

Explore Saudi Arabia
an event at the
V&A

An Evaluation

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SUMMARY

It is a compliment to Great Britain people to do this and to tell of other cultures. The children take something away... Communication is most important (Saudi Visitor to event).

Explore Saudi Arabia was a three-day festival of traditional events held at the V&A on the occasion of the State Visit of the Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah ibn Abdul Aziz to the United Kingdom. The festival was from the 30 October to the 1st November 2007.

This evaluation planned to find out how successful the event was in achieving the aims as set by the V&A. The aims and approach were based on an earlier cultural outreach project *Image and Identity* held in November 2006 but developed and built upon in an initial meeting with Nighut Yousuf, the Jameel Gallery Schools Manager.

Key findings were:

- The majority of visitors and school groups in particular had a stimulating and enjoyable experience, and appreciated *Explore Saudi Arabia*, an event held from the 30th October to the 1st November.
- Pupils particularly enjoyed the hands-on approach and the opportunity to learn about another culture from young people of that culture. They also enjoyed the opportunity to find out their own name in Arabic when it was written for them for their identity badge.
- The aims set for the event were largely successful with 78% of visitors saying they now understood more about Arab culture and in particular that found in Saudi Arabia, a figure higher than the 65% stated in the aim. Ninety four percent of visitors also agreed that the event offered creative opportunities.
- Teachers felt the opportunity to be immersed in another culture was important.
- Generally the organisation was good considering the large number of children visiting in such a short space of time.
- Visitors did appear to understand the traditional elements of the event too.
- They were able to link their visit to art and literature work at school and thus this added an extra focus for the visit.
- Adult visitors especially enjoyed the art demonstrations.
- All participating artists valued the opportunity to show their skills to others.
- Only 205 of visitors felt that the event helped direct attention towards specific areas of the museums collections and related objects.
- The Saudi organisations felt that their aim to achieve a greater understanding of Saudi culture had been achieved.

Key Issues

- Most members of the public enjoyed the event but a small minority were frustrated by the lack of interpretation – for example in the photographic exhibition.
- Visitors also found the photographic exhibition to be poorly lit and hung too high.
- Those visitors with more knowledge were frustrated with the inclusion of art activities that were clearly not from Saudi Arabia (they had a wider Islamic cultural origin). They felt the link to other Islamic cultures was inappropriate and that a link to the Jameel Gallery was inappropriate.
- Two adult visitors of the 32 interviewed were perturbed or upset that the V&A should compromise its own reputation in accepting funding for an event from Saudi Arabia as they were unhappy about the politics there and felt that the V&A should not accept funding from the country or present such an event without any reference to other issues.
- Some of the sessions at the Ardabil carpet coincided with the light being out – this was unfortunate and meant that the children could not see the detail. Events need to schedule accordingly.

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1.0 Introduction

Explore Saudi Arabia was a three-day festival of traditional events held at the V&A on the occasion of the State Visit of the Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah ibn Abdul Aziz to the United Kingdom. The festival, from the 30 October to the 1st November 2007 included music, dance, storytelling, art and an exhibition of previously un-exhibited historic photographs celebrating the long-standing friendship of the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia.

Publicity on the Museum flyer suggested a visitor could “*immerse yourself in Saudi Arabian art and culture*”.

All activities were free with sessions for schools being for pre-booked 7-12 year olds.

1.1 Evaluation aims

This evaluation planned to find out how successful the event was in achieving the aims as set by the Victoria and Albert Museum. The aims and approach was based on an earlier cultural outreach project *Image and Identity* held in November 2006 but developed and built upon in an initial meeting with Nighut Yousuf, the Jameel Gallery Schools Manager.

The evaluation aims were thus established in relation to the impact on visitors and were as follows:

Quantitative:

- 40% diverse school audiences
- 25% profile of general museum visitors

Qualitative:

- 65% of participants asked say they have increased understanding of the relationship between art and Arab cultures
- 65% of participants asked say that their appreciation of Arab culture has increased.
- 35% of participants say the programme has encouraged creativity
- 65% of artists and designers from Arab backgrounds have valued the opportunity to showcase their work/skills

with specific areas to be considered:

- visitors have an increased awareness and appreciation of connections between art, museum collections and the Arab culture
- increased interaction between communities
- exploration of differences and commonalities
- creativity and links to collections
- provide a valuable experience for artists
- attract diverse audiences

Key groups for evaluation were:

- *Priority* – teachers and pupils
- *Supplementary* – adults visiting independently and artists
- Those organising the events and the artists providing demonstrations

2.0 Methodology

The V&A were keen that the evaluation should use the *Image and Identity* evaluation approach as much as possible so that comparisons could be made across cultural activities. With a different priority audience and associated learning outcomes this was altered accordingly. The survey used in *Image and Identity* was adapted for use with a small sample of adult visitors, while separate key questions were developed for teachers, artists and organising teams. These can be found in appendix 1.

