

SAUDI ARAMCO

# World

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## The Dragons' Road to Rio

Goalie Asmir Begović

**LEGEA**

**bh**







Émigré at age 3 and now a top UK goalie, Asmir Begović returned to his native Bosnia to tend net for the country's World Cup dream. "Representing Bosnia was something I couldn't turn down," he says. "I was born here." Portrait by Haris Memija.

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Nabeel M. Amudi

**Director**

Public Affairs

Ali M. Al Mutairi

**Editor**

Richard Doughty

**Assistant Editors**

Arthur P. Clark  
Alva Robinson

**Circulation**

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**Administration**

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**Print Design**

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**Contacts**

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saworld@aramcoservices.com

Editorial:  
editor@aramcoservices.com

Mail:  
Saudi Aramco World  
Post Office Box 2106  
Houston, Texas  
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**Back Cover**



Alaa Wardi, at center, teamed up with friends at Riyadh-based Telfaz11 this year to produce a cover of Pharrell Williams's "Happy," and last year he released his first rock album with his band Hayajan.

Saudi Aramco, the energy company born as an international enterprise more than 80 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.

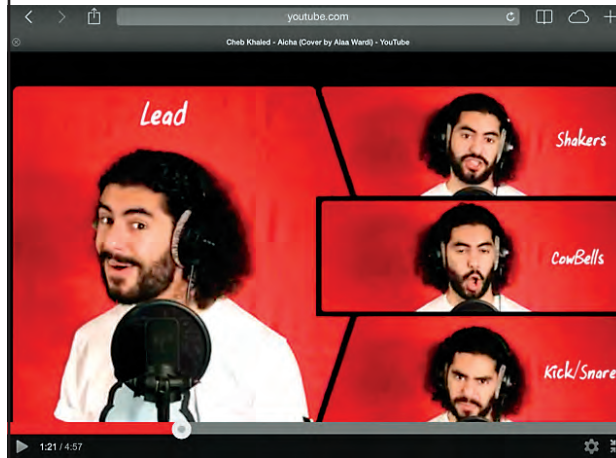


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## Alaa Wardi Goes Viral

Written by Jasmine Bager

A digital one-man band, YouTube a cappella musician Alaa Wardi has won millions of hearts and likes from his more than 30 videos, nearly all self-produced at his improvised home studio in Riyadh.



## 4 Gazing Upon Beauty

Written by Ana Carreño Leyva

"I am the garden that beauty adorns / You will know my being / if upon my beauty you gaze," wrote 14th-century poet Ibn Zamrak of the Alhambra palace and gardens in Granada, Spain, as if foretelling the centuries of artistic challenges and epiphanies to follow among painters from Granada and afar.

## The Dragons' Road to Rio

Written by Omar Sacirbey  
Photographed by Haris Memija

After earning their nation's first qualification to play at the World Cup, 16 players may do what peace-keepers, politicians, diplomats and foreign-aid workers couldn't—unite their war-scarred country.

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"Small of stature but great in courage and achievements," recorded an early 17th-century traveler of Amir (Prince) Fakhr al-Din Ma'n, who was driven into five years of exile—in Italy, hosted by the de' Medici of Tuscany—and whose leadership presaged modern Lebanon.



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Photographed by Meridith Kohut

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Written and photographed by Alia Yunis

Encouraged by English colonialists in the early 19th century, Yemeni Arabs immigrated to what is now one of the world's busiest ports. They prospered, declined, and today remain proud of a heritage visible largely in the city's newly hip "Arab Quarter."

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W R I T T E N   B Y   J A S M I N E   B A G E R

**“Alaa Wardi is my name, making music is my trade, bringing happiness is my desire.”**

—[www.youtube.com/user/AlaaWardi/about](http://www.youtube.com/user/AlaaWardi/about)

Alaa Wardi marches to the beat of his own drum, both figuratively and literally: Among other talents, he’s a body percussionist. Dubbed in March as “Saudi Arabia’s King of YouTube” by *The Atlantic*, he prefers a simpler introduction. “My name is Alaa Wardi, and I am a musician and a YouTuber.”

The 27-year-old has been captivating a global online audience for nearly three years from his bedroom studio in his family home in Riyadh. Singing covers and original songs in Arabic, English, French, Urdu, Hindi and gibberish (his word), he is nothing if not one of the most creative among the musicians who claim YouTube as their primary stage.

Taking the idea of a one-man band into the digital era, he taps, snaps, claps, rubs and smacks his hands, chest, cheeks and fingers to create percussive textures, and mixes them with vocal pops, ticks, clicks, warbles, coos and bubbles (his word, again) as well as lyrics. Some choral or multi-vocal parts he records multiple times, overdubbing his own sounds with what then appear to be digital clones who together produce all of the bass, tenor, alto and soprano parts, accompanied by more vocal imitations of guitars, bass, strings, brass and snap, beat, kick and snare percussion. At the same time, his self-mounted camera catches him, usually with headphones on, shaking his shoulder-length, tousled curls, playfully flashing his magnetic smile—all in snappy edits that give his songs as many visual delights as aural ones.

Among his influences, he credits the polyphonic vocal-percussion style of Bobby McFerrin, whose 1988 “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” was the first a cappella arrangement to reach number one on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. But Wardi brings both a 21st-century technical edge and a Middle Eastern vibe

that comes off cool in the international venue of YouTube. His playful humor mixes melody, technology and culture to create memorable, feel-good mashups.

At last count, Wardi had 36 videos that give front-row seats to a global YouTube audience of some 36 million. There is something for everyone, from Bollywood in Hindi to Rihanna in English, Amr Diab in Arabic and Wardi’s originals. Each one is a distinctive, complex musical and visual collage.

Growing up in an Iranian family in the Saudi capital, Wardi—who speaks five languages—is one of three children. His grandfather and cousins play music as a hobby, and his brother is an animator. Wardi, however, set out to make the arts his career. He studied music at Jordan University in Amman, and after graduation in 2008, he returned home.

“Living in Riyadh is actually good for me because I get to have more time in my studio to work and less things to distract me. And since my work is online, it is not limited to any country or city,” he wrote by email.

Many of his compositions are entirely solo efforts, from concept to finished upload. It can take a month to record and edit a single four-minute video. True to his online medium, Wardi relies on social media and user feedback to brainstorm, distribute and promote. He records, mixes and edits all of the separate parts, and then pieces them together into a linear kaleidoscope of sight and sound. In some of the videos, he actually plays piano or guitar, but most of the time, it is just him, a cappella. By himself. His “clones” often look contemplative and patiently “wait” to perform, or they wink or grin. While this multi-panel style of video editing is common among a cappella YouTubers, Wardi does it masterfully, and he injects



catchy Middle Eastern beats into every song—including his recent cover of Lorde’s pop hit “Royals.”

“The twelve of us are playing together, I’m the one in the center with the baby guitar,” he wrote to describe “Risala Ela...” (“Letter to...”), one of his Arabic solo videos in which he reproduced his image to appear to be in a room surrounded by doppelgängers.

His fans love it.

“I’ve listened to this more times in a row than there are Alaas on screen,” commented Mark Mangan on the “Risala Ela...” video.

Like his music, his video backdrops are often simple. One consists of Indomie ramen noodle boxes, cartons of Kit-Kat chocolate bars and various cardboard boxes from Panda Stores, a Saudi supermarket chain. These boxes, too, are a kind of visual clue to his influences: He is a patchwork of eastern and western styles.

This shows also in language. Although Wardi is multilingual, he makes it a point to sing also in languages he doesn’t understand, just to show that good music can translate to any tongue—or even none: In his soulful “Shalamonti Fel7al,” he sings a faux-Arabic that he explains at the beginning is only “gibberish.” “Some of my favorite songs that I’ve listened to a thousand times, I really don’t know what they’re about, I just make up words to sing along! So to me personally, I don’t always care what the song is about as long as it’s good,” he explained.

“Either I pick an old song that had its glory once or a new song that is a hit right now. In both cases, I choose songs that are musically interesting to me and have the possibility to turn into an a cappella,” he said.

Other times, he collaborates: For a cover of the A. R. Rahman hit “Jai Ho,” composed for the Hollywood blockbuster film *Slumdog Millionaire*, he teamed up with Eugene, Oregon, a cappella YouTuber Peter Hollens. He has appeared in videos by fellow Middle Eastern YouTubers such as Fahad Albutairi, Hisham Fageeh and Ali Kalthami, who are all members of Telfaz11, an online Arabic network that streams some of the most popular YouTube-created shows in Saudi Arabia. With them earlier this year, he produced a Saudi-guys cover of Pharrell Williams’s “Happy” that is up to 1.6 million views, and last year they put together his only video to step into political



satire, “No Woman, No Drive,” based on the Bob Marley tune “No Woman, No Cry,” that has garnered more than 11 million views.

As much as he enjoys the camera, he also sings lead vocals for his indie band Hayajan (Outburst), made up of himself and four friends from Amman whom he met during his university days. Last year, they released “Ya Bey,” an original Arabic-language album, and, singing in Arabic, they have covered both Arabic and English songs, notably a silky, Arabic cover of Pink Floyd’s “Comfortably Numb.”

“I have the most unhealthy schedule on the planet,” he admitted. “I never know what’s happening in the next day and when. I sleep, eat and work at any time. And my sleeping time always changes.” He added that the pressure to impress is getting greater, and he constantly feels the need to execute better ideas. His fans help: Upon uploading a video, he includes a note asking for feedback and suggestions of new covers.

Scrolling down Wardi’s YouTube comments, one finds viewers from Japan, Poland, all over the Middle East, Africa and the Americas earnestly populating the threads with positive emoticons and verbal high-fives. “Good job, from a Mormon in Logan, Utah,” wrote Riley Warner. “100 times better than original. Hats off, man,” commented Ankur Saraswat on Wardi’s Hindi cover of Bollywood classic “Pehla Nasha.” On one of his Arabic-language songs, Fonsise Hol-

ani wrote, “I love this, really beautiful. Brings tears.”

“Every kind of support I get from my listeners encourages me,” Wardi wrote. “So yes, that feeling gets stronger. There are always ways to reach to your dreams.”

But commenter Al Ectic seemed to sum it up, picking up 47 likes on his eight-word quip: “This guy is an endless ocean of talent.”



**Jasmine Bager** is a Saudi Hispanic multimedia journalist who grew up in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. She loves exchanging emails at [jb3501@columbia.edu](mailto:jb3501@columbia.edu), where she often writes about art, international issues and singing in gibberish.

[www.AlaaWardi.com](http://www.AlaaWardi.com)  
@AlaaWardi





# GAZING UPON BEAUTY

*ana al-rawdh qad ashbahtu haliya  
tammal jamali  
tastafid sharha haliya*

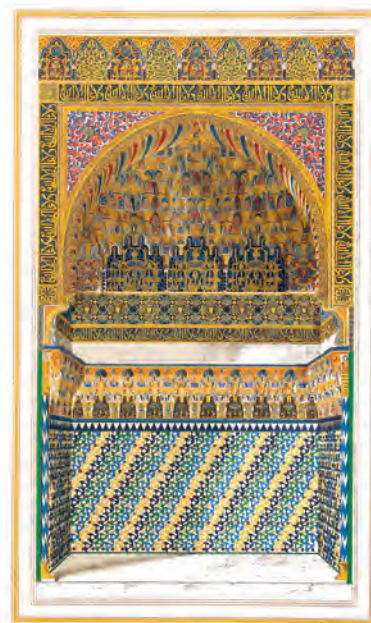


I am the garden that beauty adorns  
You will know my being  
if upon my beauty you gaze.

—Arabic verse by Ibn Zamrak, 1333-1393, in bas-relief Kufic script, in the Alhambra's Hall of the Two Sisters

Written by ANA CARREÑO LEYVA





Historicist painters of the 19th century used the Alhambra as a symbol and a setting for events they rendered in epic visual style laden with Romantic nostalgia. Top: "The Fall of Granada in 1492" by Carlos Luis Ribera y Fieve, 1890, and (above) "Boabdil's family leaving the Alhambra" by Manuel Gómez-Moreno González, 1883, both imagine the Catholic conquest and the resulting exile of the Nasrid sultan and his family. Right: Recording many of the Alhambra's designs with both a scientific and a Romantic eye, Welsh architect Owen Jones in 1856 declared it "the very summit of perfection of Moorish art." Opposite: In the early 1860's, Hudson River School painter Samuel Colman was among the first American artists to visit Spain. "The Hill of the Alhambra," 1865, reflects the popular ideal that pictorial beauty and grandeur stimulate the senses to higher awareness.

FROM EVERY DIRECTION approaching Granada, in the Spanish region of Andalucía, the southernmost in Europe, you see it: the walled fortress, palace and garden of the Alhambra, anchored to its promontory that dominates the city. With its back to the high Sierra Nevada, it scatters at its feet a downtown urban scene of modern buildings interspersed with the remains of history longer than a thousand years. To the north, the Cubist landscape of the Albayzin, or Moorish quarter, climbs an opposite hill and faces the downtown from its sinuous labyrinth of streets that still seem to echo with ancient voices.





In 1832, the year Washington Irving's *Tales from the Alhambra* was published, English artist David Roberts visited Spain, but he painted "Tower of Comares," left, in 1838, shortly before he set off on what was to become his most famous journey, to Egypt and the Levant. Right: Like Roberts, French artist Francois Antoine Bossuet, painting the Alhambra's "Porte de Justice" in the 1870's, used what were by then well-developed techniques of Romantic Orientalism: exquisitely warm lighting, precise detail (influenced by the invention of photography) and small figures that accentuate exaggerated space and perspectives—techniques evident also in the images opposite.

The Alhambra has long been upheld as the most precious gem of Hispano-Islamic art. It has profoundly inspired countless artists, from Granada and around the world, who regard it almost universally as an epitome of esthetics, replete with historical, mathematical, spiritual, mystical, sensual and oneiric aspects. Each artist has interpreted it and, in turn, let it exert its own influences, according to the artist's own style, whether historic, scientific, romantic, avant-garde or contemporary.

The palace of the Alhambra was built between the 13th and 15th centuries by the Nasrid sultans, the last of eight centuries of Muslim rulers in al-Andalus, the name given to Muslim Spain from which comes today's Andalucía. By the 1400's, the court at the Alhambra was living off brilliant reflections of past glory, uncertain of its future. Nasrid political survival depended on military aid from the North African Marinid dynasty as well as protection from the Christian kingdom of Castile in exchange for tributes. These external pressures, as well as internal power struggles, weakened the Nasrids, and their expulsion in 1492 brought on the final collapse of Muslim Spain.

Built under these precarious conditions, the monument's resistance to the passing of time is all the more amazing, because the materials available to the Nasrids were only simple, even poor ones: plaster, stucco, wood and ordinary, easily worked stone.

Yet what they lacked in monumental materials, they made up for in prodigious knowledge. Their unnamed architects had a highly sophisticated grasp of classical Greek and Islamic mathematics, from both practical and mystical, spiritual perspectives that regarded numbers as the highest, most profound of human concepts. Following these standards, they proportioned and decorated the Alhambra to reflect relationships among numbers, the cosmos and people. For example, the classical Greek concept of the "golden proportion" or golden section is used throughout the palace—in the endless geometry, in the exuberance of its designed gardens, in the ornamentation of its fabulous stuccos and in the countless panels of elegant Kufic calligraphy.

In 1492, the Christian monarchs of Castile took the keys to the Alhambra while their nobles and merchants took the most prominent Moorish and Jewish buildings in the city. In the early 16th century, some of the Alhambra's palaces were partly demolished—we don't know how many as no records





Also in 1832, French draftsman Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey was in his late 20's when he visited the Alhambra. "Court of the Lions," left, an engraving from that visit, magnifies both the height and the area of the courtyard for dramatic effect; the drowsy guitarist can be viewed as a metaphor for the common Orientalist idea of a "somnolent East." That same year, English watercolorist John Frederick Lewis began two years' residence in Spain, during which he produced the untitled image, right, of a woman gazing at the Alhambra's towers. Both artists' works were widely published to popular acclaim.

were kept—to make way for the Renaissance palace that Emperor Charles V of Spain (Charles I of Germany) intended to use to make Granada his capital.

While the Renaissance palace was built and still stands today, Granada never became Charles's capital. Some two centuries passed, during which the Alhambra fell into disuse, a long dream of oblivion in which the splendor of the past was covered by dust, surrendered to time. Its magnificent rooms and gardens became dwellings for squatters and vagabonds. As it turned out, this became an ideally appealing scene to artists of the newly emergent Romanticism.

Beginning in the early 19th century, Granada undertook a dramatic urban modernization plan that, over the next 100 years, resulted in the demolition of much of its Islamic architectural patrimony. In 1828, a writer from New York named Washington Irving visited Granada during a short tour of Spain. (A dozen years later, he came back to Spain to represent his country as ambassador.)

The history of Granada, and the Alhambra in particular, fascinated Irving, who even set up residence in the dilapidated palace, and he started to work to convince both politicians and society of the importance of preserving it as well as other historic parts of the city. In the same way, Irving found in the Alhambra inspiration for what became his best-selling classic *Tales of the Alhambra*, published in London in 1832. Many of

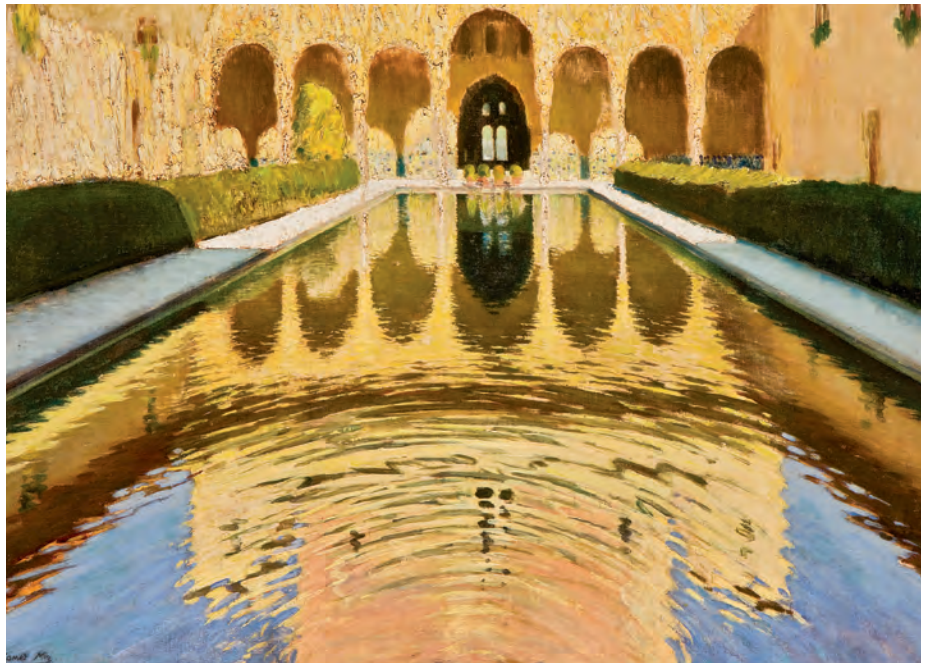
the dozens of later editions were illustrated by notable artists including Gustave Doré, Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey and others who also illustrated other literary Romantic works and travel literature.

