

Facebook First: Arabic Interactive Novel

By Gerald Loftus, 2013



The concept: write a novel, with "Zohra," James McBey's 1952 painting at the Legation as its centerpiece. Zohra is stolen from the Legation, which leads to... well, you'll have to read the novel.

The medium: Facebook, interactive. Readers react, comment, influence subsequent chapters. The language: Arabic, making this the first Arabic Facebook interactive novel.

Not bad for Tangier journalist Abdelouahid Stitou (above at the Legation with journalists from Moroccan 2M TV). The book, still visible on Facebook (in Arabic), is out now in print, and last night "ZohraLiza" (a reference to Zohra's reputation as the "Moroccan Mona Lisa") was

presented to a capacity audience at TALIM.

Sponsored by a Moroccan social action [association "Centre-Ajial" \("Generations"\)](#), the audience of Facebook Generation Tanjavis peppered author Stitou with questions about plot, characters, and the process of book writing in 2013 Morocco. Even though Stitou is a respected local journalist with contacts in the world of publishing, he encouraged budding writers to be imaginative, and to consider alternate outlets like Facebook and the web. Breaking into the publishing world is difficult even for the likes of Stitou: the print version of "ZohraLiza" is self-published.

We're delighted that James McBey's 1952 painting has inspired this publishing first, and that it is a Tangier native who is helping bring "Zohra" to the attention of new audiences. He is set to present his book in Brussels – home to a sizeable Moroccan expatriate population, largely from Tangier and the Rif – on his next appearance.

Original blog article can be found at: