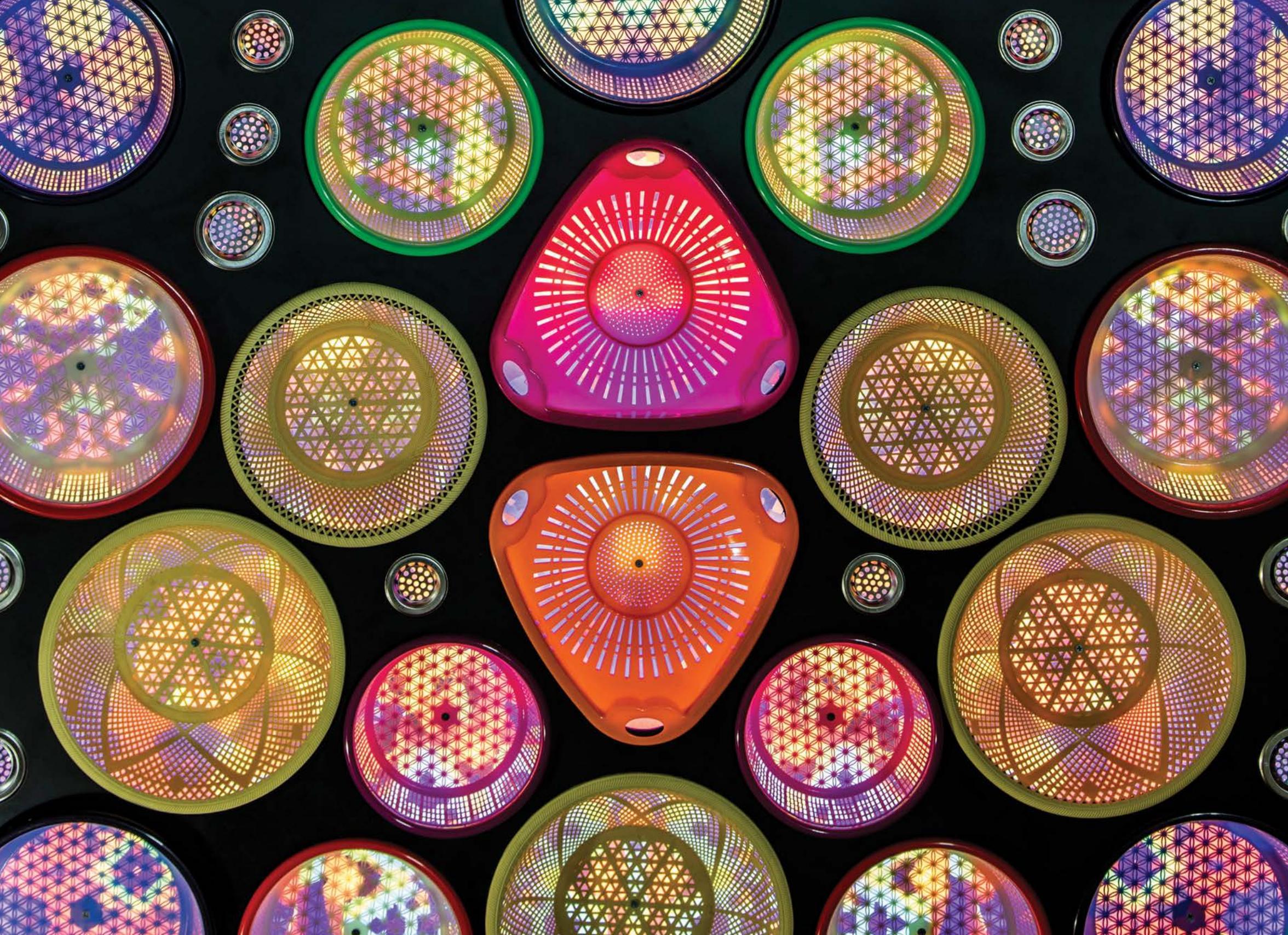


CITIES OF CONVICTION



SAUDI CONTEMPORARY ART
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH



CITIES OF CONVICTION

MUSEUM

UTAH
MUSEUM
OF
CONTEMPORARY
ART

ORGANIZER



SAUDI CONTEMPORARY ART
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

EXHIBITION	Cities of Conviction
DATES	August 25, 2017 – January 6, 2018
UMOCA DIRECTOR	Kristian Anderson
CURATOR	Jared Steffensen
MUSEUM PARTNER	Utah Museum of Contemporary Art 20 South West Temple Salt Lake City, UT 84101 utahmoca.org
ORGANISER	King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture Ring Rd, Gharb Al Dhahran, Dhahran 34461, Saudi Arabia kingabdulazizcenter.com
PRODUCER	Culturunners DIRECTOR: Stephen Stapleton culturunners.com
CATALOG DESIGN	Brian Maya
COVER	Rashed Al Shashai Heaven's Door 2014
BACK COVER	Moath Alofi Calligraphy

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★ CULTURUNNERS

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Since the 7th Century, the holy cities of Makkah and Medina have drawn millions of Muslim pilgrims every year to worship at the holiest sites in Islam, the Kaaba (House of God) in Makkah and the Masjid Al-Nabawi in Medina. Salt Lake City was established over a thousand years later by Mormon pioneers in search of a safe haven for their newly established religion. Members of the Church of Latter Day Saints also make a twice-annual pilgrimage of the faithful to the General Conference at the spiritual center of the Mormon faith, Temple Square.

The common histories of these cities extend well beyond issues of faith. Cities across both Utah and Saudi Arabia arose from the desert; have laws driven, in large part, by the predominant religion, and at first blush have comparatively conservative cultures. Also, they have a youth culture pushing the boundaries of their society through relentless individual expression while maintaining a sense of community.

These cities' growth is limited and defined by their natural boundaries, valley walls, uninhabitable terrain and mountains; and both possess economies driven by access to natural resources. The discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia propelled its expansion, at times erasing architecture and history in favor of a more cosmopolitan feel, as evidenced by the commercial development projects being constructed around the sites of pilgrimage. This phenomenon is mirrored in recent debates over land use and energy resources across the state of Utah, from Bears Ears National Monument to the development of City Creek Center and the high-rise condominiums that literally look down onto Temple Square.

Cities of Conviction will present works from artists who are engaged in looking at the struggles and transformations of their society and delving into complex issues that link Utah and Saudi Arabia, such as oil, pilgrimage and the tension surrounding commercial development around important cultural and religious heritage sites. From sacred lands to the way society condemns or accepts religious practices, each unique culture connects to one another in a variety of ways.

The artists included in *Cities of Conviction* use the visual language of art to explore the pertinent cultural issues facing Saudi Arabia and its citizens. They, as do many Utahns, question the long-term stability of relying on non-renewable resources to fund transformation. As Saudis inch towards a more globally-influenced culture, Salt Lake's Latter-day Saint communities are moving towards accepting a more globally-influenced Salt Lake City, as the influx of new residents from all over the world changes the cultural landscape of Utah.

Jared Steffensen
Curator Utah Museum of Contemporary Art

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 traveling 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; and the Arab American National Museum (AANM) in Dearborn, MI.

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. This timely exhibition at the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art (UMOCA) in Salt Lake City will be followed by stops in Memphis, TN, Washington, DC and New York, all 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 with support from CULTURUNNERS, an international platform for traveling artists.

