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WRITTEN BY NILOSREE BISWAS

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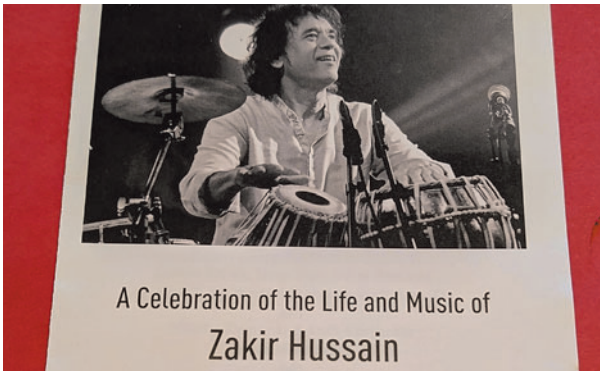


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WRITTEN BY JACK ZAHORA PHOTOGRAPHED BY TARA TODRAS-WHITEHILL

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WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY BANNING EYRE

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WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY SAMANTHA REINDERS

South Africa is the world's largest producer of mohair, a fabric used in fine clothing. The textile tradition dates to the arrival of Angora goats from the Ottoman Empire in the 1800s.

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FRONT COVER Angora goats are seen through a window at the van Hasselt farm in South Africa. A gift from the Ottomans in the 1830s and later imported from Türkiye, the goats produce highly prized mohair.





FirstLook

Poetic Fusion

Photograph by Jonathan Shadid

Prior to our modern practice of image manipulation with editing software, photographers worked more with planned intention and craft. We made premeditated and physical creations either through in-camera techniques, trick shots during the photo shoot, post-manipulation of negatives/slides or during the darkroom processing itself.

In this image taken in 1993, I sandwiched two original slides together, one a high-contrast silhouette image of a boat on the Senegal River separating Senegal and Mauritania, the other a photo of wind-carved sand dunes taken in the same vicinity. The result is more than an illusion—the visual poetry and fusion of these two realities is a metaphor for Mauritania itself, where the Sahara Desert meets the Atlantic Ocean, and where nomads and fishermen live side by side.

I created this while living in Mauritania, working with humanitarian agencies, before founding a local NGO focused on collective social and behavior change.

—JONATHAN SHADID

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Flavors

Sea Beans With Fava Beans and Dill

Recipe by Sally Butcher | Photograph by Yuki Sugiura

*This is one of my favorite lunches.
And it is super healthy.*

I started by cooking it for myself, and then realized it constitutes the perfect simple mezze dish—a warm salad of very few parts. So now everyone gets to enjoy it when sea beans and fava beans are in season, i.e., the summer months. If you want to make it out of season, use green beans instead of sea beans and frozen split fava beans.



Sally Butcher is a London-based food writer and cookbook author. She runs Persepolis, the acclaimed Persian food store in London. Her most recent book, *The New Middle Eastern Vegetarian: Modern Recipes from Veggiestan* (also published by Interlink) has been hugely successful and was shortlisted for the Guild of Food Writers' Cookery Book of the Year Award. Her first book, *Persia in Peckham: Recipes from Persepolis*, was also published to critical acclaim and short-listed for the 2008 Andre Simon Award. It was also selected by *The Sunday Times* as its cookbook of the year. When Sally is not running her store, she blogs and tweets prolifically and has amassed a devoted online following.

(Serves 1 hungry shopkeeper for lunch)

Splash of cooking oil

1 garlic clove, minced

70 grams sea beans

70 grams shucked fresh fava (broad) beans

6-7 cherry tomatoes

Pinch of ground saffron, steeped in a splash of boiling water

Couple of fronds of dill

Splash of lemon juice

Pepper, to taste (you won't need salt as sea beans are naturally full of the stuff)

Lemon wedges, to serve

Heat the oil in a pan until sizzling, then add the garlic. Toss in the vegetables and tomatoes and saute gently for 3-4 minutes before adding the saffron water, dill, lemon juice and pepper.

Serve with an extra wedge of lemon. I usually eat this with crispbread I make, but store bought will do as well.

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Sally Butcher. Interlink Books, 2023. [InterlinkBooks.com](https://www.interlinkbooks.com).



Q&A

Egyptology Today: A Conversation With Egyptian Archeologist Monica Hanna

Written by REBECCA ANNE PROCTOR

Until recently, Egyptian archeological sites were filled with foreign archeologists excavating prized treasures from the country's ancient past. Apart from laborers, one would rarely find Egyptians on these sites, says Monica Hanna, an Egyptian archeologist who is endeavoring to have her country's archeology be led and defined by Egyptians themselves. In her latest book, *The Future of Egyptology*, Hanna guides readers on a journey through the study of ancient Egypt, a discipline that began during the second half of the 19th century. She says that since its inception, Egyptology has been shaped by colonialism, causing some contemporary Egyptians to disengage with their history. Hanna cites the famous Nefertiti Bust, for whose return from Berlin she has long campaigned, and the 2013 looting of the Malawi Museum in Upper Egypt, claiming that increased education of Egyptian history in schools would have lessened the probability of such an incident.

As a child growing up in Cairo, Hanna loved museums and was fascinated by ancient Egyptian culture and history. When she began studying engineering in college, Hanna's mother saw that her real passion lay in studying the ancient civilization of her home country and encouraged her daughter to change her career path.

Hanna completed her undergraduate studies in Egyptology and archeological chemistry at the American University in Cairo in 2004. She later completed her doctorate at the University of Pisa in Italy and is now the founding dean of the College of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport in Aswan, Egypt. She is also working at the American University of Iraq-Baghdad to develop a program on heritage studies and conservation as part of her current interest in addressing the lack of education in archeological studies across the Middle East.

AramcoWorld spoke with Hanna about her new book.



In your new book, *The Future of Egyptology*, how do you connect the ancient world with the Egypt and Egyptians of today?

Egyptology is a discipline that started in Egypt—a colonial discipline made by the West during the 19th century when figures like Jean-François Champollion began deciphering the hieroglyphs in 1822. Ancient Egypt and Egyptology feels like a discipline that is trapped in a glass bottle catered to the very elite. Everyday people on the Egyptian street feel very far from it. This is how I recount the origins of Egyptology in academia. Egyptology remained an area study in the field of archeology until it evolved more recently.

Right now, Egyptology is what we see in the media—a hyped-up, adventurous version of the depth of knowledge that can be acquired through excavations and knowledge of ancient Egyptian sites. We have objects that are still being sold on the black market from illicit looting. We have big inter-

national museums buying illicit objects and looting of colonial heritage that began 200 years ago and continues today. We need to change this.

What is the future of Egyptology, and how do you achieve it?

The future of Egyptology entails a better engagement with modern Egyptian communities. People need to be involved in the current management of their heritage. They need to have a say in how their archeological sites are studied and managed. I want communities across Egypt to be involved in the excavations. I've worked on excavations where workmen had no clue about the history they were excavating.

An increase in Egyptians engaging in Egyptology through accessible education in archeology, museums and excavations will result in more hope for the future, inspiration and the economic and social potential of tourism based in Egyptian heritage.



Archeologist Monica Hanna poses at the Pyramid of Djoser in Saqqara, the oldest-known ancient Egyptian stone structure. Through her new book, Hanna seeks to engage modern Egyptians in the management of their heritage.

Why are archeology and Egyptology, for that matter, important not just to Egypt and the Arab world but to all of humanity?

Museums and archeological sites are just as important as a hospital, a school or a highway because they create space for knowledge, production, negotiation and learning of the past.

We want to build bridges and highways for infrastructure, while an archeological site or a museum is a form of social infrastructure. It is in this space where people can discuss heritage, rethink their past and better understand the present. As much as we think that a bridge is important to connect two sides of a place, the museum is also important to connect the past, the present and the future.

What is the educational landscape like for the study of archeology in Egypt?

There is not a solid school for Egyptology in Egypt—something I discuss in my book in the chapter “The Road Not Taken,” writing about how we as Egyptians have

been trying to play catch-up with the West because Egyptology was initially a European discipline made for Europeans. We have been trying to catch up, but we still, unfortunately, get faced with post-colonial challenges.

What are some of your latest excavations? What are you working on now?

I am not presently excavating but am planning a documentation project for the Temple of El-Dakka. ... I am also currently working at the American University of Iraq-Baghdad to develop a program on heritage studies and conservation and working on two more books. One is on the archival research I did on the restitution of the bust of Nefertiti, and the other one is on a critical history of Egyptology.

I think that excavations are wonderful and help us understand the past, but we have so much heritage that has already been uncovered but is not being managed and conserved properly. I am more concerned about this heritage than the heritage that is protected within the earth.

If I have a chance, I would like to do more site management and public archeology than excavations.

What regional efforts toward greater archeological work are taking place?

Saudi Arabia is doing excellent work in the field of archeology. Through archeology they are revisiting their heritage. They are investing in huge reconstructions, especially AlUla and historical Jeddah. Oman is another country to watch.

You have recently been working in Iraq. What is the state of archeology there?

The archeology there needs more conservation and site management. With many international teams working in the country, my focus will be on building capacities within the Iraqi community in such important fields.

Do you believe Egypt is inspiring other countries in their archeological efforts?

I think countries across the Arab world, and in many African countries, are looking to Egypt for the construction of museums and for heritage management. I think Egypt has enough capacity, especially in conservation.

Why is understanding our past through archeology so important to humankind?

We are not born in a vacuum. We are multilayers of history and multilayers of heritage. Feeling grounded in that past, not in a superficial nationalist way, is also good for social cohesion. When you can envision where you come from, then you can envision where you want to go.

This interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity.



Rebecca Anne Proctor is an independent journalist, editor and broadcaster based in Dubai and Rome. She is a former editor-in-chief of *Harper's Bazaar Art* and *Harper's Bazaar Interiors*.

Read more articles like this online at AramcoWorld.com.



Mughal Art's Influence on

REMBRANDT

WRITTEN BY NILOSREE BISWAS

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669), popularly known as Rembrandt, is arguably one of the greatest artists ever, famed for his myriad creations, which include biblical scenes, resplendent portraits of European elites, and a multitude of self-portraits, intense and nuanced. He was also a printmaker, draughtsman and a keen and voracious collector, acquiring from the world over.



