



AIUla to host Cortona On The Move AIUla, a landmark narrative photography exhibition, bringing together local, regional and international artists

Hosted in Saudi Arabia's oasis of arts and creativity, the site-responsive exhibition *Past Forward - Time, Life and Longing*, will run from 9th February, 2022

AIUla, 6 February 2022

AIUla plays host to an innovative photography exhibition from 9th February to 31st March, featuring the work of 19 artists from around the world, including works by photographers from Saudi Arabia.

As part of the AIUla Arts Festival, AIUla has collaborated with Cortona On The Move, the acclaimed Italian festival of documentary photography, to curate a special site-responsive experience in AIUla's AlJadidah Village.

The first edition of the collaboration is titled *Past Forward – Time, Life and Longing*. where leading local, regional and international photographers will have their works exhibited on walls and courtyards, creating an exciting journey of visual narrative.

Past Forward – Time, Life and Longing is co-curated by Arianna Rinaldo, curator and artistic director of Cortona On The Move from 2012 to 2021, and Saudi-based visual artist and curator Kholood Al-Bakr. The concept at the heart of the exhibiting programme is the idea of time. Both AIUla and Cortona live and breathe the cultural legacy of their history, one in the stunning deserts of northwest Saudi Arabia, and one in the historic heart of Italy.

Cortona On The Move is known worldwide for its focus on the 'visual narrative' that shares stories of people and planet and celebrates creativity through images. The artworks selected for Cortona On The Move AIUla are connected to the idea of the passing of time, whether it is meant on a personal and human level, or as a global and environmental point of view. Key themes explored in the exhibitions include family, friendship, memory, change and the future.



Alongside the exhibitions, visitors can engage and immerse with a variety of activities including guided tours, meetings with the photographers, photography workshops, screenings, and social evenings open to all audiences. Industry-specific activities will also take place, such as training workshops with international photo editors and associated professions. An artist residency programme will accompany the exhibition, including mentorship and masterclasses to foster cultural exchange and artistic development. In this way, the project aims to develop the skills of local artists and enrich the lives of visitors and communities.

Serving as a crossroads between three continents and a gateway between East and West, AIUla was built from successive civilisations and for millennia was a place for cultural exchange. RCU's wider long-term plan is to reinvigorate, protect and preserve AIUla, with its community at the heart of its development and future.

RCU's Director of Arts and Creative Planning, Nora AlDabal, said: *"Photography and AIUla go hand in glove. Photographers come from all over the world to capture our landscapes, heritage sites and culture. There is already a vibrant photography community in AIUla and they will no doubt be very excited to engage with this programme. Our focus on the arts in AIUla has been magnified recently with many great initiatives and collaborations announced. We see this latest collaboration with Cortona On The Move as an important step as we continue AIUla's development as a centre for creative collaboration. Photography is an essential form of the arts. The subjective nature of this art form is exactly what makes it so interesting, as it flows and changes with each artist's perspective. Our choice to partner with Cortona On The Move was motivated by their expertise and shared values in delivering exceptional cultural experiences, and enabling creative communities and local people to be truly inspired to take their art form and interest to the next level"*.

Veronica Nicolardi, director of Cortona On The Move festival said: *"Collaborating with RCU in this special project dedicated to the historic and culturally rich city of AIUla is very exciting for us, especially as this is the first time Saudi Arabia is collaborating with a European festival of photography."* Arianna Rinaldo and Kholood Al-Bakr, co-curators of Cortona On The Move AIUla stated: *"Past Forward promises to be a creative amalgamation of art, culture, history, and life in the form of images. The exhibited artists from across continents explore different perspectives of photography and combine a multitude of themes fusing the past with the future to produce a truly one-of-a-kind experience that draws from the cultural heritage of AIUla while looking towards its future."*



Cortona On The Move was created in 2011 from an idea of the Cultural Association ONTHEMOVE, whose aim is to disseminate and promote contemporary photography searching for new visions and original forms of visual communication. Now in its 12th edition, the festival offers continuous interaction between industry experts and fosters constant search for works that document the ongoing evolution of visual language – all of this in the exceptional setting of the Etruscan town of Cortona, in Tuscany (Italy).

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About AlUla:

Located 1,100 km from Riyadh, in North-West Saudi Arabia, AlUla is a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage. The vast area, covering 22,561km², includes a lush oasis valley, towering sandstone mountains and ancient cultural heritage sites dating back thousands of years to when the Lihyan and Nabataean kingdoms reigned.

The most well-known and recognised site in AlUla is Hegra, Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. A 52-hectare ancient city, Hegra was the principal southern city of the Nabataean Kingdom and is comprised of 111 well-preserved tombs, many with elaborate facades cut out of the sandstone outcrops surrounding the walled urban settlement. Current research also suggests Hegra was the most southern outpost of the Roman Empire.

In addition to Hegra, AlUla is also home to ancient Dadan, the capital of the Dadan and Lihyan Kingdoms and considered to be one of the most developed 1st millennium BCE cities of the Arabian Peninsula; and Jabal Ikma, an open air library of hundreds of inscriptions and writings in many different languages. AlUla Old Town is also a prominent site of heritage - a labyrinth of more than 900 mudbrick homes developed from at least the 12th century, and Hijaz Railway and Hegra Fort, connected to the story of Lawrence of Arabia.

For more information, please visit: www.experiencealula.com

Media Inquiries:

For AlUla Moments media inquiries, please contact Edelman Saudi Arabia

RCU-AIUlaMoments@Edelman.com

For RCU media inquiries, please contact

media@rcu.go.sa