


Ithraeyat Magazine

Summer 2025

ART OF SPORTS

Artist Ben Mosley

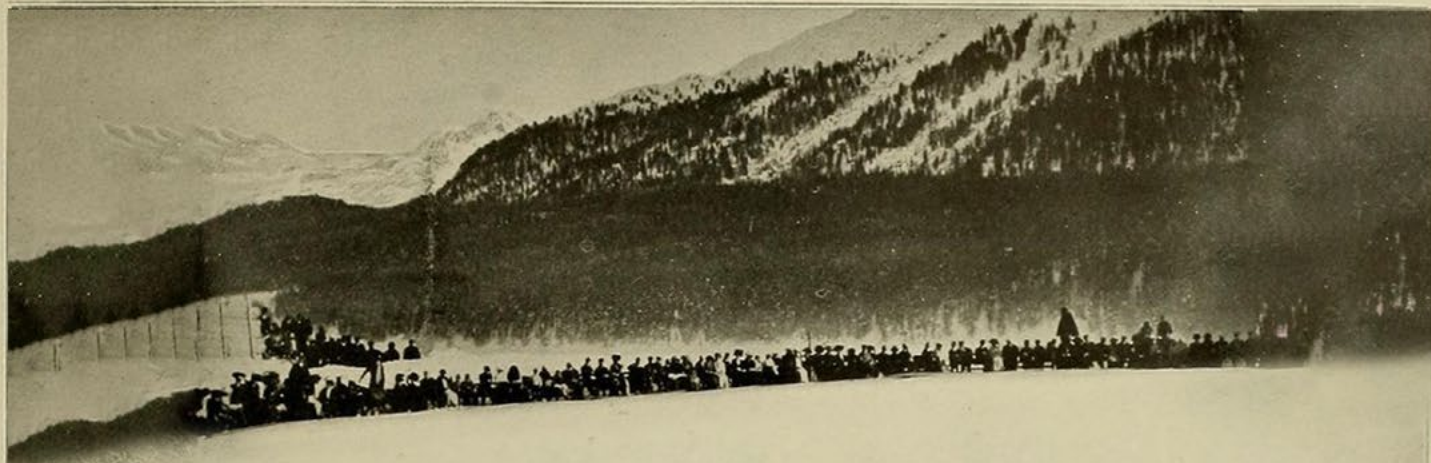




Welcome to **Ithraeyat**, a seasonal cultural magazine produced by The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra). Created to **inspire** hearts and **enrich** minds, this Saudi-inspired platform with an expansive international outlook captures the art scene and the culture of art by bringing together a mosaic of stories collected from across the Kingdom, the region and beyond.

Behind the scenes:

Ithraeyat is the plural of Ithra (enrichment). Magazine has its origins in the Arabic word makhzan, a storehouse. And therefore, Ithraeyat Magazine is a storehouse of unique, enriching stories.



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Letter from the **Editor:**
**When We Become Our Childhood
Sports Heroes**

By Rym Al-Ghazal

‘He kicked it like Captain Majid!’

This is something many of today’s adults would say if they saw a football player do a bicycle kick — an acrobatic backflip type of kick — attributing it to a character that has inspired many children in the Arab world to play football— the animated Captain Majid.



In our 25th edition of Ithraeyat, we pay homage to the '**Art of Sports**,' its universal appeal, and the importance of team spirit, as captured by our golden cover by artist **Ben Mosley**. Most of all, we pay homage to the defiant push of competitiveness that keeps us going each and every day.

There is no underestimating the art and influence of great storytelling, in this case that of the 1980s Japanese manga and anime Captain Tsubasa authored by Yoichi Takahashi, better known across the Arab world as Captain Majid after it was dubbed alongside a collection of Japanese series that have shaped the lives of several generations. The anime transfixed a generation of children and made it their dream to be able to shoot and score like him — I was one of them.

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A Gift of Art to Our Readers:

Enjoy meeting an artistic version of another legendary football player named Majid: Captain Majid Abdullah.

Nicknamed 'The Arabian Pelé,' and 'Al Sahn Al Multaheb' (The Flaming Arrow), Majid Abdullah was born in Jeddah in 1959, and graced the football fields of the world for more than 40 years with his club Al-Nassr and the Saudi national team as a striker.

Recognized for his iconic number '9' sports t-shirt, and best known for being the all-time leading goal scorer for his country, Majid still has many other milestones under his belt, including: being the first captain of the Saudi national team in the World Cup, winning the AFC Asian Cup more than once with the national team, and reaching the World Cup finals and advancing to round 16 for the first time in 1994.



Majid Abdullah, a Saudi football legend as captured by the artistic talent of Jeddah-based Syrian artist **Monzer Charaby**. This painting is one of many in the **'Wall of Legends'** collection at the home of art collector Abdullah Al-Rasheed.



Cover Art: Gold in Motion

By Layla Alzahid

**“I believe sport offers a profound sense of achievement and identity,
inspiring individuals to reach for great things.”**

— Ben Mosley

Ben Mosley is a renowned expressionist artist best known for being one of Britain's leading live painters, as well as the official artist for the British Olympic team (Team GB).

