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AramcoWorld





6 For the Love of Reading

Written by **Piney Kesting**
 Photographs courtesy of **We Love Reading**

From its first read-aloud in Jordan in 2006, We Love Reading has become one of the world's most-recognized nonprofit organizations encouraging reading among children. Behind its success stand more than 7,000 local volunteer "reading ambassadors"—mostly women—in 61 countries and its founder, a scientist whose own four children inspired her.

12 The Alhambras of Latin America

Written by **Raphael López Guzmán, Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales, et al.**
 Photographs courtesy of **Raphael López Guzmán**

From the 1860s to the 1930s, architects throughout South America and the Caribbean took inspirations from the Islamic design heritage of southern Spain, where the most inspiring building of all proved to be the Alhambra palace.

22 Habibi Funk's Musical Revivals

Written by **Mariam Shahin**

Across North Africa a few back-street stores still sell records pressed in the '70s and '80s. There Jannis Stürtz has been digging for local classics to rerelease on his digital-and-vinyl label, Habibi Funk, bringing them to global audiences and illuminating some the era's most vibrantly hybrid music scenes.

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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 Cinnamon, pepper, nutmeg, cloves, ginger and cumin: From origins in Asia all have become popular kitchen staples in much of the world. Each has a story that will appear this year in the series *Spice Migrations*. Art by Linda Dalal Sawaya.

BACK COVER Arches, columns and motifs of the 1927 billiards room of the Palacio Portales in Cochabamba, Bolivia, echo those of the 13th- and 14th-century Alhambra palace in Granada, Spain. (See map, page 16, item N.) Photo courtesy of Raphael López Guzmán.



26 Britain's Muslim Heritage Trails

Written by **Matthew Teller**

Photographed by **Andrew Shaylor**

Not far from London, newly inaugurated walking routes trace some of the first Islamic patronages and cultural contributions to the UK. The trails start at the country's first purpose-built mosque and lead to two cemeteries—one dedicated to nearly forgotten Muslim veterans and the other the resting place of several dozen British Muslims, more than a few of them leaders in their fields. While the sites owe their origins to a 19th-century linguist, the trails have come about through collaborations among a local journalist, the London-based nonprofit Everyday Muslim and the town of Woking. All have teamed up so visitors can walk the paths of stories that hold "the potential to change Britain's popular historical narrative."

34 Spice Migrations: Cinnamon

Written by **Jeff Koehler**

Art by **Linda Dalal Sawaya**

The series *Spice Migrations* opens in Sri Lanka with one of the world's favorite spices, which once grew exclusively on that island. Traders priced cinnamon like gold, and those who could get it used it for health as much as for flavor. A storm, and a Portuguese fleet, changed everything.

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FIRSTLOOK

Rodeo 7 Double Mute Grab

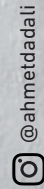
Photograph by Pally Learmond

This past spring we were in Austria filming, just before the project was cut short because of the coronavirus. For this shot I did a simple rodeo 7, which is two horizontal spins, and added a little extra spice by throwing in a double mute grab, which is holding one ski with both hands. It was a super high-speed jump, which I needed to make the 25 meters to the landing. I was lucky to land it first hit. On jumps like this it can be easy to miscalculate. Freeskiers have to become amateur physicists to build the jumps, calculating speed and altitude to landing, as well as the height of the cliffs we jump from and how much time we have to spin—anywhere from 180 to 1440 degrees or more.

This past season I helped start Silk Road Freeride, the first competition like it in Kyrgyzstan. About 30 guys and women from Turkey, Bosnia, Kazakhstan and all over joined local Kyrgyz to ski their mountains and get to know each other. When you have skiing as a common link, it's not hard to socialize. It couldn't have gone better, and I hope I can be part of this event for years to come.

I grew up skiing in New York, with small hills, frostbite-cold winters and absolutely no freeride terrain. But what we did have was a great group of ski friends and motivation to travel out for bigger and better. Couple this with me being the only Muslim professional skier in the whole sport, and you can see where my motivation to spread the love into the Middle East and beyond comes from. Everywhere may not have the fancy ski resorts, but there is extraordinary love for the sport, a great social culture and a great drive for more.

—Ahmet Dadali





FLAVORS

Lamb and Egyptian Rice With Cinnamon, Nutmeg and Peas/Green Fava Beans

Recipe by
Joudi Kalla

Photograph courtesy
Jaime Orlando Smith

Reprinted with
permission from
Baladi Palestine

Joudi Kalla
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When we were young, this dish was always present, since it didn't take too long to make.

I have included two versions here, since you can literally swap the peas for the beans if you like. *Ruz wa bazela*, how we know it in Palestine, was a childhood favorite of mine and still is. I love the meat-and-rice mixture with the spices and the peas, served with buttered pine nuts. We prefer the peas, but my mama loves the *ful* (fava beans). Try both and decide which is your favorite.

(Serves 4–6)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5 tablespoons sunflower oil | 1 teaspoon grated nutmeg |
| 200 grams (7 ounces) ground lamb | 2 ¾ cups (650 milliliters) water |
| 1 teaspoon salt | 1 ½ cups (200 grams / 7 ounces) frozen peas or fava beans |
| 1 teaspoon cracked black pepper | 2 tablespoons (30 grams / 1 ounce) butter |
| 2 ¼ cups (450 grams / 1 pound) Egyptian or short grain rice | ½ cup (70 grams / 2 ½ ounces) pine nuts |
| 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon | Yogurt dip, to serve |

If using frozen fava beans, boil them in water for 25 minutes and drain.

Heat the oil in a pan, add the ground lamb and cook for 5 minutes to brown. Add the salt, pepper and rice; stir to combine. Add the cinnamon and nutmeg and stir again. Add the water, bring to a boil and add the frozen peas or cooked fava beans. Cook, covered, over medium-low heat for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a separate pan, melt the butter and fry the pine nuts until golden. Keep a close eye on them, since they burn easily. Set aside.

Spoon the rice into serving dishes, add the buttered pine nuts and serve with the yogurt dip on the side.



Joudi Kalla has been a chef for more than 20 years. She trained in London at Leiths School of Food and Wine, and she has worked in many prestigious restaurants before going on to run her own successful catering business. She opened a Palestinian deli, Baity Kitchen, in London, from 2010–2013 to much acclaim before turning her sights to writing her first bestselling cookbook *Palestine on a Plate*. She runs cooking classes, catering events and pop-up supper clubs, and she consults on food projects.



FOR THE
LOVE OF

RE



READING

Written by **PINEY KESTING**

Photographs courtesy of **WE LOVE READING**

It was a perfect Saturday in Amman, Jordan, warm and sunny, and all 6-year-old Layan Al-Sweilemeen wanted to do was play with her friends. Her parents, however, had something else in mind. The imam at their local mosque had invited families attending Friday prayer to return with their children the next day for a new community read-aloud story program.



Fourteen years later, Al-Sweilemeen recalls how that day she and her younger brother reluctantly joined a couple dozen neighborhood kids at the mosque.

“There was this lady wearing a funny hat, who we only knew as ‘the *hakawati*,’” says Al-Sweilemeen, using the Arabic word for storyteller. “She read us several stories in all these different voices and tones. It was really interesting,” she recalls. At the end each of the children received a book and a promise of more stories in two weeks’ time.

The lady in the hat was Rana Dajani, a professor of molecular cell biology at the Hashemite University in Jordan and, as of that day, February 11, 2006, founder of We Love Reading (WLR), which translates in Arabic as *nahnu n’hibu al qira’a*.

Al-Sweilemeen, now a student at the University of Jordan, remembers that she continued to attend the story sessions led by Dajani and other “WLR ambassadors” until she was 9 years old. Although her parents had a library at home, she says, it didn’t include children’s books. She credits WLR with sparking her own passion for learning through reading. Al-Sweilemeen admits, however, that she never imagined how much WLR would grow. “You wouldn’t think something as small as a local reading circle would blow up and go all around the world,” she notes.

Today 60 countries beyond Jordan host WLR programs including most in the Middle East and others throughout Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. By 2019, 4,370 WLR ambassadors and approximately 7,500 trainees had led some 152,300 reading sessions for more than 447,000 children worldwide. In addition, true to Dajani’s goal, 4,300 WLR libraries have opened, each one a place where trained volunteers read aloud and exchange books with children.

Since 2011 WLR has worked with Jordanian authors and



Donning a costume hat and a hand puppet, We Love Reading founder Rana Dajani engages children at a mosque in her home neighborhood of Tabarbour in Amman, Jordan. “I’ve always wanted to have a broader impact beyond the walls of the university,” says Dajani. She credits her inspiration for WLR to enthusiasm her own children expressed for after-school reading programs they attended in Des Moines, Iowa, while Dajani was earning her doctorate at the University of Iowa. **LOWER** Adult volunteers crowd a WLR training led by “reading ambassadors” in Irbid, Jordan.

illustrators to produce 32 children’s stories for ages 4–10, and WLR’s ambassadors have distributed more than 261,000 copies. The stories all touch on real-life themes, from the fundamentals of friendship and empathy to countering bullying, protecting the environment and adapting to refugee life and disabilities.

This was quite a leap from the early days. Then an associate professor at Hashemite University, Dajani says she first spent three years spreading word of WLR neighbor to neighbor and publicizing it with radio ads and leaflets in local parks—all with the help of her family.

“Rana’s energy vibrates,” says her husband, former WLR CEO Mohammad Awad. “She not only

has the energy; she believes that things will always work out.”

The oldest of nine children of Palestinian and Syrian heritage, Dajani was only 16 when she enrolled in the premed program at the University of Jordan. In 1999, as a young mother of three girls and a boy, she received a Fulbright Student Grant to pursue her doctoral degree in molecular cell biology in the US at the University of Iowa. By her early 40s, she had become the world’s leading expert on the genetics of Jordan’s Circassian and Chechen populations. In 2015, *Arabian Business* named Dajani one of the “100 Most Powerful Arab Women,” and that same year, the US



Dina Al Mawed, Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp, Lebanon

"Simplicity," says Dina Al Mawed, is "what makes the WLR program unique." In 2018 Al Mawed, a recent university graduate, became WRL's first volunteer ambassador in the 80,000-person camp in south Lebanon where she grew up. "It's not about your level of education or where you hold your reading sessions," she explains. "What is important to WLR is to have the passion and willingness to give to one's community."

Al Mawed recalls how at first the children laughed when she said that she was going to read books to them. "The first session was the hardest," she notes. "However, by the end, they asked me to read the *Khaweef* story twice, and they were eager to know when I would read to them again." *Khaweef*, she explains, is a story of a frightened boy who is often bullied, but after he befriends a night monster who helps him overcome his

fears, he then can help other children.

"Reading a story for children is a very simple act," says Al Mawed, "but for both the child and the ambassador it often leads to something great and unexpected." In particular, she has learned how important it is to select stories that resonate with children living under duress.

Now when she reads, the children sit quietly. She says they seem to empathize with the characters, and they look forward to the next session.

State Department Hub for the Middle East and Africa inducted her into the Women in Science Hall of Fame.

"As a scientist I feel a strong sense of responsibility toward all of society to help develop solutions for today's most pressing problems," wrote Dajani in her book, *Five Scarves: Doing the Impossible—If We Can Reverse Cell Fate, Why Can't We Redefine Success?* (Nova Science, 2018). "But I've always wanted to have a broader

impact beyond the walls of the university. It was this aspiration that eventually led me to found a program that has become one of the most important initiatives of my life—We Love Reading."

The seeds for WLR had been planted long ago in her youth. "I was a bookworm," she noted. "In our home, my parents assembled a library that covered a long wall from floor to ceiling with books of all kinds in English and Arabic. I devoured every last one of those texts while still a young girl. I read everywhere."

When Dajani and her family moved to Iowa City in 2000 for what would become five years, their four kids spent hours after school at the city's public library, where they took part in read-aloud sessions and children's book groups. Dajani was so impressed that when it came time to return to Jordan in 2005, she expressed her gratitude to the library in a poem that was published in *The Daily Iowan*

newspaper:

Can I imagine a life
without the Iowa City
Library? The excitement
of finding a book to
read ... The quickening
of the heartbeat at
the thought of finding
a book long sought.
... But wait ... I have
learned creativity so I
will create wherever I
go my own library that
will grow and mature
with my family in the
fertile soul of my land
in Middle Eastery.

Back in Amman in December 2005, Dajani noticed that despite Jordan's 98-percent national literacy rate, it was rare to see children or adults reading on buses or in public. Libraries



LEFT Trainees volunteering at the Azraq refugee camp practice presentation and reading aloud.

