

Ithraeyat Magazine

Winter 2023

Threads



Artist Abdullah Hammas



Welcome to **Ithraeyat**, a 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 Art of the Intangible

By Rym Al-Ghazal

“It is much more difficult to do a thing than to talk about it...”

— Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900), Irish wit, poet, writer, and dramatist.

Many of us hear about a craft, a skill, a story from a previous generation and don't realize just how difficult it is to keep some cultural heritage alive. We take things for granted and only realize the importance of something when it is gone. The term 'cultural heritage' keeps changing and does not end at the physical manifestation of our heritage, such as monuments and collections

of objects. Our culture includes the 'intangible', such as traditions, stories, and living expressions inherited from our ancestors, and includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge, and practices linked to the world around us — such as nature and the stars — and the skills needed to continue producing traditional crafts.

Cover art: Artistic aspects of Saudi life by
Saudi artist Abdullah Hammas





In this winter edition of Ithraeyat, the last in 2023, we celebrate the fragile, yet continuous intangible cultural heritage through the theme of 'Threads' as we remain connected to our past, our present, and to others around us through our cross-cultural stories and more.

We should try to preserve what makes us unique, protect cultural identities under threat, and maintain our cultural diversity in the overwhelming globalization and neutralization of identities and narratives.

We have the honor of featuring the colorful, artistic and cultural identity of renowned Saudi artist **Abdullah Hammas** on our cover, a piece that captures the vibrant cultural landscape and multi-layered stories of the Kingdom.

"All my works are inspired by the daily life in our region. For me, the full body of my work is like a brick in the wall of this great country," said Hammas, capturing the heart of his work.

From the humble date palms, where every inch of it is utilized and reused, to the unique murals of Al-Qatt Al-Asiri, to the preservation of Arabic calligraphy, there are many aspects of intangible cultural heritage that are explored and celebrated.

We honor the different communities that make up our world, such as the indigenous communities, and we feature here the first-ever debut of Canadian indigenous art as we cherish and engage in cross-cultural conversations.

In this edition, we revisit greats like Claude Monet (1840 - 1926), the father of Impressionism, meet artists and figures who preserve, research, and document our cultures — and rediscover old traditions that have lasted to this day and evolved — such as the art of storytelling as embodied in the now 70-year-old sister magazine Al-Qafilah — to even how we watch and tell stories has changed.

Understanding our own intangible cultural heritage, this amazing wealth of knowledge, and the cultural heritage of different communities inspires intercultural and cross-cultural dialogue, bridges understanding, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.

"The one who doesn't know the falcon then might as well grill it."

This Arab proverb suggests that those who don't know the value of something might see it as worthless. Therefore, we should avoid reaching such a stage where we don't know something is valuable and part of our individual and collective human narrative.

Warmest regards,







Cover **Artist:**
Simplicity in Colors
by Manar Al-Mutairi

“I consider my whole life to be art.”
— Artist Abdullah Hammas

Abdullah Hammas was born in the city of Abha and grew up moving with his family between the cities of the Kingdom. He studied at the Institute of Art Education and graduated as a teacher in 1973.

Hammas is considered one of the most prominent artists in the Arab world and one of the most important pioneers of the fine art movement in the Kingdom, and was one of the first Saudi artists to participate in local and international exhibitions.

His journey with art began at a young age, with the support of his father, who provided him with the basics of drawing, such as colors and notebooks. Hammas was able to develop his skills remarkably, as he presented his first work when he was only in middle school. He shared his love and passion for art with his students for 37 years, and had many leadership positions, including president of the Jeddah Culture and Arts Society twice, and was appointed as Secretary-General of the House of Fine Artists and was its former president.

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Painting by **artist Abdullah Hammas**, 2022, courtesy of the artist.

Special Interview: Heritage Mirrors Civilizations

By Gaida Almogren

“Heritage is important because it helps preserve the cultural identity of communities and promote diversity and intercultural dialogue. Intangible cultural heritage also provides a sense of community and helps to promote mutual understanding, respect, and dialogue.”