Influenced by legendary artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Van Gogh, and Lowry, Ben's work is characterized by vibrant storytelling and dynamic live painting performances, which he's taken up a notch by incorporating 24-karat gold and precious metals as hallmarks of his own unique style.

**“Sport is a powerful force that unites
people from all walks of life in celebration,”
he told Ithraeyat in an interview.**

**“It is a compelling subject for my art
because of its tribal nature—the sense of
belonging and community it fosters.”**

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Art piece: Olympic Black, 100x150cm, Acrylic and 24 karat gold, created live for Team GB during the Paris Olympics celebrating every Team GB Medal, days 7-9. Courtesy of **Ben Mosley**.



The Cover Art: Team Spirit, 100x100cm. Acrylic and 24-karat gold on canvas. Courtesy of **Ben Mosley**.



Bridges:
Cross-Cultural **Conversations**

Mythical Athleticism
— Ancient Greece


By Rym Al-Ghazal

From the dust of ancient arenas to the pages of epic myths, sports have been part of the human story since the dawn of time. A testament to the human drive to explore and push their abilities, sports has been invented and reinvented throughout different civilizations and cultures, and continues to do so today.

Here, we honor one of the oldest and most revered gatherings of the fastest and the strongest - The **Ancient Olympics** (776 BCE–393 CE).

They were far more than athletic contests—they were a philosophical celebration of human excellence. Founded in Olympia, Greece, these games were held every four years in honor of the ancient God Zeus.

There are different mythical origins related to the games - some related to Hercules, and others drawing from a more treacherous and accursed origin known as 'Pelop's Chariot Race.'

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Year of: **Handcrafts** **The Art of Falcon Hoods**

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

Every part of Falconry is an art. Their hoods are as distinctive as their feathers and style.

But these intricate hoods are more than a stylish accessory representing tradition and cultural pride. They help calm the bird and control its focus during training sessions, whereby removing the hood signals it's time for some falconry. It also prevents the bird of prey from getting frightened during travel or when in crowded areas.

They are often handmade from fine leather and decorated with embroidery or tassels, especially in Middle Eastern falconry. Traditional Arab falcon hoods are known as "al-burqa" or "al-qaffaz" in Arabic, and are always works of art, reflecting heritage, creativity, status, and craftsmanship.

[CLICK HERE](#)
to read more 

Art featured: 'Falcons' Hoods,' from 18th or 19th century India. Made of oriental **mother-of-pearl**, **gold** sheet and hammered **wire**, plaited wire tassel, and satin lining. Part of **The Khalili Collection** as featured in Google Art & Culture.

Exclusive **Interview:** **Art Dubai: The Preeminent Oasis for Art**

By Rym Al-Ghazal

Living up to its essence as a crossroads of cultures, creativity and art, Dubai hosted its 19th Art Dubai since its foundation back in 2007.

Abuzz with the vibrant energy of visitors, artists, and creatives of all walks of life, Art Dubai celebrates the contemporary, the classical, the modern and the digital art worlds, as showcased through dozens of diverse galleries from around the world.

While many art fairs and initiatives have now joined this colorful field (including Art Week Riyadh that debuted in 2025), Art Dubai is a pioneer that filled a crucial gap in the art market when it was launched, giving critical exposure to art from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia.

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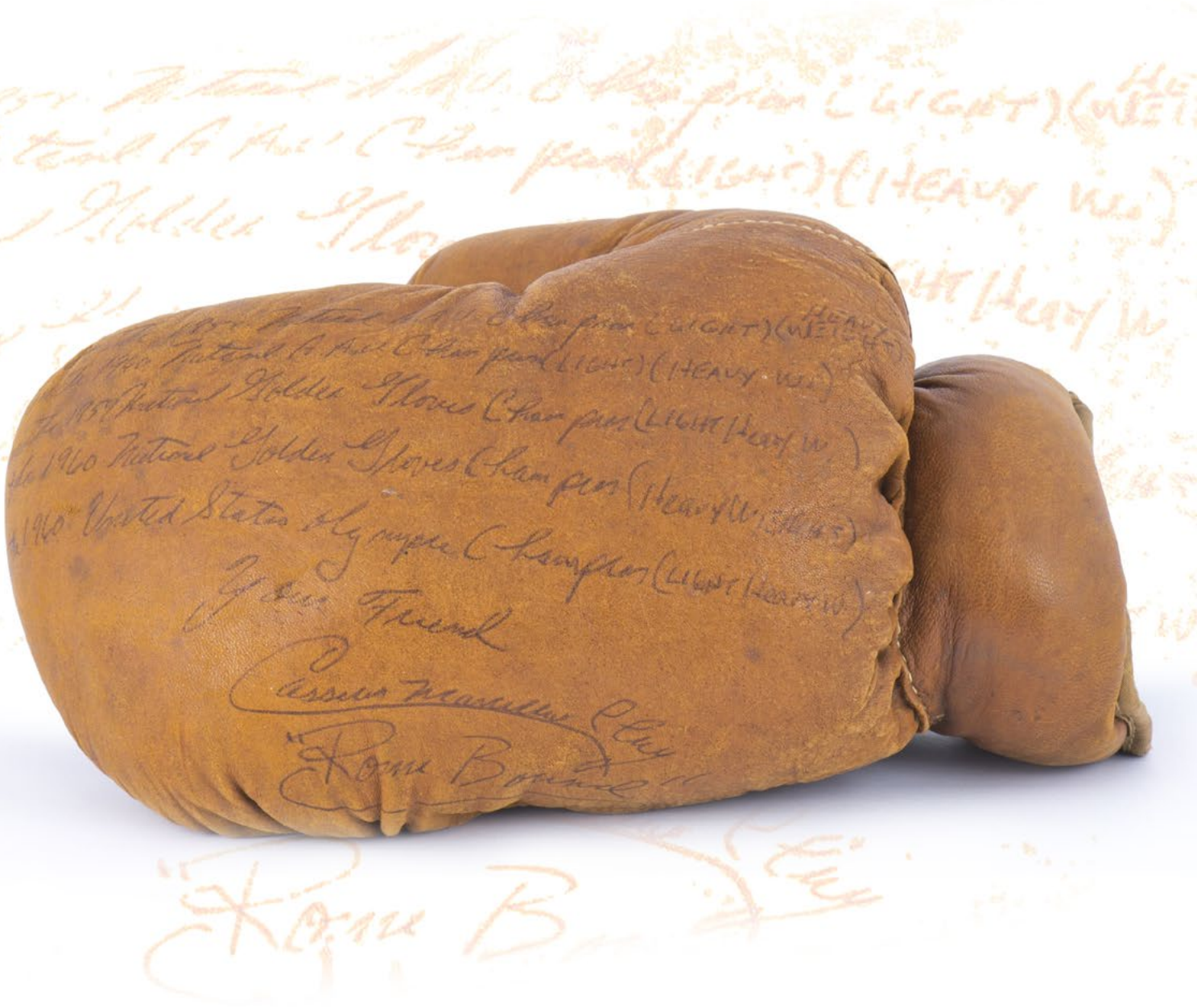
SS25

