Afruz Amighi, winner of The Jameel Prize Victoria & Albert Museum, July 2009

The Jameel Prize:

A Shift Of Alternate Worlds

By Charles Merewether

As a result of financial support of the entrepreneur Mohammed Abdul Latif Jameel, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London opened a newly renovated Gallery of Islamic Art in July of 2006. For those advocating the need to strengthen the points and terms of reference in regard to contemporary art practice, the Jameel Prize is a significant addition to the museum, most especially in relation to its already existing strengths in the field of Islamic visual arts.

To be held every two years, the Jameel prize is for 'an artist whose contemporary practice emphasized the importance of 'Islamic traditions of art, craft and design'. [1] Neither defining nor prescribing the specific form of contemporary Islamic art, the prize advocated a 'contemporary practice' inspired by 'Islamic visual culture from the past.' Moreover, entry into the competition did not require that they live or were even born there but perhaps more importantly allows for a larger Moslem world to participate. The value of this openness is not only a tacit recognition of how much has changed over the past decades of contemporary art and the culture in countries where Islamic belief is dominant but, a corrective to the narrow focus and distinctions still being made by the West. In particular, the prize aimed to "raise awareness of the thriving interaction between contemporary practice and the rich artistic heritage of Islam but, to contribute to a broader debate about Islamic culture." Moreover, as Zaha Hadid, the patron of the Prize remarked, the aim was to explore the cultural dialogue between Islamic art and contemporary practice. She added: "I hope the Jameel Prize will inspire a new generation of artists, designers and engineers to further this dialogue."

The significance of the event was the degree to which it revealed a breadth within a distinctive field of contemporary art practices. Furthermore, the introduction of the term Islamic visual culture cast the net more widely insofar as defining itself with reference to the cultural – and therefore a part of a way of life - rather than geographic orientation. The result was that in its inaugural year (2008), the prize attracted more than 50 artists from across the Middle East, Pakistan, the sub-Continent and South East Asia. A jury was selected and nine artists chosen whose work was then shown at the V&A in June of 2009. The work of the finalists showed to the contrary the distinctive forms of elaboration of forms and methods engaged with Islamic traditions and ranged from forms of calligraphy, wood and screen prints, painting and photomontage to that of jewelry and installation. The selected artists included Hamra Abbas, Reza Abedini, Afruz Amighi, Sevan Bicakci, Hassan Hajjaj, Khosrow Hassanzadeh, Susan Hefuna, Seher Shah and Camille Zakharia. [2] From this the award was given to one of these artists: Afruz Amighi. Moreover, while these artists may have come from Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Lebanon, many live elsewhere or shuttling between their family home city and another in the West. These cities then include Beirut, Istanbul, Tehran, Bahrain, Marrakesh, Dusseldorf, Cambridge (Massachusetts), New York and London.

Focusing on the cultural breadth of those participating in the Jameel prize and the character of their offers a significant corrective to how certain museum collections and exhibitions that have defined Islamic in relation to contemporary art. This is nowhere more evident than in the National Art Gallery in Amman. Here the collection is hung under the rubric of Islamic art creating a strange unsettling admixture of styles and approaches across countries as distant from one another as the Middle East and South East Asia. And while the scholarly work and engagement of Wijdan Ali has been fundamental to improving an understanding and appreciation of recent and contemporary art of the region, the museum collection in Amman raises serious issues around the concept of Islamic art. In fact, looked at more broadly, the advantage of the Jameel prize is in offering a viewer the possibility of viewing Islamic culture in relation to and through the prism of contemporary art and culture. In short, such a vantage point represents a way of representing a moderate Islamic position that embraces exchange and correspondence as much as difference and distinction.

Critical to understanding this approach is an appreciation of the complex nature and character of Islamic art and culture. This is best seen in the pioneering historical writings of Oleg Grabar, notably his 'Formation of Islamic Culture' or more recently, the monographic studies of both Wijdan Ali and Nada Shabout [3]. One of the important contributions of his scholarly approach was in opening up the extraordinary world of Islamic culture and the visual arts. While this corresponds

1 The Jameel Prize offered the winner 25,000 pounds. There were over 100 nominations received for the prize, and nine were eventually shortlisted and exhibited.

