

JULY AUGUST 2018

AramcoWorld





6 Somaliland's Midwife

Written by Louis Werner

Photography and video by Lorraine Chittock

Throughout Somaliland—the autonomous northern neighbor of Somalia—one name is associated more than any other with public health and education for women, especially midwifery and medical training: Edna Adan. From the hospital that carries her name to the villages where she is affectionately greeted as *Edo* (Auntie), Adan has helped her country recover from a civil war and inspired a rising generation of women leaders in public service, medicine, environmental conservation and even the arts.

14 Kufiya Nouveau

Written by Mariam Shahin

Photographed by George Azar

Once a traditional Arab headdress of white cotton sewn with traditional patterns in black or red, the kufiya is being pulled by designers far past its historic boundaries of colors, motifs and materials onto the streets and runways of global fashion.

 Online **CLASSROOM GUIDE**

 **2 FIRSTLOOK**

 **4 FLAVORS**

AramcoWorld

aramcoworld.com

July/August 2018
Vol. 69, No. 4



We distribute *AramcoWorld* in print and online to increase cross-cultural understanding by broadening knowledge of the histories, cultures and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their global connections.

Front Cover: Outside Somaliland's capital, Hargeisa, Edna Adan, 80, has expanded her work caring for women's health to caring also for land, joining other women to distribute seedlings and teach about caring for plants and wildlife. Photo by Lorraine Chittock.

Back Cover: Though now competing with a rainbow of colorful, often customized innovations, the traditional black-and-white "fishnet" kufiya remains a bestseller for the Hirbawi Textile Factory in Hebron, Palestine. Photo by George Azar.



24 A Conversation with Saudi Filmmakers

Twelve short films. Five video installations. Three days. From Saudi Arabia to Hollywood, seven directors spoke with each other and audiences at the second edition of Saudi Film Days, offering insights into one of the world's fastest-emerging film industries.

26 The Fragile Songs of the Sumatran Rhinos

Written by Jeremy Hance

Smallest and oldest of all rhino species, Sumatran rhinos communicate with complex, semi-musical vocal patterns. With only a few dozen left in the wild, captive breeding may offer the rhinos their best—and perhaps only—hope.

34 Listening to the Land

*Written by Matthew Teller
Photographed by George Azar*

Tuned to low-impact design, local materials and how people physically experience buildings, the Royal Academy for Conservation of Nature in northern Jordan rises from an abandoned limestone quarry to exemplify the ethic it teaches.



FIRSTLOOK

The Shining Jewel

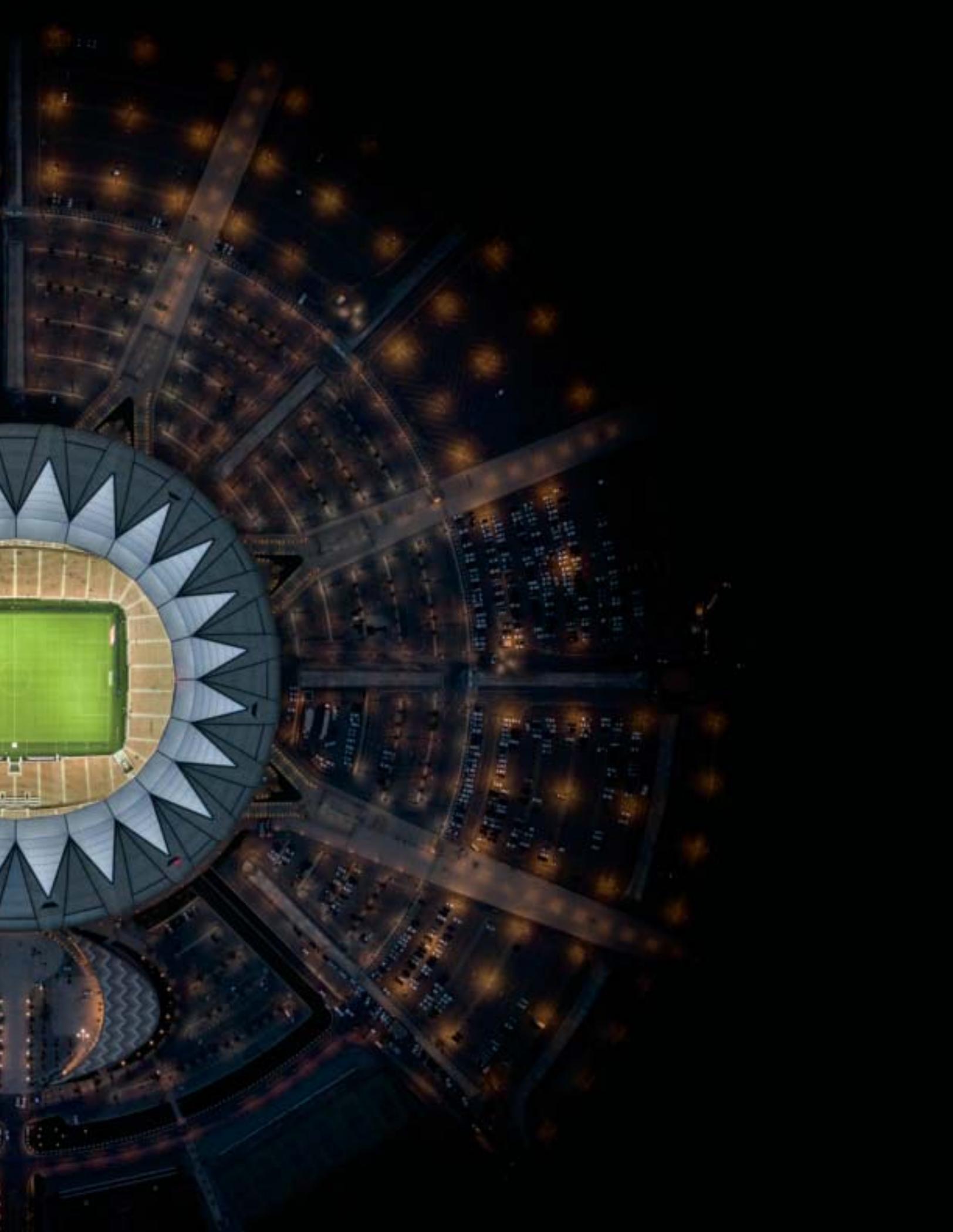
Photograph by
Saleh Alhathloul

As an architect and a photographer, I wrestle constantly with how to expand on the notion of seeing things from all angles. Often an angle least considered is the bird's-eye view—straight down. This came to mind when I thought about photographing the King Abdullah Sports City Stadium, designed by Arup and inaugurated May 1, 2014. Located on the north side of Jiddah, along Saudi Arabia's west coast, it is now the second-largest stadium in the country.

From about 500 meters, in the moments after sunset when the sky was fading into dusk, the interplay of light and dark brought out lines, spaces and patterns. Isosceles triangles and V-frames fused the stadium's references to Islamic geometry with futurism, creating a faceted symmetry, ringed with parking lot lights like beads, that shows how the stadium has earned its nickname "*al-jawhara al-mosha'ya*" — "the shining jewel."

—Saleh Alhathloul







FLAVORS

Kurus with Spoon Salad

Recipe by
Didem Hosgel

Photograph by
Ricky Rodriguez /
Ricarius Photography

My mother made this dish a lot for my brother and me because it was inexpensive, easy to prepare and, most importantly, delicious.

Growing up in southern Turkey in the city of Adana, we eat a lot of bulgur. *Kurus* is a very versatile dish, so we're always searching for different ways to use it. Delicious served with yogurt and salad, and, just as well, it makes a great sandwich. Look for pomegranate molasses in Middle Eastern or specialty stores, or substitute lemon juice if you can't find it.

(Serves 6)

- 1 c (170 g) fine bulgur (size 1)
- ¾ c (180 ml) hot water
- ½ lb (700 g) russet potatoes, peeled
- 1 T Aleppo pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 t ground cumin
- 2 T extra virgin olive oil
- 2 T all-purpose flour
- 1 egg
- 1 T salt
- Vegetable oil, for shallow frying

Turkish Spoon Salad

- 1 large tomato, finely diced
- 1–2 Persian or Lebanese cucumbers, finely diced
- ½ medium red onion, finely diced
- ½ c (30 g) chopped mint
- ½ c (30 g) chopped parsley
- 2 T pomegranate molasses
- ¼ c (60 ml) extra virgin olive oil
- 1 t salt, or to taste

In a mixing bowl, combine the bulgur and the hot water. Mix well, and then cover with plastic wrap and set aside until the water has been absorbed, about 20 minutes.

In a medium pot, cover the potatoes with cold water and season with salt. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium and cook until tender, about 20 to 25 minutes. Drain the potatoes, grate them and then allow to cool at room temperature.

Line a sheet pan with parchment paper. In a large mixing bowl, combine the plump bulgur, potatoes, Aleppo pepper, cumin, olive oil, flour, egg and 1 tablespoon salt. Mix until thoroughly incorporated. Divide the mixture into 20 pieces and form into 3-inch (8-cm) patties using the palm of your hand. Arrange on the sheet pan and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes, or up to 3 days.

Meanwhile, make the spoon salad: in a medium mixing bowl, combine all of the ingredients, tasting the salad before you add the salt.

When you are ready to cook the patties, place a large skillet over medium-high heat and add enough vegetable oil to cover the base by 2 inches (5 cm). Once the oil is hot (about 350° F/180° C), place the patties in the skillet and fry until golden brown and crispy, about 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer the cooked patties to a plate lined with paper towels and season with salt. Arrange the patties on a serving platter, and top with the spoon salad.



Didem Hosgel was raised in a traditional Turkish family where cooking from scratch and preparing food for family members were ongoing and cherished practices. After moving to the us in 2001, Didem set her roots in Boston and began working for Chef Ana Sortun at the famed Oleana Restaurant in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After many years at Oleana, she became chef de cuisine at Sofra Bakery, a Middle Eastern-inspired bakery and café. At Sofra she creates innovative new dishes using fresh, local ingredients while still honoring her Turkish roots.

Reprinted with
permission from
**The Immigrant
Cookbook**

Leyla Moushabeck, ed.
2018, Interlink Books,
978-1-56656-038-2, \$35 hb,
www.interlinkbooks.com.

LEFT: COURTESY JENNA LYONS



Nearly three decades ago, civil war devastated the Horn of Africa's northern flank. In Hargeisa, capital of the autonomous Republic of Somaliland, recovery continues, and among those leading the way are more than a few outstanding women.

Formerly the British Somaliland Protectorate, Somaliland was independent for only five days in 1960 before it joined its southern neighbor, then the Italian Trust Territory of Somaliland, to form the Republic of Somalia, with its capital in Mogadishu. In 1991 Somaliland broke away. Despite the war that followed, it has remained separate ever since.

As if to contradict the title of the 2013 novel by Hargeisa-born writer Nadifa Mohamed, Somaliland can no longer be regarded as *The Orchard of Lost Souls*. The book's tale of a trio of women who help each other survive the civil war is being succeeded by new stories of women such as 80-year-old midwife, educator and public-health pioneer Edna Adan, as well as others, including many of Adan's own students.

To find Adan in the maternity hospital and nursing school that carries her name (Edna Adan Hospital), one asks for her only by her first name, Edna. It's all that is needed, and it's best to come early, before she sets off on a routine 12-hour day into Somaliland's countryside to interview candidates for the school's incoming class. Work on the hospital had begun in the late 1990s, and it opened in 2002 with 25 beds. Even before that, Adan was already training scores of nurses and lab technicians.

Adan's public service career includes 30 years with the



Right: Edna Adan offers words of comfort to a young mother after treatment at the hospital named after her. Adan says the mother was fortunate. "When it takes them five days to get to a hospital, it's too late," she says. "Somaliland is bigger than 20 other countries in Africa. It's a huge territory. Medical facilities are clustered around the main cities. What about the other areas? Women are having babies everywhere." *Above:* Women wait for treatment in the hospital, where Adan has overseen the training of more than 1,000 nurses, midwives and health professionals.



Somaliland's *Midwife*

WRITTEN BY **LOUIS WERNER**

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO BY **LORRAINE CHITTOCK**



World Health Organization (WHO) as well as government posts as both foreign minister and minister of family welfare and social development. Nonetheless, she modestly calls herself “the guinea pig of my generation,” as if to show that she has merely passed a test to prove a woman can succeed in a public role.



first as a midwife in London in the 1950s, and she returned to her homeland as its first professional nurse-midwife. The civil war, from whose damages her family did not escape, inspired her to create something for the country.

