
#COMETOGETHER

07-28 OCT 2012
81 BRICK LANE
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EDGE
OF
ARABIA



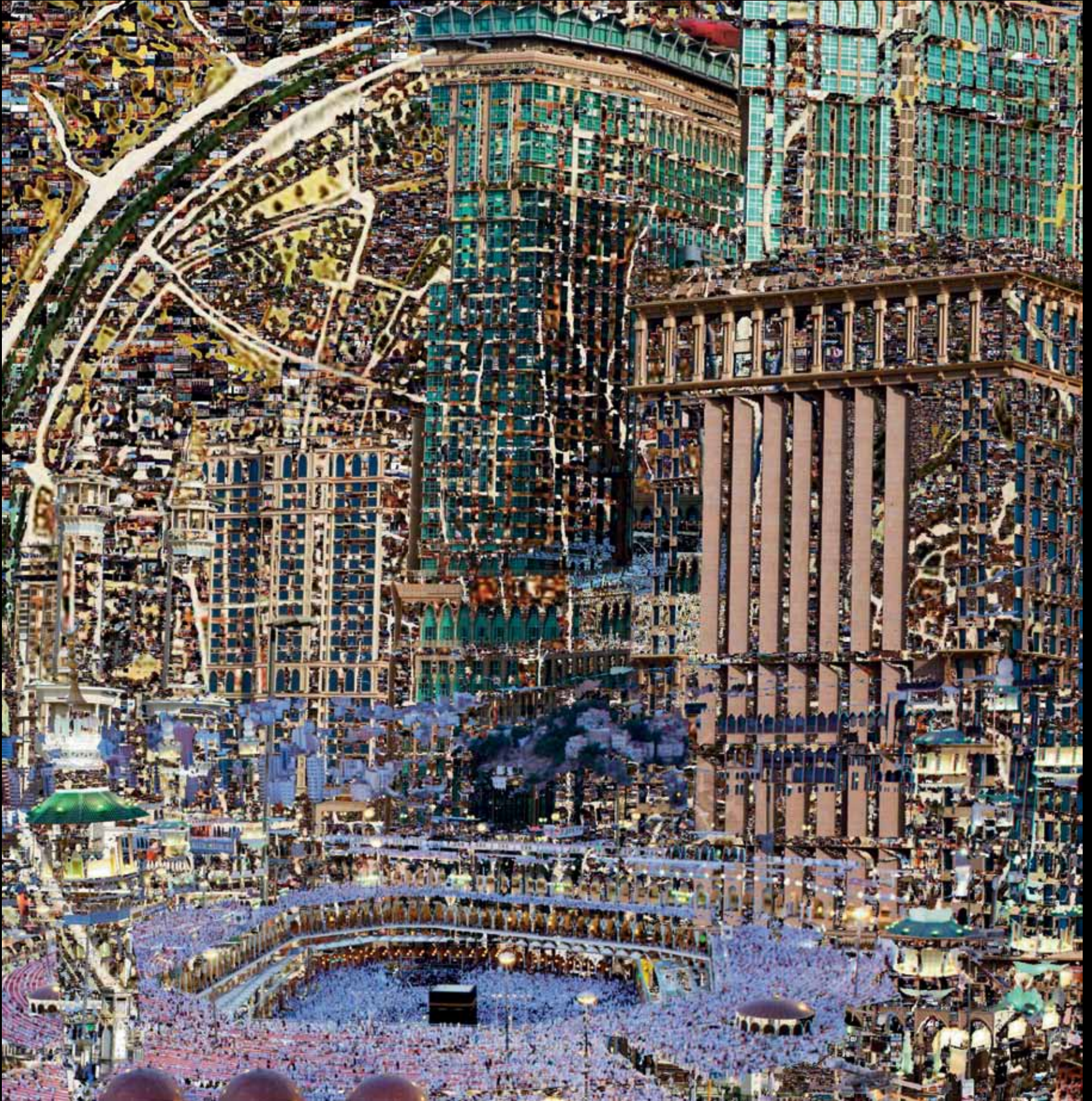
EAST LONDON
WELCOMES
CONTEMPORARY
ARTISTS
FROM THE
EDGE OF ARABIA

SHADIA ALEM (SAUDI)

The Supreme Ka'aba of God (detail)

C-print diasec mounted on dibond · 47¹/₄ x 78³/₄ in. (120 x 200 cm.)

Executed in 2012, this work is the artist's proof from an edition of three plus one artist's proof
\$15,000–20,000



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Part I & II • *Dubai* • 23–24 October 2012

CHRISTIE'S

Viewing

21–24 October
Jumeirah Emirates Towers Hotel
Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai, UAE

Contact

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ART DUBAI

20-23.3.2013

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



FOREWORD

-----ORIGINAL MESSAGE-----

FROM: "CHRIS DERCON"
DATE: SAT, 21 JAN 2012 18:17:45
TO: "EDGE OF ARABIA"
SUBJECT: RE: RE: RE:

TEAM.

THE FINANCIAL TIMES WANTED A 'REACTION' TO EDGE OF ARABIA. THEY ASKED ME UPON LEAVING THE AIRPORT. BUT I HAD TO RUSH! THEY WERE GOING TO WRITE TO ME. BUT THEY ARE AT THE DINNER TONIGHT. SO I GUESS. CAN YOU HAND THIS TO THEM?

'WE HAVE BEEN CLOSELY FOLLOWING THE DEVELOPMENT OF 'EDGE..' THROUGH THEIR DIFFERENT PRESENTATIONS - ABROAD - AS OF ITS BEGINNING IN 2007. INDEED IN THE JIGSAW PUZZLE OF THE NEW ART OF THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST THIS PIECE - AN IMPORTANT EDGE - WAS LACKING.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT IN ITS 5TH YEAR THIS IS A HOME PLAY FOR THE 'EDGE'. THE GREAT NUMBER OF YOUNG LOCALS - THEIR CURIOSITY AND ENTHUSIASM - IS PROOF OF THAT! THE EDGE ORGANISERS ARE EXPERIENCED ART PROFESSIONALS. PROOF IS THEIR CREDIBILITY BOTH ABROAD AND AT HOME. THIS SHOW WAS THE MOST MATURE SO FAR: THROUGH ITS THEMES, CHOICE OF ARTISTS, INTERPRETATION AND DISPLAY. THE WORK OF MAHA MALLUH, AHMED MATER - BECAUSE OF ITS POINTED CRITICALITY - AND OF MANAL AL DOWAYAN DESERVE A GREAT INTEREST AND FOLLOWING ALSO IN EUROPE.

THE FACT THAT THERE ARE VERY STRONG WORKS BY 'STRONG WOMEN' IS AN IMPORTANT SIGN. THE OUTSPOKENNESS AND BOLDNESS OF THE WORKS OF THE THREE ARTISTS NAMED ABOVE IS STRIKING. ESPECIALLY SET OFF AGAINST MANY 'DECORATIVE' WORKS IN THE ART OF THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST. THEY GIVE US, THE OUTSIDERS, AN UNPARALLELED INSIGHT IN THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL TENSIONS - READ: CONTRADICTIONS AND PARADOXES - WHICH CAN BE TRACED IN 'THE KINGDOM'.

THE FACT THAT MOST OF THESE ARTISTS HAVE OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREERS AS WELL IS ONCE MORE EVIDENCE OF THE FACT THAT THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST REGION IS THE BIRTHPLACE OF A NEW TYPE OF CONTEMPORARY ART AS WELL AS A NEW ROLE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART BEYOND...THE ARTIFICIALITY AND SUPERFICIALITY OF NEW ART MARKETS - THESE ARTISTS ARE TRUE INTELLECTUALS WITH A GREAT EYE FOR FORM AND IMMANENCE.

THAT THE ORGANISERS OF EDGE WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO SHOW AND TELL GUESTS ALSO THE COMPLEXITIES AND ABSURDITIES OF HISTORICAL PRESERVATION IN THE COUNTRY IS PROOF THEIR OPENNESS AND INTELLIGENCE. WE ARE LOOKING MUCH FORWARD TO THE PRESENCE OF SAUDI CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM NEXT WEEK IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HAJJ SHOW AND THE RETURN OF EDGE TO LONDON NEXT OCTOBER DURING FRIEZE.'

C

SENT USING BLACKBERRY SMARTPHONE

CHRIS DERCON, DIRECTOR, TATE MODERN ON EMAIL UPON LEAVING JEDDAH IN JANUARY 2012

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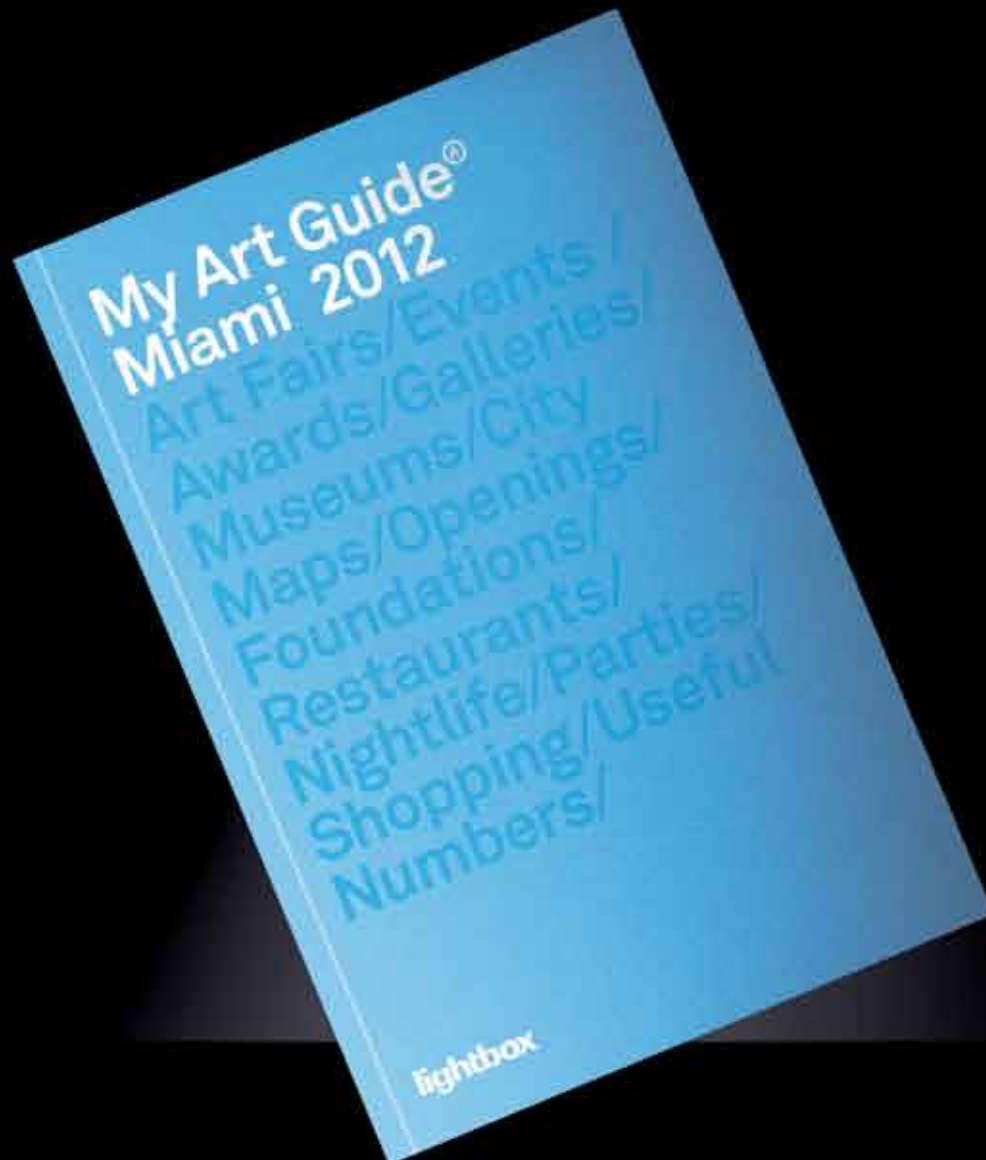
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JOURNEY

EDGE OF ARABIA IS AN INDEPENDENT ARTS INITIATIVE DEVELOPING THE APPRECIATION OF MIDDLE EASTERN CONTEMPORARY ART WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON SAUDI ARABIA.

After four years of touring exhibitions across Europe and the Middle East, **#COMETOGETHER** represents a return to London, and something of a new beginning for the project, featuring as it does over 30 established and emerging artists that go beyond the periphery of the Gulf to Algeria, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The exhibition reflects

the origin of the project as a meandering artists' journey. Defined by a process of discovery and creation which has connected people across national and international borders, **'#COMETOGETHER'** incorporates raw film footage, a library tent and platforms for performance and community intervention, reflecting an unconventional creative language being embraced by a new generation of artists across the MENASA region.

**GREY BORDERS /
GREY FRONTIERS
BERLIN 2010**



**WE NEED TO TALK
JEDDAH 2012**



**TERMINAL
DUBAI 2011**



**THE FUTURE
OF A PROMISE
VENICE 2011**



**WORLD TOUR
LAUNCH
RIYADH 2010**

**EDGE OF ARABIA
LONDON 2008**

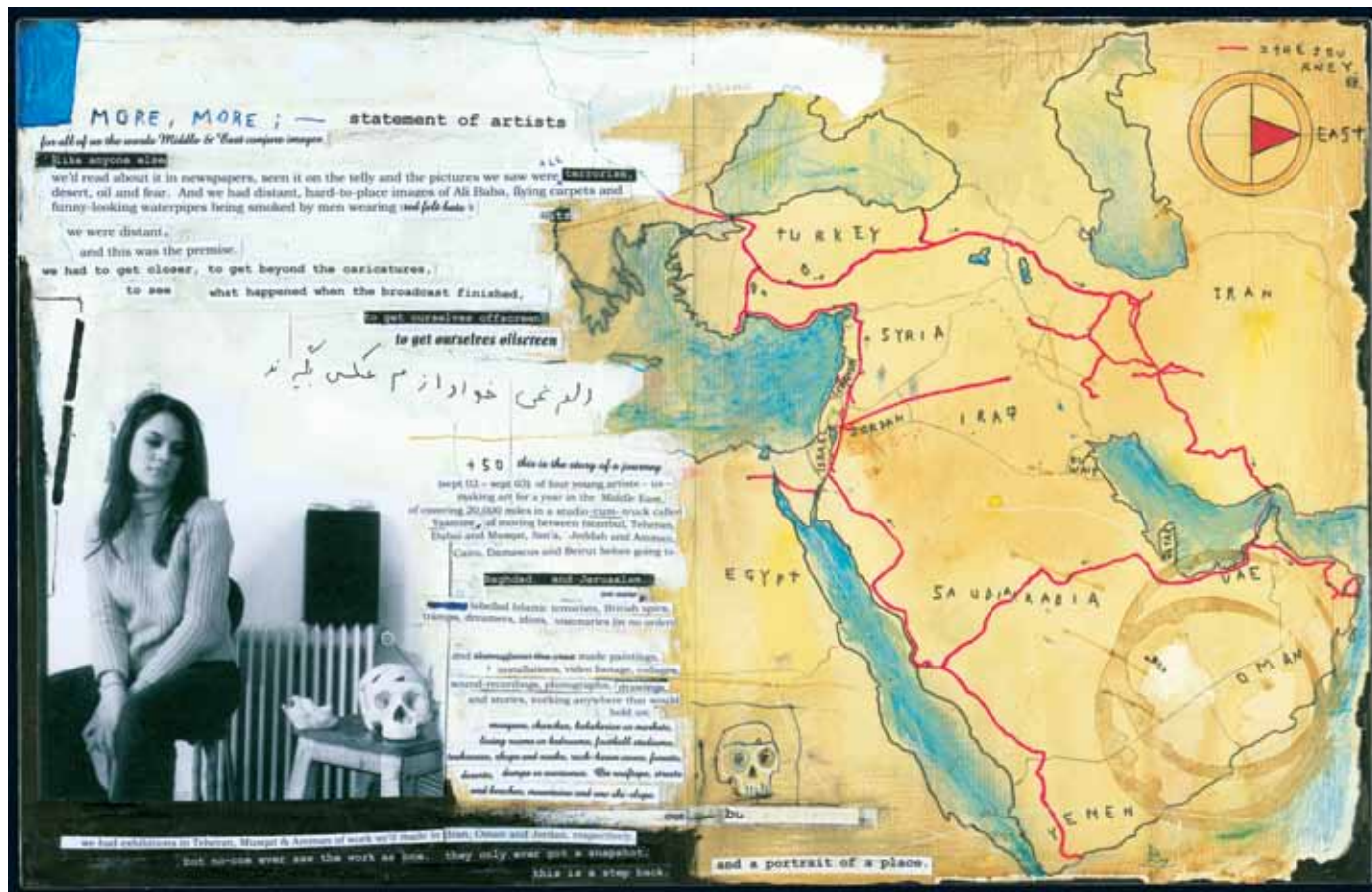


**TRANSITION
ISTANBUL 2010**



AHMED, STEPHEN & ABDULNASSER: COLLABORATION ON THE EDGE OF ARABIA

VENETIA PORTER BASED
ON AN INTERVIEW WITH
STEPHEN STAPLETON.



It was almost exactly four years ago, on 16th October 2008, Stephen Stapleton reminds me, that the first Edge of Arabia exhibition opened, at the Brunei Gallery in London. Showcasing the work of seventeen Saudi contemporary artists, the exhibition moved seamlessly from modernist oil paintings through to the work of a new generation of photographers and installation artists. The works were bold, they offered a very different image of what contemporary art from Saudi Arabia could be, and in itself, that exhibition was the result of a journey. Stephen, himself an artist, had travelled to Yemen and Saudi Arabia in 2003 as part of an art-making expedition in which he worked alongside fellow artists Al Braithwaite and Henry Hemming. In Abha, a quiet city in the green and mountainous Aseer region, Stephen had met Ahmed Mater and Abdulnasser Gharem. Discussions about life and art ensued and a friendship and unique partnership were forged. The name Edge of Arabia came to encapsulate what the three were trying to achieve: connecting artists from the centre of the Islamic World with those beyond. The word 'edge' was significant. It implied new, sometimes questioning perspectives and

a sense of possibility in a region struggling with boundaries and restrictions. Stephen quotes Kurt Vonnegut, "I want to stand as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you see all the kinds of things you can't see from the center."

