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The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, Meridian International Center, and the UAE Embassy Unveil First-Ever Exhibition of Contemporary Emirati Art to be Shown in Michigan

Lansing, MI. – Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates, a groundbreaking cultural diplomacy program that brings Emirati artwork and artists to the United States, is opening at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (The Broad MSU) on August 29, 2015. The exhibition, organized by Meridian International Center and the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), tells the story of the UAE’s rich history, culture and rapid development through the works of 25 notable Emirati artists. Past Forward represents the first major touring exhibition of contemporary Emirati art in the world.

“The artwork featured in this exhibition embodies the creativity radiating throughout the UAE, and captures the story of our young – but rapidly developing – nation,” said UAE Ambassador to the United States Yousef Al Otaiba. “Art has nourished our culture, informed our thinking, and allowed the UAE to become the modern, open and tolerant country that it is today.”

Over 50 paintings, sculptures, photographs and other artwork comprise the exhibition. The exhibition is traveling on a national tour through 2015, stopping in Texas, California, Washington, and Michigan. Emirati artists whose works are featured in Past Forward are touring the US with the exhibition and conducting educational outreach, lectures, and workshops.

“As a contemporary art museum devoted to the exhibition of work from around the globe, we are thrilled to host this major exhibition,” said Caitlin Doherty, Curator and Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs at the Broad MSU. “Past Forward is a tremendous opportunity to connect our local community with the global community through both contemporary art and educational outreach.”

Meridian International Center President and CEO Ambassador Stuart Holliday stressed the value of cultural diplomacy to increasing dialogue and relationships between communities. “This is a very exciting venture for Meridian,” said Ambassador Holliday. “Cultural diplomacy is a powerful tool to find common ground, build lasting relationships, and foster respect. Through this exhibition, Americans can experience the UAE’s diverse heritage and build the foundation for greater understanding between our two countries.”

The artwork showcased in Past Forward draws inspiration from the country’s rich history, diverse society, and unique environment. The exhibition leads visitors on a visual journey from artistic beginnings in the UAE to the country’s evolution into a vibrant regional art center. It also provides an intimate view of life in the UAE that characterizes the nation’s past, present, and future. The exhibition will be open to the public at the Broad MSU through October 18, 2015.

Related Programming

On Tuesday, September 29, the Broad MSU will host an exhibition reception and panel discussion featuring Dana Al Marashi, Heritage and Social Affairs Department Head, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Washington D.C.; Dr. Curtis Sandberg, Co-Curator and Senior Vice President of Arts and Culture, Meridian International Center, Washington, D.C.; Noor Al Suwaidi, Emirati Co-Curator, and renowned expert on contemporary Emirati art; and Salama Nasib, artist.

Support

Additional support for Past Forward is being provided by the Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority, the Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and Etihad Airways. The exhibition is co-curated by Dr. Curtis Sandberg, Senior Vice President for Arts and Cultural Programs at the Meridian International Center, and Noor Al Suwaidi, a renowned expert on contemporary Emirati art. For more information, please visit the Past Forward website and follow the hashtag #PastForward for updates.

About Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University

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Opened on November 10, 2012, the dynamic 46,000-square-foot museum serves as both a teaching institution and a cultural hub for East Lansing and the region. In keeping with MSU’s commitment to applying knowledge to benefit society and further the global common good, the Broad MSU’s program of original and traveling exhibitions; initiatives with living artists; performances; and educational offerings for students, faculty, and the community make the museum a center for questioning and understanding the modern world. With a collection containing 7,500 objects from the Greek and Roman periods through the Renaissance and on to the Modern, the Broad MSU is uniquely able to contextualize the wide range of contemporary art practices within a firm historical context. The museum is named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, longtime supporters of the university who provided the lead gift of $28 million. For more information, visit www.broadmuseum.msu.edu.

About Michigan State University

Michigan State University has been working to advance the common good in uncommon ways for more than 150 years. One of the top research universities in the world, MSU focuses its vast resources on creating solutions to some of the world’s most pressing challenges, while providing life-changing opportunities to a diverse and inclusive academic community through more than 200 programs of study in 17 degree-granting colleges.

About Meridian International Center

Headquartered in Washington, DC, Meridian International Center is a premier international leadership organization that provides valuable insight and experiences across borders, cultures, and sectors. Meridian works with U.S. Department of State, partners in the government, private, NGO, and educational sectors globally to create lasting international partnerships through leadership programs and cultural exchanges. Meridian also connects U.S. and foreign governments with the private sector to respond to global challenges and sustain impact. Meridian’s mission is to create innovative exchange, educational, cultural, and policy programs that advance three goals: strengthen U.S. engagement with the world through the power of exchange, prepare public and private sector leaders for a complex global future, and provide a neutral forum for international collaboration across sectors.

About The United Arab Emirates

The UAE is a source of stability, tolerance, innovation, and growth in the Arabian Gulf and around the globe. The United States and the UAE are reliable allies, with historical and present-day shared security and economic interests. In fact, the UAE is the largest export market for US goods in the Middle East and more US naval vessels visit UAE ports than any other port outside the United States. The United States and the UAE also enjoy growing social and cultural ties, and many US institutions in education, healthcare and the arts have formed collaborative partnerships with UAE entities. For more information: www.uae-embassy.org.

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