Twenty-five years after his death, iconic Palestinian cartoonist Naji Al Ali continues to live in people’s memories through his political caricatures. They are being shown for the first time in the Middle East at ‘The Witness’ exhibition in Katara – a humble homage to his admirable life and exceptional achievements.

P | 2-3
On a lazy afternoon on July 22, 1987, iconic Palestinian political cartoonist Naji Al Ali was walking towards the offices of the Kuwaiti newspaper Al Qabas in southwest London when he was gunned down.

He was holding a cartoon he had just drawn illustrating the image of a fatally wounded man along with Handala — a ten-year-old Palestinian boy, barefoot and dressed in rags — a figure he had created to represent Palestinian defiance.

The crumpled cartoon, bearing the harrowing memory of that fateful day, along with dozens others is displayed at ‘The Witness’ – an exhibition recently opened in Katara.

“The look on the man’s face in this drawing bears quite a resemblance to his when he was shot. In a way he already knew that he was going to be killed,” said Iraqi artist Hani Mazhar, Al Ali’s colleague and close friend. The exhibition is also showcasing some of Mazhar’s paintings inspired by Al Ali and his works.

Twenty-five years after his death, Al Ali continues to live in people’s memories through his political caricatures, which have now become works of art, thanks to Katara’s recently opened exhibition that pays homage to his admirable life and exceptional achievements.

But who else can best tell about Al Ali’s illustrious life cut short by an assassin than Mazhar.

“We worked together in Al Qabas newspaper and he was a very close friend,” Mazhar told The Peninsula before the opening of the ‘The Witness’, where dozens of Al Ali’s caricatures are being showcased alongside Mazhar’s paintings.

Asked about his best memory of Al Ali, Mazhar said: “Many things. We talked about many things. But because we are both artists, we always talked about art.”

For the first time in the Middle East, a huge number of Al Ali’s cartoons are being showcased along with 20 newly commissioned paintings by Iraqi artist Hani Mazhar, in the month-long expo at Katara Gallery Building 18 in Souq Waqif.
Inspired by Al Ali’s life and works, Mazhar’s acrylic paintings on display sometimes resemble the cartoons themselves, just in a different way. He paints in bold colours highlighting the symbolic quality of the images, resulting in the emergence of new layers of meaning.

Born in Iraq in 1955, and of British nationality, Mazhar draws inspiration for his work from diverse sources, including Mesopotamian myths as well as Arab and Andalusian literature. He has also been inspired by Latin American and Japanese literary sources. His use of colour along with the repetition of oriental motifs reflects his cultural background in a sophisticated and cosmopolitan manner.

Mazhar has held solo exhibitions in galleries across the world over the past few decades, and his works are included in the collections of the British Museum, Mexico National Print Museum and Modern Art Museum of Cartagena, Columbia.

Naji Al Ali’s career started in 1963 as a caricaturist for the Kuwaiti newspaper Al Tali’a, and eventually included over 10,000 drawings published in newspapers throughout the Arab world. In his lifetime, and posthumously, he was awarded many prizes, including the prestigious “Golden Pen of Freedom” award from the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers. Naji was the first ever caricaturist and Arab journalist to have won this prize.

Al Ali died five weeks after he was shot in the face. Three years before his death, he was described by The Guardian as “the nearest thing there is to an Arab public opinion”.

Mazhar said Al Ali would always occupy a place in the hearts and minds of people in the Arab world through his thousands of cartoons, which effectively helped crystallize public opinion during his time and remain an inspiration to journalists and media practitioners across the Arab region.

“To this day, his cartoons are still published in the Arab media. You can see many newspapers still publishing his cartoons and people are looking at them as if he just died yesterday,” said Mazhar.

Al Ali’s cartoons, according to Mazhar, would remain political, but they are also valued for their artistic quality.

“The political message is still there, but looking closely one can see his artistic side. Normally, cartoons are created only to send a particular message, but in the case of his cartoons, they can be taken as fine art also, that’s why his cartoons are alive till now,” he added.

Naji’s iconic cartoons focus mostly on the plight and resistance of the Palestinian people. His cartoon character Handala is now an icon for Palestinian defiance.

“The Palestinian struggle was the number one subject for him, but of course he drew about many other things from other parts of the world, like Latin America, Far East, everywhere. But in general, Palestine was foremost for him. Nothing has changed for many years now; Palestinians still struggle,” he said.

Compared to Naji’s times, the impact and influence of caricatures is now somewhat diminished, Mazhar noted.

‘The Witness: An Exhibition by Naji Al Ali and Hani Mazhar’ is open until January 18 at Katara Art Gallery Building 18.
Hilton Doha partners with Shafallah Center for Children with Special Needs

Members of the Hilton Doha spent a day with children from the Shafallah Center recently, as part of Hilton’s Blue Energy programme.

