

Ithraeyat Magazine

Autumn 2025



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: The Infinite Worlds of "Imagined"

By Rym Al-Ghazal

"Reason is the eye of the soul, and imagination is its light."

— widely attributed to 11th-century thinker and physician Ibn Sina (Avicenna)

Imagination is humanity's first and most powerful technology.

Long before we built cities or coded algorithms, we told stories—myths of gods and monsters, legends of heroes and villains, whispered tales of worlds beyond our own.

These imagined realms did and do more than entertain; they shape cultures, challenge perceptions, and offer escape while also reflecting our deepest fears and brightest hopes.



Cover Art: Between Silence and Dreams

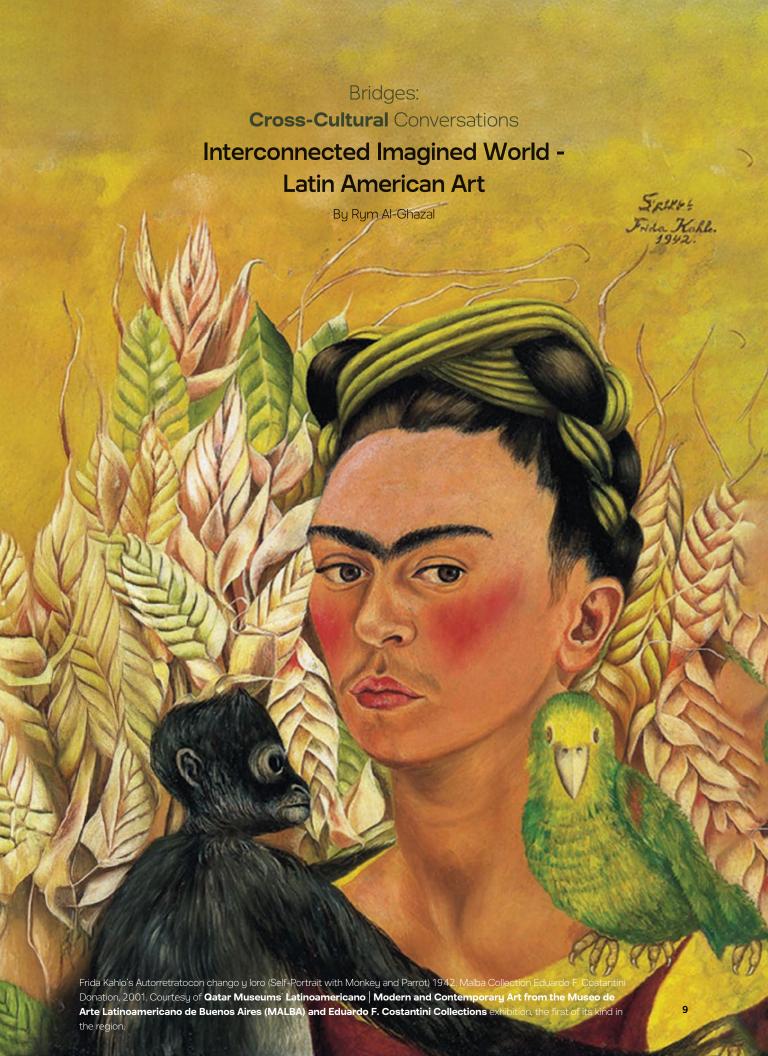
By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

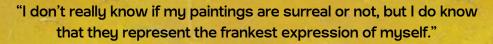
"Imagination is a window on the possible, it transforms silence into images, it gives voice to interior landscapes."

- Artist Toni Demuro

'La Cura,' by Toni Demuro. 2025, digital art, courtesy of the artist.







- Legendary Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907–1954)

There is something very special about Latin American art. Mythical, symbolic, raw, peppered with expressions of identity and ideas and realities, one can't help but marvel at the breadth and width of art born of a region so diverse and multicultural. It is a magical world of its own. An iconic example is the art of the revolutionary Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, featured here, whose creative expressions so blurred the lines between realities, dreams and raw truths, that she can't be boxed into any one category.



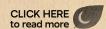
Year of: **Handicrafts Flights of Imagination**

By Ahmad Dialdin



Our imagination knows no bounds. It is ingrained into every neuron of our brains, carried across generations through every letter of our DNA, and infused into every bit of our being with each beat of our hearts.

