



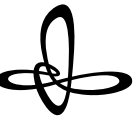
فانتوم پانچ

PHANTOM PUNCH

CONTEMPORARY ART FROM
SAUDI ARABIA IN LEWISTON



Bates | Museum of Art



King Abdulaziz Center
for World Culture
A Saudi Aramco initiative

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CONTEMPORARY ART FROM
SAUDI ARABIA IN LEWISTON

Lewiston, ME



OCTOBER 28, 2016 –
MARCH 18, 2017

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PHANTOM PUNCH

CONTEMPORARY ART FROM
SAUDI ARABIA IN LEWISTON

EXHIBITION

DATES

October 28, 2016 –
March 18, 2017

CURATORS

Loring M. Danforth
Dan Mills

ORGANISER

King Abdulaziz Center
for World Culture



King Abdulaziz Center
for World Culture
A Saudi Aramco initiative

MUSEUM PARTNER

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75 Russell Street
Lewiston, Maine 04240
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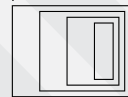
PARTNERS

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CO-FOUNDER
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FOUNDERS
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★ CULTURRUNNERS

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Curatorial Statement

Phantom Punch: Contemporary Art from Saudi Arabia in Lewiston is the first exhibition of work by Saudi artists in New England. This multifaceted project includes a significant exhibition of leading and emerging Saudi artists, as well as a series of lectures, visiting artists, and performances, story-telling and other pop-up events that create timely cross-cultural dialogue on campus and in the surrounding communities. In America, very little is known about contemporary Saudi art and artists. Media accounts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are frighteningly predictable - deserts, camels, and oil; rich sheikhs, oppressed women, and terrorists. With this exhibition, we have a rare opportunity to gain critical new perspectives on Saudi society and culture from a group of perceptive young artists who are challenging conventions and exploring the limits of what is possible in Saudi culture.

Phantom Punch, as one of a series of related exhibitions being presented

throughout the US beginning in 2016, introduces the work of Saudi artists to US audiences. The artists create smart, topical, funny, culturally resonant, and technically savvy work. Like Muhammad Ali's surprising and lightning-fast 1965 knockout of Liston in Lewiston, experiencing this exhibition and related programming is a cultural *Phantom Punch*, a complete surprise that American, Maine, and even Lewiston audiences didn't see coming.

The artists featured in *Phantom Punch* use an exciting variety of media - calligraphy, painting, sculpture, photography, video, performance, animation, and comedy - to explore topics and issues that shape the lives of Saudis throughout the Kingdom. These include the role of women and the place of foreign workers in Saudi society, the impact of oil on the Saudi economy, the relationship between American popular culture and traditional Saudi values, the impact of militarism and terrorism on everyday Saudi life, the effect

of urbanization, globalization, and commercialization on Saudi cities, the limits of censorship and intolerance on freedom of expression in the arts, the conflicts and tensions that divide Saudi society, and the power of conservative Saudi Islam to shape the spiritual understanding Saudis have of the relationship between the human and the divine. The exhibition will be accompanied by a substantial catalogue with essays by the curators. Artists include: Sarah Abu Abdallah, Ahaad Alamoudi, Njoud Alanbari, Nouf Alhimiary, Arwa Al Neami, Ahmad Angawi, Huda Beydoun, Ayman Yossri Daydban, Abdunasser Gharem, Ajlan Gharem, Musaed Al Hulis, Ahmed Mater, Nasser Al Salem, Rashed Al Shashai, Shaweesh, the Youtube animation series *Masameer*, and the multi-channel network *Telfaz11*.

An integral component of *Phantom Punch* is the accompanying educational programming, including workshops, lectures, story-telling, pop-up events on campuses and in community. These cross-cultural initiatives,

which aim to connect Middle Eastern and US artists, are being developed and scheduled in conjunction with the exhibition at each venue. This is one of four coordinated group exhibitions focusing on contemporary Saudi art in the US in 2016, along with *Parallel Kingdom* in Houston, *Gonzo Arabia* in Aspen, and *Genera#ion* in San Francisco. Unlike these exhibitions, however, *Phantom Punch* includes work by artists from both Gharem Studio and Pharan Studio, the two leading groups of artists in the Kingdom. All of these exhibitions are part of The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture's multi-year tour across the US.

Loring Danforth, Charles A. Dana
Professor of Anthropology
Dan Mills, Director, Museum of Art,
and Lecturer in the Humanities
Bates College

Saudi Artists' Tour

Since June 2016, a group of Saudi artists has embarked on a multi-city tour of the United States to generate people-to-people dialogue and better understanding across physical and ideological borders. The tour launched in Houston, Texas with a large-scale exhibition at the Station Museum in Houston, TX before traveling to Aspen, CO, and San Francisco, CA to present this multi-faceted program to audiences who have been captivated by glimpses into contemporary culture in Saudi Arabia through the works of leading artists from the Kingdom. This exhibition at Bates College Museum of Art in Lewiston, ME will be followed by stops in Los Angeles and other major cities across the United States.

The tour is spearheaded by the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, Saudi's premier arts, culture and education institution, and was initiated by Gharem Studio, a Riyadh-based collective dedicated to arts education in Saudi Arabia and CULTURUNNERS, an international platform for traveling artists. Exhibitions and events are being produced in partnership with cultural institutions and universities across the USA.

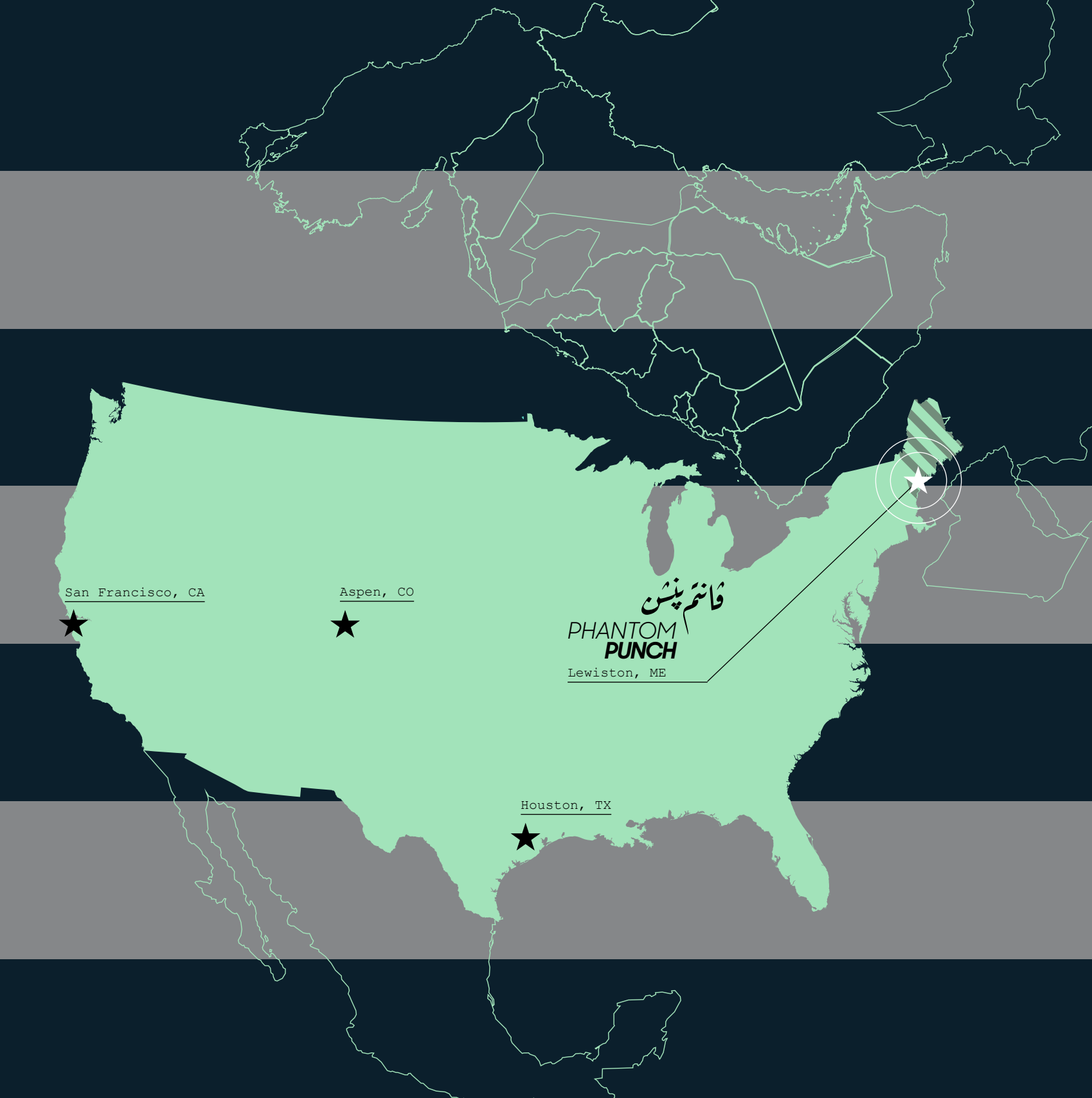
Against the backdrop of the Presidential elections, the tour is designed to create opportunities for Saudi artists to discuss common concerns with the American public, engaging them in an alternative narrative from the center of the Islamic World at this crucial time.

