PRESS RELEASE

PRESENTATION OF THE FIRST SAUDI NATIONAL PAVILION AT LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

The Ambassador of Italy to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, H.E. Mr Luca Ferrari, and the Director of the Misk Art Institute, dr. Ahmed Mater, hosted a presentation of the Saudi national pavilion at the 16th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia on Monday 14 May at the Residence of the Italian Ambassador in Riyadh. The event was attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps, artists and members of the Saudi and Italian community in Riyadh.

The Saudi national pavilion, titled “Spaces in Between”, has been organized under the leadership of the Misk Art Institute and will showcase works by Saudi architects Abdulrahman and Turki Gazzaz, supervised by curators Dr. Sumaya Al-Solaiman and Ms. Jawaher Al-Sudairy. This is the first time that Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be represented at this prestigious international art exhibition with a national pavilion.

The event aimed to celebrate this landmark moment in the history of Saudi Arabia and for the cultural relations between Italy and the Kingdom. “The economic and social changes which we are witnessing in the Kingdom today are extraordinary. As we continue to develop the strategic partnership between our two countries under the framework of Vision 2030, arts and culture have a special role to play” – said Ambassador Luca Ferrari. “For many years, young Saudi artists travelled to and lived in Italian cities as part of their artistic journey. Italian architects have worked in Saudi Arabia and contributed to its development. There is now need to develop a more strategic framework to enhance the cultural dialogue between our two countries. There is no better time for the Kingdom to join La Biennale di Venezia” – he added.

Dr. Ahmed Mater, Executive Director of the Misk Art Institute, said: “Our participation in the International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia is an unprecedented moment for Saudi Arabia’s creative community. It’s an opportunity to bring pioneering Saudi thought to an international platform through our creative vernacular. Coupled with the allocation of an incredible pavilion space, we are very excited about our presentation this year at the Biennale Architettura but also, looking forward to future years and presentations and what they will draw upon from our own community.”

In response to the overarching theme of the exhibition, the Saudi pavilion at the 16th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia will explore new possibilities for the utilisation of liminal spaces to increase socialization and community building within Saudi’s rapidly expanding cities. Over the past four decades, Saudi metropolitan centres have undergone rapid urbanization, with rural migration propelling built territories outwards. “The exhibition will explore the social implications of architecture. Architects Abdulrahman and Turki Gazzaz are using this opportunity to examine the relationship between space and architecture – hoping to engage visitors in the potential of creating interaction through redesign” – stated curator Jawaher Al-Sudairy.

La Biennale di Venezia was founded in 1895 to promote and showcase the very best of contemporary art from around the world. Over the years it has grown to encompass all forms of artistic expressions, including cinema, music, theatre, architecture and dance. The 16th International Architecture Exhibition, titled “Freespace”, has been curated by Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara. It will be open to the public from 26 May to 25 November 2018 in Venice and will include work by 71 individual participants from all around the world. 63 countries will host national pavilions.