Carine Harmand

Hello, and welcome to the latest episode in the Culture in Crisis podcast series, Preservation by Design. My name is Carine Harmand, I am a curator in the Middle East Department at the British Museum, and I am joined today by Rashad Salim who is an artist and the Project Director of Safina Projects. The Preservation by Design Podcast series explores design solutions to threats posed to our cultural heritage, drawing from a wide spectrum of practitioners in the projects they’re all engaged with.

Today, we will be talking about Rashad’s ongoing work with the Safina Projects, a creative studio that works to protect and revive the endangered craft heritage of Iraq, particularly its maritime heritage, traditional boatmaking and all of these through art and cultural research projects that engage the public in Iraq and internationally. So, hi Rashad.

Rashad Salim

Hello Carine.

CH: It's really nice to see you again.

RS: Thank you very much for inviting me to speak.

CH: So, can you tell us a bit to start about how the project emerged and what it is trying to address?

RS: Well, I've always had a fascination with boats and as a young man of 20, I had the experience of participating to Heyerdahl’s Tigris expedition which was a reed boat created in the images of the Samarian reed boats, 18 metres by 6 metres. So, I helped construct it as well as crew it for 5 months on the sea. So, that was always in the back of my mind, it was a seminal experience and an education for me.

But also, during this period specifically, the War periods, and we've had wars for 40 years now in Iraq as well as sanctions, I need to re-engage with the country, and with the issues that have grown up. I’m an artist and my family have all been artists and quite active within the archive arts scene… and maybe artists being too successful in comparison to crafts in Iraq.

So, I’m needing to see how to in a way create a new pallet and engaging with the country, so rather than bones, you know I want to use the material of the country… as an artist and conceptually engage with the country. Yeah. So, I mean that... I started... I’ve always been thinking about it, but we actually sort of started thinking that one could engage directly with the country in 2013...

We’re participated and also created a couple of the boats of the Tigris flotilla which was a nature Iraq led expedition from South East Turkey... on the Tigris River, and in sections to the [S.L. Chubish Marshes] of Southern Iraq. So, we... they recreated one of the marsh Arab [S.L. Mishufs] which is a canoe and they started to recreate the Kelek which is a raft.

CH: Huh-huh.

RS: On float on air bags. And I helped to recreate a Gufa which is a coracle, a basket boat. In fact, a… a coil basket, and that is braced with palm... not palm sorry, with pomegranate, once, so its like... you know it’s braced with it a basket braced with pomegranate once and then tarred.

CH: Yeah

RS: Yeah. So, I recreated online because I was a volunteer and they had asked me to take care of these boats knowing that I’d worked with these boats and I’d done research on them. But they didn’t find anybody that could build it, so it was just a basket maker. So, we ended up with like a 40 percent boat.

CH: Yeah
You know it hadn’t been completed…

But it worked, you could…

Oh, I managed to get down from…

Sailed, I don’t know if you can say sailed…

No, we…

…but you could…

We paddled.

We paddled actually on… on white water. You know so rough water as well as the river, for a month and something on the river, getting down. Yeah, so that was… that was successful.

These... all the boats that... actually, practically all the traditional boats of Iraq in (Unclear) have now disappeared, you know, and these are ones that existed until... until the end of the 80s, you know that sort of time. The coracle, the Gufa, they hadn’t found the people to build them, but I knew that there was an area that they still had... they used to build them in.

So, after the expedition, the Tigris Flotilla......I visited these areas which were close to Babylon... A place called Seda India, on the India branch of the Euphrates there, and I found the last Gufa coracle made, was made in 2003 or put into the water in 2003.

And during the expedition, going down, I noticed that those ancient boat types were being made using metal. So, you have coracles around coracles...

I found one on the way and then later on I found quite a few more, when I went back to investigate, all made out of metal. So, the canoes are made of metal, now they’re made out of fibreglass and they are purely functional, but nothing really aesthetic about them.

