

NOUR FESTIVAL 2013 announces its most ambitious programme ever

Contemporary art, design, film, music and literature from the Middle East and North Africa

- *Nour Festival of Arts runs from 1 October – 30 November 2013 at more than 20 venues across Kensington and Chelsea.*
- *Major highlights include the **Ferozkoh** exhibition in partnership with Doha's **Museum of Islamic Art** at Leighton House Museum as part of Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture; **Natacha Atlas** at the Royal Albert Hall; animation by calligraphic artist **Soraya Syed** with soundtrack by **Nitin Sawhney** and interpretive dance performance by **Salah El Brogy** at Leighton House Museum; the **exploration of science fiction narratives between East and West** at the Science Museum's Dana Centre; **The Perfumed Garden of Sexual Delights**, exploring taboos and changing sexual mores across the Middle East at the Mosaic Rooms; **Hall of Heaven**, five contemporary female Iranian artists at Kensington and Chelsea College; and a chance to cook with **Ottolenghi Ltd's Head Chef Sami Tamimi**.*
- *Venues include: The V&A, Science Museum, Ismaili Centre, The Mosaic Rooms and the Tabernacle, while new partners in 2013 include the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Chelsea Theatre, and the Royal Albert Hall.*
- *For more information, please visit our website, which will be live from Monday 2 September at: www.nourfestival.co.uk*
- *For images and more information, and an **Arabic version of the press release**, please visit our media centre, which will be live from 23 August at: <http://mediacentre.kallaway.co.uk/Nour-Festival-2013-press-release.htm>*

PRESS LAUNCH: Tuesday, 1st October, 7.00pm Chelsea Old Town Hall. RSVP by 21 September to RBKC@kallaway.com

Nour Festival of Arts is rapidly becoming one of Europe's most significant annual showcases of contemporary arts and culture from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), taking place every October and November at venues across the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

A highlight in 2013 is the partnership with the **Museum of Islamic Art [MIA], Doha** which brings to London the remarkable exhibition *Ferozkoh: Tradition and Continuity*

in Afghan Art. Ferozkoh pairs together priceless historical objects from MIA's collection with modern-day interpretations by craftspeople from Afghanistan, created in response to, and in conversation with, the historical objects. *Ferozkoh* – which is also part of Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture – is MIA's first ever touring exhibition and will be on display at Leighton House Museum, the very embodiment of the meeting between East and West.

Nour, which means light or illumination in many Middle Eastern languages, challenges preconceptions, sparks debate and provides insight into culture from across the MENA region. The Festival welcomes established artists and emerging talent to some of the foremost cultural institutions in the UK, creating a diverse programme that encompasses current affairs, cuisine, contemporary visual arts, film, music, poetry and performance

Arabic is the second spoken language of Kensington and Chelsea, where the Council launched the Nour Festival at its Leighton House Museum in 2010. In just three years the Festival has grown to encompass more than twenty venues across the borough, while the programme reflects the dramatic changes taking place across the MENA region. Nour is a byword for debate, cultural exchange and international artistic excellence.

2013 Festival

The 2013 Festival sees the continued expansion of the Nour programme and the range of organisations involved, while continuing to offer the unexpected and thought-provoking. Foremost a celebration of artistic and cultural excellence, Nour does not shy away from the social and political challenges in the region: for example, photographer **Sandro Vannini** on the distinct challenges in protecting Egypt's antiquities, and a panel discussion chaired by author **David McDowell** on issues facing Kurds and the question of Kurdish nationalism.

Cllr. Timothy Coleridge, Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Transport and Arts, said:

"We created the Nour Festival in 2010 in the belief that everyone in the Royal Borough should have the opportunity to experience world-class arts and culture. The significant growth of the festival highlights a wider audience across London and

beyond, interested in exploring an often unseen side of the Middle East and North Africa – its contemporary culture and artistic expression.

“Nour inevitably challenges preconceptions and confounds expectations. This year’s festival is no different. Audiences can join us on a journey through the region, enjoy a variety of artistic forms, encounter unexpected voices, and engage with issues as diverse as identity, personal health or individual rights.

“Looking ahead to 2014 and beyond, we believe the Nour Festival will continue to thrive and prosper, with the introduction of even more partners – local, national and international alike. Global interest in Nour continues to grow, as does the appreciation of its large and varied audiences.”

Graham Sheffield, Director of Arts for the British Council and Chair of the Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture Steering Committee, said:

“Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture celebrates the long-standing relationship between the two countries and aims to forge new partnerships in the arts, education, sport and science.

“We are so pleased to be partnering with the Nour Festival to bring the Ferozkoh exhibition to the UK. The exhibition is a highlight of the programmes for both the Nour Festival and Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture. I am sure this stunning exhibition will cultivate mutual recognition, understanding and appreciation of Qatari and British cultures.”

