

Alula Artist Residency presents
Palimpsest of Time: Explorations in Creative Practice
17 February – 18 March 2023

AlUla, Saudi Arabia, 21 February 2023: The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) and the French Agency for AlUla Development (Afalula) present *Palimpsest of Time: Explorations in Creative Practice* from 17 February to 18 March 2023. *Palimpsest of Time* presents a survey of the AlUla Artist Residencies alongside an exhibition and open studio featuring artists who have participated in the current and previous editions of the programme. Set across two venues the programme is on show in Madrasat Addeera and Mabiti, AlUla.

Founded in 2021, the AlUla Artist Residency is now in its second season and has, to date, welcomed 26 multidisciplinary artists from the region and abroad to pursue their artistic endeavours through experimentation in the unique and rich setting of AlUla. With interdisciplinarity and collaboration at its core, the programmes aim to foster dialogue and exchange between emerging and established artists, cultural practitioners including archaeologists, architects and botanists working on the ground, local practitioners, and members of the local community.

A palimpsest is a manuscript that has been erased and written over multiple times, leaving traces of earlier writings partially visible beneath more recent ones. In this sense the exhibition – *Palimpsest of Time* – is a metaphor for the resident artists' explorations, embracing the diversity, complexity and layers of the human experience in AlUla. The show aims to present the diverse ways in which the artists have approached their work and the impact of the residency on their artistic development.

The exhibition opens at Madrasat Addeera – AlUla's Arts and Design Centre in the cultural hub of AlJadidah – with a survey of the residency programme to date including photography and video footage of the 26 artists that have engaged in the programme.

The second section of *Palimpsest of Time* will showcase the processes and outcomes of the current artists in residence in dialogue with artists from the former residency which took place from October to December 2022. Hosted in Mabiti, a guest house and palm grove which is home to the artist residency programme, this section will present a total of 13 multidisciplinary artists who have all paid homage to the marks that the past has left on the landscape, the city and its society.

The artists and works presented at Mabiti include a romanticised investigation into the multiple meanings and symbols of date cultivation (**Augustine Paredes**); an uncanny account of man's eerie, sometimes otherworldly encounters with nature (**Monira Al Qadiri**); a divinatory object that retraces the practices of the early Arabs and employs desert sands as messengers of fate (**Sabine Mirlesse**); a reading of the sedimentary strata of the region, transformed once again like building materials (**BrickLab**); polyglot poems that bring elements of the landscape into dialogue (**Afra Atiq**); a reinterpretation of territories through fictitious geographies (**Agnieszka Kurant**); artificial intelligence that gives form to the presence of women, often evicted from history (**Daniah Al Saleh**); an exploration of parasitic plants in the Arabian desert and their potential impact on the future of the Earth (**Ayman Zedani**); a fracture in the sensory world that opens onto its digital equivalent in the metaverse (**Ben Elliot**); an open-air workshop that is also the theatre of a fable about the excessive desire for power and the passage of time (**Mohammad AlFaraj**); a dialogue between the craftsmanship of metal and that of leather, around the ornate doors of the buildings of AlUla (**Manon Wertenbroek**); and a photographic walk through the oasis-city and the intimate knowledge held by its inhabitants, putting into perspective its past and rapid transformation towards the future (**M'hammed Kilito**).

- ENDS -

Note to editors:

Location:



ARTS ALULA

Madrasat Addera, AlJadidah, AlUla and Mabit, AlUla

Dates and times:

17th February – 18th of March

Weekdays: Sunday to Wednesday 10 am 2PM / 5PM – 10 PM

Weekends: Thursday – Saturday 10 am – 10 PM

Hashtags and handles: #AlUlaArtistResidency #ArtsAlUla @artsalula

About Arts AlUla

The creation of Arts AlUla within The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) is a commitment to 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.

For more information please visit:

experiencealula.com

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ARTS ALULA

About The French Agency for AlUla Development (Afalula)

The French Agency for AlUla Development (Afalula) was founded in Paris in July 2018 following an intergovernmental agreement signed by France and Saudi Arabia in April of that year. Afalula aims to support its Saudi partner, the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), in the co-construction of the economic, touristic, and cultural development of AlUla, a region located in the North-West of Saudi Arabia which benefits from outstanding natural and cultural heritage. The agency's mission is to mobilise French knowledge and expertise and to gather the finest operators and companies in the fields of archaeology, museography, architecture, environment, tourism, hospitality, infrastructure, education, security, agriculture, botany, and the sustainable management of natural resources.