LOWER A WLR ambassador engages in Mafraq, Jordan. "We train them how to read aloud as an art," says Dajani. "And we train them also on how to start a reading aloud session in their neighborhood."



were few and their hours were short; none offered activities for children.

“Early-childhood-development research underscores the impact reading has on brain development as well as on social skills, especially if it is introduced

before the age of 10,” she says.

Her desire to promote reading in Amman became a family project. Family discussions led to a plan to attract neighborhood volunteers, teach them read-aloud storytelling techniques and help them set up informal children’s libraries.

Her three daughters helped her choose books and arrange the reading sessions. They also took turns reading aloud to children. They built WLR’s first website using a logo the family created one night at the kitchen table. Today Sumaya, Amina, Sara and their brother Abdullah are all young adults who continue to be WLR advisors and fundraisers.

At first it was difficult to attract volunteers and convince anyone in her community that a home-grown project could make a difference. Yet the numbers of children attending her readings continued to rise, and kids began to ask their parents to read to them at home. Local libraries reported a five-fold increase in book-borrowing by families.

In 2009 the New York-based foundation Synergos presented Dajani with its Arab World Social Innovator Award. Dajani used its \$34,000 grant to offer free two-day training workshops, and she hired Palestinian artist Denes Assad to teach the art of storytelling. She purchased 25 books for each newly trained ambassador



In 2015 on a visit to WLR volunteers in Uganda, Dajani distributes bags of books after a read-aloud. “I realized that the way for a child to fall in love with reading is by having a role model, a parent who’s reading aloud,” Dajani told the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which in October gave the global nonprofit the UN agency’s annual Nansen Refugee Award.

and enticed the first volunteers to attend with an offer of free transportation and lunch.

One volunteer, recalls Dajani, was a woman about 70 years old from a town outside Amman. “She was illiterate, but she still wanted to take the training,

which is oral and very interactive. Afterwards, she went home and enrolled in a literacy course. Two months later she came back and said, ‘I’m ready!’ We gave her the bag of 25 books each ambassador receives,” says Dajani, smiling. Back home, the woman started a reading circle of her own.

“Once people see how important WLR is, they will do whatever it takes to become an ambassador,” says Ghufuran Abudayyeh, who has worked as WLR’s training and communications officer since 2015. While encouraging the pure love of reading is WLR’s main goal, she adds, “it’s also about the empowerment of women in their local settings once they become ambassadors. When they see the impact they have on children’s behavior by simply reading to them, they start believing in their own ability to do more.”

By 2010, ambassadors were leading WLR groups across Jordan, and word too was spreading beyond, as WLR projects took off spontaneously in both Thailand and Kazakhstan. Dajani registered WLR with the Jordanian Ministry of Culture under a new umbrella NGO she named Taghyeer (Arabic for change).

In 2013 the organization counted 10,000 children participating in storytelling and reading sessions. It was chosen as the “Best Practice” by the US Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program. This became one of many awards WLR has received

Majd Qasha’m, Azraq Refugee Camp, Jordan

In February 2016 Majd Qasha’m had to interrupt her university studies in Arabic literature to flee with her husband Ahmad Al Abdullah and their six children from Homs, Syria. He left behind his job as a teacher. Today they live in the Azraq Refugee Camp, 85 kilometers east of Amman.

Less than six months after their arrival, both Qasha’m and her husband trained to become WLR ambassadors. Her father had shared his love of reading with her as a child,

she says, and this inspired her.

“I used to hate living in the camp,” says Qasha’m, “but WLR has given me a coping mechanism.”

She reads every day to disabled children in a center run by the Norwegian Red Cross, and on Fridays she reads to other groups of children in the camp. She says she has noticed that the reading sessions make a difference in the psychological well-being of the children. Qasha’m explains how they relate to stories that talk

about being afraid or having to overcome physical disabilities, and that tales of exciting adventures especially inspire them. Her reading group regulars, she says, seem happier and less anxious.

When Qasha’m and her family recently had an opportunity to return to Syria, she decided they would stay a while longer. “By reading to the children, I have a positive impact on their lives,” she asserts. “They even seem more willing to go to school now. I can’t leave them.”

over just a few years, including the King Hussein Medal of Honor, the UNESCO International Literacy Award for Mother-Tongue Education and the UN Science, Technology and Innovation Award.

Two years later WLR received

\$1.5 million from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and \$2 million from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). On October 1 of this year, acknowledging the value of the WLR program to refugee families in Jordan and the wider Middle East and North Africa region, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) named Dajani a regional winner of its annual Nansen Refugee Award.

"Part of WLR's success is ownership," explains Awad. "It's not us. It's not a trademark or an institution. It's the people." Ninety percent of the ambassadors are women, he explains, from ages 16 to 80. All ambassadors receive encouragement to train others in their communities.

Antje von Suchodoletz, an assistant professor of psychology at NYU Abu Dhabi, has been part of a team studying the impacts of WLR. The research, in conjunction with Randa Mahasneh at Qatar University (Doha) and Ross Larsen at Brigham Young University (Provo, Utah), so far points toward small but statistically meaningful increases in reading attitude scores and reading practices among WLR children: At all ages, WLR girls and boys outperform non-WLR peers.

A study published this year by Dajani together with Alya Al Sager, Diego Placido and Dima Amso, Ph.D., looks at how WLR's read-aloud method influences children's executive functions over six months. The authors noted:

We found that the number of books in the home and the number of children that considered reading as a hobby had increased. Changes in the home from baseline to post-WLR also predicted larger improvements in executive functions, particularly for younger children and for families who reported lower family income.

The researchers also found that among traumatized and vulnerable children, especially those living in refugee camps, WLR



Children receive books after a read-aloud session in Ajloun, Jordan. To date WLR has worked with authors and illustrators to publish 32 children's books, and it has given away more than a quarter million books.

is helping with anxiety, anger management and cultivates mental well-being. Given Dajani's own background, she empathizes with the traumas of displacement, and WLR's history has paralleled the 2013 influx into Jordan of refugees from

Syria. By 2014, WLR had begun training ambassadors in Za'atari, one of the five major Syrian refugee camps in Jordan.

"Our WLR program often has the greatest impact in the harshest conditions," explains Abudayyeh.

"A lot of NGOs provide people in refugee camps with the essential items needed to survive," adds WLR field officer Laila Mushahwar. "WLR actually helps people thrive and believe in themselves."

By 2016 WLR had ambassadors reading to children in all five refugee camps. That year it also began partnering with the UNHCR and Plan International to work in Ethiopia with refugees from South Sudan.

In March, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced families to shelter at home and schools to shut down, WLR began offering free trainings online in Arabic and English, posting read-aloud sessions on WLR's YouTube channel and sharing stories from global ambassadors on Facebook and Twitter. WLR, Dajani explains, "becomes a placeholder to keep children engaged

with learning in a fun way while schools are closed," adding that the positive parent-child interactions it fosters are also beneficial.

"WLR is no longer just a program to foster a love of reading among children," asserts Dajani. It has also grown into a global, internationally acclaimed movement that empowers WLR ambassadors to become community leaders.

"We have become a social movement, and we've gone viral," she exclaims.

And for Dajani, it all goes back to the first command revealed to humanity in the Qur'an: "*Iqra!*" ("Read!") 🌐

Research has found that especially among children who have experienced trauma, WLR's activities cultivate mental well-being.



Boston-based freelance writer and consultant **Piney Kesting** credits her own love of reading to her German mother, who often took her to the library in Baltimore, Maryland. As a mother of two daughters herself, Kesting says she "got them library cards before they could even walk" because "books lead us on journeys that help define who we become."

THE
Alhambras
OF
LATIN AMERICA



Neo-Arabic esthetics and architecture have been studied in both Europe and the US but less so in Latin America. The field study carried out here revealed a vast Orientalist heritage throughout the geography of the region encompassing a wide range of architectural types. For the exhibition *Alhambras: Arquitectura Neoárabe en Latinoamérica*, we evaluated the diversity of designs in institutional, leisure and residential architectures while emphasizing constructions whose origins can be found among immigrants from the Spanish peninsula who copied or drew directly from the Alhambra.

WRITTEN BY RAPHAEL LÓPEZ GUZMÁN, RODRIGO GUTIÉRREZ VIÑUALES, MARÍA LUISA BELLIDO GANT, ADRIÁN CONTRERAS-GUERRERO AND YOLANDA GUASCH MARÍ. PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF RAFAEL LÓPEZ GUZMÁN

Among the several Alhambra-inspired, Moorish-style homes in the Manga district of Cartagena, Colombia, two of the most notable are, **LOWER**, Casa Román, which dates from 1919 to 1931, and **OPPOSITE**, Casa Covo, which was also completed in 1931. Romanticized in the arts and commercialized at world trade fairs during the second half of the 19th century, the Alhambra palace in Granada, Spain, inspired architects and clients from the Caribbean and Mexico to Chile and Argentina. (Map A, B)





Donated by the Spanish community to Tandil, Argentina, on the occasion of the town's centennial in 1923, the Castillo Morisco (Moorish Castle) shows horseshoe arches that also reference the Great Mosque at Córdoba, Spain. **OPPOSITE, TOP** Opened in 1933 and built from a design by Venezuelan's leading modern architect, Carlos Raúl Villanueva, this arena in Maracay was one of several bull rings in South America to reference the Alhambra. **LOWER** The elaborately eclectic Spanish Club in Iquique, Chile, dates to 1904. (Map C, D, E)

While it shares elements with the more general Orientalist esthetic developed in northern Europe, Latin America's "Alhambriismo" ("Alhambra-ism") largely results from the contributions of architects who both trained and traveled in Europe and whose designs, on occasion, reflected the territorial surroundings that inspired them. We must also acknowledge the influences of architectural journals as well as literature such as Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra*. In addition, pictorial Orientalism arrived in etchings, illustrated magazines, postcards and even works by renowned European Orientalist painters Genaro Pérez de Villamil and Mariano Fortuny, whose reputations were on the rise also in the capital cities of Latin America at the time. These channels were added to by Latin American travelers and scholars who enjoyed educational travels to Europe.

On many occasions this Latin American heritage is also related to immigrants who sought to incorporate memories of their homeland when they commissioned architects who had traveled to Europe for the construction of their homes.

All these factors contributed to a Latin American Orientalist architecture without rigid requirements but rather adaptive to

conditions, personal needs, lifestyles and the local climate. This meant that, on occasion, what featured in an interior in Granada may have appeared on a facade, or what was without color in the walls of the Alhambra may appear as a rich chromaticism typical of the Caribbean. Of course, not all has been conserved over the years. There are significant "absent architectures." It is to this end that this cataloging of the buildings offers an understanding of the global "romantic" significance of the Alhambra: how its legacy is maintained on the other side of the Atlantic, and how the esthetic of what is known as Alhambriismo was adapted and flourished in a wide range of geographical areas and today forms part of the landscape of Latin American identity.

SPANISH OVERSEAS INFLUENCES AND ISLAMIC REMINISCENCES

In the 19th century, the celebration of world trade fairs offered a testing ground for architecture. Countries participated by means of pavilions, and the design of these buildings called on local flavors and also borrowed from distant pasts far removed from their national identities.

A predilection for Orientalism led to significant examples of Egyptian and Turkish architecture in the International Exhibition





Built in 1884 to represent Mexico at the World Cotton and Industry Centennial Exhibition held in New Orleans, US, the Kiosk of Santa Maria la Ribera was called at the time "The Mexican Alhambra." Now standing in a park in Mexico City, it inspired the construction of more than a dozen smaller neo-Arabic *kioscos* throughout Mexico. (Map F)

in Paris in 1867 and the Ottoman section in the Vienna exhibition of 1873. The Paris exhibition of 1878 included an Oriental bazaar, and the 1889 exhibition, also in the French capital, featured a market along with Arab-style houses, replicas of streets of Cairo and an Islamic neighborhood.

It was in the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris, however, that the presence of Moorish architecture had the greatest repercussions. Along with pavilions of obvious Egyptian, Ottoman and Persian inspiration and the construction of the Palais de l'Electricité with its Oriental interior, highlights included "Andalusia in the time of the Moors," a space that featured elements of the Alhambra, the Sacromonte district of Granada, and the palaces and the Giralda of Seville.

