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Edible Landscapes



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Seek, Strive and Succeed

Ibrahim Al-Mashrafi

Senior Editor

Life is full of challenges that may seem beyond our control, often leading us to adopt a victimised mentality. This mindset convinces us that others are responsible for our struggles, trapping us in a cycle of self-pity and self-blame. However, surrendering to such a perspective only hinders personal growth and limits one's opportunities.

A victim mentality manifests when we dwell on past grievances, replaying them in our minds instead of seeking solutions to them. This habit drains our energy and prevents us from moving forward. While sympathy from others may provide temporary comfort, it does not lead to meaningful change. In fact, excessive self-pity can contribute to emotional distress and create further obstacles in life which can last for some time.

One of the most damaging aspects of this mindset is the mistaken belief that life owes us success and sustenance without any effort. In reality, nothing comes to us without taking action. Just as a bird leaves its nest each morning in search of food, we must take responsibility for our progress. Waiting passively for opportunities to arrive is futile; we must actively seek them out. The world rewards those who strive, not those who wait.

Moreover, constantly blaming others for our hardships gives them undue control over our lives. Instead, we must shift our focus toward justice, equality, and the opportunities that exist. By doing so, we redirect our energy toward positive change and open doors to growth and success.

Ultimately, breaking free from the victim mentality requires a shift in perspective. When we take ownership of our actions and seek our own sustenance, we reclaim our power. As the saying goes, "Fortune favours the bold." Life favours those who take initiative, not those who wait to be rescued.

Identity and Experimentation in Ceramics

Hanifa Al-Balushi

College of Education



Al-Andaleeb Al-Ghafri, a student at the Department of Art Education, College of Education, is a rising talent in ceramic art. Her passion and skill were recognised when she won second place in the "Best Ceramic Product" competition at the Gulf Ceramics Carnival 2022. Her work is distinguished by a unique blend of authenticity and experimentation, reshaping aesthetic concepts in ceramics through continuous technical and intellectual exploration.

Symbolism and Aesthetic Vision

Al-Andaleeb's latest project is a visually compelling exploration of the symbolic and aesthetic dimensions of the lotus flower that grows in Sur. Integrating modern glass glazing techniques, her work captures the interplay between material and void, tradition and modernity. The lotus flower, a symbol of purity and renewal, is depicted floating in space, mirroring its natural resilience in the face of environmental challenges.

Innovative Use of Glass Glazing

A defining aspect of this project is the use of glass glazing, which enhances both the conceptual and sensory experience. The transparency and reflective qualities of glass create an illusion of movement and fluidity, echoing the shifting light across Omani landscapes. Beyond aesthetics, the technique incorporates chromium oxides to achieve colour gradients that mimic the lotus at different times of the day, reinforcing the artwork's environmental perspective.

The Role of Void in Composition

Rather than a passive background, void plays an active role in the composition, influencing the viewer's perception of movement and transformation. The ceramic pieces, suspended in space, create a dynamic interplay between presence and absence, echoing the lotus flower's life cycle from dawn to dusk.

Sustainability and Material Recycling

Al-Andaleeb's commitment to sustainability is evident in her innovative use of recycled glass to simulate water. This symbolic and environmentally conscious choice not only enhances the aesthetic appeal but also aligns the project with broader discussions on sustainability in contemporary art.

Conclusion: A Contemporary Reimagining of Ceramics

Al-Andaleeb Al-Ghafri's work extends beyond traditional ceramic forms, engaging with deeper philosophical themes of transparency, transformation, and identity. By integrating symbolism with technique, she redefines ceramic art within a modern context, offering a compelling model of experimentation in Omani visual arts. Her approach ensures that ceramics remain a vital part of the contemporary creative landscape, blending tradition with innovation in a meaningful and thought-provoking way.



