

2026 EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



# JOY: THE ART OF CONNECTION

Aga Khan Museum's School in Residence Program



AGA KHAN MUSEUM

# JOY: THE ART OF CONNECTION

**What happens when we truly see ourselves reflected in the stories, memories, and experiences of others?**

*Joy: The Art of Connection 2026* marks the third edition of the Aga Khan Museum's School in Residence program in partnership with the Peel District School Board – a growing initiative rooted in creativity, belonging, and the transformative power of the arts.

This exhibition brings together artworks created by elementary, middle, and high school students who spent time engaging deeply with the Museum's collections, architecture, and stories. Through close looking, dialogue, and artistic experimentation, students explored the theme of connection: between people, cultures, memories, histories, and lived experiences.

As students encountered objects shaped by centuries of artistic and cultural exchange across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, many discovered unexpected reflections of themselves within the galleries. Some connected with objects that reminded them of childhood memories, family traditions, or places tied to their identities. Others reflected on the importance of empathy, friendship, and learning from one another across differences.

This year's exhibition also features a collective mural inspired by Iznik tiles from the Museum's collection. Individually painted by students and assembled into a larger shared composition, the mural becomes a visual reminder that every voice, experience, and perspective contributes to a stronger and more connected whole.

These artworks celebrate the imagination, vulnerability, and creativity of young artists. As you move through this exhibition, we invite you to reflect on your own connections – and to consider how art can help us listen more deeply, understand one another more fully, and imagine communities built on curiosity, care, and shared humanity.

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Madalina Raduta

*Joy: The Art of Connection*, School in Residence program and the student-led exhibition are a partnership between the Aga Khan Museum and the Peel District School Board.

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## WITH THE SUPPORT OF

Leadership, Capacity Building & School Partnerships Team – Peel District School Board  
Fletcher's Meadows Secondary School  
Burnhamthorpe Public School  
Tomken Road Middle School  
Stephen Lewis Secondary School



**CREATED BY  
BURNHAMTHORPE  
PUBLIC SCHOOL  
STUDENTS**

Abdul Yarmal, Amir Popal, Aria Janovsky, Armani Cuffy, Bhavin Singla, Brianna Scott, Dahlia Ferracane-Vesuna, David Shaibu, Desmond Padley, Dylan Ha, Emma Tran, Hibah Amir, Jennifer (Jenny) John, Liam Beger, Liam Fox, Mohammed Hemed, Rawan Al Kardaly, Rhea Puri, Riley Desroche, Sofiiia Kuts, Stefan Maricic, Tayden Lindo, Viktoria Kutikov, Wynter Evans-Baychu, Zaid Ghani

***Mural of Connection***

2026

Watercolour on paper, mounted on foam board

Connection can be represented by many things. The students from Burnhamthorpe Public School showed what connection means to them by creating a mural inspired by the Museum's *Iznik Tiles*. The Mural shows a continuous collection of flowers, extending from one square to another, representing the interconnection between all of us.

While the students and teachers had the same starting point of a tile with a radiating floral design, everyone represented the pattern in their own distinct way.

The *Iznik Tiles* were selected for this mural as they are a key example of cultural interconnectedness.



Inspired by *Iznik Tiles*, AKM583 and AKM584



# AARUJA YOGESWARAN

## **Stars of Connection**

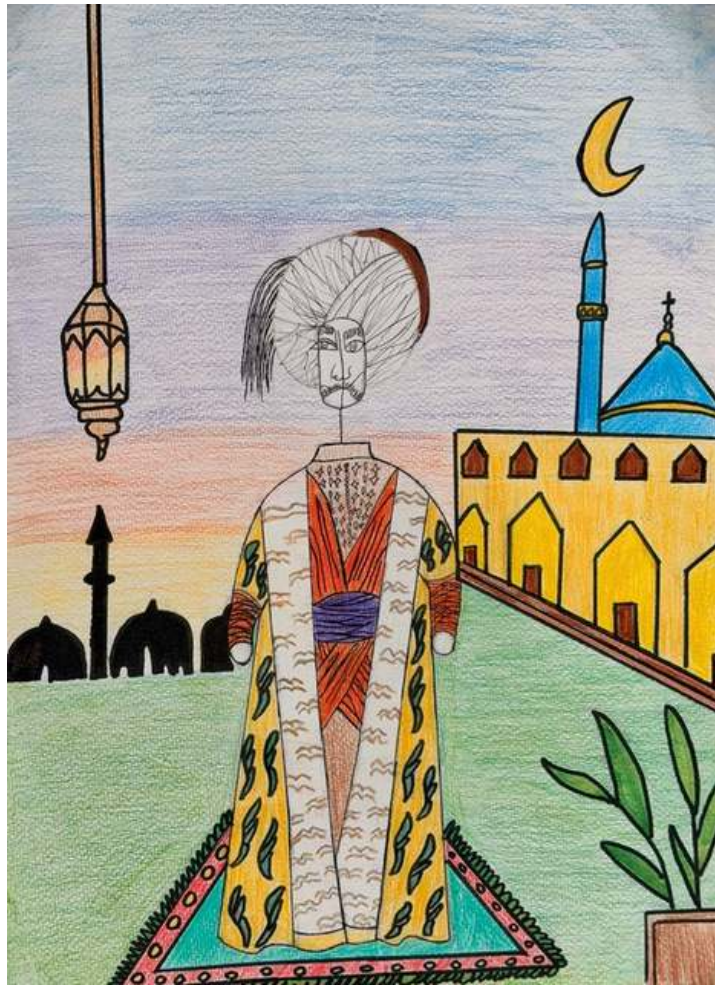
2026

Watercolour and markers

My art piece *Stars Of Connection* is inspired by the *Faridun Tests His Sons* art piece at the Aga Khan Museum. My artwork is inspired by the fact that the story is told in just one painting, so I wanted to try that idea out and made my artwork tell a story about connection. My work tells a story about three girls who are different from everyone around them and are seen as outcasts by many people. These three girls just met and they can already tell that they had a connection due to the similarities they all had. For the similarities part I made them all have star eyes while the people around them don't; this also shows the outcast part they all have going on. For my artwork I chose to do a watercolour painting and fixed some issues using markers as I assumed that the *Faridun Tests His Sons* used watercolour as well.



Inspired by *Faridun Tests His Sons*, AKM903



# ABDULLAH ABDULLAH

## **Untitled**

2026

Colour pencils and markers

My artwork is about a historical and cultural scene with a person wearing traditional-style clothing standing in the centre, with mosques, a crescent moon, and a lantern in the background. This connects to Islam because the buildings and symbols are inspired by Islamic culture, and I am Muslim, so I wanted to show something that represents my identity and beliefs. The artwork that inspired me is like a statue made out of paper, where I focused on making the figure stand out clearly. I added patterns and colours to the clothing to make it interesting, and I used warm and cool colours to separate the person from the background. First, I sketched everything in pencil to plan it out, then I used a fine liner to add details, and finally I coloured it carefully to keep it neat. My goal was to make a drawing that tells a story and shows both a person and a background. I think my artwork turned out good, and I learned how to add more detail and improve my colouring. Next time, I want to keep improving my style and make my drawings even better.

Inspired by *Life-size Paper Garment* - Isabella de Borchgrave (1946-2024)



**AISHA  
SAMEE**

***Currents of Connection***

2026

Acrylic paint on canvas

My artwork, titled *Currents of Connection*, uses a very limited art medium consisting of acrylic paint and canvas paper. My inspiration were the Persian paintings from the 16th century (such as *Manuscript of the Nigaristan*). What inspired me were the detailing and patterns on the art pieces which gave more depth. My core elements in this piece were line, space, and shape. Using a thin brush, I was able to make the details around the border and other places. The organic pattern that travels through the canvas represents life and how it's rarely a straight line, rather it is a long winding road full of unexpected turns. The brown lines represent the connections made throughout our journey. This artwork gave me a chance to place my version of connection to ancient illustrations on paper and present it to my peers and community.



Inspired by *Manuscript of the Nigaristan*, AKM272



**AIZA  
TAHIR**

***Mariam***

2026

Acrylic paint and gold flakes on canvas

My artwork, named *Mariam*, is based on the astrolabe. I used canvas paper, acrylic paint, and gold flakes. I named it *Mariam* based on the person who created the astrolabe. In my work there are constellations in each of the corners (Gemini, Cygnus, Lyra, and Andromeda) with deep meanings related to love, connection, family, and friendship. The background is a galaxy which represents connection because no matter where, who, when, or what we are, we are all under the same stars, same moon, same sun, and in the same galaxy for centuries, and in the centre you can see two hands reaching out to one another.



Inspired by *Astrolabe*, AKM611



# ALEXIS RACINE

## ***Order of the Lion's Moonlit Fire***

2026

Colour pencils, watercolour, and markers

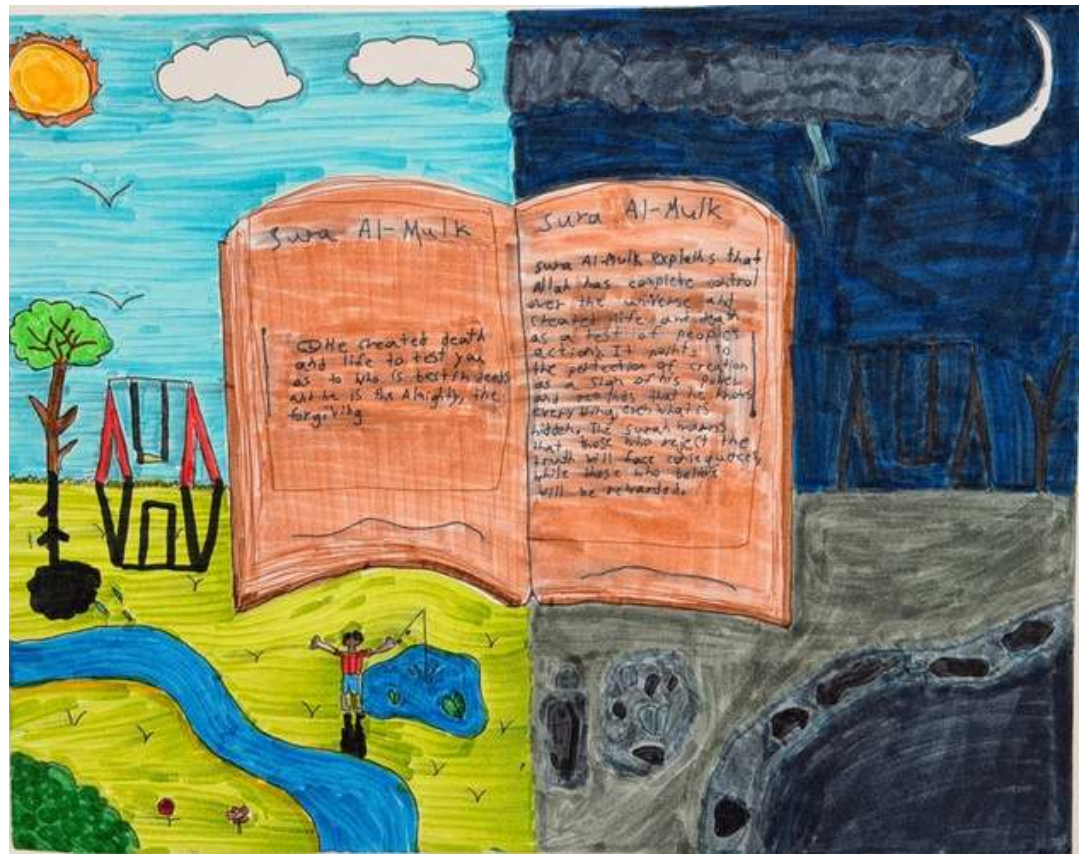
In this piece, I represented the art of connection through one's connection to the stars.

