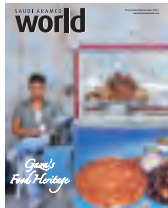


*Gaza's
Food Heritage*





In the Gaza Strip as elsewhere, the month of Ramadan is time for holiday foods, including a street vendor's stack of syrup-soaked Aleppo fingers. Made of semolina dough, they are often flavored with olive oil, anise or *mahlab*, and they are part of the food history Gaza shares, in part, with the Levant and Egypt. The photo on the cart shows *awama*, fried balls of raised dough, also doused in syrup. Photo by Maggie Schmitt.

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Following lines traced on flat, soft plaster with a stencil, a craftsman from Fez, Morocco chisels an arabesque pattern under an arch in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's new Moroccan Courtyard. Photo by Walter B. Denny.

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.



Gaza's Food Heritage

Written and photographed by
Laila El-Haddad and
Maggie Schmitt

Through decades of conflict, families in the Gaza Strip have held to foodways for comfort, pleasure and pride. Often unable to control much else in their lives, Gazans are renowned for lavishing care and attention on food and family. Visiting kitchens and talking to women about food offers many a lesson in the vital arts of getting by with grace.



Nouvelle Vogue in the Mideast

Written by
Alex Aubry

From Paris to Beirut, Kuwait and Riyadh, young fashion designers and buyers are rethinking "what it means to make a garment," and the world of haute couture is watching closely.



2012 Calendar: Word

For purposes of devotion, ornament or both, the art of calligraphy has been esteemed in every Muslim culture for some 14 centuries. Its masterpiece expressions are as diverse as the cultures—and the gifted hands—that produced them.



Through the Black Arch

Written by Arthur Clark

Widely praised as poetic, emotionally evocative and universally metaphorical, "The Black Arch" by sisters Shadia and Raja Alem represented Saudi Arabia's debut at the world's top art festival.

36 The Met Resets a Gem

Written and photographed by
Walter B. Denny

To finish up 15 new Islamic galleries, opening in November, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art tapped global talent, from the effervescent Moroccan craftsmen who brought Fez to Fifth Avenue to a slightly reluctant Massachusetts art historian, who quickly found himself knee-deep in hard and heartfelt work, with a story to tell.



44 Classroom Guide

Written by Julie Weiss

46 Events & Exhibitions

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAILA EL-HADDAD AND MAGGIE SCHMITT

Gaza's Food Heritage

"I always watched my mother cook," says Um Ramadan, as she peels purple garlic cloves by her kitchen window, which looks out on a Gaza City street teeming with early-evening activity. "But I didn't really learn to cook until I married and my mother-in-law taught me." Her husband's family, like her own, were fishing-people from the Palestinian port of Yaffa, exiled before either he or she was born. Yaffa—now part of the Tel Aviv-Yafo conurbation—is no longer what it was, but we can still taste it. From generation to generation, its sophisticated style of seafood cookery has been passed along, a thread of memory preserved in the deft gestures of hands, the precision of palate.

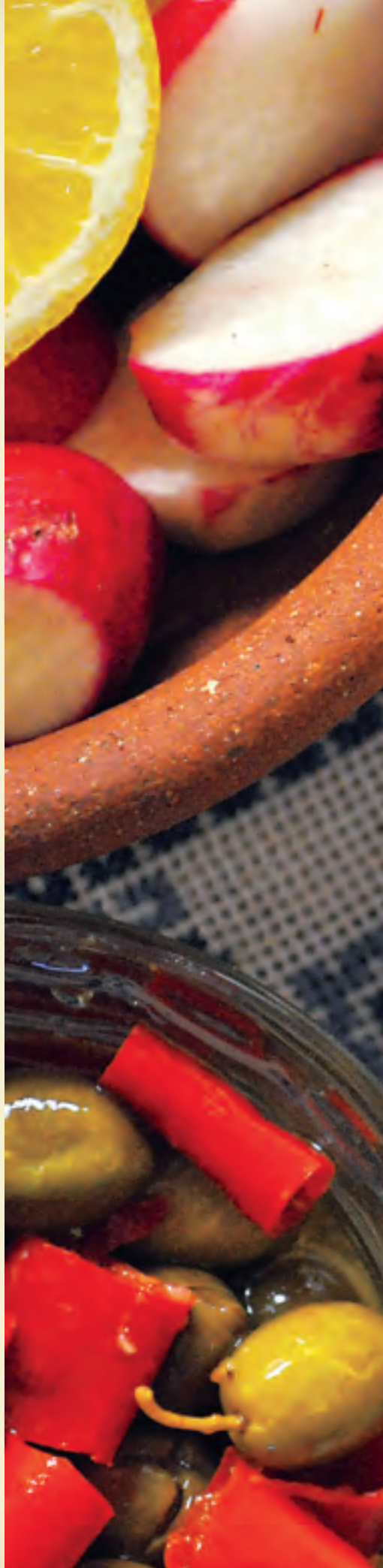
As home to the largest concentration of refugees within historic Palestine, Gaza is an extraordinary place to encounter culinary traditions, not only from hundreds of towns and villages that now exist only in memory—depopulated and destroyed during the Palestinian exodus of 1948—but also from the rest of Gaza's long history.

Through decades of conflict, families in Gaza have held to recipes and foodways as sources of comfort, pleasure and pride. Unable to control much else in their lives, Gazans are renowned for lavishing care and attention on food and family. Visiting kitchens up and down the Gaza Strip, talking to women about cooking and about life, offers lessons in the vital art of getting by with grace.

Indeed, it seems that, in Gaza, everyone is delighted to talk about food. Approached for an interview, most Gazans brace themselves to explain one more time—gently, patiently—the impossible political situation of the Strip. When they discover that the subject is not politics but peppers and lentils and the way grandmother made *maqluba*, there is a moment of astonished delight before they rip into the topic. Passers-by crowd around, each



In a kitchen in Gaza City, Um Ramadan begins preparation of *zibdiyyit gambari* (see page 5), part of the sophisticated coastal culinary heritage of the Gaza Strip. Quite different in style and taste are the hearty peasant foods of the region's interior, like *fogaiyya* (right).





Fogaiyya

450 grams (1 lb.) lean stewing beef or lamb, trimmed of fat, cut into small chunks

½ c. chopped yellow onion

5 whole allspice berries, 4 cardamom pods, 1 cinnamon stick, 2 cloves, 1 bay leaf, 2 pebbles mastic, 1 small piece of cracked whole nutmeg (or to taste)

8 c. cold water

½ c. medium-grain rice, rinsed

2 tsp. salt, divided

½ cup dried chickpeas, soaked 8-12 hours or overnight, or one 14-oz. can
1 bunch chard, thick stems removed (approx. 8½ c.)

5 cloves garlic

1 Tbs. olive oil

½ c. lemon juice, fresh-squeezed

Wash chard well, chop finely and set aside. Place meat and water in a stockpot and bring to a boil, skimming any froth. Lower heat to medium. Tie spices in a piece of gauze or disposable tea filter and add with onions. Cover and let simmer on medium-low heat for 1½ to 2 hours, or until meat is tender. Stir in rice, 1½ tsp. of the salt and canned chickpeas. (If using dried chickpeas, add them to the meat halfway through cooking.) Cook until rice is soft, approximately 10 minutes. Add chard by handfuls, stirring after each addition. Decrease heat to low. Meanwhile, in a *zibdiya* or mortar and pestle, mash the garlic and remaining ½ tsp. salt. Fry the garlic in olive oil until lightly browned, 1-2 minutes. Add to stew and mix well. Just before serving, stir in lemon juice. Pour into bowls, garnish with thinly sliced lemon wedges, and serve with flatbread.



Gaza Salad

(*dagga or salata gazaawiyya*)

- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 hot chile peppers (jalapeño, Thai chile or serrano), roughly chopped
- 2 very ripe tomatoes, chopped
- ½ c. fresh dill, minced
- 2 Tbs. extra virgin olive oil

In a Gazan clay bowl or *zibdiya* (though any mortar or curved-bottomed bowl will do), mash garlic and salt into a paste using a pestle. Add chiles and continue to crush. Add tomatoes and mash until the salad reaches a thick, salsa-like consistency. Mix in dill. Top generously with olive oil. Serve with flatbread on the side for dipping.

VARIATIONS:

- Substitute finely chopped onions for the garlic and add 1 Tbs. lemon juice.
- Add chopped cucumbers and 1 Tbs. of *tahini*. (This variation is from the old village of Beit Jirja, north of the Gaza Strip.)
- If fresh dill is not available, substitute 1 Tbs. of dill seeds. (Crush them thoroughly with the pestle, using a circular motion, along with the salt, to be sure to release their natural oils.)
- A small food processor may be used in place of a mortar and pestle. Make sure to “pulse” the ingredients—don’t purée them.

proffering a hometown recipe: “No, no—it’s much better if you add the onions at the end!”

We went to Gaza to seek these conversations, because cuisine always lies somewhere at the intersection of geography, history and economy. It is a cultural record of daily life for ordinary people. Where recipes come from and how people learn to cook them reveal much about family histories and places of origin. Where food comes from, what it costs and what can and cannot be obtained reveal much about Gaza’s labyrinthine economy. And the recipes themselves are a glimpse into history.

A sliver of green between the desert and the sea, Gaza and its environs have prospered since antiquity as a hub along essential transit routes—on the one hand, between the Levant and Egypt and, on the other, between Arabia and Europe. While it is part of the greater Mediterranean food-universe of olives, fish, rice, chickpeas and garden vegetables, it is also a bridge to the desert culinary worlds of Arabia, the Red Sea and the Nile Valley.

When we speak of modern Gaza, we are referring to the present-day Gaza Strip, which is some 40 kilometers (25 mi) long and four to eight kilometers (2½–5 mi) wide, within the borders set in 1967. Historically, however, the greater Gaza District—one of the administrative districts of British Mandate Palestine and, before that, the Ottoman Empire—comprised a much larger region to the north and east. In culinary terms, the Gaza region was both a coastal one of seafood and an interior farming one, rich in vegetables and legumes. This division between coastal and interior cuisines persists today.

The founding of Israel in 1948 divided the historic Gaza District and separated today’s Gaza Strip from the rest of historic Palestine, and the 1967 Israeli occupation cut it off from both Egypt and the West Bank. This geopolitical fact, combined with the frequent closure of Gaza’s borders over the past two decades, has resulted in isolation and uncertain political and economic circumstances, within which Gazans have had to adapt their cuisine as much as all the other aspects of their lives. “They make something like this in the rest of Palestine,” cooks we interviewed would say, showing us a favorite dish, “but we add hot chiles and dill.”

Hot chile and dill: This is the quintessential modern Gazan spice combination. Whereas Lebanese cooks have no tolerance for spicy heat, and cooks from other parts of Palestine use it in moderation, Gazans take pride in making you sweat, whether using fresh green chile peppers crushed in a mortar with lemon and salt or else *filfil ma’houn*, ground red chile peppers preserved in oil and sold as a condiment and ingredient, resembling North Africa’s popular *harissa*. The ubiquitous *tabikh bamia*, okra stew with oxtail, and *molukhiyya*, mallow soup, are both served with green chile and dill seeds crushed with lemon, cutting their dark tastes with



Among the many uses of Gaza’s signature chile-and-dill combination is *zibdiyyit gambari*, or “shrimp in a bowl,” shown above amid stuffed sea bream (left), chile-roasted crabs (top) and calamari spiced rice (right). *Zibdiya* is the name of the Gaza Strip’s ubiquitous clay bowl, used for cooking, serving and eating. Right: Um Ramadan shops at Gaza City’s fish market.



< *Zibdiyat Gambari* (Shrimp Stew)

- 1 kg. (35 oz.) fresh shrimp, peeled
- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 3 small onions, chopped (approx. 1½ c.)
- 2 green chile peppers, with type adjusted to taste
- 3 Tbs. tomato paste
- 6 tomatoes, peeled and diced (approx. 3½ c. or one 26-oz. can)
- 2 Tbs. dill, minced
- 6 cloves fresh garlic
- 1½ tsp. ground coriander
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ¾ tsp. ground cardamom
- ½ tsp. each of allspice and black pepper
- 1½ tsp. salt, divided
- 1 c. water
- ¼ c. pine nuts, slivered almonds or raw cashews
- 2 Tbs. sesame seeds
- 2 Tbs. chopped parsley

Cook peeled shrimp in a dry pan for about three minutes, until the liquid they release has evaporated and shrimp are pink. Skim off any foam. Set shrimp aside. Coarsely chop the green pepper, and crush it with ½ tsp. of the salt. Chop dill and garlic finely and rub together by hand. In the same pan the shrimp were cooked in, sauté onions in olive oil. When onions are transparent, add tomato paste, and stir well. Mix in tomatoes, spices, crushed chiles, water and the dill and garlic mixture. Stir well. Simmer for 10 minutes on low heat, and then stir in shrimp. Meanwhile, toast the nuts and sesame seeds, or fry them until golden in 1 Tbs. olive oil and set aside. Pour the shrimp mixture from the pan into the *zibdiya*. (An ovenproof earthenware dish or individual ramekins will also do.) Cover with sesame seeds, nuts and parsley. Bake for 10 minutes covered with aluminum foil, then remove the foil and bake another few minutes until the top is crusty. Serve with bread.

a blaze of brightness. Chiles are ground with meat to make *kofta kebab* and they are mashed, in the uniquely Gazan clay bowls called *zibdiya*, to make Gaza's signature tomato salad, *dagga*. Sun-dried, the same peppers are used in winter dishes such as *maftul*, the Palestinian version of couscous, in which the chile is called "the bride of the maftul" (*arusit al-maftul*) for the modest and delicate way it perfumes the grains as they steam.

After shopping with her at the Gaza fishing port, we learn a few other memorable uses of chile-and-dill from Um Ramadan. Gaza used to be famous for fish: Nine nautical miles off its shores, there is a deep channel used by great schools of fish as they migrate between the Nile Delta and the Aegean Sea. But the Israeli navy limits Gaza's fishing fleet to



Hand-shaped and sun-dried cakes of a mixture of yoghurt and grain or flour, called *kishik* and known throughout the Middle East, exist in numerous personal and regional varieties throughout Gaza, especially in the central part of the Strip.

Kishik (traditional)

- 1 kg. (35 oz.) soft wheat berries or fine bulgur
- 1 c. homemade yoghurt, or commercial buttermilk left unrefrigerated overnight to sour; more as needed
- 4 Tbs. salt
- 3 Tbs. dill seeds (optional)
- 2 Tbs. red chile pepper flakes (optional)

With a mortar and pestle or a food processor, coarsely grind wheat kernels. Knead softened kernels with sour yoghurt or buttermilk. Leave to ferment for three days, preferably outdoors or by a window indoors, kneading the mixture daily. Once fermented, add salt, dill seeds and red pepper flakes, if desired. Divide into patties, dust with wheat bran or all-purpose flour, and then leave to sun-dry thoroughly on clean cheesecloth.

(modern urban variation)

- 1 kg. (35 oz.) soft wheat berries, fine bulgur or all-purpose flour
- 2 c. buttermilk, more as needed
- 4 Tbs. salt
- 3 Tbs. dill seeds (optional)
- 2 fresh green chiles (optional)

Grind and mix bulgur, buttermilk and spices as above. Mixture should be loose and liquid. Adjust buttermilk to achieve this consistency. Cover and leave to ferment in a large bowl for several days. When well fermented, divide into sealable storage bags and freeze. Defrost for use as needed.



just three nautical miles from the coast. Though inland fish-farms attempt to compensate by producing tilapia, Gazans still prefer what they've been eating for centuries: red mullet and sea bream, sardines and sea bass, as well as an exuberant diversity of crabs, shrimp and other shellfish. Having carefully selected several medium-sized red mullet and some tiny shrimp, Um Ramadan leads us home.

Her plan is to prepare a Yaffian recipe for spicy fried fish stuffed with dill, along with *zibdiyyit gambari*, the typically Gazan dish of shrimp with tomatoes, spices and peppers stewed in a *zib-diya*, which functions as mortar, cooking pot and serving bowl in one. Soft-spoken, precise and unflappable, Um Ramadan effortlessly navigates her kitchen as she tells her family's history, interspersed with an encyclopedia of recipes.