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



CITIES OF CONVICTION

Salt Lake City, UT

San Francisco, CA

Los Angeles, CA

Aspen, CO

Houston, TX

Dearborn, MI

Lewiston, ME

KING ABDULAZIZ CENTER FOR WORLD CULTURE (ITHRA)

King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, 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.

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

UTAH MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

The Utah Museum of Contemporary Art (UMOCA) has advanced and elevated the community of contemporary arts and culture since it was established in 1931. UMOCA is a fearless voice for innovation, experimentation and dialogue surrounding the topics of our time. Located in the heart of Salt Lake City, UMOCA invites curiosity and promotes understanding of the challenging concepts that art and its reflective social commentary can present. UMOCA is a force for social transformation that unites all points of view, backgrounds, experience and ages through pertinent art exhibitions and knowledge programming. UMOCA evokes change, challenges ideologies, celebrates triumph and introduces an array of contemporary voices with in the Museum and throughout the community.

UMOCA is a five-time recipient of funding from the Andy Warhol Foundation and a 2015 and 2016 recipient of the Art Works Grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts.



ARTISTS

ABDULLAH AL-OTHMAN

ABDULNASSER GHAREM

AHMED MATER

ARWA ALNEAMI

BALQIS ALRASHED

DANA AWARTANI

GHADA AL RABEA

KHALID BIN AFIF

KHALID ZAHID

LINA GAZZAZ

MOATH ALOFI

MUSAED AL HULIS

NASSER AL SALEM

NOUF ALHIMIARY

NUGAMSHI

QAMAR ABDULMALIK

RASHED AL SHASHAI

TELFAZ11

YUSEF ALAHMAD

Suspended.
 2017 (Video Still)
 Video
 1 min 34 seconds



Abdullah Al-Othman is a Saudi artist and a contemporary writer. Born in Riyadh in 1985, he has exhibited widely in the Middle East and abroad including at Art Dubai, UAE; ABC Art Berlin Contemporary, Germany; The Mine Gallery, Dubai, UAE; CAP Kuwait, Kuwait; the *Rhizoma* show at the 55th Venice Biennale, Italy; and the *Safar Exhibition* at 21:39 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The artist's poetry is published in two volumes, "A Late Memory, 10 seconds" and "This Void May Occur Twice".

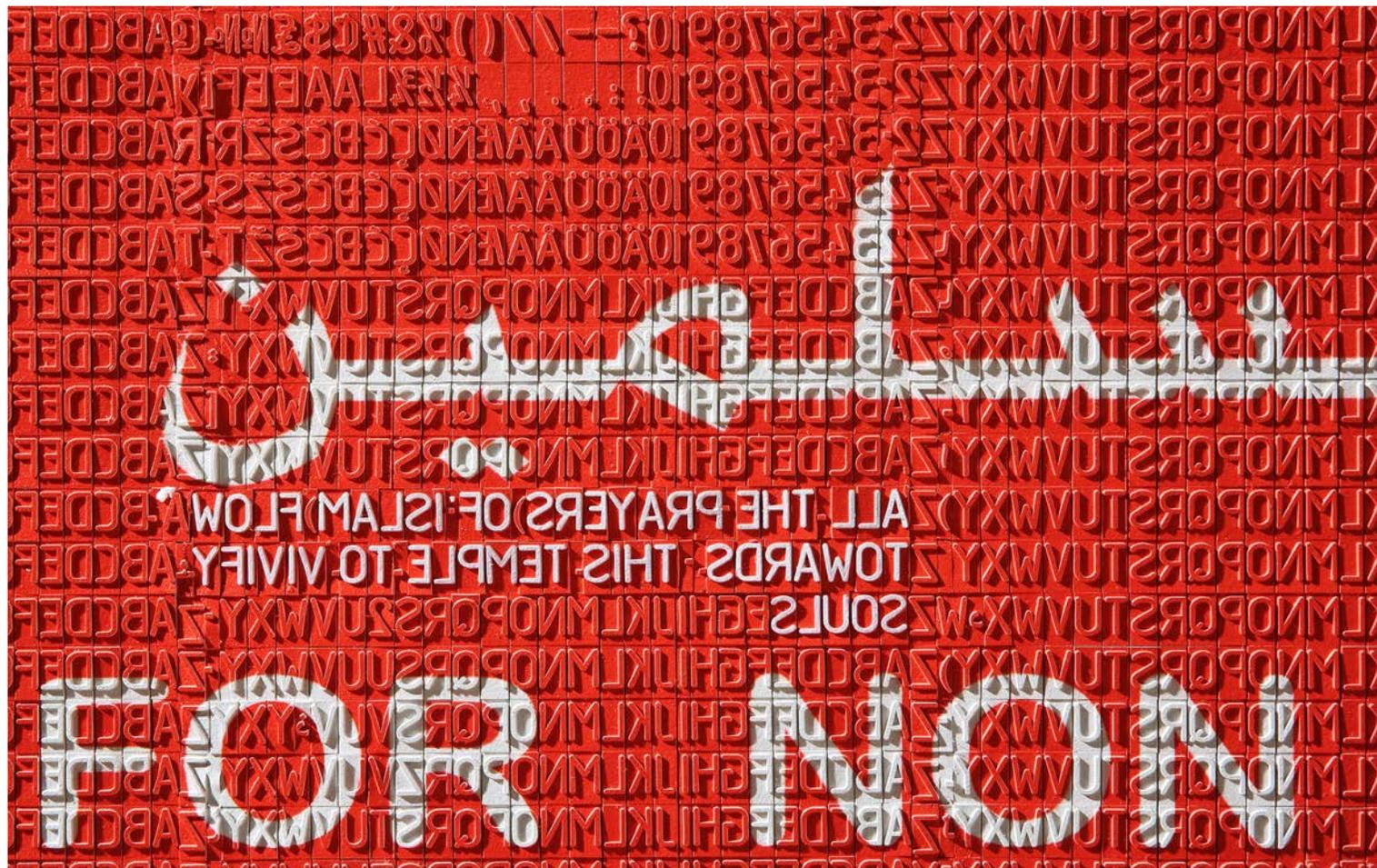
Suspended

In *Suspended*, Al-Othman created an intervention in Al-Khunji Al-Kabir in the old city of Jeddah in order to instill a renewed notion of its remarkable architectural style. He has covered the entire building with tin foil in a symbolic gesture to its frozen state. Buildings and cities, like people, have their own histories and go through their own journeys. By wrapping up the entire building, the artist sought to make a statement about the absurdity of thinking that the cycle of change could ever be stopped.

As the old saying goes, change is the only constant thing in life. As the sun will shine on the Khunji and its rays will be reflected from the tin foil in all directions, it will inspire new emotions and ideas in people.

What Al-Othman is doing here resembles stretching out an alternative bridge to nourish a human's heart. It is a surgery called "cardiac catheterization." This bridge is not necessarily a tangible one, but more importantly a revitalization of the power of memory and a firm belief in the identity of the place. In fact, it is a construction of an alternative memory, done through hiding a whole building and implanting a foreign body into the harmonious fabric of the old neighbourhood – wrapping the building with a luminous, reflective material: aluminium foil. It is an attempt to invest in the most important characteristics of this material: its high resistance to weather changes and its capability to preserve.