Around 20 members of Hilton Doha’s Blue Energy programme joined 40 children at the Shafallah Centre, which provides a range of educational and recreational services for children with special needs.

Andreas Searty, General Manager at Hilton Doha, said: “We are delighted to be working with such an important organisation that provides such an essential service to the society. The Shafallah Center empowers these children so that they can fully participate in their communities and we are very proud to be a part of this initiative.”

After a round of introductions, members of the Hilton Doha and the children at the Shafallah Centre settled down to participate in various fun-filled activities. Children learnt to make their own cupcakes with a range of decorations and condiments, teamed up to create beautiful flower arrangements and to construct towering buildings out of cards and pins. The Blue Energy team further entertained the kids with hilarious impressions using wigs, hats and bowties.

The children also participated in a series of entertaining competitions and games, including Stop-Light and musical chairs. The Hilton Doha team gifted the children Blue Energy t-shirts and commemorated the enjoyable day with a group photo. The best was saved for last as the Hilton Doha surprised the kids with a brand new plasma TV and Wii gaming system as a special donation from the hotel.

‘Mercedes Benz Car Dream Drive with Lulu’ winners get their prizes

All seven winners of ‘Mercedes Benz Car Dream Drive with Lulu’ Promotion – Ma Celica Ramos, Master Moses Alexander, S Preethi Prasanna, Master Muhammad Nabil Abdul Rahim, Cherry Carambas Victorino, Vaishakhi Anil and Seba Renny – collected their prizes from Shaijan M O, Regional Manager of Lulu Hypermarket Group, on Thursday, in the presence of Mohd H Z Abiddeen, General Manager, Chacko K Samuel, Commercial Manager, Naseer Ali, Manager-Lulu Center, and other officials of Lulu Hypermarket Group.

Exhibition at Al Markhiya Gallery

Works by US-based artist Mohammed Al Shamarey are on display at a solo exhibition at Al Markhiya Gallery in Souq Waqif. Titled Longing, the exhibition showcases images in giclee art print which are inspired by the religious dance of Sufi Mawlawis and reveal the artist’s yearning for his home country Iraq.
Georgetown SFS-Q bioethics research recognised as best at QF forum

Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar (SFS-Q) faculty member Ayman Shabana received the Research Excellence Award in recognition of the Best Arts, Behavioural and Social Sciences, Humanities and Islamic Studies Research Programme of the Year during the awards distribution ceremony of Qatar Foundation’s Annual Research Forum held at the Qatar National Convention Centre recently.

Dr Shabana, Visiting Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies at SFS-Q, won the prestigious prize for his presentation titled ‘Sustaining Islamic Bioethics Research.’ The presentation highlighted the main features of the Islamic bioethics research project that he has led at SFS-Q for more than two years.

Commenting on receiving the award for the best research programme in the fourth track of the Annual Research Forum, Shabana said, “The project has been a wonderful collaborative effort and this award recognises all the hard work and dedication of the project’s team members. This is definitely a great honor and responsibility and we are determined to exert our best effort to sustain this exciting research venture and accomplish its goals.”

The project began with a successful three-year grant proposal (2009-2012), titled Islamic Medical and Scientific Ethics, which was submitted to the National Priorities Research Program of Qatar National Research Fund by Doris Goldstein, former Director of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics Library at Georgetown University’s main campus, and Frieda Wiebe, Director of the SFS-Q Library.

This proposal aimed to expand the scope of the reputable KIE Library collection of bioethics resources to include Islamic bioethical resources.
Dolphin Energy Limited has announced the launch of the first annual Dolphin Energy Doha Dash, in celebration of Qatar National Sport Day on February 12, 2013.

The Dolphin Energy Doha Dash will take place at the Losail International Circuit in Doha, giving runners the chance to run on the circuit and follow in the tracks of Moto GP stars.

The community event aims to encourage a healthy lifestyle and raise money for charity by donating a percentage of the entrance fee charged, and will feature a 5km run for participants aged 12 and over, a 3km run for all ages, a 5km run for children and a 1km ladies walk.

Commenting on the event, Adel Ahmed Albuainain, General Manager, Dolphin Energy, Qatar said: “This is a wonderful opportunity for the community to get involved. The Dolphin Energy Doha Dash is a family fun run that supports Qatar National Sport Day and carries an important message about the benefits health and fitness have on people’s personal and professional lives.

All runners will receive an official race T-shirt, medal and gift bag as well as enjoying a great family day out in the Festival Village. The first three runners across the line in the 5km, 3km and 1km runs will receive a trophy and a special prize.

A range of activities will be on offer including live music, children’s activities, have-a-go sports areas and food and beverages.

