

'INCĒNSUM' EXHIBITION OPENS

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MUSCAT: The National Museum on Wednesday inaugurated the 'Incensum' exhibition under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd Al Said, Assistant Secretary General for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers.

The exhibition is organised in cooperation with the Italian Embassy in the Sultanate of Oman and the (Perfumme) Foundation in Turin. It was established in 2017, intending to promote the culture of scent by organising high-level cultural events.

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Jamal Hassan Al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, said: The exhibition "Incensum" embodies the historical value of the frankincense tree, as it represents a bridge to communicate with the civilisations of the ancient world, where the trade convoys moved on different paths.

Long-distance trade in frankincense was ongoing by the 3rd millennium BCE and included links to Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley Civilisation and ancient Egypt. In recognition of the importance of the frankincense trade across the ages, four sites have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list: Al-Baleed, Khor Rori (Sumhuram), Shisr (Ubar) and Wadi Dawkah.

The exhibition illustrates artefacts loaned from the Italian Republic and Omani antiquities that bear witness to ancient traditions dating back thousands of years, and highlights the continuity of Omani-Italian relations through ages, embodied by trade caravans carrying precious frankincense and spices as popular consumer goods in the Western world.

On her turn, Federica Favi, Italian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, confirmed that the "Incensum" coincided with the sixth Italian Kitchen Week to highlight the relationship between delicious taste and pleasant aromas, as frankincense is a major component of delicious meals.

Meanwhile, Dr. Nora Araba Haddad, Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in the Sultanate of Oman commented: "We pay respect to this tree, whose species is found only in this region, and because of which trade and cultural exchange flourished throughout history which shows us the importance of preserving the biodiversity". She added, "The exhibition is in line with this year's World Food Day theme, which highlights how a good environment provides a better life."

For her part, Roberta Sonzato, curator of the exhibition "Incensum" from the Italian side, said: "The exhibition was inspired by the deepest meanings of incense, as frankincense enjoyed a high status in Roman society in the Tsarist court and aristocratic families. It was as precious as gold, and it became a sacred religious symbol for Christianity." It is worth noting that the National Museum participated in the "Incensum" exhibition in the Italian version, which was hosted by the Archeology Museum in Turin during 2020. The National Museum participated with 9 artefacts related to the Omani scent culture, including the oldest incense burner discovered in the Sultanate of Oman and estimated to be about 4500 years old, discovered in the Ras Al-Jinz area, and ceremonial and ritual incense burners, and a frankincense scraping tool, in addition to an incense case.