But all the boats that we work with and that’s the coracle Gufa, the Kalek, the (Unclear) and there are many different types of canoes, Marsh Arab canoes, and now the Saba which is a type of boat that they make in Western Iraq on the Euphrates in what is Unbar region, and they use that to transport tar from ancient times, we’ll speak about that later.

But, so all these boats are actually... actually made me... not the Saba, but the coracle, the canoe and the raft are... are generic types of boats and you find them all over the world, and for me that’s very important that, there are versions that are local for something that is generic and that is so ancient, and we can not really actually say when... I would say from earliest times. I mean you know that...

And we see all these boats in... I mean, ancient Mesopotamia, ceilings or sales, we see them from the third millennium before Christ until, I mean the Assyrian Relief show us that many of these boats or the collects are shown with... but instead of inflated bags you have kind of sheepskins that are used...

That’s an inflated bag.

...in the Gufa’s you find exactly these coracles, these round coracles used from every size, so very small ones but also big ones used for military campaigns, and you can see all these military...

Precisely

...men going down the rivers through the...
Precisely, and like the Gufa that you mentioned now, that they... you know the... in the Assyrian Relief they show them carrying chariots and stuff... Its one of the things that are mentioned by Herodotus... in his visit to Babylon, or his description of Babylon... we don’t know if he actually visited. You know, but he describes them as one of the miracles of Babylon... the coracles. And they used to be...

Some transporting even horses actually, I just remembered one of the images, yes.

Let me then say about transporting three horses...and crew and stuff. So, they... we have photographs of them up to 6 metres... You know they’re huge, massive, single spiral baskets that are tarred, you know so these are huge structures. But you have the... for example, as this being generic and all over the world, we have in Europe dating back 5000bc, we have an example of them that is...5000bc in pottery form, you know.

Yeah on the Rhine I think, yeah, the Rhine of the Danube, at the moment it slips my mind. And we also have a 3000-year-old one in... that they found in Norway, and it’s something you find all over the world. But in each part of the world they’d make it according to the specific nature of their own culture.

So, you have... until now they’re used in Vietnam for example, a lattice bamboo slats, you know that is then... and in India as well.

And in England, there’s now a resurgent in Christian... in coracles, that are basically a basket structure covered in a skin of any type. Before it would have been leather.

You know small ones. So, they’re all over the world and that’s an important part of our... out ethos in that we believe that there is a sort of a generic and universal language of making, you know that is shared by all people around the world.

And the... what is really sort of a bit of a... indication I think of catastrophe, its just a graphic situation that is... this essential language of making in Iraq that for the first time in our history has disappeared.

I mean the empires and the kingdoms that we have, you know the monumental remains of, here came and went within a matter of centuries.

And we’re talking about craft traditions that have remained for tens of thousands of years at least, yeah?

Continually without a break, we’ve got examples of the same marsh Arab boats since Samarian here in the royal grave... the graveyard of Avor, yeah, there’s models of the same shape. But for the first time ever they’ve disappeared, though they remain in the iconography of Iraqi art as symbols of... of national symbols.

Yeah. But were they used in modern Iraqi art as... I mean as you would just say, those symbols of national identity maybe? Are the boats quite a strong image of that?

They’re symbols of national identity, but I think they’re also more than symbols, they are templates of the imagination you know......in the sense that you find... you find these forms, both in the representative and in the abstract. You find them in Iraq where the Arabic script was developed as we know it now in Kufi, yeah.

You find the same kind of... because of this whole identity issue and you know...they talk about the Crescent in Iraqi art, I don’t think it’s a crescent, I think the crescent is one... one reflection of this sort of parabolic curve that you find in the palm tree as well. You find in the bending reed as well.

You find it in the elements that are used in around, not necessarily only in the sky, yeah. So, its part of the creative imagination of the place that continues in the art...

