MIDDLE EASTERN PAVILIONS AT THE 56TH

VENICE BIENNALE
IRAQ

ARTISTS: Akam Shex Hadi, Latif Al-Ani, Rabab Ghazoul, Salam Alaa Sabri and Haider Jabbar

COMMISSIONER: Ruya Foundation for Contemporary Culture in Iraq [RUYA]

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER: Nuvalcusa – Associazione Culturale per le Arti

CURATOR: Philippe Van Cauteren

THEME: Invisible Beauty

LOCATION: Ca’Dandolo, San Polo

WEBSITE: www.ruyafoundation.org/en/venice-biennale

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the country's turbulent political life over the previous few decades, a question that was sustained by the 2013 Pavilion, curated by Jonathan Watkins. In an effort to move the discussion away from the geopolitical, Watkins explored the day-to-day world of artists living in Iraq, showing that there was more to existence than what was presented in the news. This year's offering will feature something of both approaches.

It remains to be seen what this actually means in terms of works to saw and experience, but a collective of predominantly monochromatic works in simple, candid and occasionally naïve styles is promised. It is important not to let visual impressions dictate our responses. There is a visceral, stillness at hand, prompting moments of heavier reflection. One displayed caption reads, "This work is by an 18-year-old school girl and depicts the girl’s best friend who she saw dead and bloodied after being raped on Mount Sinjar. At the time this drawing was made, her friend was still unburied."

The Pavilion transcends traditional categorization, a dimension reinforced by Van Doesburg. "I do not like to think in slogans," he adds, "but these words Universal Engaged Critical."