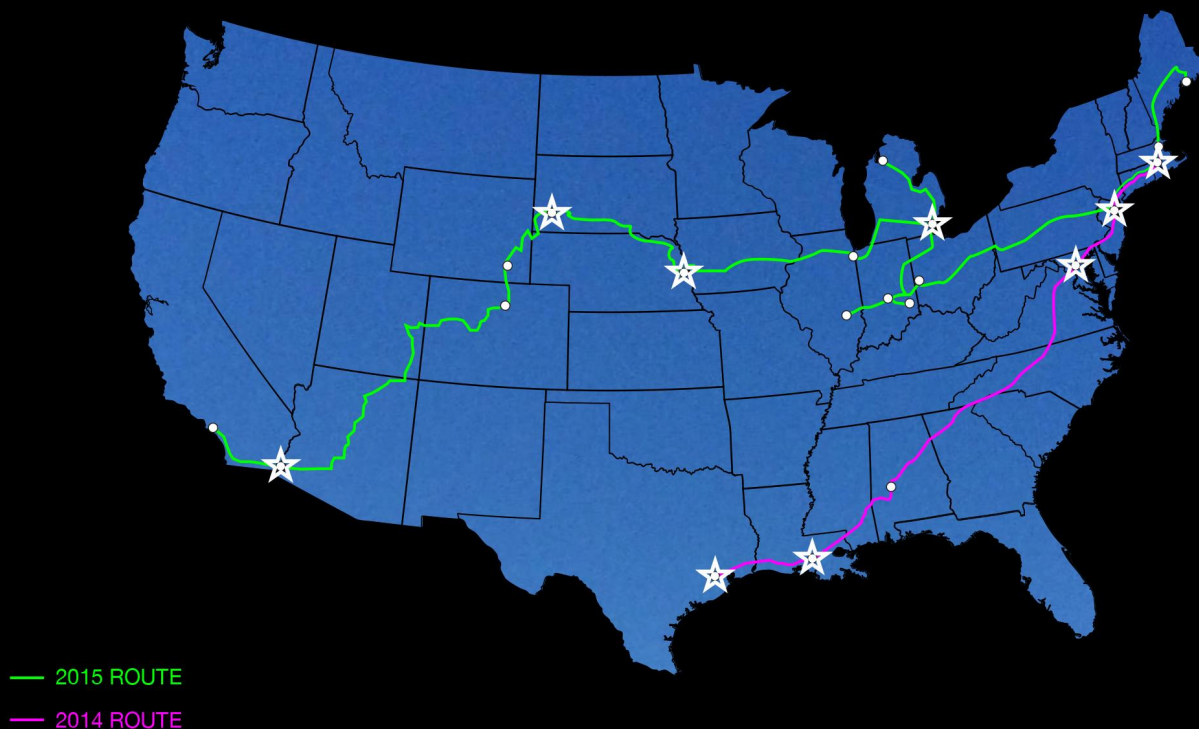


★ CULTURUNNERS STATIONS



CULTURUNNERS **CELEBRATES ONE YEAR ON THE ROAD ACROSS THE US**

WWW.CULTURUNNERS.COM



art Jameel
Abdul Latif Jameel | Community Initiatives

**12,126 MILES, 24 STATES,
11 STATIONS & OVER 50
PARTICIPATING ARTISTS**

September 2014 to September 2015: Through a year of cross-country artists' journeys CULTURUNNERS opens lines of communication between communities in the Middle East and the United States

[CULTURUNNERS](#), a cross-cultural artistic expedition launched by [Edge of Arabia](#) in partnership with [Art Jameel](#), celebrates the completion of the first year of its groundbreaking three-year road trip across the United States. Bringing together artists from the Middle East and local communities throughout America, to date, CULTURUNNERS has traveled over 12,000 miles and passed through 24 states across America. Along the way, CULTURUNNERS has hosted dozens of community events and spontaneous encounters in search of interconnected histories and common concerns across arguably the most contested ideological border of our time.

In September 2014, CULTURUNNERS set out from [The Rothko Chapel](#) in Houston, Texas in a 34ft 1999 Gulf Stream RV. Over the course of the following year, over 50 artists and curators from Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Kingdom, Iraq, Turkey, Bahrain, Kuwait, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Morocco and the United States participated in CULTURUNNERS talks, workshops and exhibitions at partner institutions across the country.

CULTURUNNERS first stop was at [Louisiana State University](#) in Baton Rouge, followed by the [Middle East Institute](#) in Washington DC where Saudi artist **Sarah Abu Abdullah** and Edge of Arabia co-founder, **Stephen Stapleton**, participated in a passionate discussion about [the \(Soft\) Power of Arts in a Changing Middle East](#).

In October 2014 CULTURUNNERS arrived at [Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge MA](#), where **Azra Akšamija**, Associate Professor at MIT's program in Art, Culture & Technology, and Edge of Arabia hosted a weeklong gathering of international artists and scientists to discuss alternative lines of communication between the Middle East and United States. Participants included artists **Ahmed Mater** (Saudi Arabia), **Arwa Al Naemi** (Saudi Arabia), and **Lara Baladi** (Egypt), as well as Smithsonian Institute curator **Carol Huh**.

