

The National's Luxury
Lifestyle Magazine
November 2025

TN

Abu Dhabi Art
celebrates a milestone

In conversation with
Kengo Kuma

Dunhill's Simon
Holloway

Dubai Watch
Week goes big

Into the heart
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The artist is present

Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim
is at the peak of his
powers



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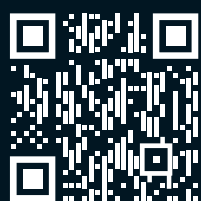
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culture bites



A lively conversation
focused on the arts
scene in the UAE and the
ever-evolving landscape
of global entertainment



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EDITOR'S LETTER

There's a photograph of Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim standing amid his sculptures – a forest of totems shaped from earth and papier mâché. He looks both part of the landscape he has created and apart from it, as if conjured by the same elements he sculpts. His story, which anchors this issue, is one of persistence and reinvention – an artist who once set fire to two lorry-loads of his own work, only to rise from the ashes with greater conviction. In his practice, destruction became renewal, and the landscape

of his native Khor Fakkan became his lifelong muse. We caught up with him in Cairo, where he is drawing inspiration for a new body of work – from the city's streets, people and even its convenience stores.

As Abu Dhabi Art returns this month, there's a particular resonance in Ibrahim's journey – a reminder that the UAE's artistic foundations were laid by those who created out of sheer belief, long before there were the major institutions that have sprung up to support them. Today, those same institutions stand ready to nurture the next generation, building on the legacy of artists such as Ibrahim. We look ahead to the 17th Abu Dhabi Art as it celebrates its role at the forefront of regional culture-making – and prepares to evolve into Frieze Abu Dhabi.

Across the issue, we explore art and creativity as a continuum. We wander through Turin's streets and historic theatres with Zegna and Mytheresa, visit Hamburg's Steinway factory and speak to Dunhill creative director Simon Holloway about the return of the quintessential English gentleman. We also sit down for a chat with Maison Margiela chief executive Gaetano Sciuto to discuss the famously anti-luxury house's attempts to be a touch more accessible, and examine Celine's next chapter under Michael Rider.

In architecture and design, Japanese master Kengo Kuma reflects on the power of empathy in space-making during his recent visit to Dubai, while Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi returns to our pages with a timely meditation on art, reading

and the intellectual foundations of a society. This month also celebrates craftsmanship of a different kind, as Dubai Watch Week returns on November 19 – bigger than ever, and a testament to the UAE's growing stature in the world of horology.

If this issue reveals anything, it's that the things that we value most – from art to style, from objects to ideas – take years to mature into the forms we treasure today. In a world always rushing towards the next big thing, how fortunate we are to pause, even briefly, amid so much well-earned beauty.

Nasri Atallah



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From wool bale to It-bag

Inspired by the humble sacks used to transport raw cashmere and wool, Loro Piana's Bale bag turns a symbol of practicality into one of desire. By **Sarah Maisey**

The Bale bag by Loro Piana is more than a refined accessory – it's a tribute to the brand's roots in the world of fine fibres. Its shape is inspired by humble hessian sacks once used to transport bundles of raw wool and cashmere. These tightly packed bales, weighing up to 200kg, made it possible to move fleeces from farm to mill. Practical and sturdy, they protected the fibres during long journeys. In Loro Piana's hands, this functional object has been reimagined as a symbol of craftsmanship and material excellence.

Since 1924, Loro Piana has been producing some of the world's finest wool and cashmere, supplying leading couture houses across Europe before becoming a luxury maison in its own right. From its headquarters in Quarona, in northern Italy's Piedmont region, the company has built its reputation on quality and innovation, working directly with farmers in Australia, New Zealand, Mongolia, northern China and Peru. This close relationship with the source of its fibres gives the maison access to some of the rarest and most valuable materials on the planet.

When the Bale bag was first shown as part of the spring/summer 2023 collection, it translated this legacy into a soft-

sided leather form – simple and quietly luxurious. The design nodded to history but was unmistakably modern, distilling a century of expertise into a minimalist silhouette. For autumn/winter 2024, the bag evolved again, this time rendered in thick woollen felt, giving the shape an architectural quality.

This year, Loro Piana has added a new chapter with the knitted Bale bag. Crafted entirely from Super 160s merino wool, the bag is made using Wish fibre – an exceptionally fine material sourced from carefully bred merino sheep in New Zealand and Australia. The purse is knitted seamlessly into a cloud-soft form, combining advanced technique with tactile comfort. Finished with a leather shoulder strap, hand-stitched handles and a structured strap beneath, it is lightweight yet durable enough for everyday use.

Discreet and unbranded, the Bale reflects Loro Piana's philosophy of understated luxury. It's an object that rewards attention – a simple idea executed with extraordinary care. In turning an everyday wool bale into an emblem of contemporary elegance, Loro Piana shows once again how craftsmanship and heritage can transform the practical into the timeless.

Since taking the helm as Dunhill's creative director in April 2023, Simon Holloway has presented only three collections, but he has already defined a casual elegance rooted in decades of craftsmanship and savoir faire. Rather than chasing trends or seasonal "newness", Holloway embraces "timelessness and classicism", delving into the gentlemanly essence of Dunhill. "It's the pinnacle of an English expression," he says, "through everything from the cloth to the cut and proportion. The incredible, rich story of Dunhill is a beautiful one to retell season after season."

Founded in the 1890s when Alfred Dunhill inherited his father's leatherworks, the house quickly pivoted to serve a new kind of customer. Anticipating the impact of Benz's 1886 Motorwagen, Dunhill began making car coats, luggage, dashboard clocks and even tobacco and lighters for the emerging class of wealthy motorists.

Today, while the brand is synonymous with refined British tailoring, "Dunhill was not born on Savile Row", Holloway notes. "It was born in the idea of motoring and then went through this evolution. It always kept with the times and had relevance to the man of whichever era it was."

When he arrived, Dunhill had lost its footing – out of sync with modern menswear, its traditions seen as dated. Undeterred, Holloway doubled down on what makes it unique: connoisseur-level tailoring and a singular Britishness. "Dunhill is for the Anglophile. European brands have a uniquely Mediterranean taste and look, which is wonderful, but it leaves the space open for Dunhill to express its Britishness."

That space is both elegant and rakish. "English taste can appeal to two completely different types of people," he says. "The suits King Charles wears are very similar to those worn by Bryan Ferry and the late, great Charlie Watts of the Rolling Stones. It's the same man, whether you're rock or royalty. One is diplomatic-level coded clothes, the other has the nonchalance of a rock star. That's just so cool and where does that exist in the world? Only in England."

Dunhill's deep ties to heritage manufacturing underpin this studied ease. "We work with the last jacquard silk-weaver in England, the last table-screen-printing mill in England, the heritage camel-hair specialist in England and many others."

To suit modern life, Holloway has in some cases halved fabric weights, creating lighter, softer materials. "That can be everything from flannel to a gun club check that would traditionally be tweed, but now is made in a really refined, superfine merino."

Having produced its suits in Italy for more than 40 years, Dunhill also benefits from Italian expertise, rendering jackets, overshirts and coats lighter still. The autumn/winter collection looked to the 1930s English Drape – a distinctive jacket cut devised by the Duke of Windsor and his tailor Frederick Scholte. Holloway modernised it by removing the shoulder pads and holding the silhouette through the canvas wrapped over the shoulders.

Despite such innovation, the house remains committed to "the vernacular of British cloth, texture, colour and pattern", now reimaged in lighter constructions. The result, Holloway says, is "invisible innovation that you really feel when you wear the clothes".

Each piece is meticulously crafted. A charcoal-grey jacket is made from suede bonded with cashmere; a field jacket from undyed virgin wool flannel is lined in merino checked tattersall. An archive double-breasted



Return of the English gentleman

Dunhill creative director Simon Holloway is intent on providing an alternative to European design, finds **Sarah Maisey**



DUNHILL

Dunhill's creative director Simon Holloway, above, uses lighter silhouettes and softer fabrics in the British brand's latest collections, left, to appeal to a younger audience

coat is reworked in wool-cashmere twill windowpane check and lined in superfine merino, while a Balmacaan coat – traditionally rough wool – is cut in houndstooth cashmere. Evening suits come in Italian dupioni silk, paired with topcoats in double-faced cashmere.

Reframing the modern wardrobe around casual elegance, Holloway lightens camel-hair coats to a shade of oat, while the single-breasted Bourdon jacket (named after Bourdon House, Dunhill's luxury space for men in London) arrives in half-lined herringbone flannel, cut with an English sloping shoulder. A Chesterfield coat is made from natural-coloured double-faced merino wool with a windowpane-checked interior.

Even the original Dunhill Car coat has been updated in suede shearling, double-faced lambskin, or a cotton-and-silk Prince of Wales check finished with horn buttons. "The combination of these innovative lightweight fabrics made with a very heritage taste, and the lighter-weight construction gives you a more contemporary product."

The new approach is attracting younger clients drawn to Dunhill's quiet sophistication. "There's a generation of men who were never told to wear a tailored jacket or a tie, and who are choosing it because it feels like an interesting way to express themselves. The whole thing is so radically chic because it's unnecessary."

Sliding into a well-cut pair of trousers, a soft knit, a chambray shirt or a timeless jacket, Holloway says, is about "the joy of getting dressed. Sure, sometimes you want to throw on a hoodie, but then other times you want something a little more exciting in your life."

He gestures to a long leather coat on a mannequin in the brand's new Dubai Mall store. Heavy enough for the British winter, lined in camel hair and burnished to a deep toffee tone, it looks fresh off the runway – yet it's an Alfred Dunhill original Car coat from around 1905.

Its quiet beauty encapsulates Holloway's vision. "We've really worked to develop a more casual, elegant side to Dunhill," he says. "This is not about being a fashion brand. This is very much about being timeless, with a more sensitive take on masculine dressing, but still with refinement and a celebration of English dress codes."

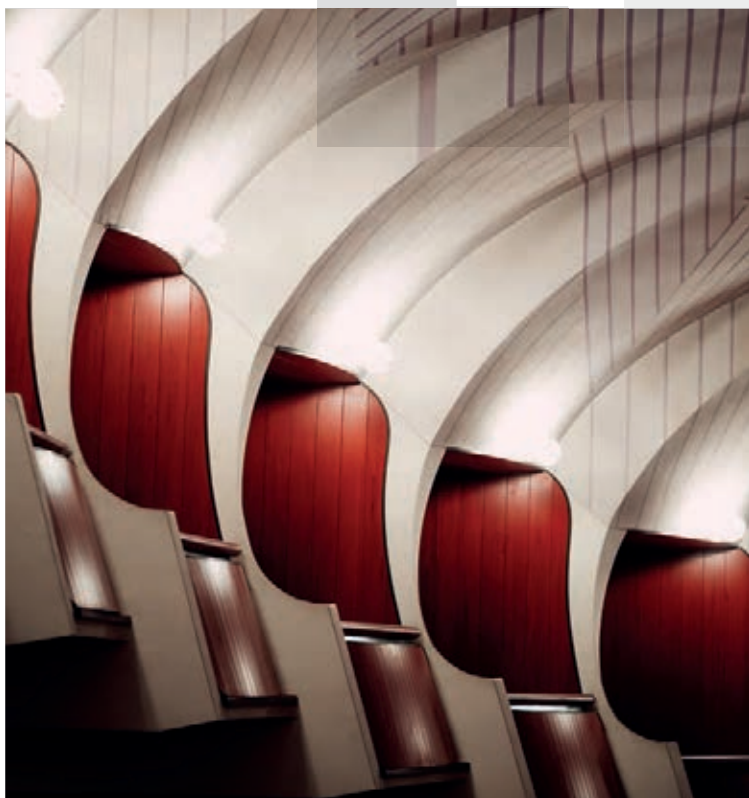


The Turin experience

Zegna and Mytheresa turn Italian city's Teatro Regio stage into the most exclusive dining room in Italy – exactly the kind of money-can't-buy experience only they can provide. By **Nasri Atallah**



Left and below, dining on the Teatro Regio stage in Turin during the Zegna and Mytheresa collaboration
Above, Dhafer L'Abidine with a classic Fiat 500



LUCAS POSSIEDE

There's a moment at the Teatro Regio when I have to pinch myself. It's revealed that we're about to have dinner on the stage of the 285-year-old theatre. Originally built in the 18th century and restored in the 1970s by architect Carlo Mollino, the space is a masterpiece of Italian modernism and operatic heritage. How have we scored such an elusive seat?

We're here with Zegna and Mytheresa, celebrating the Italian house's latest campaign with actor Mads Mikkelsen, shot in this very theatre. The evening is hosted by Michael Kliger, chief executive of Mytheresa, and Alessandro Sartori, artistic director of Zegna.

As we sit above the orchestra pit, gazing out at a phantom audience, conversation flows easily between guests. Actors, directors, style icons, from Dhafer L'Abidine and Daniel Brühl to Abdulla AlKaabi and Auro Montanari. Then, a hush falls. The curtain rises a few metres from our table and suddenly we're immersed in live performances of arias from *La Bohème* and *La Traviata* – a tribute to the theatre's legacy as the stage for Puccini's 1896 premiere under Arturo Toscanini.

Mytheresa has always taken a counter-intuitive position in the world of e-commerce. Rather than stock everything, it curates. In an age of mega-warehouses and AI recommendations, this feels almost radical. The platform works closely with the world's top brands on exclusive capsule collections available only through them. The evening in Turin also marked the launch of one such collaboration: Zegna x Mytheresa Men: The Exclusive Runway Styles.

The guest list was a blend of Mytheresa clients, Zegna friends and press – seated together at one long table. The idea is to dissolve hierarchy and create a kind of effortless, cross-world conversation that only happens in a fantastical setting.

"I always imagine they come back and meet friends at the weekend," says Kliger. "Their friends ask: 'So what did you do this weekend?' 'Oh, I had dinner at the Ritz'.

"And they can say: 'You know what I did? I had dinner in the opera, in Turin, on the stage – the whole thing just for us.'"

He continues: "How can we give our clients memories to share again? It needs to be special. It doesn't need to be super expensive – that's not the point. Was there something in the air? That's what matters."

And on the night, there was certainly something in the air. As the editor of a lifestyle magazine, you get to see more than your fair share of wonderful things around the world. More than one person deserves to see, honestly. But even then, a night like this feels special.

After the dinner is over, L'Abidine and myself decide to ditch the transport arranged for us and walk through the city. The air is crisp and it feels like a scene out of a movie walking along the streets with this matinee idol in our tuxedos.

The following morning, we explore the city behind the wheels of restored classic Fiat 500s, another product of Turin, driving from Castello del Valentino to the Ristorante del Cambio – one of Italy's oldest and most celebrated dining institutions. At the outset, each car's owner stands proudly beside their vehicle, dressed in colour-coordinated Zegna knitwear. I make a beeline for the red Abarth. It's an unforgettable way to see the city – and the smile never leaves my face, despite the rain and rock-hard suspension.

"We serve a very elite crowd," Kliger says as we recap the previous night's events. "Last night was an amazing example – dinner in a privatised opera house, singers three metres away. I always tell my team, we're successful if our clients go back with two or three stories to tell."

It is, quite literally, an experience money can't buy. You can't simply decide to dine on the stage of the Teatro Regio. In a time when so much of our consumption is driven by algorithms, it's reassuring to know that somewhere, someone is still crafting experiences designed to be remembered. And I've certainly come back home with a couple of stories to tell.



The five percent club

Maison Margiela has long existed at the avant-garde edges of the fashion industry. Now it wants to make itself a tiny bit more accessible, writes **Sarah Maisey**

For Gaetano Sciuto, chief executive of Maison Margiela, fashion is not a matter of years, but of mindset. “Maison Margiela is about attitude, not age,” he says with an assured calm that comes from both conviction and experience. Tasked with safeguarding the house’s avant-garde soul while guiding it towards a new generation, Sciuto carries the weight of a legacy that has always lived slightly out of step with convention.

Founded in 1988 by elusive Belgian designer Martin Margiela, the maison was conceived as an anti-fashion brand – its white labels stitched anonymously, its shows staged in unexpected corners of Paris, and its founder steadfastly refusing to be photographed. Ever since, it has intentionally always occupied the margins.

For Sciuto, who joined from Giorgio Armani, this makes for a delicate balancing act. “I need to tell the story of this brand honestly,” he says. “It has not been told enough.” His mandate is to ensure Margiela thrives not only as a cult name, but also as a viable business – without losing the edge that makes it so compelling.

“When I started, people told me: ‘It’s an amazing, beautiful brand. So niche, so edgy,’” Sciuto recalls with a laugh. “But if you stay at the edge, you can’t spark conversation. I want Margiela to be in the middle of the conversation.”

That tension was on full display at the maison’s spring/summer 2026 show under new creative director Glenn Martens. While a children’s orchestra played dressed in oversized suits, models walked with metallic mouthpieces – sinister, sculptural devices that prised open their lips.

Based on the four stitches that hold the brand’s clothing label in place, it was as shocking as it was divisive.

“We expected the reaction. We had hours of discussions with Glenn about it,” Sciuto says. “Even at a recent dinner, two people loved it, two hated it. And that’s the point. Maison Margiela exists to provoke dialogue. Fashion needs us, otherwise it risks becoming boring.”

Still, Sciuto is pragmatic about growth. “If you go to a party of 100 people, two will be wearing Margiela. I don’t want 100. I want five,” he says with a smile. “Just five.” It’s a mantra that has informed everything from product strategy to store design.

