

Ithraeyat Magazine

Spring 2025

NATURE

Artist **Mishal Alryhan**



What is on the cover? A 50x close-up of the wing of the necyria butterfly (*Necyria duellona*). Courtesy of **Mishal Alryhan**.

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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Photos of insects courtesy of Mishal Alryhan.



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Photos of insects courtesy of Mishal Alryhan.



fol. 7, Fly, Caterpillar, Pear, and Centipede. *Mira calligraphiae monumenta*, fols. 1-129 written 1561–1562; illumination added about 1591–1596. **Joris Hoefnagel** (Flemish, / Hungarian, 1542 - 1600), and **Georg Bocskay** (Hungarian, died 1575). Credit **Getty Museum Collection & The Public Domain Review**.

Letter from The Editor:

L What Color Are you? *L* — Homage to the Colorful Nature

By Rym Al-Ghazal

“Nature is the source of all true knowledge. She has her own logic, her own laws, she has no effect without cause nor invention without necessity... And water is the driving force of all nature.”

— The Renaissance legend Leonardo da Vinci (1452 -1519) is believed to have said.





Illustration of Sloane's urania (labelled here with its old taxon name of *Leilus occidentalis*), from volume 3 of William Swainson's *Zoological Illustrations* (1829). Credit to **The Public Domain Review** and **source**.

The Serenity of blue, the passionate intensity of red, and the joy of orange — colors inspire us as much as they identify parts of us.

When you're tired, get a boost of yellow as it has been scientifically proven to improve mental activity and enhance awareness and energy levels.

Green — one of the main colors of nature — inspires feelings of connections to mother nature and to our more tranquil self, providing overall freshness and growth.

Different shades inspire different emotions and memories. For 2025, Pantone — a leader in color standardization — has chosen the warm, comforting color of PANTONE 17-1230 Mocha Mousse, a brown hue imbued with richness that reminds us of coffee and chocolate.

Brown, in its different shades, is a color that inspires respect as it is associated with stability, wisdom, and earth. From the lightest browns of the desert to the darkest of mud and soil, mother nature's earthy tones and its many moods are celebrated in this special edition dedicated to '**Nature**' and all its diversity of beings and landscapes.



Nature is our greatest artist. It inspires as it nurtures, expands, and contracts, all the while demanding our respect and protection.

Ithraeyat is also celebrating its fifth anniversary, and for this special occasion, it honors the delicate and intricate art of nature itself — a close-up of a **butterfly's wing**.

Whether zoomed in or seen from afar, there is no competition to nature's mastery on its many canvases. We have to thank the photographers, the scientists, the activists, the storytellers and the artists for documenting the natural world around us in unique ways.

Art capturing nature, whether via photographs, paintings or illustrations — such as the colorful illustration of Sloane's urania shared here that went extinct in 1908 — now serves, in a tragic way, the only visual documents of lost biodiversity and habitats.

These **artistic documents and images** serve as a critical historical collective memory of our natural world and a reminder of what was, and may never be again.

Enjoy seeing things that may be right in front of you, or near your feet, with a new appreciation.

Warmest regards,



A **Gift** of Art to our Readers:

“As a former clinical psychologist, I am intimately aware of life’s harshness, which I consciously avoid in my work, choosing instead to focus on the good, the true, and the beautiful. Each piece represents a new attempt to solve a puzzle and capture an idea. When I achieve a sense of harmony,

my work is complete. In essence, I aim to capture reality as I perceive it—its inherent potential, hopes, and magic—and share this vision with the viewer,”

— said Ángeles M. Pomata, who has been dedicated to art for the past 10 years.

Discover more of
Ángeles M. Pomata
art [here](#).



“Treasure the Quiet” by Spanish artist **Ángeles M. Pomata** who is passionate about the study of color and nature.



'Wrapped in Flowers,' by artist **Ángeles M. Pomata**, who says she "approaches art with an open mind, constantly learning and evolving from realistic techniques towards simplicity, concept, and color."

Cover Art: Beauty under the Macro-Scope

By Hassan Albather

**“The smallest creatures often hold the key to the
grandest mysteries of our ecosystems.”**

— Rachel Carson, American marine biologist and writer
(1907–1964)

Brushed off, overlooked, neglected, stepped on, sometimes out of mere indifference but often with disgust. A grain of sand, a fallen leaf, a speck of dust, a droplet of water, and all those that dwell alongside—all taken for granted, yet are the very essence of nature.

It takes a probing eye to fully appreciate the beauty which lies in insect life, whether in their anatomy, their lush colors and sharp features, or the details of their habitats and the uniqueness of their ecosystems and lifecycles.

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A 5x close-up of the “whimsical” jumping spider. Courtesy of **Mishal Alryhan**.



"Birds Startled by Spirit" by Lucy Qinnuayuak (Inuit, 1915–1982). Ithraeyat paid homage to a timeless and beautiful poetic collection of art by featuring the first-ever debut of Canadian indigenous art. The collection was published in the **Threads** edition of Ithraeyat.

Spotlight: Planting Enriching Stories — Five Year Anniversary

By Rym Al-Ghazal

Ithraeyat. What is in a name? What does Ithraeyat even mean?

