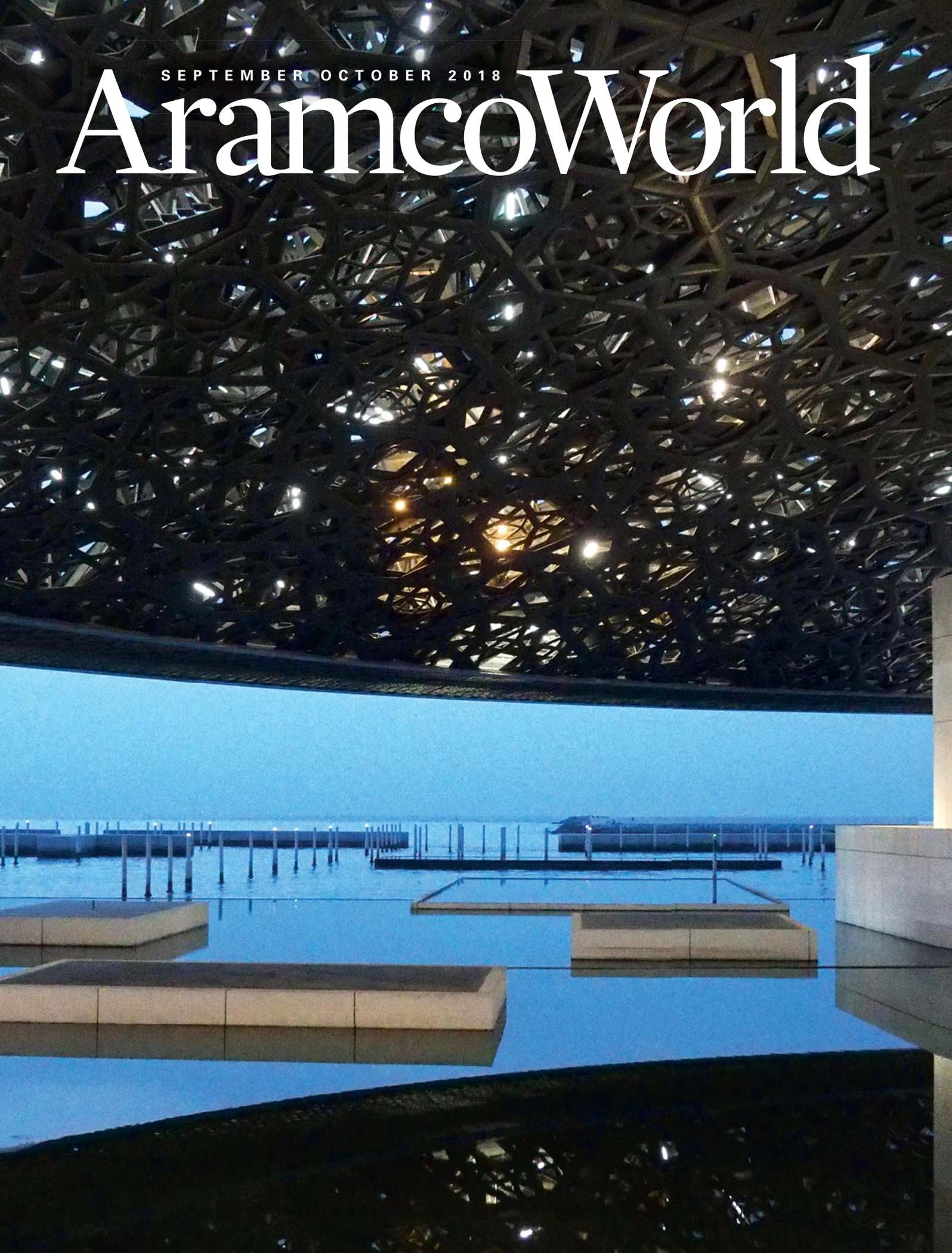


SEPTEMBER OCTOBER 2018

AramcoWorld





6 A Museum of the World

Written by Ana M. Carreño Leyva
Photographed by Richard Doughty

Ten years in the making and the first universal museum in the Arab world, the newly opened Louvre Abu Dhabi sets out a dozen themed galleries to tell cross-civilizational stories about the relationships of cultures—in every land, from the earliest settlements to today—that informed and inspired each other along their myriad respective quests of expression and beauty.

16 The Producer

Written by Lina Mounzer
Photographed by Michael Nelson

Over nearly three decades, her festivals, concerts, albums and songs have connected styles, artists and audiences across cultures from Lebanon to Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan to the heart of Hollywood, where in 2017 Dawn Elder became the first woman to be named producer of the year.

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We distribute *AramcoWorld* in print and online to increase cross-cultural understanding by broadening knowledge of the histories, cultures and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their global connections.

Front Cover: Glassy as evening falls, the waters around the Louvre Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates mirror both sky and the geometry of the museum's vast, shading dome, whose fractal patterns were inspired by the tradition of Arab screens called *mashrabiya*. Photo by Richard Doughty.

Back Cover: On the wall of a small restaurant near the sites in Thebes that “proto-archeologist” Giovanni Battista Belzoni excavated between 1816 and 1818, a local artist has paid the Italian explorer an informal tribute. Photo by Tom Verde.



22 More Than a Team

Written and photographed by Brian Clark

Founded 102 years ago in Santiago, Chile, and since 1952 a national premier-league team, Club Deportivo Palestino has played such a unifying role among the South American country's Palestinian immigrants and their descendants that "More than a team" is its motto.

28 Egyptology's Pioneering Giant

Written by Tom Verde

"Scoperta da [Discovered by] G. Belzoni. 2. Mar. 1818," he wrote in his native Italian after his crew opened passage into the Pyramid of Khafre in Giza—ignoring an anonymous explorer's graffito in Arabic dated 600 years earlier. Circus strongman, amateur engineer, locator and excavator of tombs and temples, mover of massive masterpieces—to England—Giovanni Battista Belzoni left a legacy in Egyptology that was, in every conceivable way, large.

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FIRSTLOOK

Removing Water Lilies from Dal Lake

Photograph by
Paula Bronstein

No matter what my assignment is, as a photojournalist, I usually keep a camera ready all day. You never know when there will be a chance to make an interesting image that can tell a different story.

I made this photo during a news assignment in Srinagar, capital of the part of Jammu and Kashmir controlled by India. I went to one of the most popular places for locals and tourists alike—Dal Lake. There, I hired a *shikara*, or small traditional boat, for a few hours. Although it's an urban lake full of houseboats, commuters and pleasure-craft closer to its city side, in its farther reaches Dal Lake becomes more tranquil, and the peaks of the Zabarwan Range make a magnificent backdrop. Water lilies have long grown in the lake, and in recent years they have proliferated to cover more than five square kilometers, or about a quarter of the lake, proving a nuisance to boat traffic and a threat to ecological balance. To assist with their removal, *shikarawalas*, or small-boat owners, are often commissioned to help remove the plants and keep the waterways clear.

— Paula Bronstein
www.paulaphoto.com

@pbbphoto @paulaphoto







FLAVORS

Turmeric Shrimp with Curry Leaves

Recipe by
Mei Chau

Photograph
courtesy Ricky
Rodriguez / Ricarius
Photography

This dish reflects the multicultural environment of my upbringing; it combines local ingredients and my Chinese heritage wok cooking.

I learned most of my basic culinary skills in my mother's kitchen. She taught me everything—from raising livestock and preparing animals for slaughter, through the chopping block and ending at the dinner table. This dish was invented a year after I moved to New York, with the help of my large Asian pantry, especially curry leaves, whose smell reminds me of my innocent and unbound childhood. If you can't find curry leaves, substitute chopped fresh dill. You can also use dried chilies instead of fresh: just soak in warm water for 10 minutes before slicing. Serve with rice.

(Serves 4)

- 1 lb (450 g) jumbo shrimp with shells
- 9 fresh or dried curry leaves, cut into strips
- 2 red chili peppers, cut into strips
- ¼ t turmeric
- ⅓ t ground black pepper
- 2T vegetable oil
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 T chopped shallots
- ½ t brown sugar
- ½ t salt, to taste

Butterfly the shrimp shells: Using a sharp knife, cut along the curve of the backs, from the head to the tail, cutting about halfway through the shrimp. Remove the veins.

Combine the curry leaves, chilies, turmeric and pepper and use this to coat the shrimp.

Heat the vegetable oil in a wok or sauté pan over high heat. Cook the garlic and shallots until browned, about 30 seconds.

Lower the heat to medium, add the shrimp and cook until they turn pink and curl up, about 2 minutes. Turn off the heat, season with the sugar and salt and serve immediately.

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**The Immigrant
Cookbook**

Leyla Moushabeck, ed.
2018, Interlink Books,
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Mei Chau was born into a large Chinese family in Malaysia, which is known for its colorful, mixed culture, dating back to the time when the first West-East trade began. She is the 10th child in her family and grew up in a small fishing village famous for its stretch of sandy beaches and for being the home of the giant turtle. She opened her first restaurant, Franklin Station Café, a French/Malaysian bistro in New York's Tribeca neighborhood, in 1993. Her second restaurant, Aux Epices, was opened in 2013 in Chinatown.

LEFT: COURTESY FELIPE CORONADO



A Museum of **THE WORLD**



WRITTEN BY **ANA M. CARREÑO LEYVA**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY **RICHARD DOUGHTY**

**It is a museum for the world,
which connects us all together.**

—H. E. MOHAMED KHALIFA AL MUBARAK
Chairman, Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism

All people in their diversity are one.

—AL-ZUBAYDI, 10TH CENTURY, CÓRDOBA

At the edge of the park on the land side of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, visitors savor a moment where water and sky meet the rectilinear galleries and tessellated dome—each a contemporary interpretation of a regional design tradition. In the museum’s Grand Vestibule, *right*, an inlaid portolan map and compass rose announce a global scope while polygonal glass cases with sets of functionally similar objects—such as the decorative water vessels in the background—introduce the museum’s theme of connections among cultures and civilizations.



Poised between Gulf waters and Arabian Peninsula sands, the Louvre Abu Dhabi tells us a story of humankind. It hosts a comprehensive synthesis of arts and cultures, which not only imitate each other across eras and continents, but also prove inextricably interwoven.

Only 50 years ago, Saadiyat Island’s 27 square kilometers were something of an empty quarter where sea and sand met only the blue of sky. The few inhabitants mainly earned their livings fishing and pearl-diving, and they had to cross to the mainland to find drinking water. Departing from this image, not that far away in time, we find today a far different one: an urbanism so new it can appear as if it is being swept to the surface from the desert like colossal archeological discoveries.

Opened in November, the Louvre Abu Dhabi is the most recent product of the emirate’s ambitious cultural movement, powered by the plan of its Department of Culture and Tourism for a district on

Saadiyat that emphasizes education and culture alongside tourism infrastructures. New York University opened a branch in 2010, the Zayed National Museum is under construction, and plans call for a Guggenheim museum and an opera house.

All this is happening, says Louvre Abu Dhabi Director Manuel Rabaté, because “this is a place which has always been connected. It’s a hub. The first object from the UAE we

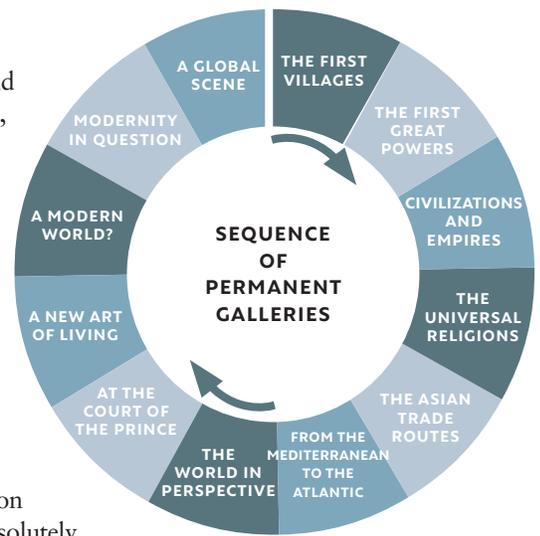
Setting its tone with works by a contemporary artist that evoke waves, music and calligraphy, the museum’s forecourt, *right*, displays untitled canvases from us painter Cy Twombly’s 2008 series *Notes from Salalah*, a port on the south coast of Oman.



Showing a plaster sculptor's skill in imparting expression, a statue from Jordan dated to 6500 BCE, *below*, introduces the quest for beauty as one of the museum's cross-civilizational themes. Lower: The humility of Gudea, prince of Lagash, now in Iraq, circa 2120 BCE, and the grandeur of Ramses II, pharaoh of Egypt from 1279 to 1213 BCE, offer contrasting approaches to the impulse to monumentalize rulers.



have is a vase found on Marwah Island, and it came from Mesopotamia 5,000 years ago. We have material evidence of the connection between this country and very important civilizations, religions, cultures and continents. The objects on display here are absolutely powerful and explicit. It was a hub; it was involved in the exchange.” Today, he continues, geography helps the region play a similar role. “You don’t have only one center of the world, you have hubs.”



This outward-looking, seafaring history dominates both the museum’s site on the water and its architectural ensemble. Designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, it creates a choral harmony among sea, light, modernism and the geometries of traditional Arab urbanism. Water is everywhere; it appears all along the horizon, increasing the sensation of being on an island within an island. Even in the interior, viewed through windows that portray scenes as if they were live paintings, flowing water enlivens the museum complex in a contemporary interpretation of the Arab *falaj*, which both irrigates and cools.

Conceived as a traditional *madinah* in which technologies of the present take inspiration from the past, the galleries, plazas and even museum offices become domains of encounters and human proximity. The resulting atmosphere is far from the ceremonious kind of European classical museums. The visit experience is in itself not only an intellectual one, but also one that plays to the senses and emotions. It does this most powerfully when the basic right angles of the cuboid pavilions meet the prodigious luminosity of the most appealing element of the ensemble: Nouvel’s dome.

Itself an homage to the greatest feature of Islamic architecture, the dome vaults the complex with a recurring weave and entwined geometries of 8,000 square and octagonal openwork medallions, overlapped in eight individual layers, each slightly different in orientation of its pattern and the widths of its ribs and open spaces. As the light of the sun filters through them, it changes continually, sprinkling variegated spots of luminescence on the planar walls and floors—a dance of daystars or, as the architect calls it, “a rain of light.”

The tessellated openwork medallions were inspired by *mashrabiya*, the decorative sunscreens of traditional Islamic architecture that Nouvel has adapted also for other buildings, most notably the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris. For him, as with traditional architects, this was partly necessity, for the design has faced an architectonic challenge from heat, humidity and salt air. Encompassing 180 meters, the dome creates a microclimate, aided by the arrangement of the pavilions, which helps channel sea breezes. The result feels like part oasis, part

village and part museum, all from an architect who, in a 2016 interview, said he “always thought that museums should be part of the towns.” It is space in which to linger. No two moments are exactly the same.

“I am fascinated by the relationship of time and light,” he continued, as well as “the kinetic dimension at certain moments.” In the modern interpretation of mashrabiya, he said, “I tried to create kind of poetry of the reaction of the geometry in relation to the light.”

This effect, however, is one we experience climactically, at the end of a visit. The museum entrance is a pair of plain white doors, found after crossing a small park.

Once we enter, white rooms of varying dimensions and angles, of kind of a cubist nature, invite our exploration. It is not unlike entering a traditional city, where irregularity and the sensation of being in a maze draws us around one corner and then another, curious what discovery might catch us by surprise.

The 12 permanent galleries lie ahead, sequenced like volumes and chapters, a living *vademecum* of universal history, written by people from

Fantastical and fearsome, artisans gave form to mythical winged creatures, from the Mediterranean, where this limestone sphinx was carved in Greece or Italy in the sixth century BCE, to northern China, where this bronze dragon was produced a century or more later. *Right:* More than 8,000 interlaced, open medallions, in eight layers, create the dome’s ever-shifting dance of daystars, under which, at right, “The Walking Man, On a Column” by Auguste Rodin amplifies the sense of space celestial.



