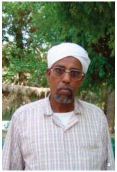
ARABIA FELIX
THE ARCHITECTURE OF YEMEN

This exhibition is the product of Salma Samar Damluji's long-lasting infatuation with the cities, landscape and architecture of Yemen.
It reconstructs and studies the original designs and plans of the country's magnificent buildings, painting a sensitive and perceptive picture of the cities and urban cultures established by generations of patrons and master builders.
It is a work that also acknowledges the ecological impact of architecture, as well as offering a celebration of the artistic skills involved in the creation of these buildings, which use materials drawn from the very earth and rock on which they are constructed: mud, *qirf*, stone, local plants and trees.

SALMA SAMAR DAMLUJI
AUTHOR AND ARCHITECT

1 In Tarīm, Munayṣūrah Palace (1995)


2 Master Builder ʿUbayd Yaʿmur, Tarīm (2005)

3 On a visit to Suqutra (Socotra) (2006)

4 New Resort Site at Rās Furḍum, with Abdullah Ahmad Bugshan (2007)

Arabia has throughout history been an area of fascination to the intrepid traveller. When Freya Stark travelled to Ḥaḍramūt in the 1930s she was unique as a lone female traveller. Although today tourism makes much of the world more accessible, one should not underestimate the tenacity, effort and bravery required by Dr Damluji as she travelled through this tough country, in a society not familiar with independent women. Her valuable work in recording buildings that can so easily disappear plays an important role in documenting this rich architectural culture, reinforcing its role in creating a relevant contemporary architecture.

5 At Bayḥān al ʿUlyā with Ḥusayn Ḥashwān, A R Zubaidi and ʿAyẓah al Laqīṭī (2005)

6 With Prime Minister Abdul Qader Ba Jammal and Koichiro Matsuura, Director General of Unesco, Sayʾūn (2006)

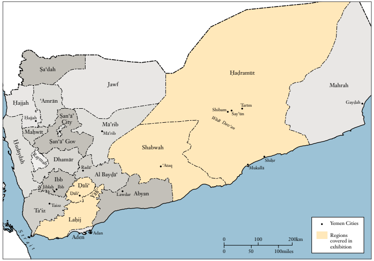
7 With master builders Yaʿmur and Bā Ḥuraysh and Tarīm Municipality secretary (2005)

8 Rajab Bā Ghazāl: Master Craftsman, Builder, and travel companion, Tarīm (1992)

9 A Bedouin lady near Hajarayn (2006)

10 In conversation with Nūr at Naḥūlah, Dawʿan (2006)

LOCATED IN THE SOUTH WEST CORNER OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA, YEMEN WAS AT THE CENTRE OF A NETWORK OF EARLY URBAN CIVILIZATIONS THAT PRODUCED ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST DISTINGUISHED ARCHITECTURAL INSTITUTIONS.


Ṣa'dah
Jawf
Ḥaḍramūt
Mahrah
Ḥajjah
'Amrān
Ḥajjah
Ṣan'ā' City
Maḥwīt
Ma'rib
Ma'rib
Ṣan'ā' Gov
Ḥudaydah
Raymah
Dhamār
Shabwah
'Ataq
Shibam
Say'ūn
Tarīm
Wādī Daw'an
Ghaydah
Shiḥr
Mukallā
Radā'
Al Bayḍā'
Ibb
Jiblah
Ibb
Ḍāli'
Ḍāli'
Yāfi'
Lawdar
Abyan
Taizz
Ta'iz
Laḥij
Aden
'Adan
Strait
Yemen Cities
Regions covered in exhibition
0 100 200km
0 50 100miles

This discipline, which remained active into the last decades of the twentieth century is responsible for the extraordinary urban fabric that can still be seen today. Some of the towers and skyscrapers that populate the towns and villages of Yemen have stood for over 300 years – a testament to the skill of the master builders and craftsmen who designed and constructed them.

The importance of Yemen's architectural heritage extends beyond the magical capital city of Ṣan'ā'. This exhibition highlights the unique architecture from Yāfi' to Ḥaḍramūt.

Thanks to Dr Damluji's exhaustive research, spanning over two decades, we have a record of the heritage that is being lost. This line of enquiry has unearthed a creative vision of architecture, one that emphasises its civic role in the context of urban development, regeneration and renewal.

