Saudi Aramco world

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The Pictures Between

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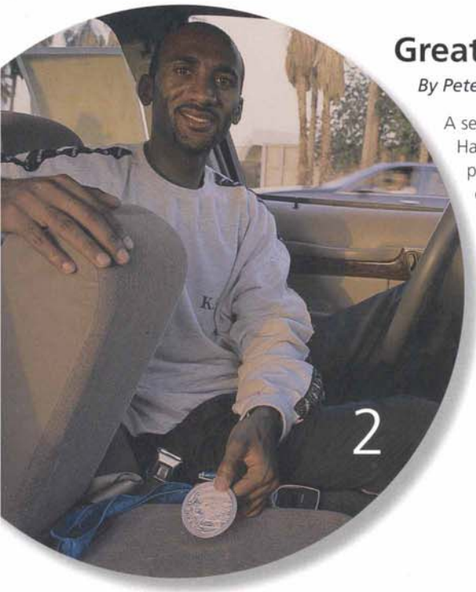

Great Leaps: Saudi Arabia's First Olympic Medals

By Peter Harrigan and Rosalind Mazzawi

A second-place finish in the men's 400-meter hurdles in Sydney made Hadi Souan al-Somayli Saudi Arabia's first Olympic medalist. The former physical-education teacher hopes his success will help track and field get off to a new start in the kingdom. A few days later, equestrian jumper Khaled Al 'Eid of Riyadh cleared a different set of hurdles perfectly in two out of three rounds, winning the bronze medal in individual equestrian show jumping.

Shaking Up Architecture

By Lee Adair Lawrence

In the design of buildings, good looks matter—but so do the relationships among buildings and people. Twenty years after the Aga Khan Award for Architecture announced its first winners, the triennial Islamic-world prize has become a leading international forum for provocative and productive debate about the roles and functions of architects, craft-workers, engineers, residents and other users of "the built environment"—and that includes all of us.

2: SAMIA EL-MOSLIMANY

20

Painting Cultural History

By Ni'mah Isma'il Nawwab

It is more than a deft hand with a brush that has made Safeya Binzagr the most acclaimed painter of Saudi Arabia: Her works are also carefully researched records of fast-disappearing ways of life, and together, they constitute an intimate visual record of the nation's recent past. To share that history more widely, she opened a museum in Jiddah last year that will permanently house her art and offer the public a new venue for art education and research.

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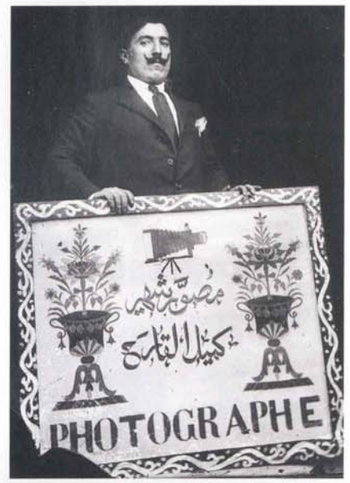

The Pictures Between

By Lynn Love

For nearly as long as travelers from the West, Arabs too have been making photographs in the Arab world. So between the heyday of the European Orientalists a century ago and today's global journalism, there lies a little-known, home-grown visual history: Daily life seen through the lenses of Arab photographers. Since 1997, the Arab Image Foundation has gathered in its Beirut archive some 15,000 photographs, and it has mounted three international shows. Its founders say they are just beginning.

28: © ARAB IMAGE FOUNDATION / MOHSEN YAMMINE COLLECTION

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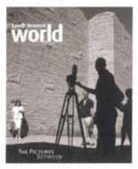

Like many of his generation, Latif Al-'Ani, now 69, learned his art from British photographers; he went on to become one of Iraq's most prolific photojournalists. In 1961 he made this photo of a film crew shooting amid the ruins of ancient Babylon. It is part of the personal archive that he placed in the care of the Arab Image Foundation last year. Photo courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation / Latif Al-'Ani Collection.

Back Cover:

Al-Midwan, 1985. Oil on canvas, 61 x 91 cm (24 x 35"). Safeya Binzagr's eye for detail, both within her paintings and in her choice of subjects, has led her to capture many domestic and neighborhood scenes—like these boys playing with tops—which she renders with accuracy and unsentimental affection. "My work does not intend to bring back the past," she wrote, "but to treasure it." Artwork photographed by Hussain A. Al-Ramadan.

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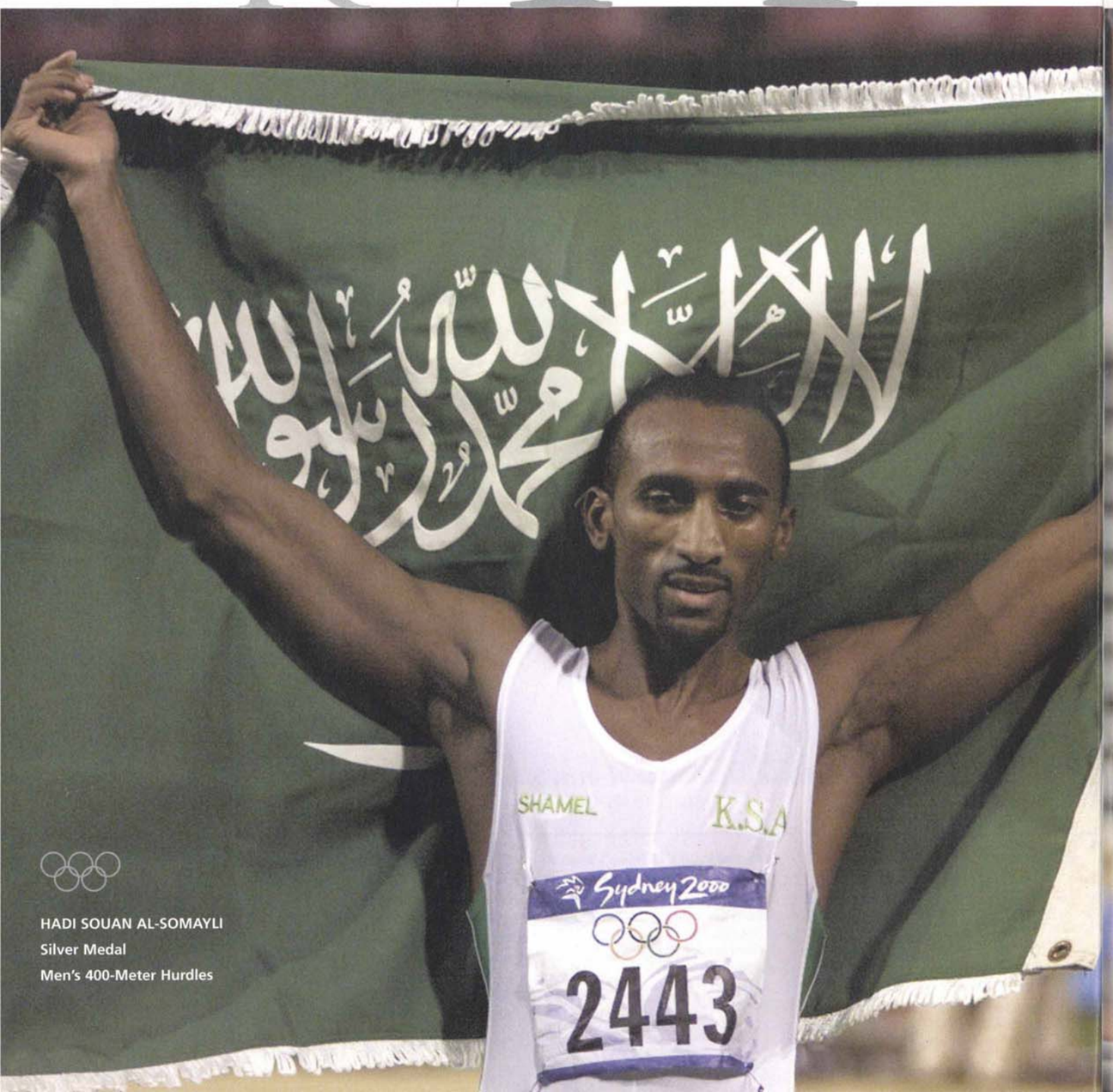
GREAT LEAPS

SAUDI ARABIA'S FIRST OLYMPIC MEDALS



HADI SOUAN AL-SOMAYLI
Silver Medal
Men's 400-Meter Hurdles

KHALED AL 'EID
Bronze Medal
Individual Equestrian Jumping

"I started to run as a kid with the idea that I could do something.

But I had no idea what 'track and field' meant." That was 25 years ago, when Hadi Souan al-Somayli was six.

Last September 27, al-Somayli stepped onto the podium in Sydney to receive the Olympic silver medal for the 400-meter hurdles. The beaming pride on his face was mixed with a little surprise, as well: He had not only made national history by bringing Saudi Arabia its first-ever Olympic medal, but he had come within three-hundredths of a second of ending 20 years of United States dominance in the event. Al-Somayli's feet had crossed the finish line first in 47.53 seconds, but they lagged ever so slightly behind gold medalist Angelo Taylor's chest, which crossed at 47.50 seconds.

Born in the southern Red Sea port of Jizan, al-Somayli was brought up in the highland town of Taif, near Makkah, and in the 'Asir plateau town of Khamis Mushayt, where his family still lives. As a young man he moved to Riyadh to study at The Institute for Physical Education, and later to Jiddah. There he taught sports at al-Thaghr Model School, until last year's successes on the global circuit prompted him to become a full-time athlete.

"I have moved around and I can say I represent all of my country," he says. "I started by just running, then took up the decathlon, tried the high jump, and moved on to high hurdles, all before taking the advice of my first coach, Lee Evans, and opting for the 400-meter hurdles."

A virtual unknown in his own country before the Sydney Olympics, al-Somayli is now a national celebrity. Since returning with the medal, which he often keeps on the dashboard of his car, he has been feted at conferences and banquets. Wherever he goes now, boys and young men stop to salute him and call out, "*Mabrouk* [congratulations], *ya kaptan Hadi!*" "Captain" is an informal title commonly conferred on sports heroes in the kingdom.

Al-Somayli believes his achievement may mark a watershed in a nation where football (soccer) remains the national sport. "Things have changed," he explains. "People have suddenly become interested in track and field. Youngsters want to know more about athletics."

Emanuel K. Hudson, a Los Angeles sports-management attorney who has a long association with Saudi Arabia's National Athletics Federation, trains athletes around the world. He and al-Somayli's coach, Chris Smith—himself a 400-yard world record-holder who has coached more Olympic medalists than anyone in the world—are confident that more Saudi track-and-field successes are yet to come.

"I am a teacher first and an athlete part-time," says Hadi Souan al-Somayli, who showed his silver Olympic medal to some of his former six- to 12-year-old sports students at al-Thaghr Model School in Jiddah.

"There is no question that Hadi Souan is a world-class athlete," says Hudson, whose team worked with him for five months before the Olympics. "And there are a lot more [Saudi athletes] like Hadi, from the same environment, with the same body type. Saudi Arabia is hiding a real nest of talent," he adds.

Indeed, two weeks after the Olympics, another Smith-coached Saudi, 19-year-old Hamdan al-Bishi, won a gold medal at the Junior Athletics Championship in Santiago, Chile with a time that would have won an Olympic bronze medal at Sydney.

For the modest and graciously good-humored al-Somayli—"I am not really a professional, I just care a lot about sport," he says—his greatest moment came not on the podium at Sydney, but upon his return to Jiddah, where hundreds of children, many from his former school, turned out to greet him.

The medal may have been silver, he says, but "to me, this was my gold, seeing the kids I teach welcome me home."

Al-Somayli's next challenge: the World Athletic Championships in Alberta, Canada in August. ⊕

Peter Harrigan works with Saudi Arabian Airlines in Jiddah, where he is also a contributing editor and columnist for *Diwaniyah*, the weekly cultural supplement of the *Saudi Gazette*.

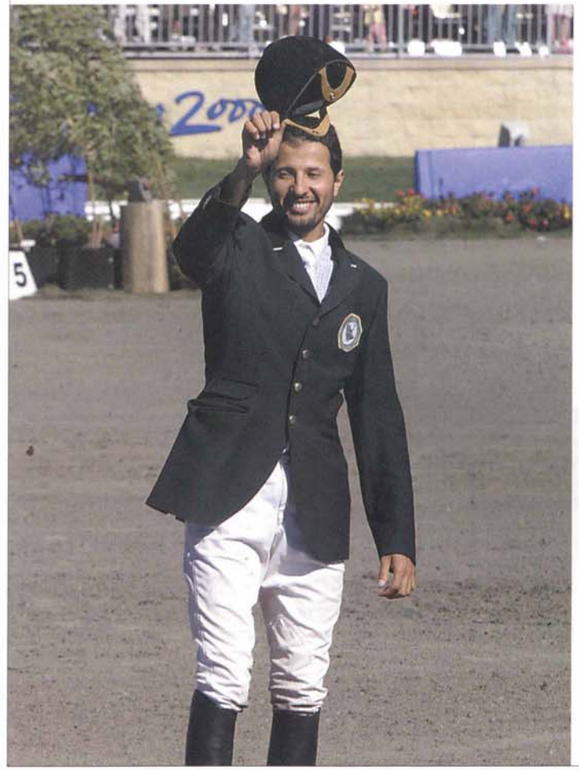
PREVIOUS SPREAD, LEFT: MARK BAKER / REUTERS / ARCHIVE PHOTOS; RIGHT: DIRK CAREMANS

DIRK CAREMANS; OPPOSITE: SAMIA EL-MOSLIMANY

Khaled Al 'Eid, 30, has been riding since he was 10 years old,

when his father, a breeder of Arabian horses in Riyadh, taught him and four younger brothers to carry on the equestrian tradition of one of Saudi Arabia's leading thoroughbred racing families. When European-style sport jumping came to Saudi Arabia in the 1980's, Al 'Eid was among the young riders who quickly realized that the light, clever Arabian horses, though peerless as to endurance (see *Saudi Aramco World*, July/August 2000) lacked the raw power of top show-jumpers. The Al 'Eid family thus began to import young thoroughbreds, mostly from Holland and Belgium, for national jumping competitions. In 1990, family members made up half of the country's first regulation-size, four-man international jumping competition team: Al 'Eid and his brother Fayad were among those who began to perfect their techniques at well-known stables, including those of Paul Schockemöhle in Germany, John Whitaker in England and Bernie Traurig in the United States. The team's first Olympic competition came in Atlanta in 1996, where Khaled, riding a bay Belgian named Eastern Knight, placed 30th.

Though the bronze medal is in his name, Khaled Al 'Eid is quick to credit his horse, as well. "He gradually accepted being pushed to a higher speed," says Al 'Eid.



The team then began training with Nelson Pessoa, a Belgium-based Brazilian whom the International Equestrian Federation calls a "show-jumping legend." Al 'Eid and his teammates quickly found an unprecedented rapport with Pessoa, whose own son Rodrigo is also a leading equestrian jumper. Eastern Knight, after a stint with an Egyptian rider, returned to Al 'Eid in November 1999, as the Saudi team began to prepare for the Sydney Olympic Games. Al 'Eid renamed the horse Khashm al-'Aan in a discreet and subtle bow to Crown Prince 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, a supporter of the team.

"Working with Pessoa," says Al 'Eid, "I found that Khashm al-'Aan and I had the same rhythm. He had the ability to tackle high, wide, Olympic-style fences, and he gradually accepted being pushed to a higher speed around the course."

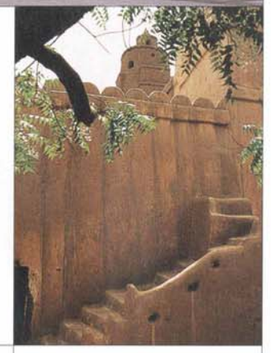
Al 'Eid also observed that Khashm al-'Aan is a "careful and stylish" jumper who, like some other show-jumping horses, needs a full day's recovery between competitive events. Accordingly, in Sydney, the pair were scheduled with a day between each of the five events: three qualifying rounds and two finals, each containing some 15 to 20 obstacles—including fences that can be higher than the horse's head. Al 'Eid recalls expecting that "with luck" he might capture 10th place in the field of 45 competitors.

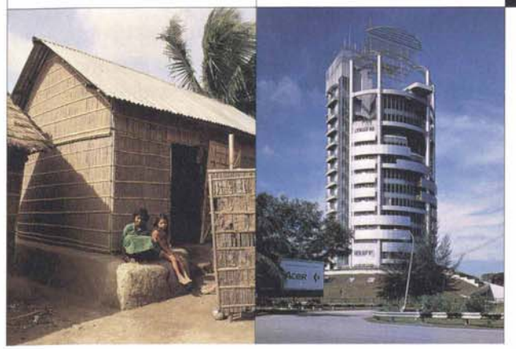
On the track, better-known riders and horses—including Rodrigo Pessoa, a favorite for the gold—knocked down or refused fences, accumulating the "faults" that push down their rankings or disqualify them. Al 'Eid, however, was one of only four who completed his first final round perfectly, and then one of three to complete the second final round with only four faults. His time, the third-fastest, earned him the bronze medal, to the enormous pleasure and pride of his country, and to the surprise of the equestrian world: One Olympic news bulletin had referred to him casually as a "rank outsider" in the field. Al 'Eid credits his patient training with Pessoa, and Khashm al-'Aan's savvy accuracy for his success.

Al 'Eid plans no more international competitions until the World Equestrian Games at Jerez de la Frontera, Spain in 2002, and by the next Olympic Games in 2004, in Athens, Khashm al-'Aan will be 17, rather too old to compete. Thus, Al 'Eid says, he is already looking for a young Olympic mount, in hopes of winning still more recognition for the sport of show-jumping within his country, and for his country within the sport. ⊕

Rosalind Mazzawi is an equestrian journalist specializing in Arabian horses. She lived in Lebanon for two decades, and now lives in France.

