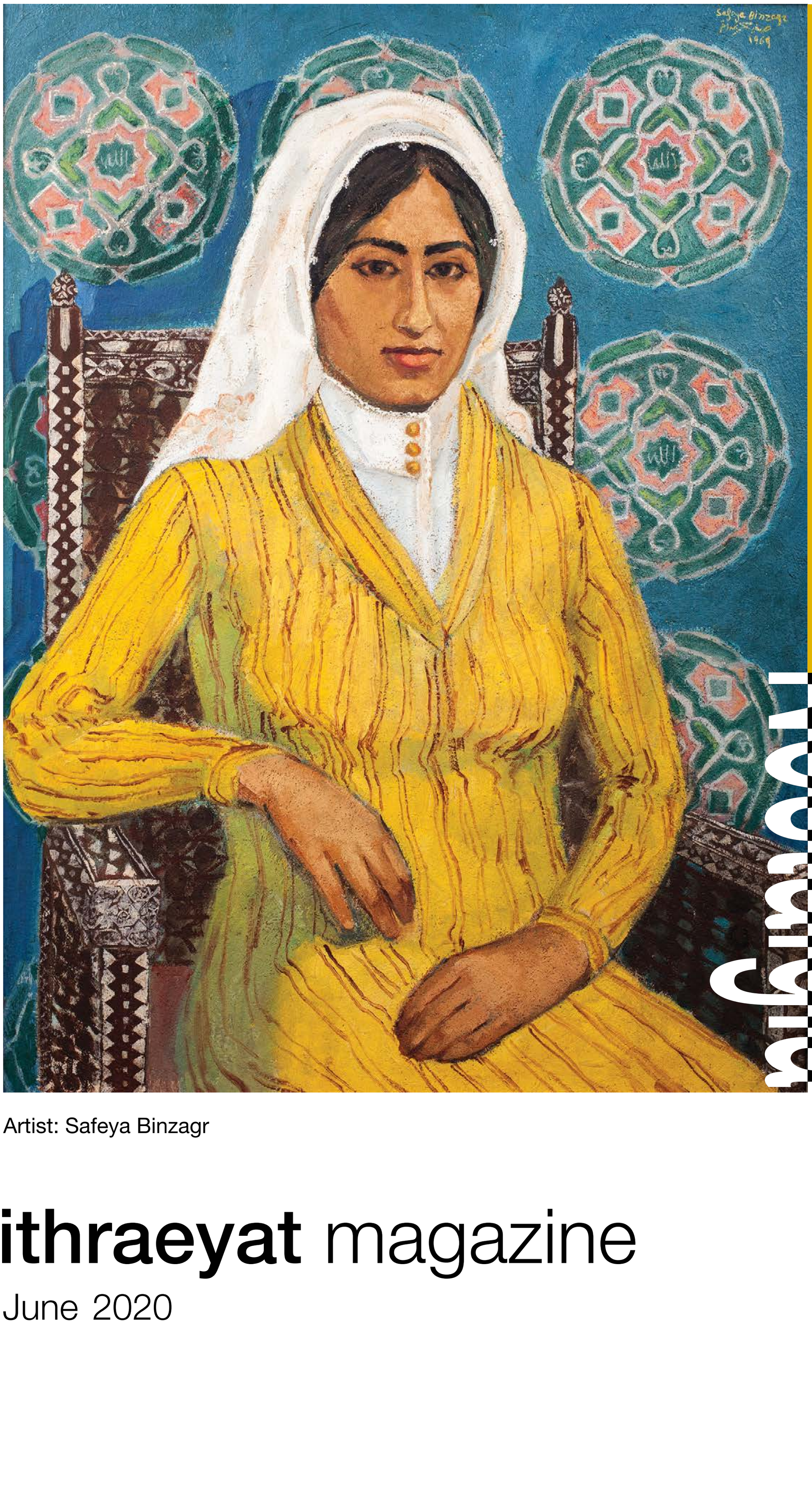
ISSUE NO. 003

ithra
by aramco



ithraeyat magazine

June 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.



‘Composition with fish,’ (1975), oil and sand on masonite, by one of Saudi Arabia’s most respected artists: Abdul-Halim Radwi. Originally from Makkah, Radwi (1939-2006) was a painter, poet and sculptor with a special focus on traditions, and a pioneer of contemporary arts in the Kingdom. Courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah.

A gift of **song:**

“Bring her home…Bring her home…”

Songs, lullabies, nursery rhymes and chants are melodious echoes from the past. They capture a story, an identity, a feeling and a memory.
And one of the most powerful nostalgic timeless songs are the traditional ‘songs of the seas’ by pearl divers from the Arabian Peninsula. Hums and drums and chants of the blues, of love, of home and the great yearning for families back on land.

Pearling dominated the thoughts and way of life of nearly all the coastal inhabitants of the Gulf for centuries. The industry gradually collapsed due to cultured pearls and other factors, and by 1939, pearling had almost completely disappeared from the ports of Saudi Arabia.

But the songs live on.

Pause and enjoy **this traditional pearl diving ballad**, passed down across many generations.

For a modern artistic interpretation, listen to **Bahara (Men of the sea)** by Saudi artist **Ahaad Alamoudi** who stages a soundscape in which the reverberations of the sea are merged with a modernized version of the song of “El Yamal,” a folkloric anthem sung by Saudi pearl divers and sailors, known in Arabic as Bahara, to give them strength in their seafaring endeavors. For the artist, this work honors the traditions of these seamen whose now defunct trade was in its heyday a crucial part of the economy of the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula.
Project commissioned in 2018 by **Ithra**, the video courtesy Ahaad Alamoudi and **Athr Gallery**, Jeddah.

Table of contents:

Portrait: 5
Safeya Binzagr—'theme-special' featured Saudi artist.
Feature: The art of life, and life of art.

Guest Interview: Cultural Reflections 7
His Excellency Øyvind Stokke, Norway's ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

Feature: 8
The Art of Nostalgia:
A special interview with the Saudi artist behind "Makkah Gate."

Feature: 9
Creative Nostalgia: How Saudi creatives are interpreting sentimental yearning.

Feature: 10
Culinary Nostalgia: The Art of Food.

Spotlight: 11
29 new artists to discover: An interview with Abdullah Al-Rasheed who launched a competition.

Arabic Treasures: 13
Mother, home and the scar of Nostalgia by Mahmoud Darwish.

Ithra Curiosities: 14
'Teardrop on the cheek of time' —timeless love stories.

From the Shelves: 15
Nine decades of Arabic comics.

Add to your bucket list: 19
Al Balad, the old heart of Jeddah.

Bridges: 20
Cross-Cultural Conversations: A Norwegian story.

From the Vault: 30
Old doors, vintage cars and our boxes of memories.

From the Archives: 31
The 'flying camel' and the first supermarket.

From the World Wide Web: 33
Art stories to browse through.

A

“If you have the will, you will,” is a motto the legendary Saudi artist Safeya Binzagr lives by.



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Meet our ‘theme-special’ featured Saudi artist, **Safeya Binzagr**, the “mother of art.”

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I

With over 35 exhibitions, over 450 artworks, Ms. Binzagr, known as “mother of art,” has spent a lifetime creating and capturing the multifaceted beauty of past Saudi life— the essence of its people, its colorful traditions, deep heritage and long history.

“Art is my life,” she told Ithraeyat Magazine in an exclusive interview. For the past five decades, Safeya Binzagr’s art creations have been and remain one of the Kingdom’s most memorable cultural ambassadors, telling the story of a nation and its human spirit….

Click here to read more



Nostalgia

“Those were the days….”

We all have a nostalgic notion for a time period, often what we believe was a more ‘innocent time,’ a decade or two with personal meanings and connections, childhood memories, songs, books, cartoons, crushes and love stories, school moments, dishes cooked by mother, locations visited and houses lived in, many things fall under **‘Nostalgia’** —the theme of this issue.

For many, there is a yearning for a pre-COVID-19 era, one that can be globally traced to just a few months ago. With every change there are positives, and negatives, and a chance to learn new things and appreciate the things and people have for granted.

In the third issue of Ithraeyat Magazine, we pay homage to Nostalgia in its different forms, and the revisit the importance of having artistic creations that trigger this sense in its citizens and its visitors.

The art on the cover is of ‘Al Zaboon’ (1969)—also known as the **‘Mona Lisa of Hijaz’**—one of the famous art pieces by the legendary Saudi artist **Safeya Binzagr**, who is one the country’s first artists with many milestones. Her art pieces capture traditions and stories, and a way of life that many are nostalgic for.



