

ithra
by **aramco**

Issue 008



Artist: Maha Malluh

Travels

Ithraeyat Magazine

November 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.

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Travels

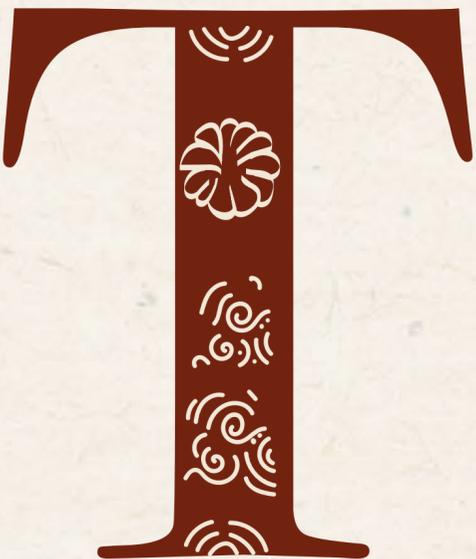
“Traveling—it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller.” — Ibn Battuta, 14th century traveler from Morocco.

Why do we travel? To explore and meet new people, see new things, learn about other cultures and their histories, and simply to get away from the everyday and the mundane. We tell stories of our travels, the experiences and the food we ate, and share images and display the trinkets, like magnets, postcards, currencies and souvenirs collected from the trip. Often, it is the journey, not the destination that leaves the greatest impressions on us.

In this latest issue of *Ithraeyat*, we pay homage to **Travels**. On the cover is the inspiring art by renowned Saudi artist **Maha Malluh** of vintage suitcases and the stories they carry. Titled ‘Journey of a lifetime,’ the art creation is in honor of the **legendary Zainab Cobbold** (born Lady Evelyn Murray; 1867–1963) a traveller and

an aristocrat, an Anglo-Scot who became the first British-born Muslim woman to perform the pilgrimage to Makkah. It inspires a discussion of the freedom of mobility set against the static nature of domestic life, a discussion at the center of women’s lives, both in the past and today. The suitcases bear witness of everyday material life in the Arab world but also point towards distant origins and travels.

The artwork inspires a question: Does belonging or domestic rooting always mean to be attached to a single geographical location? Or can a sense of belonging be a mental space, a continuous movement; even an adventure into other cultures and religions? In the COVID-19 era, we realize how much we took travel for granted, and its many seamless forms, compared to past travels riddled with danger and unpredictable turns. But some things don’t change. The stars are still here for us to turn to, to help us navigate whatever turbulent new chapters may come our way.



Meet our 'theme-special' featured Saudi artist, **Maha Malluh**, whose unique exploratory art in various mediums inspires conversations and stories.



Portrait:

Maha Malluh — ‘theme-special’ featured Saudi artist.

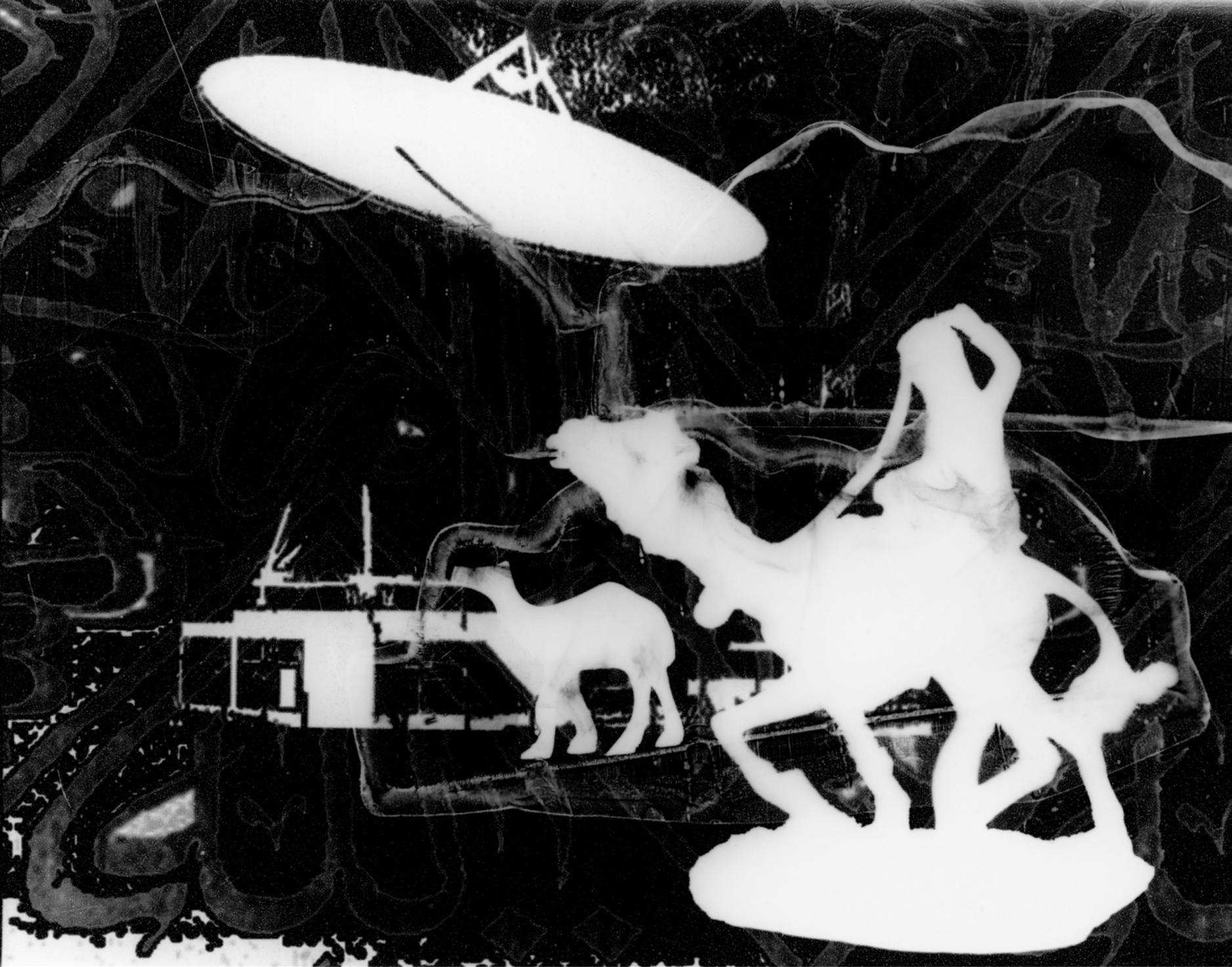
“Art is life to me...My inspiration for art comes from my country, a land of contrasting images and ideas. Good art... forces you to pause, to contemplate and think harder about your surroundings.”

One of Saudi Arabia’s most unique artists, one that explores, expands and experiments with various mediums, Maha Malluh’s creations leave an impression and tell multiple stories. Born in Jeddah in 1959, the Riyadh-based artist has been exhibiting for over three decades and is greatly influenced by her spiritual connection to the historic region of Najd, with its strong religious and cultural heritage, colorful patterned fabrics, and old Najdi architecture.

From collages to photography to reinterpreting and recycled objects from our homes and lives, Ms. Malluh is known to go digging through flea markets, deserted construction sites and various locations to find elements that resonate

and capture her and our imagination. Her latest work of mixed media installations, which use the found objects, can be seen as historic symbols of collective Saudi identity, amongst them are massive chinco dishes, Aluminum pots, cassette tapes of religious lectures, discarded oil barrels and metal doors typical of the region.