The Dolphin Energy Doha Dash has been created by Professional Sports Group, who will manage the sporting operations on the day.

Jamie Cunningham, Chief Executive Officer of Professional Sports Group, said: “Mass participation running events are growing in popularity every year in the Gulf Region and we have identified a great opportunity here in Doha.

“We hope that the Dolphin Energy Doha Dash will become a key event in the calendar for Qatar National Sport Day.

“Ware delighted to partner with Dolphin Energy and look forward to working with them to make the event a success.”

Registration is now open for the Dolphin Energy Doha Dash 2013. Participants can visit www.dohadash.com to register or to find out more about the event.

Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) took part in ILTM, the International Luxury Travel Market held at the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès in Cannes, France, from December 3 to 6.

Hosted by QTA, the Qatar pavilion featured a large number of strategic partners including the Ministry of Culture hotels W Doha, Ritz-Carlton and Sheraton Village & Spa; tour operators Qatar International Tours and Qatar International Adventures; as well as Katara Cultural Village and Souq Waqif.

Staged annually in Cannes, ILTM is the leading ‘by invitation only’ event for the global luxury travel community and each year brings together the world’s most sought after collection of luxury resorts for the most selective international luxury VIP travel buyers.

QTA’s attendance at ILTM is one of the many initiatives to position and promote Qatar as a top luxury destination.

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QTA is attracting more tourists every year. The QTA is thus promoting Qatar for its 21st century upscale facilities, luxury and leisure amenities and award-winning spas to appeal to the global luxury market.

Luxury travel continued to show a strong recovery during 2011. A key driver of growth was the rising number of wealthy individuals worldwide, the “experiential” travel and sustainability now playing a more important role.

The QTA recently announced its interest in promoting eco-tourism and responsible tourism at the recent COP 18 UN Climate Change Conference in Doha, leveraging sustainability as a key pillar in the country’s new developments.

With a wide choice of luxury hotels and resorts, Qatar offers the perfect retreat for business travelers wanting to mix business with leisure, and experience luxurious hospitality to international standards in a country with a unique cultural heritage. The QTA is thus promoting Qatar as a winning combination of the finest in modern day luxury side by side with the country’s age old traditions to appeal to the seasoned luxury traveller.

As UNWTO forecasts the Middle East region is expected to capture 8 percent of the 1.8 billion international tourists worldwide, the QTA plans to attract the largest number of these visitors to Qatar, as it promotes the country as a luxury destination ready to welcome the world’s most discerning travelers.

The Peninsula
Knee replacement linked to weight gain

by Kerry Grens

Being overweight is known to increase the risk of needing a knee replacement, but a new study finds that knee replacement surgery may also raise a person’s risk of gaining weight. Analyzing the medical records of nearly 1,000 knee-replacement surgery patients, researchers found that 30 percent of them gained five percent or more of their body weight in the five years following surgery.

One possible explanation for the counterintuitive results, experts said, is that if people have spent years adapting to knee pain by taking it easy, they don’t automatically change their habits when the pain is reduced.

“After knee replacement we get them stronger and moving better, but they don’t seem to take advantage of the functional gains” and become more active, said Joseph Zeni, a physical therapy professor at the University of Delaware, who was not part of the study.

“I think that has to do with the fact that we don’t address the behavioural modifications that have happened during the course of arthritis before the surgery,” he added.

Hundreds of thousands of people in the US undergo knee replacement surgery each year.

The goal of putting in a new knee is to alleviate pain and get people moving around more, but Daniel Riddle, lead author of the new study and a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, said his team had noticed that patients tended to gain weight after surgery.

To see whether this was common, Riddle’s group used a patient registry from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, which collected information on 917 knee replacement patients before and after their procedures.

The researchers found that five years after surgery, 30 percent of patients had gained at least five percent of their weight at the time of the surgery. That’s 10 pounds or more on a 200-pound person, for example.

In contrast, less than 20 percent of those in a comparison group of similar people who had not had surgery gained equivalent amounts of weight in the same period.

Riddle’s team explains in their degree of weight gain can lead to “meaningful effects on cardiovascular and diabetes related risk as well as pain and function.”

Part of the explanation for the weight gain the researchers observed could be the age at which patients get surgery, Riddle said. People in their 50s and 60s tend to gain weight anyway.

Still, in light of the lower rates of weight gain in the comparison group, which was also middle aged and older, Riddle said something else may also be at work among knee surgery patients.

“There’s something going on in these patients that predisposes them above and beyond their peers to weight gain,” Riddle told Reuters Health.

Indeed, the team also found that patients who had lost weight before their surgery were slightly more likely to gain weight afterward.

