

## Winning submission for The Christo and Jeanne-Claude Award 2018 unveiled

*Qasa'ed, the award-winning, socially interactive pavilion inspired by Emirati poetry, has been unveiled at NYU Abu Dhabi*

**Abu Dhabi, November 28, 2018:** Under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Shamsa bint Hamdan Al Nahyan, NYU Abu Dhabi, in partnership with Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF), unveiled the winning submission of the sixth edition of The Christo and Jeanne-Claude Award at the University's campus on Saadiyat Island.

Crafted by Abu Dhabi University undergraduate architecture students, Maram Kassab and Mariam Ayoub, the award-winning, socially interactive pavilion inspired by Emirati poetry, *Qasa'ed*, will be on display until December 11 at NYU Abu Dhabi. It will then be exhibited at Umm Al Emarat Park in Abu Dhabi from December 12-22.

In attendance at the unveiling were Founder of ADMAF H.E. Huda I. Alkhamis-Kanoo, Christo, Director of the Award Emily Doherty, Chief Curator at NYU Abu Dhabi and Executive Director of the NYUAD Art Gallery Maya Allison, as well as the winning artists, both of whom received \$5,000 from Christo to further advance their careers.

Throughout the process, these artists were supported by accompanying professionals including Doherty, Allison and her team of museum professionals from NYUAD, and the faculty of NYUAD's Visual Arts department, as well as the team's mentor Basem Eid Mohamed from Abu Dhabi University.

**H.E. Huda I. Alkhamis-Kanoo, Founder of Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation**, said: "This year we saw exceptional and diverse responses to the Christo and Jeanne-Claude award. *Qasa'ed* not only exemplifies the passion and innovation of local artists, but is also a visual representation of Emirati poetry, tradition and spirit. ADMAF is proud to support these emerging artists to envisage and realise their artistic proposals and showcase their finished work to the nation – it is a vital part of what we do for our youth and the UAE community."

"With *Qasa'ed*, it is evident that contemporary Arab art is transforming with influences from local Emirati heritage, and it is joyful to witness the emergence of these exciting young talents. The partnership we have with Christo and New York University Abu Dhabi is a longstanding one, and together we look forward to nurturing and rewarding many more artists in the future."

**Director of the Award Emily Doherty** said: "We are so proud of this year's winners, Mariam Ayoub and Maram Kassab. Their hard work, in pursuit of the production of their winning artwork, has resulted in a truly stunning sculpture that is testament to their aesthetic vision but also to their five years studying architecture. The Christo and Jeanne-Claude Award is about giving young artists an opportunity to get practical experience in the field and to launch their careers, and we hope that this year's winning work will inspire others to go for it in 2019."

**Chief Curator at NYU Abu Dhabi and Executive Director of the NYUAD Art Gallery Maya Allison** commented: “I have had the pleasure of collaborating on this award from its first presentation in 2018, and now I look back: some of the first finalists I met back in 2013 are now full-fledged art professionals, my colleagues, leaders in their field. It is deeply gratifying for NYU Abu Dhabi to play this role in such a key stage in creative professional development. These artists and their mentor impressed the jury, and have impressed my team as well, with their research and development of this ambitious and successful project. I look forward to seeing what they and their cohort of finalists do next.”

*Qasa'ed* finds its roots in the conversations of UAE citizens when they talk about their relationship with the desert and its significance in their writing. Their oral emphasis on sitting atop the dunes and sharing their poetry is reflected in the form and sense of movement in this piece. The wooden infrastructure of *Qasa'ed* resembles the desert in its fluidity and curvature. The exterior and sectional elements of *Qasa'ed* mimic Arabic calligraphy, while the interior resembles sand dunes with its smooth and curvaceous spatial qualities.

Kassab and Ayoub came upon the design for *Qasa'ed* through their passion for researching, exploring, and creating new ways to interpret their philosophical backgrounds by developing architecture. They previously participated in the fourth edition of the United Arab Emirates Undergraduate Student Research Competition (UGSRC), where they won first prize for their housing proposal *Diver-City*.

Open to UAE-based students and graduates within the past six years, The Christo and Jeanne-Claude Award was established to encourage the creation of new artwork in the UAE, acting as a launch pad for visual artists across the Emirates and offering winners an insight into professional life as an artist from commission to exhibition.

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### **About NYU Abu Dhabi**

NYU Abu Dhabi is the first comprehensive liberal arts and science campus in the Middle East to be operated abroad by a major American research university. NYU Abu Dhabi has integrated a highly-selective liberal arts, engineering and science curriculum with a world center for advanced research and scholarship enabling its students to succeed in an increasingly interdependent world and advance cooperation and progress on humanity's shared challenges. NYU Abu Dhabi's high-achieving students have come from 120 nations and speak over 120 languages. Together, NYU's campuses in New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai form the backbone of a unique global university, giving faculty and students opportunities to experience varied learning environments and immersion in other cultures at one or more of the numerous study-abroad sites NYU maintains on six continents.

### **About Christo and Jeanne-Claude**

For half a century, internationally acclaimed artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude have created highly celebrated works of art around the world. Together, they changed the concept of “public art” by creating temporary works that are truly transitory by design. Jeanne-Claude passed away in November 2009, but Christo continues with their work on *Over The River*, as well as other projects.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude have never accepted any subsidies, royalties, grants, or sponsorships. They fund all of their temporary public works, and the artists' income is derived from the sale of original works of art by Christo to museums, galleries, and private collectors. For more information, visit [www.christojeanneclaude.net](http://www.christojeanneclaude.net)

### **About the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation**

Patron: **H.E. Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan**, UAE Minister of Tolerance

Founded in 1996, ADMAF is one of the oldest, not-for-profit cultural organisations in the Arabian Gulf. Pioneering new artistic practices, it seeks to deepen global cross-cultural dialogue and inspire a renewed interest in the creativity of the UAE and Arab world. Often in partnership with leading national and international institutions, it delivers multidisciplinary initiatives for people of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities through the Abu Dhabi Festival, year-round youth platforms and community programmes.

For more information, please visit [www.admaf.org](http://www.admaf.org)