The name of the magazine is born out of Ithra, which is the other name for The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture. It also refers to 'enriching,' and so Ithra-e-yat, a play on the Arabic word of Ithra, is a plural of enrichment, and in this case, a collection of enriching stories.

In another interesting twist: the word "Magazine" has its origins in the Arabic word makhzan, a storehouse. Ultimately, Ithraeyat Magazine is a storehouse of unique, enriching stories.

Born in 2020 during the COVID-19 epidemic lockdowns, the magazine grew to feature hundreds of artists, creatives, and cultural figures; promote more than a 1,000 art pieces in different forms — including the first ever debut of **Canadian Indigenous art** — and become a station of cultural growth for many writers as well.

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Bridges: Cross-Cultural Conversations

Where nature, culture and honor meet: Mini-Japan at Ithra

By Rym Al-Ghazal

“A mini-Japan was recreated at Ithra... where elements of traditional, popular and contemporary aspects of Japanese culture were represented and the public had a chance to meet our culture.”

— H.E. Morino Yasunari, Ambassador of Japan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Silk, serenity and a subtle appreciation of the small things in our shared world — founded on values such as patience, humility and honor — are just some of the elements in Japanese culture that make it unique yet universal for all to embrace and appreciate.

From the tea ceremonies to the asymmetrical flower arrangements of Ikebana, visitors to Ithra's Japan Cultural Days embraced a range of unique cultural exchanges that imparted an appreciation of nature and the wise lessons it continues to teach us every day.

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Taking inspiration from nature, and being part of nature's narrative: Japan Cultural Days at Ithra. Photo by Ahmed Althani.



Great tit on cherry blossom branch. By Utagawa Hiroshige. Color woodblock print; yotsugiriban Japanese, 1830-1839. **Credit Line:** Clarence Buckingham Collection. Public Domain.

Spotlight: The Art of the Cherry Blossom

By Rym Al-Ghazal

"If I were asked to explain the Japanese spirit, I would say it is wild cherry blossoms glowing in the morning sun!"

— Motoori Norinaga, renowned Japanese scholar (1730-1801)

Rare, delicate and profound, the cherry blossom — known in Japan as sakura — remains one of the most iconic symbols of Japanese culture and their deep connection to nature's gifts.

Embodying symbolic beliefs of importance, hope and renewal, these magical trees are in full bloom for just one week — between March and early May.

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Bridges: Cross-Cultural Conversations

Seeking Refuge in Nature

By Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis



Mongols Escaping Turanians
 From a manuscript of the Kitab-i Nigaristan,
 a collection of instructive anecdotes and
 historic stories authored by Ahmad b.
 Muhammad Ghaffari (1504-1567)
 Copied by Ahmad al-Shirazi
 Iran, probably Shiraz, dated 980 AH /
 1572-1573
 Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper
 38.7 cm x 25 cm
 AKM272.fol187r



In a world of constant anxiety and worry about looming threats from climate change, conflict and war, many of us turn to nature for peace, succour, and even survival.

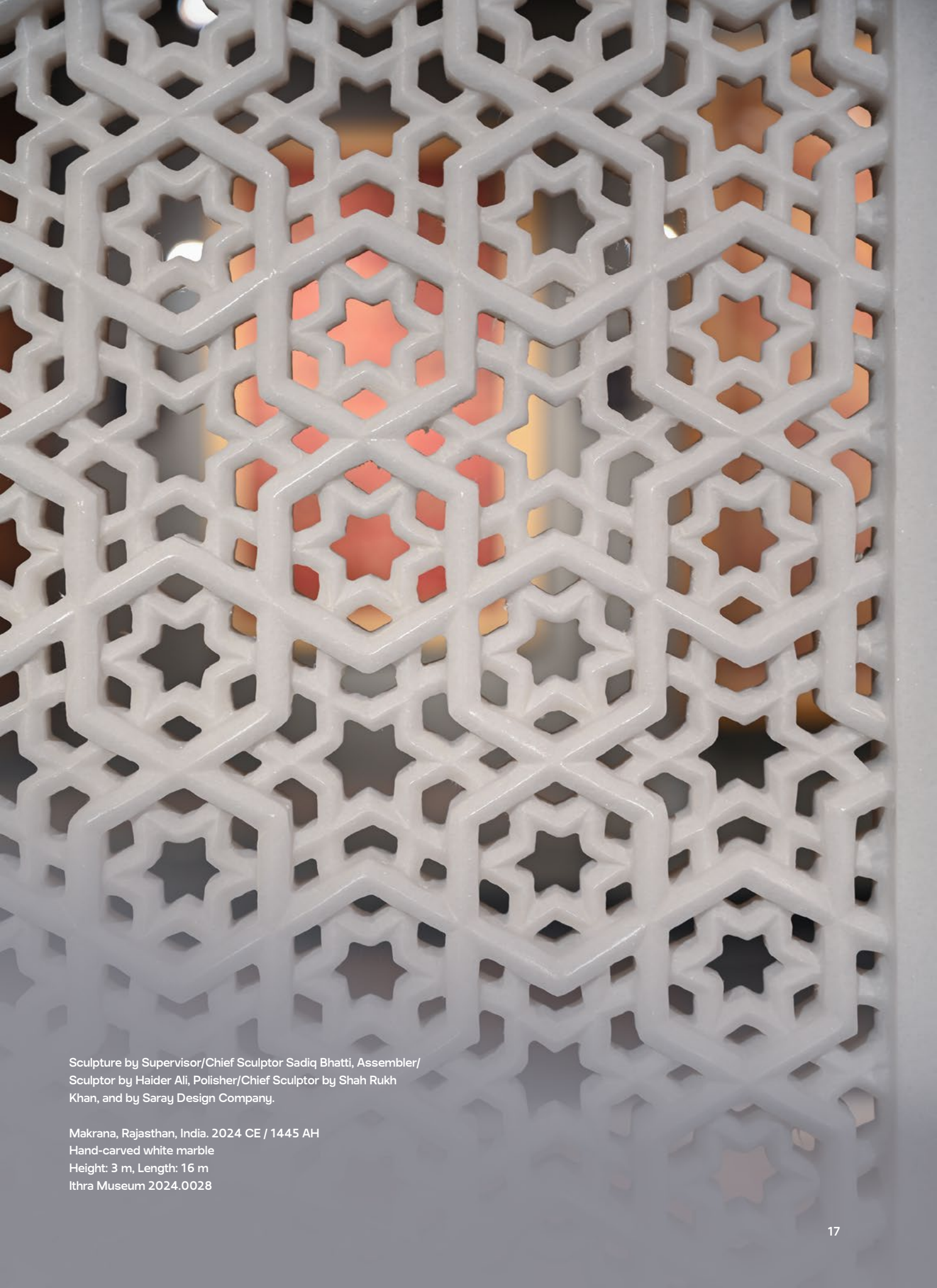
Wherever we live in the world, we know places to escape to – the sea, the forest, the desert, the mountains.