So, we find them in the art, and that’s one of the reasons why I’m doing this is that I think it’s so necessary to regain or resuscitate, revitalise, whatever, understand, these strata of craft making in Europe.
In terms of the... So Safina Projects are going to kind of revive all this heritage that has been lost, as you said. So, how do you... how do you collect this knowledge, how do you collect this heritage? Do you have reeds and sources, are there people who still know about all these crafts and yes, techniques?

So, I think we’d have to go to... from after that expedition down... on the Tigris flotilla, 2013, and in it... during that expedition I had a sort of an apophony that had to do with the Ark of the flood. And that was that the Ark may not necessarily have been one big structure, but actually more rationally and more logically would have been a gathering of many things.

So I developed this idea of the Ark being... a gathering based around the Gufa, the coracle because a coracle is round and if you gather many of these coracles together like you gather any round object of the same diameter, you get a pattern that is called in Iraq [S.L. Sabaa Youn] which means the 7 eyes that you find from the earliest times in the Temple of Warka and the courtyard, and you find it in... embedded in the wall as a sort of a mosaic.

And you find it also as... until this day, an amulet given to all children everywhere in Iraq as a protective amulet, the [S.L. Sabaa Youn], and it is basically 6 circles around one circle and in... in geometry or in sacred geometry it’s called Flower of Life, it’s what... it’s the same shape that you have with the monocular structure of carbon, of water.

In engineering it is the strongest thing, if you’ve got a flat surface, and you put it on two things and you put a weight on it it’ll break, but if you put holes in it, in this pattern, you’ll... it will stay, it will be stronger, you know. So, it’s a lattice work, yeah. So, the Ark I imagined or reimagined and we called it the Ark Reimagined was a gathering of all these boats around the Gufa.

In this pattern, and that... that started off as an art project and a sort of a... a challenge if you wish to the Western trope of the Ark.

No, this is great. We are talking about where... basically where did... where do you find all this knowledge about creating these ancient boats.

Everywhere

So, yeah, so people know how... how to make them, you’ve been to... I mean you’ve told us...

And with... with... I have since, and we once starting to do this from 2015, I was invited by the edge of Arabia to...Steven Stapleton (Unclear) of Arabia who was a good friend of mine and that all followed my ideas, he knows about this from what... to explore the concept as an artist. So, I had sort of his... his space for 2 months working on it. So, I was working on creatively as an artist, and then in 2016 with some of the actual outcomes from the sale of our works there, I did first exploratory trips into Iraq.

Yeah, going back for the first time really, after that 2013 trip. And, decided with the Gufa’s. So, we’ve had different reactions from the people there but coming to your question, yeah in the... in Britain’s sort of handbook of basketry for the Basketry Association one of the first pictures in it is of a Gufa. Yeah.

Its... you find it you know in the literature, you know in the actinography, all these different boats. So, there’s a lot of literature about it, and there’s a... it is a major sort of field of investigation academically.

You know the boats and ancient boats because importance... I particularly like it in England because it’s a maritime culture over here, there’s a lot of work on it.

So, I did spend 2017 really and up till now studying the literature. On the one hand the existing literature about bronze, pre-bronze age and traditional boats. Generally, as well as specifically the Mesopotamian. What we find really useful is what I’d call the... sort of archival archaeological strata which is the photographs, films and the writings of the 20th century, 19th century.

They’ve got expeditions, you know... you know British expeditions, the American expeditions, all sorts of expeditions who recorded what they saw in Iraq...and filmed it.
RS: So, for example, one of our partners in the work is the Pittsburgh Museum who have [S.L. Wilford Sessages] archives, and he spent 7 years with the Marsh Arabs. So, he actually photographed one of the... the disappeared, they completely disappeared.

I’ve only found one person that actually has memory of it, the type of boat that we believe is the... I believe that is... is the precursor to the Marsh Arab.

You know and... so we’re looking at every evidence that we can find on two levels, Iraq locally because they are generic, these boats. Globally, yeah, you know everything informs that.

