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May/June 2010
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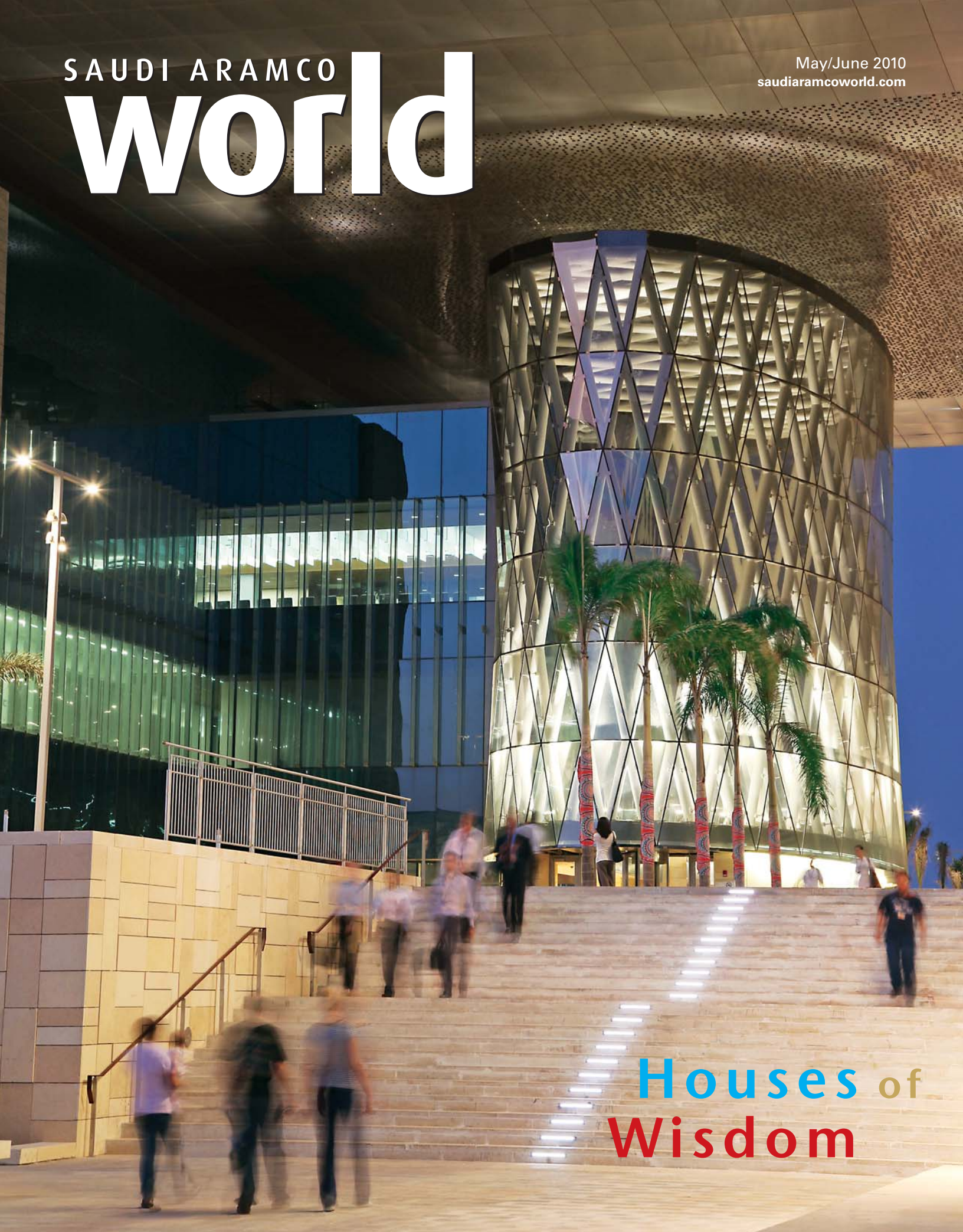

Houses of Wisdom

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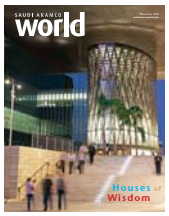
Cover



Newest of more than a dozen Gulf-region colleges and universities, most built within the last decade, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) opened its campus last fall to its first class of graduate students. Photo by J. B. Picoulet / PCP / KAUST.

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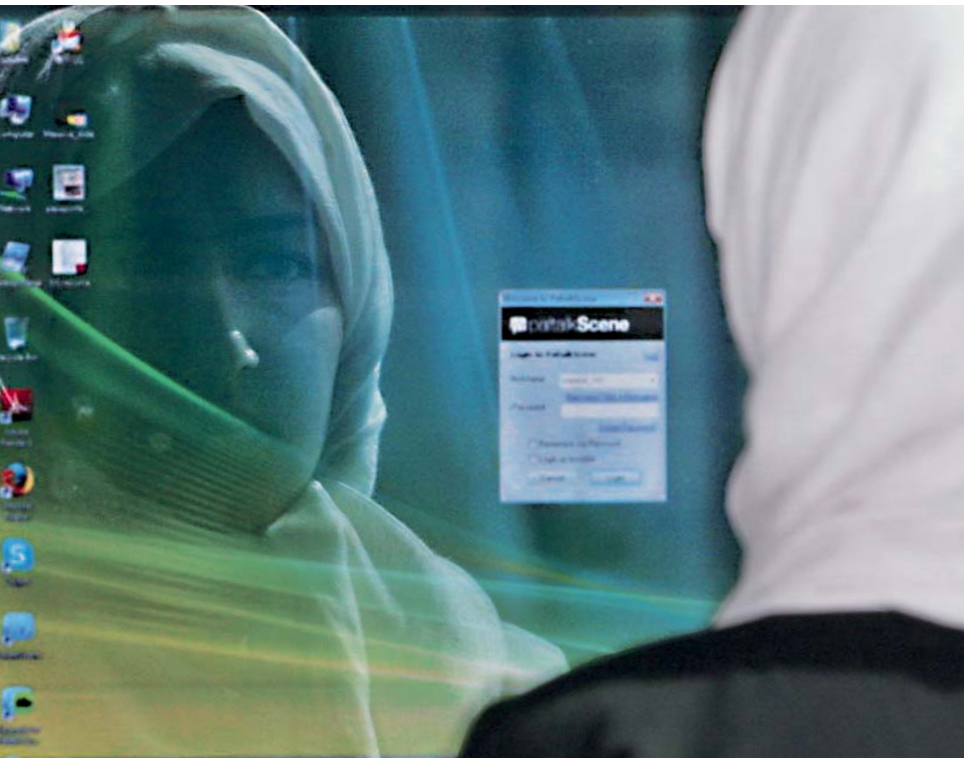
Back Cover

Barely containing her own excitement, the second-place winner in the children's Read-Aloud Competition at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair reacts to the judge's announcement of her name. Photo by Dick Doughty.

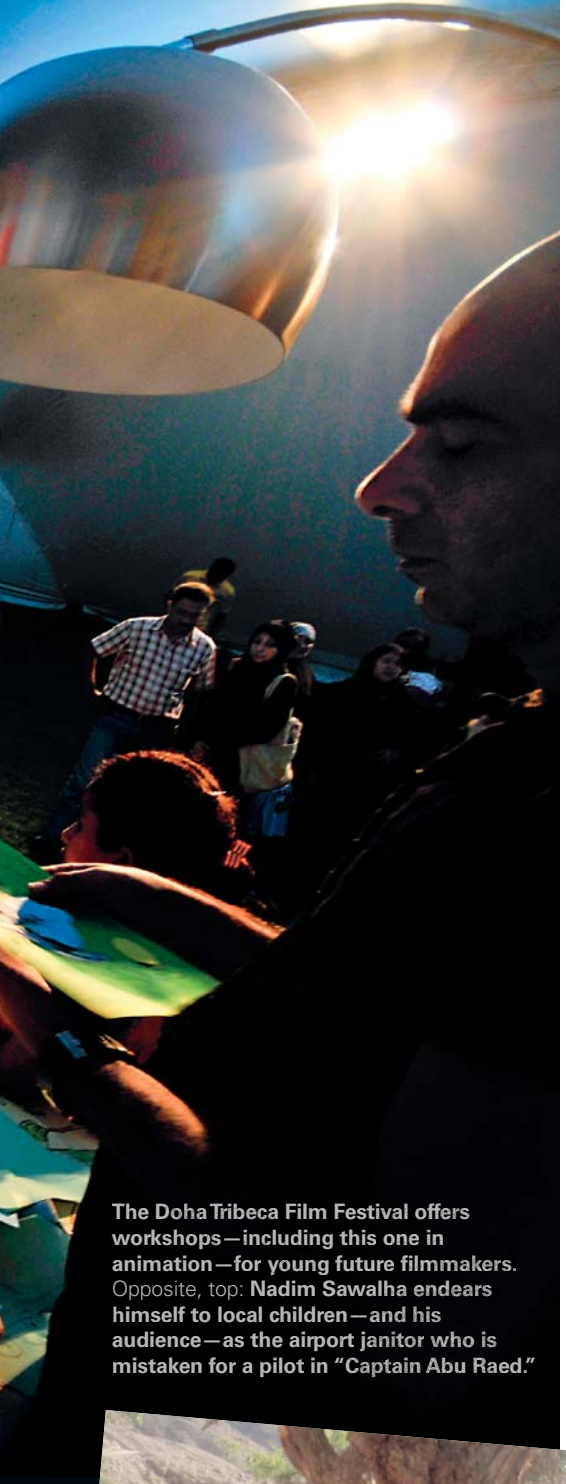
Saudi Aramco, the oil company born as an international enterprise more than seventy-five years ago, distributes *Saudi Aramco World* to increase cross-cultural understanding. The magazine's goal is to broaden knowledge of the cultures, history and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their connections with the West. *Saudi Aramco World* is distributed without charge, upon request, to a limited number of interested readers.



2: DOHA TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL; 7: TYPECAST FILMS; 24: J. B. PICOULET / PCP / KAUST

Focus on Film : The New Storytellers

Written by Piney Kesting



The Doha Tribeca Film Festival offers workshops—including this one in animation—for young future filmmakers. Opposite, top: **Nadim Sawalha endears himself to local children—and his audience—as the airport janitor who is mistaken for a pilot in "Captain Abu Raed."**

MAIN: DOHA TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL; TOP: COURTESY OF AMIN MATALQA; LOWER: ROYAL FILM COMMISSION (2)

Last autumn, seven aspiring young screenwriters packed their scripts and their hopes and traveled to a remote eco-lodge among the desert hills of Wadi Feynan in southern Jordan.

Arriving from Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria, Palestine, the US and Jordan, these men and women shared their common passion for filmmaking at the fifth annual Rawi Middle East Screenwriters Lab, where well-known creative advisors shared their expertise with the youngest generation of Arab and Arab-heritage filmmakers.

Rawi is one of the most ambitious of more than half a dozen initiatives, launched mostly in the last three years in the Middle East and the US, that are responding to the rising "new wave" of filmmakers and growing audience interest in films from the Arab world. From the Doha Tribeca Film Festival with its new, year-round educational programs to the Red Sea Institute of Cinematic Arts in Aqaba, the list also includes the Centre Cinématographique Marocain, the Screen Institute Beirut, Dubai Studio City, Abu Dhabi's Twofour54 and film fund Imagenation, and Jordan's Royal Film Commission. "I can't keep track of all the new film-related initiatives in the Arab world anymore," says Reem Bader, manager of Rawi. She attributes much of this to digital technology and the new accessibility it offers to the medium. "Through the Internet, YouTube and international media, film has become a much larger part of Arab culture."

Rawi was created in 2005 by the Royal Film Commission (RFC) of Jordan in partnership with the Sundance Institute in Utah. Since then, 37 new-generation filmmakers have attended. In 2005, fewer than 20 applications were submitted for the Lab's seven or eight fellowship slots; in 2009, more than 150 applications came in.

Left: **At the Rawi Middle East Screenwriters Lab in Jordan, director Yusry Nasrallah from Egypt listens to a student's script.** Above: **Michelle Satter, founding director of the US-based Sundance Institute's international Feature Film Program, supports the Rawi Lab. "We continuously look around the world to find the most exciting new voices," she says. "The next generation of artists is here."**

Director Cherien Dabis, left, **credits "hours of free advice" at the Rawi Lab with helping her finish her acclaimed debut "Amreeka."** Lower: **Alia Shawkat plays the independent-minded Salma.**

"We believe in these young filmmakers. They are the seeds of filmmaking in the Arab world," explains Mohannad Al-Bakri, whose title at the RFC is "Capacity Building Manager." Rawi, he explains, is a word that means "storyteller" in Arabic. Writer and director Tony Drazen was a creative advisor at the 2009 Lab. "What I found very compelling," he says, "is that most of the filmmakers wanted to tell profoundly dramatic stories about growing up in one of the Middle Eastern countries. The group was exciting. Even if the scripts weren't all well developed, the filmmakers and writers were very passionate people with intense life experiences."

Cherien Dabis, writer and director of "Amreeka," and Palestinian filmmaker Najwa Najjar, who wrote and directed "Pomegranates and Myrrh"–both films that premiered last year–are alumnae of the first Rawi Lab. "It was life-changing. I had given up on my script, but by the time I left the workshop, I had renewed faith in the story and in my characters. I wouldn't have finished my script if not for them," comments Najjar. Her film has gone on to win awards in regional and international film festivals.

"I was on the 12th draft of my script when I attended Rawi," explains Dabis. The advice she received at the workshop, she notes, was crucial to its further development, though she nonetheless went through 12 more drafts over the next two years. "I had amazing screenwriters like Zachary Sklar, who read my script and offered hours of free advice," exclaims Dabis. The story of a Palestinian mother and son who emigrate from the West Bank to rural Illinois against the backdrop of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, "Amreeka" premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and was released later that year for world distribution by National Geographic Entertainment. Designated one of the top 10 independent films of 2009, it was also a finalist for a coveted Gotham Spirit Award.

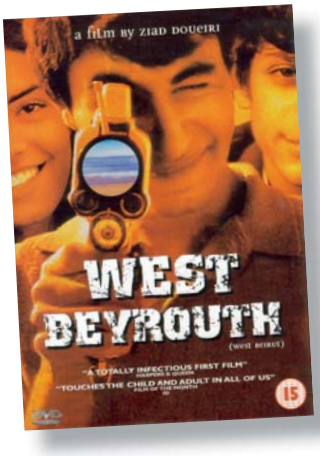
Dabis and Najjar both returned to Rawi in 2009 as mentors and creative advisors. "This encourages aspiring filmmakers," explains Michelle Satter, founding director of the Sundance Institute's Feature Film Program, which has also supported filmmakers' institutes in Latin America. "We want to be a beacon of inspiration, " she says. Years ago, she adds, she realized that "the Middle East was a part of the world we weren't hearing enough from. We continuously look around the world to find the most exciting new voices. Our interest in the Middle East came out of a sense that there is a bubbling of new talent and that the next generation of artists is there. Their work is very sophisticated. It is an exciting moment."

Amanda Palmer, executive director of the Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) in Qatar, emphasizes the region's history in filmmaking, particularly in Egypt, Lebanon, Iran and pre-war Iraq. "However, in the past five years, there has been more of what we call the 'new wave' of Arab filmmakers. These are the young filmmakers who have a cinema education and who know how to make big-budget films." More than 70 percent of the population of the Middle East is under the age of 30, says Palmer, and many in this Internet-savvy, well-traveled generation "have seen far more western films than I ever will. They are much more sophisticated cinematically than many people give them credit for," she observes.

"There is also a hunger among people in the region to tell their stories and to be acknowledged for their work, something which is happening more and more at international film festivals such as Cannes and the Berlinale," Palmer comments. At the 2009 Venice Film Festival, she explains, there were many films previewed from these new Arab and Arab–American filmmakers, and "not just because they are Arab films, but because they deserve to be seen." For example, she adds, "Palestinian writer and director Elia Suleiman is not just a great Arab filmmaker–he is a great filmmaker."

> "We used to say that we need to see more Arab–Americans in the media. Well, now it's happened."
>
> —Jim Zogby, president, Arab American Institute

The DTFF was formed in 2008 through a partnership between Shaykha Al Mayassa



bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani of Qatar and Tribeca Enterprises in New York. Spearheaded by Palmer (who is also the head of entertainment at Al Jazeera English, based in Doha), DTFF's main goal is to boost regional talent. In November 2009, the Festival launched a series of year-round educational programs to train local and regional filmmakers. According to Palmer, Doha has only eight local feature-film makers at present, but Qataris of all ages have been attracted to the educational programs—in particular the One Minute Film program run by Skandar Copti, the Oscar-nominated Palestinian director of "Ajami."

The upcoming DTFF in October will increase the number of Arab films shown and add a competition for best Arab film and best Arab filmmaker, as well as two audience awards for best narrative film and best documentary film. Each of the four awards will carry a $100,000 cash prize. In a press release announcing the 2010 Festival, Geoffrey Gilmore, Tribeca's chief creative officer, noted that "all throughout the [2009] Festival, people commented on the strength and quality of the Arab films. This led us to add an Arab filmmaking competition ... to firmly place these films on center stage."

Rasha Salti is creative director of Arte-East, a New York-based international nonprofit organization founded in 2003 to raise public awareness of artists from the Middle East and their work. She cautions against "lumping" together Arab filmmakers, who live and work in their home countries, with Arab–American filmmakers, who live in the US and work either there or in countries of the Arab world. "Their situations are very, very different," Salti notes. "And there are remarkable differences regarding conditions of production, possibility of making films, distribution and screening among the countries in the Arab world, too." She adds, however, that, in addition to earning increased international acclaim, this new generation of Arab filmmakers "is also beginning to develop local audiences."

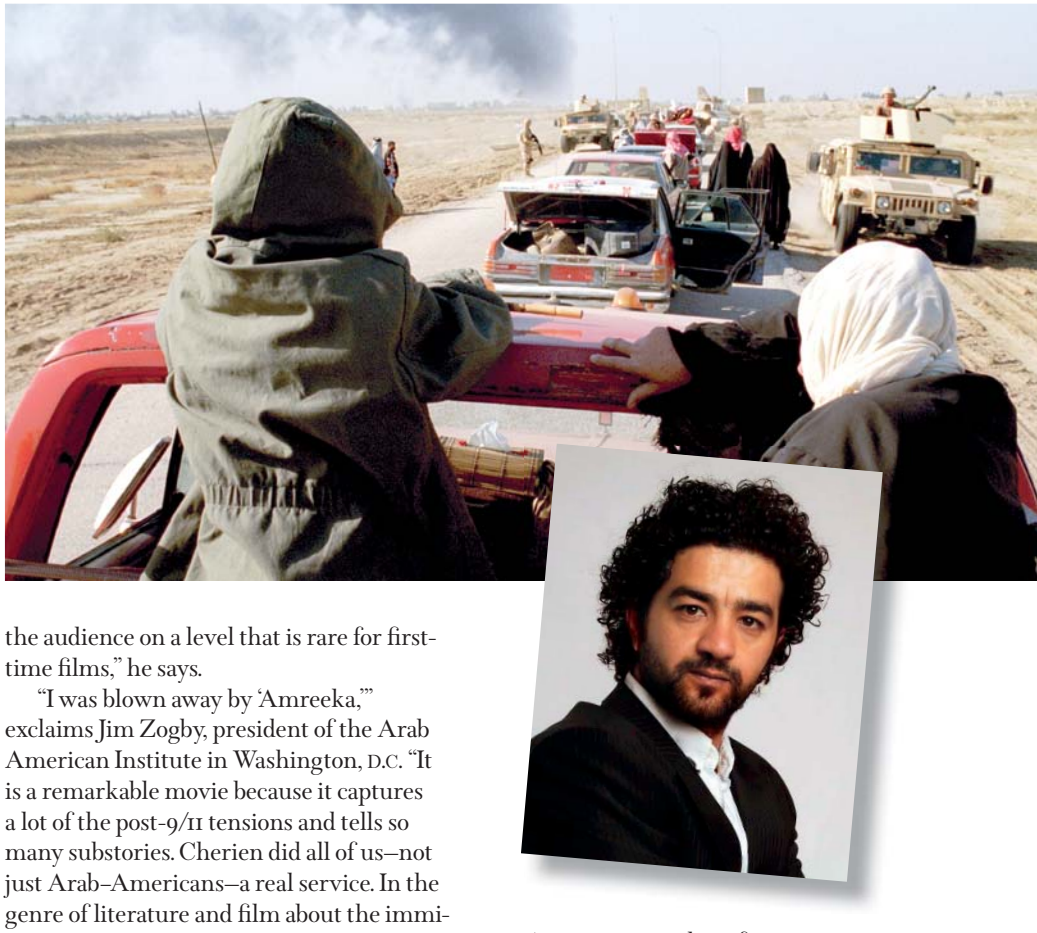
This role of the audience is critical, confirms Rajendra Roy, film curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. "Cinemas can't exist in a vacuum," he says. "Ultimately it is up to the audience to embrace the narratives and the directors. The new wave of Arab and Arab–American independent filmmakers has taken cinema and used it to relay a contemporary story of the Arab experience and also to work as a counterpart to narratives created through mass media." Roy was among the curators who choose "Amreeka" as the opener for the 2009 New Directors/New Film Festival. "'Amreeka' was chosen for Dabis's directorial talent, but also for the humanness of the film, which has a way of connecting with the audience on a level that is rare for first-time films," he says.

"I was blown away by 'Amreeka,'" exclaims Jim Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute in Washington, D.C. "It is a remarkable movie because it captures a lot of the post-9/11 tensions and tells so many substories. Cherien did all of us—not just Arab–Americans—a real service. In the genre of literature and film about the immigrant experience, this is one of the very few films that not only captures the Arab–American experience but also has lessons for other immigrant communities."

Four years ago, he says, "we used to say that we need to see more Arab–Americans in the media. Well, now it's happened. We have great journalists, novelists and filmmakers. This new generation, unlike mine, is beginning to take the story and make it part of the general culture."

Film producer Melissa Hibbard, cofounder of Fictionville Media in Brooklyn, New York, notes that a confluence of events during the last decade has made it easier for these new filmmakers to produce and market their films to a wider range of audiences. "Access to inexpensive equipment, changes in technology, instant access to the rest of the world through the Internet and a greater [public] interest in learning about the Middle East in the aftermath of 9/11 are ingredients that created a good environment for these filmmakers to become a part of the international community," explains Hibbard.

A "road movie" that follows a grandmother and grandson in search of their son and father, "Son of Babylon," by Iraqi writer and director Mohamed Al-Daradji, below, **is his second film made in post-war Iraq with a mostly Iraqi crew. (His first, "Ahlaam," received more than 20 awards.) "No one believed I could make the film in Iraq," he says. An official selection for the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, it sold out every viewing there and at the Berlinale.**



A growing number of new-generation Arab–American films, as well as debut films from the Middle East, began to appear around 2005. In 2007, "AmericanEast," starring Tony Shalhoub, the Emmy-winning star of the hit television series "Monk," became the first Arab–American film produced in the United States. Jackie Salloum's short 2005 film, "Planet of the Arabs," was an official selection of that year's Sundance Film Festival, and "Slingshot HipHop," her first feature-length documentary, about the Palestinian hip-hop group Dam, premiered

ABOVE RIGHT: HUMAN FILM (2); OPPOSITE: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ENTERTAINMENT (3)

"Once people have an opportunity to see our films and hear our stories, they can easily relate to the situation," comments Palestinian filmmaker Kamal Al Jafari. Currently a fellow at the Radcliffe-Harvard University Film Study Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Al Jafari makes evocative films that include "The Roof" and "Port of Memory," below.

Above: **Jackie Salloum followed musicians in Gaza to make "Slingshot HipHop."** Left: **"People want to listen to us—and we are enjoying the moment!" says Saudi Arabia's first female filmmaker, Haifaa Al-Mansour.** Right: **Raouf Zaki has made his short, touching film "Santa Claus in Baghdad" available free to educators.**

in 2008 at Sundance's Documentary Competition.

