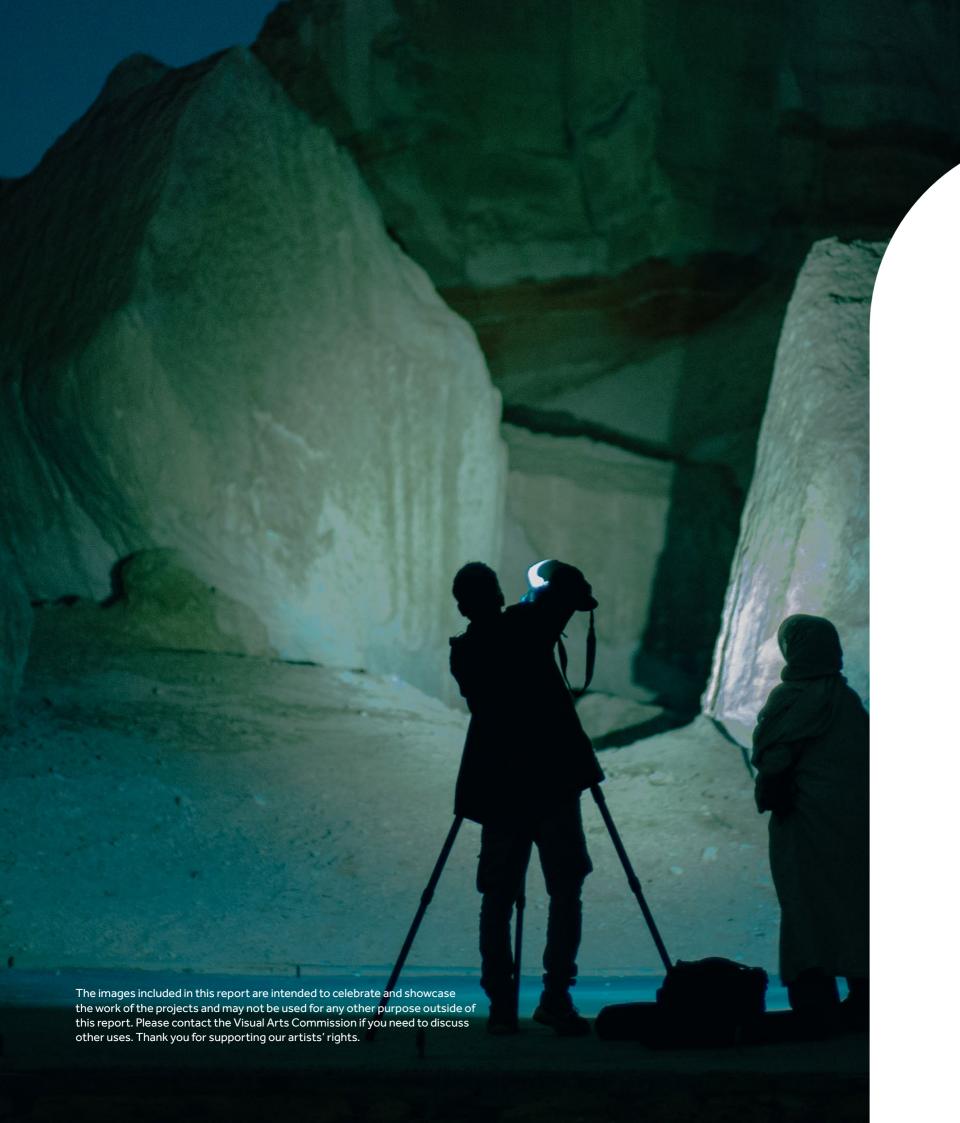
2024 A YEAR IN REVIEW







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VISUAL ARTS COMMISSION



CEO FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I present a review of the Visual Arts Commission's achievements in 2024. Saudi Arabia's visual arts sector continues to thrive, demonstrating the Kingdom's growing cultural momentum and creative ambition. The Visual Arts Commission has been at the forefront of this journey, building on the foundations we laid in previous years to nurture a dynamic and globally recognized arts ecosystem. In 2024, we focused on consolidating our efforts to empower artists and practitioners while further showcasing Saudi creativity on both the local and global stages.

This year we sustained our commitment to key programs that support the development of talent and collaboration. The second edition of the Mentorship and Guidance Program saw a record 470 applications, with 44 participants selected, 33 of whom were women. The program equipped a new generation of creatives with the tools and confidence to shape the future of Saudi visual arts. Our residency programs, both domestically and in key locations across Europe, provided participants with spaces to innovate, collaborate, and engage in cultural exchange. We introduced an additional cycle to our Riyadh-based residency this year, marking a 70% increase in capacity. These programs served as a bridge between Saudi Arabia and the wider art sector, highlighting the Kingdom's unique artistic contributions while creating space for practitioners to share their own unique ideas and inspirations.

