

stories over art

middle east & beyond

November 2025
#17



ART & DESIGN | ARCHITECTURE | FASHION | INTERVIEWS | COMMENTARY | FILM | MUSIC | PERFORMANCE | PHOTOGRAPHY | FEATURES | REVIEWS

EDITOR'S NOTE



Samuel Fosso, *The Chief who Sold Africa to the Colonists*, 1997, c-print, 85.8 x 86.5cm, courtesy the artist and Efie Gallery, Dubai

Art in any form should allow us to breathe slowly — to connect with ourselves, and to remind us of what we're losing touch with.

Lately, however, with art being created by AI and more of us consuming rather than creating, it feels as though art is losing its essence.

In the UAE, too, events are aplenty — and as the weather turns pleasant, they multiply. There's an exhibition in every gallery, a concert in every hall, an open mic in every café, and a collaboration brewing every weekday.

As I prepare myself for another season of opportunities and colours, talents and timelines, I am reminded of something an art curator said last winter. She was so overwhelmed by the number of events she had to attend in a single week that she wished for someone to rearrange her calendar — jokingly adding that perhaps we need a talk or panel on how to manage the UAE's art calendar right at the start of the season.

It did sound like a wise idea.

Until we implement it, here's what I suggest: attend what you can, and cherish it

when you're there. Don't rush to be seen — let each experience nourish your soul, the way art is truly meant to. Don't worry about what you miss, or what others say you mustn't miss. Simply, follow your heart.

P.S: In an era of ChatGPT and Paywalls, we're daring to create original content and offer it to our readers without a fee. Your support would go a long way. Subscribe to the portal and meet us on social media as well.

(Imagery: Ghanaian-owned Dubai-based Efie Gallery returns to Abu Dhabi Art with works by contemporary and modern African artists Samuel Fosso, Dr Oku Ampofo, Maggie Otieno, and Dina Nur Satti)



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MIDDLE EAST'S MOST TRANSFORMATIVE NEW BUILDINGS REVEALED

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) revealed the 15 finalists for the inaugural Middle East Award, showcasing the most transformative and socially impactful new architecture across the GCC.

From the first purpose-built women's-only mosque in the Muslim world to the ambitious transformation of a former Saudi airport into the world's largest city park, the shortlist reflected how the region is reimagining its future. Projects ranged from the conservation of one of the UAE's most biodiverse nature reserves to an experience centre built using indigenous Najdi design — showcasing architecture where innovation, sustainability, and cultural identity were at the forefront.

The winner of the award was set to be announced during Dubai Design Week on 5 November 2025, followed by a dedicated event on 7 November. The shortlist spanned four countries — the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain — and brought together both regional and international architects from across the GCC, as well as the UK, USA, Germany, Singapore, and Japan. It showcased a diverse range of projects, from civic landmarks transforming city life to innovative responses to climate change and biodiversity loss, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and bold new cultural destinations. Together, these projects demonstrated how architecture is being used to solve real-world challenges and create more sustainable and inclusive spaces for their communities.

Al Wasl Plaza by Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture, UAE. Image credit: Dubai Expo 2020 LLC

