

PRESS KIT

أرضنا

ARDUNA

OUR LAND

01.02. → 15.04.26



AlUla **متحف العلا**
Contemporary **الفن**
Art Museum **المعاصر**

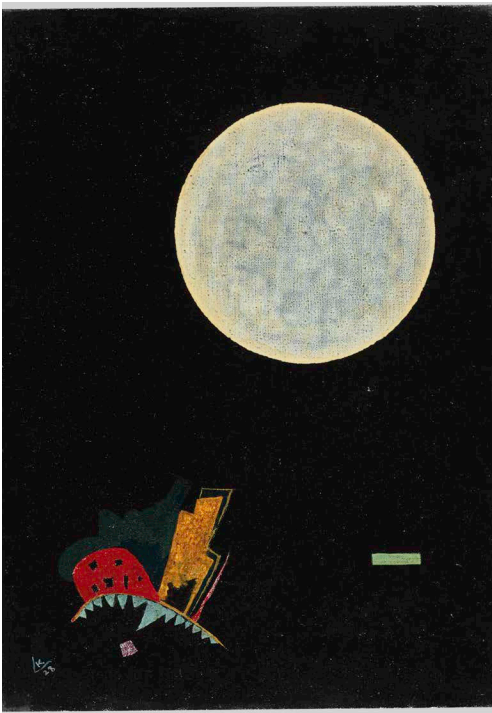
 **Centre Pompidou**

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Etel Adnan, *Untitled*, 2010
Oil on canvas, 26.8 × 32.8 cm
Collection of Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle
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PRESS RELEASE | EXHIBITION

أرضنا **ARDUNA [OUR LAND]**

CO-CURATED BY ALULA CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM AND CENTRE POMPIDOU

01.02. → 15.04.26

Curated by

**Chief Curator and Head of
the AIUla Contemporary Art Museum**
Candida Pestana

Associate curator
Ftoon AlThaedi

Curator of International Projects
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Anna Hiddleston

Associate curator
Noémie Fillon

Wassily Kandinsky, *Ein Kreis (A)* [A Circle (A)], January 1928, Oil on canvas, 32 x 25 cm
Collection of Centre Pompidou Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielles
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Natalia Goncharova, *Espace [Space]*, 1958
Oil on canvas, 55.2 x 46.2 cm
Collection of Centre Pompidou Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielles
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"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 AIUla and Centre Pompidou ; Part of the fifth edition of AIUla Arts Festival, the exhibition runs from February 1 to April 15 2026.

Exhibition organised into six thematic chapters which take the visitor on a journey through the different spaces of nature.

The pioneering exhibition "Arduna" will open to the public from February 1 to April 15 2026 as part of the fifth edition of the AIUla Arts Festival. Presented by Arts AIUla and the forthcoming contemporary art museum in AIUla, "Arduna" is a collaborative cocuration with Centre Pompidou, with the support of AFALULA (French Agency for AIUla 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 AIUla's future contemporary art museum, a global institution rooted in the region's cultural oasis and heritage. The showcased works

AIUla **متحف العلا**
Contemporary **الفن**
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Centre Pompidou

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.

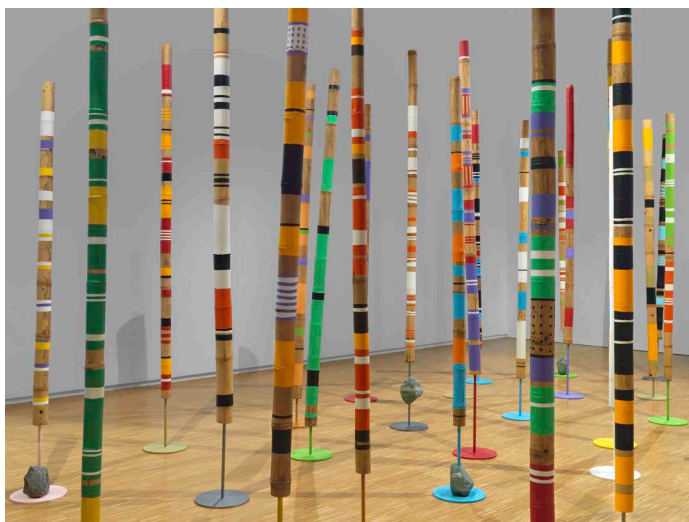
Artistic direction and curatorial concept

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,



Andrea Branzi, *Bamboo Interior Wood*, 2023, Bamboo, acrylic paint, rock, lacquered iron, varying dimensions
Collection of Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle
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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.

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 worldclass 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.

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.

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 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."

Jean-Yves Le Drian, Chairman of AFALULA (French Agency for AlUla Development), said "Arduna fully embodies the shared ambition of France and Saudi Arabia to establish AlUla as a major hub for international cultural dialogue. This exceptional exhibition, born of close collaboration between the Centre Pompidou and the Royal Commission for AlUla, reflects the strength of the Saudi-French partnership in support of contemporary creation, the transmission of knowledge, and the major challenges of our time. It demonstrates the power of art to connect territories, histories, and perspectives, in a spirit of openness and trust."

The Partnership between Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) and Centre Pompidou

This collaboration is part of a broader intergovernmental agreement signed in April 2018 between France and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The agreements between RCU and Centre Pompidou include a partnership to support the renovation of the historic Centre Pompidou building, and secondly the support of Arts AlUla's contemporary art vision.

One of the initial phases of the partnership involves supporting the cultural programming that serves as a pre-activation of the future museum. Designed within a dynamic of reciprocity, this programming fosters exchanges between Saudi, French, and international artists, while placing public engagement at the heart of the artistic and educational process. This approach allows for experimentation and the ongoing evolution of the museum's cultural and scientific vision, through residencies, artist commissions, creative workshops, intellectual encounters, exhibitions, and site-specific projects.