We draw inspiration from everything around us, and we express ourselves in whatever medium we have a passing familiarity and competence with. Take the Conference of the Birds, for example. A Quranic passage describing Prophet Sulaiman's understanding of the speech of birds inspired 12th-century Persian poet Farid Al-Din Attar to craft his now famous epic.



BOWL: The phoenix motif, while originally rooted in East Asian traditions, was introduced into Islamic art during the Mongol conquests in the 13th century and the establishment of the Ilkhanid dynasty in Iran and Iraq. This is a notable departure from similar designs of the time, which typically depict four birds in more symmetrical and static arrangements. Molded fritware with white, black and grey paint covered by a clear glaze. Probably Kashan, Iran (Sultanabad ware), 13th - 14th century CE/7th - 8th century AH. Height: 13 cm, diameter: 16.7 cm. Courtesy of

Ithra Museum.













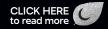
Where Imagination Becomes Art

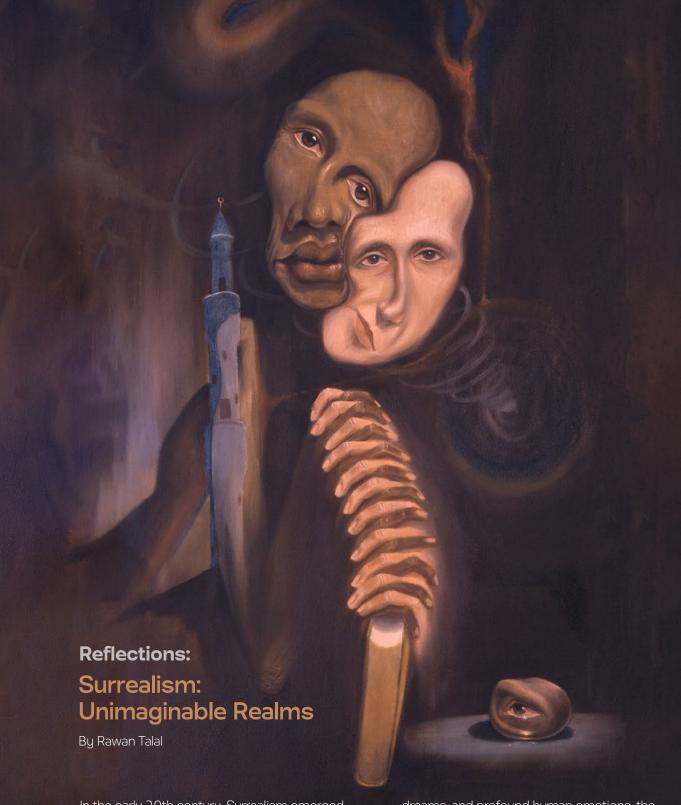
By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

"The future is created by the collective imagination of people. Curiosity deepens our understanding of the world and leads to creativity. And I believe it is imagination that determines the direction of that creativity."

— Takashi Kudo, Communications Director at teamLab Borderless

Step into a wonderland where art defies boundaries and imagination comes alive at teamLab Borderless in Jeddah, a mesmerizing digital wonderland in the heart of Jeddah's Historic District.





In the early 20th century, Surrealism emerged as a reaction to the changes brought about by World War I . It was an artistic and literary movement that challenged reason and reality and questioned everything conventional. Influenced by psychological ideas that sought a deeper understanding of the subconscious,

dreams, and profound human emotions, the Surrealists used unconventional methods to express their ideas. They pursued symbolism and blended reality with the imaginary, transforming bizarre scenes into mirrors that reflect the hidden depths of the soul.



Guest Columnist:

The Godfather: How Ahmed Khaled Tawfik Created a New Arab Imagination

By Ahmed El-Fakharany

In the 1990s, the edge of a bed, under a dim lamplight, became a laboratory for a new kind of science fiction and horror. An entire generation of teenagers would end their day with a journey into strange worlds led by Dr. Refaat Ismail, the hero of the "Paranormal" series.

He was a retired hematologist, sick and insecure, but constantly forced to confront terrifying mythical creatures. This simple, affordable series became a gateway to new imaginary worlds for Arab readers. Years later, a reader recalled those moments, saying, "It was as if they were movie tickets shown only in my imagination."

