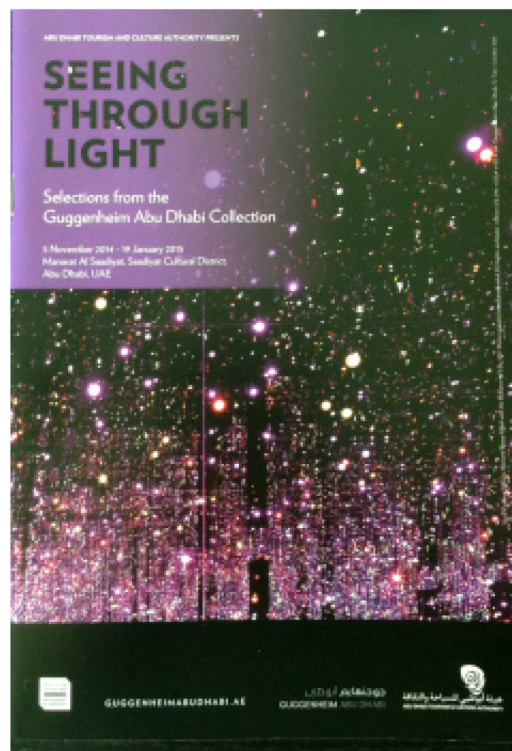


Seeing Through Light – Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Collection

November 10, 2014

“Architecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness.” **Frank Gehry**

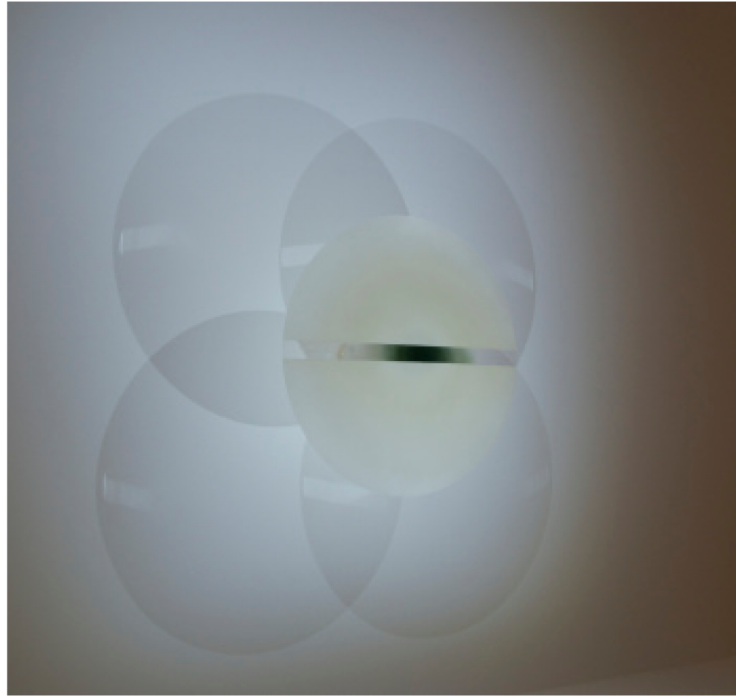
As part of last weeks sixth annual Abu Dhabi Art week presented by the Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA) at Manarat Al Saadiyat, I visited the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi's *'Seeing Through Light'* pre-opening exhibition that introduced the vision of the future museum to the public through an introductory showcase of acquisitions that examines light as a primary aesthetic principle in art.



Eighteen artworks are on display for the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi's premiere exhibition, sixteen that had been acquired, two loaned from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and a final additional piece that will be available through an interactive project called '*Corniche Pulse*' launched on January 8th and available until January 17th. Keep an eye out for that in the New Year. The '*Seeing through Light: Selections from the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Collection*' pieces portray light interpreted through different mediums whether natural or artificial, directed or reflected, interior or exterior, transcendent or celestial.

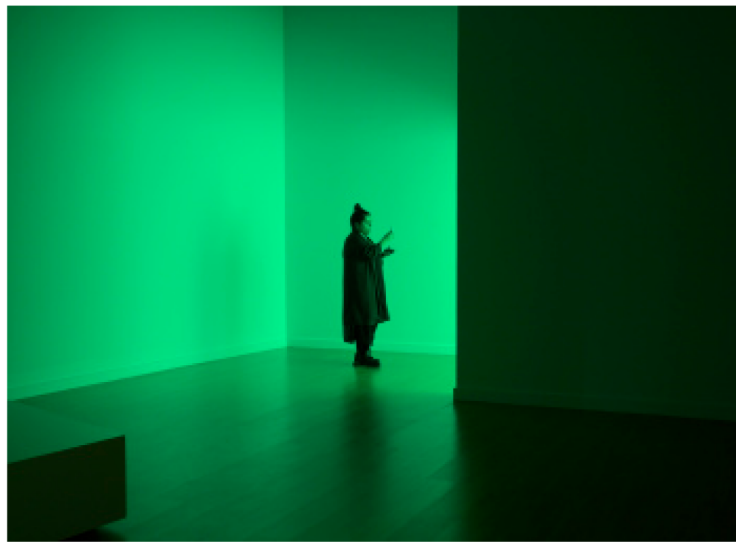


The exhibition, which is divided into five sections examines light through various processes Activated, Celestial, Perceptual, Reflected, and Transcendent. As visitors move around the exhibition there are many ways to experience light in all of its spatial, sensory, and perceptual phenomena.



