

“Buildings that Fill my Eye”

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF YEMEN

13th July – 23rd September 2017

THE
BRUNEI
GALLERY

SOAS University of London



This photographic exhibition and the accompanying events will explore the astonishing variety of building styles and traditions that have evolved over millennia in a region of diverse terrains, extreme climates and distinctive local histories. Generations of highly skilled masons, carpenters and craftspeople have deftly employed indigenous technologies and the materials-to-hand to create urban architectural assemblages, gardens and rural landscapes that dialogue harmoniously with the contours and conditions of southern Arabia. In turn, the place-making practices of Yemen's builders have played a critical role in fostering tight-knit communities with a strong sense of pride and cultural identity.

Conflict and resistance, too, have contributed to the history of Yemeni design, town planning, and civil engineering. Yemen's built environment is characterised by sturdy forts and fortifications; towering houses with windowless ground storeys and heavy timber doors; steeply-terraced mountainsides for cultivation; deep

lime-plastered water cisterns, and vast networks of stone-paved pathways connecting strategically-perched mountaintop villages. These features have aroused the aesthetic sensibilities of visitors for centuries, but they also speak of a requisite need for domination, defensibility, and self-sufficiency during times of attack or siege.

Tragically, a sharp escalation in violence in the country since 2015 has culminated in a hydra-headed conflict, involving international adversaries. There have been thousands of civilian fatalities and millions more have been displaced and are on the brink of starvation. The region's rich cultural heritage, too, has been a casualty of the conflict. The aim of this exhibition is to remind the world of Yemen's splendid material culture and the need for international collaboration to protect it and its people from the ravages of war and destruction.

Curated by Trevor H.J. Marchand, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, SOAS. Sponsored by: the **MBI Al Jaber Foundation** with additional support from **Ginkgo Library** and the **British-Yemeni Society**.

There is a 240-page illustrated catalogue accompanying the exhibition: *Architectural Heritage of Yemen: 'Buildings That Fill My Eye'*, Edited by Trevor H.J. Marchand. Published by Ginkgo Library, June 2017. Price £35. For every copy sold, £5 will be donated to the UNHCR Yemen Emergency Appeal.

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OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday 10.30 – 17.00 (Thurs late night opening until 20.00)
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