

Beauty of Islamic culture

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LONDON - One of the world's most celebrated rock photographers has launched a collection of work showcasing the diversity and beauty of the Islamic world.

Peter Sanders, who made his name photographing famous rock and roll icons of the 1960s, has launched "In the Shade of the Tree", documenting the author's travels around the Muslim world. The book illustrates Sanders four decades of travels to experience the wonders of the Islamic world.

"In the Shade of the Tree" captures the humanity of peoples often labeled by the West as either victims of circumstance or a threat to modern culture. This seminal work was originally published, as a limited run, in 2002, and had been out of print for 6 years.

The second edition was commissioned as a response to continued demands from Sanders' fans for a chance to acquire a copy of his most celebrated work. The new edition has been updated and is prefaced by renowned American scholar Hamza Yusuf.

During the four decades of travel that inspired the work, Sanders journeyed across the three continents of ancient Islamic civilisation, and enjoyed the diversity of culture and history offered by Andalus, North and Central Africa, The Middle East, Central Asia and China. The photography is interspersed with world poetry and verses from the Holy Scriptures of different religions. The book gives the reader an opportunity to share Sanders reflections on the concepts of beauty, wisdom, poverty and the nature of happiness.

He cajoles his audience into contemplating the "wealth of poverty" and the influence and importance of women in Muslim societies.

The title is inspired by the saying of the Prophet Muhammad "I am in this world like a traveller who takes shade under a tree, only to resume his journey."

Yusuf elaborates further, quoting a Qur'anic verse: "Have you not considered your Lord, how He extends the shade, and had He willed He would have made it still? Then We make the sun its guide, then We withdraw it unto Us gradually." (chapter 25, verses 45-46).

"In the Shade of the Tree is the result of many years of painstaking observation of shade. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then these pictures are a testimony to the beauty in Sanders' eye," said Yusuf, who is a fan of the work.

"He uses an odd yet wondrous mechanical device that captures for one brief moment a glimpse of beauty.

The pictures in this book, while only brief moments of shade written in light captured by his discerning eye, will linger on in your memory long after you have closed the book," added the California-based scholar.

Sanders began his career in the 1960s as one of London's leading photographers of rock musicians. His pictures of Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, The Rolling Stones, The Who and many others performing are classics of the genre.

In the late 1960s Sanders embarked on a spiritual journey that would take him to India and North Africa and then, in 1971, to the Islamic Holy City of Makkah where he photographed the Hajj pilgrimage, at a time when few professional photographers had access to Islam's holiest Sanctuary.