

Art Jameel and the Royal Commission for Al-Ula team up to train young Saudis to capture and document unique rock carvings using latest digital technologies

- This collaborative programme brought young people living in and around Al-Ula together to learn new digital and photogrammetry skills
- Those skills were immediately put to use, to record some of the most significant rock carvings in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia's premier historical and cultural destination



Local residents learning to digitally record and document the heritage of their area

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia | December 9, 2018 – In a new Art Jameel project, hosted by the Royal Commission for Al-Ula (RCU), a group of men and women from in and around the town of Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, have been trained in photogrammetry, a digital mapping technique, and documented the unique heritage of the rock carvings in their region. The 2-week intensive training programme led by Art Jameel in partnership with the Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation and supported by the Rothschild Foundation was attended by local residents from in and around Al-Ula who gained the skills necessary to digitally record and document the unique heritage of the area.

Participants trained in state-of-the-art technologies to create accurate 3-dimensional models of some of the most important archaeological sites in Al-Ula, allowing for detailed study by archaeologists and future preservation. Between September 30 and October 11, 2018, participants attended an intensive 2-day theory workshop at Shaden, a desert camp outside Al-Ula, before deploying to the field for the remainder of the free-of-charge 2-week programme.



The workshop and its outputs support the ongoing archaeological mission in Al-Ula to document and preserve the rich heritage of the region, including its rock carvings. Participants learned key skills that they can continue to use as new opportunities are created with the development of Al-Ula. Ahmed Al Masoud, one of the participants in the workshop commented saying, “the course has offered photographers like me a unique opportunity. This kind of technology has not been applied to the field of archaeology and it has allowed us to photograph and interpret some of the important rock carvings in Al-Ula in an entirely new way.”

Al-Ula is home to rich archeological sites dating back over 2,000 years to the Dedanite and Nabataean kingdoms. While Mada’in Salih is Saudi Arabia’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site and the most well-known landmark in the Al-Ula region, there are over 100 well preserved tomb facades and many ancient carvings throughout the 52-hectare ancient city.

Art Jameel offers a number of heritage preservation trainings using the photogrammetry technique as well as other cultural and art initiatives and opportunities in different parts of Saudi Arabia and in the region as a whole. Like the Royal Commission for Al-Ula, Art Jameel champions innovative approaches to protecting and preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage. At the heart of Art Jameel’s philosophy are its efforts to support local communities and to combine traditional approaches with emerging technologies. Art Jameel has also previously worked with the Factum Foundation to deploy digital technology in the documentation of endangered heritage in Saudi Arabia, and is at the centre of new heritage thinking and policy in the region.

The Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation offers sophisticated technologies that range from photogrammetry, operating systems, software and recording systems.

Hosting this programme in Al-Ula is part of RCU’s commitment to providing opportunities for young Saudis to build useful skills and creating links with their heritage. Additionally, it aims to bring the rich history and archeology of Al-Ula to the world.

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For more information visit www.artjameel.org and join the conversation on Instagram [@art_jameel](https://www.instagram.com/art_jameel) | Facebook [Art Jameel](https://www.facebook.com/ArtJameel) | Twitter [@Art_Jameel](https://twitter.com/Art_Jameel)

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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.

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.

www.artjameel.org

About Al-Ula

Located 1,100 km from Riyadh, in North-West Saudi Arabia, Al-Ula 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 Al-Ula 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 Roman Empire after conquering the Nabataeans in 106 CE.

In addition to Mada'in Salih, Al-Ula 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 Al-Ula

The Royal Commission for Al-Ula (RCU) was established by royal decree in July 2017 to protect and safeguard Al-Ula, 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 Al-Ula 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.