

MARCH APRIL 2018

# AramcoWorld





## 6 The Art Bridge

Written by Lee Lawrence

How does art affect us? How does it influence our attitudes toward the cultures artists come from and express? “Art opens us up,” says the director of the Building Bridges Program, the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art’s grant program. Experiences with art can make us feel closer to unfamiliar people—and that means we can get along better. But how does it really work? (Does it really work?) To find out, the author visits four of the 138 programs Building Bridges has supported to date: a children’s museum, a public mural, an online comedy and four touring hip-hop artists.

## 14 Marseille’s Migrant Cuisine

Written by Tristan Rutherford

Photographs and video by  
Rebecca Marshall

“If you imagine French cuisine as a tree,” says food historian Emmanuel Perrodin, “the leaves are in Paris, but the roots reside in Marseille”—fed by 2,600 years of migrations from the Mediterranean and beyond.

🌐 Online CLASSROOM GUIDE

🌐 2 FIRSTLOOK

🌐 4 FLAVORS

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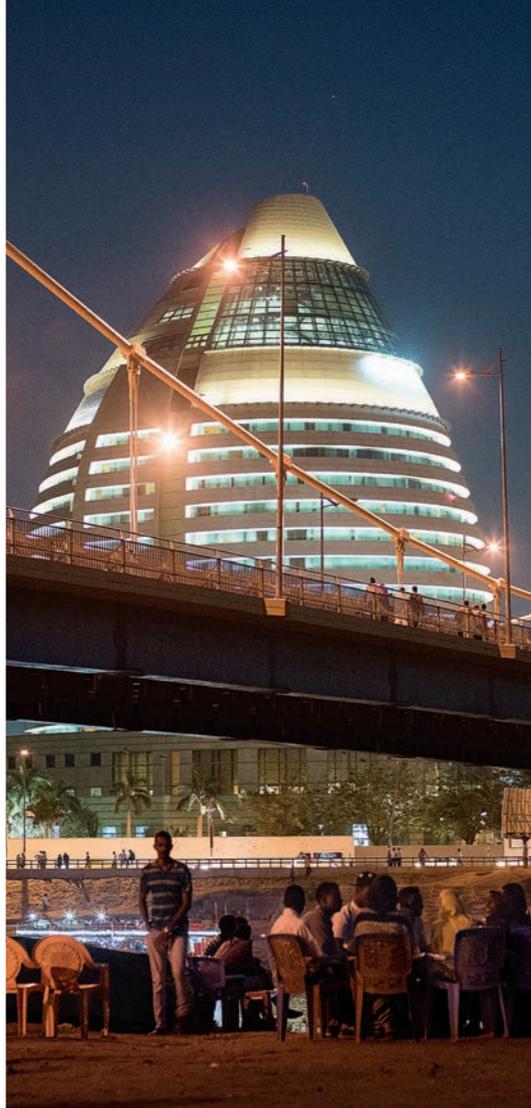
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We distribute *AramcoWorld* in print and online to increase cross-cultural understanding by broadening knowledge of the histories, cultures and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their global connections.

**Front Cover:** On simple flat toast, Marseille chef Alexandre Mazzia’s *biscotte végétale* mingles a medley of flavors, textures and spices from Africa, Asia and France and tops them with the bold colors of seasonal flowers—“a very broad architecture,” he says, that reflects the culinary spirit of his city. Photo by Rebecca Marshall.

**Back Cover:** Over a lunch of grilled meats with sauce on bread at a neighborhood eatery in Omdurman, Sudan, residents take in walls covered with portraits of local notables. From little more than a village 150 years ago to the nation’s second-largest city today, Omdurman has grown up across the Nile from Sudan’s capital Khartoum. Photo by David Degner.



## 20 The Modernist

Written by **Matthew Teller**  
Photographed by **Andrew Shaylor**

Independent. Confident. Inclusive. Three watchwords for art collector and social-media activist Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, whose Barjeel Foundation is showing—in dozens of galleries and online—how much Arab modern art has to say.

## 24 Khartoum: A Tale of Two Rivers

Written by **Louis Werner**  
Photographed by **David Degner**

Playing on what Roman historian Herodotus famously wrote about Egypt, Sudan's capital Khartoum is the gift of not one but two Niles—the White and the Blue—at whose meeting point arose a three-part metropolis that is now home to more than five million people.

## 32 The Shampooing Surgeon of Brighton

Written by **Gerald Zarr**

He wrote the first book in English by an author of Indian origin, opened London's first Indian restaurant, and he is remembered fondly along England's south coast for his introduction, in the early 19th century, of the therapeutic comforts of steam baths.

38 REVIEWS    40 EVENTS

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# FIRSTLOOK

## Jumeirah Beach, Dubai

Photograph by Bjorn Moerman

As an airline pilot, I have visited many places. In few have I seen such an impressive city expansion as in Dubai, my home for more than 15 years.

Historically a pearl-trading center, Dubai has reinvented itself in just a few decades— together with its six neighboring emirates— into one of the world's busiest business, cultural and tourism centers.

During a walk on a Friday afternoon I came upon one of the weekend football matches that are popular along the sands of Jumeirah Beach. As the players seemed to mirror the skyline of Sheikh Zayed Road behind them, they made the city seem both big and small at the same time.

I stopped to photograph the ebb and flow of the game as the light warmed toward sunset. At this particular moment, the players looked as if they had been arranged almost as deliberately as the buildings, and the sand reflected, for that instant, not the forms of the towers but the humanity that built them.

A few of the players looked up and waved to me; I replied with quick hellos. I didn't learn where they were from, or where they work during the week. Like me, they could belong to any of the more than 200 nationalities that make this one of the world's most diverse places. They turned back to the game; I walked on.

—Bjorn Moerman  
[www.bjornmoerman.com](http://www.bjornmoerman.com)







# FLAVORS

## Kushari

Recipe by  
Brenda Abdelall

Photograph by  
Ricky Rodriguez /  
Ricarius Photography

### A simple, yet hearty vegetarian dish that is popular on the streets of Egypt.

Often considered poor man's food because it is cheap and filling, kushari (*koo-shar-ee*) showcases the simple flavors of Egypt, making it popular among children and world travelers alike. I always ask for it as soon as my plane lands in Egypt. The red sauce can make or break your kushari experience, yet every Egyptian makes it differently. The sauce is a delicate combination of tomato sauce, cumin, chili, and garlic. Some add vinegar, while others let the fiery chili dominate.

(Serves 4)

2 large yellow onions, thinly sliced  
¼ c (30 g) cornstarch  
1 c (200 g) brown lentils  
1 t salt  
1 c (200 g) white rice  
1 t cumin  
2 c (170 g) elbow macaroni or ditalini  
¼ c (60 ml) extra virgin olive oil,  
plus more if needed

#### Sauce

1 T extra virgin olive oil  
6 small garlic cloves, minced  
1 t cumin  
1 t salt  
¼ t cayenne pepper (optional)  
2 T white vinegar  
15 oz (425 g) can tomato sauce

Pat the onions dry with paper towels. Toss them in the cornstarch and set aside.

In a medium pot, combine the lentils with 1½ cups (350 ml) water. Bring to a boil over medium heat, add 1 teaspoon salt, cover the pot, and reduce the heat to low. Simmer until the lentils are tender, 10 to 15 minutes, adding up to ¼ cup (60 ml) more water if they dry out.

In a separate medium pot, cook the rice: Bring 1½ cups (350 ml) water to a boil over high heat. Once boiling, add the rice, cumin, and 1 teaspoon salt. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered, until the rice is tender, about 20 minutes.

Cook the pasta according to the package instructions. Once cooked, drain, rinse with cold water, and set aside.

In a large sauté pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Fry the onions until they are light brown and crisp, about 10 minutes (you may need to do this in batches to avoid crowding the pan).

In a separate saucepan, make the sauce: Heat the olive oil. Add the garlic, cumin, salt, and cayenne pepper, if using, followed by the vinegar. Once you smell a rich aroma, add the tomato sauce, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a slow simmer and cook until it thickens slightly, about 10 minutes. If you prefer a thinner sauce, you may wish to mix in up to ¼ cup (60 ml) water.

To serve, place the pasta on a dish. Top with the rice, then the lentils, and then the onions. Serve the warm sauce on the side.

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Cookbook**

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**Brenda Abdelall** is an Egyptian American, born and raised in the culturally diverse city of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Her love for Egyptian food grew each summer during her childhood visits to Egypt, which included visits to Alexandrian coastal cities, rural villages, and the growing metropolis of El Mansoura. After watching her grandmother bake fresh bread and her aunts roll grape leaves with perfection, Brenda has found the kitchen to be her creative outlet. She runs an award-winning Middle Eastern food blog, "midEATS," and she teaches Middle Eastern cooking classes in Northern Virginia.

INSET: COURTESY/BRENDA ABDELALL



# THE ART BRIDGE

WRITTEN BY LEE LAWRENCE

Whether it is to learn, laugh or be challenged, to share discovery or wonder, art brings people together. And whether by stimulating appreciation or controversy, art helps people understand each other. This sounds straightforward enough, but is it true? Does art really do this and, if so, how? Those were my questions as I set out to write about the Building Bridges Program, which since 2007 has backed arts initiatives in the US through a total of 138 grants, all of them focused on Arab and Islamic cultures.

Building Bridges is one of the arms of the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, which in turn is part of the larger, New York-based Doris Duke Charitable Foundation that also funds global wellness for children as well as environmental and medical research. Building Bridges exists, to quote its website, “to advance relationships, increase understanding and reduce bias between Muslim and non-Muslim communities nationwide.”

Art connects people because “art opens us up,” says Zeyba Rahman, senior program officer for Building Bridges. “Makes us consider and reconsider positions. Provokes us to think more deeply.”

Rahman unabashedly aims to “move the needle for people.” The problem, she acknowledges, is that nobody has devised a fool-proof way to identify, much less quantify, just what makes

us change our mind about others. Researchers can measure changes in people’s intrinsic biases, but they don’t agree on which tools to use. It is also hard to tease out the active ingredients in a program and correlate these to outcomes. Ask anyone who has filled out a grant request. They sigh. They often have more anecdotes than data. They know things in their gut but can’t prove them.

So what is it they think they know? How does art change us? I set out to find out by taking a close look at four Building Bridges-supported programs, each centered on a different approach: play, laughter, visual appeal and performance.

“One-shot events, one-shot activities, one-shot experiences tend not to be sufficient,” says cultural historian Jack Tchen of the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University (NYU). Effective educational cultural programs are “always about a process,” and it is important that funders “acknowledge the time and labor, and care that’s needed.” Zeyba Rahman of Building Bridges would agree: “Sustained activity does create measurable impact, but the key word is *sustained*.” It is a quality Building Bridges looks for in grant applications.

From 2007 through 2017, Building Bridges allocated \$20.4 million in grants ranging from about \$15,000 to more than \$1 million. In many cases, it chose to serve as one among several sources funding a project, creating opportunities for alliances within communities.



Using a touchscreen, children play the sounds of musical instruments in a display at “America to Zanzibar: Muslim Cultures Near and Far” at the Children’s Museum of Manhattan. “The play of the exhibit is nothing new to kids,” says Lizzy Martin, the museum’s director of exhibit development. “It’s the uniqueness of how we layer the cultures onto what they are playing with.”

## FIRST STOP Kid Zone

Walking into “America to Zanzibar: Muslim Cultures Near and Far” at the Children’s Museum of Manhattan in New York is like stepping into a miniature city. Adults notice its plaza, with a fountain and tilework, its row of colorful market stalls and the prow of a boat that fills a corner of the room. Kids see games, props for dress-up and things to climb.

Four-year-old Jonah has been a regular lately. His mom, Micah Spratt, brings him several times a week. Today a long console with pictures of musical instruments catches his attention. As Micah reads the names—

“*ney*, ‘*ud* (kind of like a guitar, right?), *ebana*, *ghijak*, *tabla* (looks like drums), *kora*”—Jonah is figuring out the game. He taps “*ney*,” and a flute sounds. Taps it again—silence. On. Off. Pretty soon, he’s layering melodies of *ney* with ‘*ud* and *ghijak*, and then tapping the *tabla* on–off–on–off–on, causing bursts of drumbeat to erupt beneath the melody. Jonah smiles. Then runs off to climb the dhow.

The market area, meanwhile, is buzzing. Six-year-old Luke catches and sells fish in Zanzibar. Three-year-old Fallon fusses with a Senegalese cloth on a tailor’s dummy—when she’s created a full skirt, she declares, “Looks like a tutu now.” And four-year-old Kate, in a red dress dotted with cartoon puppies, stands amid a pile of Moroccan throw rugs with

The challenges for Lizzy Martin, director of exhibit development for the Children’s Museum of Manhattan, were to represent a range of cultures that identify with Islam and then engage kids from a range of backgrounds. She and her team started with familiar things—a truck, a boat, a shop. With input from art experts and historians, they “layered on culture.” Voilà—a Pakistani jingle truck, an Omani dhow and an Indonesian fruit stand (complete with smelly durian fruits).

zingy patterns. One she dubs “my bed.” Another, “my yoga mat.” Then, plopping down on a purple-and-white one, she wraps her legs in the red, yellow and black stripes of the other.

Multiculturalism alone, says Tchen, “oftentimes doesn’t do much.” Adults, he explains, need to help children connect new experiences with things or people they already know. Conversations about similarities and differences, he says, are what later enable us to learn to see through stereotypes.

3-D images of mosques onto a curved wall. One moment they’re standing inside New York’s modern mosque at 96th Street. Next, they’re gliding, eyes wide, under eighth-century arches in Córdoba, Spain. Samin Rafiq looks on. Rafiq is British, Muslim, and recently moved to the us. She came to the museum to give her four-year-old daughter Zoya an outing, and “America to Zanzibar” was an unexpected find.

Micah Spratt doubts that at four, her son Jonah is “making the connection to Islamic culture.” But, she adds, “I think on some level he’s taking in that these things are different—their looks, their sounds. Next time he sees things like these, they’ll be familiar.” Nearby, watching his daughter, four-year-old Kate, Stephen Reznak says his family lives in “a New Jersey town that’s pretty homogeneous.” The exhibit “gives my kids a greater appreciation for the larger world.”

Yorker Nicolle Newby, on the other hand, sought out the exhibition. While her kids, six-year-old Chance and four-year-old Couture, avidly explore, she follows, taking photos of everything from the Tunisian tiles to home-like settings, decorated with photographs, books and mementos of New York Muslim families. There is also a table where Chance and Couture hunch over tablets learning to say and write “My name is ...” in Arabic, Bengali, Hausa and more. “I like taking them to a variety of places,” Newby says, “because if kids don’t get out, then they don’t make friends easily with people from other ethnic groups, backgrounds, skin tones.” They also don’t de-

Rahman thinks “America to Zanzibar” is “a very important player” for Building Bridges. Why? “Being comfortable with our identity and being comfortable with those of others” is crucial for future generations who will “have to be concerned about being global citizens.”

velop a curiosity about themselves—back home, they pepper her with questions about their own Christian heritage.

When she leans back, hands behind her head, she forms a new, dazzling pattern. And she, beaming, knows it. Elsewhere, in a dark viewing room, teenagers manipulate the controls of a console to project

## *Arabic “calligrafitti,” eL Seed believes, has a power to elicit emotion by form alone*

She says she’s delighted to see American teens “having their own reactions to what they see, independent of politics.” As for Zoya, she says, playing in this setting “helps build associations with Islam.”

