

ISSUE NO. 006



NATION

Artist: Abdullah Al-Shalby

ithraeyat magazine

September 2020

Welcome to **ithraeyat**, a monthly cultural magazine produced by The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra). Created to **inspire minds** and **enrich hearts**, this Saudi inspired platform with an expansive international outlook will capture the art scene and the culture of art by bringing together a mosaic of stories collected from across the Kingdom, the region and beyond.



Behind the scenes

Ithraeyat is the plural of Ithra (enrichment). Magazine has its origins in the Arabic word makhzan, a storehouse. And therefore, ithraeyat Magazine is a storehouse of unique, enriching stories.

المملكة العربية السعودية



اليوم الوطني السعودي ٩٠

Happy National Day.

The Ithra family wishes you
a blessed 90th anniversary
Saudi Arabia.

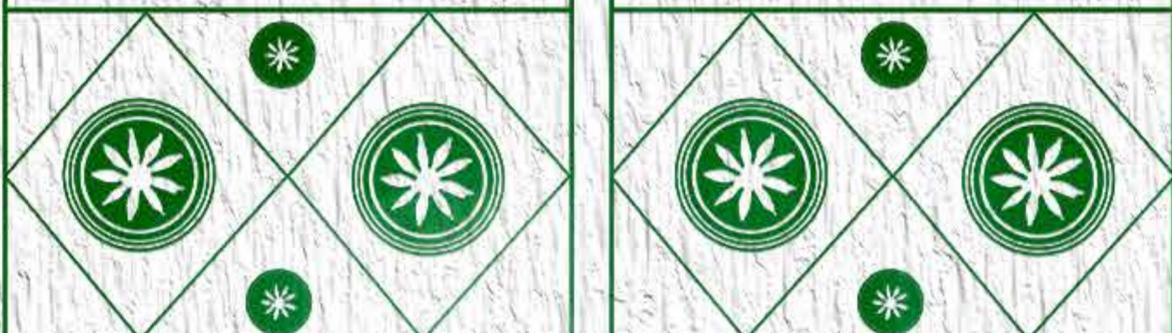
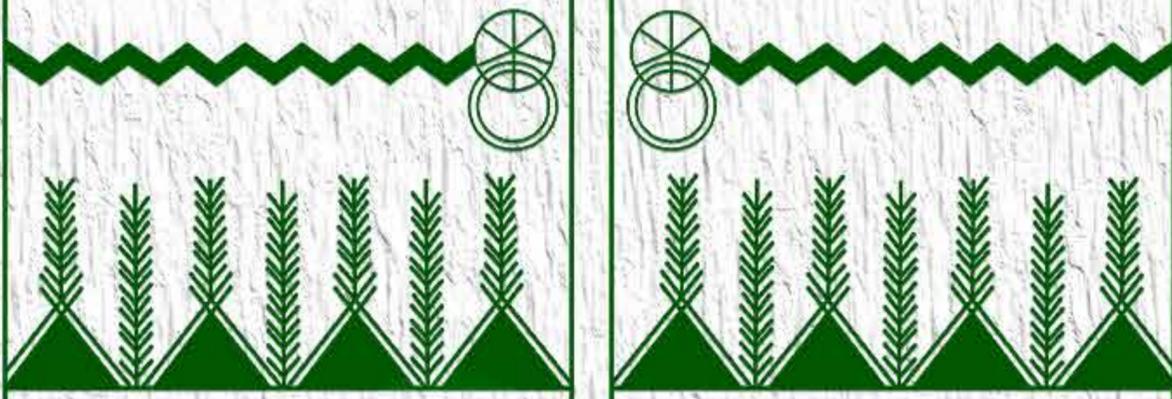


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Nation

As Saudi Arabia celebrates its 90th National Day, we at Ithraeyat celebrate the essence of belonging, unity, identity, the land and its people, elements at the core of the very definition of ‘Nation.’ A nation, a country, is a home and a source of citizenship, pride and patriotism.

For some, there are multiple homes, citizenships and identities. Especially in the era of globalization and virtuality, the concept of home becomes blurred as everything appears close and on screen. But nonetheless, with the appearance of a homeland’s flag, its anthem, and hearing one’s mother tongue,

a certain tug at the heart occurs and reminds us all of that ‘place.’ In this issue of Ithraeyat, we pay homage to **Nation**. We explore its art, its symbols, its music, and the Saudi figures from history and the many who played a role in the foundation of such a vibrant, multifaceted nation.

On the cover, we feature an exquisite piece by the renowned Saudi artist **Abdullah Al-Shalty** who invites us to look closely at his unique style of art, an art that slowly reveals itself to capture the heartbeat of a nation. We see the Saudi green flag rising from the sands, held by the hands of many, who together, in their diversity and unity, form the pride of a nation.



Meet our 'theme-special' featured Saudi artist, **Abdullah Al-Shalty**, whose unique style of art inspires as it pays homage to a nation and its people.



Special Feature:

Sheikha Al-Dosary interviews
Abdullah Al-Shalty



A collection of works that capture the spirit of a nation by renowned Saudi artist **Abdullah Al-Shalty**.

Homage to a Nation

“I try to include a bit of the soul of the place in each of my paintings.”

Abdullah Al-Shalty is truly an artist who connects the dots. In one of the masterpieces that commemorates Saudi National Day, Al-Shalty presents that unifying moment in a surreal way. In his painting, featured on the cover of this issue’s Ithraeyat Magazine, the picture is revealed only if you stand from afar, and start to interact with its elements. The art allows us to relive a crucial moment in history. Saudi heroes riding their horses, united at the front lines, with the middle horseman proudly carrying the Saudi flag high.

The unique strokes and dots invite the viewers to see many things, while sending one message.

“The painting represents power, unity, cohesion, pride and glory,” said Al-Shalty. “It is the unification of the Kingdom under the banner of monotheism. The men on horses represent the strength, power, security and readiness to do good at all time. Holding our national flag with the Shahada words along it, reflect our deep faith.”

“It’s a representation of the patriotic spirit, and it’s a small gift to my beloved country...”



An art piece by renowned Saudi artist Abdullah Hammas that captures the essence of a nation. Untitled 11, it dates to 2015. Oil on canvas. 66 x 75 cm. Courtesy **the artist** and **Hafez Gallery**.

Guest Columnist:

Dina Amin, CEO of Saudi Visual Arts Commission
—Ministry of Culture

Visual Memories in a **Green** Frame

In the late 1970s, art education became part of the school curriculum, coinciding with the birth of the visual arts movement in Saudi Arabia, supported by a government resolution and a newly found awareness of the arts. This resulted in a qualitative leap from regarding art as merely an individual talent to an understanding of art as a foundational cognitive orientation that can be taught, practiced, and acquired. Arts grew in importance over the decades with the government in 2020 establishing the Visual Arts Commission, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture.

Throughout the 90 years since the unification of the Kingdom, the art renaissance movement continued to create a competitive edge that is reflected on the visual scene. It might be true that “the ear loves before the eye sometimes,” as poet Bashar Ibn Burd (714–783) once said, but the eye is often the window to our senses and to the insights of our hearts. Especially if we accept that sight is stimulated by color, shape and form, how they interact and move, and the messages hidden within the details; all of which evoke emotions of a moment that cannot be forgotten.

