

PRESS RELEASE

## Abu Dhabi Art to Bring *Beyond: Emerging Artists* to Italy for the First Time During La Biennale di Venezia

*Beyond: Emerging Artists programme commissions from 2021 to be showcased at Palazzo Franchetti in Venice from 20 April to 22 May 2022*

*Abu Dhabi Art's second international presentation, following last year's successful collaboration with London's Cromwell Place to present the 2020 Beyond: Emerging Artists programme in the UK*

**Abu Dhabi, UAE, 25 March 2022:** Abu Dhabi Art, held under the patronage of HH Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Member of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council and Chairman of Abu Dhabi Executive Office, will present works from the 2021 edition of the *Beyond: Emerging Artists* programme at Palazzo Franchetti, Venice, Italy from 20 April to 22 May 2022, to coincide with the Biennale Arte 2022. For its first iteration in Italy, *Beyond: Emerging Artists* will showcase commissioned artists Christopher Joshua Benton, Maitha Abdalla and Hashel Al Lamki, who were supported by guest curators Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, co-founders of multidisciplinary curatorial platform Art Reoriented.

The *Beyond: Emerging Artists* initiative invites local and international curators to work with UAE-based emerging artists of their choosing in a year-round programme, enabling and supporting the artists to hone their skills and develop their professional practice. Participating artists are provided with a budget and curatorial support to create ambitious new works that are exhibited through Abu Dhabi Art.

Dyala Nusseibeh, Director of Abu Dhabi Art, said, "Abu Dhabi Art has always been committed to nurturing artists, enabling them to develop their practice and providing opportunities that can support them professionally and expand audiences for their work. Our annual programme *Beyond: Emerging Artists*, was, in 2021, funded through the newly launched cultural philanthropy initiative *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art*, whose support gave our UAE-based emerging artists an unparalleled international platform. Now expanding beyond the UAE, we are delighted to bring global attention to the works of Christopher Joshua Benton, Maitha Abdalla and Hashel Al Lamki in Venice this year."

Combining film, installation, and sculpture, Benton's *The World Was My Garden* works with the palm tree as a metaphor for migration, labour economies and the history of slavery in the Gulf. The exhibition's centerpiece is *My Plant Immigrants*, an almost three-metre-tall date palm tree suspended in the air.

*This material is distributed by Brunswick Group LLC on behalf of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi. Additional information is on file with the FARA Registration Unit of the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.*

Abdalla's *Too Close to the Sun* spans video performance, sculpture, and works on canvas and photography. The exhibition explores what the artist perceives as the wild nature of women that social forces have often attempted to tame, intertwining themes including the wildness of human nature, the archetype of the feminine psyche, and the untamable character of wild animals.

*Neptune*, a multidisciplinary work featuring sculptures and works on canvas by Al Lamki, traverses natural, built and imagined realms to foreground the scarcity of the Earth's resources and how these events impact the human psyche. In his exhibition, the artist explores liberation from worldly duties and confines through the adoption of a lifestyle grounded in nomadism.

Designed to introduce emerging UAE-based artists to a global audience, this is the second international exhibition for Abu Dhabi Art, building on the success of the fair's collaboration with London's Cromwell Place in 2021, where it extended its 2020 *Beyond: Emerging Artists* programme to the UK. La Biennale di Venezia is a perfect platform for these young artists to engage with art world professionals, collectors, art-lovers and fellow artists.

"I'm honoured to showcase *Neptune* in Venice this year at a moment that coincides with the Venice Biennale. This body of work was recently exhibited at the Abu Dhabi Art fair under the fair's *Beyond: Emerging Artists 2021* programme, curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath. *Neptune* celebrates the various colours and textures of Abu Dhabi. I'm very pleased that the journey of this body of work can extend and reach a new audience that might engage with it critically and offer up new readings and dialogues surrounding it," said Al Lamki.

Abdalla said, "My commission for the *Beyond: Emerging Artists* programme at Abu Dhabi Art last year, as an internationally facing platform, was a powerful opportunity in itself. The chance to share this series during the Venice Biennial is an honour. While much of my art chronicles personal narratives there are topics that humans might connect to universally embedded within my practice. I'm excited to see how my art connects to those that encounter it in Venice and how it takes on new meaning in this dynamic new context."

Benton said, "I am so excited to bring *The World Was My Garden* to Venice, Italy. European markets and consumer demand played an important role in the story of the date and its global circulation at the turn of the 20th century. My intention with this project is to re-route these circuits by revealing the exploitation inherent to these labour and agricultural economies."