As his career progressed over the years, Rembrandt's collection grew noteworthy. But the distinction came with a cost. The Dutch painter spent unceasingly, compounding a financial burden that compelled him to declare bankruptcy. Consequently, the municipal authorities of Amsterdam inventoried the artist's possessions, putting his beloved collection and his house up for sale to pay his lenders.

Among the artist's voluminous inventory was a slim book listed as item No. 203. It contained curious drawings in miniature as well as woodcuts and engravings on copper of various garments.

The finding opened one of the intriguing chapters in the famed painter's career, leading to a new understanding of his life and times. And nowadays we are

piecing together Rembrandt's lesser-known works.

"Scholars hypothesize that this album contained Mughal artwork, the 'miniatures' that inspired him," says Stephanie Schrader, curator of drawings at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California, who has explored Rembrandt's ties to South Asia.

According to Rembrandt experts, the artist had never visited India, suggesting he had no direct exposure to Indian culture. Yet he came up with his own versions of Mughal portraits, 25 in all, depicting emperors and courtiers.

Nearly 100 years later, these Mughal portraits, drawn between 1656-1661, came to light when British artist Jonathan Richardson the Elder's collection was auctioned in 1747.

The album was marked as "A book of Indian Drawings by Rembrandt, 25 in number" and tells the story of the artist's Mughal connection.

Rembrandt's Mughal works mark a departure from his oil-on-canvas style, such as a 1659 self-portrait, **OPPOSITE**, and often in size. Indian artist Bichitr's "Jujhar Singh Bundela Kneels in Submission to Shah Jahan" (1630-'40), **LEFT**, was the model for Rembrandt's 22.5-by-17.1 cm (8.8-by-6.7-inch) drawing in pen ink and brown wash of Shah Jahan (1656-'61).



ABOVE Rembrandt produced this 9.4-by-8.6-cm (3.7-by-9.4-inch) version of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan and one of his sons (1656-1658) in ink on Japanese paper with a light-brown wash.

MUGHAL ART AT REMBRANDT'S DOORSTEP

What was marked as No. 203 in the inventory was just one of a variety of objects originating from China, Japan, Türkiye and India, which was then ruled by the powerful Mughals. Indian acquisitions consisted of cups, baskets, fans, garments for men and women, boxes and some 60 hand weapons.

But how did they land at Rembrandt's doorstep?

The short answer: via the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Nederlandsche Geocroyeerde Oostindische Compagnie*, or VOC)'s trading ships that sailed from Surat, a port city in west India.

"He also collected many objects from foreign countries that came into Amsterdam on VOC ships,"

Schrader says, "so his interest in Indian culture wasn't unusual."

The Dutch East India Company arrived in India in 1602, looking out for cotton textiles produced in the southern and western coastal areas of Coromandel and Gujarat. The initial plan was to source textiles to exchange for spices like pepper, nutmeg, mace and other goods in Southeast Asia. However, in the following years Dutch trade expanded unexpectedly, leading to an enormous intra-Asian network, with Indian commodities like raw silk, muslin and opium taking center stage.

"Trade remained Dutch East India Company's priority. They had permission from the Mughals to begin trading in Surat, Bengal, Coromandel," notes Robert Ivermee, a Paris based historian of British and wider European colonialism in South Asia. "Textiles and raw silk bought in Bengal and the Coromandel coast were traded in Japan and Southeast Asia, as well as being taken back to Europe."

The VOC ships didn't just carry silk, cotton, spices and opium but also artworks in great numbers. By the early 17th century, art produced in the Mughal ateliers had begun circulating in Europe, with contemporary Dutch inventories referring to works as *Mogolese* (Mughal), *Oostindes* (East Indian) or *Suratse tekeningen* (Surat drawings). Whether Rembrandt owned an exclusive Mughal album is not known, but it is certain that he was inspired by these "foreign" paintings.

"Dutch East India Company was an incredibly active mercantile powerhouse from the beginning of the 17th century. Exchanges of goods, arts, objects would have been taking place regularly between the VOC and the Mughal court; thus, material goods and objects, including paintings, sketches and artistic renderings would have been arriving in the Netherlands in large quantities, and artists like Rembrandt would have seen and clearly had access to these," explains Mehreen Chida-Razvi, a London-based art historian of Mughal South Asia and deputy curator of the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art.

Chida-Razvi says Rembrandt produced "copies" or versions of Mughal paintings between 1656-61, by which point his interest had likely peaked. She adds Rembrandt "existed within a cultural milieu in which awareness of arts of Mughal South Asia, as well as other regions where Dutch EIC traded, would have easily come by."

"After making pen-and-ink drawings after the Mughal paintings, Rembrandt does turn to a flat, motionless language with subtle color; these qualities are found in later paintings." —AMY GOLAHNY



RIGHT "Shah Jahan With His Son Dara Shikoh," 47.8 by 34.2 cm (18.8 by 13.4 inches), by Indian painter Govardhan (1630–40). **BOTTOM** A similar drawing by Rembrandt in ink, 21.3 by 17.8 cm (8.2 by 7 inches), was displayed in a 2018 exhibition on Rembrandt's artwork at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California.

REMBRANDT'S MUGHAL DRAWINGS

Exposure to the Mughal world translated to a unique phase of Rembrandt's artistic creations.

In Schrader's opinion, "Rembrandt was interested in the Mughal paintings as portraits as he was a portrait painter. Mughals were popular figures in Dutch culture, and Shah Jahan was Rembrandt's contemporary—the Mughals were wealthy and powerful, much more powerful and sophisticated than the Dutch merchants."

As for the Dutch merchants, this was about a fascination for exotica, an advertisement of sorts that hinted at their power and global outreach.

"In his earliest works, there is an interest in the exotic as markers of another time, geography and culture," notes scholar and Rembrandt specialist Amy Golahny. "Familiarity with foreign costumes and customs would have been essential for artists if they were to portray [foreign] subjects."

Rembrandt drew portraits of Mughal rulers including Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb and Muslim scholars. Shah Jahan seemed to stand out the most, as Rembrandt drew the ruler more than once.

The artworks that are not replicas but rather the Dutch painter's interpretations still display his remarkable ability to imitate. The final creations reflect a shift in his oeuvre. All the drawings were made on Torinoko, an expensive Japanese art paper,



WHO WAS REMBRANDT?

"Old Master": label for Europe's most prolific pre-19th-century painters

Known mostly for: portraiture and religious paintings and drawings

Time and place: lived and worked in Amsterdam, hub of European trade with Asia, Africa and the Levant

Mughal creations: Whether Rembrandt chose to make the copies or they were commissioned, living during the Dutch Golden Age would've brought items from the East into his orbit.



sourced directly from Japan.

Experts portray this artistic departure from Rembrandt's usual style as a way to reinvent himself.

Rembrandt himself attached an unusual importance to these Mughal paintings, evident in his exclusive use of Asian paper. Though in the 1640s he often used the paper to print his etchings, it is the Mughal portraits that survive on it today.

"There is more color in Rembrandt's Mughal drawings than in most of his drawings, so he did imitate some of the color," Schrader notes, adding that the Asian paper was more refined than European paper and a better vehicle for conveying vivid colors. The artist was fond of experimenting with different papers in his printmaking, so he probably kept it in his studio.

Chida-Razvi says Rembrandt typically worked on a much larger scale than the painted page. "His sketches could have been for self-training exercises as well."

Golahny's interpretation throws further light on Rembrandt's oeuvre at this point. "[The] 1650s is the decade of a varied, meticulously careful draftsmanship, as for example with the Mughal drawings. He also copied equally meticulously drawings by [Venetian artist Andrea] Mantegna. So, he is looking beyond local markers to imagery from distant lands more broadly than only the Mughal miniatures. In both the Mughal and Mantegna copies, Rembrandt is interested in the technique of the originals."

Golahny adds that in the Mughal copies, Rembrandt has a fine pen, but his approach is to capture



LEFT An anonymous painter depicts Surat, India, from the second half of the 17th century. For the Dutch East India Company, India was an important center for the purchase of cotton fabrics, spices, porcelain and art.

WHAT WAS THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY?

Operated: 1602-1799

Also known as: United East India Company and *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC). The first publicly traded company in the world, VOC was devised using money from private investors to launch trade ventures in Asia.

Purpose: to secure commercial empire for then-Dutch Republic (today's Netherlands) in Indian Ocean

Power: held monopoly on all Dutch trade and shipping with Asia and had the right

to make treaties with Asian governments, enlist soldiers and wage war

Trade and influence: VOC transported millions of goods between Europe and Asia, including two-decade monopoly on East Asian

spices. Ships also returned with exotica that previously reached Europe via Silk Route from China across Central Asia to Middle East and Mediterranean Sea. Commodities could be distributed in larger quantities through the VOC.

Sources: Britannica, The J. Paul Getty Museum, WorldHistory.org, Aronson Antiquairs of Amsterdam

Among the surviving 23 of 25 creative copies by Rembrandt of Mughal paintings are portraits from 1656-'61 of rulers and courtiers such as **OPPOSITE** "Mughal Nobleman on Horseback," believed to be Shah Jahan, and **RIGHT** Emperor Jahangir receiving an officer bearing a document, pen and ink with brown and gray wash on Asian paper, 21 by 18.4 cm (8.2 by 7.2 inches).

the pose, garment and sometimes the expression of the model without imitating the originals' fine and closed outline. That is often filled in with opaque watercolor.

Each drawing paid particular attention to postural gait, clothing and accessories. Rembrandt interpreted Mughal styling and never missed the details of the *jamās* (stitched frock coats), *chakdar* (full-skirted frock coats, a variant of jama) mostly made of muslin, ornately designed *patkas* (sashes), jewelry, turbans and their specific ornaments called *sarpech*, and the embellished *jutis* (mules, or flat slide-in shoes worn by both Mughal men and women).

These were alien and culture specific to Rembrandt, yet he included them every time he drew. To highlight the smallest Mughal elements within his otherwise monochrome schemes of brown-wash and gray ink compositions, he used red and yellow chalks and washes of red chalk to color shoes, sashes, turban pins, sword hilts and the like.

He was also interested in the physiological details of his artistic subjects. He meticulously documented Mughal features including noses, beards and moustaches; in one of his Shah Jahan drawings, he produced a white beard, indicating grief after empress consort Mumtaz Mahal's death. Schrader believes "copying was his way of learning about another style of making portraits."