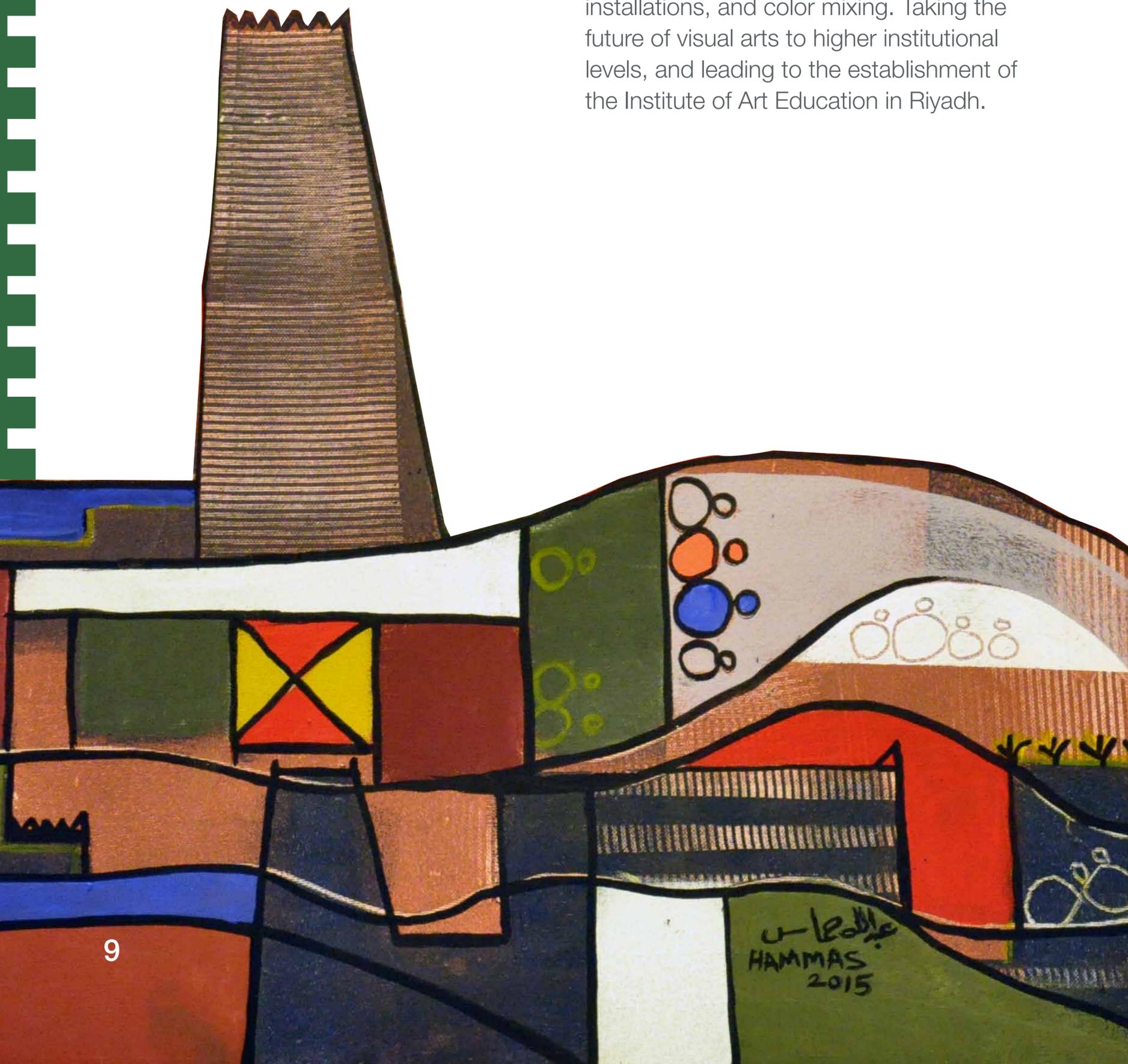
What is striking in visual arts is the deep and harmonious language shared between visual communication, the philosophy of first impressions, and understanding the fuller picture. When contemplating visual arts, it can be said that the stillness of a painting or an image reflects a vitality created by the viewer and the angle from which the art is viewed.

Very early on, the influence of visual arts surpassed the early stages of luxury, and fast became a necessity. Visual arts became a tool to express identity and symbolism, and moved from being dependent on individual efforts to the sphere of specialized schools and different styles.

Visual arts developed into cultural accumulation, to the point where today they have become an honest mediator between us and the world.

In parallel to the journey of the various forms of visual arts (painting, photography, sculpture, applied arts and craftsmanship), from conceptualization to embodiment as a tangible product, visual arts in the Kingdom lived through a story of transformation on two levels. The first relates to the impact of art education, and the second to the contribution of other government sectors.

The inclusion of art education in secondary school curriculums in the public sector in 1364 AH, focused on art activities such as copying the masters, rendering, painting landscapes, creating geometric designs, decorative installations, and color mixing. Taking the future of visual arts to higher institutional levels, and leading to the establishment of the Institute of Art Education in Riyadh.





The Saudi Ministry of Culture building is located in Ad Diriyah. Part of the World Heritage Sites List at Unesco, Ad-Dir'iyah, or Diriyah, was the first capital of Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, this institutional role was supported by the efforts of the General Presidency for Youth Welfare, its clubs in the Kingdom's regions, and the youth welfare offices and their efforts to activate the artistic movement. This was represented by a distinguished presence, locally and internationally, at competitions and exhibitions for the youth and the elite, and exhibitions of collections and contemporary art.

