

Issue 016

Gold

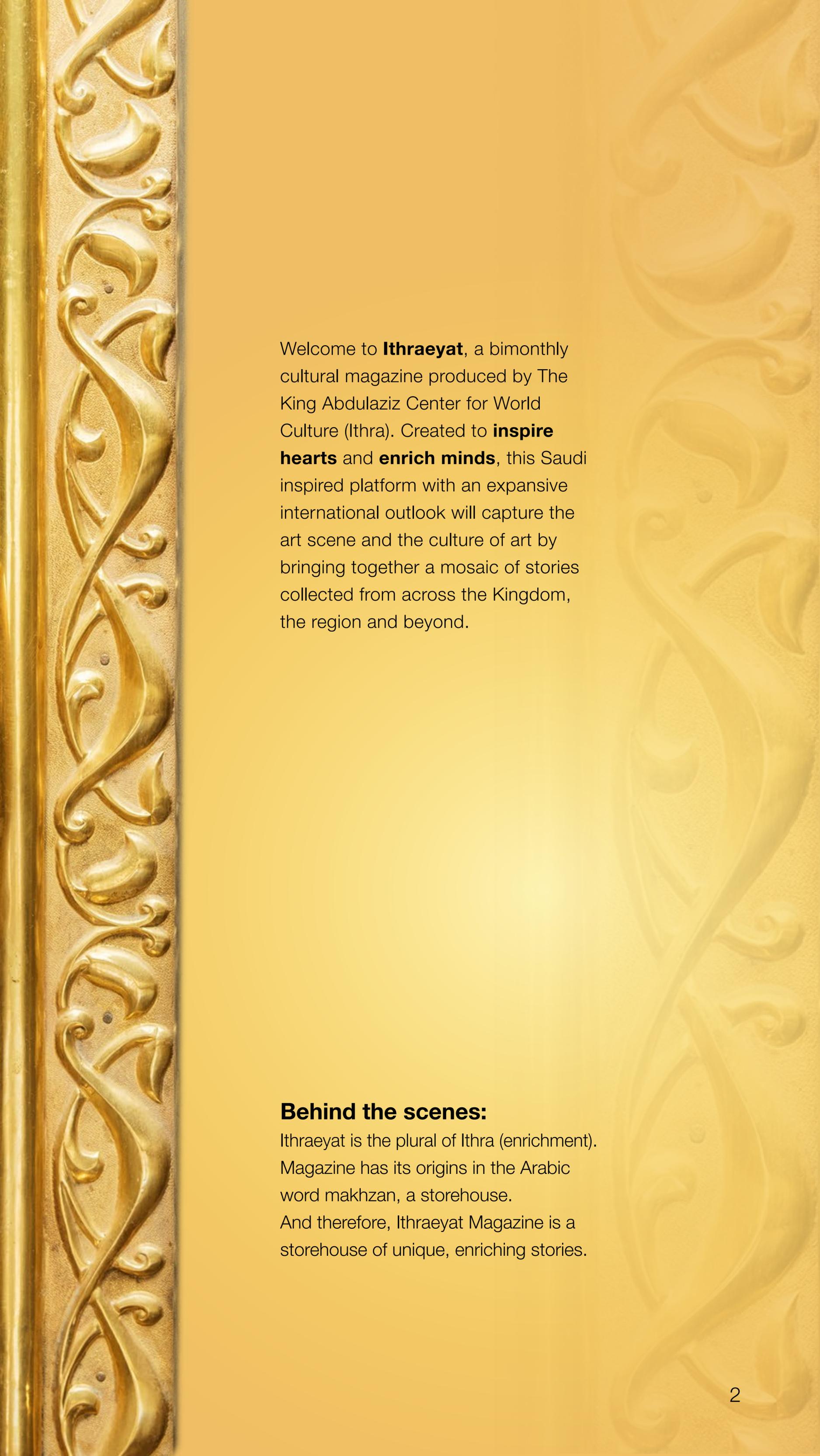


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by aramco

Ithraeyat Magazine

March | April 2022





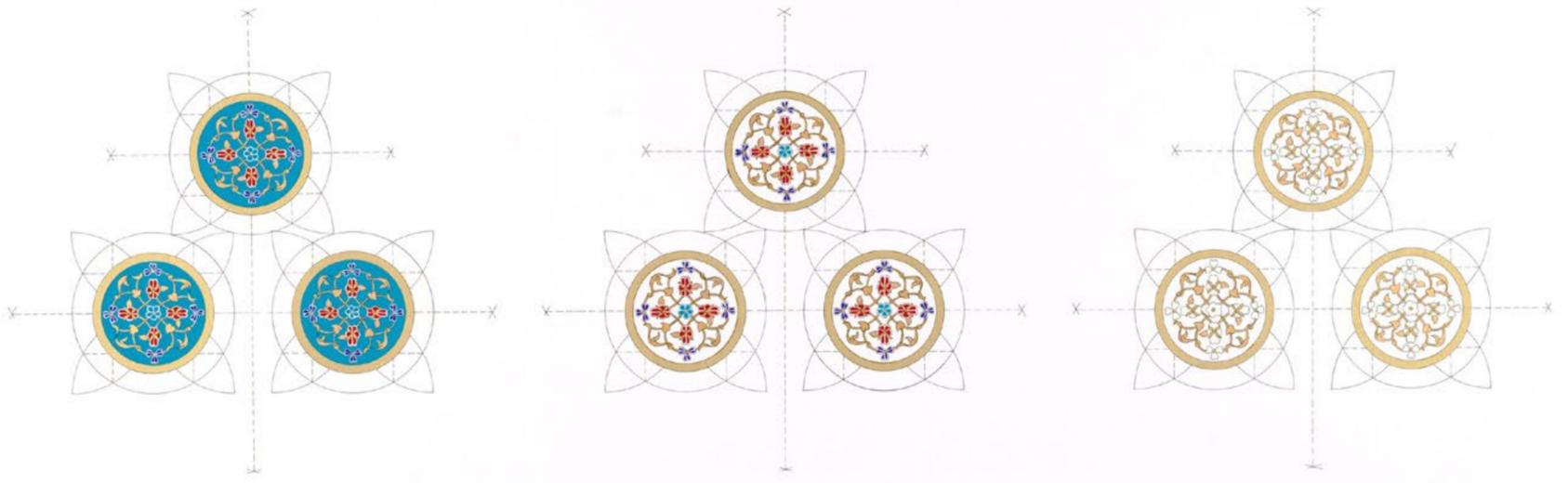
Welcome to **Ithraeyat**, a bimonthly cultural magazine produced by The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra). Created to **inspire hearts** and **enrich minds**, this Saudi inspired platform with an expansive international outlook will capture the art scene and the culture of art by bringing 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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'Qaf from the Abjad Hawaz series,' by **Dana Awartani**. 2018.
Shell gold, gouache, and ink on paper
32 x 73 cm. Courtesy of **ATHR gallery** and the artist.

