

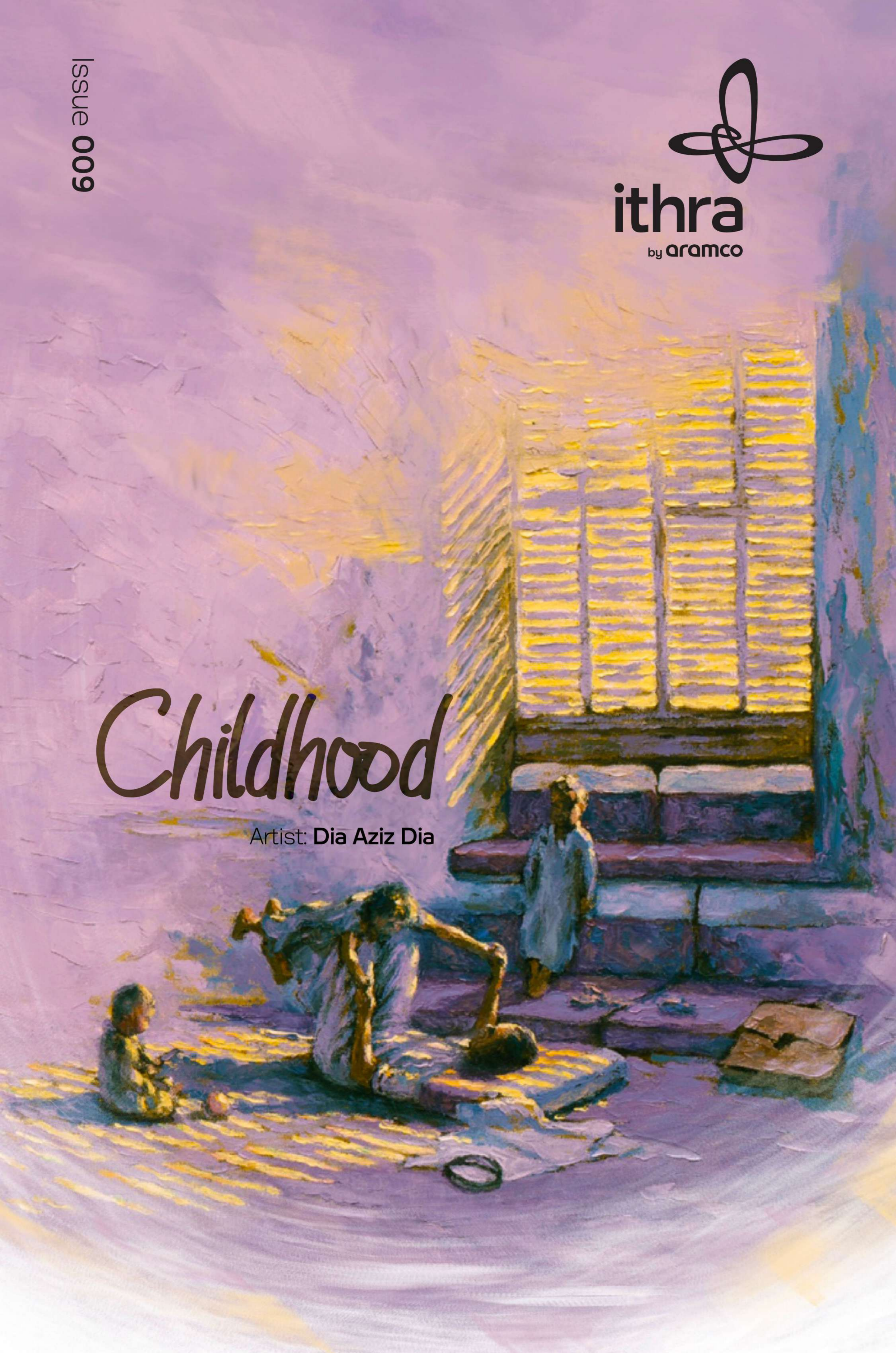
Issue 009



ithra
by aramco

Childhood

Artist: Dia Aziz Dia



Ithraeyat Magazine

December 2020



Welcome to **Ithraeyat**, a monthly cultural magazine produced by The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra). Created to **inspire minds** and **enrich hearts**, 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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Childhood

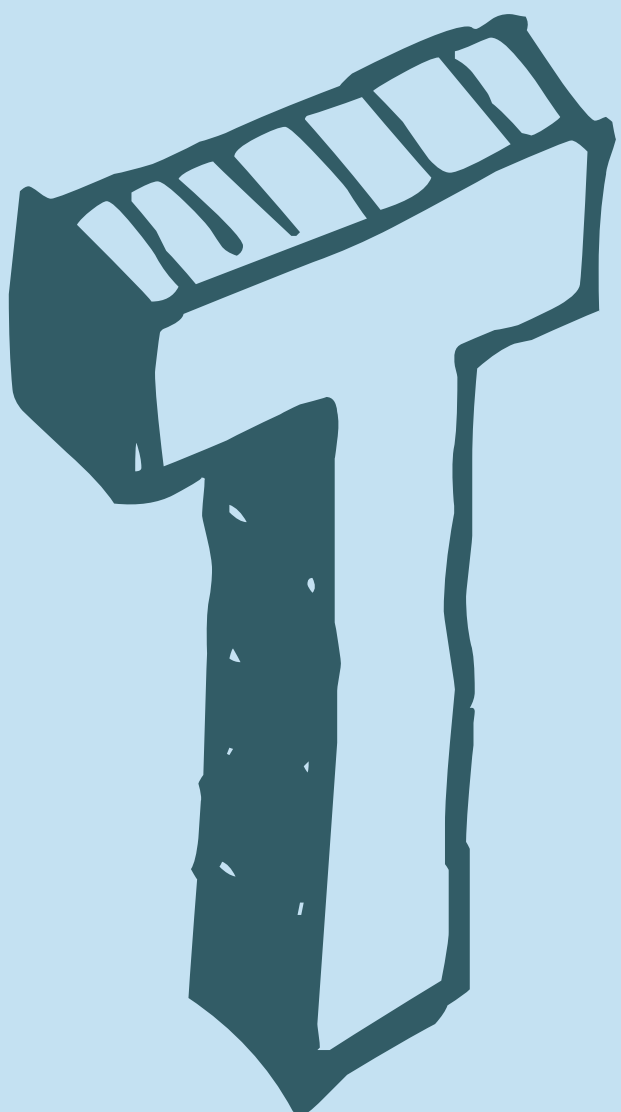
“Iftah ya sim sim abwabak nahnou al atfal, Iftah wa istaqbel As-habak nahnou al atfal...” [Open sesame your doors, we are the children, Open and welcome us, your friends, we are the children.]

It is the song that every Arab child of the 1980s and 1990s (and a few today watching YouTube) knows by heart. When that ‘la la la la’ song came on, it was time for ‘Iftah Ya Sim Sim’ the Arabic adaptation of US television’s Sesame Street, literally translated as “open sesame.” And truly, like that folk tale of “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” from the 1,001 Nights—where ‘open sesame’ were the magic words to open a cave of treasures—all wonders and magic open up to children’s curious minds and adventurous hearts. In homage to those fun, sometimes difficult times, Ithraeyat pays its tribute to Childhood. From our favorite candy to board and

video games, to cartoons and songs to fairytales and toys, we each have a special attachment to those days when all was possible, even creating a spaceship from discarded cardboard boxes and blankets. A great part of our childhood is shared with our families, and so we chose the intimate and beautiful piece of a father and his children playing after a long day of work. The wonderful cover art is by the iconic Saudi artist **Dia Aziz Dia**, titled ‘Doha ya Doha’ which is a traditional song that the father sings while swinging his child on his knees, and it ends by lifting the child up in a flying position, and asking the child: ‘Who do you love the most? Mama or Baba?’ Painted in sentimental oil colors, the piece is dear to the artist as it captures playful moments he shared with his children and grandchildren. Take a moment to reflect over your own childhood, and some of its unforgettable moments.