For Stephen, Ahmed and Abdulnasser, showing the work of talented artists from the Arabia was about 'creating empathy'. There was also the realisation that these artists were part of the changes beginning to take place in the wider Middle East. "The Saudi artists were extremely self-aware, they were part of a changing society, a changing generation, and what they were doing was connected to a societal demographic explosion". The 2008 exhibition was life-changing for some of the artists, 'they were creating contemporary Islamic art, and no one had seen Qur'anic illuminations and stories treated in this new way before.' Images of their works were circulated on the internet and published in the media. For the first time, artists were becoming role models in Saudi Arabia. While successive exhibitions in Europe and elsewhere attracted great interest, the underlying question remained: was this sustainable?

After all, many of these Saudi artists still had their day-jobs: Abdulnasser was a colonel in the army; Ahmed was a doctor, 'they are working people; providing for their families. They were not privileged as many people presumed.' There were many pressures but they continued to produce extraordinary work such as Ahmed's Magnetism in the Hajj exhibition at the British Museum (2012) and Abdulnasser's Message/Messenger, first shown in Istanbul in 2011.

Edge of Arabia had by now turned itself from an exhibition to a model, a sort of grass roots institution and 'a platform where artists felt safe'. For the Venice Biennale, with Saudi Arabia having its own pavilion for the first time, Edge of Arabia produced a pan-Arab exhibition, The Future of Promise, which soon led to discussions about the possibility of a similarly experimental, border-crossing show in London.

#COMETOGETHER is not, Stephen says, a 'curated' exhibition. The choices grew organically with one artist leading to the next. They were strongly influenced by The Generational: Younger than Jesus exhibition at the New Museum, New York, in which

practitioners, curators and others were asked to recommend artists, creating a show described as 'one of the most refreshingly transparent exhibitions of recent times'. 'We wanted to capture something new, allow for chance and connect with what is actually happening on the ground' says Stephen. The London exhibition is itself a journey reflecting Edge of Arabia's own and starts with Farhad Ahrarnia's On the Silk Road. In addition to the core group of Saudi artists from 2008 (Ahmed, Abdulnasser, Maha Malluh, Manal Dowayan, Faisal Samra and Ayman Yossri) there are new, younger artists including Sarah Al Abdali and Salwa Aleryani, as well as established names from the diaspora including Mounir Fatmi and Kader Attia. Edge of Arabia has deliberately disassociated the artists from their nationalities. 'We felt the show should be more borderless and our communications should reflect the fact that artists don't like to present their work in nationalist isolation. Edge of Arabia is not a geographical definition ... it's an approach a frame of mind.' For Stephen 'the star of the show' is the location itself, a 2000-square-metre warehouse on Brick Lane in the Olympic borough of Tower Hamlets, about which he speaks passionately. Opposite the gallery is a shop called Aladdin and a Hajj travel agent. It is hard to think of a more fitting venue for Ahmed's extraordinary new work on Makkah, an extensive project of continuous and dramatic photography and film of the developments around the holy sanctuary in the heart of the city, a body of work with which the local residents of the East End have already begun to identify. When asked what the exhibition explores, Stephen talks of threads and interconnecting themes: 'there's a chronology going back to 9/11, up to the present day and into the future; the artists are part of an unfolding story which is within its time ... rather than retrospective; like Larissa Sansour's A Space Exodus, which connects to NASA's current exploration of Mars and the recent death of Neil Armstrong; it's also about the Olympics and the possibilities for communities in East London to connect with the new generation in the Middle East. It's about process. So a number of works are unfinished, and yet somehow feel more powerful than if they were resolved. Some of the works are not in the gallery at all but in the streets outside.'

Four years on, it seems that Edge of Arabia has returned to its roots.

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أرسلنا ألق الله سبحانه بفتحك

لم أرسلكم ببيكم إلى

وإن تقول الحقيقة وأن نحب
حيرانا كما نحب أنفسنا

أتكلم عن (رسول الله) (محمد)
بعلمنا ألق نعيم اليا واحدا

حكرأ

أرأيتك الرأى ألق عبادة الأوثان
شأليا ما يساء فعبدا

هذا الله الواحد بفتح

لم حركت الثلاثة معقودو اللسان؟

ماذا تقولون بفتح (المسيح)؟

إنهم يكذبون عليك
هم يتكفرون (المسيح)

يقولون إنكم تعبدون ثلاثة آله
الآب والآب والروح القدس

فأرسلنا اليا روحنا (جبريل)...

"وأذكر في الكتاب (مريم)
أذ انتبخت من أهلها مكانا شرقيا"

"باسم الله الرحمن الرحيم"



Sama Alshaibi, vs. The Brother Video Still, 2011, Detail

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#COMETOGETHER is ideally suited to Tower Hamlets, a community where East meets West. Defined for hundreds of years by successive generations of migrants from all over the world, and home to the largest Muslim community in the capital, we are London's multicultural hub. The spirit of 'coming together' aligns with our own efforts to create 'One Tower Hamlets', a community of different faiths, nationalities and races. I would like to welcome all the artists from around the Arab world, whose work reflects the debates in our community. Cllr Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing, Olympic Borough of Tower Hamlets.

WWW.TOWERHAMLETS.GOV.UK

THE CROSSWAY FOUNDATION

The Crossway Foundation is a London-based charity delivering arts and education initiatives for young people between the UK and the Middle East. A core aim of the Foundation is to create a legacy of cultural understanding and invest in genuinely 'global citizens' of the future. The Foundation focuses on delivering the following activities: creative expeditions to and from the UK and Middle East, educational resources, residencies for artists from the Arab region and educational outreach programmes.

WWW.CROSSWAY-FOUNDATION.ORG

PARTNERS

DAR AL-MA'MÛN FOUNDATION

Dar al-Ma'mûn is an international center for artistic residencies located 14 km from Marrakesh in the village of Tassoultante (Ourika valley). The project emerged as a cultural platform aimed at providing support to artists and at promoting Moroccan and African cultural identity beyond borders by working towards intercultural exchange.

WWW.DAM-ARTS.ORG

FUTURE SHORTS

Future Shorts Festival is the world's biggest pop-up film festival featured in 6 continents, 65 countries and over 350 screenings worldwide. The Festival showcases the most exciting short films and filmmakers from around the world and continues to build a massive screening network and powerful community. Its parent company Future Cinema has become world renowned for re-imagining the cinema-going experience for productions including: Secret Cinema, The Other Cinema, Secret Screenings, Secret Restaurant and Secret Swimming.

WWW.FUTURESHORTS.COM

MILE END COMMUNITY PROJECT

Established in 1995, the Mile End Community Project (MCP) is a multi award winning youth innovation agency specialising in creative youth empowerment through innovation and engagement. Hoodforts, one of MCP's creative projects founded in 2010, allows young people a platform to express themselves via art and other creative mediums. In 2012, the Hoodforts project won four awards for its innovative work including the Adobe Film Awards, the Adobe Aspire Award and two awards at the limelight film awards 2012.

WWW.HOODFORTS.COM

NADOUR

Nadour is a non-commercial collection of contemporary art from the Arab world and Iran. Established by Rüdiger K. Weng and curator Diana Wieggersma, the Nadour collection is a platform for significant works from some of the world's most engaging and challenging contemporary artists from across disciplines and mediums, including installation, sculpture, painting, drawing, print, photography and video.

WWW.NADOUR.ORG

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creativity across borders

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ma'mûn

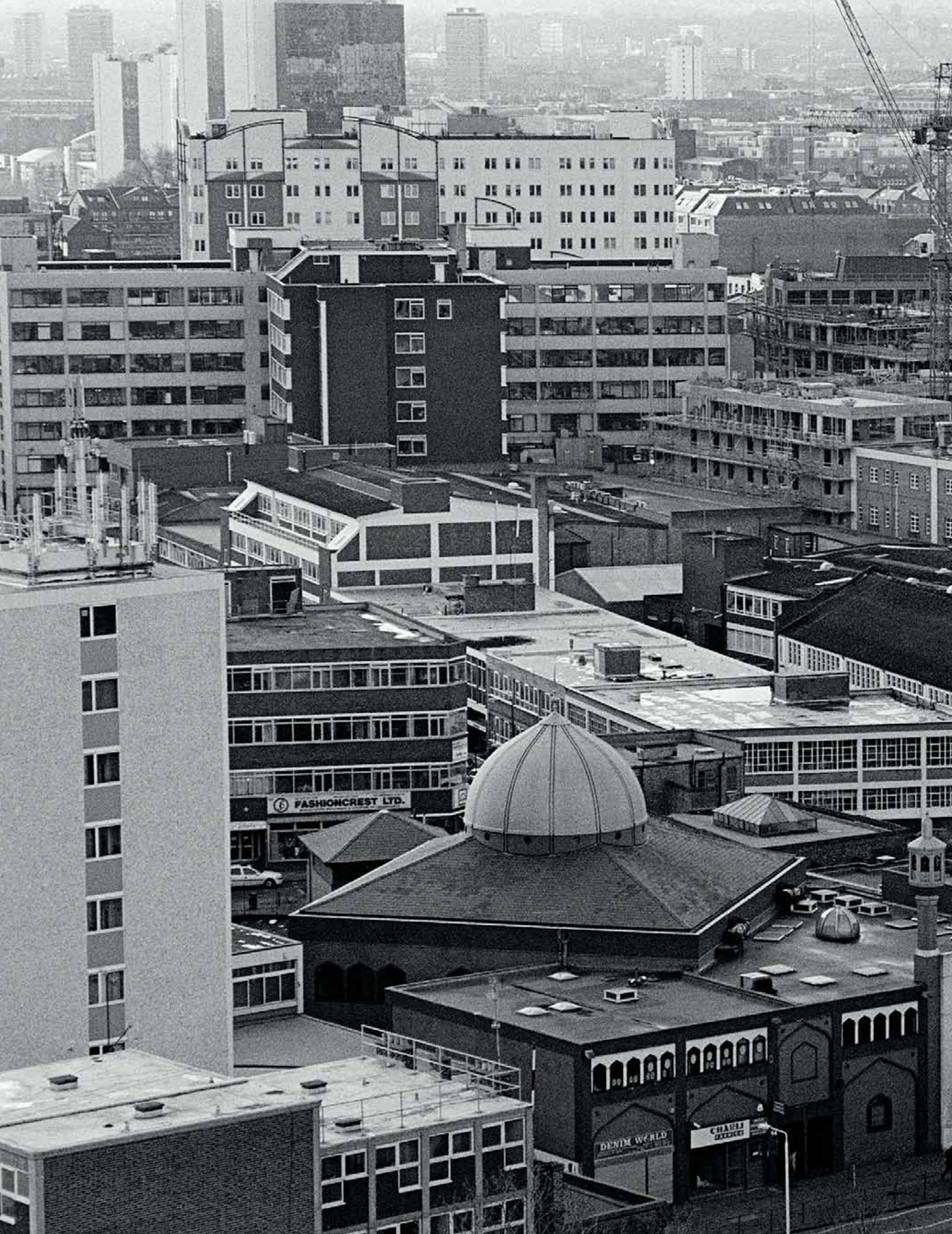
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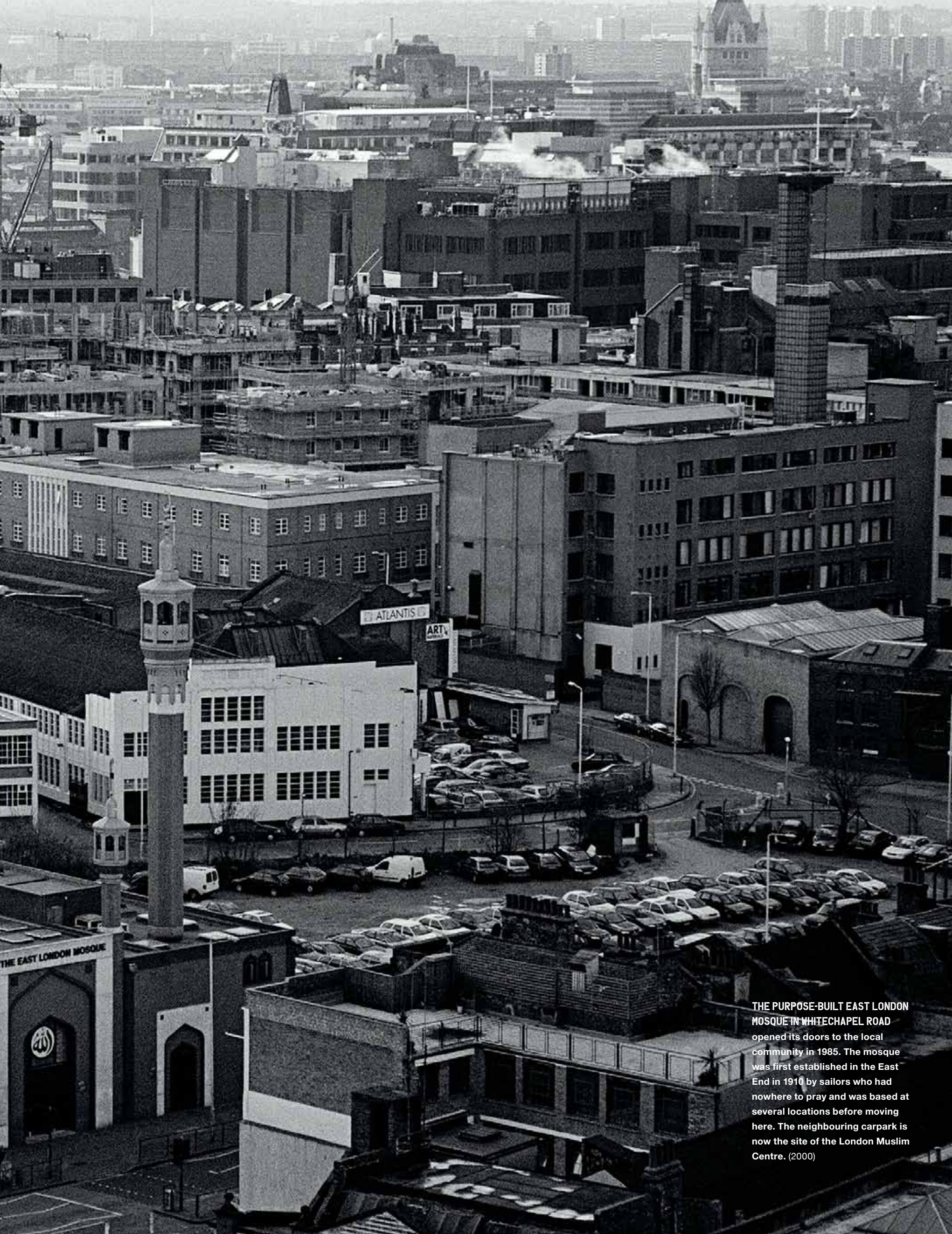
TOWER HAMLETS

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MCP



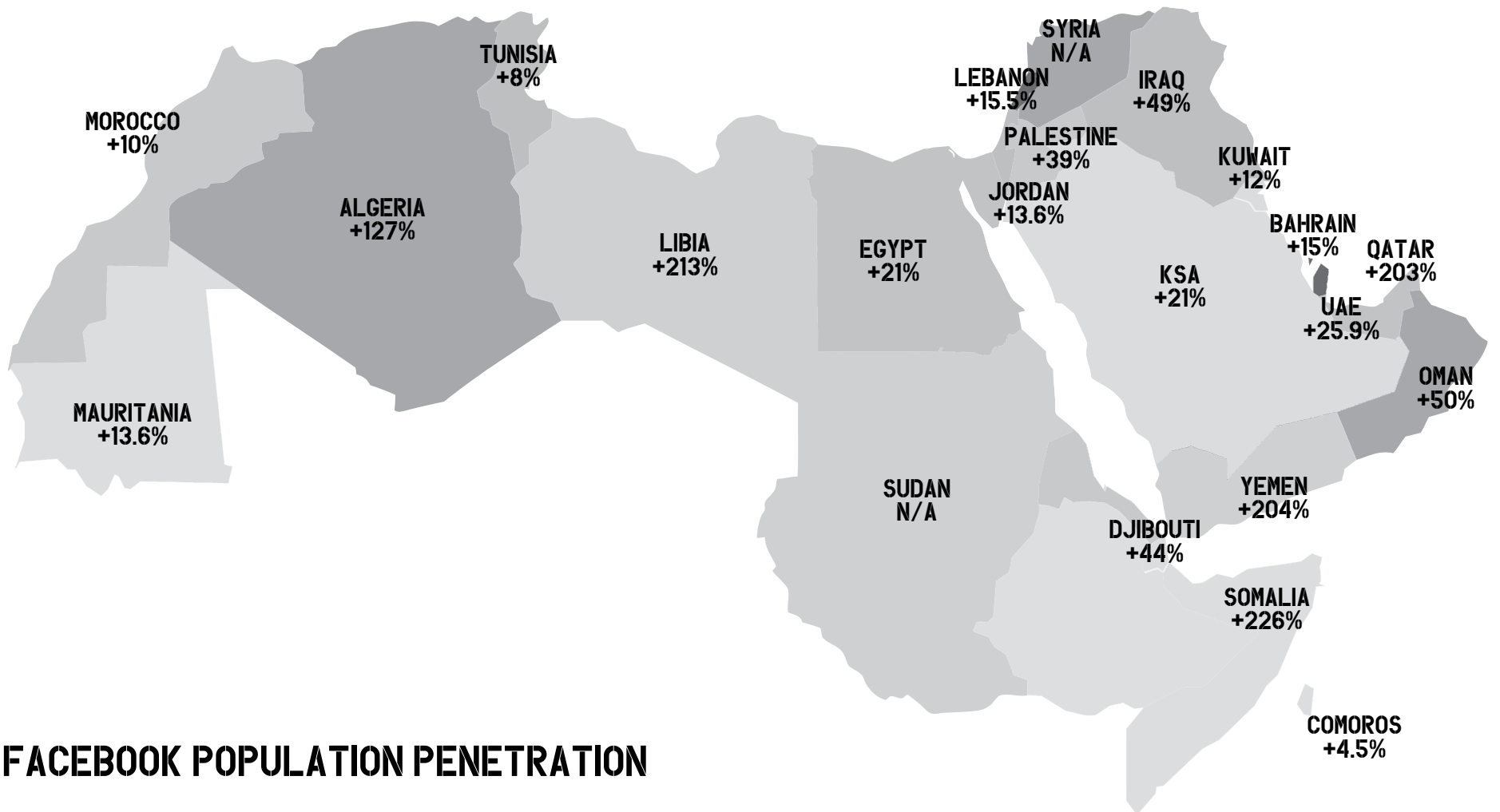


THE PURPOSE-BUILT EAST LONDON MOSQUE IN WHITECHAPEL ROAD opened its doors to the local community in 1985. The mosque was first established in the East End in 1910 by sailors who had nowhere to pray and was based at several locations before moving here. The neighbouring carpark is now the site of the London Muslim Centre. (2000)

