

الأفُق أوسع

MAKE ART POSSIBLE

AFAC 2014

End of Year Event

“InVisible”

Five public art commissions
Panel discussion with the artists

Mashrou' Leila

Indie music concert



AFAC آفاق

The Arab Fund For Arts and Culture
الصندوق العربي للثقافة والفنون - آفاق

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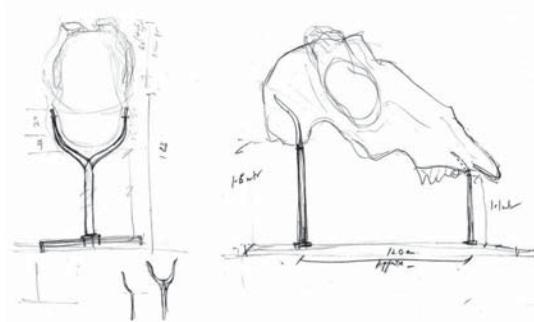
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About AFAC

The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture—**AFAC**—is an independent regional initiative that offers financial and professional support to emerging and established artists from the Arab region and to cultural institutions engaged in supporting the contemporary Arab art and culture scene. Founded in 2007, AFAC is active in 18 Arab countries and opens annual calls for Literature, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Cinema, Music and RTR (Research/Training/Regional Events), as well as special programs that support Creative Writing, Documentary Filmmaking and Documentary Photography. AFAC encourages sustainability in the arts and culture sector through public and private investments, and through entrepreneurial business practices.

About the Event



Sketch of metal stand, *Deer in the Headlights*, Doa Aly
Courtesy of CJ Roy

AFAC's End of Year Event is an opportunity to celebrate creativity and contemporary critical practices in arts and culture. Taking place in Dubai over a two-day period—November 29 and November 30—the AFAC End of Year Event 2014 consists of unveiling Public Artworks commissioned to five visual artists under the theme “InVisible” followed by a panel discussion, and a music concert by *Mashrou' Leila* at Music Hall Dubai.

This event is also an opportunity to thank the generous donors, cultural philanthropists, supporters and friends who continue to invest in AFAC's vision and make art possible.

“InVisible” Public Art Commission

AFAC, in collaboration with Amanda Abi Khalil (curator) and 17A Art Consultants (Hetal Pawani, producer), commissioned five artists for public installations, sculptures and interventions to be implemented and revealed in a public space in Dubai and pertaining to this year’s theme, “InVisible.”

The “Dubai-phenomenon” is a scale, an economy, a style; an adjective for an excessive metropolis, a context where almost nothing overreaches. Infrastructural projects are monumental and urban sprawl has no limits. This scenario is known, it was studied, replicated and also criticized.

For this public commission artists Vartan Avakian, Doa Aly, Vikram Divecha, Monira Al Qadiri and Shaikha Al Mazrou responded to the notion of “InVisible”. A theme that inspired contemporary national monuments, narrative and formal sculptural gestures concealing the visible and revealing the invisible within the cultural, historical and architectural context of Dubai. They looked at material and immaterial manifestations, dug out hidden foundations and brought to light forgotten narratives.

Informed by specific sites, stories, textures, forms and national representations the works call to question the place of culture in public space, its tangible and intangible nature and its impact on the collective and the individual.

The works resulting from this commission are to be read and metamorphosed, thus appropriated by the community and the viewers to become the custodians of silent poetic readings and symbolic associations within the context of Dubai beyond its gigantism.

A public commission is also a procedure, a complex yet invisible chain of cultural actors, technicians, contractors, engineers, policy makers’ efforts, labor and achievements. It is this form of cultural production that AFAC encourages particularly in Dubai for its capacity to operate from outside the artworld. It offers the artists new terrains for their practices and the ability to address Dubai’s context and its communities.