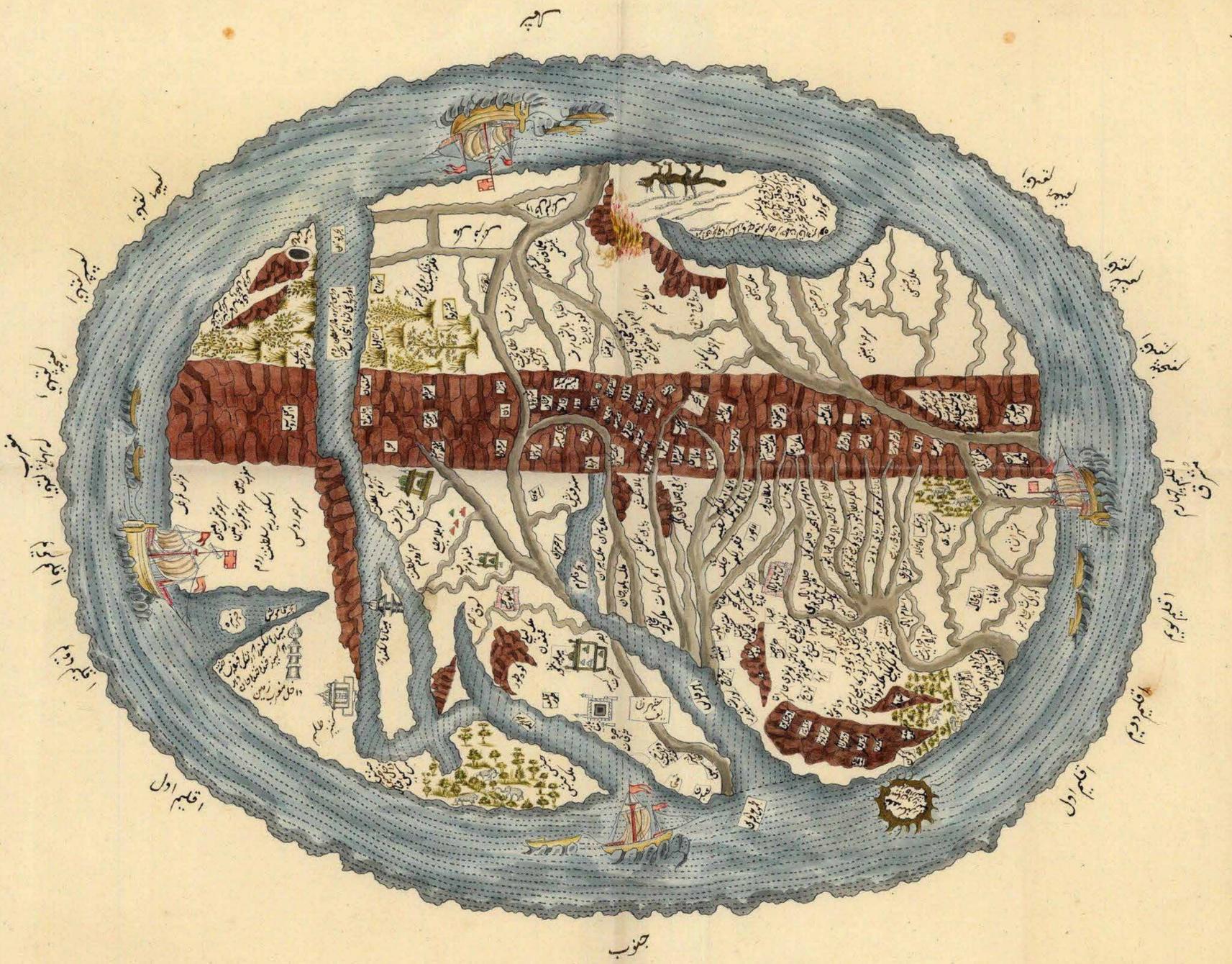
“The objects we use at home for instance tell our stories, and capture our history, the same way objects in museums around the world tell the stories of different civilizations,” she said. “When an object can no longer be used for its original purpose, a new function through ‘adaptive re- use’ may be the only chance for it to preserve and communicate the heritage in term of its significance.”



The installation featured here of old aluminum pots hanging closely together off the wall— pots that have been used by Arabs throughout history for cooking—is titled ‘Food for Thought - Al-Muallaqat.’ It explicitly makes reference to the Suspended Odes or Hanging Poems, the 6th century pre-Islamic Arabic poetry traditionally hung on the Kaaba at Makkah. *“Objects’ have the ability to be ‘distributed’ as they are given the purpose to be allowed to travel great distances for them to communicate with other ‘objects’ from different countries or cultures.”*

The co-existence of the modern and the traditional is a frequent motif in her photograms, such as featuring camels

and satellites together in ‘The Road To Makkha, screened and barcoding’ series. Her body of work continues to explore the dialogue between the past and the present, breaking barriers and inspiring conversations. Ms. Maha studied Fine Art at SMU Dallas Texas, USA, has a BA degree in English Literature from King Saud University in Riyadh and a certificate in Design and Photography from De Anza College in Cupertino, California. She had exhibited in numerous exhibitions within the Kingdom and internationally, and her work is included in international collections such as Tate Modern, British Museum, Abu Dhabi Louvre, SFMOMA-Francisco Museum of Modern San Francisco, USA and many others.



Map of the world centered on the Arabian Gulf, showing seven mosques or minarets. 18th century drawing of a lost 16th century Islamic world map, centered on the Gulf, showing the Great Mosque and Kaaba at Makkah, the Great Mosque at Madinah and five others in Iraq and North Africa. 500 x 420 mm. Oval manuscript map in ink and watercolor. **Credit Antiquariat Inlbriss.**

Special Feature:

Traveling to sacred and forbidden lands

Makkah, the holiest city of Islam. It is the city in which one finds peace, and serenity – a closeness to God. It is the global hub for the Islamic civilization. And for centuries people en masse en masse have crossed their lands and travelled long and dangerous distances to perform Hajj. To stand in front of the House of God, the Kaaba, and deepen their bond with God through the oneness of the group.

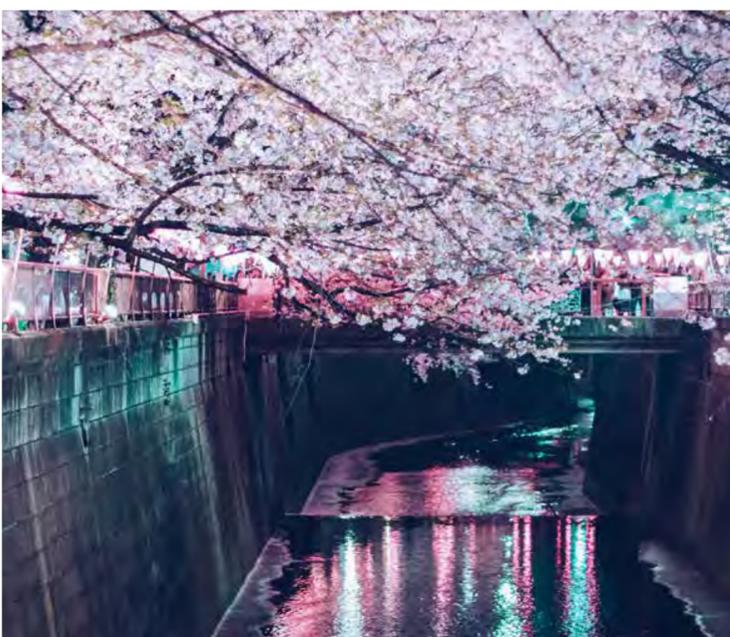
It is a holy experience like no other. It is here that travelers from all around the world meet in one place, and witness the largest single gathering at one time for one purpose. As such, one can imagine the desire world-travelers have to see this with their own eyes, and marvel at Makkah's powerful moments.



Magical Japan, photos taken by Saudi traveler and adventurer **Fatema Abdulla**.

Spotlight:

Al-Rahala — Saudi Modern explorers



“Who lives sees much, but who travels sees more,” says an Arabian proverb.

History has seen plenty of explorers travel to every corner in the world. Travel was once difficult, riddled with danger and unknowns. But today’s travelers can plan ahead, can share their adventures with a quick snap and post on social media. Here in this special spotlight, we meet a few of Saudi Arabia’s own collection of modern explorers...



Photo by Scott Baldauf.

Special Feature:

A 'Rihla' through the desert—a homage to nature and memories

“See where the wind takes the sand? If the wind is from the north, it will fall toward the south. It’s easy. No need for GPS. Khali wali [let it go] technology,” — Quriyan Al-Hajri, a man of nature and a member of a Bedouin tribe.

It was a warm Friday afternoon, and Quriyan Al-Hajri was walking quickly toward the north, as if he was on some kind of mission. Which, in fact, he was on—to plant a tree where his mother gave birth to him. But that was just one element of his mission. His goal was ambitious this past October. Over the next three or four days, Quriyan would walk from his home in a village near Ain Dar to the place of his birth, 120 kilometers away

near the historic town of Thaj. It’s a walk this 63-year-old retired Aramcon has taken several times before, but this year the stakes were somewhat higher. This year, he wanted to raise awareness about the degradation of the land of his birth over the past decades, which he believes is due to human behavior and growing desertification...



Maps of Connections & Humanity

When we travel to different places, it is the human connections and the people we meet that create those timeless memories. From a world map, to the map of “my kingdom” where the artist captures the essence of the Saudi traditional life of date farming, weaving of colors and

cloth, and the connections to nature and its landscapes. Enjoy these distinct art pieces by Saudi artist **Awatef Al-Safwan**, who was born in Tarout Island, and has been painting and venturing in the world of art—both locally and internationally—since 1992.



Map art by Saudi artist **Awatef Al-Safwan**.

Spotlight:

Travel Clothes: functional & timeless elegance



Farwah

'The most beautiful thing you can wear is confidence...'