“My father’s house, the house where I was raised, was destroyed,” she says. “Building

“My lesson to others

is do not be afraid to do anything, keep at it,” she says, “because if it works for one of us, it will work for all of us. I am not disrespectful of male leadership. Rather, I want to be helpful to them so they will come to me convinced that I am right.”

Adan was profiled by journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn in their 2009 book, *Half the Sky*, as well as the eponymous 2012 documentary about extraordinary women around the world leading the charge to a better future for all.

The daughter of a Hargeisa doctor, she was determined as young as 11 years old to pursue a medical career. She trained

this new hospital became my way of healing after so much heartbreak.”

At the hospital now, on a typical busy day, Somali colleagues are joined by volunteers from neighboring countries Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia, as well as from Denmark, the UK and the US. The day might bring a complex surgery, a routine delivery, a rare lab specimen—or more.

The needs are great. The hospital’s website notes that Somaliland’s overall public health ranks among the lowest in the world, in large part because the civil war “caused the death

Above: “Please, God, help that baby,” says Adan in prayer for the boy, lower, whom community midwife Ronda Adan prepares to wrap in a blanket to be held by his mother. Minutes earlier, following delivery by emergency C-section, the boy had stopped breathing, and had it not been for immediate treatment, he would not have survived birth. Since the civil war, Somaliland’s infant mortality rate—one of the world’s highest—has fallen to one-fourth of its pre-war high. This is due much to the growth in maternity services led by Adan, both in the hospital, which has seen delivery of more than 20,000 babies, and in rural services.





With Adan looking on together with outpatient department head Asha Farah, third-year nursing student Najah Ahmed Mohamed takes a patient's blood pressure. To build the hospital that opened in 2002, Adan sold her home and donated her pension from 30 years of work with the World Health Organization.

or departure of nearly all the country's health care professionals." Since then, much has been accomplished: Maternal mortality has fallen from 1,600 per 100,000 live births before the civil war to around 400 per 100,000—still nearly double the global average, according to the United Nations.

Adan looks to her own life to counsel midwifery recruits as well as their parents. She recounts a mother who came to her distressed over her daughter's desire to study nursing in England, expressing fear that the young woman would inevitably come home in shame. "I had to convince her that, no, it is not shame; it is a great honor," she says. "And now that same woman says, 'I want my daughter to be like you.'"

Among the 1,500 nursing, midwifery, and lab-technician students she has trained, two in particular stand out: the hospital's chief doctor, Shukri Mohamed Taher, and midwife leader Khadan Abdilaha of the Somaliland Family Health Association. Taher was trained as a nurse by Adan, after which she graduated from medical school and returned to the hospital, where she has performed several of Somaliland's first-ever pediatric procedures.

"I was 15 years old when I applied to Edna," Taher says. "I had to lie that I was 18 in order to qualify for admission. I remember being asked in the interview what I would do if a patient vomited on me. I answered, 'I would clean it up and keep talking to her.'"

More than half of the clinical residents are women, Taher says, and when husbands of patients and female relatives think a female doctor might not do something right, she offers professional reassurance: "I say, 'I've done this 1,000 times already.' My mother is not surprised by my success, but she is surprised that I'm doing even more than she expected of me."

Like Taher, Abdilaha also credits Adan with guidance that has strengthened her own will.

"I was born after the civil war," she says, "so I didn't see that madness, but my father suffered a stroke, and my mother almost died in childbirth with a younger sibling. I could not help either one because I knew nothing. So that is why I became a nurse.

"I took my exam five days after an appendectomy, and my teachers told me to rest in bed, take the exam the next year, but nothing could stop me. Even when I fainted on the last day and could not complete it, they let me pass because everything I had written on the first day was perfect."

Abdilaha admits she and her colleagues often find themselves fighting combinations of misinformation and superstition.

For example, many expectant mothers do not understand the benefits of a prenatal diet, she says. "But they feed their goats spinach, so I said, 'You should eat spinach too.' Once I had to attend a difficult home birth of a boy whose mother was reluctant to come to the clinic, even though we begged her





When Adan walks into a classroom at the Ma'alín Daud Primary School in Hargeisa, students greet her with a chorus of cheers of “*Edo! Edo!*” (Auntie! Auntie!). It’s a title of both affection and respect that she often hears wherever she goes. Her message to the students: “Stay in school! Do well in school!”

for the baby’s sake. Now little Abdulrahman is one year old and healthy, and I am happy to say that she brings him for routine checkups without question.”

The most difficult medical fight for Adan and her students is against the tradition of female genital mutilation, which the WHO condemns as a violation of human rights.

As a leader in Somaliland’s campaign to end the practice, Adan has won support from both civic and religious leaders, including the mufti, the country’s top religious authority. And they are not all.

As long ago as 1855, British explorer Richard Burton noticed that “the country teems with poets, poetasters, poetitos, and poetaccios,”—but he overlooked *poetesses*. That was a major omission. Somali women are leaders also in the arts of language in a society where verse, song and rhetoric are vital in both public and private discourse. Under the banner of a Somali proverb, “War destroys, peace nurtures,” Adan convened a meeting of the Somali Studies International Association in 2001 and commissioned poems for the occasion. Poet Mohamed Ali Masmás bluntly exhorted his listeners on the basis of Islamic teaching: “You need to stop this right now / and do what our religion asks of us.”

Daughter of a Hargeisa doctor, in the 1950s Adan became Somaliland’s first professional nurse-midwife.

Somali British poetess Warsan Shire, whose lyrics Beyoncé sang on her album *Lemonade*, wrote a poem “Things We Had Lost in the Summer”:

My mother uses her quiet voice on the phone
Are they okay? Are they healing well?
She doesn’t want my father to overhear.

Her collection’s title, *Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth*, is an ironic reference to the proverb, “These youth taught their mother to give birth”—meaning that the younger generation has the cheeky presumption to teach its elders something already well-known.

Modern and popular songs have also helped to empower women, or at least allowed them to sing in public from their hearts. In the 1970s, Hargeisa’s top singers were Khadra Daahir Cige, from a butcher’s family, who sang, “Our love can’t burn out even in fire,” and Sahra Axmed Jaamac, who sang, “Our love in an endless sea that none can escape.” Professor of African and Middle East history Lidwien Kapteijns of Wellesley College notes that songs are helping reshape ideas about love, equality and social institutions while nurturing

post-war national identity.

Indeed Hargeisa is “the mother of Somali music,” says Radio Hargeisa’s music producer, Muhammad Dahir Hayd. “We were recording it here before Radio Mogadishu even went on the air,” he says.

Hayd notes that the Somali language’s greatest love poet, Ilmi Boodhari, died in 1940 of a broken heart at age 32 in a fateful Romeo-and-Juliet-style romance. His story has inspired verse ever since, including Sahra Jaamac’s “My love is like the love that killed Ilmi.” Boodhari’s poetry, translated by B. W. Andrezejewski, includes lyrics still recited today:

And she was radiant in hue, like a lighted lantern
Surely she must have been imprinted on my heart
How else could I be so intoxicated by her?
Inside my breast she tick-tocks to me like a watch

Earlier this year, the album *Sweet as Broken Dates: Lost Somali Tapes from the Horn of Africa* was nominated for a Grammy award for historical recording. It features on its cover a 1970s-era photo of Hargeisa-born singer Hibo Nuura. Two of her most popular lyrics are “She who is successful will get her reward” and “Do not think there is another reason.” Both assert the compatibility of modernity and tradition. Now living in the US, Nuura has recently composed a patriotic anthem to her homeland.

Sahra Halgan, who was born in Hargeisa and came of age during the civil war, sings twice a week in the capital at Hiddo



Dhawr, her restaurant and music venue, whose name means “save your culture.” “During the fighting I wrapped bandages in first-aid stations,” she says. “I alternated wrapping and singing, and I remember the song everyone asked me for most often, ‘Follow Together to Fight!’ Some shaykhs complain these days about my singing, so I ask, ‘You wanted me to sing for the fighters before but not today. Why? To encourage our people then is to encourage them now.’”

Shukri Haji Ismail Bandare, minister for environment and rural development and also one of Adan’s first students, received one of four 2011 In Pursuit of Peace awards, which was presented by then-US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

Outside Ma’alin Daud Primary School, girls line up and wait to hear their names called to receive USAID rations of lentils distributed by employees of Edna Adan Hospital and the charity CitiHope. The food relief, distributed in April, was a response to the hardship the region is enduring from three years of drought. Above: Adan checks that a student is receiving the rations his family needs.





At the new Somaliland Culture and Sports Association in Hargeisa, young women play basketball as part of a program of physical education and fitness that also includes volleyball, table tennis and—unique in the country—weight training. “Our girls like to pump iron,” says founder Khadra Mohamed Abdi.

on behalf of the International Crisis Group. “By nature we Somalis are strong, and by culture we are pastoralists,” Bandara says. “As women we must excel, just as we must keep our animals the fattest, and when we travel far to draw water, we must be the first to return home in order to light our kitchen fires earliest.”

“My mother was a farmer, working all the time,” she continues. “Someone once said to her, ‘You must be tired,’ and she answered, ‘I want night to be day so I can work then too.’”

Nafisa Yusuf is executive director of Nagaad Network, a consortium for

Singer Sahra Halgan, center, built the restaurant and club Hiddo Dhawr, whose name means “save your culture,” as a venue both for her own and others’ performances, during which it’s not unusual to see the audience get up and dance alongside musicians onstage and even take selfies with Halgan. “I was a nurse for the Somali National Movement during the war,” says Halgan. When a patient “had pain or was dying, we sang to the soldiers.”



women-focused social and economic action. “The civil war destroyed men’s role in the economy,” she explains. “In our workshops for women, the question always is asked, ‘When it comes to Somali women’s traditionally subservient place in the household, what is religious injunction and what is mere cultural habit?’

“And I have the answer,” she says, “because when I was young, I always listened to my father’s mother, Saaqa. She lived to be more than 110 years old. She was always talking about weddings, and said that to be a *guun*, an unmarried woman, was a bad thing. I am trying to reverse that kind of thinking.”

Thoughts such as Saaqa’s are deeply ingrained in Somali society, as one might also see in the occasionally contradictory poetry of Ismail Mire, a veteran of the unsuccessful fight for independence from the British in the

early 20th century. After the Somali defeat, Mire returned to his life as a pastoralist and lamented, “Wives reject their husbands, they refuse to stay at home.”

But Mire’s commanding general, Muhammad Abdilahe Hasan, famed both for his resistance to the British and his poetry, extolled the wartime valor of his countrywomen, especially his wife Maryam, for whom he asked God’s help in illness:



Above: Hargeisa residents gather and relax around Freedom Square’s war memorial, a downed Somali Air Force MiG-17 mounted atop a mural of a woman holding Somaliland’s flag. Since declaring its independence in 1991, Somaliland has functioned as an autonomous region. *Right:* The Hargeisa Cultural Center held its first solo art exhibit in April with work by a young female Somaliland artist, Nujuum Ahmed Hashi. On the closing day, when Hashi made a painting that now hangs in the cultural center, she said, “I have a hero in this world, and she is Edna Adan.”



She has been a mother to Muslims, wherever they might be
 To those fleeing from danger, countless thousands of them,
 She offered a refuge, without thought for herself.
 Bring unto us, O God, relief in Maryam’s plight.

Khadra Mohamed Abdi, founder of the local nonprofit Somaliland Culture and Sports Association (SOCSA), was born in 1967 near the Ethiopian border, and she too knows what it is like to suffer from war.

“I was in Hargeisa at the start of the fighting,” she says, “but returned to my village, walking for two days and nights with my mother, my sister, carrying my sister’s newborn baby. No water or shelter. Nothing. After the war,” she continues, “when I returned to Hargeisa, I saw my primary school had been bombed, and I was determined to do something right away. University education was not possible then, but I wanted younger girls to have that chance someday,” she reasons, “so I thought, sport and culture go together—let’s call it ‘art.’”

In addition to passing on heritage through folk dance, song and other programs, what sets SOCSA apart from most women’s sports programs in the Horn of Africa is its weightlifting gym. “Our girls like to pump iron, dunk baskets and return fast table-tennis serves,” says Abdi.

If Adan can take credit for training the country’s first generation of female doctors and midwives, she can take heart that a younger generation is no less motivated.

Two of Adan’s current second-year nursing students, 21-year-olds Hamda Jama Ali and Hoodo Nuur Ismaa’il, also have personal stories about why they want to become midwives. As a young girl, Ismaa’il says she helped her grandmother attend to the healthy birth of her aunt’s first child. Ali, on the other hand, watched a neighbor almost die when no one could assist her delivery. Both will soon attend a birth for the first time as midwives-in-training.

