

قُدماً: Stepping Forward:

بحث في الممارسات الأدائية، هنا
Performance Practice
and Research, Here

18—19.02.23

Day 1 | STEPPING FORWARD: Performance Research and Practice, Here

421, Abu Dhabi

Saturday, 18 February 2023

10:00–10:15 Introduction and Welcome

10:15–11:15 Panel
(AR + simultaneous translation to EN)
Stepping From Here
Moderated by Reem Fadda, curator, Palestine/UAE

To kick off our public programming, we invite UAE-based artists Nujoom Alghanem, Mohammed Kazem, and Ammar Al Attar along with curator Reem Fadda to reflect on performance and performativity in the UAE context. Emerging from conceptual art in the 1970s, UAE pioneers employed performance to break down barriers between traditional art categories, bringing formal and conceptual ideas to life. From the gestural explorations of Mohamed Kazem to Nujoom Alghanem's costumed and cinematic performances, these practices continue to actively influence performance in the UAE, with Ammar Al Attar's most recent body of work as a case in point.

The conversation will take key works of each artist as triangulation points to chart a map of performance practices and their ecology of thought in the UAE.

We start with Mohammed Kazem's exploration of the body in motion, as in the now iconic *Tongue* (1994). Next we consider urban mobility in his *Photographs with Flags* (Dubai, 2003/1997), then explorations of the implied body in *Showering* (1998). Finally we consider the audience's body in *Wooden Box* (1996).

With Nujoom Alghanem, the panel will unpack performance art as a subject in her early documentary *Amal* (2011) and its resonances and reintegration in her later multimedia installation work *Between Heaven and Earth, the Body I Borrowed* (2017).

Ammar Al Attar's performances evolved out of his photography-based practice over the last two years, drawn to performance art's radical potential to open new directions in conceptual practices. Characterized by his determination to immerse himself in site-specific contexts, Ammar spent months preparing before documenting his performances, which until now have only been accessible as videos or photographs. In the mediated performances, Ammar is seen doing repetitive, seemingly menial tasks in his *kandura* (formal Emirati dress) such as drawing a circle around himself or stamping blank papers with a black block stamp.

With this panel, we position our upcoming discussions within the fraught and complex history of performance in the UAE, and the rapid and continuous evolution of its creative and social context.

Speakers:
Nujoom Alghanem, artist, Dubai
Mohammed Kazem, artist, Dubai
Ammar Al Attar, artist, Ajman
Q&A

11:15–11:30 Break

11:30–13:15 Panel
(EN, FR + simultaneous translation to EN & AR)
Practice
Moderated by Katia Arfara, curator and scholar, Greece/UAE

Considering the nature and terms of performance as a medium, we hear from practitioners whose work encompasses movement and choreography, lecture performance and installation, and scholarly research, writing, and pedagogy.

Ways of (Not) Seeing “the Economy”, Ho Rui An

In recent years, the projects of Ho Rui An have sought to understand what it means to observe the thing we call “the economy”. Through works that have examined such seemingly abstract and expansive phenomena as financial capitalism and the so-called socialist market economy in Reform-era China, he approaches the medium of the lecture as a form through which one can produce knowledge and make arguments that returns them to the body. This presentation explores the ways that economic abstractions come to be embodied and proposes embodied modes of observation that question what it is exactly we talk about when we talk about “the economy”.

The dramaturgy of Rangzen, Abhishek Majumdar

Rangzen' is a term used for freedom in Tibetan. Rangzen is a complex term because it on one hand meant necessary political freedom from China but over the years HH the Dalai Lama has given up the call for Rangzen and adopted what is commonly known as the Middle Path, which is an autonomous region within Tibet . This short talk looks at the complications around this and reads two scenes from Pah-la, a play on Tibet which discuss Ranzen in two different ways, one from a political territorial dramaturgical stand point and another from a feminist stand point. One of the scenes is between two Tibetans and the other between two Han characters.

States of freeze, Alia Hamdan

In this talk, Alia presents her research around the physical state of «freeze». This state echoes the fundamental experience of August 4 in Beirut, an instance of rupture in time, which got fixed in the bodies of the inhabitants of the city. How to inject time inside a fixed present? How can the filmic medium be used to pour time inside frozen gestures? I present here my ongoing esthetic enquiry and formal findings, for a project which will consist in producing a collection of videos revolving around states of freeze.

