



DESERT TO DELTA

SAUDI CONTEMPORARY ART IN MEMPHIS, TN
الفن السعودي المعاصر في مدينة ممفيس

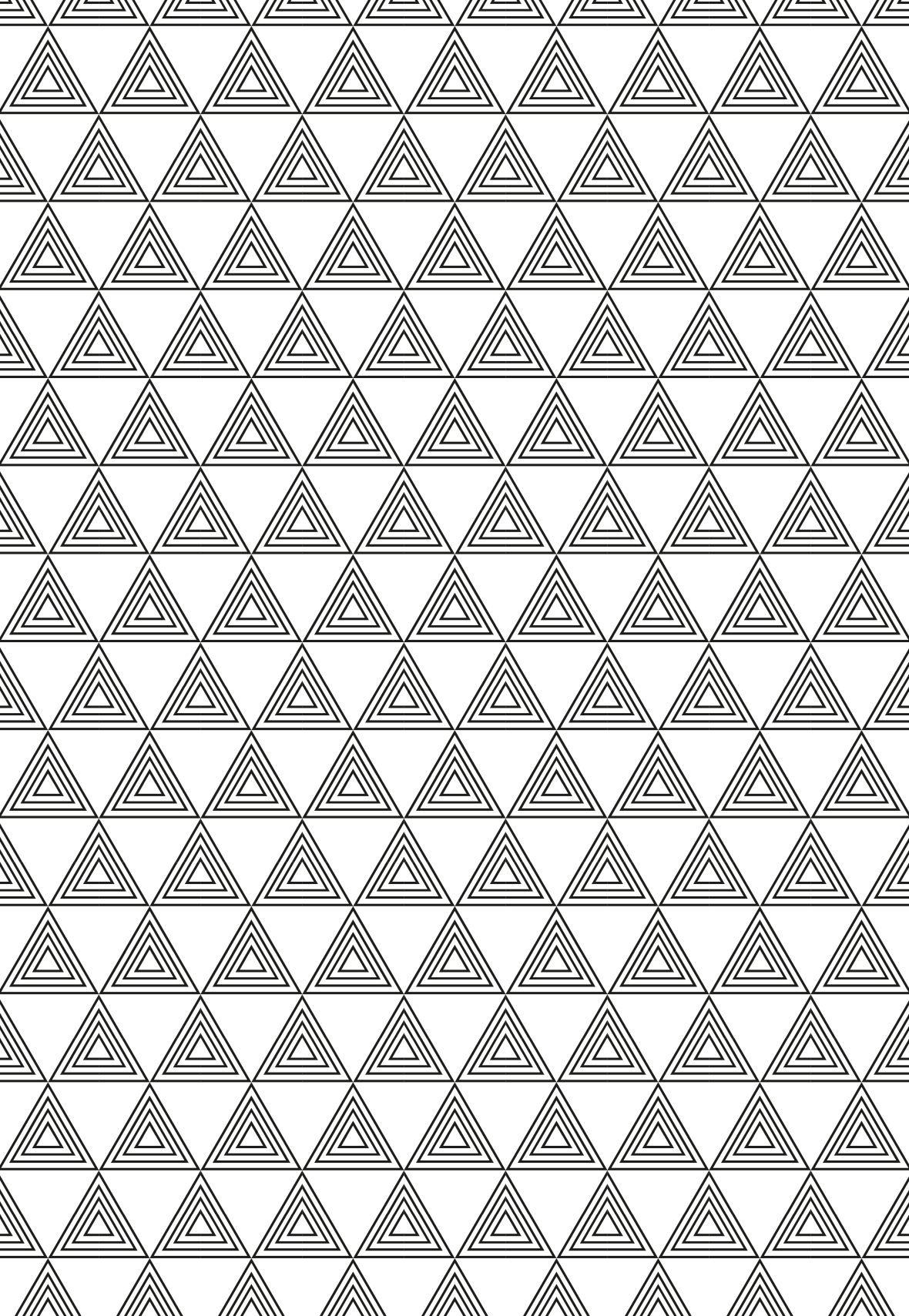


DESERT TO DELTA

ART MUSEUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

OCTOBER 8, 2017 - JANUARY 6, 2018





SAUDI CONTEMPORARY ART IN MEMPHIS, TN
الفن السعدي المعاصر في مدينة ممفيس

Museum partner



Organizer





Exhibition *Desert to Delta: Contemporary Art from Saudi Arabia in Memphis, TN*

Dates
—
Exhibition:
October 8, 2017 – January 6, 2018
Memphis Brooks Museum Artists' Talk:
October 11, 2017
Symposium:
November 5, 2017

Curators
—
Dr. Leslie Luebbbers & Edmund Warren Perry Jr

Museum Partner
—
Art Museum at the University of Memphis
3750 Norriswood Ave,
Memphis, TN 38152
memphis.edu

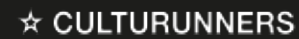


Organiser
—
King Abdulaziz Center
for World Culture
Ring Rd, Gharb Al Dhahran,
Dhahran 34461, Saudi Arabia
kingabdulazizcenter.com



Memphis Partners
—
Memphis Brooks Museum of Art
Arts Memphis

Producer
—
Culturunners
Director: Stephen Stapleton
culturunners.com



Cover art
—
Shadia Alem,
Negative No More,
2004

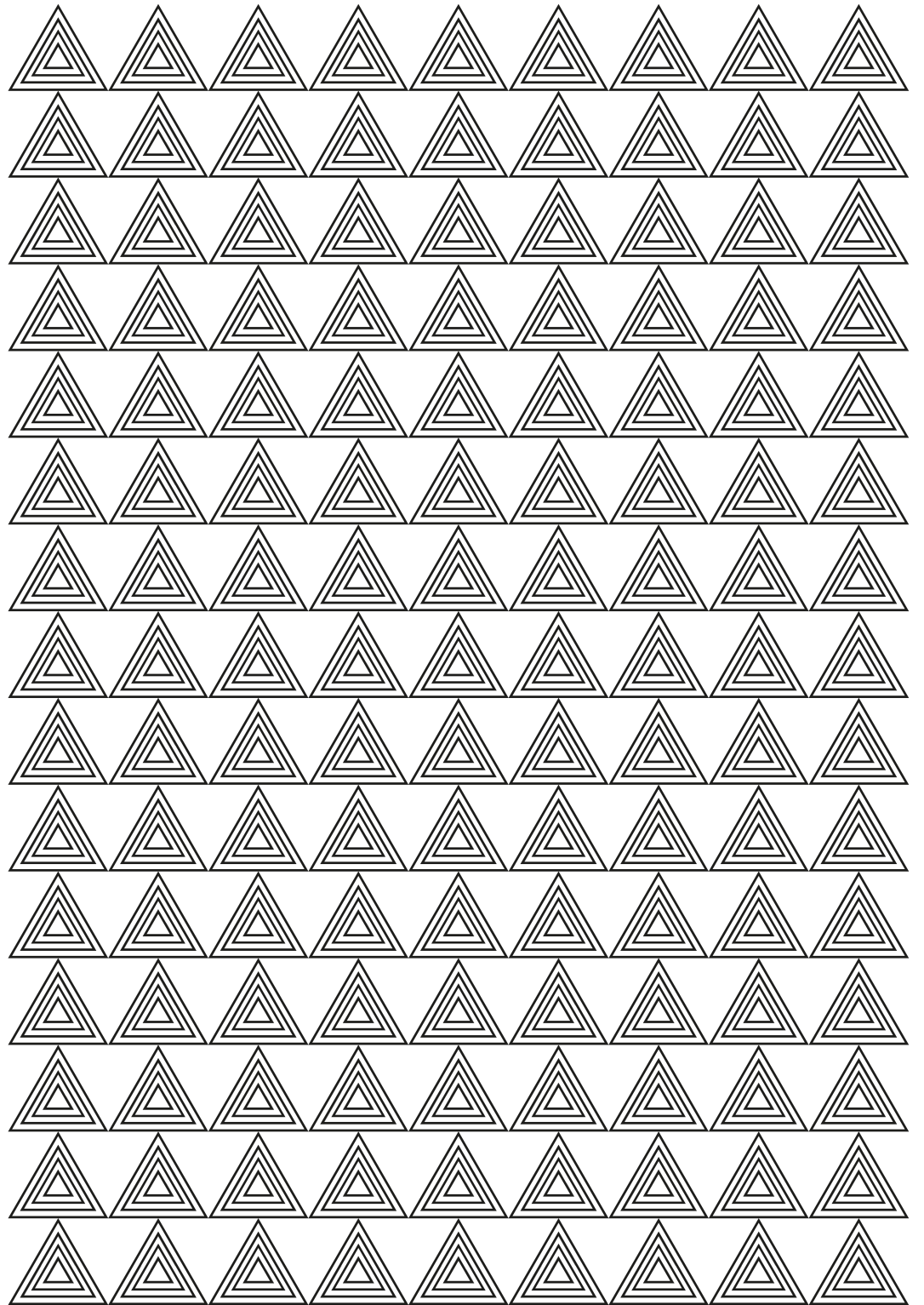
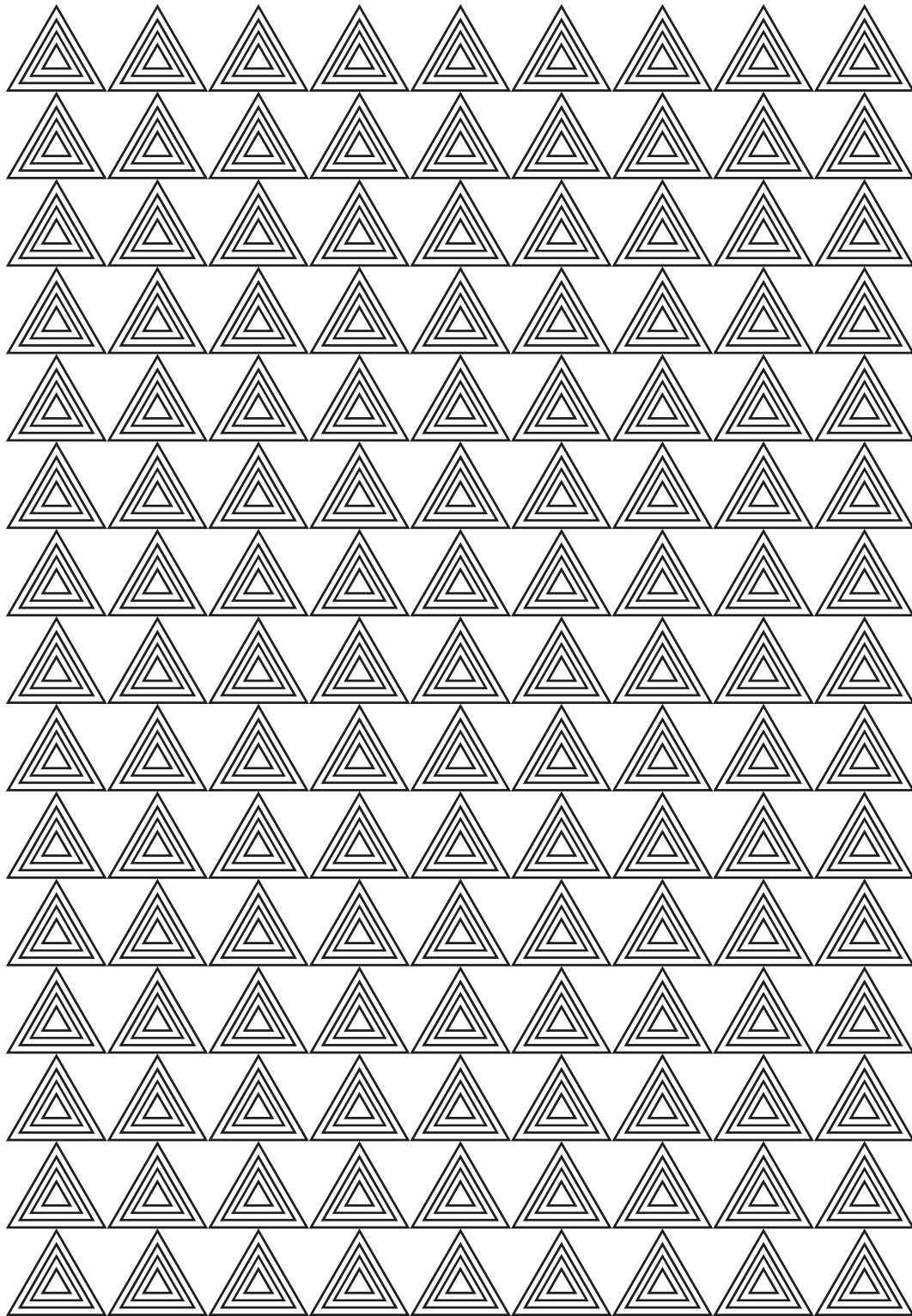


Curatorial Statement	10
Saudi Artists' Tour	12
King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture	14
Art Museum at the University of Memphis	16
Ibrahim Abumsmar	20
Yusef Alahmad	22
Ahaad Al Amoudi	24
Manal Al Dowayan	26
Shadia Alem	30
Mohammed Al Ghamdi	32
Musaed Al Hulis	34
Arwa Al Neami	36
Rashed Al Shashai	38
Dhafer Al Shehri	40
Ahmad Angawi	42
Huda Beydoun	46
Ghada Da	48
Basmah Felemban	50
Saeed Gamhawi	54
Abdulnasser Gharem	56
Eyad Maghazil	60
Maha Malluh	64
Ahmed Mater	66
Nugamshi	70
Shaweesh	72
Telfaz 11	74
Acknowledgements	78



▲

▲





At first glance, the connections between Saudi Arabia and Memphis, Tennessee might seem thin. However, common denominators begin to appear quickly with a little thought. Spiritual people devoted to their faith inhabit Memphis and the mid-south region; the same is true of Saudi Arabia. Memphis' church bells ring daily, summoning the faithful, as do the broadcast of prayers from the mosques of Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina.