A defining moment of 2024 was Saudi Arabia's return participation in the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. The Saudi National Pavilion, commissioned by the Visual Arts Commission, presented Manal AlDowayan's transformative work "Shifting Sands: A Battle Song" which captivated international audiences. The Pavilion gained interest from the international press, with over 253,000 visitors cementing Saudi Arabia's growing influence in the global cultural landscape.

While promoting and celebrating the arts remains central to our mission, we are equally dedicated to building the infrastructure needed for a sustainable and thriving sector. Our Licensing and Permits program is a prime example, providing clear guidance to artists while supporting galleries through streamlined administrative processes. By simplifying requirements and removing barriers for entry, this initiative enables artists to focus on their creative endeavors and helps galleries operate with greater ease. Together, these efforts are contributing to the long-term growth and resilience of the Kingdom's visual arts ecosystem.

Our dedication to building stronger relationships with practitioners in the visual arts sector and developing better engagement with enthusiasts remained central to our efforts. Through programs like Art & Ideas (Zawaya Wa Afkar), we continue to create spaces for meaningful discussions that shape the future of the visual arts. Similarly, the Kingdom Photography Award, which headed into its third edition in 2025, celebrated Al-Ahsa region and its heritage, uniting emerging photographers with Saudi and international professionals to capture the richness of Saudi Arabia's culture and heritage.

As we reflect on a year of meaningful progress, it is evident that 2024 has built on the strong foundation of the past while preparing us for the opportunities ahead. As we look forward to 2025, we remain committed to our mission of supporting the Kingdom's artists, celebrating our cultural heritage, and driving innovation through contemporary art. Together, we will continue to elevate Saudi Arabia as a beacon for creativity and cultural exchange on the global stage.



CEO, Visual Arts Commission Ministry of Culture, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia





267,427

ATTENDEES AT ART EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS FOR THE **VISUAL ARTS SECTOR**



ART RESIDENCY PROGRAMS (MOUs)



NEW GALLERY LICENSES ISSUED



2,204

PRACTITIONERS REACHED THROUGH OFFICIAL **CHANNELS AND SEMINARS**



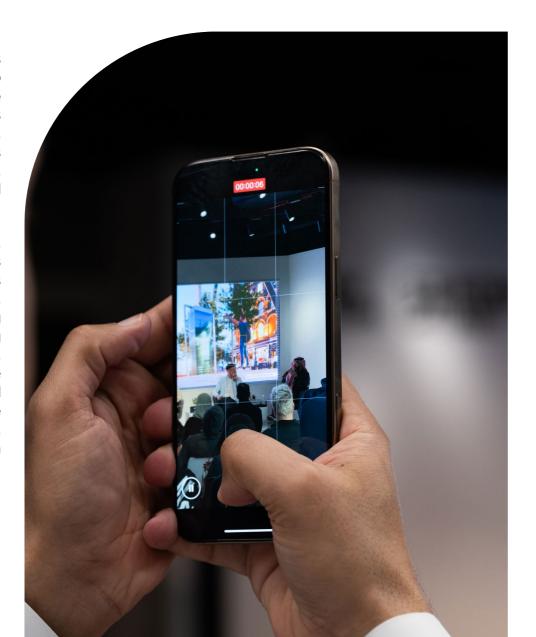
10 VISUAL ARTS COMMISSION 11

OPEN DISCUSSIONS

In 2024, the Visual Arts Commission hosted 12 open discussions, continuing the program from 2023 to enrich relationships within the sector, understand their ideas and barriers, and inspire change for the next generation of practitioners across the Kingdom.

A series of virtual and in-person sessions were hosted to invite feedback and develop new ideas through conversations that are accessible and engaging. These discussions were held in diverse creative settings, including Nasser AlTurki's studio and as part of the Noor Riyadh public program, environments chosen to inspire meaningful conversations and the exchange of ideas.

The sessions brought together artists, practitioners, and visual arts enthusiasts from across the Kingdom. With speakers drawing on personal experiences, discussions addressed key issues shaping the future of the sector while allowing practitioners to share their insights, feedback, and ideas directly with the Commission. Through careful planning and facilitation, these conversations became essential spaces for dialogue, collaboration, and the advancement of visual arts both within Saudi Arabia and internationally.







In-person discussions



6

Virtual discussion sessions



213

Total discussion attendees

Exploring Immersive Art (Virtual Session)
Photography in the Kingdom, Hayy Jameel, Jeddah
The Role of Public Art, Rashed Alshaishai's Studio
The Role of Contemporary Art Biennales (Virtual Session)
Sustainability in the Visual Arts Sector, DBF Public Program Space
Developing Cultural Districts and Creative Hubs (Virtual Session)
The Artist's Studio, Nasser AlTurki's Studio
The Purpose and Opportunities of Artist Residencies (Virtual Session)
Navigating Licensing and Permits in the Visual Arts, Wasm StudioStreet Art in the Kingdom
The Benefits of Mentorship (Virtual Session)
How Public Art Reshapes Cultural Spaces, Noor Riyadh
Discovering Art Publications (Virtual Session)

