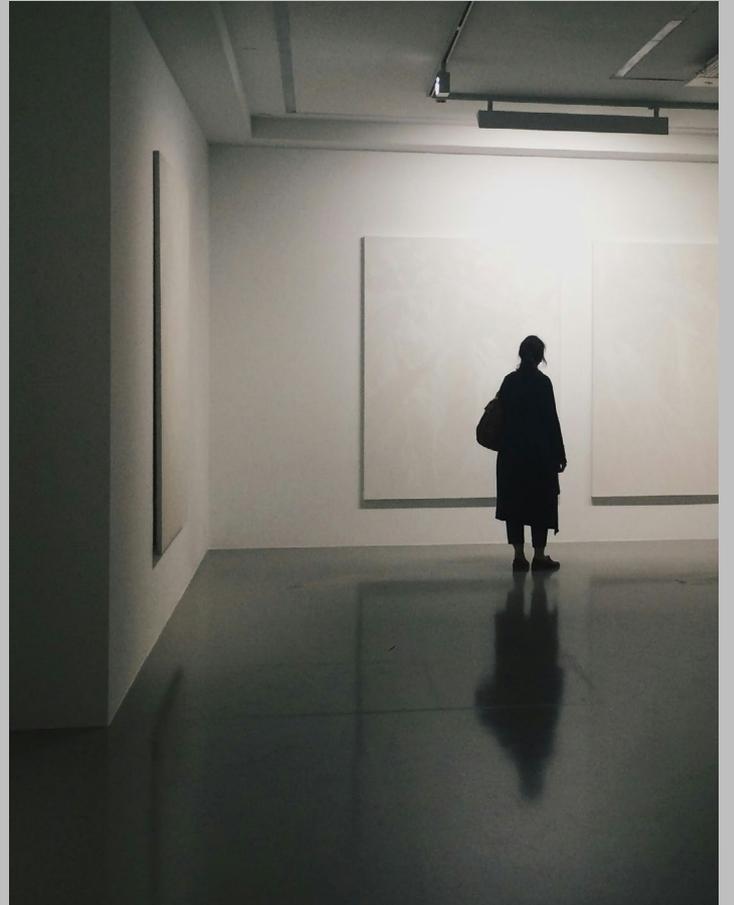


# CURATORIAL PATHS: INTRODUCTION TO EXHIBITION CURATION



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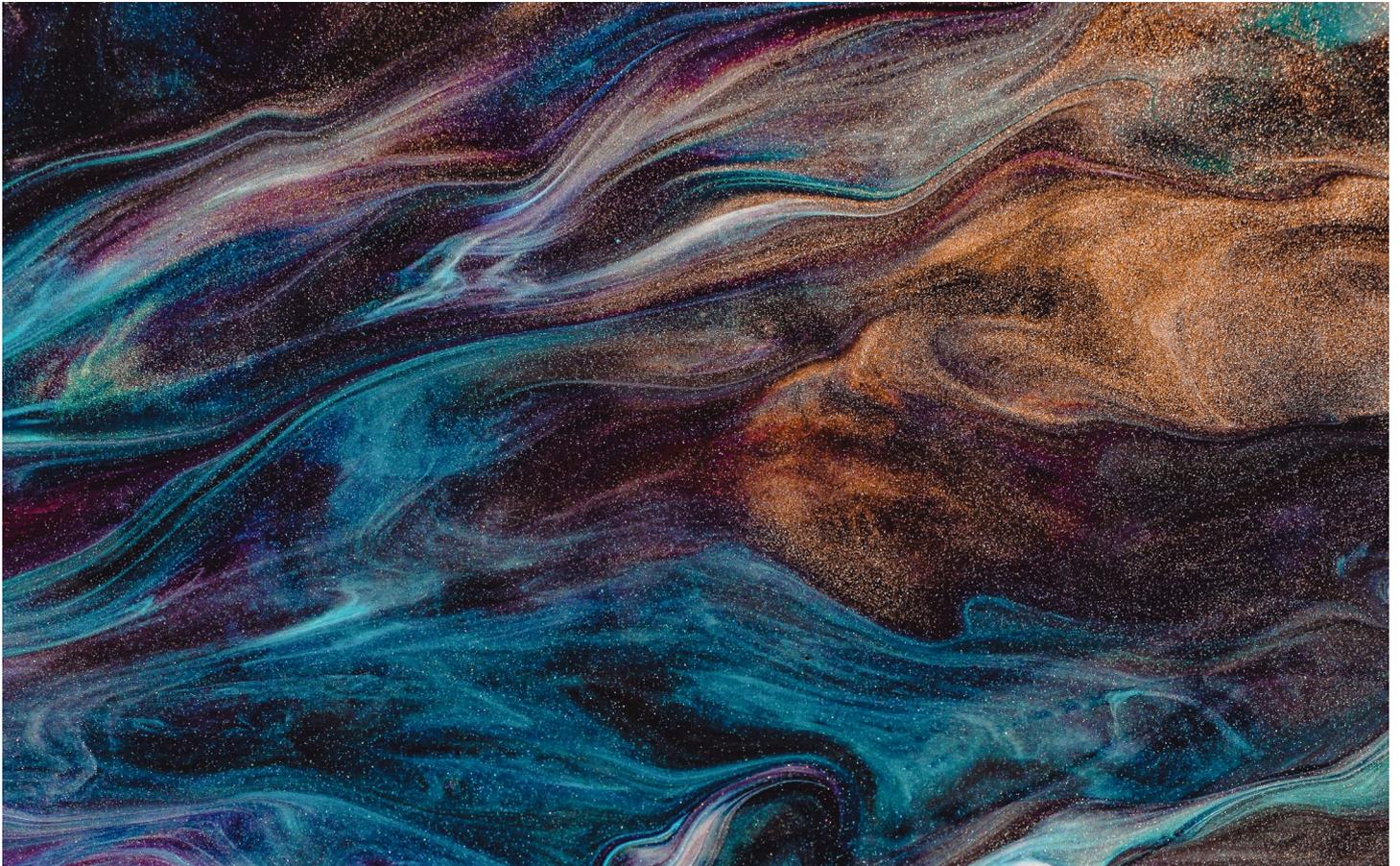
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**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