When it came to Rembrandt's interpretation of *Four Mullahs Seated Under a Tree*, he prominently included new elements in his signature style. Unlike the original *Four Mullahs* (attributed to an unknown Indian artist, 1627-1628), in which the four wise men are seen discussing spiritual matters while referring to books on a terrace with a carpet laid out, Rembrandt's version has no books, and the subjects are under a tree. Other minute differences appear, such as the designs of the coffee cups and background settings.

In his print *Abraham Entertaining the Angels* (1656), which scholars believe is again inspired by *Four Mullahs*, Rembrandt changes the theme, expanding beyond studying and recording a Mughal composition. He retains the overall essence of his source but details it with newer elements. For Rembrandt specialists this painting serves as undeniable evidence of his Mughal influences.

"After making pen-and-ink drawings after the Mughal paintings, Rembrandt does turn to a flat, motionless language with subtle color; these qualities are found in later paintings," Golahny says, citing *Flora* (Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York), *Woman With a Pink* (Metropolitan Museum of Art) and *The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*



(Nationalmuseum in Stockholm).

This distinct set of sketches isn't well known to most Rembrandt admirers, experts say. "They don't look like Rembrandt's work—especially the late work," Schrader says. "They are atypical and show him working in a much more refined manner than he is known for."

But Rembrandt's connection with the Mughal miniatures reflects his aspiration to know about a world beyond Amsterdam and Europe, which in turn unfolds a story of cross-pollination and intimate learning. His immaculate details of the physiognomies, garments and accessories are telling enough of his cosmopolitanism, thoroughly defining him as a lifelong learner, curious and open.

By drawing the rulers and vignettes of the magnificent Mughal empire, Rembrandt may have been performing an exercise in newer art techniques. Or perhaps he instead was signaling a deep interest in a foreign culture and a sophisticated world. **AW**



Nilosree Biswas is a columnist, author and filmmaker who writes about Asian history, art, culture, food and cinema. Her articles regularly appear in national and international media.

Portugal's Enduring Love of TILEMAKING

WRITTEN BY JACK ZAHORA PHOTOGRAPHED BY TARA TODRAS-WHITEHILL

The National Tile Museum in Lisbon, Portugal, features **CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT** a 1558 tile bearing the heraldry of Teodósio I, the 5th Duke of Braganza; textile motifs done ca. 1500-1525 with the *cuerda seca* (dry cord) technique developed in the Middle East; and tiles from Seville, Spain, made with the molded technique, ca. 1500-1510.

OPPOSITE A visitor studies "Composition With Azulejos With Islamic Motifs" from Seville, Spain, ca. 1500-1550.

A young Japanese couple peers through the white-and-cobalt display in the window of Cerâmica S. Vicente. Beyond the tiles they catch a glimpse of 32-year-old Miguel Moura as he uses his fingertips to press soft clay into a plaster mold.

The tourists are among the hundreds who every day file through his small but bustling atelier in Lisbon's trendy São Vicente neighborhood, which is a short walk from the city's famed Fado restaurants and the Castle of St. George.

"There's a delicate balance between welcoming people in and dedicating our very small team to production," he says just as another knock at the door interrupts him. Moura continues, saying that he often has commissions for thousands of tiles that can take three to six months to make.

Portuguese tiles, locally called *azulejos*, a word stemming from the Arabic word *al-zilli* for small, polished stone, are considered in the top tier of the country's artistic heritage.

From tiles with solid vibrant colors to ones with ornate depictions of cherubs and flowers, boutique and commercial producers have adorned apartments, churches, subway stations, theaters and just about every other kind of surface in the country.

And yet Moura is a standout among his peers because he employs a rarely used method from a bygone era—one that harks back to the beginning of Portugal's love affair with producing tiles that began during a royal trip to Seville, Spain, in 1498.

TILE'S DEFINING ERA IN JUST 50 STEPS

Every year, hundreds of thousands of visitors wander down a darkly lit hall in Lisbon's Museu Nacional do Azulejo (National Tile Museum). Unbeknownst to many, if not most, of them, they pass through one of the most impactful half centuries of Portuguese art history.









It takes the museum's lead curator, Constança Lima, about 50 paces to walk through the entire chronology that begins with a nearly 10-foot-tall Moorish-style mosaic of geometric patterns that is devoid of any portrayal of people and ends with a wall display of Christian iconography.

Pointing to the start of the exhibition, Lima says, "This is one of the earliest examples we have of the Islamic era of tilemaking in Portugal, which began when King Manuel I went to Seville and Alhambra Palace in the late 15th century," shortly after nearly eight centuries of Arab rule of the Iberian Peninsula ended in 1492.

The Portuguese king had become enamored with the Moorish esthetic of ceramic tiles, which were produced in part by what Spaniards call the *alicatado* technique. Lima says the method saw clay tiles that had already been painted and baked be painstakingly cut into pieces and pressed into mortar to form shapes such as spindles, petals, leaves and bone.

Upon his return to Portugal, King Manuel I commissioned the Moriscos—Moors who had been forced to convert to Christianity or face exile from Spain—to make tiles that would cover the walls of his palace in the city of Sintra, just outside Lisbon.

Oddly enough, while the Moors shipped their ceramic tiles from Spain to Portugal at the behest of King Manuel I, there's no evidence to show they previously produced the tiles in the country during their approximately 500-year rule of the region that

effectively ended in 1249. That's according to Rafaela Xavier, a researcher at the University of Lisbon who specializes in 15th- and 16th-century tilemaking.

"There are no traces of tile production at the time of the [Moorish] occupation in Portugal," she wrote via email. "But there are traces of ceramic production in various parts of the country, such as in Mértola," referring to the thousands of pieces of Moorish-era pottery that have been excavated in the village.

Instead, tilemaking, inspired by Islamic architecture, flourished in Portugal under a Christian king. However, Lima says, "these tiles were not considered religious [by the Portuguese]." She says it's a major reason their popularity exploded among the country's aristocracy.

Even the Museu Nacional do Azulejo, which was built in 1509 as a Catholic convent called the Madre de Deus, boasts Moorish tiles on the walls leading up to its church.

The repetitive floral patterns of the red, green

ABOVE Tiled walls and stairs greet a museum visitor. **OPPOSITE**

Third-generation tilemaker Miguel Moura works on a Moorish tile design at his workshop in Lisbon.

"[Moorish-style tilemaking] is something that there's not a lot of people doing."

—MIGUEL MOURA







ABOVE Moorish tiles are seen under a window of the Madre de Deus church inside the National Tile Museum. **PREVIOUS PAGES** Tiles adorn many buildings in Lisbon.

and blue ceramic pieces are almost muted against the house of worship's lavish baroque interior with its gilded wood carvings. In a more literary take on history, this juxtaposition could be used to foreshadow what would become Portugal's relatively quick turn from the Moors' artistic sensibilities.

MOVING AWAY FROM THE MOORS' TILEMAKING STYLE

While the importance of Moorish tilemaking to the past 500 years of Portuguese culture cannot be overstated, the motifs instantly clashed with the conventional tastes of Europeans at the time of their introduction.

From the 1490s to 1527, Europe was experiencing the golden age of the Italian Renaissance. The legendary works of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Rafael were in vogue as the continent moved away from the abstract art of the Gothic era for more

hyperrealistic imagery of people in dynamic poses. Not only that, but King Manuel I died in 1521. "Around this period, you can see the Portuguese commissions began including flowers, vegetables, animals and people," says Lima.

Reflecting this assertion, she takes a few steps down the timeline of the Moorish exhibition to reveal tiles that are markedly different from what the Portuguese monarch saw during his trip to Seville. While geometric shapes are still present, the focus is clearly on caricatures of animate objects.

The tilemaking process had also changed dramatically.

Gone was the labor- and time-intensive *alicatado* technique, replaced by the Hispano-Moresque *arista* (Spanish for "ridges") method of pushing soft clay into square molds. And while working with an intact tile was much more efficient than making a mosaic out of tiny pieces, it was no match for what was about to come out of Florence.

"In the middle of the 16th century, the Italians developed the *maiolica* technique, which is a much faster and cheaper methodology of making tiles," says Lima. Instead of filling in cavities with glaze, ceramicists could paint directly on top of the clay, treating it like a canvas. It not only enabled the mass production of tiles but also allowed the Portuguese to turn to other manufacturers in Europe.

In the years that followed, Portuguese tiles were produced by Flemish artists who leaned heavily on the white-and-cobalt-blue coloring made popular in Chinese porcelain. It marked a complete

"[The exhibition's opening mosaic] is one of the earliest examples we have of the Islamic era of tilemaking in Portugal."

—CONSTANÇA LIMA



departure from the Moorish esthetic and remains popular today.

REBELLING IN THE NAME OF PRESERVATION

Xavier says the first national production of tiles in Portugal hadn't begun until a few decades after the creation of the maiolica technique—and hardly with the motifs used by the Moors.

"Some tile factories [today], such as Viuva Lamego, produce tiles that evoke Moorish tiles," says Xavier, adding that "in the artistic field, Moorish tiles are not so present."

Meanwhile, on Moura's worktable, copper and manganese oxides, cobalt and metals such as pewter and iron produce the kaleidoscope of paints.

Having already fired the clay negative of his mold in a kiln set to nearly 980 degrees Celsius (1,800 degrees Fahrenheit), he now fills the resulting polygonal shape—one that is prominent in the Nasrid Palaces, the Islamic arts and culture complex of the Alhambra in Granada, Spain—with green, blue, black and honey colors.

"They're just my favorite tiles. They're fun," Moura says. "I have to work my hands. ... I really like the influence from the 15th century. And this is something that there's not a lot of people doing."

Moura says he's been producing this kind of tile since he was a child. "I'm a third-generation tilemaker; I don't think I really had a choice," says Moura as his mother, 72-year-old Cristina Pina, looks on from her

easel where she attends to a sketch of a floral motif.

For him, replicating this centuries-old Moorish method is not just a form of art but a small form of rebellion that began 10 years ago. "I went to Spain for a few months where my friend had a studio near Seville. I wanted to learn something different than my mother's traditional blue-and-white style from the 18th century."

Having such a rare specialty has led to his collaboration with companies in the southern Algarve region of Portugal, which are restoring old palaces that are covered in Moorish tiles. However, in a nod to his mother, Moura admits that the 18th-century style of tilemaking is what keeps his family's business profitable.