We know where they are, they call to us, and we know that they will embrace us, shelter us, and perhaps even make us whole again. That knowledge of course is not new.

In fact, throughout human history and around the globe, stories remind us of the powerful role nature can play in our well-being, regeneration, and survival.

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Sculpture by Supervisor/Chief Sculptor Sadiq Bhatti, Assembler/
Sculptor by Haider Ali, Polisher/Chief Sculptor by Shah Rukh
Khan, and by Saray Design Company.

Makrana, Rajasthan, India. 2024 CE / 1445 AH
Hand-carved white marble
Height: 3 m, Length: 16 m
Ithra Museum 2024.0028

Year of: Handicrafts The Majesty of Marble

By Rawan Talal

From deep within the earth and under immense heat and pressure, limestone undergoes crystallization to form the exquisite and durable marble that we covet for its beauty and strength. Throughout the centuries, humans have transformed this natural wonder into remarkable works of art, a testament to nature's treasures and mankind's ability to shape raw materials into both functional structures and artistic masterpieces.

Marble has been the cornerstone of human craftsmanship, from the ancient Greek and Roman statues to the masterpieces of the Renaissance. Architects, sculptors, and artisans have long relied on marble to create enduring works of art and architectural marvels, such as the grand columns of temples or Michelangelo's iconic David.

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Guest **Columnist:** **Water and Freedom**

By Jokha Alharthi

In my childhood home, there was a falaj, a water channel that flowed to nourish both people and gardens. The old houses were built in such a way that ensured the falaj passed through them, arriving from neighbors' homes and leaving to other houses before finally pouring into the gardens.

This meant that I could visit my friend by sneaking through the covered water channel between our two houses, swimming my way to her without needing to ask my parents for permission to leave through the front door. It gave us immense freedom and joy, allowing us to befriend many imaginary creatures that lived in the falaj and hid among the moss and small fish.

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A painting by **Sultan Zeyad** inspired by nature.

From the **Field**: Community Artistic Expressions -

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

We meet Saudi artists Dr. Sultan AlZeyad,
Nouf AlJamaa & Hussain Alismail

Join us on a journey through different artistic worlds. Explore the creative realms of talented artists who offer us the joy of visual contemplation. Immerse yourself in their vibrant and expressive spaces, where human ideas blend seamlessly with guided inspiration and delightful chaos.

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Spotlight: Golden Threads of Nature

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

Reimagining and reinterpreting nature in artworks remains one of the most intimate and rewarding relationships an artist can form with nature. Whether to inspire serenity, reflection or awe, there is always something in nature we can honor, even sometimes with its precious metals. Nature continues to be our greatest treasure, and here we feature intricate art from the Ithra collection, shaped by nature's various gifts.