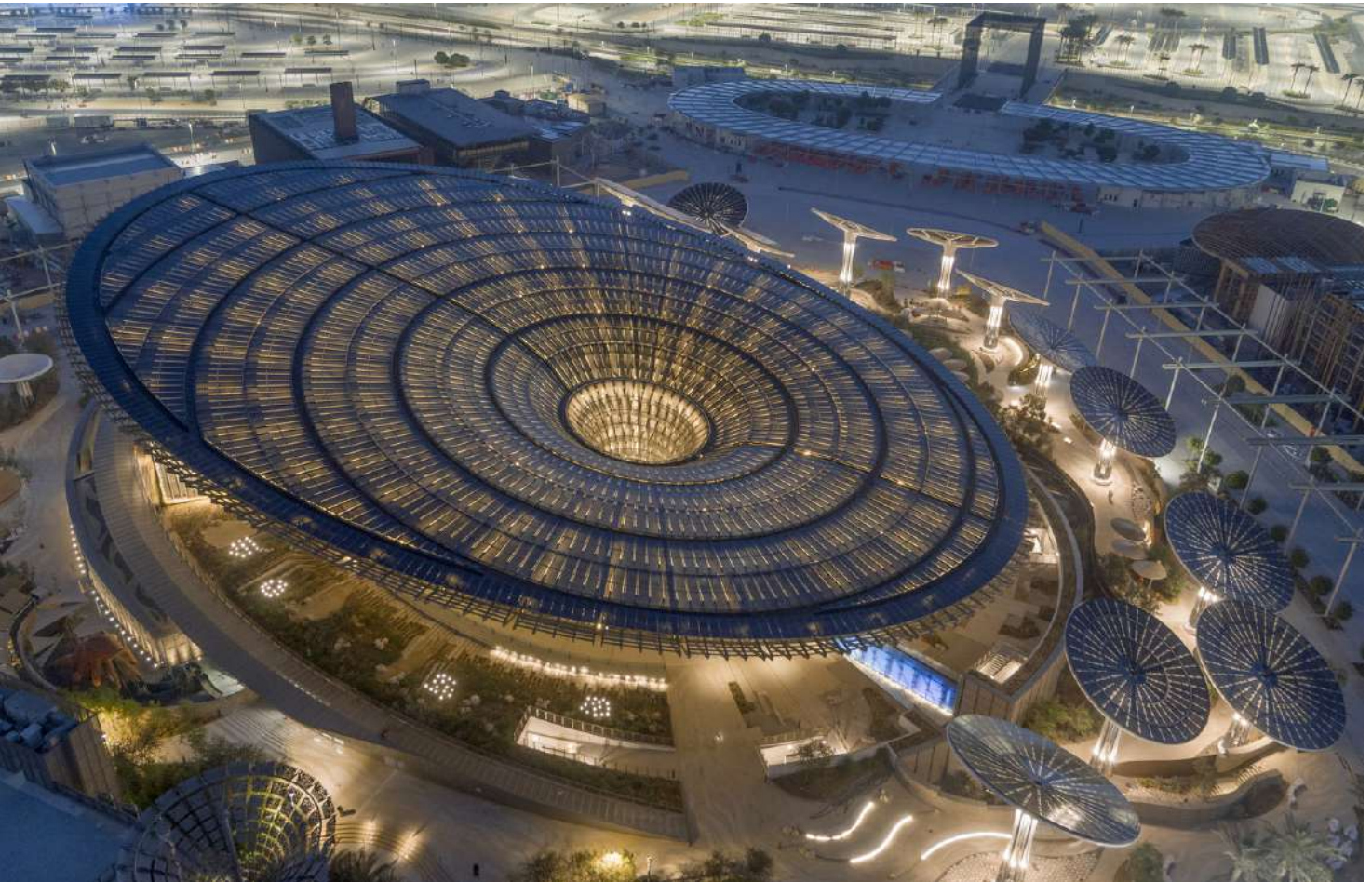
Climate-conscious design

Shortlisted projects highlighted innovative responses to biodiversity, climate, and ecology. Examples included: the Khor Kalba Turtle and Wildlife Sanctuary by Hopkins Architects (Algurm), a cluster of rounded pavilions supporting the rehabilitation of turtles and endangered birds; the World Food Waste Teahouse: Arabi-an by Mitsubishi Jisho Design (Dubai), the world's first food-concrete structure using tea leaves and dried fruits to create biodegradable, demountable tea spaces; and the Buhais Geology Park Interpretive Centre by Hopkins Architects (Al Madam Plain), five interconnected pods inspired by fossilised urchins, linking visitors to the area's prehistoric landscapes and ancient burial tombs. In Riyadh, King Salman Park by Gerber Architekten, Buro Happold, and Setec represented an ambitious regeneration of a former airport site into a

16.7 km² green oasis at the heart of the city, pioneering desert soil revitalisation, sustainable water use, and climate-resilient planting.

People-first spaces

Architecture that created inclusive, socially impactful environments was also recognised. Highlights included the Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women by Diller Scofidio + Renfro (Doha), the first purpose-built contemporary women's mosque in the Muslim world, featuring an undulating roof punctuated by over 5,000 light wells diffusing natural light to create a luminous, contemplative atmosphere; the Jafar Centre, Dubai College by Godwin Austen Johnson (Dubai), a flexible STEM learning hub designed to prioritise daylight, acoustics, and sustainability; and the Wadi Safar Experience Center by Dar Al Omran – Rasem Badran



Terra Expo City Dubai by Grimshaw, Desert INK and Buro Happold, UAE. Image credit: Dany Eid



Wadi Safar Experience Center by Dar Al Omran – Rasem Badran, Saudi Arabia. Image Credit: Dar Al Omran – Rasem Badran, Dirtyah Company



Al Dana Amphitheatre, by S.L Architects, Bahrain. Image credit: Al Dana Media Team

(Riyadh), a cultural gateway to the wider Wadi Safar development, with modern immersive experiences that highlighted heritage, ecology, and Vision 2030 goals.