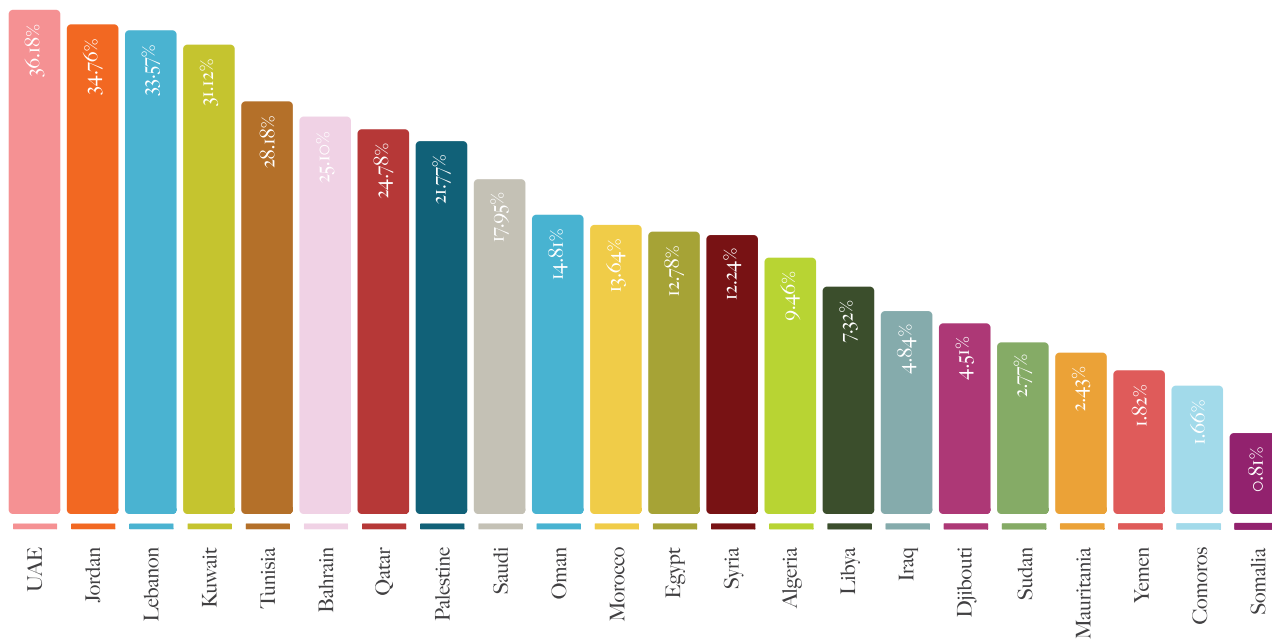
FACEBOOK

43 MILLION ARAB USERS ON FACEBOOK

FACEBOOK USER GROWTH SEP 2011 - MAY 2012



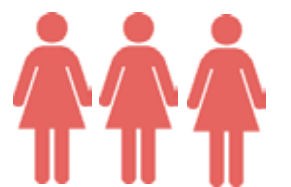
FACEBOOK POPULATION PENETRATION



FACEBOOK USE BY GENDER



28.380.000 MEN



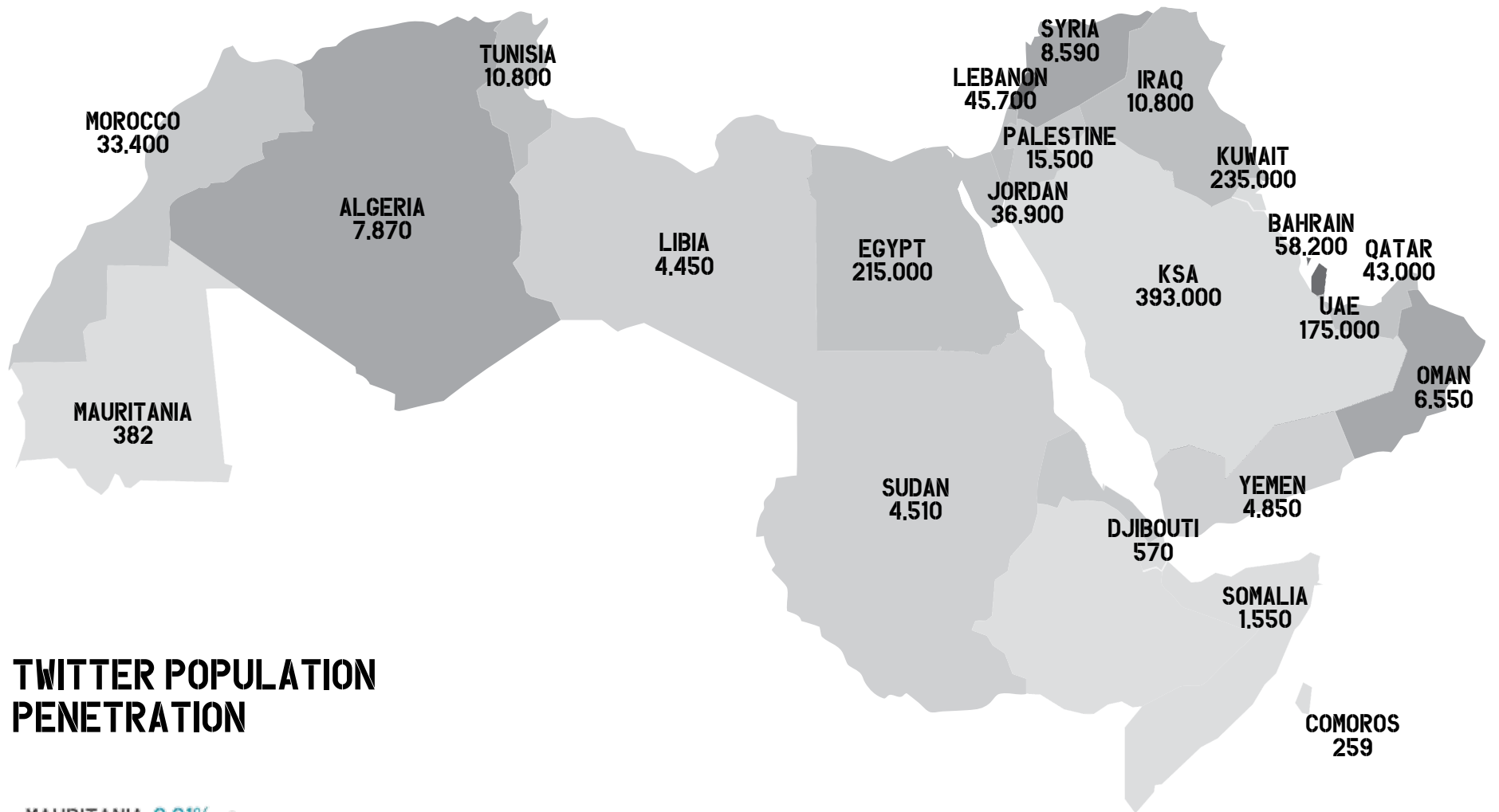
14.620.000 WOMEN

Researched by KHALED EL AHMAD Designed by LAMA ZAITOON and DANIEL COOPER
Sources DUBAI SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT, SOCIAL BAKERS and LABORSTA.ILO.ORG

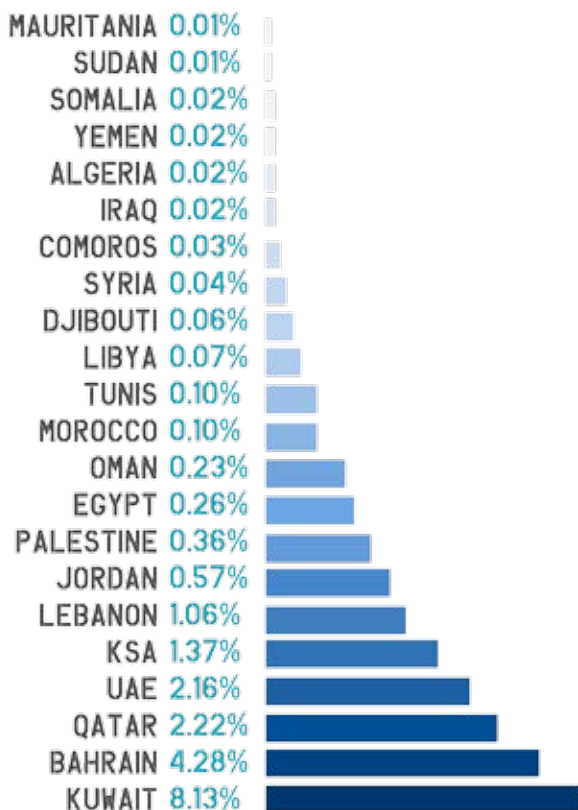
TWITTER

1.311.882 ACTIVE ARAB USERS ON TWITTER

NUMBER OF ACTIVE TWITTER USERS MARCH 2012



TWITTER POPULATION PENETRATION



MOST COMMON TOPICS ON TWITTER IN ARAB REGION DURING FEB / MARCH 2012



#THE ARTISTS

**'MANKIND! WE CREATED YOU FROM A MALE AND FEMALE, AND MADE YOU
INTO PEOPLES AND TRIBES SO THAT YOU MAY COME TO KNOW EACH OTHER.'
(THE QUR'AN . 49:13)**



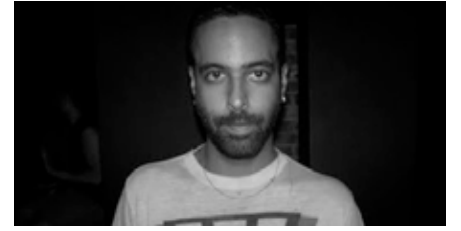
FARHAD AHRARNIA



SARAH AL ABDALI



MANAL AL DOWAYAN



KHALID AL GHARABALLI



FATIMA AL QADIRI



SALWA ALERYANI



MUSAED ALHULIS



HALA ALI



SAMA ALSHAIBI



MOHAMMED ALSHEHRI



AHMAD ANGAWI



KADER ATTIA



FAYÇAL BAGHRICHE



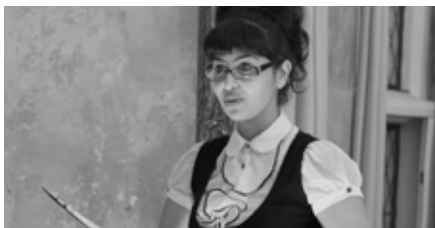
MUZAMIL CHOUDHURY



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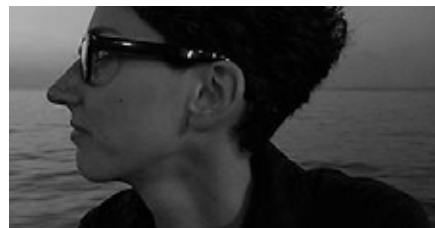
MOHAMED EL MAHDAOUI



YARA EL-SHERBINI



MOUNIR FATMI



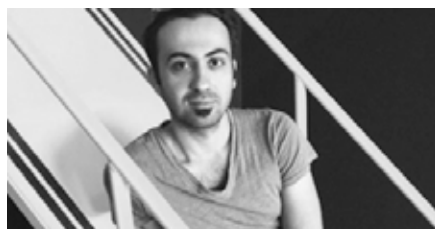
SIRINE FATTOUH



SIMOHAMMED FETTAKA



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BABAK GOLKAR



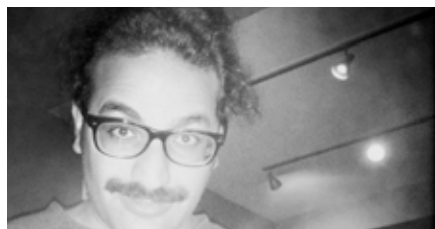
HASSAN HAJJAJ



CHOUROUK HRIECH



MOUNA KARRAY



YAZAN KHALILI



MAHA MALLUH



AHMED MATER



FAISAL SAMRA



LARISSA SANSOUR



LANTIAN XIE

THE ARTISTS

FARHAD AHRARNIA

Farhad Ahrarnia was born in 1971 in Shiraz, Iran. He lives and works between Sheffield and Shiraz, Iran and graduated in Experimental and Documentary Film Theory and Practice from the Northern Media School, Sheffield Hallam University, England. His practice exists at the cusp of craft and informal architecture, whereby he applies the core principles of architecture as a means to probe the semiotics of culture and power in society. Ahrarnia applies these codes within his hand-embroidered practice and acute needlework, which he layers upon and punctures into the surface of iconic imagery.

SARAH AL ABDALI

Born 1989 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Al Abdali studied graphic design at Dar Al Hekma College. Having been branded as one of Saudi's first street artists, Al Abdali has exhibited at the British Museum in a collateral show to the Hajj exhibition. Born into a family with rich Hejazi history, Al Abdali has grown up with a deep appreciation of the land and heritage of the coastal region of Saudi, which is a recurring theme in her work. With the landscape ever changing, Al Abdali can no longer see the Hejaz she dreams of through the ruins of today and seeks to share a vision of her imagined land. sarahalabdali.blogspot.co.uk

MANAL AL DOWAYAN

Manal Al Dowayan was born and raised in the Eastern Province, the heartland of the Saudi oil industry. She has had a varied and non-structured educational background in photography, studying first in Saudi Arabia, then Dubai, Bahrain, and London. In 2010 she was a resident artist at Cuadro Fine Art Gallery in Dubai, and 2011 she was a resident artist at The Townhouse Gallery in Egypt. She is currently part of the British Council International Cultural Leaders programme.

KHALID AL GHARABALLI

Khalid al Gharaballi is a stylist and artist based in New York. His work has been published in Vogue Homme Japan, V, Tokion, GQ and A magazine. Khalid is also a contributor to Bidoun and DIS Magazine. He has performed at Bidoun's Art Park at Art Dubai.

FATIMA AL QADIRI

Fatima Al Qadiri, born in Senegal in 1981, is an artist and musician based in New York. She has performed and exhibited at the Tate Modern (part of K48 Kontinuum), UK; MoMA PS1, New York; the 4th Gwangju Design Biennale, South Korea. She has also produced music as a solo act under her name and as Ayshay.

SALWA ALERYANI

Born in 1982, Salwa Aleryani lives and works in Sana'a, the capital of her native Yemen. Following a BA in Graphic Design from the University of Petra in 2006, she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and later received her MFA from Savannah College of Art and Design in the US. Her recent work explores the intersection of the personal and the public and how the construction and use of public spaces in the Arab World contributes to the manufacturing of our identity. In 2012, she was artist in residence at the Dar Al-Ma'mun Foundation in Marrakech, where she created the work Sleeper. salwaaleryani.com

MUSAED ALHULIS

Musaed Alhulis (b. 1973 in Al Baha, Saudi Arabia) holds a master's degree in Design and Analysis of Vehicle Systems from the University of Huddersfield in the UK. Alhulis lectures at the Technical College in Jeddah, and is a founding member of the Tasami Center in Jeddah. Alhulis is actively involved in supporting the arts movement in Saudi Arabia, helping to organise workshops and art training courses. In 2011, he was awarded an Acquisitions Prize during the Contemporary Islamic Art Exhibition.

HALA ALI

Hala Ali was born in 1986 in Saudi Arabia and later moved to the United Arab Emirates where she graduated in the BA Fine Arts program at the University of Sharjah. Through the use of installations, Ali's work remixes text, language and meaning, to explore art's potential to ignite social change.

SAMA ALSHAIBI

Sama Alshaibi is a multi-media artist born in 1973 (Basra, Iraq) to an Iraqi father and Palestinian mother and is now a naturalized US citizen. Her early practice was based primarily in photography, video art and performance but now includes video/object hybrids, multimedia installations and sculpture. Her works have been collected by public and private institutions collectors internationally including Nadour (Germany), the Barjeel Collection (Sharjah), the Rami Farook Collection (Dubai) and the upcoming Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Tunis (Tunisia). Alshaibi is currently Associate Professor of Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, USA. samaalshaibi.com

MOHAMMED ALSHEHRI

Mohammed Abdullah AlShehri is a young Saudi street artist based in Riyadh, part of a growing movement of young street artists in the country. He has 5 years of experience creating digital art, typography and graffiti.

AHMAD ANGAWI

Ahmad Angawi, being of Meccan roots, is inspired by the colourful diversity of the culture of Hejaz. His works revolve around the human condition while also paying homage to both culture and the environment. His approach is inspired mainly by Islamic principles rather than the Islamic aesthetic. Influenced by his father, Architect Dr. Sami Angawi, he has adopted the concept of "Al Mizan in design", which is the belief in the fundamental principle of balance, as a state of mind, as well as the belief in its application in the field of design.

KADER ATTIA

Born in Dugny, France in 1970, Kader Attia spent his childhood between France and Algeria, between the Christian Occident and the Islamic Maghreb. His work explores the impact of Western cultural and political capitalism on the Middle East and North Africa, as well as how this residual strain of struggle and resistance to colonisation impacts Arab youth, particularly in the banlieues (suburbs) of France where Attia lived. While each new series employs different materials, symbols and scale, Attia's practice continually returns to a sustained look at the poetic dimensions and complexities of contemporary life.

FAYÇAL BAGHRICHE

Born in 1972 in Skikda, Algeria, Fayçal Baghriche studied at the Villa Arson in Nice, before moving to Paris to help create an artists residence (La Villa du Lavoir) and a curatorial structure (Le Commissariat). His work has been included in: Nothing More Concrete/ Nothing More Real (Art Dubai, 2012), The Future of a Promise (Venice Biennale, 2011), As the Land Expands (Al Riwaq Art Space, Bahrain, 2010), La force de l'art (Grand Palais, Paris, 2009), and Architecture of Survival (Outpost for Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2008).

MUZAMIL CHOUDHURY

Muzamil Choudhury (born 1977) is an emerging artist, of Pakistani descent. He is influenced and inspired by his upbringing, growing up in the industrial city of Manchester, UK. Largely self-taught, he has attended courses at The Prince's School of Traditional Arts. After spending much of his youth working at his family restaurant and knitwear factory, he took up a career as a firefighter. Being a British Muslim firefighter has presented emotional, mental and physical challenges but has also given Choudhury a rich body of experiences that have informed his artistic practice.