Of course, it goes beyond that neutrality to create surprise and shock. The reflective character of the foil makes it function as a mirror through which the audience can initiate a dialogue with themselves. Such use summons the notion of shadow play, an ancient genre that made use of places and squares to perform storytelling. Here is a new shadow play, with new tools, in a new context.



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 U.S. 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.

Road to Makkah
2014 Digital print and lacquer paint
on rubber stamps on aluminum
40.6 x 120 in (103 x 305 cm)
Courtesy of Private Collection, Switzerland

Road to Makkah

Like many contemporary artists, Gharem often uses mundane elements of life to form penetrating appraisals of modern society. Here he transforms a standard sign found on the road to Mecca into one of his iconic stamp paintings, the surface of which is composed of small stamps.

As the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the site of the Kaaba (the directional locus of Muslim prayer), and the endpoint of Hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage, the city of Mecca is considered a holy space and is therefore off-limits to non-Muslims. This sign directs Muslims straight ahead into the city, while non-Muslims are sent to the right and those involved in official business are sent to the left.

Embedded within the larger text of the sign are smaller quotes made from the stamps and therefore seen in reverse. The quotes refer to the unity, peacefulness, and sanctity of the city, perhaps included by Gharem as a subtle critique of the practice of exclusivity.

For an American audience, the sign is a shocking reminder of our own recent history and the signage that once separated people based on the color of their skin.

Siraat (The Path)

Much of Gharem's art is performance based, captured in photographs and video, and focuses on our relationship to and trust in physical structures and the natural environment.

The Path, or *Siraat*, commemorates a tragic event that occurred in 1982, when a group of villagers took shelter from an approaching flood on a concrete bridge spanning a river in southwest Saudi Arabia, where heavy rains are often commonplace. Everyone was swept away and most were killed by the deluge.

A new road was built nearby but the old one on either side of the washed away bridge remained. On the section of road leading up to the bridge, Gharem and a crew of assistants spray-painted over and over again

the word *siraat*, which means both a literal path and also a spiritual one (e.g. the straight path that leads to Paradise).

The repetition of this single word on the roadway becomes a visual chant—a reminder of how we choose our own paths, and a remembrance of the flood victims, who, having chosen the apparent safety of higher ground, lost their lives. This notion of individual choice when it comes to life's pathways is endemic in Gharem's work.

Siraat (The Path)

2012 Video

3 min 4 seconds





Al Haramain Highway, with a view of the Gate of Mecca (Qur'an Gate)
2015 Digital Print



Antenna
2010 Neon Tubes
150 x 150 x 50 cm

Ahmed 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. He is co-founder of Pharan Studio.

Al Haramain Highway, with a view of the Gate of Mecca (Qur'an Gate)

This aerial shot shows the road to Mecca, the *Al Haramain Highway, with a view of the Gate of Mecca*. "Those making this journey, which is obligatory for every Muslim at least once in their lifetime, have come from everywhere. They approach their longed-for destination flanked by the sentinels of billboards, between unrelenting sprawling deserts, through the narrowed passage between rocky mountains.

The journey is made by any means possible; previously, they came by camel, on foot, or by ship; today they arrive by car, airplane, and ocean liner. While the practical means have changed drastically, the rare, interior experience remains unaltered from generation to generation. Every pilgrim brims with a heady mix of anticipated potential for the sublime and the insidious underlying fear

that this could also be the road to the end. They came, they come, and they will keep coming compelled by the hope of accessing the highest possible earthly experience.” – *Ahmed Mater, Desert of Pharan: Unofficial Histories behind the Mass Expansion of Mecca*

Antenna

“A boy stands on the flat, dusty rooftop of his family’s traditional house in the south west corner of Saudi Arabia. With all his reach he lifts a battered TV antenna up to the evening sky. He moves it slowly across the mountainous horizon, in search of a signal from beyond the nearby border with Yemen, or across the Red Sea towards Sudan. He is searching, like so many of his generation in Saudi, for ideas, for music, for poetry – for a glimpse of a different kind of life.

“His father and brothers shout up from the majlis (sitting room) below, as music fills the house and dancing figures appear on a TV screen, filling the evening air with voices from another world. ‘This story says a lot about my life and my art’ [Ahmed says to Stapleton] as he installs a bright, white neon antenna into the ceiling of a warehouse gallery in Berlin. [Mater says] ‘I catch art from the story of my life. I don’t know any other way.’

“Ahmed Mater is the boy with the antenna; a young explorer in search of contact with the outside world, reaching out to communicate across the borders that surround him. It is this spirit of creative exploration and curiosity that defines Ahmed’s journey as an artist.” – Stephen Stapleton from *Ahmed Mater* monograph.

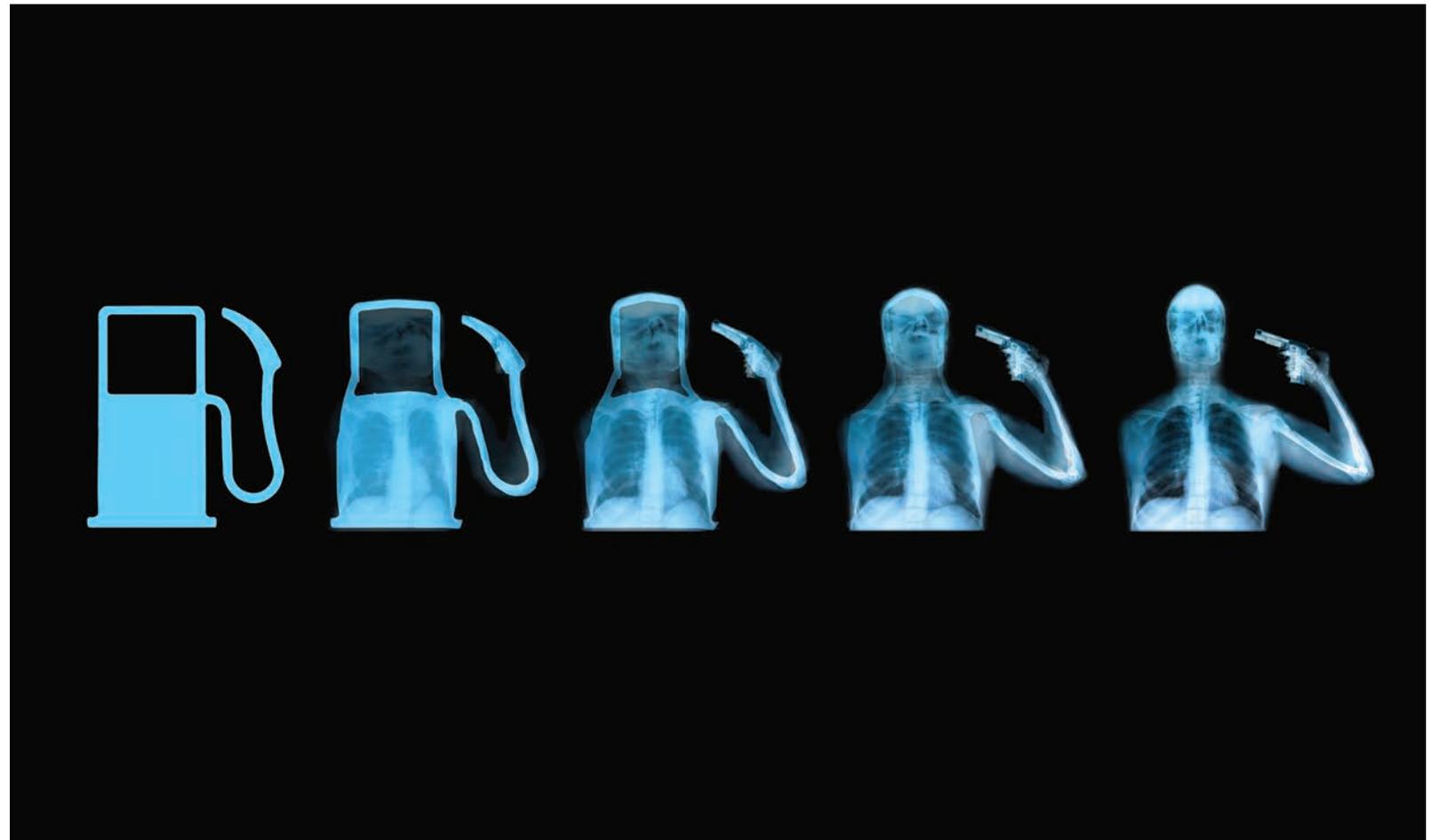
The cube is the primary building block, and the most basic form of a built structure. Furthermore, the Cube, the Ka’bah, is also Bayt Allah, the House of the One God and its location is an ancient site. Nevertheless, Mater’s Magnetism is more than a simple representation of the Ancient House of God. His contrasting of square and circle, whorl and cube, of black and white, light and dark, places the primal elements of form and tone in dynamic balance.

