

For immediate release

**The Abraaj Group announces winning artists and curator for the**

**US$100,000 Abraaj Group Art Prize 2017**

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Image credit: Rana Begum, winning artist. Photo: Courtesy of the artist.

**Dubai, UAE, 5 October 2016** - The Abraaj Group (“Abraaj” or the “Group”), a leading investor operating in global growth markets, announced today the curator, winning artist and shortlisted artists selected for the ninth Abraaj Group Art Prize, the most significant arts prize in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia.

**The Abraaj Group Art Prize 2017 Winning Artist:**

* **Rana Begum, Bangladesh**

**The Abraaj Group Art Prize 2017 Shortlisted Artists:**

* **Doa Aly, Egypt**
* **Sarah Abu Abdallah, Saudi Arabia**
* **Raha Raissnia, Iran**

**The Abraaj Group Art Prize 2017 Guest Curator:**

* **Omar Berrada (Director, Dar al-Ma’mûn; a library and artists residency in Marrakech)**

2017 marks the 9th edition of the Prize, which has been recognised globally as an exceptional platform for artists working in the region. The jury received a record number of applications from 61 countries earlier this summer; more than double the number received in 2015.

Annually, the $100,000 award enables the winning artist to develop a new commission – a “dream project”, and recognises the shortlisted artists with cash prizes of $10,000, used to support the development of their artistic practice. The new commission will be unveiled at Art Dubai - the leading art fair in MENASA - to a global audience of museum directors, collectors, artists, gallerists, and thousands of members of the public. Omar Berrada will curate the exhibition, drawing together works from the shortlist, and presenting them in dialogue with Rana Begum’s new commission.

**Winning artist Rana Begum, said**: ‘"It is such an honour to win the Abraaj Group Art Prize. I have greatly admired the winning artists and works of previous years and consider it a privilege to follow in their footsteps."

**On his plans for the exhibition, Omar Berrada said**: ‘After working with the Global Art Forum in previous years, I am delighted to return to Art Dubai as guest curator of the Abraaj Group Art Prize.  As someone who is concerned with art infrastructure in the South, I am grateful to Abraaj for generously and consistently supporting artists in and of the MENASA region over the last nine years, providing a crucial platform for new productions and international exposure. Rana Begum, Doa Aly, Raha Raissnia and Sarah Abu Abdallah are four exceptional artists who were selected from a very strong pool of several hundred applicants. They are artists with very diverse backgrounds and practices, though I see fascinating echoes between their respective approaches, which I look forward to exploring further and articulating into an exciting and thought-provoking exhibition.’

**Commenting on the strength of the winners, Dana Farouki, Chair of the jury, said**: ‘The strength of this year’s Prize proposals impressed the jury, and the selection was made all the harder by the number of applications, which continues to increase annually. Rana’s ambitious proposal will be a remarkable addition to the Art Dubai programme next year.  We are also looking forward to Omar’s thoughtful curatorial contributions, not only in working with Rana to realize the commission but also in putting together an exhibition with work by the shortlisted artists.’

The Abraaj Group Art Prize Collection – comprised of works commissioned as part of the prize – has a highly active lending policy, with works having been exhibited across five continents, 11 biennales, 31 institutions and 25 countries., including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), Victoria and Albert Museum (London), Smithsonian Museum of Asian Art (Washington D.C), Sharjah Biennial, Kochi-Muziris Biennale and Biennale of Sydney.

The Abraaj Group Art Prize has taken place annually at Art Dubai since 2008. Art Dubai is widely considered to be the leading art fair in MENASA; recognised for establishing global greater appreciation for artists and galleries from the region. The Prize is a cornerstone of Art Dubai’s extensive not-for-profit programme, which has grown in ambition annually since the fair was founded in 2007. The fair’s programme encompasses numerous on and off-site exhibitions, multiple performance art and public art commissions, as well as two of the region’s most well respected talk programmes: the Global Art Forum and Terrace Talks.

**Marking the announcement, Frederic Sicre, Managing Director at The Abraaj Group said,** *‘*The art scene in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia is thriving. The Abraaj Group Art Prize, now in its 9th year, has played a role in creating global awareness on the creative and innovative talent that exists in the region, empowering and transforming artists’ journeys. After tough deliberations for this year’s prize, the jury finally came to a conclusion entirely based on merit, and we’re extremely proud to award four women who have displayed thoughtful and innovative approaches to their art.”

