

# Manar Abu Dhabi announces line-up of 15 Emirati and international artists, and four exhibition locations

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## Culture

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ABU DHABI (ALETIHAD)

For its second edition, Manar Abu Dhabi will feature 15 Emirati artists and international individuals and collectives from 10 countries, whose 23 artworks - including light sculptures, projections and immersive installations - will be displayed at four locations across the emirate.

Organised by the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), the public light art exhibition will take place in Al Ain from November 1, 2025, to January 4, 2026, and Abu Dhabi from November 15, 2025, to January 4, 2026.

Drawing on the Gulf’s ancestral relationship with light, this year’s edition will be held under the theme “The Light Compass”, presenting contemporary artworks that explore light as both guide and medium in bridging its navigational and poetic dimensions.

Curated by Khai Hori, Artistic Director, and co-curated by Alia Zaal Lootah (Curator), Munira Al Sayegh (Curator), and Mariam Alshehhi (Assistant Curator), Manar Abu Dhabi 2025 will take place across four key locations: Jubail Island, Souq Al Mina and, for the first time, Al Ain, with dedicated trails across Al Qattara and Al Jimi Oases, celebrating Abu Dhabi’s unique ecosystems and cityscapes.

## Jubail Island

Located between Yas Island and Saadiyat Island, Jubail Island will be the anchor location for Manar Abu Dhabi 2025. Celebrated for its natural landscape and unique biodiversity, visitors can wander along the sprawling boardwalks that meander through the mangroves and engage with 15 installations thoughtfully integrated throughout the island.

Highlights include:

- \* EDEN (2025), a large-scale outdoor installation by Malaysian artist Pamela Poh, featuring steel structures and suspended glass spheres illuminated at night, creating a contemplative space for stillness and reflection
  - \* Inside a dome-like structure, UNFOLD (2025) by multidisciplinary Dutch studio DRIFT transforms visitors' biometric data into unique, ephemeral flowers and soundscapes through a generative algorithm, create a continuously evolving audio-visual experience, while WHISPERS (2025) features a sea of delicate dancing lights that respond to the subtlest currents of air and movement, forming a shifting, luminous terrain.
- Experience a captivating drone performance WIND OF CHANGE, (2025) with hundreds of drones moving across the Island's mangroves in choreographed motion, evoking a sense of growth, renewal and connection
- \* Emirati sculptor Shaikha Al Mazroui's CONTINGENT OBJECT (2025), a striking 30-metre circular land art installation transforms over time as water crystallises into a salt disc, creating an ephemeral landmark amid the mangroves
  - \* Montreal-based digital art studio Iregular will activate the Island with four interactive installations; AS WATER FALLS (2022), FACES (2022), CONTROL NO CONTROL (2012), FORTUNES (2024) utilise artificial intelligence, sensors and data visualisation to explore how we navigate shared spaces, creating a living map of our collective presence
- Other artists featured on Jubail Island include Argentine Ezequiel Pini (aka Six N. Five); Christian Brinkmann from Germany; Kirsten Berg from Berkeley, California, USA; Encor Studio (Switzerland); and Lachlan Turczan from Los Angeles, USA.



## **Al Ain**

For its debut in Al Ain, Manar Abu Dhabi will transform Al Qattara and Al Jimi Oases - green sanctuaries nestled within the city's desert topography, sustained by ancient aflaj irrigation systems - with dedicated trails of light-based installations that reflect on the enduring bond between water, light, land and life.

Al Qattara Oasis Trail presents three artworks, with each installation responding to the oasis' landscape and heritage:

\* Returning to Manar Abu Dhabi, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (Mexico) will present two works: TRANSLATION STREAM (2023), which presents poems by contemporary Emirati poets Nujoom Alghanem, Khalid Albudoor, and Adel Khozam as a slow stream of letters, inviting visitors to trace this enduring flow of consciousness and translation as shown in the inaugural edition. Alongside PULSE CANOPY (2025), a hovering canopy of light that responds to the visitor's heartbeat, upon placing their hand beneath a sensor which in turn activates 10 beams of light that begin to pulse in rhythm.

\* Stretching over 70 metres within a historic building, Emirati designer Khalid Shafar presents SADU RED CARPET (2025), inscribed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, into a pixelated pattern of light and bricks, seamlessly blending traditional craftsmanship with modern design.

Boasting a dense canopy of palm trees, the Jimi Oasis Trail invites visitors to continue their journey through the oasis and encounter five artworks:

\* Installed within the courtyard of a historic house, CYCLE OF CIRCLES (2025) by multidisciplinary Emirati artist Ammar Al Attar is a photographic series of five self-portraits captured while the artist rode a bicycle in a circular path. Presented sequentially in light boxes, the work transforms the act into a meditative performance connecting body, space and time.

\* Emirati artist Maitha Hamdan presents BREATH OF THE SAME PLACE (2025), two light-based installations inspired by the oasis environment. Centred on a six-metre Acacia nilotica tree, sensor-activated illuminated ropes that cascade from its branches respond to visitors' movements, creating a harmonious energy with the surrounding nature and history.

\* Dubai-based Emirati architect Abdulla Al Mulla presents GUIDING DRAPES (2025), an architectural installation inspired by the luminous decorations that adorn Emirati brides' houses before and after the wedding. Shown in a historic site, the work evokes the sense of joy and celebration, while recreating the atmosphere of a celebratory communal space.

\* FLORAL RESONANCE (2024), an interactive audiovisual installation by Christian Brinkmann (Germany), where visitors' interactions with a living plant, placed at the centre of the installation, generate a multi-sensory experience, both physical and digital, through a shifting display of 3D scans of surrounding plants on a dynamic digital canvas. The work also features at Jubail Island.

## **Souq Al Mina**

Set against the city skyline of Mina Zayed (Zayed Port), KAWS (Jersey City, USA) with long-time partner AllRightsReserved presents KAWS: HOLIDAY Abu Dhabi, featuring an illuminated COMPANION, the artist's signature character, reclining on its back and lifting a lit moon in its hands.

The work draws a clear line to the moon that once guided seafarers, joining maritime memory to a contemporary scene, linking art, culture and navigation under the night sky.

Alongside the exhibition, a schedule of public talks, workshops and performances will be offered to visitors over the course of the exhibition.

Source: Aletihad - Abu Dhabi

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