Sandra Strele, Rooftop Tennis Court, 2025, acrylic, water-based paint and pigments on canvas, 70 x 100 x 2 cm, Courtesy of **The Rooster Gallery**.

Add to Your Bucket List:

Where The World's First Football Game Began

By Rym Al-Ghazal



On view at 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum, a 1959 'Boxing Glove' signed by Cassius Clay — the great Muhammad Ali. Producer: Draper and Maynard Sporting Goods Factory. Production place: United States of America. Material: Leather, Textile, Fiber. Technique: Stitching, Stuffing, Handwriting. Dimensions: 26 x 19 x 11.5 cm. Part of the **distinguished collection of 3-2-1 Qatar** Olympic and Sports Museum.

So who kicked the first ball? There are many stories about the origin of the beloved football, some even crediting the simple act of kicking a round pebble out of the way as the inspiration behind it.

And indeed, there have been ball games across many cultures throughout history, but the earliest known game resembling football is the ancient Chinese game Cuju, literally meaning 'kick the ball', and dating back to 200 BCE.

Ball games kept evolving across various cultures — including various types of rubber ball games played across ancient Mesoamerica that the Spanish encountered when they landed in the New World — until the 1800s when it became the current one beloved by people the world over.

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The 1888 FA Cup final match ball features intricate designs in various colors, decorating the entire exterior.
Photo: **Courtesy of 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum.**

Exclusive **Interview:**


The Spirit of Sport: Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani

By Rym Al-Ghazal

“Climbing the Seven Summits—culminating with Everest—was the greatest teacher I’ve ever had. Each mountain taught me something different, but Everest was where I discovered who I really am. Through those climbs, I found the seven values that now define my life: passion, belief, patience, persistence, appreciation, humility, and inspiration.”

— His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani

At the helm of Qatar’s groundbreaking 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum stands a man who embodies the very spirit of adventure while conquering heights and breaking new records. His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani isn’t just a museum president—he’s a record-breaking mountaineer, a sportsman, an explorer, a serial entrepreneur, and a philanthropist reshaping the intersection of sports, culture, and technology in the Gulf.

