

Arduna - Contemporary art museum in AlUla presents landmark exhibition co-curated in partnership with Centre Pompidou

- *Arduna* features more than 80 Saudi, regional and international artworks, including significant loans from the Centre Pompidou collection, exploring how artists have represented nature in modern and contemporary art
- Co-curated by the forthcoming contemporary art museum in AlUla and Centre Pompidou
- Part of the fifth edition of AlUla Arts Festival, the exhibition runs from 1 February to 15 April 2026
- Exhibition organised into six thematic chapters which take the visitor on a journey through the different spaces of nature



Tarek Atoui, *Bayt Al Hams* 2025

AlUla, Saudi Arabia, 06 January 2026: The pioneering exhibition *Arduna* will open to the public from 1 February to 15 April 2026 as part of the fifth edition of the AlUla Arts Festival. Presented by Arts AlUla and the forthcoming contemporary art museum in AlUla, *Arduna* is a collaborative co-curation with Centre Pompidou, with the support of AFALULA (French Agency for AlUla development), bringing together more than 80 diverse artworks from Saudi Arabia, the MENA region, and beyond.

Arduna, which translates to “our land” in English, offers audiences an early glimpse into the curatorial vision of AlUla’s future contemporary art museum, a global institution rooted in the region’s cultural oasis and heritage. The showcased works are drawn from the Royal Commission for AlUla’s (RCU) growing collection, alongside significant pieces from the collection of the Musée National d’Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou. The exhibition is co-curated by Candida Pestana with

associate curator Ftoon AlThaedi from the Royal Commission for AlUla, and Anna Hiddleston with associate curator Noémie Fillon from Centre Pompidou.

Artistic direction and curatorial concept

As an oasis on the historic Incense Road that linked India and the Arabian Gulf to the Levant and Europe, AlUla represented a haven or a refuge for the traders that passed through. It was a sanctuary, a place of safekeeping where they could leave their worldly goods whilst away. It was a place of rest, contemplation and meditation - a garden within the expanse of the desert. The exhibition takes this image of the garden as a point of departure. Drawing inspiration from the site of AlUla, it will show how both modern and contemporary artists explore our evolving relationship to nature and the land. With over 80 artworks from all disciplines, it will bring together masterpieces by modern pioneering artists such as Pablo Picasso, David Hockney; Joan Mitchell and Wassily Kandinsky, alongside leading contemporary voices including Saudi artists Ayman Zedani and Manal AlDowayan, and regional artists Imran Qureshi, Samia Halaby and Etel Adnan.

Organised into six chapters, the exhibition delves into nature's multiple manifestations, both real and imagined, on a journey through gardens, forests, deserts and their constellatory reflections in the cosmos. Through a display of impactful and thought-provoking artworks, it will tackle the challenges the world encounters today, examining notions of the Anthropocene, the threat of climate change, migratory displacement and the spread of urbanisation. As artists attempt to disentangle humankind's complex and often conflicted relationship with the environment, the exhibition can be seen as a plea for the shaping of new modes of co-existence between all forms of life.

New commissions

As part of AlUla's evolving creative ecosystem, *Arduna* will introduce new artwork commissions developed in close dialogue with the region's unique landscapes and cultural narratives.

Audiences will see new works by Saudi artist Ayman Zedani and Lebanese artist Tarek Atoui, both of whom created their projects during the AlUla Artists Residency Program.

The exhibition also unveils new commissions from Saudi artist Dana Awartani, Bahamian conceptual artist Tavares Strachan, and French artist Renaud Auguste-Dormeuil. Together, these works reflect the museum's role in producing works that emerge from, and contribute to, the vibrant network of artists, curators and communities that define AlUla's unique creative identity.

Hamad Alhomiedan, Director of Arts & Creative Industries at the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), said: *Arduna* is a landmark moment for AlUla Arts Festival, reflecting Arts AlUla's emerging position at the heart of global conversations on art, culture and the environment. This exhibition brings together exceptional works from Saudi Arabia, the region and the world, engaging audiences with themes that touch on our shared relationship to nature and land. *Arduna* showcases bold curatorial ideas and creates opportunities for artists to engage deeply with AlUla's unique heritage and landscapes. It is a celebration of creativity without borders and a significant step towards establishing AlUla as a year-round hub for cultural innovation and artistic excellence."

Laurent Le Bon, President of the Centre Pompidou, said:

“This exhibition is a very important step in our partnership with the Royal Commission for AlUla, as we welcome the public to witness the first fruits of Centre Pompidou’s strategic advisory role for AlUla’s forthcoming contemporary art museum. We share the fundamental mission of promoting cultural heritage and fostering lasting intercultural dialogue, and we look forward to welcoming the public, and particularly young visitors, to this unique exhibition showcasing the artistic landscapes of Saudi Arabia, France and well beyond.”

Visitor experience and locations

Arduna will be a ticketed exhibition and staged within the galleries of the forthcoming contemporary art museum’s pre-opening spaces, giving visitors an opportunity to explore world-class art within a setting that bridges ancient heritage and contemporary creation. As part of the AlUla Arts Festival 2026, the annual celebration that transforms the ancient city into a stage for art, design and culture, *Arduna* marks a key step towards the launch of AlUla’s contemporary art museum.