When scouting for a new location in Seoul, for example, unable to find space in the main shopping commune, his team instead restored a crumbling house in the leafy enclave of Hannam, adding a garden and cafe. “It’s far

from the shopping district, and you have to seek it out. But that’s Margiela,” he explains. “We’re not for everyone. We’re for those who want to belong to our world.”

That philosophy of finding beauty in the unexpected runs deep. “All the best locations are taken or too expensive,” he says. “So, how do I make our voice heard? By staying true to the essence of Margiela, of self-expression and finding beauty in imperfection.”

This ethos now extends beyond fashion. The brand recently added to its famous numerical system, with the launch of Line 2, an art platform to foster creative and cultural collaborations. Starting with an immersive installation at the new Seoul store, the work was a collaboration between sound artist Joyul and visual artist Heemin Chung. Called *Elsewhere, Rhema, Open Torso*, it explored memory and transformation, and is the first of many such projects.

The maison’s next act is architectural, by way of its first-ever collection of 24 branded residences in Dubai. Designed around house codes including deconstruction, trompe-l’œil and transformation, details include Venetian glass and gold leaf inspired by the Japanese

art of kintsugi, the practice of mending with gold. Designed by Maison Margiela and Italian architect Carlo Colombo, in partnership with Alta Real Estate Development, it is, Sciuto explains, “the architectural expression of an haute couture house”.

At first, it may sound like a surprising pivot for a brand built on anti-luxury ideals, but Martin Margiela himself was long fascinated by interiors. He designed a homeware collection for Milan’s Salone del Mobile in 2009, redesigned the interior of the Maison Champs-Élysées hotel in 2011 and collaborated on a furniture line with Cerruti Baleri Furniture in 2012. He also redecorated the L’Île aux Oiseaux (Bird Island) suite at Les Sources de Caudalie hotel in Bordeaux.

“Looking at the archives, Martin was always drawn to design,” Sciuto says. “I feel it’s my role to go back and look at the DNA of the brand and use that in a modern way. And that’s why this project came about.”

The project’s scale, limited to 24 homes, is telling. As for being located in Dubai, Sciuto is unequivocal. “Dubai is the place to be right now. It’s becoming one of the most prominent skylines in the world.”

Other evolutions instigated by Sciuto also feel like new territory for the company, such as seating celebrities in the front row and a new campaign starring Miley Cyrus.

Here, too, there has been pushback, he explains, from diehard fans of the brand. “Some people tell us, Margiela should not be about celebrities but, you know, times have changed and being anonymous does not mean not communicating. Being anonymous to me means being an individual with your own beliefs, yet part of a community. To me, it’s communicating the value of creativity, and that we are a disruptive company.”

It’s a difficult balance, Sciuto admits, but he is thankful that he has Martens on board. “He understands that Margiela is a luxury brand. He’s intellectual and finding his way of being disruptive. Our thought process is more creative, strategic, more long term.”

“When you get this kind of recipe correct, it doesn’t have to be so literal. This is the difference in terms of Margiela versus the bigger corporate brands. We cannot compete on budget, or having the store in the right location. The only thing we can compete on is being able to send a message that is different.”

He pauses, then smiles. “We’ll always be a polarising brand. That’s Margiela.”



Chief executive Gaetano Sciuto, above, says sending models down the runway with metallic mouthpieces, left, is in keeping with Margiela’s provocative aesthetic

Strong suit

Neither a rupture nor a revival, Michael Rider's designs for Celine find grace in the in-between, a reimagining of French chic that feels both familiar and entirely new, writes **Sarah Maisey**

He may not yet be a household name, but within fashion circles, Michael Rider's remarkably seamless appointment as Celine's creative director has been met with something rare: quiet confidence. Brought on board to helm the French house at the beginning of the year, Rider brings a sense of renewal with his debut collections, a distinctly Parisian ease that feels both familiar and fresh.

That sense of familiarity is no accident. Rider spent a decade at Celine as design director under Phoebe Philo, whose tenure from 2008 to 2017 is the stuff of fashion legend, crafting a wardrobe that is still talked about today. Those years honed his understanding of Celine's particular lexicon, and its unique take on fashion that is simple yet anchored in a very Parisian chic.

Before that was Balenciaga, where Rider cut his teeth under Nicolas Ghesquière. More recently, at Polo Ralph Lauren, Rider deftly reimagined preppy Americana for a new generation. His return to Celine, announced on the same day Hedi Slimane stepped down, has something of an air of destiny about it.

"Coming back to Celine, to 16 rue Vivienne, in a changed world, has been incredibly emotional," Rider said when the appointment was announced. "Celine stands for quality, for timelessness, for style and for ideals that are difficult to define and harder still to hold on to."

If Slimane's reign was LA rock star meets Paris girl chic, Rider's first outing in July this year set out a gentler manifesto. Staged at Celine's headquarters during Haute Couture Week, the 72-look co-ed collection was about understated verve. And there were echoes of the past everywhere, such as a satin-lapelled jacket recalling Philo's resort 2010 collection; a sculpted waistline reminiscent of her resort 2017; and even Slimane's oval pendant from autumn 2020, reincarnated as a belt buckle.

The dialogue between eras was deliberate as Rider softened Slimane's severity without losing any of his precision. He used classic square silk scarves instead of Slimane's long, skinny versions, now tied at the neck or looped around shoulders with a studied carelessness. Trousers regained ease and volume – although Slimane's much-loved super-skinny trousers made the odd appearance – and jackets shifted from shrunken





CELINE

For his debut show, Celine's creative director, Michael Rider, above, demonstrated Parisian chic with roomy trousers, left, and stacked jewellery, below



fit to genteel, worn slung over an arm. These easy gestures outline how Rider understands the unspoken codes of French style, while loosening Slimane's strict outline towards something softer and more undone.

This balancing act may prove central to the designer's challenge, of how to reconcile the dual identities of Celine. Philo's grown-woman aesthetic and Slimane's razor-edged youth culture once seemed irreconcilable, their fan bases famously at war online over Philo's "old Celine" versus Slimane's "new". Yet, Rider's vision suggests a meeting point of sorts, as he evolves towards something newer and more laid-back.

Since its founding in 1945 as a children's shoemaker by Céline Vipiana, the house has prized easy elegance with a Parisian twist. Under Rider, that translates into something instinctive, where cardigans are shrugged off shoulders, bags are carried en masse and vintage-style gold jewellery sits cluttered on fingers and around wrists. Sunglasses are de rigueur, the shoes flat – boxing boots, of all things, are the new must-have – and the attitude is unmistakably unhurried.

Celine's chief executive Séverine Merle welcomed Rider's return to the house he "knows intimately".

"Michael's vision, creative talent, together with his genuine nature and strong connection to Celine's heritage make him a natural choice to continue to build a long-lasting success for the maison," said Merle.

By his second collection, shown last month for summer 2026, Rider's vocabulary became a little bolder. There were colourful micro minidresses, plenty of popped collars and a tuxedo jacket worn with pointed, lace-up suede shoes. A double-breasted jacket was stretched into a bubble hem dress, as a trench coat was sheared off into a bolero. It was heady stuff, with a growing mood less about perfection, and more about lived-in glamour, the kind that looks as though it's on its way back from somewhere fabulous.

If Slimane's Celine was enigmatic and exacting, Rider's feels quietly assured, run through with charm and nonchalance. This may be the dawn of a new kind of nostalgia, a "new-old" Celine if you will, that both remembers as it renews. And in a world ever-hungry for novelty, that might just be the freshest idea of all.

OUT OF THE FIRE

He is now recognised as a pioneer of contemporary Emirati art, with works in major institutional collections such as the Guggenheim Foundation, but Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim didn't always feel like his art had a place in the world. In fact, in the late 1990s, he was in the throes of an artistic crisis so severe that he set fire to two truck-loads of his own artwork.

"Every person sometimes reaches this place, this Bermuda Triangle within," he says. "It is a zone of disintegration, a loss of awareness. I reached that stage in 1999. I had a lot of works, almost everything from the beginning up to that time. They were in two trucks. I didn't know where to put them, I didn't have place to put them."

Ibrahim took the artworks to the mountains of Khor Fakkan, where he piled them into a colourful heap and set them ablaze. Paintings, works on paper and sculptural forms withered in the fire and turned to ash. "Dust to dust," Ibrahim says. "The works came from those mountains and they returned to the mountains."

From lighting a match to his own works to sparking the arts scene in the UAE, Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim is a force to reckon with, discovers **Razmig Bedirian**

HUSSEIN MARDINI

COVER STORY

Emirati artist Mohamed
Ahmed Ibrahim's
ongoing solo show
at Cultural Foundation
Abu Dhabi features a
rare work from the 1980s



The Sitting Man series of paintings, right, is inspired by an accidental photograph of artist Hassan Sharif captured without his head



HUSSEIN MARDINI; MOHAMED AHMED IBRAHIM / LAWRIE SHABIBI

Now 63 years old, the artist recognises that he acted out of psychological strain, a feeling that local audiences weren't able to "read" his art. The episode may have almost severed him from his practice, but instead, it marked a turning point. The day after, Ibrahim was creating art again and with unprecedented clarity.

"The moment changed me," he says. "My works were already provocative before that – not because they themselves were provocative, but because society was unable to read them. But after that, I started considering their nature as an aspect of the work. They became deliberately provocative."

Despite the societal disconnect, Ibrahim was not alone. He was surrounded by a group of like-minded artists, each of whom would contribute to the development of contemporary Emirati art.

Up until the mid-1980s, Ibrahim had learnt to nurture his passion for art in isolation, fuelled by the books that his brother-in-law would send him from the UK. "Books about art and art history and biographies in English," Ibrahim explains. That, coupled with his studies at Al Ain University in psychology – a field he had selected as there was nothing dedicated to the arts – taught him to see "the discourse behind the image, behind what is seen".

"I was practising with the few tools I had, and I was practising according to my own understanding and reading," he says. "I looked at what was happening in the world at that time, especially in books – the American modernists, for example, or the abstract expressionist movement – that opened doors to the experimentation."

Ibrahim emerged from his solitary practice in 1986, when he met the late Hassan Sharif, an artist and founding member of the influential Emirates Fine Arts Society. The meeting would become a landmark moment for the local arts scene, ushering in a new chapter. "Honestly, we helped each other a lot," Ibrahim says. "Then Hussein Sharif joined us, then Abdullah Al Saadi and later Mohammed Kazem, who was younger than us. From our discussions with each other, from our presentations, from our shared interests of music, poetry and literature, a friendship and artistic bond grew between us."



Outside our circle of five, people didn't understand what we were talking about

"The friendship between me and Hassan, and the presence of friends who shared that kind of thinking or visual outlook, led to an open circle of discussion. You couldn't have such conversations except with those few people, maybe just the five of us, because outside that circle, people didn't understand what we were talking about."

These five artists would eventually be regarded as formative figures of contemporary Emirati art. They became informally known as "The Five" because of their participation in a 2002 exhibition, titled 5 UAE, in Germany. Though they worked in different mediums, they bolstered the country's art scene and influenced a generation of artists in the region.

Their practices have garnered more international attention in recent years. Most of The Five have, in fact, shown works at the Venice Biennale



HUSSEIN MARDINI; MOHAMED AHMED IBRAHIM

through the National Pavilion UAE. Ibrahim himself was featured in a 2022 solo exhibition titled *Between Sunrise and Sunset*.

The title piece was an installation that took two years to produce. It comprised 128 sculptural forms, each unique in shape, size and colour. The work was devised using organic materials. Ibrahim formed the papier mâché over skeletal frames before using earth, leaves and even coffee and tobacco to add texture to them.

The sculptures were arranged in a gradient, ranging from more vivid hues to the dulled and monochrome palettes that alluded to the night. Some were as tall as a human being. Others were minuscule, barely rising to ankle-height. Some had anthropomorphic qualities – with a limb here or a head there, whereas others suggested the shapes of trees. The installation marked a homecoming earlier this year and was displayed at Sharjah's Maraya Arts Centre.



From Sittard and Dijon to Port Kochi and Kathmandu, each place forms a friendship

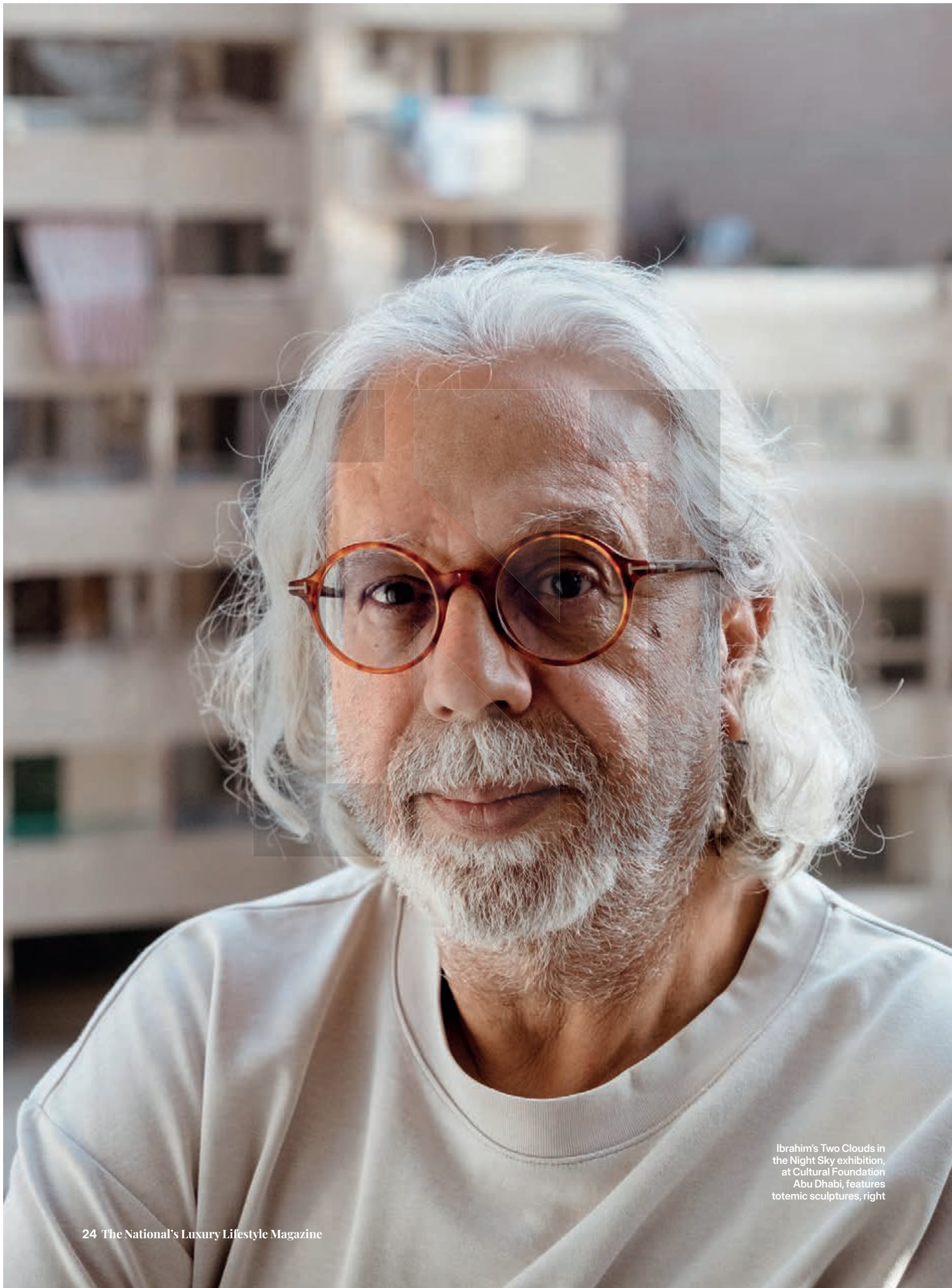
However, while that work presented a certain facet of Ibrahim's work, an ongoing solo show at the Cultural Foundation Abu Dhabi offers a more comprehensive look at his output. Titled *Two Clouds in the Night Sky*, the exhibition also features a 1989 painting by the artist – a rarity considering his bonfire a decade later. *Two Clouds in the Night Sky* brings together works from various mediums. Ibrahim's totemic sculptures are huddled in the central space. Paintings patterned by forms inspired by the natural environment of his native Khor Fakkan are hung around the sculptures. A commissioned piece, *Time/Place/Void*, is presented in the central space as well – an architectural intervention with four colourful interconnected rooms inscribed with Ibrahim's signature line drawings.

There is also a space dedicated to his famous *Sitting Man* paintings, inspired by an accidental photograph Ibrahim took of Hassan Sharif that captured the artist without his head. The final stretch of the exhibition shows some of Ibrahim's archival material and gives visitors the chance to engage with his pieces through touch – a work developed after conversations with the exhibition's curator Noor AlMehairbi.

The works come together in the exhibition as a surreal forest of sorts – or a "garden" as Ibrahim calls it – complete with its own ecosystem of



The well-travelled artist has created several works inspired by Cairo's Al Shesheini street, left



Ibrahim's Two Clouds in the Night Sky exhibition, at Cultural Foundation Abu Dhabi, features totemic sculptures, right

trees, insects and lifeforms crafted from papier mâché and water bottles. Children, Ibrahim says, seem to engage with his works the most. It isn't surprising, considering his vibrant palette and the shapes that goad the imagination to interpret anything from clouds to UFOs, people to chairs, towers of barnacles to imaginary beings.