San Francisco, CA

Aspen, CO

فانتم پونش
PHANTOM
PUNCH
Lewiston, ME

Houston, TX





King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, simply known as 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.

We aim to make a positive and tangible impact on the cultural scene by focusing on building local talents in the knowledge and creative industries. Blending iconic architectural design with advanced technology, and unique learning methods with enriching pro-

grams, ithra 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, ithra acts as a bridge connecting cultures and cultivating a creative and innovative community.

At ithra, we believe in the power of people and ideas to unlock new possibilities: the future is what we make of it.

kingabdulazizcenter.com





Artists

Sarah Abu Abdallah

Ahaad Alamoudi

Njoud Alanbari

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Ahmed Mater

Nugamshi

Shaweesh

Telfaz11

Sarah Abu Abdallah



Through overwrought film edits, Sarah Abu Abdallah manipulates attention to deconstruct daily life. Splicing footage of her life in Saudi Arabia and the US, she creates unsettled worlds marked by claustrophobia and tension. Ambient noise and voiceovers become unbearable, inchoate edits defeat any attempt at narrativization. As our focus is fractured, concentration becomes contested and our apparently consistent every day reality falls apart. By disturbing the familiar, Abu Abdallah signals a ubiquitous, often digitally facilitated, compulsion to craft historical and existential narratives of belonging, displacement and identity.

In *Saudi Automobile* (2012), the artist is seen determinedly beautifying a badly damaged car. Beginning with a defiant, tidy efficiency, she becomes progressively more disheveled and disheartened. Her actions highlights the futility of attempting to fix the dysfunctional through surface modification. The film speaks directly to the circumscribed experience of being a woman in Saudi Arabia. Attempting to steer her own life journey growing up in the Kingdom, Abu Abdallah describes this act as a "wishful gesture, the only way I could get myself a car - cold comfort for the current impossibility of my dream that I, as an independent person, can drive myself to work one day." As our focus is shifted, what appears at first stable and structured becomes insecure and inscrutable.

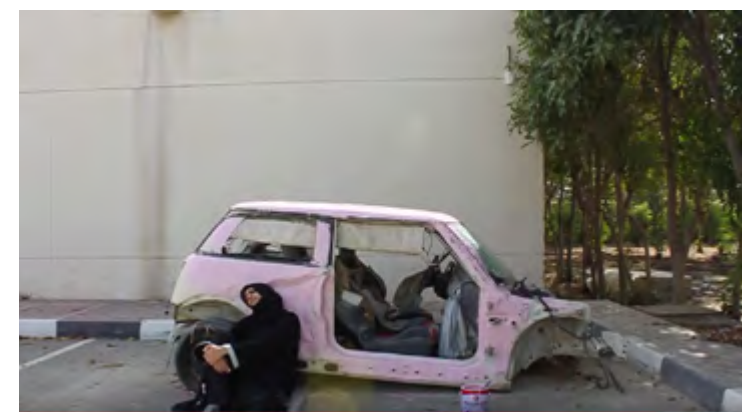
Her *Hide from Timeline #2* (2014) examines digital identity making. An eerie avatar speaks in a computerized tone over fragments of a newsfeed being self-censored as its settings are modified assiduously to "private." Like the fragmented characters we evolve through means of social media, we cannot concurrently

keep pace with the frenetic action on the screen.

Abu Abdallah creates chinks in our fluid, codified, convenient words, highlighting the inauthenticity of such attempts to present life coherently. Insisting on the rationality of the actions and footage, a veneer of orderliness is interrogated, overburdening the moment, leading to tense fragmentation. This is most apparent in *Delighted to Serve* (2014), where the absurdity of hotel marketing vernacular is exposed, intoned monotonously in a digitized voice over disjointed videos of bland interior spaces and baseball fields or disturbing videos of flies swarming around raw fish and a cat chasing a cockroach. The film looks at the spurious notion of universal authenticity and localism, using attempts of hospitality brands to compose experiences of places to heighten a sense of perpetual displacement. Disintegration takes place through dissonance; jarring moments of free falling absurdity heighten and exacerbate the absurd.

* * *

Abu Abdallah studied art at the University of Sharjah, UAE, graduating in 2011; she is currently pursuing a Master's in Digital Media at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island. Abu Abdallah has held exhibitions at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, BAM Film Festival, Serpentine Galleries 89 plus Marathon, London. In 2013 she featured in the Sharjah Biennale, the Venice Biennial, and Global Art Forum 7's fellowship program in Art Dubai. She contributed to Arts and Culture in the Transformative Times festival by ArteEast, NYC, and the Moving Image panel on Video + Film in Palazzo Grassi, Venice.



previous and current spread:
stills from Saudi Automobile
2012
video (stills)



Ahaad Alamoudi

Constant moves between life in Saudi Arabia and London inform the analytic, ethnographic approach of Ahaad Alamoudi's multidisciplinary works. Straddling two cultures, she finds her place in neither and both, existing in a transitory, in-between state. From this uncertain and productive space, Alamoudi maps processes of belonging, synthesizing conflicting narratives of national identity and place. Preoccupied with the evolution of cultural narratives, she archives the repositories and props of heritage, exploring how communities measure and preserve their stories and identities via invested, incidental ephemera.

Alamoudi constantly shifts perspectives, colliding cultural narratives and synthesizing them to produce multi-faceted, restlessly dynamic experiences that combine the traditional and contemporary, the Western and the Middle Eastern. For her internet is a dynamic and prolific source of such narratives.

Revivifying ancient heritage but casting it in a contemporary context, *tini warwar* (2016) is a performance, film, and dance that stages an underground pop sensation adapted from Bob Marley's "No Woman, No Cry" amid a performance by Khibayti dancers dressed in traditional khabeti thobes. Her research into the traditional war dance, which has remained unchanged over many generations, informs the performance. She finds in it a powerful and committed symbol of tradition where the thobe's function was altered from a daily outfit into a shield from future hostilities. She modifies the thobe once more, emblazoning it with the digital avatars of the western influences that the song references.

Immediately recognizable in our contemporary digital context as the end of a YouTube URL, *v=noyFiYK1FJU* (2016)

explores the character of the part-historical figure, part-cultural construct Auda Ibu Tayib. The work centers around Antony Quinn's portrayal of the great leader in the iconic 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia* and is accompanied by fragmented accounts from disparate sources including Wikipedia. Alamoudi retraces the image of Auda, attempting to locate the point of intersection between fact and representation, finding him formed somewhere between western imposed anthropological elision and proudly owned cultural heritage. Her treatment conjures both hope and nostalgia, simultaneously signaling pride and loss. Auda's gaze is pensive as if fixed on a contradictory western projection of the Arab World as impossibly, simultaneously the awe-inspiring great Orient and the fearful world of a threatening "other."

Both works use battle imagery to present cultural identity-making as a contested process marked by violence and force, defeat and victory, perpetual effort and persistent destructive acts.

* * *

Born in Jeddah and living between Saudi Arabia and London, Alamoudi received a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design at the Dar Al-Hekma University in 2014. She is currently pursuing a Master's in Print at the Royal College of Art in London. 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 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.



My Saudi Couple
2016
Print on plastic,
two bottles on the
spinning plynth

Previous spread:
Tini War War - Performance
2016
3 Fabric Dresses

v=YGvLDDWwLEk
2016
video (stills)

Njoud Alanbari



Elementary 240
2015
photographs and video
(stills)

Through her multi-disciplinary practice, Njoud Alanbari explores the threads of her Saudi identity, pursuing their origins to better comprehend their composition, particularly as they inform social change. A mixed-media artist and trained architect, her practice documents the way physical and social constructs inform personal and collective narratives. Growing up in Riyadh, Alanbari developed a passion for discovering her family history, tracing it back to Hail, a city in the Northern region of Saudi Arabia. Through her work, she attempts to situate her Saudi heritage within the uncertain landscape of a globalized, 21st-century context.

