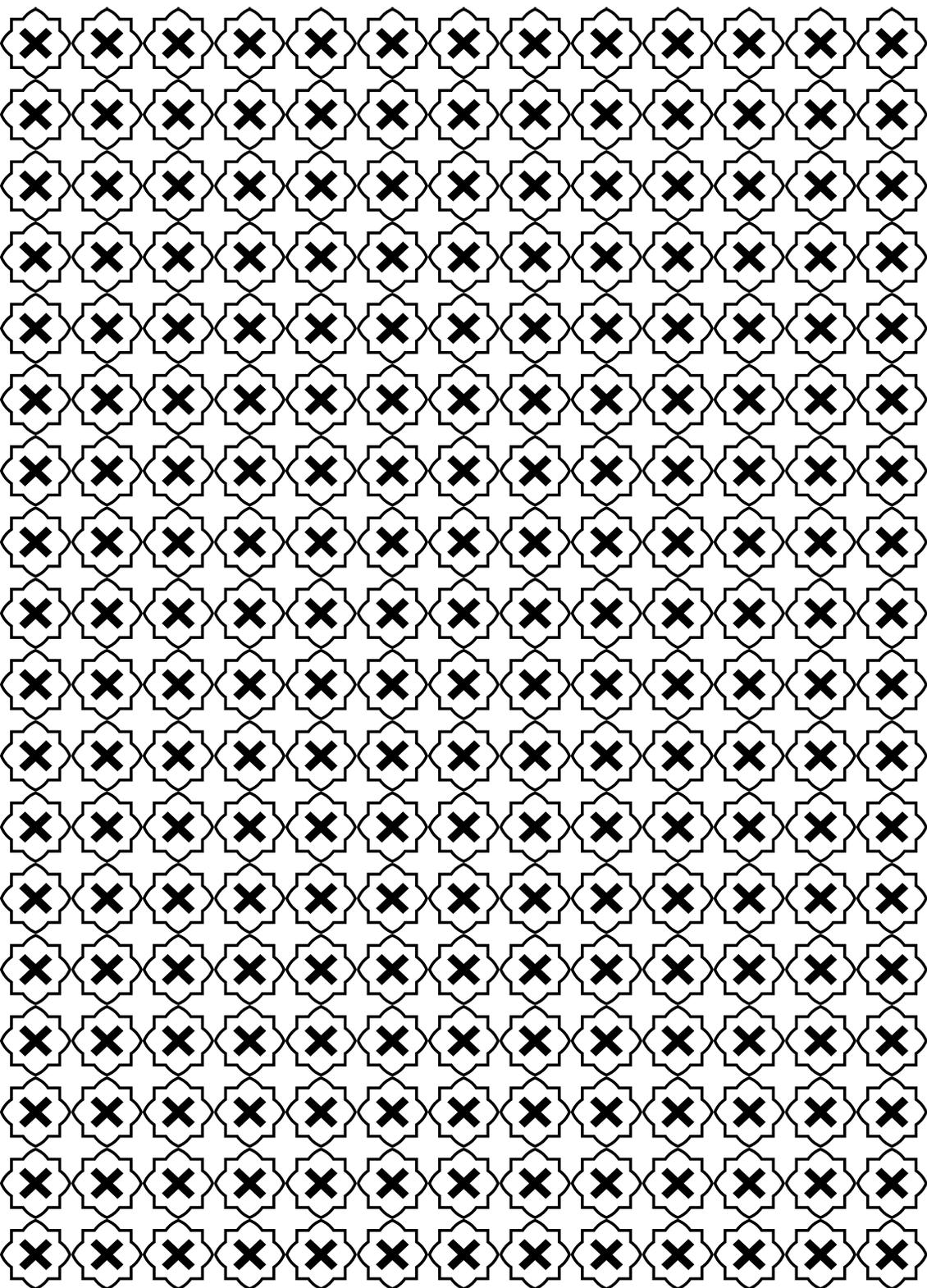


# EPICENTER



**SAUDI CONTEMPORARY ART**  
AT THE ARAB AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM - DEARBORN, MI



# EPICENTER

SAUDI CONTEMPORARY ART  
IN DEARBORN, MI  
الفن المعاصر  
في مدينة ديربورن

Museum partner



Organizer





**Exhibition** *Epicenter X*  
—  
**Dates** Opening: Saturday, July 8, 2017  
Community Program: Sunday, July 9, 2017  
Exhibition: July 8–October 1, 2017  
—

**Curator** Devon Akmon  
—

**Museum partner** Arab American National Museum  
13624 Michigan Ave.,  
Dearborn, MI 48126  
arabamericanmuseum.org  
—



**Organiser** King Abdulaziz Center  
for World Culture  
Ring Rd, Gharb Al Dhahran,  
Dhahran 34461, Saudi Arabia  
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—



**Producer** Culturunners  
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**Cover art** Yusef Alahmad & Josh Higgins

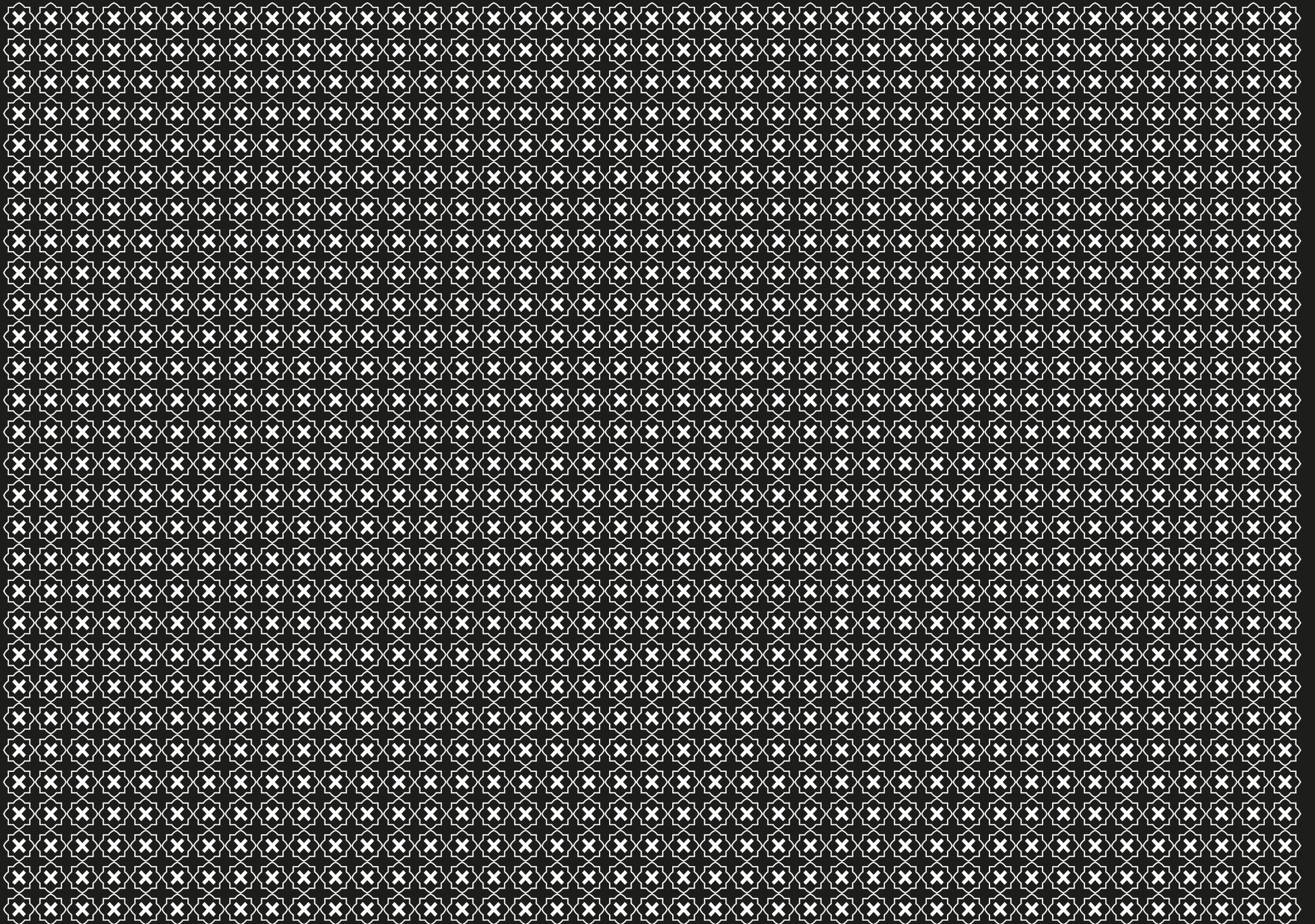
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- Zaina Al-Shahrani  
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- Jamelah Ali Alsoghayer  
- جميلة علي الصغير
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Dearborn, Michigan and Saudi Arabia serve as iconic social and cultural epicenters. Both are geographic hubs of cultural and political significance, and have strong influences both near and far over social practices, regional customs, and expressive forms.

Dearborn, often considered the focal point of "Arab America," is home to a vast array of important religious, cultural, political and community institutions. The city, geographically positioned within a region containing our nation's highest concentration of Arab Americans, has drawn waves upon waves of Arab immigrants for nearly a century. Today, both Arabs and non-Arabs alike journey to Dearborn to experience the vibrancy of Arab American culture. What's more, it is from this epicenter that ideas and culture emanate to other Arab American communities throughout our nation.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the second largest state in the Arab world, also serves as a highly influential epicenter of Arab identity, culture, and social development. Home to the two holiest sites of Islam, Saudi Arabia functions at a crossroads of culture, most notably during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Since 1933, when the United States began diplomatic relations with the newly unified country founded by King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud (Ibn Saud), the two nations have been bound by increasingly complex economic and geopolitical relationships. However, despite its position as an ally of the United States, little is known about Saudi culture and its citizens.

*Epicenter X*, the first major exhibition of contemporary Saudi art in Michigan, seeks to explore contemporary Saudi culture by promoting meaningful cultural dialogue between Saudi artists and U.S. audiences. This timely exhibition, which features both established and emerging artists working in a variety of media, sheds light on the vast diversity of contemporary artistic practice in Saudi Arabia.

Cutting through the political discourse of media outlets and government officials, the artworks featured in this exhibition open doors to the lives of the Saudi people. In doing so, it is our hope this exhibit will challenge common views and stereotypes of Arab culture by lending a voice to artists exploring poignant ideas centered on urbanization, globalization, religion and the impact of American popular culture in Saudi society.

This exhibition is a continuation of the Arab American National Museum's commitment to building community through the arts. Since its inception in 2005, the Arab American National Museum has worked to foster a safe, welcoming environment in which to connect, exchange ideas and explore culture in meaningful ways. *Epicenter X* serves as an important cultural bridge between communities and across the Arab diaspora.

This exhibition was organized by the Arab American National Museum in collaboration with the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, simply known as Ithra, and is produced with support from CULTURUNNERS.

—  
**Devon Akmon**

Director, Arab American National Museum and Curator, *Epicenter X*

تعتبر المملكة العربية السعودية ومدينة ديربورن في ولاية ميشيغان بمثابة مقرين اجتماعيين وثقافيين رمزيين، فهما محوران جغرافيان ذوا اعتبار ثقافي وسياسي لهما تأثير قوي على الممارسات الاجتماعية والعادات الإقليمية وأشكال التعبير.

تعتبر مدينة ديربورن نقطة محورية في "أمريكا العربية" حيث تحتضن مجموعة كبيرة من المؤسسات الدينية والثقافية والسياسية والمجتمعية الهامة. تتمركز المدينة جغرافياً في المنطقة ذات التركيز الأعلى من الأمريكيين العرب في الولايات المتحدة، إذ جذبت الموجة تلو الأخرى من المهاجرين العرب منذ ما يقرب من قرن. الآن، يسافر العرب وغير العرب على حد سواء إلى ديربورن لتجربة حيوية الثقافة العربية الأمريكية فمن هذا المركز تنبعث الأفكار الثقافية إلى المجتمعات العربية الأمريكية الأخرى حول الولايات المتحدة.

المملكة العربية السعودية هي ثاني أكبر دولة في العالم العربي مساحة وهي بمثابة مركز ذو تأثير كبير على الهوية الثقافية والتطور الاجتماعي في العالم العربي. تضم المملكة الحرمين المكي والمدني وهما أهم الأماكن المقدسة في الإسلام حيث يشكل الموقع الجغرافي للمملكة مفترق طرق للثقافة ولا سيما أثناء الحج إلى مكة كل عام. ومنذ العام ١٩٣٣ حينما وطدت الولايات المتحدة علاقاتها الدبلوماسية مع المملكة الموحدة حديثاً آنذاك على يد الملك عبدالعزيز بن عبدالرحمن آل سعود، تطورت العلاقات الاقتصادية والجوسياسية بتسارع مستمر. وعلى رغم العلاقة الوطيدة بين المملكة والولايات المتحدة، إلا أنه لا يُعرف عن ثقافة المملكة إلا القليل في الأوساط الأمريكية.

ابستخر اكس هو أول معرض للفن السعودي المعاصر في ميشيغان يهدف للتعريف بالثقافة السعودية المعاصرة من خلال تعزيز الحوار الثقافي البناء بين الفنانين السعوديين والجمهور الأمريكي. يأتي هذا المعرض في الوقت المناسب ليرز أعمال الفنانين المحترفين والصاعدين على حد سواء عبر وسائط متعددة ويسلط الضوء على التنوع الكبير في ممارسة الفن المعاصر في المملكة العربية السعودية.