“I want to see that happy moment when everyone is relieved, the baby is healthy, the mother is tired, and all of us are together helping,” says Ali. That attitude, Adan might say, is reward enough for a lifetime. 🌍



Louis Werner (wernerworks@msn.com) is a writer and filmmaker living in New York. **Lorraine Chittock** is the author of five books on the bond between humans and animals. She’s currently finishing her first film, *Rallying for A Wild Life—Keeping our Adventures and Wild Spaces Wild*. Find her on Facebook, Twitter and at www.LorraineChittock.com.



 www.ednahospital.org

 **Related articles at aramcworld.com**

Somali Americans: M/A 18, S/O 15
 Weaving: S/O 89
 Poetry: N/D 88



VIDEO:
aramcworld.com



KUFIYA NOUVEAU



Written by
Mariam Shahin

Photographed by
George Azar





Last year at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, “Items: Is Fashion Modern?” exhibited 111 pieces and accessories from around the world that proved influential in 20th- and 21st-century fashion. Among them were three examples of a square cotton cloth from the Arab world: the kufiya.

With origins as a plain headdress meant to protect from the sun in summer, from cold in winter, and from wind and dust in the desert, the kufiya is traditionally woven in black or red thread in several well-established patterns. Called *kufiya* (kuh-FEE-uh) mainly in the Levant, it is known by other names in other regions—*ghutra*, *shamagh* or *hattah*, most commonly. (See “Names,” p. 19.)

Across the Arab social spectrum—from hinterlands to capitals, from shepherds to software developers, revolutionaries to royalty, the kufiya has long been a sign of Arab identity. With fashion’s insatiable appetite for fusion, and especially since the proliferation of social media, the kufiya has been crossing historic cultural and geographical boundaries to step—confidently, it appears—into the lexicon of global cool.



Paola Antonelli, senior curator of architecture and design, and director of research and development at the MOMA, says the kufiya was chosen for the exhibit because “it has had a profound effect on the world at both global and local levels over the last century and, indeed, over millennia. It has been used as a practical accessory that helps people navigate local climates and environments,” she continues. “It has also become imbued with deep political significance. It has also become a fashion accessory that is, in

some iterations, completely divorced from its original context and used for its esthetic merits alone.”

To Lebanese architect Salim al-Kadi, who designed the trio of kufiyas that the MOMA displayed, the kufiya “is transformative.” It “speaks to different geographies, different people and different issues. Depending on how it is worn, it can be a symbol of resistance and protest, or a disguise. [Today] there is no demonstration anywhere in the world where there isn’t at least one person wearing a kufiya. But it also indicates the strength and power of the downtrodden. Like a Wonder Woman bracelet for Arabs, it feels like it protects.”

To make his point, al-Kadi gave literal form to his metaphor with a kufiya made out of Kevlar body armor—painted gold. It was flanked on the gallery wall by traditional cotton kufiyas, one black and white and the other red and white.

The breakthrough into high fashion began a bit more than a decade ago. In 2007 the Spanish fashion house Balenciaga included in its collection French designer Nicholas Ghes’s black-and-white kufiya-designed scarves with



Above: In Paris, model Sidya Sarr wears a traditional black-and-white kufiya less for utility and more for street style. *Opposite:* Posing for a portrait in 1975 in the ‘Asir region of Saudi Arabia, a young man wears a traditional red-and-white kufiya, called a *shamagh* in Saudi Arabia. *Previous spread, left:* A neotraditional black-and-white kufiya by Palestinian Serbian designer Rashid Abdelhamid uses four traditional patterns. *Previous spread, right:* In Beirut, Aya Bizri models a kufiya-inspired dress by fashion designer Khaled el Masri.

pink flowers and frills imposed on the *fatha* design. (See “Reading a Kufiya,” below.) Brazilian supermodel Flávia de Oliveira wore it on the runway, *Vogue Japan* featured it on its cover—spurring record sales of kufiyas in Japan—and former *InStyle* Accessory Director Meggan Crum put the scarf on her “Top Ten Accessories.”

That same year, upscale US label Urban Outfitters featured kufiya-styled scarves and shirts in a variety of colors. Though criticism for cultural appropriation on the one hand and being

“pro-Arab” on the other forced the store to pull the line, they were all back the next year with price tags up to \$115.

At the lower end of the spectrum, “street kufiyas” have hung for sale in shops selling jeans and T-shirts in many western capitals as well as across the Arab world, priced usually between \$10 and \$20. Many of these are imported from China and made of synthetic cloth with printed, not woven, patterns.

More recently, French fashion powerhouse Chanel in 2015 used both red-and-white and black-and-white kufiya designs for a range of garments and accessories, including dresses, jackets, shirts, skirts, blouses and clutches. Fabrics comprised silk and wool, and leather accents appeared on some items. Models showing them on the runway included US supermodel Gigi Hadid.

Reina Lewis, who teaches cultural studies at the London College of Fashion, dates the first appearances of kufiyas in trendy shopping areas of London to the early 1970s, where “they would be part of ensembles that included Afghan sheepskin coats.”

By the 1990s, when other fashion items started to be made

READING A KUFIYA

Knowledge about the woven designs of the kufiya has been transmitted orally, and lore has it that the main patterns reference the professions of those who first wore it.

The so-called *fatha* design (FAHT-hah; literally “opening” and popularly “fishnet”) is said by some experts to represent the nets of the fishermen of southern

Mesopotamia—probably the marshlands of southern Iraq and possibly even lands farther south along the coasts. But this is contested. In alternate tellings, from mountainous areas, it is referred to as the “honeycomb” design, in reference to beekeepers; some rural Syrian interpretations say it symbolizes the joining of hands and the marks of dirt and sweat wiped off a worker’s brow.

The other major design, called the

qamah (wheat) design by the kufiya makers of Hebron, is a reference to Jericho, one of the first known major cities to practice wheat cultivation.

There is also the plain white cloth called *hattah* (simply meaning “scarf”) worn by city dwellers in Gulf states, where it is often called a *ghutra*, and sometimes by leading members of rural leadership there as well as Jordan, Syria and Palestine.





In Dubai's Deira Murshid Bazaar, a mannequin displays a printed kufiya, wrapped turban style, in front of scarves and hijabs for women. *Right:* An Instagram post by Danish fashion label Cecilie Copenhagen, whose founder, Cecilie Jørgensen, creates dresses, tops, shorts, belts and jackets all inspired by kufiyas. *Opposite:* Meriem Ishawiyeen wears a rainbow-colored kufiya produced by Hirbawi Textile Factory in Hebron.

in the UK from kufiya-patterned cloth, “some people were offended. They felt it was the commoditization of a garment that for others was a marker of cultural, political, or national authenticity and pride—cultural appropriation.” But fashion, Lewis points out, “constantly plunders cultural symbols,” and “what some designers call inspiration others will see as cultural appropriation.”

Lewis says that while the garment has cultural and often political connotations to many, this is partly generational. “Millennials are completely unaware of its cultural and political associations and see it simply as a scarf,” she says. For many youth in London, multicolored kufiyas are “part of their fashion essentials, like a leather jacket or jeans.”

Kufiyas came later to the US, says Ted Swedenburg, a professor of anthropology at the University of Arkansas who studies identity and symbols in Arab cultures, including kufiyas.

“I first began seeing the kufiya in the United States around 1983, without fully understanding its context,” says Swedenburg. “In the last decade, kufiyas, in all colors, are being worn by actors and celebrities.” He goes on to namedrop Mary-Kate Olsen, Kirsten Dunst, Cameron Diaz, Colin Farrell, David Beckham, Justin Timberlake, “and even [US Senator] John McCain’s daughter,” Meghan McCain.

For many, however, wearing kufiyas was largely “a matter of trendiness,” says Swedenburg. “I think we have to ask *why*

the kufiya became trendy, or edgy. That relates to the growth of antiwar sentiment in the US in the 2004 to 2008 period.” It also coincides, he explains, with the moment low-cost kufiyas became more widely available.

“You can’t draw a straight line, but that was an important part of the context,” he says. “People with progressive politics began to wear them as part of their statement.” Now, “maybe the kufiya need not choose between being a political or a fashion item. It can be both, and it can be educational, a conversation starter.”

Far closer to the roots of kufiyas are the designers and textile artisans of the nonprofit Social Enterprise Project (SEP) in Jordan. Their designs are pushing toward what kufiyas might become while holding to the cloth’s traditions. SEP kufiyas often include embroidery—a traditional art especially in the Levant—and thoroughly nontraditional but trendy and seasonal colors—grays, beiges, oranges, reds-on-blacks and more.

What makes these designers distinctive is that they all work out of refugee camps, explains Roberta Ventura, a Geneva-based investment banker who supervises the design and production of handmade kufiyas in the Jerash Camp in northern Jordan. To start, women use the traditional red- or black-and-white designs on cotton, linen and cashmere, before combining them in a series of different colors with the distinctive, fine

NAMES

The name *kufiya* is transliterated from Arabic in various ways—keffiyeh, kuffiyah, and more—but they all mean the same thing, and they owe their differences to how the word was transliterated and by whom. *Kufiya* keeps close to a literal linguistic transliteration.

This same cloth headdress also goes by a series of other names in Arabic, which indicate regional identities and influences.

Shamagh, a kufiya that is almost always red and white, is a name often used by Bedouins, or groups with strong Bedouin heritage, many of whom are in Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The shamagh has a thicker fabric, which keeps the wearer warm in the cold desert nights. In the case of Jordanian shamaghs, the number of tassels can represent the town or area the wearer comes from.

Ghutra is the name most used in the Arabian Peninsula for an all-white headdress. It is usually worn with a small cotton or knitted hat

underneath known as a *taqiya*, which allows the ghutra to better keep its shape and makes it easier to style.

Chafiyeh is the Persian name for the head-dress, but it is usually worn in the style of a turban, with a larger variety of colors: dark green, dark blue, dark purple and variations.

Jahmahdani is Kurdish, and it too is worn in a turban style; however, it is almost always either a black-and-white fatha design or red and white.



FABRIC

Ninety-five percent of kufiyas have always been made of pure cotton, mostly from Egypt or India, largely woven in Syria, Palestine and Iraq. Today more and more are being made in combination with polyester, while some made in India are woven out of cashmere and wool.

cross-stitch embroidery used in traditional Palestinian dresses. The crafted kufiyas then sell in high-end stores across Europe, Asia and the Americas.

The kufiyas, Ventura says, are among more than two dozen fashion accessories made in the camps for SEP Jordan and sold to support the women workers, who are paid middle-income salaries. “The kufiya is our bestselling item,” says Ventura.

“They go like hotcakes, and they’re sold to middle class, to wealthy people, lawyers, managers, from anywhere between \$65 to \$100. They’re sold to people,” she continues, “who are usually aware of the political and cultural association, but who are also clearly willing to make a statement that they are wearing it for its beauty.”

Ventura is thrilled at the success of the kufiyas, which is poised now for a next step: After years of selling online and in select stores, this year it is producing an exclusive, top-end kufiya for the department store Boutique 1, where it will sit alongside scarves by designers such as Missoni, Rochas and Elie Saab. While the design is not yet finalized, Ventura says, “there’s more embroidery.” The price is set to hover around \$280.

Ventura adds that Boutique 1 “already sells our kufiyas, and they wanted to go onto the next level. They are selling them as a fashion statement. They are aware of the political symbolism, but they are also fully buying into our concept, our brand concept, which is, ‘forget the political statement, this is beautiful’—and you buy it because it is beautiful.”

Working from an Amman penthouse studio, Palestinian Serbian architect and kufiya designer Rashid Abdelhamid is similarly fusion oriented. He dismisses talk of cultural appropriation, and his website, *Made in Palestine Project*, displays kufiyas in an abundance of colors and combinations of fabrics. Original black-and-white or red-and-white fatha fabrics are incorporated, but more frequently they are being replaced by other colors and styles. The original kufiya designs are always present and visible, but always fused, combined, highlighted and sometimes only exist as accents that gives a thin root to the designs, gentle nods of recognition.

Abdelhamid asserts that while indeed his kufiyas reflect his own Arab European hybrid identity, they also symbolize contemporary historical context.

“I was born in Algiers and studied in Florence and Grenoble [France]. I travel between Dubai, Ramallah, Tunis and Amman. What I wear reflects these multiple cultures and identities—and many people are like me,” Abdelhamid says.

He handpicks the fabrics, including cloth from areas and communities not traditionally associated with the kufiya. “I include Tunisian velvet, Egyptian cotton, Turkish brocade, Anatolian peasant designs, Caucasian linen and sheer silks, and I combine them with the fishnet kufiya in a multitude of colors,” he says.