Cultural continuity

Several projects reimagined heritage forms for today's context. In Sharjah, The Serai Wing, Bait Khalid Bin Ibrahim by ANARCHITECT transformed two 1950s family homes once owned by a pearl merchant into a boutique hotel, balancing preservation and cultural identity with contemporary design. In Riyadh, the Wadi Safar Experience Center by Dar Al Omran – Rasem Badran drew on Najdi architecture with courtyards, inward-facing spaces, and earth-berm landscaping, integrating tradition with climate-responsive sustainability.

Kerem Cengiz, Jury Chair for the Middle East Awards, said:

“The Middle East's shortlist is a powerful reflection of a region in architectural renaissance, where cultural identity is alive, evolving, and deeply embedded in

contemporary form. From adaptive reuse of traditional typologies to bold urban interventions and socially responsive spaces, these projects reflect a region embracing innovation while honouring its heritage. Whether through materiality, spatial generosity, or climatic intelligence, each work tells a story of place and people. Together, they represent a new architectural language for the Middle East — rooted in memory, yet confidently forward-looking, imaginative, and profoundly transformative.”

Chris Williamson, RIBA President, added:

“The shortlisted projects demonstrate how architecture in the Middle East is evolving with purpose, sensitivity, and ambition. What stands out is not only the quality of design but the diversity of approaches: some projects draw deeply on heritage, while others push the boundaries of contemporary practice. As we face immense social and environmental challenges, these projects stand out for their creativity, sustainability, and human focus. They show how architecture can support communities, respond to climate realities,



Expo 2020 Thematic Districts by Hopkins Architects, UAE. Image Credit: Hopkins Architects



Khor Kalba Turtle and Wildlife Sanctuary by Hopkins Architects, UAE. Image Credit: Marc Goodwin, Archmospheres



The H Residence by tkdp, UAE. Image credit: Philip Handforth

THE COMPLETE SHORTLIST

Al Dana Amphitheatre by S/L Architects (Sakhir) — RIBA Member

Al Wasl Plaza by Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture (Dubai) — Design for Living

Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women, conceived by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro (Doha) — Social Architecture

Buhais Geology Park Interpretive Centre by Hopkins Architects (Al Madam Plain) — RIBA Member

Expo 2020 Thematic Districts by Hopkins Architects (Dubai) — RIBA Member

Jafar Centre, Dubai College by Godwin Austen Johnson (Dubai) — Sustainability and Resilience

Khor Kalba Turtle and Wildlife Sanctuary by Hopkins Architects (Algurm) — RIBA Member

King Salman Park by Gerber Architekten with Buro Happold and Setec (Riyadh) — Future Projects

Singapore Pavilion, World Expo 2020 by WOHA (Dubai) — Temporary Architecture

Terra – The Sustainability Pavilion, Expo 2020 Dubai / Terra Expo City by Grimshaw, Desert INK, and Buro Happold (Dubai) — Sustainability and Resilience

The Fold by Huna (Dubai) — Design for Living

The H Residence by tkdp (Dubai) — Design for Living

The Serai Wing, Bait Khalid Bin Ibrahim by ANARCHITECT (Sharjah) — Adaptive Reuse

Wadi Safar Experience Center by Dar Al Omran – Rasem Badran (Riyadh) — Social Architecture

World Food Waste Teahouse: Arabi-an by Mitsubishi Jisho Design (Dubai) — Temporary Architecture



The Fold by Huna, UAE. Image Credit: Luke Hayes



Singapore Pavilion, World Expo 2020 by WOHA, UAE. Image credit: Urban Redevelopment Authority



King Salman Park by Gerber Architekten, Buro Happold and Setec, Saudi Arabia. Image credit: Gerber Architekten

and create places that enrich daily life. This award is about recognising that ambition and sharing it on the international stage.”

Projects were shortlisted across a range of categories, including Adaptive Reuse, Design for Living, Future Projects, RIBA Member, Social Architecture, Sustainability and Resilience, and Temporary Architecture. Notably, categories such as Future Projects and Temporary Architecture debuted for the very first time, reflecting the evolving priorities and shifts in how architecture is designed and built for current and future generations.

