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**Fowler Museum presents the first major U.S. touring
exhibition of Emirati contemporary art**

Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates opens on January 25, 2015



Lateefa bint Maktoum, *The Last Look*, 2009. Photograph Courtesy of Dr. Lamees Hamdan

The Fowler Museum at UCLA presents *Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates*, the first major touring exhibition of Emirati art. The exhibition was organized by the Meridian International Center and the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and premiered in Washington, D.C., in May 2014. As part of its eighteen-month U.S. tour—which includes stops in Texas, California, and Washington—the exhibition will be on view at the Fowler Museum at UCLA from January 25 to March 8, 2015.

This comprehensive exhibition features over fifty paintings, photographs, sculptures, video installations and other media by twenty-five notable male and female artists who together represent all seven Emirates. The exhibition showcases the rich history and culture of the UAE, emphasizing the importance

of kinship and home, nature and landscape, as well as the nation's rapid development and focus on innovations. A lively contemporary art scene began in the UAE over forty years ago, and *Past Forward* includes works by several of these pioneering artists, including Abdul Qader Al Rais, Dr. Najat Makki, and Obaid Suroor.

Today's young Emirati artists are increasingly immersed in a fast-moving environment, which is continually updated with the latest technology. Nonetheless, they remain deeply connected to their roots and traditions. Shamma Al Amri, Mohammed Al Qassab, Alia Saeed Al Shamsi, Hamdan Buti Al Shamsi, Lamyā Gargash, Alia Lootah, Lateefa bint Maktoum, and Khalid Shafar approach rapid urbanization by creating works that reference earlier times. To preserve long-standing traditions, Mattar Bin Lahej, Alaa Edris, and Salama Nasib illustrate the significance of oral histories and local pastimes in the UAE, while Ammar Al Attar, Farah Al Qasimi, and Afra Bin Dhaher photograph everyday life. Works by Khalid Al Banna, Shaikha Al Mazrou, and Khalid Mezaina look at the psychology of contemporary existence and depict the artists' visions for the future. Meanwhile, Ebtisam AbdulAziz, Zeinab Al Hashemi, Maitha Al Mehairbi, and Maitha Demithan experiment with inventive techniques, including scanography and other digital media, to convey traditional themes.

As *Past Forward* travels across the US, the exhibition is complemented by public programming and education outreach to encourage increased cultural understanding. Khalid Shafar and Shaikha Al Mazrou, two Emirati artists featured in the exhibition, will attend the Los Angeles opening and participate in workshops and lecture programs in the area. Of note to local visitors, the UAE was recently chosen as the "Featured Guest Country" for the 2015 LA Art Show and a selection of works from *Past Forward* will also be displayed at that event before coming to the Fowler.

More Information

The exhibition was organized and circulated by **Meridian International Center with support from the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Washington, D.C.** Additional support for *Past Forward* is provided by the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority, the Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, and Etihad Airways. The exhibition is co-curated by Dr. Curtis Sandberg, Senior Vice President for Arts and Cultural Programs at the Meridian International Center, and Noor Al Suwaidi, an expert on contemporary Emirati art. The Meridian International Center is headquartered in Washington, D.C. It works with the U.S. Department of State and with government, private, and NGO educational sectors globally to create lasting international partnerships through leadership programs and cultural exchange. For more information: www.meridian.org.



مؤسسة سلامة بنت حمدان آل نهيان
SALAMA BINT HAMDAN
AL NAHYAN FOUNDATION

The Fowler Museum at UCLA is one of the country's most respected institutions devoted to exploring the arts and cultures of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas. The Fowler is open Wednesdays through Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m.; and on Thursdays, from noon until 8 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA Arts, is located in the north part of the UCLA

campus. Admission is free. Parking is available for a maximum of \$12 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call 310 825-4361 or visit fowler.ucla.edu.

Public Events

Sunday, January 25, 3 pm

Past Forward: A Conversation about Contemporary Art and Design from the Emirates

Fowler OutSpoken

The first major touring exhibition of Emirati art, *Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates*, showcases paintings, photographs, sculptures, video installations, and other media by twenty-five leading Emirati artists. In conjunction with the opening day of *Past Forward*, exhibition co-curators Noor Al Suwaidi and Curtis Sandberg, Senior V.P. for Arts and Cultural Programs at the Meridian International Center, and exhibiting artists Khalid Shafar and Shaikha Al Mazrou share their insights on contemporary life and the emerging art scene. The program is moderated by Stephanie Sykes from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). An Emirati coffee reception follows the panel.

Sunday, January 25, 1–3 pm

Kids in the Courtyard

Purdy Birdy

In the United Arab Emirates and many other parts of the world the falcon is a greatly admired bird. Explore *Past Forward* to find artworks depicting falcons and other birds. Use recycled materials such as bottles, cardboard, and popsicle sticks to make your very own birdhouse. Let your imagination soar with this special activity inspired by *Past Forward* and Pascale Marthine Tayou's collection of birdhouses entitled *Favelas ABC*. Presentation begins at 1 pm.

Thursday, January 29, 12 pm

Noor Al Suwaidi on New Art from the Emirates

Culture Fix

The United Arab Emirates has a growing art scene that emerged in the 1950s and is flourishing today. *Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates* showcases recent works by artists engaging a variety of media. *Past Forward* co-curator Noor Al Suwaidi introduces the work of a selection of featured Emirati artists and discusses the environment in which they build their own traditions and thrive at home and on the international scene.

Thursday, January 29, 6 pm

Takht Dirty

Fowler Out Loud

Bringing a contemporary twist to the traditional Middle Eastern *takht* ensemble and celebrating the new exhibition *Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates*, Takht Dirty returns for a riveting performance spotlighting the musical arts of the Persian Gulf and greater Arab world.