2 Following the closing of the exhibition on September 13th, 2009, the V&A plans to tour the exhibition to Riyadh, Istanbul, Casablanca, Damascus and Beirut.

3 Grabar, Oleg, The Formation of Islamic Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1987; Ali, Wijdan, Modern Islamic Art: Development and Continuity. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida) 1997; and Nada Shabout, Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics (Gainsville, Fl.: University of Florida, 2007).

to the Warburgian School in which figures such Erwin Panofky, Edgar Wind or Fritz Saxl were first and foremost cultural historians; it is also significantly distinguishes itself from that of the 'fine arts' a term that belongs more precisely to the British School of art history. This distinction is also true of the Jameel prize insofar as its criteria of participation was based on an Islamic visual culture and not fine arts or Islamic art. However, Grabar stops short of engaging with the subject of contemporary art, arguing that it lies beyond the scope of Islamic visual culture. The argument is important precisely because it correctly distinguishes between visual culture and fine arts. This distinction has been strengthened if not encouraged by the growth of a commercial art market and building of fine art collections alongside an increasingly globalized world of exchange and, in effect, a strengthening of a secular-based civil society. This has allowed for the appearance of artists whose practice is based on a fundamental right to the freedom of expression. And yet, while these developments and their consequent distinctions are critical to our understanding as to what has happened, they are also the very reason for taking on the challenge contemporary art offers us. That, is, one could argue that the methodological tools of Grabar's approach are invaluable to a reading of contemporary artists such as those participating in the Jameel prize. Hence, we might view the work of Hefuna, Bicakci or Hajjaj through the geographic and generational shifts as evident in their relation to Islamic visual culture.

Wijdan Ali's book offers a substantive survey of the growth of Islamic art from the nineteenth century until now. Her book makes an invaluable contribution to the development of painting and calligraphic art under the impact of art education, colonial institutions and indigenous patronage. This reflects on both the impact of Western industrialization and the complex response of engagement and resistance. In this regard, Ali refers to the impact of political and social factors suggesting a critical connection to the rise of the national and the subsequent way in which this connection seeks to circumscribe radical change from within and or from the outside. The importance of this approach is to provide the ground for exploring the formation of an "Islamic art" world as an ideological construct used against the contemporary as a sign of non-Islam and the international. And yet too, one may argue that, armed with Grabar's concept of a visual culture, we may better read the work of these artists. We would then arrive at a reading in which the art itself performs this dialogue between the cultural and artistic, the sacred and secular as distinct from belonging to or as an extension of a well-defined tradition.

In this regard, the 'modern' stage of cultural development in the larger cities of the Arab world enabled the renewal of the calligraphic in a way that was perhaps unforeseen. In particular, calligraphic practices have developed in distinct forms due to the individual character of the artist's practice, the increasing breadth of institutional and organizational support, and the possibility of the artist's engagement with the contemporary at an international level of encounter and exchange. [4] This is one of the valuable consequences of far greater accessibility to a broad range of art produced virtually anywhere and ironically an access that is far greater than the calligraphic practices in the country in which they live. The import of this is to appreciate the contemporary as also an imaginary community that is larger than the social domain in which one lives and embraces the secular and exigencies of everyday life. This world, unrestricted by place, belief, tradition or social milieu, exerts a powerful influence over the creative sector. This is far more so than what appears to be a tradition in which the concept of exploration, influence and exchange is limited if not controlled by precedent, rules and small elite. However, Ali's study would have gained from an engagement with these artists amongst others, whose work may be broadly defined as a post-calligraphic practice. This is evident in the work of Seher Shah, Hamra Abbas, Afruz Amighi or Reza Abedini, none of who seek to deconstruct so much as expand points of reference and field of practice within the everyday world of Islamic cultures.