— Dr. Jasir Alherbis, CEO of the Heritage Commission
in an interview with Ithraeyat

Heritage encompasses multiple facets and doesn't revolve around just tangible, material aspects. Alongside handicrafts and folk practices, it also includes customs and traditions.

This makes it fertile ground for employing national heritage, not just as a cultural product, but also as an economic asset, contributing to the national GDP and creating more job opportunities.

Saudi Arabia is rich in heritage, with groups and enthusiasts dedicated to preserving it.

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Traditional Saudi clothes in a traditional home setting - Al-Qatt Al-Asiri visible in the back.
Courtesy of the Heritage Commission, Ministry of Culture.

Special **Feature:** **The Art of Multiculturalism**

By Rym Al-Ghazal

“Art has a unique ability to unite people from diverse backgrounds, from all corners of the world and from all walks of life, around the enjoyment and appreciation of creative expression, something that has no borders.”

— H.E. Jean-Philippe Linteau, Canada’s ambassador to Saudi Arabia

One of the most diverse and vibrant nations in the world, Canada’s legacy on the international scene is wide and historic, with it marking its 50-year relationship with Saudi Arabia — with it being restored this year following a five-year diplomatic break.

Canada is famous for its friendly citizens, cold winters, and for its natural sites, such as Niagara Falls, the kaleidoscopic Northern Lights, its national parks, and the Canadian Rockies. It is home to dynamic indigenous communities that bring a rich culture of traditions, art, and a unique way of life. And who could forget Canada’s iconic animals like the grizzly bears, loon birds, and caribou?

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Bridges: Cross-Cultural
Conversations

Passing Knowledge from
Father to Son

By Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis





The Nawab Mirza Muhammad Baqir and his son Mirza Husayn. Signed by Mu'in Musavvir. Iran, Isfahan, dated 1085 AH /1674. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper 42.1 X 29.2 cm. **The Aga Khan Museum**, AKM81

When we think of 'art' today, we tend to focus first and foremost on material visual expressions of creativity. And yet, in many cultures around the world, it is the intangible arts and heritage of a community – their poetry, stories, knowledge and wisdom, rituals, social practices, and performing arts, their know-how with regard to traditional

crafts – that remain most cherished. Transmitted from generation to generation, a community's intangible heritage helps to foster a sense of identity and belonging, provides a link between past, present, and future, and contributes to social cohesion.

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Special Guest **Columnist**

Protecting Traditional Knowledge



By Dr. Laila Al-Bassam

Traditional knowledge, in its diverse manifestations, has garnered global reverence as a custodian of the histories and civilizations of nations. It highlights their culture and distinctiveness as it represents a human legacy. Recognizing its significance, international agreements, notably those championed by UNESCO, endeavor to not only spotlight but also document and safeguard these traditions. They underscore its pivotal role in defining the national identities of diverse societies while fostering cultural and human collaboration worldwide.

Traditional knowledge is present in most of the works undertaken by humans, and is linked to the history of people, their literature, arts, values, customs and traditions.

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Wilho Sjöström, Summer Evening, 1912.
Photo courtesy of **the Finnish National Gallery**, Hannu Pakarinen

Bridges: Cross-Cultural **Conversations**

A Legacy of Light and Color

By Rym Al-Ghazal

“The light constantly changes, and that alters the atmosphere and beauty of things every minute.”

— Claude Monet (1840 - 1926), the father of Impressionism.

Color, light, shadow, and nature's little dances and songs, such as the rustling twirlings of the leaves and the rhythmic ripples of water, are just some of the things we see every day and take for granted. But for artists who see the world differently, these are all sources of inspiration that create new forms of expression and creativity.

In honor of one of the most important artistic movements, the Ateneum Art Museum is holding the remarkable 'Colour & Light – The Legacy of Impressionism' exhibition, which explores the profound influence of Impressionism on Finnish art.

