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world

May/June 2011
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COOL MIDEAST

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May/June 2011
Published Bimonthly Vol. 62, No. 3

In a brash clash of colors, languages and pop fashion, Moroccan artist Hassan Hajjaj's upbeat portrait of musician Marques Toliver is among new art that is breaking from easy labels like "Arab" or "Middle Eastern." Courtesy of the artist and Rose Issa Projects.

Publisher
Aramco Services Company
9009 West Loop South
Houston, Texas 77096, USA

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ISSN
1530-5821

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Printed in the USA
RR Donnelley/Wetmore

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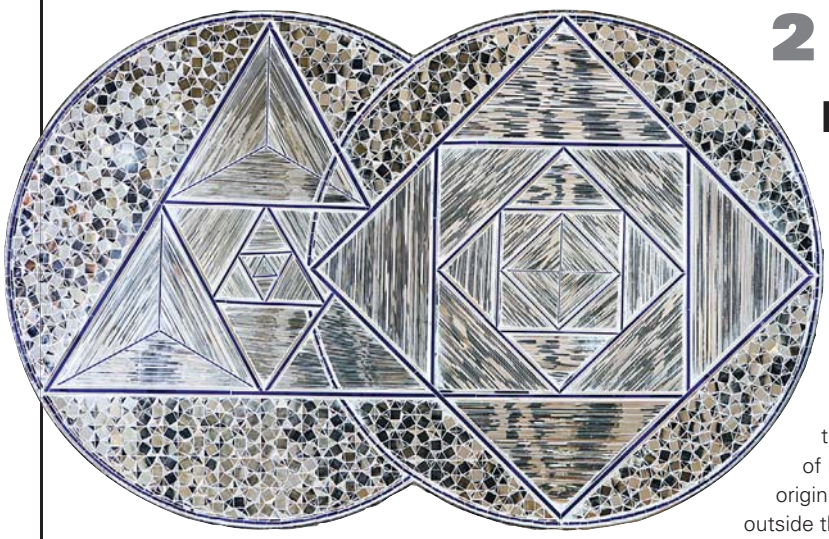
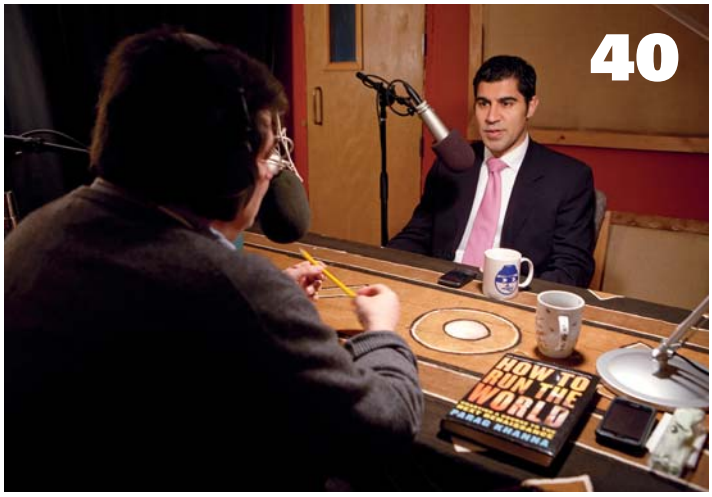
Back Cover

This rooftop view of Dhaka, Bangladesh by Reza Shahriar Rahman is among 28 images, all by first-year photography students, in "The Dhaka of My Dreams," an exhibit produced during a workshop led by photographer and educator Morten Krogvold at the Chobi Mela Festival of Asian Photography. View the gallery online at saudiaramcoworld.com.

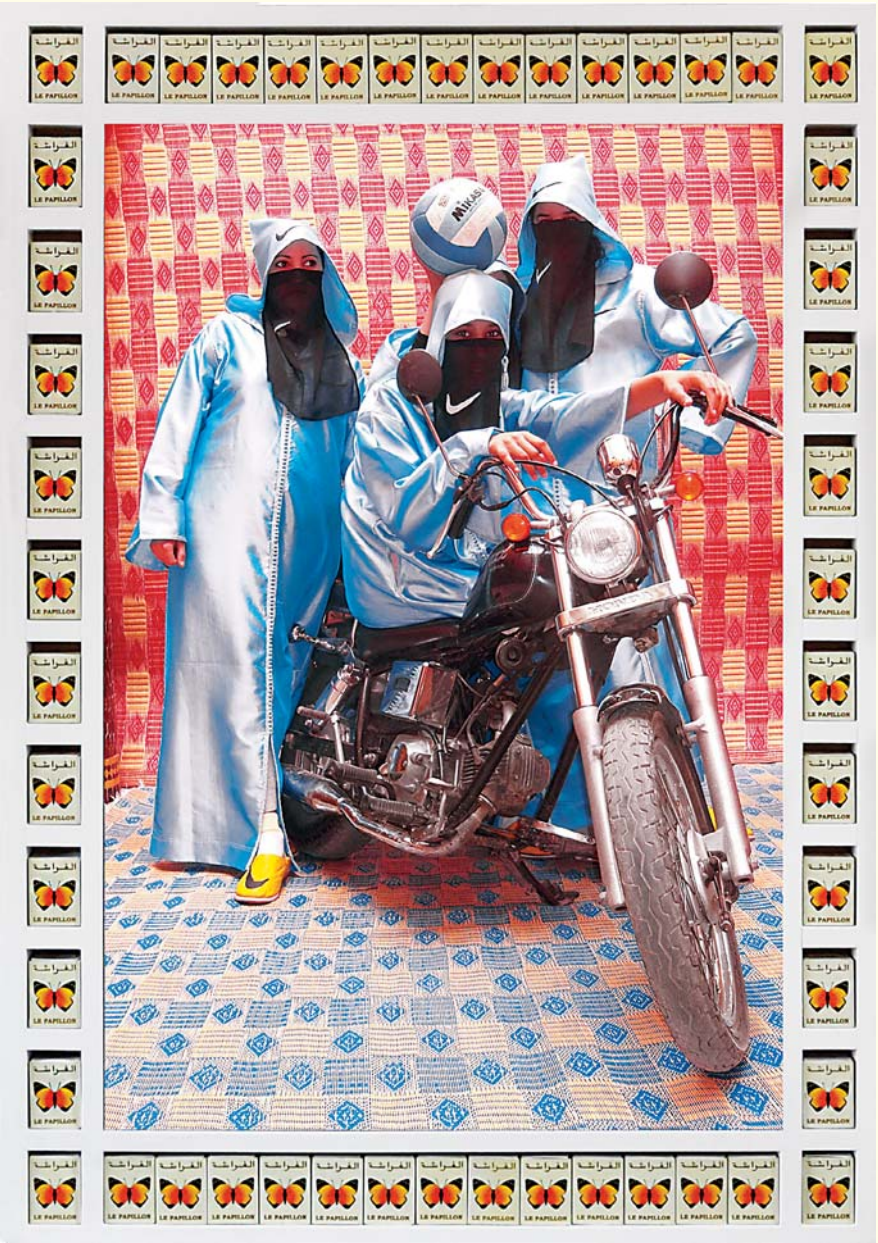
Saudi Aramco, the oil company born as an international enterprise more than seventy-five years ago, distributes *Saudi Aramco World* to increase cross-cultural understanding. The magazine's goal is to broaden knowledge of the cultures, history and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their connections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





MIDEAST

Written by Juliet Highet



Hassan Hajjaj, "Nikee Rider," 2007. Courtesy of the artist and Rose Issa Projects.

Middle Eastern artists, whether they live in that culturally kaleidoscopic (and ill-defined) region or outside it, are at the center of one of the world's most dynamic movements in contemporary art.

Their work is suffused by themes of identity, memory, grief, rage and a sense of belonging to (or alienation from) the place or culture in which they live. The traumatic ruptures of wars, exile and migration that have affected them all are partly responsible–but a different consciousness has emerged in the last few years. What's new is a cultural confidence and optimism, stemming from the fact of survival and the rising expectations that go with global recognition of the quality of their art.

"Everybody thinks we're crying all the time!" says Rose Issa, a curator of Iranian–Lebanese background whose London exhibitions have given visibility to Middle Eastern artists for 25 years. "But our art is not only about despair. It's about beauty too–the beauty of ordinary people's lives, enabling destruction to become hope. The artists who interest me now communicate, fun, color, joy, love."

She points to the photographs of Hassan Hajjaj, a young Moroccan–British artist who captures upbeat rhythms of North African street life in an iconographic style that radiates both warmth and kitschy

self-mockery, and who says, "I wanted to express so-called Arab work in a cool way."

That sensibility, says Issa, is what the new "Mideast cool" is about: playfully questioning stereotypes and exploring the relationships between traditions and modernity, between "Easts" and "Wests."

Increasing numbers of galleries in top art centers like London, Paris and New York are exhibiting contemporary Middle Eastern art. At Sotheby's and Christie's, the world's top auction houses, sales of contemporary Middle Eastern art are now regular, hugely successful events that—even during the current recession—generate an upward spiral of record-breaking prices. What's behind it?

To generalize broadly, although contemporary Middle Eastern art is often challenging and iconoclastic, it is nonetheless often esthetically beautiful, and rarely either nihilistic or self-indulgent. There's fire, there's passion, there's confidence in its messages and its own self-worth. "It reflects the reality of what's going on in the Middle East," says Dalya Islam, deputy director of Sotheby's Middle East department. "It's thematically relevant, addressing the issues of today."

Venetia Porter, curator of the British Museum's Middle East department, adds, "Many artists of the region have kept alive an

Looking at Contemporary Middle Eastern Art

If you walk into a gallery of contemporary Middle Eastern art and wonder, "What's this about?" you would not be the first to pose such a question. To better understand it, it's important to remember that, like all contemporary art, this art is not only—or even primarily—about beauty, craft or history. It might draw on those, or evoke them, but it does more than that: It's there to be thought-provoking, to connect with or refer to current events, trends and personal experience, often in ways that stretch definitions of artistic media. As often as not, it's there to ask questions, to provoke and to challenge.

Above: **Shadi Ghadirian, from "The Qajar Series," 1998-1999. Courtesy of the artist.** Left: **Leila Essaydi, "Les Femmes du Moroc #7," 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Waterhouse & Dodd.**

Sara Rahbar, "Flag #19" from the series "Memories Without Recollection," 2008. Courtesy of Saatchi Gallery.

avant-garde culture in the arts. In many cases, this has sadly required personal sacrifices, including emigration and persecution, but it is these artists' perseverance that has allowed a greater level of understanding of the cultural achievements of the contemporary Middle East, at a time when such understanding is needed more than ever."

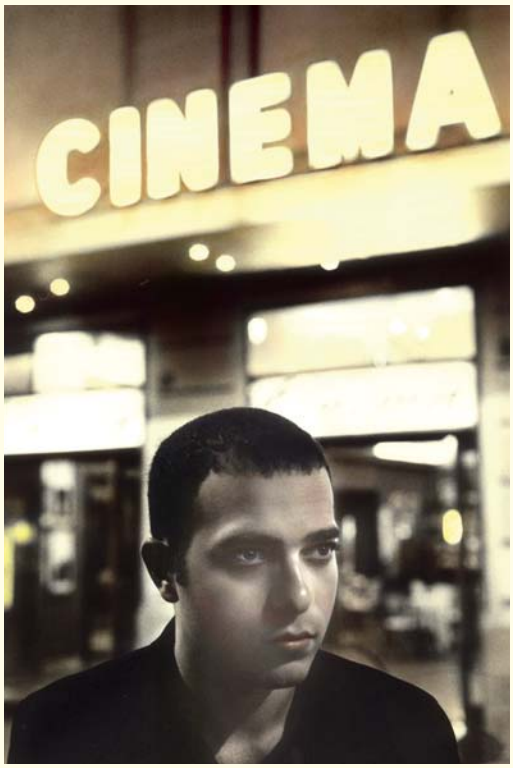
Nat Muller, first curator of Cairo's Townhouse Gallery and author of *Contemporary Art in the Middle East* (2009), writes that, throughout the Middle Eastern region, "artists take on many roles: witness, archivist, architect, activist, critic, cartographer, storyteller, facilitator, trickster, dreamer." And they often do so as citizens of two—or often more—cultural worlds. This gives artists a keen awareness of their own multiple layers of identity and experience.

Amid this diversity, four common characteristics of Middle Eastern contemporary art stand out: beauty, craftsmanship, meaning and spirituality. These go beyond time and place, and for viewers of Middle Eastern background as well as others, they help make the art extraordinarily satisfying and inspirational.

In every time and place, people hunger for beauty. Much contemporary Middle Eastern art offers a quiet, often minimalist elegance. Many of the same shapes that characterize classical art from the region—especially geometric and calligraphic ones—deeply inform contemporary works. Likewise, today's contemporary artists have embraced the craftsmanship that is highly valued in classical Middle Eastern art. From painting and sculpture to photography, video, digital images, installations and performance art, technical excellence prevails.

Meaning comes from connections to concerns, hopes, experiences, questions and dreams shared by artist and viewer. Because contemporary Middle Eastern artists are asking questions and making statements about society, their works are rarely entirely abstract, and often tend toward the figurative and the narrative. "The notion of 'art for art's sake' is inconceivable in the Arab world," writes Nada M. Shabout, director of contemporary Arab and Muslim studies at the University of North Texas. "Works of art are texts both for art and society."

Finally, artists are often aware that greatness in any of the arts is about transformation. In this regard, the contemporary development of calligraphic art is particularly inspiring: It can cause the spirit to soar, even if the viewer does not read Arabic. Elisabeth Lalouschek, artistic director of London's October Gallery, which exhibits top

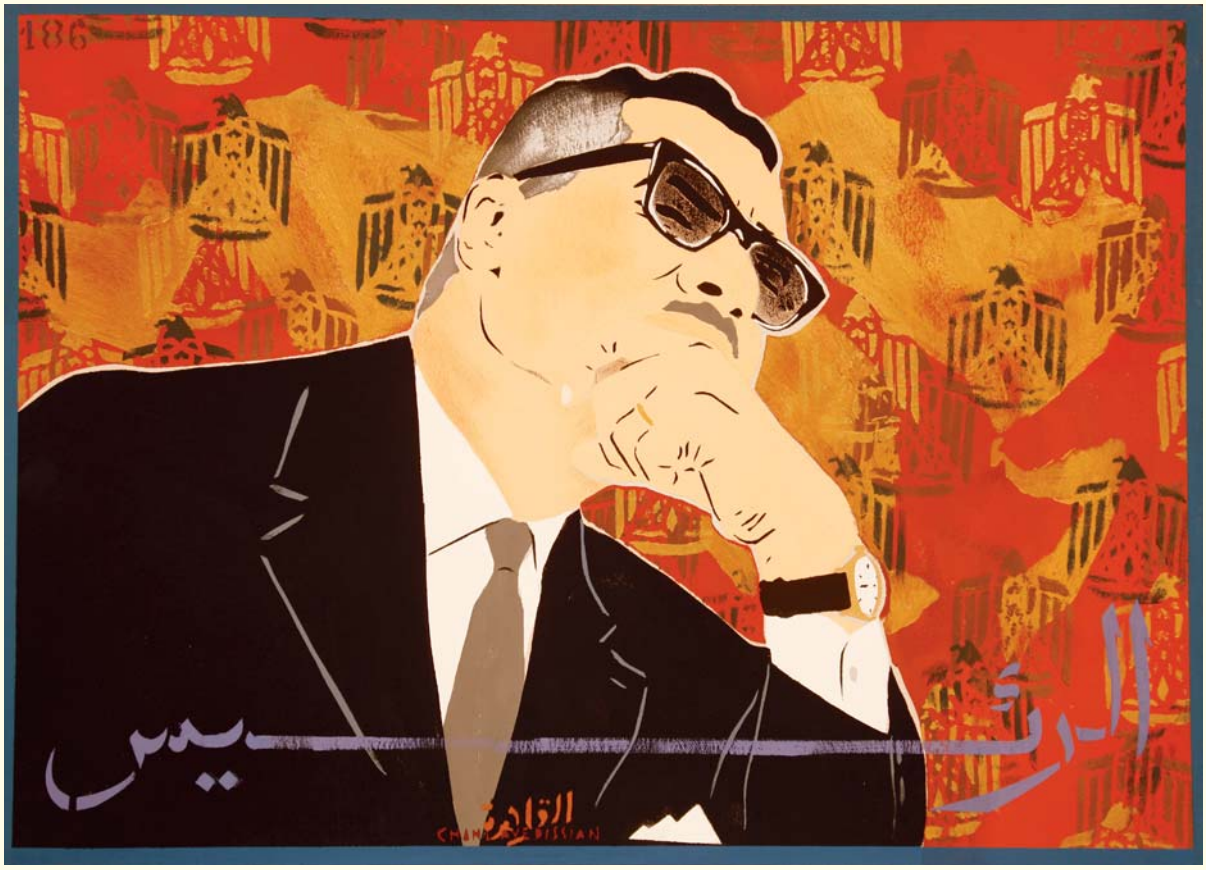


Youssef Nabil, "Cinema, Self-portrait, Florence," 2006. Courtesy of the artist and The Third Line.

The works are rarely entirely abstract. The notion of "art for art's sake" is inconceivable in the Arab world. Works of art are texts both for art and society.

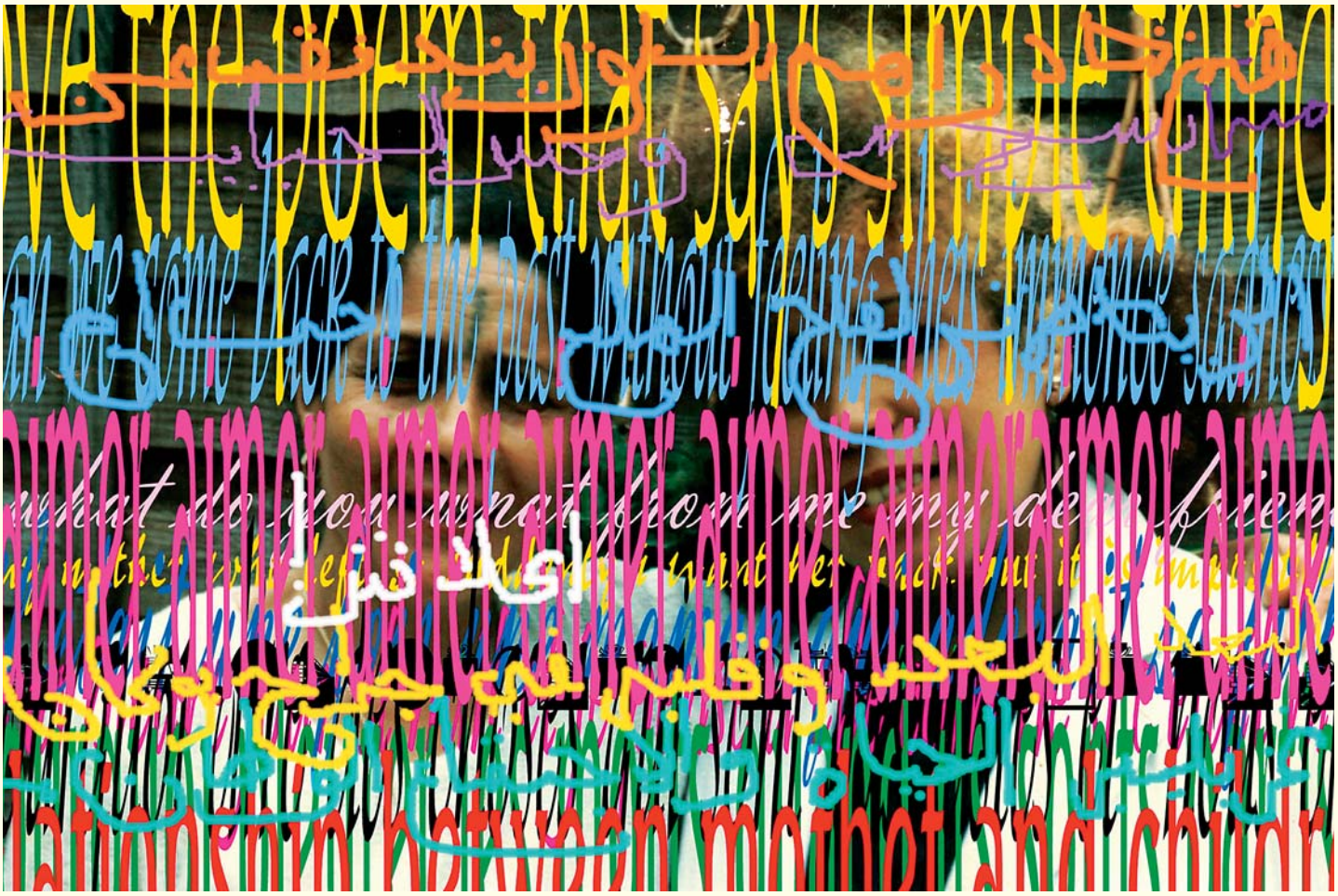
contemporary calligraphers like Hassan Massoudy, Wijdan Ali and Rachid Kouraichi, says, "I like the fluidity, the breadth, the airiness, the elegance of calligraphy. It's very spiritual."

How have traditional Arab, Persian, Turkish, North African and Central Asian arts grown into the defiantly modern presence of a new Middle Eastern cool, with its emphasis on the upbeat and a style in which a nod to fashion can lighten underlying pain? How are these artists in dialogue with their pasts, both ancient and recent? Of Egyptians, Muller observes that "articulations of the contemporary ... are weighed down by an epic Pharaonic past and an equally epic dream of ... modernity and independence." One leading explorer of this dialogue is Egyptian artist Chant Avedissian, who draws on Pharaonic design motifs, hieroglyphs, the craftsmanship of Islamic urban centers and popular Egyptian posters and magazines. He combines them all in highly crafted photographs, producing images that probe the visual languages of consumerism and political propaganda. His critically acclaimed series "Icons of the Nile" (1991–2004) features politicians, celebrities and even King Farouk, all as representatives of Egypt's nationalist heyday of the 1950's and 1960's. Also from Egypt, photographer Youssef Nabil uses stills from movies of classic singer Umm Kulthum's concerts to comment on celebrity culture, and his pastiche, hand-painted photographs of glamorous, languorous women evoke, and often exaggerate, classical Egyptian cinema styles of the 1940's.



Above: **Chant Avedissian, "El Raiis" (Nasser).** Left: **Installation at Arabicity of 100 stencils from Chant Avedissian's 1991-2004 series "Icons of the Nile." Both images courtesy of Rose Issa Projects.**

Iraqi-born Leila Kubba Kawash refers to ancient Sumerian culture as well as Greek and Islamic cultures to "piece together different time periods, ... to find a place where the past and present overlap." More directly contemporary is Iraqi Himat Mohammed Ali's moving memorial of 12 books of Arabic script overlaid with photographs and blotched with patches of black and red paint in commemoration of a car bombing on Al-Mutanabbi Street, which since the 10th century has been the center of Baghdad's book trade.



Houria Niati, "Mother and I," from the series "Curtains of Words," 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

For Iranian artist Farhad Moshiri, the recent past includes eight years of the Iran–Iraq war, which helped inspire his installation of 1001 toy guns covered with gold leaf. This came as a new direction for an artist best known for his images of classical Iranian ceramics, many embellished with Farsi calligraphy, presented on huge white canvases that united the traditional with the contemporary. (In 2008, Moshiri became the first Iranian artist to sell a work for more than one million dollars: "*Eshgh* (Love)," a calligraphic work on canvas, was spattered with glitter and Swarovski crystals.)

In Iran's not-so-distant past, the Qajar dynasty, which ruled from 1794 to 1925, often used portraiture for political propaganda, and yet there was always a yearning for prettiness, often evoked in flower paintings, as well as an abstract, spiritual dimension conjured up with mirror mosaics during that period. Childhood memories of the elaborately mirrored throne room in Tehran's Golestan Palace are imprinted on artist Monir Farmarmaian's mind, and these have inspired her 40 years of achingly poetic installations in mirrored mosaic, which also allude to the search for the spiritual inner self.

Near the end of the Qajar period, photography became the court's medium of choice for portraiture. Contemporary Tehran photographer Shadi Ghadirian draws on these conventions in her "Qajar" series of sepia-toned photographs. Each shows one or more female models theatrically posed in vintage attire against period backgrounds, and to each Ghadirian added incongruously modern items, such as sunglasses, a vacuum cleaner or a can of Pepsi.

