



  
 سَفَارَةُ الْمَمْلَكَةِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ السُّعُودِيَّةِ  
 لدى الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية  
 EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA  
 TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

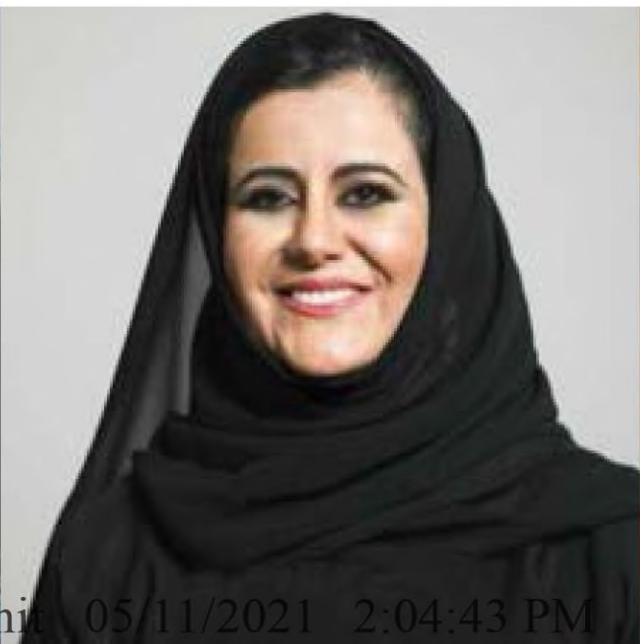
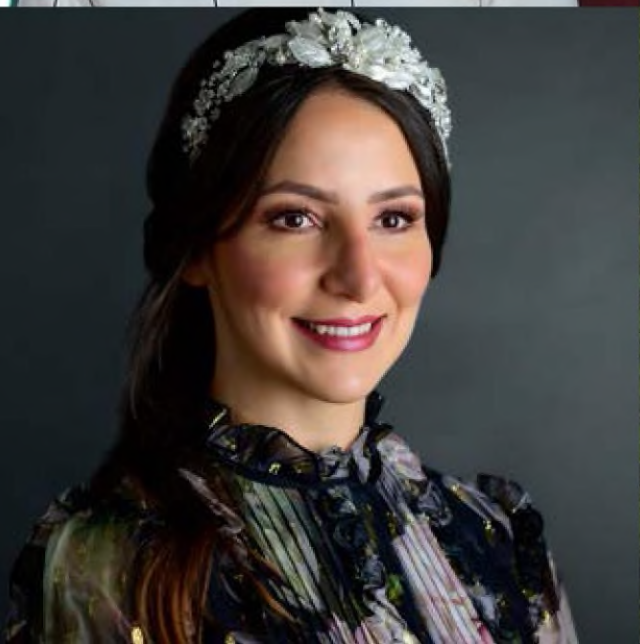
# #ChooseToChallenge

#IWD21 MARCH 2021

## International Women's Day

Inspiration and Advice from Saudi Women  
Entrepreneurs, Makers & Artists

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# IWD 2021 Theme.

## #ChooseToChallenge\*

A challenged world is an alert world.

Individually, we're all responsible for our own thoughts and actions  
- all day, every day.

**We can choose** to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality.  
**We can choose** to seek out and celebrate women's achievements.

Collectively, we can all help create an inclusive world.

From challenge comes change, so let's all **choose to challenge**.

\* Please note this theme was generated by the independent campaign group IWD and not by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United States of America



International  
Women's Day

#IDW21



# The Challengers.



<b>Culture</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>Sports</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Science &amp; Finance</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Arts</b>	<b>42</b>
Hessah Alajaji	06	Adwa Al Arifi	19	Hadeel Ayoub	28	Dr. Ahlam Alshedoukhy	43
Khulood Olaqi	08	Dania Akeel	21	Khlood Aldukheil	30	Basma Al Sulaiman	45
Dr. Maha Al-Senan	10	Rasha AlKhamis	23	Dr. Mona S. Almunajjed	32	Maha Malluh	47
Nazek Alkhulaifi & Sara Alameel	12	Reema Juffali	25	Nabila M Al-Tunisi	34	Noura Alshaya	49
Sawsan Albahiti	14			Prof. Selwa Al-Hazaa	36	Samah H. Kamil	51
Shahad Alazzaz	16			Summer Nasief	38		
				Dr. Yasmin Altwaijri	40		



# Culture

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# Hessah Alajaji

**CEO & Founder Ma'alim Tour Agency**

Hessah Alajaji began her journey into culture, travel and art in 2016. She grew up in a family that enjoys exploring the world, so her love for travel stems from a childhood filled with adventure and discovering new places. This passion continued with her as an adult and today she describes herself as a 'local advisor, avid traveler and curious explorer'.

Prior to starting her journeys around KSA, Hessah practiced her love for discovery while she pursued university studies in the USA. Hail was her first trip in Saudi, but Umluj remains the place that left the biggest impression on her. In 2019, Hessah founded Ma'alim, a tour agency that merges travel and culture and customizes trips for people looking to learn about culture in the Kingdom. Ma'alim emphasizes that experiences and itineraries are designed to ensure visitors are fully immersed in the places they visit.

Through her journeys expressed on social media, Hessah has become a reference point for people wanting to visit Saudi Arabia and authentically experience its beautiful culture.

"If you want to really know a place, get to know its people! Mingle, mingle, mingle and, most importantly, have genuine conversations. There is something to learn from every single person you meet, so don't miss those opportunities just because someone seems different from you. As a matter of fact, those who are most different from you can teach you the most valuable lessons. Always remember that."



Top right: Hessah in Hegra; and bottom right: roadside fruit seller, Uqdah Vally, Hail

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### Challenge

When I first began my journey, one of the biggest challenges was lack of resources; be it content, visuals or contacts. Saudi Arabia is known for its many wonderful attributes, but at the time, it was still making its way to becoming a tourist destination. Resources were not readily available for individuals, such as myself, that enabled us to thoroughly explore the Kingdom.

### Resolution

I refused to let this lack of resources deter me from exploring. I used to call literally everyone – guides, restaurants, businesses, you name it, and I would just talk with them! Here, I discovered the power of conversation and curiosity. Remember, challenges are opportunities to grow and unlock untapped potential.

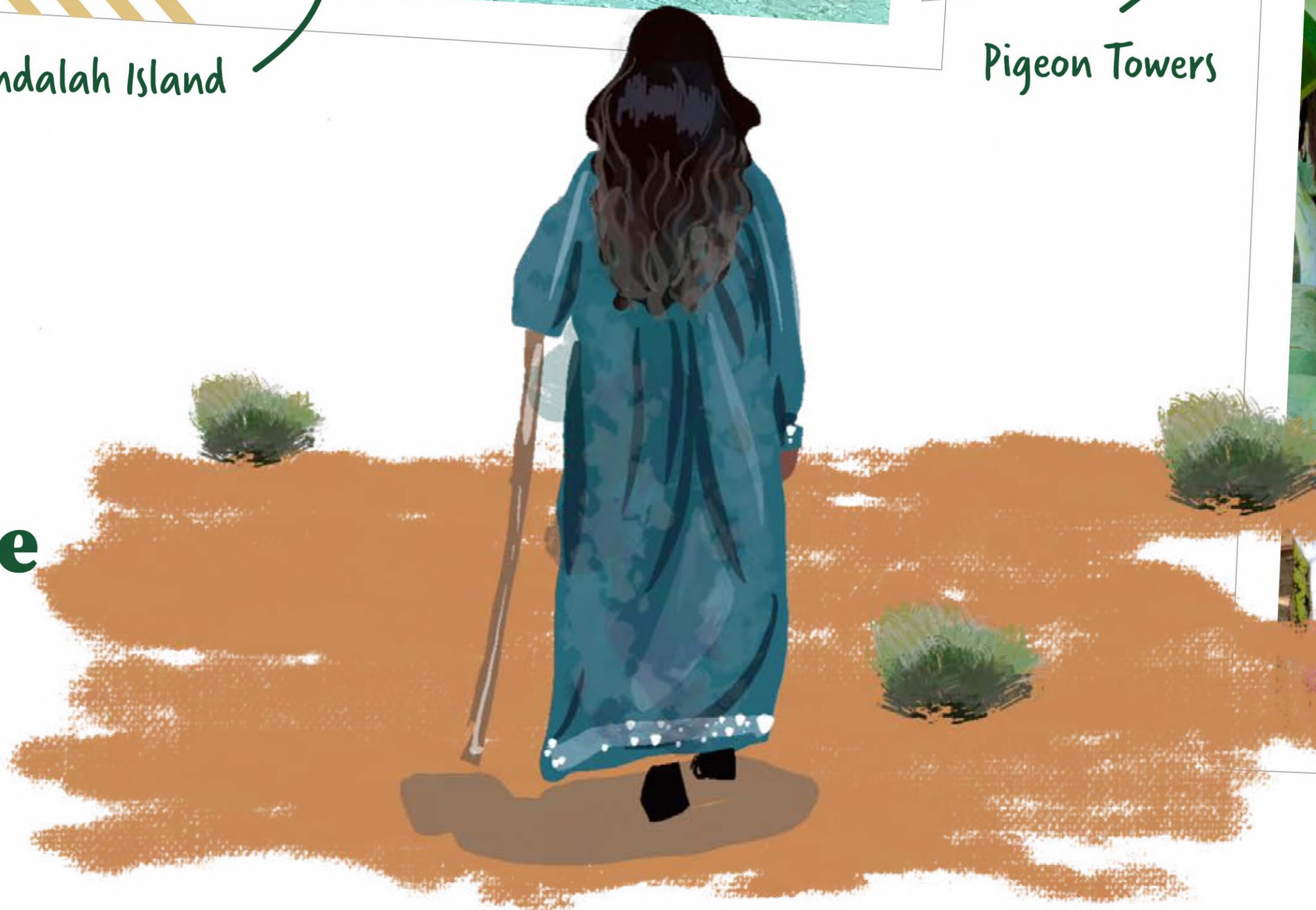
**“I seek to encourage everyone to explore Saudi Arabia and see its rich and diverse culture through its people.”**



Sindalah Island



Pigeon Towers



Images of Saudi, clockwise from top left: Sindalah Island, NEOM, Tabuk; Pigeon Towers in Dilam, Riyadh; banana farmer in Baish, Jazan



