

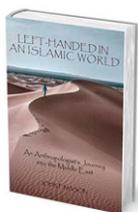
starting arguments what lists like this are for? *The Band FAQ* is, in a way the group's members might appreciate, a classic barroom argument settler, a worthy companion to some of rock's finest music.—JOEL BROWN

**Left-Handed in an Islamic World:
An Anthropologist's Journey into the
Middle East**

John P. Mason (GRS'71)
New Academia Publishing

THE DESERT CALLED TO MASON. It was so different from Boston, where as a BU student he watched the historical epic *Lawrence of Arabia* in a movie theater. He recalls a scene from the 1963 Oscar winner where the mysterious British archaeologist and army officer T. E. Lawrence came “loping onto the screen on camelback, seeming to float on the desert—and into my life.”

In this hybrid memoir-history-ethnography, Mason reflects on his 50-year career in the Middle East, living in Arab-Berber Muslim communities. His intention, he writes, was to “study their work, their ownership of land, who they married and how new kinsmen fit into their lives, their social and religious traditions, and the general round of activities of these desert villagers over the course of a year.”



His accounts are saturated with sensory descriptions, like encountering optical illusions in the desert. “I swore that what I saw was a seascape, which appeared to have water vapor rising from it....It took a while to adjust to this new sensation.”

The book interweaves history and politics—tracing the role of NATO's response to Libya's leader Muammar Gaddafi in the rise of ISIS—with the personal. Mason relates how having children changed the nature of his work in the troubled region, and how his responsibilities shifted as the United States entered into war with Iraq.

He draws the narrative to a close in 2016. “As I sit here comfortably at home, in Maryland, far away from the present strife plaguing the Middle East,” he writes, “I'd still give my eye-tooth to be able to return to Augila in the Libyan Desert.”—LARA EHRLICH

Gallery



↑ *Passing Glance*, oil on linen, 36" x 46", 2012

ASK PAINTER David Wells Roth about his influences, and he cites two of the greats: Paul Cézanne and Edward Hopper. “I understood Hopper because I spent a lot of time in New York City with my folks growing up,” says Roth (CFA'05), whose parents were from the Bronx. “I understood his vision of New York.”

When it comes to Roth's nighttime urban scenes, like the one above, it's apparent the artist is also influenced by a point in time: the dawn of the Space Age, a touchstone for someone born in 1957. “You've got little spots of light here and there,” he says. “If you squint your eyes, it's like you're looking into space.”

Roth arrived at the College of Fine Arts in 1975 (the late David Aronson, a CFA professor emeritus of art, was a mentor); for personal reasons, he left BU in 1979 and moved to New York City. He spent his time painting outdoors, and selling his work off the easel. From 1982 to 1997, he lived in

France, painting landscapes and city scenes, and exhibiting his art there and in the United States. Back in America, he began working on a new series of cityscapes, and completed a BFA at BU. About that time he was commissioned to paint the portraits of 31 judges, past and present, of the US District Court for the District of Puerto Rico. Roth began the work in 2007 and has so far painted 34 judges. The portraits hang in the central atrium of the main courthouse in San Juan.

Roth says his goal was to paint the jurists as though from life. “You can see styles subtly changing over time,” he says. “The early ones are very formal, with a very 19th-, early 20th-century look, and as you get further on, they get less formal.” As for the court's now-retired chief judge, José A. Fusté, who commissioned the portraits, “I wanted to give him the most classical pose. I wanted to give him Rembrandt's world. And I put his motorcycle and sports car collection behind him. He loved it.”—CYNTHIA K. BUCCINI