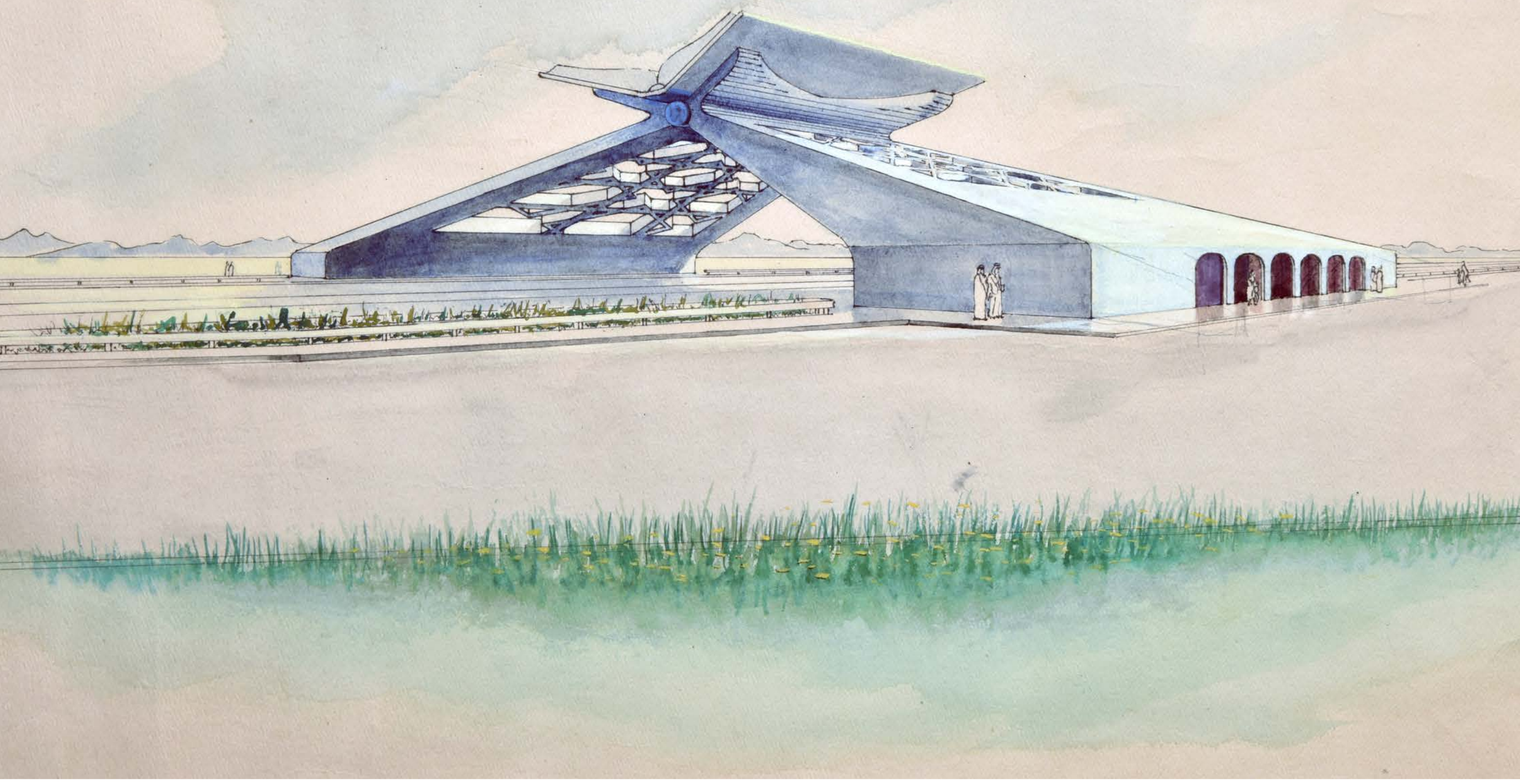
‘Illusion,’ by Hareide Design. A Norwegian design lamp is one of Ambassador Øyvind Stokke’s favorite pieces of art at his Saudi home.

Cultural Reflections: An interview

“My impression every time I visit Ithra is the impressive, breathtaking sight you get when you travel through the desert from Riyadh, entering the industrial areas and then all of a sudden there is a mirage, some huge pre-historic (or rather sci-fi) installation on top of a hill, like a Stonehenge, near the site where the first commercial oil was found and drilled, and where today’s cultural riches and knowledge are kept, like a well, and from where it will all continue to flow…”

In an exclusive interview with Ithraeyat Magazine, His Excellency Øyvind Stokke, Norway’s ambassador to Saudi Arabia, shares his views on the ever-evolving cultural landscape of the Kingdom, and the role of Norwegian creativity in one of Saudi’s greatest cultural projects: The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra).

Click here to read more



A sketch of the famous Makkah Gate by Saudi artist **Dia Aziz Dia,** dated 1979/8/14.

The Art of **Nostalgia**

“Stop, friends! Let us stay and weep at the thought of my love
She lived here on the desert’s edge between Al Dakhooli and Howmali
Tudiha and Mirkat! the campsite has not been erased
even as the south and north winds cross weave across the sands…”
—The 6th Century Prince Poet Imru’ Al-Qays

A place, a song, a certain fragrance, a particular dish, a specific date: All of these can trigger memories and a sense of nostalgia and longing for something that once was.
For some, a particular sand dune in the middle of the desert can lead to tears, as they have for past poets and travelers across its harsh terrain.

And for the past 35 years, a particular Saudi landmark has been imprinting itself on the memories of millions of travelers, who upon seeing it again, are overwhelmed with feelings of longing.

“The Makkah Gate has become the gateway to the hearts of all Muslims. I am honored to have been part of creating a collective sense of nostalgia and a memory of a journey for all those who have passed through,” said Saudi artist Dia Aziz Dia, the structure’s designer in an exclusive interview with Ithraeyat.

Click here to read more



Garba’at Rasayl “a mess of letters” project by **Hadeel Felemban**



Nostalgic pins of **Pinnizer** by Labeed Assidmi.

Creative **Nostalgia**

How Saudi creatives are interpreting sentimental yearning

With the uncertainty in ‘tomorrow’ brought on by the deadly COVID-19 virus, people worldwide – artists included — turned to the past and its cozy comfort for inspiration and grounding. Some are recycling old sentimental elements and cutting pieces and collaging.

Others are reinterpreting fictional characters from childhood and reviving old sayings and images. A third group are reviving old photos and antiques. There is no limit to creativity, and the five Saudi creatives featured here are all finding unique ways of paying homage to nostalgia…

Click here to read more



Using candy wrappers in her pieces, Saudi artist Ghada Al-Rabea details Saudi daily life, such as these featured food and drink items found in most homes. Her technique gives her work a kitsch element that echoes the sweet innocence of a simple life. Courtesy **Ghada Al-Rabea** and **Athr Gallery,** Jeddah.

Culinary Nostalgia: The Art of Food.

"Rice has it all… and so the poor burghul hanged himself"—says an old Arab proverb.

Food has a very special place in Arab culture, so special that it makes an appearance even in timeless pearls of wisdom, such as this saying where rice is valued above all, more than burghul (a kind of dried cracked wheat). This proverb is said whenever someone values someone else's company over yours. With a powerful grip over our stomachs, food has an even stronger hold over our hearts, with certain dishes becoming symbols of sentimentalism and nostalgia, reminding us of home, of mother's cooking, and of our home countries whenever we encounter certain national dishes when abroad. A dash of familiarity spiced with sentimentalism are important ingredients in our daily food regime, inspiring a true art of eating, drinking, and reminiscing.

Click here to read more



Winning piece chosen as brand identity for the competition, “The white army: health team” by Eshraq Sami from Jeddah. (Second place).

Spot**light:**

29 new artists to discover

“Art is for everyone….”

In the midst of an insomniac evening, a Saudi art collector launched a Twitter “art” competition that led to a massive flood of submissions from across the Kingdom, with over 1,500 submissions, and the discovery of 29 talented creatives in Saudi Arabia.

“I thought I would get about 200 submissions, and that would be it,” said **Abdullah Al-Rasheed.**

With names removed, the submissions were anonymously judged by the public via likes, as well as a jury of established Saudi cultural personalities. First prize 5,000 riyals. Second 3,000 riyals and third 2,000 riyals.

All three top positions were won by Saudi talents.



One of the 29 winners: “We are at peace at home, with our pets” by **Latifah Al Mahmoud** from Riyadh.

There was great support from the government, including the Minister of Culture H.H. **Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al-Saud.** “I couldn’t believe it, there were about 15 million people engaging with it!” said Al-Rasheed.

All 29 artists **were gifted with membership** to the Saudi Art Association, becoming ‘official’ artists.
“This is a testament to the great interest there is in Saudi art and how it should not be limited to just a few art lovers,” he said.
With plans to turn the winning pieces into a book and an exhibition, the collector with over 500 pieces already is overjoyed at the success of this competition.
“Art makes me happy, and I see it has made many others happy as well.”

To see all the winning pieces, **click here.**



"The Earth spreads as wide as your dream," a line by poet Mahmoud Darwish here reimagined by **eL Seed's** distinctive calligraffiti style. Acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 2014, from Ithra's art collection.