CH: Okay and people... So, have you... are there specific areas or specific villages you’ve been to across Iraq to find remaining oral stories about these boats and knowledge about these boats?

RS: These boats represent the different parts of Iraq. So, the Kelek is a type of boat on the skins, on these inflatable skins, sheepskins which are all sheepskin, that they then tied the leg parts...

CH: (Laughs)

RS: ...the neck parts, the butt parts...

CH: It looks like a sheep.

RS: Yeah (laughs), it does look like a sheep, yeah, and they used to use for water, for churning milk, for making butter, milk and that sort of thing. That has disappeared its use. But anyway, the Kelek was used to haul wood and stone, and its really, I think worthwhile to mention that you know boats in Mesopotamia you know are as... as really as... as crucial, as important, if not more than agriculture itself and the development of civilisation.

You have you know... you have these two major highways going through the Country or through the land...

...of the country and because it’s through Syria and Turkey, yeah, and parts of Iran, yeah. So, the Mesopotamian Valley...the Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers, you had these two major highways with side... side routes and then canals in between. It’s a whole... the whole...

If you look at the map, the watercourse map of Mesopotamia, its like looking at a city map, yeah, you know with all... or if you looked into detail including the canals et cetera, its... its already there.

And that united the country and created this trade and Iraq being the nexus of you know the old-world nexus, you know.

We had trade from the Gulf and from... from the East to the West, I mean all over. So, it naturally was a unified area... but with very different or graduated differences...

...environmental differences but a natural gradient, and these boats represent the north, the Kelek. So, you don’t have stone for example massive, you don’t have granite and basalt and all that in... Babylon was built with that and this was brought down on these Kelek’s, yeah. I think the British Museum also sort of brought their huge...

CH: The sculptures...

RS: ...the sculptures and the Stella’s on these Kelek’s down and took them... brought them here, yeah. And the Gufa coracles represent the centre. They were built in the centre, so we know where they were built, and the [S.L. Shashi] and the canoes, the Shashi is the reed bundle boats and the canoes, (Unclear) are in the South.

So, we have got this. So, what we do is... we locate, and you know we have people that come from that region that guide us to locate those communities that have some relationships with these boats, and then
we find those that have built it. And that’s really fascinating in itself, and we are doing oral histories as we’re going along.

And with the aim of recreating, always with the aim of recreating the boats because by recreating the boats, it’s not a matter... its not enough just to take an oral... oral history of it, but by recreating the boats you... you facilitate a reconnection between the generations.

You know so at every... every... at every recreation, you know its really beautiful to see you know this communication and this... and pride.

You know in this knowledge between you know the elders... the younger people that might have had some experience of it, yeah and... or knew how to build it having built it with their elders, and the braves, the younger men, as well as the children and the toddlers, you know, they all get involved (laughs) each and every... in every one there’s been that sort of range of involvement.

CH That’s fantastic. So, you get enthusiasm from everyone in these communities to kind of...?

RS Oh yeah, yeah we have...

There are... there has been... because we have actually recreated now several but in two different areas in Babylon inside a tent there, and Elda, Babylon, we’ve recreated the Gufa and only the Gufa and that experience has been a bit different from the... the recreation of the Shashi’s and the Mishosta canoes...

CH Yeah

RS ...in the... in [S.L. Oware] which is the sort of the town that traditionally has been the boat building town for the Marshes, out there. There has been a bit of a different, you know the Oware bit has been a much more of a communal setting, while in (Unclear) in Babylon its been more of a commissioning to one particular people that have been doing it. However, and this is where it becomes similar, as soon as people see the boats you have that communication because... and this is amazing because... and I see it as art as well.

You know it’s that... it’s happening. So, for example when we... when we transport the Gufa on top of a taxi from one place to another, it always creates a crowd. You know when people come and they remember it, you know and they speak their stories and I’ve done all the recordings from the window of the cab, you know people saying their grandmother used to have a ferry crossing using these and that...