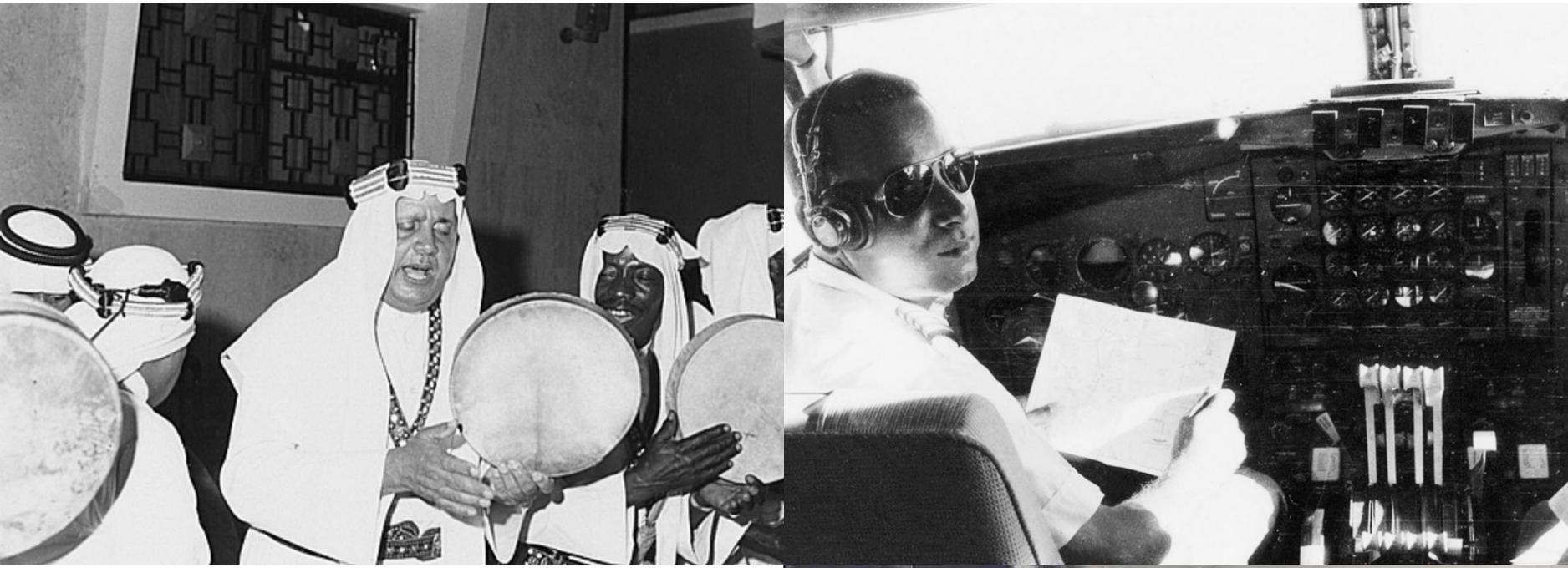
This effort was further supported by the establishment of associations and institutions interested in the various disciplines of visual arts. While exhibitions, events, special evenings, and individual efforts by pioneering Saudi artists contributed to driving the artistic movement towards more experimental, innovative and advanced spaces. Today we have reached advanced stages in dealing with, and investing in, the visual arts, while also preserving our own unique imprint and our Saudi identity in all products, tools of expression, and manifestations.

All of this stems from the spirit and identity of our homeland. Every cultural expression is first and foremost a national expression through which the artist reflects his or her emotional state at any given moment. This expression then automatically takes its place in the history of art and, in the end, it forms a national history par excellence.

It follows then, that in caring for, and seeking to serve, the visual arts, and in striving to support those who work within its sphere through the Visual Arts Commission, under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, we do so because visual arts eventually form the building blocks of the memory of history; visual memories in a **national green framework** towards which all artists and creatives in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have played a part.



Guest Columnist: Ghada Al-Muhanna



A Queen, a pilot, a humanitarian and the musician



The legendary musician Tareq Abdulhakeem, the 'pilot of the kings' Nahar Al-Nassar and Queen Effat Al-Thunayan.

When one celebrates their national day, not only do they celebrate the historical moment of the establishment of their country, but they also celebrate those who have dedicated their lives to bettering society and aiding it, one way or another – those who have committed their time to helping their communities, ultimately serving the nation and its people.

As we celebrate our 90th national day, let us remember those who have impacted us either directly or indirectly. Let us remember their names and honor them. Thank them for their contributions, for without them, things would have been different.

And who better to start with than the woman who pioneered women's education in the Kingdom – Her Highness, Queen Effat Al-Thunayan. As a young woman living in Istanbul, she had always had an affinity to teaching, and had wanted to become a school teacher. That is until she married His Royal Highness, King Faisal in 1932. Her life drastically changed, but it never stopped her from pursuing her dream in another way.

“The mother can be a school in herself if you prepare her well,” the late queen said so often as her mantra.

Guest Columnist: Ghadeer Sadeq



'The Land of Solidities,' by Saudi pioneering artist Mounirah Mously. Dated 1970, oil on wood, 110 x 80 cm. Image courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah.

▲ The Saudi artists who paved the way

“A Saudi person is distinguished by nature and environment rich with distinct aesthetic elements of form, color, volume, and line,” — Saudi artist Mohammed Al-Saleem (1939-1997)

Ever since its unification, Saudi Arabia has been going through changes and shifts in all aspects of life. By 1951 there were more than 200 schools across the Kingdom, and this was a crucial foundation for the minds of the future.



Art and music education became part of the curriculum in public schools all across the nation, and people were very receptive to this cultural shift. Today, the Kingdom is one of the best when it comes to formal, systematic education in the Middle East, with more than 70 public universities scattered across the country.

The first-of-its-kind “Institute of Art Education” was established in 1965 in the capital city of Riyadh.

The government started importing teachers from Iraq, Sudan, and Egypt. Saddi Al-Kaabi, a modern art Iraqi artist, taught at the institute when he spent two years in the Kingdom. Under his tutelage, he graduated important cultural figures, including **Ali Al-Ruzaiza** and **Dr. Mohammed Al-Resayes** and **Abdullah Al-Hammas** who are serving the Kingdom’s art and culture sector to this day.

[Click here to read more](#)



Spotlight:

❖ Our Jewelry Our Identity

What you wear sends a message... The wide range of design styles across the Arabian Peninsula along with the richness of Saudi heritage has enabled us to demonstrate the changes and continuities in jewelry composition. The intercultural influences on design vernaculars, as well as the resilience of traditional design repertoires tells the story of a nation. The dazzling range of styles and techniques in Saudi jewelry points to its rich cultural past.

After the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 90 years ago, the artefacts of our material culture do not just tell us about the transformation of the language of design across space and time, but also capture the impact of geopolitical contexts, changes in trade and technology, as well as the construction of communal identities and social habits.

Some objects, such as jeweled headpieces, have rarely been visible to outsiders in the past, and can tell us about the aesthetics of private spaces and how for instance, flowers were kept around the headpieces for their fragrances. Other items, such as the embellished textiles worn by nomadic Bedouins, help us understand how the physical demands of daily life in the desert shaped sartorial choices.

Differently fashioned earrings, rings and bangles reveal the cultural agency of urban and rural women as they made decorative choices. Elaborate necklaces illustrate the skilled and creative authorship of local craftsmen who while preserving traditional design elements and techniques, incorporated new aesthetics from a diverse range of external influences from trade and exposure.



The pieces worn reflect influences from all over — from coiled, Celtic-style bangles to abstract African designs, Egyptian snake-design bracelets, and shimmering cascades of Indian and Austrian coins. Their story is story of the pearl divers, the pilgrims that came to Makkah and stayed on and created different crafts, the influences from the trade routes that passed through, and then the newer styles and creations by designers in the Kingdom.

The richness of our culture allows us to think of design as a language that travelled along the same routes as incense and spices, science, and religious pilgrims. Design languages are exchanged, developed, and put into conversation with ancient repertoires of material culture. Therefore, when we look deeply at our designs, they capture elements from within the Arabian Peninsula and across the Red Sea and over land routes extending to Persia, Afghanistan, Turkey, ancient Rome and Greece, Egypt and South Asia.



The lands known today as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were a crossroads of civilizations and traditions which provided a fertile incubator for a sophisticated design legacy.

After the unification of the Kingdom by King Abdulaziz our jewelry slowly became significantly different from those largely worn by tribal Bedouin communities.

A more unified style emerged, and the “modern” examples are an innovation, both in their design and function as well as including new and more universal materials used in their creation.

