



## public installations illuminate abu dhabi's archipelagos for inaugural manar exhibition

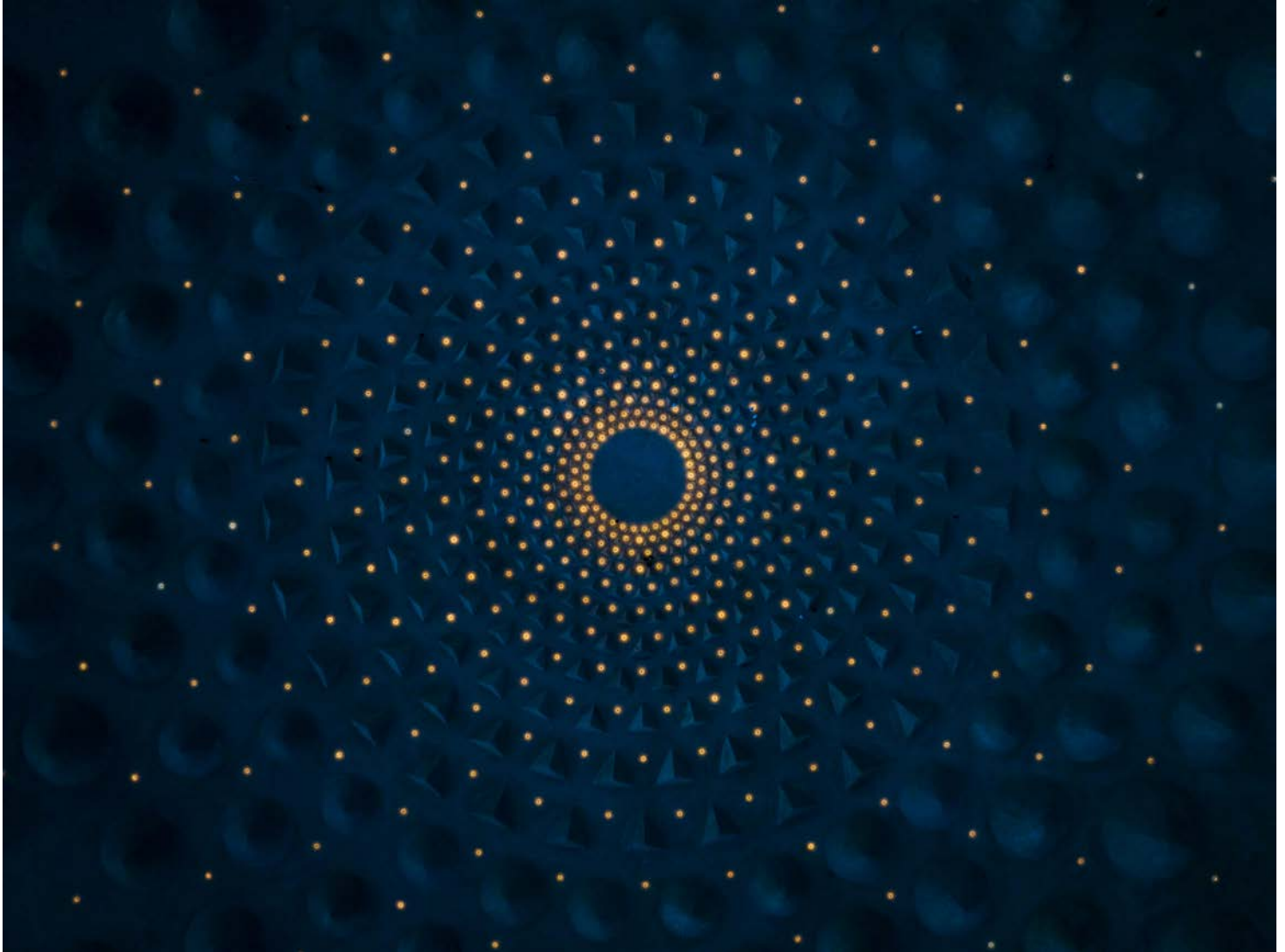
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### MANAR'S PUBLIC ART COMMISSIONS BRIDGE NATURE AND COMMUNITY

