

From April 2, 2025

to April 6, 2025

Villa Hegra
presents

NEUMA

The Forgotten Ceremony

Une exposition
des artistes
Sarah Brahim et
Ugo Schiavi

An exhibition by
the artists
Sarah Brahim and
Ugo Schiavi

النفس
لحظات طواها
النسيان

curated by Wejdan Reda &
Arnaud Morand

Informations:
www.artparis.com

VILLA HEGRA
فيلد الحجر

GRAND PALAIS
Paris 75008

**From AlUla to the Grand Palais:
Villa Hegra to Be Featured at Art Paris
and Unveil *'NEUMA, The Forgotten Ceremony'***

Villa Hegra, the first Saudi-French cultural institution, will present *'NEUMA, The Forgotten Ceremony'*, an installation by artists Sarah Brahim and Ugo Schiavi, during the 27th edition of the Art Paris fair, taking place from April 3-6, 2025 at the Grand Palais.

Within a 150 m² exhibition space, visitors will experience this work, marking the culmination of the artists' participation in Villa Hegra's first residency program. The exhibition will also offer an opportunity to explore the genesis, key voices, and vision of Villa Hegra in AlUla, a vast region in northwest Saudi Arabia celebrated for its unique landscapes featuring lush oases, dramatic sandstone formations, and timeless cultural landmarks.. Its initiatives, aimed at fostering contemporary creation in visual arts, cinema, and performing arts, have been presented to AlUla's audience since 2023.

The exhibition is curated by Wejdan Reda and Arnaud Morand.

From AIUla's Wadi Al Naam canyon to the Grand Palais: the installation 'NEUMA, The Forgotten Ceremony' presented at Art Paris

Imagined as a symbolic gesture inspired by the ritual practices of the pre-Islamic tribes of AIUla, and honoring the present-day inhabitants of this land, this installation by Saudi-American artist Sarah Brahim and French artist Ugo Schiavi is the result of in-depth research carried out in close collaboration with archaeologists and local communities across the region. Drawing inspiration from AIUla's landscape, its mythology and heritage, this exhibition fosters a contemplative mood by subtly blending contemporary creation, elements of the site's ancient history, as well as temporal and spiritual elements across an ensemble of sculptures, videos, photography commissions and a performative activation, presented beneath the Grand Palais's nave.

Unveiled in December 2024 as part of Villa Hegra's first preopening cultural season (curated by Wejdan Reda and Arnaud Morand) and the AIUla Arts Festival, this multidisciplinary artistic proposition was exhibited until February 2025 in the Wadi Al Naam canyon and in AIUla's old town. The exhibition presented in Paris features new commissions, including a video, a large-scale photograph and a series of Polaroids by Sarah Brahim engaging in a dynamic dialogue with a fused glass sculpture by Ugo Schiavi.

A series of handcrafted blown glass sculptures—shaped to reiterate the contours of the region's geology and its metamorphosis—are presented in a scenography evoking an archaeological reserve, engaging in dialogue with the Grand Palais' classical architecture infused with Art Nouveau elements. These glass vessels, evocative of relics from a forgotten era or a speculative past, become ceremonial and ritualistic objects when activated by the breath of performers. Neuma, the "vital breath" in classical thought, finds its physical embodiment in these works, where the earthly body and breath appear entwined with the celestial body and the soul. For Aristotle, "pneuma" (πνεῦμα) was regarded as the animating principle of life. Transcending the individual in Stoic thought, "pneuma" became the divine breath of the cosmos. With this proposition, the artists portray breath as the pulse of existence, the soul as an unseen current — flowing through spaces where form and meaning meet.

At the Core of Creativity: Reflecting on a Year of Residency at Villa Hegra

This collaborative installation by Brahim and Schiavi marks the culmination of their participation in Villa Hegra's artist residency program.

The creative process behind the work and Villa Hegra's commitment to intercultural cooperation will be the subject of a conference on Friday, April 4, from 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM, in Art Paris's dedicated forum space.

Participants will include:

- **Feriel Fodil**, CEO of Villa Hegra
- **Wejdan Reda** and **Arnaud Morand**, curators of Villa Hegra's first cultural preopening season
- Artists **Sarah Brahim** and **Ugo Schiavi**

Sarah Brahim

Born in 1992. Lives and works between Riyadh (Saudi Arabia), Portland (USA), New York (USA), and Milan (Italy).

Sarah Brahim is a visual and performance artist working across many mediums to present work rooted in experiences of the body. She trained as a professional performer, teacher, and choreographer at San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, and received a BFA (Hons) from London Contemporary Dance School.