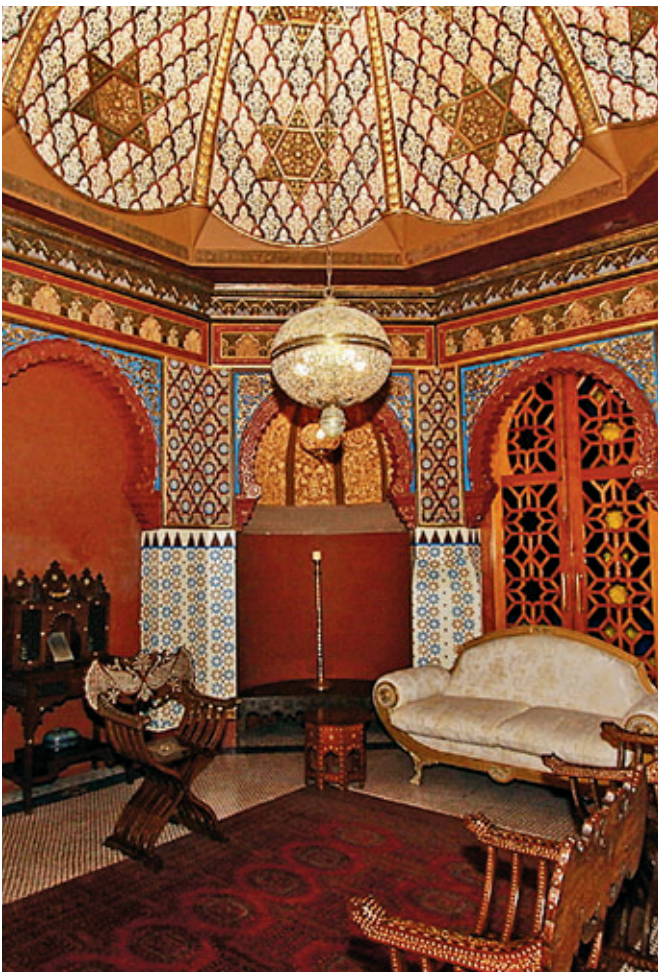
At the time, Spain, and particularly Andalusia, had often been perceived by romantic travelers as exotic, Oriental territories full of bandits and the like. Andalusia, however, also had the unique fortune of offering a rich selection of Islamic architecture.

In this context, it was neo-Arabic architecture that would repeatedly represent the image of Spain in international events, as occurred with the Spanish pavilion in the Brussels exhibition of 1910 and overseas in the clubs and headquarters of Spanish collectives in the Americas. In this sense we could mention buildings such as the Spanish Club of Iquique, Chile, designed and built in 1904 by Miguel Retomano in the Moorish style and featuring ornate, chromatic decor in its interior.





The Oswaldo Cruz Institute outside Rio de Janeiro, built between 1905 and 1918, hosts one of Brazil's leading public health research foundations. **LEFT** Decorated and furnished in "Alhambriismo" style, the 1922 Smokers' Room in the Palacio de las Garzas (Heron's Palace) in Panama City is part of the residence of Republic of Panama President Laurentino Cortizo. **(Map G, H)**



In Buenos Aires in 1912, the architect Enrique Faulkers designed the Spanish Club, the basement of which features the spectacular "Alhambra Room," murals that depict a 360-degree panoramic vision of Granada. In 1913 in Villa Maria, in Córdoba, Argentina, the Spanish Mutual Benefit Association was erected in a Moorish style. Though built prior to this, the building of the Spanish Association of Panama (1867-1905) was also characterized by its neo-Arabic influences.

Another reference to the link between Spanish and neo-Arabic architectural styles can be found in the Moorish pavilion donated by the Spanish community to Peru in 1921 for the country's centennial. On display in the exhibition grounds and standing out on account of its enormous horseshoe arch with bichromatic decoration in the manner of the arches of the Great Mosque in Córdoba, it was rebuilt in 2000. In 1923, during the centennial celebrations in Tandil, in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, the Spanish community donated a Moorish castle to the town, erecting it at the highest point of Independence Park, a kilometer from the fort that represented the earliest establishment of the town.

Another area in which Spanish-style architecture featured prominently was in bullrings. Among these, the pioneering reference was the bullring constructed in Madrid by Emilio Rodríguez Ayuso and Lorenzo Álvarez Capra in 1874, a year after the latter had designed the Spanish pavilion for the international exhibition in Vienna. This arena, classified as Neo-Mudéjar and built in red

brick, influenced other outstanding Latin American constructions, such as the Plaza San Carlos in Uruguay, inaugurated in 1909, and the Plaza Santa Maria in Bogota, which opened in 1931, and others. We can also find notable examples in Venezuela, top of the list being the Nuevo Circo bullring in Caracas (1919) and the arena in Maracay (1933), the work of Carlos Raúl Villanueva, the premier modern architect in the country.

THE PRESTIGE OF INSTITUTIONAL ORIENTALISM

Despite never having prevailed in the field, institutional architecture has also employed Oriental forms and decorative models, for cultural or service-related purposes, or as a means of featuring designs related to the exercise of power. While the repertoire of institutional buildings cannot bear comparison with the number of preserved examples of country estates and mansions, the unique nature of many of them shows that the predilection for mainly Alhambresque stylings was not exclusively associated with privately funded projects.

From the latter half of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century, architects incorporated these exotic, foreign dialects into commissions that, in some cases, ended up becoming symbols of national identity.

The fascination for the Alhambra palace in Granada, the Giralda Tower in Seville, the Mezquita, or Great Mosque, in Córdoba and other Oriental gems, not to mention the strong influence exerted by Owen Jones' *Alhambra Court*, led to the proliferation of Moorish-style pavilions in world trade fairs also in North and South America. One of the first to be produced on American soil was presented by Brazil for the International Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, though far more significant was the project known as the Kiosk of Santa Maria de la Ribera, the

pavilion representing Mexico in the World Cotton and Industry Centennial Exhibition held in New Orleans in 1884. According to Elisa García-Barragán, the design, which was the work of José Ramón Ibarrola, may be considered the most lavish example of Mexican Orientalism. While Ibarrola did not visit Europe, his friendship with Eduardo Tamariz, the maestro par excellence of neo-Arabic architecture in Mexico, coupled with his knowledge of earlier Moorish-style pavilions, acted as sources of inspiration. The amalgam of incorporated elements, which included stepped battlements, lobed arches, cube capitals and brilliant, rich colors, were bolstered by the modern nature of the materials used and

led to the construction being known in the day as "The Mexican Alhambra."

At times Orientalism was applied to reduced interior areas in an exact likeness to specific areas of the Alhambra, while on other occasions this architectural style was reserved for the exteriors of the buildings, where bay windows and decorative elements emulated the Moorish style. In the case of the former, we can highlight the "Salón Morisco" or Moorish Room of Mexico's National Palace, or the Palacio Catete in Rio de Janeiro, which passed from a private residence to become the seat of the Government of the Republic from 1897 to 1960. Somewhat more recent in its construction is what is known as the "Moorish garden" in Costa Rica's Legislative Assembly building.

In the case of the latter we can cite the High Court of Military Justice in Lima, Peru, where clear Moorish influences can be seen, not only through the use of specific architectural elements but rather for the fact that the construction materials simulate the ashlar of the Great



TOP AND LEFT The Palace of the Alhambra in downtown Santiago, Chile, was the first Moorish-style building in Latin America, and it dates from 1862. The work of architect Manuel Aldunate, it was originally a private home. It now houses the National Fine Arts Association. **(Map 1)**

The Original Alhambra

Built in the 13th and 14th centuries as the palace-fortress complex of the Nasrid rulers of Granada, Spain, the Alhambra was declared a World Heritage Site in 1984. Together with the Great Mosque of Córdoba and the Giralda tower of Seville, it is among Spain's

most outstanding examples of Muslim architecture. Inside the Alhambra, the Courtyard of the Lions, **LEFT**, inspired several imitations, including the interior of Santiago, Chile's Palace of the Alhambra, **OPPOSITE**, and the Spanish Club in San Juan, Puerto Rico, built in 1932, **LOWER**. (Map J)



Mosque in Córdoba. In Campinas, Brazil, in

1908, the Municipal Market was constructed on the orders of architect Francisco de Paula Ramos de Azevedo, who used the typical red-and-white bichromatic coloring of Córdoba architecture on both the walls and the horseshoe arches that define the space.

Likewise, what is known as the National Building in Neiva, Colombia, features paired horseshoe arches and a tower capped with a bulbous dome. Other buildings first served other purposes before being appropriated for government spaces, as is the case with the State Congress in Puebla, Mexico. This is housed in one of the more emblematic neo-Arabic buildings in the city, a building that was originally the headquarters of the artistic-philharmonic society La Purísima Concepción. It features a courtyard designed in 1883 by Eduardo Tamariz, the lower part of which is inspired by the esthetic of the Alhambra. Walls featuring tiled baseboards and plasterwork give way to lobed arches that serve as access routes to other spaces.

Neither were public buildings safe from Alhambra-style imitation, one example being the Palacio de las Garzas, or Herons' Palace, the residence of the President of the Republic of Panama. One of the finest rooms is the Smokers' Room, located in the residential area of the building, which not only reflects Orientalism in its decoration but also in the furnishing. Religious architecture also succumbed to Arabic influences, including the Chapel of Saint Joseph, the work of architect Cecil Luis Long and built in 1893 inside the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of the Light, in Leon, Mexico. Spatially like a domed *qubba*, neo-Arabic influences pervade the interior decor. Equally surprising is the church of Our Lady of the Rosary in San Luis, Argentina, which was built in 1935. The exterior is an attempt to replicate the entrance to the Great Mosque in Córdoba, with a large, horseshoe arch protected by twin towers in the style of the Giralda, in Seville.

ORIENTALISM FOR LEISURE

Early-20th-century Europe, with its romantic personality and propensity for escapism that marked its educated classes, understood that one of the most suitable architectural styles for the construction of leisure venues was the neo-Arabic style. This was also the case in the Americas.

At the time, architectural designs revealed the interests of a no less dream-obsessed Latin American society. A fine example of this is the Concha-Cazotte husband-and-wife team, one of the most acclaimed couples in turn-of-the-century Chile, who converted their Orientalist palace in Santiago into one of the most-renowned bourgeois scenes in the city.

Theaters, cinemas and other entertainment venues soon adopted the same language, and Nasrid plasterwork, bulbous domes and Persian *iwans* were not long in appearing, examples of this being the theaters Juárez in Guanajuato, San Martín in Buenos Aires, Alhambra in Havana and the cinemas Alcázar and Palacio in Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro respectively.

This "exotic impulse" also manifested itself in the skating rink in the Vista Alegre neighborhood in Santiago, Cuba; in the race track in Lima; in the pavilion of the Ateneo Uruguayo in Montevideo—the most notable example of the new style in the country and now unfortunately disappeared—and in one of the buildings in the Republic (or City) of Children in La Plata, Argentina. Perhaps the most Alhambresque of all these projects was the unfinished theater-restaurant conceived by Jorge Soto Acebal in 1915, in which patrons could watch the show while dining in what was almost an exact replica of the Alhambra's Courtyard of the Lions.





Built between 1913 and 1917 near Cienfuegos, Cuba, the palace for Aciscio del Valle y Blanco shows Alhambra-inspired eclecticism that includes Spanish ironwork, Talavera mosaics, Cuban wood, European glasswork and more. **LOWER** In Havana, Cuba, the gardens of La Tropical, built from 1906 to 1912, imitate both the Alhambra, in its main building, as well as the Alhambra's adjoining gardens, the Generalife. (Map K, L)

Another use for neo-Arabic architecture pays tribute to the beneficial effects of water. In Argentina two examples include the Natatorio Juan Perón (swimming baths) in Salta, built in 1940, and the hydrotherapy center known as the Arabian Palace in Buenos Aires. In the Mexican town of San Luis Potosí, the San José Public Baths relate in terms of both the type of building and the architectural style.

Another aspect in which the Alhambra exerted influence was in gardens, the truth being that the landscape and vegetation of the Generalife gardens in the Alhambra was copied just as often as the architecture of the palaces. In the La Tropical gardens in Cuba, not only did they imitate the columns, arches and tiles of the Alhambra in the main building, but also the adjoining gardens were organized around fountains and irrigation channels like those used in the palace.

In Argentina the same concept underlies the residences of Enrique Larreta, both the house-museum in Buenos Aires, which today houses the Museum of Spanish Art, and El Acelain, which is inspired by the Main Canal Courtyard of the Alhambra. Another unique example is the Granada Courtyard of the Art Museum in Ponce, Puerto Rico (1964), in which René Taylor, the first director of the institution, on his return from a visit to Granada, designed a courtyard inspired by the Alhambra's adjoining garden, the Generalife.