Meriem Ishawiyeen, *left*, and Diana Boghossian, *center*, wear multicolored modern kufiyas by Hirbawi; Maytha Alhassen, *right*, models a kufiya dress from Artisans du Liban et d’Orient in Beirut. *Opposite*: Designer Rashid Abdelhamid wears one of his custom kufiyas in Amman. “I include Tunisian velvet, Egyptian cotton, Turkish brocade, Anatolian peasant designs, Caucasian linen and sheer silks,” he says.





Working his way among the looms running at Hirbawi Textile Factory, Abd al-Aziz al-Taraki monitors quality for the two most traditional kufiya designs, which remain popular worldwide. *Opposite:* A wall at Hirbawi's displays a selection of the 55-year-old factory's 42 contemporary designs.

"Each piece is unique and handmade, like each one of us."

From his studio, he creates two collections a year. Internet-based sales, he says, "are exploding at around \$100 a piece, and I have orders from high-end boutiques in Florence and London, which sell them for \$300 to \$500."

Fashion historians from the Arab world agree on several facts concerning the history of kufiyas. Both the concept of the *'iqal* and the original fatha design originated in Iraq; the cotton used to make kufiyas came largely from Egypt but also from the Indian subcontinent; kufiyas were initially produced on looms mainly in Damascus; and it was the nationalist movements of Palestinians that in the 1960s first made kufiyas globally famous.

According to the Hirbawi family, which owns and operates the only kufiya factory still working in Palestine, three factories in Damascus began to flourish in the early 20th century when the use of the Ottoman tarboosh among men declined along with the empire that had popularized it. Rural men began to change

the manner the kufiya was worn by no longer wrapping it like a turban but wearing them more loosely like headscarves.

Swedenburg points out that in the 1920s and 1930s, as Syrian and Palestinian opposition to European colonialism gained strength, urban men too began to wear kufiyas that, at the time, were only either black and white or plain white. This adoption of the previously rural headdress by urban elites as a marker of national unity signified, he says, a moment of "inversion of social hierarchy."

The red-and-white kufiya has origins that are also military but relatively recent, says Widad Kavar, a Jordanian expert and collector of traditional garments. In the 1930s, Jordan-based British General John Bagot Glubb (also known as Glubb Pasha) sought to create a distinctive headdress among Arabs loyal to British rule. He is credited with ordering the production of red-and-white kufiyas.

These red-and-white kufiyas, mostly manufactured in British cotton mills, were of thicker cotton, and their pattern more densely woven, than traditional black-and-white kufiyas. They

ORIGINS

The origin—and name—of the kufiya is said to go back to a battle between Arab and Persian tribes near the Iraqi city of Kufa in the early

seventh century CE. Arab poet and historian Yousef Nasser recounts how before the battle, the Arabs wove headbands—*'iqals*—from camel hair to hold the plain headcloth in place so the Arab fighters would recognize

their compatriots.

"After the battle," Nasser says, "many of the Arabs took off their headdress, but they were told, 'keep it on as a reminder of this victory until the end of time.'"



quickly became popular among men in the wintertime and in the desert, where the nights could be bitter cold.

“All the men loved the red-and-white one,” says Kawar. “Glubb Pasha could not control who wore it. The Syrians loved it, as did the Iraqis and the Saudis.” The red-and-white kufiya became standard-issue headwear for Britain’s colonial Palestine Police Force, Sudan Defense Force and Libyan Arab Forces.

In the 1960s, black-and-white kufiyas became synonymous with Palestinian nationalism, and thus “the last kufiya factory in Palestine,” Hirbawi’s, in the city of Hebron, has taken on an iconic significance. Founded in 1963 by Yasser Hirbawi, the factory is now run by his three sons.

“When my father founded the factory in 1963, there were no other kufiya-making factories in Palestine,” says 60-year-old Judeh Hirbawi, Yasser’s eldest son. All were made in Damascus. In 1963 Yasser bought two Suzuki mechanical looms made in Japan, which produced some 300 kufiyas a month, explains Judeh. They were all black and white—like

the ones from Damascus.

By 1965 they started to make red-and-white kufiyas as well. Six years later the Hirbawis had six machines and were producing around 900 kufiyas of both types each month.

“By the 1980s the ‘salad’ design was introduced by my younger brother Izzat Hirbawi, who combined up to six colors to modernize the kufiya,” says Judeh. Today Hirbawi’s produces 42 different color designs, but the most popular is still the black-and-white classic, followed closely by the red-and-white.

It was not until 2000 that the Hirbawis began to export. Today the Hirbawis have 14 mechanical looms, still Suzukis, and 10 new ones were delivered last year. Annual production is around 60,000.

“Business is up, and we are exporting to new designers in Amman and Europe, says Judeh. “The kufiya is in fashion again,” he adds with a smile. ☺

THE MARSH ARAB KUFIYA

There was one place, however, where neither black-and-white nor red-and-white kufiyas were popular—but green ones were. In the 1950s, English writer Gavin Young lived for two years with the Marsh Arabs of southern Iraq. There, he noted that community leaders wore dark green kufiyas to assert their identification with descendants of the Bani Quraysh—the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad.



Filmmaker and writer **Mariam Shahin** has produced and directed more than 60 documentary films, and she is co-author of *Unheard Voices: Iraqi Women on War and Sanctions* (Change, 1992). Photographer and filmmaker **George Azar** is author of *Palestine: A Photographic Journey* (University of California, 1991) and director of the films *Beirut Photographer* (2012) and *Gaza Fixer* (2007). Together Shahin and Azar produced *Palestine: A Guide* (Interlink Books, 2006) and *Free Running Gaza* (2011).



Related articles at aramcoworld.com

Kanga: N/D 17

Iklat: M/A 07

Suzani: J/A 03

A CONVERSATION with Saudi Filmmakers

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY
FLEISHMANHILLARD

Twelve short films, five video installations and one feature film, all by young directors from Saudi Arabia, screened April 2–4 at the Linwood Dunn Theater in Los Angeles.

The event was the second edition of Saudi Film Days, sponsored by Ithra, the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, in collaboration with the Saudi Films Festival. Each screening included a panel discussion with Saudi and US film directors. Here are the highlights.

JOSH WELSH, PRESIDENT, FILM INDEPENDENT AND PANEL MODERATOR: I just got back—my colleague and I were just in Saudi Arabia until two days ago for our first trip over there.... It truly feels like a historic moment there, where there are significant changes coming to the film and TV and cultural landscape. So I'll just start by asking each of you, "What is unique to Saudi filmmaking?"

MOHAMMED AL-SALMAN, DIRECTOR: In Saudi Arabia we have untold stories, and our own culture and myths that we can transform into this film form. And also because we have, in our [Arabic] language, kind of metaphors, so we can interpret these into films, with metaphors and surrealism. And lots of filmmakers that I know [also] have this distinguishing sarcastic tone in their films. When we have an issue or something in our culture, we make a joke about it—in writing or now in film.

SHAHAD AMEEN, DIRECTOR: I feel that no matter how many things I try to write, I end up in some magical situation and fantastical one. And I always feel that it goes back to our language, because our language is very metaphorical. And it has vision. If you read an Arabic poem, you're seeing pictures.

ANDY TENNANT, DIRECTOR: It's important to learn from the audience, and I think it's going to be interesting for [Saudi] filmmakers to actually hear what the response is.... You don't

necessarily give the audience what they want, you give them what you're feeling.

MOHAMMED AL-BASHIR, SCREENWRITER: There are stories in Saudi that haven't been even touched before.... We are used to the oral world and oral storytelling. So introducing this image and way of expressing ideas and emotions, and myths and legends, is very exciting for us as modern storytellers.

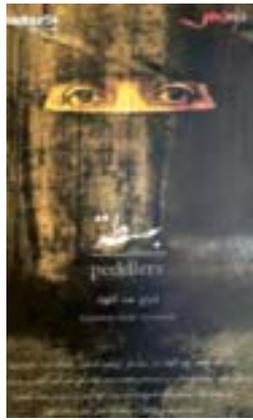
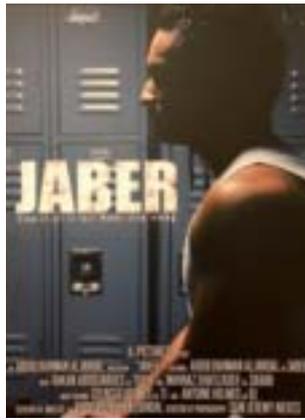
WELSH: I'm curious about the different regions in Saudi Arabia and how they might influence filmmaking. Are there particular storytelling traditions in those regions that show up in your work or that you think we can expect to see from other Saudi filmmakers?

AMEEN: There are diverse voices, and that's kind of wonderful.... Cinema does not stand on one person solely, or one genre solely.

AL-SALMAN: I think there are diverse filmmakers.... There are comedy films and realism, and also this surreal and also the sar-

Left to right: Moderator and Film Independent President Josh Welsh, screenwriter Shauna Cross, Saudi director Abdul Rahman Sandukshi, screenwriter Mohammed Al-Bashir and director Mohammed Al-Faraj.





castic tone that I talked about. I'm not sure if the region would have this effect.

WELSH: There's sometimes a perception that Saudi film is starting today, but that's clearly not the case.

ABDUL RAHMAN SANDUKSHI, DIRECTOR: At the beginning, when we were starting the experience of filmmaking, we were very excited, and we wanted the first movie to be the best and perfect.... [I worked on a film about] Alzheimer's that took one and a half years. People would say, "Wow, you took too much time on this movie." But I wanted it to be perfect. Then, I learned stories really don't end. There are millions and trillions of stories. You can

Welsh with Saudi directors Mohammed Al-Salman and Shahad Ameen, and us director Andy Tennant. Lower: Saudi director Mujtaba Saeed, Saudi Films Festival founder Ahmad Al-Mulla and director Mohammed Al-Faraj.

find a story anywhere. By the door you can find a story. Stories are everywhere. So just finish that [film].... That I learned the hard way. Just finish the movie and start with the next one.

AL-BASHIR: It all started as a personal effort [for me]. I mean, names like Haifaa al-Mansour, Bader Alhomoud, Abdullah al-Eyaf and Ahed Kamel. Those are names that are big now in Saudi film, but they started with their personal efforts and then going to film festivals and winning awards. But all of that was very independent by their own choice and their own funds and support. Now there is a more organized kind of approach.

(QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE:) Do you see this as a way to change the perceptions of Saudi Arabia?

AL-SALMAN: Sure.... We need to form and tell our stories by our own.

AMEEN: I believe film is an emotional experience, and we can't humanize people [if] we don't see their emotions. So seeing work that's coming out of real stories, real emotions from our point of view, an Arab story, I think will just bring us closer because it's going to humanize us more, and you realize at the end of the day after watching these films you'll say, "We all feel the same things, and we're all just humans."

MOHAMMED AL-FARAJ, DIRECTOR: I see what is happening here as a plant. And this plant is growing out and blossoming. And hopefully it's going to be fruitful for everyone. 🌍



 **Related articles at aramcworld.com**
Saudi contemporary art: M/J 17
Saudi Film Days: M/A 17

VIDEO:
aramcworld.com



TOP RIGHT: RICHARD DOUGHTY

A Sumatran rhinoceros is shown in a muddy, forested environment. The rhino is partially visible on the right side of the frame, with its body and legs covered in mud. The ground is dark brown and muddy, with some green leaves and twigs scattered around. The background shows a dense forest with trees and foliage.

THE
Fragile Songs
OF THE
**SUMATRAN
RHINOS**

Written by
JEREMY HANCE

A man wearing a green t-shirt, a dark cap, and dark pants is crouching in a muddy enclosure. He is leaning forward with his right hand on the back of a large pig that is lying down in the mud. His left hand is raised towards the ground. The pig is covered in mud and is looking towards the right. The ground is very muddy and has some green leaves scattered on it. In the background, there are vertical wooden posts.

**They are survivors and never
give up hope as long as they
know we are there for them.**

—Zainal Zahari Zainuddin



Two-year-old Delilah, right, is currently the youngest Sumatran rhino and only the second in recent years to have been born in captivity; in Javanese, her name means “God’s Blessing.” Working with her and her mother, Ratu, left, is veterinarian Zulfi Arsan of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS), located in Sumatra’s Way Kambas National Park. *Previous spread:* The day after her removal from the wild in December 2011, Borneo Rhino Alliance (BORA) veterinarian Zainal Zahari Zainuddin gently and cautiously began a socialization process to help Puntung, a 14-year-old female, adapt to the Tabin Wildlife Reserve in Malaysian Borneo. Until her death last year from cancer, she was one of only three Sumatran rhinos in Malaysia.