Riddle said that could be because when people lose weight in anticipation of an event, such as knee surgery, they are more likely to put on weight after they’ve achieved that goal.

gery, health care providers need to address the sedentary lifestyle people often adopt to accommodate their arthritis.

“We need to encourage patients to take advantage of their ability to function better and get them to take on a more active lifestyle,” he told Reuters Health.

Riddle agreed that the habit of being sedentary before knee replacement may carry over after surgery.

He said it will be important to develop and study weight loss interventions for these patients, and to target them to those who are most at risk of getting heavier, like relatively younger patients in their 50s and 60s and those who have lost weight before knee surgery.

In the meantime, Riddle said, patients can also take some action on their own by talking with their doctors about maintaining a healthy weight and consulting with a nutritionist and physical therapist about lifestyle changes.

Best movies of 2012

1) ZERO DARK THIRTY
Liev Schreiber, Claire Danes and Mark Ruffalo in Kathryn Bigelow's thriller about the hunt for Osama bin Laden, compli- cates the Osama-centric storyline at the top of her game, working with a script by Mark Boal that not only allows viewers to make sense of the complicated intelligence, military and political puzzle that has animated the past decade, but also creates a brand new cinematic game for the reported film.

2) LAWLESS
Shia LaBeouf and Tom Hardy in John Hillcoat's historical drama about the 1930s pro-hibition, bootlegging and conniving under house arrest in Iran uses an iPhone to explore the notion of physical and political boundaries, the aesthetic and technological essence of cinema, and the enduring power of film. The digressive masterwork was worth the wait.

3) THE WAITING ROOM
Peter Nawik's documentary spends a day in the life of an over-crowded and under-resourced hospital emergency room in Oakland, California, where a small crew of compassionate professionals provide care to a startlingly diverse population of patients. This subtle, compassionate film lifts the veil on a world often described in terms of emotional and political boundaries, the distinctive experience of one among so many, and demons and despair finding the inherent dignity and perseverance therein.

4) MONSIEUR LAZAR
Philippe Falardeau's affecting drama about a young troupe of actors training in a Montreal elementary school could have gone wrong in so many ways. The film is not a sentimental or wimpy way. Thanks to Khabibullina, Chukhrai, Burlakova and a quietly gripping performance by Vera Tsarukina, the film works, with the inherent charm of the script enhanced by the ensemble cast, particularly Mikhail Chukhrai, Alina Mileva, S. Storozhenko and among the standout scenes, there's one in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience. The scenes in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience.

5) ANNA KARENINA
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6) A MOURR
Annette Bening, Harrison Ford, Tom Hanks, and Olivia Wilde in Colin Firth's affecting drama about a young troupe of actors training in a Montreal elementary school could have gone wrong in so many ways. The film is not a sentimental or wimpy way. Thanks to Khabibullina, Chukhrai, Burlakova and a quietly gripping performance by Vera Tsarukina, the film works, with the inherent charm of the script enhanced by the ensemble cast, particularly Mikhail Chukhrai, Alina Mileva, S. Storozhenko and among the standout scenes, there's one in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience. The scenes in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience.

7) ARGO
Ben Affleck's shooting, thoroughly entertaining thriller about a little-known chapter of the Iran hostage crisis. It's the kind of comedy done in shades of green, orange and pink, which doesn't require us to strain our brain. The actors, particularly in a gripping and a heart-wrenching situation, are everything we hope for in a modern ensemble. The twist is that we are not surprised to find out that the story is true.

8) THE HUNDRED-FOOT JUMPER
Estelle Noé's affecting drama about a young troupe of actors training in a Montreal elementary school could have gone wrong in so many ways. The film is not a sentimental or wimpy way. Thanks to Khabibullina, Chukhrai, Burlakova and a quietly gripping performance by Vera Tsarukina, the film works, with the inherent charm of the script enhanced by the ensemble cast, particularly Mikhail Chukhrai, Alina Mileva, S. Storozhenko and among the standout scenes, there's one in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience. The scenes in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience.

9) ANNA KARENINA
A sense of continuity runs through all of Akshay Kumar's comedies. The film is not a sentimental or wimpy way. Thanks to Khabibullina, Chukhrai, Burlakova and a quietly gripping performance by Vera Tsarukina, the film works, with the inherent charm of the script enhanced by the ensemble cast, particularly Mikhail Chukhrai, Alina Mileva, S. Storozhenko and among the standout scenes, there's one in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience. The scenes in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience.

10) LINCOLN
Daniel Day-Lewis, Steven Spielberg, Amy Adams, and James McAvoy in Steven Spielberg's historical drama about the 16th president, his speech by Mark Boal that not only allows viewers to make sense of the complicated intelligence, military and political puzzle that has animated the past decades, but also creates a brand new cinematic game for the reported film.

11) THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE
Zainab Salbi's affecting drama about a young troupe of actors training in a Montreal elementary school could have gone wrong in so many ways. The film is not a sentimental or wimpy way. Thanks to Khabibullina, Chukhrai, Burlakova and a quietly gripping performance by Vera Tsarukina, the film works, with the inherent charm of the script enhanced by the ensemble cast, particularly Mikhail Chukhrai, Alina Mileva, S. Storozhenko and among the standout scenes, there's one in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience. The scenes in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience.

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14) MALA YAGRA
Anita Hassanandani, Tanuj Virwani, and Ali Fazal in Shimit Amin's affecting drama about a young troupe of actors training in a Montreal elementary school could have gone wrong in so many ways. The film is not a sentimental or wimpy way. Thanks to Khabibullina, Chukhrai, Burlakova and a quietly gripping performance by Vera Tsarukina, the film works, with the inherent charm of the script enhanced by the ensemble cast, particularly Mikhail Chukhrai, Alina Mileva, S. Storozhenko and among the standout scenes, there's one in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience. The scenes in which the troupe's young actors deliver a heartbreaking performance and turn their backs on the audience.

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**New Continental GT V8 convertible arrives in Doha**

**Bentley Qatar set to open new showroom in January 2013**

A 1 Wajba Motors organised a road show for the new Continental GT V8 Convertible at the Admiral Club, Ritz Carlton Hotel. More than 100 guests gathered over the three day event to see the spectacular new convertible and the rest of the magnificent Bentley range.

The new 4.0 litre, twin turbo-charged Continental GT V8 convertible, and its coupe counterpart the Continental GT V8, achieve exceptional standards for power-to-emissions in the high luxury sports car sector. Now the cooler weather has reached Qatar and the new Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible offers the perfect climate to enjoy driving with the roof down.

This remarkable, new Bentley V8 engine delivers maximum power of 500 bhp (507 PS / 373 K) at 6000 rev/min. With a new close-ratio 8-speed automatic transmission, this translates into a 0-100 km/h sprint time of 4.8 seconds and a top speed of 388 mph (303 km/h). The instantly recognisable growl of the new 4.0 litre Bentley Continental GT V8 engine sets it apart from its Bentley stablemates.

Chris Buxton, Bentley Middle East Regional Director, said: “With the new Continental GT V8 Convertible as well as the Continental Coupe GT V8, the Continental GT W12 Coupe, the Flying Spur and the Mulsanne. Over 50 Bentley customers joined together to form a convoy of Bentley vehicles that enjoyed a drive together to the Corniche in Doha. Here, witnesses were able to see the entire range and many different variations of Bentley vehicles.”

Guests were invited to the Admiral Club at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Doha to experience the New Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible as well as the Continental Coupe GT V8, the Continental GT W12 Coupe, the Flying Spur and the Mulsanne. The new showroom also has a customer lounge, a refreshments bar, and a configuration area to enable Rolls-Royce Motor Cars clients to customise and tailor their vehicles.

Commenting on the landmark opening, Geoff Briscoe, Regional Director, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Middle East, Africa & Latin America, said: “The Middle East is a crucial market for Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, and the excellent performance and support of our partner in Qatar compliments this unprecedented success drive in the region. The investment in this impressive facility is testament to the continued opportunities that lie ahead in Doha.”

Commenting on this occasion, Mohamed Kandeel, General Manager of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Doha Showroom, said: “This new facility will not only allow us to match our sales growth with our physical growth, but also underlines our ambition to achieve greater results in the coming years with even greater focus on customer convenience.”

Latest results from the importer reveal sustained growth in the first three quarters of 2012, with an 18 percent increase in sales of Rolls-Royce vehicles compared to the same period last year.

“ar business is not only about selling luxurious cars, but also investing on many different levels to ensure we have the right facilities and staff to sell new and Rolls-Royce Provenance Programme pre-owned cars, to service them and provide a very high level experience throughout the car ownership period,” he added. Located in Porto Arabia in the Pearl-Qatar, the showroom is open from Saturdays to Thursday from 10am to 10pm and 5pm to 10pm on Fridays.
Andrew, in a daring leap to freedom from an overbearing mother, moves in with a friend whose ramshackle house is the one blight on his peaceful neighbourhood — and promptly is attracted to his next door neighbour, the friendly Harlow.

Welcome by a plate of homemade cookies and admiring of the picture-perfect home where she lives with her husband, Red, is a while before Andrew starts to suspect there is something a little off about this woman, who seems just too good to be true.

The Neighbors, Ania Ahlborn’s second novel, was inspired by a battered house and a fallen-over mailbox she passed every day, making her think of a perfect house on a perfect street that in fact is “where all the darkness is.”