A Palestinian–American from Michigan with no formal film training, Salloum's latest project took more than four years to produce, not only because of the difficulties of filming in Gaza but also because she funded the film in part with wages earned in her parents' ice cream shop. "It's really important that Arabs get into making films that go mainstream," asserts Salloum. "We need to challenge stereotypes, and since most Americans learn about other cultures through television and film, this is the most powerful tool."

Raouf Zaki, an independent Egyptian–American cameraman, writer and director who lives in Massachusetts, sees the new filmmakers as "more realistic and, in a sense, Americanized." His film "Santa Claus in Baghdad," winner of the Kids First International Film Festival, is a touching short film set in Iraq during the 2000 embargo. "When we experience other people's stories through film or literature, we reach a greater level of understanding," explains Zaki, who has made his film available free on-line to educators.

Lebanese filmmaker Hisham Bizri, cofounder of the Arab Institute of Film in Lebanon and a professor at the University of Minnesota, is concerned that filmmakers know their way around their own history as well as that of Hollywood and the international film circuits. "Our role as filmmakers in society is very important," emphasizes Bizri. He wants to see a story coming out of the Arab world, he says, that is both nourished by the rich history of world cinema and deeply rooted in Arab culture. "The poetry that came out of the Arab world in the 10th century could be a great example for today's filmmakers," he says. Bizri's films have been shown internationally, including at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and his work was recently highlighted at Mizna's sixth Arab Film Festival in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Leadership is important to Sundance director Satter, too. "I believe that filmmakers in certain parts of the world can lead a country and be a source of inspiration for the next generation of storytellers," she says. Haifaa Al-Mansour, the first female Saudi filmmaker, may be one such person. As a participant in the 2009 Rawi Lab, Al-Mansour was surprised and delighted to find herself in the company of other female filmmakers. "I think female filmmakers in the Arab world are on the cutting edge of filmmaking, and we have a voice the world wants to hear. People want to listen to us—and we are enjoying the moment!

"We are a new generation of filmmakers who want to create a space for ourselves," explains Al-Mansour. "We want to talk to the rest of the world and create a different voice—one that is tolerant and open. As a Saudi filmmaker, I want my voice to reflect my own culture, but ultimately, I want my films to be entertaining enough to build bridges between cultures."

Piney Kesting is a Boston-based free-lance writer and consultant. Inspired by her first visit to Lebanon many years ago, she has been exploring and writing about the Middle East ever since. Published internationally, she is a frequent contributor to *Saudi Aramco World*.

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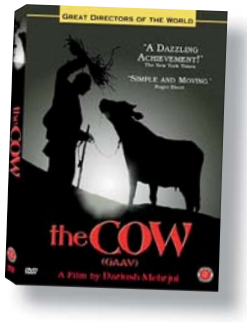
Focus on Film: The Classics

Written by Suzanne Simons

Some feature films are good. Like a good meal, they leave a pleasant aftertaste. Some are great: They offer insights that linger. Best of all, there are the classics.

"You can tell more about a country from a five-minute scene in a film than in 1000 CNN reports—such as the way people walk, their clothing, their means of transportation," says John Sinno, head of Seattle-based Arab Film Distribution, the world's largest and oldest distributor of films from the Middle East and North Africa. "Film is still the best way to learn about a country, short of going there."

But how to choose the best films? Classics define times and places and become enduring reference points in the world's collective cultural memory. Like books that can be read time and again over generations for new insights and meanings, classic films contribute to our sense of an era, and indigenously produced classics do so from inside a culture rather than from the outside looking in.



"Obviously there is a major difference. It's rare to see positive Hollywood films about the Middle East," says Raouf Zaki, director of the 2007 film "Santa Claus in Baghdad."

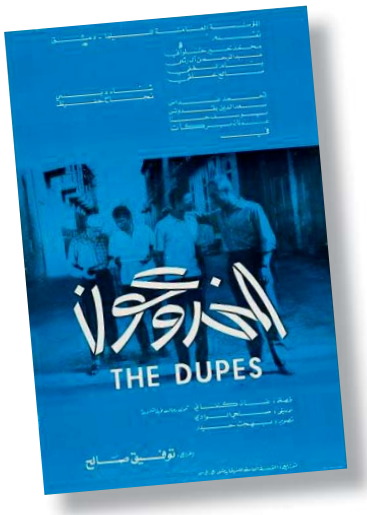
> "I've been working for 10 days and haven't made a piaster."
>
> "Cairo Station"
> (Egypt, 1958, Youssef Chahine, dir.)

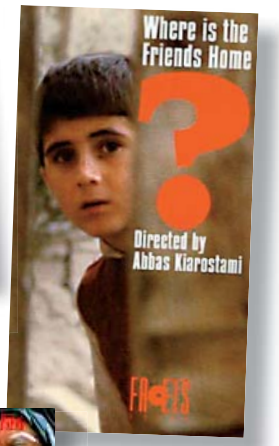
The best of Middle Eastern cinema often distinguishes itself in other, more subtle, ways, too. One is the prominence of political themes, such as the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and Islamic politics.

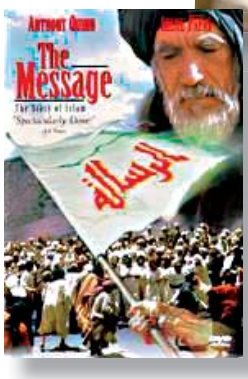
There is also often a distinctive use of space, notes critic Lina Khatib in her 2006 book *Filming the Modern Middle East.* Hollywood tends to favor grandiose, individual characters and panoramic, often overhead scenes that suggest a character's domination of space. Middle Eastern films—which also

Above: **Produced in Egypt in 1958 by Youssef Chahine, one of the country's most prolific directors, "Cairo Station" was one of the first Arab films to adapt techniques of Italian neo-realism and American *film noir.*** Left: **In 1969, "The Cow" helped set Iranian cinema free from Hollywood imitations.**

ABOVE RIGHT: TYPECAST FILMS (2); OPPOSITE, TOP: COURTESY OF KAMAL ALJAFARI (2); LEFT: COURTESY JACKIE SALLOUM; RIGHT: COURTESY RA VISION PRODUCTIONS; LOWER: COURTESY HAIFAA ALMANSOUR







often have modest budgets—tend to use space more intimately, through frequent close-ups and interior shots. Khatib also notes the diverse uses of gender themes: For example, while Egyptian and Algerian films tend to use gender as a mark of modernity, Palestinian cinema often links the struggle for political liberation with that for women's equality.

So how does one sort through hundreds of indigenously produced (and co-produced) Middle Eastern films? And how do you interpret them? "A film is like a piece of literature. It's a commentary on an issue, a window on a particular topic," says Livia Alexander, executive director of ArteEast, a New York-based nonprofit organization that promotes artists from the Middle East and its diasporas.

"How are we going to understand how people lived in Egypt in the 1950's? Certain films help, like 'Cairo Station,'" Alexander says. Similarly, in "Chronicle of the Years of Embers," there are various aspects of Algerian society you don't get in "The Battle of Algiers." The locally made film doesn't focus on the fighting."

Tracing a film's reception in the region—by both local audiences and critics—as well as how it is received at international film festivals is one way to gauge a film's importance. For example, the 1987 "Wedding in Galilee" marked a turning point in Palestinian film: It was the first major feature film shot inside historic 1948 Palestine to be shown at major film festivals. "If a film has done well at Cannes, San Sebastian, Berlin or Toronto, it gets into theaters," particularly in the US, Alexander notes, cautioning that success at festivals is not always a guarantee of a film's ability to endure. For that, she says, "ultimately, it needs to be a strong film."

Common cinematic themes often follow a country's political, economic and social history. For example, films from Egypt often focus on political, economic and social critique. In Lebanon, the 1975–1990 civil war and the 2006 Hezbollah–Israeli war often dominate. Algerian cinema is steeped in the 1954–1962 war for independence from France and the conflicts with armed Islamists in the 1990's. Iranian film, with its long and prolific history, leans toward a poetic humanism and a creative use of allegory—the better to dodge the censors—making it one of the world's most important emerging artistic cinemas. For Palestinian cinema, the Arab–Israeli conflict is "the prism everything has to go through," says Sinno, who emigrated from Lebanon in 1984.

Right: **"Chronicle of the Years of Embers" tells a story of Algerian independence from an Algerian point of view.**

Filmmaking arrived in the Middle East soon after the first projections—in 1894 in New York by Thomas Edison, a year later in Paris by the Lumière brothers. Egypt, Iran and Turkey quickly established themselves as major film production centers, drawing on popular theater, coffeehouse storytellers and their traditional shadow plays. The first feature-length commercial Egyptian film, "Laila," was produced in 1927 by a woman, Aziza Amir, who also starred in it. From the mid-1930's to the mid-1960's, Egyptian cinema was the world's third largest, after the US and India, in the number of films produced. Fundamental to its success was Studio Misr, Egypt's first fully equipped film studio, founded in 1935 by banker-investor Talaat Harb. Common genres were melodramas, musicals and comedies built around a star system that propelled to fame, throughout the Arabic-speaking world, the now-legendary singers Umm Kulthum and Mohammed Abdul Wahab, as well as Youssef Wahbi, Anwar Wagdi and Laila Murad.

"Only Egyptian cinema has been able to conquer and hold Arab markets," notes Viola Shafik, author of *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity*. "In Egypt, Egyptian films have a market share of around 80 percent. The rest are American productions."

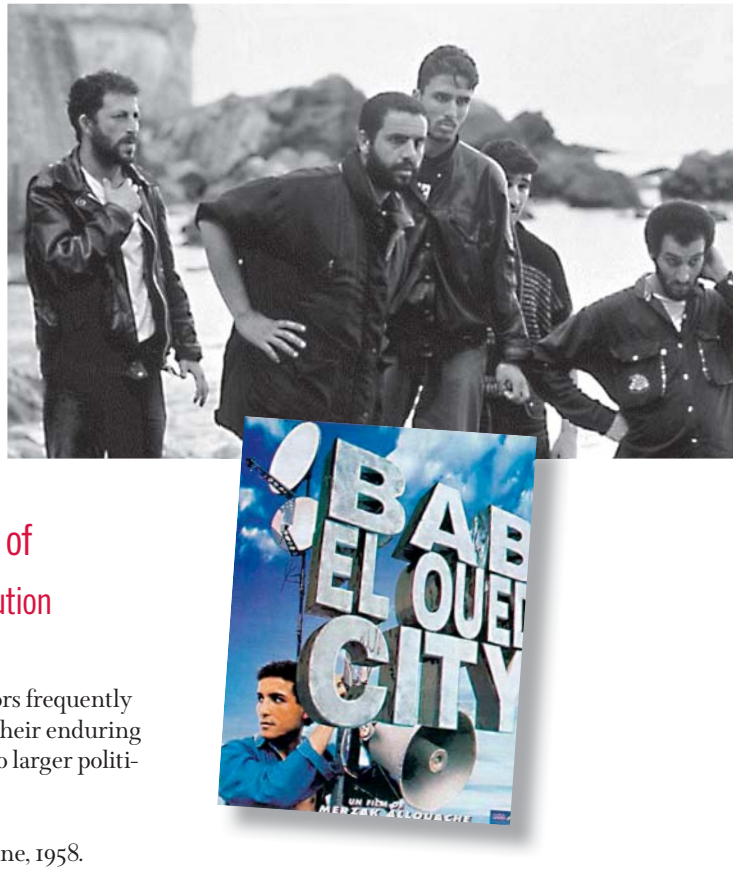
Commercial Egyptian films attracted the largest audiences and spread Egyptian dialect and culture around the Arabic-speaking Middle East. However, art-house films—typically independently made films that treat more serious themes and have more limited distribution than popular releases—may shed more light these days on understanding the region through film.

"Important cinema is not just limited to big directors like [Youssef] Chahine," Zaki says of the famed Egyptian director. Other filmmakers of note include Lebanon's Philippe Aractingi, Iran's Abbas Kiarostami and Tehmineh Milani, and Palestine's Elia Suleiman.

As Middle East cinema continues to flourish and gain international recognition, expect more classics-in-the-making.

For Sinno, one such "new classic" film is the 2005 Tunisian/French production "Bab 'Aziz," part of a trilogy directed by Nacer Khemir. Cinematographically stunning, it is a mystical tale about a young girl who follows her elderly grandfather into the desert of the soul in search of a gathering of dervishes. "'Bab 'Aziz' shows the spiritual side of Islamic civilization, with the desert as a source of inspiration," he says. "The foundations of Middle Eastern culture are based on assumptions of the desert—infinite spaces, desolation. People of the forest have abundance. People of the desert, scarcity. Individualism is not necessarily an asset. Those values of the communal over the individual have been transmitted all over the Middle East," Sinno explains.

As for classic Middle Eastern films that define cultural and political moments, filmmakers, scholars, critics and distributors frequently name the following titles for their enduring merit and their relationship to larger political and social themes.



Merzak Allouache's 1994 comic drama "Bab El-Oued City" uses humor to sharply satirize the rise of religious extremism.

"Film is still the best way to learn about a country, short of going there." —John Sinno, Arab Film Distribution

Cairo Station. Youssef Chahine, 1958. Suspense thriller set in a Cairo train station that represents all of Egyptian society. An unblinking portrayal of alienation, repression, madness and violence among society's marginalized. One of the first Arab films to adapt techniques of Italian neo-realism and American *film noir*. **www.arabfilm.com**

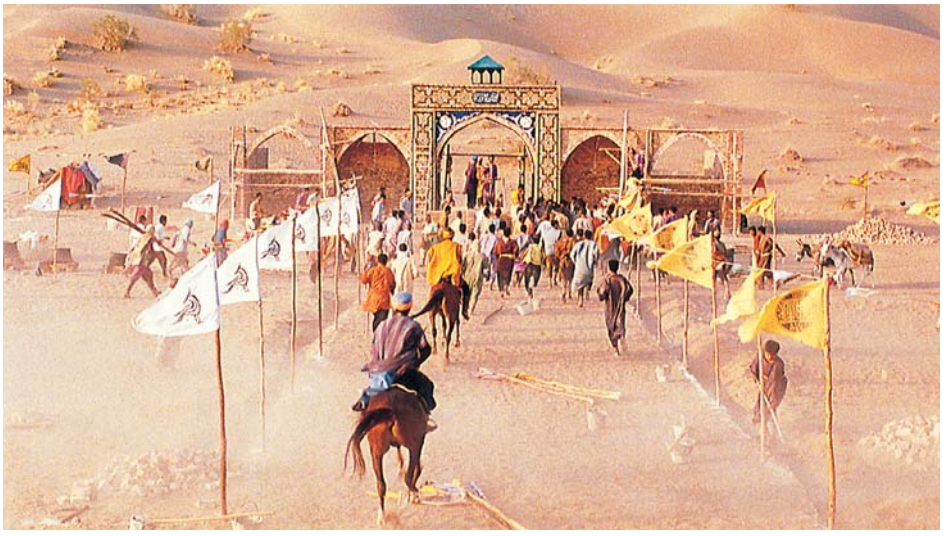
The Cow. Dariush Mehrjui, 1969. Masht Hassan owns the only cow in a remote and desolate village, and he treats it as his child. When he is away, his cow is killed. Masht returns home and, devastated, gradually comes to believe he is the cow. Among the first films to break from the *film Farsi* mold that mimicked Hollywood and establish a direction toward a more authentic Iranian cinema. **www.arabfilm.com**

Hope/Umut. Şerif Gören and Yılmaz Güney, 1970. A destitute carriage driver from Adana leads a life of misery, struggling to make ends meet for his wife, five children and aging mother. He invests all his hope in lottery tickets, but fortune's smile does not fall on him. In the end, his only way forward is to hunt for buried treasure under the direction of a *hoja* (religious teacher) with a reputation for clairvoyance. Influenced by Italian neo-realism in its stark portrayal of ordinary lives, and devoid of cliché, this is considered to be the beginning of new Turkish cinema. **http://cgi.ebay.com**

Still Life. Sohrab Shahid Saless, 1972. This simple portrait of a static life, which provides food for thought on the purpose and direction of all life, is credited with initiating Iran's distinct blend of highly poetic and political cinema.

The Dupes. Tawfek Saleh, 1972. Set in Iraq in the 1950's, this pan-Arab production follows the plight of three Palestinian refugees who try to escape their impoverished and hopeless lives to get work in Kuwait. Based on Palestinian writer and artist Ghassan Kanafani's novella *Men in the Sun*, this is one of the first Arab films to address issues of Palestinian displacement and diaspora within Arab lands. **www.arabfilm.com**

TOP RIGHT AND OPPOSITE, LOWER: TYPECAST FILMS (2)



Above and top: **Poetic and lyrical, "Bab 'Aziz" speaks to the values of desert peoples, among whom "individualism is not necessarily an asset," says film distributor John Sinno.** Above right: **Bushra Karaman plays the bride in Michael Khleifi's 1987 film "Wedding in Galilee."**

Chronicle of the Years of Embers. Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina, 1975. The story follows a peasant's migration from his drought-stricken village to his eventual participation in the Algerian resistance movement just prior to the outbreak of the 1962 war of independence against French colonial rule. Antidote to "The Battle of Algiers." **www.arabfilm.com**

Mohammed, Messenger of God. Moustapha Akkad, 1976. (*The Message* in US distribution.) This historical epic is the first and only Hollywood production to portray the story of Islam. Director Akkad saw the film as a way to bridge the gap between western and Islamic countries. Arabic and English versions of the film were made simultaneously with an Arab cast for audiences in the Middle East. **www.amazon.co.uk**

Where Is My Friend's Home? Abbas Kiarostami, 1987. This key film behind Iranian cinema's popularity in the West uses minimal dialogue, slow pacing and purposeful, realistic acting to tell the story of an eight-year-old boy who must return his friend's notebook that he took by mistake, lest his friend be punished by expulsion from school. **www.amazon.com**

Wedding in Galilee. Michel Khleifi, 1987. A Palestinian seeks Israeli permission to waive the curfew to give his son a fine wedding, and the military governor's condition is that he and his officers attend. The first internationally acclaimed film of the increasingly influential Palestinian cinema, produced in the political context of the beginning of the first Palestinian *intifada.* **www.arabfilm.com**

Bab El-Oued City. Merzak Allouache, 1994. Comedy/drama set in Algiers in 1989, during the rise to power of Islamic fundamentalism. Boualem works at night in a bakery and steals the loudspeaker that was installed on his roof to broadcast the imam's message. This blunder is used by the Islamists as a pretext to put the district under their control. The film warns of the dangers of religious extremism. **www.cduniverse.com**

Bab 'Aziz: The Prince Who Contemplated His Soul. Nacer Khemir, 2005. A blind dervish and his spirited granddaughter wander the desert in search of a great reunion of dervishes that takes place every 30 years. This poetic, lyrical road movie speaks to the values of the peoples of the desert and the cultures they have created. It is almost too new to be called "classic"—but it's so good, the label is likely to stick. **www.typecastfilms.com**

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Ibn Fadlan: N/D 99, M/A 79

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: TYPECAST FILMS (4)

Hollywood's Best

Ever since Rudolph Valentino starred in "The Sheikh" in 1921, Hollywood has produced more than a thousand movies with Arab or Muslim characters. Like older films with African–American or Native American characters, many depictions of Arabs and Muslims have been based on fantasies and stereotypes—often degrading ones.

Jack Shaheen, professor emeritus of mass communications at Southern Illinois University and author of the groundbreaking book and video *Reel Bad Arabs* and its sequel, *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs After 9/11*, has probably spent more hours viewing Hollywood-Arab movies than any other critic.

Of the 950 pre-9/11 films, Shaheen gives a thumbs-up to what he estimates is about five percent; of more than 100 post-9/11 films, the thumbs-up rate rises to about 20 percent. He defines his standard this way: "Can a family watch it and not feel ashamed of their heritage or faith, and walk away with a good inner feeling?"

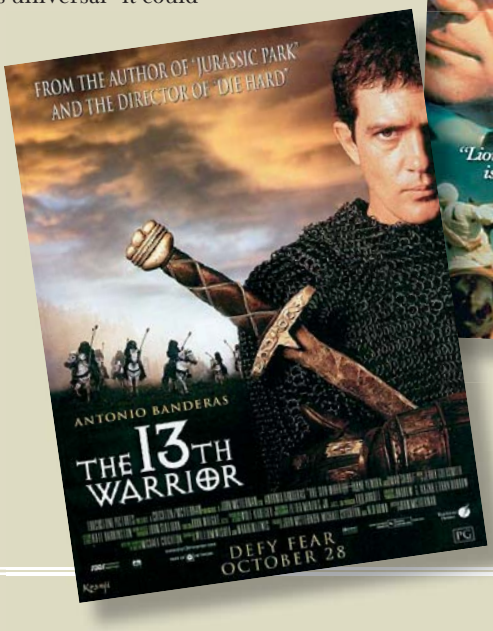
The time is ripe, Shaheen believes, for "an Arab or Muslim version of 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding'—a 'breakthrough' film, like 'Philadelphia' was for gays and 'Stand and Deliver' was for Hispanics." Recent films by emerging filmmakers (see "The New Storytellers," page 2), such as "Amreeka," portray Arab characters "like normal people," where "relationships are quite genuine, real and moving." These films, he says, point the way even if they are not blockbusters themselves. "But they are good films," he notes.

"Presence means power. Arab–Americans need to define their own image," he says.

Here are Shaheen's top three Hollywood-Arab classics:

Thief of Baghdad. Raoul Walsh, 1924. "A kind, benevolent Johnny Appleseed-like soul who reforms at the end. The people around him are good. The film shows culture, and Baghdad. Sure, it's fantasy, but Islam is respected. The theme is universal—it could be about Christianity or Judaism."

Lion of the Desert. Moustapha Akkad, 1981. "A compelling portrait of Arabs who are victims of aggressors, namely the Italians, placed in camps and persecuted prior to World War II. The film holds up beautifully, shattering myths and revealing Arab humanity."



The 13th Warrior. John McTiernan, 1999. The storyline may match up Beowulf with the Norse voyages of the 10th-century traveler Ibn Fadlan, all via Michael Crichton, but it's "done in a respectful, kind manner with a major Hollywood star, Antonio Banderas, whose intelligence saves the day. Audiences can actually cheer him on."

Abu Dhabi's Bestseller

Written by Chip Rossetti • Photographed by Dick Doughty

During a rare quiet moment in a week full of meetings, panels, award ceremonies and book-signings, Jumaa Al Qubaisi sat down to talk about the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, which he has directed since it joined forces with the Frankfurt Book Fair, the world's largest, in 2007. He got right to the point: "We're directly impacting the way Arab publishers do business."

To do that, early this March the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (ADIBF) hosted some 840 exhibitors—mostly publishers—from 63 countries in the Emirate's glassy new convention center. Over the fair's six days, more than a quarter-million visitors—many of them whole families—sought out novels, cookbooks, reference books and more—mostly in Arabic—and they met and heard dozens of writers and poets read and speak. The publishers, however, were there to do more than listen: Here was a chance to attend seminars on copyright, check out the competition, negotiate translations and distribution licensing, and do the deals that make theirs an increasingly global business.