Spanning the years 1860 to 1916, the exhibition features masterpieces by renowned artists such as Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir, and Paul Signac. These iconic works vividly illustrate the transformative impact of leading Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist figures on artists who went on to shape Finnish Colourism, such as Magnus Enckell, Alfred William Finch, Ellen Thesleff, and Tyko Sallinen. A wonderful exploration of an important artistic interplay and influences, the major exhibition includes almost 150 paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures, revealing a lesser-known period in the country's art history.

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Saudi Arabia's Intangible Cultural Heritage



Alheda'a,
oral traditions of calling
camel flocks
2022



Date palm,
knowledge, skills,
traditions and practices
2022



Knowledge and practices
related to cultivating
Khawlani coffee beans
2022



Falconry,
a living human heritage
2021



Arabic calligraphy,
knowledge, skills and
practices
2021



Traditional weaving of
Al Sadu
2020



Al-Qatt Al-Asiri,
female traditional interior wall
decoration in Asir, Saudi Arabia
2017



Arabic coffee,
a symbol of generosity
2015



Almezmar,
drumming and dancing
with sticks
2016



Majlis,
a cultural and social
space
2015



The Saudi Ardah,
dance, drumming and
poetry in Saudi Arabia
2015



From the **Vault:**

Art by Women for all - Al-Qatt Al-Asiri

By Rym Al-Ghazal

Rich, bold and full of character and color is just one of the ways one can describe the unique and vibrant art of Al-Qatt Al-Asiri.

Al-Qatt Al-Asiri is traditionally an interior wall decoration and an ancient art form that captures an important element of the identity of the region of Asir.

It is a spontaneous art technique — carried out largely by the women in the community — that involves colorfully decorating the interior walls of their houses, specifically rooms for visiting guests. Women invite female relatives of various age groups to help them in their homes, thereby transmitting this knowledge from generation to generation.

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The vibrant Asiri Wall painting by the renowned Fatima Abou Gahas from Ithra's art collection.

Special Feature:

Connecting Cultures with the Curves of Calligraphy

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

Calligraphy – the art of beautiful writing – is one of the most ancient types of art and considered the highest form of art in Islamic history. It dates back to the 7th century and is an important part of Islamic culture, history, and identity. Islamic calligraphy is known for transforming text into intricate designs and geometric compositions as a way of expressing the beauty of the Arabic language and is used to decorate mosques, walls, and buildings.

Arabic calligraphy was recently added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list after 16

countries presented the nomination.

The very first Dubai Calligraphy Biennale came as an initiative by the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority to celebrate this art, reflecting the Authority's keenness to enrich the city's creative landscape. The biennale events and exhibitions were held across more than 30 locations around Dubai, with 19 exhibitions transforming the city into a massively unique artistic experience.

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Artwork by Viktor Ekpuk at the INTERWOVEN TEXTURES exhibition in Efié Gallery. Courtesy of Dubai Culture and Arts Authority.

Examples of Arabic calligraphy types

الخط الكوفي
Kufic

الخط الكوفي

الخط الديواني
Diwani

الخط الديواني

خط الثلث
Thuluth

خط الثلث

خط النسخ
Naskh

خط النسخ

الخط المغربي المبسوط
Moroccan Mabsout

الخط المغربي المبسوط

خط الريحان
Rayhani

الخط الريحان



Special **Feature:**

Comfort in Popular Legacies

By Fatma Theyab

“The difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way.”

— T. S. Eliot, Tradition and the Individual Talent.

With its bright and sometimes false colors, modernity has swallowed up legacies and emptied them of their meanings and spiritual significance. Like every confused entity, the soul wonders about the usefulness of legacies and about the meaning of clinging to them when it is all too easy to abandon them. Still, there is consolation for the soul because of its belonging and affiliation to authentic legacies, which resist emptiness by touching on history and intangible culture. Like water that quenches thirst, the Sadu and its history are felt by the Arabian Gulf locals.

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Spotlight: Timeless Proverbs from Arabia

By Hassan Albather

“He caught the wolf by its tail.”

— This saying describes getting a strong hold of something, and it can also be used sarcastically.