AYMAN YOSSRI DAYDBAN

Ayman Yossri Daydban (b. 1966, in Palestine with Jordanian nationality) lives in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. His art is both biographical and a commentary on the environment he grew up in. His humble home is full of found objects, pirate DVDs and very few purchased "necessary" items. His last name 'Daydban' means watchman, a mask that observes the viewer and its surroundings while at the same time remaining detached from them. There is an unbridgeable opposition between the watchman and what is being watched: They seem to be in different worlds, while in such close proximity, producing enormous tension. aymanyossri.com

MOHAMED EL MAHDAOUI

Mohammed El Mahdaoui was born in 1981 in Tiznit, Morocco, where he lives and works today. He graduated from the Institut National des Beaux-Arts de Tétouan, Morocco, in 2007. His work deals with performances, installations, and interventions. He was artist in resident at Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France in 2010, and he has exhibited most recently in Morocco, Belgium, and Spain.

SIMOHAMMED FETTAKA

Simohammed Fettaka is a multidisciplinary artist, born in 1981. He currently lives and works in Tangier. Fettaka studied Philosophy and Signal Processing in Morocco and later trained in filmmaking at La Femis, Paris. Since its creation in 2005, he has been closely working with the Cinematheque de Tanger. He is the founder and director of the yearly film festival Cinema Nachia. fettaka.com

CHOUROUK HRIECH

Chourouk Hriech (b. 1977) is a French artist of Moroccan origin, working primarily with two-dimensional drawings, as well as installations, videos and photo-montages. Her drawings create spaces not by empirical reality, but through recognizable elements of actual places. The often surreal nature of these images interacts with notions of mapping, mobility, social fictions and contemporary living solutions. Hriech published a book of drawings in 2004 entitled *The Pink Book*, and her work has been shown in institutions including L'appartement 22 (Rabat), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Lyon), Kunsternes Hus (Oslo), and the Museum of Shanghai (China).

AHMED MATER

Ahmed Mater was born in 1979 and raised in Abha, a traditional village in the South West of Saudi Arabia. He studied medicine in Abha and art at the influential Al-Meftaha Arts Village. Mater's work, widely shown in the Middle East and in Europe and in the collections of the British Museum and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, is informed by his education and life as a medical doctor, as well as by his religious upbringing and Saudi culture. ahmedmater.com

YARA EL-SHERBINI

Yara El-Sherbini's playful interdisciplinary practice uses humour to engage audiences in questioning social and political systems of power and influence. The broader scope of her practice includes photography, installations, interventions, live art and video. She uses familiar frameworks, such as game shows and board games, to provide accessible and playful environments that engage audiences to explore how they see the world, and produce knowledge. She has exhibited widely including exhibitions at Modern Art Oxford, Tate Britain and the National Portrait Gallery, as well as galleries in Geneva, Barcelona and Siena.

ABDULNASSER GHAREM

Born in 1973 in the Saudi Arabian city of Khamis Mushait, Gharem currently lives and works in Riyadh. In 1992 Gharem graduated from the King Abdulaziz Academy before attending the Leader Institute in Riyadh. In 2003 he studied at the influential Al-Meftaha Arts Village in Abha and in 2004 Gharem and the Al-Meftaha artists staged a group exhibition, Shattah, which challenged existing modes of art practice in Saudi Arabia. Since then Gharem has exhibited in Europe, the Gulf and the USA, including at Martin Gropius-Bau and at the Venice, Sharjah & Berlin biennales. abdulnassergharem.com

MOUNA KARRAY

Born in Sfax (Tunisia) in 1970, Mouna Karray studied cinema and photography in Tunis and in Tokyo. During her time in Japan her work followed an autobiographical route, notably with the series *Tokyo my Love* (2001) and *Identity at Stake* (2002, current). The artist has also taught photography and curated exhibitions in Tunisia. She has been an artist-in-residence at the Centre d'Art Vivant at Rades (Tunisia) in 2004, at the Cité Internationale des Arts (Paris) in 2005, and at the Civitella Ranieri Foundation (Umbria, Italy) in 2007. mounakarray.com

FAISAL SAMRA

Bahraini-born Saudi national, Faisal Samra graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He worked as an art and graphic design consultant for the Institut du Monde Arabe (Paris), and later a stage designer for Saudi television. In 2004 he taught in the Fine Arts department of the Amman University in Jordan and obtained his first artist residency in Paris, at the Cité Internationale des Arts, in 2005. After having lived and worked in Paris, New York, Beirut, and spending time in Marrakesh and the Far East, Samra describes himself as a 'nomad wandering through time'. faisalsamra.com

MOUNIR FATMI

Mounir Fatmi was born in 1970 in Tangier, Morocco and now lives and works in Paris, France. Fatmi's multimedia practice, encompassing video, installation, drawing, painting and sculpture, has been exhibited at major international institutions including the Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and Tate Modern, London. He has participated in several biennials including Venice, Seville and Sharjah. In 2010 he was awarded the Cairo Biennial Prize. mounirfatmi.com

BABAK GOLKAR

Born in the United States, raised in Iran, Golkar currently lives and works in Vancouver. He has developed works that attempt to navigate cultural barriers and further examine the relations between Eurocentric and Eastern orthodoxies. Golkar has been actively presenting works in solo and group exhibitions; most recently presenting a commissioned installation at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, as well as taking part in an exhibition at the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, Greece. Golkar was shortlisted and selected as one of the finalists for the 2011 international Jameel Art Prize in London. babakgolkar.ca

YAZAN KHALILI

Born in 1981, Yazan Khalili lives and works in Palestine. Khalili received a degree in architecture from Birzeit University and graduated with a Masters degree from the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths College, London. He has participated in numerous shows internationally, including Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti's project *Ramallah Syndrome* in the Palestine c/o Venice Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009). In 2009, alongside Lara Khaldi, Khalili co-curated *We Were Never Heroes* as part of the Jerusalem Show, and *Independent Film* in Palestine, at the Arab Shorts Festival presented by the Goethe Institute, in Cairo. yazankhalili.com

LARISSA SANSOUR

Born in 1973 in Jerusalem to a Palestinian father and a Russian mother, Sansour studied Fine Arts in Copenhagen where she currently lives and works. Sansour borrows heavily from the language of film and pop culture. By approximating the nature, reality and complexity of life in Palestine and the Middle East to visual forms normally associated with entertainment and televised pastime, her gradiose and often humorous schemes clash with the gravity expected from works commenting on the region. larissasansour.com

SIRINE FATTOUH

Sirine Fattouh is a Lebanese artist living between Paris and Beirut. She graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts of Paris Cergy in 2006. Since 2006 she has exhibited her work at the Beirut Art Center, Roy Sfeir Gallery, The Biennial of Contemporary Art in Bourges, the French Cultural Center in Beirut, The Running Horse Contemporary Art Space. Her work creates a hulling atmosphere of seemingly ordinary surroundings while constantly raising pressing political and social questions about those who are the least heard and given voice to. sirinefattouh.com

HASSAN HAJJAJ

Hassan Hajjaj, born in 1961 in Morocco, lives and works in London and Marrakech. Hajjaj's work encompasses many techniques and fields, from designing and producing furniture including lamps, stools, poufs made from recycled North African artifacts such as upturned Coca-Cola crates as stools, road signs turned into tables tops as well as custom made clothes and photography. Hajjaj is best known for designing the 'Andy Wahloo' bar-restaurant in Paris. 'Andy Wahloo' acknowledges one of his favourite artists, Andy Warhol, but at the same time refers to a Parisian slang term meaning 'I have nothing', adopted by Hajjaj as a way of describing his work. hassanhajjaj.blogspot.co.uk

MAHA MALLUH

Maha Malluh is a Saudi artist, born in the traditional region of Najd, who explores the challenges of modernity that have come so overwhelmingly to Saudi Arabia. She has exhibited since 1976 and has in later years acquired a BA in English Literature and a Californian Certificate in Design and Photography. Continuous in her artwork, that started with collages and developed into photograms, is her use of symbolic and real imagery to express her opinion about life in Saudi Arabia. mahamalluh.com

LANTIAN XIE

Lantian Xie was born in China and raised between Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. He is a graduate of the MFA program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a recipient of the Sheikh Manal Young Artist Award of the United Arab Emirates. Xie's works are allegories for statelessness. lantianxie.com



AHMED MATER

ARTIFICIAL LIGHT / DESERT OF PHARAN

INTERVIEW BY HENRY HEMMING

AHMED MATER, *Artificial Light / Desert of Pharan*,
Installation: vinyl light-box and four channel video, (2012)

Last year the Saudi artist Ahmed Mater began a series of deliberately experimental and meandering journeys within the spiritual centre of the Islamic World: Makkah.

In many ways these expeditions—by foot, by car, rarely covering the same route twice and at all times open to creative happenstance—have their roots in psycho-geography, the conceptualisation of rudderless urban motion as a form of self-expression that began in post-war Paris and took as its starting point Walter Benjamin's fascination with the poetic, flâneur-like wanderings of Baudelaire.

Yet Mater's journeys have more to them than this. On the one hand they refer back to the work of Makkah's first photographer, the 19th century 'Makkan doctor' Abd al-Ghaffar—as a practising doctor himself Mater feels an implicit affinity to him and his work—yet his explorations also go beyond what is usually

implied by psycho-geography in terms of their relational dynamic. Mater's emphasis is on his own progress as well as the social evolution of the people around him, a subject that has acquired added significance in recent years.

Like few cities on earth, Makkah bristles under the weight of its own dramatic symbolism. It is a hallowed site revered by millions and at the same time a point of perpetual immigration. This has been the case for centuries. Yet over the last few years the city has begun to be recast, reworked and ultimately reconfigured. Makkah is being given a makeover. With this comes a new set of concerns. There is a dissonance today among many of those who live in the city or maintain an emotional stake in its future regarding what this place is, what it could be or what it should be, all of which provides a contextual background to Mater's urban exploration.

'The place I go back to the most is Al Shamia mountain,' he explains. 'This is a special place. It is just above the Ka'aba where you can see what is going on. It is like a shantytown there, with people from all over the world who have gone on hajj or umrah and decided to stay.'

It is easy to see why. As well as being a relatively tolerant and diverse Saudi city, it is hard to forget when moving around Makkah that these are the same stones over which the Prophet Muhammad once walked. The city's history and fluidity are magnetic.

'When I walk around Al Shamia,' says Mater, 'I see a very full life. There is the sound of the old air-conditioning everywhere. The markets. The old houses. And behind every wall I think about the stories going on, the people whose lives unfold in there. But now they are planning to demolish this mountain. This is part of the new scheme. So the people

in Al Shamia are waiting to find out where they will be moved to and this creates a sense of uncertainty.'

The closing image in Mater's 'Artificial Light/Desert of Pharan' ('Pharan' is sometimes used to refer to Makkah and comes from the 'Desert of Pharan' that is mentioned in the Torah) takes us to a ridge in Al Shamia. A lone figure—Mater—gazes out over the holiest site in Islam that is now host to a futuristic experiment. Towering over this strange diorama is the new clock tower: a vertical mall made up of shops and hotels with a crescent moon set above. Silhouetted against a ground of artificial white light that echoes unconsciously the white of the pilgrims' ihrams, this central figure becomes a neo-Romantic seer. We watch as he stares out—in wonderment or puzzlement, it is hard to tell—over an urban landscape that is poised as never before, vivid and in flux.



ABDULNASSER GHAREM, *The Capitol Dome*, Installation (Rendering), (2012)

ABDULNASSER GHAREM

THE CAPITOL DOME

'I COME FROM A BACKGROUND OF BUREAUCRACY, NOT DEMOCRACY,' SAYS ABDULNASSER GHAREM, THE THIRTY-NINE-YEAR-OLD SAUDI ARTIST BEHIND #COMETOGETHER'S SCULPTURAL CENTREPIECE, 'THE CAPITOL DOME'. 'BUT IN THE MIDDLE EAST TODAY, DEMOCRACY IS IN THE FRONT OF OUR MINDS. IT IS EVERYWHERE. I THINK IT IS SOMETHING WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT IN MY COUNTRY.'

INTERVIEW BY HENRY HEMMING

At the very end of 2010, a string of protests, battles and other acts of political subversion got underway in Tunisia followed by Libya, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain and other Arab countries. Collectively these were soon labelled the Arab Spring. While the impact of all this remains heavily contested, poignant and above all incomplete, each individual act must be seen as historically and politically specific. The fragments that constitute the so-called Arab Spring have at least one thing in common: their guiding light was the idea of a more democratic future. In Tahrir Square, for example, Egyptians were not calling for President Mubarak to be replaced by a rival; they fought for free and fair elections.

In the past year there have been consistent moves across the region towards a more democratic calibration of the individual's relationship to the state. This has led to landmark elections in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen. With 'The Capitol Dome', Gharem takes us to the heart of all this. He invites questions about what democracy means in the context of the Middle East. How do we explain its lustre? More importantly, what would life be like in a fully democratic Arab state?

For many people in Saudi Arabia, the U. S. Capitol in Washington D. C. is an iconic emblem of democracy. But just as it inspires thoughts of freedom and justice it can also bring to mind the stasis of petty partisan politics or the uncompromising reality of American foreign policy. Decisions in the Capitol have contributed to the American-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the on-going drone strikes in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia. The Capitol, emblem of democracy, stands for idealism and party politics as much as unilateral military might – which brings us to the figure propping up the Gharem's dome.

This is a scaled-down representation of the 19,000-pound bronze atop the Capitol. Thomas Crawford's 19th century depiction of the armed goddess of Freedom was originally intended to carry an olive branch and be surrounded by wreaths representing the flowering of science and the arts. Instead she bears a sword and shield and stands on a world bound by Roman fasces – the bundles of axes and sticks representing capital and corporal punishment from which Mussolini's Fascists got their name.

Here we have Freedom as both welcoming host and armed guard. She is inviting us in, but only on her terms. One move and the world will come crashing down around her like a crude animal trap.

Over her shoulder you can see the dome's interior made up to resemble a mosque. In Gharem's rendering, this 'wedding-cake' dome has become a forced marriage of Islamic and neo-classical architectural styles. Just as there are those in the Middle East who question whether it is wise to splice democratic values onto Arabic culture, the same question is being raised today by right-wing American commentators in response to the electoral success of Islamist parties across North Africa. Gharem's piece is a response to this question: not as an answer but an attempt to cast the question itself in a fresh light.

'The Arab Spring has brought the idea of democracy into our region, there is no doubt about that,' he says. 'I think now is the time in Saudi Arabia for us to have a conversation about this. A discussion. Not in a political sense but from a humanistic point of view. We need to think about ways of getting the older generation and the young to talk about what democracy means for us.'



ARTISTIC COLLABORATION

AS ONE OF THE COLLABORATING ARTIST GROUPS IN #COMETOGETHER, HALA ALI AND LANTIAN XIE CREATED MIND-ALTERING PIECES OF ART.

INTERVIEW BY BROWNBOOK



HALA ALI AND LANTIAN XIE, *Approximate Feast*, (2012)



Having previously collaborated with each other, for Edge of Arabia's exhibition Terminal, in Dubai in 2011, and delighted with the outcome, Ali and Xie decided to work together again for #COMETOGETHER. This collaboration has given the duo the opportunity to explore different forms of art. Revolving around themes of community and hospitality, their work has been completed using a combination of both of the artists' styles. Lantian Xie says: 'Our style of work has not changed to create this work; the method we have developed to create our pieces is more or less familiar to us now. We have made the effort to make work that is cohesive within our own larger bodies of practice.'

Born in Saudi Arabia and raised in England, Ali moved to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to attend the Fine Arts Programme at the University of Sharjah in 2007. Growing up in England, she was surrounded by a creative atmosphere from a young age. 'Having such an international upbringing has allowed me to focus on more global themes rather than local ones,' she explains. Inspired by language and meaning, Ali's pieces represent current cultural events that she believes are misconceived through media. 'My home country, Saudi Arabia, definitely influences the context and reception of my work,' says Ali.

Xie was born in the People's Republic of China yet grew up in Bahrain and the UAE and is now currently based between New York and Dubai. Having recently graduated from the Master

of Fine Arts Programme at the Art Institute of Chicago, Xie has followed his grandfather's path and expresses his creative mind by exploring ideas he believes are unexplained subjects. Because of his international upbringing and understanding, Xie does not believe he has been influenced by his home country, yet has been able to experience and reflect on the numerous cultures that the world has to offer.

For #COMETOGETHER, the artists have been able to present work that they believe truly expresses what goes on in their mind. 'Although I don't produce work from the desert per se, it's great to be invited to do shows with diverse audiences,' explains Ali. According to the duo, they have ensured that their work has followed the exhibition's theme; social media.

Working with Edge of Arabia has led the artists to understand the wealth of talent that is coming out of the Middle East. As a platform for young, emerging artists from the region, it gives individuals the opportunity to exhibit their work to audiences in a way that would not usually be possible. Ali says: 'Edge of Arabia does a lot of work in terms of education and promotion. They've invited me to exhibit in new places like London, Berlin and Istanbul and to new audiences who were otherwise not familiar with works emerging from the Middle East.' Within the region, art and style vary from country to country and Ali and Xie are now making their mark and trying to motivate their audience to think beyond the borders.

IN CONVERSATION WITH FARHAD AHRARNIA

INTERVIEW BY SARA RAZA

FARHAD AHRARNIA LIVES AND WORKS BETWEEN SHEFFIELD AND SHIRAZ, IRAN AND GRADUATED IN EXPERIMENTAL AND DOCUMENTARY FILM THEORY AND PRACTICE FROM THE NORTHERN MEDIA SCHOOL, SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY, ENGLAND

His practice exists at the cusp of craft and informal architecture, whereby he applies the core principles of architecture as a means to probe the semiotics of culture and power in society. Ahrarnia applies these codes within his hand-embroidered practice and acute needlework, which he layers and punctures upon the surface of iconic imagery. In this conversation Ahrarnia discusses his practice with critic Sara Raza and the mixed media embroidered works *On the Road*, *the Silk Road*, 2012, featured in **#COMETOGETHER** that explore the dislocation between borders and liminal spaces.

SR: YOU INITIALLY STUDIED FILM THEN LATER CAME TO THE FINE ARTS. HOW DID THAT JOURNEY EFFECT YOUR PRACTICE?