The Abraaj Group Art Prize jury 2016-17 was formed of renowned international museum curators and directors. Chaired by Dubai-based curator and patron Dana Farouki, it comprises of Defne Ayas, Director and Curator of Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art; Antonia Carver, Director of Art Jameel; Nav Haq, 2016 Guest Curator of the Prize; Fayeeza Naqvi, Founding Trustee, Aman Foundation; Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-Director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects at Serpentine Galleries; Sandhini Poddar, Art historian and Adjunct Curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; and Frederic Sicre, Managing Director, The Abraaj Group.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a monograph, written and produced by Omar Berrada.

For further information, please visit:

[abraaj.com/sustainability/art-and-innovation/abraaj-group-art-prize](http://www.abraaj.com/sustainability/art-and-innovation/abraaj-group-art-prize)

[abraajgroupartprize.com](http://abraajgroupartprize.com/)

[artdubai.ae](http://www.artdubai.ae/air-dubai/2016)

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**Notes to Editors:**

**About The Abraaj Group Art Prize:**

The Abraaj Group is a leading private equity investor, purpose-built for operating in the growth markets of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Turkey. Through its Stakeholder and Strategic Partnerships programs, the Group supports art and innovation, entrepreneurship and the next generation, aiming to have a deep rooted and sustainable impact across growth markets.

The Abraaj Group Art Prize was founded in 2008 and is now in its ninth edition. The aim of the prize is to empower potential and give often under-represented contemporary artists the resources to further develop their talent. Following the application and jury process, four artists are shortlisted for the prize and one (of the four) artists awarded the $100,000 commission. The three shortlisted artists receive a cash prize and are represented in a group exhibition at Art Dubai (March 15-18, 2017) through previous works, which are selected by the Guest Curator in liaison with the artist. The prize reflects Abraaj’s own investment philosophy, which is to take viable businesses with great potential, and create regional and global champions. To date, the 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 works were presented at Art Dubai and then gone on loan to exhibitions at Istanbul Modern, Istanbul, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, Sharjah Biennale 11, Sharjah, 54th Venice Biennale, Venice, 18th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, V&A, London, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, Hangzhou Triennial of Fiber Art, Zhejiang, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Tensta Konstall, Stockholm, Glasgow Sculpture Studios, Glasgow, 10th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, New Museum, New York.

**About the Winning Artist:**

Born in Bangladesh in 1977, Rana Begum now lives and works in London. In 1999, she graduated with a BA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art and Design and, in 2002, gained an MFA in Painting from Slade School of Fine Art. Recent and forthcoming exhibitions include; The Space Between, Parasol Unit (2016) Into boundless space I leap, Maxwell Centre, UK (2016); 11th Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2016); Solo Show, Galerie Christian Lethert, Cologne, Germany (2016); New Visions, Tensta Konsthall, Sweden (2015); Towards an Infinite Geometry, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2015); Future Light, Vienna Biennale 2015: Ideas for Change; Solo Show, Galeri Mana, Istanbul, Turkey (2014); Solo Project, Dhaka Art Summit, Dhaka, Bangladesh (2014); No.10, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2013); Manifold, Galerie Christian Lethert, Cologne, Germany (2013); The Folded Page, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2011); New Works, Delfina Foundation, London, UK (2010); and Fractured Symmetry, Bischoff/Weiss, London, UK (2010).

She has also participated in many international group exhibitions, including: New Visions, Tensta Konsthal, Stockholm, Sweden (2016); Geometries of Difference, Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, New York, USA (2015); The Language of Human Consciousness, Athr Gallery, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (2014); Summer Show, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2014); Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK (2012) where she received the Jack Goldhill Award for Sculpture.

**About the Shortlisted Artists:**

Doa Aly was born in Cairo, Egypt in 1976.  She attended the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo, earning a BFA in painting in 2001. Her work spanning video, drawing and performance, has been exhibited at the Delfina Foundation (London), Charim Gallery (Vienna), D-Caf Festival (Cairo), Warsaw Museum of Modern Art (Warsaw), Eva International Biennial (Limerick City), Huis Marseille Museum of Photography (Amsterdam), the New Museum (New York), Tate Modern (London), Haus Der Kunst (Munich), 7th Busan Biennial, 11th Istanbul Biennial, Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam) and the International Center for Photography (New York). Doa Aly is represented by Gypsum Gallery, Cairo.