Food-scaping: Edible Urban Greens

Dr. Muhammad Mumtaz Khan

College of Agriculture and Marine Sciences



The rapid expansion of urbanisation has led to overcrowded and polluted cities with limited open spaces, posing a significant threat to environmental sustainability and public health. This growing challenge necessitates that city planners and communities devise strategies to create public spaces that enhance environmental sustainability and improve the quality of life for urban residents. One emerging approach is edible landscaping, which replaces purely decorative urban gardens with productive landscapes. This innovative practice integrates food-producing plants into traditional urban landscapes, transforming gardens, yards, and even public parks into thriving spaces that yield fruits, vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers. Unlike conventional horticultural landscaping, which prioritises aesthetics, edible landscaping promotes

sustainability, biodiversity, public health, and food security. In many urban areas, open spaces are underutilised and often become dumping grounds or crime hotspots, negatively impacting safety and overall well-being. Edible landscaping revitalises these neglected spaces, fostering social interaction, instilling a sense of community ownership, and cultivating a stronger local identity. Additionally, it enhances urban biodiversity, provides shelter for pollinators, and helps mitigate air pollution. These edible gardens serve as social hubs where individuals can connect, learn, and strengthen social cohesion through the shared activity of gardening. Furthermore, the fresh produce grown in these gardens can support local farmers' markets, bolstering the local economy. Green spaces in urban areas also increase property values and create vibrant, liveable

environments. Food-scaping encourages healthier eating habits and promotes physical activity through gardening and maintenance tasks.

When designing edible landscapes in urban settings, it is crucial to select plant species based on their adaptability to local environmental conditions. Native plants typically require less maintenance and are more resilient to adverse growing conditions. In addition to providing food, edible gardens offer resting areas, educational spaces, and walking trails for urban residents. Accessibility is also essential; ensuring that people of all ages and abilities can navigate these spaces should be a priority. These gardens can also function as learning centres and play areas for children. Moreover, the aesthetic appeal of such projects can have a positive psychological impact, attracting more people to participate in



sustainable practices.

Globally, numerous edible landscaping initiatives in both developed and developing countries are drawing people from diverse backgrounds. Residents are encouraged to grow food crops in domestic landscapes, including lawns and roadside edges, effectively creating a network of food-producing streets. This strengthens community awareness of local food production and promotes sustainable urban agriculture. A notable example is "The Edible Park" in San Francisco, which combines art, education, and food production. This multi-layered park features carved installations that serve as edible gardens, fostering engagement and understanding of sustainable food practices.

Despite its many benefits, edible landscaping in urban areas does face challenges, including space

constraints, maintenance demands, and varying community perceptions. However, solutions such as vertical gardening, container gardening, and rooftop farming offer practical alternatives for maximising space while growing food. Community gardens and volunteer-driven initiatives can alleviate maintenance burdens, while public awareness campaigns can address concerns about hygiene and security by promoting the benefits of edible landscapes.

As cities continue to evolve, it is crucial to incorporate edible landscapes into urban planning. Integrating food-growing initiatives, particularly in densely populated areas and megacities, can be achieved through vertical planting technologies and innovative urban agriculture policies. Municipal authorities must support zoning regulations that

