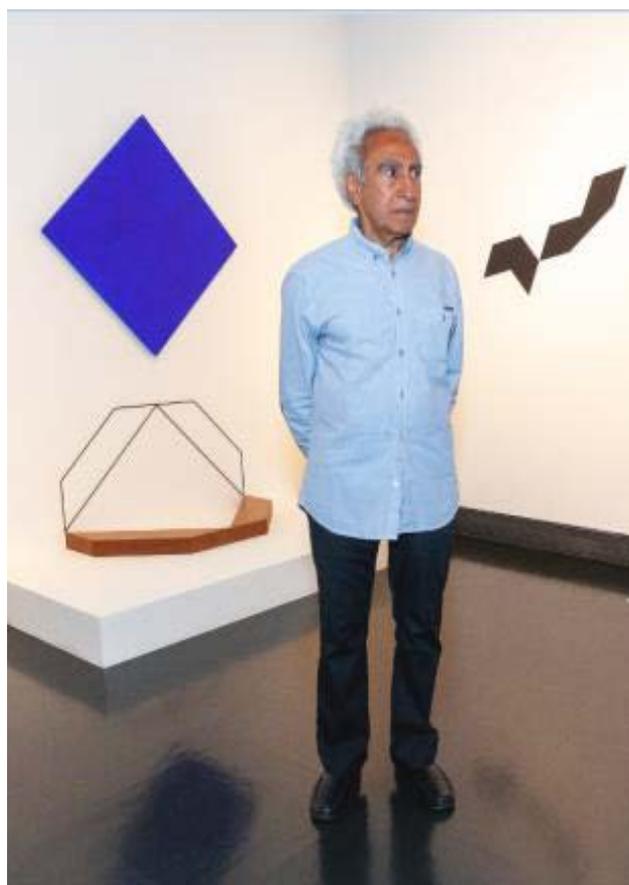


For immediate release

Mehdi Moutashar and Marina Tabassum announced as first ever joint winners of Jameel Prize 5



Dubai, United Arab Emirates | June 28, 2018 - The artist **Mehdi Moutashar** (b.1943, Hilla, Iraq) and the architect **Marina Tabassum** (b. 1969 in Dhaka, Bangladesh) have been announced as joint winners of the Jameel Prize 5. This is the first time the prize has been awarded to two finalists. Fady Jameel, President of Art Jameel, presented Mehdi and Marina with the prize at an evening ceremony at the V&A on Wednesday 27 June.

Moutashar received the award for his bold work of minimalist abstraction rooted in Islamic geometry, and **Tabassum** for her visionary Bait ur Rouf mosque built in 2012 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Both winners' achievement has been to produce work of outstanding quality and contemporary relevance while demonstrating a profound understanding of the cultures from which they come. The juries felt that although working in very different fields, the joint winners had both shown the same combination of lucidity and sophistication in drawing on Islamic tradition.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A and chair of judging panel, said: *“This edition, selecting one winner proved extremely difficult, due to the very high standard of work in the exhibition. The joint Jameel Prize 5 winners are both in dialogue with contemporary global discourses on art and have produced exemplary work in two very different disciplines. They show an awareness of modernist practices of the 20th century, which have in turn drawn on traditions from around the world. At the same time, though, they are passionately rooted in and deeply learned about their own cultural legacies.”*

Moutashar left Iraq in the late 1960s and settled in Paris, where he encountered forms of minimalism, including geometric abstraction. He has developed these ideas, integrating them with the Islamic traditions of his native land to create a powerful personal language that has depth, wit and urgency. The juries agreed that he should be considered among the greatest living exponents of a constructivist aesthetic.

Tabassum is an architect based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Bait ur Rouf mosque draws on medieval Islamic architecture and celebrates the building traditions of Bengal. The mosque is a wonder in its play with geometry, abstraction, light, air and water, making it both an animated and contemplative space. Its functions answer the needs of the local community, and it is a composition of local materials and contemporary techniques, responsive to both its environment and to history. The building positions Marina as a contemporary architect of great insight and imagination.