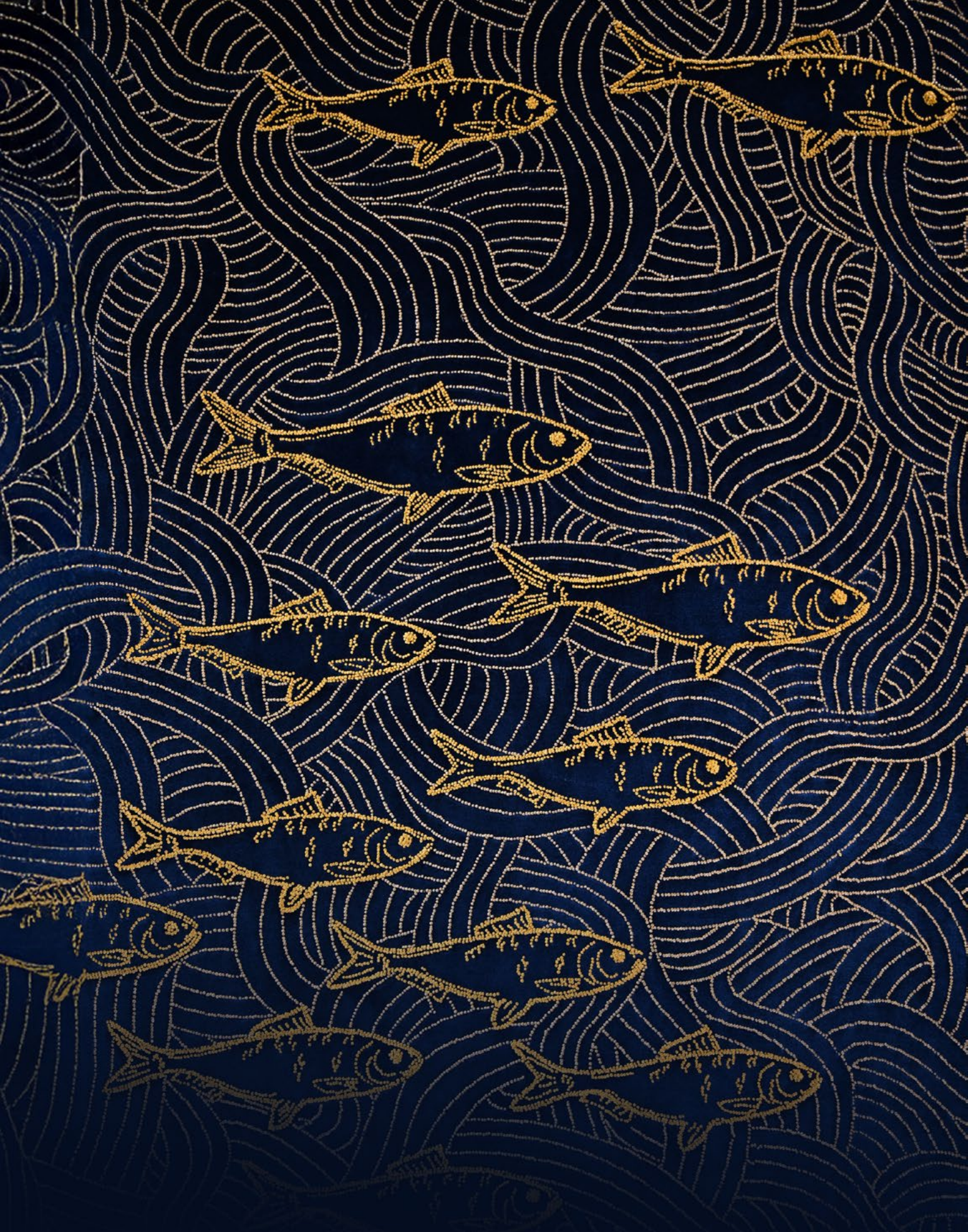
Water Seeks the Thirsty, 2020-2021
Aisha Khalid- Ithra art collection
Fabric, steel pins, 24 karat gold-plated steel pins, and audio 304.8 x 548.64 cm.

Water Seeks the Thirsty

Inspired by the sacred sites of Saudi Arabia, Aisha Khalid's project reflects her deep spiritual connection to places like the Ka'ba, the Prophet's Masjid, and Zamzam Well. For Khalid, commissioned works offer an opportunity to engage intimately with the cultural significance of such places. This tapestry, crafted from layers of lush velvet and adorned with steel and gold-plated pins, embodies her vision of these revered spaces.

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Close ups from the art piece: Water Seeks the Thirsty, 2020-2021. Aisha Khalid - Ithra art collection
Fabric, steel pins, 24 karat gold-plated steel pins, 304.8 x 548.64 cm.



Special **Feature:**
**World's Most Popular
Work of Art — The Cat**

By Rym Al-Ghazal

“The smallest feline is a masterpiece.”

— said the Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci.

There is no doubt that there is one master of the virtual world and the real one — the enigmatic cat. Sure, sometimes people get distracted by their canine friend (or foe), the dog, but cats dominate our global culture with art pieces, photos, illustrations, sculptures, film and many other forms of dedication and admiration of the best of all beasts.

“Cats are everywhere, cherished and were sacred in ancient civilizations, and they are near our homes and in the streets, and so they are always in our lives... I have always been fascinated by cats,” said renowned Saudi artist Tagreed Albagshi, who regularly features a cat – or some sort of feline, even a lion – in her art pieces.

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'Homage to the cat,' by Saudi artist **Taghreed Albagshi** who appreciates their presence in our lives and is fascinated by how symbolic they are of our past, present and our future. She dedicated a whole collection to cats. Art courtesy of the artist who recently opened her own gallery 'Taghreed Art Space'.



تغريد البغشي
2025



تغريد البغشي
2022

When light nature and art intersect: Circles of Light collection, by renowned artist from the Eastern Province Taghreed Albagshi. Courtesy of the artist.

Arabic Treasures: A Leopard by Any Other Spot, Still Remains as Cherished

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

“The leopard does not change his spots.”