At four o’clock in the morning on May 12, 2016, Zulfi Arsan balanced himself on a tall fence post, poised to jump into a pen with a rhinoceros. As lead veterinarian of the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, he watched as the rhino named Ratu gave birth to her second calf. The calf, who later would be named Delilah, was coming out wrong—hind feet first. This meant the umbilical cord could strangle her. Arsan was ready to try to help if he had to, if he could. He waited to see if the calf would breathe.

A minute passed. Then, a breath. And another.

Thus was Delilah born, the youngest *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, the smallest, oldest and most endangered species of rhinoceros in the world. With fewer than 100 left of her kind, her first breaths gave hope that Sumatran rhinos still could be saved from extinction, largely thanks to advances in science and the day-to-day work of men and women like Arsan.

Lanky and handsome with a black beard and smiling eyes, Arsan, 42, has a ready grin, and in conversation he can jump easily from the technicalities of Sumatran rhino physiology to a chat about a particular animal’s personality.

“The more I know, the more I love about the Sumatran rhino,” Arsan says. He grew up with animals, both wild and domestic—including a favorite pet heron. Having decided to be a vet at a young age, Arsan graduated in 2003 from Bogor Agricultural University in West Java. As a student, he interned at the SRS, located deep inside Way Kambas National Park in southern

Sumatra. In 2014 he became the sanctuary’s head veterinarian.

It is a job that requires sacrifice: Arsan spends more time with the SRS’s seven rhinos than he does with his own wife and four children, who live 300 kilometers away in Bogor, a suburb of Jakarta, capital of Indonesia on the island of Java. He’s with them only about eight to 10 days a month.

When he tells them goodbye, he sets out on a nine-hour trip that plods through Jakarta’s traffic, ferries across the Sunda Strait and then navigates potholed, sometimes-flooded roads through the rainforest.

“As a father and a husband, it is hard to be away from my family. They need me, and also I need them,” Arsan says. “But we have to do it, and they also understand and [are] proud for what I am doing here.”

His older children, 12 and 10, text him to check in on the rhinos. His four-year-old twins, he says, “love the rhinos.” One day he hopes to bring them to meet the rhinos in person.

For the rhinos, his job carries the highest of stakes.

SUMATRAN RHINO DISTRIBUTION

There are few big mammals on the planet today closer to extinction than the Sumatran rhino. Only the vaquita porpoise, in Mexico, is closer—about a dozen vaquita are thought to remain.

While officials estimate there are still around 100 Sumatran rhinos left in the wild—down from some 200 a decade ago—most independent experts believe the number is smaller, not more than 80 and possibly as few as 30. These are spread among four geographically disconnected populations. No one really knows if, with these numbers, any of the populations can prove sustainable.

This makes Arsan, the team at the SRS and others like them the best hope for the species. At the SRS, each of the seven rhinos lives in its own 10-hectare enclosure. Two of them—Andalas and Ratu—have produced offspring, in 2012 and 2016, respectively.

With these recent successes, conservationists say what needs to happen now is to bring more wild rhinos to the SRS—or similar facilities—for captive breeding. Like many big mammals, Sumatran rhinos are slow breeders: Females can give birth at most every three to four years, and gestation lasts 15 to 16 months. (Then they spend a couple of years raising the calf.) Females mature sexually at six or seven; males at 10. With a life span estimated at 40 years, a healthy female could bear seven to eight young, at best.

While Arsan works to help his charges create new life, across the Java Sea, in the Malaysian state of Sabah in northern Borneo, another vet is doing all he can to preserve a life.

Zainal Zahari Zainuddin has spent the last few months trying to heal a Sumatran rhino named Iman, one of two rhinos housed by the Borneo Rhino Alliance (BORA). She and a 30-year-old male named Tam are believed to be the last Sumatran rhinos of Malaysia.

Iman was captured in 2014 after a camera trap revealed her traveling route. With a pit dug and covered, the team waited eight anxious months before they safely captured her and flew her by helicopter to the BORA facility.

On first inspection, Zainuddin recalls that she looked pregnant. But it turned out to be a uterine tumor, a common problem for female Sumatran



rhinos linked to the scarcity of mates.

Zainuddin, 59, came to BORA in 2010 with 15 years of experience with the species. He knew something was wrong when Iman refused to leave her wallow.

“When they are sick, they always go back to the wallow,” says Zainuddin, who describes a wallow as a kind of “sacred place” for a rhino: Every Sumatran

rhino builds one by digging out a puddle where it can enjoy a comforting mix of mud and water.

Eventually, Zainuddin and the BORA staff were able to coax Iman, by then also dangerously dehydrated, out of her wallow into her night quarters, where the BORA medical team could attend to her.

Iman’s tumor had ruptured. Zainuddin feared she wouldn’t pull through.

“Some days we gave her 15 liters of fluid, and it took us eight hours to finish 30 bottles,” says Zainuddin. “It took us almost two months to get her back to near normal condition.”

Iman was likely Malaysia’s last wild rhino. A year after her capture, officials declared the Sumatran rhino extinct in Sabah—their last place in the Southeast Asian country. As recently as 2008, researchers had estimated there were 50 rhinos left in Sabah. Although in hindsight this had likely been a mistake, counting wild rhinos is imprecise: They are rare and difficult to see, and their tracks are nearly identical to those of tapirs. Even a rhino wallow can be difficult to identify conclusively.

The Sumatran rhino is unlike any other. Although a full-grown one weighs in at nearly a metric ton, that’s only half the weight of male African white rhinos, which also stand



Right: Newborn Delilah bonds with her mother, Ratu, at the SRS in May 2016.

half a meter taller at the shoulder. A Sumatran rhino also sports a shaggy coat of sometimes-reddish hair. While it has two horns—hence its genus name *Dicerorhinus*, Greek for “two-horned rhinoceros”—it’s not related to Africa’s two-horned rhinos nor to either of Asia’s, the Javan or Indian rhino.



matra, in Way Kambas National Park, where the SRS is located, and in Bukit Barisan National Park. A third population survives in remote Aceh, at the northern end of Sumatra. A fourth population, discovered in 2013, lives across the Java Sea in Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo. The Bukit

Junaidi Payne, executive director of BORA, calls the Sumatran rhino “the last living relic of the Miocene era,” which lasted from about 23 million to five million years ago—ages before we humans showed up. As a genus, he explains, *Dicerorhinus* split off from other rhinos around 20–25 million years ago. Despite being little known by the global public, there is nothing remotely like *Dicerorhinus* left on Earth.

“The Sumatran rhino is particularly special because it is the most ancient of the remaining rhino forms,” says Payne. “Most significantly, it represents a genus, not just a species or subspecies or race of rhinos.”

Two of its four surviving populations are in southern Su-

Barisan and Kalimantan populations are the most fragile—so much so that they may be nearly, or even already, gone.

Historically, the Sumatran rhino had ranged widely in southeast Asia, as far north and west as Myanmar, Bangladesh and India. Millennia of hunting, slaughter for its horn and deforestation meant it has been all but wiped out, one by one. Yet despite this dire picture, a recent genetic study suggests that the Sumatran rhino has been struggling against extinction since 9,000 years ago, when scientists estimate a minimum of 700 survived climatic changes and, likely, hunting by early humans. In many ways, it’s amazing they had survived the Pleistocene (2.5 million to 12,000 years ago) at

After her 2011 capture in a shallow pit in Borneo, Puntung was coaxed into this box, which was then moved by hand to a clearing, from which she was airlifted to the Tabin Wildlife Reserve. Top: A camera trap set in 2013 in Way Kambas National Park in Sumatra caught this rare image of a Sumatran rhino in the wild.



all when other large mammals of the epoch, including mammoths, giant sloths and woolly rhinos, had not.

The cold prospect of extinction is not merely a biological loss, says Zainuddin. It is also an emotional one: Sumatran rhinos are sophisticated communicators, gentle and lovable in their relations with humans.

“They tame easily to you,” says Zainuddin. “They can associate to you and ... they will accept you within the species. You can go close to them.”

This trust gives keepers the ability to train the rhino to come when called and to lie down passively when, say, they need a footbath or another procedure. Arsan calls them “clever” animals that “can learn.”

“Tam is the perfect gentleman,” Zainuddin says. When Tam eats, he always sniffs the food first and never goes “for your hand.” (In contrast, he says, Iman is a “shredder.”)

Tam has even learned to open his night-stall door by lifting the bolt with his head and moving it aside.

“He does it so confidently,” says Zainuddin. “One flip, second flip, and door is open. He just pushes [the] door in, and he walks in. He’ll make a noise, calling for the keepers.”

Still, behavior depends on context. Sumatran rhinos are

malleable and calm in their pens because they have come to associate them with human territory. But in the wild, Sumatran rhinos will be protective of their territory.

“Every keeper and I treat the rhinos as family,” says Zainuddin. “They are never pets to us. We understand their feeling and their moods.” For example, he adds, when they are ill, “they let us handle them, and they give in to us, knowing we want them well. [They] can sense this. They are

survivors and never give up hope as long as they know we are there for them.”

Both Zainuddin and Arsan stress that each rhino has a distinctive personality, and bonds to its keepers. Zainuddin says that when he and his colleague leave the pen for a time, they hear Iman “yelling from the gate, calling for them.”

In addition to snorting through its nostrils, a Sumatran rhino produces a sound from its larynx that experts compare to a singing whale or a whistling dolphin, as if the rhino is squeaking out a tune.

Arsan says he believes the rhino’s “song” is commonly used when the animal is “asking permission.” He says the rhinos tend to sing when they are waiting to be fed fruit, or wanting to leave their pens to go back to their wallows. A calf will sing out if it loses sight of its mother.

A Sumatran rhino produces a sound from its larynx that experts compare to a singing whale or a whistling dolphin, as if the rhino is squeaking out a tune.

Relaxing in cool, muddy wallows at the srs, Ratu, left, in 2012 became the first Sumatran rhino to give birth in captivity in Indonesia and only the fifth to do so worldwide; last year she gave birth to Delilah. At right, Andalas, the first Sumatran rhino to be born in captivity in more than a century, is 17 years old. He has fathered two calves with Ratu.



But aside from a short study in 2003 in the Cincinnati Zoo in the US, no one has researched the songs of Sumatran rhinos.

“There is so little known,” says Susie Ellis, executive director for the International Rhino Foundation, which helps manage the SRS.

“Everything that we know about their biology has

been learned in the captive setting because it’s just very, very difficult to study [in the wild].”

Given their rarity and timidity, very few experts have even actually seen a wild Sumatran rhino. Neither Arsan nor Zainuddin nor Ellis have ever seen one. Payne saw one, once, in 1983.

This paucity of knowledge makes support for captive breeding especially challenging. In the 1980s and 1990s, conservationists captured around 40 Sumatran rhinos for captive breeding, but it took 15 years just to begin to understand how they bred. By that time most of those captured had died.

Finally, on September 13, 2001, Andalas was born in the Cincinnati Zoo. He was the first Sumatran rhino birthed in captivity since the 19th century.

Arsan explains that Sumatran rhino females are “induced ovulators,” which means they require something outside themselves to kick off ovulation. Biologists still aren’t certain what the female needs, but they suspect that natural breeding behavior—chasing, fighting, ramming and wallowing with a male—activates the required hormones. This is difficult to impossible to trigger if no male is around, and doubly worrisome given the high risk among females—such as Iman—for uterine cancer if they do not breed.

“I think the normal cycle for female [rhinos] is that they are pregnant, have a baby, and then wean and then are pregnant again,” Arsan says. “Waiting is



Keepers and veterinarians from BORA collect semen from a male Sumatran rhino in hopes that the conservation team will soon be able to attempt the first in vitro fertilizations.

not normal.”

Tumors can lead to infertility. This has likely proven catastrophic: As wild populations declined, surviving females would meet fewer males, likely leading to a more frequent incidence of uterine tumors, all hastening the demise of the population.

Uterine cancer has also plagued captive populations. Last summer Zainuddin had

to euthanize Puntung, BORA’s other female. Puntung, who had survived losing a foot in a snare as a calf, suffered from both uterine and skin cancer.

At the end, says Zainuddin, she couldn’t even sing.

