



## Press release

English

### *Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi Announces Curatorial Team and Locations for Second Edition of Manar Abu Dhabi*

*Led by Artistic Director Khai Hori, Manar Abu Dhabi Returns This November to Illuminate the Emirate  
Under the Theme ‘The Light Compass’*



Manar Abu Dhabi 2023. Courtesy DCT Abu Dhabi

- Organised by the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), the second edition of the Manar Abu Dhabi will take place in Al Ain from 1 November, 2025 to 4 January, 2026 and Abu Dhabi from 15 November, 2025 to 4 January, 2026.
- Under the theme ‘The Light Compass’, this edition is curated by Artistic Director Khai Hori and will feature more than 19 light-based installations, including newly commissioned works by Emirati and international artists.
- For the first time, Manar Abu Dhabi will extend to include Al Ain, with its locations in the city open earlier to the public from 1 November, 2025.
- Jubail Island will be the heart of the exhibition as its central and most iconic venue.





- A dynamic public programme of talks, workshops, and performances will accompany the exhibition, offering visitors opportunities to engage more deeply with the artworks.
- Manar Abu Dhabi is part of the *Public Art Abu Dhabi* initiative, DCT Abu Dhabi's ongoing commitment to enhancing the emirate's urban fabric through public art.
- Further details, including the full artist lineup and accompanying programme, will be shared in due course.

**Abu Dhabi, UAE – 22 September, 2025:** Building on the success of its inaugural edition, Manar Abu Dhabi will once again illuminate the archipelagos, mangroves and oases of the emirate of Abu Dhabi from 1 November 2025 to 4 January 2026 (Al Ain) and 15 November 2025 to 4 January 2026 (Abu Dhabi). Organised by the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), Manar Abu Dhabi is a public light art exhibition that aims to foster creativity and celebrate the emirate's landscapes.

Under the theme '**The Light Compass**', this edition will feature over 19 newly commissioned works and site-specific light sculptures, projections and immersive installations by Emirati and international artists. Manar Abu Dhabi 2025 is curated by **Khai Hori, Artistic Director**, who was previously Deputy Director of Artistic Programming at Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Senior Curator at the Singapore Art Museum, where he oversaw Singapore's national collection of contemporary art, and Senior Curator in the Curatorial Development department at the National Heritage Board in Singapore. The exhibition is co-curated by Alia Zaal Lootah, Curator; Munira Al Sayegh; Curator; and Mariam Alshehhi, Assistant Curator.

Drawing on the Gulf's ancestral relationship with light, this edition of Manar Abu Dhabi brings together contemporary artworks that respond to its presence, behaviour, and resonance across both natural and technological forms and expressions. As the theme '*The Light Compass*' suggests, light is situated as both guide and medium, from contextualising its traditions of navigation in orienting seafarers and desert nomads to instigating poetic modes of knowledge and communication through its ephemerality. Set across Abu Dhabi's diverse landscapes, Manar Abu Dhabi will unfold across mangroves, sandbanks, gardens and urban edges, where artworks form a breathing constellation and become a living map shaped by reflection and relation.

**Jubail Island will serve as the centerstage for Manar Abu Dhabi 2025**, anchoring this year's expanded edition. For the first time, the exhibition will extend to the city of **Al Ain**, alongside an exciting rollout across other city locations, reflecting the exhibition's growing cultural footprint across the region. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Al Ain's backdrop of lush oases and ancient archaeological sites offers a dramatically different landscape from the coastal archipelagos and mangroves of the capital. Light-based installations from Manar Abu Dhabi will engage with the unique terrains of **Al Qattara and Al Jimi Oases**—green sanctuaries nestled within the city's desert topography, sustained by ancient *aflaj* irrigation systems—illuminating the enduring connections between water, land, and life. The installations in Al Ain, part of Manar Abu Dhabi, will be on display from 1 November to coincide with the ongoing Traditional Handicrafts Festival.

**Khai Hori, Artistic Director, Manar Abu Dhabi 2025**, said: "Manar Abu Dhabi brings audiences and artists into imaginative encounters shaped by Emirati traditional knowledge and contemporary





experience. With *The Light Compass*, this edition becomes a journey of navigation and discovery, inviting us to see, sense, and connect with the landscapes and stories that light reveals.”

