



News release
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V&A announces Jameel Prize shortlist, with new thematic focus on contemporary design

Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics

Porter Gallery, V&A

18 September – 28 November 2021

vam.ac.uk/jameelprize | #JameelPrize

The V&A today announces the shortlist for the Jameel Prize, the world's leading award for contemporary art and design inspired by Islamic tradition. Eight finalists have been shortlisted from over 400 applications for the £25,000 prize: **Golnar Adili, Hadeyeh Badri, Kallol Datta, Farah Fayyad, Ajan Gharem, Sofia Karim, Jana Traboulsi, and Bushra Waqas Khan.**

The Jameel Prize is a collaboration between the V&A and Art Jameel, founded in 2009 and now in its sixth edition. This edition marks a new era for the Prize by introducing a thematic focus, with the 2021 iteration dedicated to contemporary design.

Opening 18 September 2021 at the V&A before touring internationally, *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics* will showcase work by the eight shortlisted designers from India, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the UK. *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics* will be the first international exhibition to focus on innovative contemporary design inspired by Islamic tradition. With diverse practices spanning graphic design and fashion, typography and textiles, installation and activism, the finalists engage with both the personal and the political, interpreting the past in creative and critical ways. The works in the exhibition will address global events and lived realities, and the legacies of language, architecture and craft. A winner will be announced on the opening of the exhibition in September 2021.

The international jury for *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics*, which selected the shortlist and will choose the winner, includes V&A Director **Tristram Hunt** as jury chairperson, the joint-winners of Jameel Prize 5, Iraqi artist **Mehdi Moutashar** and Bangladeshi architect **Marina Tabassum**, as well as British author and design critic **Alice Rawsthorn** and Emirati writer, researcher and founder of Barjeel Art Foundation, **Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi.**

The Jameel Prize jury chairperson, **V&A Director, Tristram Hunt** said, "Now in its sixth edition, this year's *Jameel Prize* is the first iteration to focus on contemporary design and attracted a record number of

entries from around the world. From poetry to politics, those on the exceptional and diverse shortlist were selected for their innovative and imaginative projects, with strong links between Islamic traditions and contemporary design. The V&A is delighted to continue its partnership with Art Jameel with this Prize, and celebrate contemporary practitioners inspired by Islamic traditions.”

Through the past five editions, the Jameel Prize has received applications from more than 1,000 artists from over 40 countries, exhibited the work of 48 artists and designers, and toured to 16 venues globally. The first five iterations of the Jameel Prize shaped an overall understanding of the role that Islamic tradition can play as an inspiration for both art and design. As the V&A seeks to promote different aspects of this burgeoning field, *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics* is the first devoted to a single discipline. This edition also welcomed submissions via open call, as well as its traditional nomination system.

The eight finalists are:

Golnar Adili (Iran)

Golnar Adili is a multi-media artist and designer based in New York. Her practice explores aspects of her identity, particularly through Persian language and poetry. Growing up in Tehran after the 1979 Revolution, Adili’s early life was characterised by separation, uprootedness and longing. The work that will be on display in the Jameel Prize – *Ye Harvest from the Eleven-Page Letter*, 2016 – explores a letter from her father, who was exiled from Iran when Adili was young, to his lover. Adili transforms the letter into a spatial installation, honing in on his use of a single letter from the Persian alphabet — *ye* — which becomes the consistent motif of the piece. By precisely reproducing the idiosyncrasies of his handwriting, and the distance between each *ye*, Adili encodes the original document in three-dimensional form. The installation, both monumental and delicate, pays homage to her father, and abstracts and obscures the emotional content of his communication.

Hadeyeh Badri (UAE)

Hadeyeh Badri is an Emirati designer and fibre artist who lives and works in Dubai. For Badri, textiles offer a rich creative language – one that unites gesture, touch, memory, and ritual. Three of her complex and colourful weavings will be on show in the Jameel Prize, all of which incorporate writing into the body of her fabric. In these works, such as *Prayer is my Mail*, 2019, Badri nods to the legacy of the Jacquard loom in the invention of coding, but the pieces feel more intimate than algorithmic. The texts Badri uses are personal, taken from the diary of her beloved late aunt. Badri uses weaving as a way of reconnecting with her aunt, and calls upon a trope in pre-Islamic poetry, *al-wuquf 'ala al-atlal* ('standing by the ruins'), in which a poet visits a site of mourning or of architectural decay and reanimates its history through language. Badri hints at the notion that weavings may act as personal monuments, ones that remain deliberately partial and under construction.

Kallol Datta (India)

Kallol Datta is a clothing designer from Kolkata, India, whose interest in clothing from North Africa and West Asia emerged during a childhood spent in the UAE and Bahrain. Datta discovered a Senegalese caftan in his grandfather's wardrobe, which prompted research into

garment traditions from across the region, the Indian subcontinent and the Korean peninsula. Datta mines the shapes and silhouettes of the abaya, manteau, hanbok, hijab and caftan, combining gestures of enveloping, swaddling, wrapping and layering in contemporary configuration. His approach to pattern-cutting is experimental, skewing traditional geometry to create sculptural silhouettes, brought to life on the body. Datta writes, "Clothes-making is an exercise in anthropology for me", acknowledging the power of clothing to challenge social norms and channel personal expression. Three of Datta's bold looks will be on display in the Jameel Prize, alongside striking photographs the designer commissioned from photographer colleagues in India.