Part of the Perceptual section 'Untitled' by Robert Irwin

The exhibition begins with the Perceptual Light section displaying the work of five artists who were pioneers of the light art movement, Larry Bell, Dan Flavin, Robert Irwin, Keith Sonnier and Douglas Wheeler.



*Another Perceptual Light piece 'Untitled (to Jan and Ron Greenberg)' by Dan Flavin on loan from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and [The Fashion Hub's](http://www.the-fashion-hub.com) (<http://www.the-fashion-hub.com>) *Parisa in silhouette.**

Reflected Light brings together work from Heinz Mack and Otto Piene, who were active in the 1960's as founders of the Zero group and their work is joined by artists of a newer generation, Ghada Amer and Rachid Koraïchi.



Heinz Mack pieces

The exhibition then moves into the Transcendent Light section composed of work by four artists Monir Farmanfarmaian, Samia Halaby, Shirazeh Houshiary and Y.Z. Kami, all of whom use light thematically to explore the contemplative.



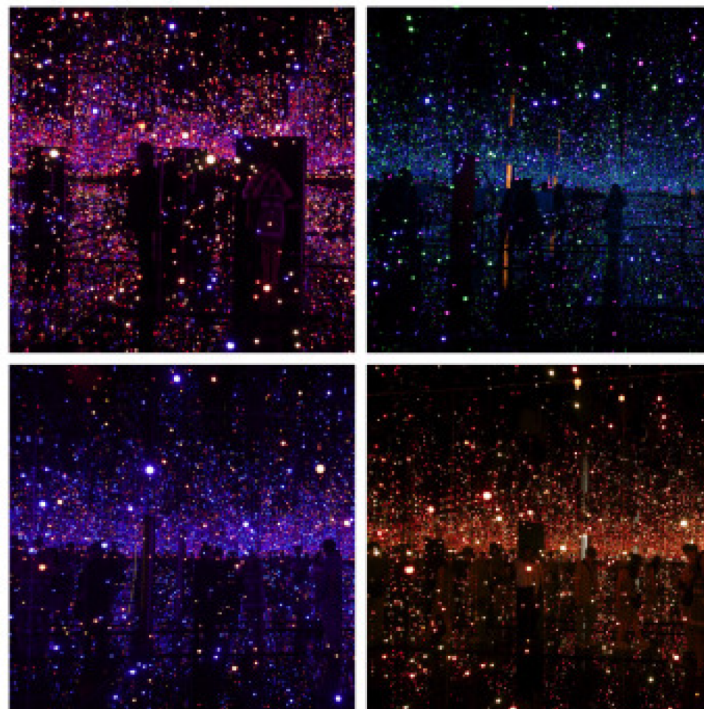
'Endless Prayers XVIII' by Iranian artist Y Z Kami of cut and pasted printed paper on canvas

Next was the Activated Light section where pieces by artists Angela Bulloch, Hassan Khan and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (Corniche Pulse artist) are displayed, their artwork dependant on advanced technologies to activate light.



6 Chains: Permutation B (52:4 — White) by English artist Angela Bulloch (2002), lacquered boxes filled with coloured light from the Activated light section.

The final Celestial Light segment brings together three artists Bharti Kher, Yayoi Kusama and Song Dong who all use a range of media including video to produce artworks that emulate the infinite.



My favourite exhibit was by 85-year-old Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama

My favourite piece or I should say room was the last exhibit, part of the Celestial Light section, by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. The *'Infinity Mirrored Room Filled with the Brilliance of Life'* is a mirror-panelled installation filled with loads of LED lights which change colour in timed intervals and then go to complete darkness. Plunged into black you need to stand perfectly still (think musical statues) to avoid stepping into the water that surrounds the walkways, I managed to navigate the room without embarrassing myself by falling in as others had apparently done previously. The installation is truly awesome and feels like you been whisked off into another three-dimensional universe. Kusama's installation depicts her battle with mental illness, psychosis and schizophrenia and represents *"all the millions of souls that make up the world"*.