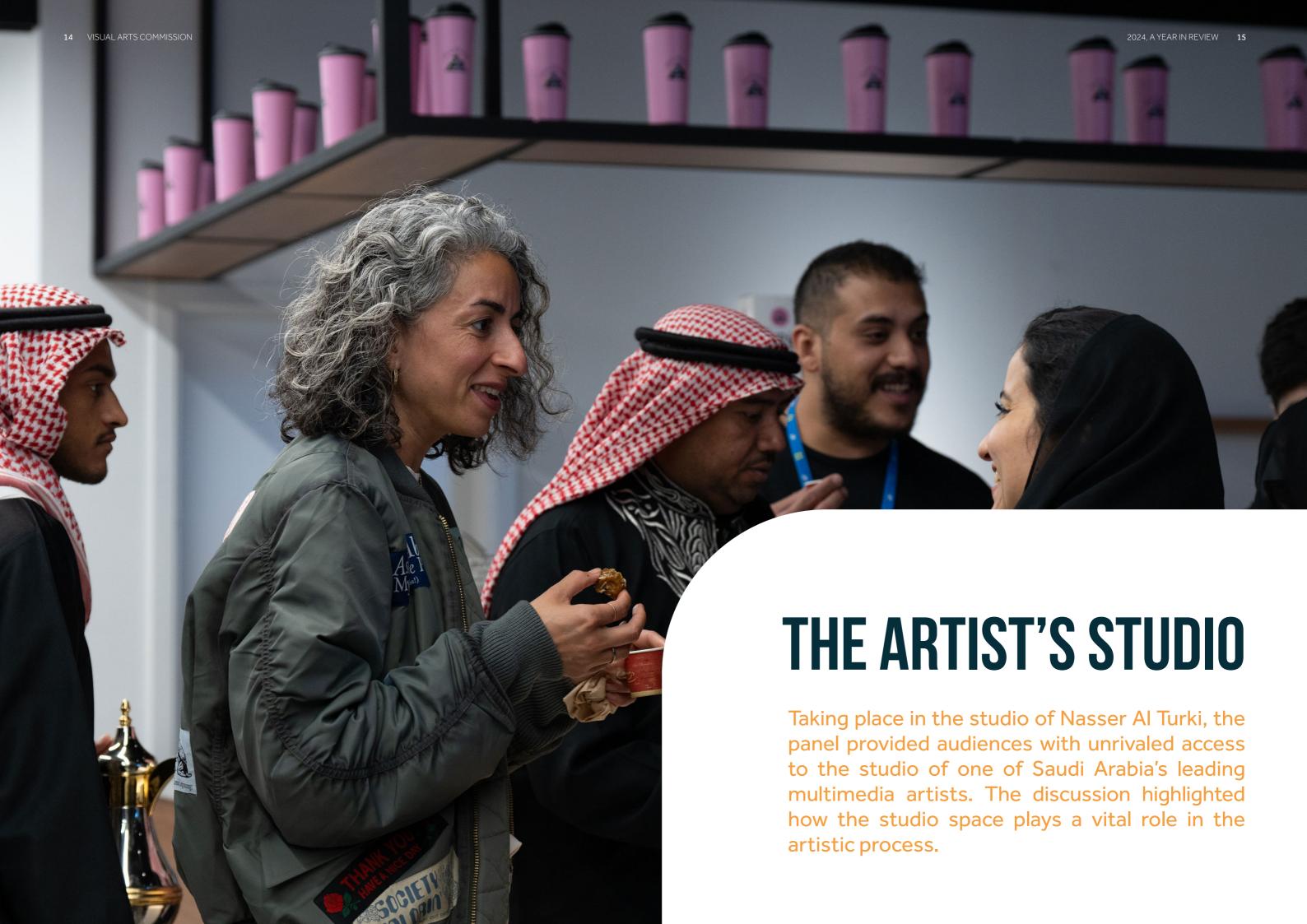




HOW PUBLIC ART RESHAPES CULTURAL SPACES

The Visual Arts Commission hosted two talks during the programming of the Noor Riyadh under the Dialogues in Contemporary Art initiative. The Panel discussion revolved around public art and how it reshapes cultural spaces. Panelists Dr. Alfredo Cramerotti, Omar Albraik, and Collective Random International gave insights into the creative processes behind some of the kingdom's public art.