Ahmed Khaled Tawfik (1962–2018), the quiet Egyptian physician, created these worlds, changing Arab youth's relationship with reading, and raising the question: How was one writer able to build an imaginary Arab world that captivated an entire generation?







Spot**light:**Labubu Dolls: Mischief, Monsters & Collectible Mania

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

Move over, Barbie. Step aside, Beanie Babies. There's a new darling in the collectible world, and it's a tiny, toothy, delightfully devilish creature with a cult following that's growing faster than you can say "Labubu!"

A creature of contradictions—both playful and a little sinister, Labubu is a mischievous pointy-eared, fang-bearing creature with a grin that suggests it's either about to hug you... or steal your snacks! Part adorable, part slightly unsettling (in the best way), Labubu is the breakout star of Kasing Lung's "The Monsters" universe—a fantastical world filled with quirky, expressive creatures that feel like they've jumped straight out of a fairu tale.





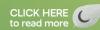
Spotlight:

Wafa Al-Hamad: Worlds of Art and Imagination

Bu the Ithraeuat Editorial Team



In the Qatari art scene, there are names who have succeeded in blending visual creativity, academic vision, and authentic aesthetic philosophy. The late Qatari artist Wafa Al-Hamad (1964-2012) is at the forefront of these figures. Over more than two decades Al-Hamad built a rich visual legacy that continues to inspire artists and researchers in contemporary art.





Exclusive Interview: A Unique Fingerprint In the Desert: The Story of Ithra's Building

By Rym Al-Ghazal

"We were designing and building a new concept that was breaking new grounds in the cultural arena. Therefore, the Ithra building had to be strong, it had to have a presence."

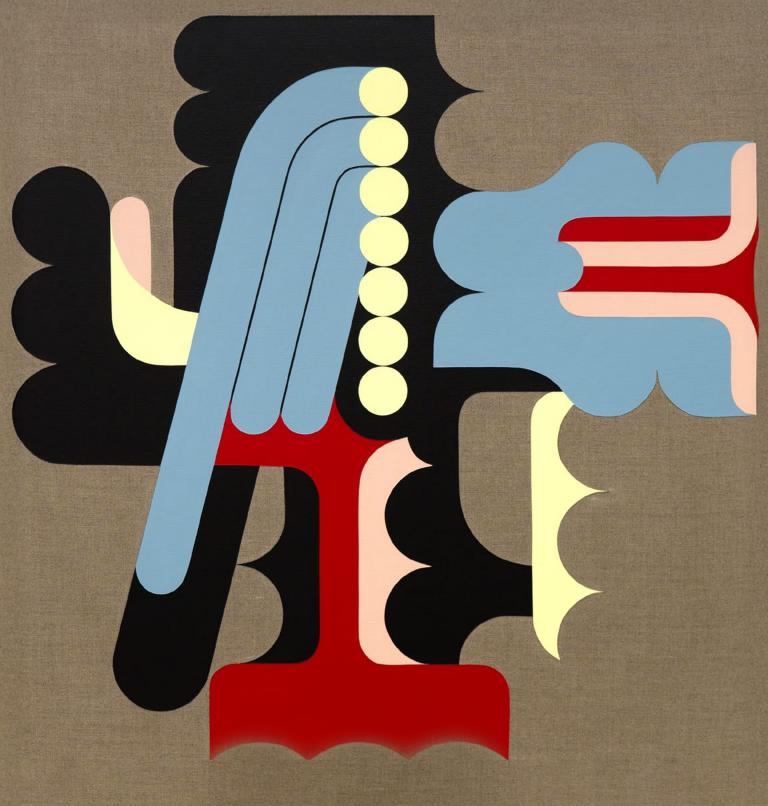
> — Eli Synnevag, Senior Architect & Director of Acquisition and Business Development Middle East & Africa at Snøhetta



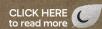
From the **Field**: Community **Art Reshapes the World**

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team





We meet in this special edition dedicated to imagination and the imagined worlds, different artists, such as Roger Mattos from Brazil, and others from Galería RGR (Mexico) and Gallery Espace (India) who explore and experiment with this theme in their own creative way.