While working on an architecture project in the Saudi public schools, Alanbari was taken aback by recurrent murals she found in classrooms and on playground. In *Elementary 240* (2015), she examines a pastel pink image that contains a set of conservative ideals that significantly restrict the freedom of Saudi women. The mural features eight swords with captions that list activities that women are forbidden from engaging in, including taking drugs, traveling abroad, and wasting time, and “embodying the Jews.” Alanbari hired a painter to recreate this mural on the walls of Gharem Studio in Riyadh and then staged a video performance featuring a group of school girls playing games and singing school songs in front of the mural. The video she produced presents a powerful visual metaphor for how the identity of young children can form in such an educational system. Although these jarring messages may often be overlooked,

they nevertheless unconsciously affect how girls internalize their role as females. After researching the history behind these murals, Alanbari learned that they were not authorized by the Ministry of Higher Education, but instead by local independent painters. The ease with which young girls absorb these ideals demonstrates how unofficial narratives can become adopted by mainstream society and in this way direct the development of shared social codes. Alanbari’s work bears witness to a common phenomenon found in education systems around the world: as teachers cultivate a sense discipline and patriotism, their well-intentioned, though ill-considered, guidance has a powerful impact on the young children they are responsible for education.

* * *

Born and raised in Riyadh, Alanbari graduated from Prince Sultan University, College of Architecture and Design and is currently pursuing a Master’s in Architecture in The University of Politecnico Di Milano in Italy. Her past experiences working within architecture for the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, AECOM, and Tatweer Buildings Company granted her experience developing innovative concepts for government projects. Complementing her passion for arts and culture, as a researcher in the Saudi Heritage Preservation Society, Alanbari then joined Gharem Studio in 2014. Her projects have traveled to London (Asia House, 2015), the Station Museum, Houston, TX (2016), and Gonzo Gallery, Aspen, CO.



المخدرات

الأفلام الخليعة

المجرب

حجابك عفاك

السفر إلى الخارج

ثقافي المحرمات

تشبه بالكافرات

تشبهوا



Nouf Alhimiary

Nouf Alhimiary uses experimental and theatrical photography to explore female identity. Based in Jeddah and associated with a new wave of activist artists, her quietly subversive work seeks to initiate and promote social change. Informed by a degree in English Literature, Alhimiary's performative, narrative-led practice explores the potential and scope of feminine individuation. Through staged and documentary series, she articulates assertively feminist positions that contest the status of women in the Kingdom.

In photographs from the series *The Desire to Not Exist*, a woman signals mutely beneath the water. Her face turned towards the surface; she appears to move towards the camera, towards air and light, but she is caught forever underneath. The implied stasis is not a struggle. Unmistakably a swimming pool, its tiled floor visible beneath the light-soaked blue, the image is staged in a contained safe space. There is potential for transformative play, an empowered performance that teases apart fixed narratives. Though the woman's mouth is shut, an alternative assertive articulation takes place. She does not wear a muted black abaya; instead her clothes bear calligraphic text. A thick black letter obscures the submerged face; the single syllable "ل" appears to stop the mouth, insistently intoning "la" ("no"). The letter is not added in post-production, but is emblazoned on the woman's body; and in one of the images, the fragmented clause 'walks on water and does not drown' is repeated over and over again. These mute utterances, embodied acts of refusal, use whatever tools possible

for the self-annunciation of identity. Re-appropriation is one such tool. The series takes its name from the writing of a notable Egyptian literary figure, Tawfiq Al-Hakim, and first appeared in "The Female Narrative," the inaugural issue of an online youth journal, Qahwa Project. The knowing re-contextualization of a male writer's words in an explicitly female context invigorates new potential meanings.

The work is not merely about text or language; Alhimiary describes the series as an experiment in dialogue and photography. We encounter the force of words unspoken—nothing is heard, nothing can be uttered in the flat plane of the picture. The written word becomes verbal, implying a defiant, shuttered silence. Refusal, re-appropriation, and theatrical play become subversive actions, recognition that a legitimate route to meaningful revolution can be an insistent repetition of the status-quo's faulty tropes, stealthily altering them by increments beneath the surface.

* * *

Alhimiary's work has been exhibited in Saudi Arabia, Italy, England, and the UAE. She was featured in *Hajj: A Journey to The Heart of Islam*, British Museum's Addis Gallery (2012), was part of two seminal exhibitions of Saudi artists: *RHIZOMA: Generation in Waiting* during the 2014 Venice Biennale and, in the same year, *Mostly Visible*, Jeddah Art Week. She has also been shown at Sharjah Art Museum as part of the 2014 Islamic Art Festival and, in 2015, she was featured in *Invisible Lines* at the Islamic Human Rights Commission Gallery, London.



previous page:
Untitled, from The Desire
to Not Exist series
2015
Photographic Print

Untitled, from The Desire
to Not Exist series
2015
Photographic Print

Musaed Al Hulis

Through material de-familiarization and contemporary sculpture, Musaed Al Hulis crafts the ephemera of prayer from impractical materials. He provides new insights into different dimensions of spirituality, often underscored with cutting commentary on the misappropriation and misuse of religious rituals. Al Hulis holds a Master's in Design and Analysis of Vehicle Systems from the University of Huddersfield, UK, and lectures at the Technical College in Jeddah—a highly skilled and technical background that is evident in his deft deployment of mechanical and electrical objects. Incorporating these materials in unfamiliar contexts, Al Hulis forges an uncomfortable tension that forces mediation between the disparate realms of physical force and energy, on the one hand, and the religious practices of Islamic spirituality, on the other. Using the methods and materials of commercial design, he highlights the human and earthly distractions that prop-up the creeping hypocrisy proliferating in certain sectors of Saudi society.

A prayer rug made of steel alloys, *Dynamic* exemplifies the innovative tension inherent in Al Hulis' practice. The work is taut and contradictory, woven with the irreconcilable implications of its material, intended purpose, and loaded spiritual significance. Clearly constructed from bicycle chains, the work implies the dynamism and spiritual power the artist feels during prayer. In Islam, prayer is neither a passive act nor an unthinking routine; resolute contemplation of God during the five daily prayers is invigorated by the fluid movements of the ritual. Bicycle chains also suggest the determined spiritual work that is required to follow "the straight

path." Just as continuous motion is essential to keep a bike upright, a steady state of spiritual action is necessary to live a good life. Conversely, while there is a sense of movement suggested by the title and material, there is also a clear sense of physical weight to the piece. The heavy, interlocked chains links demonstrate the fierce connection between the subject and God in the moment of prayer. The tangible heaviness of the metal prayer rug implies the grounding effect of the actions and the moment—where all concerns fall away and the focus is purified.

With his destabilizing use of materials, de-purposing the bicycle chains to create a prayer rug, Al Hulis defies expectations and forces renewed reflection on the intent and purpose of prayer itself.

* * *

Al Hulis has made significant contributions to the Saudi arts movement. He is a board member at the Fine Artists' House, Founder and Director of Tasami Creative Lab in Jeddah and Deputy Director General of the Center. 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).



Dynamic
2012
Steel Alloys

Arwa Al Neami



Arwa 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 south. 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 Muhammad'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 drive around in circles in vivid crayon-colored bumper cars. 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. The women bumper car drivers weave in and out of the frame of her video, restrained in their interactions, their

voices muted in accordance with signs that warn against "screaming." Nothing happens. 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's 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".

* * *

Al Neami has exhibited across the Gulf. In 2000 she joined Al Meftaha Fine Art Village in Abha, the first art center of its kind in southern Saudi Arabia, and in 2005, she won the prestigious Southern Region Arts Award under the patronage of HRH Prince Khaled Al-Faisal. In 2012, she participated in Athr's annual *Young Saudi Artists* exhibition. In 2014, she featured in the *Amod Noor* exhibition in Jeddah as well as the the historic *Mostly Visible* exhibition curated by Ashraf Fayadh. In 2014, her work was featured in *Words & Illuminations* in Madinah. *Never, Never Land* gave its name to a London EOA.P exhibition, curated by Amal Khalaf, project curator at the Serpentine Gallery, London.



previous page:
Never Never Land IV
Digital video (still)
2014

Never Never Land IV
Digital video (still)
2014

Nasser Al Salem

Nasser Al Salem is a trained calligrapher and architect, two skilled practices that share preoccupations with formal harmony and signification—areas of focus that shape his art. He revels in linguistic experimentation, segueing tradition with contemporary concerns to demonstrate the enduring relevance of the Quranic text. He ventures beyond the conventional practice of calligraphy through diverse media such as neon, wood sculpture, and found objects. Al Salem's work is devotional, firmly rooted in the Quran and the Arabic written word, revealing immutable truths in the text itself and within the modern moment. Signified (meaning) and signifier (form) evolve coevally with neat synchronicity, forging an expressive and harmonious whole.