Farah Fayyad (Lebanon)

Farah Fayyad is a Lebanese graphic designer and printmaker, shortlisted for the Jameel Prize on the strength of two projects. The first is typographic: fascinated by Arabic calligraphy and lettering, Fayyad designed a contemporary Arabic typeface, *Kufur*, based on historic *Kufic* script. Her re-imagining of the original *Kufic* script retains its visual character while adapting some features for digital use. The second project emerged from the politics of the present. Fayyad is passionate about screen-printing and runs a small press in Beirut. In October 2019, popular uprisings began across Lebanon and hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest government corruption and a growing economic crisis. Fayyad and her colleagues set up a screen-printing intervention at the heart of the Beirut protests. They equipped a manual press with slogans and artworks by local designers and printed these onto the clothing of protestors, free of charge and on the spot. The spontaneous project brought Arabic typography into the public and political sphere at a critical moment in Lebanese history.

Ajlan Gharem (Saudi Arabia)

Ajlan Gharem is a multidisciplinary artist and mathematics teacher based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. His work explores how Saudi communities understand and articulate their culture amidst globalisation and changing power dynamics. Gharem's installation, *Paradise Has Many Gates*, 2015, is true to the design and function of a traditional mosque, but is made of the cage-like chicken wire used for border walls and refugee detention centres. Such material provokes anxiety, but also renders the mosque transparent and open to the elements. The installation's transparency challenges the political authority that can underpin religion; the installation also seeks to demystify Islamic prayer for non-Muslims, tackling the fear of the other at the heart of Islamophobia. The mosque is welcoming to everyone, and the installation is accompanied by a public programme that invites people of all backgrounds to meet and spend time together. For the Jameel Prize, the mosque will be represented through large-scale photographic prints, video, and a recreation of the mosque's dome.

Sofia Karim (UK)

Sofia Karim is a British architect, artist and activist based in London. Karim's activism work is centred on human rights, artists' freedom of expression, and campaigns for political prisoners in India and Bangladesh. She is shortlisted for the Jameel Prize for her Turbine Bagh project, which imagines the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern as a stand-in for Shaheen Bagh, the neighbourhood in Delhi where mass protests against the Indian government's Citizenship Amendment Act took place in December 2019. The Act offers amnesty to immigrants from three neighbouring

countries to India, but excludes Muslims – part of an alarming rise in Islamophobic attitudes and legislation in India. “What we are witnessing is a vast and historic civil rights movement against fascism, Hindu nationalism and caste oppression”, says Karim. She invites artists and thinkers from across the world to engage with the struggle by designing samosa packets for Shaheen Bagh. Karim’s installation of samosa packets and textiles, which will be on display during the Jameel Prize exhibition, charges these humble, everyday objects with political significance, bringing attention to the ongoing human rights crisis in India.

Jana Traboulsi (Lebanon)

Jana Traboulsi is a graphic designer from Lebanon. Her *Kitab al-Hawamish* (Book of Margins), 2017, is an artist’s book that investigates margins and marginalia in Arabic manuscript production. Stemming from research into Middle Eastern traditions of book-making, Traboulsi explores aspects of manuscript practices that are often considered secondary to the central text, including diacritics, Sura markers, the index, and catchwords. A ‘scar’ she found on an ancient piece of parchment – where the animal skin had been stitched closed and written around – inspired an emphasis on the materiality of the book as form. Traboulsi’s focus on the marginal extends to recitation: how language is formed and experienced in the body, from the brain to the diaphragm, larynx and mouth. *Kitab al-Hawamish* is a palimpsestic object whose annotated illustrations recall the scientific treatise. For the Jameel Prize exhibition, extracts of the book will be reproduced in the form of supergraphics, alongside copies of the original.

Bushra Waqas Khan (Pakistan)

Bushra Waqas Khan lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan. She trained as a printmaker, and is known for extraordinary garments she designs and makes in miniature. The catalyst for her creative practice is affidavit paper, or oath paper, which is used for all official documents in Pakistan. Affidavit paper often carries national emblems like the star and crescent alongside motifs and patterns from Islamic art and design. Contracts are printed and signed on this paper – it signifies authority and ownership, something kept safe over generations. For Khan, the manufacture of the affidavit stamp was similar to her practice of etching and print-making, and she began to combine these processes with pattern-cutting and embroidery in the creation of miniature garments. The Jameel Prize will showcase the first spectacular dress Khan ever made, which is just 50cm tall. The dress nods to colonial influences on dress in South Asia, and the presence of Islamic design in everyday life in Pakistan.

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For further PRESS information about *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics*, please contact Sophie Steel at the V&A on s.steel@vam.ac.uk, or John Carlo Bogayan on behalf of Art Jameel on john@rpr.ae (not for publication).

