

detail from, *Illumination I* -
Ahmed Mater Al-Ziad Aseeri

EDGE OF ARABIA

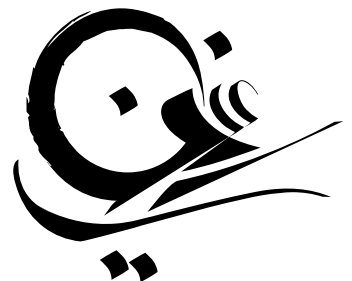
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CONTEMPORARY ART FROM SAUDI ARABIA

EXHIBITION GUIDE

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EDGE OF ARABIA

CONTEMPORARY ART FROM SAUDI ARABIA

LONDON 2008

THIS UNIQUE EXHIBITION SHOWCASES THE WORK AND INDIVIDUAL STORIES OF 17 SAUDI ARTISTS FROM JEDDAH, MAKKAH, RIYADH, DHAHRAN, ABHA AND KHAMIS MUSHAIT. IN BRINGING THEM TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME, EDGE OF ARABIA HERALDS A FRESH CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY SAUDI ARABIAN ART. THESE ARTISTS SHED LIGHT ON A NEW CREATIVE MOVEMENT WITHIN SAUDI ARABIA, RESPONDING TO A RANGE OF THEMES: THEIR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ISLAMIC FAITH; THE ARTIST'S VOICE IN THE MEDIA AGE; AND THE HISTORY, CULTURE AND ECOLOGY OF THE REGION.

EDGE OF ARABIA WITNESSES THE CULMINATION OF A CREATIVE JOURNEY THAT STARTED FIVE YEARS AGO. IT IS BASED ON LONGSTANDING FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN A SMALL GROUP OF BRITISH AND SAUDI ARTISTS AND AIMS TO PROMOTE AN IMPROVED ARTISTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AND GREAT BRITAIN.

www.edgeofarabia.com

EDGE OF ARABIA
contemporary art from saudi arabia



SHADIA & RAJA ALEM

JEDDAH

شاديا وراجا



JINNIYAT LAR | 2000

Initially a series of paintings by Shadia Alem, this piece reached its final form when Raja, Shadia's sister, composed a string of short stories inspired by the original paintings. She wrote forty stories in the space of half an hour. The final piece, with its monsters, magic and flights of imaginative fantasy is in the mould of the great medieval tradition of Arabic storytelling.

JAH EYE | 1998-2000

Jah means beautiful. The lines of Raja's text, transcribed by Shadia, become contours mapping the landscape of each eye. As if fingerprints no two are the same. The transparency of each piece is suggestive of trying to look beyond the eye to the intimacy of what lies beyond.

ABDULAZIZ ASHOUR

JEDDAH

عبد العزيز عشاوري



SOFT WHITE II | 2007

White, here, is the dominant compositional force. Ashour refers to it as his bride and treats it with delicacy. As an employee in the Ministry of Energy, Ashour is interested by invisible lines of technological communication, their diagrammatic representation and the tension he perceived in the region following the 1st Gulf War.

SAMEER AL-DAHAM

RIYADH



TURATH (HERITAGE) | 2008

Turath means 'heritage' or 'old style'. This piece relates an expressionistic account of the people, streets and landscape of Al-Daham's past. It also references subtly the pace of change in Saudi Arabia.

MANAL AL-DOWAYAN

DHAHRAN

منا الدويان



I AM A PETROLEUM ENGINEER | 2005-7

THE CHOICE | 2005-7

In these photographs women from the Eastern Province, where Al-Dowayan lives, are shown veiled and heavily made-up next to the individual paraphernalia of different male professions. With no studio Al-Dowayan erects temporary studios in the homes of her subjects, thus inhabiting herself a typically male profession.

