



@UNHCRgypt  
www.unhcr.org/eg  
arecalh@unhcr.org  
f t i You Tube

ALL THAT IS  
MINE  
I CARRY  
WITH ME







Egypt is home to 256,632 registered refugees and asylum-seekers from 58 countries. Slightly more than half of them are from Syria, followed by Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Iraq<sup>1</sup>. Most refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt live in urban areas of Greater Cairo and the North Coast amongst their host communities.

After fleeing war or persecution, the opportunity to work and earn a living is one of the most effective ways for refugees to rebuild their lives with dignity and in peace. Through safe work, forcibly displaced people can provide for their families' basic needs, maintain their dignity, and contribute to the society.

In order to help refugees and asylum-seekers engage in sustainable livelihood activities, UNHCR, through its partners, provides eligible refugees and asylum-seekers with training, coaching and counselling opportunities to kickstart their own start-ups/businesses.

UNHCR works to promote economic inclusion of those forced to flee their homes by advocating for their right to work and building their livelihoods through market-oriented programs. In 2019, 4,820 people benefited from these livelihood activities.

<sup>1</sup>(UNHCR 2020)



The following pages capture the stories of some refugee artisans whose skills shine through every product they create. From Syria to Yemen to South Sudan, their craftsmanship has been inspired by their history and culture. Their skills have been enriched by their dynamic interaction with their host community.

Refugee hosting neighborhoods in Cairo are dynamic centers of flowing sensations, which express themselves in various meanings and aspirations. They are also centers for the hopes and dreams, skills, values and narratives of refugees and asylum-seekers as they work and re-work the city's landscape. In their daily journey, they carry with them tangible assets to contribute to the city's organizations and outlook.

This brochure is an attempt to capture stories and skills of a few refugee artisans as they take part in shaping the diversity of the ecosystem of Cairo.

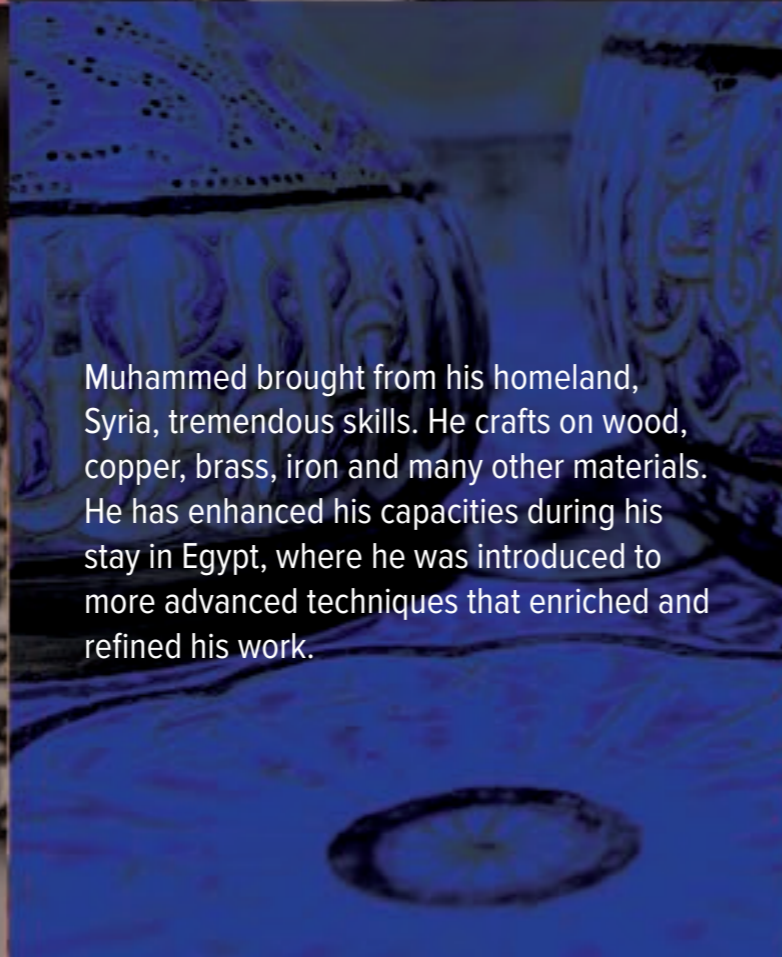
# CAPTURING CREATIVE JOURNEYS

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# MUHAMMEDI AL NAJAR



Muhammed brought from his homeland, Syria, tremendous skills. He crafts on wood, copper, brass, iron and many other materials. He has enhanced his capacities during his stay in Egypt, where he was introduced to more advanced techniques that enriched and refined his work.