This conscious process does not depart from or overshadow the meaning of the Quranic verses he cites. Rather, each work emanates from and articulates the inherent sense of the original in a way that is relevant to modern life. Al Salem reinvigorates language—his rendering becomes an act of textual elision that brings together past and present, an act that reifies the Quran as a miracle whose meaning is pure and enduring for all mankind. His modern departures establish the truths embedded in the Arabic language and, as he conveys the familiar in unfamiliar ways, he directs our attention once more to the Quran's unfathomable depths.

In *He Likes Not Those Who Commit Excess* a barcode's stark black lines warn against the modern addiction to the commercial and material, gesturing at the pitfalls of contemporary greed. Like language itself, the barcode is

a simplified vehicle for an expanse of data and information. In the same way, Al Salem reduces the expansive meaning of the verse to a highly compacted form, suggesting the abundant spiritual riches accessed through attentive linguistic study.

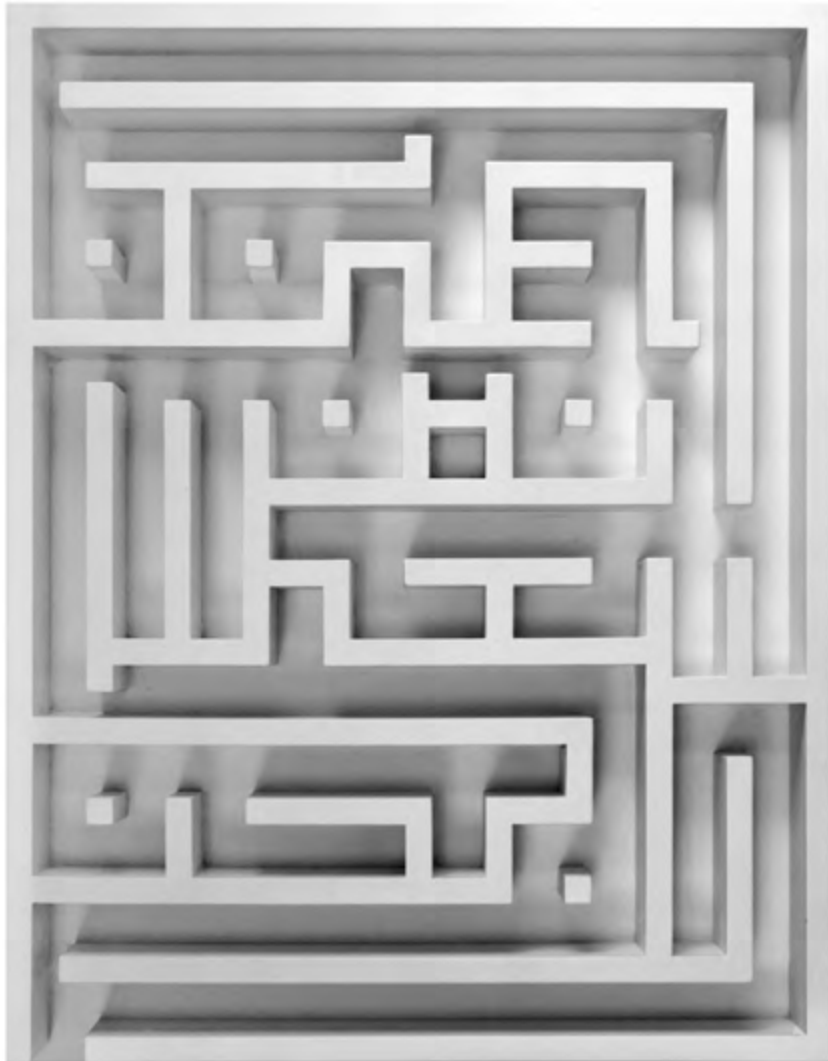
A line beats across an EKG heart monitor—as the rhythm darts back and forth, we see life measured. The work invokes *Guide Us Upon the Straight Path*, a verse recited at least 17 times a day by Muslims during prayer. Complicating any immediate reading of a “straight path,” the line is not the static horizontal that would indicate death. Al Salem demonstrates this insistent refrain to be as integral to life as the heartbeat; the fluctuations illustrating that, though an unbroken connection with God endures, the straight path is not without effort. In the same way, *Whoever Obeys Allah, He Will Make For Him a Way Out* is a convoluted maze that succinctly expresses the effort required to navigate life.

* * *

Al Salem grew up in Mecca in a family of tent makers living in the “first belt” around the Haram Al-Sharif. He has exhibited across the region and internationally; with *Edge of Arabia* in Istanbul (2009) and Jeddah (2012); in the British Museum's *Hajj: A Journey to The Heart of Islam* (2012); in *Calligraphitti* at Leila Heller Gallery New York alongside Keith Haring, Jackson Pollock and Jean-Michel Basquiat. In 2012, his first solo exhibition mounted at Athr Gallery sold out. He has continued to receive great acclaim and was shortlisted for the 2013 Jameel Prize.



Guide Us Upon the Straight Path
2013,
Video on EKG heart monitor



Whoever Obeys Allah,
He Will Make For Him A Way Out
2013
wood



He Likes Not Those
Who Commit Excess
2012
wooden installation

Rashed Al Shashai



Rashed Al Shashai creates a new visual language out of found objects from street signs and kitchenware to lightbulbs. Recontextualising the every day, he draws together the disparate vernaculars of the religion, politics and commerce, signaling how they constitute a set of competing belief systems. Abstracting objects to their essence, Al Shashai invites viewers to consider how the quotidian can become loaded with a wide range of social meanings.

Creating religious artifacts from every day objects, *Heaven's Doors* (2013) investigates the similarities between religious practices and the architectural symbols that have manifested themselves in everyday objects. Infused with an alluring light, these arched stained glass windows are in fact made from kitchenware - plastic colanders and baskets. With this contextual shift, this act of re-appropriation, Al Shashai suggests how even apparently arbitrary moments, set within domestic spaces, can be pervaded by the sacred. Just as stained glass filters the rays of the sun, colanders become a neat visual metaphor for the spiritual cleansing of the soul - an act of purification that can take place in each and every action. "Human beings have always built temples," Al Shashai explains, "whether churches or mosques - in an effort to feel closer to God, as a way of thanking Him for all the blessings He has given us, including food. The aim of this series is to clarify and somewhat criticize the wrong and immoral aspects of our social practices, unveiling their artificial religious veneer. Al Shashai underscores that dedication to God can and should be found in the every day, not through

extravagant public acts that lack sincerity or substance.

In *Delicious* (2015), rugs - powerful symbols in Middle Eastern cultures - are rolled up and sliced into smaller pieces. Reminiscent of a Swiss Roll, a desert made of alternating, rolled layers of ice cream and cake, *Delicious* consciously reduces the complexities of a rich cultural heritage into something delectable and ultimately frivolous. By calling out and undermining commercial consumption of culture, viewers are prompted to reconsider the lazy stereotypes that allow the work to be read so easily. Al Shashai's work is marked by humor, as well as a sense of uncanniness. "Art has to be playful and colorful for people to grasp the essence of it and interact with it," Al Shashai explains. "Sometimes the social context can be challenging, so exploring a playful artistic approach eases some of that tension."

* * *

Born in Al Baha, Saudi Arabia, Al Shashai currently resides in Jeddah. He received a Master's 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).



previous spread:
Heaven's Doors
2013
lighbox, strainers and plastic
plates on aluminium board

Delicious
2015
Mixed media
Image Courtesy of artist
and Ayyam Gallery, Dubai

Ahmad Angawi



Whether responding to a physical space or hewing work from collective voices and consciousness, Ahmad 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* (2012) 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."

* * *

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 the Art Jameel Foundation. 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 Artfair second edition, Saudi Art Council & Al Mansouria silent auction, Jeddah, KSA (2016); *Parallel Kingdom* at Station Museum, Houston, USA (2016).



Street Pulse
2012
3600 microphones
and steel structure

Huda Beydoun

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 among these media making surreptitious social statements via irreverent borrowed motifs and vivid graphic patterns.

Whatever the medium, her works are many-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 (she has a degree in Special Education with a specialization in Autism Spectrum Disorders) 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.

* * *

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 Edge of Arabia US Tour. Most recently, her incisive, bold practice earned her a place as part of Banksy's Dismaland platform.