LIVING IN DREAMLAND

As was the case in Europe, in Latin American architecture during the latter half of the 19th century, eclecticism began to allow for both the fusion of styles and the appearance of notably hybrid historicist forms, in particular in reference to exotic private residences. These fantasy homes served individuals as a means of social distinction particularly in the 1920s and '30s, though earlier and later examples are still to be found. The upper echelons and new American bourgeoisie lost no time in adopting these architectural daydreams as a means of



While most Alhambrismo construction took place in capital and coastal cities, the Castillo de la Glorieta was constructed between 1893 and 1897 in the Andean city of Sucre, Bolivia. (Map M)

portraying an external image of eccentric wellbeing.

The first Moorish-style building in Latin America dates to 1862 and is known as the “Palace of the Alhambra,” the work of architect Manuel Aldunate. It is in Santiago, Chile, and today it houses the National Fine Arts Association.

It is interesting to observe this type of construction in countries where

Arab traditions are even less prominent, such as Bolivia, where the Castillo de la Glorieta (1893-1897), just a few kilometers from Sucre, offer a burst of oriental fantasy in the very heart of the Andes. Not all these residences echoed the Moorish style throughout, on occasion this being reserved for just some of the rooms, as is the case with the Palacio Portales (1912-1927) in Cochabamba, Bolivia, which is the work of Simón Patiño, a businessman known as “The King of Tin,” which features a billiards room in the Moorish style. (See back cover.)

In the Río de la Plata region of Argentina, we can highlight the courtyard of the Arana residence, which originally housed a replica of the Fountain of the Lions in the Alhambra palace in Granada. It was constructed between 1889 and 1891 by the Spanish sculptor Ángel Pérez Muñoz, based on an idea brought from Europe by the founder of the city, Dr. Dardo Rocha. In Montevideo, Uruguay, we can highlight La Quinta de Tomás Eastman (1880), also known as La Quinta de las Rosas (*quinta* means country home or estate), as well as some private residences in the city center.

While we can find examples of notable private residences in the neo-Arabic style throughout virtually the entire continent, only a handful of which have been selected as examples here, it is in the Caribbean region where these are most abundant. As was customary at the time, these residences were widely dispersed, having been conceived as iconic, unique buildings. In Puerto Rico we can point out the home of Enrique Calimano in Guayama, entrusted to architect Pedro Adolfo de Castro in 1928, who also incorporated a replica of the Fountain of the Lions in the Alhambra palace that is identical to the one built years later in the Casa de España



in San Juan.

The most impressive example of Moorish architecture in the Caribbean can be found in Punta Gorda, a slice of land belonging to the town of Cienfuegos, Cuba, and housing a palace that was entrusted to the architect Pablo Donato by Asturian-born Aciscio del Valle y Blanco and built between 1913 and 1917. The building is noted for a marked eclecticism that manifests itself in the provenance of the materials used, which includes Carrara marble, Italian alabaster, ceramics from Venice and Granada, Spanish ironwork, mosaics

from Talavera, European glasswork and Cuban mahogany.

In terms of residential neighborhoods, the Caribbean is also where we find ensembles that, in the main, are noted for Moorish influences, such as Lutgardita in the Cuban district of Rancho Boyeros. In Puerto Rico the houses built using reinforced concrete in the Bayola district of Santurce are worthy of note, as are those of the Gazcue district in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and the Moorish-style houses of the Manga district of Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. Other localized sectors display similar characteristics, including the notable presence of neo-Arabic architecture, such as the San Francisco neighborhood of Puebla, Mexico. 🌐

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With a travel-size record player, **OPPOSITE LOWER**, Berlin-based DJ, producer and Habibi Funk founder Jannis Stürtz digs into a pile of Moroccan oldies. **ABOVE** At the vinyl-focused Chico's Records in Beirut, Lebanon, Stürtz, center, talks music with Jackson Allers, right, host of Beirut Groove Collective, a Lebanese nightlife scene that promotes vinyl-only music culture, while store owner Diran Mardirian listens to a record. Habibi Funk specializes in relicensing and reissuing what Stürtz describes on the label's Bandcamp feed as "funk, jazz and other organic sounds we like from the 1970s and 1980s" by Arab, North African and Middle Eastern artists whose music has fallen into obscurity yet still sounds fresh and exciting. **LOWER** It was the discovery and personal search for the family of the late Moroccan funk/soul musician Fadoul that Stürtz says lit his passion for "crate digging" across the region, and *Al Zman Saib*, by Fadoul et les Privileges, was one of the label's early releases in 2014.

In a small shop in Casablanca in 2013, Jannis Stürtz dropped a needle on a vintage vinyl recording of Fadoul, one of Morocco's most-popular musicians of the 1970s. What he heard next was "a mighty voice and a raw sound" that Stürtz, a Berlin-based DJ and music producer, found "enormously inspiring." The "energetic performance and very lively atmosphere preserved in the recording tugged at me," he says. He heard clear links in it to alternative music scenes in Germany and the West. "When I listened to Fadoul's album *Papa's Got A Brand New Bag*, I found he was blending rock and funk" in a style both Moroccan and inspired by James Brown, America's "Godfather of Soul."

The experience led Stürtz, now 36, to the founding of his second recording label. In 2000 he and a friend had turned their fascination with vinyl and African and Asian funk into Jakarta Records. Though initially "more like a hobby than a job," says Stürtz, it helped pay the bills. It was while Stürtz was working as tour manager for Ghanaian hip hop artist Samuel Bazawule that



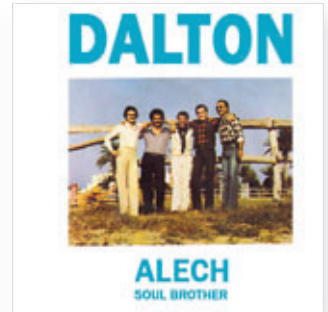
Stürtz wound up in the shop digging out Fadoul's old vinyls. Stürtz added recordings of the band, Fadoul et Les Privileges, to his own DJ mixes, and his audiences loved it.

"So clearly there was a niche," he says.

By 2014 Stürtz decided that niche could become its own label. "We decided on the name Habibi Funk," he says—*habibi* is Arabic for "dear," and the term is used both casually and formally. It "felt catchy and endearing to both Middle Eastern and Western music lovers." Habibi Funk releases have been re-pressed on vinyl and made available in CD and digital-download

formats. In all three formats, they are offering global promotion for locally produced North African and Middle Eastern vinyl recordings from the 1960s to 1980s that incorporated funk, disco and jazz with traditional styles and lyrics sung in any number of languages. Each release carries the permission of the artists or, for those deceased, their families, and Habibi Funk shares profit 50-50 with the artist or family.

To rerelease Fadoul, who passed away in 1990, Stürtz had to



Among Habibi Funk's 15 reissues to date are *The King of Sudanese Jazz*, by Sharhabil Ahmed, **LEFT**, and, **TOP CENTER**, *Muslims and Christians* by Kamal Keila, also from Sudan: Stürtz met Keila while in Sudan arranging Ahmed's rerelease. **TOP RIGHT** *Original Music for Films*, by Algerian composer Ahmed Malek, is "melancholic and reflective, emotional and touching, but never depressing," notes Stürtz in one of the extensive narratives that accompany each release. As he did in Sudan, Stürtz traveled to Algiers to meet the musician's family. **ABOVE CENTER** *Al Hadaoui*, by Attarazat Addahabia & Faradjallah comes out of Morocco, also a result of Stürtz "asking around whether anyone knew the band," which led from one person to another and ultimately the label's 2019 release of the album. **ABOVE RIGHT** Dalton was the name of a band formed by university students in Tunis in 1968 that took heavy influence from American soul and funk, and one of its founders, Faouzi Chekili, remains a prominent composer and musician in Tunisia.

make half a dozen trips to Casablanca. "We knew the neighborhood where his family used to live, but we had no actual address," he says. Stürtz went to cafés and "started showing the photo of Fadoul until I found someone who remembered him and knew where his family lived," he recalls.

The Fadoul release in 2014 proved a springboard to crate-digging and relicensing trips over the next few years to Algiers, Tunis, Khartoum, Tripoli, Cairo and Beirut. In each place Stürtz looked for "forgotten" eclectic sounds and musicians whose blends of Middle Eastern and North African music drew from other continental African, Caribbean and American genres. "If I'm inspired, that's the litmus test," he says. So far, his ear has proven well tuned: Habibi Funk is not only finding new audiences through social media and streaming platforms such as Spotify,

Soundcloud, Mixcloud and Bandcamp, it has also started to become an eponymous subgenre for tagging the kinds of sounds the label is promoting. To date the label has reissued 15 albums, and Stürtz says there are 10 more in the works.

Stürtz says that the label's clientele splits about equally between non-Arabs, whom he says "appreciate the music itself," and people from North Africa, the Middle East and the global Arab diaspora whom he finds often "relate to the lyrics more than the music."

Beirut DJ and music journalist Jackson Allers sees the label as part of the current, wider blossoming of niche labels that, though digitally driven, also offer vinyl for every album. Comparing them to independent coffee roasters, he says "they remain niche but have a very loyal and very much a global following, so the market exists, just not on a large scale."

VINYL FOREVER?

The record business collapsed in the 1990s as the music industry went digital, but collectors and audiophiles continued to value the analog sounds that they felt were often more nuanced and richer in overtones than digital recordings. As international chain stores shut down, a few independent stores have eked by. Diran Mardirian, 50, owns Chico's Records in Beirut, founded in 1964 by his father. He estimates that across

the Arabic-speaking world of some 22 countries, there are perhaps 30 record stores remaining.

"Listening to music on vinyl," says Mardirian. "there is no algorithm tracking you or programs monitoring your taste. When you listen to vinyl, you own the music. It is a fantastic feeling!"

But not everyone even knows what a record player is anymore.

"I had a young musician, maybe 18, walk in," says Mardirian. "He had never heard a record. I asked him what his

favorite band was, and he told me. When I played him the music on the actual record, he began to cry." Mardirian continues, "he told me that he had heard the song perhaps 100 times, but he had never heard it like that on a record."

Nonetheless, Mardirian estimates about two-thirds of his customers are younger than 30. To Beirut DJ and music writer Allers, "the millennials are listening to their parents' music of the 1970s and 1980s. It's almost like reviving a tradition."



Palestinian musician Rojeh Khleif, who like Stürtz is based in Berlin, says that beginning with the Fadoul releases, “Habibi Funk introduced me to a lot of Arab musicians that I had never heard of. Jannis has done a huge service to Arab music lovers.”

The process of reissuing music, Stürtz says, can be lengthy. Between signing a release agreement and shipping records—or posting download links—two to three years can go by. In addition, “we take our time to find high-quality photos and craft the accompanying booklets,” he explains.

Among the label’s recent reissues is “La Coladera” by Algerian Freh Kodja, which appears on one of the label’s compilation albums of 16 tracks by 16 musicians. Kodja, Stürtz explains, is especially interesting because he not only produced fusions with the Cape Verde-Portuguese style Coladeira but also—and more famously—was to reggae in Algeria what Fadoul was to soul and funk in Morocco.

“This kind of bringing together different musical influences is something we are usually interested in,” says Stürtz. At the same time, Stürtz cautions his listeners not to overinterpret the label’s collections, stating in his notes that the compilation is “nothing more than a very personal curation” that “in no way reflects on what has been popular in a general sense.”

Reggae, he says, was also popular in Libya, and among his releases this year is *Subhana*, four songs originally recorded in 2008

It’s in record shops like this one in Morocco, Stürtz says, where the journey often begins. Weeks or months of research and networking usually follow, often culminating in heartfelt meetings with artists and, especially in the cases of artists no longer living, their families and descendants. “I kept on traveling to Morocco trying to find info about the artists,” Stürtz writes on his Bandcamp blog about the Moroccan artist Fadoul whose sound so captivated Stürtz. “What kept me going was the fact that over the course of the next years I kept on finding different records by Fadoul, in the end a total of four. They all had the raw sound esthetic ... energetic performances, a mighty voice and a very lively atmosphere.” Later, “sitting in the living room of Fadoul’s family was an emotional moment for all of us—for his sister and family who would have never thought that Fadoul’s music gained this much attention outside of Morocco and who hadn’t heard his music for 30 years due to the absence of a record player in the house, and obviously also for me.”

by Libyan reggae artist Ahmed Ben Ali. “Libya had a big reggae music scene, something not known to most people, including music lovers,” Stürtz says about one of his latest discoveries.