Proverbs are commonly known as figures of speech that are passed from one generation to another; traditional sayings that offer advice or present a moral in a short and pithy manner. They are also metaphorical phrases, similes, and descriptive epithets that were originally used more loosely than they are today. They may be taken from an incident, a poem, passed wisdom, or poetry.

Ibn al-Muqaffa' (724 – 759 AD), the Persian translator of *Kalilah and Dimnah* said: "If speech is made into a proverb, it will be clearer to logic, easier to stomach, and more serviceable to all branches of discourse."

Meanwhile, Arab philosopher al-Farabi (870 – 950 AD) claimed that proverbs are that part of speech that is accessible to the learned and the commoner alike, both in their meaning and word choice, as evidence through their use of proverbs in casual exchanges and their acceptance of proverbial expressions, culminating into a collected wisdom of the people.

Aristotle (384 – 322 BC), on the other hand, rendered brevity the most important pillar of a proverb, which is closer to the truth, as one cannot envision a proverb that does not carry a lot of meanings in a few words.

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Special **Feature:**

Art With No Frontiers

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

"Our priority is on content and on making these contents accessible everywhere, namely also in places where the access to the Internet is not that fast..."

– Eva Schubert, founder of Museums With No Frontiers

Museum With No Frontiers (MWNF) is not only the first but is one of the only truly online museums and online exhibition programs using virtual reality to enable partners and curators from different countries, different cultures, and different economic backgrounds to realize joint projects together. MWNF continues to create virtual museums and exhibitions that provide access to art and cultural heritage from around the world.

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Special Feature: The Art of Plants

By Rym Al-Ghazal

“Heritage is maintaining respect and appreciation of our plants to make sure we don’t lose them. It doesn’t matter what creed or religion you are; botanical art crosses all boundaries.”

– Sue Wickison, botanical artist

Botanical art is one of the most meticulous and dedicated forms of art that brings nature’s treasures alive. For decades, Sue Wickison has been perfecting this art, capturing a world few get to see in real life.

With an impressive list of accomplishments and awards, Sue, who was born and brought up in Sierra Leone, West Africa, was influenced by her father. A teacher, amateur botanist, and an artist,

Sue’s father saw the same love of nature and passion in his daughter and so would take her on adventures and expeditions locating, identifying, and collecting botanical specimens.

Often, plants and the heritage around them are taken for granted, but thanks to dedication by artists like Sue, and the recent push to protect the natural world, plants are getting the attention they truly deserve.



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The date palm. Art courtesy of the the artist.



Special Feature: Reviving Folktales

By the Ithraeyat Editorial Team

**“This story of ours is one of the popular tales of the Levant
Poured like crystal glassware
About greed and narrated daydreams.”**

Mauzoun is a content and publishing house that serves brands and authors in Saudi Arabia and around the world. The organization chose this name because its approach, words, services, and values are all balanced. It was founded in 2019 with an ambitious vision to discover the richness of the Arabic and English languages, to encourage creative Arab writers, and to demonstrate the power inherent in distinguished publications,

all through integration between content, book assignments, and specialized publishing. They are dedicated to remedying the shortage of attractive content, amazing writing, and beautiful books in the Arab world. Ithraeyat interviewed the Mauzoun team on the value of folklore and their new series, “Myths in and Around Our World.”

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From the **Field:** **The Art of Scent**

By Nourah Aldaej

“To build that sense of nostalgia and connection with the pavilion, the Saudi scent we created married tradition with innovation to create an imprint or memory that was perceived uniquely by each visitor.”

– Curators of the National Pavilion of Saudi Arabia

The National Pavilion of Saudi Arabia participated in the 18th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, through an interactive experience designed by the architect AlBara Saimaldahar, along with two curators, Basma Bouzo and Noura Bouzo, and their assistant curators Joharah Lou Pabalate and Cyril Zammit.

IRTH إرث exhibition analyzed the anthropological and historical aspects of architecture, exploring the past and the present in order to uncover the mysteries of the future and solve its dilemmas.

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IRTH إرث, National Pavilion of Saudi Arabia, at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, 2023. Photo credit: Venice Documentation Project.
Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture of Saudi Arabia.