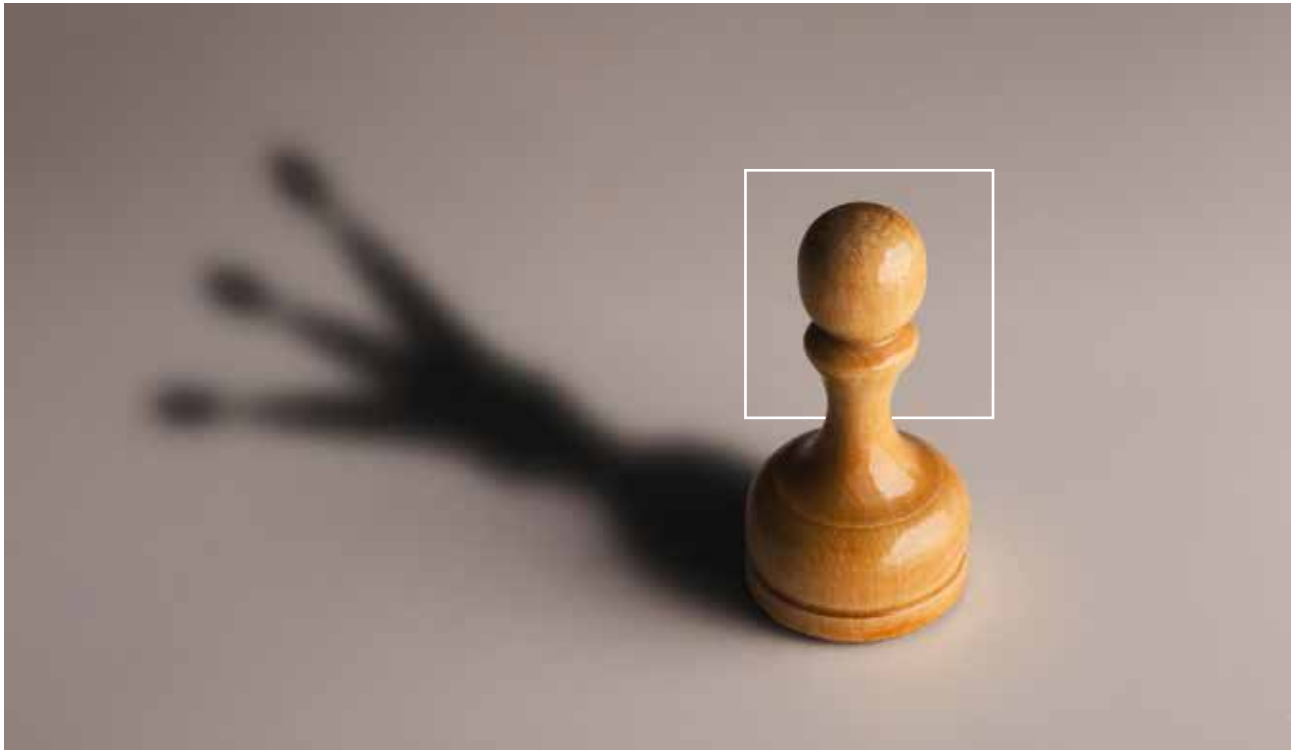
allocate space for community gardens and provide funding for local farmers' groups. By integrating food-producing plants into urban landscapes, cities can foster a culture of sustainability, enhance urban ecology, and promote vibrant, healthy communities. Embracing edible landscaping strengthens the relationship between nature, food, and urban living, paving the way for more resilient and food-secure cities. Whether on a large scale or within individual households, food-scaping can significantly enhance the liveability of both traditional and smart cities.

At the Department of Plant Sciences, College of Agriculture and Marine Sciences, members of the faculty have been actively researching and developing food-scaping initiatives to support sustainable urban environments and enhance food security.



Are you an invisible Leader?

Dr. Asma Al Yahyaei
College of Nursing



When I watched Hidden Figures, the story of Katherine Johnson, a brilliant mathematician whose groundbreaking work contributed to sending astronauts into space, it made me wonder: how many Katherine Johnsons are out there in the world. How many unrecognised heroes have quietly shaped history, their contributions left unnoticed, their names forgotten by the spotlight?

Katherine Johnson's calculations at NASA were essential to historic missions, including John Glenn's orbit around Earth and the Apollo moon landing. Yet for decades, her contributions remained concealed by systemic barriers and biases. She did not pursue

recognition; she perused the results. Her story brought to life in the film and book Hidden Figures, serves as a powerful reminder of what I call "invisible leadership" – a form of leadership defined by quiet action, unwavering integrity, and profound impact.

As I reflected on her story, it became clear that invisible leaders like Katherine are everywhere. They are the ones working tirelessly behind the scenes, shaping outcomes, and empowering others. But their contributions often go unnoticed. Could you be one of them?

Katherine's story embodies the strength of invisible leadership. She was not in the control room when John Glenn orbited Earth,

nor did she stand before press conferences after the Apollo missions. Yet, her precise calculations, completed in the quiet of her office away from the public eye, were the foundation that made those historic missions possible.

Katherine's humility and dedication embody the essence of what it means to lead without seeking recognition. She worked tirelessly, not for fame, but to ensure her team's success and their mission. Her influence extends far beyond the workplace, inspiring generations of scientists and future leaders.