Meet our 'theme-special' featured Saudi artist, **Dia Aziz Dia**, a legendary artist with creations in various forms, capturing a way of life and its many stories.





Portrait:

Dia Aziz Dia — ‘theme-special’ featured



“Art is a reflection of human life; whether it’s paintings, sculpture, music, poetry or any other form of expression. Life without Art is not worth living...”

The legendary artist Dia Aziz Dia, whose creations are landmarks and artworks are timeless heartfelt pieces, is one of those unique artists who is always exploring and evolving while artistically documenting important customs, traditional architecture and life in all its diverse forms. “An artwork in whatever form it may be, can fascinate you, can make you think, ponder and recall. It stimulates your imagination, influences your soul. Once you see it, you never forget it,” Mr. Dia told Ithraeyat in an interview, and was one of the first Saudi artists to attend the renowned Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma (academy of fine arts) in Rome. Born in Cairo in 1947



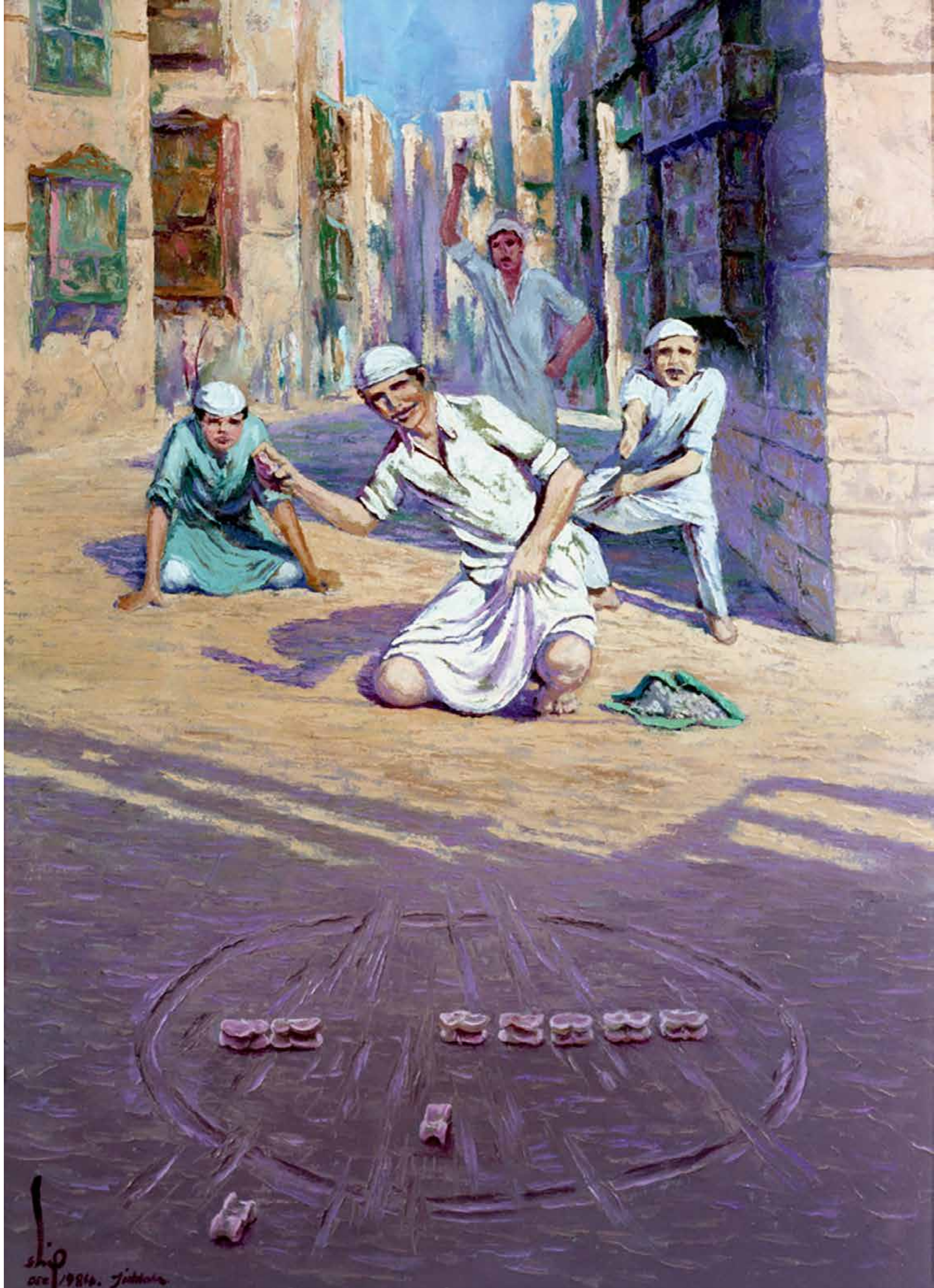
the award winning artist is a sculptor, painter, sketcher, photographer and a multi-disciplinary artist with over 40 plus years of contribution to the Saudi art scene and beyond. He is an artist who doesn't limit himself as there is "no limit in art." "Since the day I met my wife Laila, I tried to impress her with my artistic accomplishment. In addition, I always try to make my family as happy as possible," he said. He has a son and two daughters, and eight grandchildren. An artist with many milestones, where he represented Saudi Arabia in various

exhibitions, Mr. Dia is the man behind the iconic Makkah Gate. "The Makkah Gate is one of my proudest creations," he said. "It has become the gateway to the hearts of all Muslims. I am honored to have been part of creating a collective sense of nostalgia and a memory of a journey for all those who have passed through." A magnificent structure that spans the width of the Jeddah-Makkah highway, in the shape of a Holy Qur'an resting on a wooden stand—it is indeed the gateway to the heart of Islam, about five kilometers from Makkah.



Also known as ‘Qur’an Gate,’ it was designed by Mr. Dia in 1979 and was built on an area of 7,296 square meters at a length of 152 meters and 48 meters in width. “I would like the next generations to remember me as the artist who painted life in the Hijaz, and designed the Gate of Makkah.” The childhood-related artworks featured in this edition of Ithraeyat beautifully capture the fun and the loving moments experienced in childhood. “I have lived a stable and happy childhood with my loving mother, father and sister. And I still remember all the games that I used to play with my sister and friends during my life in Makkah and Taif,” he said. “Childhood is an essential part of life that forms a

person’s character in adulthood, thus it formed an essential part of my art.” From the traditional games such as hide and seek, to searching for nuts in trees after school, to dealing with one’s naughty younger sibling, Mr. Dia’s pieces capture so many joyful and nostalgic moments. “I am currently working on a commissioned family portrait, and there are other projects lined up,” said Mr. Dia. Sentimental by nature, with a relentless drive to capture the world around him, the 73 year old artist has a message to new and future artists: “Work hard and be patient, art is an act of love...” And as captured in hundreds of his diverse dynamic pieces, art indeed is an act of love, and it needs dedication and sincerity.



