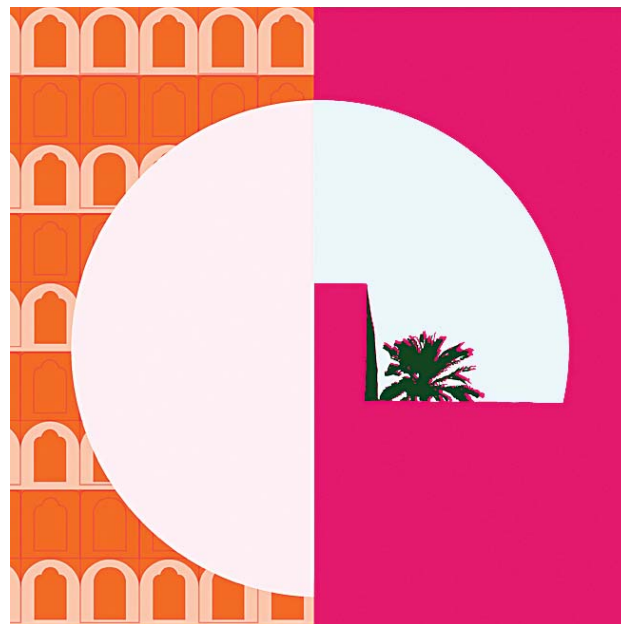
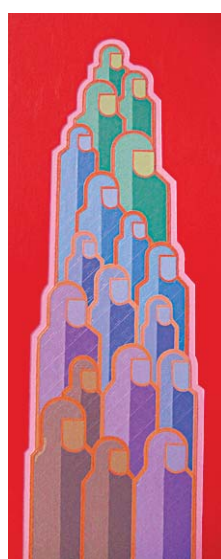




NEIGHBORS



RAS AL KHAIMAH FINE ARTS FESTIVAL



‘Hope’ launches UAE Festival

The Ras Al Khaimah Fine Arts Festival (RAKFAF) is delighted to announce that it returns this month for its 9th edition, helping launch the UAE's 2021 arts calendar. The annual arts festival, which was established under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, will open to the public on Saturday, 6 February and run until Saturday, 3 April, 2021, with all international standard Covid-19 safety guidelines in place. The historic Ras Al Khaimah pearling village of Al Jazirah Al Hamra will once again provide the central backdrop for the Festival, having been the Festival's home for the past two years and standing as a critical bridge between Ras Al Khaimah's cultural heritage and contemporary art scene. However, this year's Festival will also see two new exciting mini-exhibition sites within the Emirate: the public viewing deck of the UAE's highest peak Jebel Jais and the Open Park on Al Marjan Island.

With the theme of Hope — a theme that reflects the re-opening of the arts following the past year's closures — the outdoor exhibition of art, photography, and sculpture, set within the Heritage Village and now at Jebel Jais and Al Marjan, will present more than 130 artworks by a diverse mix of artists from some 49 countries. There will also be a vibrant program of film screenings, workshops, guided tours, and other events held across the Festival's various locations.

Artworks and programming are curated around the theme of Hope. In the year of the UAE's 50th anniversary, the Festival is looking to the past and exploring the future through the lens of contemporary art at a time when hope is central to our daily lives. Whether responding to the theme by considering human connection, the environment, or the current pandemic, each work and activity explores where hope is found, where it is built, and how it is shared. In a rapidly changing world of new technologies, urbanization, climate change, and COVID-19, the Festival is asking the critical question, how can hope inspire art, and art inspire hope?

This year, the Festival is also delighted to announce that it is partnering — for the first time — with Art Dubai and The Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi to provide joint events. These new collaborations show RAKFAF's commitment to connecting and developing the UAE's wider cultural community. Art Dubai's Regional Director, Hala Khayat, will present a talk on the inner workings of regional arts festivals on Friday, 26 February while on Sunday, 14 February, in collaboration with The Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi and supported in part by the US Embassy Abu Dhabi, musician and ethnomusicologist Dr. Ghazi Al Mulaifi will give a virtual workshop entitled Learning Rhythms of the Arabian Sea.

