

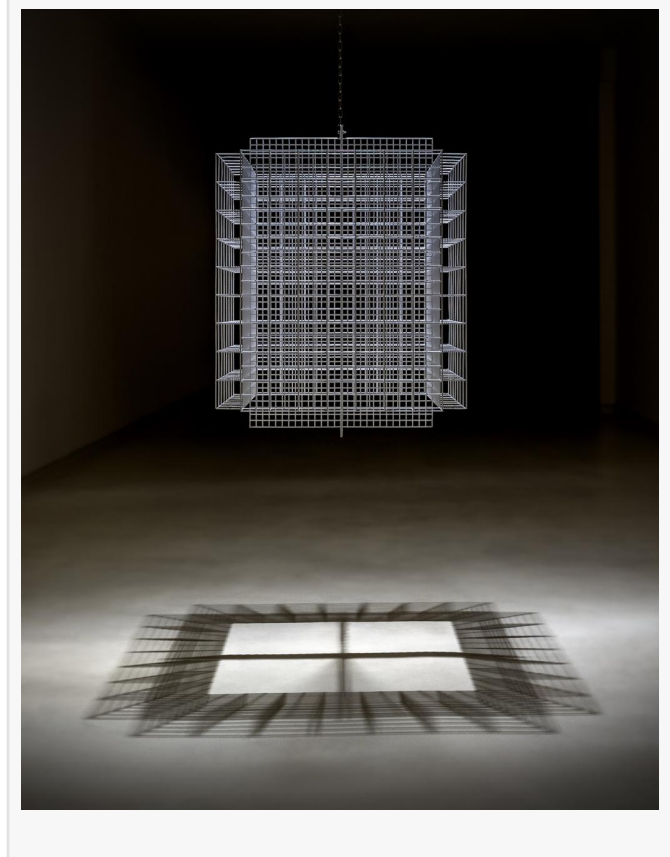
'FRAGMENTS OF FOLKLORE' A Landmark Exhibition Redefining Artistic Accessibility in Saudi Arabia

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Redefining Artistic Accessibility in Saudi Arabia*

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, April 29, 2025

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Fragments of Folklore is a major exhibition that explores cultural identity through art, bridging tradition and contemporary practice, and examining the accessibility of artistic expression in Saudi Arabia and beyond.

The exhibition represents a moment of significance in the evolution of contemporary art in Saudi Arabia as the kingdom continues its cultural development under Vision 2030. Fragments of Folklore reflects this shift through its featured artists (Lulwah Al Homoud, Rashid Al Khalifa, Raeda Ashour, and Hamra Abbas), who explore the ongoing dialogue between tradition and reinvention.



Notably, three-quarters of the artists featured in Fragments of Folklore are female, including two Saudi artists (Al Homoud and Ashour); which aligns with the Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 plans to increase female empowerment and representation.

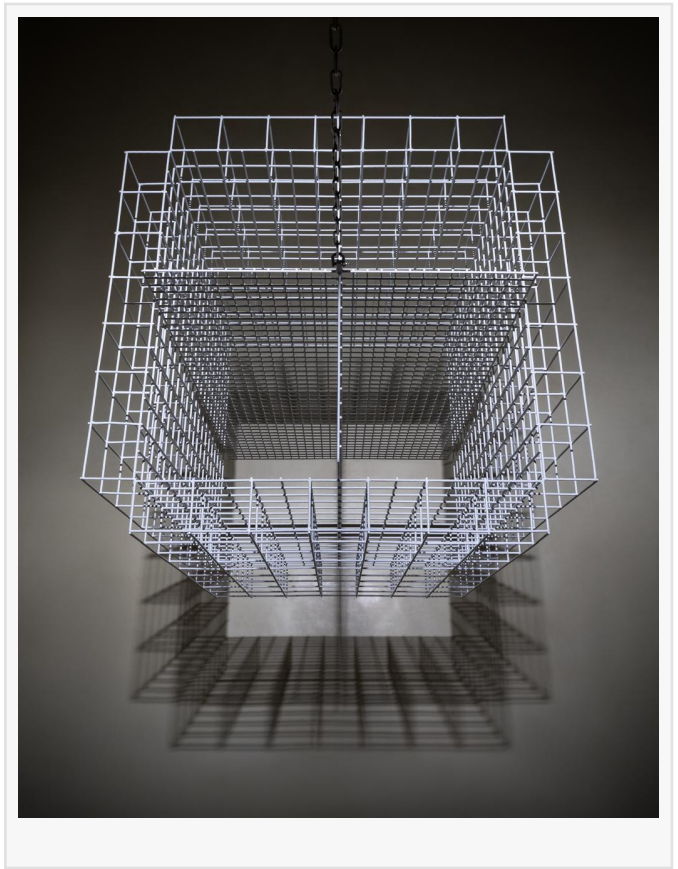
This exhibition, which takes place in Riyadh's JAX District (also known as the epicenter of Saudi Arabia's burgeoning contemporary arts scene), also marks a collaboration between three institutions – THAA (Saudi Arabia), MIR'A Art (Paris/Middle East) and TRIYAD (Belgium) – each contributing to the dialogue between local and global artistic narratives.

