

On the occasion
of Art Week Tokyo



ARTS فنون
ALULA الحالا

FUTURE OF NOSTALGIA



Exhibition
ALULA Artist Residency Programme

ノスタルジアの 未来

Sarah Ibrahim, *There Will Come Soft Rains* (2025) Digital film, 7'13"

From November 5th
to November 16th, 2025

Warehouse TERRADA G3-6F
2-6-4 Higashi-Shinagawa,
Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo

Participating Artists*

MAITHA ABDALLA
YASMINA BENABDERRAHMANE
BIANCA BONDI
SARAH BRAHIM
SALOMÉ CHATRIOT
MOHAMMAD ALFARAJ
SARA FAVRIAU
M'HAMMED KILITO
AGNIESZKA KURANT
HAN MENGYUN
THÉO MERCIER
ABDESSAMAD EL MONTASSIR
LOUIS-CYPRIEN RIALS
DANIAH ALSALEH
ANHAR SALEM
UGO SCHIAVI
HUGO SERVANIN
SOFIANE SI MERABET
ITTAH YODA
AYMAN ZEDANI

Curated by Arnaud Morand
and Ali Alghazzawi

*Detailed biographies in the Press pack

Future of Nostalgia is an exhibition presented during Art Week Tokyo, organized by Arts AIUla* and the French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA). It brings together 21 artists who have participated in the residency programmes of the ancient oasis city of AIUla, Saudi Arabia.

The exhibition *Future of Nostalgia* marks a new milestone in AIUla's international influence and contributes to positioning it within the global exchanges of contemporary creation. By bringing together artists, curators, and international partners, it highlights the scope of one-of-a-kind destination and cultural initiative—one that fosters the circulation of expertise, the emergence of new artistic practices, and the connection of AIUla with major cultural capitals in the world. This exhibition also marks a milestone in the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Japan. Over seven decades, the two nations have built a deep and enduring partnership founded on mutual respect, cultural exchange, and shared aspirations for innovation and progress. The presentation of *Future of Nostalgia* during this anniversary year reflects that spirit of collaboration, celebrating the creative dialogue between Saudi and Japanese art scenes and the enduring bond between both nations.

Bringing together artists who have lived and worked in AIUla, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through its residency programme, the exhibition approaches the oasis, its original context of creation, as a palimpsest where geology, oral histories, archeological sites, and emerging technologies overlap. Since 2021, the AIUla Artist Residency Programme has invited artists to narrate this place into presence. In this exceptional setting, whose history spans millennia, archaeological traces of pre-Islamic civilisations coexist with the tangible and symbolic influences of the Arab world. Basalt and sandstone preserve the marks of ancient rites and millennia-old pilgrimages; palm groves veil the remains of earlier settlements; cliffs and deserts carved by volcanoes, seas, and winds, now meet and harmonize with urban ambitions turned toward the future, standing at the threshold of utopia.

Accelerated societal change fractures our sense of belonging, giving rise to a longing that is both affective and diagnostic. The artists gathered here harness that impulse as a catalyst for imagining futures that are plural, grounded, and open to debate. They explore how the narratives we preserve about where we come from actively shape where we might be headed. By questioning our perception of reality, and how time alters it, these works leave us with a generative question: not “What is?” but “What if?”

While nostalgia is often dismissed as mere sentimental yearning, a wistful gaze backward to the past, for cultural theorist Svetlana Boym, it is not simply a longing to return to a past time or place, nor is it ever detached from the present. In *The Future of Nostalgia* (2002)—her seminal reflection at the turn of the new century, and the inspiration for this exhibition's title—Svetlana Boym characterizes nostalgia as a sentiment that can be experienced collectively, capable of shaping societies both in their present form and in their imagined futures. The very notion of nostalgia might seem out of step in an era primarily driven by future-building and the promises of 21st century progress and technological boom. Yet, in this fast-moving world, our vision of the future is also shaped by an awareness of the traces the present leaves behind for generations to come. The desires of today and the needs of tomorrow are in constant negotiation. In its effort to remain agile, and caught in a general sense of acceleration, our time risks forgetting to celebrate, or even simply to inhabit, the present.**

* Arts AIUla is the arts and creative industries arm of the Royal Commission for AIUla.

** Full curatorial texts in the press pack.

Contemporary creation rooted in AIUla is not a solitary act, but part of a wider movement linking Saudi Arabia with global networks of cultural production. The artist residencies, exhibitions, and public programmes developed with the support of AFALULA foster this exchange, positioning AIUla as both a place of inspiration and a stage for international collaboration. This exhibition reflects RCU's ambition: to create bridges between cultures, to celebrate imagination as a force for transformation, and to ensure that AIUla's creative industries contribute meaningfully to the global conversation on contemporary art.

