



### **Smuggling Pomegranate Pavilion (SPP)**

It is a multifaceted programme working with and around cultural practice in the Middle East and North Africa. SPP consists of exhibitions, projects, performances, lectures, discussions, and new techniques for mediating the public's reactions to art and its contexts. It operates as a researcher-in-tour program in partnerships with local organizations and culture practitioners. A team of artist, architect, designer, critic and myself will coordinate the touring programme. The residency will commence in Mesopotamia (Iraq-Syria) where is thought the tent design originated, working with the Bedouin on design and weave the tent, which will be woven from the hair of domesticated sheep and goats. The tour program will take places in Baghdad, Damascus, Amman, Cairo, Tripoli, Tunis, Alger, Marrakesh, Cordoba and Madrid.

The tent will be the mobile centre of operations that contains spaces for a library, café and auditorium to host the programme – including exhibitions, performances, talks, film screenings and workshops on writing about art, architecture and design that would encouraging critical debate in the Middle East and North Africa. A library will be developed as a peripatetic resource; a collection of catalogues, books, artists' books, CDs and DVDs. The program offers a forum for direct exchange of professionals – artists, architects, designers, theoreticians, critics, and curators – from the scheduled countries, as well as a point of interaction with local interested audiences. One of the topics on board is Nomadic dwelling; what role can artist, architect and designer play with respect to the need of 21st century man whose life, work and leisure is not secluded to one place any more?

The work programme is about crossing boundaries and the creative potential that exists when different cultures and different forms of artistic expression. There is obviously a compelling need in the world today for more exchanges across cultures, art forms, and ways of understanding. The program strives to bring new ideas, talents, and energy into the world of contemporary cultural practice. In the realm of globalized ideas of progress, art has come to express a certain degree of sameness around the world. The focus of art practice is to employ the richness, diversity and depth of cultures to animate artistic concepts in a geo-political context. Therefore we need more than ever to understand and cherish all cultural diversities and contributions of various cultures and societies. Contemporary art is not an international movement of style which can be located within one specific culture, one single history or space, but rather as a set of cultural translations. The global condition demands culturally, politically, socially and environmentally conscious art practice.

*We cannot experience a cultural product, if we do not understand the forces that affect its practice.*

SPP programme operates at various levels in terms of the size, content and scope with a variety of local contacts and venues both formal and informal. This sustains diversity in the reach and scope of the programme operating with galleries and museums as well as local authorities, colleges, voluntary committees, groups and community organisations. SPP Programme reinforces existing arts developments at a local level and promotes further awareness, investment and development. The Education and Community Programme is an integrated part of SPP overall structure. The Programme engages with a broad range of publics on many levels from guided tours, seminars and symposia to a variety of workshop programmes exploring artworks and artists' work practice. All programmes and projects are designed to place participants on an equal footing with artists, creating a forum where artists can meet people and people can meet artists, where meaningful exchange can take place, so that both parties acquire new understandings of issues explored. This can be experienced through practical workshops, dialogue and exhibitions. Small focus groups will be formed to create learning experiences from which to extract models of good quality arts educational practice within an inter/national context. Simultaneously SPP works at policy level through inter-organisation or agency contact, shared programmes, public debates, symposia and on working parties when appropriate. This creates a series of ever-widening networks, each working through its own means of communication, thus broadening the involvement of SPP and its activities.

The Pavilion design concept is inspired by tent structure used by the Bedouin. A transformative vast tent will be constructed out of lightweight 'veil'; woven strips from the hair of sheep and goats, giving the tent/pavilion a dynamic, environmentally responsive and functional form. An overlapping form of tents will give an illusion of fluidity while at the same time creating a variety of internal spaces. The combination of internal and external spaces will provide both enclosed conditioned spaces and open, non-conditioned spaces. Separate areas within the Pavilion will contain spaces for a Library, café and an auditorium, where events program will be presented, including performances, talks, film screenings. Variety of internal spaces will interweave all-the-while without touching, allowing air, light and sound to travel through narrow slits in a state that is both open and likewise tending toward closure, the pavilion will be a free standing and accessible from all sides. It is a space that will facilitate the inclusion of individuals in communal dialogue and shared experience. The pavilion structure will reveal an entirely new perspective of the hosted venue. Functionally, The tent cloth will be woven loosely to allow heat dispersal and regulate temperatures. The tent provides shade from the hot sun, as well as insulation on cold nights. During rainstorms, the yarn swells up, thus closing the holes in the weave and preventing leaks. The goat's hair is naturally oily, which has an added effect of repelling the water droplets. The flattened shape of the tent roof will be aerodynamically designed so that it cannot be blown away by sudden gusts, or by more prolonged windy conditions. It provides shade and shelter, allowing the public to attend the events in comfort. The pavilion will create an architecture that marries aesthetic and technical simplicity, defining a new architectural language that plays with space, light and perception. The tent (pavilion) will be seen, as an eye-catching temporary structure and a prominent feature of the city cultural landscape. It will be a place of discovery, intimacy and gathering.

I am consistently interested in questioning the boundaries of art, architecture and design, and experimenting with new spatial concepts intensifying existing urban landscapes in the search of a visionary aesthetic that encompasses all fields of design, ranging from urban scale through to products, interiors and furniture. SPP seeks for adventurous, alternative and even radical impressions of what contemporary cultural practice might be.

### **The Bedouin tent**

The Bedouin tent has been a dwelling-place for man since the dawn of history. Varying geographical features and differences in the culture of its dwellers may have altered its design, but its essential qualities are unchanging: a tent needs to be flexible, and it must be lightweight. The Bedouin of the Arabian Desert uses a black tent known as the *beit al-sha'r*, or 'house of hair'. These tents are woven from the hair of domesticated sheep and goats, and their design is thought to have originated in Mesopotamia. The animal hair is woven into strips of coarse cloth known as *fala'if*, which are then sewn together. The natural colour of the animal is retained – mainly black goat's hair, with occasional addition of sheep's wool, which gives the tent a streaked, brown/black appearance. The tent cloth is woven loosely to allow heat dispersal. Although the black colour absorbs the heat, it is still between 10 and 15-degree cooler inside the tent than outside. The tent provides shade from the hot sun, as well as insulation on cold desert nights. During rainstorms, the yarn swells up, thus closing the holes in the weave and preventing leaks. The goat's hair is naturally oily, which has an added effect of repelling the water droplets, so the tent's occupants can remain comparatively dry. The flattened shape of the tent roof is aerodynamically designed so that it cannot be blown away by sudden gusts, or by more prolonged windy conditions common in the desert. The exceptional length of the hempen tent ropes also assists wind resistance, as the ropes act as shock absorbers. An additional advantage of these long ropes is that they can act as trip wires to protect the tent's occupants from unwelcome intruders. Marco Polo once described a tent used by Arabian Desert Bedouin on a hunting trip. Its ropes were made of silk and it was lined with ermines and sables and coated with the skins of lions. The interior was large enough to accommodate 10,000 soldiers and their officers. Impressive indeed and very different from the humbler version used by the Bedouin people. However, for practicality, durability and adherence to tradition, the *beit al-sha'r*, or 'house of hair' is a winning design proved by centuries of use.