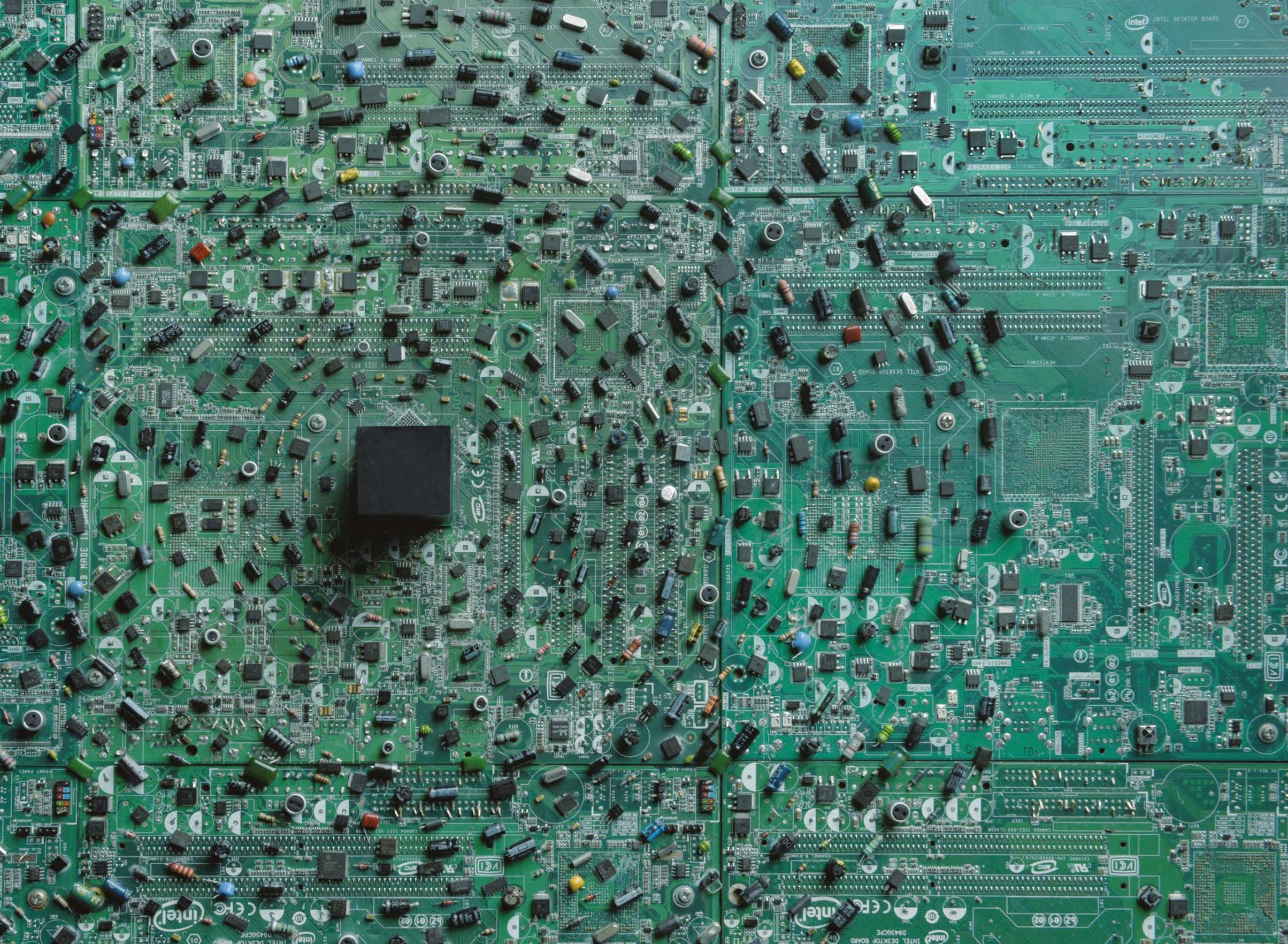
تتجاوز الأعمال الفنية المقدمة في هذا المعرض الأبعاد السياسية لدى وسائل الإعلام والمسؤولين الحكوميين لتفتح الأبواب على حياة الشعب السعودي. وفي هذا السياق نأمل أن يتجاوز هذا المعرض وجهات النظر الشائعة والقوالب النمطية عن الثقافة العربية من خلال منح الفنانين منصة لعرض أفكار مؤثرة تركز على التحضر والعولمة والدين وتأثير الثقافة الشعبية الأمريكية على المجتمع السعودي.

يعد هذا المعرض استمراراً لالتزام المتحف العربي الأمريكي ببناء المجتمع من خلال الفنون. فمُنذ تأسيسه عام ٢٠٠٥م عمل المتحف العربي الأمريكي على رعاية بيئة آمنة رحبة للتواصل وتبادل الأفكار واستكشاف الثقافة بأساليب عملية. ابستخر اكس هو جسر ثقافي بين المجتمعات عبر التنوع العربي.

تُظم المتحف العربي الأمريكي هذا المعرض بالتعاون مع مركز الملك عبدالعزيز الثقافي العالمي (إثراء) وتم انتاجه بدعم من كولتورونرز.

—  
**ديفون أكمون**

مدير المتحف العربي الأمريكي والمنسق لمعرض ابستخر اكس



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## SAUDI ARTISTS' TOUR جولة الفنانين السعوديين

Since its launch in June 2016, a group of Saudi artists has been embarking on a multi-city tour of the United States to generate people-to-people dialogue and better understanding between the two nations.

The tour began in Texas with a large scale exhibition at the Station Museum of Contemporary Art in Houston before traveling to the Gonzo Gallery in Aspen, CO; Minnesota Street Project in San Francisco, CA; Bates College Museum of Art in Lewiston, ME; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), CA.

These exhibitions present an authentic insight into contemporary life and culture in Saudi Arabia through the works of leading and emerging artists from the Kingdom. This timely exhibition at the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, MI will be followed by stops in Salt Lake City, UT; Memphis, TN; Washington, DC; and New York, all before the end of 2017.

The initiative is spearheaded by the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, Saudi's soon-to-be-opened hub for arts, culture and education, and produced with support from CULTURUNNERS, an international platform for traveling artists.

Exhibitions and educational programming are being produced in partnership with cultural institutions and universities across the U.S.A, and a reciprocal program of events and artistic projects is taking place with American artists and institutions across Saudi Arabia.

انطلقت مجموعة من الفنانين السعوديين ابتداءً من يونيو ٢٠١٦ في جولة شملت عدة مدن بالولايات المتحدة تهدف للتبادل الحضاري، وتأسيس قنوات تواصل بين الثقافات، وقد بدأت الجولة بولاية تكساس في معرض ضخم داخل متحف "ستيشن للفن المعاصر"، قبل الانتقال إلى معرض "جونزو" في مدينة أسبن في ولاية كولورادو، ومن ثم إلى "مشروع شارع مينيسوتا" في سان فرانسيسكو ولاية كاليفورنيا، و "متحف كلية بيتس للفنون" في لويفستون ولاية مين، و متحف "مقاطعة لوس أنجلوس للفنون" تقدم هذه المعارض صورة حقيقية عن الحياة والثقافة المعاصرة في السعودية من خلال أعمال فنانين المملكة الرائدين والناشئين. ستصل الجولة إلى سولت لاك سيتي ولاية يوتا، وستتبع بعدها إلى ممفيس بتنيسي وواشنطن العاصمة ونيويورك قبل نهاية ٢٠١٧.

تعتبر جولة الفنانين السعوديين أحد مبادرات مركز الملك عبدالعزيز الثقافي العالمي (إثراء) بالتعاون مع مؤسسة كولتورونرز وهي منصة عالمية للفنانين المتجولين.



Previous spread:

—  
Amr Alngmah  
*Digital Spirituality, 2016*  
Circuit board mixed media installation  
28.8 x 25.7 x 0.7 in (73.3 x 65.3 x 2 cm)

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture is a one-of-a-kind institution that brings together multiple offerings under one roof. From arts and culture to science and innovation, this bold initiative by Saudi Aramco promises a continuous journey of enrichment designed to energize the next knowledge economy of Saudi Arabia.

We aim to make a positive and tangible impact on the cultural scene by focusing on building local talents in the knowledge and creative industries. Blending iconic architectural design with advanced technology, and unique learning methods with enriching programs, the Center is an infinitely inspiring platform for explorers, learners, creators, and leaders—a thriving hub of knowledge, creativity and cross-cultural engagement. As the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia strives to achieve its ambitious national development goals to transition to a knowledge-based economy, the Center acts as a bridge connecting cultures and cultivating a creative and innovative community. At The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, we believe in the power of people and ideas to unlock new possibilities: the future is what we make of it.

مركز الملك عبدالعزيز الثقافي العالمي، هو مؤسسة تقدم برامج وفعاليات في مجالات متعددة تحت سقف واحد، وتعتبر مبادرة طموحة من أرامكو السعودية تجمع بين الفن والثقافة والعلوم والابتكار في رحلة يتخللها الإثراء المعرفي ودعم اقتصاد مستقبلي قائم على المعرفة.

هدفنا هو إحداث أثر ملموس وإيجابي على الساحة الثقافية عن طريق التركيز على بناء المهارات الوطنية في مجالات المعرفة والابتكار. يلتقي في المركز التصميم المعماري الفذ والتقنية الحديثة مع وسائل التعليم المبتكرة والبرامج الإثرائية، فهو منبر للإلهام والمبدعين، و مركز حيوي للمعرفة والابتكار وتواصل ثقافات.

وفي إطار سعي المملكة العربية السعودية لتحقيق أهدافها الوطنية التنموية الطموحة بالتحول إلى اقتصاد قائم على المعرفة، يعمل المركز كجسر بين الثقافات ويعزز بناء مجتمع إبداعي وابتكاري. نؤمن إيمانًا راسخًا في مركز الملك عبدالعزيز الثقافي العالمي بقدرة الأفراد والأفكار على فتح آفاق جديدة في المستقبل الذي هو من صنعنا.

Since opening its doors in 2005, the Arab American National Museum (AANM) has remained the nation's only cultural institution to document, preserve and present the history, culture and contributions of Arab Americans. Located in Dearborn, Michigan, amid the largest concentrations of Arab Americans in the United States, AANM presents exhibitions and a wide range of public programs in Michigan and in major cities across the country. By bringing the voices and faces of Arab Americans to mainstream audiences, AANM continues its commitment to dispelling misconceptions about Arab Americans and other minorities, as well as shedding light on the shared experiences of immigrants and ethnic groups, paying tribute to the diversity of our nation.

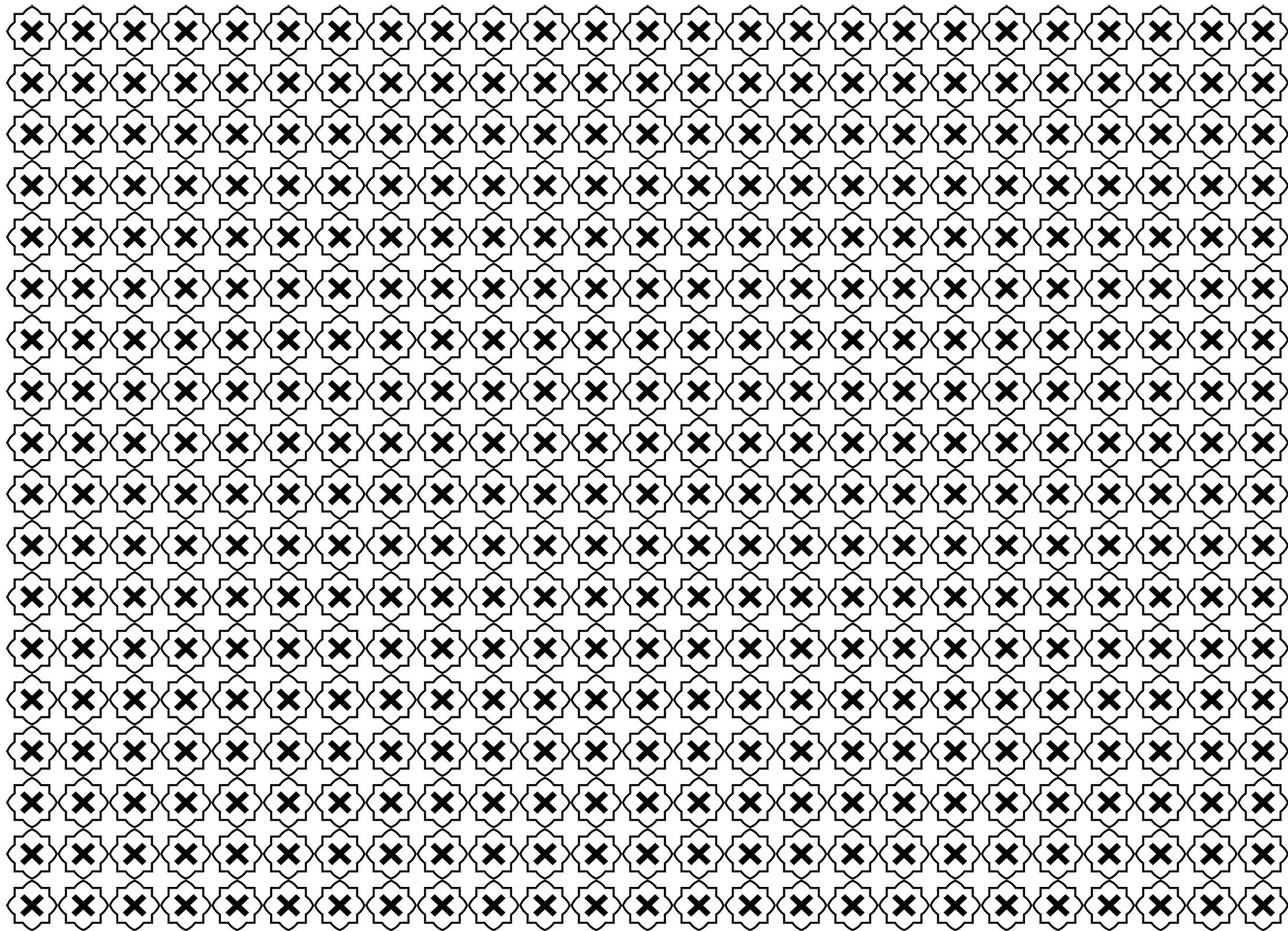
AANM is one of just four Michigan Affiliates of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

AANM is a founding member of Detroit-area arts collective CultureSource as well as the Immigration and Civil Rights Network of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience.

Most recently, AANM was selected to join the National Performance Network. AANM is an institution of ACCESS, the Dearborn, Michigan-based human service agency founded in 1971.

