MISK ART INSTITUTE
LAUNCH REGIONAL PROGRAMME
AT MISK GLOBAL FORUM

Newly established Misk Art Institute launches inaugural regional program with groundbreaking exhibitions at the Misk Global Forum

16 November, 2017 Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

The Misk Art Institute, a new cultural organization established under Mohammed Bin Salman Foundation “Misk Foundation”, founded by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, has launched a regional cultural program with a groundbreaking series of exhibitions at the Misk Global Forum in Riyadh.

The Institute, which will have permanent locations in Riyadh and Abha in the South Western region of Saudi Arabia, is being spearheaded by leading Saudi artist, Ahmed Mater, and aims to establish Saudi Arabia’s leading platform for grassroots cultural production, diplomacy and exchange.

The 2018 regional program will encompass public art commissions, exhibitions, art book fairs, school curriculum projects, artist competitions, cultural festivals; and include:

● The launch of a National Public Art Prize to be implemented in cities across Saudi Arabia
● A regionally-focused program of exhibitions and public events during Dubai Art Week 2018
● A major festival of Saudi art exhibitions and events in Riyadh
● An artists-led program of workshops and curriculum-resources for Saudi schools
● A ‘Create & Inspire’ competition for young Saudi artists to take part in the journey of a lifetime to Silicon Valley
● Saudi’s first Art Book Fair during Jeddah art week in February 2018
● The commissioning of an immersive Virtual Reality Film exploring artists’ studios across Saudi

Ahmed Mater, Head of Misk Art Institute commented, ‘Art is a universal language people use to communicate. Misk Art Institute is shining the light on great young Saudi talent’
On the occasion of the Misk Global Forum, the newly established Misk Art Institute has invited pioneering Saudi Graphic designer, Yusef Alahmad, to present his graphic artworks and design philosophy, in an exhibition entitled *Pixelated Kingdom*.

*Pixelated Kingdom* takes its name from Yusef Alahmad’s MFA thesis that addresses the historical and social contexts in which Saudi Arabian graphic design has established itself in the last few decades. The original research for *Pixelated Kingdom* was influenced by the designer’s experience working as a creative producer in both the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The driving force behind this work was to ‘elevate graphic design standards in Saudi Arabia’ by providing a resource guide for the artist’s peers.

Throughout the works presented in *Pixelated Kingdom*, the manipulation of type and the implementation of traditional Islamic patterning and calligraphy acts as a vibrant and futuristic exploration of Saudi and Middle Eastern heritage. The dialogue of sensibilities that occurs within the artist’s design choices such as wide gradients of color, bold repetitive lines and digital textures was largely influenced by the artist’s time spent living in San Francisco studying international graphic design movements.

Alahmad believes that visual design is a reflection of societal values. By incorporating visuals from his cultural upbringing and blending these design archetypes with his changing environments, Alahmad seeks to create visual connections between cultures. This blending is most notable in several works included in *Pixelated Kingdom*, such as ‘Bas,’ ‘Oud,’ and ‘Sejjada.’ Alahmad’s work within this unique visual identity has effectively inspired emerging graphic designers and artists throughout the MENA region and the United States.

*Pixelated Kingdom* surveys works created by Alahmad from 2013 to 2017, including works that were generated during his time at the Academy of Art University MFA graphic design program in San Francisco. In recent years, Alahmad has worked with Print Magazine (US), Baseline Magazine (US), Oasis Magazine (Saudi Arabia), Design Magazine (Saudi Arabia), Khaleejdesque Magazine (Kuwait), among others, and exhibited in numerous shows around the world, including P21 Gallery x Kalimat Magazine (London); SoulSpace (Oakland, California); *Loud Art: Executing Culture Shock* (Saudi Arabia); Khaleeji Reinterpreted (Kuwait); *Local Not Local*: The Arab American National Museum/The Levantine Center (Detroit/Los Angeles); Fully Booked Art Book Fair (Dubai); *Epicenter X*: The Arab American National Museum (Dearborn, Michigan); *Cities of Conviction*: Utah Museum of Contemporary Art (Salt Lake City, Utah); and *Desert to Delta*: Art Museum of the University of Memphis (Memphis, Tennessee).

**ABOUT MISK ART INSTITUTE**

The Misk Art Institute is a new cultural organization established under the Misk Foundation, which was founded by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. Under the leadership of pioneering Saudi artist, Ahmed Mater, the institute aims to establish Saudi Arabia’s leading platform for grassroots cultural production, diplomacy and exchange.

As part of Saudi Arabia’s ambitious 2030 Vision, the Misk Art Institute Institute furthers the Misk Foundation’s aim of investing in the long-term potential for artists to thrive in a society where culture plays an increasingly important role. In launching the Misk Art Institute’s local and international cultural program, the aim is to inspire a new dialogue within Saudi Arabia and between Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world.

www.miskartinstitute.org