Nadine Maalouf and Nadia Sehweil, Co-Heads of *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art*, added, "When we created *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art*, it was out of a profound commitment to supporting homegrown talent in the UAE and to encouraging the continuous development of the local art scene. Seeing the spellbinding, immersive works of Christopher Joshua Benton, Maitha Abdalla and Hashel Al Lamki first exhibited at Abu Dhabi Art 2021 now find a new setting in Venice, is testament to the success and future potential of this endeavour. We invite everyone to visit the exhibition and discover the works of three of the UAE's most promising emerging artists."

*Beyond: Emerging Artists* will be on show at Venice's Palazzo Franchetti from 20 April to 22 May 2022.

Abu Dhabi Art will return to Manarat Al Saadiyat from 16 to 20 November 2022.

For more information on Abu Dhabi Art and its year-round programmes, visit [abudhabiart.ae](http://abudhabiart.ae) and follow Abu Dhabi Art on social media: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

*This material is distributed by Brunswick Group LLC on behalf of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi. Additional information is on file with the FARA Registration Unit of the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.*

ENDS

**For press enquiries please contact:**

Pavlos Amanatidis / Saskia Deliss  
Brunswick Arts  
[ABUDHABIART@brunswickgroup.com](mailto:ABUDHABIART@brunswickgroup.com)

**Notes to Editors:**

**Beyond: Emerging Artists**

**Address:** Palazzo Franchetti, S. Marco, 2847, 30124 Venezia VE, Italy

**Dates:** 20 April to 22 May 2022

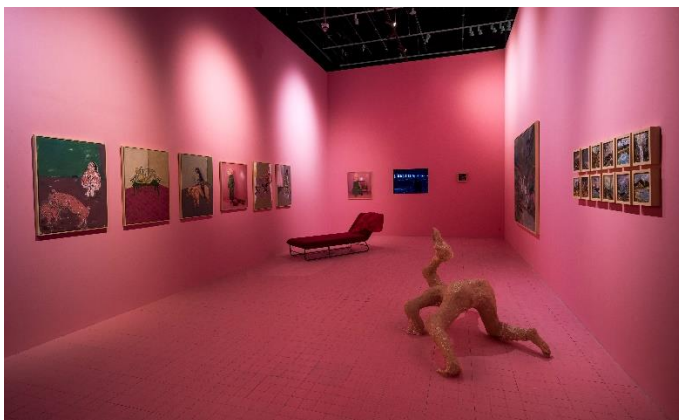
**Opening hours:** 10:00– 18:00



Christopher Joshua Benton, *The World Was My Garden*, 2021, Beyond: Emerging Artists 2021. Image courtesy of Abu Dhabi Art.



Hashel Al Lamki, *Neptune*, 2021, Beyond: Emerging Artists 2021. Image courtesy of Abu Dhabi Art.



*This material is distributed by Brunswick Group LLC on behalf of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi. Additional information is on file with the FARA Registration Unit of the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.*

Maitha Abdalla, *Too Close to the Sun*, 2021, Beyond: Emerging Artists 2021. Image courtesy of Abu Dhabi Art.

#### **About Hashel Al Lamki**

Hashel Al Lamki was born in the UAE, where he has experienced not only the rapid industrial and architectural growth of Dubai and the rest of the Emirates, but also the cultural complexities and dynamics that came as a result of the construction boom. In 2007 Al Lamki joined a BFA programme at Parsons the New School for Design in New York City. During the artist's time in New York City, he nurtured his passions and enriched his practice through multidisciplinary collaborations. Currently, he infuses these vibrant perspectives to bring them into his practice, which focuses on social innovation, sustainability, environmental & philanthropic practices. Al Lamki's most recent exhibition is his first solo show, "The Cup and The Saucer", at Warehouse421.

Hashel Al Lamki is represented by Leila Heller Gallery and a commissioned artist for Beyond: Emerging Artists curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, Abu Dhabi Art 2021.

#### **About Maitha Abdalla**

Born in 1989, mixed media artist Maitha Abdallah oscillates between the diaphanous, vibrant and surreal; her art is always marked by an atmosphere of reminiscence and nostalgia. Her paintings and mixed-media work often evolve into series and articulate strong cultural narratives; they are assemblages of memory, travel and human interactions. Informed by exchanges and experiences, her socially driven commentaries on the human condition reveal astute, intuitive observations on the world around her in a narrative form. A particularly influential encounter was with children at an orphanage where Abdallah taught English and art. The motifs of childhood began to permeate her work after this time, becoming an eloquent vernacular in which she further explores the difference between the imaginary and the real; mapping the liminal space between these interconnected worlds, she plays out many questions of social and cultural identity.