In this context, Arts AlUla and Centre Pompidou present the exhibition "Arduna" in a specially built space in the same location of the forthcoming museum. The exhibition will begin to establish the cultural vision of the museum in AlUla ahead of museum's opening.

This exhibition establishes a dialogue between the national collections of Centre Pompidou and those of the RCU, enriched by artist commissions, a publication, a mediation program and workshops, as well as a series of talks and performances. Both Arts AlUla and Centre Pompidou look forward to welcoming international visitors, AlUla locals, students and scholars to this unique exhibition showcasing the artistic landscapes of Saudi Arabia, France and well beyond.

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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 Ikma, 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

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.

ARTS فنون
ALULA العلاء

AlUla متحف العلاء
Contemporary الفن
Art Museum المعاصر

 Centre Pompidou

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 AFALULA (French Agency for AIUla Development)

The French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA) was established to support its Saudi partner, the Royal Commission for AIUla, in transforming the AIUla region into a world-class cultural and tourism destination. The Agency is structured around specialized areas of expertise, including architecture, planning, culture and archaeology, tourism, human capital, infrastructure and environment, agriculture and botany, the equestrian sector, and security.

afalula.com



THE EXHIBITION

GALLERY TEXTS
EXHIBITION PLAN
LIST OF ARTWORKS
ARTIST COMMISSIONS

GALLERY TEXTS ECHOES OF ARCADIA

Gardens have long reflected humanity's relationship with nature – as sanctuaries, symbols of paradise, and spaces of regeneration. Throughout history and in many cultures, they evoke a lost harmony, a place of refuge from chaos, embodying both memory and peace.

Plants served as a source of inspiration for many modern artists, who found in gardens powerful symbols of growth, decay, and renewal. Paul Klee's layered compositions capture the inner logic of organic burgeoning, while Jean Arp's biomorphic forms evoke continuous transformation. Joan Mitchell's vibrant landscape, drawn from the recollection of a hidden childhood garden, pulses with memory and colour, and contemporary artist Yto Barrada explores the greenhouse as a site of resistance and renewal within urban life. Together, these works reimagine the garden not as a mere backdrop, but as a laboratory for new ideas, a space to tend and restore our bond with the natural world.

AT THE FOREST'S EDGE

Caught between enchantment and obscurity, the forest symbolizes the tension between nature and culture, between the wild *silva* and the structures of civilisation. Its edge is both a physical boundary and a metaphorical threshold, marking the separation of reason from emotion. Peopled with mythological beings and charged with creative energy, the forest has been portrayed in art as apocalyptic, idyllic, or unsettling.

David Hockney transforms the forest into a luminous, celebratory space, inviting viewers into a world where nature is magical and life-affirming. In contrast, Eva Jospin's carved forest presses close, hinting at fantastical, nightmarish creatures among its intricate trunks. Ibrahim El-Salahi draws on the haraz tree's symbolic life cycle to evoke inner resilience, while Andrea Branzi imagines a "forest of the soul." Contemporary artists such as Lucas Arruda, Giuseppe Penone and Taryn Simon explore the forest as a layered space of observation, environmental awareness, and interconnectedness. From myth and folklore to emblems of resilience and ecological crisis, the forest remains a realm where the power of nature endures.



Paul Klee *Pflanzenwachstum* [Plant Growth], 1921.
Oil on cardboard, 54 × 40 cm
Collection Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle
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Giuseppe Penone, *Nel legno* [In the Wood], 2009
Oil on cardboard, 54 × 40 cm
Collection Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle
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GALLERY TEXTS

SAND AND STONE

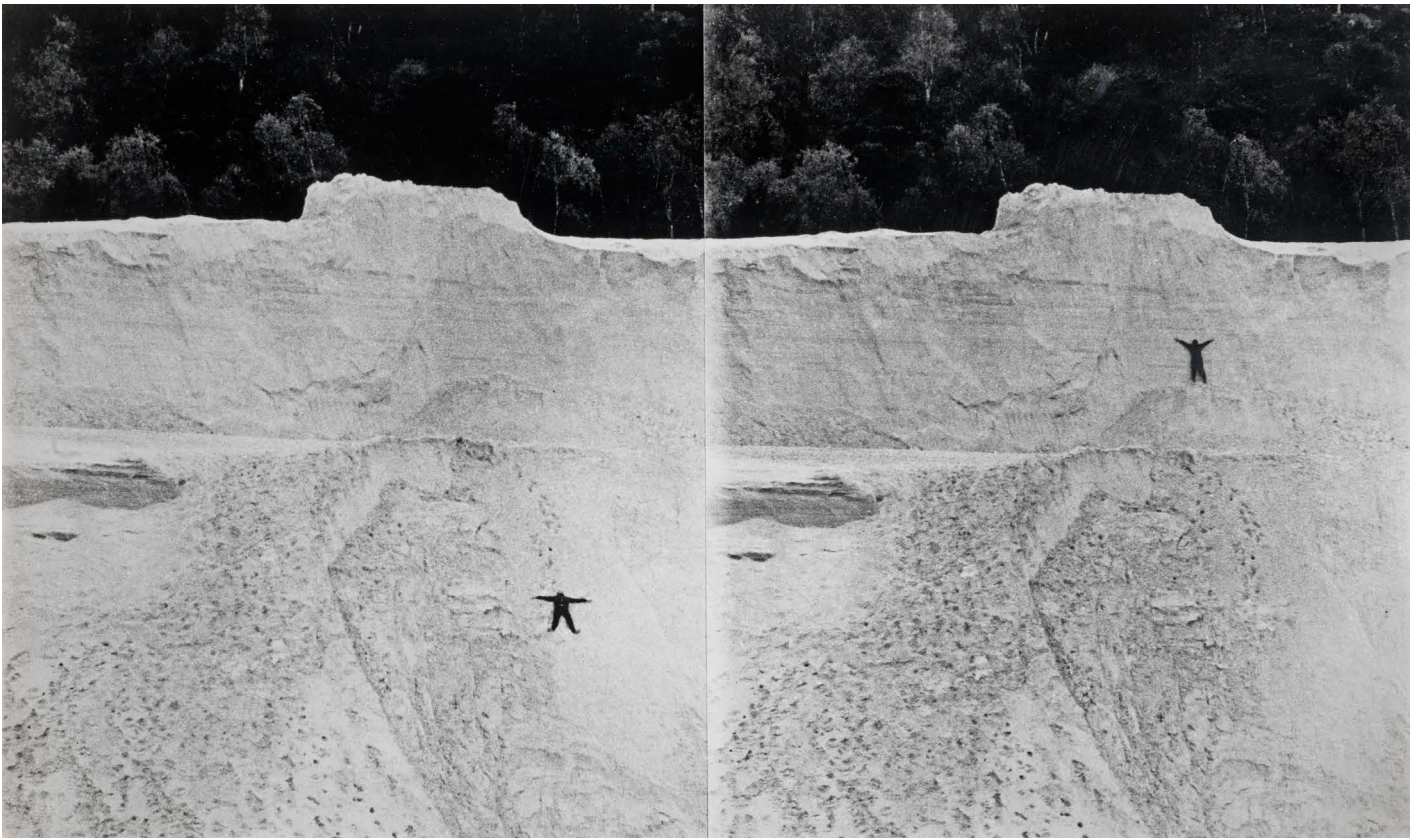
For artists across Arabia and beyond, the desert is not an empty expanse but a vibrant, living matrix. Abounding with life and the experience of nomadism, it becomes fertile ground for journeys of the mind. Sand warms, shifts, and records time; dunes are reshaped by wind, animals, and human passage. In *AIUla*, sandstone cliffs and Nabataean tombs register millennia of rituals and travel, while agriculture persists in ancient soils.

