

Ithra
Annual
Report

2023

**Going
Above.**



Ithra.

Inspiring Hearts. Enriching Minds.

Ithra is a creative and cultural destination aiming to ignite cultural curiosity, expand knowledge and inspire creativity through the power of ideas, imagination and innovation.

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Located in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, popularly known as Ithra, features a five-gallery museum, an exhibition hall, a performing arts theater, an innovation lab, a cinema, a state-of-the-art library, extensive education facilities and the first children's museum in the nation.

Ithra — from the Arabic word for "enrichment" — is a platform for art, creativity and culture. It is dedicated to education and innovation. It is a cultural catalyst, a global gateway and an economic engine.

It is Ithra's mission to foster the creative and cultural sector, and it does so by supporting the work of individuals in visual, cinematic, media and performing arts — as well as design and entrepreneurship.

The Ithra building is an architectural masterpiece resulting from an international competition won by the Norwegian firm Snøhetta. It features a unique skin made of 360 km of individually bent stainless steel pipes designed to handle the stresses of its coastal desert site, most notably heat from the sun and wind-born sand.

With the steel-pipe exterior set alongside the rammed earth walls of Ithra's interior plaza, the building combines the world's newest and oldest architectural technologies to create a model of sustainability that has twice been awarded Gold LEED status — Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, the world's leading green certification — both in 2018 for its built environment and in 2023 for its operations and maintenance. In 2018, the year it opened to the public, Ithra was listed by TIME magazine as one of "the 100 greatest places in the world to visit."

WORLD OF INSPIRATION

Abdullah Alrashid

Director, King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)

Throughout 2023, Ithra — the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture — experienced major growth and achieved success on many fronts. We set ambitious goals for the year and we outperformed virtually all of our targets. To say the least, 2023 was a great year for Ithra — our communities of staff, partners, content creators, vendors and visitors.

Ithra is now positioned for long-term success; it is growing in its ability to contribute positively to our stakeholders and society as a whole. The Center doubled the number of visitors over the past couple of years, and in 2023 alone, Ithra exceeded 1,100,000 visitors. Ithra offered more than 9,000 programs, over 1,000 more than the previous year. The Ithra Theater, for example, doubled the number of performances compared to 2022. The Museum, the Ithra Library, and the Cinema, as well, all had record years.

Ithra opened to the public in 2018 as an institution dedicated to fostering the creative economy and elevating cultural thought in Saudi Arabia. The Center had been years in the making, not only from an architectural perspective, but in recruiting and training staff and

developing a robust cultural program that would accelerate cultural development in the Kingdom. Since we opened the doors of our permanent home, Ithra has achieved five years of initiatives and programming that have supported skills creation and showcased international and Saudi cultural content. As the punctuation of those five years, 2023 has been a banner year both quantitatively and qualitatively. From the start, Ithra's mission has been to make a tangible and positive impact on human development by inspiring a passion for knowledge, creativity and cross-cultural engagement. Our vision has been of a Saudi Arabia that is a beacon for knowledge and creativity. I am extremely proud that our professional staff, in partnership with our public audiences, have set the Center on a path of success in terms of impact, awareness, participation and outcomes. We are blazing a trail to the future in support of the creative and cultural sector and the Saudi people.

As a multifaceted cultural center, Ithra is in a unique position not only to stage entertaining and educational cultural events for our visiting audiences, but also to help grow the burgeoning creative and cultural sector in Saudi by supporting the skills, knowledge and abilities of our content creators. Right now, for example, Ithra is the largest film production house in Saudi Arabia; and we are founding partners and hosts of the

annual Saudi Film Festival — which celebrated its ninth season this past year. Ithra offers education, guidance, classes, workshops and conferences on innovation, creativity, content creation and technical skills in all of the arts, teaching methods, communications, entrepreneurship and much more. Our Ithra Academy is dedicated to life-long learning. Our digital well-being initiative, Sync, is in its second year and expanding. And our Tanween creativity conference is a world-class gathering that takes on real world challenges and helps Saudi creatives take their ideas and make them into marketable realities. Ithra is far more than a museum with pictures hanging on the wall, though, yes, we do that as well.

Moving forward, Ithra will continue to fuel the creative and cultural ecosystem of Saudi Arabia. Our audiences are growing, and we will reach out to them more than ever on the local, national, regional and international levels. We will continue to develop our national and international collaborations and partnerships. Ithra is not a static building or place; it is dynamic. It is far more than the sum of the people and programs that flow through it; Ithra is a living entity fueled by cultural and intellectual development and the most incredible resource of all — human energy. We now have five years of experience and lessons learned under our belt. But we're just getting started — and you ain't seen nothin' yet!

Ithra

Five Years and the Future

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) is equipped to provide an extraordinary range of programming to the public. It features a five-gallery museum, a 900-seat theater, a 310-seat cinema, a world-class library, the education-oriented Ithra Tower, the Energy Exhibit, a creativity and innovation lab, a conference/exhibition auditorium and the first children's museum in Saudi Arabia. As well, there are sites throughout Ithra's central Plaza and grounds that are regularly adapted for performance spaces, installations, workshops and exhibitions. The Center is constantly abuzz with activity: In 2023 alone, Ithra mounted over 9,000 programs and activities and welcomed more than 1.1 million visitors.

While Ithra's structure and appearance are impossible to miss or dismiss, it was originally imagined for its cultural program designed to further the human development of the Saudi people. Having opened its doors in 2018, 2023 marked Ithra's fifth anniversary of public operations. While its facilities have expanded

and its programs improved through experience and growing expertise, Ithra's goals have never wavered. Ultimately, Ithra is about people and programming: Its mission is to "make a tangible and positive impact on human development by inspiring a passion for knowledge, creativity, and cross-cultural engagement for the future of the Kingdom."

From even before it opened to the public, the depth and breadth of Ithra's programming was vast. While leading cultural institutions around the world may have a collecting museum, a theater, a cinema, exhibition galleries, an archive, a library or some combination of these facilities, the number of peer institutions that include all of these in addition to a children's museum and an innovation lab puts Ithra in very rare company.

Alongside its focus on culture and the arts, Ithra is a highly active platform for education, innovation and entrepreneurialism. In addition to the Ithra Academy's offerings, the Center has long supported training teachers through

annual programs such as the Learning Beyond conference. In terms of STEM, Ithra mounts the weeks-long PiCon program and sponsors and hosts the KSA F1® in Schools program, which sent three teams to the 2023 international finals in Singapore. Ithra supports reading and literature through the annual Ithra Reading Program – iRead – which launched as a national competition in 2013 as well as through its commission-oriented Content Initiative.

Far more than an iconic building, Ithra is about the people participating in the programming, whether on the creative or audience side of the equation. While being the first such cultural center in Saudi Arabia has offered some advantages, it also presents a unique set of challenges. There were not, for example, pre-existing local audiences or demand for theater shows, live performances, films, art museums or libraries. Those audiences had to be created – and the Center is continuously dedicated to expanding its outreach. The same was true of the content side of the theatrical and cinematic productions. When Ithra opened in 2018, there were few experienced filmmakers or theater professionals in the country. With programs such as the Saudi Film Festival – of which Ithra was a founding partner and which includes technical and artistic workshops – the Ithra Short Play Competition, the Ithra Content Initiative and Creative Solutions among many others, Ithra has become a leading platform for professional development and new content in the Saudi creative and cultural sector.

Over its first five years, Ithra has grown its programming, public awareness and participation at an extraordinary pace, and in line with cultural and technological changes. Among hundreds of novel programs, Ithra launched a digital well-being initiative promoting the balanced use of technology, Sync, which followed its 2022 summit with a significant research project and retreats in Thailand and Oman in 2023. Many of the XR technologies that feature in the Creative Challenges of the Creative Solutions program did not even exist in a commercial sense in 2018. Yet, just as Ithra visitors can now visit historical sites around the world via VR, they can also learn how to make clay pots or weave palm fronds using ancient traditional methods.

The Ithra building is unquestionably a masterpiece of architecture and the entire complex is a paragon of state-of-the-art learning and cultural facilities. However, Ithra is ultimately about the people – both the visitors and those who produce and support the Center's world-class programming. This was a banner year: With well over one million visitors in 2023, Ithra covered new ground, scored new successes and surpassed expectations. Ithra-produced films were lauded around the world. Ithra's programs such as iRead and the Ithra Art Prize were expansively opened beyond Saudi borders. And students who topped the KSA F1® in Schools national finals at Ithra went to the world finals in Singapore and won the Innovation Thinking Award. These are clear signs that Ithra is still gathering momentum and curving upward for an ever-brighter future.

Vision

To be a beacon for **Knowledge, Creativity, and Cross-Cultural Engagement.**

Mission

Ithra aims to **make a tangible and positive impact on human development** by inspiring a passion for knowledge, creativity, and cross-cultural engagement for the future of the Kingdom.

