

## Local

# Kuwaiti artist evokes social awareness, activism through contemporary miniatures

## Rashid uses historic style in art 'close to our identity'



KUWAIT: 'The Spread of Panic' miniature deals with COVID-19 chaos. The artwork is owned by the Khaleeji Art Museum. — KUNA photos



'On the Demolition of Al-Sawaber' documents the fall of the housing project.



'Al-Hakim (The Wise One) and the Plague' focuses on the battle against the coronavirus.

KUWAIT: At first glance, miniatures created by artist Dana Al-Rashid seem to belong to a different era; however, with a keen eye on details, one cannot help but notice the contemporary aesthetics, evoking a sense of social awareness and activism on significant issues in Kuwait. From the documentation of now-demolished modern heritage architectures, the critique of social issues, to the coronavirus pandemic, Rashid's miniatures captured such realities with the ancient art made anew.

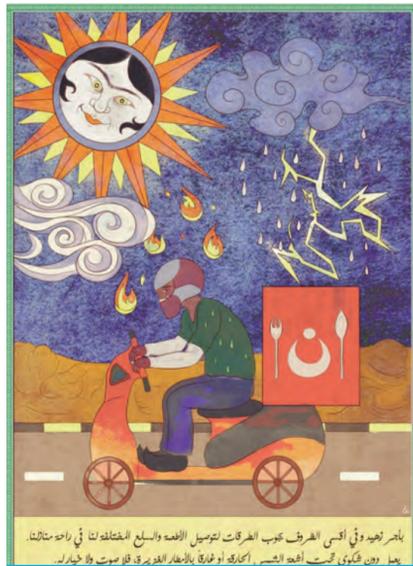


Dana Al-Rashid

In an interview, Rashid said that she began drawing miniatures in 2020 with her work featured in the digital Khaleeji Art Museum (KAM) and elsewhere. KAM, founded by Emiratis Manar and Sharifah Al-Hinai in May 2020, is the first digital museum that promotes and supports the work of Gulf artists in the region. Commenting on her artistic choice, Rashid indicated, "I felt like using a historic style that is close to our own identity," adding that with emulating Islamic miniatures - an art form flourishing in the 13th century - people here would feel a sense of belonging and connection. On the subjects of her miniatures, Rashid, who also posts art at the @kw.miniature Instagram account, said that the work touched on several topics ranging from documentation to critique.

### 'Demolition of Al-Sawaber'

In her miniature "On the Demolition of Al-Sawaber" — displayed at the "Architecture of Memory" (https://khaleejiartmuseum.com/Architecture-of-Memory-Digital-English) virtual gallery from September 29, 2021 to March 31, 2022 — Rashid said that there seemed to be a misconception about the idea of historic buildings. "People think that a building has to be made or built out of mudbricks and has to be built in the pre-oil era in order for it to be valuable. This is incorrect," argued Rashid, adding that the post-oil era saw development in many fields including architec-



A miniature depicting the grueling working conditions for deliverymen.

ture. In the case of Al-Sawaber Complex, the artist indicated that activists exhausted all possible legal means to halt the demolition of the facility built in the early 1980s for housing. Architects proposed ways to transform and renovate Al-Sawaber into artistic and commercial spaces to persevere it.

On "The Last Skate" miniature — depicting in an artistic sense, the last day of the Kuwait Ice Skating Rink — she mentioned that many people confused activists' motives towards halting the demolition of the facility as being emotional and not fact-based. "It



'The Last Skate' honors the Kuwait Ice Skating Rink before its demolition.

(the rink) has a historic value," affirmed Rashid, an architect by profession at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) tasked with historic buildings preservation. The ice skating rink, constructed in the late 1970s in cooperation with France, opened as a facility in the early 1980s to cater to the leisure needs of the population. It was considered as one

of the first facilities of its kind in the Middle East. As part of her job, Rashid took measurements of the ice skating rink before its demolition. She decided to commemorate the memory of the building by beauti-

fully drawing the very last ice skating session.

### COVID-19 pandemic

Aside from documenting architectures, Rashid commented on current issues relating to social causes and the COVID-19 pandemic. In a miniature depicting a deliveryman battling the harsh weather, Rashid noted that people sometimes took such services for granted without thinking of the challenges facing employees of the service sector. Rashid stated, "I was trying to use a color scheme that is saturated and dark... I wanted also to portray the suffocating feeling that the driver(s) may feel when they are in this suit and in dire weather situations." She said that she was glad to hear that some legislations were in the works to help deliverymen avoid hardships and better their lives.