Speaking ahead of the Festival's opening next month, His Highness Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, comments: "The arts and creative industries are key to our personal and community wellbeing and it is with enormous pride and honour that we announce the return of RAKFAF next month, which is now in its 9th year. 2020 was indeed the most challenging of years for our community and this year's Festival emerges at a crucial time, early in the new year as our community looks to new beginnings, and with an exciting and enriching program presented around the theme of Hope — a theme that seems so relevant in these unprecedented times and one that explores the strength and compassion that holds our community together."

"Furthermore, the UAE celebrates its 50th year as a nation this year and as we look to the next 50 years, we must continue our creative development for the benefit of our people and visitors. We must seek to constantly support our aspiring artists and creatives and collaborate and connect with the artistic community near and far to showcase the importance of creativity in society, and further inspire the development of our Emirate and nation in years to come."

The Festival's Director, Suqr bin Bisher, comments: "As we begin 2021, it is more important than ever that we come together as a community, in a safe way, to celebrate art, culture, and creativity. We must unite to share the challenges of the past year, to rebuild, and to exchange dreams for the future. We are delighted to announce the program for the 9th edition of RAKFAF and very much look forward to welcoming visitors and our community in-person to the Festival across its various locations this year."

"Al Jazirah Al Hamra Heritage Village has been such a successful venue for us over the last two years and we are delighted to return this year and also add two new satellite locations, the stunning backdrop of Jebel Jais and Al Marjan Island, further widening the Festival's reach. We proudly celebrate the re-opening of the arts as an opportunity to re-discover unity and compassion and support our community in our new normal. The future is bright for the arts community in Ras Al Khaimah and we are keen to encourage yet further cultural engagement, creative collaboration, and artistic development within the Emirate and wider UAE."

Art, photography and sculpture:

RAKFAF seeks to support the social and cultural development of Ras Al Khaimah and the UAE by nurturing emerging talent. This year's Festival will showcase the work of more than 100 local, regional, and international artists.

Works by local UAE names such as Azza Al Nuaimi, Nuwair Al Hejari, Amani Al Mansoori, Maryam Al Mansoori, Faisal Al Rais, Khalid Al Bloshi, Nawal Al Nuaimi, Saeed Al Emadi, Maitha Al Ali, Abeer Al Rasbi, and Abdullah Khouri will be exhibited alongside the notable GCC talents of Awatif Al Safwan, Gheed Ashor and Om Kaithoom Al Alawi from Saudi Arabia, Esraa Al Enzi and Lamia Ghareeb from Kuwait, Bahrain's Perryhan Elashmawi, and Oman's Abullah Al Blooshi.

Azza Al Nuaimi is a passionate young graphic designer from Ras Al Khaimah, and her Gmar from 2020 places heritage and contemporary design in conversation. Using a retro 70s style and pop art inspiration, it elicits the village's infrastructure while admiring how the buildings appear to change between sunrise and sunset.

Emirati photographer Nuwair Al Hejari is a member of the Emirates Photography Society, and her work, Harvest, shot in the Bida desert in Oman last year, depicts a bountiful harvest bringing good tidings for the year ahead.

Faisal Al Rais is an Emirati conceptual artist and photographer who is strongly influenced by the work of American street photographer Vivian Maier. Through his photography, Al Rais aims to deconstruct, reconstruct, and highlight the beauty found in life's simplest things. Dreamer, from 2020, looks at the unsurmountable imagination of children and children as dreamers as they consider what they would like to be when they grow up.

Om Kalthoom Al Alawi is a visual artist from Saudi Arabia. Her work, entitled Stand Up Together II, highlights how, through collaboration, we bring hope for humanity and that we are stronger together than we are alone. The abstract figures and contrasting colors express humanity's diversity, asserting that it is our differences that make us strong.