From this living terrain, the works on view take their bearings. Viswanadhan creates a soft palette drawn from the sands of the Indian coastline, where individual grains evoke both a specific place and the tension between the infinitely vast and the infinitely small.

Meanwhile, Ayman Zedani's infrared photographs reveal the hidden energies of local flora, making visible what normally escapes the eye. Jean Dubuffet treats sand as teeming matter - both ground and galaxy - collapsing micro and macro scales. Manal AlDowayan's desert rose, inscribed with women's voices, folds fragility with perseverance; dismantled, it collapses, an "ephemeral witness." Collectively, these works transform the desert into both archive and open field, a landscape where material, memory, and scale are continually renegotiated.



Manal AlDowayan, *Ephemeral Witness*, 2020
Natural silk, ink, acrylic paint and hemp rope, 220 × 180 × 100 cm
Collection of Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle
© Manal AlDowayan © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/Audrey Laurans/Dist. GrandPalaisRmn



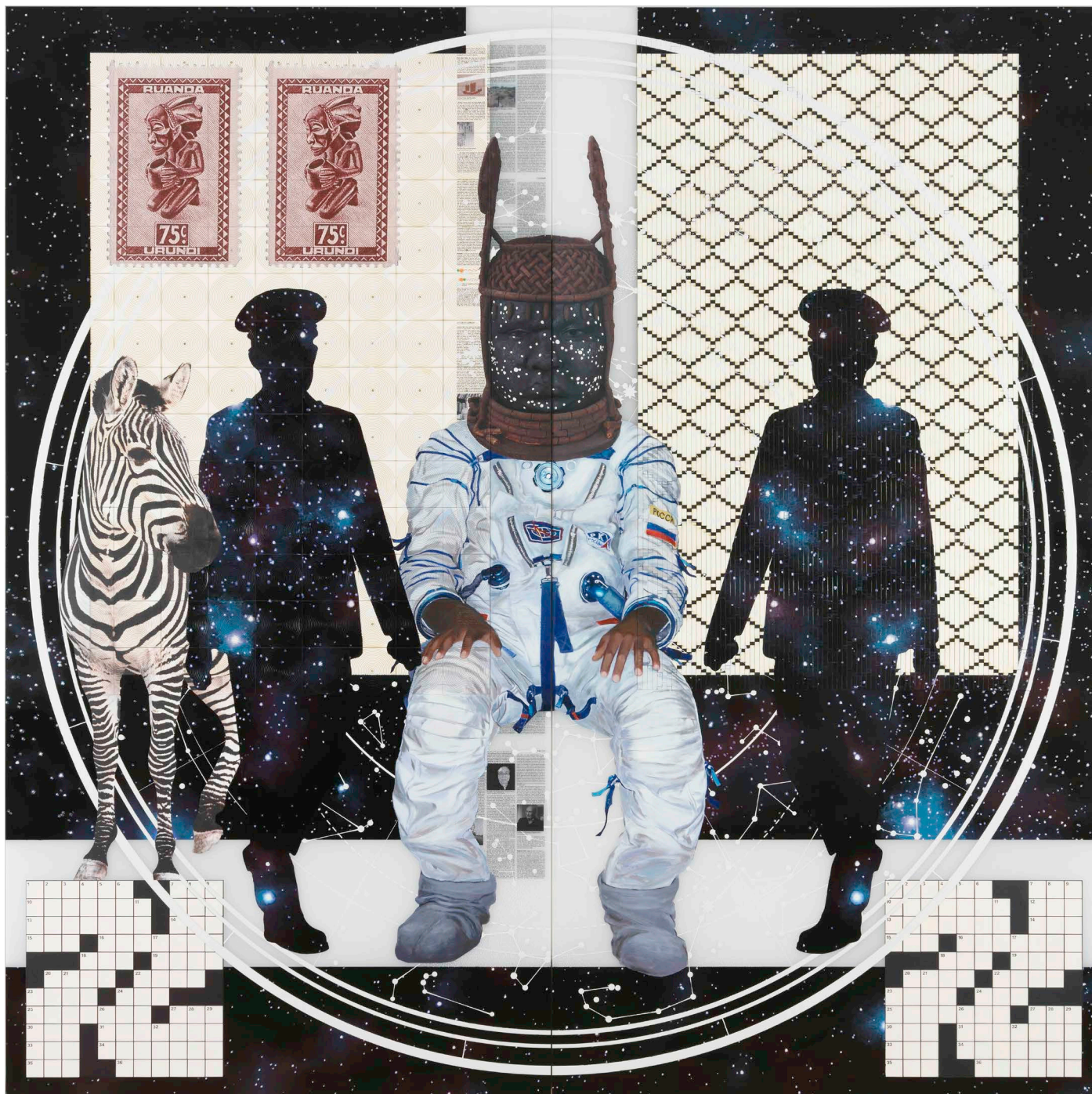
Gina Pane *Untitled*, 1970
Gelatin silver prints, 110.8 × 184.4 cm
Collection of Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle
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GALLERY TEXTS