منذ فتح ابوابه في عام ٢٠٠٥، بقي المتحف العربي الأمريكي المؤسسة الثقافية الوحيدة في الوطن أجمله التي توثق، تحفظ وتقدم تاريخ، ثقافة و مساهمات العرب الأمريكيين. واقع في مدينة ديربورن في ولاية ميشيغان وسط أكثر تكاثف من العرب الأمريكيين في الولايات المتحدة، المتحف العربي الأمريكي يقدم معارض و تشكيلة واسعة من البرامج في ميشيغان و المدن الكبرى عبر البلد. من خلال جلب وجوه و أصوات العرب الأمريكيين إلى الجماهير العامة، المتحف يتابع في إلتامه إلى إزالة الأفكار الخاطئة عن العرب الأمريكيين و غيرهم من الأقليات، بالإضافة إلى تسليط الضوء على التجارب المشتركة للمهاجرين و الشعوب العرقية، تقديراً لتنوع الشعوب في هذا الوطن. المتحف العربي الأمريكي هو واحد من بين فقط أربعة منظمات في ميشيغان منتسبين إلى مؤسسة السميثسونيان في واشنطن، و هو أيضاً معتمد من قبل التحالف الأمريكي للمتاحف. إنه عضو مؤسس من التجمع الفني كلتشرسورس في مدينة ديربورن وكذلك شبكة الهجرة و الحقوق المدنية التابعة للاتلاف الدولي لمواقع الوجدان. حديثاً، إختير المتحف للإندضمام إلى الشبكة الوطنية للاداء. المتحف العربي الأمريكي تابع لمنظمة اكسس للخدمات الإنسانية المرتكزة في ميشيغان و التي أسست عام ١٩٧١.





Qamar Abdulmalik

قمر عبدالملك

–

Yusef Alahmad & Josh Higgins

يوسف الأحمد و جوش هيجينز

–

Musaed Al Hulis

مساعـد الحليس

–

Marwah Al Mugait

مروة المقيط

–

Arwa Al Neami

اروى النعيمي

–

Ahmad Angawi

أحمد عنقاوي

–

Amr Alngmah

عمرو النجمة

–

Abdullah Al Othman

عبدالله العثمان

–

Nasser Al Salem

ناصر السالم

Ayman Yossri Daydban

أيمن يوسري ديدبان

–

Abdulnasser Gharem

عبدالناصر غارم

–

Ajlan Gharem

عجلان غارم

–

Fatimah Hassan

فاطمة حسان

–

Ahmed Mater

أحمد ماطر

–

Mawadah Muhtasib

مودة محتسب

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Nugamshi

نعيمشي

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Shaweesh

شاويش

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*Asylum of Dreams*, 2017  
Crane Machine installation with printed passports  
75 x 32 x 34 in (190.5 x 81.2 x 86.3 cm)

**Qamar Abdulmalik is a 23-year-old living in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She holds a Bachelor degree in Graphic Design and Digital Media from Princess Noura University in Riyadh. She currently works in-house for a design Studio in Riyadh while she develops her own artistic practice and experiments with different media.**

asylum (n) 1. the protection granted by a nation to someone who has left their native country as a political refugee. "He applied for political asylum: refuge, sanctuary, shelter, safety, protection, security, immunity; a safe haven." Qamar Abdelmalik is a Riyadh-based artist and designer of Palestinian origins.

In *Asylum of Dreams*, an interactive crane machine game, ubiquitous in arcades, is seen full of passports from various countries including the U.S., Canada and the U.K. Viewers are encouraged to insert coins and attempt to grab one of the many passports available to win.

The installation reflects the experience and limitations of being a refugee, an individual who has lost his/her state-established identity. The artist has often thought about what differentiates refugees from other individuals and sees this difference in the lack of basic security to establish a family, work or shelter; in other words, refugee communities live their lives in inherent instability. Abdulmalik explains, "they (refugees) may be respected or well-treated by citizens, but deep within them, they still believe they're out of place. They are homesick but have no place to be homesick for. Many of them throughout the world are reminded of their statuses daily when going about even the most ordinary of activities."

Abdulmalik pokes fun at the role of luck in terms of where and when individuals are born and based on which their national identities are determined. Her work is an attempt at giving players agency in determining their identities and subsequent futures. Furthermore, *Asylum of Dreams* points towards to difficulties refugees face each day with travel and migration. The passports represent the political and national identities in the never ending quest for freedom and safety.

Yusef Alahmad is a Saudi graphic designer and artist based in New York, NY. He completed his MFA degree in graphic design at the Academy of Art University San Francisco in December 2016, and his thesis explored 'Elevating Graphic Design Standards in Saudi Arabia'. He is currently an independent designer, alternating between graphic design projects, editorial illustrations, and art commissions.

His work has been exhibited in numerous shows around the world, including, P21 Gallery (London, U.K.), SoulSpace (Oakland, California), Loud Art (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman), Khaleeji Re-interpreted (Kuwait), Local Not Local: Arabic & Iranian Typography Show (Michigan/Los Angeles), Saudi Design Week (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia), Saudi Heritage Contemporary Exhibition: King Abdulaziz Historical Center (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia), Sculpture Northwest: Art Beyond Conflict Exhibition (Bellingham, Washington).

Recently, he was invited to speak at the Typo SF International design conference, in addition to being a judge in the second annual Arabic Design competition in Saudi Arabia.

In March 2017, he completed the Majlis Studio Residency program in New York, an initiative of King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture.

Josh Higgins is a Senior Creative Director at Facebook on the Building 8 team which is focused on building new hardware products to advance Facebook's efforts in virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence and mission to connect the world. For the last four years, he was on The Factory team where he was fortunate to work on a variety of projects from company and product identities, the Facebook brand book ensuring consistency for those identities, brand campaigns and the personalized video program. Additionally, Josh has overseen Product Marketing creative for all verticals of Facebook. Over the four years, he grew the team and processes to a high-functioning studio producing a variety of work including launch films, websites, campaigns, collateral, and online/offline creative for Facebook's annual F8 conference.

In 2013 Josh concluded his role as Design Director for President Obama's 2012 campaign.

As the Design Director, Josh built and led the creative team for the historic 2012 political campaign in which the web, design, and technology played a pivotal role. The responsibility of Josh and the team was to design the Obama 2012 campaign both online and offline. A main focus was to create a uniform message and consistent visual language across all mediums.

Josh dedicates a percentage of his time to social causes. Finding creative ways to support these causes has manifested into exhibits and charitable projects, like The Hurricane, So-Cal and Haiti Poster Projects in addition to lecture series with photographers, designers and film makers with proceeds donated to various charitable organizations and causes. With roots in both advertising and graphic design, Josh's work has earned him national honors.

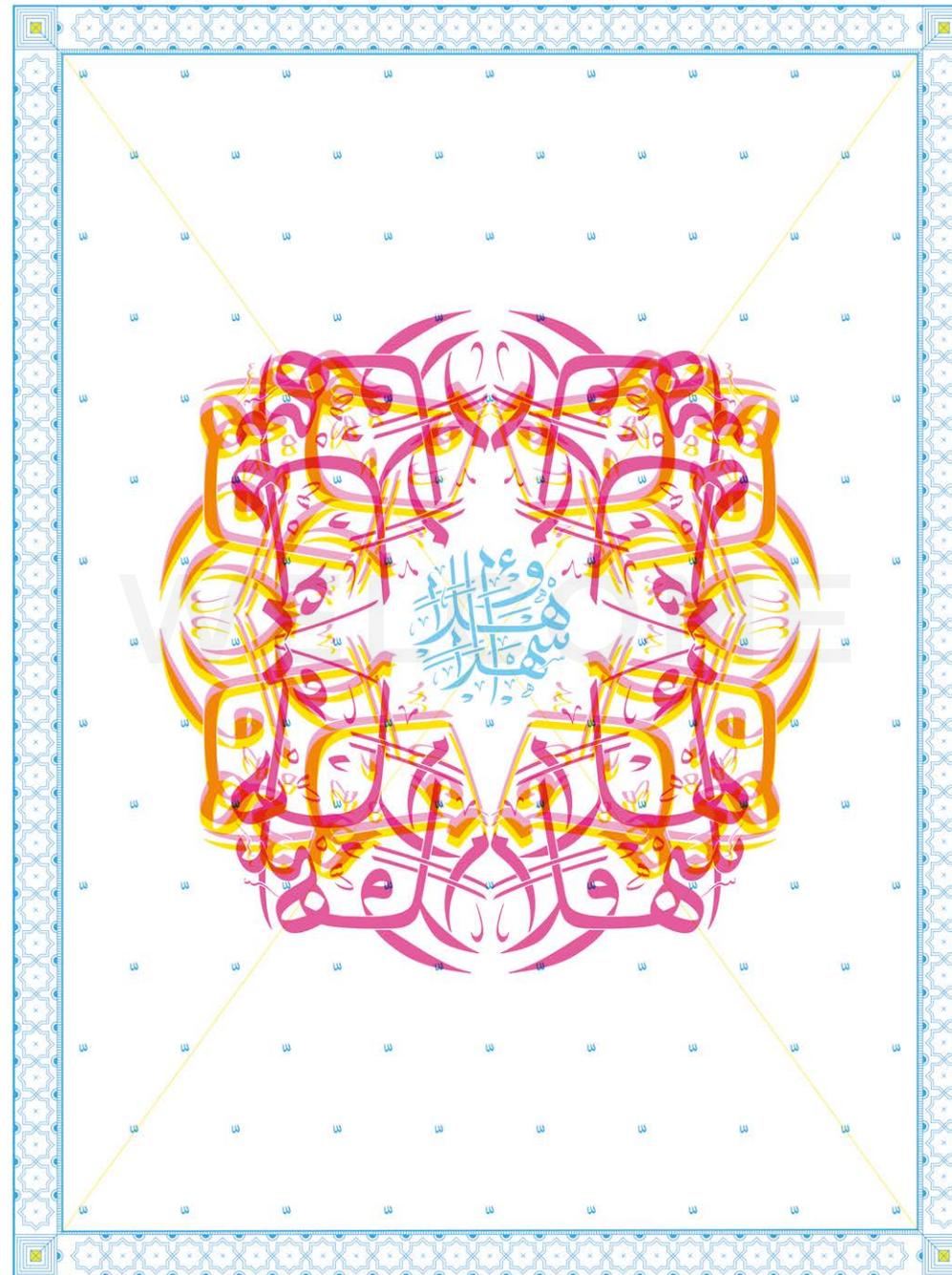
*Ahlan Wa Sahlan* is a collaboration between Yusef Alahmad and Josh Higgins and began as a reaction to anti-Muslim comments made by the current U.S. president, Donald Trump. Furthermore, this project was pursued following the unsuccessful institution and enforcement of the Muslim travel ban.

With the constant flow of immigrants throughout the U.S., and during this contentious era in American politics both at home and abroad, it has been imperative for both Alahmad and Higgins to support and create an environment of acceptance and safety within their communities and for those who have left their homes to start a new life.

The United States was built on being inclusive for all and both artists felt the need to stand up and resist new policies that contradict this fundamental pillar of democracy.

The message of this work is simple, yet powerful in scope. The saying "Ahlan wa sahan" is a welcoming phrase, yet the more literal translations are: "You are family, and our land is your land" and/or "[May you] arrive as part of the family, and tread easily [as you enter]". Repeated 5 times throughout the work, each iteration of this phrase has been interwoven in various colors to symbolize unity and strength in diversity.

Furthermore, the English word 'welcome' is superimposed in a gloss varnish across the center, visible only from certain angles.



*Ahlan wa Sahlan*, 2017  
Digital print and vinyl on Paper  
53 x 40 in (134.6 x 101.6 cm)



Musaed Al Hulis was born in 1973 in Al Baha, Saudi Arabia. He holds a master's degree in Design and Analysis of Vehicle Systems from the University of Huddersfield in the U.K. In addition to his art practice, Al Hulis lectures at the Technical College in Jeddah, and he is the Founder and Director of Tasami Creative Lab in Jeddah.

He has participated in several group exhibitions and has helped organize different workshops and art training courses around the Saudi Arabia.

Al Hulis has exhibited in more than 15 local exhibitions, and 10 international including at the Saudi Cultural Days Exhibition in Qatar and Kazakhstan, at Edge of Arabia's #COMETOGETHER exhibition in London, at multiple iterations of Art Dubai, at ABC Berlin, Art Abu Dhabi 2015, the Sharjah Islamic Arts Festivals and most recently at Bates College Museum as part of the Saudi Artists' Tour.

*Ideologies for Sale*, 2013  
Mixed Media on Wood  
110.2 x 70.8 x 35.4 in (280 x 180 x 90 cm)



Through material de-familiarization and contemporary sculpture, Musaed Al Hulis crafts the ephemera of prayer from impractical materials. He provides new insights into different dimensions of spirituality, often underscored with cutting commentary on the misappropriation and misuse of religious rituals.

Al Hulis holds a Master's in Design and Analysis of Vehicle Systems from the University of Huddersfield, U.K., and lectures at the Technical College in Jeddah—a highly skilled and technical background that is evident in his deft deployment of mechanical and electrical objects. Incorporating these materials in unfamiliar contexts, Al Hulis forges an uncomfortable tension that forces mediation between the disparate realms of physical force and energy, on the one hand, and the religious practices of Islamic spirituality, on the other.

Using the methods and materials of commercial design, he highlights the human and earthly distractions that prop-up the creeping hypocrisy proliferating in certain sectors of Saudi society.

