



## News Release

### Jameel Prize 5 – Shortlist Exhibition

28 June 2018 – 25 November 2018

ADMISSION FREE

Winner Announcement: 27 June 2018

[vam.ac.uk/jameelprize5](http://vam.ac.uk/jameelprize5) #JameelPrize5

The V&A presents an exhibition of works by the eight artists and designers shortlisted for the fifth edition of the prestigious Jameel Prize: **Kamrooz Aram, Hayv Kahraman, Hala Kaiksow, Mehdi Moutashar, naqsh collective, Younes Rahmoun, Wardha Shabbir and Marina Tabassum.**

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 of Jameel Prize 5 is announced at the V&A on the evening of 27 June 2018.

The exhibition features work that reflects the richness and diversity of Islamic traditions in art and design. This edition, media represented includes painting on very different scales and fashion design, while the sources of inspiration range from embroidered shawls to Arabic calligraphy. An architect is included in the prize for the first time. Multi-media installations evoke the symbolism of light and challenge Western approaches to art history.

A series of specially commissioned short films on each finalist can be viewed online at: [www.vam.ac.uk/articles/jameel-prize-5](http://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/jameel-prize-5)

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 curator of contemporary art and design from the region.

The Jameel Prize 5 exhibition will go on international tour. The show will be one of the first exhibitions to be hosted by the Jameel Arts Centre in Dubai, open from Spring to Autumn 2019.

The V&A announced the shortlist for Jameel Prize 5 in February 2018. A panel of judges, chaired by V&A Director, Tristram Hunt selected the eight finalists. He said: *"The Jameel Prize continues to gain momentum. This – the fifth edition of the prize – has attracted 375 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 traditions."*

One of the judges **Salah Hassan**, Professor and Director, Institute for Comparative Modernities at Cornell University, New York 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 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 eight shortlisted artists and designers:**

**Kamrooz Aram** works in a variety of art forms, including painting, collage, drawing and installation. 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 also displays *Ancient Through Modern 26* and *Ancient Through Modern 28* (both 2017), two works of collage from the same series. These contain publications of works 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 is *The Translator* from the series *How Iraqi Are You?* (2015), which was inspired by illustrations in 13th-century Arabic manuscripts. With this 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.

**Hala Kaiksow** is a young fashion designer who launched her eponymous sustainable womenswear label in 2016. She re-appropriates workwear 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 are 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 a 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* 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 *riq'ah*, and in particular by the angle at which a scribe holds the reed-pen (*qalam*) to write *riq'ah*. 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 Abudail. 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 is showing *Tâqiya Nôr* [Hat-Light] (2016). This installation is made up of 77 hats in coloured wool, all with different patterns, made by a craftsman in Rahmoun's home town. Electric wires connect the hats and power the light bulbs hidden beneath them. Arranged in ten groups in parallel rows, they are all linked to one cable. For Rahmoun, odd numbers such as 77 suggest an infinite number, and so the 77 hats in ten groups allude to the innumerable subdivisions of the Islamic faith in their different groupings, which are, though, all part of one religious community. 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 includes 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), are also on display. Shabbir has used the walls around her works as a canvas to continue her painting. 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 Dhaka, Bangladesh where she still lives and works.

**For further PRESS information please contact Henrietta Sitwell in the V&A press office on 0207 942 2502 or email [h.sitwell@vam.ac.uk](mailto:h.sitwell@vam.ac.uk) (Not for Publication). A selection of high resolution images are available to download from <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>**

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Biographies of the judging panel and shortlisted artists and designers available on request.

#### **About the Jameel Prize**

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.

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.

### **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.

### **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 new 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)