Though Irving can be credited with popularizing the Alhambra, he was himself a follower of a trend that had started a century earlier, as the compass needle of European art began to point toward the continent's most southern area—Andalucía—as well as North Africa. Fueled by the heat of Romanticism, and nurtured by the popularity of Oriental esthetics stemming from books such as the early 18th-century editions of *One Thousand and One Nights* and, near the end of that century, the encyclopedic *Description de l'Égypte*, Romantic artists flocked south. They found both thematic and iconographic keys in the history and civilization of al-Andalus

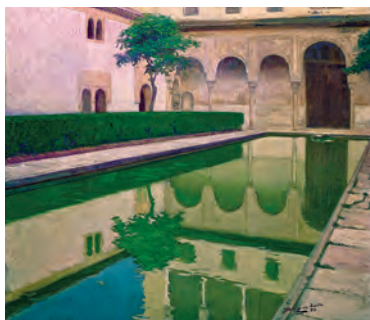
in general, in Granada more specifically and in the Alhambra most particularly of all. Granada and its Alhambra became so renowned they grew into artistic objects of desire, secular pilgrimage destinations. They were popularized further by the Romantic Travelers, comprised mainly of English and Scottish (and some French and German) writers, painters and poets, who extolled the Alhambra as a threshold of the Orient or, as they named it, "an Orient at home." They were encouraged, or perhaps enabled, by a new genre of travel

## THE ALHAMBRA'S ECHOES OF A "LOST KINGDOM" MADE AN IDEAL TABLEAU FOR ROMANTIC ARTISTS.





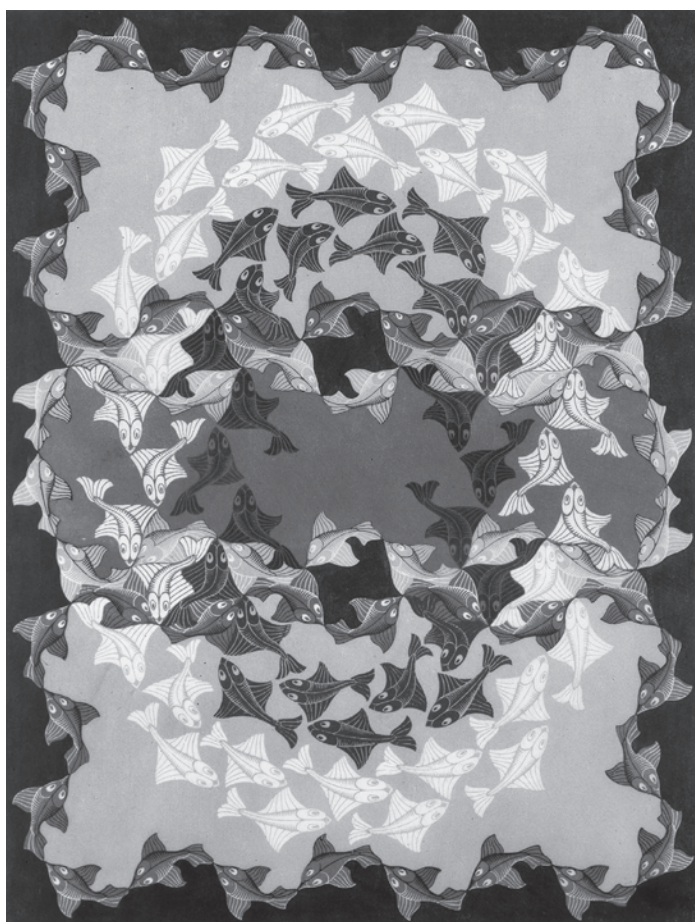




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For artists, the most popular subject at the Alhambra may be its rectangular Court of the Myrtles, or Patio de los Arrayanes, which is also known as the Court of Comares, adjoining as it does the Comares Hall, or Hall of the Throne, that appears in the background of most of these paintings. In this courtyard, and in the Hall of Comares, sultans held audiences and hosted delegations amid the symmetry conferred on the space both by the perfectly articulated columns and arches that make the transition from the courtyard to the hall, and by their reflections on the surface of the pool that occupies most of the courtyard's space. The pool thus reflects the sky even more than it reflects the architecture, and its elemental, tranquil simplicity contrasts with the rich ornamentation of the columns and vaults as well as the social and political complexity of the activities it has witnessed. For artists, this is a place where reflections make and remake the scene in endlessly singular visions, a few of which are shown here, spanning 178 years. From top left: ① Joaquín Sorolla of Valencia, Spain, 1917; ② lithograph by Girault de Prangey, 1836-37; ③ American Impressionist Frederick Child Hassam, 1883; ④ American Orientalist Edwin Lord Weeks, 1876. Paintings 5-15 are by artists from Granada: ⑤ Juan Vida, 1996; ⑥ Leonor Solans, 2005; ⑦ Eugenio Gómez-Mir, 1920; ⑧ José María López-Mezquita, early 20th c.; ⑨ Jesús Conde, 2009; ⑩ José Guerrero, 1974; ⑪ Socram, 2009; ⑫ Silvia Abarca, 2014; ⑬ José María Rodríguez-Acosta, 1904, and his nephew, ⑭ Miguel Rodríguez-Acosta, 2007; ⑮ Brazam, 1993, who says, like many, that he is indelibly influenced by the Alhambra, by "the transparency of its light, the sound of water."





French painter Henri Matisse, who visited for three days in 1910, was “the last Romantic artist, and the first Modern one,” says Maria del Mar Villafranca. “The influence of the Alhambra on Matisse did not result in mimesis but rather in something more profound”: motifs that subsequently infused his style, as seen in the patterns in his 1911 “Interior with Aubergines,” top. Similarly, a visit in 1922 inspired Dutch artist and mathematician M.C. Escher to depict neither the palace nor its art, but rather to draw from the Alhambra’s art a personal inspiration for his own interlocking, infinitely repeatable patterns that often resemble the traditionally Islamic geometric and vegetal patterns he saw in the Alhambra, as in his 1941 woodcut “Fish,” above.

books, notably Richard Ford’s 1845 *Guide for Travellers in Andalusia and Readers at Home*. Granada’s echoes of a “lost kingdom,” even a “lost paradise,” its atmosphere of ruins and the visibly mixed cultural and ethnic characteristics of its people, all made an ideal tableau for the Romantic artist. It was an inexhaustible source from which artists have never stopped drinking.

The Romantic artists, explains art historian Ignacio Henares Cuéllar of the University of Granada, “also found the Alhambra met criteria of their new theories of the Sublime, a philosophy that maintains that the visible world is a reflection of the spiritual one. This crystallizes for the Romantic Travelers in Andalusia, and the Alhambra in particular comes to define the esthetic fundamentals of Mediterranean Orientalism, a rich romantic imagination which advances the first big chapter of modernity.”

Maria del Mar Villafranca, general director of the Council of the Alhambra and Generalife, explains that especially during the second half of the 19th century, the Alhambra was a destination of choice for “cultured travelers, most of them keeping in the line of the Romantic artists such as David Roberts, John Frederick Lewis or Gustave Doré.” In addition, “personalities such as [Henri] Regnault lived with Mariano Fortuny, perhaps the most emblematic and exemplary traveler, since he also was both an art collector and art reformist.” This extended to artists of further diverse nationalities, notably the American Edwin Lord Weeks and the German Adolf Seel.

Under the umbrella of Romanticism emerged the artistic current that became known as Orientalism. Often carrying with it a varying mix of colonialist ideas and attitudes, Orientalism burst into the painting scene throughout the Mediterranean region wherever European artists found inspiration in largely Muslim, Arab and North African subjects.

According to Jesús Conde, a painter and a professor of fine arts at the University of Granada, much of the Orientalist impulse stemmed from Europeans’ search for their identity in an increasingly heterogeneous world. “That need of defining the Orient creates a whole movement,” he says. “We need to define ourselves in order to be identified as Europeans, and this could only be possible by looking at the mirror of ‘the Other.’” Yet, he adds, it was more than this: “Disillusionment further fueled a ‘flight from the West,’ where the rise of industrialism and pragmatism created a boring and suffocating atmosphere, toward not only the culture of the Others, but also toward the countries that keep, between their sky and earth, the ruins and treasures of ancient civilizations ... everybody wanted to travel, to unravel and bring to surface their own desires in those exotic lands.”

In this way, the Romantic artists discovered at the Alhambra an essential scene, an iconographic device so prodigious it could speak in as many visual languages as the artists could paint.

At the same time Romantics were flocking south, the very industrialism they tried to shun was providing their art with new ways of distribution and consumption that expanded their artistic opportunities. Until then, much painting had been financed by aristocracies or the Catholic Church, normally destined for the walls of palaces and religious buildings. Now, new manufacturing techniques enabled mass production of lithographs and engravings, making prints and paintings much cheaper (and leading





The same year Matisse visited the Alhambra, Valencian painter Joaquín Sorolla, by then in his late 40's, was starting to produce works in southern Spain, and at the Alhambra in particular, that bridged Impressionism, Symbolism and Modernism, including "Torre de los Siete Picos," left. Contemporary painter Miguel Rodríguez-Acosta, who grew up in a home alongside the Alhambra's walls, pays homage to the color red—the Arabic root of the name *al-hamra*—in his 2009 painting "Vespéral" ("Chant"), which balances colors, patterns, geometry and brushwork.

to many forgeries). Art became a marketplace commodity accessible to a new social class—the bourgeoisie—as both spectators and purchasers.

In addition, the need and the means to provide illustration for Romantic literary books popularized a visual dimension for literature previously available only in the most precious, hand-illuminated manuscripts. This further attracted artists to many subjects, and they enjoyed the challenge of graphically showing the lyric warmth of Romantic writing while at the same time appearing to reflect precisely realistic images—thanks in part to the emergence of photography.

David Roberts, famous for his lyrical realism in treating Middle Eastern subjects, was one of the seminal artists from whose esthetic choices the iconography of Romantic Andalucía derived. His most famous work of the region, "Tower of Comares" (see p. 6), shows a truly Romantic image in which the real melts into fantasy. Similarly, the engraver Gustave Doré skillfully handled the presence of people in his Alhambra scenes, using strange characters of clearly legendary traits, all the while mastering the power of light, color and the lightness of the Alhambra's architecture, to which he gave such astonishing perspectives that despite his apparent realism, the viewer is immediately transported to the Romantic Orientalist's oneiric world.

John Frederick Lewis, whose popular lithographs, water-

colors and oils were widely reproduced, emphasized Oriental and Mediterranean atmospheres by including architecture and arabesques as the main ingredients of a "lost civilization" esthetic, or a fantastic "al-Andalus paradise." On the other hand, realist and Hispanist scholar Sir Richard Ford and his wife Harriet Ford produced many drawings with empirical details that, accompanied as they were by travel-oriented texts, became essential for readers who wished to understand the country realistically.

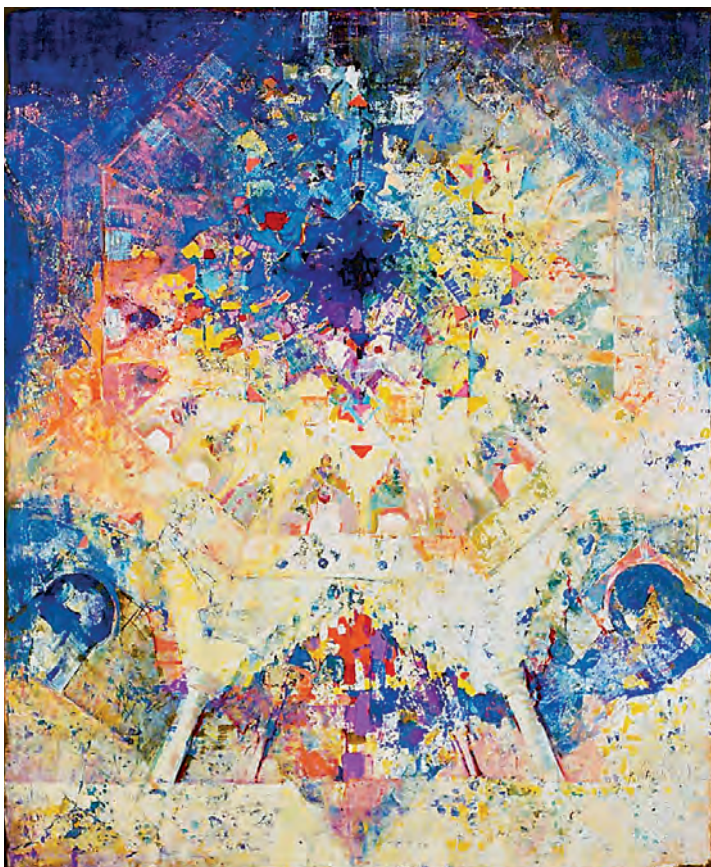
Also at this time, the figure of the "art dealer" appeared to act as a broker between artists and customers. Dealers

opened private, commercial art galleries that put artworks—and consequently the subjects of art, in this case the Alhambra—in a new position as commodities and indeed investments. Granada gallery owner Ceferino Navarro explains that the Alhambra's pres-

**"IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ANY ARTIST  
IN GRANADA TO LIVE UNRELATED  
TO THE ALHAMBRA'S INFLUENCE, AND  
NOT SURRENDER TO THE TEMPTATION  
OF IMMORTALIZING IT."**

ence is so pervasive that "it is difficult for any artist resident in Granada—either born in the city or coming from outside—to live unrelated to the Alhambra's influence, and not surrender to the temptation of immortalizing it." Along the Gran Vía de Granada, one of the main downtown streets, the gallery owned by Miguel Ángel Hortal shows in its shop windows many depictions of the Alhambra, which attract the attention of passersby, and many art lovers come here to purchase works reflecting the latest esthetic trends with the Alhambra as a subject.





Left: In the luminous expressionism of contemporary Granada painter Maria Teresa Martín-Vivaldi's 1996 "Hall of the Two Sisters," the vaults, windows and tiles of the Alhambra's most famous dome refract and dissolve. Right: After exile following the Spanish Civil War, Manuel Ángeles Ortiz became particularly devoted to the Alhambra, where in 1959 he painted "Paseo de los cipreses" ("Path of the Cypresses"), where seemingly simple geometry produces an unexpectedly vertiginous perspective.

In 1922, the Dutch mathematician and artist M. C. Escher visited Granada and found in the Alhambra a mathematical and geometric universe. "Many of the coloured mosaics in the palaces of the Alhambra's walls and floors show us that Moorish people were masters in the art of filling the plane by means of geometric figures without leaving gaps," he wrote. But his inspiration did not lead him to depict the Alhambra so much as let it become a catalyst for the growth of his personal style. This is evident in many of his hypnotically interlocking, infinitely repeatable patterns in which he used abstractions of humans and animals in ways that resemble the traditionally Islamic geometric, vegetal and calligraphic patterns he saw exemplified in the Alhambra.

Escher's response, says Villafranca, was a common one in the 20th century, when "artists' travel experiences generate more experimental and innovative ideas," carried out sometimes as *pleine-air* painting, and at other times as Symbolism, Impressionism or aspects of the avant-garde schools.

A dozen years before Escher's visit, French artist Henri Matisse spent three winter days in Granada. The Alhambra had been opened recently as a public tourist attraction. This short time was enough for the artist to feel "a break with traditional representation, the key to the artistic vanguard," says Villafranca, who organized an exhibition in 2010 titled "Matisse and the Alhambra." Known as the master of color, he had long felt a fascination for

Islamic art, especially after his travels in North Africa. But Granada proved decisive, catalytic; it was an epiphany of new forms, not just ornamentation, but also a game played by the light and shadows that filtered through the lattice walls.

"The Alhambra is a marvel," he wrote to his wife. "I feel intense emotion there." It is here he began to break down his mental boundary between decorative art and "pure" art, as at the Alhambra—as in much Islamic art—they inhabit a common space.

"The influence of the Alhambra on Matisse did not result in mimesis but rather something much more profound," says Villafranca. After that, inspirations from the motifs of the Alhambra seem ever-present in his work, either as backgrounds or as central motifs in objects and textile designs. He was, says Villafranca, "the last Romantic artist, and the first modern one."

When I need inspiration, I always go to the Alhambra to be there to soak in the golden dust of its light," Granada abstract artist Manuel Rivera (1927-1994) used to say. He was among the founders of the El Paso collective that helped guide the avant-garde after the Spanish Civil War. For him and other artists of the early 20th century, the Alhambra endured as a beacon of inspiration.

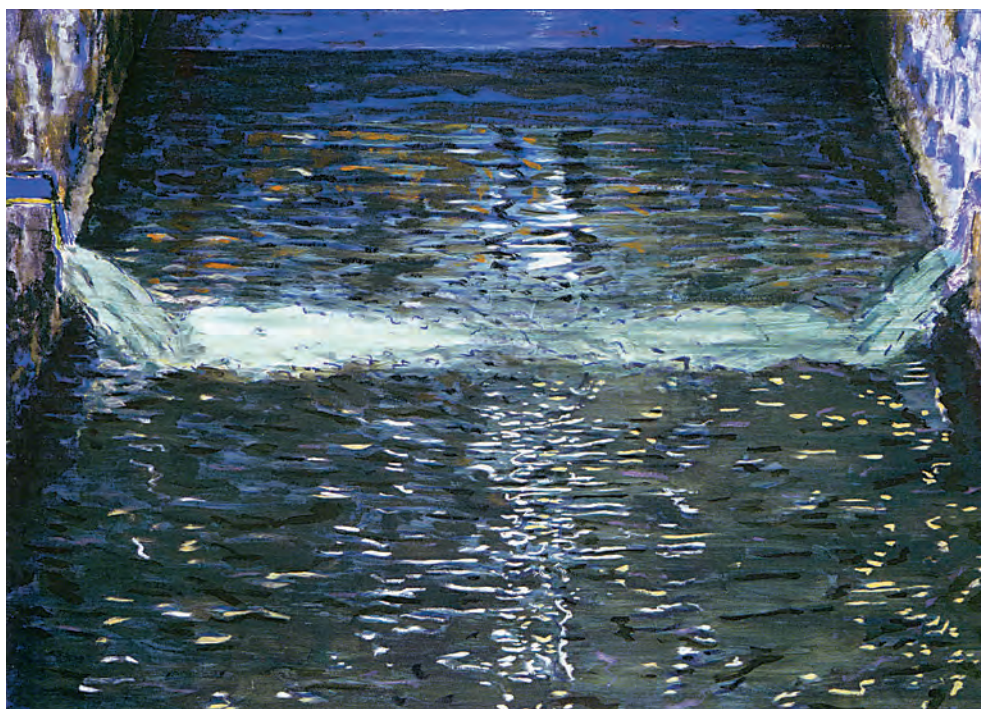
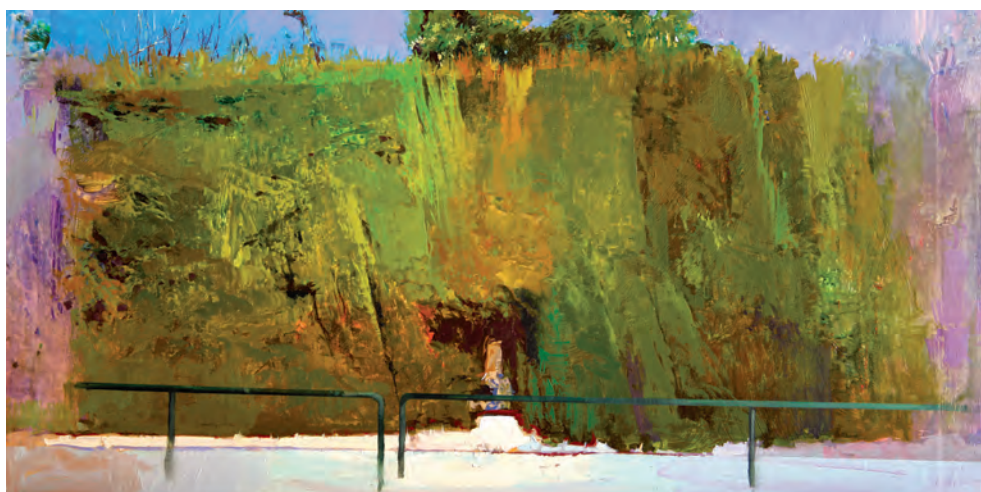


The gardens of the Alhambra have been a recurring subject among modern and contemporary artists who believe “the artist should not imitate Nature; instead he must build a new reality from it,” says Granada artist Juan Vida. Right: “La Vista de la Alhambra” (“View of the Alhambra”) by Gustavo Bacarissas, 1909-10. Center: “Muro vegetal” (“Vegetal Wall”) by Jesús Conde, 2012. Lower: “Alberca Azul” (“Blue Pool”) by José Manuel Darro, 2000.