These recipes Um Ramadan shares belong to the grand repertoire of Gazan seafood cuisine, the culinary heritage of the coastal cities. Most are elaborate and urbane, requiring several stages of preparation. They also make much use of protein, a clear sign of the prosperity and sophistication of the community from which they emerged. Other dishes in this repertoire include caramelized rice with calamari rings; small squid stuffed with rice and spices; oven-roasted crabs stuffed with ground red chiles; stingray soup (a lemony delicacy beloved in Yaffa winters); and *sayadiyya*, "fishermen's delight," with layers of spiced rice, caramelized onions and marinated sea bass. In general, larger fish are often grilled and smaller fish are fried. Sardines—once wildly abundant during their migrations in spring and fall—are often baked on a tray with a spicy tomato sauce or ground to make fish *kofta*.

Even in so small a territory as the Gaza Strip, food customs vary greatly from one region to another. Almost a world away from the urbane heritage of the coast, people with roots in southern Palestine's agrarian interior enjoy ingredients and tastes that are completely different—but no less charged with memory.

Especially in the damp chill of Gaza's winters, rural people and their descendants crave the hearty, one-dish stews unique to Gaza, often made with original combinations of humble, inexpensive ingredients. These, too, are often regional: A native of southern Gaza is unlikely to know how to prepare *sumagiyya*, a slow-simmered stew of chard and meat flavored with red tahini and an infusion of sumac berries that is a traditional holiday dish in Gaza City.

Other popular stews include *fogaiyya*, made with small chunks of beef or lamb, chard, rice and chickpeas and generously doused with lemon juice and fried garlic, and *rumaniyya*, a late-summer dish of eggplants and lentils cooked with sour pomegranate juice and thickened with tahini.

Rural areas also make broad and original use of wild greens in dishes such as *hamasees*, in which sour greens are stewed with lentils, and *khobayza*, which is mallow cooked with tiny dumplings. *Rijla* (or *baqla*)—purslane—is found all around the Mediterranean growing in the urban wild, through cracks in sidewalks and in abandoned lots. This small-leafed succulent is a favorite of peasants from the Gaza District, either raw or stewed with tomatoes and chickpeas.

Um Ibrahim, 86, remembers eating *rijla* during the exodus of 1948: “We would find it growing between the bushes where we hid, and for



Qidra Spices

Use the freshest spices available. Mix well and store in an air-tight container:

- ½ Tbs. ground nutmeg
- ½ Tbs. ground red pepper
- 1 Tbs. ground cinnamon
- 2 Tbs. ground cardamom
- 2 Tbs. ground cloves
- 2 Tbs. ground dried lemon
- ½ c. ground allspice
- ½ c. black pepper
- ½ c. garlic powder
- 1 c. ground turmeric

Traditionally slow-cooked in sealed clay pots, *qidra* (below) is a festive dish that dates back to the courts of Persia. In it, a standard mix of spices (above) and abundant cloves of unpeeled garlic perfume a mix of meat and rice.



Maqluba >

(Zeitun Women's Cooperative recipe)

Meat:

1 medium chicken, cut into 8 pieces,
skin removed, or 700 gr. (25 oz.)
lean beef or lamb, cut into large chunks
2 Tbs. light olive oil
Water to cover meat in pot

Flavoring for Broth:

1 onion, chopped
1 celery stalk, with leaves, cut in half
1 bunch parsley stalks, tied together
with string
1 sprig rosemary (optional)
1 bay leaf
2 small pebbles of mastic, crushed
with salt
5 cardamom pods
1 cinnamon stick
1 dried lemon or ½ lemon rind
(omit if using beef or lamb)

Vegetables:

1 large onion, julienned
1 head of garlic, each clove separated
and peeled
2 medium potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
2 large tomatoes, sliced
1 sweet red pepper, seeds and veins
removed, cut into large strips
3 carrots, peeled, cut in half, then cut again
lengthwise
2 lbs. eggplant or cauliflower florets, fried
or oven-roasted (recipe below)
1 c. chickpeas, pre-soaked and cooked
(or one 14-oz. can)

Remaining Ingredients:

3 tsp. salt
½ tsp. cinnamon
2 Tbs. qidra spices (recipe below)
3 c. medium-grain rice, rinsed and soaked
for 20 minutes
4 Tbs. olive oil
¼ c. pine nuts or slivered almonds, fried in
1 Tbs. ghee or butter
parsley

Brown the meat or chicken in olive oil. Add water and bring to a boil, removing any froth. Reduce heat to medium and stir in all the items under "Flavoring for Broth." Simmer for an hour or so (more if using beef or lamb) until tender. Cool, drain, and reserve the broth and the meat separately. (While the broth is simmering, prepare the eggplant or cauliflower.) In a separate bowl, add salt, cinnamon and qidra spices to the rice and mix well. Set aside. Fry the onions and garlic in a separate pan in 2 Tbs. of the olive oil until caramelized. Remove from heat.

In a large non-stick pot, add remaining olive oil and arrange potato slices in a circular, overlapping pattern, followed by tomato slices, sautéed onions and garlic, red pepper, carrots, reserved meat, roasted eggplant or cauliflower, and chickpeas. Add the rice mixed with spices on top of the arrangement in the pot. Ladle the broth over the rice until just covered, using approximately 2 cups of broth for every cup of rice. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce heat to low and cover tightly for approximately 40 minutes or until rice is cooked. If necessary, ladle a little bit more of reserved broth, half a cup at a time, and leave to simmer until rice is cooked.

Remove pot from heat and let rest, covered, for 30 minutes. Remove the lid and place a large round tray, serving side down, on the pot. Hold on carefully and flip the pot and tray upside-down. Gently lift off the pot, allowing the maqluba to slide out, as out of a mold. Adorn it with toasted pine nuts or almonds and parsley. Serve immediately with salad and yoghurt.

Grilled eggplant or cauliflower for maqluba:

Peel eggplant in alternating vertical strips (one strip peeled, the next strip with peel), then cut crossways into finger-thick slices. Soak these slices in salted water for 15 minutes. Drain well and toss or brush with olive oil. Arrange slices on an oiled baking pan or cookie sheet and bake until brown on the bottom, then broil for 5 to 10 minutes. For grilled cauliflower florets, follow same procedure but skip the salt-water bath. Toss with olive oil and proceed with oven roasting. Sprinkle with 1 tsp. cumin.



a long while, it's all we survived on," she recalls. In her home in the Deir al-Balah refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, she is one of the few who remember pre-1948 life—and as for many of her generation, it is for her often more vital than the present.

"I am telling you about how we would cook and eat in the past, but here everything is unwholesome. It is bad food. In the past, we ate very heartily and were very healthy." Her eyes gleam as she describes the wild greens and handsome squashes of Beit Tima, her home village, where her father had been mayor before they were driven out in 1948.

It's clear from how she talks that, since that day, everything else has been a shadow, a long wait. If she is to talk about food, she will talk about food before the exile. Since then it has all been UN-provided rations: flour, beans, sugar, salt, powdered milk. While Palestinians have adapted to this reality, creating innovative dishes with what ingredients are available, for Um Ibrahim, as for many elders, food—*real* food—is always in the past tense.

Many who have grown up in Gaza's refugee camps and towns, she explains, have never had full access to the foods of their



Left: With its layers of meat, vegetables and rice simmered in broth and spices, *maqluba* is a demanding special-occasion recipe that showcases both the generosity of the host and the skill of the cook. Lower: Um Ibrahim holds a cake of kishik, which she learned to make in Beit Tima, long before refrigeration was widely available.

Beit Tima Kishik Stew

½ kg. (17 oz.) boneless mutton or beef, cut small
8 c. water
1 medium onion, chopped
5 disks of kishik, soaked overnight in water
Whole spices, such as cardamom pods, cinnamon stick, allspice and bay leaf, tied in a piece of gauze or disposable tea filter
½ c. medium-grain rice, rinsed
1 c. chickpeas

Place meat and water in a pan and bring to a boil, skimming any foam. Reduce heat. Add chopped onion and whole-spice in bag. Cover partially and cook until tender. Meanwhile, mix kishik with its soaking water in a blender until smooth. Strain to remove any remaining lumps. Set aside. When meat is tender, strain and reserve the broth. Discard spices. Cook rice. When it is cooked, add broth, chickpeas, meat and the strained kishik. Bring to a boil, stirring continuously. Serve.

Khan Yunis kishik: Grind soft kishik in a food processor or with a mortar and pestle, and mix with olive oil, lemon juice and 1 Tbs. crushed dill seeds to form a paste. Serve with flatbread.

Garara kishik: Crumble kishik over oven-roasted or grilled tomatoes. Top with mashed garlic and chopped fresh dill.

parents and grandparents, because of the general unavailability or high prices of fruit, vegetables, dairy and meat. As a result, they don't know or don't appreciate some of the traditional preparations. For example, she says, her children don't like *kishik*. Says Um Ibrahim: "Ah! Kishik! It was one of our most favorite foods. It was cooked with chickpeas and meat. Beautiful!"

Before refrigeration, throughout the Middle East and Central Asia, kishik was a way to conserve the nutritional value of dairy products by fermenting and drying a paste of milk and grain. In her native Beit Tima, Um Ibrahim learned to make kishik from wheat kernels, which she ground coarsely in a heavy mortar and left to ferment with yoghurt or butter-milk. She then would shape disks that were dried in the sun, which allowed their long-term storage. When winter came, the disks were reconstituted with water, blended until smooth, and then cooked with mutton, chickpeas and rice.

Just south of Deir al-Balah in Garara, however, women prepare kishik today with plain flour, and they flavor it in characteristically Gazan style with crushed dill seeds and flakes of red chiles. When dried, this kishik is crumbled over skewered grilled tomatoes and dressed with mashed garlic and minced dill. A few kilometers still further south in Khan Yunis, kishik is ground to a powder and mixed with olive oil, lemon juice and crushed dill seeds, and the moist paste is eaten with flatbread or crumbled on top of salads.

Gaza's everyday inland foods tend to favor spicy-sour one-dish meals based on vegetables and legumes, but its celebratory festival foods are heavier on meat and richly spiced rice. There



The Flavors of Gaza



◀ **Dill seed (*ʿayn jarada*):** Both feathery fresh dill and dill seed are commonly crushed with a mortar and pestle to release the natural oils. (The name in Arabic means “locust eye.”)

Sour plums (*qarasiya*): Dried plums lend sourness to broths and stews. Fresh, these small greenish-purple fruits are boiled whole with sugar into a thick, tart jam much sought after in Gaza. With only a one-week harvest season in summer, the plums are a costly rarity.

➤ **Red tahini (*tahina hamra*):** This brick-red Gazan variety of tahini is made by roasting sesame seeds. (The more familiar white tahini uses steamed seeds.) It thickens stews and deepens flavors; it is also drizzled on chopped salads. As a substitute, a half cup of white tahini can be mixed with 1 Tbs. roasted sesame seed oil.



◀ **Sour pomegranates (*rumman hamed*):** Distinct from their familiar ruby-red cousins, these have a pistachio-green exterior, and their seeds are pressed for their juice.

Chile peppers (*filfil harag*): Green or red, fresh or dried, pickled, ground, mashed or whole, chiles set Gazan cuisine apart.

Garlic: The key here is—lots! The prized *baladi* (“native”) variety has small purple cloves, and it can be seen hanging in pantries for winter use. Rural Gazans, however, prefer onions to garlic.

➤ **Chard:** The tender leaves of this mellow green are often stewed, but also chopped and stuffed into savory pastries along with onions, sumac and minced meat.

Cumin: Along with garlic, cumin deserves its own mention because Gazans do not lump it in with mixes such as *qidra*. Most legume dishes include cumin, which is appreciated both for flavor and for its reputation as a digestive aid.

▼ **Dukka:** This is a hearty mixture of spices and legumes that varies widely by family. It is traditionally roasted at home and sent to be ground at a mill. The powder is then mixed with toasted sesame seeds and eaten with olive oil as a dip for bread, or spread onto thin dough and baked for an easy meal.



4 kg. (8 lbs. 12 oz.) wheat berries	¼ kg. dill seed
½ kg. (18 oz.) cumin seed	1 kg. (35 oz.) brown lentils
½ kg. whole sumac berries or ground sumac	20 dried red chiles
¼ kg. (9 oz.) coriander seed	1 c. salt
¼ kg. caraway seed	1 tsp. citric acid

Toast the wheat berries until they are a deep brown. Toast the spices individually until fragrant. Mix and grind to powder in small batches. Store in airtight containers. When ready to use, add 1 Tbs. toasted sesame seeds per cup of dukka.

Bedouin variation: Add chickpeas, sun-dried basil and cloves.

is history to this: Throughout Palestine, meat-based meals have historically been reserved for special occasions: holidays, family visits and important life events. Some of these dishes, such as *fattah* or *mansaf*, are based on the old peninsular Arab custom of dousing bread with broth and eating it with roasted meat. Other dishes trace their ancestry to the spiced rice dishes of the courts of Persia and Baghdad: notably *qidra*, spiced rice with meat and whole cloves of unpeeled garlic cooked slowly in a sealed clay pot, and *maqluba*, in which meat and vegetables are layered with spiced rice, then turned upside-down before serving; the resulting vegetable-studded dome is adorned with almonds or pine nuts.

These dishes, which require elaborate preparation and spices from all over the world, for centuries showcased both a host's generosity and a cook's acumen. In Gaza, there is a standard mixture of spices used for them, known simply as “*qidra* spices,” that includes cinnamon, turmeric, nutmeg, dried lemon, ground red chiles and allspice. Cooks vary both the ingredients and the proportions, of course. As these are demanding recipes, many urban families today have them prepared by professionals,

some to save time, others to save on cooking fuel. This is where Um Hamada and the women of the Zeitun Women's Cooperative step in.

Tired of the helplessness many Gazan homemakers feel in an economic situation of nearly universal male under- and

unemployment, caused by the closure of borders and subsequent collapse of industry in Gaza, Um Hamada and her neighbors in Gaza City's historic Zeitun neighborhood decided to put their cooking skills to work to support their families. They take orders for festive foods and—in a tiny but astonishingly efficient kitchen—prepare great vats of stuffed vegetables called *mahshi*, towering mounds of *maqluba* and all manner of pastries and sweets for all kinds of special events. All the women learned slightly different family versions of the dishes, so debates flourish in the kitchen, but without slowing the six or seven pairs of hands that deftly chop, slice, measure and stir in harmony.





The Zeitun Women's Cooperative of Gaza City, above, cooks fresh local recipes to order for weddings, holidays and other occasions. Right: The supreme dessert of the Gaza Strip, knafa arabiya, is made more often in bakeries than at home.

Gazans from all backgrounds generally finish ordinary meals with sweet sage tea, followed by seasonal fruits and crisp summer vegetables like cucumbers and peeled carrots. Special occasions, however, call for dessert pastries. Of the many made in Gaza, none is as splendid—nor as uniquely Gazan—as *knafa arabiya*. While *knafa* is a broad category of dessert made throughout the region, *knafa arabiya* is the jewel of Gaza and only Gaza: a rich, buttery sheet of layered walnuts and toasted semolina breadcrumbs perfumed generously with cinnamon and nutmeg, soaked in warm syrup. Rougher and more rustic than other *knafas*, it is also richer, and its flavors run deeper—a metaphor perhaps for the women like Um Ramadan, Um Ibrahim and Um Hamada, whose daily creativity in the resilient kitchens of the Gaza Strip give Gazan cuisine its true heart. 🌍



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history of Gaza: S/O 94
spices: M/A 88
couscous: N/D 98
flatbread: S/O 95

📖 The writers are coauthors of the forthcoming book *The Gaza Kitchen*, to be published in 2012 by Just World Books.

A woman is shown from the chest up, wearing a bright yellow garment with a dense, feather-like texture. The garment has a high, ruffled collar and long, flowing sleeves. The background is a solid light gray.

NO GUESS IN THE MIDEAST

WRITTEN BY ALEX AUBRY

ver the last decade, a new generation of designers has emerged to reshape the Middle East's fashion scene. Despite a reputation for producing only extravagant ball gowns, a handful of emerging Arab talents are exploring an edgier and more modern approach to design.

Inside the former Paris theater where Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* premiered in 1953, 38-year-old Rabih Kayrouz is showcasing avant-garde creations of a different kind. After years of working just under the fashion industry's radar, Kayrouz was voted into the notoriously choosy *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Parisienne* (the Paris fashion industry's governing body) in 2009, making him only the second Arab designer, after Elie Saab in 2003, to receive this distinction.

During October's round of Paris ready-to-wear collections, Kayrouz's light-filled showroom buzzed with international buyers and editors. Among them was HH Princess Deena Aljuhani Abdulaziz, founder of D'NA, a retail store and gallery in Riyadh.