A free body that invents its own gesture!, Sofiane Ouissi

How, through the body, can we transcend the gesture of reality : sublimate it, anesthetize it and transmit it? How can a gesture build a new shared space, of contagion, of living together and of friction ? From this gesture, what is the body to be reinvented? What state will this new body produce? How will this state impact on the people invited to take part in this process, in this new space being created in order to carry political narratives, to provoke and build spaces for encounters?

Speakers:
Abhishek Majumdar, playwright and theater director, India/Abu Dhabi
Alia Hamdan, artist and scholar, Lebanon
Ho Rui An, artist and writer, Singapore
Sofiane Ouissi, artist, Tunisia
Q&A

13:15–14:45 Lunch

14:45–16:30 Panel
(EN + simultaneous translation to AR)

Archive

Moderated by Nada Raza, Director of Alserkal Arts Foundation, UK/Pakistan/UAE

How do we cite and attribute the performative? Is live art a fugitive medium? As practitioners and researchers looking to build on and acknowledge the legacies that have preceded us, the role of the archivist and art historian become more relevant and urgent. Bringing together research on South East, South, West and Central Asia, this panel explores comparative approaches to performance and exhibition histories.

Performative Documentation: Archival Departure, Eva Bentcheva

While the close relationship between live performance and audio-visual documentation has been widely acknowledged (Auslander 2006; Jones 1997), the recent rise of institutional and online archives of Performance Art has raised a question: what alternative forms of 'documentation' beyond photography, video and textual accounts exist to convey socio-political contexts and micro-histories of performances? Moreover, does archiving performative art necessitate not only material, but also social, polyvocal and temporal forms of documentation? These questions have been at the heart of academic, as well as curatorial and artistic engagements with Performance Art over the past decade. In this talk, I will reflect upon my personal experiences of participating in the creation, as well as curating, an archive of performance art of/from Southeast Asia in the UK and Germany between 2016-19. Looking to more recent works such as Tuan Mami's performative installation *Immigrating Garden* (2011–present), I will conclude by discussing the key role of artists in developing archival forms which capture invisible voices and histories.

Recuperating Rummana, Rattanamol Singh Johal

In the absence of a consolidated and accessible archive, Johal's work on Rummana Hussain's performances and installations has deployed individual memories and documentary traces as a writing tool and mode of reconstruction, existing in tension with the works' iterative, temporally bounded, nonreproductive nature. His contribution to this panel will discuss the problems and possibilities of this methodology while underscoring the significance of rigorous curatorial and art historical thinking around restaging and refabrication.

The Live audio Essay, Lawrence Abu Hamdan

To some extent every artwork Lawrence made began its life as a performance, or what he calls a *live audio essay*. They are essays because they present a network of relations that are yet to be solidified in the artworks final form, they are "live" because the audience is a central component in that process by which those said relations become solidified. They are audio essays because they seek to establish and experiment with conditions for listening. An upcoming book comprising the transcriptions of his *live audio essays* will be published by Primary information later this year: this talk seeks to chart the lineage of some of these works from the live audio essay, to the artwork/ installation and finally to the book; what is lost and what new conditions are born at each stage of the performances translation?

Speakers:

Eva Bentcheva, scholar, UK/Germany

Rattanamol Singh Johal, scholar, India/USA

Lawrence Abu Hamdan, artist and researcher, Jordan/Lebanon/UAE

Q&A

16:30–16:45 Break

16:45–19:45 Performance

Practice

Burn by Nikhil Chopra, artist, India

In this durational live drawing performance, Nikhil Chopra will reflect on the element of fire as he creates a drawing at a scale larger than the span of the body, and over the period of 3 hours. Chopra's performances often critically examine stereotypes based on identity, nationality, gender and class, while walking a fine line between performance art, theater, and landscape drawing.

Nikhil Chopra's artistic practice interweaves live art, drawing, photography, sculpture and installations. His performances, in large part improvised, dwell on identity and its construction, autobiography and authorship, the pose and self-portraiture. His work reflects on the process of transformation and the part played by the duration of performance. Nikhil combines everyday life, memory and collective history; daily acts such as eating, resting, washing and dressing, but also drawing and making clothes, become the process of making an artwork, becoming an essential part of the show.