In July Habibi Funk released an album of seven songs by “The King of Sudanese Jazz,” Sharhabil Ahmed. It leads off with a sax-and-guitar-driven hit, “Argos Farfish,” which Ahmed recorded in the 1960s. In the band too was his wife Zakia Abu Bakr, Sudan’s first well-known female guitarist.

The pair and their sounds fit perfectly into Stürtz’s niche of fusions. Ahmed, who sings in Arabic, English and Kiswahili, made the electric guitar popular throughout Sudan, and Abu Bakr was a pioneer at a time when women were mainly singers or piano players. Now in his 80s, Ahmed had not played in clubs or concerts for years when Stürtz tracked him down in Khartoum in 2017.

The guitar, Stürtz learned from him, “came to them via Southern Sudan and the Congo, which in turn was heavily influenced by South American and Caribbean sounds.” Since the release of the album on Habibi Funk, he says, the pair are beginning to receive offers to play at clubs across Khartoum again.

Khleif in Berlin credits some of Habibi Funk’s success to the recent rise in influence of Arabic tunes across Europe. “Newcomers have played a role—Syrians, Iraqis, Palestinians and Lebanese—they are out there and mixing with the older communities of Tunisians and Moroccans and Algerians,” he says. Larger populations mean concerts—currently on hold due to COVID-19—can be profitable, and there is “plenty of fusion going on—Arabic music, words, tunes and instruments are influencing new European music,” he adds, pointing to groups like Schkoon and Spatz Habibi in Germany, Acid Arab in France and more.

“A lot is happening with Arabic music, old, new, fused, reissued, it’s all popular at the moment. We are witnessing a revival, in Europe and at home,” Khleif says.

To Allers in Beirut, it’s “thanks in part to labels like Habibi Funk” that musicians have “much more to draw from now that a lot of formerly ‘lost music’ has come to light.” 🌐



Filmmaker and freelance writer **Mariam Shahin** has produced and directed more than 70 documentary films, and she is coauthor of *Palestine: A Guide* (Interlink Books, 2005) and *Unheard Voices: Iraqi Women on War and Sanctions* (Change, 1992).



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Britain's MUSLIM HERITAGE TRAILS

WRITTEN BY
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PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Andrew Shaylor





Woking is British suburbia.

Stepping out from its rail station, past a few convenience stores and fast-food outlets, sightlines are dominated by architecture from the 1930s, a period when London expanded into new suburbs that ringed the city. Woking is still the heart of what is known as the Stockbroker Belt, a string of upmarket communities south of London in Surrey, a county known for golf clubs and horse racing.

A left turn brings on bay-front brick homes with eave roofs, flanking the tree-shaded street. Traffic passes. All is placid. Only the street's name hints at an unlikely tale: Oriental Road.



I

am here in search of a mosque.

On foot is the best way, in part because it's only a kilometer down Oriental Road. But it also makes sense because the Shah Jahan Mosque is the starting point of Britain's new Muslim Heritage Trails. Walking is the point.

The mosque's backstory begins with a child prodigy born 180 years ago in Pest, now part of Budapest, capital of Hungary. By the age of 10, in 1850, Gottlieb Leitner was already fluent in several European languages. His parents sent him to Constantinople—modern Istanbul—to study Turkish and Arabic. By 15 he was interpreting for the British government in Crimea.

In his early 20s, he was made a professor of Arabic at King's College London. From there he traveled to British-controlled India. As well as directing public education programs in Lahore (now in Pakistan) and founding institutions including the University of the Punjab, Leitner was increasingly drawn to what we today think of as building bridges of cross-cultural understanding—all while advising colonial officials on policy and publishing a history of Islam in Urdu.

This gifted linguist returned to England in 1881 with the goal of promoting public knowledge of Islam and Islamic cultures. He sought to establish a center for the study of what was then termed "Oriental" languages and histories, and he found the perfect site in Woking. A red brick building in neo-Gothic style, put up beside Woking's rail line in 1862 as a home for retired actors but vacant

The focal point of the new Muslim Heritage Trails is Britain's first purpose-built mosque, the Shah Jahan Mosque, which opened in 1889 in Woking, Surrey. Founded by linguist and professor Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, it was named for its patron, Sultana Shah Jahan Begum, ruler of the Indian state of Bhopal, at the time under British control. Leitner was born in Hungary and educated both there and in Constantinople, and he spent much of his life learning and teaching in the Middle East, India and what is now Pakistan. With time he grew increasingly dedicated to fostering interfaith connections: After moving to England in 1881, his plans called for the mosque to be accompanied on the site by a church and both Jewish and Hindu temples; however, he passed away in 1899 with only the mosque finished. Architect William Isaac Chambers's neo-Mughal style reflected the European enthusiasm for Orientalism during the late 19th century.

LOWER: EVERYDAY MUSLIM/THARIK HUSSAIN



Also a focus of the Muslim Heritage Trails, Britain's first Muslim cemetery was established in 1884 by Leitner, who named it The Muhammadan Cemetery. It is located in a section of Woking's Brookwood Cemetery, the largest cemetery in Britain. Many of England's prominent Muslims are buried here, including Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, William Quilliam, Rowland Allanson-Winn, Idries Shah and Zaha Hadid.

for several years, became Leitner's Oriental Institute. Opened in 1884, the institute quickly established a reputation for its scholarship, and it published journals in Arabic, English and Urdu, awarded degrees and attracted students from around the world.

It did not, however, outlive its founder. The years following Leitner's death in 1899 saw the institute's collections dispersed and its buildings converted to industrial units that almost a century later were razed and replaced with retail stores.

What has survived is the Shah Jahan Mosque, built in 1889 to serve the institute's Muslim students and scholars. Leitner oversaw its construction adjacent to the institute. I found the mosque down Oriental Road, almost hidden amid the generous houses and trees. Cuboid with an arched facade imitating Indian Mughal style, it is clad in white and topped by a dome of green.

To Nikolaus Pevsner, Britain's preeminent 20th-century architectural historian, it was "sincere and dignified." Historically, it is the oldest purpose-built mosque in Britain. (The country's oldest mosque was established two years earlier within an existing house in Liverpool.)

Trails cofounder Sadiya Ahmed was looking for ways to help her children connect with their own multiple identities.

Leitner's own religious life was eclectic. Born into a Jewish family, he spent most of his life studying, teaching and supporting Islam, and he adopted a Christian religious identification from his stepfather.

Thanks to patronage received from Sultana Shah Jahan Begum, the ruler of the Indian state of Bhopal, Leitner named the mosque for her. Like the institute, it fell into disuse after Leitner's death, but in 1913, lawyer and scholar Khwaja Kamal ud-Din, who arrived in Britain from Punjab, India, gave new life to what he called "this mosque in a non-Muslim land." It went on to become, in the words of architect Shahed Saleem, "the center of Islam in England," into the post-World War II decades when migrations from independent India, Pakistan and Bangladesh created new nodes of settlement across Britain.

Today it's the focus of Britain's Muslim Heritage Trails.

"There is very little that preserves the stories of Muslims in Britain," says Sadiya Ahmed, founder of the Everyday Muslim Heritage and Archive Initiative, which is backing the project. "We are beginning [to assemble] an archive for the Muslim community here."

The initiative, Ahmed says, stems from her efforts to help her children connect with their own multiple identities. Searching for resources, she realized that Muslim history in Britain was not being systematically documented.

“I thought if we knew a bit more about our families’ histories, we might have a better foundation.

We are so diverse as a community in Britain—Indian Muslims, Pakistani Muslims, Arabs, Black Muslims who are African or Afro-Caribbean, converts to Islam—but we have different foods, different cultures, different languages. These stories are a way of learning about each other as a community,” she says.

Other projects launched by Everyday Muslim, run by volunteers and funded almost entirely by national heritage grants, include examining patterns of 20th-century migration in London’s East End and preserving stories from London’s Black Muslim communities.

“My research and examination of these three sites told me immediately their stories had the potential to change Britain’s popular historical narrative.”

—Tharik Hussain



LEFT A blue, circular marker identifies the section of Brookwood that is one of the trail’s three stops. Journalist and travel writer Tharik Hussain, **ABOVE**, found inspiration for the idea of the trails in the archives of the mosque.

“The base foundation of everything we do is collect oral histories,” she says, noting that the archival material is then digitized and made public.

Ahmed recalls that in 2012 she caught wind of discussions in Woking among academics, historians and the Shah Jahan Mosque community about ways to showcase the town’s unique Islamic history.

She credits a visit to the mosque by journalist and travel writer Tharik Hussain, who specializes in Islamic heritages, especially across Europe. After his visit, Ahmed says, he called her and said, “I’ve made this discovery. They’ve got all this archival material!”

Hussain was a child when his family moved in the early 1980s to Britain from Bangladesh. Recently, his 2016–17 BBC Radio series on mosques in the US won top honors at the New York Festivals Radio Awards.

“Given my personal and professional interest in British Muslim heritage,” he says, “I was left astounded by the [depth] of history.”

It turns out that it wasn’t just the mosque.

In 1884, while establishing the Oriental Institute, Leitner also created Britain’s first Muslim cemetery, a plot for Muslim use within Brookwood, then the largest cemetery in Europe and on the edge of Woking. The Muhammadan Cemetery, as it was known, waited until 1895 to record its first burial: Sheikh Nubie, an Indian juggler who died while on tour in London.

In 1915, amid the cataclysm of World War I, the British government—advised by the mosque’s



imam—commissioned another burial ground, this one dedicated specifically to fallen British Muslim soldiers. On a wooded site at Horsell Common, the Woking Muslim War Cemetery, as it was known, was designed in Mughal style to match the mosque, with a domed archway entrance and ornamental minarets at the corners of a brick perimeter wall. Eighteen servicemen were laid there to rest. Later, they were joined by others who perished fighting for British and Free French forces in World War II.

“My research and examination of these three sites told me immediately their stories had the potential to change Britain’s popular historical narrative,” says Hussain. “It made sense to use [Everyday Muslim’s] expertise to develop a project that would make this heritage more visible.”

But how?

“I’m a travel writer,” he says. “I’ve always loved the way walking trails around the world allow visitors, regardless of age, background, education or otherwise, to really immerse themselves in the local history and heritage of a place in an interesting, fun and accessible way,” he says.

“History starts somewhere. In 15 or 20 years, this material will be history to that generation.”

—Sadiya Ahmed

While Hussain developed the idea of creating a Muslim Heritage Trail to link the sites around Woking, Ahmed reached out to donors. In addition, she says, the partners recruited volunteer researchers from all over the world to gather historical information and write it up in the format of the trails. Locally, oral histories too became a way to “leave a



Third stop on the trail, the Woking Muslim War Cemetery was commissioned during World War I after Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din, a missionary from Lahore who attended the Shah Jahan Mosque, proposed a final resting place for British Muslim soldiers who had made the ultimate sacrifice in service of king and country. Its site was chosen for its proximity to the Shah Jahan Mosque. In 1969 the graves were moved to the larger Brookwood Military Cemetery, and in 2015 the space was rededicated as the Muslim War Cemetery Peace Garden. The commemorative plaque, **LOWER**, is inscribed with the names of the soldiers who were buried here.

legacy with the Woking community, to say, ‘You are part of that history,’” Ahmed says. “We wanted to show that their stories are just as important to wider British history.”

The first part of the Muslim Heritage Trail leads north from the mosque for about a kilometer to the former Muslim War Cemetery. The site had lain forgotten since 1969, when the remains of all those interred were moved to the Brookwood Cemetery. In 2015, community organizers and volunteers revived it as a Peace Garden, a haven for contemplation overlooked by a commemorative stone carved with the names of those once buried there. It is a tranquil, wooded spot with a central reflecting pool.

But the main research focused on the

Muhammadan Cemetery within Brookwood, which lies west of the mosque by about 7 kilometers.

There, Hussain walks with me between the graves that cluster around the stone placed by Leitner to mark the qibla, or direction of prayer toward Makkah. It is also inscribed with

instructions on Muslim burial practices. Among the dozens of memorials, I rest my hand on the gravestone of Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936), novelist, journalist, Muslim by choice and the first native English-speaking Muslim to publish an English interpretation of the Qur’an.

Pickthall was one among several British intellectuals, explorers, imperial officials and aristocrats who chose to





British soldiers who perished in World War I continue to be honored, now with headstones in Brookwood's Muhammadan Cemetery. On them are recorded also their divisions, including 34th Poona Horse Corps, 2nd Mule Corps and the 17th Calvary.



become Muslims in the decades preceding and following World War I. Others included William Quilliam (1856-1932), who took the name Abdullah and, in addition to opening the mosque in Liverpool, was also appointed leader of Britain's Muslims by Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II. Hussain explains that while we know Quilliam was laid to rest in Brookwood, the location of his grave remains unknown.

