



PRESS RELEASE

New application criteria increases opportunity for artists

The Abraaj Capital Art Prize has changed its application process for 2011 by widening the number of winners from three to five, offering a greater number of contemporary artists from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA) the opportunity to benefit from the support and global recognition of the prize.

In addition, artists are to apply for the Abraaj Capital Art Prize 2011 directly without needing to be proposed by an independent curator. Curators are asked to support an artist's application, but the application comes directly from the artist. An internationally recognised curator will be assigned to the five winning artists following their selection.

Since its inception in 2008, the prize has been awarded each year to three sets of winners comprising an artist and curator. Unveiled this year at the Art Dubai fair, the works of the 2009 winners have been displayed this summer in the Museum of Arts & Design in New York City, providing an international platform to showcase their work.

Winning artists have gone on to become leading players in the emerging MENASA scene. Nazgol Ansarinia, whose work was rarely exhibited outside her native Tehran before winning the prize, has since displayed pieces in leading museums and galleries in New York, Paris and London, with her submission for the Abraaj Capital Art Prize her most ambitious to date.

Established by private equity group Abraaj Capital, the US \$1 million art prize is the world's most generous, and is the only art prize specifically for the MENASA region. It is also unique in that it rewards proposals rather than completed works-of-art. The chief aim of the prize is to empower potential, and give often under-represented contemporary artists from the vibrant MENASA region the resources to further develop their talent.

Marwan Sahmarani, one of the 2010 winners of the prize, explains how he felt when he won the prize: *"It is an opportunity for me to share my work with the Arab contemporary art community and to reach out to a broader audience. In receiving this honour, I am 'seen' by my peers as an innovative voice in the Arab art world."*



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Savita Apte, Chair of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize, said:

"We have concluded that widening the number of winners from three to five will give more artists from this culturally rich region of 1.6 billion people the opportunity to create a work of art that pushes the boundaries of their practice."

Fred Sicre, Executive Director of Abraaj Capital, commented:

"Having followed the progression of the 2009 Abraaj Capital Art Prize recipients, we have seen that winning the prize has not only increased their status and acclaim in the international art world, but more importantly given them the opportunity of creating new, more monumental and ambitious artworks. Identifying and empowering potential is a key mission for Abraaj Capital, and by extending the prize to a larger field of artists, we further strengthen that objective in the MENASA art community."

Enquiries

For further information about the Abraaj Capital Art Prize 2011, please visit www.abraaj.com/acap

Artist submissions:

Please note the deadline for applications is January 31st 2010.

Applications can be submitted on line at <http://www.artdubai.ae/abraaj/home.php>

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Images and interviews are available upon request.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Criteria for applications: Only artists from the MENASA region can apply (either living within or in the Diaspora). There is no age limit, and any type or variety of media can be used. The works need to be rooted in local culture and appeal to an international audience. Artists are required to submit specific budgetary projections and requirements. Most importantly, artists have to produce a personal statement that explains how they see themselves as representative of the country in which they were born, and why their artwork and artistic message is important and deserves to be recognised by a wider arts community. Applications close on January 31st 2010 and the winning artists are announced in the middle of 2010. Once chosen, the winners have six months to create their works, which are then unveiled in March 2011 at Art Dubai, the Middle East's largest art fair.

Previous winners: The 2009 winners were: KutluĖ Ataman (Turkey), with Curator Cristiana Perrella (Italy); Zoulikha Bouabdellah (Algeria), with Curator Carol Solomon (United States); Nazgol Ansarinia (Iran), with Curator Leyla Fakhr (Iran). The 2010 winners are: Kader Attia (Algeria), with Curator Laurie Ann Farrell (United States); Hala Elkoussy (Egypt), with Curator Jelle Bouwhuis (Netherlands); Marwan Sahmarani (Lebanon), with Curator Mahita El Bacha Urieta (UK).

About Abraaj Capital: Abraaj Capital group believes Corporate Social Responsibility plays a vital role in the economic and social welfare of the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA). Winner of the 2009 CSR Arabia Award, Dubai-based Abraaj was the first private sector company in the Middle East and North Africa to sign the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investments (UNPRI). Abraaj, which is the region's largest private equity group, has long funded its Community Partnership Programme with 5 per cent of the group's management fees, and through employee donations, to support educational, medical and social needs of children in the MENASA region. More than 50 projects have been funded since 2007 including the Abraaj Capital Gaza Children & Youth Trust. With a US\$ 10 million donation, the trust has been established to provide education and related needs over the next 22 years for children in Gaza orphaned by the conflict in December 2008. Additional educational initiatives include building schools and libraries, and providing scholarships for girls, in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Other projects have provided infant-heart surgery, and spinal health diagnosis and treatment in Palestine, counseling and skills-training for young women in Morocco, and the construction of two schools for the deaf in Pakistan. Abraaj employees also volunteer their time towards developing entrepreneurial and business skills among Middle Eastern youth, teaching in school classrooms with Injaz Al-Arab, the Middle East arm of Junior Achievement. Abraaj investment professionals also work with the Acumen Fund on a pro-bono advisory basis to help build capacity in their investee companies, providing affordable services in education, housing and healthcare to very low income communities in the region.

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