I found this inspiration through the artifact Badge of the Order of the Lion and the Sun, which is seen held by the woman in the picture. Although the purpose of the artifact represents something different, in my piece, I had it represent one's connection with their zodiac sign. I saw this artifact in the Museum and thought of this kind of picture almost immediately. It reminded me of my zodiac sign, Leo, and I envisioned a goddess-like woman. Eventually, I developed my idea of her floating in a night sky surrounded by flames with a sun-like halo.

The art of connection in my picture is shown by the connection between this goddess, the zodiacs and stars, and the badge of authority that she holds.



Inspired by *Badge of the Order of the Lion and the Sun*, AKM627



# AMEER ALHABIAN

## *Life and Death*

2026

Alcohol markers on illustration board

My artwork shows the theme of connection because the Qur'an is a part of my religion and I memorize and read it every day. The artifact I used for inspiration was one of the Qur'an manuscripts. I selected this artifact because it was the only one that caught my eye and I felt very connected to it. I used the Qur'an manuscript by drawing a Qur'an in the centre. In my artwork I put a summarized version of a surah that connects to me in the image of the Qur'an. In the background, I basically showed life and death, because that's what the surah basically talks about.



**AMINA  
HAMID**

### **TILES**

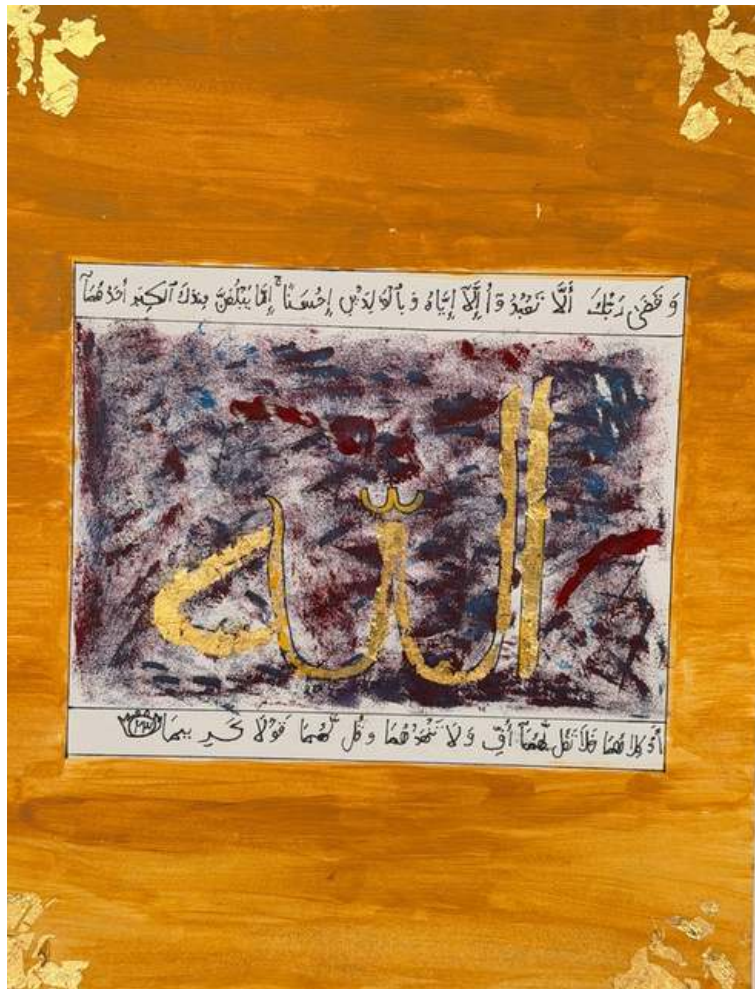
2026

Pencils, colour pencils on illustration board

My artwork shows the theme of connection by connecting various tiles from different countries together to create one large tile. The artwork demonstrates how pieces can come together to create something unique while harbouring their original self. This work was inspired by the many tile pieces at the Aga Khan Museum, and they were chosen due to their similar yet contrasting aesthetics and visuals. Illustration board and pencil crayons were used to create this piece as the materials allow for versatility that can showcase the various tiles' worth.



Inspired by *Tile*, AKM570



# ANABIA AYAZ

## **Faith and Love**

2026

Pencils, acrylic paint, markers, and gold leaf on illustration board

My artwork was inspired by Islamic tiles that use Qur'anic calligraphy and detailed borders. I focused on the word "Allah" in the center and used gold to make it stand out and represent importance and light. The darker blue and red background contrasts with the gold and creates a more emotional feeling. I also included Qur'anic verses talking about love for family around the border, which really adds it all up and connects to my identity as a Muslim.



Inspired by *Tile*, AKM796



# ANAYA MATHURA

## ***Blade of Faith and Victory***

2026

Acrylic paint on canvas

This piece of art is inspired by peace and how that even though this object is usually used to represent violence, it has a deeper meaning and can be seen in a different perspective. This dagger's meaning is that the power of God is one of the most powerful things that is in the world. I used flowers as a way of showing peace and the background is more warm colors to make the piece really pop out.



Inspired by *Dagger and Sheath*, AKM963



# ASHVIN NEETHIRASA

## **Mama's Dagger**

2026

Pencil on illustration board

This artwork was inspired by a dagger from the 1700s and the role it connects to in my parents' cooking. I wanted to show how a simple tool can carry history and meaning through generations. The kitchen scene represents family traditions, comfort, and the memories created through cooking together. The ingredients and cooking objects reflect the effort, care, and culture that my parents bring into every meal. I used shading and contrast to create depth and make the scene feel realistic and warm. This piece is about more than food. It represents heritage connection and the importance of family traditions being passed down over time.



Inspired by *Dagger and Sheath*, AKM963



## AUDREY CHEN

### *Passage*

2026

Acrylic paint and markers

Ever since I was young, I've held the belief that everyone has a fate they're destined to follow. However, this fate can only be uncovered slowly as you grow, a process that cannot be rushed or forced. This belief is shown by the various doors in the art piece, and the lack of handles on each one. The red thread connecting each of the doors signifies how fates can be connected, thus showing connection.

During my visit to the Aga Khan Museum, I was looking for a piece that made me think about connection. When I saw *Double Door* in the main gallery, I thought about where the door would lead us if it could open, which is what started up my thought process for *Passage*.



Inspired by *Double Door*, AKM707



**AUDREY  
YU**

***Blooms from the Botanicals***

2026

Watercolour, opaque watercolour, pen, and acrylic paint

The artifact I chose is a dish with dark blue paintings that depict flowers and lanterns from 17th century Iran. My piece connects to the artifact with the flowers and floral designs. I made this piece to represent my own culture through flowers as the original artist did with theirs. My piece shows many drawings of flowers that all grow in East Asia except for the harebell at the top left corner of the piece. There are five orchid flowers, all on the right side of the piece, a lotus at the bottom, cherry blossoms or sakura on the left, jasmine in the middle, begonia on the very right, and various other flowers that grow in the East scattered around.



Inspired by *Dish*, AKM588



# BANI BHARAJ

## **Lost Monopoly**

2026

Colour pencils

I took inspiration from an art piece from the Aga Khan Museum, which was the *Imitation Kraakware Charger*, for all the greenery on my artwork. I made the colours vibrant and outlined everything to make it have kind of a cartoony look. I picked the *Kraakware Charger* because it would be taken out for special events to play games in. That reminded me of when my family had events and all my cousins and I played specific games together, which is why there is a monopoly board and the dog token, which was always my piece in monopoly. A goal I had this semester for art was to get better with using colour pencils and I think this multimodal art piece really helped me figure out different ways to use them, like how I pressed harder to get the leaves vibrant, shaded lighter for the monopoly board base, and layered the grass to make it look more full. Overall, my final art piece is what I imagined as I made a rough copy beforehand, planned, and didn't change much, I am happy with it. I will be using the techniques I used in this drawing for my future artworks where I might use colour pencils.

Inspired by *Imitation Kraakware Charger*, 2024.2.2



# BAREERAH KHAN

## *The Empty Bazaar*

2026

Watercolour and markers

My artwork, *The Empty Bazaar*, is inspired by the busy feeling of markets and how they bring people together. I made this piece on watercolour paper using different sizes of watercolour brushes and rulers to help create the buildings and shapes. I was inspired by a painting I saw at the Aga Khan Museum called *The Market Square*, which showed a crowded and lively market. That artwork helped me think of a bazaar as more than just a place, but something full of life and culture. The main idea of my painting is that a bazaar is really made by the people in it. Without people, it wouldn't feel the same or have much meaning. Even though I didn't draw any people, I tried to show what they bring to the bazaar through the goods, details, and energy of the space. My goal was to share my work and make people think about how it might connect to their own experiences. I made a few mistakes, especially with the colours, but I think they made the piece feel more real. Overall, the final artwork turned out the way I wanted, and I'm happy with it.



**EMAAN  
SUFYAN**

***Crowned heritage***

2026

Watercolour, acrylic, gold leaf on illustration board

My artwork shows connection through culture, identity, and heritage. I was inspired by a perfume bottle from the Aga Khan Museum because I liked its detailed gold design and jewel patterns. I turned the perfume bottle into a crown to make the artifact feel more personal and modern. The blindfolded figure represents imagination and identity, and the Arabic calligraphy in the background says "تراث", meaning "heritage." I added it to connect the artwork to Islamic art and culture. I used watercolour to create soft colours and blending throughout the piece. I also used acrylic gold paint on the crown so the details would stand out more and look more eye-catching.