SHAKING UP ARCHITECTURE





PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

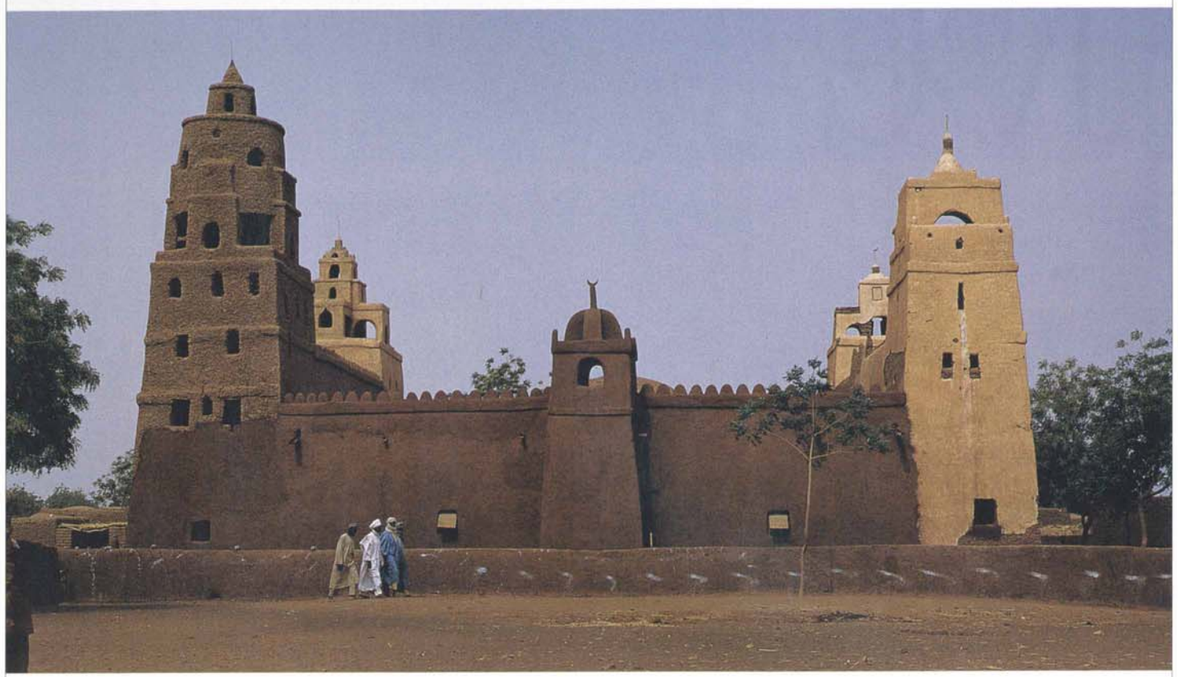
WRITTEN BY LEE ADAIR LAWRENCE

Photographs and diagrams of architectural projects in mind-spinning variety cover the walls of Howard University's Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. There is a luxurious, wood-crafted private home in Malaysia, a rehabilitated slum in Indonesia, restorations at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and a new, vibrantly colorful arts center in Senegal. There is a leper hospital in India, a reforestation project in Turkey and a skyscraper in Malaysia. It is quickly apparent that the show's title, "Architecture for a Changing World," tells only half the story, for this survey of the 71 projects that have won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) since its inception in 1980 shows that architecture is changing at least as much as the world, and that the AKAA has become a well-established, activist voice for a broader architectural vision.

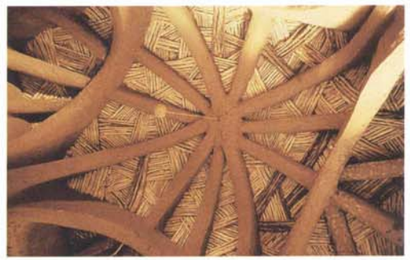
The award has its roots in the Aga Khan's sadness at the state of architecture in the Islamic world of the 1970's, where infatuation with the steel-and-glass "international style" resulted in buildings that took little notice of—and often intentionally disregarded—local materials and technologies. The condition of "the built environment"—buildings in their broader physical, social and cultural contexts—was no better. "It was clear," the Aga Khan told architectural journalist Mildred Schmertz in 1998, "that Islamic communities had lost some of their extraordinary inheritance of competence and knowledge in the realm of architecture."

To help restore "architectural excellence," he established an award that from the outset defined things differently. More conventional architectural awards, such as the

NIGER



The AKAA given in 1986 to the Yaama Mosque in Yaama, Niger did not name a lead architect but rather a master mason, and it commended community participation in the construction and maintenance of the mosque.



Previous spread, from top, left to right: **The Hajj Terminal (AKAA 1983) and the Corniche Mosque (AKAA 1989), Jiddah, Saudi Arabia; the Alliance Franco-Sénégalaise, Kaolack, Senegal (AKAA 1995); the Yaama Mosque; the Grameen Bank Housing program in Bangladesh (AKAA 1989); and Menara Mesiniaga in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (AKAA 1995).**

Pritzker Architectural Prize or the Gold Medal Awards of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), largely laud the accomplishments of individual architects. The AKAA, on the other hand, recognizes projects. While other prizes stress design, the AKAA from the start adopted criteria that include, for example, the traditional craftsmanship that restores a mosque, the environmental creativity that devises sustainable solutions to problems of sewerage, a project's promotion of social harmony, or its revitalizing effect on a village or urban area. Design is not ignored, of course, but it is understood to be an idea that, at its best, integrates local, traditional and vernacular crafts and styles with the needs of contemporary life.

What also sets the AKAA apart is that all of these matters and many more are discussed in book-length triennial catalogues that not only showcase the cycle's winners but also carry essays in which members of the master jury and the steering committee address broad and challenging theoretical questions: What is culture? What is architecture, and what is its role in society? Is there such a thing as "Islamic architecture" or is there only "architecture in Islamic societies"? Can we speak of cultural expression or identity in architecture at all? None of this makes for a typical, laudatory awards catalogue: It's more like a lively academic conference.

This distinctive approach made the AKAA the first major architectural award to consider historical-preservation and restoration projects, a move that the AIA followed in 1993. The AKAA furthermore requires nominated projects to have been in use for at least a year, so they can be judged not only on esthetic grounds but also according to how well they suit their users. In 1995 the founders of the Kenneth F. Brown Asia Pacific Culture and Architecture Design Award adopted the same criterion.

Still, as forward-looking as the AKAA may be, it is nevertheless very much a product of its time. By the 1970's, many architects had grown frustrated with 20th century modernism's lack of concern for history and its unblinking focus on function. A study of AIA Gold Medal recipients showed that, as Richard Guy Wilson wrote, the AIA was beginning to honor "recognition of the surrounding environment and history," granting awards to such architects as Louis Kahn and Pietro Belluschi. Discussion of theory and history began to reappear in journals that had for decades published practical articles on technique, design and structural articulation. Regionally, movements around the globe were beginning to advocate styles and solutions rooted in local traditions that challenged what Kenneth Frampton, Columbia University professor and member of the AKAA's 2001 steering committee, calls "the Manhattanization of the world."

Thus when the AKAA was established in 1976, it did not so much raise new questions as disseminate and legitimize what were (and often still are) emerging ideas. Until 1990, the AKAA published a magazine called *Mimar*, which was devoted to new constructions and restorations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Between 1978 and 1990 the AKAA also organized some 15 seminars, each in a different city of the Islamic world, where architects and other professionals could explore a "middle way" between the embrace of Western modernism and its complete rejection.

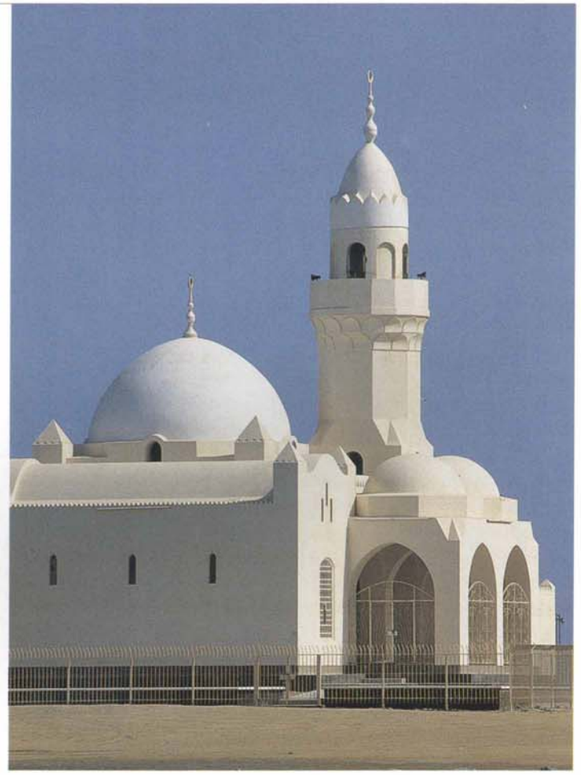
Yet for all its noble purposes, the AKAA's most attention-getting move was to set the amount of its cash prize at $500,000. Even though this total is distributed, on average, among seven to 10 projects that often name four or more principals each, it nonetheless qualifies as the largest architectural award in the world. (The Pritzker Prize awards $100,000 and the less well-known Carlsberg Award is worth $225,000.)

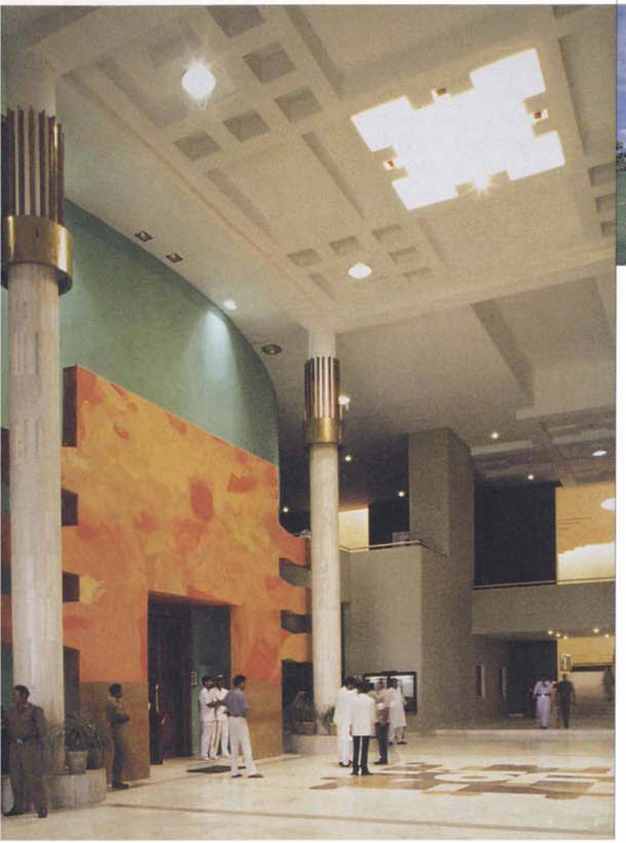
This sum alone is more than enough to influence architects. "Some renowned architects in Turkey," says Federattin Onur, chairman of the architecture department at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, "have been in the expectation of getting the AKAA, so their approach either implicitly or explicitly incorporates the values of the award." As a result, Turkey counts 11 AKAA winners to date, the most

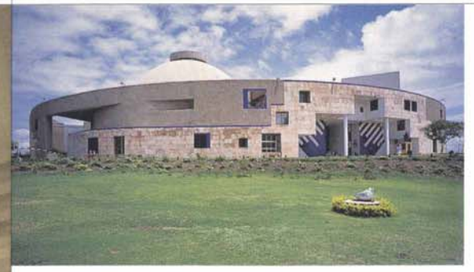
The AKAA maintains that design, at its best, integrates local, traditional and vernacular crafts and styles with the needs of contemporary life.

SAUDI ARABIA

The Corniche Mosque, by Abdel Wahed El-Wakil, elegantly blends classical and modern geometry into an icon of contemporary religious architecture in Islam. "Architecture and its forms arise from the whole revealed doctrine of a culture and religion," El-Wakil says. "The science of forms is the study of how they emerge." El-Wakil studied under the late Hassan Fathy, many of whose ideas and values underpin those of the AKAA today.







INDIA

Above and left: **The circular Vidhan Bhavan (AKAA 1998) in Bhopal accommodates the government of Madhya Pradesh state. Like many AKAA winners, its combinations of local materials and artworks with contemporary forms speak of a "middle way" between global modernism and indigenous traditions.**

of any single country. The Mosque of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara, for example, gives new life to a traditional element, the mosque's *qibla* wall that shows the direction of prayer: It is oriented toward Makkah, but it is of glass, and it overlooks a landscaped garden, which brings worshipers closer to the natural world. Istanbul's Social Security Complex, which was completed in 1970 and won the award in 1986, is a large structure that could have been monumentally vertical; instead, its cascading, layered and highly horizontal design keeps it from overpowering the nearby historic neighborhood and its landmarks.

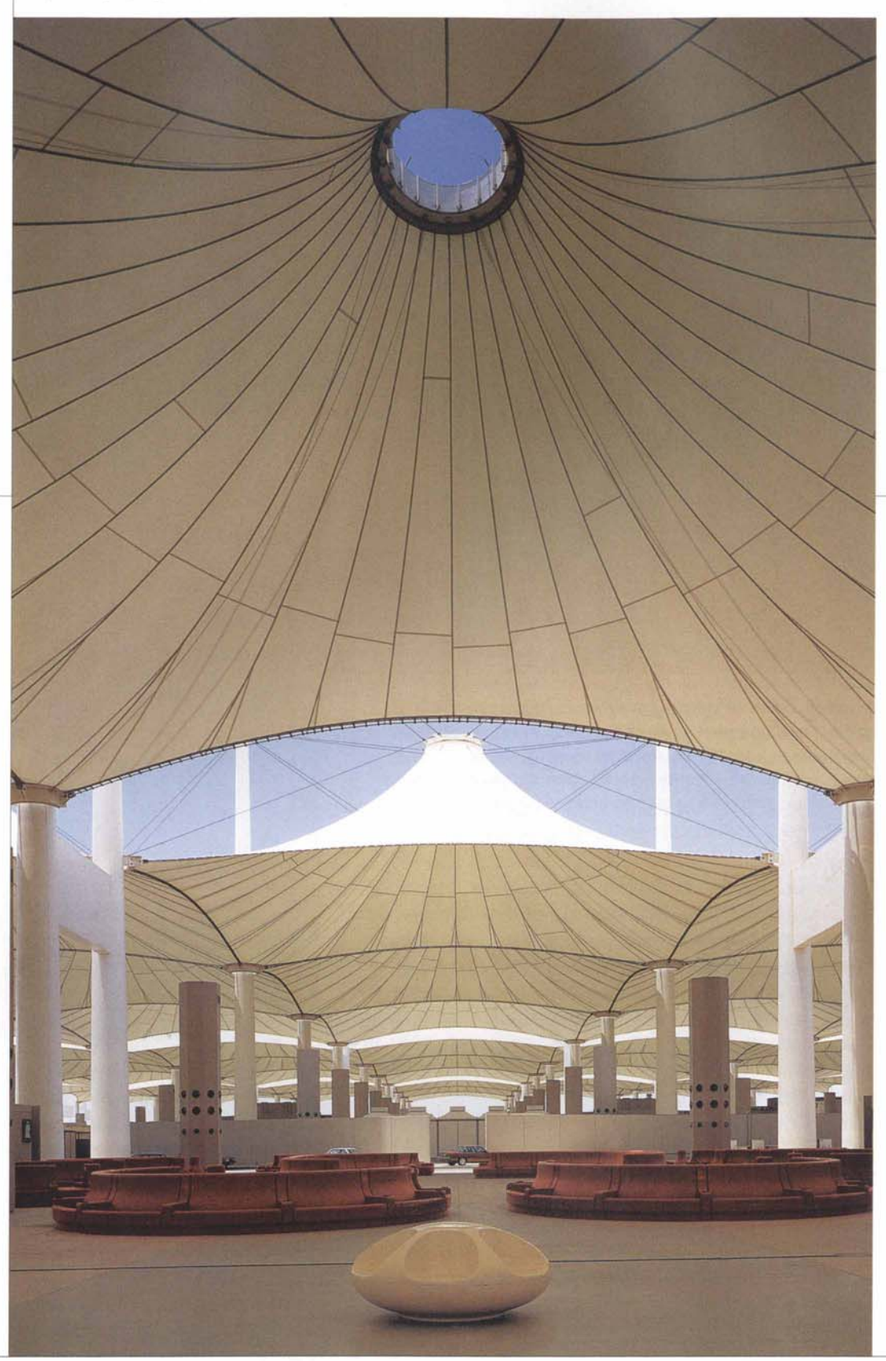
In India, AKAA winners have been primarily hospitals and housing projects. There, says architect Balakrishna Doshi, the award has affected architecture at the level of colleges and governmental agencies. Since the 1970's, Doshi has espoused low-cost housing using inexpensive, low-maintenance technology; he has also advocated the integration of varied income groups into neighborhoods and argued for the inclusion of ample communal space.

Although Doshi says he gained some admirers in the architectural community over the years, it was not until the 1995 AKAA jury heralded his Aranya Community Housing Project that he reached a wider audience. "Many government officials visited the project who had never come before," he says, and the pride the award engendered helped ensure government funding to maintain the housing project. "It used to be that, in India as elsewhere, the field of architecture did not consider housing for the poor to be significant," he adds. Today, however, architectural schools such as the one in Allahabad treat public housing and environmental, energy and social issues as well in an effort to create harmonious living environments. Since his award, Doshi has served on the AKAA's steering committee. The AKAA, he says, is unique in that "it goes beyond architecture and speaks of grassroots developments."

From his position at Columbia in New York, Frampton sees the AKAA as a counterflow in a field in which Western ideas and techniques dominate. Despite the common provincial tendency to "ignore an otherwise great production that does not occur in what they see as a center of the world," he believes architects in the developed world will in time come to recognize that they are as much in need of

FRANCE

SAUDI ARABIA



The Hajj Terminal at Jiddah's King 'Abd Al-'Aziz International Airport used a fabric-tension structure to create the world's largest roof—an expanse of some 42.5 hectares (105 acres). "The brilliant and imaginative design met the awesome challenge of covering this vast space with incomparable elegance and beauty," noted the 1983 jury, which awarded the prize to the building that serves more than 2.5 million pilgrims who annually travel to Makkah and Madinah.

Opposite: **The Institut du Monde Arabe (AKAA 1989) in Paris sits across the Seine from the Cathedral of Notre Dame. The elegant photomechanical steel diaphragm panels that control light on its southern, glass façade were intended as analogues of the wood-grilled** mashrabiyyah **windows of the Middle East. Though they proved mechanically problematic, the jury nonetheless found the building "a successful bridge between French and Arab cultures."**

There are some 500 standing monuments within the walls of the Silk Road crossroads city of Bukhara, and since 1960 a conservation program has restored many of them. The program's success, the 1995 jury noted, "sends a very strong message...of the need to restore and re-integrate old cities into new ways of life."

U Z B E K I S T A N

cost-effective, sustainable solutions to urban problems as their counterparts in the Islamic world. When that time comes, they will find the AKAA a rich source of theory and practical ideas. "The kind of paradigm that is sustained by the Aga Khan Award," Frampton says, is "continuity." And that, he believes, is "a positive model that could be used by the developed world."

William Chapin, president of the Washington, D.C. American Architectural Foundation, largely agrees, and he is looking into collaborating with the AKAA on a public television series in the United States. "What many of the awardees demonstrate," he explains, "is that in their own context people can act in rather imaginative ways to leverage energy and bring about positive outcomes. The more often you tell the story and the more variations on that story you present, the more likely people are to grasp the concept and use it."

