

Manal AlDowayan to represent Saudi Arabia at the Venice Biennale 2024

Saudi Arabia Pavilion at the Venice Biennale



Artist Manal AlDowayan in Venice, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and the Visual Arts Commission, the Commissioner for the National Pavilion of Saudi Arabia.

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2024**

April 20–November 24, 2024

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Manal AlDowayan will represent Saudi Arabia at the 60th International Venice Biennale, taking place from April 20 to November 24, 2024. The Saudi Pavilion is commissioned by the Ministry of Culture's Visual Arts Commission.

AlDowayan is one of Saudi Arabia's most significant contemporary artists working internationally. Her work, which spans various mediums including photography, sound, sculpture, and participatory practice, interrogates traditions, collective memories and the status and representation of women.

AlDowayan acts as a critical witness to the cultural and social metamorphoses sweeping her home country, and her work in turn navigates a territory where the personal and the societal overlap. Her works explore themes such as

invisibility, active forgetting, and collective memory. Through her decades-long practice, AlDowayan's art resonates with audiences around the world, fostering connection, interaction, and engagement. She is best known for participatory installations such as *Suspended Together* (2011) and *Esmi-My Name* (2012), which are the result of participatory workshops offering channels for thousands of women in Saudi Arabia to reflect on social customs relating to the position of women in Saudi Arabia and further afield.

Commenting on her participation, AlDowayan says: "My approach to art over the last two decades has given me the chance to be part of a transformation that is taking place in my country. 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."

More recently, AlDowayan performed *From Shattered Ruins, New Life Shall Bloom* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in August 2023. There, she invited visitors to navigate the space which featured a landscape of totems topped with porcelain rolls filled with texts and images depicting narratives that have upheld structures around women for generations. In a conclusive collective gesture of protest against a history of control, participants destroyed the scrolls – ultimately stripping the words and images of their power and encouraging solidarity in the face of fragmentation of action and the need for a multipolar approach when it comes to helping women and girls around the world.

Dina Amin, Chief Executive Officer of the Visual Arts Commission says: "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. We are proud to be showcasing Manal AlDowayan's work at the Venice Biennale, an important international platform for exchange."

This will mark Saudi Arabia's fourth participation at the Venice Biennale and is the third National Pavilion of Saudi Arabia to feature woman artists. A concept and further details surrounding AlDowayan's installation will be announced at a later stage, but the artist revealed that the Saudi Pavilion will reflect on the Biennale Arte's overarching theme. *Stranieri Ovunque - Foreigners Everywhere*, curated by Adriano Pedrosa, will bring together artists to reflect on the differences and disparities conditioned by areas such as identity, nationality, race and gender, amongst others.

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