LYING TO MY PSYCHIATRIST



One of **Sound of Ruby's** latest releases: 'Lying to My Psychiatrist', designed by **Abdullah AlJahdhami**.
Courtesy of the band.



From the **Field:** **Meet the avant-gardists of Saudi rock n' roll**

By Abeer Alnemari

“People would hear me try to play rock music and wonder what that sound was, or ‘noise’, I should say.”

— Mohammed Al-Hajjaj, founder of one of the first Saudi rock bands

Today, there is an increasingly growing community of passionate Saudi rock artists and enthusiasts, young and old, who create and share beautiful and original works with their audiences; in music-focused spaces that serve as important platforms for them to express themselves and form meaningful and supportive connections.

The Ithraeyat Editorial Team is pleased to present you with the inspiring story of one of the first Saudi rock bands: Dammam-based **Sound of Ruby**. The article captures their early learning journey, artistic inspiration, unique style of rock that brilliantly retains Arabic melodies, and many other fun details.



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قافلة الزيت



صفر سنة ١٣٧٣ ١٩٥٣

The first published edition of the 70-year-old Al-Qafilah Magazine - dated October 1953.

Story of the Cover: "Water is indeed one of the most important commodities for the oil exploration teams in the desert, with essential massive water container trucks coming in, such as this one here driven by Abdulaziz bin Shaiban, who has been with the company for over 11 years."