Native New Yorker Nicolle Newby, on the other hand, sought out the exhibition. While her kids, six-year-old Chance and four-year-old Couture, avidly explore, she follows, taking photos of everything from the Tunisian tiles to home-like settings, decorated with photographs, books and mementos of New York Muslim families. There is also a table where Chance and Couture hunch over tablets learning to say and write “My name is ...” in Arabic, Bengali, Hausa and more. “I like taking them to a variety of places,” Newby says, “because if kids don’t get out,

then they don’t make friends easily with people from other ethnic groups, backgrounds, skin tones.” They also don’t de-

## SECOND STOP A Four-Story Mural

On the campus of the University of Houston, the internationally renowned “calligrafitti” artist eL Seed climbs onto the platform of a cherry picker, paint can in hand. For several days, this becomes his studio, and the brick wall of the Graduate College of Social Work his canvas.

The can rattles as he shakes it, hisses as he sprays. Black lines loop and crisscross. As the hours pass, the spaces in between fill with yellow, turquoise, orange.

On the wall, eL Seed is writing an Arabic translation of a quote from the city’s namesake, Texas hero Sam Houston: “Knowledge is the food of genius, and my son, let no opportunity escape you to treasure up knowledge.” Not that anyone can read his highly abstracted calligrafitti.

That’s fine, he says. He’s seen people around the world warm to the mere form of Arabic calligraphy, which, he believes, has a power to elicit emotion by form alone. That emotion, he hopes, will challenge biases, “because we live in a time when we have the wrong perception of everybody. Even me. When the university reached me two years ago, I was like, ‘I don’t want to go to Texas!’ You create this drama in your head.”

He—and his mural—were welcomed. No criticism. No protests. Whether in conversations or in social-media posts, people seemed excited that a star of the art world created a site-specific work at their university. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, which invited eL Seed, staged programs around the mural. Classes discussed it.

Organizers envisioned the artwork sparking impromptu

Andrew Bayliss at the University of East Anglia’s Psychology Department found that when two people are reacting positively to something they are looking at together, they tend to deem the other person “more trustworthy and more pleasant.” Researchers are now exploring whether this “joint attention” phenomenon applies similarly in social media and other virtual spaces.

As the us census counts, metropolitan “Greater Houston” covers more land than the state of New Jersey. It is home to more than 6 million people who altogether speak more than 90 languages. Still, as diverse as Houston is, says Karen Farber, director of the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts at the University of Houston, “we’re not always forced to deal with each other.” One reason she championed eL Seed’s mural project, painted in the spring of 2016, was “to provoke a dialogue.”



As students make their way across the University of Houston campus, “calligraffiti” artist eL Seed finishes his building-size mural on a wall of the Graduate College of Social Work. The mural is an Arabic translation of a quote from the city of Houston’s namesake, Sam Houston: “Knowledge is the food of genius, and my son, let no opportunity escape you to treasure up knowledge.”

conversations across faiths and among Muslims themselves; however, that hasn’t happened, says Emran El-Badawi, who heads the university’s Middle Eastern Studies Program. Maybe it was unrealistic to expect it would. He says the campus is so comfortable in its diversity and has so much public art that people “take this mural and initiative for granted.” Its presence here does not challenge how people see themselves: It confirms it.

Yet, having an Arabic mural be no big deal might just be *the* big deal. It says that Arabic is an accepted part of an ever-growing American fabric. That’s a powerful theme, and El-Badawi says colleagues at other institutions have contacted him to pick his brain as they contemplate similar initiatives.

### THIRD STOP Online

I log onto [halalinthefamily.tv](http://halalinthefamily.tv) and hit “play,” launching the web-TV comedy series about a fictional Pakistani Muslim family living in a generic white-majority suburb. With four episodes that each runs five to six minutes, it’s a compact immersion that takes aim at religion-based bullying, fear-mongering, stereotyping, profiling ... you name it. From all sides. Originally intended to be a Muslim

parody of the “The Cosby Show,” it ends up closer to “All in the Family” with the main character, named Qu’osby, as blinkered and cringe-inducing as Archie Bunker ever was—and sometimes worse.

Lillian LaSalle is founder and director of Sweet 180, which produced the series. “There are people on our advisory board who said, ‘You can’t say that,’” she says, referring to any number of jokes in the script. But co-creators Aasif Mandvi and Miles Khan, formerly of “The Daily Show” with Jon Stewart, held firm. “To do parody and satire properly, we’re going to say some things that are going to offend people.”

The Perception Institute showed 2,344 viewers “Halal in the Family” and an excerpt from a narrative documentary about Islamophobia called “Truth Over Fear.” The institute found the documentary slightly more effective in getting people to question assumptions, but then they looked at how many people each one reached online. The film had attracted 10,000 views, while “Halal in the Family” had racked up 620,000, plus 18,000 Facebook “likes” and 2.5 million posts.

And they do. For example, to fit his benighted notions of American identity, Qu’osby makes an

“Halal in the Family” marked a step outside the comfort zone for Building Bridges, says Rahman. But she and her team liked its deeper message and its potential to reach so many people.



## Executive Producers Aasif Mandvi & Miles Kahn

“Halal in the Family” started as a segment on “The Daily Show” and turned into a sitcom web series that challenges stereotypes and misunderstandings through the eyes and foibles of a US Muslim family. It can be found at [halalinthefamily.tv](http://halalinthefamily.tv) or on the “Funny or Die” channel on YouTube.

embarrassing show of liking foods Islam forbids. And when a girl bullies his daughter over her religion on Facebook, Qu’osby doesn’t give the bully a moral lesson; rather, he upbraids the offender to “get her stereotypes right!”

Neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran says laughter evolved from a signal our very distant ancestors used to broadcast that all was okay. Imagine this: A man spots something moving in the shadows. He tenses. A kitten mews. He laughs. Hearing him, the others relax. This is effective, wordless vocal communication. Grace Aneiza Ali, who teaches art and policy at NYU, believes comedy can look at a specific, difficult situation—say, the tension between two immigrant parents and their locally born children—and universalize it so that everyone, laughing, connects with it.

the mosque, Qu’osby discovers his new friend’s name isn’t “Wally” but Waleed. He feels duped, and he jumps to the ridiculous conclusion that Waleed is faking his identity to spy on Qu’osby. This makes Qu’osby react so weirdly that Waleed then suspects *him* of reporting to the FBI. The scene resolves with them all laughing at the absurdity of thinking

they were spying on each other—a shot filmed through binoculars by someone peering from outside the window.

Every episode is over the top. Some gags don’t hit my laugh button. But they always make me roll my eyes at the inanity of the prejudices they pillory. “Halal” intends to be funny and activist: Right under the video, the site provides statistics and information about problems Muslims face, along with links to find out more. LaSalle says nobody has tracked yet how many viewers have followed up, but one thing’s certain: the industry has. The series won a Peabody-Facebook Futures of Media Award, and Turner Broadcasting System (TBS) commissioned a pilot script for an animated adaptation. Though TBS did not pick it up, the production team is shopping it around. It won’t be parody or satire, LaSalle says, but a warmer comedy about a Muslim family trying to fit into in a small Arkansas town. If produced, television viewers too might soon be laughing with Muslim neighbors—and sometimes at them—because, after all, the characters are bound to have plenty of blind spots, too.

### FOURTH STOP On Stage

I head west and north to Minneapolis, where the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood is known—by its residents and outsiders—as “Little Mogadishu.” More emigrés from Somalia live here than in any other single place in the US. Arriving, I look

Some 60,000 people of Somali origin live in Minnesota, comprising the most recent of the many groups of immigrants—among them Scandinavians, East Europeans, Asians and Latinos—that have settled the state that was for centuries home to Dakota Sioux and Ojibwa tribes.

for the marqu e of the Cedar Cultural Center across from Al-Karama Mall on Cedar Avenue. For close to 30 years, it has hosted musicians from around the world. More recently, it has also developed into an important meeting point for Somali and non-Somali communities.

What changed? In 2014 The Cedar (as people refer to it) teamed up with Augsburg University, a Lutheran institution with a music department that had been working with local

*It doesn't take long before Waayaha Cusub is calling out verses and students are belting the refrain.*

Somali singers. Together they launched a series of month-long residencies for Somali performers. They named it Midnimo, which in Somali means "unity."

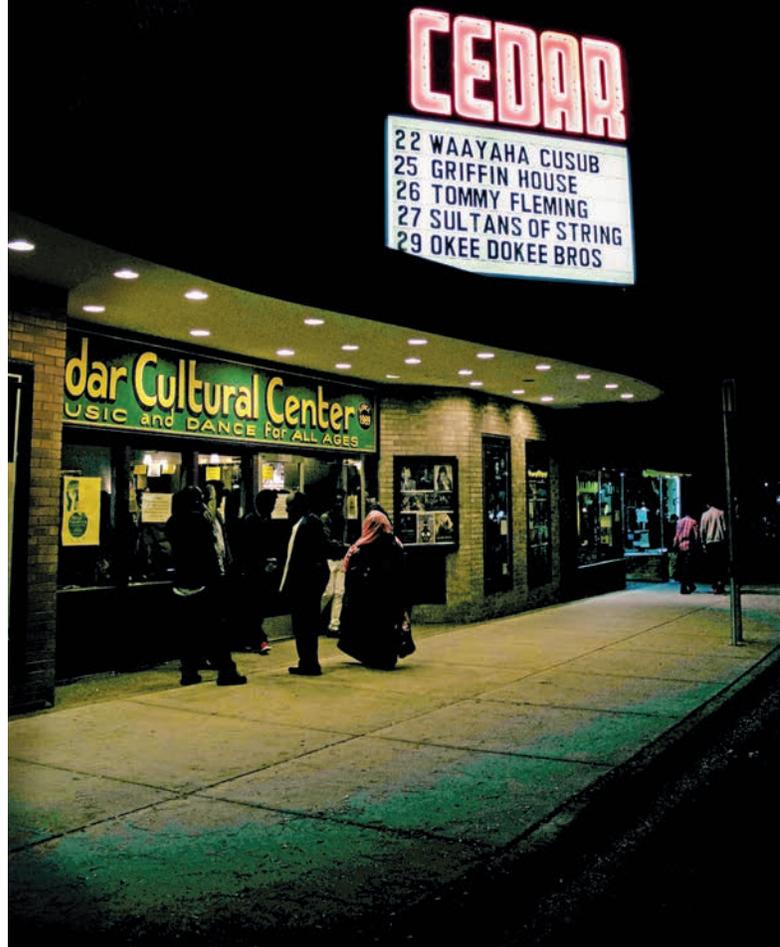
When I visit in the fall of 2016, before visas became almost impossible to obtain, Midnimo is in its seventh cycle of residencies. Four hip-hop artists are visiting

Minnesota may be the "land of 10,000 lakes," but Somalia, says guide Abdirahman Hassan, is "the land of 1,000 poets." He works at the Somali Museum of Minnesota, which opened in 2013. "Somalia is a very musical culture," Hassan says, pointing to a display of instruments. "So some people will listen to songs as long as they're Somali or as long as they're positive."

from Europe, Shiine Akhyaar Ali, Dalmar Yare, Lihle Muhidin Nur and Digriyow Abdi. In 2002 they were all refugees in Kenya. The youngest was 11, the oldest 17. They had seen pals join the militias tearing their homeland apart. Bored and scared, they started rapping for peace and against extremism. They called themselves Waayaha Cusub, "New Era."

I also meet four local non-Somali instrumentalists: keyboardist deVon Gray, drummer Joey Van Phillips, bassist Jim Anton and guitarist Jeremy Ylvisaker. The organizers

A first-year student at the College of Saint Benedict, Julia Pedron exudes curiosity and hope. "There are a lot of misconceptions about Somalis' culture and religion," she says. "I wish everybody could have the experience we had of actually getting to meet with Waayaha Cusub, getting to experience a little bit of their culture." When Shiine talked about being shot, she adds, "it was like I was speaking to a piece of history."



Outside the Cedar Cultural Center in Minneapolis, people begin to line up for tickets to hear Waayaha Cusub ("New Era"), a Europe-based Somali hip-hop group that has come to Minnesota's Twin Cities as part of the Building Bridges-supported program Midnimo, a Somali word that means "unity."

have brought them in to play backup for Waayaha Cusub. On a Thursday morning I join them in a red-brick building on Augsburg's campus. In a large classroom, the musicians all sit with their backs to the blackboard as students, all music majors, trickle in. Helped by an interpreter, the Somalis introduce themselves. When the class starts, the students are attentive, but there's no feeling of chemistry. Then Joey taps out a tempo. Shiine motions the class to stand. They're going to help him sing a song.

The refrain Shiine

No matter their background, students "have a fuzzy understanding of the Somali experience," says Darlene St. Clair, director of the St. Cloud State University Multicultural Resource Center. But "music is especially engaging," and they come away from Midnimo classes with a sharper sense of "what it's like being a refugee, the extra pressures, anxieties and fears."

teaches the students is “watch out for your people / watch out for your land.”

The students mangle the Somali lyrics, laugh, and try again. It doesn't take long before Waayaha Cusub is calling out verses, students are belting the refrain, and everyone is jamming.

Back in their seats, conversation now flows. Students speak about music as something they love, study and dissect.

The local Somali community generally likes Midnimo, says Amano Dube, director of the Brian Coyle Community Center. But it is divided over Waayaha Cusub's anti-militant messages. Some feel these inadvertently reinforce anti-Somali and even anti-Muslim sentiments by implying Somalis are “more susceptible to having children turn bad.” Others, however, believe the frank talk helps steer young people in good directions.

attempt, the disorientation of refugee life—nothing has deterred them. The students want to know about the Somali kids Waayaha Cusub reaches; the Somali singers want to hear about the students' goals as future teachers and musicians.

By residency's end the singers have run 16 college classes, conducted seven workshops for youth and worked with pupils at four public schools. In many cases, they see the same audiences for two or three sessions. Then, in a few months, another group of artists will come, and with them new music and new stories.

With school-age kids, the jamming segues into writing, and they come up with their own lyrics and perform for their mates, some from long-settled Minnesota families and some newbies. They rap about likes and dislikes, aspirations and fears. Some wriggle and giggle and, first time around, take a pass; others dive right in. As one Somali-born kid struts his stuff, Shiine whispers: “If they do not see they're talented, they can join gangs.”

What I see is a building of trust—East African kids discovering they have something to say. College students

Tchen uses the example of musicians to illustrate the crucial role played by pleasure and emotion. Because musicians love their own instruments, it is easy for them to appreciate the way instruments from another culture are played and the sounds they produce. To have that kind of experience, Tchen believes, is a key to appreciating difference “and not to just simply want to subsume it, dominate it, eradicate it or disavow it.”

Waayaha Cusub members talk about their hip hop as mission: They sing to keep Somali youth from falling prey to militants. Death threats, an assassination

learning from Somali singers and vice versa—local Somali youths attending a Waayaha Cusub performance in a venue they've never been in with white neighbors they've never met. Trust also grows between the Somali visitors and their American backups.

At first, deVon says, they rehearsed in a kind of “awkward dance.” Joey remembers worrying they couldn't get “the nuances the Somalis are looking for.” So they listened, tried something else, watched for reactions, tweaked, tried again. Gradually, everyone grew more comfortable, and the Americans even started to find ways

The Cedar Cultural Center invited Mohamed Sallam to evaluate Midnimo. I meet him as he observes a class. Midnimo isn't just about art, he explains. “It's also about artists' narratives,” he says, and how these come across is extremely important. He is on the lookout for signs that audiences might interpret individual personal stories as representing all Somalis, or even all Muslims in diaspora. Instead, he sees Midnimo preempting this by hosting a succession of different artists, all of whom are coached on how best to present their personal stories in Minnesota. As a result, Midnimo works, he says, because it “complicates the notion of what it means to be Muslim.”