Letter from the Editor

Reaching a 'golden' milestone.

“

Art is everywhere... You can't stop art, it will find its way to express itself...”

”

said HRH Prince Badr Bin Abdulmohsin Al-Saud
in an exclusive interview with **Ithraeyat**

In 2020, during the height of the Covid-19 era, as the world and all its cultural outlets went into lockdowns, Ithraeyat Magazine was born to help keep the cultural pulse alive by keeping artists connected to the public and the public with the artists and creatives. Our phones then were filled with negative news, and so Ithraeyat— which translates to 'enriching stories' — brought positive, beautiful stories and artworks right into our phones, and into our lives.

Now celebrating two years, Ithraeyat Magazine brought pioneers and emerging artists together, inspiring reflection and conversations. With over 400+ articles, 500 artists, over 13 renowned local and international cultural partners, as well as exclusive features and interviews with VIPs and legendary figures, we want to thank all of those who have been part of Ithraeyat's journey.

As Ithra's Ithraeyat grows, we hope you grow with it, and continue to take part in its cultural journey and explore its **latest digital platform**.

Like every creative endeavor, it took a few sleepless nights, with several sketches of the design and possible different names, including the name 'Well No.7' homage to the legendary oil well which would later become known as the 'Prosperity Well.' It struck oil in 1938 and began producing commercial quantities. On May 20, 2008, the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Sa'ud, laid a symbolic cornerstone for Ithra not far from the actual location of the Prosperity Well.

We commemorate our anniversary with the theme 'Gold,' as gold is more than a precious metal, it is philosophical and symbolic for a strong, pure and reliable core, one that lasts and never loses its luster. It is what we turn to in times of crisis and celebrations.



The Kaaba door. Photo courtesy of King Abdulaziz Complex for Holy Kaaba Kiswah.

Cover Art: The Door of Gold

The Gate or door of the holy Kaaba is the Muslim world's most recognized door. Made from pure gold, with exquisite, intricate Islamic geometric designs and Qur'anic verses, its panels are aromatically scented with musk, rose water and amber.

For this very special issue of Ithraeyat, the beautiful door with its timeless artistic and religious sentiment was chosen as the cover in commemoration of the magazine's two-year anniversary and to pay homage to one of history's most important doors. The Kaaba door has distinguished itself over time, a true witness to change and modernity.

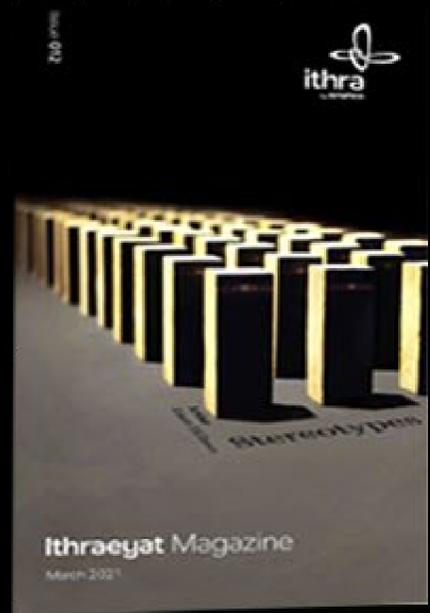
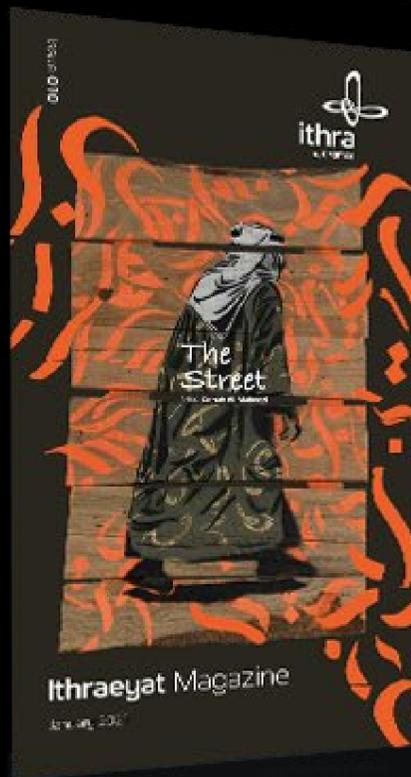
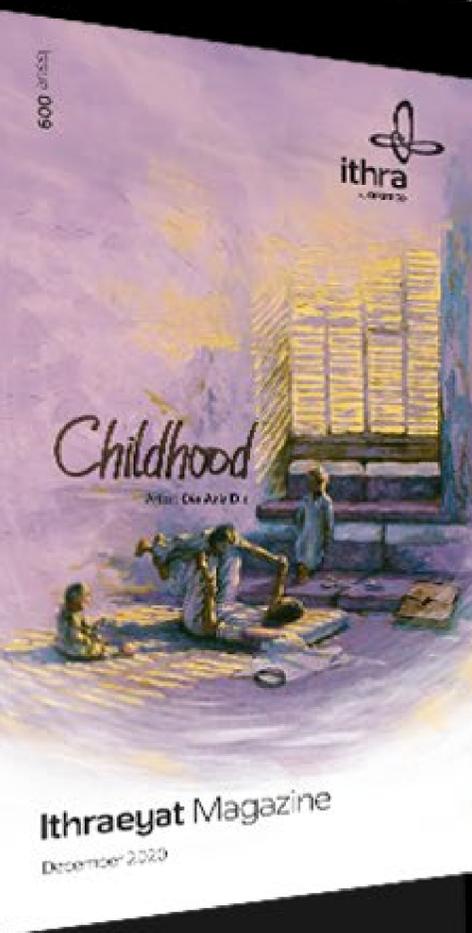
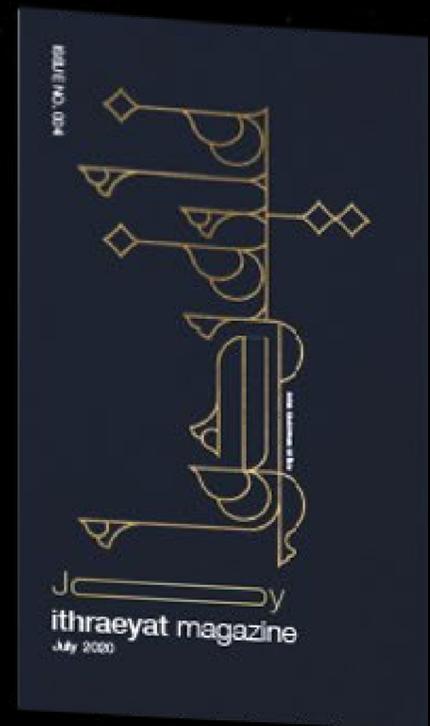
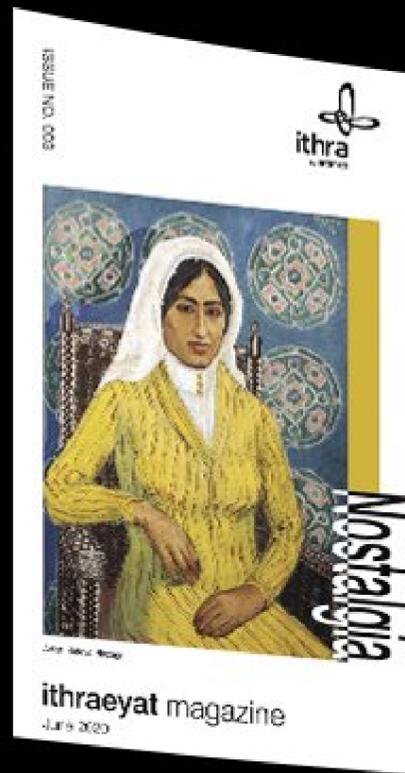
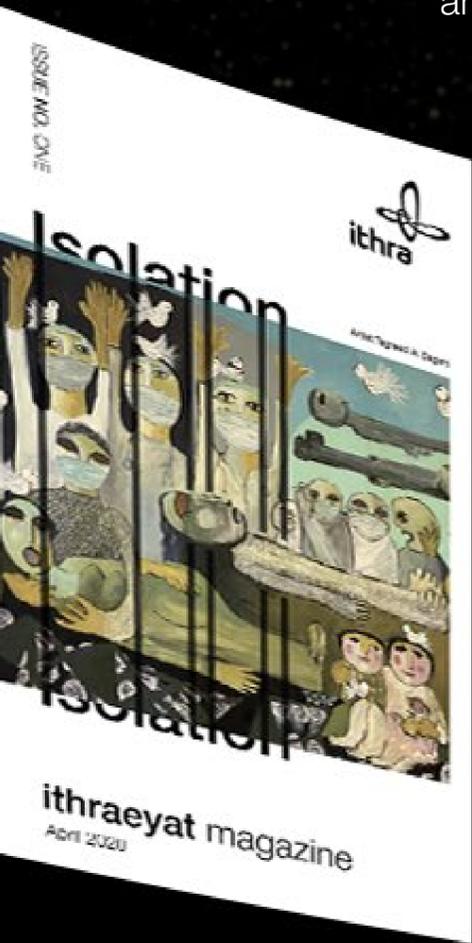
Through the ages, from pre-Islamic to Islamic era, different rulers left their mark on the door. Initially the Kaaba had no door. Then years later, a door was made from wood. During the era of the founder of Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz Al Sa'ud, whereby it was said it took over three years to make, a door out of metals like silver, iron, and copper, and plated with gold in 1363 AH (around 1943). Then in the year 1399 AH (around 1979) during the reign of the late King Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Sa'ud, it was made of pure gold weighing up to 200 kilograms, built over a span of 12 months by the jeweler Ahmed bin Ibrahim Badr.