But as an artist, he says profitability won't motivate him to come to work for the next 30 years. "Sure, this is not the core business. However, I don't want to feel like I work in a factory that produces millions of identical tiles. I want to create something unique, something special. This is something I'm doing to keep this tradition alive." **AW**

ABOVE Moorish influence is evident among the tiled walls in Lisbon.



Jack Zahora is an award-winning journalist whose work has appeared on various major outlets including National Public Radio and Al Jazeera English. He's also the chief content officer and managing partner of TW Storytelling Agency, a media company that's based in Lisbon, Portugal. **Tara Todras-Whitehill** is an award-winning photo-journalist and CEO of the TW Storytelling Agency, based in Lisbon, Portugal. Her passion is empowering NGOs, social impact teams and journalists with impactful storytelling.





Late Tabla Virtuoso

ZAKIR HUSSAIN

Set Rhythm of Collaboration

WRITTEN BY
BANNING EYRE



The sounds of Indian classical music flowed into jazz, American folk and popular music, modern dance and percussive virtuosity worthy of the man being honored, the late *tabla* maestro Zakir Hussain. In San Francisco, California's Grace Cathedral, a parade of musicians took the stage wielding guitars, sitar, violin, banjo, saxophones and all manner of drums and other percussion instruments, summoning a mesmerizing flow of deeply felt music that lasted over four hours.

Throughout these performances, few words were spoken. Only at the end did Hussain's widow, Antonia Minnecola, take the stage to thank all involved. "Tonight," she said, "we stormed the gates of heaven." The gathered thousands, including Hussain's students, collaborators and admirers in this city, where he spent much of his life, erupted in thunderous applause.

Born in Mumbai, India, Hussain was the son of Alla Rakha, the *tabla* player who accompanied sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar in introducing Indian classical music to the United States and much of the world beginning in the 1950s.

A child prodigy, Hussain began playing *tabla* at age 7 and was touring with masters on par with his father by age 12. By his own account, he walked

around Mumbai with a boom box on his shoulder, listening to The Beatles, The Doors, Jimi Hendrix and more. When his father was too ill to travel to the US for a 1969 concert with Shankar, 19-year-old Hussain took his place and his transformational global journey began.

When Hussain died unexpectedly of a rare respiratory illness in December 2024, he was widely seen as the greatest and most consequential *tabla* player who ever lived. His undeniable command of the demanding traditions of both North and South Indian classical music became a stepping-off point for seemingly endless forays into other traditions, from jazz to bluegrass, Latin music to hip-hop. So while mastery of Indian classical traditions is one clear accomplishment Hussain leaves behind, it is likely his boldness in pursuing collaborations with a diverse range of musicians and in a variety of genres that best defines his legacy.

The concert at Grace spoke to that in a commemorative ritual, interweaving dazzling virtuosity from both Indian classical musicians as well as legendary American musicians: Béla Fleck on banjo; jazz performers Joshua Redman, Charles Lloyd, Steve Smith and others; an ensemble of drummers led by Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead; and Abigail Washburn singing the Charles Wesley hymn "And Am I Born to Die," glorious and unamplified, her voice resounding through the cathedral's towering inner sanctum.

Across genres Zakir Hussain was a master player of the *tabla*, a pair of small hand drums fundamental to classical music of northern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh since the 18th century. Here he performs during the True People's Celebration in Chichibu, Japan.



ABOVE A tabla choir performs during a celebration of life for Hussain in San Francisco, California.

ZAKIR HUSSAIN'S INFLUENCE

Over five decades in the US, Hussain's music career expanded across a variety of ensembles.

Among the first American musicians Hussain connected with in the early '70s was drummer, bandleader and musicologist Mickey Hart. In his 1990 book, *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*, Hart notes Hussain's virtuosity, but the true revelation was the way Hussain revealed the tabla's "palette of emotional expression." Hart had organized a concert for Hussain and his Indian classical ensemble and been changed by the experience. "I was stunned," he recalled. "Once I sat back and I was rolling tape, I realized what was going down here. They were playing for each other."

In the 1970s Hussain also worked with guitarist John McLaughlin and Indian violinist L. Shankar in the ensemble Shakti. A high summit of virtuosity and structured improvisation, Shakti redefined jazz fusion as a global music movement. The ensemble continued to re-emerge in new formations right up to the year of Hussain's death.

In 1999, Karsh Kale, Hussain and maverick producer, multi-instrumentalist and label owner Bill

Laswell fused tradition and electronic music on the album and touring ensemble *Tabla Beat Science*. Kale is an Indian American tabla player and a pioneer of the Asian Underground movement, a fusion of electronica and various Eastern traditions. He, like many musicians, has collaborated and studied with Hussain over the years. "There was definitely an era before Zakir and after Zakir," says Kale.

Indian classical music is a tradition in which each new generation absorbs the innovations of its predecessors and tries to exceed them, Kale notes. "All the Indian classical musicians that play all over the world, not only tabla players, definitely owe something to Zakir."

Kale was a rock, pop and jazz-fusion drummer who began to study tabla only as an adult and after hearing Hussain. Hussain's curiosity constantly compelled him to conquer new creative territory. What Kale calls his eagerness "to jump out of the box and speak many languages at the same time" was both thrilling and empowering.

Hussain found a kindred spirit in banjo player and composer Fleck, an artist also known for his cross-genre forays. Fleck emerged from the bluegrass world and recalls that his peers were, frankly, intimidated by Shakti.

Summoning courage in 2003, Fleck and bassist/composer Edgar Meyer approached Hussain about collaborating on a classical composition for the new Shermerhorn Symphony Center in Nashville. "It was crazy," recalls Fleck. "If Edgar and I worked on something, it would take us months because it was a lot of slow-moving and contradicting each other. But with Zakir in the room, all of a sudden, decisions got made, and they were good decisions." The result was a concerto called "The Melody of

"All the Indian classical musicians that play all over the world ... definitely owe something to Zakir."

—KARSH KALE



Rhythm,” and from there, Hussain and Fleck became friends and co-creators for life. “Zakir always considered what he played to be melodic,” says Fleck. “Every note was bubbling. I really believe he felt that they were all pitches.”

Fleck ranks Hussain at the top of all the musicians he’s performed with over a varied career. “As an accompanist, his job was to get the best out of the soloist. ‘What is he trying to accomplish? What can I do to help?’ Zakir instinctively knew how far to push a musician, where your edges were, what you couldn’t go past.”

Fleck says Hussain made him a better player. “I call it the Magic Carpet Ride. His sense of time was so delicate and fine I could just relax. We could just sail.” Fleck admired Hussain’s informality, both off and on stage, evidenced in his commitment to giving every audience a good time. Hussain would toss in a melody from “The Lone Ranger Theme” or Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in the middle of a dazzling tabla solo. “Some people might say that’s cheesy,” says Fleck. “But it brought a lot of people to him.”

In collaboration with Fleck and others, in 2024 Hussain won three of his four Grammy awards, including one for Shakti’s final album, “This Moment.”

For Fleck, losing Hussain was devastating, “like falling off a cliff.” He says the best way he can carry forth Hussain’s legacy is to mentor and inspire musicians, as Hussain did.

ABOVE Béla Fleck and Abigail Washburn perform a tribute to their late musical colleague.

LEFT Antonia Minnecola, Hussain’s widow, thanks those who staged the concert.





OPPOSITE TOP Hussain sings with his father, noted tabla player Alla Rakha, with whom he recorded an album. **OPPOSITE**

BOTTOM Salar Nader, left, studied under and performed with Hussain for 36 years. **LEFT** Hussain performs with the Symphony Orchestra of India in 2015 in Mumbai.

BELOW Hussain and Sanjoy Roy, left, director of Team-work Arts, take part in a speaker session on music at the Zee Jaipur (India) Literature Festival in 2018.

As much as Hussain ventured beyond the known boundaries of Indian classical music, he was also an unrivaled exemplar of an august tradition. In this capacity, he mentored some of the greatest tabla players of our time.

THE LEGACY AND PROTÉGÉS

One of Hussain's protégés is Salar Nader. He encountered Hussain as a child in Berkley, California, at age 7. "I basically walked into Zakirji's classroom in 1988 as a 7-year-old," recalls Nader. (Adding "ji" to the end of a name demonstrates respect.) "He was teaching summer tabla classes twice a week."

A young boy among adult students, Nader might easily have felt cowed, but from that first encounter, Nader was struck by Hussain's gentle, "childlike" manner, his skill as a "psychologist," immediately sensing what each student needed and the best way

to teach them. So began Nader's life of study, mentorship and friendship with Hussain, which would last for the next 36 years.

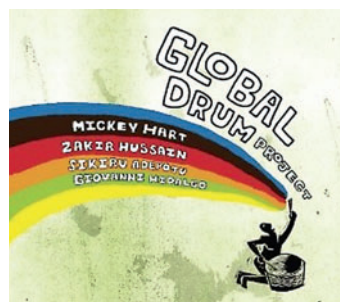
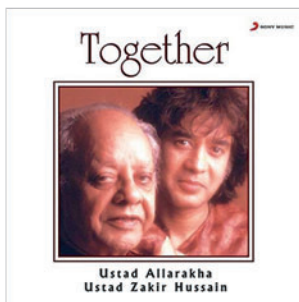
Nader had grown up in a musical household, immersed in Central Asian folk and classical traditions, including tapes of Hussain performances.

Today, Nader is one of the most accomplished tabla players alive. He performs with top-flight artists from Central Asia, as well as with jazz group Stanley Clarke Band.

The legacy Nader and other longtime students carry forward begins with tradition, complex classical compositions—some Hussain's own, some

"It was incredible to have lived in the times of Zakir Hussain."

—SALAR NADER



TOP From left, Zakir Hussain, Edgar Meyer and Rakesh Chaurasia accept the Grammy Award for global music performance for the song "Pashto" in 2024. **ABOVE** Hussain's albums include, from left: "Together," 1990; "Global Drum Project," 2007; "Tabla and Beyond," 2019; and "As We Speak," 2023.

passed down from bygone gurus. "We're still trying to crack the code," says Nadar.

From there, Hussain encouraged even his classical students to extend the range of the tabla, which he called "a limitless instrument." When Nader became the first tabla player to perform on Broadway, in a production of "The Kite Runner," Hussain was thrilled, proudly telling Nader, "You've created your own lane." And it continued with Nader's forays into hip-hop rhythms, jazz and more.