THE DRIFT OF STARS

Artists have sought to render this cosmic correlation visible. Constantin Brancusi's *Endless Column* stretches skyward as a sculptural meditation on infinity, while Lucio Fontana's punctured canvases open the picture plane to sidereal space. Painters from Wassily Kandinsky to Antoine Pevsner used geometric abstraction to evoke the dynamics and tension of celestial forces.

Contemporary works, like Mohssin Harraki's video installation, continue to translate the motion and mathematics of the stars into visual form. In these works, imperceptible cosmic structures are rendered as discernible patterns, conveying both the vastness of the universe and the contingent fragility of human life.



Tavares Strachan,
Self-portrait as King Oba with Blue Soldiers, 2023
 Oil, enamel, pigment on acrylic, 213.4 × 213.4 × 5.1 cm
 Collection of Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle
 © Tavares Strachan © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/Audrey Laurans/Dist. Grand Palais Rmn

GALLERY TEXTS BEYOND NATURE

"The Anthropocene marks the end of the illusion of a stable and separate nature," wrote philosopher Bruno Latour. This term defines a new geological era in which human activity has become a dominant force, reshaping the planet's climate, landscapes, and ecosystems. Rather than distant scenery, nature is revealed as deeply entwined with human histories and choices.

The artists featured here confront the realities of this era, exploring the environmental and social consequences of human intervention. In an argument for a rethinking of our relationship with the earth, they tackle the effects of pollution, the overexploitation of natural resources, and the rise of aggressive urbanization. Tarek Al-Ghoussein documents vast construction projects that transform ecosystems, Cheikh Ndiaye and Hassan Sharif repurpose discarded materials to critique consumerism and pollution, and Nadia Kaabi-Linke exposes histories of resource extraction and colonial trade that scar the Earth and its peoples. These works can be seen as a plea for the shaping of new modes of co-existence between all forms of life.

BORDERLINE

Territory is more than land to claim, it shapes how we perceive space, define belonging, and draw boundaries between "us" and "them."

Themes of exile, displacement, and the human need for a home run through the work of many contemporary artists. In Kemang Wa Lehulere's installation, suitcases, crutches, and ceramic dogs bear witness to South Africa's history of forced expulsion. Younes Rahmoun's precarious houses on stilts underscore the fragility of shelter, while Kader Attia's *The Embrace* meditates on reparation and care. In dialogue with these concerns, Ayşe Erkmen intertwines personal and collective identity, and Paul Guiragossian's layered figures convey the anonymity of the migrant, together expressing the upheaval and alienation caused by dislocation. These works reveal that land is not simply occupied; it is shaped through encounters, histories, and fragile ties that define who belongs and who is cast out, urging us to reconsider our place, and the places of others, on this shared Earth.



Cheikh Ndiaye
Pot d'échappement #2 [Exhaust Pipe #2], 2016
Rattan, wood, cardboard, metal, acrylic paint, 88 x 229 x 72 cm
Collection of Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne -
Centre de création industrielle
© Cheikh Ndiaye © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/Philippe Migeat/Dist.
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Kemang Wa Lehulere
Red Winter in Gugulethu, 2016
Mixed-media installation, varying dimensions
Collection of Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne -
Centre de création industrielle
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LIST OF ARTWORKS BY CHAPTER

Echoes of archadia

Pablo Picasso
Le Printemps [Spring], 20 March 1956
Oil on canvas, 130 × 195 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Louise and Michel Leiris, 1984

František Kupka
Hindu Motif (Graduated Red)], 1919
Oil on canvas, 124.5 × 122 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Eugénie Kupka, 1963

Jean Arp
Crown of Buds II, 1936
Plaster, 52 × 42.5 × 42 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Seized by the French Customs Authority, 1996

Paul Klee
Pflanzenwachstum [Plant Growth], 1921
Oil on cardboard, 54 × 40 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Bequest of Nina Kandinsky, 1981

Julio González
Fuchsias [Fuchsias], circa 1895
Iron and copper, 24 × 9 × 11 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Roberta González, 1964

Julio González
Œillet [Carnation], circa 1895
Iron and copper, 26 × 7 × 6 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Roberta González, 1964

Julio González
Rose et passiflore [Rose and Passion Flower], circa 1895
Iron and copper, 25 × 13 × 8 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Roberta González, 1964

Julio González
Œillet effeuillé [Carnation Stripped of Petals], circa 1895
Iron and copper, 26 × 7.5 × 6 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Roberta González, 1964

