

Dear Sheikha Hussah

I write these words to offer you my deepest condolences on the death of Sheikh Nasser but also to thank you for the great kindness you have both shown me over so many years.

My abiding memory of Sheikh Nasser is of his energy, his enthusiasm and passion for the object, in addition to an extraordinary ability to seek out the best, the most interesting and the utterly beautiful. This was so clear in the museum in Kuwait where the story of Islamic art unfolded case by case – each object a discovery and a link in the narrative. It was such a privilege for me to spend those months there all that time ago – I learnt so much - and through the exhibitions and scholarly publications over the years, so many of these objects have become so iconic that you cannot explain Islamic art history without them.

Where I began to understand further the sheer depth of Sheikh Nasser's passion and the importance of his project, was when I was lucky enough to witness the installation of *Treasury of the World* at the British Museum. It was the critical mass of objects that was so breathtaking, each a link in the chain, with the ability to explain in such a comprehensive way the story of that branch of Mughal art from the stones to the techniques of carving and setting. You saw how the public marvelled at these objects - what a privilege for the museum this was. I saw that enthusiasm again more recently, when Sheikh Nasser's interest had turned to the antiquities of Yemen, and learnt how he would often come to the museum to look at his favourite objects.

I have the letter that you sent me when I was lucky enough to join the British Museum fulltime. It was the experience in your museum that gave me the courage to apply for the job which 30 years later, I am fortunate enough still to have. It was your kind invitation to work with Professor Ahmad Zayla'i on the gravestones in the collection that led me to fall in love with the Arabic script. This is something that has never left me and that time in Kuwait, staying in Bait al-Badr is very precious to me.

So many of us all over the world are deeply indebted to the work you and Sheikh Nasser have done together, providing real inspiration for the future. The belief that art has the power to make a difference and create dialogue is something we all share.

Venetia