FotoFest Announces the Artists and Programs for

VIEW FROM INSIDE

Contemporary Arab Video, Photography and Mixed Media Art

HOUSTON, TEXAS - JANUARY 31, 2014 - FotoFest announces the selection of forty-nine leading contemporary Arab artists for its principal exhibitions in the 2014 Biennial, VIEW FROM INSIDE. The fifteenth edition of the international Biennial in Houston, Texas is March 15 - April 27, 2014. These presentations of contemporary photo and media-related art from the Middle East and North Africa will be the largest program of its kind in the United States in more than a decade.

VIEW FROM INSIDE features artists living and working in 13 countries – Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Yemen. Some of the artists will be exhibiting their work in the United States for the first time. Seventeen of the artists are women. Many of the artists will travel to Houston to participate in lectures, tours, and other programs during the Biennial.

FOTOFEST 2014 BIENNIAL ARAB ARTISTS
(alphabetized by last name with country of origin)

Ebtisam AbdulAziz (UAE)
Khalil Abdul Wahid (UAE)
Ammar Al Beik (Syria)
Manal Al Dowayan (Saudi Arabia)
Shadia Alem (Saudi Arabia)
Reem Al Faisal (Saudi Arabia)
Sadik Alfraji (Iraq)
Tarek Al-Ghossein (Palestine/Kuwait)
Boushra Almutawakel (Yemen)
Khalifa Al Obaidly (Qatar)
Jowhara AlSaud (Saudi Arabia)
Sama Alshaibi (Iraq)
Karima Al Shomely (UAE)
Sheikh Khalid Bin Hamad Bin Ahmad Al-Thani (Qatar)
Sami Al-Turki (Saudi Arabia)
Tammam Azzam (Syria)
Lara Baladi (Egypt)
Hicham Benohoud (Morocco)  
Ayman Yossri Daydban (Saudi Arabia)  
Shady El-Noshokaty (Egypt)  
Ayman El Semary (Egypt)  
Lalla Essaydi (Morocco)  
Mounir Fatmi (Morocco)  
Lamya Gargash (UAE)  
Abdulnasser Gharem (Saudi Arabia)  
Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige (Lebanon)  
Khaled Hafez (Egypt)  

Hassan Hajjaj (Morocco)  
Rula Halawani (Palestine)  
Nermine Hammam (Egypt)  
Hazem Harb (Palestine)  
Hazem Taha Hussein (Egypt)  
Georges Fikry Ibrahim (Egypt)  
Noel Jabbour (Palestine)  
Ahmed Jadallah (Palestine)  
Mohamed Kanoo (Bahrain)  
Mohammed Kazem (UAE)  
Huda Lutfi (Egypt)  
Maha Malluh (Saudi Arabia)  
Ahmed Mater (Saudi Arabia)  
Hassan Meer (Oman)  
Samer Mohdad (Lebanon)  
Youssef Nabil (Egypt)  
Ayman Ramadan (Egypt)  
Steve Sabella (Palestine)  
Faisal Samra (Palestine)  
Wael Shawky (Egypt)  
Camille Zakharia (Lebanon)  

FotoFest has commissioned German curator Karin Adrian von Roques as the Lead Curator for the Biennial. Ms. von Roques is known for her work, over the past 20 years, bringing contemporary Arab art to international museums and galleries throughout the world. She is working with FotoFest Co-Founder and Senior Curator Wendy Watriss to organize the 2014 Arab exhibitions.

“Our focus on Arab art was not motivated by opportunism related to the Arab world’s current prominence in the media, but rather by a genuine conviction that the U.S. and Western audiences should have the opportunity to hear from more voices in the region and see the Arab world in more nuanced ways,” says Ms. Watriss. “Finding high quality art from around the globe that engages with the issues of our world is what FotoFest does.”

The Arab artists in the FotoFest 2014 Biennial address issues ranging from the regionally specific to the global. The themes are multi-layered, addressing fundamental issues from an inside perspective; from Arab artists who live and work in the region.

“The exhibitions are not about the curator’s voice,” says Ms. von Roques. “They are about the artists and what is important to them. The diverse range of works that we will exhibit during the Biennial is not easy to categorize because we did not impose any agenda on the project other than to show the very best contemporary work from the region that we could find.

“It was only when looking at the final selection, after four years of research and viewing the individual works, that we discovered how many of the works explore similar concepts and themes. These are themes that are not unfamiliar in the West or the rest of the world. What differentiates the works is the particular ways in which individual Arab artists address the concerns and issues of their own cultures.”