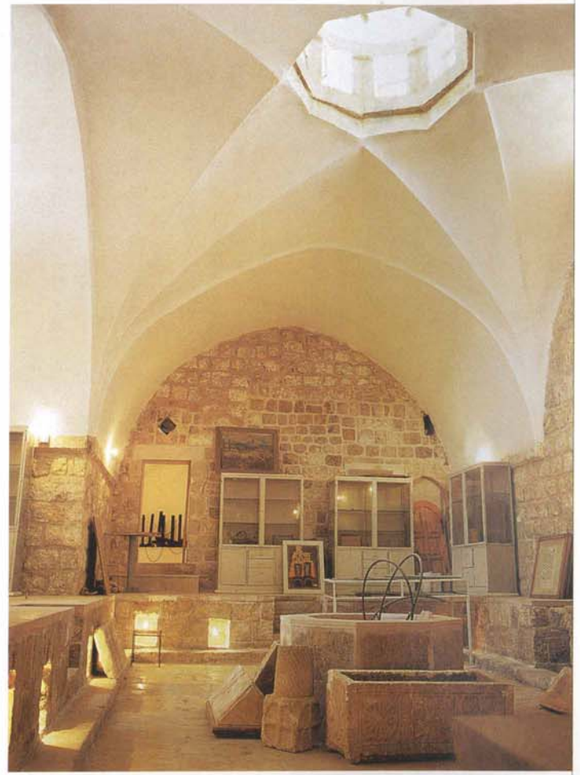
This applies no less to the story of the AKAA itself. In its coverage of the 1998 awards ceremony, *The New York Times* went so far as to call the Aga Khan "the most important figure in the world of architecture today." The professional press has been no less admiring of the AKAA's selection processes: *Progressive Architecture* called them "the most conscientious procedures of any award program in the world." In April 2000 the AIA conferred on the AKAA its Honors for Collaborative Achievement award because, as committee chair Thompson Penney explains, "we found the idea of promoting a culture through architecture very compelling. We saw the Aga Khan Award as a program that truly embodies a great idea and executes it well."

At the beginning of each three-year cycle, a steering committee chaired by the Aga Khan convenes at the AKAA headquarters in Geneva to select the nine-member master jury as

Right: The Kairouan Conservation Programme (AKAA 1992) has restored most of the city's ninth- and 10th-century monuments using traditional construction methods and, frequently, recycling the original building materials.

Below: Similarly, the rehabilitation of Hebron Old Town (AKAA 1998) included renovations to water and sewer systems as well as the restoration of stone-built, vaulted family homes. Bukhara, Kairouan and Hebron are among 11 area conservation programs that have received the AKAA.

P A L E S T I N E



"The kind of paradigm that is sustained by the Aga Khan Award is continuity. That is a positive model that could be used by the developed world."

T U N I S I A

well as the network of nearly 500 nominators. The latter are men and women living in Muslim societies, and they remain anonymous throughout the process. In addition to the candidates they identify, the AKAA also accepts independent nominations, as all of its guidelines and procedures are publicly available on the Web at www.akdn.org/agency/aktc_akaa.html. The list of nominations often totals anywhere from 300 to 500, and the first meeting of the master jury winnows that number down to a manageable 25 to 30 projects.

Then, technical reviewers visit the shortlisted sites. They study the design and research how architects and builders involved relevant communities in construction, how they secured financing and how they navigated local and national regulations. They inspect the materials to ascertain whether they were locally available and at what cost, and they ask about the decision-making process of the building from start to finish. And always, whether the project is a private home, a historical monument or a factory, the reviewers pay close attention to how users relate to it. They then present their findings to the master jury, which spends a week examining and debating the relative merits of each project.

From the start, the master juries, as well as the steering committees, have been studded with luminati, including the late Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy, often considered the father of the "sustainability" movement; Princeton historian of Islamic art Oleg Grabar; Tokyo architect Arata Isozaki; Canadian architect Frank Gehry; US architects Charles Moore and Robert Venturi and theorist Frederic Jameson. Although the roster has in recent cycles included a growing proportion of professionals from across the Islamic world—from ultra-modernist architect Zaha Hadid to the Bangladeshi founder of the Grameen Bank, Muhammad Yunus, and architects from New Delhi, Karachi, Riyadh and Jakarta—the committees are nonetheless heavily weighted in favor of Western-trained and Western-based academics and architects. All the members of the 1998 master jury, for example, earned graduate and often undergraduate degrees in Western or Western-style institutions; on the eight-member 2001 steering committee, five are currently based in the West and seven were trained there.

This imbalance is mostly a product of history, for although architecture has always played a very significant role in Islamic

cultures, the field has been defined and developed in Europe and North America for the last 500 years, and the most influential institutions are in those parts of the world. Thus, since its inception, the AKAA has been dogged by the question of the extent to which it may be perpetuating a colonial relationship between East and West.

This has led to powerful opinions. Samer Akkach, director of the Centre for Asian and Middle Eastern Architecture at the University of Adelaide in Australia, who has studied the AKAA as a cultural phenomenon, points out that the very notion of "Islamic culture" is itself a Western construct defined in contraposition to "Western culture." Akkach made the AKAA the subject of his 1997 paper "Expatriating Excellence: The Aga Khan's Search for Muslim Identity," in which he questioned whether Muslim expatriates and Western-trained architects, steeped as they are in this Western notion, are qualified to judge what does or does not constitute successful Islamic architecture. "On the one hand," he argued, "they assume their native identity to confer authenticity, while on the other, they identify with Western authority to acquire legitimacy. Through this double act, they become empowered representatives of the Muslim communities and disguised agents of [Western] cultural dissemination." In short, he worried that the AKAA was perpetuating an orientalist perspective that naturalizes the dominance of Western ideas and fails to consider the existence, let alone the legitimacy, of others.

Since then, Akkach says, he has softened his stance, which he admits was "more critical a few years back." He recognizes that modernity today is ever more likely to emerge from Asia rather than from Europe or North America. More importantly, he says he has now seen first-hand how, despite its apparent Western stance, the AKAA does indeed "mobilize local forces" to improve living conditions and "contribute to Islamic people in different societies."

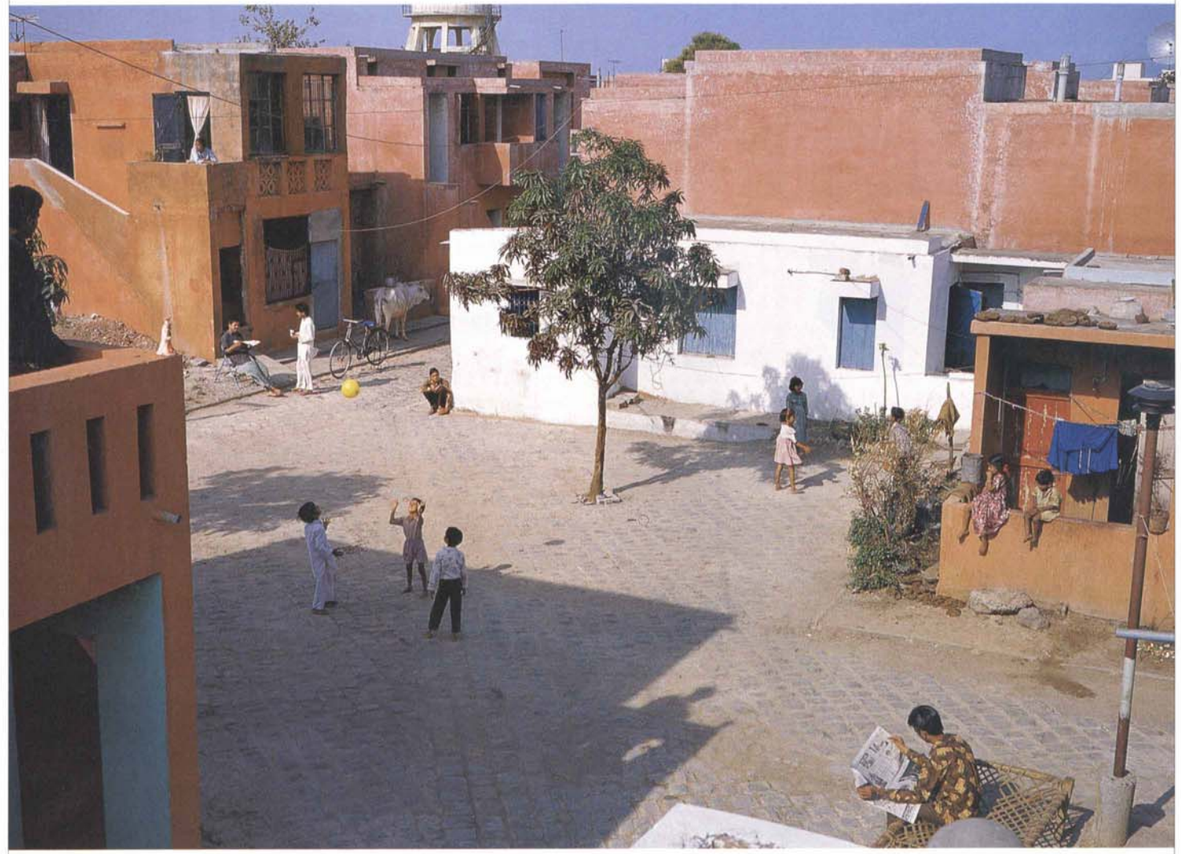
Moreover, there seems little point today in merely bemoaning the historical fact that architecture is replete with Western categories and assumptions. The AKAA's approach has been to question and challenge these assumptions and in doing so, inject new perspectives in the field. One way it does this is through discussions centered on a non-Western context, and it is just such discussions that the steering committee and master jury hold every three years. "They have to think about social and other issues while they're sitting around the table in Geneva," says Cynthia Davidson, founder of Architecture New York and editor of two AKAA catalogues. For some of the Western committee members, this may only be of academic or esoteric interest. "When they return home," Davidson adds, "they have their own practices, which are so different and very removed from the concerns prevalent in Islamic societies."

TURKEY

INDONESIA

Above: **The Re-Forestation Programme of the Middle East Technical University in Ankara (AKAA 1995) has planted millions of trees since 1960, which have reduced pollution in the smog-prone Turkish capital city and made it a better and more healthful place to live.**

Left: **Although the Pondok Pesantren Pabelan, a rural boarding school in Central Java, did not contain "striking architectural innovations," the 1980 AKAA jury gave it an award to recognize the community's cooperative success in using local and imported methods and materials to reverse the decline of a rural village.**



INDIA

The Aranya Community Housing project, in a suburb of Indore, is master-planned to house up to 60,000 people. Most of the homes are built by their occupants, using variable financing that has made participation possible for families of very low to moderate incomes. This economic integration, as well as the community's design, impressed the 1995 AKAA jury.

But for others, working with the AKAA has altered their daily business. Renata Holod, a professor of Islamic art and architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, was part of the group of advisors that worked with the Aga Khan and his team to develop the award. She has subsequently served on the master jury and the steering committee, and the work, she says, "substantially changed the way in which, as a professor, I look at material and understand it." Outside the classroom, she adds, the AKAA has influenced her thinking about her current archeological and ethno-historical survey of Jerba, an island off the coast of Tunisia. "Because I was engaged with the Award, the project has a conservation aspect and a cultural-tourism aspect to it. If I had stayed within my profession," Holod says, "I would have just done the archeology and not felt the need to engage in a structured way with contemporary society."

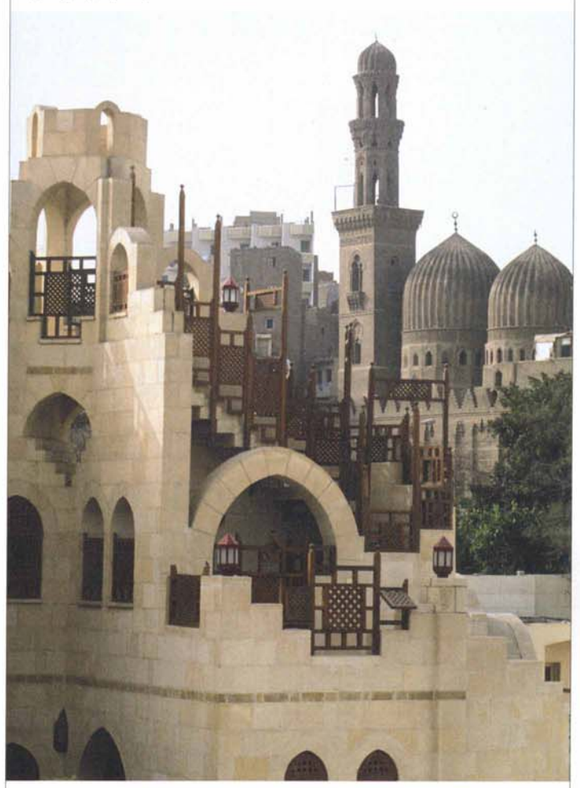
Writings by and about the AKAA also change the way some professors not associated with the award conduct their business. Akkach, for example, sets up mock deliberations or "model Aga Khan Awards" sessions with his students in which each takes on the role of a jury member.

For AKAA-winning Saudi architect and urban planner Ali Shuaibi, the AKAA has done nothing less than redefine his view of the field. He had cofounded Riyadh-based Beeah Planners, Architects and Engineers and was well established by the time the first AKAA winners were announced in 1980. Writing in the AKAA's sixth-cycle catalogue in 1995, he recalled how at that time "I, among many others, was disappointed to see that elevated water tanks and a *kampong* [an Indonesian low-

"Because I was engaged with the award, [my] project has a conservation aspect and a cultural-tourism aspect to it. If I had stayed within my profession, I would have just done the archeology."

TURKEY

EGYPT



Top: **The Social Security Complex in Istanbul (AKAA 1986) is a landmark in what Turkish architects call "the new regionalism": Its cascading structure on the sloping site—the alternative to a skyline-dominating box—demonstrates respect for its historic neighborhood between the Golden Horn and the Aqueduct of Valens.**

Above: **The Cultural Park for Children (AKAA 1992), in a similarly historic area of Cairo, builds on the neighborhood's geometry to create an intricate and fanciful multipurpose public space that has "generated a renewed sense of community."**

income housing area] improvement program were not only called architecture, but were also honored as excellent examples of architecture." Twelve years later, while sitting on a master jury, "I watched the same initial disappointment of other leading international figures turn into admiration and commitment to the pursuit of good architecture."

Pursuit is the key word here. Jury and steering committee members make it clear that, by their selections, they do not so much define what constitutes good architecture as they search for projects that might—or might not—fit a new, broader notion that architecture is not always, or solely, about buildings. As the winning projects attest, architecture can be about enhancing the human environment, whether by erecting new sheltered spaces, repairing old ones or even planting trees. (In the 1995 roster of winners, "architecture" included a reforestation program in Ankara, Turkey, and the landscaping design that integrated elements of Soekarno-Hatta airport in Cangkareng, Indonesia.)

Likewise, the requirement that projects have been in use for at least one year—many winning projects have been in use longer than that—can also be seen as putting contemporary theory into practice. Since the 1960's, postmodern theorists have increasingly discounted the value of the creator's intent and given more weight to the response of the user, no less in architecture than in literature and the performing and visual arts.

The AKAA's recognition of building teams, as opposed to individual architects, is consistent with this approach. When the master jury emerges, it presents a list of winning projects with the names of all the individuals it deems to have been key to the projects' success, and not all of these are architects. In 1980, the jury honored Egyptian master mason Aladdin Moustafa, a move that so delighted—and shocked—the architectural community that the highly respected magazine *Domus* devoted its front cover and editorial to him. Most recently, the 1998 jury gave equal credit to architect Jimmy Lim and master carpenter Ibrahim bin Adam for the success of the Salinger Residence in Malaysia. And in 1995, the prize-winning sewerage system in Indore, India was the work of Himanshu Parikh, a civil engineer.

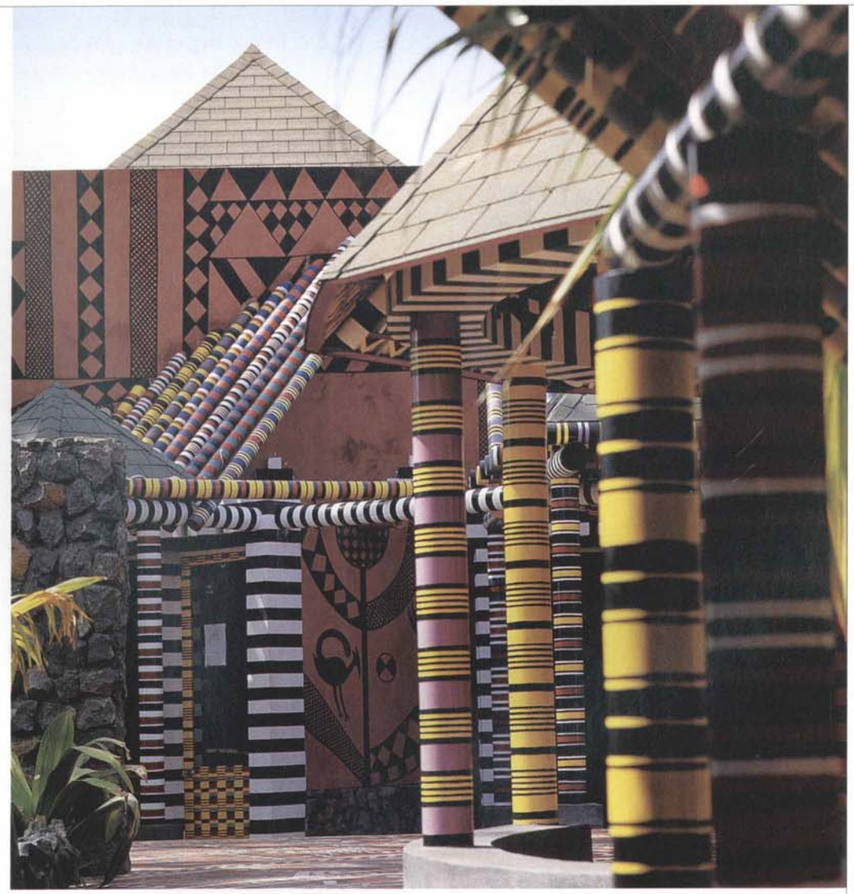
The image of Moustafa, Adam or Parikh standing alongside architects at the awards ceremony might be dismissed as a mere liberal quirk were it not for the fact that architects worldwide are struggling to redefine their roles. Gone are the days of modernism, when they were revered as gurus of social engineering. Since the 1980's, environmentalists, sociologists, engineers, psychologists and others have all encroached on architects' territory, devising ways to improve built environments. As Akkach points out bluntly, "The environment everywhere in the world is deteriorating. I think we've been arrogant for a long period of time. It's about time that architects become part of the community rather than trying to play the elitist role." In this regard, the AKAA sets an important precedent of humility.

However, it is not clear that the AKAA actually ever intended to help redefine the role of the architect; its influence in that debate may be a by-product of what some consider one of the award's weaknesses. Indeed, the AKAA is sometimes privately criticized for being too scatter-shot, for attempting to deal with world-quality design and at the same time stress broad themes of social responsibility.

Paradoxically, this overextension is also the root of another strength. In their attempts to reconcile the AKAA's mission with a selection of built projects, the jury and steering committee at each cycle find themselves wandering deep into theoretical territory. The resulting debates are what prompt Akkach to say that "the value of the AKAA is unfolding in the discourse"—a discourse he would like to see question the assumption that the expression of "culture" or "identity" should be a function of architecture at all. These terms, he maintains, are far from neutral. "Can we not," he asks, "take a pre-modern view and look at beauty and excellence without these being extended to the identity of the maker? Not imbue it with ideological content?"