Historically, the Arabian Gulf region has long been a crossroads, says Monika Krauss, the general manager of the fair. While other Arab countries, Europe and the Americas are today one part of the international conversation, there are other countries to the east. "We are on the doorstep of India," she says, highlighting the publishers and

Far left: **The fair is "a gateway to the region's emerging publishing industry," says Jumaa Al Qubaisi, director.** Center and right: **Monika Krauss, ADIBF general manager; Ali Bin Tamim, director of Kalima, Abu Dhabi's leading translation agency.**

authors from the subcontinent who occupied a section of booths, and the full day of readings by Indian authors and poets. Bipin Shah, director of the art-book publisher Mapin Publishing in Ahmedabad, sitting among his beautifully illustrated books on Indian art, calls the fair "a good place for networking and for translations. Also, there is a real potential to sell to libraries here," due to expanding education in the region. With new museums opening, too, he says, it's "an ideal place" for a publisher of art books. "The pace here is a bit slower, meaning you can get work done and actually talk with colleagues. It opens up opportunities you don't get at Frankfurt."

Iradj Bagherzade, owner of the London-based publishing house I.B.Tauris, one of the world's largest publishers to specialize in books on the Middle East in English, credits the ADIBF—though it's only four years old in its current form—with "driving more worldwide interest toward Arab literature," but, he cautions, "It's still early to determine how effective this will be. A hard reality is that translations from Arabic are expensive to produce and edit."

Adding to the fair's rising prominence are its two major prizes, the International Arabic Prize for Fiction (sometimes called "the Arab Booker" because of its support by the London-based Man Booker Prize, the world's most prestigious fiction award) and the Shaykh Zayed Book Award. Only three years old, the "Arab Booker" is awarded annually to a work of fiction in Arabic with the aim of encouraging its translation, and translation of Arabic literature in general, into other languages. Selected from a short list of six nominees, the winning novel is announced on the first day of the fair. The result is "buzz" about the winner—and about Arabic fiction. "It's nice to have an award like the Arab Booker," says Sherif Ismail Bakr, publisher of al-Arabi Publishing and Distribution in Egypt. "We're seeing more attention from European publishers for Arabic literature. Literary agents, for example, are more eager to sign up Arab authors as clients than they used to be." The first two prizes, in 2008 and 2009, went to Egyptian novelists; this year, the prize was won by Saudi author Abdo Khal for his novel *Tarmi bi-Sharar* or, in English, *Spewing Sparks As Big As Castles*.

The annual Shaykh Zayed Book Awards are given in nine categories in honor of the late ruler of Abu Dhabi and president of the United Arab Emirates, Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. The awards recognize "significant cultural achievements in Arabic culture" by "innovators and thinkers in the fields of knowledge, the arts and humanities."

Founded in 1987 as a modest open-air book bazaar, the fair's transformation into the leading publishing fair in the Gulf region began in 2007. Then, the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, which oversees the fair, began a joint venture called Kitab ("book" in Arabic) with the Frankfurt fair, which is roughly ten times the size of the ADIBF, and tasked Kitab with the fair's makeover. Since last year, Kitab has been headed by Monika Krauss, who was born in Baghdad to Iraqi and German parents and has spent much of her adult life in Europe. Kitab was founded, Krauss points out, to carry out the goals of "raising the standards of professionalism within the publishing

"Most of our entertainment comes from abroad, and even with the best of intentions, it may not be appropriate to our customs, our identity or our religion. It's very important to have writing that's relevant to us."

-Qais Sedki, winner of the 2010 Shaykh Zayed Book Award for children's literature

Choosing among vendors from more than 60 countries, a family looks over an encyclopedia. Opposite: **This year's fair attracted more than a quarter-million visitors to the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre.**

industry across the Middle East and North Africa, and fostering the culture of reading." What that culture needs most, Krauss says, is more books, as evidenced by both the number of exhibitors at Abu Dhabi, which has more than doubled in four years, and the popularity of the signings, awards, children's contests and readings at the fair. (Other regional book fairs have grown, too: See sidebar, opposite.) "There is an appetite across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the wider Arab world for reading and books," says Krauss.

"There is an appetite across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the wider Arab world for reading and books," says Krauss.

Fueling of this appetite is translation. In addition to subsidizing some 223 translation deals made at this year's fair with grants of $1000 each, the fair also hosted the emirate's largest translation organization, Kalima (Arabic for "word"). Its director, Ali Bin Tamim, explains that, like such other initiatives as Tarjem, based in Dubai, Kalima funds the translation and publication of "important" world books into Arabic, with the aim of boosting the historically low numbers of books that have been translated into Arabic during the modern period. It currently translates from languages as varied as Kurdish, German, Italian and Hindi, but plans to expand into others soon.

"We understand that translation doesn't always convey similarities, but should also reflect differences between cultures," says Bin Tamim. "Our mechanism is to have a country director for each language we translate from," and from their suggestions, Kalima selects 100 titles each year for translation. According to Bin Tamim, the Kalima initiative has translated some 300 books to date, ranging from novels by Japanese author Haruki Murakami to books by American novelist William Faulkner and Nobel-Prize-winning Indian economist Amartya Sen—with more to come.

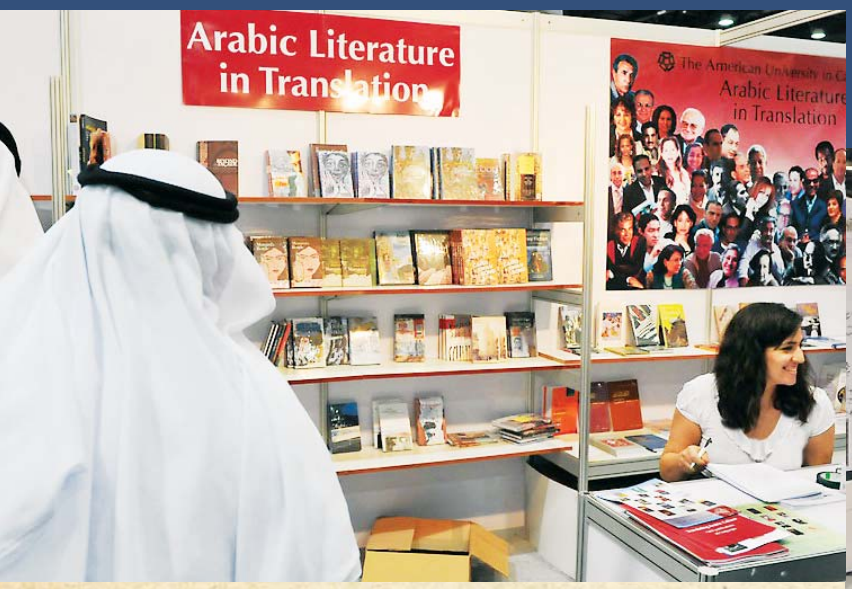
Beyond translation, Al Qubaisi, who also directs the emirate's national library, sees deeper challenges. "In Arab countries, there are no strict divisions among publishers, wholesalers, and distributors," he explains. "And there are very few bookstores, making it difficult to take books to market. There is a dearth of qualified translators. Last but by no means least is the fact that copyright infringement is not yet taken seriously enough."

Compared to the corporate book publishers increasingly dominating the market in other parts of the world, the publishers attending the ADIBF from the Arab world are still often family-run operations that also act as their own booksellers. As Syrian publisher Kassem al-Tarras puts it: "You're doing everything yourself. You have to not only market your books, but print them, know how to be a bookseller and handle copyright."

To help, last year Kitab began hosting training seminars throughout the year that brought together publishers from 11 Arab countries for sessions on everything from book jacket design to electronic publishing to strategic analysis of the 300-million-consumer market that is the Arab world.

In the training program, copyright is among the hot issues, as lack of compliance with copyright laws has been a common complaint from both publishers and authors in the Arab world, and this, Krauss acknowledges, creates a barrier to business. "It's important to show the international publishing community that this subject is being taken seriously in the Arab world," she says. At the same time, she points out that there are real reasons publishers might try to circumvent copyright laws when faced, for example, with the barriers of import costs, tariffs and state censorship laws that can make it difficult for a new book published in one country to be available in bookstores in another. As a result, some publishers will simply reprint a foreign book locally without consulting the author. To discourage this, the ADIBF enforces a strict no-piracy policy among its exhibitors, and this year one publisher caught selling unlicensed editions was sent packing and told not to return for five years.

In support of Kitab's efforts, and as an acknowledgment of the region's growing commitment to copyright and author's rights, the International Publishers Association held its annual copyright symposium in



The American University in Cairo Press, left**, is a leading translator of Arabic literature into English. Abu Dhabi-based Kalima,** below**, translates some 100 books a year from world languages into Arabic.**

Book Fairs Around the Arab World

Cairo International Book Fair. Now in its 43rd year, Cairo's annual book fair, a sprawling two-week event in late January, is the largest in the Arab world. Like Beirut, Cairo is one of the centers of book publishing in the region, and by one estimate about 60 percent of all Arabic titles are published there.

International Book and Publishing Fair of Casablanca. Held in February, Casablanca's fair is organized by Morocco's Ministry of Culture, now headed by the novelist Bensalem Himmich. This year's fair, attended by 246 exhibitors, celebrated the work of Moroccan authors and intellectuals living outside the country.

Riyadh International Book Fair. Riyadh's fair, like Muscat's (see below), overlaps dates with the Abu Dhabi fair. For many Arab publishers, Riyadh is the most important annual book fair in terms of retail sales. "The Saudis buy lots of books," says one Egyptian publisher.

Sharjah World Book Fair runs for ten days in November. Organized under the auspices of the ruler of Sharjah and now in its 28th year, it attracts some 400,000 visitors and features 750 exhibitors.

Beirut International Book Fair takes place in early December. Along with Cairo, Beirut has historically been a center of publishing in the Arab world. Its most recent fair coincided with Beirut's selection as the United Nations 2009 World Book Capital, and it attracted 200 exhibitors.

Muscat International Book Fair. Now in its 15th year, the Muscat fair is held in late February and early March, and this year featured 406 exhibitors from 27 countries.

Erbil International Book Fair is one of the newest in the Middle East: Begun in 2005, it takes place in April in the city of Erbil, in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. It has grown quickly, and, in light of its success, Baghdad—a city with a fabled literary history of its own—is planning to launch its own annual book fair.

Damascus International Book Fair takes place in August and is currently in its 25th year. In 2009, publishers from 20 countries participated, and the fair moved from downtown Damascus to a larger exhibition center.

Abu Dhabi just before the fair opened. Significantly, as Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Shehhi of the emirates' Ministry of the Economy pointed out in his opening address, "This is the first time that a copyright conference has been held in the Arab world."

On an even more practical level, the fair this year witnessed the launch of Abu Dhabi Distribution, a pan-Arab company that plans to work with publishers and distributors throughout the Arab world to help get books into the hands of readers by developing a database for booksellers that, for the first time, lists all published Arabic books–both in and out of print–just as the US Library of Congress records all copyrighted books in the United States. Abu Dhabi Distribution is also looking into the latest print-on-demand technology, which allows readers to walk up to a machine like a vending machine in any bookstore or mall, order any book, and have it printed and bound while they wait.

For many visitors, the swarms of children at the fair, many clutching armfuls of books, may seem proof enough that there is indeed a new generation of avid book readers. The fair, says Nora Shawwa, publisher of Rimal Publications of Nicosia, Cyprus, "is making children want to read." Shawwa has been coming to the fair for four years and keeps coming back because, as she puts it, "it's a good forum to introduce publishers to their counterparts in the Arab world."

Top: **As national sponsor of the fair, the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage hosted a salon-like booth that served as a hub at the fair.** Right: **At the fair's Book-Signing Corner, author Mahra Muhammad Bani Yas signs for young fans.** Lower: **Poetry recitation was one of many activities in the children's "Creativity Corner."**

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new museums: J/F 09, N/D 07
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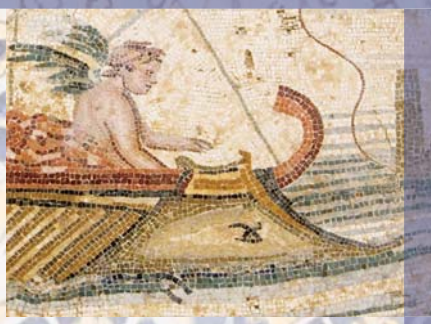


Tripoli

Crossroads of Rome and Islam

Written and Photographed by Charles O. Cecil

> "With her feet in the blue Mediterranean, 'her hand in the fire of heaven' and her back against the yellow silence of eternal Sahara, Tripoli waits her latest destiny."
>
> —Mabel Loomis Todd, *Tripoli the Mysterious,* 1912

Tripoli has had many destinies. Over the centuries, it has been ruled by Phoenicians, Numidians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Berbers, Normans, Spaniards, Turks, Italians, the World War II Allies and, finally, Libyans, both as a monarchy and, since 1977, as a *jamahiriyya*, a word coined by Muammar Qadhafi that can be translated as "people's republic." It has been ruled by an emperor, a king (more than once), a sultan, a pasha, a Four Power Commission and today, in the latest of its destinies, by the Leader (*al-qa'id*) of the jamahiriyya.

This history has created a fascinating mixture of cultures and traditions that remains unfamiliar to most westerners since it's only in recent years that Libya has begun to normalize its relations with the West. While international businesses are actively seeking sales and contracts in Libya, especially in the oil sector, tourists remain scarce, in part due to Libya's visa restrictions. Yet visitors find much awaiting them.

At first impression, Tripoli lacks the daily circus-like atmosphere of Marrakech's Djemaa el-Fna or the labyrinthine streets of Fez, Tunis or Aleppo, throbbing with the pulse of daily life. It lacks the clean and orderly visage of Jerusalem. Tripoli is more reserved, less likely to grab your wrist and tug you into a shop to purchase some "antique" of questionable authenticity. Tripoli sits and waits. It waits for you to probe gently on your own to find its hidden treasures, with no urgency to complete some transaction.

The roots of the Tripoli *madinah* are deep. From the eighth century BCE onward, the North African coast was colonized first by Phoenicians and then by Greeks. (In the Punic language, it was called Ui'at; in Latin it was Oea.) It may have been settled as early as the seventh century BCE as part of Carthage's effort to tighten its hold on the North African coast from the Gulf of Sirte to the Atlantic,

Finished in 164 CE to honor the emperor Marcus Aurelius, this arch, left, **is Tripoli's best-known Roman monument. Starting in the second century BCE, vessels like the one depicted above helped Romans turn Tripoli into an important source of wheat and olive oil. The mosaic can be seen in the Jamahiriyya Museum.** Opposite: **Tripoli's *madinah*, or old city, lies along the Mediterranean harbor, surrounded by the modern capital city.**

but unfortunately the western Phoenicians left no written records. We do know that Phoenicians founded Sabratha, Oea and Leptis Magna (to use their Roman names) and that they introduced the cultivation of olive trees to this region. The Romans named the region "Tripolitania" because of the existence of those three cities. Initially little more than rest and repair stations for the Phoenician sailors, under the Romans, from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE, those cities became important trading ports that shipped large quantities of olive oil and wheat to Rome.

No ruins remain in Tripoli from the Phoenician period, but the arch in honor of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, finished around the year 164, provides dramatic evidence of the Roman presence. (It was carefully cleaned and restored by the Italians in the years after their invasion in 1911, when they were eager to reassert their historic ties to the area.) A photo in *The Gateway to the Sahara*, by Charles W. Furlong, published in 1909, shows only the upper half of the arch above ground and the archway itself filled in with a wall, a door and a window. It was being used, according to Furlong, "as a shop for a purveyor of dried fish, spices, and other wares." The situation of the arch today offers the clearest demonstration of how much higher the ground level of the madinah is now than it was in the time of the Roman city some 18 centuries ago. This further suggests that additional structures, Roman or even Phoenician, may lie under present-day buildings, awaiting future construction projects to bring them to light.

As Africa prospered from its trade with Rome, it gained political influence there, too. Vespasian became emperor in 69 CE and was the first to appoint a North African as a senator. By the end of the second century, one-third of the Roman senate came from North Africa, and in 193,

What is a Madinah?

Madinah (pronounced "ma-DEE-nah"; also transliterated *medina*) is simply the Arabic word for "city" or "town." As people clustered together for commerce and security, residents built walls to protect themselves against raids from desert bands or against invading armies as navies. Specific areas within the walls may have been designated as marketplaces, or as working areas for artisans and craftsmen, but a majority of the space was (and often still is) occupied by residential quarters, often with shops on the ground level and shopkeepers' homes above. As cities grew in recent centuries, they often expanded beyond the bounds of the original madinah walls. Thus, in modern times, the word *madinah* denotes the original, historical core of a city, often referred to as "the old city," where streets are usually narrow and winding, often making modern vehicular traffic impossible.

The city in Saudi Arabia that is named Madinah is formally known as "*al-madinah al-munawwarah*" ("the enlightened city" or "the refulgent city"), distinguishing it from all other cities in the Arab world. Madinah in Saudi Arabia is the second-holiest city in Islam (after Makkah) and the burial place of the Prophet Muhammad.

Characteristic of madinahs throughout North Africa and the Middle East, narrow streets lined with shops, usually with homes above, keep modern shoppers and merchants cool, much as they have for centuries.

Septimius Severus, born in Leptis Magna, some 120 kilometers (75 mi) east of Tripoli, and of Punic ancestry, became emperor.

In the mid-fifth century, the Vandals of Europe crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and moved eastward, taking control of North Africa. It would be more than 1400 years before Tripolitania would again be ruled from Rome. Though the emperor Justinian, in Constantinople, did reassert Byzantine rule in the mid-sixth century, no serious effort was made to defend the area when Arab armies advanced across North Africa in the seventh. It was inevitable that Roman constructions would be dismantled, their stones and columns incorporated into new works.

A prime example of this is the crossroads in the madinah known as the Arba'a al-Saf, where four Roman columns have been incorporated into the corners of the four buildings that define this intersection. Similarly, columns of purportedly Roman origin help support the Al-Nagah mosque, considered to be the oldest standing in Tripoli today, thanks in part to major reconstruction around 1610.

A stone from the Marcus Aurelius arch, carved more than 18 centuries ago, lies near the arch's base in the madinah. Right: **Nearby, a banner commemorates 37 years of rule by Muammar Qadhafi, who took power in 1969.**

Because of their sustained contact over many centuries in the Mediterranean basin, 20th-century Italians tended to assume that urban Libyans had preserved, rather unconsciously, some vestiges of their long-lost Roman heritage. Perhaps seeking to emulate Septimius Severus in reverse, Benito Mussolini visited Libya three times between 1926 and 1942. During his 1937 visit, after the Libyan resistance to the Italian conquest had been violently suppressed, Mussolini declared himself "Protector of Islam" and had himself presented with "the sword of Islam" in a theatrical ceremony staged outside Tripoli. After the ceremony, flanked by two Libyans on foot carrying the Roman *fasces*, he rode a charger into the crowded, floodlit city—"a truly Roman entry," as the *London Times* journalist reported. In 1939, a special civic status was created to reward some Libyans for loyalty to the fascist Italian government, and the state assumed responsibility for the maintenance of mosques, assisted in the organization of the pilgrimage to Makkah and even banned the sale of alcohol during Ramadan.

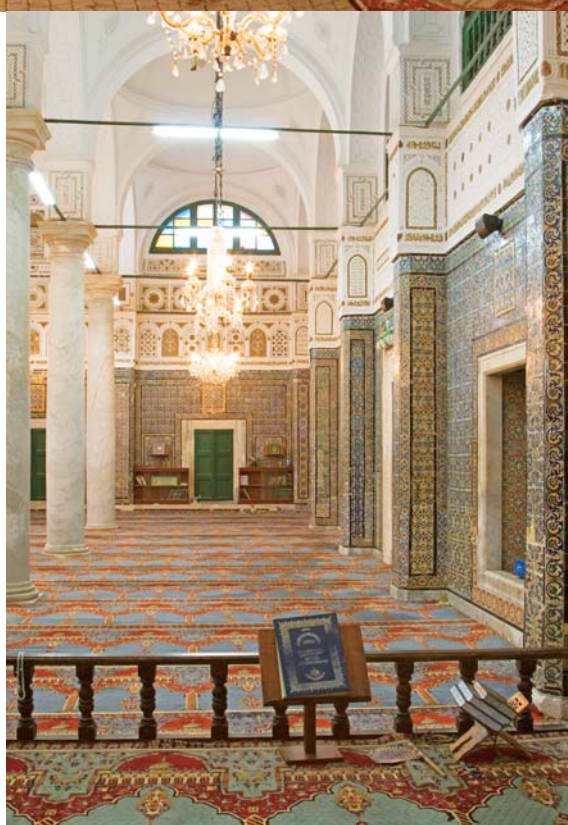
Today's Tripoli madinah has suffered neglect and, unlike the much-preserved madinahs of Fez, Morocco and Tunis, has not benefited from efforts to preserve its heritage. (One study in the 1980's found that 14 percent of the madinah's buildings were in a state of collapse.) As Italians left after independence in 1951, and as Libyan government programs offered subsidized housing in new areas of the city, many families left the madinah. The abandoned buildings were often occupied by poor immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa who had neither motive nor means to maintain the properties.

There are a few fortunate exceptions. The tiny Gurgi Mosque, immediately adjacent to the Marcus Aurelius arch, is exquisitely decorated with Tunisian tiles and floral designs in stone inlaid by Moroccan artisans. Nearby is a house constructed in 1744 as a residence for Ahmed Pasha Karamanlı, once a cavalry officer of the elite Ottoman forces known as janissaries. In 1711, Karamanlı murdered the Ottoman governor, seized power and launched a family dynasty that ruled until 1835. From the second half of the 18th century until 1940, this building served as the British consulate; it can be visited today.

The oldest mosque in Tripoli today is Al-Nagah, which is said to have been built in the 11th century or even earlier. Reconstructed early in the 17th century, its prayer hall is supported by 36 columns.

Near the Arba'a al-Saf intersection is the 19th-century house of another Karamanlı, Yusuf, who in May 1801 distinguished himself by being the first foreign ruler to declare war on the newly independent United States. Karamanlı ordered the flagpole in front of the American consulate chopped down after US President Thomas Jefferson refused his demand of $225,000 in tribute to assure the safety of American shipping in the Mediterranean. In response, Jefferson in 1803 ordered a naval blockade of Tripoli's harbor and threatened invasion by an American-led force from Egypt. Yusuf signed a peace accord with the US in 1805, and the episode was later incorporated into the Marine Corps hymn with the reference to "the shores of Tripoli." Yusuf Karamanlı's house today is a museum that also offers rooftop views over the madinah.

Some of the finest woodwork to be found in all of Libya is close to the madinah gate leading off today's Green Square in the popular Ahmed Pasha Karamanlı mosque, built in 1738. In this part of the madinah, the narrow streets can become quite busy in the afternoon. Souvenir shops offering rugs, blankets, leather goods, postcards and a variety of old pottery and metal utensils all stand just inside the madinah wall. An amphora lying on a pile of seemingly discarded jugs and jars reminds one of the days when Tripoli exported olive oil to Rome. Beyond the souvenir and handicraft



The largest mosque in the madinah is the Ahmed Pasha Karamanlı Mosque, right**, which is known for its finely crafted woodwork. The Gurgi Mosque,** opposite**, features splendid tiles from Tunisia and stonework inlaid by Moroccan craftsmen. It dates to the 19th century, and it was the last mosque in Tripoli built under Turkish rule.**

shops are jewelry and fabric stores and arcades of ready-made clothes. Luggage is displayed on the street in front of the Karamanlı mosque, along with silken gift baskets for new brides and plastic flowers. Occasionally one must step around a customer opening a suitcase to examine its interior or a bread vendor who has set up his cart in the middle of the walkway. As one passes the mosque, approaching an outdoor café adjacent to the 19th-century Ottoman clock tower, one begins to hear the sounds of the Suq al-Ghizdir, the copper market where artisans still bend, hammer and shape metal into large globes or crescents to decorate the tops of minarets. Deeper into the network of streets are tailors bent over sewing machines and weavers squeezed into tiny workshops amid beautiful fabrics.