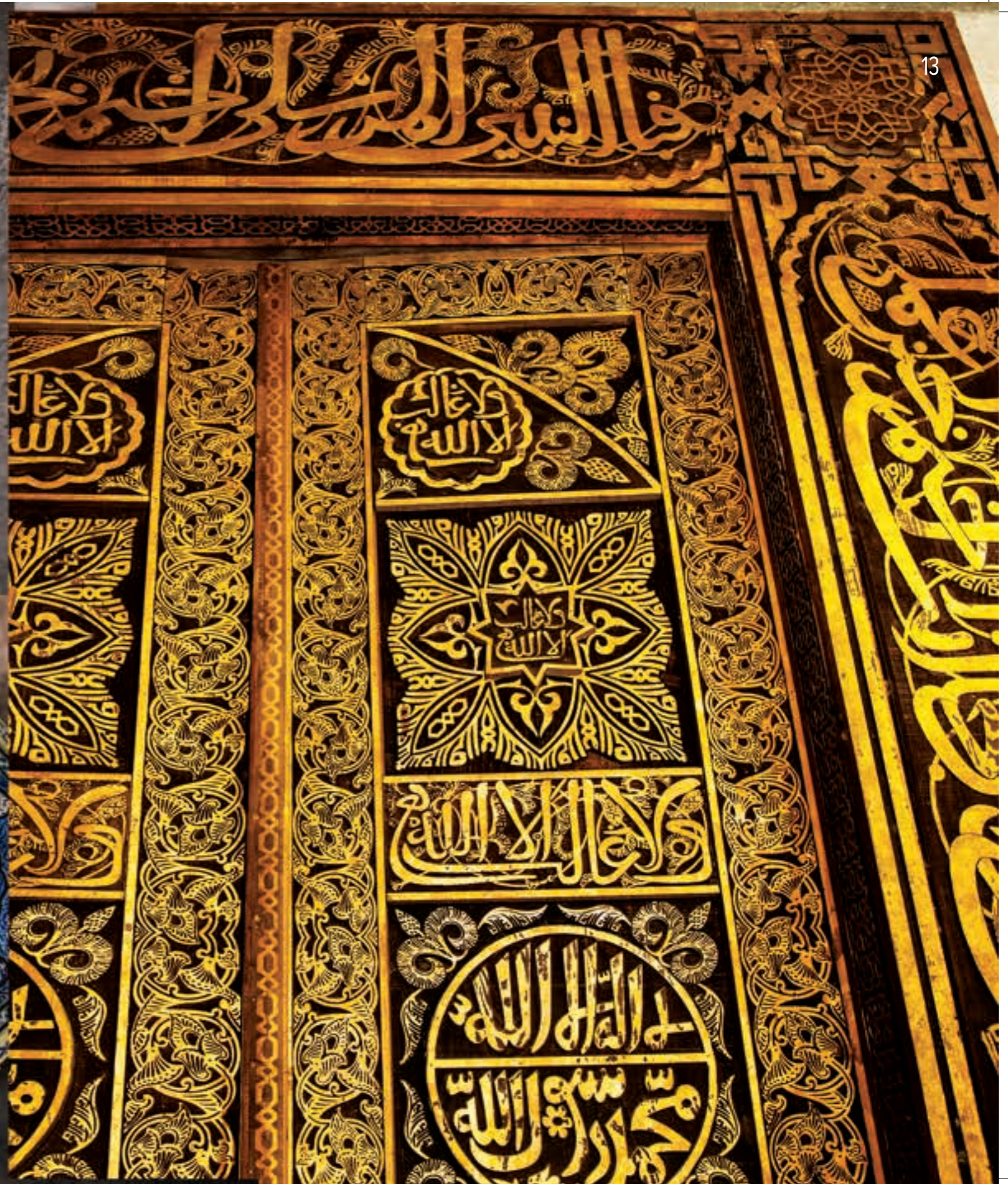




In his work, he is inspired by traditional decoration and styles. Each of his pieces requires know-how and research on the historic background of his design.



It takes Muhammed Al Najar weeks and sometimes months to bring a piece to life. At times, he also works with a local calligrapher to produce pieces of stunning beauty.





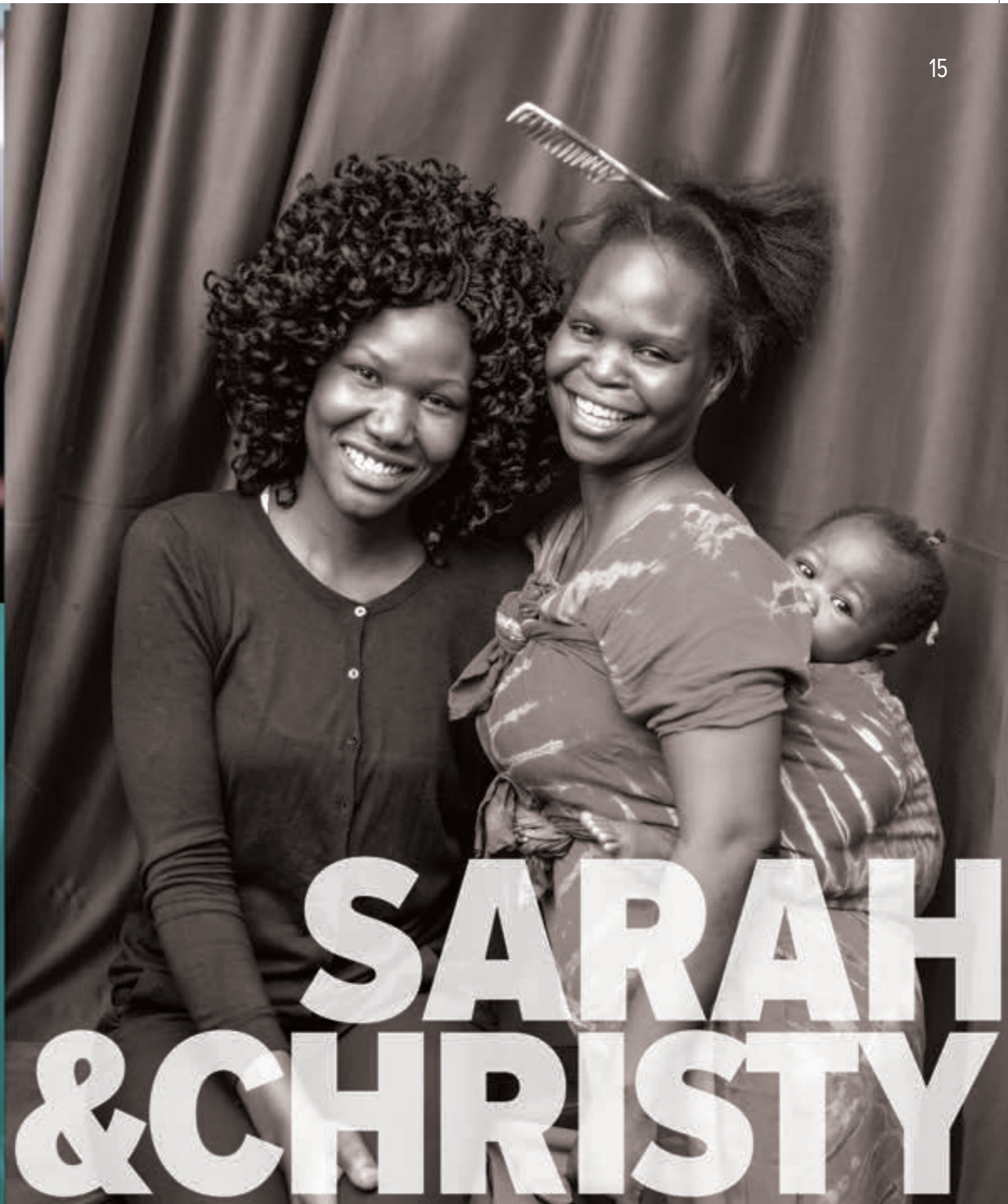


**Sarah and Christy**

Make-up and braiding

Make-up and styling are areas in which Sarah and Christy have found a venue to express their love of Sudanese beauty. The style of Sudanese braids they make is called "Bob" which is another name for "Rasta" braids. Sarah and Christy put the entire hair into small braids and add artificial hair. They love to use vibrant colors.

