



Charlie Koolhaas presents an immersive hotel room installation at XVA Art Hotel exploring accessibility and Dubai's modern architectural heritage.

Charlie Koolhaas presents *After the Image* at XVA Art Hotel: a hotel room installation on Dubai's modern architectural memory

At XVA Art Hotel in Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, Charlie Koolhaas presents *After the Image*, an installation that turns a hotel room into a working archive of Dubai's modern architectural past.

The exhibition unfolds across two spaces: an inhabited hotel room installation and a separate gallery presentation. Together, they bring photography, textiles, garments, sculptural objects, domestic materials and everyday things into conversation with Dubai's changing built environment.

Developed in relation to the UAE Modern Architectural Heritage Grant, the project extends Koolhaas' long-term research into Dubai's architectural heritage. Many of the urban landscapes she photographed between 2005 and 2025 have been transformed, redeveloped or folded into the city's rapid evolution. Her archive therefore does not simply document architecture; it records a city widely understood through its image of newness, while drawing attention to the beauty, complexity and cultural value of its modern architectural history.

In *After the Image*, the photograph does not remain flat, framed or safely stored away. It moves into fabric, furniture, bedding, curtains, clothing and objects. Architectural images become surfaces to touch, wear, sleep beside and live among. The hotel room becomes a new form of historical museum room: intimate, temporary, domestic, commercial and public all at once.

A central part of the installation is Koolhaas' ongoing *Foto-Couture* series, in which photographs of Dubai's architecture are translated into garments and printed textiles. These works treat clothing not as fashion in the conventional sense, but as a way of carrying urban memory on the body. Architecture becomes soft. The archive becomes mobile. The image becomes something that can fold, crease, move and inhabit space.

The installation also includes everyday objects drawn from Koolhaas' research into Dubai's material culture. These are containers of social and architectural memory, carrying traces of domestic life, trade, hospitality, labour, ambition and adaptation. In them, the stories of buildings become the story of the city.

XVA Art Hotel is a particularly meaningful site for the project. Established in 2003, XVA was the first gallery in Dubai dedicated to selling contemporary art and has played a formative role in the city's art scene. Located inside Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, it sits between preservation and contemporary cultural production — between the city's older architectural fabric and the restless, experimental energy of its present.

After the Image asks how archives can become more accessible by placing heritage inside the scale of a room, where cultural memory can be encountered through proximity, use, texture and atmosphere rather than only through formal archives, catalogues or museum displays. For Koolhaas, photography is not only a way of recording what has changed, but a material that can be reworked and made active again: becoming a curtain, a dress, a bedcover, a sculptural fragment, a room.

With *After the Image*, Koolhaas proposes the hotel room as an experimental archive: a place where photography, architecture, fashion and domestic space meet, and where Dubai's recent architectural history is not only looked at, but lived with.

“It is important to record and archive a city’s history, especially when it is constantly perceived as new” - Charlie Koolhaas

This project is supported through the Modern Heritage Grant Program, an initiative by the UAE Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with Zayed University and Majra – National CSR Fund.

Exhibition Details

Title: *After the Image*

Artist: Charlie Koolhaas

Dates: June 18th through July 16th

Vernissage: June 18th, from 3pm, artist will tour the exhibition with attendees from 4 pm

Artist talk: June 20th (Saturday) 4pm. More details TBC

Venue: XVA Gallery Dubai

Address: Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, 312th Road, Bur Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Opening Hours: 10am to 6pm, everyday, And by appointment outside of working hours

Admission: free

Websites: <https://charliekoolhaas.com/> <https://www.xvagallery.com/>

About the Artist

For over twenty years, Charlie Koolhaas' exhibitions have been immersive landscapes you can enter and explore – places where flat images are folded into three-dimensional structures offering infinite perspectives.

Charlie has authored various books that tell sociological stories by merging her images and writing into unified narratives. In 2020 she released her book *City Lust*, which combines writing and photography to take the viewer on a journey through the global economy.

Her recently launched *Foto-Couture*, which makes her prints wearable, further frees her photographs from the boundaries of art institutions allowing them to enter the world where their meaning continues to evolve.

Charlie has taught media theory and photography in various academic institutions such as Eindhoven School of design, TUDelft and the Sandberg Academy, and she has been a visiting lecturer at Harvard Graduate School of Design, ETH Zurich and The Architectural Association London.

XVA Gallery's mission statement

Established in 2003, XVA is one of the leading galleries in the Middle East that specializes in contemporary art from the Arab world and the Sub-continent. Exhibitions focus on works by the region's foremost artists as well as those emerging onto the scene. The gallery's artists express their different cultural identities and perspectives while challenging the viewer to drop prejudices and borders. XVA Gallery exhibits both locally and internationally; collaborating with galleries and participating in international art fairs, such as Art London, SH Contemporary and Art Basel Hong Kong in order to further expose Middle Eastern contemporary art.

XVA Gallery and XVA Art Hotel are located in Dubai's heritage district, now called Al Fahidi Neighborhood. XVA founded and organized the Bastakiya Art Fair from 2007- 2010 as part of its commitment to raising the profile of contemporary art practice in Dubai

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you like any further info / further high res images

Media Contact

Name: Carina Vicente
Email: studio.charliekoolhaas@gmail.com
Phone: +971569598268 // +447745335930