

It was in 1982 that Katie Marsh first drew my attention to a new collection of Islamic pottery being formed in Kuwait - bringing to me in the Victoria and Albert Museum occasional pieces for my opinion. I remember the first time I met the impassioned collector himself - I was with Katie on the top floor of the Museum, when Sheikh Nasser strode down the gallery, very smart and wearing as I recall a trilby hat, his eyes shining as he enthusiastically surveyed the serried ranks of pots in the old "Islamic Study Collection". This meeting was followed by an invitation to write a catalogue, and this led to a yearly rhythm of work.

A week or two was spent in Kuwait working in the soothing atmosphere of the library, selecting, studying and photographing pieces, with the help of Manuel Keen and Sue Kaoujki; followed by study and writing-up back in London. Meetings with Sheikh Nasser and Sheikha Hussah were held to discuss the scope and format of the book; my anxiety at suggesting, and then my delight at their enthusiastic acceptance of a section on fakes by their conservator Kirsty Norman. This shows their true qualities as patrons - few collectors would countenance such a thing, but Sheikh Nasser saw its importance for the understanding of the history of the subject and was interested and enthralled by the past skill of restorations. His judgement proved right - this section of the book is one of its most important (and popular!) contributions.

Two other signs of enlightened patronage: no pressure to meet unrealistic deadlines, indeed a relaxed attitude which allowed me the time to fully absorb and present what were ground-breaking topics (unglazed wares, manufacturing moulds and tools) or long-lost masterpieces (from the Behague and Kelekian collections); and a desire that the book should reach a wide audience, which meant a paper-back edition at a price that even students could afford. That this book *Ceramics from Islamic Lands* quickly became and still remains the standard work on the subject is a reflection of Sheikh Nasser's enthusiasm, his keen eye for artistic quality and historical interest, and his academic rigour. He was a great collector, a delightful host, and a generous patron, who made a long-lasting contribution to the subject, and to whom we all owe a great debt of gratitude.

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