

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jim Denevan's *Self Similar*, a monumental, site-specific land art work opens at Manar Abu Dhabi

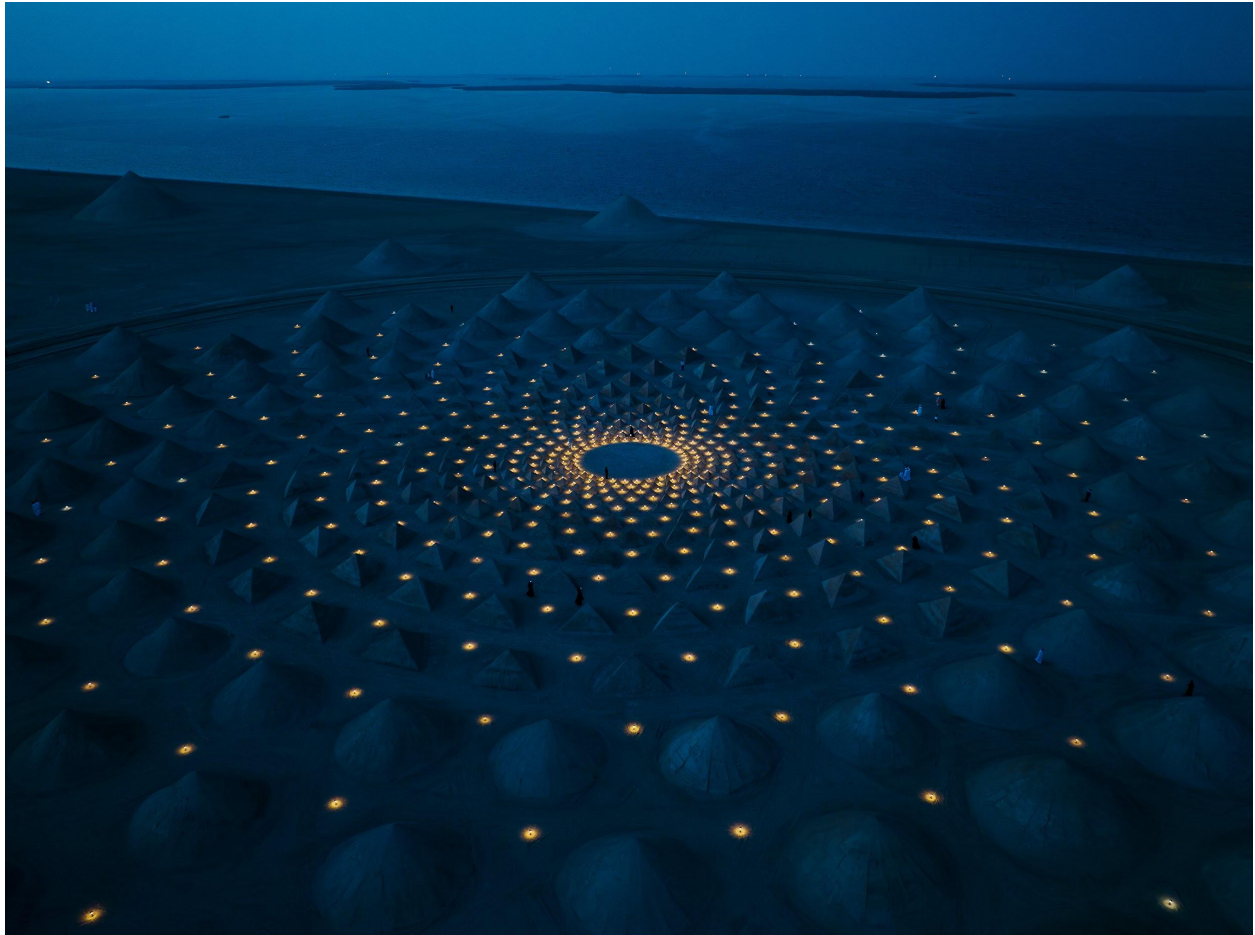
Towering clouds, a breath of air, tiny grains of sand, tall mounds and mountains, wind, and weather systems, drops and bodies of water, pyramids, small and large



Aerial view of Jim Denevan, *Self Similar* at Manar Abu Dhabi, photo by Lance Gerber

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, November 20, 2023 — ***Self Similar***, a large-scale and immersive, site-specific land work by American artist **Jim Denevan** opened to the public today in Abu Dhabi as part of the inaugural edition of the Department of Culture and Tourism's new Public Art Abu Dhabi initiative, Manar Abu Dhabi. The city-wide light art exhibition curated by **Reem Fadda**, Director of Abu Dhabi Culture Programming and Cultural Foundation and Artistic Director of Public Art Abu Dhabi, and **Alia Zaal Lootah**, Manar Abu Dhabi Curator, features 35 site-specific artworks by local and international artists and will run through January 30, 2024.

