

Rothko Chapel

artJameel
Abdul Latif Jameel | Community Initiatives



**ART JAMEEL ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF
CULTURUNNERS, AN INDEPENDENT ARTISTS' EXPEDITION
AND CORE COMPONENT OF EDGE OF ARABIA'S US TOUR,
AT THE ROTHKO CHAPEL IN HOUSTON**



**Art Jameel announces the launch of *CULTURUNNERS*
an independent artists' expedition and core component of Edge of Arabia's
US Tour, at the Rothko Chapel in Houston**

*Set to coincide with the UN's International Day of Peace, CULTURUNNERS begins its
journey in Houston with an evening of discussion and film screenings at
the Rothko Chapel on September 21st, 2014*

New York (July 10, 2014) – On the occasion of the United Nation's International Day of Peace – September 21, 2014 – the Rothko Chapel, in partnership with Art Jameel, will host the launch of ***CULTURUNNERS***, an independent artists' expedition and core component of Edge of Arabia's US Tour. In the spirit of the Chapel's humanist mission to inspire people to action through art and contemplation and to provide a forum for global concerns, this event brings together pioneering artists, scholars and community groups to cultivate new perspectives on cultural collaboration. This collaborative event, which is a core component of Edge of Arabia's multi-year journey between the Middle East and the United States, aims to assess the potential of artists' journeys to connect people through creativity and beyond identities defined by culture, religion, nation, citizenship, economic status, profession, gender or age.

Supported by FotoFest International and the Arab American Cultural and Community Center of Houston (ACC), the evening kicks off with an inter-generational, cross-cultural discussion on the role of artists' journeys in generating positive social change. Participants include Edge of Arabia co-founder **Stephen Stapleton**, as well as award-winning Houston-based photographers and founders of the FotoFest Biennial, **Fred Baldwin** and **Wendy Watriss** and Palestinian artist **Taysir Batniji**. Rice University Professor **Ussama Makdisi**, renowned scholar of US-Middle Eastern cultural relations, will moderate the discussion. The panel discussion will be followed by 'journey' film screenings by Saudi Arabian artist **Ahmed Mater**.

Over the next three years, ***CULTURUNNERS*** will travel across the US, communicating and archiving new forms of creative collaboration between American communities and the Middle East. An independent artistic collaboration led by US-based artists from MIT's Art, Culture and Technology Program, **Azra Aksamija** and **Peter Schmidt**, and Edge of Arabia co-founder **Stephen Stapleton**, the project will launch in Houston this September and thereafter begin its journey up the East Coast, stopping off along the way at Louisiana State University and communities in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Massachusetts, with major events to be announced in October 2014.

Free and open to the public, the events on 21st September open the Rothko Chapel's season of events on Art, Spirituality and Nonviolence. For more information on the schedule of the evening's events, please visit: http://edgeofarabia.com/featured_exhibitions

Connect with Edge of Arabia on [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) for all the latest news, updates, photos and more. Join the conversation by mentioning @EdgeOfArabia and using the #EOAUSA hashtag.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Ahmed Mater, Artist and Edge of Arabia Co-founder



Ahmed Mater (born 1979 in Saudi Arabia, lives and works in Abha, Saudi Arabia). His interdisciplinary art, encompassing photography, calligraphy, painting, installation, performance and video, explores the narratives and aesthetics of Islamic culture in an era of rampant globalization, consumerism and transformation. His art is informed by his daily life as a medical doctor in Abha as well as by his traditional upbringing in Saudi Arabia. His recent work presents an unofficial history of Saudi sociopolitical life. It is concerned with the representation of traumatic events of collective historical dimensions, and the

ways in which films, video, image, performance and text can document physical and psychological violence. Mater's work has been widely exhibited across the world including at The Mori Museum of Art (Tokyo), The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City, MO), the Shrajah, Kochi and Venice Biennales, Rijksmuseum Volkenkund (Leiden Museum of Ethnology), Ashkal Alwan Homeworks 6 (Beirut), and Galleria Continua's Les Moulins (Paris). His work is in the collection of the British Museum (London), Victoria & Albert Museum (London), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, CA), the Museum of Islamic Art (Doha) and Centre Pompidou (Paris).