The Five Pillars

We at Ithra aim to make a lasting impact on our audiences and ensure that we are inclusive. Our programs range from the best of international culture to projects revitalizing areas that need to be reimagined and reinvented for the future. We equip our volunteers with the skills they need in the modern international – and sometimes virtual – workplace.

We center our work around five pillars: art, knowledge, creativity, community and culture.

Sense and Sustainability

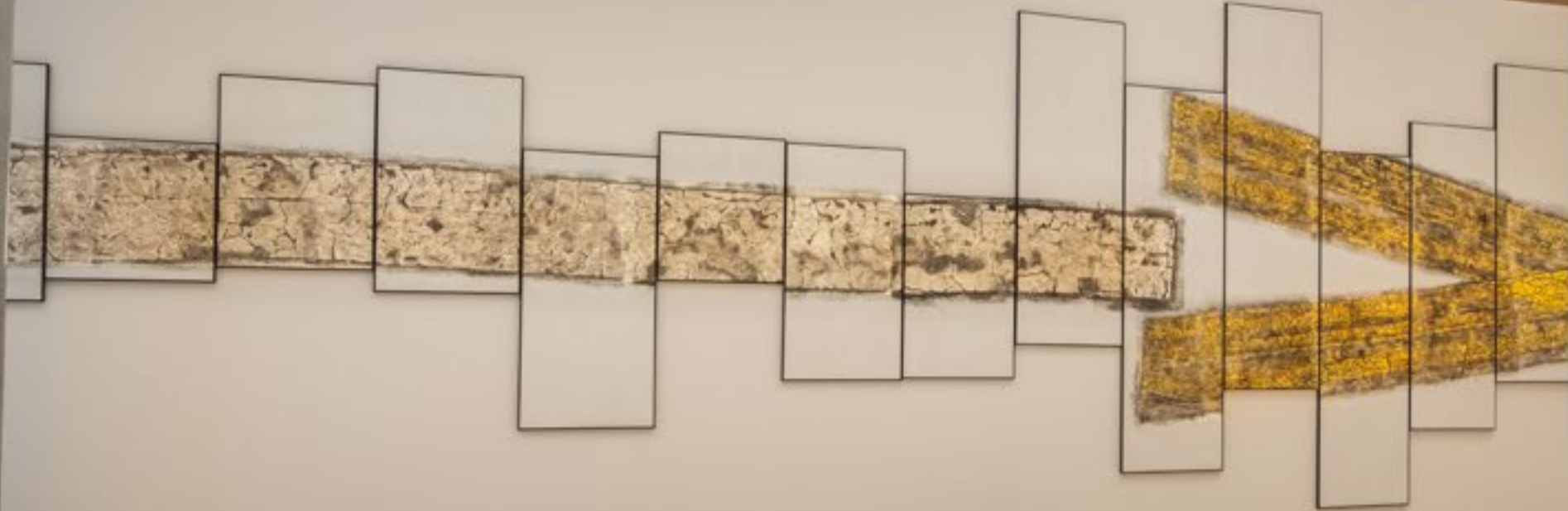
The year Ithra opened, TIME magazine named it to its 2018 list of "the 100 greatest places to visit in the world." Even before construction began, Ithra had been designed to be a beacon of sustainability, specifically targeting Gold LEED certification. Ithra's architecturally unique steel pipe skin differentiates it from any other building in the world. It combines this newest building technology with one of the oldest – rammed earth, a combination of uncemented dirt, gravel and clay that is watered and then compressed into a structural form. Rammed earth has excellent insulation, humidity-control and acoustic qualities. Ithra's rammed earth elements proudly feature earth from around the Kingdom, and this use of local materials is a critical sustainability element for LEED certification. Ithra was conceptualized as a collection of five stones symbolizing unity and mutual support. The ground level stands for the present, below is the past, and the upper elements represent the future.

- Since 2018, Ithra's built environment has been Gold LEED certified: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is the globally recognized US Green Building Council sustainability certification that rates every phase of a building – design, construction, operations and maintenance.
- In 2023, Ithra was presented with Gold LEED certification for operations and maintenance (v4,1 O+M Existing Buildings). The three-year certification process considered metrics such as water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, indoor environmental quality, and innovation in operations. Ithra is the first Saudi building to achieve two LEED Gold certifications.
- In 2023, Ithra became the first building to achieve Diamond Level Certification – the highest possible – for "Operations + Existing Buildings" in the Mostadam Program, the Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs and Housing's sustainability rating and certification system for Saudi buildings.
- Ithra is wrapped in 93,403 stainless steel tubes totaling more than 360 km in combined length. This steel pipe skin creates a natural air flow that removes solar heat gain from the exterior of the building, much like a mashrabiya – the centuries-old Middle Eastern cooling system easily recognizable as the cantilevered wooden screen windows that jut out from traditional buildings. The mashrabiya is celebrated in Ithra's design through the steel pipe skin, the covered walkway around the building and the perforated steel gates in the Plaza.

Ithra Components

At the heart of Ithra are the people who make up our teams in programs, communications, administration, advisory, technical services and operations.

We work together in the spirit of uncompromising professionalism to ensure the public experience of Ithra is defined by our ethic of excellence that drives our nine components.



Miva Art Prize

The Miva Art Prize, launched by Miva in 2017, was set to award emerging and established Saudi and Saudi-based artists in contemporary art. It is a key program of Miva aimed to support and promote Saudi artists on a global scale. The winning artwork was unveiled at Art Dubai 2019 prior to joining Miva's prestigious permanent collection.

Miva Art Prize, in its fourth edition, opened to artists from 22 Arab countries for the first time since its inception. The prize was held in partnership with the Ad-Diqyah Beirwan Foundation. The prize winner was awarded \$100,000 to create a new artwork and each year the winning artwork becomes part of the Miva art collection.

In 2021 the winner was Nadea Kadih Linka, a Tunisian-Ukrainian artist based in Berlin. Her winning artwork, *E. M. H. (E. M. H. - A Modern Fossil)*, takes an effective look at one of the effects of the pandemic - the decline in commercial air traffic, which raises questions about how humanity is measuring progress and economic growth.

مبادرة إترا للفنون

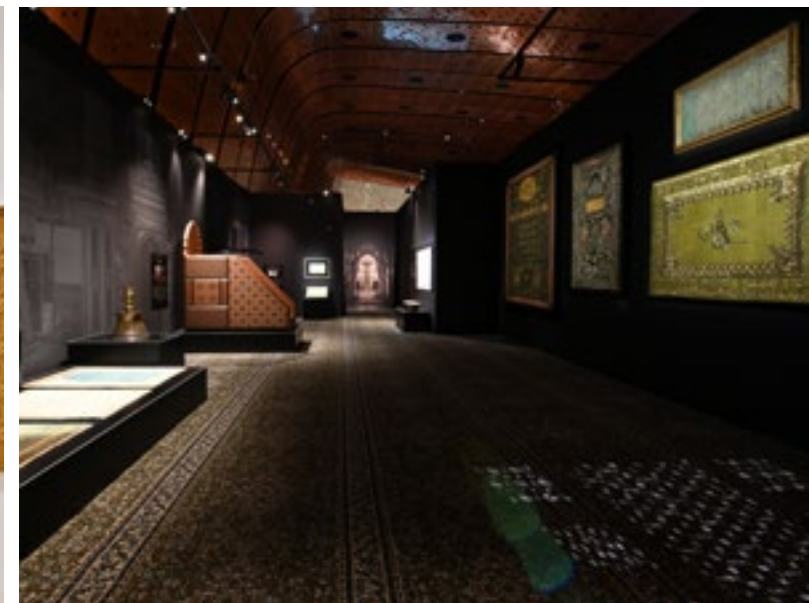
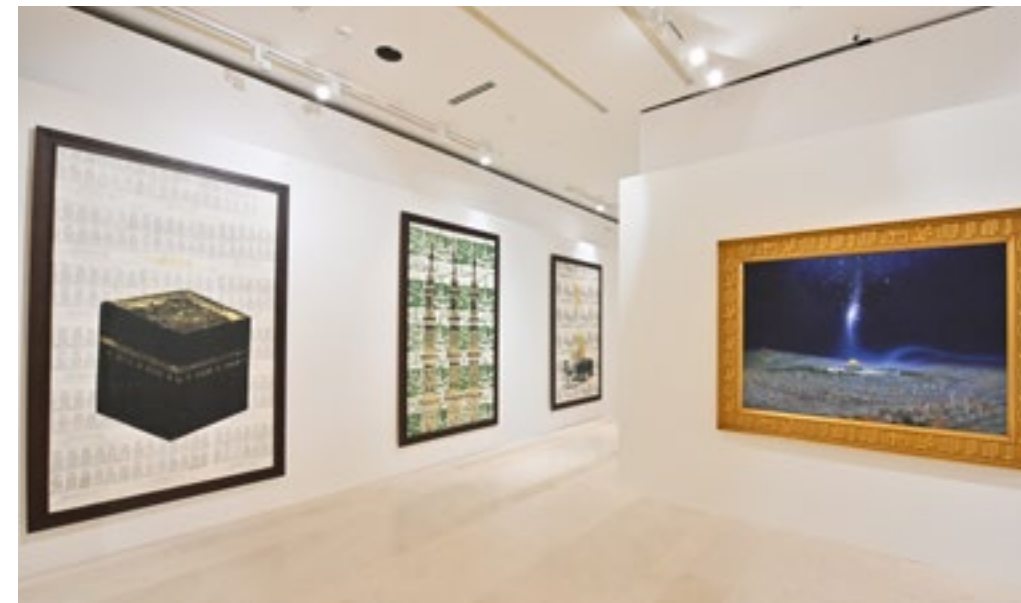
أطلق مركز الملك عبد العزيز الثقافي العالمي (إثراء) في عام 2017 مبادرة "إترا للفنون"، الموجهة للمنتخبين والمقيمين في مجالات الفنون المعاصرة. وهذه المبادرة التي تمكن الفنانين المحليين والعالميين من المشاركة في إنتاج أعمالهم التي تلحق بأهمي. كما تم الإعلان والتشرف من العمل الفني في مهرجان "أرت دبي" 2019. كما انضم إلى مجموعة إترا للفنون العالمية.