The artistic and creative process may take many hours and results in a broad array of different hair styles. The two have also mastered the art of Henna. The skills of Sarah and Christy are much liked by Egyptian women. The two women have extended their designs to include Egyptian motifs and other popular patterns.



**SARAH  
&CHRISTY**

# HANAAN HASSAN



Depicting the Yemeni culture, architecture and people is Hanan's goal in Cairo.

She was trained as an artist in Yemen. She focuses her drawings particularly on Yemeni people and traditional dresses, jewelry and daggers.

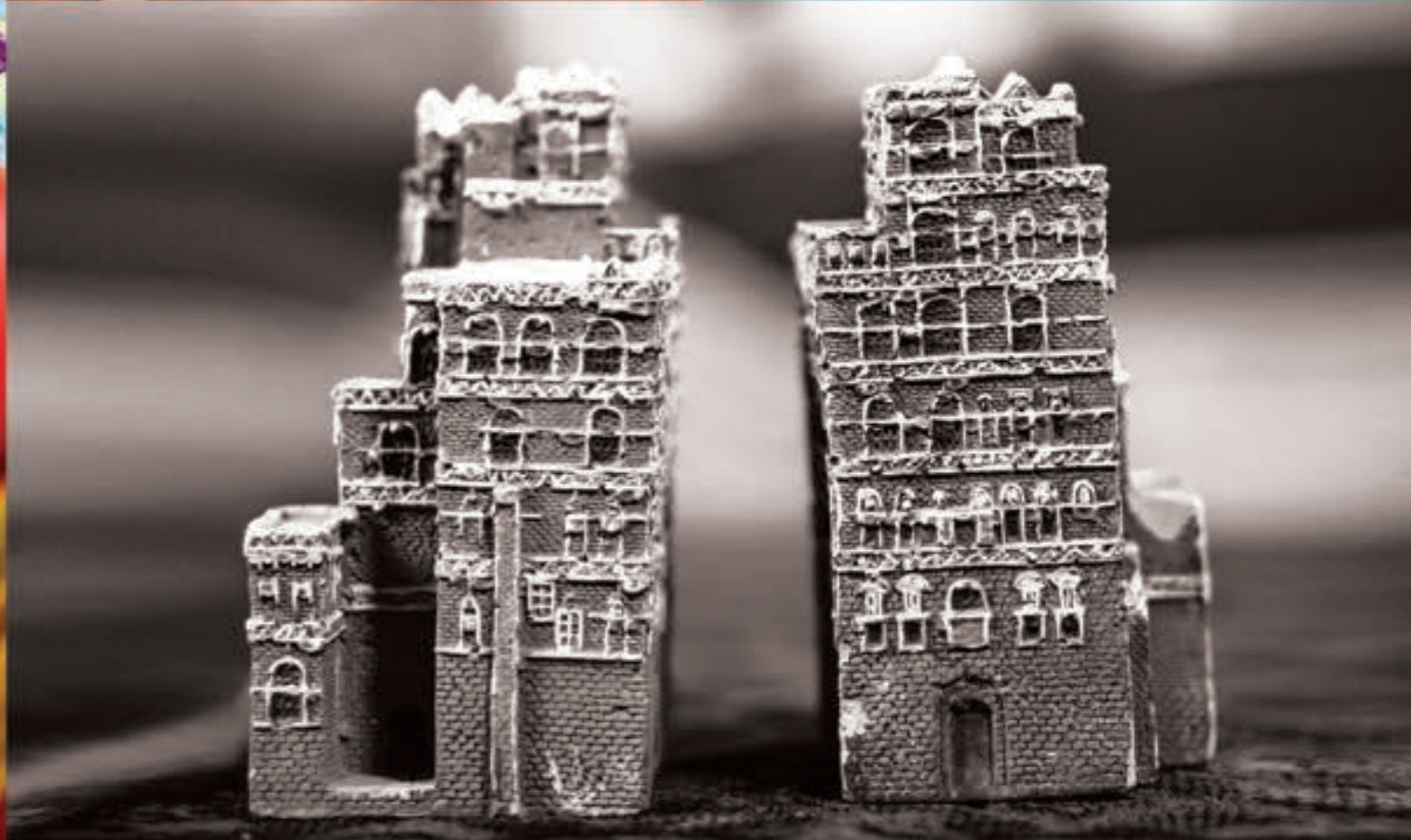
She applies her designs on items of everyday use and thereby makes her products marketable yet unique at the same time.