Inspired by *Perfume or Snuff Bottle*, AKM891



**EMAN  
TARIQ**

### **Golden Hour**

2026

Acrylic paint, gold flakes, watercolour paint, white lace, paper

My artwork explores the passage of time through a vintage-inspired design. I used soft brown tones, lace textures, printed poetry, an antique clock, and gold flakes to create a nostalgic and elegant atmosphere. The poems symbolize how time carries memories and emotion, while the gold flakes connect to the artifact I chose from the museum and represent the value of meaningful moments. I selected this artifact because it immediately stood out to me and inspired a sense of creativity the more I observed it. My artwork reflects the theme of connection by showing how time links memories, emotions, and experiences together. The antique clock represents the passage of time, while the vintage textures and poems symbolize the emotional and historical connections between the past and present. Through this piece, I want people to reflect on how time shapes memories and keeps important moments with us over time.

Inspired by the *Qur'an Case* in Museum's Collections



**EMILY  
LIN**

***Intertwined***

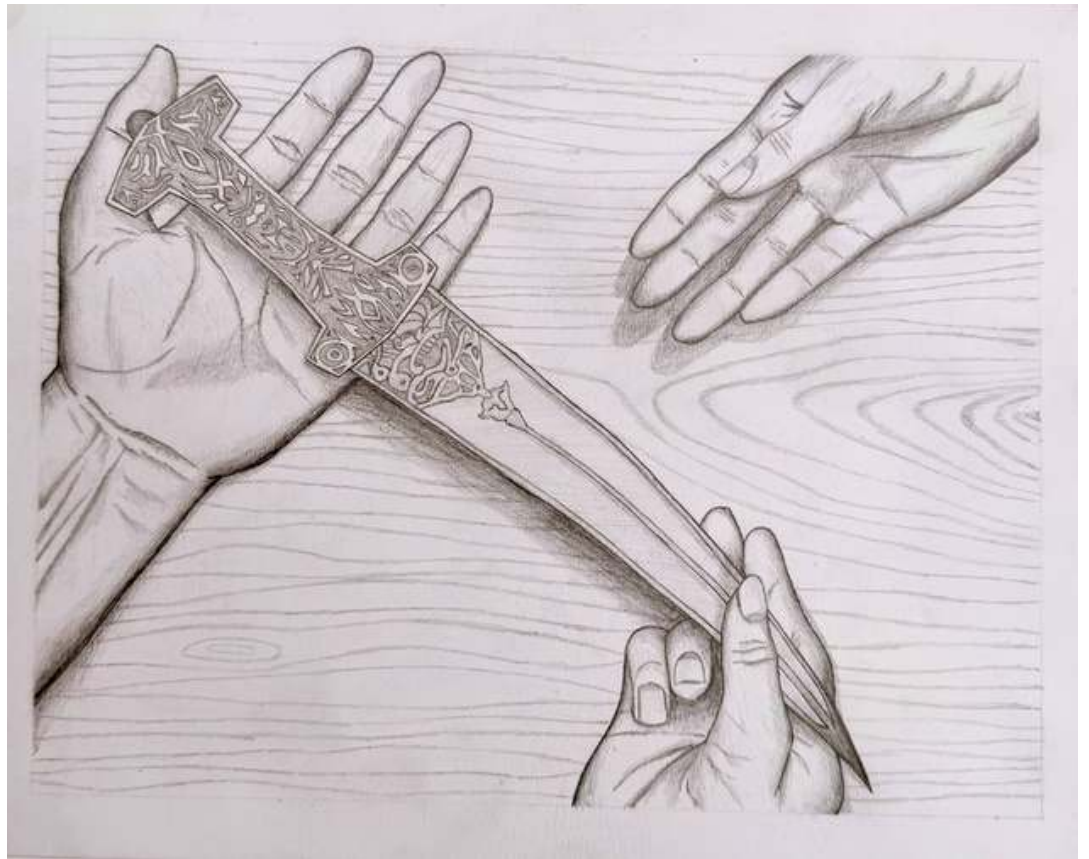
2026

Watercolour and colour pencils on watercolour paper

I chose the tile with serrated leaves and artichoke heads as my artifact. It is a piece of fritware from Iznik, Türkiye from around 1550-75 that stood out to me with its beautiful floral design and vibrant colors. The stylized design of the flowers and the shade of blue used reminded me of traditional Chinese paintings and pieces of porcelain, both of which I find stunning. I did my best to also include the use of similar colours in my piece, but it came out less saturated due to my medium. I also wanted to show the theme of connection by mixing the pre-existing vines and stems from the artifact with even more strings in the background to represent how I view connection. To me, connection is complicated, sometimes messy, but it's what brings people together.



Inspired by *Tile*, AKM875



**EZRA  
INTAC**

### ***Legacy in Hand***

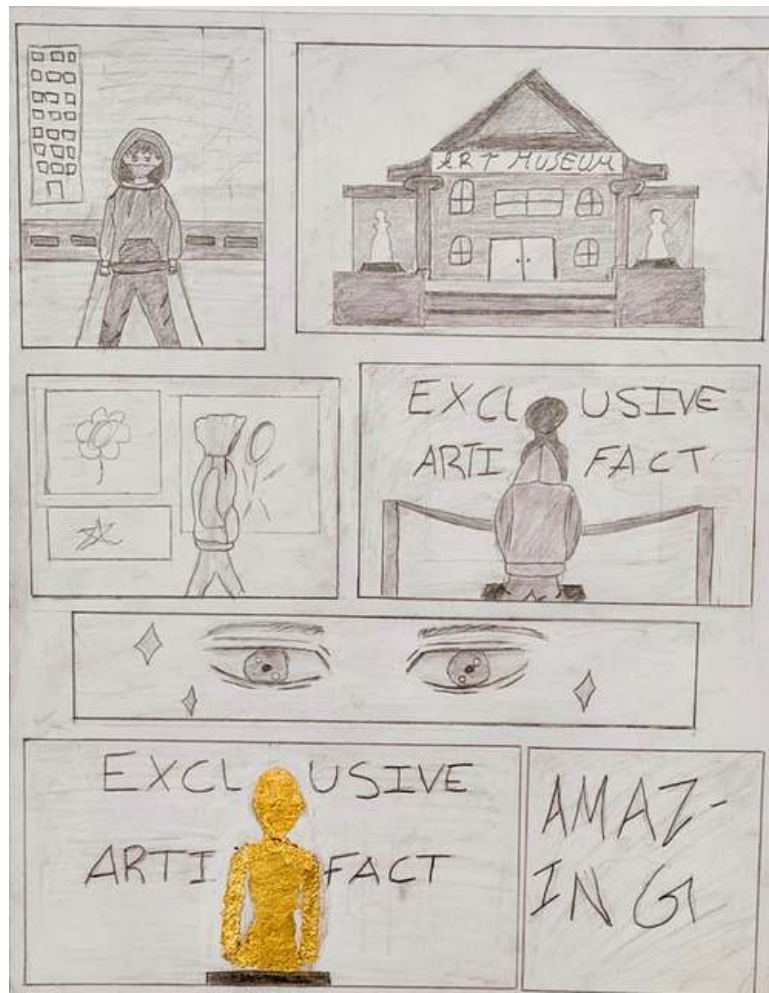
2026

Pencil on illustration board

My artwork shows a decorative dagger being passed down from one family member's hands to another. Although the dagger was originally worn as a fashion accessory rather than used as a weapon, it represents something deeper in my piece such as connection, heritage, and trust. The act of passing it down symbolizes traditions and values being shared between generations. The detailed patterns on the dagger reflect identity and craftsmanship, while the focus on the hands emphasizes human relationships. By highlighting this moment, my artwork explores how objects can carry stories and meaning, connecting people from the past to the present and continuing further into the future.



Inspired by *Dagger and Sheath*, AKM963



**FARIYA  
NAVAID**

### ***The Forgotten Figure***

2026

Pencil and gold leaf on illustration board

My artwork, *The Forgotten Figure*, was created by using pencil and gold leaf sheets. This artwork was inspired by *Life-size Paper Garment* by Isabelle de Borchgrave, who made this out from detailed and simple materials. In my comic, I wanted to create a character exploring the Aga Khan Museum and finding this glowing golden artifact on display like how I was at the Museum and I found the life-size paper garment. The pencil helped me sketch and shade the scenes and emotions, while the gold leaf represents the importance and value. This artwork illustrates that simple materials such as a pencil and gold leaf sheets can create something meaningful and eye-catching with creativity and imagination.

Inspired by *Life-size Paper Garment* - Isabelle de Borchgrave (1946-2024)



# GILANIE ANTOINE

## *Flora*

2026

Watercolour

My artwork *Flora* depicts a woman in front of a traditional Armenian church with a bright blue background with lots of floral elements. I created it by using watercolour paint and pencils with a black pen. My art was inspired by the ceramic piece *Tile* from the Aga Khan Museum, which I took the colours, style, and other elements directly from. The theme of this artwork is cultural connection and cultural history and to just be able to feel casual and connection with culture. My goal is always to just improve and this artwork helped me do just that. This piece will influence my future art works by just taking a risk and trying something new.

Inspired by *Tile*, 2025.4.1



# GRACE HE

## Shine

2026

Watercolour, acrylic paint, paint markers, colour pencil, gel pens

*Tile* and *Kashkul* are the pieces of art that inspired me the most. The *Tile* is the greyish-blue from afar, but close up, it shines. The *Kashkul* has more to it too, the detailed patterns, and the identical pieces on both sides that remind me of my Chinese zodiac, the dragon.

I included *Tile* in my artwork by adding its main pattern and an eight-pointed star to show the connection of my artwork and the Aga Khan Museum. The star represents the Museum and the start of our program, so I'd like to end this adventure with what we began with. My art piece also includes a splattered red background and the *Kashkul* dragon to represent my Chinese-Canadian identity and its connection to the artifact. Finally, the reason why I chose these artifacts is because I notice that many people in the world feel insecure and ordinary, but once you take a closer look at them, you'd realize that everyone shines in their own way, like these artifacts that didn't catch my attention the first time.