An exhibition of work by the winner and six other short-listed artists and designers runs until 25 November 2018 at the V&A. They are **Kamrooz Aram, Hayv Kahraman, Hala Kaiksow, naqsh collective, Younes Rahmoun** and **Wardha Shabbir**. In April 2019, the exhibition will tour to the forthcoming Jameel Arts Centre, located in Jaddaf, Dubai (opening November 11, 2018).

Awarded every two years, the Jameel Prize, founded in partnership with Art Jameel, is a £25,000 international art prize for contemporary artists and designers inspired by Islamic tradition.

The winner was decided by a panel of juries chaired by **Tristram Hunt**, Director of the V&A. The juries are **Salah Hassan**, Professor and Director, Institute for Comparative Modernities at Cornell University, New York; design historian **Tanya Harrod**; **November Paynter** who is Director of Programs at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Toronto; and the artist **Ghulam Mohammad**, who was winner of Jameel Prize 4.

The Jameel Prize was conceived after the renovation of the V&A's Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art, which opened in July 2006 to present the rich artistic heritage of the Islamic world. The prize aims to raise awareness of the thriving interaction between contemporary practice and this great historical heritage and to broaden understanding of Islamic culture and its place in the world.

The Jameel Prize 5 exhibition is curated by Tim Stanley, senior curator of the V&A's great historical collection from the Islamic Middle East, with Salma Tuqan, the V&A's Jameel curator.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Biographies of the shortlisted artists and designers are included below, while those of the judging panel are available on request.

About the Jameel Prize

The Jameel Prize, founded in partnership with Art Jameel, was conceived after the renovation of the V&A's Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art. The gallery is an outstanding presentation of the rich artistic heritage of the Islamic Middle East, and the Prize aims to raise awareness of the thriving interaction between contemporary practice and the great historical legacy of the region. It has also contributed to a broader understanding of Islamic culture as well as its place in the contemporary world.

Launched in 2009, the winner of the first Jameel Prize was **Afroz Amighi** for her work 1001 Pages (2008), an intricate hand-cut screen made from the woven plastic used to construct refugee tents. In 2011 **Rachid Koraïchi** was awarded the prize, for his work Les Maîtres Invisibles (The Invisible Masters, 2008), a group of embroidered cloth banners which display Arabic calligraphy and symbols and ciphers to explore the lives and legacies of the 14 great mystics of Islam. In 2013 the winner of Jameel Prize 3 was **Dice Kayek**, a Turkish fashion label established in 1992 by Ece and Ayşe Ege for their series Istanbul Contrast, a collection that evokes Istanbul's architectural and artistic heritage. This was the first time the Jameel Prize was awarded to designers. In 2016, the winner of Jameel Prize 4 was **Ghulam Mohammad**, who trained in the Islamic tradition of miniature painting, for his works of paper collage.

Each edition of the Jameel prize has toured internationally. Most recently, the Jameel Prize 4 exhibition visited the Asia Culture Centre, Gwangju, Korea (2017) and A. Kasteyev State Museum of Arts, Almaty, Kazakhstan (2017-18). Originating at the Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey and on tour in 2017 and 2018, the exhibition has been seen by 128,512 visitors.

www.vam.ac.uk/jameelprize5 #JameelPrize5

About Art Jameel

Art Jameel supports artists and creative communities. Current initiatives include running heritage institutes and restoration programmes, plus a broad range of arts and educational initiatives for all ages. The organisation's programmes foster the role of the arts in building open, connected communities; at a time of flux and dramatic societal shifts, this role is understood as more crucial than ever.

Art Jameel's model is collaborative: major institutional partners include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Prince's School of Traditional Arts and the Victoria and Albert Museum; locally, the organisation works with individuals and organisations to develop innovative programming that embraces both ancient and new technologies, and encourages entrepreneurship and the development of cultural networks.

In 2018-2019, Art Jameel is set to open two new cultural centres: Hayy: Creative Hub, a major complex for the creative industries in Saudi Arabia, and the Jameel Arts Centre, a contemporary arts institution in the UAE.

