"InVisible" Public Art

Commission AFAC End of Year Event November 2014 - Dubai



آفاق AFAC

The Arab Fund For Arts and Culture | الصندوق العربي للثقافة والفنون – آفاق In association with HSBC Private Bank

MAKE ART POSSIBLE

AFAC 2014 End of Year Event

As we prepared to celebrate the conclusion of our 8th year of cultural philanthropy for the Arab region, we decided to host more than just a gala dinner. We decided to host a series of events: a VIP reception, a music concert by AFAC grantees, the ever-popular Lebanese rock band Mashrou' Leila, and, most intriguing of all, a public art commission.

This is because AFAC is not only about funding cultural productions. Audiences are at the core of what we do. One of our main objectives is to track where AFAC-supported projects go, how they actually touch people, plant a thought, inspire, make an impact. Impact of culture, of course, is long term and cumulative, not something to be immediately captured. Yet, the questions around distribution, outreach and how art interacts with the public remain essential to our work.

What is public art? In our ongoing efforts to create special programs alongside our annual grants, we have often thought about launching specific programs dedicated to public art. At the same time, we have been expanding our areas of intervention ever wider, moving on from the Levant and North Africa to include the Gulf Countries into our scope of beneficiaries. We believe that the UAE in particular is playing an important role for the Arab region, not only because of its impressive infrastructure and its focal point for industry and capital, but for its explicit interest in being a cultural center with local, regional and international resonance.

AFAC has been already engaged with various cultural initiatives in the UAE, participating and hosting workshops at the Dubai International Film Festival, the Abu Dhabi International Film Festival, the Sharjah Biennale March Meetings and sponsoring the Art Dubai Global Art Forum Fellowship in 2014, a fast-track intensive training for emerging curators of the contemporary art scene. It became a natural choice for AFAC to host its End of Year Event "وَسَعَ Make Art Possible" in the UAE while using the opportunity to highlight AFAC's core objectives of supporting contemporary art production and engaging through dialogue; this time through interventions in public space via the public art commission of "InVisible."

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The Making Of.



We had already been pondering how to engage with the idea of public art when we heard of the official decision to encourage public art in Dubai.

We discussed our plans for a relevant intervention in Dubai concurrent with our end of year event with curator Amanda Abi Khalil, director of Temporary Art Platform, T.A.P., an association based in Beirut dedicated to Art in Public spaces, and beneficiary of the AFAC-sponsored Global Art Forum Fellowship. Amanda has been committed to lobbying for public art since 5 years now, with a particular interest in projects that intervene and challenge the status quo.

Amanda proposed a commission for public art in Dubai. We bounced a few ideas and developed together a concept, budget, plan and shortlist of artists. We also decided to bring on board an executive producer, Hetal Pawani of thejamjar, with strong roots to the local artistic community in the UAE.

In parallel, discussions with different artists were underway as we engaged with event managers, private developers and the municipality and the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority to find a suitable location to exhibit these public artworks. It was a balancing act to juggle cultural diplomacy with corporate responsibility, aesthetics and visibility as we tried to find ways of connecting the differing motivations of all of these entities to support such a project in the UAE. The fact that it would be UAE National Day on December 2nd also needed to be taken into consideration as we sought to find suitable venues to hold the public art.

These challenges that came up during our search unveiled a range of interesting questions; ones that could not have been foretold or taken for granted. What is public art? Does it have to be beautiful? Is art placed in a public space immediately public art? Is art viewed by the public, irrespective of place, public art? What is its purpose? To decorate? To educate? To invigorate the less-than-lively parts of a city? To celebrate a national success? To impress tourists? To encourage belonging?

What does public art want us to see? And what does it hide?

These challenges were at the heart of our theme, "InVisible." We engaged in detailed discussions with various developers in Dubai only to find that we could not satisfy certain requirements of safety or aesthetics or corporate image. We even had, at some point, to ask ourselves if it would be possible to create public art in response to a city's media image, without actually visiting the space or experiencing the public location at all.

The decision of venue was finally secured much later than expected. We are thankful to the Al Jalila Cultural Center for Children's artistic director Dina Abu Hamdan and managing director Bushra Al Rahoomi who, while helping AFAC explore locations and reviewing the projects presented by our artists, fell in love with Shaikha Al Mazrou's project "Stand Here" and adopted it for their own venue. We are very grateful to the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority which allowed us to host the other four works in the Shindagha Heritage Village. The two locations will allow visitors from all walks of life and all ages to enjoy and interact with these works. The works will be on display at least until March 2015, which all also allow an international audience of curators, artists and gallerists to visit during Art Dubai and Sharjah Biennale.

