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Abraaj Capital Art Prize 2010 Winners Announced

Art prize recipients honoured ahead of their March 2010 debut at Art Dubai

Dubai, September 17, 2009: Established to raise awareness of the under-represented work being created by artists from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA) region, the coveted Abraaj Capital Art Prize, in its second year, has announced three winning teams of artists and curators for the 2010 prize.

This year's prize recipients, artist Hala Elkoussy and curator Jelle Bouwhuis; artist Marwan Sahmarani and curator Mahita El Bacha Urieta; and artist Kader Attia and curator Laurie Ann Farrell, were all honoured as part of an evening event held during a visit to Dubai that enabled the winning teams to survey the site. They have six months to complete their artworks which will be unveiled in March 2010, during Art Dubai, before becoming a permanent part of the Abraaj Capital Art Collection.

Speaking at the event, Frederic Sicre, Executive Director of Abraaj Capital commented: *"In its second year, the Abraaj Capital Art Prize signifies not only our continued commitment to supporting the creative potential to be found in the MENASA region, but also re-instates Abraaj Capital's unwavering commitment as a patron of the arts. Our aim is to empower young artists across the MENASA markets and bring their talents to the forefront of both the regional and international art community."*



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Savita Apte, Chair of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize, stated: *“The quality of applications that we have received this year indicates a significantly higher level of interest, understanding and maturity. We are thrilled with the high calibre of established artists and curators vying for the Abraaj Capital Art Prize. There will be both a regional and global audience keen to see each of these artists’ creations at Art Dubai 2010.”*

Upon receiving their awards, each artist-curator team expressed their excitement and their ambition to make the most of the endorsement by the Abraaj Capital Art Prize committee.

Hala Elkoussy, a native of Cairo, Egypt and co-founder of the Contemporary Image Collective – CiC, an artist-run initiative dedicated to the visual image, commented: *“I am honoured to be the winner of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize. I am extremely pleased that such great opportunities are becoming available to artists from the region.”* Jelle Bouwhuis, Curator at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and Advisor of Visual Art & Design in Utrecht, expressed his appreciation for the award by saying: *“I’m glad that I have been instrumental for Hala to produce her work on such an ambitious scale, thanks to this prize.”*

Marwan Sahmarani, from Lebanon, creates artwork deeply rooted in his Middle Eastern origins: *“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 honor, I am ‘seen’ by my peers as an innovative voice in the Arab art world.”* Mahita El Bacha Urieta, a half-Lebanese and



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half-Spanish curator, producer and consultant on arts policy added: *"I am pleased to be selected for a prestigious prize such as the Abraaj Capital Art Prize, which shows the commitment of this unique initiative in the MENASA region to encourage regional up-and-coming talent and to support their growth, especially curators."*

Kader Attia, an Algerian, expressed his appreciation: *"To win this award means a lot to me, especially with the new artwork I propose. To win the award is, for me, the sign of an "echo", of what I wanted and aimed to tell with my (art) proposal."* Laurie Ann Farrell, who serves as Executive Director of Exhibitions for the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) in the United States, commented: *"This prize is so vital, because it enables Kader Attia to bring relevant new work into the world and share it with the many visitors to 2010 Art Dubai cultural season. On behalf of SCAD, I am deeply humbled and honoured to work on this project and be a co-recipient of this esteemed prize."*

Abraaj Capital, the premier investment firm specializing in private equity investment in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA) region, pioneered the art prize in order to foster and reward artistic development in its core markets.

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About Abraaj Capital: Abraaj Capital is the largest private equity group in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA). Since its inception in 2002, it has raised about US\$ 7 billion for its funds, and made more than 35 investments across eleven countries. Based in Dubai, Abraaj operates offices in five countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey. More than 150 world-class professionals work at Abraaj from 27 different nationalities. Abraaj's holdings include some of the region's most prominent companies, such as Air Arabia, the region's largest low-cost carrier; Acibadem Healthcare Group, Turkey's biggest privately owned operator of premium hospitals; and Al Borg Laboratory,



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the Middle East's biggest medical laboratory-testing company. Abraaj has won several international awards, and is a four-time winner of PEI's 'Middle Eastern Private Equity Firm of the Year'. Abraaj operates five funds, and has distributed about US\$ 3 billion to investors from 20 exits, where it generated superior returns from the value it added. Abraaj Capital Ltd. is licensed by the Dubai Financial Services Authority, which operates according to international regulatory standards.

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