Art Jameel is positioned alongside Community Jameel, and complements its sister organisation's work in promoting positive social change, job creation and poverty alleviation across the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey.

www.artjameel.org

About the V&A's Islamic Art Collection

The V&A has specialised in collecting Islamic art since the 1850s, and was the first institution in the world to collect Islamic art in a systematic fashion. The Museum's mission was to reform design, and it was thought that Islamic ideas about structuring patterns and matching decoration to shape and function could improve British design. The Jameel Prize shows that the link between the Islamic art of the past and contemporary practice is still very much alive.

The eight shortlisted artists and designers:

Kamrooz Aram works in a variety of art forms, including painting, collage, drawing and installation, and has had several solo shows at Green Art Gallery, Alserkal Avenue, Dubai. In his current practice he seeks to challenge modern, Western interpretations of art history, including those covering the Islamic world. *Ephesian Fog* (2016) is part of a series of works in which he explores how exhibition design shapes our understanding of the art of the past on view in museums. Using architectural materials such as brass, wood and terrazzo, he creates works that focus as much on the formal qualities of design and display as they do on the art objects themselves. Aram will also display two collage works from the series *Ancient Through Modern 28* (2017) and *Ancient Through Modern 26* (2017). These contain publications of work of art, including postcards of objects in the V&A's own collection, which present the art of the past in a modernist context, through their graphic design and photographic style. His intention is to clarify our understanding of the objects by decoding the way they are represented. Aram was born in Iran and lives and works in New York City, USA.

Hayv Kahraman's paintings combine references drawn from Islamic art, as well as the Japanese tradition of woodblock prints and the Italian Renaissance. Her work explores gender-based issues, migration and the dynamics found among Middle Easterners living in diaspora. On show will be *The Translator* from the series *How Iraqi Are You?* (2015), which was inspired by the illustrations in 13th-century Arabic manuscripts. With the series Kahraman aimed to recreate a forgotten history from the perspective of an immigrant, and this painting tells the story of the artist's mother, who acted as a translator between refugees and aid workers in Sweden. A second work, *House in Gaylani*, is from the series *Let the Guest be the Master* (2014), prompted by the sale of Kahraman's childhood home in Baghdad. The layouts of these large-scale figurative paintings are based on the floor plans of domestic houses in Baghdad. The compositions also mark out the different gender roles – the males meet in the courtyard, while the females remain in the house. Kahraman was born in Iraq and lives and works in Los Angeles, USA, and is represented by The Third Line, Dubai.

Hala Kaikow is a young fashion designer who launched her eponymous sustainable womenswear label in 2016. She re-appropriates work wear and traditional garments, treating the designs like sculptures that move around the bodies that wear them. She weaves the textiles herself on a manual loom, helped by local artisans in Bahrain. On display will be two looks from her graduate collection *Wandress* (2015). *Shepherd's Coat*, made from wool and denim, is a modified form of an Iranian shepherd's coat from the turn of the 20th century, with cartridge pleating detail that was inspired by a Cypriot shepherd's water bag and Islamic geometry. *Momohiki Jumpsuit* underneath derives from 19th-century Japanese farmers' trousers, which were mostly worn by men. Kaikow has developed the pattern so that it can be worn by a woman, turning it into a salopette that drapes over the woman's shoulder. *Kimono Vest* is inspired by the simplicity of a kimono with the detailing of the Cypriot water bag pleats. *Thoub Nashal Jumpsuit* underneath is derived from the garment pattern of the traditional *Thobe al Nashal*, a Bahraini national garment. Kaikow incorporates latex,

playing with the idea of transparency and reversing the function of a material usually used to constrain the body but in this instance making it comfortable. Kaiksow was born in Bahrain, where she still lives and works.

