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21,39 Jeddah Arts
Seventh edition
www.thesaudiartcouncil.org

January 28th - April 18th, 2020

21,39 Jeddah Arts opens *I Love You, Urgently*, an urgent call to action in response to our environmental emergency

Curated by Maya El Khalil, the seventh edition features works by 21 local and international artists, a special exhibition by Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Frei Otto, city-wide collaborative exhibitions, talks, panel discussions and an extensive public education program

The Saudi Art Council is delighted to announce that the seventh edition of 21,39 Jeddah Arts, which runs from 28 January to 18 April 2020, has officially opened. As Saudi Arabia imagines and plans a new future, 60 local and international artists, architects, designers and thinkers 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.

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 21 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.

The exhibition's unexpected address, *I Love You, Urgently*, is a call to action in response to the environmental emergency from the specificity of a local context. It 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 is 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.

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 while inspiring debate and dialogue. Communication is a fundamental challenge: with narrow human-centric attitudes a major contributing factor to the climate emergency, the situation must be considered beyond globalized, consumerist culture. We have limited scope to understand and relate to the magnitude of the problem beyond our own immediate frames of reference. I hope 21,39 Jeddah Arts 2020 is a catalyst for new ways of thinking about how we live.”

Transdisciplinary perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of the current environmental crisis are 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, ***SCULPTING SPACES - Architectural Desert Dwellings for AIUla***, launches at 21,39 Jeddah Arts this year. An initiative by The Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU), as part of its mission to work with artists to turn this spectacular desert region into a world-class cultural destination. A shortlist of ten emerging international architect-artist teams have put forward proposals for a unique, one-bedroom desert dwelling at AIUla, which incorporates innovative, energy-saving green technologies. Each of the ten shortlisted proposals will be installed in its own bespoke room at 21,39 Jeddah Arts, with proposals ranging from the rock-shaped cabin by Japanese team Yu Momoeda and Kohei Sasahara, to British practice AYA + Ajlan Gharem’s Desert Plinth and sculpture garden that absorb and store every drop of desert rain and dew to create an eternal oasis beneath the building. The aim is to realise the winning concept at AIUla and gradually build up a family of these contemporary dwellings in the desert, allowing visitors to experience overnight stays at this evolving cultural crossroads, where art, heritage and nature meet.

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 are at the core of this program, and the seventh edition will continue building on the work by the Saudi Art Council to augment education in the arts across Saudi Arabia.

During the opening week, the seventh edition presents the **21,39 Jeddah Arts Forum**, a series of talks and panel discussions curated by Maya El Khalil. Featuring artists from *I Love You*, *Urgently* and other creatives and thinkers, including Dr Sami Angawi, Christina Dean, Francisco Carballo, the topics 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 changing face of migration, the role of assistive technology and what learnings can be drawn from desert communities; the fashion industry's challenge of finding new models of sustainability; and art and artists' role in fighting the 'green malaise'.

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. The Saudi Art Council is chaired by **HRH Princess Jawaher bint Majed bin Abdulaziz**, founder of Al Mansouria Foundation.

Muhammed Hafiz, Vice Chairman of the Saudi Art Council, said: "We are incredibly excited to officially open the seventh edition of 21,39 Jeddah Arts. An integral part of Saudi Arabia's contemporary art scene, the city of Jeddah offers a culturally diverse and open space to consider new ideas and explore the intersections of culture, art and ecology. With *I Love You*, *Urgently*, curator Maya El Khalil has created a wonderful program, which will both stimulate and challenge local audiences and visitors alike."

Abdulkarim Al Humaid, official spokesperson of the Ministry of Culture, said: "We are proud to support this year's 21,39 Jeddah Arts exhibition, a dedicated platform showcasing extraordinary works by local artists. Saudi Arabia has a wealth of homegrown talent which represents the backbone of the cultural transformation the Kingdom is undergoing. At the Ministry, we are supporting the creation of an environment that allows artists, creatives and cultural entrepreneurs to thrive. One of our key objectives is to continue the development of the Kingdom's cultural industries and embed culture into citizens' and residents' and visitors' daily lives. The exhibition brings together talented artists and creatives, allowing visitors to experience arts and culture in their community. We welcome everyone to visit and experience this unique exhibition that highlights the breadth of Saudi Arabia's flourishing arts scene."

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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

About the Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture symbolizes the national and international advancement of culture in the Kingdom. The Ministry will preserve the Kingdom's historical past and promote a culturally rich future that fosters art and culture. The Ministry was created on the 2 June 2018 by Royal Order A/217, under the leadership of His Highness Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud, the Kingdom's first dedicated Minister of Culture. The Ministry has a crucial role to play in delivering Saudi Arabia's ambitious transformation programme, Vision 2030. Our goal is to contribute towards building a vibrant, thriving, and ambitious nation. The Ministry formally launched on the 27 March 2019 when we published our cultural vision for the Kingdom. This sets out the Ministry's key aspirations, which are: promoting culture as a way of life, enabling culture to contribute to economic growth and creating opportunities for international cultural exchange. For more information, visit the Ministry of Culture website: www.moc.gov.sa

About Van Cleef & Arpels

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 Khayat 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.

www.vancleefarpels.com

About AMAALA

Designed to evolve and elevate the very best in travel, AMAALA, located in Saudi Arabia along the Red Sea will boast world-class facilities across three sites. An avid supporter of the arts, and a partner of 21,39 Jeddah Arts, AMAALA will allow travellers to immerse themselves in the finest wellness, art, culture, sports and fitness offerings, and will redefine the tourism experience by presenting expertly curated journeys of holistic self-transformation.

The 3,800-square kilometre (1,460-square mile), year-round resort community with its unique heritage, progressive vibe and diverse landscape includes 2,500 hotel keys and more than 800 residential villas, apartments and estate homes, alongside 200 high-end retail establishments, fine dining, wellness and recreation.

Untouched ecosystems and world-class yachting allow visitors to extend the Mediterranean diving and sailing season into September and beyond. With close proximity to major destinations in the region, including Riyadh, Dubai and Istanbul, AMAALA will become the heart of The Riviera of the Middle East. For more information, please visit: www.amaala.com or follow AMAALA on Twitter at [@WelcomeToAmaala](https://twitter.com/WelcomeToAmaala) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/amaala).