For over 50 years, the RIBA Awards have set the global standard for design excellence and are among the most rigorously judged and respected in the world. This year, RIBA expanded its prestigious International Awards with the launch of two new categories: the Asia Pacific Awards and the Middle East Awards (GCC). This acted as a pilot in the first phase of the new international awards programme, recognising architectural excellence on a global scale.

A MESMERISING SILK EXHIBITION BY SERBIAN ARTIST LILY BURĆUL

Renaissance Business Bay Hotel, Dubai continues its ongoing commitment to championing art and culture with the unveiling of “Lilium Art,” an exhibition by Serbian artist Ljiljana Burćul, known internationally as Lily.

Blending science and spirit, Lily’s artistic journey began far from the canvas. Born in Belgrade, Serbia, and trained as a mechanical engineer, she transformed her understanding of structure and precision into a language of fluidity and light. Since 1997, she has devoted her life to the delicate art of painted silk, creating works that merge the tangible and the transcendent.

Her process combines pigment, water, alcohol, and salt in an almost alchemical rhythm, a technique that reveals layers of colour and depth. Onto these shifting surfaces, Lily adds Swarovski crystals, fine glass, quartz, and gold, giving her pieces a dynamic, luminous presence. The result is a collection where silk becomes alive, and each artwork shimmers with emotion, movement, and reflection.

“Art is not only an expression, it is a way of life,” says Lily. “Each painting is a conversation between beauty and harmony, between the material and the soul.”

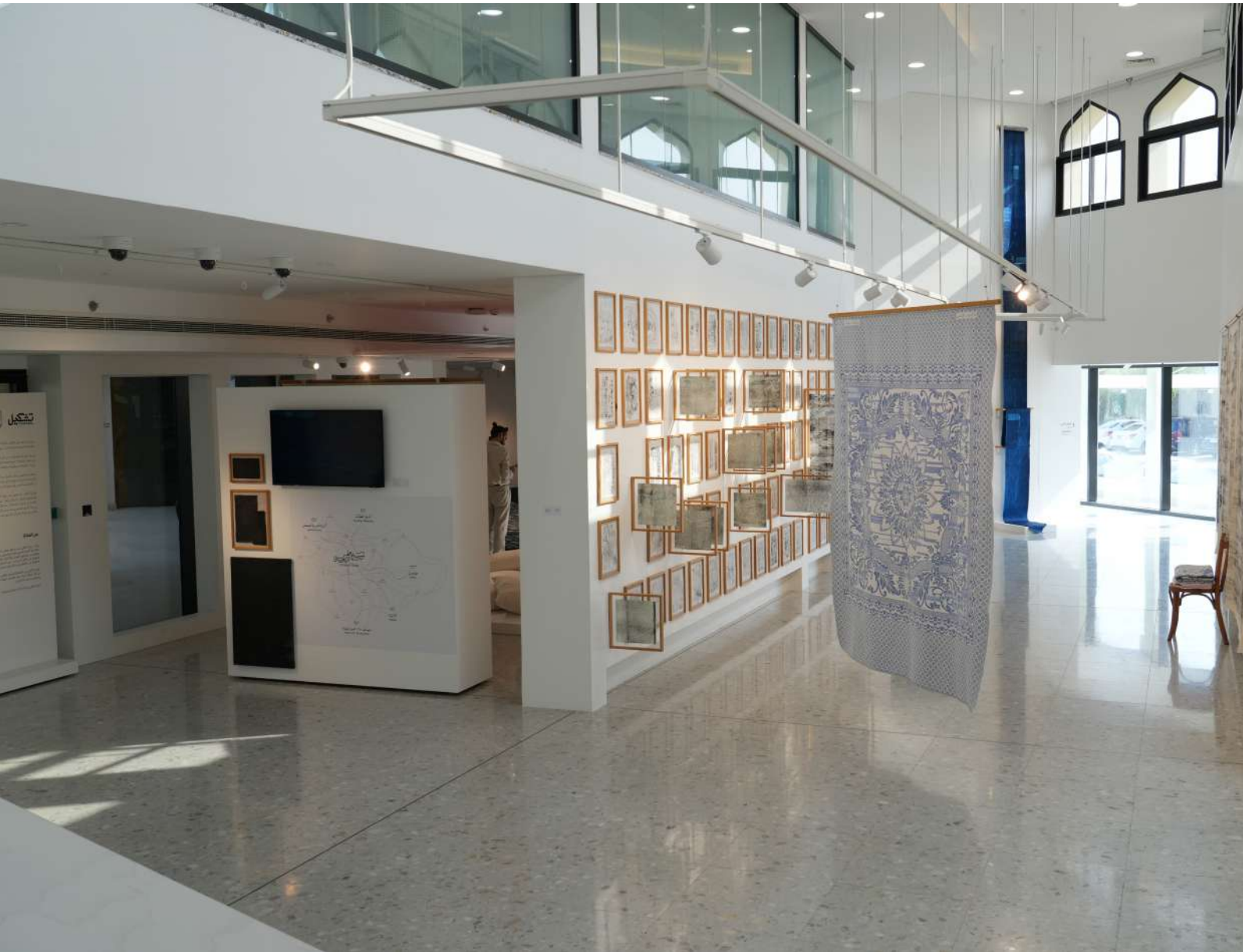
Through her brand Lilium Art, Lily has brought together her creative explorations into a unified vision of balance, light, and love. Each piece invites viewers to experience art not as a static object, but as a living moment of connection.