The beauty of invisible leadership is that it extends beyond history-makers like Katherine; it is woven into



the fabric of our communities and workplaces. Invisible leaders include mentors who guide without expecting recognition, teachers who inspire quietly but profoundly, and caregivers who put others first. Think of the colleague who ensures the team's success without seeking the spotlight or the community organiser who solves problems while staying in the background. These unrecognised heroes shape our world.

However, invisible leadership often comes with challenges: lack of recognition, misinterpretation of quietness as passivity, and burnout from supporting others without acknowledgement. To overcome these, we can take inspiration from Simon Sinek's book "Leaders Eat Last", balancing humility with visibility. Share your achievements strategically to ensure that your contributions are understood and valued. Build a support network that appreciates your leadership and acknowledges your impact. Embracing invisible leadership means celebrating others, communicating your contributions thoughtfully, mentoring the next generation, and protecting your energy through self-care to prevent burnout. By addressing these challenges, invisible leaders can continue to create lasting change.

Katherine Johnson's story reminds us that leadership doesn't need to be loud to be powerful. Her quiet brilliance changed history, and while not all invisible leaders send astronauts into space, their work is just as vital. So, are you an invisible leader? If so, take pride in your role. Like Katherine, your leadership may not always earn applause, but it builds a foundation for others to succeed. In a world that celebrates those in the spotlight, it is the invisible leaders who ensure that the stage is set and the show goes on. Our world has far more Katherine Johnsons than we realise, and their stories deserve to be told.



Portuguese Shipwrecks in Oman's Waters (1503-1944)

The history of maritime conflicts and shipwrecks in the waters surrounding Oman is an area of profound significance. In her master's thesis, *Sinking Ship Incidents in Oman's Waters between 1503-1944*, Balqees Al-Makhmari examines one such dramatic episode: the sinking of Portuguese ships under Vicente Sodré's command in 1503. This article highlights the key findings of her research, shedding light on the historical and archaeological evidence that offers insights into this event.

In the early 16th century, Portugal was aggressively expanding its influence in the Indian Ocean. Vasco da Gama's voyage to India in 1502 marked the beginning of Portuguese efforts to dominate trade routes. Before returning to Portugal, Gama left his relative, Vicente Sodré, in command of a small fleet to patrol the Arabian Sea and protect Portuguese interests. However, Sodré and his men soon turned to piracy, attacking and looting ships travelling between India and the Arabian Peninsula.

In early 1503, Sodré's squadron attacked and seized several Arab ships, killing passengers and taking captives. They later sailed to Socotra Island, where they continued to disrupt Muslim trade routes. Eventually, in April 1503, they reached the Khuriya Muriya Islands (al-Hallaniyyat) off the southern coast of Oman, where they sought shelter from seasonal monsoon winds. The local fishermen warned Sodré and his men about the dangerous north winds that could damage their anchored ships. Ignoring these warnings, the Portuguese commanders believed their ships' anchors were strong enough to hold. However, when the storm arrived, it was devastating. Huge waves battered the ships, dragging them towards the rocky shores and ultimately sinking them. Sodré's ship, *Esmeralda*, was completely lost, drowning all on board, including Sodré himself. His brother, Brás Sodré, initially survived but later died under mysterious circumstances. The few survivors, led by Pero de Ataíde, salvaged what

they could from the wreckage before burning the remaining hulls and setting sail for India. Before his death in 1504, Ataíde wrote a letter to King Manuel I describing the tragic events. Centuries later, archaeological efforts have uncovered remarkable artefacts from the wrecks of *Esmeralda* and *São Pedro*, offering valuable insights into the period's maritime history. These discoveries include coins, a ship's bell, and a navigational instrument, which help date and authenticate the shipwrecks. A total of 12 gold coins, known as *Cruzado*, were discovered at the site. Eleven of these coins date back to the reign of Dom Manuel I (1495-1521), while one belongs to the reign of Dom João II (1481-1495). Portugal primarily relied on gold from Africa, India, and Brazil to mint its currency, and these coins reflect the economic and political influence of the Portuguese empire during the Age of Exploration. Notably, the coins bear the Portuguese royal coat of arms on one side and a Christian cross on the other, emphasising





both national pride and religious zealotry. The absence of specific minting dates on the coins led archaeologists to rely on engraved symbols for dating, confirming their origin in the early 16th century.

