

جائزة
الثقافة
للمركز العربي البريطاني

The Arab British Centre
**Award
for Culture**



EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY 31 JULY 2019

- **Women lead shortlist of biennial award celebrating Arab culture in the UK**
- **Artists and organisations from across the country represented in shortlists**
- **Awards will be announced at ceremony in London on 26 September 2019**

The Arab British Centre is delighted to announce the shortlist for the Arab British Centre Award for Culture 2019, featuring nine outstanding entrants across two categories. The Award for Culture, now in its 7th edition, celebrates organisations and individuals whose work has significantly contributed to the British public's understanding of the Arab world over the last two years. The Award, which runs biennially, offers a poignant opportunity to reflect on the growth, resilience, and impact of the Arab arts scene across the UK.

This year's all-women individual shortlist highlights the particularly strong contribution of women to the current Arab cultural sector, with the discussion of intersectional identities featuring widely across the shortlist. Comedian **Esther Manito**'s performances centre around reclaiming the word 'Arab' with pride, and defining what it means to be an Anglo Arab to sometimes challenging audiences, including at an English Defence League pub, to great success. Musician **Juliana Yazbeck** writes her songs in English and Arabic, and her work focuses on empowering women, reclaiming ancestral wisdom and challenging patriarchal structures. Curator **Samar Ziadat** created Dardishi Festival in Glasgow to showcase Arab women's contributions to contemporary art. Textile and print artist **Omeima Mudawi Rowlings**' practice is heavily influenced by experiences of cultural migration and interchange, and also focuses on promoting greater inclusion and accessibility for deaf and disabled artists. And award-winning children's author and illustrator **Nadine Kaadan**'s books work to build cultural bridges with Anglophone audiences, whilst also spreading reading culture in the Arab world and promoting accessibility to reading for children with special needs.

In the category of organisations, those shortlisted demonstrate the diversity of the work taking place within the Arab cultural sector across the UK, championing both contemporary artistic practice from across the region and the preservation of heritage and traditional crafts. Music and cultural events producer **MARSM** brings audiences in London and beyond trail-blazing hip-hop and alternative music acts from the Middle East, including Mashrou Leila, DAM, and artists from the diaspora like Lowkey. Interdisciplinary platform **Sarha Collective** showcase art from across the Arab world through exhibitions, performances, and film screenings, including the first Yemeni theatre production in London 'A Land Without Jasmine' earlier in 2019. Manchester-based independent publisher **Comma Press** champions the translation of Arabic fiction, and has a reputation for developing new writers from across the MENA region, as well as providing opportunities to emerging translators working from Arabic to English. And **The Barakat Trust** aim is to support and promote the preservation and study of Islamic art, heritage, architecture and culture for future generations through a grant scheme and wide array of events including participation in festivals, exhibitions, and talks.

For the first time, the Arab British Centre invited an esteemed panel of former winners and cultural leaders to determine the shortlisted individuals and organisations, including playwright Hannah Khalil, Aser Al Saqqa of Arts Canteen, Heather Masoud of Zaytoun, and Juan De Lara of Asia House, and Arab British Centre Board Member Lizzy Moriarty. The winners will be announced at the Award ceremony on 26 September at City Hall, London, a true highlight of the Arab cultural calendar which in 2017 drew over 300 guests.

Nadia El Sebai, Executive Director of the Arab British Centre, said 'The Arab British Centre Award for Culture serves as an exciting opportunity to reflect upon the current cultural landscape of the UK, and the hard work and dedication of the Arab cultural community. Since the inception of our Award programme in 2008, we have seen the strength, diversity, and popularity of Arab culture grow exponentially, and in 2019, audiences in Britain are clearly hungry for content and experiences that showcase the best global talent, challenge perceptions, *and* entertain. From Esther Manito's stand up comedy, and Comma Press' short fiction, to Omeima Mudawi Rowlings' textile art and MARSM's alternative music acts, Arab artists and culture are firmly on the gallery walls, stages, and book shelves of the UK.'

