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THE DIRIYAH BIENNALE FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES FULL ARTIST LIST OF THE DIRIYAH CONTEMPORARY ART BIENNALE 2026

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Over 65 artists representing more than 37 nations to participate in the third edition of Saudi Arabia's contemporary art biennale

Diriyah, Saudi Arabia – December 15, 2025:

The Diriyah Biennale Foundation announces the full list of artists participating in the third edition of the Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale, opening to the public on January 30, 2026, in Diriyah, northwest of Riyadh. Led by Artistic Directors Nora Razian and Sabih Ahmed, the 2026 edition is titled “في الجُلِّ والترحال” / In Interludes and Transitions.

Taking place in JAX District, a burgeoning creative district in Diriyah, close to At-Turaif—the UNESCO World Heritage Site that served as the birthplace of the First Saudi State—the Biennale takes as its starting point the movements, migrations, and transformations that continue to connect the Arab region with the wider world. More than 22 new commissions will be presented across the exhibition, featuring artists, musicians, filmmakers, architects, and writers whose work amplifies continuity, resilience, and collective imagination in times of uncertainty.

Artists included in the exhibition are: Pacita Abad, Pio Abad, Rand Abdul Jabbar, Abdullah Miniawy Trio, Etel Adnan, Yussef Agbo-Ola [Olaniyi Studio], Leen Ajlan, Ahaad Alamoudi, Elyas Alavi, Afra Al Dhaheri, Shadia Alem, Mohammad Al-Ghamdi, Mohammed Alhamdan (7amdan), Nouf Al-Harhi, Ramy Alqthami, Abdullah Al Saadi, Ruba Al-Sweel, Lulua Alyahya, Ismail Bahri, Taysir Batniji, Dineo Seshee Bopape (Raisibe), Raven Chacon, Ayman Yousry Daydban, Nolan Oswald Dennis, Rohini Devasher, Merve Ertufan, Ivana Franke, Rahima Gambo, Eric Gyamfi, Samia Halaby, Petrit Halilaj, Hazem Harb, Aziz Hazara, Ho Rui An, Alana Hunt, Kamala Ibrahim Ishag, Amaka Jaji, Kayfa ta, Yazan Khalili, Moshekwa Langa, Daniel Lind-

Ramos, George Mahashe, Guadalupe Maravilla, Naminapu Maymuru-White, Théo Mercier, Nour Mobarak, Mochu, Nancy Mounir, Hussein Nassereddine, Daniel Otero Torres, Thảo Nguyễn Phan, Gala Porrás-Kim, Sarker Protick, Abdelkarim Qassem, Raqs Media Collective, K.P. Reji, Faisal Samra, Oscar Santillán, Amina Saoudi Ait Khay, Bogosi Sekhukhuni, Karan Shrestha, Elias Sime, Trương Công Tùng, Rajesh Chaitya Vangad, Wolff Architects, Agustina Woodgate, Müge Yılmaz, and Yu Ji. The Biennale brings together practices committed to vibrant imaginations of world-making, and responds to the profound social and ecological upheavals marking the first decades of this century. With scenography by the Italian design studio Formafantasma, the Biennale is conceived as a choreography in which histories, ancestors, dreams, and premonitions move together through song, stories, dance, and wind.

Nora Razian and Sabih Ahmed, Artistic Directors of the Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale 2026: “This edition of the Biennale takes place at a moment when the role of art feels ever more urgent. Over the last year, participating artists and our curatorial team have immersed themselves in the nuanced histories of the Arab region, the rapid transformations reshaping it, and the wider philosophical questions that echo across different geographies. We look forward to welcoming visitors into a space where artistic practices draw us into the processions shaping our world. We see the Biennale as an invitation to think rhythmically, to approach time as layered, pulsating, and collectively embodied.”

Aya Al-Bakree, CEO of the Diriyah Biennale Foundation: “Our curatorial team has brought together a group of artists that represents many generations, regions, and disciplines. We are proud that we are convening such a rich diversity of artistic practices in Diriyah, and I look forward to welcoming our audiences here for an experience of this great breadth of perspectives and narratives.”

CURATORIAL TEAM

The Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale 2026 is led by Artistic Directors Nora Razian, Deputy Director and Head of Exhibitions and Programmes at Art Jameel in Jeddah and Dubai; and Sabih Ahmed, a curator, cultural theorist, and educator serving as Projects Advisor at the Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai. They are joined by a team of international curators: Maan Abu Taleb, May Makki, Kabelo Malatsie, and Lantian Xie. The Milan-based architect Sammy Zarka has been appointed as Associate Architect and Exhibition Designer to collaborate closely with the curatorial team.

PRESS INQUIRIES

mediaqueries@biennale.org.sa

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

In Interludes and Transitions

Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale 2026

Titled “*فِي الْجَلِّ وَالتَّرْحَالِ*” / In Interludes and Transitions, the Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale 2026 considers the world as a multitude of processions. The Biennale’s title draws from a colloquial phrase invoking the cycles of encampments and journeys among nomadic communities in the Arabian Peninsula—evoking connection and continuity within a state of constant flux. The Biennale proposes to rethink the world in intense motion, through processions that entangle humans with planetary, multi-species, spiritual, and technological currents.

Located in the historic site of Diriyah, the third edition takes as its point of departure the movements, migrations, and transformations that continue to connect the Arab region with the world—bringing together practices committed to vibrant imaginations of world-making, forged through the social and ecological upheavals that mark the first two decades of this century. Co-Artistic Directors Nora Razian and Sabih Ahmed claim, “Processions have produced relations and forms in this region. The movement of winds and the flow of trade, migration, and exile are carriers of stories, songs, and languages, producing rhythms and poetic meters such as the *rajaz* (رَجَز). Thinking of the world in procession—a braiding of movements that commemorate and celebrate—allows an understanding of cultural forms through

exchange and transmissions; itineraries of travel, intersections, and mutations; and retelling of fragments of exiled stories that have persisted through bodies, materials, rhythms, and cadences.”

Harnessing synergies between visual art, music, and poetry—a hallmark of cultural expression in the Arab world and across diverse cultures—the third edition of the Biennale will create arenas that bring together works by artists, musicians, filmmakers, architects, and writers to amplify the resilience of people in times of uncertainty. The Biennale will highlight how art serves as a vital tool for preserving collective memories, asserting the power of the multitude, and fostering hope amidst adversity.

ABOUT THE DIRIYAH BIENNALE FOUNDATION

Inspired by the changes taking place in Saudi Arabia and the heritage site of Diriyah, and chaired by H.H. Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud, the Diriyah Biennale Foundation (DBF) assumes a critical role in nurturing creative expression and instilling an appreciation for culture and the arts and their transformative potential. The Foundation aspires to be a catalyst for lifelong learning and serves Saudi Arabia’s communities by offering opportunities to engage with the burgeoning local art scene. Central to the Foundation’s mandate is to stage two recurring world-class Biennales of contemporary and Islamic arts, year-round interactive educational programs, and overseeing the activation of JAX, a creative district with industrial heritage in Diriyah. At this historic moment of evolution and growth in Saudi Arabia, DBF’s Biennales showcase some of the world’s leading artists, drive cultural exchange between the Kingdom and international communities, promote dialog and understanding, and further establish Saudi Arabia as an important cultural center.



ABOUT

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