Following on from Ali's book, the recent study of Modern Arab Art by Nada Shabout focuses on the rise of the secular domain, exploring the emergence of what may be called the rise of the secular 'modern' and expansion of calligraphic traditions within the contemporary.' Focusing on Palestine and Iraq, Shabout offers an important account of the rise of the modern and abstraction. This, in part, provides the ground for distinguishing between Arab and Islamic art and means for establishing a necessary historical framework to better addressing the shifts taking place in contemporary art within Islamic cultures today. [5] As Shabout intimates, what is slowly emerging is the development of a number of artists who seek to combine the two powerful forces, on the one hand traditions of calligraphy and on the other, contemporary culture.

4 An important exhibition for an opening up of caligrtaphy to he contemporary was recently held Word Into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East. Curated by Venetia Porter at the British Museum in May 2006 and then at the Dubai International Center between 7 February-30 April, 2008.

5 By limiting my remarks to these two books I have limited my discussion to the context of the Arab world. I have also not taken into account the recent and current writings on the subject as published in journals such as Contemporary Practices, Bidoun or Canvas and others.

The practice becomes a dialogue of mutual exchange in which calligraphy as a practice is informed and shaped by contemporary culture and the world is viewed and articulated through the language and prism of calligraphy. The result has been a tremendous renewal of art practices from a field that had been left to those artists and admirers who favored the way of tradition as distinct from a contemporary rethinking or divergence from it. In a manner not dissimilar to the kinds of lines drawn with contemporary and traditional Chinese art, this distinction was consolidated if not tacitly maintained by the support of organizations, curators, critics and collectors. However, while this infrastructure may have championed certain tendencies as opposed to others, the dividing line that had been erected has also been broken and crossed first and foremost by artists themselves in manners unforeseen.

Most significantly, it has led to a critical shift concerning the status of the visual. For while the key to calligraphy remained oriented around the legibility of the written word, of a certain act of reading; forms of a post-calligraphic practices through which the act of seeing assumes a broader dominion of reference and potentiality. This shift enables the possibility of a much greater range of responses to the form of the calligraphic. This appears to have occurred in at least two ways. First, the changing relation between the calligraphic and drawing in which the word itself, its presence and form is threatened to dissolve, disappear into drawing. This may be either non-referential or directed elsewhere in terms of its referential value, such as in the secular domain. Reza Abedini's posters do just that. Reflecting the importance of calligraphy in Iranian culture, he merges text with figuration of the silhouette of the human body. The form of each merge with one another as if to reading one is also a reading of the other. Arguably it allows for a reading of the word as the point of origin, the source that animates the human being and the vessel of communication with one another. The use of the calligraphic merges with writing in the large-scale paintings and screen-prints on canvas by Khosrow Hassanzadeh living in Tehran. Combining old photographic images with Arabic script, he reclaims, as if in homage, a disappearing world in which different sectors of the Iranian community appear: wrestlers, court intellectuals, dervishes, generals, mullahs etc.

Secondly, there appears a shift to a position that is already outside the calligraphic. From this perspective, what appears rather are a number of artists who see the calligraphic as part of a larger heritage of Islamic culture that can be drawn upon or not. Artists are not working within but from an outside still able to connect to specific pictorial traditions that would include, for example, Islamic modernity's engagement with Is-

Installation view

lamic traditions of ornamentation. This shift is critical to note, precisely because it mobilizes a set of references, associations and meanings that are as much divergent as they are diverse.