Tagged and Documented 5,
from the *Documenting the*
Undocumented Series,
2013
C print Diasec Mounting



Tagged and Documented 4,
from the Documenting the
Undocumented Series
2013
C print Diasec Mounting

Ayman Yossri Daydban



Come on Ali!
Get off the ropes!
2010
Photographic Print

In an attempt to locate identity, Ayman Yossri Daydban effaces and reconfigures collected cultural ephemera. He perpetually shapes and re-shapes a shifting sense of self. “Daydban” means “watchman,” a curious coincidence for an artist whose practice is located at that unstable point where the observer meets his surroundings. As a Jordanian national, born in Palestine, living his whole life in Saudi Arabia, Daydban can attest from personal experience that identity and belonging are much-contested subjects, difficult to locate amid the unstable, fractured topographies of political realities. Struggling with these narratives, Daydban’s works are deeply personal, intersecting with the social contexts that profoundly influence the processes of identity formation. Each work becomes a tense nexus where a sense of self is relentlessly thrashed out, a point of contact where the unknowable interior landscape intercedes with the complex fluctuations of exterior worlds.

Fractured by fissures of misunderstanding, *Haya ya Ali* (Come on, Ali) and *Abeed al Manazil* (The House Negro) are both taken from *Subtitles*, a series that emerged from a moment of personal crisis. At the end of a relationship, disillusioned with the mundane success of his artistic practice, Daydban locked himself away and watched films for months on end alone. A non-English speaker, the experience was mediated through subtitles, and although intended as a tool of direct and literal translation, a surreal dissonance emerged. As his immersion in the films consumed him, he increasingly felt the subtitles become unmoored from the image. A gap emerged, and the fragments became a productive space for the

creation of meaning. Removed from its narrative, each still is transformed; what emerges creatively in the gap between still and text cannot be condemned by the censor nor understood by the audience, but it unleashes a host of powerful new meanings. There is an insurmountable detachment between this watchman and what he watches; they can never connect, yet the intent, piercing gaze placed in immediate proximity to that which it watches gives rise to enormous friction. Daydban thrives on this productive tension. Vying to remain in a world of flux and transformation, he refuses to fix his practice or himself. “I don’t want anything I make to be still,” he says. “My objects must not die. Instead I want to keep them permanently in a state between birth and death.”

* * *

Daydban has undertaken residencies at La Cité des Arts, Paris; Cuadro Fine Art, Dubai; Traffic, Dubai; and Ashkal Alwan, Beirut. He has participated in group and solo exhibitions in the Arab world and internationally. His solo exhibitions include *Identity*, Selma Feriani Gallery, London (2011), and *I am Anything, I am Everything*, Athr Gallery, Jeddah (2012). His group shows include exhibitions with Edge of Arabia since 2008; Venice Biennale (2009 and 2011); *Hajj: A Journey to The Heart of Islam*, British Museum’s Addis Gallery (2012). His works are part of renowned permanent collections including Guggenheim Museum, Centre Pompidou, British Museum, Al-Mansouria Foundation, and the Abdul Latif Jameel Foundation.

Abdulnasser Gharem

Marked by temporal and thematic tension, Abdulnasser 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 and process of rapid economic development and change.

Gharem's seminal work *Siraat* (The Path) (2012) was a controversial clarification call for social action and engagement with personal and shared histories. In a four-day, meditative performance, he and his colleagues covered the buttress of destroyed bridge thousands of times with the word "siraat" in memory of the tragic collapse of the bridge during a flood in a mountainous valley below the city of Abha in the southwest of the Kingdom. Although many people died, the incident was never reported in Saudi newspapers. Gharem highlights the significant role that official censorship in the Saudi media has had in shaping social realities as understood by Saudis themselves. *The Path* was subsequently censored from an exhibition, an unintended performance of the way official narratives continue to shape public awareness of national history. From this point on, Gharem began to incorporate thousands of rubber stamps into his work in order to protest the ease with which official institutions construct and enforce binding codes and practices.

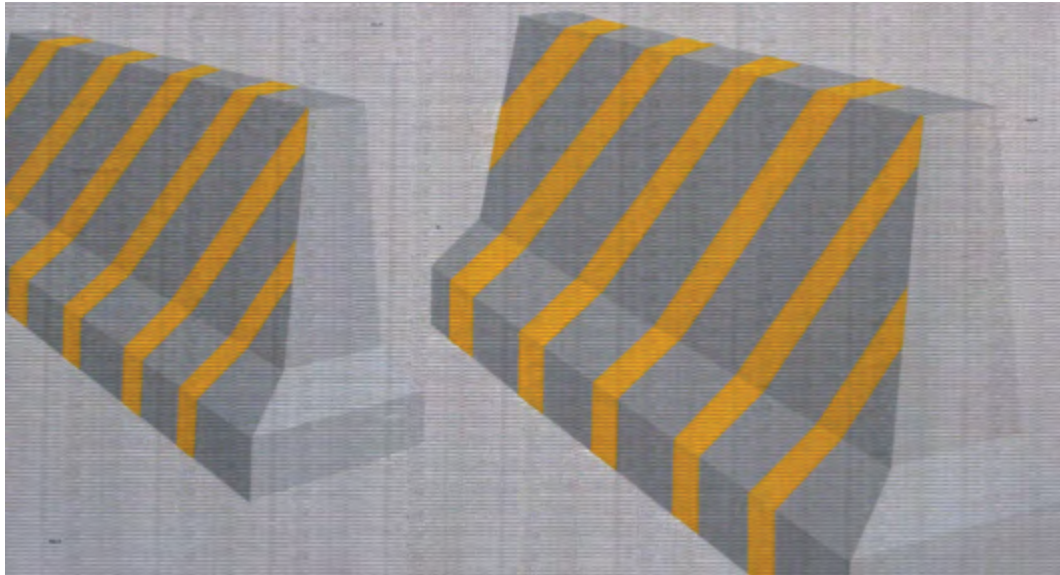
In *Concrete II* (2010), Gharem further explored the unrecorded story of the forgotten village from *The Path* in order to understand why people blindly trust in man-made structures that ultimately fail them. Gharem frequently drove in his car as a way to clear his head. Therefore he began to incorporate traffic motifs as part of a larger discussion about the many "detours" Saudis are forced to take and the many "concrete barriers" that stand in their way. This is why Gharem began to incorporate into his stamp paintings hidden messages such as "Do not trust the concrete."

In 2010 Gharem began to include slogans, speeches, and aphorisms in his two-dimensional stamp paintings. *No More Tears (Obama)*, (2010), features a famous shampoo slogan by Johnson & Johnson's painted over American President Barack Obama. He references a speech made by the president in Cairo in 2009, suggesting how political pontification can be as meaningless and throwaway as commercial catchphrases.

* * *

Gharem was born in 1973 in the Saudi Arabian city of Khamis Mushait. He graduated from the King Abdulaziz Academy in 1992, 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 *Shattah*, a group exhibition 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 the Venice, Sharjah and Berlin Biennales.





previous page:
Ricochet
Stamp painting
2015

Concrete II
2013
Stamp Painting
Image courtesy of Artist
and The Farook Foundation



Siraat (The Path)
video (still)
2007

next spread:
Aniconism
video (still)
2015



Ajlan Gharem

Ajlan Gharem explores Saudi identity and the constantly changing relationships between the individual and society. He explores the many ways power dynamics can shift across generations and social classes. He works to disrupt the impact of the status quo and to incite meaningful social change.

Paradise Has Many Gates (2015) is both installation and performance. Reconstructing a 33 by 21 foot mosque, he mimics exactly the design of the building with a dome, a minaret, a chandelier and ornate windows. Manufactured from steel chain link fencing, what he creates is markedly different from expectations. Ajlan's "mosque" gestures not to a place of worship, but is reminiscent of the fences built along the borders of Europe or the prison cells of Guantanamo Bay. This installation questions how structures can become symbolically invested with power. Our own unconscious associations come into play as we read the whole, illustrating the ease with which sign systems can be shaped by unintended, externally prescribed meanings. In a film accompanying the installation, Ajlan and his colleagues from Gharem Studio enter, worship in, and then leave the mosque in the desert outside Riyadh. Creating feelings of anxiety and tension within the mosque/cage, Ajlan showcases the way mass media shape interpretations of Islam, stifling respectful understandings as global networks promote distorting perspectives.