Traditional Saudi children's games. Artwork by renowned Saudi artist **Dia Aziz Dia**.

Special Feature:

The Games We Played—When a piece of cloth, wood and imagination was all the children needed

Playtime for children is vital to their development. It helps them understand the world they live in, and allows them to think critically and creatively. And in today's fast-changing and unpredictable world, children have many options of play to choose from. For they have their gaming consoles, electronic gadgets, speaking toys and many more which transport them from

this world into another. That wasn't the case many years ago. Children of the past from all over the world used to play more outdoors than indoors – opposite of what it is today. They owned simpler toys, which they had to either make it on their own or have an adult make it for them. And they used much of their own imaginations to entertain themselves.



Credit: Photos courtesy Al-Taybeen Museum

Special Feature:

Childhood Memories at Al-Taybeen Museum

“Throw it out! You don’t use it anymore!” Every child has heard their mother say this about their toys and other neglected objects. Some of us have kept a few sentimental items from our childhood—maybe a gift from a loved one, a Game Boy, or a precious heirloom. But what if you collected an array of things throughout your childhood? For Majid Al-Ghamdi, that was his hobby. What started as a humble collection in 1992 at eight years old—from toys to snacks and drinks popular at the time—turned into a good “old” museum. Today, 28 years later, he rummages through his ever-

growing 10,000 nostalgic collection. What others saw as dispensable, he saw as treasure. Al-Taybeen Museum is wistful, weird and wonderful. A trip down memory lane for people of all ages. Visitors would excitedly express, “I remember this!” as they browse through Al-Taybeen, which translates to the good or rather, the era of the wholesome goodness. Items as big as an airplane seat, as old as 1600s cameras and as small as a 1980s Strepsils case are stacked high and low on the shelves. Look up, look down, left and right—you do not want to miss a single thing in this unique museum...

Trinkets from our past:

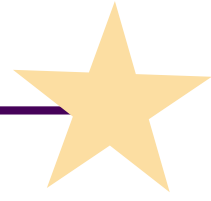
Do you recognize anything here from your childhood?



Spotlight:

Creative children

It is never too early to pursue your passions. A writer, an artist and a poet—three talented Saudi youth that inspire us as they pursue their dreams.



Ritaj Al-Hazmi
The writer

Every aspiring writer understands how daunting it is to write a novel. As a nominee into the Guinness Book of World Records, Ritaj is an 11-year-old writer who has published two novels and has three in the works. A literary inspiration, Ritaj is a young author who proves you are never too young to pursue the world of words.

Wudd Al-Ghanem
The artist



When she was five years old, Wudd held her paintbrush and began coloring her life with vivid hues. At 12 years old, Wudd is leaping into the art world and already accumulating praise. Her painting chosen and displayed by UNESCO for UNESCO's Little Artists has allowed her to shine as an artist and be an inspiration for other young creatives.

Ibrahim Al-Kuraya
The poet

Adolescents bring a plethora of surprises; Ibrahim has conceived a masterpiece. At 16 years old, his poetry book titled Japarabian Verses: A Collection holds great depth in emotion, strictly utilizing the traditional Japanese Haiku. Through his extensive learning, Ibrahim wrote a poetry book influenced by Japanese poetry forms. His work has been praised by the Ambassador to Japan in Saudi Arabia, Tsukasa Uemura.



Spotlight:

What Games Did You Play?

Throughout the decades, there have been many games with many happy memories. From board games to card games and video games to Tamagotchi (digital pets) to all sorts of group games. Here are a few that are sure to trigger fun-filled memories.

Board Games



● Carrom

With the aim and the flick of a finger, many generations across the Middle East played the Carrom board game. Originating from India in the 19th century—with one theory that it was invented by the Indian Maharajas—Carrom has topped as a bestselling game for all ages. A maximum of four players sit cross-legged on the floor, excitedly waiting their turn to strike the red coins.



■ Chess

During Ramadan and recently during quarantine, families flocked to play Carrom. A game grandparents remember, millennials relive and younger generations are discovering as part of their childhood.



Monopoly



Candy Land



Backgammon

Video Games



Nintendo

From Atari to Sega to Game Boy and many others, video games have a special place in our lives. Siblings secretly stayed awake to play one more game, friends gathered and cheered each other during parties, and families joined to tackle adventures together.

Nintendo 64, which had a lifespan of five years, became a staple in every child's video game collection. The console that gave us Donkey Kong, Super Mario and Mario Kart, The Legend of Zelda, and many more, Nintendo 64 is and will always hold a special place in all millennial's hearts.

Digital Games



Pokémon GO

Pokémon card collections, Pokémon Game Boy games, and of course, the Pokémon show are all massive hits in our childhoods. When Niantic released Pokémon GO, every child who grew up loving the franchise was hooked again as an adult.

Children and adults of all ages stepped outside, dedicated to being the very best. The app pushed us to go out, interact and capture as many Pokémon as possible. Pokémon GO allows us to relive our childhood and experience our childhood dreams of becoming the greatest Pokémon master.

A

B


Childhood

C



Spotlight:

Children's Clothing—cute, colorful and fun



There is nothing quite as adorable as a Children's Fashion Show. We used to hold these more often in the past, especially at schools, where the children would parade their Saudi national dress in all its colors and details. Every child would wear the clothes of their region and home, and their families would watch on with great pride. The richness of the children's clothes captures the diversity of Saudi culture, and how forming identities starts at a young age.