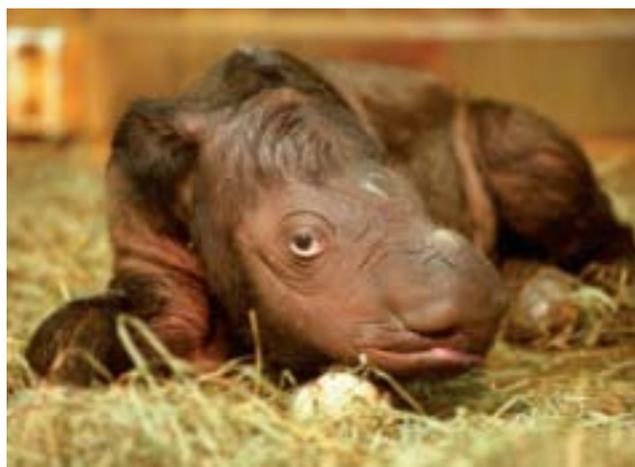
“That’s when I had to make the decision that we can’t let her go on like this,” Zainuddin says. “It’s a really hard decision to make, but it had to be made because she was suffering.”

Fortunately, Iman’s time has not come: Her condition has only improved. She has been allowed to return to her wallow, and she is eating close to her regular amounts. Still, Zainuddin is skeptical she will ever give birth.

That makes the best chance for the BORA program in vitro fertilization. BORA has collected 10 eggs from Iman to date, and it hopes to secure Indonesian government approval to send them to SRS to be implanted for gestation.

“We shouldn’t give up,” Zainuddin says, noting he thinks extinction can be avoided if Indonesia “acts soon” to do more.

Shortly after his birth in 2001, Andalas eyed the photographer in the Cincinnati Zoo, where he was the zoo’s first Sumatran rhino birth. He was later moved to the SRS. “They tame easily to you,” says veterinarian Zainuddin. “They will accept you within the species. You can go close to them.”



For Arsan, his relationship to the rhino requires a dichotomy. On the one hand, he says, he loves them each individually, sometimes as if they were his own children. On the other, he knows he also has to treat them professionally as a mammal population on the brink of extinction: He has to keep his gaze on the horizon and do everything possible to



At about 35 years old, Bina is the senior female at the srs. She lived in the Bengkulu province of Sumatra, once home to a significant population of rhinos, and in 1991 she was taken to the srs as part of its effort to begin its captive breeding program.

keep the species going.

“We are aware how important our work is,” Arsan says. “And we are also aware ... there [are] many pressures that come with it. All eyes and ears will go to us ... if bad things happen.”

In the face of such scrutiny, he and his team focus on “doing our job” and “keep[ing] our protocols.” They are in constant contact with experts around the world, and they work hard to learn from the mistakes of the past.

History proves that dedicated people can save a species this close to extinction. Both the European bison and the Arabian oryx at one time survived only in captivity. From a population that was down to just 12 animals, the bison is today more than 2,000 strong in the wild, and it thrives in several European countries. Like the Sumatran rhino, it is a rare survivor of the Pleistocene, having avoided the fate of mammoths and cave bears. The Arabian oryx is now more than 1,000 strong, and it has been reintroduced into the wild in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Jordan and Israel.

Payne believes the best chance to save the Sumatran rhino now would be “one program, managed by experts” with the goal to “boost births by any and all means possible.”

“What gives me hope now is that ... people are realizing ‘Oh my gosh, we have this window of time that’s going to be a make-or-break window,’” says Ellis. This year, she adds, she has seen increased attention and funding for the species.

Thus nothing brings on unbridled celebration more than the birth of a healthy calf.

At the srs, all eyes remain on not-so-little-anymore Delilah, who turned two this May. She is healthy, playful and, according to Arsan, more independent than her older brother.

“Delilah loves to be touched and rubbed, and she knows

and trusts us who care for her daily,” he says.

She is spending less and less time with her mother, and soon they will part—just as they do in the wild. And in about four years, when she’s ready, Arsan hopes she can bear children.

Her name, Delilah, was chosen by Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo. In Javanese, the name means “God’s blessing.” It’s an aptly optimistic choice for one shouldering hopes from both her own 20-million-year-old species as well as a much younger fellow mammal—from among which a few individuals are dedicating their working lives to her songs and those of her future kin. 🌐



Jeremy Hance (www.jeremyhance.com) is a us-based freelance reporter. He writes the “Radical Conservation” blog at *The Guardian* and is a regular contributor for Mongabay. He counts himself lucky to have met seven Sumatran rhinos. Follow him on Twitter @jeremy_hance.



Related articles at aramcoworld.com

Leopards: J/F 18, M/A 09
Oryx: S/O 09, J/A 82



VIDEO:
aramcoworld.com



LISTENING

Written by
MATTHEW TELLER

to the LAND

Photographed by
GEORGE AZAR



DEEP IN THE FORESTS OF OAK AND PINE THAT CLOAK THE HILLS OF NORTHERN JORDAN,

down a side road off a side road, you'll find a long, low building of pale limestone. It represents the future for a new generation of environmental conservationists, and also embodies the design esthetic of a boundary-breaking Jordanian architect.

"Architecture is a sin," says Ammar Khammash, 57. "I don't want to be visible, and I don't want my buildings to be visible." Standing in the building he designed, this unconventional man—artist, designer, engineer, geologist, musician and polymath—faces a view of dark-green treetops awash in spring sunshine. The forest is silent but for birdsong and cicadas. He names two world-famous "starchitects."

"I want to be the exact opposite of them," he explains thoughtfully. "Architecture is not that important. Buildings should not become monuments or luxury statements. They can be impressive without being expensive."

We are meeting at the Royal Academy for Nature Conservation, built by Khammash for Jordan's Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) and officially opened in 2015. The academy stands at the entrance to an RSCN-run nature reserve established in 1987 to protect forested land beside Ajloun, a town 70 kilometers north of the Jordanian capital, Amman.

Though Khammash's small architectural practice can claim

prestigious private and government clients, he is best known for a string of RSCN commissions ranging from Dana, a remote mountain village, to the heart of Amman. His stripped-back designs, using locally sourced materials, referencing vernacular traditions and exemplifying acute environmental sensitivity, are on show in visitor reception centers, rangers' offices and rural guest houses all around Jordan, enhancing places that many tourists visit—and that many Jordanians cherish.

Chris Johnson, a British ecologist who worked with Khammash for 20 years, speaks of the architect's "uniquely Jordanian" style. "Ammar has an amazing ability to create new buildings that are respectful of their surroundings and Jordan's cultural heritage," says Johnson, who directed conservation for the RSCN in the 1990s, and from 2005 to 2013 led its sustainable-tourism unit "Wild Jordan."

Growth in outreach has been mirrored by growth in skills development. Since 1997 the RSCN has trained around 250 specialists a year, from Jordan and across the Middle East, in management of protected areas, conservation research, ecotourism and socio-economic development. Around 2005 the idea emerged to formalize training in a single, dedicated building. "We had been pioneering capacity-building in conservation throughout

Built from available limestone rubble in an abandoned quarry, Jordan's Royal Academy for Nature Conservation building echoes the angularity and texture of its site with the gracefully contrapuntal exception of the curve of its 30-meter, single-arch bridge. Designed by architect Ammar Khammash, *lower*, in the Ajloun Forest Reserve, the building expresses Khammash's esthetic that emphasizes being part of the environment rather than standing out from it. *Right: A narrow slit in the ceiling admits just the right amount of natural light. "The light pulls you in the right direction," says Khammash.*

passing a quarry just outside the reserve boundary, and I said, 'Why should we cut another wound in nature when we already have this cut? Let's fix this and celebrate it as a human intervention.'

"Whoever was driving the last bulldozer in the last week this quarry was operating—back in the early '90s—never knew that he was designing the front elevation of my building for me," Khammash continues, with typical self-effacement. "He left a cliff, and I followed it. This building is designed by chance."

Khammash had the quarry pit cleared, but instead of bringing in stone for construction, he used the rubble, which would normally have been discarded. The result is external walls of unusually small limestone rocks neatly fitted together. The impression is of a building at one with its setting, as if it has been lifted whole from the quarry and placed on the ridgetop.

To reach it from the road, Khammash designed what was (until he built a longer one last year) the longest masonry arch

the region. With success came demand," says Johnson, who initiated and managed the project to build the new academy.

For RSCN Director General Yehya Khaled, the academy pointed to a breakthrough in public education on the environment. "We wanted the academy to be a model, representing RSCN values [in] conservation and community development," he says.

A site was identified inside the Ajloun Forest Reserve but, as Khammash explains, "I kept



in Jordan, an elegant bridge extending 30 meters over the now-empty quarry. "This bridge has almost no foundation," he says. "Its lateral thrust is like when you take a cane and bend it across a corridor: It can't go anywhere, so the more load it takes the more it pushes into the quarry sides."

The bridge delivers you to the building's public entrance, a slot in one flank that opens to ... almost nothing. The lobby, like its architect, impresses by stealth. You could cross this low transitional room in four paces, but a glass wall in the opposite flank keeps the forest in view. The ambience is of spacious calm. Free of adornment, displaying a deliberately rough finish of raw concrete, it is artful.

Khammash calls it simply a "void" where the building's two functions meet. To the right a restaurant generates income to help pay for the training courses that are run in the rooms to the left.

The restaurant area draws you out through airy interiors to shaded rear balconies woven about with foliage and forest views. But the heart of this building's beauty shows when you turn left.

Double-loaded corridors—ones that have doors opening on both sides—tend to be dark. Here, though, sunlight moves across the rubble-stone walls: Khammash has opened a glass roof above the corridor and created an end-wall of windows facing west. In summer cool winds flow through as natural ventilation.

The architect explains how he drew inspiration for this sinuously angled passageway from Jordan's famous ancient city of Petra, where you enter through a towering cleft between mountains lit from above by shafts of sunlight. "The light pulls you in the right direction," he says. "And



the bending is important. If you expose the whole length of the corridor, it's too much. Also, the bend mirrors the profile line of the quarry outside."

Underfoot, Khammash has used ceramic floor tiles that are familiar from Jordanian apartments—but with a twist. "I specified the cheapest tile in Jordan," he says, "but here we spread them wider and filled the gaps between each one. You end up with this interesting pattern, like a carpet with pulled threads."

This lack of pretension, eschewing the temptations of Italian marble, Scandinavian wood or even plaster for the walls, can cause confusion: Visitors seeing rough, concrete walls and gappy floor tiles ask when the building will be finished—and then tut when they hear it is.

Some think it's a joke, but Khammash says he is demonstrating how low-budget ideas can deliver high-quality out-



completed in 2013, deploys an array of environmentally progressive techniques, from straw-based insulation and gray-water collection to geothermal energy for heating and cooling. During this two-year, \$3.9-million construction project in dense woodland, not a single tree was felled.

Johnson talks of Khammash's "artist's eye." For Khammash, it's synesthesia that underpins his creativity. "I'm into sound," he says. "Every time I see light on geological formations, I hear music. It's like a waterfall hitting rocks, and the light is playing a sound. There's some strange connection in my brain.

The sun plays this corridor differently according to the season and the time of day."

Once you tune into Khammash's aural architecture, you find it everywhere. It draws the sounds of the forest—creaking



The academy's shaded terrace opens to an expansive view of the Ajloun Forest Reserve. Center: Cinder blocks turned sideways aid the acoustics of the main meeting room. "You don't need a microphone for a speaker to be heard," says Khammash. Opposite: "The building hovers over the forest and barely touches it," noted the jury for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which shortlisted the building in 2016.

comes. "Materials pick up social value," he adds. "People want to imitate Amman, using expensive imported stuff, but the result is a hodgepodge. This is a crude finish, but very durable, and it should age nicely. It's a very rugged building."

Another consequence is an agile minimalism. Khammash's balconies, for instance, narrow to the slenderest of cement edges, supported beneath by angled beams anchored in the smallest possible foundation. To stand on one is to fly above the trees.

But visuals tell only part of the story. The building,

of trees, whistling of wind—into the building. And it sends the sounds of the building—voices, footsteps—spiralling together in unexpected pools and pockets.

"My dream is to teach a course of architecture for blind architects, to force architects only to use the ear, not the eye," he says. "Architecture has been hijacked by the visual. What about the sound of the building, the smell of the building, the idea of earthing, experiencing architecture through our feet?"

For the conference hall, located in the academy's sloping

western cantilever, the architect examined how opera houses dampen acoustic reverberation with walls of slatted wood. Adapting the science to the local context, he built walls of cinder blocks but laid them sideways so that their slatted, open cores face into the room. “This is a nice, interesting way of using these blocks. Sound stays in the holes. You don’t need a microphone for a speaker to be heard clearly at the back of the hall,” he says.