Not far from Pickthall's headstone is that of Lord Rowland Allanson-Winn, 5th Baron Headley (1855-1935), who became a Muslim at the age of 58 and took the name Rahmatullah al-Farooq. In his later years, he founded the British Muslim Society and made the Hajj, or pilgrimage, to Makkah, as noted on his headstone by the honorific *al-Haj* inscribed in Arabic below his family's crest.

There are also more recent burials: world-renowned British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid (1950-2016); writer and teacher Idries Shah (1924-1996); Palestinian political cartoonist Naji al-Ali (1936-1987); the last king of what was in his time called North Yemen, Muhammad al-Badr (1926-1996); and Hayriya Aisha (1914-2006), Ottoman imperial princess and princess of Berar in central India, a campaigner for women's education and civil rights.

In a far corner, Hussain leads me

“It's really important for the local community to know that their Muslim heritage is accessible.”

—Di Stiff

to a small stone marked “Sherefa Musbah Haidar, died January 1977.” There, he told me a story.

Years before, browsing in a bookstore, he happened upon a used volume titled *Arabesque*, authored by Her Royal Highness Princess Musbah Haidar. Curious, he bought it. Haidar was born in 1918, the second daughter of Ali Haidar, whom the Ottoman imperial authorities had appointed in 1916 to lead Makkah, replacing the instigator of the Arab Revolt against the empire, Sharif Husayn ibn Ali. Like Husayn, Haidar traced his family lineage back to the Prophet Muhammad. Musbah’s mother was of Irish descent, and as an

adult Musbah moved to England and married a major in the British army. He died in 1966, she in 1977. They were buried here together, but the story, Hussain says, had been forgotten. Although her lineage is not greatly unusual—many families and tribes around the world claim descent from the Prophet—Hussain was fascinated by this “real-life British—or British-Irish-Turkish” descendant of the Prophet, the only known *sharif* in Britain.

Leitner’s qibla stone is now fronted by a circular blue plaque, the familiar device in Britain marking sites of historical interest. The library at the Shah Jahan Mosque, which already held substantial records of the Woking community since its foundation, now also holds the oral history recordings, transcripts and images gathered by Ahmed and her colleagues in 2017 and 2018.

“History starts somewhere,” says Ahmed. “In 15 or 20 years, this material will be history to that generation.”

At the formal opening ceremony for the trails in July 2019, Sir Laurie Magnus, chairman of the government-funded preservation organization Historic England, declared “Muslim heritage is very much a part of Britain’s heritage.”

To Di Stiff, an archivist at Woking’s Surrey History Centre, “It’s really important for the local community to know that their Muslim heritage is accessible. And these trails are popular,” she adds. After the opening, “our stock of trail leaflets went in a few days!”



Leitner, who died in 1899, is buried in Brookwood’s Christian section, which lies about a kilometer from the Muhammadan Cemetery he founded. Now linked by the Muslim Heritage Trails, his legacies of historical preservation and interfaith understanding have found new life.

Further projects beckon. Everyday Muslim is seeking to create another Muslim heritage trail linking sites around Britain visited by US activist Malcolm X in 1964 and 1965. Hussain says that in Liverpool there is potential for trails focusing on the legacy of Quilliam, and that on England’s north-east coast, in South Shields, future trails may trace sites significant to the long-rooted Yemeni communities there.

As for Leitner himself, he was laid to rest in Brookwood too, but in a Christian section almost a kilometer from the Muhammadan Cemetery. His monument, grandly carved, tops the ferns and grasses, and it is inset with a bust of the man sporting stylishly 19th-century whiskers.

At its base, under the inscriptions in English, runs a single line of Arabic: *al-ilmu khayrun min al-maali*—knowledge is better than wealth. 🌐



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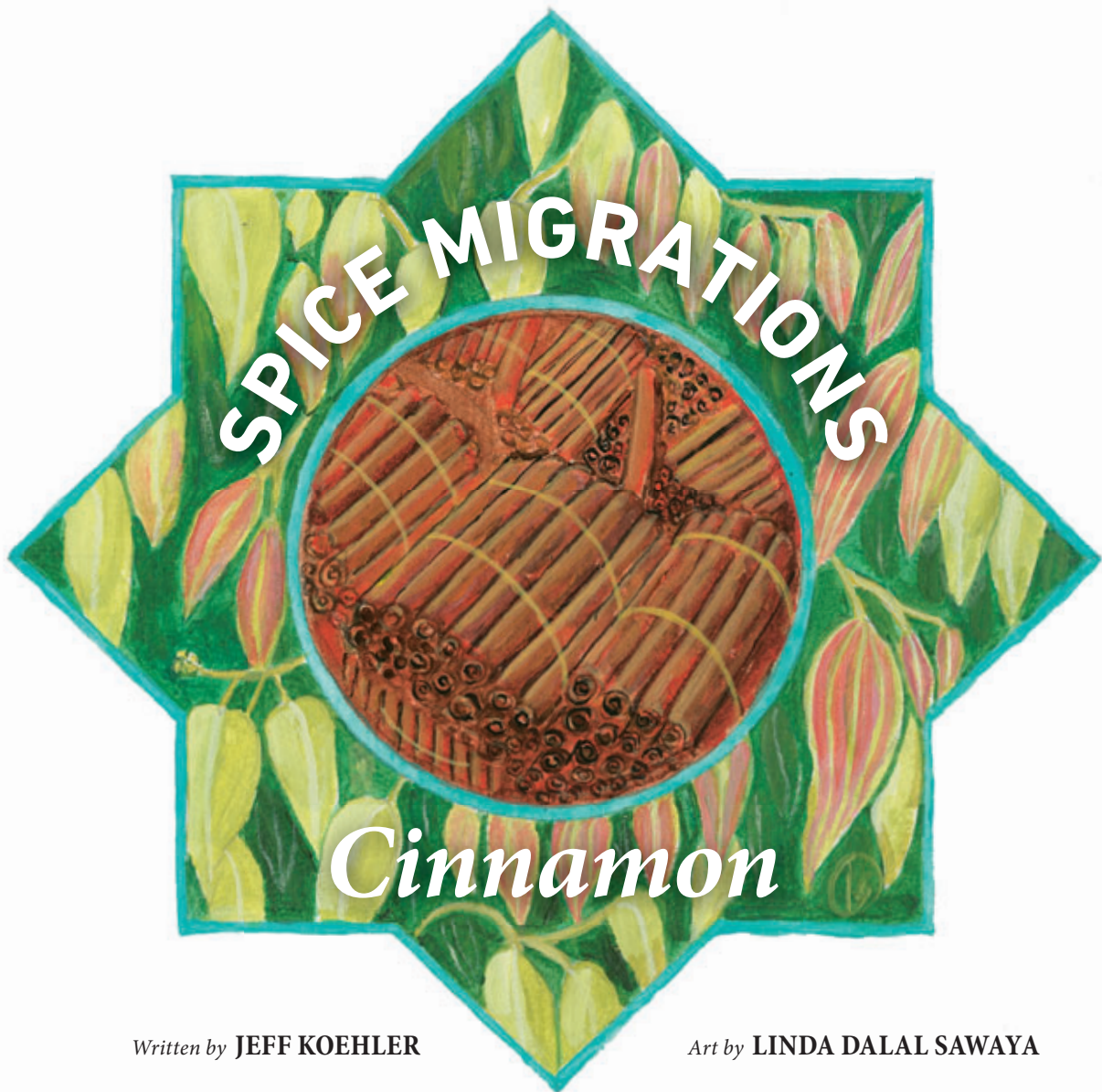
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everydaymuslim.org/projects/woking-mosque-project/the-archive



Written by **JEFF KOEHLER**

Art by **LINDA DALAL SAWAYA**

“The prince named Vijaya, the valiant, landed in Lanka,” recounts the *Mahavamsa*, the epic-poem history of Sri Lanka composed in the fifth century CE. Vijaya was, the account goes, expelled some 2,600 years ago from the Sinhalese royal court in India, and he sailed south from the Ganges Delta with some 700 soldiers. When he and the troops landed on the northwest coast of the island country, they “sat down wearied,” and their hands “were reddened by touching the dust.”

Vijaya called the kingdom he founded Thambapanni, “Copper-hands.” According to Sri Lankan historian Dilhani Dissanayake of La Trobe University in Australia, *panni* can refer also to leaves—specifically young leaves of the *Cinnamomum verum* (“true cinnamon”) tree native to that part of Sri Lanka.

An unassuming evergreen that, when cultivated, is a bush as much as it is a tree, says Marryam H. Reshii, author of *The*

Flavour of Spice (Hachette India, 2017), cinnamon’s value lies not in its leaves, but in its inner layer of bark. The English word “cinnamon” comes from the Phoenician and Hebrew *qinnamon*, via the Greek *qinnamomon*, which may have come from a Malay word related to the Indonesian *kayu manis*, “sweet wood.” It’s the Greek that lends itself to the current botanical genus, *Cinnamomum*, of which *verum* is one of some 300 species. Cinnamon’s first scientific name, *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*, refers to Sri

Lanka's former name Ceylon.

Together with its close but coarser relative cassia (*Cinnamomum cassia* and several other species), which originated in southern China, cinnamon was carried to Egypt as early as 2000 BCE by merchants who, while trading throughout the Middle East and Arabia, kept their Sri Lankan source a secret. It isn't surprising, therefore, that Greek historian Herodotus wrote around 430 BCE in *The Histories* that cinnamon grew in the land where Dionysus, the Greek god of harvest, was brought up—that is, somewhere to the east—and that it was gathered in Arabia. Arab traders, he wrote,

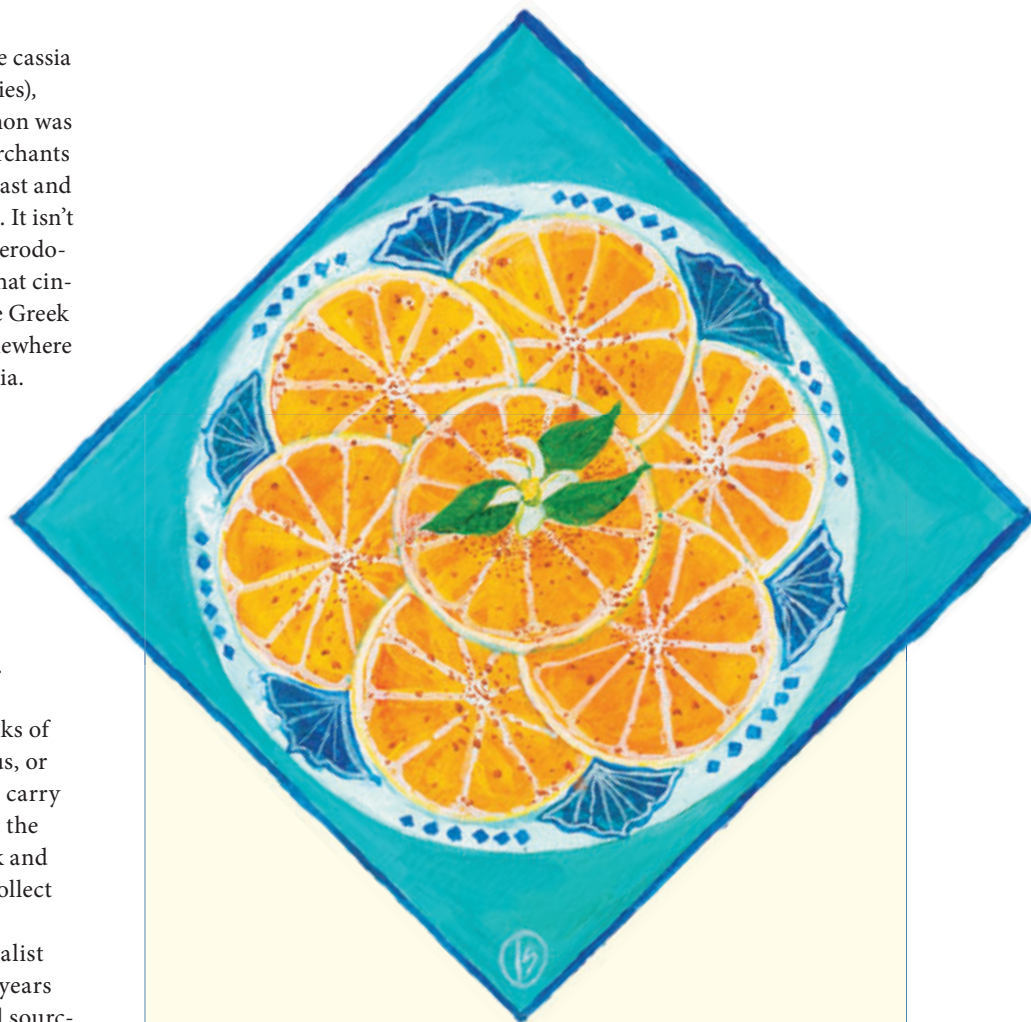
say that great birds carry these dry sticks, which we have learned from the Phoenicians to call cinnamon, and that the birds carry the sticks to their nests, which are plastered with mud and are placed on sheer crags where no man can climb up.

