

FOUNDER & MASTER DYER

Mohamed Ghassen Nouira

Argaman

Royal Purple, Reborn

Reviving Tyrian Purple — the lost dye of Carthage

In 1993, a history-class anecdote about a dye that once forged empires took root in the mind of a fourteen-year-old in Carthage. Fourteen years later, on the same shore, he found the answer oozing from a cracked murex shell.

THE JOURNEY

Tyrian purple — extracted from the glands of predatory Muricidae sea snails — was the most coveted luxury good of the ancient world: a dye so rare it crowned emperors, cloaked Cleopatra's royal barge, and was restricted to imperial use under penalty of death in Byzantium. Production had been lost for centuries.

Working from the same Carthaginian coastline where the dye was first perfected in the 2nd millennium BC, Nouira spent nearly two decades reverse-engineering it — tracking how lunar phases and light exposure shift the raw secretion through a spectrum of blues and violets before it sets as true imperial purple. The result is the world's largest catalogued collection of authentic Carthaginian purple extracts: more than 100 pigments, indexed by blend and light exposure.

"As many shades of purple as there are stars hanging from the heavens."

30+	100+	6	2022
YEARS PURSUING THE CRAFT	CATALOGUED PIGMENTS	COUNTRIES EXHIBITED	ARGAMAN FOUNDED

THE MISSION

Argaman — launched in 2022 as the world's first dyeing company dedicated entirely to Royal purple from murex — exists to keep an artisanal lineage alive in an age of synthetic, automated production. Nouira has hosted visitors from every continent at his Carthage workshop, and partners with museums, universities, and cultural institutions worldwide to bring the craft to new audiences, including school programs designed to show children that rigorous, independent self-study can rediscover what history left behind.

SELECTED MILESTONES

1993

First encounters the story of Tyrian purple in a history class, age 14.

Sep 2007	Discovers a cracked murex shell oozing purple on the shores of Carthage — the start of the research.
2009–2013	Produces first blue pigment from <i>H. trunculus</i> ; begins dyeing trials with dried murex glands.
2015–2016	First public exhibition, Bardo National Museum, as part of the Cart'Art project (two-year run).
2018	Djerba: workshop for the German archaeological mission under Prof. Stefan Ritter (LMU Munich), ~50 historians and archaeologists from four countries attending. Brussels: week-long "Du pourpre au pourpre" symposium, workshops alongside honoree Dominique Cardon.
2019	Workshop for the crew of the Phoenicia ship ahead of their Atlantic crossing aboard a reconstructed Phoenician vessel.
2020	Develops the alternation technique — sequential blending of fresh murex juices from two or three species to produce extracts ranging from amethyst to deep clotted-blood purple.
Mar 2022	Argaman launches — the world's first dyeing company dedicated entirely to Royal purple from murex.
2023	British Museum: contributes shells, dyed fabrics, and extracts to <i>Luxury and Power: Greece to Persia</i> . American School of Tunis: live-dye workshops for sixth graders. Djerba: second workshop with Prof. Stefan Ritter, including a live dye-vat demonstration.
Apr 2024	Permanent exhibition of Carthaginian purple extracts at the Abguss Museum, Munich, with Dr. Stefan Ritter (Institute of Classical Archaeology, LMU Munich).
Sep 2024	Geneva: collaboration with Ateliers Héritier (art restoration specialists) reconstructing imperial purple and royal blue dye vats, and field research precipitating pigments with kaolin, murex lime, cuttlefish bone, alum, and other historical mediums — 16 samples tested for ancient purpurissum production methods. Lecture and live workshop at MAMCO, Geneva.
Apr 2025	Live demonstrations at the ancient site of Kerkouane and the port of Bizerte (Hippo Acra), national patrimony month, attended by Tunisia's Minister of Cultural Affairs and the regional governor.
Jan 2026	Exhibit with the Southern Minnesota Museum of Natural History, pairing Argaman's extracts with lapis lazuli, azurite, malachite, and cochineal — built for rural school outreach.
Mar 2026	Launches Empyrex , Argaman's online platform with a full color chart of 100+ extracts and ordering for North American clients.
Apr–Jun 2026	Exhibitions and collaborations span the WMB Weinviertel Museum (Austria), the Museum of Plaster Casts of Ancient Art (Munich, with Dr. Stefan Ritter's Meninx project), the Qatari Book Fair, and a permanent installation at the Archaeological Museum of Nice, unveiled during European Archaeology Days 2026.
Argaman has been featured by Reuters, Middle East Eye, The Arab Weekly, and Arab News, among other international outlets.	
Argaman — Royal Purple Dyeing, Carthage, Tunisia Empyrex.io	