FA: My practice heavily depends on assemblage, the performative and the archival, whether in making films or in the use of applied and constructed embroideries; although the temporality and spatiality of these mediums greatly differ. The still images, that I select to make art with, tend to possess strong cinematic qualities and certainly refer to specific documentations of events in the not so distant past.

SR: WITHIN THIS SERIES OF WORKS ON THE ROAD, THE SILK ROAD, 2012. THE THEME OF MIGRATION OF IDEAS AND PLACE ARE EVIDENT. ESPECIALLY IN RELATIONS TO IDEAS PERTAINING TO BORDERS BOTH REAL AND IMAGINARY WOULDNT YOU AGREE?

FA: Yes our notion and concept of empire, its definitions and characteristics, boundaries and impacts do shift and change with time and passage of history. I guess our understanding is always relative, imbued and affected by where and how we are individually positioned in relation to these connotations and implications, or any specific political and physical manifestations such as 'nation' or 'empire.' I have always been interested in the relationship between the actual and the imaginary dimensions of such political and cultural constructs, the visible versus the invisible and the intangible.

SR: WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE NEEDLE WORK THAT YOU APPLY TO YOUR WORKS ALLOWS FOR NAVIGATION OF IDEAS, CODES AND SYMBOLS?

FA: The needle is a symbolic, subversive, visceral and constructive tool. A conduit which enables me to physically travel through,



navigate, manipulate and undermine the autonomy of an image. The needle enables me to intrude and run thread into and out of the image, which in turn extends the boundaries of where the image and its surface begin and where they end.

SR: IN TERMS OF THE VEHICLES THAT YOU PORTRAY THEY ARE TRAVERSING THE ACTUAL BORDERS THAT SURROUND IRAN. ARE YOU MAKING APPARENT THAT MANY IDEAS LIKE THE ACT OF MIGRATION CAN NOT BE CONTAINED OR REMAIN STAGNANT?

FA: Certainly there will always be physical barriers, but philosophical ideas do find their way across borders and check points, music and films are exchanged, so is language, poetry and literature. Ideas can not be contained and held back, there is always mobility, cultural mutation is constantly taking place, fragmentation is unavoidable, we humans have always been on the move even when we seem to be most stationary.

SR: THAT'S INTERESTING ONE CAN THINK OF MIGRATION AS A METAPHOR FOR ART.

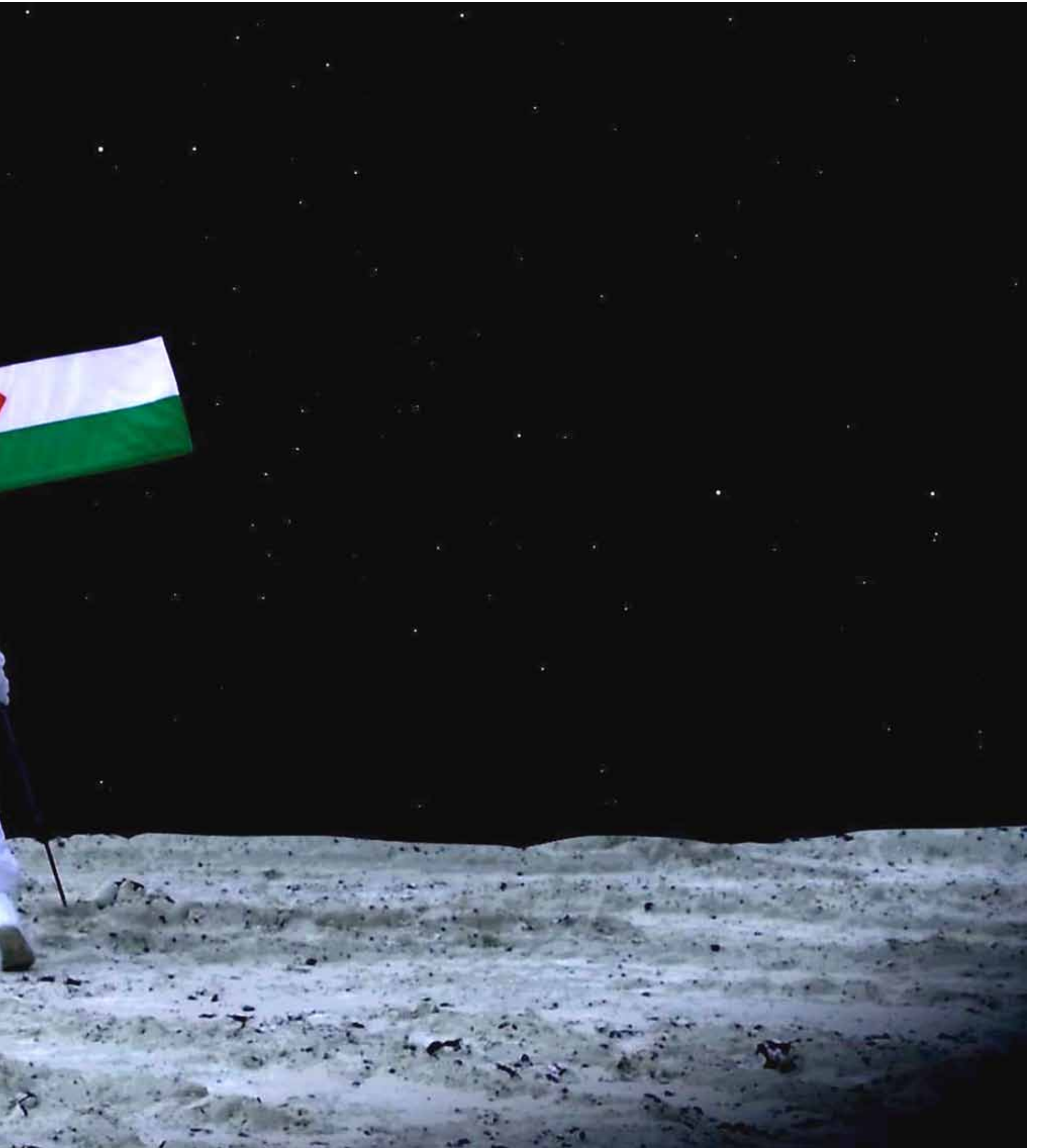
FA: Yes, art and philosophical ideas, specially those of great consequence, tend to travel fast and extensively and might even migrate for good and be adopted by new host societies. My works are a negotiation between disparate and specific cultural characteristics and ideologies, which are composed together based on my own fluid experience of different contemporary cultures in a restless manner and volatile times. Indeed some ideas encapsulated at the core my work might surface more clearly depending on the context in which the works are being shown, while other ingredients inside the work might remain dormant and silent.

FARHAD AHRARNIA

On the road, the silk road (n.1)
Embroidery with silk on cotton,
(2010-2011)



LARISSA SANSOUR, *A Space Exodus*, Video, (2009)



IN CONVERSATION WITH SAMA ALSHAIBI

INTERVIEW BY SARA RAZA



SAMA ALSHAIBI IS AN INTERNATIONAL MULTI-MEDIA ARTIST WHO EMPLOYS THE USE OF VIDEO/OBJECT HYBRIDS, MULTIMEDIA INSTALLATIONS AND SCULPTURE. ALSHAIBI'S PRACTICE EXPLORES SPACES OF CONFLICT, POST-WAR AND MIGRATION TO TEASE OUT ISSUES ON CITIZENSHIP AND POWER. FREQUENTLY, FEATURING HERSELF AS A PROTAGONIST WITHIN HER WORKS SHE APPLIES THE BODY AS AN ALLEGORICAL DEVICE TO INVESTIGATE GEOGRAPHICAL METAPHORS THAT EXIST BETWEEN SPACES OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL OPPRESSION. IN THIS CONVERSATION WITH CRITIC SARA RAZA, ALSHAIBI SPEAKS ABOUT HER RECENT VIDEO WORK VS THE BROTHER (2011) FEATURED IN THE #COMETOGETHER EXHIBITION AND RAISES PERTINENT QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF MASCULINITY WITHIN AN ISLAMIC MIDDLE EASTERN CONTEXT CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT 'THEM' AND 'US' AND 'HIM' AND 'HER.'



SAMA ALSHAIBI, vs. The Brother
Video Clip (2011)

SR: VS THE BROTHER (2011) EXPLORES A SENSE OF HYPER-MASCULINITY PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO THE ARAB FEMALE BODY. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO FOCUS ON THIS PARTICULAR COHORT?

SA: I am primarily interested in spaces of conflict, and the paradoxes contained within them. Over the years, I have used the female body, both my own and others, in my work as a protagonist, not to represent myself directly, but a symbol of the country, the people, or an issue. But the use of the gendered body, especially the Female Arab body, can be problematic. It often framed the analysis of my work. I felt I was relegated to a 'club' of Arab artists whose primary research and investigations were second to the body and/or perceived feminisms in the artwork, whether or not that was the point of the work. This led me to the Arab male body, and masculinities in particular.

SR: THAT'S AN INTERESTING ANGLE TO EXPLORE THE NOTION OF THE BINARY AND TO TROUBLE THE IDEA OF FIXED NOTIONS CONCERNING GENDER. WOULDNT YOU AGREE?

SA: Yes, I decided to embrace the conversation of the body, gender and its particulars within multiple frameworks of an encounter. This confining binary, of an Arab male oppressing an Arab Female, was reversed within my work, troubled and challenged intentionally to complicate Middle Eastern masculinities through various layers. What you see within this work is literally the spiral effect in reverse both physically and conceptually.

SR: ALTHOUGH THIS WORK IS ROOTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY, DID YOU CONTRAST ANY HISTORICAL ANALYSIS SUCH AS THE POST-COLONIAL MALE MIDDLE EASTERN BODY?

SA: There is in fact very limited research on this area beyond scarce anthropological research. The post-colonial male body tends to endure a lateral reading irrespective of cultural, geographical or religious differences. However, time will really tell what the recent Arab uprising will mean for Arab masculinities and how these will shift or mutate in relation to new forms of imperialism and globalisation.

SR: DO PERFORMATIVE WORKS EITHER INVOLVING YOURSELF OR OTHER ACTORS ALLOW YOU TO GET CLOSER TO YOUR SUBJECT MATTER OF EXPLORATION?

SA: It definitely gives a journey to the process of 'art-making' into the raw, corporal awareness of the topic I aim to address. If I am questioning or depicting anxieties, conflict and fears, the body has to endure the duress to perform the work. The projects that I make require a degree of physical discipline and this makes for physical and emotional intimacy with the experiences other human beings. However, within Vs The Brother I worked with trained performers and took on more of a directorial role as opposed to performer or central protagonist.

SR: SO THERE WOULD YOU SAY THERE IS THIS SENSE OF BOTH CONFRONTATION AND RETREAT?

SA: Directly or indirectly, it is the depiction of the ongoing recycling of the human condition to get caught in the sport of payback. One rises, one falls, and the roles then reverses. Or it can trickle down and re-form with innocent parties. Repetition, recycling and reversals are prevalent everywhere in life if you stand back and observe this cycle.

PAINTING THE TOWN

INTERVIEW BY BROWNBOOK

ABDULLAH MOHAMMED ALSHEHRI TWEETED HIS WORK FEATURING SAUDI ARABIAN OLYMPIC ATHLETE SARAH ATTAR. A STREET ARTIST BASED IN RIYADH. ALSHEHRI IS PARTICIPATING IN #COMETOGETHER

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE BRANDED AS ONE OF THE FIRST SAUDI STREET ARTISTS?

This accolade feels great and if anything it provides me with more motivation and inspiration to continue what i'm doing. Being able to achieve something like this is often difficult, especially in Saudi Arabia, so it feels great, and gives me more power to achieve my own goal of taking art to a higher level.

WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH WHEN CREATING YOUR ART?

What actually makes my art different to other artists in Saudi Arabia is the fact I touch on sensitive issues, which some people would often stay clear of.

DO YOU HAVE ANY BARRIERS FOR PRODUCING YOUR WORK?

Within all areas of art you are faced with barriers and these usually boil down to political or religious issues - these stand as an obstacle for us [artists]. For me, a typical example is that my work will be removed the next day. This is a shame, but it's understandable and again, something that feeds my hunger for doing something different.

DESCRIBE THE SAUDI STREET ART MOVEMENT.

A couple of years ago, if you asked me, I couldn't answer as street art didn't exist. However, and it give me hope in saying this, it's becoming more and more familiar with people. The street art movement is still emerging and we have many artists, when you consider all the cities in Saudi Arabia. I think the main issue is that practicing street art means you have to be very secretive. I think this can often put people off.

WHAT IMPACT DOES SOCIAL MEDIA HAVE ON YOUR WORK?

Social media is the best tool we have available to showcase and express our art. When I do a new piece of street art I will take a photo and share it on social media. This enables all of my followers, friends and fans to comment, share and like the work I do. But also provide criticism. You can't create this type of dialogue on the streets.

DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY WHEN YOU GO OUT AND PRODUCE STREET ART?

I would normally choose a quiet day. I don't want to cause any interruption to the public and also I don't want them to interrupt my work. A couple of times I have gone out early morning during public holidays, when it is quiet and I have a blank canvas to work on. Other days it could be after midnight. Again, the quieter the better.

WHAT IS YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH EOA AND #COMETOGETHER?

This is actually the first time I have ever participated in any kind of exhibition, so it has been a challenge. As an artist representing



Saudi Arabia, I have been working hard to finish the work that I have started. It's a great platform for me to showcase what I do and educate people about the art movement within the streets of Saudi. My art will augment some of the hottest events and feature some of the arguments that our society is having.

HOW WERE YOU INSPIRED BY SAUDI WOMEN IN THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPICS?

Sarah Attar is a strong woman and she faced many barriers. Some people who didn't agree with what she was doing, would attack her with strong words but at the same time she started a revolution within Saudi and represented the country on a global scale for the first time. Regardless of medals, she delivered a message to the world with the Saudi Arabian woman as the subject.

CAN YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO ANY OTHER STREET ARTISTS IN SAUDI?

The type of art in Saudi is still developing so how can I really compare myself with anyone. We are all equal and doing something we love. We're growing in a new area of art and acting as pioneers in the Kingdom. Over the years, I am confident that this medium will become more and more popular.



A BLANK CANVAS

INTERVIEW BY BROWNBOOK

BORN INTO A FAMILY WITH RICH HEJAZI HISTORY, SARAH AL-ABDALI HAS GROWN UP WITH A DEEP APPRECIATION OF THE LAND AND HERITAGE OF THE COASTAL REGION OF SAUDI, WHICH IS A REOCCURRING THEME IN HER WORK. AL-ABDALI HAS BEEN BRANDED AS ONE OF SAUDI'S FIRST STREET ARTISTS...

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE BRANDED AS THE FIRST SAUDI STREET ARTISTS?

I'm not a fan of being branded. I'm an artist, through and through. I personally believe I'm capable of working on different mediums and street art happens to be one of them.

WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH WHEN CREATING YOUR ART?

I want to experiment all the time. If it's a new design, different colour, new location, I'm always experimenting.

DO YOU HAVE ANY BARRIERS FOR PRODUCING YOUR WORK?

When doing street art, the only barrier is that I can't take my time while doing it. I've always wished to do large murals but it seems impossible, or maybe I haven't figured it out yet.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE WHEN YOU TELL PEOPLE THAT YOU'RE A SAUDI STREET ARTIST?

I never tell. And I refuse to categorise myself. But when someone finds out, usually they'd be taken over by surprise.

WHAT IMPACT DOES SOCIAL MEDIA HAVE ON YOUR WORK?

It motivates me to create more work. Social media is the only communication tool between myself and the audience.

WHAT IS YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH EOA AND THE #COMETOGETHER EXHIBITION?

My inspiration is my passion of the Hejaz. I'll fuse Hejazi figures and landscapes with the trendy atmosphere of Brick Lane.

CAN YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO ANY OTHER STREET ARTISTS?

Each artist has a different style, message and impact. My work is often referred to as thought provocative, which is an obstacle to the work itself. Most of the artworks I did are erased or damaged, especially the ones that have figures and faces of women.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN STOPPED?

Luckily I have never been stopped. When I suspect that there is something bad coming, I run away.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN FOR THE PROMOTION OF SAUDI ARTISTS?

There needs to be professional local galleries, curators and even supporters that understand the artist and his or her circumstances and potential. Once the local scene becomes solid, it enforces attention.

WHAT IS YOUR DREAM ART PIECE?

My dream art piece would be in Makka, protesting at the new landscape. I have no idea if I will ever do that.



MUZAMIL CHOUDHURY
The Situation Room
 Carpet Samples on Board (2012)



MUZAMIL CHOUDHURY

INTERVIEW BY HENRY HEMMING

MUZAMIL CHOUDHURY IS A FIREFIGHTER, ARTIST AND BRITISH MUSLIM OF PAKISTANI DESCENT. AND LIKE SO MANY PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD, IN EARLY MAY 2011 HE HEARD THAT OSAMA BIN LADEN HAD BEEN KILLED.

At the time he was watching television in the fire station where he works in Manchester. Soon after the death of Osama bin Laden was announced, there appeared on the screen the now famous image of The Situation Room in Washington D. C.

What he found remarkable was not only the relief felt by his colleagues but the connection many of them made between bin Laden and Pakistan.

'Listening to them, it was as if they thought of him as Pakistani. It was strange for me to have Pakistan linked like this to the War on Terror. There was also something comical about this image. It looked staged. I couldn't think of times in the past when we'd been shown into the heart of the American political machine like this, and at the same time it was unusual to watch an image of people watching an image of other people. It was an anxious image too. I came away from

it feeling as though I had to do something with it, I wanted to question it and inspire a debate. But I was not yet sure how.'

Choudhury has always been good with his hands, whether it was in his uncle's knitwear factory, working in a local restaurant, training as a boxer or his work as a fire fighter. From an early age he was also interested in fabric. Growing up, it was all around him. Just as Manchester has strong historical connection to the wool and cotton industries so too does Pakistan. 'My sisters have always been into colourful fabrics and fashions, and of course when I pray I'm on a prayer mat made of thick fabric. So I link that material with contemplation and thought. When a relative comes back from a trip overseas they'll often bring back a gift of a prayer mat. At home we must have at least fifty of them, although that number tends to go down when the mosque needs some or there's a big wedding!

'So it was not long after seeing the image of the Situation Room, when I was still working out how to process it, that I came home to find a box containing carpet samples. They were pantone fabric swatches left by my wife's aunt. Her family runs an Indian factory which produces these fabrics that are sold in Pakistan and around the world. I realised then that I could use these to rework the image.'