Arabic **Treasures:**

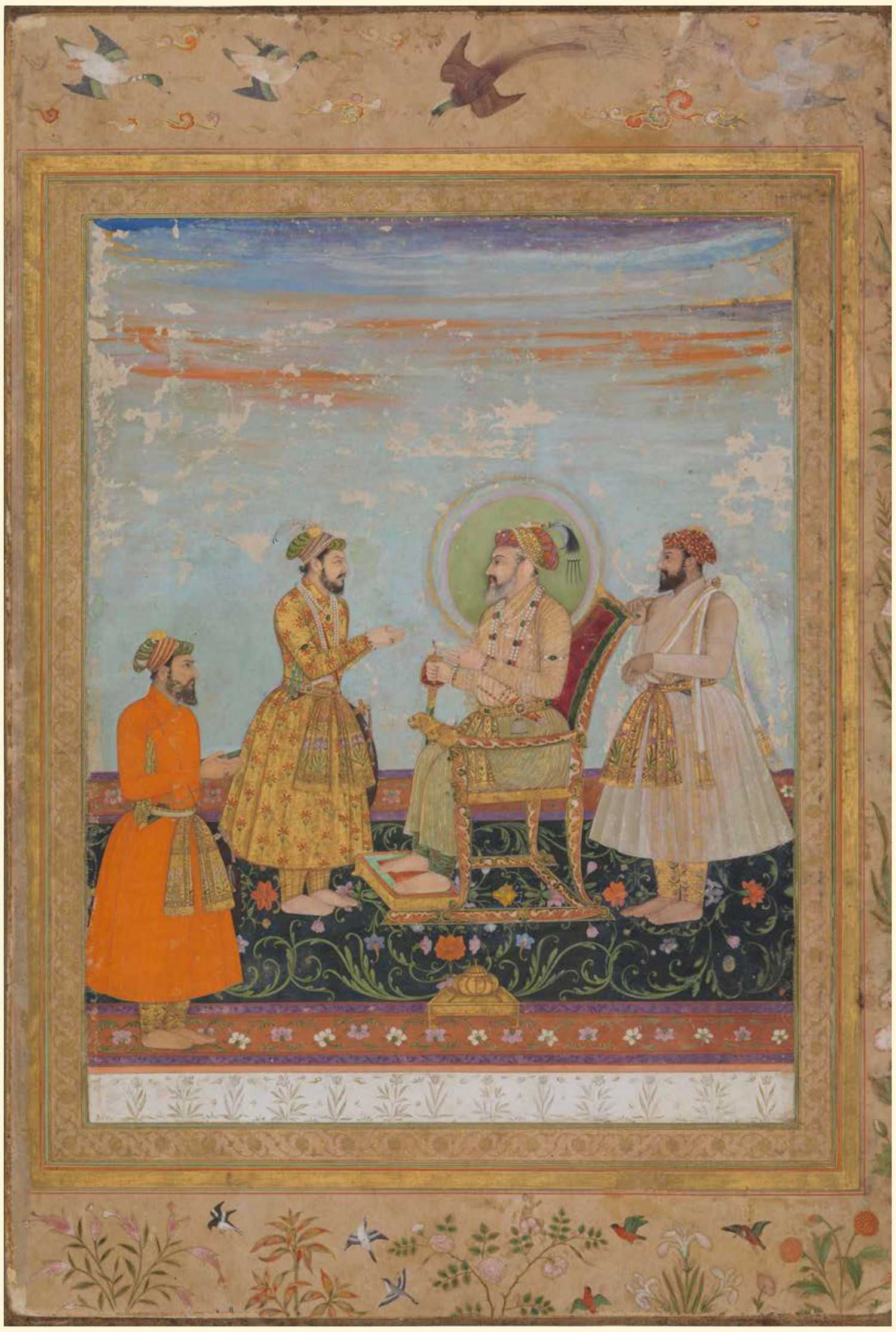
"I long for my mother's bread,
And my mother's coffee,
And her touch.
Childhood memories grow up in me
Day after day.
I must be worthy of my life
At the hour of my death
Worthy of the tears of my mother…"

The renowned Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941 – 2008) wrote this heartfelt poem while in an Israeli jail more than 50 years ago. Called "Ummi" (My Mother), his choice of words like bread, coffee, touch, and childhood evoke powerful sentimental imagery, unforgettable scents, and nostalgic feelings in whoever reads it. Bread across cultures is respected, sometimes even holy, and a metaphor for human survival, balance and peace. And when mother prepares bread and coffee, it takes on a whole other level of sentiment and timelessness. Nostalgia, with its Greek roots, nostos meaning "to return home" and algos meaning "pain," this poem truly captures the essence of nostalgia.

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Ithra Curiosities:

‘The Teardrop on the Cheek of Time’



Shah Jahan is receiving his son Dara Shikoh, Mumtaz Mahal’s eldest son. A Folio from the late Shah Jahan Album. India, c. 1650 Opaque watercolor, gold, and ink on paper 37.2 × 25.4 cm. From the collection of Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck, New York: acquired by LACMA in 1983.

“You know Shah Jahan, life and youth, wealth and glory, they all drift away in the current of time. You strove therefore, to perpetuate only the sorrow of your heart. Let the splendor of diamond, pearl and ruby vanish. Only let this one teardrop, this Taj Mahal, glisten spotlessly bright on the cheek of time, for ever and ever.”
—Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)
Indian poet and winner of the 1913
Nobel Prize for Literature

Everyone loves a love story. They have been watched, read, heard and dreamt about, with first loves often holding a very special place in the heart. Love songs trigger memories, and leave the mind wandering and the heart longing. One such love story that continues to touch the hearts of its visitors is that of the iconic sublime shrine to eternal love: the Taj Mahal.

Click here to read more

From the **Shelves:**

Nine Decades of Arabic Comics

The books we read as children mark us deeply. Later in life, the Nobel Prize for Literature winner Naguib Mahfouz still remembered his favorite read from when he was 10—a detective novel by Hafiz Najib. Although Arabic comics have long been considered "just for kids," they have recently seen a renaissance. There are not only a host of contemporary comics collections, but also projects that look at the history of comics, such as the **Mu'taz and Rada Sawwaf Arabic Comics Initiative** at the American University in Beirut and the traveling **Arabic Comics Exhibit**, co-curated by siblings Nadim and Mona Damluji.



1920s & 1930s

Al Awlad (The Boys) seems to have been the first long-running, original Arabic comic. The first issue appeared in **Egypt in 1923**, when few countries were producing serial comics. Al Awlad started up six years before Hergé began to publish his iconic Tintin in 1929, and the issues ran until 1932. Each was eight pages long, in black and white, and featured stories of mischievous children unfolding in light, fun, rhyming prose. The 1920s and 1930s also saw adaptations of Mickey Mouse comics in magazines like **Al Atfal** (The Children), which was launched in 1926.

الأولاد

الكتكوت

1940s



The 1940s was a golden age of comics worldwide. In this decade, Arab artists created original characters, but they also adapted many international comic figures for local audiences.
The magazine Katkot (baby chick), which launched in 1946, translated the adventures of Tintin. In them, Tintin became “Hammam” (هام) and he might, for instance, **wear a tarboosh instead of a cowboy hat**. Other magazines, such as **Bolbol** (1946), **Baba Sharo** (1948), and **The Future** (1948) adapted other popular figures and styles.

سمير / سندباد

1950s



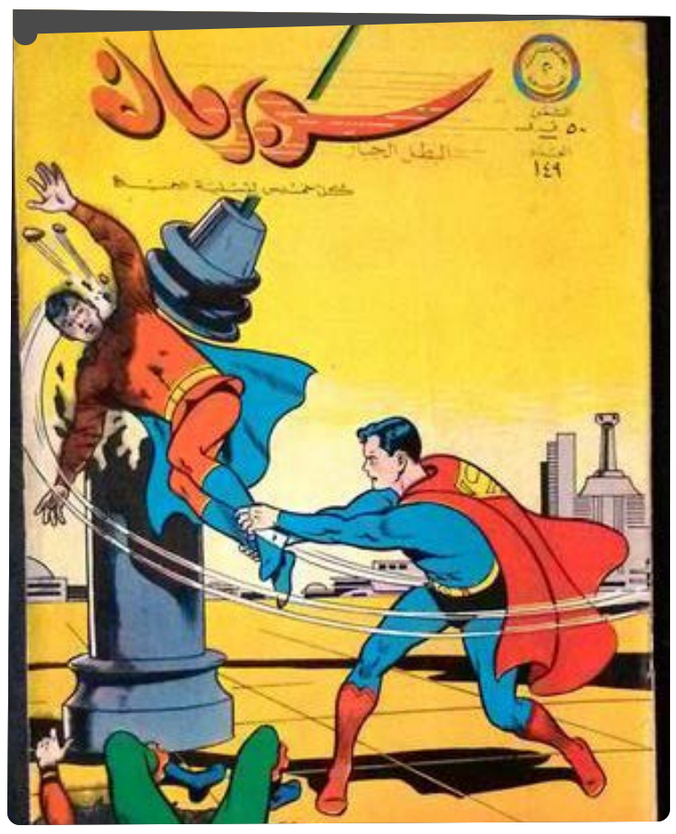


The 1950s saw the rise of Egyptian comics powerhouses such as **Sindibad** and **Samir**. When Sindibad launched in 1952, it had some local stories, but it also incorporated stories about “Farfour and Basbous,” clearly modeled on Tom & Jerry. Samir took comics art further: they boasted a variety of innovative styles and made use of colloquial language. In Samir, local Juha stories -- the “wise fool” of Arabic folklore -- shared space with adapted Tintin.