"I see it as a garden," Ibrahim says. "I enjoyed it. I enjoyed seeing the works there. As an artist, you only see your works in the studio. But to see them on the walls of the space prompts a dialogue between yourself and your works. This kind of exhibition confirms your relationship with yourself; it confirms your conviction. I don't need to be encouraged, but it instils a certainty. That certainty is encouraging because, in the end, you are a person who carries within you the genes and the cells of your society, its culture, its language, its vision and all that."

Khor Fakkan is the city that Ibrahim most potently carries in his genes and in his art. Its geography and extraordinary colour palette has been a prime inspiration since his secluded beginnings in art. The city's corals and cliffs are featured in his art as allusions or artistic materials. Their patterns and textures appear in his paintings. In sculptures such as *Fresh and Salt*, they are used as a medium in themselves.

The splendour of Khor Fakkan – as well as the conversations Ibrahim had with his peers – fuelled his practice for decades. He persevered in creating art as he moved from job to job across the years. "I began in the police, then at the public library then the Khorfakkan Art Centre, then Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, after that Umm Al Quwain National Bank, then Emirates Services Corporation, and the last stop was Khor Fakkan Hospital," he says. "Each stage was a story."

Sometimes he'd create art while on the job, hiding the works he created in his office drawer. "I tried to create something I called the *Drawer Studio*," Ibrahim says. "It was literally a studio in a drawer, materials I could use alone, away from the eyes of others. I saw it as a private ritual, something I did secretly. When someone enters, you close the drawer and nothing appears."

Ibrahim has since retired from traditional employment and has become a full-time artist. Travelling has become a major part of his recent practice, and he has come to glean inspiration from cities across the world. "There are many places that attract me," he says. "Sittard in the Netherlands, Dijon in France, Port Kochi in India, Kathmandu in Nepal. Each place forms a friendship."

But one that he returns to at least twice a year is Cairo. He stays with his brother-in-law on Al Shesheini, a street he finds particularly engaging for its colourful shopfronts and façades. He has even produced a series of paintings inspired by the street. "It is very beautiful," he says. "The buildings blend with the street. The sky blends with the ground. The human behaviour is blended. Imagine a vegetable seller next to another seller spreading his goods on the ground in a colour-coded manner. It's surreal. It becomes like a kind of folk relief."



I want to make a foundation. It will have a studio for me and a place to host young artists

Travelling has expanded his artistic horizons, but Ibrahim still considers the UAE and its arts scene as his primary spring of inspiration. During conversations with the rest of The Five in the 1980s and 1990s, Ibrahim says they often laid their hopes on the next generation. All these years later, that trust has been vindicated.


A new wave of Emirati artists has emerged, carrying forward the experimental spirit The Five had once envisioned.

"I'm very happy when I see the young artists working seriously and passionately," Ibrahim says. "We also have institutional support now, private and public, museums and universities. It just needed time. I am extremely happy with this young generation. They're my friends, all of them. They are all dear to me."

He is looking to further empower the next generation of artists from the UAE. "I want to make a foundation. It will have a private studio for me, as well as a place to host young artists if they want to work with me."



HUSSEIN MARDINI; RYAN LIM FOR THE NATIONAL



Golf fans may have noticed a change at the 19th hole: players are dressing less like middle-aged middle managers and more like they've stepped out of a lookbook. There's a bit more fashion on the fairway lately, a touch of flair on the putting green. It's the result of a growing crop of golfwear brands launched in the past five years, catering to a younger – or at least more style-conscious – generation of golfers keen to bring personality to the course.

They might, for instance, be wearing Malbon, the Los Angeles label that's built a cult following for its loose-fit T-shirts, bucket-knit sweaters and pleated skirts, or Swedish brand Macade, which is "on a mission to push the boundaries of traditional golf apparel... for a new generation of golfers". Others may prefer the irreverent edge of Shank It – "golf gear that refuses to blend in", as the company puts it – or the preppy, collegiate polish of Fore All. Even the UAE has entered the scene, with its home-grown, graphics-led brand Sandie. Some of the pros are in on the action too: Sun Day Red line by Tiger Woods offers relaxed sweatshirts and sweatpants – a far cry from the starched polos of old.

Indeed, golf looks are undergoing a full-blown style revolution. Jojo Regan, co-founder of Manors Golf says: "You can't raise money as a brand like ours unless you're addressing a specific market. Ten years ago, investors wouldn't have considered it. Golfwear was all vanilla and there was no demand for anything different."

"But there's been a change of image," Regan adds. "Golf was perceived as an elitist, white, middle-class, rich man's sport. Now, the sport is more open to anyone. As more people play, golf, for want of a better word, has become cooler."

That shift, he argues, is also linked to renewed investment in the sport – and the emergence of new, more dynamic formats such as LIV Golf, which has been played at events in countries including Saudi Arabia, bringing the game to new audiences. The influx of money and media has energised the sport and helped draw in a younger crowd, one that expects to express itself through what it wears as much as how it swings.

MANORS GOLF

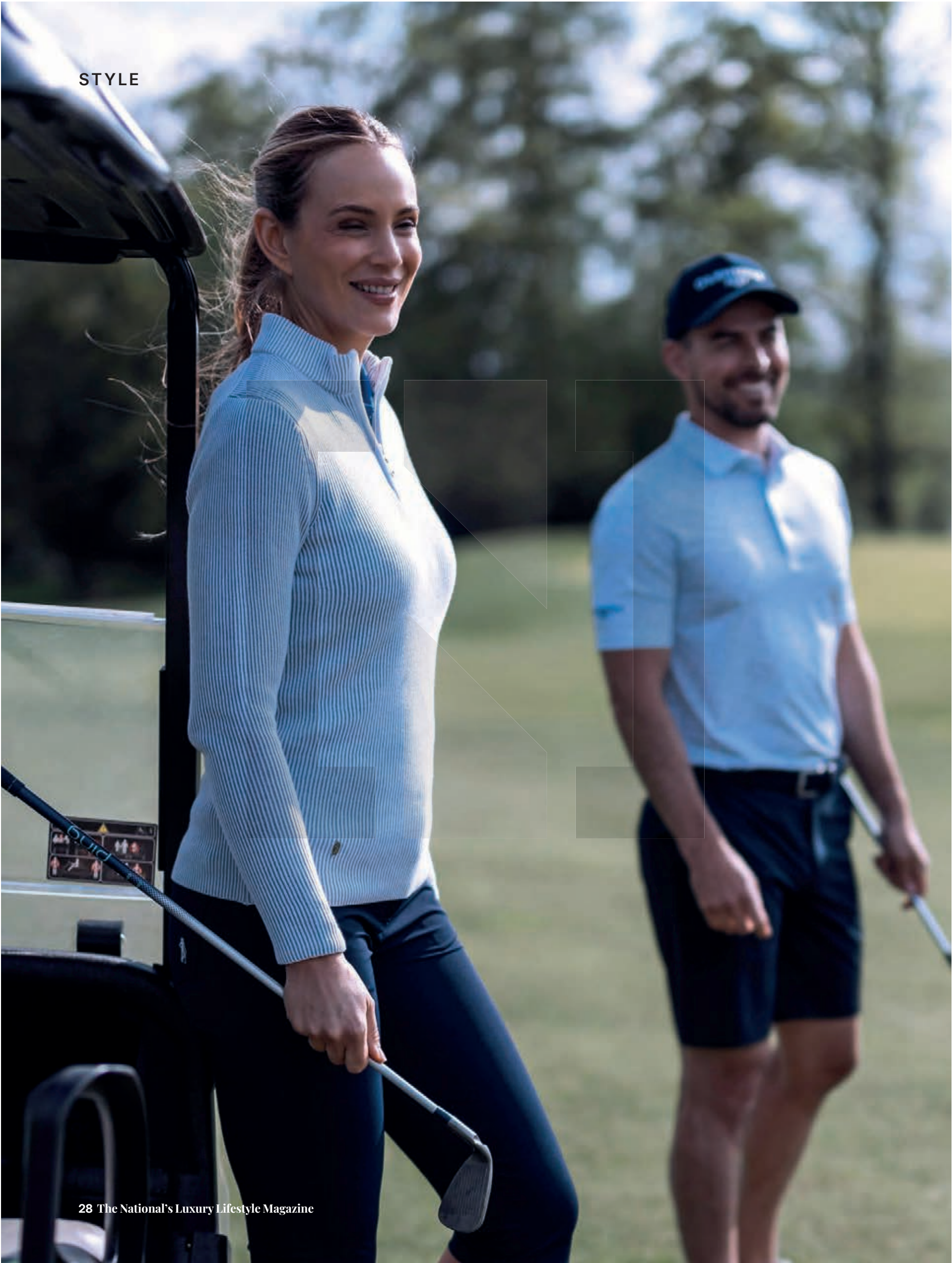
Manors Golf creates apparel from fabrics that are comfortable to play in for hours under the sun, but still feel stylish for the clubhouse after the game

STYLE

FASHION ON THE FAIRWAY

Once the preserve of khakis and conformity, golf is finding its groove with a new wave of brands – from LA's Malbon to the UAE's Sandie – reshaping what players wear on and off the course. By Josh Sims

STYLE



Of course, golf has been here before. Back in the 1950s and 1960s, it enjoyed a stylish heyday – unapologetically loud in contrast to the conservative conventions of menswear at the time. “Orange is the happiest colour,” Frank Sinatra once said. It was the shade of the loose alpaca cardigans he preferred to play in and would buy by the dozen. Later, strict clubhouse rules about dress – including those that shaped the other middle-class sport, tennis – made golf fashion cautious and exclusionary, if not downright uptight.

Players of the era might have admired the classic conservatism of Arnold Palmer, who once remarked: “[People have said that] I was a well-dressed golfer. I guess that has something to do with the fact that a lot of people who play golf don’t dress very well.” But they would likely have balked at today’s stars and their choice of flamboyant attire, from Ian Poulter’s patterned trousers to Shingo Katayama’s hats and John Daly’s riotous prints. Yet, the numbers suggest the sport is thriving. According to the R&A – a leading governing body for the sport – participation outside the US has grown by 44 per cent in the past decade, now totalling about 43 million players. And with that influx has come a fresh demand for clothes that reflect modern tastes.

The shift is linked to renewed investment in the sport and new formats of golf

“Golf apparel retailers are looking for something different to draw in a customer who otherwise won’t go in,” says Regan. “They see traditional golf style as not being for them.” Technical performance remains critical – fabrics still need to be breathable, moisture-wicking, flexible and comfortable for four or five hours of play under the sun – but now golfers also want to feel good at the clubhouse afterwards. “Just because it’s designed for the purpose of play, doesn’t mean golf clothing can’t look good after,” Regan adds. That sensibility has also helped Manors attract customers who don’t even play.

Big brands have taken note. Earlier this year, Manors released a footwear collection with Reebok – a collaboration Reebok itself initiated. Malbon has partnered with Adidas and Coca-Cola, while Fore All has teamed up with fashion designer Cynthia Rowley for a capsule of mesh polos, floral-print gloves and camo windbreakers.

Even heritage brands are feeling the shift. Glenmuir, the world’s oldest golfwear label, founded in 1891, has also moved with the times. “More new golfwear brands are coming out with relaxed, streetwear-based looks, and we’ve certainly felt the need to change too,” says managing director Mikhel Ruia. “We’ve introduced a hoodie – something our customers wouldn’t have been seen dead in just a few years ago, especially at a more traditional course. We know we’re not dressing 16-year-olds, but our customers are pulling us in that direction.”

Still, Ruia offers a word of warning. “It’s not enough for new brands to come to golf with an edge – they also have to come from golf,” he says, pointing to Nike’s gradual retreat from the category. “I still think golf is the only sport in which golfers judge another player’s seriousness about their play by what they’re wearing,” he says with a laugh. “That’s not about wealth or status, but about expressing their commitment to the sport.”

Brands such as Glenmuir, left, and Manors Golf, right, offer streetwear-inspired looks

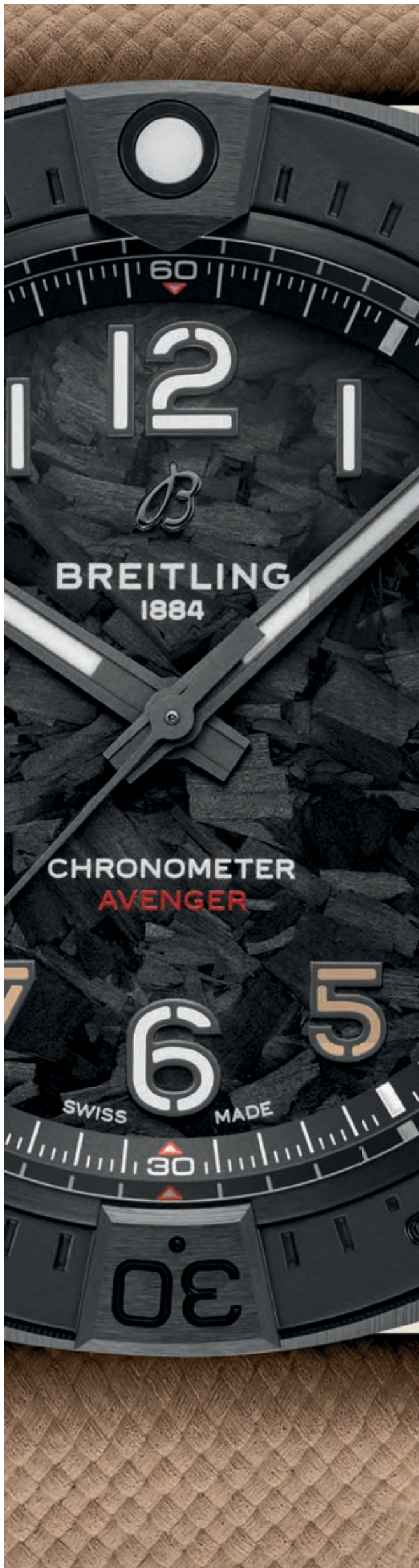


GLENMUIR; MANORS GOLF

THE TIME HAS COME

Francesca Fearon offers a sneak peek
of what to expect at the biggest-ever
Dubai Watch Week this month





BREITLING

HOROLOGY

To celebrate 75 years of watch retailer Ahmed Seddiqui, Breitling has created 75 Avenger Automatic 42 Night Mission watches

Dubai has quietly, then confidently, become one of the world's most important hubs for horological enthusiasts – a transformation carefully guided by watch retailer Ahmed Seddiqui, which launched the first Dubai Watch Week a decade ago. What began as a small gathering for collectors and watchmakers has evolved into a global meeting point for those passionate about timepieces – a place to explore the latest innovations, rare designs and the creative minds behind them.

Opening on November 19, the latest event of the biennial showcase moves to a new home at Dubai Mall's Burj Park. The location – with views of Burj Khalifa and the city's glittering skyline – signals its growing stature, as does its scale. This year's fair is the largest yet, hosting more than 90 brands, an increase of 46 per cent that underlines Dubai's rising influence within the watch world. Rolex, Audemars Piguet, Chopard, Chanel, Hublot, Van Cleef & Arpels and Tag Heuer are among those unveiling their latest creations, from Chanel's J12 Bleu and Tag Heuer's solargraph technology to the brand's newly released Connected Calibre E5 – the fifth generation of its luxury smartwatch collection.

"The increasing interest from brands and partners ahead of this year's edition has been rewarding and humbling as we further establish the Dubai Watch Week platform and continue to propel Dubai as a global destination," says Hind Seddiqui, chief executive of Dubai Watch Week.

Alongside the major maisons are up-and-coming independent brands and artisans. The event continues to act as an incubator for smaller names such as Norqain, ArtyA, Raketa, David Candaux – which brings its DC12 Maverik – and Studio Underdog, the British brand known for its playful aesthetic and distinctive dials. It describes its creations as "serious watches for serious collectors (who don't take themselves too seriously)", a motto that captures the new energy reshaping modern watch culture. Swiss brand Norqain leads its showcase with the Wild One Skeleton, a 42mm model featuring the Sellita SW200 movement, now joined by a sleek 39mm version. The Freedom 60 Chrono "Enjoy Life" and a new orange Skeleton 8K Chrono 42mm add even more colour and character to the line-up.

The Ahmed Seddiqui family's retail empire – from humble beginnings to one of the world's most respected watch retailers – has long been central to Dubai's horological rise. Over 75 years, the group has introduced the region to some of the world's most prestigious names, including Rolex, Patek Philippe and Chopard. This milestone anniversary has inspired a wave of limited editions in tribute to Seddiqui's legacy, each designed to capture the collector's imagination.

At the heart of Dubai Watch Week, the Collector's Lounge will house these commemorative pieces. Hublot, Ulysse Nardin, Ressence and Doxa all present Seddiqui-exclusive editions. Ulysse Nardin, for instance, has created a Diver [Air] Seddiqui edition, while Breitling celebrates the occasion with a limited run of 75 Avenger Automatic 42 Night Mission watches. Complete with a military strap, a scratch-resistant ceramic case and a carbon black dial, the model highlights the numerals "7" and "5" – a nod to Seddiqui's 75th year.