And here, we should note the degree to which this work has been marginalized both within the countries of its origin and by the West. Even more emphatically, I would argue that there has been a tacit complicity between observers on both sides. On the one hand, the achievements have been dismissed as feigning to the West and a denial of the breadth of Islamic visual traditions while, on the other, Western observers have viewed forms of modernism produced elsewhere as pale imitations of Western art. However, during the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, we find the flowering of secular-based practices across the Arab world, especially in countries such as Iran, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq. Such artistic movements predominantly stem from the social interrelations and exchange with Western Europe. Artists from the Arab world traveled and studied in the West and conversely European artists traveled to the East. The results were, of course, different. However, the Western world has remained predominantly conservative expecting either an art practice that can be evaluated by reference to Western art history or not and therefore defined in relation to traditional aesthetic forms such as calligraphy. This is especially true where religious belief has played a dominant social and cultural role in the everyday lives of its people. However, what is not recognized is the capacity of contemporary art to rethink the Islamic faith within the contemporary everyday, to take it outside the strictures and confines established by orthodoxy. This is the point around which Hamra Abbas' recent series has developed. It is not a case of either being Islamic or not, or that those who are Islamic be viewed as fanatical ideologues. Contradicting its title, Hamra Abbas' work Please Do Not Step – Loss of a Magnificent Story is placed on the gallery floor and wedged in between a doorway it encourages viewers to walk on what is essentially a work of art. Unlike earlier versions, the most recent manifestations are not confined by specially constructed spaces but are presented directly on the floor. This makes the work ephemeral Written in a font that uses delicate, geometrical Islamic patterns, the text recounts a story of a magic carpet that crashes on a day of turbulence conditions. Following the method of story-telling Dastangoi common to both the Islamic world and that of the sub-continent, the story recounts a fictitious adventure of Hamza (Uncle of the Prophet Muhammad) as he journeyed through the world combating evil and spreading faith. [6]

I wanted to tell you my story in person, but I do not like the weather in your country. I am therefore sending it to you in this letter. Once there was a time when everyone was intertwined with my magnificent threads spun of fire and thunder, inlayed with a multitude of stories, abounding with love, beauty, romance, lust, betrayal, and power. I flew at terrifying speeds, traversing distances unimaginable. On one such journey, carrying 32,000 families, I had to make an emergency landing on water due to turbulent weather. According to the plan, I was divided into multiple parts, each part forming into a separate raft. The families drifted in the ocean for uncounted years. Beset with melancholy and desire, they fed on secrets divulged by the deepest layers of the ocean. Returning to land the survivors began trading their secrets to buy time. Until one such day, there were no secrets anymore, and also no more time...]

In a description of the piece, the artist notes "The work is inspired in part by the feelings of displacement, at personal and collective levels, that have arisen from the increasing anti-Islamic sentiment in today's world." It is this encounter that, in a simple manner, offers a chance encounter with the viewer. This form of participation represents then a tacit exchange whereby the sentiment as expressed by Abbas' remark becomes potentially that which is experienced by the viewer.

Alternatively, contemporary artistic practices have also been informed by a broader heritage of Islamic visual culture. This broader heritage refers to the material culture of a place; a material culture that is designed and made to serve a function within the everyday. This is true of the work of Camille Zakharia, a Lebanese artist living in Bahrain, the Moroccan artist Hasan Hajjaj, Sevan Bicakci from Istanbul. Sevan Bicakci presents a collection of five precious rings in which he has created the monuments of Istanbul in miniature. Using engraving, calligraphy and inlays of precious gems, he captures the Suleymaniye Mosque, the domed mosque of Ayasofya, the sea wells of Topkapi Palace and Kosk as an ode to the garden pavilions of Ottoman palaces. Hassan Hajjaj living between Morocco and London created an imaginary store for the Jameel Prize. Titled Le Salon, the store is filled with a contemporary eclectic mix of Western and Islamic objects commercial design. A sign of globalization on the one hand and yet, on

6 The illustrated manuscripts of Hamzanama commissioned by Akbar belong in the collections of both the V&A and the British Museum

the other, the store is reminiscent of a souk in which an ever-enlarging global circuit operates at the local level. Here a place meeting, talking, sipping coffee occurs on equal footing, a place of exchange around and through which the old and new from all cultures jostle together appearing and reappearing as recycled objects, branded and rebranded with the logos of the West and texts written in the calligraphic styles of the local. Not only does the work suggest the fluidity of this exchange but, more importantly, that the local remains the constant in which recognition of the textual remains the site of exchange and cultural specificity.