**Identity is a permanent
dynamic constructed through
relations with others.**

—JEAN-FRANÇOIS CHARNIER



Visitors to gallery four, “The Universal Religions,” encounter works including a Virgin and Child carved from stone and painted in Normandy, France, in about 1500 CE; a folio from a Qur’an illuminated with color and gold during the Mamluk dynasty between 1250 and 1300 CE, probably in Damascus; and a stone figure of Guanyin, Bodhisattva of Compassion, sculpted in China between 600 and 700 CE.

Museums deal with ideas, images, artefacts, concepts, things of the mind, things of the heart. What we need now is greater understanding for one another and a wider field for our humanity to play in. A museum like Louvre Abu Dhabi could be pivotal in reminding people that humanity is, finally, one. Beauty serves nothing if it does not serve humanity.”

—BEN OKRI,

Author and 1991 winner of the Man Booker Prize, *The Art Newspaper*, September 6, 2017.

all over the earth and time. The titles of these chapters already emphasize the interconnection of narratives. The themes they host, and the ways the great art pieces are displayed, intentionally draw cultures together. “Every aspect of the Louvre Abu Dhabi reflects this philosophy of universalism, from the arrangement of the galleries to the works they show,” explains Rabaté. (Indeed, each gallery is not only shaped uniquely, but even has been given its own type of floor color and material, all the better to provide it with personality.)

The first artworks await in the small lobby in front of the entrance to the first gallery, and they too set a scene and a tone. A series of nine vertical canvases of “pseudo-writing,” or “emotional calligraphy,” by American painter Cy Twombly hang on a long wall, their uniformly azure backgrounds with white brushstrokes calling to mind not only a brisk sea brushed by wind, but also a connection

between a contemporary Western artist and one of the highest traditional arts of Islam—calligraphy. (The series is part of a larger body of work called *Notes from Salalah*—a city on the coast of Oman that captured Twombly’s imagination.)

From there our steps take us to “The Grand Vestibule,” which, through nine compact sets of objects, introduces the diversity of connections among cultures and civilizations, and their common influences, despite belonging to different ages and geographies: snapshots, as it were, of the universal found in the faces of the individual. In the museum’s catalog, Agence France-Muséums Chief Heritage Curator and Scientific Director Jean-François Charnier writes that “by highlighting what they have in common, the museum also reveals what cultures owe to one another. In the continuous flux of history, identity is a permanent dynamic constructed through relations with others.”

“When we put the concepts of history and art together,” says Rabaté, “this is the way we tell the story. It’s a history which starts with the beginning of beauty, when people stopped [merely] surviving to create it. And these objects that we have in the first galleries are about that birth of ‘a little bit more.’ It is a strong anthropological fact that beauty is a little ‘plus’ that makes us human, and we all share that. Then [the galleries] go through time, and in each period of time we explain what we have in common, what has a connection, what changes in pattern, in objects, in style, limitation, influence and sometimes position, but throughout, we have this common history of beauty.”

And this is exactly what we find in the vestibule, which

In the gallery “Civilizations and Empires,” a schist head of Buddha, produced between 100 and 300 CE in Gandhara, now in Pakistan, shows the influences in Asia of Greek esthetics that resonated for centuries after Alexander. Alongside it, a Roman marble bust of Greek philosopher Socrates, from the first century CE, highlights both a common esthetic as well as the universal impacts of great thinkers.

serves as a kind of prelude or introduction. Our eyes are first drawn toward our feet, which step on a polished marble floor, on which stretches, from end to end of the room, a portolan map of the coast of the UAE. Inscribed in antique script using inlaid stone, the coastline is crowded with names not only of major Emirati cities but also names of cities and sites where the artifacts on show here come from—many written in the scripts of their cultures of origin. In the center of the floor, a compass windrose, also



NAPOLEON

Facing the center of the gallery titled “In the Court of the Prince” hangs one of the five almost identical Romantic equestrian portraits by French artist Jacques-Louis David of French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Painted in 1803, it dominates the space due both to the oversize dimensions of the canvas as well as the vigorous representation of the emperor on his spirited, rearing stallion, which seems entirely ready for conquest of the Alps that rise formidably in the stormy background.

The figure of Napoleon is a significant one in the context of the Louvre Abu Dhabi—a French-guided museum in the Middle East. In 1798 his invasion of Egypt brought with it also the French Commission for the Arts and Sciences of Egypt, some 160 scientists and scholars who were charged with an exhaustive cataloguing of the riches of Egyptian culture, both ancient and new, as well as Egypt’s geography, language and natural history. In 1802, aided by 2,000 collaborators including artists, engravers and printers, Napoleon ordered the publication of an encyclopedia containing the vast amount of the resulting studies, with illustrations, maps, essays and a detailed index. The *Description de l’Égypte* became a foundation of systematic museology, and it was called “the richest museum on earth.”

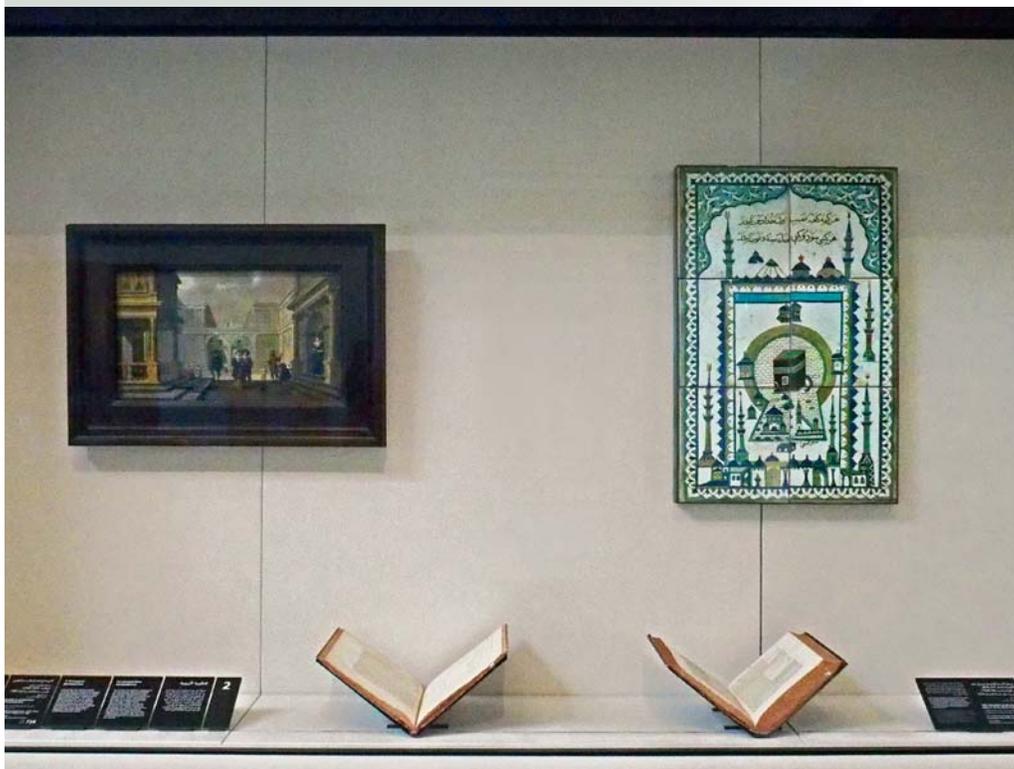
made out of inlaid marble of many colors, both draws in and points outward, symbol of discovery and relationship, open to all geographies. With the scripts, says Rabaté, this “aims to represent that central hub, as the region was the birthplace of civilization, and also for the new re-emerging networks, the new links of East with West today.”

From the points on the windrose, rhomb lines trace across the floor and up the walls to the ceiling, amplifying the concept of civilizations connected without end. The nine display cases,



FROM ARAB GEOMETRY TO EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Under this heading, two pieces, displayed side by side and both produced in the 17th century, illustrate two ways of representing space and, with it, knowledge. One is an Ottoman ceramic tile showing the Great Mosque of Makkah; the other is a colored engraving titled "The Royal Tennis Players," by Flemish artist Dirck van Delen. On the Ottoman tile, the Great Mosque is placed in the middle of the open courtyard, in a central layout that obeys the graphic conventions of its time and place, surrounded by other notable holy places, including minarets, gates and fountains that, combined in both plan and elevation, revolve around the cube-shaped Ka'ba and also describes the site's hilly topography. In van Delen's painting, one-point perspective renders the effect of depth in an urban scene while limiting the inclusion of objects that may lie outside the line of sight as prescribed by the mathematics of perspective. The European development of perspective built much upon optics research carried out centuries earlier by scholars writing in Arabic.



arranged irregularly and shaped as irregular polygons, gather themed juxtapositions of small pieces that lead us to reflect and formulate questions about difference, similarity and the meanings of "universal." Below a display of gold masks from the Levant, South America and China, all separated by centuries, the legend reads (in English, Arabic and French), "Why did so many civilisations cover the faces of their dead in gold? Does gold, as an incorruptible substance, confer eternal life, liberating our existence from the finite realm?" Other cases raise similar questions about sets of mother-with-child figures; ornamental water vessels; ceramics with symmetrical "solar" patterns; figures in

prayer; and, from the earliest times, exquisitely knapped axes and arrowheads. The tacit promise of responses to these questions takes us by the hand into the main galleries.

The galleries are organized chronologically, and the marks of the Louvre's encyclopedic curation are present in the systematic approach to both the 600 artifacts and their narratives, which are often supplemented by touchscreen displays. The works are interrelated sometimes through esthetic contrasts achieved through placement—a Chinese dragon sculpture alongside a Mediterranean sphinx; the youthful energy of a cast-bronze ballerina by Edgar Degas against the aging repose in a painting of artist James Whistler's mother—and sometimes as variations on a theme, such as a Christian Madonna and Child from 14th-century France, the Egyptian goddess Isis with son Horus from 800–400 BCE and a wooden maternity figure from 19th-century Congo.

Ceramics, metalworks, stone; daily life artifacts, religious objects, commemorative works; paintings, tapestries and installations all take us from the earliest figurations through the global influences of Greece, China, the cultures of Islam, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution and global modernisms, up to the present moment: Who influenced whom, and who responded similarly yet out of coincidence? It all tells us how life was in different cultures, from the spheres of power to the hearths of homes, and how ideas of beauty were expressed, transmitted, absorbed, reinterpreted and expressed again.

"The connection between the building and the contents through the museography narrative is a full experience," says Rabaté. "But above all, it is both knowledge and that which is the most important thing in our world: values, [such] as tolerance and respect.... You need to know yourself to be able to understand who you are, and knowing yourself doesn't mean you don't respect the other." This, he adds, is why the gallery sequence ends with "the room in which we have the work by Ai Weiwei, 'Fountain of Light,' [see sidebar, p. 14] and all those questions and identities and artists from all over the world. We started with questions, and we finish with questions." Along the way, he says, "we hope



“From the arrangement of the galleries to the works they show,” explains Louvre Abu Dhabi Director Manuel Rabaté, “every aspect of [the museum] reflects this philosophy of universalism.” *Left to right:* An Arab celestial globe of bronze mapped the stars and constellations; behind it, a Venetian globe mapped the terrestrial world of 1697. Nearly contemporaneous Buddha heads, from northern China in white marble sculpted between 530 and 580 CE, and from the Mathura region of northern India in red sandstone from 400 to 500 CE. “The Cock,” cast in bronze in France in 1935 by Constantin Brancusi, and a head ornament in the form of a snake, carved from wood and painted in Guinea between 1800 and 1900.

something happens, a changing a little bit inside you, and maybe that little bit is very important.”

At the end of the 12th gallery, lit at its center by Weiwei’s striking, luminous installation, we exit through another simple door. As in the most refreshing finish to any journey, it leads to a modern oasis of the most spectacular kind: Nouvel’s dome and plaza that frame the sea.

No one who steps into this space can avoid saying “wow” while looking up at the arc and expanse of the day-star dome. Visitors of every age and nationality all seem to experience it in a literally breathtaking way, mouths open in enthusiasm, eyes wide in surprise and awe; children, grandparents—just a few steps and, despite the breadth of the plaza before them, the next impulse seems to be to raise a camera, for in every direction we find dramatic images.

Here space itself reclaims a mystical hold on our imagination as the myriad of illuminations aloft, and their reflections on the walls and floor, induce us to meditation. Many are the ways people describe the feeling: the luminous intermittency of sunlit leaves in a breeze; the shade of palm trees; a vast solar kaleidoscope or, in the words of a young visitor, “a symbol of heaven.” This is not far from Nouvel’s aim: “You are under the sky, but the cupole is a second sky. It is a symbol of cosmology. You are in a spiritual space.”

Once this initial euphoria calms, in part thanks to the mild breeze that often blows here, and we accustom to what can feel like walking on a ceiling, there are, as a coda, six final artworks, all at once both modern and ancient, keystones of the plaza and symbols of the museum’s universalism.

In a separate set of galleries, the Children’s Museum at the Louvre Abu Dhabi displays authentic art pieces with interactive activities derived from their designs.

Raised on its high column base, a casting of French sculptor Auguste Rodin’s “The Walking Man, On a Column” appears to stride confidently toward the center of the vast space, toward a suite of four pieces by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Penone called “Germination.” Most prominent is his cast-bronze tree, whose organic form rises over our heads to contrast with the fractal geometry of the dome; alongside, a thumbprint of UAE founding father Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan is ringed by concentric circles like a cross-section of a tree, and nearby, both large and small hand-shaped lumps of clay from soils around the world link us back to one of humanity’s first means of creative production and to legends of our own origins.

One of these legendary accounts, from Mesopotamia, appears in US contemporary artist Jenny Holzer’s monumental reproduction of a clay tablet written in cuneiform script in both Sumerian and Akkadian, which covers a high wall facing the plaza. Holzer has used the most advanced tech-



FROM THE TOWER OF BABEL TO THE “FOUNTAIN OF LIGHT”

The final gallery, “A Global Scene,” reflects on today’s globalization and how it affects concepts such as difference and similarity, individuality and collectivity. The Louvre Abu Dhabi’s French-led curation team has brought to this Arab-world museum a work by Ai Weiwei, a Chinese contemporary artist with a studio in Berlin, and the work itself offers multiple layered inspirations and referents. Its form is a scale reproduction of an unbuilt tower by Russian architect Vladimir Tatlin, intended as a monument to the universalizing ideals of early communism that became an icon in the early 20th-century avant-garde movement known as Constructivism. Weiwei also calls to mind the mythical ziggurat-like Tower of Babel, which appears in the Louvre Abu Dhabi in the gallery devoted to the development of trade routes, on a canvas painted by Abel Grimmer in Antwerp in 1595 as an allegory for the hubris of globalization in that era. The image is based on the Biblical story that at first, people all understood each other, but when humans attempted to build a tower as high as the heavens, God punished them with permanent confusion in the form of different languages, and scattered them all over the earth.

Using interior light refracted through hundreds of hung strands of hexagonal chandelier crystals, Weiwei’s “Fountain of Light” literally illuminates the universalizing aspirations that both Tatlin and Babel share, as well as the cautionary challenges they offer for today.