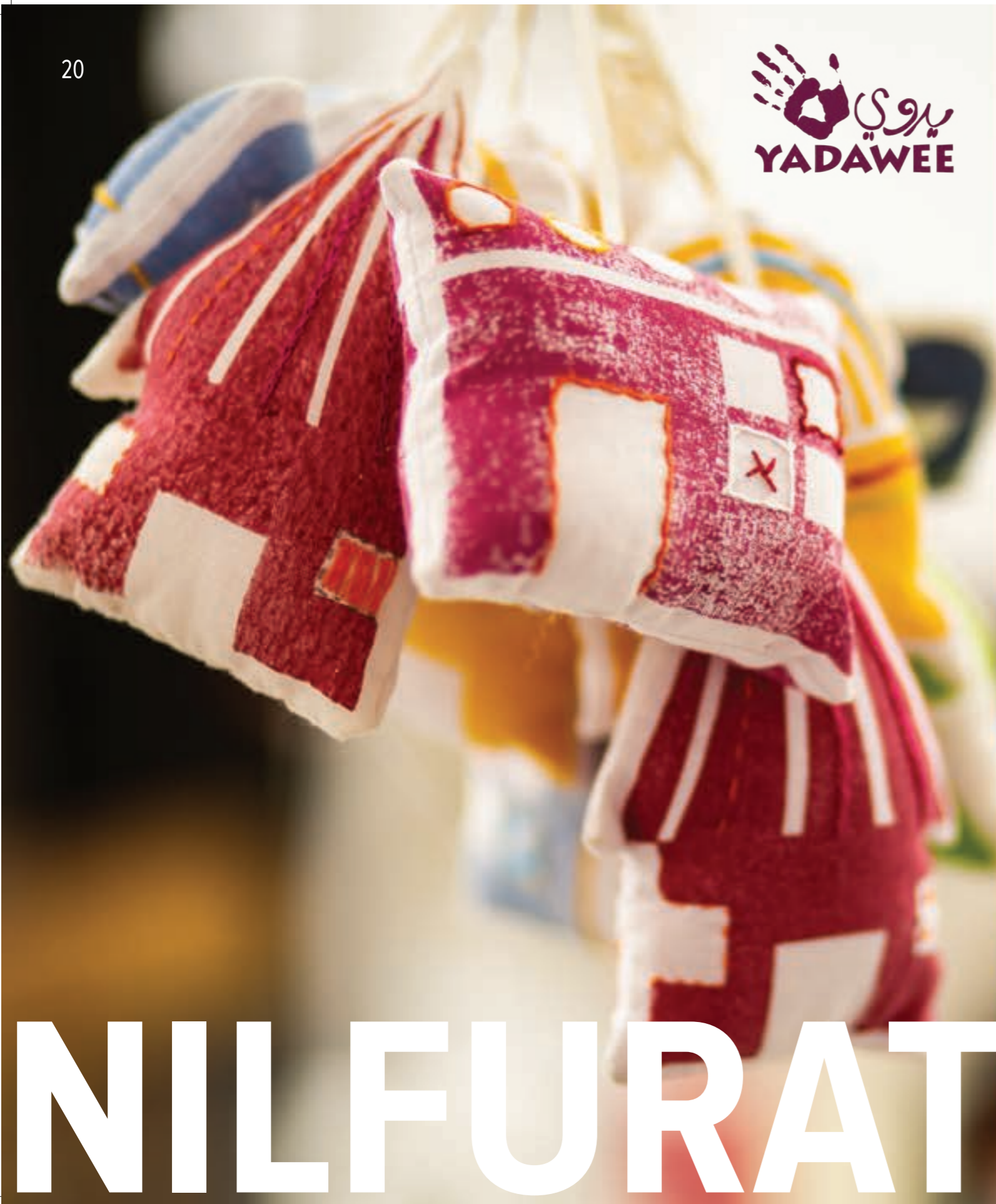




In her workshop, one would find beautifully painted pillows, bed sheets and mugs.

Hanan also creates small sculptures of traditional Yemeni houses. She put together a collection of the buildings to create a vision of her city of Sanaa.





# NILFURAT

NilFurat represents a cooperative of 30 women of different age groups from Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Egypt (Nubia) and Syria. The NilFurat workshop is a safe haven for them and their families, where they cook together and share their life joys and concerns. The NilFurat project brings these women together to connect, while engaging in the making of textile-based products.

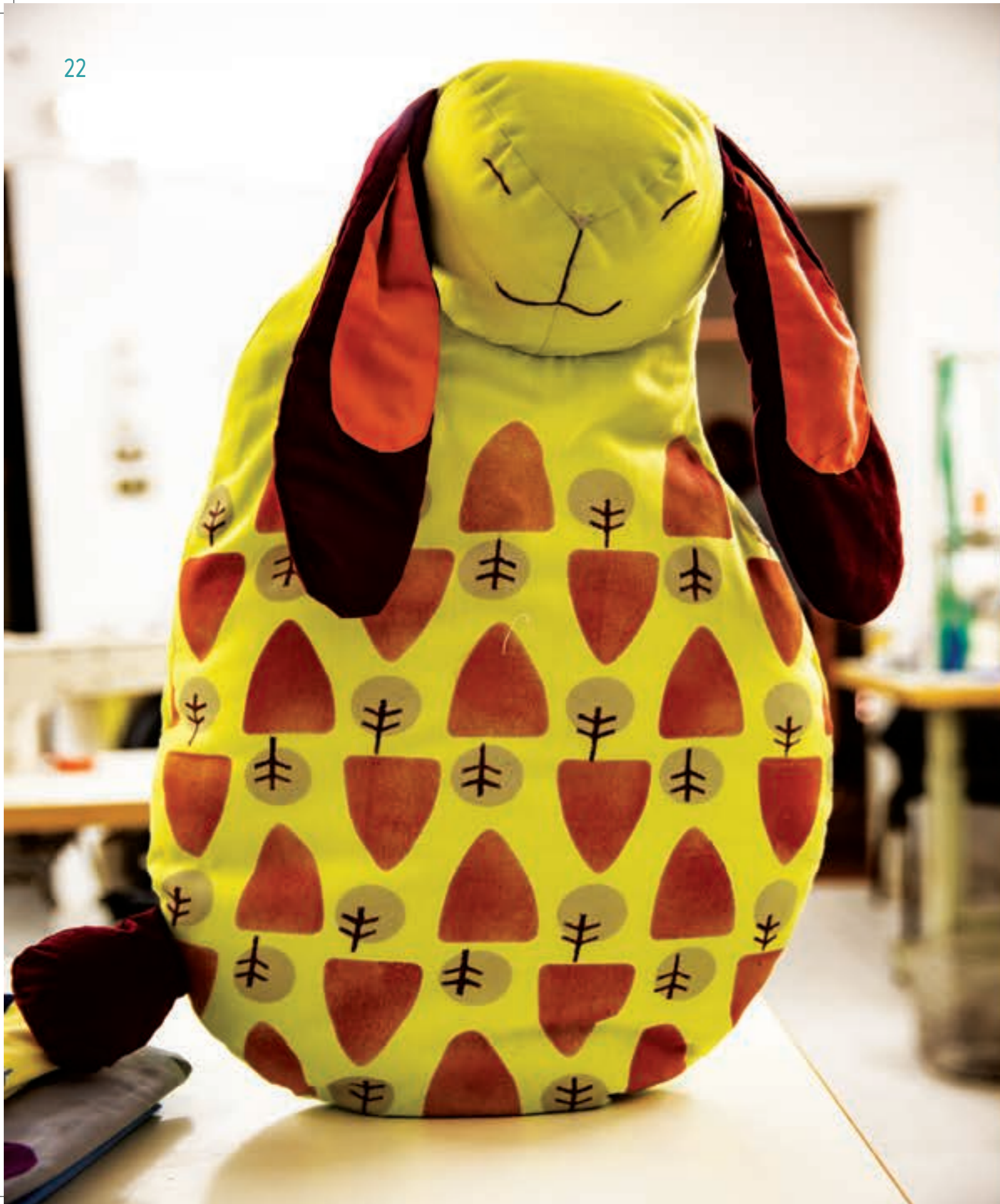
This project was initiated by UNHCR Egypt in 2015 to capitalize on the multi-cultural makeup of the area of Hadayek El Maadi. While they stayed local, they are also reaching a global market.