Jeddah and Memphis both met with disastrous floods in 2011, and Jeddah had an even more severe flood in 2009. Just as the desert heat is insufferable during the summer months, so is the heat in the Mississippi delta.

Where the comparisons are truly striking is in the arts. In the same way that music made a name for Memphis in the 1950s and 1960s, today a generation of young visual and video artists is putting contemporary art from Saudi Arabia on the international cultural map. Twenty years ago, only savvy collectors and regional art experts could name a handful of artists from Saudi Arabia. In 2016, the Freer Sackler held a large exhibition featuring the works of Ahmed Mater, and in 2017, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art held an exhibition of the art of Abdunasser Gharem. Both men have entered that high echelon of artists whose works spawn discourse on several continents. Artists such as Njoud Alanbari, Zahra Al-Ghamdi, Shaweesh, Abdullah Al Othman, and Ahmad Angawi have launched their careers in this movement. The depth and beauty of their work is great, but their works are also edgy and provocative. This body of art is imbued with what critic Stephen Greenblatt cited as necessary to great art—the characteristics of resonance and wonder.

This exhibition is more than a showcase for art; it is two cultures of art embracing each other. Herein, the visual meets the vocal and the sands meet the waters.

From Desert to Delta: Saudi Art & Film in Memphis is an iteration of the Bridges Tour of exhibitions across the US organized by King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), and produced in coordination with Culturrunners. Previous exhibitions include: Genera#ion (San Francisco, 2016), Gonzo Arabia (Aspen, 2016), Phantom Punch (Lewiston, Maine/Bates College, 2016-17), Abdunasser Gharem: Pause (Los Angeles, 2017), Epicenter X (Dearborn, 2017), and Cities of Conviction (Salt Lake City, 2017). This exhibition, like the others in the series, is tied to the host community.

—

Dr. Leslie Luebbers & Edmund Warren Perry Jr



Since its launch in June 2016, a group of Saudi artists has been embarking on a multi-city tour of the United States to generate people-to-people dialogue and better understanding between the two nations.

The tour began in Texas with a large-scale exhibition at the Station Museum of Contemporary Art in Houston, before travelling to the Gonzo Gallery in Aspen, CO; Minnesota Street Project in San Francisco, CA; Bates College Museum of Art in Lewiston, ME; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), CA; the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, MI; and Utah Museum of Contemporary Art in Salt Lake City, UT.

These exhibitions present an authentic insight into contemporary life and culture in Saudi Arabia through the works of leading and emerging artists from the Kingdom. Further exhibitions are planned for Washington, DC and New York before the end of 2017.

The initiative is spearheaded by the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), Saudi's soon-to-be-opened hub for arts, culture and education, and produced in collaboration with CULTURUNNERS, an international platform for traveling artists.

Exhibitions and educational programming are being produced in partnership with cultural institutions and universities across the USA, and a reciprocal program of events and artistic projects is taking place with American artists and institutions across Saudi Arabia.



King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), is a one-of-a-kind institution that brings together multiple offerings under one roof. From arts and culture to science and innovation, this bold initiative by Saudi Aramco promises a continuous journey of enrichment designed to energize the next knowledge economy of Saudi Arabia.

The Center aims to make a positive and tangible impact on the cultural scene by focusing on building local talents in the knowledge and creative industries in the Kingdom. Blending iconic architectural design with advanced technology, and unique learning methods with enriching programs, the Center is an infinitely inspiring platform for explorers, learners, creators, and leaders – a thriving hub of knowledge, creativity and cross-cultural engagement.

As the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia strives to achieve its ambitious national development goals to transition to a knowledge-based economy, the Center acts as a bridge connecting cultures and cultivating a creative and innovative community.

King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture believes in the power of people and ideas to unlock new possibilities.

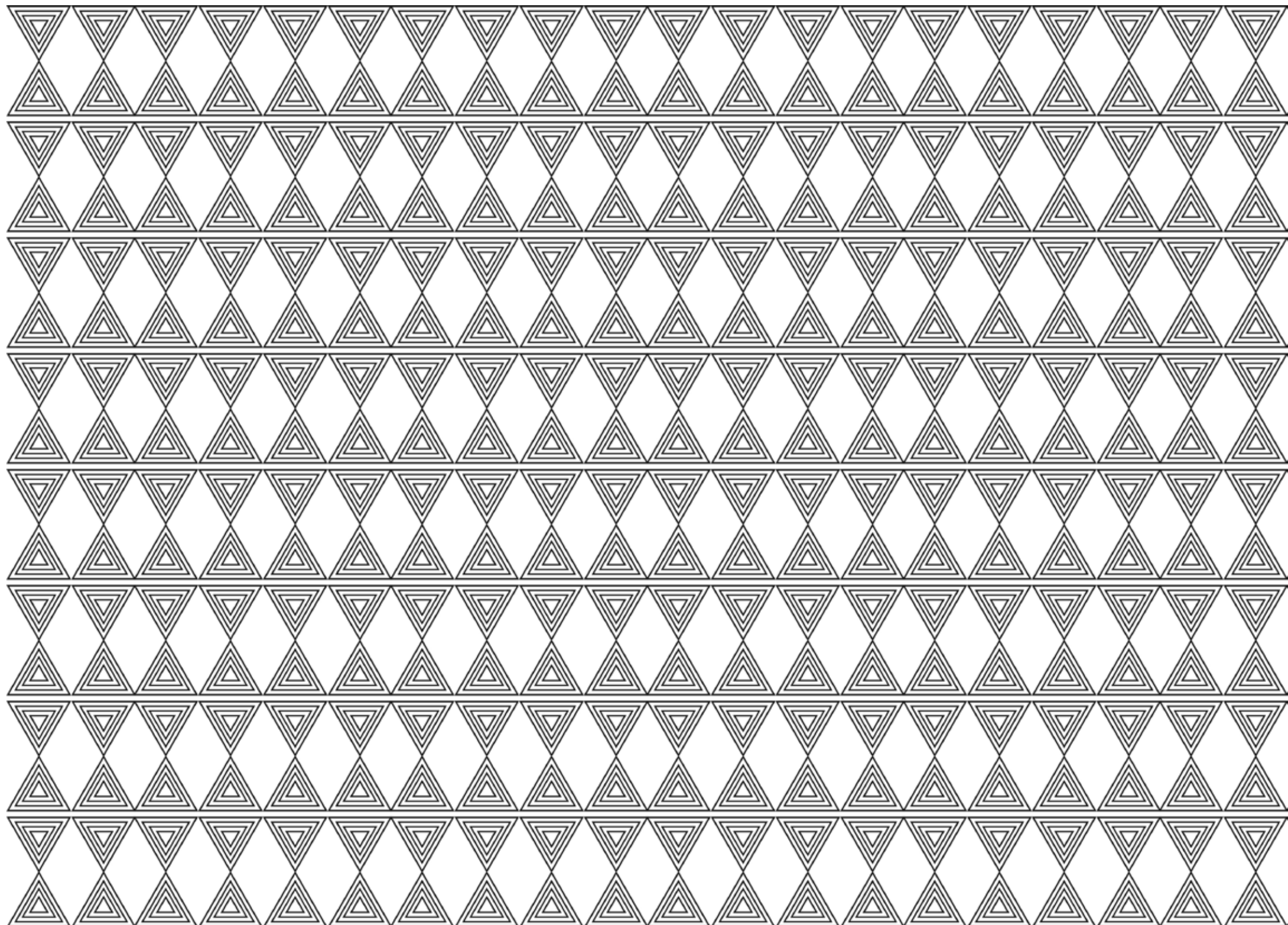
AMUM opened in 1981 and continues to host temporary exhibitions of contemporary art and culture alongside selections from our permanent collections. Since 1994, the visiting artist series has brought innovative contemporary projects to Memphis. Artists from the Mid-South, New York, Chicago, Great Britain, Germany, The Czech Republic, and Russia have designed site-based installations that include community and student participation.

Our collections of Egyptian antiquities and African art are exhibited in dedicated galleries and periodically updated with new themes. Students and scholars work with art, objects and archival materials from our diverse collections researching individual works and developing exhibitions. The 19th century to present-day print/drawing collection includes several strengths: the work of Samuel H. Crone, Carroll Cloar's lithographs, Épinal prints depicting Napoleon Bonaparte's life, Beth Van Hoesen's preparatory drawings and prints, and Andy Warhol's polaroids, prints and silk screens.



Disappearing Ink installation by John Salvest, 2014
Courtesy Art Museum of the University of Memphis





Ibrahim Abumsmar was born in Saudi Arabia in 1976 and grew to become an accomplished athlete who participated in many local and regional swimming competitions, winning numerous medals and becoming a national swimming champion. He later pursued his interest in art and photography and undertook several courses in oil painting and portraiture, design, sculpture, photography, Arabic calligraphy as well as interior architecture at Beit Alt-Ghuri, and was a student of fine art at Helwan University in Cairo, Egypt.

Abumsmar recreates everyday objects as sculptures, with the intention of questioning the essence of their identity. Manufactured objects usually have a practical purpose and are created with the intention of making everyday life easier. Abumsmar's sculptures challenge this perceived practicality and suggest that the objective of their creation is more symbolic than practical, and that they succeed in impacting our lives on a more subconscious emotional level.

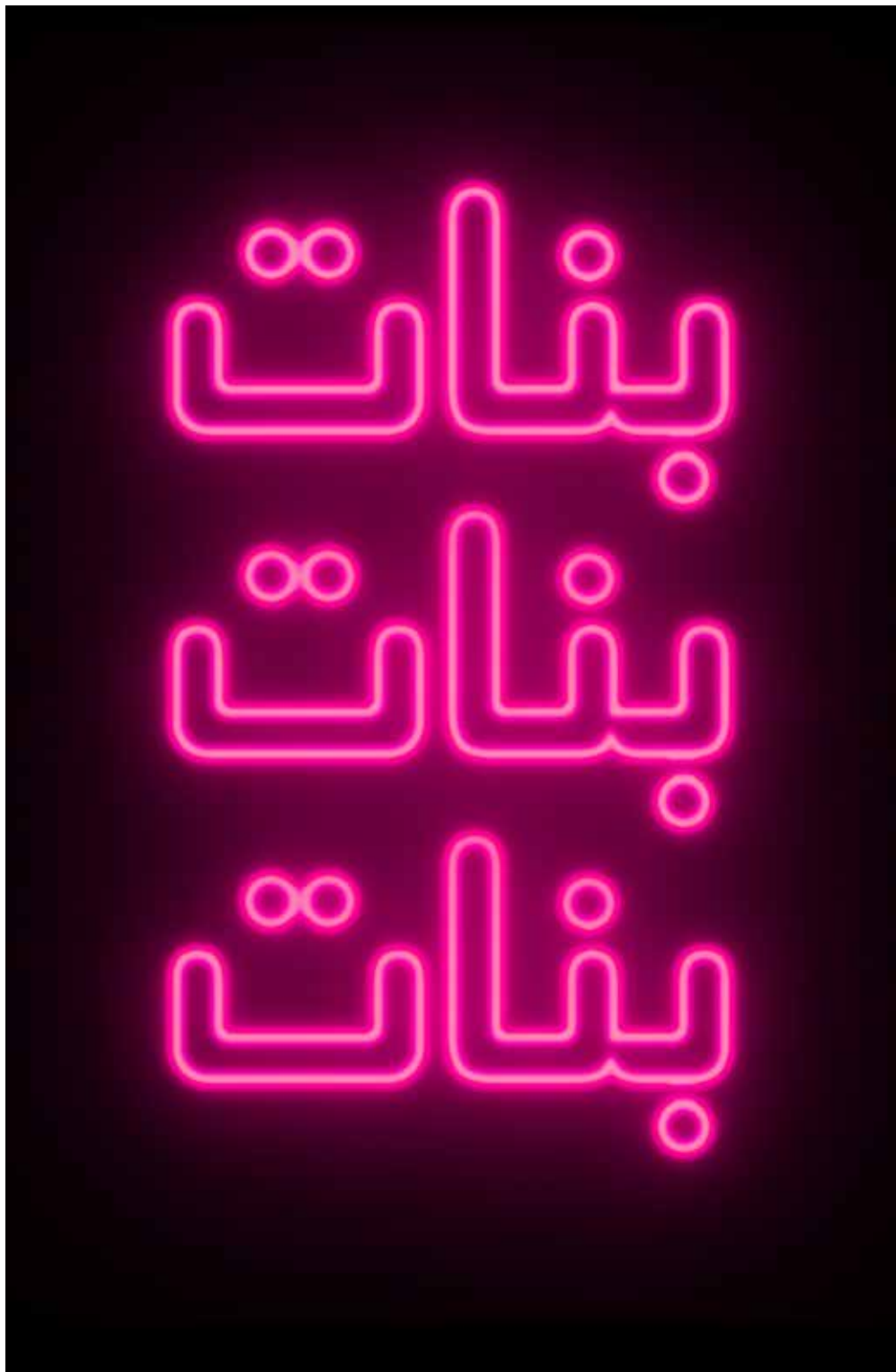
Incense and scented ointments have been used for centuries across civilizations around the world. Its uses and significance across time and cultures is vast and diverse, but its common usage in religious ceremonies is paramount to Abumsmar's work. Burned within a copper fixture made in the shape of a mortar shell that closely resembles traditional censers, Abumsmar plays with the role materials have in religion. With many wars waged in the name of religions across the globe, Abumsmar suggests replacing gunpowder with incense and ponders its power in spreading peace.

