

For Immediate Release

Art Jameel scales up training of AIUla residents to digitally record local rock art and develop heritage economy

- **AIUla residents Jawharah Albalawi and Abdulrahim Sugair received intensive two-week training by Art Jameel and Factum Foundation in Madrid, Spain**
- **Albalawi and Sugair have returned to Saudi Arabia to build a team of photogrammetrists in AIUla**
- **An expanded training programme will be rolled out through 2020**

AIUla, Saudi Arabia | April 6, 2020 – [Art Jameel](#), an independent organisation that supports arts, education and heritage in the Middle East and beyond, is scaling up its efforts to build capacity for the digital documentation of heritage in AIUla, Saudi Arabia. Last year, supported by [the Royal Commission for AIUla](#), Art Jameel and the [Factum Foundation](#) delivered the initial phase of a training programme for **Jawharah Albalawi** and **Abdulrahim Sugair**, photographers from AIUla. The training – in advanced **photogrammetry**, a technique used for the digital documentation of objects in three dimensions – was hosted at the Factum Foundation headquarters in Madrid, Spain.

The capacity-building programme is the latest development in the partnership between Art Jameel and the Royal Commission for AIUla, which is leading efforts to record and preserve the rich archaeological heritage of the region, especially the wealth of rock art and petroglyphs that abounds in the desert. Art Jameel, which has pioneered digital documentation techniques in Saudi Arabia, is committed to supporting the development of the Saudi heritage sector, including by helping to create job opportunities, in an emerging technical field, for residents in rural AIUla.

Albalawi and Sugair are alumni of [the 2018 pilot programme](#) by Art Jameel and the Royal Commission for AIUla that trained 15 men and women in AIUla in photogrammetry. Following the training in Madrid, Albalawi and Sugair returned to AIUla and are now set to deliver, with Art Jameel and the Factum Foundation, a further round of introductory training for local residents.

Describing her experience in Madrid, Albalawi said: “During our intensive training programme in Madrid, I learnt a lot about the practice of photogrammetry and how to apply its many aspects to the recording of heritage. I am looking forward to continuing to develop within the field, and expanding the practice of photogrammetry in AIUla for the benefit of everyone interested in contributing to the preservation of heritage in Saudi Arabia. I am grateful and thankful to our instructors, Art Jameel, the Factum Foundation and all those who contributed to my training.”

Fatima Mazeh, Senior Programme Manager (Heritage) at Art Jameel, said: “Jawharah and Abdulrahim’s progress has been dramatic. When they began the 2018 pilot programme in AIUla, they were novices to the entire concept of digital documentation of heritage. In Madrid, they have mastered advanced proficiency in a highly technical discipline that is vital to the work of heritage preservation and documentation in Saudi Arabia.”



“As we return to AlUla to begin another round of training for local residents in AlUla, which Jawharah and Abdulrahim will lead, we are seeing the creation of the first pool of Saudi photogrammetrists, who will be able to lead the recording of the heritage of their country,” she added.

AlUla is home to rich archeological sites dating back over 2,000 years to the Dadanite and Nabataean kingdoms. Hegra (Madain Saleh) is Saudi Arabia’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the most well-known landmark in the AlUla region, with over 100 well preserved tomb facades and many ancient carvings throughout the 52-hectare ancient site.

At the heart of Art Jameel’s philosophy are its efforts to support local communities and to combine traditional approaches with emerging technologies. Its work with the preservation of heritage in AlUla complements the organisation’s programming in Cairo and Jeddah through the [Jameel House of Traditional Arts in Jeddah](#), [Project Space Art Jameel in Jeddah](#), the [Jameel House of Traditional Arts in Cairo](#), and [Atelier Cairo Art Jameel](#) which offer a number of training programmes as well as other cultural and art initiatives and opportunities across the region.