This is not the first, nor the last, intervention of AFAC in public spaces. However, it is an important starting point to develop further ideas of what public art could be.

The Theme



We came up with the theme "InVisible" given the intangibility, and yet, the omnipresence, of culture. As we are constantly trying to make the case for the importance of arts and culture in today's Arab society, we often find ourselves straining to articulate the impact of culture upon our lives. It seems to be invisible, and yet, many of the important and critical aspects of society are omnipresent, everywhere, in our thoughts, imagery and references. We came to wonder, how is it that the visible cannot be seen? And how come we have to plead for the recognition of the invisible value of art? How can the visible and the invisible be represented together, at play with each other, in a public space that will allow for this tenuousness and ambiguity?

Inspired by the fleeting nature of culture materiality, which fades, disappears, loses its original meaning, or gets replaced by something new, we had to ask, how can public art offer a space for what is lost and what will remain?

And how do these questions pertain to a city as vibrant as Dubai?

AFAC Unveiling & Tour November 29th



The tour began at the Al Jalila Cultural Center for Children on November 29th at 4:00 PM in the presence of AFAC Chairman Dr. Ghassan Salamé and board members Amr Ben Halim and Sawsan Jafar, AFAC donors Anne-Dominique Janacek, Fayez Takieddine, Racha Mourtada and, from our official sponsors, HSBC Private Bank, Mr. Russel Prior, Head of Philanthropy. Visitors casually gathered to meet the artists of "InVisible" and to witness the unveiling of the first work in this AFAC public art commission. Bushra Al Rahoomi, managing director of the Centre, together with artistic director Dina Abu Hamdan, was also present at the unveiling of Sheikha's piece.

Shaikha Mazrou is a young Emirati artist. Her installation, "Stand Here," is minimalist and formal; a series of pipes lined up together on three planes and painted in bright primary colors. By gathering around the signage, which stands at a bit of a distance and at a certain angle to the work, she forces the viewer to look at the work from a particular standpoint where the lines come together to form a substantial and coherent composition. When walking around the installation, the vantage point is gone and composition disintegrates. On speaking about her work, she said "I always have the audience in mind, and how works of art can push a viewer to see in a certain way."

Buses then took the visitors across town for the unveiling of the other four works, spread out in different locations in Shindagha Heritage Village. The gathering at Shindagha attracted more visitors, including journalists, bloggers, art students as well as the general public. It is one of those rare places in Dubai where locals and foreigners, white collar employees and labour workers can all stroll freely, enjoying the breeze by the creek and the surroundings. The first stop was Vartan Avakian's "Collapsing Clouds of Gas and Dust". We entered a dark room, with a single glass-encased stand featuring small colored crystals. He introduced his work to the attendees and answered questions as to how these crystals were formed. He had extracted water from the Burj Al-Khalifa lake and taken it to the American University of Beirut laboratories to encourage whatever impurities exist in the water to crystallize according to their inherent nature. He has since returned the water to the lake and placed these material traces on display, his contribution to the "InVisible" theme and a reflection on his history of research into microscopic traces of human presence and monumentality.

Next we went to "Boulder Plot", a sand-covered area the size of a parking lot, and surrounded by fencing which hides the plot from view. It is clearly reminiscent of construction sites, yet the ground here has not been dug up. Rather, boulders from the mountains in Al-Fujairah are spread around, shining dark like granite. They are not natural boulders, but clearly man-made, each one exhibiting the perfect cylindrical drilled tunnel through which dynamite had once passed through, exploding the boulders and separated from the mountains that they come from. It is an enquiry into the practice of construction and a rendition of man's power of nature.

Doa's artwork "Deer in the Headlights," is a bright white gigantic skull of a deer hanging on a thin post right in the middle of the public corniche. It was inspired by an article she read by a foreign journalist who was astounded to see a deer in the middle of a Dubai highway. Of course, deer once roamed freely here, not too long ago. She was amazed at the journalist's utter surprise at what he had seen and decided to make her contribution to the commission. Adding another dimension to the discussion on what constitutes 'public' when we refer to 'public art', Doa's statue did not arrive to Dubai unscathed. Rather, a date and signature tagging the work has been scribbled in permanent red marker right in the left eye-socket of the skull by the custom's officer in Cairo airport. The decision was to keep the signature rather than removing, as testimony to the anecdotal history of public art and its mis/understanding by the general public.

Lastly, we came to the purplish iridescent totem-like statue by Monira Al-Qadiri called "Alien Technology." It is a giant rendition of a piece from an oil drill, yet its sheen refers to the once thriving pearling industry for which Kuwait, and the Gulf cities in general, were famous for before the era of oil. The artist was still on her flight to Dubai and had not arrived yet, so presenting her work was curator Amanda Abi Khalil. "InVisible" Public Art Commission

Curatorial



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 giganticism.