CH They still had taxis in ancient times, its really...

RS Yeah, yeah, yeah it is very much part of it and there’s definitely something special about boats, you know, and boats have... are body you know. They’re architectural like a home, but you’re even more dependent on them because you’re in another element with a boat. So, I think there’s something very deep about boats...and of course, boats are traditionally even the Samarian and the Greek, that... that means of going from one realm to another, even from life to death, you know.

So, they... and the Egyptians as well.

So, boats... boats have an amazing spiritual, symbolic as well as a historical thing, yeah, presence.

CH And its also a way of I guess reviving these techniques but also reviving a whole social eco-system around it and how... do you find this part of... of the project, was that something you had in mind or is that something that happened around it, and it’s something that you’re trying to build upon as well in Safina Projects?

RS That’s a very... you know a key question, in that the Ark itself, yo u know like I said is a means of gathering. It’s a means of gathering information, a complex matrix of information. So, you... but in something that is tangible, that is you know comprehensible. So, all too often these... these crafts are lost in their... as a fragment, you know, lost in their... as parts. You know as a whole.

So, gathering... the Ark has you know a central kitchen, any ark would need a kitchen. So, I mean...

CH (Unclear) about that...
(Laughs) Yeah. Yeah, I mean that is interesting that the Ark lost or Noah, you know and the earliest thing about the Ark, Noah’s wife had a name and gradually that name was lost with the patriarchy and the retelling until there was no name.

And I personally think that Noah’s Ark… wife, had a pretty part, probably she was the one that designed the ark, you know. But anyway, so the kitchen is really important. So, we’re looking also in the gardens at the kind of foods, the traditional foods and many traditional foods and stuff that have also disappeared along with the crafts, you know.

And we’re looking at… one reason why we’re looking at these traditional boats and we’re looking at them, those that could have been pre-bronze age, because we’re looking at locality, you know and the local material. So, it’s only local material. You know boat’s later on became wooden and imported from all over the place, you know metals have input.

But these are… these are organic structures built with local material so things that you mentioned earlier, something about the rope around the Ark...

Yeah. So, I spent some time in [S.L. Ionyatama] which is one of the Oasis’ by Karbala, its one of the only real oasis’ we have, its unusual, an amazing place, farm grows and another… another environment that has collapsed.

You know these are fossil water springs of the (Unclear) and they are dead now, yeah. But anyway, so, we commissioned 7 kilometres of rope there, and going back, I’m not sure now whether we mentioned the alphabet of making, but you know there’s this alphabet of making I believe that is universal and amongst these universal letters of making, are things like rope.

And nobody invented rope, rope was made naturally. It’s a natural thing, you know, you’ve got hair, you’ve got a rope you know. We’ve got sinuses, binds, et cetera, you’ve got rope, you know ropes one of the main things, you know. I’m completely against you know the term, the Stone Age because we’ve found stones that are tools, but it wasn’t the stone age, it was more likely the rope age. Yeah.

Yeah calling that period the Stone Age is like calling the industrial revolution the rivet age.

You know, basically yeah. So, the monolithic. So, it was an organic culture and naturally it would have been organic, and basketry would have been the main thing as well as sewing and these sorts of things, and we find some evidence of the tools. It wasn’t… I completely disagree with the brutal sort of very unkept sort of... thing up to it (laughs). I think that’s totally rubbish.

So, I mean we’re looking at these boats because its local. So, we’re looking also at the... at the sources. So, for example, one of the main sources are palm trees. When these are not mentioned as an importance source in the literature of boat making. They’re completely ignored because they’re not something that is visually, that has been visually captured in the... in the evidence that we have, you know. But that’s a main source of rope.

Its also a main source of structural bits, but the rope is a bit like the North American first nation use of buffaloes and that... and many other nations that have a primary element from the environment whether its an animal or a vegetable that they use. They use every bit of it.

