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PRESS RELEASE

Contemporary Art in the Middle East – symposium at Tate

22 January 2009

A major symposium focusing on contemporary art in the Middle East will take place at Tate on 22 and 23 January 2009.

This two-day event, which begins at Tate Britain and concludes at Tate Modern, brings together artists, curators and writers to discuss recent developments in contemporary art from the Middle East and its diaspora. With a mix of keynote talks by Derek Gregory (professor of geography, University of British Columbia, Vancouver) Mourid Barghouti (poet and author, *I Saw Ramallah*), Salah Hassan (professor, Art History, Cornell University) and Shumon Basar (curator, architect and author of *Cities from Zero*) the symposium comprises five sessions: *Defining the Middle East*; *Writing and Translation*; *Art Now – Recent Exhibitions*; *Tradition and Modernity*; and *The Politics of Space*.

The event will examine how we define the Middle East, how the interpretation of modern and contemporary art from the Middle East affects its understanding at home and abroad, how ideas about tradition and modernity have emerged and what the impact of new and emerging spaces for modern and contemporary art in different parts of the region will be.

Organised by Tate and the International Curators Forum in association with NAFAS online magazine, the symposium is part of the World Collections Programme, a collaborative initiative between six UK organisations which aims to develop greater access to their collections and expertise by building partnerships with organisations in Asia and Africa.

Notes to Editor

The distinguished group of panellists includes Wassan Al-Khudhairi (curator), Anas Al-Shaikh (artist), Oreet Ashery (artist), Negar Azimi (senior editor, Bidoun magazine), Bassam el Baroni (co-founder, Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum), Yto Barrada (artist and founder of Cinemathèque de Tangers), Goldsmiths College), Pat Binder and Gerhard Haupt (publishers, Nafas Art online magazine), Stuart Comer (curator, Tate Modern), Suzanne Cotter (chief curator, Modern Art Oxford), Catherine David (chief curator, Direction des Musées de France), David Elliot (artistic director, Sydney Biennale), Khalid Khreis (director, Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman), Vasif Kortun (curator and director, Platform, Istanbul), Rahraw Omarzad (editor, Gahnama-e-Hunar and founder, Centre for Contemporary Art, Afghanistan), November Paynter (independent curator), Jack Persekian (artistic director, Sharjah Biennial & director, Al Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art), Khalil Rabah (artist and director, Riwaq Biennial, Ramallah), Michael Rakowitz (artist), Dina Ramadan (art historian and critic), Andrew Renton (director of curating, Goldsmiths College), Zineb Sedira (artist), Nada Shabout (associate professor Art History, University North Texas), Hassan Sharif (artist and founder, The Flying House, Dubai), Wael Shawky (artist), Suha Shoman (founder, Darat al Funan, Amman), Christine Tohme (The Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts), Issa Touma (artist, curator and founder of Le Pont Art Organization and Gallery, Aleppo, Syria) and William Wells (Director, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo).

The World Collections Programme

The World Collections Programme uses the collections of the British Museum, the British Library, the Natural History Museum, the Royal Botanic Gardens (Kew), Tate and the Victoria and Albert Museum to foster links with institutions in Asia and Africa, to facilitate greater access to these collections and expertise and to share and exchange knowledge and expertise between the UK, Asia and Africa. It is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and is administered by the British Museum.

The International Curators Forum