–
 Abumsmar's *The Green Dome* appears to be a normal lock, but its curves and added details bear a striking resemblance to the Islamic dome that tops the Holy Mosque in Medina. It is within this dome that the Prophet Mohammed's grave is located, but it has remained locked off and inaccessible to the public for many years.

Al Mabkhara, 2010
 Copper Sculpture
 13 x 3 in (33 x 7.5 cm)

The Green Dome, 2011
 Copper sculpture
 5.5 x 2.75 in (14 x 7 cm)





- ▲ Yusef Alahmad is a Saudi graphic designer and artist based in New York. He completed his MFA degree in graphic design at the Academy of Art University San Francisco in December 2016, and his thesis explored 'Elevating Graphic Design Standards in Saudi Arabia'. He is currently an independent designer, alternating between graphic design projects, editorial illustrations, and art commissions.

- ▲ His work has been exhibited in numerous shows around the world, including, P21 Gallery (London, UK), SoulSpace (Oakland, California), Loud Art (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman), Khaleeji Re-interpreted (Kuwait), Local Not Local: Arabic & Iranian Typography Show (Michigan/ Los Angeles), Saudi Design Week (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia), Saudi Heritage Contemporary Exhibition: King Abdulaziz Historical Center (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia), Sculpture Northwest: Art Beyond Conflict Exhibition (Bellingham, Washington), Epicenter X: Saudi Contemporary Art at the Arab American Museum (Dearborn, Michigan), Cities of Conviction: Saudi art at the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art (Salt Lake City, Utah).

Recently, he was invited to speak at the Typo SF International design conference, in addition to being a judge in the second annual Arabic Design competition in Saudi Arabia.

In March 2017, he completed the Majlis Studio Residency program in New York, an initiative of King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture.

– The text of this neon reads "Girls, Girls, Girls" in Arabic and is the artist's first work in this medium. Inspired by the ubiquity of neon both in Saudi Arabia and the USA, this piece is a humorous look at culturally specific contexts that are often lost in translation.

Neon is the glow of the twentieth century and Alahmad's animated sign also connects the viewer to the Elvis Presley experience. In 1962, Elvis accelerated his Hollywood experience and entered a period of prolific—though largely formulaic—film making. *Girls Girls Girls* was his eleventh career film and further ushered Elvis' movie career into the lights, neon and otherwise.

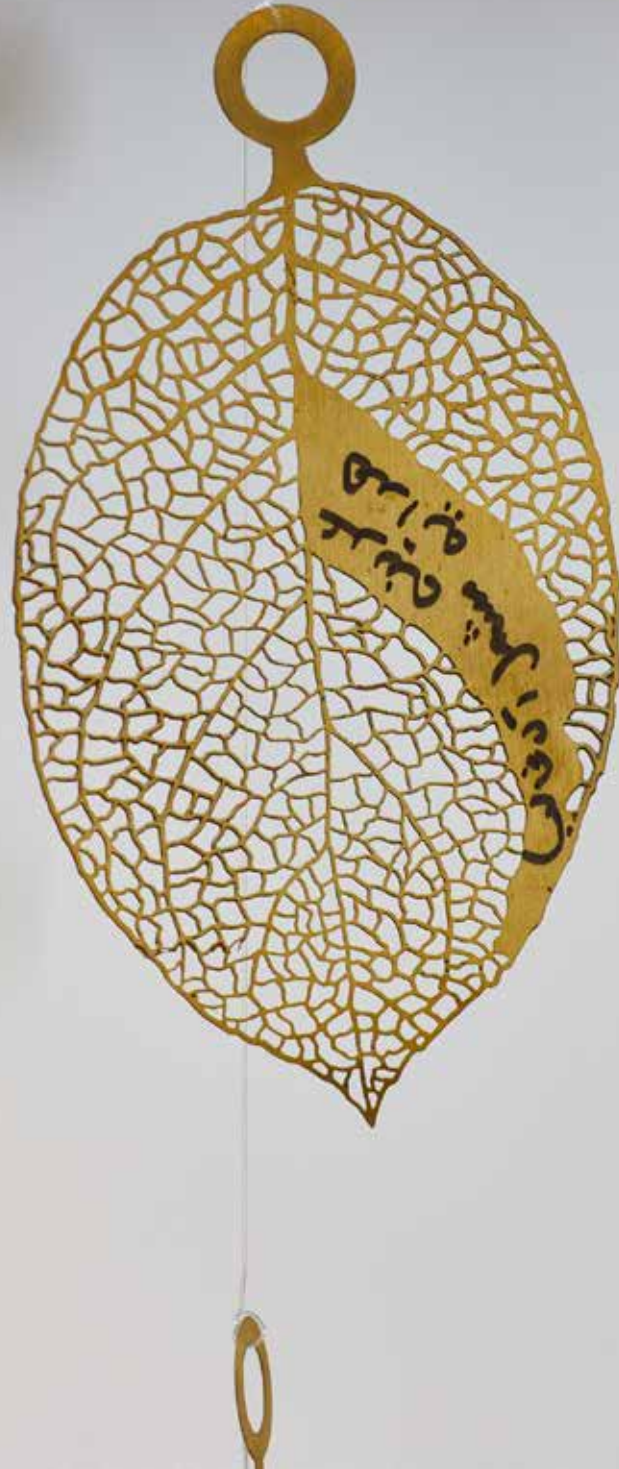
Girls, Girls, Girls, 2017
Pink neon tubes
57.91 x 39.37 in (147 x 99 cm)

Ahaad Alamoudi was born in Jeddah. Having received her Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design, she moved to London to pursue a Master's degree in Print at the Royal College of Art. On completion of her MA in 2017, she returned to Jeddah to teach at Dar Al Hekma University. Her recent exhibitions include the Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, TX (2016), CGP London, London, UK (2016), Al Hangar, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (2016), the Venice Biennale, Venice (2013), and Edge of Arabia's We Need to Talk exhibition in Jeddah (2013). In 2011, she was selected by the Crossway Foundation in London to meet with museum curators and artists and collaborated with the British Museum, Tate Modern and Penguin Books.

—
"These detergent bottles are products of my country, for my country. They are found in many households across the kingdom and I began seeing them as a current reflection of Saudi society. We have become detergent agents cleansing ourselves from what we perceive to be of low taste and standard. Everything from the slang that is used to the attire that is worn; this struggle between locality and the contemporary is apparent daily in Saudi Arabia."

My Saudi Couple, 2016
Prints on plastic bottles
Male: 14.5 x 6.5 x 3 in (38.6 x 16.5 x 7.6 cm)
Female: 13.75 x 7.5 x 3 in (35 x 19 x 7.6 cm)





Tree of Guardians (detail), 2014

Brass leaves, ink, fish wire and art paper with ink drawings
and sound recordings of oral histories during sessions
Site specific with 2000 leaves and 58 family tree drawings



Manal Al Dowayan is originally from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and holds a Master's Degree in Systems Analysis and Design. She currently lives in London, where she is completing her MA in Contemporary Art Practice in Public Spheres at the Royal College of Art. In 2014 she was a recipient of a research fellowship from NYU Abu Dhabi and was invited in early 2015 to the Robert Rauschenberg Residency in Captiva, Florida.

Al Dowayan has shown her work in Prospect 3 New Orleans–The American Biennale (2014/15), in collateral shows at the Venice Biennale (2009/11), and at museums around the world like Gawngju Museum in South Korea, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, Victoria and Albert Museum in the UK, and Mathaf Museum of Modern Arab Art in Qatar. Her artworks are part of the public collections of the British Museum, LACMA, the Louisiana Museum, Denmark, and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Qatar.

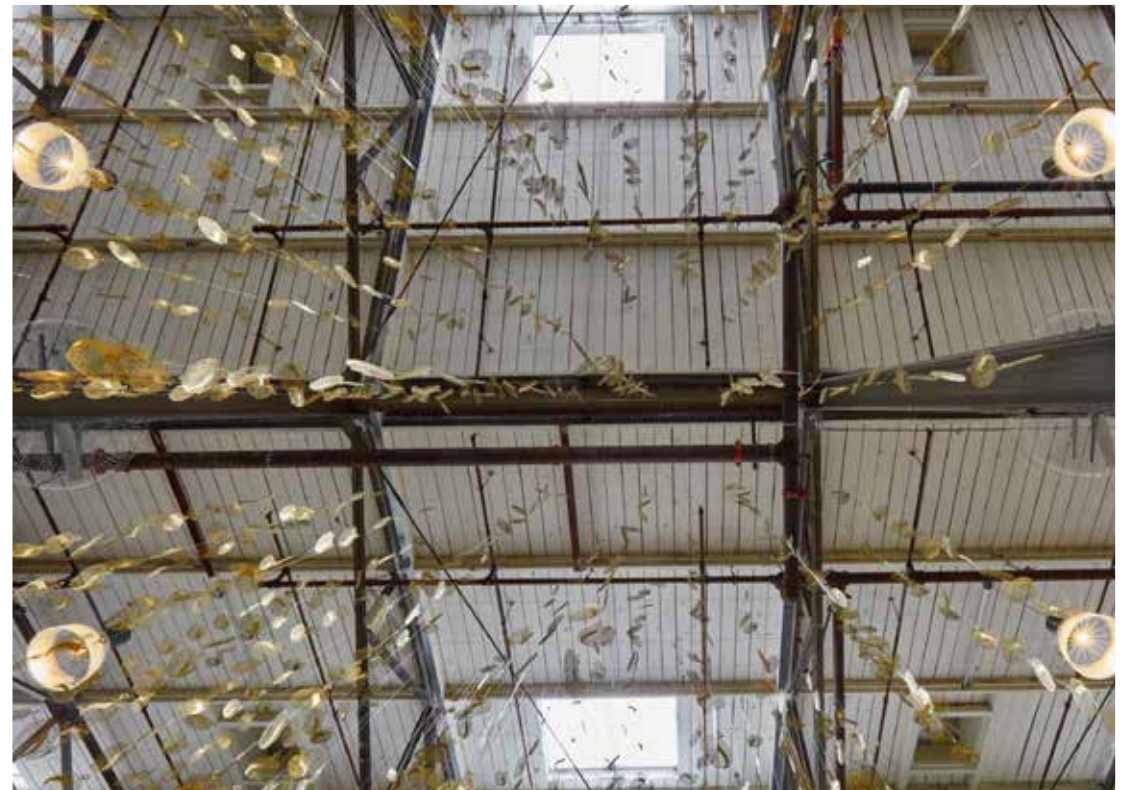
Al Dowayan is a contemporary documentarian that questions societies' transformations and historical and social narratives. Her practice transforms written and spoken narratives found across news channels, TV segments, and collected memories into tangible and simple concepts with multi-layered, physical forms. She charts her own identity within a region undergoing rapid developments in the urban and social landscape. As she states, "I live in a region that is transforming aggressively between one generation and the other. Modernization and extreme wealth happened over night. Social attitudes and traditions are being preserved and erased in a single breath. This environment gives me, as an artist, a wealth of inspirational subjects to work with. Everything around me is an opportunity and at the same time, an extreme challenge."

Tree of Guardians investigates the concept of active forgetting, memory, and oral histories. The installation contains 2000 brass leaves surrounded by 400 family tree drawings, created by women living in Saudi Arabia. As traditional family trees exclude women, Al Dowayan asked her participants to document their maternal family trees, indicating at what generation these women's names disappear from their memory. Al Dowayan conducted three major participatory sessions as she traveled with an anthropologist across universities and spaces donated by women's organizations from the East to the West of Saudi Arabia. The work culminates in a sculptural representation of the generations that were recalled by the participants. "In this project we came to the conclusion that Saudi women could only recall their maternal ancestors' names up to the ninth generation, while paternal family trees went back much further. So the brass leaves are the physical representation of when women disappear from memory".

Connecting past traditions to contemporary society, Al Dowayan illuminates the common thread woven by mothers, grandmothers, aunts and older sisters as Saudi's oral historians. Engaging visitors through an interactive installation, *Tree of Guardians* erases temporal distances between generations of hidden stories. "In its fullest sense, however, the act of preservation must transcend the identity of the single, identifiable individual, and encompass previous generations of unnamed and sometimes forgotten women that serve as the cultural and social roots for the hopes, dreams and aspirations of today's women. In other words, today's women have the power to not only speak for and about their ancestry, but also to reclaim the collective legacy of generations of women that might otherwise be lost to memory."