*“When we're playing music together, we feel we know each other.”*

“to bring our own voices into it,” deVon says. Case in point: At rehearsal one morning, Digriyow asks Jeremy to free-style the beginning of the next song. By this time Jeremy has spent hours listening and experimenting. When he

moves to center stage, he lets his fingers fly. Heads keep time, faces smile. “We don't speak English too well,” Shiine later says, “so we don't talk about a lot of things. But when we're playing music together, we feel we know each other.”

## LAST STOP

### Making Sense of It All

Each of the projects that Building Bridges supported drew non-Muslims and Muslims alike, and in different ways each offered multiple experiences. I saw art engage people mentally and emotionally, then deliver information, foster camaraderie, engender trust, stimulate curiosity and bolster identity. As time went on, it became like watching a cloth being woven, threads—sometimes similar, sometimes wildly different—crisscrossing to create ever-varying designs.

We know from the news that, all around the globe, the need keeps growing. For Building Bridges' 2018 grants competition, the number of applications doubled, says Rah-

Scientists have confirmed what we have always suspected: Interacting with people who are different from us alters the way we think about them. Researchers term this “intergroup contact,” and study after study has shown that sharing a positive experience reduces prejudice primarily by reducing anxiety and increasing empathy.



Backed by local musicians, Waayaha Cusub performs at Talahi Community School in St. Cloud, Minnesota. During its Midnimo residency, the group ran 16 college classes, conducted seven workshops and visited four public schools—in addition to performing and appearing on local radio programs.

man. And we now know enough about laughter, mutual attention, play and the evolution of cultures to begin to understand how art programs can make a real difference.

“Sometimes,” says Jack Tchen, a cultural historian at the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University, “we talk about otherness as if it’s a bad thing,” as if the world would be easier if everybody were “like ourselves. And that’s impossible.” What is possible, though,

is discovering who others are. Who we are. And what more fun and energizing way than through art which, as Rahman says, leads

“We’re overriding negative perceptions by showing the diversity of Muslim cultures, the breadth, the depth of them, the richness,” says Rahman. Building Bridges programs also encourage “the younger Muslim population to really get a look at their cultures and take pride.”

us to “consider and reconsider our positions” by inviting us to cross a bridge to—let’s go find out. 🌐



Based in Brooklyn, New York, **Lee Lawrence** writes frequently on Islamic and Asian art for *The Wall Street Journal* and cultural affairs for *The Christian Science Monitor*.



**VIDEO:**  
aramcoworld.com



# Marseille's MIGRANT CUISINE

IF YOU IMAGINE FRENCH CUISINE AS A TREE, THE LEAVES ARE IN PARIS, BUT THE ROOTS RESIDE IN MARSEILLE.

—Emmanuel Perrodin

Written by  
Tristan Rutherford  
Photographs and video by  
Rebecca Marshall

THE MODERNIST BOX OF MARSEILLE'S MUSEUM OF EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN CIVILIZATIONS (MUCEM) SITS ASTRIDE THE MOUTH OF THE CITY'S OLD PORT, NOT FAR FROM THE PLACE GREEK SAILORS SET UP A TRADING POST 2,600 YEARS AGO. THE CITY MINTED ITS OWN MONEY THEN, AND IT INTRODUCED OLIVE TREES FROM LANDS AROUND THE AEGEAN AND GRAPEVINES FROM AROUND THE ADRIATIC.

Five hundred years later the Mediterranean became Rome's nexus of trade and empire, and Marseille became one of its maritime centers. Now, MUCEM exhibits olive-oil amphorae from Anatolia, soapmaking paraphernalia from Syria, and sailing charts that show how to navigate from Algiers without running aground on the island of Mallorca.

Atop the museum, Emmanuel Perrodin, Marseille's leading culinary historian, sips black coffee. The panorama over France's third-largest city takes in the seemingly limitless sea, ramparts of 17th-century forts and a few cereal silos from the 1920s. Passenger ferries chug to and from the modern successors of the Roman trading ports of Béjaïa and Annaba in Algeria, as well as the Mediterranean islands of Corsica and Sardinia.

"Our city has a particular geography," says Perrodin. "My favorite Marseillais saying is, 'First you have the sea, then the city, and beyond that is another country called France.'"

Perrodin explains that, like Alexandria, Egypt, Marseille was a "lighthouse city." A key commercial gateway, a port city that has attracted all comers, it thrived as a polyglot trading

colony while Paris was still just a village. Believed to have been established around 600 BCE by Greeks from Phocaea (now Foca) on the west coast of Turkey, the city's more recent arrivals have included Russians, Armenians, and Berbers from Algeria—among the latter the parents of France's greatest soccer player, Marseille-born Zinedine Zidane. Most recently, in the decades following independence, families from former French colonies have come here, along with many more.

With human traffic came food, and with food came recipes. Dates entered Europe here, says Perrodin, and "arguably" tomatoes and bananas.

"Safeguarding your favorite foods is perhaps the most important cultural act," he says. "Three times per day you reinforce your cultural identity in your heart—and your stomach." Most curiously of all, the recipes that came first to Marseille—take North African *merguez* lamb sausage, for example—would now be eaten by a Cypriot French family in Paris, or by a Congolese French family in Normandy.

"Our national dish is couscous. Tajine [from North Africa]





Lined up selling fruit and vegetables, street merchants serve Marseille's southern borough of Noailles, known by locals as the "belly of Marseille," famous for its culinary kaleidoscope of piquant Moroccan *pastillas* (pastries), Algerian *mahjoubas* (crepes) and French baguettes. Culinary historian Emmanuel Perrodin, left, says the city's cultures, traditions and foods influenced by centuries of trade and migration throughout the Mediterranean make Marseille unique.

is served in French schools. If you imagine French cuisine as a tree, the leaves are in Paris, but the roots reside in Marseille."

Seeds of the city's culinary evolution can be found a few blocks north in the district of Noailles. On the corner of Rue d'Aubagne, one can see a Tunisian *leblebi* soup store. An Ivorian snack bar sells *alocco* fish with grilled plantain—and nearby is Marseille's last remaining ricotta cheese creamery. A young woman with her smartphone tucked into the elastic of her headscarf



Sharing some of her Tunisian upbringing at her shop, La Palme d'Or, Jiji Azizi sells dried herbs, nuts, spices and regional foods, including dried hibiscus.

continues a phone conversation as she shops for fruit. A young boy warns “yalla!” as he weaves his bike down the street, fishing rod in one hand. The roars of scooters and the calls of hawkers render the street a maelstrom of multiculturalism, a 21st-century Babel where one could conceivably order lunch in English, Spanish, Arabic or French.

Such telegenic scenes are backed up by tales of economic necessity. The story of 37-year-old Jiji Azizi, who manages the spice emporium La Palme d'Or, also on Rue d'Aubagne, is a mirror of migration into Marseille. “No one of my generation consciously moved here. We were born here instead.”

In the 1950s and 1960s, she says, the Mediterranean was a more open sea. Azizi's father was one of seven brothers and sisters sharing a home in Africa's northernmost city, the Tunisian port of Bizerte. “In that position you just moved to France,” Azizi says. Fortunately, his fragrant store was a success. “Armenians, Algerians, Greeks—we all eat the same halvah, dolma and all the rest.” Azizi proudly claims she is Marseillaise, before being of Tunisian roots or French citizenship. “Perhaps it's like Italians in New York. Despite being there for one century, some people are Sicilian first, then American second.”

Such stories are commonplace. Béline Sy arrived in Marseille aged 18 months in 1979. Her parents lived in Vietnam's southern colonial resort of Dalat, a leafy town that, once part of French Cochinchina, was base for soldiers of Arabian and African origins serving in the French Army. “When I return there, I get laughed at because I speak Vietnamese with a Marseillaise accent,” she says. In the mid-

1960s waves of American soldiers came to her family's town. A decade later Sy's parents fled from communist authorities with their nine children.

The family's Marseille fruit stall grew to become Tam-Ky, now the area's largest international food emporium, on the bustling Rue Halle Delacroix. Sy's checkout now rings orders of Mauritian *piments*, Madagascan *kumbawa* citrus and Indonesian pepper to patrons from Senegal, Cambodia, Mali and much of the rest of the world. A final novelty is the curious circumflex above Sy's forename, Béline. “In Vietnam we wear conical hats,” she explains, “so I put one on the ê of my name. When you move to a new country, you can do anything you want.”

Other recently settled residents are plying their wares through France, like Mediterranean traders of two and half millennia before. Around the corner from Azizi and Sy, down past a sweet-smelling shop selling *mahjouba*—crepes, North African-style—another with flipflops and a couple of halal butchers, Joseph Azzi set up his Le Cedre du Liban (Cedar of Lebanon) bakery in 1995. “Lebanese are everywhere,” says Azzi. “Saudi, Africa, London, Brazil.”

He walks past crates of pomegranate molasses to fire up his flatbread machine. With a whirr and a clunk, the timeless, round Arab loaves bake and then cool along a 15-meter conveyor that snakes underneath the flour-dusted ceiling. Stacks of flatbreads are sealed into plastic bags before being couriered along former Roman roads—now fast autoroutes—to Nice in the east and Béziers in the west. The fact they are eaten with restaurant *falafil* or supermarket couscous is testament to Marseille's status as



France's *ville carre-four*—its cross-roads city.

Yet now, as it has been for centuries, arrival also often means struggle. Some of Marseille's most recent newcomers arrive with more recipes than official papers or networks of helpful friends. Some learn quickly they can rely

on Fatima Rhazi, a grandmother originally from Morocco who acts as a kind of great aunt to Marseille's migrant women. Her organization, Femmes d'Ici et d'Ailleurs Marseille (Marseille Women from Here and Elsewhere) was formed in 1994 to foster dialogue through food.

"Some new ladies are timid for all sorts of reasons, but when cooking in our communal kitchen they open up. Believe me, women have the same problems all over the world," says Rhazi. By sharing recipes, they learn food preparation, hygiene and language skills useful for both household management and employment. And it works: 1,257 previously unemployed people who have passed through Rhazi's workshop are now in paid work.

Rhazi's backstreet office-kitchen includes a 500-book library with (titles such as *La Cuisine du Monde* and *Délices du Maroc*) that serves as a recipe vault for almost every



Along the busy Rue Halle Delacroix, Beline Sy poses at her family's store, Tam-Ky, which the Sys started after emigrating in 1979 from Vietnam, when she was a baby. Today the shop sells everything from produce to dried seaweed to prepared Vietnamese dishes.

Mediterranean, Arabic and African dish. Some hand-me-down methods remain handwritten in Arabic. Others reside on the hard drive of the association's creaking computer. "I'm from Morocco, which has three couscous recipes, but our association

regularly makes 11 different varieties," Rhazi says.

This culinary archive at Femmes d'Ici et d'Ailleurs Marseille is important also because, as an entirely self-financed organization, it is a database that helps support large-scale catering for weddings, birthdays and other events, all of which help pay for the organization's many services. When MUCEM hosts 300 guests for an exhibition opening, they often call Rhazi first. At such times, she then calls upon volunteers who hail anywhere from the steppes of Mongolia to the golden sands of Ghana to work the 20 gargantuan cooking pots and countless tajines in the adjoining kitchen. "Customers can also dine in the upstairs restaurant. We call our cuisine *oriental*. The term is meaningless," Rhazi says with a smile, "but it pushes all the right buttons." Dishes can include light-as-air black-eyed pea *accara* fritters from Senegal and herbed Moroccan chicken with a lemon *confit* sauce.

Joseph Azzi, owner of Le Cedre du Liban (Cedar of Lebanon) bakery, stands next to his 15-meter conveyor belt that enables him to produce seemingly endless amounts of pastries and breads that he ships across France.





Moroccan-born Fatima Rhazi founded Femmes d'Ici et d'Ailleurs Marseille (Marseille Women from Here and Elsewhere) in 1994. Its communal kitchen became a hub for skill-building in cooking, household management and employment. *Right*: Her notes on culinary techniques she learned from her mother are part of the group's archive. In 2009 the French government made her a *chevalier* (knight) in the national Legion of Honor.

Rhazi's own early travels influenced her palate, too. Raised a few miles from the Algerian border in Oujda, around four decades ago she was Morocco's 200-meter and 400-meter women's running champion, and this took her to competitions throughout the Mediterranean. She speaks, for example, about a Sephardi dish from the Tunisian island of Djerba called *skhina*. For religious reasons, Tunisia's Jewish community required a Saturday feast but could not prepare food on the Friday Sabbath. So the recipe of eggs, rice, spices and meat is slowcooked overnight into a state of delicious caramelization.

Recognition of Rhazi's work, and by extension Marseille's culinary *mélange*, came in 2009 by presidential decree. France's then-President Nicolas Sarkozy, himself of Greek and Hungarian parentage, together with Justice Minister Rachida Dati, who is the second of 12 children of Moroccan and Algerian heritage, visited Femmes d'Ici et d'Ailleurs Marseille.

To Rhazi's consternation, Sarkozy and Dati did not give her a check: Instead they knighted her, declaring her *chevalier de la légion d'honneur*, the nation's highest order of merit.

"I am a knight without a horse," she jokes. Then with her characteristic self-confidence, she asked France's president to assist 17 migrant families who were struggling without the correct paperwork. "I'm tough because I have six brothers. That's why I fight for women."

At a gourmet level, it is migrant and migrant-fusion recipes that can be found all across Marseille. The restaurant atop MUSEM serves a prime example with its culinary deconstruction of the famed city dish bouillabaisse, a "poor man's stew" that infuses imported saffron and tomatoes with local rockfish. Then there are hipster-Maghreb patisseries such as MinaKouk that create avant-garde pigeon *pastilla* as well as Franco-Arabi-macaron. Marseille tourism bosses sell the city by inviting

Restaurant AM par Alexandre Mazzia has received a Michelin Star for its artful fusions of flavors. Chef Mazzia, who grew up in the Republic of Congo, says his dishes "are a metaphor for the influences every resident transmits."



food bloggers from across France, North America and Asia. An Instagram generation strolls the street snapping Tunisian favorites like wafer-thin, oozy-egg *brick à l'œuf*, or Turkish *manti*, a ravioli topped with creamy yogurt. Marseille chefs of every background are grafting contemporary takes onto a culinary movement that first set sail in Aegean triremes 2,600 years ago.

Nowhere is this trend more compelling than at AM par Alexandre Mazzia, a restaurant a block from the Stade Vélo-

drome, home of the top-ranked soccer squad Olympique de Marseille. Here Michelin-starred chef Alexandre Mazzia has turned Marseille's migrant flavors, including Turkish sumac and Nigerian manioc, into world-beating fare. "My own story is typical of Marseille," says Mazzia. His paternal grandfather was an Italian saxophonist who made a mean saffron risotto, while his mother's father was a Corsican fisherman. "Therefore, it was psychologically easy for my Marseille family to emigrate to Congo in the 1970s." There, Mazzia's father took a job selecting hardwood timber for global export from the rainforest of Mayombe.

Mazzia was born in 1976 in Pointe-Noire in the Republic of Congo. Like Marseillais of other backgrounds, he grew up eating *saka-saka*, a pesto made of manioc, fish and palm oil. "When I came to live in France at age 15, I felt at home in Marseille," he says. "Indeed, my dishes are a metaphor for the influences every resident transmits." And what fusions they are: Algae chips dotted with sweet-potato jellies, topped with bottarga roe; langoustines wrapped in balls of tapioca, a West African staple, that pop in the mouth like caviar and a frozen Franco-Maghreb gem of raspberry and harisa, whose flavor serenades like Mediterranean waves and then sears like the Sahara.