Hosted at Renaissance Business Bay Hotel, Dubai, Lilium Art forms part of the hotel’s monthly series of exhibitions celebrating international artists. The initiative reflects the brand’s ongoing philosophy of curating discovery through art, culture, and human connection, offering guests and visitors a deeper experience of creativity within its spaces.

Opening Event: 13 November 2025 | 7 pm – 9:30 pm | R Lounge

Exhibition Dates: 14 – 25 November 2025 | The Lobby, Renaissance Business Bay Hotel, Dubai: Explore more: www.liliumart.global



A TAPESTRY OF MEMORY AND BELONGING

Tashkeel marked the reopening of its Nad Al Sheba 1 Gallery in Dubai with *Of Liminal Threads*, the debut solo exhibition by Syrian-Lebanese artist and designer Ranim AlHalaky, the latest participant in the Critical Practice Programme (CPP).



The exhibition culminated a year-long journey of research, mentorship, and production supported by Tashkeel and remained on view until mid-October.

Of Liminal Threads was rooted in personal and collective memory, drawing inspiration from Ranim's late grandmother Omayya, whose home in Damascus was once the heart of family gatherings. Through stories, textiles, and the rituals of return, Ranim revisited fragments of summers past — apricot jam in the kitchen, the hum of the ceiling fan, the textured Damascene blanket folded on the bed — and reimagined them as material works.

Her practice spanned cyanotypes, fabric stamping, sound recordings, and printed textiles, each piece serving as both an archive and a reinterpretation. By layering surfaces, impressions, and oral histories, Ranim examined how memory could be preserved, disrupted, and transformed. The works were structured in 'chapters,' mirroring the nonlinear unfolding of memory — with returns, interruptions, and stutters that carried both intimacy and estrangement.

"In Of Liminal Threads, I wanted to weave fragments of journeys — both physical and emotional — into a space that spoke to transition and belonging. The works carried traces of movement, memory, and pause, inviting viewers to step into the spaces in between, where departure and arrival coexist," said Ranim AlHalaky.

Beyond the gallery: culinary and collectible collaborations

To mark the reopening, Tashkeel extended the exhibition experience beyond the gallery through two unique collaborations. With Gerbou

Restaurant, located adjacent to the gallery, Tashkeel continued the tradition of the Tashkeel Artist Special. For each exhibition, Gerbou's chefs interviewed the exhibiting artist, drawing on their stories, materials, and palette to create a dessert embodying the show's essence. For Of Liminal Threads, the special reimagined the act of making apricot jam with Omayya. Presented as a rectangular form echoing a folded blanket, its surface carried blue and white impressions inspired by the cyanotypes in the exhibition — a dessert that translated Ranim's storytelling into taste and texture.

Alongside this, the Tashkeel Gallery Shop debuted the Tashkeel Artist Collection with Ranim's exhibition — a new line of functional design transforming artwork into collectible crockery. Each edition included a mug and plate designed in collaboration with the exhibiting artist, offering visitors a chance to take home a tangible piece of the exhibition. For Of Liminal Threads, the set highlighted the signature blue tones that wove across Ranim's works, echoing the patterns and atmosphere of her installation. The Artist Collection was designed to grow with each exhibition, building a series that captures the breadth of artistic voices shown at Tashkeel, available both online and in the gallery.

Together, these collaborations extended the encounter with art from the gallery into the restaurant and the home, giving audiences the opportunity to taste, collect, and remember the essence of each exhibition.