Special Guest **Columnist:**

A Homage to an Ever-evolving Art of Storytelling

The 70th Al-Qafilah issue...a renewed ambition for an everlasting youth

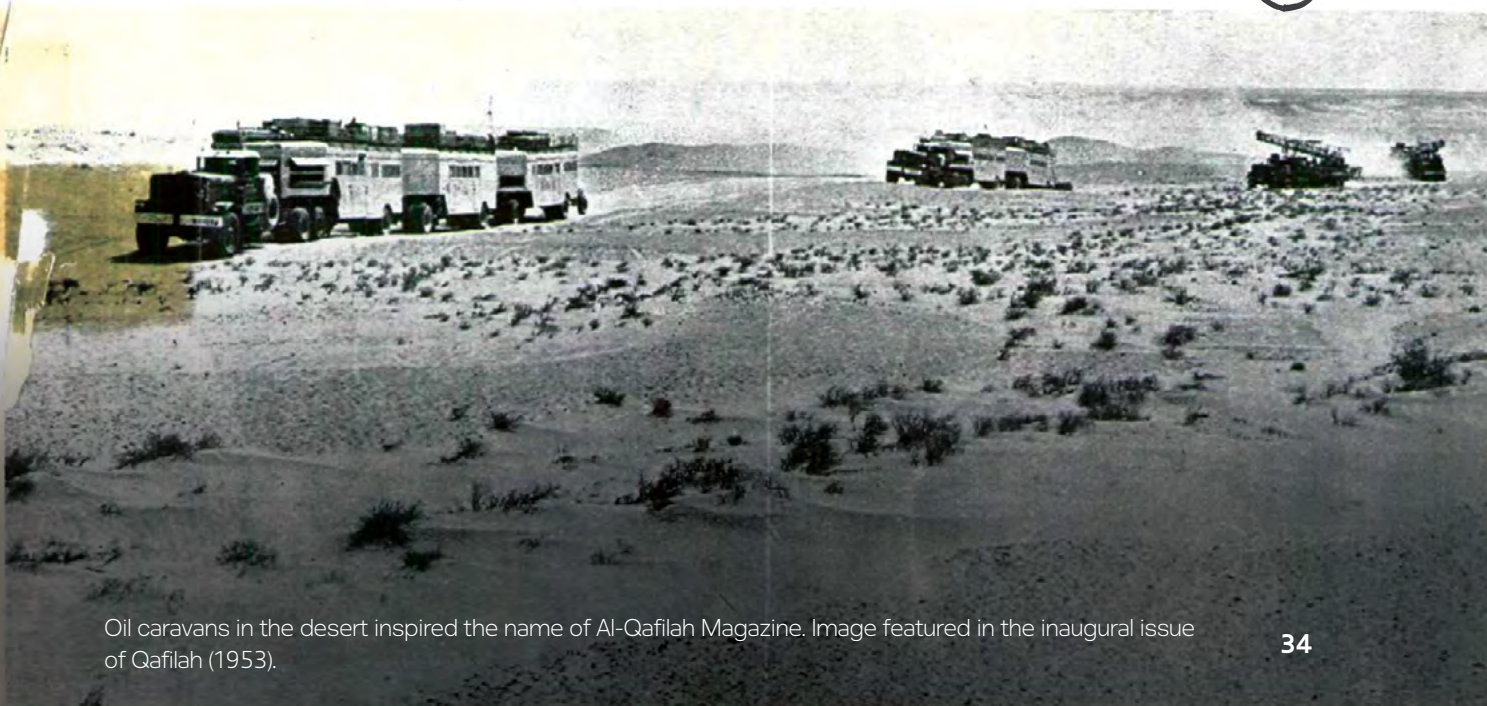
By Fuad Fahd Al-Therman

Chairman of the Advisory Committee of Al-Qafilah Magazine



Dhahran - With the publication of this 700th issue, Al-Qafilah completes 70 years of its eventful life. Here, we must recall what its first editor-in-chief, the late Hafez Al-Baroudi, wrote in the introduction to the very first issue in October 1953: "In the name of Allah, we release the first issue of (The Oil Caravan/Qafilah), and with His help we will continue to publish future issues. The management of this publication hopes to present to its readers, the company's employees, every single delightful, interesting, and useful nugget of information possible. We hope that this project will be of great benefit and lasting impact in spreading knowledge, and we will make every effort possible to provide food for thought to satisfy both intellectuals and general readers alike."

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Oil caravans in the desert inspired the name of Al-Qafilah Magazine. Image featured in the inaugural issue of Qafilah (1953).

Arabic Treasures:

A Camel that Launched a War

By Ghada Al-Muhanna

Centuries ago, in the expanses of the Arabian desert, a conflict would spark and rage for four tumultuous decades (494-534 CE). Yet, The Basus War was not initiated by the clash of kings or by the fall of empires, but by the tragic demise of a single she-camel, Sarrab. This camel, treasured by Al Basus, was more than a mere beast of burden; she was a cherished companion, a source of pride, and a beacon of wealth in a land where such creatures were integral to the survival and status of a tribe.

When Sarrab wandered into the territory of the Taghlib tribe and was killed by Kulaib, the act was not seen merely as a loss of property but as a severe breach of tribal honor. Al Basus, bereft and driven by sorrow, poured her anguish into verses that echoed the sentiments of a profound personal and tribal grievance.

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From the **Archives:**

Connections & Conversations

By Rym Al-Ghazal

There is nothing like getting to know other cultures over a hot beverage like coffee. The Arabic version of coffee was inscribed on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list as "an important aspect of hospitality in Arab societies and is considered a ceremonial act of generosity".

Often, people sit inside a 'majlis' — meaning "a place to sit" — while drinking this wonderful aromatic drink. The majlis, which plays an important role in the transfer of oral history and heritage, together with coffee, was also inscribed in 2015 on UNESCO's list, and both have not only survived the test of time, but have evolved over the years into one of the most cherished and important drinks and rooms in most households around the Gulf and greater Arab region.

From traditional cuisines and unique dances to the art of molding and weaving cultural stories in different crafts, there are endless ways to celebrate intangible heritage by keeping it alive and relevant.

Here, we share our latest **Aramco rarities** and travel back in time through Aramco's collection of old photos. These show communities sharing their stories through costumes, respect for traditional customs, re-enactments and performances, falconry, and even just the simple act of sitting together and finding out more about each other.



March 1958 | Ras Tanura.

Television sets and radio were and remain one of the ways that stories are told and retold, passing on knowledge from one generation and culture to another.