Inspired by *Tile*, AKM702, and *Kashkul*, AKM612



**HANA  
OMRAN**

***Pathway of Lights***

2026

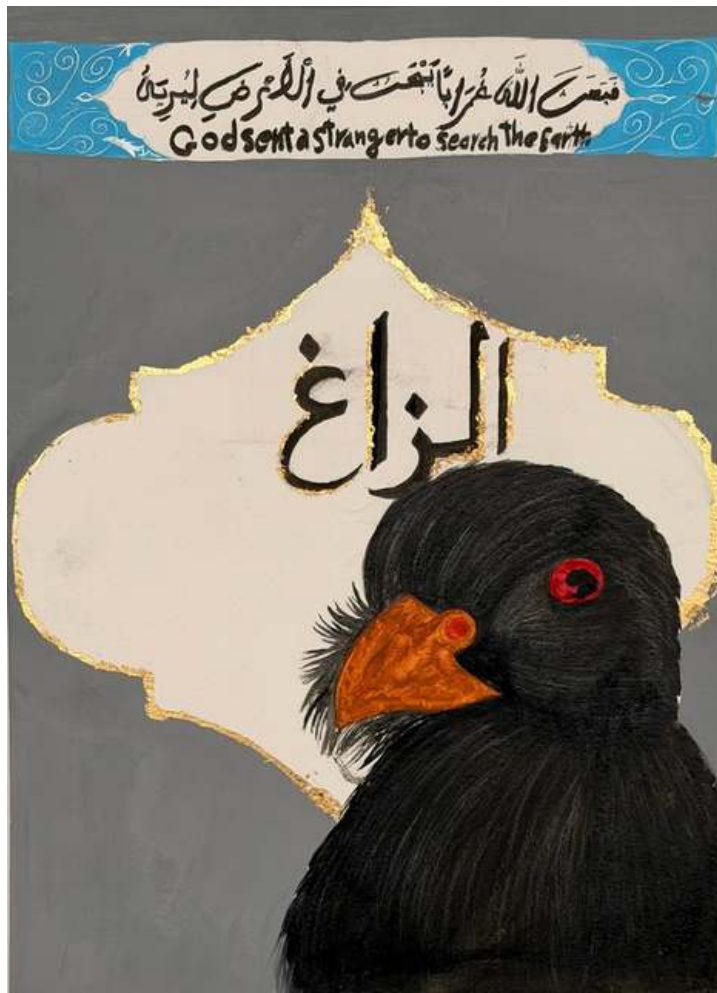
Watercolour and colour pencil

I chose a Syrian hanging lamp because I was drawn to the light blue colour and the way it seemed to glow in the Museum. At first, I thought it was a vase, but I later learned that it is actually a hanging lamp.

In my artwork, I created many tiny colourful lamps hanging throughout a forest. I used brighter colours for the lamps so they would contrast with the dark forest background. I also included personal connections to fit the theme of connection. For example, I added bunnies because I love them, fairies to make the forest feel magical, and a lizard because I have a pet lizard named Silver.



Inspired by *Hanging Lamp*, AKM645



# HALA KATRIB

## *The Crow in the Holy Qur'an*

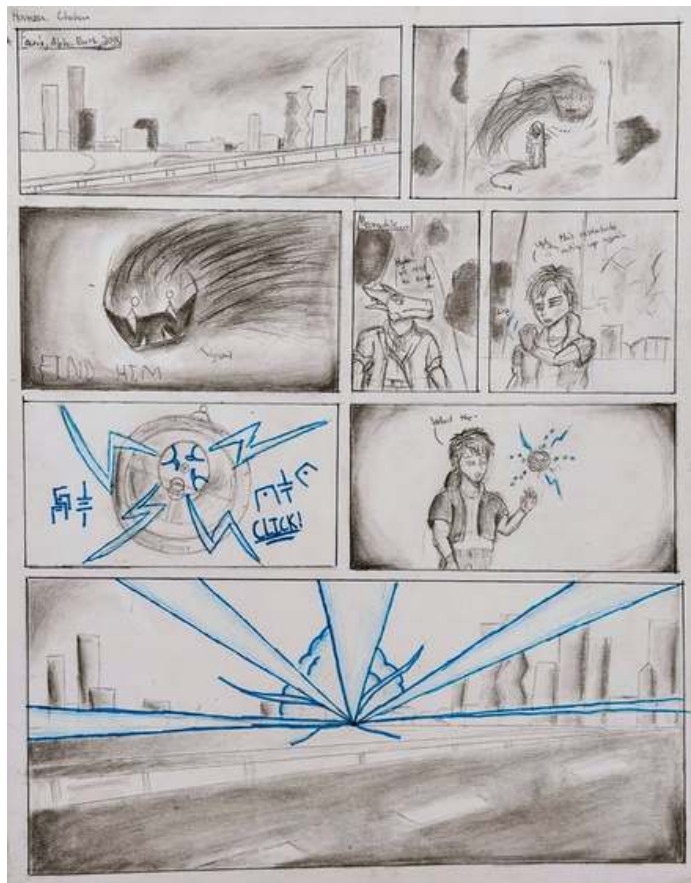
2026

Watercolour

My artwork is about the crow in the Holy Qur'an. I used black and gold colors to show myself and importance. The crow represents wisdom and learning. I added Arabic calligraphy to connect with Islamic culture and history. I wanted the viewer to feel calm and think deeply about the meaning of the crow in the Qur'an. This project helped me express my ideas through design.



Inspired by *Tile Frieze, AKM698*



# HAMZA CHOHAN

## *Echoes of First Light*

2026

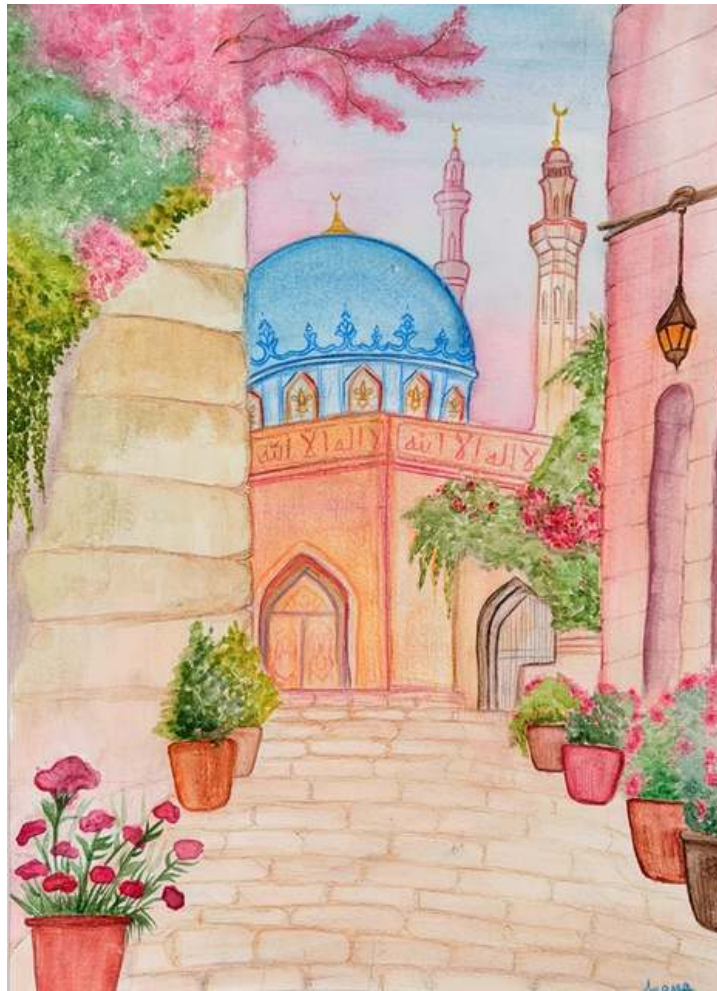
Pencils, alcohol markers, watercolour pencils on illustration board

My multimodal art piece represents the theme of connection and fantasy. My artwork shows the theme connection because in my comic strip, it has locations from our reality, but renamed and put into the future. The first panel is based on downtown Mississauga, but renamed as a city called Faunix, in the year 2035. This timeline gives the vibe that the city is old and decayed. The artifact that I used as inspiration was the *Astrolabe*. I selected this artifact because when I first saw it, it gave me the idea of magic and unknown powers. I incorporated this via the protagonist holding it and unlocking the unknown power.

In my comic strip, *Echoes of First Light*, there is an unknown entity that is allied with a monster. He orders the monster to find the protagonist. Meanwhile, there is a dragon named Cyperis that alerts that they need to leave the city immediately. Hyden, our protagonist, finds the astrolabe and is confused because the astrolabe was acting weird. A strange language starts to be recited. Hyden is confused and is interrupted when the astrolabe explodes in bright blue light across the city. I hope that I am able to create more comics that will continue to escalate the story.



Inspired by *Astrolabe*, AKM611



# INAYA CHOUDHURY

## **Garden of Connection**

2026

Watercolour and colour pencil

I made this watercolour painting to show the theme of connection. My art connects to my religion, Islam, by showing a peaceful street leading to a mosque. The pathway guides the viewer to the mosque, showing connection between people, places, and faith. The flowers and plants make the scene feel calm and peaceful.

I was inspired by the pharmacy jar artifact and used the *fleur-de-lis* pattern in my artwork. The *fleur-de-lis* is a French symbol, and I used it to represent Canada's bilingual culture. I wanted to imagine what a beautiful mosque in Canada could look like.

I used watercolour and colour pencil to create light colours, details, and texture. The blending helps make the painting feel peaceful and connected.



Inspired by *Pharmacy Jars*, AKM567 and AKM568



## JAERREN KAJAVATHARAN

### *The Universal Object*

2026

Acrylic on canvas

For my School in Residence Program artwork, I used the astrolabe to best depict connection. As an ancient astronomical instrument, the astrolabe holds great significance across many of the world's cultures and religions. In my opinion, despite our many differences, it is fascinating how we as humans can be united by shared objects like the astrolabe. My artwork features an astrolabe at the centre, in front of a bunting of flags from different countries and regions. While these nations or regions may differ ethnically, religiously, or politically, they remain connected through shared objects and traditions like the astrolabe.



Inspired by *Astrolabe*, AKM611



# JAYDEN CHAU

## ***A World Between Worlds***

2026

Acrylic paint and lino block

My piece is trying to communicate the theme of connection through people. I think that people are the greatest form of connection because they are the reason to feel seen and understood. The artifact that I chose is the *Double Door*. I was very inspired by the design and the almost symmetrical carving on both sides. I decided to incorporate it by painting the shapes and floral designs over the piece, and also stamping the design. The medium I used was acrylic paints, and a carved lino block in the shape and design of the *Double Door* as a stamp. In my art piece there are two pairs of hands. One pair is joined together for a handshake. In the other pair, one hand is holding a thumbs up, and the other hand is held out. It represents new faces and different people meeting and connecting behind the *Double Door*.



