



**ARTISTS AND CREATIVE LEADERS JOIN FORCES TO CHANNEL THE
TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ART TO INSPIRE HUMAN UNITY**

On April 22nd, Women Forward International will host its inaugural convening of the WFI Arts Counsel to build a community of artistic visionaries who leverage the power of art to bring about positive changes in global consciousness and behavior.

**MEDIA ADVISORY
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Women Forward International presents the Arts Counsel, a global network of artists, activists, scholars and practitioners dedicated to bridging the arts with modern day international relations issues to break free of outmoded ways of thinking and find solutions based on love and human unity.

Washington, D.C. (April 2021) – Art, when inspired with love, can awaken. Art can form a bridge between our hearts and minds, allowing us to rise above our differences, and transcend barriers to human unity and progress. As the world faces continual challenges to our health and wellbeing, our safety and security, our environment, and our cultural, social and civil rights, we turn to artists to dare to speak the unspeakable, make us conscious of the root causes of our challenges, and rally the human spirit.

The Arts Counsel is designed to be a creative hub, a place where members will develop their practice and curate innovative events that reflect on and respond to Women Forward International's programming, which partners graduate students with organizations on action-oriented research projects to advance women. They will encourage our next generation of leaders to move beyond the limited framework of institutional solutions to the world's most intractable problems and make global unity, collaboration, and service a living reality

The Participants

Jenevieve Aken is a Nigerian photographer and story-teller who focuses on social documentary photography and often adopts self-portraiture in her artistic practice. She explores personal experiences and contemporary social issues of identity, sexuality, gender and social roles. Her work has been exhibited in museums and galleries across Africa, Europe, Asia and America.

Ms. Aken has participated in many international, group exhibitions most recently in the Hundred Heroines "Cabinet Of Remedies" in London, and the Hidden_Project/Hidden_Message in Düsseldorf, Germany. In 2020, Ms. Aken was awarded the Wellcome Photography Prize in the Hidden Worlds category for her 2017 project *Monankim*, that explores female circumcision.

Ms. Aken has undertaken artist residency programs with LagosPhoto Festival in conjunction with Neue Schule fur Fotografie in Berlin, Germany, a residency at the Villa Lena foundation in Tuscany, Italy, and a residency at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul, South Korea.

Ms. Aken lives and works in Lagos, Nigeria.

Dana Al Fardan is a Qatari contemporary composer, songwriter and symphonic artist. Drawing on her rich cultural heritage and influenced by her love of world music, her work is a blend of Arabic influenced contemporary classical, epic in scale and universally accessible.

Ms. Al Fardan is the brand ambassador of the internationally renowned Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO), with whom she recorded "Layla" and "Sandstorm", her first two albums. Later on, she played alongside the London Metropolitan Orchestra at the iconic Theatre Royal Haymarket in London, debuting with a full program of her repertoire and bringing Qatari music to a UK audience.

Ms. Al Fardan has delved into musical theatre, composing the music for "Broken Wings", the first Middle East musical that arrived to the West End and performed in various theatres around the globe.

Currently, she's working on a composition for a film score Orca, a drama based on a true story; her second musical, "Rumi" based on the story of the 13th century philosopher and poet Rumi, to be debuted in the West End in 2021 and her fourth album "INDIGO" which will be released in the second quarter 2021.

Fatima Al Dosari is the Executive Director of Qatar America Institute for Culture (QAIC). She is an art and culture leader who spearheads the institute's pursuits to further strengthen cultural understanding, dialogue, and appreciation between her home country, Qatar, and the United States.

Ms. Al Dosari leverages her 10+ years of experience in cultural exchange and management to grow the organization's sustainable efforts in supporting a diverse art and culture community that drives inspiring change for the future. Her previous work experience includes strategizing and managing various digital properties for international organizations in the media industry and UN agencies. She also consulted for several governmental organizations, academic institutions, and corporations both in Qatar and the U.S. focusing on strategic communication, data analysis, and policy.

Ms. Al Dosari was awarded an M.A. from Georgetown University's Communication, Culture and Technology (CCT) Program and received an executive postgraduate degree in Arts & Culture Strategy from University of Pennsylvania. Her B.A. was in International Affairs and Human Development from Qatar University.

Bouthayna Al Muftah is a Qatari visual artist. Her artistic approach draws inspiration from cultural heritage borrowing elements from the people of Qatar's oral history and folklore.

Ms. Al Muftah received her BA degree from Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts Qatar. Upon her graduation, Ms. Al Muftah focused her artistic practice in printmaking, typography, documentation and artists' books, which evolved into multiple installations.

Ms. Al Muftah's fascination with her surrounding context has led her to develop strong interest in the life in the old neighborhoods of Qatar and its people. As an approach to reconstruct past experiences into contemporary settings, she often finds characters and stories to transform in her own world. She gradually turned to book binding as a way to express her inspirations and themes in the form of conceptual documentation of the

past, whilst simultaneously deconstructing and rediscovering elements in an abstract style.