REEM AL-FAISAL

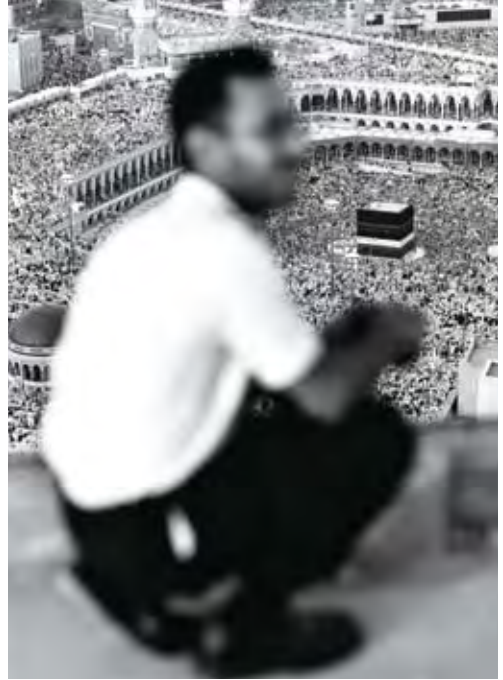
JEDDAH

الفيسال



FRUIT OF ISLAM CADET, CHICAGO | 2000

This unique series is the result of the first time an outsider was allowed to photograph the Nation of Islam's 'Saviors' Day Convention' in Chicago. Al-Faisal documents not only the tightly drilled performative aspect of the day but the preparation, anticipation and construction of the event.



HAJJ, PILGRIMAGE TO MAKKAH | 2001-3

Al-Faisal is one of the first women to be granted permission to photograph in the Holy cities of Makkah and Al-Madinah. Pictures from her Hajj series manage to capture the spirituality and beauty of the pilgrimage above and beyond the logistical difficulty of taking these photographs.

MOHAMMED FAREA

RIYADH

محمد فarea



NAJD | 2008

The stylised buildings in this piece are reminiscent of traditional buildings in the Najd region of Saudi Arabia, fleshing out Farea's concern that this style of architecture is an essential part of the nation's heritage and should be preserved.

ABDULNASSER GHAREM

KHAMIS MUSHAIT

عبدناصر غارم



RESTORED BEHAVIOUR | 2008

Made using a stamp designed specifically for Gharem's participation in 'Edge of Arabia', this work is about the reformation of behaviour. The text in the stamp, roughly translated from Arabic, reads as 'show more commitment', and later, 'Amen'. As an artist whose work deals in intervention there is an analogy here between the idea of delivering a judgement on your environment as an artist, and the approval or disapproval implied by Gharem's enormous stamp.

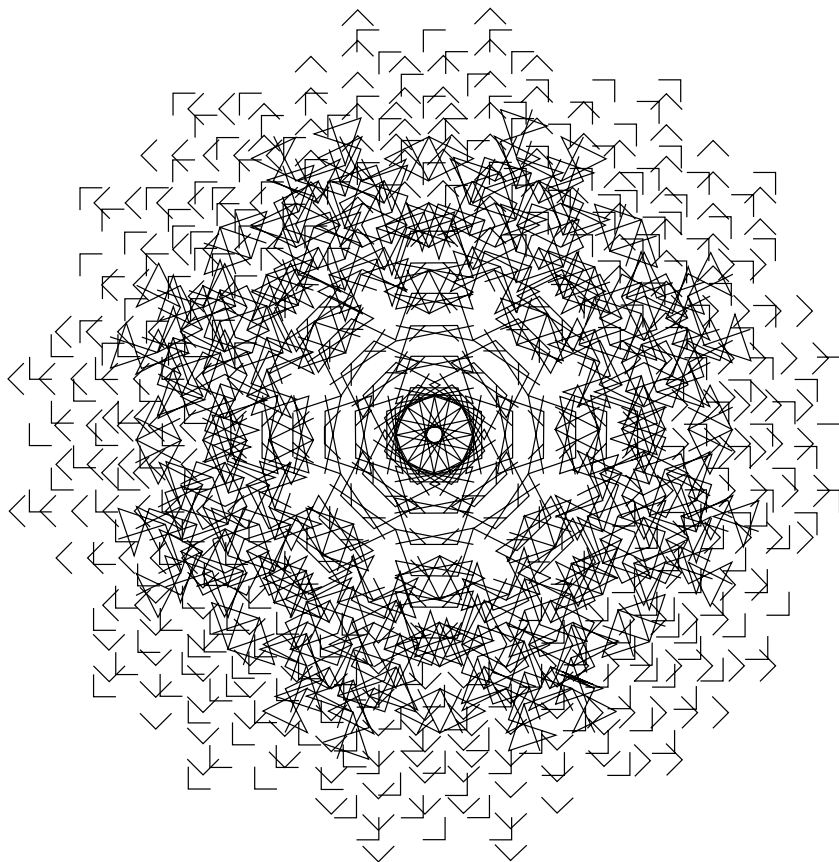
FLORA AND FAUNA | 2007

Exhibited originally in the recent 2007 Sharjah Biennial, *Flora and Fauna* shows Gharem wrapped in plastic alongside a local *Cornocarpus Erectus* tree. Because of the oxygen given off by the tree he was able to stay there for many hours. Recently imported from Australia, the authorities were unaware of the disastrous effects these trees would have on the local environment due to the fact that their roots grow horizontally. With this work he hoped to draw attention to man's symbiotic relationship with nature.

