



The artist or designer is nominated for work inspired by Islamic traditions of art, craft and design executed in the last five years.

SALMA TUQAN & TIM STANLEY

The first Jameel Prize was organised in 2009 by Tim Stanley, senior curator and head of the Middle Eastern collections at the V&A. In January 2011, curator of contemporary Middle Eastern art Salma Tuqan came to join him and together they have been working on the exhibition for the Jameel Prize 2012, which opens at the V&A in July. Later in the year, they will be taking the exhibition on tour. The prize is reliant on both the expertise of its nominators - designers, artists and cultural figures worldwide as well as the independent panel of judges that determine the shortlist

How and why was the Jameel Prize conceived?

In the 1950s, the founders of the V&A shared an admiration for Islamic art and design so began to collect Islamic art to inspire the artists and designers of their age. The Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art was opened in July 2006. Mohammed Abdul Latif Jameel, who had sponsored the development of the gallery wanted to show how Islamic art and design is still a source for contemporary artists. The Jameel Prize is seen as a way of giving this notion a higher profile.

How has the Jameel Prize influenced Western perceptions of Islamic art and culture?

The Jameel Prize has been very well received wherever the exhibition of finalists' work has been exhibited. We hope that it will show everyone how fruitful the interaction between contemporary practitioners and the Islamic traditions of the past can be. In fact, the V&A does not see it as an East/West thing. The prize is open to everyone, no matter what their background, because Islamic traditions have not been confined to the Islamic world in terms of the inspiration they have given artists and designers. This year, the nominees spanned an even larger geographical area than 2009 with submissions being received from countries as diverse as the USA, Germany, Iran, Lebanon, Uzbekistan, China and Nigeria. The Jameel Prize 2011 tour will travel to new destinations beginning at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris in winter 2011/12.

How important was it to take this exhibition on tour? What were the challenges and how was it received?

The tour was a great opportunity. The V&A has the largest international touring programme for exhibitions in the world, but even so there were several countries on the tour that had not had a V&A exhibition before - Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Sharjah and Morocco. We thought that the countries in the Middle East and North Africa would find the exhibition particularly interesting and the reaction has been very good, especially from the students and young artists involved in the programme of workshops and other events that took place alongside the exhibition. These events allowed further critical dialogue and awareness about the notions of Islamic art and its place in a contemporary context. The tour has also ensured that the shortlisted artists and winner receive ongoing exposure.

How has Afruz Amighi, the first winner of the Jameel Prize been affected by her award? How does the V&A support the artists that win?

Afruz had her first solo exhibition at the Nicelle Beauchene Gallery in New York and participated in the group exhibition *Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam* at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. She held her first solo show in the UAE, *Angels in Combat*, at Gallery Isabelle van den Bynde in Dubai. Her piece that won the Jameel Prize in 2006, *1001 Pages*, an intricate hand-cut screen made from the woven plastic used to construct refugee tents, was acquired by the V&A and will form part of its contemporary Middle Eastern collection.

What themes are generally explored in the work of your nominated artists? Are there any commonalities that can be further explored?

The Jameel Prize 2011 artists draw strongly from their own local and regional traditions and celebrate particular materials and iconography with strong references to traditional Islamic art. In much of the work there is an underlying reference to the artists' own 'hybrid' cultural identity: the mix of old and new, minimalism versus ornament, tradition and modernity, and home versus exile.