ميكي

1960s & 1970s



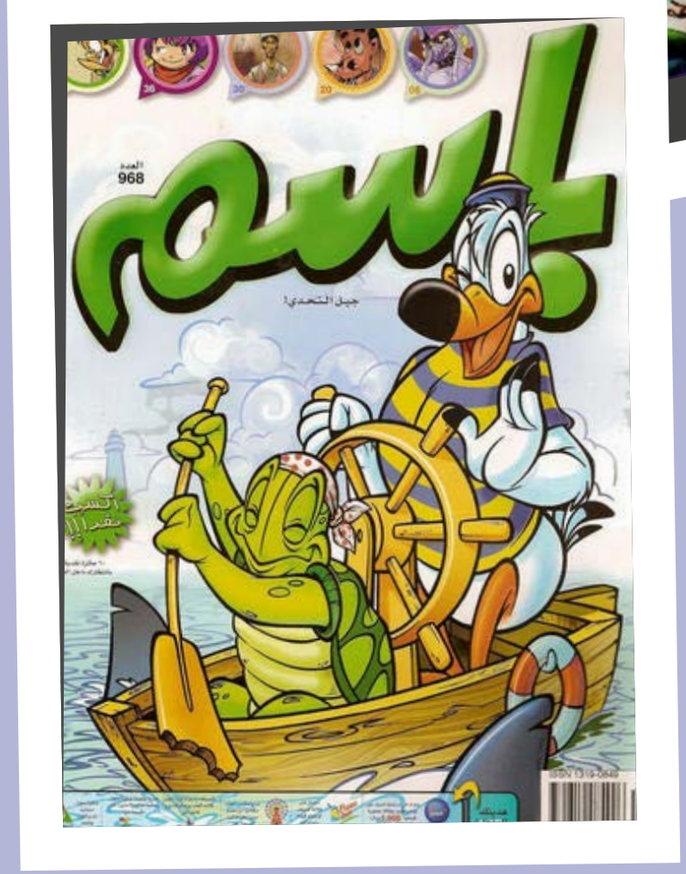


Despite the start of Lebanon's civil war, the 1960s and '70s saw an explosion in Lebanese comics. There were not only iconic and tremendously popular Mickey and Superman adaptations (where Clark Kent became Nabil Fawzi), but also the local productions of Bissat al-Reeh (Flying Carpet). According to **Lebanese scholar George Khoury**, the 1960s saw more than 35 comic magazines appear in Lebanon. In the late 1960s and '70s, a few other countries started up state-run comic magazines, including Usama in Syria and Majallaty in Iraq.

ماجد / باسم

1980s





The 1980s saw a wide variety of comics for children, including Bassem in Saudi Arabia, Open Sesame in Kuwait, and the popular **Majed** produced out of the UAE—which was recently spun-off into a TV show. One of Majed's recurring characters is a boy named Majed, while another is "Kaslan Jiddan" (Very Lazy). Launched in 1979, Majed has sold millions of copies and remains popular today.





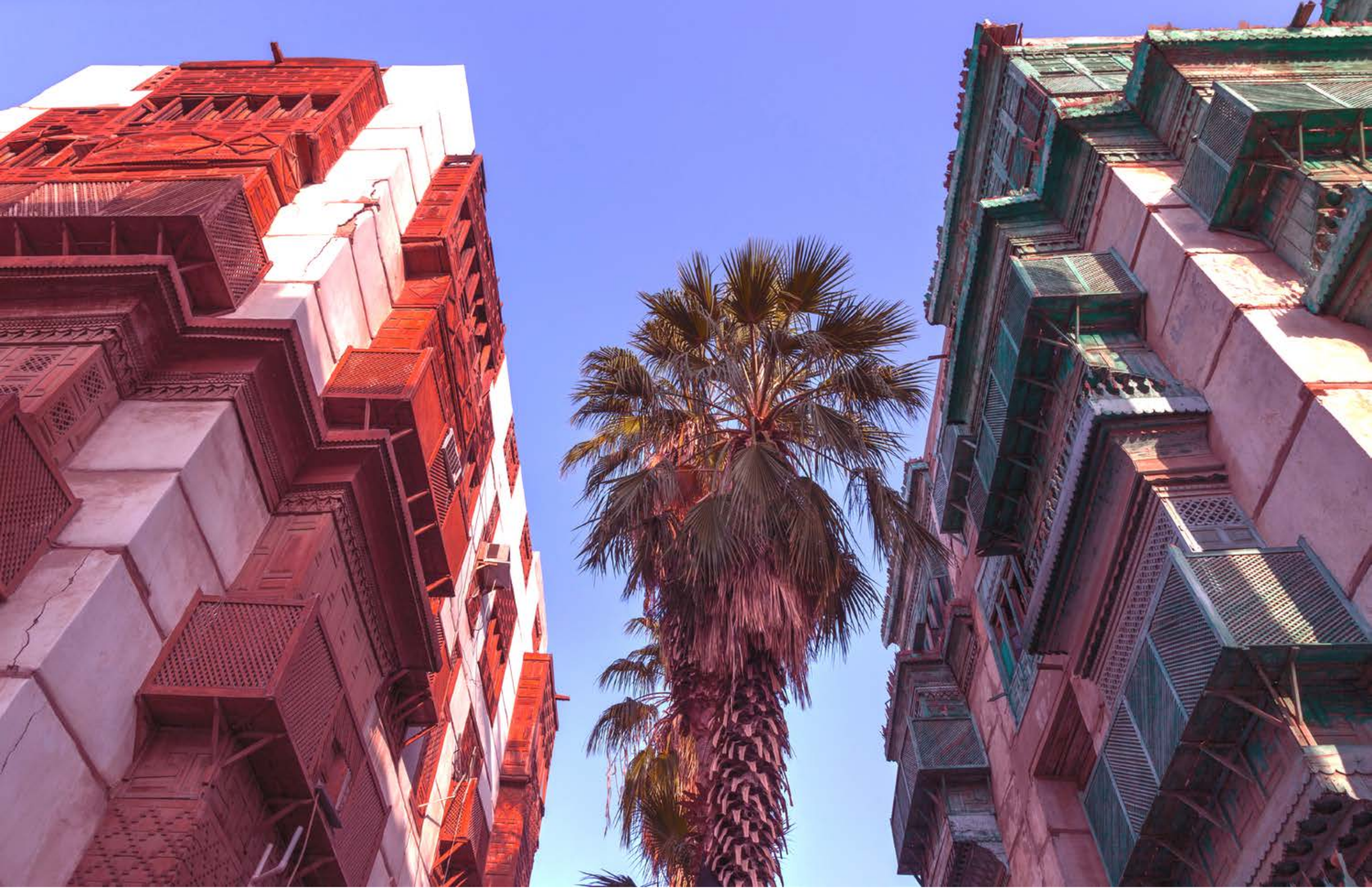
1990s & 2000s

Starting in the 1990s, many young and talented Arab comic artists moved away from comics for children. This movement started in the mid to late 1980s, with groups such as the JAD Workshop in Beirut and, in Algiers, with the first Festival de Bande Desinée in 1986. After a relatively quiet period in the 1990s, the 2000s saw a burst of comic magazines for adults, more Japanese manga style, full of challenging, dark themes. This started with the launch of **Samandal** in Beirut in 2007, and was followed by many others: **TokTok** and **Garage** in Egypt, **Lab619** in Tunisia, **Skefkef** in Morocco, and more.

تُوك تُوك

Guest **contributor:**

M. Lynx Qualey is the editor-in-chief of the ArabLit cooperative and founder of **ArabLit.org**, a website that brings together translators, authors, publishers, critics, academics and readers around discussions of Arabic literature in translation.