— William Shakespeare

International Day of The Arabian Leopard

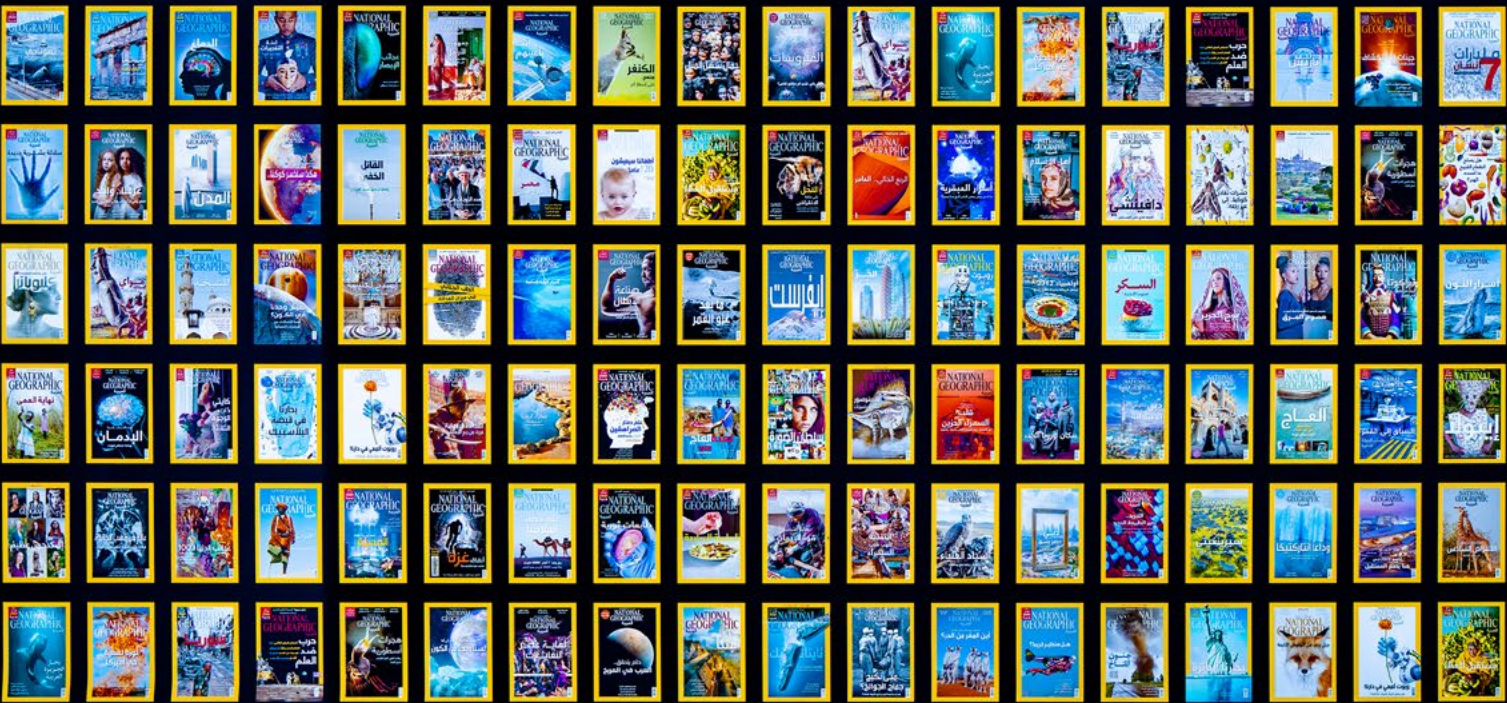
On June 12, 2023, to raise awareness about this national icon, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed February 10 as the International Day of the Arabian Leopard in resolution 77/295, whereby the Arabian Leopard Day was first launched by The Royal Commission of Alula in 2022.

“By celebrating this Day, the UN ultimately seeks to restore the Arabian leopard as “a flagship species for conservation and sustainability in its native region while emphasizing the critical role of biodiversity in maintaining the health and resilience of our planet’s ecosystems,” stated the UN website. With estimates of just 100 to 120 in the wild, conservation and breeding efforts help revive the ‘*Panthera pardus nimr*,’ the smallest leopard subspecies.

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FELIS Nimr
ex *Arabia felix*



The wonderful world of **National Geographic Al Arabiya** covers. Courtesy of Hussain AlMoosawi.

Guest **Columnist:**
The Probing Image:
Urban History and interpreting Nature
By Hussain AlMoosawi

“Hussain... I see that you don’t share images of natural landscapes from your travels,” is a common comment I receive whenever I share stories about the urban scenes I observe during my journeys, but I have my reasons, which I will explain below.

It is only natural, then, that I document my personal experiences related to these fields during my travels. If we reflect on the aforementioned areas, we find that they are all connected to human activity, whether in ancient or modern times.

History, archaeology, architecture, and anthropology; these are the realms of National Geographic, and they are also at the core of my interests, passions, and field of expertise.

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The Sinai agama, with its stunning colors and remarkable details, in Harrat Al-Raha, Tabuk Province. Courtesy of **Ibrahim Sarhan**.