At a time when the Middle East's artistic landscape is expanding, Fragments of Folklore offers a platform to reconsider accessibility, identity, and the evolving role of art within society.

FRAGMENTS OF FOLKLORE: FEATURED ARTISTS

Folklore is often thought of as an oral tradition – stories, myths, and legends passed down through generations. It is also a language of symbols and patterns, serving as a means for cultural preservation. From Bruegel's peasant scenes and Goya's mythologies to Marc Chagall's dreamscapes and Frida Kahlo's personal narratives, folklore has long anchored history while inspiring innovation in art.

In *Fragments of Folklore*, Hamra Abbas, Lulwah Al Homoud, Rashid Al Khalifa and Raeda Ashour all engage with elements of their cultural heritage, translating them into contemporary artistic expressions. Here, folklore is not a static relic of the past but a dynamic archive of identity, reshaped and reimagined across time and geography. The exhibition coincides with Saudi Arabia's Year of Handicrafts 2025, an initiative that highlights artisanal heritage and its contemporary relevance.



Each artist works with fragments of inherited knowledge – whether through geometry, calligraphy, materiality, or abstraction. Their works echo the past while asserting their place in the present, engaging with motifs and forms that have carried meaning for centuries but are now filtered through a modern lens.

By bringing these four artists together, *Fragments of Folklore* initiates a cross-cultural dialogue on tradition, symbolism, and storytelling.

FRAGMENTS OF FOLKLORE: SAUDI ARABIA AT A CROSSROADS

Fragments of Folklore reflects an important period in the development of contemporary Saudi art and the Kingdom's broader cultural transformation under Vision 2030.

Saudi Arabia is entering a new era of cultural ambition and artistic innovation. Once known primarily for its economic power and religious heritage, the kingdom is now emerging as a global hub for the arts. With a growing tourism sector, investments in sports—including hosting the 2034 FIFA World Cup—and the expansion of international entertainment, the kingdom is reshaping its global identity.

At the forefront of this shift is Riyadh, which is set to host the Louvre Riyadh, a landmark \$500 million project that strengthens Saudi Arabia's ties with France's most renowned cultural

institutions. This follows the Centre Pompidou's expansion into AlUla, further reinforcing Saudi Arabia's role as a key player in the global arts scene. The kingdom has also made a historic entrance into the international art market, with Sotheby's holding its inaugural auction in Saudi Arabia in 2025, demonstrating the growing demand for fine art in the region and its rising influence in the global art economy.

Alongside these developments, Saudi Arabia is hosting a wave of world-class exhibitions. Desert X AlUla, now a staple in the international art calendar, continues to bring ground-breaking land art to the country's desert landscapes. Simultaneously, The Islamic Arts Biennale, running until 25 May, is offering an exploration of Islamic heritage and contemporary interpretations, coinciding with Fragments of Folklore, a cultural showcase that delves into the rich traditions and narratives shaping the region's artistic identity.

Historically, large-scale exhibitions in the Gulf have focused on imported western narratives; Fragments of Folklore reverses this trajectory – elevating regional voices, redefining creative accessibility, and ensuring that the next generation of artists and audiences engage with art not as an exclusive privilege, but as an intrinsic right.

Fragments of Folklore also directly aligns with the kingdom's ambition to become a global cultural hub, placing its contemporary artists on the world stage and creating an infrastructure where art is not just displayed, but actively lived, debated, and reimaged.

With a young, ambitious, and globally connected generation leading the charge, Saudi Arabia is experiencing an artistic renaissance – one that is not only redefining its own cultural identity but also positioning the kingdom as a leading force in the global art world. This dynamism is reflected in the location hosting Fragments of Folklore: Riyadh's thriving JAX District, the epicenter of Saudi Arabia's contemporary arts scene and home to acclaimed artists, galleries, creative agencies and SAMOCA (the kingdom's first contemporary art museum).

BEYOND THE EXHIBITION: A MOVEMENT FOR ARTISTIC ACCESSIBILITY

Fragments of Folklore marks the beginning of a cultural movement:

- Mentorship & Visibility – Supporting emerging artists in Saudi Arabia by offering mentorship, curatorial support, and institutional partnerships.
- Global Dialogue – Bridging Saudi and MENA narratives with international audiences through collaborations in Paris, Brussels, and beyond.
- Sustainability & Representation – Ensuring that cultural heritage is not just preserved but actively reinterpreted for future generations.
- A shift from Euro-centric to Multi-centric – By bringing together artists from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Pakistan, Fragments of Folklore ensures Middle Eastern and south Asian artists are shaping their own artistic discourse. The exhibition could also be seen as part of a larger art-world shift towards decolonizing narratives.

- Accessible Art Ownership – The exhibition will also feature a curated Art Store, making prints and smaller works by emerging artists available at reasonable prices—allowing a broader audience to engage with and own contemporary art.□

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