A landmark in Tashkeel's journey

The reopening of the Nad Al Sheba 1 Gallery with Ranim's exhibition underscored Tashkeel's ongoing role in sustaining artistic practice in



the UAE. As one of the few organisations offering long-term, fully funded support to individual artists, Tashkeel's CPP remained a vital platform for developing groundbreaking projects. These exhibitions demonstrated the value of giving artists the time and resources to question, experiment, and refine their voices before presenting them to the public.

"Of Liminal Threads was not just an exhibition, but the result of a year dedicated to curiosity and exploration," said Sheikha Lateefa bint Maktoum, Founder and Director of Tashkeel. "Through the Critical Practice Programme, we remain committed to nurturing artistic voices and expanding the ways audiences can connect with art. The collaborations with Gerbou and the Artist Collection were part of that mission — creating bridges between disciplines and giving visitors multiple ways to carry the story forward."

A memorable close

As Tashkeel welcomed visitors back to its Nad Al Sheba 1 Gallery, Of Liminal Threads offered audiences a deeply personal yet widely relatable encounter with art. It was an exhibition remembered not only for its evocative works but also for the broader ecosystem of collaborations it inspired — culinary, collectible, and cultural conversations.

Launched in 2014, the CPP provides UAE-based artists with sustained funding, studio access, and mentorship over twelve months to push the boundaries of their practice and realise ambitious projects. For Ranim, this opportunity provided the critical framework to translate years of exploration into a fully developed exhibition. Through the guidance of mentors Dr. Samir Mahmoud and architect Faysal Tabbarah, along with collaborators in sound and film, her project matured into a multilayered body of work bridging memory, migration, and material experimentation.







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LOUVRE ABU DHABI AND RICHARD MILLE ANNOUNCE OPENING OF ART HERE 2025 EXHIBITION

On view until December 28, the exhibition reaffirms the museum's commitment to supporting contemporary artistic practices from the region and beyond.

Louvre Abu Dhabi and luxury Swiss watchmaking brand Richard Mille opened the fifth edition of the Louvre Abu Dhabi Art Here exhibition, featuring six contemporary artworks by seven artists shortlisted for the Richard Mille Art Prize. Now in its fifth year, Art Here has become a vital platform for artists to present bold new commissions within the museum's iconic spaces, engaging audiences from across the world. The initiative strengthens Louvre Abu Dhabi's role as a catalyst for cultural exchange and discovery while supporting artistic talent across diverse geographies. Curated by guest curator Sophie Mayuko Arni, Art Here 2025 invited artists to respond to the theme *Shadows*, exploring the interplay between light and absence, visibility and concealment, and the layered dimensions of memory, identity, and transformation. Reflecting the richness of regional creativity, this year's edition welcomed proposals from artists based in the GCC and Japan, as well as artists from the MENA region with a connection to the GCC.

Manuel Rabaté, Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: "Louvre Abu Dhabi is proud to open the fifth edition of Art Here and introduce these remarkable works to the public. Art Here has grown into one of the museum's most

dynamic initiatives, celebrating the diversity of artistic voices from the region and beyond. The six shortlisted works invite visitors not only to see but to experience and interact with contemporary art in new ways. Through the thoughtful curation of Sophie Mayuko Arni, Art Here 2025 deepens our dialogue with artists locally and internationally, and for the first time, Japan, reaffirming our commitment to building bridges of creativity across cultures. Thanks to our collaboration with Richard Mille and thanks to our jury members, we continue to elevate the platform's reach and resonance within the global art community"

Tilly Harrison, Managing Director Richard Mille Middle East, said: "The shortlisted works this year are not only visually striking but intellectually rigorous, engaging with the theme *Shadows* both visually and emotionally. This level of ambition is what makes the Richard Mille Art Prize a meaningful contribution to contemporary art in the region."

Art Here 2025 reflects a growing curatorial dialogue that spans the Gulf, Japan, and the wider region. As the shortlisted artists present their works, the exhibition pushes the boundaries of regional collaboration and artistic expression, inviting fresh interpretations



Ahmed Alaqla with artwork



Hamra Abbas with artwork



Ryoichi Kurokawa with artwork

of shadow, space, and cultural resonance within the universal narrative of Louvre Abu Dhabi.

Dr. Guilhem André, Director of Scientific, Curatorial, and Collection Management at Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: “Over its five editions, Art Here has grown into a leading platform that nurtures diversity and cultivates emerging artistic voices, reaffirming Louvre Abu Dhabi’s role as a hub for both regional and international creativity. This year’s exhibition presents works of remarkable depth and detail that, together, capture the vitality of contemporary art today. Art Here 2025 reveals interesting connections between the region and the concepts from around the world, strengthening cross-cultural dialogue and broadening the scope of artistic engagement.”