Tree of Guardians, 2014

Brass leaves, ink, fish wire and art paper with ink drawings
and sound recordings of oral histories during sessions
Site specific with 2000 leaves and 58 family tree drawings





- ▲ Shadia Alem is a visual artist. She graduated with a BA in Art & English Literature from King Abdulaziz University and since 1985 has participated in group and solo exhibitions in Saudi Arabia as well as Egypt, Morocco, Germany, Korea and Paris. Alem has been involved in many projects that seek to encourage creativity amongst the youth and women of Saudi Arabia. In this and all her work she is inspired by female predecessors Safia bin Zagir and Mona Mosaly who exhibited in Jeddah during the 1960s.
- ▲

-

Alem says "As part of the global clan, we the women in this part of the world are undergoing a drastic change, sloughing the negatives and regaining our image.

We are struggling to emerge from the shadow in which we have been cast behind for decades by the indifference and ignorance of the world. In the world's conscience we have remained invisible, and when accidentally subjected to the media's light we are silhouettes—passive, veiled negatives. Nevertheless, we were there all along actively creating, struggling, weaving our lives, striving and existing in every productive field without being seen.

Now, we have reached a point in our history where all is changing, the winds of global unbalance and the media revolution are reviving the embers of our efforts to cast away the darkness overshadowing our identities. I, hereby, put my life under a microscope, and allow you to see things that exist beneath the surfaces. I see us emerging, shedding this cocoon of negatives, coming into full light for us to see ourselves and for you to recognize us as part of the human body. What we can see now is not everything, but if we can't see something that doesn't mean it does not exist. What we see is part of an ocean heaving under the surface."

Negative No More, 2004
Installation of photographic Negatives
and single Channel projection
78.8 x 59 x 78.8 in (200 x 150 x 200 cm)



Mohammed Al Ghamdi was born in 1959 in Al Baha and holds a degree in Aviation Engineering. His experience with art long precedes his engineering qualifications but he draws on his work as an engineer when researching the materials he uses in his art.

Al Ghamdi uses recycled wood as his main medium. He recycles the refuse of our changing society, shaping it into a new definition of value and beauty, fossilizing into eternity moments we thought obsolete. Al Ghamdi has had numerous solo and group exhibitions in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iran, Czech Republic, Switzerland, and Italy, in addition to participations in international art fairs.

As Al Ghamdi notes, "My work is not a nostalgic attempt to relive the past but is rather an endorsement of the power of the past to create the future... My work is a contemporary vision expressed visually, left for the viewer to translate and interpret."

Al Ghamdi's repurposing of scrapped or destroyed materials serves as a reminder that all properties are conserved at many levels, and that this life cycle is but one of many for all things, manufactured and organic.



Untitled #27, 2014
Iron
6.7 x 7 x 6.7 in (17 x 18 x 17 cm)



Relieve Us With It, Oh Bilal, 2014
Carpet made from car jumper cables
70.8 x 41.6 in (180 x 106 cm)



Musaed Al Hulis has made significant contributions to the Saudi art movement. He is a Board Member of the Fine Artists' House, Founder and Director of Tasami Creative Lab in Jeddah. He has received several certificates and awards of appreciation for his work and, in 2011, he received an acquisition prize during the Contemporary Islamic Art Exhibition. He has participated in several group exhibitions and has helped organize workshops and art training courses around the Kingdom. He has exhibited in more than 15 local and four international exhibitions including Art Dubai and Edge of Arabia's #COMETOGETHER (2012). Other international exhibitions included the Saudi Cultural Days Exhibition in Qatar and Kazakhstan (2010).

-

In *Relieve Us With It, Oh Bilal*, Al Hulis has created a Muslim prayer rug made up of car battery jumper cables. The quote, "Relieve us with it, oh Bilal" has been attributed to the Prophet Mohammed and refers to the act of prayer as a source of relaxation leading to subsequent rejuvenation. Al Hulis himself observes the act of prayer (Salah)—a ritual performed five times a day by Muslims as part of their Islamic faith. The artist considers the position of prostration (Sajdah) as the source of this energy, during which seven parts of the human body connect with the ground and through which an exchange of positive and negative energy occurs. The human body is directly charged. The use of the medium (jumper cables) depicts this exchange, and the recharging of the human condition.

Arwa Al Neami was born in 1985 in Khamis Mushait and now lives between Jeddah and Riyadh. Originally from the mountain village of Rijal Alma, in 2000, Al Neami joined the influential Al-Meftaha Arts Village in Abha, the first art center of its kind in southern Saudi Arabia. She moved to Jeddah and exhibited in Mostly Visible, Jeddah Art Week 2013, and since then has exhibited internationally including at Art Dubai in 2013; Words & Illuminations, British Museum in 2014; Never Never Land, Edge of Arabia, London 2014–15; On Remote Control I + II, Lothringer13 Halle Gallery, Munich 2015–16; and Spheres of Influence: Codes and Conduct Across Structural Landscapes, Mohsen Gallery, Tehran in 2016. She is the Co-founder of Pharan Studio.

Al Neami creates incisive and daring documents of life in Saudi Arabia. Her practice has been shaped by the restrictions and obstacles she has encountered as a female artist working in the country's traditional southern region. She has taken advantage of gradually broadening artistic opportunities, extending and progressively re-drawing the boundaries that constrict female expression in the Kingdom.

Despite her apparently defiant approach, she has earned numerous accolades and taken advantage of unprecedented opportunities to subvert the status quo. Such distinguished opportunities have included being the first woman to photograph inside the Masjid al Nabawi in Medina—the site of Prophet Mohammad's tomb and the second holiest site in Islam.

Since 2012, Al Neami has lived and worked in Jeddah where she presents challenging and often humorous works that explore controversial aspects of Saudi society, with a particularly wry and erudite commentary on the position of women in the Kingdom.

Within the fixed-frame of *Never Never Land*, women wearing black abayas, hijabs, and niqabs that reveal only their eyes and their hands enjoy the neon, crayon-colored world of a funfair in the Southern Asir region of Saudi Arabia. The title of this work refers to the amusement parks that exist across Saudi, which are contradictory places—both detached realms of imaginary abandon and sanctioned spaces where fun is circumscribed by strict rules.

Documentation becomes a covert act of defiance, as Al Neami smuggles her photographic record out of the world of childish fantasy via the camera hidden beneath her own abaya. In one of her videos, women bumper car drivers weave in and out of the frame, restrained in their interactions, their voices muted in accordance with signs that warn against "screaming." For some women, this is an opportunity to practice driving—something they're forbidden from doing on real roads outside the amusement park. For all of them, this is no more and no less than their unremarkable everyday social reality, yet the footage is shot through with knowing intimacy.

By recording these moments, Al Neami documents the scene detached from its context. Out of time, we are able to turn it over for scrutiny and consideration. The artist's forbidden gaze is empowered, investing the moment with a wry significance. Her record of this everyday leisure activity becomes a commentary on the bounded lives of Saudi's women. In this act of sustained looking, the prosaic gives way to the absurd, loading the perfunctory with a darkly comic weight that enacts the Orwellian "joke as tiny revolution".

Never Never Land, 2014
Video
9 minutes and 21 seconds





▲

Born in Al Baha, Saudi Arabia, Rashed Al Shashai currently resides in Jeddah. He received a Masters of Visual Art at Umm Al Qura University in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. His exhibitions include Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2016); Low Gallery, San Diego (2016); The Armory Show, New York (2015); JOAU Tunis (2015); Hewan Art Gallery, Riyadh (2015); Hafez Gallery, Jeddah (2015); the Annual Exhibition of Emirates Fines Arts Society, Sharjah Art Museum (2012); and the Ostraka International Forum, Sharm Al Sheikh. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including First Prize from the Media Art Show, Riyadh (2011).

-

In *Beep Beep*, the popular cartoon characters Wile E. Coyote and the Roadrunner are depicted against elaborately painted light boxes built in the shape of a mashrabiya. Behind the intricate ornamentation of the screen is a backdrop of a red-sand desert landscape. The characters are positioned face to face on the interior side of the architectural feature, creating the illusion of a secluded space in which the viewer is also an occupant. The usually antagonistic protagonists are brought together as a representation of a continuous state of discord and the need for religious tolerance, prompting a consideration of the ideological divisions that continue to keep communities from coming together under the umbrella of a core system of shared principles, particularly among Muslims.

▲

Beep Beep, 2015
Light box covered with black acrylic
89 x 47.2 in (226 x 120 cm)

Street photographer Dhafer Al Shehri lives and works in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and has won numerous international photography prizes for his ability to capture innovative designs within the country's diversified socio-economic fabric.

Al Shehri's keen eye for composition and social commentary, and in particular his depiction of traditional subjects in modern contexts, are the trademarks of his work, which bears witness to the transition of Saudi society from the old to the new.

-
Worshippers kneeling during Eid prayer in an outdoor mosque on the first day of Eid Al-Fitr, which is a day of celebration for all Muslims worldwide after fasting during the month of Ramadan.

-
Worshippers in the position of prostration (sujood) during their performance of Eid prayer in an outdoor mosque on the first day of Eid Al-Fitr.



Grand Mosque, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1 Shwaal 1434 AH, 8 August 2013 (1), 2013
Photographic Print
44.5 x 64.5 x 2 in (113 x 163.8 cm)



▲ Ahmad Angawi is Associate Director at AMAR Center of Architecture and Design Studies, Jeddah and is also the Program Director of The House of Traditional Arts located in Al-Balad, the city's historic district—a collaborative initiative by the Prince's School of Traditional Arts, London, and Art Jameel. He works as a consultant at GMSV (Geometric Modeling Scientific Visualization Research Center) at KAUST working on Traditional Innovative Products.

Angawi has participated in many group exhibitions including #COMETOGETHER, Edge of Arabia, London, UK (2012); We Need To Talk, Edge of Arabia, Jeddah, KSA. (2012); Rhizoma, -The 55th Venice Biennale, Edge of Arabia, Venice, (2013); A Line in the Sand, Art Space, Dubai, UAE (2013); Connected: Art in Airports, Art Jameel, King Fahad International Airport, Dammam, KSA (2014); Al hangar, Besmallah, Jeddah, KSA (2015) / Mangour: Loved and Beloved, 21,39 & Athr, Jeddah, KSA (2016) solo exhibition / Al hangar, maboth al matar, 21,39, Jeddah, KSA (2016); Sharjah Art Fair second edition; Saudi Art Council & Al Mansouria silent auction, Jeddah, KSA (2016); Parallel Kingdom at Station Museum, Houston, USA (2016).

Whether responding to a physical space or hewing work from collective voices and consciousness, Angawi's practice is shaped by the communities he creates for. His works are participatory installations that bring people together. Borrowing elements of his Hejazi culture and Islamic traditions, he maps their perennial influences in the present moment, seeking to locate their place within a rapidly shifting local context that is being overwhelmed by globalization.

Angawi speaks out against rapid modernization; he is particularly concerned with retaining the forces that imbue urban spaces with a robust sense of community. Hosting open mic nights in an empty swimming pool in Jeddah he has created a space for young people to freely voice their opinions through music, poetry, and debate.

In much of his work, the human voice becomes the medium Angawi uses to document the multiple identities of his community. Exemplifying the energy of the restless voices he channels, *Street Pulse* is a large installation of some 3,600 microphones. The project was born amid the tumultuous, but hopeful, cacophony of the 2011 Arab Spring, and the work has captured the voices of the people of Jeddah ever since. This huge sphere of microphones documents and amplifies stories heard throughout the city. This aural/ oral photo booth is a means to harness the fluid ideas of the currents flowing through the community. By measuring the pulse of the street, the vital signs of the community body, each microphone harbors vibrations that sustain thousands of voices simultaneously.

According to Angawi, "*Street Pulse* is an ongoing interactive piece that will evolve with the contribution of different people. Through voices recorded in diverse international locations, each area or city will come to have its own sound. The aim? In the words of HRH Prince Turki bin Faisal Al Saud—"Evolution, not revolution." The project acts as an electrocardiogram machine—instead of measuring the vitals of the body, it measures the pulse of the street."

▲ *Street Pulse*, 2012
Mixed media sound installation with microphones
90.5 in (230 cm) diameter

Depending on the direction, or Wajha, which the piece is viewed, a different image is apparent revealing the shifted architectural configuration and social fabric of the scene. Angawi has referred to the Quranic verse, surah 2, ayah 148 (as visible in the work's title): "Everyone has a direction towards which he turns."

Investigating historical architectures and issues pertaining to land and ownership are explored within this work in reference to the changing structure and physicality of Saudi Arabia.

The employment of the traditional handcraft and process in creating a contemporary version of a 17th Century Manuscript painting of the Holy Mosque (Al-Masjid Al-Haram) in Makkah for the present day aptly entitled *21st Century Makkah Manuscript*.