Written by Special Contributor Somaya Badr, CEO of **Art of Heritage** and Art of Heritage Cultural Trust.

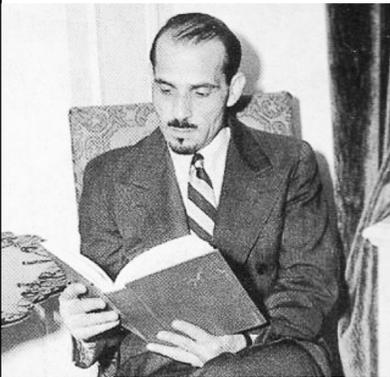


20 Saudi pioneers: The firsts



“There has to be this pioneer, the individual who has the courage, the ambition to overcome the obstacles that always develop when one tries to do something worthwhile, especially when it is new and different.” Alfred P. Sloan: An American business executive in the automotive industry. He was a long-time president, chairman and CEO of General Motors Corporation.

For Saudi Arabia’s 90th National Day, the country is celebrating its rich history, heritage and its great people. Here we pay tribute to 20 out of 100s of outstanding pioneering figures, who broke barriers in new fields and paved the way for future generations.



Khalil Al-Rawaf: First Arab and Saudi actor in Hollywood in the 1930s. (1895-2000).



Jameel Mahmoud: First actor to appear on national TV in 1956.



Maryam Al-Ghamdi: First actress, broadcaster, director and writer (1960s).



Huda Al-Rasheed: First Saudi anchorwoman in BBC Arabic service (1970s).



Media & Entertainment



Ahd Kamel: First Saudi actress to star in Hollywood movie in 2018.



Haifaa Al-Mansour: The first female Saudi filmmaker (2000s).



Yahya Al-Bishri: The first Saudi fashion designer (1980s). He has designed clothes for royals, including the late Princess Diana.



Hatem Alakeel, the first Saudi fashion designer to add a Western twist to traditional menswear (2010).



Tareq AbdulHakeem, the 'godfather' of Khaleeji music. A museum of music will be established in his honor as he paved the way for music in the region. (1920-2012).



Sawsan Al-Bahiti: First Saudi female opera singer (2018).



Ibtisam Lutfi: First Saudi female singer (1960s) (1951).



Fashion & Music



Etab: First Saudi female 'pop' singer and performer on stage (1947-2007).

Hamad Al-Luhayb

(known as Abu Lahab): First doctor from what later would become Saudi Arabia. He joined in some of the unification wars and acted as a nurse and doctor. Other first Saudi doctors of note from the 20th century: Dr. Haidar Al-Hajjar (Hijaz) Dr. Hamad AlBassam (Najd) and Dr. Yusuf AlHajiri from the Eastern Province.



Dr. Samira Ibrahim, the first Saudi woman to obtain a bachelor's degree and a doctorate, taking up an official position at the World Health Organization. She founded the first faculty of nursing in Saudi Arabia in 1976.

Art & Science



Safeya Binzagr (1940) & Mounirah Mously (1954-2019): Together each in their own right paved the way for Saudi female artists.



Abdulhalim Radwi (from Makkah, 1939-2006) is the father of Modern Saudi art.



Prince Sultan bin Salman Al Saud: The first Arab, royal, and Saudi astronaut in space (historic day June 17, 1985).



Raja Alem, Saudi Arabian novelist in 2011 become the first woman to win the International Prize for Arabic Fiction.

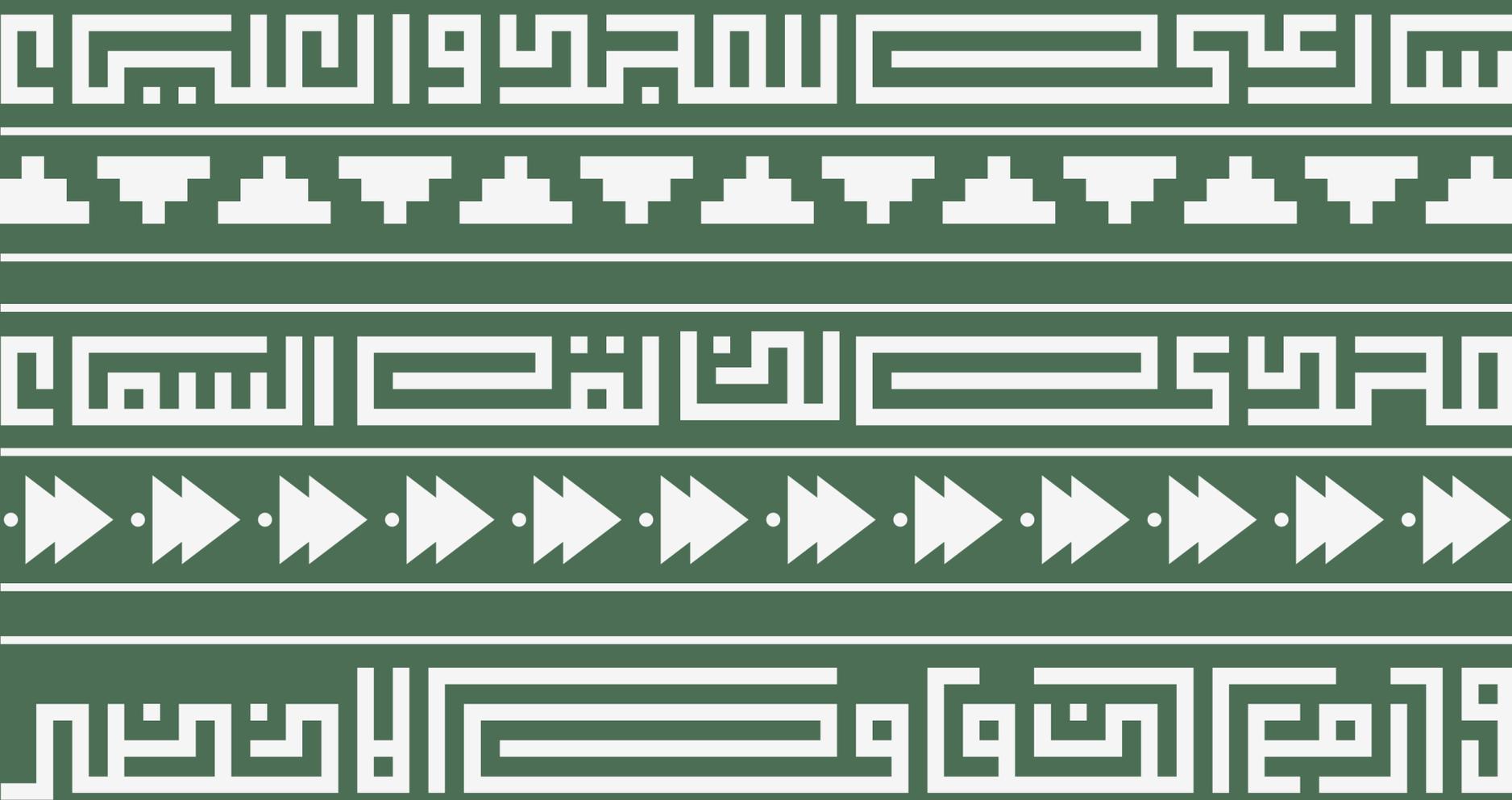


Najat Al-Husseini: The first woman to ever work at Saudi Aramco as a health professional (1935-2009).