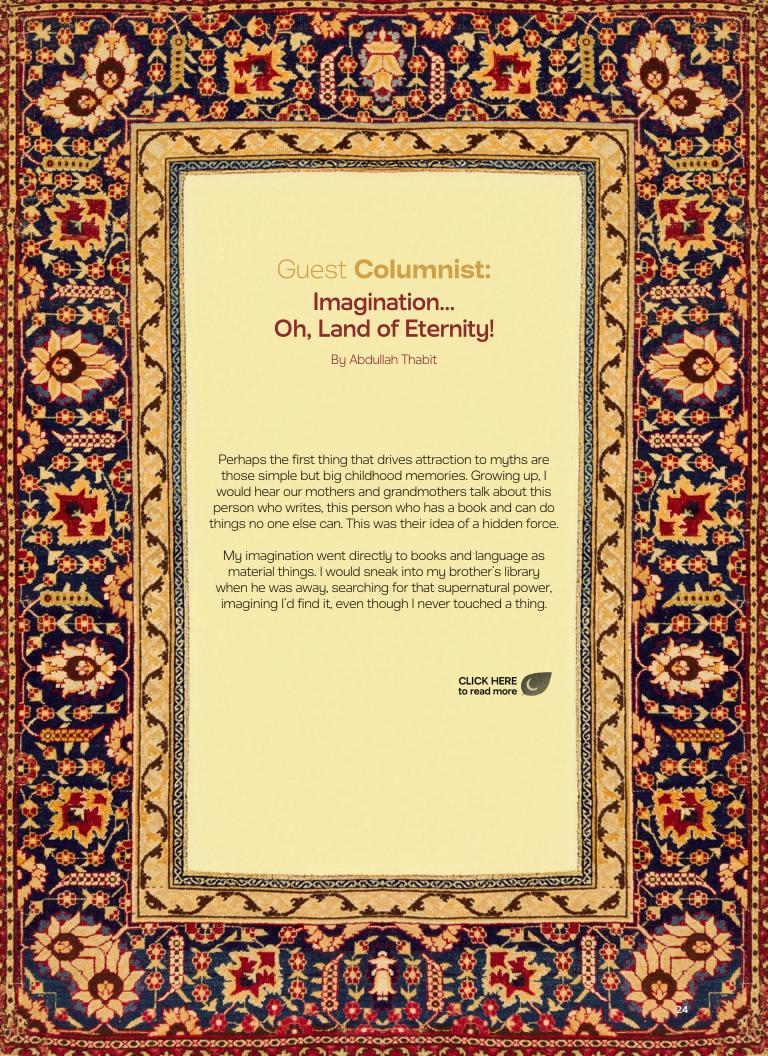
















Reflections: Cinema between Myths and Science Fiction

By Abdulwahed Alwani

The roots of science fiction go back to myths that attempted to explain cosmic phenomena aesthetically, based on the perception of natural forces as conflicting mythical forces, intertwined in their control of the destinies and fates of life and beings. With the development of scientific knowledge and the means of exploration

and research, multiple beliefs declined in favor of scientific explanations. Yet, cultures never abandoned their myths, which were rich in life experiences that revealed the human soul, and all its fears and desires, its pains and hopes. Throughout the ages, the literary world has reproduced these myths in new forms that suit emerging conditions.







Guest **Columnist:**Video Games & Imagined Worlds

By Abdul Salam Omar

Imagination in video games goes beyond the shallow and unfair framing of them being merely an escape from reality. In the rich worlds of video games, imagination reveals itself as a fundamental element among others, and forms a significant part of the experiential process of engaging with the story and adventure as intended by the creators of such games.

Video games uniquely benefit from human memory to break the boundaries of reality and imagination, blending them through scenes of intertwined, memory-evoking worlds, emotionally charged decisions, and the recreation of mythological narratives deeply rooted in human cultural heritage.



Playful imagination: The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past' released by the dynamic Nintendo in 1991, delighted players as much as it intrigued and challenged them. The Zelda series has been evolving and breaking new imaginative grounds since its first launch in 1986 - soon celebrating its 40th anniversary - with a new generation of fans gained each time. Image credit: **UML Connector**. The character Link seen above is able to bother the chickens or 'Cuccos'!