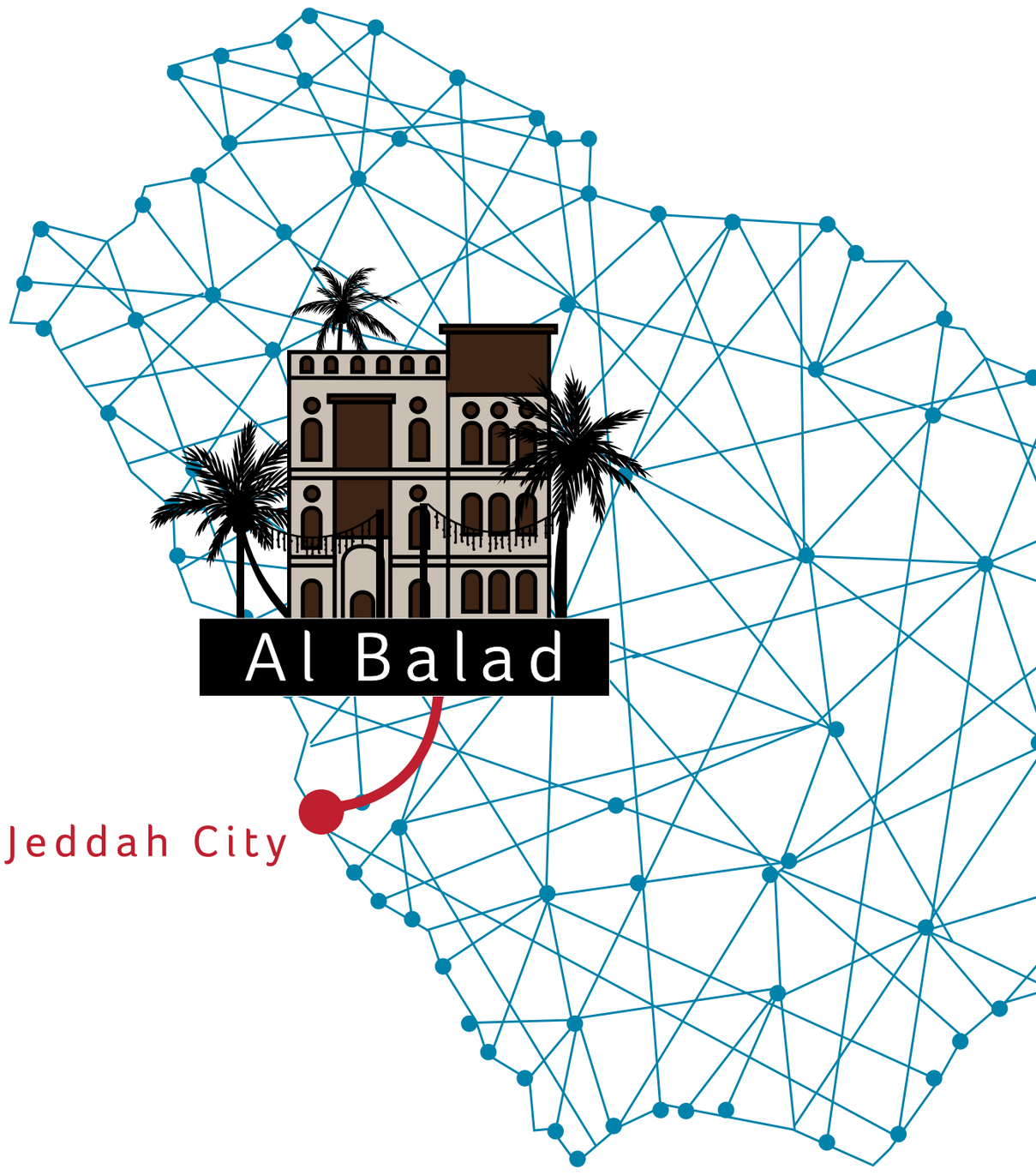
Add to your bucket list:

Al Balad, the old heart of Jeddah

“Praise be to God, who has made the port of Jeddah the best of ports….”
— 16th Century Hijazi chronicler Ahmad ibn Faraj

Jeddah, known as ‘Arous Al-Bahar’ [Bride of the Red Sea], is a city of legends. Even its name, whether myth or fact, if pronounced a certain way, means “grandmother,” and who is the grandmother of everyone? In Ammaria neighborhood, one of the oldest cemeteries in Jeddah, it is said that lies a legend as old as time - the tomb of biblical Eve [Hawa in Arabic].
Travelers, such as Ibn Jubair, an Arab geographer and traveler from the 12th century, said that, during his visit to Jeddah, he saw an old dome said to be the home of Eve.

But that is just one of the many stories of Jeddah.
Every corner, every roundabout, has a story, and one of its most famous locations, is Al Balad (The city), a Unesco World Heritage site worth visiting and getting lost in a maze of alleys and a souq of little quaint shops with authentic Saudi creations.



Click here to read more



Hemsedal, Norway. Photo by Anne Katrine Senstad

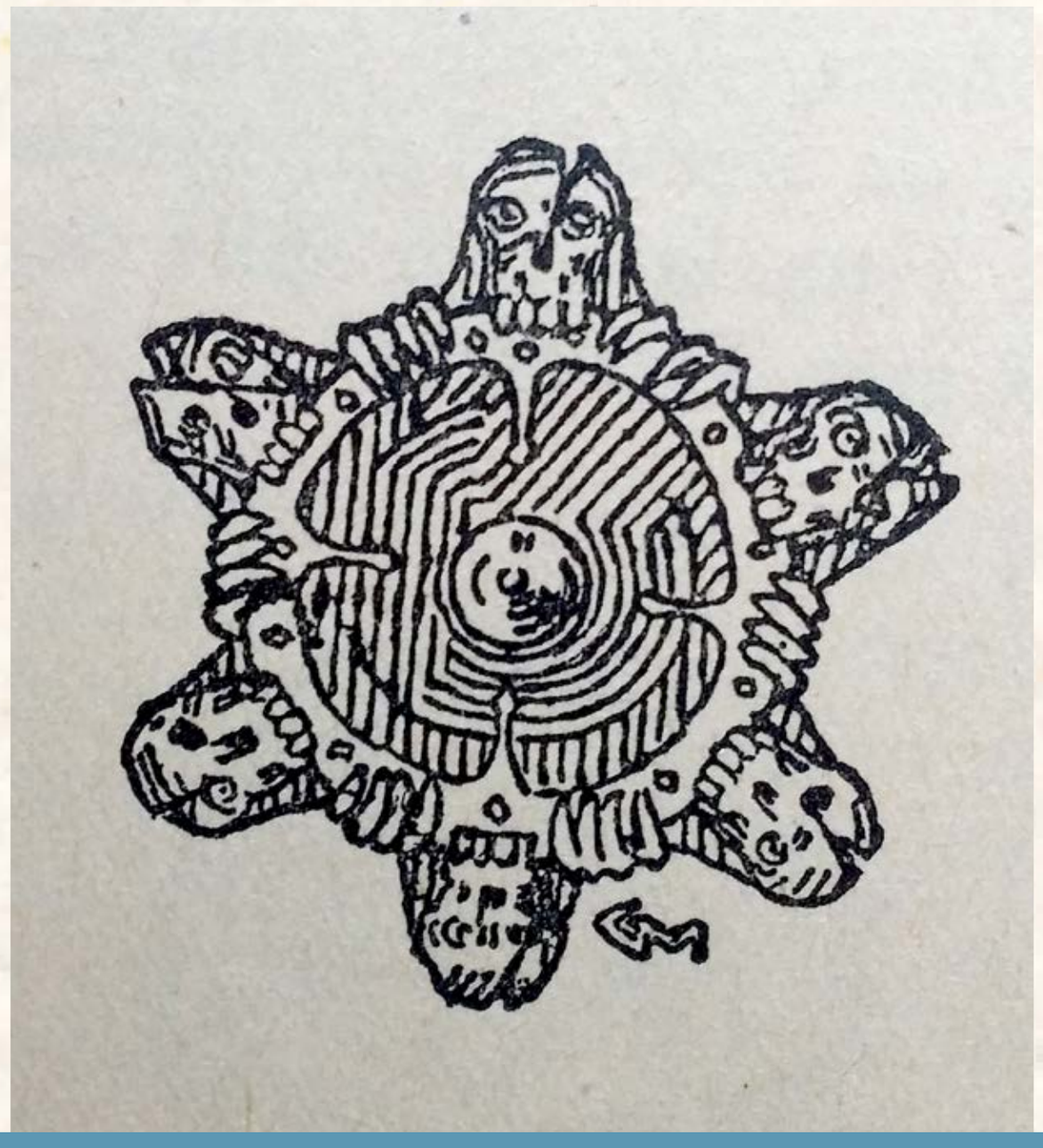
Bridges: Cross-Cultural Conversations

The mountains, the myths and the mosquitos: A Norwegian story.

Ode to nature

A Norwegian lives by nature, for nature and with nature. From the silent forests of trolls to the halls of the mountain king, all the way back to the Viking era and beyond, nature represents simultaneously an embodiment of eternity as it clears the path to the riddles of life.

From the kaleidoscopic lights in the sky, also known as the Aurora Borealis, the unruly North Sea and white midsummer nights, myths, music, poetry and stories are born and reborn.
Here I share some of Norway's cultural gems and interpreted art in the national color of blue.



