



مساحة العال للنصم
Design Space AIUla



Design Space AIUla, AlJadidah Art District (Image credit : RCU / Nicholas Jackson Photography)

Design Space AIUla, the first permanent gallery space dedicated to showcasing design initiatives across AIUla, to open in February 2024

Dynamic and inclusive space promoting collaboration across the design spectrum will open during AIUla Arts Festival

AIUla, Saudi Arabia, 11 January 2024

February 2024 will mark the opening of Design Space AIUla, a focal point for showcasing AIUla's wide ranging design initiatives contributing to the vision for AIUla. Located in the AlJadidah Arts District, Design Space AIUla provides exhibition, workshop and archive space, and is designed to foster collaboration among design professionals, students, and design enthusiasts, whilst strengthening AIUla's legacy across the cultural sphere as a catalyst for creative inspiration and design. It will open with its inaugural exhibition **Mawrid: Celebrating Inspired Design.**



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Through its series of exhibitions, workshops and archive, under the direction of Sara Ghani, who also curated the gallery's inaugural exhibition, Design Space AIUla aims to engage with emerging and established design professionals, regionally and internationally, to explore design principles and creative design processes through the lens of AIUla's natural and cultural landscape. The space will be inclusive of all design disciplines from **architecture and urban planning, to product and graphic design**. It will support and engage with the design community, whilst highlighting the wider role of design in the region's character, quality of life and wider economy.

Design Space AIUla is a contemporary building made of corten steel, glass and polished concrete. The architecture, designed by **Giò Forma Studio**, is a homage to the breezeblock used widely across buildings in the surrounding AlJadidah Arts District. Shaped around a plaza, the luminous courtyard design is complemented by the exposed geometrical brickwork, taking the form of an intricate lattice façade, bringing further light and natural ventilation throughout the building.

The inaugural exhibition, **Mawrid: Celebrating Inspired Design**, will introduce the design thinking process behind 10 recent AIUla-inspired designs across design, architecture and urban planning. It will be the first in an ongoing exhibition programme, launching on **15 February 2024 until 1 June 2024**.

Projects explored in the exhibition include **Giò Forma Studio/Black Engineering's Maraya**, a 9,740m² mirror-clad venue that blends with its awe-inspiring surroundings, echoing the natural textures and colours of AIUla; the plans for the renovation of **Madrasat Addeera**, AIUla's first arts and design centre, by UK based **Hopkins Architects**; **Roth Architecture's Azulik Eco Resort** which draws inspiration from the stories of wind and erosion, ensuring the project seamlessly integrates with its natural surroundings; **SAL Architects'** renovation of the historic **Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque**, which collaborated closely with the community to ensure a respectful and harmonious transformation; and **AIUla's Cultural Oasis District Masterplan**, guided by **Prior + Partners** in collaboration with **Allies and Morrison**, each driven by the mission to cherish and protect the cultural and natural landscape that has made AIUla a place where communities, travellers, traders and pilgrims have, for millennia, wanted to live, pass through, rest, and exchange cultural traditions.

Other exhibitors include finalists from the second edition of AIUla Design Award **Imane Mellah, Teeb, Sara Kanoo and Shaddah Studio**, and representation from the first edition of the **AIUla Design Residency**. The residency is a five-month programme in AIUla that brings together designers and experts on-site to work across multiple disciplines such as infrastructure development and architectural design, exploring public realm interventions and urban furniture, sustainability and local building materials. The five design practices engaged in the residency are: **bahraini – danish** from Bahrain and



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Denmark, **Hall Haus** from France, **Studio Leo Orta** from France, **Studio Raw Material** from India, and **Leen Ajlan** from Saudi Arabia.

The exhibition also explores the visual identity for Design Space AIUla created by **Clara Sancho Studio** and design agency **29Letters** from Madrid. The logo draws on a wide range of inspiration from across AIUla, from ancient inscriptions at Jabal Ikma to the distinctive breezeblocks in AlJadidah and other architectural elements of AIUla's more recent visual terrain.

In time, these projects will enter the **Design Space AIUla archive** which will serve as a growing source of design inspiration as well as a living compendium of local design initiatives. The workshop and archive will also host aspiring designers in AIUla's resident community who want to participate in the creative space.

Sara Ghani, Curator, Design Space AIUla said, *"Design Space AIUla commits to celebrating AIUla's natural history, its cultural heritage, and vernacular materials - inspiring sustainable futures that are rooted in place. Our ambition is to fuel the design economy, provide resources to designers to explore and experiment, and be a place for visitors to research, explore and connect with the processes behind AIUla's design journey."*

The launch programme, taking place between **15 - 17 February 2024**, will include keynote presentations, masterclasses, workshops, panel discussions and design tours. Set out as a series of intimate and lively discussions with maximum opportunity for interaction with the audience, the programme will reflect Design Space AIUla's focus as a point of knowledge exchange on mindful innovation, heritage preservation, contextual materiality and integrated urban planning.

AIUla Arts Festival is a celebration of contemporary visual and public art, design, curated cinema, art tours and artist residencies. The opening of Design Space AIUla will complement the Festival programme by giving the festival's visitors and design enthusiasts in particular, another reason to visit AIUla.

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About Design Space AIUla

Design Space AIUla combines a gallery, archive and workshop in a dynamic new centre for design in the region. Located in the heart of the AlJadidah Arts District, Design Space AIUla interrogates design practices from around the world through the prism of AIUla's cultural and natural landscapes. It aims to fuel creative thought and expression through a dynamic programme of collaboration and exchange, situating the creative practices of Northwest Arabia in the international design ecosystem. A living compendium of AIUla's design journey, from master planning to graphic design, and product design to architecture, this is a space for designers and design enthusiasts to learn, dream, investigate, collaborate, experiment, make and share.

About Sara Ghani, Curator Design Space AIUla

Sara Ghani is a dedicated architect and urban planner committed to the realisation of AIUla's vision through its spatial development. She graduated with a degree in Architecture from Prince Sultan University in Riyadh. As an urban planner and designer working in AIUla, she plays a pivotal role in preserving AIUla's cultural and natural landscape through the development of its masterplans, while fostering sustainable development to ensure the enhancement of the quality of life for the residents of AIUla.

Sara is leading Design Space AIUla with the mission to reveal the philosophy, practice, and impacts of AIUla's design journey. Her role encourages AIUla-inspired creativity, fostering a shared understanding of AIUla's design and planning process across various scales and purposes. Design Space AIUla serves as a gateway for a continued connection to AIUla's design-led activities where she is exploring and celebrating AIUla's design community.

About AIUla



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Located 1,100km from Riyadh, in North-West Saudi Arabia, AIUla 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, covering the periods when the Lihyan, Dadan, and Nabataean kingdoms reigned.

The most well-known and recognised site in AIUla 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 consists of more than 100 well-preserved tombs 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 after conquering the Nabataeans in 106 CE.

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