**CURATORIAL PATHS:  
INTRODUCTION TO EXHIBITION  
CURATION**

The 2024 Arts Apprenticeship Program, in partnership with Dirwaza Curatorial Lab, presented the “Curatorial Paths: Introduction to Exhibition Curation,” This program was designed for people living with MS and similar chronic conditions who have an interest in the creative industry and community-building initiatives. It underscores the belief that art can be a powerful tool for expression and personal growth, helping to strengthen community ties and inspire meaningful conversations about MS. By engaging participants in creative exploration, the program not only nurtures talent but also inspires greater awareness, empathy, and support for those living with MS and other chronic conditions.





Four participants were selected to train with the Dirwaza Curatorial Lab team in a hybrid structured program to enhance creative expression, develop curatorial practices, and nurture a deeper understanding of exhibition-making.

This program combined virtual and in-person group sessions, which were held primarily in Abu Dhabi, with additional sessions in Dubai and Sharjah.

Participants had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the art world by engaging with the local art community through teaching sessions, artist studio tours, and exhibition visits.

By the end of the program, participants cultivated a strong foundation in curation, empowering them to explore self-expression and achieve personal growth through the transformative power of art.



## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES & KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The Curatorial Paths program provides participants with the opportunity to:

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**01**

Learn about the vibrant art scene and art history in the UAE.

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**02**

Use art education as a tool to build community connections.

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**03**

Gain an understanding of the creative process behind curating an art exhibition.

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**04**

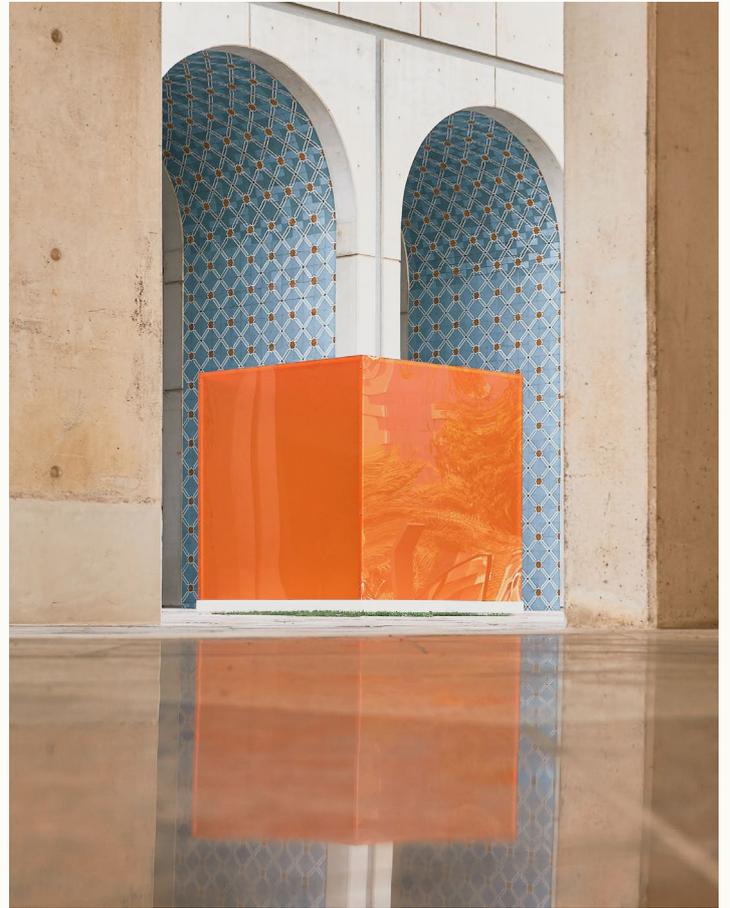
Enhance creative capacities through art as a means of expression and storytelling.