Art Here 2025 features the works of seven artists:

Palestinian architect, artist, and researcher Ahmed Alaqra’s *I remember*, a light reimagines shadows as urban traces, referencing the traditional *mashrabiya*, the wooden lattice screen used in Middle Eastern and North African architecture. Made of stacked acrylic cubes containing 3D-printed shapes from shadow photographs of Sharjah, the sculpture

transforms fleeting encounters of light and architecture into enduring sculptural artefacts.

Emirati artist and musician Jumairy’s *Echo* is an interactive light installation where visitors encounter a still water pond, a single flower, and ambient sound. Reimagining the myth of Echo and Narcissus, the work shifts focus from reflection to presence, using light and shadow to transform absence into intimacy and invite a deeper encounter with memory and the unconscious.

Japanese artist Ryoichi Kurokawa’s *skadw-* is an immersive audiovisual installation of light, fog, and sound that transforms shadows into sculptural form. A single beam cuts through shifting mist, creating ever-changing patterns of shadow and resonance. Inspired by the Japanese concept of *Ma*, the beauty of negative space, intervals and emptiness, the work invites viewers into a meditative environment where absence becomes presence.

Hamra Abbas’ *Tree Studies* is an installation of 31 stone inlay sculptures inspired by trees found in Pakistan and in the UAE. These include olive, pomegranate, and cherry. Using her distinctive lapis-on-lapis technique to create shadow-

like foliage, the works balance realism and abstraction. The grid installation of work under the dome will evoke the layered shadows of the Al Ain Oasis palm trees.

Japanese artist Rintaro Fuse's *A Sundial for the Night Without End* is a sculptural sundial conceived for a world after the sun. Formed from polished stainless steel, the work reflects its surroundings while aligning three gnomons to past, present, and future North Stars. Installed beneath the museum's dome, it transforms cosmic time into a meditation on memory, absence, and the persistence of eternity.

Architectural duo YOKOMAE et BOUAYAD's choreography of a cloud, dancing shadows is a pavilion of swaying stainless-steel mesh, inspired by traditional Kawachi weaving. Supported by slender columns, the structure creates shifting patterns of shadow and light. Using recycled industrial material, the duo, Takuma Yokomae from Japan and Dr. Ghali Bouayad from Morocco, have created an installation that blends Tokyo and Marrakesh design traditions, offering a poetic space where architecture moves like nature.

Sophie Mayuko Arni, Curator of Louvre Abu Dhabi Art Here 2025, said: "Tender light embraces beauty. Shadows lead to the essence of things. Through this year's Art Here theme, shortlisted artists connected to the Gulf and Japan have reexamined shadows in thoughtful, detailed, and innovative ways. I am beyond thrilled to unveil these works at Louvre Abu Dhabi, a museum with a universal mission, at a time when aesthetic contemplation can only remind us of unity in the present moment."

The finalists for the Richard Mille Art Prize 2025 were selected by a distinguished five-member jury, led by H.H.

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Founder of UAE Unlimited, an art collector, and a board member of the British Museum and Centre Pompidou. Joining him are Dr. Guilhem André, Director of the Scientific, Curatorial, and Collections Management at Louvre Abu Dhabi; Maya Allison, founding Executive Director of the Art Galleries and Chief Curator at New York University Abu Dhabi; Art Here 2025 exhibition guest curator Sophie Mayuko Arni, a Swiss Japanese curator and founding editor of *Global Art Daily*; and Yuko Hasegawa, Research Professor at the Graduate School of Management at Kyoto University and former Director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa.

This year's edition welcomed over 400 proposals from artists based in the GCC and Japan, alongside artists from the MENA region with a GCC connection, from which the six artworks were shortlisted. The winner of the Richard Mille Art Prize will be announced in December.

Created by an exceptional agreement between the governments of Abu Dhabi and France, Louvre Abu Dhabi was designed by Jean Nouvel and opened on Saadiyat Island in November 2017. The museum is inspired by traditional Islamic architecture and its monumental dome creates a rain of light effect and a unique social space that brings people together. From the very inception of the brand in 2001, Richard Mille's approach to watchmaking has always centred on releasing the watch from its restricted role as a mere tool for timekeeping, augmenting and extending its visual potential by placing it directly in the crosshairs of design, art and architecture.