Outside the madinah is the remaining evidence of Rome's second encounter with Tripoli: Italian colonial architecture, often incorporating Islamic arches, lines the streets leading from Green Square. More cultural blending appears in the Al-Jaza'ir Mosque, a neo-Romanesque structure built in 1928 as Tripoli's Catholic cathedral, but dedicated as a mosque shortly after Muammar Qadhafi's assumption of power in 1969.

Italy's occupation of Libya from 1911 to 1943 was not a happy period. Between the 1911 invasion and the final suppression of Libyan resistance in 1932, tens of thousands of Libyans died, most of them from squalid living conditions in concentration camps set up by the Italian administration. Thousands more fled to Chad, Niger, Egypt and Tunisia. Nevertheless, the exchange of ideas, culture and goods between Tripoli and Rome seemed to weather all storms. The presence of tinsel-decorated plastic evergreen trees for sale in the market during the days leading up to the birthday of the Prophet Muhammed suggests that this cross-fertilization continues despite, or even because of, the colonial experience.

In 2008, to offer compensation for the often brutal excesses of the colonial era and to build a foundation for future economic cooperation, Italy agreed to fund a 20-year, $5-billion development program. One major element will be a new highway linking Libya to Tunisia and Egypt. Also included are undergraduate and post-graduate scholarships for 100 Libyan students a year. In return, Libya has begun the investment of government funds in a number of Italian companies, and it has expressed interest in buying up to 10 percent of ENI, the Italian oil company that is already the largest foreign oil company in Libya, extracting 550,000 barrels a day. In Julius Caesar's day, the olive groves of Tripolitania furnished a million liters (265,000 gal) of oil in tribute each year, making Libya the most important source of olive oil in North Africa. With the passage of time, it seems one type of oil has traded places with another.

In 1912, Mabel Loomis Todd—author of four books before *Tripoli the Mysterious* and the editor of Emily Dickinson's poems—wrote, "One of the last regions in this over-traveled world not only unswamped, but even unnoticed by tourists, the old Tripoli of Punic and Roman days and of later [Muslim] supremacy can never again retreat into the obscurity of centuries."

I think Ms. Todd got it right; today Tripoli awaits the next chapter in its destiny.

After 35 years in the US Foreign Service, **Charles O. Cecil** (cecilimages@comcast.net) retired in 2001 to devote himself to photography and writing. Recalled to the Service in late 2006, he spent eight months in Libya as chargé d'affaires of the US Embassy. He lives in Alexandria, Virginia.

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Miss Tully's Letters from Tripoli

Edited and introduced by Caroline Stone

We know almost nothing about Miss Tully—not even her full name—but her book, *Letters Written During a Ten Years' Residence at the Court of Tripoli*, is a valuable and very readable source of information about the city's social and political life in the last years of the 18th century.

Miss Tully was presumably the sister of the British consul at Tripoli, Richard Tully; she joined him, his wife and their two daughters there in 1783 and lived there for more than a decade. Mr. Tully was well regarded by the people of Tripoli and their *bashaw* or ruler, Ali Karamanlı, whose family had maintained a century of autonomy from the Ottomans. Mrs. Tully, Miss Tully and her nieces had free access to the women of the Karamanlı family and were apparently on intimate terms with them; the Tully daughters spoke Arabic and Miss Tully learned some as well.

Miss Tully's stay in Tripoli came during eventful times: She witnessed an epidemic of plague, droughts, famine, locust swarms, Bedouin raids, a visit by the psychopathic son of the ruler of Morocco, sailors who tried to spread the ideas of the French Revolution, an eruption of Mt. Etna in Sicily, a state bankruptcy and finally, in 1793, the terrible punitive force sent by the Ottomans to castigate the Karamanlıs. That caused the Tullys to take ship for Malta. Miss Tully's wide-ranging interest in the world around her and her eye for detail make her letters, only published 20 years after her departure, one of the most informative and lively windows into Tripoli's past. Here are some samples.

The Roman Arch

One of the grandest arches of antiquity stands yet entire at the Marine. The old arch, as the Moors term it, was built so long ago as AD 164, by a Roman who had the control of the customs.... It is thought by all good judges to be handsomer than any of the most celebrated in Italy, as the temple of Janus, though built of marble, and esteemed one of the finest of these edifices, has only a plain roof. This arch is very high, but does not appear so, being from the great accumulation of sands carried thither by the winds, exactly as deep beneath the surface of the earth as it is high above it.... Without the walls of the town are frequently found pieces of tessellated pavement, known to have been laid down two thousand years ago. At Labeda very considerable remains of Roman buildings are still standing nearly buried in the sands. So grand were the Roman edifices, that from Labeda, seven granite pillars of an immense size were for their beauty transported to France, and used in ornamenting one of the palaces built for Louis XIV. At Zavia, which is but a few hours' ride from hence, an amphitheatre, built by the Romans, is still standing entire, with five degrees of steps: its interior is one hundred and forty-eight feet in diameter.

The Princesses Give a Feast

Before the apartment, in a covered gallery which surrounds the square area in the middle of the house, Indian mattings, Turkey carpets, and silk cushions were placed, and long tables raised a very few inches from the ground. On the tables were placed all sorts of refreshments, and thirty or forty dishes of meat and poultry dressed in different ways: there were no knives nor forks, and only a few spoons of gold, silver, ivory, or coral. When the ladies were seated, Lilla Halluma and the princesses, with their attendants, walked round the tables during the repast to attend upon their guests, according to the Arabian custom. The tables were completely filled with the different dishes: there was no room for plates, nor were they required; for when a number of ladies had eaten what they chose out of one dish, it was changed for another. The beverage was various sherbets, some composed of the juice of boiled raisins, very sweet; some of the juice of pomegranates squeezed through the rind; and others of the pure juice of oranges. These sherbets were copiously supplied in high glass ewers placed in great numbers on the ground, reminding one much of the ancient scriptural paintings. After the dishes of meat were removed, a dessert of Arabian fruits, confectionaries and sweetmeats was served: among the latter was the date bread. This sweetmeat is made in perfection only by the blacks at Fezzan, of the ripe date of that country, which is superior to all others. They make it in the shape of loaves weighing from twenty to thirty pounds:

Rich tilework decorates the courtyard walls of the Yusuf Karamanlı House. Built in the 19th century, it served as the consulate of the Italian state of Tuscany. Today it is a museum.

the stones of the fruit are taken out, and the dates simply pressed together with great weights: thus preserved, it keeps perfectly good for a year. When the dessert was finished, the blacks brought towels with gold embroidered ends, and soap and water, which were very acceptable to many of the ladies, who had used neither knife, fork nor spoon, during the whole repast.

The Black Death: Quarantine Precautions

Among the very few articles which may be brought in without this precaution is cold bread, salt in bars, straw ropes, straw baskets, oil poured out of the jar to prevent contagion from the hemp with which it is covered, sugar without paper or box.... Straw previously placed in the hall is lighted at a considerable distance, by means of a light at the end of a stick, and no person suffered to enter the hall till it is thought sufficiently purified by the fire.... Eight people in the last seven days, who were employed as providers for the house, have taken the plague and died.... The Moors perform acts of kindness at present, which if attended by such dreadful circumstances, would be very rarely met with in most parts of Christendom. An instance very lately occurred of their philanthropy. A Christian lay an object of misery, neglected and forsaken; self-preservation having taught every friend to fly from her pestilential bed, even her mother! But she found ... a paternal hand: passing by [a Muslim neighbor] heard her moans, and concluded she was the last of her family; and finding that not the case he beheld her with sentiments of compassion mixed with horror. He sought for assistance, and, till the plague had completed its ravages and put an end to her sufferings, he did not lose sight of her.

An Eruption of Mount Etna

Accounts we have just received from Europe, having explained to us a supernatural appearance that happened here some time since, lead me to tell you of the extraordinary manner in which an eruption of Mount Etna affected this country. Nothing could make a more desolate appearance than this town: the sky was extremely thick and dark, and the heavy rain, as it fell, left the white walls of the houses streaked with black, as if from sooty water tinged with red.

The French Revolution

Though in a remote part of the world, distant from Europe, we lately witnessed some of the effects of the revolution in France. On the fourteenth of last July, the crews of several French vessels came on shore, to celebrate the anniversary of the destruction of the Bastille, and of the general oath of allegiance taken in the Champ de Mars. They sung the horrid song of *ça ira*, and danced the festive dance on the sea-side; but on discovering their intentions of planting the tree of liberty on shore, the Consuls applied in time to the Bashaw, and easily persuaded him to prevent this from taking place.

On Eating Ostrich

One of these birds was lately dressed [prepared] here, merely out of curiosity. The most delicate part of its body resembles the coarsest beef: one of its eggs made three large dishes of omelet, too strong in flavour and smell to be tasted without disgust: and another egg was made into cakes and fried, and appeared like toasted crumpets. The whole repast was too disagreeable to be partaken of by Europeans.

Farewell to Tripoli

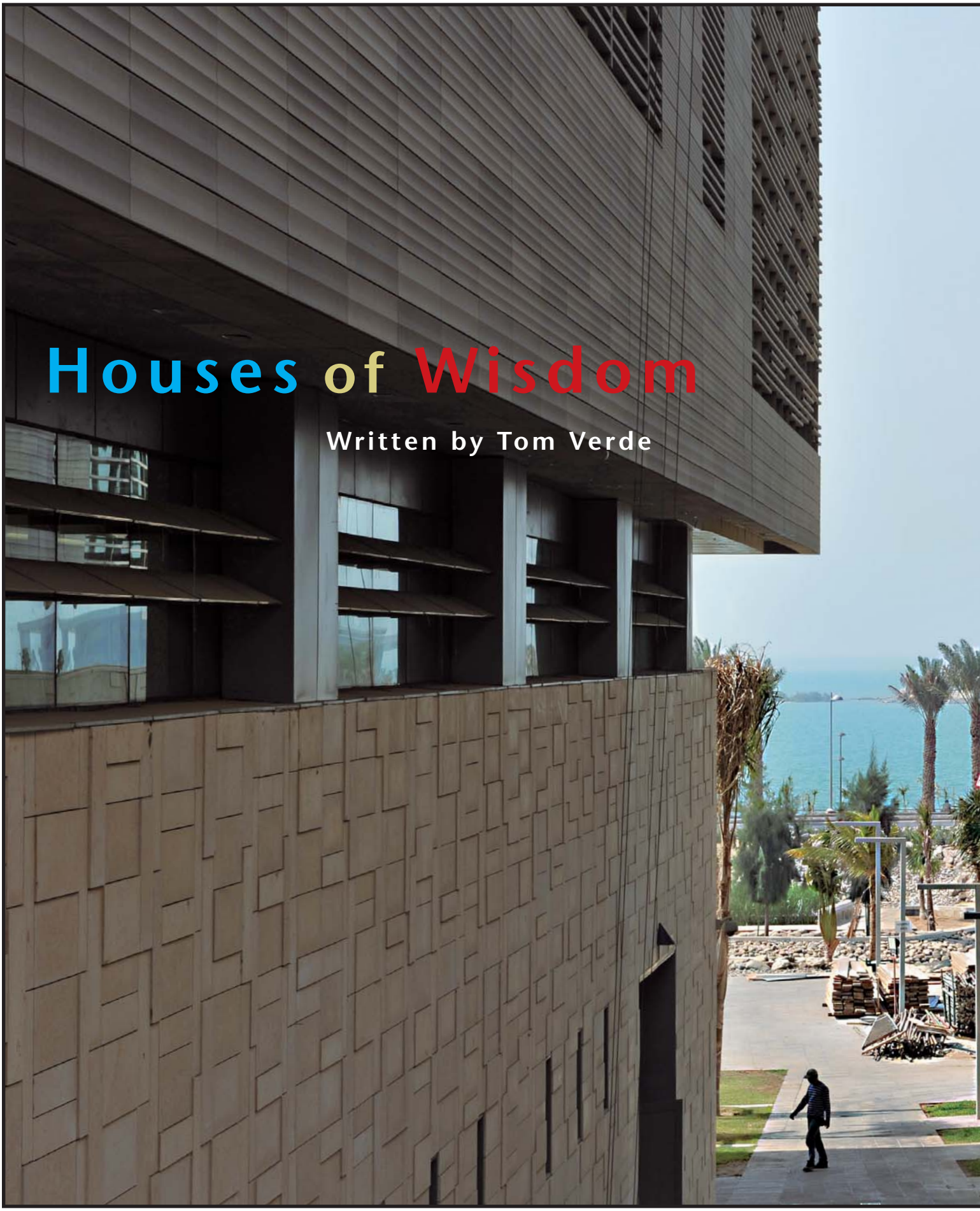
Tripoli, under Ali Bashaw, has experienced for upwards of thirty years a mild government, perhaps too mild for the interest of its subjects. The country was visited by the heavy calamities of plague, famine, and war, unfortunately for us, during the greatest part of the ten years we lived there; but no tyranny of the Bashaw made up a share of its misfortunes. Moorish families slept unmolested in the open air on their terraces, and waked to peace in the morning; while the Christians, to whom the highest respect was paid by the Moors on all occasions, lived happy with the natives, and safer here than in any other part of Barbary, till Sidy Useph, by rebelling against his father and brother, tore the country with intestine broils [sic], and laid it open to a series of troubles, which have long rendered it the theatre of murder and desolation; and it is not easy at present to conjecture when its tragedies will end.

Caroline Stone divides her time between Seville and Cambridge, where she is senior researcher on the Civilizations in Contact Project. She would like to thank the Golden Web Foundation for its support of her research on Miss Tully.

Further Reading:
Letters written during a ten years' residence at the Court of Tripoli, 1783–1975. Miss Tully. Caroline Stone, intr. 2009, Hardinge Simpole, 978-1-84382-197-7, $45 pb.

Houses of Wisdom

Written by Tom Verde



Twelve and a half centuries ago, the second Abbasid caliph, Abu Jafar al-Mansur, stood at the fertile, marshy edge of the Tigris River's west bank—at a point where the river almost merges with the Euphrates—and declared it the spot for his new capital. Though its official name was Madinat al-Salam (City of Peace), it came to be known as Baghdad, after the nearby fishing village that was displaced by al-Mansur's vision and ambition.

"Al-Mansur summoned … engineers, architects and experts," according to one medieval chronicler, to help him design and build his magnificent city, the foundations of which were laid at a time chosen by the court astrologer.

It fell to one of al-Mansur's successors, the poet and scholar al-Ma'mun, to outdo him by establishing "his famous Bayt al-Hikmah (House of Wisdom),

a combination library, academy and translation bureau," in the words of historian Philip K. Hitti. This legendary institution attracted some of the greatest mathematical (al-Khwarizmi), scientific (Ibn Hayyan) and engineering (al-Jazari) minds of its day. To fill the shelves, al-Ma'mun dispatched his head librarian, Hunayn ibn Ishaq (who translated the works of the Greek physician Galen), as far as Constantinople on a mission to track down and procure every book of classical learning he could find. It's said that for every book Ibn Ishaq translated, the bibliophile caliph offered to pay its weight in gold.

Nearly two and half years ago, in October 2007, another Arab ruler stood on a remote shore, in this case along the Red Sea coast, astride another small fishing village, the Saudi Arabian town of Thuwal, and laid the foundation stone for a similarly ambitious and monumental educational project.

"Based on Islam's eternal values, which urge us to seek knowledge and develop ourselves and our societies, and relying on God Almighty, we declare the establishment of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology [KAUST], and hope it will be a source of knowledge and serve as a bridge between peoples and cultures," proclaimed the Saudi ruler, King Abdullah ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud. Though he did not promise to award the university's resident scholars the weight in gold of their research papers, the new university's endowment is among the largest in the world. That's money on a scale that seems to match the king's intention to make KAUST a new "House of Wisdom," or as he put it: "A forum for science and research, and a beacon of knowledge for future generations."

KAUST is a vast complex of high-tech research laboratories, classroom buildings, libraries and streets lined with homes and apartments overlooking the Red Sea, lying about an hour north of Jiddah. The graduate-level university, which opened last year to fanfare and fireworks on September 23, Saudi Arabia's national day, is one of the newest, and perhaps the most spectacular, of a growing number of institutions of higher learning to open in the area, particularly in the Gulf region, in recent years. Many of them look abroad—especially to America—for their models. Though KAUST officials point out that their institution is more international than American in its philosophy and structure, it is nonetheless part of a wider movement, stretching from Morocco to Qatar, that seeks not only to recapture past intellectual glory but also to establish new "knowledge-based" economies.

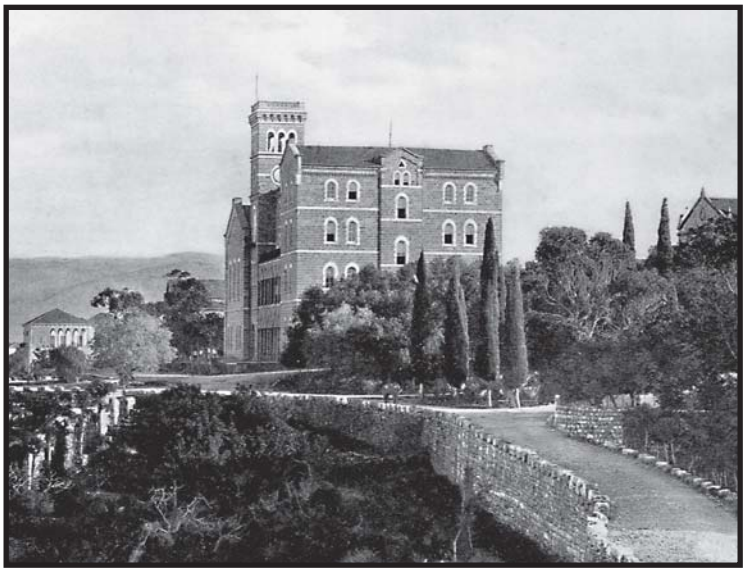
"The knowledge gap separating the Arab and Islamic nations from the advancement of contemporary global civilization is becoming deeper and wider," remarked Abdallah S. Jum'ah, former president and CEO of the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco), which was tasked with building KAUST in 2006. Speaking at the 2007 groundbreaking ceremony, Jum'ah declared that "the fostering of a culture of scientific research and indigenous development capabilities is imperative. In this regard, KAUST ... represents a critical development to shrink the knowledge gap."

Once, the West was behind in the knowledge gap Jum'ah referred to, and once, Europeans came to the Middle East to study. But in recent centuries, and especially for much of the past 50 years, the flow of students has been largely in an East-to-West direction, with many Arabs from the Gulf and elsewhere traveling, most often to the US, for university educations. Yet the history of American educational institutions in the region dates back a further half century and more to schools that are now household names in the field of high-quality higher education in the Middle East—institutions like the American University of Beirut (AUB) or the American University in Cairo (AUC), which serve as good examples of how western-style education in the region developed.

Around the beginning of the last century, the higher-education system in the Middle East—especially the Gulf—was limited. Most girls received no education outside the home, while young men and boys were typically schooled by an *imam* (religious leader) who taught the

From Morocco to Qatar, a drive to establish a "knowledge-based" economy.

The American University of Beirut, shown below **in 1921, was among the early US-style institutions of higher education in the Middle East.** Left: **Today, its graduates live and work worldwide.** Previous spread: **Two of the university's four major research buildings frame the iconic Breakwater Beacon at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, which opened in September along Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast.**



memorization of the *Qur'an*, as well as the traditions (*hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad. Those who showed promise might go on to learn Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) at a *madrassa* (mosque school), or study in the famous universities at Cairo's al-Azhar Mosque or the Kairouan Mosque in Tunisia. While such institutions produced knowledgeable clerics and scholars of Islamic law, they did not emphasize what are recognized today as the arts and sciences.

It was actually the French, not the Americans, who led the way among western educators in establishing schools in the Middle East, with missionaries opening facilities in Lebanon and Syria as early as the 1730's. The French influence in Egypt stemmed in part from Napoleon's occupation of the country at the turn of the 18th century, but also owed much to the country's Ottoman-era ruler, Muhammad Ali (1769–1849), who was cared for as a child by the French owner of a tobacco shop. (Even as late as the 1950's, after decades of British political control, there remained more French than English schools in Egypt.)

It was Ibrahim Pasha, Muhammad Ali's son, who opened the doors for the first American Protestant missionary schools in Syria, where he was governor. By 1860, American missionaries ran more than 30 primary and secondary schools in Syria. In December 1866 in Beirut, they opened the doors of the Syrian Protestant College, which would later become the American University of Beirut.

AUB's founder and first president, Daniel Bliss—an Amherst-educated Congregationalist from Vermont—believed that, while Arab students were exceptional at memorization, they needed strengthening in abstract thinking ability. As Robert Kaplan puts it in his book *The Arabists*, "The college's success or failure could rest only on its ability to teach its students how to organize and interpret facts."

This approach to education was one of many advances pioneered by the Syrian Protestant College and others in the region. Further innovations included schools for women (such as the Syrian Protestant College's school of nursing, which opened in 1905) and admitting women alongside men, which the school—by then called AUB—did in 1924. Egypt's State University in Cairo followed suit four years later. Beirut's Lebanese American University (LAU) also traces its roots back to a Protestant missionary school for girls, the American School for Girls, founded in 1835.

In Turkey, American Protestant missionaries had been establishing schools, initially for Christians, since the 1820's. The jewel in their crown was Robert College, opened by Cyrus Hamlin of Maine and New York businessman Christopher Robert in 1863. It offered students, "without distinction of race or religion, a thorough education equal in all respects to that obtained at a first-class American college and based upon the same general principles," according an early catalog. In 1890, it was joined by the American College for Girls. In 1971, these institutions were folded into the new Boğaziçi University, which encompasses the original Robert College campus.

Egypt's own Protestant-founded academy, the American University in Cairo, or AUC, opened in 1919. Established in a former palace in central Cairo, a couple of blocks east of the Nile, AUC, like its counterparts elsewhere, attracted the sons and daughters of local aristocrats who regarded America's presence in the Middle East as largely philanthropic.

Founded in 1919, the American University in Cairo moved in 2008 to an expanded campus whose design pays homage to medieval Cairo.

Like AUB's Bliss and Robert College's Hamlin, AUC founder Charles R. Watson—another New Englander—understood that, to be accepted in the region, an American-run institution of higher learning needed to address local concerns. Thus AUC established a teacher-training division, a rural extension service and, in 1921, one of the region's earliest schools of "oriental studies."

Meanwhile, farther east in the Gulf, the booming pearl industry gave rise around the turn of the 20th century to a mercantile class whose members desired, and could afford to build, systems of formal education among their tribesmen. (The oil industry would have a somewhat similar effect half a century or so later.) In Dubai and Sharjah in today's United Arab Emirates (UAE), and in Qatar, Bahrain and elsewhere, many of these early schools were run by Egyptians and Palestinians following Egyptian curricula, which included math and local geography as well as Arab and even European history.

Watson understood that, to be accepted, an American-run institution needed to address local concerns.

B. O'KANE / ALAMY; OPPOSITE, AUB: CORBIS; GRADUATES: AILEEN VINCENT BARWOOD / SAWDIA; PREVIOUS SPREAD: DICK DOUGHTY

An example of such an early school can be found in Sharjah, along Sharjah Creek in the heart of the "Old City." Hanging on the raffia-covered classroom walls of the charmingly restored Eslah School, established in 1935 by Shaykh Mohammed bin Ali Al Mahmoud, are pictures of some of the forward-thinking schoolmasters of the time: Dubai-educated Hashem bin al-Sayed Reda al-Hashemy, who established Sharjah's first printing press, and Abdullah bin Saleh al-Motawaa, among whose claims to fame was his endorsement of education for girls.

The collapse of the pearling industry in the mid- to late 1930's—a ripple effect of the Great Depression in the US and Europe, worsened by competition from Japanese cultured pearls—left the Gulf's economy languishing and caused many schools to close. Later, the unprecedented influx of oil wealth during the 1950's and 1960's forever changed Gulf economies, as well as Gulf society. Along with this new wealth came centralized governments—after the departure of the British from the states with which they had treaties—which included ministries of education. They began establishing today's schools, from kindergartens right on through universities.