20:00

Dinner

Day 2 | STEPPING FORWARD: Performance Research and Practice, Here
Alserkal Arts Foundation Project Space, Warehouse 50, Alserkal Avenue, Dubai
Sunday, 19 February 2023

10:30–11:00 Coffee and Registration

11:00–12:00 Performance
Practice
Passport Blessing Ceremony by Venuri Perera, artist, Sri Lanka
Common Room, Warehouse 50

Passports have varying degrees of power. While certain citizens can visit almost anywhere in the world without any hindrance, travel is heavily restricted for many others as their nation's passports are less powerful. Venuri Perera's satirical ceremony is triggered by the intrusive and dehumanizing processes many citizens have to face before entering another country, which further cement inequality based on country of origin.

Q&A with Nada Raza, Director of Alserkal Arts Foundation, UK/Pakistan/UAE

12:00–12:15 Welcome and Opening Remarks
Nada Raza, Director, Alserkal Arts Foundation, UK/Pakistan/UAE

12:15–13:15 *The Body Politic*
Pedagogy
Talk by Pushpamala N., artist, India

Born in Bangalore, Pushpamala is considered one of India's most established artists. In this talk, Pushpamala will walk audiences through the feminist performance & indian histories that closely influence her work. Pushpamala's work spans photography, video, performance, and more, and is known for its feminist influences and their rejection of authenticity and embracing of multiple realities.

Q&A with George Jose, scholar and Professor of Anthropology, India/UAE

13:15–14:30 **Lunch**
Warehouse 51 | Alserkal Arts Foundation

14:30–16:00 Panel (EN)
Pedagogy
Moderated by Tina Sherwell, curator and scholar, Palestine/UAE

Given that practice-led pedagogy is germane to live art, this panel addresses questions essential to the growth of a regional performance framework. What are the tools and methods that the field relies on for research and critique? What does it mean to teach performance, here? As the modes of performance expand to allow for local contexts and performative traditions, how do we transgress disciplinary boundaries and create a pool of shared knowledge for future practitioners to draw upon?

Making Theater: A Global Classroom Case Study from NYU Abu Dhabi, Joanna Settle

This talk shares the development process for a course designed to give students from around the world a shared collaborative experience making theater together, without defining the parameters of what "theater" might be.

Structures of Experience, Rabbya Naseer

Based on the experience of making, teaching, curating, & archiving 'Performance Art' within (but not limited to) the context of Pakistan, this talk will delve into some of the methods of inquiry; how to teach and archive a practice/medium/form that resides in-between disciplinary boundaries and resists definitions? Is performance art's resistance to definitions and the challenges of archiving and teaching this 'undefined experience', helpful in making it something more than the sum of its component parts?

Interdisciplinary practice, through a conscious blurring of distinctions between 'Art' and 'everyday life', helps question clearly defined categories and broadens the concept of art and its affect. Allowing for works that don't follow any.

Be Like Water, Lecture Performance, Nikhil Chopra

In the famous words of martial artist and film star Bruce Lee "Be like water my friend, be formless, you put water in a cup it becomes a cup" I find a relationship to a practice of making art live, in a state of flux, that then exists as a memory of a moment or a series of moments archived and recorded in photographs, videos and drawings. Nikhil Chopra's lecture presentation is an attempt to locate the body as a container of memory, in the now, through images of two performances: Drawing a line through Landscape and Lands, Waters and Skies commissioned by documenta 14 and the Metropolitan Museum of Art respectively.

Speakers:

Joanna Settle, artist & Professor of Theater, US/UAE

Rabbya Naseer, artist and scholar, Lahore, Pakistan

Nikhil Chopra, artist, India

Q&A

16:00–16:30 Break

16:30–18:00 Panel
(EN)
Support

Moderated by Chinasa Vivian Ezugha, artist and scholar, UK/Nigeria/UAE

What institutional infrastructure best supports a performer's process? What do commissioners, curators and host institutions need to consider when developing a performance programme? We hear from practitioners and curators who have developed frameworks and infrastructures that support and facilitate practice, and who are mindful of the responsibilities and ethics of privileging the body in relation to the object in exhibitionary contexts.

A Search for Decolonial Institution: Akademi AntarRagam and Majelis Dramaturgi as Experiments of Performing Supports, Ugoran Prasad

Our (globalized, globalizing) institutions are crumbling. Hence, these are exciting times. Should we delink from the institution – a notion of the social body that is embedded in Eurocentrism – and how? The experiments of tactical and critical supports for the arts we will discuss in this presentation are gestural at best, barely convincing, hardly exceptional or solutive, but not simply because exceptionalism is a formulaic desire of modern presentations, institutions, and Eurocentrism. We will explore practices of not-knowing, inconsistencies, and undisciplined in the making, sustaining, and performing networks of tactical ideas. There lies anxiety of separation as constant horror.