This capacious coat is very heavy, and serves the shepherd or traveller as a blanket or bed roll especially during cold nights. Usually, the outer layer is made of tightly woven woolen or cotton textile. They usually use at least two colors

which are divided by braid work like black and dark blue trimmed by black threads. Nowadays Farwahs have many colors and are very popular and high demand during the cold weather, and for camping season by both men and women.



Bedi

This short version of a Bisht is worn in central Arabia. It is made out of sheep wool with loose camel hair woven in and brushed downwards. The front decoration consists of colored embroidery worked mostly in couching stitch, with the armholes, shoulder line and back also embroidered. The sleeves are finished off with braided and wrapped tassels.

This coat was named Bedi after Beda valley where it was first produced. The significant geometrical embroidery made out of orange or red wool woven threads, in contrast to Bedi color — either camel color or black— gives it a timeless elegance and a very fashionable look. Today it can be worn by both women and men.



When you look closely at the details of the design you will feel it was designed by a couture designer. The details of each Saudi costume was designed not just to fulfill one's daily needs but also to bring joy to a tough everyday life. This is exactly what international designers these days look for.

Today we celebrate the stylish art of travel, whether across the desert, or along the mountains, while wearing rich Saudi outfits that we are proud of as colorful ambassadors of our diverse culture.

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

From the Shelves:

Discover five books to travel through

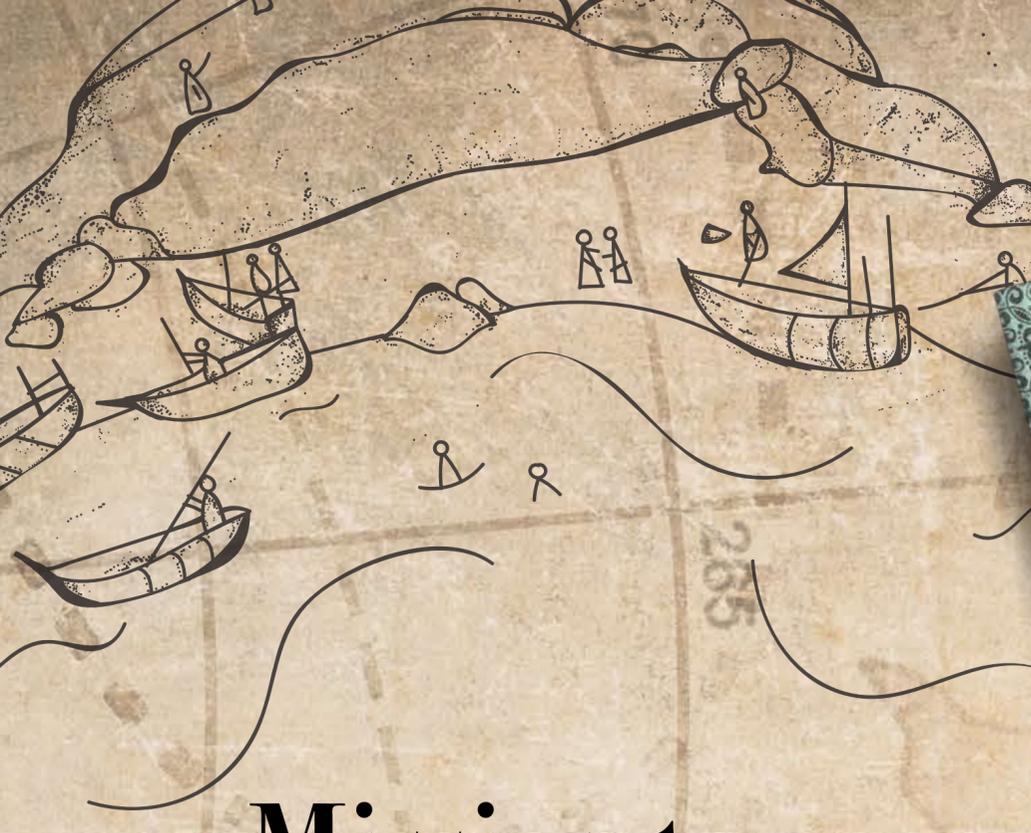
Reading is often the best substitute for travel. Through the pages, stories take us to faraway lands and magical places. These five books will give you insight into lively travels and historical experiences from across the Arabian Peninsula.

The Visit

By Dr. Shafi Aldamer, translated by Dr. Richard Mortel

A collection of rare photographs taken by Princess Alice, Countess of Athlon's visit to Saudi Arabia, published by the King Abdulaziz Public Library. She is the first member of the British royal family to visit the Kingdom, who traveled across the country with her husband, the Earl of Athlone.