Amanda Abi Khalil (curator)



Extraction of rocks, *Boulder plot*, Vikram Divecha
Courtesy of the artist



Installation process, *Stand here*, Shaikha Al Mazrou
Courtesy of the artist

Amanda Abi Khalil

Curator

Amanda Abi Khalil is an independent curator based in Beirut. At the Sorbonne, Paris, she studied art mediation, sociology, and anthropology of art, graduating with an MA in Curating Art for Public Spaces. She has worked in leading cultural institutions in France. She was the director and curator of “The HANGAR” art space in Beirut until 2012 in which she has curated numerous exhibitions and installations with emerging and established international artists. She also teaches art history and sociology of arts at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA) and at the Saint Joseph University (USJ) in Beirut and is a public art consultant for several institutions. Her recent projects include “Simple Past, Perfect Futures, Images in countershot” at the Centquatre-Paris, “Intangible experiences, arrangements and manoeuvres”, GreyNoise Dubai, “Egchi Memeg; sour tits and other displacements”, French Institute Beirut.

She is the founder and director of Temporary Art Platform, an association based in Beirut for the production and promotion of art practices in public spaces.

Hetal Pawani (17A ART CONSULTANTS)

Executive Producer

17A Art Consultants work with projects and designers to achieve custom art environments by providing high quality concepts for artworks and objects. 17A’s portfolio includes hotels, hospitals, corporate offices, residences and public art initiatives. In addition to offering an extensive selection of local and international artists, it provides complete solutions from initial planning through to procurement, production and installation.

17A Art Consultants is the new image for thejamjar’s Art Consulting Services.

Monira Al Qadiri
Alien Technology

Before oil, and for a period of over 2000 years according to some accounts, the economy of the Gulf coastline was almost totally based on pearls. Pearl diving, pearl trading, pearl music: entire cultures were founded on this precious object. Following an extended exploration of Al Qadiri's biographical relationship to oil, in terms of its materiality, symbolism, ecology and economy, as well as trying to find links between it and a pre-oil world in the Gulf region, she has come to find that a relationship between both industries exists in terms of colour. She discovered that the iridescent colour spectrum of pearls is the lighter version of the same colour spectrum found in crude oil. Although it is a fictional relationship, it is in her view one of the only points that links the two worlds together.

In this project, she recreates these formal links through the shape of drill bits that are used to extract oil. When seen separately, these drill bits resemble forms of marine life, especially when coated with the aforementioned colour scheme. Pre-oil and post-oil, oil and pearls, land and sea: these are merged together to create a harmonious existence based on the evolution of methods of wealth production.

Here the work is a proposal for a public monument. A gigantic iridescent form alluding to both an underwater world that fed the Gulf's economy for so many years and simultaneously, the tool that is central to the current economy of oil. The pearl industry is invisible to most - a forgotten history after the economic transformation that came with the discovery of oil in the region. And while the presence of oil is known and all-pervasive, the nature of its extraction is rarely seen. This drill is the basis of the wealth of the region, a central cog in the workings of the economy, finally made visible in Al Qadiri's shimmering monument.



Alien Technology, mock-up, courtesy of the artist



Monira Al Qadiri (born in Senegal, 1983) is a Kuwaiti visual artist based in Beirut. She studied inter-media art at Tokyo University of the Arts, where she received her Ph.D in 2010. Her research focused on the aesthetics of sadness in the Middle East region stemming from poetry, music, art and religious practices. Her work explores the relationship between narcissism and masculinity, as well as other dysfunctional gender roles, and is currently expanding towards more social and political subjects. Recent solo exhibitions include Sultan Gallery, Kuwait and *Achievements in Retrospective*, Moma PSI, New York, as part of the artist collective GCC. Selected group shows include, *X-Apartments Home Works 6*, Beirut; *The Fertile Crescent: Gender, Art and Society* and Princeton Arts Council & Rutgers University, USA.



Doa Aly

Deer in the Headlights

In May 2014, an Arabian Mountain gazelle was spotted running down the road at the Palm Jumeirah. The creature was seen “on the divider on the trunk of the island,” like a mirage; an eruption of nature within an urban environment. Bindu Rai reported the incident on Emirates 24/7 and it became the basis for Doa Aly’s elusive monument. Describing it as “a deer in the headlights moment”, Aly was struck by Rai’s awe and astonishment at the event.