Eng. Naela Mousli: The first Saudi female petroleum engineer and first female department manager in Aramco (In 1980s).

🚩 Arabic Treasures: The Saudi National Anthem



***Hurry and Rise
To the highest glory
Glorify the Creator of the Sky
And raise the green flag
Which carry the guidance light
Repeat: Allahu Akbar
My country,
Live as the pride of all Muslims!
Long live the king
For the flag
And homeland***

Whenever one thinks of any official Saudi event or the first Saudi song that many Saudi children have memorized, it will be “Sarree” – the country’s national anthem. It has a long and interesting story. It was first officially adopted by King Abdulaziz in 1950 without lyrics. But its story started in 1947, when the

late Egyptian King Farouq asked the Egyptian composer Abdulrahman Al-Khatib to create a musical piece to be played during the official welcoming ceremony for King Abdulaziz who was going to visit Egypt at that time. Al-Khatib composed a music piece similar to what other Arab states played at official events. He played it himself on the trumpet during the welcoming ceremony.

It was liked by King Abdulaziz and therefore, King Farouq gifted it to the Saudi King. The King asked for this piece to be played at Saudi official ceremonies to salute royal families and diplomats since the Kingdom didn’t have a national anthem at that time. For 11 years, that piece without any lyrics was used as the official royal salute.

However, during King Saud's time, he asked for lyrics for the anthem. The lyrics were created with more than 20 lines including: Long live the king, long live the homeland.

That longer form was changed during another royal visit to Egypt.

In 1975, when King Khaled visited Egypt, he liked the Egyptian national anthem's lyrics. He asked the Saudi Minister of Information at that time, Dr. Muhammad Abdo Yamani, to develop memorable lyrics for the Saudi anthem. Yamani then addressed Saudi prominent poets, asking them to fulfill the King's wish. Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal recommended poet Ibrahim Khafaja to be the one to write it. Khafaja accepted this mission with great pride. However while working on it, King Khaled passed away and the project was put on hold. In 1984, King Fahd, who succeeded King Khaled, wanted to realize King Khaled's

dream. He ordered Khafaja to complete the anthem's lyrics, instructing him to focus on Saudi heritage. The poet's mission took six months, then he gave the lyrics to the famous Saudi composer Siraj Omar to tweak the music in line with the words. The national anthem was ready and sent to the Minister of Information then, Ali

Al-Shaer, who presented the final version to King Fahd. When King Fahd heard it, he loved it and immediately ordered it to be distributed to all embassies of Saudi Arabia around the world.

On the first Day of Eid Al-Fitr in 1984, the Kingdom celebrated its first national anthem by playing it on national TV and radio. It was the first time Saudis and the whole world heard the Saudi national anthem. This year, the Kingdom will be celebrating the 36th birthday of the national anthem as it celebrates its 90th National Day.

Special Guest Contributor:

Sheikha Al-Dosary is a writer specialized in Saudi culture and is the founder of **Saudi Women Stories**.



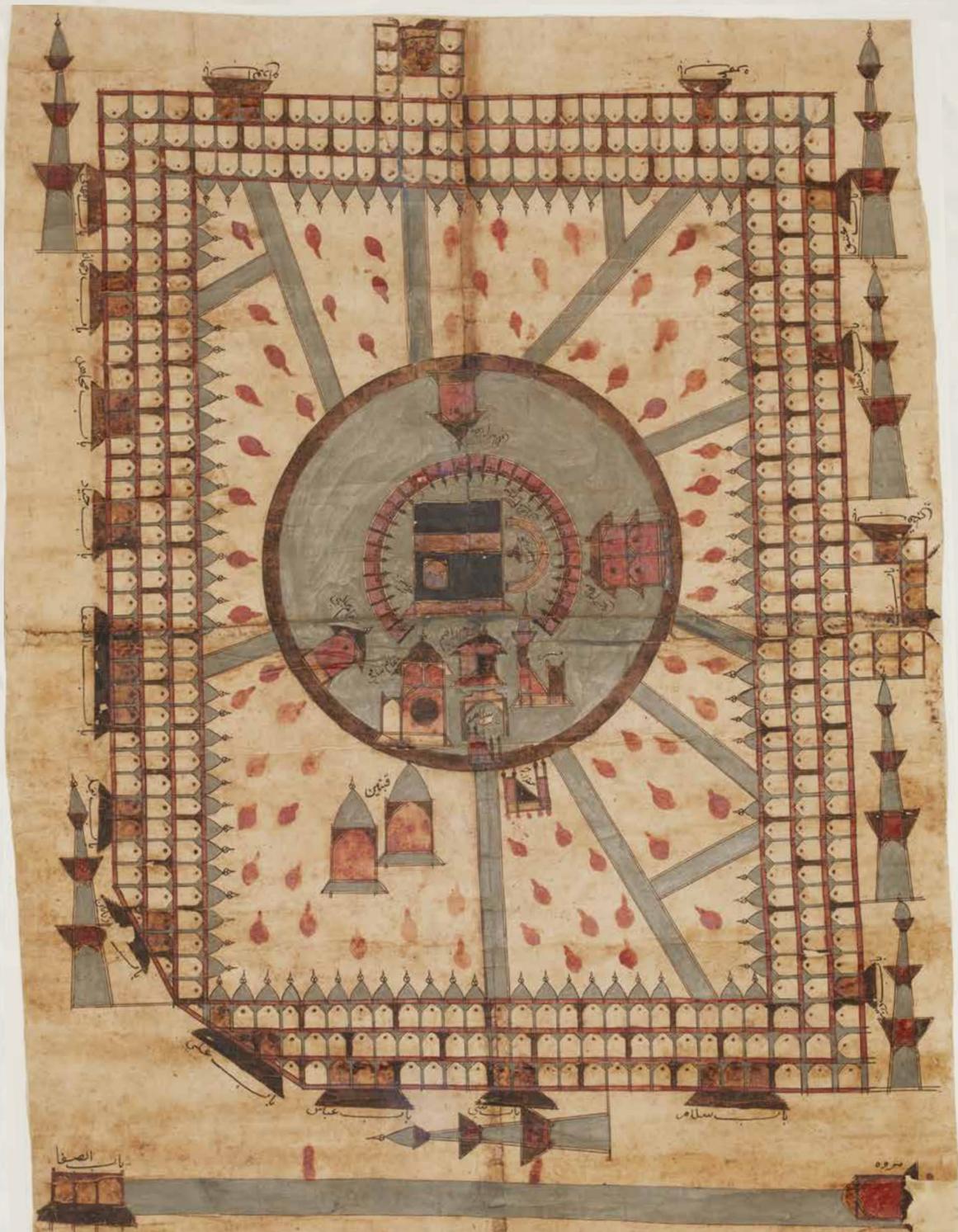
Ithra Curiosities:

The prestigious landmark — The Flag

It is a nation's symbolic landmark, and the largest in the Eastern Province. At 15 meters by 10 meters in size, the Saudi flag hangs majestically along a 50 meter long pole made of carbon steel. It was raised in 2018 on September 23rd, in celebration of National Day. Symbolic and recognizable worldwide, the flag is an ambassador of a nation's values and story.