To some extent, the AKAA already does this, for although an award-winning project must serve a Muslim community of some kind, the identity of a project's author is not an issue. For example, the Indian Leper Hospital which won an award in 1998 was designed by Swedes, and the low-income housing development project in Ismailiyya, Egypt, that won in 1986 was the work of a British firm. Yet pervading the AKAA's deliberations remains the notion that winners must incorporate, reflect or fit in with the Islamic culture and

The Alliance Franco-Sénégalaise (AKAA 1995) integrates both traditional and new local art into the structure of a meeting and entertainment complex. Inside, only about one-quarter of the space is roofed, in keeping with traditional village spatial arrangements and allowing generously for outdoor activities. "The plan and massing are simple and ingenious...but intricately complicated in the use of iconography, ornament and decoration. These designs synthesize traditional patterns in an entirely new way."



SENEGAL

MALAYSIA

The Tanjong Jara Beach Hotel and Rantau Abang Visitors' Centre, set in a marine conservation area in Kuala Trengganu, offers its guests cottage suites modeled after the istanas, the wooden palaces built by early Muslim sultans on the east coast of Malaysia. The 1983 AKAA jury found it an excellent example of "contextual architecture" that used elements of traditional design along with natural ventilation in an eco-tourism setting.

identity as those terms are defined by the users of the project. Indeed, the AKAA's stated mission is "to enhance the understanding and appreciation of Islamic culture as expressed through architecture," and it is in its questing within those boundaries that the AKAA has seen its intellectual "unfolding." In the early years, the juries seemed to favor a notion of Islamic culture that was closely aligned with a particular region, and jury members hailed the way the winning projects married regional heritages with modernity.

Later, the emphases shifted. In the 1998 catalogue, *Legacies for the Future*, Mohamad Arkhoun of the Académie Française argued for a definition of "Islamic" as being based on "values which are almost eternal and are opposed to pressures exercised by globalization," the movement toward world cultural homogenization. This has kept the AKAA's debates within the paradigm that seeks reconciliation between Islamic and Western values. Although in the same 1998 jury deliberations at least one other member, Indian architect Romi Khosla, argued for the dismantling of this duality in favor of "an alternative debate about the relevance of architecture today," he nonetheless maintained that, in practical terms, the AKAA's focus on Islamic societies offers "at least one contemporary world where the broader social issues of architecture can be...discussed."

Pursuit is the key word here. The AKAA does not so much define good architecture as search out projects that might—or might not—fit a new, broader notion that architecture is not always, or solely, about buildings.

MALAYSIA

Indeed, the Islamic world is so vast and varied that it provides architects and scholars with concerns that their colleagues practicing in the West are often spared. Although architects in cities like Dubai, Mumbai (Bombay) and Jakarta have to meet the same demands for efficient office space, modern plant facilities and technologically sophisticated infrastructure that exist in the West, they must also frequently factor in severe climactic conditions, limited availability of materials and maintenance skills, and local customs. Moreover, they also often have to seek extremely low-cost, socially oriented strategies for densely populated environments in which buildings and infrastructure are all compromised by severe poverty. As Khosla suggests, the AKAA then can contribute greatly to worldwide discussions in architecture by concentrating on what it defines, by the slings and arrows of its own debates, as the Islamic world.

Not that Khosla will have anything like the last word. When the 2001 jury adjourns in June, the issue of Islamic culture will no doubt have been one of many discussions. And the next round of award announcements will not only turn the AKAA's spotlight on projects that have enhanced the environments of Muslims; it will also, if it follows what is now AKAA tradition, enhance the intellectual environment in which we all think about the meaning and goals of architecture.

Lee Adair Lawrence is engaged in a master's degree program at New York University exploring Western representations of non-Western art.

www.akdn.org

TURKEY

The Gürel Family Summer Residence in Çanakkale is set amid woods where nearly all the original vegetation was retained. The unusually harmonious result, said the 1989 jury, is "a work of art."

Opposite, lower: **The Salinger Residence (AKAA 1998) in Selangor, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur, uses traditional wood craftsmanship to interpret rather than imitate Malay vernacular culture. Except for a small powered cement mixer, it was built entirely using hand tools.**

Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, 63 years old, is the 49th hereditary leader of the Ismaili Shi'ite Muslims living in some 25 countries around the world. He succeeded his grandfather, Sultan Sir Mahomed Shah Aga Khan, who was known internationally for his service as president of the League of Nations. More recently, other members of the Aga Khan's family have also served in leadership positions in the United Nations.

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture is now under the umbrella of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in Geneva, whose mission, beyond the administration of the awards, is the improvement of built environments in societies where Muslims have a significant presence. Conservation projects, the creative reuse of historic buildings and public spaces, international exchanges that strengthen architectural practice, and planning and conservation education are all part of its activities through its Historic Cities Support Program and its Education and Culture Program. The AKAA's leading educational project in the United States is the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which is a specialized program of professional and graduate studies and research established in 1977.

Related articles have appeared in these past issues of *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World:*

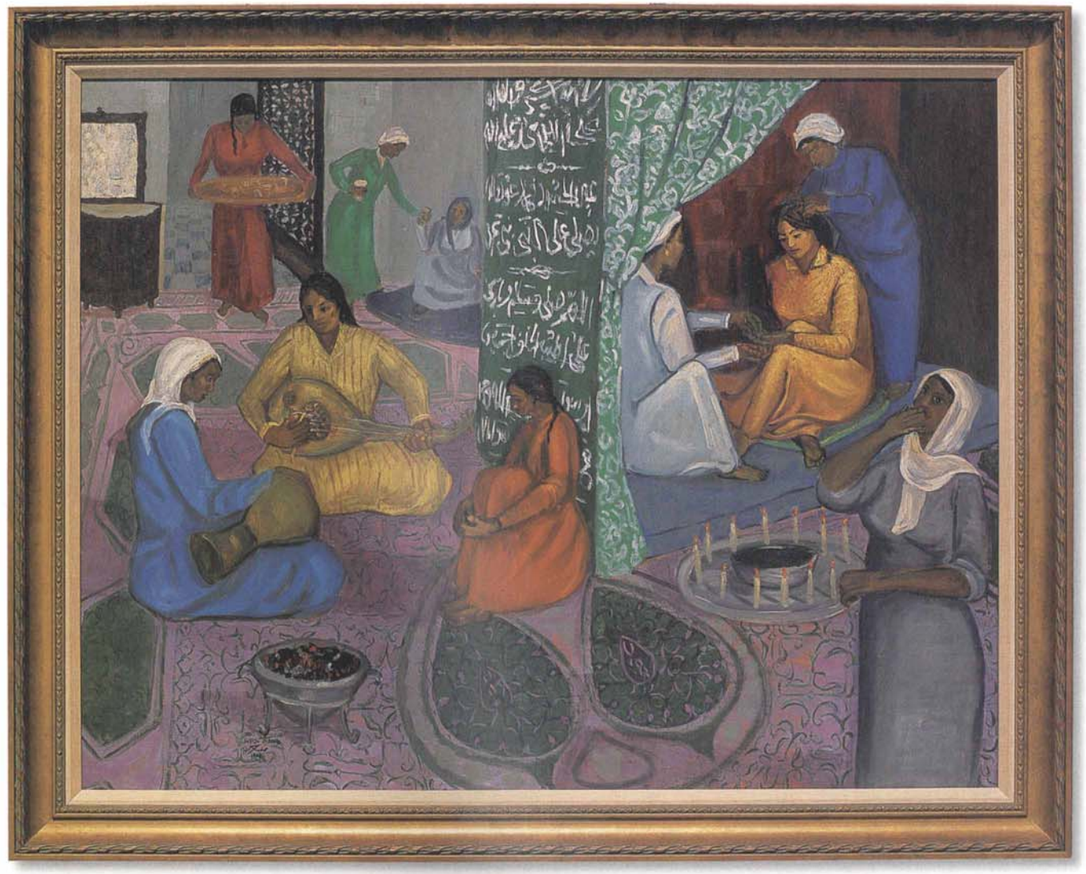
Aga Khan Award for Architecture: November/December 1987, November/December 1989
Dome of the Rock: September/October 1996
Hassan Fathy, Abdel Wahed El-Wakil: July/August 1999
Institut du Monde Arabe: January/February 1989
Jerba, Tunisia: July/August 1994
Muhammad Yunus, Grameen Bank: May/June 1999
Tuwaiq Palace: November/December 1999

SAFEYA BINZAGR

PAINTING CULTURAL HISTORY

WRITTEN BY NI'MAH ISMA'IL NAWWAB
PHOTOGRAPHED BY HUSSAIN A. AL-RAMADAN

OPPOSITE: NI'MAH ISMA'IL NAWWAB



Al-Henna, **1969. Oil, 123 x 95 cm (48 x 37"). On the evening before a wedding, the bride's hands and feet are decorated with henna, which symbolizes fertility and good fortune. It is also rubbed into her hair. The bowl of henna paste is at the right, surrounded by candles.** Opposite: **Although painting is her first passion—"I can't go for more than three waking hours without a pencil or brush in my hand," she says—Safeya Binzagr is no less a historian than an artist: "I am writing a cultural history with my brush, and I want to record it as accurately as possible."**

She is painter, pioneer, researcher and visionary, and an acclaimed leader of the artistic movement in Saudi Arabia. She has launched an ambitious gallery and museum in Jiddah that aims to serve artists and laymen alike. Above all, Safeya Said Binzagr is known for her paintings that focus on Saudi traditions and heritage, which have vitally assisted in preserving disappearing customs, practices and ways of life in the kingdom.

Born in 1940 in Jiddah to a well-known Saudi merchant family, Safeya Binzagr grew up surrounded by the colors, sounds and textures of life in an old district of the city, one crisscrossed with meandering, narrow alleys and dotted with traditional family homes. Other influences included her own family life, rich in daily rituals, customs and festivities. These factors propelled her into a 30-year journey in art.

At the age of eight Safeya traveled with her family to Egypt; later she was enrolled in the Woodstock School in Sussex, England. It was there that she developed her hobby of drawing, and had a chance to view the works of the masters at museums and art galleries. On her return to Saudi Arabia in 1964, Safeya was saddened by the scope and the rapid pace of the change brought about by the oil boom and the modernization of the kingdom. She realized that all aspects of the life she remembered were being affected. "I took note of the way this change also brought changes in clothes, customs, habits and housing. The hand of modernization was reaching even into the old-established family houses," she says.

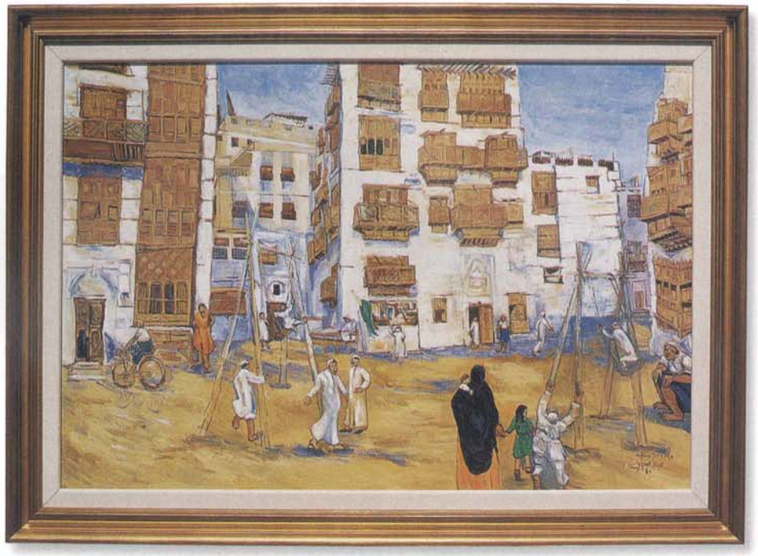
During this period Safeya took part in an emerging phenomenon, as Saudi female writers began contributing to the local press. She wrote on art, the subject closest to her heart. She wrote about art history and depicted scenes and impressions of social history. "After this

experience," she says, "I began to think seriously about refining my hobby, through formal study of the principles of art, with a hope of establishing a firm foothold in the art world."

So Safeya went to Cairo in the mid-1960's to begin a program of fulltime art study. There, she and a fellow Saudi woman artist, Mounirah Mosly, often discussed the need to make art a part of Saudi culture and a feature of the country's school curricula, and concluded that an exhibition of their work would be a step toward this goal. In 1968, the exhibition opened. At that time, the artistic movement was slowly unfurling in Saudi Arabia, and Safeya became one of its prominent figures.

Her modesty and gentle humor shine through when Safeya talks about her life. Meeting her, one would never imagine the exhibitions she has presented in Paris, Geneva and London, or the accolades and the national and international awards she has received through the years, all without fanfare. Her avoidance of the media has also led to a thirst for information about her and her work.

Safeya's concern with accuracy and detail infuse her paintings, though she calls her style "primitive." The varied influences of Cézanne, Giotto, Van Gogh, Fra Angelico and Gaugin on her paintings have been noted by art critics,



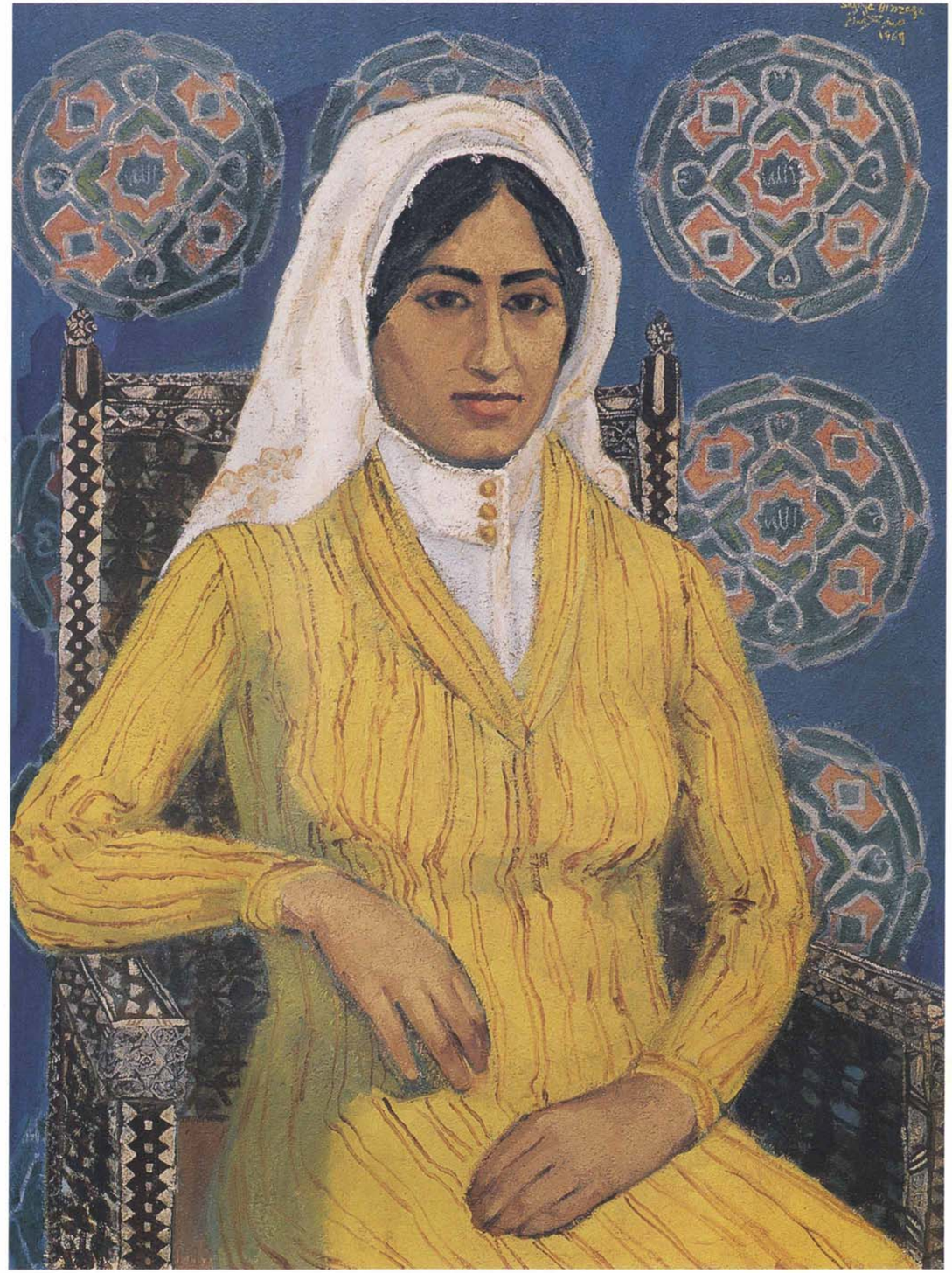
but she has freed herself from imitation and developed her own distinctive identity. She embraces the best of the impressionist, post-impressionist and realist schools to transmit a realistic but artistic image of life in the past, and the diversity of media she employs enriches and expands the range of her work. She has used brush and knife in works done in oil, chalk, watercolors and dyes, on such diverse surfaces as engraving paper, wood and fabric.

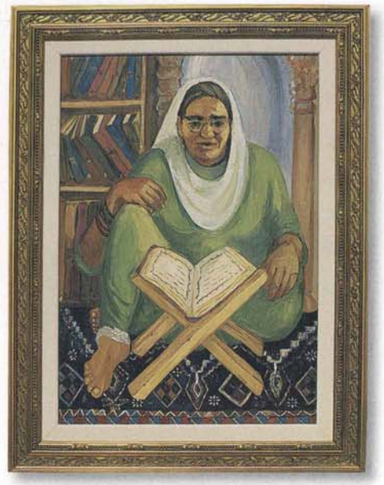
In addition to paintings of individual scenes, Binzagr has also produced several series of paintings on particular themes or facets of Saudi society and culture. Her series depicting marriage festivities, desert and city life, costumes and old homes continue to expand. All of them reflect the complexities of Saudi values and social roles; clearly, the communal bond within families, and the daily support and love extended to family members, have deeply affected Safeya, and they are strongly portrayed in her work.

Many consider the painting cycle on wedding customs in the Hijaz, the western region of Saudi Arabia, their favorite. The popularity of this series stems from the fact that the paintings take one behind the scenes into the intricate ceremonies involved, the details of dress, and the roles played by participants of various ages and genders, throughout several months of preparation that culminate in the final ceremony. The scenes trace the storyline of weddings in bygone times, beginning with the engagement, the preparation and delivery of the bride's trousseau to her new home, the grooming of the wedding couple, and the ceremony itself. When she works on such a painting, Safeya has written, "I need to do a lot of background reading and a lot of coaxing the older members of my family to relate specific details, for example a description of the bride's dress. I am writing a cultural history with my brush and want to record it as accurately as possible."