Evolution of Man

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.

Evolution of Man

2010 Silkscreen Prints
31.5 x 23.6 in (each) (80 x 60 cm, each)





Never Never Land
2014 Diasec Mounted
on Photographic Print
23.6 x 15.7 in (60 x 40 cm)

Following Spread:
Never Never Land
2014 Diasec Mounted
on Photographic Print
15.7 x 23.6 in (40 x 60 cm)

Arwa Alneami was born in 1985 in Khamis Mushait and now lives in Jeddah. Originally from the mountain village of Rijal Alma, in 2000, AlNeami 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 Co-founder of Pharan Studio.

Never Never Land

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 Alneami 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.”

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, Alneami 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 weary 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”.



Live performance at
Sharjah Art Foundation
2015 Photographed by Nidal Morra



Balqis AlRashed was born in Riyadh, Saudi and raised in Beirut for sixteen years where she graduated from the American University of Beirut with a Bachelors of Fine Arts in Graphic Design. It was during this time that she found and cultivated her voice and artistic expression as one that expresses her multiculturalism as well as her individuality.

When she returned to Saudi in 2009, AlRashed threw herself into work, and by 2010, she had co-founded Qabila Apparel, a homegrown Khaleeji clothing line. Her prolific activity and online presence have led

to her March Project Residency 2015 at Sharjah Art Foundation where she exhibited her first big scale installation "*Once, we fell from the sky and landed in Babel*".

AlRashed has been featured in various media platforms and has recently been selected as Nike ambassador. She is currently the first international artist in residence at the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, and is working on pieces that focus on the creation of meanings, practices, and dichotomies in respect to the collective, identity, and the self.

The fluids in the human body carry a memory of the ocean. It is similar to the chemical composition of seawater, signifying the origin and evolution of life. Salt is necessary for life, but too much brings death instead. Yet, some destructions are essential. Salt is used to preserve and discourage the growth of unwanted organisms. This dual quality of salt becomes interesting grounds for exploration.

In the Mormon faith, the veil plays a significant part of the endowment ceremonies in which the veil represents the separation between God and man. On the other hand, the significance of the veil in Saudi Arabia holds a different meaning, one of modesty and privacy and is particularly associated with women.

The veil maze explores our journey to the righteous path, taking the two representations of the veil respectively into consideration. The crystallized salt creates a binary between the organic growth of salt and the synthetically manufactured fabric. The fluidity of the water in a sense represents the spiritual body and salt reflecting the physical body. This alchemical process dissolves down salt into their purified individual element, then integrated back to the whole.



I went away and forgot you. A while ago I remembered. I Remembered I'd forgotten you. I was dreaming.
 2017 Video
 15 minutes

Born 1987 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Dana Awartani graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins, London and a Master's in Traditional Arts at the Princess School, London. Specializing in geometry as well as illumination, tile-work and parquetry, Awartani's work explores the relationship between geometry and nature. She also looks at how truths can be translated through art using geometric principles, visualizing a sacred language through a symbolic and multi-layered aesthetic. Awartani is keen to revive historical techniques which struggle to survive in the modern world.

In order to further an appreciation of traditional arts, she has worked on several national outreach projects in schools and communities in both the UK and Saudi Arabia. Several pieces of her work feature in the Farjam Collection, one of the world's largest collections of Islamic art.

I went away and forgot you. A while ago I remembered. I remembered I'd forgotten you. I was dreaming.

The video/installation that Awartani created comprises of her firstly creating a site specific installation in an old abandoned home, located in the old part of Jeddah, where her grandparents' generation use to live.

Awartani started by covering the floor with patterns using colored sand that are reminiscent of traditional Islamic tile work, that were once common in most Arab and Islamic homes. Once Awaratni completed the full installation she created a video piece that shows her destroying the art work by sweeping up the sand tiles as a symbolic commentary on the modern day destruction of our cultural identity and heritage, which has been a result of a careless and an obsessive need for a more modernized and industrial society without the conscious awareness of what we are leaving behind.

Awartani aims to highlight the importance

of preserving and cherishing what in essence is a crucial part of the collective identity in the region, not as an attack on modernization, but rather pointing out the importance of the old and new co-existing and living together side by side.

The home that she has chosen to create the piece plays a crucial role in the artwork, as the building was a typical home amongst the wealthy elite during the late 50s and early 60s, and it was during this time that homes in Jeddah broke from traditional Hejazi architecture and adopted a more European aesthetic to project a sense of a more "civilized" and "forward" society, and in turn completely abandoning their own cultural identity.

Equally important is the sand Awartani used, as it has been locally sourced from Saudi Arabia and the artist has dyed them herself using natural pigments that derive from stones and plants, staying true to her appreciation for traditional techniques of making art.



Bint Al Rijal
2016 Candy wrapper collage
55.5 x 42.1 in (133.5 x 107 cm)

Born in 1979 in the city of Medina, Ghada Al Rabea studied Home Economics and Fine Arts at the local Taiba University. She continues to teach these subjects at schools and organizes various art workshops.

She has been an active member of the Medina art scene, has exhibited in numerous shows locally and has exhibited at Athr Gallery in Jeddah for the first time in 2013 as part of their annual 'Young Saudi Artists' exhibition, and most recently took part in Moallaqat, the inaugural exhibition for the first edition of 21,39 Jeddah Arts [2014]

A blogger once wrote "If many people think that the Abaya hinders Muslim women's development and dreams, they should have a broader vision and a closer look at Muslim women in general, and at Saudi women in specific". This sentence applies to no one better than to Ghada Al Rabea.

Her representations that capture the details of Saudi daily life show a love of her country and strength of spirit. Her technique of using candy wrappers instead of traditional paints gives her work a kitsch element that echoes the sweet innocence of the simple life, one that cannot help but resonate with the viewer.