Portrait:

Our Special Cover Artists
By Rym Al-Ghazal

Each Ithraeyat cover tells a story. Over the past two years, Ithraeyat slowly became known for its unique covers and its reflective themes.



Isolation
Issue No.001:
Artist **Tagreed Al-Bagshi**

Numbers
Issue No.002:
Artist **Lulwah Al-Homoud**

Nostalgia
Issue No.003: Artist
Safeya Binzagr

Joy
Issue No.004: Artist
Abdulrhman Al-Faiz

Childhood
Issue No.009: Artist
Dia Aziz Dia

The Street
Issue No.010: Artist
Zeinab Al-Mahoozi

Love
Issue No.011: Artist
Ola Hejazi

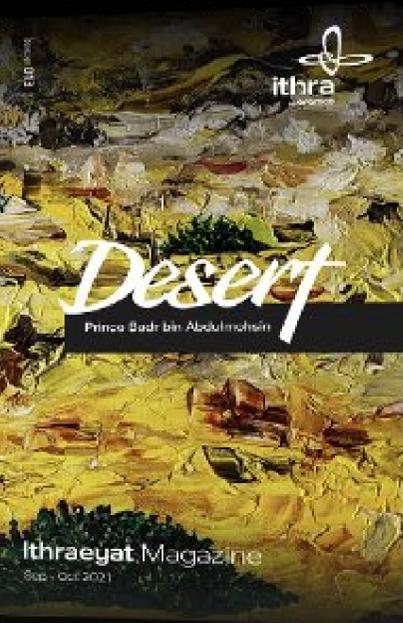
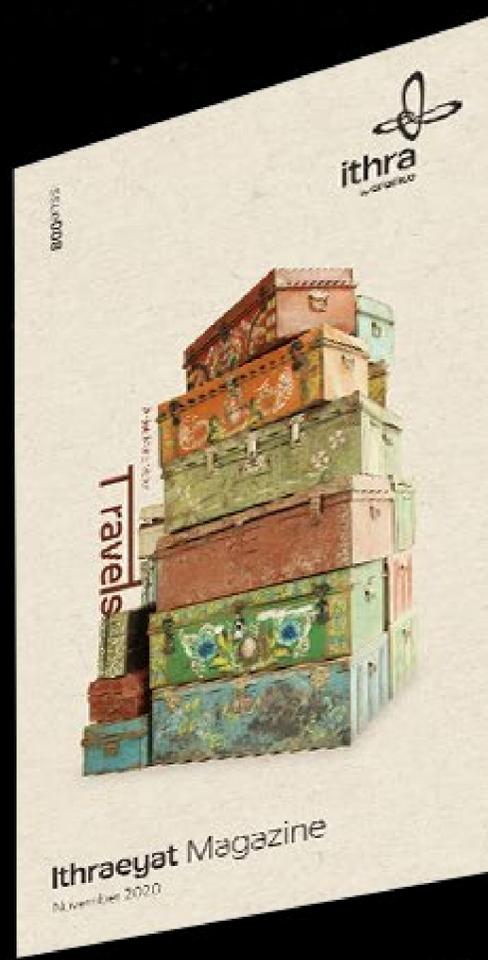
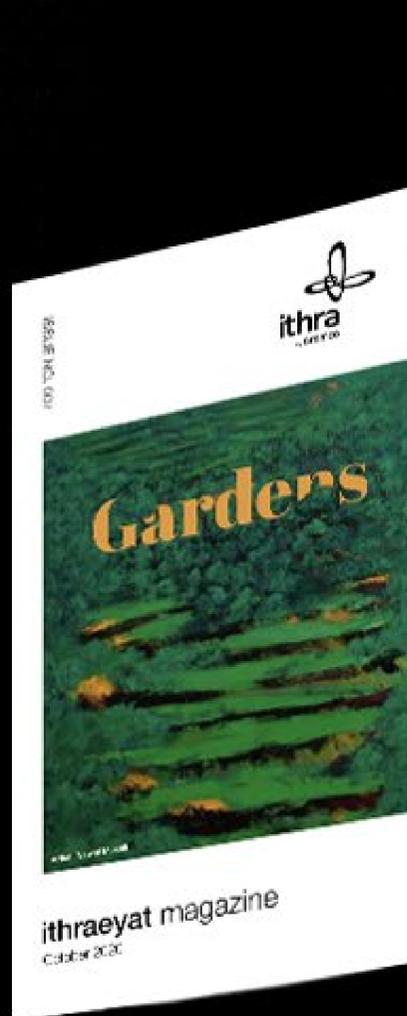
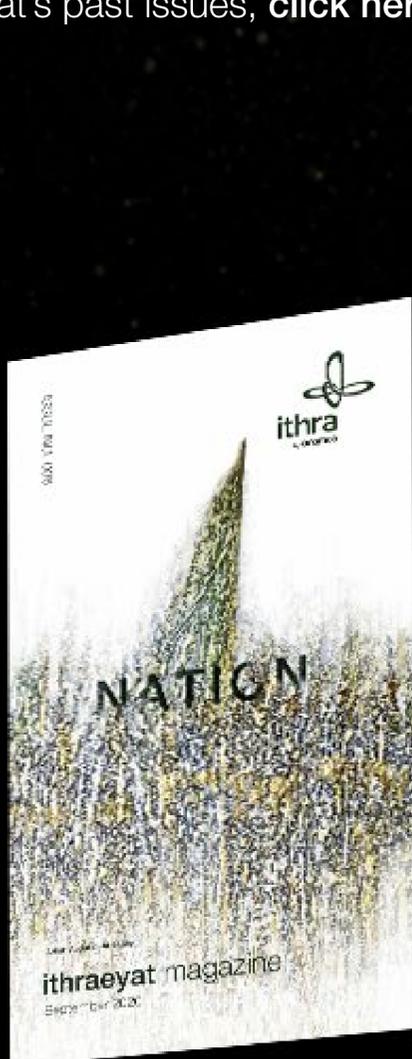
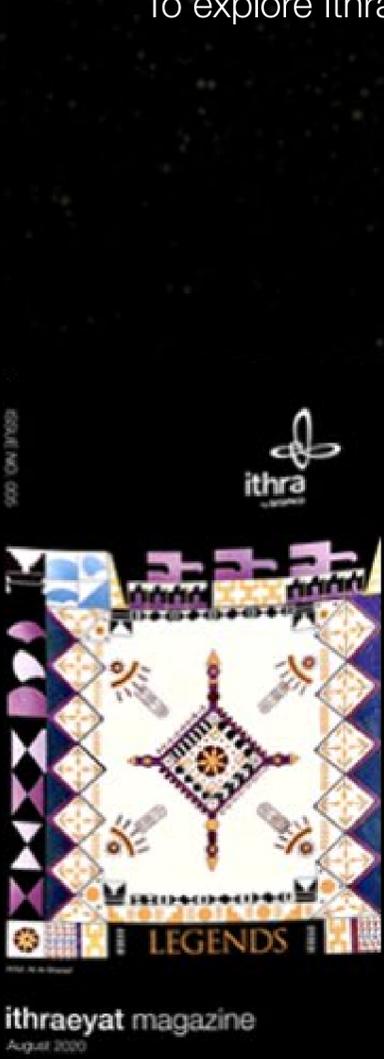
Stereotypes
Issue No.012: Artist
Eiman ElGibreen