About the artists:

Rashed AlShashai (Saudi Arabia)

Rashed AlShashai holds a master's degree in visual arts. As a conceptual artist and arts educator, Rashed has been influential to a new generation of Saudi talent while also nurturing local artistic practices as a founding member of the Saudi Arabia Fine Arts Society and the Art Education Society. In 2009, he established the Tasami Centre for Visual Arts, an independent space that supports cutting-edge art in the Kingdom, and was the organisation's director until 2014. In his work, Rashed utilises found objects and appropriated imagery as conceptual means of identifying the signs of the everyday, creating what he describes as a "semantic field" through which philosophical questions, primarily the purpose of human existence and the functions of society, can be explored.

Sara Favriau (France)

Sara Favriau works with sculpture, installation, and performance. She summons forms, symbols, and popular processes to better shift their meanings. Huts, canoes, bows, trees, or voguing all comprise her formal and conceptual lexicon. Their poetic enacting in Sara Favriau's work is a theatrical meeting between past, present, and future. How can the two distinct temporalities — of the past and its heritage on the one hand, and progress and its discoveries on the other — be brought together? This question of blending is at the heart of Sara Favriau's process: she melds fiction and essay into a very simple, metamorphic form, that is both humorous and poetic.

Talin Hazbar (Syrian)

Talin Hazbar was born in Syria and raised in the United Arab Emirates. Her practice is at the intersection of architecture and art. Landscapes and natural formations influenced her understanding of matter as volatile and mobile, continuously moving and adapting. Talin's interest in nature and the ephemeral structures stems from nature's ability to

operate and behave both at a microscopic and a grand level simultaneously. Her practice framework is focused on redefining the idea of molds and exploring the space between material contingency and malleable molds, to achieve articulated coherent and responsive structures. Talin's work and processes aim to showcase the overlapping boundaries in nature, history, and ecology.

Laura Sellies (France)

Laura Sellies is a graduate of the Beaux-Arts de Lyon and has a master's degree in creative writing from Université Paris 8 Vincennes – Saint-Denis. She has developed a work and research practice in which installation, film, performance, literature, and music share a space that can only be defined by the viewer's attention. For her, art is a collaborative and collective process. She creates links between sculptures, people, images, and sounds to establish a durable and relatively autonomous commonality, then observes potential developments. They become elements of a silent language that embodies forgotten histories and future myths.

Sofiane Si Merabet (France / Algeria)

Sofiane Si Merabet is a French-Algerian artist and cultural entrepreneur living and working in Dubai. A travel-obsessed polyglot, Sofiane has always been involved in projects reflecting on plural identities. On his digital platform, The Confused Arab, he explores the concept of what he calls the "future of nostalgia." In parallel to his ongoing research around memories, identities, and diaspora, he also investigates these themes through interactive installations. In most of his work, Sofiane interrogates emblematic spaces and their role(s) in human interactions.

Muhannad Shono (Saudi Arabia)

Muhannad Shono is a visual artist who feels no limitation to medium or scale. His multidisciplinary practice is catalyzed and structured by story. Muhannad's work harnesses the power of narrative by creating and contesting personal, collective and historical truths. Impacted by childhood memories, the aim and expression of his work is rooted in exploring both the existent and non-existent boundaries which have characterized his life. Taking a singular approach, his work amplifies the moment where impact, transmission, and change occur. This results in the creation of relics and symbols which belong to a world all of his own and are defined by a constant need and curiosity to challenge the imagination. Muhannad developed his own visual vocabulary, from intimate drawings, large scale sculptural works, robotic and technological pieces, all of which illuminate a journey he would like to take us on.

Kévin Bray (France)

Bray's work is a hybrid of techniques, sitting somewhere between film, graphic design and sound design. Often resulting in experimental music videos, the process of making – and revealing that process – is at the core of a portfolio that stretches visual codes to create unpredictable and otherworldly forms. His work contains many art historical references but is equally apocalyptic, as if it were a backdrop for a science fiction story.

Petra Cortright (USA)

Cortright's core practice is the creation and distribution of digital and physical images, using consumer or corporate softwares. She became renowned for making self-portrait videos that use her computer's webcam and default effects tools, which she would then upload to YouTube and caption with spam text. Cortright's paintings on aluminium, linen, paper, or acrylic are created in Photoshop using painting software and appropriated images, icons, and marks. The digital files are endlessly modifiable, but at a "decisive moment" they are translated into two-dimensional objects. They become finite, yet their range of motifs and marks, and their disorienting perspectives and dimensions suggest dynamic change.

Ittah Yoda (France, Japan)

Kai Yoda and Virgile Ittah have developed a dual artistic identity that brings their very different backgrounds together through digital technology, a vector of cross-cultural creative collaborations. Their collaboration gives birth to real, virtual and participatory forms that connect the heritage of humanity and the collective unconscious. Focusing on the collective and error, they explore the possibility of new collaborations between multiple cultures and space.