Add to your **Bucket List:** **Nature Through a Lens of Love**

By Layla AlZahid

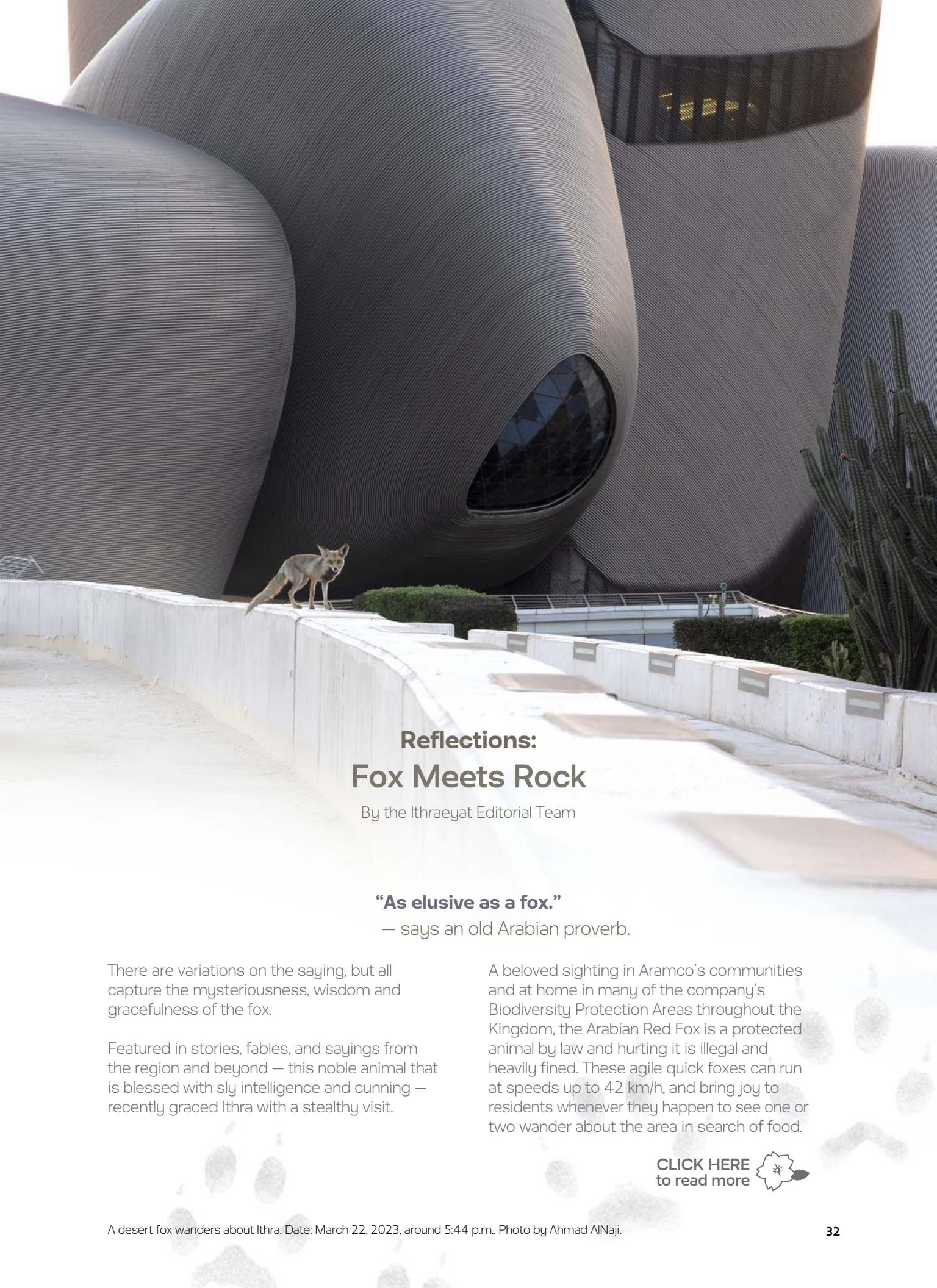
“On my journey with photography, I find myself in a constant search for beauty, whether in vast natural landscapes such as towering mountains and sprawling plains, or in the finest details like the wind’s engraving on the sand. This astonishing diversity in nature makes it an inexhaustible source of inspiration and creativity in all aspects of life.”

— The traveler Ibrahim Sarhan

Photography is not merely a means of documentation, it is a tool that invites us to see the world through different lenses and angles, especially when in the hands of a passionate traveler who meticulously captures the finest details of nature across plains, deserts and mountains.

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Reflections: Fox Meets Rock

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

“As elusive as a fox.”

— says an old Arabian proverb.

There are variations on the saying, but all capture the mysteriousness, wisdom and gracefulness of the fox.

Featured in stories, fables, and sayings from the region and beyond — this noble animal that is blessed with sly intelligence and cunning — recently graced Ithra with a stealthy visit.

A beloved sighting in Aramco’s communities and at home in many of the company’s Biodiversity Protection Areas throughout the Kingdom, the Arabian Red Fox is a protected animal by law and hurting it is illegal and heavily fined. These agile quick foxes can run at speeds up to 42 km/h, and bring joy to residents whenever they happen to see one or two wander about the area in search of food.

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Special Feature:

NUEMA: Art in the Valleys of AlUla

By Ahmad S. Badghaish

“We live only to discover beauty. All else is a form of waiting.”

