



## Pavilion of Saudi Arabia At the 16th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

- **Saudi Arabia to make its first appearance at the Biennale Architettura 2018**
- **Misk Art Institute commissions the debut Saudi Pavilion: ‘Spaces in Between’, presenting new concepts in urbanization**

**Riyadh, Saudi Arabia** - Alongside 64 other participant nations, Saudi Arabia will make its debut appearance at the Biennale Architettura 2018 in Venice this spring. The Misk Art Institute is organizing the inaugural Saudi Pavilion for this prestigious international event, with a large exhibition space situated within the Venetian Arsenal, the most prominent building of the Exhibition, a complex of ancient Venetian shipyards. The selected Saudi representative architects, Abdulrahman and Turki Gazzaz, represent the younger generation of architects hailing from Saudi Arabia, earning their place in a competition that saw over 70 entries, supervised by a panel of judges in addition to the two pavilion curators, Dr. Sumayah Al-Solaiman and Ms. Jawaher Al Sudairy.

In response to the overarching theme of the Biennale Architettura 2018, ‘Freespace’, which its organizers describe as “thinking applied to the space where we live, that we inhabit,” the Saudi pavilion is entitled **‘Spaces in Between’**. The project explores new possibilities for the utilisation of liminal spaces to increase socialization and community building within Saudi’s rapidly expanding cities. Over the past four decades, Saudi metropolitan centres have undergone rapid urbanization, with rural migration propelling built territories outwards. Settlement-driven growth has produced in many instances disjointed, mono-functional, car-dependent neighbourhoods connected by highways. In this state of fragmentation, over 40% of city land lies vacant with the wide distances between residential enclaves eroding social ties and depleting natural resources. This reckoning of urbanization has emphasized the role design can play in shaping social life and rebuilding community. Saudi cities are seeking to steer development inward and repurpose empty lots into convivial public spaces that allow for walkability and human interaction. Such developments are directly transforming the architectural landscape of Saudi’s urban centres, as iconic structures rise on the skyline.

“The exhibition will explore the social implications of architecture. Architects Abdulrahman and Turki Gazzaz are using this opportunity to examine the relationship between space and architecture – hoping to engage visitors in the potential of creating interaction through redesign,” states curator Jawaher Al Sudairy.

The total process has been completed under the leadership of the Misk Art Institute. Ahmed Mater, its Executive Director, states: “Our participation in the International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia is an unprecedented moment for Saudi Arabia’s creative community. It’s an opportunity to bring pioneering Saudi thought to an international platform through our creative vernacular. Coupled with the allocation of an incredible pavilion space, we are very excited about our presentation this year at the Biennale Architettura but also, looking forward to future years and presentations and what they will draw upon from our own community.”

As part of Saudi Vision 2030 (the official plan to diversify the Kingdom’s economy and develop its public sectors), the Misk Art Institute is dedicated to identifying and empowering Saudi creative talent, in this case through the appointment of two Saudi curators and two architects for the National Pavilion: **Dr. Sumayah Al-Solaiman** and **Ms. Jawaher Al Sudairy; Abdulrahman Gazzaz** and **Turki Gazzaz**.

**Dr. Sumayah Al-Solaiman** is the Dean of the College of Design at Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University. She is also currently a member of the Municipal Council of the Dammam Metropolitan Area and a columnist. She received her PhD in Architecture from Newcastle University in the UK and her Master of Architecture from King Faisal University. She also has executive degrees in Management, Leadership, Strategy and Innovation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States and was the recipient of the Ibn Khaldun Fellowship at that renowned institution for the 2013-2014 academic year. Previously, she was the Vice Dean for Quality, Development and Academic Accreditation and the Chair of the Graphic Design and Multimedia program at the college. She was also editor-in-chief of the Postgraduate Journal "Forum" at Newcastle University. Her research interests include areas of intersection between architecture and politics such as the mediation of power in space and place, ideologies and nation-building in architectural practice and regionalism within modernism.

**Ms. Jawaher Al Sudairy** holds a Master's degree from Columbia University School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation in New York City, a Bachelor of Arts from Smith College, as well as a degree from the University of Beijing. Jawaher is currently the Director for Research at Al Nahda Society and the Senior Program Manager at Evidence for Policy Design at Harvard Kennedy School. She is a member of the organizing committee for the annual Rahmania Seminar in collaboration with the Princeton Institute of Studies. Previously, she has worked as research associate at the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Housing Policy. She also served as a Strategy Consultant at Monitor Group and as the Investment Promotion Manager at Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA). Her research focuses on mobility, housing and social integration, concentrating on the cities of Riyadh and Makkah.

The architects chosen for the pavilion, the brothers **Abdulrahman** and **Turki Gazzaz**, were born and raised in Jeddah. Abdulrahman holds a Bachelor's degree in Architecture and Planning from the University of the West of England, located in Bristol, United Kingdom, while Turki earned his Bachelor's degree in Architectural Engineering from McGill University in Montreal, Canada. These respective studies have cemented their attachment to the field of architecture, leading them in 2015 to found Bricklab - Saudi Arabia, a studio for developing architectural concepts based in Jeddah. Their diverse backgrounds have led them to deepen their knowledge in architectural engineering, planning and history. This drives them to focus on evolving the research aspect of each project and offer contributions with new dimensions for specific social, economic and political contexts.

#### **ABOUT MISK ART INSTITUTE**

**Misk Art Institute** is a cultural foundation and a branch of the Misk Philanthropic Foundation, established by His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, within the framework of the Saudi Vision 2030 program. The institute endeavours to encourage cultural production at the grassroots level, promote cultural diplomacy and knowledge exchange, and elevate the Kingdom's status as a center for cultural innovation in the arts. Misk Art Institute's program comprises the launching of both local and international exhibitions and events, the development of a network of artists, and an arts education program in schools and universities across the Kingdom that seeks to invest in developing the skills of young artists, nurturing their long-term potential and achieving prosperity in a society where culture plays an increasingly significant role. Through launching its local and international cultural program, the institute aims to stimulate new dialogue within Saudi society, and between Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world.

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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