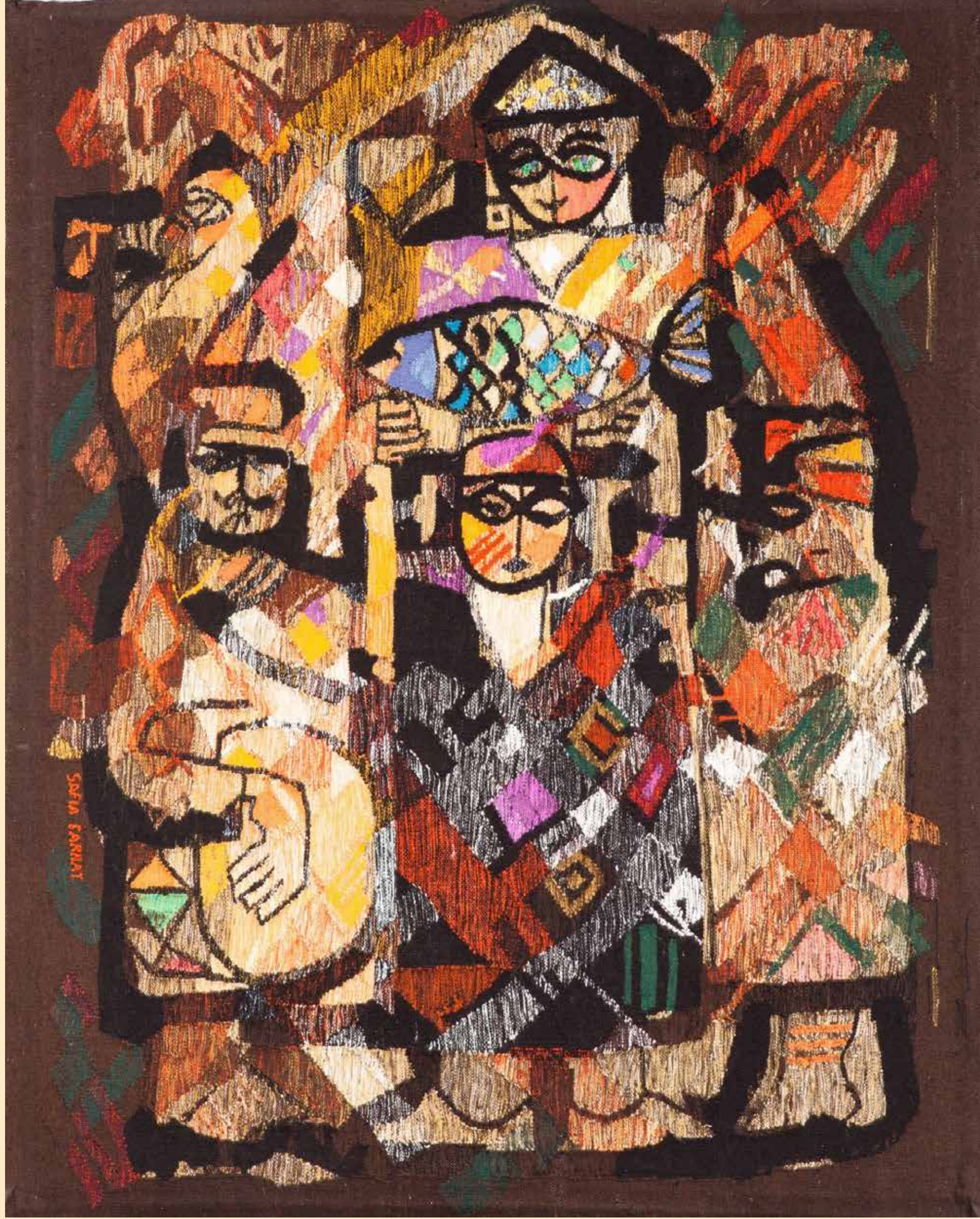
For example the skirts and blouses from Juhadalh, a small tribe in the southwest of Saudi Arabia, are made out of cotton and silk and heavily embroidered with metal beads. Then we have the caps that children wear, a headdress style not confined to Western cultures. Here, the children from Bani Malik tribe wear nicely embroidered caps with glass beads—including beaded chin and neck strands—with lovely geometrical pattern.



There is also an elaborate girls 'quba'a' (headgear) from the Hijaz (Bani Salim tribe) that is hand woven with black and brown cotton appliqué decorated with glass buttons, coins and cowrie shells. Today, children are choosing their own clothes, often using the internet to pick clothes that are fashionable and popular worldwide. In order to preserve the wonderful colorful world of Saudi

children's clothing, we need to introduce the youth to the styles at an early stage, and encourage Saudi fashion designers to apply traditional styles with a touch of modernity to keep them alive and in demand.

Written by Special Contributor Somaya Badr, CEO of **Art of Heritage** and Art of Heritage Cultural Trust.



'Mère et enfants,' by **Safia Farhat**. 1972. Tapestry, 151 x 124 cm, Image courtesy of Almarsa Gallery and Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

Arabic Treasures:

'Doha ya Doha
 And the Ka'aba they built it
 And the Zamzam water they drank it
 My grandfather traveled to Makkah
 He brought me a basket of cake...
 The cake is in the storehouse
 And the storehouse needs a key...
 And the key is with the carpenter...'

So begins one of the most memorable lullabies in Saudi Arabia. Lullabies are familial treasures that get passed down the generations. And while the specific words of the one above might shift from family to family and region to region, we would be hard-pressed to imagine a more emblematic Hijazi (or even Saudi) lullaby than Doha ya Doha. Its origins are a mystery, but its impact on children over generations remains strong. Still, lullabies are a strange collection. While

it is always used to soothe and sedate a child, it is not generally a song about them or reflecting their feelings, but more reflecting the thoughts and emotions of the parent singing their hopes and fears about what will happen to their little one. The earliest recorded lullabies of human history—during the times of the Sumerians—covered all these points. In them, were the familiar hopes of a mother that her son sleep well, grow strong, get married and have children of his own.

In my ururu chant may he grow big, In my ururu chant may he grow large... Put to sleep his restless eyes, Put your hand on his painted eyes, And as for his babbling tongue, Let not the babbling tongue shut out his sleep... May the wife be your support, May the son be your lot...

There was also some warrior-like advice towards the end, for good measure. *Seize the enemy's mouth, Bind his arms like reed bundles! Make the enemy cower before you, lest he rip open your back like a sack.* Four thousand years on and we still sing to our little ones (more of the former verses, less of the latter). What is unique about Doha ya Doha is the sense that it's more of a sequential stream of thoughts type of lullaby. Less hopes and fears and more a melodic quasi-improv-styled series of events, as if each verse were made up on the spot to the delight of both parent and child. For this author, this Saudi children's song will always have a special place, as it was a song my

father used to sing to us, passed down the years from his father and grandfather before him. Roughly translated, it goes:

**God is nice
raw is rice
we sat to eat
nothing in sight**

With your child lying on your legs, holding his hands as you lift them up and down to the rhythm of this short, bittersweet spiritual song, one can't imagine a more valuable treasure.