بعد مبادرة إترا للفنون، إنطلقت أعمال الفنانة التي بدأها الفنان سوزا منة لدعم الموهوبين في مجال الفن المعاصر. وتلهم الفنانة الفنانة في المملكة والعالم من خلال تقديم دعم مالي 100 ألف دولار لإنشاء عمل فني جديد. كما تم عرضه على جمهور عالمي في "مهرجان أرت دبي" إلى جانب عمل الفنانة المرموقة الفنانة العالمية في مختلف أنحاء العالم. كما تم عرض المبادرة في استضافة الفنانة التي أطلقت المهرجان مع "مؤسسة أبحاث العربية" قبل عدة أيام من المشاركة العالمية من 22 دولة عربية.

تحت إشراف من الجمعية عام 2021 أطلقت المؤسسة البرنامج لدعم الفنانين، إترا التي تقدم في برامجها الفنانين تحت مظلة واحد من أكبر - مجلة العربية - الجوائز على أنه أكبر الفنانة في الوقت الحالي. والتي ترعى موهبة الفنانين والتي تدعمهم بتلك المخططات الخاصة من أجل دعم الفنانين العالميين.



The Ithra Museum is home to five permanent galleries and curates programs for other spaces both within and external to the Center. Gallery One (Funoon) focuses on international and Saudi contemporary art. Gallery Two (Ajyaal) is used for a range of art and Saudi heritage-oriented exhibitions. Gallery Three (Kunooz) generally features curated exhibitions dedicated to the beauty of Islamic art, design and history. Gallery Four (Rehlaat) features an exploration of the natural history of the Arabian Peninsula. The Archive Gallery presents highlights and important objects from the archives that relate to the history of Aramco. The Museum also mounts major exhibitions in the Great Hall.

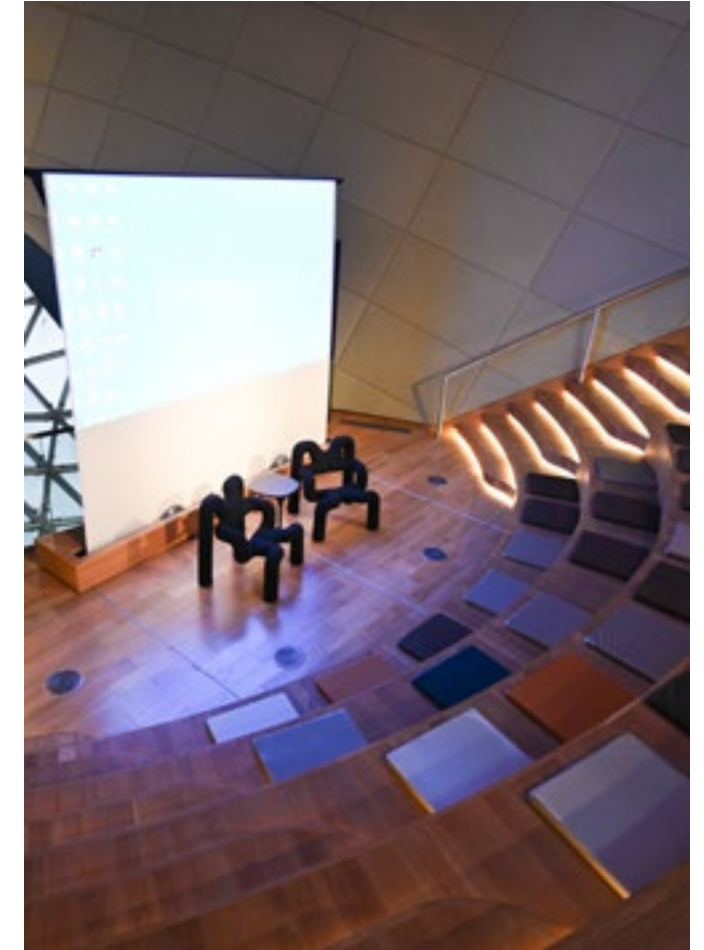


Ithra Idea Lab





Ithra's Idea Lab is an innovation facility where aspiring creators, inventors and entrepreneurs can develop their ideas and transform them into prototypes and marketable products. It features a materials library, a state-of-the-art immersive



lab, design exhibitions, 3D printers, meeting spaces and an amphitheater for presenting projects. The Idea Lab produces several of Ithra's major programs, such as the Tanween creativity conference and Creative Solutions.

Ithra Theater





The 900-seat Ithra Theater is a world-class opera-style stage venue that hosts a diverse program of Saudi and international productions, performances, ceremonies, conferences and talks. Since opening the doors to the public in 2018, the

Ithra Theater has presented 62 productions from around the world, accounting for the sale of over 215,000 tickets for 244 performances over five years.



Ithra Cinema



Ithra's 310-seat Cinema offers a screening venue catering to the interests of Ithra's diverse audiences with events to engage and inspire while functioning as a production platform, supporting the Kingdom's burgeoning film industry talent. Ithra Film Production is now one of the Kingdom's leading independent film production houses.

Movies supported by Ithra have been shown commercially, at film festivals such as Cannes and the Toronto International Film Festival, and on streaming services. The Ithra Cinema is a founding partner and perennial host of the Saudi Film Festival which completed its ninth edition in 2023.



Ithra Great Hall



Ithra's 1,600-square-meter Great Hall offers visitors a window to the world as it hosts traveling exhibitions, major events, conferences and installations designed to expand the visitor's

worldview with cross-cultural displays covering the arts, sciences, history and more in an expansive and unique copper-lined space.