Notes to Editors

- *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics* at the V&A, London runs from 18 September – 28 November 2021.

- *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics* will showcase work by the eight shortlisted designers: Golnar Adili, Hadeyeh Badri, Kallol Datta, Farah Fayyad, Ajlan Gharem, Sofia Karim, Jana Traboulsi, and Bushra Waqas Khan.
- *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics* is curated by the V&A's Jameel Curator of Contemporary Art from the Middle East, Rachel Dedman, in collaboration with V&A Senior Curator for the Middle Eastern Collection, Tim Stanley.
- *Jameel Prize: Poetry to Politics* is a free exhibition. To enter the museum you will need to book a free advanced ticket at vam.ac.uk.
- A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk.

Social Media

- **V&A:** Instagram [@vamuseum](https://www.instagram.com/vamuseum) | Facebook [@VictoriaandAlbertMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/VictoriaandAlbertMuseum) | Twitter [@V_and_A](https://twitter.com/V_and_A)
- **Art Jameel:** Instagram [@art_jameel](https://www.instagram.com/art_jameel) | Facebook [Art Jameel](https://www.facebook.com/ArtJameel) | Twitter [@Art_Jameel](https://twitter.com/Art_Jameel)

About the Jameel Prize

The Jameel Prize, founded in partnership with Art Jameel, was conceived after the renovation of the V&A's Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art. The gallery is an outstanding presentation of the rich artistic heritage of the Islamic Middle East, and the Prize aims to raise awareness of the thriving interaction between contemporary practice and the great historical legacy of the region. It has also contributed to a broader understanding of Islamic culture as well as its place in the contemporary world.

Launched in 2009, the winner of the first Jameel Prize was **Afroz Amighi** for her work *1001 Pages* (2008), an intricate hand-cut screen made from the woven plastic used to construct refugee tents. In 2011 **Rachid Koraïchi** was awarded the prize, for his work *Les Maîtres Invisibles (The Invisible Masters, 2008)*, a group of embroidered cloth banners which display Arabic calligraphy and symbols and ciphers to explore the lives and legacies of the 14 great mystics of Islam. In 2013 the winner of Jameel Prize 3 was **Dice Kayek**, a Turkish fashion label established in 1992 by Ece and Ayşe Ege for their series *Istanbul Contrast*, a collection that evokes Istanbul's architectural and artistic heritage. This was the first time the Jameel Prize was awarded to designers. In 2016, the winner of Jameel Prize 4 was **Ghulam Mohammad**, who trained in the Islamic tradition of miniature painting, for his works of paper collage. In 2018 the first ever joint winners of Jameel Prize 5 were **Mehdi Moutashar** —awarded for his bold work of minimalist abstraction rooted in Islamic geometry and **Marina Tabassum** — for her visionary Bait ur Rouf mosque built in 2012 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Now a triennial Prize, the sixth edition in 2021 marks a new era. Future Jameel Prizes will be dedicated to a single discipline, with the 2021 edition focusing on contemporary design.

About the V&A

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity, spanning 5000 years of human creativity. It was established in 1852 to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, its purpose is to champion creative industry, inspire the next generation, and spark everyone's imagination.

About the Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art at the V&A

Art Jameel has partnered with the V&A since 2006, with the opening of the Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art by Mohammed Abdul Latif Jameel, who dedicated the Gallery to the memory of his parents, Mrs Nafisa and Mr Abdul Latif Jameel, the late founder of Abdul Latif Jameel. This was followed by the establishment of the Jameel Prize for contemporary art and design inspired by Islamic tradition. Highlights include the Ardabil Carpet, the world oldest dated carpet and one of the largest, most beautiful and historically important.

About Art Jameel

The Jameel family is currently celebrating three quarters of a century of philanthropy; this amazing journey is marked through the [75 Years / 75 Voices / 75 Stories](#) project, which includes a contribution from [Tristram Hunt](#), Director, V&A, alongside other key figures from the worlds of business, arts, academia and philanthropy, including [HRH The Prince of Wales](#); [HE Noura Al Kaabi](#), UAE Minister of Culture and Youth; [Max Hollein](#), Director at the Metropolitan Museum New York; and [L. Rafael Reif](#), President, MIT.

Art Jameel supports artists and creative communities. Current initiatives include running heritage institutes and restoration programmes, plus a broad range of arts and educational initiatives for all ages. The organisation's programmes foster the role of the arts in building open, connected communities; at a time of flux and dramatic societal shifts, this role is understood as more crucial than ever.

[Jameel Arts Centre](#), an innovative contemporary institution in Dubai, UAE, opened on November 11, 2018; [Hayy Jameel](#), a major complex for the creative industries in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, is set to launch in the winter of 2021.

Art Jameel's model is collaborative: major institutional partners include [Delfina Foundation](#), [the Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), [the Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Arts](#) and [the Victoria and Albert Museum](#). Locally, the organisation works with individuals and organisations to develop innovative programming that embraces both ancient and new technologies and encourages entrepreneurship and the development of cultural networks.