Ithra **Curiosities:** The Children's Museum

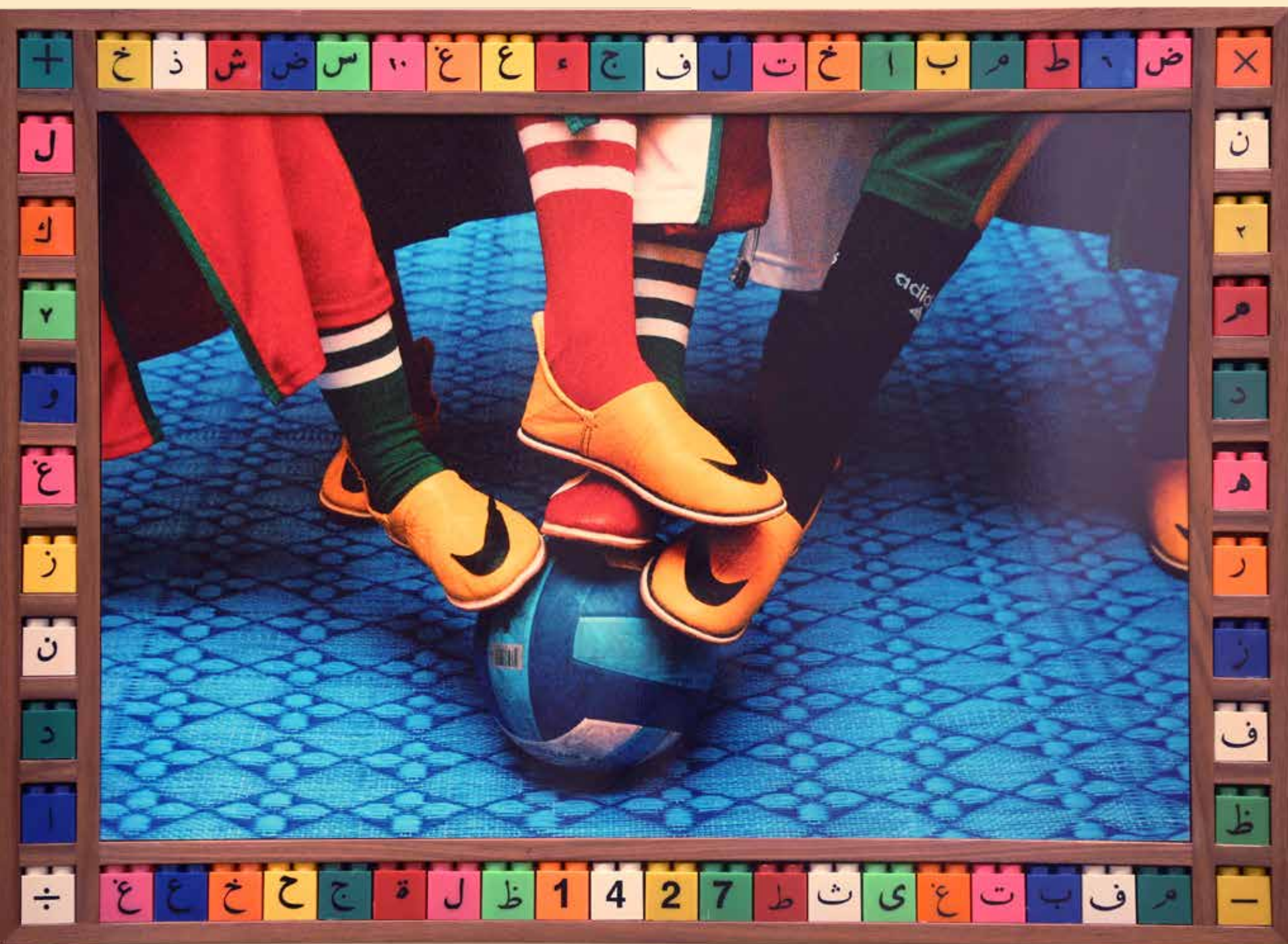


Within the Ithra Children's Museum, the first of its kind in the Kingdom, young minds can enjoy a vibrant world of integrated, interactive experiences that will stimulate, inspire and enrich. It offers children exciting and immersive

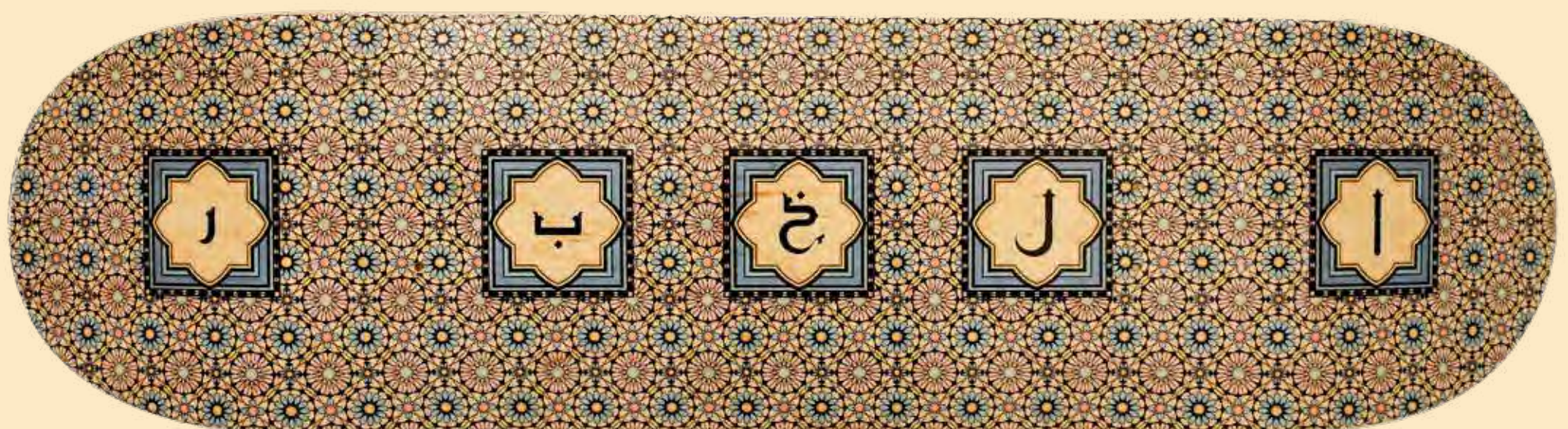
opportunities for exploration and discovery through colors and play. Walking through the museum's four sections is quite an adventure. The Eco-Lab encourages the natural curiosity of budding scientists who are welcome to get their hands dirty while learning about the environment and physics. The Islamic Arts hall teaches the beauty and richness of Islamic art through geometric patterns, abstract designs, language and calligraphy. Our World informs visiting children about different cultures from around the world, while the Story Cave ignites their creativity and imagination by giving them a chance to listen, act, dress up and star in their own

The Art of Color and Play

Art from Ithra's collection.



Titled 'Feet Ball' by Haddan Hajjaj. 2006. Metallic Lambda print on wood frame with objects, 62X82cm. In this photograph, four feet wearing brightly colored slippers jostle for control of a football. There is a 'swoosh' logo of a universally recognized sports brand. This inventive fusion combines local tradition with a commentary on the power of branding in global capitalism. The piece is framed by a mosaic of 62 colored plastic children's building blocks printed with Arabic letters, numbers and mathematical symbols.



'Al-Khobar' Skateboard Decks by Yusef Alahmad. 2014. The artist printed Al-Khobar, the name of the city he is from, onto a skateboard, combining elements of art and design. By using such a potent symbol of youth culture and printing these Arabic letters onto it, he simultaneously establishes his roots while commenting on his place in a modern, globalized world.