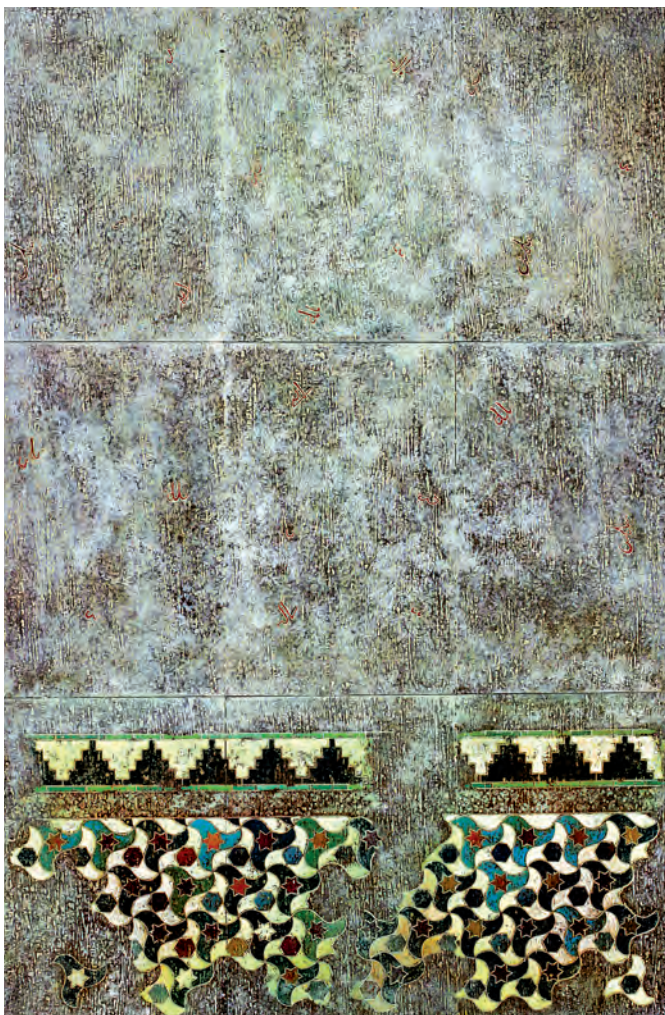
Similarly, and influenced much by Matisse, Granada vanguard painter Manuel Ángeles Ortiz (1895-1984) became renowned for his ability to “capture with abstract evocations the memory and the subtle hints of its forms,” according to contemporary artist José Manuel Darro, also from Granada. “The Nasrid geometry is an invitation and an intellectual challenge,” he adds. “Even though the Alhambra has been painted almost to saturation as a picturesque, exotic subject or as a landscape, it has been much less common to re-create the language and the geometry of its fragments.”

The underlying visual language and the geometry of the Nasrid palace also deeply inform the contemporary painting of Miguel Rodríguez-Acosta, born in Granada in 1927. His studio is in his family’s former home just a few minutes’ walk from the palace gardens. He explains the extent to which the Alhambra represents an icon of beauty to Granadans with a family anecdote: “During a trip to Versailles that my family made when I was a kid, while they were walking around the gardens of the French palace, my father asked our nanny if she had liked it. The lady, who was born in Granada and unable to express it otherwise, said, ‘It’s an Alhambra like all Alhambras!’”

Having grown up with the Alhambra as a premise of beauty, he is today one of the most internationally recognized of the city’s artists. His works speak through color, pattern and rhythm; they reference volumetric features and gardens to achieve “a fertile synergy” between his roots and his lifelong personal love of Italian tradi-







Granada artist Augusto Moreno works with metal sheets on which firings and acids produce colors, as in “Susurra el moro” (“The Moor’s Whisper”), 2008, left. Right: Julio Juste’s “Baño Árabe” (“Arab Bath”), 1988, from his series “Castillo Inferior” (“Lower Castle”), inspired by the Alhambra’s *hammam* (bath), is a collage of paper, cardboard and wood that recalls the ephemeral nature of the modest materials Nasrid artisans used in building the Alhambra.

tions, writes Maria Dolores Jiménez-Blanco in the artist’s 2003 retrospective catalog. “Textures of infinite chromatic layers ... which Rodríguez-Acosta creates with infinite delicacy, have a possible explanation in the daily contemplation of walls whose plaster has been chipped and broken by the passing of centuries.” She continues: “The network of brushstrokes that makes up the surface of his pictures, conferring on them the immediacy of the gestural and connecting them to the trends of 20th-century expressive abstraction, also have a correlation with the plaster filigree on the upper part of the Alhambra’s inner walls.”

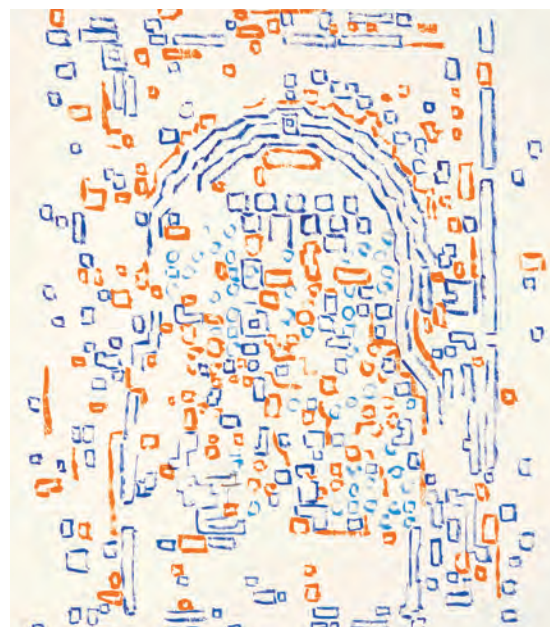
The poet Antonio Enrique often says that the Alhambra is the real university for the Granadan, where we have all learned harmony. Maybe this is the reason why all those who have been so lucky as to have been born here are mesmerized by this referent.... Hence, the recurring temptation of recreating its forms, its geometries, its challenges where light and shadow play such a transcendental role: It is a complete challenge for any artist. I have felt that spell, and I have tried to convey those emotions which emanate from light, color and shapes. Few are the monuments in the world that have such a magnetic power. Gardens, fountains, domes, halls, water springs, towers, everything is an invitation to emotion, to sensual pleasure—and who can remain unmoved in the face of these ecstatic geometries?

—SILVIA ABARCA

Juan Manuel Brazam, another Granada artist established both in Spain and internationally, says that if he were born in any other place, while he might be the same physically, his work would be different. His canvases, he says, are more and more nurtured by the art of al-Andalus, the Nasrid kingdom and the Alhambra. He builds his paintings with “the transparency of its light, the sound of water, the play of its jets of water.” The images of its mosaic inlays, he says, call forth unity, abstraction and geometry.

Maria Teresa Martín-Vivaldi, painter and engraver, has





Left: One in a series of sketches called “La Alhambra,” published in 2007 by Miguel Rodríguez-Acosta, abstracts and almost pixelates colors and patterns, as does “Rincon de la Alhambra” (“Corner of the Alhambra”), 2010, by José Manuel Darro, right. “Even though the Alhambra has been painted almost to saturation as a picturesque, exotic subject or as a landscape, it has been much less common to recreate the language and the geometry of its fragments,” says Darro. “I have approached my works with a certain determination in this formal universe.”

used the Alhambra in a series of works that impose color and perspective on the vaults and tiles, creating a dream-like vision in which the monument appears, blurs, and dissolves. Asunción Jódar finds inspiration in the private worlds of the Alhambra’s female dwellers, which “excludes or cancels out any outlying or simplistic, exterior observation.”

The proliferation of paintings based on the Alhambra continues among younger Granada artists, the “emergent” ones, who always seem to bring forward renewed visions no matter how impossible it may seem to do so anymore. Belén Esturla, Silvia Abarca and Leonor Solans all capture new looks with new shades of light through their treatments of color. Augusto Moreno, born to a Granadan family of sculptors, works with copper sheets in which colors appear through the actions of firings and acids—not unlike the tradition of glazed pottery. José Javier García Marcos uses color with a fury that pulls him halfway toward an Abstract Impressionism.

Departing from the widespread definition that art embraces all creations made to express a sensitive vision, we can see how the Alhambra is far more than beautiful architecture, far more than the vegetal intricacies of the arabesques on its walls. It speaks more than the words of its Kufic calligraphy; the reflections of the waters in its fountains and ponds reflect more than its own parapets and the bright Andalusian sky. The real power of the Alhambra

## THE ALHAMBRA TODAY

Thanks to decades of conservation and restoration throughout the monumental complex, the Alhambra conserves its splendor much as it was when the last Nasrid sultans inhabited the palace. Declared a World Heritage site in 1984 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and host to more than two million visitors annually, it is one of the most frequently visited monuments in Europe.

palace lies not only in its own masterpieces, but also in its power to fire creativity beyond itself, beyond its time, beyond its place, in the far greater garden of the human imagination.

Those who gaze upon the gardens and palace that beauty adorns indeed begin to know their being—their es-

sence—as the poet Ibn Zamrak immortalized on the wall of its Hall of the Two Sisters. It is an essence not known as we know fact, but apprehended, as so many artists have shown, in the way we know a truth, or even an epiphany. And then, the Alhambra itself becomes the artist, working on us. ☉



**Ana Carreño Leyva** (acarrenoleyva@gmail.com) is founder and former editor of the Spanish cultural magazine *El Legado Andalusi* and former communications director for the Fundación El Legado Andalusi in Granada, where she has also curated numerous exhibitions. In 2007, she translated *The Hermetic Alhambra* (Port-Royal Ediciones) by Antonio Enrique. A painter by avocation, she remembers the first time her parents took her to the Alhambra as a child. “It was like entering a world of magic and dreams, and I saw it through the eyes of my imagination.”



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# The Dragons' Road to Rio







As the fog rises from the green foothills of Mount Igman, overlooking Sarajevo's southwestern neighborhood of Hrasnica, the grounds crew for the Bosnian national soccer team, Senad, Nihad and Sead, are hard at work. They are digging 15-centimeter-wide (6") canals in a flooded corner of the field at Stadion FK Famos, named after a soccer club started in 1953 by the Famos Motor Factory. The company's clients once included Mercedes Benz, but it closed during the 1992-1995 Bosnian War.



Top-scoring forward Edin Džeko moves the ball while fellow forward Vedad Ibišević looks on, left, during a match played to raise charitable funds for flood victims three weeks before the team's first World Cup match. Above: The team stands with local boys for the national anthem.

Written by OMAR SACIRBEY | Photographed by HARIS MEMIJA





**Before practice at their pre-Rio training camp at Hrasnica, near Sarajevo, coaches talk to their team of Muslim, Serb and Croat players. All agree that both personal and athletic chemistry has been essential to success. "Everyone has a story. Everyone has their memories. Yes, it's all in the past, but we never forget where we are from," says defender Ermin Bičakčić.**

It is Friday morning, May 16, opening day of training camp for the Bosnian team, which in October qualified for this year's World Cup in Brazil, its first such success as a modern-day independent nation. Without a doubt, most citizens agree, the national soccer team's qualification is the greatest thing they have experienced during a postwar period beset by government dysfunction, 60-percent unemployment and unresolved ethnic discord among Muslims, Serbs and Croats.

It has been raining nonstop since Tuesday evening. While most of the water has run off, it remains in the southwestern corner of the field, making it look more like a marsh than a soccer pitch. Still, Sarajevo is one of the luckier places in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the rain continues through Saturday, May 18, causing catastrophic flooding and mudslides that leave an estimated 500,000 people homeless in this nation of four million. Images of destroyed and damaged homes, dead farm animals floating in the water and distraught families fill the nightly news. It is Bosnia's worst catastrophe since the Bosnian War, which created two million refugees and left 100,000 people, mostly civilians, dead.

The Bosnian team bus is scheduled to arrive at 9:30 a.m., allowing the players to take the field by 10:00. Senad, Nihad and Sead, who are quick to invite a stranger for coffee, still have work to do.

By 8:00, the rain has paused, giving Nihad a chance to string the nets, which he carts to the field in an old wheelbarrow, onto the goals. Senad and Sead lay down the chalk, stretching a cable between the corners to make sure their lines are straight. They are applying a few finishing touches to the field when husky Securitas officers in dark blue and black bomber jackets swing open the gates to let in the bus, greeted by some 100 clapping fans, young and old, all with hope and pride in their eyes. Head coach Safet Sušić, one of the greatest soccer players ever produced by the former Yugoslavia, and whose birthplace, a village 100 kilometers (65 mi) north

of Sarajevo called Zavidovići, is flooded, looks back through the dark windows and gives a short wave.

The doors open and 16 of the world's best soccer players descend, wearing their practice gear. They include Miralem Pjanić, 24, a baby-faced midfielder for AS Roma, whose fans call him "The Little Prince"; Mensur Mujdža, 30, a defender who played for SC Freiburg in Germany's Bundesliga, coming off an injury that nearly cost him a spot on the roster for Brazil; backup goalie



**The coaches, including head coach Safet Sušić, left, and Borce Sredojević and Tomislav Piplica, two of his four assistants, also bring a mix of Bosnian Muslim, Orthodox Serb and Catholic Croat ethnicities to the field. Although this is the first World Cup qualification for Bosnia-Herzegovina, prior to Yugoslavia's breakup in 1990, it sent a team to eight of the 14 World Cup matches since World War II.**





**Unlike many teams who close their practices to the public, the Bosnian ones are open. Stopping by the field on their way home from the nearby school, girls watch the players, many of whom were about their ages during the Bosnian War.**

Asmir Avdukić, 33, the sole player who didn't play abroad, instead choosing to tend net for FK Borac in Banja Luka, capital of the Republika Srpska, one of Bosnia's two political entities; and temperamental striker Vedad Ibisević, 29, whose grandfather and 20 other relatives were killed during the war, and who now stars for VfB Stuttgart in the Bundesliga.

The field looks beautiful—slick, but ready for action. “There are just three of us, but we get the job done,” says Senad, the youngest member of the grounds crew, as if the outcome has never been in doubt. “The last few days we did nothing but work. We all worked to make this happen.”

Some Bosnians say confidence was once rare in Bosnia, of late a hard-luck nation located in a Balkan region famous for its fatalism. This collection of soccer players, however, is changing that.

“Bosnians and Serbs have this inclination for pessimism and depression, a loser's mentality. We lacked optimism,” says Marjan Mijajlović, a gravelly voiced sports commentator and Bosnian Serb. He calls the games for Sarajevo-based FACE-TV and, during a match in 2009, gave the team its nickname:

“Zmajevi,” or “Dragons,” which he derived from a 19th-century Bosnian military hero, Husein Kapetan Gradašćević, who is celebrated in a *sevdah*, or traditional Bosnian song, that refers to him as a dragon.

But things are changing, says Mijajlović, 42. “Look at Džeko, and how he plays with confidence,” he notes, referring to 28-year-old forward Edin Džeko, who in 2008-2009 led upstart VfL Wolfsburg to its first Bundesliga title before moving in 2011 to Manchester City, where he helped the team capture two English Premier League titles in three years. “If you believe you won't lose, you won't lose.”

Besides coming from a small country with modest resources and a small pool of players from which to select its team, what makes Bosnia's World Cup qualification even more improbable is that most of its players were kids when the war broke out. Now they are taking this soccer-mad nation to its first-ever World Cup, giving some joy to people who badly need it.

Not everybody is cheering, however. Serb and Croat nationalists who want to secede from Bosnia root against the Bosnian squad.



The team, mostly Bosnian Muslim but including several Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs, has emerged as an international soccer contender *and* as a counterweight to Bosnia's nationalists, proof of what the country's different ethnic groups can achieve when they work together. Indeed, 32-year-old midfielder Zvezdan Misimović, a Serb who delivers the assists, and Džeko, a Muslim and the team's top scorer, form the team's most prolific point-making combo. Today, a growing number of the country's Serbs and Croats are beginning to cheer for the Bosnian team, and some observers wonder whether it can accomplish what armies of peacekeepers, politicians, diplomats and foreign-aid workers have been unable to do: unite the country.

"We don't have these problems in the team. We are all like one," says Elvir Rahimić, 38, a star midfielder with PFC CSKA Moscow, where he is called "The General." He played for Bosnia throughout qualification, but Sušić asked him to be an assistant coach in Brazil.

"We'd like to see Bosnia and Herzegovina function like the team. That would be ideal," Rahimić says. "We don't look at who is what [nationality], what the names are. There's none of that. We hope the politicians can do the same in the government as what we've done in the national team. That would be super for this country."

Unlike with many teams who close their training to the public, the Bosnian training sessions, two hours each, twice

Clockwise from top left: "We know what people have been through during the war," says midfielder Senijad Ibričić, the youngest of five brothers, who learned to play soccer in a refugee camp outside of Zagreb. "Soccer gives people some happiness in their hearts, and that gives us the heart to fight." Marjan Mijajlović is the sportscaster who dubbed the team "Zmajevi," or "Dragons," after Bosnian folklore. Assistant coach Piplica hugs midfielder Miralem Pjanić, 24, whose fans call him "The Little Prince" and Mehmet Bešić hugs his son, defender Muhamed Bešić, 21, whom Sušić assigned to cover Argentina's Lionel Messi, arguably the world's greatest player, during the team's first World Cup match.







Above: **Borce Sredojević**, a Serb, has been assisting Sušić since 2009. “Football doesn’t recognize borders,” he says. “Football doesn’t recognize skin color. Football destroys prejudices. Football saves people.”  
 Right: **Edin Džeko** poses with a young fan for a souvenir photo.



a day, are open, and this Friday afternoon, a few hundred fans ignore a light rain and head toward chipped concrete bleachers that can hold 1500 spectators. There are kids in track suits, middle-aged and older men with blue berets, young women in designer jeans and moms with small kids. Asim Zukanović, an older gentleman, has come directly to the stadium from having a wisdom tooth removed.

Sušić, with his four assistants, Rahimić, Borce Sredojević, Elvir Baljić and Tomislav Piplica, is addressing the players, who are split into teams of four and standing in a 30-by-30-meter (33-by-33-yd) square bordered by plastic orange-and-yellow discs.

“There are no goals. This is about reaction,” Sušić, 58, offers. He blows his whistle and throws the ball into the middle of the players, who explode into action.

The pace in the tight space is lightning-quick. Players deftly collect low, hard passes fired to them from approximately five, 10 meters away, and then fire equally hard passes to nearby teammates before a defender flies in. There is no dribbling. Players take just one or two touches before getting rid of the ball. At this level, a third touch gives a defender time to swoop in and break up the play.

The intensity is obvious. When Pjanić misplays a high ball to an opponent, he yells, sinks to his knees and buries his face in his hands. A moment later he is up and chasing the play.