Reflections:

Imagination is Our Tool for Discovering the Unknown

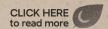
By Rawan Talal





We discover the world with an instinct that drives us to see the unseen and imagine what doesn't yet exist. The initial spark begins with a simple question: "What if?" Imagination, in essence, is a hidden mirror to reality. Although it may seem at first glance separate from it, or a means of escaping it, it is what

grants humans the ability to transcend the familiar boundaries of knowledge in science, art, and even the details of daily life. It is a tool for discovering the unknown, redefining the known, and a means of proposing what cannot yet be proven.

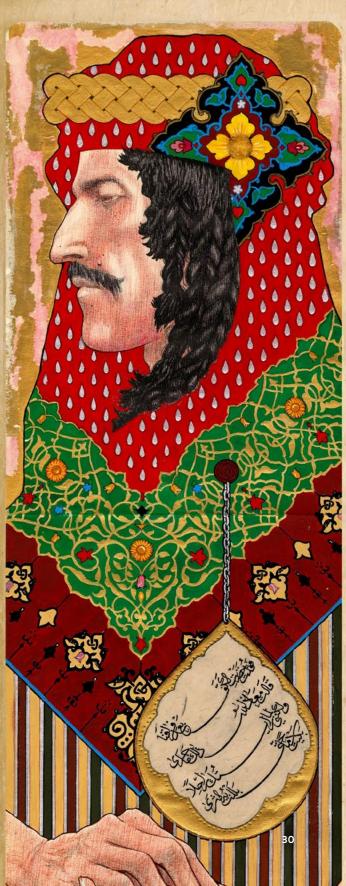


Arabic **Treasures**:

A Timeless Story of Love -Layla and Majnun

By Layla Alzahid



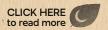


"I remembered Layla and the bygone years... and the days when no one forbade our cheer"

- Qays ibn Al-Mulawwah

Every nation in the world has immortal love stories that have left a profound impact on their conscience and colored their memories across generations, celebrating love and infatuation, and fascinated by the lives of

These stories have become legends and tales told throughout the ages, including the story of the most famous lover, Qays ibn Al-Mulawwah, his love for Layla Al-Ameriya, and the sweet poems he composed about her, which were recited by lovers after him time and time again to express their feelings.





وَمَانِيَ اشْرَاكُ وَلَكِيَ عِجْهَا وَعُظْمَ الْجُوَيَا عِبَاالْقَلْمِ اللَّاوِيَا الحِبُّ مِنَ لاستماء مَاوَافَقَ إَشِهُمَا أَوْاشْبَهُ أَوْمَاكَانَ مِنهُ مُدَّالِينًا خَلِينَاغُ لِنَافَا كُنْ مُنْ لِينِينَ لِمَنْ اللَّهُ مُنْ لِينِينَ لِمَا وَمُنْ ذَا لَمُنَا لِينَا لَمَمْرِي لِقَدْأَبْتَكَيْمِينَ يَابُمُمَامَةَ الْ جَمِيْقِ وَأَبْتَكِيْتِ الْمُبُونَ الْمُوَاكِمُ خَلْنِلَانِ لَانْرَجُو اللَّقِياءَ وَلازَيْ خَلِينَاتُنِ اللَّ يَرْجُو الرَّبِيارِيُّ َكَ الْفُ مِنْ الْمُ الْمُعَاوِيا لِلْهِ الْمُعَالِمُ الْمُعَالِمُولِا لِمُعَالِمُولِا لِمُعَالِمُولِا لِمُعَا شَمَا اشْتَطَنْهُا الْوَلْمُوفَى الْجَمَاقَا بِالْفَلَوْلِ الْعَفْوْفَا لِمِنْكُمَا اللَّهِ الْعَلَمُ وَالْمَت عَلَى مِثْلِ السَّرِيِّ فِلْمُثَلِّ الْمُؤْمِنِيَّةِ وَأَنْكُتُ مِنْ السَّرِاعَ الْمَاوْمِ الْمِيْمِ الْمِلِيِّ الْمُشْرِّقُ الْمِسْمِيِّ فِيْمِيَّا لِمِيانِّهِمِ وَالْأَكْمَانُ وَالْمُنْمِينَ فِي اللَّهِمِيَّةِ وَادْمِثُ مِرْدَاءِ الْفِيْسِيْمِ اللَّهِ اللَّهِ مِنْ اللَّهِمِيَّةِ مِنْ الْمُنْسِيَّةِ فِي اللَّهِمِيْسِ