Communities of support - From local to translocal, Venuri Perera

Finding herself a part of different communities, Venuri is a receiver, mediator and negotiator of various forms of support. She will share her experiences with these varied support systems through her collaborations with Colombo Dance Platform, The Packet Collective, and Portals Next and reflect on their shifting strategies. What does it mean to form collective alliances and how does performance practice in particular lend itself to the formation of transnational networks and solidarities?

Toward a Perennial Future, Tanzim Wahab

This presentation will discuss the current dynamics of social and institutional support of performance art in the context of Bangladesh. Bangladeshi performance art is characterized by the interdisciplinary exchanges it has always generated – originally with fields of politics, theatres or public space interventions, but today more and more with self-organized and collaborative forms. The growing numbers of local practitioners and their commitment to redefining the conventional understanding of the medium have triggered

the development of various, specific languages and practices. The idiosyncrasy of regional performance art attempts to sketch an answer to pressing questions about the practice. What role does it play in cultural and political activism beyond white-cube spaces? While many cultural institutions stem from the architecture of affinities, it is equally important to revisit the support systems of performance and display, composing fluid structures of performance events comprehensively yet sustainably from local positionalities and communities. How can we learn from small-scale cultural platforms, itinerant formats, collective inquiry, and cooperatives, active in multivalent ways to create a porous infrastructure and circular economy of use and defiant acts of (artistic) freedom?

Speakers:

Ugoran Prasad, researcher, Indonesia

Venuri Perera, artist, Sri Lanka

Tanzim Wahab, researcher, Bangladesh Q&A

18:00–18:30 Break

18:30–19:30 Performance

Practice

The Oil in the Tankers, the Wind in the Trees by Ho Rui An, artist, Singapore

Sitting off the coast of Singapore are fleets of supertankers that speak to the economic significance of the oil industry in a country better known internationally as a postindustrial financial hub. Likewise, the botanical lushness of its urban landscape—a legacy of a nationwide greening movement launched in 1963—has allowed the city-state to produce an image of itself as “a city in a garden” that obscures its centrality within the global fossil fuels trade. Situating the oil industry’s somewhat unlikely and little-examined development in Singapore against a scenography of the island city’s postcolonial repopulation by greenery, this performance proposes a visual economy of the city-state that is premised upon the near-invisibility of oil and the spectacular visibility of trees

In this encounter between oil and trees, the vast tankers that allow oil to be kept out of circulation in order to be sold for higher prices at a later time are the underside to the alluring views of nature in constant motion, as observed by the American filmmaker D. W. Griffith when he famously invoked “the beauty of the moving wind in the trees”. Yet, in moving between scenery and monument, urban landscaping and historical figuration, the narrative here refuses any desire for visual pleasure. Instead, it seeks to reframe the seemingly contingent appearances in the background of an image as the grounds for a new kind of witnessing, one that might allow us to trace the material networks that enable oil’s always volatile emergence onto a scene covered by trees.

19:30–19:45 Q&A session with Mays Albaik, Programs and Community Initiatives Manager, 421

19:45 Closing Remarks

Biographies

Ammar Al Attar is a self-taught, Emirati mixed-media artist. Al Attar's practice seeks not only to document and translate, but also methodically research and examine aspects of regional ritual, material culture, and geographic orientation that are increasingly elusive in his rapidly globalizing society. His shift into performance art has given his work new depth, as it encompasses his gaze as both the subject and the observer. By using performance to translate interactions with his daily and natural environment, Al Attar widens the scope of possibility, providing a window into experience, perseverance, endurance, and ultimately creation.

He has also been recognized with various prizes, including by the Emirates Fine Arts Society 2014, Emirates Photography Exhibition 2014, and Art Abu Dhabi Commission 2018. His pieces are held in public and private collections throughout the Middle East at Sharjah Art Foundation, Barjeel Art Foundation, Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation, as well as internationally at the British Museum and Yinchuan Museum of Contemporary Art in China.