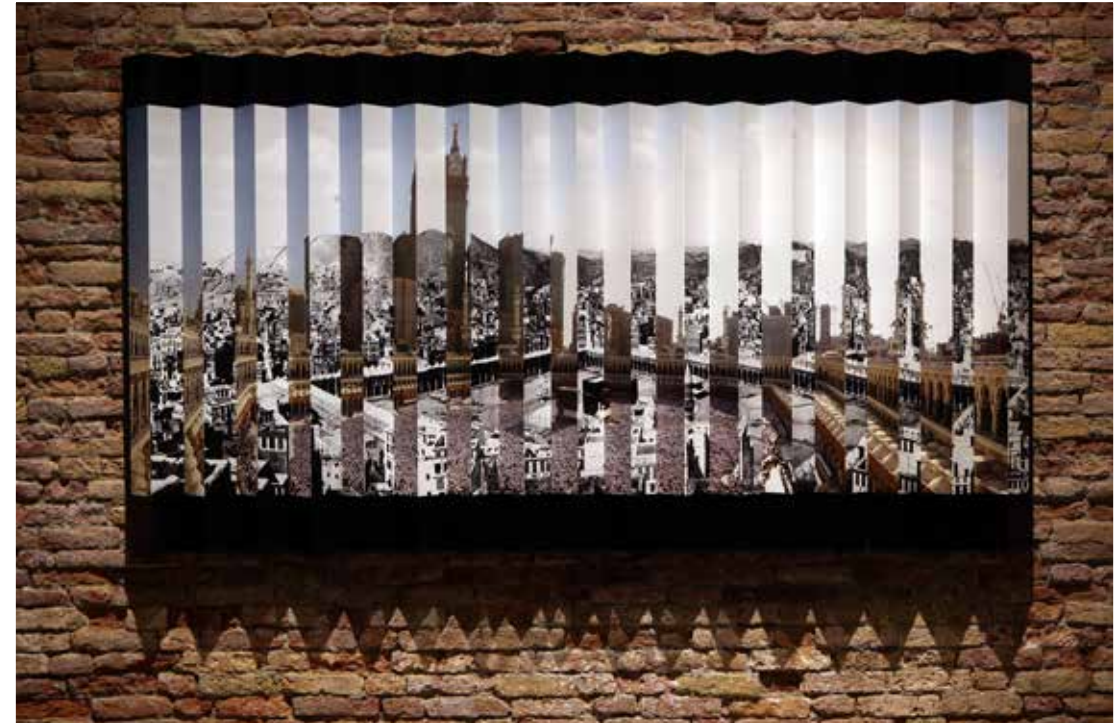
In Angawi's version, a small bulldozer that is eating away the ancient historical architecture of Al-Masjid Al-Haram has been introduced. The Rawaq was to be demolished, and this has raised a debate whether to keep it or to destroy it for the Mosque expansion plan. Some believe that the Rawaq is an Ottoman heritage others relate it back to the Abbasid period; regardless, it's another piece of Makkah heritage that will be gone.

The painting was first exhibited in the Venice Biennale 2013 on a stand in the direction of Makkah. The more you get close and examine the piece, the more you will be leaning towards the Ka'ba.

The bulldozer is painted in silver, it's the only thing that will change and get tarnished in the painting as time passes by.

Wijha 2:148-And everyone has a direction to which they should turn, 2013
Digital Lenticular Print mounted on Aluminum
64.5 x 118 in (164 x 300 cm)

21st Century Manuscript, 2012
Ink, gold, silver, gouache and watercolor
14.5 x 9.8 in (37 x 25 cm)





Tagged and Undocumented 4, from the Documenting the Undocumented Series, 2013
Diasc mounted digital print
20" X 30" (51 X 97CM)

Tagged and Undocumented 5, from the Documenting the Undocumented Series, 2013
Diasc mounted digital print
20" X 30" (51 X 97CM)

Huda Beydoun was born in 1989 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. She graduated with a degree in Special Education, specialising in Autism Spectrum Disorders. She also studied Graphic Design and Photography at Dar Al Hekma College in Jeddah.

Beydoun's work has been displayed across Saudi Arabia, the Gulf region and internationally. She was part of *The Meeting Place*, at the 2014 *FotoFest Biennial*, *RHIZOMA: Generation in Waiting* at the 55th Venice Biennale, 2013 and the *Bridges US Tour*. Most recently, her incisive, bold practice earned her a place as part of Banksy's *Dismaland* platform.

Originally a painter, Huda Beydoun has evolved as an artist and now incorporates digital art, mixed media and photography into her work. She deftly moves across these media making surreptitious social statements via irreverent borrowed motifs and vivid graphic patterns.

Whatever the medium, her works are multi-layered. Often marked by an unnerving sense of disruption, she splices together moments and meanings. Owing a debt to her training as a graphic designer, her vivid, expressive, and humorous facades quickly give way to offer glimpses of unsettled narratives that vie for attention. Formally and conceptually, her works never quite comfortably cohere. This capacity to create provocative amalgamations through apparently innocuous graphic expressions places Beydoun among the vocal group of young Saudi artists whose work turns urgently toward controversial topics. She credits her experience working in arts education with galvanizing her desire to express a wide range of alternative perspectives.

Documenting the Undocumented is a series about looking and looking again. Its story coaxes the viewer into a process of layered-looking. Upon first encounter, Beydoun's work provides an effortless and immediate visual coherence. It's easy on the eye, decorative, and fun. Here are Mickey and Minnie Mouse! Their images obscure the faces and emotions of undocumented "foreign workers" whose labor has built the infrastructure on which Saudi society depends. Self consciously cartoonish, the colorful, graphic foreground flattens the image, rendering it devoid of challenging commentary... almost. Beydoun deceives. As we look, her playful adjustments reconfigure, transforming from cartoon to camouflage. A jarring dissonance enters the space between the foreground and the background and demands we look, and look again. In this way, her graphic intervention forces us to engage with the grainy black and white background only to find it shot through with the tell-tale horizontal lines that hum across CCTV footage. Suddenly, these faceless figures come into focus. Their anonymity is exacerbated as their identities are flattened behind the Mickey Mouse motif. A heightened sense of social discomfort enters the fray as we recognize that we cannot really see the "foreign workers" in each photograph. As the title of the series suggests, these undocumented masses who live in the country illegally are hiding in plain sight. As we watch, we are already complicit in their plight—first we do not notice them, distracted by the vivid foreground—then we look at them as though through the roving eye of a surveillance camera, the threat that always looms, always monitors.

Having studied Fine Arts at Central St. Martin's College of Art and Design in London, Ghada Da's multi-disciplinary fine art practice focuses mainly on performative sculpture and video installations. Her durational work is a journey of observation on the relationship of the body to space, its disconnect and rebirth. Allowing the sculptural body to live outside its organic system is at the core of her practice.

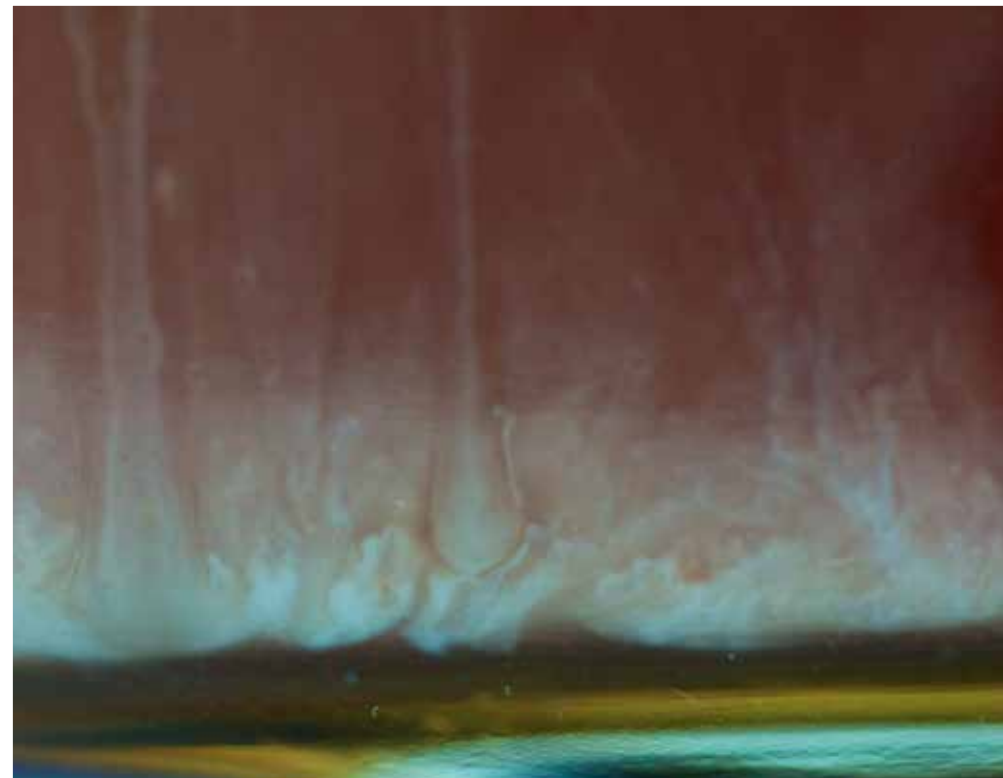
Da investigates time's visible landscape presented by the body and the spatial area in which the body exists as well as its invisible counter part; the psyche. Hence creating images that become psychological portraits of the identity of the human condition by an intentional mutation by design.

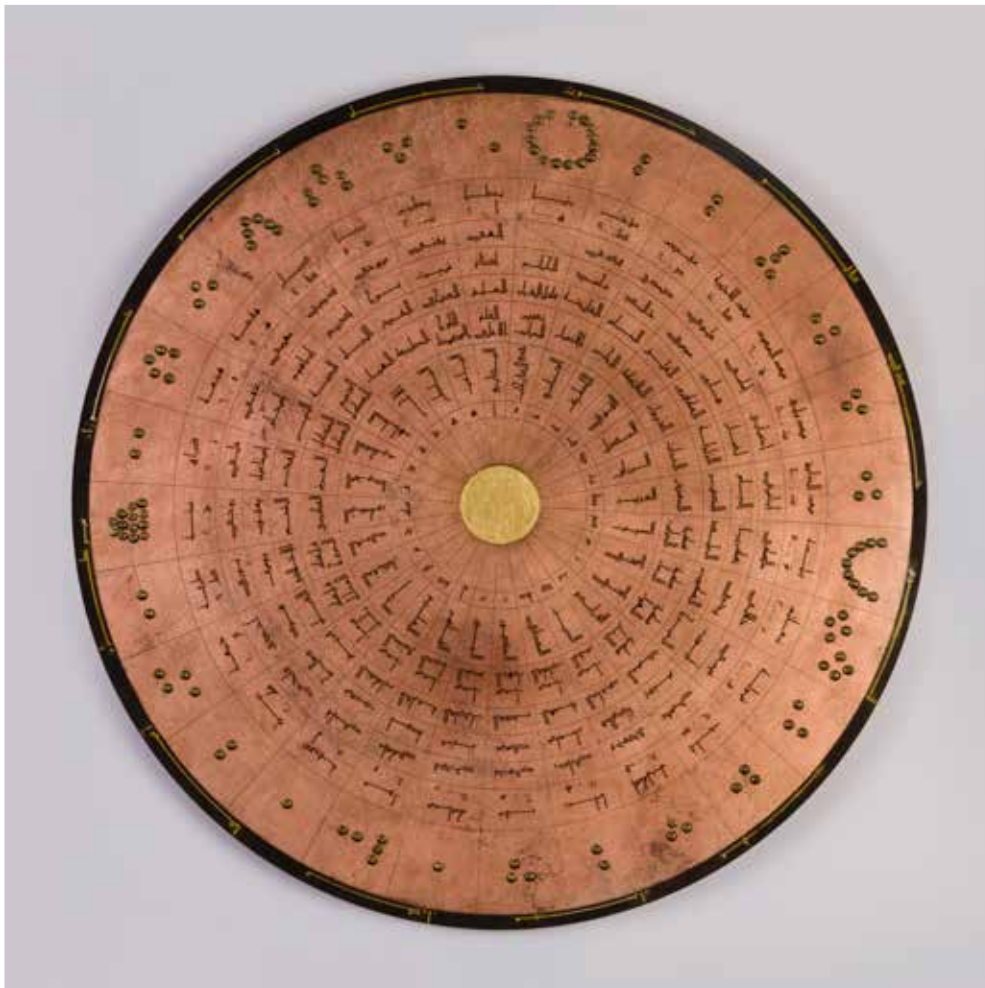
Da is from Saudi Arabia and is based in Dubai, UAE. Her works have been shown internationally including: Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, Pon Ding Gallery Taiwan, Seoul Art Space Geumcheon, Seoul, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, Saatchi Gallery, London, Satellite Space, Dubai and Benetton Foundation, Treviso amongst others.

For this project, Da focuses on the philosophical implications of scent and its relationship with themes such as culture, religion, gender, decadence and the domestic in a variety of historical periods. It is an exploration of contemporary norms and values surrounding scent; from the introduction of synthetic smells to digital scent technology and our understanding of its implications.

Da has been researching key scents and their influence on the body. She asks, "What is our evolution as a race from the perspective of scent and how has that changed over time? How does this affect the future?" Scent is used as a tool to deconstruct the body, to collapse time and space and as an access point to wider social and political experiences. Ultimately, the work investigates the abject body which exists in the in-between of these categories and pattern.

Sculptural Color from Historiographical Perspectives of Scent
 Memphis, October, 2017
 Dimensions variable on 2.5m x 2.5m canvas





▲ **Basmah Felemban is a self-taught Graphic Designer who worked in various fields during and after graduating high school in 2011. Her first work "Jeem", a transition from design to contemporary art, made its debut at the British Museum in 2012 as a sideshow to "Journey To The Heart of Islam: Hajj Exhibition".**

Felemban recently graduated with an MA in Islamic and Traditional Art from the Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London, UK in 2017.