Alternatively, Zakharia work elaborates a purely formal engagement with Islamic designs. Through the use of photo-based collage, his series Markings recalls Islamic mosaic tiles or textiles, such work as Division Lines, also makes use of street markings. Yet, even more so, the significance of these works rest with their engagement with the spaces of the everyday, the logic of its geometry, an environment in which we belong and live. In recent years, Susan Hefuna's work has exemplified this approach. Living and working in Cairo and Dusseldorf has developed a body of drawings and sculpture that reference the Mashrabiyah or latticed windows or screens used in Arab architecture. Designed as a form for separating the inside from the outside. While helping cool the inside spaces from the heat of the outside, they nevertheless allowed for the light to filter in. At the same time, they served the purpose of distinguishing the private from that of the public spaces, enabling a person to be able to see out onto the open square or street from the shadow cast over the interior.

Displayed as a freestanding piece, Hefuna shifts the relationship of viewing. Seen on both sides, the idea of inside/outside is transformed to the ability to see on either and both sides in which the screen is seen as a border or threshold that divides the space. At the same time, the form and modeling of each sculptural piece is enhanced by the use of light with which to create its reflection on the supporting floor or stand. This not only captures the principles of design and geometry of the form but seen in this way suggests a correspondence with forms of Western abstraction. The emphasis on this level of abstraction increases the potential breadth of its reception, loosening the originating reference to the Mashrabiyah. This too is enhanced by the addition of inscriptions that, while again referencing the tradition of inscribing short religious texts on the window, is now inscribed with English or Arabic words that provide a point of entry into the world and therefore communicate with the world of the viewer from near and far.

Such art practices are 'informed' by Islamic or Arabic heritages, discovering linkages back into cultural and visual histories. And yet, they are not seeking to reify the past or even follow the achievements of modernism in the Arab or Islamic world. Contrary to this, contemporary practices within the Arab and the Islamic world seek to embrace the contemporary in its plurality as much as the specificity of its instance. Such endeavors characterize in an essential manner the spirit of the contemporary insofar as breaking down the boundaries of containment and definition. Tacitly the notion of difference is negotiated through aesthetic forms, enabling both points of commonality and recognition of distinction. In short, the transformation as much as the continuities of art practices have been extraordinary not only as regards aesthetic traditions but, in relation to their place and function within their immediate society. This has in turn led to an infrastructure of museums, collections, galleries and critics that have been seeking to foster, exhibit and promote local work. But, we should not limit this point only to the local or immediate precisely because the achievement here is to be found in the intrinsic multiplicity of its character and reading. This should be seen both in terms of the artist's place of abode and practice as well as the exhibiting and reading of the work itself. There is a mobility about these practices allowing for a reading in more than one place or audience. In some case this is the character of the work, not only at a formal level, but equally, in terms of its subject.

The work belongs to a tradition of aesthetic practices that has emerged across the Islamic, especially Arab world over the past one hundred years and more. In this regard, it bears an important correlation and contiguous relation to Western aesthetic movements and forms and yet, remains distinctive in its relation to a perceived inheritance of Islamic culture. Against the prevalent idea that globalization is the structural key to understanding contemporary culture, this intertwining of references within a movement towards relative autonomy is important to register. Moreover, in this regard, the work offers an openness of reading that is a critical marker of the international. Seen from this perspective, their work is part of a broader international context of contemporary art that is not defined nor limited by tradition, medium or country.

