

# Ithra 2020

Inspiring Hearts  
Enriching Minds

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our founder was here



# Foreword

To our dear readers,

As we propel ourselves into 2020, we at Ithra look forward to a new year filled with new, enriching and diverse programs for our visitors.

2019 was a year filled with passion for learning, cultural triumphs and great achievements, all of which were reflected in the year-long schedule of Ithra's knowledge, creativity and cross-cultural offerings.

We continued to build bridges connecting people to new cultural experiences. As part of our promise, we delivered novel and creative experiences to the Center's audiences, broadening cultural horizons.

Our efforts have been concentrated on building Ithra into a hub where curious minds — free of any inhibition — can convene and explore the realms of culture, knowledge and creativity. This includes the contemporary art scene, cutting-edge technologies and a variety of interests in between. We are particularly proud of our ever-expanding success in making Ithra a dynamic platform for supporting and nurturing local Saudi creatives.

While we mark the successes of the past year, Ithra is thrilled to move forward in 2020 with greater ambitions, more imaginative ideas and farther-reaching goals, taking unprecedented leaps in global culture.



# Ithra 2019



**+ 1,000,000  
Visitors**



**Ithra Visitors  
Increase**

**50%**



**Ithra Programs  
Increase**

**23%**

For Ithra, 2019 was a record year of milestones and achievements made up of visits, events, programmed activities and exhibitions for seekers of knowledge and creativity. We did more than ever to promote Arab heritage, global culture, contemporary art, science, learning and creativity.

In 2019, the Center hosted over 650,000 visitors, and celebrated the milestone of our one millionth visitor to experience Ithra! We also welcomed 163 official delegations and VIP visits.

With the Kingdom's initiative to become a global destination for tourism, Ithra's visitors not only consisted of local Saudi citizens and residents, but also included tourists from around the world, eager to experience Saudi's growing cultural landscape and learn more about the Kingdom's history, creative potential and its rich cultural heritage.

In addition to an increased turnout of visitors, we embraced 1,622 volunteers (a new record!) who dedicated a combined 91,395 hours of their time to elevate the visitor experience at Ithra and provide support for the Center's many events.

Volunteerism, a key pillar at Ithra, enriches our society through engagement and an increased sense of ownership, empowering Saudi youth. We clearly saw these positive qualities in our growing community of devoted volunteers.

This past year, the Center presented lectures, seminars and workshops that featured over 2,600 guest speakers.

Ithra continued to welcome and engage young minds from the community, hosted over 41,000 students from 773 schools, who explored and learned about the Center's diverse offerings.

Ithra has quickly emerged as a leading cultural hub and a unique incubator for science and the arts.



**Content Created  
Increase  
10%**



**1,622**



**Customer  
Satisfaction  
90%**

# Q&A

## with Abdullah Alrashid

After a record year of visitors and programs, we spoke with Abdullah Alrashid, Head of Programs at Ithra, to find out more about the Center's future direction, as well as its upcoming offerings for 2020.

**The Center has achieved continuous progress in creating and providing content, enriching the community with knowledge and culture since its inception. What was special about the year 2019?**

2019 was a year of cultural enrichment and resulted in many success stories.

To start, we welcomed Ithra's one-millionth visitor; this was quite the achievement for the Center.

Our world-class exhibitions, 'Mara'ina' and 'Being Saudi', were internally curated and received immensely positive reviews from the public, media and art critics. Additionally, we hosted international art exhibitions featuring the works of renowned artists, such as Renaissance polymath Leonardo da Vinci and Norwegian expressionist Edvard Munch.

2019 also marked the commencement of the Arab Thought Foundation's FIKR17 conference, which was held for the first time in the Kingdom, in partnership with Ithra. FIKR17 convened over 60 leading literary figures and decision-makers from the region and the world.



Other achievements include the support of Saudi's thriving cinema industry, featuring films which have gone on to win six local, regional, and international awards, becoming the most recognized content-creation program in the Kingdom.

Under Ithra's expertise and support, over 20 short and feature length films have been produced.

Another highlight of 2019 was Ithra's flagship creativity season, Tanween, which attracted more than 100,000 visitors in 17 days. On the theater front, the team delivered 14 different performances by groups that hailed from 10 countries, a true multicultural reflection of Ithra's promise. In total, the Center proudly created over 150 pieces of quality content, ranging from films to artwork, which now sit within Ithra's collection.



**Abdullah Alrashid**

Head of Programs, King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)

## Programs

### What is Ithra's Programs team responsible for?

- Research and engage with the community to determine its cultural and creative needs.
- Align the mission of Ithra with the Kingdom's national ambitions.
- Design programs with domestic, regional and international appeal to contribute to the cultural landscape of the Kingdom.

**Under Ithra, there are numerous initiatives related to different fields and interests. How do people react to this diversity and widespread reach?**

Each field at Ithra is imbued with knowledge, creativity and culture, designed to enrich visitors with new world-class experiences, making culture accessible to all. It is wonderful to see Ithra's various departments' specializations manifest in different forms and mediums, and to see communities engaging with them and finding their own creative 'tribes'.

An example of this is how local bibliophiles and reading enthusiasts have started their own book club at the Ithra Library. Filmmaking aficionados have found a hub to discuss the art of filmmaking and cinematic productions through our monthly film society meetings. Artists are finding visual inspiration within the walls of Ithra's museums and exhibitions.