▲ **Despite being at such an early stage in her career, Basmah has exhibited in many international and local exhibitions such as Art Dubai, 21/39, contemporary art Istanbul, Venice Biennale, and Art Abu Dhabi. In 2014 she won The Arab Women Awards in the "Young Talent" category, and then was invited to be on the judging panel the following year.**

Driven by her experience as a young creative in Saudi, she puts supporting the local creative scene as a priority, from working in small startups to giving talks, workshops and her social media platforms.

-
Felemban says, "The limits of our existence are a lot less than we are made to think by modern society which evaluates a person by the quality and quantity of the objects they own. My starting point was Mulla Sadra's book *The Four Journeys* (al-Asfar al-arba'a), in which he speaks about Universal Man (al-Insan al-Kamil), and the journey of each one of us returning to the essence. This book has been one of the main inspirations for this series along with other writings such as the books of Rene Guenon including 'Universal Symbols of Sacred Science' (translated into Arabic)."

▲ *The Journey from Creatures to God*
Laser engrave on coppered plywood with gilded embellishments and a rotating mechanism
25.5 x 25.5 in (65 x 65 cm)

-
The Journey in God by God (following spread)
Laser engrave on coppered plywood with gilded embellishments and a rotating mechanism
25.5 x 25.5 in (65 x 65 cm)

Asfar is the plural form of safar meaning journey in Arabic; Sadr al-Din Shirazi intended the scheme of his book to match the four journeys considered by Islamic mystics, framed by: 1. The part on general issues (existence and its manifestations). 2. The part on natural philosophy (substances and accidents). 3. The part on proper theology. 4. The part on the soul, its origin, and its resurrection.

The four journeys are as follows:

1. The journey from creatures to God.
2. The journey in God by God.
3. The journey from God to creatures by God.
4. The Journey in the creatures by God.

The journey from creatures to God: Based on Ibn Arabi's book 'The Bezels of Wisdom' (Fusoo al-Hikam). Composed during the later period of Ibn Arabi's life (12th century), the fass or "bezel" of a ring is a part with which it is decorated and upon which the name of its owner is written. "Wisdom", in this case, is knowledge of the Divine realities and attributes.

In each chapter of this book, Ibn Arabi gives a jewel that helps to bring us closer to Universal or Perfect Man, in order to understand Al-il hiyyah ("the Divinity" or "Allah"), the name of the highest ontological level which embraces all of the levels of the divine Names and Qualities.

-
The journey in God by God: (by God, in that the spiritual traveler leaves his or her own existence and ascribes his journey to God). A map of the constellations using Abd al-Raman ibn Omar al-Sufi's work titled "Book of the Constellations of the Fixed Stars". This is for when the traveler is on the high seas and his position can only be determined by measuring of celestial bodies.



Saeed Gamhawi is a teacher and member of the Fine Artists House in Jeddah and the Saudi Society for Culture. Gamhawi's works are the products of distorted realities. They are depicted as familiar images of what we might come across in our everyday lives. He questions the information circulating through mass media and educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. Solo exhibitions in Jeddah include his first show in 1998 and second in Atelier for Fine Arts in 2003.

Gamhawi participated in local group shows such as the 21,39 show Earth and Ever After in 2016, as well as international shows including the Ten Saudi Artists Exhibition, Syria 2000, and The Saudi Contemporary Art exhibition, Cairo 2001, as well as Saudi Cultural Week exhibitions in Italy, Netherlands and the United Arab Emirates. His work is housed in private and public collections including Abdel Raouf Khalil Museum, and the Youth Welfare.

At first glance, Gamhawi's *Tabashir* is a container of chalk sticks—multi-colored chalks and white chalks. Beyond the quotidian pieces of chalk, however, Gamhawi is making another statement about the equally mundane proliferation of arms and ammunition across the planet. Has war taken

the place of education? Has violence destroyed the classrooms and the playgrounds? The bullet-form soft pastel chalks speak to the increasing threat of hostility to the world's children. From Columbine to Beslan to Sandy Hook to Peshawar, school children are under attack, and little time passes between tragedies. Gamhawi's simple re-crafting of the chalk form carries with it the resonance of all the classroom massacres in recent years, and the images of families burying their children in the wake of terror.

After intermediate school, the children of the village emigrate to the city to make a living and seek jobs, the best of which are in one of the government departments. The village is empty of its sons...

The carpet is a symbol of generosity, goodness and hospitality. The same sons of the village live in the city where, inside their small apartments they have carpets, but mostly they have carpets under the coffee and tea tables--the carpets are used for decoration. When they flee the noise of the city over the weekend they take these carpets with them; they must have them and they can not be dispensed with. This carpet is my mother's carpet--it was a marriage gift from my father.

Tabashir, 2016
White and multi-colored chalk
3.1 diameter x 0.5 in (7.9 diameter x 1.2 cm) each

The Carpet, 2014
Single channel video
2 minutes and 38 seconds



Abdulnasser Gharem was born in 1973 in the Saudi Arabian city of Khamis Mushait, where he continues to live and work. In 1992, Gharem graduated from King Abdulaziz Academy before attending the Leader Institute in Riyadh. In 2003 he studied at the influential Al-Meftaha arts village in Abha, and, in 2004, Gharem and the Al-Meftaha artists staged a group exhibition, Shattah, which challenged existing modes of art practice in Saudi Arabia. Since then, Gharem has exhibited in Europe, the Gulf and the USA including at The Martin-Gropius-Bau and at the Venice, Sharjah, and Berlin Biennales.

Gharem's vocational path embraces the polarities of artist and soldier. Although he has had no formal art training, as a commissioned officer he found time to study on his own—learning about 20th-century art through the internet—and to form a cooperative venture with other artists, which in 2003 became the art collective Edge of Arabia. Co-founded by Gharem, the organization was intended to help support contemporary Saudi artists reach an international audience. Gharem is at the forefront of this movement.

The socio-political dichotomies present in the media, politics and daily life stand at the center of Abdulnasser Gharem's installations, public interventions and sculptural works.

Marked by temporal and thematic tension, Gharem's prolific practice attempts to reconcile impossibly disjointed narratives. He traces the jostling social realities of life in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, showing how

contradictory cultural standards have challenged contemporary social realities. He demonstrates that even personal memories can be shaped by official histories and that Saudi society has been constructed through an unusually complex process of rapid economic development and change.

Gharem's work is informed by his unique interpretation of the social conditions of his home country and his direct interaction with society. His process is very much rooted in communication and exploration. He incorporates art into his day-to-day life, searching for opportunities for interventions in his surroundings.

Gharem frequently uses Islamic architectural settings in his work. Here he employs an Iranian mosque as the backdrop for this monumental stamp painting, which depicts an army tank (a common sight for Gharem, a lieutenant colonel in the Saudi Arabian army) with a giant orange daisy protruding from its cannon. The flower and the colorful tile decoration of the mosque facade belie and even disguise the deadly nature of the armored vehicle. For the artist, this form of camouflage represents his own critique of theocracies that prey on sincere religious beliefs by promoting a message of intolerance toward adherents of other faiths. The combination of weapon and flower may be reminiscent of some of the antiwar imagery from the Vietnam War era; this powerful work perhaps takes on a new meaning once transplanted to American soil.



Camouflage, 2017
Digital print and lacquer paint on rubber
stamps on aluminum
94.5 x 189 in (240 x 480 cm) (in four parts)



In the 1980s, the municipal authority for Abha and Khamis Mushait learned about a drought-resistant tree called the *conocarpus erectus* that would add to the lush, well-watered feel of the area, known for its climate. Soon after Gharem moved to Khamis Mushait the municipal authority planted thousands of *conocarpus erectus* saplings down the main streets. But as the *conocarpus erectus* reached maturity a strange thing happened. Nearby cottonwoods, willows and other indigenous trees started to die. Most had compact root balls that sought moisture deep in the ground. The *conocarpus erectus* has a different strategy. Its roots shoot out in horizontal veins that keep close to the surface, drinking up water before it can reach the roots below. In short, the balance of the local ecosystem in Abha and Khamis Mushait had been upset by the introduction of these imported trees. Abdunasser Gharem planned to stage a performance that would highlight what had happened.

Gharem chose a *conocarpus erectus* towards one side of a busy commercial street in the heart of Khamis Mushait. The shopkeepers were agog as Gharem proceeded to cover the tree with a broad and transparent sheet of plastic. Having secured the corners to the base, Gharem stepped inside this plastic cocoon in his pristine white thobe and shemagh, while his colleague took photographs. In Khamis Mushait, the performance was met with

curiosity and perplexity. A crowd gathered around Gharem. Cars slowed to a crawl. A traffic jam ensued. There was honking, questioning, and all-round confusion. Nobody knew what to make of it. After an hour in the midday heat he was also able to survive thanks to the small hole that had been burnt in the plastic by the sun.

Finally, members of the municipal authority heard about Gharem's intervention, and when they saw what he was up to, became convinced that Gharem was trying to kill the tree. The performance was soon stopped.

"Our architects and planners need to consider the environment more carefully in their designs," Gharem later wrote. "Our technology needs to accelerate in this sense. We need a philosophical analysis of the relationship between the technological and the natural."

Gharem called this performance and photographs of the event *Flora and Fauna*. With it, he positioned himself for a moment in real and symbolic equilibrium with nature, so that neither he nor the tree suffered. In other ways, *Flora and Fauna* was about received wisdom and when to question it. Some of the passersby who saw Gharem wrapped in plastic thought he would not be able to breathe. They had not accounted for the oxygen produced by the tree.

Flora and Fauna, 2007
Video
2 minutes and 23 seconds

Eyad Maghazil is an emerging Saudi artist born in Riyadh in 1985. Maghazil started studying architecture at King Fahad University in 2002. In 2008, he decided to pursue being an artist and filmmaker full time. In 2010, Maghazil co-founded UTURN entertainment, an online production company. He currently works as creative director on several shows and documentaries for the company. Maghazil first exhibited his work in a group show for Young Saudi Artists at Athr Gallery in 2010, and at Art Dubai 2011. He currently lives and works in Jeddah.

Maghazil's *Breaking News* is social commentary through plastic media. The transparent mass grave for these bloodied toy soldiers is much like a television screen, permitting the viewer to watch the horrors of the news up close and unfiltered. While the news is unmitigated spectacle, it is also unstoppable. The bodies represent so much of the world, constantly at war, and so much life constantly being lost in the Orwellian never-ending conflicts. In this statement, Maghazil's news is not so much breaking as it is constant, unresolvable, and without mercy, crushing far into future generations, built on the many wars of the past.

Breaking News, 2011
 Mixed media sculpture with 3000 acrylic
 toy soldiers
 51.1 x 31.5 x 7.8 in (130 x 80 x 20 cm)







Maha Malluh is a Saudi artist, born in the traditional region of Najd, who explores the challenges of modernity that have come so overwhelmingly to Saudi Arabia. She has exhibited since 1976 and has in later years acquired a BA in English literature and a Californian certificate in design and photography.

Continuous in her artwork, that started with collages and developed into photograms, is her use of symbolic and real imagery to express her opinion about life in Saudi Arabia.

—
 From the dawn of Arabic civilization, oral history has dominated the cultural scene. Visual culture and written tradition are important in their own right, but it is oral heritage that remains the pride of every Arab.

Speaking of her work, Malluh says "I want to reflect the visual culture of Saudi Arabia, and the immense impact that globalization had and still has on our country. I often find myself considering these very significant issues and I need to take us to terms with this shift, from oral heritage to visual culture."

The work *Almuallaqat* attempts to create a global universe where the visual tradition and the oral one are both celebrated and presented as counterparts. The original and rustic aged aluminum pots used in *Almuallaqat 4*, were collected from various flea markets all around Saudi Arabia. They were specifically used throughout history by women and families, as cooking vessels.

These pots are therefore an anthropological testimonial as a celebration of Arab history, of Arab hospitality traditions and also a visual metamorphosis of personal and individual histories of a nation.

This installation is part of the Food for Thought (*Almuallaqat*) series which is named as a reference to the great Hanging Odes (*Muallaqat*), the famous canonical Arabic poems by great pre-Islamic or Jahili poets from Arabia that once were exposed in the Ka'ba in Mecca. However nowadays, those canonical Arabic poems are studied and read as a part of a lost heritage, of a past golden age of our culture.

Almuallaqat stands to call out for the reconnection with our global heritage, by using this strong contemporary visual anthropological proposition to tell the world the story of our cultural identity.

Therefore, these hanging pots are together a salute to our literary heritage and an actual testament that shows our current need for visual and aesthetic culture. These small pots are the voices of our revived archaeological search for our visual heritage, for that buried culture that stayed in the shadows of our literary heritage for so long.