It was also around this time that nations in the region began looking to the West for higher education. Money from oil revenues provided generous scholarships to send students overseas, particularly to the US, where the reputations of schools such as Stanford, Princeton, Texas A&M, Georgetown and others—with their degrees in business, engineering and international relations—attracted a generation of Arab and Muslim students. They came to take advantage of the best that American higher education had to offer, and they returned home to take up prominent positions in government and industry—especially the petroleum industry. In 1979, Iran—on the eve of its revolution—led the Middle East in the number of students abroad, with some 50,000 studying in the US, according to a 2004 report by World Education Services. The mid 1970's through the early 1980's, the report notes, "marked the peak of Middle Eastern student enrollments in the US."

Political turmoil and strained US-Arab relations in the decades that followed led to declines in the numbers of Middle Eastern students seeking American educations. Then, for several years after 9/11, it became increasingly difficult for Muslims and Arabs to obtain student visas at all—at one time a fairly straightforward process. A 2004 survey conducted by the Institute of International Education reported that 59 percent of Arab and Muslim students who wished to go to school in the US gave up their plans because of the new, lengthy background checks and long waiting periods.

Although Middle Eastern students by then had any number of local, usually government-run universities from which to chose, many still perceived a western-style education as a desirable ticket to success. And in recent years, as visa delays have been reduced and background checks speeded up, the Saudi government in particular has initiated a generous scholarship program for study abroad. Saudi enrollment in US universities in 2008-2009 increased by 28 percent over the previous academic year, reaching 12,661.

It was during the last 10 to 15 years that the model of the American-style university in the Middle East began to enjoy a renaissance, thanks primarily to the long-range vision of local leaders.

Shaykh Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qasimi is one such leader. Ruler of Sharjah for 37 years and a member of the UAE's Supreme Council, the 71-year-old Shaykh Sultan is a passionate scholar and historian—a modern-day al-Ma'mun—and the sort of fellow who can happily lose himself for hours leafing through a copy of Claudius

Founded in 1997, AUS is a relative veteran among the western-style universities.

On a spring afternoon, students relax on the front steps of the American University of Sharjah (AUS) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). AUS enrolls some 5200 undergraduates, about 20 percent from the UAE, followed by contingents from Jordan, Egypt and Palestine. After graduation, many stick around: Some three-fourths of its more than 5000 alumni live in the UAE. Opposite: **Students crack books and laptops in AUS's library.**

Ptolemy's second-century treatise on geography. Sharjah's onetime minister of education, he was pressed into service as the emirate's ruler after the assassination of his elder brother in 1972. But education remains near and dear to his heart.

"If you want to see him get excited, ask him about history, about learning," says Malcolm Richards, dean of the School of Business and Management at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), a 125-hectare (313-acre) campus of palm trees, tranquil pools and monumental domed buildings a few kilometers east of downtown Sharjah. AUS was founded in 1997 and is thus a relative veteran among the new western-style universities in the region. It is an impressive example of what happens when you combine powerful financial resources ($135 million out of the shaykh's pocket alone) and the vision of a man who knows precisely what he wants in an institution of higher learning, from the floor tiles right up to the rooftops.

Established in 2003, the American University of Kuwait (AUK) partnered with Dartmouth College in New Hampshire to develop a liberal-arts program. It has also mounted local initiatives, such as the Arabian Heritage Project, which focuses on the traditional cultures of the Arabian Peninsula.

> Common to all the schools are classes taught in English, a mostly American faculty and an emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving.

"When they were building the library, the shaykh looked at its dome and thought it conflicted with the dome on the Main Building, so he said, 'Take it down,'" recalls Richards. "He didn't like the second one either, so he said, 'Take it down' again. Then they finally got it right."

While the stunning lemony-white exteriors and vaguely Mughal domes, columns and arches may well inspire, it's what goes on in the classrooms of AUS and other such institutions across the Middle East that is turning the region's educational system on its ear.

"There has been a disillusionment, unfortunately, with the capabilities of the national universities in the Gulf and Middle East," says AUS chancellor Peter Heath. "Whether new universities or branch campuses, it's really based on parents' dissatisfaction with the status quo."

Heath's assessment is not mere boosterism for his own institution. Prior to coming to Sharjah last year, he served for 10 years as the provost of AUB, many of those years during a time when the university was rebuilding and restabilizing itself in the wake of the 2006 Lebanon war. Thus he has been surveying this landscape for some time from the perspective of an insider who has observed, and contributed to, the growth of western-style higher education in the Middle East.

It is, in fact, a fairly broad landscape, with choices ranging from what are little more than glorified tech schools to actual branch campuses of some of America's leading universities. Whatever their pedigrees, common elements among most of these models include classes taught in English, a predominantly American faculty and an emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving.

With an eye toward a future in which economies are not buoyed as much by oil and natural gas as they are today, the founders of these institutions, such as Sharjah's Shaykh Sultan, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah and Qatar's Shaykhah Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, have geared curricula toward the scientific and the technical, with emphasis on research and development. Thus, while poetry, history and the like are on offer in most of the institutions, as they are at any liberal-arts school, the emphases here are on schools of business, medicine, engineering and design.

"I came here to study architecture and design, because I feel these disciplines will better prepare me for life and a career," says Farah Istieteih, an AUS freshman from Jordan, who sat with a sketchpad in her lap and a thumb extended, for perspective, toward

OPPOSITE AND BELOW: ART CLARK; ABOVE: BRYAN DENTON / CORBIS

an elaborately decorated doorway of the auditorium. Her classmate, Rawand al-Muhtaseb, from Syria, was equally resolute and even more single-minded.

"I am studying mass communication and want to go on from here to graduate studies at Northwestern, then into public relations and advertising. I have a definite plan," says the second-semester freshman, with a confident, mediagenic smile.

Al-Muhtaseb is one of about 5000 students at AUS, an enrollment that is on target for the school's growth and capacity. Yet even

though "the popularity of American-style education in Arab society is at an all-time high," according to a 2007 study by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the challenges associated with such ventures are as real today as they were in Daniel Bliss's day: how to teach critical thinking; how to attract and retain top expatriate faculty; how to address the sensitive issues around co-education; how to teach top-quality course material in English to students for whom English is a second language; and how to adapt western concepts to a Middle Eastern classroom.

"From a business-school perspective, the fundamentals of things like human-resource management, accounting principles, basic marketing—those don't change that much," said AUS's Richards. "But then there are things like *shariah* [Islamic] law and Islamic finance, which are very important here, that we need to prepare our students for."

Such curricular integration is critical, according to AUS's English Department head, Fatima Badry. In a survey she conducted in 2008 on the globalization of higher education in the Gulf, she was alarmed to find that western-style universities in the UAE offered little that might fall under the heading "local studies."

"I found that less than a quarter of the courses had anything to do with local culture, history, society," says Badry. As a linguist, she also fears the loss of Arabic on college campuses in the Gulf and elsewhere in the Arab world where western-style higher education is on the rise.

"There is a middle road," she says, pointing out that while college and university administrators from France to South Africa to Turkey recognize that English provides access to worldwide, Internet-based knowledge these days, local language and culture need not be sacrificed.

"It doesn't have to be either-or," she says. "It is a false dilemma that either we go with English to modernize our education, or we stay with Arabic and we are considered traditional and backward-looking. All the studies show that you can be bilingual and still have a successful educational model."

AUS's mission from the beginning has been to provide "a liberal-arts education, based on the American model, grounded in Arab culture," says Badry. She questions whether the institution is living up to the latter part of that statement, yet wryly acknowledges that its first part is what guarantees her the academic freedom to voice such a concern in the first place.

The Starbucks at the student center at Education City in Doha features tribal carpets, cushions and a full Bedouin tent. That may not be quite the kind of cultural balance Badry has in mind, yet it's as quintessential a picture of East meeting West as you will find here in Qatar, a thumb-shaped nation jutting into the Gulf a few hundred kilometers up the coast from Sharjah. Female students in inky black *abayas* and young men in crisp white *thawbs* sit cross-legged beneath the folds of the tent, engaged in typical graduate-school chat over foamy grande lattes and the pages of science and engineering textbooks the size of Manhattan telephone directories.

Outside, in the glaring sun and soaring temperatures, ideas are literally sprouting. Bright yellow, shoulder-high letters spelling out words such as "Innovate" and "Think," in English and Arabic, erupt from the emerald-green lawns of the Qatar Foundation's 15-year-old Education City, a 1000-hectare (2500-acre) conglomeration of high-tech buildings and branch campuses of well-regarded American universities, including Cornell, Carnegie Mellon, Northwestern, Georgetown, Texas A&M and Virginia Commonwealth. The inspiration behind the big yellow words—and the daring enterprise itself—is that of Qatar's dynamic shaykhah and foundation chairperson Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned. Employing a different model from AUS, Shaykhah Mozah attracted these prestigious American institutions by employing incentives that no dean of admissions or chief financial officer could resist.

"The Qatar Foundation told us, 'Whatever you need, we'll get for you,'" says Mark H. Weichold, dean of Texas A&M at Qatar. "Because we're a Texas state school, we can't spend state money over here, so the foundation has taken care of everything. It's what made it possible for us to even think about establishing a campus here in the Middle East."

While A&M–long an alma mater to many Arab students–already had something of a global presence, the Qatar Foundation invitation was strongly appealing from both academic and financial perspectives.

An ovoid lecture hall, above**, stands at the center of Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, one of the six universities whose branch campuses offer full-fledged** US **degrees at Education City. While some classrooms are traditional** (opposite)**, others, such as the one shown** right **at Georgetown University's Education City branch, feature live videoconferencing.**

"Doha is the place to be in terms of oil and liquefied natural gas [LNG] production," says Weichold. "It's not too hard to connect the dots between what Qatar has to offer and what our students will be exposed to in terms of state-of-the-art facilities and access to systems and technology that are unavailable in Texas."

A brand-new petroleum and petrochemical safety research college, in partnership with Texas A&M, British Petroleum and Qatar Petroleum, in the industrial port city of Ras Laffan, about an hour's drive northeast of Doha, is a good example."Ph.D. students can conduct research there on the dynamics of LNG fires, fire engineering, fire-fighting and safety methods," says Weichold. "They can study oil spills in the ocean and LNG emergencies under controlled conditions."

On the flip side, Education City offers Middle Eastern and foreign-national students something they can't otherwise obtain locally–an American diploma from an American university, without having to travel to America.

"The institutions at Education City are not 'American-style,' or 'drawn from' or 'inspired by' universities in the United States. They *are* US universities," says Chuck Thorpe, Carnegie Mellon Qatar's dean. "We are not *like* Carnegie Mellon: We *are* Carnegie Mellon, and when you graduate from here, you do so with a Carnegie Mellon degree in your hand."

It is the prestige associated with such a degree that the Qatar Foundation is banking on to attract students. Other Gulf states using the same strategy include Dubai, with its International Academic City, where Michigan State University stands out among a bevy of smaller international institutions, and Abu Dhabi, where New York University established a branch campus on the emirate's $27-billion Saadiyat Island, not far from a branch of another distinguished New York institution, the Guggenheim Museum.

The allure of this model is that, like a franchise, it has name recognition and systems in place almost as soon as the ceremonial ribbons are cut and the lecture-hall doors open.

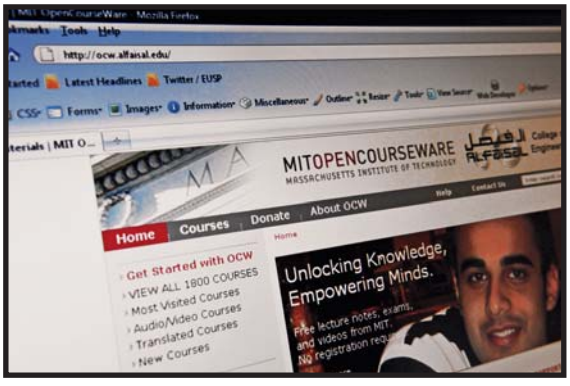
"They carry the policies and procedures and admission requirements of the mother institution and benefit from its reputation," according to Shafeeq Ghabra, co-author of the Washington Institute report. In addition, Ghabra observes, "These universities do not face the start-up problems most new private universities and colleges in the Arab world do." Those start-up issues include the lengthy process of accreditation. Because they are American institutions operating overseas at the invitation of foreign governments–almost like embassies–universities at Education City get right down to the business of educating students, conducting research and helping their host governments achieve a critical goal for future survival: the transformation of commodity-based economies into knowledge-based ones.

"Doha in 2009 is a lot like Pittsburgh in 1909," observes Thorpe. "There you had the richest man in the world, Andrew Carnegie, running the steel business, and a population of immigrant workers from all over, working in the industry. But Carnegie realized the future was in aluminum and had the vision to diversify. We're doing the same here by training our graduates to explore new ideas in computer science, information systems technology and robotics."

Like Texas A&M, Carnegie Mellon tailors its curricula and research to meet specific regional needs, such as establishing (in cooperation with IBM, A&M and Qatar University) one of the

Bright yellow, shoulder-high letters spelling out "Innovate" and "Think," in English and Arabic, erupt from Education City's emerald-green lawns.

MAIN: MARTIN MARION /WEILL CORNELL; OPPOSITE AND RIGHT: BRYAN DENTON / CORBIS



Top: **In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, students in Alfaisal University's University Preparatory Program receive hands-on lab instruction from biology instructor Drew Clippard, left.** Above: **A model shows Alfaisal's four colleges, some still under construction, as well as its mosque (lower right), all circling the palace of Saudi Arabia's late King Faisal ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz.** Left: **Alfaisal taps into supplements on-line, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's free OpenCourseWare program.**

Middle East's first "cloud-computing" initiatives, an Internet-based system that will deliver hosted services—applications, research and seismic modeling for oil and natural gas exploration—to local businesses and industries. Meanwhile, in its robotics labs, Carnegie Mellon researchers ponder uniquely Middle Eastern solutions to uniquely Middle Eastern challenges in the field of artificial intelligence, such as the nature of human-robot interactions in Arab social and cultural settings. One result: "Hala" (whose name means "welcome" in Arabic), a computer-robot receptionist that can distinguish the gender and clothing style of an approaching person (traditional Gulf or western) and respond accordingly in either Arabic or English.

Yet with local solutions come local dilemmas, not the least of which are language problems of the sort that AUS's Badry noted.

"I've had managers at Qatar Petroleum tell me that the computer-science students we send them are excellent, but that their Arabic is not good enough," says Thorpe.

Then there are cultural challenges that go beyond even the delicacy of coeducation—challenges that speak to the heart of a liberal-arts education.

"For example: How do you teach freedom of speech," asks Richard Roth, dean of the journalism program at Northwestern University in Qatar, "in a part of the world where it is not protected?" Answering his own question, he says, "The same way we teach it in the States."

This means his students get out into the field rather than relying on press releases, and they decline gifts from sources in exchange for favorable coverage—a custom which, in many news organizations in the Arab world, might be considered acceptable. Yet at the same time, Roth observes, local traditions and sentiments can enhance and broaden American journalism-school curricula.

"We teach American-style journalism, but we've also had success tapping into the Bedouin style of storytelling, which is linear and direct, but colorful," he says. "Also, a lot of American journalism-school students want to go into entertainment reporting. Here, the students are much more passionate about politics."

Plans for Northwestern's journalism school in Qatar include four large state-of-the-art broadcast studios and the world's largest media wall. But the bigger and more magnificent the facilities, the more they seem to dwarf the student body on a campus that seems eerily empty: Enrollment at Northwestern is a mere 71 students, while most other schools in Education City hover between 100 and 250. Texas A&M is the exception, with 390—a figure that is on target for the school's enrollment.

And such numbers can make all the difference. Last year's financial meltdown in Dubai left Michigan State University and the Rochester Institute of Technology struggling to attract qualified students not only from among UAE citizens, but also from a

shrinking pool of expatriate families, many of whom left the country in the economic crisis. Earlier in the year, George Mason University (GMU) closed its Ras al-Khaimah campus in the UAE without graduating a single student, due in part to low enrollment and severe budget cuts. The campus has since been given a chance at a new life by the newly created American University of Ras al-Khaimah. A sentence in a May 25, 2009 story in the English-language Abu Dhabi daily *The National* summarized the new school's strategy: "The new government college ... will have lower admission requirements and fees in the hope of attracting more students."

Qatar's Education City is in a different situation, says Thorpe, because it is foundation-supported. The GMU campus, he points out, was corporate-sponsored, as was Michigan State, which made them more vulnerable to market economics. A computer scientist by training and diplomat by nature, Thorpe remains focused and more than optimistic about Education City and enrollment numbers, which he said are currently capped at 100 at Carnegie Mellon to maintain slow, steady growth.

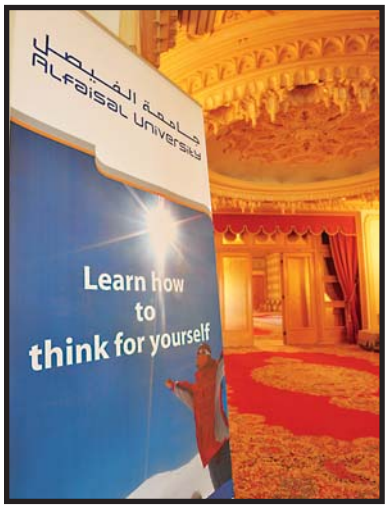
"At Carnegie Mellon, we are problem solvers, and we believe in bringing Pittsburgh to the problem," he said. "But there are five other institutions here as well, and when you bring together people with different areas of expertise and different backgrounds and ideas, it is very powerful."

If Education City is a foundation-financed collection of powerhouse institutions and AUS is a visionary's version of an American university, then Saudi Arabia's two-year-old Alfaisal University in Riyadh is something of a hybrid. Supported by the King Faisal Foundation, the university is nonprofit but private rather than state-funded.

Instead of welcoming branches of brand-name American universities, Alfaisal University has called on them to form partnerships to help the Saudi university's administration develop its own infrastructure and curricula. Thus Alfaisal's College of Medicine has collaborated with Harvard Medical International (essentially a consultancy arm of the Harvard Medical School) to design programs and facilities and recruit faculty, while the engineering school makes use of free course material from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology through the Cambridge school's Web-based OpenCourseWare initiative.

This strategy has become increasingly common in recent years in Saudi Arabia and the larger region. Effat University, a women's institution in Jiddah, has partnered with Swarthmore, Duke University's Pratt School of Engineering, Georgetown's School of Business, Mount Holyoke and others. In Kuwait, the American College of the Middle East has signed agreements with Purdue to help develop programs, while that nation's first private college, the Gulf University of Science and Technology, opened in 2002 under an agreement with the University of Missouri at St. Louis.

Despite such arrangements, however, and though its classes are taught in English and modeled on American-style curricula, Alfaisal remains distinctively Saudi. The architectural centerpiece of its campus (still under construction) is the restored palace of the late Saudi king Faisal ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, around which the colleges of business, medicine, engineering, science and general studies are circled like clan leaders sitting around a tribal shaykh. Meanwhile, Alfaisal's all-dome mosque, wrapped for shade by concentric louvers, sits like an upside-down bowl whose smooth arcs play off the sharp taper of its needle minaret. One of the first buildings erected on the new campus, the mosque does not dominate the facility, but it offers a focal point that counterbalances the restored palace.



In the former royal palace, a sign spells out a clear message to students.

"We say we are western-style, yet are still a Saudi university," says Maher A. Alodan, dean of the engineering school and vice president for research and graduate studies. Like many educated men of his and his father's generation, Alodan, in his 40's, earned a doctoral degree in the US. His Ph.D. diploma in chemical engineering from the University of Minnesota occupies a conspicuous place on the wall behind his desk. But the time has come, he says, for Saudis and other students in the region to look homeward to solve the problems at home. "We want to educate students to conduct research here, and produce graduates who have the skill and the knowledge to contribute to the economy," he says.

Alodan's counterpart at Alfaisal's college of medicine, Dean Khaled Mana'a Alkattan, echoes this sentiment, with a pointed observation.

"If you look at the medical community in Saudi Arabia today, only 30 percent of the doctors are Saudi. The rest are expatriates. We need to address that," he says.

By focusing on its specific disciplines, Alkattan said, Alfaisal is readying a new generation for entrepreneurship, finance, business management, genetics and biotechnology on both local and global levels. So far, the school has done an effective job of marketing itself to its target audience—students not just from Saudi Arabia, but from throughout the Muslim world and even the Arab diasporas in the West.

"I did a semester at McMaster University in Canada, but found that the student body was way too big. Plus, I missed my family," says Mohammed Khusheim, a Saudi who is now studying medicine. Aside from a smaller, more culturally familiar student body, Khusheim appreciates the school's approach to education.

"It's a combination of problem-based learning and traditional lectures. I think it works well," he says.

"We say we are western-style, yet are still a Saudi university."

DICK DOUGHTY (4)

But not every incoming freshman is prepared for this type of curriculum. In some cases, a certain amount of ramping up is required.

"Not every high school can expose its students to such things as hands-on lab experiments," says Sudanese student Ayman Mohamed.

KAUST is focused on one big challenge, which it calls "sustainable prosperity."

Hence, Alfaisal's University Preparatory Program (UPP) has been designed to walk students who need the help through the basics of lab techniques, scientific research and critical thinking in medicine, engineering and business for a year before they start their degree programs.

"Such training is necessary for a student population of varied backgrounds," says Ala Al Bakri, Alfaisal's vice provost for accreditation and quality assurance. "It's not a homogeneous group. We have people from the general education Saudi system, people from the Jordanian system, from IB [International Baccalaureate] programs—you name it." UPP ensures that everyone starts off at the same level.

Alfaisal administrators have high aspirations for the school's graduates and for what the institution can offer both the kingdom and the region. "The vision and mission of the school is to help provide future leaders for Saudi Arabia and the region," said Al Bakri, with a determined edge to his voice that is characteristic of many educators in the region who have taken on no less a task than reshaping the higher education systems in their own countries, using a road map from another.

Then there is the institution on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast that may be rewriting the road maps of higher education altogether: KAUST.

It is difficult for a visitor to maintain perspective at KAUST. It is anomalous, yet familiar: An Oz-like complex set on the edge of the desert, overlooking a lonely stretch of Red Sea beachfront, yet architecturally similar to any number of Fortune-500 company R&D centers. It's imposing and polished, yet unfinished: Construction dust competes with blowing sand, while palm-tree saplings still wrapped in burlap line the main entranceway like beach umbrellas waiting for summer. It's a degree-granting university with many western-trained professors and researchers that has nonetheless rejected the traditional western organizational model in favor of a pragmatic, interdisciplinary approach focused on "sustainable prosperity" and the attendant issues of energy, food, water, environment and computer technology. Such an approach, KAUST faculty and administrators say, is breaking down walls that have compartmentalized universities since the Middle Ages.