It's a long way from beef bourguignon. As Mazzia says, "People from Paris now come to me. The restaurant is booked solid for the next two months."

Mazzia now works on culinary projects across the city including private after-hours access to the Musée Cantini gallery of fine art, where paintings like Paul Signac's "Entrée du Port de Marseille" show steamships delivering goods from across the globe. Mazzia takes inspiration from these canvases'



Residents walk along the Le Vieux Port (The Old Port), where for centuries people from across the Mediterranean stopped to trade—and where many began a longer journey, staying on and investing themselves in the fabric and future of France's third-largest city.

watery rhythms to create dishes for intelligentsia-based foodways road-tested for centuries by migrants.

"The staff at my restaurant l'AM come from 11 countries, from Comoros to Korea," he says. That is as many nationalities as fielded by the current Olympique de Marseille soccer team, which has won the Coupe de France trophy a record 10 times.

"The richness of Marseille is its mix of cultures," he says. "Together we win." 🌐



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# The Modernist



WRITTEN BY **Matthew Teller**  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **Andrew Shaylor**

**Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi bustles. There's an energy about him that fills a room. Words tumble, but you sense that however quickly his syllables form in the air, the brain behind them is much faster.**

He also likes to move. I've interviewed a lot of people, but nobody else has interrupted a discussion to ask, "Can I stand up?" and then kept on answering my questions while pacing to and fro as I nodded from my swiveling office chair.

I first met him in 2012, when he led me on an architectural tour around his home city of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). My notebook that day was a sweat-spattered mess of scribble as I scampered to keep up with him.

This time I tracked him down to talk art at the Arab World Institute in Paris. Al Qassemi, 40, is among the leaders of a cultural shift that over the last decade has brought modern and

contemporary art from the Arab world to global attention.

"I remember the first work I bought, [a painting of] a door by [Emirati artist] Abdul Qader Al Rais," he says. "It was in an exhibition in the spring of 2002, and he painted it a couple of months before. I just thought, 'This is a real interesting guy. Let's buy his work.' It's a watercolor—he really is a master of watercolor—and I liked that he had drawn an old door and window in the UAE. That was the beginning."

First, to mark traps for the unwary: "Sultan" is his given name, not a title, even though branches of the Al Qassemi family rule both Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah, two of the

seven emirates that comprise the UAE. Even more confusingly, the amir of Sharjah is an exact namesake, except that in English, the amir spells it “Sultan Al Qasimi.” As a result, despite keeping his father’s given name Sooud, Al Qassemi is sometimes mistaken—particularly online—for the amir.

But working as a columnist, political speaker and social-affairs analyst has given Al Qassemi his own public profile. His social-media reach grew rapidly after 2011 when, as a non-resident fellow at the Dubai School of Government, he garnered worldwide attention for tweeting real-time translation and commentary in English on fast-moving news events from the Middle East.

Invitations to lecture followed, along with appearances on CNN, BBC and other news media, and bylines in global publications from *Foreign Policy* to *The New York Times*.

His Twitter followers number half a million, though he tells me that lately the interactions have become “overwhelming,” forcing him to pull back. Shortly after our meeting, he stopped tweeting altogether, deactivated his 80,000-follower Facebook account and capped his Instagram feed to his existing 23,000 followers.

“My use of social media has changed. I’m not posting breaking news [anymore]; it’s predominantly culture. I post about art,” he says.

This is where Al Qassemi is creating even deeper impact.

In 2010 he established the Barjeel Art Foundation, based on his own collection. Barjeel has since grown to become one of the most dynamic art institutions in the region, in part through its continuous program of exhibitions in Sharjah and beyond. It exists to overturn common perceptions of Arab art as derivative (or nonexistent), and to expand knowledge by promoting hitherto underappreciated genres to galleries and art markets around the world, and to individuals via its encyclopedic website.

Buoyed by recent experience teaching a spring 2017 workshop on Middle Eastern art at New York University (NYU), he talks eloquently of art’s long history in Arab countries, of how the region’s first art exhibitions in the modern era took place in Egypt in the 1870s and how the opening of the first art schools in the region in 1906 was fueled by artists from minority religious communities as well as support from the grand mufti of Egypt, Muhammad Abduh.

From starting out collecting only the newest contemporary art, Al Qassemi has become an unabashed modernist.

“I still like work from the last two decades,” he says, “but we’re looking now at the first half of the 20th century, and absolutely my favorite decade for art, the 1960s.

“That was an incredible decade in the Arab world. People saw art as a way to push back against the remnants of colonialism. Governments were supporting artists. They

Hanging on a panel at the Arab World Institute’s 2017 Barjeel Foundation show “100 Masterpieces of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art” are works dating from 1956 to 2014 by Mohamad Said Baalbaki, Lorna Selim, Naim Ismail, Walid Al Shami, Atta Sabri, Paul Guiragossian, Abdul Hay Mosallam Zarara and Abdul Rahman Al Ma’ani. *Opposite:* Al Qassemi on the roof of the institute in Paris.



**“We want to  
take the art to as  
many museums  
as possible.**

**Is it cultural  
diplomacy?**

**You bet it is!”**



understood the importance of culture. So you see Iraqis like Shakir Hassan Al Said and Jawad Salim; you see Egyptians like Hamed Ewais and Abdel Hadi El Gazzar; Lebanese like Saloua Raouda Choucair and Chafic Abboud, and on and on—a lot of great artists using art to create a new [national] identity. I love this. It was an expression of a modern, independent, confident [outlook], which we don't see in 1980s or 1990s works.”

Al Qassemi's profile hasn't gone to his head. Quite the reverse. In naming his foundation, he chose an Arabic word with deep cultural resonance locally. *Barjeel* means “wind tower,” a feature of traditional architecture that is distinctive to the UAE and its broader region.

“I have not put my name on this institution. People may know me as a writer, but they know Barjeel [independently]. Or they may know Barjeel but not me. I don't matter,” he says.

Is he doing anything different from what philanthropic art collectors have long done?

“Art is certainly reaching people now in a way that it wasn't before. I see myself as a very small player who's trying to influence as many minds as possible, presenting the Arab world in a different way. There are a lot of galleries, a lot of talks; this TV show I present [“Art Plus”] that has 300,000 to 400,000 viewers per episode, with hundreds of comments from people discussing an artwork. I see Barjeel as a private foundation for the public good.”

That mission, he adds, includes holding a mirror up to society: Barjeel showcases a model of the Arab world's diversity and inclusivity. Works by artists from the region's ethnic and religious minorities share space on equal terms

with works by establishment figures. Al Qassemi wants to lead by example.

“Sometimes the most difficult conversations we have are amongst ourselves,” he says, ruefully. “I feel [Barjeel] is a positive influence.”

As part of its outreach, Barjeel has loaned works from its thousand-strong collection to dozens of institutions worldwide. Shows in the Middle East have so far included Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait City, Amman and Alexandria. Exhibitions in Singapore and Toronto led to an unprecedented four-part show in London at the prominent Whitechapel Art Gallery that opened in September 2015 and ran for more than a year. Further worldwide exhibitions culminated in a sequence of shows across the eastern US throughout 2017.

“If you think of our Whitechapel exhibition, that had 330,000 visitors,” says Al Qassemi. “A third of a million people were influenced, one way or the other—Tehran, 20,000 visitors, Toronto, 60,000 visitors, and so on. I'm happy. I'm astounded, actually.”

When Al Qassemi and I met in Paris, the Arab World Institute was hosting another Barjeel show: “100 Masterpieces of Modern and Contemporary Art.” By the exhibition's close, nearly 20,000 people had passed through the doors. The institute's president, Jack Lang, tells me visitor feedback had been enthusiastic.

“Barjeel plays an important role in the cultural landscape of the Arab world,” Lang says.

“Sultan Al Qassemi is building a collection to benefit art history. It is a major study source and promotes better knowledge of the art of the Middle East, through public programs [and also because] the collection's database is



A visitor takes notes in front of Egyptian artist Ahmed Morsi's "Self Portrait," painted in 1970 using oil on wood. Through Barjeel, says Arab World Institute President Jack Lang, Al Qassemi is "building a collection to benefit art history. It is a major study source, and it promotes better knowledge of the art of the Middle East."

online. That gives easy access to key information on most Arab artists."

Lang's thoughts reinforce those of critic and Whitechapel Art Gallery Director Iwona Blazwick, who told *ARTnews* that the gallery's Barjeel exhibition was "the first show in the UK to present, in a non-anthropological way, a modern Arab sensibility. What took us so long to get there?"

Salwa Mikdadi, visiting associate professor of art history at NYU Abu Dhabi, speaks of Al Qassemi's "indomitable drive."

"Barjeel has succeeded more than any other institution in presenting early 20th-century and post-colonial modern Arab art to mainstream art institutions outside the Arab world," she says. "It [has helped] contextualize current practices within the trajectory of the region's long history of art."

A key question facing Al Qassemi through all this is how best to leverage what has become considerable influence. What should Barjeel's next move be? He tells me he'd like to build a museum, but then he pivots in mid-thought.

"If I don't spend for four or five years, I could [do it]. But I think sharing the art is much more important. Right now we have 200 works on loan somewhere in the world, and several exhibitions in the works: India, Mexico, Tunisia. We want to take the art to as many museums as possible. Is it cultural diplomacy? You bet it is! We're going to counter the stereotypes with everything we've got. Imagine if you had a hundred organizations like Barjeel pushing Arab art into international arenas: How would the world perceive [the

Middle East] differently?"

With characteristic clarity, though, Al Qassemi also sees the summit of the mountain he is climbing. From Paris he tweeted a snapshot of people in the Musée d'Orsay crowding around Van Gogh's famous 1889 self-portrait, to which he added his own caption that referenced Arab modernists: "One day, in my lifetime, people will congregate to see the works of Mahmoud Said, Kadhim Hayder, Marwan, Saloua Raouda Chocair, et al."

Half a million people saw that message on their Twitter feeds. Al Qassemi—whose most recent appointment is to the board of trustees of Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art—is out to win opinions, one by one if necessary. And he's still the fastest walker I've ever met. 🌐



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 <https://vimeo.com/139315815>

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# KHARTOUM

## A TALE OF *Two Rivers*

*Written by* LOUIS WERNER

*Photographed by* DAVID DEGNER



Wherever two rivers meet, one often renames the other. In Paris, the Seine takes in the Marne. In Allahabad, the Ganges subsumes the Yamuna. In St. Louis, the Mississippi swallows the Missouri. But in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, the Blue Nile and the White Nile arrive as equals in stature and equivalents in name, so at their confluence they both change their names as they become, for the next 3,000 kilometers to the Mediterranean Sea, the Nile or, in Arabic, *bahr al-nil*, the Nile Sea.

Khartoum is different in another way, too, because the meeting of two rivers spawned three cities, each on its own bank. To the southeast lies Khartoum proper; to the west Omdurman; and to the northeast Khartoum Bahri (“Khartoum Seaward”). Each has a distinct outward face, origin

story and role in the history of the peoples of Sudan, as well as symbolic landmarks to tell its own tale.

To corrupt the famous metaphor Herodotus coined about Egypt, one could say Khartoum is the gift of the two Niles. While South Sudan broke away from Sudan in 2011, taking with it about a quarter of the territory of what had been since 1956 Africa's largest nation, the tri-city conurbation at the heart of this increasingly parched country might soon be home to more than 10 million people, almost double from just a decade ago, if growth continues apace. Refugees from neighboring nations, including South Sudan, migration from the countryside and natural growth all add up.

Originally a fishing village, Khartoum was largely unrecorded until the Ottoman Turks arrived in the early 1820s under the banner of their independent governors, the



High-rises in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, poke into the sky on the peninsula formed where the briskly flowing White Nile, right, and the slower-moving Blue Nile join. A tri-city conurbation of Khartoum proper, Omdurman and Khartoum Bahri ("Khartoum Seaward") has grown up where the rivers meet. Lower: Residents enjoy reggae at a Khartoum music club.



khedives of Egypt. Many later Western accounts are largely fictional or self-aggrandizing. These include the 1966 film *Khartoum* about the death of British General Charles Gordon in 1885 at the hands of Sudanese led by Muhammad Ahmad ibn al-Sayyid, with several of England's most famous actors in blackface playing Sudanese historical characters. There was also *The River War*, Winston Churchill's grim eyewitness record of the 1898 Battle of Omdurman, in which the British recaptured Khartoum at a cost of an estimated 10,000 Sudanese casualties against 47 British.

Khartoum's settlement by outsiders began as army quarters, consulates and trading posts. In 1862 Samuel Baker arrived with his Hungarian wife, Florence, after a year exploring Ethiopia up the Atbara River and down the Blue Nile, expecting a bit of restful luxury while preparing to

ascend the upper White Nile.

But it was not what they had hoped for. "The difference between the view of Khartoum at the distance of a mile, with the sun shining upon the bright river Nile in the foreground, to the appearance of the town upon close inspection, was about equal to the scenery of a theatre as regarded from the boxes or from the stage," Baker wrote in *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia*, published in 1867. He was disappointed that up close, "the sense of smell was outraged." Baker sought out the British consulate, with its rampant lion and unicorn crest over the door, in "the Belgravia of Khartoum," as he called it.

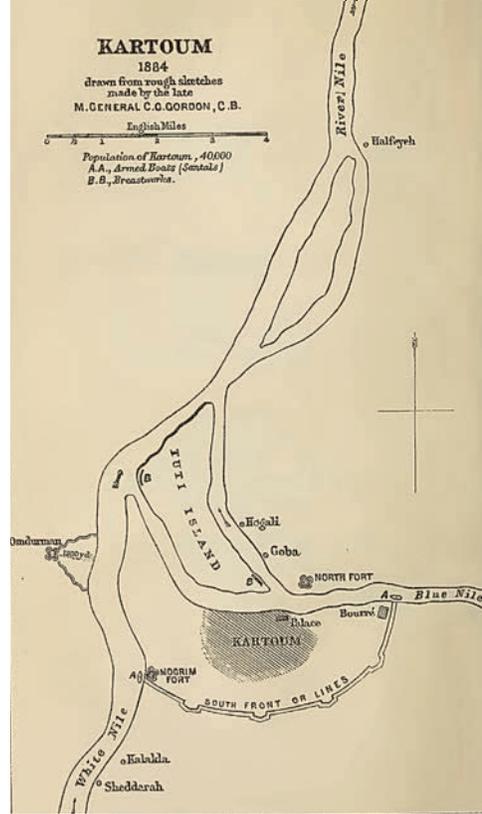
Residents of that posh London neighborhood would have been surprised to find, as Baker did, chained leopards and loose ostriches inside the compound. And they would be amused that 100 years later the Belgravia brand produced Khartoum's best dairy products and its logo featured a Guernsey cow.

The logical place to start a visit to Khartoum is at the point of confluence, a small peninsula on the side of Khartoum proper called *moqran al-nilayn*, the meeting of the two Niles. Here the Blue Nile, its headwaters 1,500 kilometers away in Ethiopia to the southeast, flows sluggishly, and the White Nile, born on the border of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo some 2,300 kilometers south, runs briskly.

A dilapidated family fun park lies near the point, but the view across the waters to Omdurman, Bahri and the flood-prone, paisley-shaped island called Tuti tells Khartoum's founding story best. It was an ideal site for urban growth: plenty of water to drink and alluvial mud banks for both cultivating and brickmaking along wide rivers for transport south, east and north.