"The jarring contrast," writes Marta Weiss, curator of photographs at London's Victoria & Albert Museum, "is indicative of the tension between tradition and modernity, public personas and private desires, that many Iranian women navigate on a daily basis." Ghadirian's spirited debates with social issues that concern and inspire her inform her other series as well, which blur the distinctions between documentary and fiction, often wrapping needle-sharp points in dry humor. Probing the limits of her expressive freedom, she continues to live in Iran despite artistic residencies that have been offered to her from western institutions. In doing so, she mirrors her generation, the first since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, asserting its place despite doing so largely behind closed doors.

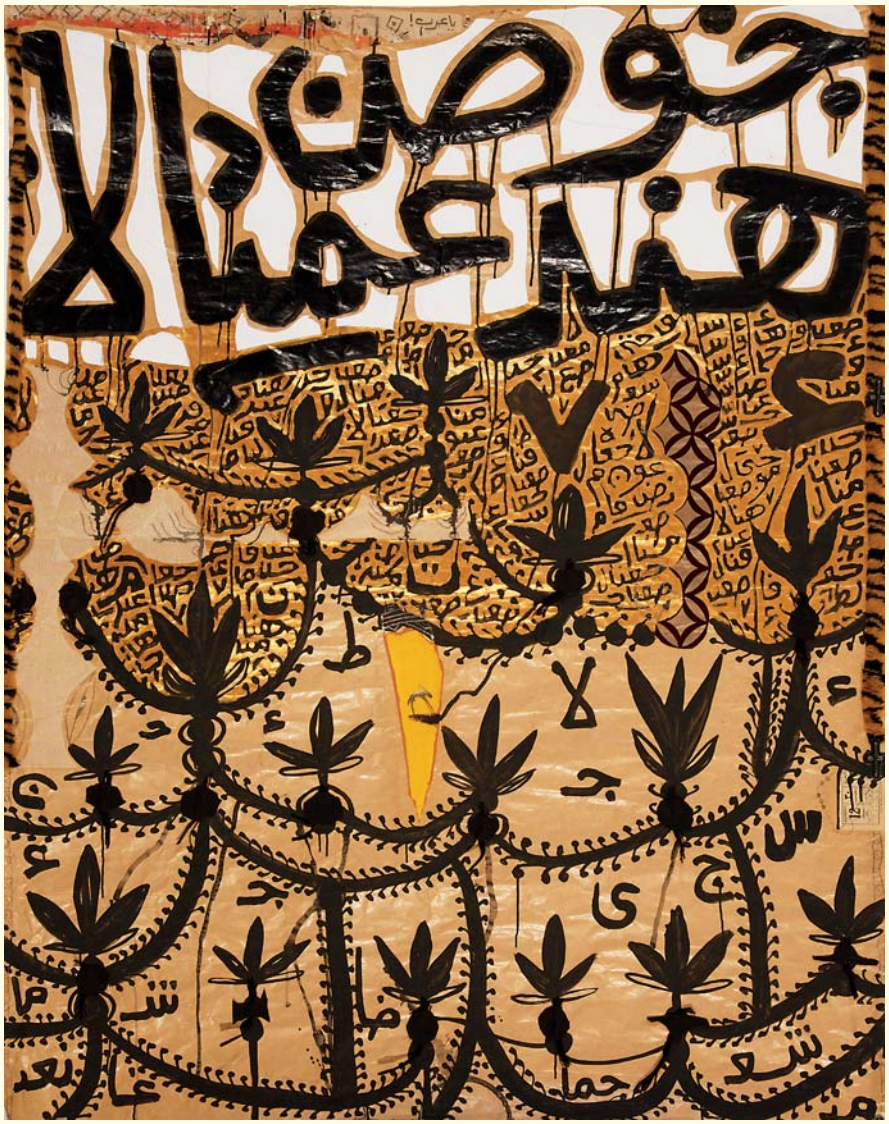
Most Middle Eastern diaspora artists live in the West, and their art benefits from both their home cultures and western ones.

Equally witty, winking at tradition and subversively questioning stereotypes, is photographer Hajjaj, who lives in both Marrakesh and London. He delights in street style and mash-ups of traditional culture and global branding. His models, dressed in veils and *djellabahs*, seem to take pride in their heritage, but add their own generational stamps, such as the veil and headscarf sporting

an imaginary Louis Vuitton logo and the *babouches* displaying a Nike swoosh. As Issa says, the street-smart figures "sometimes look menacing, but they are simply defending their world, their turf, their style and their right to have problems and aspirations. Like the artist, they have guts and attitude. They express Arab power, pride and joy."

While far more politically engaged, Laila Shawa's work exudes Middle Eastern cool. The invitation to her "Arabopop" exhibition looked like a miniature box of cornflakes—a play on branding and consumerism again. More provocatively, her "Fashionista/Terrorista" series creates discomfort by blending style with an implied threat based on stereotypes. "It's a comment on how Palestinians are perceived," she says. "We are judged on appearance."

Shawa is one of the leading contemporary Arab artists living in the diaspora, outside the Middle East. In *Reflections on Exile*, the Palestinian writer Edward Said asks, "If true exile is a condition of terminal loss, why has it been transformed so easily into a potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture?" The answer lies in art's pursuit of transformation. Most Middle Eastern diaspora artists live in the West, and their practices benefit from both their home cultures and their western ones, creating opportunities for endlessly hybridized styles. The artist whose painted photographs evoke Cairo's cinematic past, Youssef Nabil, later embarked on a series of self-portraits: "I left my life in Cairo behind, and I found myself in a totally new place. I started asking myself questions about life, my life, my country and the idea of being away. In a way, I had closed a door behind me and I was no longer the person I used to be." Whether departure is voluntary or forced, exiles can use art to rebuild themselves—one of Nabil's self-portraits depicts him sleeping among tree roots.



Above: **Fathi Hassan, "Life," 2009. Courtesy of Rose Issa Projects.** Left: **Laila Shawa, "Desert City," 2008. Courtesy of the artist and Articulate Baboon Gallery.**

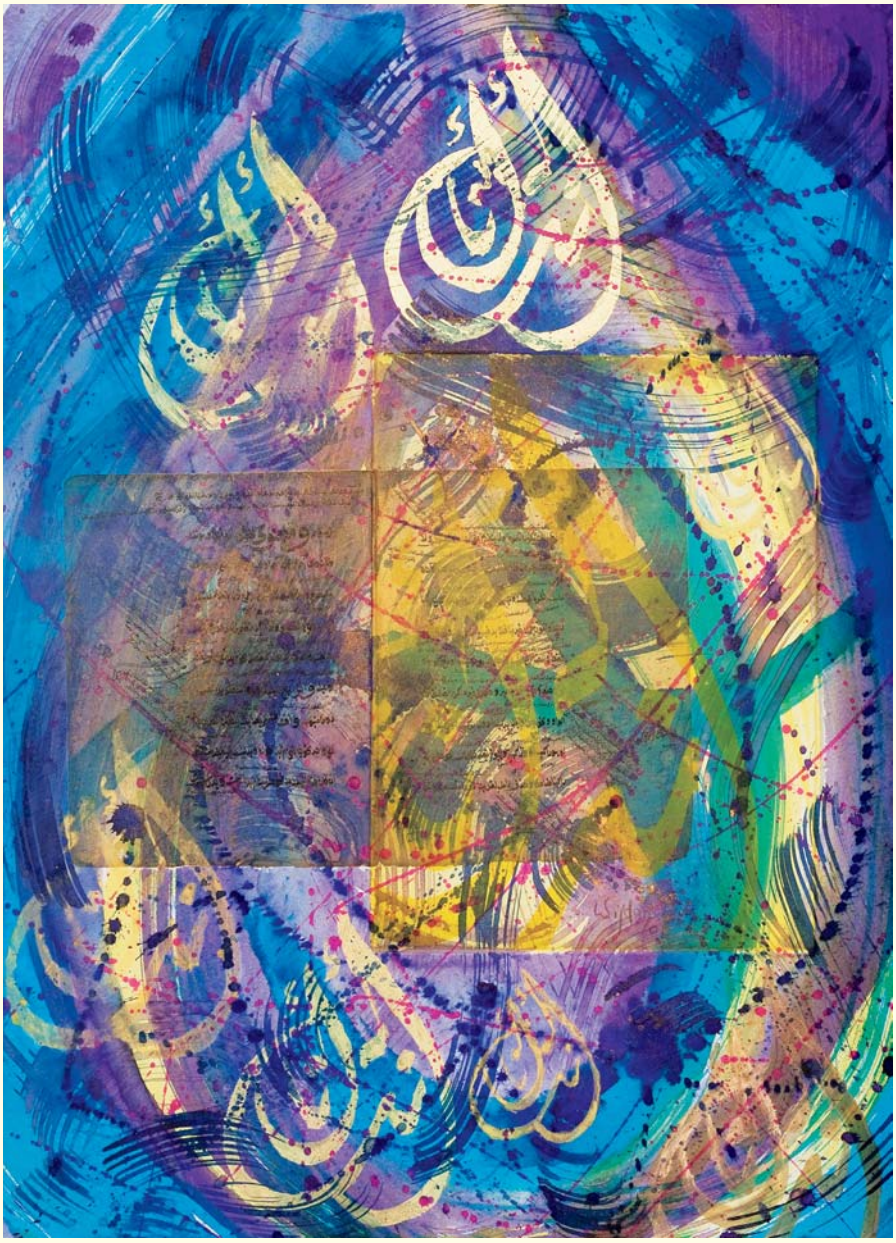
Arriving in Britain from Algeria in 1977, Houria Niati became one of the pioneers introducing contemporary Arab art to the West with her series "No to Torture." She says, "In my heart, I am displaced culturally. When I return to Algeria, I feel sad, because I am not a part of it, though I feel alienated here too, which doesn't mean I dislike it. Now I am rediscovering my mother's Berber ancestry and my family roots. I go to my Mum's place to paint, and I am connecting with young Algerian artists and art students." Niati's multimedia installation "Out of the Ashes" contains 100 engraved wooden portraits of Algerian women, showing the designs and patterns of their clothes. "They are the protectors of our culture," she says. A series called "Curtains of Words" celebrates her own multiculturalism in photographs based on her childhood and family, overlaid with text in Arabic, French and English.

In addition to these common concerns, there is also gender. Far from stereotypical submissiveness, women play central roles in contemporary Middle Eastern art.

"What you see in the Arab world now are borrowed icons of consumerism and an absence of cultural identity." –Laila Shawa

In her widely exhibited series "Like Every Day," photographer Ghadirian made studio shots of women in Day-Glo veils, over the faces of which they hold common domestic objects such as a teacup, an iron or a broom. Shirin Aliabadi and Farhad Moshiri, a married couple, poke at domestic life in their series "Operation Supermarket," in which, for example, a box of detergent called "Shoot First" stands next to dishwasher liquid called "Make Friends Later." In Aliabadi's solo portrait series "Miss Hybrid," a self-consciously glamorous young Iranian woman is photographed with bleached-blond hair, blue contact lenses and surgical tape on her nose (implying plastic surgery); she insouciantly blows a mauve bubblegum bubble that matches her denim jacket.

Samira Alikhanzadeh discovered a box of old photographs, mainly of women and children, to which she applies grid patterns, veiling some of the women and using shards of mirror to conceal the eyes of others. The viewers catch reflections and are encouraged to ponder their own identities as well as their connections with the subjects. Yet another leading Iranian woman artist, working most often in film, video and photography, is Shirin Neshat, whose 1993 series "Women of Allah" pointedly addressed gender segregation.



Above: **Parviz Tanavoli, "Standing Heech," 2007. Courtesy of the artist and Waterhouse & Dodd.** Left: **Wijdan, "Love Series," 2008. Courtesy of Jonathan Greet and October Gallery.**

But among some of the younger generation, it is the lighter approach, with humor, exaggeration and style, that characterizes Middle Eastern cool. In a still from Palestinian Larissa Sansour's movie "Bethlehem Bandolero," we see her in a red Mexican sombrero; a bandanna covers her lower face, outlaw-style–but behind her is the wall erected by Israel to fence off the West Bank.

"But we can't always ask our artists to reflect political issues," says Issa. "I'm fed up with sad things and ugliness. I'm looking for positive messages, good energy. My job is to filter the best art, to present beautiful art, as well as to question things."

Reflecting a geographical region as hybrid and complex as its many cultures, contemporary Middle Eastern artists are merging heritage and modernity into something very cool indeed.

Setting the Scene

Though London, New York and a few other cities remain dominant art centers, the explosive growth of digital communication has meant that art from countries not formerly known for local creativity, except in the heritage department, is now meaningful enough to global art buyers to be super-cool and worth a bundle. Whether the art produced the demand or the demand produced the art—or both—the result is our digital-era, post-9/11 "golden age" of spectacular artistic creativity, a cultural phoenix born from the fires of half a dozen exceedingly turbulent decades, strengthened by blossoming local cultural developments and burgeoning international interests, both intellectual and cannily capitalist.

Hassan Massoudy, "Ô ami, ne va pas au jardin des fleurs. Le jardin des fleurs est en toi. —Kabir XVI", 2008. ("O friend, do not go to the garden of flowers. The garden of flowers is in you.") Below: **Rachid Kouraichi, "Bronze Finial." Both images courtesy Jonathan Greet and October Gallery.**

Though the tragedy of 9/11 had the side effect of raising western interest in Middle Eastern cultures, art historians point beyond it to two other modern political events that caused profound introspection about the future directions of the Arab world, a re-evaluation in which the region's artists and intellectuals participated. Both the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the June War of 1967 involved military defeats that were shattering psychic events for Arab countries. Writing on the theme of "Arabness," poet and critic Buland al-Haidari describes artists after 1967 as "vying with each other in trying to blaze a new trail which would give concrete expression to the longing for Arab unity, and end by giving the Arab world an art of its own."

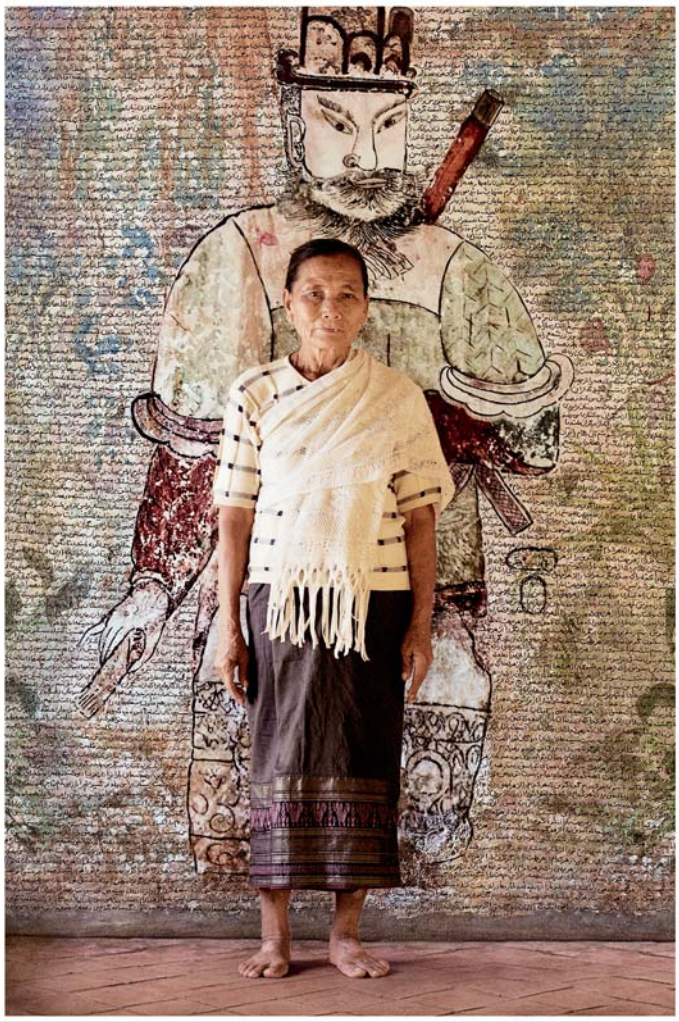
As a consequence, curator Venetia Porter writes in *Word Into Art*, the catalogue of the landmark 2006 exhibition of contemporary Arab calligraphy, "Arab artists, many of whom had trained in the West, or had been exposed to western art traditions, began to seek inspiration from aspects of their indigenous culture. The increased use of script by some artists can certainly be seen in the light of this."

Rose Issa points out that, for Iranian artists, the rise of Iranian cinema to world prominence over the past three decades "has encouraged a mix of documentary films and photography mixed with fiction. This has led to a new esthetic language." After the Iran–Iraq war, she adds, "artists wanted to document their towns, their families, their histories. Photography was the easiest and cheapest way to do this. The strength of Iranian art still comes from the way it tells real-life stories—the poetry of life, modestly done, winning prizes and influencing western artists."

Artists, however, have been only part of the picture. Collectors, galleries, museums, governments and private businesses also play essential roles. In many countries of the region, post-colonial governments established national museums, and some included contemporary collections. Prominent among them, opening in 1977—two years before the Islamic Revolution—Tehran's Museum of Contemporary Art became "one of the region's most important cultural institutions," notes Saeb Eigner, author of *Art of the Middle East*, and "today the country can boast some of the region's great artists." Indeed, Tehran has a wealth of private galleries, and artists also run Internet galleries and stage performance art in abandoned buildings, fields and mosques.

Other national museums with strong

contemporary collections opened in Cairo, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Istanbul. In other places, local private and international donors often play leading roles. For example, although Lebanon is a vibrant art hub, the first Lebanese pavilion at the Venice Biennale, in 2007, was entirely supported by private Lebanese and Italian patrons.



Above: **Shadi Ghadirian, "Nil, Nil, 18," 2008. Courtesy of the artist.** Right: **Shirin Neshat, "Games of Desire: Couple 1, 2009." Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery.**

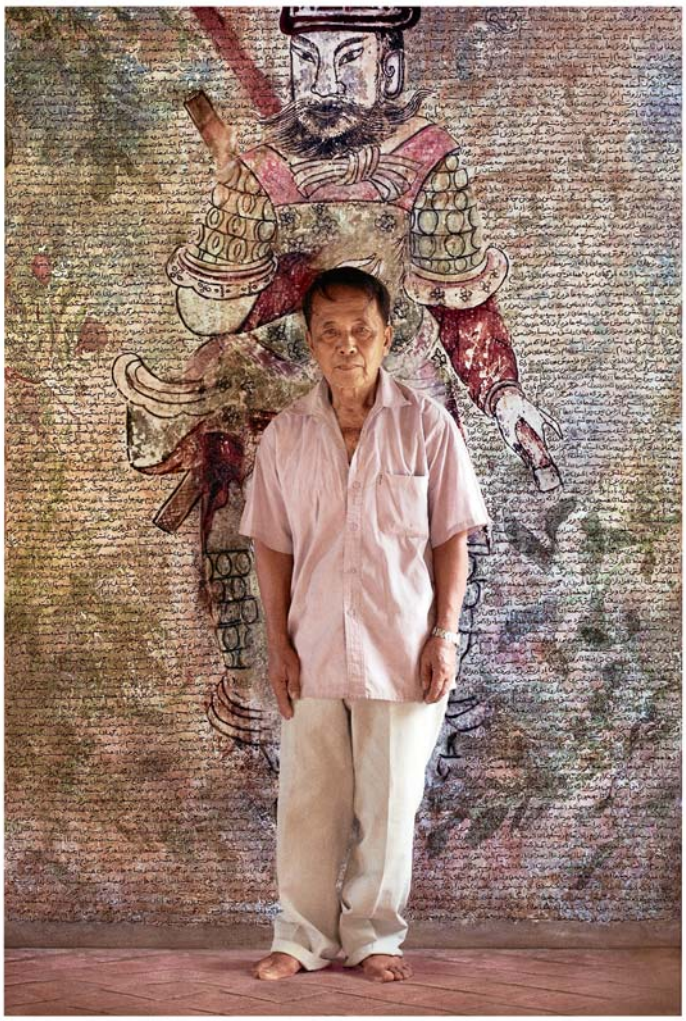
In the West, London's Victoria & Albert Museum established the Jameel Prize for contemporary art in 2008, inspired by Islamic traditions of design and craft. Both the Oxford Museum of Modern Art and Tate Modern have deployed curators to the region, "fishing for talent," says Issa. Other significant international exhibitions have included "Signs, Traces, Calligraphy" in London in 1995; "DisORIENTation" in Berlin in 2003; "Images of the Middle East" in Copenhagen in 2006; "Arabise Me" in London in 2006; "In Focus" in London in 2007; "Di/Visions" in Berlin in 2007; "Routes I" in 2008 and "Routes II" in 2009 in London; "Unveiled: New Art from the Middle East" in London in 2009; and, most recently, "Edge of Arabia" in London in 2009.

In the region, pioneering galleries sprang up early on in Cairo: Mashrabiya opened in 1982, followed by the Karim Francis Gallery and the influential Townhouse. In 2000 the Nitaq Festival introduced a new generation of artists and media, including photography and video, followed in 2004 by the Contemporary Image Collective of Cairo and the Alexandria Contemporary Art Forum. Last year, Articulate Baboon Gallery was founded as "a harbourage for counter-culture in Egypt and the Middle East."

It is Dubai, however, that has become the new hotbed. Down below the high-rises and construction cranes are some of the region's most cutting-edge contemporary art galleries: Majlis, B21, Cuadro, XVA, MEEM, The Courtyard, The Flying House and The Third Line (which recently opened a satellite in Doha). Within Jordan's National Gallery of Fine Arts is the first contemporary art gallery in the Middle East, kick-started in 1980 by Princess Wijdan's collection of her own and other artists' work. And in 1989 the first exhibition "Contemporary Art From The Islamic World" took place in London's Barbican, organized by Jordan's National Gallery.

In Kuwait, the Dar Al Funoon Gallery was founded in 1994, after the Gulf War. Then, says its owner, Lucy Topalian, "it took us 10 very difficult years to even awaken an interest and awareness for art in the Middle East." The last few years, she adds, "have

Rula Halawani, "Intimacy," 2004. This series of black-and-white photographs depicts interactions among Palestinians and Israelis at an Israeli checkpoint in the West Bank. Courtesy of the artist and Selma Feriani Gallery.



gone well, thanks to the interest of the international auction houses, also the media, especially *Canvas* magazine, the art fairs and certain museum shows."

Topalian mentions the Dubai-based, bimonthly *Canvas* magazine, founded in 2004, which—along with the quarterlies *Bidoun* (2005) and *Contemporary Practices*—have spread the word of Middle Eastern contemporary art.

Sotheby's was the first auction house on the scene with an auction in London in 2001; Christie's opened a Dubai office in 2005 and held its first auction there in 2008. Sotheby's promptly followed and added a branch in Qatar; then came Bonhams and Phillips de Pury. Continuing auctions both locally and in London have exceeded sales expectations, and in 2008 Iranian sculptor Parviz Tanavoli set a record for Middle Eastern art prices when "The Wall (Oh, Persepolis)" sold in Dubai for $2.84 million. Michael Jeha, managing director of Christie's Middle East, says that, in 2009, "75 percent of the Dubai art sale" went to buyers "from the region, up from an average of 50 percent in previous years."

In 2008 Christie's introduced contemporary Turkish art. In 2009 it added Saudi artists, who that same year exhibited at both the "Edge of Arabia" show at the Brunei Gallery in London and, for the first time, at the Venice Biennale. They plan more shows in Berlin and Istanbul.

The region has its own biennale in the emirate of Sharjah, where the event is an almost venerable 24 years old. Before the sixth biennale in 2003, it focused on the more traditional genres of painting, sculpture and graphic arts; since then, its efforts have been concentrated on more contemporary art practices, such as installation, video, photography, performance, digital and Web art, emphasizing the "discourse between aesthetics and politics."

The newest art fairs, born as annuals, are Art Dubai (2007) and Abu Dhabi (2008), which together have contributed greatly to the authority of contemporary Middle Eastern art. John Martin, co-founder of Art Dubai and a London gallery director, explains, "In the first year, our priority was to establish the credibility of the event, particularly in terms of quality and intellectual content, with 40 galleries taking part." Since then the fair has expanded with many more galleries and events, attracting over 5000 visitors who might not otherwise have been drawn to the region. The 2011 event attracted 82 participating galleries from 34 countries.