The Arab British Centre Award for Culture was established in 2008 to raise awareness of contemporary Arab culture in the UK and to give financial support to individuals and organisations at a crucial point in their career. The 2017 winners Hannah Khalil and Aser Al Saqqa of Arts Canteen used their British Council travel grants to support trips to Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates respectively. Two years later, introductions made on this trip have led to Hannah's play, 'Scenes from 70 Years' (formerly 68 Years), being translated into Arabic and staged in Tunis. She also continues to present her plays across the UK to public and critical acclaim, most recently working with the National Theatre of Scotland and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Arts Canteen continue to produce leading events Arabs Are Not Funny! and Arab Women Artists Now Festival, and used their prize money to develop a new website.

The Award for Culture has two categories – one for individuals and one for organisations. The Arab British Centre will present each of the winners with a cash prize of £2,500 and the [British Council](#) will provide the unique opportunity for travel and international networking opportunities in one of the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia or Qatar. For the first time, this year a runner up in each category will also receive a travel grant from the British Council. The Arab British Centre Award for Culture is supported by The League of Arab States.

End

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Arab British Centre Award for Culture

The award series was established in 2008 to of raise awareness of contemporary Arab culture in the UK and to give financial support to individuals and organisations at a crucial stage in their career. The Award for Culture is a successor to the Arab British Culture & Society Award, which ran for four years between 2008 & 2011 and celebrated organisations that had made a considerable impact on the British public's understanding of the life, society and culture of the Arab world. Winners of that prize were Saqi Books, Zaytoun, Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival and Al Jazeera English. In 2013 the first Arab British Centre Award for Culture was presented to the London-based Iraqi playwright, Hassan Abdulrazzaq, whose plays address issues in the Arab world. In 2017, the Award grew to honour both an individual and an organisation, with playwright Hannah Khalil and arts and music events producer Arts Canteen taking the respective prizes.

About The Arab British Centre

The Arab British Centre aims to further understanding of the Arab world by promoting its culture, sharing its knowledge and supporting a community of individuals and organisations that work to enhance friendship and collaboration between people of the UK and the Arab world.

www.arabbritishcentre.org.uk



SHORTLISTED ORGANISATIONS

MARSM

Since its founding, Marsm has dedicated itself to producing and promoting events that promote the rich and diverse arts and culture of the Arab world across the UK. From hosting some of the biggest names in the Middle East to emboldening burgeoning underground music scenes, it strives to support the exceptional creativity and talent of artists across the region.

From Palestinian hip-hop to bass-heavy electronic nights, Egyptian indie-rock and everything in between, Marsm dedicates itself to producing events that promote the rich and diverse arts and culture of the Arab world. From hosting some of the biggest names in the Middle East to emboldening the burgeoning underground music scenes, Marsm challenges the dogmas of cultural production and presents viable alternatives to the increasing commercial corporatisation of arts and culture.

<http://marsm.co.uk/>

Comma Press

Comma Press is a not-for-profit independent publisher specialising in the short story. Founded in 2003, Comma's award-winning publications include collections by new and established authors, interdisciplinary collaborations, and translation commissions devised to identify cutting-edge often marginalised voices from around the world. Comma is also the founder and co-ordinator of the Northern Fiction Alliance, a publishing collective designed to support and showcase independent publishers in the North of England.

<https://commapress.co.uk/>

Barakat Trust

The Barakat Trust supports the preservation and study of the art, architecture and culture of the Islamic world for future generations.

We do this by funding students, academic research, publications, digitisation schemes, conservation, archaeology, conferences and other projects and by raising awareness through public engagement activities aimed at generalist and specialist audiences of all ages.

We are an international non-political, non-religious charity based in the United Kingdom. Since our establishment in 1987, we have supported over 700 projects in 40 countries.

