

The NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery's new exhibition sheds light on one of the UAE's most important artistic communities



Installation view of works by Hassan Sharif and Jos Clevers. Photo Courtesy NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery

Artists include: Ebtisam Abdulaziz, Abdullah Al Saadi, Jos Clevers, Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, Mohammed Kazem, Hassan Sharif, Hussain Sharif, and Vivek Vilasini with contributions from Khalid Albudoor, Nujoom Alghanem, Cristiana De Marchi, and Adel Khozam

Abu Dhabi, Wednesday, March 1: The NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery is pleased to announce that its spring exhibition, *But We Cannot See Them: Tracing a UAE Art Community, 1988-2008*, will open its doors to the public tomorrow, March 2, at 12pm with curator-led tours from 5-7pm.

This landmark exhibition begins a survey of one of the most important artistic communities in this country's history. At its core is a group sometimes called "the five", who, together with their fellow writers and filmmakers, identified with a "new culture" of encouraging radical, formal and conceptual experimentation. Community played an important role in these artists' development, as they exchanged critical and creative ideas, supported and served as sources of inspiration for one another, at a time when art institutions and venues in which to exhibit their work were not widely available. Eventually, some of these artists founded the celebrated Flying House, a venue dedicated to displaying work from this community.

To prepare the exhibition, the curators made use of archives from the artists, and interviewed a range of members of this community, including writers, poets, and filmmakers, in addition to the artists shown here. The research and interviews have been distilled into a scholarly book of the same title, published in tandem with the exhibition, together beginning the process of tracing this pivotal artistic

community in the key years of its formation. The book includes a seminal essay by art historian, Aisha Stoby, on the history of Modern art communities in the Gulf.

The exhibition features historic works from 1988 through 2008, with a focus on works that were shown together originally. *But We Cannot See Them* also includes archival material and videotaped interviews with members of the community, as well as a reading room of work from other important members of the community, and contributions from Cristiana De Marchi, Adel Khozam, Nujoom Alghanem and Khalid Albudoor.

Artists featured include: Hassan Sharif, Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, Abdullah Al Saadi, Mohammed Kazem, Hussain Sharif, Vivek Vilasini, Jos Clevers, and Ebtisam Abdulaziz.

Founding Director and Chief Curator of the NYUAD Art Gallery, Maya Allison notes: “The trajectory from a small community of artists to a group of well-established figures in the UAE arts scene happened in only a few decades. Today, most of the artists included here have participated in the UAE Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, many are collected by museums, and they continue to develop their individual voices, providing inestimable inspiration for contemporary emerging artists in the UAE.

“The importance of community and collaboration to their success and longevity cannot be underestimated. In the course of our research into this community of artists, we have found their practices and stories deeply moving and inspiring, and we hope that art historians will use the book and this exhibition as a resource to support further study of this this pivotal community.”

But We Cannot See Them is curated by Maya Allison with Exhibitions Curator Bana Kattan, with research and program development by Programs Curator Alaa Edris. The title of the exhibition is drawn from a poem written by a key early member of the community, poet and filmmaker Nujoom Al Ghanem.

The exhibition opens to the public on **Thursday, March 2, from 12-8pm**, with curator-led tours at 5:00, 5:30, and 6:00 pm.

But We Cannot See Them will be complemented by a full public program of events and talks for all ages, taking place throughout the the exhibition. For more information, please visit The Art Gallery’s website at www.nyuad-artgallery.org.

But We Cannot See Them: Tracing a UAE Art Community, 1988-2008

2 March-25 May 2017

NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery

Visitor hours: Monday – Saturday, 12 pm – 8 pm (closed Sundays)

Admission: The NYUAD Art Gallery is free and open to the public

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For more information, please contact:

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Follow NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery on social media channels:



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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.