

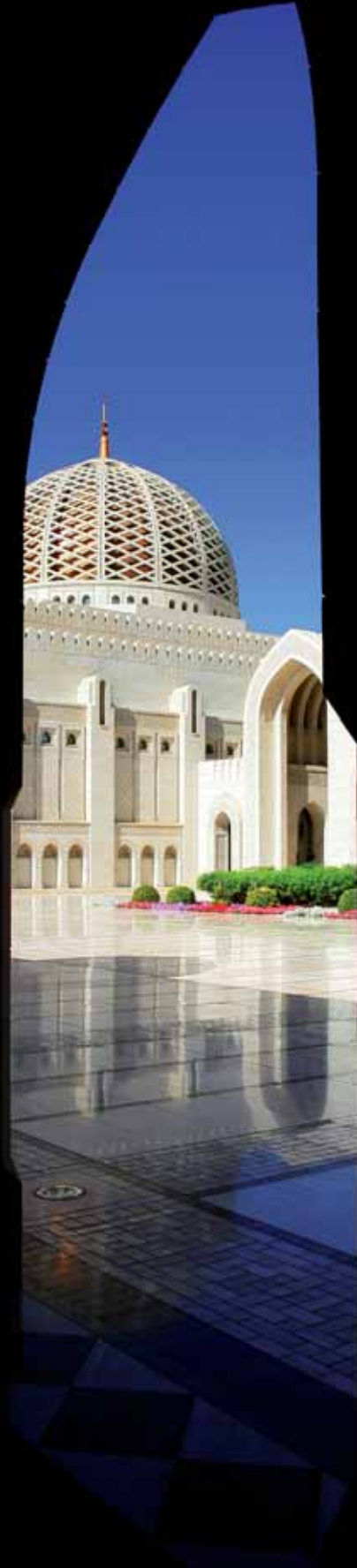
*n by Marco Sordelli*  
*photos by Gigi Grasso*

The Sultan Qaboos Grand mosque symbolizes the coming together of a spectacular array of traditional Islamic art and architectural styles that are set in a contemporary mode. The confluence of Ottoman, Mamluk, Islamic Indian Mughal, Iranian Safavid, traditional Omani and other styles of architecture in various part of the structure confer on it a uniqueness that is hard to surpass by any modern piece of architecture. In 1993, the Diwan of the Royal Court held an international competition to find the best design for the Grand Mosque. In 1995 the construction commenced, took six years to complete and was inaugurated by His Majesty the Sultan in May 2001. The mosque complex consists of a sacred platform with the main prayer hall and the open air prayer courtyard, defined by the four corner minarets each standing 148 feet. The main prayer hall, elevated square blocks per Omani mosque tradition, has a capacity of over 6,600 and the entire complex can accommodate 20,000. In addition there is a ladies prayer hall, covered passageways, a meeting hall and a library with 20,000 books.

The floor of the prayer hall is entirely overlaid with a magnificent Persian carpet measuring more than 60 x 70 metres. The carpet is woven of fine wool and cotton yarn made of 1,700 million knots, 21 tons of weight and covering a total area of 4,263 square metres. Handmade in 28 colours by 600 artists, the manufacture of the carpet took four years, of which fifteen months were spent in the preparation of the designs, yarns and dyes.

The grand central chandelier, made of Swarovsky crystal and gold-plated metal work is in the Guinness Book of World Records as "the largest and most beautiful chandelier ever made." The grand central chandelier, which is eight meters in diameter and 14 meters in length, weighs eight tons, with 1,122 lamps especially designed and produced for the main prayer hall. The whole interior of the Grand Mosque is panelled with off-white and dark grey marble panelling clothed in cut stile work.

The Grand Mosque inspired the founding of a contemporary institute dedicated to advanced Islamic studies with appropriate educational facilities and accommodation.