Many of the artists deal with the region’s diverse and shifting identities. Change features prominently in their works. The dramatic and tumultuous changes of the past century caused vast upheaval in the social, political, economic and geographic structures of the region. As access to modern communication technologies has exposed more of the region to constant and instantaneous contact with Western and other cultures through satellite television, the internet, digital photography and social media, the pace of change has increased.

These changes, and the speed with which they occur, have affected their traditional relationships with “homeland” and family, and has generated widespread experience with diaspora and displacement. Memory and loss – of both place and
person play a large role in many of the artists’ works. Other themes include: questions of gender; religion; historical heritage; the legacy of colonialism; and political upheaval.

FotoFest is working with a number of prominent galleries and cultural centers in the Middle East and around the world including (alphabetically): Athr Gallery (Jeddah); Ayyam Gallery (Dubai); Berlioni Gallery (London); Cuadro Gallery (Dubai); Edge of Arabia (London); Edwynn Houk Gallery (New York); Empty Quarter Gallery (Dubai); Atelier 21 (Casablanca); Sfeir-Semler Gallery (Hamburg); The Third Line (Dubai); Rose Issa Projects (London); and Taymour Grahne Gallery (New York).

Members of the Arab Advisory Board assisting the Biennial Curators are: HH Sheikha Paula Mubarak Al Sabah (Kuwait), contemporary Arab art collector; HRH Hessa Bint Khalifa Bin Ahmed Al Khalifa (Bahrain), contemporary Arab art collector; Maya El Khalil, Director of Athr Gallery, Jeddah; Dr. Munir Jiwa, Founding Director of the Center for Islamic Studies and Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies at the Graduate Theological Union, University of California, Berkeley; Ali Yussef Khadra, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Canvas Magazine (Dubai); Mona Khazindar, Director General of the Institut du Monde Arabe (Arab World Institute), Paris.

BOOK
With the Arab exhibitions, FotoFest is publishing a hard-bound book on contemporary Arab art, featuring over 200 color reproductions of Arab artworks, a DVD of video works and four essays by prominent scholars on Arab art: Biennial Curator Karin Adrian von Roques; Arab artist Samer Mohdad, Founder of the Fondation Arabe pour l’Image (Arab Image Foundation); Dr. Claude W. Sui, Chief Curator of the International Forum of Photography at the Reiss-Englehorm Museum, Mannheim, Germany; and Mona Khazindar, Director General of the Institut du Monde Arabe (Arab World Institute) in Paris. FotoFest Senior Curator Wendy Watriss is writing the introduction. The book, co-published with Schilt Publishing in Amsterdam, and designed by HvAD Design, New York, will be available during the Biennial, in March 2014.

ARAB PROGRAMS – FOTOFEST 2014 BIENNIAL
As part of FotoFest’s goal to engage audiences with the cultures of the Arab world, FotoFest will sponsor a day-long conference on Arab Art, Saturday, March 29, 2014 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH). This program will feature lectures and roundtables with leading curators, participating Arab artists, and scholars in the field. Topics include: the History of Visual Art and Photography in the Arab World; Orientalism; Gender in Arab Art; Religion; and Urban Change.

FotoFest will co-host an additional forum in early April in partnership with Rice University. Dr. Ussama Makdisi, Arab-American Educational Foundation Chair of Arab Studies at Rice University, and Fares el-Dahdah, Director of the Humanities Research Center at Rice University, will organize talks on “Arabophobia.” Speakers at this time include Dr. Melani McAlister, Associate Professor of American Studies, International Affairs, and Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University, Washington, D.C., a scholar on U.S. Christians’ reactions to Arabs; Houston-based, Palestinian-American physician and poet Fady Joudah; and one of the featured artists in FotoFest’s Biennial exhibitions.

Exhibiting Arab artists will be featured in FotoFest’s International Fine Print Auction. Panels addressing the collecting of Arab art and the Middle East art market will be a part of FotoFest’s 2014 VIP Collectors Programs, accompanying the auction and conference at MFAH. www.fotofest.org/2014biennial/auction/
**Four Artist-Curator Dialogues** will feature conversations between exhibiting Arab artists and prominent U.S. curators and scholars. Arab artists will present *artist books at special book signings* in conjunction with FotoFest’s portfolio review.