THE INTERMIX **RESIDENCY: JAX**

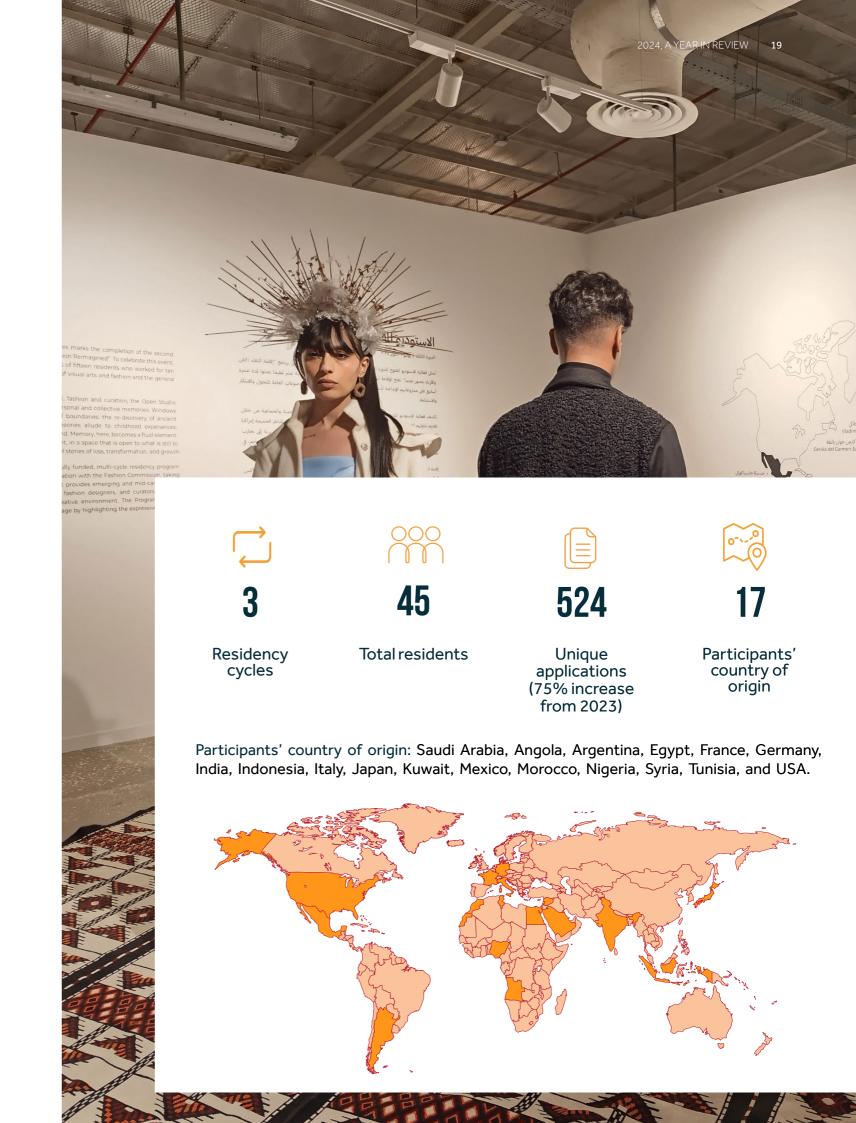
Established in 2022, The Intermix Residency provides an interdisciplinary opportunity for artists to create, express themselves, and be immersed in Saudi Arabia's art scene.

The second edition of the Intermix Residency, a collaborative initiative between the Visual Arts Commission and the Fashion Commission, continued to explore the connection between the visual arts and fashion design. Held at the JAX district in Riyadh between October 2023 and October 2024, the residency provided 45 emerging and midcareer creative professionals from 16 countries -including Saudi Arabia, Japan, and France-with a program to explore, innovate, and collaborate.

With increasing interest from applicants, an additional cycle was added to 2024's residency program, resulting in 3 cycles each lasting 10 weeks, increasing capacity by just over 70% from 2023. The program featured dedicated studio spaces and weekly group sessions to encourage participants to share knowledge and inspire creativity. Each cycle also included curated workshops on themes such as wearable sculptures, Saudi craft, and sustainability, alongside a cultural trip to Jeddah, Abha, and Alkhobar-Dhahran to explore and understand the Kingdom's rich artistic heritage.

Participants were encouraged to be bold with their experimentation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and cultural exchange. Each resident worked on projects exploring innovation, transformation, and sustainability, with their work showcased during a twoday open studio event at the end of each cycle. The open studio sessions attracted 2,000 visitors to engage with the final projects.

By blending disciplines, supporting peer learning, and encouraging the exploration of the relationship between materiality and the visual language of art and fashion, the Intermix Residency is a cornerstone of the Commission's mission to provide Saudi talent with multidisciplinary opportunities to deepen their practice and build peer-to-peer connections to enhance their careers as creative practitioners.



THE INTERMIX RESIDENCY: POUSH

Beyond the borders of Saudi Arabia, Intermix Residency extends to France, providing an interdisciplinary opportunity for artists to create, express themselves, and be immersed in cross-cultural settings.

The Visual Arts Commission hosted the second Paris edition of the Intermix Residency at the French art institution POUSH, from September to December 2024. The residency invited five talented female Saudi visual artists and one curator to explore innovation, collaboration, and growth within one of the world's most vibrant artistic environments.