Data collection approaches were:

- Survey/ short interviews with adult visitors
- Short interviews with artists and organisers
- In-depth interviews with teachers
- Observations of event and particularly of school sessions, with tracking as appropriate
- Emailed surveys to all teachers and schools to gather data linked to key questions to enhance interview data. *Unfortunately despite several attempts to contact teachers only one reply was received.*

Data was collected on all three days as follows:

- 30th October 2007
 - Familiarisation with event strands etc
 - Observation of each activity/event
 - Focused observation of school groups in workshop sessions
 - Interviews with teachers and organising staff
 - Limited number of interviews with members of the public
- 31st October 2007
 - Observation of school groups
 - Interviews with teachers and organising staff
 - Interviews with members of the public
- 1st November 2007
 - Final observations of school groups and interviews with teachers
 - Summative interviews with organising staff
 - Focus on interviews with members of the public

Within in the three days it was impossible to cover all audience groups equally and thus the priority audience, schools, remained the central focus.

3.0 Observations

Much of the activity during the three days took place in the Raphael Gallery and included:

- Ardha dance
- Music (and sing along) with professional musicians
- Making of an Islamic art screen using colouring of appropriate patterns
- Traditional costumes from Saudi Arabia to try on
- Carom board games to play
- Photographic exhibition
- Artist demonstrations from the Prince's School of Traditional Arts

Elsewhere visitors could:

- Listen to stories in the Neru Gallery
- Listen to the Oud being played in the Jameel Gallery
- View films in the Lecture Theatre on the natural environment in Saudi Arabia

There were also a number of special activities for school groups held in the workshop rooms close by:

- 3D geometry
- 2D geometry
- Patterns inspired by plants

3.1 A typical school group visit

Each session started with an introduction from a Saudi representative. This then followed with writing in English and Arabic of individual names on badges. The children were then split into a number of groups and rotated around a number of different sessions, allowing for greater interaction and participation.

*Each child gets help writing their name on a badge in Arabic
The children are loving it. They are happy and enthusiastic...really keen to go and try on clothes (observation notes).*

Within the Raphael Gallery children were able to watch a sword dance by young men from the Saudi team and were then were able to join in. Other pupils were meanwhile trying on traditional dress or colouring in Arabic geometrical patterns. They were also able to receive a guided session on a small group of photographs of Saudi Arabia including discussion of life there or watch artists demonstrating their skills.

The children are very enthusiastic – they are nice photos and the children are interested but they want to touch - perhaps they need to sit down (observation notes).

At these two sessions (photographs and demonstrations) there were often too many children for them all to see everything and some found it hard to concentrate for the whole period. Some were also distracted by the more active sessions going on around them and were keen to try those out as soon as possible. With a large number of schools attending there was often several groups in the gallery at once but organisation was generally very good.

Elsewhere in the museum the children were able to colour and develop Arabic style art;

The graphic workshops are popular and give opportunity for children to design, draw and colour. The Shamsa technique produced some high quality

pieces... The workshop leaders are very good, giving appropriate support and an opportunity for children to develop their own ideas (observation notes).

They like art and so are enjoying this very much – some are really good at it (teaching assistant)

Some pupils also had opportunity for a guided session in the Jameel Gallery – concentrating on only a few objects and focusing largely on the Ardabil carpet. Sometimes not all could see but the approach with questions and appropriate language and themes meant that most children interacted and enjoyed themselves.

They are looking for clues ... looking closely to see if the carpet is actually symmetrical. However, the light has now gone out, but the teacher is pleased with pupil responses to the questions. A teacher commented that the gallery was very worthwhile (Observation notes).

Many groups were able to end the session with a singing session in Arabic with the Abdul Salam al keir – a very popular element.

All enjoyed the singing – they came out of the tent still singing the song and smiling .. (observation notes)

Each school was also given a number of different resources to take away with them.

Adult visitors enjoyed the lively atmosphere and enjoyed joining in. They especially liked the art demonstrations. Family groups on half term also engaged with children enjoying the activities.

3.2 Strengths

- Generally the events for pupils were well organised and organisers managed the large number of school groups well, providing a good range of activities for them to do.
- All children enjoyed their visit, especially the hand-on activities.
- The sessions in the Jameel Gallery were well led, the session leaders were responsive to the children and focused on 1 or 2 objects, getting pupils to look carefully and respond to questions. There was however a small number of children, one with Special Educational Needs, who found it hard to concentrate.
- The teachers were pleased with the interactive nature of the sessions and the way Saudi team members developed a good rapport with the children. Some commented that having men leading activities was good as this provided good role models for the children.
- The flexibility of sessions including the art workshops meant that children could develop their own creativity – even the boys enjoy the art and carefully worked at their creations.
- Despite the large number of school groups present most general visitors were not put off from looking around (although some did walk quickly through – probably using the space more as a corridor to get elsewhere). Some also joined in and tried things out including the colouring and dressing up
- Adults were particularly keen on the artist demonstrations

I've never seen anything like it – I make jewellery – very contemplative (adult visitor)

4.0 Feedback from Teachers

Feedback from teachers and support staff consisted of 16 interviews. These were undertaken during the museum visit and were thus informal and flexible. This often meant that the full list of questions was not covered.