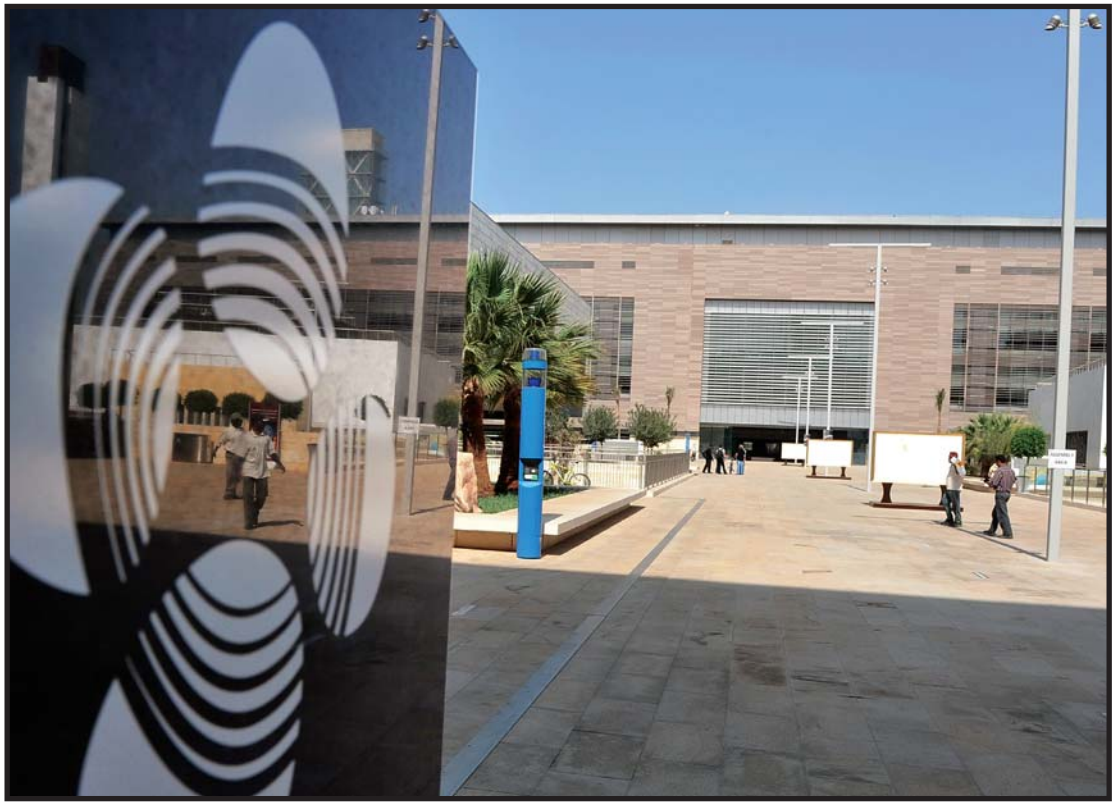
"KAUST was built to do interdisciplinary research and to solve new problems," says Mohamed Samaha, a 30-year Saudi Aramco veteran who is now KAUST's senior vice president of research and economic development. He and other Saudi Aramco colleagues, past and present, including projects-and-planning expert Nadhmi Al-Nasr—now KAUST's interim vice president of administration and finance—were called on in mid-2006 to build the institution from the sand up. Sitting in an expansive office overlooking KAUST's iconic Breakwater Beacon, which rises from the edge of the campus's artificial lagoon, Samaha shrugged off the scale of such a task with a self-effacing chuckle.

"Aramco is known for building major projects. That is what we do," he says.

Still, building KAUST was a task unlike any other that

From left: **Researchers and faculty from around the world give KAUST a cosmopolitan feel. "KAUST is organized to tackle the really big problems of water, energy, food and environment," explains President Choon Fong Shih, who holds a doctorate from Harvard. Tools to do that include "Shaheen,"** opposite, left, **centerpiece of the Supercomputing Research Center, established in partnership with IBM. The library,** opposite, right, **offers on-line resources alongside traditional book stacks.** Opposite, top: **Built by Saudi Aramco in three years on the site of a former fishing village, the university devised a logo that reflects its goal of becoming a world research hub.**

Saudi Aramco had faced, according to Al-Nasr, who spearheaded the project. It started, he recalls, with a phone call from Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali I. Al-Naimi, telling Saudi Aramco that King Abdullah wanted the company to build KAUST. Al-Nasr quickly assembled a team, discussed building sizes and locations—and then learned that, in addition to building the *physical* university, the king also expected Saudi Aramco to design and start up the institution itself—and operate it for the first five years.



The aim was the creation of a research institute—"one of the best in the world"—to help lead the kingdom's transition into a knowledge-based economy using the world's best talent. And the king wanted it open in three years.

To do that, Al-Nasr's team, often accompanied by Al-Naimi, reached out to the world's top universities and academic advisors. "We went around the world—the US, Europe and Asia. In every place we visited, without one exception, they initially met us with skepticism that a job so big could be accomplished so quickly. They said, 'Either you're out of your mind or you don't really know what you're up to,'" says Al-Nasr.

But as the team continued to discuss the project, its goals and its support, university leaders came on board, and a number of them formed an advisory group that met regularly with Al-Naimi to hear ideas and offer their own. "When they listened to us, they didn't listen to dreamers—although we were dreaming," says Al-Nasr. "They listened to people who were very realistic and who wanted to learn."

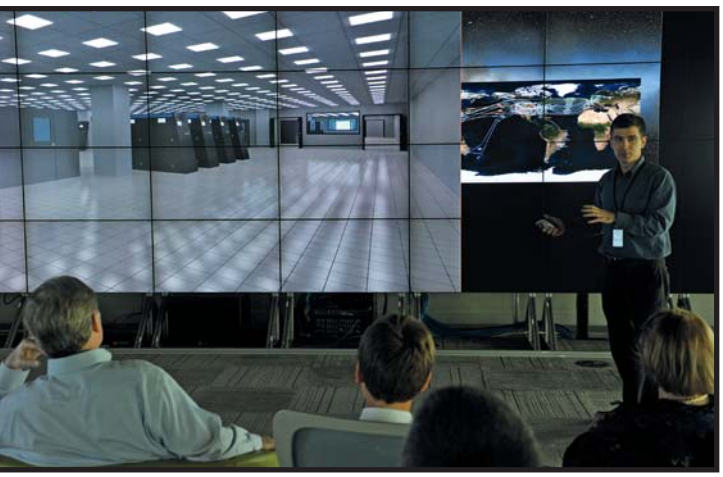
Even before ground was actually broken in the fall of 2007, the university had been established and was signing research agreements and offering scholarships to prospective students—many of whom were still a year or so away from receiving their bachelor's degrees—and recruiting professors and administrators.

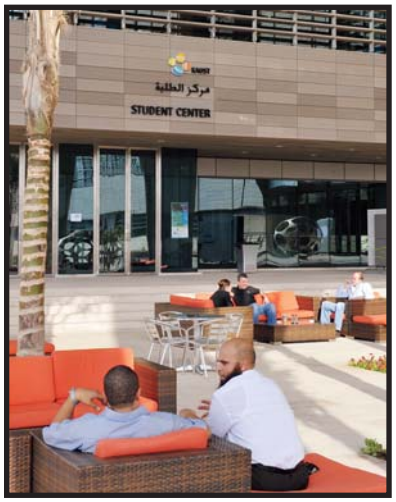
The fruits of those labors are what can be seen today.

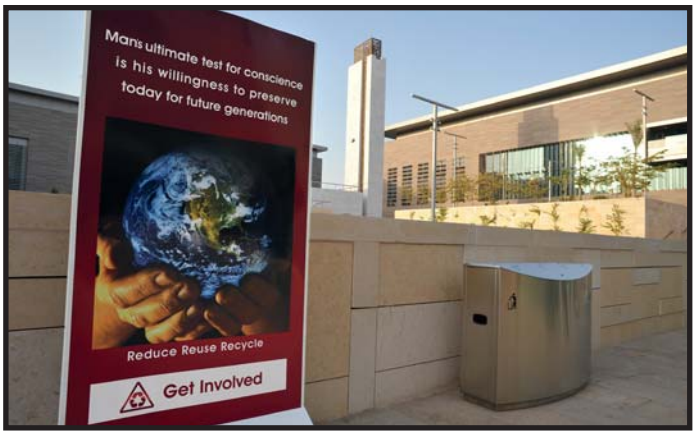
For its building blocks, KAUST utilized many of the same elements as other western-style institutions in the region: top-notch facilities and faculty, partnerships with educational and corporate entities worldwide, and a focus on research and development.

It also faces many of the same challenges. Enrollment at the school is currently about 400, and it plans to raise that number gradually to about 2000. Among the initial crop of students, many are working on master's degrees rather than the more desirable Ph.D.'s. Saudis make up some 15 percent of the student body, and

OPPOSITE, LEFT: J. B. PICOULET / PCP / KAUST; OPPOSITE, RIGHT AND THIS PAGE: DICK DOUGHTY (4)







Surrounding the university is a self-contained community to support the families of researchers, a group that KAUST plans will grow to number more than 2000. Today the community includes a free bus system connecting homes with the modest commercial district (above) as well as schools through grade 12 and a student center. Left: **All waste bins at KAUST separate recyclables, and a sign in the center of the campus summarizes the university's philosophy of "sustainable prosperity."** Opposite, top and lower: **Buildings for KAUST's four "divisions" face a palm-lined lagoon; from the library, students enjoy a view of the Breakwater Beacon and the Red Sea beyond.**

the rest are from around the globe, with China, the US and Mexico heavily represented. Instruction is in English and, while faculty members hail from 40 countries, the majority are American.

This all lends a tangible air of cosmopolitan collegiality to KAUST, from its Singapore-born, Harvard-educated mechanical-engineer president, Choon Fong Shih, to its Australian info-tech crews, to the curries on offer in the cafeteria alongside Texas chili. Yet what genuinely inspires comparison to the famed Abbasid House of Wisdom is the sheer novelty and ingenuity of the place—what you get when you give good planners a noble goal and generous funding, and tell them to go do their best.

"The credit for the intellectual design of KAUST largely goes back to Frank Press, who runs a group called the Washington Advisory Group, basically a bunch of retired university presidents, which KAUST consulted on how to create this institution," explains David Keyes, dean and professor of applied mathematics and computer sciences at KAUST. Press, an 86-year-old geologist, is a former chairman of the US National Academy of Science and served as President Jimmy Carter's science advisor. While Saudi Aramco itself ran the construction job, Press and his outfit put KAUST in touch with university officials worldwide who advised on filling the buildings with its human resources and outfitting its labs with state-of-the-art equipment. (This includes one of the world's fastest supercomputers, the world's most powerful nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer and a six-sided virtual-reality visualization room that turns raw data into manipulable 3-D images.)

But beyond filling offices and labs, the aim was "creating a new kind of university, outside of the mold," says Keyes. Instead of separate disciplines, faculty are clustered into four interdisciplinary "divisions"—energy and environmental resources, biosciences and bioengineering, materials science and engineering, and applied mathematics and computational science. They offer degrees in nine fields, a number that may grow to 20 in the next five years. The disciplines are organized under "centers" rather than departments—a significant departure from the US university model.

"Think about the typical American research university," Keyes explains. "It evolved from a college. Colleges have accredited majors. Everything is pipelined through disciplines. A national lab is very different. It's given a mandate—to create a more fuel-efficient vehicle, or put a man on the moon, or develop a transportation network. Those people don't reward how many papers you publish in scientific journals. They reward whether you can put together a team and solve a problem. KAUST is a mix of those two philosophies."

KAUST, says Keyes, is a mix between a traditional university and an international lab.

Thus a computer scientist and mathematician like Keyes can pull together data mined by KAUST researchers in the genomics and nanobiology labs and feed them into a computer to produce a visualization of a protein's mechanics. Gary Amy, director of KAUST's water desalination and reuse center, can work with, and draw on the expertise of, scientists from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, one of KAUST's 42 academic partners, with which it is developing its own Center for Marine and Oceanic Research to research conservation and exploration of the Red Sea, still a largely unexplored body of water. (Just over half of KAUST's 3600-hectare [8900-acre] "campus" is water: a protected Red Sea sanctuary.) Other partners include the Institut Français du Petrole, the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai, the National University of Singapore and AUC.

"We have this incredible source of water here that is undrinkable," says Amy. "Some desalination processes put the extracted salts back in the water, but that causes an imbalance which can affect coral reefs. We're looking to develop a greener method."

Innovation, says Samaha, is what KAUST is all about. Less than a year old, it has already developed 18 new technologies in desalination, nanotechnology, bioremediation and solar energy, he says. "This is an unusually high number in a short period of time."

But patent applications are only a part of the bigger picture that KAUST is attempting to draw.

"We have very good schools in the region, built on the American model—AUC, AUS and others. They are excellent schools. But what we lack here in the region is a graduate-level research ecosystem—an institution dedicated solely to research that is truly interdisciplinary," says Samaha.

To hear Samaha tell it, it's an ambition that King Abdullah thinks of every day. "The king truly wants KAUST to be a new House of Wisdom," he says. "It is his dream."

The legacies of the Abbasid House of Wisdom remain with us today, 12 centuries later: chemistry, algebra, engineering, optics, medicine and more. There isn't a discipline in the natural or applied sciences that hasn't been influenced, to one degree or another, by the men whom al-Ma'mun gathered in Baghdad more than a millennium ago.

But the future is what concerns the new generation of scholars and researchers who are coming together, from across the Arab world and beyond, to take advantage of the best of what the West and the East together have to offer. Perhaps Caliph al-Mansur would smile if he could see what is happening in this latest round of educational endeavors, for the dream it represents is much the same as his own. Felix Lao, a computer-science student at KAUST from Hong Kong, put it simply: "I love the vision of the king: to group different people from around the world here—to discover, solve problems and think about our future."

In under a year, KAUST has developed 18 new technologies in desalination, nanotechnology, bioremediation and solar energy.

Writer **Tom Verde** (writah@gmail.com) holds a master's in Islamic studies and Christian–Muslim relations from Hartford Seminary and teaches theology, philosophy and ethics at King's Academy, a college-prep boarding school in Jordan. King's Academy, he observes, "struggles with many of the same challenges as the schools in this article, of which the deepest is how to successfully merge what works for Jordan with what works for America—where many of the students will send the college applications they'll soon be filling out."

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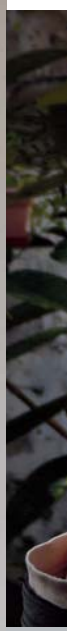
DICK DOUGHTY (5)



ABOVE (PORTRAIT): MATTHEWTELLER

Finding the Essence

In west Beirut, Hamra Street's fashion boutiques and upmarket coffee shops form a strip of commerce that points toward the landmark Murr Tower on the edge of downtown. A block or two north, past clusters of auto workshops and convenience stores, lies the residential neighborhood of Jounblat. Here, on quiet, narrow America Street, you may find an unnamed dead end that snakes away between apartment blocks. Down an alley off an alley, reached by a side street off a side street, lives Mona Saudi, sculptor and poet.

"I'm in the city," she smiles, gesturing around her leafy, hidden garden, lemons hanging over cacti, "but as you can see—I'm also not!"

Still living in the modest 19th-century house she first rented in 1974 and later bought, Saudi surrounds herself with her work: Abstract sculptures of limestone and marble fill a

Written By Matthew Teller
Photographs courtesy of Mona Saudi

Above, from left: **Mona Saudi in her garden. "For me, sculpture is an incarnation of poetry, touching on the invisible. It is the language of silence, of movement in stillness." "Lovers" (Jordanian limestone, 1993); "Illumination" (marble, 1990).** Opposite: **"The Spring" (travertine, 1986).**

modest terrace among the trees. All the sculptures look deceptively light: Some are graspable in two hands, while others soar above head height, their clean lines and graceful curves playing off the terrace's natural disorder. They look graceful enough to fly, but most would require a crane to shift. Saudi places a hand on one as she explains how important it is for her to have space for contemplation, adding pensively, "I need seclusion. I need birdsong."

In a charming, unexpected haven in a city hardly known for tranquility, this groundbreaking artist has found both.

Mona Saudi was born in Amman in October 1945, when the Jordanian capital was little more than a village. She grew up in a family of eight siblings, and fondly recalls playing among the tumbled columns and blocks of a ruined Roman fountain, the Nymphaeum, near her home.

Early on, it was apparent that she was determined to make her own way. "From the age of six or seven, I wanted to be a creative person, free," Saudi says. "My first feelings were toward being earthy."

She was a voracious reader, frequently visiting Amman's British Council library and absorbing T. S. Eliot's classic poem *The Waste Land* at 14, "even before I started reading Arab

Above, left to right: **"Woman/Bird" (marble, 1974); "The Gate of Life" (Lebanese stone, 2004); "Woman/River" (marble, 2003); "Intimacy" (Jordanian jade, 1999).** Opposite: **"The Dawn" (Belgian marble, 1983).**

poetry," she says. Saudi names Colin Wilson's 1956 study of alienation, *The Outsider*, as a key early influence. "Wilson examined so many artists and thinkers who broke with tradition: Nietzsche, Rilke, Joyce, Rimbaud. For me, this was the discovery of a global way of thinking," she says.

The magazine *Shi'r (Poetry)*, published in Beirut, helped Saudi connect with Arab literary traditions. As well as publishing western writers in translation, *Shi'r* showcased contemporary Arab poets such as Yousef al-Khal and Adonis. Saudi credits the magazine with inspiring her to begin writing her own poetry.

Such precociousness led to tensions at home: The artist's younger sister Fathieh, today a published poet herself, laughs as she remembers family life being "war every day!" When Saudi was forbidden by her father to apply to the university, she took the momentous decision to drop out of high school and escape from Amman to the more progressive city of Beirut. As she wrote later in her monograph *Forty Years in Sculpture*, "That day my life began."

Saudi recalls the Lebanese capital as "vivid..., a large space of contemplation and continual movement," and this made a lifelong impression. She hung out with the city's artists and mounted her first exhibition—of paintings—at the Café de la Presse in Hamra.

The proceeds allowed Saudi to set her sights higher: She bought a ticket to Paris. "I went by sea," she smiles. "I had been dreaming of going to Paris since I was a child, and to realize my dream, it seemed appropriate to travel through water."

Even today, sipping tea on her terrace, remembering that epic voyage makes her laugh. After stops at several Mediterranean ports and an overnight train ride from Marseilles, Saudi arrived in Paris on a cold February morning in 1964. She went straight to the only address she knew—that of Lebanese artist Halim Jurdak, whom Saudi had met the year before in Beirut.

"It was early morning," Saudi recalls. "He came down the stairs, so astonished to see this girl from Jordan on his doorstep. He took me to a small hotel in the Saint-Germain quarter. I remember it was unheated and cost four francs a night [about $1]."

Paris's famous School of Fine Arts accepted her, and there she began to experiment with sculpture. Her first work in stone, "Mother/Earth," is dated 1965. A single block of limestone comprising two bulging volumes flanking a spherical form, it clearly announced themes and preoccupations that would mark Saudi's career: The embrace-like interaction of spheres within semicircles, her ability to draw organic, curvaceous warmth out of cold stone, and her expression of an inner, quintessentially female energy. All this is made explicit by the work's title, a terse juxtaposition of words to which Saudi returned repeatedly in a series of "Mother/Earth" sculptures over subsequent decades.

One of the strongest influences on her style—pointed out by observers and acknowledged by the artist herself—has been the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), specifically his desire to sculpt "not the appearance, but the idea, the essence of things." As Paul Richard of the *Washington Post* commented: "[Saudi's] stone pieces, like [Brancusi's], simultaneously suggest the ageless and the modern."

"Mona Saudi begins with the modernism of Brancusi and Hans Arp," says Mazen Asfour, assistant dean in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Jordan University in Amman, "lyric abstraction with touches of cubism—and she mixes it with humanism. She is looking for a dialogue [by using] dimensional tricks: the illusion of space within her sculpture. She draws the viewer in. She wants you to build her form with her."

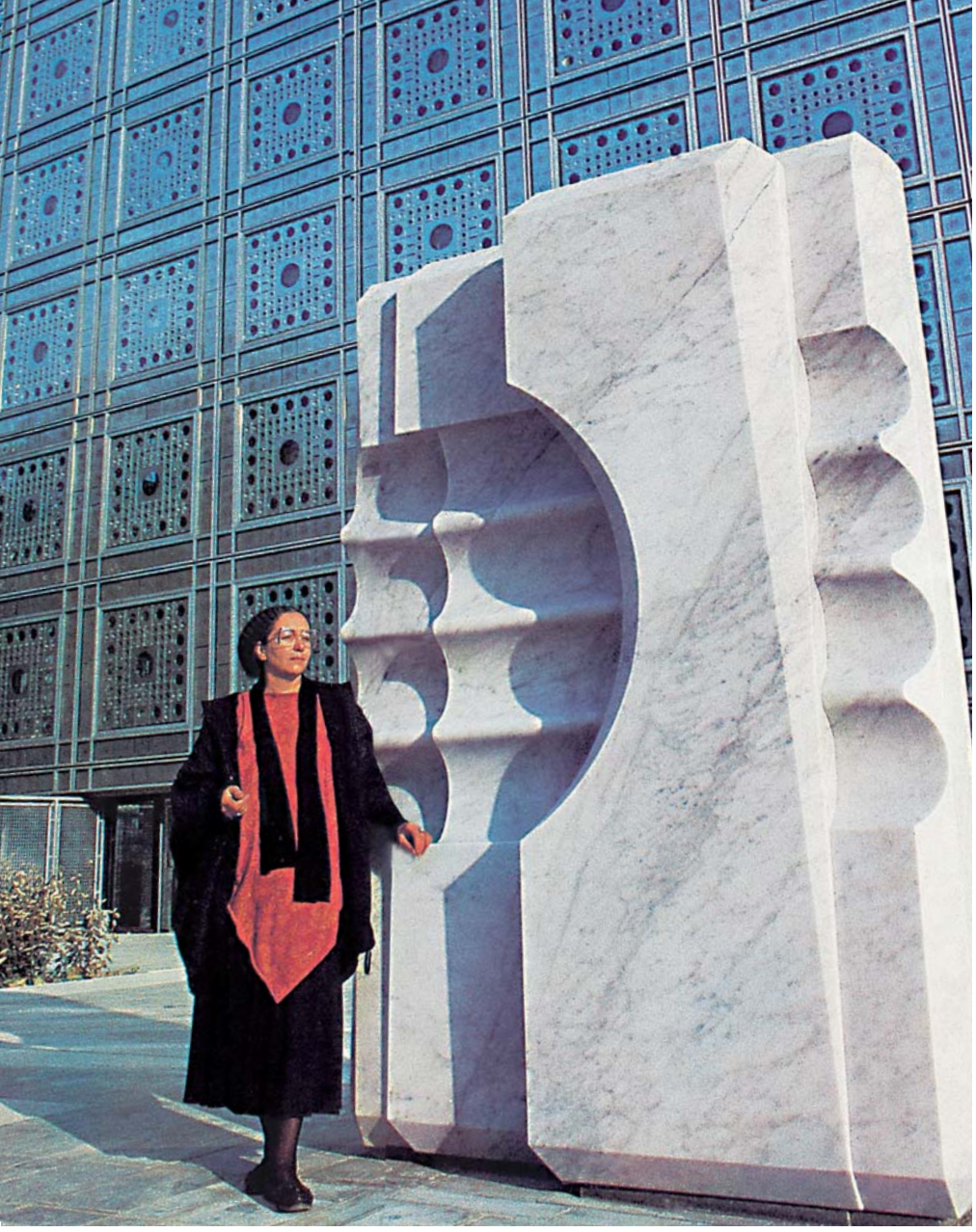
This "illusion of space," influenced further by the English sculptors Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975) and Henry Moore (1898–1986), is a key marker of Saudi's style. In many of her works, pregnant bulges seem to swell from the stone, hinting at egg-like fertility as well as at interior voids. Saudi has her own way of describing this: "I start with a block," she says, "and I have to open distances within it. I put time inside the stone by dividing it. This is what makes the mystery of sculpture."

Though she stayed in Beirut after the outbreak of civil war, Saudi was eventually persuaded in 1983 to leave for the safety—and the family ties—of Amman. By then she was working in different stones, always local to the region: Syrian black diorite, Yemeni alabaster, honey-colored Lebanese marble and an extraordinary green-veined marble from the deserts south of Amman that Saudi has dubbed "Jordanian jade."

> The embrace-like interaction of spheres within semicircles, her ability to draw organic, curvaceous warmth out of cold stone, and her expression of an inner, quintessentially female energy became hallmarks of Saudi's style.