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**05**

Raise awareness of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) through artistic outlets, fostering empathy and understanding.

# ABOUT NMSS



Established in 2022 under the Ministry of Community Empowerment (formerly the Ministry of Community Development), the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) is a UAE-based NGO created to better the lives of people living with multiple sclerosis (MS) and their communities in the UAE through education, advocacy and advancing global efforts to finding a cure for MS.

NMSS is governed by a board of trustees, advised by a local and international Strategic Advisory Committee and Medical Advisory Committee, and supported by MS ambassadors and volunteers.

Together, they ensure that people living with MS have access to high-quality care and get the guidance they need through reliable resources.

NMSS has driven positive advancements within three core pillars by activating key strategic programs and initiatives. These pillars are:

- Providing support and resources to people living with MS.
- Raising awareness and reducing the stigma associated with MS.
- Driving research and development to advance treatment for MS.

Dirwaza Curatorial Lab is an Abu Dhabi-based creative incubator and projects partner. As a creative incubator, Dirwaza builds communities in the Gulf through non-profit mentorship for multi-disciplinary research, archive building, critique, and artistic programming. As a projects partner, Dirwaza advises institutions, decision-makers, collectors, and businesses.

They specialize in cultural projects, managing collections, designing exhibitions, and proposing bespoke arts-driven programs. The organization works with a growing network of artists, arts professionals, and institutions to participate in a dynamic environment with homegrown ideas.

## ABOUT DIRWAZA CURATORIAL LAB

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS), in collaboration with Dirwaza Curatorial Lab, has developed this program to bridge the gap between the arts and the MS community. Dirwaza's expertise in curatorial practice complements NMSS's mission of promoting awareness and improving the quality of life for people living with MS through the power of creativity. This initiative aligns with NMSS's broader efforts to support and celebrate those living with chronic conditions.

The collaboration also builds upon NMSS's Abu Dhabi Art 2023 partnership, wherein the therapeutic potential of art was explored to spark understanding and inspire change.



## ENTERING THE ART SCENE: NMSS AT ABU DHABI ART 2023



In 2023, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) commissioned a groundbreaking art installation, including workshops, as part of its participation in Abu Dhabi Art 2023. Designed to raise awareness about Multiple Sclerosis (MS), the installation, titled “How Nature is Constant When the Sun Never Rests,” was created by award-winning Emirati multi-disciplinary artist Maitha Al Omaira. The work explored themes of memory, renewal, and the intricate relationship between the human body and its environment.

Using alginate, casts, plaster, and elements of flora and fauna, the installation symbolized the ever-evolving nature of MS and its parallels with the changes found in the natural world. Positioned within the “Into the Horizon” section, curated by Dirwaza Curatorial Lab, the installation represented a harmonious intersection of body, nature, and the broader societal understanding of MS.

The installation and workshops, also displayed at COP28, provided a platform for dialogue, community engagement, and advocacy, enabling visitors to explore the complexities of MS through artistic expression.