Set in POUSH's dynamic 20,000 m² creative campus, the Residency connected participants to a global artistic network of over 270 artists and curators. Residents participated in tailored programs designed to enrich their creative practices, including guided tours to galleries such as Galerie Valeria Cetraro, Perrotin, and Galleria Continua, as well as visits to institutions like the Palais de Tokyo and Fondation Cartier.

The resident practitioners engaged with Paris's vibrant cultural scene, attending key events like the annual Photo Saint Germain where they could explore museums, galleries, and bookstores focused on photography. They explored techniques and mediums through intensive workshops, including Risograph printing and glassblowing, allowing them to deepen their practice and experiment with new creative processes.

The cross-cultural exchange was an important part of the residency, highlighted by a resident-curated dinner showcasing Saudi cuisine. This gathering brought together diverse perspectives and encouraged dialogue about contemporary art and Saudi Arabia's growing role in the global arts scene. The program culminated in an exhibition curated by one of the participants, Tala Saeed, showcasing works that reflected the residency's themes of innovation and interdisciplinary exploration. By building connections across disciplines and cultures, the residency at POUSH reinforced the Commission's commitment to supporting Saudi artists and positioning the Kingdom as a global hub for creativity and cultural exchange. Through these connections, practitioners can be challenged and inspired across disciplines and cultures.



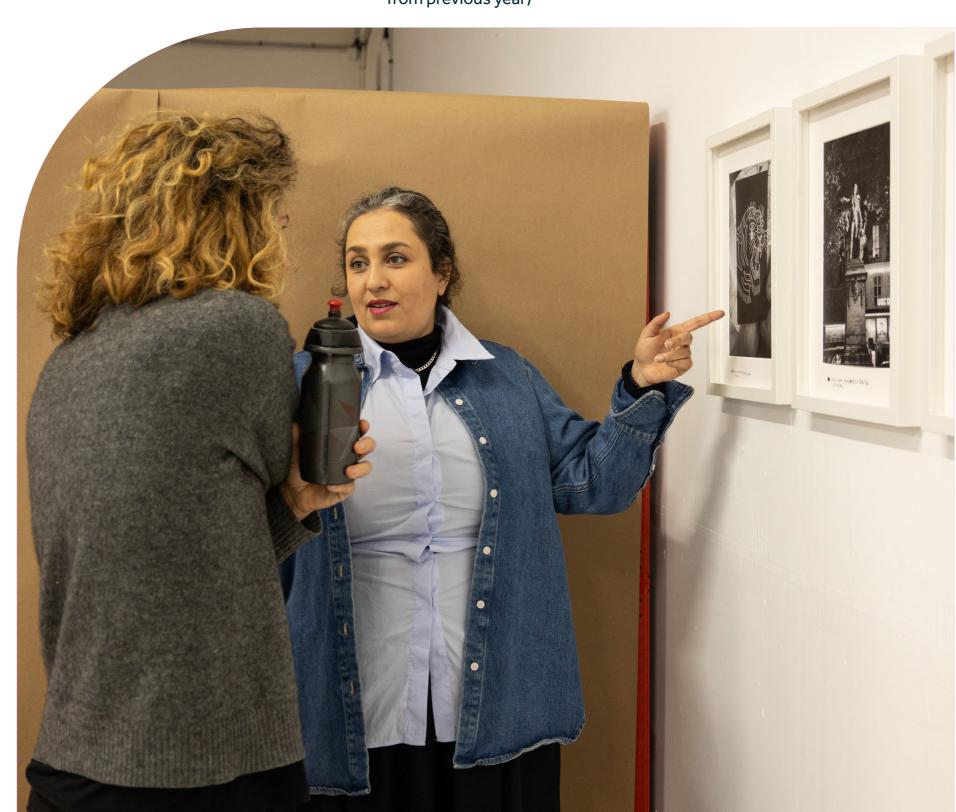
6

Participants (50% increase from previous year)

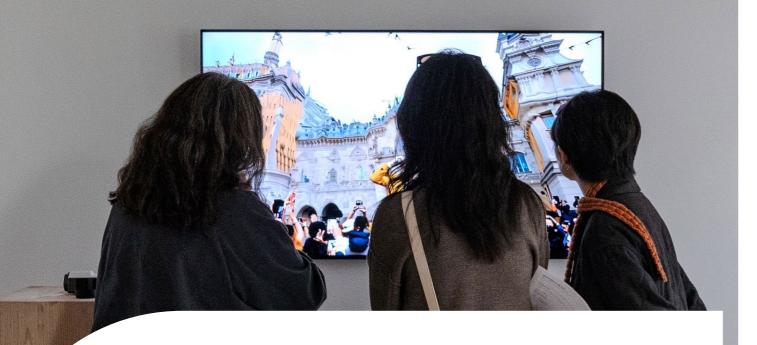


270

Connected art professionals









01 JUL - 20 SEP

2024

Duration

Saudi artist

residents

LONDON. UK

Location

DELFINA FOUNDATION **ART RESIDENCY**

The Visual Arts Commission enabled three Saudi artists selected by the Delfina Foundation to attend their prestigious 2024 Summer Residency, providing studio space and access to top UK art institutions.

