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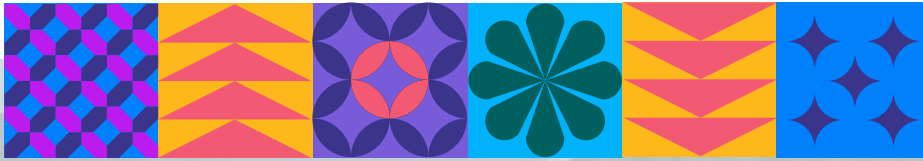
THE
ACADEMY

دائرة الثقافة والسياحة
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE
AND TOURISM



AI x Arts Fellowship

A joint initiative of **The Academy**
at **MBZUAI** and the Department of
Culture & Tourism



Overview

The AI x Arts Fellowship offers space for artists, technologists, scientists, and cultural thinkers to explore how creative practice might respond to the profound shifts defining our era. It is not simply a program about learning new tools. It is concerned with how artistic voices today might apprehend a world undergoing structural transformation.

Throughout history, major artistic movements have emerged alongside moments of tremendous scientific, cultural, and industrial change. The Impressionists developed new ways of seeing during a rapidly modernizing Europe, and a similar flowering of expression took shape during the Islamic Golden Age. Our world is now entering a comparable period of shift. This fellowship asks how contemporary creative practice might register and respond to these changes, and what new forms of expression or understanding might emerge.

Over the course of a year, fellows take part in a series of week-long residencies in Abu Dhabi, supported by ongoing peer exchange and independent development. The program brings together hands-on engagement with emerging tools, philosophical dialogue, and immersion into one of the most dynamic and fast-growing cultural ecosystems in the world.





Program Components

The fellowship combines technical inquiry, reflective dialogue, cultural engagement, and collaborative development.

1. Technical Exploration

Fellows spend time in the MBZUAI research environment, learning through guided experimentation with emerging tools and methods.

2. Philosophical Dialogue

The Academy convenes conversations with artists, scholars, and cultural practitioners to explore conceptual, social, and ethical questions arising from technological and societal change.

3. Cultural Immersion

Abu Dhabi's cultural landscape offers direct access to institutions such as Louvre Abu Dhabi, the forthcoming Guggenheim, TeamLab, the Natural History Museum, Abu Dhabi Art, and Frieze, along with curators, foundations, collectors, and peer artists.

4. Peer Exchange

The fellowship cultivates an environment in which fellows learn from one another, reflect together, and allow their practices to evolve through sustained exchange.

5. Documentation and Commissions

Each participant's journey is documented, and a commissioning fund may support promising works or collaborations for further development or public presentation.



Expectations

Fellows are expected to devote sustained time, attention, and presence to the program and its community.

1. Residency Attendance

Fellows must join the series of week-long residencies in Abu Dhabi. Dates will be shared in advance.

2. Active Engagement

Fellows are encouraged to experiment, collaborate, and contribute meaningfully to the intellectual and creative life of the cohort.

3. Ongoing Development

Time between residencies is reserved for continued research, creative development, and dialogue with peers and program leads.

4. Public and Community Participation

Fellows take part in Abu Dhabi's cultural life through talks, workshops, school engagements, exhibitions, media conversations, or similar activities. The Academy will invite fellows to propose how they would like to engage.

5. Openness of Form

Fellows are encouraged to develop a final creative outcome by the end of the fellowship. The form of this work is open and may range from an individual project to a collaborative piece that emerges within the cohort. The emphasis is on producing thoughtful work that reflects the inquiries and explorations undertaken throughout the year.



✓ Selection Criteria

The fellowship seeks individuals who bring creative rigor, openness, and distinctive viewpoints.

1. Demonstrated Contribution

Evidence of meaningful artistic, cultural, or intellectual work, shown through practice, research, or community engagement.

2. Curiosity and Openness

A willingness to explore new ideas, question assumptions, and work with unfamiliar tools and methods.

3. Cross-Disciplinary Perspective

Applicants from across artistic, technical, and scholarly domains are encouraged, including those whose practices bridge fields.

4. Diversity of Experience

Candidates may represent a range of geographic, cultural, and experiential backgrounds. Both emerging and established voices are welcome.

5. Cohort Balance

In shaping the inaugural group, we will consider how different perspectives and backgrounds complement one another. Selection reflects individual merit as well as the collective balance of the cohort.



Benefits

The fellowship provides practical learning, cultural access, and opportunities to expand artistic thought and practice.

1. Access to Research and Thought Partners

Fellows engage directly with MBZUAI researchers and thinkers, building technical literacy and deepening conceptual frameworks.

2. Cultural Access in Abu Dhabi

Fellows connect with major museums, foundations, galleries, cultural districts, and international platforms.

3. Public Engagement and Visibility

Fellows may share work and ideas through conversations, workshops, media, and other public platforms across the city.

4. Community and Collaboration

Fellows join an international cohort that supports experimentation, exchange, and collaboration during and beyond the fellowship.

5. Commissioning Support

Select works or collaborations may receive institutional backing for further development and presentation.



Timelines

- The fellowship runs for one year
- Fellows will participate in three residency periods in Abu Dhabi, each featuring a diverse range of programs such as technical workshops, masterclasses, and local immersion activities.
- Tentative timeline:
 - June 2026 (1 week):** Along with major art and cultural exhibitions across Abu Dhabi.
 - November 2026 (1 week):** In conjunction with Frieze Abu Dhabi.
- Time between residencies is dedicated to continued development and exchange

Contact Us

For questions or expressions of interest, please contact Mr. **Abdullahi Alim** from The Academy at MBZUAI

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Please note that nomination or application does not guarantee selection.