**What programs does Ithra's 2020 calendar have on offer for visitors?**

Our programs for 2020 began with the exciting launch of our Content Commissioning Program, an ongoing new initiative aimed at the Kingdom's creatives. In February, we will kick off the first of our Ithra Cultural Days series, with the inaugural edition focusing on Vietnamese culture. As we launch our Q2 operations, we will be adding another new educational initiative - Learning Beyond, for teachers and educators next April. Additionally in April, we will partner with the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts (SASCA) to host the 6th edition of the Saudi Film Festival, a key opportunity gathering local filmmakers to showcase their stories and talents to Saudi audiences.

Performance takes center stage at Ithra as we offer educational theatrical programs in partnership with the General Administration of Public Education for

middle school students, a part of building capacity and talent in the Kingdom's creative industries. Additional programs will also be offered during the summer and winter months for families and children.

**Ithra Aspirations for 2020**

- Become a creative and tourism destination for domestic, regional and international visitors who are passionate about the arts and culture.
- Become an incubator in the fields of theater, film, music, innovation, philosophy and the arts, by hosting knowledge-sharing sessions such as exhibitions, open dialogues, and discussions with global experts and renowned artists.
- Become a training and development platform in a creative and cultural space that enriches all members of the community.
- Launch new initiatives that will become part of the Center's annual calendar.

**Upcoming events in 2020**

January	Content Commissioning Program	
	Ithra Cultural Days	February
March	PiCon	
	Saudi Film Festival	April
May	Ithra Cultural Majlis	
	Ithra Summer Camp	June
July	iRead Camp	
	Back to School	August
September	Saudi National Day iRead Final Event	
	Tanween	October
November	Great Hall Exhibition	
	Ithra Winter Camp	December

# Be one of our 10 lucky winners!

**Win an 'individual' Ithra membership and get access to exclusive benefits!**

Share your very own photo of the Center on our Twitter account and win!



# Reflections



## The Inspiration of the Arabic Language

The iconic gamechanger and leader Nelson Mandela once said: “if you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, it goes to his heart.” Mandela strongly believed in the power of language.

Language is defined as the way that a certain group of people communicates, whether by symbols, the use of sounds to create words, or more. Language conveys a sense of home, belonging, and comfort to the individuals who hail from a certain region or community.

Language shapes the way an entire people think and behave; it is a path to understanding a nation’s culture.



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## Conserving Cultural Memory Through Art

At the Ithra Museum, preservation of the past and unmasking the hidden treasures of art, and especially Islamic art, is of paramount importance.

Acquiring and maintaining artworks to preserve humanity’s collective memories is within the Ithra Museum’s core mission.



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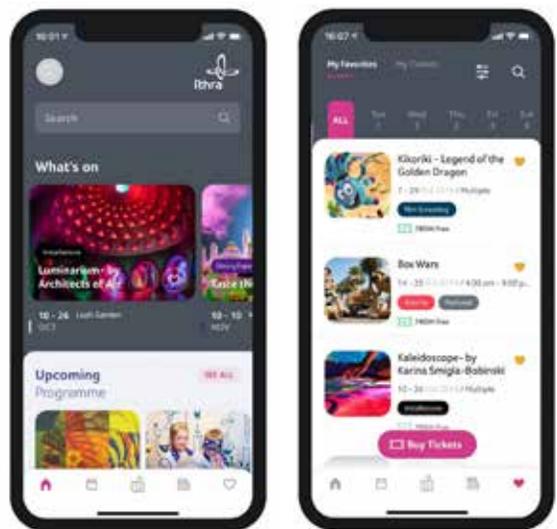
## Photography: A Reflection of Humanity

Photography has captured feelings and moments for centuries. Unlike any other art form, it captures real people in real time; with raw images that depict a subject’s honest emotions and beautiful landscapes set in real-time. Photography is a form of modern art that remains significant to this day and is a language that can be understood by everyone.

Immortality is an abstract concept, but with photography, our memories, our experiences, and our perspectives can outlive us.



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# Behind the Scenes

## The Wall of Rammed Earth

Upon entering Ithra, visitors will first pass the Plaza, which has an unusual, eye-catching architectural detail representing the essence of Saudi Arabia – the wall of rammed earth.

Standing in stark contrast against the overall sleek, modern design of the Plaza, the wall of rammed earth – or crumbled soil, stands between 9 to 11 meters, made from soil retrieved and preserved during the construction activities of Ithra.

The wall is a multifold metaphor for sustainability and environmental-friendliness, reflecting the harmony between tradition and modernity as we work towards building successes upon the legacy of our past.

Built across Ithra, a powerful message is embedded within its very walls that speaks to its visitors: "Our present is built on the details of our history and heritage, and allowing us to leap forward into our future."



# Exhibition

## **His Majesty, our founder was here.**

This photo was taken of the late King Abdulaziz as he arrived in his car to Aramco to check on the petroleum reserves of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1947.

This photo was kept by Aramco as a souvenir for this remarkable and historic visit, as it is considered a great highlight in both Saudi Aramco and the Kingdom's history.

Seven decades later, this photo was transformed by the creative artist Sultan Bin Fahad, who poured his imagination and energy to recreate and repurpose this photo into fine art, combining reality with the abstract in an appealing visual manner.

This photo is displayed in the "Mara'ina" exhibition held at the Ithra Museum's Funoon Gallery - open until April.



# Join The Ithra Community

Enjoy our exclusive offers and promotions to the fullest using our family, individual, or student membership packages.

Set off on a journey through knowledge, art, culture, and many more surprising events!

Become a member today!



Register for  
Ithra membership

