

The UAE Ministry of Culture and the Aga Khan Museum Celebrate the Successful Launch of Their First Collaborative Exhibition at the Al Burda Festival

Following its success at the 20th Al Burda Awards, the inaugural exhibition, jointly curated under the landmark Memorandum of Understanding, is set to debut in Toronto in the summer of 2025

ABU DHABI, UAE – December 23, 2024 – On December 17, 2024, the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Culture hosted the prestigious Al Burda Awards at the iconic Louvre Abu Dhabi. This celebrated event highlighted the enduring richness of Islamic artistic traditions through the Al Burda Award ceremony, dynamic performances, interactive educational programs and curated exhibitions. Among these was an inaugural collaborative exhibition of contemporary Islamic art, drawing from the Ministry’s collection and co-curated in partnership with the Aga Khan Museum under the terms of a landmark Memorandum of Understanding signed earlier this year.

This strategic partnership aims to nurture the next generation of young professionals, intellectuals, and artists, empowering them through training, mentorship and opportunities for creative growth. Following its debut at the Al Burda Awards, the exhibition – co-curated by the Aga Khan Museum and the first cohort of Al Burda Fellows, comprising young UAE-based art practitioners – will travel to Toronto, Canada. There, a selection of winning pieces from the past 20 years of the Al Burda Islamic Art Award, will be curated to create a compelling dialogue with historic masterpieces from the Aga Khan Museum’s Collections.

“We are delighted to join this year’s festival through our partnership with the UAE Ministry of Culture,” says Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, Director and CEO of the Aga Khan Museum. “It has been an incredibly rewarding experience to collaborate with the first cohort of this inspiring initiative, shaping an exhibition of Islamic calligraphy, illumination, contemporary expressions, and poetry that beautifully reflects their unique artistic and cultural perspectives while fostering meaningful intercultural dialogue through the arts.”

The theme of this year’s Al Burda Awards was **Al-Noor (Light)**, highlighting the capacity of contemporary Islamic art to illuminate pathways to understanding, peace and innovation.

Al Burda Awards key highlights included:

- **The Al Burda Award:** Celebrating exceptional talent in three categories; Arabic calligraphy, poetry and Islamic ornamentation. The collaboration of the Aga Khan Museum with the UAE Ministry of Culture in relation to the Al Burda Award reflects a shared ethos focused on celebrating the arts of Muslim cultures and – in a broader sense – fostering intercultural dialogue and peace.
- **Exhibitions and Performances:** Featuring winning artists whose works represent the diversity and evolution of Islamic art, alongside live performances and immersive installations.

- **Educational Engagements:** Offering participants a deeper understanding of the interplay between tradition and modernity in Islamic art.

About the Aga Khan Museum

[The Aga Khan Museum](#) in Toronto, Canada, has been established and developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). Through permanent and temporary exhibitions, educational activities and performing arts, the Museum's mission is to spark wonder, curiosity, and understanding of Muslim cultures and their connection with other cultures through the arts. Designed by architect Fumihiko Maki, the Museum shares a 6.8-hectare site with Toronto's Ismaili Centre, which was designed by architect Charles Correa. The surrounding landscaped park was designed by landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic.

About The United Arab Emirates Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture works to enrich the cultural ecosystem of the UAE by supporting the country's cultural, art and heritage institutions. It provides a platform for artists and innovators, promotes cross-cultural dialogue, and delivers dynamic productions and experiences that represent the UAE's rich and eclectic culture on a national as well as international level.

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