So, we found for example that the palm tree not only would have given many of the materials that could have made boats, but the palm front, the leaf of the palm is cut and then there’s a stub that’s left.

And that’s called the Carob, and then that is cut, and you get this sort of..., the pattern that you find on palm trees, you know this...
...which is also by the way there’s 6 around 1, it’s the same pattern, you know of the... And the Carob, the palm front stump, yeah, they used to make shoes out of. Nobody makes shoes and we couldn’t find... I found one person that remembered that shoes were made... shoe soles were made from that.

So, this is a potential industry, so as we’re working with this and because we’re working with the natural material, the available material or indigenous material that would have made these boats...we are also looking at the wider applications and the wider products that could have been used for it. Noah would have worn shoes, you know, its all part of the...the society. But what’s happened now in Iraq is that there has been a breakdown in the relationship or the equation between the town, the village and the environment.

Because crafts have always been that... that link, you know, between the environment and the... and the people, yeah. Its that link so, you know going down on the river you don’t see people using the boat in the river, very few people using the river. We had 33 million palm trees, now we’re down to below 10 and they’re being massacred for urban development and as well as by salt encroachment.

By what sorry?

Salt encroachment from the Gulf waters coming in because the rivers, the Tigris, Euphrates have gone down, you’ve got water coming in from the Gulf into the... into taking over. So, these are areas that you have the major palm grows in South of Iraq and (Unclear) these areas. Yeah, as well as destroying it for oil, in that sense I support that, BP sort of thing, let it be noted. Yeah.

Because they’re actually destroying vast areas to empty the spaces around the oil extraction points, and then you have the pollution of the burn-offs and all that sort of... I live in a plume...when I work there, off the burn-off. So, there are many things that are... are breaking the connection between people and environment.

And these boats and the Ark itself as a concept attempts to gather that information into it... into its design.

Yeah? Into its design, but as one of our objectives that we’re looking at achieving, is to create a virtual museum of what would be considered organic or intangible crafts. There’s no such thing at the moment. I mean you’ve got...anthropological museums, you’ve got virtual museums for historical archaeological museums.

But you don’t have a virtual... you know I see the Ark as this is a means of the paedic means, you know as cyclopaedic means of gathering these...

All these crafts?

All these crafts, all these boats and the actual structure......and the function of the... and the material of the Ark itself. So, we’re doing a 3D, we’re aiming to do a 3D design and to put the information that we are gathering into it. So, you would be able to visit the Ark...

I suppose that...

...and to enter the Ark...

That would be something real, an actual...?

That would be a 3 dimensional...virtual ark that would be the cyclopaedia and of course we’re going to make a real one. You know a real one that you can visit.

And my sort of fantasy wish, is to have an Ark made by every major culture that has an ark story with their own indigenous material.

And have a conversation between those.

Fantastic, yeah.

Yeah, because you know that would be great to have a festival of arks, you know.
Just out of curiosity, where... where would that big museum or arks be? Or what would be the perfect place? (Laughs)

Well the perfect place would be each one in their own area.

Okay

Yeah, and run then a gathering wherever... wherever they could gather. I mean I could see them gathered in, you know in any... any (Laughs).

You know we are... we have been appointed as to... to curate and design and produce the first Iraqi architectural pavilion, national pavilion in Venice, 2020. So, we’re working towards that.

Yeah

So, Venice is a perfect place. I mean...

Absolutely.

...the lagoon there, we also want to be able to bring it here, and we’re producing...

I mentioned a virtual model, but we’re also producing scale models of it where we’re studying the techniques because its not only boats, and its not only crafts, but it’s also vernacular architecture, yeah, that we would (Unclear). So, the super structure is vernacular architecture, and in recreating this or investigating this, its not a matter of us going in there and making these or recreating these boats.

Its not enough, what we want to do is to see how to... to sustain them and sustain the communities that are making them.