Ahlborn, whose first book was self-published but became such a success she then picked up a conventional publishing contract, spoke about neighbours, horror and her book.

What inspired the book?
“Always been pretty fascinated with serial killers, but not in the sense that I read about them and I’m like, let’s see how they kill all their victims. I’m more interested in the fact that someone could be living right next door to you, and they might be the nicest person that you had ever met, but they’re really not. There’s something about that really intrigues me. Of course it terrifies me, it freaks me out, but just that concept was what spurred my writing The Neighbors. That, and I do have a little bit of a love affair with the atomic age and the perfect sort of Americana thing that was going on. That to me is also a little creepy, it’s so perfect that it’s almost plastic, it’s Stepford Wives.

Every time something is super cool and happy and nice, I always find something really creepy going on with it. If you meet the one person who’s always happy, always smiling and always laughing, I’m going to be the person who’s sitting back thinking, what’s this person hiding?”

How did you bring this idea to life?
“I knew that I wanted to have an everyman character that readers could relate to, so I put that into Andrew. He’s just a regular guy. He has a lot of issues that he’s dealing with, and he really is looking for that whole grass is greener on the other side concept. Then he steps into a life that he thinks is going to be great, oh look how nice these new neighbours are - they’re going to give him a job, they’re really sweet, they invite him to dinner. And he couldn’t be happier, only it’s ‘oh my God, what have I gotten myself into.’

“As far as Red and Harlow go, I had to rewrite this thing three times. The concept was there, but there was something off about it. I actually started writing Harlow as a really nice old lady, kind of like your grandma, and there was something about it that just wasn’t working for me. So I let her go and said, ‘Do whatever you want.’ I let her run with it, and figured I’d just see what happened in the next couple pages. And she turned into this really retro, cougury vixen. I thought ‘oh no, we’ll run with that.’ I had to rewrite the whole thing. I just loved that — it just feels so wrong. A really sweet woman who ends up being almost like a dominatrix, in a way.”

You sound like that surprised you. Do you have that kind of experience a lot when you write?
“Yes. When it comes to writing, I think there’s two different ways that you can approach it. You can either plot it out and do it by an outline and make the characters do what you want them to do, or you can basically let the characters carry the story and see where it goes. I like to do both techniques. Of course I want to have a beginning, middle and end where I don’t feel I’m just writing and writing and writing and it’s not going anywhere, because that’s horribly frustrating.

“On the other hand, you always want it to be kind of organic, so it doesn’t feel forced. When you allow those characters to step up to the plate and say ‘here’s what I would do.’ You learn a lot about yourself that way. You don’t know that you’ve got these ideas in your head, and they come out by way of these fictional characters. It can get a little bit weird, especially when you’re writing horror and thrillers. You’re like, ‘oh my God, what’s wrong with me?’”

What is the function of scary stories?
“I think that scary stories are the most truthful. I think that the honesty behind a lot of stuff that you read in horror is really what’s scary. In The Neighbors, one of the things that I tried to do was make Harlow as likable as possible even after I revealed the fact that she is this monster. The reason why I did that is because if your neighbor is some crazy psychopath but you don’t know that, you might like that person. That in itself is terrifying because you don’t know, you’re so good at hiding what they are.

“I think that there’s bits of humanity that come out in horror and thrillers that are really uncomfortable for us to otherwise think about. Could I relate to the monster next door? Could I care about them? Could I be the monster next door?

“That’s the way that I think that horror became so popular - it really reflects who we are and who we hide. It also reflects our worst fears. We want to explore those fears and it’s a safe way to explore those fears... But forget it, when I have to be alone by myself in a locked house at night, I sleep with all the lights on and the dogs in my room, where otherwise I wouldn’t care if my husband was home... It’s just funny how those tiny little differences make us interpret things in a totally different way. If he’s here I’m fine, but if he’s not a serial killer is definitely going to knock on my door and this is the last night of my life. That’s just the way that our minds work. I think that horror makes us reflect on our fears, and on who we say we are - but are afraid to say we are.”

By Elaine Lies

Do you really know who lives next door?

Co-author of Three Cups of Tea commits suicide

by Teresa Carson

Journalist David Oliver Relin, co-author of the controversial best-selling book Three Cups of Tea, took his own life last month in the Columbia River town of Corbett, Oregon, east of Portland, authorities disclosed yesterday.

The cause of Relin’s death on November 15 was listed as suicide by blunt force head injury, said Tom Chappelle, Multnomah County deputy medical examiner, but he declined to give further details. Relin, who lived in Portland, was 49.

Relin, a freelance journalist who wrote for several magazines, became best known for his work with Greg Mortenson on the wildly successful memoir Three Cups of Tea, which was first published in 2000 and spent four years on the New York Times bestseller lists.