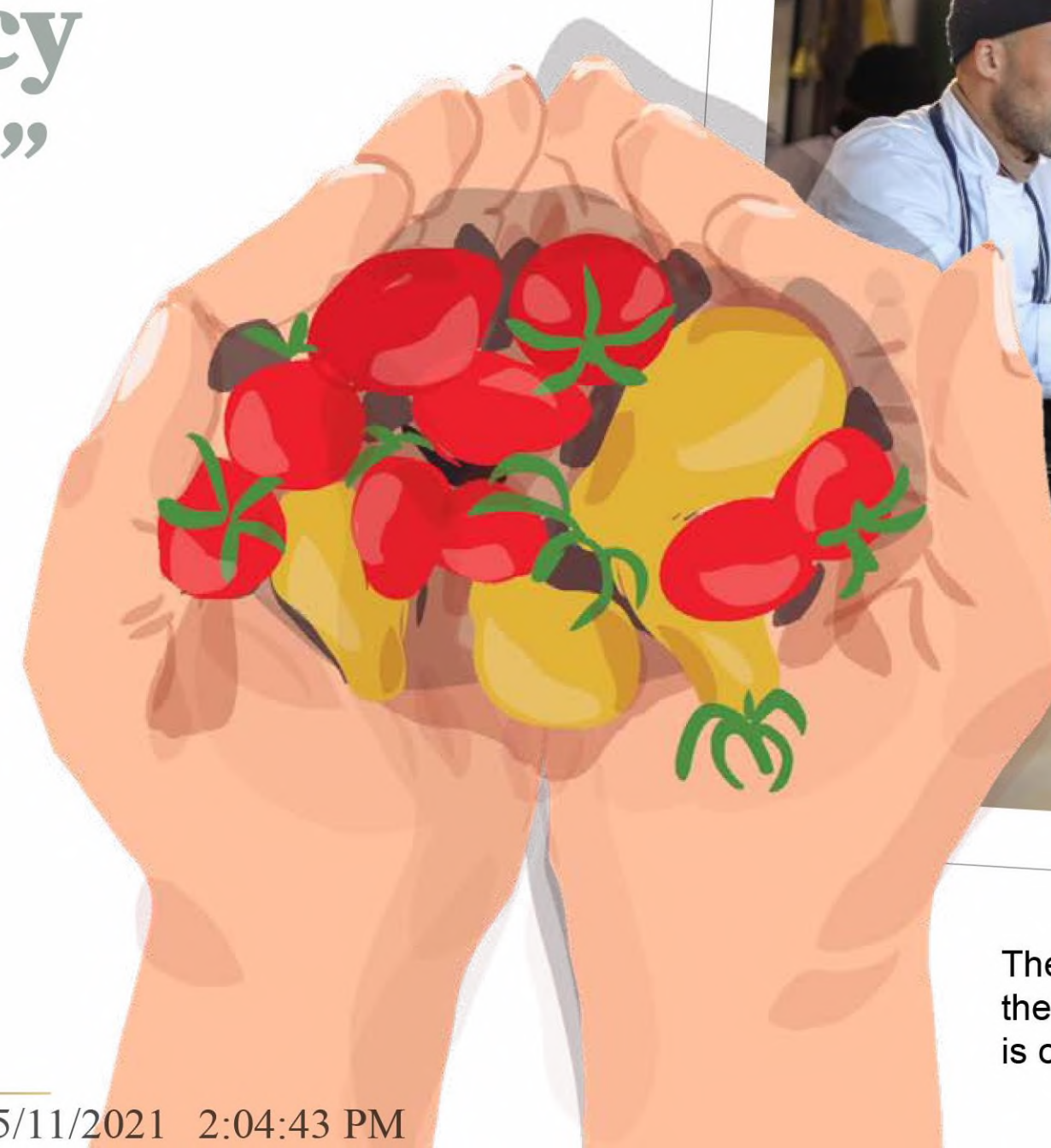
Khulood Olaqi, founder of Oishii Sushi, was born in Jeddah and raised in Riyadh. She holds a bachelor's degree from King Saud University, where she majored in health education and applied medical sciences.

She is passionate about cooking and food science. She holds several short course certifications from various prestigious culinary institutions including Le Cordon Bleu, Ashburton Cookery School, and Whitepepper Chef Academy and Cookery.

My favorite quote is  
**“Without commitment you’ll never start, but more importantly without consistency you’ll never finish.”**

# Khulood Olaqi

*Chef & Founder of  
Oishii Sushi*



From top right: Oishii Sushi platter; and Kholoud in London's Borough Market

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### Challenge

The greatest challenge I faced was during my journey of opening my first restaurant. I quickly realized that my skills as a chef were merely one factor of a successful bricks and mortar offering. As a restaurateur, you must also have an understanding of the entirety of the operation, from hiring to training to management. Without experience in all of these roles, you'll find it difficult to thrive in that industry.

### Resolution

At the start, I relied on outsourcing the services I needed outside the kitchen. But I felt strongly that I needed to learn everything about the restaurant industry outside of the kitchen if I wanted my restaurant to succeed and grow. I made time to travel to the UK and enrolled in three of the top culinary schools, where I learned about kitchen and restaurant operations, significantly enhancing my knowledge and skill set. Although there is never an end to learning, I can now confidently say that I was able to acquire enough training and experience to run the business outside the kitchen too!



From top right: Kholoud at Whitepepper Chef Academy and Cookery school; and Kholoud cooking

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# Dr. Maha Al-Senan

*Shura Council member & Cultural Advisor*

For over 25 years, **Dr. Maha Al-Senan's** work has revolved around the arts, culture, and heritage of Saudi Arabia. Dr. Al-Senan was a fellow at Harvard University, an Associate Professor at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, as well as the General Manager for the Saudi Heritage Preservation Society. She also served as an Advisor for the Ministry of Culture. In November 2020 she became a member of the Shura Council of Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Al-Senan's Ph.D. thesis, from King Saud University, on pre-Islamic Art in Arabia was awarded the King Salman bin Abdulaziz Prize for Higher Studies on the History and Civilization of the Arabian Peninsula in 2012. She has been recognized for her work through prizes and fellowships in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Germany, Italy, and the USA. Dr. Al-Senan remains active in the arts and culture fields, is well published, and is a board member of many cultural committees.



"I want to be remembered for my contributions in documenting Saudi culture. The future is better if we know more about the past."



**Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Pictured: Dr. Al-Senan receiving recognition for giving a conference talk on Saudi culture

### Challenge

In 2011, in my first official executive role, I was tasked by a then new NGO, the Saudi Heritage Preservation Society (SHPS), to build it from the ground up. I had just returned from my PostDoc fellowship at Harvard University, was very ambitious, and began building the NGO's structure and team, then developed the strategy. Knowing our strengths and weaknesses, limited resources, recognizing our strong and powerful board members, and our important cause, I made a decision to focus on huge impact, low cost and international recognition which led us down the road of getting Al-Arda al-Najdia [traditional dance, pictured right] on the UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2015.

### Resolution

This was my main accomplishment during my five years at SHPS. It took four years of management, leading, ups-and-downs, negotiation, convincing authorities and board members, motivating the team and fundraising, to reach to an announcement. Registration of the first Saudi element in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO was the beginning of many to follow. Happily, I had the opportunity later to lead the work for the government on many cultural projects. My reputation with al-Arda al-Najdia led to me being entrusted with this responsibility by the highest authority in the Saudi cultural sector.

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**“As women in the field of arts, heritage and culture, we were struggling to be heard. Now, we are the voice!”**

**Illustrated:** the traditional Saudi dance, Al-Arda al-Najdia, which Dr. Al-Senan worked to have placed on the UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2015





# Nazek Alkhulaifi & Sara Alameel

*Co-Founders, Torba Studio*

Top right: Torba Character, used to represent the brand; and bottom right: The Moon Skirt from the “New Horizons” collection

**Torba Studio** is a fashion brand born and based in Riyadh, that designs ready-to-wear clothing and accessory collections. Founded by two of Riyadh’s Princess Noura University alumni, Sara Alameel and Nazek Alkhulaifi, Torba Studio was conceived in 2018 with the aspiration of creating innovative, modest, and practical streetwear clothing.

The name of the brand ‘Torba’ is an Arabic word that means ‘sand’, and is used in the same way that in the English language refers to ‘dust’ being the core component of human origin (as in the phrase from the funeral service in the Book of Common Prayer “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust”).

Accordingly, Torba Studio seeks inspiration from the mystery and philosophy of the unknown, spirit and afterlife. This is the context of the brand’s slogan, ‘see beyond what you can touch’. Thought-provoking ideas and graphics are therefore the foundation of their work, and visible in every collection.

Edgy-street-style is an influence that is apparent in their designs, yet they remain fiercely proud of their heritage as Saudi women and wear the niqab (face covering) when outside of their studio or in front of men. On this topic they explain: “Just as you see a Buddhist in saffron robes expressing his spirituality, we are modern, modest Muslim women expressing ours. Not repressed, just expressing, and in this case fashion is our canvas.”

This absolution of identity is part of their narrative; they wish the pieces, rather than their own personalities, to be the focus of the brand. They address the apparel needs of their own community, which embraces oversized pieces and layering as a contemporary approach to modesty. Signature pieces include the ‘pa-kirt’, a combination of pants-under-a-skirt, something they always wear themselves, but their version is rendered comfortable with just one waistline. The same application is given to oversizing sweaters and jeans: by hemming shoulders, sleeves, and necklines at fitted lengths and widths, Torba can be excessive with fabric without being frumpy.



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**Challenge**

As artistic individuals who are very proud of our background and identities, we struggled to find modern, avant-garde and modest fashion that reflected our personal style.

**Resolution**

Torba is the resolution! It is all about valuing our authenticity and that of others, and representing this through our creative designs. We wanted to create a space for spirits similar to ours. We committed ourselves to producing

products that are of the utmost quality and representative of our design aspiration.

Torba is a brand that is expressed by words and visuals rather than a particular human figure or a model, and this is why in all our marketing we use what we call the "Torba character" to represent "Torba Studio". We made our main muse the veil, as it emphasizes our modern, avant-garde, and modest focus.

*"We believe that people around the world are all different and we like to accept it when we see people expressing their spirituality in ways that are personal to them. The way we dress and our designs are an expression of our values. We are modern, modest Muslim women expressing ours. Not repressed, just expressing, and in this case fashion is our canvas."*



From left: illustration of hair tie that was typically worn by young girls, that Torba embraced and adapted to create a version in their collection (making it an item that has sentimental value and is a local culture reference for many young Saudi women); Spring Fog Hair Tie from the Mortal Spring Collection; Torba Studio's office space; Reflective Piping Abaya from the "New Horizons" collection



# Sawsan Albahiti

*Opera Singer & Vocal Coach*

**Sawsan Albahiti** was born in Riyadh and is a self-taught musician from childhood. Today she is celebrated as the first Saudi opera soprano. Sawsan developed her vocal skills with songs from different genres. Her opera singing potential was discovered while studying at the American University of Sharjah in 2008. Sawsan's career took off when she performed the Saudi national anthem at the opening of Teatro Alla Scala di Milano's performance in Riyadh, in 2019. She was also selected to give a solo performance during the Riyadh Season. In 2020, she performed at events hosted by the Saudi British Society, the G20 Women 20 Summit, World Opera Day with Opera For Peace (OFP) in Berlin, and was featured in various publications including the New York-based Opera Wire.

Through her diverse experience in singing, Sawsan became curious about vocal technique, and subsequently gained a certification as a voice teacher. With her passion for music, Sawsan founded The Soulful Voice Institute, the first such program in Jeddah. She is also the first Saudi teacher of the NY Vocal Coaching Centre (NYVC) Alumni group and an affiliate with OFP.

**“Sometimes our biggest challenge is our own mind-set. Change it to the best way it can serve you and you will enjoy a journey that will take you to great heights.”**



### Challenge

When I first began to pursue a career in classical music and opera, one of the challenges was to keep my passion for this art in the absence of performance and training opportunities. Today, thanks to Vision 2030, the opportunities are tremendous in the Kingdom and I cannot be prouder.

### Resolution

My main support was my family who positively embraced my career direction and my vocal coaches who were also my mentors. My parents and siblings would celebrate each step of my achievements, and this gave me the motivation to continue my opera singing journey. Also, watching and listening to the recordings of my singing practice helped me improve my voice. It motivated me to become the first certified Saudi voice teacher and I founded my own vocal training institute



Top right: Sawsan performs at Riyadh Season 2020; and bottom right: recording session

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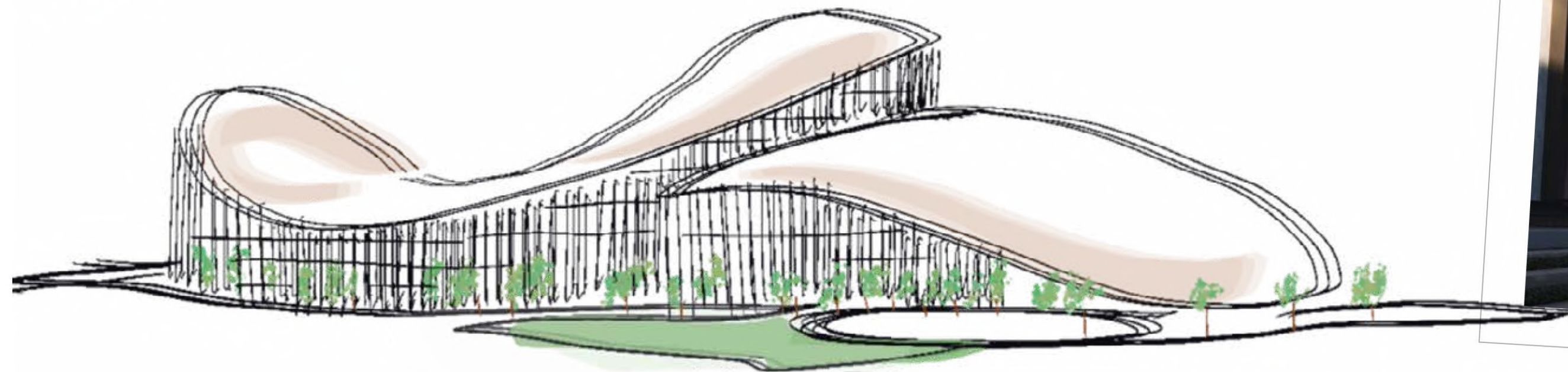


Shahad Alazzaz was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and is the daughter of renowned journalist and photographer Saleh Alazzaz. She earned a BA in Architecture from the University of Manchester and a Master's degree in Architectural Design and Project Management from IE Business School in Madrid. Shahad started her career as an intern in a Spanish Architecture firm, but was quickly appointed to manage projects she brought in from the Middle East.