Joan Mitchell
La Grande Vallée XIV (For a Little While) [The Large Valley XIV (For a Little While)], 1983
Oil on canvas, 279.8 × 600 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Acceptance in lieu, 1995

Jan Brykczyński
The Gardener, 2013
Pigment inkjet print, 40 × 50 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the artist, 2020

Jan Brykczyński
The Gardener, 2013
Pigment inkjet print, 40 × 50 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the artist, 2020

Jan Brykczyński
The Gardener, 2013
Pigment inkjet print, 40 × 50 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the artist, 2020

Yto Barrada
Ba-Youssef et les tomates jaunes [Ba-Youssef and the Yellow Tomatoes], 2011
Chromogenic print, 80 × 80 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Société des Amis du Musée national d'art moderne, 2012

Yto Barrada
1971, Paris (France)
Tables d'écoliers de la serre, ferme pédagogique, Tanger [Schoolchildren's Desks in the Greenhouse, Pedagogical Farm, Tangier], 2011
Chromogenic print, 150 × 150 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Société des Amis du Musée national d'art moderne, 2012

At the forest's edge

Giuseppe Penone
Nel legno [In the Wood], 2009
Larch, 291 × 49 × 49 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Anonymous gift, 2017

Giuseppe Penone
Il Verde del bosco con ramo [Forest Green with Branch], 1987
Tree branch, sap, chlorophyll on cotton canvas, 183.5 × 237 × 10 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Société des Amis du Musée national d'art moderne, 1994

Behjat Sadr
Untitled, 1974
Oil on canvas, 87 × 170 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Mitra Goberville, 2013

Andrea Branzi
Bamboo Interior Wood, 2023
Bamboo, acrylic paint, rock, lacquered iron, varying dimensions
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Fonds Meyer Louis-Dreyfus, Amis du Centre Pompidou, 2024

Ibrahim El-Salahi
Palm Tree, 2001
Coloured inks on Bristol board, 86.6 × 86.6 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Ibrahim El-Salahi
1930, Omdurman (Sudan)
The Tree, 2003
Coloured inks on Bristol board, 101 × 75.5 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

LIST OF ARTWORKS BY CHAPTER

Lucas Arruda
Untitled (from the Deserto-Modelo series), 2020
Oil on canvas, 30 × 30 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Mickael Gourand, 2022

Lucas Arruda
Untitled (from the Deserto-Modelo series), 2019
Oil on canvas, 24 × 30 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Alexis Bomillo, 2021

Lucas Arruda
Untitled (from the Deserto-Modelo series), 2021
Oil on canvas, 96 × 115 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Marciano Art Foundation, 2022

Eva Jospin
Forêt [Forest], 2024
Cardboard, wood, 300 × 500 × 45 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase with the support of Ruinart and Emerige, 2024

David Hockney
The Arrival of Spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire in 2011 (twenty eleven), 2011
Oil on canvas, 365.6 × 975.2 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the artist with the support of the Amis du Centre Pompidou, 2017

Taryn Simon
The Hoh Rain Forest, 2007
Chromogenic print, 96.8 × 113.8 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase, 2009

Sand and stone

Jean Dubuffet
Sérénité profuse (élément de sol) [Profuse Serenity (Ground Element)], October 1957
Oil on canvas, 114.4 × 146.4 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase, 1982

Anna-Eva Bergman
No. 7-1952, 1952-1953
Oil on plywood, 50.4 × 73 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Amis du Centre Pompidou, Groupe d'Acquisition pour la Scène Française des Années 1950-1980, 2023

Gina Pane
Untitled, 1970
Gelatin silver prints, 110.8 × 184.4 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of L'Association Camille, 2010

Viswanadhan
Sand, 1976
Sand on canvas, 240 × 642 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the artist, 2016

Manal AlDowayan
O'Sister, 2021
Natural tussar silk and acrylic paint, 160 × 195 × 55 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Manal AlDowayan
Ephemeral Witness, 2020
Natural silk, ink, acrylic paint and hemp rope, 220 × 180 × 100 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Amis du Centre Pompidou, International Circle-Middle East North Africa, 2022

Ayman Zedani
The Holy Wadi, 2025
Serie of 14 photographs
Chromogenic photograph prints
32 x 42 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

"The Drift of Stars"

Wassily Kandinsky
Ein Kreis (A) [A Circle (A)], January 1928
Oil on canvas, 32 × 25 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Bequest of Nina Kandinsky, 1981

Constantin Brancusi
Vue supérieure à contre-jour et sur ciel voilé de La Colonne sans fin de Târgu Jiu [High Angle View, Backlit with Overcast Sky, of Endless Column in Târgu Jiu], 1938
Gelatin silver print, 39.8 × 29.8 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Bequest of Constantin Brancusi, 1957

Antoine Pevsner
Naissance de l'univers [Birth of the Universe], 1933
Oil on Isorel, 75 × 105 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Virginie Pevsner, 1962

Max Ernst
Le Monde des naïfs [The World of the Naïve], 1965
Oil on canvas and oil pastel, 116.5 × 89.5 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Acceptance in lieu, 1982

Natalia Goncharova
Espace [Space], 1958
Oil on canvas, 55.2 × 46.2 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Soviet State, 1988

Lucio Fontana
Concetto spaziale (60-0.45) [Spatial Concept (60-0.45)], 1960
Oil on canvas, perforations, incisions, cuts, slits, 150 × 150 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase, 1977

LIST OF ARTWORKS BY CHAPTER

Adolph Gottlieb
Heat Wave, 1964
Oil on canvas, 197.8 × 168 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Anonymous gift, 1985

Etel Adnan
Untitled, 2010
Oil on canvas, 28.2 × 37.6 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase, 2012

Etel Adnan
Untitled, 2010
Oil on canvas, 26.8 × 32.8 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase, 2012