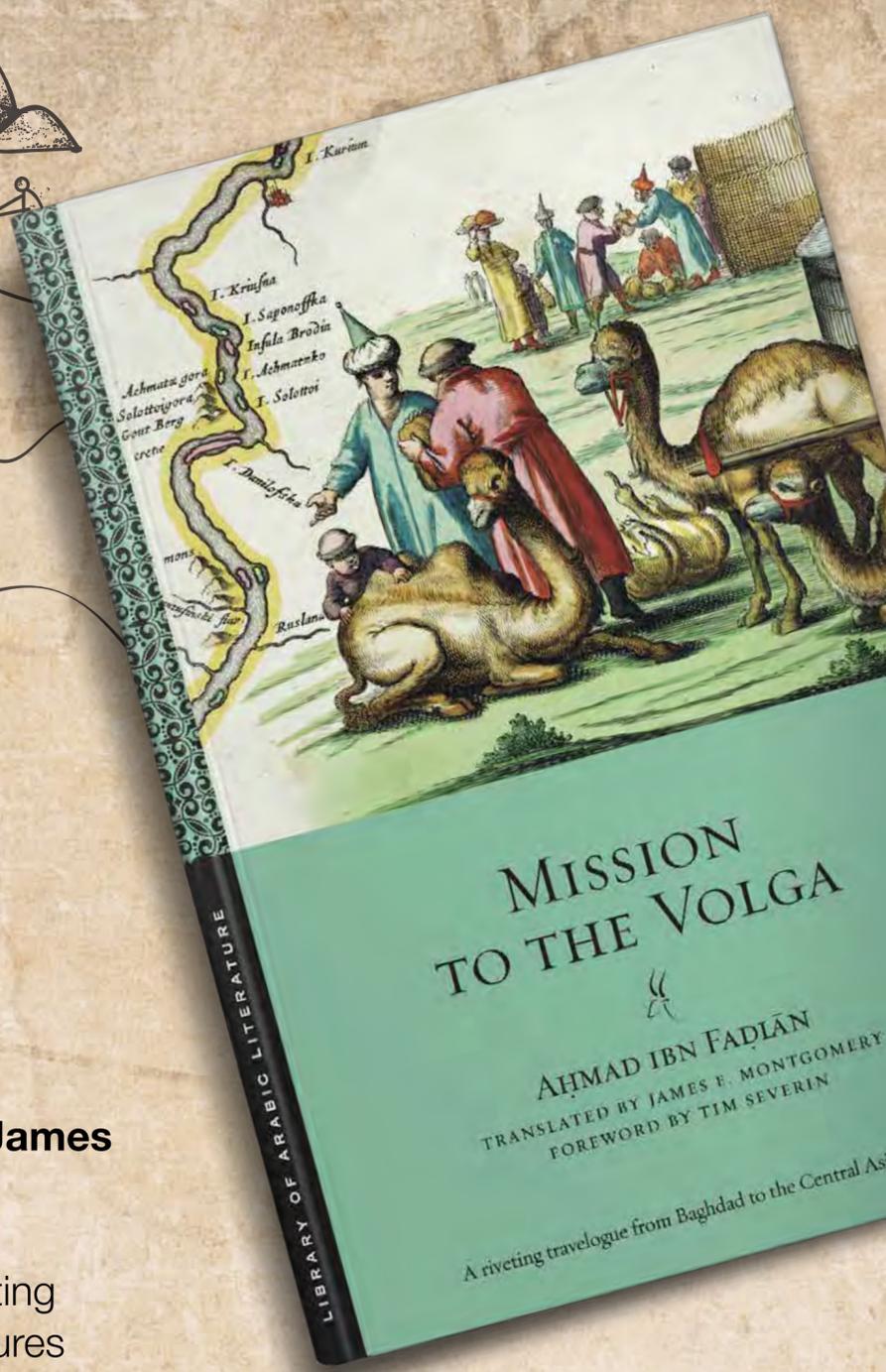




Mission to the Volga

By Ahmad ibn Fadlan, translated by James Montgomery

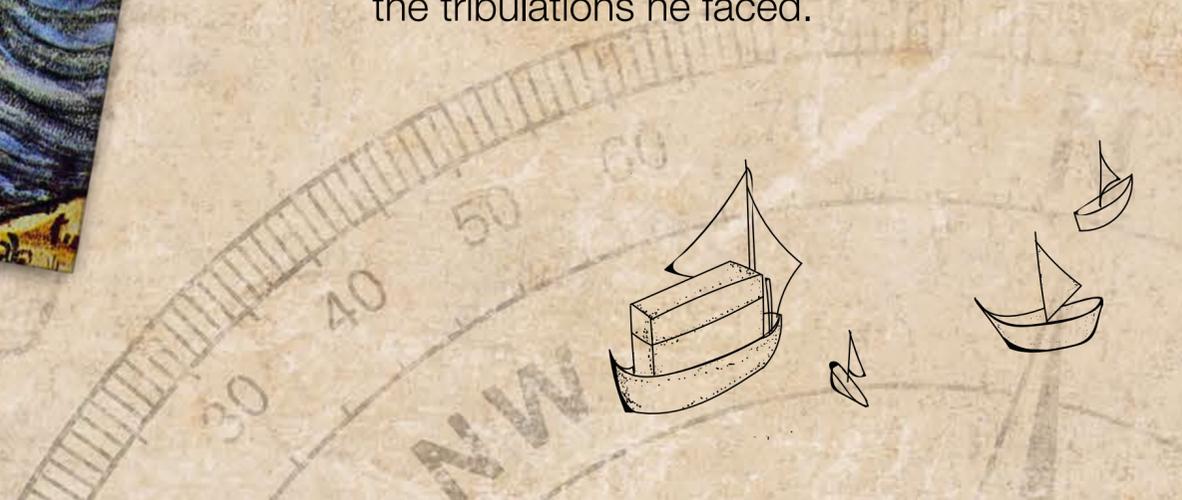
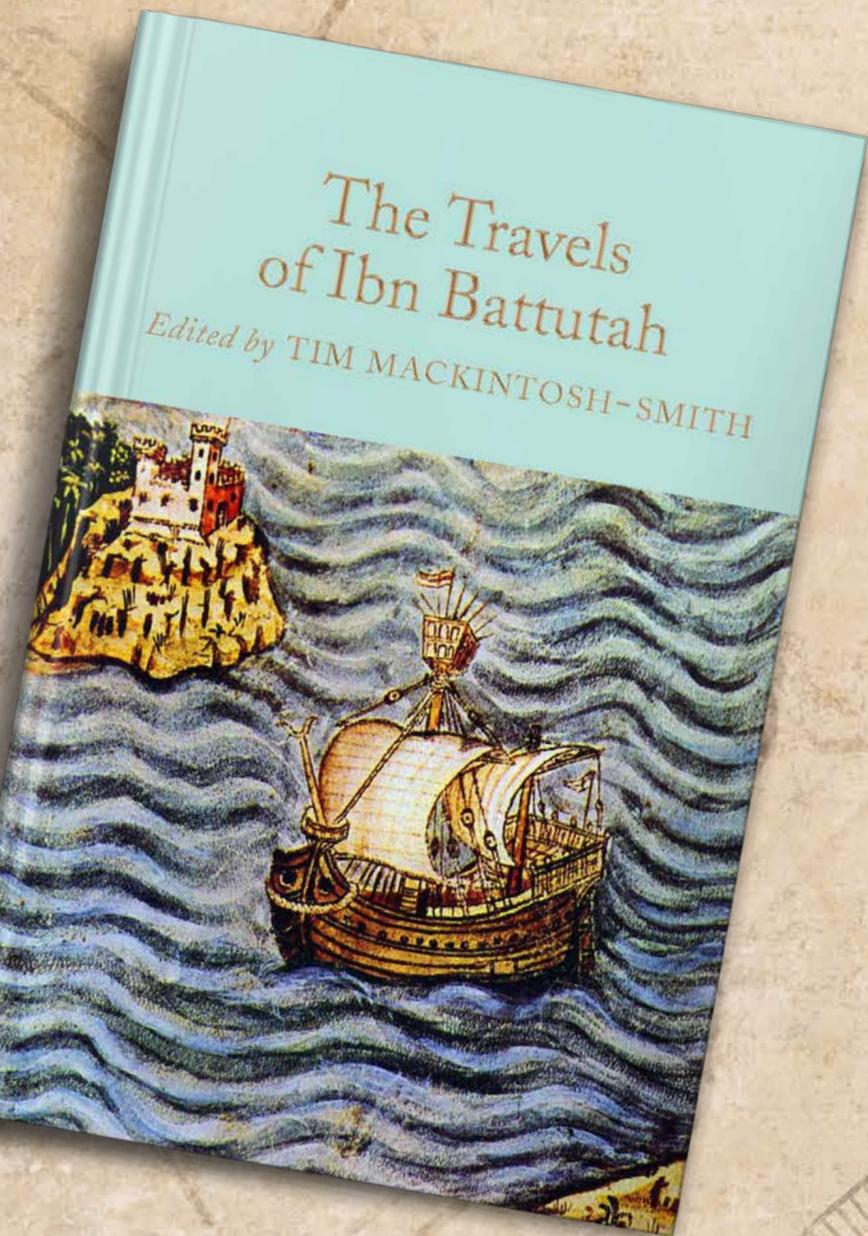
Dive into a world of diversity and enchanting accounts by Ahmad ibn Fadlan's adventures during the Abbasid Empire. Mission to the Volga includes his vibrant writings on Baghdad's travels to the upper Volga River, today's central Russia. A remarkable travelogue, including a thrilling ship burial and a rare description of the Viking Rus, including their customs, clothing, and their body painting.

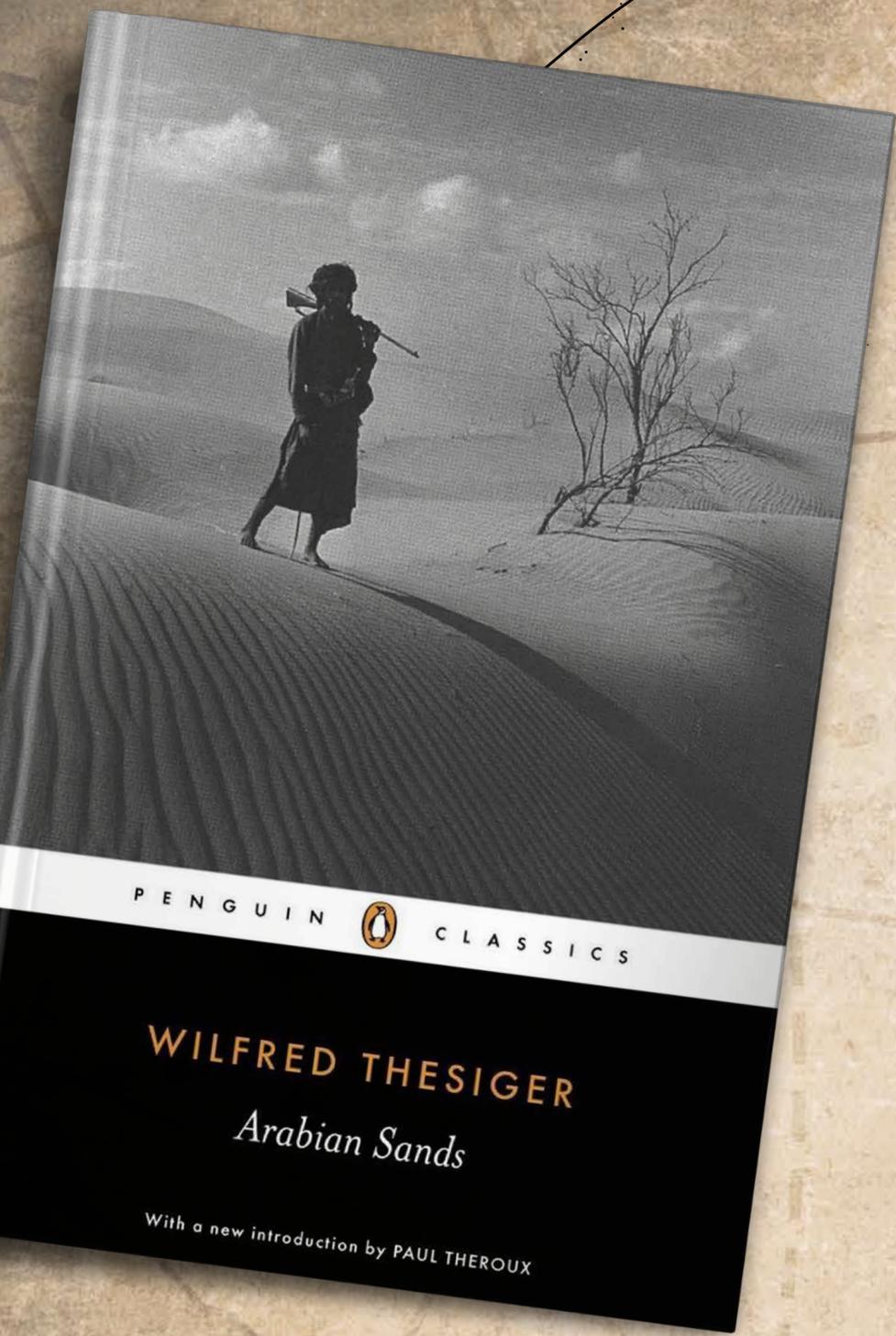


The Travels of Ibn Battuta

By Ibn Battuta, edited by Tim Mackintosh-Smith

Ibn Battuta traveled vastly across lands—from Morocco to Makkah and India to China. In his book, The Travels of Ibn Battuta (known initially as Rihla), he notes his journeys and the tribulations he faced.