Another longtime classical student of Hussain is Amit Kavthekar, who also performed at Grace Cathedral. Kavthekar began studying tabla in Mumbai when he was 5. Showing talent, he was sent to study with Hussain's father.

When Rakha died in 2000, Kavthekar began studying with Hussain. This was challenging in India

because he was such a star. "There are always hundreds of people around him," Kavthekar recalled. But after moving to Boston in 2010, Kavthekar spent focused time with his teacher.

He witnessed Hussain playing with Indian masters but also with Fleck, McLaughlin and others. All this enlarged his concept of tabla. He mastered the tradition and continues to accompany top-flight classical artists, but in 2021 he also joined jazz guitarist Al Di Meola's group.

Among the deepest skills Kavthekar learned from Hussain is the ability to sense the needs of each situation and adjust accordingly. "Onstage," recalls Kavthekar, "one day he's playing with Béla Fleck, and the next day he's playing hardcore Indian classical music. Then again, he's playing with a symphony, and every time his playing changed,



ABOVE Surrounded by fans in Kolkata, India, Hussain signs autographs after a Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet in 2023.

sometimes loud, sometimes very soft for a whole concert.” He adds, “You never felt that he was thinking about himself as the most important person on the stage.”

Roshni Samlal came to Indian classical music through an unusual route. She was born in Trinidad, a descendant of Indian migrants. When the family moved to the US in 1997, she was familiar with giants of the tabla, including Hussain.

Samlal blossomed from this homespun musical life to a professional career when she joined a musicians’ collective very much of the Hussain era, Brooklyn Raga Massive. Hussain was a crucial model for Brooklyn Raga Massive, which began as a series of jam sessions in the spirit of Hussain, a classical virtuoso who was also free to experiment with Mickey Hart, get down with Chuck D, or a Western classical or jazz ensemble. This openness was a revelation for Samlal.

“A lot of us were students, and some were tabla players who would play with sitar players, and we would all show up at the jam session. It was a safe space where you could try out the material, and organically, people started calling each other for gigs. I realized that a tabla player could also be an ensemble leader.”

Samlal met Hussain when she was a teenager, but in Hussain’s last year of life, she attended one of his intensive workshops. She had once heard Hussain

explain the guru-student relationship this way: “The guru is a fast-flowing river. A student is just trying to get a cup of the water from that river that’s always just traveling and kind of in flux.”

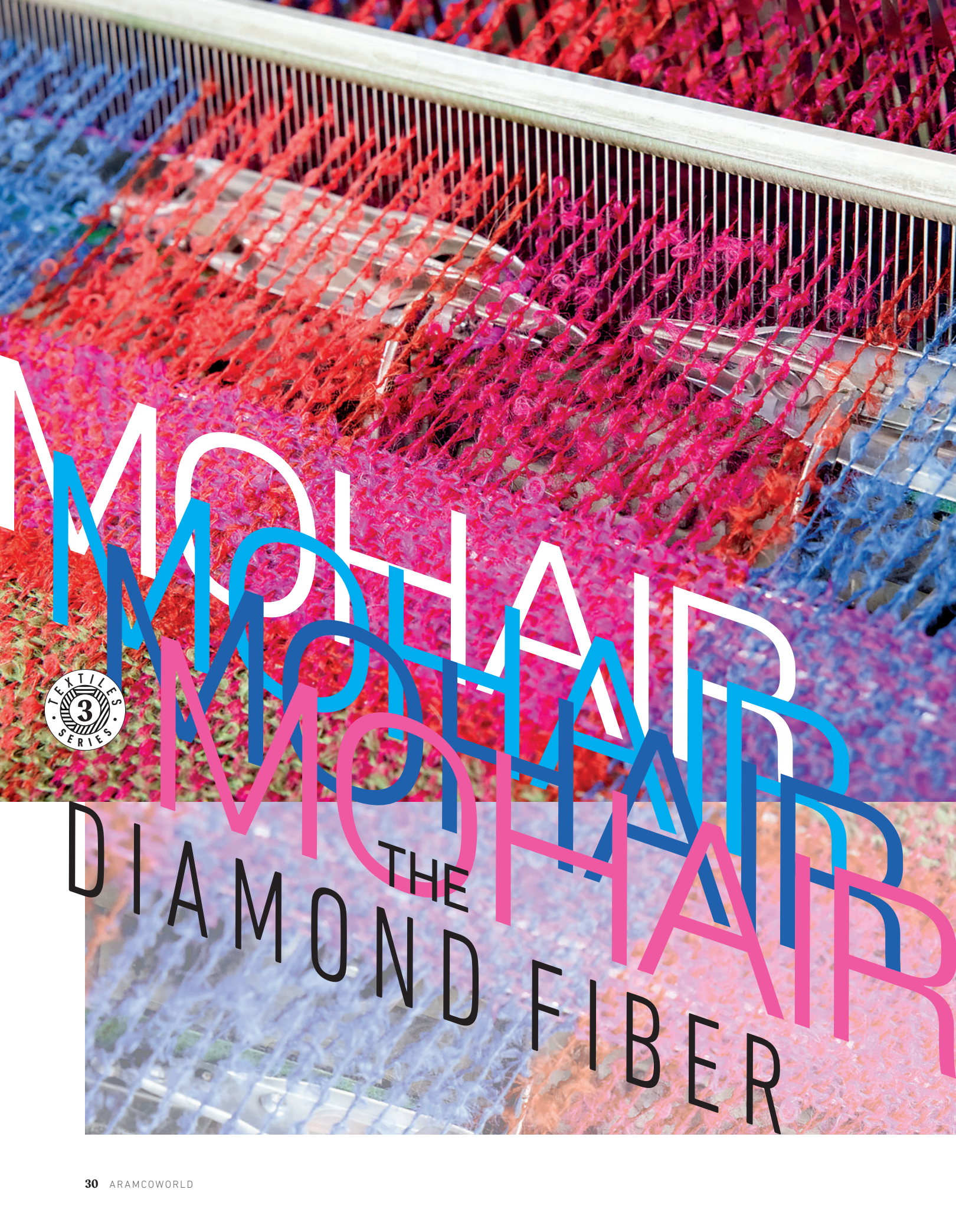
For all he accomplished, Hussain knew that there are still many people around the world who have no notion of the tabla, and that drives a sense of mission for Hussain’s protégés, as it did for Hussain himself. Minnecola, his widow, now leads the Zakir Hussain Institute, dedicated to keeping her husband’s legacy alive. “As a start,” she says, “we’ll be continuing his teaching and archiving his performances and workshops.”

For his protégés, Hussain was a gift. “It is incredible to have lived in the times of Zakir Hussain,” says Nader.

That was certainly the consensus at Grace Cathedral. Hussain had planned a busy itinerary for 2025. Instead, a global cadre of artists and followers embraces the challenge of creating anew in the post Zakir Hussain era. **AW**

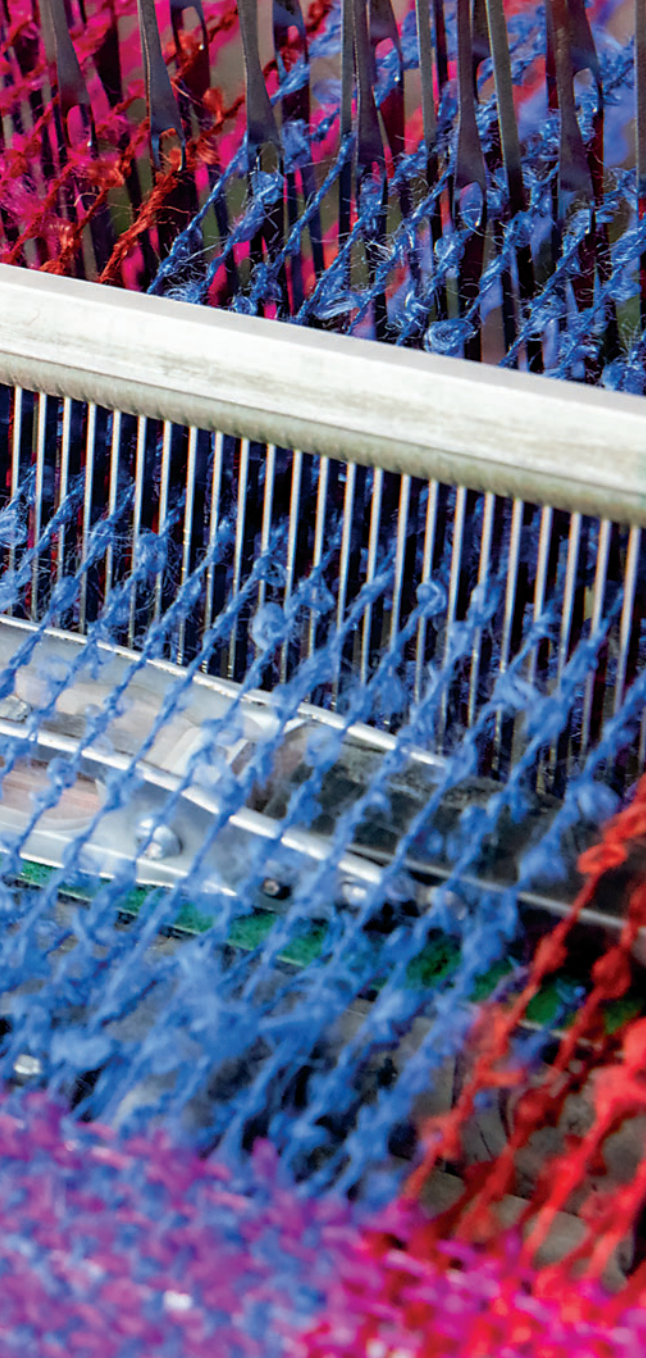


Banning Eyre is a senior producer for Public Radio International’s Peabody Award-winning “Afropop Worldwide” (afropop.org) and author of a number of books on African music and history.



MOLHAN

DIAMOND THE FIBER



WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY SAMANTHA REINDERS

Gizella Arendse sits with a quilting needle in hand threading mohair—a fiber produced from the hair of the Angora goat. She is one of 11 women artisans working for the family-run van Hasselt farm at the foot of the Swartberg Mountains in South Africa.