Taysir Batniji, Artist



Taysir Batniji is an interdisciplinary visual artist who divides his time between France and Palestine. His practice incorporates drawing, painting, installation and performance, often closely related to his heritage – however since 2001 the artist has focused primarily on photography and video. Batniji has participated in numerous international exhibitions, including *Untitled*, 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011); *Future of a Promise*, a collateral event of the 54th Venice Biennale

(2011); *Seeing is Believing*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2011); and *RAY 2012* Fotografieprojekte Frankfurt/Rhein-Main (2012). Taysir Batniji is represented by Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Hamburg & Beirut, and by Galerie Eric Dupont, Paris.

Fred Baldwin, Photographer and Co-founder of FotoFest International Biennial



Swiss born Fred Baldwin co-founded FotoFest International in 1983 and served as president from 1984 to 2001, when he became Chairman of the Board of Directors. Following a BA from Columbia University in 1956, he began working as a freelance photographer. Baldwin has been commissioned by many international publications including LIFE, National Geographic and the New York Times. His award-winning work has dealt with subjects such as the Civil Rights Movement in Georgia, rural poverty in the Georgia and the Carolinas, Arctic fishermen in the Lofoten Islands, polar bears and other wildlife in the Norwegian Arctic, wild horses in Mexico, and Peace Corps volunteers in India.

Wendy Watriss, Co-founder of FotoFest International Biennial



Co-founder of FotoFest International in 1983, Wendy Watriss worked as a freelance photographer, writer, curator, newspaper reporter, and producer of television documentaries from 1965 to 1993. Since 1991, she has been Artistic Director and Senior Curator for FotoFest, curating and organizing more than sixty international exhibitions on photography and photo-related art from the Arab world, China (1934-2008), Latin American photography (1865-1992), Russia (1950s-2012), US Latino photography, Central European photography, the global environment, new media, water, artists responding to violence, and Guantánamo, among other themes. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the World Press Photo Feature of the Year (1982), the Leica Oskar Barnack Prize (1982), the Mid-Atlantic Arts Alliance / National Endowment for the Arts Award (1984), a Humanities Fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation and a Research fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. With Frederick Baldwin, she is the recipient of the Vision Award (2011) and has served on juries for the National Endowment for the Arts, New England Foundation for the Arts, the Haas Foundation, and the Houston Arts Alliance. She was born in San Francisco.

Stephen Stapleton, Artist and Edge of Arabia Co-founder



Stephen Stapleton is an artist and curator. After encountering the artistic community in Abha, Saudi Arabia during a journey across the Middle East in 2003, he founded the Offscreen Education Programme and Edge of Arabia as platforms for cultural dialogue between the Middle East and western world. He later founded the Crossway Foundation, a London-based charitable organization seeking to promote creative collaboration between the UK and the Middle East and EOA. Projects, an art gallery showing contemporary art from the Middle East based in Battersea, London. Stapleton has a degree in fine art and philosophy from the University of Brighton, a PGCE in art education from the University of London and has exhibited his own artwork in Tehran, Amman, London, Oslo and New York. He has published several books related to the Middle East including *Offscreen: Four Young Artists in the Middle East*, *Edge of Arabia*, *Contemporary Art from Saudi Arabia* and won several awards for his work in the field of intercultural education.

Professor Ussama Makdisi, Rice University



Ussama Makdisi is the Professor of History and the first holder of the Arab-American Educational Foundation Chair of Arab Studies at Rice University. In April 2009, the Carnegie Corporation named Makdisi a 2009 Carnegie Scholar as part of its effort to promote original scholarship regarding Muslim societies both in the United States and abroad. He has published widely on Ottoman and Arab history as well as on U.S.-Arab relations and U.S. missionary work in the Middle East. Among his published works, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Cornell University Press, 2008), was the winner of the 2008 Albert Hourani Book Award from the Middle East Studies

Association, the 2009 John Hope Franklin Prize of the American Studies Association, and a co-winner of the 2009 British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize given by the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies. Professor Makdisi has also published in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, and in the *Middle East Report*.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

Art Jameel

Art Jameel – Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiative’s (ALJCI) arts and culture initiative – aims to foster and promote a thriving arts scene within the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey (MENAT) region and to support the development of creative enterprises. In partnership with art organizations worldwide, Art Jameel develops cultural exchange programs to encourage networking and knowledge sharing.