The Summer Residency Program 2024 at the Delfina Foundation offered a transformative experience for the three Saudi artists, enabled by the Ministry of Culture through the Visual Arts Commission. As the largest international visual arts residency program in the UK, the Delfina Foundation provided residents with the platform to incubate their ideas and showcase them to their international peers and the public.

This year's summer program was organized around the theme "Cyphering, Vibing" exploring group dynamics, collaboration, and improvisation. A program of activities enhanced the residents' learning and development, including gallery visits to leading art institutes such as Chisenhale Gallery, Nottingham Contemporary, and the Sir John Soane Museum.

Unique to this season, residents were able to travel to La Biennale di Venezia. The trip enabled residents to draw inspiration from a wide range of contemporary art from international leaders in the visual art sector.

The program concluded with an Open Studio event attended by over 100 guests, including curators, collectors, and the public. This drop-in event showcased the residents' works and their creative practices, as well as supporting the growth of the artists' international network for future inspiration and collaboration.

BALLY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL **ART RESIDENCY**

The Visual Arts Commission sponsored a Saudi visual and performance artist to attend the International Art Residency Program at the Bally Foundation in Switzerland. The Commission was proud to highlight the awarded artist with this opportunity after a rigorous application process.

The Residency Program, run by the Bally Foundation in Switzerland, offers residents unique opportunities for intellectual and professional development. Selected from a competitive pool of applicants, The Commission proudly supported this opportunity as part of its role in supporting Saudi artists to develop their talent.

In addition to the artworks created during the residency, the program also facilitated a collaboration between the Commission and the Bally Foundation, which will benefit future artists in the Kingdom. A notable example of this collaboration is the discussion program organized by the Foundation, which

helped to advance Saudi Arabia's voice in the sector. Initiatives like this enable Saudi artists and practitioners to expand their international reach, contributing the voices of this region to the global art scene.







Artworks created



BRAHIM

Artist



LUGANO, **SWIT7FRI AND**

Location

26 VISUAL ARTS COMMISSION 27



44Graduates



Out of 44 graduates were women



41

Saudi participants (36% increase from 2023)



470

Applications (38% increase from 2023)



179

One-on-one mentorship sessions



MENTORSHIP & GUIDANCE PROGRAM

With 470 applicants in 2024, the mentorship and guidance program shows the leading role the Visual Arts Commission is taking to empower and inform the next generation of artists within the Kingdom.

Following the success of the 2023 program, an open invitation was extended to Saudi and Saudi-based artists and practitioners. From a highly competitive pool of 470 applicants, 44 participants were selected to take part in three program cycles. These participants engaged in group sessions and individual mentorship meetings, led by prominent figures in the visual arts sector, including Curator Ebtehal Alrajhi.

Mentored by experts in the various fields of visual arts, the program contributed to the development of the careers of emerging Saudi and Saudi-based art practitioners. Equipping them with valuable skills and knowledge to advance in their creative journeys. Building on the achievements of the previous year, the 2024 Mentorship and Guidance Program continued to deliver outstanding results, reinforcing the Kingdom's commitment to nurturing talent and strengthening capabilities within the visual arts sector.

IMAGINE PICASSO

In February, the Visual Arts Commission brought the groundbreaking "Imagine Picasso" to Riyadh, providing over 6,500 visitors the opportunity to engage in the world-renowned multimedia exhibition.

Pablo Picasso's impact on the field of visual arts is profound, revolutionizing artistic expression and inspiring generations of artists worldwide. Recognizing the importance of his legacy, the Commission played a key role in bringing the multimodal exhibition "Imagine Picasso" to Riyadh in 2024, providing an opportunity to inspire and inform the next generation of the Kingdom's artists as well as the public.

The exhibition offered a unique and immersive experience, using light and sound to encourage visitors to engage with Picasso's work in new ways. By sparking dialogue and fresh perspectives, the exhibition contributed to the growth of the domestic arts sector, underscoring a commitment to inspiring innovative creativity within Saudi Arabia. This initiative also demonstrated the Kingdom's expanding role on the global arts stage. Hosting a world-renowned multimedia exhibition highlighted the Kingdom as a destination for cultural exchange, offering international audiences a fresh view of Saudi Arabia's growing contributions to the global art scene.



6,624



03 FEB — 03 MAR 2024

Duration



LAYSEN VALLEY, RIYADH

Location



Number of attendees



THE KINGDOM PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD

The second edition of the Kingdom Photography Award offered emerging Saudi photographers the chance to exhibit their work alongside professional photographers, all exploring the year's theme, "We Tell Stories."