Green, with a sword symbol of strength, the 'Shahada' (profession of faith and first pillar of Islam) is written across it in the Thuluth calligraphic script. It reads: 'There is no god but Allah; and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' Green is said to have been Prophet Muhammad's (Peace Be Upon Him) favorite color, and it is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as the color of the garments worn by those in Paradise.

Bridges: Cross-Cultural Conversations



Depiction of the Masjid Al-Haram (Holy Sanctuary) at Makkah, Saudi Arabia, probably Makkah/Hijaz. Dates to the late 18th century. Paper, watercolor and ink
61.5 x 85.0 cm. Accession Number: AKM529.

✽ A precious souvenir from Makkah

‘Like a pulsing magnet at the center...’

This fantastic work on paper, of considerable size, shows a bird’s eye view of the Masjid Al-Haram with the Ka’ba in the center. Paintings like this one were made for pilgrims to Makkah, who carried them home and kept them as revered keepsakes imbued with blessings from the holy site. As religious souvenirs, they were either displayed on the wall or carefully stored away for safety.

At the heart of the image, the Ka’ba appears with a semi-circle to the right, indicating the low *hatim* wall, with the *hijr* (stone of) *Isma’il*, where Abraham built a shelter for his wife Hajar and their son Isma’il. The pink surrounding enclosure represents a high circle of metal with suspended lamps. Between this and the outer closed circle lies the *mataf*, a space for worshippers to walk around the Ka’ba. This area also shows the *maqams* or pavilions of the four legal schools of Sunni Islam —



Hanafi (right), *Malaki* (above), *Hanbali* and *Shafi'i* (both lower left). The *maqam shafi'i* is shown as on the upper level of a two-story building, above the Zamzam well, indicated here as a simple circle. Next to it are the *maqam Ibrahim*, and below it, an old arched gate known as *bab al-salam*. Further to the right, the *minbar* (pulpit) of the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman appears. The latter is marked with a tall conical top, echoing the Ottoman style of minarets and minbars. Outside the circular enclosure lie the two domed buildings *Qubbatayin*, the storage houses for carpets, drinking water, olive oil, and other supplies. Entrance gates to the holy sanctuary are named and marked by staircases.

At the bottom of the composition the *mas'a* road appears, where following the visit of the holy enclosure, pilgrims have to walk and run, between *Marwa*—shown here as a domed building with stairs on the right— and *Safa* on the left,

depicted as triple arched buildings with stairs. Besides attesting worshippers' completion of Hajj to those around them, this precious piece beautifully captures how the Holy Ka'ba is like a pulsing magnet at the center — and heart — of the Muslim world.

Written by Special Guest Contributor Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, PhD, the Director of Collections and Public Programs at Aga Khan Museum. In each issue, we feature a special treasure from the **Aga Khan Museum**, one that tells a story, captures a moment and inspires conversation.



From the Vault:

Saudi artists capturing the essence of a nation.

There are many ways to pay homage to one's homeland. It could be via its archaeological landmarks, its traditional crafts, its rituals, its customs, its people and its houses. There are too many great artists from across Saudi Arabia who capture a thread from the great quilt that makes up the country's many faces, traditions and stories.



The vibrant Asiri Wall painting by the renowned Fatima Abou Gahas from Ithra's art collection. Al-Qatt Al-Asiri is a deeply rooted traditional art form that flourished among Asir province and is listed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.



'Worshippers Leaving the Mosque,' by pioneer Abdulrahman Al Soliman. Dated 1981, Oil on canvas, 76 x 101 cm. Image courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah.



'1440m,' by Sultan bin Fahad. 2016-2020. This recognizable art piece is based on an archival image found in Aramco's archive, of King Abdulaziz the founder of the modern nation of Saudi Arabia, in a car inspecting oil fields in 1947. The artist flipped the image; the effect rendered the late King in the driver's seat and in the reflection of the car, an image of a man inspecting the oil fields looms below. Courtesy Sultan bin Fahad and **Athr Gallery, Jeddah**. An edition of it hangs at Ithra's "**Mara'ina**" exhibition.



'Jeddah,' by iconic Taha Sabban. Dated 2015.
Oil on Canvas. 150x150 cm
Courtesy of the **Artist & Hafez Gallery**.

From the Archives:

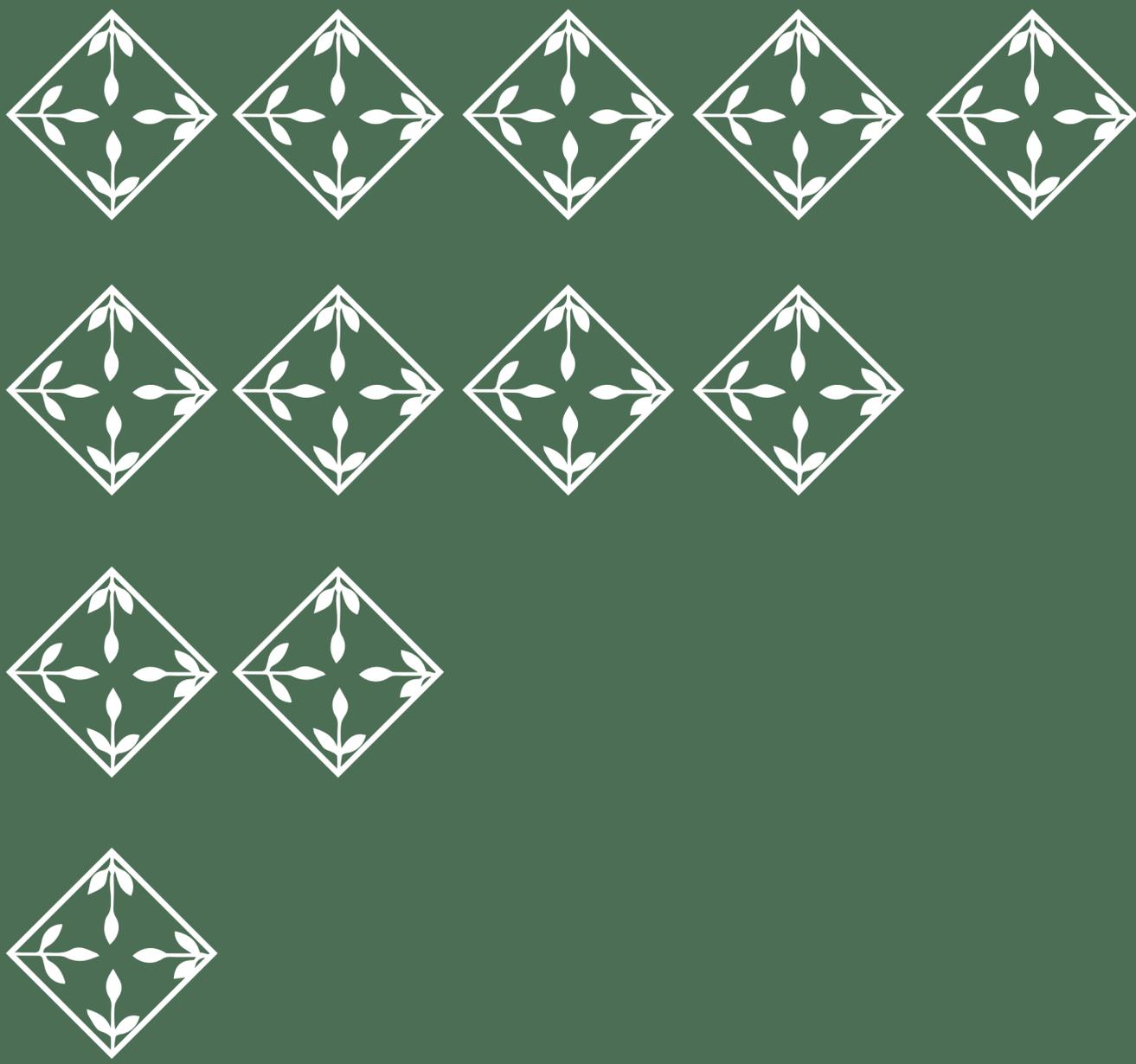
Celebrating our home.