Khammash’s architecture blends here with conceptual art. “People could write notes and push them into the holes or keep pencils in there. Another idea was to bring local students to fill the upper third of the walls with branches and twigs pushed into these blocks. Wood is good for acoustics, and this

“Can we solve the problem without the building? If I can, I will.”

be run here with international partners, including the University of Montana, and that it has brought local socio-economic projects developing biscuit-making and handmade-soap production into the building. Rebranding the academy as “Wild Jordan Ajloun” is next, which will help consolidate the efforts to deploy it for tourism as well as education.

Khammash watches with pride. “Architecture is problem-solving,” he says. “This

is the spark for me, and every time I design, that’s in my subconscious: Can we solve the problem without the building? If I can, I will. The site is the architect, and I listen to it. Ultimately, I’m just a draftsman, a technician under the site’s command.” 🌐



could also help people feel they own the building—they could come back and say, ‘You see that branch? I put it there 10 years ago.’”

Khammash warms to his theme. “Architecture is a beginning. Let others add to your work. You see this in art installations, but architecture can do it too. Buildings can change if you just give people the skeleton to start with.”

In 2016 the academy was shortlisted for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture—“a great privilege,” says Khaled, not least for international recognition of the building’s potential to deliver a new generation of conservationists. He tells me the RSCN is developing curricula for training programs that can



Matthew Teller is a UK-based writer, journalist, broadcaster, and documentary-maker for the BBC and other international media. He contributes regularly to *AramcoWorld*. Follow him on Twitter @matthewteller and at www.matthewteller.com.

Photojournalist and filmmaker **George Azar** is author of *Palestine: A Photographic Journey* (University of California, 1991), co-author of *Palestine: A Guide* (Interlink-Books, 2005) and director of the films *Beirut Photographer* (2012) and *Gaza Fixer* (2007). He lives in Beirut.



Related articles at aramcoworld.com

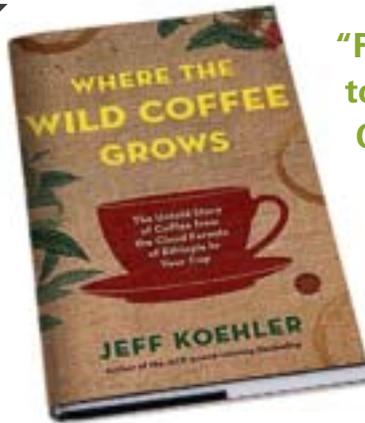
Jordanian filmmaker: S/O 15
 Jordan’s Neolithic sites: N/D 14
 Aerial views of Jordan: M/J 00



REVIEWS

Without endorsing the views of any of the authors, the editors encourage reading as a path to greater understanding.

Search more than 200 book, music and video reviews, 1993–present, at aramcoworld.com



“From smallholders in Antigua Guatemala, to ... someone picking up a Skinny Cinnamon Dolce Latte at a Starbucks drive-through, each cup of their Arabica is linked to the undergrowth of Ethiopia’s coffee forests.”

Where the Wild Coffee Grows: The Untold Story of Coffee from the Cloud Forests of Ethiopia to Your Cup

Jeff Koehler. 2017, Bloomsbury USA, 9-781-63286-509-0, \$28 hb.

Starting in the shady forests of Kafa in the Ethiopian highlands where wild coffee trees soar 18 meters and produce sparse, uneven-colored fruits, Jeff Koehler takes readers on a journey exploring the origins and history of the internationally beloved brew. He follows trade routes of antiquity along which merchants transported coffee from Ethiopia to Yemen as early as the fifth century CE. Yemenis were cultivating and selling their own coffee by the early 10th century. By the 16th century, Arab traders were exporting coffee from the ports of Yemen throughout the Muslim world and into Europe, where it was considered a distinctly Arabian product. Koehler skillfully blends an abundance of facts about coffee with its complex political and social history and looks at future-development subjects such as the value of studying wild coffee trees to mitigate adverse effects of climate change, resulting in a book that is as entertaining as it is informative.

—RAMIN GANESHAM



The Literary Life of Cairo: One Hundred Years in the Heart of the City

Samia Mehrez, ed. 2016, AUC Press, 978-9-77416-785-0, \$24.95 pb.

Cairo is complicated—“one of the globe’s largest historic, multi-cultural urban centers,” says Mehrez—and this

work is an attempt to map the socioeconomic and cultural realities of the metropolis through its 20th-century literature. The book is the second part of a two-volume project in literary geography. It continues the mapping of *The Literary Atlas of Cairo*, focusing on Cairo’s history, culture and politics. *The Literary Life of Cairo* probes complex human relationships of that geography, with carefully selected excerpts from Arabic literature penned over the past century, supplemented by original texts in English and French. The literary nuggets are arranged by themes: Cairo’s leading personalities; the cosmopolitan elite; state versus private schools; street protests; women in the city; and the urban underworld, for example. Its

humanity is captured by almost a hundred writers, including such notables as Naguib Mahfouz, Ahdaf Soueif, Alaa Al Aswany, Nawal El Saadawi, Ihsan Abdel Quddus, Edward Said and Tawfiq al-Hakim.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



Medieval Islamic Maps: An Exploration

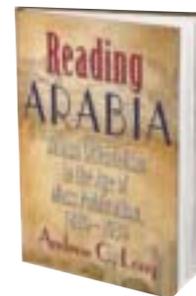
Karen C. Pinto. 2016, University of Chicago Press, 978-0-22612-696-8, \$60 cl.

“These Islamic maps are unique in the way they cross time and space ... of the Islamic world,” states the author of

this amply illustrated volume. Through the cartographic tradition known as *kitab al-masalik wa al-mamalik* (*Book of Routes and Realms*), focusing on iconography, context and patronage, Pinto shows how maps evolved into art objects rather than the guides depicting places, landforms and shorelines as we understand maps today. Many indeed look like abstract art but are actually highly schematic representations designed to make cultural and political

sense of territory. She traces the development of Islamic mapping traditions alongside the cosmographic and cartographic descriptions of the cultures, including Hindu, Buddhist and Jain, that influenced those styles. She also points out intriguing mysteries—such as the relatively obscure Beja tribe of eastern Africa, found on every map. This volume explores maps as gateways into Islamic history offering insights that can be appreciated by both scholars and general readers.

—GRAHAM CHANDLER



Reading Arabia: British Orientalism in the Age of Mass Publication, 1880–1930

Andrew C. Long. 2013, Syracuse UP, 978-0-81563-323-5, \$34.95 cl.

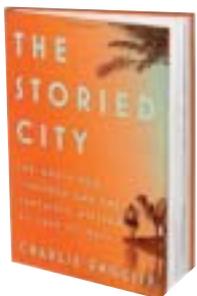
This engagingly written work looks at literature, as well as ephemera such

as advertisements, household goods and popular culture, to understand how notions of the Middle East as a place of exotic fantasy became embedded in Western cultural imagination. To do this, Long focuses on



depictions of the Arab world by five leading British Orientalists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: explorer and writer Richard Burton; poet Charles Doughty; adventurer Robert Cunningham-Graham; scholar and Muslim convert Marmaduke Pickthall; and archeologist T. E. Lawrence. He demonstrates how colonialism and, often, self-aggrandizement drove their engagement with the Middle East during Britain's imperial heyday when "the printed word [made] material culture possible and knowable." As he writes: "The fantasy that underpins British Orientalism, which is still operative today, was born in the cities of Great Britain as a mass-cultural phenomenon." Perhaps of more interest to sociologists and cultural analysts of the UK than historians of the Middle East, Long's book sheds light on attitudes that ripple out from cultural relations into the realms of contemporary business, politics and wider society.

—MATTHEW TELLER



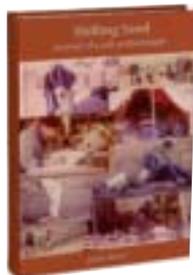
The Storied City: The Quest for Timbuktu and the Fantastic Mission to Save Its Past

Charlie English. 2017, Riverhead Books, 978-1-59463-428-4, \$28 hb. Timbuktu is an alluring and elusive town. Centuries of European adventurers flung themselves

south across the 3,200-kilometer stretch of the Sahara seeking to learn about this remote desert crossroads. Charlie English is the latest, quitting his job as international editor at *The Guardian* to write this splendidly crafted book, so taken was he by the tale of superhero librarians saving Timbuktu's storied manuscript collection when destructive jihadists occupied the city in 2012. Timbuktu is a city filled with bibliographic fervor,

its scholar-citizens the protectors of family libraries filled with handwritten Arabic manuscripts, putting the lie to the prevalent myth of Africa's unwritten history. English tells his story in a zigzag between the history of European exploration of Timbuktu and current times, circa 2012. The two tales converge near the end as the librarians' Indiana Jones tale of rescue builds and the image looms of an *auto-da-fé* pyre of manuscripts.

—ANN WALTON SIEBER



Shifting Sand: Journal of a cub archaeologist, Palestine 1964

Julian Berry. 2017, Archaeopress Publishing, 978-1-78491-659-6, £18 pb. When he was 17, Briton Julian Berry spent a month with a Dutch-sponsored

archeological excavation at Deir Alla, a prolific Bronze/Iron Age site (16th to sixth-century BCE) in Jordan. This book recreates his diary from that period in 1964, giving his impressions of Dutch and Arab colleagues, basic living conditions and weekend excursions to Jerusalem, Damascus and Beirut. He also writes about his work on the dig, as well as his reactions to what he found around him: the poverty and hardship on the one hand, and the beauty and contentment of a simple rural life on the other. As much as he loved his time at Deir Alla, Berry decided not to become an archeologist, but instead founded Compton Press, a letterpress book-printing company. However, he never lost his love for archeology. He concludes his slim book with a section showing how archeologists have now identified Deir Alla as the Biblical Pethor, home of the prophet Balaam, who foretold the end of the world in time for his people to avert tragedy.

—ROBERT E. GRUTZ



Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange

Malcom C. Lyons, trans. Robert Irwin, intro. 2017, Penguin Classics 978-0-24129-995-5-1, \$18 pb. Billed as the first English translation of a medieval Arab fantasy collection,

this book has numerous similarities to *The Thousand and One Nights* but is probably much older. In fact, it's believed to be the oldest collection of imaginative Arab tales ever found. Historian Robert Irwin says the stories were gathered in 10th-century Egypt, though the extant manuscript was probably produced some 600 years later. It features magical wonders, powerful jinn, entrancing mermaids, bizarre shape-shiftings, treasure hunts, astounding wealth and crushing poverty. Discovered in an

Ottoman library in Istanbul in 1933 with the title page, as well as its second half, missing, just 18 of the collection's 42 stories have been preserved. This is not high literature: The stories' Arabic is sometimes flawed, and there are occasional narrative lapses. They portray a world where "political incorrectness has gone mad," writes Irwin, and both good people and bad suffer the consequences. One hopes that someday scholars searching in dusty archives will locate the second half of this amazing book.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



Textiles of the Middle East and Central Asia: The Fabric of Life

Fahmida Suleman. 2017, Thames & Hudson, 978-0-50051-991-2, \$40 hb.

This beautiful book, based on the British

Museum's collections, emphasizes areas from which it has particularly rich holdings, such as Palestine, Yemen and parts of Central Asia. Many pieces will be unfamiliar, such as the examples of Zoroastrian costume. The volume is a pleasure to look at and is highly informative. It is organized by subject: childhood; marriage and ceremony; status and identity; religion and belief; house and homestead; politics and conflict. This novel approach allows for enlightening introductory essays, although some categories, such as embroidered dowry textiles or elaborate children's clothing, are common across traditions not just limited to the area under discussion. Modern and antique pieces are illustrated, showing the evolution of design and execution, and the section on politics and conflict is perhaps the least known and most interesting. The work is a valuable contribution to the subject for anyone interested in textiles, those working in the fields of ethnology and design—or simply to be enjoyed for beauty.

—CAROLINE STONE



Victoria & Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant

Shrabani Basu. 2017 (second edition), Vintage Books, 978-0-52543-441-2, \$16 pb.

At her Golden Jubilee dinner in 1887, the aging

Queen Victoria first noticed and subsequently befriended 24-year-old Abdul Karim, a tall, handsome Muslim servant from India. He instructed her in Urdu, and they discussed politics and philosophy. She soon became "very fond" of her Indian munshi (teacher), as she called him, averring that his faith "set us as a [great] example." Predictably, members of the royal family despised Karim. Yet the more they complained, "the more fiercely the Queen defended him," writes Basu. Ushered out of the palace upon Victoria's death, Karim watched as the queen's letters of affection to him were burned. Yet his diaries survived, which Basu drew upon to update a prior edition written before his discovery of the journals. These documents, plus the release of the 2017 major motion picture on the friendship, have refreshed and added to the story of this platonic love affair between a monarch and her servant.