Inspired by *Double Door*, AKM707



**JENNA  
MUKBEL**

***Guided by the Stars***

2026

Watercolours, pens, alcohol markers

In my artwork, *Guided by the Stars*, I show the connection between space, religion, and discovery through an astrolabe surrounded by stars and constellations. I chose this title because the stars were used for guidance and learning, especially in Islamic history. As a Muslim, I am interested in how Muslim scholars used astronomy to navigate, tell time, and understand more about the universe. The astrolabe represents knowledge and curiosity, while the telescope represents exploration and discovering new things. I used bright gold colors on the astrolabe to make it stand out from the blue and purple space background. I added constellations around the artwork to make it look more connected to space and astronomy. This artwork connects my interest in space with my cultural and religious background. Overall, my piece shows curiosity, learning, and the importance of exploring the unknown.



Inspired by *Astrolabe*, AKM611



# JULIA BAZYDLO

## ***A Journey***

2026

Acrylic paint on canvas

I did an acrylic painting, showing my connection to God through the Holy Spirit. I was inspired by the rooster incense burner. I changed the rooster into a dove, which is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. The perfume that came out of the incense burner resembled the Holy Spirit entering my soul. In my painting, the Sun resembles my heart, and the Dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The mountain symbolizes my journey with God. My goal is to reach the top. On the top of the mountain is Jesus. The more I pray and treat other people with love, I climb higher to the top. The tree shows how God made such beautiful creations and on the top of that list are humans. God loves us. The cloudless sky shows the perfection of God.



Inspired by *Incense Burner*, AKM602



**KHUTEJA  
SYED**

**Untitled**

2026

Mixed media



Inspired by Tile Frieze, AKM698



**KSENIIA  
NIKIFOR**

***There is Beauty in Imperfection***

2026

Colour pencil and alcohol markers on illustration board

My painting represents my childhood, and the memories that I had. It also shows that even things that aren't perfect could have some loveliness and magnificence. As you may notice, some lines in the painting aren't perfect, or the colours don't match, but they show that some of my memories weren't exactly amazing. Some memories are blurred, some are not complete, but all of them are beautiful in their own way. The sunflowers in the painting are from the artifact that I picked. Since I was little, I loved sunflowers, because my family and I often visited a field full of them. I remember even taking pictures with them. All of the other flowers and yellow details that I added represent my family and friends which have always supported me, no matter what. There even is a quote that inspired me to represent my friends as flowers, and it goes like this: "Friends are flowers in the garden of life".



Inspired by Panel, AKM904



**LEEN  
HASAN**

**Medicine**

2026

Colour Pencil on Paper

I was inspired by the idea of medicine. The patterns in my artwork reflect the images I saw on the *Pharmacy Jar* at the Aga Khan Museum. The jars inspired me because the idea of helping sick or hurt people makes me feel like there's always a chance to help, even if you don't have the tools to help.



Inspired by *Pharmacy Jars*, AKM567 and AKM568



**LEEN  
OWDA**

**Peace**

2026

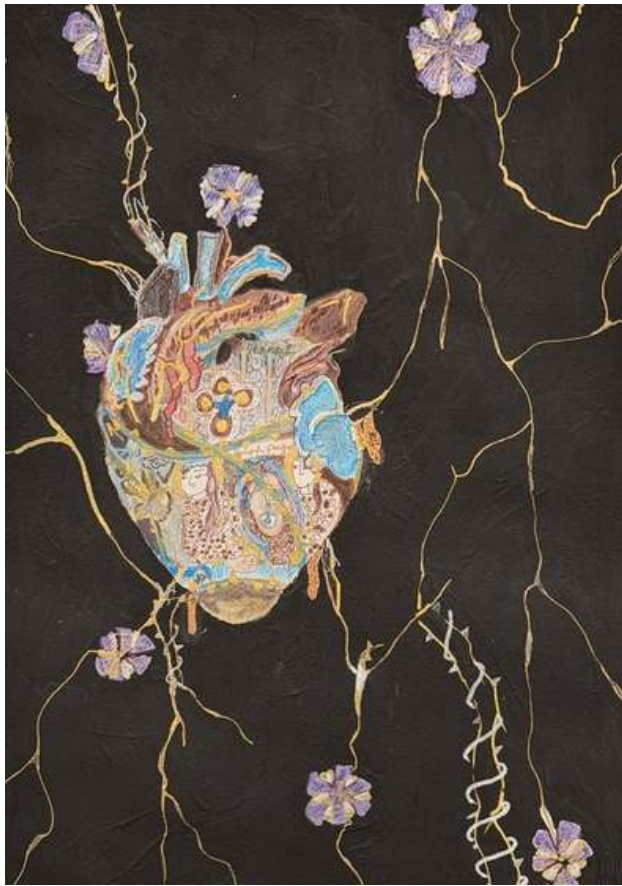
Alcohol markers, Sharpie, pencil, paint on illustration paper

My artwork represents the theme of connection by showing a mosque, which is a place where people gather through faith, prayer, and community. The Arabic calligraphy includes words connected to kindness and mercy, showing how people connect through shared values and beliefs.

The thing that sparked my creativity was this really old tile frieze. I picked it because I was drawn to the intricate patterns, the way the buildings were designed, and the beautiful writing that looked like it was from a different world. So, I took those ideas and ran with them, adding things like domes and tall towers to my artwork, making sure everything was balanced and symmetrical, and even including some Arabic script to give it an extra layer of meaning. I used markers and black outlines on paper because they helped create bold colors and clear details. The bright windows and open entrance make the mosque feel warm and welcoming. Overall, my piece represents unity, culture, and the importance of bringing people together.



Inspired by *Tile Frieze, AKM698*



# LILIT CHAKMAZYAN

## ***Happy Hearts do Beat Fast***

2026

Watercolour, acrylic paint, and acrylic markers

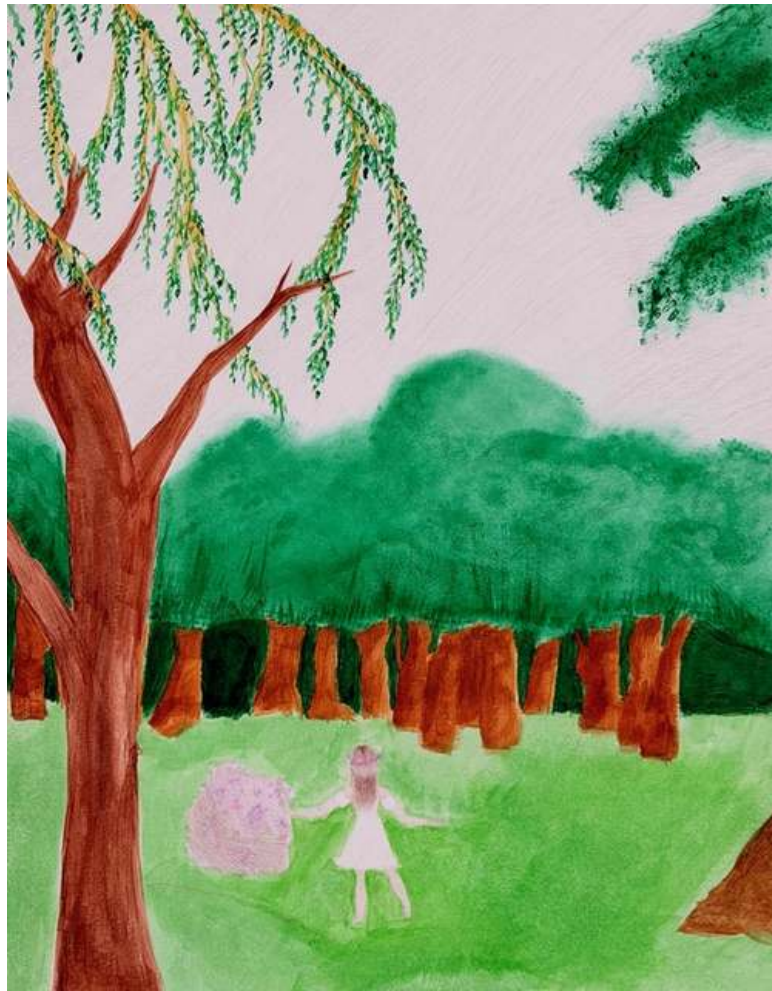
Through cracks, gold accents, flowers, and the heart, my artwork represents determination through difficult times. It shows how humans push their limits and find positivity through struggle. The cracks symbolize pressure and resilience, while the flowers represent growth and the little things in life.

At the museum, other than bowls and rugs, there was nothing that was eye-catching until I came upon the *Lustre-Painted Ewer*. It inspired me with its rich colours, the light cracks, the representation of stress building up like water, and the history shown on the vase. I connected this to the responsibilities and stress I experience as a 13-year-old as my responsibilities grow. It shows that people may not show the amount of stress they have trapped in them, the support they need, but they end with the happiness they deserve.

I used watercolour paint to create a worn texture. I also translated the vase's Arabic calligraphy into my own hidden message: "Good luck to the owner," adding hope to everyday stress. The heart is pressured and transformed by cracks and veins, showing stress building but also leading to growth and positivity from beating faster.



Inspired by *Lustre-Painted Ewer*, AKM763



**LIZA  
BIELIK**

***Freedom***

2026

Watercolour and colour pencil



**MANDY  
LI**

***Edge of Trust***

2026

Watercolour and colour pencils

I present my work to you, *Edge of Trust*. My work was inspired by the artifact, *Dagger and Sheath*. Its detailed design caught my eye, so I included it in my art. I wanted to put priority on connection through its core of trust, so I drew two people back-to-back, one holding a dagger and the other holding its sheath.



Inspired by *Dagger and Sheath*, AKM963



**MANAN  
SINGH**

***Untitled***

2026

Colour pencils on illustration board



Inspired by *Dagger and Sheath*, AKM963



**MANVEER  
SAINI**

*Untitled*

2026

Colour pencils on illustration board



# MARYAM BAKSH

## **Nature Vibe**

2026

Watercolour

I was inspired by this art piece called *Dish*. The dish got me inspired by how beautiful the dragon is and how the mood is like a calm scene with the blue flowers growing around the plate. Therefore, I thought about illustrating an image that showed the same emotions. The scene that I painted has a tree in the foreground and a lake in the background. I find that nature is so relaxing and that it is important to remember that we are all connected by planet earth.