❖ Rarities from The Aramco Archives.

January
1952.

‘There, that is home.’ Dhahran school students Susan Kelly, from the United States points to her home state of Wyoming, while Faridah Sowayigh from Saudi Arabia points to the Eastern Province on the World Globe.



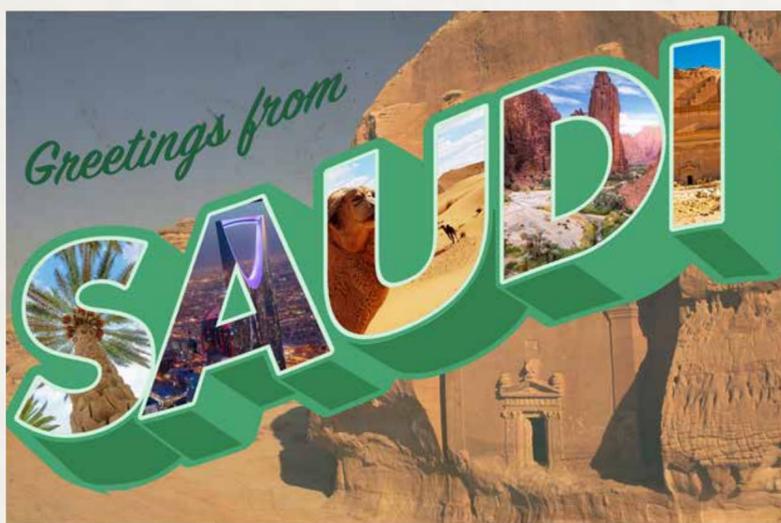
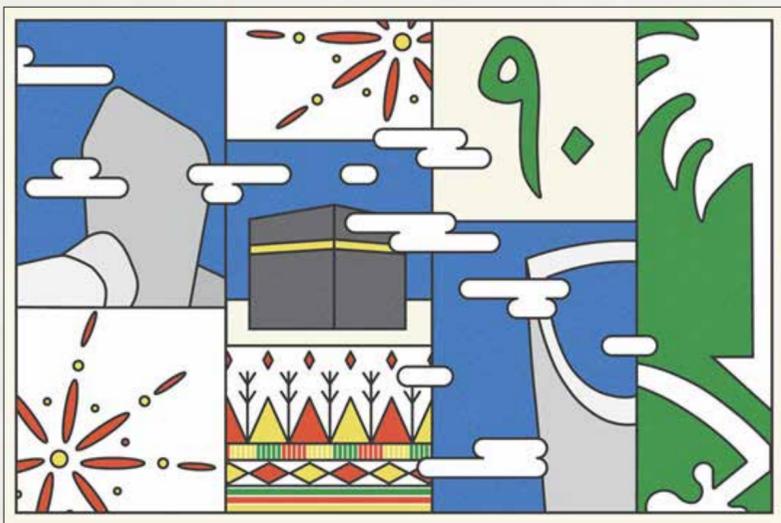
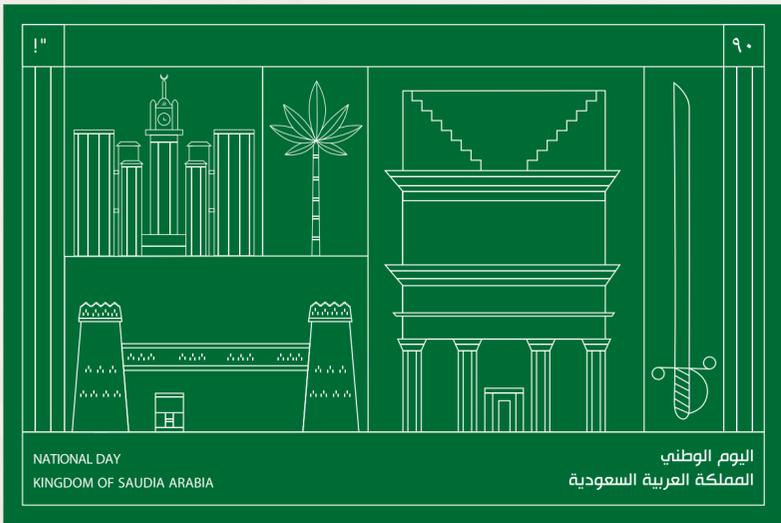
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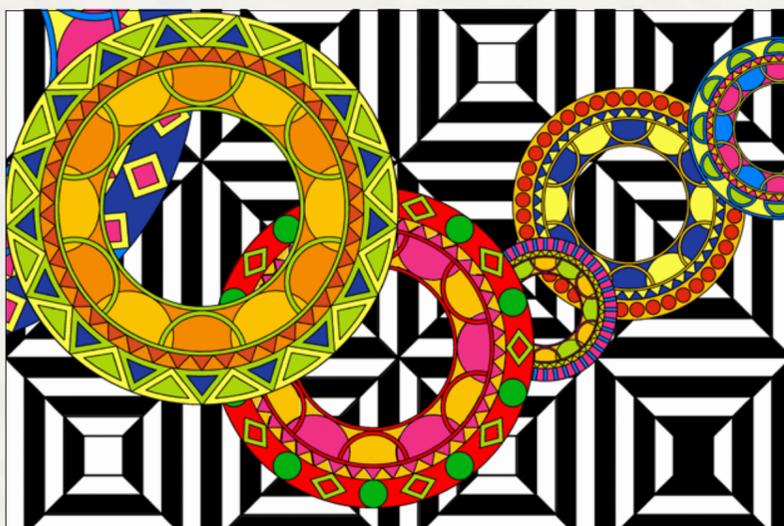
From Saudi Arabia with love.