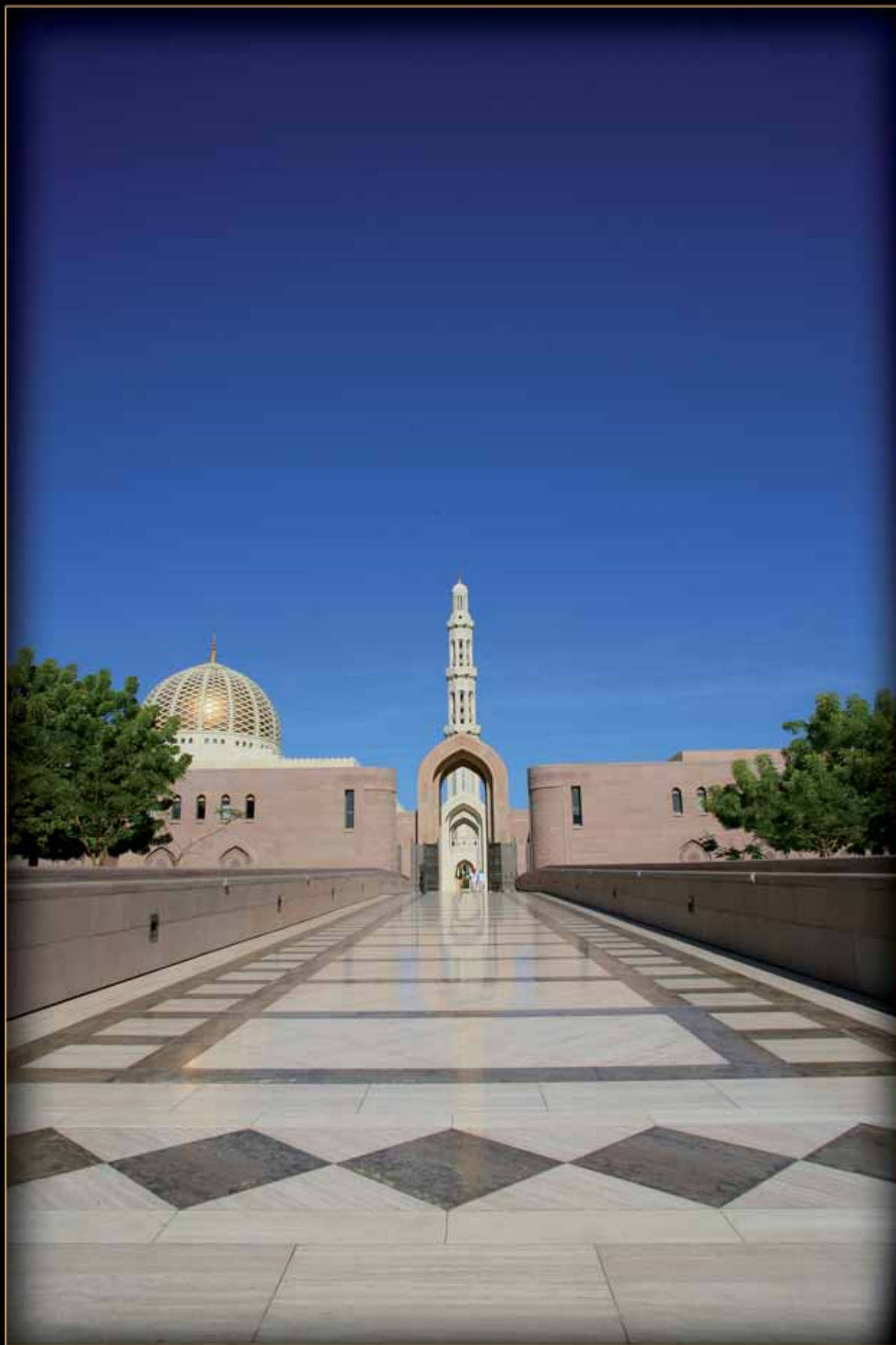


THE SULTAN



QABOOS







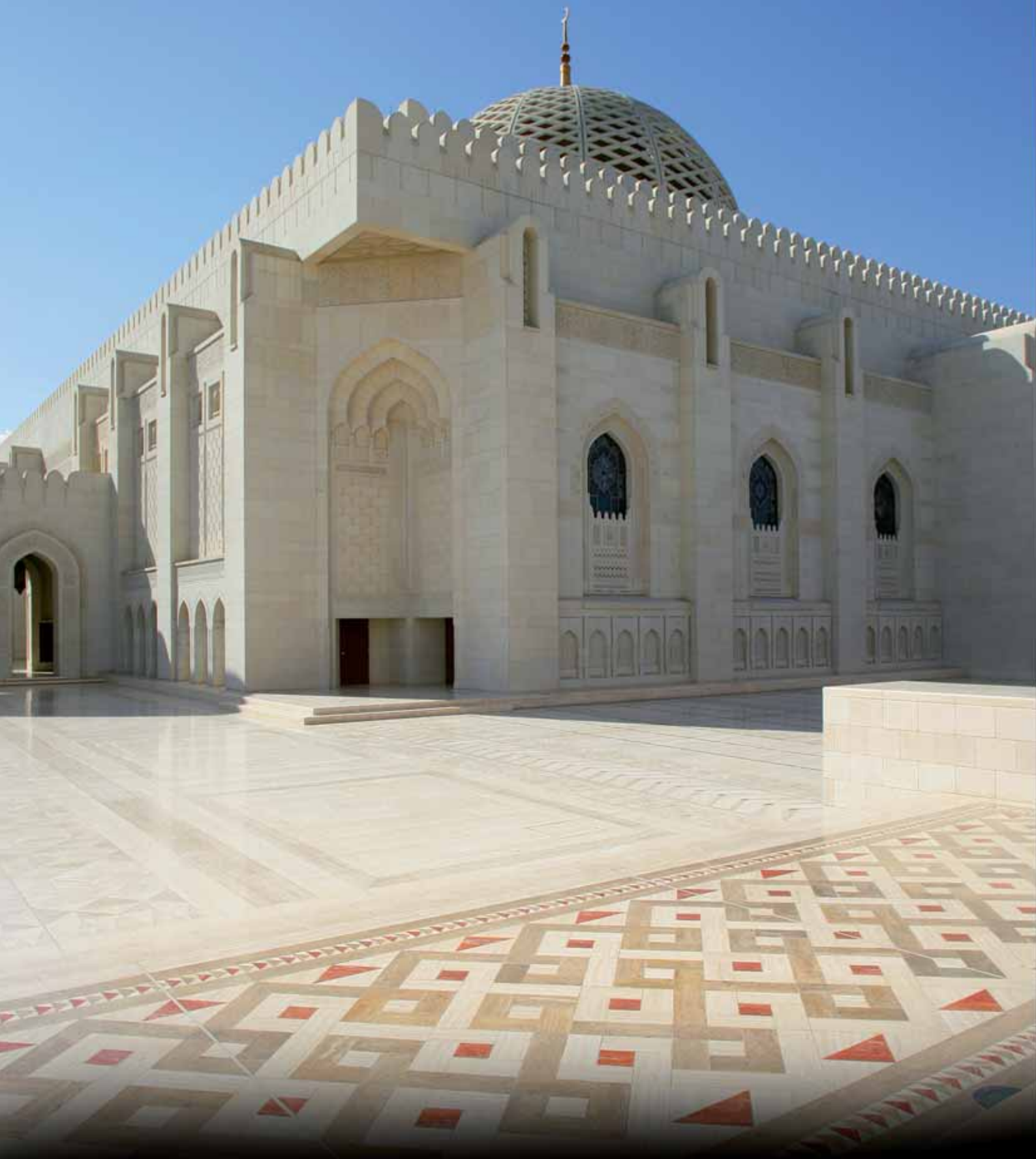
# ISLAMIC INDIAN ART

## "The Mughal Era"



*Main entrance fully clad with brown colour sandstone, with the main minaret that rises to a height of 91.5 meters.*