35 vibrant sculptures, projections, and immersive installations enliven and unite Abu Dhabi's archipelagos as the UAE's capital launches its inaugural Manar exhibition. Deriving its name from the Arabic word for a lighthouse, the luminous showcase realized by Public Art Abu Dhabi and co-curated by Reem Fadda and Alia Zaal Lootah brings together new, multi-sensory commissions by both regional and international artists to redefine perceptions of Abu Dhabi's natural landscape. Following the theme of Grounding Light, public artworks by Shezad Dawood, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Samia Halaby, Ala Edris, Carsten Höller, and teamLAB among others explore notions of self-enlightenment across the coastline, mangroves, land, and sky – each uniquely using light as a poignant medium for reflection. From pencil-beam robotic searchlight curtain illuminating the sky above Abu Dhabi in their hundreds and reacting to cosmic radiation from outer space, to contemplative pavilions and interactive games, the city can be experienced in a new light like never before. *'Light has an immediacy and a simplicity to it that speaks to the public in a direct way. And I find that as a medium it is quite joyful, and it adds an illuminating aspect for art,'* Reem Fadda tells designboom as we explore the city together.

*'Manar Abu Dhabi was created on the basis of us understanding that Abu Dhabi has such a diverse, inherent natural beauty,' Fadda continues. 'As a resident, I wanted to think, how can I experience that and how can that become attainable to myself or the public? As a public art initiative, we thought that Manar can become a platform which develops an experience with this formula of light, art, nature, and water. What better way to see art than take a boat into the mangroves and see artwork illuminating our path?'* Visitors can engage with Manar Abu Dhabi's transformative artworks across its seven key locations from November 15, 2023, to January 30, 2024.



Jim Denevan, *Self Similar* (2023), Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber

## NEW LIGHT AWAKENS UNINHABITED LULU AND AL FAHID ISLANDS

Across an uninhabited patch of desert on Al Fahid Island, 448 pyramids and mounds hand-sculpted from sand emerge up to 27 meters high from the earth for Jim Denevan's meditative *Self Similar* — the USA-based artist's largest land art to date. Nineteen concentric rings spanning an area of nearly a square kilometer expand outward in a mandala pattern to symbolize both transience and connection to nature. *'With the fall and spring equinox*

*you will see the sun hit the mound all the way on the other side. And because the composition is so large, as the clouds shift the mounds will just light up in some areas and cast shadows in some others... It's very meditative,* Denevan tells designboom as we walk through the installation. See more of our coverage of **Self Similar** here.

Elsewhere, **Mexican-Canadian artist** Rafael Lozano-Hemmer takes over the uninhabited Lulu Island, transforming it into his sci-fi-like Translation Island overlooking downtown Abu Dhabi, its darkness only illuminated by mesmerizing glimpses of sound and light. The exhibition weaves an interactive journey through 10 immersive, multimedia artworks bringing together collaborations with artificial intelligence, ultrasonic atomizers, hundreds of pencil-beam robotic searchlights, Geiger counters and thermal cameras tracking fire pits, and multilingual translations of Finnegan's Wake across the waters, and more.



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Translation Island (2023), Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber

## LUMINOUS INSTALLATIONS FOR REFLECTION & PLAY ALONG THE CORNICHE

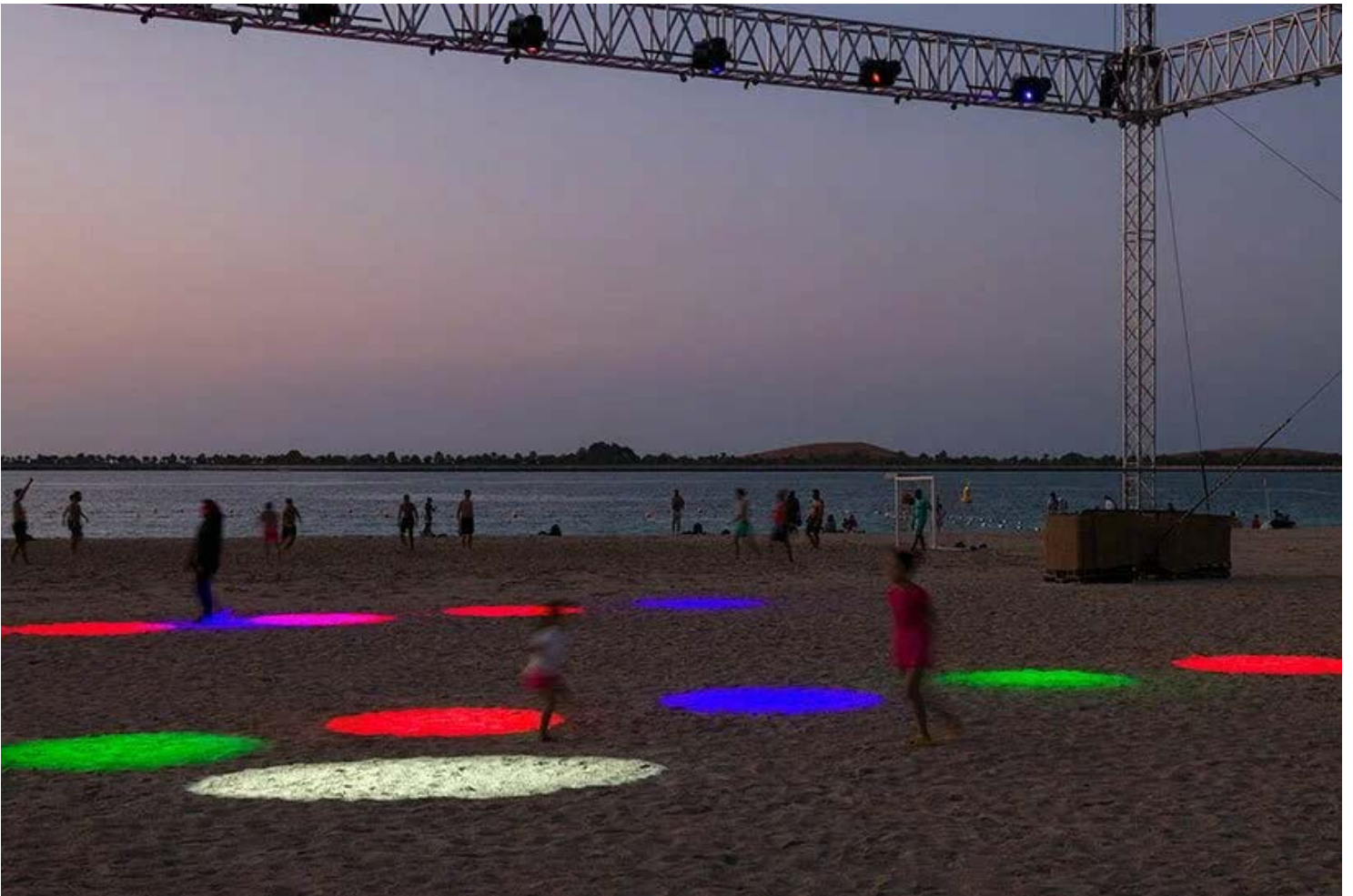
A beloved space for gathering for the local community and tourists alike, the corniche has been transformed with joyful artworks placed at intervals to create new restful, contemplative, or interactive meeting points. Along the pathway, Emirati artist Latifa Saeed invites visitors to take a contemplative detour and walk through an undulating labyrinthine structure constructed from 5,000 glass bricks. The obscured walls of Al-Duroob (the passages) offer a dynamic interplay between veiling and unveiling, construction and contraction, and boundlessness and restriction – all of which unveil as the journey unfolds. Nearby, artist Shilpa Gupta subtly reflects on humanity’s ability for change in a multilingual artwork that illuminates the corniche with optimistic messages in Arabic, English, and Hindi.



