

My personal memories of dear Nasser are legion – spanning as they do a period of more than 42 years! However, there is one in particular I would like to mention today as not only is it the reason that our long friendship was able to evolve over more than 4 decades but it was the catalyst that gave rise to the creation of Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah. Although I did not include this in the publication *30+ Years Collecting Memories*, it is the missing link between the first and second paragraphs of my contribution there and thus a Prologue to that volume.

As mentioned in that publication, after first meeting Nasser in New York in late April, 1978 he invited me to Kuwait in the Fall of that year to meet you, dear Hussah, and to see his collection of Islamic art. While there, he also arranged for me to visit the museum complex designed by Michel Ecochard—the four buildings of which had been completed for some time but still stood empty.

Early in 1981, Nasser asked if I would be willing to serve as the Islamic art specialist in a UNESCO group appointed at the request of the Kuwaiti government to study that complex and ascertain the necessary steps that would lead to its long-awaited opening. Happily agreeing to his request, that April I joined the other members of this group in Kuwait for two weeks to study the buildings and write a report which was to be submitted to the Kuwaiti government. Not long after this report was received in Kuwait, I heard from Nasser that the government had decided not to proceed with the proposed plan. I shall never forget what he said to me after that: “Let’s show them how to do one building, Lyn! Will you agree to direct the project to make one of the buildings in the complex a museum for my Islamic collection?” After securing the blessing of my own museum, I accepted Nasser’s invitation.

At that time, I was planning the installation at The Met of a traveling exhibition which was due to open that November: *Renaissance of Islam: The Art of the Mamluks*. As I wanted to see if Nasser might be willing to hire the exhibition designer of that show, Charles Ryder, to prepare the Ecochard building for the installation of his own collection, I asked you both if you could come to see this exhibition before it was to close on January 10, 1982. You did just that and as you very much liked the show, while you were still here Nasser offered Charlie the job which he readily accepted.

At the end of January shortly after the Mamluk exhibition closed, I flew to Kuwait for several weeks to begin to set in motion the wonderful project that would lead to the opening of Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah slightly more than one year later – the culmination of dear Nasser’s early and enduring passion for Islamic art and his pioneering vision at a very young age for a museum of Islamic art in Kuwait – the first in the Gulf! His lasting legacy in the field of Islamic art was (and remains) forever sealed!

In closing, it seems very fitting – given the role that The Metropolitan Museum of Art played in my initial introduction to Nasser and the subsequent evolution of Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah – that it would not only serve as the bookends to our wonderful friendship: our very first meeting occurring at The Met in late April, 1978 and our last taking place there as well on August 27th, 2020 but also that he will be forever connected to the Museum’s Department of Islamic Art through the curatorial chair you endowed in his honor!

With my love to you, dear Hussah and in loving memory of dear Nasser,
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