Jordanian architectural exhibit opens

Opening to museum members on Saturday, March 8 and to the general public on Sunday, March 9, 1986 from 2 to 5 p.m. is the exhibition “Village Architecture In Jordan.”

“Village Architecture in Jordan” serves as a witness to an ancient culture which adapted to function. Ammar Khammash lived for approximately two weeks in each of the nine villages included in the exhibition, and conveys to us fresh impressions of a disappearing architectural tradition. He speaks of the experience which inspired the project, “Arriving from Amman one afternoon after school in November, 1978, I was overwhelmed by a village that was almost covered with fired clay jars of all sizes displayed on the roofs. For some reason the olive oil production of the village Anjarah (in north Jordan) was scarce, which prompted the villagers to store their olive jars on the roofs of their houses away from the children. Anjarah still had some parts intact of its traditional architectural fabric, draped down the mountainside, as the roofs of the same height and texture followed the playful terrain. The jars on the roofs were plentiful and tantalizing. By the time the old Mercedes 190 came to a stop at the lofty entrance of the village, I had already decided which jar I wanted to buy. The villagers brought it down to me. Eight years later, I realized the significance of that moment. It marked the beginning of an intensive investigation of village architecture in Jordan.”

Made possible by a generous grant from The Royal Endowment for Culture and Education of Amman, Jordan, Chairmanned by Queen Noor Al Hussein, the exhibition will be shown in the United States before beginning an international tour at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, Holland, from there it will be shown at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Cologne, West Germany in 1987 and then travel to the new archaeological Museum at Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan.

The exhibition was organized by Herman Mhire, Director of the USL University Art Museum, and represents the first collaboration between the museum and a fifth year student in architecture.

Civic groups, social clubs and organizations and school classes are encouraged to schedule a tour of the exhibition by telephoning the museum one week in advance at 231-5326. Museum hours in Joel L. Fletcher Hall on the USL Campus are Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays from 2 to 5 p.m. Admission is free. “Village Architecture In Jordan” will be on view through April 11.

Herman Mhire, left and Ammar Khammash install photo.

Featuring the work of Ammar Khammash, native of Amman, Jordan and fifth-year architecture student at USL, the exhibition contains over 200 color photographs, drawings and watercolors selected from a collection of 5,000 images produced during field work conducted between January and August, 1985.

A country of great beauty and tradition, Jordan is undergoing rapid and dramatic change. Ways of life centuries old are radically juxtaposed with a restless enthusiasm for the modern. This exhibition will document, for the first time, essential aspects of traditional village life which will certainly be altered as twentieth century technologies impact upon the previously isolated rural environment. Change is so dramatic and rapid in Jordan, that many of the villages examined in this exhibition have already been transformed. The traditionally harmonious integration of stone and wood structures with the dramatic Jordanian landscape is ingeniously to a harsh arid environment and simultaneously produced an architecture incorporating superb simplicity of form with an inspired dedication to function.

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