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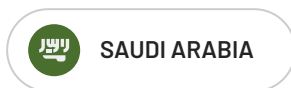
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NEWSLETTER: CITY PULSE RIYADH

# From Riyadh to New York: Sultan bin Fahad's 'Cncve'

Egyptian flavors, Frieze London and Saudi National Day celebrations.



Rebecca Anne Proctor

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Welcome to **Al-Monitor Riyadh**.

This week, we highlight Saudi artist **Sultan bin Fahad**'s solo exhibition in **New York**, the upcoming inaugural **Cultural Investment Summit** in Riyadh, Saudi artists participating in **Frieze Art Fair** in **London** in October and weeklong **Saudi National Day** celebrations at **Ithra** in Dhahran.

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Happy reading,

Rebecca

*P.S. Have feedback or tips on Riyadh's culture scene? Send them my*

### 1. Leading the week: Sultan bin Fahad in ‘Cncve’



*Sultan bin Fahad's "Oinbargo," 2025. Oil on folded canvas. (Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller)*

Saudi multidisciplinary artist **Sultan bin Fahad** is presenting his latest canvas works in “**Cncve**,” his solo exhibition at **Leila Heller Gallery** in **New York**. Exploring questions of **power** and its cyclical path through history, Fahad creates what appear to be folded **portraits** of former **world leaders**. One such work references **Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**, featuring nearly illegible text like “oinbargo, October 1973,” alluding to the **1973 oil embargo** orchestrated by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting

Countries in response to countries supporting Israel during the **Yom Kippur War**. Through this, Fahad contemporizes **history**, demonstrating how the **past** is intertwined with the **present** and **future**.

In another piece, **“Alo-Palestinian,”** the viewer can barely make out the date 1917, turned upside down, seemingly referencing the **Balfour Declaration**, which established a national home for the **Jewish people** in **Palestine** under the British Mandate. In **“Anti-Fasst,”** a grinning man in a black suit is folded in a way that obscures his full appearance, accompanied by the nearly illegible phrase **“AntiFasst Protection, August 1961,”** likely referring to the **Berlin Wall**, officially described by East Germany as the **“Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart.”**

Fahad's works invite viewers to ask both **present** and **retroactive questions** about what happened and what might have happened. **Bold and vibrantly painted**, these pieces reflect on **pivotal moments** in recent history and the ways they continue to **shape our world** today.

**Date:** through Oct. 18

**Location:** Leila Heller Gallery, Ground Level, 22 E. 80th St, New York

Find more information [here](#).

## 2. Word on the street: Sobhy Kaber





*A view of dishes at Sobhy Kaber. (Courtesy of Sobhy Kaber)*

If you're craving **Egyptian cuisine** in a **laid-back ambiance** in Riyadh, **Sobhy Kaber** is the place for you. The eatery first gained popularity in Cairo, opening its doors in **1996** after its founder, Sobhy Kaber, started as a street vendor selling **grilled liver sandwiches**. In Cairo, the multistory restaurant is known for catering to **large crowds** of Egyptians.

Now in **Riyadh**, the restaurant is quickly becoming equally popular in Saudi Arabia. Choose from a range of **delicious dishes**, including **juicy kebabs**, **tagines** and **stuffed cabbage leaves**. Don't miss the renowned **molokheya**, an ancient Egyptian dish made from the minced or whole leaves of the **jute mallow plant**, typically served with **chicken** and **white rice**.

**Location:** Al Takhassusi, Riyadh

Find more information [here](#).

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### 3. Riyadh diary





*Daniah Alsaleh's "A Palette's Stone 3," 2024. Acrylic, crushed stone of carnelian on polyester canvas. (Courtesy of the artist and the gallery)*

- **Daniah Alsaleh & Basmah Felemban at Frieze London 2025**

Preeminent Saudi gallery **ATHR** will present Saudi artists **Daniah Alsaleh** and **Basmah Felemban** at **Frieze London 2025**. The presentation reflects on Saudi Arabia as a landscape in **continuous change**, shaped by the movement of its people, environment and traditions.

In her work, **Alsaleh** draws on the historic Nabataean city of **AlUla** to explore **layers of history** through **materials** and **memory**. In her **"Stone Palette" series**, she grinds **carnelian**, once transported along ancient trade and pilgrimage routes, into pigment to paint **contemporary views of AlUla**. In the multimedia installation **"Hināt,"** Alsaleh references a **Nabataean woman** whose remains were found in **Tomb 117 at Hegra**, combining **photographic transfer, painting, video** and **algorithmic generation** to bring Hināt back to life in a space where memory, fiction and reality converge.