Yet the golden age is in some ways only gold plate. As Saeb Eigner points out, in addition to a dearth of art-education opportunities in the region, there is "a lack of sufficient expertise, courses and research about modern art of the Arab world and Iran, reflecting the absence of this subject from the curricula of art history departments in many of the leading universities around the world."

"We need more art history, more museums dedicated to modern art and more galleries," says Issa. Houria Niati says that in Algeria, "in the past 20 years, art schools and galleries have opened, but media coverage of exhibitions is spasmodic, reflecting our political instability." There is now, she adds, "a new generation of artists," and Algeria, like the rest of the region, "is 'kicking' in terms of art!"

Farhad Moshiri and Shirin Aliabadi, "Families Ask Why," from the "Operation Supermarket" series, 2006. Courtesy of the artist and The Third Line.

Writer, photographer and editor **Juliet Highet** is a specialist in the heritage and contemporary arts of Africa, the Middle East and India. She is the author of *Frankincense: Oman's Gift to the World* (Prestel, 2006) and is working on a book series called "The Art of Travel." She lives in England.

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DOHA'S NEW MODERN

Written by Richard Covington
Photographs courtesy of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art

In the mid-1980's, when Shaykh Hassan Ali Al-Thani began studying art history at Qatar University, he was struck by the fact that no Arabs figured in the story of modern art. He decided to look deeper.

With the help of his professor, the painter Yousef Ahmad, the shaykh, a member of Qatar's royal family, embarked on what became an enduring exploration into the lives and labors of contemporary Arab artists. In short order, he was deeply bitten by the urge to collect their artworks.

"I realized that modern Arab art was in a terrible state," he explains. "There were very few galleries in the region, and neither the gallery owners nor the artists themselves had a true appreciation of the value of the work."

Speaking in his 10th-floor office overlooking Doha harbor and the sand-colored, cubist blocks of the I. M. Pei–designed Museum of Islamic Art, the 50-year-old Hassan, now the vice chairman of his country's museum authority, recalls that his passion for acquiring Arab modern art first met with bafflement. "People thought it was very strange that I would put so much time, energy and money into collecting pictures," he says. "I realized that if I started to put some of these pieces on display, they would begin to understand how this art is a connection to our past and a vision for our future." The idea for a museum devoted to modern and contemporary Arab artists was born.

Shaykh Hassan Ali Al-Thani and Yousef Ahmad, photographed at Mathaf's opening in December.

By becoming a hands-on patron of the arts, Hassan, a former painter and still a photographer and videographer, is helping transform Qatar into a cultural hub in the Gulf region. His collection of some 6300 artworks, acquired since 1986, is the most extensive modern Arab art collection in the world.

Opening last December, the collection's new home, called Mathaf (Arabic for "museum"), is both a modest and a serious affair. Housed in a two-story converted school near Education City, the sprawling enclave of mostly American university campuses a half-hour's drive from Doha's skyscrapers, the fledgling

LOWER: ORLANDO THOMPSON; OPPOSITE, TOP: RICHARD BRYANT

Left: **Dia Azzawi, "Red Sky with Birds," 1981.** Above: **Taheya Halim installation, 1960's.** Lower: **Gazbia Sirry, (title unknown), 1955.**

institution eschews the glamorous aura surrounding such other museum projects in the Gulf as the satellites of the Louvre and the Guggenheim rising on Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Island. The low-key design by French architect Jean-François Bodin is, Hassan explains, a temporary home, as plans for something more permanent—and presumably larger—are still under discussion. In addition to Mathaf's galleries, the building includes a café, a small bookshop, a library and a classroom, all intended to help fulfill the museum's ambition to become a center for research and education.

Throughout the 20th century, Arab artists often pursued blends of European techniques and Middle Eastern subjects.

The name of Mathaf's inaugural exhibition, "*Sajjil*: A Century of Modern Art," was inspired by a poem by the Palestinian author Mahmoud Darwish: *Sajjil* is Arabic for "the act of recording." In the show, some 236 works, arranged in a dozen airy, white-walled galleries, offer up a survey of Hassan's collection, starting from its oldest work, a small oil canvas from 1847 by Ali Zara, depicting a covered alley in Cairo.

Critical reaction to "Sajjil" has ranged from praise of innovators like Gazbia Sirry, Ramsis Younan, Ibrahim el-Salahi, Hamid Nada and Mahmoud Said to questions about whether it all goes far enough. "Nothing was censored," says Mathaf's acting director and chief curator Wassan al-Khudairi, referring mostly to works of political commentary, as well as a smattering of nudes.

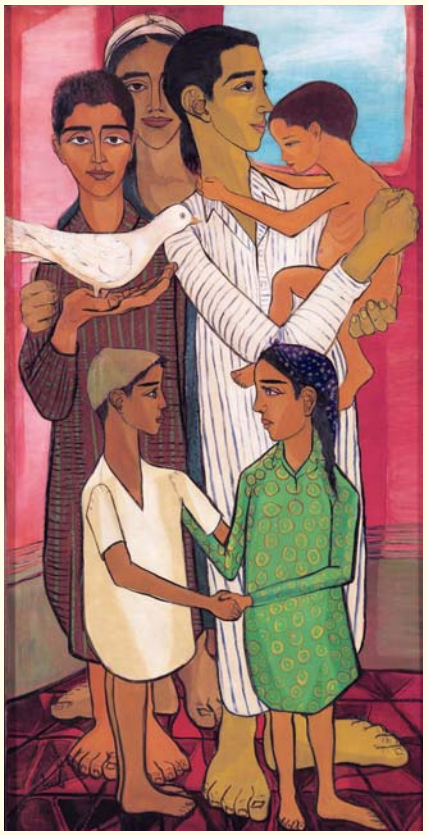
Alongside "Sajjil," two complementary exhibitions opened in a cavernous annex of the city's Museum of Islamic Art. "Interventions" presents early productions by five artists represented in the shaykh's collection together with the same artists' fresh creations produced for Mathaf's opening. More daring is "Told/Untold/Retold," which shows new commissions of visual narratives by 23 young Arab artists living across the region and in Europe and the United States.

In a region with little tradition of appreciating, collecting and exhibiting modern art, nearly everything about Mathaf is groundbreaking. Although there is a growing roster of regional art fairs, auctions and commercial galleries, what has been missing, al-Khudairi observes, are institutions. "If you see pictures in isolation at an auction or in a catalogue, they don't mean anything," she continues. "What we want to do is to establish a context, a history, so you can make connections among works."

Compiling biographical information on the 118 artists represented in "Sajjil," and then editing it into a 374-page Arabic and English-language catalogue, proved to be a task in itself. Al-Khudairi and other researchers relied on gallery owners, collectors, the artists themselves, their families and descendants to assemble the often elusive personal histories. "Now, from the bios, you can see who studied where and with whom, and you can start to make key connections," the director explains as we sit over coffee in the museum's sun-drenched café.

"One thing we are trying to demonstrate is how Arab artists were part of mainstream art," she says. "Many studied in Paris, Rome and elsewhere and became engaged participants in the modern-art movement. They came home and started schools or just had their own studios, and their influence spread to other artists," she continues.

Unlike western modernists, Arab artists were not rebels, al-Khudairi argues. Instead of rejecting European or Arab traditions, she says, they sought a blend that brought European points of view and techniques to Middle Eastern subjects.



Like many of the modern Arab artists she exhibits, the 28-year-old art historian herself has a background that mixes East with West. Growing up in Kuwait with Iraqi-born parents, she studied art history in Egypt, the US and the UK, and she worked at Atlanta's High Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum of Art before signing on in September 2007 to direct Mathaf.

Petite and dynamic with wavy black hair,

"What we want to do is to establish a context, a history, so you can make connections among works," says Wassan al-Khudairi, Mathaf's acting director and chief curator.

al-Khudairi relishes her pioneer role. "There is certainly a buzz surrounding modern Arab art," she declares. "People want to try to understand the 'mysterious' Arab world through its art.

"The Gulf is misconceived as having no history, so when people hear about a collector who's been gathering works for 25 years, and hear that we've built a modest-sized museum designed by a great architect who is *not* a 'starchitect,' we catch them off-guard."

Mathaf is unique in its focus on Arab modern artists from the region as a whole.

Although Mathaf has only been open a matter of months, the museum has already hosted two conferences for international art scholars; another is planned for December. Art from Mathaf has been lent to shows in the US, Germany and France. Emerging poets have written and recited compositions inspired by objects in the collection, films have been shown, and student volunteers from nearby universities have devised personalized tours of their favorite items. "The idea is that if these 19-year-old and 20-year-old college students speak to teenagers, they're more likely to listen," al-Khudairi explains.

To Yousef Ahmad, 55-year-old professor and painter, Mathaf is unique in its focus on Arab modern artists from the region as a whole. Other museums of modern art in the Arab world, he notes, tend to focus primarily on national artists.

Ahmad started his own career at the art academy in Cairo, a venerable institution that opened in 1908. Following in the footsteps of many aspiring Middle Eastern painters, he went west to continue his education, but not to Paris, Rome or London: He landed at the California Institute of Art in Oakland, where he earned a master of fine arts degree in 1982.

Back in Doha, he began teaching art history and drawing at Qatar University. Hassan was one of his star pupils and soon became a close friend and patron: Among the first canvases Hassan acquired was Ahmad's own 1976 abstract work "Construction," which now hangs in the museum.

Under his former professor's tutelage, Hassan learned all he could about Arab artists, consulting reviews, conversing with other collectors and visiting the artists themselves. It was often frustrating, he recalls. Few books had been written about the artists or the region's artistic movements. Newspaper and magazines, he says–including *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World*–were about the only published sources available.

"I went to Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco," Hassan recalls. "Sometimes I would stay with the artists and sometimes they came to Doha," he adds.

One place Hassan was unable to visit was Iraq, but in 1990 Ahmad was able to arrange for some 400 works by Iraqi artists to be transported from Baghdad to Doha in 40 trucks. Among the works was an antic street scene by Jewad Selim entitled "Baghdadiat" that is in the current show. In 1994, after nearly eight years of collecting, Hassan opened a private museum in a pair of villas that he had converted into gallery spaces and artists' studios. Ahmad became the director.

Around 1995, as Baghdad under sanctions became a difficult place for artists, Hassan invited Dia Azzawi, Ismail Fattah, Mahmoud al-Obaidi and other Iraqi painters to take up residence in the studios of the villa museum.

Jeffar Khaldi, from "Fade Away," 2010.

"I gave them space, canvases, paint and other materials and turned them loose," recollects Hassan. Sketching with the artists and photographing them, he became more of a colleague than a patron. The loosely organized collective provided a productive refuge for a decade, until around 2005, when Hassan decided to close it. The artists moved to the US, Canada and Europe. Of the 500 or so works that were produced during these informal villa residencies, a dozen are currently on display at Mathaf.

Meanwhile, Hassan and Ahmad continued methodically scouring the region for finds. To some artists, the shaykh's support meant the difference between obscurity and recognition. Mounir Canaan, for example, was a successful magazine illustrator in 1940's Cairo. He sank into poverty in the 1950's and 1960's when he began producing abstract collages made with scraps of wood, cardboard, jute and glued sand. "His efforts were not only misunderstood, they were reviled," the shaykh explains. Hassan began buying Canaan's art, and he recommended it to the Arab World Institute in Paris, which also made several purchases.

Above: **Jassim al-Zainy, "Features from Qatar," 1973.** Left: **Khalil Rabah, from "BIPRODUCT," 2010.**

"Canaan wrote to me that, for the first time in his life, he could afford to buy a studio," Hassan reflects. On the artist's death at age 80, in December 1999, the shaykh acquired the entire contents of that studio. Canaan is now regarded among the most important artists in the Arab world.

Frequently, too, artists and their families balked at parting with treasured pieces. But when they learned that Hassan planned on showing them in a public museum, they often agreed after all.

A pyramid 233 centimeters tall (7' 6"), made of wood and crawling with images of creepily realistic ants, is a striking case in point. Constructed in the 1960's by Cairo artist Taheya Halim, the installation sculpture generated confusion when it was first unveiled. "Back then, people didn't know what to make of it," jokes Hassan. "They thought it was some sort of decorative backdrop for a store window. But when I saw a photograph of it in the mid-1990's, I said to myself, 'I must have it for the museum!'"

Halim, who was then 85 years old and one of the established doyennes of Arab art, refused Hassan's initial purchase offer, saying she had promised the piece to the Cairo museum. But when he assured her it would have pride of place in the larger institution he was planning, she changed her mind. The piece, which some critics have interpreted as a veiled attack on the controversial construction of the Aswan High Dam (with the ants representing exploited laborers), is now showcased in the Mathaf's galleries of abstract and conceptual art.

Ultimately, Hassan's ambitions outgrew his resources. In 2004, he persuaded Shaykha Mozah Al Missned, the second wife of the Qatari emir Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, to place his collection under the auspices of the Qatar Foundation.

Now, in addition to lending art for exhibitions abroad, Mathaf is conserving and restoring modern artworks and building up a research center as a scholarly source of information on artists, art schools, galleries and commercial sales in the region, starting with Hassan's own library of some 7000 books on art—including a growing number of publications and catalogues focusing on the Middle East. He hopes to produce an encyclopedia of Arab art that will be available over the Internet.

"We're becoming an international player, not just an institution for Qatar," he says.

Paris-based author **Richard Covington** (richardpeacecovington@gmail.com) writes about the arts, culture, history, archeology and science. His article "Roads of Arabia," about Saudi Arabian archeology, was the cover story of the March/April 2011 issue. Previously, he has reported for *Saudi Aramco World* from Istanbul, Dhaka, Karachi, Venice, Tashkent and Almaty.

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www.mathaf.org

OPPOSITE, TOP: JORELL LEGASPI

On the Surest Path

Written by Gerald Zarr

In his 2003 memoir *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, writer and Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk recreates his extended family's apartment building in the enclave where once lived the viziers and pashas of the Ottoman Empire. But by the 1950's, when Pamuk was growing up, their mansions of state had become "dilapidated brick shells with gaping windows and broken staircases darkened by bracken and untended fig trees," soon to be razed to make way for apartment buildings like his own. One of the mansions Pamuk could see from his back window was that of the 19th-century Tunisian pasha Khayr al-Din, whom the sultan had brought to Istanbul in 1878 to help save the empire.

Known to history as the Tunisian Khayr al-Din (or, in Turkish, Tunuslu Hayrettin Pasha), he was born in the western Caucasus around 1822. Then as now, this Circassian region was embroiled in conflict between the local populations and Russia. His father, a local chief, is believed to have died in battle against the Russians. "I definitely know that I am Circassian," Khayr al-Din recalled, but "I do not remember anything about my native place or my parents. Either because of war or forced migration, I must have been separated from my family very early and forever lost track of them. My repeated attempts to find them came to naught," he wrote in a memoir.

He was brought to Istanbul as a child—too young to later recall by whom, or even exactly when—and, as a *mamluk*, was indentured to the Ottoman military governor of Anatolia. *Mamluk* literally means "slave" in Arabic, but "ward" would be a better description of his situation: He was raised and educated with the governor's son in a mansion on the Asian shore of the Bosporus. But after that boy's untimely death, Khayr al-Din found himself, at age 17, on a boat bound for Tunisia, then an autonomous

This view of downtown Tunis, capital of Tunisia, was made in 1899, some 20 years after Khayr al-Din ended his seven-year service as prime minister and 32 years after he wrote his historic book on the principles of good government. Opposite: **Few portraits of Khayr al-Din exist. This painting by Mahmoud ben Mahmoud was later used by engravers to produce the image on the Tunisian 20-dinar currency note.** **(See page 23.)**

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; OPPOSITE: NATIONAL MILITARY MUSEUM OF TUNISIA / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Ottoman province. One of the rituals that bound the bey, or governor, of Tunis to the Ottoman sultan was the provision of mamluks for the bey's military and civil service.

At the bey's palace, Khayr al-Din received further education appropriate for a future member of the ruling class. He learned the Qur'an by heart, perfected the Arabic he had first learned in Istanbul, and studied French and Italian. Around 1840, he entered the army, where he studied warfare under French officers in the bey's service. With his strong intellect, athletic build and military bearing, he advanced rapidly. By 1853, near his 30th birthday, he was a brigadier general.

That same year, the bey sent him to Paris to represent Tunisia in a case against a corrupt Tunisian tax official who had absconded to France, obtained French nationality and sued to extort more money from the Tunisian state. Khayr al-Din denounced the defendant and countersued. The case attracted so much publicity that Emperor Louis Napoleon appointed an arbitration panel at the French foreign ministry, and as a result of Khayr al-Din's efforts, the panel's ruling was favorable to Tunisia.

That was the beginning of four eye-opening years in Paris, during which the young general perfected his French and carefully observed the French Republic's customs, society and government. He was impressed particularly by the clarity of the rules governing citizens' rights vis-à-vis each other and vis-à-vis the state.

In 1860, he chaired the commission that produced the Arab world's first constitution separating executive, legislative and judicial powers, along the lines of reforms in Europe and Istanbul.

These three views of Tunis, all made in 1899, were published as "photochrom" prints by the Detroit Publishing Company, at the time the largest US publisher of popular, collectable postcards of subjects around the world. Below: **"Sugar Square";** opposite, from top: **"The French Gate" and "Outside a Moorish Café."**

In 1857, Khayr al-Din returned to Tunis, where he was appointed Minister of the Navy, a post he administered capably for five years. When the office of bey changed hands in 1859, Khayr al-Din was selected for the customary and prestigious diplomatic mission to Istanbul, where he presented the sultan and the pashas of the court with a cargo of gifts, and petitioned the sultan for the customary document for the bey's investiture. In 1860, he chaired the commission that produced Tunisia's—and the Arab world's—first constitution that separated executive, legislative and judicial powers, along the lines of reforms in Europe and Istanbul. Later the bey tapped him to head the 60-member Grand Council the constitution created.

At the time, the most powerful and corrupt political figure in Tunisia was the bey's prime minister—and Khayr al-Din's superior—a mamluk of Greek origin born Georgios Kalkias Stravelakis and named Mustafa Khaznadar. He contracted for huge loans in Europe at extortionate rates of interest—paid in part to himself—and treated the state treasury as his private slush fund, even paying for the education of his two nephews in Paris out of state coffers.

Khayr al-Din found Khaznadar's behavior repellant, but that didn't stop him from marrying Khaznadar's daughter Djenina in 1862. A few months later, however, he lost patience not only with Khaznadar, but with other officials, including the bey himself:

> I realized that, under the guise of allowing reform measures to emanate from the Council, the Bey and Prime Minister were trying to legalize their own infractions. I tried ... to solicit their sincere interest in the country's welfare. However, my efforts yielded no results. I did not wish, by participating in the affairs of state, to share in the deceit being practiced upon my country.

For the next seven years, Khayr al-Din refused all government posts. He and Djenina lived quietly near Tunis, raising a family. Besides gardening, reading was his passion. He ordered such French publications as *Le Petit Marseillais* and *Le Semaphore*, and for commentary on Tunisia he read *Le Journal des Débats*. He also read *Al Akbar* from Algiers and *Al Djawa'ib* from Syria.

Nonetheless, he made a point of keeping on good terms with the bey and his father-in-law. He paid courtesy calls on the bey twice a month, and he headed

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (3)

Khayr al-Din was no slavish admirer of the West, but Europe's power, prosperity and progress, he felt, stemmed from stable political institutions and, in particular, the rule of law.

cultural and diplomatic delegations to nine European countries. These trips "allowed me to study the foundations and conditions of European civilization and of the institutions of the great powers of Europe. And, profiting from the leisure which my retirement offered me, I wrote my political and administrative work," he wrote.

This acclaimed work, *The Surest Path to Knowledge Concerning the Condition of Countries*, he finished in 1867. In it, he analyzed Europe from the Middle Ages to his own day. He concluded that Europe's development had nothing to do with climate, soil fertility, the supposed superiority of one race over another or the dominance of Christianity. (If that were so, he argued, the Papal States would be the most advanced, which certainly wasn't the case.) Europe's power, prosperity and progress, he felt, stemmed from stable political institutions and, in particular, was based on the rule of law.

Khayr al-Din was no slavish admirer of the West, but he believed that Muslim societies would have to adapt to an emerging world or be overwhelmed by European expansion and encroachment. So he mined western thought for ideas consistent with Islam and the cultures of the Arab world. He saw in European consultative government something comparable to the Islamic *shura*, or "consultation," and he believed that good governance was a form of *maslaha*—the choosing of an interpretation that produces the greatest good for the greatest number.

He also gave a straightforward argument in favor of Muslim states adopting European advances in mathematics and science. "There is no reason to reject or ignore something simply because it comes from others, especially if it had been ours before and taken from us," he wrote in *The Surest Path*, referring to the knowledge from Greece and elsewhere that Muslim scholars had translated and advanced during Europe's Dark Ages.

> Rather, there is an obligation to restore it and put it to use.... The truth must be determined by a probing examination of the thing concerned. If it is true, it should be accepted and adopted whether its originator be from among the faithful or not.

And, he added, "It is not according to the person that truth is known. Rather, it is by truth that the person is known. Wisdom is the goal of the believer. One is to take it wherever one finds it."

Arabic and French versions of *The Surest Path* appeared in 1868, followed by English and Turkish translations. The book was eagerly read by the governing class in Istanbul and across the Muslim world. In Paris, the Persian ambassador had it translated into Farsi and shipped to Tehran.

In Tunisia, by 1870, Khaznadar's corrupt ways had led to financial ruin—as Khayr al-Din had predicted. European creditors forced the bey to sack Khaznadar, and Khayr al-Din was offered the post of prime minister.

When Khayr al-Din died in 1890, his funeral was observed here in the Eyüp Sultan mosque complex, the oldest in Istanbul and the most honored place of final rest for leaders of the Ottoman Empire.

He accepted: Finally, he had a chance to put into action reforms he had thought long about. He commissioned a study that found that in his country of one million people, only 14,000 children were in primary school: He made education a government priority. In Tunis, he established Sadiki College, the first secular secondary school. He boosted the agrarian economy through tax holidays for new plantings of date palms and olive trees. He had a locked box placed in Tunis's central square to which only he held the key and into which he encouraged people to drop comments and complaints, signed or not. Never had a Tunisian head of government tried to govern with such transparency, honesty and accountability.

Opposite: **Famous for its blend of Ottoman and European neoclassical styles, the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul was both home and office for Sultan Abdul Hamid II.**

Khaznadar, however, was not finished. Drawing on a fortune he had stashed in Europe, he financed a campaign to vilify Khayr al-Din in the French and Italian press, going so far as to drive down the value of Tunisian bonds on the Paris bourse just to discredit him. And the unhappy truth was that Khayr al-Din had no natural constituency to fight back on his behalf: He had contracted for no foreign loans, created no clique of yes-men, and offered no morsels of patronage to flatterers, relatives or cronies.

"The Bey appeared to be satisfied with my administration," he wrote, "but in secret longed for the old times.... Also, supporters of my predecessor Mustafa Khaznadar, who stood to gain from his return to power, left no stone unturned to revive his fortunes."

Khayr al-Din was forced from office on July 21, 1877. Khaznadar was back in power the next day, though he was himself quickly replaced. This reversal of Khayr al-Din's reforms sparked a new political crisis for Tunisia, one that ended three years later in the complete loss of the country's sovereignty when the French army marched in and established the protectorate that endured for the next 75 years.

In Istanbul, these events had not passed unnoticed. Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II had heard about *The Surest Path* (though whether he read it is unknown), and he wanted to meet its author. A year after leaving office, Khayr al-Din found himself on a steamship bound for Istanbul, where he was received warmly by the sultan and, to his own astonishment, offered the post of grand vizier. It was an offer he could hardly refuse—a redemptive, even vindicating culmination to his career. In a letter to a friend, Khayr al-Din wrote: "I would like to show the Bey of Tunis, who thinks that anyone quitting his dominions would die of starvation, that one such person has become Grand Vizier."

A nearly worthless currency and some 400,000 war refugees were among the challenges Khayr al-Din faced in 1878, when Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II, above, **appointed him grand vizier–a post comparable to that of prime minister.**

In his new job, Khayr al-Din faced daunting problems. Turkey had just fought a punishing war with Russia in the Balkans and the Caucasus, and enemy forces still occupied parts of the country. Nearly 400,000 refugees had crowded into the capital. Tons of nearly

TOP: AYHAN ALTUN / ALAMY; INSET: THE ART ARCHIVE / ALAMY; OPPOSITE: YADID LEVY / ALAMY

worthless paper money had been issued, clogging the financial system. And Egypt's Khedive Ismail—nominally subject to the Ottoman Sultan—had repudiated foreign loans and kicked out European advisors, precipitating an international crisis.