Question	Summary of response
Have you enjoyed the event? What do you feel it has been about?	<p>All teachers said it was enjoyable and successful in achieving their aims. They all understood it was about Saudi Arabia and associated Islamic culture and traditions. They enjoyed the opportunity for children to do things, relate to the Saudi people and to try the art activities for themselves.</p> <p>Quotes from teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fantastic range of activities – longer to do each would be good</i> • <i>Brilliant and fantastic – we are really pleased with the session – it immerses the children in the culture. They have lots of enthusiasm.</i> • <i>I did think it would be good but it has really come off and fulfilled expectations. I like the games and clothes</i>
Has the day been useful for you and your pupils? What in particular was successful?	<p>All teachers were positive about the day and felt it had met their needs – either through the art themes or through the development of greater cross-cultural awareness. One school group was also linking to literature work at school on the Arabian Knights. Teachers were particularly pleased with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hands-on approach • art activities • singing and music • dance • trying on clothes • communication with people from Saudi Arabia – and especially the younger ones and the male role models showing activities such as Carom. <p>Quotes from teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An interesting topic – absolutely vibrant. It is good to have other children show them things... it is fun isn't it – really great – I'm enjoying it too. I didn't know about the objects elsewhere in Museum</i> • <i>We have come because we have an art week – focusing on Islamic Art - doing a special piece on canvas – so this fits in perfectly. They enjoy art – it is good to have hands on like this</i> • <i>We are really pleased with the session – it immerses the children in the culture</i> • <i>The singing is lovely though</i>
What areas of the curriculum has it usefully connected with?	<p>As stated above key areas were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural understanding • Art • Literature
Have there been any problems or issues?	<p>A number of minor issues were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure of the coach to pick up the children from

	<p>school at the right time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rushed programme – teachers would have liked longer at each activity and also time in the schedule in movement from one session to the next, and also a toilet stop! • Confusion of who was actually in charge of the group and its programme! One teacher said it seemed as if there was more than one person in charge and she wasn't sure whom she should follow. <p>Quotes from teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Problems with time – didn't all get to do everything</i> • <i>I would have liked longer so the pace could be slower ...also time to go to the toilet and get from A to B.</i> • <i>The only problem has been the coach (was late to collect them) and thus everything has been a bit rushed</i> • <i>I am slightly concerned that some (children) are disappearing elsewhere (for another activity) when I am in charge</i> • <i>I am not sure what we are doing next – or who is organising it.</i> • <i>The only problem was when half of the class missed the storytelling over some disorganisation (email feedback from one teacher)</i>
<p>Do you feel the event has successfully provided an opportunity to showcase the diversity of Arabic culture (prompt: past and present)?</p>	<p>Teachers were very impressed with the wide range of activities the pupils could join in with and also the cultural objects they could view.</p> <p>Teacher quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Boys did enjoy the objects in the gallery – it was interesting – they were very enthusiastic.</i> • <i>They like to join in and see it for real.</i> • <i>We saw it as a cultural learning experience but it has linked well with what we are doing at school.</i> • <i>It showed a good diversity of Arabic culture from past and present (email feedback from one teacher).</i> <p>The sessions in the Jameel Gallery and the hands-on activities linked past and present elements and the tradition of art within Islam. Not all groups had the Jameel gallery session and thus this aspect may well have been picked up. Some children, though, might also have taken on board the traditional aspects during of the art sessions and through sessions such as storytelling and music in their atmospheric Bedouin tents.</p>
<p>What do you think about the potential of events such as this to encourage links towards specific areas of the museums collections</p>	<p>Some of the school groups were able to have a short session in the Jameel Gallery and they were given opportunity to develop a wider knowledge and in particular a potentially greater awareness of historic objects such as the Ardabil carpet.</p>

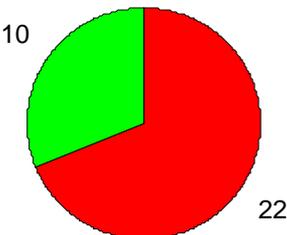
<p>such as the Islamic Middle East Gallery, the Jameel Gallery?</p>	<p><u>Links to Islamic past in general</u> Nearly all school groups also participated in geometric and plant inspired art workshops. Here they learnt about the traditional approaches to art in Islam and spent time creating their own patterns and Shamsa prints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There is great potential to encourage links between your event and areas of the museum collections especially the Jameel Gallery (email feedback from one teacher).</i> <p>It seems unlikely that all pupils would have been able to make links with relevant museum objects but they would have grasped a strong tradition of the arts with Islam. One teacher did comment that it was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Very much about the present.</i>
<p>Would you say that it has provided links between Arab-inspired culture and our own?</p>	<p>Teachers were very keen that Islamic pupils were able to explain and share their culture with others in their class; however a link to our own culture was not specifically highlighted.</p> <p>Teacher quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We have Islamic youngsters and so it is good that they are able to explain to others about their lives</i> • <i>There are some really good at visual activities and some have Arabic origins and this is a good opportunity for them (pupils) to share their knowledge and culture</i> <p>But one emailed response from a teacher did not feel the links were there:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The event did not provide link between the Arab culture and our own.</i>
<p>We are planning educational resources for the Jameel gallery – is there anything you would find particularly useful</p>	<p>Most of the teachers interviewed had not been to the Jameel gallery at the time of interviewing. Those that had enjoyed the session; the leaders generally used appropriate language and engaged the children in question and answer sessions that the pupils found engaging.</p> <p>Pupil attention was maintained (excepting one or two special needs children or those with less ability to concentrate). Teachers liked the gallery and the opportunity to look at real artefacts and thought the led session good.</p> <p>Teacher Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Very good – they really enjoyed it.</i> • <i>The gallery (Jameel) visit was worthwhile as many of our group are Islamic and thus have a context to put it in – yes good.</i> • <i>Most are interested in the gallery ...boys did enjoy the objects in the gallery – it was interesting – they were very enthusiastic.</i> • <i>It would be useful if the carpet was lit up – the children had been told about it and it was an anticlimax (email from one teacher).</i>