In 2017, Shahad founded Azaz Architects, approaching her passion to design with what she describes as a "new philosophy". She is responsible for projects that span from residential spaces to large judicial projects. Her new venture is described as a continuation of the design process, but with a different philosophy. Azaz Architects is now an award-winning boutique firm that provides architectural services to projects of all scales. Shahad has been appointed as the Royal Institute of British Architects representative in Riyadh.

# Shahad Alazzaz

*Founder of Azaz Architects*



*"Take each challenge on and walk away a bigger and stronger person. Use your skills to fight back with poise and grace."*



## Challenge

As with most businesses, the impact of COVID-19 was a major and unprecedented challenge to Azaz Architects. I take pride in having created a team-oriented practice, one that has cultivated a strong team of designers. Nonetheless, the impact of the new realities of social distancing, working from home and self-isolation were significant. Against that backdrop of uncertainty, we were working on bigger, more ambitious and more demanding projects. I worried that without access to direct, face-to-face collaboration, the team would crumble under the growing pressure.

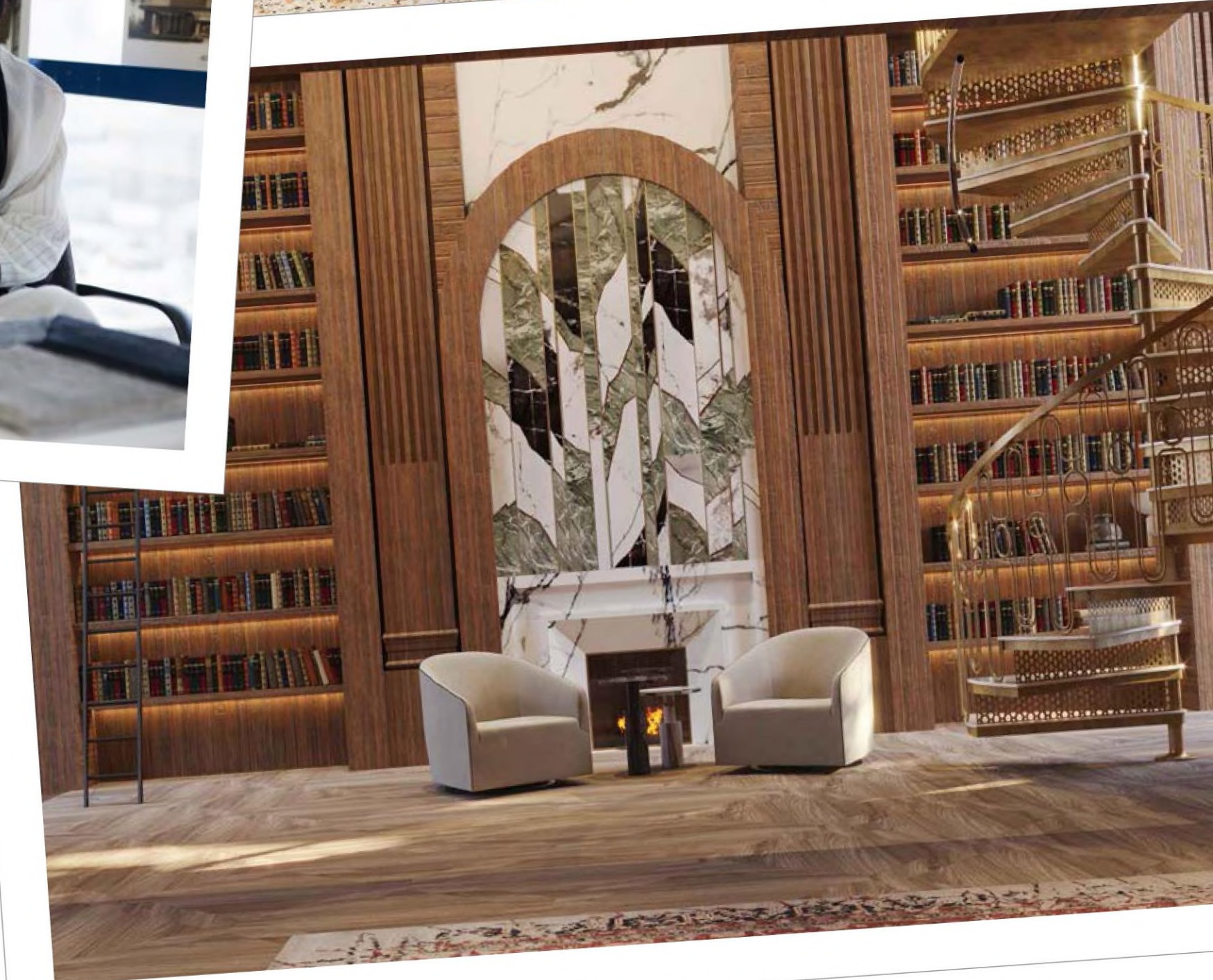
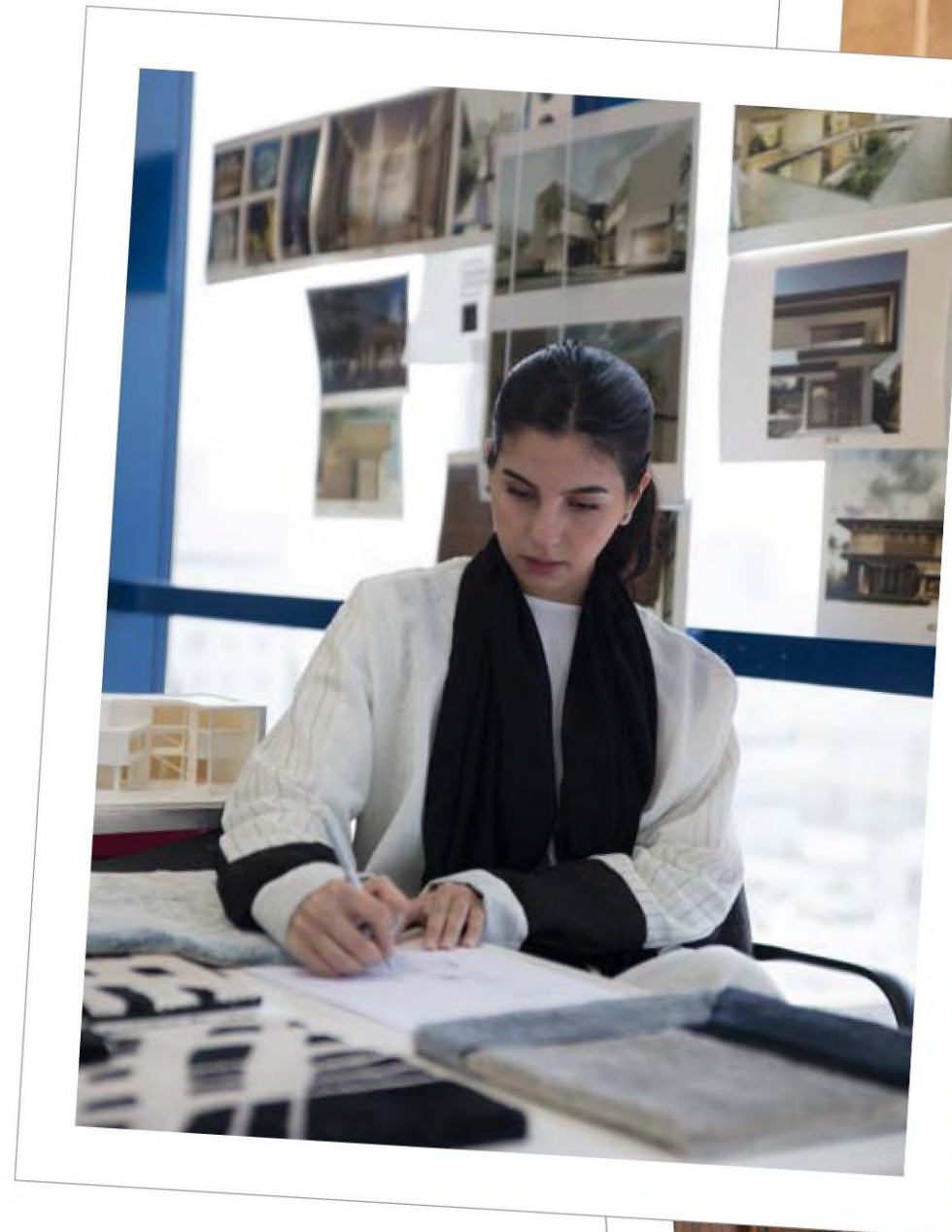
As I was getting accustomed to that challenge and working around it, I faced a bigger, more personal one. While working from home during a quiet afternoon, I was disrupted and forced to evacuate. A fire had started and quickly grew across the house, eating away at my childhood memories. Suddenly, I found myself looking back at my home, the place I was most comfortable in, while it turned into ash.

## Resolution

With regards to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 realities, our team has worked tirelessly and admirably to protect the institution we love to serve. We found ways to stay connected and continued to collaborate. In fact, during the past year, we produced our best work and have received outstanding recognition for it. Our core was tested and we proved to be skillful, talented and most importantly hard workers. I am lucky to see my business not only survive the pandemic, but come out of it thriving.

On the personal challenge, I was able to manage it with composure and support from my family and friends. We were able to quickly recover. The fire in my home offered my family a fresh start. An opportunity for me, as a designer, to create their living spaces on a clean slate. It fills my heart with pride and joy to see them comfortable in their own home.

**Clockwise from top right:** Azaz Architects designed this branch of hip Saudi coffee brand, Elixir Bunn, and it won the International Category at the Restaurant & Bar Design Awards 2020, photo by Abdulrahman Bayashout; designs by Azaz Architects; Shahad sketching



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# Sports

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# Adwa Al Arifi

*Deputy of Planning  
& Development at the  
Ministry of Sport*



**Adwa Al Arifi** has played a significant and effective role in shaping women's sports in Saudi Arabia. She is the Deputy of Planning and Development at the Ministry of Sport and is currently a board member of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF) and the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee (SAOC). Adwa is also a member of the Women's Committee of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and the Women's Committee at the Asian Olympic Committee (OCA). She has represented Saudi Arabia in several FIFA and AFC conferences.

She has a finance degree, as well as a sports diploma in football management from the Portuguese Football Association and a referee certificate from the U.S. Soccer Federation.

Her previous expertise was managing investment funds. Adwa's work is now her real passion. She established the first women's football team and a Grassroots League competition in 2007 with 10 teams with more than 300 players in total playing regularly. After 13 years of intensive work on developing women's football in the Kingdom, she established the first women's futsal (indoor football) national team, who had their first ever participation in the Sixth GCC Women's Games in Kuwait in 2019 and won their first bronze medal.