**Hamad Al Homiedan,
Arts & Creative Industries Director, RCU.**

At the heart of Saudi-French cooperation are heritage, art, and the creative industries. The artist residencies, established by AFALULA and the RCU in 2021, stand as an emblematic testament, complementing the many other cultural programs that France carries out alongside its Saudi partner. The exhibition Future of Nostalgia marks a new stage in AIUla's international reach and helps anchor it within global creative exchange. It showcases the impact of a unique model of cooperation that fosters the circulation of know-how, the emergence of new forms of expression, and AIUla's networking with major cultural capitals.

**Jean-Yves Le Drian,
Chairman, AFALULA**

As the future presses relentlessly onward, memory tacitly retreats into a fragile landscape—a realm where time unravels its linear thread, folding instead into sedimentary layers, each moment imprinted with residues of multi-sited, polyphonic pasts. It is these layered terrains that the works gathered in Future of Nostalgia navigate—not longing to recover a fixed past, nor to forecast a monolithic future, instead, to stage the present as a palimpsest, where time's signatures collide and are endlessly re-edited. These artists breathe life into fragments of a once shared past, so that what is remembered is shaped by what is lost; and what is imagined often carries the faint trace of what never came to be. Here, nostalgia unfolds as a way of inhabiting time's complex loom

**Arnaud Morand, Lead Curator
Ali AlGhazzawi, Associate Curator**

A fertile international residency programme

The AIUla Artist Residency Programme is a key element of AIUla's ambitious 21st-century vision, positioning contemporary creation as a cornerstone of the project. It uniquely combines artistic intelligence with scientific expertise to shape the development of this remarkable destination, built by and for artists. This programme contributes to imagining and cultivating AIUla's possible futures. It serves as a platform for regional and international artists to explore and experiment with their artistic pursuits against the backdrop of AIUla's awe-inspiring landscape, with its 200,000 years of human history. It fosters a dynamic dialogue and collaboration among artists, as well as with the local communities of AIUla.

Located in the palm grove of Mabiti AIUla and the newly opened artists' lodging in AlJadidah, the residency programme offers a privileged setting for artists to reflect on and re-evaluate the role and methods of creative practice in the contemporary world.

By delving into questions such as our connection with the past, our responsibility towards the environment, and the integration of local culture into our daily lives, artists contribute to a fresh perspective on our surroundings. Through their art, they weave narratives using various languages of expression, be it through words or visual forms. They draw inspiration from cultural artifacts and natural elements, intertwining them with their imagination.

It acts as a catalyst for the development of artistic practice, leveraging artists' perceptions and critical perspectives while providing them with the time and unparalleled context to nurture their craft.

The residencies serve as an anchor for AIUla's burgeoning arts scene and contribute to the strategic growth of the creative industries, deeply rooted in the land and its heritage. Together, they contribute to the creation of an imagined future for AIUla.

The AIUla artists in residency programme was established in 2021 by Arts AIUla and the French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA). First dwelling on visual art solely, it has since created a design iteration that unravels each year in AIUla since 2023.

FUTURE OF NOSTALGIA KEY FIGURES

21 CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS
REPRESENTING 10
NATIONALITIES INCLUDING
SAUDI AND FRENCH

AN ENSEMBLE OF 35
ARTWORKS, PAINTINGS,
SCULPTURES, INSTALLATIONS,
PHOTOS, VIDEOS
7 ORIGINAL PRODUCTIONS

SINCE ITS CREATION IN 2021,
THE RESIDENCY HAS HOSTED
MORE THAN 50 ARTISTS
AND DESIGNERS

Information

November 5th to 16th, 2025
from 11:00 am to 8:00 pm

Warehouse TERRADA G3-6F
2-6-4 Higashi-Shinagawa,
Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo

Press preview

November 4th
from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Opening

November 4th
5:00 pm to 11:00 pm

Communication / Media relations contacts

l'art en plus

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About Arts AIUla

The creation of Arts AIUla within The Royal Commission for AIUla (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. AIUla 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 AIUla seeks to preserve this legacy: fuse the old with the new; the local with the international, keeping the arts central to the spirit of AIUla as a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage. Arts AIUla 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 AIUla’s contemporary art scenes: positioning the arts as a key contributor to AIUla’s character, the quality of life for its local community and the region’s economic future. Arts AIUla focuses on transferring the talents of the Saudi nation and the local AIUla 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 AIUla.

About the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU)

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 French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA)

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.



فنون ARTS
العمارة ALULA