



News Release

27 June 2018: for immediate release

Mehdi Moutashar and Marina Tabassum announced as first ever joint winners of Jameel Prize 5

vam.ac.uk/jameelprize5 #JameelPrize5



The artist **Mehdi Moutashar** (b.1943, Hilla, Iraq) and the architect **Marina Tabassum** (b. 1969 in Dhaka, Bangladesh) have been announced as joint winners of the £25,000 Jameel Prize 5. This is the first time the prize has been awarded to two finalists. Fady Jameel, President of Art Jameel, presented Mehdi and Marina with the prize at an evening ceremony at the V&A on Wednesday 27 June.

Mehdi received the award for his four bold works of minimalist abstraction rooted in Islamic geometry, and Marina for her visionary Bait ur Rouf mosque built in 2012 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Both winners' achievement has been to produce work of outstanding quality and contemporary relevance while demonstrating a profound understanding of the cultures from which they come. The judges felt that although working in very different fields, the joint winners had both shown the same combination of lucidity and sophistication in drawing on Islamic tradition.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A and chair of judging panel, said: *“This edition, selecting one winner proved extremely difficult, due to the very high standard of work in the exhibition. The joint Jameel Prize 5 winners are both in dialogue with contemporary global discourses on art and have produced exemplary work in two very different disciplines. They show an awareness of modernist practices of the 20th century, which have in turn drawn on traditions from around the world. At the same time, though, they are passionately rooted in and deeply learned about their own cultural legacies.”*

Mehdi Moutashar left Iraq in the late 1960s and settled in Paris, where he encountered forms of minimalism, including geometric abstraction. He has developed these ideas, integrating them

with the Islamic traditions of his native land to create a powerful personal language that has depth, wit and urgency. The judges agreed that he should be considered among the greatest living exponents of a constructivist aesthetic.

Marina Tabassum is an architect based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Bait ur Rouf mosque draws on medieval Islamic architecture and celebrates the building traditions of Bengal. The mosque is a wonder in its play with geometry, abstraction, light, air and water, making it both an animated and contemplative space. Its functions answer the needs of the local community, and it is a composition of local materials and contemporary techniques, responsive to both its environment and to history. The building positions Marina as a contemporary architect of great insight and imagination.”

An exhibition of work by the winner and six other short-listed artists and designers runs until 25 November 2018 at the V&A. They are **Kamrooz Aram, Hayv Kahraman, Hala Kaiksow, naqsh collective, Younes Rahmoun and Wardha Shabbir.**

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 was decided by a panel of judges chaired by Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A. The judges are Salah Hassan, Professor and Director, Institute for Comparative Modernities at Cornell University, New York; 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.

Launched in 2009, the winner of the first Jameel Prize was Afruz 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.

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.

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.

– ENDS –

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 (Not for Publication)

A selection of high resolution images are available to download from <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>

Notes to Editors:

Biographical Information on the Winners

Mehdi Moutashar (b.1943, Hilla, Iraq) lives and works in Arles, France. He graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts, Baghdad, Iraq in 1966 and the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France in 1970. He was Professor at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, from 1974-2008. Moutashar's art lies at the confluence of two artistic traditions, the western heritage of geometric abstraction and the Islamic aesthetic tradition of geometrical order and lines. His art is a radical, geometrical abstraction with figures that are never enclosed inside the limits of a contour but open, fragmentary and constantly shifting. His solo exhibitions are numerous but more recently include: *Ligne, couleur 1968-1978*, Galerie Orsay, Paris, France (2017); Albareh Gallery and The National Theatre of Bahrain, Bahrain (2017); Galerie Victor Sfez, Paris, France (2016); Galerie AL/MA, Montpellier, France, (2016 and 2012); Galerie Le Petit Temple, Lasalle, France (2014); Galerie Linde Hollinger, Ladenburg, Germany (2013); and Kleine Museum, Weissenstadt, Germany (2011). A selection of recent group exhibitions include: Art Dubai, Albareh Gallery (2017); *Au-delà de la forme: Richard Seera/Mehdi Moutashar*, Palais du Tau, Reims, France (2016); *Hommage au Carré noir de Malevitch*, Musée Vasarely, Budapest, Hungary (2015); Galerie Deleuze-Rochetin, Arpaillargues, France (2011); *Francois Morellet & Mehdi Moutashar*, Institut des Cultures de l'Islam, Paris (2010); and *Notations*, Akademie der Kunst, Berlin and ZKM Zentrum für Kunst and Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, Germany (2009). Moutashar's work is in numerous international collections including; Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France; Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France; Fine Arts Museum, Chartres, France; Fine Arts Museum, Cholet, France; National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan; National Modern Art Museum, Baghdad, Iraq; Klingspor Museum der Stadt, Offenbach, Germany; Scandinavian Graphic Art, Stockholm, Sweden; Modern Art Museum, Tunis, Tunisia and Kleine Museum, Weissenstadt, Germany.

Marina Tabassum (b. 1969 in Dhaka, Bangladesh) lives and works in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Tabassum graduated with a B.Arch from Bangladesh University of Engineering and

Technology in 1994. She is the principal of Marina Tabassum Architects (MTA), a company which aims to establish a global language of architecture yet rooted to the place, putting climate, materials, site, culture and local history first. As a result, projects are carefully chosen and are limited by number per year. They range from Master Planning of Eco Resorts to twelve storied residential blocks. For Jameel Prize 5, she is shortlisted for her project Bait ur Rouf Mosque in Dhaka, Bangladesh for which she also received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2014-2016. Prior to establishing MTA in 2005, Tabassum founded URBANA, a practice based in Bangladesh, with Kashef Chowdhury. Together with Chowdhury she designed the Independence Monument of Bangladesh and the Museum of Independence in 1997. Their project A5, Architects Residence was a finalist of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2004. She won the Architect of the Year Award in 2001 and was listed in the top ten women of Bangladesh in 2005 (published by Ananya magazine). She is Academic Director and Member of the Executive Board of Bengal Institute for Architecture, Landscapes and Settlements and currently a member of the Board of Directors of Prakreeti, a Fair Trade Organisation that promotes the crafts of Bangladesh. Tabassum is visiting Professor at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, Massachusetts and the University of Texas at Arlington, USA and was visiting professor at BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh (2005-11). She has lectured at international architecture forums and events including: Architecture Foundation of Australia in Melbourne, Australia (2017); Cite de l'Architecture, Paris, France (2017); Architecture League of New York, Harvard GSD (2016 and 2017); Swiss Architecture Museum Basel, Switzerland (2016); National Conference of Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Perth, Australia (2014) and Roros, Institute of Architects, Norway (2013).

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 the Jameel Prize

Leading curators, designers, artists and cultural figures from across the world were invited to nominate applicants to the Jameel Prize. There were 375 entries received from around the world, and for the first time, the shortlist features work from Bangladesh, Bahrain and Jordan. A panel of judges, chaired by V&A Director, Tristram Hunt, selected the shortlist of eight artists and designers. A series of specially commissioned short films on each finalist can be viewed online at:

www.vam.ac.uk/articles/jameel-prize-5

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