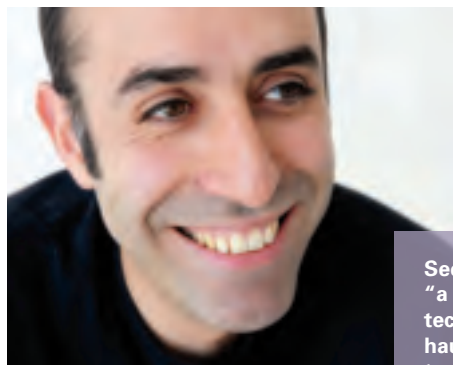
"I first met Rabih on a visit to Beirut," recalls Abdulaziz. "When you entered his studio, you immediately got the sense that this was a designer very different from the others. There wasn't a bead or a ruffle in sight.

Instead, his clothes showed a modern and refined approach to luxury that was rare among Arab designers."

Pitching the glamorous side of a country long associated with war, the Lebanese capital has positioned itself at the center of the creative movement that is changing the way Middle Eastern fashion is perceived both within the region and abroad. "Beirut has a unique magic," explains Heba Elkayal, style editor for *The Daily News Egypt* and *The International Herald Tribune*. "It's home to one of the region's most liberal and cosmopolitan societies, and that creates the conditions for new ideas to take root."

"Lebanon's fashion circles are pretty small," explains Milia Maroun, who designs out of Beirut under the label "Milia M." "As a group, we are very close-knit and supportive of each other, because we've shared similar experiences. It's a feeling of camaraderie that's not easily found in the wider fashion world."

According to Carole Corm, an editor at *ELLE Arab World* in Beirut, this young group of designers inevitably invites comparisons to the generations that preceded them—"established designers, such as Elie Saab, George Chakra and Zuhair Murad, who paved the way when their clothes appeared on Paris runways and the red carpet." The difference, she adds, is that while the older designers "tended to take a formulaic approach to glamour," Kayrouz, Maroun and others "are part of a new generation



Seeking what he calls "a place where the technical discipline of haute couture is adapted to our modern-day world," Rabih Kayrouz's designs have been widely praised by fashion critics from Paris to Beirut and Riyadh.



reacting to this esthetic by producing clothes from a different reference point. They are Lebanese, but they are also very European in the way they view luxury. Where one group built its fame on glitz, the other prides itself on a very subdued idea of dressing. It also feels a bit more intellectual with Rabih and Milia. More thought seems to be put into what it means to make a garment, into the choice of materials and the craftsmanship,” observes Corm.

This evolution in taste also marks a shift in the way fashion consumers—women—in the region are approaching Arab designers. “For years there was this notion that European and American designers were better,” says Elkayal. “The Lebanese designers were really responsible for breaking that perception by showing abroad, and producing collections that were not only well made but deserved the same price points as their western counterparts.”

The change in tastes, asserts D’NA’s Abdulaziz, is hardly restricted to Lebanon. “There also seems to be this perception in the West that women in the Gulf tend to go for gaudy or over-embellished gowns. In reality, my Saudi clients have very sophisticated tastes and respond well to Kayrouz’s understated elegance.”

Maroun, who trained in Paris, returned to Beirut in 1999 intent on launching a career in ready-to-wear. “When I established my label, I wanted to create beautifully made and feminine clothes that women could wear every day. My collections attract women who are assertive, self-confident and comfortable in their own skin,” says Maroun, who also travels to Istanbul to teach a fashion course at Bilgi University.

Kayrouz too has turned his attention to the region’s next generation of creative talent. In 2008, he joined Tala Hajjar to co-found the Starch Foundation as a “laboratory for new ideas.” Every six months, aspiring designers submit portfolios to Kayrouz. With the help of a committee, he makes selections and guides them through the development, presentation and promotion of their first collection at the Starch boutique in Beirut’s Saifi Village.

“There is a lot of talent in Lebanon, but they are somewhat lost when it comes to setting up their own labels. I’ve acquired all this experience in the industry over the years, and felt a responsibility to share it,” explains the designer.

“Rabih understood early on that in order to create a sustainable fashion industry in the Middle East that could compete at an international level, we first needed to build our creative talent



This page: “It’s not only about how good one is at pattern making or sketching, but also how intellectually engaged they are in the process of creation,” observes Beirut designer Milia Maroun, founder of Milia M.



pool,” explains Hajjar, who served as Kayrouz’s marketing manager for three years before devoting herself full-time to Starch. “Through his sharp eye, creative direction and crucial contacts, he’s

been able to give these young designers a platform.”

Hajjar also believes that Kayrouz sets a good example. “He not only encourages individual expression, but provides them with marketing and financial advice that’s overlooked by many fashion schools,” she continues.

One young designer who has benefited from Starch is Ronald Abdala. “Starch has had a positive effect on my career, helping me gain a better understanding of the local market and introducing me to a new clientele,” explains Abdala, who still sees challenges facing the region’s young designers.

“It’s difficult to find high-end stores willing to stock young Lebanese talent, which leaves many to fend for themselves by either opening boutiques or selling out of their showrooms. Another challenge is the cost of sourcing large enough quantities



This page: “They don’t feel pressured to create collections based on Oriental clichés,” says blogger Confashions from Kuwait in reference to Beirut-based Saudi designer Mohammed Ashi.



of high-quality fabrics to produce a ready-to-wear collection, let alone manufacture it,” he explains.

Some in the region’s fashion media are keenly aware of these challenges, and they are working to promote these talents to wider audiences. “It takes a number of factors for designers to emerge on the international scene. It’s not simply talent and luck, but also major financial backing and, quite often, the endorsement of others in the industry, whether through direct promotion or by placing their pieces in magazine articles or on covers,” says style editor Elkayal.

Like Paris, which is a magnet for aspiring designers from around the world, the Lebanese capital is luring young Arab talent from across the region. Mohammed Ashi, a Saudi designer based in Beirut, is known for his unconventional approach to running his label: Instead of following a strict pattern of seasons,

he produces capsule collections that have earned him a following both within the region and internationally.

“Ashi takes a post-modern approach to old-school couture,” notes Confashions from Kuwait, one of the region’s most influential (and anonymous) fashion bloggers. “He doesn’t do those over-the-top looks that are synonymous with Middle Eastern fashion. Instead he finds beauty in imperfections, which is why his clothes are rough and refined at the same time. There is a handcrafted appeal to his creations that often come in muted tones, with an emphasis on interesting textures, exposed seams and sculptural forms,” she continues.

Ashi’s work also points to a shift in the way young Arab designers address cultural heritage. For his latest effort, the Saudi designer didn’t reference Arabian themes, but rather expressed his inspiration through Emily Dickinson’s poem “A Bird Came Down the Walk.” The result was a set of 15 gravity-defying pieces featuring undulating silk organza collars and ball skirts rising dramatically off the floor on layers of sculpted tulle.

“What’s interesting about designers such as Ashi is that they don’t

feel pressured to create collections based on Oriental clichés or variations on the kaftan,” explains Confashions from Kuwait. “In a sense they are citizens of the world, and they want to establish their own individual voices. When they reference Oriental themes, it’s done in a very subtle manner, such as a particular method of construction or an embroidery technique.”

Ronald Abdala, who moved back to Lebanon in 2004 after graduating from London’s Central Saint Martins, says this approach is “changing the perception of Arab designers as one-trick ponies.” Having grown up in London, Paris, Lagos and Beirut, he says, “I always try to balance my designs in ways that reflect my multicultural background.”

These are thoughts echoed by others as they try to address a global audience while maintaining a unique identity. “I don’t design specifically for a Middle Eastern customer, but for a modern woman of today,” explains Kayrouz. “I spend a lot of time observing how women walk or put their hands in their pockets. All of these observations influence my design process.”

“Rabih once told me that his clothing is made so a woman can gather it easily around her and hop into a cab—minimal fuss, everyday use. I love that. In an age of excess and pretension, Kayrouz celebrates the woman wearing the dress rather than the dress wearing the woman,” adds Elkayal.

For Maroun, collaborating with artists of the Lebanese diaspora has provided further inspiration. For her winter 2010 collection, she created a dress using a print of a photograph by Fouad Elkhoury that depicted a blown-out concrete wall, one of the Lebanese photographer’s many images documenting Beirut’s destruction during the civil war. “There is something hauntingly beautiful about his photographs, so I decided to have them blown



up and printed on fabric, which I then made into a dress. I think this notion of seeing beauty in destruction is very true to a city like Beirut, which has been destroyed and rebuilt over the centuries,” explains the designer.

The emergence of new design schools in Beirut, Doha and Riyadh is strengthening the larger trend, but merely having four walls is not enough, says Maroun, who has also taught at the Ecole Supérieure des Arts et Techniques de la Mode in Damascus. “We need to nurture intellectual curiosity among students, so that they can think outside the box in terms of design,” observes Maroun. “It’s not only about how good they are at pattern making or sketching, but also how intellectually engaged they are in the process of creation.”

The emergence of Arab names on the global fashion scene has also changed perceptions about a profession that, until very recently, “wasn’t a career families encouraged their children to go into,” writes Confashions from Kuwait. “But as we see success stories emerge, it’s becoming more acceptable.”

Mohammed Ashi, born in 1980, admits his journey into fashion was anything but straightforward. “Although I come from a family of textile dealers and manufacturers, they didn’t want me to go into design initially. My father wanted me to focus on the business end of the family company. I studied marketing at St. Michael’s College in Vermont, but the urge to design always remained with me. I was determined to create my own brand, so I took fashion courses in Paris and Beirut,” he says. Later, he worked for Givenchy, Elie Saab and Beirut’s Milia Maroun before setting up his own label.

Others of this new generation have often had training further abroad than Beirut. “In the last few years we’ve begun to see graduates from prestigious fashion schools, such as New York’s Parsons School of Design and London’s Central Saint Martin’s, who have won coveted internships with some of the biggest names in the business. Many of them have returned home to influence local fashion trends,” explains Heba Elkayal.

One example is Kuwaiti designer Tahir Sultan, who has become known for an extreme approach to knitwear that incorporates bold colors and volumes that are best described as architectural. Indeed, he initially studied architecture before



Above and left: “Extreme knitwear” by Tahir Sultan. Lower: Kayrouz poses with Starch Foundation winners. “To create a sustainable fashion industry in the Middle East,” says Starch manager Tala Hajjar, “we first need to build our creative talent pool.”



relatively short time, it’s not hard to envision a day when Arab designers will influence and mark fashion history—similar to the way the Antwerp Six and the Japanese did during the 1980’s. As for how long it will take—it may happen faster than anyone expects,” she says. “What is certain is that we are on the right track.”



Architect, artist, curator and editor **Alex Aubry** (alex.a.aubry@gmail.com) is particularly interested in design and culture produced by a new generation in the Middle East and its diaspora. His articles have appeared in Paris-based *Unfair* magazine, *Brownbook* magazine and the London arts publication *Muraqqa*. He lives in Chicago.

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Geometry of the Spirit

WRITTEN BY DAVID JAMES

Calligraphy is without doubt the most original contribution of Islam to the visual arts. For Muslim calligraphers, the act of writing—particularly the act of writing the Qur'an—is primarily a religious experience. Most western non-Muslims, on the other hand, appreciate the line, form, flow and shape of the Arabic words. Many recognize that what they see is more than a display of skill: Calligraphy is a geometry of the spirit.

The sacred nature of the Qur'an as the revealed word of God gave initial impetus to the great creative outburst of calligraphy that began at the start of the Islamic era in the seventh century CE and has continued to the present.

Calligraphy is found in all sizes, from colossal to minute, and in all media, from paper to ceramics, metal, textiles and architecture. It commenced with the writing down of the Qur'an in a script derived from that of the Nabataeans. The early scripts were bold, simple and sometimes rough. The scripts used from the seventh to the 11th century had origins in the Hijaz, the region of Makkah and Madinah in western Saudi Arabia. Historians group these into three main script families: *hijazi*, Kufic, and Persian Kufic.

Hijazi is regarded as the prototypical Qur'anic script. It is a large, thin variety with ungainly vertical strokes. Kufic developed in the eighth century, and of all the early scripts, it is the most majestic—a reflection of the stability and confidence of the early classical period of Islam. It was much used through the 14th century from Islamic Spain all the way to Iran, where around the 10th century calligraphers developed Persian Kufic. The system of marking Arabic's normally implied short vowels and employing distinguishing dots, or points, is essentially that used today in modern standard Arabic.

Western scholars and students have often used the term “cursive” to distinguish later, less angular scripts. However, medieval Muslim writers on calligraphy and the development of writing classified scripts other than Kufic into categories based not only on shape, but also on function: *murattab*, meaning curvilinear, primarily comprised scripts for courtly and secular uses, including *thulth*, *tawqi* and *riqa'*; *yabis*, or rectilinear scripts, comprised styles for Qur'anic and other sacred calligraphy, including *muhawraqa*, *naskh* and *rayhan*. These are often regarded as the six major “hands” of classical Arabic calligraphy.

Cover: Before gilding this ivy leaf with a mixture of gold ink and gum arabic, the anonymous calligrapher painstakingly removed its dermal tissue until only the leaf's skeleton remained. Dating to the 19th century, this piece is from Ottoman Turkey and measures 12.8 x 12.5 centimeters (5"x4 7/8"). Photo courtesy of the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art.

As well, there were regional varieties. From Kufic, Islamic Spain and North Africa developed *andalusi* and *maghribi*, respectively. Iran and Ottoman Turkey both produced varieties of scripts, and these gained acceptance far beyond their places of origin. Perhaps the most important was *nasta'liq*, which was developed in 15th-century Iran and reached a zenith of perfection in the 16th century. Unlike all earlier hands, *nasta'liq* was devised to write Persian, not Arabic. In the 19th century, during the Qajar Dynasty, Iranian calligraphers developed from *nasta'liq* the highly ornamental *shikastah*, in which the script became incredibly complex, convoluted and largely illegible to the inexperienced eye.

The Ottomans devised at least one local style that became widely used: the extremely complex *diuani*, which was well suited to expressing a complex language like Ottoman Turkish, itself a hybrid of Turkish, Arabic and Persian. It was used much in official chancery documents and *firman*s, or decrees, which often began with the most imposingly ornate calligraphic invention of the Ottoman chancery, the imperial *tuğra*, or monogram.

We do not know when the idea of a freestanding composition based on a word, phrase or letter first arose. The first separate such calligraphic composition was perhaps the phrase *bismillah al-raḥman al-raḥim* (“In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful”), which begins every chapter of the Qur'an but one. Due to the imbalance of the letters, this turns out to be an awkward phrase to write well, and to this day can be a test of the calligrapher's skill. The separate calligraphic composition reached its ultimate development in the 18th and 19th centuries, at the hands of Iranian and especially Ottoman calligraphers.

Such calligraphic composition became particularly important when calligraphy departed from paper to appear on functional objects. Some of the finest examples of this occurred on 10th-century ceramics from the Samarkand area. Simple inscriptions in classical Kufic, always in Arabic, were applied to the rims of plates and dishes, usually pure white in color. The results, to western eyes at least, represent some of the most esthetically pleasing and exciting examples of applied calligraphy.

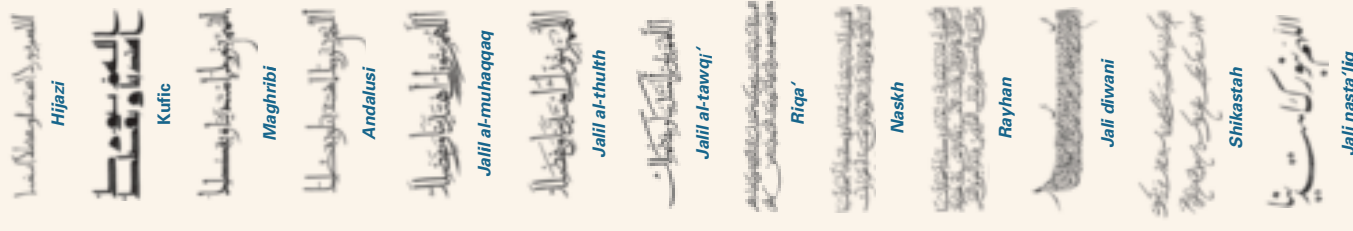
But perhaps the most important application of calligraphy to objects is in architecture. Throughout the Islamic world,

few are the buildings that lack calligraphy as ornament. Usually these inscriptions were first written on paper and then transferred to ceramic tiles for firing and glazing, or they were copied onto stone and carved by masons. In Turkey and Persia they were often signed by the master, but in most other places we rarely know who produced them.