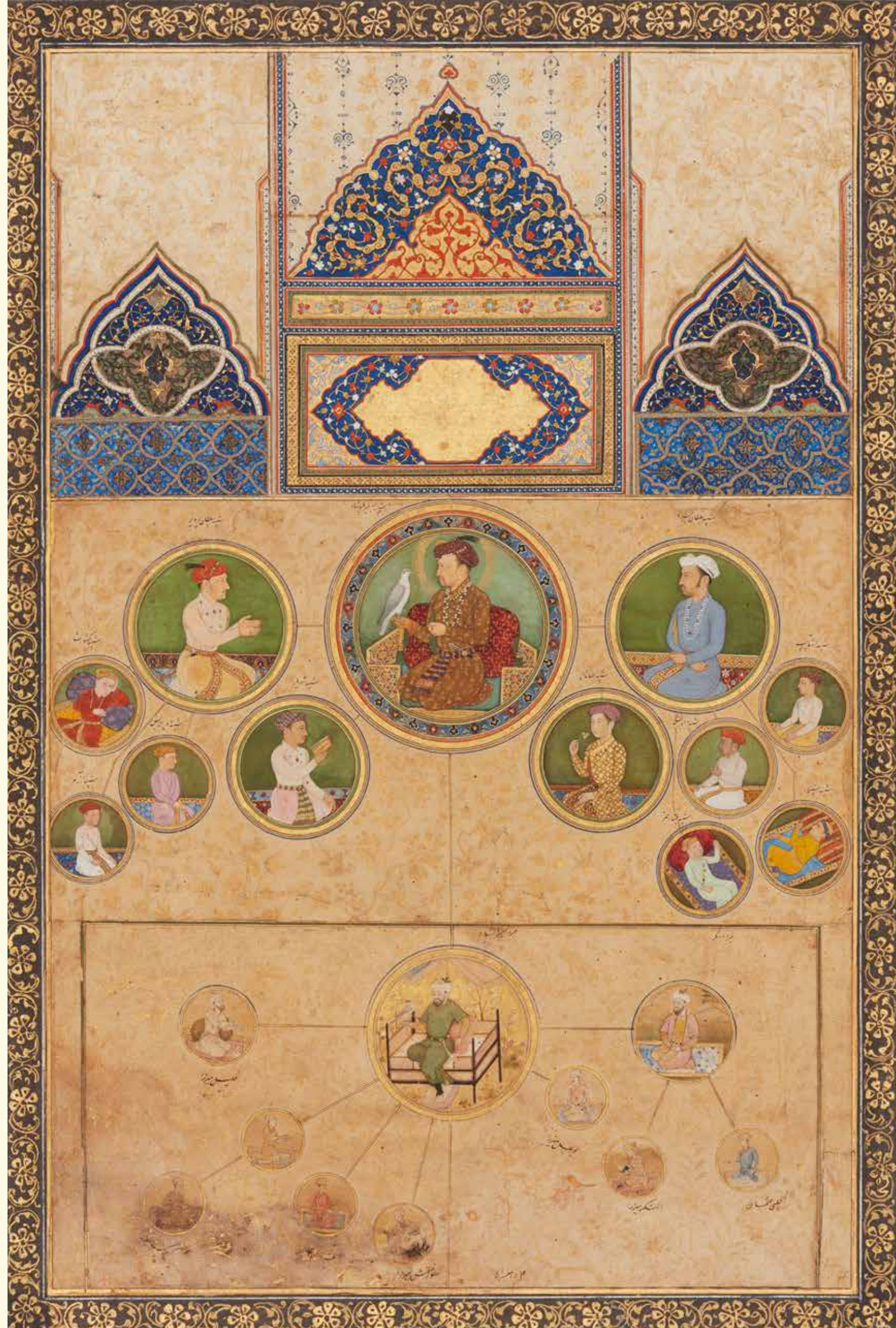


Add to your bucket **list:**

'Malahi' Amusement Parks in Saudi Arabia
— the loud, the crazy and the fun

Saudi Arabia has been on a rollercoaster ride of sorts over the past one hundred years or so. Lives have shifted drastically since the early villages, cities and Bedouin lifestyles of the past. One aspect that has shifted significantly is childhood, specifically what children do and where they go to have fun. The biggest news in the amusement park front, over the

past couple of years is the introduction of a Six Flags park project in the up-and-coming entertainment city of Qiddiya near Riyadh. This is a bucket list item you will not want to miss as it boasts what will be the world's longest, tallest and fastest roller coaster ride in the world. Its current projected completion is 2023.



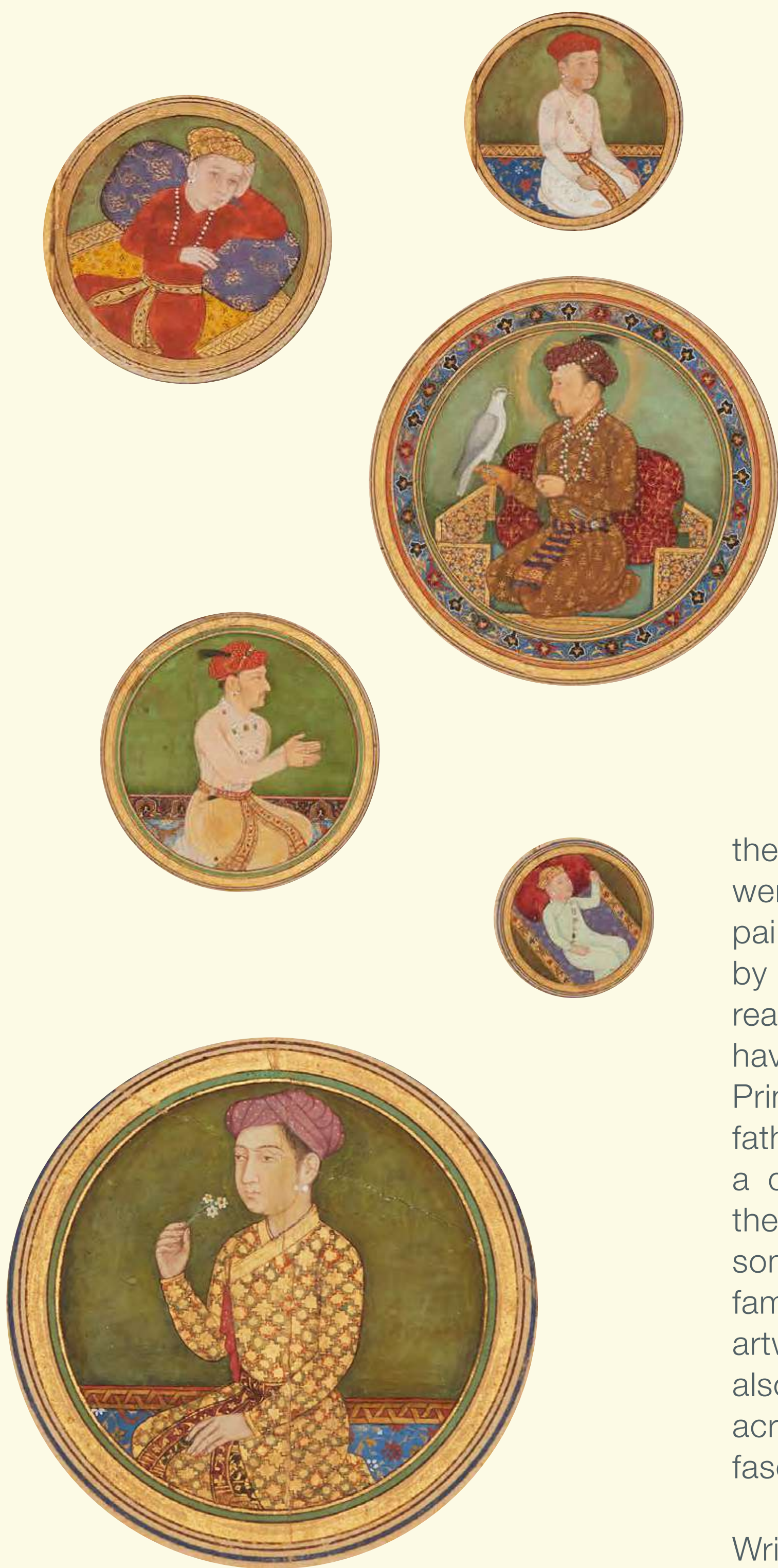
Genealogical Chart of Jahangir India, Agra, 1610-1623. Opaque watercolour, gold and ink on paper. H. 36.2 cm x W. 24.2 cm. AKM 151

Bridges: Cross-Cultural Conversations

A Royal Family Tree: Fathers and Sons

All over the world and across the centuries, childhood in a royal family has always been a complex, as well as a pampered affair. This fascinating imperial family tree from 17th-century India tells a host of stories about hierarchies, privileges, pedigree and rivalries relating to the fathers and sons of the Mughal court. Featured here, the emperor Jahangir (reign 1605–1627) is shown surrounded by four of his sons and –in turn– their male offspring, some of them still mere babies. All are depicted with idealized facial features,

wearing elegant robes and turbans, adorned with precious jewelry. But all is not well with this seemingly happy family portrait: Jahangir's most famous son and eventual successor, Prince Khurram –later known as Shah Jahan– is missing from it. By rights, he and indeed his sons should have appeared right beneath his illustrious father. Instead, this space is occupied by the lineage of the Mughal's Timurid ancestors. Interestingly, judging by the arrangement of the medallions and marks on the lower half of the paper, it appears that



the portraits of Khurram and his sons were in fact removed from the original painting at some stage and replaced by Jahangir's Timurid forefathers. The reason for this curious omission may have been both political and personal. Prince Khurram had rebelled against his father in 1623, and the theory goes that a disappointed Jahangir arranged for the subsequent erasure of his wayward son and all his offspring from his Mughal family tree. Reflecting on this intricate artwork is a wonderful opportunity to also contemplate our own family trees across the ages, and ponder the many fascinating stories they carry.

