Press Release – for immediate release

Speculative Landscapes
Areej Kaoud | Ayman Zedani | Jumairy | Raja’a Khalid

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Abu Dhabi, 25 June 2019: This fall, NYU Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) Art Gallery, the University’s academic museum-gallery, invites viewers into the imagined worlds of four UAE-based artists who have each emerged in the Gulf, and are rising internationally. Open to the public from September 16 – December 7, 2019, the exhibition is curated by Chief Curator at NYU Abu Dhabi and Executive Director of the NYUAD Art Gallery, Maya Allison. Through close study of their surroundings in the UAE, each of the artists here reflect on our shared futures: Areej Kaoud, Ayman Zedani, Jumairy, and Raja’a Khalid.

Speculative Landscapes presents a series of new installations through which each artist explores the very concept of environment (natural, artificial, virtual). Each raises a question: how do organisms – whether human or other – create, survive, and inhabit our natural, artificial, and virtual worlds? The four artists in this exhibition have developed their practice in the UAE, establishing a strong regional track record, as well as an emerging international presence. They share a speculative practice, extrapolating imagined worlds within existing ones.

Each installation offers an imaginary journey derived from the artists’ real-world observations of everyday life. In Khalid’s performative installation, she invites viewers to embrace personal well-being as a commodifiable trend, while Kaoud’s playground keeps visitors on high alert to ever-present risk. In two very different landscape installations, Zedani and Jumairy each propose
worlds in which our natural bodies and the landscape around us manifest biological or artificial intelligence.

Allison, who is fast becoming recognized as one of the leading curators of contemporary art in the UAE, comments: “For me, these artists capture something unique in their perspectives, both in how they respond to our surroundings, and how they connect to the unusual art scene here. There has been an apparently fast rise of contemporary art in the UAE that matches the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of the country since its founding in 1971. The art community, of course, has always existed, but began to create a very proactive community starting in the 1980s and 90s. That grass-roots scene was largely invisible to their international peers until around 2012, when the now-acclaimed Hassan Sharif came to the attention of major international curators. By then, the UAE’s Sharjah Art Biennial had long since become a highly-influential leader, while Dubai saw the growth of the commercial gallery sector with the pivotal Art Dubai fair, followed by the launch of a series of international museum projects in Abu Dhabi.”

She adds: “These three emirates (Sharjah, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi) host what has evolved into a diverse art ecology. Still, few know about the later generation of artists now based in the UAE. The community today, as much as ever, come from a mix of international backgrounds, and very often their work is in dialogue with both where we are, and the many cultures that converge in the UAE. Now, a host of organizations support the emerging artists, but other ‘emerged’ artists occupy a midpoint as they branch out into international museum shows and prestigious residencies. This exhibition offers a rare lens onto one specific recurring theme that I’ve observed in this emergent scene, a theme that these four artists in particular express through their distinctly arch, speculative, conceptual practice.”

-ENDS-

For more information about the NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery, please contact:

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Notes to Editors

About NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery

www.nyuad-artgallery.org

The NYUAD Art Gallery is an academic museum-gallery that presents work by internationally-established artists, curators, and scholars, to serve the intellectual and creative dialogue among the university and wider communities, via topics of regional relevance and international significance. The Gallery and its projects serve as a catalyst and locus of intellectual and creative activity through multiple venues and projects. The main gallery is a teaching museum, connecting the curriculum and the public. The Project Space is an exhibition laboratory for community artists. Collectively these two spaces, the new Reading Room, the annual Christo Award, the Campus Collection, and a series of original publications catalyze regional and international dialogue.

About NYU Abu Dhabi

www.nyuad.nyu.edu

NYU Abu Dhabi is the first comprehensive liberal arts and science campus in the Middle East to be operated abroad by a major American research university. NYU Abu Dhabi has integrated a highly-selective liberal arts, engineering and science curriculum with a world center for advanced research and scholarship enabling its students to succeed in an increasingly interdependent world and advance cooperation and progress on humanity's shared challenges. NYU Abu Dhabi's high-achieving students have come from 120 nations and speak over 120 languages. Together, NYU's campuses in New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai form the backbone of a unique global university, giving faculty and students opportunities to experience varied learning environments and immersion in other cultures at one or more of the numerous study-abroad sites NYU maintains on six continents.