Khayr al-Din worked long hours, even on Fridays, and at night often invited ministers to continue working in his mansion—the same one Orhan Pamuk would look out toward as a young man some seven decades later.

Within the year, most of the refugees were resettled. Khayr al-Din defused the Egyptian crisis by persuading the sultan to depose Khedive Ismail, an action that also put the bey of Tunis on notice. As for the paper-money crisis, his solution was dramatic and effective: "Although no one considered it possible," wrote Ali Ekrem Bolayır in a memoir published in 1991, "Khayr al-Din Pasha had cages of iron installed in Bayazit Square in which huge bundles of the paper money, which were worth less in value than wrapping paper, were burned in front of the eyes of the public, and he thus rid the nation of this pestilence."

But success so often invites enmity, and opposition to the incorruptible grand vizier began to build. With time, fabricated stories began reaching the ears of an increasingly paranoid sultan, who in July 1879 asked for Khayr al-Din's resignation.

Yet Khayr al-Din remained in Istanbul until his death on January 29, 1890. His funeral services were observed with royal pomp at the Eyüp Sultan mosque, on the west bank of the Golden Horn.

Today, Tunisians regard Khayr al-Din as the inspiration for their country's blend of tradition, modernity and openness to the world. Almost every city or town has a street or public square named for him—usually spelled "Kheireddine" in the French manner—and his palace in the old city of Tunis has been brilliantly restored as an art and culture venue. His academic creation, Sadiki College, is still a leading institution (and appeared on a Tunisian commemorative stamp). In 1968, to mark the centennial of his great book, his remains were moved from Istanbul and reinterred in Tunis.

As the author of *The Surest Path*, Khayr al-Din is often compared with another celebrated Tunisian statesman and scholar, Ibn Khaldun, whose *Muqaddimah (Introduction to History)* was a beacon of knowledge in the Middle Ages.

Historian L. Carl Brown of Princeton University says that Khayr al-Din "probably felt that the problems of government and administration were similar throughout the world." And that, he adds, "is why the book appears so modern

Khayr al-Din's residence in Tunis is now the city museum.

Sadiki College was founded by Khayr al-Din in 1875, while he was Tunisian prime minister. Right: **In 1975, a stamp commemorated the college's centennial.** Below: **Tunisia's 20-dinar banknote uses a design based on Mahmoud ben Mahmoud's painting of Khayr al-Din.**

today, in spite of a terminology and mode of argument which belong to an earlier age. In any case, this predisposition seems to have enabled Khayr al-Din to learn from Europe unburdened by inferiority complex or mental anguish."

To that should be added a comment by Julia Clancy-Smith of the University of Arizona, a specialist in 19th-century Mediterranean history: "Khayr al-Din's thinking and life story—which cannot be separated from each other—hold critical importance for the 21st century. His openness to 'foreign' ideas, tolerance, courage in voicing criticism of Muslim religious and political elites, including the Ottoman sultan and Tunisian bey, and his cosmopolitanism—he moved with ease between Paris and Istanbul—breaks down the pernicious myth that cultural and religious identities are necessarily a source of conflict in the world."

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Ibn Khaldun: S/O 06

The Surest Path: The Political Treatise of a Nineteenth-Century Muslim Statesman. Tunuslu Hayrettin Pasha. L. Carl Brown, tr. and commentary. 1967, Harvard UP, Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs No. 16.

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BLESSED by

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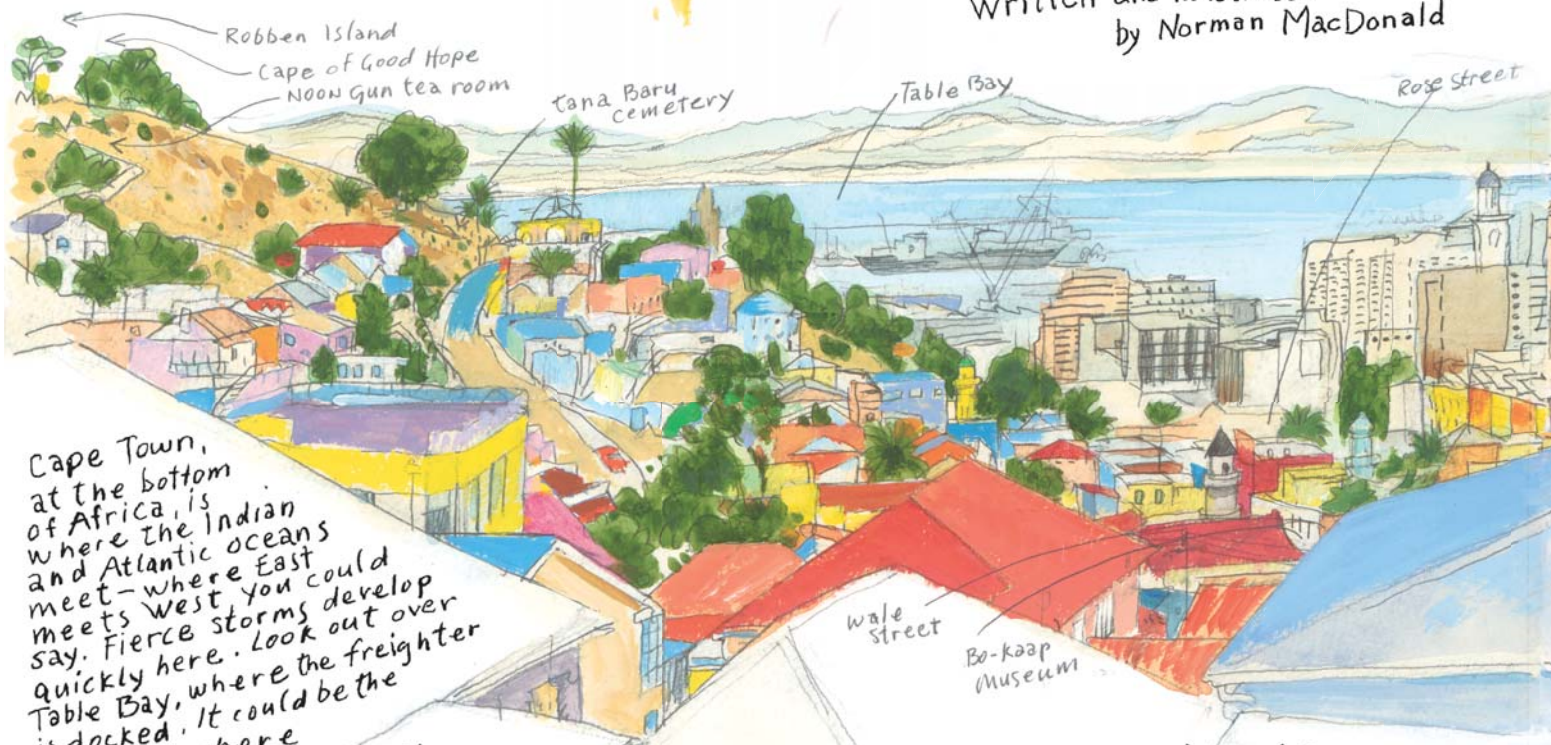


Cape Town, at the bottom of Africa, is where the Indian and Atlantic oceans meet—where East meets West you could say. Fierce storms develop quickly here. Look out over Table Bay, where the freighter is docked. It could be the very spot where the Haerlem, a Dutch ship, foundered in a storm in 1647. The European history of South Africa begins right about then.

When you gaze out over Cape Town from Signal Hill, you see the colorful houses of the Bo-kaap district in the foreground. In the distance is Table Bay. The majestic Table Mountain isn't visible in this drawing, but it's to the right. At times a cloud drapes itself over the top of the mountain that gives the impression of a tablecloth. Are there songs written about this city—like Chicago, New York, even Birmingham? None of those places have a mountain or brilliantly colored houses or a bay. From here, Cape Town seems to deserve an Opera.

One morning I was sketching a pink house close to a grey-green mosque. A man came by and looked over my shoulder. "You know," he said, "we are blessed." He mentioned the beautiful harbor, the Bo-kaap where we were standing, Table Mountain and "Doctor Wind," which at times can blow at hurricane speeds, but, he said, "it purifies our air." During my weeks there, the word "blessed" came up several times, even in the book I was reading: Summertime, by J.M. Coetzee, about his early years as a writer in Cape Town. "I felt blessed" is near the middle of it.

The hill to the left, a Muslim burial ground, looks like what the rest of the harbor would have been if you think away the buildings. The glowing tales of the bay that the rescued sailors of the Haerlem told convinced the gorernors of the Dutch East India Company that, in spite of storms, this was an ideal half-way stop on the route to Batavia (Indonesia).

So Jan van Riebeeck arrived on April 6, 1652 with three ships (two were to follow) carrying 80 men and eight women, including his wife. They were, essentially, survivors: on the 5 ships, 130 sailors had died en route from Amsterdam. It's a comment on how important the new settlement was to become.

In the 17th. and 18th. centuries, the company sent slaves, convicts, political exiles and occasional intellectuals and even princes to the Cape. They came from India, Southeast Asia and especially Indonesia. Most were Muslims, and they were sent to build the town, though some were imprisoned on Robben Island out in Table Bay.

Recuperating Dutch sailors and bored soldiers gave Cape Town the reputation in maritime circles as "the tavern of the two oceans." However, the Muslim workers arriving from the East were different. Drinking was against their beliefs. They were also law-abiding, skilled and smart. Some eventually started moving to the slopes of Signal Hill.

TWO OCEANS

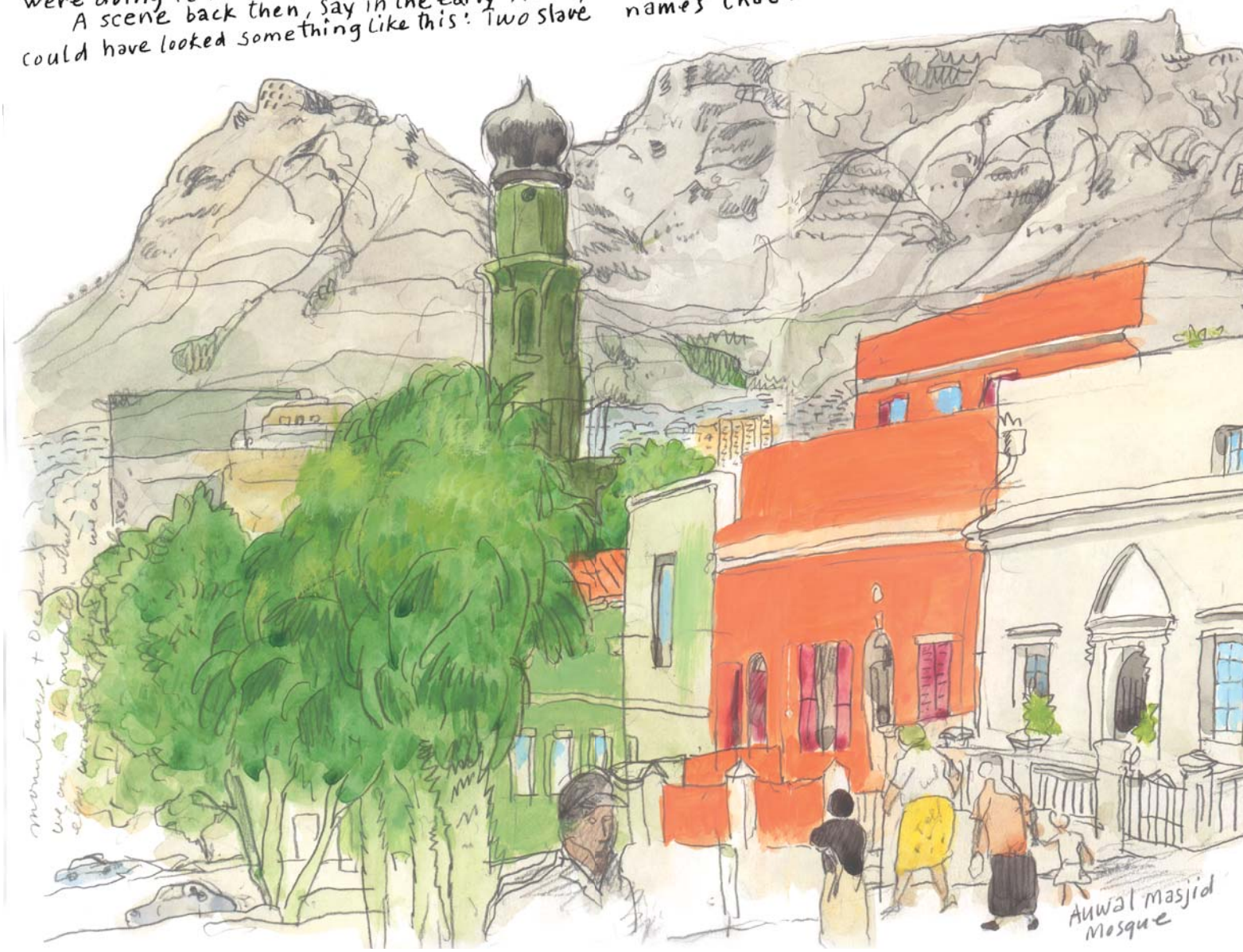
In Afrikaans it was called "Boven die kaap." Now everyone just calls it Bo-Kaap.

Over the next 350 years, this area became home, at one time or another, to almost every clan and religion, including the Dutch. But it was always most closely associated with the Muslim community, as it was built largely by the descendants of the Malay slaves in the last half of the 19th. century. Under the infamous apartheid Group Areas Act of 1950, the area was declared an exclusive residential area for Cape Muslims. Since the end of Apartheid in 1990, and especially today, the Bo-kaap is hot real estate. People from everywhere are buying these red, green and yellow houses with a view over the bay where it all began.

In the 17th. century, before Cape Town existed, sailors who spied these rocks at The Cape of Good Hope looked to the sky and whispered a prayer that good weather would see them safely past.

When Cape Town began as a resupply staging post, Protestant Holland was at war with Catholic Spain, and the Dutch Reformed Church was the only denomination allowed in Cape Town—at least visibly. But Lutheran Christians built a "barn" that was only later remodeled into the church it had always been, and Muslims prayed in their homes. Their situation was more complicated because Muslim leaders and teachers wrote in Arabic. Muslim students therefore had to study Arabic, and people today say the Muslim slaves (who were often called "Malay" because they came from the East) studied hardest of all to prove their value to their masters, even though they were doing it in secret.

A scene back then, say in the early 1700's, could have looked something like this: Two slave boys of Malay origin are on their way to the madrasa, or school, but they can't let on that's where they are going. The boys are barefoot, for slaves were not allowed to wear shoes. Their clothes are one notch up from rags. They hold a piece of paper because slaves always had to have in their possession a written reason to be on the street. A Dutch soldier steps in front of the two and asks where they are going. He examines their paper, which is in Arabic. Although he can't read it, he sends them on their way because Malay slaves are expensive, and he doesn't want to anger their owner by making them late. When the boys enter the schoolhouse, the teacher tells one to sit over there next to Africa, and the other to sit next to January Batavia: Slaves were given names that reflected where they came from



and in which month they arrived; slaves born at the Cape were often given Biblical names by their owner. The boys would study the alphabet, the Qur'an or arithmetic. But they did go to school, even as slaves. At least some did. That's how people here say it was.

"I'm not an imam. I only assist. Our imam is not well and the committee asked me to stand in. I have the time. I'm a plasterer by trade. I fell in Durban when a scaffold broke, and I was injured. The orthopedic surgeon said I had to have a hip operation, which has been done.

"I was born in District 6. We moved here in 1945. We were given green ID cards from the government that identified us as 'Cape Malay,' one of the colored groups. I never believed I was 'colored.'

Mohammad Faldil Soeker

"The Auwal Mosque we are in became a reality in 1794 thanks to Prince Abdullah Kadi Abu Salaam, later called Tuan Guru. In Arabic, 'auwal' means 'first.' Tuan Guru is a person on a high spiritual level.

"There was a woman here yesterday. She asked if I had seen a film on TV about Abraham Lincoln, and she asked if I knew the poem about the death of the American president. I said, 'Yes, I know that poem,' and promptly began—

Oh Captain! My Captain!
our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weather'd every rack,
the prize we sought is won;...

And I recited the rest for her. She couldn't believe it, at my age. I thought she was going to faint. (Laughs). I had memorized the poem in grammar school. I love history and poetry. Tuan Guru wrote the whole Qur'an from memory while imprisoned on Robben Island. What a memory that was!"

Zanie Misbach, Malay cook who had a cooking program on TV last year.

"I grew up in the 60's at the top [of Bo-kaap] near the Noon Gun. Whenever I walk up and down, I always stop and look out over the Bo-kaap. I went this way to school and to town. This is my memory of the Bo-kaap. From there you can see three minarets, the harbor and the mountain. The name of this street is called 'Stadszicht,' which means 'city view' in Dutch.

"I opened my first restaurant in the Bo-kaap. This community knows me as 'food.' It was a tent in the garden with green chiffon draped to the floor. People sat on the floor on cushions. It was a job serving the food, always bending over. I liked the idea of owning a restaurant. I sold it about 1994 and we started the Noon Gun Restaurant. It's my mom and dad's. My sister was up in arms when I made my version of bobotie. 'Mama never made it like this,' she said. I taught her and her daughter to make other recipes. It's like that in families.

"The houses were all white before the bright colors. Thirty years ago I was the first to paint my house pink. In the guides it says it was a protest against Apartheid. For me it was a protest against white walls!

"No, not really. My real protest was something else. Non-whites weren't allowed to own a business during the apartheid, and I always had a business. I made wedding and ball dresses. We had become part western. You can see it, at weddings, in our dress. We're half-way. I had a white manageress who was a friend stand in front. I had to stand in the back of the shop.

The police would come and ask if the shop was mine. 'No,' I'd say.

"Don't lie. Don't lie,' they shouted.

"I had to be very careful because our family house was used as a safe house for political exiles. In the morning I would see a lot of people sleeping on couches, or on the floor. Cooking was safer.

Fozia: "My sister Shereen wrote a book about the Bo-kaap. Zanie, my other sister, hosted cooking programs on TV.

"When we were in school, our parents would put us in the family car and we would travel somewhere for a short vacation. When we travelled east and into the mountains, at some point my dad would pull over to the side of the road and look ahead. 'See those three peaks?' he would ask.

'They are called the three sisters.' We stared at them, thinking maybe they were named for us. Then we drove on. The restaurant is seasonal and now starting to get busy. I wish we had time to see each other more, like the old days."

Ali, "We have a big family. My cousins and I do everything together. We look after each other."

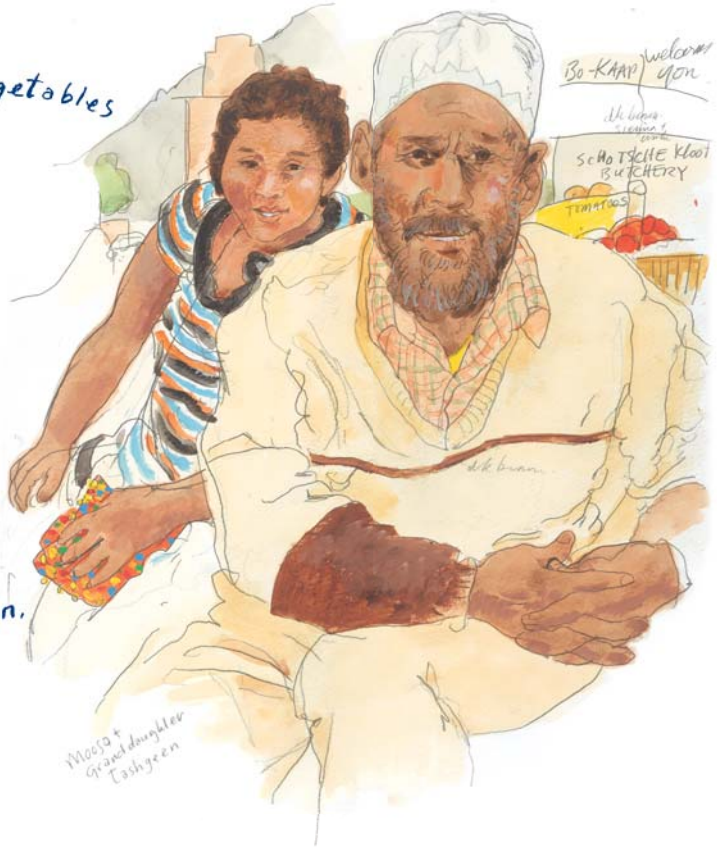
A workman passes by with a toolbox. "My uncle," he says.

I came to the Noon Gun Restaurant for their famous bobotie. It arrived with a loud bang. The Noon Gun – there really is one – above the restaurant on Signal Hill, fired off a round at noon every day since 1806.

My bobotie looked similar to Shepherd's pie with a yellow topping. Like a lot of oven dishes its not its visual beauty but rather its smell and taste that make this dish so popular.

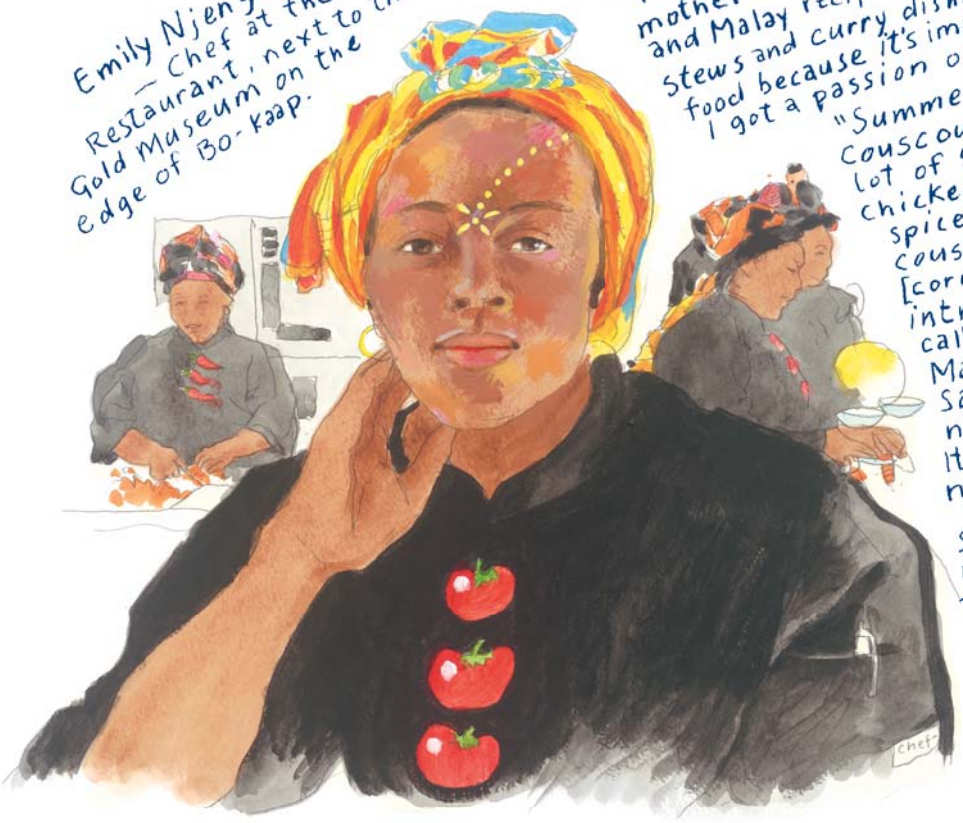
Born in District 6, Moosa sells vegetables on Pentz road in the Bo-kaap. His grandchildren come by after school. He lets them collect money and give change to customers. He smiles watching them.

"I come here every morning at six. Everyone in Bo-kaap know me. Selling vegetables is the only living I can make. I can't write. I was very sick as a child and did not go to school. I could not walk. Doctors in Somerset hospital put iron on my legs to get them straight. "It is a nice place here. Some sell and go far away. Where I live is nice but not like here. The higher you go up the Bo-kaap, the more money you pay. It is a better view and cooler in summer. But you can't live forever. You can have a lot of money but the money can't go with you down. "I am satisfied. God let me live. He gave me another chance."



Moosa's granddaughter Tashqeen

Emily Njengere — Chef at the Gold Restaurant, next to the Gold Museum on the edge of Bo-kaap.