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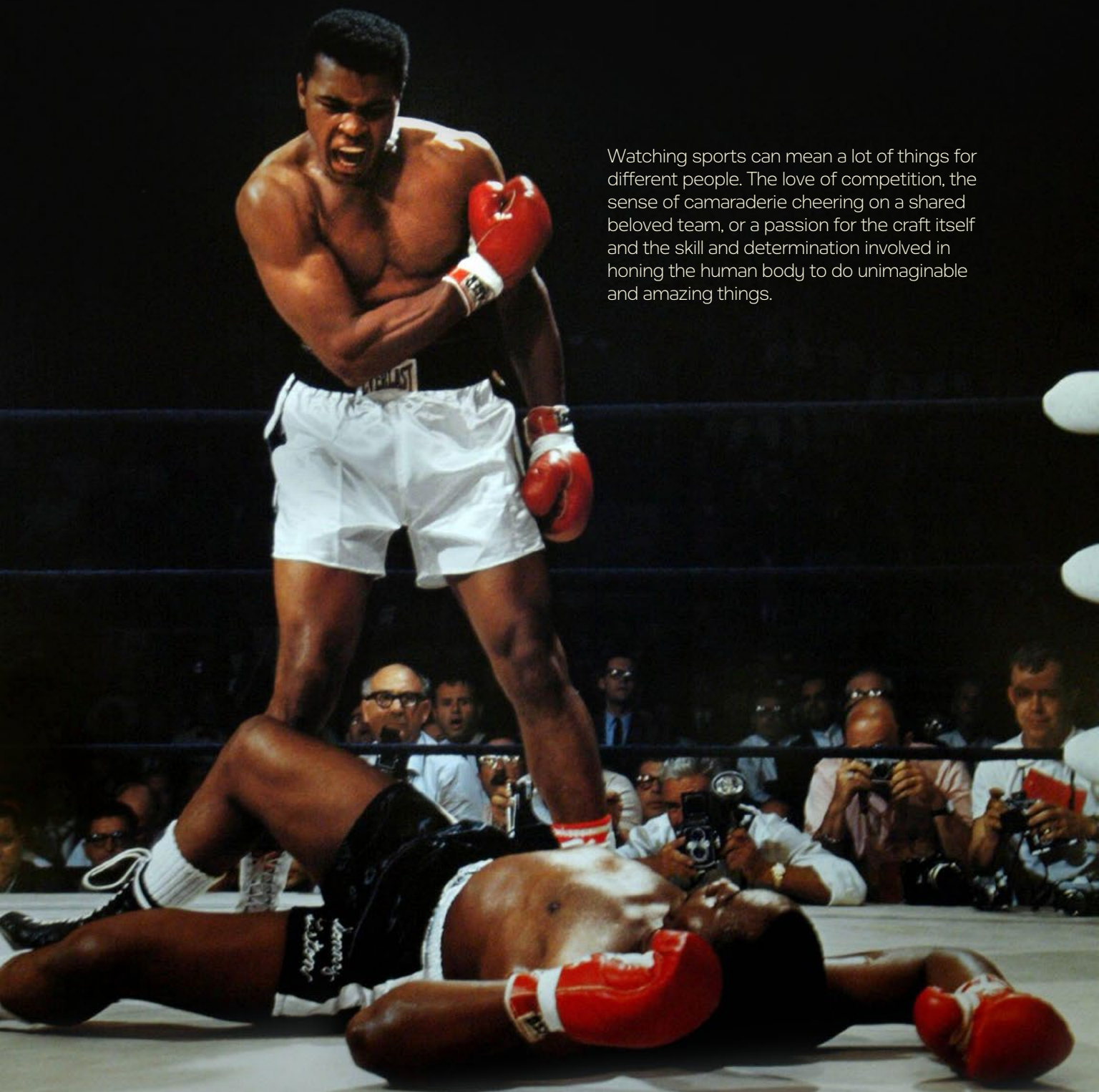


His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani seen here defying all odds as he climbs the challenging mountains of Nepal. Courtesy of Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani. He is the president of **3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum**.

Spotlight: Iconic Pics of Legendary Athletes

By Ahmad Daldin

Watching sports can mean a lot of things for different people. The love of competition, the sense of camaraderie cheering on a shared beloved team, or a passion for the craft itself and the skill and determination involved in honing the human body to do unimaginable and amazing things.



The iconic photo that became an iconic poster: The legendary boxer **Muhammad Ali vs Sonny Liston**, capturing the champion in action after first round: knockout of Sonny at St Dominic's Arena, Lewiston, ME, at the 1965 World Heavyweight Title. Credit: **Alamy**.



Still, even for those of us that don't follow sports for any of those reasons, we still share in the humble admiration of the greats. We recognize the moments that stand out in history, the feats that cause humanity to collectively gasp in awe, the times where passion, energy, emotion and defiance scream out to say "Look at this! Look at what we can do!"

Photo of true courage and resilience: **Terry Fox** runs during his "Marathon of Hope" in 1981, inspiring all of Canada and then the globe. Credit: **The Canadian Press/Alamy Live News.**



These iconic images resonate because they encapsulate more than just athletic excellence—they immortalize powerful narratives that reflect cultural identity, historical triumphs, and personal struggles.

Saudi Wonder Goal: Footballer **Saeed Al-Owairan** of Saudi Arabia celebrates during Saudi Arabia's 1-0 victory over Belgium in their first FIFA World Cup in 1994 match at RFK Stadium, Washington DC. Mandatory Credit: **Billy Stickland/ALLSPORT.**



Each photograph serves as a snapshot of human potential, a vivid reminder of perseverance, rebellion and inspiration. Whether it's Terry Fox redefining courage, Abebe Bikila shattering barriers barefoot,

or Saeed Al-Owairan electrifying a nation on the world stage, these visuals transcend borders and eras, etching themselves deeply into our collective memory.

The legendary **Diego Maradona**'s 'Hand of God,' that continues to this day to be debated.
Contributor: Daniel Motz / **Alamy Stock Photo**.



We share here just a handful of these moments – as there are far too many – captured for all of time: iconic images of iconic people doing what they do best.

What are some of the iconic sports images you remember?
Share your memories with us at: ithraeyat@ithra.com

Winning Barefoot: The legendary **Abebe Bikila** at the 1960 Rome Olympics. Abebe, a member of the Imperial Guard of the Emperor of Ethiopia, wins the Olympic marathon running barefoot. Credit: **Album / Archivo ABC**.