LULWAH AL-HOMOUD

RIYADH

لؤلؤة الحمد



ALLAH (GOD) | 2008

From the series, *The Language of Existence*, these works represent a deconstruction and recalibration of the basic calligraphic Arabic form. Al-Homoud has assigned numerical values to different letters and, having combined this with her appreciation of traditional geometries and the Vedic square, has formed highly original and complex visual interpretations of the 99 different names of God.

MAHDI AL-JERAIBI

MAKKAH

مهدى الجرايبي



DIALECTIC

Originally part of a school desk, each wooden board was once in use in a secondary school in Makkah. Rather than hang them himself Al-Jeraibi has chosen to leave these wooden planes in Hessian sacks. The audience is invited to hang them on the wall opposite. In this way members of the audience form their own relationship the remainders of these desks. Together they form a mosaic of shared human memory. By presenting the work like this the artist brings to life and heightens the dialectic between not only artist and viewer, but viewer and work.



ZINCOGRAPH 1 | 2003

In each *Zincograph* hairs cut from the head of the artist's wife, his friends, or an anonymous mass of pilgrims on hajj have been suspended around a wooden frame. We see strangely intimate portraits of people the viewer may never meet - and certainly would not recognise if they did. Contained in each hair is the DNA of the subject so these works become reminiscent of giant slides waiting to be examined beneath a microscope.

YOUSEF JAHA

MAKKAH

يوسف جaha



NATURE'S FORM I | 2004

Inspired both by the spirituality of Makkah itself and the beauty of its natural landscape, these pieces suggest expressionistic dreamscapes typical of Jaha's late period.

AHMED MATER AL-ZIAD ASEERI

أحمد ماطر
عسيري

ABHA

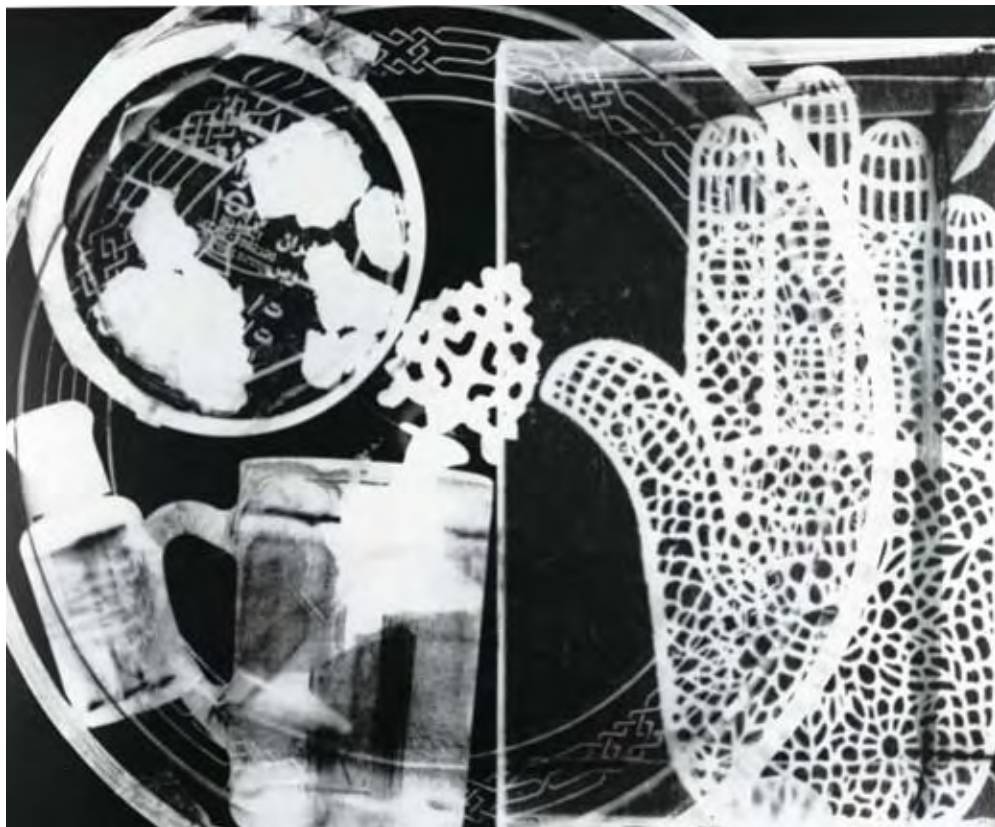


ILLUMINATION I | 2008

In *Illumination I & II*, two matching X-Rays have been printed onto paper prepared carefully using tea, pomegranate, coffee and other materials used traditionally to prepare the opening pages to a religious text. This gives these pages a rare luminosity. With the torsos facing each other Mater touches on notions of exteriority, or 'us' and 'them'. Though set up in opposition the mirrored segments complete each other as two halves of a whole, as if the Lion and Unicorn book-ending a coat of arms.