وتغيرهُ لِنَالَ وْتُرْعَكُمُ أَنَّوْنَ يُلُوثُ وَلا يَعْنَ عَلِّوالْكَ إِنْ يَا فَلْمَ أَرْمِثُ لِينَا خَلِت في صَبَابِةِ أَسْدَ عَلَى رَعْنِوالْأَعَابِيِّ نَصَّافِي وَاذِ لاَشْتَهْمَنِكِ أَنْصَدِمِ الْمَنْ مِنْشَاكِ أَوَانَ يُجْرِمُهُ الْمَوْلِيَّا عُولُ النَّاشُ عَلَى تَحَدُّونَ مِهَا مِرْ مَنْهُ قَرْصُلُوا قَلْتَ أَنْ لِيمَالِيَّ يِهُ السِّائِرُ أَوْنَاءُ الْمُسَامِرُ الْمُعَالَمِينَ فَإِيَّاكَ جَبِّي لَا يَحْتُى بِكُ مَايِيَ أذامتا أستقال الدهر والمرمالك فشاؤالت الالقاميات وشاي كَيْنَا وَالْكُنْ الْمُوالِدُ مِنْ الْمُؤْكِلُ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ الْ وَإِنْ لَا الْسِنَةِ فِي وَمِلْ الْمُؤْكِدِ لَهُ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ ا فِي الْضِنْ الْمِنْ اللّهِ مِنْ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ اللّهُ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ اللّهِ اللّهُ الْمُؤْكِلِينَ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهِ اللّهُ اللّ دَكَ نَارُ شَوْقِهِ فَوَادِي فَأَيْجِتْ لَمَا وَجُعْ شَيْتُ مُرَكَّرُ فِي فُوَ إِذِي الدائبًا الرَّكْ بُالمُأُونَ عَرَيْوُ الْعَلَيْتَ الْقَدْ الْسِيرَ هُوَاتًا يَ أيتايلك فترميال ثهاريجة كالمتحالت ابطرابث الإياجة الجي يظر بقي مان هي أله وكالمتا تعت منتمال وَأَنْكُمُتُمَّا إِنْ وَشِيطَ صَفِي وَلَوْ أَكُنَّ الْآلِي مُعْتِعَ الْبَيْنِ لُوَكُنْتُ عَالِبَ ألاكيت ينتعهزي ماللك كؤماليا وماللصبان بعدشية الالثَّالوالْمِي لِيَكُالِاتُكَّىٰ الْمَمْرِيْتِ بَالْوَمْرَيْتُ بِمَالَوْمِنْ فِفُ وَلِيْمَا لَهُ مَا لَوْمَ اللَّهِ الْمُؤْمِدُ فَالْمُومِلُونِ فَمَا لِلْمُؤْمِدُ الْمُؤْمِدُ فَالْمُؤْمِدُ فِي اللَّهِ فَالْمُؤْمِدُ فَالْمُؤْمِدُ فِي فَالْمُؤْمِ والأفت فضها اليواف أفريك فإفريك والمتالة والميك

خَلِيْلًا إِذَا أَزْفَتُ دَمْعِي بَكِي لِيًّا فالترف الإنكاف الانتبائة ولا النياد الاخمار الانكاري