The local social enterprise Yadawee included NilFurat under their production capacity in 2017 and it consequently became part of MADE51, UNHCR'S global platform for refugee producers.

The women's product ideas are based on their backgrounds and personal stories. They highlight conjunctions and the diversity between their cultures. As the women meet in the safe facility of the project, they are capacitated in the skills of tailoring, silkscreen printing, block printing, embroidery, fabric dyeing and quilting. In their products, they mix their own experience with learned techniques.





Yadawee improved the production, making it attractive for the local and international markets. In addition to their standard line, they provide for wider customized orders.

**Product ideas include:**

**Nursing scarf** - This product is designed for the practicality of a mother to breastfeed, cover her sleeping baby or

for sun shading. Patterns used on these thin scarfs tell the different traditions of the NilFurat women. In Sudan and Nubia, an eggplant is hung in the house to protect the newborn from the evil eye.

Pistachios are distributed as giveaways in Syria to celebrate the baby, and rice pudding is eaten in Egypt at the festive gathering to celebrate the newcomer.



**Aprons-** Families gather to bond and share food during annual celebrations. In each country there are specific dishes that are made ritually to break the routine of normal life. These dishes, whether savory or sweet, bring the family together and are transferred from one generation to another. An apron collection was designed for parents and children, marking the value of tradition and annual celebrations.



# TUKUL CRAFT



The Tukul Craft workshop is built on three main pillars: Santo, Wilson and Justin. These three men produce a wide range of products and services. The workshop represents a home to them, where they can interact and be creative with other refugees, bringing together their hearts and lives.



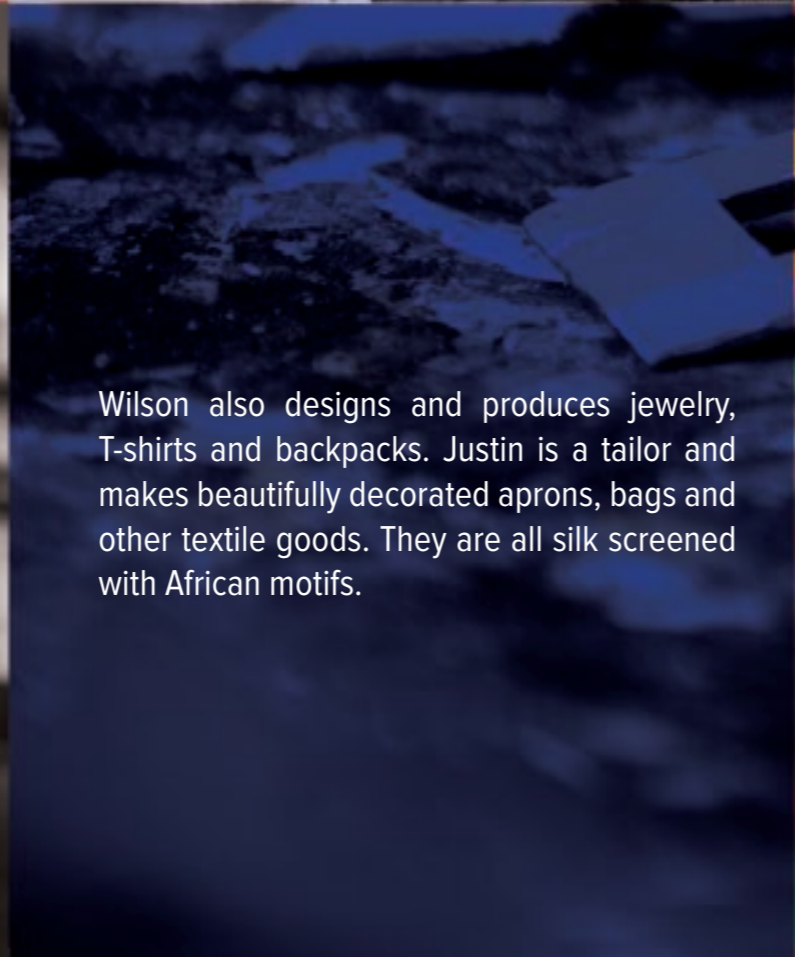


The pieces that come out of this workshop are diverse and often depict African patterns and scenes. The products include paintings, silkscreen printed textiles, souvenirs, kitchen utensils, wooden jewelry and many others.

