



21,39 Jeddah Arts Seventh edition

January 28th - April 18th, 2020
Opening: Tuesday, January 28th, 2020

Location: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
www.thesaudiartcouncil.org

21,39 Jeddah Arts announces the participating artists and further details for its forthcoming edition

- ***I Love You, Urgently***: main exhibition curated by Maya El Khalil brings together 22 artists responding to the environmental emergency from the specificity of a local context
- Special exhibition on the legacy in Saudi Arabia of Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Frei Otto, a pioneer in biomimicry and adaptability
- Program of seventh edition also features city-wide collaborative exhibitions, alongside talks and panel discussions, and an extensive public education program

The seventh edition of 21,39 Jeddah Arts (28 January - 18 April 2020) is a call to action in response to the environmental emergency from the specificity of a local context. As Saudi Arabia imagines and plans a new future, 60 local and international artists, architects, designers and thinkers will pose questions around environmental sustainability and explore alternative and symbiotic ways to inhabit our planet through a city-wide programme of exhibitions, commissions, talks and debates, and an extensive public education program. 21,39 Jeddah Arts is presented by the Saudi Art Council, an independent initiative aimed at cultivating the local Saudi art scene and building bridges with the international art world.

Curated by **Maya El Khalil**, the program's central exhibition, ***I Love You, Urgently*** contends with the global climate emergency through a series of explorations by 22 artists. Encompassing painting and drawing, film, sculpture, performance, installation, sound and scent-based works, visitors to ***I Love You, Urgently*** can discover works by:

Ayman Zedani, Aziz Jamal, Cristiana De Marchi, Daniah Al Saleh, Duran Lantink, Fahad bin Naif & Alaa Tarabzouni, Farah K. Behbehani, Filwa Nazer, Maha Nasrallah, Manal AIDowayan, Marwah AIMugait, Mohammad Alfaraj, Mohammed Kazem, Muhannad Shono, Obadah Aljefri, Omar Abduljawad, Nojoud Alsudairi, Raja'a Khalid, Sultan Bin Fahd and Zahrah Alghamdi.

Further details about the participating artists and their projects can be found [here](#)

The exhibition's unexpected address, *I Love You, Urgently*, departs from the often overly-scientific, divisive, or bureaucratic language of global summits, the media, and environmental policy. Instead, it emphasizes the highly personal nature of the crisis, focusing on the individual artists' contexts – geographic, cultural, and social – and their own journeys into a collective experience, driven by emotion and curious research. Each artist has responded to three specific themes: ideas of biomimicry, the imitation of the models, systems and elements of nature for the purpose of solving complex human problems; of adaptability; and of specificity, how to think of alternative and symbiotic ways to inhabit our planet from a local context. Throughout *I Love You, Urgently* the problems of engagement and understanding are brought to the fore, while highlighting the significant role artists, designers and other creatives perform: communicating and inspiring love for the planet, for future generations, and for each other - urgently.

In a period of hyper-consumption, lessons can be taken from an architectural history that predates the rapid urban development of the last century. The legacy of Pritzker Architecture Prize winner **Frei Otto** (1925–2015) – a pioneer of light structures and biomimicry – provides a powerful contrast to acceleration and excess. As inspiration for *I Love You, Urgently*, there will be an exhibition of Frei Otto's architectural models, sketches and research, documenting his work in biomimicry and adaptability, and his radical philosophy of "architecture before architecture". ***Architecture of Tomorrow. Frei Otto's Legacy in Saudi Arabia***, curated by Maya El Khalil and Georg Vrachliotis, professor of architecture theory and director of the architecture collection at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, offers an opportunity for reflection on a vision that contributed to the urban landscape of Saudi Arabia, home to some of his most innovative projects.

Transdisciplinary perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of the current environmental crisis will be offered by ***Propositions for a Poetic Ecosystem***, bringing together artworks by six Saudi and Swiss artists, **Zahrah Al Ghamdi, Nasser Al Salem, Marie Griesmar, Sandra Kühne, Muhannad Shono** and **Nadya Suvorova**, who since 2016 have worked with acclaimed scientists from different disciplines both in Switzerland and Saudi Arabia during the artists-in-labs program's international residency exchange. Curated by Irène Hediger and Flurin Fischer, the exhibition is a speculative, tangible and poetic manifestation of the artists' inquiries into leading ecological research on the Red Sea and the Swiss Alps' ecosystems, shedding light on the importance of water as the primary medium through which we feel the effects of climate change. The exhibition is presented and supported by the artists-in-labs program - Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology KAUST, Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia and the Saudi Art Council.

A further exhibition inspired by the landscape of AIUla will be announced soon.

Each year, with every edition of 21,39 Jeddah Arts, the Saudi Art Council curates an extensive **educational program** open to the public for the duration of the three month art initiative. Young people sit at the core of this program, and the seventh edition will continue building on the work by the Saudi Art Council to fill a demand gap in the artistic education across Saudi Arabia.