Their artwork unfolds as vast generative and performative installations. Hosting a refined Artificial Intelligence, their pieces are continuously changing and ramifying according to their own dreamlike variations, in collaboration with their audience's gestures. The whole haptic experience falls within a therapeutic approach and forms an attempt to reframe ways of communicating and living together in the dawn of the Symbiocene.

Nicolas Lamas (Peru)

Lamas creates alternative visions of reality, drawing inspiration from everyday life and what he finds around him – the street, the city, the internet and nature. He carefully manipulates images, text and objects to visualize the countless possibilities packed within them. His focus is on the continual development of ideas to generate new possibilities and challenge our preconceptions.

Timur Si-Qin (Germany)

Timur Si-Qin's interests in the evolution of culture, the dynamics of cognition and contemporary philosophy weave together to create a new kind of environmental art. Taking form through diverse media, installations of 3D printed sculptures, light-boxes, websites, texts, and virtual reality, Si-Qin's work often challenges common notions of the organic vs the synthetic, the natural vs the cultural, the human vs non-human and other dualisms at the heart of western consciousness.

Si-Qin's long-term meta-project is the proposal of a new secular faith in the face of climate change, global pandemics and biodiversity collapse, called New Peace. Through New Peace, individual works aggregate into a hyper-distributed, branded ecosystem of signifiers. Drawing from disparate disciplines like the anthropology of religion, marketing psychology, and new materialist philosophy, Si-Qin regards spiritualities as cultural softwares, capable of deep behavioural and political intervention. New Peace is thus a new protocol for the necessary renegotiation of our conceptual and spiritual relationship with the non-human. New Peace is an artwork, a church, a brand and a memetic machine.

Daniah Al Saleh (Saudi Arabia)

With her profound focus on social commentary and the relationship between Arab culture and mass media, Daniah Al Saleh investigates the construction of the collective memory. Through her practice, she seeks to decipher the clichés and stereotypes emanating from images and messages on news platforms. Coming from a background in geometric abstraction, her work has since evolved to encompass archival images, computer technologies, and artificial intelligence programs. The subjectivity and margin of interpretation that were once the painter's prerogative can now be entrusted to a technological tool that can modify and generate images from a database, supporting the artist in her active mission to deconstruct the standards of her practice, particularly concerning the female narrative.

Mohamed AlFaraj (Saudi Arabia)

The oeuvre of Mohammad AlFaraj is one of inventive, spiritual, and allegorical narratives that come into corporeality through his unique plastic language. His predilection for technique, be it video, sound, photography, installation, painting, or writing, is ceaselessly shepherded by an adaptation of creative process to context. He often creates composite works integrating found objects that, through his camaraderie, take on new lives. A mischievous storyteller, Mohammad AlFaraj invites audiences to voyage through his fiction and endow with shape and form the sets and creatures they encounter,

demonstrating that another world, though imaginary, also exists. With his experiments, more playful than empirical, he approaches his work as a game and art as a daily recreation.

Dr. Afra Atiq (UEA)

Poet and scholar Dr Afra Atiq is recognised for her poetry, where oratory performance is integral to and inseparable from the literary experience. Her poetics seize on subjects centred on culture, legacy, nostalgia, family ties, and interpersonal relationships, and puts them in perspective against the backdrop of a culture or collective memory. Resolutely backed by powerful sentiment, her writing assumes autobiographical dimensions that allow her to tackle subjects in which everyone can revel. Among the particularities of her style is her multilingual writing, which enables her to combine Arabic and English within the same artistic space.

M'hammed Kilito (Morocco)

With documentary photography as his medium of choice, M'hammed Kilito pursues a comparative study of oases across the sundry territories of the Mashriq and Maghrib. Witnessing a world on the verge of transformation, he is particularly interested in the efforts to preserve, enhance, and sustainably develop its deserts' oases, seeking to portray the stories of their communities as actors or arbiters of change. A silent and inquisitive observer, M'hammed Kilito retraces the encounters and discoveries of his accumulative explorations through his photographs, painting authentic pictures of these sites and their singular societies, manifold specificities, rich heritage, and abundant resources.

Sabine Mirlesse (France/USA)

Through experimentations in photography, sculpture, and installation, Sabine Mirlesse pursues a mythology centred on landscapes, their physical, metaphysical, and historical characteristics, and the divinatory practices that may have once inhabited them. Since time immemorial, humans have sought to extrapolate meaning from nature, hoping to illuminate their futures by interpreting elemental signs from the soil, strata, and lustre of their terranean surroundings. Viewing geological sites as mystic thresholds upon which one may beseech the Earth, Sabine seeks to recount the world's divinatory methods, referencing through her practice the varied techniques, rituals, and instruments people have used to inform their relation to the metaphysical.