Aly’s sculpture interprets this awe - the experience of being confronted with a body where it does not belong. “Life is metaphysical,” says Merleau-Ponty. A gazelle sprinting along the highway becomes a sublime event, at once prehistoric and futuristic. The monument takes the form of a mountain gazelle’s skull, only the animal’s head is without its trademark horns. Colossal and mounted on a display stand in plain view. It is suggestive of natural history museums, filled with mounted animal heads, reminding us of man’s dominance over nature.

But the gazelle remains elusive. Misplaced, stylized, and hovering above each passersby, a gazelle’s skull is at once fragile and violent; confronting the onlooker with his or her own vulnerability and hubris.

Master sculptor: Ahmad Moussa

Sculptors: Ahmad Kamal, Boshoy Nabil, Basma Zaki, Abdel-Rahman



Doa Aly (born in Egypt, 1976) is a visual artist based in Cairo. She studied painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Helwan University, in Cairo where she received her BFA in 2001. Her work is informed by the notion of disturbance and is often based on short stories, epics and myths that speak of an intense struggle between control and consummation. Selected group exhibitions include Meeting Points 6, Beirut Art Center, Beirut; Argos, Brussels, *The Future of Tradition*, Haus Der Kunst, Munich, 7th Busan Biennale and 11th Istanbul Biennial. Solo exhibitions include Darat Al Funun, Amman and Townhouse Gallery, Cairo.

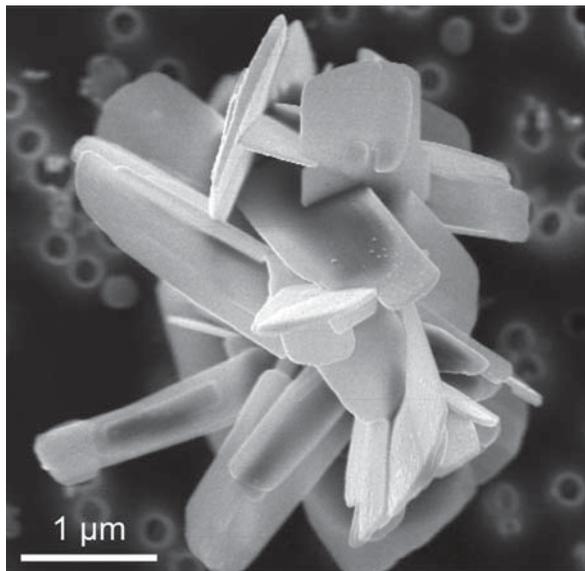


Image from a scanning electron microscope of a particle composed of calcium sulfate crystals
Photo © University of Freiburg

Vartan Avakian

Collapsing Clouds of Gas and Dust

Monumentality resides in scale. It resides in the scale of residue the monument generates. The power evoked by a monumental structure emanates from this residue, from this dust. Dust is soil. Dust is pollen. Dust is fibers. Dust is also shed skin cells, hair, tears and sweat. This dust generated by the monument's "life" holds its aura.

Monuments, as the Latin origin of the word suggests, are structures that evoke remembrance and commemoration. They are inscriptions of memory on matter. Monumentality is characterized in people's adherence to the power of a structure.

Vartan Avakian encapsulates the aura of monuments in natural sculptural forms, taking the shape of crystallized minerals. From Dubai's monumental structures, the artist collected natural and biological residue to preserve as registers of memory on matter. For this alchemy process, the artist collected water from Burj Khalifa Lake, a commonly identified architectural monument in Dubai. Each body of water holds a unique residue due to the different environmental and human pollutants, so to speak. This unique residual mix is collected as a register of monumentality and crystallized into small sculptures of natural stones and minerals.

The work will emanate the supposed aura of monumentality of Burj Khalifa. This scientific and poetic process questions monumentality in public spaces as something both utterly visible and invisible at the same time.