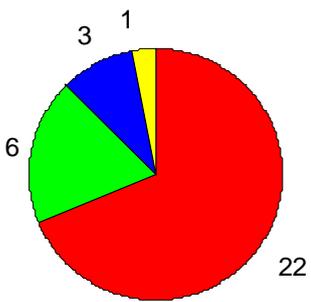
In summary teachers were very happy with the session, except one or two small logistical issues. The V&A aims were generally achieved but links to the Jameel Gallery were rather weak.

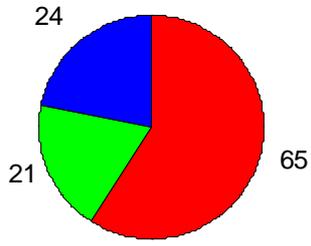
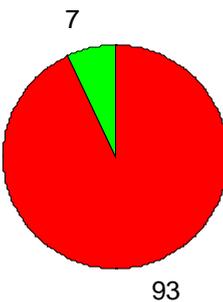
5.0 Feedback from the general public

We have just been to Egypt so I wanted to show the children a different Islamic culture – probably much the same to them but I thought it would be good to see costumes and artwork. We came yesterday and saw it and so we have come back today (Mother).

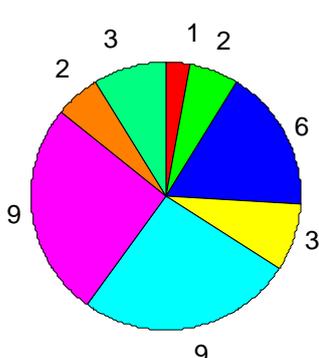
The table below summarises the 32 responses to the visitors' survey. The slight variation in the total number of responses to each question relates to the recording of a couple's/families different views or to the fact that not all interviews covered all questions (some were conducted in a more informal way if time was short or they had to respond to pupils).

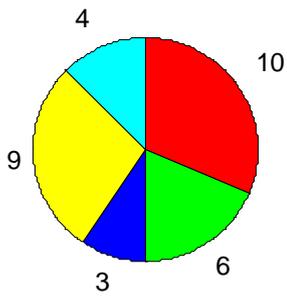
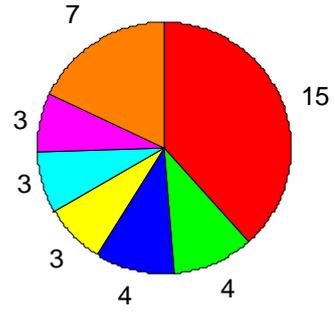
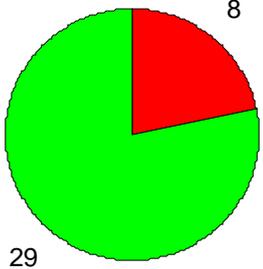
Question	Response
Have you ever visited the V&A before?	Yes 11 No 9 Not asked 12
Did you plan to visit the Arabic Cultural event today?	<p>Yes 10 No 22</p>  <p>Most respondents had not heard of the event before they arrived at the Museum. This is not surprising as the key audience group was schools and thus only a small amount of wider publicity was done prior to the event. Visitors did receive a flyer upon entering the museum and some followed the direction of the music they could hear. Those that did intend to visit had either been on a previous day, had heard from a friend, or had seen an advert in the local or specialist press.</p>
How much would you say you have enjoyed your visit today?	<p>A great deal 22 (over 68%) A fair amount 6 Just a little 3 Not very much 1 Not at all 0</p>

	 <p>The majority (over 66%) said they enjoyed it a great deal. There were a small number who were unhappy with the event and their reasons for this are outlined in the discussion below. Others had only seen part of the gallery when interviewed and thus commented – <i>just seen a little so far</i>.</p>
<p>What do you think about the overall presentation/atmosphere of the event?</p>	<p>The majority of participants liked the presentation and atmosphere. Many said lovely (9), great (9), good (5) and one said <i>fine</i>.</p> <p>Other comments: <i>It looks great – I wanted to see the Bedouin tent ...</i> <i>A lovely atmosphere</i> <i>A lovely atmosphere – especially for children</i></p> <p>3 people were less happy with one commenting; <i>Why is it happening?</i> Another was perturbed by the mix of Saudi and non-Saudi aspects (see discussion below).</p> <p>Total of approximately 84% of respondents were very positive about the atmosphere</p> <p>There were also a number of specific comments relating to the photograph exhibition;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the height of the photos (too high) • the low levels of lighting – thus making the photographic exhibition difficult to see. <p>Two others asked for more interpretation in the photos and another wanted more through out.</p>
<p>Would you say that it has increased your awareness of Arab-inspired cultural activities?</p>	<p>Twelve respondents said yes and others commented: <i>This is a good idea with links to Arabic Culture</i> <i>Yes – I enjoyed the demonstrations</i> <i>Going to Egypt soon so good to learn more</i> <i>Great multicultural experience</i> <i>Getting close to the crafts was best</i> <i>A good idea to link with Arabic culture</i> <i>An interesting topic – good to have the children to show them around</i> <i>Enjoyed the games</i></p>