Bovet's contribution is particularly striking. The maison has produced two limited editions, including a seven-piece version of its world timer, the Récital 30, adorned in the colours of the UAE flag. The Seddiqui name and the number 75 are engraved on the back, while Dubai appears in Arabic on the city roller and Arabic numerals mark the hours. Bovet's second release, the Récital 12, features a rich blood jasper dial, underscoring the brand's craftsmanship and artistry.

Audemars Piguet, celebrating its own 150th anniversary, will also draw attention with a groundbreaking Royal Oak "Jumbo". The model

HOROLOGY



New timepieces such as Parmigiani Fleurier's Toric Petite Seconde, far right, and Girard-Perregaux's Laureato Fifty, right, will be at Dubai Watch Week, above

integrates both a flyback chronograph and a flying tourbillon – a technical feat that comes packed with patented innovations and a design language that remains unmistakably Royal Oak.

The Swiss West End Watch Company, one of the earliest to influence the Seddiqi family's fascination with watches, pays homage with a two-piece tribute – a pocket watch and a wristwatch. The pocket edition is inspired by models originally designed for the Indian Army and Railways, featuring a white dial with Hindi numerals in red or black cartouches. The automatic wristwatch is based on the brand's historic Reference 8152, long favoured by military officers and explorers, with a faceted sunray centre dial. Both models feature engraved 75th-anniversary casebacks.

Gerald Charles joins the celebration with a 20-piece Maestro 2.0 Ultra-Thin "Tiger's Eye", distinguished by a bronzed case and sand-toned rubber strap that makes the shimmering gold hues of the tiger's eye dial come alive under light.

Among the event's other notable unveilings is Louis Moinet's Impulsion Titanium Green, a 12-piece limited-edition conceived especially for Dubai Watch Week. The chronograph, with an exposed movement and flying tourbillon, pays homage to Abraham-Louis Breguet and Louis Moinet – inventors of the tourbillon and chronograph respectively. Parmigiani Fleurier will present fresh iterations of its minimalist Toric Petite Seconde in platinum and rose gold "Dune" cases, while Girard-Perregaux celebrates 50 years of its famed Laureato with the new Laureato Fifty.

Louis Vuitton is also making waves with the Monterey, a pebble-shaped watch that revisits the brand's first wristwatches from 1988, designed by late Italian architect Gae Aulenti. Lug-free and crowned at 12 o'clock in a nod to pocket watches, the Monterey has smooth contours and a white enamel dial that evoke a sense of contemporary nostalgia. The train-track motif on the dial revives an original element from the 1980s design.

With more than 90 luxury brands showcasing everything from elegant dress watches to divers, field pieces and avant-garde collector editions, this year's Dubai Watch Week promises to be a feast for enthusiasts. But beyond the spectacle lies the deeper purpose of the event: education.

Masterclasses will offer hands-on insight into the artistry of fine watchmaking. Bovet will guide attendees through the roller system of its Récital 30 world timer, while designer Fiona Kruger hosts a workshop on dial marquetry and composition through collage. Hermès, meanwhile, will open a window into its intricate leather marquetry – a painstaking craft used to embellish the maison's most artistic dials.

The programme also brings together some of the industry's most influential figures. Rolex chief executive Jean-Frédéric Dufour will appear in conversation with Abdul Hamied Seddiqi, chairman of Seddiqi Holding. A chief executive round-table featuring Georges Kern (Breitling), Ilaria Resta (Audemars Piguet), Karl-Friedrich Scheufele (co-president, Chopard) and Julien Tornare (Tag Heuer) promises to reveal candid insights into the world of Swiss watches. Wei Koh, founder of *Revolution* and *The Rake* media platforms, will curate a series of talks exploring the evolution of watch culture and the names who've shaped it.

In addition, Dubai Watch Week has signed a partnership with Bonhams as its lead auction house partner, which arrives in Dubai with a shared knowledge and experience of horology.

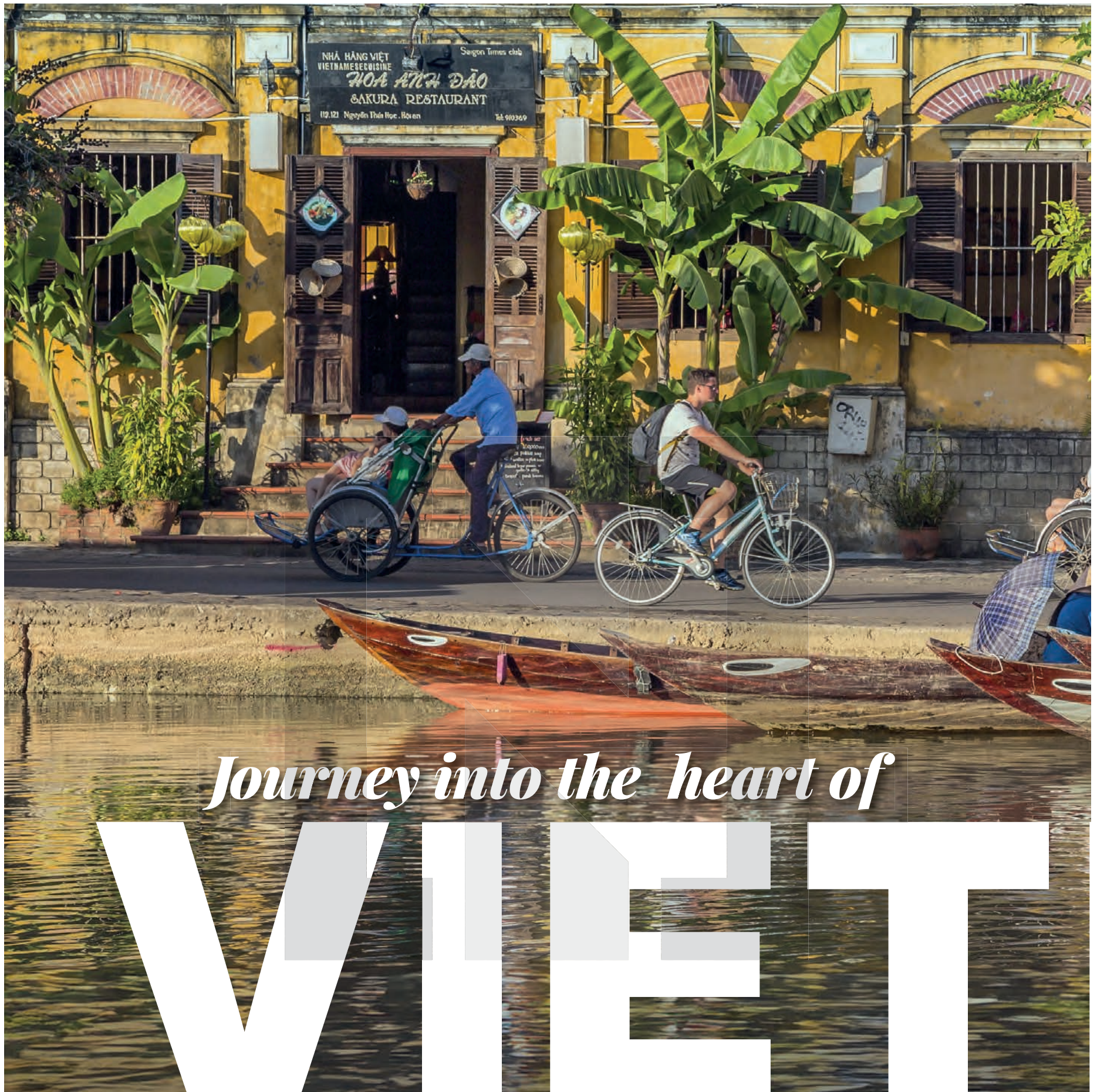
It's remarkable to consider how far Dubai Watch Week has come in only seven events – from a handful of exhibitors in 2015 to a cornerstone date on the global watchmaking calendar. The achievement stands as a testament to the Seddiqi family's vision, Dubai's position as a global luxury capital and the enduring allure of mechanical mastery in an increasingly digital world.



DUBAI WATCH WEEK: PARMIGIANI FLEURIER; GIRARD-PERREGAUX



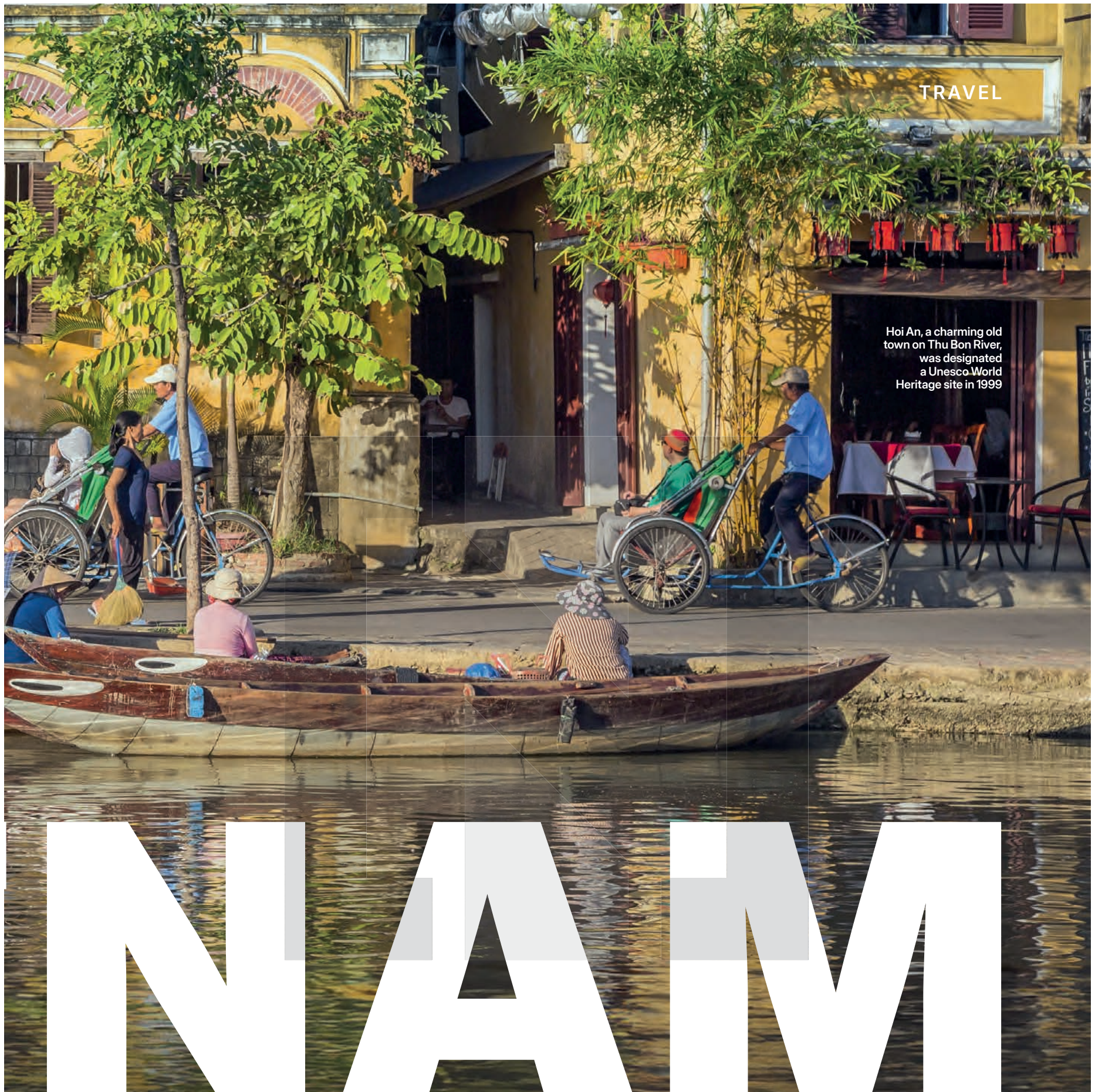
The increasing interest from brands ahead of this year's watch week has been rewarding as we propel Dubai as a global destination



Journey into the heart of

V I E T

From the potters of Hoi An to the bridges in the mist of Da Nang, the country's central region moves at a gentle pace, discovers **Sarah Maisey**



TRAVEL

Hoi An, a charming old town on Thu Bon River, was designated a Unesco World Heritage site in 1999

Any ambitions I had of becoming a ceramicist were swiftly shattered at the My Linh pottery workshop beside the Thanh Ha Pottery Village in Vietnam's Hoi An. As the wet clay spun off the wheel and through my fingers, I realised that shaping earth into form is far harder than it looks.

Thanh Ha Pottery Village showcases Hoi An's long history as a trading port between the 15th and 19th centuries. Its walls are lined with photographs of domed kilns nestled between homes and trees, while the ground floor displays works by local artists.

Outside, amid bougainvillea and bamboo, miniature versions of the Tower of Pisa, Sydney Opera House and Saint Basil's Cathedral dot the garden in a joyful clash of kitsch and craftsmanship. The streets around the village invite visitors to try their hand at the wheel or to shop for

expertly made ceramics – delicate teacups, deep pho bowls dripping with glaze and small clay flutes shaped like animals. I left with a menagerie of crooked tigers, chickens and buffalo for about Dh13.

Hoi An is a charming old town on Thu Bon River, its historic centre astonishingly well preserved. Designated a Unesco World Heritage site in 1999, it holds more than 1,100 timber-frame houses arranged in a street plan barely changed in centuries. The town is a blend of influences – Chinese temples and wooden shophouses, narrow Vietnamese tube houses, French colonial villas and the Japanese Covered Bridge, first built in the 1500s.

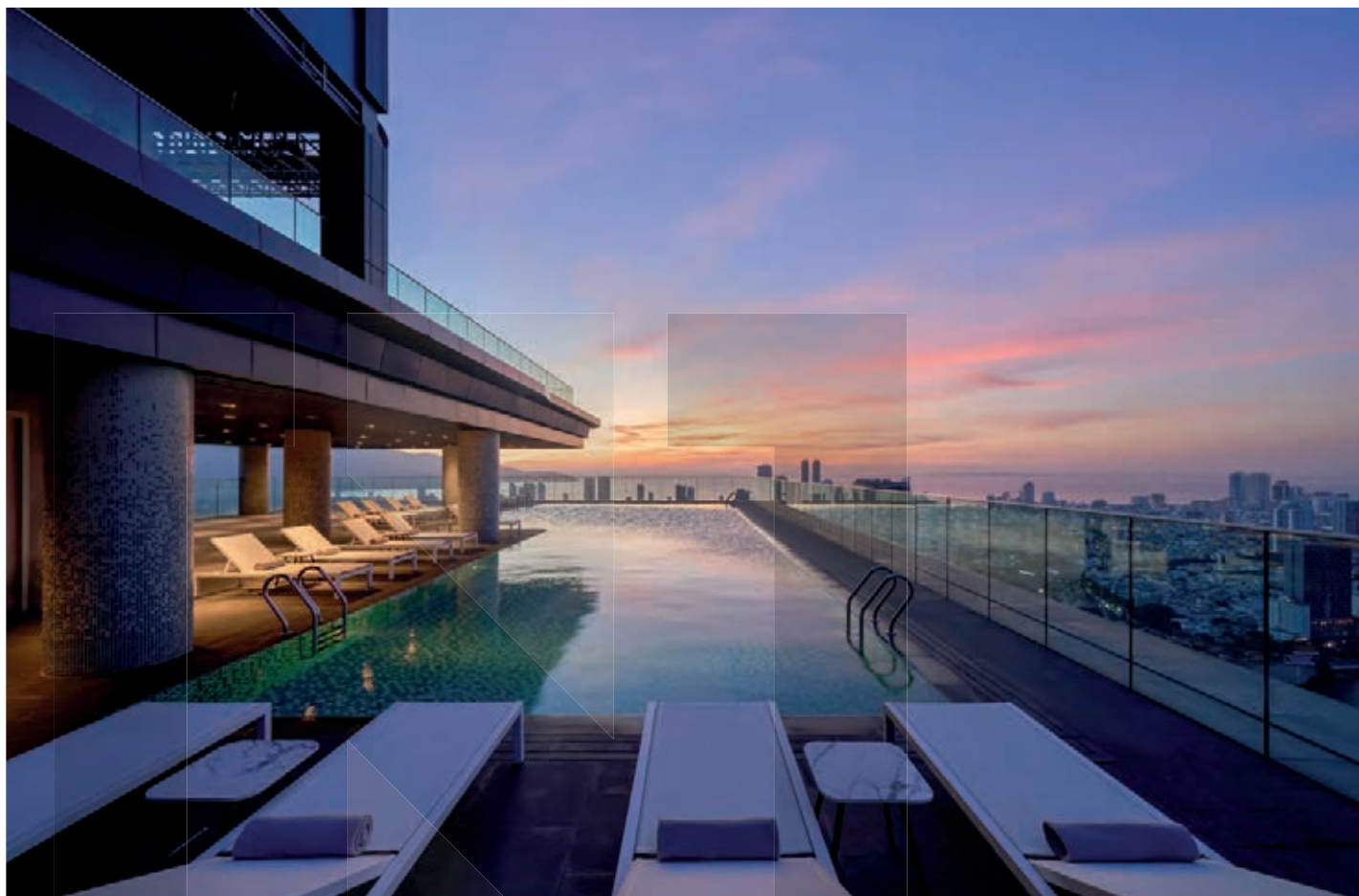
Today, those ancient structures house cafes, tearooms and boutiques selling everything from silk lanterns and handmade soaps to retro

GETTY IMAGES

**Golden Hands Bridge is a walkway
held aloft by two enormous stone hands,
and offers cinematic views over the jungle**



Clockwise from left, Golden Hands Bridge is best visited early in the morning; M45 Rooftop Bar at Courtyard by Marriott Danang Han River offers panoramic views; and coloured lanterns on boats drifting on Hoai River



propaganda posters. Visitors can paint their own lanterns, sip chocolate at Maison Marou's pretty cafe in Le Loi or visit Jimmy Chen's viral jewellery stand for custom silver pieces. Local tailors can copy an outfit or make one from scratch, and most shops deliver to hotels so visitors can wander hands-free.