Mohair, as a fiber, is known for its sheen, durability and resilience. Once it's woven into yarn, either by hand or high-end machine, it is in high demand, primarily from the luxury clothing market. But its durability and ability to hold color also makes it popular for things such as shawls and blankets.

Most of its making starts on goat farms like this one.

"We see the whole cycle from the studio," says Arendse. "...The newborn kids who are so cute, the teenagers they become, the first time they get sheared, and then, here us ladies sit, working with the very fibers from those animals, making beautiful things..."

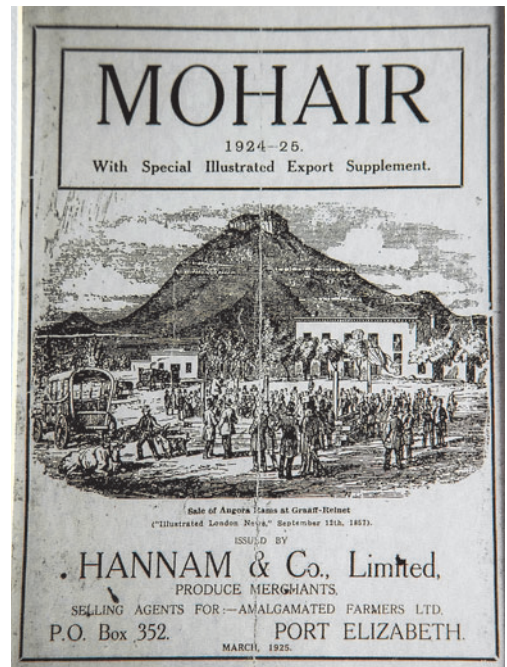
For the artisans mohair is a passion. "I love mohair. There is nothing like it," she continues as she wipes a bead of sweat from her brow. It's hot and dry here in the Karoo, the region where most of the country's Angora goats are farmed. In fact, the

OPPOSITE The Hinterveld Mill operates outside Gqeberha, South Africa, turning fleece into finished fabric.
ABOVE "There is nothing like it," Gizella Arendse says of mohair.



ABOVE Seda Ozbar farms Angora goats in 2022 in Ankara, Türkiye, one of the world's leading mohair producers.

LEFT John Brown and young Master Gatheral, son of the British consul to Türkiye, pose with an Angora ram in 1867. **RIGHT** The Mohair Experience Museum in Jansenville, South Africa, displays an old magazine cover related to the export of mohair.



word *karoo* means “dry” in Khoi, the language of the Bushmen who first lived in these parts. Here, in this dryness, Angora goats flourish.

Today, South Africa is the world’s largest producer of mohair—making 54% of the world’s supply in 2023, according to Marco Coetzee of Mohair South Africa (MSA), the industry body that promotes, regulates and supports the sustainable production of mohair in South Africa.

Yet mohair has not always been a major industry

in South Africa. The first Angora goats arrived in the region, then a British colony, only in the 1830s. They were brought from the Ottoman Empire, specifically present-day Türkiye.

ORIGINS OF ANGORA GOATS AND MOHAIR

Goats in general have been around since time immemorial—they are referenced in holy books, and



ABOVE With her GuguByGugu brand, fashion designer Gugu Peteni is elevating mohair onto the international stage. **RIGHT** A mohair sweater designed by Gugu celebrates her South African heritage and craftsmanship.



physical evidence shows they were present in Greek and Roman times. The exact origins of Angora goats, however, are somewhat shrouded in mystery.

Gürsel Dellal, director of Ankara University's Ankara Goat and Mohair Application and Research Center, says the Angora goat is related to a breed that originated in the Himalayas and Tibet and likely came through migration of Turkic tribes from Central Asia to Anatolia in the 11th century CE.

In fact, he says, "it has been developed as a breed mainly in Ankara Province and its surroundings and takes its name from this city [formerly known as Angora]."

By the first century CE, historical writings mention the distinctive long fiber of goats from Anatolia (Asia Minor). While this is not definitive proof of the breed's origin, it suggests that selective breeding for long, luxurious locks began in this part of the world centuries ago.

In Türkiye the Angora goat was originally a house animal, kept by women to provide fiber for their own clothing. The goats, as we recognize them today, were first described in Western European writings, according to Dellal, as early as 1538.

The word "mohair," he says, comes from the Arabic word *mukhayyar*. Originally meaning "distinguished" or "selected," it came to refer to "goat's hair fabric."

Strict control of the industry allowed the Turks to dominate the mohair trade for centuries. While Angora goats became known outside the Ottoman Empire by the mid-16th century, it wasn't until a hundred years later that raw mohair fiber reached Western Europe—partially because of a prohibition on its export, says Dellal.

Domestic consumption and export of fabric woven from mohair fiber "made very important contributions to the Ottoman Empire economy for

The first Angora goats arrived in the region from the Ottoman Empire in the 1830s.



Angora goats are raised on the van Hasselt family farm at the foot of the Swartberg mountains in South Africa. The farm owns one of the oldest mohair studs.

officials. It's here the story takes an interesting twist—the ewe was pregnant and gave birth to a ram kid during the journey, says MSA's Coetzee.

The rest, as they say, is history. Over the following decades, more Angora goats were imported, and through selective breeding, farmers successfully established herds that thrived in the semi-arid Karoo region. By the mid-to-late 1800s, South Africa had surpassed the Ottomans in mohair production, becoming a dominant player in the global market. Fast-forward to 2024, and Mohair South Africa estimates that there are just shy of a million Angoras in the country.

AN INDUSTRY THRIVES

South Africa's thriving mohair industry—and the sheer scale of it—is palpable at the Stucken Group's large processing warehouses and its Hinterveld Mill just outside Gqeberha, the country's mohair hub. This family-owned, vertically integrated business has built its reputation over 150 years—first in Russia, then Germany and, since the 1950s, in South Africa.

A collection of colossal warehouses stores hundreds of bales of mohair bought at an auction. From here, the mohair is taken by forklift to several hefty machines, beginning an intricate process that turns the initially soiled fleece into finished fabric.

Hinterveld owner Daniel Stucken beams with pride as he explains each step, from shearing and washing to carding, dyeing and spinning. "It has a natural shine, like a diamond," says Stucken—alluding to the fact that mohair is often referred to as the "diamond fiber"—"and diamonds are revered for their beauty and value." He also believes that consumers are starting to understand the importance of slower, more sustainable fashion.

The culmination of the fiber's transformation can be seen in Hinterveld's showroom—a burst of color and texture. Mohair is known for taking dye exceptionally well, as Mandy Wait Erasmus, Hinterveld's textile design coordinator, explains. "The vibrant hues it produces are unparalleled in the textile world. Designers, myself included, adore that facet of mohair," she says.

It is these colors—and the fact that mohair is sustainably sourced—that South African designers are now embracing, taking the fabric from local farms to international catwalks, art biennales and high-end boutiques.

One such designer who exemplifies this journey is Frances van Hasselt, who focuses on elevating mohair to a more prominent status as one of the world's most ancient, exclusive fibers.

Having grown up on a family farm in the Karoo that owns one of the oldest mohair studs, she has always had a deep affinity for the fiber. "Farm to fabric"

many years," he says. In addition to the fabric, wigs, rugs, sweaters, hats, tablecloths, scarves and shawls were all fashioned from mohair, and all increased its recognition.

The prohibition on exports of the goats themselves was even more extreme. Dellal explains that in 1541 two Angora goats were sent to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V by Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. The next export didn't come until the early 1800s.

In the late 1830s, the Ottomans gifted 12 infertile Angora rams and a single ewe to the South African

"The vibrant hues [mohair] produces are unparalleled in the textile world."

—MANDY WAIT ERASMUS



The Hinterveld Mill has operated since the 1950s, transforming raw fleece into dyed and spun fabric using sustainable practices.

is very much woven into my being,” she says. “For me our fabrics start with rainfall, the land, the health of animals, the care of a herdsman, the process of spinning yarn and finally weaving and finishing, the last few steps in a long line of codependent elements and actors that came before.”

She and her team—of which Arendse is one—weave stories into rugs, tapestries and capsule apparel collections, allowing the natural environment to inform every aspect of their design and manufacture.

“We live in such a beautiful place. It’s so easy to be inspired by what we see around us here,” says Arendse.

South Africa has some of the best mohair in the world, produced under some of the most sustainable practices and in phenomenal processing houses. “Even though we don’t have a formal textile sector,” says van Hasselt, “we have thousands of highly skilled traditional textile artisans. When you combine the strengths and skills unique to South Africa’s textile ecosystem with excellent design and



ABOVE Katriena Kammies, left, and Frances van Hasselt work on a loom to complete a tapestry installation titled "Threads." With contributions from Kate Otten Architects, The Herd and van Hasselt's studio, the piece was featured in the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennale in Italy.

RIGHT Van Hasselt touts South Africa's highly skilled traditional artisans.

quality, we can produce products that can hold their own on any world stage."

SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGH FASHION

Another young South African woman who is hoisting mohair onto the international stage is Gugu Peteni. She is the creative force behind the brand Gugu-ByGugu. Although the business just started in 2019, she already has fashion houses and fashionistas in a frenzy.

Inspired by and born in the '90s, Peteni is bringing a fresh, bold look to luxury streetwear by adding an Afri-modern element to it. Knitwear, a cornerstone of her collections, reflects both her training and her South African identity. Her innovative mohair creations incorporate the fiber



"The future of mohair in South Africa is a bright one."

—FRANCES VAN HASSELT



into contemporary fashion pieces that celebrate both heritage and craftsmanship.

Like that of van Hasselt, Peteni's commitment extends to the sustainability of the fiber, its sourcing and production. Her studio strives to keep everything local.

A childhood of cutting up her mother's tablecloths and curtains to make clothes for her dolls led Peteni to study fashion, ultimately landing an internship with MSA. "I love working with mohair; once you touch and feel it, you don't really want to work with synthetics anymore." Mohair became part of her brand's DNA. "It's more than a fiber," she says. "It's a legacy."

Before 2020 Peteni was already making noise in the South African fashion world—presenting at the prestigious Design Indaba art gallery and participating as the youngest candidate in the "Project Runway South Africa" franchise. In 2020 her commitment to sustainability pushed her to create consciously made fashion pieces, which led her to represent South Africa at Lagos Fashion Week. The annual trade show in Nigeria is Africa's largest fashion event, according to the government of South Africa.