We have established a physical presence in London last year for the first time. Since then, we have strived to promote the culture of the Arab and Islamic worlds to UK audiences –often through mutually-beneficial partnerships. Such initiatives are helping to challenge misconceptions and foster a common understanding among people of different backgrounds.

<https://barakat.org/>

Sarha Collective

Sarha Collective a London-based platform for new perspectives from the Middle East and North Africa. The work of a group of artists, filmmakers and other creatives, it showcases groundbreaking art from across the Arab world through exhibitions, music and theatre performances, film screenings and other events which aim to challenge stereotypes and facilitate cross-cultural exchange and dialogue. We have a great interest in Arab archives, in rare, lost or vintage art, photography, music, theatre and film from across the Middle East and North Africa and a strong desire to celebrate this cultural legacy and bring it to the public attention. Being based in London, the collective aim to facilitate exchange between artists from across the Arab world, who might otherwise be unable to meet and work together. Wherever possible, Sarha aims to commission new work and is committed to supporting early-career creatives and underrepresented voices whose work has never been shown in the UK previously.

<http://www.sarhacollective.com/>

SHORTLISTED INDIVIDUALS

Nadine Kaadan

Since the age of 8, Nadine Kaadan hasn't stopped writing and illustrating children's books - she simply knew that it was her calling in life. She started distributing her first children's magazine to her 5th grade classmates, and 20 years later she is an award winning children's book author and illustrator, whose mission it is to spread reading culture in the Arab world, in a way that is inspired by Syria's rich heritage. Her stories sometimes touch on delicate subjects like children with special needs, or like the current troubled situation in the Arab world, and other times they are just plain fun.

<http://www.nadinekaadan.com/site/>

Esther Manito

Esther Manito started doing stand up comedy in April 2016, and made it her mission to normalise the word Arab and challenge the misconceptions that dominate popular media.

In the last three and a half years Esther has achieved a wide range of accolades including; BBC New Comedy Award Nominee 4 years running 2016-2019, So you think You're Funny Finalist 2017, Bath Comedian of the Year Finalist 2017, Sussex Comedia of the Year 2019, First woman to perform comedy at Dubai Opera House and published author in the satirical collection "Don't Panic I'm Islamic".

<http://www.esthermanito.co.uk/>

Samar Ziadat

Samar Ziadat is a freelance curator, educator and activist based in Glasgow, Scotland. She is the Director of Dardishi Festival, a festival of Arab and North African womxn's art. Currently, she is also an arts programmer at Glasgow Zine Library and the Scottish Queer International Film Festival. Her community-focused practice centres on issues of decoloniality and queerness; presenting talks, delivering workshops, producing zines and programming events that explore the hidden histories and narratives of marginalised and underrepresented communities. She graduated from the University of Kent with First Class Joint Honours in English Literature and Art History, and holds an MSc from the University of Edinburgh in Modern and Contemporary Art History, Curating and Criticism.

@samarziadat

Omeima Mudawi-Rowlings

Omeima is a British-Sudanese textiles artist who has exhibited her work nationally and internationally. Omeima's work in dyes, screen printing and *Devoré* technique explores themes of identity and change, communication, heritage and womanhood. She is greatly influenced by her Sudanese heritage and enjoys exploring influences from Arabic geometry.

Omeima is an alumnus of UCA Farnham and Cockpit Arts, and alongside her practice works as a mentor and consultant trainer for emerging artists and young people, working in partnerships with leading organisations, especially those interested in inclusive practices.

omeima-arts.com
resonantarts.org/

Juliana Yazbeck

Born to Lebanese parents, Juliana draws on her mixed cultural upbringing to create her signature sound: an unlikely but mesmerising fusion of spoken word, otherworldly electronics, and haunting Levantine vocals. Juliana recently headlined Liverpool Arab Arts Festival and Shubbak Festival and is currently writing new material and working on her Autumn 2019 shows.

<https://www.julianayazbeck.com>