Ithra Tower

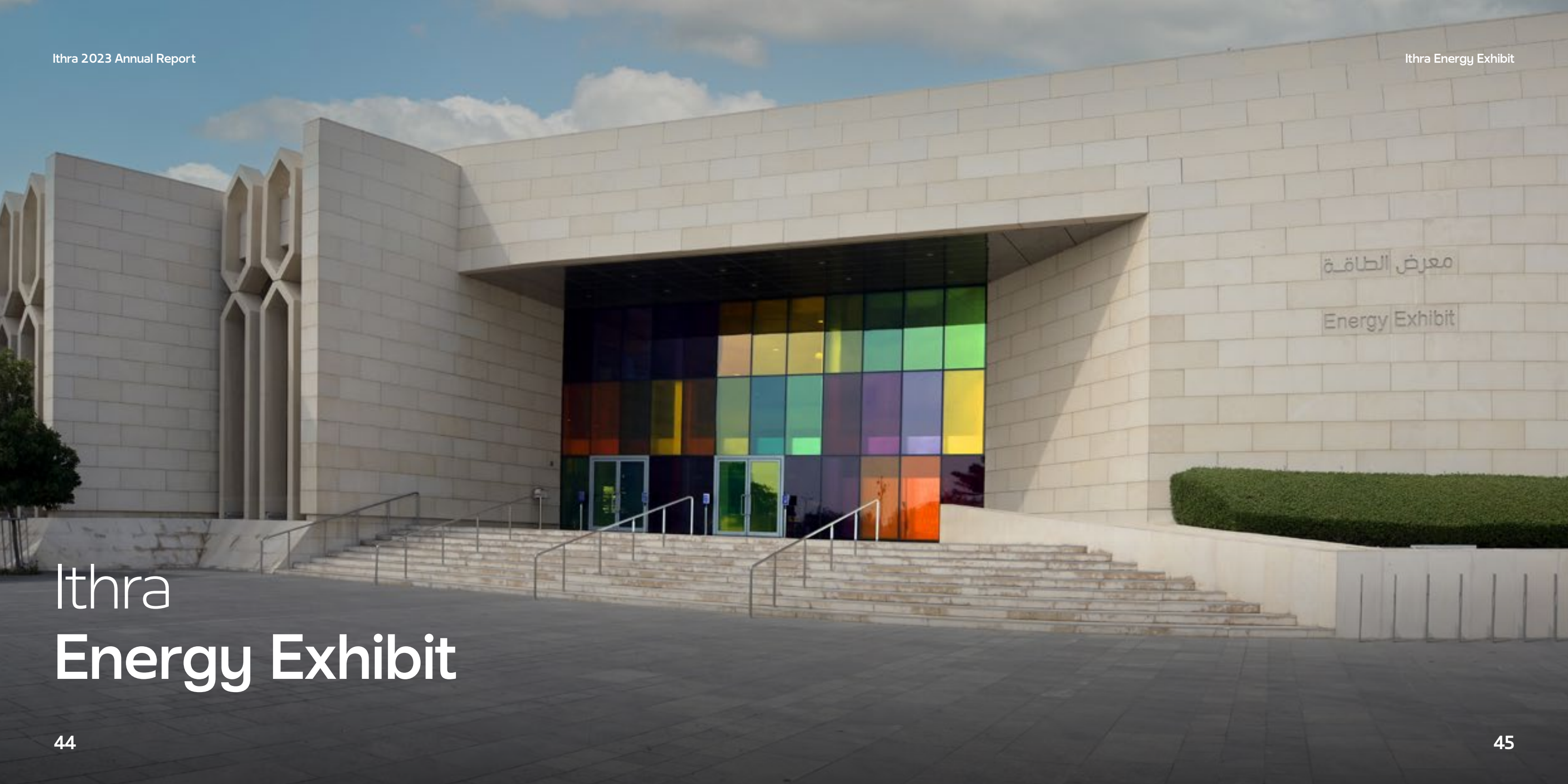




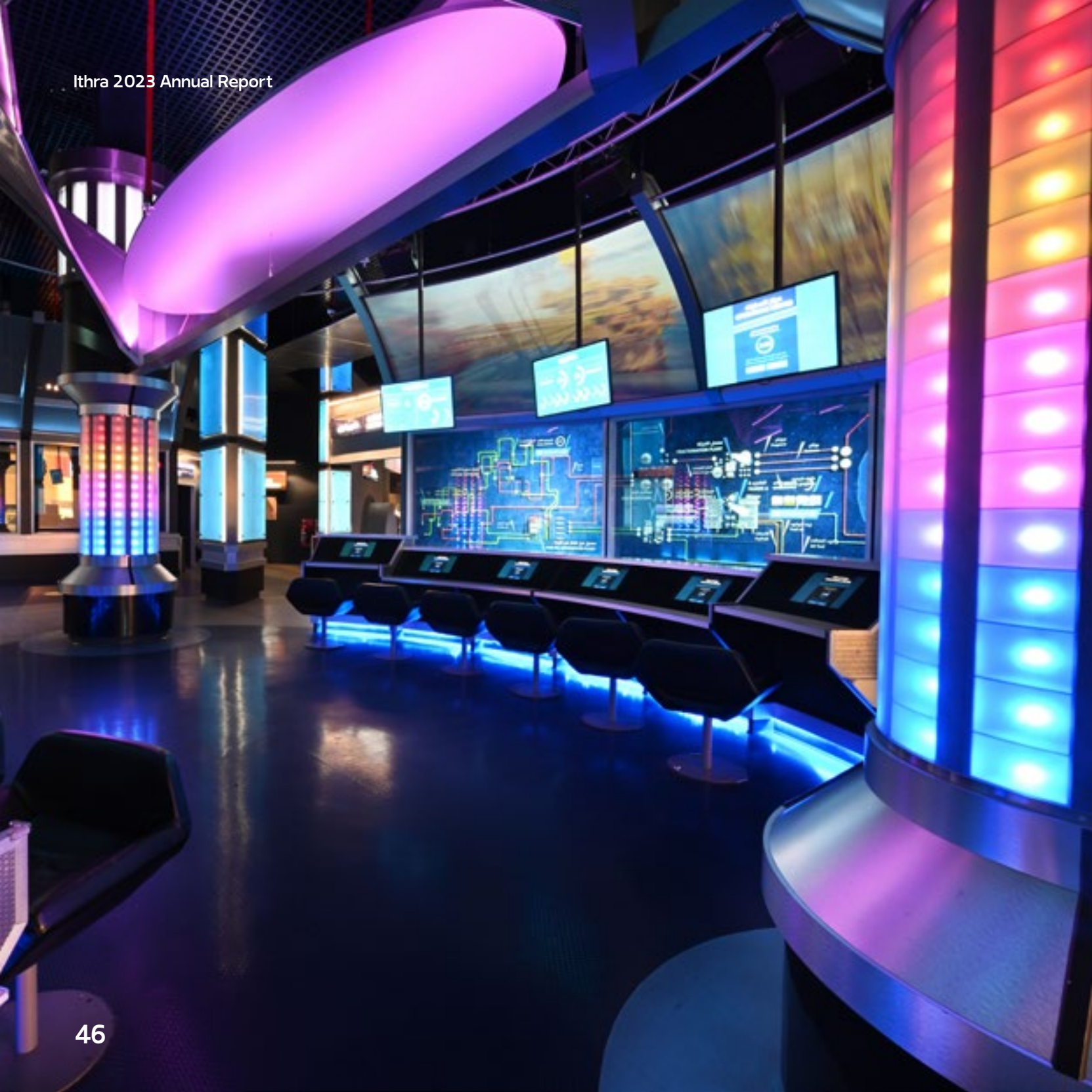
Soaring 18 stories into the sky, the Ithra Tower houses a wide range of educational facilities ranging from senate-style boardrooms and laboratories to multimedia and art studios and even a state-of-the-art immersive lab. The Ithra



Tower hosts workshops in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math), literature, media and creativity, offering skills-based programs for people across all age groups and interests.



Ithra Energy Exhibit



Ithra's ever-popular Energy Exhibit explores a world of discoveries in energy science through interactive displays, advanced technologies and multimedia. Established by Aramco in its original form as a traveling exhibit during the 1950s, the Energy Exhibit found a permanent home in its

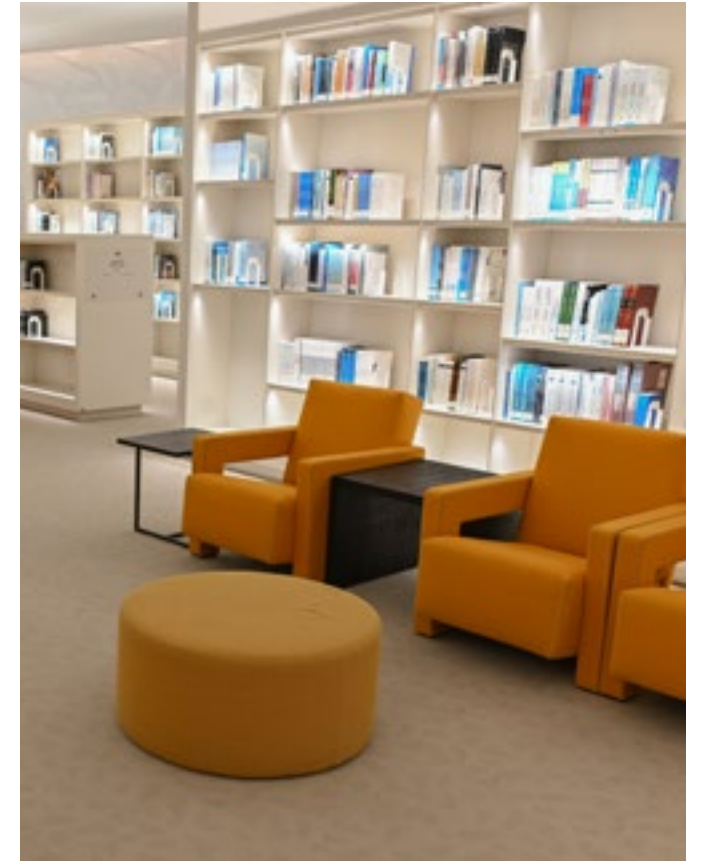
current location in the late 1980s, when it was the only museum in the Eastern Province. It has since evolved into a state-of-the-art facility that offers exciting and engaging educational journeys that explore how natural resources and alternative forms of energy are harnessed safely and efficiently.



Ithra Library



The Ithra Library is Saudi Arabia's first digitally integrated library. It is one of the largest public libraries in the region, with a collection of over 370,000 paper volumes in Arabic and English



arranged across four floors. The Library's offerings include audio and e-books, book fairs, signings, talks by prominent literary figures, children's programs and literary competitions such as iRead.