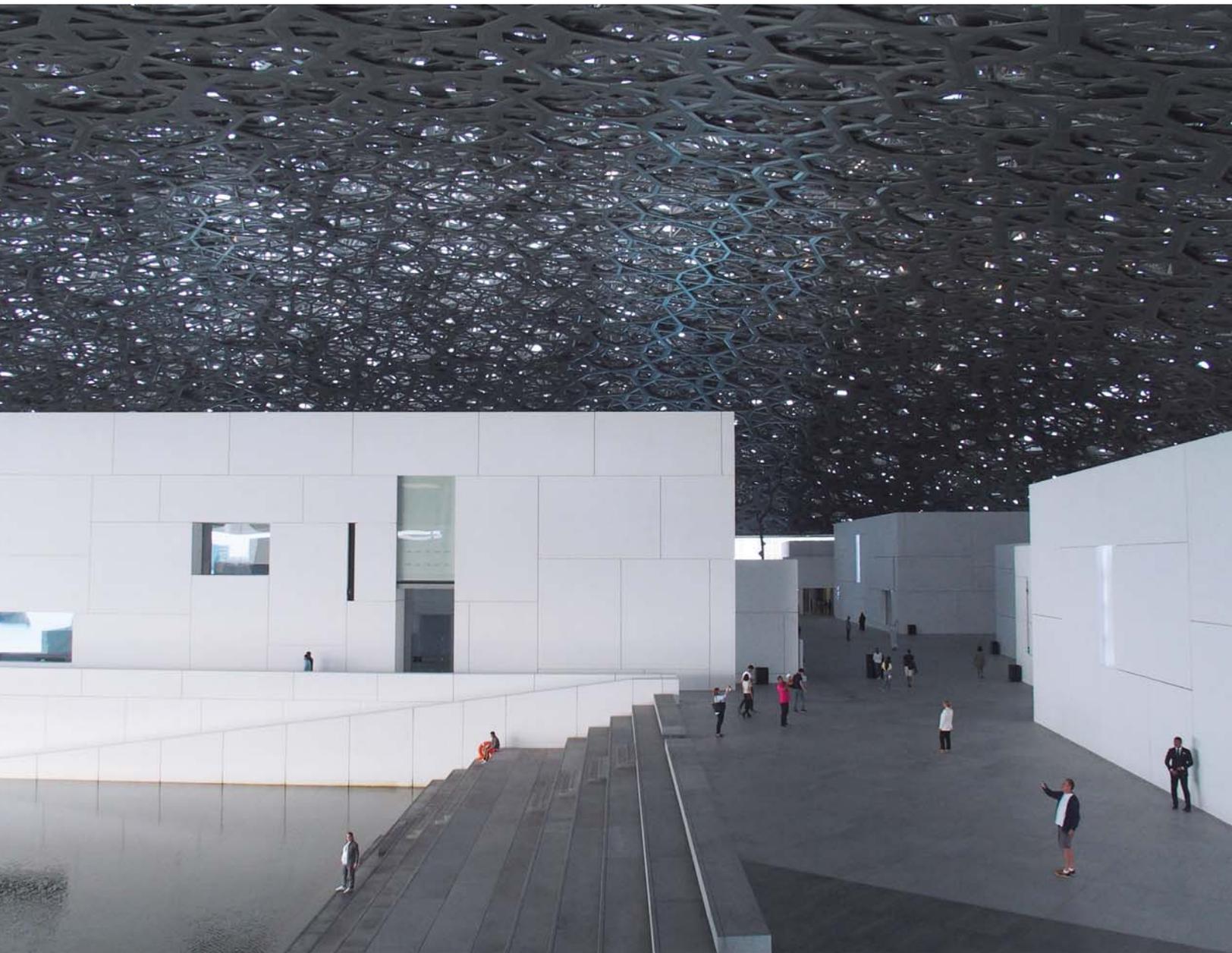
As Chief Heritage Curator and Scientific Director Jean-François Charnier writes, this caution extends to the word “universal” itself, which comes to us with a Latin etymology from *unus*, “one,” and *vertere*, “to turn.” That is to say, he writes, “turning around one.” The word “universal—created by a Europe convinced that the world revolved around it—bears within it the ethnocentrism of its origins.” He quotes Martiniquan poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant, who defined the universal as “nothing other than the sublimation of the particular.” This etymology, concludes Charnier, “can also be interpreted differently and indeed *in-versely*, as plurality turned into unity, a striving for coherence, for what humanity has in common.”



Another monumental text-panel by Holzer is nearly hidden. It lies around the corner that leads toward the Children’s Museum pavilion. On it appears a passage from French writer Michel de Montaigne, who wrote on tolerance in the 16th century, when France was in the throes of religious wars. A humanist, his own motto was “Every man bears the whole stamp of the human condition,” and the page Holzer selected for this wall comes from the original manuscript of his celebrated *Essais*. In its marginal notes appears a single question, “What do I know?”

Washed by the rain of light from the dome, there could be no more fitting affirmation to Rabaté’s observation that the Louvre Abu Dhabi “starts with questions, and we end with questions.” 🌐

nologies to enlarge and precisely engrave the ancient texts, found in Assur, now in Iraq. A lyrical account of the creation of the world and the first humans, it sends strong symbolic messages that reinforce both the central importance of writing in cultural exchange while at the same time reminding us that the challenges of translation—of dialogue across cultures—have faced us since the very beginnings of language.



Contrasting infinite complexity with elemental simplicity, the central plaza evokes the irregularities and scale of traditional *madinahs*, or old cities. From here, visitors find the museum's galleries for temporary exhibits, the Children's Museum, the auditorium, a restaurant and offices. *Left*: Pages from the 1375 CE *Muqaddimah* by Ibn Khaldun, among the founders of modern historiography, appear in oversize intaglio on one of the three walls of historic texts produced for the museum by us artist Jenny Holzer.



Ana M. Carreño Leyva (acarrenoleyva@gmail.com) is former editor of the Spanish cultural magazine *El legado andalusí: Una nueva sociedad mediterránea*, published by the Fundación El Legado andalusí in Granada, where she has also served as communication director. In 2007 she translated *The Hermetic Alhambra* by Antonio Enrique (Port-Royal Ediciones). She collaborates frequently with *AramcoWorld* and other cultural magazines as a freelance writer and art director. **Richard Doughty** is editor of *AramcoWorld*.



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The

PRODUCTION



ER

WRITTEN BY
LINA MOUNZER

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MICHAEL NELSON



Last year, producer, composer, musician, mentor and multicultural music emissary Dawn Elder became the first female producer to win the Hollywood Music in Media Award for Best Production. *Above:* Elder hands out music for a July 2008 show in Millennium Park, Chicago, that reunited artists from Sudan and South Sudan, accompanied by the African Birds and members of the Chicago Symphony.

Question: What connects Iraqi singer-songwriter superstar Kazem Al Saher, Nigerian Afrobeat legend Fela Kuti, us television and film star Woody Harrelson, and aspiring teenage vocalists in Santa Barbara, California?

The answer is leading me down State Street, the main drag of Santa Barbara, her hometown and business base an hour-and-a-half's drive north of Los Angeles. From here, for nearly three decades, Dawn Elder has promoted and mentored musicians, recorded albums, arranged collaborations and organized concerts that have opened American ears to new music from the Arab world and beyond and brought fruitful exchanges among popular, creative performers from dozens of countries. As we walk, she explains how, as a producer, she put together Al Saher's 2000 album, *Al Hobb Al Mustaheel (The Impossible Love)*, his first and only us-label release; how as an organizer, in 1989 she brought Kuti to play at the Santa Barbara club she ran for a performance the local newspaper declared the concert of the year. As for Harrelson, she managed his brief music career, even going on the road with his band, Manly Moondog, before Harrelson turned to full-time acting. The teenagers are, she says, a mentoring focus, since her founding in 2015 of the Ultimate Vocal Music Summit as a nonprofit that brings together young singers and songwriters and celebrity mentors from the high echelons of the LA scene.

We're on State Street, though, because her mind isn't just on music these days. Last year, Santa Barbara was devastated by twin natural disasters that cost the lives of 21 of its citizens and did nearly \$2 billion in damages to property and businesses. The Thomas Fire was the second-largest wildfire in modern California history, and it was followed by fatal mudslides. While the direct damage did not reach downtown, the economic and psychological toll is clear as we pass recently shuttered storefronts. Elder shakes her head at each one we pass.

"Santa Barbara is a really rich place in terms of its music history, the history of rock 'n' roll. So many bands got their start here, or recorded here—Fleetwood Mac, the Beach Boys, the Eagles," she says. "Music is the keeper of memory. It brings the past back, with all its feelings."



MAIN: HISHAM KAROURI

ABOVE: COURTESY DE MANAGEMENT

It soon becomes clear that this eclectic, fusion-based philosophy guides everything she takes on. When we meet, she is juggling five projects. It's a typical load.

She's gearing up to record an album with Cheb Khaled, the Algerian "King of Rai," with whom she has collaborated numerous times for nearly two decades. In addition to arranging and producing the album down at LA's iconic Sunset Studios, she is co-writing many of its songs with him, including one she describes as a "celebration of immigration."

She's also trying to round up funding for a Peace Through Music concert she is planning for early November in Washington, D.C., that would, like so many of her concerts, bring together Arab and Western musicians to perform on the same stage.

There is something deeply personal about her mission. Born and raised in California's Bay Area and of Lebanese and Palestinian descent, she is at home both in the US and in Arab cultural worlds. Creating dialogues and building relationships through music can help "change the way people see other people," she says. "I may not talk politics, but I talk music. Everything I want to say is contained in my music," she says.

Though her parents named her after the legendary Lebanese diva Sabah, which translates as "morning," and which Elder later anglicized to Dawn, they hoped she would grow up to become a doctor. But they also believed in a well-rounded education. So, in addition to enrolling her in ballet classes, they arranged that she receive piano lessons from no less than the conductor of the San Francisco symphony, Josef Krips. Along with the rock 'n' roll culture she absorbed "during the heyday of Haight-Ashbury," she recalls, her parents also took her to a concert by the iconic Lebanese singer Fairuz. That, she says, became a watershed: "I knew I was truly listening to a legend. It remains with me as one of my all-time favorite musical experiences."

“

Dawn is a unique and indomitable force in the movement to awaken Americans to the music of the world.”

—BANNING EYRE, MUSICIAN AND PRODUCER, AFROPOP WORLDWIDE



Although she completed a pre-med degree at the University of California at Berkeley, she added a second major in music and wrote songs on the side. Organizing events and concerts was an opportunity, she says, that "fell into my lap."

While at UC Berkeley, Elder had been working at a delicatessen on San Francisco's Columbus Avenue. When music performers in the annual Madonna del Lume festival (also called "The Blessing of the Fishing Fleet") "landed right outside my door," a lightbulb flashed on, she says. She contacted some local bands and invited them to perform at the deli, which soon became known as much for its live music as its sandwiches. A few years later, in 1982, Elder's new vocation took her to New York, where she worked in catering while making connections among musicians, radio DJs, music-label owners, and concert organizers and promoters—all the backstage players who support artists and the business of music.

She returned to the West Coast in 1984 when Ventura County recruited her to overhaul three restaurant properties in Ventura and nearby Santa Barbara. Again, she helped the venues book live music. Word of her skill and success reached back to East Coast label heads she had met—Blue Note, Sony, Epic, A&M, Capitol and Universal—and they began sending her new music. She began scouting for new talent and securing radio play.

From top: In 2000, Elder brought Wadih al-Safi and Sabah Fakhri together for The Two Tenors of Arabic Music. In 2012, she served as a co-producer and songwriter for the One World concert in Syracuse, New York, that brought together Afghan-born *rubab* virtuoso Homayoun Sakhri and renowned Beninese singer/songwriter Angélique Kidjo as well as some 30 other musicians and the Dali Lama. In 2016 Motown icon Stevie Wonder was among celebrity artists who helped mentor young singers at her Ultimate Music Vocal Summit. In 2004, she co-wrote and produced "Love to the People" for Algerian Rai star Cheb Khaled (far right); Khaled's full album, *Ya Rayi*, featured additional collaboration among Elder and the late electronic pioneer DJ Cheb I Sabbah, left, and producer Don Was.



In 2014 Elder worked as a creative consultant and producer with nonprofit sponsor MasterPeace to put on the International Day of Peace concert at Amsterdam's Ziggo Dome with nearly 40 artists from around the world. Lower: In 1998, Lebanese star Sabah performed at the Long Beach, California, International Friendship Festival.

Then, as she describes it, she grabbed a chance to run a dinner club in Santa Barbara, quickly earning it a reputation as a top-ranked venue for performers the likes of Wynton Marsalis, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Fela Kuti, Shawn Colvin, Billy Vera, Taylor Dane, Tony Bennett and King Sunny Adé.

From the start, she was drawn to what was beginning to be called “world music”—music that looked beyond the borders of the us for voices and rhythms that all excited her sense of a music as a unifying global language. “I was firmly planted in multiculturalism,” she says. “I’ve tried to carry this with me into all of my music and events.”

That was on full display in 1990 when, at the request of Santa Barbara Mayor Sheila Lodge, she organized the city’s annual Old Spanish Days festival. Rather than stick to a tried-and-true lineup of flamenco and other folkloric music, she booked the Latin-influenced rock of Santana, and for a Scottish twist booked Average White Band. It “literally rocked the boat,” she says with a laugh.

Her drive to bring Arab music to the us grew out of an epiphany she had at an Arab wedding that she attended with her father in Detroit in 1989. The performers, she says, were “stereotypically Oriental—hookahs, belly dancers, candelabra, the works. And the musicians were awful.” Rather than complain, her father told her, “You better be prepared to do something about it.”

The opportunity came in 1997 when she linked up with Michael Sembello, a Stevie Wonder collaborator who had created a group called The Bridge based on the idea of “writing an album of music that would bridge the world.” But she conceived of it as something even grander: an International Friendship Festival with seven pavilions showcasing music from different parts of the world.

To plan for the Middle Eastern pavilion, she remembered the concert she’d attended with her parents and thought, “That’s the effect I want to create.” She marched into the Lebanese Consulate in Los Angeles and told the startled consul, “I want Fairuz,” she recalls.

The consul couldn’t get her Fairuz. But he was helpful, and he introduced her to a Palestinian-American composer and virtuoso on both *‘ud* and violin, Simon Shaheen. He became a mentor, a longtime collaborator and a friend—and he helped Dawn meet her superstar namesake, Sabah.

Sabah not only agreed to perform at the festival for free, but also to provide her own band. She drew 100,000 people out to Long Beach and brought down the house. “She was amazing,” says Elder. “I had no idea that there was such a huge commu-

nity out there hungry for Arabic music in the us.” In 2006 the *Los Angeles Times* called the event “a turning point in Elder’s career, and a milestone for LA’s Arab American community.”

This caught the attention of the television company Middle East Broadcasting Center, which in 1998 invited her



to organize a festival in Washington, D.C., called Ana Alarabi (I am Arab). She not only set the musical lineup with headline acts from both the famous Lebanese musician and composer Marcel Khalife

and the renowned Nubian-Sudanese musician Mohammad Wardi, but she also invited fashion designers, dancers and other artists to showcase the best of Arab culture.

Elder went on in 1999 to produce two albums' worth of material with Wardi and recorded it with as many of the original members of Wardi's band as she could locate, flying them in from the UK, the Netherlands and Egypt and filling in the ensemble with US musicians. It was expensive, funded partly out of Elder's own pocket but mostly by Mohammad Mutawakil, a Sudanese-born doctor and longtime Wardi fan. The musicians recorded everything at Sunset Studios to capture the synergy and sound of a live performance, but *Mohammad Wardi and the African Birds: Longing for Home (Vol. 1)* and *Memories of Sudan (Vol. II)* remain unreleased. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, in the US followed by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, "the time never felt right," Elder says.

"It's a lifetime's work, and it deserves at least a year of promotion before it can come out." That, she hopes, will happen next year, perhaps bringing Wardi's musical legacy to the Grammy Awards.

The events of September 11 gave her endeavors a sense of urgency, Elder says. For the next decade she interacted with some of the biggest names in the music business in both the US and the Arab world, orchestrating collaborations between musicians, bringing a hip, positive vision of what it means to be Arab to her audiences and, for the first time, working in the Arab world itself.

She brought Carlos Santana and Cheb Khaled together to record a song called "Love to the People." Next, she linked



Kazem Al Saher with Lenny Kravitz to record "We Want Peace" and then with Sarah Brightman to create "The War is Over."