Mays Albaik is a Palestinian artist and the Program & Community Initiatives Manager at 421, a creative platform in Abu Dhabi. In her practice she explores the triangulation of place, body, and language through video, sculpture, and installation, and is expanding into collaborative methods of art production. At 421, she focuses on researching, setting, and executing the broader vision for programs that prioritize the needs of the creative community, working towards a horizontal approach to institutional operation. Mays holds an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, and a BArch from the American University of Sharjah, and is an alumna of the Salama Bint Hamdan Emerging Artist Fellowship. Mays lives and works in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Nujoom Alghanem is an Emirati poet, artist, and film director. She has published eight poetry collections and produced numerous films including documentaries, fiction, and art films. Her films have won over 40 regional and international prizes. In 2019, she was the solo artist of the UAE National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, and two years earlier was one of five artists were chosen to present the UAE in the same pavilion. She received the Pride of the UAE Medal through the Mohammed bin Rashid Government Excellence Award. Nujoom is a professional mentor and trainer in art practices, filmmaking and creative writing. She is currently a trustee of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, as well as an advisor to educational and cultural organizations in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Ho Rui An is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory. Across the mediums of lecture, essay and film, his research examines systems of governance in a global age. He has presented projects at the Bangkok Art Biennale; Asian Art Biennial; Gwangju Biennale; Jakarta Biennale; Sharjah Biennial; Kochi-Muziris Biennale; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Kunsthalle Wien; Singapore Art Museum; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; and Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media, Japan. In 2019, he was awarded the International Film Critics' (FIPRESCI) Prize at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany. In 2018, he was a fellow of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program.

Katia Arfara is Assistant Professor of Theatre & Performance Studies at New York University Abu Dhabi and curator. Her research, curatorship and teaching focus on performance and politics in the Global South, postcolonial dramaturgies, migration, and public art. During her artistic leadership of the Onassis Stegi, she has curated numerous interdisciplinary festivals and site-specific exhibitions at the intersection of art, science and civic practice. Dr. Arfara's work has been supported by the Fulbright Program, the DAAD, the Clemens Heller Program, the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton University, and the Saison Foundation in Tokyo. Her writing has been published in TDR: The Drama Review, Theatre Research International, Contemporary Theatre Review, and Performance Research. She is the author of *Théâtralités contemporaines*, the editor of the special issue « Scènes en transition - Balkans et Grèce » for Theatre/Public, and the co-editor of *Intermedial Performance and Politics in the Public Sphere*.

Eva Bentcheva is an art historian and curator with a focus on transnational archives, conceptualism, performance and participation art in South/Southeast Asia and Europe. She is Associate Lecturer at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (Heidelberg University), as well as Postdoctoral Researcher and Publications Coordinator for the international research project 'Worlding Public Cultures: The Arts and Social Innovation'. She completed her PhD in Art History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, on 'The Cultural Politics of British South Asian Performance Art, 1960s to the Present.' Her previous positions have included Adjunct Researcher for the Tate Research Centre: Asia, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Goethe-Institut Fellow at Haus der Kunst in Munich where she co-curated the exhibition *Archives in Residence: Southeast Asia Performance Collection* in 2019. She is co-editor of a guest-edited issue of *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art on 'Pathways of Performativity in Contemporary Art of Southeast Asia'* (March 2022).

Nikhil Chopra's artistic practice interweaves live art, drawing, photography, sculpture and installations. His performances, in large part improvised, dwell on identity and its construction, autobiography and authorship, the pose and self-portraiture. His work reflects on the process of transformation and the part played by the duration of performance. Nikhil combines everyday life, memory and collective history; daily acts such as eating, resting, washing and dressing, but also drawing and making clothes, become the process of making an artwork, becoming an essential part of the show.

Nikhil's performances on the international art and theater scene began in 2008, when the artist was invited to contribute to Time Crevasse (Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama), kunstfestivaldesarts Brussels, Making Worlds (53rd Venice Biennale), Performa (New Museum New York) and Marina Abramovic Presents (Manchester International Festival, The Whitworth Gallery, Manchester). After his one year research fellowship at Interweaving Performance Cultures, Freie Universität Berlin in 2011, his work took him back to the Whitworth Art Gallery to make a solo project for the 2013 Manchester International Festival where he received critical acclaim for his performance "Coal on Cotton". Between 2014 and 2017 he performed at the Kochi Muziris Biennale, Bienal de la Habana, the 12th Sharjah Biennial and documenta 14. In 2019 he presented a nine days long solo performance titled "Lands, Waters and Skies" for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Nikhil is currently at residence at the Cite des Arts, Montmartre, Paris with Art Explora for six months.

Nikhil Chopra was born in Calcutta in 1974, and lives in Goa. After studying at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Maharaja Sayaji Rao University in Baroda, India, the artist continued his studies in the United States in 2003 to return to India in 2005 with a Masters from Ohio State University.