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About Art Jameel

Art Jameel supports artists and creative communities. Current initiatives include running heritage institutes and restoration programmes, plus a broad range of arts and educational initiatives for all ages. The organisation’s programmes foster the role of the arts in building open, connected communities; at a time of flux and dramatic societal shifts, this role is understood as more crucial than ever.

Jameel Arts Centre, an innovative contemporary institution in Dubai, UAE, opened on November 11, 2018; Hayy:Creative Hub, a major complex for the creative industries in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, is set to launch in 2020-21.

Art Jameel’s model is collaborative: major institutional partners include Delfina Foundation, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Prince’s Foundation School of Traditional Arts and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Locally, the organisation works with individuals and organisations to develop innovative programming that embraces both ancient and new technologies, and encourages entrepreneurship and the development of cultural networks.



Art Jameel is positioned alongside Community Jameel, and complements its sister organisation's work in promoting positive social change, job creation and poverty alleviation across the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey.

artjameel.org

About AlUla

Located 1,100 km from Riyadh, in North-West Saudi Arabia, AlUla is a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage. The vast area, covering 22,561km², includes a lush oasis valley, towering sandstone mountains and ancient cultural heritage sites dating back thousands of years to when the Lihyan and Nabataean kingdoms reigned.

The most well-known and recognised site in AlUla is Mada'in Salih, Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. A 52-hectare ancient city, Mada'in Salih was the principal southern city of the Nabataean Kingdom and is comprised of more than 100 well preserved tombs with elaborate facades cut out of the sandstone outcrops surrounding the walled urban settlement. Current research suggests Mada'in Salih was the most southern outpost of the Romans after conquering the Nabataeans in 106 CE.

In addition to Mada'in Salih, AlUla is home to a series of fascinating historical and archaeological sites such as: Al-Khuraybah (ancient Dadan), the capital of the Dadan and Lihyan Kingdoms, which is considered one of the most developed 1st-millennium BCE cities of the Arabian Peninsula; thousands of ancient rock art sites and inscriptions; and Hijaz Railway stations.

About Royal Commission for AlUla

The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) was established by royal decree in July 2017 to protect and safeguard AlUla, a region of outstanding natural and cultural significance in North-West Saudi Arabia. RCU is embarking on a long-term plan to develop and deliver a sensitive, sustainable transformation of the region, reaffirming it as one of country's most important archaeological and cultural destinations and preparing it to welcome visitors from around the world. RCU's development work in AlUla encompasses a broad range of initiatives across archaeology, tourism, culture, education and the arts, reflecting the ambitious commitment to cultivate tourism and leisure in Saudi Arabia, outlined in Vision 2030.

About Factum Foundation

Founded in 2009 by Adam Lowe, Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation is a not-for-profit organization established to demonstrate the importance of documenting, monitoring, studying, recreating and disseminating the world's cultural heritage. Through the rigorous development of high-resolution recording and re-materialization techniques, Factum aims to break down the barriers between traditional and digital arts and apply the outcomes to the preservation and sharing of cultural heritage.

Factum Foundation was created with the aim of using Factum Arte's innovative processes and technologies for preservation, education and the development of thought-provoking exhibitions. Factum Foundation develops new techniques in digital recording and processing to record artworks of many



different types, from paintings and manuscripts to monumental sculptures, caves, rock-art sites. The Foundation always records at the highest possible resolution and works to ensure that all commercial rights to the data recorded remain with the object.

These recordings have many uses: they can be used by curators to monitor condition, by researchers for study, or to allow anyone who cannot travel to see the original object to view it in high-resolution through the internet. They can be used to explore different options for restoring objects in a purely virtual setting, without harming the original, or they can be used to create facsimiles which are indistinguishable from the originals to the naked eye, as part of a coherent approach to understand and read the importance of material evidence.

The Foundation also builds digital archives to preserve these records, creates exhibitions, and has set up training courses and centers in locations from Egypt to Dagestan, Venice and AlUla to create local experts in digital preservation who are able to record their own cultural heritage.