We do know that such masters of calligraphy were often born to it. Once a young man's potential was recognized, he would be apprenticed to perfect the basic hands, learn ink-making and perhaps study paper-making and illuminating. When he was considered good enough to work on his own, he would receive an *ijazah*, or license. Although in Europe the scribal profession disappeared soon after the arrival of the printing press at the end of the 15th century, in the Middle East printing did not become firmly established until the 19th century, and thus the profession of the calligrapher largely endured until then.

Today, calligraphy continues as a religious and artistic practice. Outstanding calligraphers live throughout the world, and their works bring the attention of the global public to the supreme art of Islamic calligraphy. ☞

(Adapted and edited from “The Geometry of the Spirit,” by David James, originally published in *Aramco World*, September/October 1989.)



CALLIGRAPHY SAMPLES BY MOHAMED ZAKARIYA, REPRINTED FROM THE ART OF THE PEN (LONDON, 1996), COURTESY OF THE NOUR FOUNDATION

Patterns of Moon, Patterns of Sun

WRITTEN BY PAUL LUNDE

The *Hijri* calendar

In 638 CE, six years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Islam's second caliph, 'Umar, recognized the necessity of a calendar to govern the affairs of Muslims. This was first of all a practical matter. Correspondence with military and civilian officials in the newly conquered lands had to be dated. But Persia used a different calendar from Syria, where the caliphate was based; Egypt used yet another.

Each of these calendars had a different starting point, or epoch. The Sasanids, the ruling dynasty of Persia, used June 16, 632 CE, the date of the accession of the last Sasanid monarch, Yazdagird III. Syria, which until the Muslim conquest was part of the Byzantine Empire, used a form of the Roman "Julian" calendar, with an epoch of October 1, 312 BCE. Egypt used the Coptic calendar, with an epoch of August 29, 284 CE. Although all were solar calendars, and hence geared to the seasons and containing 365 days, each also had a different system for periodically adding days to compensate for the fact that the true length of the solar year is not 365 but 365.2422 days.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, various other systems of measuring time had been used. In South Arabia, some calendars apparently were lunar, while others were lunisolar, using months based on the phases of the moon but intercalating days outside the lunar cycle to synchronize the calendar with the seasons. On the eve of Islam, the Himyarites appear to have used a calendar based on the Julian form, but with an epoch of 110 BCE. In central Arabia, the course of the year was charted by the position of the stars relative to the horizon at sunset or sunrise, dividing the ecliptic into 28 equal parts corresponding to the location of the moon on each successive night of the month. The names of the months in that calendar have continued in the Islamic calendar to this day and would seem to indicate that, before Islam, some sort of lunisolar calendar was in use, though it is not known to have had an epoch other than memorable local events.

There were two other reasons 'Umar rejected existing solar calendars. The Qur'an, in Chapter 10, Verse 5, states that time should be reckoned by the moon. Not only that, calendars used by the Persians, Syrians and Egyptians were identified with other religions and cultures. He therefore decided to create a calendar specifically for the Muslim community. It would be lunar, and it would have 12 months, each with 29 or 30 days.

This gives the lunar year 354 days, 11 days fewer than the solar year. 'Umar chose as the epoch for the new Muslim calendar the *hijra*, the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad and 70 Muslims from Makkah to Madinah, where Muslims first attained religious and political autonomy. The *hijra* thus occurred on 1 Muharram of the year 1 according to the Islamic calendar, which was

named "*hijri*" after its epoch. (This date corresponds to July 16, 622 CE on the Gregorian calendar.) Today in the West, it is customary, when writing *hijri* dates, to use the abbreviation AH, which stands for the Latin *anno hegirae*, "year of the *hijra*."

Because the Islamic lunar calendar is 11 days shorter than the solar, it is therefore not synchronized to the seasons. Its festivals, which fall on the same days of the same lunar months each year, make the round of the seasons every 33 solar years. This 11-day difference between the lunar and the solar year accounts for the difficulty of converting dates from one system to the other.

The Gregorian calendar

The early calendar of the Roman Empire was lunisolar, containing 355 days divided into 12 months beginning on January 1. To keep it more or less in accord with the actual solar year, a month was added every two years. The system for doing so was complex, and cumulative errors gradually misaligned it with the seasons. By 46 BCE, it was some three months out of alignment, and Julius Caesar oversaw its reform. Consulting Greek astronomers in Alexandria,

he created a solar calendar in which one day was added to February every fourth year, effectively compensating for the solar year's length of 365.2422 days. This Julian calendar was used throughout Europe until 1582 CE.

In the Middle Ages, the Christian liturgical calendar was grafted onto the Julian one, and the computation of lunar festivals like Easter, which falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, exercised some of the best minds in Christendom. The use of the epoch 1 CE dates from the sixth century, but did not become common until the 10th.

The Julian year was nonetheless 11 minutes and 14 seconds too long. By the early 16th century, due to the accumulated error, the spring equinox

was falling on March 11 rather than where it should, on March 21. Copernicus, Christophorus Clavius and the physician Aloysius Lilius provided the calculations, and in 1582 Pope Gregory XIII ordered that Thursday, October 4, 1582 would be followed by Friday, October 15, 1582. Most Catholic countries accepted the new "Gregorian" calendar, but it was not adopted in England and the Americas until the 18th century. Its use is now almost universal worldwide. The Gregorian year is nonetheless 25.96 seconds ahead of the solar year, which by the year 4909 will add up to an extra day. ☹

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Though they share 12 lunar cycles—months—per solar year, the *hijri* calendar uses actual moon phases to mark them, whereas the Gregorian calendar adjusts its nearly lunar months to its nearly lunar months to synchronize with the sun.

Converting Dates

The following equations convert roughly from Gregorian to *hijri* and vice versa. However, the results can be slightly misleading: They tell you only the year in which the other calendar's year begins. For example, 2012 Gregorian begins and ends in Safar, the second month, of *Hijri* 1433 and 1434, respectively.

Gregorian year = [(32 × *Hijri* year) ÷ 33] + 622

***Hijri* year** = [(Gregorian year – 622) × 33] ÷ 32

Alternatively, there are more precise calculators available on the Internet. Try www.rabiah.com/convert/ and www.ori.unizh.ch/hegira.html.

It is he who made the sun to be a shining glory, and the moon to be a light (of beauty), and measured out stages for her, that ye might know the number of years and the count (of time).
—The Qur'an, Chapter 10 ("Yunus"), Verse 5



Parchment leaf from a Qur'an
North Africa (probably Tunisia)
Late ninth or early 10th century
28.6 x 38 centimeters (11¼" x 15¼")
Courtesy of The David Collection

The so-called "Blue Qur'an" is notable for its regal blue sheepskin parchment as well as its script in gold, outlined in black, and its verse markers in now-decomposed silver. The Kufic script, however, is difficult to read because the calligrapher spaced some letters and words equally. To spread the text uniformly across the page, he lengthened certain letters, a practice known as *mashq*. This page shows chapter (*sura*) 2, verses 187-190.

JANUARY
SAFAR — RABI' I 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 7	2 8	3 9	4 10	5 11	6 12	7 13
8 14	9 15	10 16	11 17	12 18	13 19	14 20
15 21	16 22	17 23	18 24	19 25	20 26	21 27
22 28	23 29	24 1	25 2	26 3	27 4	28 5
29 6	30 7	31 8				

FEBRUARY
RABI' I — RABI' II 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9	2 10	3 11	4 12
5 13	6 14	7 15	8 16	9 17	10 18	11 19
12 20	13 21	14 22	15 23	16 24	17 25	18 26
19 27	20 28	21 29	22 30	23 1	24 2	25 3
26 4	27 5	28 6	29 7			



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ
هُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ
الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ
بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا
رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ
يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
الْمُتَّقِينَ
وَإِلَّا تَذَكَّرْ لَعَلَّكَ تَكُونُ مِنَ
الْمُتَقَرِّبِينَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ
غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

MARCH

RABI' II — JUMADA I 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 8	2 9	3 10
4 11	5 12	6 13	7 14	8 15	9 16	10 17
11 18	12 19	13 20	14 21	15 22	16 23	17 24
18 25	19 26	20 27	21 28	22 29	23 30	24 1
25 2	26 3	27 4	28 5	29 6	30 7	31 8

APRIL

JUMADA I — JUMADA II 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9	2 10	3 11	4 12	5 13	6 14	7 15
8 16	9 17	10 18	11 19	12 20	13 21	14 22
15 23	16 24	17 25	18 26	19 27	20 28	21 29
22 1	23 2	24 3	25 4	26 5	27 6	28 7
29 8	30 9					



Earthenware bowl

Eastern Iran (perhaps Nishapur) or Samarkand

10th century

27 centimeters diameter, 10 cm height (10 5/8" x 4")

Courtesy of The David Collection

"He who believes in a reward [from God] is generous with gifts," reads the interwoven, knotted Kufic calligraphy on this bowl of earthenware covered with a white slip and painted in a brown and red slip under a transparent glaze. Pottery of this type was made under the Samanids, who were Persians known for their revival of the Persian language. For whom the anonymous Samanid calligrapher painted this Arabic masterpiece remains a mystery.

MAY

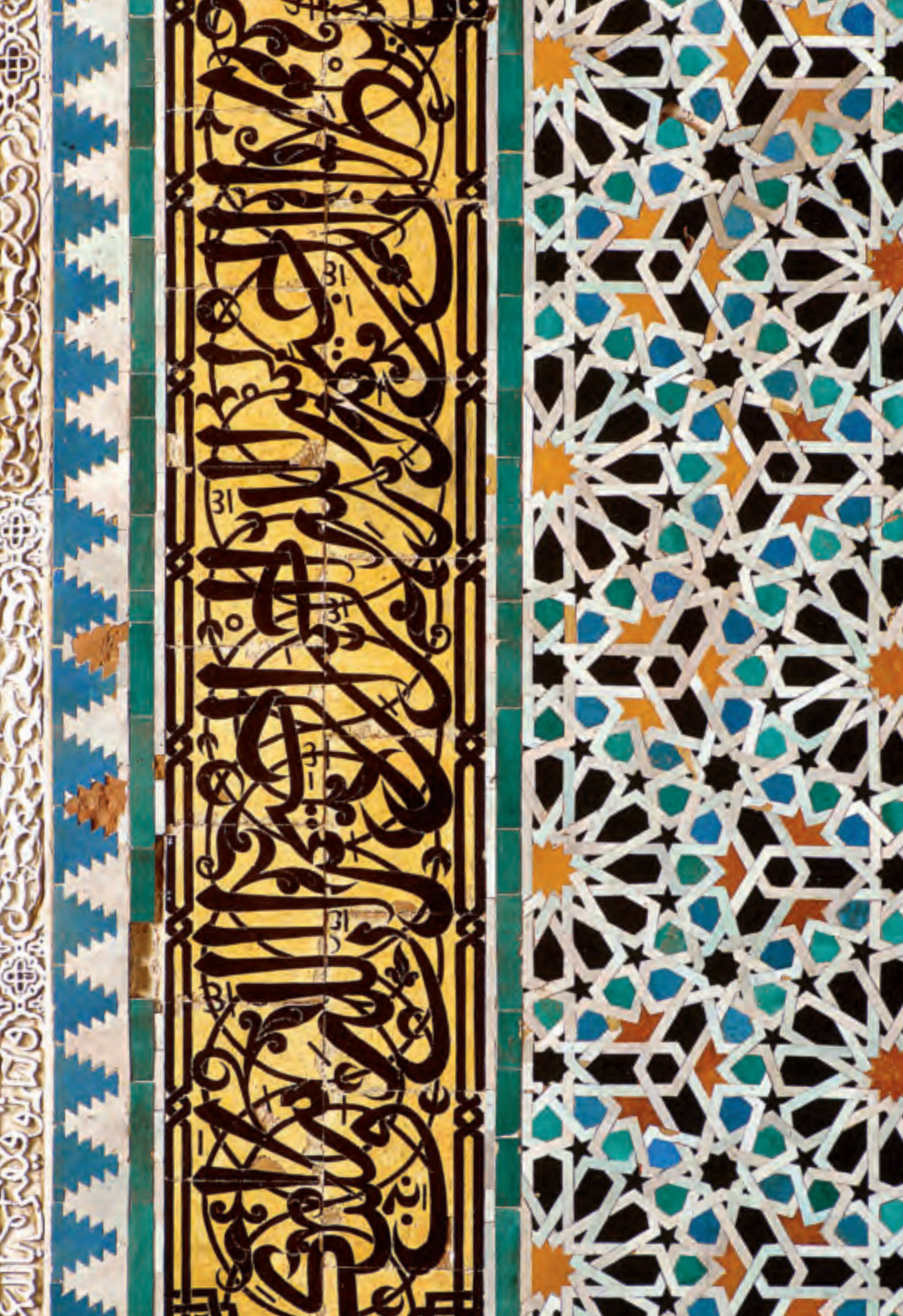
JUMADA II — RAJAB 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 10	2 11	3 12	4 13	5 14
6 15	7 16	8 17	9 18	10 19	11 20	12 21
13 22	14 23	15 24	16 25	17 26	18 27	19 28
20 29	21 30	22 1	23 2	24 3	25 4	26 5
27 6	28 7	29 8	30 9	31 10		

JUNE

RAJAB — SHA‘ABAN 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 11	2 12
3 13	4 14	5 15	6 16	7 17	8 18	9 19
10 20	11 21	12 22	13 23	14 24	15 25	16 26
17 27	18 28	19 29	20 30	21 1	22 2	23 3
24 4	25 5	26 6	27 7	28 8	29 9	30 10



Detail of wall cladding
Attarin Madrasa, Fez, Morocco
1323–1325 CE
Photo by Gerard Degeorge / akg-images

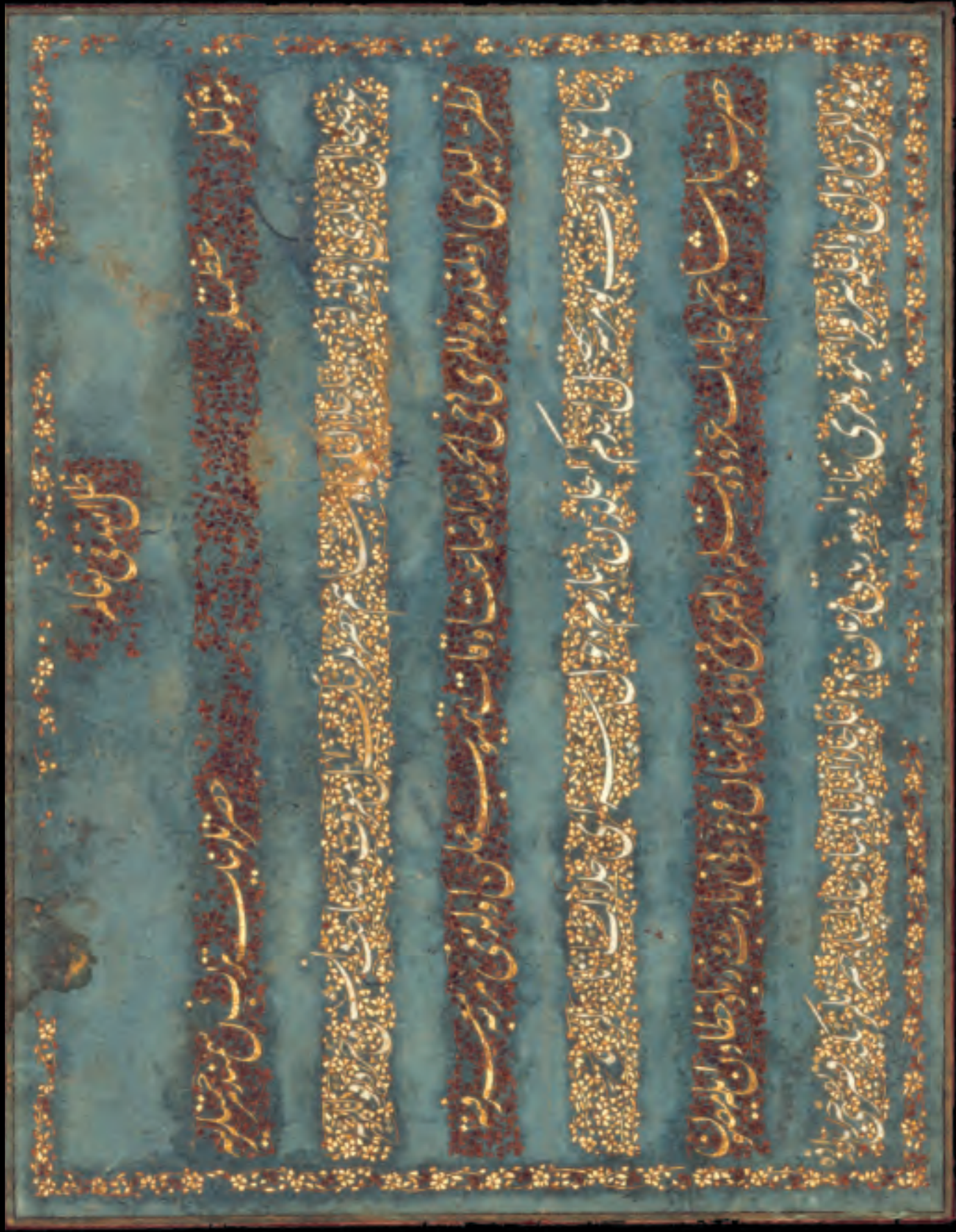
Commissioned under Marinid Sultan Uthman II ibn Ya'qub, the "School of the Perfumers" was named for its location near the perfumers' market. Its courtyard walls are clad in polyhedral mosaic *zillij* tiles, above which appears ornamental calligraphy in a sgraffito technique. Known as *taqshir*, or "peeled work," the black glaze of each nearly square tile was scraped off negative areas, leaving the shiny letters in low relief against a terra-cotta base.

