

Press Release  
27 April 2016

### **Ruya Foundation to exhibit at Art16, London**



The Ruya Foundation is pleased to announce its participation as a non-profit exhibitor in Art16 at Olympia, London from 19 – 22 May 2016.

Ruya's presentation will exhibit works from a broad range of contemporary Iraqi artists, most of whom live and work in Iraq, meaning that the Fair will present the first opportunity for many of them to engage with the international art market. Ruya strives to create international opportunities for, and foster recognition of, Iraqi contemporary artists working both in Iraq and abroad in a variety of ways and Art16 will mark the first occasion on which the Foundation has presented work at an international art fair.

Works will be on display by 12 artists working across a range of media including painting, photography, ceramics, textile, installation and video. The Foundation has been working with many of these artists for a number of years, seeking international opportunities and exposure.

As well as featuring internationally recognised Iraqi artists, the presentation will also exhibit lesser-known artists who have yet to exhibit in any context outside of Iraq, including Dilan Abdin (b. 1982) who creates artist books and ceramicist Qasim Hamza (b. 1952). They will be joined by artists such as Jamal Penjweny (b. 1981), who exhibited in the Iraq Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale 2013, and Nadine Hattom (b. 1980), whose work is on display as part of 'Parallel Projects' at the sixth edition of the Marrakech Biennale.

Ruya aims to present a spectrum of Iraqi contemporary work today at Art16, from installation and video to traditional media such as textiles and paint. Examples of contemporary Iraqi painters who will be on display include Ahmad Abdul Razzaq (b. 1954) and Yusra Alabadi (b. 1967). Abdul Razzaq paints surrealist, almost post-apocalyptic, landscapes that merge fantastical creatures with human body parts, whereas Alabadi's colourful, figurative works present traditional figures and events with a studied innocence.

There will also be a particular emphasis on photography in the presentation, reflecting the strong presence of photography as an accessible medium for artists living in Iraq. Hattom and Penjweny are joined by Ayman Al Amiri (b. 1995) and Julie Adnan (b. 1985). Al Amiri is a Baghdad-based photographer who takes black-and-white photographs of street life in the city. Works from his series 'Baghdad's street workers' (2013–2014) will be on display, which feature frank and surprisingly playful depictions of prostitutes in domestic settings in Baghdad. Adnan's multimedia project *You May Go* (2010–) includes photographic portraits of subjects holding up touristic images of countries they wish to visit or migrate to, in direct contrast to the landscape of Iraq that the subjects inhabit.

Ruya's partnership with Art16 follows its launch of the first publicly accessible online database of Iraqi contemporary artists, which includes over 300 artist profiles. The majority of the artists on display at Art16 can also be explored on the database.

Ruya's participation in Art16 is driven by its on-going mission to promote the work of contemporary Iraqi artists internationally and to create meaningful opportunities for Iraqi artists both in and outside of Iraq. At a very essential level, this partnership grants commercial opportunities to artists who are otherwise disenfranchised from the art market.

Tamara Chalabi, Chair and Co-Founder of the Ruya Foundation said:

*'We are delighted to be partnering with Art16 to give contemporary Iraqi artists the opportunity to exhibit on an international platform. This is particularly vital at a time when the cultural infrastructure of Iraq is increasingly under threat.'*

- ENDS -

### **Notes to Editors**

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The Ruya Artists Database can be found at [www.ruyafoundation.org/en/artists](http://www.ruyafoundation.org/en/artists)

### **About the Ruya Foundation**

The Ruya Foundation is an Iraqi registered non-profit, non-governmental organisation founded in 2012 with the aim of aiding and enriching culture in Iraq, and building cultural bridges with the world. Ruya's initial goal is to promote culture in Iraq at a time when priorities are focused elsewhere, and to build a platform that will enable Iraqis in the arts, the young in particular, to benefit from, and participate in international events. In addition to supporting local projects, its aim is to create a network of intercultural events that can contribute to the development of civil society in Iraq. It is also committed to nurturing a multicultural dialogue through the arts.

Ruya initiates and commissions creative projects in the visual, audiovisual and performing arts. Ruya was the commissioner of the National Pavilion of Iraq for the 56th and 55th Venice Biennales in May 2013 and May 2015. Ruya collaborated with international artist

Ai Weiwei on a major publication *Traces of Survival: Drawings by refugees in Iraq selected by Ai Weiwei*. In March 2015, Ruya launched the first drama therapy project in Baghdad, supported by the Prince Claus Fund. In addition, the Ruya blog is a live platform for Iraqi art. Interviews with emerging and established artists both in Iraq and those based in the diaspora are published regularly to encourage dialogue, the exchange of ideas and promote the possibility of collaboration.

[www.ruyafoundation.org](http://www.ruyafoundation.org)

### **About Art16**

Art16 will showcase leading contemporary and modern art from across the globe for its fourth edition in May 2016. Alongside the presentation of international galleries, the Fair hosts a parallel programme of talks, tours and VIP events. Art16 brings together works from both emerging and established art markets from around the world.

Art16 is organised by Art Fairs London Ltd, which was set up by the original founders of ART HK: Hong Kong International Art Fair, Tim Etchells and Sandy Angus.

### **Art16 opening dates:**

Thursday 19 May 2016, 6 pm – 9 pm

Friday 20 May 2016, 11 am – 7 pm

Saturday 21 May 2016, 11 am – 7 pm

Sunday 22 May 2016, 11 am – 5 pm

Further information and tickets available at [www.artfairslondon.com](http://www.artfairslondon.com)

Image credit: **Nadine Hattom**, A U.S. Marine with a ground combat element assigned to Delta Company, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Task Force Mechanized, Multi-National Force - West walks through the Hatra Ruins in the Jazeerah Desert in Iraq on July 20, 2008. The task force is conducting disruption operations in the area to deny the enemy sanctuary and prevent foreign fighters from accessing the area. DoD photo by Lance Cpl. Albert F. Hunt, U.S. Marine Corps. (Released) From the series *Shadows*, 2016. Courtesy the artist and Ruya Foundation.