Come evening, the town transforms. Strings of coloured lanterns glow over the riverfront as boats drift on Hoai River and both locals and travellers release paper lanterns on to the water to wish for happiness and peace. By morning, the evidence is quietly gathered back by hand.

Central Vietnam's lushness flows into its cuisine. Fruit sellers balance baskets of mangosteens, rambutans and crab apples, while the coffee is dark, rich and best taken iced with condensed milk (ca phe sua da). For dessert, coconut jelly served in its shell is unmissable.

Offshore, Cu Lao Cham Islands – a Unesco Biosphere Reserve – lure divers to clear waters named after the ancient Champa Kingdom that once ruled this region. Those intrigued by its legacy should head north to Da Nang's Museum of Cham Sculpture, housed in a handsome colonial building with more than 400 sandstone relics tracing Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic influences across seven centuries.

Da Nang itself is a city in reinvention. Once a fishing port and later an American airbase – briefly one of the busiest in the world – it is now a fast-rising coastal hub framed by mountains and sea.

Nearby, the Golden Hands Bridge in Ba Na Hills has become social-media-famous: a sweeping walkway held aloft by two enormous stone hands. Reached by a 5km cable car, it offers cinematic views over the jungle. The wise visit early, enjoy the bridge and head straight back down before the theme park crowds arrive.

Back in the city, a cyclo ride – Vietnam's bicycle-powered rickshaw – offers a languid way to explore. Sitting front and centre, you glide through streets buzzing with motorbikes and market stalls; it's best enjoyed with a camera, a measure of trust and a steady nerve.

While northern Vietnam has four seasons, the centre and south have only two: wet and dry. During my visit, the rains had just begun – brief,



GETTY IMAGES; COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT BONVOY

misty bursts that left the Golden Hands Bridge shrouded in dreamlike fog. But the downpours can be fierce, so it's best to check local weather and plan accordingly.

For food lovers, Nen Danang is a must. Tucked away in a residential street in Ngu Hanh Son, it is Vietnam's first and only Michelin Green Star restaurant. Founder and chef Summer Le calls it "consciously Vietnamese", using "hyper-local" ingredients – many grown in the city farm next door. Paired menus feature delicate bites of scallop, rice-field crab and fermented coconut and pineapple, each course served with a hand-drawn illustration and a poetic description.

As the sun dips, M45 Rooftop Bar at the new Courtyard by Marriott Danang Han River offers panoramic vistas from sea to mountains. As the city's tallest building, it has a view that's unmatched and food that's served omakase-style, with the chef curating each exquisite course.

STAR POWER

BMW's limited-edition car features a celestial theme in keeping with Arabian traditions. By **Nasri Atallah**

While we wait for an expected 7 Series facelift next year – as has been spied during tests on the autobahn – another region-specific design has been added to the G70 generation family, a special model built exclusively for the Middle East. Called the Suhail Edition, it's based on the 760i, currently the only V8-powered model in the line-up.

The limited-edition car takes its name from Suhail, a star in the constellation Argo Navis. In Arabian tradition, it has long symbolised guidance and brilliance – a fitting metaphor for a car that embodies the BMW Individual personalisation service at its most poetic.

The Suhail star has carried deep cultural resonance across the Arab world for centuries. Known to astronomers as Canopus, Suhail is a giant, yellowish-white star in the constellation Carina, about 313 light-years from Earth. It is the second-brightest star in the night sky.

Its appearance in late summer marks a shift in the seasons – and an always-welcome signal of cooler winds. To Bedouin tribes, Suhail was both a compass and a calendar, guiding journeys across the desert and seas long before GPS took over. Even today, its rising is celebrated in parts of the Gulf as a moment of renewal and reflection, a reminder of humankind's dialogue with the stars.

That symbolism makes the name resonate as more than only marketing. The Suhail Edition draws from a story that predates the motor car itself and ties to our earliest ability to navigate our terrain.

At first glance, the Suhail Edition looks like a fully optioned 7 Series, but BMW's designers have added enough celestial cues to set it apart. The exterior wears a two-tone oxid grey and night blue metallic finish, a subtle nod to twilight fading into night. Up front, crystal-

effect daytime running lights and an illuminated kidney grille create a theatrical entrance – which has become a BMW hallmark of late.

Inside, the theme continues with night blue leather, embroidered Suhail constellations on the headrests and mirror-finish oak trim. The Sky Lounge panoramic roof, threaded with LED lights, gives the cabin a soft, starlit glow.

Rear passengers are treated to the Executive Lounge package, complete with reclining seats and the now-famed BMW Theatre Screen – a 31.3-inch 8K display that folds from the ceiling like first class in-flight entertainment.

The Suhail Edition may also mark the end of an era for BMW nomenclature. It's likely one of the last 7 Series to carry the "i" suffix, as the brand begins phasing it out from all petrol-powered cars in 2026. From that point onwards, the letter will be reserved for fully electric models – a symbolic shift for a marque still balancing its combustion past with its electric future.

The Suhail Edition follows a well-trodden path of bespoke regional commissions, where luxury brands have found eager collectors. The Rolls-Royce "Arabian Gulf" Phantom, Bentley "Pearl of the Gulf" Bentayga and Aston Martin Vanquish S Ultimate Middle East Edition all leaned into local culture through symbolism and storytelling. BMW's take feels more introspective.

While only 50 cars will exist, the Suhail Edition's significance lies less in scarcity than in timing. It is a celebration of something that feels just as eternal as the 7 Series and BMW itself, as the marque prepares for a quieter and electrified future.



Suhail Edition has a two-tone oxid grey and night blue metallic finish, and the cabin includes headrests embroidered with constellations



The Suhail star symbolises guidance and brilliance – a fitting metaphor for a car that embodies BMW Individual at its most poetic

Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi ON ART

Young Emir Studying (1878) by Osman Hamdi Bey

A young man in a vivid green thobe and yellow turban lays on his stomach, absorbed in a book. In *Young Emir Studying* by Osman Hamdi Bey, his right hand props his chin, while the fingers of his left hand trace the lines from right to left – a remnant of the old Ottoman Turkish script written in Arabic letters. I often think about this niche that the young man, an emir no less, has carved for himself. From his title – Arabic for “prince” – we can assume he had access to every distraction and luxury, yet chose to spend his time reading and learning.

Had this emir lived in 2025, would he still hold a book? Or a phone? Would he study a sacred or historical text, or scroll endlessly through social media? Digital access isn’t all-bad; the internet can also be a vessel for learning. My thoughts drift to the young women of Afghanistan, once again barred from education, whose only refuge was online – until their internet was cut off for days last September.

Back to printed books. The UAE is fortunate to host several literary festivals, with Abu Dhabi International Book Fair and Sharjah International Book Fair both dating back to the early 1980s. Dubai added its own in the 2000s with the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature.

Sharjah’s event, which is among the region’s oldest and most popular, returns this month, taking place until November 16, expecting to exceed



two million visitors as in past years – making it one of the largest globally by attendance.

Since the rise of social media, young people, particularly in the Arab world, have struggled to disengage from screens and rediscover the joys of play and reading. Acknowledging this, Dubai launched the Arab Reading Challenge in 2015, drawing millions of participants from across the region. The initiative rewards enthusiasm for books, but it must complement the guidance of parents, guardians and teachers, whose example remains vital amid the temptations of instant gratification.

Young Emir Studying remains one of Louvre Abu Dhabi’s most beloved works, constantly drawing crowds in person and views online. A sister version, painted in 1905, hangs at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, though it lacks the rich palette of the Abu Dhabi original. So admired is the green-robed emir that the museum now offers him on prints, postcards and other keepsakes.

Today, like that young emir, we face endless diversions – digital and otherwise. He embodies the Arabic proverb: “A book is the best of all companions.” Perhaps, then, we should follow his example – open a book, newspaper or magazine, and let ourselves be absorbed, uninterrupted by social media’s noise and its seductive, fleeting pull.



DCT ABU DHABI



Since the rise of social media, young people have struggled to disengage from screens and rediscover the joys of reading

ARTS TRANSITION

Maghie Ghali looks ahead to what we can expect from this year's Abu Dhabi Art – which promises to be a celebration of 17 years of cultural impact

Under the Gulf Focus section at Abu Dhabi Art, Saudi Arabia's Hafez Gallery will present the emotive works of artist Sami Al Marzooqi

As the Gulf gears up for another autumn rich with culture, the return of Abu Dhabi Art remains one of the most anticipated events on the region's calendar. The 17th edition, taking place from November 19 to 23 at Manarat Al Saadiyat, will bring together more than 140 galleries from 52 cities across 37 countries.

This year's fair is also bittersweet – it marks the final outing before Abu Dhabi Art relaunches as Frieze Abu Dhabi. The transition will lend a sense of nostalgia to the event, as both the fair and its loyal audience reflect on 17 years of connecting through art.

"Fairs are often described as platforms in art world discussions, but they are perhaps more understandable as communities, certainly in the case of Abu Dhabi Art," says Dyala Nusseibeh, the fair's director. "I hope everyone enjoys this edition and is as excited as we are for the new chapter ahead as Frieze Abu Dhabi. What is certain is that we have collectively created very strong foundations for the growth ahead," she adds.

"Abu Dhabi Art functions as both a dynamic commercial hub for the art market and a marketplace for ideas," Nusseibeh explains. "Exhibitor numbers have risen by 40 per cent compared to 2024, underscoring the growing international interest in the UAE's art scene amid shifting global dynamics. This global participation also allows Abu Dhabi Art to amplify regional narratives and share them worldwide, contributing meaningfully to cultural discourse."

Alongside the main showcase of international galleries such as Pace Gallery, Mennour, Galleria Continua and Hanart TZ, this year's

ABU DHABI ART





CULTURE

Focus section highlights artists from Turkey, the Gulf and Nigeria. The popular Collectors' Salon also returns, presenting historically important objects, artefacts, rare books, maps and artworks.

The Nigeria Focus, presented in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy of Nigeria, underscores shared values between the UAE and Nigeria in supporting the creative economy. Seven galleries will take part, featuring both established and emerging artists from the Osogbo School – a modernist art movement born in the 1960s that fused Yoruba cultural symbols with a post-independence visual language.

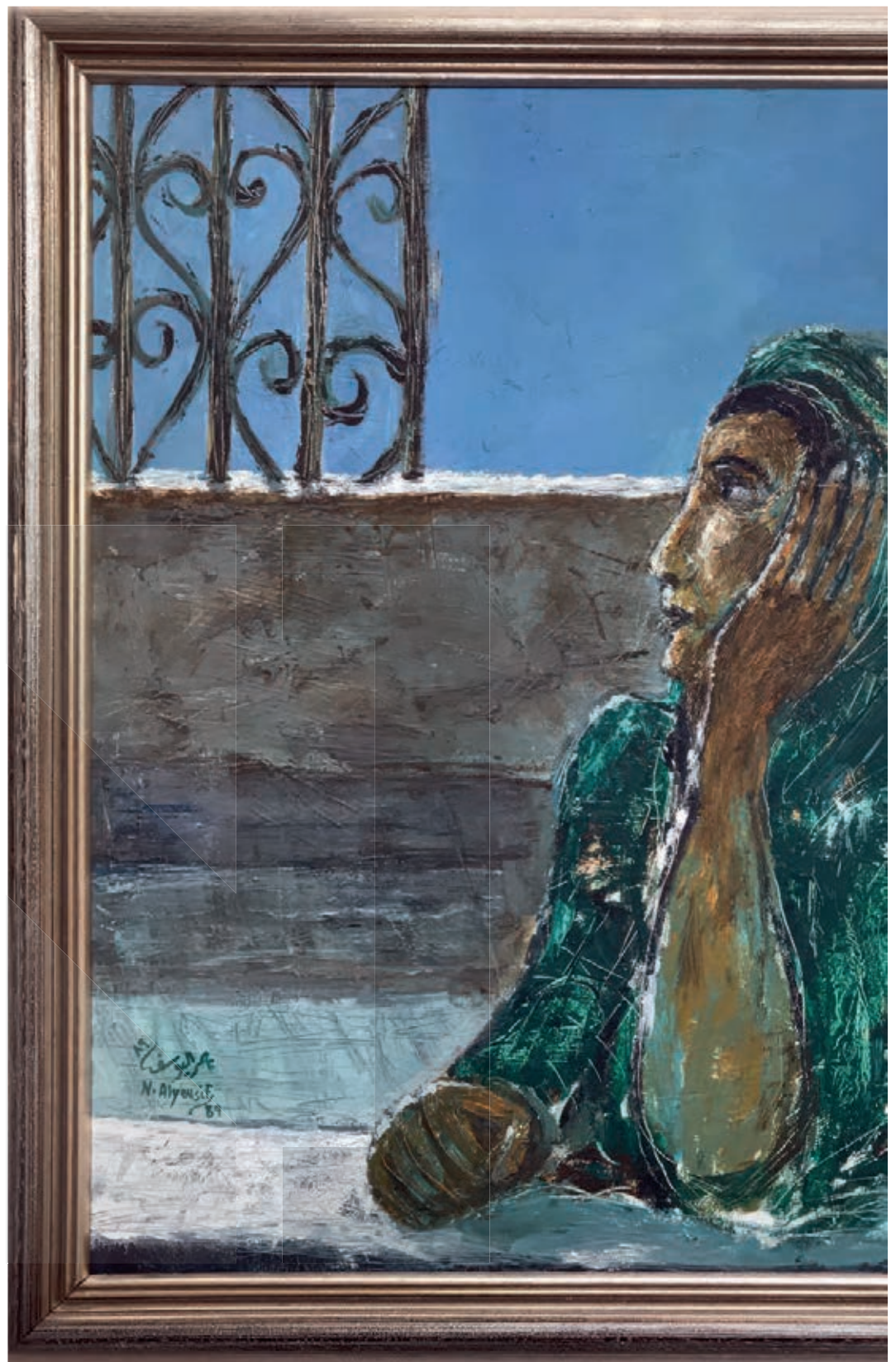
The Turkey Focus, curated by former Turkish gallerist Doris Benhalegua Karako, shines a light on modern masters from the country and their connections to the broader Middle East. A major highlight is a collection of works by Fahrelnissa Zeid, a pioneering artist whose extraordinary life and career spanned Istanbul, Baghdad, Paris, London and Amman.

"All three Focus geographies are vibrant centres of creative production, each with rich, yet often under-researched contributions to global art history, which has long been dominated by Eurocentric narratives," says Nusseibeh. "These regions have experienced profound social and political transformations in recent decades, and their artists have responded to these shifts with extraordinary innovation. There is significant growth potential in the market for artists in these sectors, making now an exciting moment for collectors to engage with their work."

The Gulf Focus celebrates the region's dynamic art histories and its new generation of artists, presenting seven galleries from across the Arabian Peninsula. Dubai's Gallery Isabelle will bring a group show spotlighting Emirati pioneers Hassan Sharif and Mohammed Kazem, alongside rising talent Alia Zaal, while Doha's Wusum Gallery presents a solo exhibition dedicated to Qatari artist Tarek Darwish.