JULY
SHA'ABAN — RAMADAN 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 11	2 12	3 13	4 14	5 15	6 16	7 17
8 18	9 19	10 20	11 21	12 22	13 23	14 24
15 25	16 26	17 27	18 28	19 29	20 1	21 2
22 3	23 4	24 5	25 6	26 7	27 8	28 9
29 10	30 11	31 12				

AUGUST
RAMADAN — SHAWWAL 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 13	2 14	3 15	4 16
5 17	6 18	7 19	8 20	9 21	10 22	11 23
12 24	13 25	14 26	15 27	16 28	17 29	18 30
19 1	20 2	21 3	22 4	23 5	24 6	25 7
26 8	27 9	28 10	29 11	30 12	31 13	



Petition to the Sultan
 Ottoman Turkey, 18th century
 10.9 x 14.2 centimeters (4 1/4" x 5 5/8")
Courtesy of the Nasser D. Khalili
Collection of Islamic Art

Seven lines in Ottoman Turkish *ta'liq*, cut from paper colored either gold or white, against either brown or gold applique scrollwork, comprise this undated request signed by "the wretched Nafsi Harid-zade," who sought to study in the palace of the unnamed sultan. The roots of calligraphic decoupage go back to 15th-century Iran, where *qafis* (paper-cutters) were at times nearly as esteemed as calligraphers.

SEPTEMBER

SHAWWAL — DHU-AL-QA'DAH 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 14
2 15	3 16	4 17	5 18	6 19	7 20	8 21
9 22	10 23	11 24	12 25	13 26	14 27	15 28
16 29	17 1	18 2	19 3	20 4	21 5	22 6
23 7	24 8	25 9	26 10	27 11	28 12	29 13
30 14						

OCTOBER

DHU-AL-QA'DAH — DHU AL-HIJJAH 1433

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 15	2 16	3 17	4 18	5 19	6 20
7 21	8 22	9 23	10 24	11 25	12 26	13 27
14 28	15 29	16 30	17 1	18 2	19 3	20 4
21 5	22 6	23 7	24 8	25 9	26 10	27 11
28 12	29 13	30 14	31 15			



Mashq i
United States, 2011
60 x 51 centimeters (24" x 20.1")
*Courtesy Mohamed Zakariya / Linearis
Institute / Frank Wing*

Washington, D.C.-based calligrapher Mohamed Zakariya produced this model of *jali ta'liq* script using yellow ink on paper dyed blue and burnished with *ahar*, a mixture of egg white and alum that for centuries gave calligraphers a perfectly smooth and archival surface. The text is a poem commemorating an Ottoman victory, originally calligraphed in 1895 by Sami Efendi.

NOVEMBER

DHU AL-HIJJAH 1433 — MUHARRAM 1434

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 16	2 17	3 18
4 19	5 20	6 21	7 22	8 23	9 24	10 25
11 26	12 27	13 28	14 29	15 1	16 2	17 3
18 4	19 5	20 6	21 7	22 8	23 9	24 10
25 11	26 12	27 13	28 14	29 15	30 16	

DECEMBER

MUHARRAM — SAFAR 1434

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 17
2 18	3 19	4 20	5 21	6 22	7 23	8 24
9 25	10 26	11 27	12 28	13 29	14 1	15 2
16 3	17 4	18 5	19 6	20 7	21 8	22 9
23 10	24 11	25 12	26 13	27 14	28 15	29 16
30 17	31 18					



1949



1952



1986



1992



2011

In November 1949, the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) launched an interoffice newsletter named *Aramco World*. Over the next two decades, as the number of Americans working with Saudi colleagues in Dhahran grew into the tens of thousands, *Aramco World* grew into a bimonthly educational magazine whose historical, geographical and cultural articles helped the American employees and their families appreciate an unfamiliar land.

The magazine is now published by Aramco Services Company in Houston, Texas on behalf of Saudi Aramco, which succeeded Aramco in 1988 as the national oil company of Saudi Arabia. In 2000, *Aramco World* changed its name to *Saudi Aramco World* to reflect this relationship.

Today, *Saudi Aramco World*'s orientation is still toward education, the fostering of cooperation and the building of mutual appreciation between East and West, but for the last four decades the magazine has been aimed primarily at readers outside the company, worldwide, as well as at internal readers. Its articles have spanned the Arab and Muslim worlds, past and present, with special attention to their connections with the cultures of the West.



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A searchable, indexed reference disk containing PDF scans of all print-edition articles, from 1950 through 2010, is also available upon request, without charge, from the addresses above.





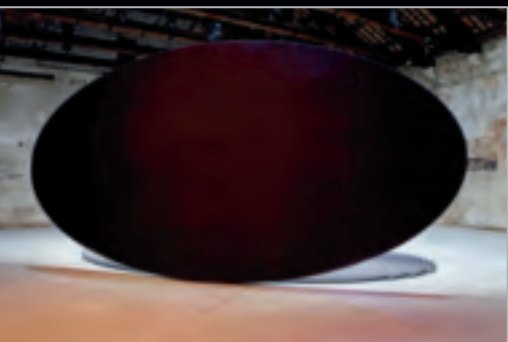
THROUGH THE BLACK ARCH

WRITTEN BY ARTHUR CLARK

From the early Middle Ages, the Arsenale was where Venice built and outfitted the ships that for centuries brought this city-state fabulous wealth and influential contact with far-flung peoples. Now, the echoing chambers of the Arsenale open every two years to the Venice Biennale, the world's top contemporary-art festival. This year, from June to November, art from a record 89 countries brought people and ideas from around the world to Venice.

One room's exhibit in the Arsenale didn't look like much at first. From the door, all that appeared of the installation titled "The Black Arch" was a flat, solid black ellipse some seven meters (23') long, nearly blocking the path in. But slipping out from around its lower curves were glimmers of light and color from images projected onto the floor. And, in the distance, murmurs of voices in Italian and Arabic stimulated the viewer's curiosity to find out what lay on the other side.

There, the view was transformed: The black ellipse became a mirror of stainless steel. On the floor in front of it stretched a pool-like array of 3257 polished silver spheres, each the size of a grapefruit, arranged in curves that echoed the ellipse. In the pool of spheres, toward its left side, a mirrored cube, balanced on a corner, stood about shoulder-high. Its lower sides reflected the spheres; cut into its top corner was a cubical niche



ANDREA AVEZZÙ

"It's like a seashell that opens and lets you in."

that held a few handfuls of pebbles. The sounds of Italian and Arabic voices were louder on this side, and the images on the floor proved to be colorful fragments of Renaissance mosaics and views of pilgrims at prayer in Makkah.

"It's very sensitive," said visitor Eric Guérin of Joinville, France. "There are so many things that tease my eyes and my ears. It's like a seashell that opens and lets you in."

"The Black Arch" was created for the Biennale by artists Shadia and Raja Alem, sisters born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. It marked the first-ever exhibit by Saudi Arabia at the show, whose 2011 theme was "ILLUMInations"—art as a way of deepening human connections across boundaries and borders of all kinds.

"Only when you go round the back of [the ellipse] do you become aware of its other face ... in which your own milky reflection mingles with ghostly photographic projections of pilgrims praying in Makkah and Arab merchants taken from Venetian paintings," *The Financial Times* reported, calling the Saudi presentation "a ground-breaking move." The Alem sisters, who divide their time between Saudi Arabia and a shared flat in Paris, agree. "The kingdom joining the Venice Biennale with the work of two women is breaking the wall between us and the rest of the world," says Raja. "It is a revolution in itself," adds Shadia.

The sisters are independently successful: Raja is an acclaimed writer whose novel *The Dove's Necklace* won this year's International Prize for Arabic Fiction; Shadia is a visual artist whose work has been widely exhibited internationally. From time to time, the sisters join forces, and at the 2009 Biennale, their joint work was part of a private Saudi group exhibit called "Edge of Arabia."

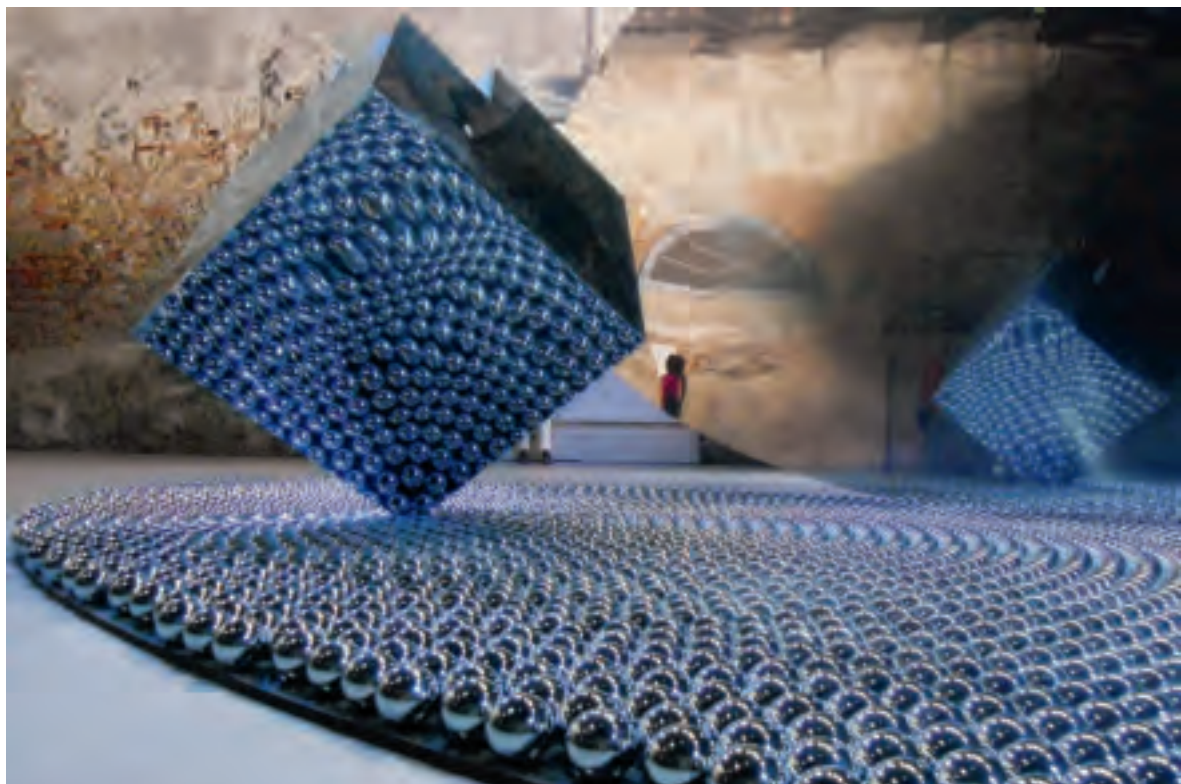
"The Black Arch" marks their most high-profile collaboration so far. Cinzia De Bei, who holds an art degree from Venice's Ca' Foscari University and who helped staff the Saudi Pavilion, observed that while

casual visitors tended to be "really amazed" at the Alems' installation, those who lingered were "even more amazed at the work. It's not just beautiful. They see it also has a deeper meaning."

The project began, explains Shadia,

proved to be the key, right at their fingertips: There were powerful links among the 13th-century Venetian after whom the airport was named, their own childhood in the holy city of Makkah and the Biennale itself.

It was, says Raja, "this act of *traveling*,



when the Saudi Pavilion's co-curators, Mona Khazindar, director of the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, and Robin Start, a London-based art consultant, named Shadia among six Saudi artists to compete for the honor of producing the kingdom's exhibit at the 2011 Biennale. Shadia at once spoke to Raja, and together with four other artists, the Alems

what Marco Polo represents," combined with the realization that it was also, at that moment, the Hajj season, when Muslims come to Makkah from around the world—often after long waits in airports. This, they also realized, spoke to the theme ILLUMInations: travel—both physical and symbolic—is both a means of communication and a deeply shared human experience.

They quickly also invoked the name of Ibn Battuta, the Moroccan from Tangiers who set out on travels to Makkah and on to India, China

and more in 1323, the year before Marco Polo died. The two never crossed paths, says Raja, but they shared the calling of travelers.

The sisters, too, have journeyed as children and adults, and "the act of traveling has made a difference in our lives," says Raja. She explains that, when she was a child, every year at the time of Hajj her family turned the lower floors of their seven-story home over to pilgrims. The Alems moved upstairs, affording the sisters, who were born just more than a year apart, almost literally a bird's-eye view

"It's about exchange—learning from the Other, enriching the Other and being enriched by the Other. It's enlightenment!"

visited the Arsenale room assigned to the Saudi exhibit: 350 square meters (3770 sq ft) of emptiness; a high, beamed ceiling; worn, burnt-orange brick walls; five windows, all on one side. "The space was horrible," Shadia remembers. "We thought, 'What can we do with that?'"

As they were leaving Venice, awaiting their flight at Marco Polo Airport, they struggled to find a way "to conquer this space." It was, Shadia recalls, only when their flight was delayed that the sisters found what

of the kaleidoscope of cultures that gathered in the city.

They also recalled a particularly memorable story from their paternal grandmother. There once was a queen, says Shadia, who as a bride in her husband's many-roomed palace, was told "she could open any door except the black door." Eventually, of course, she did open the black door—and discovered a new world.

"Black is like a prohibition to cross over something. So it is a challenge," says Raja. "If you allow that black to prevail," you are left without knowledge, and "it creates war and [other] problems." Often, the metaphorical "crossing" is less difficult than one fears it will be, she continues, "like 'The Black Arch,' where one face is black and the other face is reflective and full of light. Between them is only a very thin barrier."

They further experienced the mystery associated with black, Raja says, in the *kiswah* that is draped over the Ka'bah in the Great

In the cube's niche sits a mix of pebbles from Venice, shaped by the sea, and from Muzdalifah in Makkah, shaped "by people's hands, sweat and desire over centuries."



Mosque in Makkah, where they attended prayers every Friday with their mother. "When we look at the Ka'bah covered in black," she says, "there is something unimaginable behind it."

A few weeks after their visit, the sisters had sketched what became "The Black Arch." Fuad Therman, director of Saudi Aramco's King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture and a member of the Saudi selection committee, said the committee "appreciated the emotional depth and visual strength" of the Alems' proposal.

The sisters worked with fabricators in France to construct the installation, and Shadia herself took photographs and

Co-creators of "The Black Arch," sisters Raja and Shadia Alem (left and right) called it "a remix or a dialogue of sounds and light, woven of the two cities' mosaics and ornaments."

recorded evocative sounds from Makkah and Venice. Her images of mosaics from St. Mark's Basilica and other buildings in Venice show links with the Middle East as well as with the city's local religious history. Her photographs from Makkah portray the textures of that city, mainly through mosaic-like images of pilgrims. Her soundtrack is as varied as the *adhan*, the call to prayer, in Makkah, the noises of a marketplace and a wedding, and, from Venice, the song of a gondolier, the chatter of a crowd in St. Mark's Square—and an announcement of a flight at Marco Polo Airport, much like the one that triggered the project's conception.

They also realized that water was an element that both linked and distinguished the two cities: While Venice and Makkah share a history of maritime travel (Venice directly and Makkah by way of nearby ports), Venice is built in the sea and endures the historic threat of floods, while Makkah is built in the desert and endures the historic threat of droughts. Between the 10-minute projections of images from each place, the sisters created an interlude in which abstract images of waves rippled along the floor to the sounds of lapping water and seagulls.