Spotlight: The Art of the Football Jersey

By Batool AlAskar



Art has always had its own way of sneaking into our lives. For me, it started with simple colors, which were not merely shades on the players' shirts, but signals that determined the rhythm of my day. I used to watch those colors on the green pitch, knowing that the outcome would decide the mood in our home for the next two days.

Over time, I realized that these shirts were not just cues to distinguish teams, but moving canvases, with art pulsing in every detail; from the design of the logos and the curved lines to the particular colors that carried the identity of the team.

[CLICK HERE](#) 
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Ezeta, the Italian craft masters known for their distinctive style, have showcased their artistry by designing SS Romulea's football kits, including this jersey — an accomplished championship team of the Italian Eccellenza league — inspired by the architectural splendor of Ancient Rome's Basilica of St. John Lateran.



Spotlight: Saudi Sports: A Decade of Achievements

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

Since Saudi Arabia set up its first official sports authority back in 1954, the country's sports scene has changed a lot. What started as a simple step has grown into a bold dream to become a major player on the global sports stage. Today, that dream is coming true, with the Kingdom hosting many more big international events that are catching the world's eye.

With the generous permission of the **Saudi Ministry of Sport**, we're excited to share a selection of important upcoming dates in the Kingdom's sporting calendar. Get ready and mark your calendars.

2025:

- Italian Super Cup – 2025–2026 season

2026:

- WWE Royal Rumble
- FIA World Endurance Championship
- Arabian Gulf Cup (Gulf Cup 27)
- AFC U-17 Asian Cup (2026–2028)

2027:

- AFC Asian Cup
- First Olympic Esports Games

2028:

- Community Sports Olympiad
- UCI Gravel World Championships

2029:

- Asian Winter Games
- Spanish Super Cup (2020–2029)
Supercopa de España)

2034:

- FIFA World Cup
- Asian Games (ASIAD)



Special Feature: The Tifo Phenomenon: When Stands Become Art

By Qais Abdullatif



Your eyes behold **the art** of Italian sculptor, architect, and poet Michelangelo created between 1508 and 1512. But this is not a sightseeing trip to Rome. You are not standing in the Sistine Chapel, gazing up at its ceiling. You are not in a museum, and you are certainly not scrolling through a social media page filled with famous artworks.

You are in a football stadium in Madrid 2008, just before the kickoff in the famous derby between archrivals Real Madrid and Atlético Madrid. In the stands, Real Madrid's hardcore fan group, known as Ultras Sur, decided to create their own version of Michelangelo's masterpiece.


[CLICK HERE](#) 
to read more

Photo: Before the Rome derby in 2020, Lazio fans unveiled a tifo related to the timeless art of the Italian sculptor and painter Michelangelo. Credit: **Alamy Stock Photo**.




Spotlight:

**Women in the Olympics:
Bodies that Dream, Voices
that Resist, Histories
that Rise**

By Rawan Talal

Sports have never been merely a reflection of physical strength, but a canvas that expresses a human being's struggle with themselves and with their society.

As for women, their steps were never just athletic movements. Every step on grass, sand, snow, and across water left a mark on the body of society and reshaped its features. Questions rang out: Who has the right to be a sports champion? Who is allowed to run and score and win? And who deserves to have their achievements celebrated? Women, who for so long were excluded and kept in the shadows, now bring light and glory.

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From the **Field**: Community Artistic Expressions