As the magazine celebrates its two-year anniversary, it deeply thanks and pays homage to all the artists, over 500 so far, whose creative artworks enrich Ithraeyat and inspire its readers.

Thank you all for being part of the Ithraeyat journey.

Here are our honored 'Theme-special' featured Saudi artists whose art pieces graced our covers over the past 15 issues.

To explore Ithraeyat's past issues, [click here](#).



Legends
Issue No.005:
Artist **Ali Al-Shareef**

Nation
Issue No.006:
Artist **Abdullah Al-Shalty**

Gardens
Issue No.003: Artist
Nawal Musali

Travels
Issue No.008: Artist
Maha Malluh

Desert
Issue No.013: Artist
HRH Prince Badr bin Abdulmohsin

Light
Issue No.014: Artist
Walaa Fadul

Sustainability
Issue No.015: Artist
Mohammed Al-Faraj

Gold
Issue No.016: Art
Kaaba Door

Spotlight

Our Exclusive Guests

From royals, ministers and ambassadors, to pioneers, emerging artists and creatives from various walks of life, they have all graced the pages of Ithraeyat and told their stories through their art.

With over 500 artists featured, it would be difficult to mention all, and therefore here are a few who opened up about themselves, their motto in life, and the importance of art.



“While you hone your craft and become better at it, don’t shy away from showcasing it to the world, art is not personal, art should be shared with the world. It’s a way of sharing, expressing and communicating, art sparks conversations and leads to dialogue...”

Her Excellency Noura Al-Kaabi, UAE Minister of Culture and Youth in **Issue 014**.

“The joy of counting blessings especially in hard times is a vital key to survival, allowing appreciation to be the real savior. We all can make a difference, if we focus on our sources of joy, and with joy comes strength...”

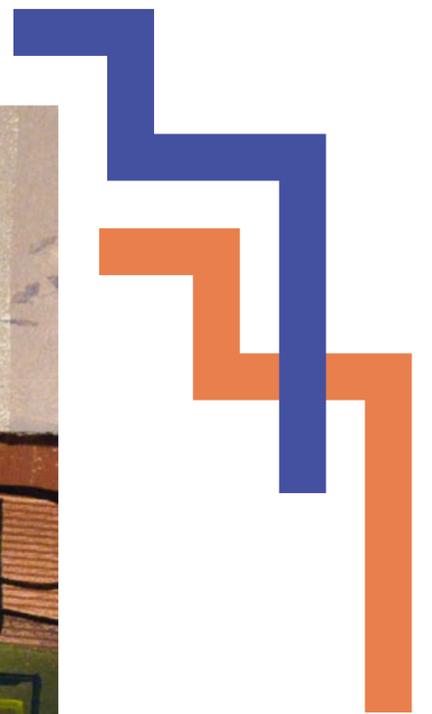
Shaikha Hala bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, Director General, Culture and Arts at Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities in **Issue 004**.



“Art is everywhere...You can’t stop art, it will find its way to express itself...”
HRH Prince Badr Bin Abdulmohsin Al-Saud, the legendary poet, shares with us a different artistic side in **Issue 013**.



“Every family has a love story they like to re-tell. Often it is an intense – sometimes immortal – story like that of Adon and Astarte, Qays and Layla, Romeo and Juliet, stories of unrequited love. In my family, it is the story of Prince Amin and Princess Najla, and it is one that renews my faith in love...”
Princess Diala Arslan Talhouk in **Issue 011**.

