



منتدي Traditional Arts الفنون التقليدية Forum



**When national capabilities
meet traditional arts,
We safeguard sustained heritage.**

 25 – 27 January 2026

Chapter One:

Overview of the Traditional Arts Forum



Forum Overview

The Royal Institute of Traditional Arts (Wrth) is organizing the Traditional Arts Forum from 25 to 27 January 2026. The Forum serves as a national knowledge-based and interactive platform that explores the essence of traditional arts and their future, recognizing their role as a fundamental pillar of national identity.

The Forum aims to bring together academic research, economic empowerment, and community-oriented interactive experiences, while promoting innovation and creativity as key drivers in the development of traditional craft practices and the sustainability of the sector.

The Forum program spans three days and is built around six integrated pillars: intellectual, interactive, aesthetic, creative, community-focused, and knowledge-based.

 25–27 January 2026

 9:00AM – 6:00 PM

Main Pillars

Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer in Preserving Traditional Arts:

This pillar focuses on developing the skills of practitioners in traditional arts and ensuring the intergenerational transfer of craft knowledge through training programs, applied learning, and documenting the living experiences of artisans to enhance the sustainability of craft practice and link it to national cultural development tracks.

International Cultural Exchange in Traditional Arts:

This pillar addresses the role of global cultural cooperation in highlighting traditional arts through comparisons that reveal similarities and differences between local and international experiences, utilizing them to foster cultural dialogue and produce contemporary creative visions and products.

Future Vision in Preserving Traditional Arts: Opportunities and Sustainability:

This pillar highlights capacity-building efforts in safeguarding and preserving traditional arts as a core component of national cultural identity, while reconsidering the mechanisms for transferring them to future generations within their sustainability. It also addresses contemporary challenges facing this role, and means of documentation, scientific research, innovation, and modern technologies in protecting them and enhancing their cultural presence.





Chapter Two

Forum Executive Summary



Traditional Arts

A Living Cultural Identity

Traditional arts are considered one of the most important components of a living cultural identity. They are not merely handicrafts or aesthetic expressions; rather, they constitute an integrated knowledge system that reflects the relationship between humans and their environment, society, and place, and embodies values inherited across generations. Through these arts, collective memory is preserved and life experiences and skills are transmitted, taking diverse forms that vary according to local environments.

According to the definition of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as stated in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, traditional crafts are among the productive activities that rely on inherited skills and accumulated expertise. They are used in the manufacture of products that carry cultural and social dimensions expressing the identity of the community.

Accordingly, the organization encourages the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage within cultural protection frameworks. In the Saudi context, traditional arts stand out as one of the most prominent pillars of national identity and its manifestations. At the international level, UNESCO encourages the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage within cultural protection systems.

The Kingdom's Strategies in the Fields of Culture, Research, and Innovation (Initiatives)

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has adopted comprehensive strategies to enhance and support traditional arts and to strengthen their cultural and economic role within the framework of Vision 2030. A series of initiatives has been launched that link culture with scientific research and innovation to strengthen the artisanal sector. These strategies include funding and educational programs that support innovation in product design, digital marketing, and the enhancement of artisans' capabilities.



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In the field of culture:

The Kingdom's strategies aim to protect and safeguard intangible cultural heritage, particularly traditional arts, through several approaches. These include comprehensive and continuous documentation of these arts and their integration into educational curricula to raise awareness among future generations. The strategies also encourage the organization of festivals and events that highlight the role of traditional arts in national culture, in addition to strengthening the role of local communities in preserving their heritage.

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In the field of research and innovation:

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Challenges and Future Opportunities

Traditional arts in the Kingdom face several challenges that affect their sustainability and development. Among the most significant of these is the reliance of many arts on the availability of necessary raw materials, which increases production costs. In addition, modern lifestyles pose a major challenge due to declining interest and the lack of effective educational programs that integrate these arts into academic curricula.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous promising future opportunities arising from the cultural renaissance the Kingdom is witnessing. Traditional arts have become integrated into tourism programs, contributing to attracting local and international tourists, which increases demand and motivates artisans to develop diverse products that preserve authenticity and sustainability.