Omdurman in the mid-19th century was just a village with a ferry crossing. But after Muhammad Ahmad ibn al-Sayyid's successful uprising against Anglo-Egyptian forces, in 1885 it became the capital.

As quoted by historian Robert Kramer in his book *Holy City on the Nile*, al-Sayyid's successor, "The Khalifa" Abdullahi ibn Muhammad, announced in 1885 to his countrymen:



British General Charles Gordon, who lost his life in Omdurman in 1885 in a battle against Sudanese fighters, drew this map showing Khartoum and Omdurman with their defenses in 1884.

"O beloved ones ... for the interests of the faith and your guidance and [for] the betterment of your religion, we have thought fit that you should move from Khartoum ... dwelling among us with your children and all that belongs to you."

Omdurman's symbolic heart today lies in the vicinity of the Khalifa House Museum, once ibn Muhammad's headquarters. Not far away on the riverbank are the crumbling mud ramparts of an Ottoman-built fort and the *SS Bordein*, an iron paddle wheeler assembled in 1869 in Cairo from English-made parts.

The British first sent the *Bordein* to Sudan to assist Samuel Baker's mission on the Upper Nile, and then it became Gordon's lifeline during the siege of Khartoum, during which it carried to safety the six volumes of his journals—the last ever heard from him—which became an eponymous classic of Victorian heroic literature after his death. The *Bordein* was later captured by Sudanese forces, recaptured by Lord Kitchener on the first day of the Battle of Omdurman,

Visitors view a battle scene at the Khalifa House Museum in Omdurman, which became the capital after Sudanese forces under Muhammad Ahmad ibn al-Sayyid defeated Anglo-Egyptian troops in 1885. In 1898 the British recaptured Omdurman from Adullahi ibn Muhammad, whose house is the site of the museum. Independence came to Sudan in 1956.



and then fell to rust and ruin until the tourism ministry put it on display.

Ahfad University for Women (*ahfad* means grandchildren in Arabic) is probably Omdurman's most famous living institution with roots in the rebellion. Established at the turn of the 20th century as a girls' school by Babikir Badri, a former soldier, it today offers undergraduate and advanced degrees in the social and health sciences.

The founder's philosophy of schooling is a pragmatic one aimed at everyday problem-solving and support for education as a path to autonomy and independence. This is evident in the university's continuing efforts to recruit students from marginal areas, including Bejas from the Red Sea hills, Darfuris from the west and Nuba girls from the south.

The campus green buzzes with the voices of students between classes. Psychology major Hind Ismail from Omdurman, rural-education major Reem Tariq Habib from the United Arab Emirates—daughter of a Turkish father and Egyptian mother—and business major Roshan Hasan, daughter of an Indian diplomat who plans to continue her studies at her father's new post in Japan, are all 19-year-old sophomores. They say that a women's college gives them the same advantages in terms of intellectual space and confidence that female students seek elsewhere. That Ahfad is part of Women's Education Worldwide, an international consortium of single-sex universities, is no surprise.

Abdel Moneim Badri, a 77-year-old professor of education at Ahfad, has vivid memories of Omdurman before Sudanese independence in 1956. He remembers swimming in the Nile at the cement steps known as *al-nimar* (the numbers), so named for the flood-gauge levels painted on each one, and then rubbing his wet body with dust and sand so his mother would not know he had broken his promise to stay out of the water.

"My mother only had two worries, drowning in the Nile and being run over by a tramcar," he says with a smile. "But we still would swim, and we always played in the tram's tracks, dodging their wheels. Back then,

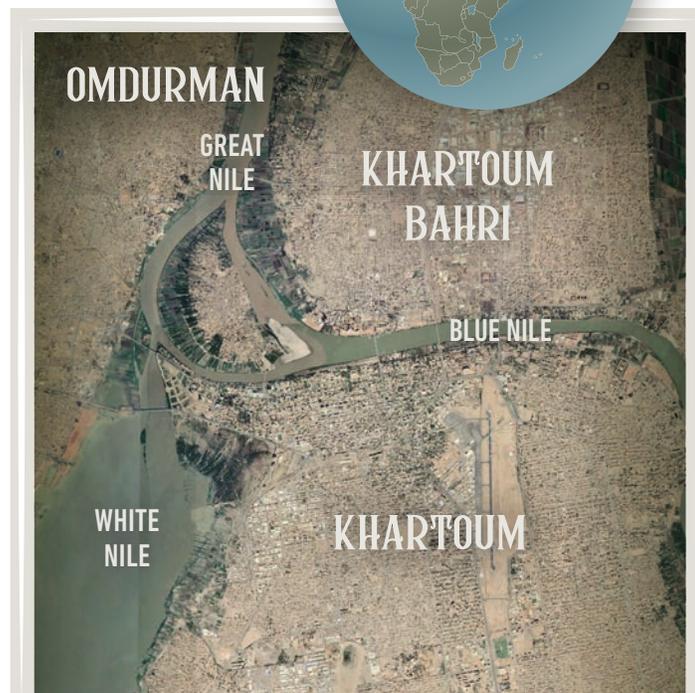


The shell of the 19th-century British paddle-wheel steamer *SS Bordein*, above, sits on display near the old Omdurman fortifications. It was one of five such ships ordered by Sir Samuel Baker from England for his 1871 Nile expedition. *Right*: A Chinese-built locomotive pulls out of the Khartoum Bahri train station en route to Atbara, with a stop at pyramid-rich Meroë—a 330-kilometer trip. *Lower*: A recent satellite image, covering approximately the same territory as the map *opposite*, highlights dramatic urbanization.



Omdurman was like a village. Everyone knew everybody, so to walk in the street meant having always to stop and say hello. It was best to stick to the back alleys if you were in a hurry, or did not want to be seen by others."

If Omdurman is the Arab heart of the capital, representing the history and culture of the Sudanese themselves rather than of their former Ottoman and British colonial rulers, then another important voice in that story is that of a migrant from the countryside. KhairAllah Khair al-Sayyid, a former camel herder and trail boss of export herds to Egypt, hails from Dar al-Kababish in Sudan's central state of North Kordofan. He came to Omdurman during the



devastating 1984 drought that killed his own livestock. He eventually bought a lot in Omdurman's sprawling settlement Dar al-Salam, built his house and started his family.

KhairAllah's oldest son, 27-year-old Suliman, could not be more unlike his father, who can neither read nor write and only knows that he older than 70. Suliman is studying English at Al-Neelain University in Khartoum and keeps up with the world on social media. The story of Suliman's younger brother Mohammed is yet another facet of modern Sudan: Mohammed dropped out of high school after catching gold fever, and he has recently graduated from hand-digging deep manholes to drilling, blasting and mechanical earthmoving in surface pits.

"Both may be right or both may be wrong about their future," says their father. "Who knows where success lies in these times? My camel days are over, and my sons do not even ride them."

The University of Khartoum, founded in 1902 as Gordon Memorial College, is the pride of Sudan's educational system. Its main buildings were designed in a cross of neo-Ottoman and Collegiate Gothic styles by the khedive's personal architect, a Greek named Dimitrius Fabricius Pasha. They contrast with the modernist, sleekly domed examination hall built in mid-century across the lawn.

Ibrahim el-Zein Soghayroun, a history professor, was born in 1936 in Khartoum proper, or as his generation often called it, Khartoum Qibli. (*Qibli* literally means "toward the *qibla*,"

or toward Makkah, an adjectival form often used in Egypt, where one faces south when praying, and thus its colloquial meaning is "southern.") He graduated from Hantoub Secondary School, considered the most elite of its day. He remembers fondly when his headmaster L.W. Brown was invited to Buckingham Palace to honor his schoolmate Jaafar Nimeiry, the fourth president of Sudan, who served from 1969 to 1985.

"All the students were proud that our school had been recognized by the queen herself," he says. "I never felt that Khartoum was just a small town far

away from the world. From the post office, you could send a telegram to any place on the globe for just a few piasters."

Another Khartoum landmark is the Acropole Hotel, founded in 1952 by Greek immigrant Panaghis Pagoulatos and now operated by his sons Athanasios and George. Seventy-two-year-old Athanasios smiles as he remembers the days before independence when the Greek community numbered some 20,000 throughout the country.

"Our Hellenic Club was busy every day with dancing and sports," he says. "We would take picnics by motorboat from the sailing club to a yellow sand beach at a place called Om Doum (Mother of the Doum Palm) on the Blue Nile. Our tennis and basketball teams were the best in the city."

The Acropole, a place seemingly out of an Agatha Christie novel, is still fully booked in high season as archeologists head out to the pyramids and temples near Meroë, about 200 kilometers north of the capital. Only the memories of Khar-

## "I NEVER FELT THAT KHARTOUM WAS JUST A SMALL TOWN FAR AWAY FROM THE WORLD."

The population of Khartoum and its sister cities may soon touch 10 million, twice the number of a decade ago, at the current rate of growth. Here, the road is crowded near a major bus station close to the city's Great Mosque.





Former trail boss KhairAllah Khair al-Sayyid poses with his sons at their home in Omdurman. He drove camels from his home in central Sudan north to Egypt until a drought cost him his livestock. "My camel days are over," he says, "and my sons do not even ride them."

toum's two other luxury hotels remain from that earlier time, when the British were almost as common on the streets as the Sudanese, before the independent government switched vehicle traffic overnight from left- to right-side driving in a clean break with the colonial past. The Victoria Hotel has been demolished, and the slickly refurbished Grand Hotel is now part of an international chain.

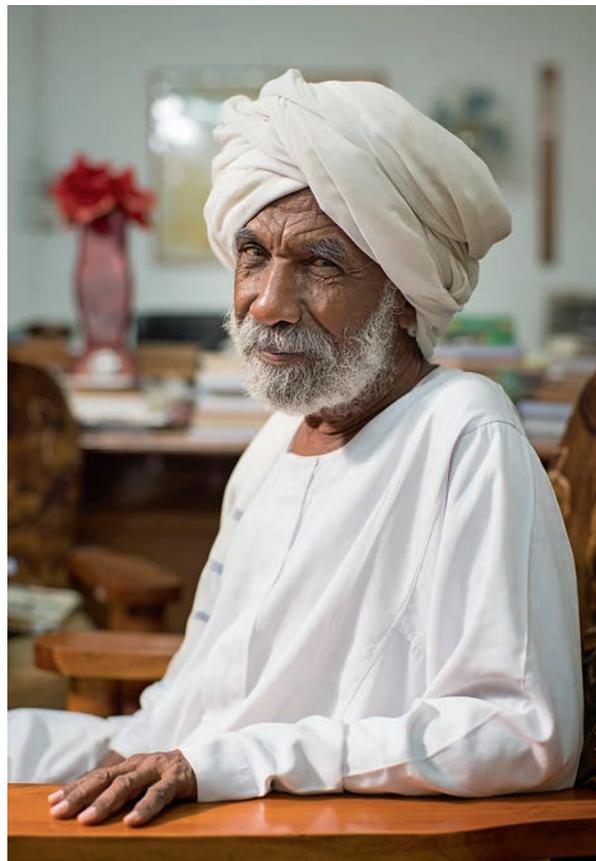
There are four bridges across the Blue Nile between Khartoum and Bahri. At the foot of one is the book-lined office of Jaafar Mirghani, director of the Sudan Civilization Institute and a native son of Bahri. "Do not be deceived by today's jumbled city," he says. "What may look like *'ashwaa'i* (haphazard) planning to an outsider is in fact underwritten by history."

Kitchener laid out his colonial city of Khartoum in a tight grid "from the river to the railroad" and designated Bahri, then largely open ground, for warehouses, dockyards and repair shops, says Mirghani, who remembers its three original villages, or *hillas*: Hamid, Khojali and al-Sebabi. Dockyard jobs

brought migrants from downriver, and their residential quarters sprang up there, too: Danaqla, for people from Dongola; Shelaliyya, for people from the cataracts (*shelal* in Arabic) on the border with Egypt; and Amlak (after the Arabic word for real estate), for Egyptian office clerks.

From the Bahri train station, a train leaves daily for Shendi near Meroë, the pyramid-rich city that from 800 BCE to 350 CE was capital of the Kingdom of Kush, and onward along the Nile to the city of Atbara, now the line's final destination.

The morning hour of departure is a study in contradictions. A Chinese bullet locomotive pulls five sleek cars on tracks laid down and barely touched since the time of Lord Kitchener. Passengers rush to board for a six-hour trip that by bus takes half that time. Its mere 330-kilometer route is a fragment of what was once Africa's most extensive railroad network of



Jaafar Mirghani, director of the Sudan Civilization Institute in Khartoum, warns visitors not to be tricked by the seemingly chaotic design of the metropolis. "What may look like *'ashwaa'i* (haphazard) planning" is rooted in history, he says.



Students chat and check classwork on the steps of the main library at the University of Khartoum, founded in 1902 as Gordon Memorial College. The school is at the top of Sudan's educational system. Lower: A vendor displays his wares at the weekly Nubian wrestling matches in Khartoum Bahri.

more than 4,500 kilometers that is now mostly derelict. But to open the Sudan Railways Corporation website—with its “future projects” page—is to glimpse a dream that desperately wants to come true again.

Bahri's historical mixing of ethnicities from near and far continues today, too. On weekend afternoons in al-Haj Yousef district, young men, the majority of them migrant workers—Fur, Hamar, Arab, but mostly Nuba—from the western provinces gather in an open arena with banked seating for wrestling matches.

The wrestling skills on show are of the highest order. Many of the athletes belong to Greco-Roman and freestyle teams, and they train accordingly, but the technique here is traditional Nuba: in a sand pit with sand freely applied to key grip spots on one's own body—chest, upper arm, wrist and nape of the neck—that defiantly dares the opponent to grab and attempt take-downs. (This makes it almost an opposite of Turkish oil wrestling, in which a slippery escape is encouraged, but here, such an attitude is seen as retreat.)

The wrestlers are ranked not by weight category but by skill class, from *shibli* (lion cub, or bottom) to *wasit* (middle) and *faris* (knight, or top), and each one belongs to a club. Muhammad Hanu Anima is 18 years old and 80 kilograms, and he belongs to Ittihad al-Burkan, the Volcano Union. His teammate Badri al-Din Marwaha is just five kilograms heavier, but at age 42

and with 30 years of experience, he has attained the rank of *faris*. The league's two oldest teams are named *Usd al-Ghaba*, (Lions of the Forest), and *Suqur al-Jidyan* (Falcons of the Valley, i.e., Secretary birds), and they evoke the same fierce loyalties and rivalries as Omdurman's soccer clubs al-Mireekh and al-Hilal.

Many wrestlers take a *nom de combat* with comedic overtones. Magirus, aka Adam Hamid, from Masalamiyya village near El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan, is named for a German truck. He claims 400 victories in an average match time of two minutes.

“I don't have time to stick around,” he says with a shrug. He belongs to the national Gre-

co-Roman team, and he has competed in the World Championships in Ankara, Turkey. “When in training I eat only fish and camel meat and drink only milk and fruit juice,” he explains. “But now, out of season for international matches, I eat as I please.”

An unrestricted diet does not seem to hurt his skills, for he battles to a draw with a fighter named Damar (Destruction), from South Kordofan. Damar seems pleased to have avoided Magirus's pin, so he climbs the ring's top rail and drinks the crowd's adoration.

The day's most anticipated match is between the nearly





Sightseers snap selfies as they sit on a bridge over the Blue Nile between Khartoum and Tuti Island late in the afternoon.