Arabian Sands

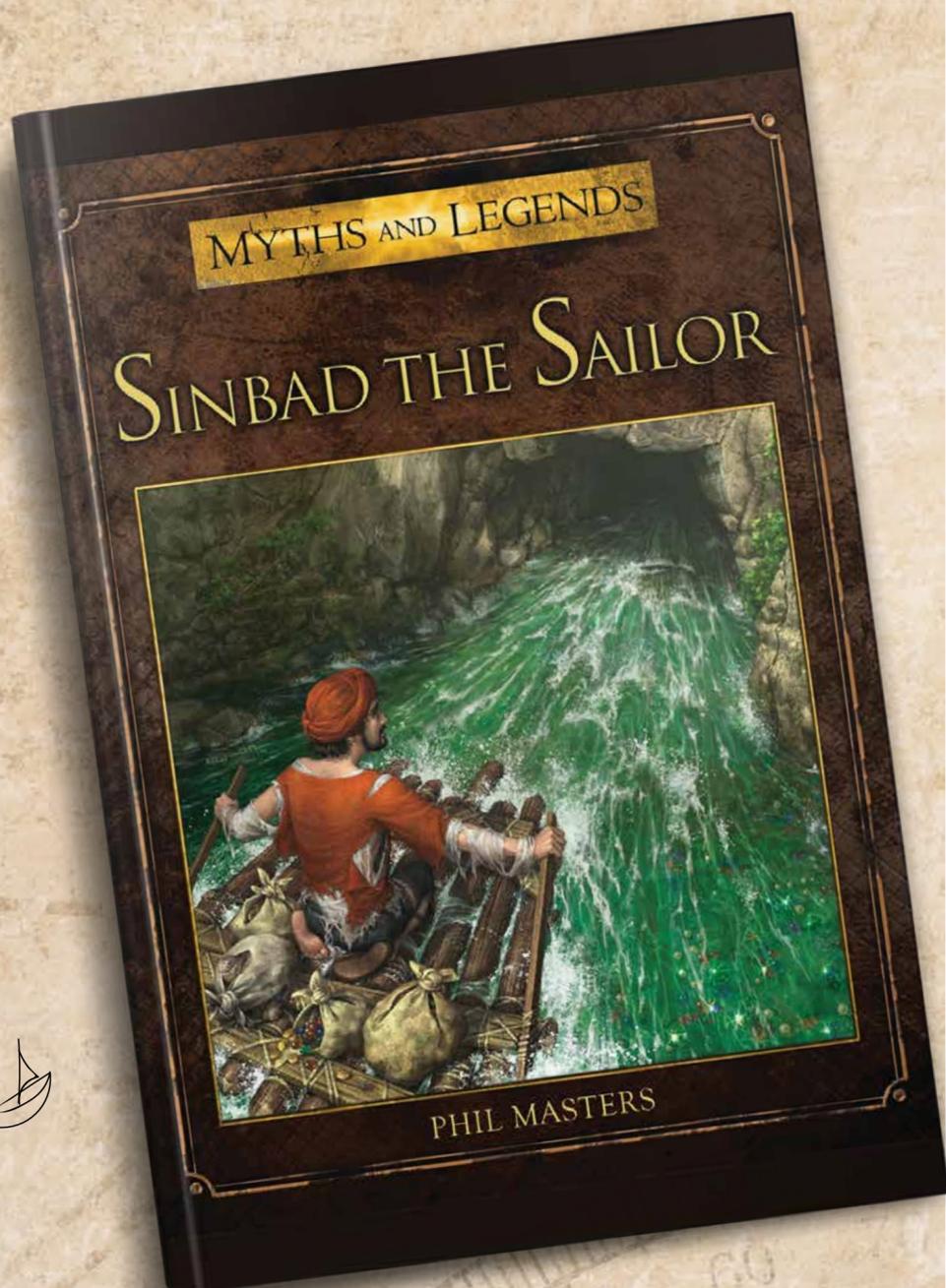
By Wilfred Thesiger

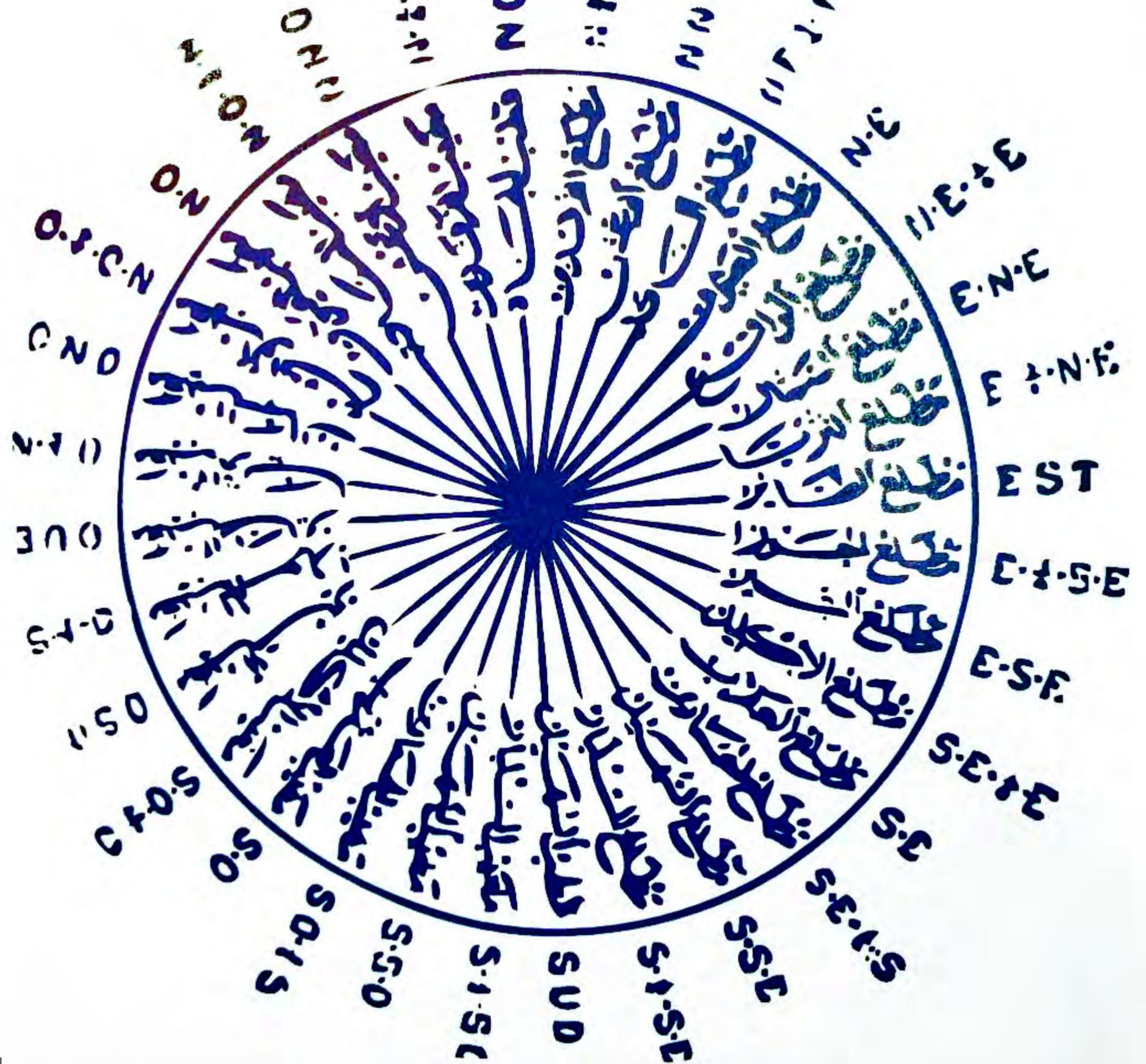
Arabian Sands recounts Wilfred Thesiger's (also known by his Arabian nickname Mubarak bin London) experiences across the Empty Quarter and many other tales. The book focuses on the changed Bedu way of life after World War Two and other Arabian Peninsula inhabitants.