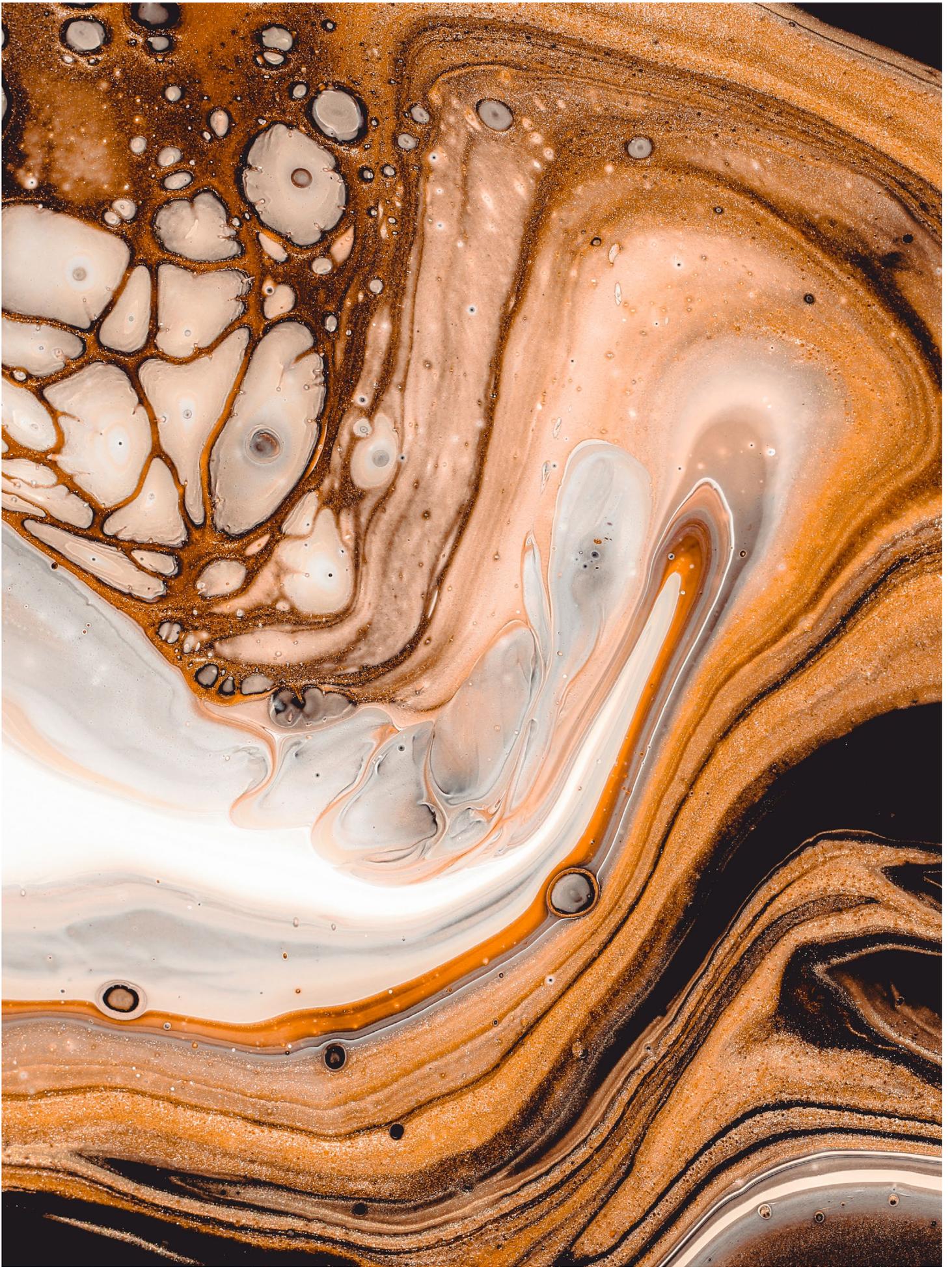
Dr. Fatima Al Kaabi,  
Vice Chair of the NMSS Board of Trustees,  
reflected on the initiative:

**“Multiple Sclerosis is more than a diagnosis; it’s a life-altering journey. Through art, we can visually represent the complexities of living with MS and inspire the understanding and support needed to achieve a future free of MS.”**

Munira Al Sayegh,  
Founder of Dirwaza Curatorial Lab,  
added:

“Telling stories is by far one of the most important tools to have while navigating the world around us. Having a safe space that allowed for these stories to unfold, allowed for the success of this apprenticeship- one that brought a group of people together, sharing, extending and learning not only from the program but most importantly one another.”





# THE THERAPEUTIC POWER OF ART

## ART IS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR SELF-EXPRESSION, STORYTELLING, AND COMMUNITY BUILDING.

It enables individuals to connect with others, express their feelings, and advocate for their own well-being.

By creating shared experiences and sparking dialogue, it provides a platform for empathy and understanding. Through its support of the Curatorial Paths program, NMSS helps empower participants to share their personal narratives and connect their experiences with those of others.

This interconnectedness strengthens communities and challenges stigmas associated with chronic conditions like MS, simultaneously equipping participants with the skills to craft curatorial proposals and present them. Art's therapeutic impact extends beyond personal healing; it allows for collective growth and promotes a deeper understanding of chronic conditions, positioning art as a significant tool in the empowerment of people with MS and similar conditions.

## MEET THE APPRENTICES

**THE SUCCESS OF THE CURATORIAL PATHS PROGRAM IS DRIVEN BY THE DEDICATION AND TALENT OF ITS PARTICIPANTS. EACH APPRENTICE BRINGS A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE AND STORY TO THEIR WORK, REFLECTING THE DIVERSE EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE MS COMMUNITY AND BEYOND.**

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, unpredictable condition of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information between the brain and spinal cord.

The cause of MS is unknown. It is an individual condition, and MS symptoms vary greatly from person to person. MS can often be an invisible condition, with symptoms that flare suddenly and unpredictably, impacting work, relationships, and daily routines.