The Darah, which opened in Jiddah last year, is a gallery and museum built around Safeya's collection but dedicated to a full range of museum and art-related public educational services. Above: Al-Madarih, **1985. Oil on canvas, 61 x 91 cm (24 x 35"). Simple wooden swings of different kinds used to be set up in city squares at** 'id **and on other special occasions. Opposite:** Zabun, **1969. Oil, 80 x 60 cm (31 x 24"). The painting's title refers to a type of dress that was popular in the Western Province of Saudi Arabia in the 1950's and 1960's. Safeya's rendition of it on this woman—seated four-square with an aura of quiet strength and confidence— have made this Safeya's signature painting, widely regarded as a dignified testimony to the role of duty and decorum in the lives of women in Saudi Arabia.**

LOWER: NI'MAH ISMA'IL NAWWAB

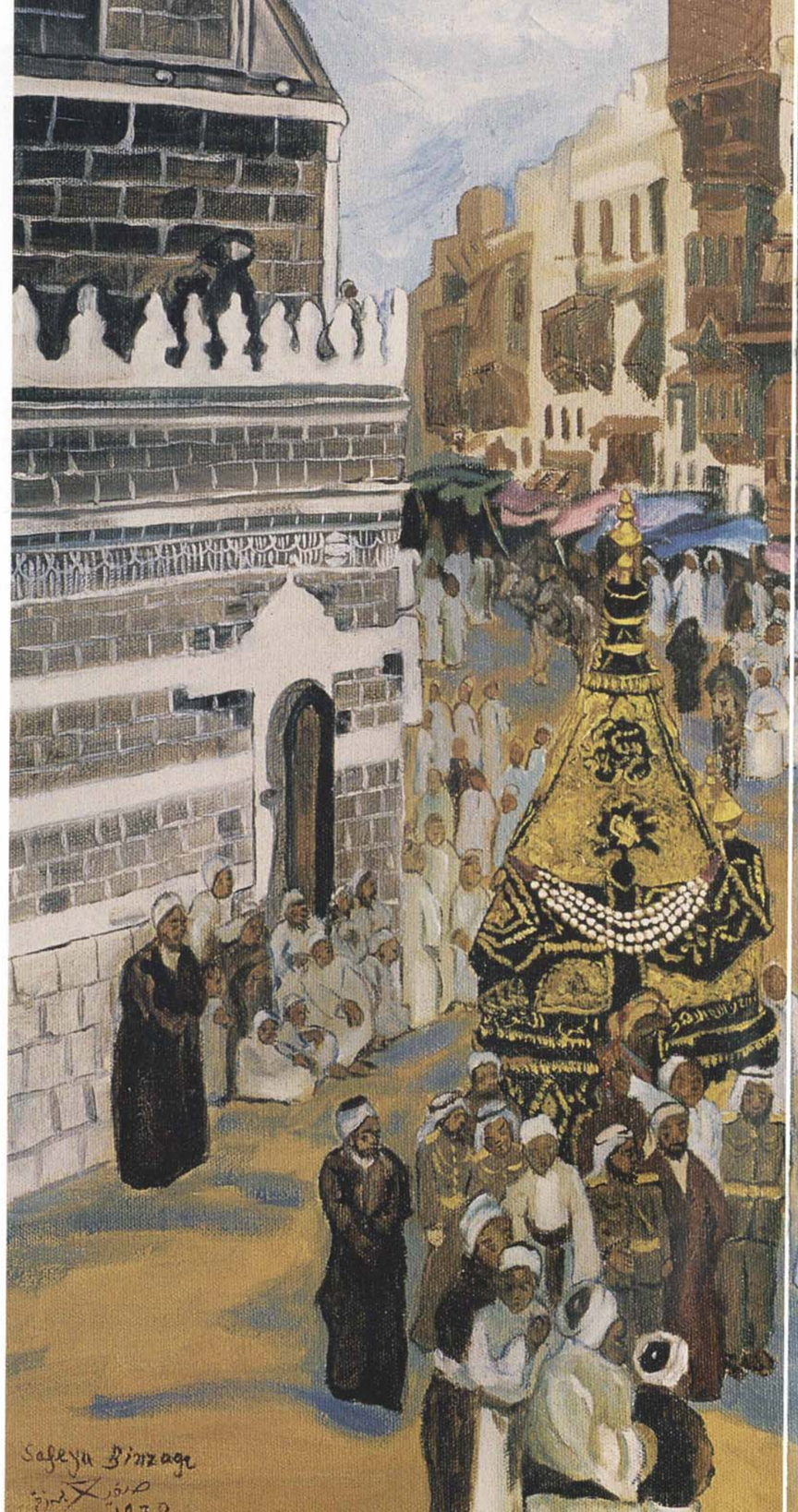


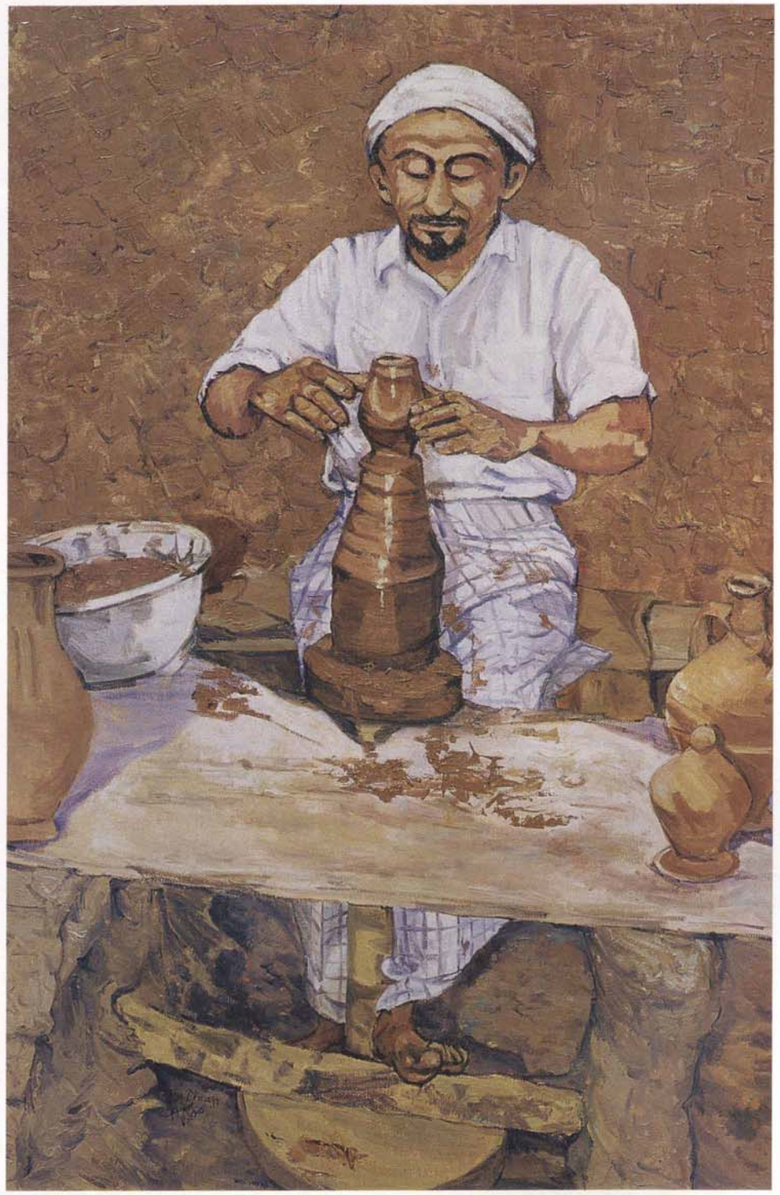


Recitation, **1968. Oil, 50 x 70 cm (20 x 28"). A Pakistani woman recites from the Qur'an. Safeya describes her as one of the many devout Muslims who "left her homeland to live...near the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah."** Right: Al-Mahmal, **1972. Oil, 55 x 76 cm (22 x 30"). The *mahmal* is the decorated camel-litter that, in times past, was brought in procession each year from Egypt to Makkah, bearing the newly-made embroidered covering of the Ka'ba. Today, this covering is still sewn and embroidered anew each year, but the work is done in Makkah.**

Safeya's latest series on costumes spans the different regions of the kingdom, and her individual pieces include portraits of such prominent figures as the late King Faisal as well as anonymous individuals such as herdsmen, fishermen and farm women.

One of her most famous works is "Zabun," a portrait of a Saudi lady wearing a traditional type of dress of that name that was still common in the 1950's and '60's in the Western Province. Known as "Safeya's Mona Lisa," the painting is based on a portrait of her sister, though the artist says that she revised the face four times "until I was happy with the Arab face." "Zabun" has become Safeya's trademark, especially after its appearance on the cover of one of her books and its reproduction in prints and on





The Potter, **1987. Oil on canvas, 61 x 91 cm (24 x 35"). Potters working at kick-wheels once produced a variety of different and essential containers: water jugs, incense burners and jars. The craft has all but disappeared now, displaced by the ubiquity of cheaper plastic ware and piped-in water.**

matchboxes, plates, mugs and a variety of other objects. For many Hijazi ladies this painting is also significant for the social value placed on this mode of dress, which was always worn by older women at weddings and was slowly disappearing with the older generation. Happily, the style is now being revived.

The four-square yet graceful posture of the woman in the portrait make it clear that, indirectly, the painting also depicts the respect in which women are held in Saudi society. The sitter's air of quiet strength, the confidence and determination in her mouth and chin, and the stillness of the hands that seem unaccustomed to leisure—all these give one a sense of the demands that were made on such a lady of stature, from supervising her home to receiving guests from within and beyond the extended family, and helping in the everyday duties of the household. This painting is a tribute to the life of women in those days and the central role that duty and decorum played in their lives.

Asked what impelled her to begin painting traditional themes, Safeya says that, after living abroad, she returned to her country with a fresh eye, and "I missed seeing familiar and vanishing social scenes. I can also say that my heritage paintings may be due, in part, to my love of history, and to the lack of information on cultural traditions." The success of her first exhibit in 1968 was a turning point, she says. "I found that people were very attracted to subjects dealing with either Bedouin life or the former city life. The paintings reminded the older generation of times past, and opened up the eyes of the younger generation to an untapped wealth of traditions and customs. This decided me on my path."

After the exhibition, Safeya took three major steps. First, she decided to retain her work, since she keenly felt the loss of the paintings sold at that time: What went with them, she discovered, was "a part of my inner being." Secondly, she resolved to delve deeper into Saudi social history and folkloric traditions, which meant that she had to research and depict scenes that had been lost in what she terms "our rush forward." And finally, she began collecting documentary data on cultural traditions and related subjects.

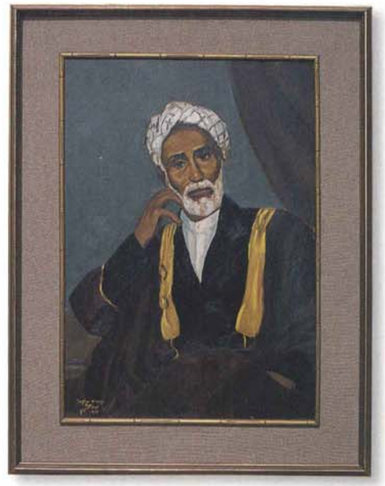
Ever since, she says, "my aims have been to create a record of our cultural legacy, to realize myself through the creation of such a record, and to leave it for our future generations." The artist's intentions have only intensified through the years, and her mission's worth is confirmed by the current revival of interest and studies related to Saudi Arabia's heritage. Painting now plays a paramount role in her life. "Since I started painting I have not been able to stop. I can't go for more than three waking hours without a pencil or brush in my hand. I don't think I could live without painting."

The painter's documentation methods take a variety of forms. She conducts interviews, corroborating facts with at least three independent sources. She has also set up and photographed reenactments of social traditions and practices to get a feel for the details involved. Indeed, she has come to rely more and more on her camera, which she describes as "my personal sketch book," photographing local sites, old city districts and such details as embroidery work, to use as references when required.

Safeya also took up "hunting for historic photographs and documents." This search has led her to archives and organizations abroad, such as the Royal Geographical Society in London, where she has located travelers' journals and books and has been able to purchase copies of some photographs.

Even as Safeya produced her work and carried on documenting past lifestyles, she started to dream of housing her collection. After nine years of planning and construction, she realized her dream last year, with the establishment in Jiddah of the Darah, a combination gallery and museum that provides a range of services to students and visitors. "I feel that each of us has a role to play and something to contribute," Safeya says.

Students often throng a large sun-lit studio area of the Darah that is used for classes involving artists of various talents and ages. Qualified artists and teachers provide art and art-appreciation sessions in a casual and inviting atmosphere. Paintings by students line the walls and slide presentations are a widely used teaching tool. Safeya keeps an eye on the courses given and dispenses advice when needed. "I like the students to feel at home and I always invite them to spend some time, either before or after class, looking through the masterpieces that we have available on slides and other media. I also encourage them to make use of the library."



Grandfather, **1968. Oil on hardboard, 50 x 70 cm (20 x 28"). This portrait of Safeya's grandfather Muhammad Obeid Binzagr shows him in traditional dress, including the headdress of embroidered Syrian silk called the** omama. **"My aims have been to create a record of our cultural legacy," Safeya says, "to realize myself through the creation of such a record and to leave it for future generations."**

Safeya began the library with her personal collection, the fruit of years of travel, and students and researchers often spend long hours perusing the more than 2000 volumes in Arabic, English and French on art, history, literature and other subjects. She also has an additional private collection of rare books in several languages that can be viewed when the need arises. And researchers consider Safeya herself a valuable source of information for students of art or traditional customs and heritage.

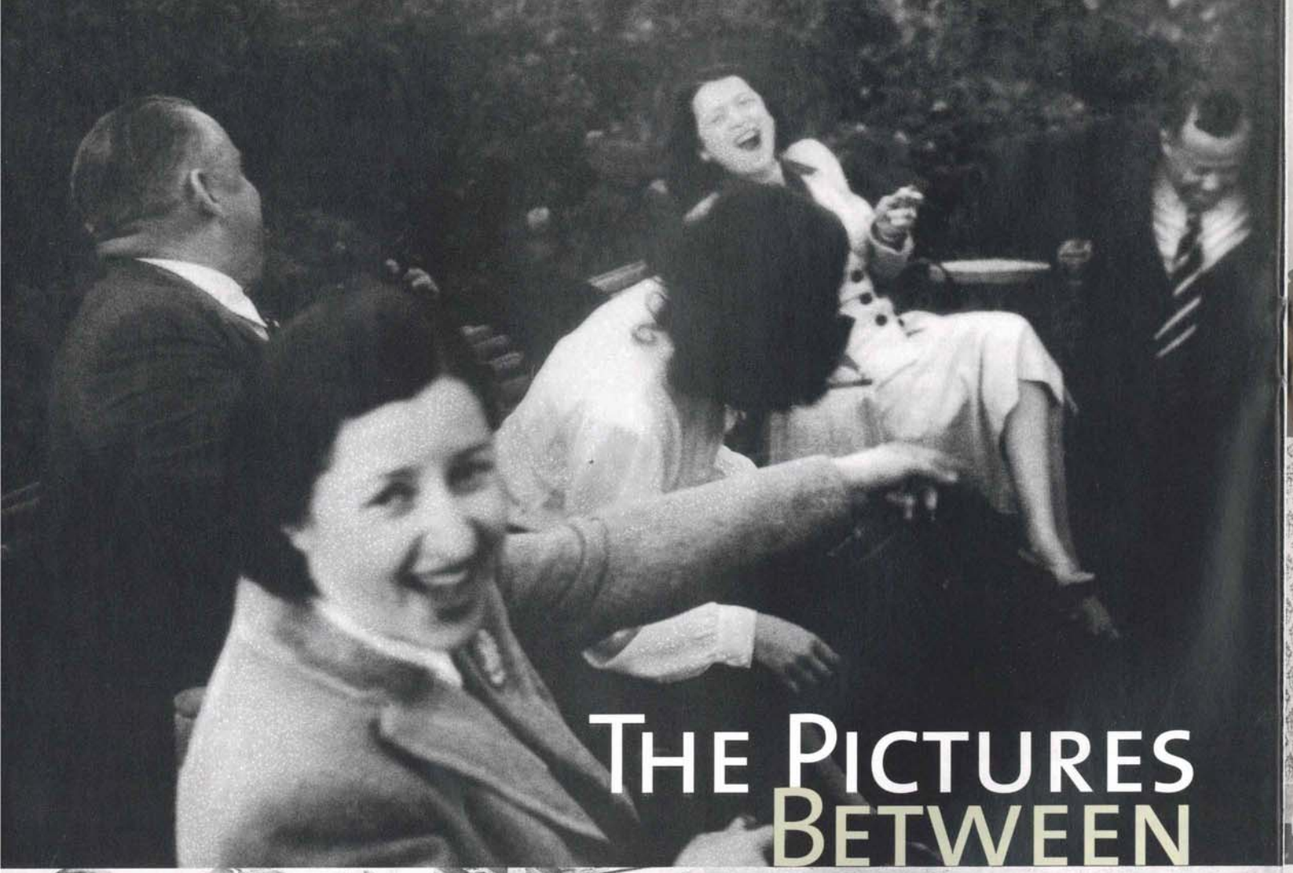
The Darah is also the location of a monthly *majlis*, or salon, at which a multinational group hears lectures in Arabic or English on artistic, literary or other subjects. The guest list varies according to the topic under discussion and the speaker.

Philip Wright, a British "new museologist" who has studied the quality of visitors' experiences in art museums and the reasons why particular works are included in them, was impressed by his visit to the Darah: "Building such a high-quality structure is an amazing gesture from Safeya. The idea of dedicating a room to a specific theme is a very individual idea, and gives the museum an international quality." Of Safeya's work, he continued, "It is interesting that when Safeya chooses themes, she is not swayed by monetary considerations and has set her own goals, and she does so in an extraordinarily single-minded way by undertaking a very thorough study of traditions. Her collection provides a teaching resource and a visual record of artifacts and unusual portraits of Saudi women in the '60's that can not be found in any books."

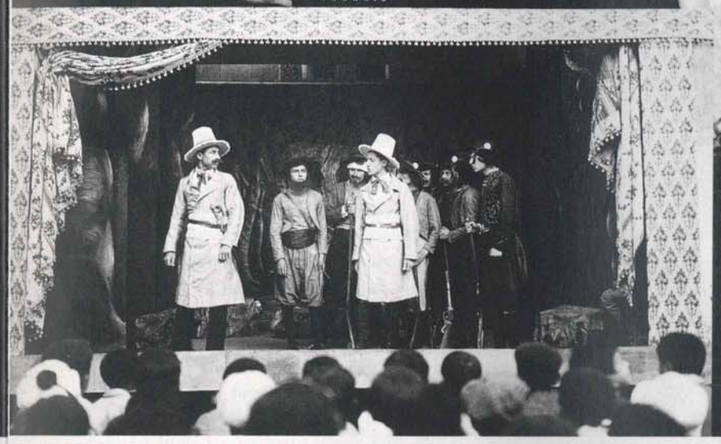
As for Safeya's current and future activities, "I like to keep busy," she says. "There are many things that I am doing at the same time. I'm working on completing my costumes series, and reproducing my paintings on CDs, once copyright questions are worked out. I am also completing two new book projects to add to my previous two books, *Saudi Arabia: An Artist's View of the Past*, published in English and French in 1979, and a more recent publication, *Safeya Binzagr: A Three-Decade Journey with Saudi Heritage* in Arabic and English."