Sinbad the Sailor

By Phil Masters

A mariner, a hero, and a legendary character of the Middle East. Sinbad the Sailor is a delightful story to dive in and to rediscover magical realms and bizarre folks as Sinbad sails beyond the horizon.





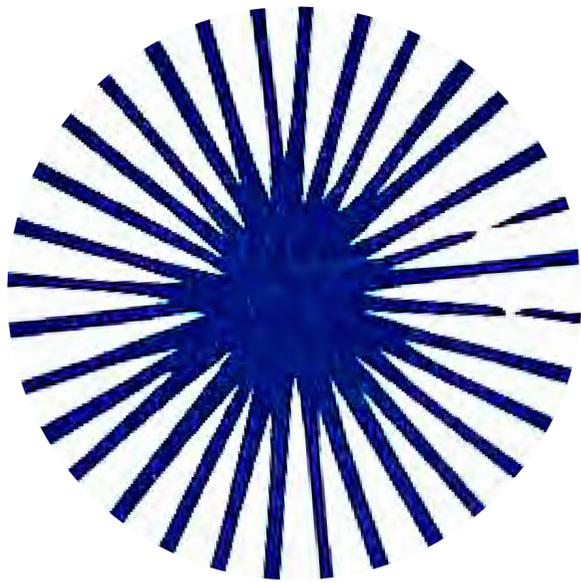
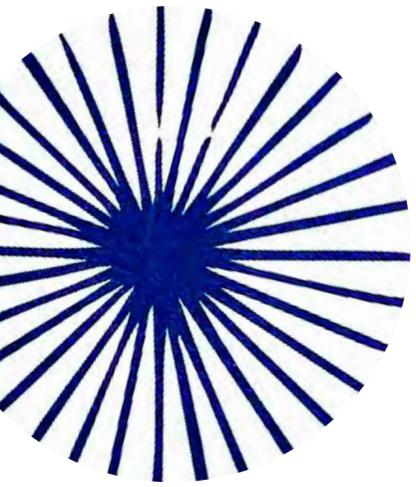
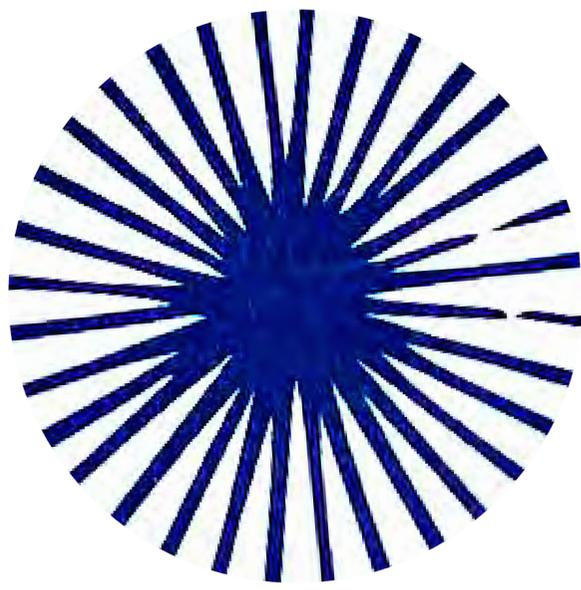
Courtesy of Maj. General Ahmad bin Mohammed Bin Thani. Source: The Book of Useful Information on the Principles and Rules of Navigation, (originally in arabic Kitab al-Fawa'id fi Usul 'Ilm al-Bahr wa 'l-Qawa'id) written around 1490

Arabic Treasures: Lion of the Sea

‘A teacher – the Captain or Commander of the ship – must be pious and just, never oppressive, always obedient to Allah, properly mindful of Allah in all his actions...’ —Ahmed Ibn Majid

Believed to be the inspiration for the fictional character Sindbad, Ahmed Ibn Majid was born in the early 1400s. While some say he was born in Julfar, the medieval predecessor of Ras Al Khaimah, and others say he was born in Sohar of Oman, the man known as ‘The Lion of the Sea’ was an influential navigator, poet and scholar. Navigation of the Arabian

Gulf and the Indian Ocean by European powers was partly aided by the maps and treatises of Ibn Majid who is believed to have set sail as young as 17. “We can easily sail in their ships and upon their sea, so they have great respect for us and look up to us. They admit we have a better knowledge of the sea and navigation and the wisdom of the stars,” he wrote about **European navigation.**



He was an accomplished cartographer and revolutionized navigation by placing the compass inside a box. He is also credited with several inventions, such as the design of the triangular lateen sail, which has survived for centuries and hangs from the masts of local ships to this day. Ultimately, the best guide for humanity is right above them.

“And it is He who placed for you the stars that you may be guided by them through the darkneses of the land and sea. We have detailed the signs for a people who know,” The Qur’an (6:97)



The Berber Minbar Morocco, Middle Atlas, Morocco. Circa 1700 AD. Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*), pigment and iron nails. 158m x 60cm. Door arch 215 cm high. From Ithra's collection.

Ithra Curiosities: The Traveling Minbar

An interesting tradition that became distinctive of minbars in North Africa, such as this one, was their mobility. In the Maghrib (North Africa) and Al-Andalus (or Muslim Spain), it became common practice to store the minbar in a closet built into the wall to the right of the mihrab.

Because they were quite heavy, Maghribi minbars, again like this one, were built on wheels so that they could be rolled out of the closet, and wooden tracks were often laid on the carpets or mats of the mosque floor to help them travel.

The minbar has three steps, a seat, and an entrance porch surmounted by an elaborate crest. The elements of the main body are assembled from rectangular panels incised and painted with geometric motifs enhanced with dark orange and black pigments.

Each of the minbar's four stair risers show the common motif of horseshoe arches which echo the earlier minbars on which this one was based.

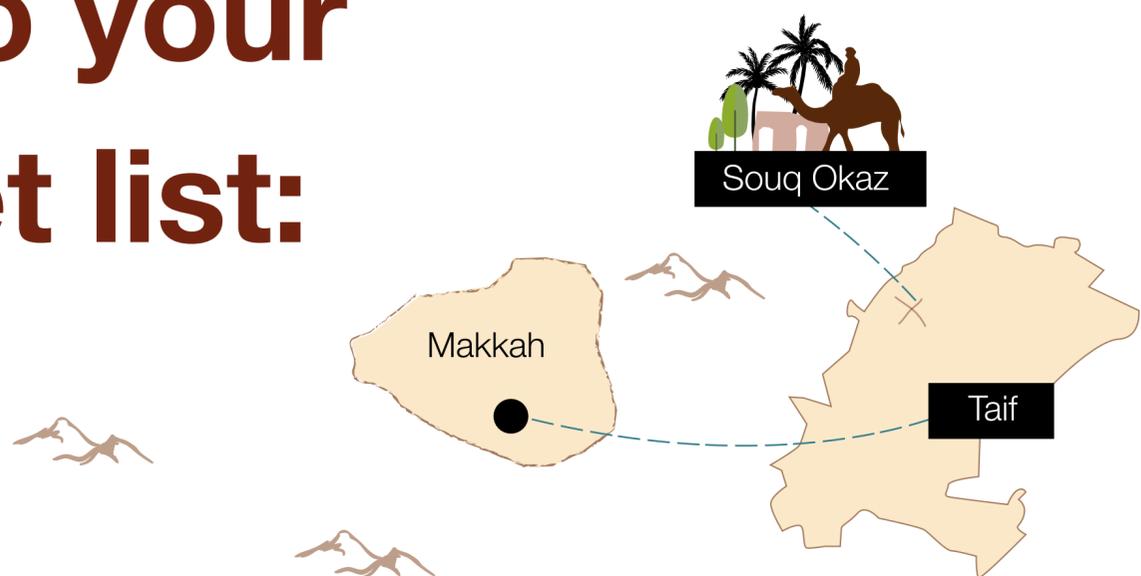
Indeed, although this minbar was made for a small congregational mosque in the Atlas mountains, the models for this kind of minbar go back to the grand Almoravid Minbars from the Kutabiyya mosque in Marrakech and the great mosque of Cordoba.





Okaz, where the Wordsmiths of Arabia met.

Add to your bucket list:



Souq Okaz (located 40 kilometers north of Taif) was one of the three major souqs of the pre-Islamic era, and most accounts outline a sacred procession of visiting each souq during the holy months of Dhul-Qidah and Dhul-Hijjah, culminating with pilgrimage at Makkah. As an old saying went, “Do not attend Souq Okaz, Mijna and Dhil-Majaz unless you’re in a state of ihram

for pilgrimage.” The word okaz can be translated in many ways, but roughly means preaching, boasting and arguing, which is an especially apt description of the activities that happened there. Apropos of the souq’s name and legacy, even the Prophet had gone there each year to preach to the people about Islam...