Chinasa Ezugha (Nigeria/UK/Abu Dhabi) Co-Director LADA/ Assistant Professor of Live Art as Social Practice NYU Abu Dhabi. Her interdisciplinary practice spans Live Art, film and drawing, questioning her identity as a Black woman living in England. Founder of Live Art in Wymondham, Norfolk, she has served on the Board of Trustees for The Garage Theatre, Norwich, and Pentabus Rural Theatre (2018-2017). She is currently a Ph.D candidate at the University of Exeter and the 2021 Research Associate at the Centre for Contemporary Art Derry, Londonderry.

Reem Fadda is a curator and art historian who has organised many international exhibitions and biennials, especially those pertaining to art and geopolitics in the Middle East. She is the Director of the Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism. Previously, she was the Associate Curator, Middle Eastern Art, Abu Dhabi Project at the Guggenheim Museum (2016–2010) and Director of the Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art (PACA), Ramallah (2007–2005). She served as Academic Director for the International Academy of Art Palestine, Ramallah, which she helped found in 2006.

She holds a BA in English Language and Literature from Birzeit University, Ramallah, Palestine (2002) and an MA in Curating from Goldsmiths College, London (2005). Fadda was also awarded the eighth Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement in 2017, and received a Fulbright scholarship to pursue her PhD in the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, US in 2008.

Alia Hamdan is a researcher in esthetic politics and dance and performance theory and a performance practitioner. Her research interests gravitate around the encounters between Deleuzian semiotics of the image, choreographic modes of thinking and politics. Since 2013, she has taught courses of performance theory and art history at ALBA (Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts), LAU (Lebanese American University) and USJ (Université Saint-Joseph). She has also produced and participated in performance projects such as Someday (Hamdan, BIPOD, Beirut, 2012) and Retrospective (Xavier le Roy, Beirut Art Center, 2016). In 2022, she was in residency at the Camargo foundation (Cassis, France). In 2023, she will be in residency at the Schloss Solitude Academy (Stuttgart, Germany).

Rattanamol Singh Johal is currently Assistant Director of the International Program at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. He holds a doctorate in Art History from Columbia University, where his research focused on the emergence of postmodernist art practices in India during the eighties and nineties. He has held research and curatorial fellowships at MoMA, Tate Research Centre: Asia (now Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational), and the Whitney Independent Study Program. Previously, he worked as a curator, archivist, and publications editor at Khoj International Artists' Association in New Delhi. Rattan earned a BA summa cum laude from the Macaulay Honors College at CUNY, an MA with Distinction from the Courtauld Institute of Art, and an MA and MPhil from Columbia University.

George Jose researches metropolitan transformation in and of contemporary south Asia. His work explores the urban periphery as a crucial, if undervalued, site for culture and politics that generates a distinctive form of urbanism especially in the global south. He studies the manner in which quotidian processes of work and consumption craft citizenship even as it limits rights and produces the conditions of precarity and informality. George is interested in the multiple ways in which the contemporary city is imagined, produced and consumed in its margins, by its marginalized citizens.

Dr Jose has held research, teaching, and leadership positions in the academia and not-for-profit sectors. In his role as Dean of the Jyoti Dalal School of Liberal Arts (JDSOLA), NMIMS University, Mumbai, Dr Jose provided academic leadership to the School and facilitated the realization of the School's vision. He led JDSOLA's strategic planning and curriculum development and specified educational objectives. George was the inaugural Program Director for Asia Society India; Program Officer with India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), Bengaluru; and was a Research Fellow at Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin. He is currently a Visiting Associate Professor of Anthropology at NYU Abu Dhabi.

Mohammed Kazem was born in Dubai in 1969. He studied painting as a teenager at the Emirates Fine Art Society, Sharjah, and music in the early 1990s at Al Rayat Music Institute, Dubai. In 2012, Kazem received an MFA from the University of the Arts, Philadelphia. A conceptual artist who has worked closely with his mentor, artist Hassan Sharif, Kazem uses overlooked remnants of the everyday, from construction flags to chewing gum, to measure and navigate global transformations. Often using or representing his own body in drawings, performances, and photographs, Kazem employs geographical markers as a way to locate his own subjectivity in relation to the rapid modernization and development of his homeland, the United Arab Emirates.

Abhishek Majumdar is a playwright, theater director and scenographer. He is also faculty and Program Head Theater at New York University Abu Dhabi.