**“The love of what you do  
and the harmony of standing  
together as one will get you  
what you desire.”**

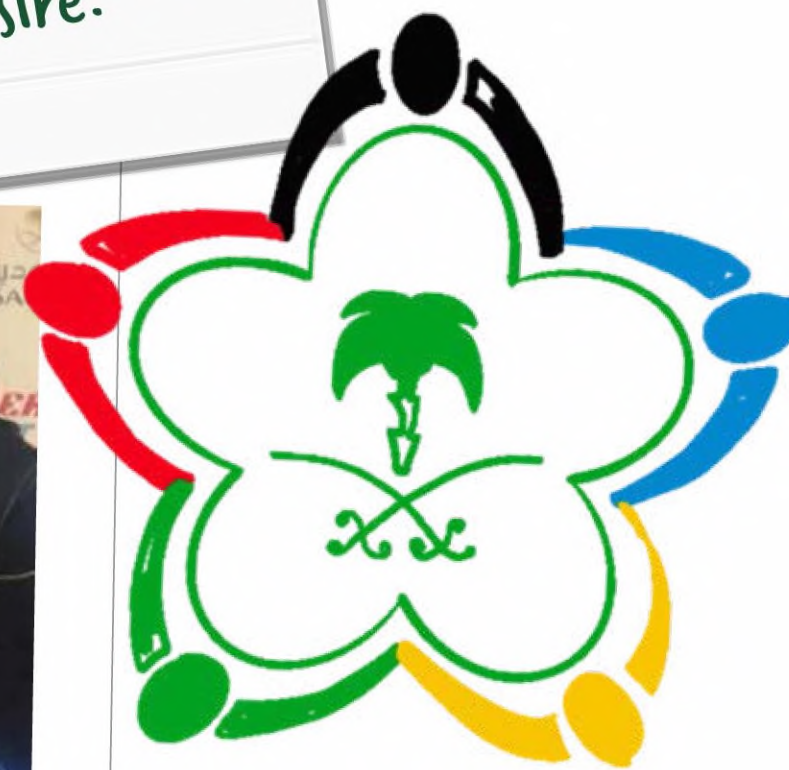
**Pictured right:** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud shaking hands with Adwa

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**Above:** Adwa with the Minister of Sport, HRH Prince Abdul Aziz bin Turki Al Faisal; **and below:** Under 16 Mass Participation Federation (MPF, currently Sports for All Federation) football tournament with HRH Princess Reema as the MPF president



"Persistence! Allow your passion to fill your motivation. The love of what you do and the harmony of standing together as one will get you what you desire."



### Challenge

Growing up with an immense passion for sports in general and football especially, at a time when few opportunities were available for women to pursue that passion.

### Resolution

Unity is always the way to approach any challenge. Nothing is reached when one works in silos. Alongside fellow classmates and women's football enthusiasts, we formed Al Yamama Football Club in 2006, the first ever female football club in the Kingdom. We cared so much for the sport, we reached out to people and places we knew to play and train, and to others who wanted to play. Football is in our heart and we cared so much for the sport. We leveraged our families' support and the growing support from leadership to realize our dream and to be able to share it with others.



# Dania Akeel

*Motorsports Athlete & Author*

Dania Akeel's passion for motors began at a very young age. Her fond memories of driving a battery-powered convertible when she was 3 years old in her childhood home's backyard developed over the years until she found herself on the racetrack at 30 years old. She participated in her first motorcycle racing season at the Ducati Cup in the UAE National Sportsbike Super Series 2019/20 season and was awarded the trophy for 'Rookie of the Year'. Dania's racing season came to an end when she had an accident on the track leaving her with plenty of time to reflect on life.

She decided to write down her findings in a book titled "Freefall". The book is a collection of true short stories that include perspectives of some experiences she had. Dania hopes that her stories will inspire readers to grow and develop in their personal journey.



Clockwise from top right: Dania racing in her first season in the Ducati Cup in the UAE National Sportsbike Super Series 2019/20; Dania at the Dakar Rally's route announcement in Saudi Arabia; Dania scouting the Extreme E route

**“The first time I reached speeds I had never experienced was both a joy and challenge, for there is often an intimidation of the unknown.”**

**Challenge**

Throughout my first racing season, I was given direction, guidance, and support at every turn. The biggest challenges I faced were internal ones. The mental challenges were many and I often had to make choices and decisions that would continue to lead me deeper into the world of competitive motorsports whenever I faced fear. My biggest physical challenge was having an accident on the racetrack which left me with multiple broken bones in my pelvis and spine. I saw my racing season come to an end.

**Resolution**

Taking full responsibility for my decision to race, ownership of any consequence that occurred, and accepting my pain wholeheartedly, allowed me to go through the healing process with an amount of patience I had not known before. I used that time to dive deeper into my wellness and self-development journey, leaving no stone unturned.



*“Tapping into your inner authentic self will help you to overcome challenges. To live honestly means facing every moment with a willingness to learn, and to search for any gaps or shortcomings within oneself. Fuel your inner gaps with the intention of constant progress.”*



From left: Dania racing; and Dania receiving Rookie of the year award during her first racing season



# Rasha AlKhamis



*Multi-sports athlete*

**Rasha AlKhamis** is a multi-sports athlete and enthusiast. She is a board member of the Women’s Committee for the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee. She is also a board member on the Saudi and Asian Boxing Federations. She uses her platform and experience to inspire other women in Saudi Arabia to participate in sports.

Rasha earned her master’s degree from the University of Southern California in International Public Policy and Management in 2013, after graduating from King Saud University with a B.Sc. in Business Administration in 2011.

As an athlete, she is a semi-professional footballer and was the first woman to become a certified boxing coach in Saudi Arabia, earning her accreditation from the Saudi Arabian Boxing Federation.

Currently, Rasha works as a full-time management consultant with a multinational firm working on sports projects such as mass participation, developing strategies for federations, high-performance athlete pathways, and sports monetization and privatizations.

Rasha resides in Riyadh where she continues to encourage and promote other women to become elite athletes.



**Top:** Rasha summiting Toubkal mountain in Morocco; **and bottom:** posing for her entry in the book Under The Abaya: Street Style from Saudi Arabia

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### Challenge

While studying abroad, I felt overwhelmed by the environment change and schoolwork. I read that boxing is a great outlet and has a major impact on one's lifestyle, so I took up boxing and practiced early mornings on a weekly basis before my classes.

### Resolution

I am proud that I overcame my challenge through a positive outlet. Boxing taught me about self-confidence, resilience, and empowerment. I practiced boxing for two years and it had an amazing impact on all aspects of my life. After moving back home, I overcame my second challenge of the scarcity of boxing sessions and coaches in Saudi Arabia by becoming a catalyst and the first female coach certified by the Saudi Boxing Federation. As a result, I was able to give back to my country and community, and continue my passion in taking an active role in growing the sports industry in Saudi Arabia where we aspire to put more female Saudi athletes on the map with the elites.



**“To all the women in Saudi Arabia, now is the time to dream big and be part of an even bigger dream.”**



Rasha is the holder of four Guinness World Records: the most players in a five-a-side, football (soccer) exhibition match (June/July 2019) in Lyon-France; the most nationalities in a football exhibition match (June 2019), in Lyon-France; the highest altitude game of football at Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, (June 2017); and the lowest altitude football match at Dead Sea, Jordan (April 2018).

**Pictured:** Rasha celebrating her 30th birthday by surfing the waves of Hiriketiya bay, Sri Lanka

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# Reema Juffali

*Racing Driver*



Reema Juffali is Saudi's first woman to race competitively in motorsport. She enjoys all sports, but cars and motorsports are her real passion, and it was only recently that she realised her talent behind the wheel.

Reema began her racing career in October 2018 when she competed in the UAE and, to further develop as a driver, she joined the competitive 2019 British F4 Championship. In 2020, Reema continued racing in F4, competing in both the UAE and British Championships achieving a number of strong performances.

Reema graduated from Northeastern University in Boston with an International Affairs degree.

*"I love the feeling I get when I'm behind the wheel, that's where I'm happiest. But more than that, it's the challenge that keeps me going."*



Pictured: Reema on the race track

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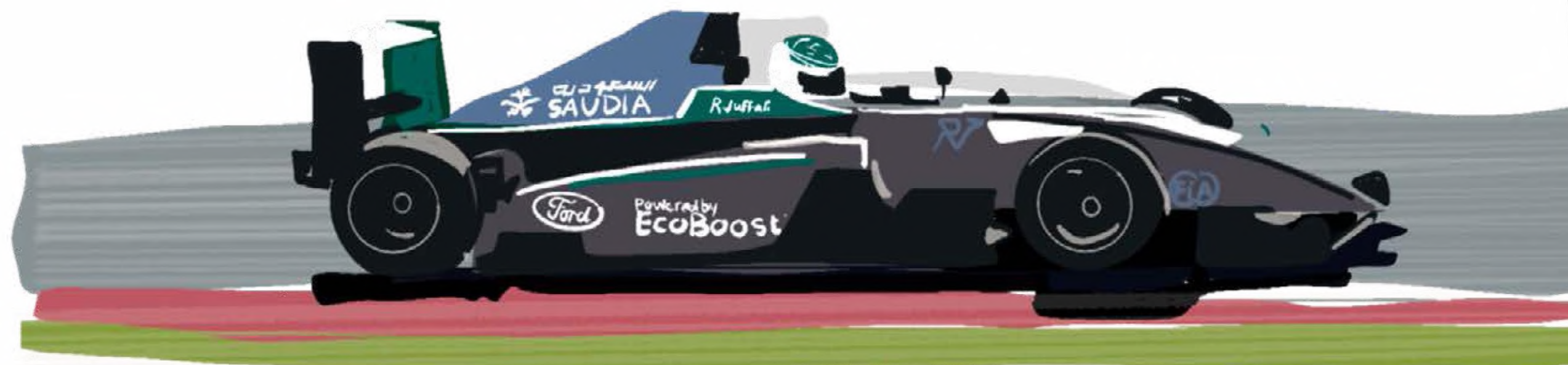
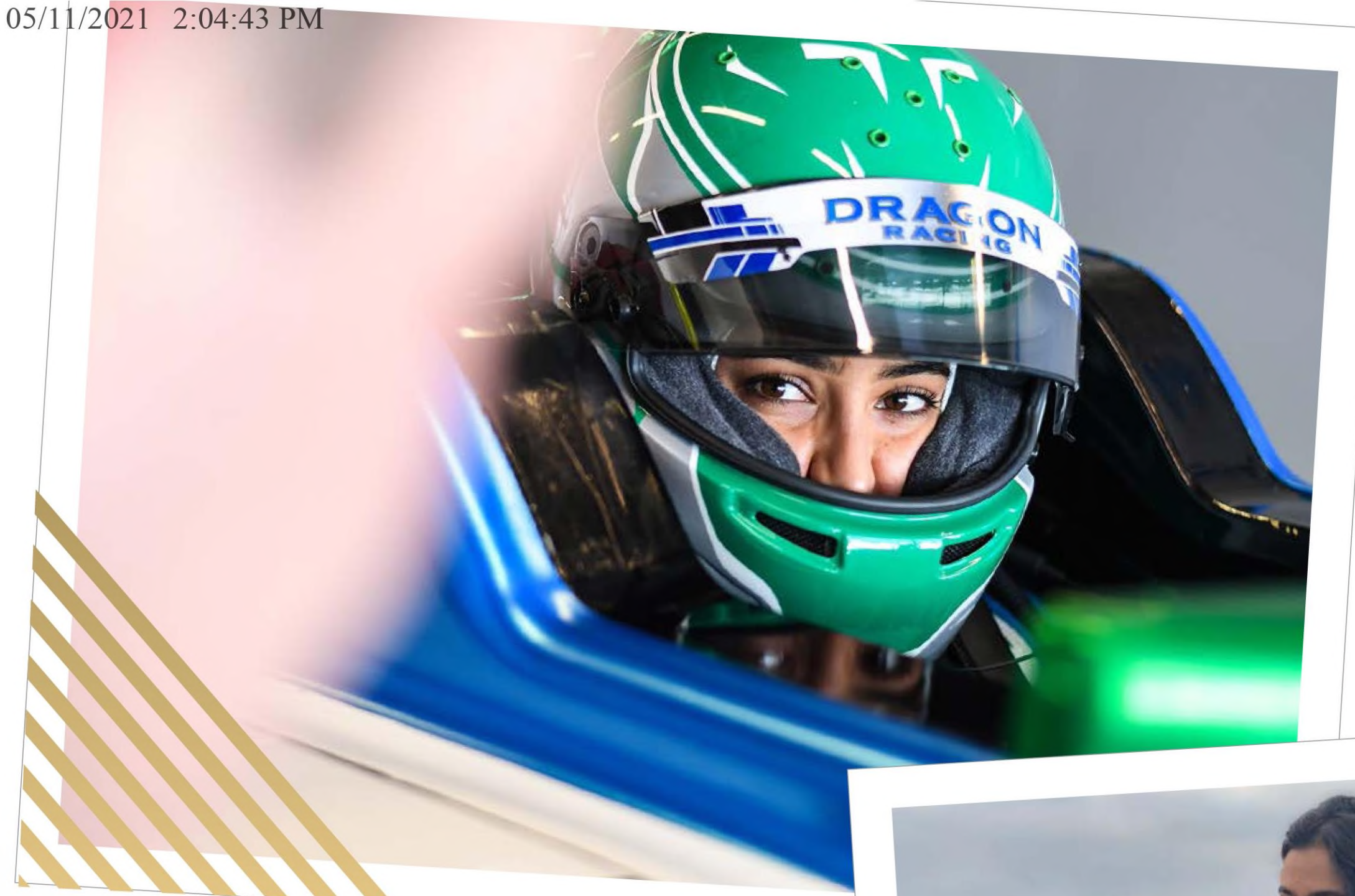
**“Trust your instincts, don’t be afraid to take the leap and go after what you love. You won’t know if you don’t try.”**

**Challenge**

My biggest challenge was taking that first step and pursuing my passion, racing, with no experience and a lot to learn.