Bridges:

Cross-Cultural Conversations



Planispheric Astrolabe Spain (Historic Al-Andalus), probably Toledo, 1300s. Bronze, engraved and inlaid with silver. Diameter 13.5 cm AKM611

Precious travel companion: The Astrolabe

Astrolabes like this sophisticated example, attributed to 14th-century Toledo in Southern Spain and once owned by one Mas'oud, would once have been indispensable travel companions as well as crucial, every day calculating devices. On the road, travellers could use it to determine the time and length of day, when to pray, the direction (qibla) towards Makkah,

and the distance remaining to their destination. All in all, astrolabes were among the most important and versatile instruments used by Islamic scientists. First invented by the Greeks around the 3rd century BCE, they were perfected in the medieval Islamic world and were said to have over a thousand different uses, including measuring the position of celestial bodies in the sky, casting



horoscopes, and surveying the land. Astrolabes could also calculate the moon's angle above the horizon and the lunar mansions, i.e. the position of the moon within a sign of the zodiac on a particular night. The word "astrolabe" and the Arabic word *asturlab* are derived from the Greek term *astrolabon* for "star taker." The instrument has been called many names, some of them quite poetic: the polymath medieval scholar Al-Biruni called it "mirror of the stars" and "taker of the stars."

An astrolabe is made up of 4 main pieces: the base plate (*mater*); the web-like plate (*rete*), which shows the fixed stars, the zodiac constellations, part of the sky across which the sun travels and certain naked eye stars; plates made for different latitudes,

and the rule (*alidade*) at the back, used for making observations and reading off scales. This medieval Spanish astrolabe is particularly fascinating for another, unique reason: it has inscriptions in Latin, Hebrew and Arabic and comes from a time when Christian, Jews and Muslims in Al-Andalus lived and worked peacefully alongside each other. It is a symbolic treasure, one embodying the essence of acceptance and multiculturalism.

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:**

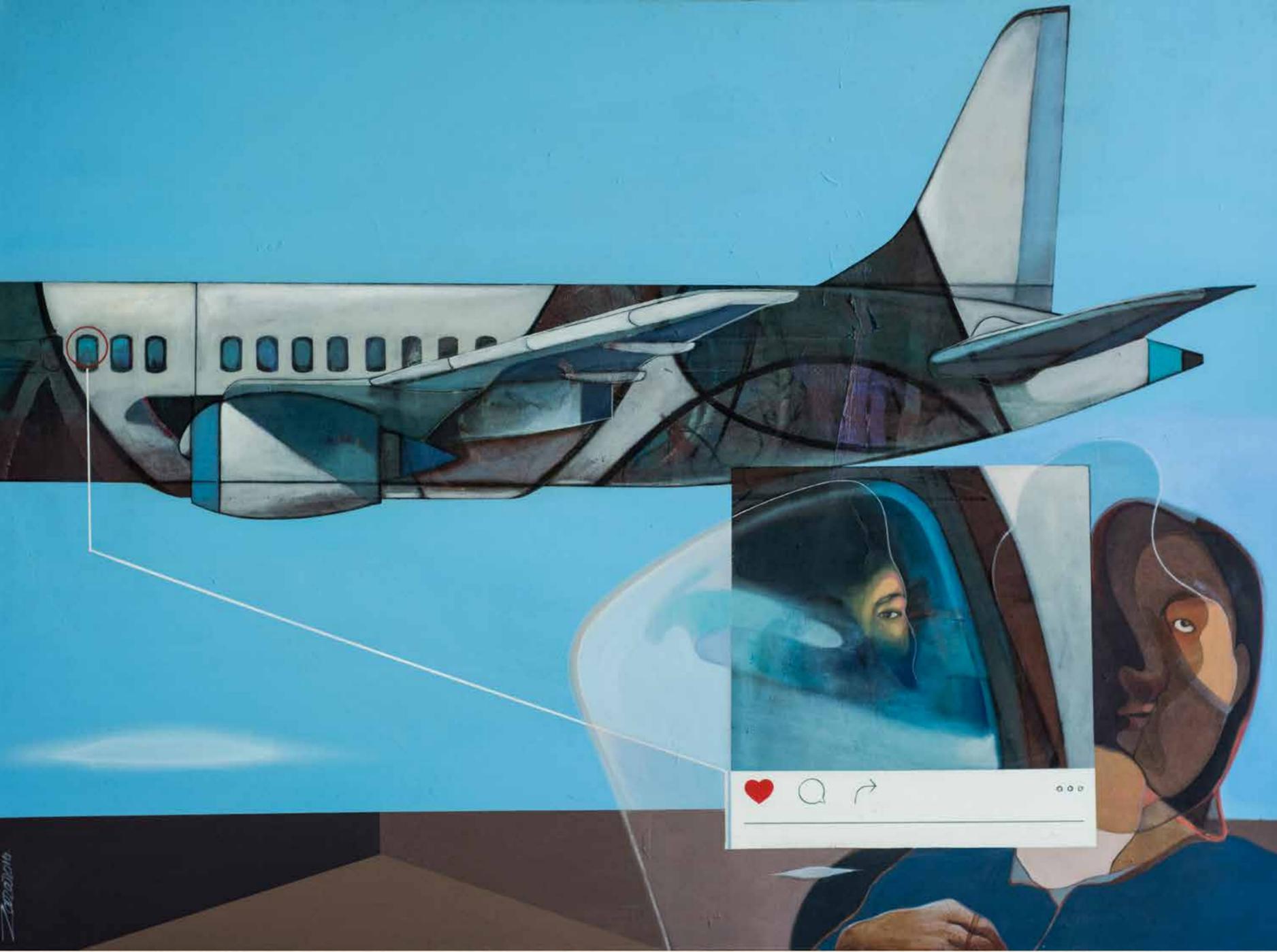
The art of travel.

Travel is many things, it includes traveling across a room, across land, within ourselves and even to space. Here we meet artists from a special collection by the Barjeel Art Foundation who visit this theme of travel in its diversity, and take us along on a ride of creativity.



'The Last Look,' by **Lateefa Bint Maktoum**. 2008, Archival print on paper 100 x 150 cm. Image courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah.





'A gate feeling the sky' by **Mohammad Zaza**. 2014. Acrylic on canvas. 125 x 170 cm courtesy of the artist and **Hafez Gallery**



'The Redman's Journey II,' by **Mohammad Zaza**. 2015. Acrylic on canvas. 250 x 200 cmm courtesy of the artist and **Hafez Gallery**



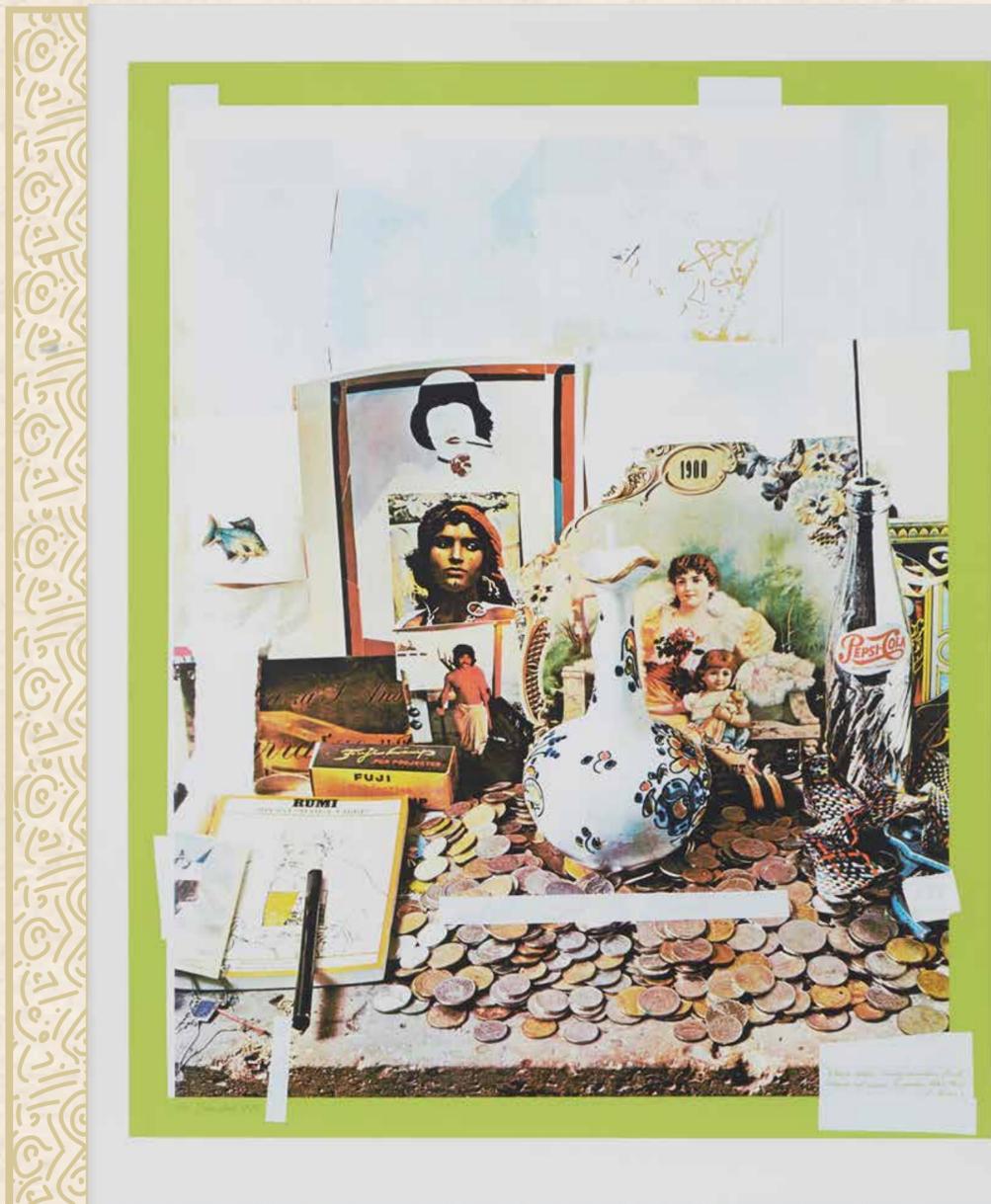
'Suspended Together - Standing Doves,' by **Manal Al Dowayan**. 2012, Porcelain, 20 x 10 x 23 cm. Image courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah.



