



THE VATICAN LIBRARY PARTICIPATES IN THE ISLAMIC ARTS BIENNALE IN JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA, FROM JANUARY 25 TO MAY 25, 2025

Vatican Library, 25 September 2024

The Vatican Apostolic Library is pleased to announce its participation, with several works from its collections, in the AlMadar section of the Islamic Arts Biennale, which will be held from January 25 to May 25, 2025, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Organized by the Diriyah Biennale Foundation, the Islamic Arts Biennale will take place at the Hajj Terminal of King Abdulaziz International Airport, an architectural structure designed to handle the massive influx of pilgrims which holds deep significance for Muslims around the world, as millions of travelers pass through the airport each year to make the sacred Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages to Makkah. This unique cultural event is dedicated to the arts of Islamic civilization and serves as a meeting and creation point, offering visitors the opportunity to explore the contributions of Islamic arts and culture to world civilization. The Biennale celebrates and promotes the diversity of artistic expressions that characterize Islamic arts globally, and seeks to facilitate understanding and collaboration between different cultures by creating a bridge between the past, present, and future through a wide range of contemporary artworks and historical artifacts, and through a multi-sensory experience.

The inaugural 2023 edition of the Islamic Arts Biennale attracted over 600,000 visitors. The 2025 edition reaffirms its programmatic lines by presenting together historical artifacts and contemporary works as part of a rich *continuum*. It is curated by an international team led by Artistic Directors Abdul Rahman Azzam, a renowned author and historian who served as Senior Expert Advisor for AlMadar in 2023; Julian Raby, a distinguished scholar and former professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at the University of Oxford, and former Director of the National Museum of Asian Art at the Smithsonian Institution; and Amin Jaffer, Director of The Al Thani Collection, a scholar specializing in the intersections between European and Asian cultures. Saudi artist Muhannad Shono, who in his work focuses on spirituality and the role of imagination in shaping reality, is the Contemporary Art Curator. The Biennale is spread across approximately 100,000 square meters of exhibition space and it will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalog.

AlMadar ("The Orbit") features a diverse representation of objects from museums, libraries, and collections worldwide, promoting collaboration and dialogue among these institutions. It offers a multifaceted representation of the art of numbers in all its aspects, from its origins in nature to its infinite applications within Islamic culture, to mathematical advancements, terrestrial and celestial mapping, navigation and commerce, rituals and spiritual life, the organization and decoration of the Quran, geometry, proportion, and the design of Arabic texts and architecture. A series of contemporary artworks accompanies the presentation, exploring the theme of numbers in the present collective, including site-specific installations.

Website:

<https://biennale.org.sa/en>

Social media:

https://www.instagram.com/biennale_sa/

https://x.com/biennale_sa

Quotes

“The esteemed collaboration between the Library and the Biennale for AlMadar offers a tangible opportunity for fostering fraternity through universal symbols, which serve as powerful tools for understanding and connection, promoting dialogue and cooperation among diverse cultures. This significant project aspires to build bridges between the past, present, and future, celebrating the rich diversity of artistic expressions within Islamic culture and standing as a concrete model of integral anthropology.” (H.E. Msgr. V. Angelo Zani, Librarian and Archivist of H.R.C.)

“On this occasion, our Institution has proudly contributed a selection of rare and invaluable works, drawn from our rich heritage, to enhance the beauty and singularity of this exhibition. Since the dawn of civilization, numbers – from the simplest contemplation of quantities and relationships among entities, to the most intricate mathematical systems and cutting-edge digital technologies – have been a constant companion to human history, forging connections and building bridges between peoples, cultures, societies, as well as philosophical and religious perspectives.” (Rev. Don Mauro Mantovani, S.D.B., Prefect of the Vatican Library)

Contacts and information

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