Ithra Children's Museum



The Ithra Children's Museum is the first museum in the Kingdom for children up to the age of 12 and their caregivers. Our youngest visitors are offered an array of exciting opportunities to enrich their lives through interactive play-based experiences, including exhibitions, classes and workshops. The Museum includes the Cave of Creative Stories,

a section dedicated to Islamic arts and a hands-on environmental laboratory, in addition to the mezzanine floor, where young visitors up to the age of five years can play, learn and explore. The Museum also hosts an array of educational programs for children, from workshops to seasonal camps and annual events.



Volunteer Community



Ithra's Volunteer Services aims to help develop youth and individuals' commitment to society and future generations as well as creating a new generation experienced in service and the creative and cultural sector. In 2023, more than 3,700 volunteers generated over 150,000 volunteer hours. Ithra is officially accredited and certified

by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development; it is the first entity to develop and manage professional volunteering programs and services in Saudi Arabia, surpassing all of the Ministry's Edama standards to achieve the highest level attainable.

Our Team

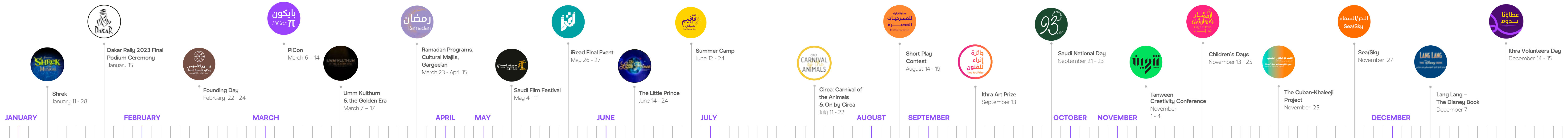
Ithra's team comprises people from all over the world. We currently have 22 nationalities represented among our team, which numbers over 1,200 persons, including contractors and Aramco employees.

Ithra's team contains a variety of professionals whose skills are especially relevant to Ithra, including artists, educators, writers, technicians, conservation experts, theater managers, film producers, XR experts, sound and vision professionals, museum curators, architects and librarians among many others.



A Banner Year **2023**

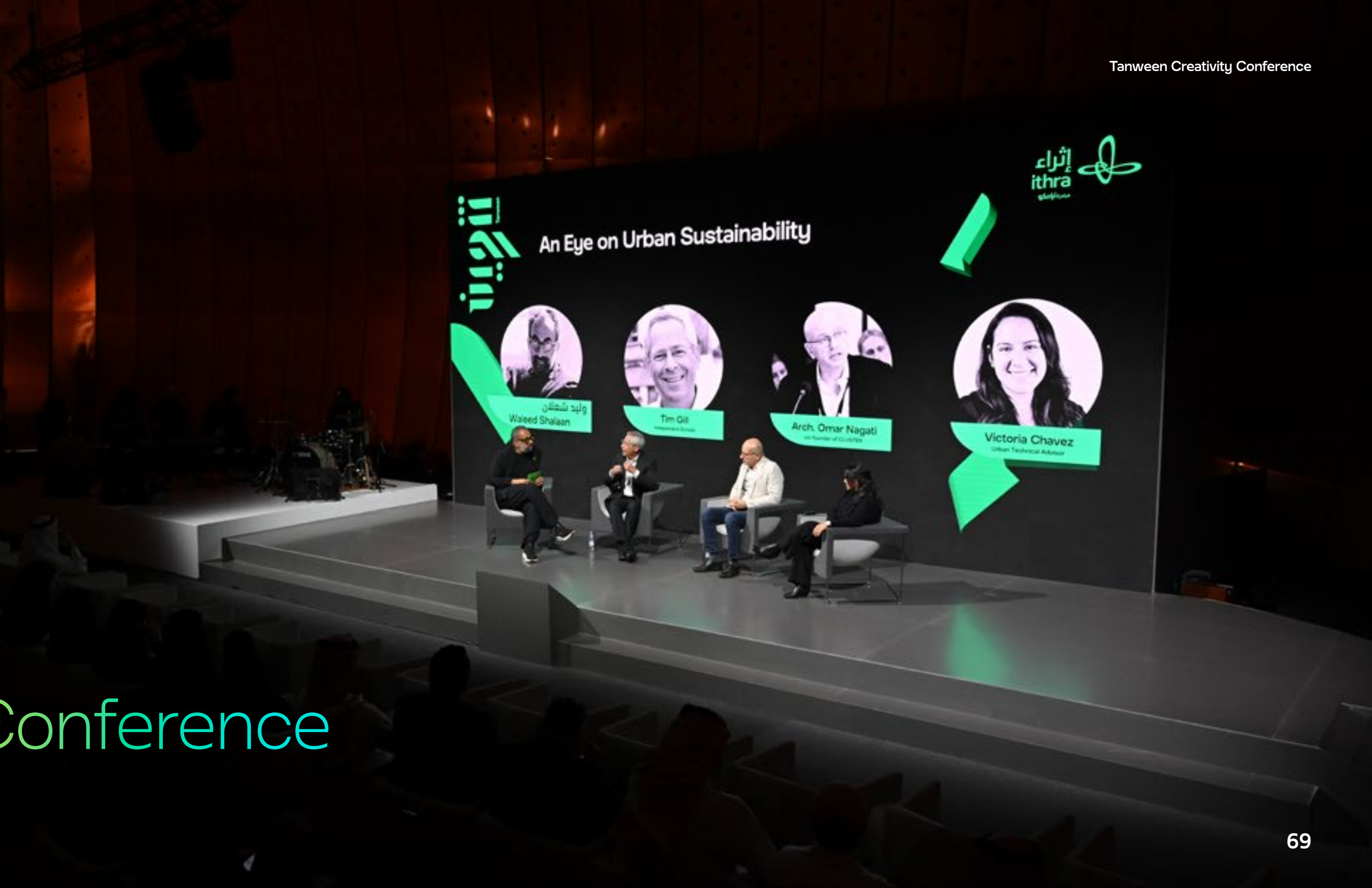
Itiha witnessed unprecedented growth in the number of participants and visitors in 2023. With more programs, exhibitions and theatrical programs than ever, turnout well surpassed expectation, with well over one million visitors. Following is a series of short descriptions of Itiha's major events along with a sample of new programs and initiatives of 2023.



A Year of Inspiration

Major Events

Tanween Creativity Conference



إثراء
ithra
مركز الثقافة

An Eye on Urban Sustainability

وليد شعلان
Waleed Shalaan

Tim Gil
Investment Advisor

Arch. Omar Nagati
Co-Chair of CUSPES

Victoria Chavez
Urban Technical Advisor



The sixth edition of Tanween — Ithra’s annual creativity conference – drew over 7,000 attendees for four days of workshops, talks, masterclasses, exhibitions, panel discussions, design challenges and a variety of creative activations under the theme of “scale.” The conference was a platform for over 100 designers and creatives from 27 countries. Visitors saw the

outcomes of projects from the previous Tanween Challenges. As well, many enjoyed the new A Day with an Expert program of design masterclasses and the inaugural Tanween Mega Challenge. Motivated by humanitarian efforts to change lives of refugees, Tanween challenged 70 innovators from across the globe to design sustainable and empowering solutions that improve the education,

power and food security situations inside refugee camps. The Mega Challenge’s winning ideas were submitted by Ithra to a list of qualified sponsors for evaluation and, pending approval, implementation in selected refugee camps in Mauritania, Zimbabwe, Jordan, Indonesia, Ethiopia and Bangladesh.

Tanween 2023 in numbers

- 1 Mega Challenge
- 12 Mentors
- 8 Live Demo Sessions
- 8 Speakers
- 8 Panel Discussions
- 24 Panelists
- 4 Exhibitions
- 4 Workshops
- 4 Installations



Alsharqiya Gets Creative



Alsharqiya Gets Creative is a creativity initiative with events held throughout the Eastern Province. The fourth edition featured more than 1,500 activities in 10 cities, and included more than 200 workshops and 20 exhibitions as well as designathons, hackathons, marathons and competitions. For the 2023 edition, Ithra worked with five main partners, 21 strategic

partners, 300+ creative partners and five media partners. The programs included a creativity market, mural painting, beautification projects, live performances, career discovery workshops, musical training, padel competitions, Taekwondo, football training, theater programs, art exhibitions and much more.



AlBader
at Ithra



Ithra organized the highly anticipated AlBader at Ithra event on March 20, under the patronage of HRH Prince Saud Bin Nayef, Governor of the Eastern Province. Highlights of the evening included a theater performance with poetry, singing and acting, created and produced by HRH Prince Bader bin Abdulmohsin exclusively for Ithra. The exhibition of AlBader's paintings, *Near Side of the Moon*, remained on view through May 31.