Nuba Mountains, and al-Tahir (the Virtuous One). Their match also ends in a draw, but then Influenza does what would be unthinkable in almost any other sport: He hefts his opponent high onto his shoulders and parades him around the ring as if al-Tahir had won. Perhaps that is how he felt after eking out a mere draw against an opponent a full third of a meter shorter.

The matches conclude by sundown, and minibuses take spectators back to their homes in Bahri, whose side-by-side mix of glistening villas, humble shacks, international-brand outlets and hole-in-the-wall stalls seem to free it of the sometimes-heavy historical legacies that underpin Omdurman and Khartoum, as different as those two are from each other.

If one takes a bird's-eye view over this tripartite metropolis, seeking to generalize about where it has been and where it is going from the story of a single individual, one might wish to meet Sayyid Bashir Abu Jaib.

Abu Jaib's roots are in the camel trade in central Sudan, but his life now is mostly in the city—a foot still there and a foot now here. He lives in one of Bahri's new neighborhoods, keeps his trading office in old Omdurman and, to avoid traffic, he sometimes commutes there via Khartoum on bridges

over first the Blue Nile and then the White.

His oldest child is a pharmacist newly graduated from university, his wife is an engineer, and the business associates who drop by in a constant stream are from his home territory. A cacophony of car horns bleeds through his office window as he discusses the prices of livestock, gum Arabic and *karkady* (a dried part of the hibiscus plant that makes a refreshing tea). Perhaps there is a margin he can act upon.

Perhaps he is ready to broker a deal between the countryside and foreign markets. If so, the mosaic of Khartoum is the best place to make it happen. 🌐

## ABU JAIB'S ROOTS ARE IN THE CAMEL TRADE IN CENTRAL SUDAN, AND HIS OLDEST CHILD IS A PHARMACIST AND HIS WIFE IS AN ENGINEER.



**Louis Werner** is a writer and filmmaker living in New York. **David Degner** ([www.daviddegner.com](http://www.daviddegner.com)) holds a master's degree in photojournalism from Western Kentucky University, where he also majored in philosophy. He lived in Egypt for eight years, where he edited *Panorama*, a journal of photography. He is currently pursuing projects in West Africa.



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THE  
SHAMPOOING  
SURGEON  
OF  
BRIGHTON

WRITTEN

by

GERALD ZARR

Historian William Dalrymple titled his 1998 review of *The Travels of Dean Mahomet: An Eighteenth-Century Journey through India*, “An Indian with a Triple First.” It was an apt choice: *The Travels* was the first book ever published by an Indian writer in English, and the author was also the founder of London’s first Indian restaurant. To complete his hat trick, Mahomed—the spelling he used later in life—made a lasting name for himself in the English seaside resort of Brighton by bathing the royal, rich and famous.

Mahomed’s *Travels* would have remained confined to the rare-book sections of the few great libraries that hold an original copy if it were not for Michael H. Fisher, a professor of history at Oberlin College in Ohio. He persuaded the University of California Press and Oxford India Press to republish Mahomed’s memoir in 1996 complete with his own biographical sketch of Mahomed.

Last spring I spent a week in London and Brighton tracing the footsteps of Dean Mahomed, which is an Anglicized version of his given name, Din Muhammad. I sought out first Rozina Visram, whose 1986 book *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700–1947* discovered Sake Dean Mahomed for our contemporary era. We met

In his 1822 compilation of “detailed accounts of the various cases,” Sake Dean Mahomed included this artist’s view of his bathhouse on the coast in Brighton, England. Inside, customers found frescoes showing fruit trees and gardens “in the most glowing colours with Indian landscapes.” The building stands today as a hotel.



at the British Library. My first question to her was why she had featured Mahomed in her book. Her answer: “I wanted to rescue him from obscurity.” She explained it was she who had inspired Fisher to republish *Travels*.

The next day I took a 57-minute train ride to Brighton. Within minutes of arrival, to my great surprise, I spotted, on the side of a number 822 city bus, the name “Sake Dean Mahomed.” (He adopted “Sake” as an Anglicization of *shaykh* in the 1820s.) I soon learned this bus sign was part of a civic campaign to honor notable citizens, and that there are today more traces of Mahomed in Brighton than one might expect. A formal portrait of Mahomed, attired as a Georgian gentleman, hangs in the Brighton Museum, painted by English artist Thomas Mann Baynes. Along the sea, the Queen’s Hotel stands on the site that was once Mahomed’s Baths. At 32 Grand Parade is the house where he died, aged 92.

Dean Mahomed was born in 1759 in Patna, today the capital of India’s eastern state of Bihar, about 600 kilometers from Kolkata. According to Mahomed’s autobiographical sketch, his father was a *subedar*, a military rank roughly equal to lieutenant, the second highest permitted to Indians under British colonial rule. He served in a battalion of *sepoys* (Indian and Bengali soldiers) in the Bengal Army of the East India Company. Mahomed was 11 when his father was killed in battle.

Some years later he took service under an Anglo-Irish

officer named Captain Godfrey Baker and, like his father, rose through the ranks. In 1782 Captain Baker decided to return to Ireland, and he invited Mahomed to accompany him. “Convinced that I should suffer much uneasiness of mind, in the absence of my best friend,” Mahomed resigned his commission and left India—never to return. Twenty-five years old, Mahomed settled in 1784 in the small Irish port city of Cork, where he worked for the Baker family on their estate for the next 22 years.

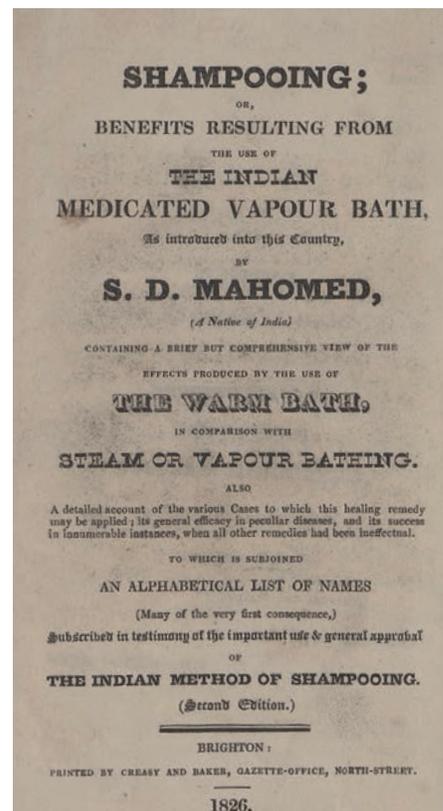
He also went to school to master English, which he did successfully enough, because it was from Cork in 1794 that he published his historic two-volume *Travels*. His work, says Fisher, shows an “elegant command over the high English literary conventions of the day.” To market the book, Mahomed took out a series of newspaper advertisements, and he published *Travels* by subscription, as was common at the time. “Testifying to his acceptance as a literary figure,” says Fisher, “a total of 320 people entrusted him with a deposit ... long in advance of the book’s delivery.”

In 1806, at age 47, Mahomed moved to London and married again. He headed for fashionable Portman Square, home and haunt to former East India Company employees referred to—pejoratively, at times—as nabobs, an Anglicization of the Mughal title *nawab*. He found employment with the richest nabob of them all, Sir Basil Cochrane, who had made a fortune in India on supply contracts with the British Navy. Cochrane had published several tracts promoting the use of “vapor” (steam) baths to relieve medical complaints, and he had even installed one at his home. Mahomed is believed to have added an Indian treatment of therapeutic massage to Cochrane’s vapor treatment, thus creating the salubrious formula that later was to become the sensation in Brighton.

In 1810, around the corner from Portman Square at 34 George Street, Mahomed opened London’s first Indian restaurant, called the

Hindoostane Coffee House. *The Epicure’s Almanack*—London’s first restaurant guide—described it as a place “for the Nobility and Gentry where they might enjoy

A colored lithograph, far left, shows Sake Dean Mahomed circa 1820, six years after he started his steam-bathing business, which he promoted through books including this one published in 1826. He is wearing an ensemble based on traditional Indian attire.





Mahomed was born in 1759 (although he would later change his birth year to 1749) in Patna in India's eastern state of Bihar, whose waterfront on the Ganges appears in this 1795 engraving. Son of an officer in the colonial army, Mahomed found service under an Irish captain who in 1784 took Mahomed back to the captain's own home to Cork, Ireland.

the Hookha with real Chilm tobacco and Indian dishes of the highest perfection.... All the dishes were dressed with curry powder, rice, cayenne and the best spices." Despite the raves, Mahomed was unable to make it a success. He declared bankruptcy two years later.

Today Portman Square is a mix of real-estate firms, hedge-fund offices and luxury apartments. Only the peaceful garden at its center seems to hold any memories of the days of the nabobs. Number 34 George Street has since been renumbered 102, and it is a tall block of serviced apartments for business travelers and tourists, a short walk from the shopper's paradise of Oxford Street. At the entrance, the City of Westminster has affixed a green plaque: "Site of Hindoostane Coffee House 1810, London's First Indian Restaurant. Owned By Sake Dean Mahomed 1759–1851."

At the age of 55, Mahomed moved to Brighton. It was 1814, the year after the publication of Jane Austen's most popular book, *Pride and Prejudice*, in which 15-year-old Lydia is consumed by a youthful infatuation with fast-growing, fashionable Brighton—sentiments that could offer a man like Mahomed an opportunity for a new start:

In Lydia's imagination, a visit to Brighton comprised every possi-

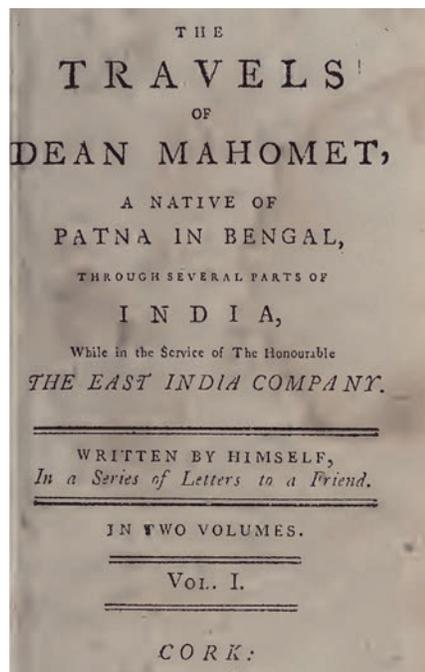
bility of human happiness. She saw, with the creative eye of fancy, the streets of that gay bathing-place.

Brighton's fame as a health resort began in the 1750s with the dissertation by Richard Russell, M.D., asserting the curative benefits of seawater. There was, however, one problem: Most people couldn't swim. This led to the development of a bathing apparatus: a small wooden room, fitted with carriage wheels, drawn into the sea by horse. After having disrobed the bather, a professional "dipper" would

dunk the patient in the sea one or more times, depending on wave conditions, weather and the client's fitness. Once the "cure" was complete, the client changed back into street clothes and the horse made the return ashore.

Mahomed offered a far more convenient, private and certainly less chilly "cure." First came a kind of early form of aromatherapy: The client lay in a heated aromatic vapor or steam bath infused with Indian oils and herbs. Af-

In Ireland Mahomed perfected his English, and in 1794 his two-volume *Travels* became the first book in English by an Indian-born author. In it he describes "champing"—shampooing—in which the client "lies, at full length, on a couch or sofa [sic], on which the operator chafes or rubs his limbs, and cracks the joints of the wrist and fingers."



TOP: LISZT COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES; RIGHT: SIMON HARRYOT; LOWER LEFT: GEORGE CRUIKSHANK / BRITISH LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES; OPPOSITE, TOP: THOMAS DANIELL / BRITISH LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

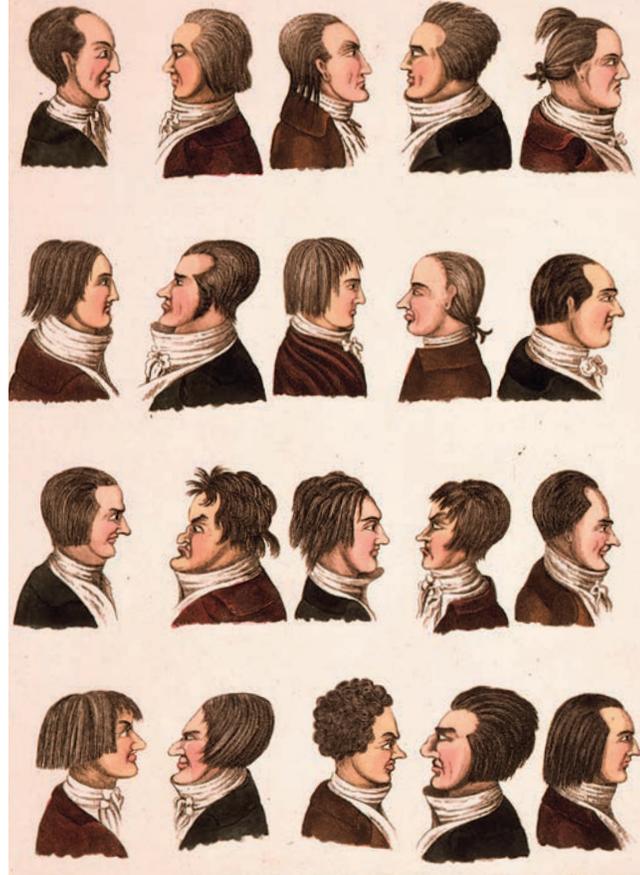
ter the client started perspiring freely, he or she was then placed inside a kind of flannel tent with sleeves protruding inwards that would allow the operator, from outside the tent, to massage the bather vigorously.

Mahomed described this process using the Hindi word *chámprná*, to knead or vigorously massage, eventually adopting an Anglicized version of it and billing himself as a “shampooing surgeon.” (Only later did “shampoo” come to mean hair-washing and hair soap.) It was around this time Mahomed added the title “Sake” to his name.

Former Royal Pavilion Director Clifford Musgrave wrote in his 1970 *Life in Brighton*:

The fashionable invalids were eager for some fresh way of whiling away their time, and the highly scented steam baths were found by many to be far more agreeable than sea-water baths, whether hot or cold, and to sufferers from rheumatism and kindred ailments the massage was soothing and relaxing. There was, moreover, the intriguing sensation that one was enjoying something of the voluptuous indulgences of the East.

Brighton’s horse-drawn “bathing machines” drew the satirical gaze of artist George Cruikshank and the entrepreneurial gaze of Mahomed, who promoted his “Indian Medicated Vapour Bath” as a healthy, safe, relaxing alternative.



Left: Ridiculing London’s nouveau-riche nabobs—a pejorative play on the Indian title *nawab* that also references their profits from the East India Company—this illustration of 20 men’s hairstyles dates from 1811, a year after Mahomed opened London’s first Indian restaurant, below, in a district popular among the nabobs. Despite rave reviews, it bankrupted him.