1 Ṣan'ā's upper storeys built in fired bricks; laced façades and decorative brickwork

2 Postcard of the Grand Royal Hotel in Aden (former Hotel de l'Univers of c. 1890) still standing at Steamer Point

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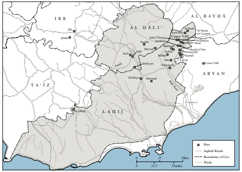
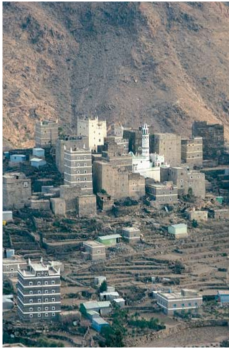
LAḤIJ
STONE AND SKYSCRAPERS


IBB
Ibb
Jiblah
AL ḌĀLI'
AL BAYḌĀ
TA'IZ
LAḤIJ
ABYAN
Upper Yāfi'
Lower Yāfi'
Al Hadd
Al Yamm (or Lamm)
Banī Bakr
Jabal Thamar
Qudmah
Al Ḥuṣayn
'Antar
Masjid al Nūr
Sawayda'
Asqalah
Lab'us
Manfarah
Jurbah
Miflīḥī
Yahr
'Aqabil
Shu'ayb
Kabe
Ḍāli'
Dubiyyat
'Ahkariyah
Ḥabilayn
Mawṣtah
Wādī Bana
Al Jahlah
Sites
Asphalt Roads
Boundaries of Gov.
Wadis
0 25 50km
0 12.5 25miles



Al Ḍāli'

'… we wound up three thousand feet (we are already six thousand up here) to where the Emir
I think we saw as great a view as anywhere in the world – mountains studded on their lower p
towers, and here and there terraces and cultivated hollows, and ahead of us the blue wall of th

1 City of al Ḍāli'

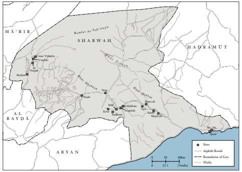
2 Panoramic view of Jirbah, the capital of Miflīḥī (in the front left-hand corner is the Bin Wais House)

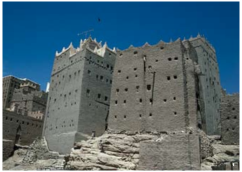
has a mountain fort.
eaks with fortress
ne Yemen.' Freya Stark, 1939

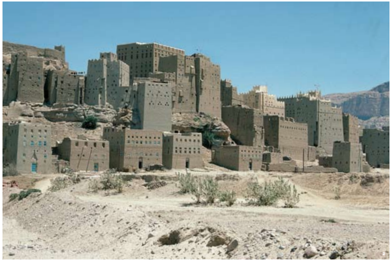
3 The town of 'Awābil. View from the entrance to the village

4 'Antar with absent *tashārīf* in all the housing

SHABWAH
MUD BRICK AND DESERT PALACES


MĀ'RIB
Ramlat As-Sab'atayn
SHABWAH
HADRAMŪT
Umm 'Uthayn
Usaylān
Al Nuqub
Bayhan
Wādī Jirdān
Wādī Markhah
'Atāq
Nişab
Wādī Ḥabbān
Ḥawṭah
Ḥabbān
Sūfal
Şa'īd
Yashbum
Naqabah
'Ayn
'Azzān
Mayfa'ah
Bir 'Ali
Qana'
AL BAYḌĀ
ABYAN
Sites
Asphalt Roads
Boundaries of Gov.
Wadis
0
20
40km
0
12.5
25miles





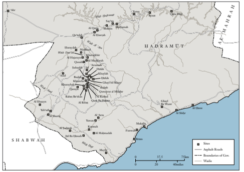
Bayḥān & Ḥabbān

'On the mountain spurs stood a few towers of bold and harmonious proportions whose strong constructional lines indicated that we were approaching the country of architects. The Hadhramaut is their homeland and the wadis falling in that direction show more of this art, the one treasure salvaged from the wreck of an ancient civilization.' D. van der Meulen, 1947