In such terms, it should not come as a surprise to find that the Jameel prize attracted such a large number of artists whose work does not belong to the school of calligraphy, but rather, draw upon Islamic culture. Hence, the work assumes an important presence within the framework of the V&A and contemporary art more generally. For one, the V&A have a substantial collection representing the history of Islamic visual culture. This is manifest through all forms of material support including paper, ceramics, textiles, architecture and manifesta-

tions of ornamentation and design. These become a source of reference from which those artists draw, a practice that references, departs from and returns to differently certain visual traditions within the Islamic world today. But insofar as it moves in the method and manner of its elaboration, it belongs as much to the broader contemporary and international art world of exchange. Unlike that of an institutionalized religious orthodoxy or State-directed nationalism, this space aspires to the freedom of the non-aligned, a fragile non-ideological space in which the visual art as with the other arts aspires to foster and maintain.

The Jameel prize was awarded to Afruz Amighi whose artwork 1001 Pages ostensibly explores the relation between image and its shadow. The image is composed of an intricate patterning of ornamental and representational motifs cut out of a large plastic sheet by the use of a stencil burner. At first glance the intricacy of form creates an exquisite decorative patterning, recalling Islamic motifs seen as instanced repeatedly throughout their material culture. However, the full effect if not realization of the piece, was only achieved in the shadow caste by virtue of a light projected by an overhead projector onto the wall through the sheet. Hence while the viewer was drawn to look at the immediate precision required to cut the intricacy of form, the shadow created a unified form of this design. A coalescence between light and shadow, the work creates an extraordinary unity between the material and immaterial, between the mundane plastic and purity of reflection.

While the actual physical distance between the plastic sheet and gallery wall enabled the shadow to be reflected and seen at a distance, this space could also be entered. It becomes a site of negotiation between the two. And yet, in this position the sheet and wall could not be viewed at the same time but rather it was only through the sheet that one could see the two as they overlapped. In effect, the significance of the spacing was emblematic of the distance between the two realms of the material and everyday and the sacred or sublime. And while we may view the capacity of the mundane sheets to be transformed into this arena of contemplation, the distance remains critical to a further reading and understanding of the work. This may be seen in two ways that are on the one hand personal and the other social. The first is that Amighi is Iranian born but lives and works in New York. In an interview, Amighi speaks of how:

Conceptually, I think this piece is also about the act of removing the material, which in turn does reflect my absence, for I am taking away material to create these images. These are the images that form a landscape in which I haven't necessarily lived in. I've read about the landscape and maybe felt its outer edges. It is a conceived memory that I'm outside of, and that's why I'm fond of the shadows. These experiences are something I haven't endured in the flesh, and the shadows give me a way of expressing this knowledge and range of emotions in a way that does not feel absolutely definitive, for the shadows themselves are intangible. [7]

The shadow of the work shifts, multiplies in its reading, signifying a lack of substance, an absence, separated from the sheet, that is dislocated from its place of origin. There is a solitude here, a physical projection that castes a shadow, a momentary form that is insubstantial, elusive. The second dimension is that the plastic sheets are of the kind used for refugee shelters. And, while this point of reference is not inherently obvious but rather, noted by the artist in the accompanying title label, the allusion is significant. This reference to the refugee tent suddenly takes on a resonant meaning. It becomes a symbol of displacement from one's abode, an outside and yet, transformed into a screen it becomes too the fabric of history, multiple histories that is around the experience of detachment and the projection of a sacred space and an imagining that belongs to the Islamic world.

Unlike Amighi, the large-scale drawings and monumental prints created by Seher Shah take the Islamic decorative principles of composition and style as a point of departure and return. Born in Pakistan, Shah lives and works principally in North America enabling her to freely explore and extend differing traditions and references. Animating her work on paper through a multicity of lines that create vast roaming landscapes, her work intertwines miniature painting, calligraphic traditions and Islamic geometric designs with the drawing styles of North American minimalism of the Sixties. Shah coined the term Jihad Pop to characterize her work by referencing their originating concept whereby jihad refers to the inner struggle to resolve contradictions, and pop to the popular as distinct from the ethos of consumerism. The artist's landscapes are interlaced with recurrent motifs and icons. In particular, she often references the essential form of the black square and cross, symbolizing two different religious icons appear as contiguous with one another rather than in opposition. The image of the black square symbolizes Mecca and alternately the image of the cube exemplified by the work of the great Russian artist Kasimir Malevich and aesthetic move-

7 Alexander Barakat, An Interview with Afruz Amighi. See http://www.muraqqa.com/interview.html. HYPERLINK "http://www.muraqqa.com/interview.html" (21 July, 2009)

ment of Suprematism in the immediate years leading up to the Russian Revolution in 1917. Together they appear as part of a fictive landscape of public and private spaces, of social engagement and private reflection.