Viking illustration, warrior and shield from Sagas of Kings by Snorre. The shield depicts the King Olav's favorite horseman and warrior, Ragvald Vognstyreren Heidum-Hår.



Traditional Viking pattern, horse head, from Sagas of Kings by Snorre. The horse was an important companion of the Viking.

The Viking **Route**

The early Norwegian Vikingr, the Norse word for Viking, have many legends and stories, and extensive literary excursions encompassed of verse, rhyme and prose that follow paths of long winding family histories crossing valleys and fjords (long, deep, narrow bodies of water that reach far inland), boisterous bloodthirsty battles out at sea, trade all the way to the Far East and Northern Africa bringing back gold coins, textiles and elaborately decorated swords. The mockery of their enemies, tricking them into their certain demise is bragged about in short verse. Trolls in the Viking era were born from the rich mythology of Odin and Thor, representing darkness and death, ever still, a force to conquer in battle in the underworld.

"I have never seen bodies as nearly perfect as theirs. As tall as palm trees, fair and reddish, they wear neither tunics nor kaftans. Every man wears a cloak with which he covers half of his body, so that one arm is uncovered. They carry axes, swords, daggers and always have them to hand. They use Frankish swords with broad, ridged blades."



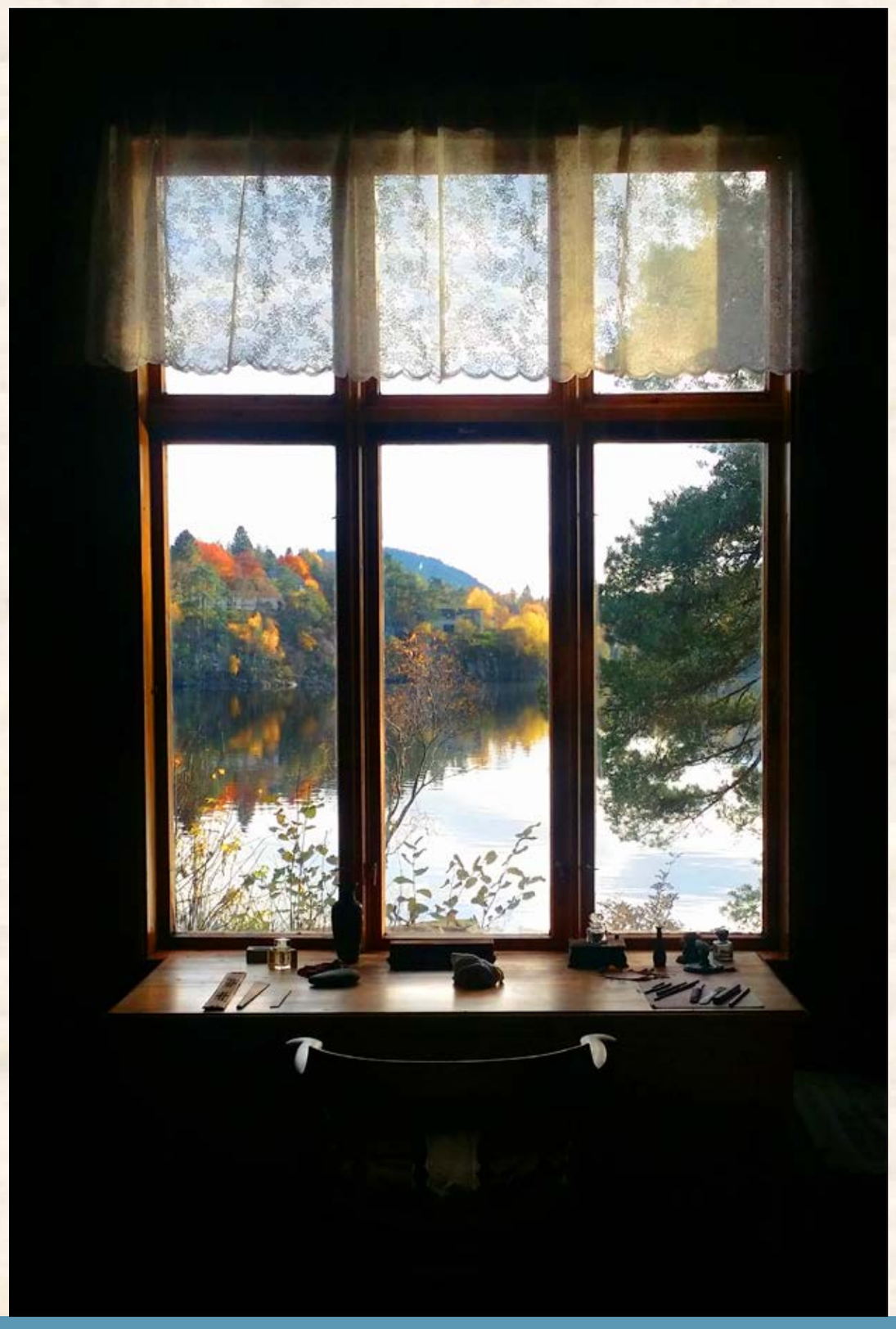
Interpretation: On the fjord, the return home of the Viking Ship fleet. By Anne Katrine Senstad

So the Arab traveller Ahmad Ibn Fadlan recorded his meeting more than 1,000 years ago with a strange race he called the “Rusiyyah,” now commonly known as Vikings. Ibn Fadlan first met the Norse warriors as they travelled across the Russian steppes, sailing their longships down the Volga river and looking to trade with the Arab world.

A mysterious character, the real Ibn Fadlan was a key member of a diplomatic mission sent by Abbasid Caliph Al Muqtadir in 921 from Baghdad to the upper reaches of the river Volga, in answer to a request for diplomatic assistance from the king of Volga Bulgaria.