While at MIT, the [CULTURUNNERS RV](#) was transformed into a mobile artists' studio and broadcast vehicle ready for its first stop in 2015 – The Armory Show in New York.

[CULTURUNNERS participation at The Armory Show](#), New York's leading contemporary and modern art fair, featured 16 artists using custom-built technologies to map, archive, and amplify stories and voices from the MENAM (Middle East, North Africa and the Mediterranean) section of the fair and related communities across New York. Artists made use of the CULTURUNNERS' RV's new state-of-the-art digital studio to start broadcasting artists' 'Dispatches' via CULTURUNNERS' new interactive [website](#).

Highlights included: [performances by Darvish Fakhri \(Iran\)](#), who used a customised, motorized longboard (long skateboard) / Persian Carpet to travel through the fair dressed as a traditional Dervish. The week also marked the launch of CULTURUNNERS broadcast channel with a [performance](#) and [short film](#) exploring [Little Syria](#) and featuring artist-in-residence at the Queens Museum, **Brian Zegeer** (United States). The film was directed by Jeddah-based filmmaker, **Husam Al Sayed** (Saudi Arabia), and with an original score by Dubai-based composer and

founding member of Analog Room, **SALAR** (Iran). Both Sayed and SALAR were recipients of Art Jameel's first residency program with The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.

After further events in New York at [Columbia University](#) and Williamsburg, **CULTURUNNERS** headed west into the heartland of America, with artists including **Yazan Khalili** (Palestine), **Anne Senstad** (Norway) and **John Mireles** (United States).

Khalili directed the RV to US towns in Illinois, Ohio and Indiana named [Palestine](#). Khalili has long been intrigued by what the name of an ancient place suggests to the New World and how this name is being preserved in contemporary American politics. **Senstad** meanwhile, set out to [learn Arabic and Farsi calligraphy](#) on board the shaky RV. Guided remotely by a Master Calligrapher based in Tehran, Senstad used the project as way to connect encounters with ordinary people in the US with this art form from the Islamic world.

In July 2015, **CULTURUNNERS** presented a weeklong community program in Detroit, featuring exhibitions, talks and performances organized by New York-based Iranian curators, **Lila Nazemian** and **Ava Ansari**. **CULTURUNNERS** invited artists, [Peyman Shafieezadeh \(Iran\)](#), traveling to the U.S. for the first time, and [Sara Ouhaddou \(Morocco\)](#) to produce new bodies of site-specific work which were exhibited at Redbull House of Arts and installed on the RV and streets in Downtown Detroit.

Next to join **CULTURUNNERS** was Bahrain-based Saudi artist, **Faisal Samra**, who travelled across six states from Chicago, IL to Denver, CO. In August 2015, Samra was joined by U.S. artist **Matthew Mazzotta**, for a special collaboration that culminated in a [community event](#) at the [The Union for Contemporary Art in Omaha, Nebraska](#). At the heart of Samra's journey was a series of encounters with artists and activists of the Oglala Lakota Nation in South Dakota. Based at the site of the battle of [Wounded Knee](#), Samra worked with Lakota singer, **Leon Grass** and his family to explore common concerns facing tribal communities in North America and Southern Arabia.

Iraqi brother artists **Sami** and **Halim Al Karim** met **CULTURUNNERS** in Denver before the RV headed west to meet with **Sara Ouhaddou** in **San Diego**. The journey culminated in a community celebration and outdoor exhibition in [Logan Heights, San Diego](#), featuring large-scale photographs from **John Mireles'** *Neighbors* project (which he began in [Detroit](#)) and an installation inside the RV by **Sara Ouhaddou**. Ouhaddou, in the US for the first time as part of Art Jameel's residency program at ISCP in New York, exhibited a specially commissioned textile made in collaboration with Moroccan artisans.

In January 2016, **CULTURUNNERS** will embark on the second phase of its on-going grassroots tour, inviting selected artists, writers and cultural practitioners to take part in an expanded East / West cultural expedition. From Makkah to Minnesota, Damascus to Detroit, **CULTURUNNERS** has identified 10 pioneering artists that will be joining the tour during its second year.

More information on 2016 activities will be announced in the coming months.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS AND ORGANIZERS QUOTES

"Everybody can turn on the news and see that there is a need for an alternative story, an alternative picture. With *CULTURUNNERS* we have tried to create a platform for that alternative. The project empowers traveling artists using cultural technologies to connect people across physical and ideological borders."

Stephen Stapleton, Co-founder, Edge of Arabia

"I decided to join the project because I saw how innovative it was in terms of the production and creation of art: taking it away from the conventional, static environments such as galleries and museums and transporting it to the sites of the masses. My project with *CULTURUNNERS* started in Chicago on 2 August 2015 and ended in Denver on 17 August 2015 and was one of the most important experiences of my long professional life. In those two weeks, we gathered enough knowledge and video/image data to spurn a whole year of work."