"I was born in Cape Town. I watch my mother cook. I cook Indian, African and Malay recipes mostly. I like to cook stews and curry dishes. I always taste my food because it's important in a chef. I got a passion on cooking.

"Summer we have light meals. Couscous is nice and cool. Not a lot of spices. We serve it with chicken, Tagine chicken, cumin spice. Roast it a bit. Serve with couscous. I make nice mealie [corn porridge] soup. Portuguese introduced corn to Africa. We call it mealie. I also make Cape Malay puri crisps and chicken satay from East Indies. I cook a nice 'bobotie'. It's for winter time. It is a 'Cape Malay' dish and the national dish of South Africa. "It's also a historical dish. When the slaves from the east came to the Cape in the 17th century, the ingredients for the recipe were already growing in the gardens. All they needed were the spices like masala, turmeric, cumin, coriander, etcetera. It was one more blend of east and west. "When you come here," Emily advises, "you must come with an empty stomach."

During slavery, January 2 was the only day in the year slaves had a holiday. They danced in the streets. It is still celebrated on this date as the Carnival. After the end of slavery, about the 1850's, it was continued by the colonial working-class society. Today anybody can join a Kloops (club) that competes each year. The first three winners in each category get a trophy to keep in their Klopskamer (clubhouse). Categories include "best dressed," "best march," and so on.

Aykes Swartz, plays guitar in the Cape Town Goema Orchestra.

"The Carnival came from the slave trade, the dregs of the community, the rough ones. It was tagged with so many negative aspects. The middle class 'coloreds' went to the mosque and church and were taught the right things and kept their kids away from the Carnival.

"It's different now. The majority of parents and kids of the technological age have their own opinions. They are much more advanced. Carnival is respectable now.

"It is so in our blood. No matter which class you are from, once the fever hits you, you can't help but be part of the whole thing. Mac's father, Mr. Mac, was a leading figure in the Carnival. He played the sax and the banjo.

"Mac wrote music for all the instruments in the 'Goema Symphony Number 1,' violin, flute, cello and sax. The first time I heard it I thought he was pushing the bar so high he's leaving some of us in the dark. He's not just talented, he's gifted.

"The Zulus and Khoi have tribal dancing, and we have the goema. That is our musical culture. That is who we are. I'm blessed."

I wanted to find out about all kinds of jazz in Cape Town, goema music. There is and goema is related.

Everyone said Mac Mckenzie was the best goema musician. Staff in a music store told me where to find him.

His 82-year-old mother answered the door, wiping her hands on a dishcloth; "He is in his studio in the backyard," she whispered.

I waited until he finished up with Wesley Valentine, a bass-guitar student.

Then he put the kettle on for a cup of tea. "What we are doing here is a Cape Town composers' workshop. We have six concerts of the Cape Town Goema Orchestra coming up.

"We are always challenged by not having a music education. It's expensive. Going to University of Cape Town costs 31,000 rand. Where is one going to get 31,000 rand? We don't charge money.

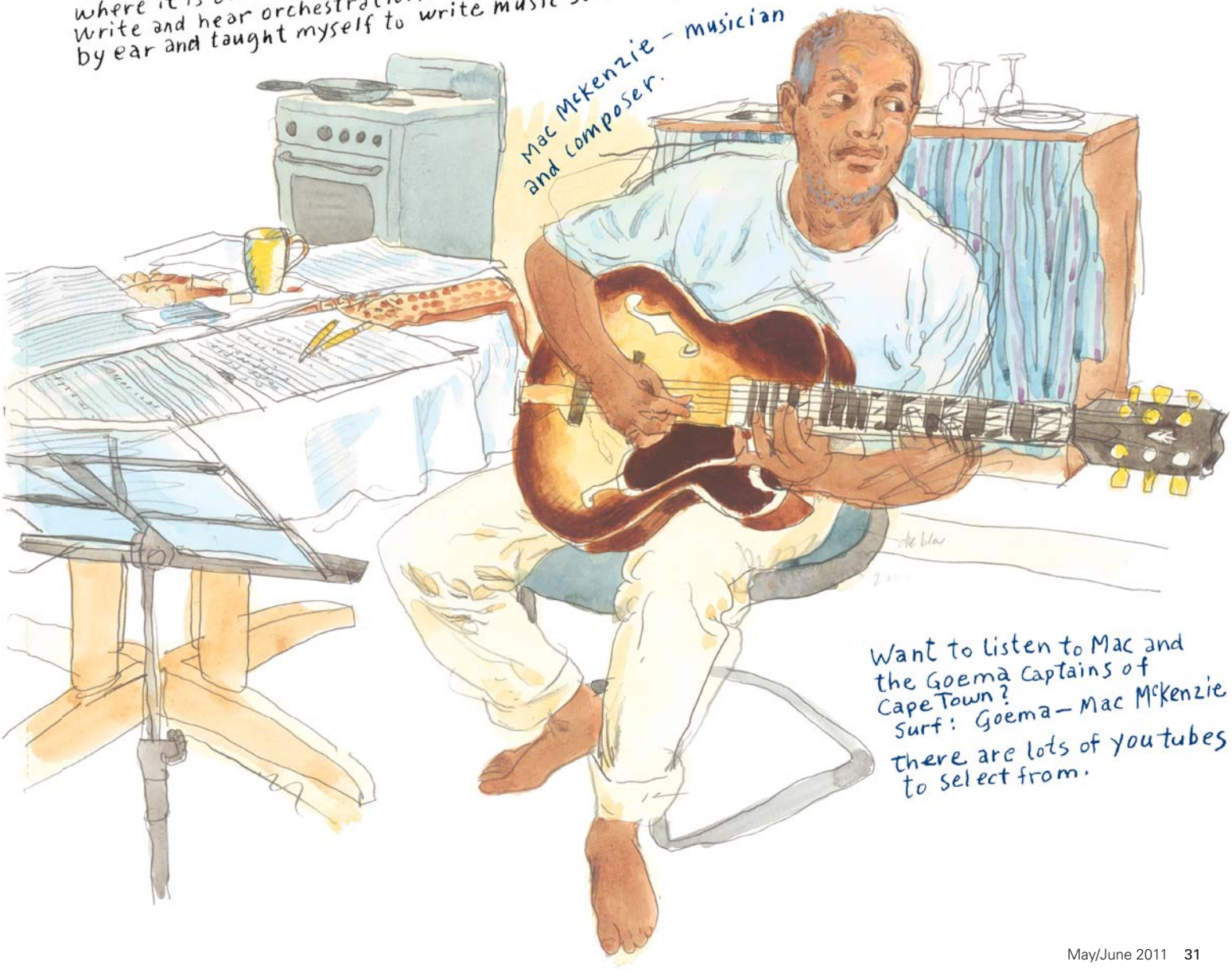
"People here are from disadvantaged backgrounds, and we are trying to put music in the schools, open their minds – from asking a student to play a 'C' and they don't know where it is on the guitar, to where they can write and hear orchestration. I learned to play by ear and taught myself to write music so I could get royalties for my work and put bread on the table, which is what we all want to do in life.

"It is a slow journey. We don't use computers. It is a pencil, an eraser and music paper. We are Creole, mixed people, Colored. Our ancestry has disappeared. We come from the first people of the world, if you know your business. Our brains have been stripped bare of knowledge of where we come from. They ~~d~~ danced to the goema drum. The Carnival is goema. We call our music goema."

Mac plucks the beat on his guitar.

"I march out each year with the Carnival group. The sound has the mixture of all the world. You can hear Indian, Khoi, San, Malaysian, Indonesian, Jewish, European. Cape Town was the one port that everyone had to come to.

"I compose it with quieter tones, a sophisticated version of what one hears in the street. I can now play goema with classical musicians."



Mac Mckenzie – musician and composer.

Want to listen to Mac and the Goema Captains of Cape Town?
Surf: Goema – Mac Mckenzie
there are lots of youtubes to select from.

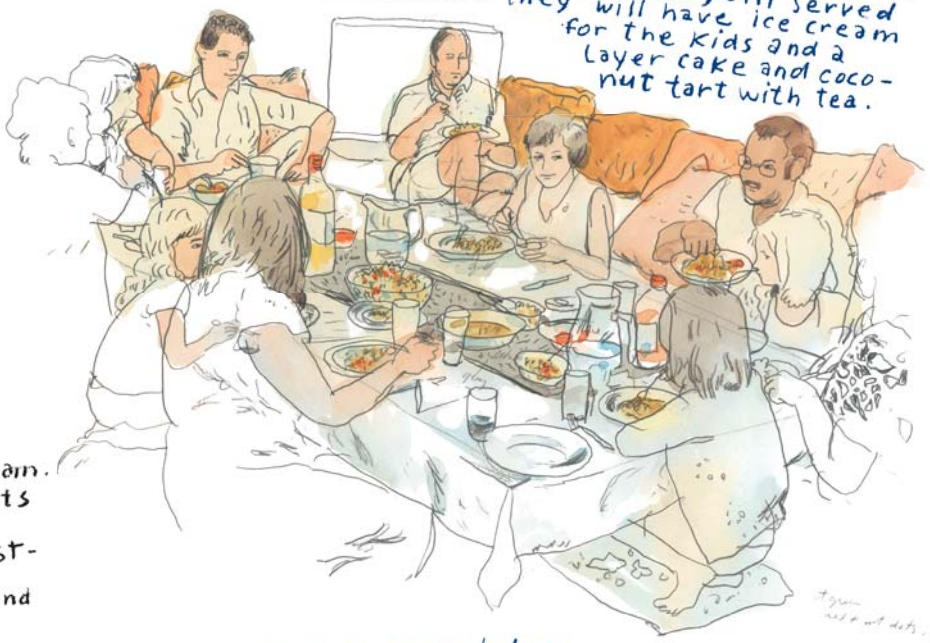
This portrait of Andries Bicker, a governor of the Dutch East India Company who sent Jan van Riebeeck to the Cape, hangs in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. From the first days of Cape Town, artists sketched its life and times. In the 19th. century it was the famous artist-explorer Thomas Baines, with his long black beard, wide brimmed hat and colorful scarves. 25 of his pictures hang in the Castle of Good Hope museum in the city. I counted them.

In the 20th. century it was Sandra McGregor's turn. For nearly 20 years she drew and painted the people of Cape Town. She now lives in a retirement home in Vredes Street.

"I remember most of the people I sketched. The streets, the buildings, the Malay girls, Indian women in bright patterned dresses. And then there was Cass. Cass was a wonderful model. He had gorgeous expensive costumes which were lovely to paint. He was a dancer and very religious. He had made the Hajj many times. Each time he returned from Makkah, he asked me to paint him in his new Arab kit.

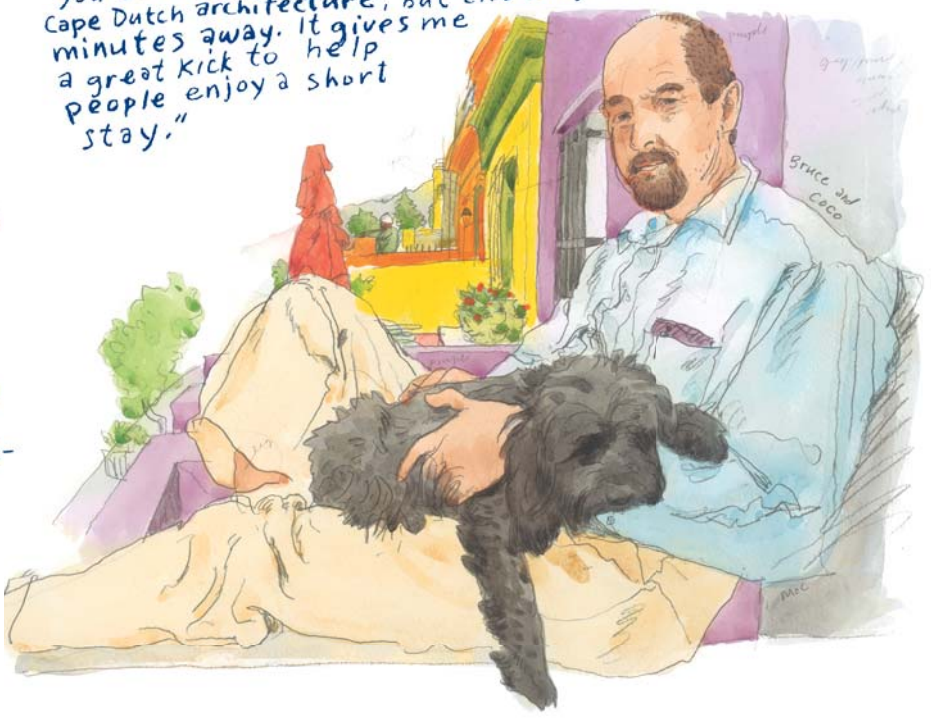
"When I paint a portrait I feel a oneness, an energy flowing between the sitter and the painter." She pointed to a portrait of Cass on a book cover and sighed. "I wish I hadn't sold that one."

A group of visitors enjoying Malay cuisine in Shereen's living-room café. She served chilli bites, koeksisters and pompadours for starters. Zanie made chicken beryani served with Sambal. For dessert they will have ice cream for the kids and a layer cake and coconut tart with tea.



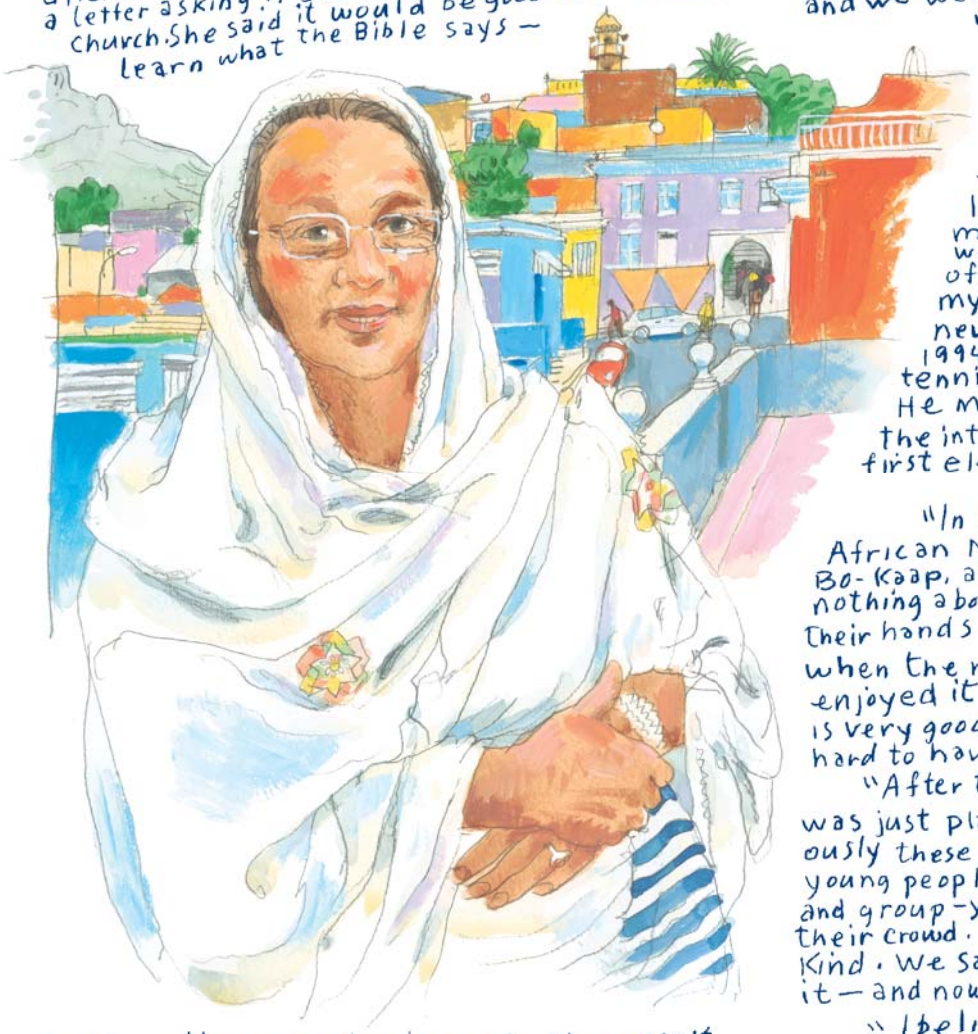
Bruce Speirs - Rose lodge.

"I came here on vacation. Thought it was a beautiful country. A great place to open a B+B. I lived in Germany for 35 years. I began as a ballet dancer in Canada then went to Germany where there was more work. I was a salesman and an English teacher. I could open a B+B. No problem there. Six months later I moved here and found out how to do it. The first year was difficult. It always is in the beginning until your place is mentioned in travel books. Bo-kaap is a residential area of colorful buildings like this one, the most interesting part of Cape Town. You can wander around the streets and admire the Cape Dutch architecture, but the city is only five minutes away. It gives me a great kick to help people enjoy a short stay."



Shereen: "I was born in the Noon Gun Restaurant at the top of the hill. It wasn't a restaurant then. It was my mother's bedroom. (Laughs)

"When we went to school, we spoke Afrikaans. It was the language of the oppressed. Our parents didn't want us to go to an Afrikaans language high school, so I went to St. Pauls, where we were taught in English and also attended church. My grandmother was given a letter asking if she didn't mind if we went to church. She said it would be good for me to learn what the Bible says—



and how they sang the hymns. She wasn't insecure about me learning another religion. We had our own system of living by a religion which she termed as 'a way of life.' My parents encouraged integration, different religions and cultures. I often take my grandchildren into a church.

"During Apartheid when we were running from the police, we would go to Desmond Tutu. He was Archbishop of St. George Anglican Church in Cape Town from 1986 until 1996. He would hide us under the piano. We thought it was the last of our lives. One incident I remember in District 6 Church, sitting beside the piano and my friends were underneath. I peeked around the corner of the piano and saw Bishop Tutu leaning against the big door. Outside the police were banging on the door, and he shouted, 'Not here! Not inside this holy place! Not here!' They went away. I always remember that moment.

"There was a lot of trauma at the time, people leaving or getting shot. Police would have excuses to shoot, calling it self-defense. All this happened with my kids around. Between 1985 and 1990 were the saddest years of my life because friends left the country, some tortured to give names. I lived in the heart of it and experienced the struggle.

"My husband was a French Huguenot, and we were separated by the Morality Act.

"He said, 'It's not my business to go to the army and be sent to the bush and shoot anything that moves.' He left.

"In 1991 Mandela came to Tana Baru cemetery in recognition of those who were buried at Robben Island and those buried here. My mother, my daughter, Zainab and I were there. I have photos of the four of us. A picture of Mr. Mandela and my daughter, she was 11, was in the newspaper. Mr. Mandela came in 1994, when we celebrated the bicentennial of the Auwal Masjid Mosque. He mandated me to put this area on the international map. We celebrated the first elections that same year.

"In 1999 I stood for the ANC (the African National Congress party) in the Bo-Kaap, and I won. It was exciting. It was nothing about money. Everyone had to put their hands in their pocket. We were here when the real issues were at hand. I enjoyed it. Since then our infrastructure is very good. Education is better, we worked hard to have computers in every classroom.

"After the real problems were solved, it was just play. Politics is not taken too seriously these days. Today I speak a lot with young people and they seem very clique-y and group-y. They won't have anyone else in their crowd. They stick together with their own kind. We saw that in apartheid and we broke it—and now it's back again.

"I believe in the power of praying. I say to people, 'Pray! Throw it out into the universe and something positive will come back.' That is why I am a tour guide. Often tourists want to know the down side. They say, 'We've been on the bus and hear that every thing is rosy and so good. Please tell us what is wrong.' There is so much wrong, but it is going to get better. We are working on it."

Norman MacDonald
www.macdonaldart.net

With my avid interest in drawing and history, Cape Town and the Bo-Kaap were perfect subjects. Lovely people in the midst of a turbulent history. I'm blessed.

norman@macdonaldart.net

For a week in January, 10 young photojournalists took part in "Portraits of Commitment," a workshop held during the sixth biennial Chobi Mela Festival of Asian Photography in Dhaka, Bangladesh. All were students or recent graduates of the Pathshala South Asian Media Academy in Dhaka. Their assignment: A portrait-and-caption profile of someone who is contributing to the common dream of a better community, country or world.

Of course, it was not as easy as it might seem. We met not only in Pathshala's classrooms, but also at exhibits and events, and there was a daily buzz of mobile phone calls, texts and e-mails. Some students returned to their subjects twice or more in pursuit of the elusive qualities that distinguish portraits from snapshots. Being visual storytellers, most of the photographers supported their portrait with narrative images in addition to words.

The results varied as much as the students and the subjects. But one message came through clearly: All our dreams have a story.

–DICK DOUGHTY, MANAGING EDITOR

Portraits *of* Commitment

Shahida Kanam

"If we come forward one by one, our country shall certainly be developed one day."

BY K. M. ASAD

Shahida Kanam, 20, lives in the small village of Purbodhola in northern Bangladesh. She counts herself lucky to have gone to school, and luckier still to have taken a computer class in ninth grade. The following year, Arban, a non-profit development organization based in the region, sponsored a more advanced class. She stayed in touch with Arban, and last year she became one of 12 "info-ladies." Each travels by bicycle from village to village, carrying wireless-enabled laptop computers that allow residents of these rural communities to talk with relatives working overseas using Internet-based voice communications, such as Skype, and webcam chats. In these villages, residents often migrate to work abroad, and the webcam, Shahida says, is a particular delight to those who remain at home and see their loved ones perhaps only once a year. It has also reduced crime: False passports, visas and promises issued by unscrupulous recruiters can now be detected more easily through Internet research and direct communication with relatives overseas. "I'll continue rendering my service to all as long as I can so that no one can be exploited for lack of education," she says.

Sayeeda Khanam

"I have tried to document time, space, society and history. It has not been so silky-smooth."

BY TASLIMA AKHTER

In the 1950's, it was rare to see a woman carrying a camera in East Pakistan (as Bangladesh was then called). But Sayeeda Khanam had been photographing since 1940, when at age 13 she received from her sister the gift of a Rolleicord twin-lens reflex camera—which she still owns. "The different colors of the skies, the beauty of the Padma River, different birds" inspired her, she says, but later she turned to journalism. In 1956 she participated in an international exhibition in Dhaka, becoming the country's first female professional photographer. In 1971, during Bangladesh's War of Liberation, she took a photo of two rows of young women dressed in white saris with rifles on their shoulders. The image became one of the most famous photographs of the war. For many years she worked for *Begum* women's magazine and various other press outlets. Now 73, she also recalls the celebrities she photographed—among them Queen Elizabeth II of Britain, the empress of Japan and Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon.

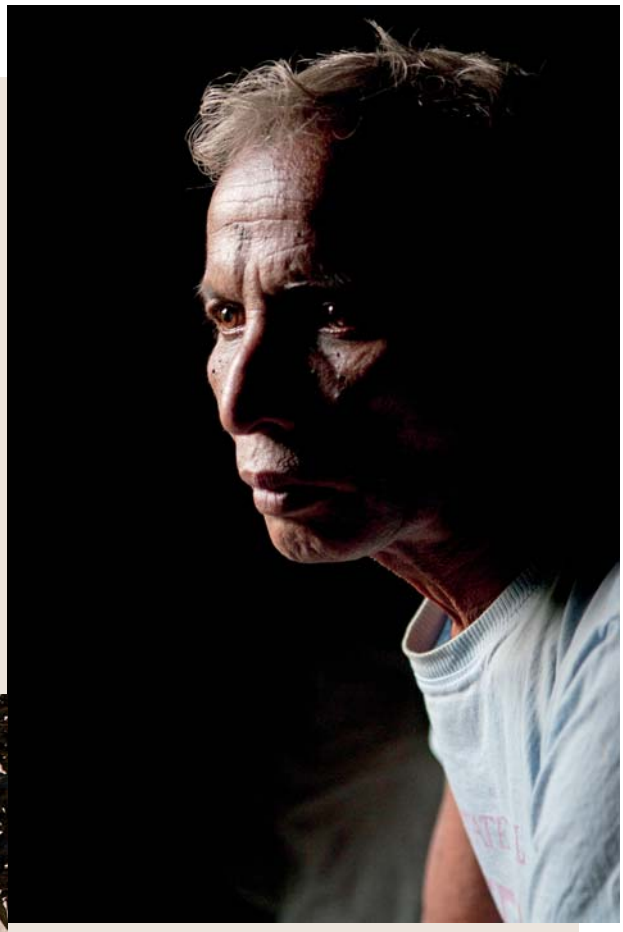
BY ASHRAFUL AWAL MISHUK

In August 2006, 12 high school students in Dhaka founded the One Degree Initiative (1°) to get youth in Bangladesh engaged in community service. Now, 1° has more than 1500 members, and international branches in Nepal and Canada. In Bangladesh, it has run some 50 projects, each designed to be a life-changing experience for both volunteers and recipients. Mushfiqur Rahman, 20, sits on the group's executive committee while also studying business at the American International University of Bangladesh. In December, Rahman helped organize a medical camp at Alok Shishu Shikkhaloy, a primary school in Dhaka's Agargaon slum. More than 100 families received free medical services from doctors organized by 1°, and students of the school themselves acted as volunteers: One of the student leaders from the school was 13-year-old Faruk Hossain, who has continued to act as a liaison between his classmates and 1°.