The seventh edition will also present the **21,39 Jeddah Arts Forum**, a series of talks and panel discussions curated by Maya El Khalil taking place during the opening week. Featuring artists from *I Love You, Urgently* and other creatives and thinkers, including Dr Sami Angawi, Christina Dean, Francisco Carballo, the topics will include: architect Frei Otto's relevance today to Saudi Arabia and the region as it moves forward in an environmentally unstable context; the impact of heavy urban and industrial development on the natural environment; the approach to environmental sustainability on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast; the mass movement of people caused by climatic changes in the context of Saudi Arabia; the fashion industry's challenge of finding new models of sustainability; and art and artists' role in fighting the 'green malaise'.

Maya El Khalil, curator of the seventh edition of 21,39 Jeddah Arts, said:

“Artists, architects and designers – in short, creators – are in a unique position to explore ideas and take an active role in dismantling Anthropocene attitudes, replacing these with solutions to the environmental crisis we face and inspiring debate and dialogue. As a species, we have dissociated ourselves from nature, increasingly building a relationship of dominance and exploitation. We need to revisit the value of our interdependence not only with nature but with each other. By observing and emulating nature’s time-tested patterns and strategies, we already have the solutions to a sustainable future. I hope 21,39 Jeddah Arts 2020 is a catalyst for new ways of thinking about how we live.”

Maya El Khali’s curatorial statement can be found [here](#)

HRH Princess Jawaher bint Majed bin Abdulaziz, Chairwoman of the Saudi Art Council, said:

“The city of Jeddah has long been at the forefront of Saudi Arabia’s contemporary art scene, and we are excited to bring creative responses to environmental concerns to the table with the seventh edition of 21,39 Jeddah Arts. As a culturally rich melting pot, Jeddah is a place of exchange for new ideas, and we look forward to presenting a multifaceted program that we hope will be the springboard for dialogue between local and international artists and audiences, and which will give voice to young people through an extensive educational outreach program.”

For media enquiries or to register for press accreditation:

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About 21,39 Jeddah Arts

21,39 Jeddah Arts is a non-profit initiative organized by the Saudi Art Council that seeks to maintain and develop the phenomena that has, for decades, seen the city of Jeddah at the forefront of Saudi Arabia’s contemporary art scene. Illustrating the geographic coordinates of the city (21.5433°N, 39.1728°E), the annual city-wide program takes the form of curated exhibitions, educational workshops, talks and discussions, as well as other cultural events in different venues across the city, in collaboration with a range of partners. Each edition aims to cultivate and share the local arts and cultural scene, to showcase Saudi art and artists, to encourage collaboration, and to bring the international art public to Jeddah. www.thesaudiartcouncil.org/2139.

About Maya El Khalil

Maya El Khalil is an independent curator who, for the last decade, has been working locally, regionally and internationally with artists, collectors and institutions to develop the identity and ideas that have defined the contemporary art scene in Saudi Arabia. From its inception in 2009 until 2016, she was the Founding Director of Athr, a leading contemporary art gallery based in Jeddah. El Khalil holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Mechanical Engineering and an MBA from the American University of Beirut. She is currently enrolled in an MA Program in Art and Politics at Goldsmiths University. Born in Beirut, she currently lives in Oxford, UK.

About the Saudi Art Council

Founded in 2014 by a group of local art patrons, the Saudi Art Council (SAC) is an independent non-governmental initiative with the aim to cultivate the local art scene, encourage interest in arts and culture, and build bridges with the international art world. The Saudi Art Council has established itself as a respected pioneer in the contemporary art scene within the Kingdom. It organizes exhibitions in its gallery spaces in Jeddah and across the country, curated by a mix of experienced local and internationally recognized foreign curators, as well as coordinates vocational trips abroad for artists

and educational workshops in collaboration with schools. The Saudi Art Council is chaired by Her Royal Highness Princess Jawaher bint Majed bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the founder of Al-Mansouria Foundation. www.saudiartcouncil.org

Partners

Van Cleef & Arpels is an ardent supporter of the arts, and is proud to be a partner of 21,39 Jeddah Arts for the fifth year, supporting the creative scene of Saudi Arabia.

The collaboration will once again focus on the Van Cleef & Arpels Middle East Emergent Design Prize, the yearly award which aims to nurture the region's design talent. The winner of 2019, Julia Ibbini, will be exhibited at Van Cleef & Arpels' booth at the Saudi Art Council, and the jewelry house will also announce the call for entries for the 2020 edition of the prize. Additionally, visitors to 21,39 Jeddah Arts will have the opportunity to view a display of work by Arthur Hoffner, who has created an installation suffused with balance and suspended motion, echoing the Perlée collection from the Maison. Arthur, the winner of the People's Choice Award at the 2017 Villa Noailles Design Parade, collaborated with the Maison to produce a series of vases combining gilded brass spheres, aluminum tubes and blocks of marble put together in a precarious composition that appears to defy the laws of gravity. Arthur's creations will be displayed at the newly opened Van Cleef & Arpels boutique at El Khayyat Centre, Jeddah.

Since opening on the place Vendome in Paris in 1906, Van Cleef & Arpels has proven to be a jewelry design leader for over a full century. With a blend of inventiveness and poetry, Van Cleef & Arpels perpetuates a highly distinctive style that has produced numerous signatures.

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