Bint Al Rijal

Al Rabea's use of discarded candy wrappers to produce collages of iconic pieces and familiar settings, not only serve to reintroduce the historic and iconic within a contemporary Hejazi context, but also presents a sharp commentary on our globalized system today giving value to the disposed and forgotten – be it material or cultural.

These wrappers are not only discernible in their imagery due to the consumer society we live in, but also nostalgic to childhood, triggering personal memories and touching each viewer individually. Mentos wrappers, along with Kit Kat foils and Smarties boxes serve as Al Rabea's palette, each playing their part in adorning the canvas

to represent everyday social behaviors or historically iconic masterpieces traditionally woven into our sense of global culture.

The wrappers also align to present a decorative and repetitious pattern around its rim, elaborately enhancing her attempt to reintroduce and redefine the classical into the contemporary. Traditional thobes are represented with Mentos and Munchies abayas, Van Gogh in a Omma (turban) and Frida Kahlo in a traditional Hejazi head dress; a veritable coming of East and West, in a fusion of color and diversity.

This body of work can be read as a representation of Orientalist notions, one where typically traditional and 'Old Era' subjects are pulled into the contemporary using globalized and iconic branded material, uniting its audience in its draw and redefining them with a creative and modern twist of understanding.

The World

2016 Acrylic painted on plastic
with motion sensor technology
55 x 7.8 in (140 x 20 cm)



Born and raised in Mecca, Khalid Bin Afif's interest in the arts began with his attempts to photographically capture the stars and the clouds he saw from his rooftop. Bin Afif went on to study Engineering at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, and eventually worked in Marketing. Throughout his life, art, design and technology have remained his passions, and he has continually tried to learn, explore and experiment with them.

The World

In *The World*, five enlarged plastic eyes; each painted a different color and lined up in a row, rotate, nod, and whirl in various sequences in response to audience movement.

Through *The World*, Bin Afif seeks to reflect on the state of humanity. Like much of his other work, *The World* draws on his interests in technology and architecture. He uses motion sensors and computer programming to choreograph its movement.

The most fundamental element of his practice is the moving audience. His 'motion art' uses sensors to detect the audience's movement and activate the piece. Afif finds that contemporary audiences are able to relate with his work, having intimate knowledge of it from a culture dependent on iPhones, Google maps, and other responsive technologies at their fingertips.

Bin Afif's work is thus not only dependent on the viewer's presence, it is also reliant upon their engagement around the piece, perhaps moving in closer or waving. This dynamism stands in direct contrast to what he sees as the typical, passive, art-viewing experience. The static, untouchable artwork is of no interest to him. "Touch me" is an idea that lies behind much of his endeavors. Its aim is to interact and engage with viewers, and demands that they participate as well.

Once involved, the audience is invited to contemplate the affinities between these rotating eyeballs and themselves. Each of the five eyes is a different color – representing what he says are the only possible eye colors in people across the globe, regardless of race, gender, nationality, religion, or any other identifiable factor. Hence these eyes, each enlarged to the size of a head, represent all of humanity.

Their movement is designed to reflect the truth of the human psyche and the state of the world. The eyes sometimes move in agreement, nodding in unison and performing what looks like a dance. In other moments, they scramble frantically and independently, reflecting people's attempts to unite, their instances of fear, and their moments of harmony.



Beginning/End
 2017 Altered gas pump
 25.3 x 18.9 x 50.4 in

Khalid Zahid was born in London in 1979. He is a self-taught artist who in the past three years has exhibited in numerous collective exhibitions in Riyadh, Kuwait and Jeddah. Each piece he creates references our daily realities, the community and individuals we interact with day in and day out, and the ways which we can evolve these relationships to create a better reality.

Beginning/End

Through *Beginning/End*, Zahid urges viewers to reconsider Saudi's dependence on oil by instead looking to the future. Worldwide, Saudi Arabia is known for its oil and Zahid has come to see the natural resource as a global symbol for Saudi Arabia. But as the Kingdom progresses and works towards a new vision for itself with plans such as Vision 2030, it aims to break away from its sole dependence on oil.

Zahid quite literally takes apart a gas tank, the universally recognizable device from which the public purchases oil. Its various components hang from above, separated from one another but still recognizable. The meter remains intact and running, a powerful reminder of how quickly time is passing and a representation of the urgency to develop new sources of energy and income, so as to move away from the oil era and into a new one.



Al Hajj (the pilgrimage) Metaphor
 2014 Ink on watercolor paper
 40 x 29 in (101.6 x 73.6 cm)

Lina Gazzaz is an artist based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. She received her Bachelor of Studio Arts Degree from Meredith College, Raleigh, North Carolina. She has participated in multiple solo and group exhibitions in Saudi Arabia, the United States, Lebanon, the UK and the UAE, and received the Painting Award at the Prophet Mohammed Festival in Dubai.

Her artwork engages the figurative, experimental, and Islamic in a critically contemporary manner. She mostly works with Chinese ink on watercolor paper, ink, pastel, and oil. She is currently working on multiple projects; collage, urban sculpture and movie clips.

Al Hajj (the pilgrimage) Metaphor

When Lina Gazzaz was 14, she performed Hajj—the pilgrimage to Makkah—and for the last few years she’s wanted to do it again, even though Muslims typically only make the journey once in their lifetime.