Curatorial Paths: Introduction to Exhibition Curation embraces art as an expressive medium to share these personal journeys, promoting empathy for people with MS and other chronic conditions.

By developing skills in curatorial practices and deepening their connection to the arts, the apprentices have contributed to building a more inclusive cultural landscape, where storytelling through art amplifies diverse voices and experiences.

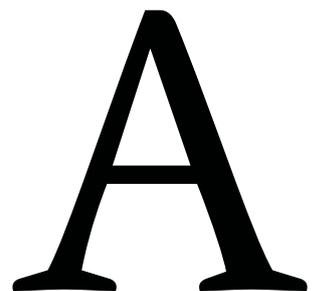


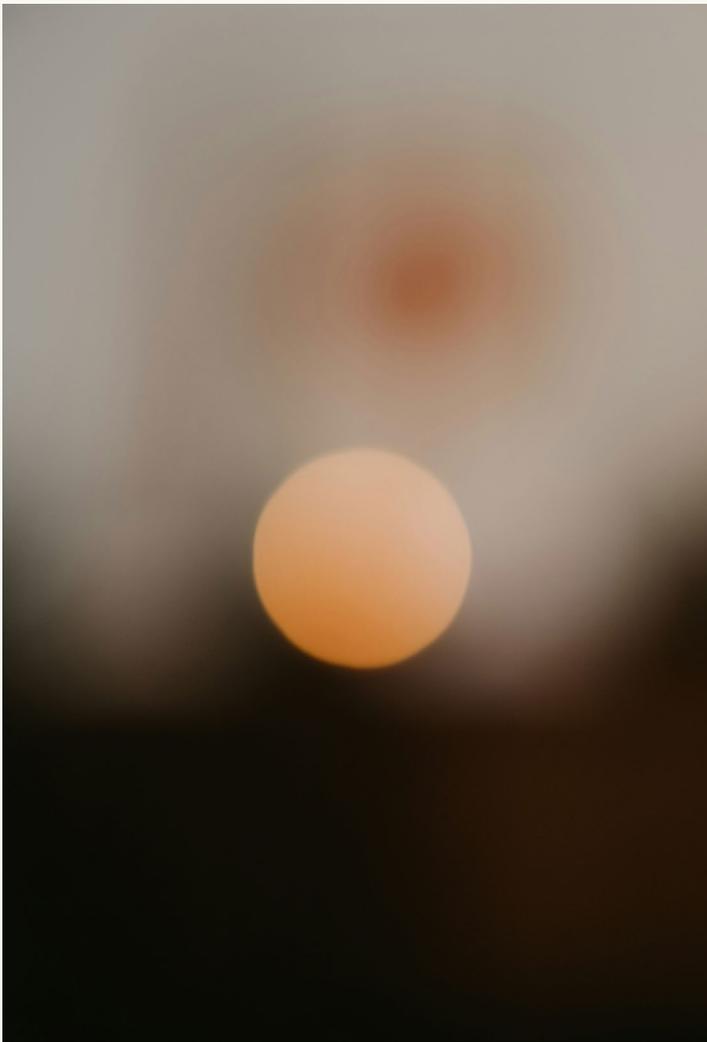
The contributions of these individuals highlight the power of art to inspire and connect.

S



**Sultan Al Shamsi** A Person  
Living with MS





Sultan's project, Living with the Unseen, shines a spotlight on the invisible symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

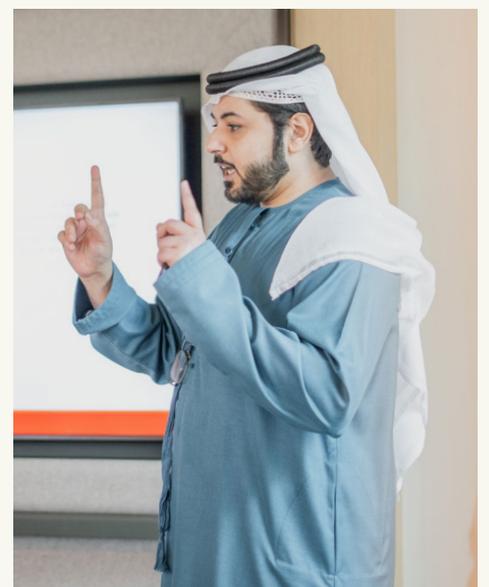
He emphasizes the significance of these hidden challenges, which often surpass the visible manifestations of the disease.

Sultan highlights that while MS is most noticeable during an attack, the everyday struggles of people living with MS often go unnoticed and misunderstood.

**PROJECT:**

**LIVING WITH THE  
UNSEEN**

His project brings much-needed awareness to these unseen symptoms, advocating for greater understanding and empathy.