From there the accolades continued flowing in. In 2024 her spring-summer collection titled "Echoes of Self"—which delves into the complexities of identity—showed at Paris Fashion Week and won the Best Young Designer Award.

She began a mentorship with fashion house Balenciaga. "This was a defining moment for me," she recalls. "There's a deep sense of pride in knowing that these pieces, made from locally sourced mohair and inspired by African heritage, are being appreciated by a global audience." Her journey continued to New

York Fashion week.

With collections that tell stories through textures and patterns, her work resonates deeply with those who value both innovation and tradition.

While South Africa now leads global mohair production, Türkiye remains one of the leading producers of the fiber in the world.

According to Dellal, the Angora goat remains of great importance to the textile industry in the country, as well as to folkloric culture, gastronomy and employment. The production of the fiber significantly increased over the past decade. He says his work at the research center aims to address and improve production of mohair because of more recent interest in organic textile products and therefore natural animal fibers.

Back in South Africa, van Hasselt says she feels inspired to be creating alongside peers who share her passion for craftsmanship and local materials, and making them relevant, especially at a time when the world's gaze is on South Africa and the rest of the continent. "The future of mohair in South Africa is a bright one," she says.

Whether in Türkiye or South Africa, one thing remains undisputed: Mohair is truly the diamond fiber. **AW**

Van Hasselt's SOFA (Supporting Old Factories in Africa) collection consists of blankets, scarves and coats made from high-quality, end-of-the-run mohair yarn stock produced in legacy factories across the country.



Samantha Reinders (samreinders.com; @samreinders) is an award-winning photographer, book editor, multimedia producer and workshop leader based in Cape Town, South Africa. She holds a master's degree in visual communication from Ohio University, and her work has been published in *Time*, *Vogue*, *The New York Times* and more.

Author's Corner

Rediscovering Voices and Stories: A Conversation With the Editors of *Muslim Women in Britain*

Written by AIBARSHYN AKHMETKALI

When Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor embraced Islam as a teen, she recognized a divide between her faith and its portrayal in some Western media in the 1990s. Determined to challenge stereotypes, she became a sociologist dedicated to what she sees as Islam's empowering principles for women. For her latest work, *Muslim Women in Britain, 1850–1950*, she joins her coeditor, historian Jamie Gilham, in uncovering remarkable stories of Muslim women who founded communities, undertook Hajj independently and even reverted (converted) to Islam under great circumstances.

For Cheruvallil-Contractor, this project deeply reflects her mission to showcase the agency and resilience of Muslim women. Gilham, who relishes unpacking the perspectives on 19th-century Muslims, brought to the collaboration his expertise in uncovering overlooked histories. Together, they have created a groundbreaking collection that brings to the forefront the women behind the emergence of British Muslim heritage.

AramcoWorld talked with both editors, who share their journey, the challenges of uncovering hidden histories and why these stories matter now more than ever.



How did you come up with this compilation of Muslim women's stories?

Sariya: We realized we both wanted to explore the histories of Muslim women in all of these communities that existed in Liverpool, in Woking. It's almost as if we had to work backwards: We had to look at who was actually doing any work on these communities, and we approached them.

Jamie: I think one of our key points was that we wanted to commission something new rather than to recycle something. For example, Lady Evelyn Cobbold has been well-written about, and we talk about her in the introduction, but we didn't think there was enough new information about her to warrant a new chapter. She's an amazing person, but there's almost nothing new to say about her. Looking at the list, pretty much [for] all of them, a new perspective has been written about. The last chapter [on World War II hero Noor Inayat Khan], for example, was a very original take on somebody who's been written about extensively. And in terms of Elizabeth Cate's, a little bit had been written about.

So, we did whittle the contributors down. Some people did drop out, and that was primarily because they couldn't find enough material to write about the women that they wanted to talk about, which just highlights the paucity of information and archival material about these women.

What was most challenging about pursuing this specific aspect of Muslim history? Jamie, you mentioned, for example,

that you faced a scarcity of materials.

Jamie: For me as a historian, that's a huge problem, and then related to that is that the sources we do have are often written by men, so we have a male [-centric] perspective on things. Also, the history of Islam as a discipline is pretty new, which is exciting, but it makes it all the more difficult when you're looking at your subjects that are people for whom you have very little primary evidence on the whole.

Sariya: Like Jamie said, resources are usually written by men. It is clearly gendered. For example, Nafeesah Keep, you can actually access transcripts of her talks. So, she did talks at the Liverpool Muslim Institute, and those talks are represented in full in some of the archives that are available, but nevertheless, it is still gendered. What we realized early on is that there is *also* a class element. Where paperwork, documentation, letters were available—not often but largely—they were from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. There are, of course, exceptions to all of this. I wrote about Mrs. Olive Salomon, a very working-class woman. She was training to be a nurse, met and married her Yemeni husband, and they lived in really deprived conditions. They didn't have a lot of money. And you know, the argument we make is that when not assured of existential needs, not knowing where your next meal is going to come from, you're going to be less concerned about preserving your history.

How did your different academic backgrounds—one in sociology and the other



OPPOSITE Woking, England, is home to the Shah Jahan Mosque, the United Kingdom's first purpose-built mosque, which hosted the Muslim Festival in 1917, **ABOVE**.

in history—complement or challenge each other in shaping this book?

Sariya: As a sociologist, every time I'd go into Muslim communities here in Britain, I'd get a sense that young people in particular want a sense of their rootedness in British society. I think now around 66 percent of the Muslim community in Britain is of South Asian heritage. Particularly in older generations, there's a harking back through the history of Islam in South Asia, whereas young people now want to know what Islam is like here [in Britain]. I think my perspective was about ensuring that this work addresses those needs, gives young people, young women in particular, a sense of who Muslims in Britain were 100 years ago.

It was fabulous working with Jamie because he understands history and the historical method. What Jamie also gets is the bigger picture of the history of Islam during that time. So I think we had complementary skills and knowledge.

Which narratives or misconceptions about Muslim women does this book challenge?

Sariya: I think it definitely makes a difference to understandings of Muslim women. Sometimes the stereotypes make us believe that there is only one way of being Muslim and, indeed, being Muslim women.

Jamie: This book as a whole does help build a better picture of British Muslim life in the past

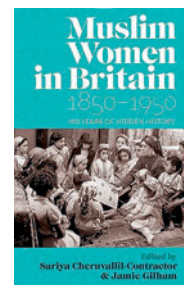
but, also more plainly, of Britain's history and its global history. This is just one tiny piece of that huge jigsaw, but it's an important piece that has been previously overlooked or underplayed.

In what ways do you think the experiences shared by these women can resonate with other women around the world?

Sariya: This book shows us these women's vulnerabilities. We tried to humanize these women and show them not as abstract structures. Often history is told by the dominant group, for the dominant group, and Muslim women are nowhere on that hierarchy. So the last line we wrote was we also hope that by showcasing these historical stories of Muslim women who lived in Britain, this book will contribute to understandings about what exactly it means to be British. So, it's not just about Muslim women's understandings, but everybody's understandings of what it is to be British.

Jamie: Another key takeaway for me is these women's agency and their tenacity, despite—or because of—a quite depressingly consistent level of hostility towards them: hardship, struggle, discrimination. They generally overcame those hurdles. A couple of them probably didn't maintain their commitment to Islam, and there's no judgment there at all, but their lives were not easy.

This interview has been lightly edited and condensed for length and clarity.



Muslim Women in Britain, 1850-1950: 100 Years of Hidden History
Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor and Jamie Gilham, eds. Oxford University Press, 2024.

Read more articles like this online at [AramcoWorld.com](https://www.aramcoworld.com).

Reviews



Every Rising Sun

Jamila Ahmed. Henry Holt and Company, 2023.

Every Rising Sun, the debut historical fiction novel by writer and lawyer Jamila Ahmed, reimagines the classic *One Thousand and One Nights* but with a newfound feminine perspective. In 12th-century CE Persia, protagonist

Shaherazade grows up sheltered in the splendor and ease of palace life as the eldest daughter of the vizier to the Malik, or ruler. Shaherazade stumbles upon the Malik Shahryar's beautiful wife, Fataneh, in a compromising situation, awakening a malicious streak of retribution and revenge. The tale unfolds through layers of stories within stories, revealing the power of words to shatter even the hardest of hearts and heal wounds that have lasted generations. Shaherazade assigns herself as the champion by marrying the Malik and striving to end his relentless execution of brides, a cycle born from betrayal. Shaherazade's battle begins as a personal struggle against the Malik's tyranny. Her defiance, however, sparks a wider rebellion. Armed with the power of storytelling, she wields the enticement of cliffhangers, each tale a promise of an enthralling and captivating story that sways hearts and minds. Shaherazade captivates her listeners—readers, court members, the Malik and even caliphs—by weaving tales of fantastical adventures. The heroine's journey traverses the annals of history and balances on the backstory of one of the most renowned folktales ever.

—CASEY HURTT



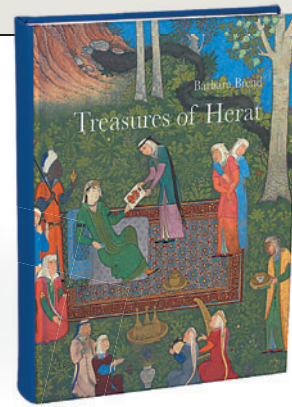
Umm Kulthum: The Star of the East

Rhonda Roumani. Crocodile Books, 2024.

Umm Kulthum: The Star of the East presents a children's book about the legendary Egyptian singer and cultural icon Umm Kulthum. Rhonda Roumani, a Syrian American author, with her familiarity with Arab

culture and traditions, takes readers on an enchanted voyage of the late vocalist's humble prelude to the highlight of her glamorous calling. Her long haul to success validates how her flair and zealousness left a mark on present-day Arab music, culture and society. The narrative takes off with a heartwarming look at Kulthum's childhood in a small village along the Nile in Egypt. Her insistence on attending school would cultivate a talent in memorizing the Qur'an and singing religious songs. She performed disguised as a boy—her performances defied traditional norms for girls—and her recitations led to the discovery of her own voice and eventually the climax of a career that helped Egypt reclaim its national identity. Roumani reveals glimpses of some of the trials and tribulations Kulthum faced during her initial stay in Cairo. Flipping the script within her own life and breaking societal norms, she went on to collaborate with some of the most prominent composers and poets in the Arab world. With help from Cairo-based illustrator Ahmed Abdelmohsen, Roumani invites readers to celebrate the singer's *métier* and cultural ascension as an avant-garde artist and symbol of national pride.