The merchants, he continued, set large chunks of raw meat near the nests of this cinnamologus, or cinnamon bird. “The birds swoop down and carry off the limbs of the beasts to their nests, and the nests, being unable to bear the weight, break and fall down, and the Arabians approach and collect what they want.”

A “fabulous story,” scoffed Roman naturalist and philosopher Pliny the Elder nearly 500 years later, told by traders to keep prices high and sources shrouded. And while Pliny was right—the world did value cinnamon for both rarity and mystery—scarcely anyone in the Mediterranean or Europe could answer where it came for nearly another 1,000 years.

While today cinnamon is on nearly every spice rack, and it is used mostly to flavor food and drinks, its history shows it has had a range of other, mostly health-related roles, as Jack Turner noted in his 2005 *Spice: The History of a Temptation*. In addition to Egyptians who used it as a perfume in embalming, the Bible's Old Testament mentions it as an ingredient in anointing oil. From India to Rome people burned it in cremation. The voluminous 10th-century *Kitab al-Hawi fi al-Tibb* (*Comprehensive book on medicine*) by polymath al-Razi recommends cinnamon to help “prevent sweat from armpit and feet, so there will be no stink.”

Medieval Islamic physicians used cinnamon to treat wounds, tumors and ulcers. They influenced European physicians such as Italian Matthaeus Platearius, whose 12th-century *The Book of Simple Medicines* recommended cinnamon to help form scars on wounds and relieve ailments of the stomach, liver, heart and more. Dissanayake points out that in Sri Lanka the fourth-century CE medical



Oranges Slices with Cinnamon

This popular North African dessert is a simple, refreshing way to finish a meal. Some like to add a few drops of orange blossom water. Sprinkle over a handful of golden raisins, if desired. The recipe is adapted from *Morocco: A Culinary Journey with Recipes* (Chronicle Books, 2012).
—JEFF KOEHLER

Serves 4

4 plump Valencia oranges	1/8 teaspoon orange flower water, optional
1 teaspoon superfine sugar	4 sprigs fresh mint
Ground cinnamon	

Trim off the top and bottom ends of the oranges and reserve. Peel each orange with a knife, removing any of the white pith. Cut the oranges crosswise into 8-millimeter (1/3-inch) thick slices. Transfer to a mixing bowl. Pull a couple of the smaller slices apart without losing any of the juices.

In a small mixing bowl, squeeze the juice from the reserved ends. Add the sugar, orange flower water (if using), and a pinch of cinnamon, and whisk until the sugar is dissolved. Pour over the orange slices, turning to coat. Cover and refrigerate until chilled.

Divide the oranges among four dessert plates, overlapping the slices. Spoon any remaining juice over the top and dust with cinnamon. Garnish with the mint sprigs and enjoy.

books of King Buddhadasa introduced the cinnamon tree as a medicinal tree or herb and that, still today, Ayurvedic medicine prescribes cinnamon to aid digestion and oral hygiene.

It was not until the 10th century that glimmers of the connections between Sri Lanka and cinnamon began to appear. In *Aja'ib al-Hind (Marvels of India)*, traveler al-Ramhormuzi wrote, "Among remarkable islands, in all the sea there is none like the Island of Serendib, also called Sehilan [Ceylon].

... Its trees yield excellent cinnamon bark, the famous Singalese cinnamon."

By the 13th century, naturalist and geographer Zakariya ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini had written in *Athar al-bilad* (Monuments of the lands) that "the wonders of China and the rarities of India are brought to Silan. Many aromatics not to be found elsewhere are met with here, such as cinnamon, brazilwood, sandalwood, nard, and cloves."

Ibn Battuta, the most well-known global traveler of his time, came to the island in 1344 CE and wrote—or perhaps exaggerated—that "the entire coast of the country is covered with cinnamon sticks washed down by torrents and deposited on the coast looking like hills."

Hieronimo di Santo Stefano of Genoa, traveling in the late 15th-century, noted that "after a navigation of twenty-six days we arrived at a large island called Ceylon which grow the Cinnamon trees."

Still, the origins of cinnamon did not become widely known until after 1505, the year a storm blew a Portuguese fleet to the shore of Sri Lanka. The Portuguese departed with nearly six metric tons of the spice that whetted their appetite for more. Over the next hundred years, variously through force and local alliances, they gradually took control of the centuries-long Arab and Muslim trade monopoly. A century later Ceylon's king allied with the Dutch to evict the Portuguese, only to have the British wrest control near the end of the 18th century. However, by 1800, *Cinnamomum verum* transplants were thriving commercially in India, Java (now in Indonesia) and the Seychelle islands off East Africa. No longer as scarce, cinnamon's value declined, on its way to becoming a worldwide grocery-store spice staple.

Now twice a year, after Sri Lanka's big and then small monsoon seasons, when high humidity makes production easier, wrist-sized cinnamon trees are cut, and skilled cinnamon peelers trim the branches and scrape off the outer bark. With blade-sharp knives they loosen and then remove the delicate inner bark, often only about a half-millimeter thick. They pack the paper-thin curls inside one another to form dense, cigar-like quills that are dried, graded and cut into lengths.

Traditionally, a peeler passed down the skill to an apprentice.

According to Dissanayake, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on the subject, it took five to seven years to master the art. "The peeling process is really intensive," Dissanayake says. It "relies on local knowledge, expert skills, dexterity and patience."

Both in quills (cinnamon sticks) or ground to powder, true cinnamon has a highly fragrant aroma with a warm, woody flavor that is simultaneously delicate and intense, and its after-taste is sweet.

While in European and American cultures cinnamon features frequently in cakes, cookies, candies and hot drinks, in Sri Lanka, where cinnamon is pervasive in the national cuisine, cooks often add a quill to fish curries, for instance, and elsewhere cinnamon frequently complements savory flavors such as Moroccan lamb tagines (slow-cooked stews), Turkish pilafs and Middle Eastern meat dishes, as well as curry powders, masala

spice mixes and the essential Chinese five-spice mix.

Often what is on the shelf today is not *Cinnamomum verum*, true cinnamon, but its cousin cassia, which now grows both in southern China and in other parts of South Asia, like Laos and Vietnam.

Easier and cheaper to produce, cassia's inner bark is darker, coarser and thicker—often too hard and thick to pulverize or grind by hand using a mortar and pestle. Cassia can be more pungent because it contains tannins, those protective polyphenols that make our mouths rough and dry. "The cinnamon of Sri Lanka is stronger, more sweet and pleasing to the palate, and not woody at all," says Reshii. That sweetness, she adds, is why true cinnamon is so popular in desserts, breads and puddings, while cassia is popular among cooks for main dishes, from curries to kibbeh, especially across Asia.

Cinnamon has long been a key part of Sri Lanka's cultural identity, and today it is one of the world's most popular spices, a key to every cook's pantry. 🌍



Jeff Koehler is an American writer and photographer based in Barcelona. His most recent book is *Where the Wild Coffee Grows* (Bloomsbury, 2017), an "Editor's Choice" in *The New York Times*. His previous book, *Darjeeling: A History of the World's Greatest Tea* (Bloomsbury, 2016), won the 2016 IACP award for literary food writing. His writing has appeared in *The Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Saveur*, *Food & Wine* and NPR.org. Follow him on Twitter @koehlercooks and Instagram @jeff_koehler. **Linda Dalal Sawaya** (www.lindasawaya.com; @lindasawayaART) is a Lebanese American artist, illustrator, ceramicist, writer, teacher, gardener and cook in Portland, Oregon. Her 1997 cover story, "Memories of a Lebanese Garden," highlighted her illustrated cookbook tribute to her mother, *Alice's Kitchen: Traditional Lebanese Cooking*. She exhibits regularly throughout the US, and she is listed in the *Encyclopedia of Arab American Artists*.





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“Each of them walks on their own path, ignoring the other. I fear they will never meet.”



The Magnificent Conman of Cairo: A Novel

Adel Kamel. Waleed Almusharaf, tr. 2020, AUC Press, 9-789-77416-967-0. \$16.95 pb.

In this underrated piece of Arab literature, we follow the lives of Khaled and Mallim, two young men from vastly different Egyptian social classes whose lives are completely changed after a chance encounter and an unnecessary misunderstanding. Their stories unfold in an ironic twist ending against the background of social and political upheavals that defined the early-20th-century Kingdom of Egypt. Waleed Almusharaf translated Kamel's witty dialog so masterfully from the original Arabic that the characters come alive and become personally felt. Interestingly, one could postulate that the protagonist Khaled was somewhat inspired by Kamel's life, as both are lawyers with diverging personal interests. For Kamel it's literature, and for Khaled it's revolution. *The Magnificent Conman of Cairo* was originally published in 1942 to little fanfare in Egypt. However, in the modern day, this novel is the perfect quarantine book for Arab and non-Arab readers alike.

—MARINA ALI



Chetna's Healthy Indian Vegetarian: Everyday Veg and Vegan Feasts Effortlessly Good for You

Chetna Makan. 2020, Mitchell Beazley, 9-781-78472-662-1. \$24.20.

Within decades of the rise of Islam, Muslim traders dominated commerce in the Indian Ocean. Much of their business centered on spices, which they purchased from West Indian, Gujarati merchants, famed for their upscale vegetarian cuisine. This accessible introduction to Indian vegetarian cooking features more than 80 recipes, many of which are worthy of the Gujarati palette, with creative, healthful reinventions of classic Indian dishes. Grated zucchini stands in for ground meat in kofta, the Indian (and Middle Eastern) equivalent to meat balls, simmered in a spicy, tomato-rich curry. Anise-flavored carom seeds nuance eggplant and green-pepper *sabji*, a chunky curry. Perhaps most creative is the book's variety of easy-to-make flatbreads—*rotis*, *chapattis*, *naans* and more—made from beets, *moli* (daikon), buckwheat and other grains. Access to an Indian or Middle Eastern grocer (some of the ingredients are also available online) will help the home cook master these tempting and exotic recipes. —TOM VERDE



Falastin: A Cookbook

Sami Tamimi and Tara Wigley. 2020, Ten Speed Press, 9-780-39958-173-1. \$35, hb.

The cuisine of “Falastin” (pronounced fa-la-STEEN and named for a former Palestinian newspaper founded in 1911) is both honored and reinvented in this elegant tribute to the people and culture of Palestine by native-born Sami Tamimi and Irishwoman Tara Wigley, whose travels in the region and tutelage under Tamimi's partner and famed cook Yotam Ottolenghi (who provides a forward) left her “knee-deep in tahini.” Like Ottolenghi's cuisine, the 110 recipes in this beautifully illustrated cookbook evoke the streets of Jerusalem and the Palestinian countryside. There are some surprises (the addition of powdered skim milk to the dough recipe for pita bread) and elegant twists (dark coffee and cardamom in flourless chocolate torte, reminiscent of traditional Arabic coffee). Flourishes, such as whipped feta and yogurt, pistachios and Aleppo pepper, add panache to simply roasted wedges of eggplant, plus sections on Palestinian foodways (e.g. the story of the Palestinian Seed Library) elevate the classic foods of the region to new levels while honoring their roots. —TOM VERDE



Garum: Recipes From the Past

Ursula Janssen. 2020, Independently Published, 9-798-63491-120-5, \$32 pb.