Arab artists will participate in FotoFest’s **International Meeting Place Portfolio Review for Artists**, and will lead exhibition tours. FotoFest will organize tours, with artists or curators, for groups and individuals. In April, FotoFest is organizing a two-weekend-long **Arab Film Program with the MFAH**, featuring films and documentaries from Arab filmmakers.

Finally, FotoFest is creating a **curriculum for grades 3-12** to accompany these exhibitions. Working with FotoFest’s year-round education program, **Literacy Through Photography**, this project-centered curriculum reinforces writing and visual analysis while imparting information about Arab cultures. The curriculum aligns with education requirements for all grade levels; it will be available online, free of charge. Interactive tours for students will complement the curriculum.

**ARAB PROGRAMMING PARTNERS:** Arab Cultural and Community Center of Houston; Arab-American Educational Foundation (Houston); Athr Gallery (Jeddah); ArteEast (New York); Edge of Arabia (London); Inprint (Houston); Menil Collection (Houston); Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Rice University (Houston); Rothko Chapel (Houston); and Aperio, Music of the Americas (Houston).

**MEDIA PARTNERS:** Art in America; Contemporary Practices, Visual Arts from the Middle East; European Photography; and Houston Public Media.

**OTHER BIENNIAL PROGRAMS**
FotoFest’s own contemporary Arab exhibitions are accompanied by over 111 independent venues, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Menil Collection, and the city’s major commercial art galleries, who are mounting independent exhibitions of photography. A full list of Biennial **Participating Spaces** is available on the FotoFest website at: www.fotofest.org/2014biennial/spaces.

Free exhibition tours, led with prominent Arab experts, artists and curators, are scheduled for every Saturday during the Biennial. **Public poetry readings and music performances** will take place in April, including: a performance with pianist **Michael Zuraw**, Artistic Director of the Houston-based chamber music ensemble Aperio, at the Rothko Chapel; and FotoFest’s popular **Bike Scramble bicycle tour**.

FotoFest’s pioneering **Meeting Place Portfolio Review for Artists**, the largest and most international event of its kind, is bringing together **500 international artists** and **over 200 leading curators, gallery directors, publishers, and collectors** for three weeks of one-on-one meetings. The Meeting Place takes place **March 15 – April 2, 2014**. Information is available at: www.fotofest.org/2014biennial/portfolioreview

Presented in conjunction with the Meeting Place is FotoFest’s **Discoveries of the Meeting Place**. The popular exhibition is a showcase for some of the best work discovered at the previous Biennial portfolio review. It is a launching pad for the careers of many emerging artists. www.fotofest.org/2014biennial/exhibitions/discoveries
As part of the Meeting Place, FotoFest sponsors **four public Evenings with the Artist Open Portfolio Nights.** These evenings are accompanied by the **Artist-Curator Dialogues, Book Signings** and other programs. [www.fotofest.org/2014biennial/portfolioreview/evenings-with-the-artists.htm](http://www.fotofest.org/2014biennial/portfolioreview/evenings-with-the-artists.htm)

In coordination with the Portfolio Review, FotoFest is organizing **Workshops for artists and the interested public.** Workshops will focus on hand-made art books and collecting photography. [www.fotofest.org/2014biennial/workshops](http://www.fotofest.org/2014biennial/workshops)

Exhibition tours and other programs are available throughout the six weeks of the Biennial. Details on additional programming will be announced as they become available and may be found online at: [www.fotofest.org/2014biennial](http://www.fotofest.org/2014biennial)

**FOTOFEST 2014 BIENNIAL CATALOGUE**

FotoFest will publish a **Biennial Catalogue**, the document of record for the event, including: descriptions of FotoFest’s exhibitions; information on the 111 independent participating exhibitions presented across the city during the Biennial; FotoFest’s 2012-2013 Inter-biennial Exhibitions; and FotoFest’s Literacy Through Photography education program. The Catalogue will be available in March 2014.

**FOTOFEST 2014 BIENNIAL MAJOR SPONSORS**

The Brown Foundation Inc.; The Cullen Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; JP Morgan Chase Foundation; The City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance; Houston Endowment, Inc.; Doubletree Hotel by Hilton Houston Downtown; The Crane Foundation; The Levant Foundation; Athr Gallery (Jeddah); Edge of Arabia (London); The Wortham Foundation; FotoFest Board of Directors; Judith and Gamble Baldwin; Ayyam Gallery (Dubai); Berloni Gallery (London); Texas Commission on the Arts; Sidley & Austin LLP; Salient Partners; Chris Olsen; HexaGroup; iLand Internet Solutions; The Deal Company; Brookfield Office Properties; Williams Tower Gallery

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Remains of the Sun Temple of the Sabaen kingdom, Marib, Yemen, 1994
FOTOFEST INTERNATIONAL

Founded in 1983, FotoFest International was established to promote international awareness of museum-quality photo-based art from around the world. FotoFest is a non-profit photographic arts and education organization based in Houston, Texas. The first FotoFest Biennial was held in 1986. It is the first and longest running photographic arts festival in the United States. It is considered as one of the leading international photography Biennials in the world.

