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Summary

There are few limits to the imagination, as a pair of innovative science exhibitions in Dubai and Abu Dhabi remind us.

Universal innovation

National Editorial

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Futuristic cars, helicopters centuries ahead of their time, and human-like robots. No, not the latest arms or automobile expo to hit Dubai, but a showcase of some of Leonardo Da Vinci's greatest inventions.

In collaboration with the Leonardo Da Vinci Museum in Florence, the interactive show, which takes place until December 5 at Burjuman Mall in Dubai, showcases 60 machines created from original Leonardo drawings. For art lovers, the organisers are showing reproductions of his paintings including The Last Supper and the Mona Lisa.

We see a connection to another exhibition that is being held in the capital. Visitors to Abu Dhabi's 1001 Inventions exhibition have been treated to works by some of the finest scientific minds of the Muslim world.

Many of their inventions predate, complement and even rival those by Leonardo. Abbas Ibn Firnas is believed to be one of the first inventors to attempt a flying machine. Another inventor, the Iraqi-born 11th-century scientist Ibn Al Haytham, developed a version of the camera obscura, making him one of the fathers of optics.

There are few limits to the imagination. "I want to invent a time machine," said Eesha Raazia, an 11-year-old pupil. "But I think it would be impossible." We, however, are not ruling it out.