She also organized Al Saher's first major US tour in 2003 and produced his first US-label release under Ark 21 Records. In Lebanon, as part of the 2003 edition of the Beiteddine Festival, she linked up Al Saher and Brightman in a sold-out concert under the stars. In Las Vegas, she also organized The Two Tenors concert with Wadiah al-Safi and Sabah

Above: 15-year-old Hailey Silveira is among the vocalists Elder mentors through the Ultimate Vocal Music Summit, a nonprofit that brings young singers and songwriters together with some of the region's most accomplished musicians and producers. Left: Elder hopes this former department store, recently abandoned by Macy's in downtown Santa Barbara, can be renovated as a music center. "Santa Barbara is a really rich place in terms of its music history, the history of rock 'n' roll. So many bands got their start here, or recorded here," she says.



Fakhri, backed by Simon Shaheen's ensemble Qantara, recorded live and released as an album. In 2004 she worked with Quincy Jones on his

We Are the Future concert program in Rome, coordinating the inclusion of world-music artists in the lineup. Later she organized an album, *Love Songs for Humanity*, and a national concert tour by the Voices of Afghanistan ensemble.

That resumé, says Banning Eyre, a music writer and performer who produces *Afropop Worldwide* for National Public Radio, has earned Elder the reputation as the premier Arab American music producer in the US.

"I cannot think of anyone who has shown such consistent dedication to creating large-scale national showcases for music from the Arabic-speaking world," he says. He praises Elder as a tastemaker, one whose "strong loyalty and sharp judgment" have guided her choices "for the best music coming out of North Africa and the Middle East."

"She has pulled together some truly extraordinary

showcases, based always on merit, humanitarian vision and musical excellence, rather than obvious demand,” he says. “Dawn is a unique and indomitable force in the movement to awaken Americans to the music of the world.”

Success as a producer, however, has never come smoothly. She faced pushback on both sides of the world: In the US, she often had to convince

promoters that the “unknowns” she was trying to book were really superstars in the Arab world; in the Middle East, she had to convince executives that a woman could do the job she was putting forward.

“It was exhausting,” she confesses. “I’ve had to take a little step backward from all that to bring other projects to the foreground.”

One such project is the Ultimate Vocal Music Summit (UVMS), which she founded in 2015, grounded in hometown Santa Barbara. It takes the format of reality-TV shows such as *American Idol* and sets it up to maximize benefit to the young artists rather than the show’s owners. Among its sponsors are piano manufacturer Steinway, the performing-rights company BMI and the Orange County School of the Arts.

From annual auditions for budding musical artists between the ages of five and 18, 50 are chosen to attend a three-day musical boot camp that includes training in vocal technique, songwriting and music, and stage presence—all the basics of what it takes to become a professional performing musical artist. Parents too receive advice about how to advocate best for their young performer.

Out of the 50 kids selected to attend the boot camp, 10 come on full scholarship, and five are chosen at the end for a yearlong mentorship program that culminates in a concert backed by a Grammy-level band. They get the chance “to work with people who have worked with Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson and Aretha Franklin, and they are all volunteering their time,” says Elder.

This kind of training “changes the kinds of dreams they allow themselves to have about their futures,” says Elder. “I



At Sunset Sound, Elder prepares for recording sessions planned with Cheb Khaled later in the week. Since the 1960s the studio has recorded not only dozens of music and film-score icons but hundreds of hopefuls—including, in 2016, Ty Waters (Tyson Venegas), then 10 years old, whom Elder mentored as a writer and singer through her Ultimate Vocal Music Summit.

can’t see not helping a young artist or helping foster a culture, or helping create music that will make a difference.”

And the UVMS, she says, is part of her vision for Santa Barbara too. It’s part of why she wanted to walk me down State Street, especially to the Macy’s department store building, a gorgeous Spanish-colonial-revival construction that now sits empty.

“After the fires and the mudslides, I wanted to do something that would help document [the city’s] musical history, create something that would keep the memory alive,” she says. Under one roof, she envisions a center for musical production, both professional and civic, with “cafés and street performances” outside. She ticks up every floor of the building with her finger: the ground floor for studio spaces and instrument shops; the second floor, teaching studios, offices for an independent recording label, seminar rooms, workshops, master classes, a library, a music camp; and on the third floor, recording studios.

To begin to bring that dream to life, she estimates she will have to secure \$17 million. It’s early in the process, she says, and like any project, donors have to be convinced they are supporting “a good cause.”

If her experience is any guide, that is easy to believe. ☺

“I can’t see not helping a young artist or helping foster a culture, or helping create music that will make a difference.”

—DAWN ELDER



Lina Mounzer is a writer and translator living in Beirut. Her fiction and essays have appeared in *Bidouin*, *Warscapes*, *The Berlin Quarterly* and *Chimurenga*, as well as *Hikayat: An Anthology of Lebanese Women’s Writing*, published by Telegram Books. Her favorite way of listening to music is through earphones while walking in the city. **Michael Nelson** (www.lifeonthewire.photo) is an award-winning us photojournalist who has been based in Lebanon, Belgium, Egypt and the us during his 35-year career. He currently lives in Los Angeles and works for the European Pressphoto Agency.



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MORE THAN A TEAM

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Brian Clark



***En cada pueblo en Chile,
hay un Palestino,
un sacerdote
y un policía.***

**(In every village in Chile,
there's a Palestinian,
a priest
and a policeman.)**

—CHILEAN SAYING

In 1906 Nikolas Majluf arrived in South America after a sea voyage that had begun in Haifa, then part of the Ottoman Empire. He had changed ships in Marseille and continued to Buenos Aires, Argentina. From there, he traveled by mule over the Andes and ultimately settled in Victoria, Chile, nearly 1,000 kilometers south of Santiago, the nation's capital.

He was following a path that had been established by Palestinians who had begun arriving in Chile in the late 1800s. They struggled at first, but in ensuing decades they created both businesses and institutions, including schools, professional associations—and Club Deportivo Palestino (Palestinian Sport Club), the soccer team popularly known as “Palestino.” Founded just more than a century ago in Santiago and a member of Chile's premier league since 1952, it has played such a unifying role in the community that its banner proclaims “Palestino—Mas que un equipo” (Palestino—More than a team).



Top: Club Deportivo Palestino (in white) defends its home pitch at La Cisterna stadium in Santiago, Chile, in a match this year against Andax Italiano. *Right:* Santiago, a city of 10 million, stretches out below San Cristobal Hill, which rises from the edge of the Bellavista neighborhood, where many Palestinians settled and that is now filled with restaurants, clubs and art galleries.

The club's history is intertwined with the Palestinian community in Chile and its roots in the Middle East, explains team spokeswoman Valeria Apará Hizmeri. Last year, the team even launched an effort to bring in soil from different communities in Palestine to spread on its home field to emphasize its enduring connection.

"The team unites Palestinians and brings families to the stadiums together in a healthy, sporting environment" that includes Arab music and food, she says. "The club also





The Rincon Arabesco (Arab Corner) restaurant in Santiago's barrio Bellavista signals the neighborhood's Arab heritage.

represents the Palestinian spirit. It brings the Palestino flag to the highest level in international competitions [in South America],” she says.

Though there are no official figures, an estimated 300,000 of Chile's roughly 17 million residents can claim Palestinian descent, and this makes Chile the nation with the largest single diasporic group of Palestinians outside the Arab world. So many took up residence in the long, narrow country on South America's Pacific coast that locals began to quip, “*En cada pueblo en Chile, hay un Palestino, un sacerdote y un policía*” (In every village in Chile, there's a Palestinian, a priest and a policeman.)

For his part, Majluf set up a small store. He did well, and soon his brother followed, explains Majluf's 30-year-old great-grandson, Anuar Majluf. Next came their respective spouses and children, who had remained behind in Beit Jala, a village south of Jerusalem that is now part of the Palestinian West Bank. Once the siblings were established, around 1911 their in-laws followed too.

When World War I engulfed the Middle East in 1914, still

more Palestinians—many of them Orthodox Christians—emigrated to avoid being drafted into the armed forces of Turkey, which had allied with Germany. Many moved to Chile.

Still more Palestinians arrived after the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, when tens of thousands fled, and ever since, others have continued to trickle in. At the bakery named Panadería y Pastelería Fufu—which has branches both in Santiago and in Beit Jala—I meet baker Johnny Abu Jeries, who says he arrived in Santiago only five years ago.

Anuar Majluf, an attorney who is also executive director of the Palestinian Federation of Chile, tells me his family's story as we sit on the patio of the Palestinian-owned Hotel Loreto

in Santiago's barrio Bellavista. It was in this area, and in the barrio Patronato to its south, he explains, that numerous early Palestinian immigrants built homes and opened factories and businesses in the early 20th century.

Now, Bellavista has become an artsy quarter of clubs, restaurants and galleries, says Majluf, who also once led the General Union of Palestinian Students in Chile.

“Through soccer and fielding a successful premier-league team, the acceptance of Palestinians grew.”



Above: A lamppost gives directions both to local swimming pools and to Palestine, in Spanish and Arabic, in Santiago's barrio Bellavista. **Above right:** Former Palestino player Carlos Hasbun has collected newspaper clippings of the team for nearly 70 years. "It was beautiful, and I will always be proud of Palestino," he says of his time with the club. **Right:** "Hard work, a thousand-year-old culture, faith and dedication to family led to our success in Chile," says Manuel Hasbun Zaror, an engineer and former head of the Palestinian Federation. **Far right:** Mauricio Abu-Ghosh, whose father immigrated to Chile from Beit Jala in Palestine with his family at age 10 in 1951, locates his old hometown, which he visited several years ago.



Manuel Hasbun Zaror, a 74-year-old engineer and, like Majluf, a former head of the Palestinian Federation, says his forebears and other Palestinian immigrants struggled at first because they lacked resources, education and connections. Initially, they also faced some discrimination from Chileans with European roots.

"Hard work, a thousand-year-old culture, faith and dedication to family led to our success in Chile," Zaror tells me over lunch at the Palestinian Club in the upscale barrio Las Condes. Those accomplishments are on full display at the club's expansive, palm-dotted enclave, which sports an Olympic-size pool, tennis courts and other facilities. Street signs are in Spanish and Arabic, and a doormat at the main entry to the club says, in Arabic, *ahlan wa sablan* (Welcome).

Al-Murshid, the Santiago Palestinian community's first Arabic newspaper, began publishing in Patronato in 1912. Though the neighborhood now is home to immigrants from Korea, Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia, Haiti and more, it's easy to find evidence of the district's Palestinian past and present. Just down the street from

Hotel Loreto, the Rincon Arabesco (Arab Corner) restaurant serves grilled-meat shawarmas, *rellenos Arabes* (peppers stuffed with meat and spices) and other Arab-influenced dishes; on a nearby avenue called Pio Nono, named for Pope Pius IX, which leads away from the famed San Cristobal Hill and its green funicular cable cars, a curbside stand sells *dulces Arabes*—Arab pastries such as halva and kunafah.

On one morning, I enjoy a cup of strong coffee and baklava sweets at El Majrur, a café that takes its name from a neighborhood in Beit Jala. It stands on the same block in Patronato as the Orthodox Cathedral of St. George, which is, along with the city's two mosques, another community for Chileans of Palestinian descent.

To watch Club Deportivo Palestino play, however, it's a 17-kilometer drive south from Patronato to La Cisterna, the stadium the team calls home. For this game, they are playing a top rival, Audax Italiano, a team founded by Italian immigrants early in the 20th century. (Among the league's 16 teams, there is one more with ethnic origins, Unión Española, founded by Spanish immigrants.)



According to Zaror and his distant cousin, 84-year-old Carlos Hasbun, Palestino was established in 1916 to compete against other Palestinian clubs in a national sporting competition held in Osorno, in southern Chile.

Palestino won, and went on to other successes, but the team folded around 1920. Three decades later, it was revived, says Zaror, who adds that his brother, Raul, now in his 80s, helped restart the team and even played on it. In 1952 the club made the jump from the second division to the premier league—the top level of professional soccer in the country.

While this day's game proves an exciting back-and-forth contest that ends in a 1-1 draw—aided by plenty of raucous cheering from the home crowd—I quickly see just how Palestino is, as its motto goes, more than a soccer team. I hear time after time how it represents the Palestinian diaspora, not only in Chile, but also throughout Latin America and even around the globe.

Accompanied by Majluf, I arrive early for the 5 p.m. game and, as a leader of the Palestinian Federation, he seems to know everyone. We settle into seats on the west side of the field with most of the Palestino *binchas* (fans).

But my eyes and ears are soon drawn to the east side of the pitch where several drummers are booming out a rhythm and a man stands high on the rim of the stadium waving an enormous Palestinian national flag. This despite the fact that on the team's current roster there is not a single player of Palestinian descent, though former defender Roberto Bishara now serves as a training coach.



Majluf tells me how in December 2014, when Palestino qualified for the Libertadores de America competition for the first time in 35 years, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas sent the club a personal letter congratulating its coaches and players.

(The team made it to the quarterfinals, and its games were televised in the Arab world.)

“On behalf of all Palestinians worldwide, I want to thank you for this joy that you gave us in this special moment,” wrote Abbas. “You are players and also ambassadors of our colors throughout South America.”

In 2016 Palestino actually flew to the West Bank city of Nablus, where they faced a local all-Palestinian team—and lost 3-0. The match received full-page attention in the sports section of *El Mercurio*, the Santiago newspaper, and one columnist put the loss down to jet lag.

Elsewhere on La Cisterna stadium property, painted murals boast of the team's two premier-league championships (1955 and 1978) and show off more



Top: Palestino players (in black) shake hands with players from the Hebron Stars at al-Hussain Ali stadium in Hebron on December 15, 2016. They played to a 1-1 draw. **Above:** The Santiago newspaper *El Mercurio* highlighted the exhibition game that was part of the club's weeklong visit, during which it played Palestinian teams, toured historical sites, met dignitaries and held soccer-skills clinics to help connect the team with its origins.

colorful representations of the Palestinian flag.

Majluf smiles as he describes growing up wanting to play for Palestino. “But that wasn't realistic, just a childhood dream,” he says with a chuckle, noting that today, the fan base of the team has spread well beyond the Palestinian community.

“In a way, the team helped Palestinians integrate into Chilean society,” he says. “This is a very socially stratified country, and even as we began to rise economically, many doors remained closed. But through soccer and fielding a successful premier-league team, the acceptance of Palestinians grew.”



A Palestino fan shares the game with his son at La Cisterna stadium, reinforcing ties across generations with a global diaspora and a land of origin half a world away.

Palestinians have achieved success in Chilean politics too, he adds, noting that in recent decades, around a dozen communities in Chile have elected leaders of Palestinian descent. Recoleta, the Santiago borough in which the *barrio Patronato* lies, recently elected Daniel Jadue *alcalde* (mayor). Isabel Plá Jarufe, descended from Palestinian immigrants, is serving in the cabinet of President Sebastián Piñera as minister for Women and Gender Equity.

For Majluf, who attended university in Jordan and has traveled to the West Bank several times, “win or lose, the soccer club proudly represents the State of Palestine and the diaspora in Latin America and around the world.”

On another morning, I meet Mauricio Abu-Ghosh, whose father came from Beit Jala with his family at age 10 in 1951. He recalls his father telling him how, as a young man, he had worked as a peddler, helping to support the family by walking from town to town selling needles and sewing supplies.

Abu-Ghosh, 54, and also a former official with the Palestinian Federation, is an engineer by profession. He spent a decade working for LAN, the Chilean national airline, before opening a clothing company with his wife, Andrea, in Patronato. A big soccer fan, he says he played on recreational teams until he turned 50.

Several years ago, he visited Beit Jala with his family. He calls it “a joyful experience to see the home where my father grew up, and where he kicked balls around in his backyard.” At the

same time, he adds, “It was bittersweet because while the villagers were extremely welcoming, the occupation is hard on them.”