**Felemban** looks to the **future**, approaching the **natural landscape** as an informational system translated across multiple disciplines. Her work imagines **new terrains** from fragments of **language** and **data**. **Marine life** becomes a guide to the future, with **ballpoint drawings** of **coral sprites** and paintings of **catfish** rendering the improbable presence of river fish in desert landscapes — an imaginative creation of reality and what is to come.

**Date:** Oct. 15-19

**Location:** Frieze London, Regent's Park, booth A23

Find more information [here](#).

- **Riyadh stages inaugural Cultural Investment Conference**

Under the patronage of the Saudi Ministry of Culture, the inaugural **Cultural Investment Conference** will take place in **Riyadh** next

week. The event will convene **global leaders** in investment, public policy and culture to discuss the **future of cultural investment** and how it can bring about cultural production, economic growth and social development.

“The Cultural Investment Conference reflects Saudi Arabia’s commitment to global cultural investment and inclusive growth that benefits everyone,” said Saudi **Minister of Culture, His Highness Prince Bader bin Abdullah bin Farhan** in the event’s opening press release. “We believe that culture not only reflects heritage and identity but is an essential form of investment that can drive economic opportunities, foster mutual understanding, and shape a more connected and creative global future.”

The **two-day conference** will feature **38 panels** with cultural experts and **over 100 speakers**, exploring **public-private partnerships**, cultural **investment funds** and the growing role of **philanthropy** in advancing **creative economies**. The conference also emphasizes how culture can be a powerful driver of **economic diversification, innovation** and **international cooperation**.

**Date:** Sept. 29-30

**Location:** King Fahd Cultural Center, Riyadh

Find more information [here](#).

- **Ithra stages lineup of events for Saudi National Day**

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (**Ithra**) will celebrate the **95th Saudi National Day** on **Sept. 22-27**, focusing on Saudi culture and heritage. The Dhahran-based hub will offer interactive **exhibitions, installations, film screenings, workshops** and **family events**. Visitors are encouraged to dress in green or white or a color representing a region of the kingdom.

Highlights include the **Saudi time capsule**, where participants record messages and images to be returned in 2030, and **musical performances** such as “**Dialogues of Tunes**,” featuring the **oud** and **semsemiah**. The week will conclude with **fireworks** illuminating Ithra’s architecture and gardens, celebrating the kingdom’s rich diversity through art, music, food and performance.

**Date:** Sept. 22-27

**Location:** Ithra, Dhahran

Find more information [here](#).

#### 4. Book of the week: "King of Kings"

This gripping new book by **Scott Anderson**, author of the bestselling book "**Lawrence in Arabia**," traces the history of the **Iranian Revolution** — one of the most momentous events in modern history — and examines how it rippled across the Middle East influencing **regional political power dynamics**, with devastating, long-lasting repercussions. Anderson charts the **rise of the revolution**, born from a mix of **religious fervor**, **anti-colonial sentiment** and discontent with the **shah's rule**. He explores how the revolution became a template for the upheaval around the world by what he calls the "**economically marginalized, religiously fervent masses**" against secular elites. The much lauded book offers insights into today's global unrest.

#### 5. View from Riyadh

*Riyadh-based photographer Osama Yahiya Al-Jabarti captures  
Edge of the World. (Courtesy of Osama Yahiya Al-Jabarti)*

Edge of the World (**Jebel Fihrayn**) is a **natural geological wonder** about 100 kilometers (62 miles) northwest of Riyadh. Part of the **Tuwaiq Mountain range**, its dramatic cliffs offer breathtaking views of the **desert plains**. Popular for **hiking, mountain climbing** and **outdoor meals** with friends and family, the site is best accessed with a four-wheel drive due to the rugged terrain.

#### 6. By the numbers

- Since its establishment in June 2018, the Saudi Ministry of Culture has issued so far more than **9,000 cultural licenses**, providing support and incentives for cultural production across all creative fields.
- The ministry has also increased the number of **cultural associations, institutions** and **clubs** in the nonprofit sector in Saudi Arabia from 28 in 2017 to **993 in 2024**.

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