Without dismissing the symbolic message and aesthetic beauty of the original *Muallaqat*, *Almuallaqat* reinforces the position of poetry in Arab culture and heritage, whilst simultaneously engaging a visual universal dialogue

Food for Thought Almuallaqat 4, 2016
 Used aluminium pots
 176.8 x 551 x 15.7 in (449 x 1.400 x 40 cm)



Physician turned artist, Ahmed Mater is one of the most significant cultural voices documenting and scrutinising the realities of contemporary Saudi Arabia. Born in 1979 and growing up in the fertile south of the Kingdom, he now lives and works between Riyadh, Jeddah and Abha, Saudi Arabia. His life and work has been shaped by the seismic changes of the oil boom and rentier era—transformations which have diverged into unprecedented social shifts and trenchant ideologies. He uses photography, film, sculpture and performance to map, document and analyse the tension of these rapid developments, considering their psychological impact on the individual, the community, society and the world.

His practice embraces the paradoxes of science and faith. Entwining expressive and politically engaged artistic aims with the scientific objectives of his medical training, he fuses the two realms to explore their connections and contradictions. Employing broad research-based investigative techniques, Mater assesses the Kingdom's social, economic and religious condition, mining and preserving disregarded and forgotten narratives through expansive documentary ambles. His surveillances are also distilled into compacted conceptual scenarios, nodes that tug at the dense strands of the Kingdom's past, present and future, conjuring and contemplating modernisation and tradition, religion and globalisation.

Mater's work has been widely exhibited internationally including at The British Museum, London (2006 and 2012); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2011); Institut du Monde Arab, Paris (2012); Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2013); New Museum, New York (2014); Guggenheim, New York (2016). In 2016, he became the first Saudi artist to hold a solo exhibition in the United States with 'Symbolic Cities: The Work of Ahmed Mater' at the Smithsonian Institution's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC. He has participated in talks and panels including at The Louvre, Paris (2010); Akademie der Kunste, Berlin (2010); Armory, New York (2011); Art Basel, Basel (2012); Leiden Museum, Amsterdam (2013); Art Dubai, Dubai (2017); and UNESCO NGO Forum, Riyadh (2017). His work is part of major international

collections including The British Museum, London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; and Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Composed of footage filtered through the phone cameras of immigrant workers, *Leaves Fall in All Seasons* is a fragmented document of Mecca, the most highly invested symbolic site in Islam and perhaps the world. The shaky immediacy of these raw, interleaved perspectives opens up new vantages on the multi-faceted city. Workers are granted agency as they film, borrowing from television vernacular they frame their own narratives, telling the unheard story of their lives and their Mecca. As we follow their gaze, the city's symbolic status becomes destabilized; we witness its fraught history and the new construction becomes as insecure as the buildings that collapse in the violent demolitions reconfiguring the urban landscape. Countering these scenes of destruction are moments of ascendancy, the most poignant of which is the installation of the great gold crescent moon on top of the infamous Makkah Royal Clock Tower Hotel. Jabril (Gabriel) is a "foreign worker" charged with executing this astonishing performance.

As he makes his heavenly ascent astride the crescent moon, he comes to represent the millions of workers who have found themselves between two realities—resident in the most holy city of Islam, yet existing in the most inhumane conditions, stripped of their most basic human rights. This sense of tense contradiction appears in the diversely different crowds that swarm across the city like falling leaves at the whim of the vicissitudes of this tumultuous place. *Leaves Fall in All Seasons* is a work composed of fragments—of lives, of time, of texts, of perspectives. Like the leaves of a book, damaged, reconfigured and imperfectly bound, these are the contradictory stories of a contested city caught in a perpetual cycle of construction and destruction.

Leaves Fall in All Seasons, 2013
25 archival inkjet prints
11.8 x 15.3 in (30 x 39 cm) each



Evolution of Man, 2010
Silkscreen prints
31.5 x 23.6 in (80 x 60 cm) (each)



In a light box, peculiar X-rays reveal a strange evolutionary process. Whether we take a western approach and read from left to right, or whether we read from right to left as in the Arab world, *Evolution of Man* shows a chiastic process of devolution—either the man with the gun to his head becomes a gas pump or the gas pump becomes a suicidal human figure. Both readings link oil to self-destruction, calling into question the Kingdom's almost exclusive reliance on the petrodollar for its economic well-being.

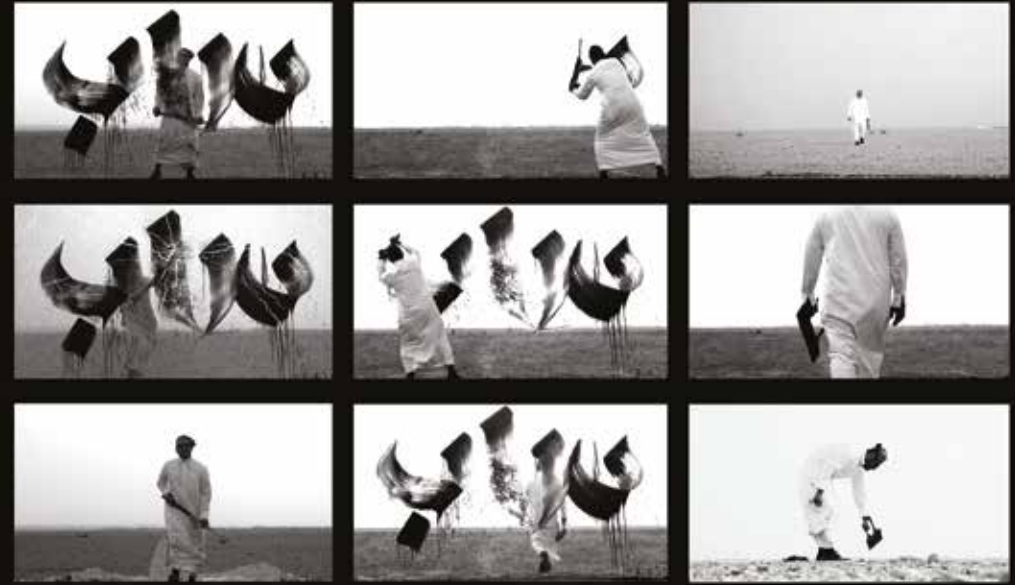
Nugamshi currently works as a graphic designer for a local bank in Riyadh, focusing on its print and web design. Nugamshi has taught workshops on basic training, techniques and history of calligraphiti at YourAOK art organization in Kuwait and has presented performances and staged exhibitions in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan and the US. Most recently, he presented his video works in the 2016 Sharjah Calligraphy Biennial.

A prominent proponent of the “calligraphiti” movement, Nugamshi makes innovative use of Arabic calligraphy, transforming this traditional art form into an expressive contemporary vehicle. While his work is firmly rooted in the spiritual essence of the Arabic language, he also incorporates Japanese and Chinese calligraphic techniques into his work. Just as calligraphy has been historically used to illuminate the meaning of the words it contains, Nugamshi contemporizes his expressions through materiality, unfolding modern linguistic meanings with unexpected methodologies that forge fresh, modern contexts.

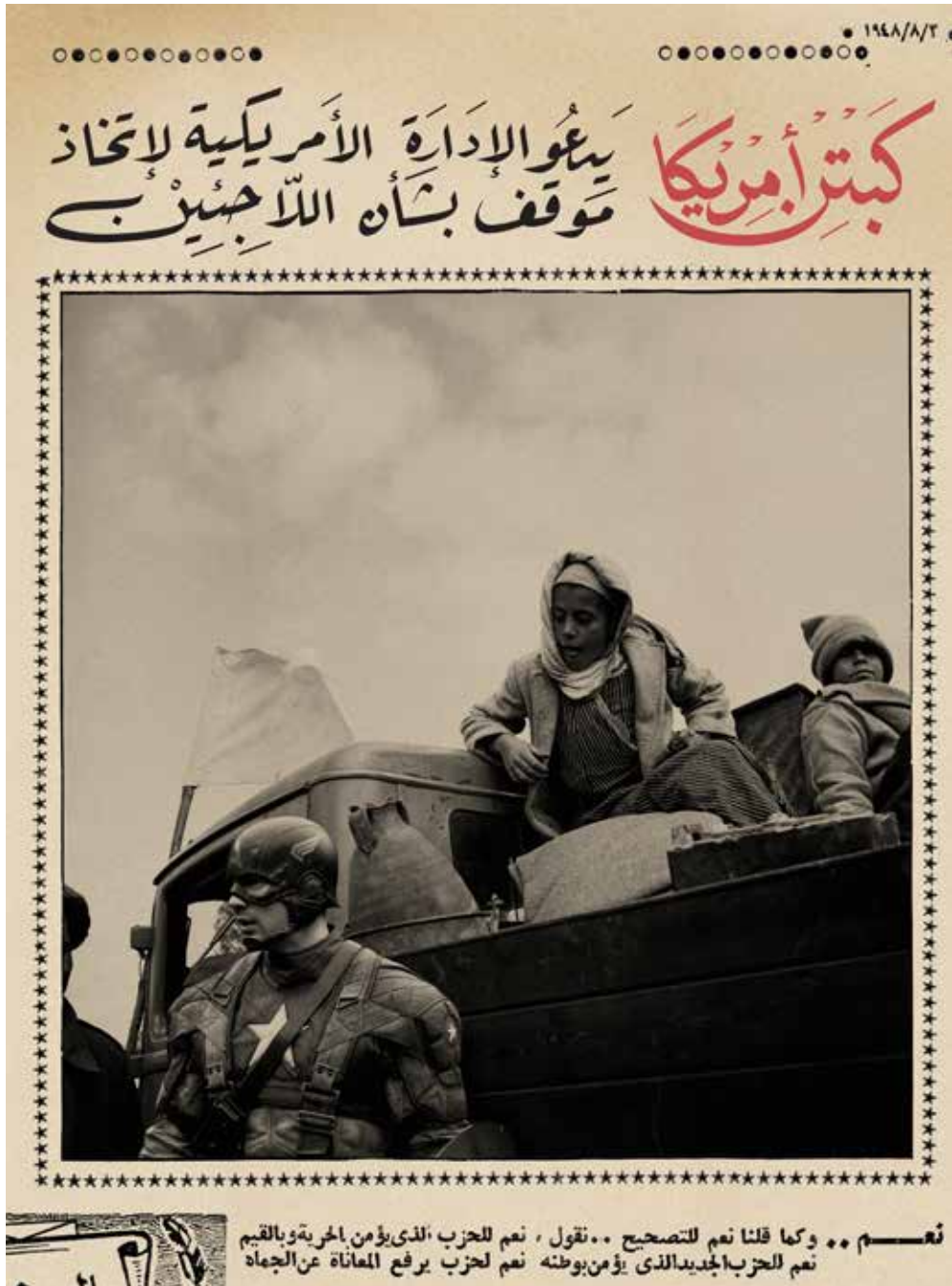
—
Mirage (Sarab) is as much a performance as it is a calligraphic object. In the hot expanse of the Riyadh desert, dressed in a pristine white thobe, Nugamshi approaches a translucent glass encasement. On this immaculate surface, he paints in crude oil, channeling the metaphoric embodiment of intangible aspirations that the world “mirage” conjures. He also speaks to the literal, scientific meaning of the word as the

illusion created by refracted light in extremely hot environments, literally creating the effect as he works in the white heat of the desert. Nugamshi highlights our reliance on this transient resource, commenting on its role as the main resource on which the Saudi economy depends. He notes that “the whole world depends enormously on a resource to the point where we breathe and drink an elixir that will eventually run out.” Interested in environmental change both locally and worldwide, and the impact industrialization has had on his own country, Nugamshi wants his calligraphic work to promote discussion and an acknowledgment of the impact our actions have had on the planet.

As a performer, Nugamshi sees his role as instigator, provoking dialogue between viewers and the words they see. “With each performance,” he explains, “I bring new emotions, new stories, and a new understanding. My art practice forces me to develop a relationship between myself and the chosen word. Thinking in Arabic, and surrounded by English or Arabic speakers does not affect how I am connected with the wall in front of me. Instead, in every performance, a new facet of my understanding is reflected in the speed and rhythm of my hands. One day I find myself pressing hard into the wall and the other I am lightly gliding my hand across it.” Adapting his words to his own tempo and rhythm, Nugamshi has the ability to control space, unpacking the ramifications of utterances, claiming the words, their meanings and the physical space he makes his own.



Mirage (Saraab), 2016
Single channel video
2 minutes and 9 seconds



▲ Captain America – US Government Urged to take a Stance on Refugees, 2013
Silkscreen on Digital Print
58 x 43 in (147.62 x 109.22 cm)

▲

Shaweesh is based in Riyadh and is the Creative Director at Gharem Studio. He has exhibited at the Venice Biennale (2013), Gharem Studio's Ricochet exhibition, Asia House, London (2015) and in other local shows across the Middle East.

Shaweesh is a mixed media artist who is part of an urgent young generation colonizing public forums – from social media to the streets – to articulate the cultural boundaries between Saudi Arabia and the world. Shaweesh harvests inspiration from communally shaped and collectively owned narratives generated online, incorporating diverse references into his work – from icons of film and television to Pop Art and western brand graphics.

—
In *Captain America, The US Government Urged to Take a Stance on Refugees*, Shaweesh makes use of an old newspaper from February 26, 1949, that documents escalating tensions between Egypt and Israel in the former Palestinian city of Al Falujah. That year, over 4,000 Egyptian troops were besieged by Israeli forces, laying the groundwork for the 1949 Armistice Agreement that allowed a peaceful transfer of territories outside Gaza to Israeli control, ultimately forcing Palestinian residents to flee. This photo shows a UN truck transporting over 3,500 refugees from Al Falujah to Gaza. It is an iconic image that represents a divisive event of migration and resettlement and captures the UN's short-lived hopes for peace. Shaweesh is particularly drawn to the exchange of symbols across cultures, here incorporating Captain America as a symbol of safety, a childhood dream with meaning in both Eastern and Western imaginations. Portraying innocent children during a time of crisis, he underscores their naive faith in these UN envoys as guardians of security, suggesting that their fantasies are like those of Western children looking to an imaginary superhero.