Etel Adnan
Untitled, 2010
Oil on canvas, 26.8 × 32.8 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase, 2012

Etel Adnan
Équilibre [Balance], 2018
Etching in color, 72.5 × 38 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Etel Adnan
Montagnes [Mountains], 2020
Etching in color, 46 × 45.4 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Etel Adnan
Un moment de lumière [A Moment of Light], 2017
Etching in color, 48 × 38 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Mohssin Harraki
Anwar Al-Nujūm A'B'C,D' [The Lights of the Stars A'B'C'D'], 2015
Video installation with 4 screens. Duration: 2 min. 46 sec.
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchased with the support of the Amis du Centre Pompidou, International Circle, 2018

Tavares Strachan
Self-portrait as King Oba with Blue Soldiers, 2023
Oil, enamel, pigment on acrylic, 213.4 × 213.4 × 5.1 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Joint gift of the artist and Galerie Perrotin, 2024

Rachid Koraïchi
1947, Aïn Beïda (Algeria)
Les Ancêtres liés aux étoiles [The Ancestors Linked to Stars], 2008
Silver and gold thread on silk, 294.5 × 237.5 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Beyond Nature

Richard Long
A Somerset Beach, 1968
Gelatin silver print, 88.5 × 124 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase, 1987

Cyprien Gaillard
Real Remnants of Fictive Wars VI, 2008
Betacam video tape, digitised, 4/3, colour, mute, 1 min. 40 sec.
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase, 2009

Nadia Kaabi-Linke
Kula: Common Fuel, 2017
Lignite grains on silk paper mounted on canvas, 690 × 190 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Amis du Centre Pompidou, International Circle, 2018

Imran Qureshi
The True Path, 2009
Watercolor, graphite, and letaset transfer on paper, 45 × 800 × 24 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Imran Qureshi
Story of Two, 2019
Gouache on paper, 28 × 38 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Hassan Sharif
Cardboard and Glue, 2005
Cardboard, glue, 30 × 160 × 200 cm (minimal dimensions after installation)
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Robert Matta, 2013

Cheikh Ndiaye
Pot d'échappement #2 [Exhaust Pipe #2], 2016
Rattan, wood, cardboard, metal, acrylic paint, 88 × 229 × 72 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Galerie Cécile Fakhoury, 2016

Tarek Al-Ghoussein
Abu Dhabi Archipelago (Island Making 2) from the Odysseus series, 2015
Pigment inkjet print, 100 × 134 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Amis du Centre Pompidou, International Circle-Middle East North Africa, 2023

Samia Halaby
Green and Earth, 2014
Acrylic on canvas, 152.5 × 203 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

LIST OF ARTWORKS BY CHAPTER

Samia Halaby
Central Park 8, 1986
Animation programmed for Amiga 1000, 4:3, colour, sound, 4 min. 17 sec.
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of Véronique Parke, Fonds Art Numérique, Amis du Centre Pompidou, 2024

Borderline

Paul Guiragossian
À travers le temps [Through Time], circa 1986
Oil on canvas, 90 × 80 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase made possible by the Amis du Centre Pompidou, International Circle-Middle East and by Robert Matta, 2017

Ayşe Erkmen
Netz [Network], 2006
Hand-tied cotton clothing labels, nails, 220 × 60 × 20 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchase, 2012

Younes Rahmoun
Manzil-Janna [Heaven House], 2015
Resin, dye, varying dimensions
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Société des Amis du Musée National d'Art Moderne, International Circle-Middle East, 2016

Sliman Mansour
Uncertain Landscape 1, 2009
Acrylic on canvas, 84.1 × 104.2 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim
Suspended, 2015
Wood, dyed papier mâché, Canson paper, adhesive, cord, acrylic paint, felt tip, ball-point, Indian ink, 66 × 44 × 15 cm
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the Amis du Centre Pompidou, International Circle-Middle East, 2017

Kemang Wa Lehulere
Red Winter in Gugulethu, 2016
Mixed-media installation, varying dimensions
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Purchased with the support of Groupe Perspective des Amis du Centre Pompidou, 2018

Laurent Grasso
Artificialis, 2020
Animated, Digital video, 16/9, colour, stereo, sound, 27 min. 33 sec.
Produced at the invitation of the Musée d'Orsay, the film *Artificialis* received generous support from The American Friends of the Musée d'Orsay and the exceptional collaboration with PERROTIN.
Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou
Gift of the artist, 2021

Kader Attia
The Embrace, 2019
Wood, 100.3 × 176.5 × 63.5 cm
Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla

ARTIST COMMISSIONS

Tarek Atoui
1980, Beirut (Lebanon)

Tarek Atoui's commission is a long-term conversation between the artist, the city and its people. The project was designed from the start around the creation of shared ground, with emphasis on listening and learning as collective acts, to enable the gradual emergence of a major work of art. Upon its launch in 2025, Atoui thus focused on connecting with the AIUla community, especially schools, students, artisans and musicians, to create a space in which artistic exchange could take root naturally.

Workshops, rehearsals and open performances became the project's lifeblood. Participating students discovered that music could be more than an art form, since it is also a way of coming together, of building something in common through sound. Local musicians joined in their daily improvisations and jam sessions, which sometimes attracted more than a dozen players. These encounters carried the energy of AIUla's social life: generous and receptive, with a drive for experimentation.

Instead of a brief residency, Atoui opted to work gradually, collaborating with educational partners to develop relationships over time. This approach made it possible to nurture local talent and share knowledge in ways closely connected to daily life. Some young participants have already gone on to join AIUla's music school, continuing the journey started with this project, a subtle yet meaningful sign of change.