1 Ḥawṭah. Close-up of the traditional generous housing

2 Tall clustered towers and mansions with more recent houses along the wādī

ḤAḌRAMŪT
STONE, SHALE AND MU

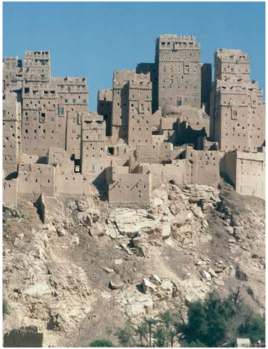

'Alir
Wādī Ḥaḍramawt
Tarim
'Aynat
Qabr Hūd
Say'ūn
Shibām
Maryamah
Al Qaṭn
Al Ḥawṭah
Qa'ūdah
Wādī Al 'Ayn
HADRAMŪT
AL MAHRAH
Ḥuraydah
Wādī Dawʿan
Al Hajarayn
Al Mashhad
Qaydūn
'Amd
Wādī 'Amd
Al Ḥusayn
Al Shaḥr
Al Ḥāmī
Ghayl Bā Wazīr
Al 'Arus
Yuwan
Mukalla
Fuwwah
Burum
Al Sadarah
Jul Ba Ḥawah
Al Mahmadah
Wādī Ḥajr
Mayfa'
SHABWAH
Sites
Asphalt Roads
Boundaries of Gov.
Wadis
0
37.5
75km
0
20
40miles

1 Wādī al Kasr, beginning of Wādī Ḥaḍramūt proper

D BRICK SKYSCRAPERS

Mukallā & Shiḥr

'After a two-day journey we arrived in Mukalla harbour at the hour of morning prayer. The dazzling white town, huddled together on a narrow strip of land, rises straight up from the sea's deep blue surface against the bright red background of a towering mountain wall. Hard by the coast stands the massive soaring minaret, dominating the town, from whose heights the call to the faithful is sounded.' Hans Helfritz, 1956



Wādī Ḥajr

'The percentage of good looks is high in Yuwan, where the women have shapely, tapering faces, broad foreheads, wide full lips and straight noses, but they sometimes mar their appearance by tattooing, and the young married women consider it attractive to paint the upper half of their faces yellow and the lower half green.' Doreen Ingrams, 1939

2 Mukallā, the old town

3 A traditional weaver in Ḥawṭah quarter

4 Al Shiḥr; view across the old town

5 The whitewashed domes of Quẓaymatī mosque

6 Close-up of Kanīnah

7 The town of Jūl Bā Ḥāwah

8 Ghayl Bā Ḥkūm, last settlement in Wādī Daw'an

9 Looking down at Wādī Daw'an from Shitnah

Wādī Daw‘an

‘I was not prepared for the plunging suddenness, the sheer drop of the gulf upon which we gazed in failing light. The upper part of the cliff facing us still held the red light of the day; but below, the gorge fell sheer a thousand feet into deepening shadow, amethyst and violet and indigo, and further, out of eye-range, into darkness at the bottom.’ Donald Foster, 1969

10 City of Hajarayn at the mouth of Daw‘an

11 Qarn Bā Ḥakīm, near Rabāṭ Bā ‘Shan

12 Buḍā, previous spiritual capital and abode of Āl Āmūdī

13 Ḥayd al Jazīl, from Rās Furḍum, and the end of Laysar looking south

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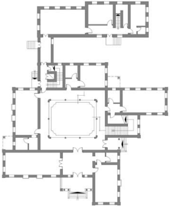
A PROJECT WITH MO
BUILT FOR PRIME MI
THE CONSTRUCTION
APPRECIATION OF AN



1 View from the farm looking south across the wādī and plateaux

RE CONTEMPORARY IMPACT IN SAY‘ŪN IS THE HOUSE NISTER ‘ABDUL QĀDIR BĀ JAMMĀL AT MARYAMAH IN 2005. OF THIS HOUSE IN MUD BRICK EXPRESSES A LONG-STANDING ND RESPECT FOR THE SKILL OF TARĪM’S MASTER BUILDERS.

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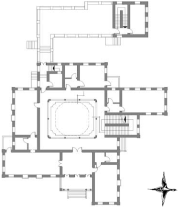
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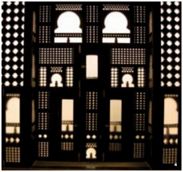
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7

2 From left to right: Ground floor; First floor

3 Looking out over the pool and shading structure

4 Rawshan carved screen covering the entire balcony on the first floor

5 View of the South façade

6 Window from the first-floor living room looking out over the pool and shading structure

7 Master builder Maḥfūẓ bin ‘Awaḍ Ya‘mur (left) with ‘Abdullah bil Khayr (right), site manager at the main house *siddah* entrance