—EMINA JAMIL



Treasures of Herat

Barbara Brend. Gingko, 2022.

Barbara Brend, scholar and specialist in Persian and Mughal painting, presents a comprehensive study of one of the most highly esteemed works of Persian literature, the *Khamsah* (quintet or pentatalogue) by Nizami Ganjavi, the 12th-century CE poet and philosopher born in present-day Azerbaijan. Brend examines two separate Herat-produced manuscripts of the *Khamsah*, Nizami's collection of five romantic epics, currently housed in the British Library, conducting a side-by-side comparison of each of the book's various 225 folios of text and illustrations. The patrons who commissioned these 15th-century-CE manuscripts Brend leaves to speculation and debate, but the evidence she outlines suggests how the seven calligraphers and artists for both folios had access to the royal *kitābhānah* (library). The finished product surely would have been presented as gifts of political significance to the Mughal grandees or sultan who hired them. Brend's study reveals glimpses of time and space that may otherwise be forgotten. In assessing the richness of paint colors, the frontispieces, the facial feature detailing and the relationship between the images, their iconography and artist backgrounds, she clues in readers to the intersecting heritages of the time. Folio art, as an example, captures landscapes rife with flora and fauna, the dynamics of a 15th-century social hierarchy of princes and laymen emerging in Central and South Asia, and the grandeur of medieval Arabic, Persian and Timurid architecture. The result is a rich historical reference for art history students, collectors and scholars of art, poetry and literature.

—J. A. VALENTINE

"The manuscripts are far from unknown and individual pictures have been much published and repeatedly discussed, but they have not hitherto been treated in full and in relation to each other."

—From *Treasures of Herat*

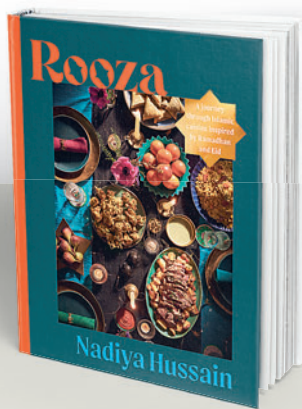
Without endorsing the views of authors, the editors encourage reading as a path to greater understanding.



Famed Chef Brings Together Global Flavors in Culinary Celebration of Ramadan Traditions

Written by GANESHRAM RAMIN

Nadiya Hussain's *Rooza* pays tribute to the food of Ramadan, Islam's holy month of fasting and reflection. Featuring recipes of more than 30 cultures, Hussain's 10th cookbook includes mouthwatering dishes from around the world.



Rooza: A Journey through Islamic Cuisine Inspired by Ramadhan and Eid

Nadiya Hussain. Sourcebooks, 2025.

Reviews

Hussain's diverse food choices celebrate often overlooked culinary gems, delighting readers with a rich tapestry of flavors. From Southeast Asian vegetarian dishes to North African steamed dough and pan-Arab classics, the recipes highlight the global unity of Muslim cultures and cuisines.

Hussain, a television personality and food columnist, saw her career skyrocket overnight after winning "The Great British Bake Off" in 2015. Since then, she has consistently challenged cultural stereotypes, using food as a bridge to connect communities. In *Rooza*, she invites readers to experience the richness of Muslim cultures through meals enjoyed in restaurants, at home and at festive gatherings, whether in Asia, Europe or Africa. Drawing on her Muslim upbringing, Hussain embraces foods in a variety of settings, much like other cultures do. Her message resonates deeply, thanks to this simple yet organic approach.

Hussain shares dishes that reflect her love for international cuisine, as she notes in the book's introduction. Some recipes were inspired by friends and neighbors, while others were discovered through her travels. Either way, each dish carries a story, making the cookbook a personal and global journey.

Unlike her previous works, which cater to busy families with quick-meal ideas, *Rooza* invites readers to slow

down and savor the traditions behind each meal. Hussain encourages taking time to enjoy thoughtfully paired dishes in the company of loved ones. This shift in pace highlights the cultural and emotional significance of shared meals.

Rooza's exploration of lesser-known cuisines from around the world sets it apart, offering a refreshing departure from cookbooks that focus on a single nation or culture. From Mauritius's fish rouguaille (fish curry) to Cambodia's sweet nam van noodles and Libya's crisp dibrhal dessert, the book presents a wide variety of flavors that celebrate the richness of global Muslim culinary traditions.

Cookbook aficionados will appreciate that Hussain has opted to arrange chapters according to country rather than by meal categories. Unlike other Ramadan cookbooks that emphasize *suhoor*, the morning pre-sunrise meal, Hussain shifts the focus entirely to evening main courses and desserts for breaking the daily fast. This thoughtful structure invites readers to dive straight into dishes that best capture the culinary essence of each country.

Through stunning photographs of plates set against jewel-toned backdrops and bathed in incandescent lighting, *Rooza* masterfully evokes a heritage esthetic, perfectly capturing the ambience of post-sunset Ramadan mealtimes.

"What I cook can be inspired by traditional foods, my travels, something I may have watched on TV or read in a book, or even by an entire cuisine that I know nothing about."

—From *Rooza*

Find more reviews like this online at [AramcoWorld.com](https://www.AramcoWorld.com).

Events



Universality of the Universe: Installation Reflects Commonalities in Depictions of Cosmos

Kour Pour: Cosmic Diagrams showcases three monumental paintings that explore the kaleidoscopic ways in which different cultures have envisioned the cosmos. Inspired by celestial and terrestrial designs from diverse artistic traditions, and blending elements of Persian carpets, mandalas and zodiacal charts, these works reveal a shared quest to understand a vast, interconnected cosmic order. Displayed alongside objects from the Aga Khan Museum's collections that highlight artistic exchanges between Islam and East Asia, this mesmerizing installation bridges East and West Asian traditions. It offers a contemporary perspective on how cultures have been intertwined throughout history to the present age, emphasizing how artistic expression has been—and continues to be—shaped by creation, adaptation and innovation.

Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through February 22, 2026.

ABOVE "Cosmic Companions," (detail) 2023, acrylic on canvas over panel, 84 x 60 inches.

Current / July

Digital Witness: Revolutions in Design, Photography, and Film examines the impact of digital manipulation tools from the 1980s to the present, for the first time assessing simultaneous developments and debates in the fields of photography, graphic design and visual effects. Featuring more than 150 photographs, posters, publications, videos, moving image files, film clips and interactive software experiences, the exhibition traces the emergence of distinctive digital aesthetic strategies, relationships to realism and storytelling modes. The nearly 200 artists, designers and makers in *Digital Witness*, including New Zealand filmmaker Ragi Syed, illuminate today's visual culture, where digital editing tools are easier to access than ever before.

LACMA, **Los Angeles**, through July 13.

RIGHT Melanie Willhide, "With the Exception of Blue," archival pigment print, 2013.



Highlights from AramcoWorld.com. Please verify a venue's schedule before visiting.

Events

Current / August

Continuation of a Craft: Saudi Traditional Costumes showcases the evolution of Saudi attire, blending local and imported materials into vibrant garments that reflect regional identities and cultural values. The exhibit highlights intricate designs, materials and techniques, celebrates contemporary designers modernizing traditions and explores how Saudi Arabia's diverse geography shapes costume variations in materials, colors and styles.

Ithra Museum, Dhahran, **Saudi Arabia**, through August 31.

Current / September

Writing or calligraphy? The Sublimated Arabic Alphabet highlights Arabic calligraphy in all its expression, from the first sheets of the Qur'an to contemporary photography, through architecture or everyday objects, to its investment in new media. Thanks to

its rich collections, the art center is able to showcase Arabic script, from the earliest pages of the Qur'an to street art and contemporary art.

Arab World Institute, **Paris**, through September 21.

Coming / November

A Seat at the Table: Food & Feasting in the Islamic World explores culinary traditions from the emergence of Islam to today, highlighting key historical developments, contemporary challenges and the impact of trade on food. It also examines how feasting and dining etiquette shaped courtly culture. The exhibition includes more than 100 objects from the museum's collection and is organized into five sections—each section will include a video of a contemporary chef preparing a dish that reflects his or her culinary traditions.

Museum of Islamic Art, **Doha, Qatar**, May 29 through November 8.



African and European Artworks Meet at The Met

Iba Ndiaye: Between Latitude and Longitude constitutes the inaugural exhibition in the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing's in-focus gallery, part of the complete major reenvisioning of The Met collection of African art. The exhibition introduces African art and European paintings in relation to the work of Senegalese French painter Iba Ndiaye from the museum. Among the selection are works by Rembrandt, Goya, Degas, Derain and Bacon, along with key works of African sculpture, textiles, metalwork and Islamic illumination.

The Met, **New York**, May 31 to May 31, 2026.

LEFT Iba Ndiaye (Senegalese, 1928–2008). "Tabaski" (detail), 1970. Oil on plywood. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Readers are welcome to submit event information for possible inclusion to proposals@aramcoamericas.com, subject line "Events."

What's Online?

Sharjah Biennial

Since its founding in 1993, the Sharjah Biennial has become an internationally recognized art event in the United Arab Emirates. This year's group of artists from around the world explores the theme of "to carry."

History in Objects

The past talks to us. How do items—lavish or common, significant or trivial—from bygone eras help us understand the history of our world? Explore objects from various times and places, one at a time, in this new series.

Learning Center: No Passport Required

Project-based learning lies at the heart of *AramcoWorld's* Learning Center. With lesson plans and materials anchored to reported stories from the magazine, teachers can explore ways to link its resources into their curriculum, no matter the subject.



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Quiz

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What is considered “the king of all Azerbaijani foods”?



A

Rice dishes (pilafs)



B

Shekerbura (stuffed pastry)



C

Waffles



D

Tskan (meat pies)

Answer: A. While different regions of Azerbaijan take pride in their stuffed pastries and meat pies, rice dishes rule. Learn how Turkic, Anatolian, Persian and Eastern European influences create the nation's complex and enticing cuisine at AramcoWorld.com.





ABOVE Portugal's National Tile Museum displays tiles with Moorish motifs from Seville, Spain.

Read more on page 14



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