تَذَكِّرْتُ لَنِكُن وَٱلْيَهِ بِيزَا لَحُوالِبَا وَأَيَّامَ لَاغَنتَى عَلَى اللَّهِ نَسَاهِيَّا فَقُلْتُ الْمُبَلِّ تَارُ لِينَ إِنَّوْقَلَتُ بِعِلْيَالِينَا عَنْ مَنْ وَعُقَافِهُ الْلِينَا فَيَا لَيْلَ حَكَمْ مِنْ جَاجَةٍ فِي مُهِمَّةٍ إِذَاجِهْ تُحْفُ مِي اللَّيْلِ لَدُ أَدْرَ مَاهِيًّا وَقَدْيَجُ اللَّهُ النَّتَ يَتِينَ مَعْلَكُما يُطْنَانِكُ الطَّنِّ أَذَلَاتَ كَفِيًّا تجالقة أفواك يتولؤر آنك وجذناطوال الذهريات بايا وْعَهْدِي بِلْكِيارَ وَهِي ذَاتُ مُوْمِيِّهِ مَرْدُ عُلَيْتَ إِلَا عِنْمِي الْوَاشِيبَ و المستخد الحد المستقبلة فراشتوا مستخد المستخد المستخد المستخد المستقد والمستفدة والشافي ال يعتبر و تعلق عسر و المستخد المستخ وَخَيْرَثَالِي أَنْتُ مَنْ الْكِينَ الْمِينَا الْمِنْ الْوَلِيدِ فَهَاذِي شَهُو رُالصِّيفِ عِنَّا فَذَا فَقَافَ فَفَا لِلدِّوى تَرْمِي بَلْكَ لَا ٱلمرَّامِ ا فَلُوَّانَ وَاشِرِ الْسِيَمَامَةِ دَارُهُ وَدَارِي الْهُلَ جَمْرَمُوتَا هَتَكَالِلاً وَمَاذًا لَمُنْ لَا إِجْسَنَ اللَّهُ جَالَّتُ مِنَ الْجُمَّا فِي نَصْدُ لِيَكُلُّ جَمَّالِيمًا وَقَدْ كُنْتُ أَعِلُو يُحِبُّ لَيَكِي فَلَوْمَرُلُ فِي النَّفْشُ وَالْإِبْرُ الْمُجَنَّى عَلانِيكَ فَارْتِ مِنْوَالْكِبُّ بَيْنِي وَيَتَكُمُّا يَكُونُ كُفَاقًا لَا يَهُوَ لَا لِيَّا الْمَثْنِي اللَّهِ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهِ اللَّهُ اللَّ ولايسرت مينلام وفي وكليلا يهينا والمقالط فيالابكاليا وَلَا شِيْتَ عِنْدِي لِمُنامِزَ عِينَةٍ مِزَالَ إِنَّ الْإِبْلُ دُمْعِيرُوانِ وَلاَهِ مَنْ اللَّهِ الْحَوْثِ لاَ مِهَمَّا مِنَ اللَّهِ الآلِثُ الرَّبِعُ كُالْتِي فإِنْ تَمْهُوا لِيَكِنَ وَجِمْدُوا لِلاَمُهَا مِنْ فَالرَّضِيْمُوا لِمِنْ الفَرَاهِيَ فأشه وعندالله الزاجيك فهتذا لمتاعندي عاعنده اليا فَقَوَاللّهُ الْمِلْكِرُوفِ مِبْالِنْوِنَا وَالشَّوْقِ مِنِي وَالْمَرَارِ فَقَوْلِكَ الْمُرَارِقَقُولِكَ اللّ وَإِنَّالَهُ كِلْمُكِلِثِ الشِّيابُ وَأَلِيثِ الْمُؤْلِدِي وَالْمِيثِ الْمُرْتِينِ الْمُؤْلِدِينَ وَالْمِينَا أَعُدُّ اللَّهِ الْمِهَ الْمُدَلِّكُ وَقَدْعِشْ ُ وَهُرَّا لَا الْمُدَّ اللَّهِ اللَّهِ اللَّهِ اللَّهِ اللَّ وَأَخْدُنُ مِزْجَنِوالبُمُوتِ لَهَانِي أَهْمَةِ ثُهُمَاكِ الْفَصْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّالِيمًا الرَّانِيا إِنَّا مِسْكِلْتُ بَمَنْتُ جُوْفًا ، وَهِي وَانْتُ اللَّهِ لِللَّالْمِ لَلْوَلِمُ اللَّهِ اللَّهِ ا







From the Shelves:

Cats, Sailors, and Strange Lands: Tales of Imagination

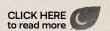
By M. Lynx Qualey

Anything you can imagine, may have already been written or about to be so.

Be they merchants, pirates or migrants, all sailors found tales and cats so loveable and useful that they welcomed them both on board their boats, traveling with them all around the world.

And so it was that versions of the Panchatantra tales, the Thousand and One Nights, and Snow White circled the globe, enchanting listeners, readers, and viewers in hundreds of languages and dialects.

