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From Paris to the Middle East: here's what the Louvre Abu Dhabi is bringing to the global art scene

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The Louvre Abu Dhabi's latest post-impressionism exhibition adds Asian and Middle Eastern perspectives to the western canon and exemplifies the landmark's role as a global cultural connector

"The Louvre Abu Dhabi is completely different from [the one in Paris, where] everything is organised by departments: sculptures, paintings, drawings, decorative art, antiquity, oriental antiquities, and Greek and Roman antiquities," says Jérôme Farigoule, chief curator of Louvre Abu Dhabi. "Here, our main goal is to build connections and dialogues between cultures. We mix to see the influence between the UAE and the rest of the world."

The museum's director Manuel Rabaté agrees. "It's not an extension of the Louvre," he says. "It's a universal museum reimagined [to tell] the story of the commonalities of humanity through art. Instead of classifying [different cultures], we insist on their connectivity. So in the same showcase, you could have artworks from China, Japan, the local community to access global art, it also puts Emirati artists on the world map, such as through its annual art prize Art Here, which is supported by luxury watch brand Richard Mille."

This year, more than 200 artists from the UAE and North Africa submitted works which explore the theme "awakenings" while making use of or responding to the museum's intricately designed space. The finalists, selected in September, have their pieces displayed in the museum space until December 15. The winner, to be announced next month, will be awarded US\$60,000.

Artist and poet Sarah Al Mehairi from Abu Dhabi is one of the five shortlisted candidates this year. Her audio-visual installation *Shared Motion*, which presents the word "wind" in Arabic, Farsi, Hindi and Urdu, reflects the linguistic landscape of the region surrounding the Arabian Sea.

"To be a part of the Abu Dhabi art scene is beautiful because you are not only becoming part of its history but also shaping its here and now," she says, adding how pleased she is to witness her hometown becoming a hub for multicultural exchange. "I believe my work describes that growth well—it almost acts as a love letter to my city." She says the biggest boon from being a finalist is the growth it's giving her career. "It's always amazing to see an institution like the Louvre Abu Dhabi supporting their own homegrown artists and bringing artists from across the region together."