	<p>Overall positive feedback was over 65%</p> <p>7 (21%) said No. 8 were not asked</p>  <p>Some were already informed and knowledgeable about Arabic culture – either because they were Arabic in origin or were interested in the topic. <i>I used to live there (Saudi Arabia)</i> <i>Interested in Princess Alice of Athlone (came to see the photos which included many of her)</i> <i>Proud of the event (from Saudi Arabia)</i></p>
<p>What do you think about the potential of events such as this to encourage creativity?</p>	<p>Overwhelming positive feedback 23 (approx 72%) said Yes. Others commented: <i>So good to see this – the V&A was set up to inspire through design</i> <i>Glad children enjoy it</i></p> <p><i>They love it – (their children)</i> <i>I want to bring back a group of young people to the V&A – I teach life skills – it would be really good</i></p> <p>Total positive feedback on creativity was over 93%</p>  <p>2 (7%) hadn't really realised it had creative activities for children – came to see the photographs <i>Yes but not for me – (an older person)</i></p> <p>Other comments asked for: <i>Food would be good too</i> <i>Something to take away would be good</i> <i>More information for children so they can create a story</i></p>

<p>Do you feel that the events have helped direct attention towards specific areas of the museums collections such as the Islamic Middle East Gallery, the Jameel Gallery ?</p>	<p>This was a difficult question for visitors to answer. Most respondents had not been in the Jameel Gallery yet and thus were not really able to make any links. Some (2) were aware of its existence and said that they might go in there later but were unable to make any further comment.</p> <p><i>Just going to the gallery now</i> <i>Not been in the gallery yet but yes it might</i></p> <p>3 respondents were interested in the art demonstrations and talked of the opportunity to see such traditional Islamic artwork and the associated artwork.</p> <p>3 others said that they thought it did help direct visitors to the gallery <i>I have been in the Jameel gallery – they link well and people seem to be going there</i> <i>Always go in the Costume gallery here but yes it helps</i> <i>Yes it does – we have been in the galleries here</i></p> <p>Total positive feedback on the event helping make links with objects was approximately 20%</p> <p>2 visitors were not sure.</p> <p>3 other respondents were less positive and focused on the event being Saudi and the gallery covering a much wider area and cultural heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Saudi doesn't have (this type of) art – the artists here are doing work linked to the Ottoman Empire.</i> • <i>Jameel gallery has nothing to do with Saudi Arabia</i> • <i>Interpretation (is needed) – dates, events, who, outcome of the visit (for the photographs).. also what about the history of Saudi Arabia, the language/script ... and the tent is too elaborate for a normal Bedouin tent (gentleman who used to live in Saudi Arabia and came especially to see and was very disappointed).</i>
<p>Do you plan to undertake anything as a result of your attendance today?</p>	<p>As most visitors came across the event rather than planning to see it they felt it unlikely that they would follow up with anything. A number were sight-seeing in London and thus had plans for other sites to see. One said she was on a <i>social visit</i>.</p> <p>Parents were bringing children to entertain and educate them during half-term and might continue with activities at home</p> <p>1 family took activities to do later (colouring) and 1 family took head-ware to try on.</p>

	<p>Three people took leaflets on the arts school Several families had come the previous day to the Museum and had seen the event and had come back to do and see more – and thus this was part of their follow-up from their first visit.</p> <p><i>Came yesterday my daughter is doing Islamic tiles at school so we came again ..(parent)</i></p> <p>1 lady said she would like to return with her students</p>
Age	<p>Under 16 1 16-17 2 18-24 6 25-34 3 35-44 9 45-54 9 55-64 2 65+ 3</p>  <p>The largest number of interviewees were between 35 and 54 and relate to the number of parents bringing children to see the event as part of the half term visit to the Museum (having come from elsewhere in the country, abroad or attend private schools)</p>
Did you come with anybody today	<p>Nineteen came as a group: 10 in family groups 6 as a couple and 3 in a group of friends ie roughly two thirds (66%)</p> <p>Nine came on their own; 3 were students studying in Britain 3 to see the exhibition particularly - one was a museum guide and one who came from the city especially.</p>

																									
<p>Ethnic Origin</p>	<table> <tr><td>White British</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>BME Asian</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Irish</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>White European</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>American</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Saudi Arabian</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Other (7):</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Japanese</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Iraqi</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Turkish</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Kenyan</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Philippines</td><td>1</td></tr> </table> 	White British	15	BME Asian	4	Irish	4	White European	3	American	3	Saudi Arabian	3	Other (7):		Japanese	2	Iraqi	2	Turkish	1	Kenyan	1	Philippines	1
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<p>Gender</p>	<table> <tr><td>Male</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>Female</td><td>29</td></tr> </table>  <p>The sample has a bias towards women. This did partly reflect the visitor profile but also the fact that in couples it was often the women who responded.</p>	Male	8	Female	29																				
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Female	29																								

One mother said;
They (the children) have enjoyed the costumes and the colouring – I have given them books to draw in so they can draw what they see. We live locally and have been to Egyptian wedding so we were looking forward to the dance.

