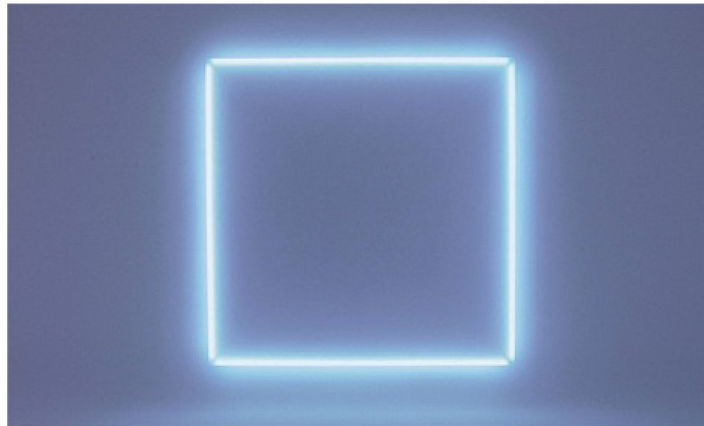


By Liz Totton

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Guggenheim Abu Dhabi preview

Get a Guggenheim preview with 'Seeing through Light' at Manarat Al Saadiyat



The capital is poised to be a hub on the international art scene, and 'Seeing through Light' at Manarat Al Saadiyat offers a glimpse of things to come. *Liz Totton* learns more about what the exhibition offers.

Saadiyat Island has been under construction for the past few years, but sensational things are happening beyond the safety barriers – and now we can glimpse the cultural light at the end of the tunnel.

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is offering a window into artwork to come, and the view is generating a buzz. The exhibition 'Seeing through Light: Selections from the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Collection' will be on view from November 5, 2014 to January 19, 2015 at Manarat Al Saadiyat.

The exhibition is comprised of 17 artworks acquired for the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi collection, as well as two key loans from its partner institution, the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum in New York.

The final piece of art by artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer will be one that debuted in 2009 at the Venice Biennale, a contemporary art exhibition in Venice, Italy. The canopy of lights will be activated and controlled by the heart rate of visitors using a sensor that converts their hearts' electrical activity into a unique lighting sequence. The canopy was designed for Abu Dhabi and will be exhibited on the East Plaza on the Corniche January 8-17, 2015.

Seeing through Light is the first major exhibition for the future museum. Maisa Al-Qassimi, is the programmes manager for Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and one of the exhibition's curators. She says, 'The exhibition presents 19 artworks by international artists. The artwork reflects the museum's cross-cultural perspective and philosophy. The exhibition examines light as a primary aesthetic principle in art, the art world and history. The theme's depth and flexibility has relevance across cultures and time periods.'

The exhibition is divided into five sections which examine light in the following forms: Activated, Celestial, Perceptual, Reflected, and Transcendent.

Activated light showcases the artist Angela Bulloch, who is well known for using Belisha beacons – the lights used to illuminate pedestrian crossings – in her work. On view is Angela's '6 chains: Permutation B' in the centre of this section, which resembles lit up, colourful building blocks. Celestial light meanwhile features artists such as Bharti Kher and Yayoi Kusama who use a range of media to produce artworks that emulate the infinite using light. Bharti paints bindis – decorative stickers worn by Indian women on their forehead – on broken mirrors, which replicate the experience of looking into the night sky. Yayoi will showcase a mirror-panelled installation with LED lights and water.

Perceptual light examines the untitled work of artists such as Robert Irwin and Douglas Wheeler who pioneered the light art movement in the 1960s in California. Light art obliged viewers to perceive space and light in ways they normally wouldn't. Look out for their white UV light and plexiglass pieces.

Reflected light assembles the work of the German artist Otto Piene who, throughout his career, has sought to demonstrate that light is a source of life to be constantly rediscovered, while Transcendent light showcases the work of painters such as Monir Farmanfarmaian and Y Z Kami, who use light to explore their world. On view in this section is Y Z's 'Endless Prayers XVIII,' which is paper cut and pasted onto canvas.

Maisa says, 'While the exhibition begins chronologically from the 1960s, it quickly blends time and mixes established and mid-career artists, as well as assembling a diversity of media within each section. From sensory environments that visitors can move around in to video, painting and sculpture, visitors will be able to experience light in all of its spatial, sensory and perceptual phenomena.'

The exhibition will also include free educational workshops, activities and discussions about light and how artists and cultures have depicted it throughout time. The hands' on workshops will allow visitors to explore the exhibition's themes. To receive notifications of upcoming workshops, like Saadiyat Cultural District on Facebook or follow it on Twitter @saadiyatCD.

The public programmes that accompany the exhibition will kick off on November 3 with a Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Talking Art Series' talk, called Seeing through Light, during which artists Angela Bulloch, Shirazeh Houshiary and Rachid Koraichi will answer questions. Artscape: An Evening of Light and Live Electronic Music on December 11 will be a night of music inspired by the featured artwork, with a special live performance by Hassan Khan, who will be displaying light in sync with music.

Maisa adds, 'Abu Dhabi has been witnessing a transformation in its art scene that forecasts a bright future for its art world, which can be felt on Saadiyat Island. Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is undergoing constant growth, with new programmes being added annually. There is a lot to look forward to; this is only the beginning.'

Make a visit to Manarat Al Saadiyat to see the future of art to come. If you are not already excited for Saadiyat Island's burgeoning cultural district, this glimpse into the new Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is certain to pique your interest.