A further metaphor lies with the pebbles held in the niche at the top of the cube. Some of the pebbles Shadia gathered from Muzdalifah, where pilgrims ritually throw small stones at pil-

lars representing the devil, or, as Raja puts it, "visualizing a negative moment in your life and aiming a stone at it." She calls the pebbles "miniature sculptures shaped by people's hands, sweat and desire over centuries." Mixed in with those pebbles are others from Venice.

While the work is rich in symbolism, the Alems insist that "The Black Arch" is "not specific to any single place, culture or time," and that it is open to personal interpretation. For example, says Shadia, the cube, "may represent the Ka'bah" at the center of the Great Mosque, and the spheres may represent pilgrims, but the cube could no less effectively represent "your city" and the spheres,



reflecting the visitors themselves, literally show "people everywhere." The importance, the sisters explain, lies in the mixing and sharing that is continuous, and of which the viewer is a part.

Co-curator Mona Khazindar agrees, saying "The Black Arch" makes a lasting impression.

Many visitors "were taken by surprise," she notes. "They were not expecting to see such artwork from Saudi Arabia and from Saudi women.... I think it has changed the perception of Saudi art in the West.

"It's a very cosmopolitan artwork. It's about exchange—learning from the Other, enriching the Other and being enriched by the Other. It's enlightenment! Such artworks are very important because they teach you to look at the Other through a different window."


Saudis, too, have been surprised.

"Within Saudi Arabia, you have lots of artworks that tackle more traditional or local themes. 'The Black Arch' is very conceptual, very modern and very poetic," Khazindar says. "We never thought of Makkah as having any resemblance to Venice, yet it does. Makkah is also a mosaic of people, of culture and colors."

Shadia and Raja hope "The Black Arch" can tour other cities. Then, they say, even more people might find themselves only "a black door" apart from each other—and be able to step through to meet. ☪



Arthur Clark (arthur.clark@aramcoservices.com) is assistant editor of *Saudi Aramco World* and editor of *Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah*, the semiannual magazine for Saudi Aramco retirees. He lives outside Houston.

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Ibn Battuta: J/A 00
Makkah: N/D 91, J/A 92, J/F 99
Venice: M/A 08
kiswah: N/D 74, S/O 85

THE MET RESETS A GEM

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY WALTER B. DENNY

In November, after an eight-year, \$50-million renovation, 15 galleries devoted to “The Arts of Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia” will open in New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. In what is almost a new museum within the museum, visitors will view some 1200 of the Met’s nearly 12,000 Arab-Islamic works arranged not chronologically from past to present, but rather as a kind of geographical traverse across places and cultures.

This new way of organizing the exhibits, reflected in the long

name that omits the word “Islamic,” reflects an evolving emphasis on the diversity that exists within a vast field that includes not only religious art by Muslims, but also much secular and luxury art by Muslims, as well as art by Muslims for non-Muslims and vice versa. Among the new cases and spaces are three displays that promise to be especially striking: the Spanish Ceiling, an elaborately carved, painted and glazed wooden ceiling probably made in the 14th, 15th or 16th century by Muslim artists for Christian patrons; the Damascus Room, an early 18th-century reception room (*qa’a*) from a Damascus



merchant's mansion; and the Moroccan Courtyard, the Met's newest jewel, created this year inside the museum in authentic 14th-century style by contemporary artists from Fez, Morocco who used materials and tools of the era.

It's fair to ask, however, why the Met has bothered—and why the renovation took eight years—when the museum was already long renowned for the world's largest display of what was, perhaps too sweepingly, called “Islamic art.” In a world where such cities as Toronto and Doha are building entirely new museums, and the Louvre in Paris has added a major expansion for arts from Islamic cultures, the Met is different: It can't expand. Its “footprint” on the east side of New York's

Central Park is legally limited, so “building from within” has been both the Met's motto and its burden for years. Although the renovated and renamed galleries offer nearly 40

a combination of excitement and dread. I also knew I was going to have to learn the art of skillful compromise.” (She learned as well that at times compromise was not enough:

One major donor withdrew upon learning that the new galleries would displace the Damascus Room from the front of the exhibit hall.)

The final consensus was that the times were ripe for change. The old Islamic Galleries had been designed in the early 1970's, and they had become



Left: In a dramatic finish to eight years of effort, 11 masters of traditional Moroccan interior arts spent nearly a year in residence to create the Moroccan Courtyard in the authentic style of the 14th century, the era that produced the masterpiece mosques, madrasas and palaces of North Africa and southern Spain. Above: Fifth Avenue, New York, viewed from the temporary elevator that ferried materials to the 15 new galleries.

percent more space, they remain where the original ones were, on the second floor. The story behind these new exhibition spaces, where I had the privilege to both work and observe over nearly four years, is one of diplomacy and drama but, above all, of hard work and hard choices.

In 2003, the museum closed its Islamic Galleries to accommodate the long-planned renovations. Because the mission of a museum is to find new ways to interpret and display art, and thus to produce new knowledge, the Met took this as an opportunity to rethink and renovate its Islamic-world displays—an opportunity made all the more important, even urgent, by post-9/11 interest in Islamic cultures. But the opportunity came at a time of internal transition at the Met, and so it was only after some false starts that in 2005, director Philippe de Montebello appointed Navina Haidar, a promising young associate curator, to direct the renovation project.

“I knew right away I would need to confront major questions of what ‘Islamic art’ meant,” she says. “And I viewed the task with

too small for a growing collection. They were particularly limited in the way they could showcase carpets and textiles, and it was in this regard that in 2007 I received a call from Stefano Carboni, then the department's managing curator, who asked if I might know a student or a protégé—“a junior Walter Denny,” he put it—who might be available to help. After some thought, I had to respond that, to my knowledge, the only Walter Denny with the combination of expertise he sought was the original,

65-year-old one. And so it was that I committed myself, without knowing quite what I was in for, to a weekly five-hours-each-way commute from Amherst to spend one seven-hour day a week at the Met. Quickly, Carboni, Haidar and the

superb Met staff melted all of my misgivings. I realized I had made the best decision in my professional lifetime.

THE MET STAFF
MELTED MY MISGIVINGS.
I HAD MADE THE BEST
PROFESSIONAL DECISION
OF MY LIFE.

One of the challenges for which my advice was sought lay in Gallery 10, where the 10-by-9-meter (33' x 28') Spanish Ceiling was to hang. That gallery would also be the major showcase for the Met's collection of almost 800 Islamic carpets. But the ceiling left the gallery's walls too short to hang more than small rugs, and while the floor was expansive, how could we illuminate carpets on it without the ceiling-mounted spotlights normally used in museums? I soon learned that this challenge was modest compared to



the fundamental one facing the proposed Moroccan Courtyard: Since such a space would be a new construction in an old style, did it legitimately belong in a museum devoted to art from earlier times? And if so, who would construct it, and where? In Morocco, and then ship it in pieces? Or build it right there in the museum?

And then there was all the work going on deeper behind the scenes. The museum had to resurvey its entire Islamic-lands collection, which had grown much recently—had to rephotograph it, generate digital records and determine which objects would be displayed in which new galleries and on what kinds of stands and cases—and take into account as well the rotations, planned years in advance, that would keep individual light-sensitive objects from being exposed too long. To prepare for construction, the old galleries had been stripped to bare brick. To move debris out and new materials in, the museum had secured approval from the city's Landmarks Commission to punch a hole in the great Beaux-Arts façade, raise scaffolding and install a temporary exterior elevator on Fifth Avenue. There were architectural drawings, and there was, over all of it, the whopping price tag for both the construction and the scholarship that the renovation required. Like champion hot-dog-eaters, art museums have seemingly insatiable capacities to devour money, and



The opportunity for “creative curating” brought Sheila Canby, left, to head the Met’s Islamic department. She is talking with Florica Zaharia, far left, head of textile conservation at the museum. Above: Inch by inch, panels of the Spanish Ceiling were raised into position.



Crouching on the catwalks that wind among the Spanish Ceiling's hangers, one pair of technicians, left, winches up the ceiling's central ornament while another pair, below, guides it into its final position.

in this, as in so much else, the Met is second to none.

My place, it turned out, was amid an ever-shifting team of more than three dozen art historians and scholars from around the world whom Carboni, Haidar and chief curator Michael Barry convened to research the collections, write labels and explanations and prepare a monumental commemorative catalog. As a result, the Islamic department was packed tighter than downtown Cairo with some of the world's brightest young experts, and their cramped workstations, surrounded by piles of books, made it all look much like an updated vision of a medieval scriptorium.

Throughout the process, Mimi Lukens Swietochowski, who had helped lead the building of the 1970's galleries, stood out as a priceless resource and guide, working closely with Haidar and all the staff during the entire project. Tragically, she succumbed to leukemia in September, less than two months before the opening.

In one way, the massive effort behind the new galleries seemed to resemble a pyramid balanced on its tip: After all the experts and specialists have weighed in, the actual work of putting art physically in place is done by only three people: collections manager Annick Des Roches and art handlers Tim Caster and Kent Hendrickson. Every object moved, stored, crated, uncrated or repositioned—in the right sequence, at the right time—depends on their skill and, not

infrequently, their physical strength.

With the teams in place, and a schedule aiming at a late-2011 opening, hundreds of decisions, small and large, awaited us. Like a group comprising both expert and novice skydivers, it seemed that everyone took a deep breath, and leaped.

REHANGING THE SPANISH CEILING

Mecka Baumeister is the Met's conservator for objects (as distinct from paintings, works on paper or textiles). An exemplar of no-nonsense German expertise, often dressed in her famously flamboyant trousers, she specializes in architectural orphans. The wooden Spanish Ceiling, a carved masterpiece of geometric strapwork, gilded and elaborately painted, came to the us in 1931 when William Randolph Hearst bought it from an art dealer.

Hearst never installed it, and it was donated to the Met in 1956.

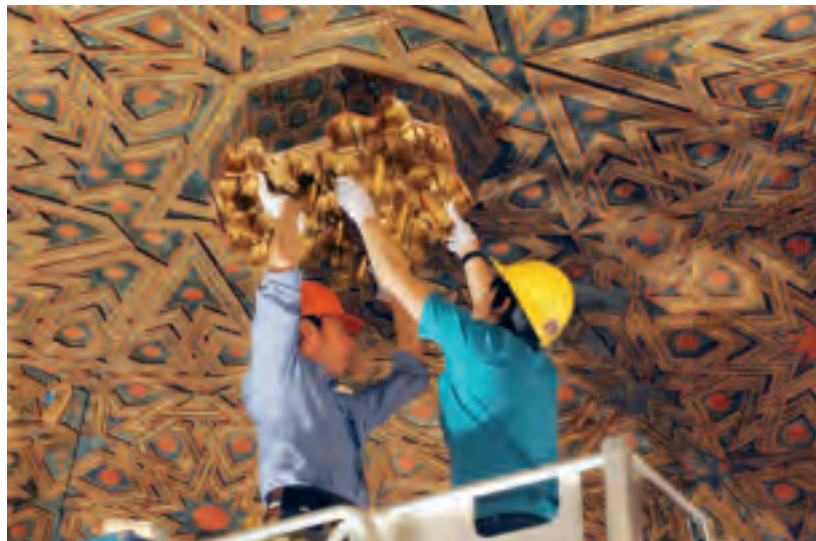
Its origins have so far eluded scholars, but its style resembles some works found in the Castile-Leon region, and it was probably built between the 14th and 16th centuries by Muslim

craftsmen for a Christian client—possibly a monastery. When it was dismantled in its original gallery at the Met in 2004, Baumeister and other specialists gradually discovered that it had been enlarged by as much as 60 percent from its original size and otherwise extensively fiddled with—but by whom, where and when remain one of the museum's mysteries.

"We had to clean up an historical mess, and

yet give the overall impression that nothing had changed," says Baumeister. Dismantled, the heavy pieces of the ceiling were stacked around a temporary conservation laboratory in one of the gutted former galleries, where she and her team studied and conserved the literally tons of wood.

Meanwhile, in Gallery 10, steelworkers constructed a massive, shell-like frame from which the Spanish Ceiling could hang anew. Renfro Associates, the museum's lighting consultants, helped us develop fiber-optic wands projecting from the walls and concealed in the railings around the carpets on the floor. Those railings would surround the floor-display carpets, and the idea of a marble platform there on which to show the largest carpets was scrapped in favor of a modular wooden platform that could be



adapted to various lengths and widths as different carpets rotated through the gallery.

Once Baumeister's team finished, it was then up to Jim Boorstein's five-person crew to hang the ceiling. Boorstein runs Traditional Line, which specializes in period rooms for museums and other institutions. The installations at the Met, he says, are "not really a story, but the better part of a novella." Using hand-operated winches, his crew meticulously lifted each of the ceiling's 21 main trapezoidal sections a centimeter at a time. Once they were in place, the crew bolted the ceiling's joists to U-shaped hangers on thick steel rods that hung from the support frame. To accomplish this, workers had to crawl through a trapdoor built into an office above the room, climb down and then crawl along the shell's narrow, fiberglass catwalks.

As a curatorial decision, filling the gallery with a star-studded geometric ceiling above and geometric carpets below seems, to the experts, like a great one. Will the public like it? We'll find out in November.

THE DAMASCUS ROOM

Since its installation near the front of the Ettinghausen Galleries, the Damascus Room has been one of the best-known, most-visited parts of the Islamic collection. A gift to the museum from New

York's Kevorkian Foundation, it, too, came from an art dealer who acquired it, no doubt with considerable physical effort, from an original location thought to have been in the Nuraldin neighborhood of Damascus—but which, like the home of the Spanish Ceiling,

remains unknown despite efforts to learn its precise source.

Extensively decorated in the style fashionable in Ottoman Syria in the early 18th century, the room consists of a two-level marble floor, the lower level adorned with



Its panels of Persian verse now set in proper sequence, the Damascus Room was pieced together on a steel cage frame.

Opposite: Assistant curator Navina Haidar in the fully assembled Damascus Room.

a playing fountain and the upper rimmed by low, sofa-like *diwan* seating. The walls are decorated with paintings of flowers and a long poem in Persian, and the ceiling is elaborately carved and delicately gilded. During its time in the dealer's storeroom, tobacco heiress Doris Duke bought two of its wall panels, which she installed in Shangri-La, her orientalist mansion in Hawaii, and today the Met uses photographs to take their place.

The Damascus Room's dismantled pieces were arranged in another gutted gallery made into a temporary lab. There they received the attentions of Baumeister's conservators. The wood panels, covered with fragile layers of gesso, glue and paint, each had to be cleaned and stabilized. Abdullah Gouchani, the museum's epigraphic consultant from Tehran, helped to solve what proved to be a giant jigsaw puzzle, reassembling the rhymed Persian couplets in their proper sequence. Renfro provided an improved illusion of daylight coming in the windows by using new LED panels. Just before reassembly, the conservation and design team flew to Damascus and spent several weeks studying the interiors

To clean and restore the many pieces of both the Damascus Room and the Spanish Ceiling, the Met gave over nearby galleries to serve as temporary conservation labs.

of 18th-century houses still standing in old neighborhoods of the city.

Once the design decisions were made, again it was Boorstein who took over installation. A steel exoskeleton behind the Damascus Room's walls would provide anchor points, support, and "backstage" stairs and catwalks for ongoing maintenance and lighting. (The next time a hurricane or earthquake hits New York, the safest place in the city might be the Damascus Room.) Bit by careful bit, using hydraulic lifts, Boorstein's crew raised each precious piece of 18th-century wood and poetic wisdom into place. When they were done, others laid the under-floor electrical wiring and the plumbing for the fountain. And at the entrance, video screens and signage were designed to be useful but unobtrusive. By midsummer, all that was left was for Des Roches, Caster and Hendrickson to arrange the items of period-appropriate decorative art on the room's walls and shelves.

THE MOROCCAN COURTYARD

The courtyard was the last of the three major projects in the new galleries. In April 2009, Haidar and her colleagues made a trip to Morocco, which for the past few decades has enjoyed something of a renaissance in the traditional arts of woodcarving, marquetry, tile-mosaic and carved stucco. This has been encouraged by, on the one hand, laws that



require public parts of buildings to include traditional arts, and, on the other, the deep roots that craft traditions still enjoy within the country's economy and culture. There, the Met team interviewed companies specializing in historic restoration and traditional architecture. They chose Moresque, a firm from Fez run by three brothers of the Naji family.