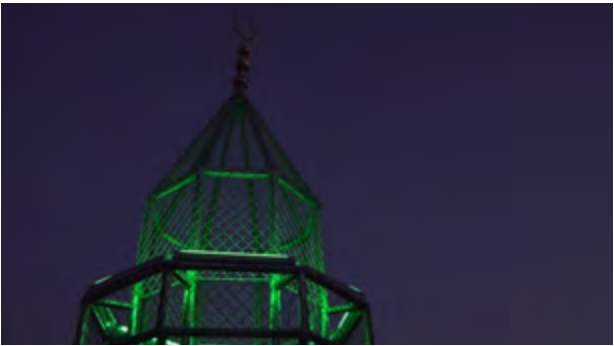
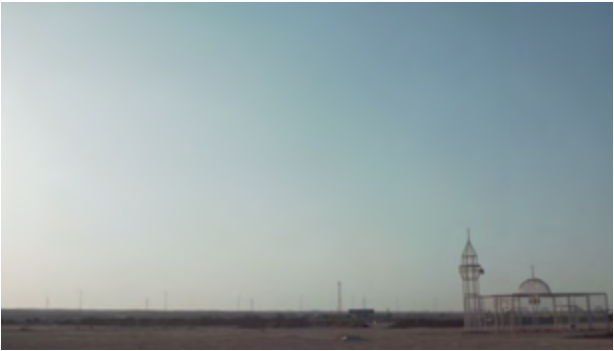
This collective performance is empowering; it consciously acknowledges the competing narratives that impinge on Saudi identities. *Paradise Has Many Gates* also gestures to the ways we can become imprisoned by external readings of our actions and to the ways these attitudes can become deeply ingrained in our lives. This performance suggests the importance of inciting change through the progressive modification of repeated behavior—siphoning power away from externally imposed stereotypes towards self-articulation.

The mosque installation is currently on display in Houston, Texas, outside The Station Museum as part of the Saudi Artists Tour.

* * *

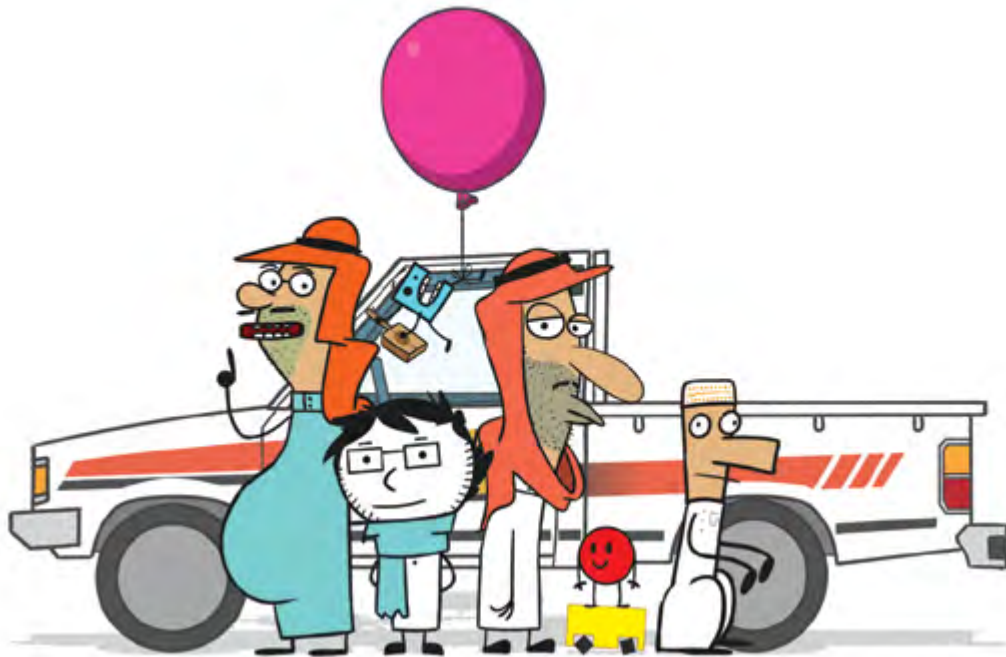
Born in the southern city of Khamis Mushait in Saudi Arabia, Ajlan Gharem received a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics at King Khalid University in 2008 and has applied his analytical background to art making. Based in Riyadh, he divides his time between Gharem Studio and as a math teacher at Al Sahabah Public School. He is a co-founder of Gharem Studio along with his brother, prolific and influential artist Abdunnasser Gharem. He has participated in group exhibitions at the Brunei Gallery, London (2016), Asia House, London (2015), Quincy House, Fotofest Biennial, Houston (2014), and the British Museum (2014). In 2011 he was selected by the Crossway Foundation in London to meet with museum curators and artists and collaborate with the British Museum, Tate Modern and Penguin Books.





previous and current spread:
Paradise Has
Many Gates
2015
Print and video (stills)

Masameer



Produced in Saudi, Masameer is a popular animated YouTube series that satirizes the country's social and political atmosphere. The series features characters who consciously question received behaviors and customs through apparently innocuous daily interactions. Presented within this childish context, the cartoons are incisive documentations of the status quo pursued *reductio ad absurdum*. Masameer uses both the conversational Saudi dialect and *fusha* (classical Arabic), reconnecting younger audiences to their ancestry while also exploring how language and tradition can create and sustain intractable cultural archetypes.

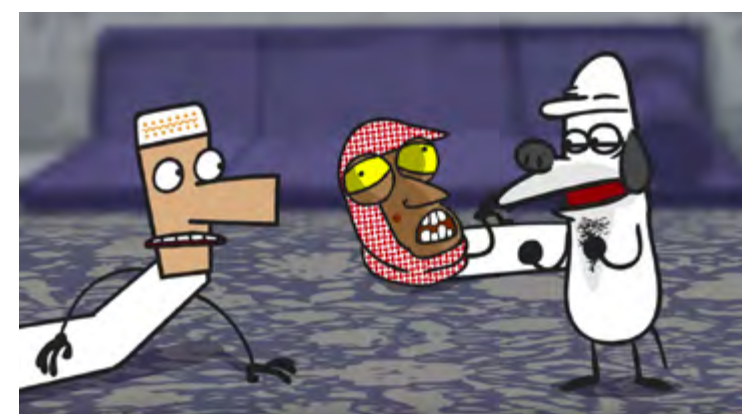
The episodes selected interrogate how negative, stereotypes of Arabs are internalized and propagated. *Dear Art! Who's Looking at You?* is narrated by a regular Masameer character who feels separated from his local Saudi community. Frustrated by the lack of personal creativity and passion found in the comedy, art and design networks open to him, he maps terrain shaped by unconnected patterns adopted inconsistently from other cultures. Unbearable monotony is found in gray, walled construction sites and row upon row of identikit houses. The only break from this claustrophobic world are the roofs and ceilings pilfered from other cultures; his surroundings become a fragmentary, unlivable amalgam of appropriated, foreign images. *Pixel City* comments on the arbitrary imposition of state control and its attempts to expunge articulation of cultural difference. In a world of pixels, society is governed by a species of squares who cannot fathom the circle. Ultimately denying incontrovertible facts, willful ignorance is preferred over any contradiction to order - no matter how logical. *Oblation* emphasizes the media propagated narratives that

shape US-Arab relationships. Set in an Arab world of a dystopian near-future, the perpetual cycle of cultural disconnection, Western misunderstanding, and conflicting self-articulation by opposing regional factions has led to the ultimate solution: "cheaper than a bullet, advisory opinion or speech," Arab unity will be found through the complete extermination of the Arab people.

The series gives a voice to digital graphic designers and the local community alike, granting an authorial platform for original Arabic content, underscoring the potential for self-documentation in the competitive, noisy digital realm. An industry originally catering for children, Arab animation has flourished as a form of social commentary, while it has also developed into a cross-generational genre that exploits the potential of self-articulation via social media. Faced with competition from digital platforms, traditional broadcasters are investing in alternative production methods, inspiring diversified content and attracting a rapidly growing market in a country without any public cinemas. As a growing animation community incorporates foreign design techniques into local programming, a revolution of traditional media networks has taken place that has spawned important cross-generational conversations.

* * *

Masameer is produced by Myrkott, a Saudi animation studio that has provided local content online and via public programming since 2011. The series is led by Abdulaziz Al-Muzaini, Executive Director, and Co-founder; Malik Nejer, Artistic Director and Co-founder; and Faisal Al-Amer, Head Writer, and Co-founder. It has attracted over 300 million views and 1 million subscribers.





Ahmed Mater

Ahmed Mater uses photography, calligraphy, painting, installation, performance, and video to explore the narratives and aesthetics of Islamic culture in an era of rapid globalization and social change. A doctor and artist, Mater's practice ranges across the rapidly shifting map of contemporary Saudi Arabia, synthesizing and documenting collective memory to transcribe unofficial histories.

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 construction become 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.

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 chiasmic 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.