Thoughts on how to improve it;
It was disappointing as they wanted to see other dances ...my daughter says 'they just wave their swords' and so we are disappointed. It is not necessary to join in but very much to see a greater variety... we might perhaps see some storytelling – we didn't know it was happening elsewhere.

Three people were particularly negative about the event. One couple were knowledgeable about the subject and were perturbed to find non Saudi Arabian art (demonstrations *influenced from Ottoman culture*). One lady was a Muslim from India and was very upset to find Saudi Arabian storytelling in the Nehru Gallery (and angry that the V&A should undertake an event linked to Saudi Arabia). Lastly, a British white gentleman who had worked in Saudi Arabia and was very knowledgeable about the country had many criticisms but these were largely linked to the need for more interpretation and clearer and more evident exhibition aims.

6.0 Feedback from Organising staff

I just go with the flow .. all is going well. I am glad it is all working and the children are enjoying it (Saudi Arabian leader).

A small number of informal interviews were undertaken throughout the three days with 7 of the Saudi team including greeters from the King Faisal Academy, ex-pupils who helped run events and event leaders recruited through the Saudi Embassy. Each of the leaders was spoken to more than once over the 3 days to glean a fuller picture.

We are proud to show people around and help them (Greeter)

The responses to the questions are summarised in the table below.

How do you feel the event has gone?	All staff spoken to felt that the event had gone very well. Some did mention the hard work that goes in before hand but said that it was worth it.
What has been particularly successful?	No particular aspect was highlighted – although individuals were pleased with the schools sessions and the response from the pupils. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Good for young people to develop with links to other cultures especially if not already exposed to in a mixed class or community (Head teacher helping organise event)</i> • <i>Children are enjoying it</i>
What problems have there been?	Various logistical issues were mentioned but they did emphasise these were only minor hiccups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various logistical problems of escorting groups of children to different parts of the museums. This

	<p>meant on occasions some confusion, and also session leaders for stories or in the Jameel Gallery not always getting groups when they expected them. However Saudi event leaders worked at developing the student's skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems with the coaches not picking up school groups when they had been timetabled to collect them • Long queues at security in the morning • Less flexibility within the museum than had been possible when helping at the Jameel Gallery opening when some events had been in the Garden and able to offer food etc. • <i>When we did activities in the summer we were outside and it meant that we could do more activities (Saudi organiser)</i>
<p>Has your organisation succeeded in achieving its aims?</p>	<p>All were entirely happy with the events and the schools visits and felt that their aim to achieve a greater understanding of Saudi culture (and Islamic aspects) had been achieved;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Worthwhile doing (Saudi event organiser)</i>
<p>Do you feel the event has successfully provided an opportunity to showcase the diversity of Arabic culture (prompt: past and present)?</p>	<p>Those interviewed focused on the current culture but also referred to the more traditional aspects such as the music, Bedouin tents and stories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hard work but worthwhile when got the feedback from the children. It is very much about cultural understanding (Saudi organiser).</i>

Informal interviews were also held with a number of key organisers from the V&A during the three days.

Key findings were:

- Satisfaction at the overall success of the event and especially the schools programme
 - *I think the most successful aspect of the Explore Saudi Arabia event was the musical workshop with Oud and Drum players in a Bedouin tent in the Raphael gallery. The musicians were true pros they created beautiful music and really engaged the children in the activity, which surrounded learning a short Saudi song and clapping in time, although this certainly wasn't the most seemingly educational activity of its type it really engaged all the children and public who dropped in with its beautiful music which filled the Raphael, I think it will be one of the most memorable activities from the event.*
 - *Most successful – the overall experience for the children who attended – within their 2-hour visit they were able to dip into a multi-sensory feast of activities. They all had a really good time.*
 - *That state schools were able to benefit from the event. The Saudi embassy were happy with the event*
- The extensive planning and preparation that was needed – all in a short space of time – meant that other normal work had to be placed on the back burner.

7.0 Feedback from artists

A small number of interviews (4) were undertaken with artists, and in particular those providing demonstrations in the Raphael Gallery. All had connections with the Prince's School of Traditional Arts and provided opportunity for visitors to find out about a range of techniques used in Islamic Art.

Has the Cultural Arabic event provided a useful opportunity for their work	All were very positive and said it had been an excellent opportunity to show their work to others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Really enjoy the opportunity – I find if you give fine brushes etc to children they do fine careful work.</i> • <i>An opportunity to practice ideas and improve - some are interested, others not.</i>
What has been particularly successful?	All agreed that showing the range of approaches to visitors – young and old – had been a really valuable experience. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Thoroughly enjoyable – it doesn't matter that you don't complete things or get interrupted - it is worthwhile sharing</i>
What problems have there been?	No one mentioned any issues or concerns
Do you feel the event has successfully provided an opportunity to showcase the diversity of Arabic culture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Yes going very well – it works well to have a Q&A session and they do enjoy looking at the objects</i> • <i>It really touched me to explain more about what I am doing- the motifs and the paint alchemy – they (the children) have been interested and so enthusiastic</i>

8.0 Discussion

Returning to the original aims of the evaluation in turn.