Latifa Saeed, Al Duroob (2023), Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber

A playful rest fostering community interaction along the sand, Carsten Höller’s Abu Dhabi Dots game comprises 20 spotlights divided into four colors that follow the movements of the participants as they play a ‘reward and punishment’ game with each other. Engaging in competition, players must overlap their dots to attain the coveted sole white dot. *‘I think it’s going to be a great meeting place because, although there are so many places to sit down, they all feel imposed by the architect or the city planner,’* the German artist tells designboom. *‘Unlike typical outdoor meetings where people gather in groups that don’t interact with each other, this space could facilitate a mix of individuals. It’s literally about mixing things up, as seen in the overlap of colors, where they*

*blend to create entirely new shades.* Read our interview with Carsten Höller about his participation at Manar here.



Carsten Höller, Abu Dhabi Dots (2023), Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber

The site specific Bait al-Nur by Tunisian visual artist Nadia Kaabi-Linke evokes both Oriental and Occidental architecture as it renders tribute to light, or electromagnetic waves, connecting everything in the visible universe, through abstracted shadows and geometries. The cross-cultural pavilion offers a moment of secluded respite illuminated by ambient lighting and the serenity of a space of worship along the corniche. *‘My wish is that it is a place to share spirituality, mysticism, architecture, and just daylight. It is an embodied daylight in the space,’* Kaabi-Linke shares with us.

Palestinian artist Samia Halaby revisits two of her iconic Kinetic works from the 1990s, City and Yafa, initially created *‘to paint the way things sound in addition to the way they move.’* Unfolding as a dynamic symphony between painting and music, the works pose large LED screens along the coastline, replaying recordings of previously live performances of Halaby’s abstract brushstrokes brought to life by her experimentations with programming to depict themes of evolution.



Nadia Kaabi-Linke, Bait Al Nur (2023), Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber

## SAIL TO FLOATING SCULPTURES IN THE MANGROVES

Darawan by an Emirati collective comprising artists Ayesha Hakhir, Rawda al Ketbi, and Shaikha al Ketbi sets three whimsical sculptures afloat amid the Eastern mangroves. A carousel, a trio of female figures carrying utensils above their heads, and a staircase ascending to a door gradually emerge from the waters as visitors sail through, to together explore Abu Dhabi's traditions, rituals, and cultural practices.

An ever-changing symphony of sound, digital technologies, light, and water, Luciferin Shores by Emirati artist Jumairy celebrates the ethereal beauty of bioluminescent Abu Dhabi beaches, posing reflection on the interconnectedness of all living beings. The artwork responds to the sways and ripples of the waves, mimicking the shimmer of bioluminescent organisms with an otherworldly fusion of neon blues, glistening greens, and phosphorescent purples.



Ayesha Hahir, Rawdha Al Ketbi, Shaikha Al Ketbi, Darawan (2023), Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber

## NEW MEETING POINTS ALONG ABU DHABI'S NATURAL & BUILT LANDSCAPE

Exploring the visualization of space through time, Asma Belhamar's (more here) *Chasing the Dance of Alfay* is an installation that encapsulates the architectural history of the UAE. Its walls create an intimate enclosure within a garden overlooking the sea and Abu Dhabi's skyline, integrating traditional cultural and Islamic motifs that adorn homes in the region and casting shadows laden with nuances of culture and identity in transition.

Shezad Dawood's four-meter-high iridescent sculpture *Coral Alchemy (Acropora Grove)* sits ahead, bringing the perils of the oceanic ecosystem at the hands of human impact above ground. In collaboration with marine scientist Noura Al Mansouri and machine learning, the London-based artist replicates the growth patterns of *Acropora Downingi*, an endangered species endemic to the Abu Dhabi region, using AI to promote environmental awareness. The resulting form has been treated with a thermochromic paint finish which causes the sculpture's color to change in response to ambient temperatures, representing human impacts on reef ecosystems through the warming of the oceans.