Her research-based practice began while studying medicine at university, as she continued practicing and performing. The pursuit to understand the body through every possible lens- biological, physiological, experiential, and more- led her to receive her BS from Oregon Health and Science University, with a focus on medical anthropology, naturopathic medicine, and public health.

In her work, Brahim examines how gestures of the body create a language that can be used to voice grief, metamorphosis, the unseen form, and our relationship to the natural world. Transformation through movement is reflected in her works that explore questions of embodiment and cycles of connection, whether social, spatial, or spiritual.

In 2024, her first solo exhibition was presented at the Bally Foundation in Switzerland. She was also part of the Filmmakers Academy at the renowned 77th edition of the Locarno Film Festival and awarded Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. She was invited of 8 artists for the Visio European Programme of Artists Moving Images residency and festival program and for the closing ceremony of Venice Biennale 2024. Her work can currently be seen at NYU as a part of *Between the Tides: A Gulf Quinquennial*.

Ugo Schiavi

Born in 1987 in Neuilly sur Seine, France. Lives and works in Marseille, France. Ugo Schiavi's work resides at the crossing of time, merging the contemporary and the antic in uncanny forms, finding an echo in common memory. Playing on the tensions between past and present, that could be affiliated to fictional archaeology, it gives way to engrossing narratives and balance between strength and fragility, fiction and history.

Ugo Schiavi's approach is born from a universal heritage and grows on erasing the idea of temporality via the creation of mutating artworks, willing descendants to public and universally shared monuments. Through his practice appears an anticipated archaeology that defies the linearity of time.

Schiavi takes his detailed casts directly from live models and figural public monuments; the physically demanding casting processes give his works an expressive spontaneity. His practice is an extension of his interests in collection and conservation; he carefully preserves accumulated layers of meaning from sites and ancient works to discover new contemporary correspondences.

Ugo Schiavi had several personal exhibitions at Centre d'Art Bastille, Grenoble (2022); Musée Réattu, Arles (2021) and Musée des Beaux Arts d'Orléans, Orléans (2019). He was also featured in group exhibitions such as *Noor Riyadh* and *BIENALSUR* (2023), the Lyon Biennale (2022), *Le Voyage à Nantes* (2021) and *Nuit Blanche* (2018).

Villa Hegra's Foundations, Initiatives and Perspectives

A dedicated section of the exhibition space will allow visitors to follow Villa Hegra's journey since its emergence as a symbol of Saudi-French cultural cooperation.

This ambitious, ever-evolving project invites exploration of its many dimensions, from the deployment of its cultural initiatives in AIUla and beyond to the individuals who drive it and shape its identity as a key institution in tomorrow's cultural landscape.

The public will be able to discover the institution's future through the first architectural renderings of Villa Hegra's forthcoming building, designed by Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, recipients of the 2021 Pritzker Prize.

Within this space, Paul Emilieu Marchesseau, Villa Hegra's first designer-in-residence, will present an overview of the work conducted during his immersion in AIUla. His technique is anchored in a sustainable approach that prioritizes the repurposing of raw materials. His creations, nurtured through dialogue with Saudi artisans, establish the foundations for a range of modular and sustainable furniture, conceived for Villa Hegra's future workshop spaces within its temporary and, ultimately, permanent space.

About Villa Hegra

Born from the friendship between Saudi Arabia and France, Villa Hegra is an institution dedicated to cross-cultural cooperation. Supporting contemporary creation, particularly in the fields of visual arts, cinema, and performing arts, it aims to be an open space for creativity, education, and exchange. By fostering dialogue between the AIUla community and international audiences, Villa Hegra creates opportunities for expression while contributing to the region's global visibility. It embodies France's cultural dynamism in AIUla and, in turn, that of Saudi Arabia in France.

Since 2023, Villa Hegra has launched its offsite programming in AIUla, becoming part of the region's cultural landscape through a series of initiatives open to all: artist residencies, concerts, performances, exhibitions and installations, scientific workshops, conferences, academic exchange programs, and scientific research. These projects are developed in collaboration with French institutions such as Forum des Images, Mobilier national, Opéra national de Paris, Philharmonie de Paris, and the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS). At the same time, other Villa Hegra initiatives are also taking place in Paris.

In spring 2025, Villa Hegra will open its temporary site in central AIUla. This space will become the hub of its artistic and cultural programming, offering a space for encounter, exchange, and creation for artists and audiences alike.

As the first Saudi-French cultural institution, Villa Hegra was established during the French President's visit to Saudi Arabia in December 2024, following the agreement signed between the two countries in December 2021. Its two founding institutions are the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) and the French Agency for AIUla Development (Afalula).