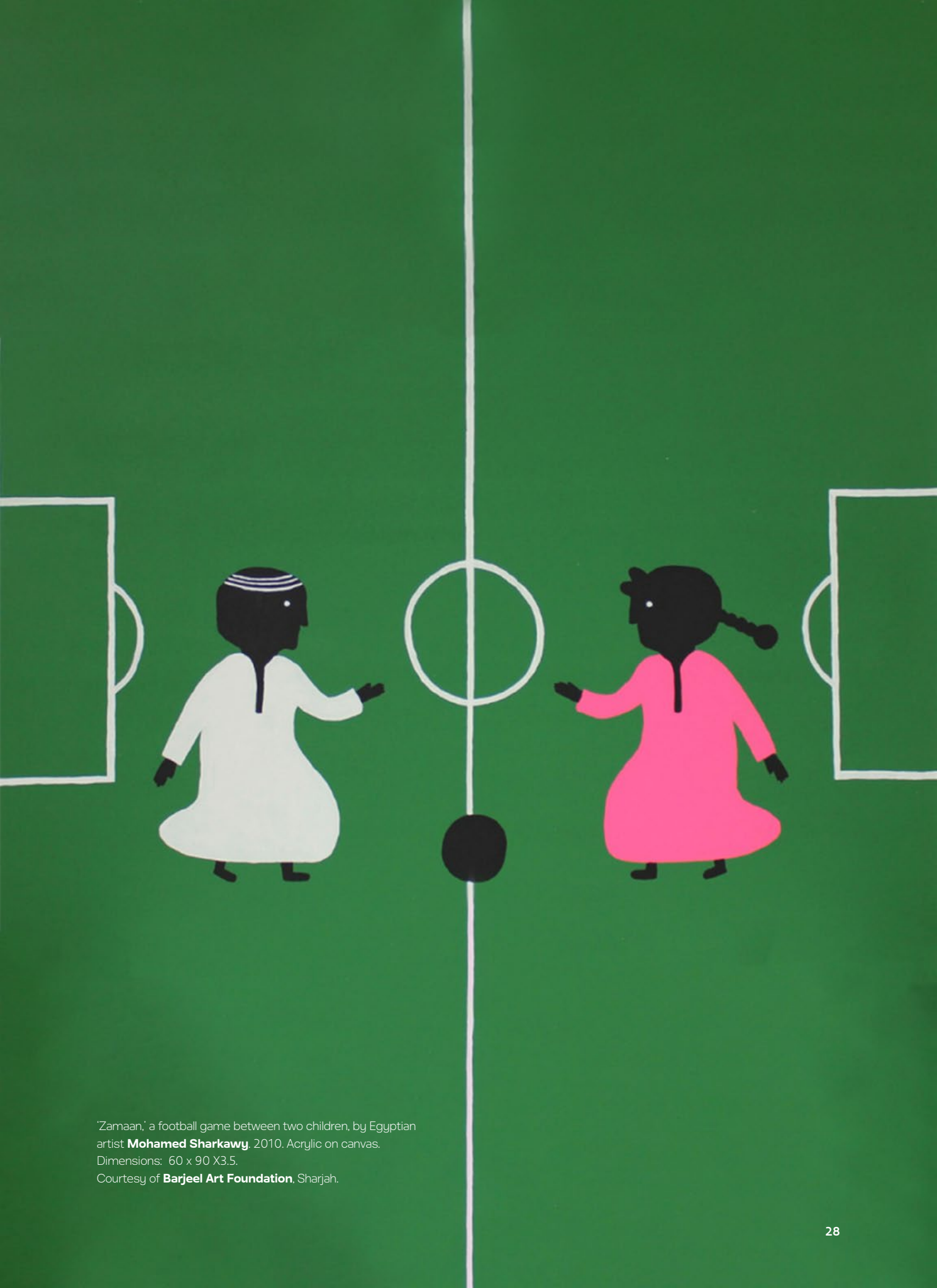
By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team



We meet in this special edition dedicated to sports, three artists who capture the essence and the spirit of sports in their own creative way. We meet **Werner Bronkhorst** from South Africa, **Mohamed Sharkawy** from Egypt, and **Lee Wybranski** from the United States.

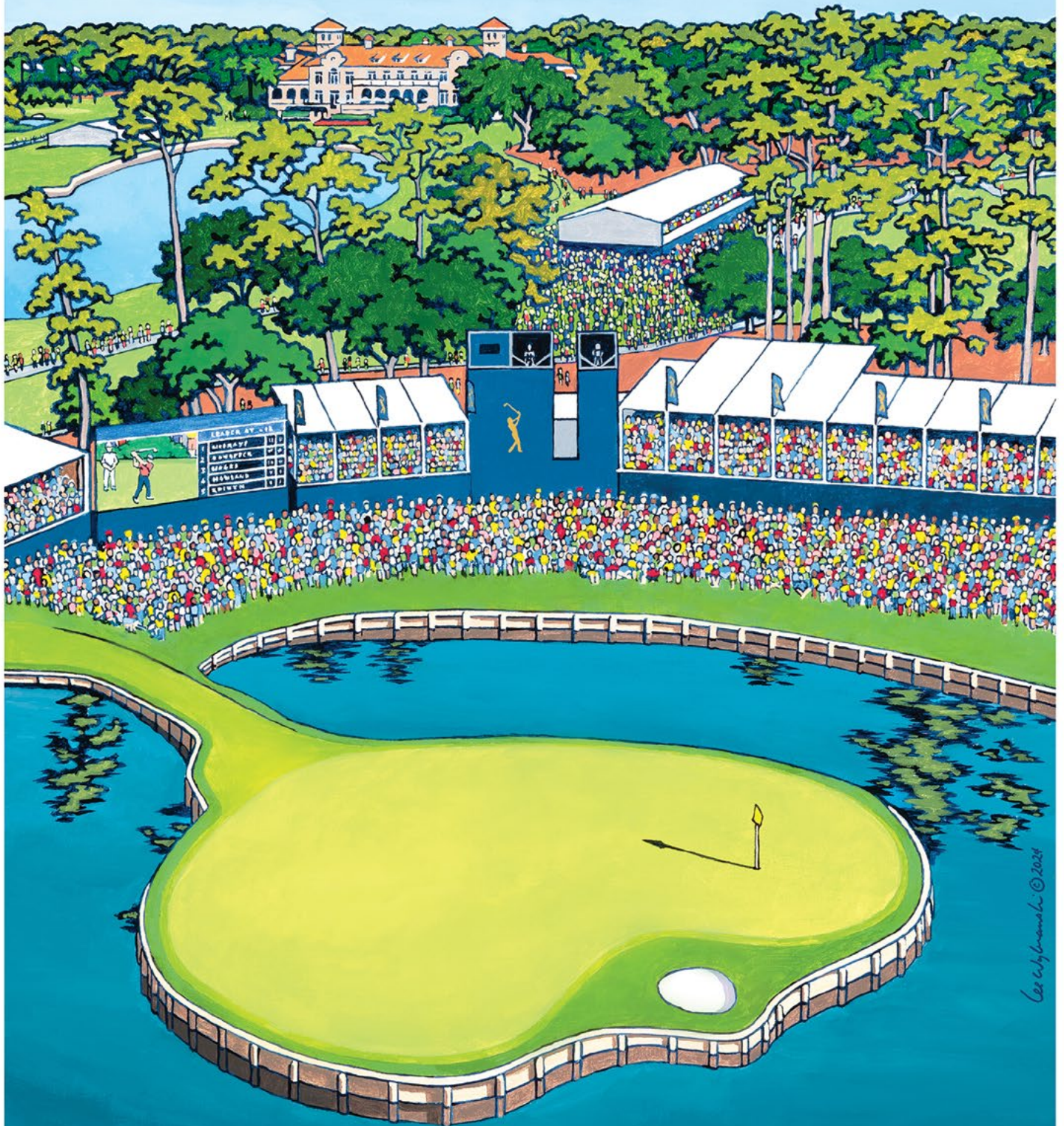
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Art featured: 'Caddey Road.' Courtesy of **Werner Bronkhorst**.