Faruk Hossain

Mushfiqur Rahman

"The smallest change has the power to trigger substantial, lasting improvements. One should not hesitate to be the first one to take such a step."



Shudhir Chandra Bardhain

"An educated nation will not remain a poor one."

BY A. M. AHAD

Born in 1940, an accountant by profession, Shudhir Chandra Bardhain resigned his government job in 1969 and sold family property to found the Bhulakut K. B. Higher School. It opened its doors in 1972, a year after Bangladesh's independence, and it offered the new nation's first free education for rural girls. Bardhain remembers going door to door, family to family, in his village of Bhulakut, some 170 kilometers (105 mi) east of Dhaka, persuading villagers that education could improve their lives and that "an educated mother makes an educated nation." The school also enrolled boys, but charged tuition for them; it was free for girls in order to encourage families to send their daughters as well as their sons. Today, the school is still open, and every morning starts with a chorus of alphabets and numbers for some 550 girls and 330 boys. In 2008, Bardhain was one of 10 recipients of the Shada Moner Manush ("people of generous heart") Award sponsored by Unilever Bangladesh.

Munir Hasan

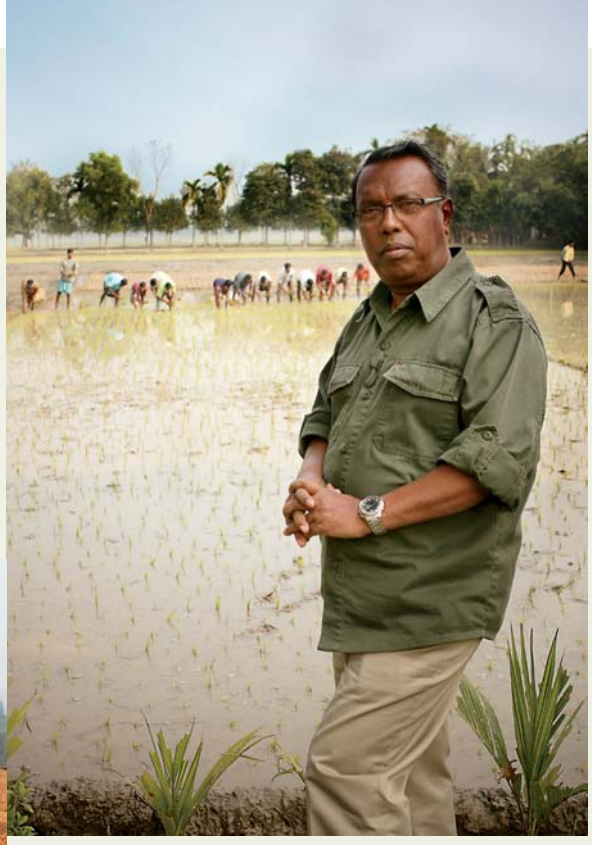
"I have always dreamed of turning my country into a nation of world-class, advanced mathematicians and scientists."

BY HASAN RAZA

Since 2005, Munir Hasan has led Bangladesh's students in the International Mathematics Olympiad, but—perhaps more important—he is the leading creative force revitalizing the nation's approach to math education. Using a network of community-building math festivals, daily newspaper columns, teacher training and new textbooks that emphasize exploration and questioning rather than rote memorization, he is "making math a joyful priority," according to the Ashoka Foundation, which elected him a fellow in 2008.

BY M. R. K. PALASH

Recipient of 28 national and international awards, Shykh Seraj is the pioneer of agricultural journalism in Bangladesh. In this mostly rural nation, that makes him a star. He has produced more than 1000 episodes of five different television programs, starting with "Mati o Manush" ("Soil and Men") back in 1982, the year he graduated from Dhaka University with a master's degree in geography. He has covered every imaginable facet of agriculture, from rice-farming techniques, shrimp and fish farming, fertilizer choices, beekeeping and dragon-fruit production to urban and schoolyard gardening, soil health, land-use disputes, conflicts between small and large growers, technology impacts and rising sea levels. His use of television to reach often illiterate or semi-literate farming families is widely credited with hunger relief and improved prosperity nationwide. Most recently he has launched a series of Web sites and podcasts under the banner of "e-agriculture."



Shykh Seraj

"Farmers are the real architects of Bangladesh."

Tenjing Chakma

"For my native people,
I've felt something instinctive inside myself."

BY N. HAIDER CHOWHURY

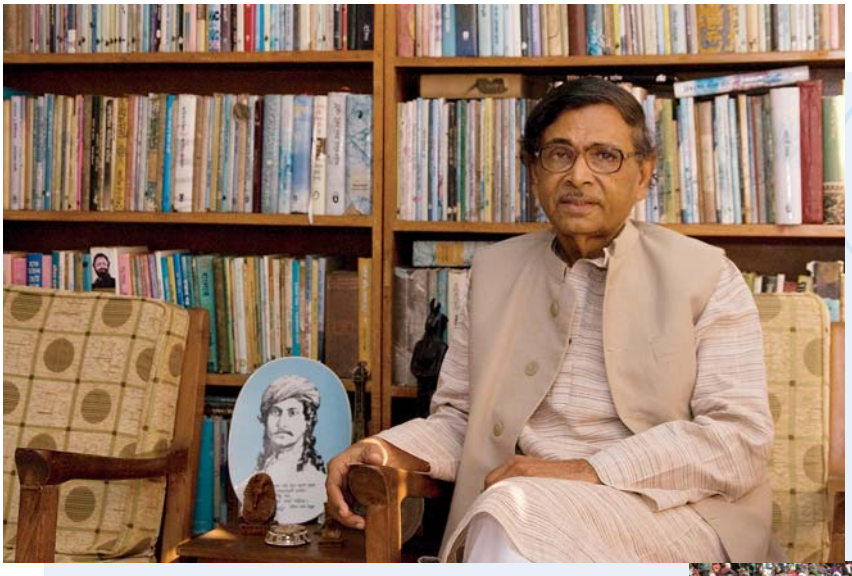
Born into the Chakma, the most prosperous of 13 major tribal communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of southeastern Bangladesh, 31-year-old Tenjing identifies himself among a new breed of fashion designers. In the 1990's, he studied design in New Delhi and Calcutta. In 2000, he returned to Bangladesh, but the emerging fashion houses of Dhaka did not interest him, and the rapid assimilation of international styles—and the abandonment of traditional ones—among his own Chakma people drew him back to the Hill Tracts. Now, working in the small city of Rangamati with four employees and contracts with a handful of Chakma weaving families, he produces fusion designs that bring together traditional and contemporary. Most popular are his wedding dresses, which show now in Dhaka, in Chittagong in eastern India and elsewhere.

BY D. M. SHIBLY

Yasmin was still in her teens when Iffat Ara Sarker Eva met her at Safe Home, a halfway house in Dhaka for destitute youth separated from their families. Yasmin said she didn't know where her family was. She recalled being sent at age 13 to live with her grandmother, a beggar in the town of Dinajpur. That was after her parents' divorce, she said. Police had brought her—rescued her, says Eva—to Safe Home, where Eva has worked as a coordinator since 2008. There, her job is to reunite troubled, runaway and abandoned youth with their families—if the families can be found. Finding Yasmin's family, Eva says, was particularly difficult. Yasmin recalled little, partly out of shame; since she had run away, her grandparents would not take her back. Eva learned that Yasmin's father was a rickshaw driver in a slum in Dinajpur. She finally found him, sitting on a footpath on a bridge. They shared tea. He agreed to take her back. Four months later, the father arranged a marriage, with Yasmin's consent. Yasmin asked Eva to attend the wedding, and to remain her legal guardian. Now the couple has a son, and Eva, age 52, has since then accumulated more than 20 such success stories.

Iffat Ara Sarker Eva

"I will work for people until I am physically unable to do the job."



Abdullah Abu Sayeed

"People do not become enlightened. That is the name of a dream. They try and become enlightened. That attempt is the enlightenment.... To me, what is important is the start."

BY SYED ASHRAFUL ALOM

Writer, television presenter, cultural activist and professor of Bengali language at Dhaka College, Abdullah Abu Sayeed is perhaps best known as the founder in 1975 of Dhaka's World Literature Center (Bishwa Sahitya Kendra), known popularly as "Kendro." Now counting more than 125,000 members and housing one of the nation's best libraries, Kendro also offers classes on world literature at more than 500 schools—and provides the books to the students. In 2004, Abu Sayeed's commitment was recognized with the Ramon Magsaysay Award, often called "the Asian Nobel," for his contributions to "cultivating in the youth of Bangladesh a love for literature and its humanizing values through exposure to great books of Bangladesh and the world."

Finalists in the nationwide annual student reading contest sponsored by Kendro celebrate in Dhaka in January.

Kaniz Almas Khan

"I want every woman to be a companion in my success."

BY M. N. I. CHOWDHURY

Beginning with her first tiny salon, called Persona, in 1990, Kaniz Almas Khan has now become the owner of Persona Group, a chain of women's beauty salons and spas, as well as the lifestyle magazine *Canvas*. In 2009, she was named most outstanding businesswoman in Bangladesh. What sets her apart from other entrepreneurs are her employees, who now number more than 1400: 99 percent of them are women, and many come from underprivileged, even dire, backgrounds. They include members of rural minority tribes and nearly two dozen survivors of acid attacks. All have been trained by Khan and her associates. "The women of our country have a lot of potential," she says. "If they want, they can step in along with men and build a better future."

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.

Bangladesh: J/F 94, M/J 99, J/A 02, M/J 09

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"Portraits of Commitment" was led by Dick Doughty, managing editor of *Saudi Aramco World*, and D. M. Shibly, an instructor at Pathshala South Asian Media Academy and a staff photographer at *ICE Today* magazine. Bottom row, from left: Students M. N. I. Chowdhury and M. R. K. Palash, Pathshala Vice Principal Abir Abdullah, Dick Doughty and D. M. Shibly. Top row: Students K. M. Asad, Ashraful Awal Mishuk, Syed Ashraful Alom, Taslima Akhter and Hasan Raza. Not shown: Students N. Haider Chowhury and A. M. Ahad. Special thanks to Pathshala Principal Shahidul Alam, workshop coordinator Snigdha Zaman and tutor Munem Wasif for the support and encouragement that made this article possible.

THE MULTIPOLAR FUTURE

INTERVIEW BY TOM VERDE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBBIE BAILEY

Parag Khanna is a senior research fellow in the American Strategy Program at the New America Foundation and author of *How to Run the World: Charting a Course to the Next Renaissance*, published in January by Random House. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and a doctorate from the London School of Economics. Born in India, he grew up in the United Arab Emirates, New York and Germany. The World Economic Forum has named him a "young global leader," and *Esquire* magazine has included him among the "75 Most Influential People of the 21st Century."

For this interview for *Saudi Aramco World*, writer and radio producer Tom Verde met Parag near his home in Manhattan.

Tom Verde: In your new book, you discuss "neo-medievalism," which seems to be an oxymoron. How does that work?

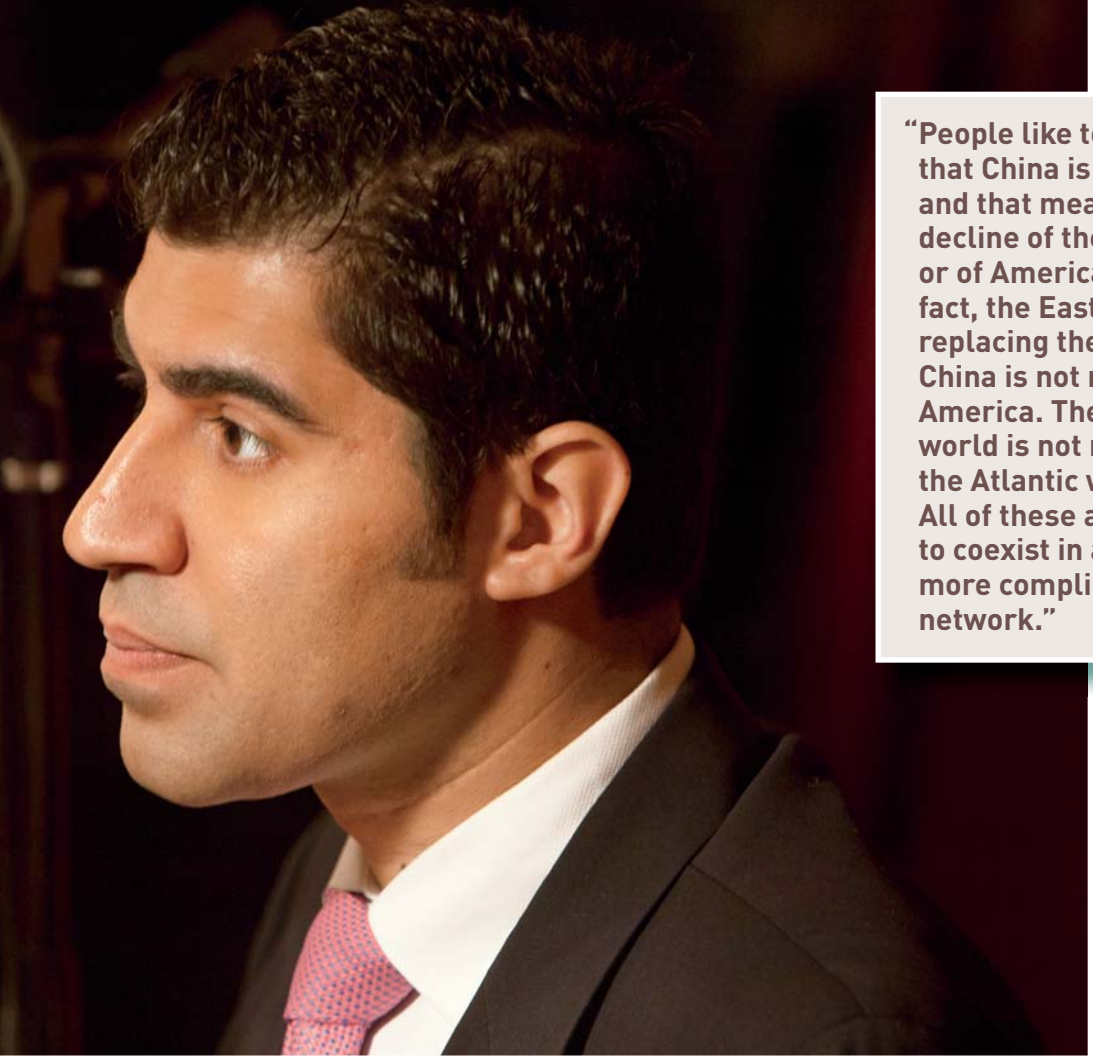
Parag Khanna: Well, the Middle Ages was a very long period of history, from the fall of Rome to the fall of Constantinople. A thousand years are captured by this phrase, "the Middle Ages." Of course it was a different kind of history for every part of the world. In Europe, it's often thought of as the Dark Ages. But as we know, for the Arab–Islamic world, it was a golden age. For Song Dynasty China, it was a golden age. For the Chola Dynasty of India, it was the apogee of their power. We are again, in the 21st century, entering a multipolar landscape—one in which China, India, the Arab–Islamic countries, Europe, the United States, Brazil and others are all able to call their own shots, to determine what they want and the policies they want to pursue, without any one power dominating over the others—and that is exactly what the world was like during the Middle Ages. Too often we hear the term, and we think [of it] from a Eurocentric point of view. But the multipolarity, in the literal sense of diverse powers and civilizations coexisting, with none dominating over the others but starting to interact—trade and commerce, but also tension and conflict—that's a very medieval phenomenon. And we are back in that world today.

What's made that happen?

Globalization is probably the number-one thing. Globalization 1.0 began in the Middle Ages, the first time we had sustained, intercontinental contact between Western Europe and China and all of the various civilizations and empires in between. The Silk Roads and the Crusades, for good and bad reasons, helped create this constant connectivity across geography. Today, I would say that we are at Globalization 5.0. I think we are just at the beginning of this phase that I call "the New Middle Ages," in which we have to reckon, in the West and in the East, with coexisting. People like to say that China is rising and that means the decline of the West, or of America. But in fact, the East is not replacing the West. China is not replacing America. The Pacific world is not replacing the Atlantic world. All of these are going to coexist in a much more complicated network. I think that is a very telltale sign of a new medievalism.

During these thousand years and those golden ages that you refer to, there was, besides commercial exchange, a lot of exchange of ideas. Is that happening today? Is the Internet the new way of transmitting ideas?

Old and new ways of transmitting ideas coexist. If you think about ideas as technologies, for example, they are going in many directions. If you think about the latest high-tech innovations in clean technology or biotechnology, much of that has been invented in the West, but it's currently be-



"People like to say that China is rising and that means the decline of the West or of America. But in fact, the East is not replacing the West. China is not replacing America. The Pacific world is not replacing the Atlantic world. All of these are going to coexist in a much more complicated network."

ing innovated in the East as well. Similarly, [there are] models of capitalism and macroeconomic management. People talk about a "China model" today because they have a state-capitalist hybrid economic structure that's very different from laissez-faire western capitalism, and that model has a certain amount of appeal. Emerging markets today around the world are starting to pick and choose what sort of economic system they want to have, based on lessons they can see in real time, from the East and from the West. So the Internet is one medium. Innovations from our educational institutions are [also] very important. Let's remember, the great universities of the western world—Bologna, Paris, Oxford—were founded during the Middle Ages. They were very prominent actors. It was a very multilevel kind of order in which innovation wasn't just from one state to another state. It was among companies, merchant families. The family that sponsored the work of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, the Medicis of Florence, helped to finance the creation of the world's first stock exchanges in Antwerp and Bruges. In Italy, wealthy families, royal families and others helped to create long-term credit, which was a great innovation of the Middle Ages, in fact [one] that helped sponsor the Silk Road and that constant East–West contact. It's all so much more intense and rapid today than it was 1000 years ago, but in fact this is not the first time in history that we're having this East–West commercial and intellectual exchange.

The terms "East" and "West" that you just used: I've often discussed this with people in the Muslim world, asking "Is there 'East' and is there 'West'?" And they've told me, "Not really." Can you help me understand that a little more?

When people use those terms, they're thinking not in terms of just countries and borders, but civilizations and empires. During this period of history, the Holy Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Arab Islamic caliphates—the Abbasid and Umayyad caliphates—those didn't have rigid state borders such as we have in the modern, Westphalian world. Empires opened themselves up to that kind of trade and exchange. They needed to seek ways to expand their influence as much as possible, beyond what their nominal, geographic borders were. So East and West really didn't have such a strict definition back then. Today, I think of the "Middle East" not as actually being part of the East. I think of it very much as a geographic crossroads. To me as a political geographer, the geographic centrality of the Arab world means that it is central to processes of globalization. The linkages between Europe and Asia, and the trade between Europe and Asia—which is in fact greater than the trade between Asia and the United States—hinges to a tremendous extent on use of the Suez Canal, on the traversal of land routes. Look at the infrastructure developments that are happening, linking Europe across Turkey to the Caspian Sea, connecting to the Near East. To me, the Middle East is central to the process of globalization, because if globalization means anything today, it means the growing relationship across emerging markets, particularly Eastern Europe, Africa, the Near East and China, and Central and South Asia, like India. What set of countries, what set of peoples, sits at the exact center of all of that, if not the Arab world?

How about the term "Muslim world"? You don't really hear about "the Christian world" but we do talk about "the Muslim world." Why is that?

I think it's a very dangerous use of the term, quite frankly. I've been very opposed to the use of that term since 9/11, which is now a decade ago. In think tanks and in the US government and in my own writings, I have been very adamant and vehement that the term shouldn't be used at all, and certainly shouldn't be used in a political context. If one wants to speak about the Islamic world from the standpoint of appreciating the diversity within the many Muslim societies and communities that exist, describing them all as Muslim and appreciating that, that doesn't connote any kind of geopolitical symmetry, and I think that's okay. But when one uses the term to connote a unified civilization or religious bloc with which one has to negotiate collectively, that I think is very dangerous. In fact, if current

events in the Middle East teach us anything, it's that we have to appreciate one country at a time, and the very specific dynamics that are going on, without over-generalizing.

I find that people are sometimes surprised to hear that there are far more Muslims in Southeast Asia than there are in the Middle East. People are surprised to hear that there is a Christian population in the Middle East as well.

Wouldn't it be better if people actually appreciated country by country, society by society, exactly what the composition and contours of the demographics are? Because then, rather than thinking about the "Arab–Islamic world" as somehow unified and whole, they would say, "Wait a minute, there are more Muslims in Southeast Asia than there are in the entire Arab world." If we think about Syria not as just another "Arab/Muslim country," we would realize, "Oh, goodness, there are so many Christians in that country, and in other countries like Egypt as well." I think this is yet another reason why we have to focus on the ground level rather than making these top-down generalizations.

In your book, you write that "we are never more than a hair's breadth away from the symptoms of medievalism." What do you mean by that?

In that passage I give a lot of examples of things in the Middle Ages that resemble some of our news headlines today. One is, of course, the great London food riot. We know that a lot of the sparks that have flown up now in the Middle East and other parts of the world have been triggered by food prices spiking. I give the example of the great tragedy of Iraq and the extent to which a society that was quite modern and developed was so quickly brought to chaos and violence and civil war. I think that there are some unfortunate parallels between what we think of when we hear the word *medievalism* and what we see happening in the world today: the fact that we can slip so quickly from a pristine model of modern nation-states into something that looks far more fragmented, dangerous and unpredictable.

"This book is an *homage* to diplomacy, and diplomacy is to me the profession, the art, the craft of attempting to make rules for the world. And 'run' is the operative part of it."

Some of what you've said reminds me of that scene from the movie "Network" where the chairman of the board is chewing out the TV anchor and says to him, "There are no more nations! There is only AT&T, and Dow Chemical, and Shell Oil. These are the nations of the world today!" Are we moving in that direction?

People have predicted for a long time the decline of the nation-state. This goes back to the period of that film, to the 1970's, because that's when globalization really picked up, after the end of World War II: the Marshall Plan, the rise of multinational corporations, western liberalization [and the] deregulation of economies. Susan Strange, at the London School of Economics, wrote about "triangular diplomacy," in which firms were equal participants in diplomacy with states. Alvin Toffler wrote *The Third Wave* and talked about the denationalization of economies and the rise of mega-corporations. This was really a trend in thinking at the time. Now fast-forward 40 years and of course we still have many strong, modern nation-states, but we also have a lot of weak, fragmenting, collapsing states. In this book, I call it "post-colonial entropy"—the gradual dissipation of centralized power in many post-colonial societies. So it isn't one or the other, just like it isn't China *or* the United States. It isn't companies *or* states. It's a mix of the two. One can look at how large and powerful western economies still are—the United States and Great Britain and Germany and so forth—but if you look at the proportion of their GDP that is made up by very powerful corporations, it's a stunningly large percentage. In Britain after 2008, people realized just what a staggering percentage of their GDP—close to 50 percent—depended on the London City, meaning the banking sector. It's quite remarkable how powerful firms are, but that's different from saying that they are truly autonomous actors. Yet quite a few multinational corporations have become that way: They can relocate; they can move their headquarters around for financial or other purposes. I think that's important to recognize as well, because I think it is an almost irreversible component of globalization.

In the wake of the Middle Ages, there was the Renaissance, of course. What kind of Renaissance do you see coming?