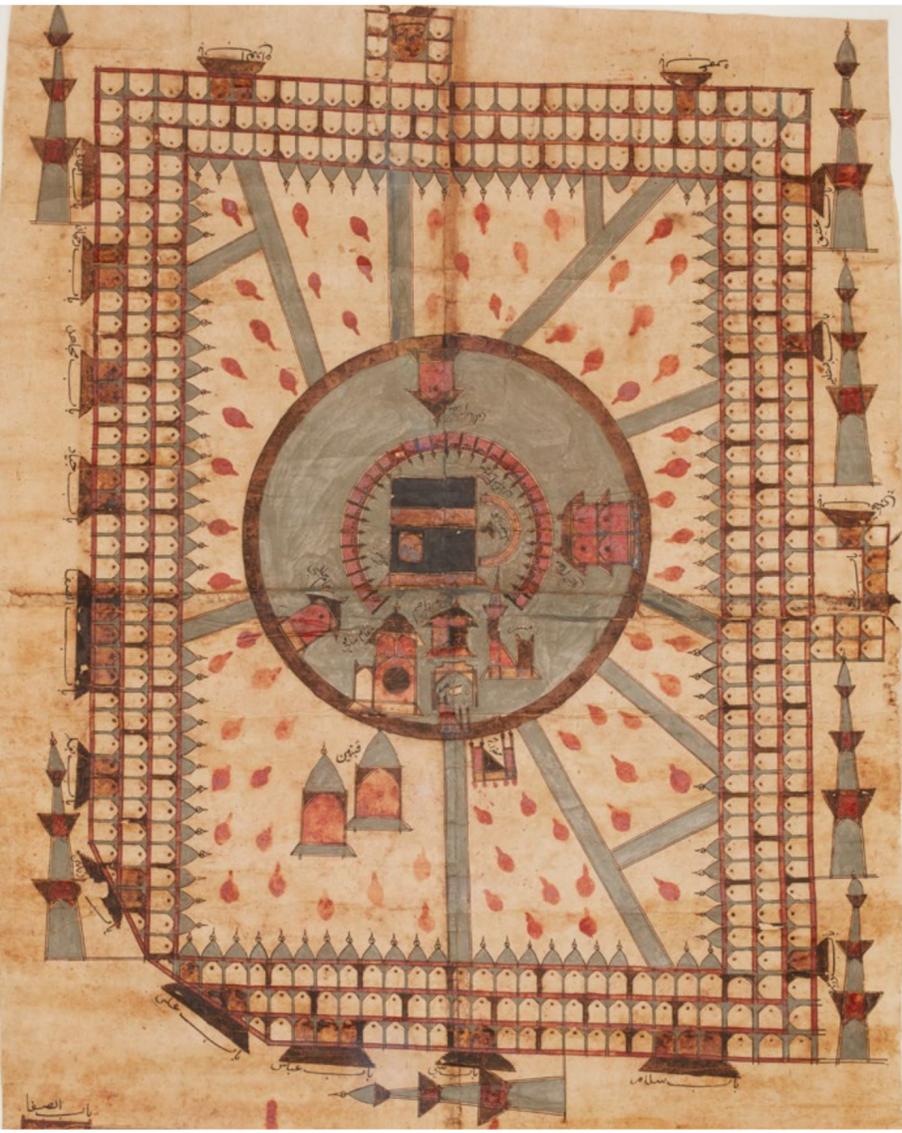


“Visual arts eventually form the building blocks of the memory of history; visual memories in a national green framework towards which all artists and creatives in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have played a part...”
Dina Amin, CEO of Saudi Visual Arts Commission—Ministry of Culture in **Issue 006**.



“Doors in Saudi culture are symbolic of an entrance to heaven, whereby it is like entering a private paradise of peace and harmony inside a home. There is a lot of diversity of doors around the Kingdom, from their different craftsmanship to their various engravings and calligraphic designs, where each door style is linked to the region of its origin...”

Somaya Badr, CEO of Art of Heritage and Art of Heritage Cultural Trust who is featured in every issue, and this particular lovely piece on ‘The Art of Door,’ is in **Issue 010**.



“Like a pulsing magnet at the center...This fantastic work on paper, of considerable size, shows a bird’s eye view of the Masjid Al-Haram with the Kaaba in the center. Paintings like this one were made for pilgrims to Makkah, who carried them home and kept them as revered keepsakes imbued with blessings from the holy site...”

Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, Director and CEO at the Aga Khan Museum, Toronto. In each issue, we feature a special treasure from the Aga Khan Museum, one that tells a story, captures a moment and inspires conversation. This special piece is in **Issue 006**.



“I find joy in capturing the ordinary, the banal, the things we see every day, and making them special and discovering the hidden story and beauty in them...”

Princess Reem Al-Faisal, a renowned artistic photographer who also broke into the NFT world with her latest art. To explore her photography and her story, read her interview in **issue 004**.





The Kiswah. Photo courtesy of King Abdulaziz Complex for Holy Kaaba Kiswah.

Special Feature:

‘Woven with Gold,’

an exclusive interview with His Honor Sheikh Abdul Hamid Al-Malki, Adviser and Deputy General President for the Affairs of King Abdulaziz Complex for Holy Kaaba Kiswah by Rahma Dhyab.

All the way from Germany to Makkah, a heavy 120 kg of pure gold-plated silver arrives annually to make the elaborate cloth of the honorable Kaaba.

Known in Arabic as “Kiswah,” this sacred cloth is woven with great devotion and mastery. It has a deep-rooted and majestic history in Saudi Arabia, where it stands as a breathtaking masterpiece ornamented with holy Qur’anic verses inscribed with gold threads; each stitch adding a wonder over a wonder.

In this exclusive interview, Sheikh Abdul Hamid Al-Malki, Adviser and Deputy General President for the Affairs of King Abdulaziz Complex for Holy Kaaba Kiswah shares with Ithraeyat Magazine the story of this sacred Islamic cloth, and discusses the eternal relation between the golden threads that beautifully and gracefully decorate the Kiswah, and impressions on all who visit and pray near it.

To read more, [click here](#) 



Funerary Mask
1st century AD
Gold
H.17.5 cm; W.13 cm
Thaj, Tell al-Zayer
National Museum, Riyadh, 2061

Spotlight:

A Mask of Mystery

By Rym Al-Ghazal

A golden mask. A golden glove. Gold engraved with precious stones, intricate jewelry, and convex gold buttons and foils were just some of the things buried with what is believed, a very special little girl around six years old, in a tomb now famously known as 'The Tomb of Thaj.'

Her final resting place surrounded by round gold foils, this precious child's face was covered with a shiny gold mask, depicting simple facial features. From bracelets to necklaces and a golden waist belt, a single golden glove lay on her chest. Who is this golden child? And what happened to her?

To read more, [click here](#) 



Glove
1st century AD
Gold
L. 15 cm; W. 4.5 cm
Thaj, Tell al-Zayer
National Museum,
Riyadh, 2063



'Hamama.' Varying accounts of travelers assign this head ornament to the Najd and the northern regions of the Arabian Peninsula. The wearer's hair was threaded through the piece to firmly anchor the piece on top of the head. The row of coins created a fringe over the forehead framing the face with a similar row at the back falling gracefully over the back of the head. Pearls are used to outline the colored stones and the central cartouche design. The art piece courtesy of **The Art of Heritage**.