TALISMAN X-RAY | 2008

This combines an X-Ray of a human torso placed marginally behind a talisman, similar to that of Fatima that can now be found in Istanbul. Like many of Mater's works this relates to a much earlier part of the region's history and the cultural artefacts created during this period.



MERWED | 2008

Each photograph contains a series of objects from Malluh's studio. They are identifiable only by their outline and the varying degree of translucence. In trying to decipher these objects the viewer becomes an airport security guard. Intimate belongings are scanned to identify them and to gauge the threat they appear to pose.



ATAA AL RIYADH | 1994

Originally entered into a British Airways competition looking for a new tail-fin design, *Ataa Al Riyadh* combines traditional motifs from the Najd region with Najdi architecture, both of which Al-Ruzaiza has studied throughout his career. Autobiographical in nature, this piece combines Al-Ruzaiza's experience of studying art in Rome for five years with his knowledge of Saudi Arabian architecture. The result is a dream-like hybrid testament to the artist's culturally rich past.

NOHA AL-SHARIF

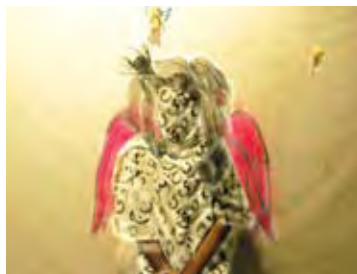
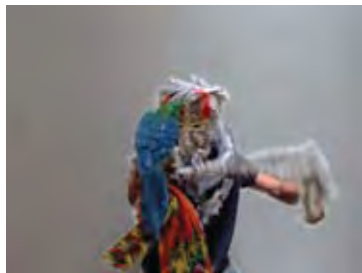
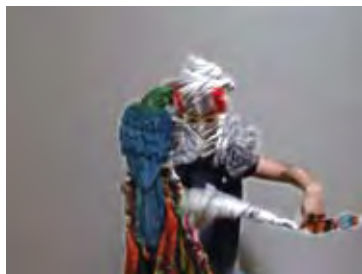
JEDDAH

نوحه الشريف



HUMBLY AND DEVOUT | 2008

The inspiration for *Humbly and Devout* is drawn both from Al-Sharif's admiration for Henry Moore and her deep-rooted faith in Islam. Based on a photograph of women during prayer, these figures when seen together combine as if fingers in a hand. This is a reference both to the everyday regularity of prayer performed five times a day, and that praying as a group is religiously preferable to praying in isolation.



DISTORTED REALITY # 19 | 2007

Each triptych relates separate instants from a series of actions performed by Samra. In a formal sense they are reminiscent of Francis Bacon's legendary triptychs. Each performance is unscripted, with no contrived start or finish, and together they form part of Samra's polemic against what he calls the 'made-up images' of advertising and globalised news media. His desire throughout is to present the viewer with images that are rigorously unmediated.

DISTORTED REALITY # 43 | 2007

Distorted Reality records a succession of performances acted out by Samra, mostly with his face obscured. The artist intentionally constructs a warped reality that is every bit as unreal as the illusion fed to us each day via televisions, computers and posters. Samra explains, 'It's important for people to know that they're being hypnotised by these "made-up image-producers"... they look to beautify wherever possible. With *Distorted Reality* I do the opposite.'