Abdallah is a graduate of the Salama Bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship, in partnership with the Rhode Island School of Design, and is also one of the founders of Bait 15, an artist-run gallery and studio in Abu Dhabi, and plays an active role in the Contemporary art scene in the UAE. She participated in Abu Dhabi Festival 2019 Visual Arts Residency Programme in Vaduz, Liechtenstein and Vienna, Austria.

Maitha Abdallah is represented by Tabari Art Space and a commissioned artist for Beyond: Emerging Artists curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, Abu Dhabi Art 2021.

#### **About Christopher Joshua Benton**

Christopher Joshua Benton (b. 1988) is a UAE-based American artist working across sculpture, photography, and film. Christopher works closely with communities and neighborhoods to instigate collaboration and share stories of power, labor, and hope. His practice explores how the working-class uses culture and innovation to stage resistance to post-colonial and neo-liberal forces. Past work has been presented at Dubai Design Week, the Fikra Graphic Design Biennial, and Jameel Arts Centre. He is currently pursuing his MS in Art, Culture, and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, through the support of Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation.

Christopher Joshua Benton is a commissioned artist for Beyond: Emerging Artists curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, Abu Dhabi Art 2021.

#### **About Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath**

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath are Founders of Art Reoriented, a multidisciplinary curatorial platform launched in 2009 in New York and Munich. They are Curators of the Lyon Biennale in 2022, and Affiliate Curators at Gropius Bau in Berlin. As an independent voice, Bardaouil and Fellrath have collaborated with more than 70 institutions worldwide, including Centre Pompidou, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Tate Liverpool, Moderna Museet, Reina Sofia, ARTER, and the Montblanc Cultural Foundation. They are internationally recognized curators and award-winning authors whose practice is rooted in global contemporary art, as well as in the field of modernist studies.

In 2016 they were part of the team of curatorial attachés of the 20th Biennale of Sydney. At the Venice Biennale, they were curators of the National Pavilions of Lebanon in 2013 and the United Arab Emirates in 2019, and they are Curators of the French Pavilion in 2022.

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath co-curated *Beyond: Emerging Artists*, Abu Dhabi Art 2021.

#### **About Beyond: Emerging Artists**

An annual initiative that launched in 2017. The programme provides three emerging artists in the UAE with a platform from which to develop their practice and realise ambitious art projects. The selected artists are chosen by a guest curator each year. They undertake a year-long programme of workshops and studio visits initiated by the guest curator which leads toward the realisation of a project for the Abu Dhabi Art fair in November. The works remain on exhibition to the public for several months beyond the fair dates.

#### **About Dyala Nusseibeh**

Dyala Nusseibeh has been the Director of Abu Dhabi Art since 2016. Having graduated with a BA from Cambridge University and an MLitt (with Distinction) from Glasgow University, she spent a year at the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi followed by four years at the Saatchi Gallery in London as Head of Education. In this capacity she organised annual student shows, the education programme at the gallery and a travelling exhibition of works from the Saatchi collection to Ipswich in order to broaden outreach. In 2013, Nusseibeh became founding Director of ArtInternational Istanbul, managed by leading fair organisers Angus Montgomery, a position she held until 2016 when she joined the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi.

*This material is distributed by Brunswick Group LLC on behalf of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi. Additional information is on file with the FARA Registration Unit of the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.*

**About Abu Dhabi Art**

Abu Dhabi Art expands beyond the notion of a traditional art fair, in placing strong emphasis on a diverse public engagement programme, including art installations and exhibitions, talks and events that take place in different locations throughout the year. The culmination of this year-long programme is the Abu Dhabi Art event in November, which provides an important sales platform for participating galleries whilst also offering these galleries an opportunity to showcase ambitious installations and site-specific works by their artists to a wide audience.

**About the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi**

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) drives the sustainable growth of Abu Dhabi's culture, creative and tourism sectors, fuels economic progress and helps achieve Abu Dhabi's wider global ambitions. By working in partnership with the organisations that define the emirate's position as a leading international destination, DCT Abu Dhabi strives to unite the ecosystem around a shared vision of the emirate's potential, coordinate effort and investment, deliver innovative solutions, and use the best tools, policies and systems to support the culture and tourism industries.

DCT Abu Dhabi's vision is defined by the emirate's people, heritage and landscape. We work to enhance Abu Dhabi's status as a place of authenticity, innovation, and unparalleled experiences, represented by its living traditions of hospitality, pioneering initiatives and creative thought.