In *Ideologies for Sale*, the artist has created a mihrab (prayer niche) positioned atop a wooden cart, commonly used for selling fruits and

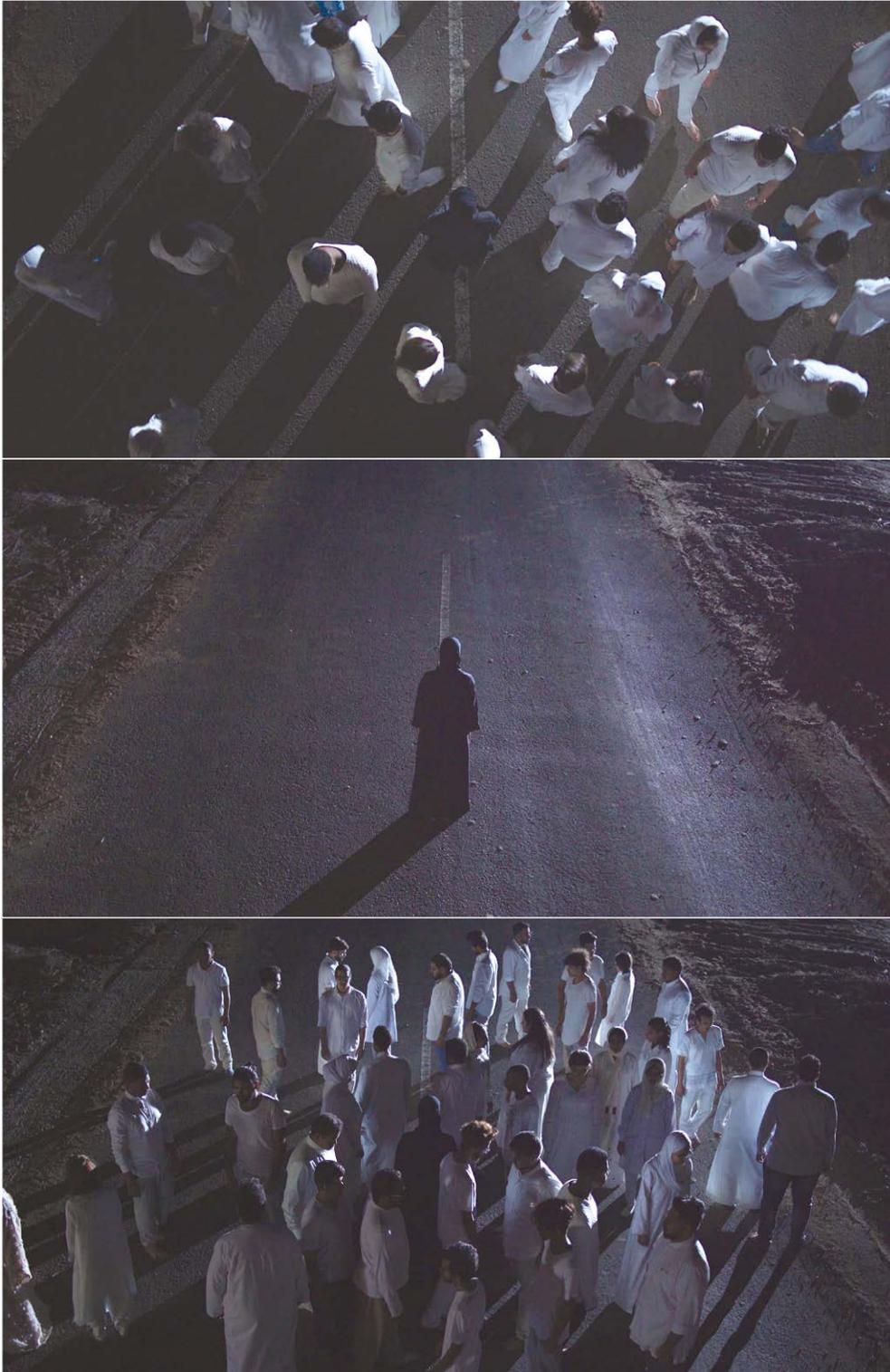
vegetables. The mihrab is the most important element in any mosque as it indicates the direction of Mecca, towards which every Muslim has to orient him/herself to perform the rituals of prayer. Perched on top of a fruit and vegetable cart, the installation refers to the cheap ideologies, seasonal beliefs, and lack of direction that have swept over the artist's world, toying with compliant minds, solely in the pursuit of power, supremacy and profit.

In *Relieve us with it, Oh Bilal*, Al Hulis has created a Muslim prayer rug made up of car battery jumper cables. The quote, "Give Us Rest with It, O Bilal" has been attributed to the Prophet Mohamed PBUH and refers to the act of prayer as a source of relaxation leading to subsequent rejuvenation. Al Hulis himself observes the act of prayer (Sal'a)—a ritual performed five times a day by Muslims as part of their Islamic faith. The artist considers the position of prostration (Sajdah) as the source of this energy, during which seven parts of the human body connect with the ground and through which an exchange of positive and negative energy occurs. The human body is directly charged. The use of the medium (jumper cables) depicts this exchange, and the recharging of the human condition.



*Relieve us with it, Oh Bilal*, 2014  
Carpet out of car jumper cables  
70.8 x 41.6 in (180 x 106 cm)





Marwah Al Mugait is a photographer and videographer based in Riyadh. Initially working within the realms of commercial photography, Al Mugait has pursued a fine arts practice since completing a Master's degree at the University of Westminster in the U.K in 2012. In May 2017, she completed the Majlis Studio Residency program in New York, an initiative of King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture.

A keen proponent of both the aesthetic and conceptual use of light and shadow, her layered works often possess the essence of magical realism; presenting windows which reveal the subtle perspectives and intimate secrets of her subjects.

Her photographs tend to be intimate portraits of stories, Al Mugait's work focuses on exposition: shedding light on things that people overlook or discard. Her work encompasses a wide variety of themes but embodies the desire to explore the gap between different ways of communicating.

Al Mugait's work emphasizes fluidity and turbulence. By drawing from a wide range of technologies and a heightened sense of awareness, she forces her audience to pay attention to the pauses in human interaction, providing the audience a confidential glimpse into a private moment.

*We Were* (2017) is a video installation that revolves around the intensity of the hidden human connections, embodying the nature of the emotional cycle in the context of relations and communications between one another.

In the film, Al Mugait reveals the visual manifestations and inceptions of such bonds, the collective energy shared between individuals, and ultimately exposes the temporality of such connections. In particular, this body of work visually traces how humans process rushed interactions, form multiple layers of memories and define the notion of departure or disappearance after the termination of each emotional exchange.

Perceiving body language as a medium for expression and a form of a dialogue, this piece demonstrates the power of the human connectivity and the fragility of isolation through the performing of multiple rituals.

*We Were*, 2017  
from the series *Subtitles*, 2012  
Video  
6 minutes and 22 seconds

Arwa Al Neami was born in 1985 in Khamis Mushait and now lives in Jeddah. Originally from the mountain village of Rijal Alma, in 2000, Al Neami joined the influential Al-Meftaha Arts Village in Abha, the first art center of its kind in southern Saudi Arabia. She moved to Jeddah and exhibited in *Mostly Visible*, Jeddah Art Week 2013, and since then has exhibited internationally including at Art Dubai in 2013; *Words & Illuminations*, British Museum in 2014; *Never Never Land*, Edge of Arabia, London 2014–15; *On Remote Control I + II*, Lothringer13 Halle Gallery, Munich 2015–16; and *Spheres of Influence: Codes and Conduct Across Structural Landscapes*, Mohsen Gallery, Tehran in 2016. She is the Co-founder of Pharan Studio.

Arwa Al Neami creates incisive and daring documents of life in Saudi Arabia. Her practice has been shaped by the restrictions and obstacles she has encountered as a female artist working in the country's traditional southern region. She has taken advantage of gradually broadening artistic opportunities, extending and progressively re-drawing the boundaries that constrict female expression in the Kingdom.

Despite her apparently defiant approach, she has earned numerous accolades and taken advantage of unprecedented opportunities to subvert the status quo. Such distinguished opportunities have included being the first woman to photograph inside the Masjid al Nabawi in Medina—the site of Prophet Muhammad's PBUH tomb and the second holiest site in Islam. Since 2012, Al Neami has lived and worked in Jeddah where she presents challenging and often humorous works that explore controversial

aspects of Saudi society, with a particularly wry and erudite commentary on the position of women in the Kingdom.

Within the fixed-frame of *Never, Never Land*, women wearing black abayas, hijabs, and niqabs that reveal only their eyes and their hands drive around in circles in vivid crayon-colored bumper cars. The title of this work refers to the amusement parks that exist across Saudi, which are contradictory places—both detached realms of imaginary abandon and sanctioned spaces where fun is circumscribed by strict rules. Documentation becomes a covert act of defiance, as Al Neami smuggles her photographic record out of the world of childish fantasy via the camera hidden beneath her own abaya. The women bumper car drivers weave in and out of the frame of her video, restrained in their interactions, their voices muted in accordance with signs that warn against "screaming." For some women, this is an opportunity to practice driving—something they're forbidden from doing on real roads outside the amusement park. For all of them, this is no more and no less than their unremarkable everyday social reality, yet the footage is shot through with knowing intimacy.

By recording these moments, Al Neami documents the scene detached from its context. Out of time, we are able to turn it over for scrutiny and consideration. The artist's forbidden gaze is empowered, investing the moment with a wry significance. Her record of this everyday leisure activity becomes a commentary on the bounded lives of Saudi's women. In this act of sustained looking, the prosaic gives way to the absurd, loading the perfunctory with a darkly comic weight that enacts the Orwellian "joke as tiny revolution".



*Never Never Land*, 2014  
Video  
2 minutes and 41 seconds



Ahmed Angawi is Associate Director at AMAR Center of Architecture and Design Studies, Jeddah and is also the Program Director of The House of Traditional Arts located in Al-Balad, the city's historic district—a collaborative initiative by the Prince's School of Traditional Arts, London, and Art Jameel. He works as a consultant at GMSV (Geometric Modeling Scientific Visualization Research Center) at KAUST working on Traditional Innovative Products.

Angawi has participated in many group exhibitions including *Cometogther*, Edge of Arabia, London, U.K. (2012); *We Need To Talk*, Edge of Arabia, Jeddah, K.S.A. (2012); *Rhizoma*, The 55th Venice Biennale, Edge of Arabia, Venice, (2013); *A Line in the Sand*, Art Space, Dubai, U.A.E. (2013); *Connected: Art in Airports*, Art Jameel, King Fahad International Airport, Dammam, K.S.A. (2014); *Al hangar*, Besmallah, Jeddah, K.S.A. (2015) / *Mangour: Loved a nd Beloved*, 21,39 & Athr, Jeddah, K.S.A. (2016) solo exhibition / *Al hangar*, maboth al matar, 21,39, Jeddah, K.S.A. (2016); *Sharjah Art Fair second edition*; Saudi Art Council & Al Mansouria silent auction, Jeddah, K.S.A. (2016); *Parallel Kingdom* at Station Museum, Houston, U.S.A. (2016).

— Whether responding to a physical space or combining work from collective voices and consciousness, Ahmad Angawi's practice is shaped by the communities he creates for. His works are participatory installations that bring people together. Borrowing elements of his Hejazi culture and Islamic traditions, he maps their perennial influences in the present moment, seeking to locate their place within a rapidly shifting local context that is being overwhelmed by globalization. Angawi speaks out against rapid modernization; he is particularly concerned with retaining the

forces that imbue urban spaces with a robust sense of community. Hosting open mic nights in an empty swimming pool in Jeddah he has created a space for young people to freely voice their opinions through music, poetry, and debate. In much of his work, the human voice becomes the medium Angawi uses to document the multiple identities of his community.

Exemplifying the energy of the restless voices he channels, *Street Pulse* is a large installation of some 3,600 microphones. The project was born amid the tumultuous, but hopeful cacophony of the 2011 Arab Spring, and the work has captured the voices of the people of Jeddah ever since. This huge sphere of microphones documents and amplifies stories heard throughout the city. This aural/oral photo booth is a means to harness the fluid ideas of the currents flowing through the community. By measuring the pulse of the street, the vital signs of the community body, each microphone harbors vibrations that sustain thousands of voices simultaneously.

According to Angawi, "*Street Pulse* is an ongoing interactive piece that will evolve with the contribution of different people. Through voices recorded in diverse international locations, each area or city will come to have its own sound. The aim? In the words of HRH Prince Turki bin Faisal Al Saud—'Evolution, not revolution.' The project acts as an electro-cardiogram machine—instead of measuring the vitals of the body, it measures the pulse of the street."

In *Wajiha 2:148*, a large lenticular photograph juxtaposes an old image of the Masjid Al-Haram from the 19th century with a contemporary image of the same site. Depending on the direction, or *Wajiha*, which the piece is viewed, a different image is apparent revealing the shifted architectural configuration and social fabric of the scene. Angawi has referred to the Quranic verse, surah 2, ayah 148 (as visible in the work's title): "Everyone has a direction towards which he turns."

*Street Pulse*, 2012  
Mixed media sound installation with microphones  
90.5 in (230 cm) diameter

Following spread:  
*Wajiha 2:148-And everyone has a direction to which they should turn*, 2013  
Digital Lenticular Print mounted on Aluminum  
64.5 x 118 in (164 x 300 cm)





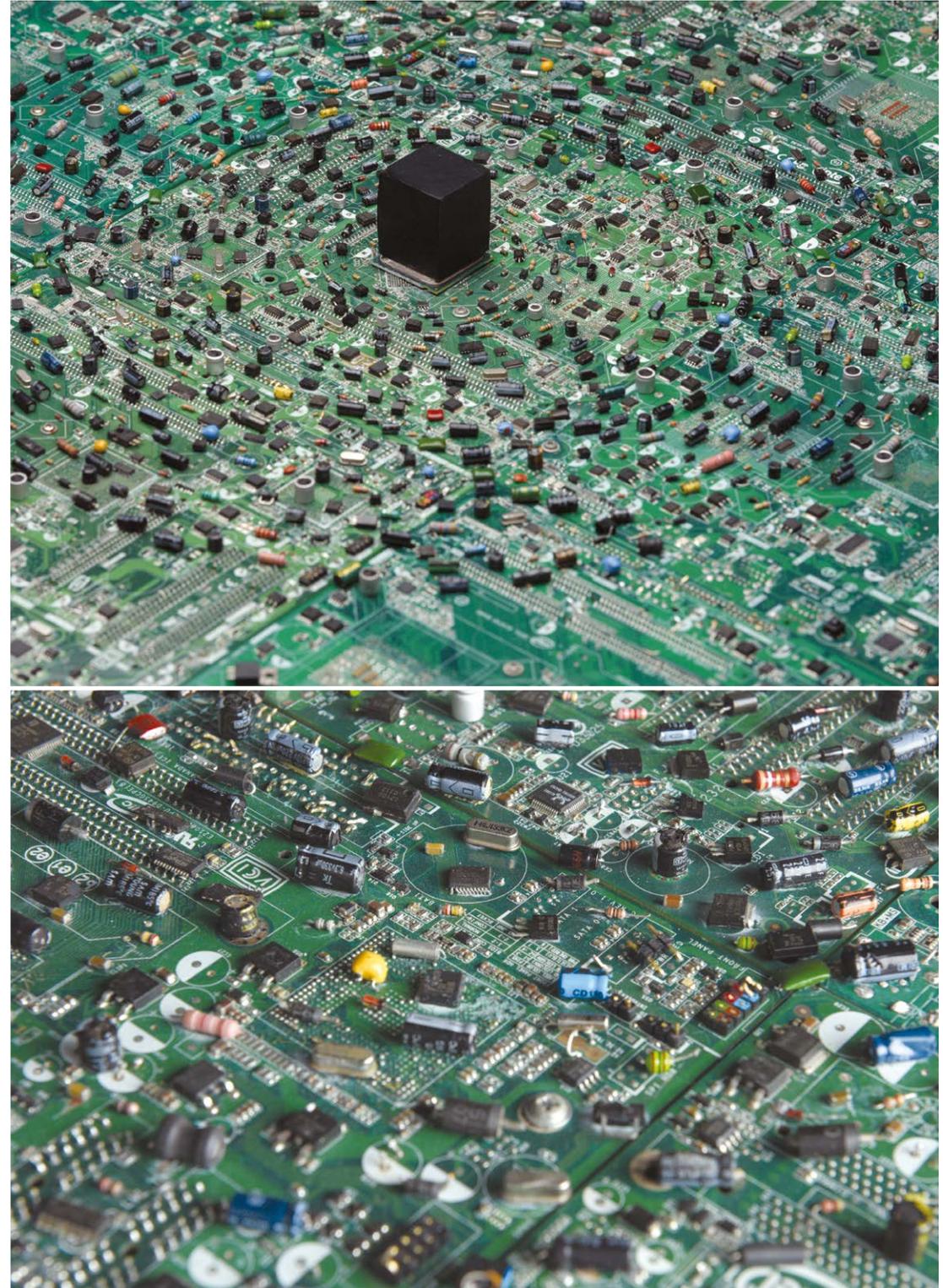
Amr Alngmah was born in 1982 and holds a Bachelor's degree in dental surgery. He is a self-taught artist who began painting at a young age and is increasingly interested in trying different materials, from the traditional to the digital. He has a special interest in conceptual work, installation, and digital media that reflects the culture of the region and his personal vision. His works depend more on concept and idea (including extensive research) than on traditional aesthetic objectives. He is driven by a desire to have a positive effect on people through the communication of contemporary art.