Well, this is the question, really. When I was writing my Ph.D. about the evolution of diplomatic systems, the literature on medieval diplomacy and on Renaissance diplomacy conceded that it was hard to tell when the Renaissance actually began. We think of the Renaissance as being this great flourishing and flowering and rediscovery of ancient wisdom and culture, and of course Arab and Muslim scholars were an important conduit for that having taken place at all, given what was happening in medieval Europe. But the fact is it took centuries to actually crystallize the Renaissance, and even when it did, it was highly uneven. So to me, the transition is a very long one. What I am trying to explore in this book is what we can learn from the way different power centers—companies or NGOs or governments or international organizations or humanitarians or philanthropists—are engaging today a set of rules about how to steer resources in the right direction to stabilize the world. Then maybe we'll be able to see the dawn of this new Renaissance. And my hope is that we will follow some of the prescriptions that are evident in the best practices that are out there today, so that we could get to this new Renaissance in the next 20 to 30 years.

Did the Renaissance have any worldwide impact at all, or was it simply a European phenomenon?

The Renaissance actually spread very slowly from Italy northward. People speak of the Italian Renaissance and then the Northern European Renaissance, which had a very different set of characteristics. There was a gradual modernization of institutions, but Talleyrand didn't invent the modern French foreign ministry until the 17th century, and that was a long way after what we think of as the Renaissance. This is a very long period of unfolding, and the global consequences were such that, as Europe came out of the Middle Ages and the commercial revolution helped to spur the period of great exploration, early manifestations of intensifying East–West trade began, and colonialism ultimately arose. That was another major phase of globalization, whether it was positive or negative, but it did unite the world geographically and allow for the acceleration of East–West exchange. It also marked the period in which the western ascendency began again, and that lasted for centuries, until the modern day.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it seems that Muslim or Christian, Arab or Asian didn't really matter when it came down to trade, did it?

No, it didn't, and that was the amazing thing about the Silk Road. Whether it was Marco Polo or Ibn Battutah, whether it was the bazaars of Samarkand or Jerusalem or France, it's really remarkable how multiethnic and multicultural these were, how trade managed to transcend all of those divisions. And that continued for such a long period of time. This is why I believe that we are not only building new Silk Roads through modern infrastructure—roads and railways and pipelines and so forth—but there's a new maritime Silk Road as well. So much medieval commerce was conducted by land *and* by sea, and today most of the world's trade is handled by shipping-container traffic. The new maritime Silk Road that links the Middle East, with its vast energy resources and other exports, to China, India, Japan, Korea and other powers is thriving again today.

During the late Ottoman Empire, the Hijaz Railway was a conduit for moving goods and soldiers and military materiel from one part of the Ottoman world to the other. What future do you see for that particular conduit?

I think of the Hijaz Railway, or the need to resurrect the Hijaz Railway, as a great metaphor for how the Arab world is beginning this process of reuniting again. Unfortunately, the last time the Arab world was united was under the Ottoman Empire. But the lesson still stands that infrastructure is a pathway to unity. In the turbulence around the Arab region today is this opportunity to revisit very fundamental questions of political and geographic identity, because, we know, quite a few of the borders in the region are artificial. The pathway to broader progress and unity across the Arab world is to break down those straight lines on the map and start using infrastructure to transcend them—everything from water canals to railways to pipelines. I can envision a new Hijaz Railway, not only from Turkey all the way to Saudi Arabia, but with offshoots to Syria, to Iran, to Iraq. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries have planned a high-speed railway that will link all of them together. I can imagine a Hijaz offshoot to Cairo. Think about how resources and migrants and trade can take place across North Africa as well. I think infrastructure is going to be a vital part of the next map of the Middle East, especially coming out of the current situation.

When I first saw the title of your book, How to Run the World, *I thought it was written by the cartoon character on "Family Guy" who's always coming up with a plan to run the world.*

That's funny. But this title is very serious. It could be thought of either as a joke or a way to compete with Tom Friedman. But actually this book is an *homage* to diplomacy, and diplomacy is to me the profession, the art, the craft of attempting to make rules for the world. And "run" is the operative part of it. It doesn't just mean a one-off solution, a silver bullet. It doesn't mean crisis management. It means a process. What is the management process for keeping the world stable? The answer to that—the one-word answer to that—is diplomacy, better diplomacy. This book is meant to be a very serious treatment of that, because we need more and better diplomacy.

There is an exploding population under 20 in many of the countries that we've been talking about. What is the future for them?

You know, people talk about a "youth bulge" across the Middle East, but also in other parts of the world that have very young demographic profiles. That certainly includes the emerging markets as well. For many people, that's very dangerous, because it can mean instability, political unrest and so forth. To me it's an opportunity, because I think there's a policy road map for how to create jobs for and integrate young people into society and make them productive assets to help lift economies. I firmly believe that events right now can be seen as putting the region on a more positive trajectory. The ways in which young people today are motivated and connected and networked and willing to move—and have the freedom to move—across borders to pursue their goals is going to be a factor that all governments, East and West, are going to have to take into account.

Freelance journalist and author **Tom Verde** (writah@gmail.com) is a frequent contributor who holds a master's degree in Islamic studies and Christian–Muslim relations from Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. He has lived and traveled widely in the Middle East.

Robbie Bailey (www.baileyphoto.com) is a free-lance photographer, based in New York City, who specializes in environmental portraits. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York* and been seen on "The Today Show" and "NBC Nightly News."

How to Run the World: Charting a Course to the Next Renaissance.
Parag Khanna. 2011, Random House, 978-1400068272, $26, hb.

www.paragkhanna.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 Web site, TeachMideast.org, with background essays and lesson plans.

Julie Weiss is an education consultant based in Eliot, Maine. She holds a Ph.D. in American studies. Her company, Unlimited Horizons, develops social studies, media literacy and English as a Second Language curricula, and produces textbook materials.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

Several articles in this edition of *Saudi Aramco World* focus on art. Two of them explore art that is being created and shown by artists in and from the Middle East. A third displays portraits made by photojournalism students in Bangladesh. The three articles provide opportunities to think about creativity—how and why people create, and where and why people view their creations. The activities in the Classroom Guide aim to help you explore these issues. It is divided into two themes: *Making Art* and *Showing and Viewing Art*. As you'll see, the distinction isn't always hard and fast, but breaking the material down into these two themes will give you a way to access it.

Theme: Making Art

Why do people create art? What is art's purpose?

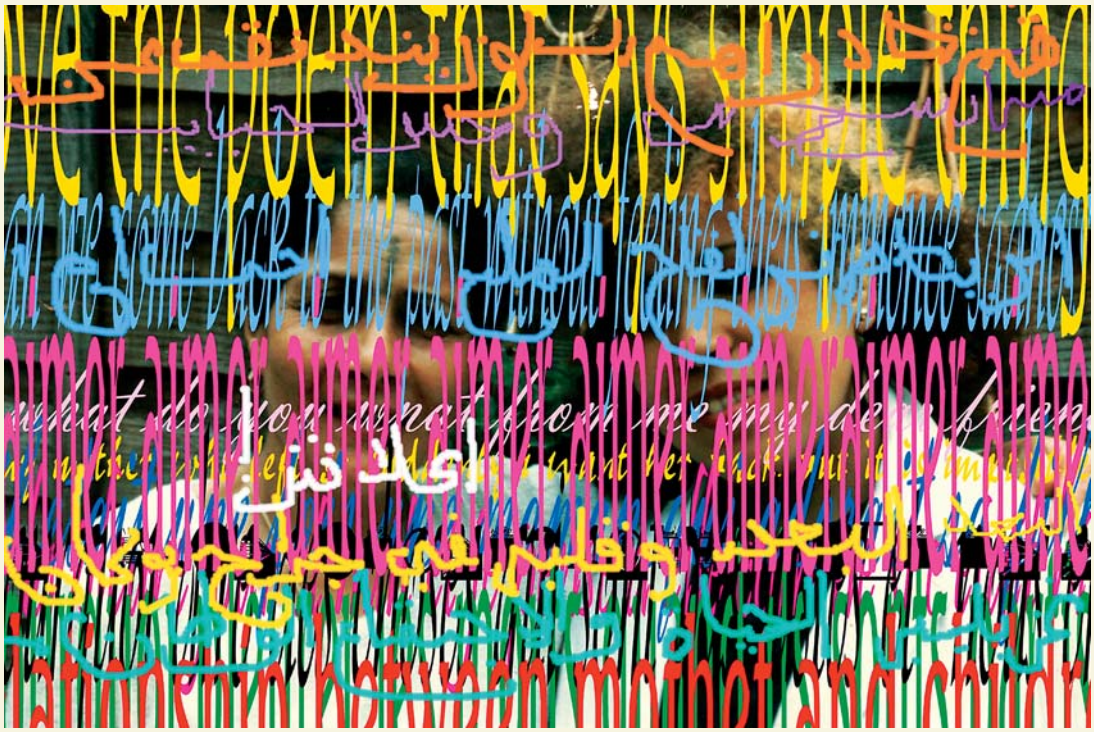
Before you read any of the articles, consider this question: What is the purpose of art? Take a few minutes to think about it. Then make a few notes, or write a few sentences with some answers to the question. Don't worry: There are no right or wrong answers! You'll be reading some articles that will address the question. But the reason for this activity is to see what you think now, before you read what others think. Once you've finished answering the question, have volunteers share their answers with the class, and have the teacher or another student write them on the board. When you've got a good list, step back and think about the whole group of answers. What generalizations can you make about your class's thoughts on the purpose of art?

Now turn to *Saudi Aramco World* to see how others address the question of why people create art. Read "Mideast Cool." As you read, highlight the sections of the article that answer the question "What is the purpose of art?" Divide the class into groups. Each group should have a piece of chart paper. Turn it sideways (landscape) and draw lines dividing it in thirds. In the left third, write the phrase "art for art's sake." Now, what do you think "art for art's sake" means? If you don't know, do some Internet research to find out. Write your group's definition of the phrase on the left side of your chart. In the middle section, write down the purposes of art that you highlighted in "Mideast Cool." Discuss each of them with your group to be sure you understand them. With your group, role-play a conversation between someone who believes in art for art's sake and others who believe in art for the purposes listed in your middle column. (Each person should take just one "purpose for art," even though you may support several different purposes. By focusing on only one purpose, you can get clear on why someone would think that that purpose was the most important one.) After the conversation, make a few notes that identify which ideas about art's purpose you agree with (if you agree with any of them) and why. Hold on to the notes. You're going to have a chance to use them, but first you're going to think even more deeply about why artists create art.

You're going to do that by looking at art itself and then working backward. Consider the artwork on page 6, "Mother and I," by Houria Niati. With your group, talk about your first impressions of the work: At first glance, do you like it? Why or why not? Then look more closely at it. Notice that it contains two layers. Who do you think the people are in the base layer photo? What makes you think so? What does the top layer consist of? In what ways are the two layers different? What effect do the two layers have on you as a viewer? How do you feel when you look at them? Getting back to the artist's purpose, why do you think Niati made a two-layer piece? Why these two particular layers? Use your list of purposes to help you think about it. Then find the part on pages 7 and 8 where Niati is quoted speaking about her art. How does her explanation affect your thinking about the purpose of her art? Make any necessary additions to your list.

What is art anyway?

As you know, both "Mideast Cool" and "Doha's New Modern" look at artists and the art they create. "Mideast Cool" identifies four characteristics of art by Middle Eastern artists. What are they? Read about each one. Then turn your attention to "Portraits of Commitment," which has a somewhat different focus. Read Dick Doughty's introduction. Who created the photographs and narratives (stories) that appear in "Portraits of Commitment"? In the introduction, circle the words or phrases that describe the creators of the portraits. Do you think that the work of photojournalist-storytellers is art? To get another perspective on that question, read "Setting the Scene," which follows "Mideast Cool" on page 9. Looking back at your chart, the purpose of art might be "for art's sake," or it might be any number of other purposes named by the people you've read about. Let's put the initial question "What is art anyway?" in a more specific way: Do you think there is a clear distinction between art and photojournalism? Why or why not?



HOURIA NIATI, "MOTHER AND I," FROM THE SERIES "CURTAINS OF WORDS," 2006. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

Who makes art?

Now that you've thought about why people create art, think more about those creators: artists. Who are they? What characteristics do they share? What characterizes their vocation? "Mideast Cool" quotes author Nat Muller's description of the roles that Arab artists take on. Find the list and write it in the third column of your chart. Compare it to the list of reasons that people create art. Draw lines to match up the roles with the purposes. For example, artist-as-activist could match up with the purpose of art as "making statements about society." If you can't find a match, see if it makes sense to add (or subtract) from either list.

In what circumstances is art created?

Artists are people who live lives. In addition to creating art, they have to take care of such mundane matters as food and shelter. Some also have to deal with such difficult matters as living in exile or struggling with limitations in their homelands. Since you're exploring the making of art, it's worth thinking about whether such circumstances affect artists' creations. For example, "Doha's New Modern" says that "Baghdad under [the United Nations economic] sanctions [in the 1990's] became a difficult place for artists." In what ways do you suppose it was difficult? What very practical assistance helped the artists?

How might material support change the art that someone creates? Take big Hollywood filmmakers as an example. They have seemingly unlimited funds (relatively speaking) to do their work. Independent filmmakers, on the other hand, often have relatively little money. Bring in clips from different movies to share with your classmates. Make sure you have samples from both high-budget and low-budget films. Discuss: How can you tell which is which? Do you think these very different creative products can be compared to each other? Why or why not?

Take some time to pull together the work you've done on this theme. Write an essay that answers the question: *What is the purpose of art?* Use material from the three articles to support your answer. You may also want to use one or more of the artworks reproduced in the magazine, too.

Theme: Showing and Viewing Art

So far you've explored in some depth why artists create, what they create and the circumstances in which they create it. Now it's time to look at how they display the art, and how and where we view it.

Why does it matter to people to have their art shown?

All three articles that you've read address, in one way or another, how artists feel about having their work displayed. In some cases, they know even before they begin creating that their work will be shown in a specific place, and often to specific kinds of people. Divide the class into groups of three, and assign each person one of the three articles. Reread your article, find parts that talk about showing art, and summarize them. (Probably the easiest way to summarize is to write a few sentences, but if you can summarize without writing anything down, that's fine, too.) Share your summary with the members of your group, and listen as they share theirs. With the other members of your group, discuss this question: Do you think that knowing that their art will be shown affects artists while they are creating? To help you bring the question closer to home, think about doodling. When you doodle (say, during a class while the teacher is talking), do you think that anyone will see what you draw? If you think or thought your drawing would have an audience, would it affect what you do? How?

How important is the situation in which you look at art?

Find the part of "Doha's New Modern" that describes Mathaf's building. In addition, find the parts where people express their thoughts about that setting. Have you viewed art in a big, fancy museum? Write a journal entry that addresses these questions: How did you feel when you were there? Did the setting in some way enhance your experience of viewing the art? Did it in some way detract from your experience? On the other hand, have you ever viewed art in a small gallery? Or in an artist's studio or house? How did you feel in those settings? Which kind of setting do you prefer? Why?

Another factor that affects the viewing of art is whether a viewer has a guide. Mathaf has tour guides who are local university students. "The idea is that if these 19-year-old and 20-year-old college students speak to teenagers, they're more likely to listen," says Wassan al-Khudairi, Mathaf's acting director. What do you think? Would you like art more if a person took you around? If so, why? If not, why not?

How do you look at art?

Now that you've explored the making and viewing of art, try your hand at actually looking at a work of art. Choose a work of art from one of the three articles. What do you like about the piece? What drew you to it (so to speak)? What, if anything, does it mean to you? Connect the piece to what you've read about the artist who created it. Does that affect your appreciation of it?

Events & Exhibitions

Current **May**

Jean-Léon Gérôme, the first major retrospective in 30 years to focus on the work of the 19th-century French orientalist painter and sculptor, displays a carefully selected group of some 70 works that cast new light on Gérôme's oeuvre on the basis of research undertaken in recent decades. The exhibition will consider Gérôme's theatrical concept of history and mythological painting (his preferred genres), his use of a realistic idiom and the interest in detail evident in his orientalist works (based on highly detailed sketches made during his numerous trips, as well as on photographs), and his use of polychrome in his sculptures. The exhibition will also look at the artist's use of illusionism and *trompe l'oeil*, revealing the links between his paintings and new media of that time such as photography. It will also be shown at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, **Madrid**, through May 22.

Told / Untold / Retold: *23 Stories of Journeys Through Time and Place* presents new commissioned works from 23 contemporary artists with roots in the Arab world, including painting, sculpture, photography, video, multimedia installations and interactive digital art. Some works' stories are "told," evoking autobiographical accounts and nostalgia for the things that were. Other stories are "untold," anticipating imagined futures that could be. And there are those that are "retold," proposing an alternative narrative to the things that are. Central to each story is the use of time as a concrete compositional element and the reflection on the act of journeying, a condition that has come to describe the rampant fluidity of today's society. Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through May 28.

Interventions honors and celebrates the lives and careers of five pivotal modernist Arab artists: Dia Azzawi, Farid Belkahia, Ahmed Nawar, Ibrahim el-Salahi and Hassan Sharif. As well as highlighting key moments in their experiments and oeuvres, the exhibition introduces five new works commissioned by Mathaf from the artists for this exhibition. These new works are presented alongside pertinent pieces from the museum's permanent collection, providing a context which emphasizes thematic and artistic progression. The new works assert the continuing commitment of the five artists and the endurance of their discourse and their cultural roles. Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through May 28.

West by East. Iranian artist Shadi Ghadirian explores in her photography the relationship between her homeland's people and the social and cultural issues that have swept the nation. Queen Gallery, **Toronto, Ontario**, through May 30.

Mummies of the World presents 150 human and animal mummies and related artifacts from South America, Europe, Asia, Oceania and Egypt, showing how science can shed light on the historical and cultural record and demonstrating that mummification—both intentional and by natural processes—has taken place all over the world. The exhibition includes interactive multimedia exhibits that illustrate how such scientific tools as computer tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, DNA analysis and radiocarbon dating allow researchers to deduce facts about the lives, history and cultures of the mummies. **Milwaukee [Wisconsin]** Public Museum, through May 30; Franklin Institute, **Philadelphia**, June 18 through October 23.

Current **June**

Egypt in Stone, Egypt in Paper displays part of the rich collection of manuscript notes, graphic works recording the appearance of monuments, tracings of carved decorations and inscriptions, watercolors, prints, photographs and annotated clippings amassed by the great archeologist, Egyptologist and ethnologist Prisse d'Avennes, who explored the shores of the Nile over 19 years in the first half of the 19th century. Unlike collectors of antiquities, he brought few objects home from Egypt, but those he did are of the greatest historical importance. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through June 2.

New Cartographies: *Algeria–France–UK* brings together recent works by 10 emerging and established contemporary artists to explore Africa's largest country and its complex relationship with Europe as Algeria heads toward its 50th year of independence. The show examines issues of diaspora, migration, memory and identity by investigating cultural and personal aspects of journeying across politically connected countries. Cornerhouse, **Manchester [UK]**, through June 5.

Elizabeth Taylor in Iran features images of the late actress's 1976 visit to Iran taken by Firooz Zahedi, today a successful Hollywood photographer but then a recent art-school graduate just learning his craft. Iran provided an exotic and engaging locale for Taylor, a tireless global wanderer at the height of her fame. For Zahedi, who had left Iran as a child, this was a reintroduction to his own country, which he experienced not only through the lens but through Taylor's eyes. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through June 12.

Motawi Tileworks showcases tile as both art and architectural decor, sheds light on the tile-making process and draws connections between the firm's contemporary production and the Arab world's tile-making tradition. Motawi Tileworks products are handmade in a studio in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and though Egyptian–American siblings Nawal and Karim Motawi have been producing them for less than 20 years, they are widely admired for their rich glazes and their Arts-and-Crafts-influenced designs. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through June 12.

Cairo Dreams 2011. German–Egyptian artist Susan Hefuna exhibits aluminum sculptures and ink drawings dealing with fragility and vulnerability. Her work reflects her experience between cultures, dealing with cross-cultural codes and constantly playing with what images mean and how they travel the mind. Third Line, **Dubai**, UAE, through June 16.

Shahnamah: Heroic Times: *A Thousand Years of the Persian "Book of Kings"* sheds light on the *Shahnamah*'s influence and includes numerous manuscripts and artifacts. Composed by the Persian poet Ferdowsi of more than 50,000 rhyming couplets, the *Shahnamah* is one of the great epics of world literature, capturing the entire history of the old kings of Iran, from their mythical beginnings to their conquest by the Arabs. The exhibition illustrates the central role this piece of world literature plays for Iranians. Museum of Islamic Art (Pergamon Museum), **Berlin**, through June 19.

Shafic Abboud: *Retrospective of Paintings, 1948–2003* is a tribute to the renowned Lebanese–French painter and features more than 150 works, some dating back to 1948. Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, through June 19.

Al-Fann: *Art From the Islamic Civilization From the Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait* aims to introduce visitors to the wealth of more than 1000 years of Islamic art and history, telling of the exchanges and respect among Islamic civilization as different as Spain, India and China. The exhibition includes around 350 objects that represent all the major artistic media, from arms to jewelry, manuscripts and carpets. Kunsthistorisches Museum, **Vienna**, through June 19.

Shirana Shahbazi has created a site-specific wallpaper installation. The photo-based work isolates objects and images, including a vase of flowers, a piece of fruit and a beautiful young woman in a moment of reflection, laid out in geometric blocks of color. New Museum, **New York**, through June 19.

Monsters, Demons and Winged-Beasts: *Composite Creatures in the Ancient World*. The abundant imagination of the ancient world gave birth to a vast array of monsters that inhabited a rich world of myth, legend and high adventure. This exhibition explores the menagerie from the Greek perspective, focusing on the ways in which the Greeks borrowed imagery from Egypt and the ancient Near East and developed a vast repertoire of imaginary creatures that proliferated in the Greco-Roman world. From the siren, the human-headed bird whose call is fatal, to the fire-snorting lion with a serpent's tail, the exhibition traces the development and dissemination of "monstrous" imagery through works in gold, silver, precious and semiprecious stone. Carlos Museum, Emory University, **Atlanta, Georgia**, through June 19.

Georg Schweinfurth: *Pioneer of Textile Archaeology and African Explorer* began excavations at Arsinoë (Egypt) at the beginning of the 1880's and, within two short years, unearthed around 450 textile fragments from late antiquity, as well as complete items of clothing and headdresses, blankets and cushions. While it was customary for other excavators at the time to cut out the ornamental features of textiles and discard the rest, thus destroying the objects' cultural-historical context, Schweinfurth preserved the items as completely as he could. Some 30 archeological textiles are on display, spanning the entire spectrum of clothing and used fabrics from late antiquity. In addition, the exhibition uses several of Schweinfurth's ancient Egyptian finds as well as manuscripts, drawings and printed books to trace the explorer's biography and examine the full range of his diverse researches. Bode-Museum, **Berlin**, through June 19.

Homage to Shafic Abboud: *Works by 12 International Arab Artists.* Espace Claude Lemand, **Paris**, through June 25.

Archaeologists and Travelers in Ottoman Lands. In the late 1800's, the University of Pennsylvania began excavating the ancient city of Nippur, located in present-day Iraq. This marked the first American expedition in the Middle East. Over a decade, the excavation team unearthed a remarkable collection of nearly 30,000 cuneiform tablets. This exhibition tells the stories of three men whose lives intertwined during the Nippur excavation, as well as the story of the excavation. Osman Hamdi Bey, director of the Imperial Museum in Istanbul (now the Istanbul Archaeological Museum), was the gatekeeper for all excavations in the Ottoman Empire. Also an accomplished painter, Hamdi Bey created a painting of the excavations at Nippur. This painting, along with another Hamdi Bey painting in the Penn Museum's collection, is featured in the exhibit. University of **Pennsylvania** Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, **Philadelphia**, through June 26.

Current **July**

"No Equal in All the World": *Artistic Legacies of Herat, Afghanistan* celebrates the visual culture of Herat and Afghanistan. The artistic traditions developed in this region from the 1100's to the present day extend far beyond the modern boundaries of Afghanistan. Herat enjoyed acclaim as one of the great cultural centers of the Islamic world. In the medieval

period, it was renowned for its production of inlaid metalwork. In the 1400's, however, the city was lauded for the countless cultural achievements of the Timurids, Turco-Mongol warriors who ruled over Iran and Central Asia at the time. The sophistication achieved in the courtly art and architecture of this period inspired the work of Safavid, Uzbek, Mughal and Ottoman artists active later in, respectively, Iran, Central Asia, India and Turkey. British Museum, **London**, through July 3.