He says his relatives follow Palestino both online and, at times, by waking early to watch games live via satellite TV.

That makes them not unlike Palestino fans in the rest of Palestine as well as Jordan, Tunisia and other parts of the world, where they follow Palestino on its social-media channels, says the team spokeswoman, noting that wherever they live, many of these *hinchas* wear Palestino jerseys on game days.

“They [Palestinians] are happy we support them and that’s one of the reasons why Palestino means so much,” Abu-Ghosh says. “It is a great symbol for the diaspora, one of the most valuable things we have. And not just for us in Chile, but also to the people in the motherland. Palestino shows that we are still alive, and we will not forget where we came from.” 🌐



Journalist **Brian Clark** is a former soccer player of middling ability who has lived and studied in Bolivia and Brazil. A resident of Middleton, Wisconsin, he writes a column for the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* and contributes to the *Los Angeles Times* and other publications.



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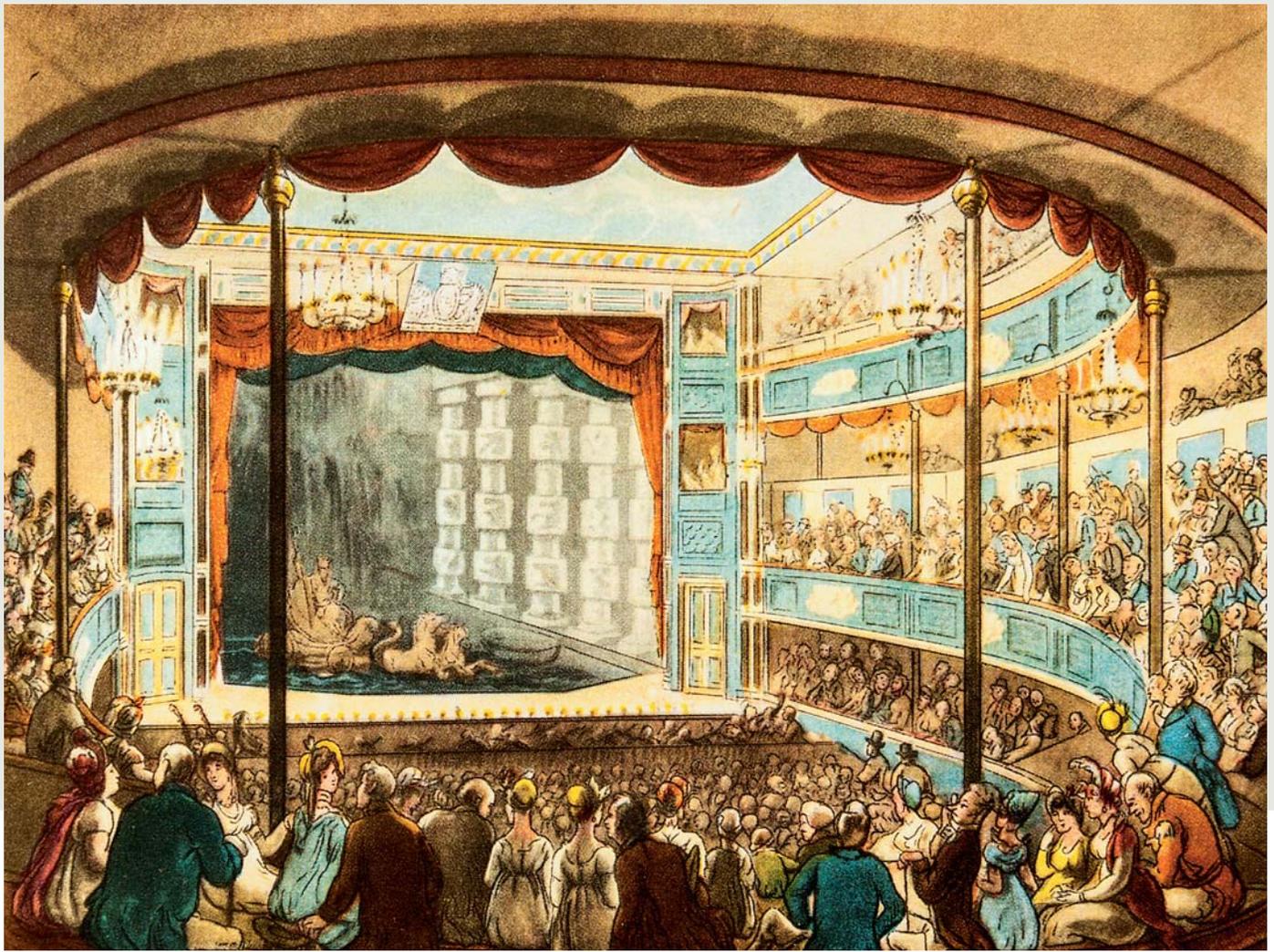
EGYPTOLOGY'S
PIONEERING

Giant

WRITTEN BY **TOM VERDE**

Weighing 3.6 metric tons and measuring nearly three meters from chest to crown, the 3,200-year-old red-granite bust of Pharaoh Ramses II fairly lords over the British Museum's Egyptian sculpture gallery. Napoleon's troops had tried, yet failed to so much as to budge the toppled, fragmented figure from its sandy resting spot in the Ramesseum, the pharaoh's vast mortuary temple in Thebes, on the west bank of the Nile near present-day Luxor. But the pharaoh's dead weight proved no match for the ingenuity of two-meter-tall showman, explorer, adventurer and engineer Giovanni Battista Belzoni.





Guarding the opposite end of the Egyptian statue gallery stands another testament to Belzoni's mettle moving massive stone statues: the seated figure of 15th-century-BCE Pharaoh Amenhotep III with the name "Belzoni" etched boldly into the artifact's base.

Was Belzoni a desecrator and plunderer of Egypt's pharaonic treasures, or just an Italian bull in an ancient Egyptian sculpture shop who, by his own account, clumsily crushed moldering mummies to dust? Or was he a serious, early archeologist, meticulous by the measure of a time when his profession

Opposite: Prize fragment of the full-length original, the bust of Pharaoh Ramses II, left, proved the first of many heavyweight artifacts acquired for Britain by Giovanni Battista Belzoni, whose portrait in Arab attire, top, hangs in the Archaeological and Art Museum in his home city of Padua, Italy. Above: Belzoni began his theater career in 1803 in London at the Sadler's Wells Theatre. In his signature strongman act, right, he shouldered a dozen actors on an iron frame.

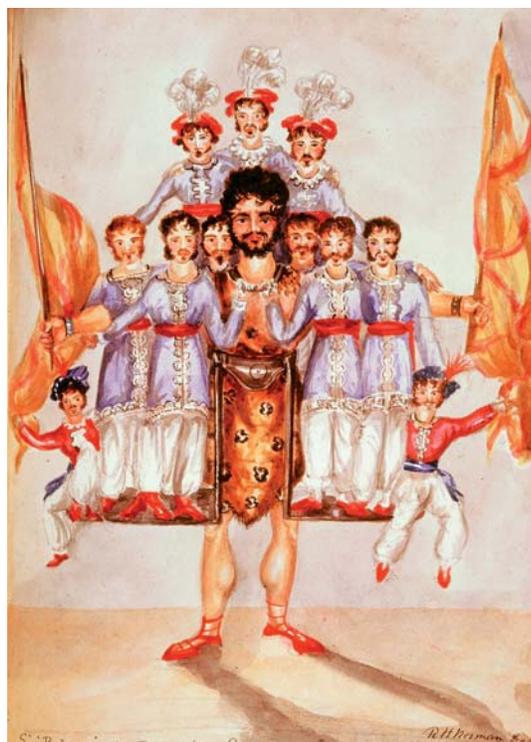
didn't even have a name, let alone international standards?

To find out, I turned to Belzoni's own record, *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia*, published in 1820. But I quickly learned that his story in Egypt really began

nearly two decades earlier in London, on the stage of the Sadler's Wells Theatre, a brisk half-hour walk northeast of the British Museum.

"Fee! Faw! Fum!" screamed the oversize headline on the handbill that advertised the top acts at Sadler's Wells on April 11, 1803. The role of the fulminating giant was played by none other than "Signor Giovanni Batista Belzoni."

Belzoni had arrived in London earlier that year by way of Amsterdam and Paris, where he had been knocking around on a meager income peddling religious relics, with occasional subsidies from his family back in Italy. Born in Padua





Belzoni's original assignment in Egypt was to design an irrigation tool that would prove more efficient than the traditional animal-drawn *saqiya* (waterwheel), shown here in a display near Luxor. Although his prototype appeared promising, mishap and suspicion kept it from production.

could draw far more water than the traditional *saqiya* water wheel. Yet it met with skepticism and worse. In its working debut before the pasha and his ministers, an accident injured one of the workers operating the device. The ministers declared it "a bad omen," and the pasha consigned Belzoni's waterwheel to oblivion.

But Egypt had more in store for him.

During his sojourn in Bulaq, Belzoni met the newly appointed British consul general to Egypt, Henry Salt. Among Salt's mandates was one from the trustees of the British Museum "to collect Egyptian antiquities for our great national depository." Moreover, Salt was pitted in a race against the French, who had, since Napoleon's army had arrived in 1798, only ramped up their own efforts to dig up and carry off as many Egyptian relics as they could.

One of most coveted prizes was the exquisitely carved bust of Ramses II.

The top half of a once-full-length seated figure, it lay half-buried in a courtyard of the pharaoh's 13th-century-BCE funerary temple, long known as the Memnium because of its proximity to the two 18-meter statues of Amenhotep III known as the Colossi of Memnon. Salt welcomed the opportunity to engage Belzoni "for the purpose of raising the head of the statue of the

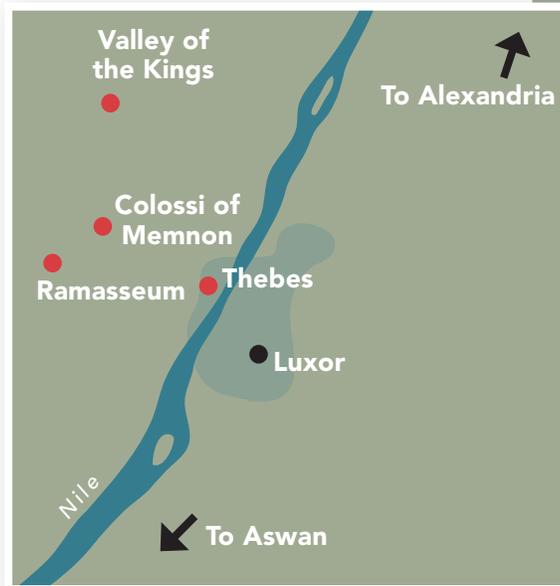
in 1778 (or 1783, the date is uncertain) and the son of a barber, he picked up informal skills in mechanics and hydraulics, possibly by working on Rome's famed fountains.

At Sadler's Wells, Belzoni developed his signature act, the "Human Pyramid." Dressed in a circus-strongman outfit and—if the illustrations are to be believed—bearing a colorful flag in each hand, Belzoni strutted the stage with a 58-kilogram iron frame suspended from his shoulders, upon which were arrayed a full dozen members of the theater company. The sensational act launched his career as "The Great Belzoni," and he won fame across Europe.

Over the next decade, Belzoni tweaked his performance with stagecraft involving waterfalls, weights, levers, rollers and balancing techniques. Along the way, he married an Englishwoman, Sarah Bane.

In 1815 the Belzonis were en route to Constantinople (now Istanbul), when they chanced to meet an agent of the pasha of Egypt who piqued their interest with an offer to travel to Cairo and devise a "hydraulic machine, to irrigate the fields." Belzoni welcomed the offer to be taken seriously as an engineer, not just a giant. He accepted the terms offered and they set sail for Alexandria on May 19, 1815.

They settled in Bulaq, Cairo's rough-and-tumble port. Belzoni indeed developed an irrigation device, a water-bearing "crane with a walking wheel," which demonstrated it





At the height of the summer in 1816 Belzoni used his circus-proven, weight-levering know-how to succeed where Napoleon and his troops had failed: He lifted the bust of Ramses II from the Ramesseum, the pharaoh's mortuary temple in Thebes, and hauled it to the nearby Nile. To get the statue out of the temple, however, Belzoni broke the bases of two columns.

younger Memnon, and carrying it down the Nile." He drew up an agreement on June 28, 1816.

Arriving at Thebes, arguably the world's greatest open-air museum, on July 22, Belzoni, like most, was awestruck by its temples, mostly built during the height of New Kingdom's architectural and artistic glory, from the 16th to the 11th centuries BCE. "It appeared to me like entering a city of giants, who, after a long conflict, were all destroyed, leaving the ruins of their various temples as the only proofs of their former existence," he recorded.

After examining the ponderous relic, Belzoni made a simple plan: Employing his circus-proven, weight-levering know-how, he would hoist the statue onto a cart built from poles, drag it by rope over rollers to the Nile and load it onto a boat.

Five days later, on July 27, Belzoni and a crew levered the statue onto the cart. While dragging it through the temple's entrance, Belzoni noted they had to "break the bases of two columns"—an act sure to horrify modern archeologists.

"He was not a true Egyptologist or archeologist in the modern sense, but what he did was still remarkable," says Mostafa Al-Saghir, director general of Karnak Antiquities. A native-born Egyptologist, Al-Saghir ranks Belzoni among the many plunderers of his country's heritage. Yet he recognizes that the Italian giant had a unique instinct for excavation that set him apart from others who followed.

"The way that Belzoni lifted the small colossus of Memnon [the head of Ramses] from the Ramesseum was the same technique used by the ancient Egyptians," Al-Saghir points out.

And thus, on August 12, 1816, "the young Memnon arrived on the bank of the Nile."

While awaiting a boat capable of bearing such a cargo down to Alexandria, Belzoni took a trip farther south up the Nile—as did I.

One of Belzoni's most eagerly anticipated destinations was the island of Philae. Reputed burial place of Osiris, Egyptian god of the afterlife, it is one of the most poetic settings in all of Egypt. Verdant and palm-fringed, it was located, in Belzoni's day, in the middle of the Nile at Aswan. (When the Aswan High Dam's Lake Nasser threatened to submerge the island in the 1970s, UNESCO engineers moved Philae's entire temple complex to higher ground at neighboring Agilkia Island—a feat that no doubt would have impressed Belzoni.)