Pushpamala N. is an artist based in Bangalore, India. In her strongly feminist and subversive work as a photo and video artist, sculptor, performer, writer and curator, and in her collaborations with photographers, writers, theatre and film directors, Pushpamala seeks to intervene in the dominant cultural and intellectual discourse. Her work is often polemical, looking at the idea of the nation state in an age of globalized neoliberalism and using the idea of cultural memory to explore history and contemporary society with irony and wit.

Her work is widely shown in museums, galleries, biennales and film festivals worldwide more recent being the Art Encounters Biennale Timisoara (2023), Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (2022), Office for Contemporary Art, Oslo (2021), CSMVS Museum Mumbai (2022), Vancouver Art Gallery (2019) Fotofest Houston (2018) to name a few. Her recent solo shows are Documenta Indica at Chemould Prescott Road Mumbai and Motherland at Heidelberg in 2022. She was the Artistic Director of the Chennai Photo Biennale (2019).

Sofiane Ouissi is a choreographer, dancer and curator who works collaboratively with his sister Selma. They have been creating and dancing together since the beginning of their careers. They are considered major figures in contemporary dance in the Arab world and their work has been shown internationally in prestigious museums and theaters.

Le moindre geste combines video, movement, and drawing and invites to meet invisible citizens through gestures and empathy. From the story of Wejdan, a Syrian refugee met in Metz, a video was created with five female artists from the Arab world.

Selma and Sofiane Ouissi explore the boundaries of what art can do, and what can be constructed through arts and culture in Tunisia. In Tunis they created 'Dream City', a biannual inclusive festival concept, and the structure 'L'Art Rue', dedicated to artistic gestures that aim for social and political transformation.

Venuri Perera is a choreographer, performance artist, curator and educator from Colombo. A recent graduate of DAS (Arts) Theatre, Amsterdam, she holds an MA in Psychology (Pune University '06), PostGraduate: Dance in Community (Laban, London '08). A member of the Chitrasena Dance Company for 15 years, since 2004, she has collaborated in multi-disciplinary performance projects locally and internationally. Since 2017 she has been exploring the power dynamics of gaze, anonymity, sensuality and subverting frameworks of ritual through performative experiments in public space, theaters and galleries. Her solo works have dealt with violent nationalism, patriarchy, border rituals, colonial heritage and class. They have been shown in festivals and biennales across Europe, South and East Asia and Africa since 2010. Venuri was curator of the programmes of Colombo Dance Platform since 2016. Attempting to create conditions for compassion and healing in her life and work, failing and learning, she remains curiously optimistic.

Ugoran Prasad is a fictionist, dramaturg, and performance scholar. An Associate Artistic of Teater Garasi/Garasi Performance Institute (Yogyakarta), he has taken part in some of the group's main works since the early 2000s. Initiating and co-chairing Majelis Dramaturgi, a dramaturg's knowledge exchange network since 2017, he leads Akademi AntarRagam, a deschooling program based on expanded dramaturgy and social practice. He is a Ph.D. candidate in Theatre and Performance at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. In his other universe, he serves as a lyricist and performer for a modern-rock band, Majelis Lidah Berduri.

Nada Raza is a curator and researcher whose work focuses on contemporary art from South and West Asia. Raza is currently the director of Alserkal Arts Foundation and has curated the 2023-2022 public art commissions, *The Follower* with Ala Ebtakar, Sarah Almehairi, Sahand Hesamiyan, Fahd Burki and Timo Nasseri. As the founding artistic director of Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai, her curatorial projects include *Altered Inheritances: Home is a Foreign Place* (2019); and *Body Building*, a thematic exhibition of lens-based work (2019).

Prior to this, Raza was Research Curator at Tate Research Centre: Asia, with a particular focus on South Asian art. She co-curated *Bhupen Khakhar: You Can't Please All* (2016) and organised presentations of work by international artists, including Meshac Gaba, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarman, Zarina Hashmi, Sheela Gowda, Amar Kanwar and Mrinalini Mukherjee. She was guest curator of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize (2014) and curated *The Missing One*, for the Dhaka Art Summit and the Office for Contemporary Art Norway (2016). She has also worked on international art at the Institute for International Visual Art (Iniva) and at Green Cardamom in London. She curated her first exhibition in 2005 in Dubai for the Third Line. Raza holds an MA from the Chelsea College of Art and Design and is a doctoral candidate at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