The book, which sold over 4 million copies, chronicled Mortenson’s failed attempt to climb the mountain K2 in South Asia and his encounter with impoverished Pakistani villagers whom he credited with inspiring him to build schools for young girls and other humanitarian projects in the region.

However, the credibility of the book came under fire in 2011 when the CBS television news programme 60 Minutes aired an expose accusing Mortenson of fabricating or embellishing key details of his story, and using his charitable institute to promote sales of the memoir.

CBS News, for example, disputed Mortenson’s account of being kidnapped in Pakistan’s Waziristan region in 1996. Mortenson later acknowledged in an interview posted on his institute’s website that the book contains “discrepancies” that resulted from “omissions and compressions” done for the sake of literary expediency. But he insisted the abduc tion story was “pretty much” true and defended the book overall, saying, “I’m not a journalist. I don’t take a lot of notes.”

Relin said in a 2008 interview with a University of Oregon professor that in addition to interviewing Mortenson extensively, he conducted more than 200 interviews with people tied to Mortenson’s story and travelled three times to northern Pakistan. Relin said he objected to Mortenson getting a co-author credit on the book.

Relin later wrote Second Suns: Two Doctors and Their Amazing Quest to Restore Sight and Save Lives, which is scheduled to be released by Random House in June.

A graduate of Vassar College and the Writers’ Workshop at the University of Iowa, Relin focused for two decades on reporting about social issues and their effect on children, according to an Iowa Writers biography.
China’s Apple takes slice of smartphone pie

by Melanie Lee

China’s Xiaomi Technology is a fairy tale for nerdy entrepreneurs.

Less than three years after its founding, the smartphone maker is valued at $4bn and evokes Apple-like adoration from its fans, some of whom are desperate enough to skip work for a shot at buying the latest product the day it goes on sale.

Founder Lei Jun dresses like the late Steve Jobs, in jeans and a black top. He has created a fervent fan base for Xiaomi’s moderately priced high-end smartphones by mimicking Apple Inc’s marketing tactic of attaching an aura of exclusivity around its products.

Before Xiaomi, the 42-year-old Lei was a key investor in China’s early Internet scene, co-founding startups including Joyo.cn, which was eventually sold to Amazon.com Inc, and the recently listed YY Inc.

Born in Xiantao, a small city in China’s central Hubei province better known for breeding Olympic gymnasts than billionaire technocrats, Lei brushes off comparisons to Jobs but such kind of comparison brings us adoration from its fans, some of whom are desperate enough to skip work for a shot at buying the latest product the day it goes on sale.

Lei, who has nearly 4 million followers on China’s popular microblogging platform, Weibo, feeds the buzz by dangling teasers about new products and launch dates.

“We’re not a company that chases sales volume. We chase customer satisfaction. We look for ways to give the customer a great surprise,” Lei said.

His vision for an exclusive mid-tier brand that builds up incrementally, rather than swamping the market, has found financial backers. In June, Xiaomi raised $216m from Singapore’s sovereign wealth fund, the Government of Singapore Investment Corp, and a few of Lei’s friends, local media reported, giving it a valuation of $4bn.

“China is ripe for its own Apple, HTC or Samsung,” said Han Tung, managing partner at Qiming Venture Partners, a venture firm backing Xiaomi. “The country is big enough, there are enough mobile Internet users and mobile phone consumers. Therefore having its own mobile ecosystem built up by a domestic brand makes sense.”

Xiaomi, which was founded in April 2010 and only started selling smartphones in October 2011, is on track to sell 7 million units this year, exceeding its target of 2 million.

Xiaomi is already profitable and is expected to rake in sales of up to 13bn yuan ($2bn) this year.

“Our product only sold for a year and hit sales of $2bn. That is pretty impressive,” Lei said, adding Xiaomi was not considering an initial public offering within the next five years.

Mo Xiaohua, a 24-year-old accountant, is a proud Xiaomi fan who only recently bought her first Xiaomi phone.

For many who use Xiaomi phones, the customizable themes and the weekly updates are a big draw.

“I like Xiaomi because among China’s brand smartphones, its value is the best,” Mo said. “Now that we have such a good China branded phone, we need to support it.”

BLACK BACK FLATS

Xiaomi has its fair share of detractors who doubt it will have a happy ending. They say the smartphone game in China can only be won with wide distribution and high volume or a big brand with distinctive designs.

Xiaomi, whose attraction is its price and high technical specifications, does not win points for cutting-edge design.

“This is a world where people are now cramming out ‘black back flats’, that’s what all these phones are when you put 10 on the table... Xiaomi is not going to stick out,” said Michael Clendenin, managing director at RedTech Advisors. “In this world, the market is driven by two things: one is massive volume and two huge brands.”