As part of this year's award, five professional photographers were commissioned to celebrate Al-Ahsa region and its people. Photographers include:

- Abdo Shanan (Algerian)
- Alejandro Chaskielberg (Argentinian)
- Farah Foudeh (Jordanian-Palestinian)
- Latifa AlBokhari (Saudi)
- Tasneem Alsultan (Saudi)

An exploratory trip through Al-Ahsa culminated in an exhibition titled "Al-Ahsa Hassana" curated by Mohamed Somji. The exhibition was showcased at Hayy Jameel in Jeddah, from 11 February to 2 March 2024.

In the second half of the initiative, emerging artists from across the country responded with submissions reflecting diverse interpretations of the theme.

The five shortlisted Saudi artists: Amnah Ibrahim Alhaik, Abdullah Hussain Alshaikh, Mohammed Al Jerabi, Nather Abd Rab Alrasool Alsyf, and Zuhair Ahmad Altraifi, were chosen by an independent



judging panel and each received a 20,000 cash prize and vouchers for photography equipment, worth an additional 20,000 c. The exhibition was accompanied by an extensive public program which included panel discussions and hands-on workshops, making the awards a platform for increasing engagement with key audiences and inspiring creativity around photography in the Kingdom.

32 VISUAL ARTS COMMISSION ZAPPEION

SAUDI CULTURAL WEEK IN GREECE

The Visual Arts Commission brought together Saudi-Greek peers as part of Saudi Cultural Week in Greece for two panel discussions that explored the transformative role of art residencies.

The Saudi Cultural Week took place at the historic Zappeion Hall in Athens, in September 2024, bringing the rich heritage and creativity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Greece. Among the highlights were two panel discussions led by the Commission, which explored the transformative impact of art residencies.

The first panel, titled "Curators' Voices" featured Sarah AlMutlaq, Hafsa AlKhudairi, and Marilou Thiebault who shared insights into how residencies provide a space to incubate developing artists. The second panel, titled "Artists' Voices" included Mohammed AlFaraj, Hanna AlMilli, Hawazin AlOtaibi, and Hugo Servanin who reflected

on how residencies provide platforms for creative exploration and development. Both panels were moderated by Arnaud Morand, Head of Arts at the French Agency for AlUla Development (AFALULA), fostering a lively discussion on the importance of developing talent through residential programs.

While the broader Saudi Cultural Week celebrated the Kingdom's diverse cultural heritage with traditional crafts, culinary experiences, and performances, the Commission's panels demonstrated the value of international dialogue and collective support for emerging talent.



TW0 SESSIONS

Hosted



27 SEP — 01 OCT
2024
Date



ATHENS, GREECE

60TH INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION: LA BIENNALE DI **VENEZIA**

As the International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia celebrated its 60th year, the Visual Arts Commission presented the Kingdom's exceptional artistic talent to over 250,000 attendees at the Saudi Pavilion.



253,952

20 APR - 24 NOV 2024

Number of attendees



Dates



VENICE Location At the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia – the National Pavilion of Saudi Arabia presented a large-scale multimedia installation by renowned Saudi artist Manal AlDowayan, commissioned by the Visual Arts Commission. The transformative work, Shifting Sands: A Battle Song (2024), explored themes of identity, memory, and cultural change, offering a powerful reflection of Saudi Arabia's evolving societal landscape.

In Shifting Sands: A Battle Song (2024), visitors were invited to wind their way through a maze of large-scale, printed silk, petal-like sculptural elements that took their forms from the "desert rose," a crystal commonly found in Saudi Arabia's desert sands. The surfaces of these sculptures were silkscreened with texts written about Saudi women, a cacophony of media opinions that had profoundly impacted their perception and obscured their self-representation. Yet, at the center of the work, a shift occurred. There, Saudi women boldly proclaimed themselves. Through a series of participatory workshops, Manal AlDowayan offered Saudi women and girls a platform to assert their voices, setting forth a rallying cry of courage and solidarity.

Alongside the exhibition, the curators developed an accompanying public program to inspire and educate both within the Kingdom and abroad. Manal AlDowayan, in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou and partners at the Delfina Foundation in London, addressed international audiences.

Demonstrating a commitment to the domestic arts ecosystem, the Commission was proud to lead discussion panels with Manal AlDowayan and engage with students from Saudi universities, including Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in Dammam, the University of Jeddah, and Princess Nourah University in Riyadh.

SAUDI EMERGE

In April, the Visual Arts Commission showcased the Kingdom's visual arts at Saudi Emerge in Mexico, collaborating with leading galleries and artists to highlight Saudi creativity on the international stage.

Following the success of the inaugural Saudi Emerge event in Paris – an innovative concept store that invited global audiences to experience the rich tapestry of Saudi culture – the Commission extended its participation in the event held in Mexico City from 07 to 14 April 2024.

Collaborating with leading Saudi galleries, ATHR and Hafez, eight artists produced a series of limited-edition prints, highlighting the creativity and craftsmanship of Saudi talent on an international stage.