From the wider MENA region, artists from Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, Algeria, Turkey, and Iran will be represented. Egyptian artist Mohamed Husain has been a professional artist for over 15 years and his work One with Burqa inspires hope through the leadership of women. It illuminates the path for young people in the UAE, honoring the role of Emirati women in maintaining the traditions and heritage of the nation while looking towards the future and modernity.

The work of several artists from Africa, Asia, and Oceania will feature from countries such as India, Pakistan, Sudan, Australia, Philippines, South Korea, and China, in addition to names from Europe and the United States. Further-

more, four iconic Israeli video artworks, curated by renowned French-Israeli curator Sharon Toval, will be exhibited at the Festival. This is the first time since the signing of the Abraham Accords that an Israeli art curator is curating an exhibition in the Emirates.

Shadab Khan is an Indian contemporary artist based in Dubai. He draws inspiration from the beauty seen in life through the telescope, microscope, or naked eye. Lost in Dream from 2019 asserts that while unavoidable circumstances will make us lose track of our dream, hope can bring us back. It depicts that dreams are more powerful than reality and hope will always triumph.

Buddy Gadiano is a Filipino artist based in Abu Dhabi. He documents daily life, diverse cultures, and landscapes in his photography. Smile from Tondo from 2018 conveys the message of positivity, love, and hope as the people of the Manila slum of Tondo witness the development of their community after it was transformed into a Government housing project.

Donnel Gumiran is another Filipino photographer represented in the show. He is known for his evocative portraits and travel photography, capturing human conditions and emotions in everyday life. His Give Us Chance (Hope) highlights that education is the greatest form of hope and that, even in the direst circumstances, we have an obligation to provide education for our children.

Florencia Clement de Grandprey is a French-American artist born in Spain. She aims to empower and inspire people through her work. Speak Your Truth from 2019 encourages the viewer to find their voice, eliciting a sense of clarity and confidence. She highlights that when we can speak our truth, only then do we become free.

Mexican artist Alejandra Palos Ortega and Cuban artist Monica Garcia Ricardo specialize in sculpture and installation, and abstract paintings on large scale canvases, respectively. Inspired by an Asian legend, their Make a Wish from 2020 is made of 2,020 paper cranes and speaks to the confinement and isolation experienced during lockdown.

This year's U.S. Honorary Guest Artist is Robert Clark, a freelance photographer based in Brooklyn, New York. His participation is supported by a grant from the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai. The author of six monographs, Robert Clark has worked with National Geographic Magazine for 25 years, photographing more than 50 stories, including their award-winning cover story entitled "Was Darwin Wrong?"

His artwork will be exhibited within the fort at Al Jazirah Heritage Village, as well as Jebel Jais and Al Marjan Island. His photography of birds and their feathers all reflect the theme of Hope. These exhibitions will highlight his exploration of Darwinism and evolution. Robert will host a workshop at Jebel Jais, highlighting the form and function of feathers through photography, on Saturday, 6 February.

Notable highlights of Clark's works on view are Secretary Bird (top left), depicting the species found in the Savannas of the sub-Saharan region, and Wilson's Bird of Paradise, which shows a single, tightly folded tail feather, which is the species' most curious feature and one the male birds employ to attract a mate. Right is his work Archaeopteryx Feather, the first fossil feather ever known.

Oral history project:

A series of video interviews will be presented as short films in various villas at Al Jazirah Al Hamra Heritage Village. For these, five former residents have been recorded talking about daily life in the pearling village, providing a rich, valuable history and rare insights into what life was like in the Emirate decades ago. These unique oral records, which will be at the heart of this year's Festival, aim to preserve Al Jazirah Al Hamra Heritage Village's history and the stories of those who lived there, and ensure that Ras Al Khaimah's cultural heritage is passed on to the next generation.

editor's choice

