From New York to Palestine: NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery announces its autumn 2017 and spring 2018 exhibitions

13 August 2017, Abu Dhabi: The NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery (NYUAD Art Gallery) is pleased to announce their upcoming autumn 2017 and spring 2018 exhibitions. In the autumn, *Inventing Downtown New York: Artist-Run Galleries, 1952–1965* will open on October 4, bringing to Abu Dhabi a major collection of historical artworks organized by the Grey Art Gallery, New York University’s fine art museum in New York City. Then, spring of 2018 will see a landmark, mid-career retrospective of art world duo Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti, featuring artworks and site-specific installations not only in the Art Gallery, but also around the NYUAD campus on Saadiyat Island, on February 24th.


*Inventing Downtown New York: Artist-Run Galleries, 1952–1965* examines the New York art scene between the peak of Abstract Expressionism in the early 1950s and the rise of Pop Art and Minimalism in the early 1960s. During this time, artists helped expand the definition of what constituted downtown Manhattan. Establishing co-operative and artist-run galleries that triggered new aesthetic directions, they also extended eastward the parameters of what was considered “downtown,” toward the tenements and industrial buildings of Lower Manhattan. These spaces would help shape the artworks they created and exhibited.

Organized by the Grey Art Gallery, *Inventing Downtown* is the first major museum exhibition to survey these vital years from the vantage point of fourteen key artist-run galleries. Featuring over 200 paintings, sculptures, installations, drawings, photographs, and films, the show reveals a scene that was much more diverse than has previously been acknowledged, and will include works by over 50 artists who pursued abstraction and figuration alongside those who ventured into installation and performance art. The artists range from the well-known (Yayoi Kusama, Alex Katz, Mark di Suvero, Claes Oldenburg, and Yoko Ono) to the lesser-known (Ed Clark, Emilio Cruz, Lois Dodd, Rosalyn Drexler, Sally Hazelet Drummond, Jean Follett, Lester Johnson, Boris Lurie, and Aldo Tambellini).

**Opening on October 4th at the NYUAD Art Gallery, Inventing Downtown** is curated by Melissa Rachleff, a clinical associate professor in the Department of Art and Art Professions at NYU’s Steinhardt School.

**Spring 2018: Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti**

**Opening on February 24th at the NYUAD Art Gallery,** the first exhibition of 2018 will be a mid-career retrospective of the renowned, award-winning artist duo Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti. Co-directors of DAAR, an architectural office and artistic residency program that combines conceptual speculations and architectural interventions, their theory and practice moves between art, architecture and education.

Petti and Hilal’s body of work explores how our experience is shaped by our understanding of “permanence” or “impermanence” in our environment. Their installations bridge architecture and art, examine the social, economic and political consequence of exile and displacement, and delve into public and private impermanent spaces. Visitors can look forward to large-scale installations both outdoors on the NYU Abu Dhabi campus, as well as works of different mediums displayed in the Art Gallery itself.
Petti and Hilal’s projects have been shown at the Venice and Istanbul Biennales, as well as at museums including the Centre Pompidou in Paris, among many others. Their artistic practice has received multiple awards and grants, including the Prince Claus Prize for Architecture, shortlisted for the Visible Award, the Curry Stone Design Prize, the New School’s Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics, the Anni and Heinrich Sussmann Artist Award, the Chrnikov Prize, and recipient of the Foundation for Art Initiatives grant.

The exhibition is guest-curated by NYUAD Associate Professor Salwa Mikdadi, who is among the foremost historians of modern art from the Arab world. It is co-curated by Bana Kattan, NYUAD Art Gallery Curator, who recently co-curated Invisible Threads (NYUAD).

**Maya Allison, Founding Director and Chief Curator of the NYUAD Art Gallery**, said: “Our coming year’s exhibitions reinforce our focus these inaugural years, on the themes that shape our understanding of where we are: culture, environment, and history, as they relate specifically to the UAE and Saadiyat Island.”

For the autumn exhibition, Inventing Downtown, Allison notes, “this further develops the idea of artistic community that drives our current show, But We Cannot See Them. Where But We Cannot See Them examines a home-grown UAE avant-garde community of artists, Inventing Downtown explores a similar impulse by artists to band together to enable artistic innovation and community, but in the very different circumstances of the New York art scene of the 1950s and 60s. It continues our reflections on the vision for the UAE, and Saadiyat, as a center of cultural and knowledge production.”

**Bana Kattan, Curator of the NYUAD Art Gallery** said, “Our spring 2018 exhibition connects our physical world (geographically and architecturally) to both historical and current events, as Alessandro Petti and Sandi Hilal’s works embrace such topics as modern geopolitics and the plight of refugees. It is a great honor to be co-curating this with Salwa Mikdadi.” **Maya Allison adds**, “This exhibition marks a high point for one of our program’s key themes, ‘the environment, natural and human-made’.”

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www.nyuad-artgallery.org
Notes to Editors

About NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery

The NYUAD Art Gallery is located at the main entrance to NYUAD’s Saadiyat Campus. It is an academic museum-gallery that presents curated exhibitions of art and material culture across historical and contemporary topics, with a special emphasis on subjects of both regional concern and international significance. Through focused exhibitions, events, and publications, the NYUAD Art Gallery serves as a catalyst and locus of intellectual and creative activity, linking the University with the Abu Dhabi public and a worldwide community of artists, curators, and scholars.

Supported by a museum-trained staff, the curatorial platform supports scholarly and experimental installations, artists’ projects, guest curators, and landmark exhibitions. The coming exhibition program centers on three themes: landscape and the built environment, Islamic art and culture, and art in global dialogue.

To contact the gallery, call +971-2-628-8000, or visit the website: www.nyuad-artgallery.org.

About NYU Abu Dhabi

NYU Abu Dhabi consists of a highly selective liberal arts and science college (including engineering), and a world center for advanced research and scholarship — all fully integrated with each other and connected to NYU in New York. Together, NYU New York, NYU Abu Dhabi, and NYU Shanghai form the backbone of a unique global network university, with faculty and students from each campus spending "semesters away" at one or more of the numerous study-abroad sites NYU maintains on six continents.

NYU Abu Dhabi graduated its first class in spring of 2014. It is attended by a diverse student body representing over 100 countries and speaking more than 100 languages.