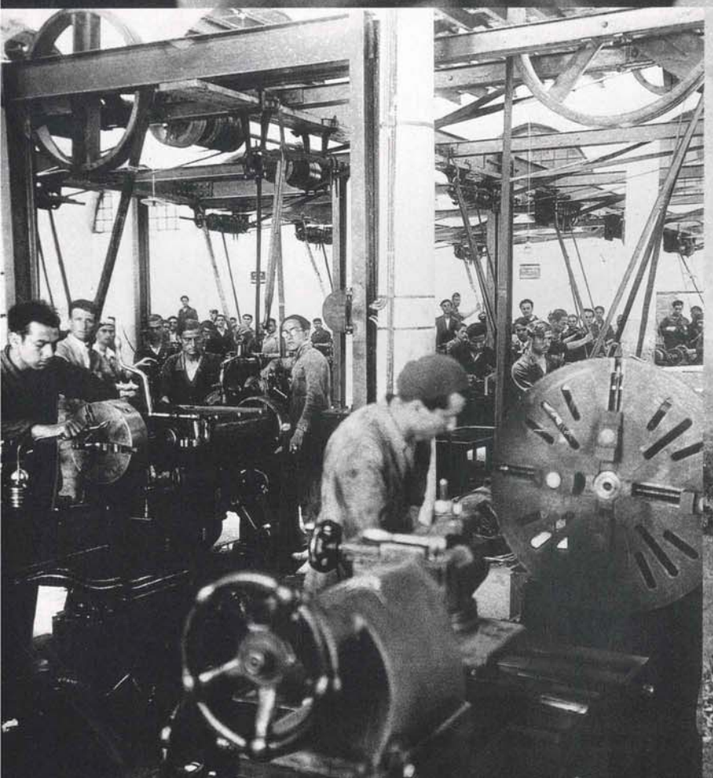
Safeya seems set to continue creating a record of her country's cultural legacy and opening up new vistas for those interested in Arabian ways of life, Saudi Arabia's people and their history. She has opened a window on the past, and opened a door into the future, expanding the role of Saudi artists and introducing the wealth of Saudi Arabia's traditions to the world.

Ni'mah Isma'il Nawwab contributes articles on Arabian and Islamic history, customs and traditional arts to *Saudi Aramco World* and other publications from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.



The Pictures Between

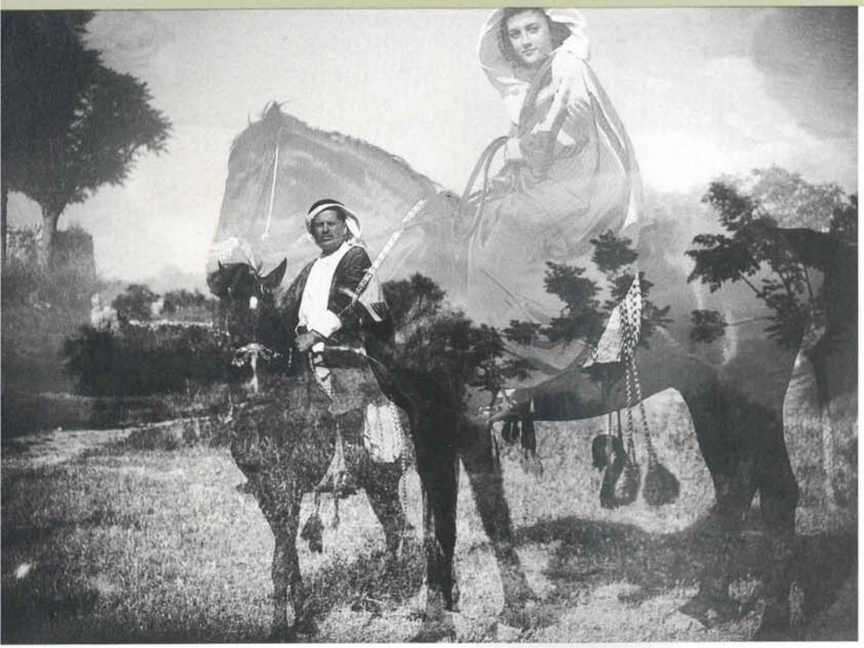




Written by *Lynn Love*

Photographs courtesy of
Arab Image Foundation

Collecting, conserving and exhibiting the work of early Arab photographers, both amateurs and professionals, builds *an indigenous way of looking* at modern Arab history.



Horseback riding, Marie el Khazen. Zgharta, Lebanon, 1924. Mohsen Yammine Collection.

Previous page, clockwise from top left: *Gathering in a garden,* photographer unknown. Chekka, Lebanon, 1945. Fayza Salim el Khazen Collection. *Two women posing next to a television set,* photographer unknown. Lebanon, 1960. Pharaon Collection. *Theatrical presentation at the Marist Brothers' School,* photographer unknown. Aleppo, Syria, undated. Amy Alfred Girardi Collection. *Elias el Helou,* photographer unknown. Homs, Syria, 1936. Helou Collection. *Andrée Khacho, horseback riding,* photographer unknown. Lebanon, 1950. Aimée Kettaneh Collection. *Route to Damascus,* Fouad el Khoury. Furn el Chebbak, Lebanon, 1926. Fouad el Khoury Collection. *Al-Sanayi' Technical School,* Scavo & Sons. Lebanon, undated. Mohsen Yammine Collection.

"In between, you have nothing!" says Fouad Elkoury, as he describes what the world has seen in more than 150 years of photography in Arab countries. Prior to World War I, he explains, "you have a typology: ruins and monuments, street scenes and landscapes of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Cairo, and their so-called 'exotic' locals." Beginning in the 1970's, he says, largely negative stereotypes, borne by news media, became dominant. It is the half-century between these two eras, and all the subjects "in between"—and beyond—the stereotypes, that are scarcely represented, says the 48-year-old Beirut-born photographer.

Photographic literature bears him out. For example, Naomi Rosenblum's authoritative *A World History of Photography*, published in 1989, includes a number of European travelers' early shots of the Holy Land and North Africa: When Arabs are depicted at all, they usually serve as little more than anthropological objects. Today, news photographs still often fail to depict Arabs or Arab societies fairly. "The images we have conventionally seen in no way express civil society, or the range of social movements

Marie el Khazen is an outstanding example OF AN AMATEUR WHO TOOK WELL-COMPOSED, THOUGHTFUL PICTURES OF FAMILY EVENTS, EVERYDAY LIFE AND FRIENDS.

or of gatherings of the people of Arab regions," says Elkoury.

The Arab Image Foundation (AIF), of which Elkoury is a founder, is the first attempt in the Arab world to change this external viewpoint. The method is to collect, conserve and exhibit work by Arab photographers who photographed locally, either as amateurs or professionals, and thus build an alternative to the visual history defined by the West. Although focused mostly on the period from World War I to the 1970's, some of the AIF's collection dates to the late 19th century—a fact which, Elkoury maintains, refutes the contention that Arabs themselves were not taking pictures locally even in the earliest days of the medium.

The AIF is run by 10 Arab photographers, filmmakers and scholars who live mostly in Beirut, Paris, New York and Cairo. Nearly all have been educated both in the Arab world and the West, and their bifurcated educations have helped inspire their commitment to changing how modern Arab history is understood through photography. Founded in 1997, the AIF has already collected approximately 15,000 images, mostly from North Africa, the Levant and Iraq—and its members know there are many more waiting to be "discovered" both within those regions and beyond. As if to symbolize its organizational maturation, the AIF will move this year from the apartment-sized office it has shared with an architect to its own publicly accessible exhibition, research and education space in Beirut.

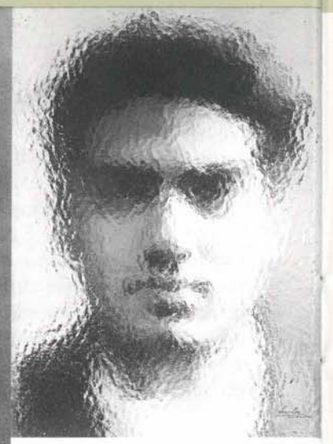
The first of the AIF's three major exhibitions to date, "[Histoires Intimes] 1900–1960" ("Intimate Stories") was organized in 1998 in Paris for the Lebanese Cultural Season at the Institut du Monde Arabe. Curated by Elkoury and fellow AIF founding member Samer Mohdad, it surveyed work by previously unknown Arab amateurs from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon. The show was the first to elucidate ways Arabs came to photograph Arabs. For example, the few early European photographers who stayed in the region began to work for the affluent classes in cities such as Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Beirut, Aleppo, Cairo and Alexandria, where they trained and inspired the first generation of local Arab studio photographers. Later, in the early 20th century, as Arab individuals began to acquire cameras for private use, they often photographed each other according to the European stylistic conventions.

Among the early Arab amateurs, Marie el Khazen is an outstanding example of a photographer who took well-composed, thoughtful pictures of family events, everyday life and friends. Class and social standards, Elkoury says, both promoted and limited Arab photography at the time. "El Khazen's work is exceptional. [French photographer Henri] Cartier-Bresson was also from a wealthy family, had access to a camera and took pictures of what was around him. It was only in his 40's and 50's that he decided to commercialize his work. I'm sure if Marie el Khazen had lived in another social context she would have done the same." Additionally, he explains, although photography was available to the Arab bourgeoisie, it was regarded as a hobby. To pursue it professionally would have lowered the photographer's social status to that of a craftsperson.

The exhibition, like the others curated by the AIF since, also displayed strong, often vernacular, aesthetic characteristics. The images shared neither the Western sense of photographic grandeur in views of landscapes and monuments, nor Western notions of documentary photography, which grew out of a particular mid–20th-century American ideological climate. An analogous indigenous "Arab documentary photography" has not yet been identified, but the AIF is one of the few institutions in the Arab world that could provide a setting where scholars might undertake the necessary critical review of images from the region and connect them with the social contexts in which they were made.

The second AIF exhibition, "Cairo Portraits," showed in France, Switzerland and Lebanon in 1999 and 2000, and delved into the studio-commercial aspect of photography in the Arab world. Three Armenian studio photographers—Van Leo, Alban and Arman—developed distinctive, related styles in Cairo during the 1940's. What is intriguing about the work of this trio, says curator Akram Zaatari—a cofounder of the AIF with Elkoury

Right: ***Woman sitting at the entrance of the house,*** **Marie el Khazen. Lebanon, 1920. Mohsen Yammine Collection.**



Above: ***Saudi Brothers,*** **Van Leo. Cairo, 1975. Van Leo Collection.**
Top right: ***Self-portrait,*** **Van Leo. Cairo, 1945. Van Leo Collection.**
Opposite: ***Studio portrait,*** **Alban. Cairo, 1945. Georges Mikaelian Family Collection. All three photographs appeared in the AIF's 1999 show "Cairo Portraits."**

and Mohdad—is the iconic quality of the photographs. "The images have this serenity," he says. "There's so much emphasis on the *mise-en-scène*—the lighting, the poses, the character. It was almost like staging a shoot for a film." Indeed, Zaatari adds, studio photographers of this era often did work for Egypt's film industry: "Doing the setup and the lighting is what they cared about." The differences among the three also fascinate. Alban and Arman tended to photograph the bourgeoisie and high society, including the foreign community. Van Leo concentrated on marginal performing artists, and he had an experimental streak that came out best in his numerous self-portraits.

"Cairo Portraits" also points out the breadth of the little-known Armenian role in early photography in the Middle East. It began in 1859, just two decades after the word *photography* was coined, when Yessayi Garabedian, leader of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, started a photographic workshop. In 1885, several Armenian photographers left the employ of the Ottoman sultan and traveled from Constantinople to Cairo, where they opened a studio. From the turn of the century through World War I, photographers, and well-educated craftspeople who became photographers, were among those who joined the Armenian exodus from Turkey. Among them was Levan Boyadjian, who in Cairo adopted the pseudonym Van Leo.

While AIF's exhibitions are important, they depend upon the success of its mission to collect and preserve photographs, and it was on this basis that Elkoury and Mohdad conceived the foundation. In their discussions, during the snowy winter in Lebanon's mountains in 1996, they contemplated the untapped wealth of photography that had been produced in the Arab world, held almost entirely in scattered family collections, and they envisioned an organization that would find out just how much was really there. Months later, they received a start-up award of approximately $100,000 from the European Union, and their discussion became an occupation. They had to start finding the photographs.

Elkoury started close to home, with family albums and boxes that dated to the late 19th century. Then a businessman friend of Elkoury's donated some of his family photography. After several months of networking, Elkoury, Mohdad and Zaatari had persuaded a number of their colleagues to join the foundation, contribute photography from their own family collections, and help search for more. Thus family photography became the basis of the collection, and finding it gave the founders the confidence to continue searching for a broader range of work in locations beyond Lebanon. They began with Egypt and Jordan.

In Cairo the founders met with Lara Baladi, a free-lance photographer who works there and in Paris. She joined the AIF in 1998 by donating some of her family's collection and helped make the AIF known in Cairo by hosting a presentation at the British Cultural Center. "People need to see Arab photography in order to understand that there is a richness to it, and that what they have in their own family archives might enhance this richness," she says. Such collecting trips and informal networking have become part of the foundation's core activities, and the collection now holds contributions from more than 150 private collections from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

Above: ***Naga family gathered for the birthday of Nelly Naga,*** **Sayyed Naga. Cairo, 1937. Busseina Saleh Younes Collection.**

The collecting efforts have benefited from the fundraising successes of AIF Executive Director Zeina Arida, who joined in 1997 as the first full-time staff member. While the European Union grant supported initial operating expenses, she helped secure further funds, earmarked for collecting, from the Dutch Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development. This money financed a trip to Iraq in the spring of last year by member Yto Barrada, a Moroccan photographer, during which she gathered images from a number of private collections. This year, AIF's expanding operations are being underwritten by a $150,000 grant from the US-based Ford Foundation as well as funds from other donors, most of them in the UK and Lebanon.

Arida's goal for the AIF lies beyond solvency, she says, in a system through which research monies will be available dependably each year, so that collecting trips can be planned strategically, rather than grafted onto to the personal travel plans of AIF members. She is also concentrating increasingly on soliciting Arab-based support to reduce the

AIF's reliance on European and North American philanthropy. "It is beginning to be a question of ethics," she says. "More Arabs should be involved in our activities, and this includes monetary support."

Though impressive to date, the AIF's collecting efforts are still very young, says Elkoury. "Don't forget, this is the *Arab* Image Foundation, meaning from Morocco to Saudi Arabia. The area is vast. So far we've only been to some families in Morocco, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. And recently we've sent Yto to Iraq, where it is rich with photographs, but where conditions are very difficult."

In researching photos, the AIF takes the original print or negative, makes a copy, and gives that copy to the owner of the original. Information about the original is documented, the image is digitally scanned and the print or negative is put into archival storage for safekeeping. "It isn't always easy to get people to part with their photographs," says Zaatari. "They want to know why we're interested in their grandmother. We tell them, 'Yes, it's a photo of your grandmother, but it's a historical record, too.'"

The foundation has had to find ways to ensure that donors are comfortable with the future uses of their photographs. If a donor doesn't want his or her photographs reproduced or exhibited, the foundation designates such images as in-house resources.

These receive the same conservation efforts and make the same contribution to historical knowledge, but the donor's wish for privacy is respected. In most cases, however, donors of photographs share both the copyright of their images and any royalties generated from their use.

Although collecting and exhibiting are the centerpieces of day-to-day activities, AIF members are also finding that the foundation is becoming a crossroads of sorts, a salon for contemporary Arab photographers. With nearly all 10 current members working somewhere in the field of photographic arts, says Zaatari, "a lot of Arab photographers are contacting us. They want to be affiliated with the foundation because they are interested in seeing more, and because they want to communicate with other photographers or other people in the field." In this way, the AIF may contribute to the current evolution of Arab photography. Zaatari adds that he would like to see exhibitions featuring contemporary work, and that contemporary work is beginning to be included in thematic exhibitions. "Until now our collecting has been limited to the period until the 1970's," he says, "because the notion of the photographer as artist did not take root in the region until then."

The AIF's two most recent exhibitions, "The Vehicle" and "Mapping/Sitting" move in this direction. They are conceptual shows in that they use photographs as bits of evidence that collectively illustrate and explore a historic theme. Although the photographs are historical, drawn from the archive, they lay the groundwork for AIF's showing of contemporary Arab photography in the future because they offer the beginning of a discourse on Arab visual culture that can easily encompass new artistic work.

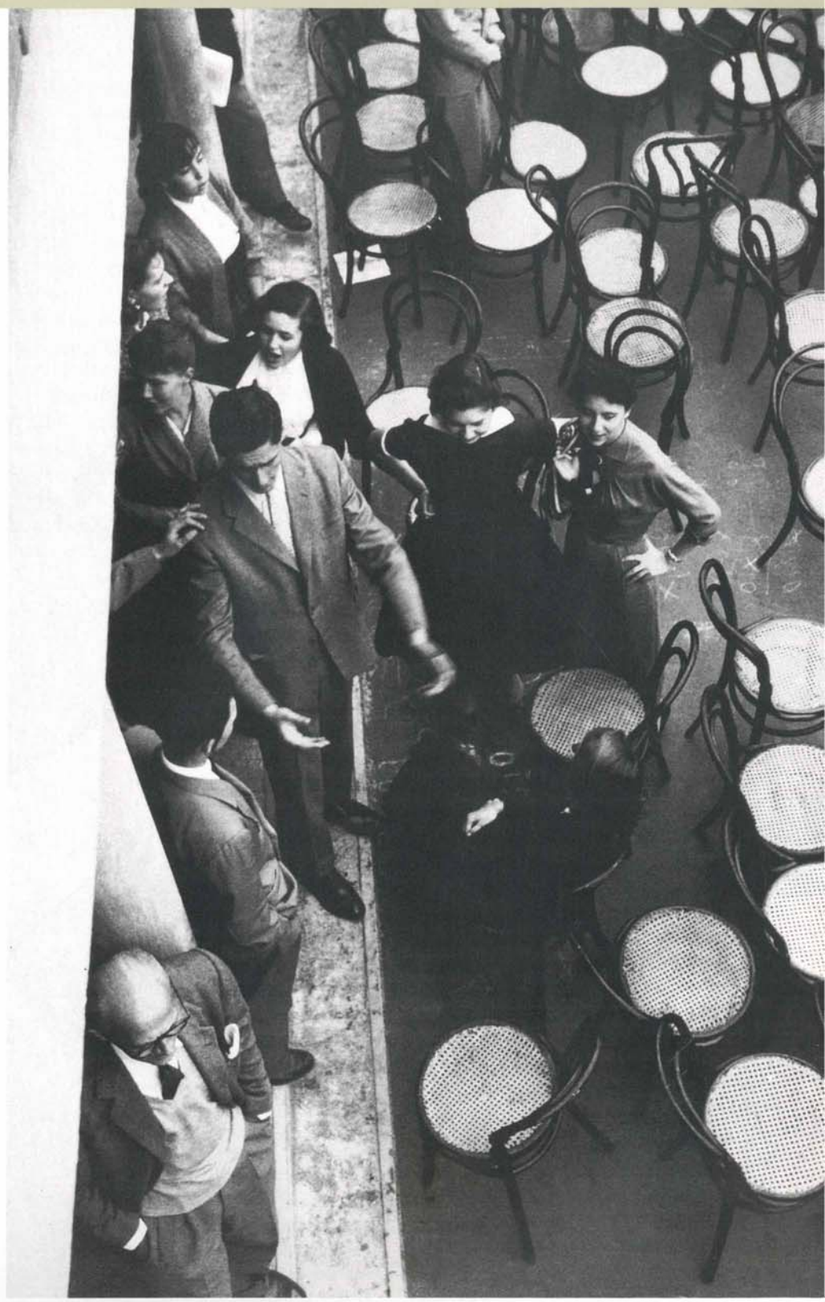
"The Vehicle: Picturing Moments of Transition in a Modernizing Society" examined ways the Arab world internalized notions of "modernity"; it was displayed in Beirut, Amman, Cairo and Damascus. While the exhibition's title literally refers to the new or improving modes of transportation—cars, ships, trains, planes, bicycles and motorcycles—the show maintains that the camera itself was no less of a "transporting" device: The amateurs who bought Kodak box cameras at the turn of the century to photograph their families, friends, trips and the events around them were also creating a collective portrait of their society. In this show, Zaatari says, "photos of the new means of transport are used as a metaphor for a society and its people on their way to modernity."