YOKOMAE et BOUAYAD with artwork



Rintaro Fuse with artwork

TANWEER FESTIVAL RETURNS TO THE SANDS OF MLEIHA THIS NOVEMBER

One of Sharjah's most unmissable celebrations of unity and cultural connection returns from November 21st to 23rd, with a three-day programme of transformative music, immersive art, workshops, and nature-inspired experiences in the heart of the Mleiha desert

Something truly incredible is set to once again light up the Sharjah desert this November 2025 with the return of the Tanweer Festival. Following the success of its debut edition, the one-of-a-kind festival returns to the majestic dunes of Mleiha this November 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, bringing with it a renewed call for enlightenment through music, art, and shared human experience. Set in the breathtaking natural beauty of Sharjah's Mleiha region, this celebration of global unity is designed to ignite connection, understanding, and inner discovery through an unforgettable cultural journey under the stars.

At the heart of Tanweer Festival is the visionary leadership of Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, whose passion for cultural

dialogue, spiritual growth, and sustainability inspired the festival's creation. Driven by a belief in the transformative power of music, nature, and shared experiences, Sheikha Bodour envisioned Tanweer as a platform that transcends borders, connects communities, and nurtures a deeper understanding of our shared humanity.

Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi recently commented, "We are thrilled to bring Tanweer Festival back for its second edition, and this time, it's even more ambitious, immersive, and meaningful. Last year's debut was just the beginning of a journey that resonated deeply with so many people, and this year we are building on that foundation with a richer programme, stronger sustainability







practices, and an even more powerful message of unity. I truly can't wait to welcome our growing community back to the Mleiha desert to continue this journey together."

This year, Tanweer Festival, which translates to the festival of enlightenment, embraces the theme of 'What you Seek Is Seeking You,' a famous quote from Rumi, the 13th-century poet and mystic whose work transcends cultures, religions, and generations. Through music and poetry, Rumi encouraged people to explore the depths of our inner selves, reconnect with the natural world, and find unity in diversity, values that lie at the very heart of Tanweer.

What to Expect

The festival grounds are carefully curated to reflect its holistic ethos. The Main Stage will be a multisensory arena with ambient lighting, ancestral music, and mountain-side projections. The Dome acts as the heart of community learning, hosting discussions and workshops, while the Tree of Life serves as a serene space for gathering and reflection. Nourish, the festival's culinary hub, offers organic, farm-to-table dishes including vegan, vegetarian, and traditional Bedouin-style BBQs. The Marketplace features handpicked artisans offering unique handcrafted items, while immersive art installations transform the desert into an open-air gallery.

Leaving No Trace

Sustainability remains a non-negotiable pillar of Tanweer Festival. It is a no single-use plastic event with a dedicated reuse and recycle strategy, green waste composting, and zero-waste food and beverage services. Sustainability education will be woven throughout the festival, setting a new standard for eco-conscious cultural events in the region. With a "leave no trace" approach, Tanweer ensures that its footprint is minimal, proving that large-scale gatherings can be deeply respectful of the land that hosts them.

Returning with a more dynamic and expressive identity, the second edition of Tanweer is a chance for individuals to step into the desert once more, giving them the opportunity to reflect, reconnect, and realign through the universal language of music. This is more than a festival; it is a movement for those who seek deeper meaning, community, and beauty in a world too often divided.

Don't miss the Tanweer Festival 2025 and get ready to experience a mystical arena where the desert sings, the soul listens, and enlightenment awaits. For more information and to register, visit www.tanweerfestival.com.



PERFORMANCE

Rooted in the heart of Arab heritage, the timeless tale of Antar and Abla has captivated generations, inspiring countless literary and artistic works. Now, this legendary story returns with a contemporary touch in a groundbreaking opera that brings Arab creativity to the global stage. The production has been recognized with the Mohammed bin Rashid Award for Arabic Language in Cultural Excellence, honoring its artistic and cultural significance and its role in strengthening the presence of Arabic in the hearts of new generations. Tickets are now on sale for the landmark Arabic opera *Antar & Abla*, set to run from December 9 to 14 at Abu Dhabi's International Tennis Centre in Zayed Sports City. Audiences will be treated to six performances over six enchanting nights, blending the grandeur of opera with the richness of Arab heritage.

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We've all seen it — those bold brushstrokes on school corridors, the quirky murals in hidden cafés, or vibrant splashes of color tucked into street corners. Have you spotted a piece of art in the UAE that has left you in awe? Tell us about it! Where did you see it? What made it special?

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