Inspired by *Dish*, AKM881



## MAY MUSALLAM

### *Untitled*

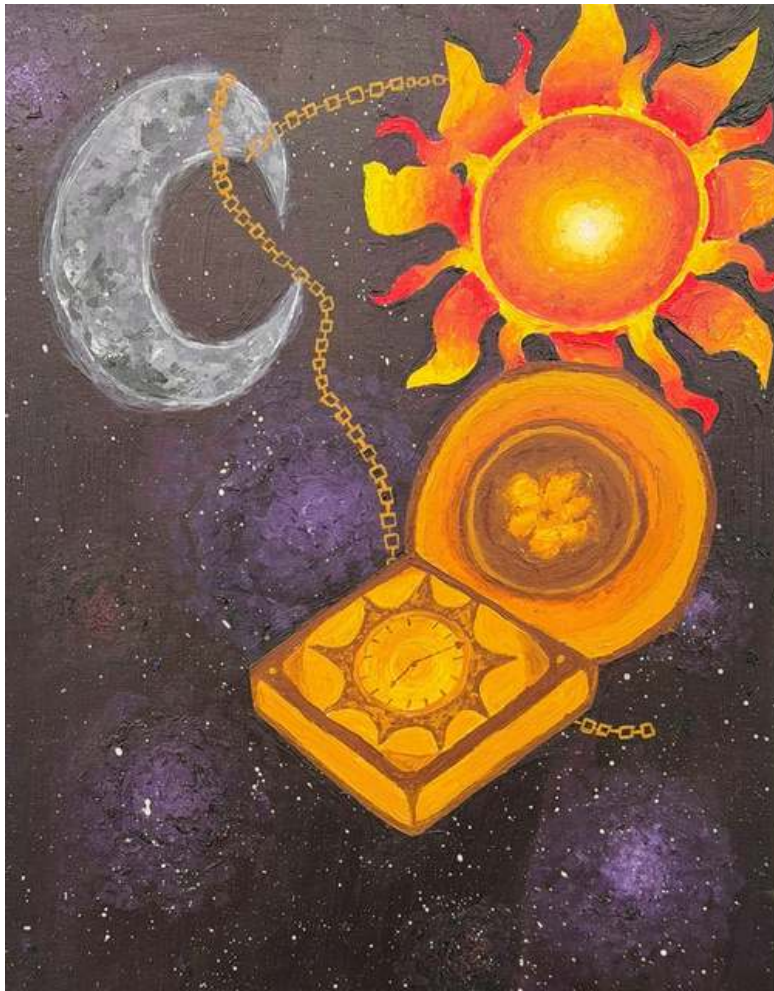
2026

Acrylic paint and markers on illustration board

My artwork shows the theme of connection through the idea of choices and how they can completely change the outcome of someone's life. The two swans represent two different paths that still share similarities, while the divided background shows how different those paths can become over time with the hardship of the decision. I was inspired by the *Double Door* artifact because it reminded me of my life in Palestine and how moving to Canada changed my environment, community, and sense of belonging. Throughout my life I've wondered how different I could've been if it weren't for the decision my family had made years ago, the decision of choosing our culture in Palestine or the safety and education in Canada. The keyhole in the centre represents curiosity, uncertainty, and wondering what life could have been like if different decisions were made, if I had been able to peek through the keyhole and see what my life would have been. I used acrylic paint to create bold colours and texture in my piece, helping emphasize the contrast and emotion between the two paths. So, I tell myself now, that everything happens for a reason, no matter what the outcome is.



Inspired by *Double Door*, AKM707



**MELIS  
IRSAT**

***Guided by Light***

2026

Acrylic paint on illustration board

This piece reflects my personal search for direction and balance, using the astronomical compass as a symbol of guidance in my own life. I was inspired by how people, including myself, often feel lost and look for something steady to rely on. The sun and moon represent different parts of who I am, logic and emotion, light and darkness, and how they are constantly connected rather than separated. Through this theme of connection, the artwork shows that finding direction isn't about choosing one side, but understanding how these opposing forces work together. The vast space surrounding the compass mirrors the uncertainty I sometimes feel, but also reminds me that I am still guided. Ultimately, this piece represents my connection to both myself and the world as I navigate my path forward.



Inspired by *Astronomical Compendium*, AKM625



# MUHAMMAD RAYYAN

## ***Rooted in Faith***

2026

Alcohol markers and pencil on illustration board

This artwork shows a Qur'an with a tree growing out of it. The tree represents growth and life. The Pakistani jasmine flowers on the tree connect it to my background and culture, showing where I come from. Overall, it's about how faith, identity and personal growth are all connected.

Inspired by a *Qur'an Manuscript* from the Museum's Collections



**NOOR  
IMAM**

### **Shellborne Grove**

2026

Watercolour, gold leaf, pencil, and fine liner on watercolour paper

The *Shellborne Grove* explores the connection between land, sea, and personal identity through inspiration from artifacts at the Aga Khan Museum. I was especially inspired by the painting *Eskandar in a Tree Pavilion* because of the horses included. As an equestrian, horseback riding has been a major part of my life since I was little. Horses represent freedom, strength, trust, and movement, and they reflect a deep personal passion of mine. I included them inside the shell to show how important they are to my identity and memories. The shell represents my connection to the ocean and the peace it brings to one. In Islam, the ocean can symbolize purity, reflection, and the power of creation. I wanted the shell to feel calm and spiritual almost like a protected space, holding memories and deep meaning. By combining the oak tree, shell, and horses, I created a world where land and sea come together to represent both my personal values and connection to the world around us.



Inspired by *Eskandar in a Tree Pavilion*, AKM147, and *Shell with Inscriptions*, AKM665



# POLINA SMIRNOVA

## **Zhar Ptitsa**

2026

Colour pencil on paper

During my trip to the Aga Khan Museum, I was inspired by a beautiful blue lamp. When I went over to collect information on this artifact, my eye was caught by the name tag! The tag said "vase." I felt like such a simple name took away from the complexity and beauty of the artifact. Connection is all about balance and I decided to balance its name to its appearance! I added beautiful colours that reminded me of polar lights and feathers of a Russian heat bird called "Жар-птица" (pronounced *Zhar-ptitsa*).



Inspired by *Hanging Lamp*, AKM645



**RAJBIR  
MEHAT**

***The Kitchen***

2026

Pencil and alcohol markers

This artwork was to compose how a kitchen knife can relate to the knife that was not used for cutting vegetables. The cover shows how that the knife can still be used to not relate to cooking and cutting.



Inspired by *Dagger and Sheath*, AKM963



# RANI MERUGU

## ***Unity in Nature***

2026

Watercolour

For my artifact, I chose Bowl with a Hare. I incorporated this artifact into my art piece by drawing three hares in a row, each at a different angle. I also included a variety of flowers: white trilliums, harebells, crocus, hare foot clovers, and lotuses. I wanted to represent the theme of connection by drawing them together since most of them share a similar meaning, such as new beginnings, unity, and abundance. The three hares represent fertility and the lunar cycle, but in Christianity it is associated with the Holy Trinity. To me, this shows the theme of connection by how these flowers and animals have their own spiritual meaning in many different cultures, each aligning with their own beliefs.



Inspired by *Bowl with Hare*, AKM684



# SAIFULLAH MOHAMMED

## ***With Hardship Comes Ease***

2026

Pencil and alcohol markers

My artwork represents the journey through hardship toward peace and hope. The mountains and dark clouds symbolize struggles and challenges, while the path leading toward the light and mosque represents faith, guidance, and healing. I included the quote "Indeed, with hardship will be ease" to show that difficult times do not last forever. The trees, sunrise, and open book create a calm and comforting feeling. Through this piece, I wanted to express patience, hope, and trust in Allah during hard times.



# SAMANTHA UENO

## *In Bloom*

2026

Watercolour on watercolour paper

This piece is inspired by a panel of tiles from the 15th century in Syria. This piece has a Chinese aesthetic, focusing on florals and symmetry. My artwork reflects this while incorporating Japanese culture. This piece demonstrates connection because of how the girl is connected to nature while she controls the wind and blossoms around her. Additionally, it shows connection to culture. As a Wasian (White and Asian heritage), I have felt self-conscious about certain aspects of my appearance that make me feel like an imposter within my culture. However, adding these attributes to the girl made her even more connected to the world around her. I also substituted the pattern around the triangular framework with a Japanese cherry blossom poem, focusing on nature, culture, renewal, and the beauty of impermanence. Lastly, in the centre of each triangle, I included symbols that show Japanese cultural values.



