

Barjeel Art Foundation celebrates Art Week this March with Part 2 of 'Beloved Bodies' plus the unveiling of new artist commission by Sadik Alfraji
Barjeel Art Foundation Gallery, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah
4 March – 4 October 2017



Hayv Kahraman, *Flayed Lamb*, 2008. Courtesy Barjeel Art Foundation

On 4 March, 'Beloved Bodies' – an exhibition showcasing a variety of depictions of the human form – will open at the Barjeel Art Foundation Gallery, Maraya Art Centre. Spanning the 20th Century to the present day, the exhibition is comprised of two phases: Part 1 and Part 2 (4 March 2017 – 4 October 2017).

'Beloved Bodies' is presented and curated by Barjeel Art Foundation curator Mandy Merzaban, with works drawn exclusively from the Barjeel Art Foundation Collection, one of the most extensive collections of Modern and Contemporary Arab art from the region with over 1200 works dating from the late-1800s to the present day. The exhibition's title is loosely inspired by French theorist Roland Barthes' writings on the dynamics of love and desire. Barthes uses the term 'beloved body' to refer to the object of a lover's desire, whether that is a person, an object or a place.

This second phase of the exhibition will present a larger selection of contemporary works that include artists Hayv Kahraman, Tagreed Darghouth, and Nadia Ayari that depict the body in many contexts - traversing themes of language, landscape, trauma and remembrance.

The exhibition will include, among others, the work *Flayed Lamb* by Hayv Kahraman, a Los Angeles-based Iraqi artist who was born in Baghdad, before emigrating to Sweden with her family and finally settling in the USA. Kahraman's work addresses gendered identity through a range of media including painting, drawing and sculpture. By addressing issues such as gender inequality and sexual violence, Kahraman touches on struggles inherent to the female experience. Inspired by Persian miniatures and Japanese painting, Kahraman's voluptuous female characters partake in activities that border on the grotesque. Her work challenges cultural norms of women as fetishised objects, as well as perpetuated expectations that women should aspire to become objects of desire.

Support for commissioned work by Sadik Kwaish Alfraihi at the Maraya Art Centre

Alongside the opening of 'Beloved Bodies II', the Barjeel Art Foundation has commissioned a new artist work by Sadik Kwaish Alfraihi at the Maraya Art Centre in Sharjah, titled *Once Upon a Time: Hadiqat al Umma*. The Iraqi artist presents a panoramic multi-media installation reviving his childhood experience of Baghdad's Hadiqat Al Umma. Although it has lost much of its beauty over the years, the park remains a vivid memory in Sadik's mind and he uses his own visual and emotional recollections to recreate its rhythm. His beautiful drawings, which reimagine people seen there, are brought to life in black and white animations across 9 projectors. The artist's recreation of the collective experience of this park in the 1970s belongs to his larger exploration of the loss, fragmentation and lapses in time that underline exile.

The works have been commissioned by Barjeel Art Foundation, and the exhibition is generously supported by Ayyam Gallery.

A panel discussion will be held on the 4 March with Sadik Kwaish Alfraihi and Mandy Merzaban (curator at Barjeel Art Foundation) at 7:00pm.

Additional programming at Maraya Art Centre: Fari Bradley and Chris Weaver, *Circular Landscapes*

Maraya Art Centre presents *Circular Landscapes*, a surround-sound, musical and conceptual performance series by artists in residence Fari Bradley and Chris Weaver. For these works, the artists focus attention on distinct locations in Sharjah: The Mleiha Desert archaeological site and the Sharjah International Airport (the first airport in the UAE). These sites are tied together through their diverse relationships to notions of flow and transition throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Each performance sculpts sound and vision into a multi-channel, audio-visual work, scoring field recordings and interview excerpts collected at each site, alongside electro-acoustic compositions performed live by the artists.

Performance times:

4 March, 7:30 - 8:00 pm at the Maraya Screening Room, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah

17 March, 3:00 - 3:30 pm at the A4 Space Theatre, Al Serkal Avenue, Dubai

24 March, 8:00 - 8:30 pm at Al Qasba Theatre, Al Qasba

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Notes to Editors

Barjeel Art Foundation is an independent, UAE-based initiative established to manage, preserve and exhibit a collection of Arab modern and contemporary art. The foundation's guiding principle is to contribute to the intellectual development of the art scene in the Arab region by building a prominent, publicly accessible art collection in the UAE.

Part of this objective involves developing a public platform to foster critical dialogue around contemporary art practices with a focus on artists with Arab heritage internationally. The foundation strives to create an open-ended enquiry that responds to and conveys the nuances inherent to Arab histories beyond borders of culture and geography.

By hosting in-house exhibitions, lending artwork to international forums, producing print and online publications, and fashioning interactive public programmes, the foundation strives to serve as an informative resource for contemporary art by Arab artists both locally and on the global stage.

In addition to building an informative database of artists, the foundation is seeking to develop an educational programme that both understands and involves the local community. By establishing partnerships with arts and cultural institutions internationally, the foundation looks to create opportunities to encourage public awareness of the importance of art to the community.