F1®
in Schools



Ithra led the Aramco-sponsored F1® in Schools program in the Kingdom and hosted the Saudi National Finals, which had over 27,000 attendees. Sixteen teams from across the country came to compete in this STEM-based competition. Three teams were selected from among 50 finalists from around Saudi to compete in the F1® in Schools World Finals in Singapore, where Team Oryx from Saudi Arabia won the Innovation Thinking Award.





iRead

The Ithra Reading Program



iRead is a reading competition that has had 200,000 participants since its inception in 2012. For its ninth edition, iRead expanded to all Arab countries, leading to a 300% increase in participants (75,000) from the previous year. It comprises three key components: The Reader of the Year Award is granted to the student who writes the best description and critical

reception of books read during the academic year. Reading Ambassadors is a competition among teachers to promote a culture of reading among their students. Content Creators is open to Saudi citizens and residents interested in making and enriching Arabic content. The 2023 closing ceremony featured a reading by the Syrian Poet Adunis.

Creative Solutions





The Creative Solutions Residency Program is an eight-month digital storytelling residency with a focus on utilizing immersive technologies. Residents are guided by global experts in immersive tech, culminating in the production of working prototypes.

The launch of the 2023 open call coincided with the Demo Day for the 2022 cohort in February, showcasing 10 prototypes to potential investors and collaborators.

Saudi Film Festival

مهرجان أفلام السعودية 9th
SAUDI FILM FESTIVAL
Ithra | 4 - 11 May 2023





The annual Saudi Film Festival showcases Saudi contributions to the film industry and offers professional development opportunities for the cinema sector.

The ninth edition included film and screenplay competitions as well as screenings, red carpet events, panel discussions, script development

labs, a production market, VR experiences, book signings, masterclasses, seminars and workshops.

Of particular note for Ithra in 2023 was that Aseel Omran won the Best Actress award for her role in the Ithra-produced film *Valley Road*.

Ithra Art Prize



One of the most valuable art prizes in the world, the Ithra Art Prize awards the winning artist \$100,000 in addition to up to \$400,000 to create the work.

Ithra unveiled the winning artwork of the fifth Ithra Art Prize, *ON* (عن) by Iraqi-Finnish artist Adel

Abidin, selected from over 10,000 submissions. The work is now part of Ithra's permanent collection. Ithra also announced Obaid Alsafi as the winner of the sixth edition of the prize for his work *Palms in Eternal Embrace* that was unveiled in February 2024 at Arts AIUa.



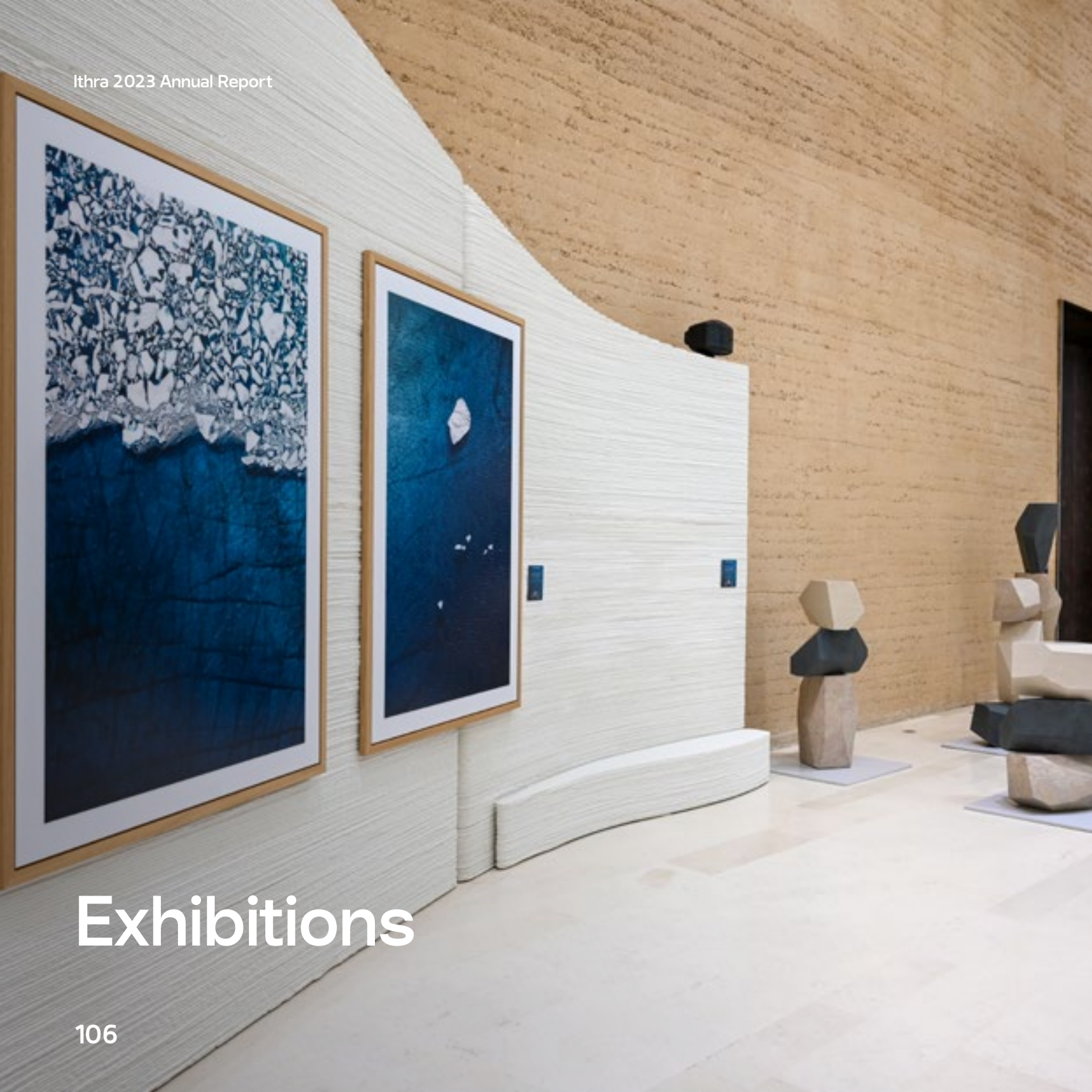
Ithra Content Initiative



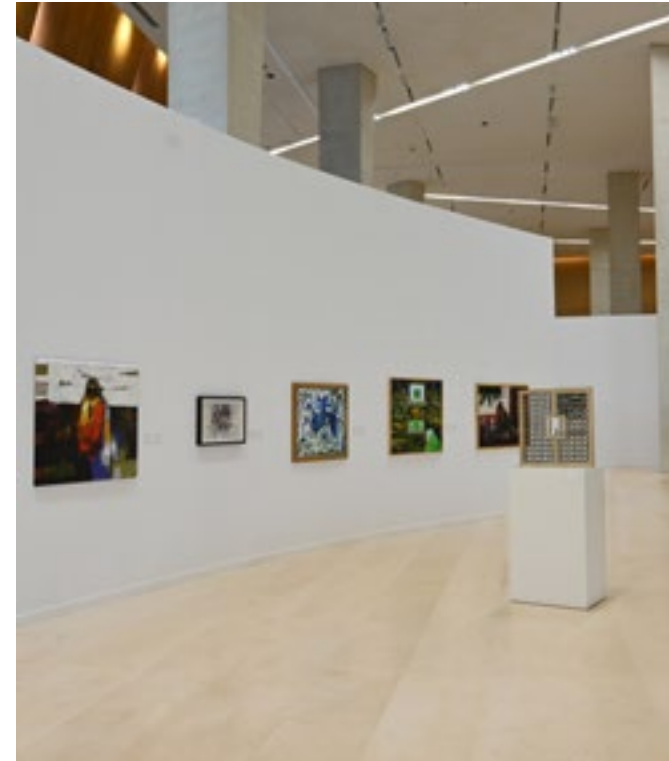
As part of Ithra's efforts in supporting and developing Arabic content, Ithra conducted the second edition of the Ithra Content Initiative in collaboration with the Cultural Development Fund.

In 2023, a total of 23 projects were selected for funding, including documentary films, literature, translation, online platforms, music, podcasts, and mobile video games.

Programs and Initiatives



Exhibitions



During 2023, the Ithra Museum curated and mounted more exhibitions than ever. The Ithra-curated *Hijrah: In the Footsteps of the Prophet (PBUH)* that completed its run at Ithra in the spring opened at the National Museum in Riyadh as the first of its international traveling venues. *The Art of Orientation* explored the various historical roles of mosques, and featured over 80 exquisite objects from Cairo's Museum of Islamic Art – the first collaboration by museums from Saudi and Egypt. A major highlight of the



year was HRH Prince Bader Bin Abdulmohsin Al Saud's *Near Side of the Moon* exhibition of paintings. Ithra contributed an exhibition of 15 works to the Islamic Arts Biennale in Jiddah. Ithra's Gallery One featured *Net Zero*, an exhibition about environmental problems and solutions. Gallery Two highlights included an exhibition about the Saudi environment, *From Earth*. The Great Hall finished the year with Boris Acket's *Sea/Sky*, a ceiling installation rounded out with dynamic lighting and a sound installation.