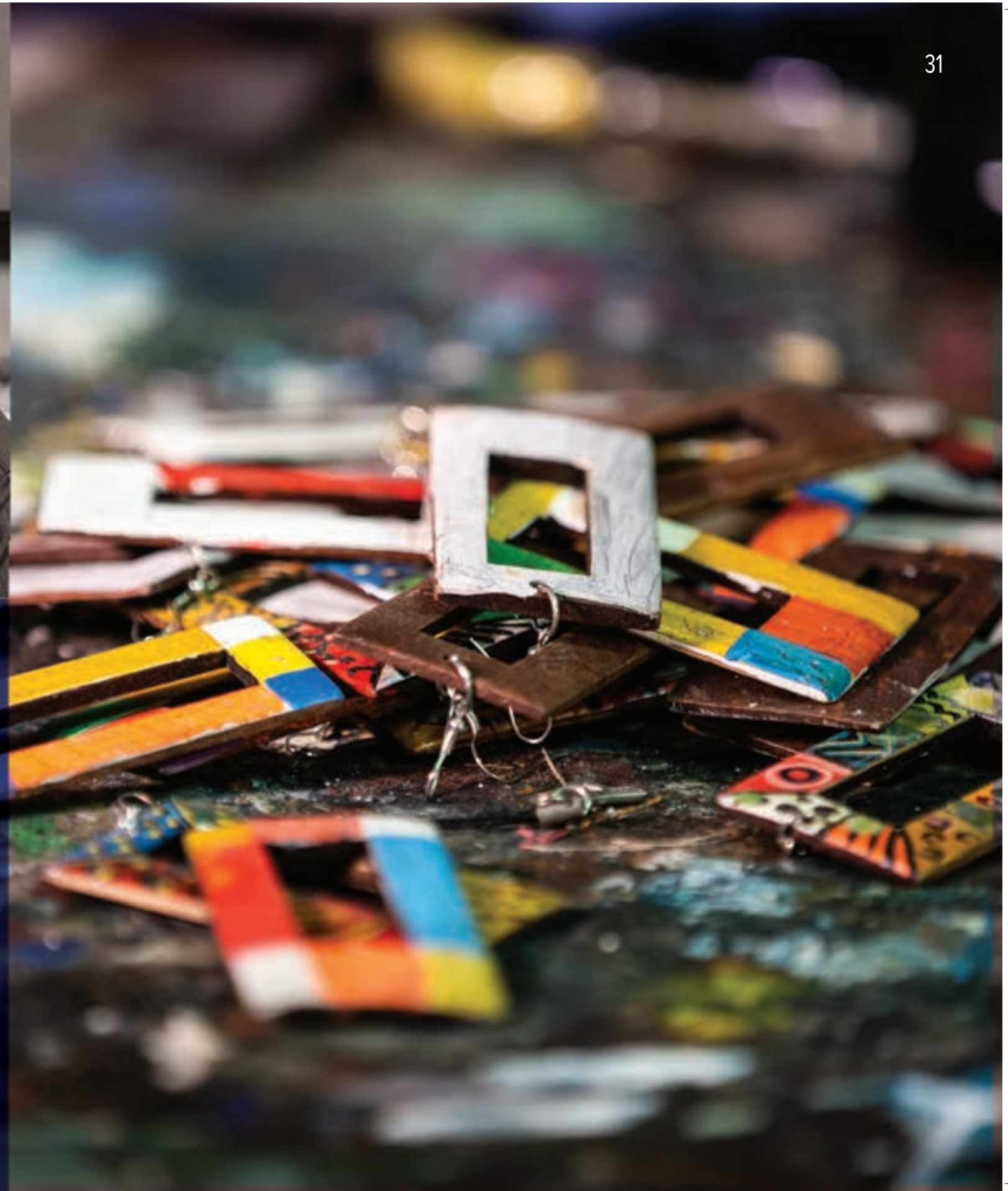




The wide range of products are based on the different skills of these three men. Santo and Wilson are painters and produce items that depict scenes of life in Africa.



Wilson also designs and produces jewelry, T-shirts and backpacks. Justin is a tailor and makes beautifully decorated aprons, bags and other textile goods. They are all silk screened with African motifs.

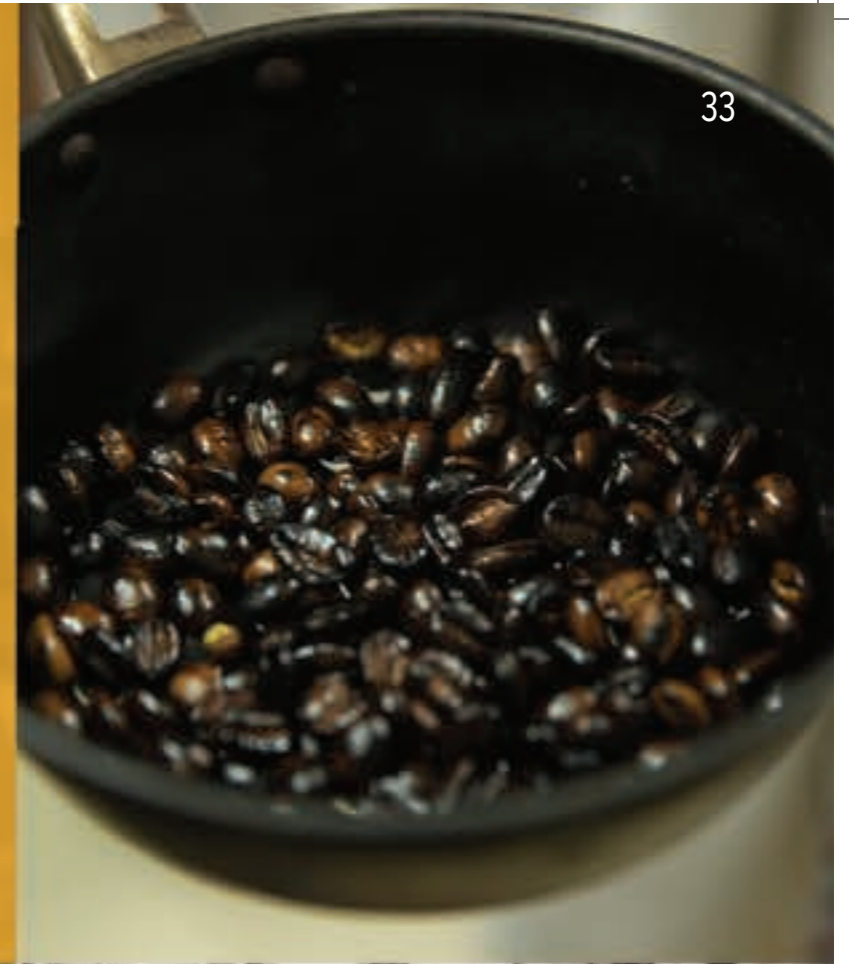


# ERCIE



Ercie is a community center where Ethiopians gather to enjoy together shared cultural values and activities.