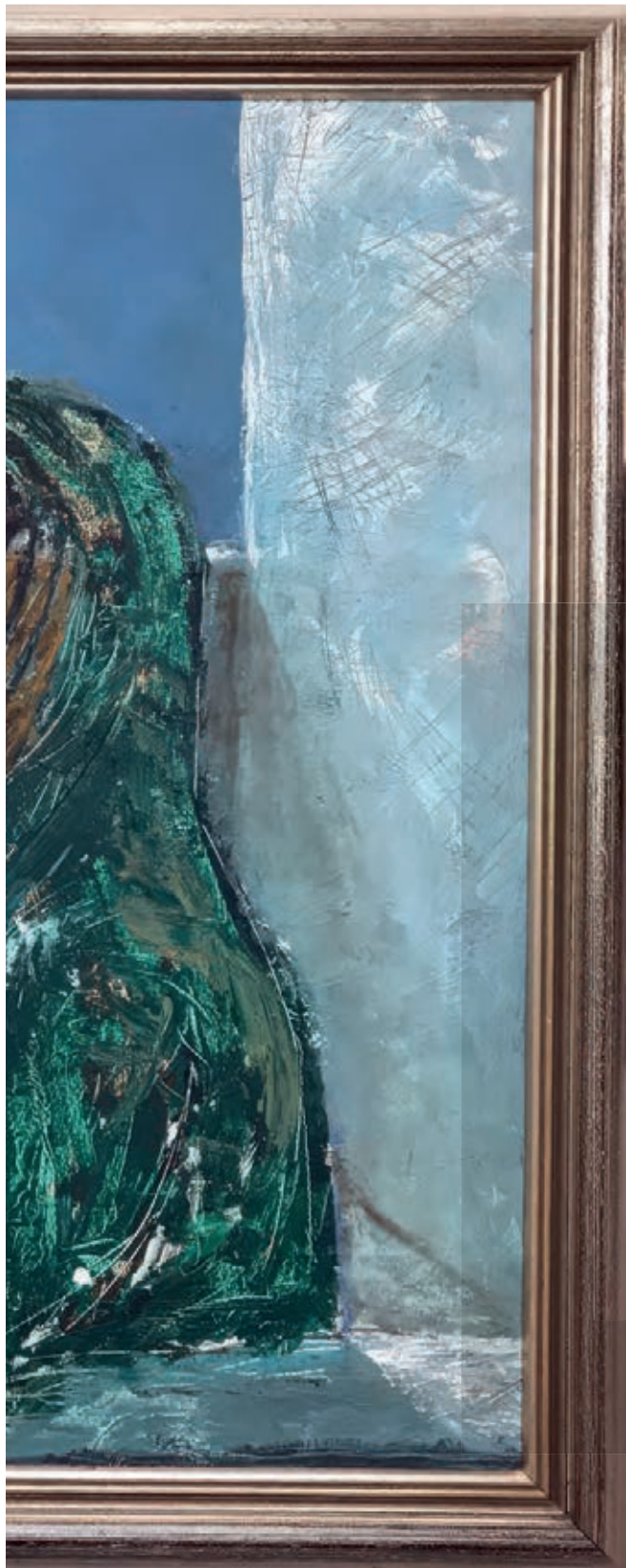
Kuwait's Hunna Art, which champions female artists, will showcase works by Alymamah Rashed (Kuwait), Joud Fahmy (Saudi Arabia), and Zayn Qahtani (Bahrain), all at pivotal moments in their careers. "Their practices converge around questions of materiality, ecology and embodied storytelling," says Hunna founder Océane Saily. "Rooted in the Gulf's environments and mythologies, each artist engages distinct materials – from painting and sculpture to bio-based media – to explore the resonances between self, land and culture."

"These three artists represent the strength and diversity of a new generation of voices from the Arabian Peninsula," she adds. "Artists whose practices are grounded in their local contexts, yet speak to global conversations. Rashed's surreal anatomies evoke shifting ecologies through an intimate, subjective lens;

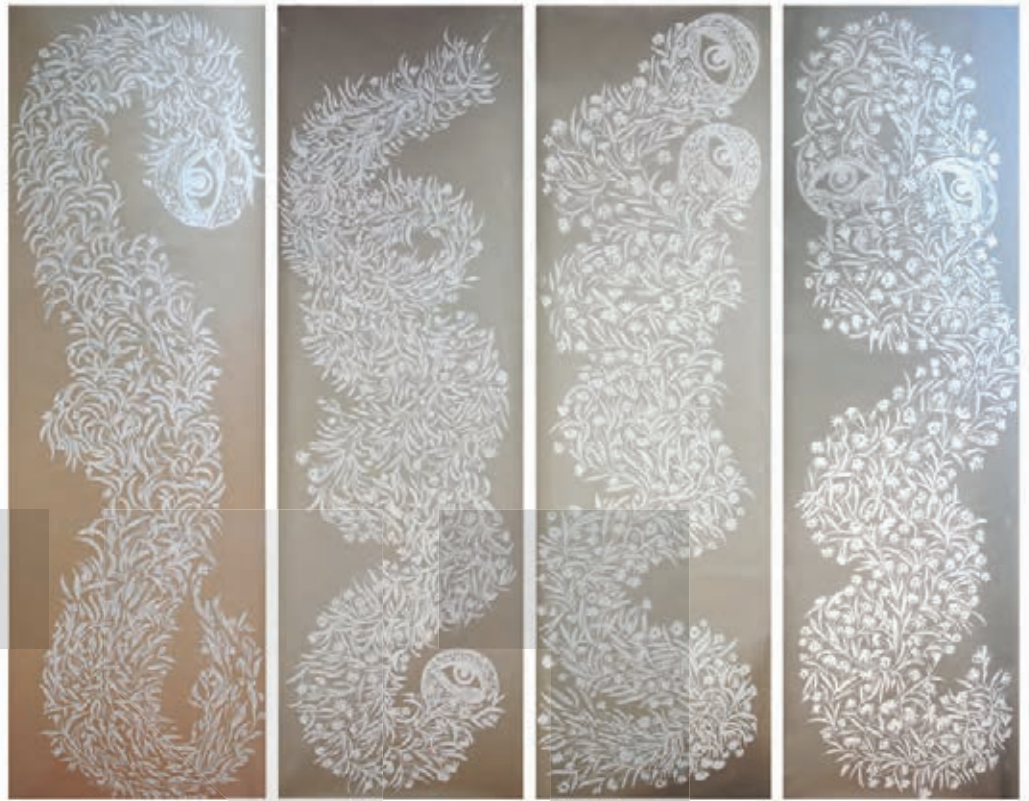


ABU DHABI ART





Clockwise from left, *It Was Always You* by Bahraini artist Zayn Qahtani; *The Lady and the Moon* by Nasser Al-Yousif from Bahrain; and *When Your Light Lived Within Me – Lace Tree Series I-IV* by Alymamah Rashed from Kuwait



Fahmy's labour-intensive textile sculptures reclaim women's agency through tactility and endurance; and Qahtani's experimental use of organic matter proposes speculative cosmologies grounded in the Gulf's material and spiritual heritage."

Saudi Arabia's Hafez Gallery presents the works of Sami Al Marzoogi, Sara Alabdali and Raeda Ashour, whose practices span meditative ink studies, narrative landscapes and embossed surfaces. "Each artist engages with heritage as a living source," says Kenza Zouari, project manager at Hafez Gallery. "Whether through Al Marzoogi's emotive colour and line, Alabdali's integration of Hejazi culture and personal memory, or Ashour's reimagining of Islamic ornament for modern contexts. Their practices complement and enrich one another, embodying the region's diversity and relevance on the international stage."

Bahrain's Albareh Gallery delivers a curated selection of works by Nasser Al-Yousif, one of the founding figures of Bahrain's modern art movement. The showcase traces his evolution from early paintings inspired by Bahraini folklore and architecture to late linoleum prints created after he lost his eyesight, in which vision is replaced by touch, rhythm and inner light. "A self-taught artist, he bridged tradition and modernity, infusing his work with the warmth of lived experience and the discipline of experimentation," says gallery director Hayfa Aljishi. "His legacy continues to inspire a generation of artists who see in his practice both an artistic and human triumph – the belief that creativity endures beyond limitation."

Another highlight this year is the unveiling of six site-specific commissions across key cultural landmarks in Al Ain, extending the fair's reach beyond the city and into the emirate's heritage heartland.

As part of the Beyond Emerging Artists 2025 programme, three artists from the UAE – Alla Abdunabi, Salmah Almansoori and Maktoum Marwan Al Maktoum – will debut dual-site

commissions in both Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. This has been curated by internationally acclaimed artist Issam Kourbaj, who will also present a series of his own installations across Al Ain Museum, Al Qattara Arts Centre and Al Hili Archaeological Park.

"Abdunabi presents a poetic vessel at Al Jahili Fort – an empty water carrier placed beside a disused well, evoking longing and exile," explains Nusseibeh. "Almansoori creates organic sculptures woven from palm fibres at Al Ain Oasis, in dialogue with the site's natural textures and traditions. While Al Maktoum unveils a monumental installation near the Jebel Hafeet Tombs, exploring time, landscape and ancestry."

"More established artists are also contributing to the Al Ain commissions," she adds. "Hesam

Rahmanian and Ramin and Rokni Haerizadeh from Abu Dhabi have conceived a sculptural *Triumphal Arch* at Al Hili Archaeological Park, inspired by a

phrase from Andalusian mystic Ibn Arabi. The work transforms his words into intertwined letters that hover in space – a poetic fusion of language, form and imagination."

Completing this year's Al Ain commissions is renowned Nigerian artist Nike Davies-Okundaye – who is a fifth-generation weaver and a key figure of the Osogbo School. His work, *The Market Square*, will be presented at Al Ain Oasis, and is composed of monumental indigo-dyed textiles.

As the curtains prepare to close on Abu Dhabi Art in its current form, this year's event stands as more than a farewell. It is a celebration of 17 years of cultural exchange, a reflection on the legacy it leaves behind and a confident step towards a new chapter under the famed Frieze umbrella – a defining moment in the UAE's cultural evolution.

Making a grand piano is part physics, part carpentry and part devotion. At the Steinway & Sons factory in Hamburg, where each piece takes close to a year to complete, you see how vibration becomes melody and a craftsman's touch turns raw material into sound.

Each hammer strike in the warren of workshops sends waves through soundboards of varnished spruce, turning air pressure into tone. It is a process refined on both sides of the Atlantic for about 170 years – a choreography unchanged since founder Heinrich “Henry” Engelhard Steinway opened his New York workshop in a Manhattan loft in 1853.

Opened in 1880, the Hamburg site is one of only two Steinway factories in the world. Its sister workshop in New York, established earlier by Henry's son, William Steinway, primarily to serve the North American market, continues to operate independently.

From its corner in northern Germany, the instruments that take shape find their way to concert halls in London, Vienna and Dubai. The emirate's connection to Steinway stretches back about a decade. Since Dubai Opera's inauguration in 2016, it has relied on Hamburg-made concert grands for its performances, supplied through House of Pianos in the UAE.

The relationship deepened with the Dubai Opera Limited Edition – a set of 14 handcrafted pianos unveiled last year and featured at the Downtown Dubai venue since, including as part of the Steinway Prizewinner Concert Series running until March 29.

My visit of the factory begins not in a showroom but in a nearby lumber-yard. Rows of maple, beech and mahogany woods rest on steel racks, some marked with chalk dates showing how long they have been drying.

“We keep them here for up to two years,” says Camilo Daza Tapia, head of Steinway & Sons's product management for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. “Only when the wood has released its moisture naturally can it hold the tension that produces our tone.”

He explains that only a small number of guests are ever allowed through the gates. “These visits aren't open to the public,” he says. “They are for concert halls or private buyers who have ordered a piano and want to see how it comes to life. When they see what a year of work looks like, they become patient. They stop thinking about the instrument as an object and start thinking of it as an heirloom.”

Inside the main hall, the air hums with machinery – the steady thud of hammers shaping the rim of an unbuilt piano, the searing whine of saws cutting spruce for soundboards, the brushing of lacquer. Between stations, workers tune out the din through earbuds. “Eighty per cent of what we do is still manual,” Daza Tapia explains. “Technology assists us for safety and precision, but our tone depends on touch – on experience that can't be programmed.”

A group of craftsmen move a long ribbon of laminated maple into a heavy steel press, bending it into the familiar curve of a grand piano. It will rest for 100 days to hold its shape. “We always start from the outside in,” Daza Tapia says. “The rim is our foundation. It holds the vibration that defines everything else.”

Nearby, another team works on the soundboard – the thin wooden panel beneath the strings that acts as a natural amplifier – assembled from strips of Sitka spruce with the precision of a violin-maker. “Only about

GRAND



20 per cent of the wood we source meets our standards,” he says. “It has to be light enough to respond but strong enough to last a century.”

Steinway engineers call the soundboard the instrument's soul. Its crown, a subtle arch in the wood, gives the piano its ability to project. Later, in a quieter room, a technician threads



Each piano has to look right in a room, but also respond to the lightest touch

and struck, its pitch tested with a tuning hammer. From a distance, the process appears ritualistic – signatures and pencil marks track accountability and progress across the frame, a technician's name input at each step.

Steinway's Hamburg workshop produces about 1,200 pianos a year. Many will go to

institutions, some to individual artists. A few are commissioned as works of art in themselves. Each concert grand represents an investment that can exceed \$200,000, and Daza Tapia says the UAE is part of a growing Middle East market, with institutions and private collectors driving demand.

The Dubai Opera Limited Edition, for example, was created in tribute to both the venue and the seven emirates. Each of its 14 models is finished in white or black lacquer with gold fittings, arabesque patterns and a music desk shaped like a dhow sail.

“Some clients are musicians, others are interior designers or collectors,” Daza Tapia says. “Either way, they come to us because they want something functional and aesthetic. It has to look right in a room, but also respond to the lightest touch.”

The bridge between workshop and stage becomes clear when the piano undergoes voicing – the step where hammer felts, the compressed wool covering the piano hammers that strike the strings, are pricked by hand

From the scent of spruce and hum of machinery in the main hall to the hush of the selection room, a visit to Steinway's Hamburg factory uncovers the unwavering rhythm its pianos demand. By **Saeed Saeed**



DESIGNS

Left, the making of a Steinway begins with planks and patience, the wooden rim of each piano bent, shaped, then left to rest for 100 days. Below, a sheet of veneer that will be shaped into the rim of a grand piano

to refine their tone. The technician, a young woman oblivious to us standing nearby, plays the same note repeatedly, soft then louder, listening for what Daza Tapia describes as the “colour” of the note. “This is the moment each piano finds its own voice,” he murmurs. “Even I can’t predict exactly how each one will sound.”

Many of the artisans who reach this stage began here as apprentices. Daza Tapia notes that Steinway runs a three-and-a-half-year in-house training programme certified by Germany’s Chamber of Crafts, teaching every aspect of piano construction.

It is not unusual for an employee to spend an entire career perfecting one task, passing the technique to the next generation as their mentors once did. A board inside the headquarters lists long-serving employees – of the about 500 working in the Hamburg factory, more than a dozen have between 25 and 50 years of service.

Down a long corridor, the noise falls away. Daza Tapia opens a set of double doors and the atmosphere transforms. The selection room

feels like a different world: bright, silent, still. The air smells faintly of polish and new lacquer – the scent of instruments freshly finished, their lids glinting under the soft light.

“This is where clients come to choose,” he says. In this room, the factory’s work ends and the piano’s life begins. Rows of gleaming grands stand like newborns, each with a tag noting its serial number and destination. Those looking to buy arrive to play scales, others only a few chords before they know. Most prefer to be left alone until the solemn decision is made. “At this stage, nothing I say matters,” Daza Tapia notes. “It’s between them and the piano.”

And almost simultaneously, while the chosen instrument is shipped for delivery – where it is assembled and fine-tuned on-site by certified technicians – another piano will begin assembly on the other side of the plant. “Every piano ends up with its own personality,” he says. “You can have the same materials and same process, but it surprises you. That’s what keeps us here; you never finish learning. Each one teaches you something new – about sound, or yourself.”





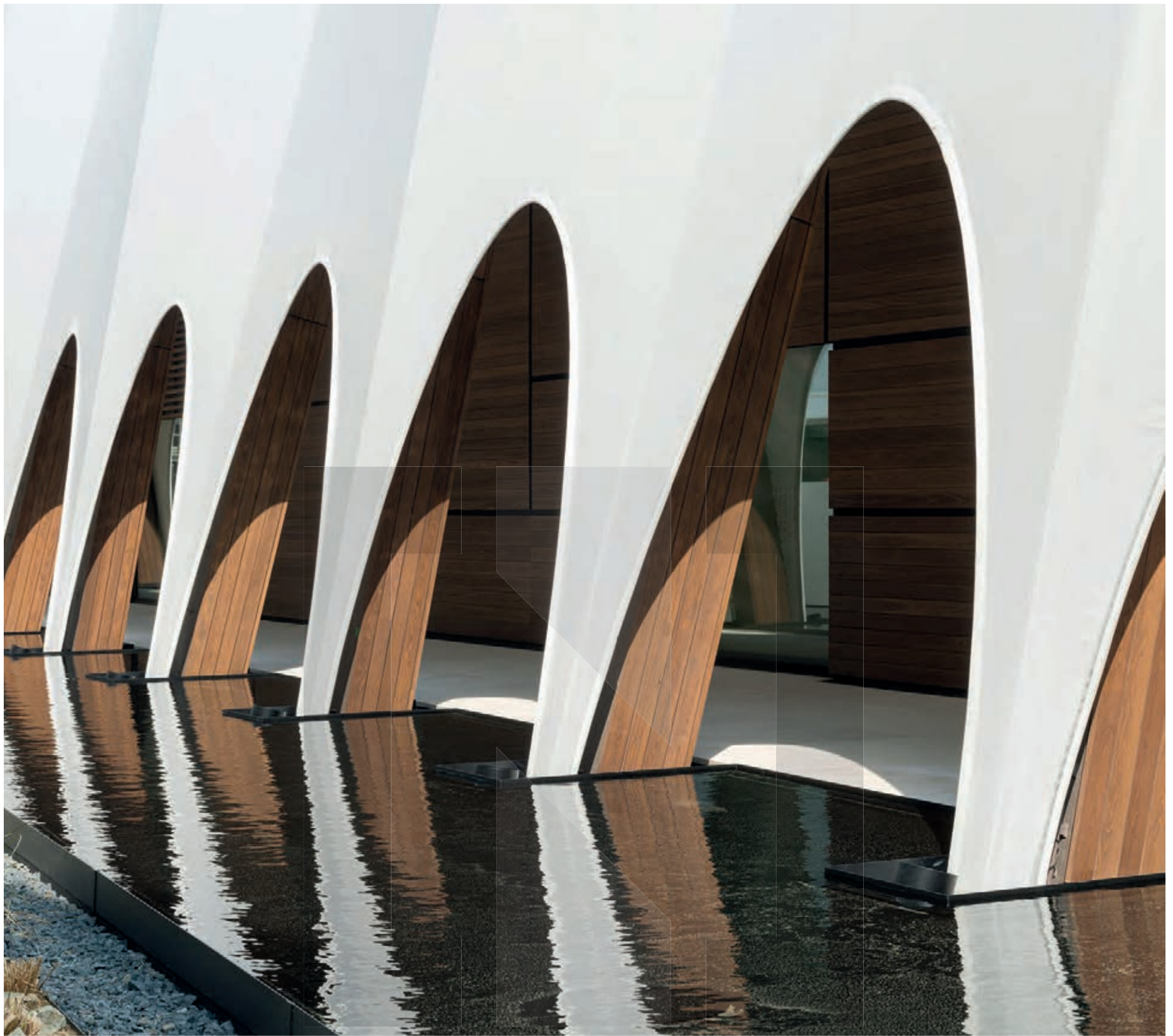
A rendering of Al Ghurair Collection's Wedyan, a 46-storey tower with 149 residences overlooking Dubai Canal

KENGO KUMA BRINGS HIS SOFT TOUCH TO DUBAI

The Japanese starchitect, known for his 'weak architecture' approach, has taken on his first UAE project. By **Katy Gillett**

If **Kengo Kuma** were given a blank cheque to design any structure he wanted in Dubai, the starchitect would create a Japanese-style teahouse. "I'm very much interested in the spiritual experience in the desert," he tells me at the launch of his first UAE project, a high-end residential tower with Dubai's Al Ghurair Collection that incidentally features teahouse-inspired pavilions on the terraces. "The desert is where the conversations take place, like a gathering place ... like a teahouse."