Ithra Film Production

In the Kingdom, Ithra has produced more than 23 films, of which 16 have received national, regional and international awards. Its latest, *Valley Road* by award-winning independent director Khalid Fahad, is currently showing in cinemas. Ithra productions have been screened more than 70 times at over 20 festivals around the world, claiming more than 25 awards.

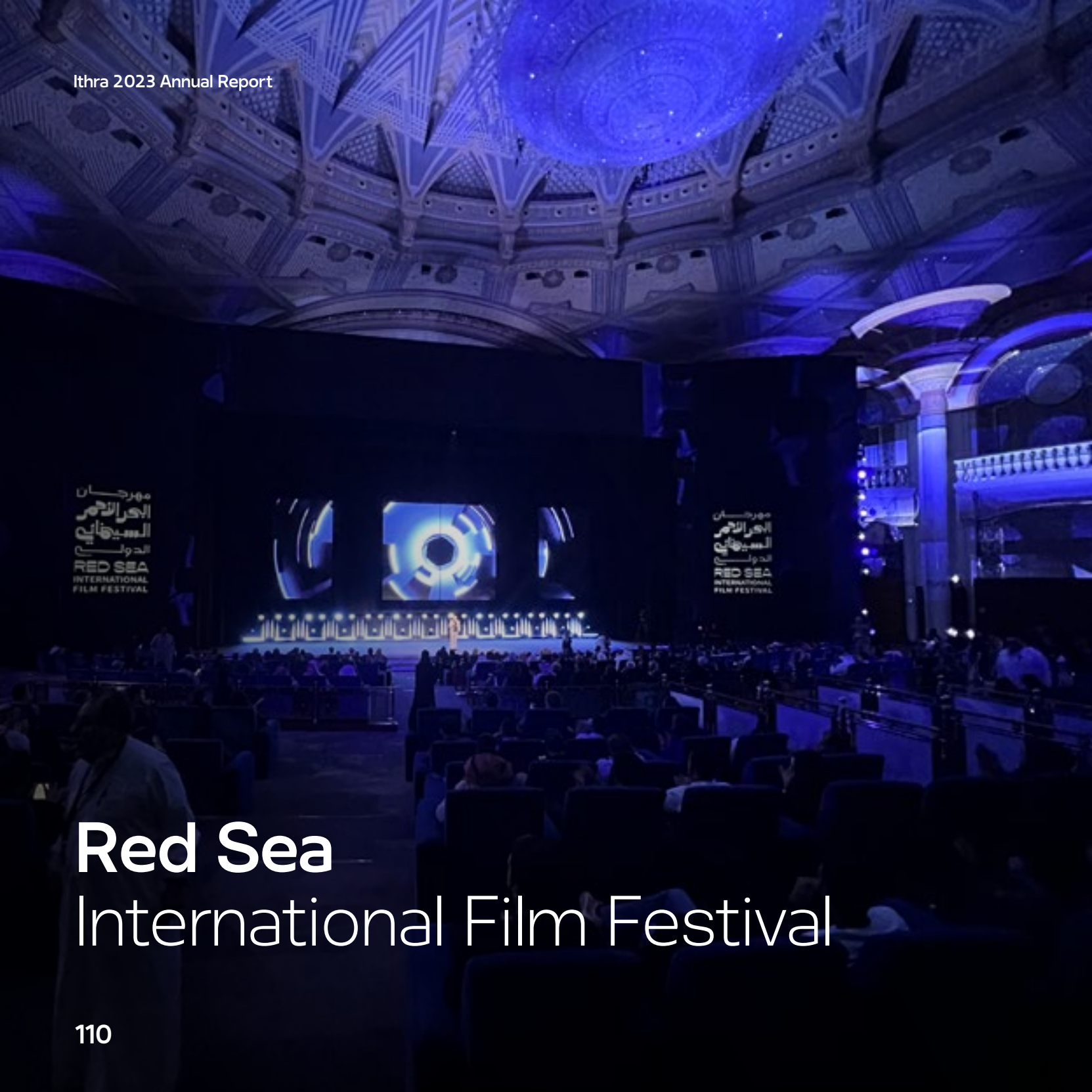
Hajjan: Directed by Abu Bakr Shawky. The story of a boy and his camel who must ultimately race for their lives.

- World Premiere at Toronto International Film Festival; Sept 10
- Selected to be screened at Palm Springs International Film Festival in CA
- Selected for gala screening at RSIFF

Valley Road: Written and directed by by Khalid Fahad. A mute boy gets lost on the way to a neighboring village to have his disability treated. Adventures and imagination ensue.

- Official selection for the 2023 Malmö Arab Film Festival in Sweden
- 2023 official selection for the Sharja International Film Festival
- Best Actress Award to Aseel Omran; 2023 Saudi Film Festival
- 2023 official selection for the Rotterdam Arab Film Festival





Red Sea International Film Festival



Ithra participated in the Red Sea International Film Festival (RSIFF) in Jiddah to showcase its latest cinematic productions and highlight its initiatives to nurture the Saudi filmmaking industry. Ithra Film Production's *Hajjan* premiered in the Middle East with a gala screening. Other participating films by Ithra included the short film *Hadi Alees*

and the documentary *Khalid Alsheikh: Between the Thorns of Art and Politics* about the Bahraini singer Khaled Alsheikh. Ithra also presented a prize of \$50,000 at the Red Sea Souk Awards for the Best Saudi Film in production or post-production to *The Night Whisperer* by Lina Mahmoud.



Ithra Theater Events



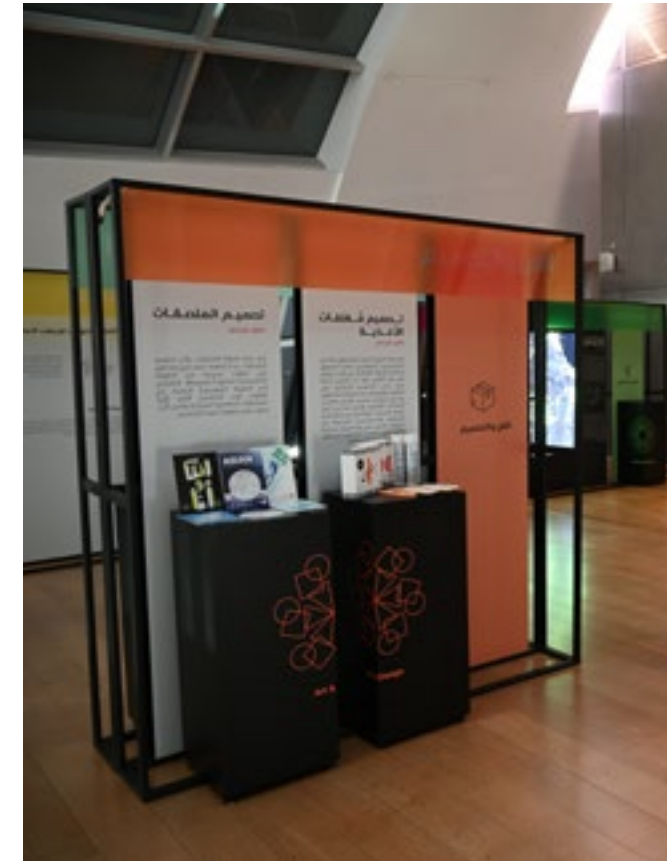
Attendance at the Ithra Theater grew from 32,000 in 2022 to over 52,000 in 2023 — an increase of over 60%. — and the number of days on which programming took place in the Theater doubled from the previous year. Musical performance highlights for the year included one of only 10 worldwide performances of *Lang Lang — The Disney Book* (and the only one in the Middle East), the tribute *Umm Kulthum & the Golden Era, Jazz at Lincoln Center — Sing*



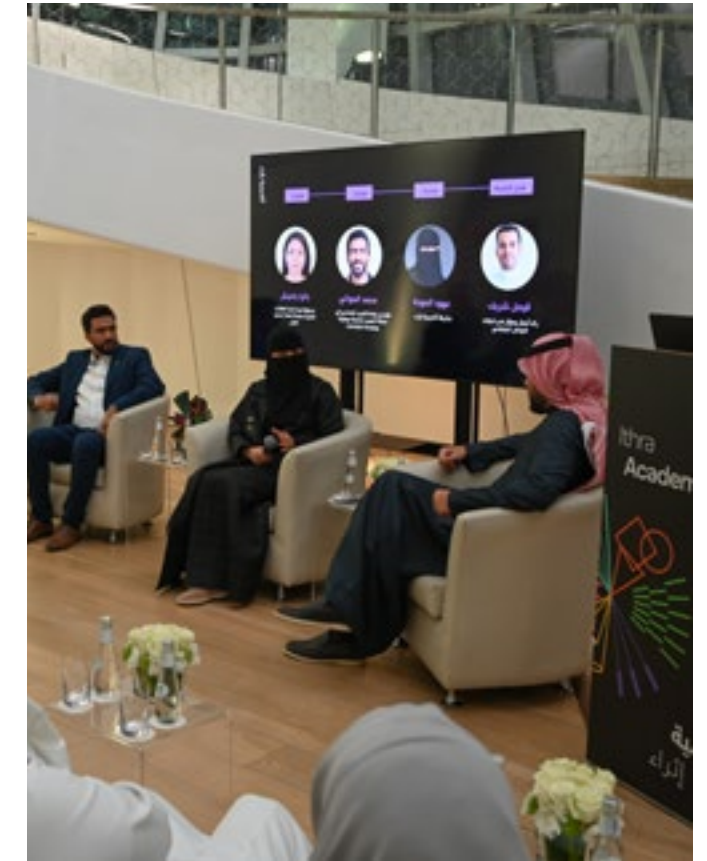
and Swing, the high-energy and hybrid Cuban-Khaleeji Project, and an evening of Spanish songs with virtuoso guitarist Pablo Sáinz-Villegas and renowned soprano Serena Sáenz. Theatrical highlights include the magic spectacle *The Illusionists – Direct from Broadway*, an interpretation of *The Little Prince* featuring music, dance and circus performances; two different programs by the Australian circus group Circa and *DreamWorks' Shrek The Musical*.