These works lead us in many directions of which, at least one pertains to the subject of globalization. And regardless of whether we call them post-colonial, transnational, diasporic and international, they share two important traits, first their acknowledgement of a rich and diverse Islamic visual culture and secondly, of a movement within the work that is driven by both a personal and social engagement with the subject of their practice. To this degree there is a particularity to their practice, as if negotiating this threshold between these two dimensions, a re-reading of each in the light of the other as distinct from subsuming one into the other or creating a fictive separation.

It is to the credit of such initiatives as the Jameel Prize that more such artists are being recognized and supported and that, as a result, institutions have begun to embrace contemporary practices that draw upon the richness of Islamic visual culture. [8] Not only does this challenge the ideologues of separation but, provides powerful evidence and the grounds for further elaboration as to the interplay and relations with other forms of contemporary art as much the increasing strength of contemporary practices developing in the Islamic world.

Afruz Amighi, winner of the Jameel Prize 2009
Image courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum

8 This is also true of the Sharjah Biennale alongside that of certain commercial art galleries in the Middle East and the Gulf as well as magazines as mentioned in Fn.4.

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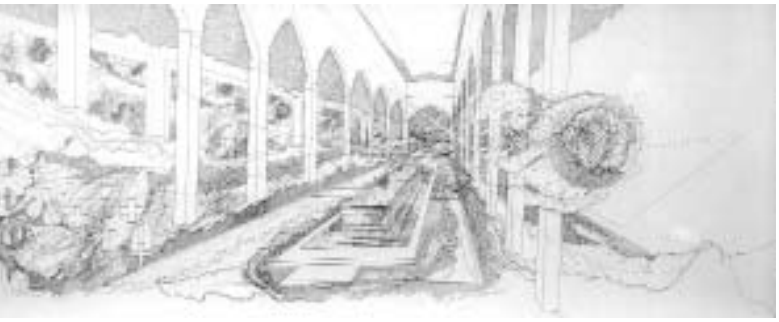

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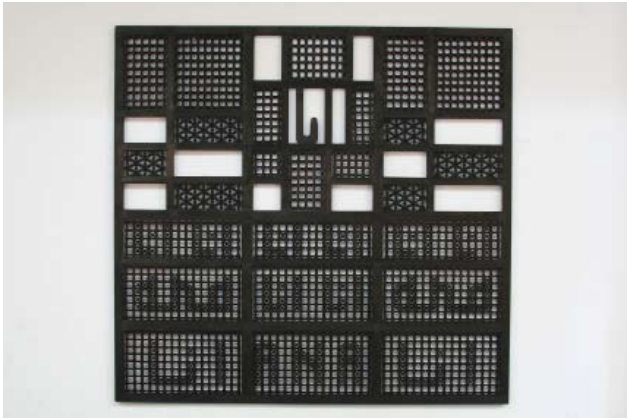

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1 Division Lines (2004-06) © Camille Zakharia

2 Jihad Pop Progression 4 - Interior Courtyard 1 (2006), Seher Shah
Courtesy of the artist and Bose Pacia Gallery, New York

3 Ana (2007), Susan Hefuna
Courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum

4 Ya Ali Madad 1 (2008) © Khosrow Hassanzadeh

5 Please do not step: Loss of a Magnificent Story (2009) © Hamra Abbas
Photo: V&A images

6 Badaneh (Body) (2004) © Reza Abedini