In collaboration with:
American University of Beirut - Department of Chemistry
Lead Chemist: Ghinwa Darwish at Dr.Pierre Karam Lab

Courtesy of the artist and Kalfayan Galleries, Athens - Thessaloniki



Vartan Avakian (born in Lebanon, 1977) is a visual artist based in Beirut. He studied Communication Arts at the Lebanese American University and has a Masters in Architecture and Urban Culture from Universitat Pompeu Fabra and the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona. He works with video, photography, installation and more recently natural material. His practice is often related to mundane aesthetics with a focus on urban culture and is comprised of long-term research related projects. Avakian is a founding member of the art collective Atfal Ahdath and a member of the Arab Image Foundation. Recent exhibitions include Art Dubai; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; Transmeridiale 2K + 12, Berlin; Wallach Art Gallery, New York and Sharjah Biennial X. He is represented by Kalfayan Galleries, Athens - Thessaloniki.

Vikram Divecha

Boulder plot

Boulder plot is a site-specific sculptural installation composed of gouged boulders that were carefully handpicked from Fujairah, where quarries regularly conduct blasts in the mountainous Emirate, producing a range of aggregates and rocks used for asphalt, concrete, marine and infrastructure construction works.

Each of these boulders has a cylindrical hole that runs through it. These holes are caused due to a particular and infrequent phenomenon seen at quarries during rock blasting. The process involves drilling holes into a mountain, which are filled with industrial explosives. Since the explosives are not filled up to the brim the impact of the blast is reduced towards the surface area. This uneven distribution of energy sometimes yield boulders that retain the drill holes. When observed closely, these perfectly chiseled cylindrical holes offset the irregular surface of the boulders, a trace of mankind's rational incisions into the organic shapes of nature.

Transported to the city and arranged in a regimented order within a barricaded empty plot, viewers get a private audience with the boulders and a chance to peek into the construction activities that extend into the mountainous landscape of the region. In Dubai's cityscape there are thousands of such barricaded construction sites where the viewer is not expected to see what is happening behind them. Revealed to the viewer in an enclosed space, these rough extracts from nature translate an invisible yet common construction process.

After the exhibit the boulders will be sent to a crusher plant from where they will be distributed into the region's construction industry market, either in rock or broken down aggregate form.

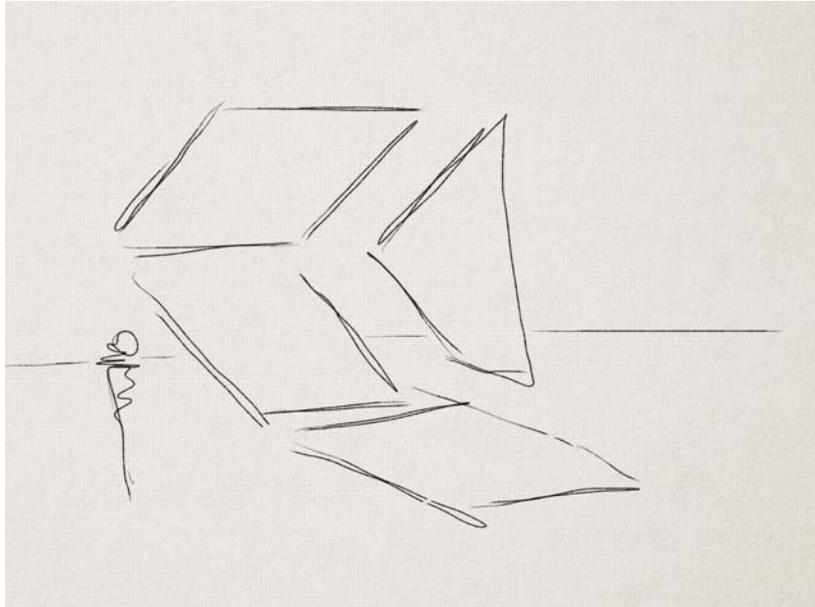


Born in Lebanon in 1977, Vikram Divecha is an artist who lives and works in the UAE. Divecha investigates the permeation of urbanization and the economic and cultural shifts it precipitates. He situates his practice within various production cycles of a city, involving himself with construction industries, contractors, labourers and municipalities. His sculptural works and installations are made using construction materials. He also works with photography and video. Divecha has exhibited extensively in the UAE, including Maraya Art Centre and Cuadro Art Gallery and was awarded the Middle East Emergent Artist Prize, 2014. He recently participated in Meziara International residency with Temporary Art Platform in Lebanon.
Photo © Ekta Saran



Boulder with hole in a Fujairah quarry yard, research image, courtesy of the artist

With the support of Abhay Dudhankar, Blasting Engineer (Arabian Rock Engineering), Fadi Boughader (United Quarries), Eng. Ibrahim Salam (Al A'ali Crushers), Eng. Mohamad Harb (AMP Aggregates Manufacturing Plant), Raed Limoun (Doha Quarry), Doug Ross (Combined Mining and Shipping), Mohammed Suhail (Fujairah National Quarry).