Belzoni crossed to Philae just before dawn, standing "at the stern, waiting for the light to unveil that godly sight." Wandering the island, he noted what he might haul away on a later trip: Top prizes included a fine frieze depicting Osiris as well as "an obelisk of granite about twenty-two feet [6.5 meters] in length and two in breadth" that stood at the entrance to the second pylon or gate, to the Temple of Isis. Today, thanks to Belzoni, only its base remains at

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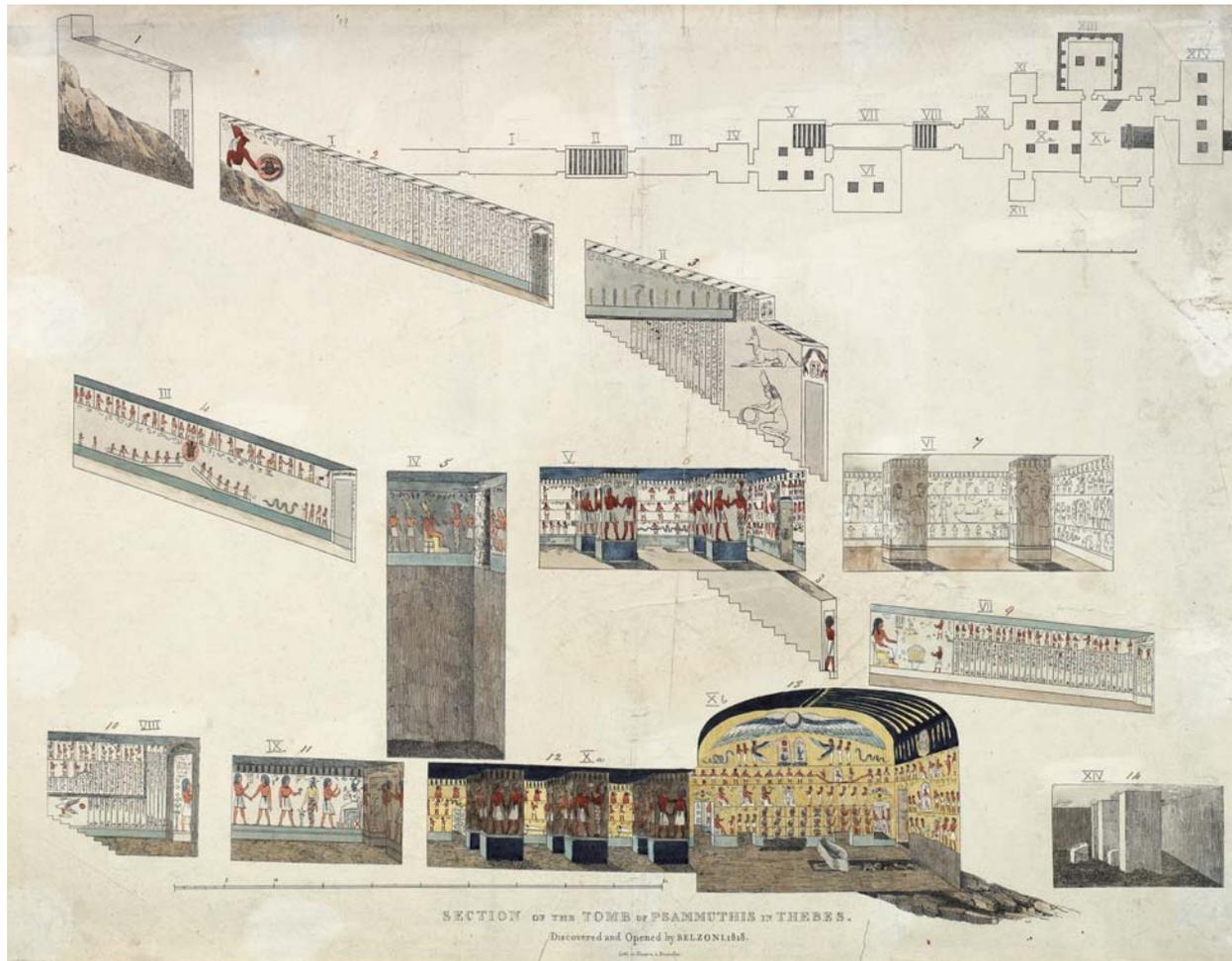
Arriving at Thebes, Belzoni wrote:

"It appeared to me like entering a city of giants, who, after a long conflict, were all destroyed."

Philae, and the obelisk stands in the gardens of Kingston Lacy, a National Trust property in Dorset, England. Its eventual journey there would come close to being Belzoni's most disastrous enterprise.

Belzoni continued upstream with his party toward the temple of Abu Simbel, some 500 kilometers south of Luxor, to investigate the remains of four 20-meter seated statues of Ramses the Great. They found the temple's grand entryway drowned in sand, and Belzoni realized that excavating there would be like "making a hole in water ... an endless task." Unless, that is, he could find a way to keep the sand from refilling the hole after every scoop.

Deploying his knowledge of hydraulics, engineering and stagecraft, he calculated that the doorway "could not be less than thirty-five feet [10 meters] below the surface of the sand," and the front of the temple was likely proportionately "one hundred and seventeen feet [36 meters] wide." (The top of the temple's doorway is in fact about two-thirds of the way down a 30-meter-high façade, and the temple is indeed 36 meters wide.)



Among the tombs Belzoni discovered in what is now referred to as the Valley of the Kings at Thebes was that of the fourth-century BCE pharaoh Psammuthis. In 1818 he and his team took measurements and made detailed drawings of what they found—the kind of patient work that earned him the title of "proto-archeologist" from archeologist and Valley of the Kings specialist Don Ryan.

With palm logs and locally hired labor, Belzoni drove a palisade into the sand in front of the temple. Then he wet the sand "close to the wall over the door" to stop the drifts from sifting back down into the hole. After exposing the face and shoulders of one statue, he had to interrupt the task to return to Luxor to load the bust of the Ramses statue onto a boat.

Ramses the Great

One of history's longest-living pharaohs, Ramses the Great ruled for 67 years, past the age of 90. The supposed pharaoh of the biblical story of the Exodus, he fought more battles, produced more statuary (and more children: 85), and constructed more buildings than any other ruler of early pharaonic Egypt, a period covering nearly 2,500 years.

First-century Greek historian Diodorus Siculus identified Ramses's temple as "a monument of the king

known as Osymandyas" (a Greek corruption of Usermaat-Re, the throne name of Ramses), which became the subject of Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous poem:

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert ... Near them, on the sand
Half sunk a shattered visage lies."

The inscription on Ramses's toppled statue, "Should any man seek to know how great I am and where I lie, let him surpass one of my works," inspired the theme of Shelley's poem: the hubris, and transience, of earthly power.

He arranged for a local tribal leader to safeguard the site, sketched his progress and left “with a firm resolution of returning to accomplish its opening.”

Back at Luxor, Belzoni hired a boat heading upriver to Aswan for its return journey to Cairo. It would first collect the pieces

of the Osiris frieze from Philae and then pick up the Ramses head at Luxor. The obelisk at Philae, however, would await a longer vessel.

In the meantime, Belzoni literally began poking around the Valley of the Kings. “[I]n one of most remote spots [I] saw a heap of stones, which appeared to me detached from the mass,” he wrote.

“The vacancies between these stones were filled up with sand



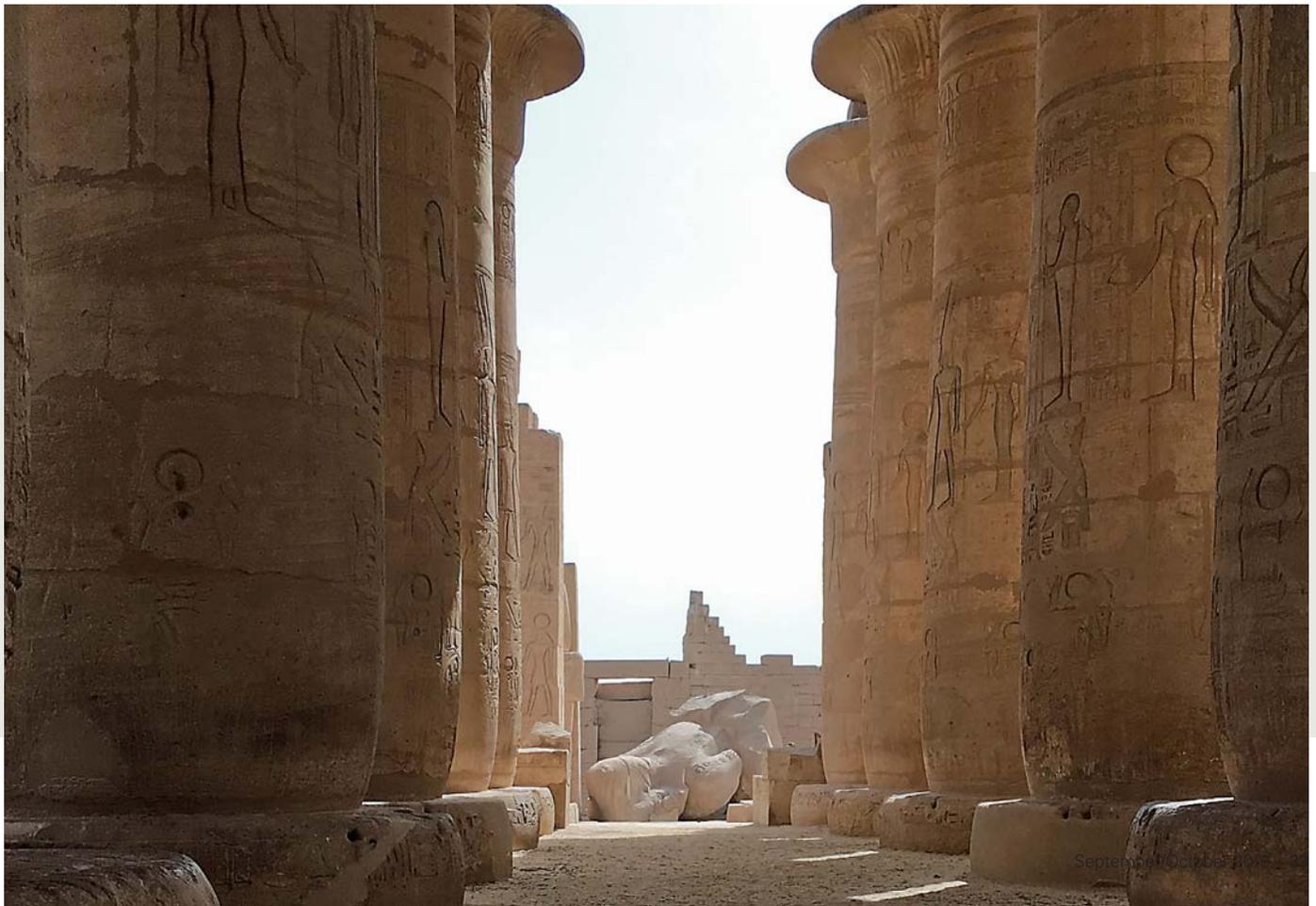
and rubbish. I happened to have a stick with me, and on thrusting it into the holes among the stones, I found it penetrate very deep.”

He detected telltale flood patterns and noted accumulated debris that might be hiding tomb entrances. Sure enough: “On removing a

few stones, we perceived, that the sand ran inwards.” Within two hours he and his crew cleared away the entrance to what turned out to be the 14th-century-BCE tomb of Ay, Tutankhamun’s successor, a site now designated KV23, which stands for Kings Valley tomb number 23.

But he wasn’t the first one to enter it after Ay’s burial. There was little in the tomb, save the partial remains of Ay’s sarcophagus. So Belzoni returned to Luxor to meet the boat returning

Top: In 1816 Belzoni journeyed to Abu Simbel, the site of a temple fronted by colossal statues of Ramses II. Finding the entry blocked by deep sand, he used his engineering skills to devise a way to clear it. This 19th-century engraving is based on Belzoni’s original drawing of the temple. *Lower:* Another fallen statue of Ramses lies at the end of what was once a covered, hypostyle hall in the Ramesseum.



from Aswan. To his dismay, it arrived without the Osiris frieze from Philae, which had been smashed in spite by agents of his French-employed rival explorer, Bernardino Drovetti. (See sidebar, p. 36.)

Drovetti's men, it turned out, had furthermore convinced the boat's captain that the Osiris frieze stones would sink his boat, and that transporting the Ramses sculpture would do likewise. The regional governor then came to Belzoni's rescue: He ordered the captain to transport the bust of Ramses and anything else Belzoni wanted. Belzoni and his crew eased the giant head down a specially built ramp and onto the vessel, which didn't sink. On November 21, 1816, Belzoni accompanied the head to Alexandria, where it would await transport to England.

Archeologist Don Ryan of Pacific Lutheran University leads me down a rocky escarpment in the Valley of the Kings to KV21, a tomb that both he and Belzoni have excavated. Ryan has written and lectured internationally on Belzoni, and he rejects his predecessor's reputation as a ham-fisted plunderer, crediting him rather as the valley's first modern excavator.

"He is too easy a target. There were no rules back then, no systematic archeological practices. That wouldn't happen for another 70 years. So you have to look at Belzoni in the cultural context of the times," he says.

Nearly lost in 1818 when Belzoni let it slip into the Nile while removing it from the island of Philae, this 22-meter obelisk bears Greek and hieroglyphic inscriptions and dates to 150 BCE. Belzoni's efforts helped it land where it stands today on the Kingston Lacy estate in Dorset, England.



Equally resolute in defending Belzoni, American University of Cairo Egyptologist Salima Ikram is willing to forgive Belzoni's clumsiness, a sin even modern archeologists occasionally commit.

"Who among us hasn't had their Belzoni moment?" she asks.

Still, one winces to read some of Belzoni's accounts. Particularly painful reading is his quest for papyri, made by literally crawling over stacks of mummies at Qurna, near the Ramesseum: "[W]hen my weight bore down on the body of an Egyptian, it crushed it like a band-box ... so that I sunk altogether among the broken mummies, with a crash of bones, rags and wooden cases, which raised such a dust as kept me motionless for a quarter of an hour, waiting till it subsided," he wrote. The pulverized mummies, he concluded, "were rather unpleasant to swallow."

In February 1817, at Salt's behest, Belzoni returned to the Valley of the Kings, accompanied this time by Salt's secretary and an artist. Their mission was to find more artifacts, including mummies and papyri; for his own part, Belzoni was eager to return to his interrupted excavation at Abu Simbel.

It wasn't until summer that Belzoni got his wish, and he and his crew excavated the front of the temple in temperatures topping 51 degrees Celsius. On July 31 they reached

"the upper part of the door as evening approached [and] dug away enough sand to be able to enter," he wrote. But Belzoni chose to wait until dawn, after he observed that the rising sun would pierce directly into the temple's massive, east-facing doorway.

As the first light for more than a thousand years illuminated the interior, the team "entered the finest and ... most magnificent of temples ... enriched with beautiful intaglios, painting, colossal figures," Belzoni gushed.

Belzoni's superlatives still ring true today, I thought as I wandered in my own awe through the lofty, pillared entry hall lined by eight facing statues of Ramses taking the form of Osiris. Although Belzoni and his team took little from the temple, they spent several days measuring, drawing and compiling a detailed record of the structure's interior and exterior.

"Taking measurements, drawing pictures—that is real archeological documentation," says Ryan, who often refers to Belzoni as a "proto-archeologist." The accuracy of Belzoni's record-keeping, says Ryan,

remains useful to this day.

Greek writer Herodotus and Roman writer Strabo, respectively from the fourth century BCE and first century CE, recorded estimates of as many as 47 royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings, though only 18, Strabo said, were visible. The French had identified 12.

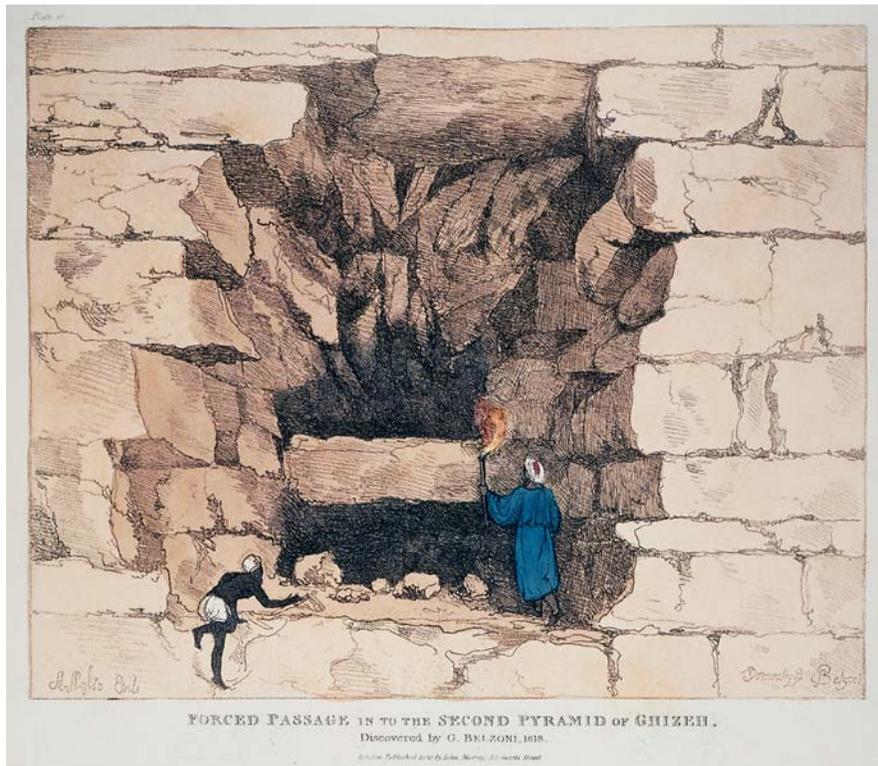
Belzoni was aware of the ancient reports and, like others, took them as reason to keep looking. Back near the tomb of Ay, using “a large pole ... not unlike a battering ram,” he crashed his way into a tomb with

eight mummy cases, including one draped in painted linen, “exactly like the pall upon the coffins of the present day.” It disintegrated on touch. Because Belzoni’s entrance destroyed the clay seals that would have named the interred, what are now known as the KV25 mummies remain unidentified.