Artist Biographies:

Areej Kaoud (b. 1987, Sharjah, UAE)

Kaoud is a Palestinian conceptual artist who grew up between Montreal, Canada and the UAE. She earned her MFA in Studio at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in 2011, as well as an MFA in Curating at Goldsmiths College in 2013. Her art practice draws on her interest in narratives and disastrous scenarios. Emergency provisions are a common subject in her work creating ambitious multi-media installations inviting the viewer to question the relationship between our bodies and politics. Kaoud’s projects articulate the distance between anxiety, preparedness, and the humour which takes place in preparing for non-immediate threats. Her ironic work puts us face to face with our anxiety-driven world that can sometimes present frightening resemblances to a dystopia.

Kaoud is currently working as a copy editor at Sharjah Art Foundation. She lives and works between Dubai, UAE, and London UK.

**Ayman Zedani (b. 1984, Khamis Mushait, Saudi Arabia)**

Zedani’s lifelong passion in science and art led him to pursue biomedical science alongside art studies. He is an experimental artist that shows a deep interest in scientific processes to ignite a multiplicity of interpretations from the audience. Through a diverse set of skills and media—including sculptures, photographs, paintings, and digital techniques, Zedani inspires the viewer to consider the nature of representation and the complexity of experiential phenomena. Scientific experimentation lies at the core of the artist’s ambition to push the boundaries of artistic expression and contemplation.

Zedani has been extensively represented in numerous group shows across the region, including Sharjah Art Foundation (2018, Sharjah, UAE), Institut du Monde Arabe (2018, Paris, France), Sharjah Art Museum (2017), DCT Abu Dhabi (2017), and Tashkeel (2017, Dubai, UAE). In 2018, the artist became the first recipient of the Ithra Art Prize. His work has been supported and collected by the Greenbox Museum, Amsterdam.

**Jumairy (b. 1992, Dubai, UAE)**

Jumairy experiments with sound, film, digital technologies, and performance to create immersive worlds. With these sensory experiences, the artist occupies and transforms spaces into provocations that usher viewers from their present time and place into imagined realms. What the artist thinks of as "Jumairy's world" is an evolving and expansive space mapped through performative acts, scientific experiments and mysterious rituals taking place on stage, across the big screen, and within smartphone apps. The same prismatic approach structures his music, in which he intertwines Arabic electro-pop with the discordant soundscape of industrial music. Through these, the “Jumairy world” evolves, becoming a conduit through which the artist explores psychological questions and processes traumas, both personal and collective.

Jumairy's work has been presented through residencies and exhibitions across the region and internationally. He was commissioned for the inaugural 'UAE Unlimited' exhibition A Public Privacy (2015) and Is Old Gold? (2017), both at DUCTAC in Dubai. In 2015/16 he participated in the Art Dubai A.i.R. programme in collaboration with Delfina Foundation and Tashkeel, which culminated in an installation and performance work at the Art Dubai fair. A residency with Maraya Arts Centre resulted in BRZ5, his first solo exhibition in Milan, Italy organised by FARE Arte. His work has been collected and supported by Barjeel Art Foundation and Maraya Art Centre as well as being acquired by private collectors.

**Raja’a Khalid (b. 1984, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia)**

Khalid is an artist of South Asian descent based in Dubai. She received her MFA from Cornell University in 2013. Khalid’s work has been exhibited in regional solo exhibitions at Tashkeel (2017, Dubai, UAE) and Grey Noise (2016, Dubai, UAE). Selected group exhibition participation includes ARCO Madrid (2018, Madrid, Spain), the 6th Edition of Athens Biennale (2018, Athens, Greece) Art Jameel (2018, Dubai, UAE), VITRINE (2016, Basel, Switzerland). She has been a resident at the International Studio and Curatorial Program (2015, New York, USA), Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten (2015, Amsterdam, Netherlands)
Khalid's work has been exhibited in regional solo exhibitions at Tashkeel (2017, Dubai, UAE), Alserkal Avenue (2017, Dubai, UAE), and Grey Noise Gallery (2016, Dubai, UAE). Her work also featured in numerous group exhibitions both regionally and internationally, including Art Jameel (2018, Dubai, UAE), VITRINE (2016, Basel, Switzerland), Queens Museum (2016, New York, USA). In 2014, Khalid was commissioned to create an artwork for the Global Art Forum 8 by Art Dubai.