Quantitative Aim	Detail
1. 40% diverse school audiences	School groups were offered the opportunity to attend the event and these were from local schools that appeared to have diverse ethnic profiles. Teachers commented on the diversity of the groups and the numbers of Arabic children. Pre-booked school pupils: 356
25% profile of general museum visitors	Visitor figures show that general visitors totalled 1642. These visitors were also from diverse ethnic backgrounds (approx 41% of those interviewed were from

	ethnic minority groups)
Qualitative Aim	Detail
3. 65% of participants asked say they have increased understanding of the relationship between art and Arab cultures.	<p>Three visitors (approx 10%) discussed the demonstrations they saw showing Islamic art and clearly made links between Arab culture and art.</p> <p>Three visitors (approx 10%) thought there were clear links to the Jameel Gallery. Thus only a small minority of respondents had appreciated any link to the gallery, although with many visitors having not been there yet.</p> <p>Nearly all school groups also participated in geometric and plant inspired art workshops. Here they learnt about the traditional art techniques to art in Islam and spent time creating their own patterns and Shamsa prints. It is likely that pupils would have understood a strong tradition of the arts</p>
4. 65% of participants asked say that their appreciation of Arab culture has increased.	<p>78% did say they now understood more about Arab culture and in particular that found in Saudi Arabia. 22% (7) of visitors said their knowledge had not been increased as they were already knowledgeable and/or they were Arabic or Saudi themselves.</p> <p>All teachers were confident that the event had provided opportunity for pupils to develop a greater understanding of Arab culture among pupils.</p> <p>A small number of school teachers also commented on extending their own knowledge</p>
5. 35% of participants say the programme has encouraged creativity	94% (30) had agreed that the event offered creative opportunities
6. 65% of artists and designers from Arab backgrounds have valued the opportunity to showcase their work/skills	Artists showcasing work were all associated with the Prince's School for Traditional Arts but were not all of Arabic origin. All (100%) valued the opportunity to show their skills to others.
Further aims:	Detail
7. an increased awareness of connections between art/collections and contemporary cultures/Arab and an increased appreciation	See 3.

8. interaction between communities	There was clear observational evidence that school groups were themselves of mixed origins but also that the groups learnt and shared activity with the Saudi representatives – adults and younger people. Teachers expressed their pleasure in seeing young people involved and also male role models showing and helping at events such as the Carom game and dressing up.
9. exploration of differences and commonalities	Students certainly experienced a range of activities that they were unlikely to be familiar (except some from Islamic backgrounds etc) and were clearly exposed to the different approaches. There is no evidence to say whether teachers have drawn links to their own lives at all. However teachers did highlight how wonderful it was for Islamic children to be able to excel and explain and show their own (or similar) culture to their class mates and feel a sense of pride.
10. creativity and links to collections	See 5.
11. provide a valuable experience for artists.	See 6
12. Attract diverse audiences	Successfully attracted a wide range of visitors. See statistics above

Thus in general the event Explore Saudi Arabia was a success with visitors having an enjoyable and learning experience. They found the event offered creative opportunities in an exciting atmosphere. Visitors were able to learn more about a different culture. School teachers were impressed with the event and found a range of learning opportunities linked to cultural awareness, art and literature. One teacher said

Brilliant and fantastic – we are really pleased with the session – it immerses the children in the culture.

This sort of cultural event provides opportunity to link modern culture and art with the past and the galleries in the V&A. It is important that there are opportunities for visitors to view relevant museum objects as well as being drawn into a lively atmospheric event with hands-on activities.

Appendix 1
Tools used

Arabian Cultural Event

Visitor Questionnaire (schools)



We want to find out a bit more about our visitors and I wondered if you could spare a couple of minutes to answer a few questions about yourself. It's just for internal use and is confidential and anonymous.

- 1 Have you ever visited the V&A before? Yes No
2 Did you plan to visit the Arabic Cultural event today? Yes No

3 How much would you say you have enjoyed your visit today?

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| 3.1 A great deal <input type="checkbox"/> | 3.2 A fair amount <input type="checkbox"/> | 3.3 Just a little <input type="checkbox"/> | 3.4 Not very much <input type="checkbox"/> | 3.5 Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--|--|--|---|

4 What do you think about the overall presentation/atmosphere of the event?

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5 Would you say that it has increased your awareness of Arab-inspired cultural activities?

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6 What do you think about the potential of events such as this to encourage creativity?

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7 Do you feel that the events have helped direct attention towards specific areas of the museums collections such as the Islamic Middle East Gallery, the Jameel Gallery ?

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8 Do you plan to undertake anything as a result of your attendance today?

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.....
.....

Now, I'm just going to ask a couple of questions about yourself.

9. Can you tell me which of these age groups you fall into? (show visitor the choice if necessary)

9.1	Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.2	16-17	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.3	18-24	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.4	25-34	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.5	35-44	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.6	45-54	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.7	55-64	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.8	65+	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Did you come with anyone today?

Yes No

11. What is your ethnic origin? (show visitor the choice if necessary)

11.1	White British	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.2	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.3	Any other White background (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.4	Black British	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.5	Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.6	African	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.7	Any other Black background (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.8	White & Black-African	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.9	White & Black-Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.10	White & Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.11	Any other Mixed background (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.12	Asian British	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.13	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.14	Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.15	Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.16	Other Asian background (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.17	Chinese or Chinese British	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.18	Other ethnic background (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

That's it. Thanks very much for your time, enjoy the rest of your visit.