Guest Columnist:

'Old is Gold - Our Hidden Treasure of Golden Cultural Heritage,'
by Somaya Badr, CEO of The Art of Heritage.

"The geometric forms and the structure used in traditional Saudi jewelry has always been my first source of inspiration. They remain, to my eye, the most unique and charming pieces, both ancient and supremely modern in concept," —**HRH princess Nourah Bint Abdulla Al Faisal**, Nuun Jewels.

For decades the Art Of Heritage cultural trust has been dedicated to preserving and sharing the material culture and heritage of the Kingdom. The trust has been focused on uncovering the largely unknown stories of our forefathers and their remarkable struggles, with a mission to always bring the link from our past to our future generations.

To read more, [click here](#) 





Untitled Artwork by Widad Al-Orfali, Courtesy of the Al-Khudairi and Abbas Family

Special Feature:

‘The Feminine Golden Threads,’
by Hafsa Al- Khudairi. With special interviews with
iconic artists **Widad Al-Orfali & Manal Al-Dowayan.**

“فدوة للبنات: عشرة وأقول قليلات”

God Bless Girls: Ten and I Say Few

This Iraqi saying is always what pops into my mind when I think of the women in my life and my female ancestry. It is a way to fondly remember what my late paternal grandmother used to say to me as well as to remind myself about how important we are as women. Furthermore, I grew up surrounded by golden themes and have always loved gold as a material, color, and concept. Gold may be considered a shiny yellow-ish metal but it is also the feeling of value and importance. Gold to me is my grandmother’s stories, my father’s heart, my sibling’s teasing, my mother’s hugs, the art collection I grew up with, the desert and

the dates, our traditional clothes and jewelry, the rays of sunlight, and knowledge acquired and developed.

Furthermore, the women in my life have taught me so much and I always look to them for guidance. There is the Iraqi side of my life with artistic and cultural lessons, which included classic sayings all the way to the Mesopotamian era. The Saudi side of my life taught me resilience, growth, and adaptation, including accepting who you can become beyond the limits of what is expected.

To read more, [click here](#) 



Spotlight:

“Gold & the Golden Age,”

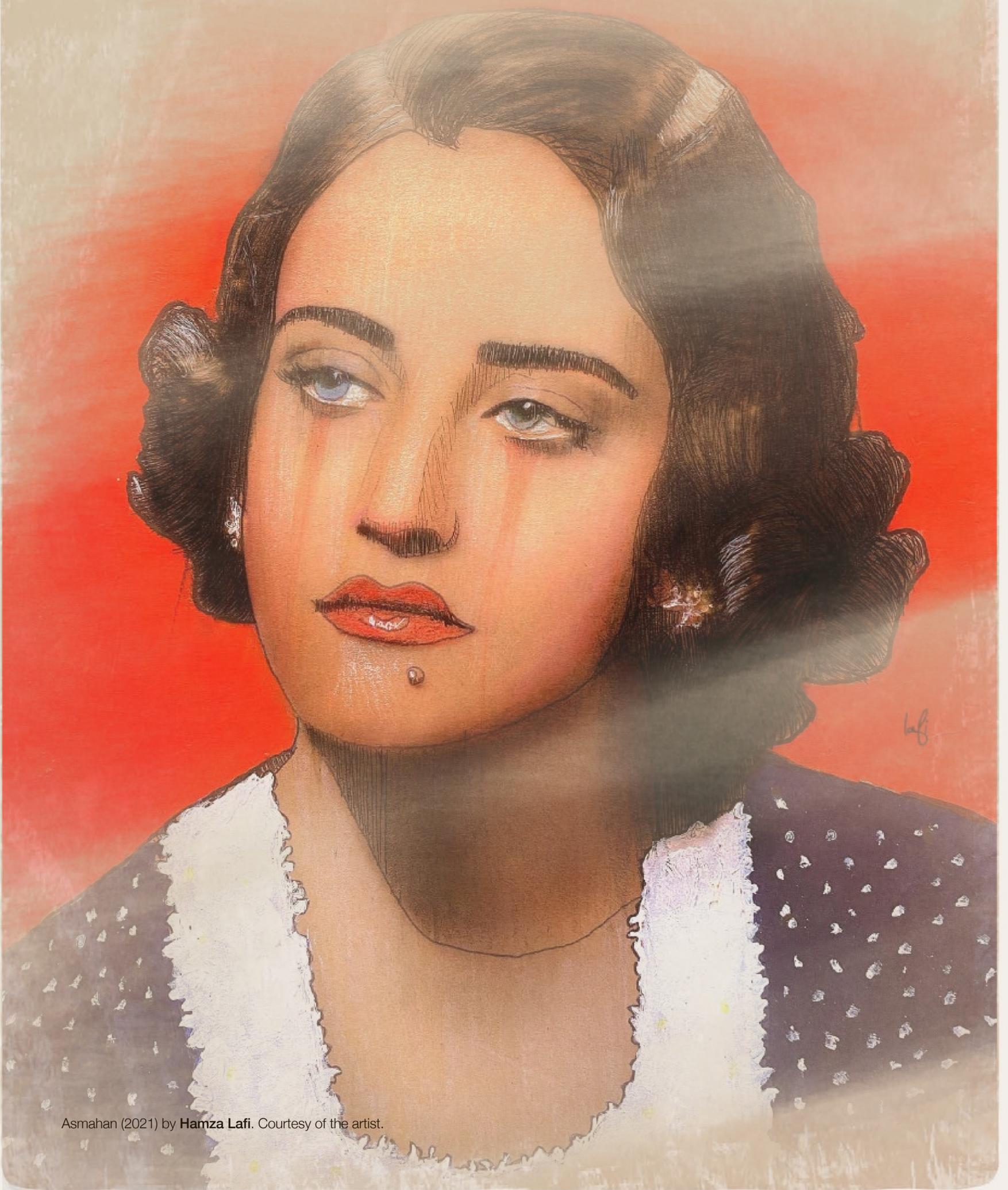
by Hafsa Al-Khudairi and Aljohara Al-Athel

What is the “Golden Age?” Is it a moment in the past? Are the moments in cultural history truly golden or is it a nostalgic feeling we associate with the past? The Golden Age is meant to be a time period where everything produced had an impact and was considered so valuable to the cultural industry that we consider it gold. We are sometimes

