

GLOBAL GO

PAST AND PRESENT

Presented by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Washington, DC and Meridian International Center, *Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates* is the first major touring exhibition of Emirati artwork and the first time the story of the UAE's unique culture, history and development has been told through art. The exhibition is travelling across the United States on an 18-month odyssey, including stops in Texas, California, and Washington. Featuring over 50 paintings, photographs, sculptures, video installations, and modern approaches such as scanography, by 25 Emirati artists, it serves to showcase the creativity radiating throughout the Emirati art scene. The overarching theme of the exhibition highlights the balance between rapid development and the nation's ties to its heritage and connection with traditional values. The works feature core elements of Emirati life and represent all seven emirates, while emphasising the importance of kinship and home, nature and landscape, and technology and innovation within Emirati culture.

"This art is intended to break down boundaries and help Americans understand the UAE and its people," says Dana Al Marashi, Head of the Department of Heritage and Social Affairs at the United Arab Emirates Embassy in Washington, DC. "We are hoping that we will be able to reach Americans who would not necessarily have heard of the UAE or known that the grassroots arts scene even exists."

Past Forward is much more than an art exhibition. "The beauty [of] art is that it transcends language and cultural barriers. Each artwork is unique and each person reacts differently to something they see. As long as people leave the exhibition with a greater understanding of the UAE, then this exhibition will be a success," says Al Marashi.

This groundbreaking cultural-diplomacy art initiative provides a powerful tool for finding common ground, building lasting relationships, and fostering respect. *Past Forward* offers an opportunity for peer-to-peer exchanges of ideas, information, and experiential learning, as well as a framework for Americans and Emiratis to gain a better mutual understanding through first-hand insights through these fascinating works of art. "Art has always been at the root of Emirati society. Art has nourished our culture, informed our thinking, and allowed the UAE to become the modern, open and tolerant country that it is today," confirms Ambassador Yousef Al Otaiba, United Arab Emirates Ambassador to the United States.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Artist Khalid Mezaina speaking to one of the guests during the launch of *Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates*; Emirati artists spent the day visiting the Sheikh Zayed Institute for Pediatric Surgical Innovation at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC; artist Maitha Al Mehairbi speaking to guests during the launch of *Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates* at the Meridian House; workshops with local students were also held at the Meridian International Center, where students were given the opportunity to view the art and speak to the visiting artists.

THE BEAT WITHIN

Ever feel like you're dancing to a different beat to everyone else? Silent discos give you the chance to do just that and there could be few more spectacular venues than The View from The Shard in central London. On 15 November, head to the top of Western Europe's tallest building, buy a beverage, and take in the unparalleled, panoramic views over the UK's Capital. Pop a silent-disco headset on and browse the offerings. Three DJs will be battling it out over separate wireless channels, playing the best in pop, rock and party classics, while you dance the night away at 1,000 feet. Everyone picks their own beat, so no-one will know which tune has set your toes tapping. And if you want to know what a room full of people miming a disco looks like, slip your headset off and take in the crowd's disco moves in silence.

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