A series of landscape works in this "jade," including "Sunrise" (1980) and "Dawn" (1981), as well as later pieces such as "Nocturne" (2002), extends the solid/void juxtaposition: Saudi renders the sky in polished stone, with the earth and sun shaped as empty air. The Lebanese artist and critic Samir Sayegh describes Saudi "using the concept of geometry to express spirituality."

Saudi explored the same idea more overtly in her best-known work, "The Geometry of the Soul" (1987), a marble sculpture some three meters (10') in height donated by Jordan to the Institut du Monde Arabe (Arab World Institute) in Paris, where it remains on public display. Drawing together elements from the 2000-year-old art of the Nabataeans, builders of Petra, with wave-like undulations reminiscent of both sea and desert, curves that hint at the crescent moon and even the suggestion of a musical staff or the strings of an *'ud* (lute)—"The Geometry of the Soul" expresses both calm and profundity. Critic Joseph Tarrab spoke of its being "rooted in the persistence of a state both primitive and definitive, the immutability of a basic, absolute permanence".



"The Geometry of the Soul" (marble, 1987), Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris.

Another landmark work of the 1980's was her "Variations on Arabic 'N' "(1981), a marble piece later installed in the garden of the French Embassy in Amman. The Arabic letter (pronounced "noon") is formed by a semicircle enclosing a point. It embodies Saudi's preoccupation with the embrace-like dialogue of line and sphere, and its sound also often denotes the feminine form of Arabic personal pronouns. Here, three of these volumes climb to form a figure that is at once totem-like and human, symbolic and figurative.

Despite her successes abroad throughout the 1980's and 1990's, including exhibits in Washington, London and Paris, Saudi felt cloistered and restricted in Amman. Several projects, including a plan to establish a sculpture center, foundered. In 1996, three years after receiving Jordan's National Honorary Award for the Arts from King Hussein, she returned to Lebanon.

The last decade has seen Saudi teaching off and on at the American University of Beirut and participating in high-profile exhibitions, including the 2006 inaugural sale of modern and contemporary art at Christie's in Dubai. She has published editions of her own poetry and has produced several series of ink drawings that combine poems by Adonis, Mahmoud Darwish and the French writer Saint-John Perse with representations of her sculptural forms.

Her most recent sculptures show a new sense of fluidity. Her series "Woman/River," as well as individual pieces such as "Woman/Bird" (1998) and "Woman/Water" (2004), with their deployment of wavy silhouettes against solid-edged volumes, deepen impressions of the intangible bonds between the human and the natural world. Saudi's Brancusi-inspired desire to sculpt "the essence of things" continues to guide her.

Her most recent sculptures show a new sense of fluidity, and her Brancusi-inspired desire to sculpt "the essence of things" continues to guide her.

One of the very few Arab women artists to pursue sculpture, Mona Saudi is acknowledged as a pioneer of Jordanian art, standing alongside figures such as Nabil Shehadeh, Salah Abu Shindi and the country's most prominent and successful painter, Mohanna Durra. She has also stuck tight over five decades to her independence and to what Joseph Tarrab has called her "strongly singular" vision, largely heedless of the ebb and flow of artistic fashions.

Durra—under whom Saudi trained in the early 1960's—recognizes the value of her perseverance. "Even back then," he says, "I could tell she had a mind of her own. But that rebellious spirit is also a renovating spirit. I find her work uplifting. She broke taboos and went far beyond Jordan. Her achievement is great."

Khalid Khreis, director-general of Jordan's National Gallery, concurs, calling Saudi "one of the most important Arab artists," and emphasizing her universality and her modernist authenticity.

Yet her work, lacking both narrative symbolism and links to traditional Arab styles, is not easy to pigeonhole, and the question of her influence remains open. As Barbara Rowell, owner of the Jacaranda Gallery in Amman, notes, few contemporary Arab artists are drawing influence or inspiration from Saudi. Sculpture in stone, it seems, has become deeply unfashionable.

"Defending your obsession like this is not easy. Mona Saudi is one of a generation of artists who fought for art that is international but inspired by local sources," says Saleh Barakat, owner of Beirut's prominent Agial Gallery and an expert on contemporary Arab art. "The legacy of Arab culture is within her. She is someone who did not make a career in Europe, but she has gone around the world, seen, absorbed, digested and produced. She is a lady of the Earth."

Despite her youthful defiance, the artist eventually reconciled with her parents. She describes her father, Abdulmajid, as mystical. "He was a religious man, in a different world," she says. "I respected his beliefs, but didn't feel the need to ask his permission."

By contrast, she found great inspiration in her mother, Yusra, a quiet woman who loved gardening and who, Mona's sister Fathieh notes, often chose to be seen in public deliberately bareheaded, in contravention of social norms. "I feel her love even now," says Saudi. "I feel her protection."

Although married for a time to journalist Hassan Batal, who still writes a daily column for the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Ayyam* (their daughter, Dia Batal, is a professional designer), Saudi has long lived alone. She rarely cooks, preferring to order meals for

Above, left to right: **"Waves" (marble, 2005); "Growth" (Jordanian jade, 2002); "The Jordan River" (1983, granite).**

> "I began my life by dreaming, and I still dream today."

delivery from the famous Barbar restaurant. She works in her little garden, accompanied by recordings of the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould playing Bach. ("Very abstract," she smiles. "Bach reflects something geometrical in nature, and listening to Gould is like polishing a sculpture. Each line in its place.") When not at home, she still often spends long hours at a studio she rents in the suburb of Ouzai, a neighborhood of auto-repair workshops, carpentry businesses and small factories.

"I'm a dreamer," says the soon-to-be 65-year-old. "I began my life by dreaming, and I still dream today, of more sculptures, more exhibits, more discoveries. I don't think of time as a burden. When I was 17, I felt much older than I do now. I still have a lot of things to do."

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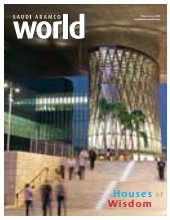
Related articles from past issues can be found on our Web site, www.saudiaramcoworld.com. Click on "indexes," then on the cover of the issue indicated below.

sculpture: J/F 98
Yemeni alabaster: M/J 99

See more of Mona Saudi's sculptures at www.saudiaramcoworld.com.

Classroom Guide

WRITTEN BY JULIE WEISS



FOR STUDENTS
We hope this two-page guide will help sharpen your reading skills and deepen your understanding of this issue's articles.

FOR TEACHERS
We encourage reproduction and adaptation of these ideas, freely and without further permission from *Saudi Aramco World*, by teachers at any level, whether working in a classroom or through home study.

—THE EDITORS

Curriculum Alignments
To see alignments with national standards for all articles in this issue, click "Curriculum Alignments" at www.saudiaramcoworld.com.

Professional Development Workshops
The Middle East Policy Council, an independent, non-partisan educational organization, offers free Professional Development Workshops to help K–12 educators understand the geographical, political and human complexities of the region and to provide valuable teaching resources. MEPC will design a workshop to give your school, organization or conference innovative tools and strategies for teaching about the Middle East and Islam. For information, e-mail Barbara Petzen at bpetzen@mepc.org with your name, school or organization, phone number, and subject and grade taught. MEPC has also developed a companion website, TeachMideast.org, with background essays, lesson plans and other educational modules.

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CLASS ACTIVITIES

This issue's Classroom Guide is organized around the single theme Crossroads. *You'll define the word and identify crossroads in your own surroundings. You'll also explore different ways in which places are crossroads, including the geographical meaning, as well as in the sense of meeting places for ideas and cultures.*

Theme: *Crossroads*

What is a *crossroads*?

Have you heard the word *crossroads* before? If you have, in what context did you hear it? What did it mean? If you aren't familiar with the word, work with a few other students to see if you can figure out what it means. The word *crossroads* is a noun, which means it names a thing. The word is made up of two smaller words: *cross* and *roads*. What thing might a crossroads be, based on these two smaller words? To get a hint, look at the headline on page 17: "Tripoli: Crossroads of Rome and Islam." Then read the subhead below it. What do these two additional pieces of information suggest might be the definition of *crossroads*? With your group, write down your best guess at a definition.

Then read this definition of *crossroads*.
crossroads |'kros-'rōdz|
usually plural **a:** the place of intersection of two or more roads. **b: (1):** a small community located at such a crossroads **(2):** a central meeting place.

How close was your definition to this one? Revise your definition if necessary. Have the class agree on a definition, and have a volunteer write it on a sign where everyone can see it as you work on these activities.

Where is there a crossroads in your world?

Think about the places you see and go regularly—in your school, your neighborhood, your town or city. Where is there a crossroads? Find or draw a map that shows the crossroads, and identify it by using a highlighter or a marker that makes it stand out for a viewer.

Of course your map shows that the place is a crossroads geographically speaking. But is it simply a place where roads or hallways or paths intersect? Or is it also a central meeting place? If so, who meets there, and what do they do when they meet there? Do they talk? Read? Text? Drink coffee? Shop? How can you tell? Is there a restaurant? Or a café with WiFi? Or a park with walking paths? Below your map, write a few sentences describing your crossroads. Post your maps and descriptions around the room and check them out. Then, based on what you've done, make a class list of the characteristics of crossroads.

What other crossroads can you identify?

You can identify other crossroads the same way you identified your local ones. Look, for example, at "Tripoli: Crossroads of Rome and Islam." Find Tripoli on the map on page 21. Where is it, relative to Rome? Where is it relative to the rest of Africa? Where is it relative to the Middle East? How does its location qualify Tripoli as a crossroads?

"Abu Dhabi's Bestseller" tells about another kind of crossroads: a book fair. Monika Krauss, the manager of the fair, asserts that the Gulf region has been a crossroads for a long time. Locate Abu Dhabi on the map on page 12. Then, using a larger world map, answer the question: What places "meet" there that make the area a crossroads?

Education City, described in "Houses of Wisdom," is also a crossroads. Read about it on pages 30 to 33, and find Doha, where Education City is located, on the map on page 34. Is it at a geographical crossroads? What does it connect? And what makes Education City itself—distinct from Doha's geographical location—a crossroads?

What happens at the crossroads you have identified? How can you tell?

Now read "Tripoli: Crossroads of Rome and Islam." With your group, answer these questions: What economic activities take place in Tripoli and have taken place there for centuries? How do these activities relate to its location as a crossroads? Look back at the local crossroads you identified and described. Are any of the activities in Tripoli similar to those at your local crossroads? If so, which ones? In other words, what does your local crossroads have in common with Tripoli?

Remember that you figured out how you could tell that your local crossroads was in fact a crossroads. You can ask the same question about Tripoli. The thing is, the Tripoli–Rome connection has gone on for centuries. If you want evidence that Tripoli was a crossroads in the past, a Starbucks on the corner won't cut it! With your group, go through the article carefully and underline where it describes evidence of Tripoli's status as a crossroads. (Don't forget: There's more than one time period mentioned in the article.) Add to your list of characteristics the kinds of evidence that reveal that a place is or has been a crossroads.

Turn next to the Abu Dhabi book fair.

Who meets at the fair? What do they do there? What, if anything, do their actions have in common with what people do and did at your local crossroads and in Tripoli? In addition to individual people, ideas—many expressed in books—also meet at the fair. How is this similar to and different from what happens at your local crossroads and in Tripoli? For example, if people work on computers at the café at your local crossroads, are they sharing ideas? How is their virtual meeting of ideas similar to and different from what goes on at the book fair?

What gets exchanged at the crossroads?

"Houses of Wisdom" tells about educational institutions as crossroads in several ways. Many are crossroads in terms of their location. They are also crossroads in terms of the ideas that people exchange there. And finally, they are crossroads where different notions of education meet, mix and change each other. Have a look.

Read "Houses of Wisdom." Because it's a long article that covers a lot of ground, break it up and read it in smaller chunks. (In fact, the editors at *Saudi Aramco World* have already broken it into sections for you! Each section begins with a sentence in a larger font in a color other than black.) Use these section breaks as places to pause in your reading. Work with a partner. You can each read a section silently, then pause. Together summarize what you've just read. Write a summary of the section in a couple of sentences, putting each summary on its own piece of paper. If you can't summarize the section, go back and reread it until you and your partner can do the summary.

As you pause to summarize each section, think about the notion of a crossroads. On the sheet of paper with the summary of the section, answer these questions: What kind of crossroads is described here? Who or what is "meeting"? When you've done that for all the sections, spread your sheets of paper out on a table or on the floor. What patterns do you see? Try writing a different kind of summary—an analysis, actually. Write three paragraphs. Use the following prompts as topic sentences for your paragraphs:

- For centuries, schools have served as crossroads where people from the West have come together with people from the Middle East.
- At these schools, people have shared ideas about what constitutes education and who should be educated.
- At universities today, common western notions of academic disciplines "cross paths" with different reasons for asking questions and different ways of organizing knowledge.

What problems arise with the exchange that takes place at different crossroads?

Both "Houses of Wisdom" and "Abu Dhabi's Bestseller" identify problems that can arise when people from different places and cultures come together. Take language, for example. People who come from different places often speak different languages. They may come together at a book fair or a university—a crossroads—but they bring their own languages with them. How can they best communicate with each other? The situations described in the two articles offer different answers to that question.

Start with the book fair. The problem there isn't so much that people can't communicate with each other; it's that books are in different languages. One of the goals of awarding prizes to good books at the fair is to encourage them to be translated from Arabic into other languages. Think about this as a kind of trade issue. What do booksellers bring from Arab countries to the rest of the world? As a point of comparison, what did traders bring from Tripoli to Rome? Then think about the effects of trade. Make a web that shows some of the effects that Tripoli's exports had on Rome. Then make a web that shows some of the effects that the booksellers' "exports" have on the rest of the world—and on the Middle East itself.

"Houses of Wisdom" reports that many classes at the universities discussed in the article are taught in English, and many are about topics that are not directly related to life in the region. But those are controversial. Why? Working with a partner, complete the following activity. Draw a vertical line down the center of a piece of paper. On one side, list reasons why it's a good idea to teach in English about non-local topics. On the other side, list reasons why it would be a good idea to teach in Arabic about topics specific to the region. Take one side and have your partner take the other. Debate which side seems more convincing. Then think about what Fatima Badry says: "It doesn't have to be either-or. It is a false dilemma." With your partner, discuss how to bring the two sides together. Come up with a proposal that describes how a university could do both. Present your proposal to the class.

How can you show a crossroads in a photograph?

You've looked at visual images of crossroads on maps. But what about photos? The three articles you've read for these activities are richly illustrated with photos. Look closely at them. Choose one that you think shows what a crossroads looks like. To help you, look back at your definition of crossroads, and at the characteristics and evidence of crossroads that you've identified. For example, the panoramic photo of Tripoli on page 16 shows a crowded city with an active port. You might say that it shows Tripoli as a crossroads for trade that comes by sea. Or, thinking more in metaphor, you might say that the arch pictured on page 17 suggests setting apart a specific place, separate from the road that leads into it, as a meeting place. You get the idea. Share with your group the photo you choose and your analysis of it as a crossroads. Then, if you can, go to the local crossroads you identified and mapped. Take some photos that show that it's a crossroads. Bring them back to class and share them with your fellow students.

Roads to Arabia: *Archaeological Treasures from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

The study of archeological remains only really began in Saudi Arabia in the 1970's and brought a wealth of unsuspected treasures to light: temples, palaces adorned with frescoes, monumental sculpture, silver dishes and precious jewelry left in tombs. The exhibition provides both chronological and geographical information about the discoveries made during recent excavations and emphasizes the important role played by this region, in antiquity, as a trading center. Over 300 works—sculptures, ceramics, jewelry, frescoes—are on display, dating from antiquity to the beginning of the modern period; the majority have never before been exhibited. They reveal an original and dynamic civilization, which, in spite of the extreme natural conditions, took advantage of the country's geographical position at the crossroads of trade routes linking Africa and the lands along the shoreline of the Indian Ocean with Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean world. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, from July 12 through September 27.

This funeral stele from the National Museum in Riyadh commemorates a woman named al-Ghaliyah bint Abduljabbar.

CURRENT **May**

Maharaja: *The Splendor of India's Royal Courts* explores the world of the maharajas and their extraordinarily rich culture, bringing together more than 250 magnificent objects from India's royal collections, many seen in Europe for the first time. The exhibition includes three thrones, a silver gilt *howdah*, gem-encrusted weapons, court paintings, photographs and Indian turban jewels and jewelry, and covers the period from the 18th century, when the great era of the maharajas began, to the end of the *raj* (British rule) in 1947. It shows the changing roles of the maharajas in a historical and social context and looks at how their patronage of the arts, both in India and in Europe, resulted in splendid and beautiful commissions designed to enhance royal status and identity. Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, **Munich**, through May 24.

Gold of the Steppes: *Princely Treasures From Beyond Alexander's Empire* displays unique artifacts created by the Scythians and Sarmatians, horse nomads who left no written records but did leave exquisite material evidence of very highly developed cultures. More than 200 exhibits illuminate their traditions, richness and artistic talents, and display the results of the excavations of recent decades. Reiss-Engelhorn Museums, **Mannheim, Germany**, through May 25.

CURRENT **June**

Compact Home, Iraqi–Canadian artist Mahmud Obaidi's new exhibition offers alternatives to a post-globalized art world where local singularities often contribute to a still legitimized western center. Obaidi's work addresses the theme of "flight," linking the different meanings of the term, from the perpetual flight of a hyphenated Middle Eastern artist with no place to call his own, to the problem of "flying while Arab" and the racial profiling of a man boarding a KLM flight. Sultan Gallery, **Kuwait City**, through June 3.

Treasures of the Aga Khan Museum: *Masterpieces of Islamic Art* exhibits more than 200 splendid works, documenting more than 1000 years of cultural history, from the collection of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. Included are pages from the Persian heroic epic *The Shahnama*, the oldest Arabic manuscript of Ibn Sina's *Canon of Medicine*, 19th-century Chinese pilgrim Ma Fuchu's illustrated report on his pilgrimage to Makkah and a double page of the "Blue Qur'an" from the ninth century. The exhibition is arranged under two main headings: "The Word of God," concerning manuscripts of the Qur'an, illuminated pages and objects that deal with the pilgrimage to Makka, and "The Route of the Travelers," which takes the visitor on a journey through the Islamic world. The works of art on display—paintings, drawings, book illustrations, manuscripts, inscriptions, metalwork vessels, ceramics and wood carvings—offer a view into the extraordinary variety and overwhelming richness of an Islamic culture that, from the eighth to the 18th century, stretched from the Atlantic coast of North Africa all the way to China. Martin-Gropius-Bau, **Berlin**, through June 6.

The Manchester Indian: *Thomas Wardle and India* shows scintillating silk saris and other textiles from India, and marks the centenary of the death of Thomas Wardle. Best known for his collaboration with William Morris, Wardle also made great efforts to reinvigorate the silk industry in India. During a visit there in 1885–1886, he collected sample lengths of fabric, which are featured in the exhibition together with fabrics printed and dyed by Wardle's company in Staffordshire. They reveal the profound influence of Indian design on British textiles of the Arts and Crafts movement. Whitworth Art Gallery, University of **Manchester**, **UK**, through June 6.

To Live Forever: *Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum* uses some 120 pieces of jewelry, statues, coffins and vessels dating from 3600 BC to the year 400 of our era to illustrate the range of strategies and preparations that the ancient Egyptians developed to defeat death and to achieve success in the afterlife. The exhibition explores the belief that death was an enemy that could be vanquished, a primary cultural tenet of ancient Egyptian civilization. To survive in the next world, Egyptians would purchase, trade or even reuse a variety of protective objects. The exhibition explains the process of mummification, the economics and rituals of memorials, the contents of the tomb, the funeral accessories—differentiated by the class of the deceased—and the idealized afterlife. Exhibits include the vividly painted coffin of a mayor of Thebes, mummies, stone statues, gold jewelry, amulets and canopic jars. Philbrook Museum of Art, **Tulsa, Oklahoma**, June 6 through September 12.

Childhood on the River Nile: *Images of Children from Egypt* displays children's clothing, shoes and toys; doll clothing; and depictions of children on the ornamental trimmings of fabrics and other organic artifacts. Bode-Museum, **Berlin**, through June 10.

Poetry and Prayer: *Illuminated Manuscripts from the Islamic World* presents masterpieces of Islamic manuscript illumination from the ninth to the 19th century created in famed artistic centers in today's Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Egypt and the Indian subcontinent. Characterized by the effects of gold, lapis lazuli and esthetically powerful design, Islamic manuscript illumination enhances the viewer's engagement with the book. The exhibition aims to broaden the perspective on Islamic illumination by considering both religious and non-religious works and to explore the ways in which illumination punctuates various parts of the book, navigating the reader through the pages. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, through June 13.

Byzantium: *Splendor and Everyday Life* presents more than 600 objects, many made of gold, silver, silk, ivory and other precious materials, that made the Byzantine Empire and Constantinople the envy of the West. But the significance of the Eastern Roman Empire went far beyond its riches: There, antiquity lived on uninterrupted into the late Middle Ages, making Byzantium the bridge both between East and West and between classical antiquity and modernity. European-influence Byzantium had ties with the Near and Middle East and, via the Silk Roads, with China. In this exhibition, computer animations and video shorts take the viewer into a foreign world that is nonetheless part of our own civilization's foundations, visiting Constantinople, Ephesus, Thessaloniki, Bergama, Aleppo and the monastery in Sinai, casting the Byzantine Empire and its heritage in a new light. Kunst- und Austellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, **Bonn**, through June 13.

Terracotta displays some 100 objects, including delicate Greek female

MUSEE DU LOUVRE

figurines, architectural fragments, medieval children's toys, prehistoric animal figures and sculptures of deities from pre-Islamic Syria and Iraq. Terra-cotta sculptures served different purposes in different cultures—sometimes representing gifts to the gods or fertility symbols—and thus provide information on religious practices, burial customs, clothing and household objects in the time and place they were made. The exhibition emphasizes the techniques used and the craftsmanship that went into making the objects. Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, **Leiden, The Netherlands**, through June 13.

Connecting Heavens features works by contemporary Lebanese artists. Ayman Baalbaki reflects on the Lebanese civil war, Oussama Baalbaki explores the emotive effects of inanimate objects, and Tagreed Darghouth deals with controversial social issues. Also featured are Shawki Youssef's most recent works, Rafic Majzoub's paintings, Abdul-Rahman Katanani's depictions of Palestinian refugee camps and Chaza Charafeddine's photographic collages. Green Art Gallery, **Dubai**, through June 15.

Born Among Mirrors: *Lebanon 50 Years After* juxtaposes black-and-white photographs taken in 1956 by Elias Hakim as he and his family emigrated to the United States with color photographs taken in 2006 by Hakim's son, Najib Joe Hakim, on his return to Lebanon for the first time in three decades. They are not just images of a homecoming, but a heartfelt exploration of a people and a place. Jerusalem Fund Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through June 25.

Recent Paintings on Canvas and Stone. Algerian artist Mahjoub Ben Bella paints on ceramic shards, fabrics (including canvas), tiles, walls, plates and metro stations. His work evokes both Arabic calligraphy and European abstraction, with signs and symbols materializing out of composition and rhythm. Galerie Claude Lemand, **Paris**, through June 26.

The Secrets of Tomb 10A: *Egypt 2000 BC* introduces the concepts of the afterlife in the Middle Kingdom (2040–1640 BC) by a journey through the remarkable tomb of Djehutynakht and its many objects. In a 1915 excavation, the MFA found, in jumbled disarray, the largest Middle Kingdom burial assemblage ever discovered. The tomb was filled with the funerary equipment of a local governor and his wife, and contained four beautifully painted coffins, one of which may be the finest painted coffin Egypt produced and a masterpiece of panel painting. Additionally, it included Djehutynakht's jewelry, walking sticks, canopic jars and other objects, plus models of what must have been the governor's estate, including some 60 different model boats and two dozen models of daily life, such as individual shops of carpenters, weavers, brick-makers, bakers and brewers. Most of the objects have never been displayed before. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, through June 27.