Choudhury then pixelated the image of the Situation Room and rendered it using these fabric samples. By doing this he was using South Asian craft to represent an image generally associated with Pakistan and terrorism. As well as providing a rich, tactile contrast between the lush feel of the fabric and the austerity of the image's content, he also wanted to challenge this heavily exposed photograph. He was using fabric to suggest that this image might also have been fabricated.

The impetus for this piece, however, goes back further than this. It lies in Choudhury's response to the ways in which his life began to change following the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in which 343 of his fellow firefighters died. In the years that followed fire-fighters across the UK began to be retrained to deal with fires that might follow terrorist attacks. This highlights the culturally pervasive impact of 9-11 just as it touches upon the way in which he felt himself in the spotlight on account of his faith. His cathartic response to the Situation Room combines elements of his upbringing, profession, his roots, a history of working with his hands, an increasingly politicized sense of self, and a desire to confront this mass-produced image head on in order to start a discussion.

THE EAST END OF ISLAM

REHAN JAMIL

The East End of Islam is a black and white photographic exploration of the Muslim community in Tower Hamlets and the pivotal role of the East London Mosque within that community.

The exhibition challenges stereotypes of Muslim identity and raises awareness of lifestyle, culture and religious rituals.

From 1997 to 2007, photographer Rehan Jamil was granted unprecedented access to the East London Mosque. During this time, the community raised substantial funds to enable the London Muslim Centre to be built on a plot of land next to the Mosque in Whitechapel Road. Together, the two buildings now offer a home to various community projects, regular classes for adults and children, a nursery, primary school and secondary school, a funeral directors, a gym, a Scout group, a library and rooms that anyone in the local community can hire (whatever their faith).

Rehan Jamil grew up in Spitalfields, lives in Stepney and regularly worships at the East London Mosque.





Irish pop star SAMANTHA MUMBA was revealing parts of her body in this Reebok advert – until she was ‘hijab-ified’ by black spray paint. (2002)



Male worshippers begin to leave the East London Mosque after Taraweh (late evening) prayers, during the month of Ramadan. The mosque has separate prayer halls and facilities for men and women. @Shumina Begum, (2001)



VOLUNTEER PRESENTERS on MCR (Muslim Community Radio) share a joke with a listener who has called in during a children’s show. During the month of Ramadan, the East London Mosque is granted a temporary license to broadcast 24 hours a day. The station is very popular. (2005)



ADAM PRIMARY SCHOOL is housed within the East London Mosque. Year 6 girls play in the basement prayer hall during morning break because the school does not have an outdoor playground. (2003)





NEIGHBOURS in Monthope Road, off Brick Lane, chat over the fence on a summer evening. (2000)

#THE
ARTWORKS



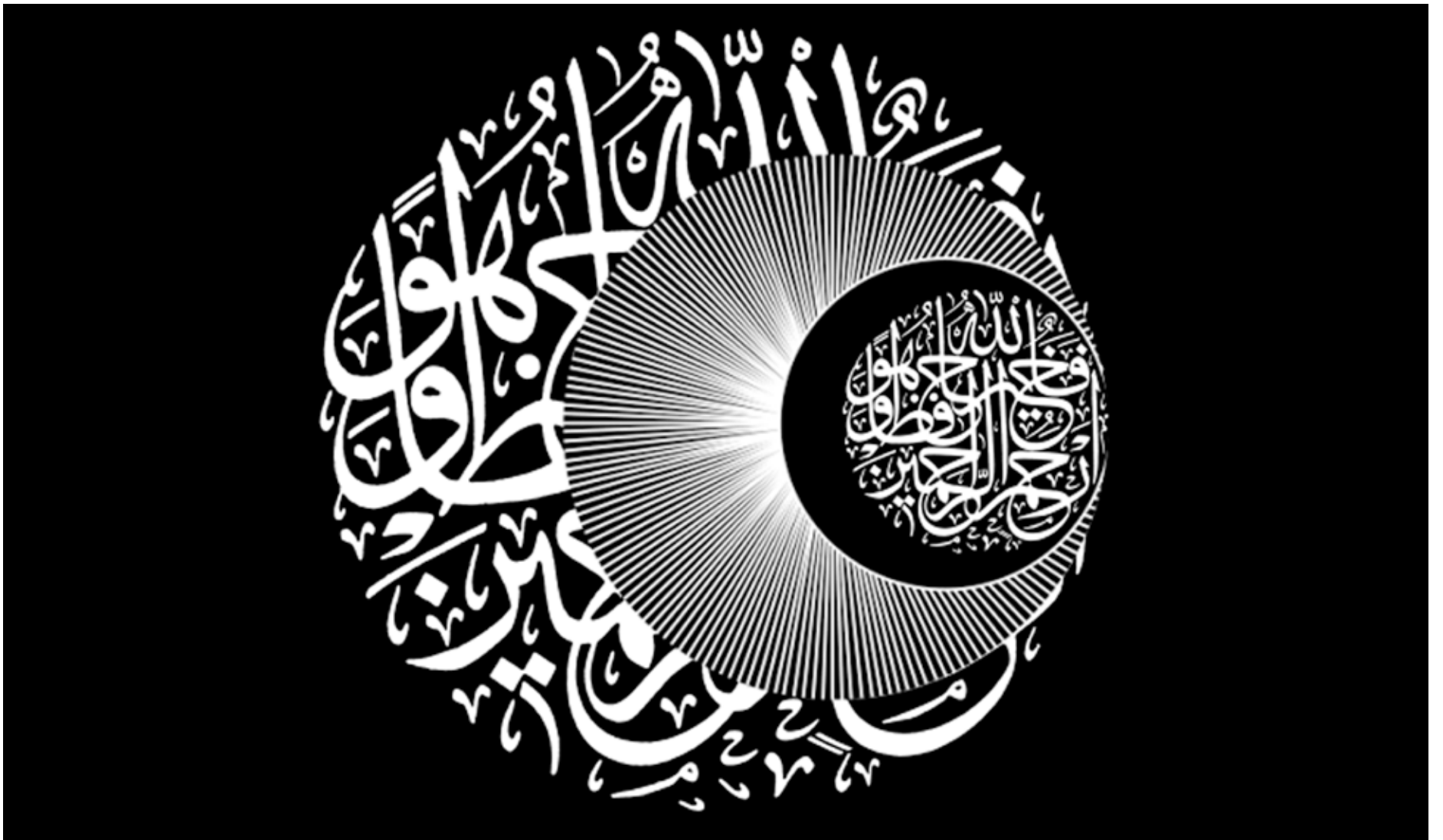
MANAL AL DOWAYAN, *Mohammed And Oil*, From the series 'If I Forget You Don't Forget Me', Fiber Silver Gelatin Prints & HD Video, (2012)



SARAH AL-ABDALI, *Makkah Street Time*, Installation, (2012)



AHMED MATER, *Antenna*, White Neon Tubes, (2011)



MOUNIR FATMI, *Technologia*, Video installation, (2010)



FAÇYAL BAGHRICHE, **Blue Globe**, Installation: Steel, Plexiglass, Perspex, Motor & Wood, (2012)



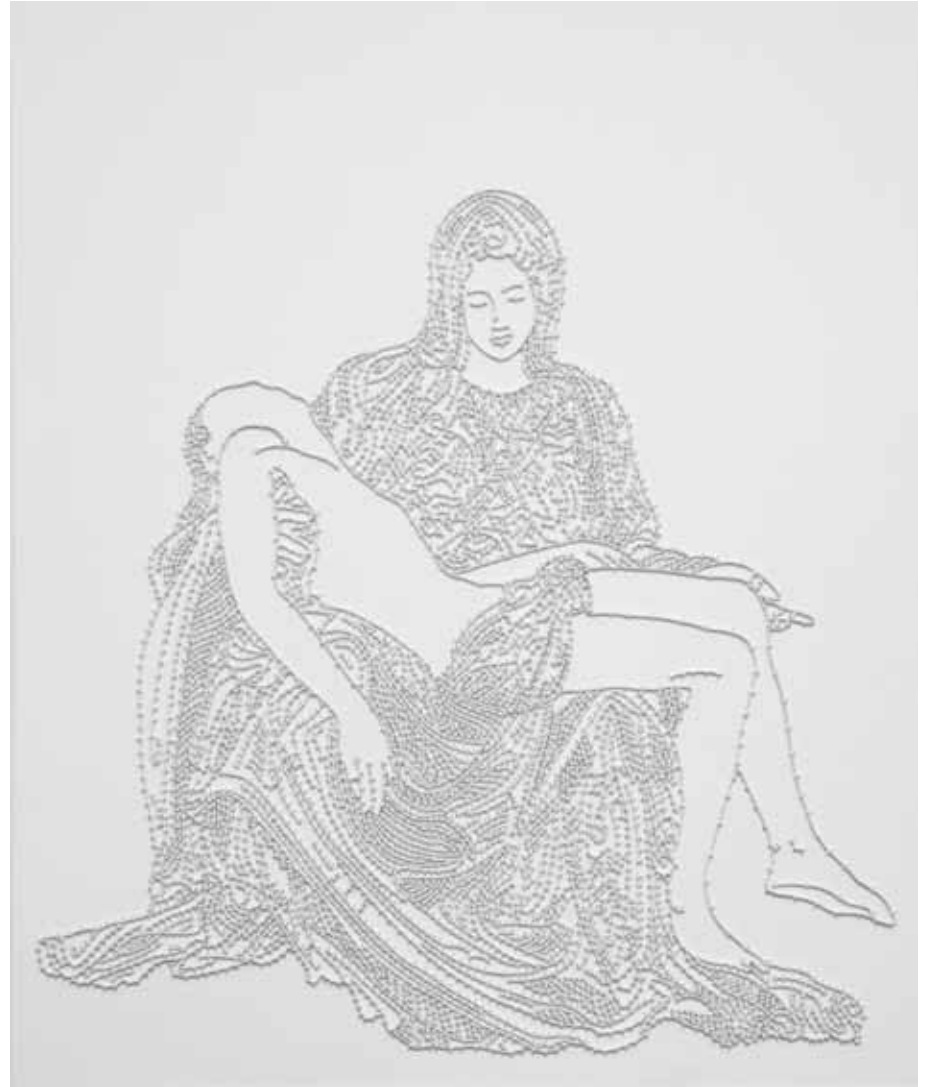
LARISSA SANSOUR, **A Space Exodus**, HD Video, (2009)



KADER ATTIA, *Big Bang*, Installation, (2005)



SIRINE FATTOUH, *A Night In Beirut*, HD Video, (2006)



MOUNIR FATMI, *The Pietà*, Mixed media on wood panel, (2007)



MUSAED ALHULIS, *Dynamic*, Steel alloys, (2012)



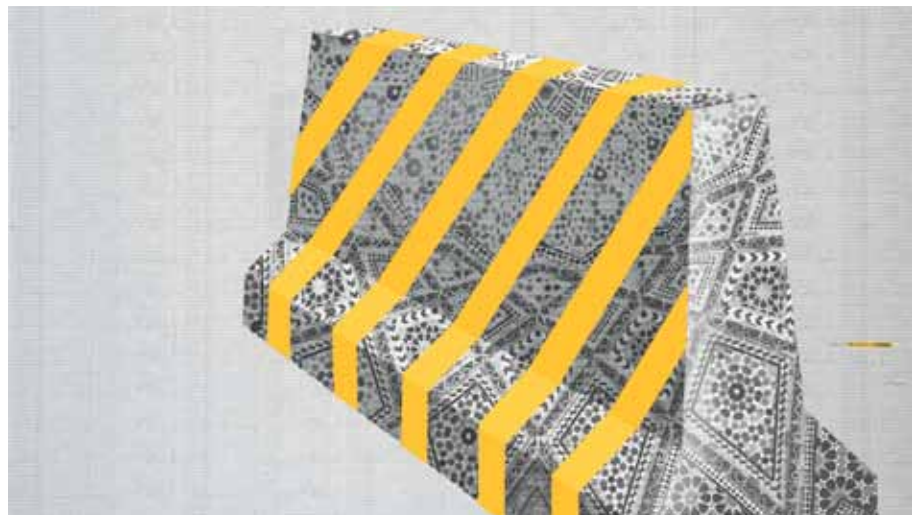
BABAK GOLKAR, *Grounds For Standing and Understanding*,
From the series 'Negotiating Spaces', Installation, (2012)



CHOUROUK HRIECH, *Birds and Humans*, Mixed Media and Drawing on paper, (2012)



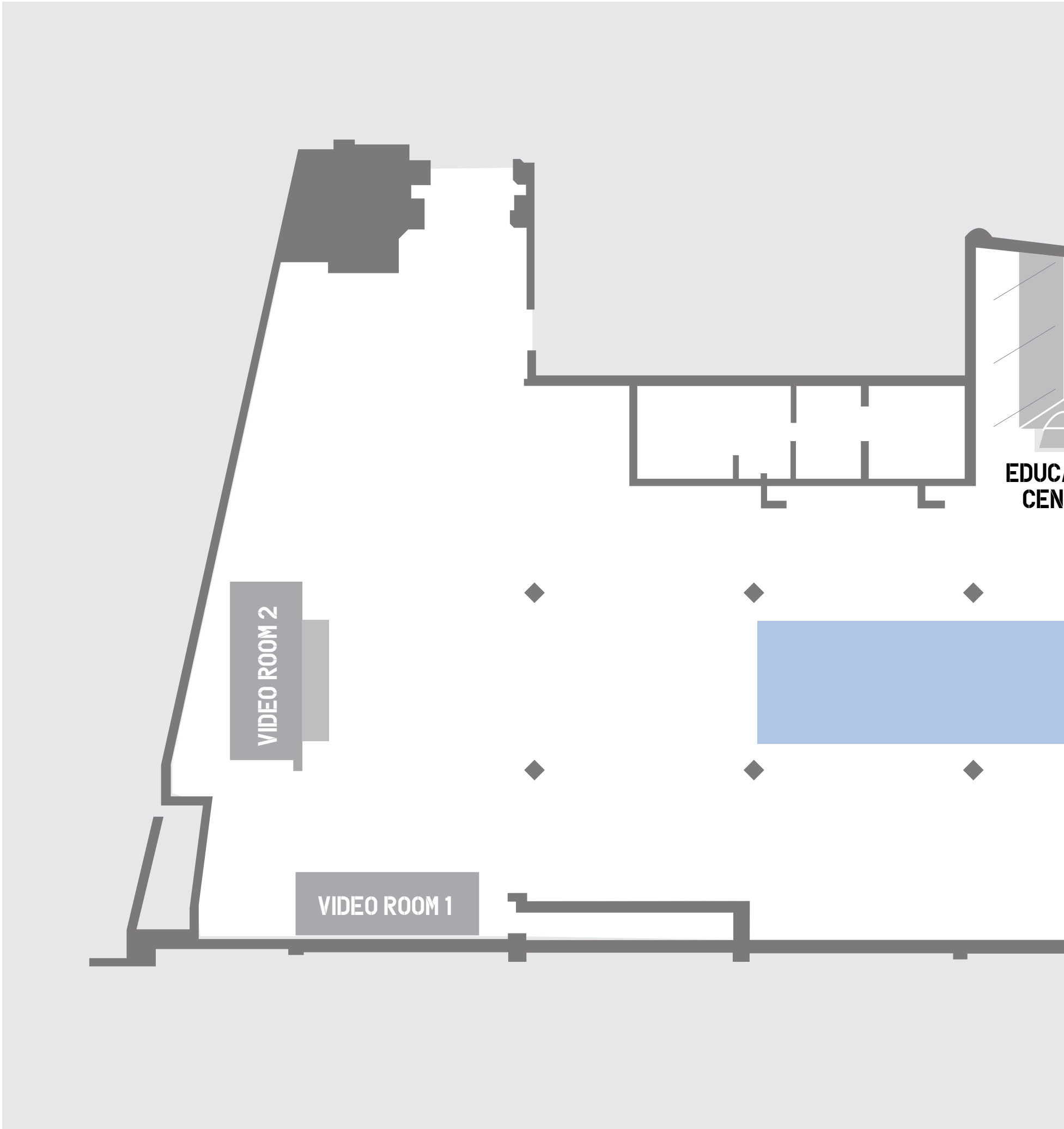
SAMA ALSHAIBI, *vs. The Brother*, Installation, two channel video, (2011)

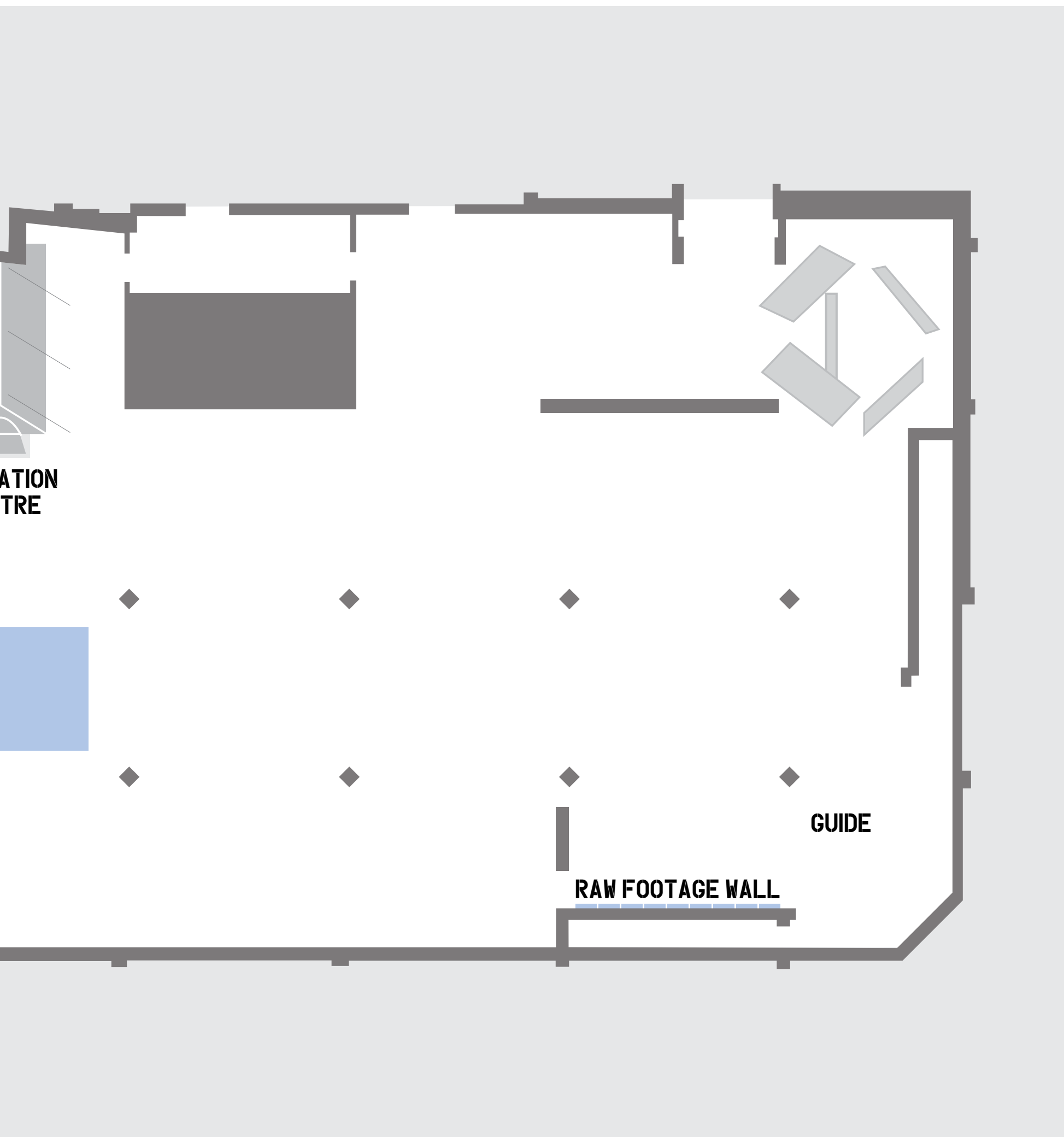


ABDULNASSER GHAREM, *Concrete Block VI*, Rubber stamps and industrial laquer paint, (2012)