In 2026, the collaboration is expanding further while holding on to the same spirit of exchange. The circle now includes Madrasat Addeera, AIUla's school for arts and design, where craftspeople such as embroiderers, stone carvers and potters will work alongside musicians and students. Deeply tied to the city's heritage, their practices bring another layer to the project, connecting the senses of hearing and touch. Builders and workers from AIUla will also take part, acknowledging their essential role in influencing both the city's present and its visions for the future.

With this continuity, Atoui's work grows through attention rather than accumulation. Each step adds another voice, another rhythm, another gesture. Over the next three years, these relationships will result in a new body of work culminating in a major installation for the opening of AIUla's contemporary art museum. More than a composition of sounds, it will stand as a record of how a place can be heard, and how a work of art can emerge from the shared act of listening.



Exhibition view of *Bayt AlHams Chapter 2: Phonolites*
Tarek Atoui, 2026
© Nick Jackson Photography

ARTIST COMMISSIONS

Renaud Auguste-Dormeuil
1968, Neuilly-sur-Seine (France)

Renaud Auguste-Dormeuil's artistic practice unfolds at the intersections of time, memory and representation. Since the 1990s, he has sought to reveal the invisible structures shaping our understanding of reality and history, grappling with the elusive concept of time through his art. Central to his practice is an exploration of absence and disappearance as well as a quest to depict temporal phenomena that resist direct visualisation, such as death, war and the irreversible flow of history. For him, art is not merely a record of the visible but also a means of imagining what cannot be seen: the before and after of historical rupture, the mute persistence of cosmic time.

This sustained engagement with time and memory finds profound expression in his photographic series *The Day Before* (2000–2010), which captures the starry night skies as they appeared on the eve of aerial attacks such as 9/11, Hiroshima, Guernica and Sarajevo. The images evoke a moment of silent stillness – a vast and indifferent cosmos poised above unfolding human

tragedy. By juxtaposing intimate, localised histories with the continuity of celestial time, *The Day Before* highlights the dissonance between lived trauma and the universe's eternal expanse, holding an instant in which those who know are reflected or fractured by those still unaware of the impending event.

A layering of time is also evident in Auguste-Dormeuil's tapestry works. He acquires damaged or devalued sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Aubusson tapestries and overlays each one with the night sky from the date of an historical event contemporaneous with its creation and reconstructed with astronomy software. Painted in India ink and gold gouache, these star charts disrupt the serenity of the original scenes, reproducing the sky above the Great Fire of London, for example, or the heavens on the night Renaissance painter Caravaggio died. The result is a visual palimpsest collapsing multiple moments into one frame. Through this process, Auguste-Dormeuil confronts the grim reality that history, once made, cannot be erased – the passage of time is indelible, permanently etched into both memory and material.

The artist's approach is inverted in his performance *I Will Keep a Light Burning*, which pulls the convergence of past and present into the future. Candles are lit in an arrangement matching the configuration of stars as they will appear above the same site one hundred years from the time of the performance. As the candles burn and finally flicker out, only photographs of the installation remain, emphasising how moments slip into absence, surviving solely in images. In this way, the work reveals art itself as an ephemeral illusion – not just a record of what was, but also a gesture towards what can never be fully grasped, suggesting that representation is less about preserving reality than confronting its perpetual disappearance.

Ultimately, Auguste-Dormeuil's work challenges us to perceive time not as a fixed narrative but as a fragile constellation of instants: visible and invisible, remembered and forgotten. His work is a reckoning with the nature of history and the fact that traces left behind carry the weight of what can never be undone.



Detail view of *The Magic Mountains – The sky on 14 March 1959* marking the passage of Halley's Comet across the skies of AIUla
Renaud Auguste-Dormeuil, 2026
© Nick Jackson Photography

ARTIST COMMISSIONS

Dana Awartani

1987, Palestine / Jeddah (Saudi Arabia)

Commissioned by the contemporary art museum in AIUla under the auspices of The Royal Commission for AIUla, this new work by Dana Awartani reflects on the fragile continuity of cultural heritage in the aftermath of conflict. Rather than focusing solely on ruins left behind, the artist turns her attention to the living knowledge embedded in traditional craftsmanship, paying homage to its role as a vital agent in processes of memory and renewal.

Awartani draws upon the long history of stone carving in the Levant, where artisans once adorned fortresses, places of worship and other civic architecture with ornamental motifs that spoke to both spiritual and communal life. Often threatened or destroyed during recent decades of unrest, these designs are re-examined here through the lens of geometry, a discipline that, for the artist, offers analytical precision and a universal visual language. In this way, the reproduced ancient motifs are also reactivated: translated once again into stone, they send messages across time, affirming continuity in the face of disruptions.

This project was executed in collaboration with displaced stone-masons and craftsmen from across the region. By involving these artisans now based in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the project highlights the transmission of skills that might otherwise be lost due to war or migration. This act of shared creation takes a stand against the fragmentation of cultural memory, demonstrating that craft can serve as a form of resilience and collective healing in addition to ensuring a livelihood.



Exhibition view of *When the Dust of Conflict Settles: Baalshamin Temple IV, Palmyra, Syria*,
Dana Awartani, 2025
Gouache and walnut ink on handmade cotton paper, H 35 x W 45 cm
© Nick Jackson Photography



Exhibition view of *When the Dust of Conflict Settles*
Dana Awartani, 2025
Gouache and walnut ink on handmade cotton paper and hancarving on Naqab stone, Madaba stone and Ajloun stone
© Nick Jackson Photography

The commission thus expands beyond the object itself to stage an encounter between past and present, between inherited traditions and contemporary urgencies. Awartani presents stone carving as an evolving practice – one that can speak directly to present conditions of displacement and reconstruction – rather than a static remnant of history.

With this work, the artist invites us to view heritage as a living continuum: a fragile but enduring thread that connects communities across borders and generations. In the context of AIUla, a place where ancient history meets contemporary vision, the commission underscores the fact that cultural institutions have a responsibility to sustain traditional knowledge while imagining new futures shaped by dialogue, preservation and artistic intervention.