Alngmah's immense creative curiosity has influenced his experimentation with a variety of both traditional and digital media. His particular interest in expanding on conceptual frameworks when creating his works of installation and digital media reflect the cultural and regional context from which he is working.

In *Digital Spirituality*, Alngmah explores the root of the word "spirituality" as derived from "spirit." The artist believes that humans consist of two main parts: the body and the spirit, where the spirit holds a higher rank as the main engine in the machine of the body. Furthermore, spiritual influence is an effect produced by strong and deep bonds between various elements or peers. This association results from the deep value placed upon peer to peer spirituality and morality. In this installation, Alngmah looks to the spiritual influence of the Kabaa in Mecca, where over a billion of Muslims turn towards to pray multiple times throughout the day.

Alngmah's use of digital hardware as material for his installation is a direct reflection of the modern era as the age of technology. All electronic devices have circuits that possess microprocessors. These microprocessors are the main components of electronic circuits and essentially represent the pulse and power of the whole apparatus. The work ultimately presents the functions of power within the mechanical engineering of electronics to the ritual behaviors of human spirituality.

*Digital Spirituality*, 2016  
Circuit board mixed media installation  
28.8 x 25.7 x 0.7 in (73.3 x 65.3 x 2 cm)





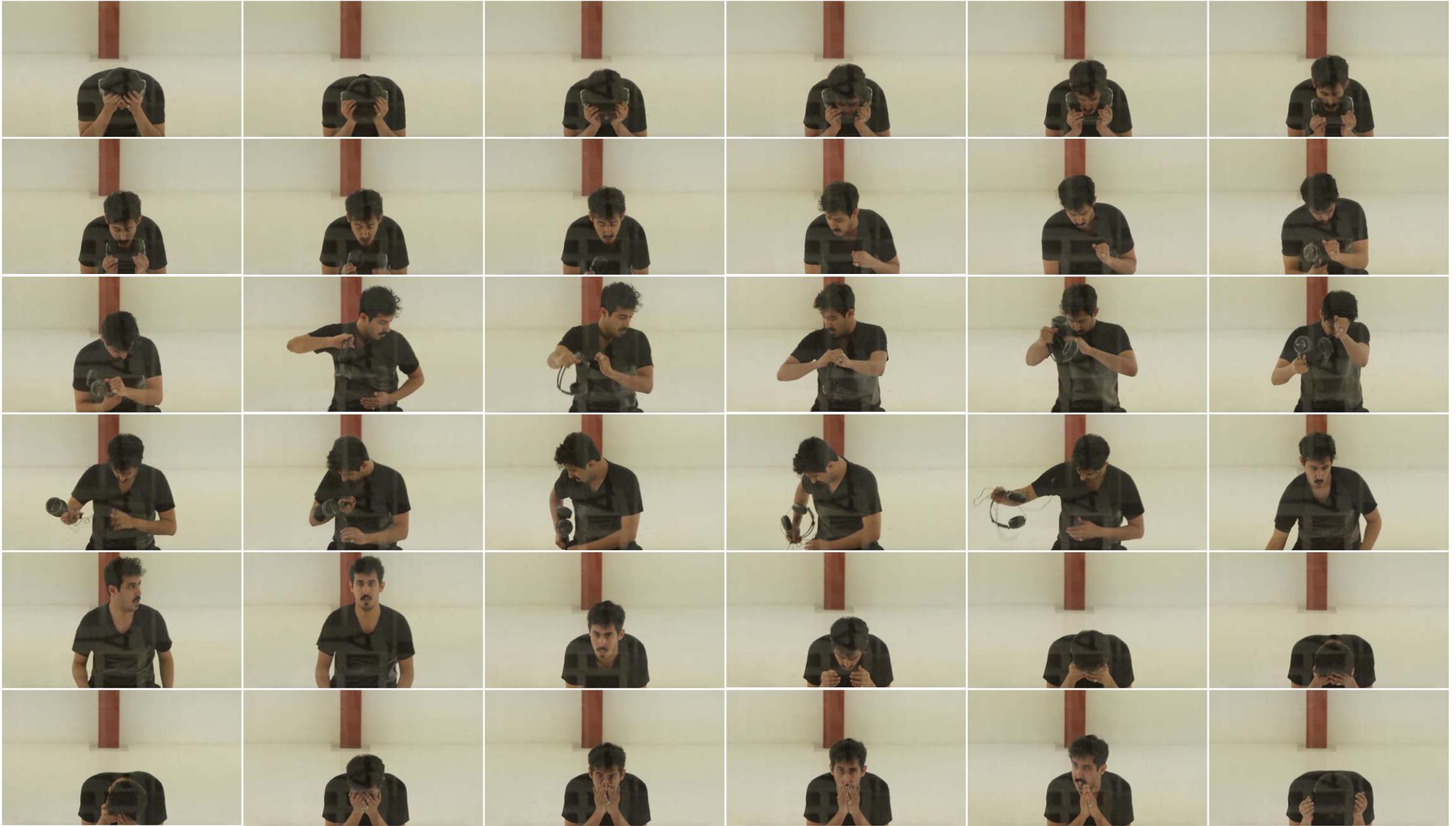
Still from *No-Touch Torture* performance at The Mine Gallery, Dubai, 2015

**Abdullah Al Othman is a Saudi artist and a contemporary writer. Born in Riyadh in 1985, he has exhibited widely in the Middle East and abroad including at Art Dubai, U.A.E.; ABC Art Berlin Contemporary, Germany; The Mine Gallery, Dubai, U.A.E.; CAP Kuwait; the Rhizoma show at the 55th Venice Biennale, Italy; and the Safar Exhibition at 21:39 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The artist's poetry is published in two volumes, "A Late Memory, 10 seconds" and "This Void May Occur Twice".**

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Abdullah Al Othman is both an artist and a published poet. Al Othman's work is conceptual, or idea-based, and incorporates the written word, personal manifestos, and color to suggest various possibilities and meanings. He works in different artistic styles and mediums, including video, graffiti, street art interventions, and small installations.

In February 2015, Abdullah Al Othman culminated months of research into the use of music as weaponry, with a performance titled *No Touch Torture*, as part of an exhibition in Dubai. Sitting inside a glass box, he listened for three solid hours to twenty-one songs reportedly used by the CIA as a torture technique in 'war on terror' prisons, namely Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib.

By combining different elements and testaments to the performance, Othman confronts the viewer with the raw ingredients—human, almost forensic evidence of the behavior of mankind in the face of extremism. He raises a number of intertwined issues that characterize today's commonly used, systemized violence—actions that sacrifice human dignity. The installation draws attention to the detail implicit in one man's experience of this method of torture, to the potency of repetitive and brainwashing patterns, both sonic and behavioral. The work highlights individual actions and reactions, that when compounded by a mass of similar events, have the force of a social and political tidal wave that leaves no room for individualism, freedom of thought, nor action.



*The Experiment* from the *No-Touch Torture* series (video stills), 2015  
Multi-channel Video

Nasser Al Salem grew up in Mecca in a family of tent makers living in the “rust belt” around the Haram Al-Sharif. He has exhibited across the region and internationally; with *Edge of Arabia* in Istanbul (2009) and *Jeddah* (2012); in the British Museum’s *Hajj: A Journey to The Heart of Islam* (2012); in *Calligraffiti* at Leila Heller Gallery, New York alongside Keith Haring, Jackson Pollock and Jean-Michel Basquiat. In 2012, his first solo exhibition mounted at *Athr Gallery* was met with critical acclaim. In 2013, he was shortlisted for the *Jameel Prize*.

Al Salem is a trained calligrapher and architect, two skilled practices that share preoccupations with formal harmony and signification—areas of focus that shape his art. He revels in linguistic experimentation, combining tradition with contemporary concerns to demonstrate the enduring relevance of the Quranic text. He ventures beyond the conventional practice of calligraphy through diverse media such as neon, wood sculpture, and found objects. Al Salem’s work is devotional, firmly rooted in the Quran and the Arabic written word, revealing immutable truths in the text itself and within the modern moment. Signified (meaning) and signifier (form) evolve together with neat synchronicity, forging an expressive and harmonious whole.

This conscious process does not depart from or overshadow the meaning of the Quranic verses

he cites. Rather, each work emanates from and articulates the inherent sense of the original in a way that is relevant to modern life. Al Salem reinvigorates language—his rendering becomes an act of textual elision that brings together past and present, an act that reifies the Quran as a miracle whose meaning is pure and enduring for all mankind. His modern departures establish the truths embedded in the Arabic language and, as he conveys the familiar in unfamiliar ways, he directs our attention once more to the Quran’s unfathomable depths.

The neon on view depicts two Arabic words simultaneously: *Arabi* (Arab) and *Gharbi* (Westerner/Non-Arab). The flickering light on the top left letter flashes on and off: lightening a single dot that transforms one word to the other. When the dot is lit, it reads ‘Gharbi’ and when it is off, it reads ‘Arabi’.

By expanding on the very language that is used to identify an Arab from a Non-Arab, the work highlights the minor differences that have continuously altered, shaped and perplexed the narrative of self-identification in the region. And in today’s world of constant cultural and social exchange, blending, assimilation and even appropriation, we find ourselves asking: What makes an Arab an Arab? What are the differences or similarities laying beneath the surface of language?

*Arabi/Gharbi*, 2016  
Neon installation  
35.4 x 85.4 in (90 x 217 cm)





*Inhad Aan Al Hibal (Get Away from the Ropes)*, 2013  
Diasac mounted digital print  
28 x 51 x 2.5 in (71 x 129.5 x 6.3 cm)

Ayman Yossri Daydban lives in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. His art is both biographical and a commentary on the environment he grew up in. His humble home is full of found objects, pirated DVDs and very few purchased “necessary” items. His last name ‘Daydban’ means watchman, a mask that observes the viewer and its surroundings while at the same time remaining detached from them. There is an unbridgeable opposition between the watchman and what is being watched: They seem to be in different worlds, while in such close proximity, producing enormous tension. Daydban is considered one of the pioneers and a driving force behind the new Saudi contemporary art movement.

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In an attempt to locate identity, Ayman Yossri Daydban effaces and reconfigures collected cultural ephemera. He perpetually shapes and re-shapes a shifting sense of self. “Daydban” means “watchman,” a curious coincidence for an artist whose practice is located at that unstable point where the observer meets his surroundings. As a Jordanian national, born in Palestine, living his whole life in Saudi Arabia, Daydban can attest from personal experience that identity and belonging are much-contested subjects, difficult to locate amid the unstable, fractured topographies of political realities. Struggling with these narratives, Daydban’s works are deeply personal, intersecting with the social contexts that profoundly influence the processes of identity formation. Each work becomes a tense nexus where a sense of self is relentlessly thrashed out, a point of contact where the unknowable interior landscape

intercedes with the complex fluctuations of exterior worlds.

Fractured by fissures of misunderstanding, *Inhad Aan Al Hibal (Get Away from the Ropes)*, *Kunna Jameean Ekhwa (We Were All Brothers)* and *It Will Not Be An Easy Matter* are all taken from *Subtitles*, a series that emerged from a moment of personal crisis.

At the end of a relationship, disillusioned with the mundane success of his artistic practice, Daydban locked himself away and watched films for months on end alone. A non-English speaker, the experience was mediated through subtitles, and although intended as a tool of direct and literal translation, a surreal dissonance emerged. As his immersion in the films consumed him, he increasingly felt the subtitles become unmoored from the image. A gap emerged, and the fragments became a productive space for the creation of meaning. Removed from its narrative, each still is transformed; what emerges creatively in the gap between still and text cannot be condemned by the censor nor understood by the audience, but it unleashes a host of powerful new meanings. There is an insurmountable detachment between this watchman and what he watches; they can never connect, yet the intent, piercing gaze placed in immediate proximity to that which it watches gives rise to enormous friction. Daydban thrives on this productive tension. Vying to remain in a world of flux and transformation, he refuses to fix his practice or himself. “I don’t want anything I make to be still,” he says. “My objects must not die. Instead I want to keep them permanently in a state between birth and death.”

*This Is Not Going To Be Easy*  
from the series *Subttiles*, 2012  
Vinyl  
43.3 x 24.4 in (110 x 62 cm)





*Kunna Jameean Ekhwa (We Were All Brothers)*  
from the series *Subtitles*, 2010  
Digital print  
19.6 x 35 in (50 x 89 cm)

Abdulnasser Gharem was born in 1973 in the Saudi Arabian city of Khamis Mushait, where he continues to live and work. In 1992, Gharem graduated from King Abdulaziz Academy before attending the Leader Institute in Riyadh. In 2003 he studied at the influential Al-Meftaha arts village in Abha, and, in 2004, Gharem and the Al-Meftaha artists staged a group exhibition, Shattah, which challenged existing modes of art practice in Saudi Arabia. Since then, Gharem has exhibited in Europe, the Gulf and the U.S. including at The Martin-Gropius-Bau and at the Venice, Sharjah, and Berlin Biennales.

