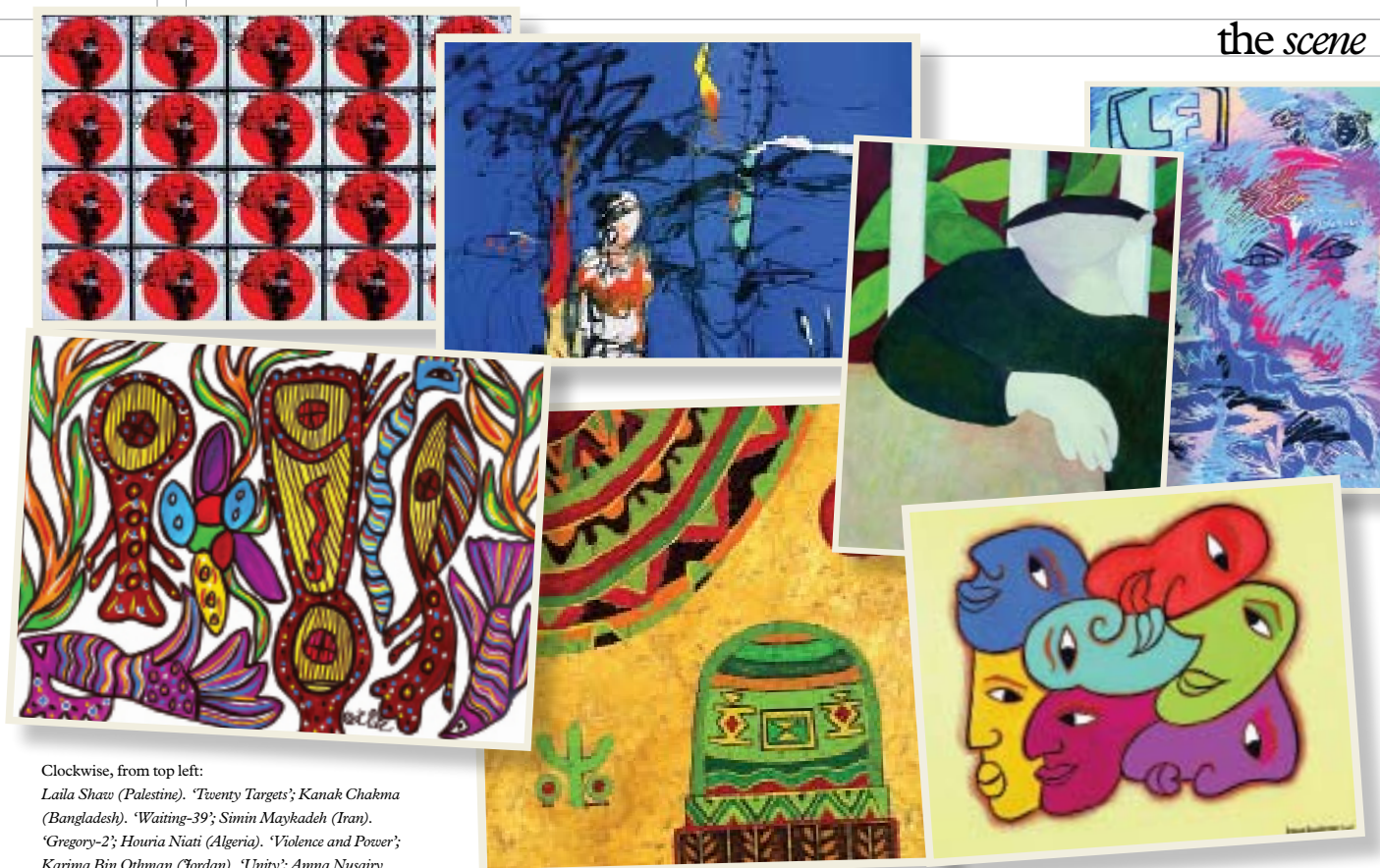


the scene

# Breaking **the** Veils

72 Contemporary artworks. 52 formidable women. 21 Islamic countries: 'Breaking the Veils: Women Artists from the Islamic World' tours the US.

*Meriam Bouderbala (Tunisia). Untitled.*



Clockwise, from top left:

Laila Shav (Palestine). 'Twenty Targets'; Kanak Chakma (Bangladesh). 'Waiting-39'; Simin Maykadeh (Iran). 'Gregory-2'; Houria Niati (Algeria). 'Violence and Power'; Karima Bin Othman (Jordan). 'Unity'; Anna Nusairy (Yemen). Untitled; Baya (Algeria). Untitled.

**A**fter touring 15 European cities and Australia, US not-for-profit organisation, The ArtReach Foundation, was chosen by the Royal Society of Fine Arts, Jordan and the Pan-Mediterranean Women Artists Network, Greece (*Femme-Art-Méditerranée*, or FAM) to host 'Breaking the Veils: Women Artists from the Islamic World' for its three-year North American tour. ArtReach, founded 10 years ago by Susan Anderson, CEO, seeks to help children worldwide who have become victims of war, violence and natural disaster. By training teachers and professionals, it uses creative art and therapies to help these children's growth and development.

With Delta Airlines onboard as the official airline sponsor, 'Breaking the Veils' hopes to dispel stereotypes and prejudices against women from the Islamic world by introducing American audiences to the artists through their work. It features an astounding selection of Contemporary art by well-established female artists - some veiled, some not - from Islamic countries as diverse as Sudan, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Turkey, Iran and Indonesia, as well as the Gulf states and North Africa. The art covers a range of media, from oils, acrylics and watercolours to silk-screens, etchings, collages, treated photographic print and dried cacti (yes, dried cacti).

Launched at the Clinton Presidential Centre in Little Rock, Arkansas on 20 June of this year, the spectacular event was attended by HRH Princess Wijdan Al-Hashemi, PhD, Founder

and President of the Royal Society of Fine Arts, Jordan and the Jordanian Ambassador to Italy. Also present was Aliko Moschis-Gauguet, Founder and President of FAM and Dr Khalid Khreis, Director General of the Royal Society of Fine Arts, Jordan and the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, as well as the curator of the 'Breaking the Veils' international tour. The exhibition hopes to end its tour at the United Nations in June 2011.

Moschis-Gauguet has summarised the exhibition by stating that "After September 11, there was a lot of talk about women in Islam and how repressed they were. We assembled this collection for tour in the US and Europe with the hope of breaking the stereotypes of women in Islam, and to show the output of gifted women artists - Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu - who live within Islamic civilisation and contribute to the cultural heritage of this region."

Speaking at the inauguration of the tour on 19 September 2002 at Porte d'Amboise in Rhodes, Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan, a fierce advocate of women's rights, said "They [the artists] have something in common that is more important than any dissimilarity. That 'something' is the essence of Islamic art, of all art. It is the spirit of creativity and humanity. Real art connects. It connects us with ourselves and one another. It leads us to discover new truths and helps to illuminate the humanity we share. The work of these artists lights up not only the Islamic world, but the human world as well. Through this exhibit they are helping to break the veils of misunderstanding and ignorance."