

---

# THESEUS TEMPEL WIEN

---



**Zeinab Alhashemi**

***There May Exist***

18 April to 13 October 2024

Theseus Temple, Volksgarten Wien

Zeinab Alhashemi's (\*1985) installation *There May Exist* in the Theseus Temple explores how humans and animals adapt together to their environment. It examines the ways the oil boom in the Gulf region transformed culture and the local significance of camels, which were once the key source of livelihood, means of transport and central cultural touchstones.

For her sculptural works, the conceptual artist from the United Arab Emirates uses camel fur and hide dyed in El Ain, an oasis city in the UAE. The leather, which is mounted on various surfaces, forms sculptural landscapes and creates intersections between seemingly unlike forms and objects.

The link between progress and decline also reverberates through Alhashemi's work. As Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the founder of the Emirate of Dubai, explained: 'My grandfather rode a camel, my father rode a camel, I drive a Mercedes, my son drives a Land Rover, his son will drive a Land Rover, but his son will ride a camel.'

## Artist Statement

*'There May Exist* is an evocative installation composed of oil barrels transformed into a pyramid. I delve into the profound metamorphosis that has swept through the United Arab Emirates since the revelation of oil. Emanating from the pyramid's core, a striking texture envelops the oil barrels, one reminiscent of the toughened hide of the camel from different breeds in the region – a representation of change, inspired by the momentous shift following the oil discovery. The pyramid's form itself is an ode to the ascent of progress, constructed from the very vessels that propelled the United Arab Emirates into modernity.

In connection with the impact of oil discovery in the Arabian Peninsula my work aligns with the discussion of cultural evolution and the reshaping of the traditional. Delving into the tension between progress and tradition, the camel hide sculptures serve as symbols that prompt viewers to reflect on the dynamic relationship between past and present, offering a visual dialogue on the rich cultural heritage of the Gulf region and the ongoing quest for identity in the face of industrialization.

The history of the United Arab Emirates is intertwined with the camel. These animals played a crucial role in the region's development. Before the discovery of oil, camels were essential for transportation, trade, and survival in the desert environment. Even as the United Arab Emirates underwent significant economic transformations with the discovery of oil, camels retained their cultural importance. Camel racing, a traditional sport, became a symbol of heritage and identity. The United Arab Emirates have invested in camel breeding and racing events, blending modernity with tradition. Today, camels stand as a cultural icon, reflecting the countries' historical reliance on these resilient animals and preserving a connection to its desert roots.'

## Zeinab Alhashemi

Conceptual artist Zeinab Alhashemi (\*1985) lives and works in Dubai. She designs her installations as site-specific commentaries that focus on the cultural traditions of the Arabian Peninsula. Combining materials and structures, she creates landscape sculptures that blend cultural and natural histories.

**Highlights so far:** Richard Mille Art Prize, Louvre Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (2022), Art D'Egypt Second Edition, Pyramids of Giza, United Arab Emirates (2022), Mirage exhibition, Desert X AIUla, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2022)

<https://zeinabhashemi.com>

<https://www.instagram.com/zalhashemi>

---

THESEUS  
TEMPEL  
WIEN

---

### **Theseus Temple**

The Theseus Temple was built between 1819 and 1823 by court architect Peter von Nobile. It was designed to house a single work of contemporary art: Antonio Canova's white marble masterpiece *Theseus Slaying the Centaur*. For almost seventy years this artwork stood alone inside the building, until in 1890 it was moved to the monumental staircase of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, where it remains to this day.

Now a series of exhibitions has returned the building to its original purpose: to showcase remarkable artworks by contemporary artists, one at a time. *There May Exist* was curated by Tobias Mörike (Weltmuseum Wien) and stands in connection to the special exhibition *On the Backs of Camels* at the Weltmuseum Wien. The show can be seen from 18 April to 13 October 2024 in the Theseus Temple in Vienna's Volksgarten. Admission is free.

---

# THESEUS TEMPEL WIEN

---

## PRESS PHOTOS

In the press section on our website, you can download press texts and press photos for current reporting free of charge: <https://press.khm.at/en/pr/theseus-temple>



**Zeinab Alhashemi**  
© Zeinab Alhashemi



***There May Exist at the Theseus Temple***  
Exhibition view  
© KHM-Museumsverband



***There May Exist at the Theseus Temple***  
Exhibition view  
© KHM-Museumsverband



***There May Exist at the Theseus Temple***  
Exhibition view  
© KHM-Museumsverband

---

**THESEUS  
TEMPEL  
WIEN**

---



***There May Exist at the Theseus Temple***  
Exhibition view  
© KHM-Museumsverband



***There May Exist at the Theseus Temple***  
Exhibition view  
© KHM-Museumsverband



**Theseus Temple**  
© KHM-Museumsverband

---

# THESEUS TEMPEL WIEN

---

## **Opening Hours Theseus Temple**

daily 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

free entry

More about the exhibition and about the Theseus Temple:

<https://www.khm.at/en/visit/exhibitions/zeinab-alhashemi/>

<https://www.khm.at/en/visit/collections/theseus-temple/>

## **Social Media**

Follow the Weltmuseum Wien on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

Follow the Kunsthistorisches Museum on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [TikTok](#).

#ThereMayExist

## **Contact**

Nina Auinger-Sutterlüty, MAS (Head)

Sofie Wunsch, MA

KHM-Museumsverband

T +43 1 525 24 - 4021 / - 4045

[presse@weltmuseumwien.at](mailto:presse@weltmuseumwien.at)