**Alia Zaal Lootah, Curator, Manar Abu Dhabi 2025** added: “Manar Abu Dhabi will highlight the unique nature of Abu Dhabi’s islands and oases, and will leave a lasting impression on residents and visitors alike through installations employing various technologies and immersive experiences. By bringing together artworks that reflect history, wayfinding, and guidance through light, the exhibition offers an experience that is both meaningful and unforgettable, reflecting the emirate’s identity as a vibrant cultural capital.”

As part of *Public Art Abu Dhabi*’s ongoing commitment to enhancing the emirate’s public spaces through art, **a dynamic public programme of talks, workshops, and performances will accompany the exhibition**, offering visitors meaningful opportunities to engage with the artworks.

More information on the participating artists and programmes will be released later in 2025. For more information, please refer to the **Annex**.

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## About Manar Abu Dhabi

Organised by the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), Manar Abu Dhabi is a public light art exhibition that aims to foster creativity and celebrate the emirate's landscapes.

### About the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi:

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) drives the sustainable growth of Abu Dhabi's culture and tourism sectors and its creative industries, fuelling economic progress and helping to achieve Abu Dhabi's wider global ambitions.

By working in partnership with the organisations that define the emirate's position as a leading international destination, DCT Abu Dhabi strives to unite the ecosystem around a shared vision of the emirate's potential, coordinate effort and investment, deliver innovative solutions, and use the best tools, policies and systems to support the culture and tourism.

DCT Abu Dhabi's vision is defined by the emirate's people, heritage and landscape. We work to enhance Abu Dhabi's status as a place of authenticity, innovation, and unparalleled experiences, represented by its living traditions of hospitality, pioneering initiatives and creative thought.

**For more information about the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi and the destination, please visit: [dct.gov.ae](http://dct.gov.ae) and [abudhabiculture.ae](http://abudhabiculture.ae)**

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## **Annex: Curator Biographies**

### **Khai Hori**

*Artistic Director*

Khai Hori is an internationally respected curator whose distinguished career includes serving as Deputy Director of Artistic Programming at Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Senior Curator at the Singapore Art Museum where he oversaw Singapore's national collection of contemporary art, and Senior Curator in the Curatorial Development department at the National Heritage Board in Singapore.

His curatorial work spans major institutions, biennales, festivals, and public interventions. Key projects include the Maybank Foundation Artist Fellowship Programme in 2023 in Bali, *Tianzhuo Chen* and *Secret Archipelago* in 2015 at Palais de Tokyo, *Open SEA* in 2015 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyon, and *Welcome to the Jungle* in 2013 at the Yokohama Museum of Art and the Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto. His landmark exhibitions in Singapore include *If the World Changed*, Singapore Biennale 2013, the seminal retrospective *Lucid Dreams in the Reverie of the Real* on Lee Wen in 2012, and *Negotiating Home, History and Nation* in 2011.

### **Alia Zaal Lootah**

*Curator*

Alia Lootah is a distinguished curator whose contributions have shaped the regional and institutional art landscape. She began her career in 2008 with the Women's Museum in Dubai and later obtained a Master's degree in Art History in 2012. Her subsequent tenure at Louvre Abu Dhabi included the co-curation of several major exhibitions that contributed to the museum's foundational years.

Since 2019, she has focused on private consultancy, advising on art collections with a particular emphasis on the Gulf. In recognition of her contributions to the arts, she was named Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres in 2023.

### **Munira Al Sayegh**

*Curator*

Munira Al Sayegh is an independent curator and cultural instigator based in Abu Dhabi. She is the founder of Dirwaza Curatorial Lab, a platform dedicated to curatorial incubation and cultural advisory. Her work champions grassroots initiatives and centres on the reclamation and reframing of Gulf narratives.

A published author and active voice in the region's evolving art discourse, Munira plays a pivotal role in shaping the cultural landscape of the United Arab Emirates and beyond.

### **Mariam Alshehhi**

*Assistant Curator*

Mariam Alshehhi is a Curatorial Assistant with the Public Art team at the Department of Culture and Tourism in Abu Dhabi, where she supports the realisation of major cultural and public art initiatives. She





began her museum career at Louvre Abu Dhabi, where she worked within the Collections and Scientific Management team, contributing to curatorial documentation and research.

Her experience includes collaborating with international artists, notably assisting TeamLab in their Manar project in Abu Dhabi in 2023. She holds a degree in Art History and Archaeology from Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi.

