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Art and Design Education in Oman

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It is impossible to paint a true picture of art and design education in Oman without briefly considering the geography and history of this country. Oman is located in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula in the Middle East, covering an area of 309,500 square kilometers. It has 1,700 kilometers of coastline, stretching from the Strait of Hormuz in the north to Yemen in the south, and has access to three seas: the Arabian Gulf (Persian Gulf), the Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea. Oman borders Saudi Arabia to the west, the United Arab Emirates to the northwest, and Yemen to the southwest. It is the second largest country in the Arabian Peninsula. Oman has been known by several names during the course of its history. The best known of these are Magan, Mezoun, and, of course, Oman, each of which has a specific cultural or historical connotation (Ministry of Information 2013).

The practice of arts and crafts in Oman goes back thousands of years. Rock art can be found throughout the country, from its northernmost to its southernmost points. Images include men with animals, men riding horses and camels, hunting activities, trees, and boats. In 1975, Stone Age cave drawings were discovered. These depict human life as it was at that time: The images found include human figures, animals, and tools and equipment. Some interesting images and text were also found in caves in Salalah, a city in the province of Dhofar in the south of Oman; these images date back to the pre-Islamic period (Al-Yahyai and Al-Amri 2006; see also Al-Yahyai 2013).