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Works of ten finalists of AIUla Design Award linked to legacy and inspiration

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The mud-brick labyrinth of AIUla Old Town.

Muhammad Yusuf, *Features Writer*

Arts AIUla has announced the ten finalists for the second edition of the AIUla Design Award (ADA). Their works will be exhibited at Paris Design Week (PDW) where five winners will also be announced (Sept. 7). Twenty designers were originally shortlisted and their prototypes were evaluated by a jury of recognised leaders from the design world. The designs of the finalists will be shown in an exhibition conceived by acclaimed designer Herve Sauvage (Sept. 8 – 16) at Galerie MR21 during PDW. The exhibition will also be open to the Media on September 6, during the PDW Press Day.

The brief is that the winning designs may be commissioned, supported in their production and promoted within AIUla and its network of influential and high-profile regional and international activities. The presence of the award at PDW provides an opportunity for design audiences to engage with new and exciting designers interpreting the landscape and heritage of AIUla in special ways for cultural retail.

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Jury member Cyril Zammit said that “the designers have captivated the jury with their innovative concepts, artistic excellence and imaginative interpretations of AIUla’s rich cultural heritage. The quality and innovation have proven exceptional. There were more international entries than the first edition and I was pleased to discover a stronger voice from the Middle East with emerging new talents. All the finalists have managed to truly capture the essence of AIUla and transform it into tangible retail designs.”

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The ten finalists are: Tawa by Shaddah Studio (Saudi, based in Saudi Arabia); Naba Tea Tiffin by Ikki, Gunjan Gupta (Indian, based in India); AIUla Terrains: Dates Serving Set by Teeb (Lebanese & Saudi, based in Saudi Arabia); Incense Heritage Collection by Sarra Hafaiedh (Tunisian, based in Tunisia); Ohjea by Thaqeb Studio (Saudi, based in Saudi Arabia); Oil Lantern by Imane Mellah (French, based in Paris); Book Lithic by Ahmed AlMannai, Rashed AlAraifi and Hamad AlMannai, and Abdulla Binhindi (Bahraini, based in Bahrain); Arabian Leopard Sculpture Set by Abdulla Binhindi (Bahraini, based in Bahrain); Steps Clasp by Sara Kanoo (Bahraini, based in Bahrain) and Sand Garden by Tajalla Studio (Saudi, based in Saudi Arabia). The six winners of the first edition were Reem Bashawri, Nour Shourbagy, Tarek ElKassouf, Teeb, Rukun x Harry Dobbs, and Niko Kapa.



Works of the finalists of AIUla Design Award's second edition.

ADA is an Open Call that invites established and emerging designers to conceptualise and propose unique items for cultural retail. It recognises design inspired by the heritage, landscape and artistic legacies of AIUla. Jury members of this year's edition are: Cyril Zammit - Design Advisor & Consultant/Cyriel Zammit Design Consultancy; Robert Frith - Creative Director/King Abdulaziz Centre for World Culture, Ithra; Emily Marant - Design Consultant & Founder/Studio Marant and Raghad Hazzazi - Arts and Cultural Programming Lead/Royal Commission for AIUla.

Zammit is an independent design advisor and strategic consultant. He created Dubai Design Days in 2012, before launching the first two editions of Dubai Design Week in 2015. He has strong networking relations with international events such as Montreux Jazz Festival, Design Miami, Art Basel and Design Miami – Basel. Frith is a creative professional experienced in the design and the curatorial development of museum, artistic and cultural projects. He works with clients from the public and private sectors.

Marant is an art and design consultant and Founder of Studio Marant. Also the co-founder of French Cliche, a studio that connects emerging artists with traditional know-hows, French Cliche produces and exhibits objects and furniture pieces at the frontier of art and design. Hazzazi has a background in museum and art curation, and has been at the forefront of developing the technical and curatorial infrastructures for AIUla's collections.

The creation of Arts AIUla within The Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) is hailed as a commitment to the next chapters in a millennia of artistic creation; celebrating cultural inheritance, AIUla has been a consistent and ever-evolving hub of cultural transfer. It was – and now has been revived – as a place of passage, a crossroads for trade, and home to successive civilisations who carved, sculpted and inscribed their lives into the landscape. The work of Arts AIUla seeks to preserve this legacy: fuse the old with the new; the local with the international, keeping the arts central to the spirit of AIUla as a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage.

Arts AIUla's mandate is to bring to fruition a series of new initiatives, projects and exhibitions. The artwork curation will speak to RCU's vision for the continued development of AIUla's contemporary art scenes: positioning the arts as a key contributor to AIUla's character, the quality of life for its local community and the region's economic future. Arts AIUla mainly focuses on transferring the talents of the Saudi nation and the local AIUla community into meaningful long-standing social and economic opportunities. It is a key part of the Journey through Time masterplan, bringing together fifteen different landmark destinations for culture, heritage and creativity across AIUla.

AIUla, the site, tells the complex story of human settlement and civilisation through art and design. It ranges from prehistoric architecture upon the volcanic fields that continue to compel and confound archaeologists; the exquisite sculpture of ancient Arabian tribes who made AIUla their capital; the monumental Nabataean tombs carved out of sandstone mountains and decorated with intricate symbols inspired by Italian, Egyptian and Greek cultures; and the mud-brick labyrinth of AIUla Old Town, decorated with the artwork of its inhabitants.