Considering he's one of the world's most celebrated architects, Kuma has done surprisingly little in the region. Some of his most famed structures include Japan National Stadium in Tokyo and the China Academy of Art's Folk Art Museum in Hangzhou. Here, he's designed The St Regis Resort in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea, where he relied heavily on organic shapes and curves, natural materials, neutral hues and designs that minimise impact, including spiral-shaped, coral-inspired villas that offer 360-degree views of the sea stretching towards the horizon. Apart from that, Kuma's only



Wedyan is a dialogue between Japanese aesthetics and the context of Dubai, a city that is like a museum of architectural design

other foray in the Gulf has been to create a national pavilion for Qatar at Osaka Expo 2025, featuring white fabric stretched over a scalloped timber structure with several arched openings reminiscent of traditional dhow sails, merging inspiration from Japan's heritage of wood joinery.

He's excited about this new project, Kuma tells me at the event, which takes place amid the low-rise villas of Umm Suqeim, at Skooni Arts Foundation & Residence, an event space for creative gatherings. Kuma is as unimposing as his designs; mild-mannered and softly-spoken, but with a fashionable edge. He wears a sculptural black shirt with sheer sleeves, extra fabric twirling outward in an aesthetic similar to the sketch of the

soon-to-be-realised building I'm given when we meet. Whether or not that detail was intentional remains to be seen, but something about Kuma and his vast portfolio strikes me as being very intentional. "Dubai is kind of a museum of architectural design," he says when I ask him what he thinks of the city's structural landscape. "To work here is very exciting for me, because Dubai can show the future of a city."

Kuma is best known for his philosophy of seamlessly merging nature with architecture, seemingly out of step with Dubai's penchant for glass-clad modernity. However, in the property sphere, a move towards authenticity and wilderness has been emerging – so perhaps he's right on time. "We want to show the dialogue with nature," he says of Al Ghurair Collection's first waterfront residence, which is called Wedyan, meaning valleys in Arabic. The 46-storey tower will sit adjacent to Dubai Canal, drawing influence from the movement of water and sand. "We were inspired by the organic shape of the river," he says. "We tried to find a new solution for the skyscraper in the city. The whole silhouette is very soft, organic, intimate – and people want to be in that kind of soft environment."

The building will house 149 residences – a mix of three, four and five-bedroom layouts – plus two full-floor penthouses, as well as a three-storey sky villa.

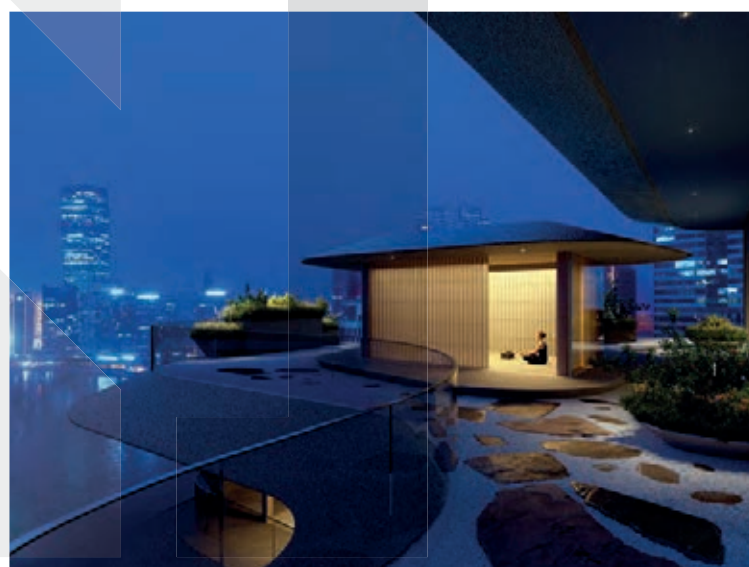
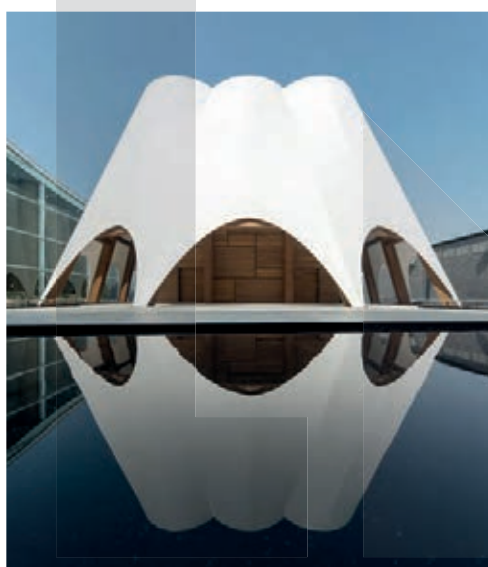
Some key elements include a back-of-house kitchen, larger-than-usual suites for live-in housekeepers, window glazing that protects owners'

DESIGN

KATSUMASA TANAKA, SHRUTI JAIN FOR THE NATIONAL, AL GHURAIR COLLECTION



Kengo Kuma, left, created the structure for the national pavilion for Qatar at Osaka Expo 2025, far left and below left, featuring white fabric stretched over a scalloped timber structure – reminiscent of traditional dhow sails. For some terraces at Wedyan, below, the architect designed Japanese teahouse-inspired pavilions



artworks from UV rays and 65,000 square feet of amenity space that comprises everything from a spa to a podcast studio and boxing facilities. One of the building's defining features will be the spacious balconies. "People can feel the wind over the canal and in that kind of environment, we can propose these huge balconies, so natural wind comes through, and it's totally integrated with nature," Kuma explains.

A handful of the terraces will feature those aforementioned Japanese teahouse-inspired pavilions; a blank space the residents can transform into anything they like, whether for yoga and meditation, a recording studio or their own contemporary art museum. "Wedyan is a dialogue between Japanese aesthetics and the context of Dubai," Kuma says. "Our design philosophy is to connect and create a conversation between architecture, nature and people ... to bring softness to the design and to create quietness through shadows that cascade and reflect across the facade, terraces and amenity spaces."

To achieve a natural cooling effect, the designer has looked to Old Dubai for inspiration, as architects historically relied on shade, narrow corridors and wind towers or barjeel, before air-conditioning. He has also used old-style mashrabiya screens. "It's a beautiful solution for controlling natural light and bringing in the breeze," says Kuma, who likens it to Japan's penchant for silk and folding screens. "The details on these screens also give a peaceful feeling."

Sultan Al Ghurair, chief executive of the company behind this project, says Al Ghurair Collection exists to develop buildings that don't exist anywhere else. That's why Kuma was entrusted with their vision. "Our search for an architect who shares our commitment to originality and obsession with detail led us to Kengo Kuma, a visionary with a truly unique design perspective," says Al Ghurair.

In an age when dystopian sci-fi imagery has become reality, it is perhaps disruptive to choose a man known for his dedication to the concept of "weak architecture" – anti-monumental, subservient, subtle spaces that blend in rather than stand out, whether that's on an isolated desert island in the Red Sea or smack-bang in the middle of an urban environment like Dubai. Indeed, intimacy, respect for nature and a sense of peacefulness are defining elements of Kuma's body of work. It's a balance between ultra-modern design and traditional values, while paying homage to local craftsmanship and materials.

It's Dubai's architectural freedom that he's most enamoured by, Kuma adds. "There are many, many constraints everywhere, but Dubai has a freedom. I think it's very necessary for artificial design because we are facing a drastic change and we need to find new solutions." With this, he refers to climate change; the UAE's climate might be tricky to work with, he says, but "in the future every country will have this kind of climate. So, this can be a pioneer project."

MAKE IT LAST

In a world of viral sensations and disposable media, here is our team's selection of physical media that deserves to be enjoyed slowly and thoughtfully



GONE BEFORE GOODBYE BY REESE WITHERSPOON AND HARLAN COBEN (PENGUIN/CENTURY)

Since its founding in 2017, Reese Witherspoon's book club has boosted the profiles of several female authors. And now, book lovers will see if it can do the same for the Oscar-winning actress as she makes her writing debut. But Witherspoon is not going at it solo. She's employed the help of bestselling author Harlan Coben.

Titled *Gone Before Goodbye*, the suspense novel follows Maggie McCabe, a surgeon whose life unravels after a string of tragedies cost her her career and purpose. When a former colleague offers Maggie a second chance treating a high-profile patient overseas, she seizes the opportunity, only for the patient to vanish under suspicious circumstances. Maggie then finds herself entangled in a deadly conspiracy and is forced to go on the run to uncover the truth before she becomes the next to disappear.

David Tusing, assistant features editor



WHERE DO I GO? BY RANIA MATAR (KAPH)

This year marks 50 years since the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War—offering a time to both memorialise and warn of what is left unhealed. In the photobook *Where Do I Go?*, Rania Matar collaborates with Lebanese women to tell their story through portraits and through an understanding of their relationship to a beautiful but broken country. Each image is the result of collaboration. Matar's subjects are not simply photographed, they are participants active in their own image-making. The process unfolds organically, with each woman reclaiming her place within the frame and, symbolically, within her country.

"While my photographs may not provide solutions or closure," Matar writes, "I hope they nevertheless invite the viewer to pause and find the beauty, the hope, the shared humanity and the grace that still exist despite everything. They are my love letters to the women of Lebanon. This project is for us all: the ones who stayed and the ones who left but can never leave."

Nasri Atallah, TN Magazine editor



**NEW QUARTET LIVE AT PIERRE BOULEZ SAAL
BY AMIR ELSAFFAR (MAQAM RECORDS)**

New Quartet Live captures the first musical encounter between trumpeter Amir ElSaffar's trio – drummer Tomas Fujiwara and tenor saxophonist Ole Mathisen – and pianist Tania Giannouli on vinyl. Recorded at Berlin's Pierre Boulez Saal, the performance brims with spirited, tempestuous moments. ElSaffar's trumpet, blending Arabic maqam and jazz influences, intertwines with Mathisen's saxophone in hypnotic counterpoint, while Giannouli's piano grounds the exchange with a steady, propulsive groove. Fujiwara's drumming brings polyrhythmic tension and lift – a dynamic made all the more striking in this bass-less ensemble. The collaboration emerged from a short residency at the Berlin concert hall, comprising two days of rehearsal, a sold-out concert and a recording session – now preserved on this evocative vinyl release. Razmig Bedirian, arts and culture writer



HELL'S ANGELS (THE CRITERION COLLECTION)

Many will recognise Howard Hughes from Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator*, where Leonardo DiCaprio captured both the man and his eccentricities with brilliance. In that film, we see Hughes pour a fortune into a project he believed would revolutionise cinema – and make him a fortune in return.

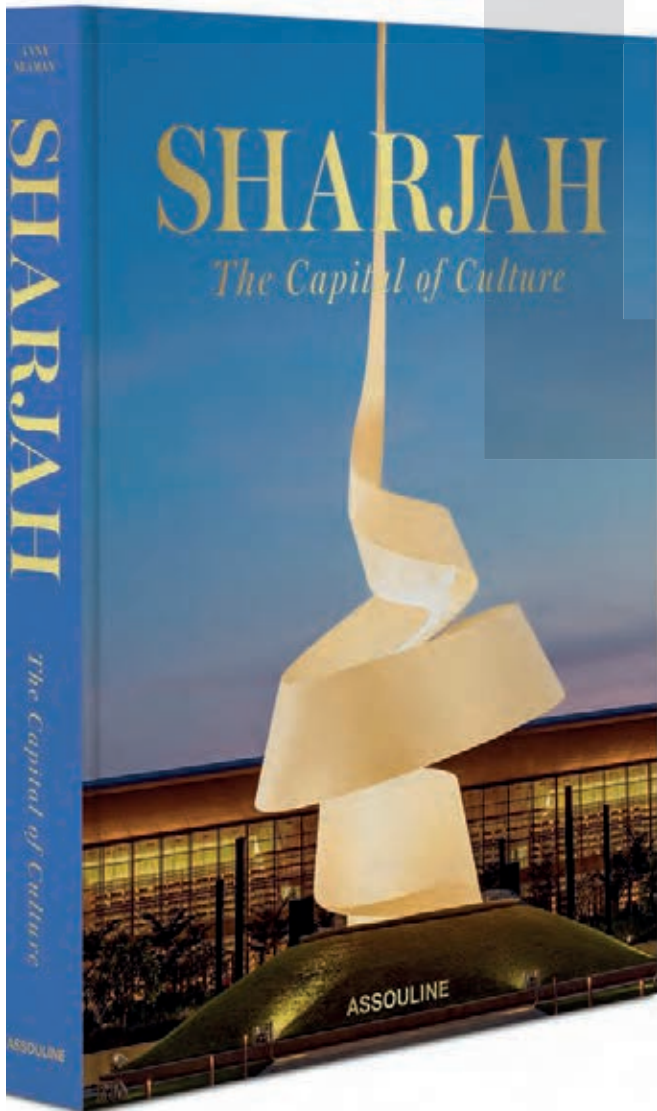
That film was *Hell's Angels*, a First World War epic that consumed three years of his life. Starring Ben Lyon, James Hall and Jean Harlow, it follows two brothers on diverging paths amid the chaos of war. Though it became one of the highest-grossing sound films of its time, it failed to recoup its enormous budget, making it a spectacular, if fascinating, flop.

Now, *Hell's Angels* returns in all its aerial-dogfighting glory in a 4K Blu-ray restoration from the Criterion Collection, complete with special features that delve deeper into its turbulent creation. Faisal Al Zaabi, gaming journalist



**SHARJAH: THE CAPITAL OF CULTURE
(ASSOULINE)**

Sharjah is the latest city to get the Assouline treatment by way of a coffee-table book that honours the emirate's status as a regional creative hub. It reflects on the cultural expression of Sharjah's architecture, its focus on ecotourism, ecology and creative industries including literature and film, and is an impressive addition to my coffee-table book collection I cannot wait to make. Farah Andrews, head of features



THE WATCHLIST

From the thrilling finale of a beloved show to a film featuring several landmarks in Abu Dhabi, **David Tusing** lists the most exciting releases this month

1 NICE TO NOT MEET YOU (PRIME VIDEO)

Before *Squid Game* turned him into a global star, Lee Jung-jae was already a beloved name in South Korea. He stars in this new romcom series as Hyeon-jun, a typecast actor yearning for a fresh start in melodramas, while Lim Ji-yeon plays Jeong-sin, a decorated political journalist reassigned to the entertainment desk after one of her stories upsets powerful people. Expect plenty of laughs in a story full of charm about a clash of personalities and unexpected chemistry.

■ November 3

2 ALL'S FAIR (DISNEY +)

After working together in the 12th season of *American Horror Story*, Kim Kardashian and Ryan Murphy are reuniting, this time for a legal drama. Under the leadership of Allura Grant (Kardashian), an all-female team of divorce attorneys leave their male-dominated firm to open their own practice. There, they help clients navigate high-stakes break-ups, scandalous secrets, as well as shifting allegiances – both in the courtroom and within their own ranks.

■ November 4

3 PREDATOR: BADLANDS (CINEMAS)

Following the acclaim garnered by 2022's *Prey*, which was released on Hulu, and which served as a prequel to the *Predator* franchise, director Dan Trachtenberg was commissioned to do two more films. The animated *Predator: Killer of Killers* had its premiere in June and serves as tie-in to the live-action *Predator: Badlands*, which will have a global cinematic release this month. Meant to be stand-alone film, *Predator: Badlands* is set in the future on a remote planet and follows a young predator (Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi), an outcast from his clan, who finds an unlikely ally in Thia played by Elle Fanning. Together, they embark on a treacherous journey in search of an apex predator.

■ November 6

4 NOW YOU SEE ME: NOW YOU DON'T (CINEMAS)

Abu Dhabi plays a major role in this highly anticipated threequel to the magic-themed robbery thriller series. This time, The Four Horsemen – played by Jesse Eisenberg, Woody Harrelson, Dave Franco and Isla Fisher – reunite to recruit three skilled illusionists for

another robbery involving the world's largest queen diamond from a powerful crime syndicate. The film also stars Justice Smith, Dominic Sessa, Ariana Greenblatt, Rosamund Pike and returning cast member Morgan Freeman. Watch out for many of Abu Dhabi's famed sites, including Louvre Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed Bridge and Liwa desert.