Beyond the Page: *The Miniature as Attitude in Contemporary Art from Pakistan* exhibits 50 works by 13 contemporary artists who engage the miniature as practice and concept. Roughly half of the artists trained in traditional miniature painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan, and assimilate new imagery and materials in their practice. The rest, though not trained in miniature painting, explore the concept of the miniature in such diverse forms as photography, textiles, sculpture and installation art. As these artists emigrate, travel and exhibit internationally, the "new miniature" movement has become a global phenomenon that demonstrates the vitality of contemporary Pakistani art and, more specifically, how aspects of "tradition" are essential parts of contemporary culture. Pacific Asia Museum, **Pasadena, California**, through June 27.

Tactics of Invisibility *Contemporary Artistic Positions From Turkey* displays 20 works—installation art, performance, painting and photography—by 16 Turkish artists working in Turkey and elsewhere, beginning with some who came to prominence in the 1960's, continuing with such newly established artists as Kutluğ Ataman, and ending with Nasan Tur, Nilbar Güreş and other emerging figures. The exhibition will also travel to Berlin (Tanas) and Istanbul (Arter). Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, **Vienna**, through June 30.

CURRENT **July**

Perspectives explores ideas of expectation and illusion: Each of the works displayed is not as it first appears. Graphic images appear to shift and flip; a collection of boxes becomes a cabinet of curiosities; an angel turns into a replica of a bombed and beaten city; abstract paintings reveal themselves as aerial photographs. Among the exhibition's five distinctive artists is Prague-based Iranian installation artist Yassi Golshani. Hyatt Regency **London**, through July 1.

My Dear Brother: *Armenians in Turkey 100 Years Ago* provides insight into the lives of Armenians living inside today's Turkey at the beginning of the 20th century, presenting a large collection of postcards from across the region. Images include townscapes, secular buildings and churches, factory interiors, craftsmen and working women, showing how widespread and integrated Armenian communities were across Ottoman territory and demonstrating their roles in society. The exhibition also includes maps, texts and a community exhibit based on oral history that displays objects from the same era still found today in Armenians' London homes. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London**, through July 24.

Kantha: *The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal.* Stitching *kanthas* was an art practiced by women across Bengal, a region today comprising the nation of Bangladesh and the state of West Bengal, India. Lovingly created from the remnants of worn garments, kanthas are embroidered with motifs and tales drawn from a rich local repertoire and used especially in the celebration of births, weddings and other family occasions. The exhibition presents some 40 examples created during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, when this vibrant domestic art flourished, and encompasses works by women of diverse backgrounds—rural and urban, Hindu and Muslim. While all share a collective Bengali culture, the amazing variety of motifs, patterns, color combinations and designs of the kanthas demonstrates the imagination and creativity of their makers. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through July 25.

A Story of Islamic Embroidery in Nomadic and Urban Traditions brings together more than 200 rare textiles from across the Middle East, from Pakistan to Morocco, and includes a wealth of embroideries from Central Asia. With their variety of motifs and colors, these works testify to the role of women in creating an artistic tradition of significance and beauty. Gallery One, Emirates Palace, **Abu Dhabi**, through July 28.

Arabia, an IMAX 3-D film shot at more than 20 locations across Saudi Arabia, provides a vivid portrait of the history, culture and religion of the Arabian Peninsula. Aiming beyond stereotypes, the movie mixes scenes of modern-day life in the kingdom with images of its natural and built heritage, and looks into the future through the eyes of young Saudis. Actress Helen Mirren narrates, but the film's real voice is Hamzah Jamjoon, 24, a Jiddah-born film student at Chicago's DePaul University. He sets out with a film crew to explore his Arabian identity, diving in the Red Sea, flying over dune and oasis towns, riding camels with the Bedouin and exploring Madain Salih, the 2000-year-old Nabataean town famous for its huge sandstone tombs. Viewers also join three million Muslims making the pilgrimage to Makkah with another Saudi, Ni'mah Ismail Nawwab. A photographic companion book, *Arabia: In Search of the Golden Ages*, is available. Fernbank Museum of Natural History, **Atlanta**, through July 29; Museum of Nature and Science, **Denver**, through August 22; Science Museum of **[Richmond] Virginia**, through September 1; The Tech, **San Jose, California**, and **Detroit [Michigan]** Science Center, through September 6; Science Museum of **[St. Paul] Minnesota**, through October 24; **Texas** State History Museum, **Austin** and Science Spectrum, **Lubbock, Texas**, through October 30; Museum of Science, **Boston**, Science Center of **[Des Moines] Iowa** and Papalote Museo del Niño, **Mexico City**, through December 30; Museum of Discovery and Science, **Ft. Lauderdale, Florida**, through January 30, 2011; Marbles Kids Museum, **Raleigh, North Carolina**, through February 28, 2011; **Louisville [Missouri]** Science Museum, June 12 through December 30; Scientific Center, **Salmiya, Kuwait**, opens June 24.

CURRENT **August**

Arts of Bengal: *Wives, Mothers, Goddesses* presents domestic artifacts made by and for Bengali women during the 19th and 20th centuries, including intricate embroidered quilts called *kanthas*, vibrant ritual paintings and fish-shaped caskets and other implements created in a resin-thread technique. Drawn from a common pool of motifs and ideas that reflect the unique environment of the region, these creations provide a rare view into women's everyday lives and thoughts. Other arts, such as elaborate painted narrative scrolls and souvenir paintings from Kalighat near Calcutta, illustrate women's many roles, both domestic and divine. (A companion exhibition, **Arts of Bengal: Village, Town, Temple**, open from March 13 through July, also showcases works from the Museum's extensive holdings of Bengali vernacular arts.) **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through August.

The Two Qalams: *Islamic Arts of Pen and Brush.* In Arabic, the word *qalam* originally meant the calligrapher's reed pen. Calligraphers were and are esteemed in Islam because their pens write the sacred words of the Qur'an. The attitude toward painters, however, has not always been so positive since their brushes could depict—thus create—human and animal figures, thereby challenging the sole creative authority of God. Persian poets of the 16th century countered this negative perception by describing the painter's brush as a second *qalam*, equivalent to that of the calligrapher's pen. The two *qalams* came together in the vibrant bookmaking workshops of the Islamic courts of Persia and India where calligraphers and painters collaborated to produce a wealth of illustrated manuscripts and elaborate albums filled with specimens of beautiful writing and painting. As seen in the 16th- through 19th-century album pages in the exhibition, the arts of pen and brush often merged with exquisite results. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through August.

Arts of Bengal: *Town, Temple, Mosque* explores the rich texture of the "sacred" and the "mundane" from the 18th to the mid-20th century in Bengal's cities and towns, which have long functioned as hubs of commerce, religious activity and the arts where professional painters, potters, weavers and sculptors catered to diverse audiences. Under British colonial rule, the products of artists in Kolkata (Calcutta), Murshidabad, Dhaka and Patna included sumptuously decorated silverware, silk saris brocaded with images of urban pleasures, colorful paintings of religious processions and even detailed botanical studies made for European patrons. The façades of temples and mosques were often decorated with intricately molded terra-cotta bricks; some also provided venues for artists to sell souvenir paintings of deities and even scenes satirizing the dissipations of city life. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through August.

The Silk Road: *Ancient Pathway to the Modern World* allows the visitor to "travel" from Xi'an, China's Tang Dynasty capital, to Turfan, a bustling oasis; Samarkand, home of prosperous merchants; and Baghdad, a meeting place for scholars, scientists and philosophers, in the period between 600 and 1200, with dioramas and interactive displays from each city. For centuries, the Silk Road was a vast and busy network connecting Asia and the Mediterranean where people met, transported goods and conducted trade, and in the process shared culture, religion and technology. Feathers, furs, spices, silks and other trade goods; live, working silkworms; a cutaway replica of part of a dhow; a working model of a water clock; sounds and smells; and video clips of papermaking and

glassblowing are among the exhibits. Live Silk Road music on Sunday afternoons. American Museum of Natural History, **New York**, through August 15.

Very Postmortem: *Mummies and Medicine* explores the modern scientific examination of mummies that has provided new insights into Egyptians' living conditions and brought us closer to understanding who they were. The exhibition marks the return of Irethorrou, the Fine Arts Museums' mummy out on loan since 1944. CT scans done at Stanford University Medical School shed light on Irethorrou's physical attributes and the cause of his death, and make possible a three-dimensional "fly through" of the mummy and a forensic reconstruction of his head. The exhibition also includes a variety of ancient artifacts that date from approximately 664–525 BC, the Late Period of the 26th Saite Dynasty. Fine Arts Museums' Legion of Honor, **San Francisco**, through August 15.

Embroidery From the Arab World, the Netherlands' first exhibition on the subject, looks at various styles of embroidery and the ways this versatile textile technique is used to decorate men and women's clothing—as well as homes, public buildings and animal trappings—in a wide variety of forms, colors and designs. On display are more than 60 examples in silk, linen or wool from Egypt, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen and Eastern Mediterranean countries, and the role of the French embroidery company DMC, which has influenced especially Mediterranean Arab embroidery for more than 100 years, is highlighted. The oldest embroideries on display are two fragments of children's tunics from fifth-century Coptic Egypt. More recent items include an early 20th-century dress and velvet jacket from Bethlehem; a late 20th-century men's cloak from the Moroccan High Atlas; Bedouin dresses from the Northern Sinai; indigo dresses from Yemen; and wedding dresses from Morocco, the Siwa Oasis and Saudi Arabia. TRC Gallery, **Leiden**, **The Netherlands**, through August 22.

Bharat Ratna! *Jewels of Modern Indian Art* presents a selection of outstanding works by some of India's most celebrated modern painters, focusing on a generation that emerged following India's independence in 1947. Luminaries such as Francis Newton Souza, Maqbool Fida Husain and Sayed Haider Raza formed an influential artistic avant-garde at this transitional moment; their paintings are a synthesis of visual traditions, embracing both western modernism and a heritage colored by Indian art, myths and classical traditions. The exhibition's divergent works highlight the dialogue between the traditional and modern, the indigenous and foreign, and the sacred and secular as Indian artists sought an independent identity. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, through August 22.

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Pioneers to the Past: *American Archaeologists in the Middle East, 1919–1920* highlights James Henry Breasted's travels through Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine, exhibiting travel ephemera, documents and archival photos, narrated by quotations from diaries. Breasted's goal was to purchase artifacts for his new Oriental Institute Museum and to scout sites for future excavation, but he found himself in the unstable political situation after World War I, when local peoples, under colonial domination, were struggling for independence. The exhibition raises questions about whose history would be written, the role of America in the Middle East and the relationship of the past to the present—all issues still debated today. Catalog. Oriental Institute Museum, **Chicago**, through August 31.

CURRENT **September**

Metamorphosis features a site-specific project by Canan Dağdelen, a snapshot of the Turkish contemporary art scene and the dynamic culture of the city from the perspective of a young curator. The exhibition title refers both to the transformation of the art environment of Turkey and to the rapid development of Istanbul. As an assemblage of artworks of diverse media, it reflects the effect of these simultaneous, ongoing transfigurations on artistic production of the day. Proje4L / Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art, **Istanbul**, through September 4.

Tutankhamun's Funeral explores the materials and rituals associated with the burial of the renowned pharaoh and includes some 60 objects, including lids, bowls, linen sheets, jars and bandages that were used at the pharaoh's mummification and the rites associated with his burial. Featured objects also include a sculpted head of the youthful Tutankhamun and several facsimile paintings depicting funerary rituals. Archival photographs from the early 20th century by Harry Burton, the Museum's expedition photographer, provide an evocative background. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through September 6.

Meroë: *Empire on the Nile* highlights the majesty of an ancient civilization and its intermingling of African, Egyptian and Greco-Roman influences. Located in Sudan, 200 kilometers north of present-day Khartoum, Meroë was the capital of a great empire on the Nile, famed for the pyramids of the kings and queens who dominated the region between 270 BC and AD 350. Comprising 200 works of art, the exhibition's main themes are everyday life, trade, social systems, the kings and their insignia of power, the role of the queens, and religious practices fusing the gods Amun, from Egypt, and Dionysus, from Greece, with the people of Meroë's own vision of the afterlife. The discovery of the ruins of the Meroë pyramids by Frédéric Cailliaud in 1821, and finds from the archeological explorations begun by the Louvre in 2007, are also emphasized. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through September 6.

Mind the Dig! *How Does Archeology Work?* An interactive exhibition. Reiss-Engelhorn Museums, **Mannheim, Germany**, through September 19.

CURRENT **November and later**

Mummified allows visitors to experience at computer stations the "virtual autopsy" of the museum's mummy, undertaken to learn more about the age, possible illness and cause of death of the person within the beautifully painted outer wrappings. The exhibition also features some 20 ancient Egyptian objects depicting images of mummified people, animals and deities, and discusses the "mummi-mania" of the 17th to 20th century. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, through November 8.

COMING **May**

Light of the Sufis: *The Mystical Arts of Islam* explores a historic branch of Islam whose followers seek mystical union with God and focuses on Sufi ideas and practices that found expression through the arts of the Islamic world, beginning with light, which symbolizes both God and enlightenment. The show includes furnishings used for mosque lighting; illustrated, illuminated and laser-etched manuscripts of poetry; and contemporary works inspired by Sufi principles and practices. Museum of Fine Arts **Houston**, May 16 through August 8.

Illuminating the Word. The calligraphy of the Qur'an and its illumination have firm rules rooted in the text itself. The symbolism of the colors and designs clarifies the meaning of the text while reaffirming and illustrating the complexity and depth of the verses. Colors and designs themselves add the emphases that Tajammul Hussain uses to give visual expression to the text. Athr Gallery, **Jiddah**, May 17 through June 10.

Courtly and Urban Batik From Java presents refined designs that range from a skirt-cloth for a sultan to an elegant silk scarf that might have been worn by an itinerant entertainer. Others were produced on Java's cosmopolitan north coast as Islamic banners for the Sumatran market or as altar cloths for Java's Chinese community. The fabrics contrast sharply with the rustic batiks displayed in **Nini Towok's Spinning Wheel**, below. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, May 23 through September 5.

A Gift from the Desert: *The Art, History and Culture of the Arabian Horse* explores the impact of the horse on civilizations of the ancient Near East and the Islamic world and highlights the beauty and romance of the Arabian breed. Arabian horses are the thread that runs through the exhibition, as they relate to many aspects of the arts and culture of the civilizations that treasured them, as well as the important role of the ancient Near East, Egypt and Arabia in equestrian history. The nearly 400 objects on display, from 27 museums and private lenders, include a petroglyph (rock carving) and petroglyph depictions; a Sabean stela showing camels and riders; illuminated copies of the Qur'an; a Mamluk gilded glass pilgrim flask; a 2000-year-old golden bridle found in the UAE; second-century frescoes from the "lost city" of Fao in Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter; objects related to Islamic mathematics, astronomy and navigation; glass, ceramic and metalwork from the early Islamic dynasties through the Ottoman Empire; Orientalist art and lithographs depicting horses; and Islamic arms and armor. International Museum of the Horse, **Lexington, Kentucky**, May 29 through October 15.

COMING **June**

Iranian–Americans in Los Angeles displays engaging images of the everyday lives of second-generation Iranian–Americans in Los Angeles, the world's largest population of expatriate Iranians, taken between October 2009 and January 2010 by four similarly hyphenated documentary photographers—Farhad Parsa, Arash Saedinia, Parisa Taghizadeh and Ramin Talaie. The exhibition raises interesting questions about identity and the process of (self-) documentation. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, June 6 through August 22.

Embodyment exhibits photographs by Lebanese artist Rasha Shammas that show an element that unexpectedly links different strata and sectors of Lebanese society: the tattoo. Often associated with various forms of rebellion, tattoos have become a modern way of expressing one's personality. Running Horse Contemporary Art Space, **Beirut**, June 9 through July 24.

Witness is a solo exhibition of new works by internationally acclaimed Palestinian–British artist Mona Hatoum, who became famous 20 years ago with a series of performance and video works that focused intensely on the body. Later, her work moved increasingly toward large-scale installations and sculptures that evoke conflicting emotions of desire and revulsion or fear and fascination. Hatoum's work addresses notions of displacement, uncertainty and conflict through the use of familiar domestic objects transformed into foreign and sometimes threatening sculptures. **Beirut** Art Center, June 10 through September 9.

Rachid Koraïchi presents sculptural installations including ceramics, textiles, various metals and painted work on silk and paper or canvas. The Algerian artist is fascinated by signs of all kinds, real and imaginary. Beginning with Arabic calligraphy, his work is composed of symbols, glyphs and ciphers drawn from a wide variety of other languages and cultures. October Gallery, **London**, June 11 through July 10.

Hope! From Giacometti to Murakami features 50 works by 50 international artists displayed in four sections—Genesis, Exodus, Apocalypse and Grace—showing that an alternative perception of contemporary art is possible. Works by major western artists, including Richard Serra, Alighiero Boetti, Damien Hirst, Ed Ruscha, François Morellet, Lucio Fontana and Sigmar Polke, converse with those by both famous and recently distinguished Middle Eastern creators, such as Shirazeh Houshiary,

Rokni Haerizadeh, Reza Aramesh, Farideh Lashai, Reza Derakshani, Mona Hatoum and Farhad Moshiri. Palais des Arts, **Dinard, France**, June 12 through September 12.

Free Me From My Chains presents a large-scale work in neon in which Algerian artist Zoulikha Bouabdellah spells *hubb* ("love") in a simple animation as three intertwined lights flash on and off. She also presents works that refer to Middle East culture in the person of Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum. Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, **Dubai**, June 14 through August 15.

The Fourth Annual Chicago Arabesque Festival is set in the most vibrant part of downtown and offers a dynamic celebration and exploration of the art, cuisine, culture, music and dance of the Arab world. Showcased products include carpets, musical instruments, hookahs, woodwork and carpets. Daley Plaza, **Chicago**, June 24–26.

Muraqqa': *Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library* focuses on a group of six albums (muraqqas) compiled in India between about 1600 and 1658 for the Mughal emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan (builder of the Taj Mahal). Each album folio originally consisted of a painting on one side and a panel of calligraphy on the other, all set within beautifully illuminated borders. Many of the paintings are exquisitely rendered portraits of emperors, princes and courtiers—all dressed in the finest textiles and jewels—but there are also images of court life, and of Sufis, saints and animals. This exhibition has been on tour in the US for the past year and will now return to the Library, which holds one of the finest collections of Indian Mughal paintings in existence. Catalog. Chester Beatty Library, **Dublin**, June 25 through October 3.

Afghanistan: *Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul* explores the cultural heritage of ancient Afghanistan from the Bronze Age (2500 BC) through the rise of trade along the Silk Roads in the first century of our era. Among the nearly 230 works on view, all from the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul, are artifacts as old as 4000 years, as well as gold objects from the famed Bactrian Hoard, a 2000-year-old treasure of Bactrian grave goods excavated at Tillya Tepe in 1978 and long thought to have been stolen or destroyed, but rediscovered in 2003. The earliest objects in the exhibition, from Tepe Fullol in northern Afghanistan, are fragmentary gold vases dated between 2500 and 2200 BC. A second group, from the former Greek city Aï Khanum, reflects Mediterranean influence between the fourth and second centuries BC. Trade goods from a third site, at Begram, date from the first century and include ivory statues and reliefs, as well as painted glassware, vases and bronzes, many imported from Roman, Indian, Chinese and East Asian markets. The Tillya Tepe group consists of some 100 first-century gold objects, including an exquisite crown and necklaces, belts, rings and headdresses. Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, **Bonn**, June 11 through October 3; British Museum, **London**, Spring 2011.

COMING **July**

Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs is [another] extensive exhibition of more than 140 treasures from the tomb of the celebrated pharaoh and other sites. It includes his golden sandals, created specifically for the afterlife and found on his feet when his mummy was unwrapped; one of the gold canopic coffinettes, inlaid with jewels, that contained his mummified internal organs; and a three-meter figure depicting Tutankhamun as a young man, which originally may have stood at his mortuary temple. Providing context and additional information are 75 objects from other tombs in the Valley of the Kings, including objects related to Khefren (Cheops), Hatshepsut and Psusennes I. **Denver [Colorado]** Art Museum, from July 10.

Treasures of the World: *Jewellery of India Under the Grand Moguls* includes more than 400 pieces of jewelry from the Mughal epoch, lent by the Al-Sabah family, which constitute the core of one of the great Islamic art collections of the late 20th century. The 13 sections of the exhibition not only display those amazing and in some cases unique works but also inform the viewer about materials and techniques. Islamic Arts Museum **Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur**, July 28 through mid-December.

COMING **August**

Nini Towok's Spinning Wheel: *Cloth and the Cycle of Life in Kerek, Java* explores the multiple meanings of the beautiful rustic textiles from Kerek, the last place in Java where batik is still produced on hand-woven cotton cloth and where a full range of hand-woven textiles still supports a remarkable system of interrelated beliefs and practices. Nini Towok is the Javanese goddess who cultivates cotton in the heavens and sends her yarn to Earth in the form of moonbeams. Fine examples of these rarely seen cloths illustrate the various techniques, patterns and color combinations, and the exhibition concludes with a series of 17 outfits, each specific to a particular individual according to sex, age, social status, occupation and place of residence. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, August 1 to December 5.

COMING **September**

Desert Jewels: *North African Jewelry and Photography from the Xavier Guerrand-Hermès Collection* combines previously unexhibited North African jewelry and late 19th- and early 20th-century photographs. Jewelry designers and makers used silver, coral, amber, coins and semiprecious stones to create wedding necklaces, hair ornaments, bracelets, rings, earrings and fibulae, which show the common elements of North African societies as well as local variations in materials and motifs. North African jewelry came to the attention of western collectors only in the 19th century. The most important photographers of the day, including the Scotsman George Washington Wilson, the Neurdine brothers from France and Turkish photographer Pascal Sabah, visited the region and photographed landscapes, architecture, markets and people adorned in their jewels. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, September 4 through December 5.

COMING **October**

To Live Forever: *Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum* uses some 120 pieces of jewelry, statues, coffins and vessels dating from 3600 BC to the year 400 of our era to illustrate the range of strategies and preparations that the ancient Egyptians developed to defeat death and to achieve success in the afterlife. The exhibition explores the belief that death was an enemy that could be vanquished, a primary cultural tenet of ancient Egyptian civilization. To survive in the next world, Egyptians would purchase, trade or even reuse a variety of protective objects. The exhibition explains the process of mummification, the economics and rituals of memorials, the contents of the tomb, the funeral accessories—differentiated by the class of the deceased—and the idealized afterlife. Exhibits include the vividly painted coffin of a mayor of Thebes, mummies, stone statues, gold jewelry, amulets and canopic jars. Catalog by curator Edward Bleiberg, $39.95. **San Antonio [Texas]** Museum of Art, opens October 15.

COMING **November and later**

Heroes and Kings of the Shahnama shows folios of the famous text from each of the Library's 25 copies, produced in Iran and India between the 14th and 19th centuries. The *Shahnama*, or *Book of Kings*, is the Iranian national epic, relating the glorious, often gory, feats of the heroes and kings of pre-Islamic Iran. Compiled in written form in the 11th century by the poet Firdawsi, these tales have been popular both inside and beyond Iran for more than a millennium. While many tell of dragons and *divs*, others, such as stories of Alexander the Great, derive from recorded history. The exhibition celebrates the 1000th anniversary of Firdawsi's completion of the text in the year 1010. Fully illustrated catalog. Chester Beatty Library, **Dublin**, November 19 through March 20.

PERMANENT

The Saudi Aramco Exhibit 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. Most institutions listed have further information available at their Web sites. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion in this listing. Some listings have been kindly provided to us by Canvas, *the art and culture magazine for the Middle East and the Arab world.*

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