The center imports and sells iconic artifacts that represent the Ethiopian culture and history. The center is home to a talented jewelry maker who puts her creative energy and skilled labor to manufacture earrings, necklaces and belts.





### Wubnesh

Woven baskets are mainly used for preserving food or for display. Making these baskets does not require complicated tools. It mainly relies on the weaver's talented hands and simple materials.

The woven baskets are made of natural plant fibers, which are sometimes dyed and coiled together, forming geometric patterns. It might take Wubnesh two months to finish a single basket.



**Engdawerke Fulas-** is the main tailor in the center. He makes beautiful unique Ethiopian attires and gowns using high-end fabrics and colorful embroideries.

**Hanna Tatesse-** is the embodiment of Ethiopian hospitality. She makes coffee in the traditional Ethiopian coffee station at Ercie. She roasts the raw coffee beans, crushes them and then makes the potent iconic Ethiopian coffee.





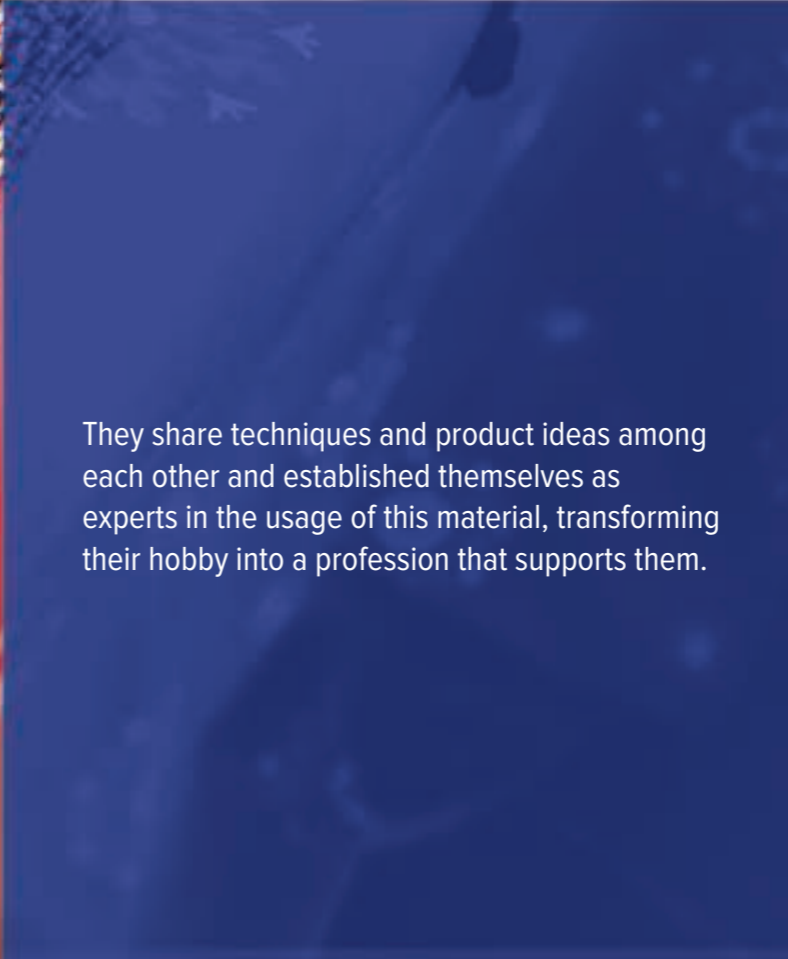
# WOMEN'S BEAD WORK



## Suksuk. As precious as gold.

Many Sudanese and south Sudanese women know how to work with the “Suksuk” beads, either weaving or crocheting them or by creating simple bead chains. A cup of tea often initiates this activity. To meet up, chitchat and connect and to make some money to cover the cost of the cup of tea, some 20 women decided to start Women’s Bead Work, a training and production hub.