Telfaz11 is an online entertainment content distribution platform that has attracted and fostered significant Arab “internet talent.” Founded by Alaa Yoosef and Ali Kalthami in 2011, Telfaz11 derives its name from the Arabic word for television and commemorates 2011, the year of the Arab Spring, marking it as a significant watershed for artists and filmmakers and an opportune moment to establish a local production platform.

–
Launched on 11.11.11, Telfaz11 immediately asserted itself as a new platform for cultural expression. Telfaz11’s producers opened up an alternative to local television programming, positioning themselves in opposition to the narrow perspective offered by the media of the time, which they perceived as lacking adequate discussion of art and entertainment.

Since its foundation, Telfaz11 has attracted a group of over 40 actors, editors, and producers, and has become a creative, production and talent management organization which collaborates across the globe from bases in Jeddah, Riyadh, and the US. The collective portrays contemporary social, cultural, and political issues of the region through satirical YouTube videos.

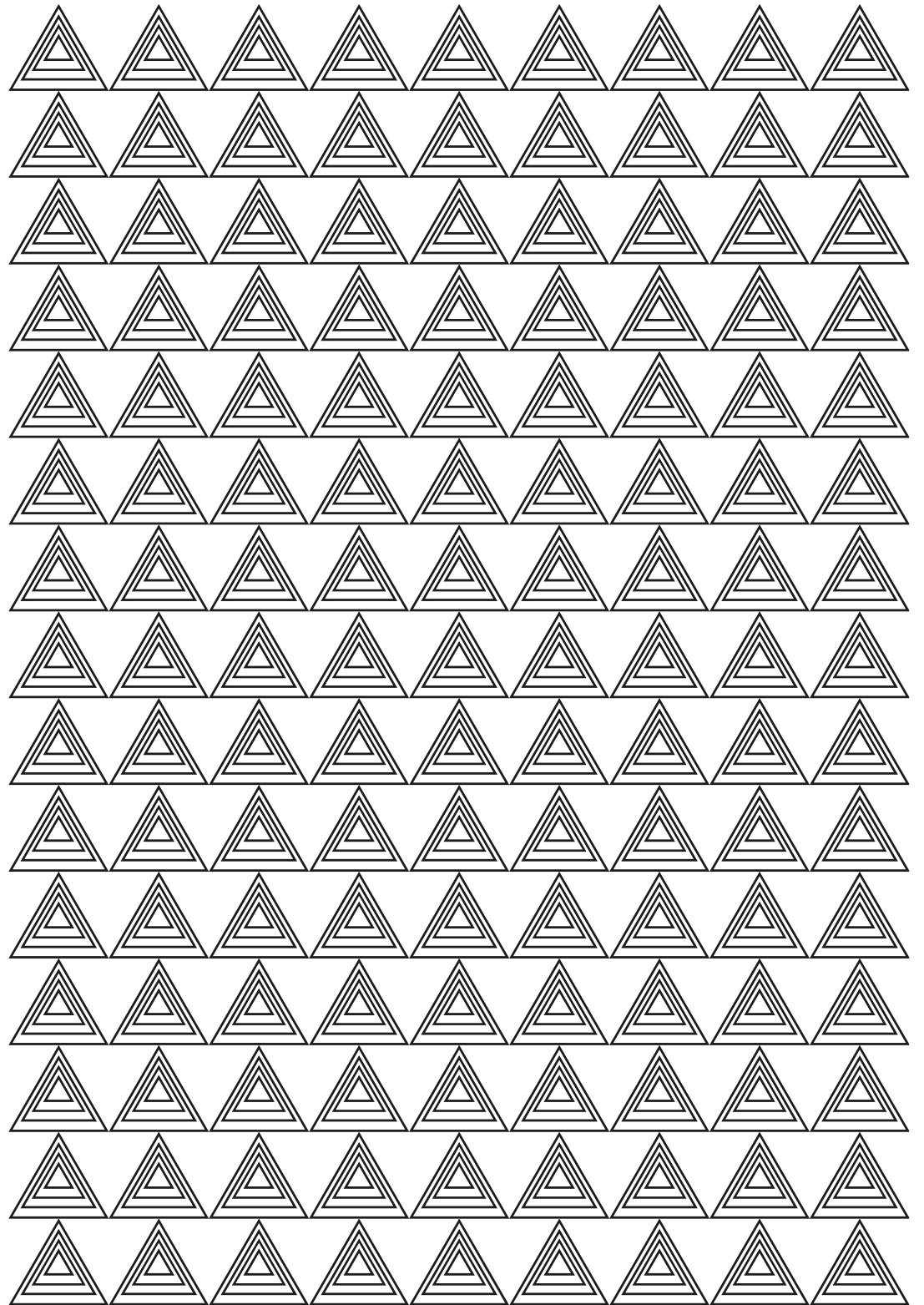
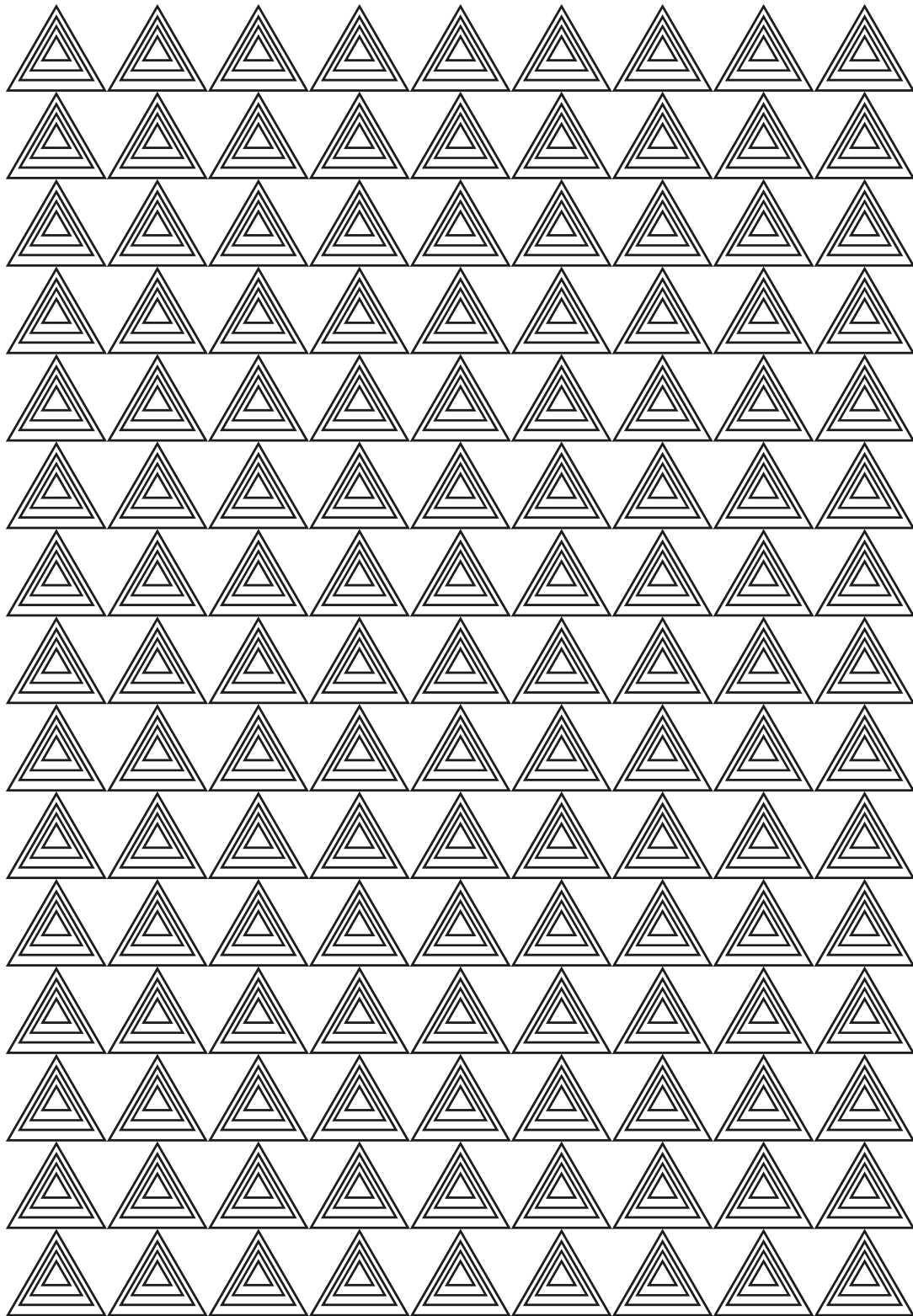
Telfaz11 also collaborates with independent artists, providing opportunities for existing and emerging talent. The platform exists to facilitate self-publishing and to promote original design and individual expression. According to Ali Kalthami, Creative Director of Telfaz11, “Telfaz11 content is not confrontational in nature. It takes an indirect approach that invites the viewers to rethink and question important and often sensitive subjects through comedy and drama. I think this type of

content is positive because it encourages the viewer to critique and question rather than passively receive. There are some censorship agencies in the Ministry of Culture and Media who we communicate with—we have found that they respect our work and contributions and they have never asked us to remove any of our content. In fact, we discuss and collaborate with them on how to promote the film industry in Saudi Arabia and motivate youth. Today, I see that there is an environment in Saudi Arabia for discussing and rethinking many traditions that are no longer relevant in our world, while still maintaining our identity and avoiding disconnect from our heritage by blindly appropriating other cultural identities.”

Inspiring viewers to contemplate local identities without copying other entertainment and design formats, Telfaz11 is motivating a new generation to experiment in new ways with its traditional Arab heritage. By attracting a global presence, Telfaz11 not only reinforces a shared sense of cultural identity within the Arab world, it also exposes the West to Arab perspectives on issues of such as sexism, terrorism, and social change. And it does so via the cross-cultural languages of humor, fashion, and music. Produced by Saudis studying abroad, as well as by Saudis who have been educated in Saudi, Telfaz11 presents shows that address both Arab and American stereotypes that pervade the mass media in both countries. With this dual approach, Telfaz11 bridges social and generational gaps within the cultures of the Arabian Gulf.

Telfaz11 has produced seven popular series, with shows such as *Temsa7LY*, *Khambalah* and *La Yekthar* that have garnered over a billion views and 9 million subscribers.





Art Museum of the University of Memphis

Leslie Luebbbers, Ph.D., Director
Warren Perry, Assistant Director
Anita Huggins, Office Manager
Jason Miller, Media Specialist
Neil O'Brien, Preparator
H. Doug McWhirter, Museum Technician
Diana Gill, Ph. D., AMUM Docent

—
Anne Hogan, Ph.D., Dean of the College of
Communications and Fine Arts
Gerry Keen, Campus Planning and Design Specialist
Beverly Tsacoyianis, Ph. D., Assistant Professor,
Department of History
Nabil Bayakly, Ph. D., Department of Arabic Language
Latosha Dexter, Deputy University Counsel

—
Samire Rahbe Chambers, Graduate Assistant
Jennalyn Krulish, Graduate Assistant
Hannah Clevinger, Graduate Assistant
Clivona Burse
George Burton
Reiley Wilson

—
LeRoy Pettyjohn, Vice President, Fine Arts Division,
Mallory Alexander International
Geoffrey Collins, CFO and General Counsel, Mallory
Alexander International
Lisa Fisher-Wood, Fine Arts Coordinator, Mallory
Alexander International
David White

—
Kevin Mireles, Federal Express Corporation
Saad Kidwai, Federal Express Corporation

—
Dan Mills, Bates College
Loring Danforth, Bates College
Devon Akmon, Arab American National Museum
Kristian Anderson, Utah Museum of Contemporary Art
Sandra Williams, Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Anthony Tino, Fully Booked Art Fair

—
Kathy Dumlao, Memphis Brooks Museum
Ryan Watt, Indie Memphis
Tracy Lauritzen-Wright, Arts Memphis
Etty Terem, Ph. D., Rhodes College
Tiffany McClung, Memphis Theological Seminary

King Abdulaziz Center For World Culture

Ali Almutairi
Abdullah Al Eyaf
Noor Al Daham
Wadha Al nafjan
Abdullah Al Rashid
Abdullah Al Abdullah

—
CULTURUNNERS

Stephen Stapleton
Sarah Al-Faour
Imogen Ware
Lila Nazemian
Valeria Mariani
Matteo Lonardi
Aga Antosz
Mohamed Ali Ghomriani

—
Arts Memphis

Tracy Lauritzen-Wright

—
Memphis Brooks Museum of Art

Kathy Dumlao

—
We would also like to thank

Fady Jameel
Georges Marci
Kevin Mireles
Tiffany Hall McClung
Ghareem Studio
Pharan Studio
Athr Gallery
Hafez Gallery
Ayyam Gallery
Devon Akmon
Dan Mills
Anthony Tino
Saad Kidwai