“When I participated in Abu Dhabi Art in 2023 with NMSS, I saw how Maitha’s art sparked curiosity and inspired people to ask questions. It showed me the power of art in raising awareness. I was struck by how many people were unfamiliar with MS, and it became clear that awareness through art could make a real impact.

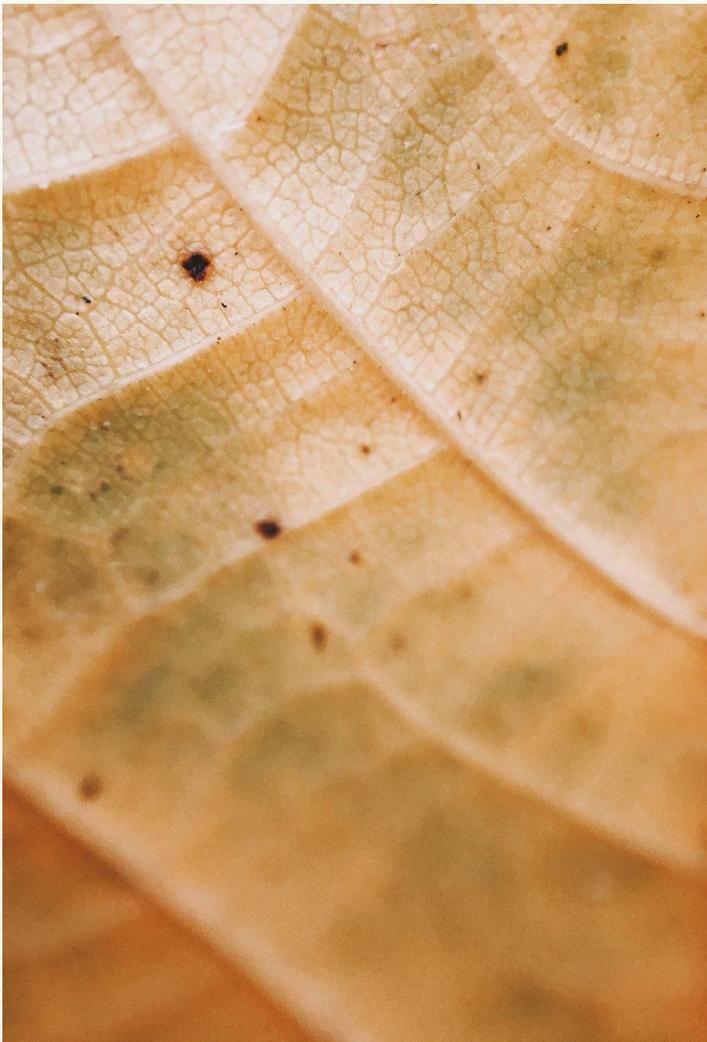
When the opportunity arose, I applied to the Arts Apprenticeship Program to explore this further. At 35, it’s exciting to still have the chance to experience something new and continue learning. This program has been a transformative journey for me.”

Y



**Yusra Wahba** Living with  
Fibromyalgia

**W**



Yusra's exhibition, Aren't We All Bodies, explores the themes of the body, nerves, and fluidity. Although she does not have MS, Yusra lives with fibromyalgia, a chronic neurological condition that causes constant pain and fatigue.

**PROJECT:**

**AREN'T WE ALL BODIES**

Her exhibition reflects on the shared challenges of the human body, inviting viewers to consider the universality of these experiences.



“The Arts Apprenticeship Program profoundly impacted my journey, helping me better understand and connect with my health condition, fibromyalgia. I especially appreciated the insights from my mentor and the shared experiences with my cohort.

Through this program, I learned how to express myself through art and gained curatorial skills, which culminated in my exhibition. It was an opportunity to reflect on the body’s transformation after trauma. This experience has been invaluable for my personal and professional growth.”

C



**Ciba Sanno** A Person Living  
with MS

S



Ciba's project, Invisible Tales, delves into the hidden effects of MS. She portrays the condition as a constant balancing act between its unpredictable chaos and the calm that comes with symptom management and hope for the future.

**PROJECT:**

**INVISIBLE TALES**

Each aspect of her work highlights a different unseen symptom, bringing visibility to the often-overlooked realities of MS.



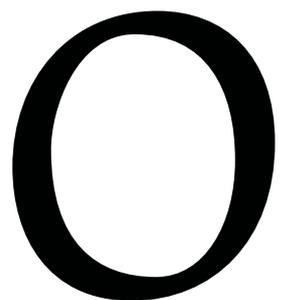
“This program was a game-changer for me. My days were once consumed by household chores and hospital visits, but the program brought a new sense of purpose and excitement to my life.