ZTE and Huawei have set smartphone sales targets for this year at about 30 million and 60 million respectively. The firms have traditionally dominated the cheap low-end smartphone segment but have been pushing into the mid-price range.

ZTE said it launched 11 types of smartphones in the mid-price range of 1,500-2,500 yuan this year, up from six last year. Apple released its mid-range tablet, the iPad Mini, in China on Friday.

“Xiaomi had great headline appeal a year ago... but the problem is now you have got guys like ZTE and Huawei and Meizu with phones that are priced in a similar range,” Clendenin said.

China is expected to surpass the United States as the world’s largest smartphone market this year with 160-170 million unit sales, up from 78 million last year, Gartner said.

Analysts said Xiaomi had to ramp up volume and address technical problems and a shortage of customer service centers if it wanted a shot at the big league.

“One of the challenges of being in the middle is that you can get squeezed,” said Duncan Clark, chairman of Beijing-based consultancy BDA.

Lei is resolute that he will prove the naysayers wrong.

“In this industry, I think the most important thing is to get love from your customers,” he said. “If you are popular with your customers, you succeed.”

Reuters
Hoy en la Historia

December 10, 2007

1901: The first Nobel Prizes were awarded on the fifth anniversary of the death of industrialist Alfred Nobel.
1921: Albert Einstein received the Nobel Physics Prize in Stockholm, Sweden.
1967: Otis Redding, one of the most influential soul singers of the 1960s, was killed in a plane crash in Wisconsin.
1982: The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea was signed by 119 countries.

Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner assumed office as Argentina’s first woman president following her election victory in October. She succeeded her husband.

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1982: The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea was signed by 119 countries.

Picture: Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS

ALL IN THE MIND
Can you find the hidden words? They may be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, forwards or backwards.

Baby Blues

Jerry Scott and Rick Kirkman

Hagar The Horrible

Chris Browne

Zits

Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman
How to play Hyper Sudoku:
A Hyper Sudoku Puzzle is solved by filling the numbers from 1 to 9 into the blank cells. A Hyper Sudoku has unlike Sudoku 13 regions (four regions overlap with the nine standard regions). In all regions the numbers from 1 to 9 can appear only once. Otherwise, a Hyper Sudoku is solved like a normal Sudoku.

How to play Kakuro:
The kakuro grid, unlike in sudoku, can be of any size, it has rows and columns, and dark cells like in a crossword. And, just like in a crossword, some of the dark cells contain numbers. Some cells will contain two numbers. However, in a crossword the numbers reference clues. In a kakuro, the numbers are all you get! They denote the total of the digits in the row or column referenced by the number. Within each collection of cells - called a run - any of the numbers 1 to 9 may be used but, like sudoku, each number may only be used once.
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Hong Kong dogs seek tooth-brushing world record

More than 300 dogs had their teeth brushed in Hong Kong yesterday in an attempt to set a new Guinness World Record for the most canines having their pearly whites cleaned at the same time.

Owners of the 312 pooches scrubbed the animals’ teeth for three minutes using a special brush and gel, as they sought to set a new Guinness World Record in the category “most people brushing dogs’ teeth simultaneously”.

Organisers said the event, held in Stanley on the south coast of Hong Kong Island, was aimed at promoting a hygienic lifestyle for dogs and raising funds for a dog rescue centre.

“A lot of people take care of their dogs’ hair and their diet but not so much their teeth,” Hilda Wong from The Link real estate firm, which organised the event, said.

“Brushing teeth is crucial for dogs, it’s just like brushing their hair. You don’t have to do it every day but it’s good to do it once a week because they eat and chew,” she added.

Wong said it will take three to four months for Guinness officials to certify whether the event is a new Guinness World Record.

A summary of issues of the day discussed by the Qatari community in the media.

- Public relations offices of some institutions and companies have been criticized for not dealing properly with the media and the public.
- Complaints against an outlet in Villaggio Mall for playing English songs containing objectionable words.
- Some drivers suddenly slow down their vehicles near radars without caring for the vehicles behind them.
- Discussion about why Qatari teachers are quitting Independent Schools.
- Demand for review of exorbitantly high fees of private schools.
- Some Independent Schools are punishing students for being late in the morning. The students are made to stand several hours in the school compound.
- Some commercial centres and organisations allocate small parking spaces for cars in order to accommodate more vehicles.
- The salary of Qatari doctor is lower than that of administrative employees in several organizations in Qatar.
- Traffic violations are increasing due to lack of strict action by the Traffic Department. The department is only collecting fines.
- The Central Municipal Council’s role and its relations with the Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning are similar to that of Palestine at the United Nations -- without any power or authority.