Written by Special Guest Contributor Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, Interim Director and CEO at **Aga Khan Museum**. In each issue, we feature a special treasure from the Aga Khan Museum, one that tells a story, captures a moment and inspires conversation.

From the Vault:

The Art of Childhood — mothers and children.

**“Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of
Life’s longing for itself.
They come through you but not from
you, And though they are with you
yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not
your thoughts, For they have their
own thoughts.**

**You may house their bodies but not
their souls, For their souls dwell
in the house of tomorrow, which
you cannot visit, not even in your
dreams. You may strive to be like
them, but seek not to make them
like you...”**

**—The poet, painter, and philosopher
Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931) on
‘children.’**

Childhood is a stage everyone goes through, and it means different things to different people. Happy, sad, beautiful, fun, difficult and ambivalent moments are all part of that experience. Here we pay homage to the deeply emotional element of motherhood that is strongly tied to our memories of childhood. Enjoy this very special collection from **Barjeel Art Foundation**.

Image Credit:

‘Standing Figure and Child,’ by **Khalil Gibran**. Undated.
Pencil and watercolor on paper, 27.94 X 17.78 cm.
Image courtesy of **Barjeel Art Foundation**, Sharjah.





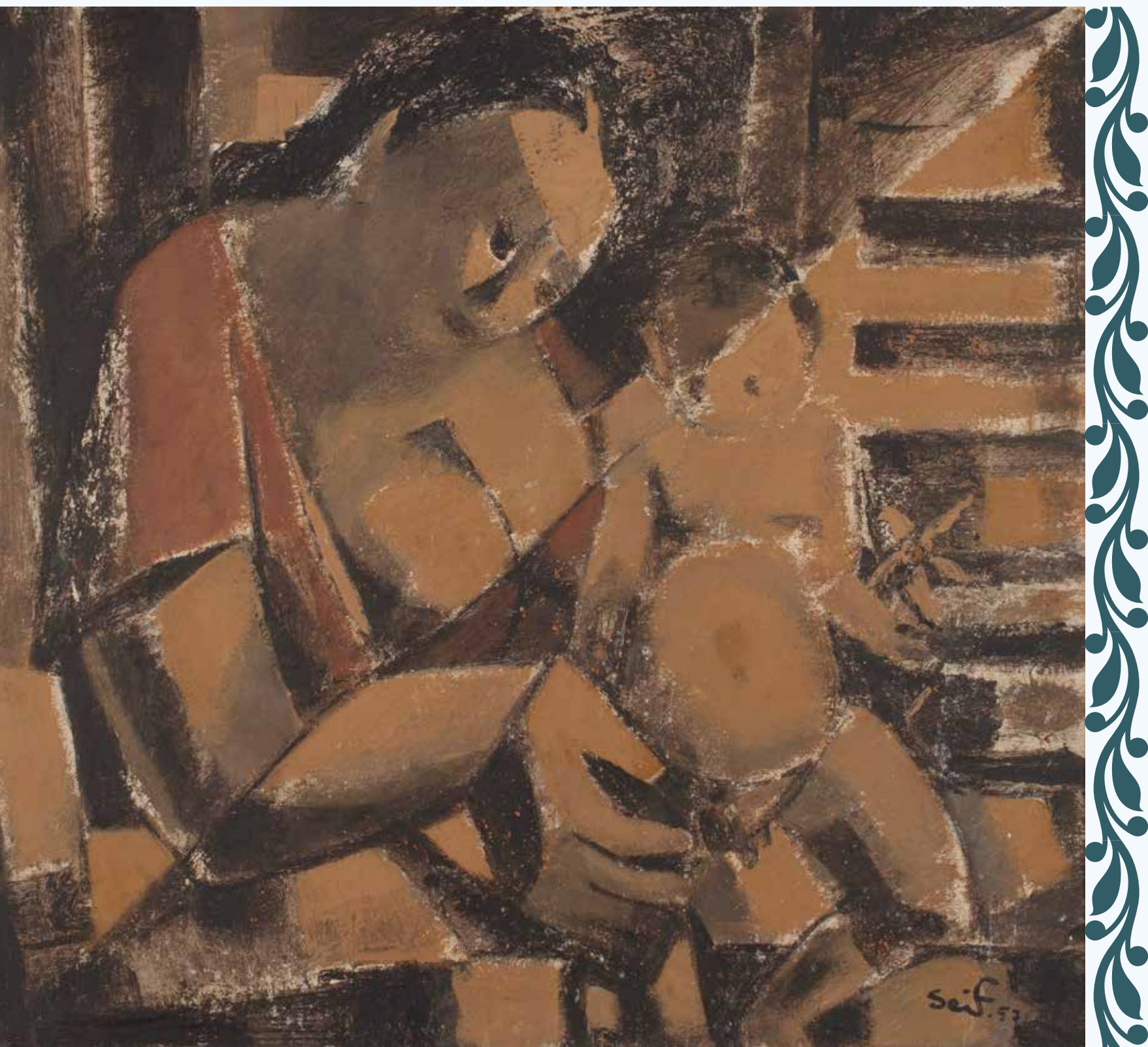
'Madonna of the Oranges,' by **Ismail Shammout**. 1997. Oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cm. Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



'Madonna and Child,' by **Paul Guiragossian**. 1957. Oil on canvas, 71 x 59 cm. Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



'La Famille,' by **Hatim Elmekki**. 1950's. Oil on canvas, 55 x 46 cm. Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



'Mother and Child,' by **Seif Wanly**. 1957. Oil on board, 72 x 75.2 cm. Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



'La Lampe,' by **Paul Guiragossian**. 1979. Oil on canvas, 101 x 72 cm, 1979. Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



'Mom and Child,' by **Faraj Abbo Al-Numan**. 1961. 60 x 49 cm, Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



'Sanawat,' by **Maitha Demithan**. Scanography on paper, 178 x 143 cm, 2010. Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

From the Archives:

The Art of Play



Rarities from the Aramco Archives.

Dhahran
January 21, 1949.

There are no limits, and no fears when you are a child. From running across unknown terrain to climbing mountains to simply hanging from random structures, childhood is truly an adventure. Here we view lovely gems from the archives, reminding us of the days when we competed, we played and we dressed up for a photo. We see the Singelyn's child hang from the Monkey Bars at the all children playground facilities and meet shy Bedouin children as they pose for the camera, and admire the courage of boys as they climb.



Northern Arabia
Safaniya, 1975.



Dammam Muraikibat
January 30, 1976.