'Zamaan,' a football game between two children, by Egyptian artist **Mohamed Sharkawy**, 2010, Acrylic on canvas.
Dimensions: 60 x 90 X3.5.
Courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah.

THE PLAYERS



Lee Wybranski © 2024

1974

50TH ANNIVERSARY

2024

Guest **Columnist:** **The Football Odyssey: Between Memory and Myth**

By Rakan Abdulaziz




In 1990, in the heart of Milan, a twelve-year-old Italian boy watched with his friends a football miracle: Cameroon defeats Maradona. However, the boy did not pay attention to who scored the goal, but to the one who kept his team steady with only nine players, against the legends from the Tango nation.

That goalkeeper, who appeared to him like the heroes of epics, standing tall between the posts, was Thomas N'Kono. And from that moment, Gianluigi Buffon changed his favored position from midfielder to goalkeeper, to later become a legend himself, as if carrying that moment forward.

It is a story that echoes the tale of Theseus when he saw Heracles in his grandfather's palace and chose to follow in his path of danger and glory. Both the Italian boy and the Greek boy saw in those men not just a person, but a road worth following.

And that is when a legend is born: when fleeting moments are etched in us – forever.

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درجة ثانية ٣ ريالات

المملكة العربية السعودية

رقم ١١١٤٣

المباراة الرسمية

على الاضواء الكاشفة

درجة أولى

على كأس صاحب الجلالة المعظم

بين

فريق نادي النصر و فريق نادي القادسية بالدمام

على ملعب رعاية الشباب بالملز

وذلك مساء يوم الخميس ١٣٩٧/٥/٢٤ هـ الموافق ١٩٧٧/٥/١٢ م

الساعة الثامنة والرابع زوالي الساعة الثانية غروبي

كل تذكرة غير مغتومة تعتبر لاغية

Reflections:

Origins on the Pitch: Al-Qadsiah, Al-Nassr, and a Nation's Game Begins

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

Football was never just a game for us, it had always been woven into the social and cultural fabric of Saudi Arabia, a way to express identity, community, and belonging. Since the sport's local emergence in the early 20th century, young enthusiasts took to narrow streets and open lots, forming informal teams named after their neighborhoods.

These humble spaces were their first pitches.

Over time, the game grew: clubs were founded, regional tournaments emerged, and in 1977, the Kingdom launched its first professional league, the Saudi Premier League, with eight clubs from across the country.

CLICK HERE
to read more



Second-round match ticket from the inaugural Saudi Premier League season (1977), preserved in the **archives of Al-Qadsiah Club**. Courtesy of the club.

تقطع عند الباب الخارجي


Reflections: From Strike to Stroke: First NFT Football Exhibition

By Hassan Albather



A vibrant celebration of human culture, athleticism, artistry and the spirit of community, the beautiful game — from bustling streets to grand stadiums — has always united people regardless of their backgrounds. Truly, it is a universal language of connection and shared passion. At its core, football embodies the spirit of simplicity, but also creativity and innovation.

It constantly evolves, embracing new tactics and technologies and supporting different communities. Over the years, football has transcended the boundaries of physical competition to become a canvas for cultural storytelling.

[CLICK HERE
to read more](#) 

Art featured: Generated NFT for the historic World Cup Final, with Argentina winning the cup in Qatar after the penalty shootout. Part of Ithra Art Collection.

500 PS
POSTE AERIENNE



Spotlight:
Tiny Triumphs -
Stamps Celebrating Sport


By Rawan Talal





Postage stamps were first introduced in the 19th century—not merely as conveyances for sending letters, but as miniature canvases that encapsulate the identity, history, values, and even the culture of nations.

The world's first stamp, the "Penny Black," issued in Britain in 1840, featured the image of Queen Victoria and marked the beginning of using art in stamps as a means of visual storytelling and historical documentation.

CLICK HERE
to read more 

Ambassadors for sports: A collection of stamps from Finland, 1989, showcasing popular sports in the country. Source **Wikimedia Commons**.