Inspired by *Panel of Tiles*, AKM580

# SAVANNAH HOLNESS



## *Special Dinner*

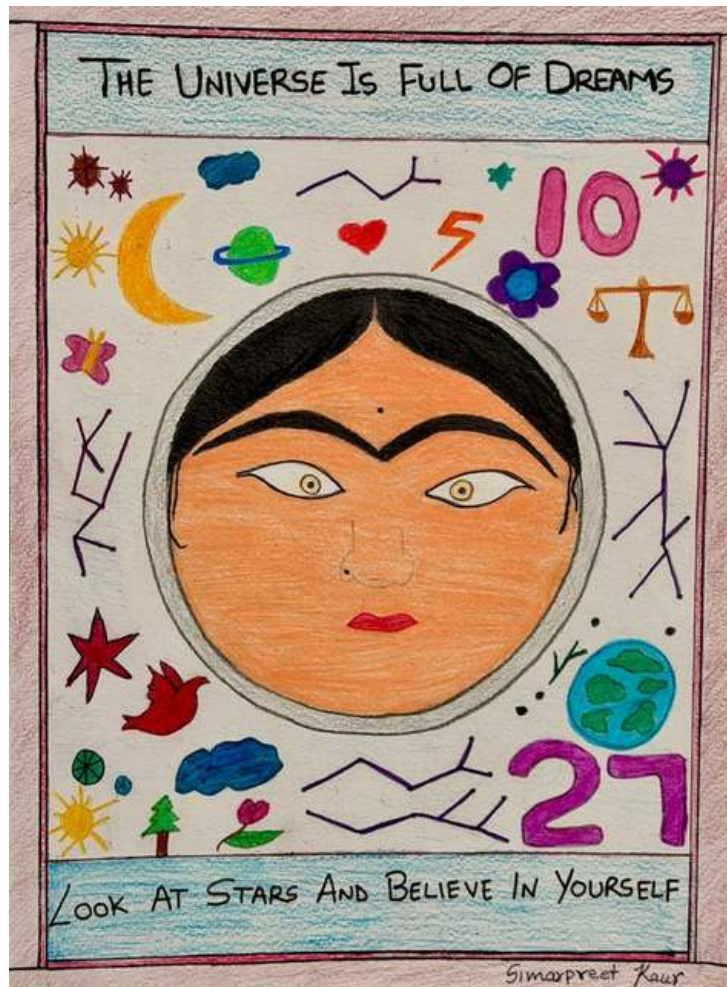
2026

Markers and colour pencil on illustration board

My art piece, *Special Dinner*, is an illustration that is meant to depict connection through a social gathering: eating a delicious meal together. Although these gathering can be stressful or anxiety inducing for multiple reasons, I wanted to showcase how they should be filled with love, comfort, and happiness most of all. The artifact used as inspiration from the Aga Khan Museum is named the *Ablution Basin*, which is a large porcelain dish made in Jingdezhen, a city in China. When I saw it in the museum it reminded me of my grandma's fancy plates. They were only used for certain occasions, like big dinners whenever my family and relatives came over. Coming from my mom's side, all the dishes were usually Laos food, including sticky rice, Nam Khao, Beef Laam, and more that are present in the illustration. The main reason I picked the *Ablution Basin* was because it brought me back to those dinners, and how they gave me so many lovely memories to look back on. Thinking about them brings feelings of nostalgia, peace, comfort, and even hunger! I'm lucky enough to be surrounded by people who adore me and accept me for who I am. How I incorporated these ideas into my art was by using my cultural dishes, laid on top of the beautifully, detailed designed plates where everyone surrounds them, enjoying and sharing the food with each other. The messiness of it is supposed to demonstrate how around loved ones, you should be allowed to be yourself and that even if the food gets stuff dirty, it is okay to laugh about it with others.



Inspired by *Ablution Basin*, AKM722



**SIMARPREET  
KAUR**

**Untitled**

2026

Colour pencil on illustration board

Inspired by The Moon, from a folio from a Falnama (Book of Omens), Collection Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam, WM-71803-1



# STIAN GASCOYNE

## *The Eucharist*

2026

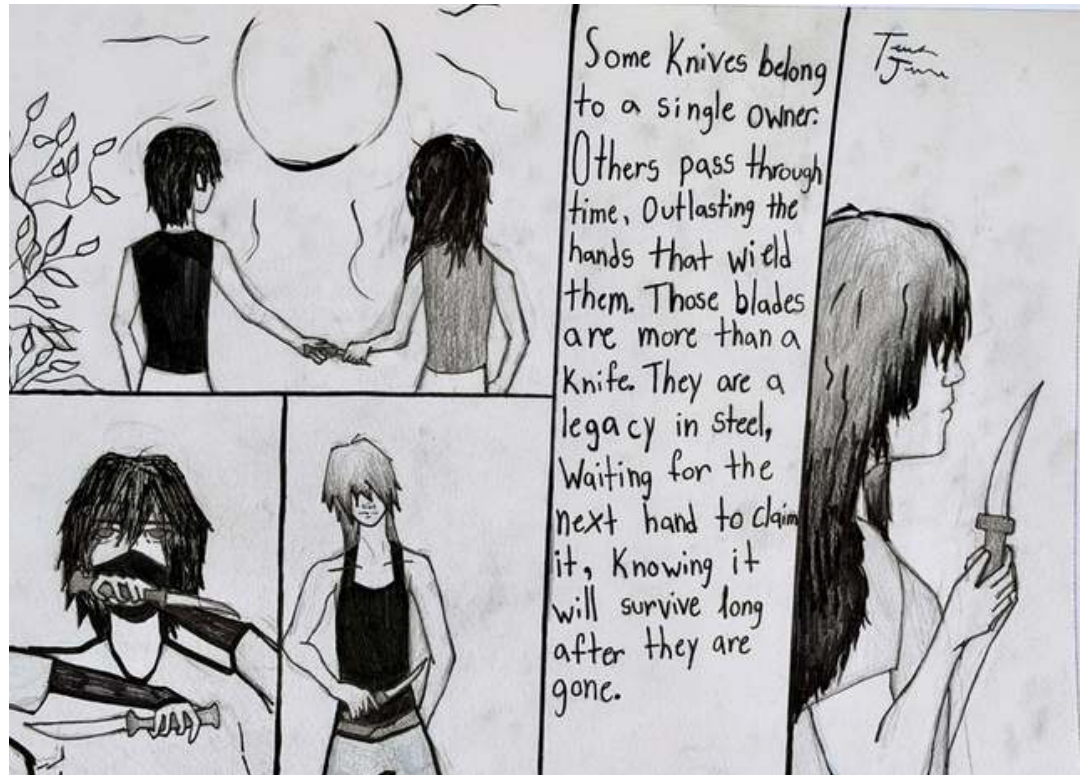
Watercolour

When I first heard about the theme, I thought about my faith and how God connects everyone through the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion where Christians consume the Eucharist and become connected with each other. My art focuses on this spiritual connection. In my artwork, the Eucharist is depicted on top of a chalice filled with wine, like in the sacrament of communion. There are rays of light shooting out of the Eucharist which symbolizes God reaching out to bring others to Christianity.

The artifact I took inspiration from was a glass bottle which has an iridescent shine on the metallic paint that makes it reflect pink and green light. I tried to incorporate these colours into a stained-glass background, using watercolour to give it a handcrafted feel. The bottle also has this deep blue colour to the glass which I hope I managed to do justice.



Inspired by *Bottle*, AKM647



**TEODORA  
JOVICIC**

***Legacy in Steel***

2026

Pen and pencil on illustration board



Inspired by *Dagger and Sheath*, AKM963



# THARSHIKA RAMESH

## *Untitled*

2026

Colour pencils on illustration board

The art piece I chose at the Aga Khan Museum was Faridun Tests His Sons which we observed. In the initial story, the king (their father) appears as a dragon in order to decide who is worthy of being chosen as the next heir, and the younger son proves his intelligence through applying communication to resolve issues. I wanted to illustrate communication in my drawing since it's so essential and has the power to sort conflicts, hence why there are three girls which could represent my two best-friends, one using their voice, one using their phone, and the last one writing a letter. The medium I used was colour pencils. I chose this medium because it allowed me to portray the people and the natural landscape colours, as well as making me able to use a little bit of shading. I was supposed to use an illustration board but due to it being taken, I chose watercolour paper and it honestly added texture which I really loved.



Inspired by *Faridun Tests His Sons*, AKM903



# TIANNAH LLOYD

## *Harmony Beneath the Arches*

2026

Watercolour and colour pencil

In my artwork, I captured the theme of connection with the peacock and woman in red. In between the two is a *Kashkul*, also known as a begging bowl. Even though the peacock and woman are unfamiliar with each other, they are both drawn to this bowl. It was left outside, and everyday people passed by it without noticing. One night, the woman and peacock both wished for something life-changing. The next morning, they stopped at opposite ends of the bowl, with gold shining off them. My artwork shows how anyone can be connected despite their differences, just like the two dragon heads on the opposite sides of the bowl. I used the peacock to symbolize joy and new beginnings. This artwork connects to me because it represents the art of connection no matter your differences. For this piece I used two mediums, watercolor and pencil crayon to give my artwork that balanced and peaceful feeling.



Inspired by *Kashkul*, AKM612



## VALERIIA SAVYTSKA

### *Ashes of Childhood...*

2026

Colour pencils, watercolour, and markers

In this painting, I used colour pencils, watercolour paint, and markers to create contrast between fantasy and destruction. The fairytale book shows a brave knight calming a silly dragon, saving a princess, and living happily ever after representing childhood innocence, hope, and the belief that good always wins. Surrounding the book are large, frightening dragons setting it on fire, symbolizing violence and war destroying childhood dreams. This artwork connects to my personal experience of war beginning in my home country when I was just 10, and to the Aga Khan Museum through one of its dragon inspired artifacts.



**YERIN  
KIM**

### ***Two Opposites Collide***

2026

Acrylic paint, watercolour, colour pencil

My artwork shows two girls on opposite sides holding the astrolabe. The astrolabe is something that sailors used to navigate around the world. It uses star locations to locate directions and distance.

The two girls are located on opposite sides of the astrolabe and represent me and my friend from school. We aren't complete opposites, but we definitely have different styles, and I thought an amazing way to showcase that was the moon and sun.

They're opposites but also have similarities that complement each other. Just like my friendship with my friend, which I think showcases the art of connection.

I used watercolour because I liked the way that they blended nicely and felt flowy, and connected to the water which is where the astrolabe was normally used for navigation while exploring.

I also used acrylic paint because the colours were nice and bold and clear.