Previous Studies

A study on the role of digitalization in safeguarding national heritage examined the cases of Egypt and Sudan as a model for employing digital technologies in preserving heritage. Using a descriptive analytical approach and a case study, the study demonstrated the effectiveness of electronic archiving in reviving heritage. However, it focused on a single case and overlooked modern Arab and international experiences, the use of artificial intelligence, and the measurement of cultural and social impact, alongside a lack of attention to traditional arts.

A study on the virtual museum as a tool for heritage preservation and tourism promotion in Al-Ahsa adopted a descriptive analytical methodology to analyze digital museum experiences and develop a model for a virtual museum in Al-Ahsa. The study confirmed the role of technology in heritage preservation and in promoting cultural tourism and national identity. However, it remained within a theoretical framework without practical application or impact measurement tools, and it did not link virtual museums to long-term sustainable development or Vision 2030.

A study titled "Adoption of Collaborative Robotics in Traditional Arts" used the Technology Acceptance Model to examine artisans' acceptance of robotic technologies within the Saudi crafts environment. The results showed that cultural and social factors determine levels of acceptance or rejection. Nevertheless, the study neglected symbolic and environmental dimensions of crafts and did not provide a training framework or strategies for intergenerational knowledge transfer, nor did it link technology to resource sustainability.

A study titled "Enhancing Saudi Heritage Locally and Globally: The Role of the Saudi Heritage Commission" relied on descriptive analysis and field observation. The study showed that the Commission adopts a comprehensive approach to digital preservation and cultural diplomacy, contributing to the global promotion of Saudi culture. However, it identified a lack of precise tools for measuring social and economic impact and weaknesses in the continuous evaluation of initiatives.



Research Gap

Lack of Scientific Documentation and Context for Intangible Cultural Heritage:
Studies often lack in-depth interpretation of cultural symbols and historical, ethnic, and linguistic contexts, resulting in heritage being disconnected from its living roots and community practices.

Scarcity of Ethnographic Studies and Comprehensive Field Research:
Efforts remain limited in collecting and documenting oral heritage, beliefs, customs, traditions, arts, and craft skills, alongside the absence of continuous monitoring of social and cultural transformations.

Absence of Methodological Research on the Impact of Technology and Innovation:
There is a notable lack of systematic research on the role of technologies such as digitization and virtual reality in preserving and disseminating intangible cultural heritage, and their effectiveness in reaching wider audiences.

How Does the Forum Address These Gaps?

A series of workshops was conducted at the Royal Institute of Traditional Arts (Wrth), bringing together experts and specialists in traditional arts to develop focused themes that respond to the identified gaps. These workshops resulted in several key working tracks, through which the Traditional Arts Forum (2024) seeks to place these gaps within a constructive framework, as follows:

Axis of Capacity Building and Skills Transfer in Traditional Arts:

Proposing institutional training programs and knowledge-transfer initiatives supported by funding and strategic partnerships.

Axis of International Cultural Cooperation in Traditional Arts:

Establishing collaborative networks with international organizations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ICOMOS, and global museums, to expand the exchange of expertise and to develop exhibitions and international partnerships.

Axis of the Future Vision for Traditional Arts:

Exploring the future of crafts through balanced approaches that integrate digitization and innovation on one hand, while preserving the human and creative value of craftsmanship on the other.

Expected Objectives of the Forum

Through a review of previous literature and the identification of research gaps, and by linking them to the forum's core themes and three pillars—capacity building and skills transfer, international cultural cooperation, and a future vision for safeguarding traditional arts—a set of expected objectives that the forum seeks to achieve can be outlined as follows:

Enriching Academic Knowledge:

Producing new scientific papers and research that address gaps not covered by previous studies, and opening new pathways in the fields of documentation, digitization, education, and cultural diversity.