Historical recipes, as author Ursula Janssen points out, can be difficult to interpret because they are often little more than “a list of (proposed) ingredients.” Informative and wide-ranging—borrowing from Mesopotamia to Elizabethan Europe—her book aims to offer recipes “you can actually easily do at home, in a normal household kitchen, with readily available ingredients.” Janssen does suggest substitutes for ingredients like vinegar for verjuice (the juice of unripened grapes, popular in medieval/Renaissance cuisine) or Thai fish sauce for the *garum* of the title, a heady concoction of fermented fish guts, a favored condiment in the Greco-Roman world. But where is one to find “2 pigeons, preferably with heart, liver, and gizzards” at the average grocery store when preparing the questionably appetizing Babylonian pigeon burger? Honey-sweetened, Roman-era cheese-cake in a terracotta bowl sounds tempting. But its two cups of “white cheese” (feta? cottage?) is somewhat vague. A better volume for the armchair gourmet or food-history enthusiast than the home cook. —TOM VERDE



Parwana: Recipes and Stories From an Afghan Kitchen

Durkhanai Ayubi. 2020, Interlink Books, 9-781-62371-875-6. \$35, hb.

Afghani-born restaurateur Durkhanai Ayubi honors her parents, Zelmah and Farida Ayubi, and Farida's home cooking in this loving and deeply personal memoir/cookbook featuring classic Afghan recipes from Farida's kitchen. Fleeing their troubled country in 1987, the Ayubis settled in Adelaide, Australia, where they eventually opened Parwana, a restaurant offering traditional Afghani cuisine. Rice serves as the foundation for various kinds of *palaw* (pilaf): studded with almonds and pistachios, paired with *maash palaw* (mung beans) or blended with seared chicken breasts and tart, dried cranberries. *Jelabi*—squiggly, deep fried ropes of dough drenched in saffron-cardamom sugar syrup—summon family memories of 'Id celebrations, while roasting eggplant for *bartah* (the Afghani version of baba ghanoush) preserves excess supplies of the abundant, summertime crop, in accordance with Farida's dictum that nothing should go to waste. Sections on Afghan history and family stories of resettlement add dimension to this culinary chronicle, "driven by commemoration ... tinged with a mixture of loss and hope."

—TOM VERDE



O'tkan Kunlar (Bygone Days)

Abdullah Qodiriy. Mark Reese, tr. 2018, Muloqot Cultural Engagement Program, 9-780-57846-729-0. \$25 pb.

Abdullah Qodiriy began publishing *O'tkan Kunlar* in 1922 as a serial in the Uzbek journal *Inqilob* (Revolution) at a time when Bolshevik propaganda and jadidist ideology thrived in Central Asia. The story's success led Qodiriy to release it four years later as Uzbekistan's first novel, but its increasing popularity opened both the book and its author up to criticism, eventually leading to the purging of Qodiriy in 1938. The story, translated for the first time into English, takes place in Turkistan, the heart of Central Asia, in "the year 1264 of the Hijra" (1845 or 1846) and centers on Otabek, a young man "lost in thought" and left feeling "like an outsider." His pursuit for love with a young woman takes readers on a romantic journey filled with self-doubt and self-discovery. The backdrop of a region mired in a period of political and ethnic transition heighten the narrative, perhaps revealing the author's intent to relate the spiritual-moral decay of his people and the socio-cultural degradation happening at the hands of Russian colonists to the circumstances of his own day. —ALVA ROBINSON



Tasting Difference: Food Race, and Cultural Encounters in Early Modern Literature

Gitanjali G. Shahani.

2020, Cornell University Press, 9-781-50174-870-7. \$39.95 hb. Dr. Gitanjali Shahani presents a cerebral exploration of colonialism, cultural heritage and racism intersecting with cuisine, detailing how we understand other groups of people through their foods. The book's fundamental thesis centers on how cuisines can simultaneously fetishize and alienate the people they are meant to represent. We learn about the problematic origins of our favorite foods, like coffee and sugar, and how their proliferation has radically altered the nations where they originated. It is interesting to think how our daily Starbucks run originated from a bloody history marred by slavery, class warfare and environmental destruction. Even so, on a personal note, my mind harkened back to Kara Walker's *Subtlety* art exhibition, which was discussed at length in "Tasting Difference," while I was measuring a cup of sugar for baking a few days prior to writing this review. This book is a must for those who aim to learn about the systemic inequalities left behind in imperialism's wake or want to dive deeper in the history of food. —MARINA ALI



The Road From Raqqa: A Story of Brotherhood, Borders and Belonging

Jordan Ritter Conn. 2020, Ballantine Books, 9-781-9848-

171-81. \$28 hb. In "Places, Loved Ones" the poet Philip Larkin describes the feeling of belonging to a "place where I could say / This is my proper ground, / Here I shall stay." It is this deep-rooted feeling of place that is at the root of Jordan Ritter Conn's *The Road From Raqqa*. He tells the story of the Alkasem brothers, Bashar and Riyad, who hail from a historic line of Raqqa's ancestral leaders. Ritter Conn describes their childhood, the tribal ties and multigenerational gatherings that define the family's identity and the ways in which these are eroded in time and by global political events: domestic politics in Syria, then attacks on the Twin Towers in New York and ensuing revolutions across the Arab world. As time progresses Riyad realizes that his fondness for Raqqa lives on only in his memories and through his family. This is a beautiful and touching love story for a city loved and lost.

—SOPHIE KAZAN



Ancient Egyptian Jewelry: 50 Masterpieces of Art and Design

Nigel Fletcher-Jones. 2020, AUC Press, 9-789-77416-965-6. \$19.95 hb.

One reason so little jewelry has survived from ancient Egypt, explains Nigel Fletcher-Jones, is that "over the centuries, gold and precious stones were reused or recut many times, often with the implicit encouragement of the Egyptian authorities." Fortunately, some stunning examples of this jewelry did survive in tombs dating from the Early Dynastic period (3100–2686 BCE) on through the Ramesside period (1292–1180 BCE) and beyond. Housed in museums in and around Cairo, the 50 examples pictured include jeweled collars, heavy gold pectorals, bracelets, armlets, earrings, pendants and more. As often as not, the ornaments incorporate the hard stones valued by the Egyptians both for their endurance and their color. The red orange of carnelian symbolized the sun and vitality. The blue-green turquoise represented the blue waters from which all life emerged. And lapis lazuli, imported from far-away Afghanistan, represented the protective night sky. A detailed description of each jewel accompanies the full-page illustrations.

—JANE WALDRON GRUTZ



Nubian Gold: Ancient Jewelry from Sudan and Egypt

Peter Lacovara and Yvonne J. Markowitz. 2019, AUC Press, 9-789-777416-782-9. \$59.95 hb.

For thousands of years, Nubia and Egypt associated gold with the powerful, regenerative powers of the sun. Crafted into exquisite armlets, earrings and pendants, gold both adorned the body and signified wealth, status and power, while protecting the wearer from harmful forces. "Birth, childhood, battle, pregnancy, illness and death were life experiences fraught with dangers that required divine intervention," explain the authors. "Adornments even accompanied the dead during their perilous journey to the afterlife." To create these beautiful ornaments, Nubian and Egyptian craftsmen became experts in the arts of goldsmithing, enameling and stone-polishing. Within their rich repertoire were delicate golden chains, swiveling scarab rings, and pendants depicting the symbols of their gods: a ram, for example, stood for the powerful god, Amun. No two ornaments are quite the same, yet as this beautifully illustrated volume shows, each embodies the qualities that make Nubian and Egyptian jewelry some of the most beautiful of the ancient world.

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EVENTS

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CURRENT / JANUARY

Rayyane Tabet: Alien Property tells the story of the ninth-century BCE stone reliefs excavated in the early 20th century at Tell Halaf, Syria, and their subsequent destruction, loss or dispersal to museum collections around the world. Examining the circuitous journey four of these reliefs took to arrive at The Met under the aegis of the World War II-era Alien Property Custodian Act, the presentation also highlights the very personal connection of the reliefs to contemporary artist Rayyane Tabet, who has created rubbings of 32 basalt reliefs in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, the Louvre Museum, Paris, the Walters Museum, Baltimore, and The Met. The Met. **New York**, through January 18.

CURRENT / MARCH

Egyptian Mummies: Ancient Lives, New Discoveries, a compelling exhibition from the British Museum, presents insights into six mummies spanning 900 BCE to 180 CE including a young child, temple singer and the daughter of a priest. Combining CT scans, digital visualizations and the latest research, this exhibition offers a fascinating glimpse into how these people lived along the Nile and what happened to them after

they died. Each mummy has a story to tell. Royal **Ontario** Museum, through March 21.

Faig Ahmed: Dissolving Order, dedicated to the work of Baku-based artist Faig Ahmed, contemplates how age-old structures can be disrupted, overturned or reorganized in an instant, inviting new possibilities. Though the show was envisioned before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it evokes ideas and emotions that are all too relevant in our current moment of global upheaval. The exhibition's centerpiece is a deconstruction of one of the world's most enduring, remarkably consistent art forms: the carpet. Like many of Ahmed's sculptures, "Guatama" (2017), a hand-woven carpet, distorts familiar features of carpets, warping the past into something otherworldly and new. Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through March 21.

CURRENT / OCTOBER

Al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya (The Pen League): A Digital Exhibition offers a glimpse into the vibrant worlds and ambitious undertakings of al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya, a collective of members that formed a *mahjar* (diaspora) school that aspired to rethink the form and essence of Arabic literature and language. Their animated literary and artistic world created a home in New York from where they could navigate the challenges of what came to be called *ta'amruk*, or Americanization. On the 100th anniversary of al-Rabita's establishment in 1920, this exhibit presents a range of images and texts including poetry books, articles, personal letters and community journals published and written by the league's members. Arab American National Museum. **Dearborn, Michigan**, through October 17.

CURRENT / 2021

Archival Memories: Marcell Restle's Research in Anatolia and Beyond gives deep insight into the research of art historian Marcell Restle (1932–2016), who dedicated his life to the study of Asia Minor in Late Antiquity and Byzantine, as well as Seljuk and Ottoman times. Restle pioneered the systematic examination of the heritage of Cappadocia, one of the crossroads of Anatolia, and his detailed studies of Byzantine architecture and mural paintings helped launch the modern art-historical studies of Cappadocia. His extensive archive of slides, photographs, written documents, technical and photogrammetric drawings, as well as video and sound recordings all make for a rich collection that serves as the basis of this exhibit. **Online**, through 2021.

PERMANENT

Tatar Avyli, an ethnographic open-air museum, is a recreation of the work and life of a typical medieval Tatar village that transports visitors to the past through full-scale examples of wooden architecture, crafts and samples of Tatar national cuisine. The complex, built in the form of a typical Tatar village, plays home to housing and farm structures and shows the difference between peasants, craftsmen and merchants. Petting zoos and annual cultural events such as festivals, horse races and fairs add to the unique experience. Tatar Avyli, **Isakovo, Republic of Tatarstan, Russia**, permanent.

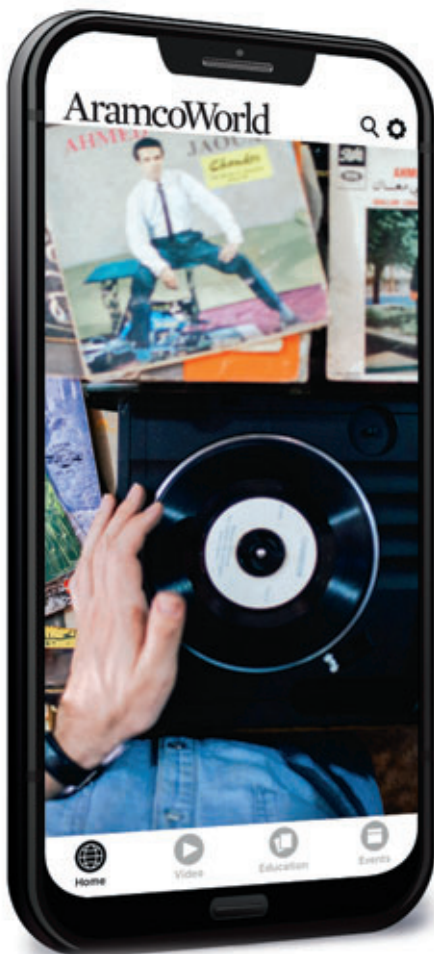
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Art in Isolation: Creativity in the Time of COVID-19

Art in Isolation: Creativity in the Time of COVID-19 pays tribute to the experiences and reflections of artists from the Middle East and its diaspora during a period of global crisis. Works made at the height of the global pandemic by regional artists center around the theme of sheltering in place. The result is a rich curation of art pieces by 39 emerging, midcareer and established artists investigating the emotional and physical impacts of confinement on artistic practice. All the works are for sale and can be purchased online, with most proceeds going to support the artists. Middle East Institute, **Washington, DC**, through January 29.

"The Promise" by Honolulu-based artist Melissa Chimera, 2020, oil on wood and acrylic, 91.5 x 70 centimeters.

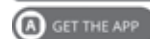


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