Here, we see that radio and TV sets are among the modern appliances available in shops at Rahimah, Ras Tanura. We see Mrs. Thomas Blake and her son Bobby shopping. Rahimah, Ras Tanura. Courtesy of Aramco Archives.



Enjoy our **Aramco** Rarities:

1952 | Aramco Dhahran.

Checking last-minute details before their Air Flight from Dhahran To Amsterdam - drinking coffee at the same time — are Henry Caldwell, Robert Westphal, and Raymond Rieg. They met their mothers in Holland, whom they hadn't seen in two years. Courtesy of Aramco Archives.



1940 |

His Majesty King Abdulaziz's falcons and their caretakers. Falcons were used by the king to spot Gazelles in the desert. Courtesy of Aramco Archives.





17 April 1959 | Dhahran.

In earlier days, it was the custom of Americans to wear Saudi Arabian traditional clothes when visiting other parts of the Kingdom. Assembled in Riyadh were R.G. Follis, present Board Chairman of Socal; Robert Miller, Socal Director; and Fred A. Davies. Courtesy of Aramco Archives.

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Editorial team:



Communication and Marketing Manager:

Yousef Al-Mutairi

Editorial Editor, PR & Head of Communications:

Hadeel Al-Eisa

Editor in Chief & Creative Art Director:

Rym Al-Ghazal

Edition Graphic Design:

MADAR Studio: Fatma Magdy, Ibrahim Magdy

Editors:

Mona Hassan, Ahmad Dialdin and Manar Al-Mutairi

Arabic Editing & Translation:

Dar Al-Sabah

Contributing Writers:

Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, Director and CEO at the Aga Khan Museum, Fuad Al-Therman, Chairman of the Advisory Committee of Al-Qafilah Magazine, Dr. Laila Al-Bassam, Gaida Almogren, Ghada Al-Muhanna, Nourah Aldaej, Fatma Theyab, Hassan Albather and Abeer Alnemari

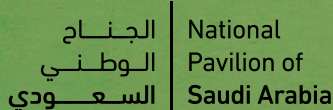
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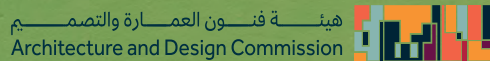
AGA KHAN MUSEUM



وزارة الثقافة
Ministry of Culture



National
Pavilion of
Saudi Arabia



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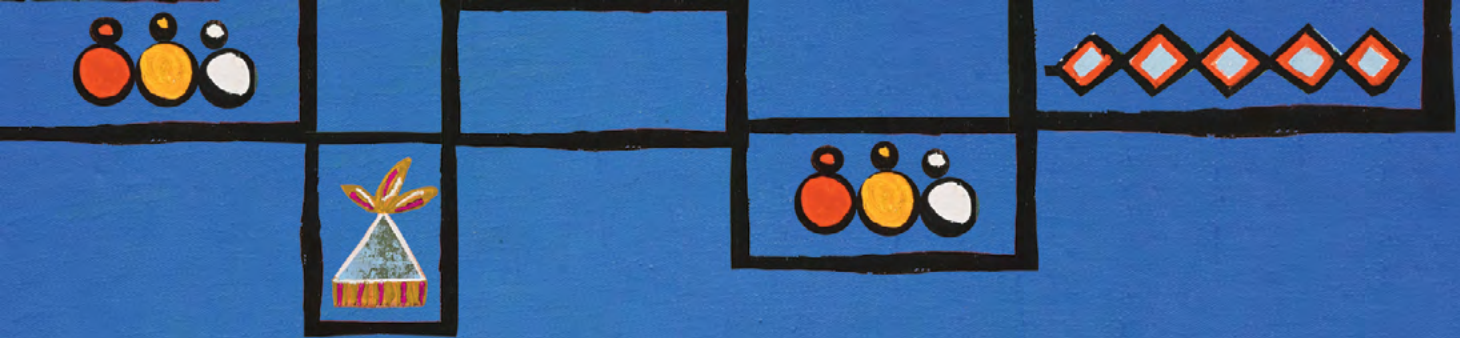
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About Ithra

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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