Joanna Settle is the Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs and Social Impact and an Arts Professor of Theater at NYU Abu Dhabi. Settle sees her artistry, teaching and residence as part of a whole approach to interpersonal and civic engagement. Since moving to Abu Dhabi, her creative and pedagogical practices have been tremendously influenced by the potential of the UAE to become a central platform for knowledge generation in the field of Performance. Her work has been seen at PS122, Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, MASSMoCA, all venues at the Public Theater, The Guthrie Theater, Arena Stage, the Wilma Theater, the Kimmel Center, Opera Philadelphia, Joe's Pub, Brooklyn's American Can Factory, and other locations that are not formal venues. Recent productions include: *Sky on Swings*: a world premiere new opera about Alzheimer's disease, world premiere of *Noura*; and most recently, Settle co-created *Al Raheel/Departure* with Emirati writer Reem Almenhali. She has upcoming commissions with both the NYUAD Art Gallery and Opera Philadelphia. She recently completed a residency with Cité Internationale des arts in Paris.

Tina Sherwell is a Visiting Associate Professor of Art and Art History, Director of the MFA in Art and Media at NYU Abu Dhabi. Tina Sherwell, works across art practice, art history, curating and education. Her research focuses on topographies of belonging, home, loss, and exile in the work of Palestinian and Arab artists. Her research interests also encompass visual cultural studies, in particular the role of images in contemporary society. She was Director of The International Academy of Art, Palestine, (2012-2007 and 2017-2013). She worked on the development of the Faculty of Art, Music and Design for the Board of Trustees of Birzeit University and was Program Head of the BA in Contemporary Visual Art (2021-2017). Previously she was Programme Leader of Fine Art at The Winchester School of Art, UK (2007-2005). Recent curated exhibitions include: *Intimate Terrains; Representations of a Disappearing Landscape*, The Palestinian Museum (2019) Degree Show of the International Academy of Art, Palestine (-2011 2018), *Retrospective of Sliman Mansour*, Al Hoash Art Court, East Jerusalem, (2011). She was managing editor of *Jerusalem Quarterly* (2015-2008) and has undertaken consultancies for UNESCO, Riwaq Conservation Centre, Danish Centre for Culture and Development, British Council and WeWorld GVC. She has served on various juries in Palestine and The Middle East.

Tanzim Wahab is a curator, researcher and lecturer. He lives in Berlin and Dhaka. His curatorial interests revolve around the sensory and community entanglement of cultural spaces, locational practice(s) and alternative art education. He is the festival director of Chobi Mela International Festival of Photography, Dhaka, and curator, community facilitator of Spore Initiative, Berlin. Between 2016 to 2021, he served as the chief curator of Bengal Foundation, heading several curatorial research projects and exhibitions across South Asia. Wahab, alongside Munem Wasif, has published two editions of *Kamra* – a comprehensive publication in Bengali, setting ideas and debates of photographic history and theories. He is currently co-editing 'Primary Documents' South Asia- A MoMA publication on cross-regional art history. Wahab was the Vice Principal of Pathshala South Asian Media Institute from 2015 - 2013, and is currently a trustee and lecturer at the institute. He has been recently appointed as a co-curator of the Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie 2024, Germany.

421 is an independent platform dedicated to emerging artists and creative practitioners in the UAE and across the region. A site for research, learning and experimentation, 421 provides a nurturing environment for emergent creative practices and those who want to harness the arts as an agent for social inquiry and transformation.

Located in Abu Dhabi's Mina Zayed, 421 presents a year-round program of exhibitions, talks, workshops, special events and educational initiatives that offer accessible learning opportunities to the wider community and the general public. Many of the 421 programs are organized in collaboration with local, regional and international partners, engaging children, students, educators, and creative professionals in a participatory approach to artistic and creative practices. These programs are designed to develop artistic and creative skills, supporting the growth of the UAE's creative ecosystem.

Alserkal Arts Foundation is a non-profit that extends Alserkal's mission to support cultural production, offering opportunities for research and artistic production to cultural practitioners and researchers with strong regional or contemporary relevance whose work challenges the conventional boundaries of disciplines. Through support for artistic projects, research grants, alternative learning, and artist residencies at purpose-built studios located in the heart of Alserkal Avenue, the Foundation seeks to incubate creative thinking that contributes to the region's cultural sphere, leading to new forms of knowledge. Alserkal Arts Foundation is supported by Abdelmonem Bin Eisa Alserkal, Ahmad Bin Eisa Alserkal and the Alserkal family.

The **Arts and Humanities at NYU Abu Dhabi** encompass fields of central importance to human culture and creativity. Research and scholarly activity in the Arts and Humanities is creative and collaborative, spanning the disciplines to better understand the human experience through works of art and literature.