Dragon embroidery, from The Sagas of Kings by Snorre



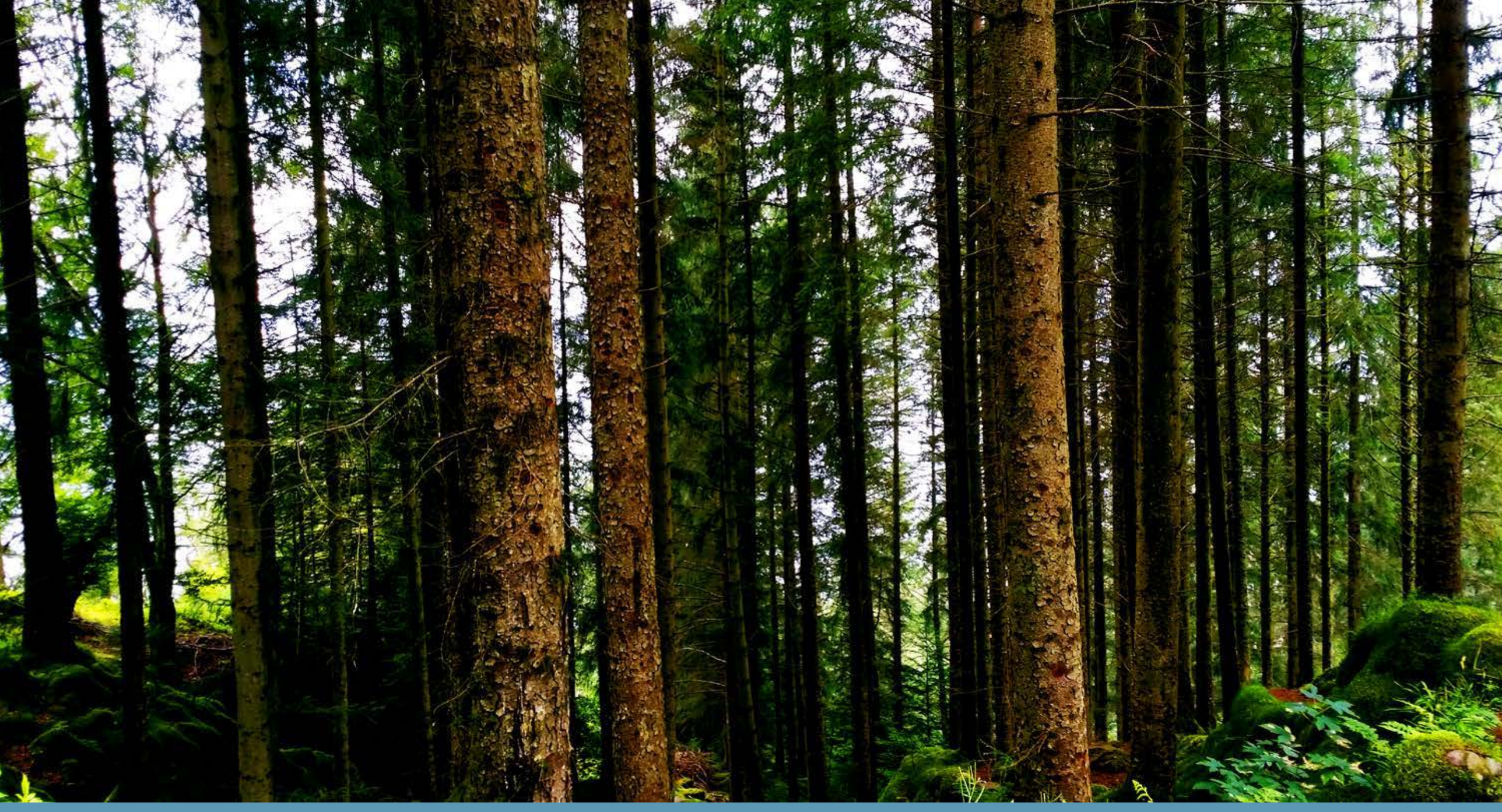
From my window.
By Anne Katrine Senstad

The poetry **of nature**

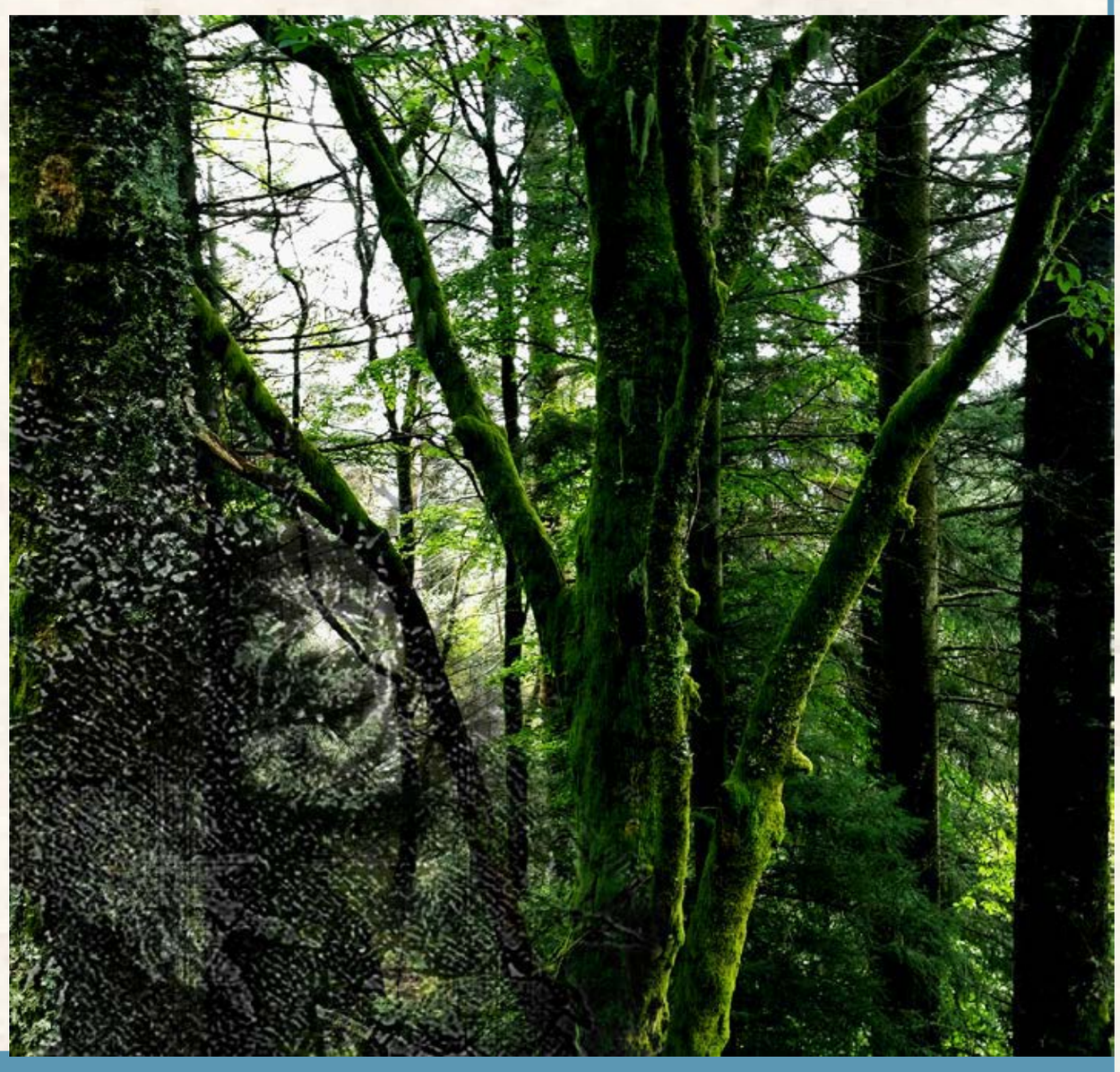
Hans Børli (1918 -1989) was a poet and lyricist who captured the heart of the Norwegian relationship with nature through his language. With a humble approach to the vernacular, Børli transcends the essence of the human condition through the everyday moment and eternal cycles of life. Børli was a school teacher, who lived and labored in the forest all his life. I have reinterpreted these poems by Børli shared here, in homage to his timeless prose.

On Eternity's Tablets

Nothing vanishes.
All forevermore engraved
on eternity's tablets.
If a bird flies through the setting sun
two people exchange some friendly
words
by the mailbox one morning, or
a trail is gently blanketed in virgin
snow,
then these minute things
will be kept in universal consciousness
as long as days break in the east,
night descends mercifully over Earth.
There is a vast memory out there in
space,
an all-embracing memory
that cancels Time
and unites all things
in a single star-white Instant.



In the Forest. photo By Anne Katrine Senstad.



Encountering a tree troll. When walking in the forest, beware of trolls, witches and gnomes, some are lucky and will tell you secrets, and some will put spells on you, pulling you into the underworld.
Photo/illustration by Anne Katrine Senstad

The Forest Whispering

A forest whispering is like the sound of
A bird in flight.
Breathing the wind of wings
Of hope and dreams and longing
That keeps the earth floating in space
Despite the growing weight
of war and blood
And despair

The second poem by Børli was written during the German occupation of Norway in the 1940s when Børli was active in the resistance and conveys his sadness for war. I was inspired to reinterpret the poem responding to our present time, yet keep it's timeless innocence in tone and respectful of the original.

To read more poems from the poet, **click here.**



Photo by Anne Katrine Senstad with the iconic illustration by Theodor Severin Kittelsen (1914-1857) “The Troll contemplating his age.”
The troll contemplating age is ironic since they have no age, they are known to be dumb and worry heads – Kittelsen’s illustration is about how we as humans worry about life. I put him on the very edge of a mountain peak in Hemsedal, as if sitting on the roof of his house. Trolls live inside mountains if they are small like this fellow, and if they are large, they are the actual mountain itself. In that case, the mountain is a sleeping Troll not to be awakened – the other ironic point with the illustration is it refers to the sculpture “The Thinker” by Rodin – so it’s a human trait to think, to contemplate, to philosophize and worry.

Decoding the **Trolls**

Trolls are mythological human looking figures that vary in size, personality and in relation to a natural phenomenon.
They are generally an embodiment of all bad things in human beings as in greed, fear, violence and laziness, vices one has to fight within oneself or one meets on the path of life. But trolls can also be considered gullible pets to play with due to their slowness or cheeky characters.
Trolls allow us to express what we can’t or shouldn’t say or do.
The largest known trolls are giants, the size of mountains, merged with the mountain itself, with trees growing on his back and head, spending their lives asleep as a mountain until it rises when woken, in a bad mood stumbling about, angrily in a daze looking for trouble and human blood. This type is considered the most dangerous.

The slightly smaller troll, but still a giant the size of the super ape King Kong or a mythical Cyclops, is the affluent wealthy troll who lives inside a mountain known as a Mountain Hall Kingdom. This type of troll sleeps in a pile of gold coins and holds court to numerous variations of lesser trolls and gnomes.
One of the most famous trolls is a three-headed troll, the size of the tallest pine trees where the three heads argue with each other and their story is that they can never agree, determined to lose the battle and in the end, it is always outsmarted by a folk character known as Askeladden. Through Askeladden we learn how to conquer a troll in order to not get eaten alive when we take its gold and conquer its land. Askeladden’s secrets in fighting trolls include outsmarting them by asking them trick questions riddles or competitions.



Illustration by Anne Katrine Senstad, based on a traditional illustration from the fairytale: Askeladden and the Troll who competed. The illustration is inspired by German painter Gerhard Richter's paintings of events and history that are often blurred and dreamy.