One of the Najis, Adil, is a slight man who bubbles over with the energy of a Moroccan fountain. Given to big smiles and even bigger hugs, he is the perfect extrovert, a logical front man for his firm. By December 2010, he and the first of 10 other craftsmen had arrived in New York and settled into two condominiums in Queens that Adil persuaded the Arab owner to rent out for the greater good of Arab-American relations.

With them also came stuff—all heavy, tons of it. There were bags and bags of tiny monochrome-glazed tiles, cut into stars and triangles, angled strapwork and polyhedral darts, wedges and lozenges: Known as *zillij*, these mosaic pieces would be arranged into colorful geometric panels to adorn the base of the courtyard's walls. There were sacks and sacks of powdery, straw-colored gypsum that, mixed with water, would coat the upper parts of the walls and be carved into intricate reliefs. There were paper stencils, hand chisels of all sizes—and a portable CD player for Moroccan music.

Certainly the Metropolitan Museum of Art had not seen anything quite like Adil's team in decades, if ever. For once, the art on display was being made before the eyes of its curators: First the artisans arranged hundreds of *zillij* face down on templates, then they poured grout over their backs to form solid, rectangular sheets that could be lifted and fixed to the walls, glazed side out. Next came the stucco—a traditional form of carved plaster. They sifted the dry plaster by hand and mixed it with water in shallow





troughs, again by hand. Gobs of soggy plaster were passed hand to hand and smeared and smoothed on the walls—by hand. By evening, walls and workers often seemed equally coated.

But the most amazing part was only about to begin. Using paper stencils as fine as lace, Adil's artisans marked patterns on the dried plaster. They then donned traditional Moroccan *jellabas* and stepped into pointy-toed yellow Moroccan slippers—Adil insisted this was traditional for doing carving work, not just for show—then picked up small steel chisels, much like ones that would have been used in the 1300's, and began to carve: tap, tap, scrape; tap, tap, tap, scrape—each move practiced and precise.

One of the hallmarks of Islamic art is the way it seems to almost alchemically transmute the most humble, elemental

materials—clay and gypsum from earth, wool from sheep, wood and base metals such as copper and brass—into patterned works of meditative beauty and awe-inspiring complexity. Watching a dozen virtuosos of stucco-carving bring forth such reliefs

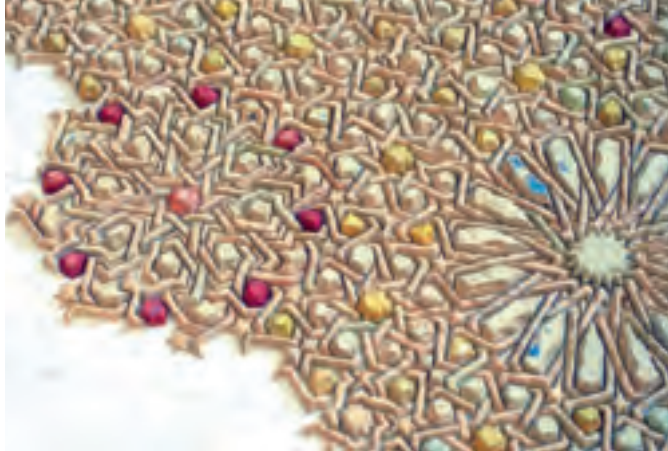
of geometry and vegetation is an unforgettable experience for those fortunate enough to witness it. Adil, his brothers Muhammad and Hicham and the rest of the crew may have been learning to be New Yorkers by night—they had adapted quickly to their commute on the

New York subway—but in the daytime, the 14th century lived again on Fifth Avenue.

There were other Moresque artisans at work, too, back in Fez, carving wood, the third major aspect of traditional Moroccan architectural ornament. There were cedar beams, lathe-turned wooden dowels

HAIDAR HOPES VISITORS
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The Moroccan Courtyard is designed to highlight the traditional arts of zillij (tile mosaic), plaster carving and woodworking. The craft team from Moresque assembled the zillij, above, and carved the plaster, opposite page, in the museum; the doors, ceiling joists and window lattice (*mashrabiyyah*), visible at right, were made in Fez.

assembled into screens (*mashrabiyyah*), and carved doors. The New York crew installed these, and in the square opening at the top of the court, more LED lighting simulated Moroccan daylight. As a final touch, under the watchful eye of Nadia Erzini, the museum's consultant on Moroccan decoration, conservators treated the wood to give it the dark patina of 700 years of oxidation.

To Adil, the pride taken by his craftsmen is now all the greater for their sense of having brought their traditions successfully to one of the most prestigious art museums in North America. "We brought two very beautiful things to New York," he says. "Our craftsmanship itself, and the results of that craftsmanship that we will leave behind."

But Haidar believes that they brought more than this. "The Moroccans were like a breath of fresh air in the galleries," she says, pointing out that they transformed the way the staff worked as much as they transformed gypsum. The museum staff often brought the artisans cookies and refreshments, and in the camaraderie soon many of us at the museum were hugging each other just like Adil.

In late 2009, as the renovation work was beginning to show signs of fruition, museum director Thomas Campbell made an offer to Sheila Canby, who since 1991 had been curator of Islamic art and antiquities at the British Museum. Sensing a new opportunity for what she calls "creative curating," she accepted and came to New York as curator of Islamic art. "In a sense, I've been preparing for this job all my career," she says. "Thanks to the way the teams functioned, I was able to join in the work on the new galleries in a seamless way."

By September, not far from Canby's office on the museum's third-floor mezzanine, plans were under way for November's opening festivities, the VIP and press previews, and visits from sundry consuls, ambassadors, patrons, princes and presidents. Last-

minute work on labels, wall texts, videos, educational programs and the catalog continued at fever pitch. Team spirit was much in evidence.

When the doors open, says Haidar, she hopes visitors will find that "we've presented the Islamic world and Islamic art as the confident equal of any of the world's great artistic traditions." With that, she believes, will come better understanding that "Muslims are like

everyone else—we all love beauty and beautiful things, and appreciate the enrichment that beauty brings to everyday life. We want to share that common humanity in the new galleries."

As for herself, she plans to "get back into my scholarly work on Indian painting, and to rediscover myself as a scholar. In the long term, my dream is to return to my native India, where I hope I can someday make a significant contribution in the museum field using the skills I have acquired here."

As I reflected on her comment, I saw again how the Met's spectacular renovation is but one large step in what is today an entirely global process, one that continues in Paris, Toronto, Doha, Abu Dhabi and other cities around the world. In their own ways, museums are a lot like Adil and his artisans: continually bringing into relief patterns and beauty, sharing insight and discovery, whether it's one chisel-tap a time, one gallery at a time or one museum at a time. 🌐



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

Metropolitan Museum of Art: M/J 69, M/J 98 *zillij*: M/J 01
Damascus Room: M/J 93



Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Maryam D. Ekhtiar, Priscilla P. Soucek, Sheila R. Canby and Navina Najat Haidar, eds. 2011, Yale University Press, ISBN 978-0-300-17585-1, \$65 cloth.



www.mma.org



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 us national standards for all articles in this issue, click "Curriculum Alignments" at www.saudiaramco-world.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, TeachMiddleEast.org, with background essays and lesson plans.

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CLASS ACTIVITIES

This issue's Classroom Guide is organized around two themes: *Describing Experience* and *Behind the Scenes*.

Theme: Describing Experience

This issue of *Saudi Aramco World* is all about things we experience with our senses: fashion that we look at, made of fabric that we feel against our skin; food that we smell and taste; art in exhibition spaces that we experience as entire environments. But how do writers put such sense-based experiences into words? How do they convey the experience to readers?

How do writers use words to describe sensory experiences?

Writers use different techniques to describe things. For the purposes of these activities, we'll focus on three of those techniques. First, they use descriptive words to describe objects and actions. (In grammar jargon, you would say they use adjectives to describe nouns and adverbs to describe verbs.) Here are a few examples:

- Adjective-noun pair: red shoes; blue sky; black-and-white dog.
- Verb-adverb pair: run quickly; drive cautiously; sing happily.
- Adverb-adjective-noun: extremely hot day; piercingly loud voice.

A second technique for describing things is similes. If you don't remember what a simile is, find a definition. Make sure your definition has some examples so that you'll be able to recognize a simile when you see one. Come up with a simile or two of your own, just to be sure you're comfortable with the concept.

Finally, a third technique for describing things is to refer to something you assume your audience is already familiar with. For example, "The Met Resets a Gem" describes the museum's "Beaux-Arts façade"—which is helpful for readers who know what "Beaux-Arts" refers to. (If you don't, you can Google it and find images that show you.)

Keeping these three descriptive techniques in mind, divide the class into four groups. Assign each group one of the feature articles: "Nouvelle Vogue in the Mideast," "Through the Black Arch," "The Met Resets a Gem" and "Gaza's Food Heritage." With the members of your group, read your article, and look for how the author describes the clothing, artwork, exhibition space or food. As you read, highlight the descriptions, and use a different color to distinguish each type of description. Share a few examples of each type of description with the class so that you all have a good sense of how the authors of the four articles described sensory

experiences: Which descriptions did you find most evocative? In other words, which ones gave you the best idea of what something looked, felt, tasted, smelled or sounded like? What made it work for you? Which did the least to help you imagine what the author was seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling? Why do you think it didn't work for you?

Now find examples of descriptions in other sources. You might, for example, read a restaurant review or watch a TV show that reviews restaurants. Or you might find an advertisement for an air freshener or a laundry detergent that describes scents. Maybe you'll read a music review: How does the author describe the sounds? You get the idea. Find one brief example and share it with the class. Explain what you discovered about how the author described whatever sensory perception(s) he or she was experiencing. If you liked the description, explain why. If you didn't like it, how would you describe the same thing? What do you think makes your description better for a reader, viewer or listener?

How can you describe something effectively?

Now try it yourself. The authors of the articles in *Saudi Aramco World* were describing things that they had experienced. You haven't had direct experiences with what they're describing, so think about something you do have direct experience with—things you can see, hear, taste, touch and/or smell. Choose a food dish, for example (you'll probably get the most mileage if you choose one you really like or one you really don't like), or an article or outfit of clothing, or a place. Whichever you choose, be very specific. For example, describe your experience as you sit at your favorite spot on a beach you know well, rather than just trying to describe "a beach." Write your description. Make sure it's at least a paragraph, but see if you can go for a page or two. Remember that your aim is to describe the sensory experience so that someone who hasn't shared that experience can really understand what you perceived. Have people read aloud their descriptions, or trade descriptions with several other students so that you can read each other's writing.

Theme: Behind the Scenes

Much of what we see every day is finished products. If you go to a restaurant, you see only the food as it's served: You don't usually see it as it's being prepared in the kitchen. When you read this magazine, you see it in its finished form—all laid out with photographs, captions, call-out quotes and well-edited text. But a lot happened behind



the scenes to make the food or the magazine possible. That's what you'll be looking at in these activities.

What finished products do you present?

Would you want people to look behind the scenes to see those products before they were finished?

You may not think of yourself as someone who presents a finished product, but you are, and you do. For example, when you turn in a homework assignment, you've probably made a clean copy of it (at least your teacher hopes so). You don't show your drafts or all the cross-outs you made, and there is no evidence of how late you might have stayed up to finish it, or the conversations you had with anyone while you were working on it. You only show the finished product—and maybe that's just as well!

Think of an example of another finished product that you present or have presented. Write it down at the top of a piece of paper. Then think about how that product came into being. What was involved? What did you have to do? What was the product like at different points during its creation? In short, write about—or show illustrations

while you were baking the cookies? Write a little bit about what you would or wouldn't want others to see in your behind-the-scenes process.

What is gained by knowing what went on behind the scenes? What is lost?

Clearly a lot of people are fascinated by what goes on "behind the scenes." That's what tabloid magazines and shows are about: What is that movie star *really* like? Are the prince and the princess *really* in love? The private lives of public people fascinate others.

So does what goes into making a movie. (That's where the phrase "behind the scenes" comes from, after all.) Have you ever watched the supplemental material on a DVD? Whether you have or not, do it now. Get a DVD of a favorite movie and watch the director's commentary (or interviews with the actors or explanations of the special effects). What did you find out? How does knowing it change how you think about the movie? Does it make you like the movie more? If so, why? Do parts of it bother you? If so, why? Have a few volunteers describe for the class how their thoughts about their movie changed when they saw the



of—what went on behind the scenes. Then think about whether or not you want people to know everything that went on during the process of creation. For example, would you want your classmates to see what your hair looked like before you combed it this morning, or for them to see you repeatedly sticking your finger in the cookie dough

background material. As a class, discuss whether you are glad you saw the background or not, and why.

Now look closely at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's new exhibition space that is called "The Arts of Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia." Read the article to find out how that space came into being. After you have read the article once, go through it again, this time paying particular attention to the challenges that writer Walter Denny describes. With a partner, list those challenges in the left-hand column of a T-chart and the solutions in the right-hand column. You might further organize your chart by having a section devoted to each of the three major rooms he describes and another section about the overall challenges.

When you're done, visit the museum's own website, particularly the page for the new space: <<http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/museum-departments/curatorial-departments/islamic-art>> With a partner, describe (orally or in writing) what you see in the photo the museum has placed on that page. Find the photos in "The Met Resets a Gem" that show the same space while it is being renovated. How does seeing and reading about the space as a work-in-progress affect your thoughts and feelings about the finished space? Does knowing the behind-the-scenes story make you more or less likely to want to see the space in person? Write an essay to answer the questions, and explain your thinking. Include how your thinking was influenced by the earlier example you came up with of your own "finished product" as well as how you responded to the additional material in the DVD. What conclusions can you reach about the value of knowing what goes on behind the scenes? What conclusions can you reach about the drawbacks of knowing it? What new questions come up for you about products and situations you are in?

Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam is the first major exhibition dedicated to the pilgrimage to Makkah, central to the Muslim faith. It examines the significance of the Hajj as one of the five “pillars of Islam,” exploring its importance for Muslims and looking at how this spiritual and physical journey has evolved through history. The exhibition examines three key strands: the pilgrim’s journey, with an emphasis on the major routes used from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East; the Hajj today, its associated rituals and what the experience means to the pilgrim; and the origins and importance of Makkah, the destination of the Hajj. Exhibits—which include material from collections in Saudi Arabia and from the Khalili Family Trust, as well as from major public and private collections in the UK and around the world—document the long and perilous journey associated with the pilgrimage, gifts offered to the sanctuary as acts of devotion and souvenirs that are brought back from the Hajj. They also include archeological material,



manuscripts, textiles, historic photographs and contemporary art. The Hajj has a deep emotional and spiritual significance for Muslims, and continues to inspire a wide range of personal, literary and artistic responses, many of which are explored throughout the exhibition, which also examines the social and political significance of the pilgrimage in relation to global trade and the transmission of ideas. British Museum, London, January 26 through April 15.

Current November

Body Parts: *Ancient Egyptian Fragments and Amulets* features 35 representations of individual body parts from the museum’s ancient Egyptian collection, using both fragments of sculptures and objects created as distinct elements to illuminate the very realistic depiction of individual body parts in canonical Egyptian sculpture. Ancient Egyptian artists carefully portrayed each part of the human body, respecting the significance of every detail. Brooklyn [New York] Museum, through November 27.

Underground Revolution: *8000 Years of Istanbul* displays finds uncovered in one of the most important archeological excavations of Turkish history: the Yanikapi 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, through November 31.

Current December

Amulet in Spirit: *Contemporary Yemeni Jewelry by Suad Raja* is a collection of Yemen-inspired contemporary silver jewelry. Jerusalem Fund Gallery, Washington, D.C., through December 6.

Ayman Baalbaki: *Beirut Again and Again* posits that little has truly changed in “peacetime” Beirut: No problems have been resolved, no politicians called to account, no militias disarmed. Baalbaki expresses his theme in layers of paint on canvas and in colorful floral textiles that give life to his depiction of bombed buildings, bullet-ridden façades, piles of rubble and snipers’ towers. Though his works pay tribute to his country’s traumatic recent history, they also reveal stirrings of hope. Rose Issa Projects, London, through December 9.

Life and Death in the Pyramid Age: *The Emory Old Kingdom Mummy* places the mummy—excavated at the sacred site of Abydos in Middle Egypt in 1920—in the context of ancient Egypt’s mummification and burial practices and the cult of the dead, and explores the social and political

changes that marked the end of the Pyramid Age. The development of the site of Abydos and the cult of Osiris is also a focus of the exhibition, with a link to the current excavations at the Middle Cemetery where the Old Kingdom mummy was found nearly a century ago. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, through December 11.