ARTIST COMMISSIONS

Tavares Strachan
1979, Nassau (Bahamas)

Tavares Strachan's work traces the intersections of art, science and history, bringing to light the narratives often erased by dominant systems of knowledge. Rooted in modes of exploration – be they aeronautical, astronomical or oceanic – his practice is a poetic meditation on human aspiration, displacement and the constraints shaped by environments and historical omissions. His projects frequently unsettle official narratives, restoring visibility to marginalised figures such as pioneering Black explorers and astronauts whose contributions have been overlooked or forgotten.

Through monumental installations, neon text works and immersive multimedia, Strachan questions how knowledge is constructed, circulated and controlled. He probes the mechanics of memory, asking who is remembered and why. At the heart of this inquiry is his *Encyclopedia of Invisibility*, a sweeping, ongoing archive of obscured people, places and phenomena that challenges institutional authority and expands the boundaries of historical and scientific discourse.

Strachan's fascination with cosmic phenomena, paired with his experience in cosmonaut training and Rastafarian ideas of unity and divinity, infuses his work with a profound sense of the individual's place in the universe. In *Self Portrait as King Oba with Blue Soldiers*, this celestial perspective intersects with ancestral legacy. African royalty, space travel and historical trauma do not merely coexist; they orbit one another, forming a complex allegory of endurance and transformation.

These questions of legacy and influence reemerge in *Palaces, Priests, and Power*, a recent series inspired by Langston Hughes's reflections on empire during his travels in Uzbekistan, as well as Strachan's own search for connections between the Middle East and the American South. Composed of carpets and sculptures, the series combines architectural forms – temples, mosques and palaces – with images of cotton blossoms, spaceships, birds and flowers. Together, these elements highlight centuries of overlapping power, religion and commerce, revealing the complex ties between spiritual authority, economic interests and historical conflicts. Hughes's insight that "the biggest and most successful robbers have always lived in palaces... close to the temples" becomes a kind of thesis: a recognition of power's enduring proximity to sanctity. Strachan echoes the unease Hughes expressed in his reflection on religion as something "placed into a museum" – preserved, perhaps, but removed from lived experience.

In these works, Strachan appears in multiple guises – astronaut, oba, deep-sea diver: figures who move across kingdoms and thresholds, both temporal and symbolic. They travel not only through space but also through the infrastructure of empire: along trade routes, into cotton fields, through sanctuaries and industrial ruins. The carpets transform into terrains of remembrance, where disparate histories surface and the overlooked is rendered visible. Rockets launch beside coral reefs; sacred architecture emerges from the same soil that once bore cotton. In this woven topography, Strachan gathers scattered narratives and listens for what remains, inviting us to reconsider what knowledge is, who it belongs to and what has yet to be told.



Exhibition view of *Self Portrait (Space Helmet 2)*
Tavares Strachan, 2024
Ceramic
© Nick Jackson Photography

ARTIST COMMISSIONS

Ayman Zedani
1984, Abha (Saudi Arabia)

In his newly commissioned work for the contemporary art museum in AIUla, Ayman Zedani turns toward the deep time of the Arabian Peninsula to imagine a future archaeology, one in which traces of ancient civilizations no longer merely record the past but also open portals into alternative understandings of knowledge, cosmology and even the notion of belonging. Drawing from his ongoing engagement with heritage, science fiction and the speculative potential of archives, Zedani constructs a fictional framework that proposes a radical re-reading of the region's landscapes.

At the heart of the project lies the imagined discovery of Daraj, a fictional ancient Arabian script whose two forms (one practical, one sacred) reveal a forgotten language of connection between earth and cosmos. This linguistic breakthrough has, in the project's world, begun transforming long-familiar archaeological structures, such as the monumental mustatils and tombs of AIUla, into potential interdimensional gateways. With this re-enchantment of the archaeological record, Zedani challenges the limits of historical interpretation and hints at unseen cosmologies that might have once animated these sites.

The work unfolds in the form of a two-channel video installation, conceived as both an archive and a portal. Positioned in a subtle V-formation, the dual screens envelop the viewer in an immersive environment that merges archival material, new footage and 3D renderings of archaeological sites. Across four acts, the narrative oscillates between documentation and speculation, moving from

the rediscovery of ancient inscriptions to the establishment of a fictional Museum of Earth Matter and finally to a visionary proposition that these gateways, once dismissed as myth, might be reactivated. The installation blurs the distinction between field-work and fiction, scientific inquiry and mythmaking, situating the viewer in a shifting terrain where knowledge itself becomes a fluid construct.

Zedani draws inspiration from Ursula K. Le Guin's book *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, which proposes that the earliest cultural tool was not a weapon but a vessel, a means of gathering and holding life. Here, the artist's fictional narrative becomes a conceptual container, carrying within it the many histories, myths and temporalities that converge in AIUla's desert landscapes. This "carrier bag" contains 3D scans, archival and Super 8 footage, fragments of ancient texts and echoes of oral traditions, each element suspended within a wider meditation on what it means to inherit and imagine the past.

By merging the scientific language of excavation with the poetic techniques of speculation, Zedani casts AIUla as a site where fiction and history coalesce, and where the landscape itself becomes a mnemonic device. His work proposes that to truly engage with heritage, one cannot stop at preserving its remnants but must also reopen its possibilities, treating the past as an active participant in constructing future conceptions. With this commission, Zedani invites viewers to step into a world where myth and materiality entwine, and where the ancient sands of Northwest Arabia whisper of what has been and what might yet be.



Exhibition view of *In the Bellies of the Rocks*
Ayman Zedani, 2026
Two-channel video installation with stereo Audio, 14 minutes
© Nick Jackson Photography

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