Gharem's vocational path embraces the polarities of artist and soldier. Although he has had no formal art training, as a commissioned officer he found time to study on his own—learning about 20th-century art through the internet—and to form a cooperative venture with other artists, which in 2003 became the art collective Edge of Arabia. Co-founded by Gharem, the organization was intended to help support contemporary Saudi artists reach an international audience. Gharem is at the forefront of this movement.

The socio-political dichotomies present in the media, politics and daily life stand at the center of Abdulnasser Gharem's installations, public interventions and sculptural works.

Marked by temporal and thematic tension, Gharem's prolific practice attempts to reconcile impossibly disjointed narratives. He traces the jostling social realities of life in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, showing how contradictory cultural standards have challenged contemporary social realities. He demonstrates that even personal memories can be shaped by official histories and that Saudi society has been constructed through an unusually complex and process of rapid economic development and change.

Gharem's work is informed by his unique interpretation of the social conditions of his home country and his direct interaction with society. His process is very much rooted in communication and exploration. He incorporates art into his day-to-day life, searching for opportunities for interventions in his surroundings.

In his series *Men at Work*, Gharem depicts what appear to be Western soldiers within a kaleidoscope of Islamic motifs and a road sign commonly found in the Middle East region depicting "Men at Work." Created in 2010, following the decade long "war on terror" which had no end in sight, the soldiers and standing guard and seem to be watching the observer. The artist believes that such imposed barriers in fact "appear not just to protect people but to keep knowledge and ideologies separate from one another." Gharem's pieces engage observers, compelling them to the question and challenge accepted ideas and assumptions.



*Men at Work I-IV, 2012*  
 Glazed Silk Screen printed and Diamond Dust  
 30 x 37.4 in (76.2 x 95 cm) each



Mount of Mercy, 2012  
240 Polaroid Prints  
59 x 98.4 in (150 x 250 cm)



Born in the southern city of Khamis Mushait in Saudi Arabia, Ajlan Ghareem received a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics at King Khalid University in 2008 and has applied his analytical background to art making. Based in Riyadh, he divides his time between Ghareem Studio and as a math teacher at Al Sahabah Public School. He is a co-founder of Ghareem Studio along with his brother, the influential artist Abdunnasser Ghareem.

Ajlan has participated in group exhibitions at the Brunei Gallery, London (2016); Asia House, London (2015); Quincy House, Fotofest Biennial, Houston (2014); and the British Museum (2014). In 2011 he was selected by the Crossway Foundation in London to meet with museum curators and artists and collaborate with the British Museum, Tate Modern and Penguin Books.

Ajlan Ghareem explores Saudi identity and the constantly changing relationships between the individual and society. He explores the many ways power dynamics can shift across generations and social classes. He works to disrupt the impact of the status quo and to incite meaningful social change.

His polaroid installation *Mount of Mercy* is part of a larger series of the same name, in which Ghareem has collected images, hidden letters and discarded objects that were left at Mount Arafat, a hill in the east of Mecca, by pilgrims during the annual Hajj. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH is said to have given his last sermon at the top of Mount Arafat, also known as the Mount of Mercy. Participating in praying on the Mount is considered to be the most important part of the Hajj Pilgrimage. While walking atop the mount, hundred of discarded images can be seen on the ground or hidden among rocks, some with messages written along the edges or back with supplications to the Divine, some taken during the Hajj and others clearly taken abroad and purposely left. These ritual remnants are regularly collected by Saudi police and burned, as these actions are not sanctioned. In preserving these discarded objects, Ghareem documents this little talked about ritual by some pilgrims and expands upon depictions of collective faith.

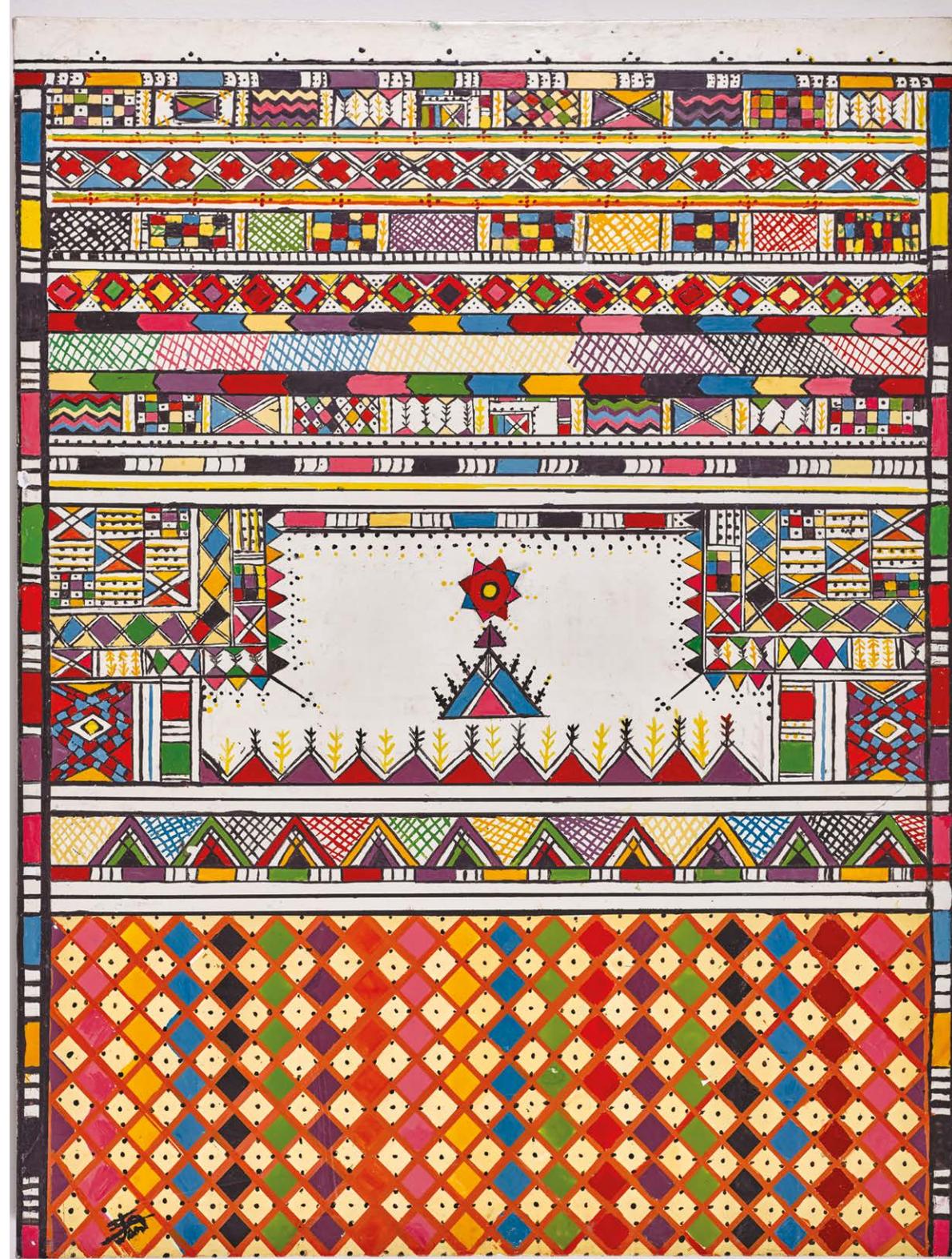


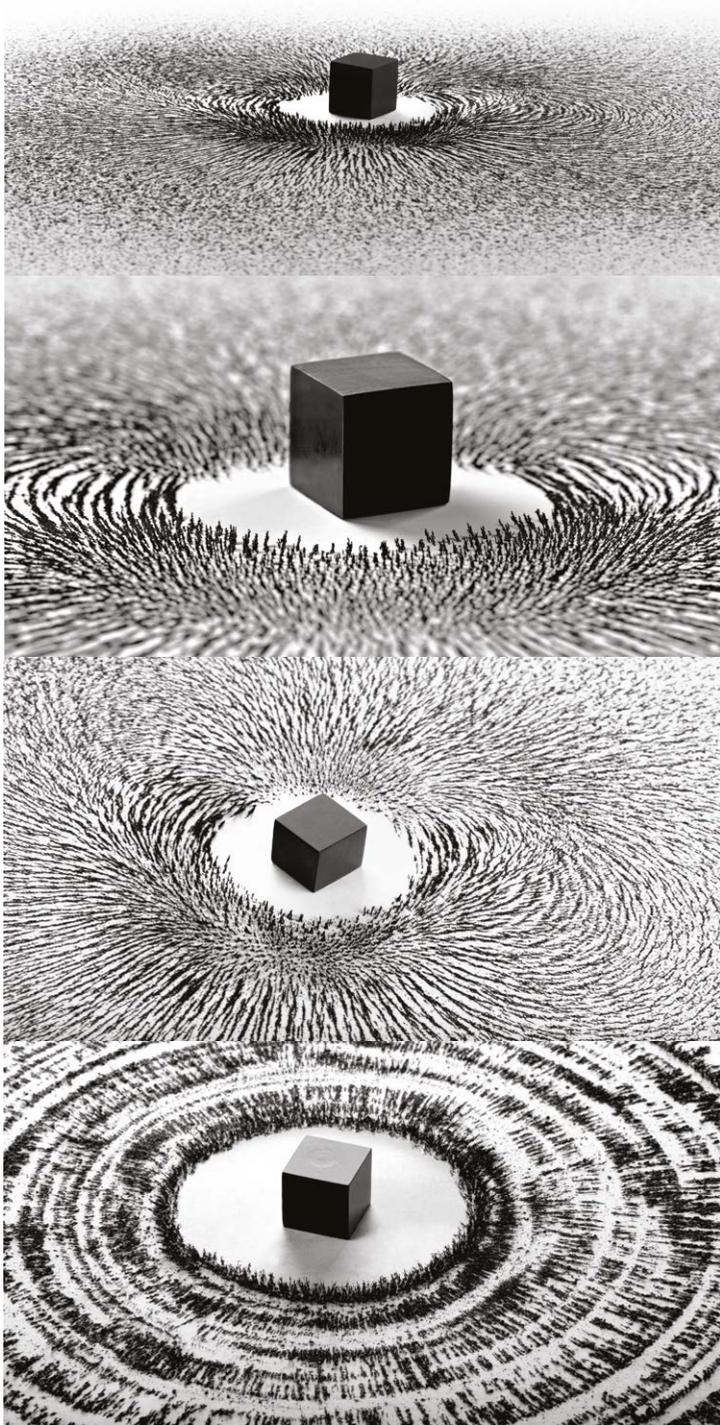
Fatimah Hassan is a traditional Asiri house painter in Abha, the capital of the Asir Region of South-Western Saudi Arabia. Fatimah is the mother of leading Saudi contemporary artist, Ahmed Mater, who credits her with his introduction to color, creativity and composition, as well as an education in local art history not taught in Saudi schools or universities.

—  
In Asir, women traditionally paint the walls of their house which is called Qut painting. Their collectively made Qut wall paintings express a long and intimate relationship between peoples and their natural environment. The murals are complex scenes that narrate the stories of their family, culture, environment, rituals, and agricultural past. They are an important part of the cultural and natural heritage of Asir and irreplaceable sources of Asiris' life and inspiration.

Over past decades, many of the older paintings have been in the danger of being damaged or destroyed. The disappearance of these historical paintings leads to irrecoverable loss of the testimonies of Saudi women's creative brilliance, social development, and their contribution to the writing of the region's history generation after generation. Women's involvement in various spheres of intangible cultural heritage is both central and vital. Such spheres include what may be described as essential realms of culture, and those which are often indispensable in providing jobs and maintaining familial and cohesive social relations. Through their work, Hassan and other female members of her community hope to revive and maintain this the hundreds-year old tradition of Qut painting from Southern Saudi Arabia for generations to come.

*Our Mother's House*, 2014–2015  
Pigment paint on primed Canvas  
48 x 36 in (122 x 92 cm)





Ahmed Mater splits his time between Abha, Jeddah, and Mecca in Saudi Arabia. He founded the Al-Meftaha Arts Village in Abha, and in 2003, he co-founded Edge of Arabia. He has exhibited across the Arab world and internationally. His solo exhibitions include *100 Found Objects*, Sharjah Art Museum (2013); *Ahmed Mater, The Vinyl Factory Gallery, London* (2010); and *Symbolic Cities*, Washington, D.C. (2016). His numerous group shows include *Here & Elsewhere*, New Museum, New York (2014); *A-History*, Pompidou Centre, Paris (2014); *Light from the Middle East*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2013); *Desert of Pharan at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India* (2012). His works are held in many international collections, including The Barjeel Art Foundation, U.A.E.; The British Museum, U.K.; Centre Pompidou, France; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Mathaf Museum, Qatar. He is a co-founder of Pharan Studio.

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*Magnetism I - IV*, 2012  
Photogravure Etchings  
24.4 x 31.8 in (62 x 81 cm) each

—  
*Following spread*  
*Golden Hour*, 2014  
Digital C-Print  
59 x 78.7 in (150 x 200 cm)

Mater uses photography, calligraphy, painting, installation, performance, and video to explore the narratives and aesthetics of Islamic culture in an era of rapid globalization and social change. A doctor and artist, Mater's practice ranges across the rapidly shifting map of contemporary Saudi Arabia, synthesizing and documenting collective memory to transcribe unofficial histories.

The premise for Mater's *Magnetism* is simple and, like its central element, forcefully attractive. He gives a twist to a magnet and sets in motion tens of thousands of particles of iron, a multitude of tiny satellites that form a single swirling nimbus. The images are strikingly reminiscent of the portrayals of the yearly Muslim Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Mater's black cuboid magnet is a small simulacrum of the black-draped Ka'bah, the 'Cube.' His circumambulating whirl of metallic filings mirrors in miniature the concentric tawaf of the pilgrims and their sevenfold circling of the Ka'bah. Reacting to the force of the magnetic poles, the metal filings closest to the magnet rise up as if collectively standing in ritual adoration.

The cube is the primary building block, and the most basic form of a built structure. Furthermore, the Cube, the Ka'bah, is also Bayt Allah, the House of the One God and its location is an ancient site. Nevertheless, Mater's *Magnetism* is more than a simple representation of the Ancient House of God. His contrasting of square and circle, whorl and cube, of black and white, light and dark, places the primal elements of form and tone in dynamic balance.