Nour Festival 2013: Programme highlights

- ***Ferozkoh: Tradition and Continuity in Afghan Art***, a major exhibition at Leighton House Museum in partnership with Doha’s **Museum of Islamic Art [MIA]** as part of Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture. The show pairs together priceless historical objects from MIA’s collection with modern day interpretations by craftspeople from Afghanistan. (14 Nov – 24 Feb)
- Internationally-renowned artist **Natacha Atlas** in concert at the **Royal Albert Hall** to showcase her globally recognised meld of Eastern and Western Musics (12 Oct)

- A new animation commission from calligraphic artist **Soraya Syed** with an original soundtrack by **Nitin Sawhney** (5-31 Oct) and interpretive dance by Salah El Brogy (formerly of Akram Khan Dance Company) (20 Oct only) both at Leighton House Museum
- **London Algerian Ballet** performing *A Journey to Algeria*, a unique dance show uncovering the rich cultural heritage and history of Algeria marrying vintage traditional dances with vibrant contemporary performances. The Tabernacle (8 Nov)
- Panel discussion on the taboos and changing sexual mores in the Arab World at the Mosaic Rooms entitled ***Does the Arab Spring need a Summer of Love?*** Sex is entwined in politics and economics, religion and tradition, gender and generations, making it a powerful lens to examine the Arab region's complex landscape. (6 Nov)
- A solo exhibition of paintings and drawings by the Syrian Kurdish artist **Lawand** at the Mosaic Rooms exploring exile, displacement and the influence of poetry. (4 October – 29 Nov)
- An evening with **Sami Tamimi**: Dishes from Jerusalem. A unique event showcasing a selection of the finest dishes from Jerusalem with the **Head Chef of Ottolenghi** restaurant. Books for Cooks (7 Nov).
- A discussion to explore the transition of science fiction narratives between East and West, where luminary speakers with a diverse range of perspectives will ask whether a revival of **Arab Science Fiction** is of international importance. At **Science Museum's** Dana Centre (2 Oct)
- *Half of Heaven*, an exhibition by five contemporary female Iranian artists at Kensington and Chelsea College, which showcase the ways in which artists have found varying strategies to circumvent censorship and critique Iran's theocratic dictatorship. (10 – 24 Oct)
- **Borderless beats featuring 47 SOUL**, a newly formed Palestinian and Jordanian band laying down Arabic Reggae, Hip Hop, and Mijwez solos overtop of Debka, Rai, and Afrobeat grooves at The Floyover Portobello (19 Oct).
- **Crossways / Al Multaq**, dialogue and exchange by artists and musicians with roots from different Arab regions at Leighton House Museum (5 Nov)

END

Nour Festival of Arts

Public information

Nour Festival of Arts programme and booking info: www.nourfestival.co.uk

Twitter: [@RBKCCulture](https://twitter.com/RBKCCulture) / [@NourFestival](https://twitter.com/NourFestival) / [#NourFestival](https://twitter.com/NourFestival)

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About the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Culture Service:

Arts and culture are part of the core script for The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The Council believes that excellence in culture can be transformative in the widest sense and all those who live, work in or visit the Borough should have access to world class, often complex, arts and culture. The Royal Borough is home to a vibrant community of creative people: from large cultural institutions to independent producers, performers, artists and creative businesses. Through its Cultural Service and wider activity, the Council is building on the unique identity of the borough to drive major creative ventures, fresh ideas, and creative exchanges, nurture talent, and promote creative networks to the benefit all who visit, live or work in the borough.

Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture

Qatar UK 2013 is a year-long cultural exchange programme between the United Kingdom and the State of Qatar, aiming to strengthen bilateral relations by creating lasting partnerships between institutions and individuals. Mutual recognition,

understanding and appreciation of Qatari and British cultures are cultivated through over 60 entertaining and educational events throughout the year in both nations. Qatar UK 2013 is coordinated by the British Council and Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) with the support of Platinum Sponsors Qatargas, Shell and Vodafone.

For more information visit us at www.qataruk2013.com

Find us on Facebook [facebook.com/QatarUK2013](https://www.facebook.com/QatarUK2013)

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Museum of Islamic Art

An iconic feature of the Doha skyline, the Museum of Islamic Art represents the full scope of Islamic art from three continents over 1,400 years. The Museum was designed by noted architect I.M. Pei, who was inspired by elements of classic Islamic architecture. Connected to the Museum is MIA Park where you can participate in activities, rent bicycles and paddleboats, or just gaze at the Doha skyline.

متحف الفن الإسلامي

يمثل متحف الفن الإسلامي الذي يعتبر معلماً رائعاً من معالم أفق الدوحة، نطاقاً كاملاً من الفن الإسلامي يغطي ثلاث قارات على مدى 1400 عام من الزمن. صمم بناء المتحف المعماري الشهير إي. إم. بي الذي استلهم فكرته من عناصر العمارة الإسلامية الكلاسيكية. تحيط بالمتحف حديقة واسعة زاخرة بالأنشطة كاستئجار الدراجات والقوارب، كما يمكن للزائر الاكتفاء بتأمل أفق الدوحة الجميل.