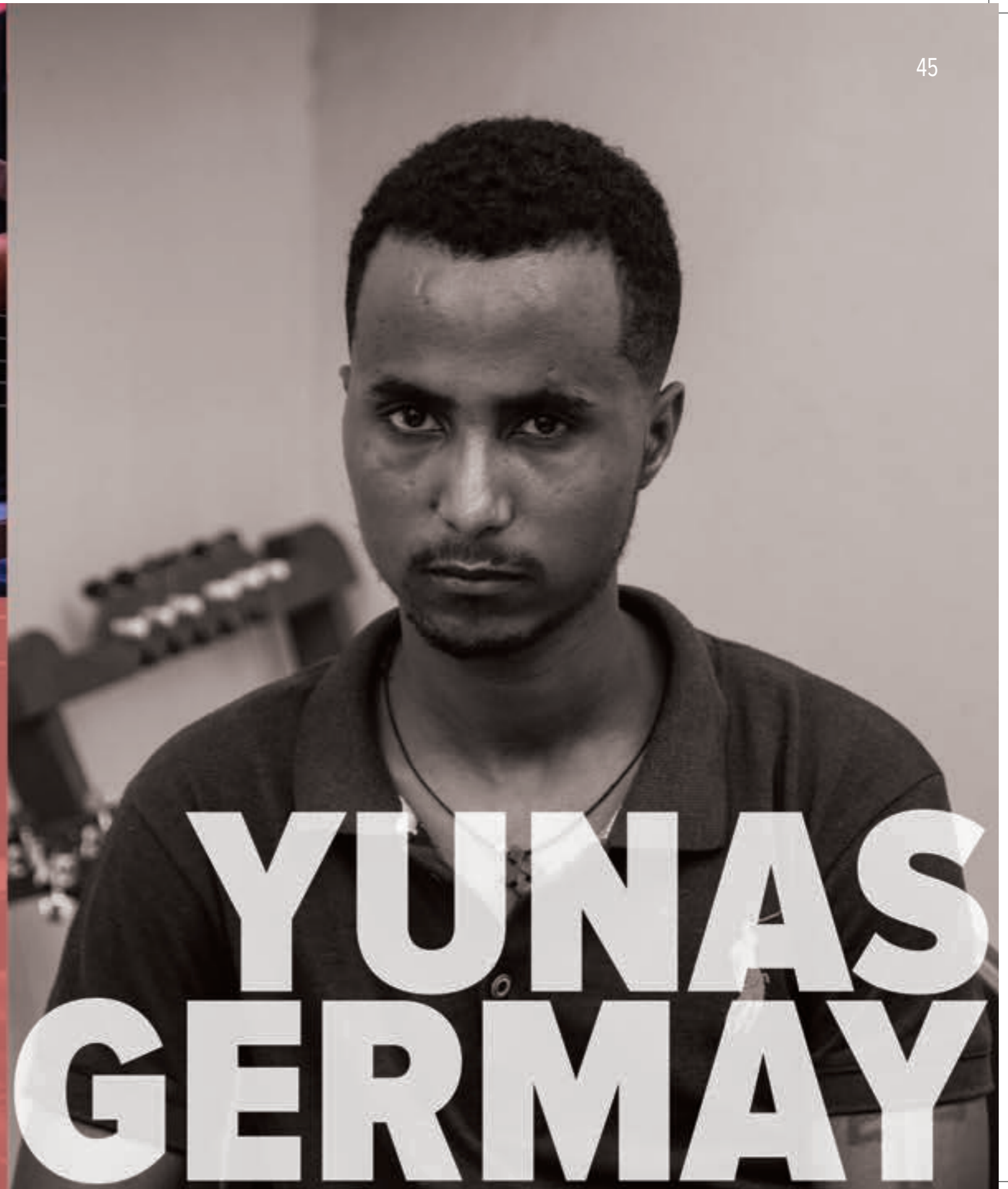
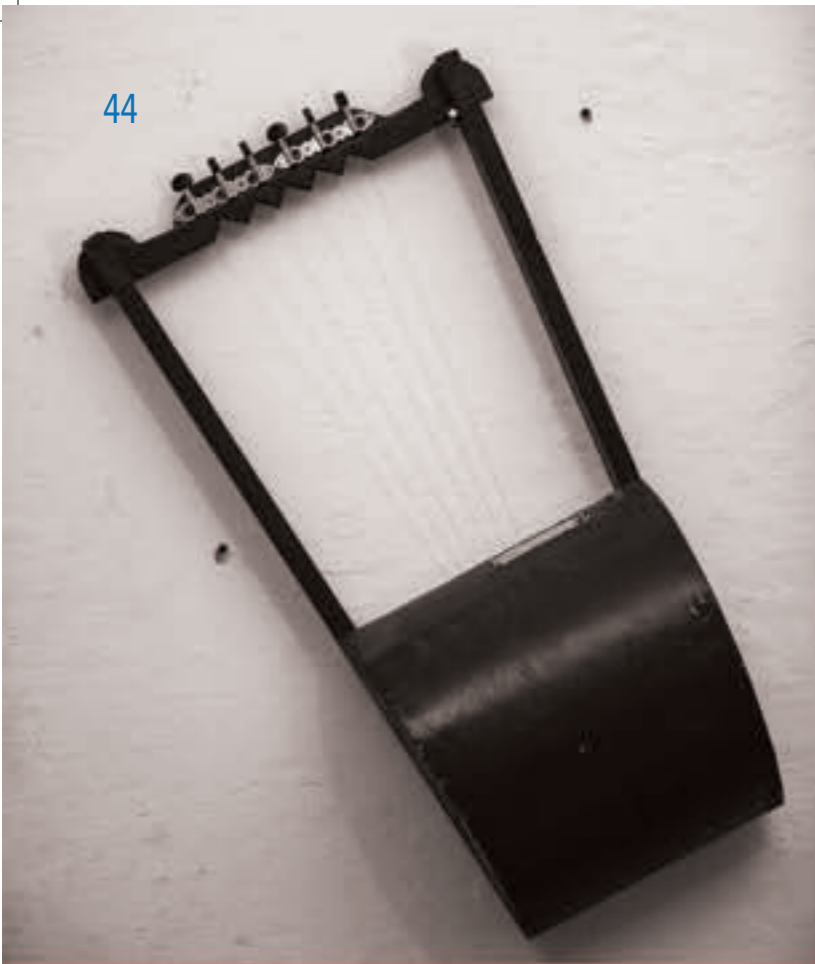


They share techniques and product ideas among each other and established themselves as experts in the usage of this material, transforming their hobby into a profession that supports them.



# WADAJIR

The Wadajir community center serves as a hub of Somali culture in the area of Hadayek El Maadi. It caters to different cultural directions and fosters opportunities of expression, production, learning and marketing.



### **When words fail, music speaks.**

The Qirar is a string instrument that is traditionally used in Eritrea. Yunas grew up manufacturing and playing this instrument. He manufactures the wooden part and

decorates it with studs and leather, to give each Qirar a different style and character. He also purchases electronic parts and adds them to the wooden body.





Mastering the art of jewelry creation, Fatma makes all kinds of accessories. She features her products at multiple stores in the Maadi and Dokki areas in Cairo and she also sells her products in bazaars and festivals.

At festivals, Fatma custom-makes jewelry at her portable station, which includes crimping tools, wire cutters, beads organizers, beading cords and beading needles.



With these few basic tools, she makes earrings, bracelets, anklets, keychains instantly on demand. She creates items that are widely artistic or classically elegant. Due to her undeniable skills, she produces any design ordered by her clients within 10 to 15 minutes.

In addition to her solo work, Fatma also collaborates with other workshops, such as Tukul Craft. Her collaboration with Wilson has helped further develop her designing skills and range of products.

# FATMA



