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Manal Al Dowayan to showcase Saudi art at La Biennale di Venezia

November 21, 2023



Artist Manal AlDowayan in Venice 2023. (Supplied)

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RIYADH — Renowned Saudi artist Manal Al Dowayan has been selected to represent Saudi Arabia at the prestigious 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, scheduled from April 20 to Nov. 24, 2024.

The Saudi Pavilion, commissioned by the Ministry of Culture's Visual Arts Commission, will feature Al Dowayan's impactful contemporary artwork.

Al Dowayan, recognized as one of Saudi Arabia's leading contemporary artists with a global presence, explores diverse mediums such as photography, sound, sculpture, and participatory practice. Her art delves into themes of tradition, collective memory, and the representation of women. Serving as a critical observer of cultural and social transformations in her homeland, Al Dowayan's work navigates the intersection of personal and societal realms.

Her decades-long practice has resonated globally, fostering connection and engagement. Al Dowayan is celebrated for

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participatory installations like *Suspended Together* (2011) and *Esmi-My Name* (2012), where workshops allowed thousands of Saudi women to reflect on social customs regarding women's roles.

Expressing her thoughts on the opportunity, Al Dowayan said, “The Biennale Arte 2024 presents a rare opportunity to represent where I stand in my practice, positioned in the context of my community, my country, and the world as a whole.”

In her recent performance, *"From Shattered Ruins, New Life Shall Bloom"* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in August 2023, Al Dowayan invited visitors to navigate a space adorned with totems carrying porcelain rolls filled with texts and images reflecting narratives surrounding women. In a collective gesture of protest against historical control, participants destroyed the scrolls, symbolizing solidarity in the face of fragmented actions and the need for a multipolar approach to support women worldwide.

Dina Amin, CEO of the Visual Arts Commission, expressed pride in showcasing Al Dowayan's work on the international stage, stating, “At the Visual Arts Commission, our goal is to bring to the forefront the talent that resides within our country and to look for ways to nurture, amplify, and celebrate it on local, regional, and international stages.”

This marks Saudi Arabia’s fourth participation in La Biennale di Venezia, with the third National Pavilion featuring women artists. Details about Al Dowayan’s installation reflecting on the Biennale Arte’s theme, *"Foreigners Everywhere,"* curated by Adriano Pedrosa, will be announced later.



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