Riffs features recent work by Moroccan artist Yto Barrada, whose photographs, films, installations, sculptures and editorial work refer to the sociopolitical situation of her hometown, Tangier, Morocco. The title of the exhibit refers simultaneously to the musical term and to the Cinéma Rif, home of the Tangier Cinémathèque, which the artist directs, as well as to the nearby Rif mountains, once a stronghold of anti-colonial insurgency in Morocco. “I’ve always been attentive to what lies beneath the surface of public behavior,” says Barrada. “In public, the oppressed accept their domination, but they always question their domination offstage.” Wiels, Brussels, through December 12.

Weaving the Threads of Livelihood: *The Aesthetic and Embodied Knowledge of Berber Weavers* centers on a special 19th-century cloak, an *akhnif*, unique to Morocco, which inspired Berber weavers of the Sirwa region to produce a new type of carpet in the 1990’s, and variants since. Many of these richly colored, densely embellished and painstakingly crafted carpets are displayed, demonstrating the ongoing dynamism

and creativity of Sirwa weavers, who draw on and continuously update their rich weaving tradition to produce a great variety of textiles for the international market. Visitors can watch as Sirwa weavers demonstrate their technical skills on equipment especially brought from Morocco, and can try their own hand at weaving, handling spindles, cards and beating combs, yarns and weaving samples. An international conference on Moroccan textiles is planned in conjunction with the exhibition. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, London, through December 17.

Karanis Revealed: *Discovering the Past and Present of a Michigan Excavation in Egypt* is a two-phase exhibition exploring the story of Karanis, a village southwest of Cairo that was inhabited during Egypt’s Greco-Roman period and excavated by the University of Michigan in the 1920’s and 1930’s. Part I looks at daily life during the early centuries under the Ptolemaic Dynasty, and Part II follows changes that came with the Roman occupation of Egypt and, later, with Christianity. The displays include collections of Roman glass, tax rolls on papyrus, and the leather breastplate of a Roman soldier. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Part I, through December 18; Part II, January 27 through May 6.

Treasures of the Bodleian features a selection of the rarest, most important and most evocative items from the Bodleian Libraries’ nine-million-volume collections, from ancient papyri through

medieval oriental manuscripts to 20th-century printed books and ephemera. Highlights include the oldest surviving manuscript of the *Elements* of Euclid, 888 CE, re-edited in the fourth century by Theon of Alexandria; an illustrated 14th-century manuscript of Marco Polo's *Travels*; a letter from a petulant Egyptian schoolboy named Theon, written in the second or third century, complaining to his father for leaving him behind; and a leaf from the birch-bark Bakhshali manuscript containing the first evidence of the concept of zero. Bodleian Libraries, **Oxford, England**, through December 23.

1001 Inventions: *Discover the Muslim Heritage in Our World* traces the story of 1000 years of science from the Muslim world dating from the seventh century onward, looking at the social, scientific and technological achievements that originated in the Muslim cultural sphere. It features more than 60 exhibits, interactive displays and a dramatization showing that many modern inventions, spanning fields such as engineering, medicine and design, can trace their roots back to men and women of different faiths and cultures who lived in Muslim civilizations. **California Science Center, Los Angeles**, through December 31.

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. The exhibition displays 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.

Current **January**

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, recounting the history of the book, detailing the patient conservation, explaining the cutting-edge imaging and highlighting the discoveries of the dogged and determined scholars who finally read what had been obliterated. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, through January 1.

Dream and Reality: *Modern and Contemporary Women Artists from Turkey* is centered on the position of women artists in modern and contemporary art and offers a new, alternative perspective on the country's sociocultural history. The exhibits range from the mid-19th century to our day and incorporate many different media, from painting to video; they are works of close to 80 artists, including pioneering

female artists about whose lives and work we know little and whose names are almost forgotten. Also included are rediscovered moderns and women artists who, for the last four decades, have been shaping the contemporary art scene with their intellectual attitude and practical actions. **Istanbul Modern**, through January 8.

Wonder of the Age: *Master Painters of India, 1100–1900* presents some 220 works selected according to identifiable hands and named artists, and dispels the notion of anonymity in Indian art. The high points of artistic innovation in the history of Indian painting are demonstrated through works by 40 of the greatest Indian painters, some of them identified for the first time, each represented by five or six seminal works. Indian paintings have traditionally been classified according to regional styles or dynastic periods, with an emphasis on subject matter and narrative content. Recent scholarship, however, has begun to securely link innovations in style with specific artists and their lineages. Together with a careful study of artist's inscriptions and scribal colophons, it is now possible to construct a more precise chronology of the development of Indian painting. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through January 8.

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. Frist Center for Visual Arts, **Nashville, Tennessee**, through January 8.

Global Patterns: *Dress and Textiles in Africa* focuses on the accomplishments of African weavers, dyers, bead embroiderers and tailors, and highlights the continuities, innovation and exchange of ideas that mark dress and textile production in Africa. 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 places as far away as India and Indonesia. Beadwork, *kente* cloth and indigo-dyed cloths called *adire* are among the highlights of the display. Museum of Fine Arts **Boston**, through January 8.

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 a pictorial *kantha* from India embroidered with threads recycled from old saris. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through January 8.

Parergon is a series of sculptural works presented by Babak Golkar comprising objects that resemble interrupted or deformed frames. As the frames are not closed, the viewer is able to view the cross-sections and explore the distinctive forms that they represent: identifiable architectural silhouettes of such well-known structures as Hagia Sophia and the Dome of the Rock. The works center on iconic architectures from eastern cultures that have shifted in context throughout history. The Third Line, **Dubai, UAE**, through January 12.

Mysticism: *Yearning for the Absolute* uses specific examples to illuminate the various manifestations of mysticism in Europe, Persia, India and East Asia. Museum Rietberg, **Zurich**, through January 15.

Gifts of the Sultan: *The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* is a pan-Islamic exhibition spanning the eighth through 19th centuries and including 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 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. Museum of Fine Arts **Houston**, through January 15.

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**, through January 16.

Heroic Africans: *Legendary Leaders, Iconic Sculptures* challenges conventional perceptions of African art. Bringing together more than 100 masterpieces drawn from collections in six European countries and the United States, it considers eight landmark sculptural traditions from West and Central Africa created between the 12th and early 20th centuries in terms of the individual persons who lie at the origins of the representations. Using materials ranging from humble clay, ubiquitous wood and precious ivory

to costly metal alloys, sculptors captured evocative, idealized and enduring likenesses of their individual patrons. Analysis of each of these works considers the historical circumstances and cultural values that inform them; the sculptures are among the only tangible surviving links to generations of leaders who shaped Africa's past before colonialism. Catalog. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through January 29; Museum Rietberg, **Zurich**, February 26 through June 3.

Emirati Expressions showcases works by Emirati artists that revolve around the theme of national identity. The photographs on show, produced in workshops led by photographer Stephen Shore, capture moments, places, people, sounds and images that reflect the essence of Emirati expression. Manarat Al-Saadiyat, **Abu Dhabi**, through January 29.

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111): Celebrating 900 Years honors one of the most significant Islamic thinkers and authors. Al-Ghazali, born in Tus (modern-day Iran), was a prolific writer particularly on philosophy, theology and law; his influence extended to some of the great western philosophers and even to the present day. The exhibition includes manuscripts, rare books and lithographs, as well as work by al-Ghazali's critics and scholars who were influenced by him. McLennan Library, McGill University, **Montreal**, through January 31.

Current **February**

Vaults of Heaven: *Visions of Byzantium* offers a glimpse into the complex and vivid world of the Byzantine Empire through large-scale contemporary photographs by Turkish photographer Ahmet Ertuğ. The images highlight culturally significant UNESCO heritage sites in present-day Turkey, with a focus on the Karanlık, Tokalı and Meryemana churches in the dramatic Cappadocian region of central Anatolia. **Pennsylvania** Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, **Philadelphia**, through February 12.

Current **March**

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.

Central Nigeria Unmasked: *Arts of the Benue River Valley* reviews the arts produced in the Benue River Valley, source of some of the most abstract, dramatic and inventive sculpture in sub-Saharan Africa. 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 explores the history of central Nigeria through the dynamic interrelationships of its peoples and their arts. National Museum of African Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through March 4.

Zaha Hadid: *Form in Motion* is the first us exhibition to feature the renowned British-Iraqi architect's product designs in a setting of her own creation. Widely regarded as one of the most innovative architects of the 21st century, Hadid was the first woman to receive the Pritzker Architecture Prize. Using complex, fluid geometries and cutting-edge digital design and fabrication technologies, she has advanced the language of contemporary architecture and design. For this exhibition, she has created an all-encompassing environment in which to display examples of the furniture, objects and footwear she has designed in recent years. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through March 25.

Current **April**

Tutankhamun: *The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs* features more than 100 artworks, most of which have never been shown in the United States before this tour. These spectacular treasures—more than half of which come from the tomb of King Tutankhamun—include the golden sandals found on the boy king's mummy; a gold coffinet that held his stomach; golden statues of the gods; and King Tut's rings, ear ornaments and gold collar. Also showcased are objects associated with the most important rulers of the 30 dynasties that reigned in Egypt over a 2000-year span. The exhibition explores the splendor of the pharaohs, their function in both the earthly and divine worlds, and what "kingship" meant to the Egyptian people. Among the highlights is the largest likeness of King Tut ever discovered: a three-meter (10') statue of the pharaoh found at the ruins of a funerary temple. Museum of Fine Arts **Houston**, through April 15; Pacific Science Center, **Seattle**, May 24 through January 6, 2013.

Current **May and Later**

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 move from the margins of an art world shaped by the colonial establishment, they organized path-breaking associations and 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 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,

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Cai Guo-Qiang:

Saraab includes more than 50 works by one of the most influential international contemporary artists in his first solo exhibition in the Middle East. The exhibition demonstrates the emotional breadth of Cai's work, from the intimate to the spectacular, and is inspired by the multilayered history of the artist's hometown of Quanzhou, China. *Saraab* ("mirage") illuminates the long-standing but little-known relationship between China and the Arab world dating back to the ancient maritime Silk Roads. Featuring the artist's characteristic use of symbols and stories about local history and transnational movements, the exhibition explores the historic and contemporary iconography of the Arabian Gulf and its seafaring culture, as well as the Islamic history of Quanzhou. Works on view also address the ambiguity of Qatar and China's relationship, as well as Cai's own creative development. A millennial and symbolic journey, *Saraab* questions whether there is something illusory or unobtainable about the process of cultural, temporal and geographic translation. Since his youth, Cai had been curious about the traces of Islamic influence in his hometown, including the grand Ashab Mosque and cemeteries with countless Arabic-inscribed tombstones. Quanzhou was a significant maritime port on the ancient Silk Road and a trade hub for silk, porcelain, tea and spices. The city also hosted some of the earliest Muslim missionaries, now buried in the city's Holy Mausoleum. *Saraab* offers Cai's perspective on the complex web of conceptual and material connections between China and the Arab world, of dynamics between historic localities marked as much by the passage of ideas and lived experience as by material trade. Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, **Doha, Qatar**, December 5 through May 26.

Detail of Cai Guo-Qiang's installation "Fragile" in production.



especially Paris, London and New York; 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. Peabody Essex Museum, **Salem, Massachusetts**, through June 1.

Patriots & Peacemakers: *Arab Americans in Service to Our Country* tells true stories of heroism and self-sacrifice that affirm the important role Arab-Americans have played in the United States throughout its history, contributing greatly to society, fighting and dying in every us war since the Revolution. The exhibition highlights service in the armed forces, the diplomatic service and the Peace Corps. Personal narratives tell of Arab-American men and women of different national and religious backgrounds. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through July 12.

Coming **November**

Genghis Khan: *The Exhibition* tells the story of the Mongol warlord who conquered half the known world. Under his rule, the empire grew to be the size of Africa—four times the size of the Roman Empire at its largest. But Genghis is also revered as an innovative leader and statesman who brought unity, stability and religious tolerance to most of Asia and parts of

Europe. Highlights of the exhibition include jewelry, ornaments and musical instruments, weapons such as battle axes, scimitars, lances and long- and crossbows, and such other military essentials as steel stirrups and silk underwear. **North Carolina** Museum of Natural Sciences, **Raleigh**, November 19 through January 16.

Coming **December**

Noor an-Nisa (Light of Femininity) is produced by choreographer and dancer Kristina Koutsoudas, who has combined dance, music, song, poetry and stories to present traditional arts and culture as well as scenes of women and spirituality in Near Eastern, Middle Eastern and North African cultures. Using 10 dancers and a small classical Arab music ensemble from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, she draws from Arabic and Persian musical and literary tradition to portray the spiritual and devotional side of those cultures. 7:00 p.m. Rothko Chapel, **Houston**, December 2–3.

Ancient Egypt—Art and Magic: *Treasures from the Fondation Gandur pour l'art* brings to life one of the world's greatest civilizations. The exhibition of 100 stellar works features mummy cases, tomb and temple reliefs, papyrus fragments, alabaster vessels and precious stones. The show spotlights the spiritual qualities of the works,

as well as their technical mastery. Museum of Fine Arts, **St. Petersburg, Florida**, December 17 through April 29.

Coming **January**

The Pirates of Carthage is a play by Daniel Kelly that examines the recent uprising in Tunisia alongside the Mercenary War (264–241 BCE) in the ancient city of Carthage. The stories of uprising and rebellion in different eras are presented in parallel using Flaubert's novel *Salammbo* and the social networking platform Twitter; the play explores how we connect with the world around us. The Nellie Dean, **London**, January 16–18 and 23–25.

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 never before exhibited. Pergamon Museum, **Berlin**, January 26 through April 9.

Coming **March**

Love and Devotion: *From Persia and Beyond* features more than 60 rare Persian, Mughal Indian and Ottoman Turkish illustrated manuscripts from the 13th to the 18th century as well as related editions of European literature, travel books and maps. These works come from one of the richest periods in the history of the book and shed light on the artistic and literary culture of Persia, showcasing classic Persian tales and revealing the extent to which Persian language and culture influenced neighboring empires, as well as parallels in the work of European writers dating back to Shakespeare, Chaucer and Dante. Visitors will see works by such writers as Nizami, Jami, Firdausi, Rumi and Hafiz, as well as the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* and *The 1001 Nights*. A conference on "Persian Cultural Crossroads" will be held April 12–14. State Library of Victoria, **Melbourne, Australia**, March 9 through July 1; thereafter Bodleian Libraries, **Oxford, England**.

Coming **April**

Looking at History through a Variety of Lenses is the theme of the 19th EUROCLIO annual conference professional training and development course, sponsored by the European Association of History Educators and the History Teachers' Association of Turkey. ① www.euroclio.eu. Hotel Kervansaray Lara, **Antalya, Turkey**, April 1–7.

PERMANENT/ INDEFINITE

Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia are a new suite of 15 enlarged, renovated and freshly conceived galleries for one of the world's finest and most encyclopedic collections. Under construction for nearly eight years, the galleries trace the course of Islamic civilizations over 13 centuries from the Middle East to North Africa, Europe, and Central and South Asia. "This new geographic orientation signals a revised perspective on this important collection, recognizing that the monumentality of Islam did not create a single, monolithic artistic expression, but instead connected a vast geographic expanse through centuries of change and cultural influence," says Thomas P. Campbell, director of the museum. As a whole, he adds, the galleries have been redesigned to "evoke the plurality of the Islamic tradition and the vast cross-fertilization of ideas and artistic forms that has shaped our shared cultural heritage." Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**.

Silk Road Luxuries from China

reveals the cross-cultural impact of Silk Road trade on Chinese luxury goods. The intermingling of Chinese traditions and foreign influences led to a remarkable change in luxury goods produced for Chinese urban elites in the sixth through the eighth century, fueled by an open and cosmopolitan multicultural society centered in the Tang capital, Chang'an. A small but exquisite

array of 21 objects, including intricately decorated mirrors, cups and other forms of tableware, display the high levels of craftsmanship practiced by Tang dynasty artisans working in precious materials. Freer Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**

New Ancient Egypt and Nubia Galleries redisplay the Ashmolean's world-renowned Egyptian collections and exhibit objects that have been in storage for decades, more than doubling

the number of mummies and coffins on display. The new galleries will take visitors on a chronological journey covering more than 5000 years of human occupation of the Nile Valley, presenting the collections under the broad themes of Egypt at its Origins; Dynastic Egypt and Nubia; Life after Death in Ancient Egypt; The Amarna 'Revolution'; Egypt in the Age of Empire; and Egypt meets Greece and Rome. Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, **Oxford, England**.

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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