Later, the fantastical was joined by the futuristic imaginings of science fiction, and later still by superhero stories, which are now among the most well-traveled of tales, thanks to heroes like Spider-Man, Sailor Moon, and Astro Boy.





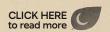
From the Vault:

Where Monsters, Myths and Magic Maps Are Found

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

Libraries are the sacred vaults of human imagination—guardians of worlds both real and dreamed. Within their hushed halls, carefully-bound atlases whisper of lands where dragons circle uncharted islands in the world's first modern atlases, and ancient manuscripts crackle with the magic of One Thousand and One Arabian Nights, where Jinn, known as Genies, defy time and cunning figures like viziers spin fate like silk.

Here we share some of the magic of imagined worlds through a collaboration with the **Qatar National Library** (QNL) by showcasing a selection of some of their treasures, as curated by Aysha Hassan Al Ansari, the Head of Heritage Collections at QNL.





From the **Archives:**Trying on Different Hats

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

'Action!' And the film starts rolling and a new imagined world is recorded and comes to life.

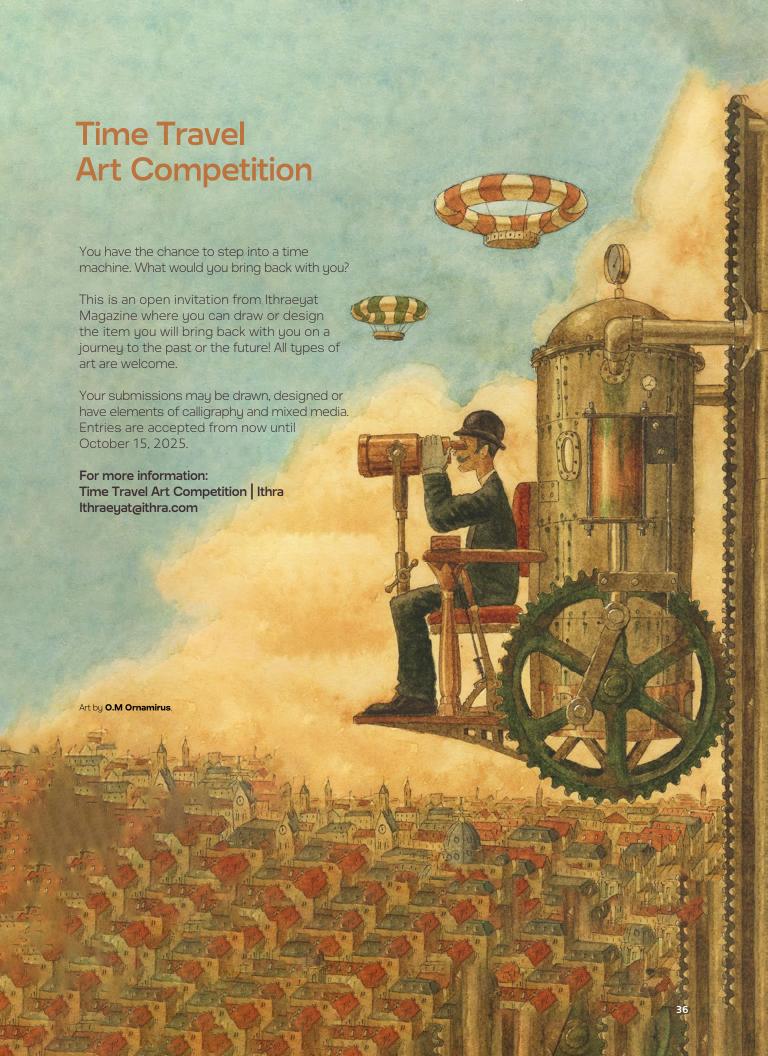
Trying on costumes, playing roles or simply immersing oneself in a book or play or movie, there are many ways to escape and imagine a different world, a different perspective, and even a different self altogether.

In our latest edition, we go back in time and see how theater, cinema and the different worlds we create continue to entertain as they challenge us to think outside the confines of our realities.

CLICK HERE to read more

Dhahran, November 1954





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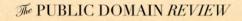




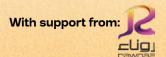














About Ithra:

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 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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