Denevan's most ambitious installation to date, the ephemeral work, sited on the city's Fahid Island, where city and desert are flanked by the Arabian sea, forms a prominent, new landmark that spans an area of nearly a square kilometer and rises majestically to a height of 27 meters.



Aerial view of Jim Denevan, *Self Similar* at Manar Abu Dhabi, photo by Lance Gerber

Among the largest works of land art ever made, *Self Similar*, which began as a single circle drawn with a stick in the sand, is at once grand and delicate. The monumental yet temporary installation is formed of 19 concentric rings of 448 pyramids and mounds that expand outward and upward in a mandala pattern. Iron Bridge provides a serendipitous entry, attuned to the rising and setting sun and the city skyline in the distance — a powerful physical and metaphorical point of arrival. Visitors can interact with the work by situating themselves within it at any point and by scaling two observation mounds to enjoy 360 degree views of the entire composition and the surrounding natural landscape. Standing in the center enables visitors to realize the symmetry of the geometric composition and experience a moment of contemplation, transience and connection to nature. The work exists in perpetual transformation, a vulnerability inherent to its material and form.

“As I draw and shape these forms, an invitation is made, it emerges. An ‘entering into’ takes place. A centering. Scale, presence, human, and otherwise. External is internal and internal is

external. That which expires and that which is eternal, a simultaneity, within and without,” said Denevan, who, as part of his Sisyphean practice, offers up his work to the vagaries of wind, weather and the progression of time.



Detail view of Jim Denevan, *Self Similar* at Manar Abu Dhabi, photo by Lance Gerber

Responding to the exhibition’s theme of ‘Grounding Light’, Denevan’s *Self Similar* invites visitors to immerse themselves in a physical and psychological exploration that reveals how we move and exist in relation to our world. The construction of scale, relation, the minute and the boundless are simultaneously manifest, illuminating ideas of sameness and radical difference. At dusk each evening more than a thousand solar lanterns come to light one by one, adding to the city’s ambient light, casting delicate shadows and a transformative and unifying warm glow on each of the individual volumes of sand in the composition.



Jim Denevan at *Self Similar* at Manar Abu Dhabi 2023, photo by Lance Gerber

Self Similar was realized with initial participation of volunteers from the region who hand-sculpted individual pyramids in the innermost ring, continuing Denevan's history of engaging the local community to participate in the construction of his large-scale installations.

More information about Manar Abu Dhabi [here](#).



Aerial view of Jim Denevan, *Self Similar* at Manar Abu Dhabi, photo by Lance Gerber

Jim Denevan

Jim Denevan is a world-renowned American artist, who interacts with the earth's topography to create entirely site-specific works in sand, earth, and ice which can span miles. Ephemeral in nature, the near meditative practice is the purpose for Denevan, who relies on intuition and parallax over measurement aids, creates mathematically and geometrically complex compositions and leaves them prone to the tides, winds and seasonal progressions. Unexpectedly confronted with the works in a natural setting, viewers are invited to interact with art beyond institutional walls.

Denevan has been commissioned to create temporary land drawings and sculptures around the world, including for Desert X AIUla in 2022, and documentation of his work has been featured in the Vancouver Biennale, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Peabody Essex Museum, Christie's and MoMA/PS1.

In 1999, he founded Outstanding in the Field, a radical reconceptualization of the dining experience at the forefront of the sustainability movement that has gained global cult status. He was the subject of the recent documentary, *Man in the Field: The Life and Art of Jim Denevan*. An avid surfer, Denevan is from Santa Cruz, California.

[DOWNLOAD PRESS KIT AND IMAGES](#)

Follow Jim Denevan

Instagram: [@jimdenevan](#)

#jimdenevan

Follow Public Art Abu Dhabi

Instagram: [@publicartabudhabi](#)

#GroundingLight #ManarAbuDhabi #AbuDhabiCulture

Communications & Media Relations

Lyn Winter, Inc.

Lyn Winter, lyn@lynwinter.com

Denise Sullivan, denise@lynwinter.com

****ENDS****