Stand here, sketch, courtesy of the artist

Shaikha Al Mazrou

Stand here

In an increasingly immaterial and digitised age, Shaikha Al Mazrou's work utilises the formal aspects of minimalism to engage with a current fascination with materiality in art. Based on simple gestures, her works call attention to the physical representation of tension, weight and physical space. Her work materializes ideas of uncertainty, doubt and instability through a playful yet highly formal exploration of a material's physical properties.

Stand here is a sculptural installation, made from scaffolding polls in primary colours. Seen from different angles, the sculpture appears to change form, becoming a variety of geometric shapes. Merely by circling the work, the audience is forced to engage with the sculpture, as it changes and evolves before their eyes. It encourages an active viewing experience, playing with visual assumptions and evoking a physical and immediate reaction.

Here, invisibility is present in the structure itself. The nature of the work's construction allows for its own camouflage and concealment, until viewed from the perfect angle. Installed at the entrance of Al Jalila Cultural Centre for Children, the work also symbolises the mission of the institution - to bridge children's education and art. It invites children to engage with its visual and playful potential.



Shaikha Al Mazrou (born in UAE, 1988) is a visual artist based in the Emirates. She studied at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah and received her Master's degree from Chelsea College of Fine Art, University of the Arts, London. Her work borrows formally from minimalism and intellectually from conceptual art, arising from the on going discourse around materiality. The use of minimal aesthetics and abstract geometry challenges certain ideas of display. Recent exhibitions include the 1^o International Arezzo Biennial of Art, Italy; Art Dubai 2013; 14th Asian Art Biennale 2010, Bangladesh; Sharjah Art Museum, UAE; Museum of Modern Art, Germany 2010. She has taken part in residency programs at the Delfina Foundation, London in collaboration with Tashkeel, Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, Bastakiya, Dubai.

Panel Discussion at Al Jalila Cultural Centre for Children

Date: November 29

Time: 7 p.m.

The discussion will focus on the artist's proposed projects and practices, considering the specificities and challenges of conceptualizing a work, producing it and implementing it in a public space. Public art consists of a complex chain of procedures that will be explored in this discussion. From a cultural policy perspective and considering this public commission as a pilot project in Dubai, the panel will give voice to artists, policy makers and institutions on their vision of associating contemporary art practice with placemaking and urban policy.

Guests on the panel

Vikram Divecha (artist, India), Shaikha El Mazrou (artist, UAE), Monira Al Qadiri (artist, Kuwait), Vartan Avakian (artist, Lebanon), Doa Aly (artist, Egypt), Hetal Pawani (Producer, 17A, thejamjar director), Dina Abu Hamdan (Al Jalila Cultural Centre artistic director).

The panel discussion will be moderated by Amanda Abi Khalil (curator).