■ November 13

5 STRANGER THINGS SEASON FIVE (NETFLIX)

This one's for the diary as it all ends this year with our ragtag group of friends who set off on an adventure of a lifetime when the series began in 2016. The fifth and final season of the sci-fi series will begin in the autumn of 1987, with the small town of Hawkins now scarred by the opening of the rifts – a tear in the space-time fabric. Meanwhile, our heroes have one single goal – to find and kill Vecna, the malevolent being that's caused destruction and death. *Stranger Things* season five will be released in three volumes with four episodes on November 26, three episodes on Christmas Day and the finale episode on New Year's Eve.

■ November 26



PRIME VIDEO; DISNEY; 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS; LIONSGATE; NETFLIX



1

1 MEURAL CANVAS II

The Meural Canvas II by Netgear transforms any wall into a living gallery. Combining art and technology, this digital frame displays thousands of works, from classic paintings to contemporary photography, in lifelike detail thanks to its antiglare, true-to-texture display.

Controlled via an app or gestures, it lets users curate and rotate collections with a wave of the hand. The canvas is framed in real wood and is available in different colours and finishes.

■ Price on request

2 XPPEN ARTIST PRO 14

The XPPen Artist Pro 14 (Gen 2) blends the feel of traditional sketching with the precision of modern technology. Its laminated 14-inch display reduces parallax for seamless pen-to-screen control, while the accompanying X3 Pro stylus is battery-free and lightweight. Together, the pairing delivers near-zero latency and a natural drawing experience that mirrors real paper. Sleek and portable, the tablet's ultra-slim aluminium design and integrated stand make it equally at home in a professional studio or on the go.

■ From Dh1,615

3 THE SMALL POTTERY WHEEL

Handcrafted in the UK by two potters, The Small Pottery Wheel is a compact and powerful tool that brings ceramics into any creative space. Despite its size, it offers strong torque for larger amounts of clay, removable batts for continuous throwing and a detachable tray for easy cleaning. It offers variable speeds,

bidirectional spinning and a choice of colours for versatility and ease of use. Each wheel is 3D-printed from durable PetG plastic and comes with four batts, a power supply and a guide detailing care instructions.

■ From Dh802

4 SNAPBLOQ A04

The Snapbloq A04 is a compact but powerful mini drill designed for artists and designers working with precision. Equipped with a wide range of accessories, it's ideal for engraving, carving, polishing and intricate detailing across materials such as wood, metal, glass and ceramics. The adjustable speed settings of this lightweight device make it versatile for a variety of tasks including jewellery-making and mixed-media art.

■ From Dh336

5 3DOODLER FLOW ESSENTIALS

The 3Doodler Flow Essentials pen set lets artists draw in three dimensions by extruding heated filament that hardens as it cools. Perfect for sculptural accents, prototyping and mixed-media projects, it turns sketches into tangible objects in real time. With intuitive controls and a lightweight design, it offers an accessible entry point into 3D creation, ideal for adding depth and dimension to artistic work.

■ From Dh499

TOOLS OF IMAGINATION

Dana Alomar rounds up five innovations designed to inspire, shape and create



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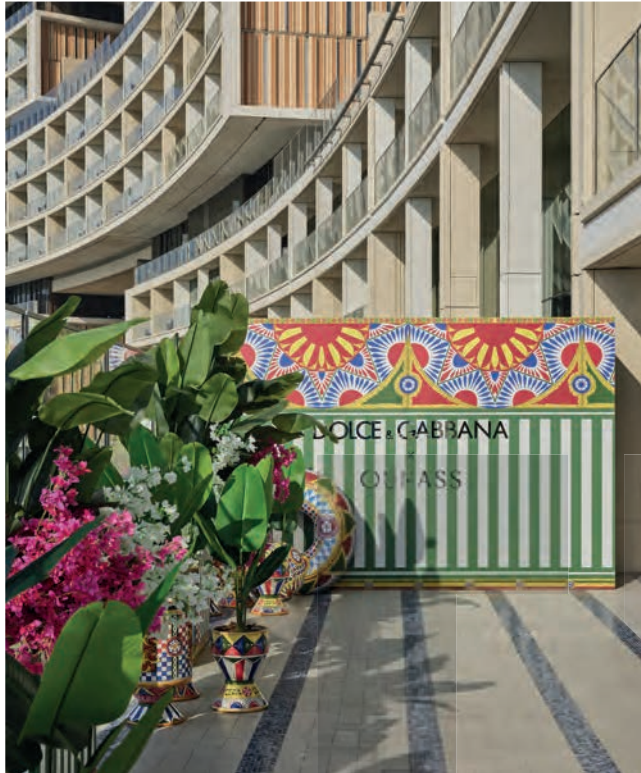


PRADA

The annual Prada Galleria campaigns have evolved into something more than fashion communication - they are auteur-driven short films that reinterpret the bag through cinema's most distinctive lenses. Following last year's short by Jonathan Glazer, the 2025 chapter invites award-winning director Yorgos Lanthimos to reimagine the Prada Galleria within his singular cinematic world. True to Lanthimos's surrealist sensibility, the film unfolds like a condensed feature - a study in narrative tension and quiet absurdity. At its centre stands the Galleria, where it becomes something of a totem, an amulet of everyday ritual. Through this collaboration, Prada reaffirms the Galleria's role - as well as the brand's - in the ongoing dialogue between fashion, film and imagination.

BLACK BOOK

Our round-up of the most interesting and noteworthy arrivals in the world of fashion, fragrances and interiors



DOLCE & GABBANA x OUNASS

Dolce & Gabbana, in collaboration with Ounass, returns to Atlantis The Royal with a vibrant takeover of Cloud 22. This winter, the pool bar on the 22nd floor of the hotel, has been transformed with the brand's signature Carretto Siciliano motif – adorning planters, cushions, trays, towels and even pool floats. A curated menu of 10 Italian-inspired dishes completes the experience.

GERALD CHARLES

Founded in 2000 by the name behind many of the world's most famous watches, Gerald Charles is an independent Swiss company by designer Gerald Genta. Limited to only 50 pieces, the 39mm Maestro 9.0 Roman Tourbillon pays tribute to Roman art and architecture, featuring a hand-hammered 18K rose gold dial that makes each piece unique. Roman numeral indices are baton-shaped and coated with Super-Luminova, while a 60-second flying tourbillon at 6 o'clock sits within a GC-shaped cage. Powered by the Swiss Calibre 9.0 with a 50-hour power reserve, the timepiece is water-resistant up to 100 metres and finished with a bespoke bridge engraved with Côtes de Genève. The result – Swiss precision meets Italian artistry in a wristwatch that is effortlessly elegant.

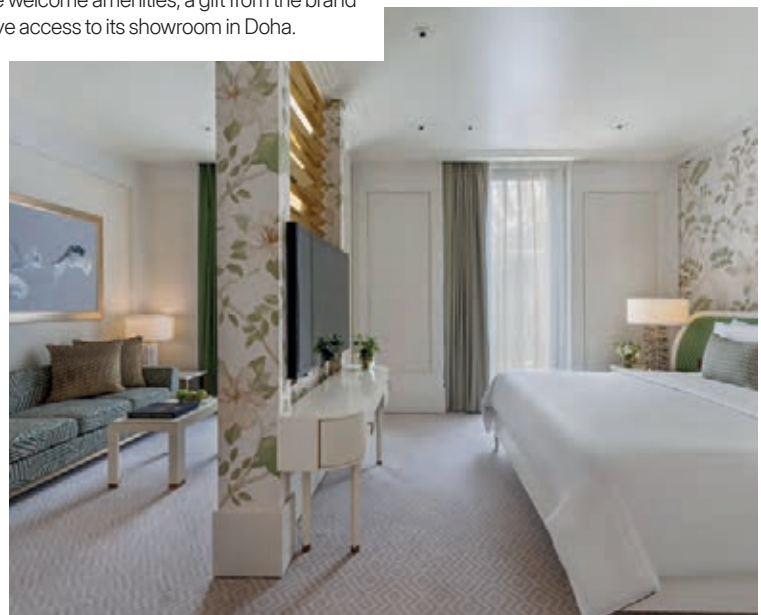
metres and finished with a bespoke bridge engraved with Côtes de Genève. The result – Swiss precision meets Italian artistry in a wristwatch that is effortlessly elegant.

BARENIA EAU DE PARFUM INTENSE BY HERMÈS

A year after unveiling its Barénia fragrance, Hermès reunites with in-house perfumer Christine Nagel for Barénia Eau de Parfum Intense – her first chypre scent for the house. Defined by bright citrus and an earthy, mossy base, it offers a richer, more enveloping take on the original. Inspired by the warmth and suppleness of Barénia leather, Nagel builds the scent around notes of leather, ginger lily and patchouli. Fruity miracle berry, butterfly lily and jasmine add freshness, while roasted oak wood brings a spicy, molasses-like depth. Presented in an amber-toned bottle by Philippe Mouquet, echoing the Collier de Chien bracelet, the refillable fragrance is available in 100ml, 60ml and 30ml.

LIBERTY LONDON x MANDARIN ORIENTAL, DOHA

Mandarin Oriental, Doha has announced a year-long collaboration with Liberty London, the famed British purveyor of fabrics and wallpapers. Together, they've created a series of Liberty rooms and suites to mark the brand's arrival in Qatar with its first showroom outside the UK. The redesign includes the grand Baraha Presidential Suite, while all guests booking Liberty rooms receive welcome amenities, a gift from the brand and exclusive access to its showroom in Doha.



Designer Abdulrahman Al-Abed has earned accolades for his deep commitment to Saudi Arabia's vestimentary heritage. He expresses this most clearly through his brand Qormuz, which he founded in 2017.

The brand had a moment when Saudi actor Mohamed Elshehri wore a Qormuz jubba on the red carpet at the Venice International Film Festival – and the world took note.

At this season's Riyadh Fashion Week, Al-Abed launched a collection inspired by the heritage of northern Saudi Arabia – drawing on the historical figure Sheikh Nuri Al Shaalan. The designer is clearly influenced by history – both his own family's and the kingdom's. But his work is not about looking backward, it is about taking that history into the future. We caught up with him for our quick-fire questionnaire.

What is your favourite time of day and why?

Definitely the morning. I love beginnings – whether it's the start of a day, a journey or a project. There's something different in the air at the start. My morning routine also sets the tone for the rest of the day.

What is your favourite restaurant anywhere in the world?

HolyBelly in Paris. I visited it last year – it's a breakfast place that just feels like comfort and craft in one bite.

When was the first time you realised your parents were human?

Two years ago, sadly. A moment that changed my view of them forever.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Funnily enough, like half the Saudis my age. I once dreamt of becoming an engineer – because in our generation, it was all about medicine or engineering. Has that changed? Absolutely. What do I want now? I think I'd love to be a university professor later in life.

Do you have any hidden talents?

I write – a lot. Maybe more than people expect.

Your favourite book?

I lean towards historical literature. One of the books I'm most attached to is by William Palgrave, a British explorer who documented his journey through Arabia in the late 1800s.

What type of music can't you stand?

I don't connect much with rap. But I listen to all genres. I enjoy discovering new sounds, even the ones I don't love.

What puts you in a bad mood?

Negative talk about the future. Pessimism. I can't stand conversations that focus on problems without solutions.

What can you not live without?

Art. Life feels grey without it.

Dream dinner guests?

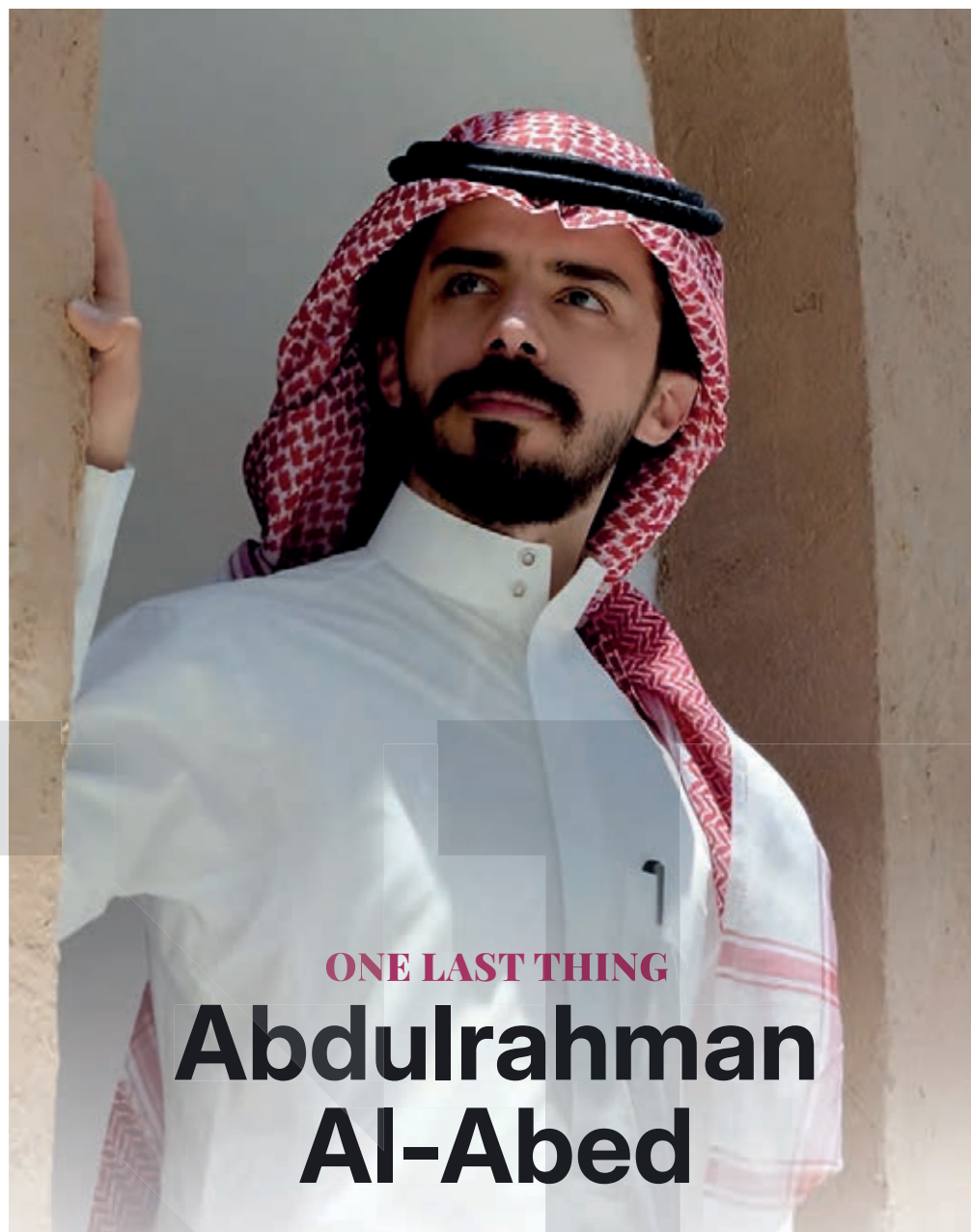
My grandfather, King Abdulaziz and Ghazi Al-Gosaibi.

Sitting on the sofa or out with friends?

Friends and memories, always.

What is your favourite Arabic word?

Samm. It's a pure Najdi word that means 'I'm at your service'. It's generous, open and powerful.



ABDULRAHMAN AL-ABED

ONE LAST THING

Abdulrahman Al-Abed

What smell takes you back to childhood?

The scent of burning samar wood – it reminds me of winter gatherings when I was younger and my grandfather's majlis.

What food takes you back to childhood?

Honestly? Not food. It's hearing Spacetoons theme songs while hugging my mother.

Which city do you love but would hate to live in?

Barcelona.



The scent of burning samar wood reminds me of winter gatherings

It was a bit scary, to be honest.

Any words to live by?

People for people – and every single one of us needs God.

Biggest pet peeve?

Racism. I despise reducing people to their colour or origin instead of who they truly are.

Do you believe in aliens?

I think there might be some kind of contact soon ... maybe Elon Musk needs to dig deeper.

Can you play a musical instrument?

I've tried guitar, oud and piano. None lasted, but the attempt was beautiful.

Have you ever been on a motorcycle?

Yes, but didn't love it.

The most niche thing you watch on YouTube?

Funny cat reaction videos. They crack me up.

How do you take your tea?

I'm not a big tea drinker, but I love sage tea, it brings back deep memories.

What makes you cry?

Standing before the Kaaba. It becomes an unspoken conversation between me and God, every year.

What do social algorithms think you're interested in?

A curious, unpredictable guy. I probably confuse the algorithm. One day it's history, the next it's perfumes, AI or wedding clips.

TikTok or Instagram?

Instagram, it's more of an artistic platform than just social.

What is it about you that would surprise most people?

My grandfather's journey from Palestine to Saudi Arabia, his connection with Bedouin tribes, his encounters with King Abdulaziz and King Saud.

What was the last thing you did for the very first time?

A hiking trip to Ghiya village in southern Saudi Arabia. I almost lost my life, but gained a new sense of clarity.

As told to William Mullally



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