In *Golden Hour*, Mater reveals the landscape of the holy city as teeming with skyscrapers. Cranes and artificial lights clutter the skyline. Zealously efficient use of land means most of Mecca has been built on. The current expansions are immense, their ambitions signaled by a frenetic mass of cranes and bulldozers visible even in the waning light. Even the Ka'baa is encroached upon, jostled among buildings that vie for space as the Clock Tower with its colossal crescent moon ascends. Through this work and his larger series, *Desert of Pharan*, Mater reveals the speed and breadth of transformation which introduces dependent concerns regarding the city's social mechanics and the ongoing symbiotic relationship between demolition and construction.



Mawadah Muhtasib is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and is currently pursuing a degree in Motion Graphics at the Dar Al Hekma University. In May 2017, she completed the Majlis Studio Residency program in New York, an initiative of King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture. Muhtasib has exhibited her work internationally including in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Salvador de Bahia, Brazil; Dubai, U.A.E. and New York, NY. She is part of the collection of King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture and she collaborated with the Office of the Office of H.H. The Crown Prince of Dubai for the creation of the longest graffiti scroll which achieved the Guinness World records in 2014.

At an early age, Mawadah explored with a variety of mediums including film, illustration, graffiti and painting in order to find her language of expression through art. In 2013, she created her own Calligraffiti typeface, which is a combination of Calligraffiti painting and mirrored Arabic characters that focuses on the beauty of the strokes and lines of the Arabic language and form. The typeface is designed to demonstrate the Arabic calligraphy as a unique distinctive form, not necessarily readable yet visually engaging. In her artistic process, Mawadah aims to push the boundaries of perception and artistic expression, which are not solely achieved through the visual but in addition to other senses.

*Hannhak (Experience)* was conceived and produced by Muhtasib while in New York during her artist residency at Majlis Studio in Spring 2017, an initiative of the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture. The first time working in with laser-cut mirror acrylic, she uses her characteristic reversed Arabic typeface. The skilled strokes and gestural nature of her practice are assiduously captured by the medium. The title and use of reflective mirror refer to the artist's creative and personal growth throughout her time in New York.

Muhtasib's aim is to reach the peak of her capabilities through creative reactions to her surroundings. She believes that pushing the boundaries of perception and artistic expression are not solely achieved through the visual but rather in addition to other senses.



*Hennkah (Experience)*, 2017  
Laser-cut Gold Mirror Acrylic Sheet  
18.5 x 32 in (47 x 81.28 cm)



Performance stills from Bates College  
Museum of Art, Lewiston, ME.

**Nugamshi is a Riyadh based artist. He trained as a graphic designer specializing in branding and type design; he currently works as a graphic designer for a local bank in Riyadh, focusing on its print and web design. Nugamshi has taught workshops on basic training, techniques and history of calligraffiti at YourAOK art organization in Kuwait and has presented performances and staged exhibitions in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan and the U.S. Most recently, he presented his video works in the 2016 Sharjah Calligraphy Biennial.**

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A prominent proponent of the “calligraffiti” movement, Nugamshi makes innovative use of Arabic calligraphy, transforming this traditional art form into an expressive contemporary vehicle. While his work is firmly rooted in the spiritual essence of the Arabic language, he also incorporates Japanese and Chinese calligraphic techniques into his work. Just as calligraphy has been historically used to illuminate the meaning of the words it contains, Nugamshi contemporizes his expressions through materiality, unfolding modern linguistic meanings with unexpected methodologies that forge fresh, modern contexts.

As a performer, Nugamshi sees his role as instigator, provoking dialogue between viewers and the words they see. “With each performance,” he explains, “I bring new emotions, new stories, and a new understanding. My art practice forces me to develop a relationship between myself and the chosen word. Thinking in Arabic, and surrounded by English or Arabic speakers does not affect how I am connected with the wall in front of me. Instead, in every performance, a new facet of my understanding is reflected in the speed and rhythm of my hands. One day I find myself pressing hard into the wall and the other I am lightly gliding my hand across it.” Adapting his words to his own tempo and rhythm, Nugamshi has the ability to control space, unpacking the ramifications of utterances, claiming the words, their meanings and the physical space he makes his own.

Shaweesh is a Riyadh based artist. He has exhibited at the Venice Biennale (2013), Gharem Studio's Ricochet exhibition, Asia House, London (2015) and in other local shows across the Middle East. He was formerly the Art Director and Creative Director of Telfaz11, a media-based collective in Saudi Arabia whose popular shows and videos have garnered over 12 million followers and over 1 billion views on YouTube.

Shaweesh is a mixed media artist who is part of an urgent young generation colonizing public forums—from social media to the streets—to articulate the cultural boundaries between Saudi Arabia and the world. Shaweesh harvests inspiration from communally shaped and collectively owned narratives generated online, incorporating diverse references into his work—from icons of film and television to Pop Art and western brand graphics.

His latest series is situated in an ill-defined hinterland, somewhere between fantasy and reality. Caught between the west and his own social context, Shaweesh borrows from politics and pop culture—two powerful realms that have shaped his consciousness. While visiting street vendors in Riyadh, he bought old newspapers that document key events in the history of the Middle East. By digitally incorporating cartoon heroes into these scenes, Shaweesh creates mock-up artifacts that provide new perspectives on key historical events. He imposes these American super heroes into moments of great political significance that have structured the evolution of western and Saudi

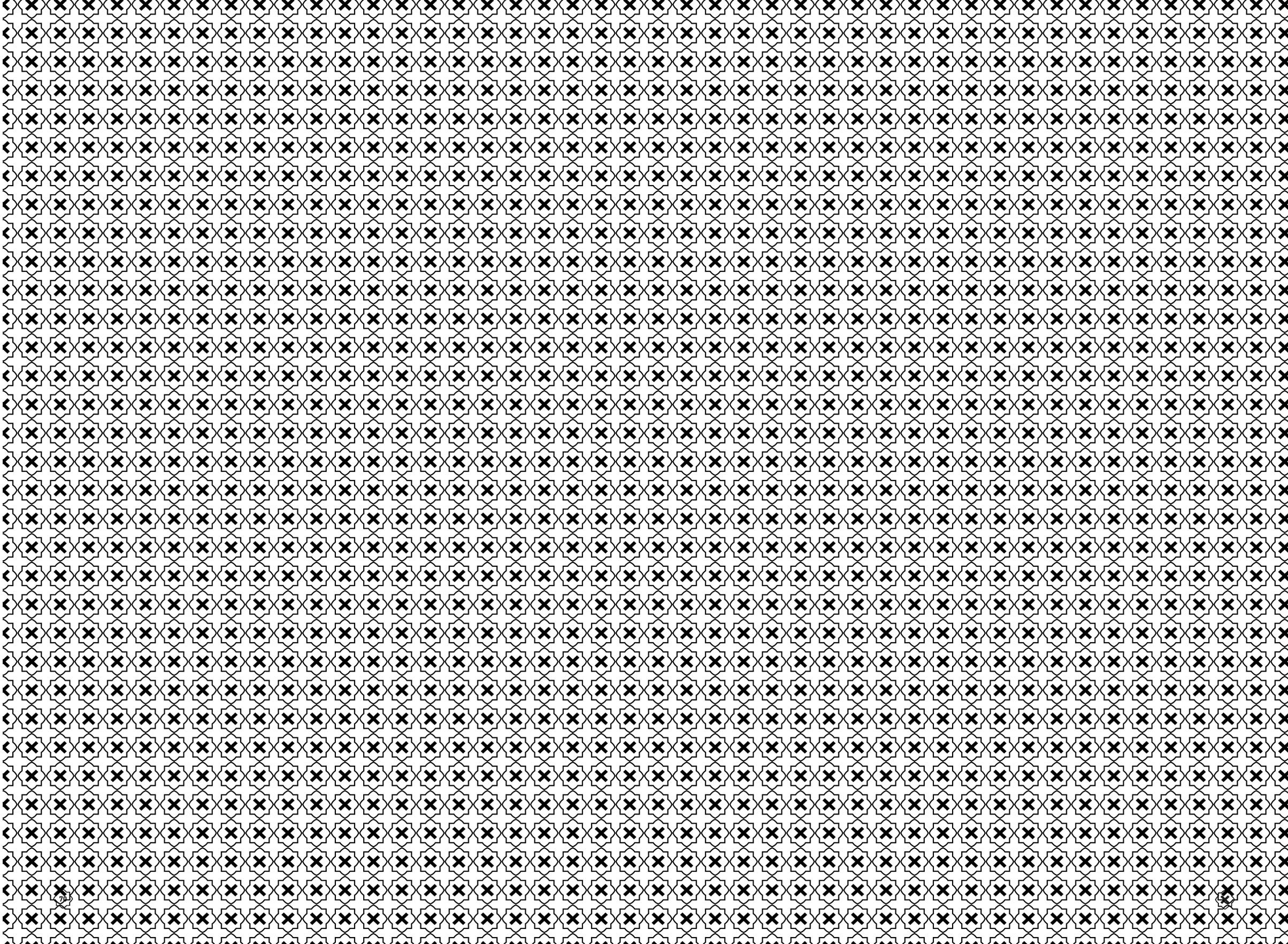
foreign relations. Elided in this way, the imagined events appear authentic, as if we view history from a child's perspective, unable to distinguish between historical news footage and the fantasy world of cartoons and science fiction. Alluding to the destabilizing infiltration of American popular culture into a childhood spent watching television, Shaweesh demonstrates how powerful western narratives can hold sway over people's ability to articulate their own cultural identity and history.

In *Captain America-U.S. Government Urged to Take a Stance on Refugees* (2016), Shaweesh makes use of an old newspaper from February 26, 1949, that documents escalating tensions between Egypt and Israel in the former Palestinian city of Al Falujah. That year, over 4,000 Egyptian troops were besieged by Israeli forces, laying the groundwork for the 1949 Armistice Agreement that allowed a peaceful transfer of territories outside Gaza to Israeli control, ultimately forcing Palestinian residents to flee. This photo shows a U.N. truck transporting over 3,500 refugees from Al Falujah to Gaza. It is an iconic image that represents a divisive event of migration and resettlement and captures the U.N.'s short-lived hopes for peace. Shaweesh is particularly drawn to the exchange of symbols across cultures, here incorporating Captain America as a symbol of safety, a childhood dream with meaning in both Eastern and Western imaginations. Portraying innocent children during a time of crisis, he underscores their naive faith in these U.N. envoys as guardians of security, suggesting that their fantasies are like those of Western children looking to an imaginary superhero.



Captain America-U.S. Government Urged to take a stance on refugees, 2013  
Silkscreen on Digital Print  
58 x 43 in (147.62 x 109.22 cm)







Commissioned by Edge of Arabia in partnership with Art Jameel on the occasion of the launch of Our Mother's House at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, November 2015.

*Memory Code 1, 2014–2015*  
Pigment paint on primed Canvas  
78.7 x 511.8 in (200 x 1300 cm)

[MURAL ARTISTS]

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Salehah Yahya Alalmai  
صالحة يحيى العلمي  
Salehah Abdulzeaz Alraqde  
صالحة عبدالعزيز الرقدي  
Jamelah Ali Alsoghayer  
جميلة عاي الصغير  
Arwa Mohammed Alzehr  
أروى محمد الزهر  
Halimah Moshabab Assiry  
حليمة مشيب العسيري  
Fawzeiyah Mohammed Barzyq  
فوزية محمد بارزيق  
Sharifah Mohammed Mahdi  
شريفية محمد مهدي  
Nawahar Abdulrahman Moghawi  
نواره عبد الرحمن معاوي  
Ohud Ebraheam Moghawi  
عهد إبراهيم معاوي  
Fatemah Faya Yaqub  
فاطمة فايح يعقوب  
Zohrah Faya Yaqub  
زهرة فايح يعقوب



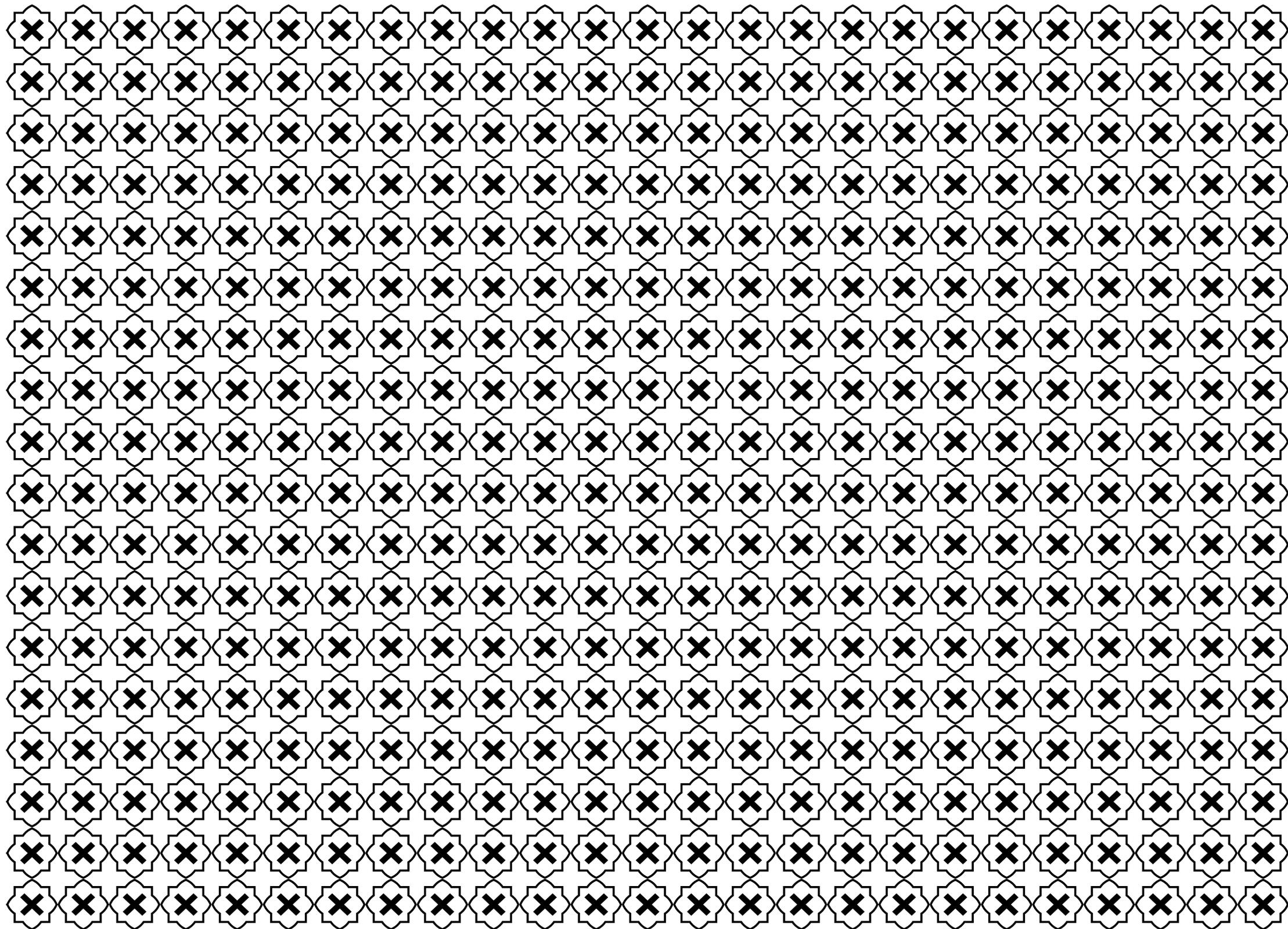


**[MURAL ARTISTS]**

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 Safia Ahmed  
 صفية أحمد  
 Amira Al-Almai  
 أميرة العلمي  
 Nala Ali  
 نالا عاي  
 Salha Mohammed Al-Qahtani  
 صالحه محمد القحطاني  
 Zaina Al-Shahrani  
 زينة الشهراني  
 Sharifa Ayed  
 شريفة عايض  
 Fatimah Hassan  
 فاطمة حسان  
 Jameelah Mater  
 جميلة ماطر  
 Jewaher Mater  
 جواهر ماطر  
 Reem Mater  
 ريم ماطر  
 Fatima Yahya  
 فاطمة يحيى

