

Press release

Paris, November 27, 2023

The French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA) welcomes the signing of a major partnership between the Centre Pompidou and the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) for the development of a Contemporary Art Museum in AIUla

Saudi Arabia and France signed an intergovernmental agreement in April 2018 on the sustainable development of the AIUla region and its transformation into a world-class cultural and tourism destination.

As a result of this agreement, the French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA) was created to mobilize all French know-how (experts, operators, companies) and to support its Saudi partner, the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU), in a spirit of collaborative development.

In developing AIUla, it is the joint desire of Saudi Arabia and France to implement a new model of economic and tourism development, focused on environmental conservation, respect for history and the land, and inclusion of the local population. This approach is at the heart of the bilateral agreement signed between the two governments.

On the occasion of the visit to Riyadh and AIUla of the French Minister of Culture, Rima Abdul Malak, on March 12, 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the RCU and the Centre Pompidou as part of the project to create a Contemporary Art Museum in AIUla.

On November 27, 2023, during the visit to Paris of H.H. Prince Badr bin Farhan Al Saud, Saudi Minister of Culture and Governor of the RCU, a partnership arising from this Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the French Ministry of Culture by Laurent Le Bon, President of the Centre Pompidou, and Amr AlMadani, CEO of the Royal Commission for AIUla, in the presence of H.E. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Chairman of the French Agency for AIUla Development, and Nora Aldabal, RCU's Executive Director of Arts & Creative Industries.

This partnership, facilitated by AFALULA, aims to support the enhancement and development of the cultural, artistic and creative aspects of the AIUla site. The Centre Pompidou will contribute its scientific and technical expertise in the training of staff, particularly in the areas of conservation management of collections and mediation. It may also provide support for the organisation of cultural and event programming.

The project to create a Contemporary Art Museum in AIUla has entered a new phase, marked by the selection of its architect, Lina Gotmeh. Chosen for her remarkable experience and ability to combine creativity and sustainability, the Franco-Lebanese architect will propose a design inspired by the site and guided by a responsible approach.

The museum will set new standards in sustainable design, showcasing how architecture can be a catalyst for urban regeneration and environmental renewal while offering opportunities for engagement with the community through a calendar of workshops, school programmes, and more.

With a defined artistic and curatorial strategy, the programme allows for the ongoing exchange,



acquisition, loan, and display of art works and artefacts between RCU and Centre Pompidou, as well as the promotion of various scientific and cultural initiatives based around the sharing of unique items from each partner's collection.

Centre Pompidou's experience and expertise in creating a comprehensive strategy to attract international visitors, host major cultural events and productions, and in establishing opportunities for advocacy and audience development, will support RCU's goal of transforming AIUla into the world's largest living museum and a global hub for cultural and heritage tourism.

"I am delighted with the signing of this partnership which crowns the strengthening of Franco-Saudi cooperation in the fields of art and culture. France will bring to Saudi Arabia its world-renowned know-how regarding museums and contemporary creation. As a leading cultural institution, the Centre Pompidou will support the Royal Commission for AIUla, in a spirit of sharing experience and knowledge, in the development of cultural spaces, the museum management and in the implementation of an ambitious project: the creation of a Contemporary Art Museum in AIUla, whose influence will extend throughout the Middle East and beyond and which will contribute to making AIUla, with the support of AFALULA, a major cultural destination." **Jean-Yves LE DRIAN, Chairman of AFALULA**

About AFALULA (French Agency for AIUla Development)

Born as a result of an intergovernmental agreement signed by France and Saudi Arabia in April 2018, the French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA) was founded in Paris in July 2018. In the spirit of collaborative development, AFALULA's objective is to support its Saudi partner, the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU), in the sustainable economic, tourism, and cultural development of AIUla, a region with an exceptional natural and cultural heritage located in the north-west of Saudi Arabia. The Agency's mission is to mobilize all of France's expertise and know-how and to bring together the best operators and companies in the fields of archaeology, museography, architecture, urban planning, tourism, hotel management, infrastructure, education, security, agriculture, botany, and sustainable natural resource management.

About the RCU (Royal Commission for AIUla)

The Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) was established by royal decree in July 2017 to preserve and develop AIUla, a region of outstanding natural and cultural significance in north-west Saudi Arabia. RCU's long-term plan outlines a responsible, sustainable, and sensitive approach to urban and economic development that preserves the area's natural and historic heritage while establishing AIUla as a desirable location to live, work, and visit. This encompasses a broad range of initiatives across archaeology, tourism, culture, education, and the arts, reflecting a commitment to meeting the economic diversification, local community empowerment, and heritage preservation priorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 programme.

About the Centre Pompidou

Since 1977, the Centre Pompidou has been deeply rooted in the city of Paris and open to the world and to innovation. Its iconic building is home to Europe's richest and one of the world's largest collections of modern and contemporary art, in addition to exhibitions, symposiums, festivals, shows, projections, and workshops for young people. Its extremely rich programme at the crossroads of art forms and audiences attracts more than 3 million visitors every year. True to its ambition to make culture and creation available to as many people as possible, the Centre Pompidou also develops its regional and international presence.

For more information, visit: centrepompidou.fr

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