On October 9, 1817, after just three days of digging, Belzoni discovered both KV21 and the 12th-century-BCE tomb of Montuherkopshef, eldest son of Ramses IX. The murals, which Belzoni described as being in a “perfect” state of preservation in the tomb’s entry corridor, show the prince making offerings to various gods.

Two days later, Belzoni disturbed the sleeping chamber of Ramses I (1292 to 1189 BCE), the founding father of Egypt’s 19th Dynasty. The pharaoh, however, had long since been moved by 21st-Dynasty priests for safekeeping and only his ka—a statue serving as the soul’s resting place—stood “six feet six inches [two meters] high, and beautifully cut out of sycamore-wood.” Alongside it lay a red-granite sarcophagus containing two mummies, neither of them pharaohs.

The discoveries continued: October 16 was, Belzoni noted, “a fortunate day, one of the best perhaps of my life.” Reading the terrain, he dug about 14 meters from the tomb of Ramses I, where he “had strong reason to suppose, that there was a tomb in that place.” Two days later he entered what remains the deepest, most magnificently decorated tomb in the



Belzoni illustrated his 1822 book with drawings by his own hand, including this one of the entryway of the Second Pyramid (also called the Pyramid of Khafre), which he located, cleared, and in 1818 walked through to become the first modern explorer to enter its burial chamber.

Valley of the Kings: that of Seti I, successor to Ramses I.

“We perceived that the paintings became more perfect as we advanced farther into the interior,” Belzoni wrote of his descent, this one made gingerly, creeping along by candlelight through multiple chambers and along the tomb’s 137-meter-long central corridor. The vast frescoes depict scenes from the *Book of the Gates*, wherein the deceased pharaoh passes through a series of gates, guarded by deities, to reach the afterlife. The burial

chamber’s vaulted, painted ceiling—an innovation, along with the floor-to-ceiling murals—features an inky-blue night sky with astronomical symbols and constellations.

Following Belzoni’s footsteps down, though today with better lighting, I was lucky to gain access to the tomb, which had only recently reopened after extensive conservation. The deeply saturated original colors have faded somewhat due to exposure and damage done by 19th-century archeologists (including Belzoni), whose wax impressions stripped off irreplaceable layers of paint.

The tomb’s unrivaled prize, however, lay in the crypt: an empty sarcophagus carved from a single block “of the finest oriental alabaster ... minutely sculpted within and without with several hundred figures ... as I suppose, the whole of the funeral procession and ceremonies relating to the deceased,” Belzoni wrote.

The Great Belzoni had increased the known number of tombs in the valley by half. However, much of the praise was bestowed on Salt, who assumed credit for the British discoveries in Egypt and who had been accumulating the fruits of Belzoni’s labor—statuary, papyri, mummies, etc.—to sell to the British Museum.

When Belzoni arrived with Sarah in Egypt in 1815, like most first-time visitors, one of the first things they did while in Cairo was to cross the Nile and venture to Giza, “to go see the wonder of the world, the

The dust of the pulverized mummies below him was, he concluded, “rather unpleasant to swallow.”

pyramids.” And like many tourists of the day, he climbed to the top of the Great Pyramid for a sunrise breakfast before exploring its interior—where he got his massive frame stuck, briefly, in the descending corridor.

Now, nearly three years later, he was back, this time as an excavator, looking for a way to get into the Second Pyramid, also known as the Pyramid of Khafre, which writers up to that day had insisted had no entryway.

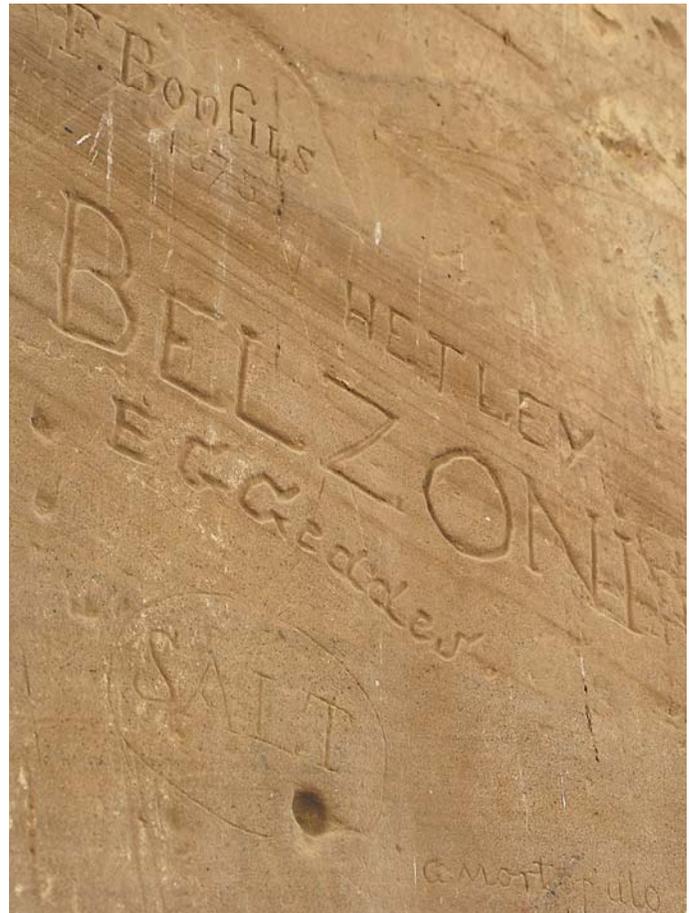
It was slow going at first. After a month of digging and a false passageway, they struck “a large block of granite, inclining downward at the same angle as the passage into the first pyramid, and pointing toward the centre.” Levering the stone out of the way, Belzoni found himself “in the way to the central chamber of one of the two great pyramids of Egypt.”

Although he became the first modern explorer to set foot inside its burial chamber, he was not the first since the pyramid’s construction: Arabic graffiti on the wall announced a visitor dating around 1200 CE. Following suit, Belzoni emblazoned his own name across the length of the tomb’s south wall, declaring: “*Scoperta da* [Discovered by] G. Belzoni. 2. Mar. 1818.”

Soon after this triumph, Belzoni faced yet another challenge from his French rivals. Belzoni learned that Drovetti’s agents had been assigned to Philae to preempt his removal of the obelisk. Belzoni made haste back to Philae, where he oversaw the loading of the obelisk—after dropping it into the Nile and, fortunately, recovering it.

Why the Italians?

During Belzoni’s time in Egypt, his fellow countrymen could be found everywhere. Among them was Belzoni’s arch-rival Bernardino Drovetti, a former French consul who scoured the country for artifacts to sell to the French and who continually tried to thwart Belzoni’s efforts. Like Belzoni, Drovetti and other Italian adventurers in Egypt at the time hailed from northern Italy, which in Belzoni’s day was part of France—hence Drovetti’s French allegiance. Francesco Tiradritti, director of the Italian archeological mission in Luxor, says that northern Italians were historically drawn to Egypt because, according to legend, the northern Italian city of Turin “was supposed to have had ancient Egyptian origins” via an Egyptian prince who journeyed to the region around 1523 BCE with a large group of followers, looking for new lands. During the Renaissance, humanists, centered in northern Italy and mindful of the legendary connection, looked to Egypt and its treasures as symbols of ancient wisdom, Tiradritti adds.



On the wall of the Ramesseum, Belzoni carved his name carefully, unmistakably and indelibly—both above and more prominently than that of his patron and consul general of Britain in Egypt, Henry Salt, which is faintly visible near the bottom at left.

That was, Belzoni decided, a dramatic swan song from which to exit Egypt’s vast stage. He and Sarah left for England in September 1819. He had discovered and excavated some of the most famous sites in ancient Egyptian history, yet both he and Sarah had endured illness, hardships, threats from the French and the perceived ingratitude of Salt

Taking a showman’s cue from Belzoni, Soane set candles inside the sarcophagus, and their glow proved visible through the translucent alabaster.

who, ultimately, did publicly declare his high regard for Belzoni and arrange a generous stipend for him.

Nonetheless, Belzoni was ready to leave: “[N]ot that I disliked the country I was in ... nor do I complain of the Turks or Arabs in general, but of some Europeans who are in that



Central masterpiece of the Soane Museum in London, the alabaster sarcophagus of Seti I, pharaoh who succeeded Ramses I in the late 12th century BCE, was celebrated last year as part of the bicentennial of Belzoni's discovery. He described the burial vessel as "minutely sculpted within and without with several hundred figures."

country, whose conduct and mode of thinking are a disgrace to human nature."

In March 1820 he published his narrative. Lavishly illustrated by the author himself, the book was a sensation, and the press warmed to him, hailing him as a "celebrated traveler" and "a pioneer ... of antiquarian researches." Cashing in on this wave of celebrity amid a general atmosphere of Egyptomania, Belzoni returned to the stage—this time in a spectacle that featured a scaled replica of the colorful tomb of Seti I in Piccadilly's Egyptian Hall (coincidentally so named after its faux-Egyptian façade). True to his proven showmanship, Belzoni, assisted by a team of physicians, opened the evening's entertainment by unwrapping a mummy.

The Piccadilly address is now an office building, though a photograph of the old performance hall hangs in the lobby. Crossing the street, I caught a double-decker bus to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Sir John Soane's Museum stands along a quiet back street. Soane, a wealthy architect and avid collector of art and antiquities, purchased the Seti sarcophagus from Salt in 1824 for £2,000, after the British Museum declined it. (The museum had just spent a controversial £35,000 to buy the Elgin Marbles.) Soane placed the sarcophagus on display in the crypt-like basement of his trio of adjoining houses that now comprise the museum. It remains there today, protected by a glass display case.

In 1825 Soane debuted his acquisition, still the finest Egyptian artifact in the UK, by inviting the cream of London society to come see it. Taking a showman's cue from Belzoni, Soane astonished his guests by darkening the room and setting candles inside the sarcophagus, whose glow proved visible

through the translucent alabaster. On hand that evening was Sarah, but not her husband: It had been two years since The Great Belzoni had succumbed to dysentery during an expedition to West Africa.

Salt was not much luckier. Although he amassed a fortune auctioning off his pillage, he died in 1827 after trying to sell the bulk of his collection to the British Museum. Ironically, when it wouldn't meet his asking price of £10,000, Charles X of France snapped it up, the better to enlarge the Egyptian collection at the Louvre.

Last year Soane's museum began a commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Belzoni's discovery of the Seti sarcophagus by opening an exhibit devoted to his life's work. Belzoni, says curator Joanna Tinworth, did "the best he could at the time" with the tools at his disposal. While some scavengers, in the form of competing archeologists, left behind vacant tombs and rubble, Belzoni bequeathed to modern researchers detailed records that became one of the foundations upon which the modern science of archeology has been built. 🌐



Tom Verde (tomverde.pressfolios.com) is a senior contributor to *AramcoWorld*. For their assistance in researching this article, he thanks guide and teacher Abdallah Nosseir and Djed Travel of Cairo.



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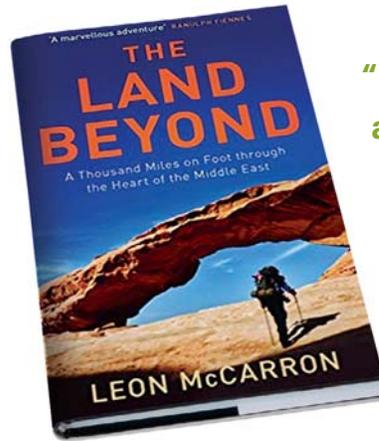
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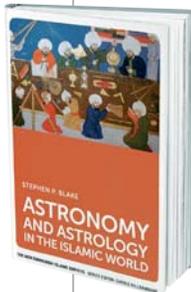
“Trails can bring life to a dying landscape, and can forge relationships between segregated communities. Walking on such trails illuminates hope, and peace, and hospitality. It is an inherently positive activity, and a simple one rooted in equality and goodwill.”

The Land Beyond: A Thousand Miles on Foot through the Heart of the Middle East

Leon McCarron. 2017, I.B. Tauris, 978-1-78831-056-7, \$25 hb.

At one point in this personal account of a long-distance trek across the Middle East, the author muses: “There is a convincing case for [us essayist] Rebecca Solnit’s contention that the brain works at three miles an hour.” If anything encapsulates the spirit of Northern Irish explorer Leon McCarron’s inspiring adventure among marginalized people and overlooked landscapes, it’s the idea of walking as therapy—for personal healing, for education, but also for cross-cultural understanding and perhaps even for international reconciliation. It’s a hugely entertaining read, following the ups and downs of this journey on foot from Jerusalem through Palestine and Jordan to the summit of Mount Sinai in Egypt, illuminated with tender, insightful vignettes: McCarron makes light of the time when he turned up exhausted in a remote Jordanian village only to have a stranger take him into his house to wash his feet, feed him and give him a bed, but it’s an affecting passage in an often-moving book. The great British explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes called McCarron’s trip “a marvelous adventure.” He’s not wrong.

—MATTHEW TELLER



Astronomy and Astrology in the Islamic World

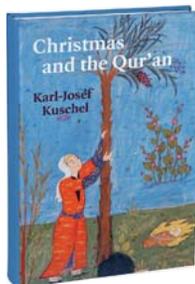
Stephen P. Blake. 2016, Edinburgh UP, 978-0-7486-4910-5, \$125 hb.

Blake demonstrates that until the late 16th century major advances in science were driven by the astronomers and mathematicians of the Islamic world, explaining

that astrology was closely linked to the science of astronomy from earliest times. In both the Islamic and early European periods, scientists frequently funded their research by casting horoscopes, and predicting and interpreting celestial events. Blake traces the advance of scientific knowledge from the Abbasid era (mid-eighth to mid-13th century) to the Renaissance. Astronomer/astrologer Abu Ma’shar, for example, powerfully influenced European thinkers. Al-Khwarizmi’s treatise on the motion and positions of heavenly bodies was the first Arabic work of its kind to reach Europe intact in the 12th century. Contributions of Islamic astronomy included

major inputs from Islamic Spain and Central Asia. Blake details the role of Islamic astronomers in developing observatories, astrolabes, celestial globes and other instruments. He tracks the transfer of Islamic astronomical and astrological knowledge to scientists such as Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler and Isaac Newton.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



Christmas and the Qur'an

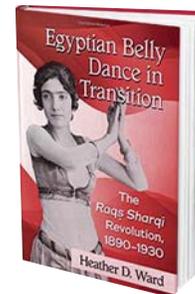
Karl-Josef Kuschel. 2017, Gingko Library, 978-1-90994-208-0, \$44.95 cl.

Originally published in German in 2008, this comparative study

of Mary, Jesus and John the Baptist in the Bible and Qur’an is also the author’s call for continued dialogue between Christianity and Islam. It focuses on what the two faiths share, advocating that a love of Jesus and Mary is one such commonality. Kuschel, a Catholic theologian, opens with a comparison of the different Christian gospels, particularly

Mathew and Luke, about the birth of Jesus, going on to discuss how the role of Mary is both similar and different in the Bible and Qur’an. Written in simple language, this is an easily accessible and insightful comparison of the two religions, particularly for those familiar with only Christianity or Islam.

