

Louvre Abu Dhabi's New Exhibition, Stories of Paper, Opens To The Public

About 100 artworks from the collections of Louvre Abu Dhabi, Musée du Louvre and 14 lending museums, institutions, and private collections are on display



H.E. Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, on a

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Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, inaugurated Louvre Abu Dhabi's second international exhibition of the year, Stories of Paper.

The all-new exhibition will open to the public on April 20 and will run until July 24, 2022. Organised by Louvre Abu Dhabi in partnership with Musée du Louvre and France Muséums, the exhibition discovers the extensive variety of artistic expressions of paper, with the purpose of encouraging richer knowledge of a familiar, and increasingly versatile material.

Stories of Paper is curated by the Musée du Louvre's Xavier Salmon, General Curator and Director of the Department of Drawings and Prints, and Victor Hundsbuckler, Curator at the Department of Drawings and Prints, with the support of Dr. Souraya Noujaim, Director of Scientific, Curatorial and Collections Management at Louvre Abu Dhabi. The curators were assisted by Amna Rashed Al Zaabi, Senior Curatorial Assistant, Louvre Abu Dhabi, Charlotte Maury, Art Collection Officer, Department of Islamic Art, Musée du Louvre and Cristina Cramerotti, Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet.

About 100 artworks and objects from 16 museums, cultural institutions and private collections will be on display. These include books, manuscripts, drawings, a reproduction of a house and 13 contemporary artworks and installations made of paper. The exhibition will take visitors on a journey through time to discover the various ways in which paper was utilised across cultures. Visitors will also be able to enjoy a diverse public programme of wide-ranging cultural activities.

“With the emergence of digital transformation and the dematerialisation of our haptic experiences, it makes sense for Louvre Abu Dhabi, a universal museum, to celebrate paper as a common yet precious good,” says Manuel Rabaté, Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi. “From books, manuscripts and drawings to contemporary art works or installations made of paper, Stories of Paper retraces a chronological history of this single universal medium, considering the usage and key characteristics of paper such as transparency and robustness to provide an original perspective on the use of paper throughout time and across the different regions. We are also very pleased to invite prominent Emirati artists to be part of this shared dialogue—with works on display by Hassan Sharif, Abdullah Al Saadi and Mohammed Kazem, all of whom are considered pioneers of Emirati conceptual art. A special thanks goes to Musée du Louvre, France-Muséums and all the international lending institutions and private collections who have helped in bringing this exhibition to fruition.”

Stories of Paper spans 12 themed sections, all of which highlight the key qualities and varied use of paper across centuries with immersive scenography. The themed sections include Plant Origins, An Affordable, Widely Used and Multipurpose Material, Movement, Colour, Transparency and Translucency, A Versatile Material, a Substitute Material, A Support for Reproducing Works, Fragility and Resistance, A Space, A Possibility of Collecting, A Space of Annotating, of Associating Comments and Images, a Trace and a Malleable Support. The exhibition will allow the visitors to understand the tools and mechanisms used to create paper, and invite them to explore the different textures of paper through the mediation devices.

“Stories of Paper exhibition includes a rich selection of loans from Musée du Louvre, Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Centre Pompidou, Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire de Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Sharjah Art Foundation, Zayed National Museum, and Goesan Museum, as well as works from the permanent collection of Louvre Abu Dhabi,” says Laurence des Cars, Director of Musée du Louvre. “It fuses contemporary works from Arab and European art scenes, such as Labyrinth by the great Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto—a piece which confirms paper's perpetual importance to mankind. This is precisely where the essence of Louvre Abu Dhabi lies—in its ability to bring together diverse collections that would probably not have had the opportunity to interact anywhere else but in Louvre Abu Dhabi.”

Curators Xavier Salmon and Victor Hundsbuckler said: “Stories of Paper is exhibited in parallel to the UAE's great appetite for contemporary creation and innovative technologies, with the

ambition to create curiosity for this familiar material at a time when digital technology is permeating all aspects of our daily lives. The exhibition aims to establish this definition using 12 criterions and taking a historical look at paper on a global scale. Beyond drawings, this exhibition explores the whole range of artistic expressions of paper with the aim of encouraging wonder and fostering the visitor's understanding of an ordinary yet extremely versatile medium."

Dr. Souraya Noujaim, Scientific, Curatorial and Collections Management Director at Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: "Paper has, without a doubt, served a purpose in every aspect of society throughout history. There is already nostalgia for the material and its many familiar uses in our daily lives. However, time is not up for paper. It is still strongly rooted in our practices and its charm has not faded. This is evident in the artworks on display at Stories of Paper. We are very proud that, for the first time, we are able to showcase pieces from renowned Emirati contemporary artists, such as Hassan Sharif, Abdullah Al Saadi and Muhammad Kazem, which explore key attributes of paper as a medium, celebrating this simple yet unique medium and its perpetual importance in today's society."

Cultural and Educational Programme

A rich cultural and educational programme will accompany Stories of Paper, offering an array of events. An online talk and a recorded podcast by the exhibition's curators will be available on Louvre Abu Dhabi's website and mobile application, for the public to explore the exhibition.

In collaboration with Cinema Akil, Berklee Abu Dhabi, Goethe institute, Irtijal, and Metropolis Art Cinema, Louvre Abu Dhabi will present a cine-concert on May 4, fusing two worlds by presenting contemporary electronic experimental music from the Arab world, in synchronised harmony and improvisation against the silent film classic, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, directed by Lotte Reiniger. Film screening will provide enjoyable, accessible, and diverse viewing experiences, with stories from cultures around the world. A series of films featuring paper as a medium will be screened on May 5: *Kubo and the Two Strings*, featuring a 12-year-old Japanese boy earning his living by magically manipulating origami with music (the film will be followed by a sketching session for children and families); and three short films (*The Dot*, *Sky Color*, and *ISH*), inspiring kids to create their own dots, squiggles and much more.

A series of educational activities will be available for adults, families, and youth including an Express Tour of the exhibition, a creative masterclass using paper and print focusing on an abstract representation of ideas, led by an Emirati artist, and, a Make and Play activity where children can experiment with different kinds of paper to make a paper portrait and other objects, and a Young Visitor's Guide offering the opportunity to learn about the properties and stories of paper throughout history. An online papermaking masterclass with Emirati artist Taqwa Al Naqbi will teach participants how to make their own handmade paper, inspired by the Qur'an commissioned by Sultan Abdullah II Al Sa'adi, and enjoy with the family a Make a Plant illustration activity.

The Stories of Paper exhibition catalogue is available in Arabic, English and French.