The exhibition's categories—speed, mobility, liberation, collective imagination and looking at oneself—not only depict Arabs often literally in the driver's seat, but they also depict, for example, women exercising new social privileges, men humorously flexing muscles at picnics, and individuals and families playing with alternative identities by posing with varied props and costuming themselves as beggars, noblemen, soldiers, villagers, artists and so on. "They all illustrate a fascination with 'the look,' or maybe a celebration of the newly permissible pleasures of modernity," says Zaatari.

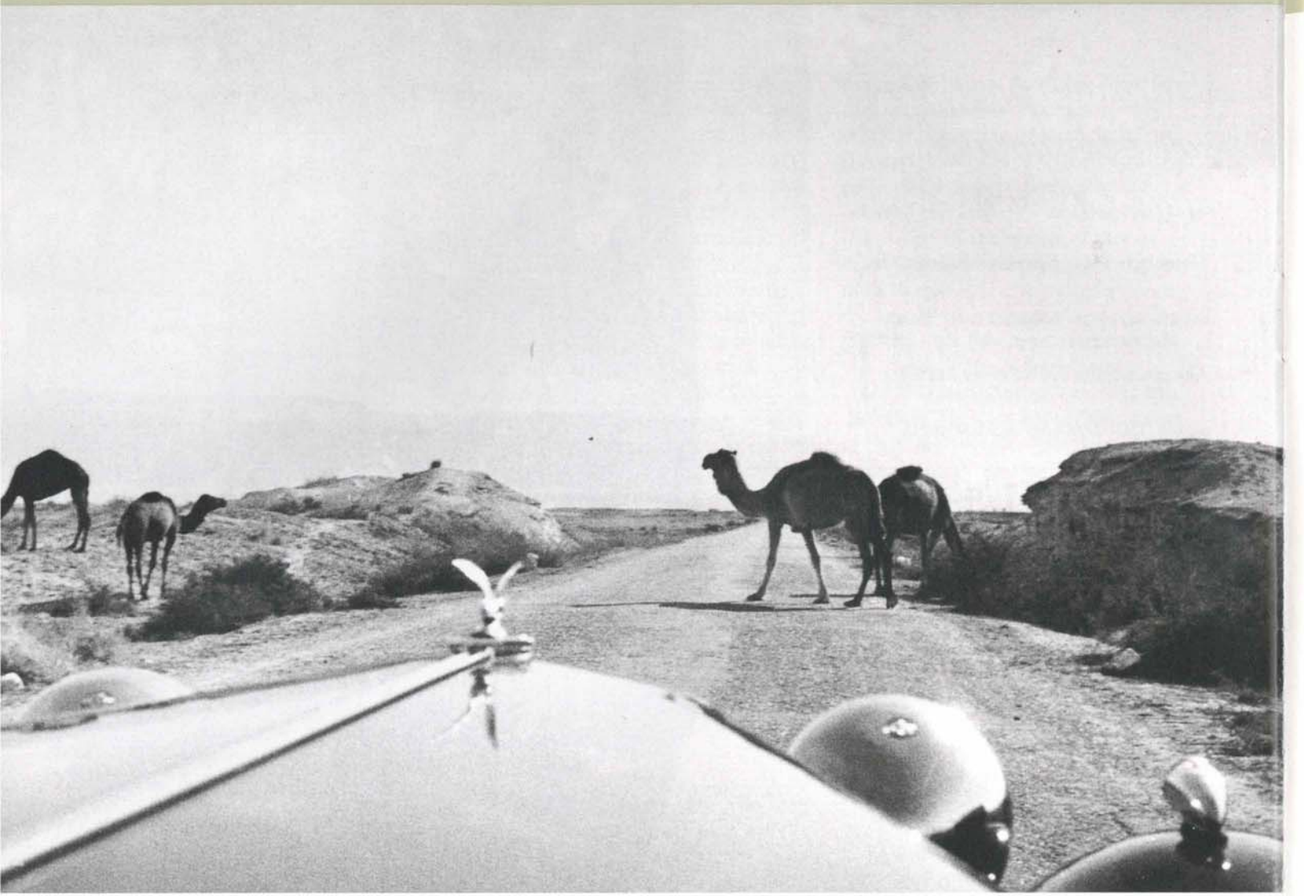
Right: ***Feast day in Baghdad,*** **Latif el 'Ani. Baghdad, 1960. Latif el 'Ani Collection.**
Above: ***Beauty contest for children,*** **Chafic el Soussi. Saïda, Lebanon, 1954. Chafic el Soussi Collection.**

The collecting efforts are very young, says Elkoury.

"THIS IS THE *ARAB* IMAGE FOUNDATION, MEANING FROM MOROCCO TO SAUDI ARABIA. SO FAR WE'VE ONLY BEEN TO SOME [150] FAMILIES IN MOROCCO, EGYPT, PALESTINE, SYRIA, JORDAN, LEBANON AND IRAQ."



Above: ***Gathering at the terrace of a coffee shop,*** **photographer unknown. Lebanon, 1955. Leila Takieddine Collection.**



"Mapping/Sitting" is scheduled to open in Beirut in July. It brings archival collections of studio portraiture, passport photography and institutional group portraits together with a body of contemporary work called "Photosurprise" by Hashem al-Madani, a Lebanese photographer, who made images of passersby every day from the same locations, usually public spaces such as streets or beaches in Lebanon, Egypt and Palestine.

Curated by Zaatari and AIF member Walid Ra'ad, a photographer and professor of visual culture at the City University of New York, Queen's College, "Mapping/Sitting" seeks to "dissect" forms of portraiture to discern the logic of the choices photographers made in creating their images—their "mapping"—of faces and places. According to Zaatari, "we want to reveal the codes that photographers used constantly and repetitively with different clients. For example, with some studio photographers, there would always be a close-up of the client's face, a three-quarter view and a full-length shot."

Top: ***On the road to the Dead Sea,* Hisham Abdel Hadi. Palestine, 1955. Abdel Hadi Family Collection.** Above: ***Dajani family,* photographer unknown. Beirut, 1945. Rabiha Dajani Collection.**

Ra'ad sees "Mapping/Sitting" and other such forward-looking, conceptual AIF exhibitions as necessary endeavors in creating both a contemporary Arab visual culture and an Arab understanding of the past through images. "The works in this project share a commitment to the kind of photography that is repetitious and seemingly endless," he says. "These images provide ways of thinking of Arab photography in culturally and socially critical terms," rather than as discrete works of art by individual artists. Or, as Zaatari puts it playfully, "It's as if you write the same postcard to all your friends and each one thinks it is a personalized message. But if someone were to collect all the postcards and put them side by side, a different 'message' would come through," one that spoke to the purposes for which this was done, who was included and who was not, and so on.

Regardless of contemporary contributions, the archive will continue to be the backbone of many of AIF's exhibitions and publications, and in Beirut it is largely Arida who has organized it. One of the few AIF members who is not a photo-artist herself, she is the resident expert when it comes to conserving prints and negatives rescued from non-archival sources. Assisted by archivist Tamara Sawaya, Arida is also the administrative muscle behind the AIF's digital database, which after more than two years of often tedious scanning, cataloging, repairing and copyrighting now contains some 9000 images, or more than half of the entire archive. This project may lack the glamour of the larger-than-life-size prints hung for "Cairo Portraits" or the percolating modernity of "The Vehicle," but it creates a resource that, when it becomes publicly available on-site and online, will make the AIF collection accessible around the world.

Once it is online, Arida aims to begin improving the physical condition of the photographs in the archive. "We store all of our negatives and prints in a temperature- and humidity-controlled storage area, so what we have won't deteriorate more than it already has. But we would like to do more restoration work," she says. To prepare, she attended conferences in Europe last summer to learn more about photographic restoration, and she has proposed a conservation exchange program with the National Photo Restoration Workshop in Rotterdam.

With its own exhibit space and an online presence, the Arab Image Foundation is no longer a fledgling in 2001. The breadth of its promise gives it momentum as it explores its own middle ground, an ever-growing collection of pictures "in between" that reveal parts of Arab culture not previously visible to either an Arab or an international public. ⊕

DESPITE ITS HISTORICAL FOCUS, *the AIF is becoming a salon for contemporary Arab photographers.* "MAPPING/SITTING," TO OPEN IN JULY, WILL BE THE FIRST AIF SHOW TO BLEND CONTEMPORARY WITH ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS.

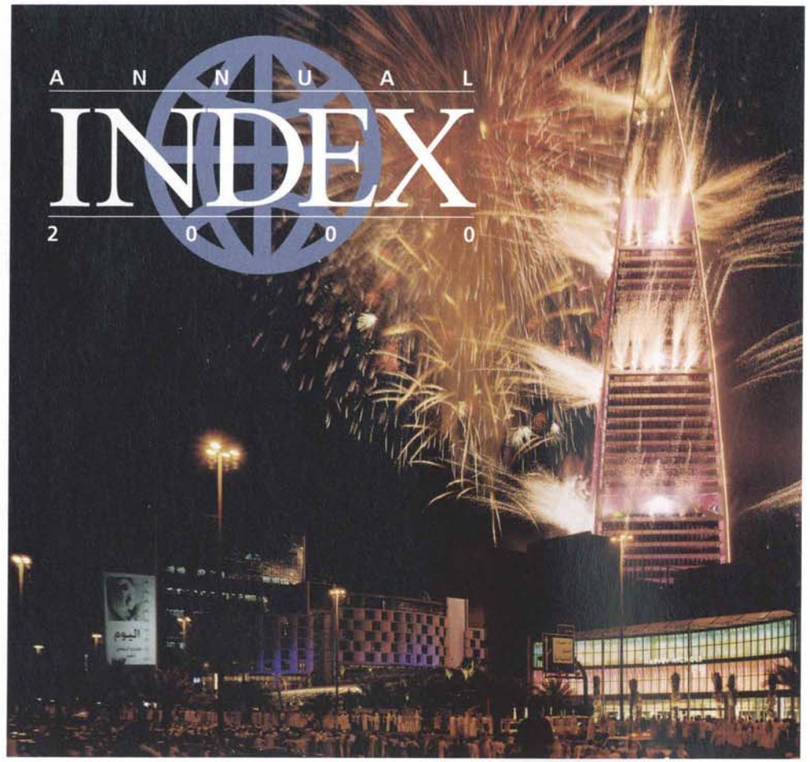
Above: ***King Ghazi I of Iraq piloting,* photographer unknown. Iraq, 1933. Arab Image Foundation Collection.** Below: ***Welding on the Darbendi Khan water pipeline project,* Latif el 'Ani. Iraq, 1961. Latif el 'Ani Collection.**

Lynn Love is a former editor of the visual arts journal *Afterimage* who lives in New York. Last year she was a writer-in-residence at the American University in Beirut. Her e-mail address is KLL911@earthlink.net.

www.fai.org.lb

Related articles have appeared in these past issues of *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World:*

Early photography in the Middle East: November/December 1983, July/August 1989
Ottoman use of photography: January/February 1989
First photographs of Makkah and Madinah: January/February 1999



SUBJECTS

KING FAISAL FOUNDATION

NORMAN MACDONALD

TITLES

AUTHORS

PHOTOGRAPHERS

ILLUSTRATORS

INSTITUTIONS

Events&Exhibitions

Frederick Arthur Bridgman, "An Interesting Game," 1881.
BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870–1930 presents seminal paintings by Jean-Léon Gérôme, Frederic Edwin Church, John Singer Sargent and William Merrit Chase along with decorative arts (some by Louis Comfort Tiffany), sheet music, advertisements, Shriner memorabilia, photographs, fashion items and Hollywood posters and film stills. All demonstrate how images and impressions of "the Orient"—which then meant mostly North Africa and the Levant—were created, and often marketed, to suit American needs, creating stereotypes that endure to this day. "People constructed an imaginary Orient," says art historian Holly Edwards, who originally curated the show for the Clark Art Institute. "Some people needed escape from the modern world. Some people needed religious inspiration. Some simply needed to have a good time." The landmark exhibit shows the gradual acceptance of a "constructed" and imaginary "Orient" into US cultural thought, some three decades after it was introduced. The first part of the exhibit covers 1870 to 1893, when Orientalist fashion came to the US from Europe and became popular among industrialism's new elites. Although US painters of the time looked to Continental (mostly French) Orientalists for style, US Orientalist content was both more positive and more conservative. The second part opens with the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where US Orientalism began to move into the mass-culture world of music halls, movie houses, department stores and consumer culture. "This is an Orient that has dominated the world of advertising until our own times," notes Oleg Grabar of Princeton University in the exhibit's catalog ($60 hb/$30 pb). Information: www.mintmuseum.org. Mint Museum of Art, **Charlotte, North Carolina**, February 3 through April 22.

<<< January

Teaching About the Arab World and Islam is the theme of teacher workshops co-sponsored by the Middle East Policy Council in Washington, D.C., and conducted by Arab World And Islamic Resources and School Services (AWAIR) of Berkeley, California. Sites and dates include: **DeSoto, Texas**, January 19; **Salt Lake City, Utah**, February 3; **Dallas**, February 10; **Norfolk, Virginia**, February 16; **San Jose, California**, February 24; **Lansing, Michigan**, March 3; **Brooklyn, New York**, March 13; **Boston**, March 17; **Oakland, California**, March 31; **Amherst, Massachusetts**, April 2; **Boulder, Colorado**, May 15-16. Information: 284-495-9742, awair@igc.apc.org.

Sultan 'Ali of Mashhad, Master of Nasta'liq displays the art of the calligrapher, born in Mashhad, Iran in 1442, who became the definitive practitioner of *nasta'liq*, a calligraphic style favored in the 15th and 16th centuries for poetic texts written in Persian. Two dozen works, some enlivened with brilliant illumination, are on display, as well as samples by two of his best-known pupils, Mir 'Ali of Herat and Sultan Muhammad Nur. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, January 19 through April 22.

Egyptian Art at Eton College: Selections From the Myers Museum presents some 150 works of art from one of the least-known and finest collections of Egyptian decorative art, assembled by an alumnus of the college. The exhibition includes a series of remarkable faience chalices and bowls, an electrum pectoral and a finely carved fragmentary statuette. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through January 21.

Gold of the Nomads: Scythian Treasures from Ancient Ukraine presents 165 of the finest gold objects from Scythian graves and burial mounds, many in the "animal style" associated with the Central Asian steppes, and many excavated since 1975 and thus never before exhibited in the United States. The Scythians were a nomadic people who originated in Central Asia in the early first millennium BC and flourished in what is now Ukraine from the fifth to the third century BC through trade with the Greek cities of the Black Sea coast. Their arms, horse trappings and other artifacts show Near Eastern and Greek influence, and the recently excavated items are causing a reevaluation of the interrelationships among the Aegean world, the Near East, and Central Asia as far east as Mongolia. **Brooklyn [New York]** Museum of Art, through January 21; Royal Ontario Museum, **Toronto**, February 18 to May 6.

Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur presents 150 extraordinary objects revealing traditions of royal life and death, excavated in the 1920's by Sir Leonard Woolley. They include the famous "Ram in the Thicket"—a statuette of a goat nibbling the leaves of a tree—jewelry, a comb, a wooden lyre decorated with a gold-and-lapis bull's head, games, furniture, seals and vessels of gold, silver and alabaster, many found in the intact tomb of a woman—a queen or high priestess—named Pu-abi who died between 2600 and 2500 BC, a high point of Sumerian culture. Catalogue $50/$35. Oriental Institute Museum, **Chicago**, through January 21.

Court and Conquest: Ottoman Origins and Design for Handel's "Tamerlano" at the Glimmerglass Opera juxtaposes sumptuous, self-consciously Baroque-Orientalist costumes by Judy Levin, produced for Jonathan Miller's 1995 production of Handel's 1724 opera, with the Ottoman, Timurid and European Orientalist works of art, borrowed from US and British collections, that inspired the designs. Levin's task was substantial: Design for an opera composed in 18th-century Europe, set in 15th-century Turkey, and performed in the present-day US and Europe. The exhibit was originally organized by the Kent State [Ohio] University Museum. Catalogue. Brunei Gallery, **London**, January 24 through March 23.

Canadian Society for Syriac Studies public lectures include *Icons and Syrian Inscriptions in the Monastery of the Syrians in Egypt*, by Lukas van Rompay (Duke University), January 25; *Frescoes and Syriac Inscriptions in Medieval Churches in Lebanon*, by Erica Dodd (Victoria University), February 15; and *Syriac Heritage at the Northern Silk Road*, by Wassilios Klein (Bonn University). All lectures begin at 8:00 p.m. Information: aharrak@chass.utoronto.ca. Earth Sciences Center, University of **Toronto**.

A Calligrapher's Art: Inscribed Cotton Ikat From Yemen. Weavers, calligraphers and dyers joined forces in the ninth and 10th centuries to produce striped cotton textiles that were so highly valued that rulers might give them to subjects whom they wished to honor. Some of these fabrics are inscribed in Arabic in ink or gold leaf, others bear embroidered inscriptions, embroidered geometric patterns, or woven repeat patterns, often warp resist-dyed. This significant collection is exhibited for the first time. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, January 26 through April 29.

Tribal Traditions: Village and Nomadic Weaving of Anatolia shows village-made flat-woven rugs, grain sacks, saddlebags and other items decorated in bold patterns and designs. These once explicitly identified the tribal affiliation of their makers, but the forced settlement of nomadic groups in Anatolia (Asian Turkey), which began as early as the 16th century, brought differing tribes into contact and began the blending of designs, so that in the 19th and early 20th centuries they ceased to be means of identification. While the names of many of these groups have been lost, a strong design tradition remains and links these beautiful weavings to specific regions or even villages. Thirty-five rugs, bags and bands from the Museum's collection explore four regions known for their "classic" textile designs: Bergama, Konya, Malatya and Erzurum. Information: www.textilemuseum.org. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through January 28.