— poet and writer Khalil Gibran

NUEMA: The Forgotten Ceremony, an artistic work by Sara Brahim and Ugo Shiavi, presented at the AlUla Arts Festival. Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla.

AlUla is an open-air museum, seamlessly blending raw nature with deep-rooted history. As one strolls through its vast valleys, towering mountains, and precisely sculpted rock formations, there is a sensation of traveling through time, tracing the footsteps of ancient civilizations.

In every relic, valley, and rock carved either by human hands or shaped by the wind, there lies a story waiting to be told.

AlUla stands as a cultural, historical, and artistic destination, filled with breathtaking nature, enchanting history, and modern development.

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NUEMA: The Forgotten Ceremony, an artistic work by Sara Brahim and Ugo Shiavi, presented at the AlUla Arts Festival. Courtesy of the Royal Commission for AlUla.

A desert eagle owl chick seeks shelter under its mother between the rocks. Courtesy of **Faisal Hajwal**.



From the **Field**: Community **Wings Over Arabia**

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

Saudi Arabia enjoys rich biological diversity, and birds are among the most prominent elements of its wildlife. This diversity is due to the many different environments it contains, from the long coastlines on the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf and the mountains in the north and south, to the dense forests and vast deserts in between.

Much of this environment remains in its natural state, and the government is keen on preserving wildlife throughout the Kingdom, striving to protect any and all endangered species. One effective method is increasing awareness of the importance of the environment and fostering a culture of caring for animal and plant diversity.

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From the **Field:** Where Red Sands and Animals Roam - Shaybah Canvas


By Rym Al-Ghazal

Nature paints an impressive and intricate canvas of life and living beings in the Rub' Al-Khali, which may be called the 'Empty Quarter', even though it is anything but empty.

Against the impressive backdrop of Shaybah's silky reddish sand dunes, there are fresh tiny and wobbly two-toed footprints on the sand that mark new hope for nature.

Unaware of their importance in the national drive for conservation and revival of native species to the Rub' Al-Khali, five baby ostriches are playfully tugging away at shrubs and kicking about some sand under the watchful eyes of their towering mother.



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A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small, young plant seedling. The seedling has a thin, light-brown stem with small green leaves. It is growing out of a thick, cylindrical core of dark brown soil. The person holding the seedling is wearing a light-colored, possibly beige, thobe. The background is blurred, showing other people in similar attire, suggesting an outdoor event or gathering.

Reflections: Green Pages

By Ithraeyat Editorial Team

As a collection of layered stones inspired by the geological nature of Saudi Arabia, Ithra's architecture directly takes from nature, but Ithra's programs give back to nature as well.

Ithra's deep connection with the region's natural environment goes beyond the aesthetic aspects of the building. It extends to a societal responsibility reflected in its various programs.

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عليه فمن كان عنده علم من امر فليعلم ويرفعه اليه فانه لا يقتل الا
بعد النقص والتثبت في امره لا باللهو والمجانة وهذه صورة النمر
يخاطب الجنه بما امر به الاسد





Arabic **Treasures**

Kalila wa Dimna -
Timeless Animal Fables

By Rym Al-Ghazal

“Images of the animals in varieties of paints and colors [are intended] to delight the hearts of princes, increase their pleasure, and also the degree of care which they bestow on the work.”

— Ibn al-Muqaffa', 8th century.

Like the beloved Aesop's Fables, Kalila and Dimna is a collection of animal fables that were written not just for moral instruction to three young princes, who were unruly at the time and had to learn to be wiser rulers, but also for the amusement and reflection of whoever reads them.

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Detail from the bookplate of the English bibliographer, paleontologist and geologist Charles Davies Sherborn, engraved by his father in 1890. In the image can be seen a bust of Shakespeare alongside a portrait of Darwin, a copy of the Venus de Milo alongside a microscope. The Latin on the bookcase reads "books are friends, nature [from] God." Credit from **The Public Domain Review**