Amid constant chatter between players, Sušić shouts out instructions: “Switch fields, lift your heads up!” “Look for a solution faster!” “Don’t hang on to the ball!” When Sead Kolašinac, a 20-year-old defender from the Bundesliga club Schalke 04, waits too long to make a pass, giving a defender a chance to knock it away, Sušić yells out, “You waiting for him to say hello?”

It’s ironic coming from Sušić, who was a dazzling dribbler for FK Sarajevo, Paris Saint-Germain (where fans voted him the club’s greatest non-French player) and the Yugoslav national

team. His feats are preserved on YouTube, and there is even a Bosnian song celebrating his skills, “Not Alone, Safet.”

Sušić is credited with instilling an offense-driven, creative, fun-to-watch brand of soccer that results in lots of goals, making the Bosnians a favorite among soccer enthusiasts outside of Bosnia. Indeed, the 30 goals Bosnia scored in European qualifying trailed only England, Germany and the Netherlands. “They are always looking to attack,” says Luc Hagège, a reporter for the French sports daily *L’Équipe* who grew up watching Sušić and credits him with making him a soccer lover.

Soccer is an important part of Bosnian culture, and full-size and miniature soccer fields are plentiful in cities and the countryside. Austro-Hungarian soldiers introduced the game in the late 19th century and the first clubs sprang up before World War I. After World War II, Yugoslavia became a soccer power, appearing in eight of 14 World Cups and reaching the semifinals twice, before it dissolved in 1990. Prior to Sušić, there was Vahid Halilhodžić, another Paris Saint-Germain standout, who will also be at the World Cup as head coach for Algeria, and Asim “Hase” Ferhatović, another great dribbler who played for Sarajevo, whose skills are memorialized on YouTube in a song in his honor, “The Sunday That Hase Left.”

That is the legacy the current generation of Bosnian players



**Teammates congratulate midfielder Izet Hajrović after he scores. “No player won alone. And all of us have a big motivation to do something for the people who have been through so much,” commented Bičakčić.**

was set to inherit—until the war erupted. Most of them were youngsters when the conflict began. Some grew up in Bosnia under the threat of snipers and shellfire, others left with their families, and a few players were born outside of Bosnia.

Džeko has recalled in interviews how his family’s house was damaged by shellfire. That forced a move to another home where displaced family members were already staying.

Ibišević, 29, was quoted in the May edition of *ESPN Magazine* about how, at age seven, he hid in a hole his mother dug in the forest outside their village of Gerovi, hoping his sleeping little sister wouldn’t wake up and alert Serbian paramilitaries conducting house-to-house searches a few hundred meters away. His family left Bosnia in 2000 and, after a short stop in Switzerland, moved to St. Louis, Missouri, home to the biggest Bosnian population outside of Bosnia.

There, in 2003, the National Collegiate Athletic Association named the St. Louis University athlete the only freshman on the list of its most valuable Division I soccer players. This came after Ibišević, whose short hair has begun to grey, had been named to the All-America first team by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America and Freshman of the Year by Conference USA.

Asmir Begović, who tends net for Stoke City in England and is viewed as one of the top three goalies in the English Premier League, left Trebinje in southern Bosnia with his family when he was three, and he knew he wanted to be a professional goalie, like his father, after putting on his first gloves as a refugee in Germany at age four. When he was 10, his family moved again, to Edmonton, Canada, where he also played baseball, volleyball, basketball and tennis.

Begović takes his journey in stride. “We could have buckled as a family, but thankfully we stuck together,” says the 26-year-old, who is married and has a young daughter. “We just saw it as this is the way life took us; things happen for a reason. And I think that was the best attitude we could have had. This experience obviously made me grow a little more quickly, having to deal with a little more responsibility.”

Begović eventually played for Canada’s Under 20 squad—one of nine players who played for the national youth teams of other countries before joining the Bosnian team. While many of his teammates who grew up in France, Germany, Switzerland and elsewhere as refugees say their decisions about whether to play for Bosnia or



**Above: Fans in Sarajevo. The team’s success is proving a counterweight to the country’s ethnic partisans: Indeed, midfielder Zvezdan Misimović, opposite, is a Serb who delivers the assists to Džeko, a Muslim, and together they form the team’s most successful goal-scoring duo.**

their adopted countries came easily, Begović needed time to reflect.

“I had a lot of relationships and friends in Canada. It was a pretty important part of my life; it was difficult to leave them,” says Begović, whose parents encouraged him to integrate into Canadian life, while speaking, reading and cooking Bosnian at home. “But representing Bosnia was something I couldn’t turn down. A lot of my family is here, so I can share these experiences with them. I was born here and that’s a huge connection.”

If Bosnia wins the World Cup in July, nine-year-old Irfan Vugdalić, who is kicking a soccer ball with Arnel Arnautovic, 11, in a hilltop meadow next to a new field and training center approved by soccer’s world body FIFA in Zenica, 75 kilometers (47 mi) northwest of Sarajevo, says he’ll celebrate by build-



ing a bonfire on that spot. From here, you can see Bilino Polje stadium in downtown Zenica, where Bosnia played its home qualifying matches, going four and one. A Catholic church steeple rises above the west end of the stadium; a minaret looks over the east end; and billowing smokestacks from the steel factories tower over both.

Vugdalić's father, Suad, 38, has other dreams. "If I had the chance to leave here, I would. I don't even have to think about it," he says.

He and his son go to the field to play soccer almost every day, but on this Monday afternoon, the day before the catastrophic rains, they are here earlier than usual. About an hour before, around 3:30, a man shot and killed another man in a dispute involving money and ethnic graffiti.

Suad Vugdalić acknowledges, however, that life was better when Zenica, which locals proudly call the Dragons' Nest, hosted the Bosnian soccer team. Consider its final home qualifier against Lichtenstein.

"Nobody was home. Everybody was on the streets. And there were no problems. Just happiness," he recalls. "Nobody thought about unemployment or work or who was what religion.

"It took us back to the days when we all lived together. There were even Serbs from Banja Luka and Bijeljina buying Bosnian uniforms."

"That was unimaginable a few years ago," adds his wife, Arnela. "Many people are starting to believe in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state."

Besides their winning ways, what makes these players endearing to fellow Bosnians is that they experienced the hardships of war and refugee life like them. At the same time, the players, after living through hard times and having friends and family in Bosnia, know that many Bosnians still have hard lives. Indeed, between the stadium and the Hotel Herzegovina where they are staying, scenes of struggle are routinely visible from the team bus: farmworkers hunch over in fields; a man with one leg hobbles







**Days before the end of training camp and the team's flight to Rio de Janeiro for the World Cup, goalie Asmir Begović, who has also started a foundation that builds recreational facilities for kids in Bosnia and England, signs autographs.**

on crutches; an elderly woman, pale, begs; stray dogs ramble everywhere. This makes them a down-to-earth bunch, happy to oblige requests for autographs or to have their pictures taken with adoring fans at their hotel in between practices.

"We know what people have been through during the war," says midfielder Senijad Ibričić, 28, the youngest of five brothers, who learned to play soccer in a refugee camp outside of Zagreb. "Soccer gives people some happiness in their hearts, and that gives us the heart to fight."

They try to find other ways to help, too. Begović started a foundation that builds recreational facilities for kids in Bosnia and England, while Džeko makes almost as much news for his charitable ventures as he does for his goals. Halfway through their training camp, they play a fundraising game against the country's Under 21 team in Gradačac in the north. Local papers report how Pjanić stopped at a pharmacy on the way to buy supplies for flood victims. Between practices on a Sunday, several of the players take calls for a telethon to raise money for a new bone-marrow-transplant hospital.

After an hour of talking, Rahimić, Kolašinac, Avdukić and another back-up goalie, Jasmin Fejzić, 28, slip outside for espressos. They debate with a hotel waiter about whether FK Čelik, the team from Zenica whose weekend game against Sarajevo had been cancelled because of the flooding, was any good.

Players acknowledge that representing their country in its

first World Cup will be a challenge, but they still exude confidence. "To overcome this, we only have to relax and enjoy, and not to be afraid. We know we are a good team," says 22-year-old midfielder Izet Hajrović, who scored the winning goal—a rocket from 25 meters (27 yds) out—against Slovakia that kept the team at the top of its group, setting it up to qualify for Rio.

That attitude has rubbed off on many Bosnians.

"They have given the kids confidence. They've shown that Bosnians are a talented people, and that to succeed we just need to work hard," says Mensur Milak, headmaster of the Mak Dizdar Primary School in Zenica. "This is a big thing for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It goes beyond soccer."

Talent and hard work brought this group of players together, but the right chemistry, they all agree, has been essential to success. That starts with the coaches: three Muslims, a Bosnian Serb and a Bosnian Croat.

"Our relations are based on strong friendship, honesty and respect, and that's helped build unity, cohesiveness and a work ethic," says assistant coach Sredojević, 56, who is Serbian. To be successful with players, he adds, "You have to be seen as a friend."

But maintaining the right chemistry sometimes seems easier said than done, especially given the pressure to win games in Brazil, and to lift and possibly unite a divided country. After Bosnia lost a friendly match to Egypt in February, there was some "confusion" in the locker room, admits Ermin Bičakčić, a



On the patio of the team's hotel, Edin Džeko listens to the story of a single mother, right, whom he later helps. Lower: Kids chase the team's bus after practice. "They have given the kids confidence," says Mensur Milak, headmaster of the Mak Dizdar Primary School in Zenica. "This is a big thing for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It goes beyond soccer."

defender who signed with 1899 Hoffenheim in late May. During the training sessions, tempers occasionally flare, or players collide and hit the ground while clutching their ankles, eliciting a nervous gasp from the spectators.

Bičakčić, 24, who scored the pivotal tying goal in the club's 2-1 win against Slovakia during qualifying, believes the team has tamed any threats to its unity. "We've grown up as team," he says in fluent German. "No player won alone. And all of us have a big motivation to do something for the people who have been through so much. And this motivation is what creates the chemistry."

"Everyone has a story. Everyone has their memories. Yes, it's all in the past, but we never forget where we are from."

It is Wednesday morning and the sun is shining on Stadion FK Famos. Players are in two lines facing each other, rifling passes between before sprinting to the end of the line. They are quick on their feet and the concentration shows on their faces. The idea is for the team members to find a rhythm with one another, taking off from their line at the right moment. A step too soon or too late and the timing collapses.

"Teamwork is important," Sušić tells them.

Defender Muhamed Bešić looks fit and sharp, despite joining the team a few days late because of commitments to his club, Ferencvárosi in Budapest. Sušić has called Bešić, 21, the only person on the team capable of covering Argentina's Lionel Messi, arguably the world's greatest player, in the team's very first World Cup match.

Bešić recalls being nervous before his first youth practice, for a team called Tiergarten in Berlin, where he was born. But he isn't the least bit nervous now, despite the task ahead of him.

"I'm not thinking about playing against Messi. I see him as another player. I just focus on my game," says Bešić, whose arms are covered in tattoos, including a set that reads, "Mama," "Papa," "Faruk" (his brother), and "Falešići," the town about 150 kilometers (95 miles) north of Sarajevo where his family is from. Although Bosnia is the underdog, Bešić believes the team can win.



"Why play soccer if you don't play to win," he says, mindful that the best hopes of a diverse young country are riding with him and his fellow Dragons. 🌐



**Omar Sacirbey** (osacirbey@hotmail.com) is a correspondent for the Religion News Service and a former Bosnian diplomat during the 1992-1995 Bosnian War. The son of Bosnian refugees who came to America in 1967, he grew up loving soccer and is now a youth soccer coach. **Haris Memija** (harismemija@gmail.com) is a photojournalist in Sarajevo who works mainly for Xinhua News Agency; he is also represented by Corbis Images.



#### Pronunciations

ć = **hitch** š = **sugar** ž = **azure** č = **cello**



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LEBANON'S

# *Renaissance*

PRINCE



Written by TED GORTON

"LIKE ALL COUNTRIES, LEBANON HAS NATIONAL STORIES ABOUT ITS ORIGINS. IN THEM, AMIR (PRINCE) FAKHR AL-DIN MA'N IS BOTH COLORFUL AND CONTROVERSIAL. BORN IN 1572 AND EXECUTED FOR TREASON IN 1635, HE IS A "FATHER OF THE NATION" TO GENERATIONS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN, EVEN "FOUNDER OF THE MODERN LEBANESE STATE" TO ONE WRITER [AZIZ AL-AHDAB], WHILE, MORE RECENTLY, HISTORIAN KAMAL SALIBI DOWNGRADED HIM TO A MERE "STRONGMAN" WHOSE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MODERN STATE WERE INCIDENTAL TO HIS DYNASTIC CONCERNS. BUT BOTH VIEWS UNDERPLAY THE ROLE OF HIS TRAVELS TO THE WEST IN A TIME WHEN FEW ARABS DID SO—EVEN IF FORCED BY CIRCUMSTANCE.

His early life was marked by trauma: In 1585, when he was 13, the Ottoman governor of Egypt, Ibrahim Pasha, led an army to the Shouf Mountains of southern Lebanon, where his forebears of the Druze house of Ma'n had ruled since before the 1516 Ottoman conquest of Syria. Ibrahim's orders were to punish the frequently rebellious Druze, who by that time were chafing at Ottoman control. Fakhr al-Din's father, Amir Qurqmaz, was killed, along with hundreds of others. The boy found himself a sudden heir to the leadership of a devastated realm, surrounded by hostility.

Against the odds, and with help from his mother and younger

brother Yunus, he gradually restored his family's power through commerce, warfare, marriage, tributes and other means. By the time he was a young adult, the Ma'n had reasserted control from Beirut east to Palmyra and south as far as Galilee.

Throughout these years, England, France and Spain, as well as principalities of the Netherlands, Genoa, Venice and Tuscany, competed for eastern Mediterranean trade while the Ma'n and others in Lebanon and Syria competed with each other and their Ottoman overlords. It was this network of competition that in 1608 led Ferdinando I de' Medici, grand duke of Tuscany, to sign a treaty with Fakhr al-Din. For Tuscany, it strengthened its hand against rivals Venice and Genoa, and for Fakhr



Left: This 1787 engraving is the only known portrait of Amir Fakhr al-Din Ma'n that appears to agree with written descriptions of him.

al-Din, it strengthened his position under Istanbul—which had granted the French “Concessions” that gave them exclusive rights to trade in Ottoman ports. Keenly aware of the treaty’s potential to rankle, it included a provision assuring Fakhr al-Din asylum at the house of de’ Medici should Istanbul come to object too strongly.

In 1610, Oxford scholar George Sandys visited Lebanon and wrote the first known personal description of Fakhr al-Din, whose fortunes were rising:

Small of stature, but great in courage and achievements: about the age of forty [he was 38]; subtile as a foxe, and not a little inclining to the Tyrant. He never commenceth battell, nor executeth any notable designe, without the consent of his mother.

Other sources during his lifetime also noted that he was short, stocky, strong, cheerful and noble but unpretentious; with clear, bright eyes, a pug (or at least non-aquiline) nose and a dusky complexion; an accomplished chess-player and horseman with interests in botany and astronomy. (He was so small that his archenemies in Tripoli, the Sayfas, were said to joke that “an egg could fall from his pocket without breaking.”) Fakhr al-Din was furthermore unanimously portrayed as fearless in battle; generous to all and merciful toward vanquished enemies; true in friendship; popular with the common people; just in government but implacable and even harsh in justice.

Three years after Sandys visited, Fakhr al-Din pushed Istanbul too far. His son ‘Ali defeated a troop of elite, Damascus-based Janissaries at Muzayrib, near the modern Syria-Jordan border. To the Ottomans, it signaled an unacceptable expansion of Ma’n influence. At the same time, a lull in conflicts with Persia allowed the Sultan to dispatch an army to retaliate—and probably more.



## THE BANU MA'N & THE DRUZE

The *banu* (“sons of”) Ma’n asserted Kurdish origins, but the Ma’n appear in historical records at the end of the 15th century in what was then western Syria and is now the southern mountains of Lebanon. Based at both Deir al-Qamar inland and Sidon on the Mediterranean, the Ma’n vied with rival Druze and others for territory and the trade that flowed between ports and overland routes. There is no record of when the Ma’n joined the Druze faith, which originated in early 11th-century Cairo and spread to Syria, where it became closed to outside conversion, as it remains today.

Recalling the punitive expedition that killed his father in 1585, Fakhr al-Din held a council meeting in Sidon in mid-September 1613: The choice was to fight to an almost certain death or flee, in the hope that Tuscany would honor the terms of the five-year-old treaty. Just before the Ottoman army closed in, Fakhr al-Din and a hundred or so followers took to three ships, one Dutch and two French. The companions he chose were a remarkably mixed group for the times: Druze, Sunni Muslims (including his chief counsellor, Hajj Kiwan), Maronite Christians and two Jews (including Isaac Caro, his friend and secretary). Also aboard was his wife Khasikiya and their infant daughter.

Their destination: Livorno, principal port of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, on the northwest side of the Italian peninsula. Ferdinando I had died a year after the treaty, and he had been succeeded by his son, Cosimo II.

The voyage took more than 50 days, and it was imperiled by storms that caused the French ships to arrive three days after Fakhr al-Din’s, as well as by pirates whom the crews dissuaded with threats of “cannonballs and fight.”

On Fakhr al-Din’s arrival, the 23-year-old Grand Duke Cosimo II was in Florence, attending one of the earliest performances of what we now call



Though he died a year after signing his treaty with Fakhr al-Din in 1608, Grand Duke Ferdinando I de’ Medici of Tuscany saw the Amir as an ally in maritime commerce that bypassed Turkey.



Florentine records show that Fakhr al-Din was both a fascinated observer and an object of popular curiosity, but perhaps the most unexpected legacy of his exile is a drama still enacted on occasion today in Florence as part of a festival of de' Medici heritage: "Fakkardino a Palazzo: un Turco fra i Medici" ("Fakkardino at the Palace: A Turk among the Medici"). The title is a double entendre, as *fakkardino* is Florentine dialect for "hot weather," "brouhaha" and Fakhr al-Din's Italianized name—leading to the title's meaning, which is something like "a hot time at the palace."



opera. Fortunately, his mother and Ferdinando's widow, the Archduchess Cristina di Lorena, was there. A few days later, Fakhr al-Din and his entourage were accorded a royal reception at the Palazzo Pitti, hailed by the Archduchess as "beloved of my late husband."

And so began an extraordinary, five-year sojourn. The de' Medici were pleased to host an exile who offered a prospect of lucrative markets should his restoration to power be made possible. Fakhr al-Din and his companions were thus among the very few non-Christians from the Ottoman Empire to voluntarily reside in the Christian lands of Europe. The rarity of such contacts was a product of the times, for the Ottoman-controlled Levant tended to be more welcoming to Christian travelers, traders and pilgrims than was Europe to Muslims and Arabs.

Much of what we know of this part of Fakhr al-Din's life comes from the chronicle of Ahmad al-Khalidi al-Safadi, who may have accompanied the Amir in exile or, more likely, took dictation from him after his return to the Shouf in 1618. It is a unique view of Renaissance Europe through a Levantine lens, a mix of practical and social observation:

We were told that the Duke's daily income was eighty thousand *scudi*, but others said that was the gross revenue of his country, not all of which belonged to him. We also heard that he had annual revenues of [a million gold piasters]. Apparently his dynasty is not very old, dating back a century or so to the year 900 of the *hijra* [October 1494; the Florentine Republic was founded in 1532]. Their family were originally physicians ["Medici" means "doctors"]....