**Resolution**

To overcome the fear of the unknown, by following my true passion and entering a completely new field and profession. I made sure to surround myself with the right team of coaches and advisors, and to approach every situation with an open-mind and the willingness to learn from mistakes.



Above: Reema racing; and below: Reema celebrating a win for Saudi

# Science & Finance



**Hadeel  
Ayoub**  
*Founder, BrightSign*



**Hadeel Ayoub** is an experienced lecturer, researcher, and entrepreneur. She is currently finishing a PhD in Human Computer Interaction with emphasis on machine learning applications for gesture recognition at Goldsmiths, University of London. In 2017, she founded BrightSign, a wearable technology start-up developing enabling innovations employing artificial intelligence (AI) to facilitate communication for individuals with non-verbal disabilities.



*"Goals should be dynamic, and it is okay for them to change. Keep chasing them and define your own learning curve while doing so. Pivoting your direction can sometimes be a good thing, don't be afraid to bring your past knowledge to a new challenge. You'd be surprised how everything you know comes together to solve a problem in a novel way."*

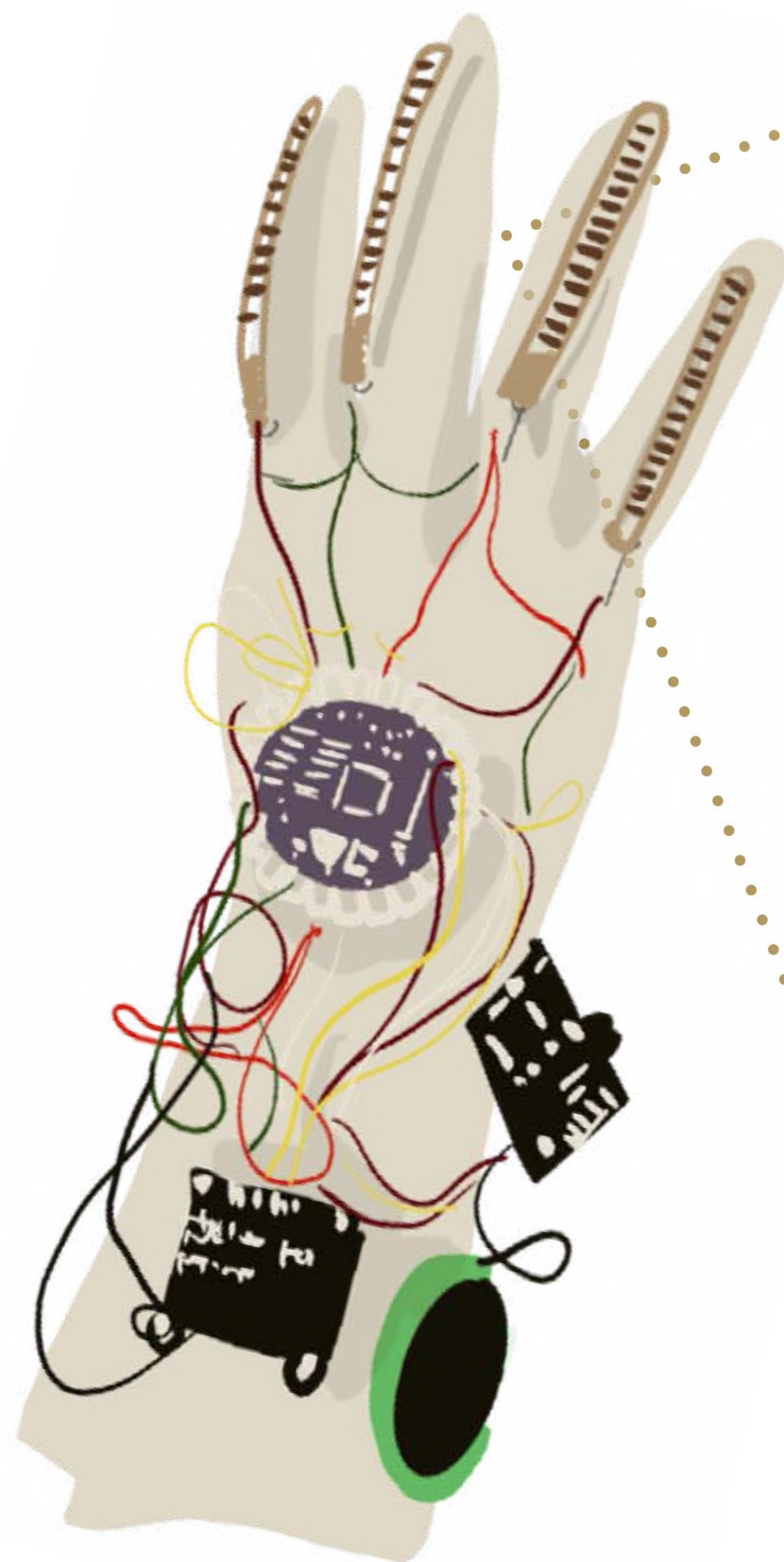


### Challenge

During my PhD, I developed a smart glove that translates sign language to speech. Everyone who tested the glove wanted to buy one, and so I founded a company that uses AI to translate any form of sign language to any spoken language. I called it BrightSign. The thing I found most challenging was making the transition from being an academic researcher to an entrepreneur and the founder of a tech start-up. Even though I came in with high skills in technology, I had no prior knowledge of the business world.

### Resolution

Embracing the opportunity to learn more about all of the hats I need to wear as an entrepreneur in order to run my business successfully. I did that by expanding my network and joining tech accelerators where I was partnered with likeminded founders going through the same journey. Together, we helped each other overcome the challenges early start-ups face. The most benefit was from the transfer of knowledge gained from being exposed to each other's experiences; both good and bad.



My mantra is

**“One day I hope to give a voice to those who can’t speak.”**



# Khlood Aldukheil

*Financial Advisor & Founding Partner of Aldukheil Financial Group*

**Khlood Aldukheil** is a financial advisor with a long career in investment banking. She is a Founding Partner in Aldukheil Financial Group (AFG), a Saudi closed joint stock company with capital market authority license, engaged in corporate finance and advisory services. AFG floated a large number of companies on the stock exchange including SABIC, Riyadh Bank, Al Fransi Bank, Saudi British Bank and others.

**“Think big, plan bigger and work hard.”**



Top right: Khlood moderated the launch of the 2030 National Industrial Program; and bottom right: Khlood lobbying for change at the Council of Chambers

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### Challenge

The greatest challenge is to continue to make a difference in meaningful issues in the financial sector. You can develop your career by working hard, but making a greater impact requires much more effort, especially for women's economic empowerment. It requires creative thinking, tackling the issues head-on, and trying to identify the real value drivers that ultimately affect people's livelihood and jobs.

### Resolution

I believe all challenges can be addressed, although not necessarily solved, with knowledge, planning and execution. I manage all challenges head-on, by mental modelling of the issue, and relying on my technical skills when needed. You need continuous development to make an impact in the financial sector.



**Top right:** Khlood speaking on financial inclusion at the G20; and **bottom right:** Khlood elected President of the Committee for the financial sector at the Riyadh Chamber

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# Dr. Mona S. Almunajjed

*Award winning sociologist, author & advisor on social issues*

**Dr. Mona S. Almunajjed** is an award-winning and prominent sociologist at the forefront of women's affairs in Saudi Arabia. She is an advisor and an author on socio-economic and gender issues in the GCC countries. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from George Washington University and an MA in Sociology from New York University. Her publications include the books *Women in Saudi Arabia Today*, *Significance of Arabic Names for Girls in the Arab World*, *Saudi Women Speak*, and *Saudi Women: A Celebration of Success*. She is a regular contributor to newspapers and magazines in the Gulf region.

She has spent fifteen years working with and advising various United Nations international agencies on social development programs related to women, youth, family, education, and labor. She received the United Nations 21 Commendation Award in recognition of her contribution to her work and the project "Activating the role of women welfare associations in Saudi Arabia".

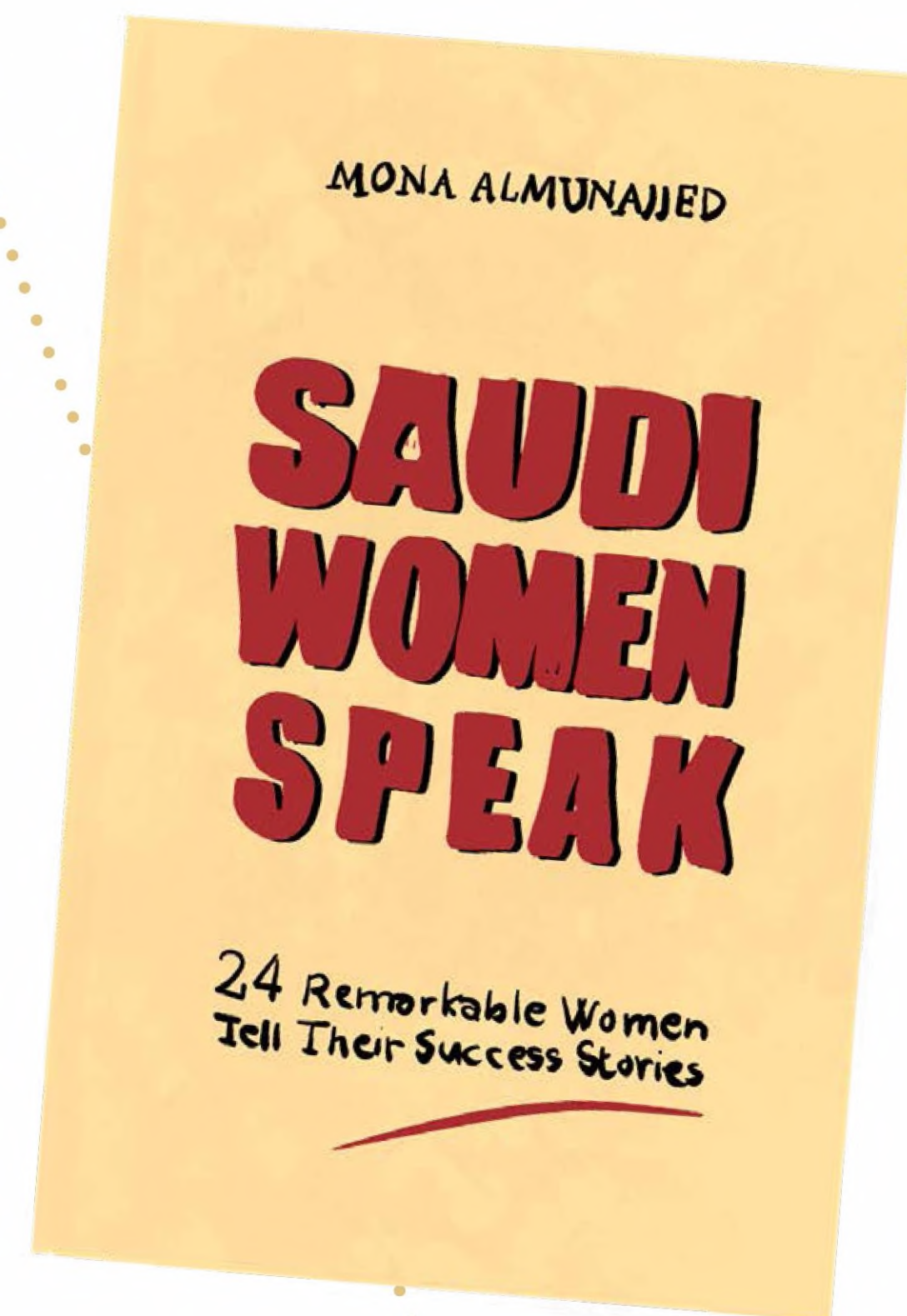
She has been selected by *Arabian Business Magazine* as one of the "World's 100 Most Powerful Arab Women" for several consecutive years, and as one of the "World's 100 most Powerful Arab Thinkers." She was also selected by *CEO Middle East* magazine as one of "The 50 Most Influential Women in the Arab World."