This thoughtfully collaborative exhibition reflects the museum’s commitment to curatorial depth, cultural dialogue and accessibility. By presenting work on this scale, the museum advances its mission to collect and present contemporary art with depth and integrity. Through the commissioning of innovative and anchoring projects, the contemporary art museum aims to help shape the cultural discourse of today and tomorrow.

Visitors will encounter an institution that delivers profound artistic experiences, cultivating knowledge, creativity, reflection and cultural exchange. It connects audiences with meaningful encounters, fosters the development of regional talent, and positions AlUla as a vital centre in the global cultural network.

Join us at AlUla Arts Festival 2026 for a season of art, heritage, and creativity in one of the world’s most extraordinary landscapes. For more information, please visit: experiencealula.com.

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Multimedia gallery:

High-resolution photos can be found [here](#)

About Arts AlUla

The creation of Arts AlUla within The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) is a commitment to crafting the next chapters in a millennia of artistic creation – celebrating cultural inheritance, presenting the art of our time, and shaping a future propelled by creativity. AlUla has long been a consistent and ever-evolving hub of cultural transfer. It has been a place of passage, a crossroads for trade, and home to successive civilizations who carved, sculpted and inscribed their lives into the landscape. The work of Arts AlUla seeks to preserve this legacy: fuse the old with the new; the local with the international, keeping the arts central to the spirit of AlUla as a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage.

Arts AlUla will bring to fruition a series of new initiatives, projects and exhibitions. The artwork curation will speak to RCU's vision for the continued development of AlUla's contemporary art scenes: positioning the arts as a key contributor to AlUla's character, the quality of life for its local community and the region's economic future.

Arts AlUla focuses on transferring the talents of the Saudi nation and the local AlUla community into meaningful long-standing social and economic opportunities. This is a key part of the Journey through Time masterplan bringing together the 15 different landmark destinations for culture, heritage and creativity across AlUla.

About Centre Pompidou:

Inaugurated in 1977, Centre Pompidou is a centre for art and culture where the fine arts interact with live performance, film, music and topical debates. Deeply rooted in the city of Paris yet open to the world and to innovation, Centre Pompidou uses the prism of creation to explore major societal issues and the transformations at work in the contemporary world.

Centre Pompidou conserves Europe's richest and one of the world's largest collections of modern and contemporary art, and lends the most artworks of any museum today. True to its openness to the world and its ambition to make culture and creation available to as many people as possible, Centre Pompidou develops its regional and international action in the form of exhibitions, loans and sustainable partnerships with communities.

About AlUla Moments:

AlUla Moments calendar introduces a diverse lineup of festivals and events designed to unlock AlUla's stories, reveal its hidden layers, and celebrate both local and global cultures. With over 7,000 years of continuous human presence and once home to some of the most sophisticated ancient civilisations, AlUla has always been a natural setting for cultural gatherings and shared experiences.

The calendar features five flagship festivals, each offering a rich mix of experiences across art, culture, music, nature, wellness and astronomy. These include the AlUla Wellness Festival, focused on modern practices that engage mind, body, and soul; Winter at Tantora, the original AlUla celebration of heritage, fashion, music, and culture; and the Ancient Kingdoms Festival, which honours the civilisations that once thrived in AlUla through immersive storytelling and

experiences. The AlUla Skies Festival celebrates the wonders of the night sky with hot air balloons and stargazing, while the AlUla Arts Festival brings together contemporary and ancient expressions of creativity through exhibitions, installations, and cultural programming.

Alongside these festivals, the AlUla Moments calendar also includes standout marquee events such as AZIMUTH and AlUla Desert Polo, in addition to heritage sports events like the AlFursan Endurance AlUla. These are complemented by world-class experiences across fashion, adventure, and sport, further positioning AlUla as a leading destination for meaningful and memorable experiences.

For more information, please visit experiencealula.com

About AlUla:

Located 1,100 km from Riyadh, in North-West Saudi Arabia, AlUla is a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage. The vast area, covering 22,561km², includes a lush oasis valley, towering sandstone mountains and ancient cultural heritage sites dating back thousands of years to when the Lihyan and Nabataean kingdoms reigned.

The most well-known and recognised site in AlUla is Hegra, Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. A 52-hectare ancient city, Hegra was the principal southern city of the Nabataean Kingdom and comprises of over 140 well-preserved tombs, many with elaborate facades cut out of the sandstone outcrops surrounding the walled urban settlement.

Current research also suggests Hegra was the most southern outpost of the Roman Empire after the Romans conquered the Nabataeans in 106 CE.

In addition to Hegra, AlUla is also home to ancient Dadan, the capital of the Dadan and Lihyan Kingdoms and considered to be one of the most developed 1st millennium BCE cities of the Arabian Peninsula, and Jabal Ikmah, an open-air library of hundreds of inscriptions and writings in many different languages, which has been recently listed on the UNESCO's memory of the World Register. Also, AlUla Old Town Village, a labyrinth of more than 900 mudbrick homes developed from at least the 12th century, has been selected as one of the World's Best Tourism Villages in 2022 by the UNWTO.

For more information, please visit: experiencealula.com