12 Gender

12.1 Male

12.2 Female

Date.....Time.....

Interviewer.....Interview no.

Questions for in-depth informal interviews with teachers:

1. Have you enjoyed the event? What do you feel it has been about?
2. Has the day been useful for you and your pupils? What in particular was successful?
3. What areas of the curriculum has it usefully connected with?
4. Have there been any problems or issues?
5. Do you feel the event has successfully provided an opportunity to showcase the diversity of Arabic culture (prompt: past and present)?
6. What do you think about the potential of events such as this to encourage links towards specific areas of the museums collections such as the Islamic Middle East Gallery, the Jameel Gallery?
7. Would you say that it has provided links between Arab-inspired culture and our own?
8. We are planning educational resources for the Jameel Gallery – is there anything you would find particularly useful?

Question for artists

1. Artists will be asked whether or not they think the Cultural Arabic event has provided a useful opportunity for their work
2. What has been particularly successful?
3. What problems have there been?
4. Do you feel the event has successfully provided an opportunity to showcase the diversity of Arabic culture (prompt: past and present)?

Questions for those involved in running the event

1. How do you feel the event has gone?
2. What has been particularly successful?
3. What problems have there been?
4. Has your organisation succeeded in achieving its aims?
5. Do you feel the event has successfully provided an opportunity to showcase the diversity of Arabic culture (prompt: past and present)?

Appendix 2

The table below provides summaries of the 16 informal interviews undertaken with teachers and associated school staff.

Primary School Teacher	It is a great opportunity to learn about something specific – I wasn't sure whether it was one country or wider but this is good to learn in detail about another culture. We saw it as a cultural learning experience but it has linked well with what we are doing at school. The other class has just been doing tales – Arabian nights – so it links well. They came and told my class some of the stories before we came today.
Teacher/support worker	Very good – they really enjoyed it. The gallery (Jameel) visit was worthwhile as many of our group are Islamic and thus have a context to put it in – yes good.
Primary School Teacher	So far so good. The children are enjoying it. No problems. There are some really good at visual activities and some have Arabic origins and this is a good opportunity for them to share their knowledge and culture. This is a year 6 class and they like artwork – one goes to our art club. They are all working very carefully - this boy is really good at tracing.
Primary School Teacher	All is ok – the children are really enjoying it – it is great. The only problem has been the coach (was late to collect them) and thus everything has been a bit rushed
Primary School Teacher	A little rushed in places – especially in the games The singing is lovely though. There have been no other problems. The children are excited and have loving it. They like dressing up.
Parent Helper	An interesting topic – absolutely vibrant. It is good to have other children show them things. – it is fun isn't it – really great – I'm enjoying it too. I didn't realise it linked to the King's visit. A culturally mixed class. I didn't know about the objects elsewhere in Museum.
Primary School Teacher	Most are interested in the gallery, but slightly concerned that some are disappearing elsewhere (for another activity) when I am in charge. Boys did enjoy the objects in the gallery – it was interesting – they were very enthusiastic. I am not sure what we are doing next – or who is organising it. One child said it was a pity no one could sit on it anymore.
Primary School Teacher	I like the activities – the children have got into it. I would have liked longer so the pace could be slower. Also time to go to the toilet and get from A to B. But I am glad we booked in to groups to visit.
Primary School Teacher	All is fine. We have come because have an art week – focusing on Islamic Art – doing a special piece on canvas – so this fits in perfectly. They enjoy art – good to have hands on like this.
Primary School	The artistic work is good.

Teacher	Have taken some resources for the Shamsa work so we can do it back at school.
Teacher - Tuesday	No links with what we are doing at school. All are focused and enjoying. Wasn't time to do everything – a shame as wanted to do everything – so excited. One boy likened the 2d geometric pattern to a stained glass window.
Teaching assistant	They like art so are enjoying this – some are really good at it. It has certainly met expectations. Did not really need overt curriculum links – it is important for cultural learning. We have Islamic youngsters and so it is good that they are able to explain to others about their lives – very much about the present. A shame not enough time – not all got to do everything upstairs - they really enjoyed the dressing up – the girls and the boys.
Primary School Teacher	Brilliant and fantastic – we are really pleased with the session – it immerses the children in the culture. They have lots of enthusiasm. Excellent staffing with lots of skilled people. Some of children proud of their Islamic culture – sharing with others and getting respect. All children are behaving. I did think it would be good but it has really come off and fulfilled expectations. I like the games and clothes. It is good to see male staff role models taking teaching roles. It means you can take a back seat and actually watch. It is a shame that the politics gets in the way.
Primary School Teacher	Really happy. It is interesting that they are being able to be creative and do their own patterns – that is good – but it might also be useful to see if they can copy some of the patterns used by the workshop leaders.
Teacher	Good for Islamic children to share and for others to learn. They like to join in and see it for real. One child just here from Iraq has spoken in Arabic to the staff here.
Teacher	We are doing art at school. Problems with time – didn't all get to everything. Very creative and hands-on. Fantastic range of activities – longer to do each would be good – perhaps all day and then it would be more leisurely. All is free which is fantastic. Some of the Muslim children are so excited.