Jumairy, Luciferin Shores (2023), Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber





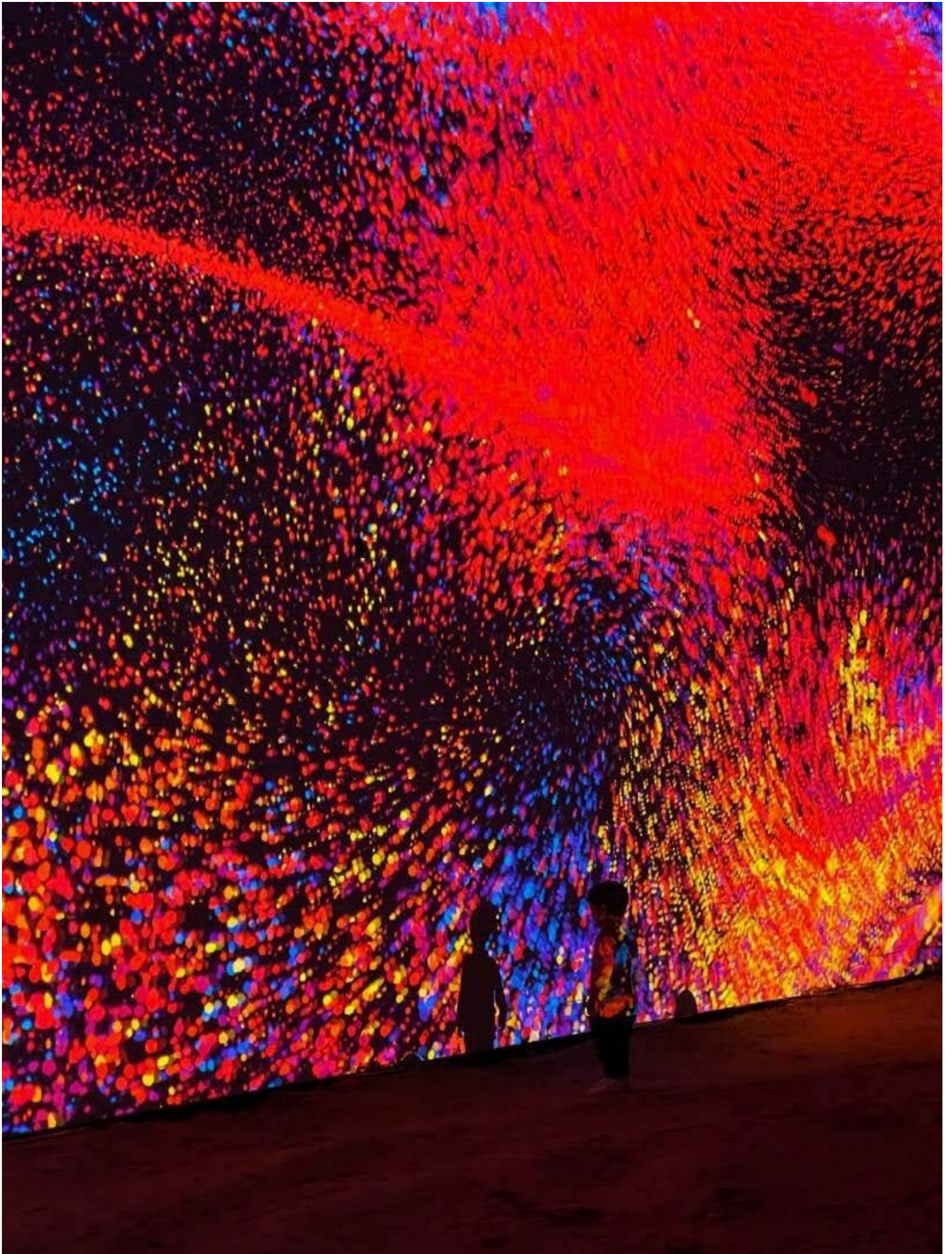
Asma Belhamar, *Chasing the Dance of Alfay* (2023), Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber



Samia Halaby, *City (1992-2019)*, Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber



Luciana Abait, Agua (2023), Manar Abu Dhabi, 2023. courtesy the artist and DCT Abu Dhabi. © Lance Gerber





Coral Alchemy by Shezad Dawood | © designboom



**project info:**

**exhibition:** Manar Abu Dhabi

**location:** Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

**on view:** November 20th, 2023 – January 30th, 2024

**co-curators:** Reem Fadda, Alia Zaal Lootah

**commissioned by:** Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi

**photography:** Lance Gerber | @lance.gerber

ravail khan | designboom

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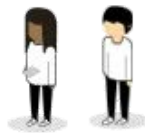
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