In the heights above Florence, the Duke has a vast and imposing villa surrounded by gardens and water.... There are iron water-pipes buried in places under the garden, and whenever they wish to play a joke on someone entering it, they turn the water on suddenly so that it squirts on him from top to toe.... Their purpose in building such palaces with their gardens is to have different places to spend about three months at a time, along with their families. Thus they spend the three winter months on the coast, the three summer months in the hill-country; the three months of spring are spent in-between, where the hunting is good, and so it goes for the autumn as well.

Their domains are orderly, prosperous and disciplined; the title Gran Duca means in Arabic the "Great Amir" or "Prince," for in the lands of the Christians there are many principalities. This Duke is said to be greater than any of the others, for all the kings and Sultans of the Christian lands write to him and show him all due respect.

Indeed, there was time for leisure as well as business. This is

how al-Safadi described Florence on the eve of Carnival, 1614:

At that time began the feast of Carnival which falls just before their long period of fasting [Lent]. They celebrate it with various games and amusements, covering their faces with masks dyed in different colours. They fill hollowed-out eggs with rose-water if they are rich, plain water otherwise, and throw these at each other; grown-up men do this with each other and even with women. They attach a helmet to a stake; the horsemen have to gallop by at full speed and strike it with a lance, which they hold from the bottom since there is a pennant on the tip—which has no sharp point, but a piece of lead which is used to mark the place of impact on the helmet. The clever horseman who strikes the helmet on the eyepiece gets the prize....

At night they have other games and dancing for men and women together, in a huge hall, with the far wall decorated with tapestries of landscapes that look very far away, with the sky red as sunset and figures passing across it like angels. On the floor there are rollers underneath sea-blue cloth that move up and down, imitating the waves of the sea, while a skiff sails quickly across it; about fifteen handsome youths jump out, dancing and reciting speeches....

De' Medici accounts of the Amir are less vivid, although the de' Medici agent who received Fakhr al-Din for a visit to Pisa said he was "exceedingly curious about all the customs and practices found in Christendom." As his daily business, Fakhr al-Din tried to drum up European support for his return



This view of the harbor at Livorno, the main port of Tuscany, was painted a few decades after Fakhr al-Din's exile.





Far left: **Cosimo II de' Medici was 18 years old when he succeeded his father as grand duke; his tutor was Galileo (who later, like Fakhr al-Din, received sanctuary at the House of de' Medici).** Left: **Cosimo II appears at center between his wife, Marie Madeleine of Austria and his son Ferdinando II.**

to power, even going so far as to propose an invasion of the Levant, with him at the head of an army backed up by European naval and logistical support. His meetings with the Grand Duke, the French ambassador and indeed Pope Paul v Borghese were attended by de' Medici translators. The most tantalizing political prize of all for his Christian allies would have been no less than the recovery of Jerusalem from Ottoman control. But he was too late by at least a century: European enthusiasm for crusading had given way to commerce and the tensions that would bring on the Thirty Years' War.

After two years in Tuscany, he accepted an invitation from

to let Ibn Ma'n return to his country, having observed and learned so much about the Christian lands. So the Duke hesitated to provide the ship with written permission to sail, it being their custom that no ship may sail without one.

All the Emir's family and his followers and possessions were on the ship, and this situation continued for eight days. Finally the Emir invited the Duke's interpreter, one Carlo, onboard the vessel. While he was onboard, the Emir had a barrel of gunpowder which he had purchased brought up, had his wife sit on it, and told the interpreter: "If the Duke obliges us to disembark, meaning that we shall have no hope of returning home with our women and children, if we despair of the Duke's decision, we will set fire to the gunpowder and blow ourselves up, women and children and all." The Emir then went ashore and told the Duke his last word, as follows: "It was with your permission that we embarked on this boat, along with our families and possessions. Now we have been there for eight days, suffering from the heat at a time of Ramadhan

## *In Italy, Fakhr al-Din tried to drum up support for his return to power, even going so far as to propose an allied European invasion of the Ottoman-ruled Levant.*

the Spanish Viceroy of Sicily—the Duke of Osuna—to come to Messina. Like the de' Medicis, Osuna hoped the Amir could be useful in furthering his commercial ambitions in the Levant; the Amir hoped the Spanish would be more effective at securing his return to power than the de' Medicis had proved to be. A year later, Osuna was promoted to Viceroy of Naples; again, Fakhr al-Din and his suite tagged along, unable to return home while his enemies held sway in Istanbul. He stayed there the better part of two further long years, dreaming of—and lobbying for—a grand invasion that would put him on the throne of Syria.

He became homesick, notably for his aging mother, who with his brother Yunus had successfully managed the home front, protecting the Ma'n family and supporters from reprisals.

In late 1618, his fortunes brightened with the execution of his archenemy, grand vizir Nasuh Pasha, which was followed by a letter from rising star Ali Pasha, a longtime personal ally who became grand vizier a year later. Ali invited the Amir to return and receive the title of Governor of Sidon, Beirut and Jubeil. Fakhr al-Din set about to depart at once, as related by al-Safadi:

Some counsellors of the Duke told him that it was unwise

fasting. I demand a permit to sail!" When the Duke's wife heard this, she told her husband, "Since you gave them permission to embark, you gave them your word, you must give them permission to sail, along with their families, who are already onboard the ship." The Duke said, "All right, come tomorrow and receive the permit..." The Emir came to see the Duke to thank him before they sailed, which they did in the middle of Ramadhan, in the year one thousand and twenty-seven of the Hijra [September 6, 1618].

Fakhr al-Din spent the decade or so after his return consolidating the power of the Ma'n, building and repairing defensive and civil structures and working for the economic growth of his realm that by 1625 included most of the Levant outside Anatolia, the cities of Aleppo and Damascus, and the coast from Beirut to Gaza. He had learned Italian and used that knowledge to translate treatises on botany, one of his hobbies.

As trade grew, despite the official monopoly granted by the Sultan to France, Fakhr al-Din continued to receive gifts from the de' Medicis. The choice of gifts reflects more than mere political intent: the Medici Archives in Florence mention much



Much historical writing about Fakhr al-Din M'an can be traced back to the biases and perhaps even ambitions of his chief biographer, Istifan Al Duwayhi, the Maronite patriarch during the late 17th century. Due to the scarcity of source material, made worse by the confiscation of Druze literature considered blasphemous by Ottoman authorities, Al Duwayhi's chronicles became heavily influential in Fakhr al-Din scholarship, helping advance the convenient legend of the dynastic leader as a unifying nationalist hero. Yet for contemporary historians, the chronicles also reveal the patriarch's desire to promote his own community—some of whom were appointed to senior positions by the Druze leader and his descendants—while downplaying elements of the story that cast doubt on the inclusiveness or uniqueness of his rule.

In what he calls “the long rebellion,” historian Abdul Rahim Abu Husayn reflects upon nearly two centuries of clashes between Ottoman authorities and various, mainly Druze, chieftains, which began several decades before the reign of Fakhr al-Din and reached far beyond the current borders of Lebanon into all its neighboring states. The rebellion, he writes, was driven less by nationalist aspirations and more by an influx of weapons, covertly obtained from European powers, especially Tuscany and Venice, to whom Druze leaders were seen as a potential medium for advancing “political, commercial and religious designs upon Syria,” wrote Abu Husayn in a 2009 paper.

Western interests particularly favored Fakhr al-Din due to the wholly imaginary belief that he was a descendant of Crusaders, and that his hatred for the Turks might lead him to convert to Christianity, a hope expressed by the Pope in a 1610 letter to local Maronites urging them to rally behind Fakhr al-Din.

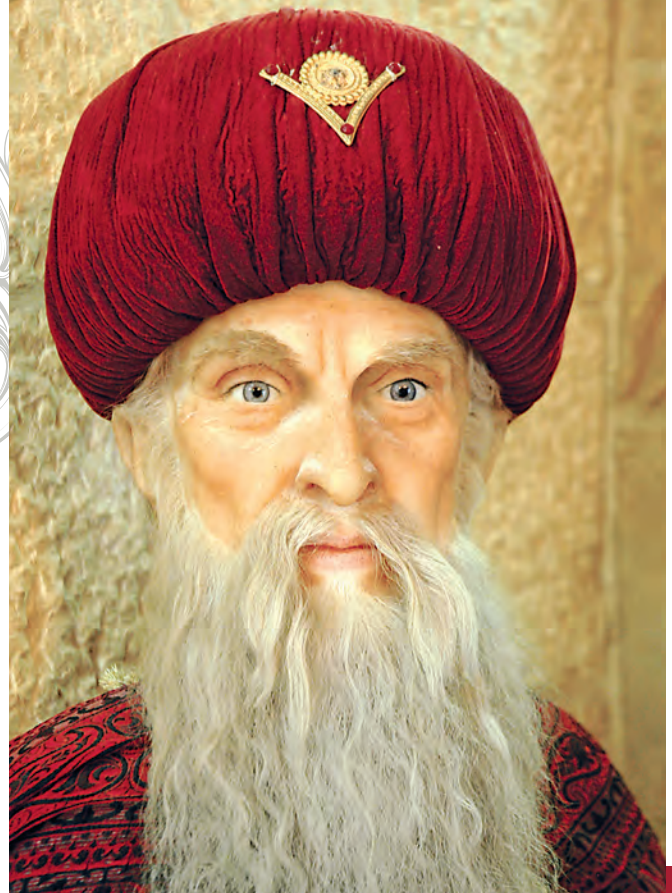
Thus for contemporary historians, the convergence of interests among certain European powers, the Maronite leadership and the person of Fakhr al-Din—who himself battled frequently against neighboring Sunni and Shia Muslim clans, even fellow Druze—had little resemblance to unifying or creating a state. “Fakhr al-Din was never Emir of Lebanon and he did not found a Lebanese state,” declared the late historian Kamal Salibi in his 1988 classic *A House of Many Mansions*.

Abu Husayn goes farther, noting that Fakhr al-Din's illicit weapons shipments from, and secret deals with, European powers may be seen today as treason. Yet he admits Fakhr al-Din was more diplomatic than his competitors, owing perhaps to his ambition, cunning and use of generous bribes. “He was a man of imagination,” says Abu Husayn at his office in the American University of Beirut. “He learned a lot from what he saw.”

Souad Slim, director of history and Near Eastern studies at Lebanon's Balamand University, is not overly bothered by the title “Father of Lebanon,” although she acknowledges that his legacy symbolizes a Maronite-Druze alliance more than a multiconfessional one that resembles Lebanon today.

“Any political entity has to have heroes and foundational myths,” she says.

—by **Habib Battah**



**This idealized wax effigy of Fakhr al-Din is on display in Fakhr al-Din's historic palace in Deir al-Qamar, Lebanon.**

silverware, jewelry and, perhaps most notably of all, “a telescope of Galileo, long, with its wooden case.” These were the years during which Galileo was resident in Tuscany under the protection of the de' Medici, at Villa Bellosguardo.

Fakhr al-Din built a palace in Beirut and another in Deir al-Qamar, a castle at Palmyra and a *khan* (market-hostel) that still stands in Sidon. He restored the castle of the Knights of Saint John in Akka (Acre) and fortified Crusader and Mamluk forts ringing his domain from Qa'a in the northern Bekaa to Baniyas in the Golan Heights.

Nevertheless, in pursuing expansionist policies and—worse—stinting on bribes to the officials of the Porte, he eventually again pushed his Ottoman masters too far. Chronicler al-Safadi died in 1624, and most of what we know about the remainder of the Amir's life comes from Ottoman historians such as al-Burini, al-Qaramani and Shams ad-Din ibn Tulun, all of whom took the official line that Fakhr al-Din was both a traitor and a heretic.

The tipping point came in late 1632, when an Ottoman army that had just failed to take Baghdad from the Persians sent word that it intended to spend the winter in the Bekaa Valley. Fakhr al-Din reportedly was furious at being merely informed rather than asked for that privilege—and possibly wary of having an Ottoman army wintering in his backyard. He sent a detachment of soldiers and forced the battle-weary troops to withdraw to much less hospitable winter quarters farther north, on the other side of Aleppo. Unsurprisingly, the commander complained to Istanbul, and this must have been judged a last straw. If Sultan Murad IV could not have Baghdad, he would have at least the head of an upstart Druze.





After his return from exile in 1618, Fakhr al-Din expanded Ma'n influence. In Sidon, he commissioned the Khan al-Franj (Caravansarai of the Foreigners), above; in his family's historic home in Deir al-Qamar, his palace, right, is a historic building.



This 12th-century citadel near Palmyra, Syria, was among several Fakhr al-Din had renovated throughout the region.

In 1633, the Sultan ordered the governor of Damascus to lead 20,000 soldiers against the Amir's 8000. It seems that Fakhr al-Din sent his son 'Ali north to prevent the Sayfas, his enemies in Tripoli, from linking up with the Damascus troops, but 'Ali was killed on the mission. There was no flight to Tuscany this time: Fakhr al-Din's troops were routed; his younger brother Yunus was captured and executed. The Amir fled to a cave, but he was captured with his sons Ma'sud and Hussein and taken to Istanbul. There, on April 13, 1635, Fakhr al-Din and Mas'ud were strangled and beheaded. Hussein was spared, having not yet reached puberty. He grew up

in the *Saray* (Palace) and eventually became Ottoman ambassador to India.

Fakhr al-Din's legacies are not simple ones. Everything about him speaks to an absence of vindictive sectarianism: There is no evidence that he ever harmed or persecuted anyone simply because of religious beliefs or ethnic origin. He was a pragmatist whose supporters and confidants came from a mix of ethnic-

religious groups that united under him in an effort to achieve a measure of local autonomy that demonstrated the potential for different communities to work together.

Fakhr al-Din worked hard to introduce cultural and economic improvements based on his experience in Europe. The Italianate buildings in Beirut's much battered Sursock Quarter and elsewhere in Lebanon owe something (though not everything) of their style to the de' Medici palaces he had known. In a 17th-century type of technology transfer, he hired Florentines to assist with civil construction, medicine, baking and farming.

Today, a Virgin Megastore and a parking lot stand on the site of his Beirut palace that for more than two centuries was a landmark. Sixty years after his death, a touring Englishman, Henry Maundrell, described it:

The emir Faccardine had his chief residence in this place. ... At the entrance of it is a marble fountain, of greater beauty than is usually seen in Turkey. The palace within consists of several courts, all now run much to ruin; or rather perhaps never finish'd. The stables, yards for horses, dens for lions and other savage creatures, gardens, &c. are such as would not be unworthy of the quality of a prince in Christendom ... but the best sight that this palace affords, and the worthiest to be remember'd, is the orange garden.... One cannot imagine any thing more perfect in this kind.

The Lebanese government erected an equestrian statue of the Amir in 1974 in Baakline, his birthplace, but two years later, during the Lebanese Civil War, it was dynamited. From a "Father of the Nation" he had become a political football, revered by those anxious to emphasize Lebanese particularism and denigrated by those who see the country as part of a larger Arab nation. Yet to all, he set an example of tolerance and pragmatic cultural receptivity that is perhaps his most enduring legacy. 🌐



By 1633, Ottoman Sultan Murad IV could no longer tolerate Fakhr al-Din's expanding power—and the growth of European trade that went with it.

religious groups that united under him in an effort to



**Ted Gorton** ([www.tjgorton.wordpress.com](http://www.tjgorton.wordpress.com)) is an American-born writer who lives in London and the south of France. This article is based on his latest book, *Renaissance Emir: a Druze Warlord at the Court of the Medici* (London: Quartet Books, 2013).



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# The ARAB TRADERS of COLÓN

*Written by* NANCY BETH JACKSON  
*Photography and video by* MERIDITH KOHUT

The new high-speed toll road across the Isthmus of Panama—that narrow land bridge separating the Pacific Ocean from the Caribbean Sea—has transformed what for centuries was an arduous or even dangerous trek into an easy 45-minute commute between the bustling capital of Panama City and Colón, home of the largest duty-free trade zone in the western hemisphere, second in the world only to Hong Kong.

At the Caribbean end, the toll road funnels into a four-lane highway named for Ahmed Waked, one of the first Arab traders to see the zone's potential nearly 50 years ago. While new highways and technology now enable many of the nearly 300 traders in the Colón Free Zone to live in the capital, Waked and his fellow Arab traders, the majority of the merchants in the giant trans-shipment center, stick close by their warehouses, offices and showrooms. They remain rooted in enclaves around Colón, a crumbling city so despairing that filmmakers use parts of it as a stand-in for Haiti.

“We are very family oriented,” explains Ahmed Waked’s son Nidal, who twice has headed the Colón Free Zone Users Association, a cross between a Chamber of Commerce and a lobbying group. “We travel a lot for business and don’t want to leave our families alone.”

The Colón Free Zone, which a *New York Times* reporter recently described as a “warren of shops, warehouses and banks,” is the hub from which billions of dollars of goods mostly from Asia are distributed mostly to Latin America. Panama Canal expansion, free-trade agreements and plans for



Left: Shoppers stroll through the Colón Free Zone, the largest duty-free trade zone in the western hemisphere. While most trade is wholesale, visitors from the nearby cruise-ship port and Panama City also shop for bargains.

an international airport are likely to accelerate business, predicted a 2013 study by Lilly and Associates, a Miami-based international shipping and logistics company, which noted that the Colón Free Zone import-export trade grew by 58 percent between 2008 and 2011 despite the global recession. In 2011, the Free Zone imported \$14 billion worth of goods and exported \$15 billion, doubling figures of a decade earlier, according to Surse Pierpoint, a former Free Zone Users Association president.

The best way to survey the Free Zone is from the roof of the Four Points Sheraton, the five-star hotel complex developed by the Waked family in Millennium Plaza, adjacent to the Zone. With 14 floors, it is by far the tallest building in town—yet a pygmy compared to the towers in Panama City.

From its original 150 hectares (370 acres), the 66-year-old Free Zone has more than doubled in size through land acquisition and landfill. More than 30 hectares (75 acres) were added by Ahmed Waked, who “bought a mountain and moved it,” according to his son. The Lilly report anticipates that the Free Zone will expand to cover 1800 hectares (7 sq mi), not including nearby shipping facilities like the Manzanillo International Terminal, the largest container port in Latin America.

An oriental *sug* it isn’t, but the rush of taxis, private cars and pedestrians squeezing through the



Warehouses built on what was once swampland stretch toward the horizon in this view from atop the 14-story Four Points Sheraton hotel complex adjacent to the Free Zone.

gates where passports or identity papers are presented make it a world apart from the rest of the city. The bulk of trade is wholesale, annually drawing a quarter-million buyers, business representatives and assorted other visitors. Tourists from the new cruise-ship port and on day trips from the capital drop by to shop for duty-free bargains.

What can’t be seen from the top of the hotel is the influence Free Zone traders have beyond the walled compound. For example, Group Wisa, owned by Ahmed Waked’s younger brother, Abdul, and the Mot-

ta family, Panamanian Jews who began selling duty-free items to cruise passengers in Colón in 1940, share duty-free franchises at the Panama City International Airport.

Abdul Waked is the leading distributor of luxury goods in Latin America, as well as owner of La Riviera, a regional chain of fragrance shops, and two Panamanian newspapers,

**Free Zone dynamo Ahmed Waked (right) poses with his son Nidal in Colón. Ahmed, who emigrated from Lebanon to Colombia in 1957, spotted opportunity in Colón in 1967 and moved his family there five years later.**





including *La Estrella*, the oldest daily in the country. He also has banking, insurance and real-estate interests, including the \$360-million Soho complex in the heart of Panama City's business district. Its three towers, one of them among the 10 tallest buildings on the skyline, will be a city in itself with offices, residences, boutiques, a cinema, gourmet grocery, casino and a Ritz-Carlton hotel.