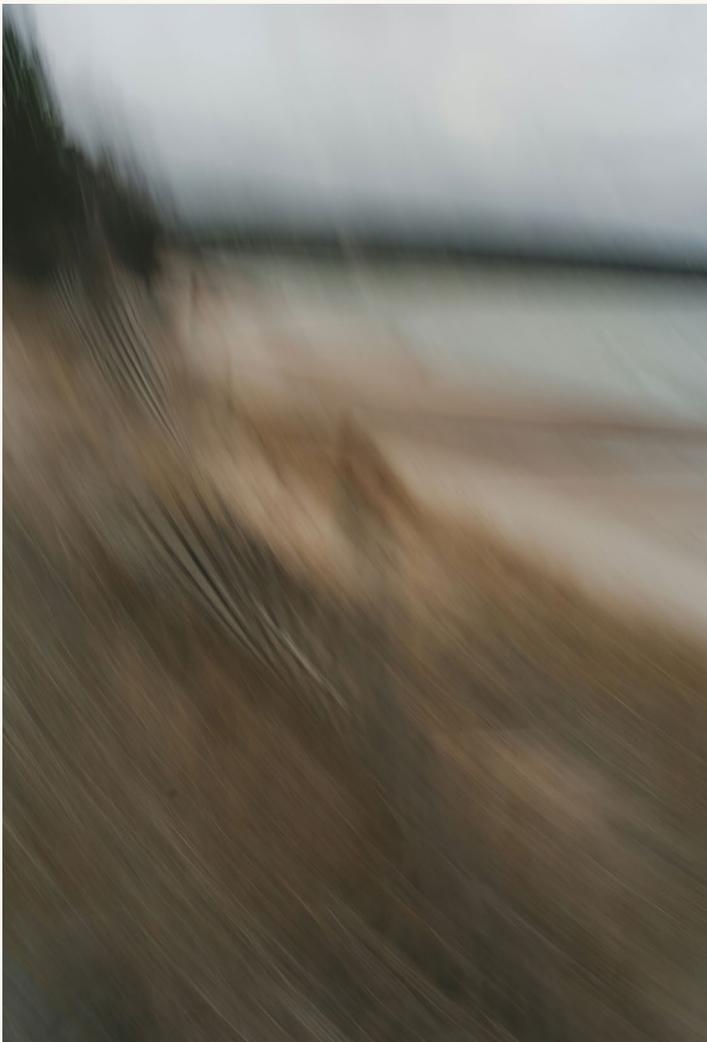
I never missed a single session and looked forward to connecting with my health journey through an artistic lens. It transformed how I perceive and express my experiences.”

C



**Cristina O'Hanlon** A Person  
Living with MS



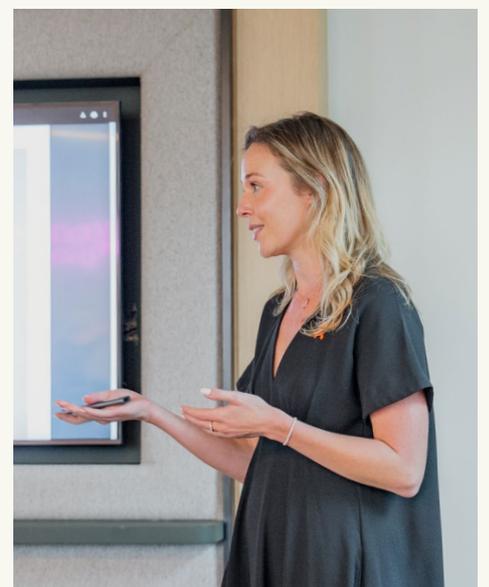


Cristina's "Running Outside to Return Home" is a journey into the personal and universal – the spaces where femininity, self-discovery, and cultural identity converge.

**PROJECT:**

**RUNNING OUTSIDE TO  
RETURN HOME**

This exhibition brings together eight visionary artists from the region who explore the intimate landscapes of the self, where identity is not fixed but wrestled with, and their vulnerability becomes a powerful act of revelation.



“The highlight of the Arts Apprenticeship Program was meeting with the cohort each week. These sessions explored various curatorial approaches inspired by exhibitions in Abu Dhabi, sparking conversations about our health conditions and coping mechanisms.

This program created a space where I could connect my passion for art with my personal journey. It was a transformative experience that brought two integral parts of my life together in a meaningful way.”

# PROGRAM STRUCTURE & OUTCOMES

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## **WEEKS 1-2:** **Foundation & Ideation**

The first two weeks of the program focuses on the foundations of curating. Participants are introduced to curatorial practices and explore the thematic ideas that will drive their proposals. These early stages emphasize creativity, research, and forming connections with the broader art community.