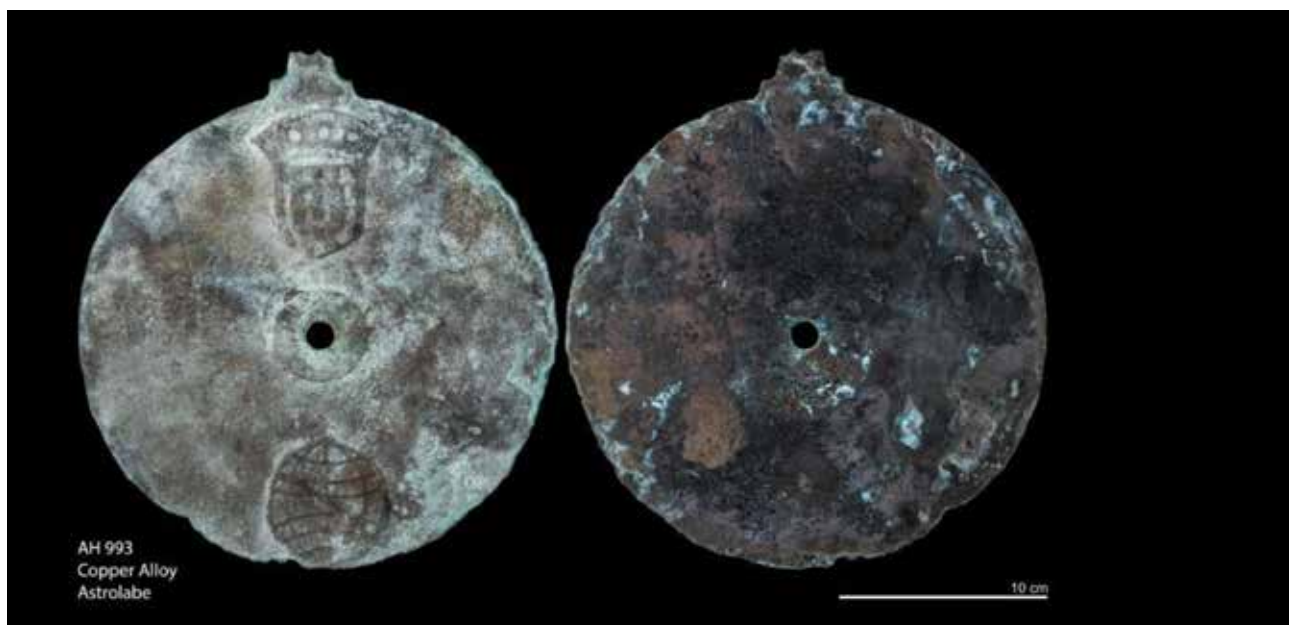
A copper ship's bell, preserved in Omani waters for over 500 years, was also recovered. Despite corrosion, specialists identified the letters "D" and "M," referring to King Dom Manuel I of Portugal. Additionally, the bell's structure suggests the ship's construction date was around 1498, aligning with historical

records of the Portuguese fleet during that period.

Among the most intriguing discoveries was also a nearly intact copper astrolabe—a vital navigational tool used by sailors to determine latitude. Unlike typical astrolabes of the time, this one lacked inscriptions or dates, but it featured two significant logos: the Portuguese royal coat of arms and Dom Manuel's emblem. These markings confirm the astrolabe's Portuguese origin and its association with the maritime empire's expansion.

Astrolabes were widely used by Arab navigators before being adopted by Europeans. The craftsmanship of this instrument reflects the technological advancements of the time and highlights the fusion of Arab and European maritime traditions.

The sinking of *Esmeralda* and *São Pedro* in 1503 marks an important chapter in Omani maritime history. Through meticulous archaeological research, scholars have been able to reconstruct the events surrounding the shipwrecks, offering valuable insights into the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean. The discovery of coins, the ship's bell, and the astrolabe underscores the significance of these shipwrecks in understanding early modern naval warfare, trade, and cultural exchanges. These findings not only enrich historical knowledge but also highlight Oman's crucial role in the maritime history of the Indian Ocean. The wrecks serve as a testament to the dangers of the sea, the ambitions of powers, and the resilience of those who navigated these waters centuries ago.