Mehera Blum is the founder and creative director of Blumera, created with the intent of designing luxuriously exquisite, high-vibratory, uplifting collections while utilizing unexpected natural sustainable materials such as recycled brass and up-cycled wood. Ms. Blum is heavily influenced by her extensive travels that introduced her to a myriad of cultures and the beauty of the world, which she continually seeks to express in new and unimagined ways. She is also inspired by her late mother, world-renowned painter Laurie Blum, and in the years since her mother's passing has reimagined her mother's paintings into new creations.

Ms. Blum started her career as an actress with a BFA from Boston University, studying also at London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. She went on to appear in theater, movies, and television.

Blumera has been featured in publications including British Vogue, Vogue India, WWD, Forbes and Harper's Bazaar.

Kay Chernush is an award-winning photographer with more than 30 year's experience in commercial and fine art photography. Her assignments have taken her all over the world for major magazines, Fortune 500 corporations, and both nonprofit and governmental agencies. Her fine art work is included in the permanent collections of the World Bank, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the National Institutes of Health.

In 2005, an assignment for the U.S. State Department brought her face to face with the evils of human trafficking and modern slavery which led her to begin working with individual survivors and anti-trafficking organizations in cities around the world. She developed an innovative approach, using collaged and constructed imagery that dignifies trafficked persons and re-frames how their stories are portrayed. To broaden the scope of her project, Ms. Chernush founded ArtWorks for Freedom in July 2011, to use the power of art in all its forms to fight modern slavery.

Ms. Chernush lives in the Washington, DC area.

Zuhal Feraidon was born in Afghanistan and later fled to Turkmenistan with her family before immigrating to the United States in 2005. Ms. Feraidon received her BA in Studio Art and Biology from the University of Virginia and her MFA in painting from the Rhode Island School of Design.

In 2015 Ms. Feraidon traveled back to Afghanistan, as part of an independent study, with research focused on female identity in one of the most difficult environments that women have to endure. In 2016 she was the recipient of the Aunspaugh Post-Baccalaureate Fellowship in Studio Art through the McIntire Department of Art.

Ms. Feraidon currently teaches as a visiting lecturer at The Massachusetts College of Art and Design and as an instructor at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Maria Helena Maldonado-Villar was born in Barranquilla, Colombia. Her art stems from her life-long passion for travel and photography. She translates her photographs into a variety of artistic mediums: wood sculpture, intaglio, woodcut, silk screen, and linoleum. Some of her work is printed on her handmade paper from Fabriano, Italy, where she studied at the Museo de la Carta e della Filigrana, focusing on paper making, and intaglio with Roberto Stellutin, during her the summer of 2015.

Ms. Maldonado-Villar's work has been exhibited in Curated Exhibitions and venues, including Gallery Via Umbria, Somerset Town Hall, Cosmos Club, and the World Bank. Additionally, her artwork has decorated the showroom at Poltrona Frau in Georgetown, Washington, DC, from October 2016-August 2017.

Ms. Maldonado-Villar has an MA in International Relations and Economics from Johns Hopkins University (SAIS) and a BA in International Studies from The American University. She has also worked at The World Bank in Washington and UNESCO in Paris.

Ms. Maldonado-Villar lives in Washington, DC.

Georgina Mayer has been a macrobiotic chef and counselor at Casa Macro since 2013.

She enjoys sharing her passion for the culinary arts for health and healing with the mission to inspire and promote wellness and satisfaction through food and lifestyle.

Casa Macro is the first vegan macrobiotic restaurant in Mexico. It offers a 100% plant based menu in an environmentally friendly space where one can enjoy healthy meals next to a small organic garden. At Casa Macro Ms. Mayer also offers lectures, nutritional and macrobiotic counseling, cooking classes, organic garden workshops. People interested in learning about healthy foods, lifestyle and how to take care of their own health consciously through peaceful coexistence with our planet will get the skills and resources in a fun environment.

Ms. Mayer is the co-owner and co-founder of Cauce. Cauce is dedicated to the promotion of health and environmental issues through lectures, children's plays and counseling for businesses, schools, families and individuals.

Ms. Mayer is a Plant Based Diets Chef by the Natural Epicurean Academy of Culinary Arts in Austin, TX, a Macrobiotics Counselor by Macrobiotics America, Oroville, CA and has a Nutrition diploma by Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana.

Nada Odeh is a Syrian artist, curator, activist, humanitarian and poet. She was born and raised in Damascus and lived in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates before coming to the United States in 2013 due to the conflict and revolution in her country. Ms. Odeh received her BA in Fine Arts from Damascus University and her M.A. in Museum Studies from Syracuse University. Ms. Odeh has established a project known as 'Nada's Picassos', which began in Damascus but was then later traveled to Dubai, Michigan and is currently based in New York State. Ms. Odeh's artwork is influenced by elements of her heritage including Arabic miniatures and Middle Eastern colors, and the key themes of her artwork are Syrian refugees in camps and the Syrian people with a recent focus on displaced Syrian women in exile.

Ms. Odeh's art has been exhibited in Damascus, Dubai, Detroit, Toledo, Tiffin, Washington D.C., and across New York State in New York City, Syracuse, Albany and Auburn.

In addition to exhibitions of her work, Ms. Odeh has also curated projects on the topic of immigration and folklore arts. She worked with the New York Folklore on various projects highlighting immigrants and refugees' folklore arts.

Ms. Odeh lives and works in Syracuse, New York.

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