Ash Lad (Askeladden):
The Norwegian 'Cinderlad'

In the fairytale of Ash Lad and the trolls who competed, the trolls are said to represent nature and its riches in raw form while Ash Lad represents human resourcefulness, trade and ownership. Ash Lad is an 18th century cultural archetype deeply embedded in the Norwegian psyche, but his brave ways and sense of humor can be traced back to the Viking sagas. He is the youngest son on a farm characterized by being an underdog and misunderstood by the world. But nevertheless, he is full of optimism in the face of adversity. When presented with impossible tasks, he always wins in the end against all odds while achieving the highest goals possible, often by outsmarting his opponents with his wit, charm and imagination. This series of fairy tales are full of trolls, princesses and mythology that are widely used as symbolic of moral encouragement and faith in the inherent good in people.

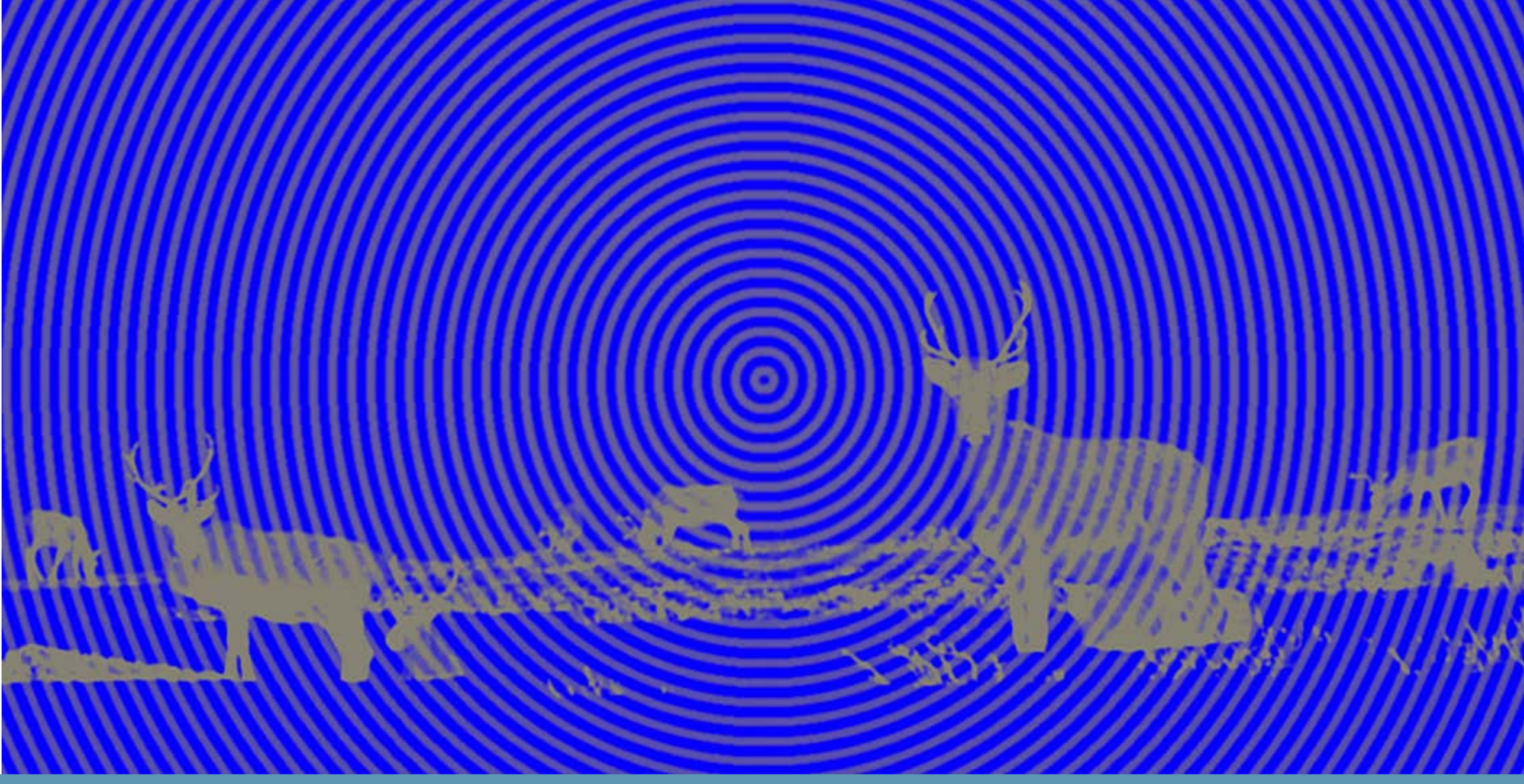


Illustration: Reindeer with traditional Sámi sun circle (indigenous symbol of the Laplanders/ Sámi people). Artwork by Anne Katrine Senstad.

The Joik: nature represented in song

In Sámi culture, the indigenous peoples who have inhabited the north since ancient times, the reindeer with the mightiest antlers is the leader and the king. The trolls here can be a rock in a brook or river and the Sámi sing to them and share stories about them, as well as embody their characteristics through the Joik – the Sámi traditional song. All nature is alive and is respected. In Joik you vocalize the ode by personifying it, singing how wind and rivers are our helpers, how the mountain feels pain or how the reindeer is magical. In Norway the preservation of the Sámi indigenous culture and language occurs through contemporary art, film and music, often based on the ancient poems and storytelling. The ways of Sámi are eternal and timeless, yet adaptable to any cultural or technological evolution today and tomorrow. A children's version of the Joik is a Joik of the mosquito, sang with the high-pitched voice of the mosquito, whose necessity for blood preserves the cycle of life, teaches the child of the ways of all things in nature and their true characteristic.

Above the arctic circle the sun never sets, it is a 24 hour day for three months, while in southern Norway the midsummer nights appear as a velvety blue twilight at the darkest hours. The eternal midnight sun is literally heaven for the swarms of monstrous mosquitos that start to appear around midsummer, making the mosquito a very present part of everyday life for the people in northern Norway. The northern Mosquito is not to be confused with the smaller tropical mosquito.



Illustration: Reindeer with traditional Sámi sun circle (indigenous symbol of the Laplanders/ Sámi people). Artwork by Anne Katrine Senstad.

Mosquito Joik

The son of the wind has advanced
The daughter her self is pushing from
the end

If I haven't arrived by midsummer
I will come
Even with a cain.

I sting you because your blood is so
sweet
I sting you because through this minute
sting you are alive

But the day when the crows become
white,
I will be done with my task

That is my promise of certainty for the
cycle of life

Traditional Sami Joik, approximately
dating to: 500 B.C.

(An ancient song that survived orally,
the nomadic Sámi people don't have
a written tradition like the Vikings did,
yet story telling has preserved their
cultural memory. Sámi culture is very
sophisticated and contemporary in
numerous ways)

Have a listen **here** to one interpretation
of this song about an annoying
mosquito.



Traditional ancient reindeer illustration, Sámi. Artwork by Anne Katrine Senstad.

Guest **contributor:**

Anne Katrine Senstad is a Norwegian artist based in New York. She has exhibited widely internationally including the Venice Biennale, Bruges Art and Architecture Triennale, He Xiangning Art Museum, Kai Art Center, Athr Gallery, ISEA Dubai 2014 and numerous other institutions, as well as projects in Saudi Arabia. Permanent public art commissions include The Wolfe Center for the Arts designed by Snøhetta Architects.

From the **Vault:**

Old doors, vintage cars and our boxes of memories.



From the UAE, **Hessa Al Joker.**



By ‘the godfather’ of Emirati fine art, **Abdul Qader Al-Rais**

In this issue, we pause to rediscover and reflect on elements in the art of life, some we may have taken for granted, others we have forgotten about, and those stored away preserving past moments and their many stories.

The pieces courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah**

Click here to read more

From the Archives:



Rarities from the Aramco Archives.

1952.

The “Flying Camel,” an Aramco airplane arrives in Dhahran. The gleaming exterior of the plane matches the beauty of its interior. Ordered from Douglas aircraft, the new DC6-B has begun to make regular flights between New York and Dhahran.

More From the **Archives:**



Rarities from the Aramco Archives.

November 1952.

The exterior view of Al-Hazza store, the first supermarket in Al-Khobar. It features Abd Ar-Rahman Ibn Isa Ar-Rumayh, Amir of Al-Khobar.



Holy Economy (2018-19) by Prince Sultan bin Fahad. A collection of water bottle containers used in Hajj by various pilgrims, each depicting specific cultural motifs. The artist draws on the use versus waste value of these objects. He salvages and harnesses their function in a collective format, transforming each object into individual totems that stand for diversity, color and collectivity. Courtesy Sultan bin Fahad and **Athr Gallery**, Jeddah.

From the World Wide Web:

Art stories to browse through

+ Google Arts & Culture: Transform your selfies, pets portraits into famous artworks

+Obituary: The solid forms of the renowned Egyptian sculptor Adam Henein

+Obituary: The unique repeated patterns of French-Algerian artist Mahjoub Ben Bella

+Obituary: The exploration of identities by Libyan-Canadian artist Arwa Abouon

+The Five Monuments Around the World That Came Down and why

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

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To engage with Ithra’s wide range of virtual programs and activities, please check **Ithra Connect.**

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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.

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