Art Jameel is the founding partner of Edge of Arabia, The Crossway Foundation, Arabian Wings, Jeddah Art Week and The Archive. In partnership with the Victoria & Albert Museum in London it provides the biannual Jameel Prize for contemporary art inspired by Islamic traditions. Additional projects include: Jeddah Sculptures Museum, a public park established in collaboration with Jeddah Municipality; the Art Jameel Photography Award; and the Art Jameel Art Olympics in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia.

ALJCI was established in 2003 to promote positive social change through the establishment of long-term partnerships with international institutions, and the creation of initiatives in the fields of Job Creation, Global Poverty Alleviation, Arts and Culture, Education and Training, Health and Social. More information on ALJCI’s considerable set of initiatives can be found online at www.aljci.org.

Edge of Arabia

Edge of Arabia is an independent non-profit arts and education initiative dedicated to connecting Middle Eastern artists with international audiences. To date, *Edge Of Arabia* has welcomed 250,000 visitors to its exhibitions, distributed over 50,000 books & catalogues worldwide, impacted over 300 schools & universities through its award winning education program and reached a wider audience of over 10,000,000 through a dedicated communications campaign. International exhibitions include: *Rhizoma*, 55th Venice Biennale (2013); *#COMETOGETHER*, East London (2012); *We Need to Talk*, Jeddah (2012); *The Future of a Promise*, 54th

Venice Biennale (2011); *Terminal, Dubai* (2011); *Transition*, Istanbul: European Capital of Culture (2010); *Grey Borders/Grey Frontiers*, Berlin (2010); *Edge of Arabia*, Riyadh (2010); *Edge of Arabia*, 53rd Venice Biennale (2009); and *Edge of Arabia*, University of London (2008). <http://edgeofarabia.com/>

The Rothko Chapel

The Rothko Chapel, founded by Houston philanthropists John and Dominique de Menil, was dedicated in 1971 as an intimate sanctuary available to people of every belief. A tranquil meditative environment inspired by the mural canvases of Russian born American painter Mark Rothko (1903-1970), the Chapel welcomes over 60,000 visitors each year, people of every faith and from all parts of the world. On the plaza, Barnett Newman's majestic sculpture, *Broken Obelisk*, stands in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 2001 the Chapel was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, an honor awarded before the institution was fifty years old. The Chapel regularly makes top ten lists of places to visit, and is a featured entry in National Geographic's book *Sacred Places of a Lifetime: 500 of the World's Most Peaceful and Powerful Destinations*, published in 2009. The Chapel has two vocations: contemplation and action. It is a place alive with religious ceremonies of all faiths, and where the experience and understanding of all traditions are encouraged and made available. Action takes the form of supporting human rights, and thus the Chapel has become a rallying place for all people concerned with peace, freedom, and social justice throughout the world. www.rothkochapel.org

FotoFest International

FotoFest was founded in 1983 as an international, non-profit organization based in Houston, Texas. Over the past 20 years, FotoFest has curated or sponsored ground-breaking exhibitions on photo-related art from Latin America, China, Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, Korea, Japan, England, Germany, France, the Middle East and North Africa. FotoFest's well-known Biennial and related programs are known for their commitment to social issues and the presentation of important contemporary and historical artwork that not widely shown by mainstream arts organizations. www.fotofest.org

Arab American Cultural and Community Center

The Arab American Cultural and Community Center (ACC) is a non-profit organization in Houston, Texas governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Since its inception in 1995, the ACC has been committed to fulfilling its mission of serving the Arab American community in Houston through cultural programs, outreach and social services; promoting Arab culture and heritage and fostering a greater understanding of Arab Culture amongst the Houston community at large by serving as a liaison and resource center. The ACC aims to contribute to the integration of Arabs as Americans, to provide a forum for cultural, educational and recreational interaction, and opportunities for association and social contact. The ACC provides a positive vision through sponsored programs, outreach and social services, especially for children as a main unifying element of the community. www.acchouston.org

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