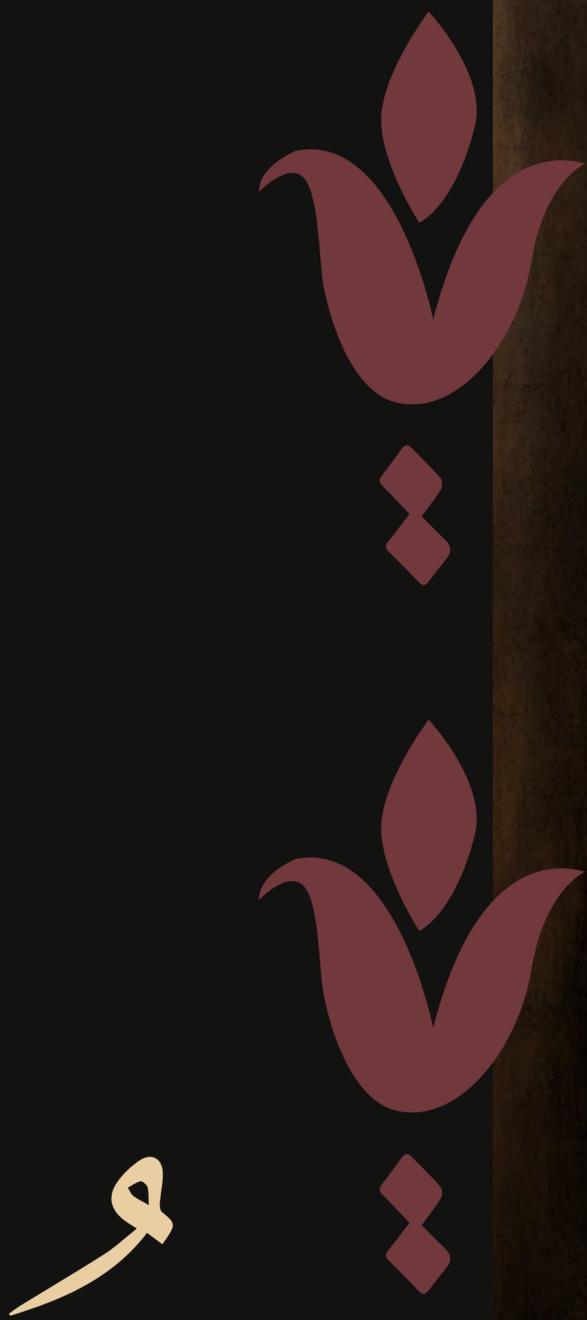
too attached to the past as if we cannot create something truly amazing and awe-inspiring in our present day and age, as if the future does not hold surprises we have yet to discover. Thinking of how we glamorize the past, will the future generations glamorize our present creations?

The question we leave you with: Is the Golden Age truly behind us or is it yet to be defined?

To read more, [click here](#) 



Asmahan (2021) by **Hamza Lafi**. Courtesy of the artist.



'Layla falls asleep,' by Sarah Al-Abdali. 2019. Gouache, charcoal, and gold on paper 63 x 27.5"

Courtesy of the artist.

Special Feature:

“Preserving Hijazi culture with gold,”
an interview with Sarah Al-Abdali
by Ghadeer Sadeq.



“I think my art is my language that I created over the years, and I’m still shaping, and as I mature, I’m making the vocabularies that would form this language that I call art.”



Artist Sarah Al-Abdali is a Saudi contemporary artist. Her art revolves around things she loves and admires: her Islamic heritage and Hijazi culture, her appreciation of Jeddah and Makkah vernacular architecture, and her obsession with women’s stories from Islamic history.

Al-Abdali’s work is a nostalgic trip to the past, where she attempts to retell historical stories, buildings, and influential female personalities through her artistic creation.

To read more, [click here](#) 



Special Feature:

‘Nature and Gold,’ an interview
with Nasser Al-Turki
by Hafsa Al-Khudairi.

“Learn the rules then break them
so you can truly create something new...”

Nature and its secrets inspired the wonderful art produced by **Nasser Al-Turki** and displayed at Naila Gallery. Al-Turki began his art journey 40 years ago when he was just nine years old when his art teacher asked him if he was drawing what he was seeing or just copying his peers. He realized at that moment that he must contemplate in order to draw what he sees.

He learned the basics of art from school, practiced drawing from the views out his window, researched in books, and experimented with materiality and color.

For Al-Turki, art is his daily life and his passion. He spends most of his time in his studio to the point that he sometimes forgets himself in his artwork.

To read more, [click here](#) 

From the collection “Desert of Gold”
by **Nasser Al-Turki**, courtesy of the artist.



Untitled Artwork courtesy of **Faisal bin Khalid Al-Khudaidi** from the exhibit 'Talk of the Windows' at L'Art Pure Gallery.

Special Feature:

'Words of Gold,'
an interview with Faisal bin Khalid Al-Khudaidi
by Hafsa Al-Khudairi.

“Gold never corrodes. It is a symbol of elegance, authenticity, and glamor...”

Sitting in the middle of **L'Art Pure Gallery**, at his solo exhibition, 'Talk of the Windows,' **Faisal bin Khaled Al-Khudaidi** is a man whose art lives up to expectations and his personality is proof that being kind is not just a virtue but a way of life. It is no wonder that His Highness Prince Badr Al-Saud, the Minister of Culture, even posted pictures of some of Al-Khudaidi's artwork from

the exhibit. It is a wonder to behold and the concept is even more striking.

'Talk of the Windows' is conceptualized from a sociological idea that, just as windows allow light and subtle breezes to pass through the house, so too can souls. When we lose that sense of light, we lose a sense of being and become dark.

To read more, [click here](#) 

MAP OF OPHIR & TAPROBANE

by A. M. Cameron.



A map used by some travellers to locate the region of Ophir - this one assumed it was located close to India.