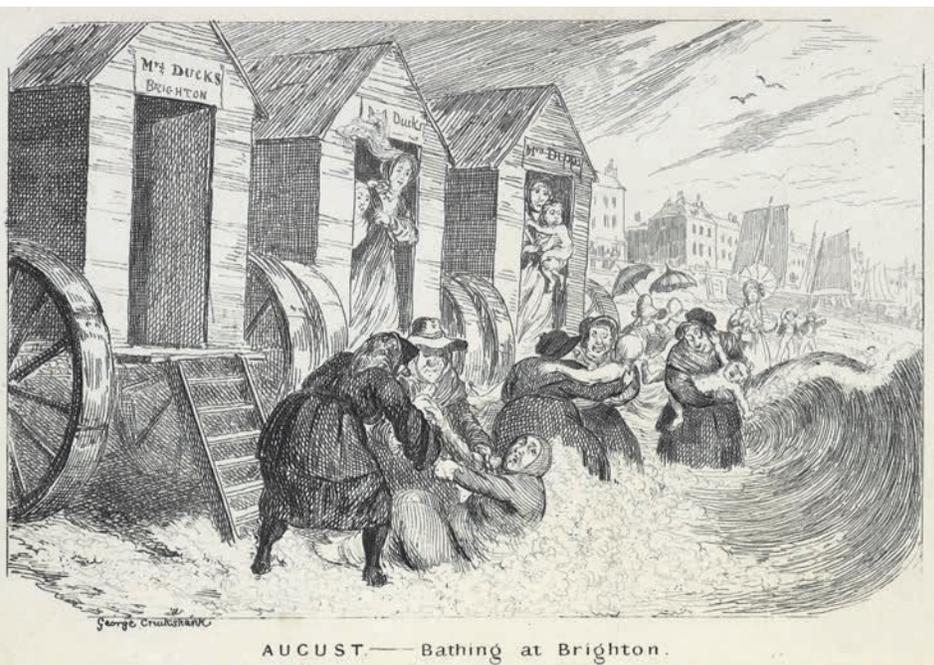


In 1820 Mahomed’s opulent, bathhouse opened on the Brighton seafront.

Visitors entered through a splendid vestibule where graphic testimonials were kept in the form of abandoned crutches, spine-stretchers, leg-irons, club-foot reformers and other paraphernalia from patients Mahomed had cured. The clientele amused themselves in reading rooms beautifully painted with Indian landscapes before moving to private marble baths. (Unseen by patients in the basement was the technology that pumped all seawater and freshwater the bathhouse required: a steam engine.)

Word spread, and quickly a visit to Mahomed’s Baths was *de rigueur* for English ladies and gentlemen as well as commoners plagued by gout, rheumatism and other maladies. Prominent figures such as Lord Castlereagh, Lord Canning, Lady Cornwallis and Sir Robert Peel frequented the establishment. So did the niece of the king of Poland, Princess Poniatowsky, who in gratitude presented Mahomed with an engraved silver cup that is now on display at the Brighton Museum. Mahomed became known simply as “Dr. Brighton.”

On my own first full day in Brighton, I went to see David Beevers, keeper of the Royal Pavilion. He explained that in another “amazing coincidence” the Royal Pavilion was being transformed by architect John Nash (designer of Buckingham Palace and much of Regency London) into a kind of Indian fantasia “just as Mahomed came to Brighton.” Nash’s client was none other than King George IV, who as prince regent had ruled for his father, George III, during the latter’s terminal illness. “Shampooing surgeon” became a title of royal appointment. In 1825 Mahomed in-



Among the devotees of Mahomed's bathing techniques was Princess Poniatowsky, niece of the King of Poland, who in 1826 presented a silver cup, cover and dish in gratitude for "perfect recovery in consequence of the treatment." Mohamed's own recovery saw him remake his career from a struggling London restaurateur to owner of several successful bathhouses in Brighton and the prestigious title of "shampooing surgeon" to King George IV.

stalled a private royal vapor bath next to the king's bedroom in the Royal Pavilion, which Musgrave described as "a large marble plunge bath, with pulleys attached to the ceiling by means of which the Royal person could be lowered into the waters in a chair."

Added Beavers:

When Mahomed came to the Royal Pavilion to "shampoo" the king, he wore an official costume modeled on Mughal imperial court dress now on display in the Royal Pavilion. But he would have put on something more practical whilst the massaging process took place.... Mahomed did much business with the royal household. Besides baths and shampoos, which cost one guinea each, he sold it bathing gowns of twilled calico and swanskin flannel, and other bathing gear.

The royal vapor bath was dismantled in 1850, said Beavers, which was "a great pity," though there are hopes it might be restored because "Mahomed was a remarkable person, and there is increasing interest about him."

After the death of King George IV in 1830, his younger brother succeeded to the throne as King William IV. The new king was as fond of Brighton—and shampooing—as his brother had been, and he kept Mahomed on as "shampooing surgeon."

By the mid-1840s, when Charles Dickens was writing *Dombey and Son*, "shampooing" was sufficiently well-known to the reading public that he was able to write of his fictional



character Miss Panky that she was "a mild little blue-eyed morsel of a child—who was shampooed every morning, and seemed in danger of being rubbed away altogether."

James Smith, a frequent contributor to London literary reviews at the time, composed a poetic tribute he called

## LIVING LINEAGE

Sake Dean Mahomed married twice, each time, coincidentally, to a woman named Jane. In 1786, two years after his arrival in Cork, Ireland, he married Jane Daly. In 1806 in London he married Jane Jefferys of Bath, England. While both bore children, there appears no trace of Daly's line now, while Mahomed and Jefferys have more than 40 living descendants. Their grandson Frederick Akbar Mahomed (1849–1884) was an internationally recognized physician who graduated from Cambridge University and practiced at Guy's Hospital, London, specializing in hypertension and kidney disease. The largest single group of descendants come from his great-great-grandson John Akbar Douglas Mahomed (1897–1952), who immigrated to the US, and many of them live in the state of Michigan. In an unpublished reconstruction of the Mahomed family

history, J. Stewart Cameron, M.D., wrote:

I shared the honor of following, much later, in the footsteps of Frederick Akbar Mahomed as a consultant physician at Guy's Hospital working in the same medical specialty, and so inevitably I studied Akbar's outstanding work in this area. Through finding out about Akbar, I learned about his grandfather Sake Dean, and was instantly captivated.





As royal “shampooing surgeon,” Mahomed oversaw the installation of a private steam bath in the Royal Pavilion, the seaside residence of King George IV that had been designed by John Nash as an Indian fantasia around the time Mahomed moved to Brighton.

local charities and the official steward for the Annual Charity Ball. He played a prominent role in the life of Brighton, illuminating the baths with gas-lights to celebrate royal arrivals and anniversaries. “Mahomed was a generous and kind-hearted man,” says Visram, “always willing to help the poor and needy, either by giving them free treatment or by donations of money.”

Queen Victoria, after her accession to the throne in 1837,

also made several visits to Brighton but, as Musgrave makes clear, quickly found the Pavilion not to her liking.

The lack of privacy at the Pavilion ... made the place quite unsuitable for a couple who demanded the complete separation of their private family life from their State existence.... Writing to her aunt, the Duchess of Gloucester, from the Pavilion in February 1845, the Queen complained “the people are very indiscreet and troublesome here really, which makes this place quite a prison.” ... *Punch* published an account entitled “The New Royal Hunt,” which protested fiercely against the fact ... that “Her Majesty and her Royal Consort cannot walk abroad, like other people, without having a pack of ill-bred dogs at their heels, hunting them to the very gates of the Pavilion.”

As the pavilion lost its special standing as a royal residence, so Mahomed lost his royal patron.

Mahomed died in February 1851 at his son’s home, 32 Grand Parade, Brighton. According to Fisher, newspaper obituaries “uniformly took the tone that Dean Mahomed, once so important to the town’s development, had largely been forgotten.”

In his review, Dalrymple described Mahomed as “constantly charming and infinitely adaptable, intelligent and sharp-witted, part charlatan and part Renaissance man.” To which Visram added that “Mahomed may have been a self-publicist—and he had to be to succeed—but there is no doubt of his skill. The medical profession of the time was impressed.” In the end, Fisher asserted, “Mahomed negotiated for himself a distinguished place in British society.” ☺



**Gerald Zarr** (jzarr@aol.com) is a writer, lecturer and development consultant. He has lived and worked overseas as a US Foreign Service officer for more than 20 years. He is the author of a cultural guidebook on Tunisia and numerous articles on the history and culture of the Middle East.

“Ode to Mahomed, The Brighton Shampooing Surgeon”:

O thou dark sage, whose vapour bath  
Makes muscular as his of Gath,  
Limbs erst relax’d and limber:  
Whose herbs, like those of Jason’s mate,  
The wither’d leg of seventy-eight  
Convert to stout knee timber:

The ode continued, attributing Brighton’s growth to Mahomed’s fame:

While thus beneath thy flannel shades,  
Fat dowagers and wrinkled maids  
Re-bloom in adolescence,  
I marvel not that friends tell friends  
And Brighton every day extends  
Its circuses and crescents.

First published in *The New London Magazine* in 1822, these verses later appeared in Mahomed’s own self-promoting collection of testimonials. Originally titled *Cases Cured by Sake Dean Mahomed*, a second edition with the much longer title, *Shampooing; or, Benefits Resulting from the Use of The Indian Medicated Bath, as Introduced into this Country*, followed a few years later in 1826, with a third edition in 1838.

Of course, not everyone sang the praises of shampooing. Charles Molloy Westmacott, a British journalist and author who wrote humor and satire under the pseudonym Bernard Blackmantle and served as editor of *The Age*, the leading Sunday newspaper of the early 1830s, claimed that although shampooing “is in great repute [in Brighton],” it is “a sort of stewing alive by steam, sweetened by being forced through odoriferous herbs ... dabbed all the while with pads of flannel.”

Mahomed shared his success, and he became a donor to

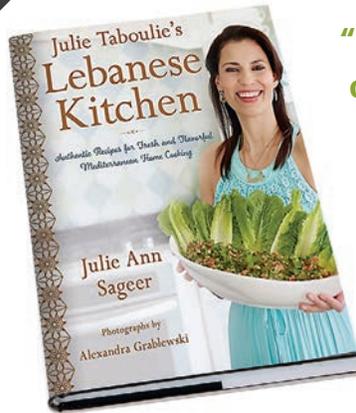


# REVIEWS

Reviews by  
Tom Verde

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

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**“No meal is complete without a strong cup [of *ahweh*].... Among groups of Lebanese women, it is a tradition to ‘read the cups,’ by flipping them over after the coffee has been drunk, letting them dry, and flipping them back over to reveal squiggly lines and swirls similar to Arabic text.”**

### Julie Taboulie's Lebanese Kitchen: Authentic Recipes for Fresh and Flavorful Mediterranean Home Cooking

Julie Ann Sageer with Leah Bhabha. 2017, St. Martin's Press, 978-1-25009-493-3, \$29.99 hb.

Julie Ann Sageer earned her nickname “Julie Taboulie” from her uncles as a girl after they noticed her “obsession with the dish, and food in general.” Though raised in upstate New York, she developed a passion for her ancestral cuisine in her Lebanese-born mother’s kitchen. There, she watched “Mama” rolling out “*ajeeh*” (a traditional non-yeasted bread), pickling vegetables for a medley called *kabees* and blending chickpeas for hummus.” She parlayed those memories into the tv show “Cooking with Julie Taboulie,” and this collection of 125 recipes features many of its favorites. There are chapters on street food, such as lamb meat and onion skewers or fried chickpea, potato and bulgur patties, plus a variety of sauces, spices and pickles, including pickled stuffed baby eggplant and *toum* (garlic, olive oil and lemon sauce), “an essential sauce in Lebanese cuisine.” Many recipes feature step-by-step instructions for the novice.



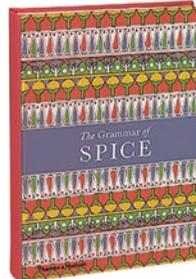
### Coastline: The Food of Mediterranean Italy, France, and Spain

Lucio Galletto and David Dale. 2017, Interlink Books, 978-1-56656-026-9, \$35 hb.

Arab merchants had as much to do with establishing what we now call “the Med-

iterranean diet” as did the Greeks, the Romans and even the Vikings, the authors of this colorful volume say. While often considered, historically, a “Roman lake,” the Mediterranean might be better described as a superhighway—of trade. For trade introduced eggplants, artichokes, almonds, lemons and even pasta, or inspired their widespread use, in the northwestern Mediterranean region. At one end were their sources—India, the Middle East and Central Asia—and in between were Arab traders. By introducing rice to Andalusia, Arabs laid “the groundwork for paella.” Sugar, “the Arab sweetening,” offered a more affordable alternative to pricey honey. Recipes reflecting these influences are featured throughout

this elegant title, such as *le riz aux cerises* (cherry and almond rice pudding); paella Valencia, a saffron-infused blend of chicken, rabbit and snails; and even biscotti, an Italian favorite, studded with Arab staples: fig, almond and orange.



### The Grammar of Spice

Caz Hildebrand. 2017, Thames & Hudson, 978-0-50051-967-7, \$29.95 hb.

If every picture tells a story, so does every spice, as this

enlightening and handy (all entries include menu suggestions) volume points out. Medieval Arab merchants made a fortune shipping nutmeg from Banda Islands—part of today’s Indonesia—“to cater to the luxurious tastes of European aristocrats,” writes Hildebrand. Sailors approaching Banda reportedly smelled the spice “before they even saw the islands.” Ginger will make fish “flock to the hook” when its juice is applied to bait, according to fishermen’s lore. Carob is also known as St. John’s bread, after

John the Baptist, whose puzzling diet of locusts and wild honey may have really consisted of the pods “also known as locust beans.” Molasses made from carob remains “a traditional sweetener in the Levant.”



### Istanbul & Beyond: Exploring the Diverse Cuisines of Turkey

Robyn Eckhardt and David Hagerman. 2017, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 978-0-54444-431-7, \$35 hb.

This is a book for those who mistakenly believe that

Turkish cuisine is “largely confined to kebabs ... salads, and baklava,” writes Eckhardt. Because Turkey borders multiple countries, from Bulgaria to Iraq, it follows that its cuisine is not singular. Rather, it has been impacted by “an array of culinary regions that make it one of the most gastronomically complex countries anywhere.” Istanbul itself, we discover, “boasts iterations of dishes” imported by various subjects of the Ottoman Empire: “Greeks, Albanians, Caucasians, Russians, Sephardic Jews, and Armenians.” Look to Syrian spice bread,



redolent with anise, ginger, fennel and nutmeg, from the ancient trading city of Mardin on the border with Syria and Iraq for some of that far-flung flavor. Or try turmeric-scented lamb and chickpea stew, served the Armenian way in earthenware mugs. Greek-style yogurt adds richness to corn and crème fraîche biscuits from “the high hills above Savsat, near Georgia,” served alongside blue cheese and cherry-tomato preserves. A bibliography and resources for tracking down less common ingredients are included.



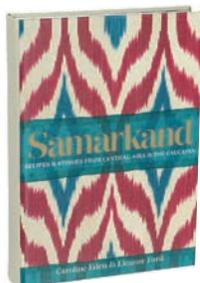
**Kaukasis, The Cookbook: A Culinary Journey through Georgia, Azerbaijan & Beyond**

Olia Hercules. 2017, Weldon Owen, 978-1-68188-303-8, \$35 hb.