Faisal Samra, participating artist

"Traveling with *CULTURUNNERS* was a unique chance to confront what I thought I knew about the US through TV, journals, movies, shows, documentaries. Traveling on the RV from San Diego to LA, I was struck by the complexity of people's relationships to their different origins, living in the US and being a South American, a Native American, an African- American, an Arab or European American. When I go back to Morocco my vision will be completely different, and this will affect my work."

Sara Ouhaddou, participating artist

"*CULTURUNNERS*' cross cultural efforts [form] a groundbreaking and important model for expanding our understanding, serves as outreach for a new and real form of cultural exchange, and offers international artists a platform to further their practice. It is an artist residency on wheels combined with the idea of the mythological American road trip, exposing its passengers to the vastness of the American continent. It organically intersects with societal and cultural diversities, and provides an immensely fruitful and rewarding creative exchange and platform for exposure to participating international artists."

Anne Senstad, participating artist

CULTURUNNERS STATIONS 2014-15:

- Sept 2014:** Houston TX – CULTURUNNERS Launch @ The Rothko Chapel
Baton Rouge LU – CULTURUNNERS @ Louisiana State University
Washington DC – *Soft Power* Panel Discussion @ Middle East Institute
- Oct 2014:** Cambridge, MA – CULTURUNNERS @ MIT (ACT program)
- Mar 2015:** New York, NY – CULTURUNNERS @ The Armory Show, Focus MENAM
- Apr 2015:** New York, NY – *A Free Way* Panel Discussion @ Columbia University
- June 2015:** Williamsburg, NY – CULTURUNNERS 2015 Launch @ Loosie Rouge
- July 2015:** Detroit, MI – Artist-led Public Program @ Redbull House of Arts
- Aug 2015:** Omaha, NE – Community Event @ Union of Contemporary Art
Wounded Knee, SD – CULTURUNNERS @ Oglala Lakota Nation
- Sept 2015:** San Diego, CA – Community Event @ Casa Mireles
- 30 Oct 2015:** London, UK – CULTURUNNERS 2015 Party @ Edge of Arabia Gallery

For more information please contact:

Katrina Weber Ashour | +1-212-627- 1653 | katrina@fitzandco.com

Taylor Maatman | +1-646-589-0926 | taylor.maatman@fitzandco.com

www.culturunners.com | www.aljci.org | www.edgeofarabia.com

Facebook: Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives | Edge of Arabia

Instagram: @ALJ_CI, @edgeofarabia @culturunners | **Twitter:** @ALJCI, @edgeofarabia

#ARTJAMEEL | #ALJCI | #EOAUSA | #CULTURUNNERS

Art Jameel

Art Jameel, one of Community Jameel's Initiatives, fosters and promotes contemporary art and creative entrepreneurship across the MENAT region. In partnership with arts organizations worldwide, Art Jameel is developing two arts centres and cultural exchange programmes to encourage networking and knowledge sharing.

Art Jameel is the founding partner of Edge of Arabia, The Crossway Foundation, Jeddah Art Week, and The Archive. In partnership with the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, it awards the biannual Jameel Prize for contemporary art and design inspired by Islamic traditions. Additional projects include: Art Jameel Photography Award; Jeddah Sculpture Museum, a public park established in collaboration with Jeddah Municipality; Art Jameel Olympics, an arts education programme at schools developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia; and Art Jameel Programme for Traditional Arts and Crafts in Fustat, Egypt, in partnership with the Prince's School of Traditional Arts.

Community Jameel was established in 2003 to promote positive social change, and has been undertaking this through the establishment of long-term partnerships with international institutions, and the creation of initiatives in the fields of Job Creation, Global Poverty Alleviation, Arts & Culture, Education & Training, Health & Social, and Food & Water Security. More information on Community Jameel's considerable set of initiatives can be found online at www.cjameel.org.

Edge of Arabia

Edge of Arabia is an independent, non-profit arts initiative, which connects artists and cultural communities between the MENA (Middle East & North Africa) region, Europe and United States. It is the vision of a group of British and Saudi artists who met in the mountains of South-West Saudi Arabia in 2003 and shared a common desire "to start a cultural movement from the periphery of the international art world." With its exhibitions, expeditions, educational programs, and publications, it seeks to foster new audiences, create expanded networks and inspire artists to develop independent and authentic practices, which unite people across physical and psychological borders. Based between London and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and New York, Edge of Arabia is a registered UK Social Enterprise, which maintains creative independence and has, to date, welcomed over 250,000 visitors to its exhibitions and distributed over 50,000 publications worldwide. In 2014 Edge of Arabia launched a grassroots tour across the United States in partnership with Art Jameel. International exhibitions include: Rhizoma, 55th Venice Biennale (2013); #COMETOGETHER, East London (2012); We Need to Talk, Jeddah (2012); The Future of a Promise, 54th Venice Biennale (2011); Terminal, Dubai (2011); Transition, Istanbul: European Capital of Culture (2010); Grey Borders/Grey Frontiers, Berlin (2010); Edge of Arabia, Riyadh (2010); Edge of Arabia, 53rd Venice Biennale (2009); and Edge of Arabia, University of London (2008).

More information can be found online at www.edgeofarabia.com.