Sarah AbuAbdallah lives and works in Qatif, Saudi Arabia. She studied art at Rhode Island School of Design for a Masters in Digital Media, and in the College Of Art And Design at Sharjah University. She is currently an artist and puzzle maker, working with video, installation, poetry and images. Sarah has exhibited work in the Sharjah Biennial 11, *Fluidity* in Kunstverein in Hamburg, *Co-Workers* in Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, *Do it Arabic*, Prospectif Cinéma / Filter Bubble at the Centre Pompidou and Luma Foundation, *Private Settings* at the Warsaw Museum of Modern Art; *Arab Contemporary* at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, participated in the Serpentine Galleries Marathon, *Rhizoma*; a collateral event organised by Edge of Arabia at the 55th Venice Biennale, amongst others. She was the recipient of Sharjah Art Foundation’s Production Programme Grant (2016) in collaboration with Josh Bitelli for their project *To Gaze at Ten Suns Shining*. Sarah also executed the 89plus project “Vessel Verses” with Abdullah Al Mutairi for Art Dubai 2016.

Raha Raissnia (b. 1968, Tehran, Iran) received her BFA from the School of the Art institute of Chicago in 1992 and her MFA from Pratt Institute in 2002. In the interim, her interest in avant-garde filmmaking led her to work at Anthology Film Archives (1995– 1999), where she has also exhibited. In 2016, Raissnia’s work was the subject of a solo presentation at the Museum of Modern Art (New York). In 2015, her work was included in All the World's Futures, 56th International Art Exhibition, curated by Okwui Enwezor, Venice Biennale. Previously, her work has been featured in exhibitions at White Columns (New York), Access Gallery (Vancouver), the Museum of Contemporary Art St. Louis, Khastoo Gallery (Los Angeles), Thomas Dane Gallery (London) and The Kitchen (New York), among others. Recent solo shows were held at Ab/Anbar Gallery (Tehran), Galeria Marta Cervera (Madrid), Galerie Xippas (Paris), and the Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art (Isfahan, Iran). Raissnia’s projection-performances, often undertaken in collaboration with Aki Onda and Panagiotis Mavridis, have been held at Arnolfini – Center for Contemporary Arts (Bristol, UK), the Drawing Center (New York), Issue Project Room (New York), and Emily Harvey Foundation (New York), among others. Raissnia’s fifth one-person exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery took place in November 2015.

**About the Curator:**

Omar Berrada is a writer, translator and curator, and the director of Dar al-Ma’mûn, a library and artists residency in Marrakech. Previously, he curated public programs at the Centre Pompidou, hosted shows on French national radio, convened the Tangier International Book Salon, and co-directed Dubai’s Global Art Forum. He is editor, with Erik Bullot, of Expanded Translation – A Treason Treatise, a book of verbal and visual betrayals; and, with Yto Barrada, of Album – Cinémathèque de Tanger, a multilingual volume about film in Tangier and Tangier on film. His translations include books by Jalal Toufic, Stanley Cavell and Joan Retallack. In 2016 he edited The Africans, a book on migration and racial politics in Morocco, and curated several exhibitions including ‘Memory Games’, a group show as part of the Marrakech biennale; ‘Black Hands’, a solo show of M’barek Bouhchichi’s work at Kulte Gallery in Rabat; and ‘I want to possess in this world That which brings joy to the eyes’, a presentation of Ahmed Bouanani’s films and archive at Witte de With in Rotterdam. He currently lives in New York and is a visiting scholar at NYU.

**About Art Dubai:**

Art Dubai is held under the Patronage of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. Art Dubai is held in partnership with The Abraaj Group and is sponsored by Emaar and Julius Baer. Madinat Jumeirah is home to the event. Mashreq Private Banking is the exclusive partner of Art Dubai Modern. The Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, the Emirates-dedicated entity for heritage and culture, is a strategic partner of Art Dubai, and supports the fair’s year-round education programme.

Annually over 90 galleries participate in Art Dubai, in a curated programme presented through the fair’s two main sectors; Contemporary and Modern. Art Dubai’s extensive not-for-profit programme includes Art Dubai Projects; an exhibition of works by winners of the annual The Abraaj Group Art Prize; a range of educational programmes including The Sheikha Manal Little Artists Program and the community school Campus Art Dubai; and the critically-acclaimed Global Art Forum. The eleventh edition of Art Dubai takes place March 15-18, 2017.

[artdubai.ae](http://artdubai.ae/)