Ithra Academy



Ithra Academy is a talent development house that offers learning programs designed to empower and enable artists, professionals and ambitious individuals to play an active role nationally and internationally in the creative and cultural sector. The Academy aims to support skill and talent



development in the creative and cultural sector through focused, hands-on and cutting-edge content designed and delivered by experts in six domains: Creative Leadership, Art and Design, Film and Performing Arts, Literacy, Music, and Science and Technology.



Engaging Audiences



At Ithra we are committed to engaging our audiences at all levels. We seek to inspire by showcasing culture and by enabling our communities to discover and develop their abilities. We support the culture and creative sector by developing talent, capability and

content for national and global success. We bring international art, performers and thought leaders to the Kingdom, and we nurture and showcase Saudi talent internationally through partnerships and outreach.



PiCon



PiCon is an annual science event, part of Ithra's Energy Exhibit programs. It celebrates science through various scientific exploration opportunities such as exhibits, immersive experiences, talks, discussion sessions, and programs that engage families, young adults, and science lovers. PiCon, which focuses on science, surrounds International Pi Day, which falls on 3.14 (March 14). PiCon features activities and sessions on math and science.



PiCon 2023 ran from March 6 – 30 under the theme "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." It featured "The Giant Match" – a human foosball game, "The Car League" which used remote control cars to play football/soccer, the PiDiscussions talk series, the "Crazy Science Show" and finished with the PiMoment – a giant laser light harp that visitors could play.



National Day



Ithra's festivities for the Kingdom's 93rd National Day welcomed over 73,000 visitors in September. The programs included the second edition of *Sing-along for Saudi*.



Camps and Ithra Youth Program



About 1,000 children attended the perennially sold-out Ithra Summer Camp and Winter Camp in 2023. In the summer program, the campers learned about the architecture of the homes that animals build for themselves and the importance of natural architecture. The Ithra Youth Summer Program, in its second year, introduced dozens of participants between



the ages of 13 and 18 from hundreds of applicants to the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI), including a behind-the-scenes view of Ithra. Six selected winners will participate in various Ithra programs until summer 2024 to further their professional development.



Digital Wellbeing Initiative Sync



Sync is a digital well-being initiative launched by Ithra with a vision to create a world where we are all in control of our digital lives. The initiative is guided by extensive research in collaboration with global entities to understand the application of technology and how it affects our lives. The first Sync retreat of 2023 took place in Thailand from

November 20 - 25. The 2023 Sync Oman retreat took place from December 19 - 23 in Muscat. These global digital well-being programs allowed participants to recalibrate their relationships with digital technology and focus more broadly on the world around them.



Riyadh International Book Fair

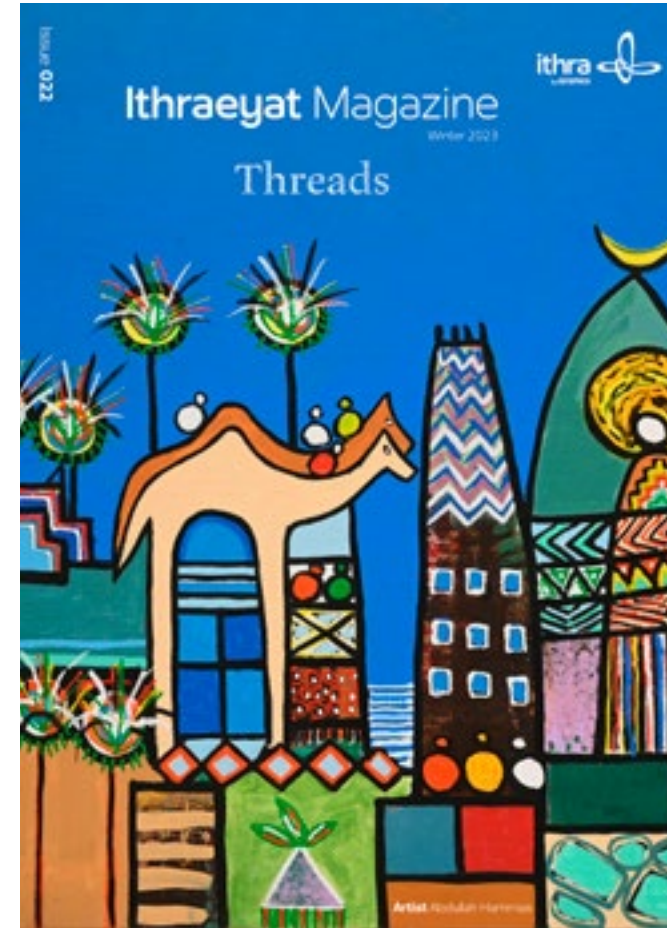


For the eighth time, Ithra participated in the Riyadh International Book Fair held from September 28 to October 7. Ithra's pavilion showcased the Ithra Library, its programs and publications

such as iRead and Ithraeyat magazine. Ithra also conducted a panel discussion titled, "Enabling and Supporting Arabic Content Creation."



Ithraeyat Magazine



Ithra's first digital cultural magazine, Ithraeyat ("enriching" in Arabic), is a Saudi-inspired platform with an expansive international outlook on the culture of art. Each issue of Ithraeyat is based on a theme and features exclusive artwork on the



cover by a guest artist. The articles highlight both established and emerging artists, poets, writers and creatives. Available in both Arabic and English, the digital version of the magazine has featured more than 500 artists in its 23 issues.

2023 in Numbers

1,100,000+

Visitors

2,000,000+

Social Media Followers

10,000,000+

Website Visits

4,770

Media Mentions

26%

Content Creation Increase

3,700+

Volunteers

150,000+

Volunteer Hours

27,000+

School Visitors

4,000,000+

Visitors Since Opening

Success and Partnerships

To address the obstacles and challenges facing the world today, Ithra believes in the need for cooperation, knowledge sharing, and exchanging ideas in order to promote cultural and civilizational communication with the rest of the world, exploring new sources of energy and human potential, inspiring people, satisfying curiosity and supporting innovation. As a result of these efforts, Ithra has won awards and accolades that have documented its successes and how the Center's leadership is driving change in the Kingdom and enhancing its global presence.



As the result of hard work, creativity and its ethic of excellence, Ithra won many **awards, certifications and recognitions** during 2023, including:

Mostadam Sustainability Assessment Program Diamond Certification

Ithra achieved the Mostadam Sustainability Assessment Program's Diamond Certification for Operations + Existing Buildings (Mostadam O+E). Ithra is the first Saudi building project to receive this highest tier certification.

The Aramco Excellence Award for the Hijrah Exhibit

Ithra's Hijrah exhibit won the Aramco Excellence Award – the company's highest board-recognized accolade.

Industrial Hackathon Award

Ithra won the Industrial Hackathon Award for supporting Saudi creators, the creative industry and sustainable productions through pioneering programs such as the Tanween Challenges and Creative Solutions.

SMARTIES Awards

Ithra earned two high-profile SMARTIES Awards, including a Gold award for the Ithra branding campaign "Inspire your World."

Cultural Development Award

Ithra won the Outstanding Contribution to Cultural Development award by Capital Finance International (CFI) for its stakeholder-benefitting economic and value-adding contributions.

LEED Gold certification

Ithra became the first Saudi building to receive LEED Gold certification for operations by the US Green Building Council. (Ithra was awarded Gold Certification for construction in 2018 – the 2023 certification is for EBOM, Existing Building: Operations & Maintenance.) LEED is the world's most prestigious sustainability certification.

Global Luxury Tourist Destination Award

Ithra was named Global Winner in the 2023 Cultural Destination category at the 17th Annual World Luxury Awards Gala Ceremony in Athens, one of the tourism industry's top international awards.



Buildings
tion

Awards and Certificates

Partnerships and Collaborations



**And
Beyond.**