As an international platform for serious photographic arts exhibitions, the FotoFest Biennial has become known as a showcase for the discovery and presentation of important new work and new talent from around the world. The Biennial takes place citywide in Houston with participation from the leading art museums, art galleries, non-profit art spaces, universities and civic spaces. The 2014 Arab exhibitions will take place in FotoFest’s headquarters gallery and three to four additional FotoFest art spaces. The Biennial has an audience of 275,000 people from 34 countries. This audience includes a select group of 150 museum curators, gallerists, publishers, editors, photography collectors, directors of non-profit art spaces and international festivals from Asia, Europe, Latin America, Canada and the United States.

KARIN ADRIAN VON ROQUES

For the past twenty years, Karin Adrian von Roques’ professional focus has been modern and contemporary art from the Middle East. Upon finishing her studies of Islamic Art in Bonn, Germany, she became interested in modern and contemporary art from Arab countries and pioneered academic exploration and exposure of outstanding artists in this field. She began a series of strategic programs to bring concepts central to the works of contemporary Arab artists to the attention of a broader public by means of museum and gallery exhibitions. Aware that contemporary art from Islamic countries takes place within a wider socio-political context and dialogue, Ms. von Roques has organized and participated in seminars, interviews, publications and auctions throughout the world to generate intercultural dialogue on the subject of Arab culture.

Ms. von Roques has been an art advisor and art historian to numerous museums and has worked as a special consultant for Islamic exhibitions such as From Bagdad to Isafahan — Islamic Manuscripts and Miniatures, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris, 1994–95. In 1997 she became the Founding Director of the Hesse Museum in Lugano, Switzerland focusing on programs about ethics and intercultural dialogue. She has curated more than twenty international museum and gallery exhibitions, among them: Written Cosmos — Arabic Calligraphy and Literature throughout the Centuries, Museum of Applied Arts, Frankfurt, Germany, 2004; Languages of the Desert — Contemporary Arab Art from the Gulf States, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Kunstmuseum) Bonn, Germany, 2005 (traveled to the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France, 2006; the Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2007; and Galleria Metropolitana, Barcelona, Spain, 2006); The Present Out of the Past Millennia — Contemporary Art from Egypt, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Kunstmuseum) Bonn, 2007; and The Art of Writing — Contemporary Calligraphy from Three Cultures, Art Forum, Kurhauskolonnaden, Wiesbaden, May 2011.

Among Ms. Von Roques’ writings and publications are: The Situation of Contemporary Arab Art, catalogue essay for the exhibition Languages of the Desert, Dumont Verlag Cologne, 2005; The Present Out of the Past Millennia — Contemporary Art from Egypt, catalogue essay for the exhibition of the same title, Wienand Verlag Cologne, 2007; and Perfect Harmony — The Calligraphy of Khaled Al Saai, catalogue essay for the retrospective of Khaled Al Saais work at Centre Culturel Francais de Damas, Syria, 2009.

WENDY WATRISS

Wendy Watriss is a Co-founder of FotoFest and has served as Artistic Director and Senior Curator since 1991. She has developed over 60 international exhibits for FotoFest, including path-breaking exhibits on Photography from China 1934-2008; AMERICAN VOICES - Latino photographers in the U.S., Photography from Latin America 1865-1994; photography from Central Europe; contemporary Mexican photography; the visual history of Kurdistan with Susan Meiselas; contemporary Korean photography; early 20th century and contemporary Russian photography; multi-media/new technology installations; and subjects such as the Global Water Crisis, The Global Environment, Guantanamo; Artists Responding to Violence; and Contemporary U.S. Photography. In 2009, she was the invited curator for international exhibitions of the Guangzhou 2009 Photo Biennial at the Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China. From 1970-1991, Wendy Watriss worked as an award-winning international photojournalist and independent documentary photographer. She won the World Press Photo Award for Feature Stories and the Oskar Barnack Award - Leica in 1982; Interpress Photo in 1983; and Mid America Arts/National Endowment for the Arts in 1985.