* * *

Mater splits his time between Abha, Jeddah, and Makkah in Saudi Arabia. He founded the Al-Meftaha Arts Village in Abha, and in 2003, he co-founded Edge of Arabia. He has exhibited across the Arab world and internationally. His solo exhibitions include *100 Found Objects*, Sharjah Art Museum (2013); *Ahmed Mater*, The Vinyl Factory Gallery, London (2010); and *Symbolic Cities*, Washington, D.C. (2016). His numerous group shows include *Here & Elsewhere*, New Museum, New York (2014); *A-History*, Pompidou Centre, Paris (2014); *Light from the Middle East*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2013); *Desert of Pharan* at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India (2012). His works are held in many international collections, including The Barjeel Art Foundation, UAE; The British Museum, UK; Centre Pompidou, France; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Mathaf Museum, Qatar.



previous spread:
Leaves Fall in All Seasons
2013
video (stills)

Evolution of Man
2010
Lightbox

Nugamshi



Artist performance -
San Francisco
2015

A prominent proponent of the “calligrafitti” 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) (2016) 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.

* * *

Nugamshi currently lives in Riyadh and is a Gharem Studio artist. He trained as a graphic designer specializing in branding and type design; he 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 calligrafitti 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.

Shaweesh

١٢ صفحة ٣٠ مليماً



رئيس مجلس الإدارة ورئيس التحرير
موسى صليبي
مدير التحرير
احمد زيين

مؤسسة اخبار اليوم بشارة الصحافة بالقاهرة
تلفزيون اخبار اليوم - تلخبره ٩٧٧٧٧٧ (٧ خطوط)
٤٤/٩٧٩٨٤٣ - ٢٦/٩٧١٧٢٥
تلكس دولي ٩٢٢٢١٥ - محلي ٩٢٢٢٨٢

التوزيع و توزيع الأرباح ٧ شارع الصحراء بالقاهرة
تلخبره ٩٧٩٧٤٤
البريد الإلكتروني اخبار الصحراء بالقاهرة
تلخبره ٩٧٧٨٦٠
مكتبة الكونستانتين ٣٥ شارع صفوة بقطر ٢٠٠٠٠
مكاتب محلي ٤١٣٧

الجميس ٢٩ شعبان ١٣٩٨ - ٣ المحس (أب) ١٩١٩ • العدد ٨١٥٤ السنة السابعة والعشرون • AL-AKHBAR, 3 AUGUST 1919

ولارش فير ضيف شرف الوفد العربي في مؤتمر الصلح بفرساي عام ١٩١٩



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.

His latest series is situated in an ill-defined hinterland, somewhere between fantasy and reality. Caught between the west and his own social context, Shaweesh borrows from politics and pop culture - two powerful realms that have shaped his consciousness. While visiting street vendors in Riyadh, he bought old newspapers that document key events in the history of the Middle East. By digitally incorporating cartoon heroes into these scenes, Shaweesh creates mock-up artifacts that provide new perspectives on key historical events. He imposes these American super heroes into moments of great political significance that have structured the evolution of western and Saudi foreign relations. Elided in this way, the imagined events appear authentic, as if we view history from a child's perspective, unable to distinguish between historical news footage and the fantasy world of cartoons and science fiction. Alluding to the destabilizing infiltration of American popular culture into a childhood spent watching television, Shaweesh demonstrates how powerful western narratives can hold sway over people's ability to articulate their own cultural identity and history.

In *Captain America - US Government Urged to Take a Stance on Refugees* (2016),

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 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.

* * *

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. He is the Art Director and Creative Director of Telfaz11, a media-based collective in Saudi Arabia whose popular shows and videos have garnered over 12 million followers and over 1 billion views on YouTube.

كبت أمريكا تدعو الإدارة الأمريكية لإتخاذ موقف بشأن اللاجئين



نعم

وكما قلنا نعم للتصحيح
نعم للحزب الجديد الذي يؤمن
نعم للحزب الذي يؤمن بالحر
نعم لحزب يرفع المعاناة
الاستقلال ويقضي على تج
نعم حزب يعيد بناء الانسان
المصري ويفتح له الافاق . وابواب
التقدم .. والرخاء في ظل الاخاء
.. والمساواة .. والعدالة وفي
سياج من سيادة القانون .. تطبق
على الحاكم . قبل ان تنال من الحكوم
نعم للحزب الجديد .. ليس بين
اعضائه قيادات كل عهد اتفقت فن

هل يوح

في كل عام يختلف المساء
العربية والاسلامية حول تحد
شهر رمضان المعظم وتكرر
تحديد يوم عيد الفطر المبارك
الاصحى المبارك وهذا يشير الى
جميع أنحاء العالم الاسلامي
ولقد قدمت بحثا علميا يو
والامبياد في جميع الدول الار
العالم الاسلامي ، ونشر في
ومجلة ، وعلى موجبات الا
والنليفزيون ، ووافقت اكبر
وفلكية في مصر على البحث
بكلية العلوم جامعة القاهرة
تقريراً الى امين عام مجمع ال
وتوفق الطريقة الجديدة
الحدث ، وبين الرؤية ال

سمح السعوي رشق الاوقات

أن شقق الاوقاف كانت توزع في
لماضي توزيعاً غير عادل فكان يستول
عليها الكبراء واصحاب المظن
والنفوذ حتى فاحت ريحها وطلب
لرأى العام العلاج الجذري لها



previous spread:
[Darth of Arabia - Arabian](#)
[Envoy host quest of Honor](#)
[during Versailles Peace](#)
[Treaty](#)
2016
Print

[Captain America - US](#)
[Government Urged to Take](#)
[a Stance on Refugees](#)
2016
Print

Telfaz11



Telfaz11 is an online entertainment content distribution platform that has attracted and fostered significant Arab "internet talent." Founded by Alaa Faden and Ali Al 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.

About Bates

Bates Museum of Art

As a teaching museum at a liberal arts college, the Museum of Art and its exhibitions, collections, stewardship, and interpretation bring a world of ideas to campus that enhance the vitality of the intellectual and cultural life of Bates, the surrounding communities, and beyond. The museum serves as a laboratory for the development and presentation of thought-provoking exhibitions; acquires and stewards artworks that strengthen the collection in ways that support the liberal arts curriculum; develops a wide variety of education programs that are integral to Bates and the broader community, especially K-12 students; supports creative, rigorous, and original scholarship; and provides professional training opportunities through internships.

The Bates Museum of Art is recognized for presenting ambitious and adventure-some thematic exhibitions of regional, national, and international artists, and for integrating them into the academic and cultural life of campus, the surrounding communities, and the state of Maine.

Bates College

Since its founding in 1855 by Maine abolitionists, Bates College has welcomed men and women from diverse racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds.

A private, highly selective, residential college devoted to undergraduate study in the liberal arts, Bates has always stood firmly for the ideals of academic rigor, intellectual curiosity, egalitarianism, social justice and freedom. Bates is recognized for its inclusive social character and progressive tradition, and is rightly celebrated as one of the first US institutions of higher learning to admit women and people of color.

Mission Statement

Since 1855, Bates College has been dedicated to the emancipating potential of the liberal arts. Bates educates the whole person through creative and rigorous scholarship in a collaborative residential community. With ardor and devotion – *Amore ac Studio* – we engage the transformative power of our differences, cultivating intellectual discovery and informed civic action. Preparing leaders sustained by a love of learning and a commitment to responsible stewardship of the wider world, Bates is a college for coming times.



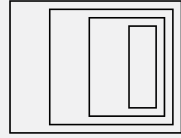
About Gharem Studio



Gharem Studio is a non-profit arts organisation dedicated to encouraging individual thought and self-expression with artists across the Muslim world. Founded in 2010, the studio offers residencies within a purpose built studio in Riyadh, as well as art education, career guidance, resources, equipment, promotion and opportunities for exhibitions both in the Middle East and the rest of the world. To date, the studio has staged exhibitions at the US ambassador's residence in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as well as working closely with the British Council on a series of workshops with Professor David Rayson, Head of Painting at the Royal College of Art, London.

Artist Abdalnasser Gharem moved to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 2013 in an attempt to broaden his professional resources and established Gharem Studio in the process. Due to the lack of proper studios for artists in the city of Riyadh, Gharem Studio began as a working space for Abdalnasser. The space attracted fellow artists, photographers and creative minds, who proved to be the first wave of a new Saudi art initiative.





pharan.studio

A responsive initiative, Pharan Studio moves beyond traditional cultural spheres to forge a space where collective forms of action tangibly influence wider civil concerns. As a rash of economic crises have spawned significant public spending cuts, citizens and collectives have been urgently mobilised. Prompted to fill the vacuum left by these cuts, they have created essential organisational alternatives. In this assertive alternative space, cultural practice has been reclaimed from the machinations of neoliberal governments and the conflated intent of commercial ends.