So, we’re looking for example with the Marsh Arab... with the Mishota’s, the canoes, how to introduce them as a new national sport, to introduce them into the... into the tourist landscape.

Because they have disappeared from there. How to give the opportunities to engage with the river by making expeditions, so we have an expedition coming up from Anbar.

Which... they only recently liberated from ISIS and we’re building one of the boats there, that should be here. I’m going there in a couple of days to start recreating those boats. But its then that boat will become representative of them and their crafts and of using the crafts that are around...

...we’ve found women who make wonderful basketry there, and then going to Babylon from Anbar, to Elda and then having another trip from Elda to Basra and the South.

Bringing in... we’re working with the Universities...

So, we’re having students and they are working with... also on oral history and architectural students. So, introducing this, because we don’t have any Iraqi... a tradition of maritime. Maritime heritage, nor do we have a... of vernacular architecture, you know. So, we are... we are trying to introduce these as subjects.

And to facilitate because the Iraqi Universities are really... recreating themselves after all these decades of war and problems...and they... you know all of their libraries were looted and burnt. So, this... as much as we can in our small way, we want to be able to facilitate those disciplines that can... that are mutually useful with this project.

So, to have... I’d love to see a tradition of youth in Iraq going on boat trips...you know from the North to the South.

And a beautiful output of the Safina Projects is the recent opening in Hawaii of the maritime centre. Can you tell us just a bit more about that because I think it would be a really beautiful way to end?

Well I think... well yes, and I do need to mention that you know the work... this work that we have been doing has been supported and very gratefully so. It couldn’t have happened without the support of the British Council, the Cultural Protection Fund, the Marine Network.
So, we are really fortunate in having been picked up and supported by academic as well as institutional support, as well as local and friends of mine, you know that have done it.

So, I mean its amazing the support we have received, and it couldn’t have happened without that. So, with that in Oware, in this.., which is between [S.L. Guerna], that’s a confluence of the Tigris Euphrates River, with the Marshes, and Tibias is in between and Medina. That was historically but in the Marshes, but on the edge of the Marshes and it was marshland that had canals et cetera. Now it’s dry.

It used to have I think something like 2,000 workshops, boat building workshops, now they make metal, they’re metalworkers now in that area. But we’ve found the families that built the boats that were documented by people like Thesseger, you know there, you know and its really interesting because when I went there first and I showed them pictures of the boats that I wanted to recreate they not only knew what the boats were, but they could name the people that had made the individual boats.

CH  Oh.

RS  You know so the boats were... were so unique, each one, that I’d consider them art works in themselves, because they... they could see the individual maker in the form of the boat. So, we built with them 7 marauders, (Unclear) around from 11 metres, 10 metres... No 11 metres, and 10 metres, these are Shepstone, war canoes, marauders, they’re the... you know they’re the Rolls Royce’s of their time.

You know they have been overtaken now by SUV’s (laughs), you know. Yeah. So, we’ve recreated 3 of those as well as smaller canoes and experimental canoes. So, we’re looking as well as... as the morph... you know the historical morphology of those canoes, how you know that shape because we have these canoes represented in the British Museum in models, you know from war, and they’re the same shape exactly. But you know we’re looking to see how they would have developed over time.

And, so I’ve been working in that since July, since July, June, July. And now they have sort of owned it. They’ve taken that and owned it and set up a whole area, sort of heritage, maritime heritage centre. We’ve built a boat yard and now we’re looking to sustain it and having a celebration in the Tigris in the Marshes tomorrow, after tomorrow.

CH  Great, well that’s fantastic and I hope everything goes well in the next set of regions and for the rest of the Safina Projects. Thank you so much Rashad...

RS  Thank you very much.

CH  ...for this conversation.

RS  Thank you.

CH  It was fascinating and I hope for the conversation today and thank you for our audience for listening.

RS  It was my pleasure speaking with you. Thank you very much for this.

END