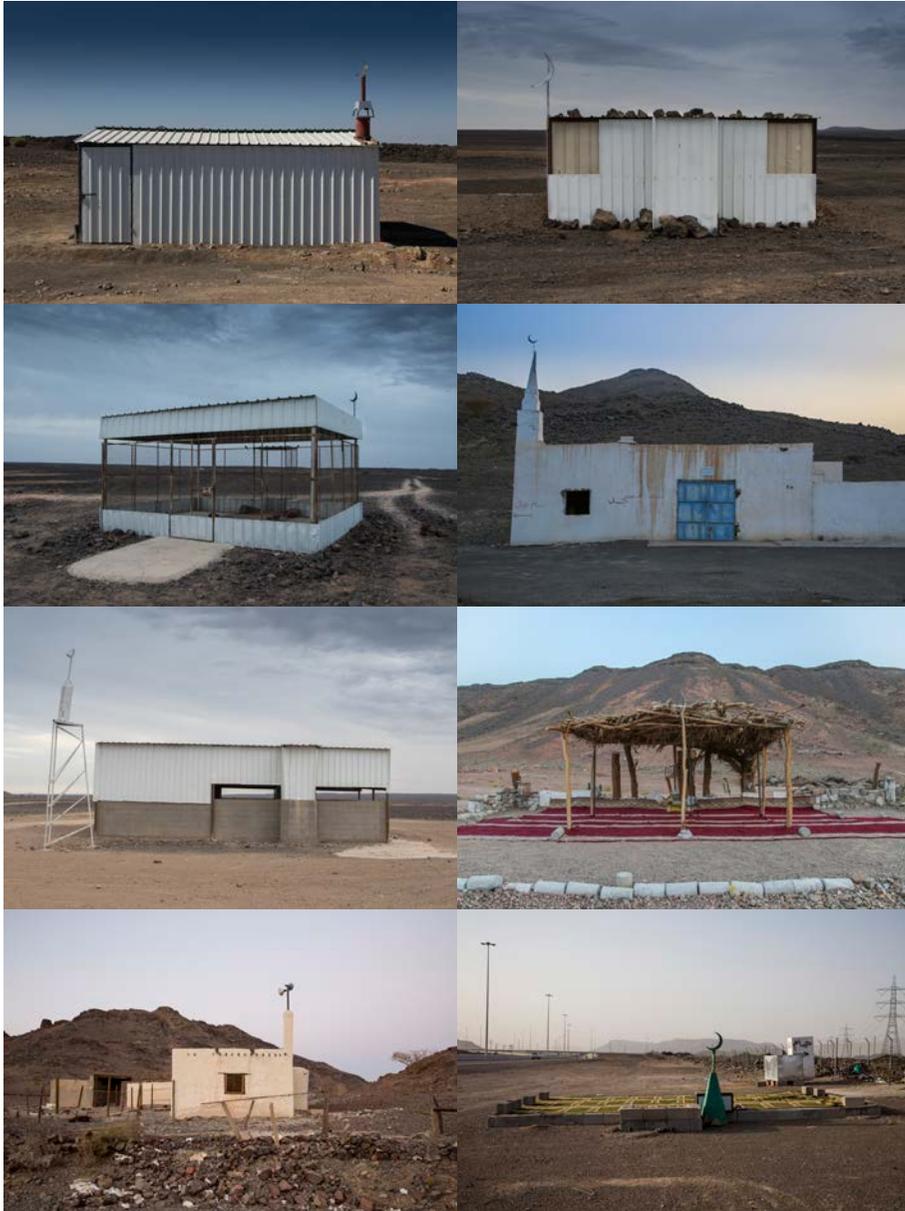
The desire to repeat, she says, is because she was too young to feel the deeper meaning behind the sacred journey. In 2016, she worked on a painting during the 10 days of the pilgrimage in order to stay spiritually engaged. “I was attempting to uncover a deeper understanding of the concept of Hajj,” she says. During that time she created *Al Hajj (the pilgrimage) Metaphor*.

Webs of fine intersecting lines echo the rituals, and as a result a multiplicity of visuals emerge to represent the spiritual impact of this journey. The human need for spiritual fulfillment was expressed through different shades of blue, highlighting it as the one and only goal of Hajj.

Hajj is considered a metaphor for the Day of Judgment, and so it is a ritual that reinforces diversity, equality, justice, and freedom of choice. The first and last ritual of Hajj starts and ends from the Holy Mosque in Mecca.

The Ka’aba, believed to have been built by Adam (Pbuh), is the first house built for humanity. Performing Tawaf marks the very beginning of the Hajj journey. Tawaf is the ritual of circling around the Ka’aba seven times; it is read as a metaphor of our life journey. The repetition of this circular motion is in itself a metaphor for the motion of the universe as a whole.

Each pilgrim is made aware of his or her place within the totality of God’s universal system. To begin and to end with this ritual in particular represents the core ideal of Hajj, which is faith and surrender to God to reunite and remain a part of that universe.



The Last Tashahud
2017 Digital Photograph
and Multimedia Installation

Moath Alofi was born in Medina, Saudi Arabia in 1984. He holds a BA in Environmental Management and Sustainable Development from Bond University, Australia and currently works as an Environmental Coordinator and Safety Supervisor at Dar Alhijra in Medina.

To Alofi, the holy city is both his studio and an open museum, and since 2013, he has embarked on a photographic journey exploring its fast expansion; documenting its cultural heritage, and spreading awareness of its hidden treasures. Alofi is the founder of Almhba, an interdisciplinary studio focusing on the region of Medina by promoting art and assisting researchers.

In addition to that, he is the co-founder of Erth team, a well-equipped and qualified team specialising in Safari and exploration trips using aerial photography as a means to document the heritage and beauty of the region and Saudi Arabia as a whole.

Alofi has exhibited his photography at Loud Art in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman, [2016], and *Earth And Ever After*, 21,39, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia [2016].

Last Tashahud

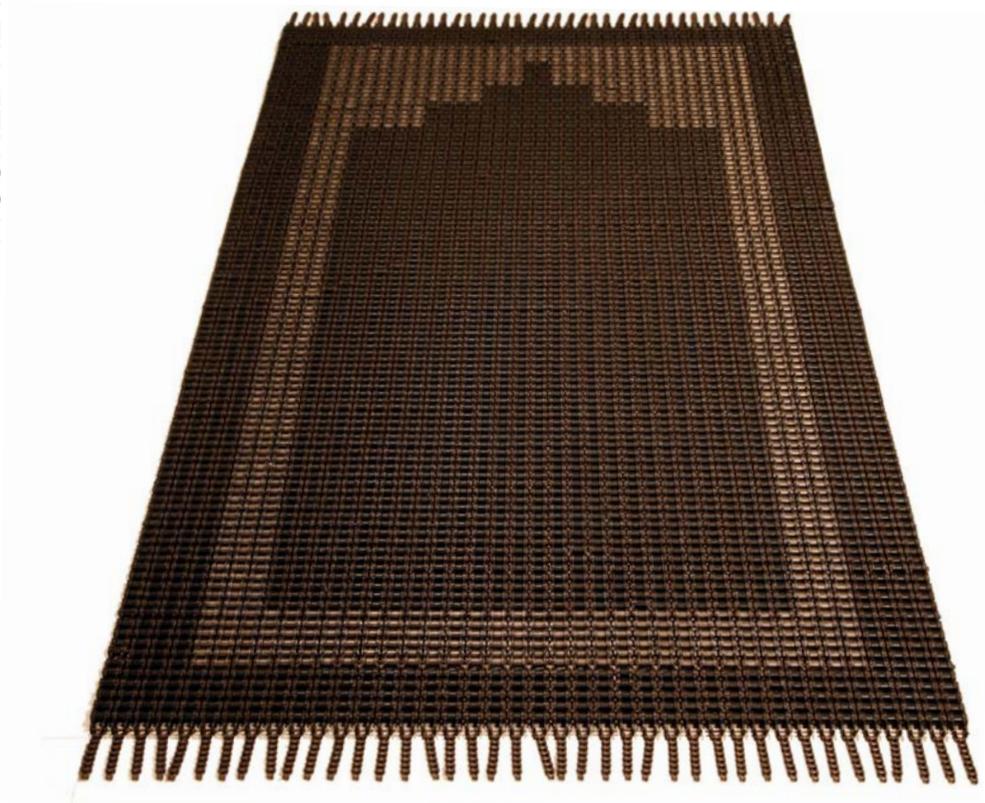
The Last Tashahud is a photographic documentation capturing desolate mosques scattered along the winding roads leading to the holy city of Al-Maddinah Al Munawerah. The mosques are built by philanthropists hoping to offer a haven for travelers, who seek to reap the rewards from these structures.

Moath captures these mosques as flat forms that disrupt the natural lines of the landscapes behind. The horizontal x-axis that divides the sky and earth is perpendicular to the vertical y-axis of the mosques' walls. The images depict the construction of spiritual or religious realities; and affect a meeting point between barren landscapes, vibrant clear skies, and primitively designed structures.

The structures appear to have sprouted from the desert: erecting a bridge between the heavens and earth. Moath emulates the structure's unique ethos – displaced from the contemporary understanding of a house of worship, and only witnessed by travelers of this holy city.

