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SUBJECT: REMBRANDT IN OMAN

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard Schmierer, Ambassador, Department of State,

Embassy Muscat; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

1. (U) During the month of Ramadan, Oman hosted an exhibit of Rembrandt etchings, the first time his works have been publicly exhibited in the Middle East. Dr. Abdulrahman al-Salimi, editor for "Tolerance" magazine and nephew to H.E. Sheikh Abdullah bin Muhammed al-Salimi, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, organized the event under the sponsorship of the Salimi family library. There were over 100 original etchings in a heavily guarded hotel ballroom that was open to the public daily throughout the month. Abdulrahman told poloff that the exhibit was a success and that over 7000 people viewed the exhibit.

2. (C) Comment: It is unusual to see an art exhibit in an Islamic country that includes the display of the human form, as conservative Islamic scholars oppose such art. It is even more surprising when that exhibit is sponsored by the library of the Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, effectively giving it his personal endorsement. Oman is unique in that its formal religious

establishment is often out in front on religious freedom, tolerance, and diversity issues. End Comment.  
Schmierer