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## **WEEKS 3-4:** **Research & Relationship Building**

During weeks three and four, participants focus on researching artists and establishing key relationships within the art scene. These relationships are essential for developing a meaningful curatorial concept that resonates with both the artists and the broader community.

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## **WEEKS 5:** **Proposal Development**

In week five, participants refine their exhibition proposals, integrating their research and artistic selections into comprehensive curatorial concepts. They focus on translating their vision into clear written and visual formats, preparing for the final presentation.

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**WEEKS 6-7:**  
**Expanding Dimensions through  
Programming**

Weeks six and seven involve the expansion of participants' curatorial concepts through public programming and publications. These elements allow for broader community engagement and help strengthen the accessibility of their exhibitions. Participants gain valuable insights into how programming could elevate an exhibition's impact.

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**WEEKS 8:**  
**Presentation & Critique Session**

The final week culminates in a presentation and critique session, where participants present their proposals to a panel of guest critics. This experience offers participants critical feedback and the opportunity to further refine their ideas before the final exhibition.

## APPRENTICE OUTCOMES & FUTURE PATHWAYS

The Curatorial Paths program empowers participants by providing new skills, exhibition opportunities, and career advancement prospects. These achievements are key to creating future opportunities in the arts sector for people with MS.

The exhibition booklets created during the program provide lasting evidence of the apprentices' journeys, showcasing their creativity and growth. In addition, the apprentices were offered hands-on experience via interning with Dirwaza Curatorial Lab following their apprenticeship.

The internship aims to embed the apprentices in the day-to-day aspects of industry, where they will shadow the Dirwaza team and learn the operational elements of the entity.





## WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR COMMUNITY

NMSS extends sincere thanks to Dirwaza Curatorial Lab, the artists, and all contributors who have made the Curatorial Paths: Introduction to Exhibition Curation program a reality. The collaboration demonstrates a shared commitment to empowering the MS community through the arts and promoting inclusivity in the UAE's cultural landscape.

We also wish to thank the Arts Apprenticeship Selection Committee, a dynamic collective of visionaries who are active in the creative and artistic community. As pioneers shaping the first edition of this program, these judges set the foundation for a legacy of artistic discovery and mentorship, with many more inspiring chapters yet to come.

**THE SELECTION COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS INCLUDE:**



**Munira Al Sayegh**  
Founder of Dirwaza  
Curatorial Lab



**Hessa Al Nuaimi**  
Curatorial Advisor at Dirwaza  
Curatorial Lab



**Nasser Alzayani**  
Visual Artist



**Rand Abdul Jabbar**  
Visual Artist



**Hala Zainal**  
Senior Manager Programs and  
Community Outreach at National  
Multiple Sclerosis Society



**Dr. Dana Al Mazrouei**  
Arts and Creative Learning  
Expert at 421

Special thanks also go to partners, mentors, and critics, whose contributions have been invaluable in shaping the program's success.

Your support has had a significant impact on both the participants and the wider community.

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## M39

M39 is a contemporary art space located in Abu Dhabi, known for supporting emerging artists and experimental curatorial practices.

The space provides a platform for innovative exhibitions, cross-disciplinary collaborations, and community-focused projects.

Website: [m39.ae](http://m39.ae)

Location: Zayed Port - Al Mina - Abu Dhabi

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## ART JAMEEL

Art Jameel is an organization that supports arts, education, and heritage in the Middle East. Its initiatives include exhibitions, commissions, and public programs designed to engage with contemporary cultural production.

Art Jameel is also known for its focus on educational programming and support for emerging talent.

Website: [artjameel.org](http://artjameel.org)

Location: Jaddaf Waterfront - Dubai

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## 421 (WAREHOUSE421)

A hub for creativity and artistic expression, 421 hosts exhibitions, workshops, and public programs, focusing on engaging the local community in creative practices.

Its programming emphasizes both emerging and established artists, offering a space for artistic development and exploration.

Website: [421.online/home](http://421.online/home)

Location: Zayed Port - Al Mina - Abu Dhabi

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## SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

A leading institution in the region, Sharjah Art Foundation supports contemporary art practices through exhibitions, residencies, and educational initiatives.

Known for its large-scale international exhibitions such as the Sharjah Biennial, the foundation fosters dialogue and creative engagement within the region and globally.

Website: [sharjahart.org](http://sharjahart.org)

Location: Corniche St - Al Mareija - Sharjah

# CONTACT INFORMATION FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS



For more information about the Arts Apprenticeship Program or to explore upcoming events hosted by the NMSS, please email us at: [info@nationalmssociety.ae](mailto:info@nationalmssociety.ae) or, visit our website at [nationalmssociety.ae/en/](http://nationalmssociety.ae/en/)

Stay connected and discover the latest updates, insights, and initiatives by following us on social media:

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National Multiple Sclerosis Society UAE



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