Arabic Treasures

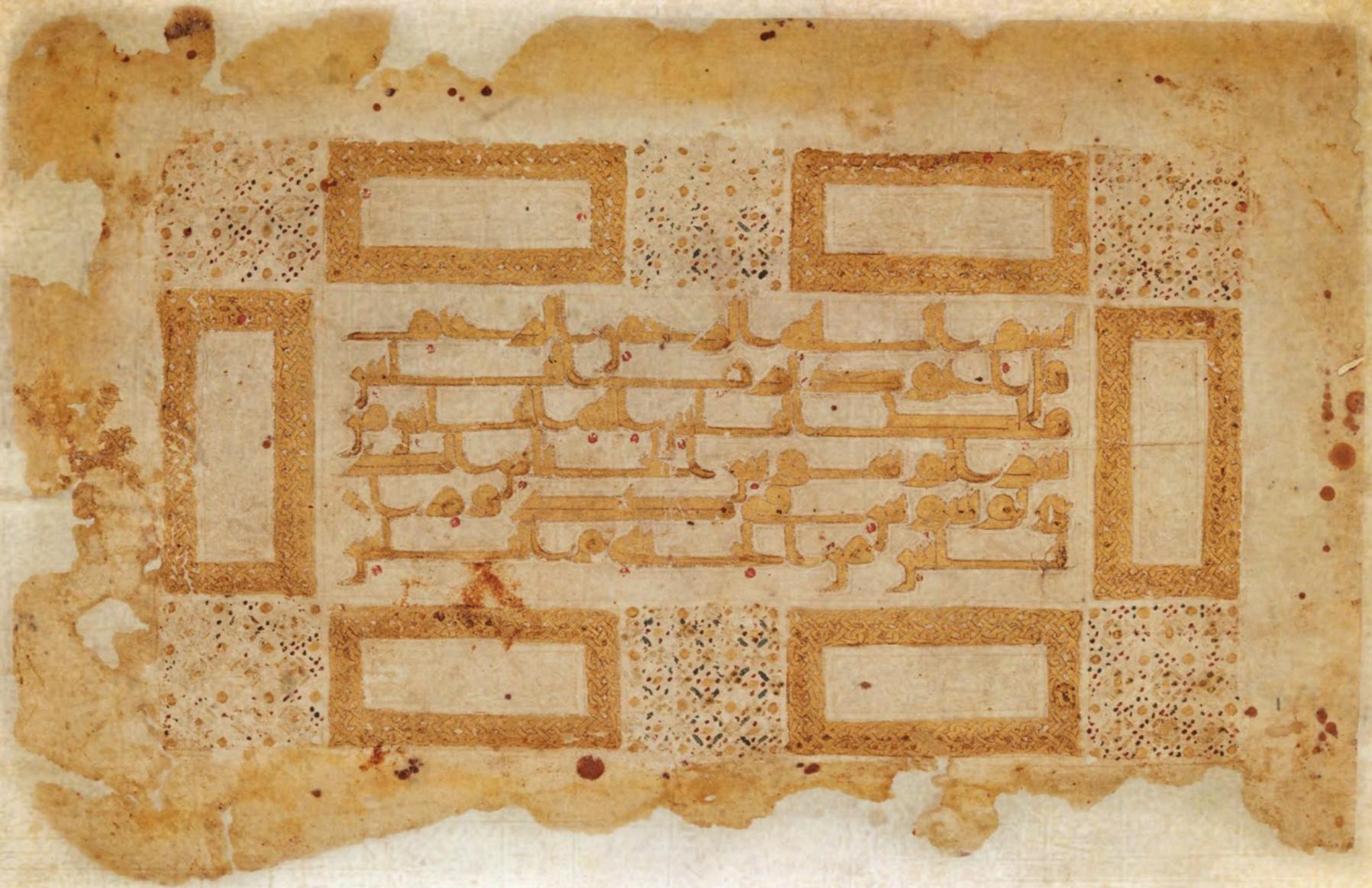
'Prophet Sulaiman's Treasure,'
by Ghada Al-Muhanna

When we explore human history, we hear about many epic stories surrounding empires and kingdoms. One such epic is the story of King Solomon, known to Muslims as the Prophet Sulaiman. The highly revered prophet had a prosperous and immensely wealthy kingdom, making the prophet one of the wealthiest kings of his time.

For centuries it was speculated the wealth was amassed from the mines and natural minerals that were retrieved from areas within the proximity of the prophet's kingdom. One region where fine gold was retrieved from was made clear, and it was a region named Ophir. In the Old Testament, Ophir was mentioned as a place where gold, silver, copper, monkeys and peacocks were produced.

To read more, [click here](#)





Folio from a Qur'an Manuscript

Chapter 114, Al-Nas (The Mankind)

North Africa or Iraq, 9th-10th century

Gold, ink, and opaque watercolor on parchment

H. 16 cm x W. 25 cm

The Aga Khan Museum, AKM478

Bridges: Cross-Cultural Conversations

‘Scripts of Gold,’
by Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis.

In the spiritual arts of the Muslim world, gold has always played an important role due to its unique ability to evoke the light and glory of the Divine with its otherworldly luster and sheen.

On this wonderful page from a rare, early Islamic

Qur'an, both the calligrapher and the artist responsible for the ornamentation joined forces in their usage of gold pigments to write and beautify the final surah (chapter) of the Holy Qur'an, Al-Nas (114): ‘Say, I seek refuge in the Lord of humankind, the Master of humankind, the God of humankind, from the evil of the lurking whisperer, who whispers into the hearts of humankind from among jinn and humankind.’

To read more, [click here](#) 



Collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece
Flanders (today northern France, Belgium
and the Netherlands)
1500–1600

L. 118 cm; gold and enamel
Louvre Abu Dhabi

Image credit: © Department of Culture
and Tourism – Abu Dhabi.
Photo: Thierry Ollivier

Bridges: Cross-Cultural Conversations 'Golden treasures' from Louvre Abu Dhabi.

Every gold piece tells a story of a time, of a civilization and its people. Here we share the story of three pieces of treasure from the **Louvre Abu Dhabi** collection. Content and images courtesy of Louvre Abu Dhabi.

The flower of Chivalry

Founded in Bruges in January 1430 by Philip the Good, the Order of the Golden Fleece gathered around the Duke of Burgundy a group of loyal knights entirely obedient to his will and committed by its statutes to mutual love, aid and fraternity. As a pledge of obedience and loyalty, they wore the insignia they received on their investiture, the collar of the Golden Fleece, every day. The order's name refers either to the golden fleece sought by Jason, as recounted by Apollonius of Rhodes, or the fleece laid out on the ground by Gideon in the Bible. This collar belonged to Adrien de Croÿ (c. 1500–53), one of the faithful counsellors of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and Duke of Burgundy, who bestowed it on him in 1519.

To read more, [click here](#) 

From the Vault:

'Golden tales' from the collection of Barjeel Art Foundation.

There is always something interesting to discover at the **Barjeel Art Foundation**. Each art piece catches an important moment in history and in particular Arab art history.

Here we pause to enjoy the pieces that embody elements of the theme of 'gold.' From golden

stallions to deep conversations, gifts exchanged in marriage and the legendary Imra'a (lady) piece where a woman is precious and dependable like gold, in the patience, strength and nurturing that she brings into our lives.

R.T.G.



'Untitled,' by **Amer Al Obaidi**. 2006. Oil on Canvas, 88 x 88 cm. Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

To read more, [click here](#) 

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Gold Discs from the Ithra Archives



1945-47 | Gold Discs

Part of the Aramcorama exhibition, courtesy of Ithra Archives.
Photo by Yasir Al-Qunais.
Six discs photographed back and front.

A rare collection lies in the Aramcorama exhibition. At first glance, they would appear to be gold coins, but then on a closer look, they are actually 'gold discs.'

Similar in design to coins, they were minted by the Philadelphia Mint in the 1940's for Aramco, and bore, on one side, the U. S. Eagle and the legend "U. S. Mint,

Philadelphia, USA" and, on the other side, stamp certifying the fineness and weight. Aramco, required to pay royalties and other payments in gold to the Saudi government, could not obtain the gold at the monetary price fixed by the United States, therefore, the U. S. government specifically began to mint the "discs" - actually bullion in coin form for these payments.

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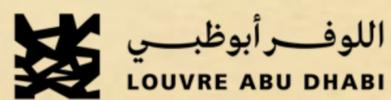
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Special thanks for contributing artists & art:



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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 the 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:

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