AYMAN YOSSRI أيمن يوسري

DAYDBAN

JEDDAH



MAHAREM (TISSUES) | 2008

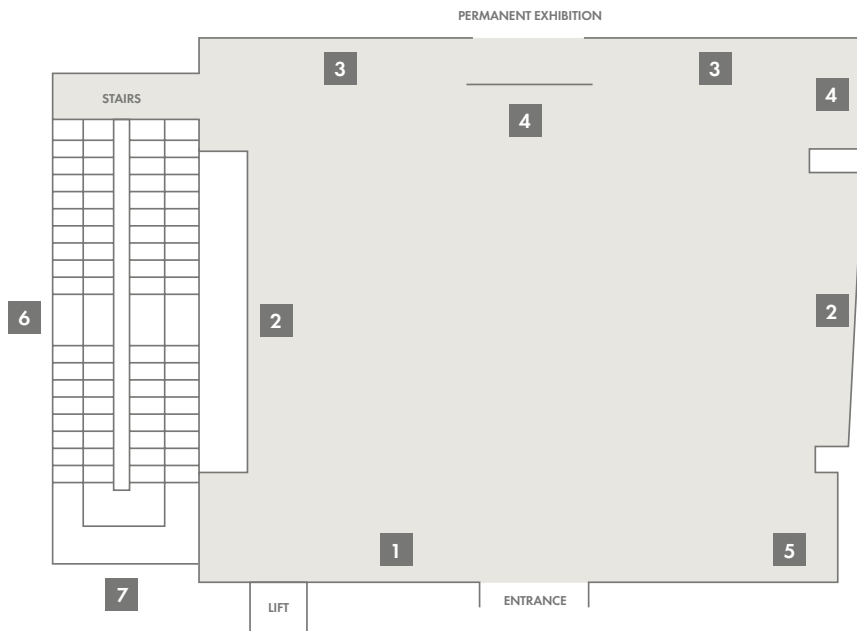
On the surface of each tissue box is a poster for a famous Arabic film from the 1940s or 1950s. Most nights Yossri returns to this fictional, mostly black-and-white world of film where nothing changes. Often he weeps. As he does he reaches for the nearest tissue-box. In Arabic the word *maharem* can relate to both tissues and your close family. Both provide an emotional blanket against the outside world.

IDENTITY SHOP | 2008

Similar to many of Yossri's works this piece does not involve a finished artistic commodity. Instead, exchange is the artwork on show. Yossri wants to trade identities and ideas during the course of the exhibition making this perhaps the ultimate expression of the ideals behind 'Edge of Arabia': to create meaningful dialogue between Saudi artists and a British art-going public.

EXHIBITION

GROUND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 MAHDI AL-JERAIBI
- 3 FAISAL SAMRA
- 4 AHMED MATER AL-ZIAD ASEERI
- 5 REEM AL-FAISAL
- 6 SHADIA & RAJA ALEM

LOWER GROUND FLOOR



LOWER GROUND FLOOR

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 7 LULWAH AL-HOMOUD | 13 ABDULAZIZ ASHOUR |
| 8 MANAL AL-DOWAYAN | 14 AYMAN YOSSRI DAYDBAN |
| 9 NOHA AL-SHARIF | 15 ABDULNASSER GHAREM |
| 10 SAMEER AL-DAHAM | 16 MAHA MALLUH |
| 11 ALI AL-RUZAIZA | 17 YOUSEF JAHA |
| 12 MOHAMMED FAREA | |

ARTISTS

- شادية وراجة أليم SHADIA & RAJA ALEM, JEDDAH
- عبد العزيز عيوني ABDULAZIZ ASHOUR, JEDDAH
- سمير الداهم SAMEER AL-DAHAM, RIYADH
- مانال الدويان MANAL AL-DOWAYAN, DHAHRAN
- ريم الفاضل REEM AL-FAISAL, JEDDAH
- محمد فارة MOHAMMED FAREA, RIYADH
- عبد الناصر غريم ABDULNASSER GHAREM, KHAMIS MUSHAIT
- لولوا الحمد LULWAH AL-HOMOUD, RIYADH
- مهدى الجريبى MAHDI AL-JERAIBI, MAKKAH
- يوسف جاها YOUSEF JAHA, MAKKAH
- أحمد ماطر الزيادة ASEERI, ABHA
- مها ملوح MAHA MALLUH, RIYADH
- علي الروزايا ALI AL-RUZAIZA, RIYADH
- نوح الشريف NOHA AL-SHARIF, JEDDAH
- فaisal سامرا FAISAL SAMRA, BAHRAIN
- أيمن يوسري AYMEN YOSSRI DAYDBAN, JEDDAH

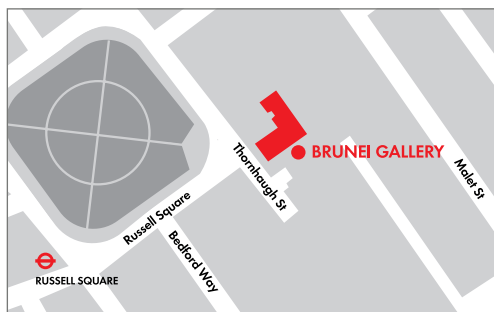
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE ARTISTS:
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SAUDI ARABIA





detail from, *Hajj, Pilgrimage to Makkah* - Reem Al-Faisal



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