—ALIA YUNIS



Egyptian Belly Dance in Transition: The Raqs Sharqi Revolution, 1890-1930

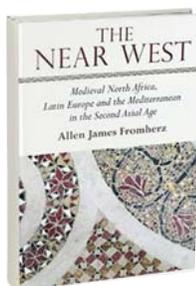
Heather D. Ward. 2018, McFarland, 978-1-47666-674-7, \$39.95 pb.

Cultural historians have asserted that *raqs sharqi* (“eastern dance”)—public interpretations of *raqs beladi* (“belly dance”) performed at private celebrations like weddings—evolved during the British colonial era in Egypt in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in response to Western influences and desires, Ward writes in this study of the often-stereotyped art form. She argues that *raqs sharqi* was in fact



a rebellion against foreign occupation, “a product of Egyptians actively defining and asserting their cultural and national identity.” Drawing on Arabic primary sources including accounts by “Egyptians who created the dance themselves,” the book takes readers into the Arab-owned, colonial-era entertainment halls where raqs sharqi was presented. We learn that the outfit worn by dancers was not “a Western fantasy costume,” but descended from “an indigenous (though Ottoman-influenced) ... style.” What was seen on stage was not some titillating Orientalist vision, “but hybrid cultural expressions ... embraced as authentically Egyptian.”

—TOM VERDE



The Near West: Medieval North Africa, Latin Europe and the Mediterranean in the Second Axial Age

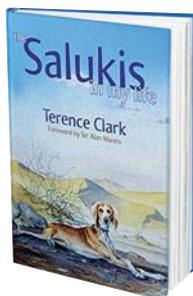
Allen James Fromherz. 2016, Edinburgh UP, 978-0-7486-4294-6, \$120 hb.

The author argues that North Africa played a key role in the religio-cultural transformation of the Mediterranean region that peak-

ed in the 12th century CE, making the medieval period a pivotal or “axial” era comparable to the mid-first millennium BCE. Fromherz takes a fresh look at a variety of sources, finding—rather than a period of sometimes violent hostility—a fascinating mixing of cultures in art and architecture, music, poetry, medicine and commerce. He builds

his case around four cities—Bèjaïa (today’s Bougie, Algeria), Rome, Tunis and Marrakech—and describes North Africa as “a dynamic republic of letters, words and ideas.” In the form of the Berber Almoravid and Almohad dynasties, North Africa was a dominant player in the history of the Western Mediterranean, as the strict conservatism of the initial rulers gave way to a more tolerant, cosmopolitan worldview.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



The Salukis in My Life

Sir Terence Clark. 2018, Medina Publishing, 978-1-91148-703-6, \$35 hb.

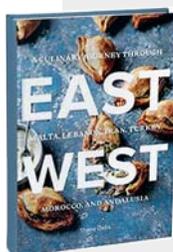
Although Clark spent most of his long diplomatic career in the Middle East, it was only after he had been named British ambassador to Iraq in 1984 that he and his

wife acquired their first saluki—a sand-colored puppy whose Kurdish owner really didn’t want to let her go. Beautiful, affectionate and born for the chase, Tayra’s hunting exploits introduced Clark to fellow enthusiasts ranging from Bedouin tribesmen to Gulf royalty, all of whom had much to teach him about the saluki breed and its ancient heritage. Clark retired in 1994, but he continued to visit the Middle East to see old friends and their new salukis, as well as participate in conferences dedicated to preserving the breed. A 1999 trip to Iran sparked an interest in the Tazi, or Persian, saluki, and Clark later broadened his conservation efforts to salukis in Russia and China. In this book, he tells of his diplomatic work, his travels and especially the joy that came into the Clarks’ lives when they adopted the first of their spirited, desert-bred salukis.

—JANE WALDRON GRUTZ

Epicurean Excursions

REVIEWED BY TOM VERDE



East/West: A Culinary Journey through Malta, Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, Morocco, and Andalusia

Shane Delia. 2017, Interlink, 978-1-56656-006-1, \$35 hb.

Noting the latitudinal boundaries of the countries in this handsome cookbook’s subtitle, students of history will quickly get the gist. This “East” to “West” culinary journey is “deeply rooted” in the

author’s Phoenician heritage, a legacy of trade and travel dating to antiquity. Yet the equally adventurous modern cook will appreciate the creative range of recipes offered here, rooted in tradition, yet updated for the contemporary, albeit sophisticated, kitchen. Starting in Malta, his ancestral home, chef Shane Delia provides a version of the island’s signature dish: rabbit stew. Due east lies Lebanon, where traditional baked bulgar (*kibbeh*) is nuanced with tomato, mint and pomegranate molasses. From Turkey comes Delia’s own twist on Turkish delight, made from fine semolina and candied, spiced pumpkin. Beautiful photographs highlight the rich diversity of these cultural cuisines.

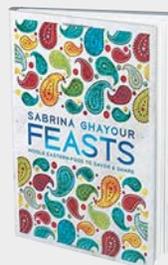
know, as one early Baghdadi author put it, what “kings and caliphs and lords and leaders” ate. This popular collection of 635 recipes was anonymously compiled in Syria in the 13th century. Its meticulous organization was one reason for its success. Its heady combinations also made it popular, for it infused dishes with aromatic ingredients “such as rose water, musk, or ambergris,” rendering medieval Arab fine dining “a feast for the nose.” An extensive glossary, plus facing pages of the original Arabic text, make this a desirable reference work for scholars. While the medieval recipes are impractical for modern cooks, examples such as “sanbusak”—layered cuts of meat sautéed with “coriander seeds, Chinese cinnamon, mastic and pepper” stuffed with saffron-colored poppy seed and pistachio bread crumbs—may still coax sighs from envious gourmands.

and tangy tomato sauce (*koshari*), lemony sugar syrup (drenching *atayef*, crunchy, pan-fried “pillows” of pastry stuffed with walnuts and raisins), and the foundations of an Egyptian mom’s meat loaf (*kobeba*): ground beef fortified with bulgar and spiced with cinnamon and nutmeg. Grownups might be more receptive to ‘*akkawi* (slow-cooked oxtail) or *mukh ma’el-beid* (lamb brains with egg). This book, from an Egyptian cook raised 12,000 kilometers away from the source of her inspiration, holds a little something for everyone.

Feasts: Middle Eastern Food to Savor & Share

Sabrina Ghayour. Weldon Owen, 2018, 978-1-68188-374-8, \$35 hb.

The “breaking of bread and sharing of meals have long played a part in uniting cultures, communities, and families” throughout the Middle East, writes Ghayour, a noted British-Iranian chef who hosts a popular supper club at



various sites in London. With family meals and ritual gatherings as focal points, her colorful new cookbook offers menu suggestions and more than 90 recipes, arranged according to occasion, time of day or diet preference. Many are creative and jazzy, such as burnt-orange salad with pistachios, mint and pomegranate. The novice cook may be intimidated by some ingredients—like Greek basil or Maldon sea salt, most readily available in Britain—and regrettably the book offers no substitute suggestions. Yet the resourceful home cook can either find these online or work around them to create impressive feasts of his or her own.

Scents and Flavors: A Syrian Cookbook

Charles Perry, ed. and tr. 2017, New York UP, 978-1-47985-628-2, \$30 hb.

Aside from a few examples from antiquity, it wasn’t until medieval times—between the 10th and 13th centuries—that cookbooks appeared, courtesy of Arab scribes. The texts addressed the public’s desire to



The Taste of Egypt: Home Cooking from the Middle East

Dyna Eldaif. 2016, AUC Press, 978-977-416-755-3, \$35 hb.

While this colorful volume includes many of the usual Egyptian ingredients—fava beans (*ful*) and lamb, bulgur and eggplant—it is a far-from-conventional cookbook. To begin with,

the author explains that she is “an Australian born to Egyptian parents” who learned many traditional recipes from her mother or relatives in Cairo while taping a Middle Eastern reality-TV cooking show. She adds that “many Egyptian dishes are great for kids,” an often overlooked yet obvious virtue of recipes featuring macaroni





EVENTS

Highlights from
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CURRENT / SEPTEMBER

The Mosaic Rooms 10 Years: *Modern Masters and Contemporary Culture from the Arab World and Iran* celebrates the museum's 10th anniversary with six exhibitions and events divided into two parts running to autumn 2019. Presented is a series of seminal modernist artists from Egypt, Iran and Morocco curated by Morad Montazami and a series of group shows presenting contemporary art from these three countries organized in partnership with regional institutions and curators. The Mosaic Rooms, **London**, through September 19.

Islam e Firenze: *Arte e Collazionismo dai Medici al Novecento* ("Islam and Florence: Art and Collectibles of the Medici to 1900") offers visitors the opportunity to discover the knowledge, exchange, dialogue and mutual influences between the arts of East and West. The exhibit illustrates the important role Florence played in interfaith

and intercultural exchanges between the 15th and late 19th centuries—in addition to Florence's longstanding interest in the Islamic world. That is apparent as early as in the diaries of Florentine merchants like Simone Sigoli, Leonardo Frescobaldi and Giorgio Gucci, who traveled to the Levant in 1384 and visited Cairo and Damascus, remarking in amazement on the quantity and outstanding beauty of the items they saw. Le Gallerie degli Uffizi and Museo Nazionale il Bargello, **Florence**, through September 23.

Ottoman Arcadia: *The Hamidian Expedition to the Land of Tribal Roots (1886)*. In 1886 Sultan Abdülhamid II commissioned an official expedition to create three volumes of photography documenting the dramatic landscapes, towns and monuments of the early Ottoman settlements of Yenisehir, Söğüt, Bozüyük and Bursa in Anatolia. These photographs, with handwritten captions in Ottoman

Turkish and French, are displayed for the first time along with contemporaneous

documents, images and publications from other collections. They document the inhabitants of these areas in the Ottoman Empire and demonstrate how layers of memory could be reclaimed through the medium of photography. Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, **Istanbul**, through September 30.

CURRENT / OCTOBER

Margiana: *A Bronze Age Kingdom in Turkmenistan*. Margiana is the name of a historical site in eastern Turkmenistan that 4,000 years ago was the cradle of an advanced Bronze Age civilization. Featured are the results of archeological investigations undertaken in the ancient city of Gonur Tepe, where structures discovered bear witness to early instances of urban planning. The palace complex and burial sites known as the "Tombs of the Kings" have revealed relationships to the regions that would subsequently form the network known as the Silk Roads. More than 2,200 objects from Gonur Tepe are on display for the first time outside Turkmenistan. Neues Museum, **Berlin**, through October 7.

CURRENT / NOVEMBER

Jameel Prize 5 features this year's prizewinners, Iraqi artist Mehdi



Ways of Seeing includes "The Algiers' Sections of a Happy Moment," a 37-minute, black-and-white video produced in 2008 by David Claerbout that uses some 600 photographs captured around a small soccer field on a roof in the casbah of Algiers.

to explore the ways by which artists assign forms and concepts that seem familiar with renewed appearances and meanings. This third iteration of the exhibition—the first opened in Istanbul last summer and the second in Brussels this past winter—includes new works by Palestinian multimedia artist Mona Hatoum, Emirati artist Lateefa bint Maktoum and the late Hassan Sharif. NYU **Abu Dhabi** Art Gallery, through November 17.

Ways of Seeing brings together 26 internationally acclaimed artists and art collectives in media including painting, sculpture, photography, sound, film and installation. The exhibition is based on John Berger's seminal 1972 text on visual culture, *Ways of Seeing*, in which he shifted the emphasis of art criticism away from the professional art-expert and relocated it within the grasp of the layperson. In taking its cue from Berger's groundbreaking argument, this exhibition invites the viewer to engage with the artwork and



Moutashar and Bangladeshi architect Marina Tabassum, along with the six other artists and designers shortlisted for the biennial award. This marked the first time the £25,000 biennial award for contemporary artists and designers inspired by Islamic tradition has been given to joint winners. Moutashar created four works of minimalist abstraction rooted in Islamic geometry, including her 2014 “A Fold at 120 Degrees and a Square,” while Tabassum won for her Bait ur Rouf mosque, built in 2012 in Dhaka. Shortlisted participants include artist Kamrooz Aram, fashion designer Hala Kaiksow, and Hayv Kahraman of Iraq, who shows her distinctive paintings of female figures based on 3D scans of herself. Victoria and Albert Museum, **London**, through November 25.

CURRENT / DECEMBER

Núria Güell and Levi Orta: *The Aesthetics of a Property Map, Syria (Part I)*. Barcelona-based artists Núria Güell and Levi Orta examine power structures and relationships through their collaborative practice. Güell leverages her privilege as an artist and as a white, middle-class, European woman to challenge hegemonic legal and moral systems. Orta investigates the creative dimension of the political by appropriating or simulating established protocols to reveal their constructed nature. They create “analytic replicas” to critically translate, in

the field of art, strategies deployed by neoliberal capitalism to maintain social inequalities. The artists examine the business interests linked to the appropriation of housing in Syria in the context of the Syrian war as well as the provision of it to asylum-seekers in Teesside in Middlesbrough, suggesting that a mechanism of profit-making runs through the situation, and considering museums as cultural influencers. **Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK**, throughout 2018.

COMING / NOVEMBER

Misk Art Week transforms Riyadh with art and design exhibitions, music and performing arts, film programs, creative workshops and art fairs as it brings together artists, galleries, creatives and cultural enthusiasts. Celebrate modern and contemporary creativity with gallerists, filmmakers, curators and cultural producers. Various locations, **Riyadh**, November 1 through 7.

Egypt’s Sunken Cities. More than 1,200 years ago, two ancient cities were lost to natural disasters and the rising tides of the Mediterranean Sea. Two decades ago, underwater archeologist Franck Goddio and his team discovered those cities, revealing monumental statues, religious images carved in stone, exquisite jewelry and delicate ceramics—bringing a greater understanding of life during the age of the pharaohs. **Minneapolis**

Institute of Art, November 4 through April 19.

I am Ashurbanipal, King of the World, King of Assyria. In the seventh century BCE, King Ashurbanipal of Assyria was the most powerful man on Earth. He described himself in inscriptions as “king of the world,” and his reign from the city of Nineveh (now in northern Iraq) marked the high point of the Assyrian empire, which stretched from the shores of the eastern Mediterranean to the mountains of western Iran. Ashurbanipal projected an image of a ruler worthy of protecting his people through accounts and stone reliefs showing feats of strength and courage—notably hunting lions. Like many rulers of the era, he boasted about his victories in battle and his brutality in crushing enemies. However, this vast and diverse empire was controlled through more than force: Ashurbanipal used his skills as a scholar, diplomat and strategist to become one of Assyria’s greatest rulers. This exhibition tells the story of the Assyrian king through the British Museum’s collection of Assyrian treasures and rare loans that together allow for a portrait of a complex leader. **British Museum, London**, November 8 through February 24.

The Far Shore features five Arab American artists—painters Reem Bassous and Helen Zughaib, photographer Rania Mater, printmaker John Halaka and multimedia artist

Melissa Chimera, who also curated the exhibit. Their new work draws inspiration from contemporary Arab poets including Chimera’s mother, Lebanese American poet Adele Ne Jame, Texas poet Hayan Charara, Haas Mroue of Lebanon, Sharif El Musa and Palestinian American Guggenheim fellow Naomi Shihab Nye. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, November 9 through April.

PERMANENT

Rain Room is a site-specific installation created by the London-based collaborative-studio Random International that provides an immersive experience of continuous rainfall. When visitors enter the room, they are directed to navigate intuitively and carefully through the dark underground space to protect themselves from the downpour. As the visitors walk through the room, which uses 1,200 liters of self-cleaning, recycled water, their movements are detected by motion sensors that trigger the rainfall to pause. **Al Majarra, Sharjah, UAE.**

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