**Dear participants in the
“Art of Sports” postcard competition.**

We extend our sincere thanks for your valuable participation. Your enthusiasm and engagement brought us great joy, and we were truly impressed by the high quality of the entries we received, which made the evaluation process a real challenge for our team.

We are pleased to announce the names of the winners:

- Mohammed Al-Shehri
- Ali Al-Arbash
- Wejdan Al-Aradi
- Lamia Al-Shayban
- Reem Al-Awaji

Due to the overwhelming number of wonderful submissions, we've also selected a group of **'Special Mentions'**—including a special category for **children's entries** that truly captured the spirit of sports and inspired us all.

**Click here to
see more**



Enjoy Meeting the Five Winning Artworks:



Winning artwork by Mohammed Al-Shehri.

بطولة التنس المملكة العربية السعودية



Tennis Championship

٥

بريد
POSTAGE

٥



Winning artwork by Ali Al-Arbash.



Winning artwork by Wejdan Al-Aradi.



Winning artwork by Lamia Al-Shayban.





Winning artwork by Reem Al-Awaji.



Arabic Treasures: The Horse: What Poets Have Yet to Say

By Rawan Talal

**“Cherished and honored by us, our children may
starve, but she would not be deprived.”**

— Poet Ubaydah ibn Rabi'ah al-Tamimi

We can say much about an Arab's relationship with horses. It is not a utilitarian relationship limited to transportation or use in war, but rather a delicate, emotional bond. The horse was the Arab's companion on the road and a mirror reflecting their identity and core values: courage, generosity, pride, and

authenticity. In the desert, it stole the hearts of nomadic Bedouins with its beauty, grace, speed, and intelligence—as well as its loyalty and endurance. Their tents became a shelter for the horse, and a man might go to sleep hungry, giving priority to the horse to be fed.

CLICK HERE
to read more 

Art featured: The Arab Tent, by Sir Edwin Henry Landseer (1802–1873), circa 1865–1866.
Oil on canvas, Wallace Collection, London. Image courtesy of **Artvee**.


From the **Shelves:** **Our Oldest Human Arts**

By M. Lynx Qualey from Arablit



Sports and storytelling are two of the oldest human arts. Both flourished in different styles around the world: from stickball among the Algonquin people, and falconry in ancient Mesopotamia, to "mob football" in medieval England and the martial arts in China. These sports also influenced local literary forms, as storytellers vied to tell tales of winners and losers.

Nowadays, to read a good sports story is to be transported to the scene: muscles tense as you cheer or flinch or shout advice at your favorite player. But in a great sports story, we find much more: explorations of the limits of the human body, thoughts about the nature of hierarchy, and diatribes on the essence of competition.

CLICK HERE
to read more 

Art featured: Cabinet of Curiosities (ca.1695) by Domenico Remps, held in the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence. Credit from **The Public Domain Review**.




From the **Vault:** **The Art of Movement**

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

Capturing movement in art is a challenging art form in itself.

Very few artists can create dynamic celebrations of the senses, but the crown would have to go to the legendary Leonardo da Vinci. His 1510 anatomical **Vitruvian Man** dissected movement with scientific precision. The sketch echoes a gymnast's pose in a timeless freeze of athletic grace.

In the area of sports, it is wonderful to discover artists that challenge the elements of movement and the dynamic essence of sports and explore a new way to express art. A good example is Futurist artist Umberto Boccioni who intentionally rejected traditional imagery and created works that were modern and radical, such as his 1913 **Dynamism of a Soccer Player** that shattered form to show speed's essence.

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Art featured: Olympic series, basketball by Hans Erni, 1983.

From the collection of: **The Olympic Museum** and published on **Google Arts & Culture platform**.



From the **Archives:** **For the Love of the Game**

By Rym Al-Ghazal

An empty dusty street, a grassy lot, or even just an alleyway between two buildings; any spot can easily be turned into a playing field. After all, where there's a will and passion, there's a way... and there's a sport.

As these beautiful photos from Aramco Archives capture, there was no need for fancy stadiums or even golf links; people came with their balls, their clubs, their excitement, and played their hearts out.

What these images capture is the ultimate team spirit, that invisible force that turns individual talent into collective triumph.


[CLICK HERE](#) 
to read more

Photo featured: Location and date are unknown (possibly an Aramco residential area), but this child's enthusiasm for football is symbolic of the passion of the game and its players. Courtesy of Aramco Archives.

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Special thanks for contributing artists & art:



The PUBLIC DOMAIN REVIEW



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ABOUT ITHRA

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) is one of Saudi Arabia's most influential cultural destinations, a destination for the curious, creatives, seekers of knowledge, and more.

Through a compelling series of programs, performances, exhibitions, events and initiatives, Ithra creates world-class experiences across its interactive public spaces that bring together culture, innovation and knowledge that are designed to appeal to everyone. Connecting creatives, challenging perspectives and transforming ideas, Ithra is graduating its own leaders in the cultural field.

Ithra is Saudi Aramco's flagship CSR initiative and its largest cultural contribution to the Kingdom. Ithra's components include the Idea Lab, Library, Cinema, Theater, Museum, Energy Exhibit, Great Hall, Children's Museum and Ithra Tower. For more information, please visit: www.ithra.com

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Art courtesy of Ben Mosley.