The Unknown Paradise: Archaeological Treasures from Bahrain presents nearly 600 objects outlining 4500 years of the history of this past and present center of international trade in the Arabian Gulf. The Sumerians saw Dilmun, as they called it, as a prelapsarian paradise; it figures in the Epic of Gilgamesh. As the bronze-age commercial link among the civilizations of the Indus, Oman and Mesopotamia, Bahrain was the home of the rich and sophisticated Dilmun civilization (2100–1700 BC), whose most important trading commodity was copper. Bahrain enjoyed another, less well-known florescence at the intersection of Hellenic and Parthian culture (300 BC–AD 600), when it was known as Tylos. Sites from that period have yielded carved stelai, glass from as far away as Egypt, and jewelry of gold, precious stones and the famous Gulf pearls. Information: +49-351-814-450. Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte (Museum of Prehistory), **Dresden**, January 31 through July 8.

<<< February

Intifadat Al-Aqsa is a collection of recent photographs of the current Palestinian resistance by Ramallah-based Reuters stringer and photography teacher Osama Silwadi, one of the youngest of Palestinian photojournalists. Sony Gallery for Photography, **Cairo**, through February 1.

Afghanistan Under the Taliban: A Selection from Fazal Sheikh's The Victor Weeps. In a little over a decade, Sheikh has become a significant portraitist who uses photojournalistic techniques to make brave, compelling, strikingly compassionate photo-documents from some of the world's most beleaguered places. Tracing his own family roots in Afghanistan and working covertly, he has produced portraits that tell a tragic story with rare grace. Art Institute of **Chicago**, through February 4.

Antioch: The Lost Ancient City brings the inhabitants of Antioch and their public and private lives in the second through sixth centuries into the museum. A variety of objects that have survived the vicissitudes of time—mosaics, sculpture, frescoes, glass, metalwork, pottery, coins, weights—are re-placed in the context of their architectural and cultural environments. The 160 objects, including some of the finest examples of mosaics from Antioch, evoke the luxury of the domestic settings of the elite as well as the street life of a polyglot urban metropolis. Catalogue. Information: www.worcesterart.org. **Worcester [Massachusetts]** Art Museum, through February 4; **Cleveland [Ohio]** Museum of Art, March 18 through June 3.

The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes displays spectacular finds of gold and silver recently excavated in Bashkortostan, Russia along with related Scythian, Sarmatian and Siberian objects from the Hermitage Museum. Created around the fifth to fourth century BC by nomadic peoples who lived in the steppes of the southern Ural region, these distinctive works of art include wooden deer-like creatures overlaid with sheets of gold and silver, as well as gold attachments for vessels and gold plaques that originally adorned leather or fabric. The subjects are similar to those of Scythian art, but the vibrant curvilinear elaboration of the body surfaces is unique in the area and resembles the style of artworks found much farther east, in the frozen tombs of the Altai region of Siberia and in western China. Catalogue. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through February 4.

Ikat: Splendid Silks of Central Asia. Isolated from the expanding industrial world, 19th century Bukhara and Samarkand (in today's Uzbekistan) dveloped the labor-intensive, richly colored, explosively patterned silks known as ikats. The Malay-Indonesian word denotes a cloth-making process in which threads are resist-dyed before weaving. Grouped in tiny bundles, threads are wrapped in selected areas to prevent color penetration. After dyeing, the wrap resist is removed, and the procedure is repeated for a second color, a third, and so on. Finally, the colorful, patterned threads are woven together with other, usually unpatterned, threads, on a loom. Practiced in many parts of the world, ikat-making reached its zenith in Bukhara and Samarkand, where guilds of craftsmen—among them Tajiks, Jews, and Uzbeks—cooperated. Despite their startling beauty and pervasive social importance, however, these ikats enjoyed only a brief flowering. During the 1870's, newly introduced synthetic dyes harshened their colors, and the Russian occupation of Central Asia undermined their intricate system of production. This exhibition includes 40 wall hangings, velvet strips, and robes, all drawn from the Boston's Guido Goldman Collection, the largest and most comprehensive private collection of Central Asian ikats. Catalog illustrates 70 textiles, including those on view. **Denver** Art Museum, February 10 through April 29.

Syria, Land of Civilizations assembles more than 400 cultural treasures to present one of the world's oldest cultural centers. The exhibition views 12,000 years of history from successive viewpoints: first, social and political organization: the establishment of villages, the rise of cities, the creation of kingdoms and of empires; then economic organization: the invention of agriculture, the processing of raw materials, the development of trade and the management of production and commerce; and spiritual organization: the concept of divinity, the rise of temples, the creation of rituals and the appearance of monotheistic religions. Finally, the exhibition highlights the West's intellectual and scientific ties to Syria. Catalogue. Provincial Museum of **Alberta, Edmonton, Canada**, February 10 through May 13.

Fabric of Enchantment: Indonesian Batik from the North Coast of Java places colorful batik (fabric dyed in a wax-resist process) made in the late 18th to the mid-20th century in an esthetic, social, and historical context. Long overlooked by both connoisseurs and scholars who had concentrated on the traditional Indonesian

Continued from previous page

batik of central Java, the foreign-influenced patterns in north coast batik are both visually stunning and highly complex. Drawn from the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the exhibition comprises 48 outstanding examples that reveal the development of north coast batik through an examination of the relationship between wearers and makers. On the north coast, as elsewhere, dress was the major means for communicating identity. The wearing of batik was, and to some extent still is, a key element in distinguishing ethnic affiliation, marital status, social standing, and occasion. The textiles in this show are masterpieces of the batik-maker's art; at the same time they provide insight into the dynamics of a unique, multicultural society. **Cleveland [Ohio]** Museum of Art, through February 11.

Human Image is a thematic introduction to the museum's collections through 100 representations of the human form arranged across broad reaches of history and geography into topical clusters—creation, devotion, perfection, power and others—that highlight both universalities and great differences. Curators have designed a radically interdisciplinary show to "challenge received understandings and provoke debate surrounding the role and purpose of the contemporary museum exhibition." British Museum, **London**, through February 11.

Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and Tutankhamen focuses on the cultural flowering of the Amarna period—a brief two decades in the mid-14th century BC—that centered on the revolutionary pharaoh Akhenaten, sometimes called the first monotheist. His capital, Amarna, was a city of 20,000 to 30,000 people; with his wife, Nefertiti, he engineered a wholesale reorganization of Egyptian religion, art and politics. The exhibition presents more than 300 objects from 37 museums and private lenders. Catalogue $30. Information: www.rmo.nl/. Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, **Leiden, Netherlands**, through February 18.

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Lion rhyton from Ecbatana (now Hamadan), a former capital of Iran, 500–450 BC.
NATIONAL MUSEUM, TEHRAN

7000 Years of Persian Art: *Masterpieces from the Iranian National Museum, Tehran* marks the first time since 1979 that an exhibit from the National Museum has traveled abroad. Some 180 objects survey one of the richest artistic heritages in the Islamic world, from decorated ceramics from the earliest times to objects dating from the 10th century, when Islam's visual vocabulary had developed along lines that maintained stylistic roots in Persian tradition. The gold and silver vessels of the Achaemenid kings (558–330 BC) are one of the exhibit's highlights; Selucid, Parthian and Sassanid dynasties produced their own masterworks of metals, ceramics, glass and jewelry. Catalog (in German) ös 590. Information: www.khm.at. Kunsthistorisches Museum, **Vienna**, through March 25.

Chant Avedissian: A Contemporary Artist of Egypt shows scroll-like paintings, executed on corrugated cardboard, that encompass both current and historical Egyptian images, from political figures to everyday objects, in pursuit of "the essence of an Egyptian way of seeing." Gallery talk by Elizabeth Harney, curator, February 18, 2:00 p.m. National Museum of African Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through February 19.

Earthen Architecture: Constructive Cultures and Sustainable Development is the theme of six separate, intensive courses in project design and building and conservation techniques, many of which are drawn from traditional methods of the Middle East. Course lengths vary from four days to four weeks, and all instruction is in French. Information: www.craterre.archi.fr. CRATerre-EAG, **Grenoble, France**. The first course begins February 19; the last one ends October 26.

Palace of Gold and Light: Treasures from the Topkapı, Istanbul. Showcasing the splendor of Turkey's rich history and cultural heritage, this exhibition features more than 200 works of art and artifacts from the Topkapı Palace collections. The heart of the Ottoman dynasty for 400 years, Topkapı houses an extraordinary range of objects, including silk and satin costumes, carpets from imperial looms, military trappings, calligraphic works, ceramics and porcelains. The exhibition is divided into thematic sections that focus on the palace as the center of dynastic power, military administration and religious leadership as well as a domestic residence. Museum of Art, **Fort Lauderdale**, through February 28.

The Art and Tradition of the Zuloagas: Spanish Damascene from the Khalili Collection features some of the finest work of Plácido Zuloaga, a late?19th-century Spanish master of the art of damascening, the process of decorating iron, steel or bronze surfaces with gold or silver "onlays." The process took its name from Damascus, from where it spread to Italy and Spain, although it may have originated in China. Carolo Quinto Museum, Alhambra Palace, **Granada**, through February; Real Fundacion de **Toledo**, March to May.

Islamic Works on Paper: Recent Acquisitions shows paintings, calligraphy, bound manuscripts and drawings including a Mamluk Qur'an manuscript and contemporary graphics from artists of Middle Eastern and Muslim heritage. Information: www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk. British Museum, **London**, through February.

<< March

The Eternal Image: Egyptian Art from the British Museum is the first loan ever of some 150 pieces that span 3000 years of Egyptian history, from a tiny royal portrait of carved ivory to the colossal granite statue of Seti II. Included also are rare wooden sculptures and papyrus paintings, neither of which survived the passage of years in great numbers. Information: 419-225-8000, www.toledomuseum.org. **Toledo [Ohio]** Museum of Art, March 2 through May 27.

Artists from the Arab Maghreb highlights Algerian, Libyan, Moroccan and Tunisian artists in the final of six surveys of contemporary Arab-world arts, with an emphasis on painting. Information: www.daratalfunun.org. Darat al Funun, **Amman, Jordan**, through March 8.

Emperors on the Nile: Roman Egypt presents a broad view of the Roman occupation of Egypt, displaying more than 250 objects from European museums. Allard Pierson Museum, **Amsterdam**, through March 11.

Mysteries of Egypt includes more than 350 artifacts, large graphics, and a carefully recreated tomb to inform visitors about the intellectual, artistic, and practical achievements of the ancient Egyptians. Companion exhibit **Women of the Nile** explores the essential role of women and the variety of their responsibilities in the four primary aspects of Egyptian life: in the home, the temple, the palace and the afterlife. Glenbow Museum, **Calgary, Alberta**, Canada through March 11.

A Distant Muse: Orientalist Works from the Dahesh Museum of Art extends investigations around the "discovery" of Islamic and Arab lands ("the Orient") by Europeans in the 19th century through 50 works that demonstrate that Orientalism was not a simple dynamic between subject and object or a matter of Western dominance and Eastern dependency, but rather a more complex "convergence of influences" that included Middle Easterners who participated in the orientalizing of their own cultures for their own advantage. Information: www.flagler.org. Flagler Museum, **Palm Beach, Florida**, through March 25.

Foreign Affairs: Islamic Ceremonial Documents From the Royal Archives shows about 100 beautifully decorated calligraphic documents sent from various courts of the Islamic world to the Dutch government from the 17th to the 20th centuries. Most have never before been exhibited. They are complemented by maps, painting and engravings to provide a general picture of the rich and long-standing connections between Holland and the Islamic world. Peripheral events include concerts of classical Iraqi and Turkish music and calligraphy lessons. Wereldmuseum **Rotterdam** (formerly Museum voor Volkenkunde), through March 25.

India Through the Lens: Photography 1840–1911 presents 135 photographs taken on the Indian subcontinent during photography's early golden age. The exhibition emphasizes the esthetic qualities of the images as much as their social and historical importance, and highlights the art of the panoramic photograph, the British passion for archeological and ethnographic documentation, and the work of Felice Beato, who recorded the aftermath of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. Also on view are Samuel Bourne's landscapes, and works by Lala Deen Dayal, an Indian photographer equally at home in the opposing worlds of Indian princes and British viceroys. Catalogue. **India Through Your Lens**, a community-based electronic exhibit, is at www.asia.si.edu/indiaphotos. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through March 25.

<< April

Agatha Christie and the East: Criminology and Archeology traces those two strands in the life of the "Queen of Crime," displaying diaries; hitherto unpublished photographs of Christie and her husband, archeologist Max Mallowan; more than 200 artifacts from his excavations in Iraq and Syria; and a compartment from the Orient Express. The exhibition emphasizes Christie's participation in the digs as restorer and photographer. Antikenmuseum **Basel**, through April 1.

Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Khalili Collection explores the influence of the Ottoman sultans over affairs of state and religion with displays of calligraphy, Qur'ans, manuscripts, arms and armor, metalwork, ceramics, textiles and scientific instruments from the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. Catalogue. **Portland [Oregon]** Art Museum, through April 8.

The Glory of Ancient Egypt's Civilization displays more than 123 objects selected from the inexhaustible collection of the Egyptian Museum of Cairo and the Luxor Museum, including images of the gods, pharaohs, and officials who ruled this world and the next, the vessels meant to serve the dead in the afterlife, and the various types of gold ornaments that symbolize Egypt's royal culture, including the famous golden mask of Psusennes I. National Museum of Art, **Osaka**, through April 8; Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, **Sapporo**, April 21 through July 1.

A Seal Upon Thy Heart: Glyptic Art of the Ancient Near East features a selection of cylinder seals from ancient Mesopotamia, which had practical functions and also served as exquisite art, depicting mythological, decorative or animal scenes. They also provide modern scholars with information on the lives and beliefs of their users. Information: 404-727-4291, www.emory.edu/CARLOS/. Carlos Museum, Emory University, **Atlanta**, through April 8.

Asian Traditions in Clay: The Hauge Gifts presents 81 vessels from three important ceramic traditions. On display are 33 examples of ancient Iranian painted or burnished earthenware, 16 low-temperature–glazed earthenware works from Islamic Iran and Iraq, and 35 Khmer stoneware vessels. The exhibition explores the different technologies and uses associated with the objects and the different esthetics that gave rise to them. Catalogue. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through April 22.

Nuzi and the Hurrians: Fragments From a Forgotten Past opens a window on the little-known world of the Hurrians, displaying objects excavated at Nuzi, now Yorghan Tepe, in northeastern Iraq. Nuzi was only a provincial agricultural town, but yielded finds—including nearly 5000 cuneiform tablets—that illuminate everyday life in the 14th century BC. Very early glass, pottery and figurines, jewelry, tools and weapons are among the 150 objects on display, part of the largest Nuzi collection outside Iraq. Harvard Semitic Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, through April 2001.

<< May

Persepolis: Documenting an Ancient Iranian Capital, 1923–1935 displays photographs, sketchbooks, watercolors, scale drawings and "squeezes" (papier-mâché casts) of inscriptions made by German archeologist Ernst Herzfeld and the team from the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute that excavated Persepolis, one of the capital cities of the Achaemenid Persian empire that flourished between 558 and 330 BC and stretched from the Aegean to the Indus. The excavation set the stage for a new understanding of Persian imperial architecture and sculpture. Information: www.asia.si.edu. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through May 6.

Strokes of Genius: Contemporary Iraqi Art shows 55 works in varied media, selected by an intercultural curatorial panel, created by 34 Iraqi artists living in that country and in more than a dozen countries abroad. The 34 are among 150 artists, many of them young, who have contributed over five years to produce a book, website and traveling exhibition that highlights both historical roots and contemporary experiences. *Strokes of Genius* was initiated by Maysaloun Faraj, an Iraqi-American artist, and has drawn on a pool of volunteers and UK-based and international arts organizations, including the Arts Council and the British Museum. The book (of the same title) will use reproductions, interviews, essays and biographical sketches to impart a broad understanding of Iraqi art in recent decades (Saqi Books, £17.95 hb, available in May). Information: www.strokes-of-genius.com. Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, **Exeter** University, May 14 through July 20; Hotbath Galleries, **Bath**, August 8 through September 13.

<< Later

Sites Along the Nile: Rescuing Ancient Egypt is an exhibition of nearly 600 objects representing the cultural development of ancient Egypt from 5000 BC to the seventh century of our era. The artifacts were rescued by archeological excavations from looting and flooding of ancient temples and burial sites, making this collection a world-class resource for Egyptologists. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, **Berkeley, California**, through June 30.

Mysteries of the Mummies: Rotating Preview will present at least one important artifact—a coffin, a mummy, canopic jars, and so on—every six months as the museum cleans and conserves items in its important recent acquisition of ancient Egyptian artifacts. Information: 404-727-4291, www.emory.edu/CARLOS/. Carlos Museum, **Atlanta**, through summer.

Saudi Bedouin Jewelry displays more than 100 pieces donated recently by Lewis Hatch and Marie Kukuk that has doubled the collection of the Nance Museum. **Lone Jack, Missouri**, permanent.

Fountains of Light: Metalwork from the Nuhad Es-Said Collection features 27 elaborately inlaid base-metal objects, crafted in the Islamic world between the 10th and the 19th centuries, that were intended to rival the finest contemporary gold and silver works in their beauty and craftsmanship. The ewers, candlesticks, incense burners and vessels represent the heights of technical and esthetic achievement reached in that period in the regions that are now Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The exhibition includes silver-inlaid keys to the Ka'ba commissioned by Mamluk rulers to symbolize their role as defenders of the faith. Texts discuss techniques, materials and design. Catalog $90. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, indefinitely.

The Coptos Gateway, which dates to the second century BC, is the second-largest Egyptian object in a US museum collection. Taken apart in the Middle Ages, the order of its stones was only recently determined, allowing its reconstruction. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, permanent.

Early Islamic Inscribed Textiles. In a variety of materials, weaves, embroideries and ornamental schemes, these textiles from the early Islamic world (10th to 13th centuries) were most frequently used for clothing. They also displayed a wealth of information. The earliest and most prestigious of them, called *tiraz*, name the official factories in which they were made, and the recipient for whom the caliph had them made, and bear quotations from the Qur'an. These were extremely important "documents" of high status, keenly sought after and widely imitated. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, **Ann Arbor, Michigan**, permanent.

The Saudi Aramco Exhibit, newly renovated, relates the heritage of Arab-Islamic scientists and scholars of the past to the technology of today's petroleum exploration, production and transportation, set against the background of the natural history of Saudi Arabia. **Dhahran, Saudi Arabia**.

Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion in this listing.

Free-lance photojournalist David H. Wells, who has contributed regularly to *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World* since 1996, has been awarded an Alicia Patterson Foundation grant for 2001. His award will cover a year of work on stories about India, where he has traveled frequently in recent years: Three of his articles for us were from there. The Patterson fellowships have been one of journalism's most prestigious writers' and photographers' grants since 1965, when the award was established to commemorate the former publisher of the newspaper *Newsday*. Wells' new work will appear in the foundation's publication, *The APF Reporter*, and elsewhere.

Readers of Eric Hansen's article on *'ud*, or aloeswood, "The Hidden History of a Scented Wood," in our November/December 2000 issue, have written to ask where they can buy some of the precious aromatic to try. A US supplier of *'ud* chips and incenses made with *'ud* is Shoyeido Corporation, 1700 38th Street, Boulder, Colorado 80301. They can be reached at www.shoyeido.com or 800-786-5476.

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