The Art of **Digital**

In its support of the ever evolving digital art, Ithraeyat Magazine will feature a special section dedicated to the various forms of digital art, providing a one of a kind expressive platform for Saudi and international digital artists. Here, the artists will debut their unique experimental creations in relation to the themes in all its diversity and imagination, pushing boundaries and inspiring conversations.



Design Concept

"My childhood was influenced by unconditional love and curiosity for all the small details that life leaves for me to discover. This art piece captures some of those special moments of developing my sense of empathy and communication with animals, observing insects' movements for hours, scribbling in mud as my first attempts at drawing while the wind blows in the open space around me. These journeys would end when the cassette tape that I chose to play ended, music replaced by peaceful silence." By Saudi Digital Artist **Dhay Alabdulkarim**



Using candy wrappers in her pieces, Saudi artist Ghada Al-Rabea details Saudi daily life, such as this family outing titled: Tala'at Ala Al-Corniche (2016). Her technique of using candy wrappers on wood gives her work a childlike and playful element that echoes the sweet innocence of a simple life. Born in 1979 in the city of Madinah, the artist's work is multilayered in concept and content. Her use of discarded candy wrappers to produce collages of iconic pieces and familiar settings, not only serves to reintroduce the historic and iconic within a contemporary Hejazi context, but also presents a sharp commentary on our globalized system today giving value to the disposed and forgotten, be it material or cultural. These wrappers are not only discernible in their imagery due to the consumer society we live in, but also nostalgic to childhood, triggering personal memories and touching each viewer individually. Courtesy **Ghada Al-Rabea** and **Athr Gallery**, Jeddah.

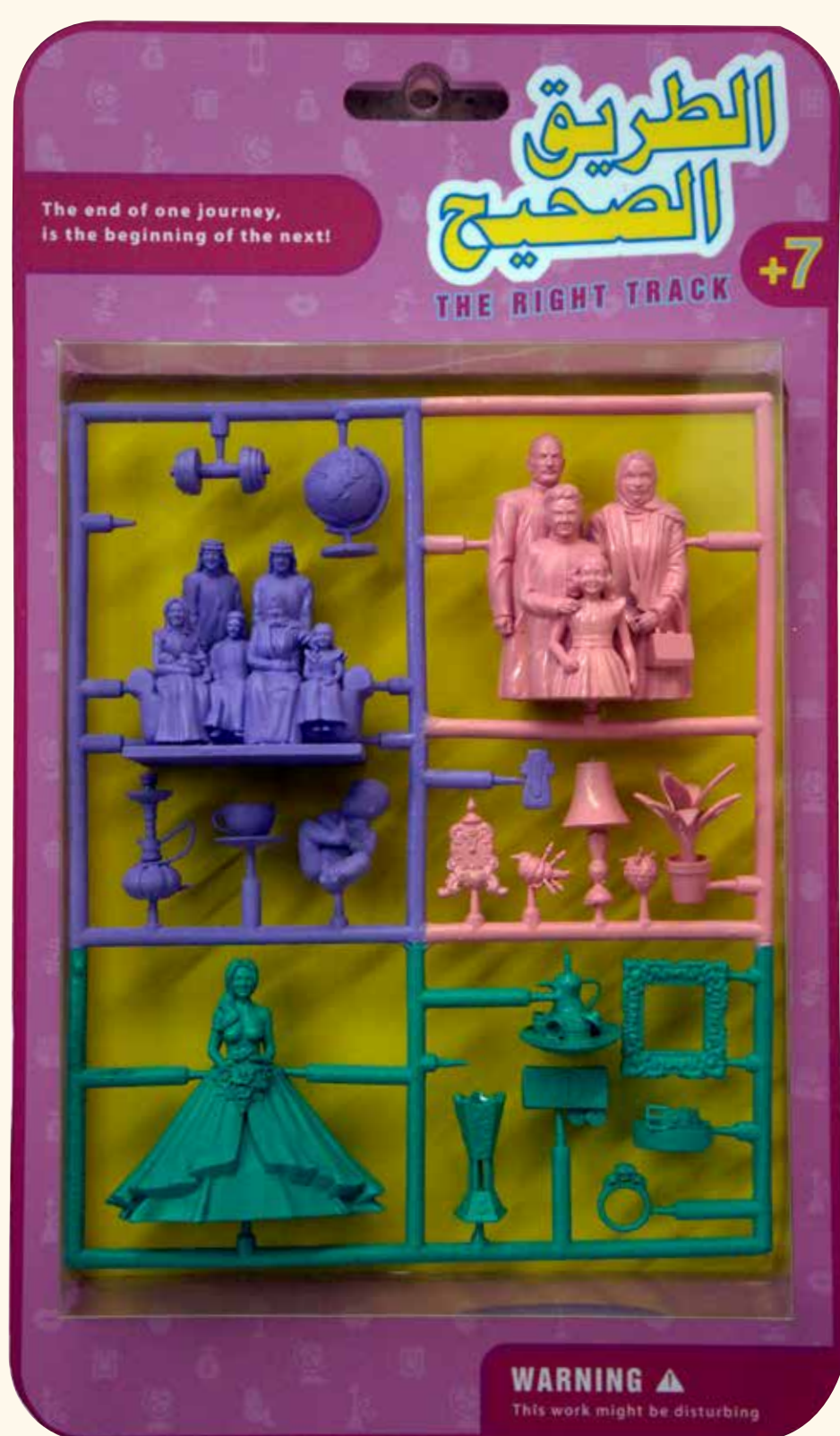


From the World Wide Web: Art stories to browse through

- Red Sea Film festival presents restored Al-Naamani works
- Visual Resources of the Middle East project created at Yale
- Painting the Khaleeji Woman: A Celebration of the Late Saudi Artist Zakia Al Dubaikhi's Work
- A mysterious monolith has now popped up in the Netherlands
- The Queen's art collection goes on public display at Buckingham Palace



Lebanese multi-medium artist Aya Haidar relooks at everyday found objects and offers them alternative readings through hand-embroidered interventions, proposing new narratives that contribute to wider dialogues on cultural remembrance, shared stories and identity. These pieces featured here are part of Haidar's latest body of work, titled *Highly Strung*. Exhibited at Art Dubai Portrait Exhibitions (17-20.3.2021). Courtesy **Aya Haidar** and **Athr Gallery**, Jeddah.



'The Right Track,' by Joud Fahmy. 2020. 3D print and mixed media. 34.5 x 20.5

Right Track is an exploration of the nuances and complexities of the human experience. Using 3D print, the work grapples with the idea of a mold that one finds themselves brought into and is shaped by the ideals and values of one's family and society. The piece reflects three life phases. The Past: In the upper section of the box, the artist uses her own family photographs that symbolizes the presence of a typical happy household. In the elements of the lower part of this box, lies a compilation of various items relating to the daily-life experiences of growing up that become part of childhood memories. Present: It is split into two parts; the right side compiles the various items that showcase the process of the artist's own character development of taste and views in the coming of age journey, featuring some wedding customs and traditions that relate to the left side of the box. Future: Depicting the unpredictability of this phase, the items included in this part are sporadic and random, indicating the various crossroads and paths that the future holds. Courtesy the **artist** and **Hafez Gallery**.

We look forward to sharing our 'makhzan' of stories with you every month.

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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 Knowledge Tower. For more information, please visit: www.ithra.com

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