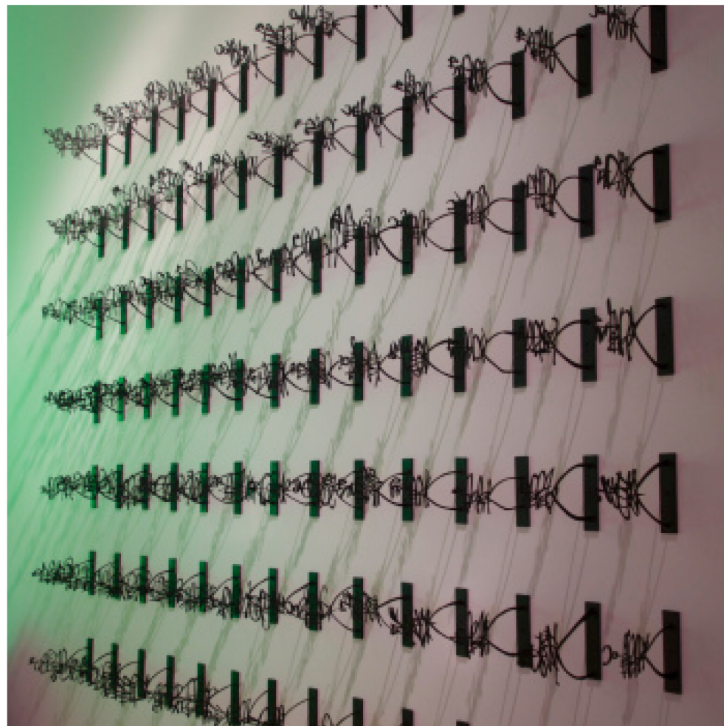
'Hängende Lichtkugel' by Otto Piene who was a founding member of German artists' group, Zero.

I also loved the Hängende Lichtkugel (Hanging Light Ball) by deceased German artist Otto Piene, which was part of the Reflected light section. Hard to believe that this piece is over forty years old (created in 1972) as it looks so modern. The perforated and chromium-plated brass sphere that hangs from the ceiling has light bulbs and an electric motor inside which powers its slow rotation throwing light and reflections across the room, causing a fantastic effect.



'The Words I Love the Most' by Ghada Amer (2012) in bronze with black patina

A strong focus of the exhibition comes from Middle Eastern artists who are featured in seven out of the eighteen works on display, with one section dedicated to pieces from Arab and Iranian artists. My favourite piece from this Transcendent section was Egyptian artist Ghada Amer's sculpture entitled *'The Words I Love the Most'* which had security, peace, freedom and love written in arabic all woven together in a sphere. An amazing piece that was enhanced by the lighting causing it to reflect and created shadows and patterns from its position on the floor.



Algerian visual artist Rachid Koraïchi piece selected from 'Le Chemin des Roses' (Path of Roses) 1995- 2005 featured in the Perceptive Light section



Close-up of Koraichi's piece in the foreground and the Celestial Light offering by Bharti Kher, panels of broken mirrors covered in bindis in the background as well as some of the many art students at work.



Perceptual Light piece by Keith Sonnier, Ba-O-Ba V (1970). Clear acrylic discs mounted on the wall

The 'Seeing Through Light: Selections from the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Collection' runs from until 19th January 2015 at Manarat Al Saadiyat in the Saadiyat Cultural District here in Abu Dhabi and entry is free. If you enjoy a bit of culture I would urge you to visit the gallery and its lovely cafe Al Fanr, reminiscent of The Tate Modern in London, a perfect spot for a coffee after gazing at the fabulous art on display.



Exhibit by Egyptian artist, musician and writer Hassan Khan

There will also be a variety of enlightening, engaging, and educational hands-on workshops, short courses and events for all age groups to explore the themes and concepts of the exhibition available between 13th November 2014–17th January 2015. The next event will be ‘*Artscape: An Evening of Light and Live Electronic Music*’ to be held at the Manarat Al Saadiyat on Thursday 11th December. For more information www.guggenheim.org/abu-dhabi (<http://www.guggenheim.org/abu-dhabi>)



Artist impression of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (source:www.guggenheim.org/abu-dhabi)

This pre-opening exhibition is an exciting milestone in the development of this new museum which is expected to open sometime in 2017 and will join Manarat Al Saadiyat and The Louvre (which opens in 2015) and the Zayed National Museum (due to open in 2016) in putting Abu Dhabi’s Saadiyat Cultural District on the Worlds art and culture map. The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, designed by the award-winning renowned architect Frank Gehry (designer of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao among many others), will be a ‘*monument to light*’ and will be fourth museum to join the global Guggenheim family alongside those already in New York, Bilbao and Venice.



Part of the exhibition space of the 'Seeing Through Light' Exhibition (source:www.cntraveller.com)

Factual information sourced from www.guggenheim.org/abu-dhabi
(<http://www.guggenheim.org/abu-dhabi>) and www.abudhabiartfair.ae
(<http://www.abudhabiartfair.ae>)

Unless otherwise stated, all photos on this page © Jo Brett 2014. All rights reserved.