The Last Tashahud, (Al Tashahhud Alakheer) is an invocation said by the prayer when rising from prostration. Its linguistic definition translates to the last testimony, or perhaps even the last witnessing. The series contains 2 volumes and consists in total of over 50 mosques and the cumulative distance covered was over 1700km.





Dynamic
2012 Steel alloys/bicycle chain
59 x 27.5 in (150 x 70 cm)

Musaed Al Hulis has made significant contributions to the Saudi art 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*.

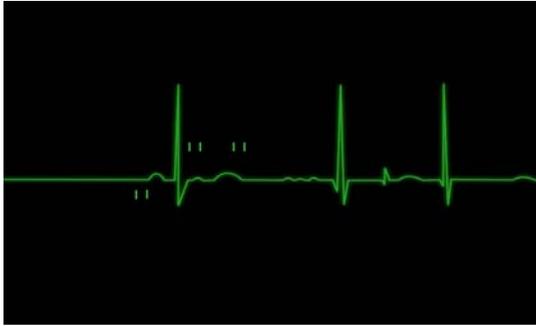
He has participated in several group exhibitions and has helped organize workshops and art training courses around the Kingdom. He has exhibited in numerous local and international exhibitions including Art Dubai and Edge of Arabia's #COMETOGETHER (2012). Other international exhibitions include the *Saudi Cultural Days Exhibition* in Qatar and Kazakhstan (2010).

Dynamic

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.



Guide Us Upon The Straight Path
 2013 Video on EKG heart monitor
 15 seconds



*They Will Be Seen Competing
 in Constructing Lofty Buildings*
 2014 Concrete Sculpture
 228 x 149.6 x 196.8 in
 Artwork image from 2017
 Safar Exhibition at 21:39,
 Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Nasser Al Salem grew up in Mecca in a family of tent makers living in the “rust 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 *Calligraffiti* 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 was met with critical acclaim. In 2013 he was shortlisted for the Jameel Prize.

Guide Us Upon The Straight Path

The calligrapher Nasser Al Salem works in various media, including sculpture, ink on paper and video. In *Guide us Upon the Straight Path*, Al Salem uses a new and evocative calligraphic style based on the ‘script’ of the hospital monitor to write out a believer’s prayer, derived by the verse’s call for believers to maintain their path on the straight and narrow. The words are spelled out on the monitor, in Al Salem’s innovative calligraphic style, to call on the urgency for humanity to follow the message of the divine before it is too late and the heartbeat falls into a flat and straight line.

The Desire Not to Exist series
2015 Digital Print



Nouf Alhimiary's work has been exhibited in Saudi Arabia, Italy, England, and the UAE. She was featured in *Haji: 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.

The Desire Not to Exist series

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 "لا" 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. Reappropriation 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, reappropriation, 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.

The Desire Not to Exist series
2015 Digital Print





Still image from Mirage film
2016 Image courtesy the artist

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 calligraffiti 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 “calligraffiti” 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.

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.



Asylum of Dreams
2017 Crane Machine installation
with printed passports
75 x 32 x 34 in

Qamar Abdulmalik is a Riyadh-based artist and designer of Palestinian origins. She holds a Bachelor degree in Graphic Design and Digital Media from Princess Noura University in Riyadh. She currently works in-house for a Design Studio in Riyadh while she develops her own artistic practice and experiments with different media.

Asylum of Dreams

asylum (n) 1. the protection granted by a nation to someone who has left their native country as a political refugee. "He applied for political asylum: refuge, sanctuary, shelter, safety, protection, security, immunity; a safe haven."

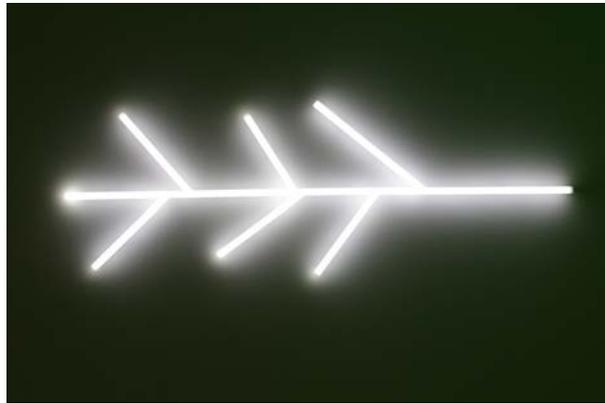
In *Asylum of Dreams*, an interactive crane machine game, ubiquitous in arcades, is seen full of passports from various countries including the U.S., Canada and the UK. Viewers are encouraged to insert coins and attempt to grab one of the many passports available to win.

The installation reflects the experience and limitations of being a refugee, an individual who has lost his/her state –established identity. The artist has often thought about what differentiates refugees from other individuals and sees this difference in the lack of basic security to establish a family, work or shelter; in other words, refugee communities live their lives in inherent instability.

Abdulmalik explains, "they (refugees) may be respected or well-treated by citizens, but deep within them, they still believe they're out of place. They are homesick but have no place to be homesick for. Many of them throughout the world are reminded of their statuses daily when going about even the most ordinary of activities."

Abdulmalik pokes fun at the role of luck in terms of where and when individuals are born and based on which their national identities are determined. Her work is an attempt at giving players agency in determining their identities and subsequent futures. Furthermore, *Asylum of Dreams* points towards to difficulties

refugees face each day with travel and migration. The passports represent the political and national identities in the never ending quest for freedom and safety.



Shortcut
2015 Acrylic
and LED lights
31.5 x 90.5 in



Delicious
2015 Carpet
19.6 x 78.7 x 59.1 in

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).

Shortcut

Shortcut is an artwork derived from the alleged first drawing in the sand the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The symbol urges human beings to pursue the straight and correct path away from the twisted and diabolical.

Delicious

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."

Heaven's Door

Creating religious artifacts from everyday objects, *Heaven's Doors* (2014) 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.

Following Spread:
Heaven's Doors
2013 Aluminum,
acrylic, and lights
101.2 x 106.3 in





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 U.S.

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.

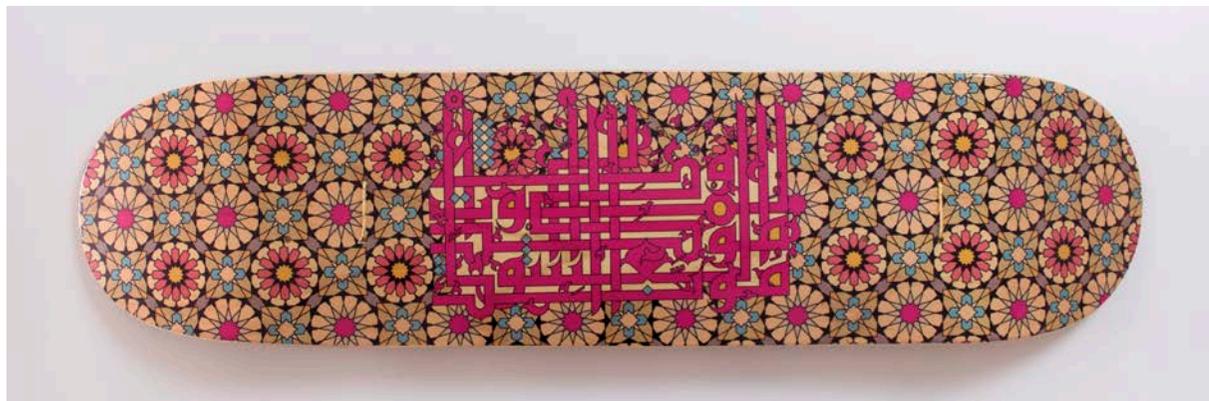
I think this type of content is positive because it encourages the viewer to critique and question rather than passively receive. There are some censorship agencies in the Ministry of Culture and Media who we

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 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.