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)

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 the jamjar's Art Consulting Services.

5 Public Artworks at Shidagha Heritage Village & Al Jalila Cultural Center For Children





Al Shindaga 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

The Commissioned Artists



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 7/24 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 Points exhibitions include Meeting 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.





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.



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 PS1, 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.





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 calls 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° 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.



till the poles should be 3 metres, one was a bit



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 Lebanese American University the 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; Transmerdiale 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.









Public Talk Al Jalila Cultural Center for Children November 29th at 7:00 PM



Returning back from the afternoon stroll through Shindagha Heritage Village, the audiences gathered again at the Al Jalila Center for the artists' talk.]

Moderated by curator Amanda Abi Khalil, the panelists included the artists Doa Aly from Egypt, Vikram Divecha from UAE, Vartan Avakian from Lebanon, Shaikha Al Mazrou from UAE as well as the artistic director of the Al Jalila Center Dina Abu Hamdan and the producer of the "InVisible" public art commission Hetal Pawani of thejamjar and 17A. Monira Al-Qadiri from Kuwait participated in the talk through video.

Amanda contextualized the theme "InVisible" as it pertains to Dubai's monumentality and as it questions the role and stature of public art and public space. Each artist was given the floor to speak about his or her interpretation of the theme. The logistical challenges of creating public art in situ were also discussed and the commission was considered a pilot project on several fronts.

Mobility restrictions, not uncommon in the region, was one of the issues presented as Egyptian artist Doa Aly was unable to travel to Dubai earlier in the year for a site visit, due to a declined visa request. She decided to include this inaccessibility into her experience and relied on research to collect a perception of Dubai, which she had never visited before. One article in particular caught her attention; it expressed a journalists' utter astonishment at the presence of a stranded deer in the middle of a Dubai highway. "He wrote a full page-and-a-half article about it and I found myself reacting to his awe." The journalist, a foreigner, thought he had seen a mirage. Deer, the natural inhabitants of these deserts and the inspiration of Arabic lore, poetry and love songs, have receded in the face of the metropolis.

Vikram talked about the sense of disconnect between modern urban living and the natural source material from which living space is made. Boulders from Al-Fujairah are regularly mined and exploded into sizable pieces in order to supply urban development. Human power over nature is a given, even mountains melt away. His project captures a phase of construction rarely visible to the ordinary home-owner or apartment-dweller. It also captures an in-between phase in the lifetime of the boulder, no longer part of a mountain, yet still not polished, refined or crushed into whatever final form will be. When Amanda asked what he wants the future of his work to be, Virkam said "These boulders will eventually return to take their part in the urban construction cycle, each one will end up somewhere else, and the memory of having been part of an art commission may be infinitesimally retained."

This brings us to Vartan's project, "Collapsing Clouds of Gas and Dust." A miniscule work on anyone's count, even more strikingly so given the theme of public space and Dubai monumentality. Vartan extracted a portion of water from the Burj Al-Khalifa lake and, using a chemical lab, was able to extract and crystallize whatever minerals, elements and compounds the water contained. His premise is that "the monumentality of a place is established through human sweat and tears, dead skin and shed hair, foots steps, spit, blood, all kinds of body secretions are expended in the making and maintenance of a monument. As technology advances more and more, I am seeking to find evidence of human presence and human intervention on an increasingly microscopic level."

Monumentality requires continued presence and efforts of human beings, which inevitably leads to more invisible residues which can be collected and analyzed, like DNA.

Speaking to the audience from a video recording, Monira Al-Qadiri explained her desire to acknowledge the huge disruptions on the history and the culture of the region since the discovery of oil. She recalled her grandfather, who used to sing to give energy to the workers and the divers on the pearling boats, an ancient tradition no-doubt, yet precious little of this history remains. The one link should could find between the two wealth-making industries of the region, pearling and oil, was color; the two are on opposite sides of the same iridescent spectrum. She said with a smile, "My dream would be to install one of these sculptures in every city in the Gulf."

Shaikha Mazrou's work, "Stand Here", was displayed at the entrance of the Al Jalila Center. Its bright primary colors, deemed attractive to the young audiences the center caters to, also offers an interesting conceptual experience for grown-ups. Dina Abu Hamdan, artistic director of the center, expressed her excitement at having the young Emirati's work on the premises and emphasized that "cultural work has a role to play in reaching out to audiences, inviting them to question what is around them and to become engaged as citizens."

Producer of the commission Hetal Pawani was the driving force behind realizing the commission from idea to reality. "After having put this project together, we now have a working idea of what it takes to create public art in a city like Dubai, and we know this is only the beginning."

