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## **Art Jameel and the Victoria & Albert Museum announce the artists shortlisted for Jameel Prize 5**

- **Winner to be announced on June 27, 2018, at the V&A, London**

**Dubai, United Arab Emirates | February 6, 2018** - The Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), in partnership with **Art Jameel**, has announced the shortlist for the Jameel Prize 5, the international prize for contemporary artists and designers inspired by Islamic tradition. Eight finalists have been shortlisted for the £25,000 (AED 128,000) prize, which is awarded every two years. They are: **Kamrooz Aram, Hayv Kahraman, Hala Kaiksow, Mehdi Moutashar, naqsh collective, Younes Rahmoun, Wardha Shabbir** and **Marina Tabassum**.

The fifth edition of the Jameel Prize will debut at the V&A, London, where the winner will be announced on June 27, 2018. The accompanying exhibition, showcasing the work of the eight shortlisted artists and designers, will run from June 28 until November 25, 2018. The exhibition will then tour to museums globally, including to the Jameel Arts Centre, in Dubai, in 2019.

The shortlist is diverse and for the first time features an architect. Other practices represented in the shortlist include painting and fashion design, while sources of inspiration range from embroidered shawls to Arabic calligraphy. Multi-media installations evoke the symbolism of light and challenge Western approaches to art history. This great variety reflects the richness of Islamic tradition as a source for contemporary creativity, highlighting the influence of our shared cultural past on contemporary artistic views of the world.

The panel of judges, chaired by V&A Director, **Tristram Hunt**, selected the shortlist. He said: "The Jameel Prize continues to gain momentum. This – the fifth edition of the Prize – has attracted nearly 400 nominations from around the world, and for the first time, the shortlist features work from Bangladesh, Bahrain and Jordan. This year's outstanding shortlist displays real diversity; the judges found beauty, spirituality, complexity, humour and humanity. The V&A is delighted to continue its partnership with Art Jameel in recognition of the extraordinary contemporary artists and designers inspired by Islamic tradition."

One of the judges, **Salah Hassan**, Professor and Director, Institute for Comparative Modernities at Cornell University, New York, and a regular contributor to Sharjah Art Foundation's exhibition programme, commented: "The shortlisted artists for Jameel Prize 5 represent an array of amazing talents, who are engaged in diverse practices in art and design, that are conceptually-oriented and in sync with latest discourse of contemporary art, yet rooted in discrete ways to their own cultures and multiple identities. Jameel Prize 5 expands our horizons of what modernity and contemporaneity truly mean, and enriches our understanding of a truly globalised art world beyond its current confines."

The judging panel also includes the independent 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 the winner of Jameel Prize 4.

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For more information visit [www.artjameel.org](http://www.artjameel.org) and join the conversation on Instagram @art\_jameel | Facebook Art Jameel | Twitter @Art\_Jameel

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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](http://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](http://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 Kaiksow** 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. Kaiksow 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. Kaiksow 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 riqā', and in particular by the angle at which a scribe holds the reed-pen (qalam) to write riqā'. 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.