The Arabs came only recently to Colón, a generation after the Free Zone was established in 1948 and long after other immigrant groups such as South Asians, Chinese and Caribbean islanders. The latter included among their numbers Jewish traders who could trace their lineages to Sephardic Jews who had fled Iberia in the late 15th century. Today it is estimated that the Free Zone's ethnic-religious breakdown is roughly 40 to 50 percent Arab, 30 to 40 percent Jewish, and the remainder divided equally among South Asians, Chinese and Panamanians. The city itself is predominantly Afro-Caribbean.

Arabs began settling in Colón around 1970. The first arrived from small villages in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley or by way of Colombian port cities. They weren't looking for a garden spot. They sought economic opportunities, much like the first wave of predominately Christian Arabs who migrated to the Caribbean rim from the Levant in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Arabs who began settling in Colón around 1970 weren't looking for a garden spot. They sought economic opportunities.

Unlike the earlier Arab immigrants, those coming to Colón went into international commerce almost immediately instead of peddling goods around the countryside or opening small shops.

"Traders go where the trade is," observes Ebrahim Asvat, a prominent Panama City attorney and political commentator with roots in the Free Zone, adding that building a new enterprise takes courage. "They can end up in a hostile environment when they go looking for new areas of opportunity. Few people will take those risks and challenges."

In Colón, the impetus for immigration also involved international turmoil: the long *La Violencia* or civil war (1946-1964) in Colombia, where Arabs had thrived economically and politically since the 1880's, and the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 in Lebanon. Many Arabs, particularly those in Colombia's San Andrés Free Zone, began looking toward Panama.

"We're the lifeboat for the region," says Pierpoint, whose great-grandfather came to Colón from Texas in 1906 when Americans took over Panama Canal construction—just three years after Panama broke away from Colombia and declared itself independent.

The new arrivals could hardly have landed on a less hospitable shore, with a rainy season stretching from May through December and a history of boom-and-bust, most recently

**Nidal Waked keeps a close eye on the computer screen during a meeting with associates at his Vida Panama office in the Colón Free Zone. He moved to Colón with his family as a six-year-old in 1972.**





Right: Surrounded by watches and perfume, a saleswoman waits for customers at a shop in the Free Zone. Below: Arab salesmen talk pricing strategy before a sale at an electronics and appliance store in the Free Zone.

bust. Business began there in the mid-19th century, after William Henry Aspinwall, an American shipping mogul, turned a swampy mangrove island into what became Colón. He filled in the low spots, built a causeway to the mainland and created the Caribbean terminus of a cross-isthmus railroad, which trimmed the grueling and dangerous trip from New York to the California gold fields to 40 days.

The French followed in the 1880's with plans to connect the oceans by duplicating the Suez Canal. Using landfill from the giant trench, they extended the city and established a vibrant expatriate life, despite sand flies, mosquitoes and tropical diseases. After the French effort failed, the US government stepped in to complete the job.

The new canal, inaugurated in 1914, drew American presidents and international celebrities like Albert Einstein and made Colón one of the world's busiest cruise-ship ports. US President William Howard Taft authorized the modified Spanish colonial architecture of the now historic "New" Hotel Washington, opened in 1913 on the site of a hotel the Panama Railroad Company built for its employees around 1870. Its first guest was the American millionaire Vincent Astor, who sailed to Panama with some Harvard classmates on his yacht *Norma* in March 1913 to see the canal before it was filled with water. Though a specter of its former glory, the hotel remains a landmark, now owned by a Waked cousin.



A worker supervises the offloading of containers from a ship at the Manzanillo International Terminal in Colón. Adjacent to the Free Zone, it opened in 1995, and it is the largest container port in Latin America.

Colón boomed in the 1950's, but political riots in the early 1960's led to a steady decline. Nonetheless, Ahmed Waked, who had emigrated from Lebanon to Colombia in 1957, saw opportunity. Passing through the city on a shopping trip from San Andrés to China in 1967, he established a toehold and four years later installed his nephew in business. The following year, he moved his family—including six-year-old Nidal—to the city.

Nidal Waked estimates that Colón today has about 200 Arab households, although a few families have decamped to the capital and others weekend there. The Colón Arabs live in two areas: along the sea, in the neighborhood near the Hotel Washington called De Lesseps, and in Ciudad





In the old Canal Zone town of Margarita, girls prepare for midday prayers at the International Arabic Preparatory Academy, which is attended by the children of many Arab traders in Colón.

del Sol (Sun City), the gated development the Wakeds built in the early 1990's in the old Canal Zone town of Margarita.

Colón, with a metropolitan population of 240,000, supplies most of the Arab community's daily needs. Supermarkets sell halal meat, and the International Arabic Preparatory Academy in Margarita holds classes through grade 12. Instruction is in English, but the 400 students—half of whom are Panamanian Christians—also study Arabic, Spanish and the Qur'an.

Club Union Arabe, a social organization with a swimming pool and spacious banquet halls, opened across the street from Ciu-

dad del Sol in 1993. Now a local institution, it hosts events like business lunches, children's birthday parties and weddings for Arabs and non-Arabs as well. The chef mixes local dishes with traditional Lebanese favorites like *kibbe*, hummus and *fattoush* salad.

Arab traders enthusiastically support the city's professional soccer team. Mohamed Hachem, son of Fawzi Hachem, the honorary consul in Panama, is a board member and a major advertiser. In 1994, the team's official name was changed to Club Deportivo Arabe Unido (United Arab Sports Club). Nicknamed "Los Arabes," it was chosen the best club in Central America in 2009. Recently, the team has been training and playing in Panama City while the Colón stadium is improved.

People still talk about how in 1989 the Arab traders stepped up to defend the Free Zone against possible riots and looting after the us invaded Panama and arrested General Manuel Noriega on drug-trafficking and racketeering charges in 1989. While most traders fled the Free Zone with their families to seek the relative safety of the capital, the Arabs stood their ground during the resulting civil unrest, protecting not only their property but also everyone else's.

As a teenager, Nidal Waked was among the more than 100 defenders, including a few South Asians and Chinese, who slept on sidewalks and in offices for two weeks until the threat of violence diminished. "We guarded everything regardless of who owned it," he says. "We got the guns from the police,







Clockwise from above: **Preschoolers learn Arabic at the International Arabic Preparatory Academy in Margarita. Large, stylish homes line a street in Ciudad del Sol, the gated community built by the Waked family in the early 1990's in Margarita. Nidal Waked, right, and his family enjoy a traditional Lebanese dinner at their home in Ciudad del Sol.**

who told us to look for them in green containers among the thousands in the Free Zone.”

Noriega had left such containers, filled with arms, all around the country in anticipation of an invasion. In the end, shots were exchanged and a few defenders suffered minor wounds, but the Free Zone was the only area in Colón not looted.

The Free Zone has not been free of controversy, however. As with many busy international ports, talk of smuggling and other nefarious activities occasionally surfaces, although less frequently since Noriega's departure. Environmentalists and scientists at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute's Galeta Marine Laboratory near Colón warn that the expansion of the Free Zone and port facilities threatens important mangrove habitats along the coast.

The disparity between the poverty of the city and the economic boom of the Free Zone and Panama City is obvious. In 2012, protesters in Colón rioted over the national government's decision to allow export companies to buy land they had been leasing in the Free Zone. According to *The Panama Digest*, only 35 percent of the proceeds would have been targeted for “social investment” in the area, with the rest going to the national government. In response, then-President Ricardo Martinelli repealed the law and increased rents, with 100 percent of the hike pledged for reinvestment in a new hospital, homes and an international airport in Colón.

More often today the Free Zone is seen as a microcosm where Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians work together harmoniously, often forming partnerships with one another. Officers of the Free Zone Users Association change annually with nary a blip when a Jew hands over leadership to a Muslim or vice versa.

“They understand each other very well,” observes lawyer Asvat. “There's no difference between a Jew and an Arab [in the



Free Zone]. They have the same customs. They all do business together and take politics out of the equation.”

They find they have too much in common to be in conflict. Just hand them international disputes and see what would happen, says Nidal Waked.

“We'd take care of it like *that*,” he notes, snapping his fingers. “We're good businessmen.” ☸



**Nancy Beth Jackson, Ph.D.** (nancybethjackson@gmail.com) is a journalist based in New York. She has taught journalism at the American University in Cairo, Yazed University in Abu Dhabi, Columbia University and the University of Missouri-Columbia. **Meridith Kohut** (meridith.kohut@gmail.com) has produced news, features

and video photojournalism from throughout Latin America for numerous world publications since 2008. A graduate of the University of Texas School of Journalism, she lives in Caracas, Venezuela.



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**Video:**



# The ARAB TRADERS of SINGAPORE

*Written and photographed by*  
ALIA YUNIS

**The World Bank ranks Singapore as the easiest country in the world in which to do business. Indeed, business is what brought the Alattas, Aljunied, Alsagoff, Alkaff and Ibn Talib families here in the early 1800's, in one of history's most successful Arab Diasporas.**

For much of the 19th century and into the 20th, the Arabs of Singapore owned more than 50 percent of the 710-square-kilometer (275-sq-mi) island territory. But that was a long time ago, before Singapore became the second-most densely populated country in the world and the one with the highest per capita percentage of millionaires: 15.5 percent of its 5.4 million inhabitants—837,000 people. Before it evolved from a backwater trading post into the most technologically advanced country on the map, a gleaming city-state metropolis of skyscrapers and upscale shopping centers. And before its Kampong Glam district (sometimes called the Arab Quarter) metamorphosed into the trendy, hipster place to hang out that it is today.

Five and six generations after their ancestors arrived, there are many Arabs who haven't forgotten their roots. Quite the opposite: Their forebears came from Hadhramaut, in southern Yemen, and the members of this tight-knit community still identify themselves as Hadhramis, Arabs and Muslims—but firmly placed in Singapore.

"When we were children, my father used to say, if we were naughty, I'll send you to Hadhramaut," recalls Khadijah Alattas, a soft-spoken businesswoman, at a Saturday afternoon gathering of several women and a few men who belong to the Arab Network of Singapore (ANS), a group formed a few years ago to develop cultural events to benefit local charities.

The others at the table laugh and nod at Alattas's comment. Yet their pride in their heritage shows as they compete to tell each other the stories of their own families. Most would like to visit Hadhramaut one day, although none wants to go back permanently. The young women vigorously shake their heads and say "no" with a smile when asked if they would marry someone living in Hadhramaut. Still, by family pressure in the past and

by choice today, they rarely marry outside Singapore's Arab community.

The group is meeting in the Arab Quarter at Zac's Café, several metro stops away from the city's financial district where Alattas, the de facto

ANS leader, works. Zac's is a Middle Eastern restaurant decorated with wall-sized photos of Hadhramaut's mountainous landscape. From its open windows, the café offers a good view of the Sultan Mosque, Singapore's largest and the only one with a call to prayer that can be heard outside its walls.

Near the mosque runs Muscat Street. Two years ago, the ANS took part in its grand reopening that celebrated the completion of a joint project by the governments of Singapore and Oman to revitalize the thoroughfare, which now includes two ornate archways and a series of four murals depicting Singapore's Arab heritage.

Zac's Café is one of many "shophouses" in Kampong Glam. Shophouses were once the domain of Arab merchants and traders, structures in which the bottom half was reserved for retail commerce and the top half was the family abode. Today they are a prime destination for tourists looking for batiks, fabrics and perfumes or a sidewalk café to smoke *shisha* day or night in the steamy outdoors. But only four of the shophouses on Arab Street are still owned by Arab families.

One of them, Aljunied Brothers, is a Chinese and Malay clothing-and-tailoring shop still run by Zahra Aljunied's 85-year-old father, Junied. Zahra Aljunied is a fast-talking librarian with







**Restaurants and traditional shophouses line Boussora Street in Singapore's Arab Quarter, anchored by the Sultan Mosque. Right: Just down the street, members of the Arab Network of Singapore meet at Zac's Cafe. Alwi Abu Baker Alkaff sits center, a picture of his community's Hadhramaut homeland in Yemen behind him.**

more stories than time to tell them, and she is well known for organizing the first exhibit about the Singapore Arabs, which opened at the National Library in 2010 and included personal papers, photos and artifacts. Keeping family trees is traditional in the Hadramaut community, and she has continued the work of her grandfather, whom she calls “the Aljunied genealogist.” Unlike others in the community, she has visited Yemen twice with her father, mostly to work on her collection.

At Zac's, the women crowd around Aljunied's computer as she shows old photos she has collected. Many are surprised by the pictures. When she pulls up a black-and-white photo from the early 1950's of several women in glamorous evening gowns, one of them shouts: “That's my grandmother!” Her grandmother, it turns out, is also an aunt to one of the other women, and the cousin of another. But there are no striking family resemblances among them. Hadhrami traders traveled far and wide in Southeast Asia starting in the 1500's, and they married members of other ethnic groups over the centuries. Many of their descendants' features reflect the

mix of the other communities that make up Singapore, particularly the native Malay.

The Aljunieds and other major Arab business families had a large presence in Southeast Asia for nearly 300 years before they came to Singapore, from their base in Palembang, Indonesia.

Legend has it that Singapore got its name from a Malay prince who landed here in the 13th century and saw a lion: in Malay, *Singapoura* means “Lion City.” When Britain colonized the “Lion City” in 1819, there were already some Arabs here. But it was Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the designer of “modern” 19th-century Singapore, who encouraged many more to come, the better to ful-







This engraving of Singapore Harbor was made around 1870, when Singapore's Arabs owned more than half the island's territory. They began arriving in the early 19th century, and they have not forgotten their families' roots in southern Yemen.

fill his ambition to make the island a major regional trading hub. The Arabs made their homes in the then-Malay fishing neighborhood called Kampong Glam: Kampong means “village” in Malay and Glam is a local tree that once grew there.

“The way Singapore history is written, [the authors] give the impression that Raffles liked the Arabs,” says Syed Farid Alatas, a professor of sociology at the National University of Singapore and the ANS authority on the history of the Hadhramis. “Actually, Raffles didn’t like the Arabs. He had nasty things to say about them. But he looked to the Arabs to bring this strategic location to life.

“When Raffles came, there wasn’t much going on here. He wanted to create trade networks, and the Arabs were already known throughout the region for having good trade networks. He found them useful. So he facilitated them coming to Singapore.... He used them to his advantage—like any good colonial ruler would do.”



Arab Street, a popular venue for tourists, offers sidewalk cafés with *shishas* and shops with a variety of locally made products.





Singapore's most iconic building is the colonial-era Raffles Hotel, which rose on land leased originally from the estate of Syed Mohammed Alsagoff in 1887. Indeed, property-leasing was the biggest business of the Arabs until the 1950's. But that changed when the government instituted policies that still cast a shadow over the community's conversations.

Most of the Arab properties were traditionally held in Muslim trusts called *waqfs*. Under the Rent Control Act in 1947, however, the owners of all pre-World War II buildings—and thus most *waqf* properties—were barred by the government from raising rents to keep up with inflation. Consequently, the value of the trusts diminished significantly. But the biggest blow came with the 1967 Land Acquisition Act.

As Singapore's government began to envision the island's further transformation into a global business center, the shortage of land for urban development became acute. The act allowed the government to acquire any property—particularly prewar property—for urban renewal at whatever price it determined.

That meant the Arabs, who owned much real estate in central Singapore, had to give up properties at prices much below market value. Indeed, only one major property remains in Singaporean Arab hands: the Treetops Executive Residences, a luxury apartment complex on the outskirts of the city center where a private villa of the Talib family once stood. It was converted to apartments in 1953 and then demolished to make way for Treetops in 2000.

Khaled Talib, a journalist and author whose grandfather bought the Treetops land with his brothers in the 1800's, notes that his family also suffered losses of land due to the Land Acquisition Act. "We had more than 600 shophouses in Singapore, and today we only have about 40," he says. "Some we sold [at market value], but many were acquired."



In addition, he explains, "most of the land in Singapore owned by the Arab families came under mandatory legal-trust management, which has now expired. As a result, the properties were sold and shares of inheritance divided, apart from being subject to land acquisition. Our trust, on the other hand, is ongoing. We were also quick to adapt to changing times by ensuring that our properties were refurbished in order to match the changing landscape of Singapore."

Many Arabs also did a poor job of record-keeping, as Zahra Aljunied knows only too well. "I found a letter dated 1954 from the British Government to my father telling him it needed a piece of his land to build a religious house, and promised him a 100-year lease," she says. "He assumed it was a mosque, but they built a church there." Worse than that misunderstanding, she says, she cannot find the lease he signed—no one can—so the land has been permanently lost to the family.

These stories are not part of the general conversation in Singapore, however. Tan Pin Pin, a local filmmaker who explores the less-flattering sides of Singapore, including a short film on the complications of land shortages, knows little about the Singapore



Left: In Singapore in the early 1800's, the British aimed to make the island a strategic hub for commerce; their success carries on at Singapore's vast container ports today. Above: The bride's accessories highlight her Arab heritage in this Singapore wedding photo from the 1930's. A member of the Alsagoff family, she hailed from Makkah, where it is likely that her father was a trader.





**The Aljunied Brothers parfumerie on Arab Street is one of the few remaining Arab-owned stores in the Arab Quarter. Their shop also features batik clothing and accessories.**

Arabs. “When I go to hang out on Arab Street or Baghdad Street, I don’t think much about why it is called that,” she says. She’s never really wondered why the Aljunied Road or the Alkaff Gardens have their names.

“My great-grandfather came here from China in the late 1890’s,” she says. “Most of us were shipped here to be worker bees for the British. I think we just respect money—you know, business—that’s the policy in general. This is a business center. People don’t really look deeper than that.”

She pulls out her national ID card, which shows she is ethnically Chinese. (The categories on the card are Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other.) “These categories make it easy for the administration to control business and to keep the [ethnic] proportions in place for stability,” she says.

The Arabs, who estimate their numbers at between 7,000 and 10,000, fall under “Other.” But Alatas says their actual numbers would be higher if many hadn’t chosen to call themselves Malay when the government started giving education subsidies to Malays, who are considered the official native people.

“In the 1980’s, the government actually began to encourage the different ethnicities to develop their own identities,” he says. “I suppose it’s because the government thought it was a good sell for tourism. It’s part of developing the multicultural side of Singapore, and that also has had an effect on the different ethnic groups becoming more interested in their heritage.”



**This statue of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, framed by the skyscrapers of Raffles Place across the Singapore River, is believed to stand at the spot where he landed in 1819, going on to establish the British settlement on the island. “He looked to the Arabs to bring this strategic location to life,” says Syed Farid Alatas.**

That kind of encouragement helped spur the founding of the ANS. A gala dinner it hosted last November to support local charities received media coverage that inspired the group to do more. “We want to showcase our culture and at the same time prove that we are an effective and productive part of Singapore,” says Khadijah Alattas.

By the 1980’s, Singapore Arabs were rarely going back to visit Yemen. Homecomings had already begun dropping off in the 1960’s as Yemen became more politically turbulent. In addition, in 1967 Singapore instituted manda-

tory military service, with the result that young men who traditionally would visit Yemen in their late teens no longer could. If Singapore Arabs leave today, it is mostly to immigrate to Australia to work.



Nor can the Hadhramaut region count any longer on remittances from Singapore-based relatives, who once built grand homes there. Still, the Singapore community enjoys the little ways in which its members have influenced Yemen's culture: For example, the prawn crackers and fish paste that are common in Yemeni cuisine came from Singapore's Malay cooking.