'Two People in Space Outfits,' by **Abdel Hadi El Gazzar**, early 1960's, Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 cm. Image courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah.



'Space Exploration,' by **Menhat Helmy**. 1973, Oil on canvas, 123 x 123 cm. Image courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah



'The Caravan (2 of 5),' by **Jafar Islah**. 1976, Silkscreen on paper, 83 x 66 cm. Image courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah

From the Archives:

Homage to travel and its memories



Rarities from the Aramco Archives.

Two young Shepherdesses

While rarer today with widespread tourism and modern travel, there were once many elements of surprise whenever one hit the road and simply went off to the desert, mountains and less explored areas. One would meet tribes and shepherds, see wildlife, exchange and collect foreign currencies and rarities, and simply enjoy meeting other exploring souls.



September,
1957

Ain Dar No.57 looms above a herd of wandering watering camels, while herdsman beam with joy. No. 57 is situated in the North Gawar Field. September 1957.

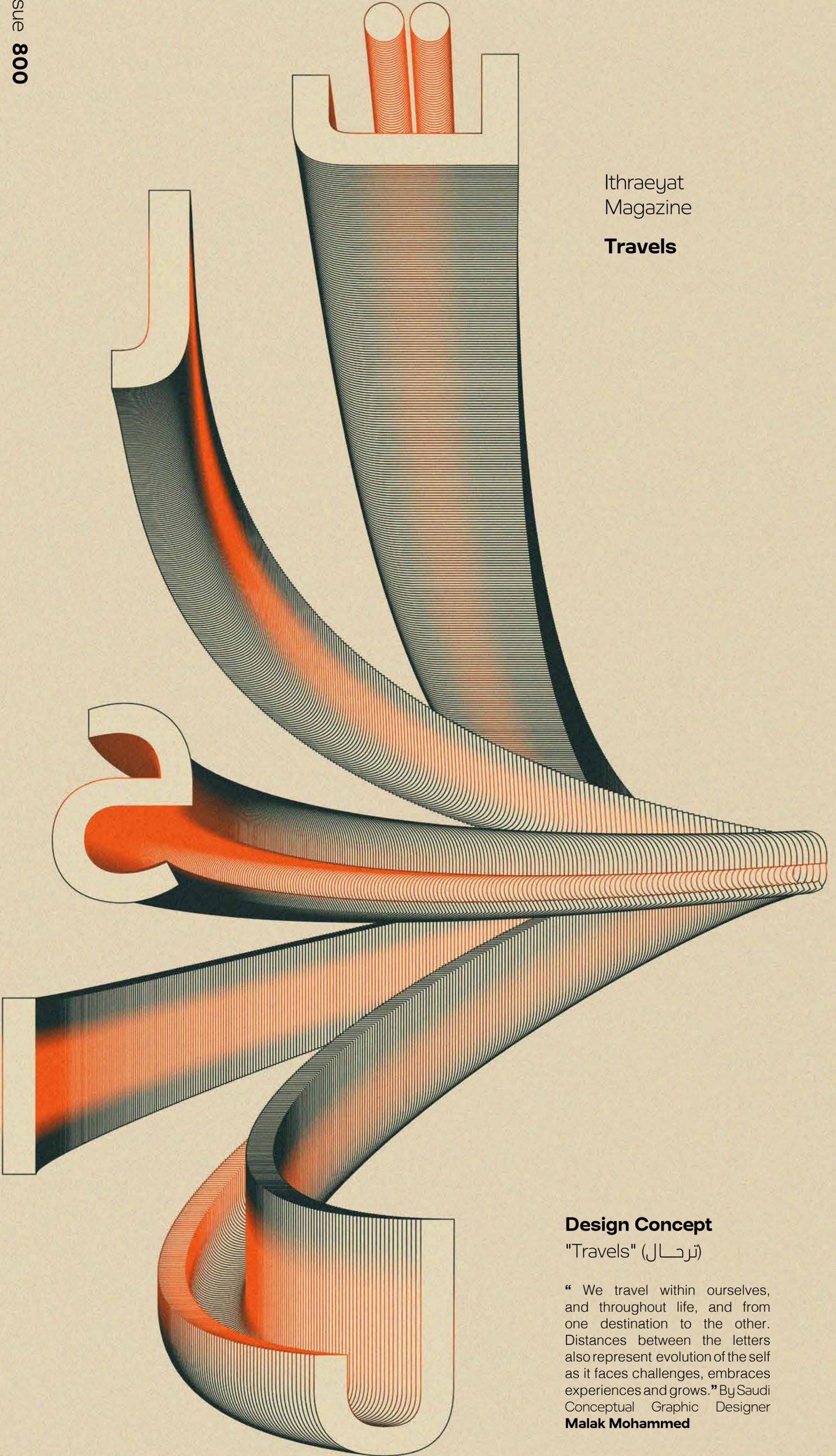


1968.

100, 50, 10 Saudi Riyals.

The Art of **Digital**

In its support of the ever evolving digital art, Ithraeyat magazine will feature a special section dedicated to the various forms of **Typography**, providing a one of a kind expressive platform for Saudi and international digital artists. Here, the artists will debut their unique experimental creations in relation to the themes in all its diversity and imagination, pushing boundaries and inspiring conversations.



Ithraeyat
Magazine

Travels

Design Concept

"تُرَاحَل" (Travels)

“ We travel within ourselves, and throughout life, and from one destination to the other. Distances between the letters also represent evolution of the self as it faces challenges, embraces experiences and grows.” By Saudi Conceptual Graphic Designer **Malak Mohammed**



'The Lost Path,' Desert X Al-Ula, 2020 by Muhannad Shono. We are all in search of meaning in our lives, whether it be through maps we follow or journeys we undertake. In The Lost Path, Shono reminds us that the journey is always greater than the destination, and points us towards our own personal buried histories. Known for his unique unpredictable art, Shono revisits his site-specific commission in Al-Ula with a series of unique ink illustrations on 50 prints of a photograph he took over the region of Al Ula. In this art, he is using plastic pipes, a byproduct of the petroleum industry which he repurposes as one would ink on paper, effectively drawing on site – a sculptural sketch in the desert. The Lost Path is a call for discovery, a treasure map leading towards finding our personal path. Art courtesy of the **artist** and **Athr Gallery**, Jeddah.

From the World Wide Web: Art stories to browse through

- +Saudi artist brings global Inktober art challenge to KSA
- +Culture documentation by Saudi ministry to help dispel misconceptions
- +Saudi Arabia culinary authority serves up new strategy
- +Turning the Aboriginal Art and Cultures Centre vision into reality
- +7 Amazing Things You Can Do in Google's Arts and Culture App

We look forward to sharing our 'makhzan' of stories with you every month.

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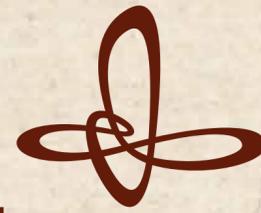
AGA KHAN MUSEUM

حافظ

HAFEZ GALLERY



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About Ithra

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) 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, Energy Exhibit, Great Hall, Children's Museum and Knowledge Tower. For more information, please visit: www.ithra.com

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