Mehdi Moutashar left Iraq in the late 1960s and settled in Paris, where he was heavily influenced by the geometric abstract work he encountered. His current work reflects this language of abstraction but also draws on Islamic traditions of sophisticated geometry and elegant script. *Deux plis à 120°* [Two folds at 120 degrees] (2012) is made of two metal plates, which, as the work's name implies, are both folded at 120 degrees. The work was inspired by a style of Arabic calligraphy called *riqa'*, and in particular by the angle at which a scribe holds the reed-pen (*qalam*) to write *riqa'*. The other works on show, including *Un plis à 120° et un carré* [A fold at 120 degrees and a square] (2014) and *Un carré et trois angles droits* [A square and three right angles] (2016), are based on similar processes of abstraction. In *Deux carrés dont un encadré* [Two squares, one of them framed] (2017), the lower, framed square crosses the line between the wall and the floor, with the meeting point between the two surfaces playing the role of the base line used in writing in Arabic calligraphy. Moutashar was born in Iraq and lives and works in Arles, France.

naqsh collective is the creative output of two sisters - architect Nisreen and graphic designer Nermeen Abu Dail. Their sculptural works create a contemporary visual language that draws on the embroidery traditions of the Levant region, which includes their native Jordan. Since 2014 they have been working with the patterns used in cross-stitched embroidery, and *Shawl* (2015) is inspired by a well-used woman's shawl – its worn condition reflected the many uses to which it had been put. In a similar way, the use of different embroidery motifs in the work, especially those from Palestine, reflects the various tribulations the people of the region have experienced. The work is made of walnut wood, with the pattern laser-cut into the wood and painted by hand. The brass elements were then added, including tiny pieces of hand-cut brass inserted into the recesses in the patterns. Finally, the work was hand-finished to mimic the smoothness of a woman's shawl. Both sisters were born in Amman, Jordan, where Nisreen still lives and works. Nermeen lives and works in Dubai, UAE.

Younes Rahmoun's practice is diverse, ranging from installation and drawing to new technologies and multimedia. His work is inseparable from his religious and spiritual beliefs, referencing the patterns, geometry and numbers found in Islamic art. Each element, whether a material, a number, an orientation or a colour, has a significance that often relates to Islam, and in particular to the rich tradition of Sufi mysticism. Rahmoun will show *Tâqiya Nôr* [Hat-Light] (2016). This installation is made up of 77 hats in coloured wool, found in the shop of a craftsman in Rahmoun's home town. Electric wires connect the hats and power the lightbulbs hidden inside. Arranged in ten groups in parallel rows, they are all linked to one cable. The numbers 10 and 77 allude to branches of the Islamic faith – 10 main and 77 secondary branches. Rahmoun was born in Morocco and lives and works there, in the city of Tetouan.

Wardha Shabbir was trained in the Islamic miniature painting technique but uses it to produce imagery that is rigorously contemporary. In her current work she draws on the ideas that underlie the Islamic garden, painting the flora and fauna associated with cultivated spaces with painstaking care. The compositions are arranged to convey symbolic meaning, often showing a concern with the path we take through life. The display will include two diptychs – pairs of paintings that play off each other. The first, entitled *A Wall* (2017), is a metaphor for the boundaries we draw around ourselves and which we need to cross, while the dragonflies flying around it represent the situations or people we encounter as we pass through life. The second diptych is called *Raasta* (2017), which means 'pathway' in Urdu. It is symbolic of a journey to self-awareness and the search for a connection with

the divine. Two further paintings with botanical references, *A Cube* and *Two Pillars* (both 2017), will also be on display. Shabbir was born in Pakistan, where she lives and works in Lahore.

Marina Tabassum is the first architect to be shortlisted for the Jameel Prize. She is the founder of Marina Tabassum Architects, a practice based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, that focuses on architecture that is global yet rooted in its locality. Her entry for the Prize is the Bait ur Rouf mosque in Dhaka, built in 2012 in a densely inhabited part of the city. Its design was inspired by the mosques built in Bengal in the Sultanate period (13th to 16th centuries), but this historical form is given a thoroughly contemporary expression. Bait ur Rouf also celebrates local materials and building techniques, and local customs and climatic conditions. The prayer hall is essentially a pavilion on eight columns, contained by walls of porous brick and with light streaming in through skylights, introducing a sense of spirituality and allowing the space to remain lit during daylight hours. Tabassum was born in 1969 and lives and works in Dhaka.