Untitled 2
2016 Digital print
on maple wood



Yusef Alahmad is a Saudi Graphic Designer and artist based in New York, NY. 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 a full time freelancer, alternating between graphic design projects, editorial illustrations, and art commissions.

Yusef's work has been featured in Print Magazine (US), Baseline Magazine (US), Alef Magazine (Qatar), Oasis Magazine (Saudi Arabia), Design Magazine (Saudi Arabia), Khaleejesque Magazine (Kuwait), among others.

He has exhibited in numerous shows around the world, including, P21 Gallery x Kalimat Magazine (London), SoulSpace (Oakland, California), Loud Art: Executing Culture Shock (Saudi Arabia), Khaleeji Reinterpreted (Kuwait), Local Not Local: The Arab American Museum/The Levantine Center (Michigan/Los Angeles).

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.

Skateboard Decks

In a time when most things associated with Islamic/Arab culture are met with fear and speculation, I wanted to show that two very different cultures can co-exist or even blend seamlessly. Skateboarding is part of a counterculture that emerged in the 1970s and continues to be symbol of alternative and rebellious ideals. Whereas, Islamic patterns and motifs are often associated with traditional and religious art from the Middle East.

Palindrome.
2016
Digital print on maple wood



Yusef Alahmad's vibrant skateboard decks unite these unlikely elements of counterculture with the centuries old tradition of Islamic design. In these skateboards, these seemingly opposing cultures are purposefully combined to reflect that contradictions are a fact of life. Alahmad thus creates topically modern amalgams of the old and the new that explore the role of tradition in the present day and highlight the beauty of coexistence.

In essence, his work combines cultures. The bold design and bright colors allude to graffiti styles and skateboard culture whilst his use of calligraphy and arabesques point to his upbringing, bridging his past with his experiences living in San Francisco where skateboarding reigns supreme, from middle-aged men in suits to teenagers, Alahmad encountered people from all walks of life skateboarding.

Much like Alahmad's work, the reality of Salt Lake City is one of a multiplicity of contradictions existing in unison. Although Utah may be known for being the headquarters of the Church of Latter Day Saints, making Mormonism the dominant culture, it is noted as having a well-established countercultural presence buoyed by radio stations, magazines, record stores and bars, as well as by a prominent skateboarding scene. Although seemingly in contrast, these cultures coexist in centers like Salt Lake City.

Palindrome تناظر

A Palindrome is a word, phrase, number, or other sequence of characters which reads the same backward or forward.

مودته تدوم لكل هول وهل كل مودته تدوم

The phrase was written by an unknown Arab poet and is said to be one of the marvels of the Arabic language (عجائب اللغة) because it reads exactly the same forwards and backwards.

Edit: Some sources contribute the phrase to Ali bin Abi Taleb علي بن أبي طالب while others say it was written by the poet Al Arjani.

Untitled 1
2016 Digital print
on maple wood



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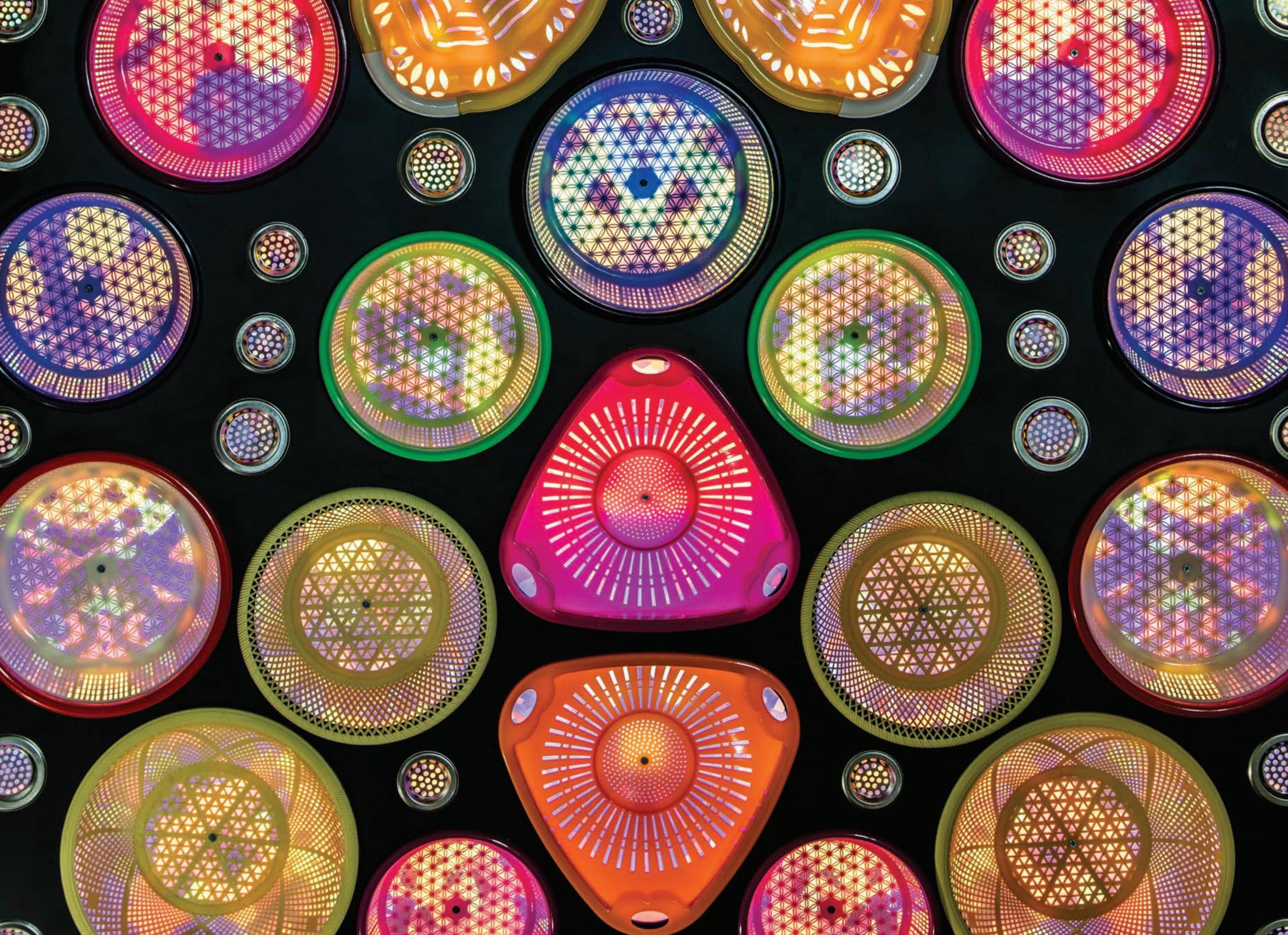
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