FATIMA AL QADIRI AND KHALID AL GHARABALLI, *Mendeel Um A7mad (N x I x S x M)*, Video, (2012)

FLOOR PLAN





INFORMATION
TREE

GUIDE

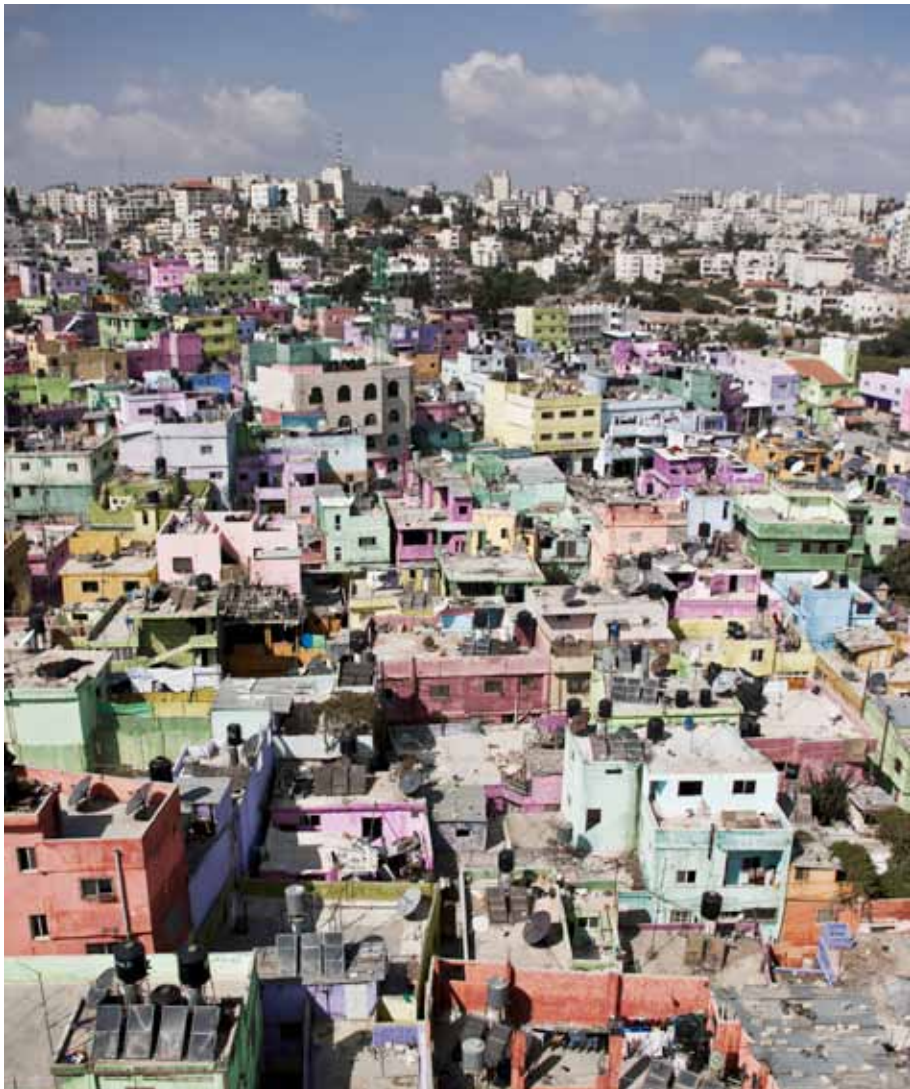
RAW FOOTAGE WALL



FAISAL SAMRA, *Resistance*, Video, (2011)



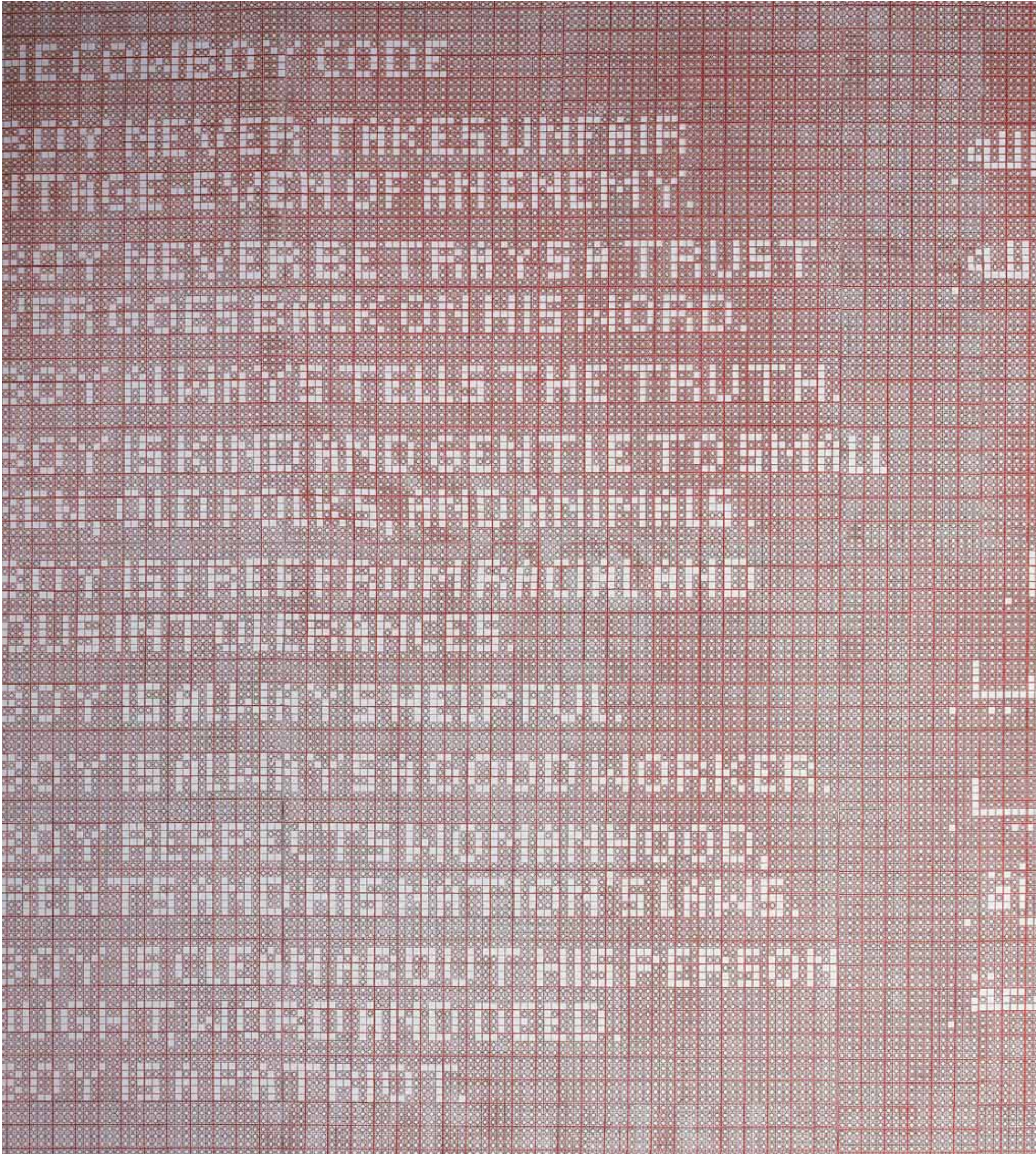
MOUNIR FATMI, *Save Manhattan 03*, Installation with speakers, (2007)



YAZAN KHALILI, *Colour Correction II* (from *The Camp* series), Photographic print on paper, (2012)



SALWA AL ERYANI, *Sleeper*, Polyurethane foam and fabric, (2012)



AHMED MATER, *The Cowboy Code (Hadith)*, Installation, Toy gun caps, (2012)





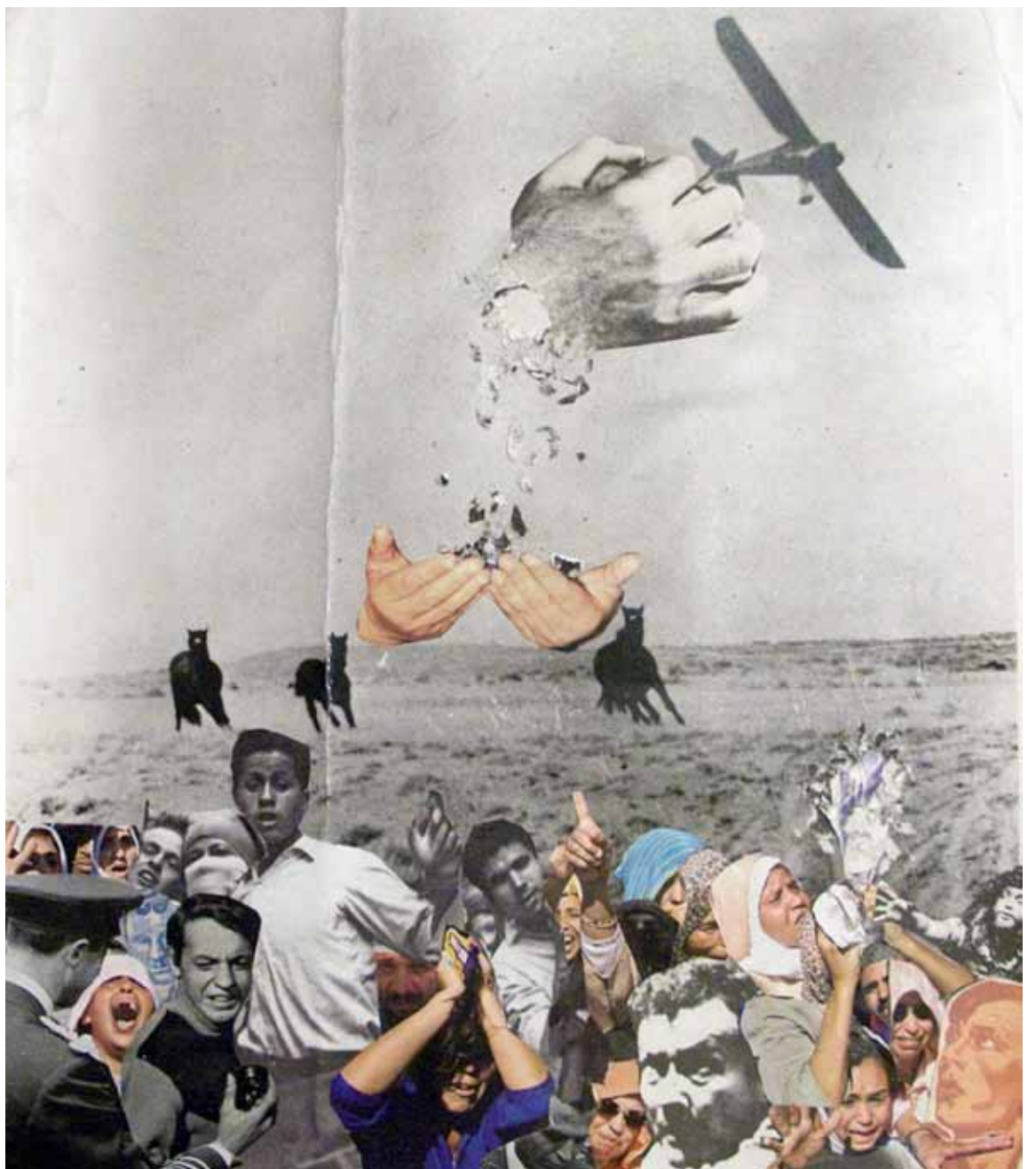
HASSAN HAJJAJ, *Naabz*, Video, (2012)



MOHAMED EL MAHDAOUI, *Safar*, Video Installation, (2007)



MAHA MALLUH, *Food for Thought "Assabee"*, Cassette tapes in wooden baking trays, (2012)



SIMOHAMMED FETTAKA, *Revolution without a hero*, Collage and acrylic paint, (2011)

A CULTURAL EDUCATION

ON THE BACK OF THE FRENCH FINANCIAL CRASH IN 2008 FRENCH-ALGERIAN REDHA MOALI AND HIS WIFE JOINED FORCES TO DEVELOP A VISION FOR A HOTEL WITH A DIFFERENCE.



Dar al Ma'mun, at the foot of the Atlas Mountains, on the outskirts of Marrakech, Morocco, follows an ethic of responsible tourism; local farmers provide the majority of the food for the hotel; the hotel's central feature is a library specialising in Arabic and continental literature, whilst an artists' residency programme invites four or five artists to stay at the hotel every three months, as complimentary guests, with a 5000 Euro grant to cover their expenses and the time and freedom to work solely on their art.

Founded by Redha Moali to overcome challenges, he is hosting several talks around the challenges faced by artists in the Arab

world, for Edge of Arabia's **#COMETOGETHER'S** Education Programme.

Dar al Ma'mun (DAM) is a multicultural platform, where people can meet and learn from each other. We aim to make way for new and fruitful encounters between artists, translators and audiences from around the world. I used to be part of a world where people tried to find happiness through money and consumerism and most were disappointed. So the process of artistic creativity to find such happiness intrigued me.

It seemed very natural to become involved with EOA, because we have a lot in common; we want to provide a culture of

international contemporary creation in the Arab world. **#COMETOGETHER** will help us all gain a better perspective of the strength and singularity of the young creative scene in the Arab world away from any prejudice. It will also give these artists the opportunity to interact with the local population of Brick Lane and initiate dialogue.

My role at the exhibition is to organise a series of talks focussing on the difficulties faced by Arab artists. We're hoping to address the issue of emergence; emergence of practices and ideas from a world which has long been considered the Third World. **#COMETOGETHER** highlights the emergence

of web-based sociality at a time when notions of public space or common ground are very much in dispute. We propose to explore the emergence of a generation of artists from the Middle East and the challenges they face economically, socially and aesthetically.

EOA's mission, I would suggest, is to remove the barrier which separates those who are excluded from those who are included. The programme we are running will consist of a double panel discussion on Art, Technology and the Community which the DAM team will moderate, with Tweet Nadwas-style questions and answers at the end of the talk. Nadwa means symposium or meeting in Arabic and Tweet Nadwas was started in Egypt in the wake of the revolution – with the idea of bringing twitter conversations into a public space. At the Lunchtime Talks we will discuss a specific artwork, inviting different people to lead it each time – the artist, curator etc.

Our programme is not only aimed at artists, art lovers and art professionals, but also local schools, community centres and universities. We want to reach new audiences and improve understanding in the heart of multicultural London. And that ties in with something I'm really looking forward to doing whilst I am here – meeting as many interesting and diverse people as possible.



FORTS OF THE HOOD

BRAINCHILD BEHIND HOODFORTS, A PROJECT SET UP IN LONDON TO NURTURE THE TALENTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS, NURULL ISLAM TALKS ABOUT HIS JOURNEY AND HOW HE IS CONTRIBUTING TO #COMETOGETHER...

Nurull Islam, 34, is first generation British of Bangladeshi parentage. His family moved to Mile End, East London when he was a few years old. He works part time for a charity called London Tigers, spends a bit more time building his own business - Crescere Ltd and spends a lot of his time running, in a voluntary capacity, the Mile End Community Project (MCP), (which established the award-winning project HoodForts). Islam, with MCP, is running part of **#COMETOGETHER'S** Education Programme.

"Growing up in Mile End, there was never much to do. Our estate didn't have any youth provision like the other neighbouring estates did. They had places to keep warm in winter; some even had sports facilities. Racism was rife which led to increased community tensions. We soon got fed up with the lack of facilities, so we attended council meetings, made ourselves heard and gradually all the young people and some of the adults on our estate signed a petition demanding resources. In 1995 we were offered premises which became the first ever youth centre in Mile End. This was the start of the Mile End Community Project (MECP).

Three of us run the project - Assan Ali who leads on strategy and the sports projects, Selim Uddin who runs the leadership and cultural projects and me. I organise the creative projects. It is our workshops that make us different to a traditional youth centre.

HoodForts, was started in 2010. It's been very successful and gives local young people, mainly Muslim between the ages of 12 and 17, who are struggling to find employment, the chance to express themselves creatively. They want to make a difference to where they live and to equip themselves with new skills.