8

Number of artists



07 - 14 APR 2024

Dates



MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Location



In 2024, the Visual Arts Commission launched the Licenses and Permits project to support artists and galleries while driving long-term sector growth.

The Licenses and Permits project was launched to provide clear guidelines for visual artists, practitioners, galleries, and exhibition organizers, ensuring structured and accessible processes for operating within Saudi Arabia's visual arts sector.

Through this initiative, the Commission introduced two licenses and one permit:

• Visual Art Galleries License:

Allows galleries to legally operate and showcase contemporary visual art practices.

• Visual Artists' Studios and Creative Spaces License:

Enables artists to establish and operate dedicated workspaces for artistic production.

• Visual Arts Exhibition Permit:

Grants approval for temporary exhibitions held outside an applicant's registered facility.

Each license and permit has specific requirements, including commercial registration under designated visual arts activity codes, proof of expertise, and a structured operational plan. To enhance accessibility, a bilingual (English and Arabic) video guide was developed, helping applicants understand the process and requirements.

Streamlining licensing and permitting enables artists to focus on creativity while providing galleries and exhibition organizers with greater clarity and operational security. Ultimately, this initiative strengthens the Kingdom's commitment to a dynamic and innovative arts sector.



14

Licensed Art Galleries



9

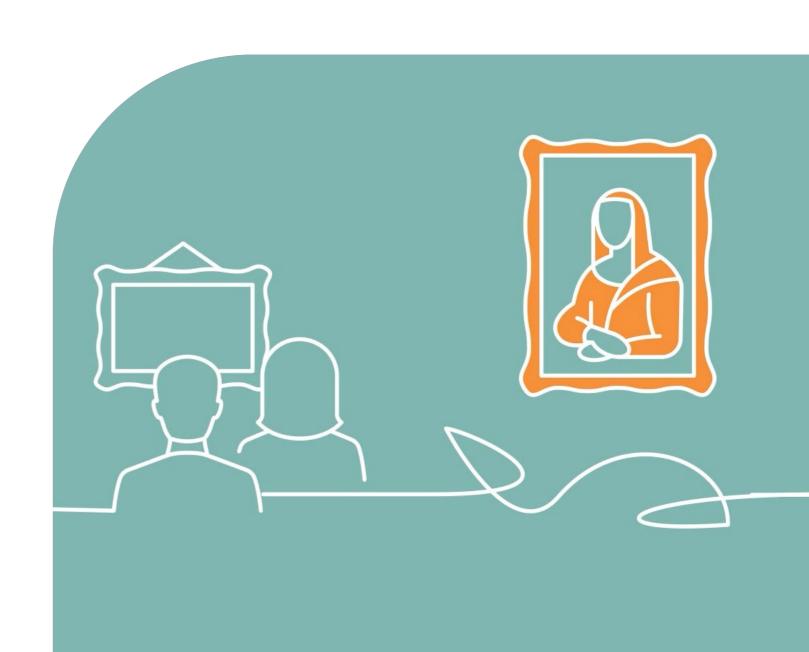
Licensed Studios and Creative



3

Visual Arts Exhibition Permits Issued

LICENSES AND PERMITS



key programs and landmark initiatives will continue to drive the growth of Saudi Arabia's visual arts sector while nurturing homegrown talent and elevating the Kingdom's presence on the global cultural stage.

The year began with the highly anticipated inaugural Riyadh Art Week, a transformative event that united the entire arts ecosystem in a week-long celebration of creativity. This groundbreaking event showcased leading Saudi and international visual artists and practitioners through public exhibitions, interactive installations, and dynamic programming that transformed Riyadh into a global hub of artistic expression.

The Kingdom Photography Award, in its third edition, invited Saudi photographers to explore the theme "In a New Light". This theme reflects the Kingdom's evolving creative landscape under Vision 2030, encouraging participants to document these changes and share new perspectives on Saudi Arabia's artistic journey with the world.

Featuring both commissioned works from international and Saudi photographers as well as an open call for domestic talent, the award continues to foster creativity and connect local and global perspectives.

The first international edition of "Zawaya Wa Afkar", known as Art and Ideas, launched in Seoul and will take place at Asia Now in Paris.

This landmark event brings Saudi artists, curators, and philosophers together with their international peers to explore humanity's relationship with the Earth through contemporary art, under the theme. This event marks a significant milestone in the Visual Arts Commission's mission to elevate Saudi Arabia's voice in global cultural conversations.

The Intermix Residency will also embark on its third edition, developing the cultural and artistic relationship between fashion and the visual arts as well as broadening an international network of Intermix alumni.

Efforts to develop the visual arts sector's infrastructure will advance through targeted research, resources, policies, and mentorship initiatives. These programs aim to support creativity, celebrate heritage, and build a sustainable ecosystem for long-term growth. With these efforts, 2025 promises to be a year of discovery, collaboration, and a lasting impact on the Kingdom's creative community.