**Top right:** Dr. Almunajjed meeting Chancellor Merkel in Berlin during an international conference where she gave a speech; **and bottom right:** Dr. Almunajjed being recognised at *CEO Middle East*, 100 Most Powerful Arab Women award ceremony

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**“Face challenges, don’t be afraid of taking risks, stay positive, and don’t give in to defeat.”**

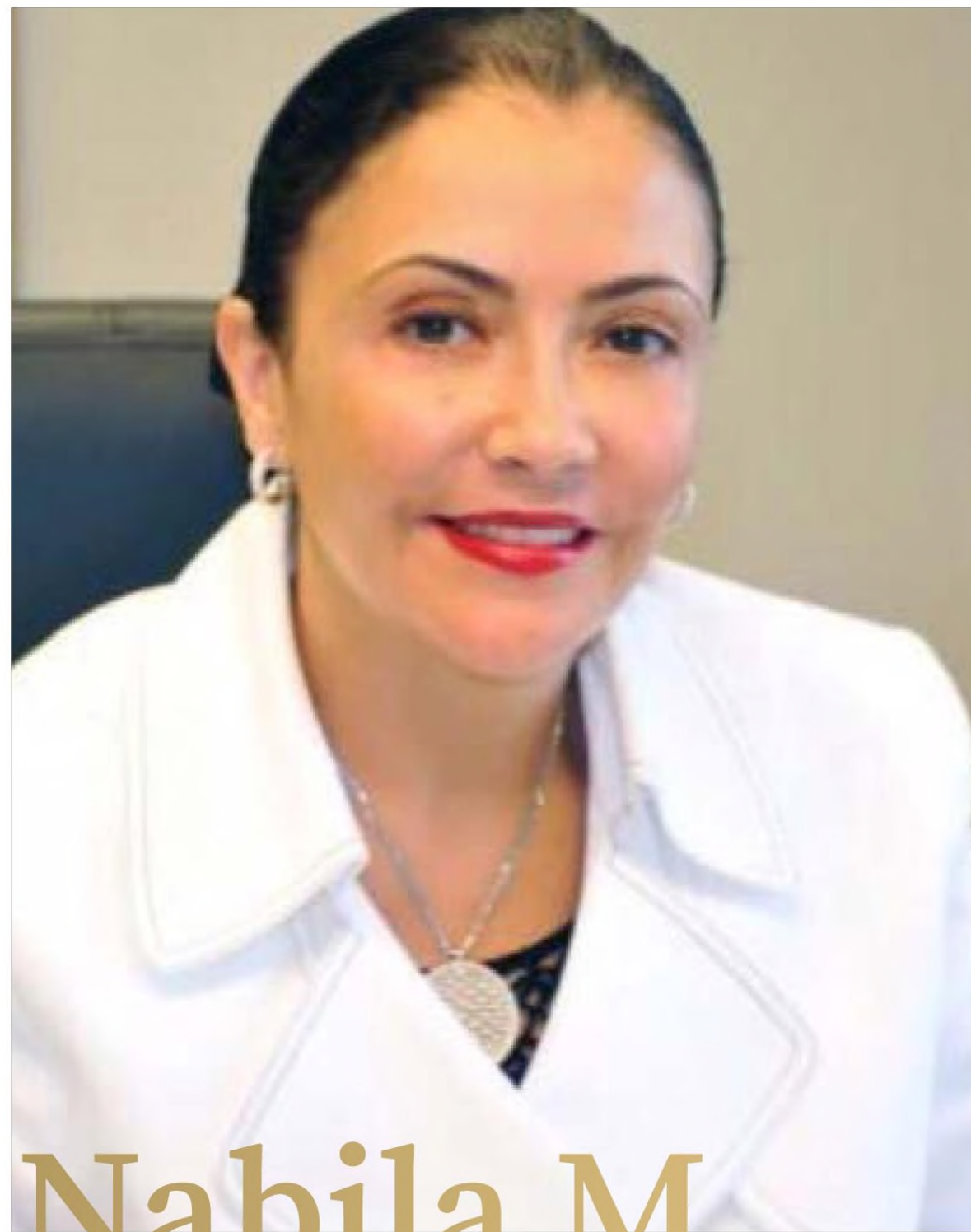


### **Challenge**

My greatest challenge has been to introduce constructive change to the status of women in my region, socially, educationally and economically and to contribute positively to their development. I strived to empower women and to improve their lives through education and training.

### **Resolution**

I believe that one must have the willpower, strength of mind and a positive character to face the challenges and overcome the obstacles. I was determined to achieve my goal and fulfill my dream of helping people and making a difference in their lives and my strength of character and support of my family allowed me to do that.



# Nabila M Al-Tunisi

*Executive Director of  
Programs & Acting CFO at  
Munshaat*

**Nabila Al-Tunisi** is the Executive Director of Programs and acting Chief Financial Officer at Munshaat, an organization responsible for developing mega-projects.

Inspired by the technology of the day, Nabila started off her illustrious career at Saudi Aramco in 1982 as a Computer Systems Engineer. She rose through the ranks in various engineering and leadership roles to become the Chief Engineer at Aramco, one of the largest energy companies in the world.

One of her landmark achievements in the energy sector, according to Al-Tunisi, was the completion of the multi-billion-dollar Manifa oilfield, a cluster of 27 man-made islands in the shallow north-eastern waters of the Arabian Gulf. It is one of the largest offshore oilfields in the world. As a Project Manager, Nabila was featured in the *Project Management Institute* magazine as one of the 25 most influential women in project management and was heavily involved in the joint venture project between Saudi Aramco and DOW Chemicals to build the largest integrated hydrocarbon and petrochemical facility.

She earned her bachelor of science degree in electrical and computer engineering from the University of Portland in 1980, and subsequently, earned her master of science in computer engineering from Oregon State University in 1982.



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**“Pursue your dreams, be good at what you do, work with passion, innovate to achieve excellence, always face your challenges with class and never give up.”**



### Challenge

As a young female graduate in electrical and computer engineering, joining Saudi Aramco and working in the male dominated oil and gas industry at a time when computers and technology and their potential were not understood by many, was both a challenge and an opportunity.

### Resolution

I was able to overcome this challenge through my unwavering passion and dedication for engineering excellence, the support of my family, the great education I obtained, and all the amazing people I have worked with throughout the years, all of which allowed me to constantly reinvent myself and be able to enjoy a wonderful career.



# Professor Selwa Al-Hazzaa

**Clinical Professor & Senior Consultant of Ophthalmology  
CEO & Founder Saudi Development Med**



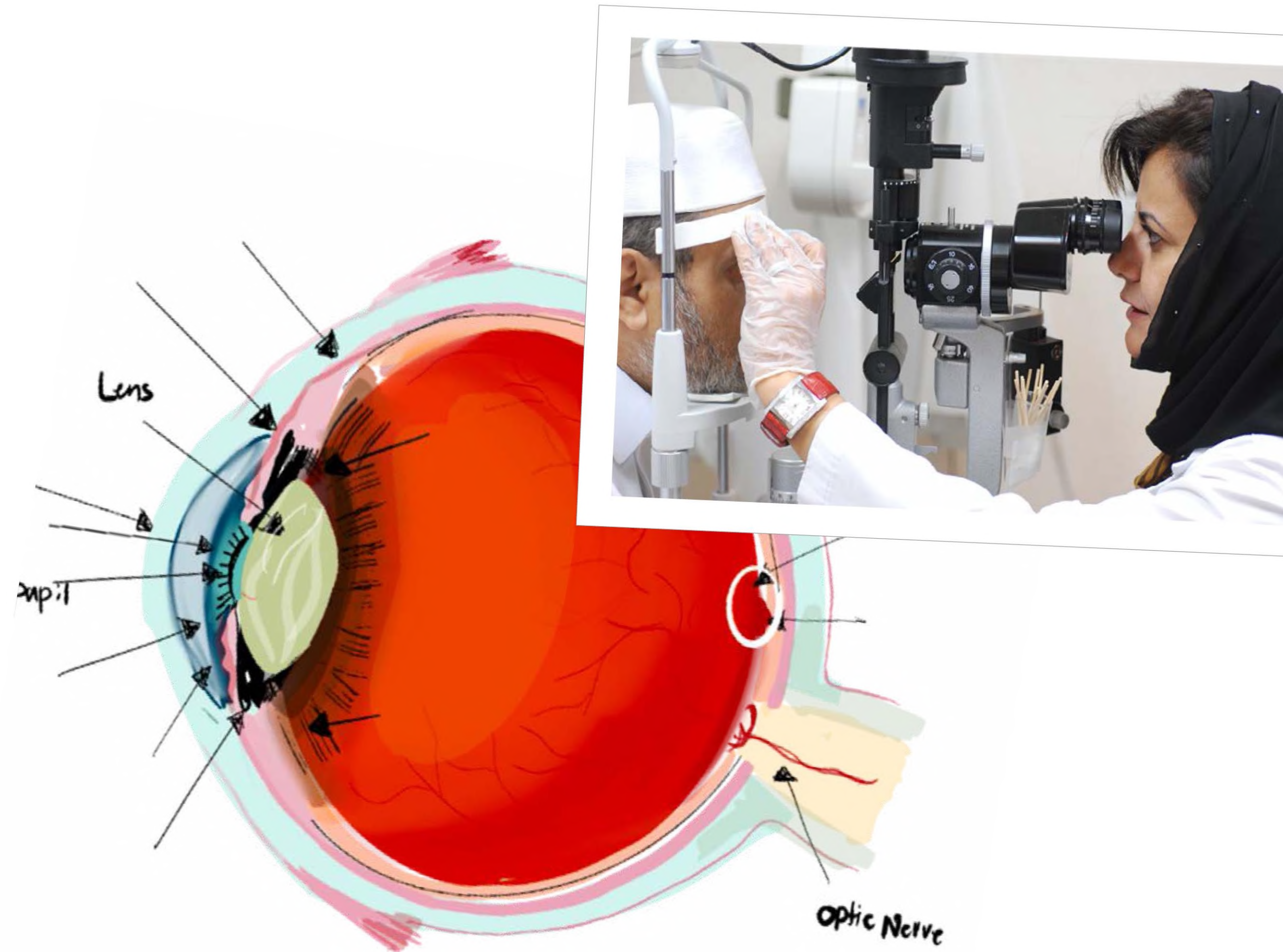
**Professor Selwa Al-Hazzaa** is a Senior Consultant of Ophthalmology, and a Clinical professor. Dr. Al-Hazzaa was named Arab Woman of the Year in the field of Medicine and Community Services in 2005 from the Arab Women Studies Center in Paris, and one of 'The Most Powerful Arab Women of the Year' in 2005 by *Forbes International Magazine*.

Most recently, she was the recipient of two awards from Arab Women Awards in 2015 with one in the field of Medicine and the other for Lifetime Achievement.

Career highlights include being appointed as a Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Health and serving as one of the first female members of the Saudi Shura Council. Dr. Al-Hazzaa was elected as an Executive Member of the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO), the highest rank in Ophthalmology worldwide where she was the youngest member and the first female from the Middle East. Dr. Al-Hazzaa is an author of over 65 articles, editorials, review articles, and book chapters, including most importantly in Duane's International Ophthalmology on Genetic Eye Diseases in Saudi Arabia.

Currently Dr. Al-Hazzaa is the CEO & founder at Saudi Development Med focusing on uplifting the healthcare in the region using artificial intelligence. Dr. Al-Hazzaa is also a professor at the College of Medicine, Al-Faisal University, KSA, and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Southern California, USA."

Below: patient check-ups at King Faisal Specialist Hospital; and Dr. Al-Hazzaa speaking at the U.S.-Saudi Business Opportunities Forum in Los Angeles, California, 2013



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**“I seek to be the next generation’s role model. Be persistent and keep moving forward.”**

### Challenge

They say the hardest paths are the most rewarding ones. And indeed, being amongst the first Saudi females to pioneer may have had its hardships and challenges but It was worth it as I paved the way for the future generation.