On the other hand, as Singapore itself has become an international foodie haven, its Arabs have done little to promote their traditional cuisine outside their homes, as Arab immigrants have done in the West. Few of them speak Arabic either, aside from endearing traditions like still calling women *sharifa*—a name meaning “noble.”

Their strongest bonds are genealogy and religion. Many families trace their lineage back to Mohamad bin Isa Al Muhajir, a 10th-generation descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, who moved from Baghdad to Hadhramaut in 956 CE. Today, most of the families in the community help their children with religious studies at family gatherings on Friday evenings.

Imam Hassan Al-Attas comes from a long line of spiritual leaders. Over dinner at his house, where he and his wife live with their extended family, he and Syed Farid Alatas talk about the history and faith of their ancestors. “Many people say the Hadhramis came to spread Islam, but, of course, the majority of them were not doing that,” Alatas says. “There were a lot of push factors—instability, infighting and one of the most driving forces: famine.

“A thousand years ago, Hadhramaut was very fertile, but in the last 500 years it has become less and less fertile, so people began to leave to look for jobs to support themselves. Since the education in Hadhramaut was basically religious, they might be traders, they might be property owners, but when they were going out and about in other countries for their work, they converted people through various ways, particularly intermarriage.”

“At the same time, there were some real scholars that came over,” adds Imam Hassan, whose family is a living example. “They came because they were being called to take certain positions as the community grew. And sometimes they were doing both—you would be a preacher, but you would supplement that with trade.”

Imam Hassan and Alatas say Singapore's Middle Eastern street names have more to do with its strategic location than any other factor. Just as Singapore was a central spot for trade, it was also a good stopping-off point for pilgrims from Indonesia and elsewhere to the east to get supplies on the way to the Hajj in Makkah.

Hassan notes that his father built his own mosque here in 1952, before the government rationalized mosque construction by regulating funding and issuing building permits based on neighborhood populations.



**Singapore's Arab Quarter draws an eclectic mix of visitors and locals, day and night. The descendants of its original Arab residents still celebrate their heritage, but mostly live elsewhere in the city.**

**Singapore's Arab community also enjoys the little ways in which its members have influenced Yemen's culture: The prawn crackers and fish paste common in Yemeni cuisine came from Singapore's Malay cooking.**

“Singapore changed so much in my father's lifetime,” he says. “He had three passports—British, then Malaysian and then, when Singapore separated from Malaysia [in 1963], a Singapore one. The only thing that didn't change was that he was Hadhrami. I remember that my father would give his sermons in Arabic. And there would be Malays there, especially during the Friday prayers, who wouldn't know Arabic.”

Since the 1970's, after the formation of the Muslim Religious Council, every Muslim employee automatically donates one Singapore dollar from his or her salary every month to pay for mosque construction. “When there is enough money, the government gives it to the religious council for one of the Muslim communities, could be Indian or Malay, to build their own mosque,” Imam Hassan says. “Some of the mosques in the old days were made of wood. Now they are more beautiful and have all the modern facilities.”

Nearly everything about Singapore is very modern, even the relatively old. Ethnic enclaves like the Arab Quarter are neat and orderly, just like the rest of the city. It is a diverse tourist spot from morning to night, but the descendants of the original inhabitants of this neighborhood mostly live somewhere else among the shiny towers and pristine, tree-lined streets and gardens of modern Singapore.

They work in professions that define the country's business image, as professors, diplomats, bankers, writers, secretaries and, yes, still occasionally shophouse owners. They are as comfortable walking along Orchard Road and Singapore's other sleek boulevards or strolling near Marina Bay—where the city's Merlion (half lion-half mermaid) statue serves as a mascot and tourist attraction—as they are listening to the call to prayer on Arab Street.

“There is no such thing as a Singaporean wholesale,” says Khaled Talib, summing up the complexity of the Singaporean identity.

“I was once in the UAE for a year, and I tried to join the Singapore Club. When I spoke to the head of the club on the phone, a Chinese person, he didn't believe that I was from Singapore. As you can see, his version of a Singaporean differs from mine.

So I like to classify myself as a Singapore-born Arab, a houseguest of the Malay people, the original owners of the land.

“And at home, we still make *halwa* and *muhlabiyyah* for dessert. Some things have not changed.” ☺



**Alia Yunis** ([www.aliayunis.com](http://www.aliayunis.com)) is a writer and filmmaker based in Abu Dhabi. She is the author of the critically acclaimed novel *The Night Counter* (Random House, 2010).



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Islam in Melaka J/A 01





Several articles in this edition of *Saudi Aramco World* look at the interactions among groups of people—from soccer teams to members of religious and ethnic groups to people of different nationalities. How do people come together to form a group, even when they are different from one another? How do these different groups interact? Sometimes they get along well, and sometimes they don't. In the Classroom Guide activities, you will explore a few different ways that groups interact, and you will try to pinpoint what makes it possible for people to get along with those whose group identity is different than their own.

## 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](http://www.saudiaramco-world.com).

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

## CLASS ACTIVITIES

### Group Identity and Interaction

Everyone is a part of different groups, and our group memberships define us in ways that are important to how we think about ourselves. For example, you might identify yourself, in part, by the country you're from. It's pretty common for someone to say, "I'm American," or "I'm Saudi," for example. Think about the parts of your own identity that come from being part of various groups. Make a T chart. In the left-hand column, list as many groups as you can think of with which you identify. They might be based on nationality, city, region, religion, ethnicity, activity interest and so on. Hold onto the chart. You'll fill in the right-hand column shortly.

Because you identify as part of various groups, how those groups relate to other groups may have a big effect on you. Let's take a simple example. One city may have a competition with another city. New York and Boston, for instance, have a long-standing rivalry that seems to revolve around their baseball teams. And that rivalry sometimes affects how individuals from those two cities interact with each other: Some New Yorkers don't want to know Bostonians, and vice versa, based solely on the city that they come from and the team that they cheer for.

With that in mind, look back at your group identities. In the right-hand column of the chart, list groups with which your group is thought to get along and groups with which it is thought not to get along. Do more of your groups have positive relations with other groups or negative relations? Comparing your chart with another student's, which types of groups seem to have the most positive relations, and which seem to have the most stressful? Make a few notes about why that might be the case.

### Power Relations: Colonialism and Beyond

Now that you've thought about how you identify yourself as a member of certain groups, pull back the lens to consider a bigger picture—that is, a picture beyond



your personal experience. Let's look at some of the different ways that other groups interact with each other.

One of those ways is when one group has power over another group. Colonialism is an example. Working with a group, write down the word "colony." Have you heard it before? In what context? What do you understand a colony to be? Look up a definition to see how accurate your prior understanding of the word was. With the definition in hand, discuss with your group what colonialism means, and write a definition of it.

Now read "The Arab Traders of Singapore." In it, you will find a description of how it happened that large numbers of Yemeni Arabs settled in Singapore in the 1800's. Pay particular attention to the part of the article where professor Syed Farid Alatas talks about Arab migration. Why does he say that many Arabs came to Singapore when they did? What do you think is Alatas's attitude about colonialism? What evidence do you find in the article to support your answer? Discuss with your classmates: Are you surprised by Alatas's attitude about colonialism? Why or why not? Are you surprised by his saying that Thomas Stamford Raffles "had nasty things to say" about the Arabs who settled in Singapore? Why or why not? Given the tendency for there to be tension between the colonizers and the colonized, why do you think the British set up a colonial relationship with the people living in Singapore? What did they have to gain by doing so?

Once Singapore gained its independence from Britain—in other





## IF YOU ONLY HAVE 15 MINUTES...

In “Alaa Wardi Goes Viral,” author Jasmine Bager does something that can be very challenging for a writer: she describes in words the contents of an unconventional YouTube music video. Put another way, she uses one medium (words) to convey to readers the content of two other media (music and video). Put your own writing skills to the test: Watch any YouTube music video that you like. Then, using Bager’s description of Alaa Wardi’s videos, particularly the part in the first column of the article, write a description of the video you chose. You can add another layer to this task by having more than one student watch the same video, and then compare their writing, discussing what was particularly strong in each writer’s description so that students learn from each other. (Hint: Avoid general words like “big,” “long,” “fast” and so on, and see how many specific words and phrases you can use.)

words, once the colonial relationship ended—Singapore citizens of Arab descent continued to have less power than another group. With what group was the new relationship? How did that group assert its authority over the Singapore-born Arabs? Again, why do you think they did so?

Then, there is a deeper question: How do you think that groups of people justify to themselves that it’s reasonable to assert power over others? What attitudes make it feel acceptable to them to exercise their power? With your group, write down a few thoughts about this. The article “Gazing Upon Beauty” gives a clue to the attitudes that led to colonialism. (The article is complex, so what follows is an explanation of the part that is relevant for this activity.) On page 10, professor Jesús Conde points out that Europeans were particularly interested in the Orient (the East) because defining it helped them understand their

own identity as Europeans (people who lived in the West). How can that be? How can defining a group of people help a *different* group of people know themselves? If you think about it, it will make sense: One way that we know who we are is by knowing who we’re not. For example, one way that girls know they’re girls is because they’re not boys; one way you know you’re human is that you’re not a fish, a cat or a chimp. The same way of knowing holds for groups. People who study this idea use the word “Other” (with a capital O) as a way to describe anyone who is “not you.” You can apply the idea to those groups that hold power over others. Take the example of the colonizers of Singapore: If the British used their power to see Arab immigrants as “Others,” how might that affect government policies that concerned Arabs?

### On the Lighter Side

By now you may be despairing, having thought so much about difficult relationships among groups of people, relationships that are based on the power of one group over another group. But wait! Don’t despair! It’s time to think about the positive ways that groups of people relate to each other.

Read “The Dragons’ Road to

Rio,” which describes how Bosnia’s soccer team has become a model of inter-ethnic and religious cooperation in a country that has been torn by conflict. As you read, underline or highlight the parts of the article that explain how the soccer players have been able to form a world-class team despite their differences. Based on what you’ve read, write a paragraph or a list of what you believe is necessary for a diverse group of people to come together as the Dragons have done. You might also think about your own experiences as a team member: What was it that made your team feel like a team, and what made it possible for you to work or play together well?

It isn’t only on the soccer field that

people from different cultures can live and work together peacefully and even make money together. Read “The Arab Traders of Colón.” Highlight or underline the parts of the article that describe the ethnic makeup of the Free Zone and that address the sense of cooperation among these different groups. Referring back to what you wrote about what makes a group of diverse people become a team, think about what enables the people of the Colón Free Zone to live and work together harmoniously. How does the situation in Colón differ from the situation described in Singapore? What do you think accounts for the differences?

### Putting it Together: A Plan for Living Together

Now you’ve had a chance to explore different ways that groups interact with other groups. Some include imbalances of power and an absence of equality; others are more equal (egalitarian) and harmonious. Reviewing what you’ve read, written and discussed, it’s time to answer The Big Question: *What makes it possible for diverse groups of people to get along with each other and live in harmony?* Present your answers in whatever form best suits you. You can write it, make a video or oral presentation—or anything else you can think of. After all, you’re identifying the building blocks for living together with less conflict—for world peace! Make sure you present them with the importance that they deserve.



## VISUAL ANALYSIS

Imagine a collection of paintings that all depict the same subject—and that all look different from each other. When you turn to pages 8 and 9, you won’t have to imagine any longer: You can see the paintings in front of you. All the images there show the Patio de los Arrayanes, or Court of the Myrtles, in the Alhambra palace in Granada, Spain. Choose any two of the paintings—they don’t have to be the ones you see here—and compare them. Describe how they are similar to each other and how they are different. Include the effects that these differences have on you as a viewer. Which, if either, do you prefer? Why? Share your analysis with one or more of your classmates.



BY ROB ARNDT

**Istanbul** is the third and most ambitious edition of The Moving Museum. With a three-month residency program for 40 international artists, it marks the largest coordinated influx of international resident artists in Istanbul's recent memory. Among the artists are 12 from Turkey who will anchor the period of dialogue that features a public program of events, talks, workshops, lectures and performances. These will take place in the warehouse that will serve as residency headquarters and house a digital program directed by artists Jeremy Bailey, right, Joe Hamilton and Jonas Lund. Each artist has been commissioned to participate in local projects as well: While making an enduring impact on the city, they will also bring new influences to their current and future collaborators as well as themselves, furthering the museum's focus of expanding local conversations to international audiences. At the end of October, the residency will culminate in an exhibition. Founded in 2012 by Aya Mousawi and Simon Sakhai as an independent, non-profit organization, The Moving Museum is a traveling program that aims to strengthen relationships among local art scenes and the global community of contemporary art. The word "moving" is not only attributed to the museum's physical space, but is described as its "intention to advance contemporary art and its institutions." Previous work includes exhibits in London and Dubai. Multiple locations, **Istanbul**. Residency from August 1 through October 31; exhibition from October 27 through December 15.



New-media artist Jeremy Bailey will help direct The Moving Museum's Istanbul digital program.

#### Current July

**Mounira Al Solh:** *All Mother Tongues Are Difficult* engages with the concept of language as a place of transition between the mother tongue and the languages of immigration. She links the concept of cross-boundary dialects with the recent surge in refugees from Syria. Sfeir-Semler Gallery, **Beirut**, through July 19.

**Gérôme and the Lure of the Orient** features paintings by the Orientalist and academic painter Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), along with a selection of decorative objects that explore the intersection of eastern and western art production. Like many artists of his time, Gérôme was drawn to the Orient—"always my most frequent dream"—a term that included the lands of the Middle East, North Africa and Asia Minor. In 1853, Gérôme first visited Constantinople, and between 1856 and 1880 he took regular trips to Turkey, Egypt and Palestine, making artistic studies of the people and places he encountered. Back in Paris, he transformed his observations into highly polished pictures that earned him great acclaim. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, **Kansas City, Missouri**, through July 20.

**Summer Show 2014** is a selection of works by artists currently represented by the gallery and others who have shown at the gallery in the past. Media include photography, painting, sculpture and installations; artists include Arwa Abouon, Ala Ebtakar, Ebtisam Abdulaziz, Golnaz Fathi, Hassan Hajjaj, Huda Lutfi, Laleh Khorramian, Pouran Jinchi, Rana Begum, Rhea Karam, Sara Naim and others. All show both new works as well as works that are showing for the first time in **Dubai**. The Third Line, through July 24.

**The Divine Comedy:** *Heaven, Hell, Purgatory Revisited by Contemporary African Artists* converts three floors of the museum—Hell, Purgatory and Heaven—into the stage for a new interpretation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and for an esthetic approach to contemporary African art, exploring poetry and art as a means of expressing the ineffable. Why Dante? Curator Simon Njami answers, "Because the *Divine Comedy* is first and foremost a human comedy. And I am convinced that nothing human can be alien to another human being." Museum für Moderne Kunst, **Frankfurt/Main**, through July 27.

**Giving Contours To Shadows** looks at ways artists, curators and thinkers relate to their respective eras. The group exhibition, a roundtable program and a series of satellite projects in Marrakech, Nairobi, Dakar, Lagos and Johannesburg together reflect on philosophical, cultural and historical global concerns. Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, **Berlin**, through July 27.

**Maha Maamoun:** *The Night of Counting the Years* marks the Egyptian-American filmmaker's first institutional solo exhibition. The show takes its title from her 2011 film that digs through

blurred mobile phone footage on YouTube of the storming of Egyptian state security buildings in Cairo. In her latest film, *Shooting Stars Remind Me of Eavesdroppers*, Maamoun interweaves images and sounds recorded in Cairo's Al-Azhar Park together with an intimate conversation about eavesdropping, truth and trust. Fridericianum Turm, **Frankfurt**, through July 27.

**M.F. Husain:** *Master of Modern Indian Painting* looks at one of the most ambitious projects by one of India's most eminent artists. Husain began his career as a painter of cinema hoardings after attending art school in Bombay (now Mumbai). Using freehand drawing and vibrant color, he depicted Indian subject matter in the style of contemporary European art movements, particularly Cubism. "Indian Civilization" is a series of eight triptych paintings commissioned in 2008 as a tribute to India's history. Each panel explores a different theme, and together they create a personal vision of India, of what Husain called "a museum without walls." Interweaving religious and symbolic iconography with historic figures and events, the paintings also incorporate memories from the artist's own life. Originally envisaging it as a series of 96 panels,

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE MOVING MUSEUM



## When the Greeks Ruled Egypt

explores the confluence of two cultures through more than 75 artworks. Gilded mummy masks, luxury glass, magical amulets and portraits in stone and precious metals demonstrate the integration of foreign styles while also paying tribute to the enduring legacy of ancient Egypt's distinctive visual culture. Despite centuries of cultural contact with Greece, the art and architecture of the Egyptian kingdom retained its distinct style, uninfluenced by Greek tourists, traders, diplomats and soldiers. So when Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals, came to rule Egypt, he found it wise to adapt to the older culture, whose unique art forms had persisted for more than 3000 years. He installed himself as "pharaoh," built a new capital at Alexandria, and united the two major gods of each nation to form a new universal deity, Zeus Amon. The era of Ptolemy's dynasty was an age of profound curiosity and rich experimentation, as the Greeks, and later the Romans, met an established culture far older than their own and exchanged artistic, social and religious ideas with it. Art Institute of **Chicago**, through July 27.

**Carpets of the East in Paintings From the West.** Since antiquity, an expensive textile underfoot was a sign of either secular power or religious piety. Only the wealthy and powerful could afford fine carpets, which were traded as luxury goods from the Islamic world to Europe and other parts of the world. As early as the 14th century, images of carpets made in the East began to appear in European paintings. This exhibition shows three mid-17th-century Dutch paintings along with three actual, corresponding rugs of the same period. Metropolitan Museum, **New York**, through July 29.

Current **August**  
**A History of the World in 100 Objects**, presented by the Abu Dhabi tourism and culture authority, surveys world history from two million years ago to the present. The British Museum, **London**, through August 1.

**Syria's Apex Generation** is an exhibition of recent works that spotlights a new school of Syrian painting that is, despite the disintegration of the Damascus art scene, continuing to expand. Focusing on painters who launched their careers in the 2000's, when the Damascus art scene experienced significant growth, the exhibition will demonstrate how these artists have contributed to the catapulting of Syrian art over the past decade and explore the new phase of the country's contemporary art. Ayyam Gallery **Dubai (Dirac and Al Quoz)** and **Beirut**, through August 2.

**Design Motifs in Byzantine Art.** Many of the textiles found in Egypt, the southernmost province of the Byzantine Empire, were woven in linen and wool and decorated with a great variety of motifs. Meant to be worn and to decorate domestic and religious spaces, the works on view in this exhibition feature designs that generally refer to abundance and prosperity. Metropolitan Museum, **New York**, through August 3.

**Nalini Malani: *Transgressions*** spans painting, sculpture, installation, performance and works on paper to explore gender, class and race in a postcolonial world. Nalini Malani was born in 1946 in Karachi, before the 1947 partition of India. The exhibition features "Transgressions II" (2009), a video shadow play from the Asia Society Museum Collection that integrates the folk sensibility of traditional shadow plays with new technology, creating a mesmerizing projection of colors and imagery. The exhibition also features a selection of Malani's artist books, which emphasize the importance of drawing and painting to her practice. The Asia Society Museum, **New York**, through August 3.

