

For Immediate Release

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Sharjah Art Foundation hosts a panel of leading figures in the early UAE contemporary art world.

Panel discussion was the 3rd in the SB12 Monthly Talk series



Panelists from left to right : Dr. Yousef Aidabi, Hassan Sharif, Mohammed Kazem, Abdul-Raheem Sharif and Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim at Sharjah Biennial 12 Monthly Talks, 2014

Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) hosted an exceptional assembly of panelists as part of the SHARJAH BIENNIAL 12 MONTHLY TALKS. Moderated by Dr. Yousef Aidabi, advisor at the *Dr. Sultan Al-Qasimi Centre for Gulf Studies*, the panelists consisted of SB12 participating artists Mohammed Kazem and Hassan Sharif; alongside Abdul-Raheem Sharif founder of 'Flying House', a non-profit platform that promotes Emirati artists and artist Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim. On this remarkable occasion, the panelists discussed the development of art and cultural production in the UAE and focused on their own practices as well as their contributions to arts organisations and the fostering of emerging artists in the UAE. This panel discussion was held in support of *Sharjah Biennial 12: The past, the present, the possible*, which will be on view March 5 through June 5, 2015.

Quoting H.H. the Ruler of Sharjah Sheikh Dr. Sultan Al Qasimi, "Enough of the concrete

revolution and shift to empowering people instead,” Dr.Aidabi also noted his Highness’s belief in the important role of culture in building and nurturing traditional society. He explained how the work of artist Hassan Sharif and the establishment of the Emirates Fine Arts Society were the first steps in the creation of a contemporary art scene. The artists emphasised the important contribution made by the Sharjah Biennial to the development of the local art scene and to the establishment of regional and international recognition. They discussed how, since its establishment in 2009, Sharjah Art Foundation has played a leading role in the growing awareness and interest in art within the UAE and the subsequent increase in art events across the Emirates.

Mohammed Kazem highlighted the important role of first generation artists such as Hassan Sharif and Abdul Rahim Salem who made a profound impact on the artists of the second and third generations through the creation of supportive sessions, lectures, workshops and exhibitions. Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim spoke about his personal experience, saying, "In the beginning I used a self-education theory by reading about the history of art and art criticism. I gained inspiration and knowledge which enabled me to practice art.”

The artists expressed how the media has played a crucial role in developing art through continuous coverage about art events taking place in the UAE. Al-Khaleej newspaper in particular, they noted, has had a dedicated art and culture section since the 1980’s, which included articles about poetry, fine art and theatre. It gave people the opportunity to know more about art in the Arab world by creating a connection between the artists and their audience.

The session ended with questions from the audience that revolved around the current art scene and the new generation of artists. The speakers agreed that new and emerging artists in the UAE all benefit from the growing number of commercial galleries and art events that provide increasing possibilities and artistic platforms.

About Sharjah Biennial 12

Curated by Eungie Joo, *Sharjah Biennial 12: The past, the present, the possible* (SB12) invites over fifty artists and cultural practitioners from over twenty-five countries to introduce their ideas of the possible through their art and work. The exhibition takes place in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, crossing the emirate to sites in and around the city as well as in the city of Kalba on the Gulf of Oman. Over two-thirds of participating artists will present new works and commissions. Organised by Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah Biennial 12 will be open to the public from March 5 to June 5, 2015.

About Sharjah Art Foundation:

Sharjah Art Foundation brings a broad range of contemporary art and cultural programmes to the communities of Sharjah, the UAE and the region. Since 2009 SAF has built on the history of cultural collaboration and exchange that began with the first Sharjah Biennial in 1993. Working with local and international partners, we create

opportunities for artists and artistic production through our core initiatives that include the Sharjah Biennial, the annual March Meeting, residencies, production grants, commissions, exhibitions, research, publications and a growing collection. Our education and public programmes focus on building recognition of the central role art can play in the life of a community by promoting public learning and a participatory approach to art. All our events are free and open to the public. Sharjah Art Foundation is funded by the Department of Culture and Information, Government of Sharjah.

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