The winning postcards celebrating Saudi National Day
(From over 80 submissions)



The Postcards



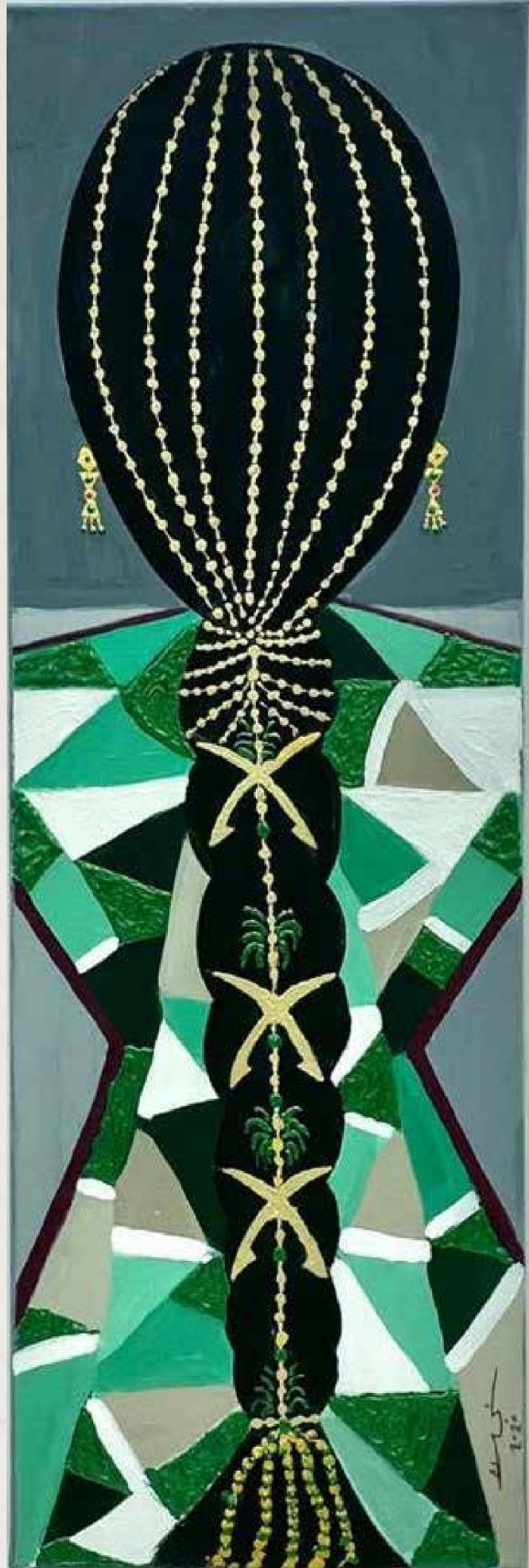




Winning artworks



By Hanouf Al-Laboun



By Najla Al-Hnaki





Artwork by Shahad Al-Ghaith
Photograph Credit: Khaled Al-Harthy



By Ebtahal Al-Mansour



Notable mentions

for their imagination.



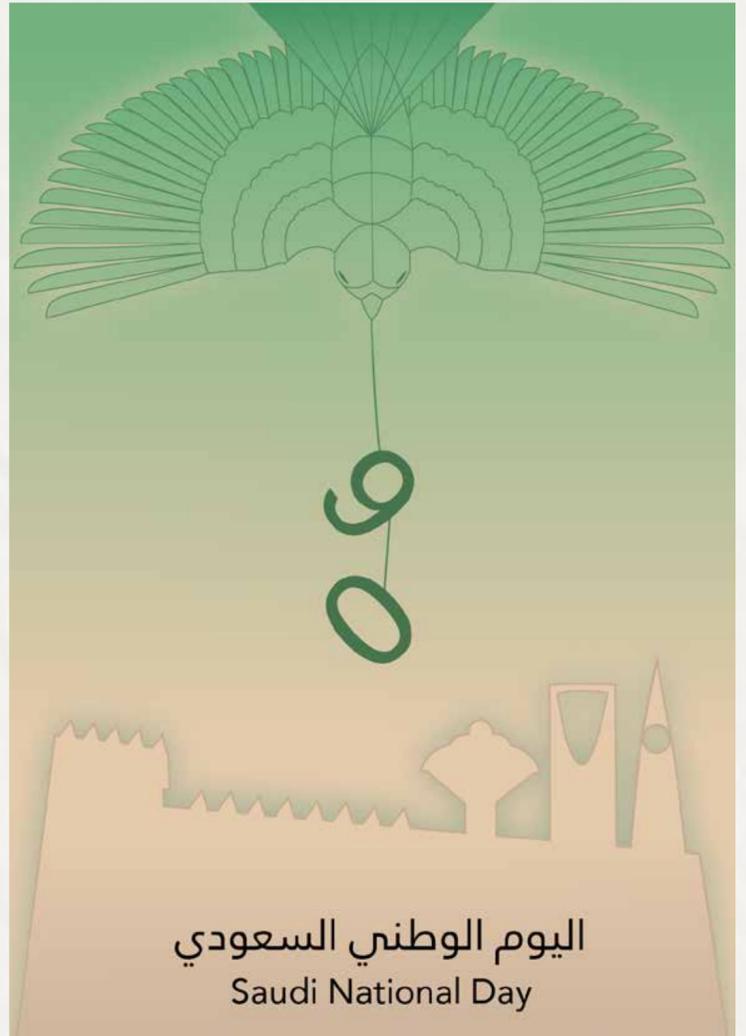
By Abeer Bahismi



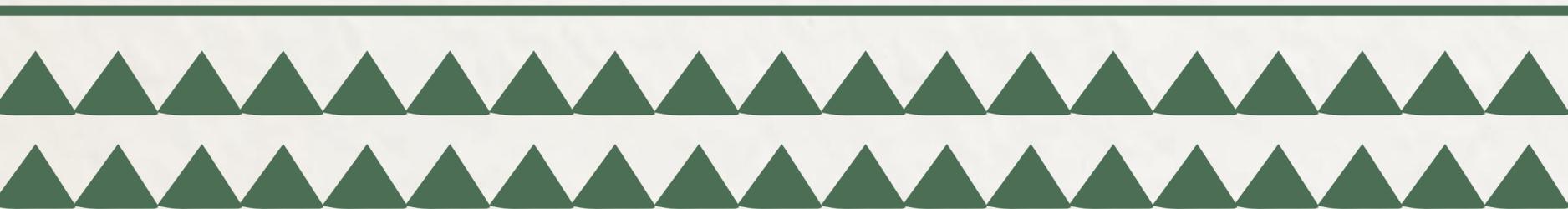
By Zainab Ghazwi



By Reem Saleh



By Majd Ald



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Special thanks for contributing artists & art:

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About Ithra

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture is one of Saudi Arabia's most influential cultural destinations, a destination for the curious, creatives, seekers of knowledge, and more.

Through a compelling series of programs, performances, exhibitions, events and initiatives, Ithra creates world-class experiences across its interactive public spaces that bring together culture, innovation and knowledge that are designed to appeal to everyone.

Connecting creatives, challenging perspectives and transforming ideas, Ithra is graduating its own leaders in the cultural field.

Ithra is **Saudi Aramco's** flagship CSR initiative and the largest cultural contribution to the Kingdom.

Ithra's components include the Idea Lab, Library, Cinema, Theater, Museum, Archive, Energy Exhibit, Great Hall, Children's Museum and Knowledge Tower.

For more information, please visit: www.ithra.com

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