**Slavs and Tatars.** The 8th Berlin Biennale brings together a range of international artistic positions that explore the intersection between larger historical narratives and individuals' lives. The majority of the participating artists have produced new works for the exhibition, which proposes new perspectives on the facets of, and relations in, history. Slavs and Tatars are presenting the sound installation "Ezan Çılgınlıkları," comprised of a large metal *rahle* (Qur'an reading stand) with speakers embedded in the ground. Amidst the Turkish-language revolution, the Turkish translation of the traditionally Arabic call to prayer, or *ezan*, was perhaps the most controversial of all. Enforced from 1932 and rescinded in 1950, it was the only significant language reform to be reversed, and today the Turkish call to prayer can be viewed as another historical attempt to define Turkish identity. Haus am Waldsee, **Berlin**, through August 3.

**Decisive Moment** is a parallel photography exhibition, curated by eminent photographer and educator Tarek Al-Ghoussein, in tandem with the Emirates Photography Competition. The latter looks at photographers exploring “decisive moments” that characterize the contexts in which they live; the parallel show demonstrates the value of sustained investigations that seek to build bodies of work that transcend the single image. Manarat Al Saadiyat Auditorium, **Abu Dhabi**, through August 16.

**Amir Hossein Zanjani** shows work in a solo exhibition around the philosophical and social aspects of submission to power. Born in 1980 in Esfahan, Iran, he has works within many major collections in the Middle East. Rendered with the vibrant and expressionistic brushstrokes he is renowned for, his canvases show parades of individuals mobilized by the military; loyal soldiers marching in unison to the commands of an authoritarian officer; bizarrely semi-nude figures of soldiers gathered together in blind obedience and other representations of conflict and submission to power. Sal-sal Private Museum, **Dubai**, through August 17.

**Songs of Loss and Songs of Love:** *Oum Kulthoum, Lee Nan-Young and their 1967 "Almost" Encounter* is based on a fictional framework conceived by the exhibition's curators Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath to raise questions about cultural exchange. This show imagines an encounter between celebrated Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum and her Korean equivalent, Lee Nan-Young. Bardaouil and Fellrath envision that Nan-Young attended Umm Kulthum's 1967

concert at Paris's Olympia and there asked her to perform in Korea. This fictional scenario is realized through works by 18 Middle Eastern artists, including Adel Abidin, Ali Cherri, Mona Hatoum, Mounir Fatmi, Raed Yassin, Pascal Hachem, Ghada Amer and Mohammed Kazem, among others. **Gwangju Museum of Art, South Korea**, through August 25.

**Ordinary Lives:** *Photography by Rania Matar* captures the mundane activities of everyday life amid the political and social turmoil of postwar Lebanon. The energy and determination of Matar's subjects are dramatically conveyed in a series of 28 images that depict the bond between mother and child, the camaraderie of friends and the resilience of ordinary people—and of their country. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through August 31.

Current **September**  
**Explorations:** *Egypt in the Art of Susan Osgood* is an eclectic joining of art and archeology in contemporary art, highlighted by the artist's drawings of coffins from KV63, the first new tomb to be discovered in Luxor since the uncovering of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922. An artist for the University of Chicago's Epigraphic Survey in Luxor, Osgood produced travel sketchbooks and four series of paintings and prints, all inspired by ancient graffiti, early maps and more than 30 years in Egypt and beyond. University of **Coimbra** Science Museum, **Portugal**, through September 14.

**String of Pearls:** *Traditional Indian Painting* presents manuscript paintings from different parts of India and surrounding regions and highlights their interrelationships, analogous to pearls on a string. The paintings were inspired by musical and literary sources, historical events and various religious traditions; viewed together, they offer a glimpse into the richness of Indian painting during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Harn Museum of Art, Gainesville, Florida, through September 14.

**Empire, Faith and War:** *The Sikhs and World War One* tells the story of the disproportionately large role played by Britain's Sikh community in "The Great War." Though Sikhs were only two percent of the population of British India at the time, they made up more than 20 percent of the British Indian Army in 1914, gaining commendations and a reputation as fearsome and fearless soldiers. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London**, through September 28.

**Another Day** features documentation of Palestine by photographer Sara Russell laid out as a narrative, unfolding just as did the photographer's experience. IHRC Bookshop and Gallery, **Wembley, UK**, through September 30.

Current **October**  
**Abstraction into the World** is a pairing of exhibitions that interrogates architecture, the urban environment and the natural world, placing abstraction in dialogue with these contexts. Tracing the careers of Piet Mondrian and Nasreen Mohamedi—artists working in different eras and continents—the exhibit explores how each arrived at similar nonfigurative styles, suggesting correspondences between their

practices and a parallel interest in bringing abstraction into reality. Exhibiting Mondrian and Mohamedi together, "Abstraction into the World" creates an unprecedented dialogue between Indian and European modernism through the lens of abstraction in relation to urban and natural environments. Tate **Liverpool**, through October 5.

**Princely Traditions and Colonial Pursuits in India.** South Asian artistic traditions were dramatically transformed by the political, social and economic changes that accompanied India's transition from local to colonial rule in the 19th century. Artists formerly patronized by Indian princes came to work for English officials and merchant elites, adjusting their practices to suit their new patrons' tastes. English artists and expatriates introduced new genres and pictorial styles to India, while foreign demand for Indian luxury items brought about esthetic transformations in textiles, silver and other goods. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through October 12.

**Saturated:** *Dye-Decorated Cloths from North and West Africa* celebrates the dyer's art from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Cameroon. The exhibition presents 11 dye-decorated cloths produced by traditional techniques and worn as garments or accessories. Before the introduction of European-made printed textiles to Africa in the 19th century, textile designs were made with natural dyes on plain homespun cotton, wool, raffia or other materials. Women were most often the dyers, and dye-decorated cloth was a major form of feminine artistic expression. **Dallas Museum of Art**, through October 12.

**Now Read This.** This exhibition comprises 45 works by 39 contemporary artists of international background and reputation from the collection of Driek and Michael Zirinsky. The works are united by their use of textual elements, their textural granularity and their inclusion of textile references and components. Just as text, texture and textile all share a common root (the Latin *textus* means woven), these works all invite the viewer to bring a reader's close level of examination to their encounter with the work. Featured artists include Ghada Amer, Xu Bing, Hilður Bjarnadóttir, Mel Chin, Annabel Daou, Ala Ebtekar, Olafur Eliasson, Markus Hansen, Dinh Q. Le, Robert Longo, Sherry Markovitz, Ulrike Palmbach, Kathryn Spence and Xiaozhe Xie, among others. **Boise State University Arts Gallery**, through October 20.

Current **November**  
**True to Life: New Photography from the Middle East** is an exhibition of contemporary photographs by internationally acclaimed artists from the Middle East that encourages visitors to question the “authenticity” of what appears to be represented in photography and explore what is real, staged or imaginary. **Birmingham** Museum & Art Gallery, **uk**, through November 2.

**Kader Attia**, the renowned French-Algerian artist, unveils a new site-specific commission. The work revisits the biblical story of Jacob's Ladder with a towering floor-to-ceiling structure of



rare artifacts and books. Hidden inside this library is a cabinet of curiosities filled with items ranging from old scientific measuring devices to books by such authors as Descartes and Alfred Russell Wallace. At the center of the work, a beam of light shines up to a mirrored ceiling. Attia's multimedia installations reflect on anthropology, politics and science and are rooted in history and archival research. His works explore ideas around identity in an age of globalization. Whitechapel Gallery, **London**, through November 23.

**Places of Memory** at The Pavilion of Turkey at the 14th Venice International Architecture Biennale explores the biennale theme "Fundamentals" by departing from three areas of Istanbul that acted as thresholds during different stages of curator Murat Tabanlıoğlu's life. This is the first year that Turkey is presenting at the International Architecture Exhibition in its new long-term pavilion at the Arsenale, **Venice**, through November 23.

**Ancient Lives, New Discoveries** introduces visitors to eight people from ancient Egypt and Sudan whose bodies have been preserved, either naturally or by deliberate embalming. Using the latest technology, the exhibition builds up a rounded picture of their lives, their health, their occupations and how they died, all in the Nile Valley, over a span of 4000 years, from Egypt to Christian Sudan. The individuals on display include a priest's daughter, a temple singer, a middle-aged man, a young child, a temple doorkeeper and a woman with a Christian tattoo. British Museum, **London**, through November 30.

**Platform 007** is an online project space discussing the future of arts infrastructures and audiences across North Africa and the Middle East, sponsored by Ibraaz, the critical forum on visual culture. Initiated by the Kamel Lazaar Foundation in 2011, it publishes an online, biannual Platform with monthly rolling content, in both written and video formats. Platform 007 is a stage for the interpretation and dialogue around self-organized, socially engaged art practices and how they contribute to, and go beyond, a culture of institutional frame-works for art. [www.ibraaz.org/platforms/](http://www.ibraaz.org/platforms/), through November.

Current **January and later**  
**In Remembrance of Me: Feasting with the Dead in the Ancient Middle East** explores how the living and the dead interacted to commemorate ancestors in the

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## Imran Qureshi:

*The God of Small Things* is the first indoor installation in a US museum by the artist, born in Hyderabad, Pakistan, in 1972 and widely considered one of the leading figures in developing contemporary esthetics. In 2011, Qureshi rose to prominence with an installation at the Sharjah Biennial, and in 2013 he won further renown for his Rooftop Commission at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. For this project, Qureshi printed forms and images appropriated from his earlier work on thousands of sheets of paper that he then crumpled and formed into a site-specific "mountain." As viewers walk around the immense structure, they discover that this mountain has been sliced along a sharp angle, following the gallery's wall, to create an intimate, tunnel-like space. This tension between grand and intimate scale is reflected also in Qureshi's pairing of a commissioned miniature painting with the massive installation. In addition, the installation also includes a series of red and gold paintings, as well as never-before-seen video works that give viewers insight into Qureshi's careful, meditative process. Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, **East Lansing, Michigan**, through August 17.



ancient Middle East. More than 50 artifacts document how food and drink were regularly offered to nourish the dead in the afterlife and how two- or three-dimensional effigies preserved the memory of the deceased. The exhibition was motivated by the 2008 discovery of a stela in eastern Turkey that dates to about 735 BCE; it commemorates an official named Katumuwa. The lengthy text carved on it reveals that, in that region, the soul of the deceased was thought to actually dwell in the stela and needed to be cared for by the living. Other exhibits examine commemoration of, and communication with, the dead and different conceptions of the soul in ancient Egypt, Iraq, and Israel/Palestine. Oriental Institute Museum, **Chicago**, through January 4.

**National University Model Arab League and National High School Model Arab League** are academic and leadership development experiences comprising some 20 local and regional conferences, each one a debate-based simulation of the League of Arab States. Students develop skills while gaining practical, immediate knowledge about a critical world region. Information: Josh Hilbrand ([josh@ncusar.org](mailto:josh@ncusar.org)). Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center, **Washington, D.C.**, April.

**India: Jewels That Enchanted the World** examines the legacy of 500 years of Indian jewelry, from the 17th century to the present. More than 300 pieces of jewelry and jeweled objects are brought together for the first time to showcase the beauty of Indian craftsmanship, the magnificence of gemstone setting and the refinement of Indian taste. Assembled from more than 30 museums, institutions and private collections, the exhibition is the most comprehensive ever staged on the subject. Its first

section focuses on the jewelry traditions of South India: monumental pieces crafted from gold, worked in relief and decorated with gemstone flowers and birds. The second is devoted to the jeweled splendor of the courts of the Mughals, who came as conquerors, ruled as emperors and, as connoisseurs, patronized artists, architects, enamelers and jewelers. A further section is devoted to the symbiosis between India and European jewelry houses and the cross-cultural influences that resulted in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It concludes with the work of two of India's leading present-day jewelry houses, The Gem Palace and Bhagat. State Museums of **Moscow** Kremlin, through July 27, 2015.

Coming **July**  
**Concentrations 57: Slavs and Tartars.** Slavs and Tartars is an art collective whose installations, lecture performances, sculptures and publications result from an unconventional, research-based approach. The group identifies the "area east of the former Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China known as Eurasia" as the focus of its multidisciplinary practice. In this exhibition, the group presents new work from its current series, "Long Legged Linguistics," an investigation of language as a source of political, metaphysical and even sexual emancipation, using its trademark mix of high and low culture to address the thorny issues of "alphabet politics": the attempts by nations, cultures and ideologies to ascribe a specific set of letters to a given language. The exhibition includes original works in Persian, Russian, Turkish, Georgian and English presented in a series of sculptures, installations, textiles and printed matter. **Dallas** Museum of Art, July 27 through December 14.

Coming **September**  
**Ghosts, Spies and Grandmothers: SeMA Biennale, Mediacity Seoul 2014** invokes the word "ghost" to call on spirits whose presence has been erased by dominant historical narratives. It uses "spy" to allude to the experience of colonialism and the Cold War in Asia. "Grandmothers" are living witnesses who have endured the ages of ghosts and spies and who demonstrate once again that women bear the brunt of the harm caused by colonialism and war. The biennale views Asia as a moving target, a cognitive lens and a region that is much more complex than its stereotypes, and includes work by artists from Arab and western countries as well as Korea. **Seoul** Museum of Art and Korean Film Archive, September 2 through November 23.

**Francesco Clemente: Inspired by India** examines the Indian influences in Clemente's work and how they relate to the artistic traditions and practices of various regions of India. In contrast to leading conceptual artists' practices of the 1970's, Clemente focused on representation, narrative and the figure, and explored traditional, artisanal materials and modes of working. The exhibition includes some 20 works, including paintings from the past 30 years and four new, larger-than-life sculptures. Rubin Museum of Art, **New York**, September 5 through February 2.

Coming **October**  
**Serendipity Revealed: Contemporary Sri Lankan Art.** Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London**, October 9 through December 20.

**The Future Is Not What It Used to Be: The 2nd Istanbul Design Biennial** considers "the manifesto" as a



platform and a catalyst for critical thinking in design. It asks how 21st-century designers can use the manifesto not only in the production of texts but also through actions, services, provocations or objects with the goal of inciting inventive outcomes. Of 800 submissions from Turkish and international designers, curator Zoë Ryan selected 75 that imagine a new future and instigate change by building on and reinterpreting history. Galata Greek Primary School and other locations, **Istanbul**, October 18 through December 14.

**L'avenir (looking forward)** shows work by 50 artists and collectives from 22 countries as BNLMTL 2014—La Biennale de Montréal. It combines a multi-site venue, a series of performances, film screenings, talks, tours, publications, conferences and other special events at the Musée d'art contemporain and other cultural institutions and public spaces throughout the city to examine how contemporary artists give form to the question of "what is to come?" Multiple locations in **Montréal**, October 22 through January 4.

**Jerusalem Show vii** encompasses exhibitions, film screenings, performances, talks, walks and workshops showcasing works of Palestinian and international artists, presented in the Old City of Jerusalem in various indoor and outdoor venues. **Jerusalem**, October 24 through November 7.

**Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.** An eye-opening look at the largely unknown ancient past of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this exhibition draws on recently discovered archeological material never before seen in the United States. "Roads of Arabia" features objects excavated from several sites throughout the Arabian Peninsula, tracing the impact of ancient trade routes and pilgrimage roads stretching from Yemen in the south to Iraq, Syria and Mediterranean cultures in the north. Elegant alabaster bowls and fragile glassware, heavy gold earrings and Hellenistic bronze statues testify to a lively mercantile and cultural interchange among distant civilizations. 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. Asian Art Museum of **San Francisco**, October 24 through January 18.

Coming **November and later** **"The Invisible Hand,"** a work by the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Ayad Akhtar, will be presented in the 2014-2015 season of the **New York Theatre Workshop**. The play is about an American stockbroker kidnapped by Islamic militants; his perspective on his captors evolves as he negotiates for his release. November and December.

**Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum** is an exquisitely illustrated papyrus from Greco-Roman Egypt, one of the most intriguing ancient representations of a place ever found. The papyrus depicts the Faiyum Oasis, located to the west of the Nile, as a center of prosperity and ritual. For the first time in over 150 years, major sections owned by the Walters Art Museum and the Morgan Library & Museum, separated since the manuscript was divided and sold in the 19th century, will be reunited. Egyptian jewelry, papyri, statues, reliefs and ritual objects will illuminate the religious context that gave rise to this enigmatic text, which celebrates the crocodile god Sobek and his special relationship with the Faiyum. Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum, **Hildesheim, Germany**, Fall; Reiss-Engelhorn-Museum, **Mannheim, Germany**, Spring.

**Pearls on a String: Art and Biography in the Islamic World** presents the arts of Islamic cultures from the point of view of authors and artists from historical Muslim societies, offering an alternative to impersonal presentations of Islamic art. Instead, the exhibition focuses on specific people and relationships among cultural tastemakers threaded together "as pearls on a string," a Persian metaphor for human connectedness—especially among painters, calligraphers, poets and their patrons. The exhibition highlights the exceptional art of the Islamic manuscript and underscores the book's unique ability to relate narratives about specific people. Through a series of vignettes, the visitor is introduced to the art inextricably linked to the men and women who shaped the Islamic past and contribute to its future. Asian Art Museum, **San Francisco**, Summer 2015; Museum of Islamic Art, **Doha**,

**Qatar**, Fall 2015; Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore, Maryland**, Spring 2016.

#### PERMANENT / INDEFINITE

**Divine Felines: Cats of Ancient Egypt** presents 30 artworks selected from the museum's extensive Egyptian collection: feral and tame cats, stone or bronze cats, small or large cats, domestic or divine cats. The exhibition explores the role of cats, lions and other felines in Egyptian mythology, kingship and everyday life, where they were revered for their fertility, associated with royalty and valued for their ability to protect homes and granaries from rats and mice. On public view for the first time is a gilded leonine goddess dating from between 770 and 412 BCE that entered the Brooklyn collection in 1937. **Brooklyn Museum, New York**.

**East-West/West-East** is a newly unveiled sculpture by Richard Serra, placed in a desert area. It consists of four steel plates, varying from 14.7 to 16.7 meters tall, that the artist says symbolize the connections between Qatar's two regions. "It brings this peninsula together, with the sea on one side and the sea on the other," says Serra. "I went to several desert [areas] ... and liked this one the most." Sixty kilometers from **Doha**.

**Monuments From Mesopotamia** is a nuanced collection of Mesopotamian casts, including the Laws of Hammurabi, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser II and the Stela of Esarhaddon. These monuments depict scenes of rulers and gods or symbols of the royal and divine, meant to proclaim the rulers' greatness before the gods and their subjects. Harvard Semitic Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**. **Hassan Hajjaj: My Rock Stars Experi-**

**mental**, a three-channel video installation, includes nine separately filmed performances by an international array of musicians. The sitters/performers wear clothes that Hajjaj has designed himself and pose in spaces covered by patterns he has selected. Clad in traditional fabrics as well as international-brand clothes and shoes, the musicians bridge the gap between now and then, us and them, high culture and low, reflecting a fusion of Moroccan craftsmanship and contemporary art. **Los Angeles County Museum of Art**.

**Contemporary Art Museum in Jiddah.** Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives plans to construct a 7000-square-meter museum, to be called Bayt Jameel, which will include spaces devoted to education, exhibitions of local artists' work and international temporary exhibitions, as well as a gallery where works that have received the Victoria and Albert Museum's Jameel Prize will be displayed. There will also be an open-air sculpture garden, lecture/training rooms, art laboratories, an events hall and cafeteria. Bayt Jameel will also offer international study scholarships to young Saudi artists. The master plan for the project is currently being designed.

Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Most institutions listed have information online. Readers are welcome to submit information no less than eight weeks in advance for possible inclusion. Some listings appear courtesy of *Canvas*, the art and culture magazine for the Middle East ([www.canvasonline.com](http://www.canvasonline.com)).

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