The culture of the Caucasus—that vast and rugged territory

sweeping eastward from the Black Sea through Georgia, Armenia, southern Russia, northern Iran and Azerbaijan to the banks of the Caspian Sea—is “intertwined” and “interwoven” with “cooking techniques and dishes shared and borrowed,” writes Hercules. This is understandable, as the region has been variously ruled by Arabs, Mongols, Persians and Ottomans, each of whom left their culinary stamp, characterized by hearty fare, on the mountainous landscape. Lamb is favored in dishes like *chakhapuli*, young lamb stewed with herbs and spices common to Arab cuisine (coriander, fenugreek, tarragon, mint and lots of garlic), tinged with the acidic juice of sour plums. Ground lamb, along with onion and molasses, likewise figures in *qutab*, stuffed breads that can also be filled with herbs and cheese or squash and pomegranate (a Persian touch). Buckwheat ice cream—rich and nutty—is an unusual treat for dessert. Beautifully illustrated with informative headnotes, this cookbook is an ode to a richly diverse cuisine.

tool for making boat-shaped, stuffed *pide*, the “Turkish version of pizza.” The book includes plenty of creative, vaguely Californian riffs on this cultural classic, such as chicken-and-garlic *köfte pide* with chili yogurt, smoked salsa, walnuts and feta. The title is also the name of the author’s UK restaurant, inspired by culinary memories of growing up in north London “surrounded by Turkish and Greek Cypriots.” Her ancestors were Ottoman Turks who migrated to Cyprus in the early 16th century. The “huge amount of crossover between Turkish and Greek food” is evident—along with Levantine and North African influences—in such dishes as buttered *freekah* (a popular Egyptian grain) with chickpeas, green olives, currents and pistachios, or *medjool* date butter, an unctuous blend of meaty dates, Asian black-rice vinegar and softened, unsalted butter. These and other such recipes represent a sophisticated reinvention of a simple cuisine.



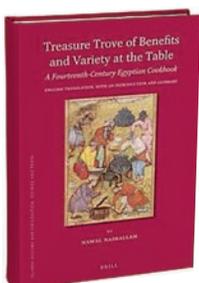
**Samarkand: Recipes—Stories from Central Asia & the Caucasus**

Caroline Eden and Eleanor Ford. 2016, Kyle Books, 978-1-90948-742-0, \$34.95 hb.

Combining engaging travel and food essays writ-

ten by journalist Eden and recipes compiled by TV food editor Ford, this strikingly illustrated cookbook can be savored in the kitchen or the armchair. Described as a “celebration of the richness and diversity” of Central Asia and the “culinary heritage of its distinct populations,” it focuses on the cuisines of seven groups, among others, that “left their mark on Samarkand”: Tajiks, Russians, Turks, Jews, Koreans and Uzbeks. The results range from the truly exotic (tarragon soda) to the tried-and-true (spinach *khachapuri*, a Georgian version of the familiar Turkish *pide*, a pizza-like filled flatbread). There are numerous versions of another standby, *plov* (rice pilaf)—“a quintessential dish ... with as many variants

as there are people who cook it”—such as chicken and almond, sesame and nuts, and fish and saffron. There are traditional breads and doughs, such as swirled onion flatbread from Kyrgyzstan and Khiva egg dumplings from Uzbekistan, along with hearty winter comfort food like Russian buckwheat *kasha* with caramelized mushrooms, or winter *kuksu*, a meat-and-veggie noodle bowl inspired by post-Soviet Korean *Koryo-saram* cuisine.



**Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table: A Fourteenth-Century Egyptian Cookbook**

Nawal Nasrallah, trans., 2017, Brill, 978-9-00434-729-8, \$172, hb.

This book of medieval Egyptian cuisine dates to a time when Cairo

was regarded as “the mother of all nations (*umm al-bilad*),” having surpassed Baghdad as “a flourishing metropolis [and] a cultural haven for diverse ethnicities and nationalities.” It contains 830 recipes for food and drink, plus recommendations for food preservation and preparation, and descriptions of techniques and tools that bridge “the gap between ancient gastronomic riches and today’s cuisine.” Recipes for sweet-and-sour purslane (a leafy green), sautéed in sesame oil with onion, honey and vinegar, or chopped, boiled chard, blended with yogurt and crushed garlic, sound as modern as they do delicious. The medieval version of the electric mixer, the *mifrak*—a wooden dowel with rows of perpendicular pegs at the end—is still used in Upper Egypt and Sudan. Translated for the first time into English by Nasrallah, who also provides the introduction and glossary, this scholarly title includes 22 recipes updated for the modern kitchen, offering general readers a chance to sample the cuisine of medieval Cairo.

Turk, celebrates the diversity of Turkish food while inviting the reader along on a personal journey into the markets, kitchens and cafés reminiscent of his father’s childhood. The author—a professional chef—relates the pleasures of enjoying a leisurely “Black Sea breakfast” featuring plates of fresh, sliced vegetables and “parsley, cheese and bread,” followed by jam, honey and tea brewed “in a magnificent Turkish teapot.” He shares his personal home recipe for Iskender kebab, using pieces of rib eye steak in place of spit-roasted lamb, drizzled in a spicy, buttery tomato sauce, contrasted and cooled by dollops of lemon-and-garlic-infused yogurt. He serves up a tangy onion and red cabbage salad alongside traditional fried mackerel, “served to hungry fishermen along the Bosphorus.” While covering a broad range of Turkish regional cuisines, this cookbook is a tribute to one man’s love affair with the food served around his family’s dining table for generations.



**Unforgettable: The Bold Flavors of Paula Wolfert’s Renegade Life**

Emily Kaiser Thelin. 2017, Mortar & Pestle, 978-1-68188-222-2, \$35 hb.

Paula Wolfert may be “the most influential cookbook author you’ve never

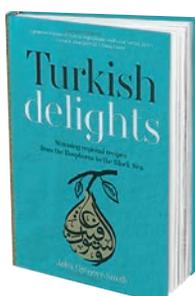
heard of,” quips Thelin. Yet Wolfert introduced a generation of Western cooks to traditional Moroccan/ North African cooking with recipes such as *muhammara* (tangy sweet pepper and nut spread) and labor-intensive but rewarding hand-rolled couscous (“one of life’s rare chances to pretend to be an oyster creating a pearl”). Her life story and determination to learn Moroccan and Arab cuisine at the feet of home cooks and local teachers are explored in this engaging cookbook-cum-memoir-cum-testimonial. It covers Wolfert’s years of apprenticeship, including globetrotting adventures in the 1960s with a husband who broke her heart but not her spirit, followed by professional success and the composition of “eight seminal cookbooks” and “countless articles on the traditional foods of the Mediterranean.” Sadly, Wolfert succumbed at age 68 in 2013 to dementia. That diagnosis threatened to erase a lifetime of learning, which this text lovingly seeks to preserve.



**Oklava: Recipes from a Turkish-Cypriot Kitchen**

Selin Kiazim. 2018, Interlink Books, 978-1-56656-028-3, \$35 hb.

The title of this beautifully produced cookbook translates simply as “rolling pin,” a handy kitchen



**Turkish Delights: Stunning Regional Recipes from the Bosphorus to the Black Sea**

John Gregory-Smith. 2016, Kyle Books, 978-1-90948-748-2, \$29.95 hb.

This title, by the British first-generation son of a



# EVENTS

Highlights from  
aramcoworld.com



## CURRENT / MARCH

**Music, Faith and Diplomacy along the Silk Road.** Centuries of cultural exchange along the Silk Road have played a central role in constructing the cultures of Asia and Europe. The selection of objects shown are from SOAS's own collections, including a rich array of manuscripts that vividly illustrate the cultural exchanges across parts of Asia as well as musical instruments that celebrate the musical contacts between the

Middle East and the West dating back to the arrival of Arab culture in eighth-century Spain, which brought various Middle Eastern instruments to Western Europe. SOAS, Brunei Gallery, University of London, through March 23.

## CURRENT / APRIL

**American Landscape: An Exploration of Art & Humanity by Nabil Mousa.** For Atlanta-based artist Nabil Mousa, the color

orange is a visual metaphor for the fear experienced by those marginalized because of their gender identity or orientation. This mixed-media exhibition takes up the fraught politics of human rights in the us. Born in Syria and raised in a conservative Christian household in the us, Mousa incorporates the cultural tensions of both countries into his practice, including socio-religious pressures and self-realization. His work is always framed by hope for greater equality, no matter how naïve or impossible that might seem in the face of ever-challenging differences. Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, Michigan, through April 8.

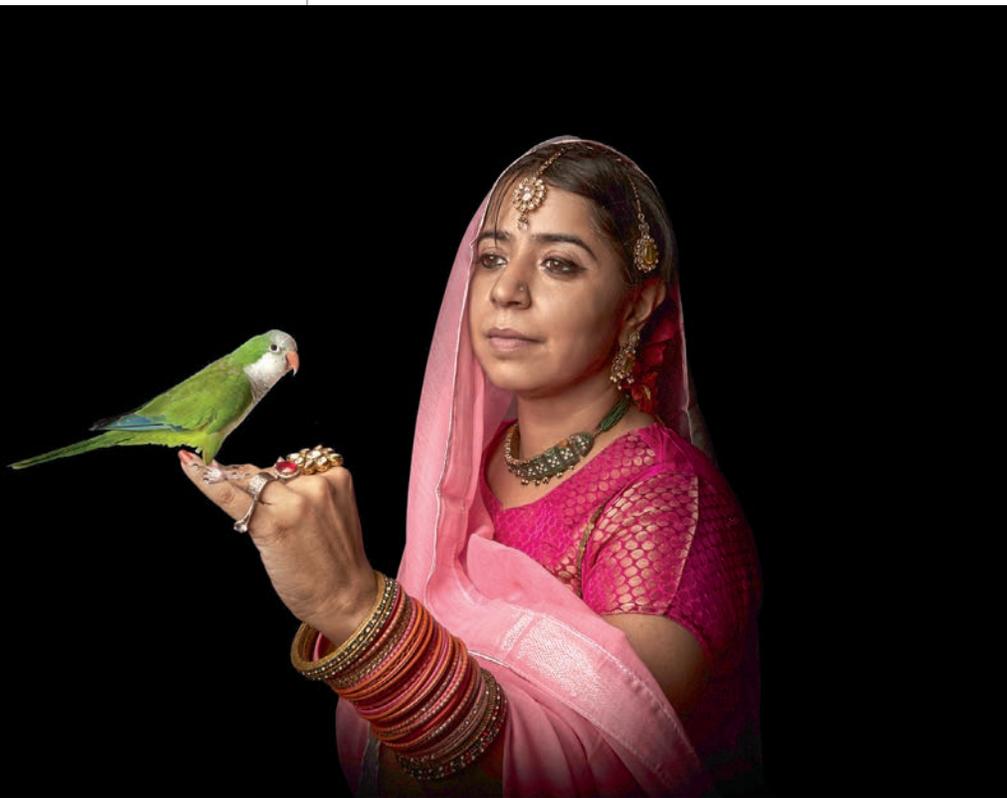
**Living with Gods: Peoples, Places and Worlds Beyond** looks at how people believe through everyday objects of faith, providing a perspective on what makes believing a vital part of human behavior. Seeing how people believe, rather than considering what they believe,

## India: Contemporary Photographic and New Media Art

Through 48 featured artists, from India and the global Indian diaspora, the FotoFest 2018 Biennial speaks to contemporary issues in India including gender; land rights; the environment; urbanization

*"The Impersonation of Mehr-Un-Nissa,"* from the series *Impersonations*, by Anusha Yadav, 2016.

and migration; and caste and class. Organized by Lead Curator Sunil Gupta and FotoFest Executive Director Steven Evans, this is one of the largest exhibitions of contemporary photography by artists of Indian origin to be presented in the us, and it marks the first time that FotoFest has focused directly on South Asia. As a platform for art and ideas, FotoFest has a long history of focusing attention on emerging and under-recognized regions, including Latin America (1992), Korea (2000), China (2008), Russia (2012) and the Arab world (2014), showcasing hundreds of artists and in many cases introducing their work to the us. "We expect it to challenge many conventions and expectations for the region, and for its art and cultures," says Evans. Washington Avenue Arts District and Louisa Sarofim Gallery at Asia Society Texas Center, Houston, through April 22.





suggests that humans might be naturally inclined to believe in transcendent worlds and beings. Stories, objects, images, prayers, meditation and rituals can provide ways for people to cope with anxieties about the world and help form strong social bonds. This in turn helps to make people's lives well-ordered and understandable. British Museum, **London**, through April 8.

**Women of Vision:** *National Geographic Photographers on Assignment* highlights a new generation of women photojournalists who have told some of the most powerful stories of the last decade. As different as the places and the subjects they have covered, these women share a passion and commitment to storytelling. From the savannas of Botswana to the streets of Libya and Afghanistan, and from the beaches of the Jersey shore to the steppes of Mongolia and the rainforests of New Guinea, these 11 women have traveled the world as explorers, capturing compelling stories of our planet and its people. **Allentown [Pennsylvania]** Art Museum, through April 8.

#### CURRENT / JULY

**The World of the Fatimids** bears witness to a dynasty that, at its height in the 10th and 11th centuries, influenced knowledge and culture throughout the Mediterranean, Europe and the

Near East. The exhibition marks the first time a carefully selected collection of masterpieces from the Fatimid dynasty are being shown in North America. Among the objects are monumental marble reliefs from the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, never before shown abroad; luxury objects ranging from rock crystal and ivory to ceramic lusterware; and masterpieces of metalware. Drone videography and 360-degree virtual-reality films conjure up Cairo, the Fatimid's flourishing capital, offering insight into what the city was like a millennium ago. Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through July 2.

**Binding the Clouds:** *The Art of Central Asian Ikat*. Across Central Asia, oasis towns were once awash with the rainbow colors of resist-dyed *ikat* fabrics. Through exceptional artworks recently donated to the museum, this exhibition focuses on the sophisticated dyeing technique known in the region as *abrband* (binding the clouds). The George Washington University Museum / The Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through July 9.

#### COMING / MARCH

**Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim.** Curated by Sharjah Art Foundation President and Director Hoor al-Qasimi, the exhibition features works by the Emirati artist spanning

over three decades. Included are paintings, drawings, sculpture and installations, as well as documentation of the artist's vast explorations into land art, inspired by a lifelong relationship with the environment of Khorfakkan, **UAE**. This survey also traces the esthetics and concepts of his work, such as his interest in the demise of nature that accompanies urban development—all concerns that evoke thoughts of the primordial. Gallery 3 at al-Mureijah Square, **Sharjah, UAE**, March 16 through June 16.

#### COMING / MAY

**Intersections:** *The Visual of Islamic Cosmopolitanism* investigates architecture, painting, textiles, calligraphy, photography and music among Muslim and non-Muslim societies. As an academic conference, papers and presentations address artworks from the eighth century to the present from North Africa, Europe, the Middle East, as well as Central and South Asia. Bringing this range of visual cultures into conversation highlights the cosmopolitanism, plurality, cultural receptivity and centrality of art that has contributed greatly to Muslim cultures. Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History and **Dallas Museum of Art**, May 4 through May 5.

**World on the Horizon:** *Swahili Arts across the Indian Ocean*. Located

at the crossroads of Africa and the Indian Ocean, the "Swahili Coast" has been a vibrant arena of global cultural convergence for more than a millennium as peoples from the Arabian Peninsula, Asia, Africa and Europe have journeyed across the Indian Ocean in many directions. On the East African coast, this confluence of peoples gave rise to diverse communities that are often called "Swahili"—after the Arabic word meaning "edge" or "coast." Swahili Coast art has been shaped by these complex migrations, the formation of new empires and the making and unmaking of social identities. The works from different regions and time periods explore Swahili arts as objects of mobility, outcomes of encounter and products of trade and imperialism, and they reveal the movement of artistic forms, motifs and preferences while reflecting the changing meanings they may carry during the course of their life histories. National Museum of African Art, **Washington D.C.**, indefinitely from May 9.

Most listings have further information available online and at [aramcoworld.com](http://aramcoworld.com). Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion to [proposals@aramcoservices.com](mailto:proposals@aramcoservices.com), subject line "Events".

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