Erasmus+ Bridges Continents



Professor Francesco Canganella is a microbiologist specialising in microbial ecology, biotechnology, and food microbiology. He graduated with distinction in Biological Sciences from the University of Rome La Sapienza in 1985 and earned a PhD in Microbial Ecology from the University of Bologna in 1992. He joined the University of Tuscia as a Research Assistant in 1990, later becoming an Associate Professor in General Microbiology (2000) and a Full Professor in Agricultural and Environmental Microbiology (2005). Professor Canganella also serves as the focal point for fostering cooperation between Sultan Qaboos University and the University of Tuscia (UNITUS) within the Erasmus programme, facilitating academic exchange and collaboration.

1. Could you briefly explain the Erasmus Mundus programme and its primary objectives for students and staff? What distinguishes it from other programmes?

Erasmus+ is the European Union's programme supporting education, training, youth, and sport in Europe. With an estimated budget of €26.2 billion, it has nearly doubled its funding compared to the previous programme (2014-2020).

The 2021-2027 programme places particular emphasis on social inclusion, green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life. It aligns with key EU initiatives, including the European Education Area, the Digital Education Action Plan, and the European Skills Agenda. Additionally, Erasmus+ supports:

- The European Pillar of Social Rights
- The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027
- The development of a European dimension in sport

Erasmus+ provides opportunities for mobility and cooperation in:

- Higher education
- Vocational education and training
- School education (including early childhood education and care)
- Adult education
- Youth work
- Sport

Originally launched by the European Union in 1987, the Erasmus programme aimed to foster closer collaboration between universities and higher education institutions across Europe by establishing a structured system of student exchanges. Over time, the

programme expanded in scope and is now known as Erasmus+, integrating previous EU schemes for transnational cooperation and mobility in education, training, youth, and sport. Increasingly, Erasmus+ is extending its reach beyond Europe.

Since its inception in 1987, more than 15 million people have participated in Erasmus+, demonstrating its widespread appeal and impact among students, staff, young people, and lifelong learners.

2. Could you tell us about the origins of the collaboration between UNITUS and SQU?

The collaboration began when I established contact with the Omani Embassy in Seoul during my eight years as Science and Technology Counsellor at the Italian Embassy. Upon my return to Italy, I proposed a potential bilateral collaboration



and Erasmus project to Sultan Qaboos University.

3. What are some of the key milestones achieved so far through the UNITUS-SQU Erasmus Project?

- Two bilateral workshops
- Ongoing preliminary research among the partners
- A bilateral research project on camels funded by SQU (2025-2026)
- Six Omani undergraduate students attending UNITUS for an academic semester
- Two SQU staff members visiting UNITUS

4. What are the most significant benefits of the collaboration between UNITUS and SQU?

- Cultural exchange and knowledge sharing
- Joint academic and research activities
- Student mobility and collaborative teaching methods

5. What inspired you to focus on international academic collaborations?

My past experiences abroad, both as a researcher and as a diplomatic Science and Technology Counsellor, have strongly influenced my interest in fostering international collaborations.

6. How has your experience visiting SQU influenced your perspective on academic and cultural exchange?

It has provided me with a deeper understanding of Arab culture and expanded opportunities for launching new research collaborations.

7. What areas of research or academic collaboration do you see as having the most potential for future projects between UNITUS and SQU?

- Biology
- Agriculture
- Aquaculture
- Finance and Economics
- Engineering

- Zootechnics
- Food Science

8. How can universities in different regions collaborate more effectively to address regional and global challenges?

By fostering:

- Bilateral academic and institutional partnerships
- Dual-degree programmes
- Student exchange initiatives
- Collaborative research projects

9. What advice would you give to students or staff who want to make the most of opportunities like Erasmus Mundus?

Be open-minded and willing to immerse yourself in different cultures and academic environments. International experiences can provide invaluable professional and personal growth.





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