Numinous: *Paintings by Yari Ostovany,* an Iranian artist living in the us, explores the space between his two cultures and the symbiotic relationship between Persian and western art. Lucid Art Foundation, **Inverness, California**, through July 4.

The Spirit of the East: *Modern Europe and the Arts of Islam.* A new visual universe opened for 19th-century Europe with the discovery of the arts of Islam. The expansion and democratization of travel and the development of photography helped art dealers and their patrons develop a new way of seeing; publications and exhibitions diffused the new field of artistic knowledge. Collections of Islamic art were built whose range and depth still testify to Europe's fascination with the East, and this exhibition suggests that we are today the heirs and beneficiaries of the new visual vocabulary. European art developed not only the fantasies embodied in orientalist painting, but also looked eastward for a new esthetic that might transform western representation, examining textiles and carpets, ceramics, metalwork, marquetry and ivory carving for a new repertory of forms, themes and techniques. Musée des Beaux Arts de **Lyon, France**, through July 4.

Afghanistan: *Crossroads of the Ancient World* highlights some of the most important archeological discoveries from ancient Afghanistan, which enjoyed close relations with neighbors in Central Asia, Iran, India and China, as well as more distant cultures. The exhibition showcases more than 200 unique pieces on loan from the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul, accompanied by selected items from the British Museum. The artifacts range from classical sculptures and polychrome ivory inlays from imported Indian furniture to gold-inlaid personal ornaments worn by a nomadic elite. Together they showcase the trading and cultural connections of Afghanistan and how it benefited from being an important crossroads of the ancient world. The earliest objects in the exhibition were found at the site of Tepe Fullol, which dates to 2000 BCE. The later finds come from three additional sites dating between the third century BCE and the first century CE. These are Ai Khanum, a Hellenistic Greek city on the Oxus River and on the modern border with Tajikistan; Begram, a capital of the local Kushan dynasty, whose rule extended from Afghanistan into India; and Tillya Tepe ("Hill of Gold"), the location of an elite nomadic cemetery. British Museum, **London**, through July 17.

Captured Hearts: *The Lure of Courtly Lucknow.* A cosmopolitan Indo-Islamic-European capital, Lucknow was the 18th- and 19th-century cultural successor of the resplendent Mughal Empire. It fostered some of the most vibrant artistic expression of its day in a variety of media, and represented a rare intersection of eastern and western artistic traditions. The exhibition features album paintings, historical and religious manuscripts, textiles, period photographs, metalwork, glassware and jewelry that offer proof of a rich and dynamic culture. Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet, **Paris**, through July 18.

Rebirth: *Lebanon 21st-Century Contemporary Art* features 48 Lebanese artists whose works tackle the theme of rebirth. The pieces on show are either recent or were created for the exhibition by artists including Talar Aghbashian, Christina Anid, Ara Azad, Zena Assi, Issam Barhouch, Huguette Caland, Joseph Chahfe, Flavia Codsi and Targheed Darghouth. **Beirut** Exhibition Center, through July 24.

Paradise Lost addresses the relationship between art, nature and technology. Consisting of digital media and video works, the exhibition features pieces by 21 artists whose works examine the impact of technology on the environment. **Istanbul** Modern, through July 24.

Central Nigeria Unmasked: *Arts of the Benue River Valley* is the first major international exhibition to present a comprehensive view of the arts produced in the Benue River Valley, source of some of the most abstract, dramatic and inventive sculpture in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet compared to the majority populations living in northern and southern Nigeria, the diverse groups flanking the 650-mile-long river—and their fascinating arts—are far less known and studied. The exhibition includes more than 150 objects used in a range of ritual contexts, with genres as varied and complex as the region itself—figurative wood sculptures, masks, figurative ceramic vessels, and elaborate bronze and iron regalia—and demonstrates how the history of central Nigeria can be "unmasked" through the dynamic interrelationships of its peoples and their arts. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, through July 24.

Tents, Camels, Textiles of Saudi Arabia and More: *An Exhibit of Bedouin Weaving* shows pieces acquired by Joy Totah Hilden and Robert Hilden between 1982 and 1994 in Saudi Arabia and nearby countries. Initially, Joy Hilden says, "I simply loved the pieces I saw and wanted them. Then I began to realize that they were being sold because the owner had abandoned the nomadic life. It became clear not only that nomadism was dying out but that the techniques of spinning, dyeing and weaving were falling by the wayside as well. I saw the opportunity to create a collection representing aspects of Bedouins' textile material culture in order to pass on my love of the craft and what I learned from it to others." ⓘ 415-399-0333, ext. 15. Mills Building, 220 Montgomery Street, **San Francisco**, through July 29.

Dis[Locating] Culture: *Contemporary Islamic Art in America* showcases American Islamic artists, broadly defined, and aims to problematize stereotypes and challenge notions of cultural and religious homogeneity. A symposium to explore the issues suggested by the exhibition, keynoted by renowned scholar Reza Aslan, will be held April 16 at the Warhol Museum Theater. Michael Berger Gallery, **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, through July 30.

Contemporary Views IV: *Contemporary Egypt* features an overview of Egyptian art, with pieces from early artists who helped pave the way for Egyptian contemporary art, to works by today's emerging generation. Artists displayed include Tahia Halim, Mounir Canaan, Taha Hussein, Omar El-Nagdy, George Bahgory, Adel El-Siwi, Hamdi Attia, Khaled Hafez, Hazem Taha Hussein, Gihan Suleiman, Kareem El-Qurity and Hany Rashed. Al-Masar Gallery of Contemporary Art, **Cairo**, through July 31.

Current **August**

The Salvaged Gods From the Palace of Tell Halaf. During an expedition in the Middle East in 1899, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim (1860–1946), heir to a banking family and diplomat from Cologne, unearthed the remains of a palace dating from the early first millennium BCE on the Tell Halaf mound in what is today northeast Syria. Once the excavations were completed, most of the spectacular finds were brought to Berlin and were not—as originally intended—exhibited on Berlin's Museum Island, but were instead placed on display in a renovated machine plant in 1930. During World War II, a bomb destroyed the private museum and the unique sculptures it housed. Nearly 60 years after the collection's devastation, one of the largest restoration projects ever undertaken has led to the reconstruction of the monumental stone sculptures and relief panels, pieced together from 27,000 fragments. This is the first chance for visitors to experience sculptures at firsthand that were, until now, thought to be lost forever. Staatliche Museen zu **Berlin**, Pergamon Museum, through August 14.

1100–1900: *The 40 Greatest Masters of Indian Painting* presents 240 of the works of artists who, in their own tradition, are equivalent to Dürer, Michelangelo, Rembrandt or Vermeer in the West: 'Abd al-Samad, Farrukh Beg, Nainsukh, the "Master of the Elephants" and many others. The milestone exhibition provides an overview of the development of Indian painting from 1100 to 1900. Museum Rietberg, **Zurich**, through August 21.

Patterns of Life: *The Art of Tibetan Carpets* explores the stylistic variety and uses of Tibetan carpets, saddle rugs, sleeping rugs, pile pillows, cushion covers and door rugs, placing them alongside paintings, sculptures and everyday objects. Tibetans have created carpets for decorative and functional purposes for centuries, using both indigenous motifs and designs, such as snow lions, as well as medallions and checkerboard patterns, which suggest considerable influence from Tibet's historical trading partners as far afield as Iran. Rubin Museum of Art, **New York**, through August 22.

Current **September**

Trade Goods and Souvenirs: *Islamic Art From the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam* presents more than 170 works of art ranging from opulent ceramic vessels from medieval Iran to rare textiles from Spain and miniatures from Iran and India. Many of these items entered the Amsterdam collection by chance, as trade goods or souvenirs, and reflect the historical ties between the Netherlands and the Islamic world. In the exhibition, the Amsterdam collection is complemented by pre-Islamic art from the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, including colorful perfume flasks and glass dishes, Coptic textiles, bronze weapons and a unique shield from Iran decorated with a hunting scene. These archeological finds vividly demonstrate how much the Islamic tradition inherited from such earlier cultures as classical antiquity and the Byzantine and Sassanian Empires, and at the same time demonstrate the originality and uniqueness of Islamic art. By illuminating the historical ties between the West and Islamic cultures, the two museums aim to influence the image of Islamic art and culture in the West and draw attention to issues of research in and display of Islamic art in the Netherlands. Rijksmuseum van Oudheiden, **Leiden, Netherlands**, through September 4.

Green: *The Color and the Cause* explores the techniques people have devised to create green textiles, the meanings that this color—traditionally associated with nature and its attributes, including life, fertility and rebirth—has held in cultures across time and place, and the ways that contemporary textile artists and designers are responding to concerns about the environment. The exhibition includes works from the Museum's collection, along with extraordinary work by contemporary artists and designers from five continent, including two site-specific installations. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through September 11.

Adornment and Identity: *Jewellery and Costume From Oman* features a selection of 20th-century silver jewelry, weaponry and male and female dress from Oman. The display includes bracelets, anklets, necklaces, earrings, hair ornaments, *kohl* pots and men's accessories. The jewelry is decorated with coins, coral and glass beads and gold leaf, with many amuletic pieces incorporating elaborate Qur'an cases. Also featured are colorful embroidered costumes, including children's outfits, from different regions of Oman. British Museum, **London**, through September 11.

In Search of Biblical Lands: *From Jerusalem to Jordan in Nineteenth-Century Photography.* In the 1800's, travelers came to the eastern margins of the Mediterranean and encountered a landscape of belief, at once forbidding and monotonous. Propelled by a connection to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and encouraged by texts recently discovered in Egypt and Assyria, explorers, excavators and entrepreneurs came to photograph places hitherto only imagined. This exhibition presents images of the region known variously as Palestine, western Syria, the Transjordan Plateau and the Holy Land. Subjects range from architectural sites and strata to evocative geography and scenes of pastoral life. Getty Villa, **Malibu, California**, through September 12.

Current **October**

Sajjil: *A Century of Modern Art* is a comprehensive cross-section of art from the Arab world produced over the last 100 years. The word *sajjil* means "the act of recording," and the exhibition brings together more than 200 artworks from Mathaf's extensive collection, presenting turning-points in artistic thought as it evolved in the Arab world during the century leading up to the 1990's. The exhibition helps set Arab modern art in its historical place within a larger art-history tradition. It also emphasizes the several common moments and concerns that make it possible to talk about a shared identity in the region. The exhibition is divided into ten themed categories: nature; the city; individualism; form and abstraction; society; family; history and myth; struggle; *hurufiyah* (abstract letterform art); and Doha. Many elements of the art recur across time and space and in spite of historical interruptions. Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through October 1.

Zaha Hadid: *An Architecture* examines over three decades of the groundbreaking Iraqi–British architect's work through a selection of projects (both completed and in progress), using models, prototypes, sculptures, paintings, objects and film, allowing visitors to fully enter the universe of Hadid. A graduate of the prestigious Architectural Association School in London, where she later taught, Hadid's style is characterized by the interlacing of taut lines and curves, sharp corners and overlapping planes. Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, through October 30.

Current **November and later**

Underground Revolution: *8000 Years of Istanbul* displays finds uncovered in one of the most important archeological excavations of Turkish history: the Yanikapı dig in Istanbul, which revealed Neolithic settlements dating back 8500 years, including a unique collection of 34 sunken ships. As the actual artifacts are too fragile to move, the exhibition presents them through photographs, information panels and digital demonstrations. Istanbul Centre in **Brussels**, November 30, 2011 through November 31, 2012

Typecast: *Flinders Petrie and Francis Galton.* In 1886, Francis Galton commissioned Flinders Petrie to take photographs of different "racial types" among enemies of the ancient Egyptian civilization. This was part of Galton's project of skull measurements and research into racial difference. The exhibition displays some of the photographs and explores their contentious legacies, examining the impact of racial theory on archeology. Petrie Museum, **London**, through December 22.

Before the Pyramids: *The Origins of Egyptian Civilization* explores Egypt's Pre-Dynastic and Early Dynastic material culture and shows how these early materials shed light on our understanding of later Egyptian culture. The most fundamental aspects of ancient Egyptian civilization—architecture, hieroglyphic writing, a belief in the afterlife and allegiance to a semi-divine king—can be traced to Egypt's Pre-Dynastic era 1000 years before the pyramids were built. This exhibit, based on the most recent research on the origins of ancient Egypt civilization, includes 140 objects, including pottery, stonework, carved ivories, and objects from the tombs of the first kings and of the retainers who were buried alongside them. Catalog. Oriental Institute Museum, **Chicago**, through December 31.

Global Patterns: *Dress and Textiles in Africa* focuses on the accomplishments of African weavers, dyers, bead embroiderers and tailors, and highlights continuities, innovation and the exchange of ideas from within and without that mark dress and textile production in Africa. More than any other artistic expression, dress and textile production in Africa demonstrates the continuous connections of the continent with the outside world. Throughout centuries, African textile artists seamlessly and joyfully integrated into their visual vocabulary new design elements and new materials such as glass beads, buttons and fabrics that arrived as the result of trade with Europe and places as far away as India and Indonesia. They added to or transformed existing traditions, and at times created new types of textiles and garments. Beadwork among the Ndebele peoples of South Africa and the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria, Kente cloth in Ghana and Togo, and Yoruba indigo-dyed cloths called Adire are among the highlights of the display. Museum of Fine Arts **Boston**, through January 8, 2012.

Second Lives: *The Age-Old Art of Recycling Textiles* highlights the ways people in various cultures have ingeniously repurposed worn but precious fabrics to create beautiful new textile forms. Examples include a rare *sutra* cover made from a 15th-century Chinese rank badge, a large patchwork hanging from Central Asia, stitched together from small scraps of silk ikat and other fabrics, and a pictorial *kantha* from India embroidered with threads recycled from old saris. "Second Lives" complements the major spring exhibition, **Green: The Color and the Cause**, listed above. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through January 8, 2012.

Of Gods and Mortals: *Traditional Art from India.* In India, art is an integral part of daily life. The importance of paintings, sculpture, textiles and other art forms comprises two basic categories, one related to religious practices and the other to the expression of prestige and social position. This new installation of works from the Museum's collection features some 28 pieces, principally representing the 1800's to the present. Peabody Essex Museum, **Salem, Massachusetts**, through March 1, 2012.

Painting the Modern in India features seven renowned painters who came of age during the height of the movement to free India from British rule. To liberate themselves from a position at the margins of an art world shaped by the colonial establishment, they organized path-breaking associations: the Calcutta Artists Group in 1943, the Progressive Artists Group in Bombay in 1947, and the Delhi Shilpi Chakra in 1949. They pioneered new approaches to painting, repositioning their own art practices internationally and in relation to the 5000-year history of art in India. These artists created hybrid styles that are an under-appreciated yet essential component of the broad sweep of art in the 20th century. After independence in 1947 they took advantage of new opportunities in art centers around the world, especially Paris, London and New York, intensifying their quests for what the Bombay Progressives termed "aesthetic order, plastic coordination and color composition." At the same time, they looked deeply into their own artistic heritage, learning from the first exhibition of Indian art in 1948 at Raj Bhavan in Delhi and taking inspiration from ancient sites like the old city in Benaras and the temples at Khajuraho. Peabody Essex Museum, **Salem, Massachusetts**, through June 1, 2012.

The Peacock Room Comes to America. A lavish dining room designed by James McNeill Whistler is reinstalled for the first time as it appeared in the home of museum founder Charles Lang Freer in 1908. It includes more than 250 ceramics from China, Japan, Syria and Egypt that Freer used to define "points of contact" between Asian and American art: subtly toned pots in iridescent and monochromatic shades of green, gold and brown. Freer arranged the ceramics to highlight tonal relationships among the vessels and other works of art in his collection. Freer Gallery of Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through April 2013.

Coming **May**

Bayt Al-Aqqad: *A House In Damascus* marks the reopening of the David Collection and features a building that the Syrian government placed at the disposal of the Danish Institute in Damascus in 1997. After major restoration, Bayt Al-Aqqad now stands as a splendid example of Islamic urban architecture. The house's oldest parts date back to the 15th century, although in ensuing centuries, changing styles left their mark on the complex. Visitors can examine the house's history from 1470, when it was built on the ruins of a Roman theater, through its massive restoration. David Collection, **Copenhagen**, May 15 through August 7.

Roads of Arabia: *Archaeological Treasures From the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.* The study of archeological remains only really began in Saudi Arabia in the 1970's, yet brought—and is still bringing—a wealth of unsuspected treasures to light: temples, palaces adorned with frescoes, monumental sculpture, silver dishes and precious jewelry left in tombs. The exhibition, organized as a series of points along trade and pilgrimage routes, focuses on the region's rich history as a major center of commercial and cultural exchange, provides both chronological and geographical information about the discoveries made during recent excavations and emphasizes the important role played by this region as a trading center during the past 6000 years. More than 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. State Hermitage Museum, **St. Petersburg, Russia**, May 17 through August; Pergamon Museum, **Berlin**, October through December.

Houston Palestine Film Festival presents "Fix Me" by Raed Andoni and "The Imperialists Are Still Alive!" by Zeina Durra. 7:00 p.m., Museum of Fine Arts, **Houston**, May 20 and 21, respectively.

Breaching the Wall. A wide range of artists, including John Halaka, Raji Cook, Ellen O'Grady, Helen Zughaib, Mona El Bayoumi, Elena Farsakh, Michael Keating and Najat El Khairy, share their thoughts and feelings about the Separation Wall in Palestine, using sculpture, paintings, photographs and video. Each artist's work speaks to this issue in a unique voice. Jerusalem Fund Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, May 20 through June 24.

Orientalism in Europe: *From Delacroix to Kandinsky* presents diverse interpretations of North Africa and the Middle East by almost 100 western European artists, beginning with the time of Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign (1798–1801) and continuing through the modernism of the early 20th century. Masterpieces by Ingres, Delacroix, Gérôme, Renoir, Sargent, Klee and Kandinsky—as well as a number of lesser-known artists—present orientalism as a theme that transcends styles, artistic perspectives and national borders, one which is particularly relevant because, in the globalized 21st century, the different concepts of East and West are still colliding. The exhibition thus also considers the social, political, ethnic and religious aspects of orientalism. Though western fascination with the Middle East dates back centuries, in the 19th century many artists started actually traveling to the region; some even settled there. Their paintings and photographs fostered further tourism and shaped a particular image of the Orient that was strongly influenced by colonial motivations. The exhibition concludes with works by several modern artists who were equally unable to resist the allure of the Orient and who interpreted the topic with a new pictorial expression. Musée des Beaux-Arts de **Marseille, France**, May 27 through August 28**.**

Coming **June**

Gifts of the Sultan: *The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* is a pan-Islamic exhibition that spans the eighth through 19th centuries and includes more than 240 works of art from three continents: carpets, costumes and textiles, jewelry and other objects of precious metals, miniature paintings and other arts of the book, mosque furnishings and arms and armor. It also includes a small contemporary component: new work by three artists with roots in the Islamic world who have been commissioned to interpret the theme of the exhibition. *Gifts of the Sultan* introduces viewers to Islamic art and culture with objects of

SAUDI ARAMCO WORLD
(ISSN 1530-5821)
is published bimonthly by
Aramco Services Company,
9009 West Loop South,
Houston, Texas 77096-1799, USA

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to
Saudi Aramco World
Box 2106
Houston, Texas 77252-2106

undisputed quality and appeal, viewed through the universal lens of gift giving—a practice that proliferated at the great Islamic courts not only for diplomatic and political purposes but also as expressions of piety, often associated with the construction or enhancement of religious monuments. Gift-giving was part of the social fabric of the medieval and late-medieval Islamic world as a signifier of power and an expression of political aspirations. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, June 5 through September 5.

Out of Place features four artists—Hrair Sarkissian, Ahlam Shibli, Ion Grigorescu and Cevdet Erek—who explore the relationship between dominant political forces and personal and collective histories. The exhibition centers on urban spaces, architectural structures and the condition of displacement. Darat Al-Funun, **Amman, Jordan**, June 7 through September 29.

Paper at Work focuses on European artists' use of paper from the 15th century—only 100 years after it was first manufactured north of the Alps—to the present day, considering colored papers; cut, glued or layered papers; papers selected for effect, such as recycled or crumpled paper; and transparent or lithographic paper. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, June 9 through September 5.

To Live Forever: *Egyptian Treasures From the Brooklyn Museum* uses some 100 pieces of jewelry, statues, coffins and vessels dating from 3600 BCE to 400 CE 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, and 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. **Nevada** Museum of Art, **Reno**, June 11 through September 4.

'Abbas: *45 Years in Photography* features 133 black and white photographs and four audio-visual clips by acclaimed Iranian photographer Abbas Kiarostami. As a member of the Magnum agency since 1981, he has covered important political and social events. Through his photographs, which also depict the Iranian Revolution, he aims to show his dedication to the struggles within different societies of the world. National Museum of **Singapore**, June 18 through September 18.

Eight Artists in Yemen. At the invitation of the Yemeni Tourism Ministry, eight European artists—Philip Braham and Charles Foster-Hall from the UK; Stéphanie Ledoux, Philippe Bichon, Charlotte Jaunez and Aurélie Pedrajas from France; and Eduardo Laborde and David González-Carpio Alcaraz from Spain—spent three weeks in Sana'a painting and exhibiting. The resulting works reflect a rich trove of subject matter. ⓘ www.rgs.org. Royal Geographical Society, **London**, June 20 through July 8.

Coming **July**

The Art of the Writing Instrument From Paris to Persia. Every culture that values the art of writing has found ways to reflect the prestige and pleasure of the craft through beautiful tools. Writing implements such as pens, knives and scissors, as well as storage chests, pen-cases and writing desks, were often fashioned from precious materials: mother-of-pearl, gems, imported woods, gold and silver. Once owned by statesmen, calligraphers, wealthy merchants and women of fashion, these objects highlight the ingenuity of the artists who created them and underline the centrality of the written word in the diverse cultures that produced them. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, July 2 through September 25.

The Use of the Astrolabe: *A Masterpiece of 16th-Century Illumination* displays a scientific manuscript created between 1555 and 1559 by an unknown master in French court circles. It explains the functions of this ancient instrument according to the teachings of the German astronomer Johannes Stoeffler, presenting a geometry lesson and a visual delight. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, July 6 through October 3.

Inside the Toshakhana: *Treasures of the Sikh Courts* brings together some of the finest examples of Sikh art and heritage in public and private collections as a tribute to Punjab's rich artistic traditions. The *toshakhana* (treasury) in question belonged to the one-eyed ruler of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839). The "Lion of Lahore" amassed a magnificent collection of beautiful objects and works of art—jewelry, paintings, textiles and arms and armor—to form his unrivalled toshakhana. The exhibition focuses on objects connected with the Sikh court of Lahore generally and Ranjit Singh's toshakhana specifically, which was dispersed a decade after his death. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London**, July 14 through September 24.

Coming **October**

In the Kingdom of Alexander the Great: *Ancient Macedonia* retraces the history of Alexander's homeland from the 15th century BCE to the Roman period, presenting more than 1000 artifacts from museums in northern Greece and from French archeological digs, particularly the Portal of the Enchanted Ones, a masterpiece of Greco-Roman sculpture. "People know that Alexander was Greek, but they don't know that he was also Macedonian, or that Macedonia is in Greece," says the Louvre's director of Greek antiquities. "The exhibition presents an opportunity for visitors to rediscover Alexander in the light of his origins." Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, October 3 through January 2.

Lost and Found: *The Secrets of Archimedes.* In Jerusalem in 1229 CE, the greatest works of the Greek mathematician Archimedes were erased and overwritten. In the year 2000, a team of museum experts began a project to read those erased texts. By the time they had finished, the team had recovered Archimedes's secrets, rewritten the history of mathematics and discovered entirely new texts from the ancient world. This exhibition tells the story. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, October 16 through January 1.

God Is Beautiful; He Loves Beauty: *The Object in Islamic Art and Culture* is a three-day symposium whose keynote speaker will be Paul Goldberger, the Pulitzer Prize–winning architecture critic and writer for *The New Yorker*, who will discuss the Museum building, designed by I. M. Pei, as a work of Islamic art in its own right. Other speakers, each presenting a paper on a work of art in the Museum's collection, include curators, art historians, academics, researchers, archeologists, independent scholars and calligrapher Mohamed Zakariya. This fourth biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art is free and open to the public. ⓘ www.islamicartdoha.org. Museum of Islamic Art, **Doha, Qatar**, October 29–31.

PERMANENT/ INDEFINITE

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 eight weeks in advance 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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