

Louvre Abu Dhabi marks fifth anniversary with exhibition celebrating contemporary art from the Gulf region

The second edition of the Louvre Abu Dhabi 'Art Here 2022' exhibition, on view until 19 March 2023, showcases work by the ten GCC artists shortlisted for the Richard Mille Art Prize

Louvre Abu Dhabi marks fifth anniversary with exhibition celebrating contemporary art from the Gulf region

The second edition of the Louvre Abu Dhabi 'Art Here 2022' exhibition, on view until 19 March 2023, showcases work by the ten GCC artists shortlisted for the Richard Mille Art Prize

[f](#) [t](#) [p](#) [e](#) Sign up to our newsletter



Exterior view of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, designed by French architect Jean Nouvel
(Image credit: © Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi. Photography: Yiorgis Yerolymos)

The Louvre Abu Dhabi and Swiss watchmaking brand Richard Mille have unveiled the second edition of the Louvre Abu Dhabi 'Art Here' exhibition, a multifaceted celebration of contemporary art from across the UAE and wider GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) region.

The Louvre Abu Dhabi was inaugurated in 2017, following an agreement with the Louvre Museum in Paris made a decade before. It was an instant international sensation, not least because of its gleaming white geometric buildings enveloped by a colossal dome formation comprised of intersecting aluminium lattices, envisioned by Pritzker prize-winning French architect Jean Nouvel. The waterfront museum is sited on the burgeoning arts hub of Saadiyat Island where the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Zayed National Museum are also under construction.



(Image credit: © Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi. Photography: Yiorgis Yerolymos)

The museum was born of a vision to create a robust cultural exchange between the international and local art ecosystems through its rotating permanent collection and temporary historical and contemporary exhibitions. 'This museum is the first universal museum of the Arab world,' Manuel Rabaté, director of Louvre Abu Dhabi, explains to *Wallpaper**. 'There are many ways to use this beautiful museum. As a building, as a meeting place, as a meditation place, for food, [and] sport. It's a place that the community can engage with.'

On display within the Louvre Abu Dhabi's Forum space until 19 March 2023, 'Art Here 2022' features work by ten artists who have been shortlisted for the Richard Mille Art Prize 2023. While the first edition of the prize was open to UAE-based artists, the second edition is a multidisciplinary celebration of voices from the entire GCC region.



Installation view of the Louvre Abu Dhabi 'Art Here 2022' exhibition, which showcases work by ten shortlisted artists for the Richard Mille Art Prize

(Image credit: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi. Photography: Augustine Paredes (Seeing Things))

The show features artists Afra Al Dhaheri, Ayman Zedani, Dana Awartani, Elizabeth Dorazio, Manal Al Dowayan, Rand Abdul Jabbar, Simrin Mehra Agarwal, Shaikha Al Mazrou, Vikram Divecha and Zeinab AlHashemi, whose work ranges from sound installation to ceramics, textiles and raw natural materials.

'This museum is a house of the past, of memory and keeping treasures, but it should [also] be a place for the future and a stage for artists,' explains Souraya Noujaim, director of scientific, curatorial and collections management at Louvre Abu Dhabi. 'We are in an iconic building housing literally icons of history and I wanted to playfully invite the artists – "What do you think of all that?" – and the results are really marvellous because it's not what you expect.'



Installation view of *Sidelines* by Manal AlDowayan

(Image credit: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi. Photography: Augustine Paredes (Seeing Things))

Artists were shortlisted by a five-member jury formed of HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, chairman of UAE Unlimited, art collector, and patron; Morad Montazami, a curator, art historian and publisher; Hala Wardé, founding architect of HW Architecture, long-term partner of Jean Nouvel and the lead of the Louvre Abu Dhabi project; Souraya Noujaim, director of scientific, curatorial and collections management at Louvre Abu Dhabi; and Reem Fadda, director of the cultural foundation and curator of Louvre Abu Dhabi 'Art Here 2022'. The prize winner will be announced in March 2023 and receive an award of USD60,000.

Exhibiting work responding to the theme 'Icon and Iconic', the show's artists examine the historical gravity and contemporary ubiquity of the notion of 'icon', and how it now resonates within arts and culture. 'What I found interesting is that all of these artists were asking what that [icon] means, [and] deconstructing that meaning completely,' Fadda continues. 'We would understand iconic as "surface, image, or easily consumed"; what you have here is something far more embodied and earthen, much more existential.'



Installation view of *A Still Life of an Ever changing Crop Field*, by Shaikha Al Mazrou

(Image credit: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi. Photography: Augustine Paredes (Seeing Things))

‘We were all searching for excellence, that’s the core of it,’ says Fadda. ‘The prize is catered for this region, and you feel it. You feel a level of homogeneity in terms of the concerns that are abounding.’

As well as the Louvre Abu Dhabi ‘Art Here 2022’ exhibition, a number of site-specific contemporary interventions by leading international artists reinforce the museum’s commitment to the present. Jenny Holzer has engraved three walls with ancient texts, while Giuseppe Penone installed four pieces in the light-dappled courtyard that engage with the museum architecture and its collections. For the museum’s fifth anniversary, Michelangelo Pistoletto was invited to exhibit a series of ‘mirror paintings’ inspired by the Louvre in Paris, displayed throughout the Abu Dhabi museum’s collection.



Installation view of *Standing by the Ruins*, by Dana Awartani

(Image credit: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi. Photography: Augustine Paredes (Seeing Things))

‘There are very active art scenes blossoming in the UAE. We have limited space that we can dedicate to questioning the contemporary scene, so that’s why we created [the prize with Richard Mille],’ Rabaté concludes, explaining that an important part of the Louvre Abu Dhabi’s visitor demographic is creators and artists. ‘It’s already recognition to be inside the Louvre Abu Dhabi. We want it to be a sustainable discussion with the community. Local, global, all of it is here. It’s a full package of what we do to celebrate the vitality and confidence of the institution.’

Louvre Abu Dhabi ‘Art Here 2022’ falls within the UAE’s cultural season that comprises the Abu Dhabi Art fair, new exhibitions at the NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery, Dubai Design Week, and Art Dubai.



Installation view of the Louvre Abu Dhabi 'Art Here 2022' exhibition, which showcases work by ten shortlisted artists for the Richard Mille Art Prize

(Image credit: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi. Photography: Augustine Paredes (Seeing Things))



View under the dome of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, designed by Jean Nouvel

(Image credit: © Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi. Photography: Yiorgis Yerolymbos)

Artworks by the ten Richard Mille Art Prize shortlisted artists are on show in the 'Art Here 2022' exhibition until 19 March 2023. louvreabudhabi.ae; richardmille.com ✱