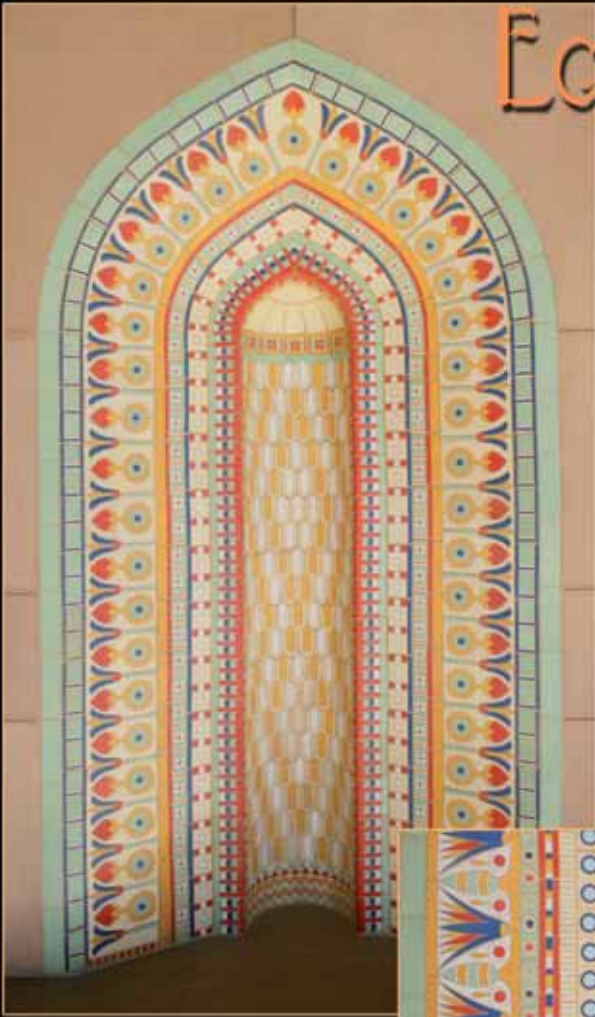
Islamic architecture in India is distinguished by the Mughal style. Emperor Hamayun contributed significantly to its formation and was responsible for a fusion of the Persian and Indian style. The floral designs are typical of this classic tradition, found at Agra's Taj Mahal. Pure white makrana marble is used for the panel base of the flanking frames, inlaid with semi-precious stones, including mother of pearl, malachite, lapis lazuli and coral.





# EGYPT & MESOPOTAMIA

*"Ancient legend & glory"*



*Some 30,000 tons of sandstone was imported from India, and cut, dressed and carved in Muscat. Marble tiles are used for the paving scheme of much of the complex. The central dome, rising to a height of 50 meters, has an outer skin of concrete fretwork design embellished with gold mosaics.*

**T**he pre-Islamic period of Egypt and ancient Mesopotamia had a long tradition in fresco, mural painting and tile work. Egyptian motifs unravel an early vivid source for the evolution of floral design, drawing upon the Nile, stars and legends of life and spirituality. Assyrian designs represent a precision in stylising the forces of nature, power and myth into a formal ornamental framework.









# THE MAGHRIB

"Jewels of Paradise"



*The grand central chandelier made of Swarovsky crystal and gilded metals. With 35 chandeliers it weighs eight tons!*

*The Main Prayer Hall with the magnificent Persian carpet made of 1,700 million knots and weighing 21 tons.*

Islamic art delved into geometry as the major source for decorative patterns and architectural forms. The artworks at Alhambra (in Granada, Al Andalus) reveal the visual splendour and architectural innovation achieved. Framed murals of geometric configurations exalt the complexity and beauty of an abstract art and its intricate designs, originally brought from the East (Anatolia, Baghdad and Kashan).





# MAMLUK

## "Imagery of Light"



*The complex is entirely faced in cream "Arabecato" and "Taj" sandstone.*

Geometric and floral patterns became a major form of the Islamic decorative arts. The Mamluk interpretation of Islamic architectural design in Egypt and the Levant, yielded an extensive vocabulary. Contrasting coloured horizontal bands along walls or vertically in the soffits and undersides of arches and Mihrabs produced radiating designs. Decorative elements adorning openings, niches and portals added a serene light to the stone architecture.





# BYZANTIUM E EARLY ISLAM

## "Antique Mosaic e Pure Decoretion"

*Passageways with different marble tiles designs – the walls of the mosque are sheer poetry in stone. The ceilings are inspired by those of Omani forts.*



Early Islamic art was enthralled by the classical heritage and in touch with the artwork of Pompeii and Costantinople. Islamic art distanced its expression from iconic imagery and nature which was instead symbolised and represented by strong geometric and floral references. Craftsmen and artist from Byzantium and Rome contributed to the new visual language in the elaborate ornament and architecture.







# PERSIAN KASHI DESIGN

## "Lavish Safavid Splendour"



*The Mosque site runs for an entire kilometer along the Seeb Highway, covering 416,000 square meters and adorned with beautiful gardens.*

**P**ersian designs are rooted in the Mongol Ilkhanid dynasty founded by Hulagu Khan. The Ilkhanid ruler embraced Islam and this resulted in the dynasty's prolific output in architecture and the visual arts. This period brought new colour schemes and an emphasis on geometric features and relief. Based on original designs depicting the flower of heaven, each niche is different in form, construction and pattern.