Augustine Paredes (Philippines)

Inextricably linked with photography, writing, and publishing, Augustine Paredes's painterly and collagic work is rooted in the investigation and récit of his personal canon.

With confessional narration at the heart of his work, he skilfully addresses feelings of desire, loss, and longing, and retells the experience of displacement and uprooting not as an impression thereof but as an event unto itself. The product is honest, often autobiographical anecdotes that unfold across various mediums, bound together by his poetic, intuitive, and playful approach to creation. Public participation, the space for delight and surprise, and the explication of otherness are indivisible components of his work. For Augustine, Paradise is a mirror gazing back at its viewer.

Monira Al Qadiri (Kuwait)

Monira Al Qadiri has always been fascinated by the history and archaeology of the Gulf region, particularly that of Saudi Arabia, where part of her family originates. She has spent the last decade creating sculptures, installations, videos, and performances that assume a range of strategies to explain the Persian Gulf region's staggering urban and economic development over the last decades. Sensible in her works is the excellent attention she pays to the swift and profound transformation of lifestyles in the age of oil, which impacts our relations to global geopolitics and local natural ecosystems.

Bricklab (Saudi Arabia)

Bricklab is a Jeddah-based architecture studio co-founded by brothers Abdulrahman and Turki Gazzaz creating architecture for cultural uses and artistic installations that responds to their commissions' sociopolitical and economic contexts. Their practice probes the boundaries between art, material research, and built environments and merges technical mastery with conceptual rigour and interdisciplinary design. Inviting reflection upon dynamic elements that often go unnoticed, they explore the "gaps between graphics, product design, interiors, and architecture" through innovative investigations of the site, object, and the user: the component parts of our social and physical worlds.

Ben Elliot (France)

Ben Elliot is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work encompasses digital media, video, installation, and painting. He addresses contemporary themes such as the impact of emerging technologies, the rise of influence marketing, and the formation of socioeconomic trends. In his creative process, Elliott incorporates cutting-edge companies, individuals, and objects to examine the concepts and values they embody. In recent years, Elliott's work has evolved to maintain a strong connection to new technologies, using them in his art not only as digital tools but also exploring them as subjects in their own right.

Agnieszka Kurant (Poland)

Agnieszka Kurant's interdisciplinary oeuvre spans installation, sculpture, and film. Residing at an intersection of art and science, her largely conceptual body of work explores how complex social and cultural systems can operate in ways that confuse distinctions between fiction and reality. Probing collective and non-human intelligence (Artificial Intelligence, animal and microbial intelligence), the artist explores the transformations of the human and the future of labour and creativity in the 21st century.

Manon Wertenbroek (Switzerland/ Netherlands)

Manon Wertenbroek's work ties together two seemingly disparate yet harmoniously complementary dimensions of her artistic inquiry. On the one hand, her imaginative and intellectual pursuits delve into the human body and its inherent capacity to betray elements of our identity, past, and ability to reinvent ourselves. On the other hand, her affection for techniques and materials drives her to give equal attention to the skills she employs in transforming them, imbuing her works with the patience and technicality of handcrafting. Her ideas, steeped in psychoanalysis, are embodied in sculptural works, photographs and installations that exude a contained sensuality whilst being rife with symbolism.

Ayman Zedani (Saudi Arabia)

Through videos, installations, immersive environments, and a strong interest in the sciences, Ayman Zedani exposes his inquiries regarding the interactions between humans and non-human worlds. Plunging the public directly into the heart of his questions and the cohabitation scenarios he imagines, he aims to upend our comprehension of the past and challenge our acceptance of the future. He intertwines his specific interest in the Gulf region with his investigative practices, invites audiences to observe symbioses between species, and creates narratives open to many interpretations and questions.

Gregory Chatonsky (France)

Gregory Chatonsky is a French-Canadian artist. After studying art and philosophy, he founded Incident.net in 1994, the first Netart collective in France. From 2003, he tackled the question of ruins, flows and the materiality of the digital. In 2009, he began experimenting with AI, which over the years became an object of research and creation, followed by a research seminar at the ENS Paris on artificial imagination. He has exhibited at the Palais de Tokyo, Centre Pompidou, MOCA in Taipei, Museum of Moving Image, Hubei Wuhan Museum, and more.



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For media enquiries:

Laetitia Tregoning

FLINT

UAE: +971 567 242 154

E: laetitia.tregoning@flint-culture.com

W: www.flint-culture.com

For the Royal Commission for AlUla:

Public Relations Team

publicrelations@rcu.gov.sa

For Afalula:

Mathias Curnier, Director of Communications, Marketing, Innovation & Public Relations

+33 (0)6 77 04 56 18 – mathias.curnier@afalula.com