Empowering Practitioners and Artisans:

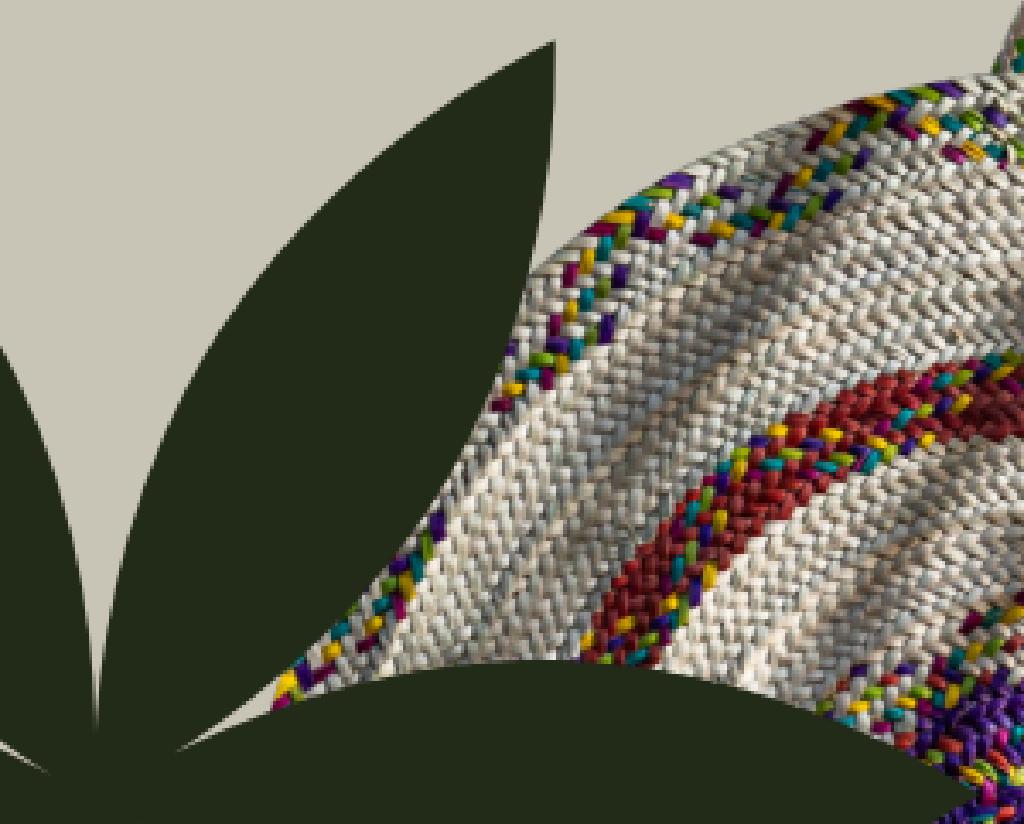
Amplifying the voices of artisans and craftspeople and transforming their expertise into transferable and teachable knowledge, thereby contributing to their support within the national and global creative economy.

Highlighting Saudi Arabia's Role Globally:

Strengthening the Kingdom's image as a leading cultural and knowledge-driven force in safeguarding heritage and traditional crafts, by aligning its initiatives and strategies with international references and standards.

Traditional arts constitute a core pillar of Saudi cultural identity, as they embody intergenerational continuity and express the values and collective memory of society. This research underscores that the challenges of globalization and technological transformation necessitate intensified efforts to safeguard and develop this heritage.

It also highlights the pivotal role of state institutions in education, innovation, and cultural initiatives in revitalizing crafts, linking them to sustainable development. Heritage, therefore, is not a static relic of the past, but a living source of creativity and renewal, and a shared responsibility that requires sustained support and the transmission of knowledge to future generations.



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