This urgent and essential spirit of alternative collaboration has the potential to lead us out of the mire and to forge new models of empowered self-organisation, all with the capacity to liberate cultural institutions and the makers that animate them from fraught economic collapse. Cultural futures will be determined by these initiatives. This future is dependent on the question of "the commons," a question with resonances and ramifications beyond art, with its very basis in the fundamental notion of solidarity.

Collective energy coalesces in cultural spaces, forums where the public can participate and collaborate. The output of these productive, exploratory and open processes is more than the cultural product itself, here new values and forms of social life are produced.



About Pharan Studio

These rooted, responsive collaborative models must respond to their immediate context. As such, Pharan Studio grew intuitively, responsively and urgently from a very specific local context, one that reflects a wider movement of citizen engagement seen across the region and the globe. In the Arabian Peninsula, Pharan Studio has transformed and reclaimed a cultural space, turning it into an open forum for all. In Jeddah, Pharan collective works with firm commitment in the cultural sphere, but recognises that inherent to this is the development of lasting collaborative connections with other fields. These connections are the catalyst for broad initiatives that are engaging people in the city's cultural development - the fundamental development of their futures.

The studio is a fertile interdisciplinary meeting ground for social commentary, activism and progressive artistic programming. As these conversations and fields collide and exchange, they make an unprecedented contribution to cultural production, prompting and shaping debate in Jeddah, across Saudi and the wider region. Led by a dynamic and engaged group, the studio succeeds in connecting diverse local and international audiences. These productive, alternative connections develop a more complex understanding of how art and critical cultural thinking can equip us with the skills of open-mindedness and a powerful

imagination - skills that are vital in the evolution of a dynamic society.

Education is essential. For this generation and the next, the essential educational focus is to learn to create and appreciate conceptual, collective, social and visual representation, to encourage continual interpretation and understanding. In this spirit, art has the potential to inform all areas of society, feeding into every profession and cutting across racial, cultural, social, educational and economic barriers. It can foster true understanding, open spaces for thought that dissipate fear and, as a result, promote a culture of awareness and acceptance.

"Rather than dwell in frustration over the current state of art education, I have instead chosen to respond with positive action. I opened Pharan Studio and started to run an independent art education programme within that space. I hope to complement and enhance the efforts of small individual initiatives that have made education central to their existence. Pharan Studio is a space of collaborative coalescence, where existing Saudi talent is brought together as a productive and evolving resource." - Ahmed Mater

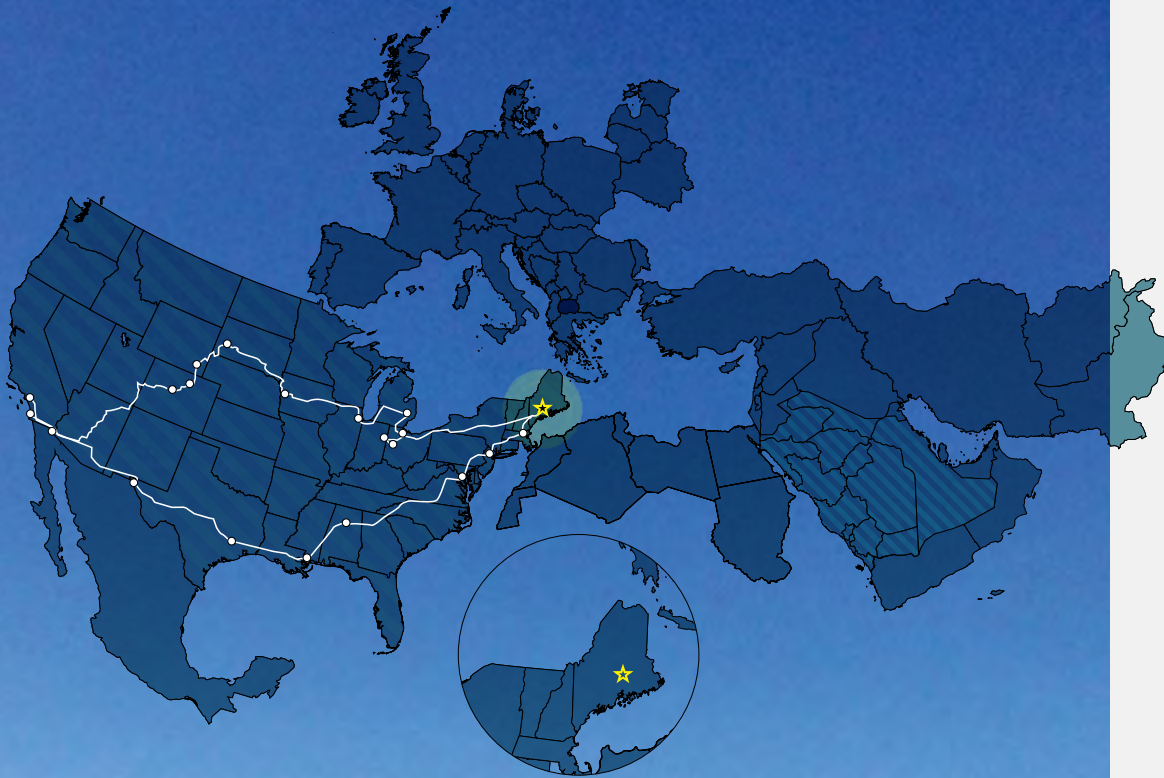
About Culturunners

★ CULTURUNNERS

CULTURUNNERS is an independent production studio which empowers and mobilizes artists across international borders. Through curatorial, media and educational production, CULTURUNNERS prioritizes direct encounters and storytelling, trusting in the power of art to inspire empathy and uncover counter narratives across the world.

CULTURUNNERS' first major project is a multiyear grassroots artists' road trip crisscrossing between the Middle East and the United States. In September of 2014, CULTURUNNERS set out in a 34ft 1999 Gulf Stream RV from The Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas on a mission to connect artists and communities between the two regions. To date, CULTURUNNERS has traveled over 15,000 miles, teaming up with over 50 artists in 25 states across America; along the way, CULTURUNNERS has produced events at Louisiana State University, the Middle East Institute, the United Nations Headquarters in New York, The Armory Show, Columbia University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, San Diego Art Institute, New Mexico State University, The Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian Institute, The National Civil Rights Museum and now at The Station Museum in Houston, Texas.

www.culturunners.com



— 2014 / 2015 / 2016 ROUTE

 ARTISTS' COUNTRIES



Acknowledgments

Thank you to the artists, galleries, and collectors for generously loaning work for this exhibition:

Sarah Abu Abdallah, courtesy of the artist, Qatif
Ahaad Alamoudi, courtesy of the artist, London
Njoud Alanbari, courtesy of the artist, Riyadh
Nouf Alhimiary, courtesy of the artist, Jeddah
Musaed Alhulis, courtesy of Edge of Arabia Collection, London
Arwa Al Neami, courtesy of the artist and Pharan Studio, Jeddah
Nasser Al Salem, courtesy of the artist and Athr Gallery, Jeddah
Rashed Al Shashai, *Heaven's Doors*, courtesy of the artist and Hafez Gallery, Jeddah
Rashad Al Shashai, *Delicious*, courtesy of the artist and Ayyam Gallery, Dubai
Ahmad Angawi, courtesy of the artist, Jeddah
Huda Beydoun, courtesy of the artist and Ayyam Gallery, Dubai
Abdulnasser Gharem, *Aniconism* sculpture and *Aniconism* video, courtesy of Gharem Studio, Riyadh
Abdulnasser Gharem, *Aniconism* video and *Siraat* (The Path) video, courtesy of the artist and Gharem Studio, Riyadh
Ajlan Gharem, courtesy of the artist and Gharem Studio, Riyadh
Masameer, courtesy of Masameer
Ahmed Mater, courtesy of the artist and Pharan Studio, Jeddah
Shaweesh, courtesy of the artist and Gharem Studio, Riyadh
Telfaz11, courtesy of Telfaz11

We would like to thank the following people associated with Bates College:

Leena '12, Halah, Ahmed and the students of #Bates2Saudi
Will Ash, Academic Technology Consultant, Information & Library Services
Sylvia Hawks, Academic Administrative Assistant
Ben Lizzotte, Senior Audio Visual Analyst, Information & Library Services
Scott Tiner, Assistant Director for Client Services, Information & Library Services

Bate Museum of Art staff
Dan Mills, Director, Lecturer in the Humanities
William Low, Curator
Anthony Shostak, Education Curator
Corie Audette, Assistant Collections Manager/Registrar
Anne Odom, Academic Administrative Assistant

Funded in part by the Museum of Art Synergy Fund

back cover:
Ayman Yossri Daydban
Get off the ropes!
Get off the ropes!



انهمض عن الحبال!
انهمض عن الحبال!