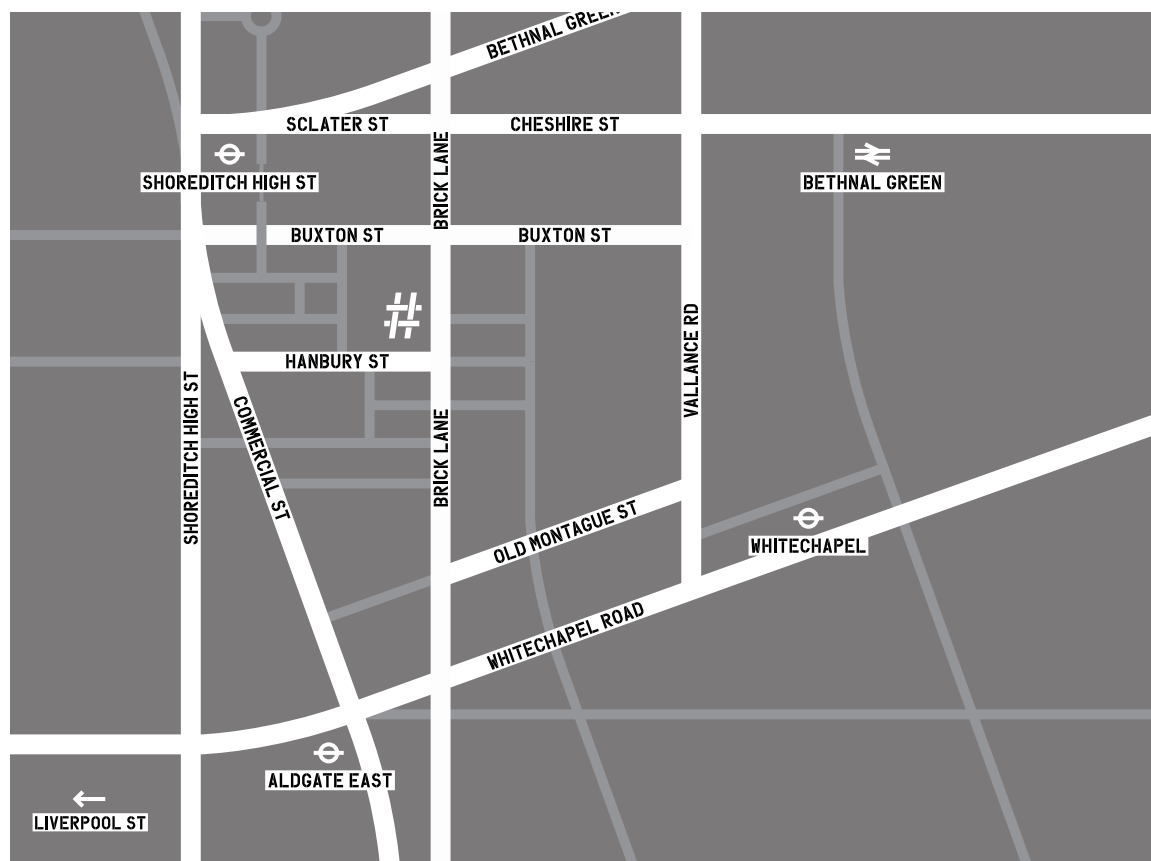
Our mission is to ensure that they recognise their potential.

HoodForts aims to address and educate people on what affects young people living in the 'Hood'. This includes religion, politics, society's perception of them and what is considered anti social behaviour. 'Hood' refers both to the neighbourHOOD where the young people live and the hoodie culture which brands them with the misconstrued reputation of being 'bad' kids. 'Forts' refers to the fact that around Mile End, the neighbourhoods are like a fortress due to the ongoing territorial and postcode wars that affect young people. It also alludes to the thoughts - pronounced 'forts' in this area - that young people may have about living on these estates.

We came to be involved with Edge of Arabia (EOA), after our first win, [HoodForts won a prize, in the Best Design and Print category, at the 2010 Adobe Youth Voices Event at the British Film Institute]. Stephen [Stapleton, founding artist of EOA] was impressed with our work and he created the opportunity for me to share the HoodForts story with other educators in America. This year HoodForts won again and we delivered a graffiti workshop to the winning artists of EOA, which led to our involvement with **#COMETOGETHER'S** Education Programme.

Our aim with the exhibition education programme, is to attract young people who wouldn't normally come to something like this. We want to open their minds to art; give them the confidence to explore their potential and recognise their skills. These workshops tie in closely with the work we do with HoodForts generally. Being part of these projects allows us to empower local young people to work towards their future goals."

EVENTS & PROGRAMMES



#COMETOGETHER
OLD TRUMAN BREWERY
81 BRICK LANE
LONDON E1 6QL

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
07-28 OCT 2012
EVERY DAY 11AM-6PM
THURSDAYS UNTIL 9PM

THURSDAY 11-OCT 2012
EDUCATION DAY
10AM-8PM (FREE EVENT)

EXPLORE MIDDLE EASTERN ART THROUGH
 WORKSHOPS, FILM SCREENINGS AND DISCUSSIONS.

THURSDAY 18-OCT 2012
STREET ART WORKSHOP
6PM-9PM (FREE EVENT)

AN EVENING OF CREATIVITY LED BY
 LOCAL AND MIDDLE EASTERN ARTISTS

THURSDAY 25-OCT 2012
FUTURE SHORTS FESTIVAL
6PM-9PM (TICKETED EVENT)

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INFO@CROSSWAY-FOUNDATION.ORG

#COMETOGETHER | EDUCATION DAY

THURSDAY 11TH OCTOBER | WORKSHOPS

10AM - 2:00PM

MURAL WORKSHOP | ATHIER MOUSAWI

A participatory based large-scale mural workshop for primary level students aimed at encouraging students to work as part of a team and to further their artistic skills in scale drawing and colour awareness.

About the artist: Athier Mousawi is a British Iraqi visual artist who has worked extensively as an educator within the UK and on the field. For three consecutive years from 2007 Athier worked as British Museum Arab artist in residence working in schools throughout the UK.

10AM - 2:00PM

DOME WORKSHOP | ADAM WILLIAMSON

A dome construction workshop for young people aimed at exploring the art of the Islamic pattern, participants gain a respect for context and an understanding of the intimate relationship with materials. Suitable for secondary level students and above.

About the artist: Adam Williamson, Crossway Co-founder, is a specialist stone and wood carver and a practising artist in a range of media. Adam has been a lecturer at Birkbeck, University of London, and the Princes School of Traditional arts. He has delivered extensive workshops in the UK and abroad. Adam is based in Hackney Wick.

THURSDAY 11TH OCTOBER | DISCUSSIONS

3PM - 3:20PM

THE SOCIALISING ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

SPEAKERS:

AHMED AL OMRAN: Saudi Arabian journalist and blogger.

ABDULNASSER GHAREM: Saudi Arabian contemporary artist

NADIA IDLE: Egyptian author of Tweets from Tahrir

MODERATOR:

REDHA MOALI: Founder and Chairman Dar al-Mamun Foundation

3:20PM - 3:40PM

PANEL 2: WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

SPEAKERS:

AMAL KHALAF: Assistant Curator of the Edgware Road Project

WILLIAM WELLS: Director of Townhouse Gallery, Cairo

NURULL ISLAM: Founder of Mile End Community Project

AARON CEZAR: Director of the Delfina Foundation

HAMZA SERAFI: Founder and Director of Athr Gallery, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

MODERATOR:

CLLR RABINA KHAN: Cabinet Member for Housing, Olympic Borough of Tower Hamlets

3:40PM - 3:55PM

Q&A

THURSDAY 11TH OCTOBER | SCREENINGS

5PM - 6PM

TALK & SCREENING: AL-ISHARA & AHMED MATER

THURSDAY 11TH OCTOBER | LATE

6PM - 8PM

COMMUNARTE: MILE END COMMUNITY PROJECT

DOWN THE LANE

LONDON, AN EVER-GROWING CULTURAL CAPITAL OF THE WORLD IS OVERFLOWING WITH MULTINATIONAL ARTISTIC TALENT. THROUGHOUT THIS SECTION, WE WILL GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE COBBLED STREETS OF BRICK LANE AND THE PARTS OF THE CITY THAT ARE POPULATED WITH MIDDLE EASTERN DIASPORA WHILE PICKING OUT THE BEST SPOTS TO VISIT.

Leaving behind its days of acting as East London's industrial area, Brick Lane has grown into a vibrant community, welcoming people of all origins and walks of life. Adapting a Middle Eastern feel, Brick Lane gives its visitors the opportunity to immerse themselves completely into the over-ruling atmosphere that has formed. Whilst walking around this part of the city, the dominant Middle Eastern atmosphere has even affected the street signs, which have been translated into different languages, catering to all needs of the public.

Rich in heritage, London has an overabundance of districts for the Middle Eastern traveller. Scratch beneath the surface and dig deep into the pockets of London and you will find areas which, although rough around the edges, are populated by Arab diaspora.

The red brick-lined streets populating Brick Lane offer an insight into a diverse community that charms all that pass through. Brick Lane is rapidly becoming one of London's cultural melting spots. Amongst the cobbled streets of the Lane, in between renovated buildings lie art galleries, vintage shops and Arabic-styled cafes. The area's blooming reputation is becoming well known for the creative, commercial and pioneering products.

The evident growing culture in London was created by Arabs for Arabs in the 1970s, with an influx of Arabs from the Gulf States visiting the city, coffee shops began to emerge. Nowadays, entrepreneurs are setting a trend to adapt London, with an explosion in popularity of modern, cheap and tasty Levantine and North African establishments that overshadow the Italian and even Indian cultures in the city.

These bright new bustling cafes popularising Arabic food and culture exist alongside more aspirational venues, such as Mo Café. Set up by restaurateur Mourad Mazouz, Mo Café acts as a café and a bazaar housed in a Moroccan Riad.

On Edgware Road, just a stone throw away from Brick Lane, traditional Arab cafes line the street. Al Shishaw, one of these well-known cafes continuously serves Arabic coffee and delicacies in its exuberantly decorated surroundings. The loyal clientele that dine at these cafes and restaurants along the road make sure to show their spirit when Cairo's notorious football derby between Zamalek and Al Ahly is on, creating a roar of sounds throughout the street.

Being a much respected travel destination for Arabs, attracting 1.5 million Arabs every year, London is now home to one of the most diverse, kaleidoscopic populations in the world - with about 500,000 living in the United Kingdom - and has teemed with art galleries, museums, music venues, theatres, breathtaking performance venues and local art house cinemas to take advantage of the global platform they need to voice their thoughts.

Middle Eastern art is certainly not a new phenomenon. Dale Egge, an art consultant and gallerist from the 1970s to 1990s brought most of the regional art to the city, thus becoming known as the godmother of Middle Eastern art in London. However, only recently has the dialogue between the Middle East and West really begun to grow.

Janet Rady, a representative of Middle Eastern artists in London says that the first

major eye-opener was the Word into Art exhibition that took place at the British Museum in 2006. Word into Art explored the vibrancy of the contemporary Middle Eastern art scene through the creative use of Arabic script in art. Isabelle Causse, the curator of the exhibition said: 'The aim was simply to present to the world, the developments in modern art in a huge region whose culture remains unfamiliar to most people outside its borders.'

In 2009, Charles Saatchi, owner of the Saatchi Gallery in London opened Unveiled: New Art from the Middle East, showcasing 90 pieces from 19 artists across the region. Saatchi intended to raise awareness of the breadth and dynamism of the Middle Eastern art scene, which Rady says: 'Further helped to break down the West's deeply embedded prejudices towards the region.'

There is a wealth of Middle Eastern artists living and working out of London. Some, like Iranian Shirazeh Houshiary, are already established on a global scale, whilst others, such as Lebanese Shirine Osseiran, are just making their first steps on the growing scene. Many Middle Eastern artists bump into limitations with their art in their own country and therefore come to London to have freedom with their art. The artists see London as an extraordinary opportunity to study at some of the world's top art colleges and begin their career on an international level.

With contemporary Middle Eastern art continuously developing throughout London, it seems as though it is the ideal time to take the next step in spreading the talent of the region even further.

SALMA TUQAN, A PALESTINIAN BASED IN LONDON IS RENOWNED FOR HER WORK IN ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING MIDDLE EASTERN ART AROUND THE WORLD. AS THE CONTEMPORARY CURATOR, MIDDLE EAST. AT THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM IN LONDON. SHE HAS ASSISTED IN PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR THE ARAB ART SCENE IN THIS COSMOPOLITAN CITY. WE SPOKE WITH HER TO FIND OUT HER FAVOURITE PLACES IN LONDON...

WHERE ARE THE BEST PLACES TO GO IN LONDON? Where to start... London has something for everyone, as long as you search it out by foot and get lost in the process.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BEST GALLERIES TO VISIT IN LONDON AND WHY? There are so many galleries to choose from. I would say for contemporary art galleries I am always introduced to something new at Paradise Row and Lisson Gallery. I'd really recommend the innovative Hannah Barry gallery in South London and Thomas Dane is perfect for brilliant Arab talent.

The Mosaic Room in Earls Court is consistently dynamic across its literature, film and contemporary art programming. For a day out, the Horniman Museum and Gardens, with its labyrinth of ethnographic musical objects and idyllic gardens, is wonderful, as is the Wallace Collection, a hidden gem not far from the hustle of Oxford Street.

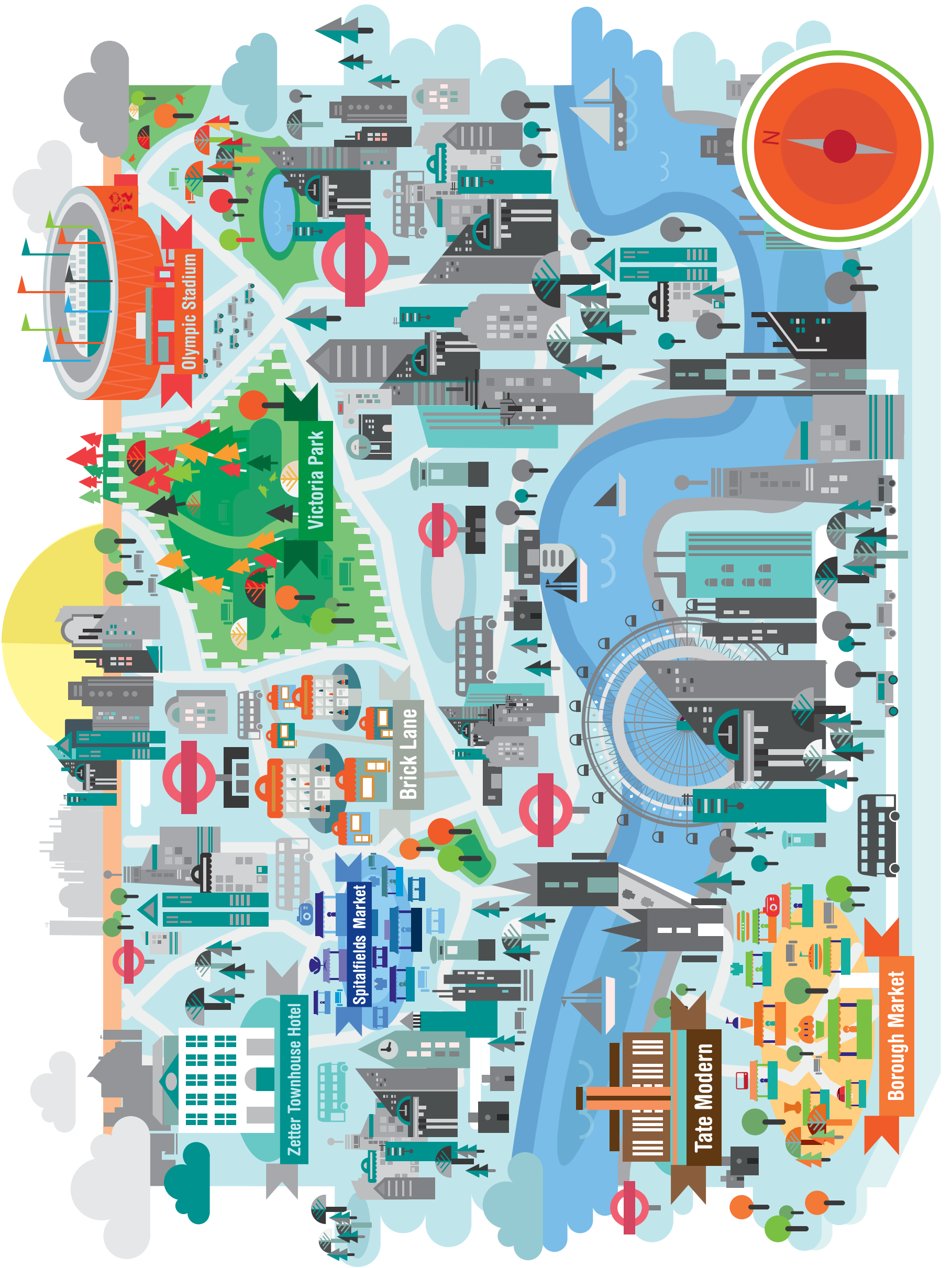
Over in Shadwell, The Wapping Project is a fantastic space for site-specific ambitious installations and the Delfina Foundation's residencies offer the opportunity to hear artists in residence discuss their work. For the best of design, the V&A is the place to visit, especially during the London Design Festival.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME IN THE CITY? Dipping in and out of activities, catching an art exhibition, enjoying rare moments of sunshine in Hyde Park, curling up for a film at one of the Curzon cinemas, and chasing my nephews at London Zoo.

HOW DO YOU GET A TASTE OF ARABIA IN LONDON? WHERE ARE YOUR FAVOURITE PLACES? Really the most memorable experience of great Arabic tastes tends to be sharing food amongst friends & family during Ramadan at home.

But there are some very well known spots, like Maroush on Brompton Road, Noura, Al Bustan and Pasha. Lately, lots of people have moved on to popular chains like Yalla Yalla in Green's Court, serving Beirut street food and Comptoir Libanais, a lively canteen-style delicatessen on Wigmore Street. If you don't want to go to a restaurant, you could always wander around London's many markets where you are bound to find wonderful Arabic flavours from numerous stalls by companies like the Arabica Food and Spice Company, French and Grace and many others.

ARE THERE CERTAIN PARTS OF LONDON WHERE THERE IS A STRONG MIDDLE EASTERN FEEL? One of London's unique elements is its ability to assimilate people from all walks of life. Because of this you can find Middle Eastern influences all around the city - on the steps of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London in Russell Square, at the live music nights at Momo on Heddon Street, around the abundance of cafes along Edgware Road and on Saturdays in the Golborne Road, just off Portobello Road. These are just some of the parts of the city that have become home to much of the Arab crowd in London.



Olympic Stadium

Victoria Park

Brick Lane

Spitalfields Market

Zetter Townhouse Hotel

Tate Modern

Borough Market

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HASSAN HAJJAJ
CHOUROUK HRIECH
MOUNA KARRAY
YAZAN KHALILI
MAHA MALLUH
AHMED MATER
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LANTIAN XIE
FAISAL SAMRA

@OTHER

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