Mashrou' Leila at Music Hall

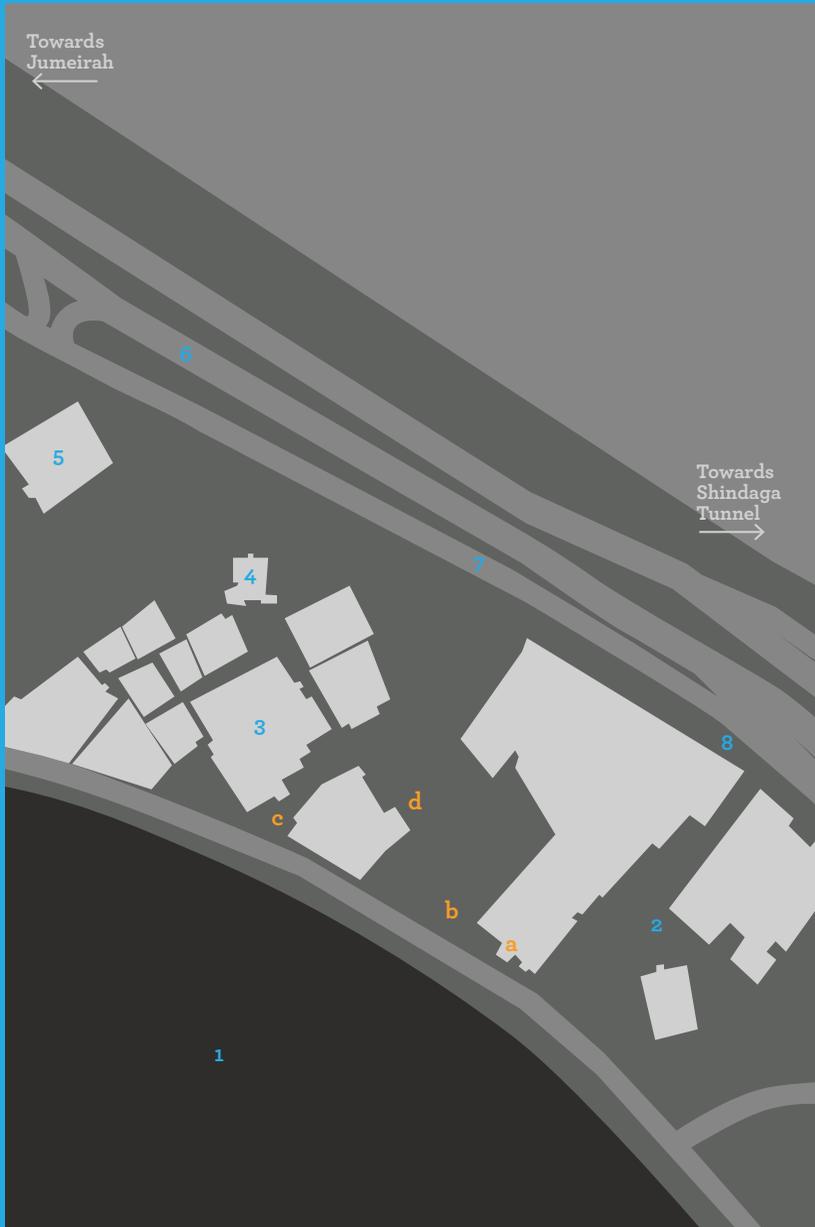
Date: November 30

Time: 9:30 p.m.

Tickets available at Platinum.

Mashrou' Leila is an Arab five-member alternative rock band that emerged from Beirut, Lebanon, in 2008 as a music workshop at the American University of Beirut. The band has released three studio albums, *Mashrou' Leila* (2008), *El Hal Romancy* (2011), an EP, and *Raasük* (2013) which had won an AFAC music grant earlier that year.

Mashrou' Leila's entertaining themes and satirical Lebanese lyrics reflect the many faces and flaws of Lebanese society which are not addressed by mainstream Arabic music. The band is critical of the problems associated with contemporary urban life and expresses some of the frustrations and concerns of today's generation using lyrical melodies that draw on the violin, keyboard, electric guitar, percussion vocals and experimentations with voice distortion.



Al Jalila Cultural Centre for Children
Stand here, Shaikha Al Mazrou

Music Hall Dubai

Al Shindagha Heritage Village

Al Shindagha Heritage Area

1. Dubai Creek
2. Heritage and Diving Village
3. House of Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum
4. Al Shoyookh Mosque
5. House of Sheikh Hasher Al Maktoum
6. Al Khaleej Road
7. Bus Stop
8. Parking

- a. *Collapsing Clouds of Gas and Dust*, Vartan Avakian
- b. *Alien Technology*, Monira Al Qadiri
- c. *Deer in the Headlights*, Doa Aly
- d. *Boulder plot*, Vikram Divecha

