

PRESS RELEASE

SIGNATURE OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CENTRE POMPIDOU AND ITHRA, THE SAUDI ARAMCO CULTURAL INITIATIVE

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On Tuesday 10 April 2018, the Centre Pompidou signed a new memorandum of understanding continuing the cultural partnership with Ithra, the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture: Saudi Aramco's cultural initiative in Saudi Arabia.

This memorandum of understanding, signed for a renewable period of five years, will enable the two institutions to develop various cultural projects and maximise the sharing of knowledge and skills. This will involve staging temporary exhibitions, producing publications, introducing mediation events for younger audiences and setting up cultural exchange and artistic awareness-raising programmes between France and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

To quote Nasser Al-Nafisee, Saudi Aramco's Vice-President for Corporate Affairs: « *We are delighted to develop strategic partnerships with institutions and organisations that share our commitment to cultural development and help us achieve the Centre's objectives. This partnership will introduce training and educational opportunity programmes designed to enhance the development of Saudi talent and the potential of the next generation.* »

« *This new memorandum of understanding is a source of great pride for the Centre Pompidou. It highlights the success of our partnership with Ithra, the Saudi Aramco cultural initiative, and international recognition of the Centre Pompidou's expertise and highly-committed teams. By strengthening its cultural links and bonds of friendship with Saudi Arabia, a fascinating country with over thirty million inhabitants, the Centre Pompidou asserts its constant desire to reach out to new audiences through trailblazing exhibitions and innovative mediation schemes.* »

Serge Lasvignes, President of the Centre Pompidou

This new memorandum of understanding is part of a continuous productive partnership begun in 2013 between the Centre Pompidou and Saudi Aramco.

The Centre Pompidou had been approached to take part in the preliminary phase for creating a major cultural centre in Dhahran – Ithra, the King Abdulaziz Centre for World Culture – and had staged *Couleurs pures* («Pure Colours») in a temporary structure of 1,500 m² : a show featuring around twenty key 20th and 21st century works from the Centre Pompidou collection.

This first exhibition of modern and contemporary art ever presented to the Saudi public was a resounding success, attracting 45,000 visitors in the 41 days it was open (16 October to 28 November 2013).