### Resolution

I am very delighted to see the progress and forward motion in action, and that women today are applauded and encouraged, and do not have to face similar challenges.





# Summer Nasief

***Award-winning healthcare  
technology innovator***

**Summer Nasief** is an award-winning healthcare technology innovator, moderator, and keynote speaker. She is currently the Healthcare Digital GM at General Electric (GE) Middle East, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey enabling the company's vision for precision health building in the industry-leading Edison platform, as well as its cloud, edge, artificial intelligence, and analytics capabilities for clinical application.

Previously she held a number of leadership roles, including Chief Executive Officer at G42 Healthcare Group, a semi-government authority building Abu Dhabi's Sovereign Health Cloud and Human National Genomic Program for the Emirate. She also worked for *Fortune 100* organizations like Microsoft, where she was the Healthcare Director for Middle East, Africa, Israel & Turkey, leading the company's digital cloud transformation framework across 79 countries both private and public sector, and built the IOT Healthcare business for Honeywell MEA leveraging smart infrastructure technology which is now the backbone of the connected hospital IOT ecosystem and creating the next-generation automation and integration. Summer was named 2015 *Arabian Business* Top 100 Most Influential Women in the Arab World and has been honored with numerous awards and recognitions.

Summer also spent 15 years in an upwardly mobile career at IBM that took her to numerous cities worldwide including San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Egypt, and lastly her hometown of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. There she became the company's first Saudi female industry leader to be appointed in the Kingdom since the company's inception in 1914. In this role, she led its healthcare and life sciences vertical, working with government agencies including the Saudi Ministry of Health on the quality-of-care transformation throughout the Kingdom.

Summer has become a prominent ambassador for empowering women to become active agents in the ever-evolving Saudi female workforce, collaborating with the country's ministry of labor on steps toward this objective. She was awarded a 2014 fellowship by the Aspen Institute for the Middle East Leadership chapter, recognized for her game-changing work on a regional level.



*"You are the master of your journey, and only you can determine what life you will live, everyone else is just an observer. Remember that not everyone understands where you are going as the horizon is sometimes in unmastered territory and that is how we evolve and bring change about in the world."*

**Right:** Summer speaking at Gloworks career fair, an organization that aims to increase diversity in the Saudi workforce by connecting employers with female employees

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### Challenge

I would say that I've always been underestimated in terms of capabilities, and I've heard "no" all the time, but I never let that discourage me. An example is when I wanted to take the country healthcare leader role in Saudi Arabia for IBM in 2012. At that time the country was still segregated and very few women were in commercial roles.

### Resolution

I didn't let that stop me, I wouldn't take "no" for an answer and went to every executive in IBM until someone would listen and could help influence giving me the role as I believed I was the right person for the job. Against all odds, we grew our business double digits in my first year and I helped on-board the first 30 females in the Riyadh office within the first 24 months. I've learned to be brave; my favorite saying is "feel the fear and do it anyways," by Gloria Steinem. Everything starts and ends with what you say is good enough for you.



**“I live by this saying:  
when you take the  
elevator to the top,  
it's your job to  
send it back down  
for the others.”**



# Dr. Yasmin Altwaijri

*Senior Scientist & Head of Epidemiology Research, King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Center, Riyadh, & Visiting Fellow at Harvard Medical School*

Working on projects that intersect science, health, technology and society, **Dr. Yasmin Altwaijri** is a Senior Scientist and Head of Epidemiology Research at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and is a Visiting Fellow at Harvard Medical School.

Her research interest centers on determining the burden of chronic diseases within the Saudi population in general and among youth in particular. She has been a vocal advocate for policy changes and initiatives aimed at creating an environment which supports healthy lifestyles for the community, in order to reverse the growing obesity epidemic.

Working in collaboration with Harvard University and the World Health Organization, Dr. Altwaijri is leading the Saudi National Health and Stress Survey, one of the largest health projects in the country, which aims to assess the mental health landscape in the Saudi population and the

region, within a global context. Research from this project, which spans genetics to policy outcomes, provides a launchpad for future direction and innovation in the field of mental health. Dr. Altwaijri is also actively involved in many initiatives aimed at Saudi women's empowerment and creating avenues for their contribution to sustainable socioeconomic development. She is a Board Member of the Al Nahda Philanthropic Organization. Dr. Altwaijri obtained her B.Sc. degree from King Saud University, and her M.Sc. and Ph.D. from Tufts University in the USA.



### Challenge

Leading a research team to embark on a national public health project, where we interviewed individuals in their homes throughout the country. An audacious task given that we were a country not accustomed to household surveys, especially when the research aims to understand the burden of mental health in the community, a sensitive topic in any country.

### Resolution

I was fortunate to have research funds and experienced global partners, but the most important support came from having an enthusiastic and passionate team which made it possible to overcome our many operational challenges, resulting in one of the highest quality household based public health surveys by any standard.



**“Build your team wisely.  
Develop a reputation  
which attracts talent.  
Surround yourself with  
the best and brightest.”**

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# Arts

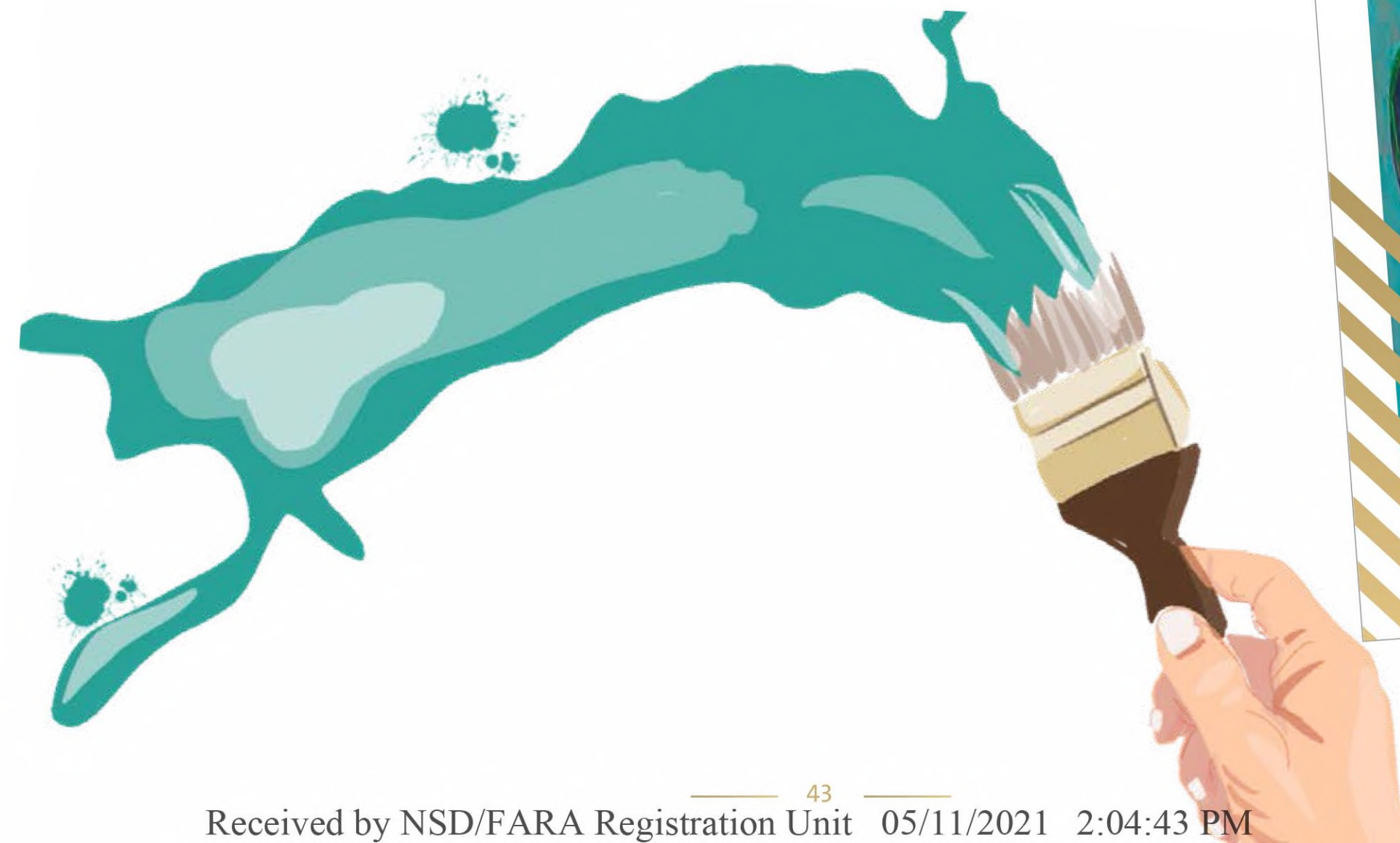


**Dr. Ahlam Alshedoukhy** started her career as a pathologist, became a practicing physician, and eventually a professor. Despite that, she always had an interest in the humanities and eventually found her voice through art. By looking at the world, and human beings, with an analytical eye and with a love of color, she began to see the power of expression through painting. She started her artistic journey in 2004, working with oil and acrylic.

Her major sources of inspiration are society and the self, as she focuses on the individual versus the collective identity. She found this inspiration in conversations with her children and students, in the microscope of her study, and the intricate developments happening in Saudi Arabia. These are all part of the stories she tells through her paintings.

# Dr. Ahlam Alshedoukhy

*Artist & Pathologist*



Pictured: Dr. Alshedoukhy's work titled "Generation Y"

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### Challenge

The biggest challenge I faced is discovering who I was when I turned 50, and accepting my unique and expressive spirit. I felt lost and found myself reflecting on my life, questioning who I am and what I want to achieve moving forward. I have had many life experiences and a successful career as a physician, but I knew deep down that a change of course for me was long overdue.

### Resolution

I started painting and never stopped. I changed my day job to be able to paint and converted a space in my home to a personal studio, where I spend most of my day. Believing in myself and following my passion helped me face this transitional time in my life. I found myself through my art. The world of art has inspired me to fulfill my need and desire for exploring my emotions in a stimulating and free space.

**“We find purpose in all we are given, turn obstacles into opportunities and love into life.”**



**Top right:** Dr. Alshedoukhy's work titled "Al Kawareer", referencing Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH), saying where he referred to women as "Al Kawareer," urging men to be kind and gentle to their kinswomen; and **bottom right:** Dr. Alshedoukhy's work titled "Evolution"



# Basma Al Sulaiman

*Patron & Collector*



**Basma Al Sulaiman** was raised in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where she earned a BA in English Literature. She later completed a Certificate in modern and contemporary art at Christie's Education London. In 2011, Basma launched BASMOCA (Basma Al Sulaiman Museum of Contemporary Art), the first virtual museum to present an actual private collection to a global audience. Visitors can create avatars and interact with others as they are "walking through" the museum, which showcases Basma's collection of western and middle eastern art alongside a large number of contemporary Chinese pieces. Basma's main focus is to support Saudi art and artists by promoting them locally and internationally. She is one of the founding members of the Saudi Art Council and spearheaded the development of Jeddah Sculpture Park. In 2014, she became the first woman to receive an award from the Saudi government for her contribution to the country's art and cultural spheres.



*"To think outside the box is a very important element at the moment and to try to work out new and creative ideas that will help their communities develop, and to be an active part of these communities."*



Pictured: Basma's virtual contemporary art museum experience

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# “Have knowledge in the face of future challenges.”

## Challenge

It was not easy to enter the international art scene, but with determination and persistence I overcame these difficulties, and became a part of the international art movement. These days not only are Saudi women accepted in this field, but they also influence it.

## Resolution

I am deeply grateful for my country's support and recognition of my role in the art world and for allowing me to establish the first sculpture park in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.



Jeddah Sculpture Park



Personnage  
By Juan Miró



Clockwise from top right: Basma receiving recognition for her contributions to Saudi art and culture in Jeddah Sculpture Park; and Jeddah Sculpture Park



# Maha Malluh

*Artist*

**Maha Malluh** is a Riyadh-based artist who was born in Jeddah. She currently resides and works in Riyadh, London, and Vienna. Maha is greatly influenced by her spiritual connection to the historic region of Najd (the central region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that includes Riyadh), with its strong religious and cultural heritage, colorful patterned fabrics, and old architecture.