—TOM VERDE



The Traditional Crafts of Egypt

Menha el-Batraoui, ed. Nabil Shawkat and Mandy McClure, trans. 2016, Auc Press, 978-9-77416-753-9, \$45 hb. This volume is a brave attempt



EVENTS

Highlights from
aramcoworld.com



CURRENT / JULY

Ex Africa is the largest show of contemporary African art to be staged in Brazil. The show is named after the Latin proverb “*ex Africa semper aliquid novi*” (there is always something new coming out of Africa), quoted by the Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder in the first century CE after his journey through the African provinces of the Roman empire. *Ex Africa* features more than 80 paintings, installations and other works by 20 African artists, including two of Afro-Brazilian heritage. The centerpiece is a monolithic installation by Youssef Limoud, from Egypt, and Ibrahim Mahama, from Ghana. The work is made using stacked rubble from Brazilian cities. The result is “an architecture of order and chaos

and structure and ruin.” (Excerpt from *The Art Newspaper*.) Centro Cultural Banco do Brazil, **São Paulo**, through July 16.

Baghdad Mon Amour: Saison Culturelle is about artistic strategies of reinventing Iraqi heritage after decades of war. Mostly from Iraq, the artists gathered here seek to overcome the looting and destruction of museums and archeological sites from Baghdad to Mosul. By revealing the protective drive of these artists, expressed in allegory, parody, editing and archeology, *Baghdad Mon Amour* summons the utopia of a “museum without a wall” to face catastrophe. Far from nostalgia, a constellation of modern and contemporary works of art, archival documents and nomadic signs celebrates a visual culture that resists erasure, giving way to a possible rebirth of Baghdad between gestures of preservation and reinvention. Institut des Cultures d’Islam, **Paris**, through July 29.

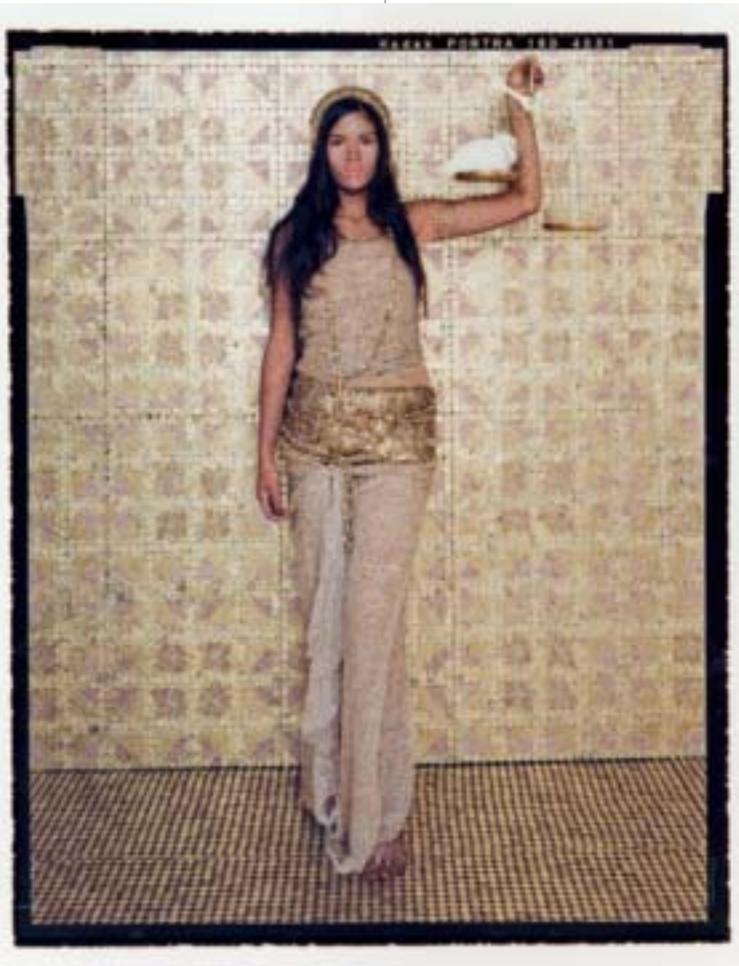
Nicky Nodjoumi: Fractures is the first solo exhibition at the gallery by Brooklyn-based artist Nicky Nodjoumi. The show features the artist’s work from the past two years, including large- and small-scale oils on canvas, ink drawings, and a collection of archival source

imagery and collages. Nodjoumi is a figurative painter with an abstract sensibility, and his paintings explore the emotional dynamics of contemporary politics. The brushwork is quick, loose and expressive, though the compositions are carefully worked out well in advance. His protagonists are often men in suits—the uniform of contemporary authority—painted against sparse backgrounds. The Third Line, **Dubai**, through July 31.

CURRENT / AUGUST

Mona Hatoum: Terra Infirma illuminates contradictions and uncertainties in contemporary global society. Often referencing domestic and everyday objects, Hatoum creates installations and sculptures that capitalize on unexpected combinations to evoke a range of conflicting emotions such as fear and fascination, or attraction and revulsion. Over her four-decade career, she has continuously investigated ideas of home and displacement, engaging with conditions of global instability and political upheaval. Pulitzer Arts Foundation, **St. Louis, Missouri**, through August 11.

168:01—*A Library Rising from the Ashes, Wafaa Bilal*. In 2003 the College of Fine Arts at the University



“Bullets Revisited,” by Lalla Essaydi, chromogenic print mounted to aluminum with a uv protective laminate.

I AM

is an exhibition on a 16-month us tour organized by CARAVAN, an international arts nonprofit. As the world’s attention focuses ever more on the rights of women, and there is at the same time an increasing need for understanding and friendship between the peoples of the Middle East and West, *I AM* is an East-West peacebuilding exhibition that showcases the insights and experiences of Middle Eastern women as they confront issues of culture, religion and social reality in the Middle East and the West. Designed to address stereotypes and challenge misconceptions of the “other,” the exhibition is a visual celebration of the crucial role Middle Eastern women play as guardians of peace bringing attention to their diverse contributions in the enduring global quest for a more harmonious and peaceful future. St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral, **Seattle**, through August 7.



of Baghdad lost its entire library of 70,000 books when looters set fire to the collection during the invasion of Iraq. Fifteen years later, students at the college still have few remnants from which to study. Iraq has experienced a long history of cultural destruction. During the 13th century, an invading Mongol army set fire to all the libraries of Baghdad, including the famed Bayt al-Hikma (House of Wisdom). Legend describes the invaders throwing its entire library into the Tigris River to create a bridge of books for their army to cross. The pages bled ink into the river for seven days—168 hours—at the end of which the books were literally drained of knowledge. *168:01*, by Iraqi-born artist Wafaa Bilal, refers to the first moment when grief is transformed into a spur to action, signaling the beginning of a struggle to move forward from ruin. Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through August 19.

Labour of Love: *New Approaches to Palestinian Embroidery* unfolds a material history of Palestine, telling little-heard stories through the intimate catalyst of clothing. Among the themes are “*Intifada dresses*” that combine traditional motifs with rifles, maps and political slogans. Stitched by women in protest and solidarity during the First Intifada (1987–1991), the exhibition renders women’s bodies as active sites of political resistance, an implicit challenge to popular images of women as anonymous carriers

of heritage. Placed in conversation with archival photographs, posters, paintings, music and newly commissioned video, the exhibition amplifies female voices and histories, casting fresh light on paradigmatic cultural material. The Palestinian Museum, **Birzeit, Palestine**, through August 25.

CURRENT / SEPTEMBER

What Do You Mean, Here We Are?

Townhouse Gallery, Cairo is a retrospective of the renowned gallery founded in 1998, which emerged onto a scene dominated by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture and its private affiliates. As one of the first independent art spaces in Cairo, Townhouse has borne witness to an unusual and intriguing trajectory, from a modest start in the backstreets of downtown Cairo to its emergence at the center of the regional contemporary art scene, and further across more recent periods of turmoil and reconfiguration. The Mosaic Rooms, **London**, through September 9.

The Mosaic Rooms 10 Years:

Modern Masters and Contemporary Culture from the Arab World and Iran celebrates the museum’s 10th anniversary with an ambitious program of six exhibitions and events divided into two parts running to autumn 2019. Presented is a series of seminal Arab and Iranian modernist artists from Egypt, Morocco and Iran curated by

Morad Montazami, and a series of group shows presenting contemporary art from these three countries organized in partnership with regional institutions and curators. The Mosaic Rooms, **London**, through September 19.

CURRENT / OCTOBER

Huma Bhabha: *We Come in Peace*.

Born in 1962 in Karachi, Pakistan, artist Huma Bhabha was selected to create a site-specific installation for the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden, the sixth in a series of commissions for the outdoor space. Bhabha’s work addresses themes of colonialism, war, displacement and memories of place. Using found materials and the detritus of everyday life, she creates haunting human figures that hover between abstraction and figuration, monumentality and entropy—responses to violence and turmoil. Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through October 28.

COMING / NOVEMBER

Misk Art Week transforms Riyadh with art and design exhibitions, music and performing arts, film programs, creative workshops and art fairs as it brings together artists, galleries, creatives and cultural enthusiasts. Celebrate modern and contemporary creativity with galleries, filmmakers, curators and cultural producers. Multiple locations,

Riyadh, November 1 through 7.

PERMANENT

New Middle East Galleries. The 4,500-year-old crown jewels of a queen. One of the world’s oldest drinking vessels. A baby’s rattle. A school child’s first writing primer. A workman’s tool. The very first spreadsheet. Through these objects and more than 1,200 others, these newly renovated, reconceptualized galleries create a journey exploring how, 10,000 years ago, in the fertile crescent of the Middle East, the most transformative point in human history was set in motion: the domestication of plants and animals and, with it, the shift from hunting and gathering to farming. Villages developed, then towns. Writing and mathematics developed for record keeping. Mesopotamian societies gave rise to the world’s first cities—cities that, it turns out, were not so different from our own. These are the first in a series of gallery renovations taking place at the museum over the next several years. Penn Museum, **Philadelphia**.

Most listings have further information available online and at aramcoworld.com. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion to proposals@aramcoservices.com, subject line “Events”.

SEE OUR FULL LISTINGS AT ARAMCOWORLD.COM

AramcoWorld is published bimonthly in print, web and tablet/mobile editions, and an email newsletter is published biweekly. Two-year (12-issue) renewable subscriptions to the print edition are available without charge to a limited number of readers worldwide.



To subscribe to the email newsletter: www.aramcoworld.com → Subscription Services → Newsletter.

To subscribe to the print edition: www.aramcoworld.com → Subscription Services → Print Edition.

If requesting a **multiple-copy subscription** for a class, specify the number of copies desired and the duration of the class in an email to subscriptions@aramcoservices.com, subject line, “Multiple-copy request/[your name].”

For **residents of Saudi Arabia**, all requests for subscriptions, changes of address and renewals must be sent by postal mail to Public Relations, Saudi Aramco, Box 5000, Dhahran 31311, Saudi Arabia.

Change of address: www.aramcoworld.com → Subscription Services → Print Edition. Have your mailing label with you in order to enter your alphanumeric Subscriber Account Number.

Back issues, from 1960 onward, can be read in full online and downloaded from www.aramcoworld.com. Printed copies are available for issues less than five years old, as long as supplies last. Request them by

email to subscriptions@aramcoservices.com, subject line, “Back-issue request/[your name].” Bulk copies of issues less than five years old will be provided when available, without charge, for use in classrooms, workshops, study tours, lectures or other nonprofit educational events.

Article Proposals: www.aramcoworld.com → About → Guidelines for Contributors.

Permissions:

Texts of articles may be reprinted without specific permission provided that the text be neither edited nor abridged, that the magazine and author be credited, and that a copy of the reprinted article, or a link to it, be provided to the editors.

Photographs and illustrations: Much of our photo archive is available at www.photoarchive.saudiaramcoworld.com. Image licensing for approved uses is royalty-free.

No junk, ever: Contact us with confidence. You will receive no unsolicited marketing email or postal mail as a result of your subscription or inquiry.

AramcoWorld (ISSN 1530-5821) is published bimonthly by the Aramco Services Company, Two Allen Center, 1200 Smith Street, Houston TX 77002, USA.

Copyright © 2018 by Aramco Services Company. Volume 69, Number 4. Periodicals postage paid at Houston, Texas, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *AramcoWorld*, Box 2106, Houston, Texas 77252-2106.

AramcoWorld

