

For immediate release

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‘Syntax and Society’: The Abraaj Group Art Prize 2016 exhibition is revealed at Art Dubai

MARCH 16, 2016, DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: The Abraaj Group Art Prize 2016 exhibition, ‘Syntax and Society’, was revealed today at Art Dubai, the leading international art fair of the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. ‘Syntax and Society’ features a new video installation by the winners of the 2016 prize, Palestinian artist-duo **Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme**, which is exhibited for the first time alongside significant works by the Abraaj Group Art Prize 2016 shortlisted artists: **Dina Danish, Mahmoud Khaled, and Basir Mahmood**. The exhibition is the final stage of the annual and most significant arts prize held in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, and is presented at Art Dubai’s tenth edition, March 16-19, 2016.

Curated by the 2016 Guest Curator **Nav Haq**, ‘Syntax and Society’ considers how and why artists communicate through symbolic structures in society through their work. Particularly, the exhibition responds to the structure and meaning of language and the role it plays in philosophy, culture and socio-political systems. The diverse practices of the shortlisted artists are presented as a whole.

The **new video installation by the winning artists**, Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, ‘Only The Beloved Keeps Our Secrets’, examines how modern day technologies, particularly the Internet, can enable a continued existence for those who have been deceased. Found material from a variety of sources, including images, texts and testimonies, are collaged together within the video installation to complete the final piece. Each of the various elements come together as the video unfolds, pointing to the Palestinian narrative and collective history.

Alongside Abbas and Abou-Rahme’s new commission, the works presented by the shortlisted artists invite viewers to examine different cultures. Dina Danish questions how language is structured, from tongue-twisters to ordinary words in cinema. Mahmoud Khaled reflects on the relationship between the arts and political history, by considering the representations class and stereotypes in public spaces. Basir Mahmood deliberates on beginning and endings, from the writing and mailing of letters that are never received, to situations where disused artefacts from one culture are newly adapted in another.

The Abraaj Group Art Prize, now in its 9th year, is a central part of Art Dubai's programme. The Abraaj Group, a leading private equity investor in growth markets, launched The Abraaj Group Art Prize in 2008 to bolster the region's arts ecosystem and reward artistic development. The Prize is the only art prize of its kind that awards artists based on a proposal, rather than a completed work. A renowned jury made up of international museum curators, this year newly chaired by the Dubai-based patron and philanthropist Dana Farouki, selected the winning artists, who are awarded a \$100,000 prize to develop a major commission, which is revealed at Art Dubai.

Following the 2016 exhibition, the winning artists' commission will become part of the Abraaj Group Art Collection – comprised of works commissioned as a result of the prize. In keeping with the aims of the prize, the organisers will seek opportunities to tour and present the work worldwide in exhibitions, museum shows, biennials and other events. Over the past nine years, commissions by MENASA artists participating in the AGAP have been exhibited across 5 continents, 11 biennales, 31 institutions and 25 countries.

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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 eighth 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 16-19, 2016) 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 and 2015 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 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 Julius Baer and Piaget. Madinat Jumeirah is home to the event. The Dubai Culture and Arts Authority is a strategic partner of Art Dubai and, along with Dubai Design District (d3), supports the fair's year-round education programme.

Art Dubai 2016 includes 94 galleries, presented across three programmes - Contemporary, Modern and Marker. Art Dubai's extensive not-for-profit programme includes Art Dubai Projects; an exhibition of works by winners of the annual 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 tenth edition of Art Dubai takes place March 16-19, 2016. artdubai.ae

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