Inspired by *Astrolabe*, AKM611



# VIKASNE JEYASEELAN

## *The Water of Life*

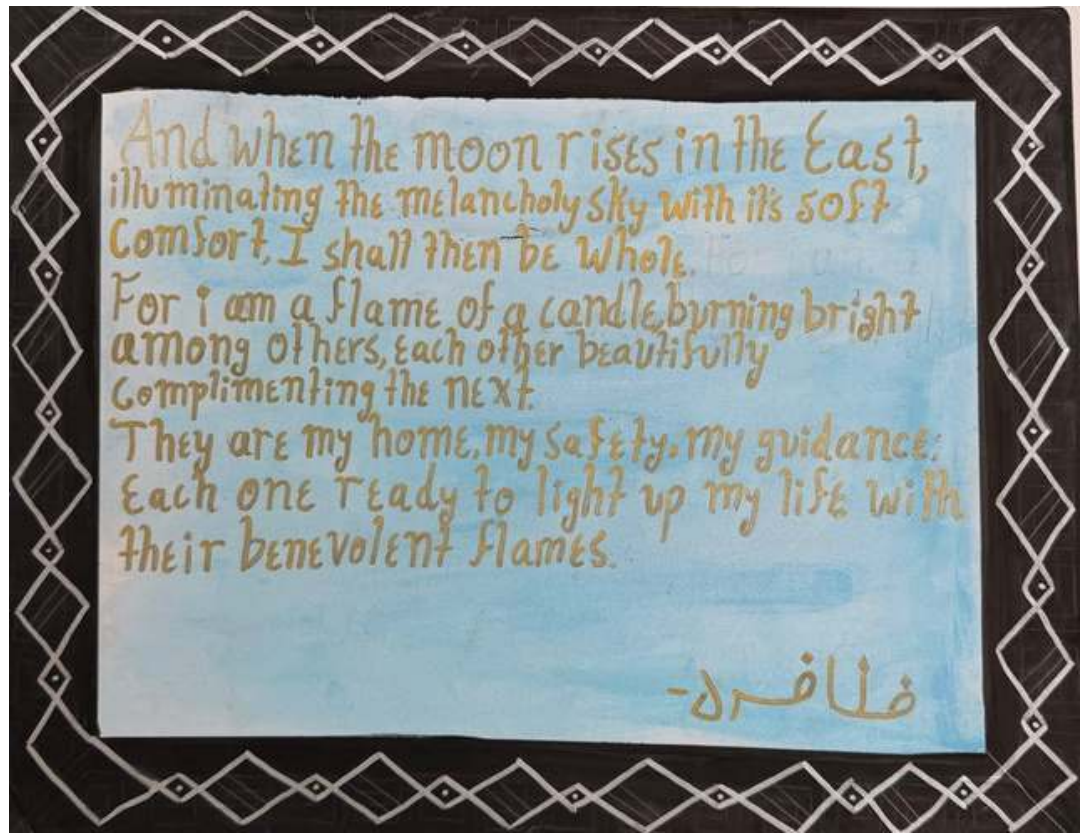
2026

Watercolour, watercolour markers

My artwork is based on Shell, an artifact from India. My piece shows hands pouring water into the ocean, representing humans giving back to nature. I chose this artifact because I was interested in learning about how to give back to the Earth, and since the shell suggests the preservation of water, I thought I could incorporate that into my own art piece. To create my piece, I used watercolour because it matched the theme of water. I also used watercolour markers for the finer details in my artwork.



Inspired by *Shell*, AKM665



## ZAFIRA SEERZAWAN

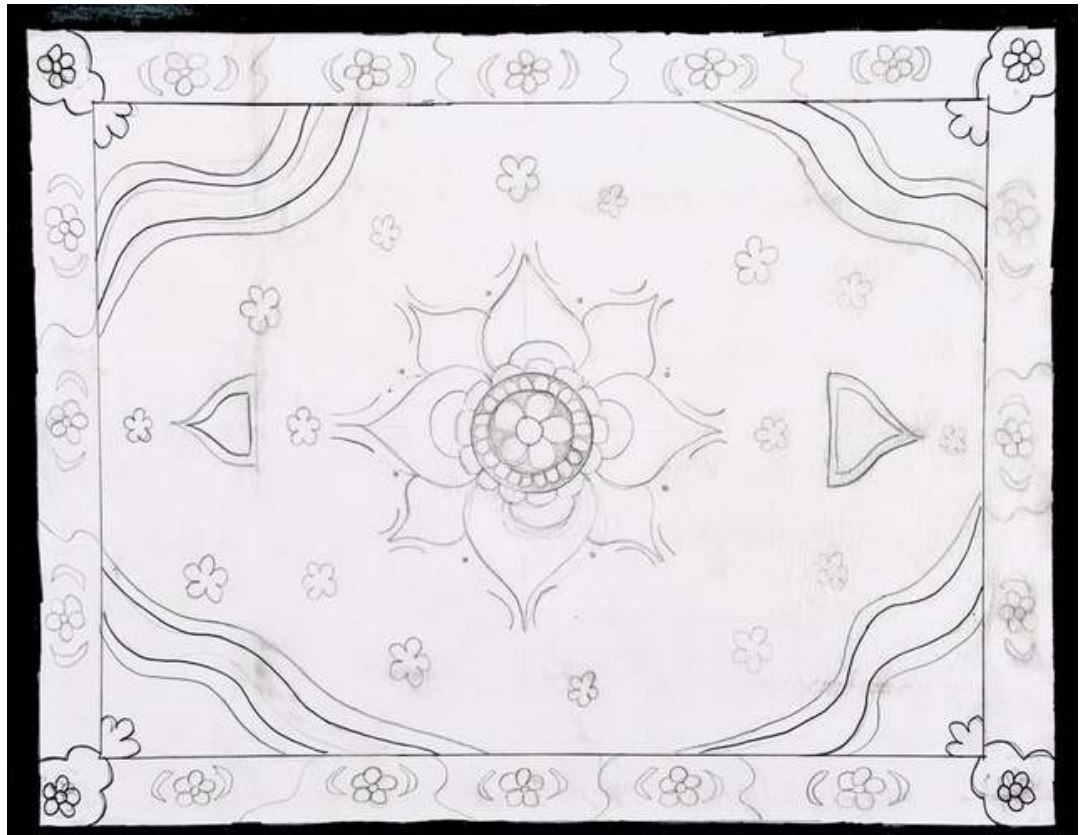
### **Moonlight Flames**

2026

Watercolour, markers, and acrylic paint

*Moonlight Flames* explores the art of connection through poetry in the form of calligraphy. I was inspired by the poems of the *Shahnameh*, the delicately written letters wooed me to try and replicate its nature. This piece has deeper meanings to me, for it is very similar to a painting that previously lived in my Arabic grandparents' house. The black border, golden lettering, and blue background of this art piece pulls me back into their home, at the dinner table learning how to write for the first time. I wished to recapture the moments in-between, the stability of connection in underlying ways. No matter how physically distant we are from the people who care for us, the flames we are continue to burn with their sense of connection.

Inspired by the various *Shahnameh* (*Book of Kings*) folios in the Museum's Collections



**ZAHRA  
JAFRI**

***Print of Pakistan***

2026

Alcohol markers and colour pencils on illustration board

This artwork shows my connection to Pakistani culture because it was inspired by the rugs in my house. The patterns and colors remind me of home and my culture. I chose this design because I have always liked the detailed patterns and traditional style of the rugs in my house. I created my own carpet design using traditional floral patterns, decorative borders, and rich colors inspired by Pakistani rugs.



Inspired by *A Manuscript of Book of Kings (Shahnameh)*, AKM269



# ZAINAB DOGAN

## *Aurea*

2026

Watercolour, pen, acrylic paint, acrylic marker, and gold leaf

My artwork shows the theme of connection by depicting stars and planets in outer space which the astrolabe depended on to guide traveling people to the places or people they cared about. I was inspired by the Astrolabe in the Aga Khan Museum. I picked this artifact because I thought its function and appearance are very cool. I incorporated this piece into my artwork by painting a planet that had similar features to it like the colour and the dials. I picked to mainly use watercolour since it would make blending colours together easy. In my piece, the planet is floating in space, shining brightly and surrounded by stars and colour.



Inspired by *Astrolabe*, AKM611

## OBJECT LIST

### Aga Khan Museum

#### **A Manuscript of Book of Kings (Shahnameh)**

Author: Firdausi, Persian, ca. 935 – 1020  
Created for: Sultan Abu'l-Nasr Qasim Khan  
Scribe: Na'im al-Din Shirazi  
Iran, 1492-1493  
Binding: leather, paint, lacquer, pasteboard  
AKM269

#### **Ablution Basin**

China, 1506-21  
Porcelain  
AKM722

#### **Astronomical Compendium**

Iran, 19th century  
Gold; enamelled  
AKM625

#### **Badge of the Order of the Lion and Sun**

Iran, ca. 1840-60  
Gold, enamel, set with diamonds, rubies, garnets, green glass  
AKM627

#### **Bottle**

Iran, 9th-10th century  
Glass, colourless, polychrome weathering; free blown, wheel-cut, tooled, worked on the pontil  
AKM647

#### **Bowl with Hare**

Egypt, 11th century  
Fritware, lustre-painted  
AKM684

#### **Dagger (jambiya or khanjar) and Scabbard**

Faizallah Shushtari Isfahani  
Iran or Turkey, ca.1700  
Gold, jade and steel  
AKM963

#### **Dish**

Iran, 17th century  
Fritware, underglaze-painted  
AKM588

#### **Dish**

Iran, 17th century  
Fritware, underglaze-painted  
AKM881

#### **Double Door**

Iran, 1487-1488/AH 892  
Wood, carved  
AKM707

#### **Eskandar in a Tree Pavilion**

India, ca.1610  
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper  
AKM147

#### **Faridun Tests His Sons**

Folio from the. Shahnameh (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasp  
Iran, ca.1535  
Opaque watercolour, gold and ink on paper  
AKM903

#### **Hanging Lamp**

Syria, 10th-12th century  
Glass  
AKM645

#### **Incense Burner**

Iran, 11th-13th century  
Broze, inlaid with copper  
AKM602

#### **Imitation Kraakware Charger**

Iran, ca.1615-1640  
Fritware, underglaze painted  
2024.2.2

#### **Kashkul (Beggar's Bowl)**

Iran, late 16th century  
Brass  
AKM612

#### **Manuscript of the Nigaristan**

Author: Ahmad b. Muhammad Ghaffari, Persian, died 1567 Scribe: Ahmad al-Shirazi  
Iran, 1573-74 CE  
Ink, opaque watercolour, and gold on paper  
AKM272

**Panel**

India, 15th–16th century  
Marble, carved  
AKM904

**Panel of Tiles**

Syria, 15th century, framing and gilding:  
second half of the 19th century  
Fritware, underglaze-painted; wood and  
gesso frame  
AKM580

**Perfume or Snuff Bottle**

India, 17th or 18th century  
Gold, inlaid with rubies  
AKM891

**Pharmacy Jars (Albarelli)**

Syria, 15th century  
Fritware, underglazed-painted  
AKM567 and AKM568

**Planispheric Astrolabe**

Spain, 14th century  
Bronze, engraved and inlaid with silver  
AKM611

**Shell**

India, 18th century  
Incised mother-of-pearl  
AKM665

**Tile**

Syria, first half of the 15th century  
Fritware, underglaze-painted  
AKM570

**Tile**

Türkiye, 1560–1565  
Fritware, underglazed and painted  
AKM875

**Tile**

Syria, 1150–1250  
Fritware  
AKM702

**Tile**

Iran, Early 14th Century  
Fritware, underglaze and lustre-painted  
AKM796

**Tile**

1850–1899  
Fritware, moulded and underglaze painted  
LI2015.19.1

**Tiles**

Türkiye, 1560  
Fritware, underglaze-painted  
AKM583 and AKM584

**Tile Frieze**

Iznik, Türkiye, ca.1570  
Fritware, underglaze-painted  
AKM698

**Life-Size Paper Garment**

Isabelle de Borchgrave  
2012  
Papier mâché and paint  
On loan from a private collection.  
LI2020.21.2

**Lustre-Painted Ewer**

Iran, 12th–13th century  
Fritware, lustre-painted  
AKM763