*Memory Code 2, 2014–2015*  
 Pigment paint on primed Canvas  
 78.7 x 393.7 in (200 x 1000 cm)

Commissioned by Edge of Arabia in partnership with Art Jameel on the occasion of the launch of Our Mother's House at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, November 2015.



Masameer is produced by Myrkott, a Saudi animation studio that has provided local content online and via public programming since 2011. The series is led by Abdulaziz Al-Muzaini, Executive Director, and Co-founder; Malik Nejer, Artistic Director and Co-founder; and Faisal Al-Amer, Head Writer and Co-founder. It has attracted over 300 million views and 1 million subscribers.

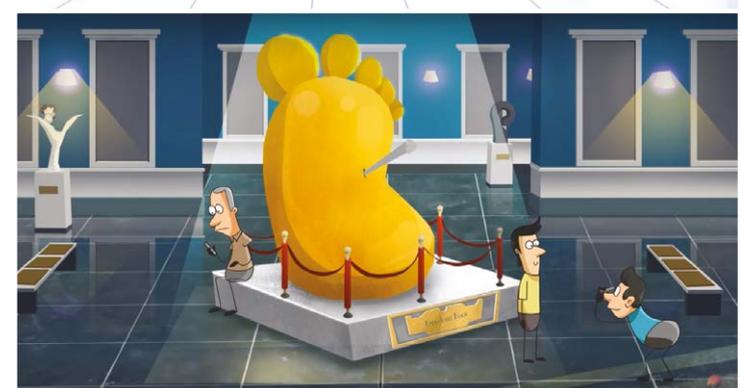
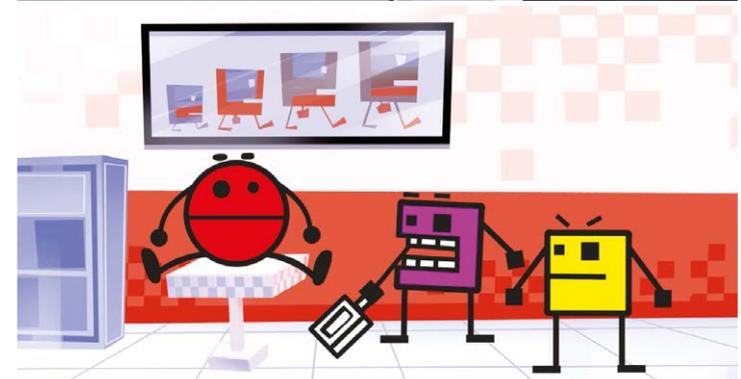
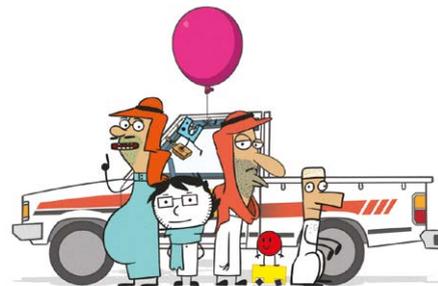
Masameer is a popular animated YouTube series that satirizes the country's social and political atmosphere. The series features characters who consciously question received behaviors and customs through apparently innocuous daily interactions. Presented within this childish context, the cartoons are incisive documentations of the status quo pursued *reductio ad absurdum*. Masameer uses both the conversational Saudi dialect and Fus'ha (classical Arabic), reconnecting younger audiences to their ancestry while also exploring how language and tradition can create and sustain intractable cultural archetypes.

The episodes selected interrogate how negative, stereotypes of Arabs are internalized and propagated. *Dear Art! Who's Looking at You?* is narrated by a regular Masameer character who feels separated from his local Saudi community. Frustrated by the lack of personal creativity and passion found in the comedy, art and design networks open to him, he maps terrain shaped by unconnected patterns adopted inconsistently from other cultures. Unbearable monotony is found in gray, walled construction sites and row upon row of identical houses. The only breaks from this claustrophobic world are the roofs and ceilings pilfered from other cultures; his surroundings become a fragmentary, unlivable amalgam of appropriated, foreign images. Pixel City comments on the arbitrary imposition

of state control and its attempts to expunge articulation of cultural difference. In a world of pixels, society is governed by a species of squares who cannot fathom the circle. Ultimately denying incontrovertible facts, willful ignorance is preferred over any contradiction to order—no matter how logical. Oblation emphasizes the media propagated narratives that shape U.S.–Arab relationships.

Set in an Arab world of a dystopian near-future, the perpetual cycle of cultural disconnection, Western misunderstanding, and conflicting self-articulation by opposing regional factions has led to the ultimate solution: "cheaper than a bullet, advisory opinion or speech," Arab unity will be found through the complete extermination of the Arab people. Also on view will be a series of Ramadan themes videos. During the yearly Holy month of Ramadan, many media collectives release their newest and best material.

The series gives a voice to digital graphic designers and the local community alike, granting an authorial platform for original Arabic content, underscoring the potential for self-documentation in the competitive, noisy digital realm. An industry originally catering for children, Arab animation has flourished as a form of social commentary, while it has also developed into a cross-generational genre that exploits the potential of self-articulation via social media. Faced with competition from digital platforms, traditional broadcasters are investing in alternative production methods, inspiring diversified content and attracting a rapidly growing market in a country without any public cinemas. As a growing animation community incorporates foreign design techniques into local programming, a revolution of traditional media networks has taken place that has spawned important cross-generational conversations.





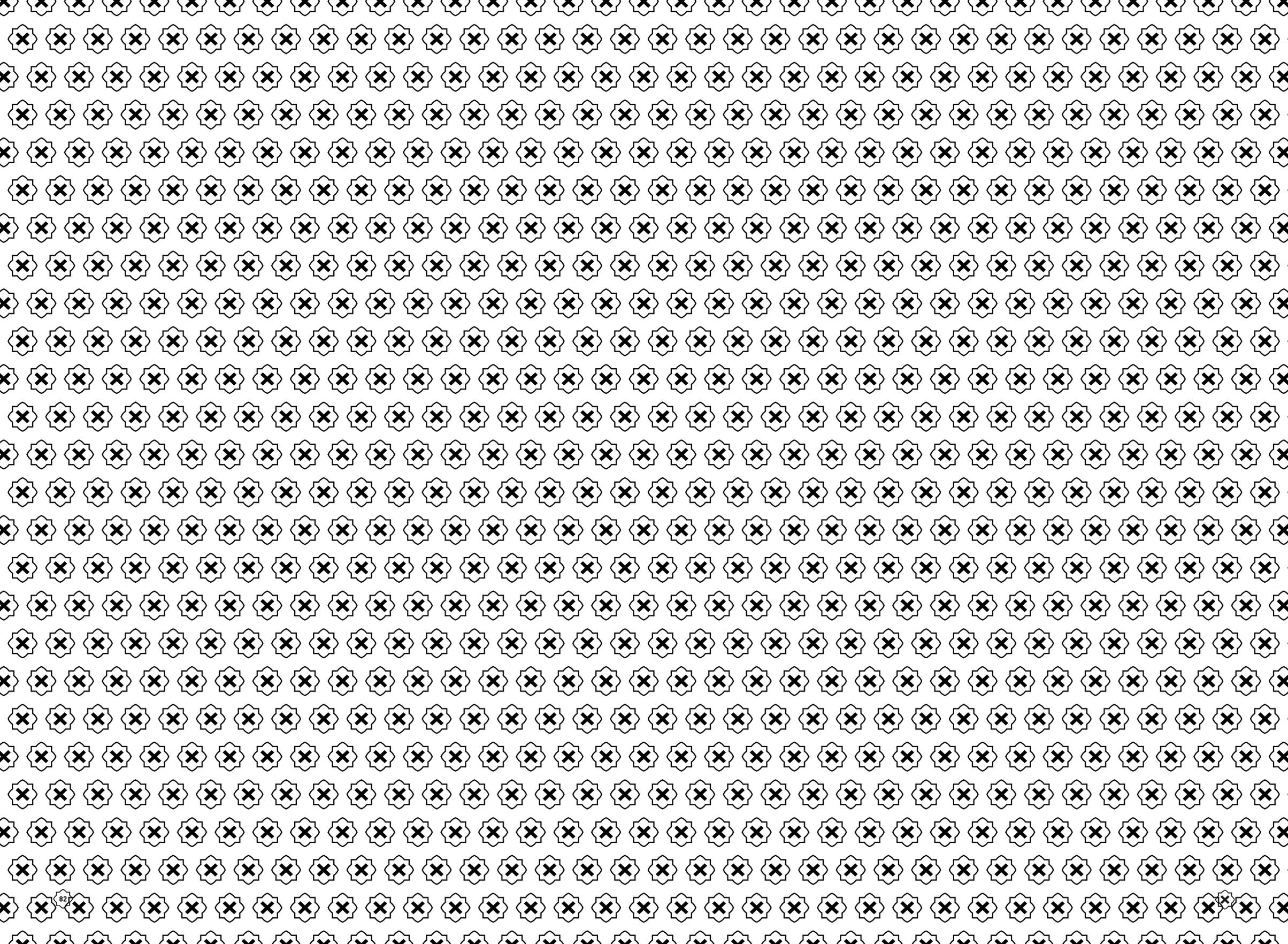
**Telfaz11 is an online entertainment content distribution platform that has attracted and fostered significant Arab “internet talent.” Founded by Alaa Yoosef and Ali Kalthami in 2011, Telfaz11 derives its name from the Arabic word for television and commemorates 2011, the year of the Arab Spring, marking it as a significant watershed for artists and filmmakers and an opportune moment to establish a local production platform.**

– Launched on 11.11.11, Telfaz11 immediately asserted itself as a new platform for cultural expression. Telfaz11’s producers opened up an alternative to local television programming, positioning themselves in opposition to the narrow perspective offered by the media of the time, which they perceived as lacking adequate discussion of art and entertainment. Since its foundation, Telfaz11 has attracted a group of over 40 actors, editors, and producers, and has become a creative, production and talent management organization which collaborates across the globe from bases in Jeddah, Riyadh, and the U.S.

The collective portrays contemporary social, cultural, and political issues of the region through satirical YouTube videos. Telfaz11 also collaborates with independent artists, providing opportunities for existing and emerging talent. The platform exists to facilitate self-publishing and to promote original design and individual expression. According to Ali Kalthami, Creative Director of Telfaz11, “Telfaz11 content is not confrontational in nature. It takes an indirect approach that invites the viewers to rethink and question important and often sensitive subjects

through comedy and drama. I think this type of content is positive because it encourages the viewer to critique and question rather than passively receive. There are some censorship agencies in the Ministry of Culture and Media who we communicate with—we have found that they respect our work and contributions and they have never asked us to remove any of our content. In fact, we discuss and collaborate with them on how to promote the film industry in Saudi Arabia and motivate youth. Today, I see that there is an environment in Saudi Arabia for discussing and rethinking many traditions that are no longer relevant in our world, while still maintaining our identity and avoiding disconnect from our heritage by blindly appropriating other cultural identities.”

Inspiring viewers to contemplate local identities without copying other entertainment and design formats, Telfaz11 is motivating a new generation to experiment in new ways with its traditional Arab heritage. By attracting a global presence, Telfaz11 not only reinforces a shared sense of cultural identity within the Arab world, it also exposes the West to Arab perspectives on issues of such as sexism, terrorism, and social change. And it does so via the cross-cultural languages of humor, fashion, and music. Produced by Saudis studying abroad, as well as by Saudis who have been educated in Saudi, Telfaz11 presents shows that address both Arab and American stereotypes that pervade the mass media in both countries. With this dual approach, Telfaz11 bridges social and generational gaps within the cultures of the Arabian Gulf. Telfaz11 has produced seven popular series, with shows such as Temsa7LY, Khambalah and La Yekthar that have garnered over a billion views and 9 million subscribers.



**Arab American  
National Museum**

Devon Akmon  
Elizabeth Barrett Sullivan  
Ava Ansari  
David Leins  
Ayah Krisht  
Kim Silarski  
Dave Serio

—  
**King Abdulaziz Center  
For World Culture**

Tareq AlGhamdi  
Abdullah Al Eyaf  
Noor Al Daham  
Abdullah Al Abdullah

—  
**CULTURUNNERS**

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Matteo Lonardi  
Aga Antosz  
Mohamed Ali Ghomriani

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**Designer**

Yusef Alahmad

—  
**We would also  
like to thank**

Ghareem Studio  
Pharan Studio  
A-Political Collection  
Athr Gallery  
Robert-David Jones  
Spectrum Neon  
Chris Turner

