

The star of Qatar shines on

The Third Doha Cultural festival

Doha-Mounir El-Fishawy

One of the world's most important cultural festivals was held in Doha this month under the auspices of the National Council for Culture in Qatar. Guests were treated to a variety of activities including operas, poetry readings, art exhibitions and plays. Activities were focused on the Doha-Sheraton hotel's Salwa, Dafnah, Majlis, Bida'a, Dukhan and Maha halls. Bida'a Park was the venue for the traditions of the desert extravaganza with craft displays and folkloric shows which spilled over into Sahim bin Hamad Square in the city centre. Performances in the open air theatre next to the Ritz Carlton Hotel entertained visitors. It was also a festival of fireworks which lit up the night sky and competed with the colourful laser lighting in the streets. Doha's buildings were lit up, clothed in a beautiful dress like a bride on her wedding day. ➤



The desert life.

تراث البادية.



Tatoeing.

الوشم.



Young faces.

فتاتان بالزي الشعبي.

The opening ceremony

The festival was opened by the Amir Hamad bin Khalifah al-Thani, the Amir of Qatar. There was standing room only in Dafnah hall in the Sheraton packed to capacity with officials, media and the public. The opera "The Tent of Honour" was a poetic narration of the history of Qatar, past and present with a look forward to the future. The set combined the land and the sea, the tent and the oil fields and diving for pearls, narrated with the help of old documentary films. The dramatic scenes went gradually from the time of hardship to the time of acquired wealth. The opera, which was also screened on local television and shown on satellite channels, was well received.

Exhibitions

Exhibitions were held in conjunction with the festival (9th - 20th of March 2004), including "The Heritage of the Desert" which featured traditional dances and songs, such as al-Rayyan, al-A'ialah, al-Samiry, samara, women's night, dialogue, local poetry, together with a display of Bedouin tools, such as daggers, swords and rifles, women's jewellery and tools for making fabrics and carpets. The "Traditional Village" presented a male-dance team, crafts and local folkloric games, such as al-Laqqah, Taq-Taq, jumping the rope, fighting etc. The "Ivory and Carpets" exhibition displayed some Islamic Art Museum treasures, among them an ivory piece with Bismallah (In the Name of God) carved on it. It revealed Fatimi influences and was



Shopping mall in Dawha.

احد مراكز التسويق بالدوحة.

made by Christian hands. There was also a display of silk fabrics and huge curtains. The "Forum of Visual Arts" exhibited the work of artists from the Gulf region, including Qatar, UAE, Iran, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait as well as Egypt, Japan, and Italy. There was also a chance to see rare stamps at "The Second International Philatelic Exhibition" which displayed collections of stamps franked on the first day, many from the nineteenth century. There was an auction, and the first Egyptian stamp sold was valued at \$1500. The top exhibition was organised by "The Photographic Society" with international participation, a variety of exhibits and techniques, a display of high quality photos from the last 12 years, workshops

and lectures about the development of cameras from manual to digital.

The Meeting of Cultures

"The Meeting of Cultures" was an event with many activities: a film about the development of Qatar and different aspects of life in the country. There were groups of folk dancers and music from different continents: Asia, Africa and Europe with a display of fire works and lasers.

Poetry readings

Much of the festival was devoted to poetry readings, with poets, such as Adonis and Dr. Mania Said al-Autaibah. The night on which Adonis read his poetry was called "A ➤



Fireworks.

ألعاب نارية.

Distinguished Night for Adonis and Naseer Shama" It did the publicity proud and the audience loved Adonis recital of his best works to the guitar accompaniment of Naseer Shama. The music echoed the words of the poems. Two Egyptian girls, Mai Abdul-Qader and Riham Abdul-Karim also sang. The former minister, Dr. al-Autaibah combined poetry and politics in his poetry, a reminder of his anthology "Petroleum Poems". There were other nights for poets from across the Gulf region who flew into the world of poetry.

Conferences

One of the most important conferences was "Democratic Changes in Qatar" addressed by the foreign office minister, Shaikh Jassim bin Jabur al-Thani. There was also a lecture by Dr. Saad al-Din Ibrahim: "Democracy cannot to be forced on us from outside". Other conferences included "Creativity of Arab Women", with the participation of Gulf women writers, from Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and "Improving the Curriculum" and honouring the late Aminah Mahmmod al-

Jidah (1913-2000) who worked in female education in Qatar. Specialised lectures on "The Visual Culture" were also delivered. There were many press conferences for the poets and artists taking part in the festival, such as the comedian Adil Imam, Adonis, Marcel Khalifah, Majdah al-Rumi, Dr. al-Autaibah and others.

Folkloric shows

On the open air stages in Bida'a Park, city Centre and the Post Office, audiences enjoyed shows by groups from different countries, such as: Togo, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Cuba, Azerbaijan, Nepal, China, Yemen, Russia and Serbia, as well as Qatar and the Alexandria group.

Plays

One of the shows that gained popularity was "Body guard" by the comedian Adil Imam. performed for three nights to appreciative audiences. The Qatari play "Prince of Shares" was also successful. The organisers also catered for the children

with two plays "Majud and the Seven Dwarfs" and "The Magic Lamp". Each dwarf represented an exaggerated trait and the educational and entertaining play aimed at treating that defect. "The Magic Lamp" warned children about the negative affects of new technology, such as computers and satellites, stressing that these developments were not a substitute for dreams. The "Rainbow 2" competition fostered the spirit of competition amongst the children and pushed them to show their creativity. A group from Latvia played some magic tricks, blew soap bubbles and introduced games from Walt Disney characters who entertained the audience - even the adults. Fourteen characters displayed on a giant screen, 100 by 10 metres told legendary tales about ethics, education and entertainment. The exhibition closed with a performance by about five thousand young people and an evening fire works display. The count down for next year's festival has already started, with hotels waiting for all their rooms to be booked once again. ■