She has a BA degree in English Literature from King Saud University and a certificate in design and photography from De Anza College in California. Maha has been exhibiting both in Saudi Arabia and internationally since 1976.

Her artwork examines the emblematic and cultural symbols of Saudi Arabian civilization. Her early work used traditional canvas, on which she created collages, using local fabrics and photographic images of traditional buildings.

Over the period of the past fifteen years, Maha has explored, experimented and expanded the art of the photogram, an early turn-of-the-century photographic technique, which captures a photographic image by exposing photo-sensitive paper directly to a light source, without the use of a camera.

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Maha's most recent work includes mixed-media installations, which use found objects that can be seen as historic symbols of collective Saudi identity. These include massive, enameled dishes, cassette tapes of religious lectures, discarded oil barrels, and metal doors typical of the region.

Maha had her first solo 'Capturing Light' at Gallery O in Riyadh (2007) and has exhibited in numerous international events, including Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China (2010), the British Museum's Hajj exhibition (2012) and the Institut du Monde Arabe Paris (2012 & 2014), Hauser & Wirth, London (2013), Art Basel Unlimited (2014), Saatchi Galerie London (2016), and the 57th Venice Biennale (2017). Maha is also included in a number of important collections, including UBS, Jameel Art, the British Museum, London's Tate Modern, Center Georges Pompidou, Paris, The MAK Museum, Vienna, the Louvre & Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and SFMOMA.



Food for Thought  
"Almuallaqat" 3 →

**Top right:** Food for Thought II, 2012, Tate Modern, London. **Bottom right:** Food for Thought "Almuallaqat" 3, 2015, The Mak museum Vienna installation view, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna

**Challenge**

One of the biggest challenges I had faced was going back to college after a five-year break, during which I had two children. Like many women of my generation, I was adamant to pursue my college degree despite all the challenges that come with being a full-time mother at the same time. Needless to say, it was a delicate balance and one that was quite stressful.

**Resolution**

I was absolutely determined to press ahead and deal with whatever difficulties would come with that commitment. Since I lived in a city far away from my parents and sisters, I didn't have the family support I relied on as a college-pursuing mother. In order to better cope with the situation, I made the decision to study part-time, attending college two to three times a week while my kids were in school. In doing that, I was able to spend time with my children after they come back from school until they went to sleep. Two more children and seven years later, I finally graduated with a BA in English literature.

**“Enjoy the time and process in achieving your goal, and let optimism fuel your confidence and willingness to achieve your dreams.”**



*The Road to Mecca - 2010 Tradition & Modernity*

Top right: Food for Thought “Almuallaqat”4 2016 Installation view, Saatchi Gallery London 2016. Bottom right: The Road to Mecca - 2010 Tradition & Modernity Photogram Series The British Museum, London

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# Noura Alshaya

*Artist, sculptor, film art director & production designer*

Pictured: Noura's sketch exploring identity and the self

Choosing to follow her dream career in the fine arts, **Noura Alshaya** is currently the Art Director at MISK Foundation.

Born in Riyadh, both of Noura's parents valued art and raised her to appreciate and advocate for all types of art. At heart, Noura is a painter and sculptor who aims to recount the major transformations in human life through her work. She also aims to create a discussion around the Saudi image from an artistic perspective.



"Being an artist implies a certain lifestyle, a way of seeing the world. Being an artist means you are constantly exploring, wondering and arguing about how the world is or how it should be."

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**“In a nutshell, being an artist means having a free soul.”**

**Challenge**

As a creative person, working a desk-job was very difficult. It was a challenge for me to sit in an office for long hours. I couldn't wait to get out of my seat and go back to my studio, move around, draw and interact with my paint and brushes.

**Resolution**

I dedicated time each day to work on my art. With commitment to my craft along with proper time-management, I was able to create the balance I needed.



From left: HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal sharing Noura’s work at Misk Tweeps Forum; and artworks by Noura

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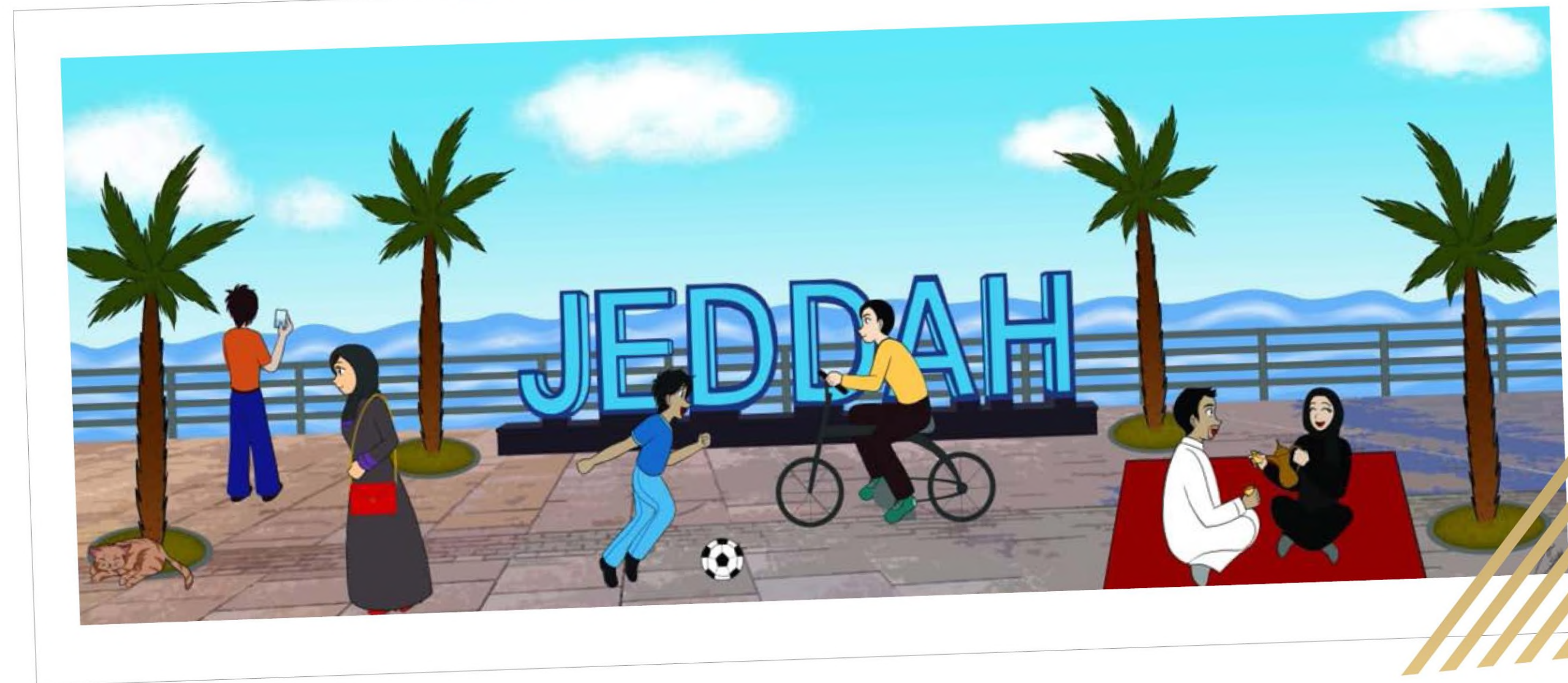
# Samah H. Kamil

Artist & Mangaka  
(manga artist)

Born in Jeddah, **Samah Kamil** is a freelance artist and Mangaka (manga artist). She obtained her master's degree from the College of Art and Design and her bachelor's degree in Islamic arts, both from King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah.

Samah stays active in the arts community by showcasing at exhibitions, events and competitions. She also lectures and gives workshops to further help art enthusiasts develop their skills.

She is an author of two books: *Tale of Proverb & The Art of Manga*. Her one-of-a-kind master's research is focused on manga and its historical developments and techniques and applying them to Saudi culture.



Clockwise from top right: Samah signing book for fans; and Samah's illustrations

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**Challenge**

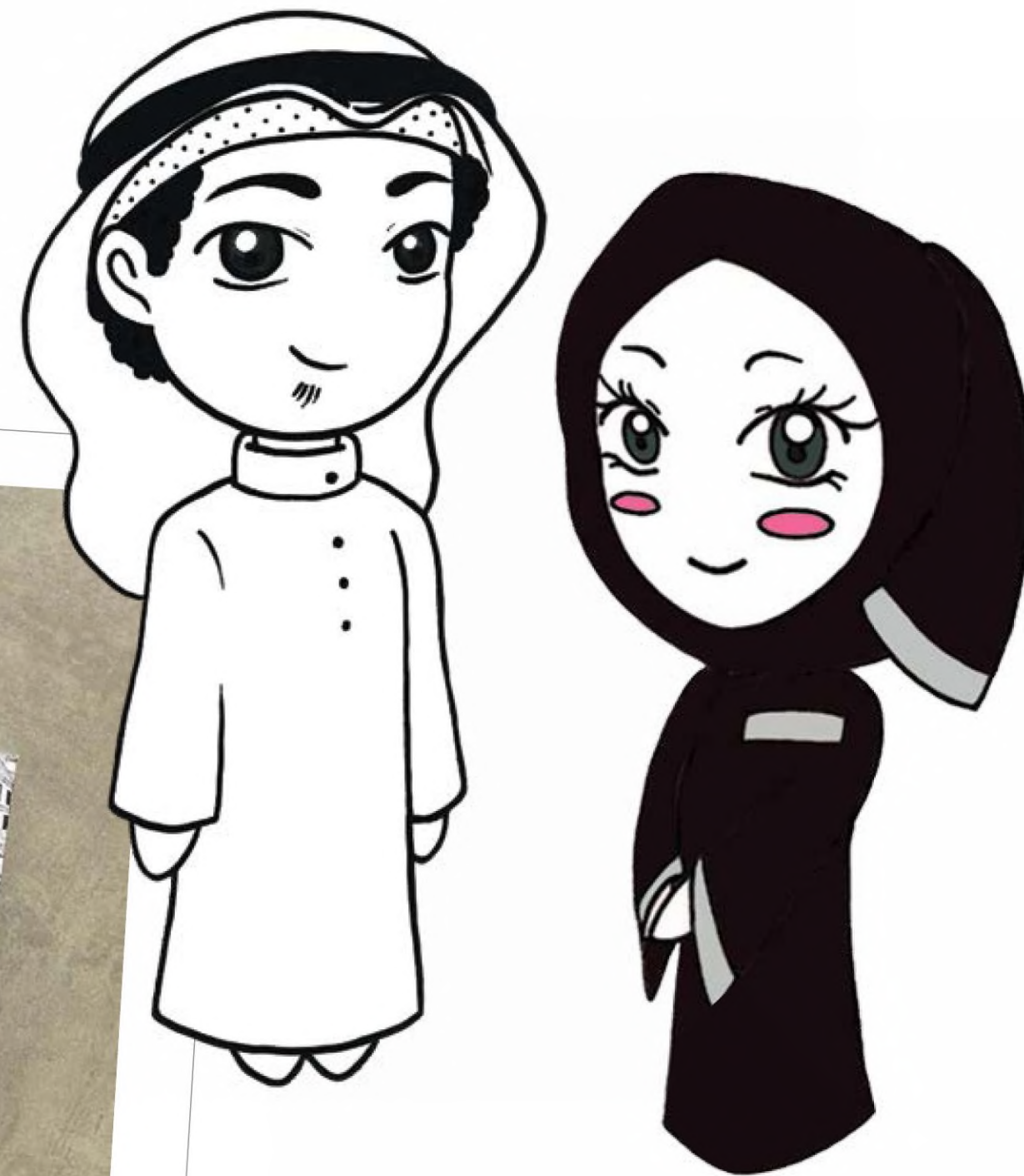
My biggest challenge was discussing my master’s research idea of illustrating Manga drawings and stories in Saudi and Arabic culture, a very novel and foreign idea, with a group of professors, as they were reluctant to approve the idea.

**Resolution**

With the support of my academic advisor, and my passion for my master’s research idea, I forged ahead and became the first Saudi woman to conduct master’s research about manga art in Saudi Arabia, and in the Arab world. I went on to publish two books on this topic.

From left: *The Art of Manga* by Samah H. Kamil; and Samah’s illustrations

**“No matter what happens, keep holding on to your dreams until they come true.”**



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