From the **Shelves:**

Where Nature and Words Meet

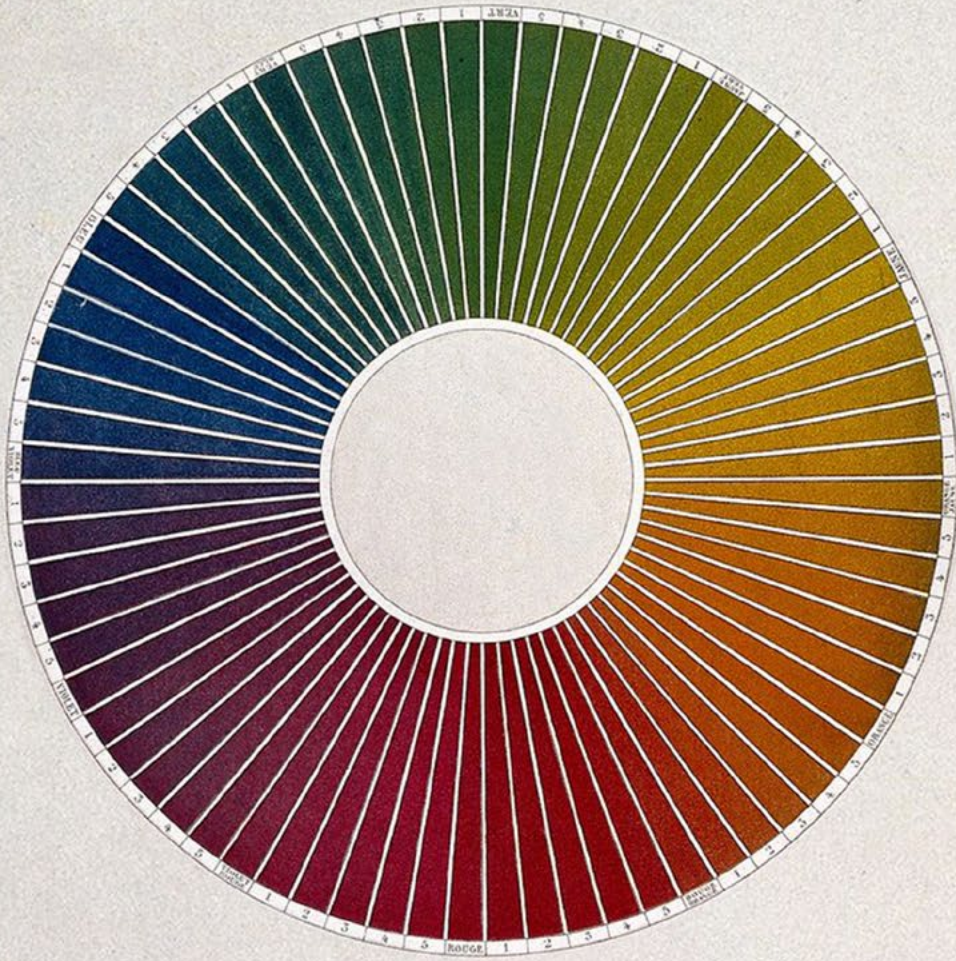
By M Lynx Qualey from **ArabLit**.

Books set in natural landscapes have a different rhythm from those set in cities. They often leave behind the instant gratification of plot twists, clues, fights, and pulse-pounding conclusions. Instead of moving in straight lines, they often move in spirals, revealing more as we get closer and closer to the book's beating heart.

When we read the literary works below, we are the patient hunter; we read meditatively and watch for truths to come into sight, and then we follow them quietly back to their lair.

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From the **Vault:** **Art you Should Know**

Rym Al-Ghazal

Art is life and life is art. In this special section of each edition, we will be highlighting art that has impacted our world in one way or another, inspiring new forms of art, new artists, and even challenging how we view and create art.

Art is more than an artwork, it is a philosophy, an exploration of our world, realities and unrealities; sometimes pushing the boundaries of our own mindset, and how we express ourselves and our stories.

Here we discover three art pieces and their stories, each of which has left its mark on the art world.

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Eastern Province, 1970 – 1977 |

A Closer Look at Camel's Long Neck and Head (Camelus Dromedarius).
Courtesy of Aramco Archives.



From the **Archives:** **When Nature Was Our Home**

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

South Of Riyadh at Manfuha, 1949 |

Ruins of the Home of Famous Arab Poet Maimun Al A'sha ibn Qais. Courtesy of Aramco Archives.

“Take high morals from the deserts, for the soul is corrupted by crowding.”

– Elia Abu Madi, Lebanese-American poet (1890 -1957)

Often misrepresented as a barren place of nothingness, the desert is actually vibrant with life in various forms, and home to many species and even people. Not long ago, people lived closer to nature, or rather, within nature itself, as seen in the photos here that capture how a poet once lived in a cave in the mountains.


Nature is home to many animals and plants that are able to naturally tolerate or adapt to their environment. Their bodies have become specifically attuned to endure the harsh nature of the terrain and the taxing conditions, most prominently displayed in our ships of the desert – the camels.

The sounds of life, be they birds, insects or the cuddly jerboa, transform the silence of the desert into a subtle song of wonder composed by nature's very own orchestra..

Visually, the clarity of the skies is something we have taken for granted. Our noise and light pollution within the cities block our view of the stars and planets above, but a drive out to nature returns to us this gift of stellar beauty to be experienced once more.

Enjoy our latest Aramco rarities.

Here is the house of the poet Maimun ibn Qais al-A'sha, a pre-Islamic poet from the first class of pre-Islamic poets. He was born and raised in Manfuha, now a part of Riyadh, but then an urban village on the banks of Wadi Hanifa in Najd in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.. It contains his house and grave, and one of the streets of Manfuha was named Al-A'sha in his honor.

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Postcard “Art of Sports” Competition

This is an open invitation from Ithraeyat Magazine to do a postcard design on the “Art of Sports” All types of art are welcome!
Your submissions may be drawn, designed or written (using Arabic calligraphy or others).

**The submissions are open from March 18 until May 8, 2025 at
11:00 PM**

Click here for
more information



Editorial team:

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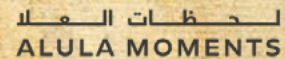
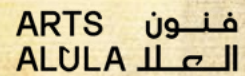
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Through a compelling series of programs, performances, exhibitions, events and initiatives, Ithra creates world-class experiences across its interactive public spaces that bring together culture, innovation and knowledge that are designed to appeal 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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