In her depiction of the coronavirus developments, Rashid put out several works of art including "The Al-Hakim (Wise One) and the Plague" and "The Spread of Panic," the latter work was acquired by the Khaleeji Art Museum for its permanent collection. The pandemic-themed miniatures developed in concept as the situation progressed, said Rashid, adding that she looked at the piece "The Wise One and the Plague" in a new light as more pandemic-related information was revealed. On the "Spread of Panic" miniature, she said, "I wanted to capture the alarm and the fear... how surreal it was to see when you go to the groceries or like to the Co-Ops and see how many items are out of stock."

On creating miniatures, she revealed that each piece started with a pen-and-paper rudimentary sketch, which then is scanned to a computer. Afterwards, the grueling process begins, taking around 20 to 50 hours depending on the piece. The perks of working in digital media is the ability to adjust the art on command and the variety of color schemes, said Rashid, revealing that she is planning to create miniatures using regular tools.

Regarding the reaction towards her art, Rashid indicated that the feedback was mostly positive and very welcoming, stressing the need for more support within Kuwait to help push artists' visions. She said that the miniatures project had been successful, because it was impactful and was not detached from reality, adding that people liked artwork that "gives their opinions a voice" and asserted that art and activism could change people's opinions on matters of crucial importance. — KUNA

## Amir opens Assembly term amid...

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political stability, adding the dialogue has resulted in an agreement to extend hands of cooperation. He said the government aims at reforming the economy and diversifying sources of income, but without undermining the interests of low-income people. The prime minister stressed on his government's resolve to continue to fight corruption.

During the session, the Assembly refused to form four temporary panels, including one for dealing with the affairs of stateless people or bedoons, after some MPs insisted that such issues should be tackled by the interior and defense committee. The Assembly also refused to form a temporary committee for oil affairs, with some MPs saying such an important sector must be debated by the financial and economic affairs committee.

The Assembly also unanimously elected opposi-

tion MPs Farz Al-Mutairi and Osama Al-Shaheen as secretary and observer of the Assembly respectively. Ghanem then adjourned the session until Nov 9. Before then, it is highly expected that HH the Amir will pardon a number of opposition activists, including former MPs exiled in Turkey for over three years, as part of the national dialogue. It is also highly expected that the government will resign to pave the way for forming a new Cabinet, taking into account the outcome of the national dialogue.

During the session, there was a protest by opposition MP Hamdan Al-Azemi over why the speaker had deleted a number of grillings against the prime minister and several Cabinet ministers. Ghanem said he took the responsibility, along with the Assembly office, to delay the grillings until the next session, hoping that something good will happen as a result of the national dialogue.

Opposition MP Saifi Al-Saifi had called for delaying the election of committees because the government is reportedly planning to resign, and accordingly the election of panels should be held in the presence of the new Cabinet. The speaker however said the elections should not be linked to the future of the Cabinet.

domain awareness, strengthen deterrence, and foster partnerships.

It marked the first time the US Navy was integrating unmanned surface vessels with manned ships at sea in the Middle East, and the first time with a regional partner testing in Gulf water. "We're putting a couple of unmanned surface vessels called MANTAS T-12 in the water," he told AFP, as two ships from the Royal Bahrain Naval Force stood by. "This will help us understand how we can use these vessels to enhance maritime domain awareness, which is critically important to maintaining regional stability and security."

Bahrain overlooks the Strait of Hormuz - a passage less than 40 km wide at its narrowest point, and where US and Iranian naval vessels have faced off in the past. In February, US President Joe Biden's administration pulled an aircraft carrier out of the Gulf in a sign of potentially easing tensions with Iran, which had soared under former president Donald Trump. — AFP

## COVID cases, deaths rising again in Europe

PARIS: COVID infections and deaths are on the rise again in Europe, with Russia, Ukraine and Romania registering the highest fatalities on the continent, an AFP tally showed yesterday. About 1,672,000 new cases have been registered on the continent over the past week, an average of about 239,000 per day. That was an increase of 18 percent on the previous week, according to AFP's data, compiled from official sources from 52 countries and territories in the region.

The increase in cases was a 60 percent jump from August and September, when there were about 150,000 new registered cases per day, the data showed. In the region, 42 countries saw an increase

in new infections over the past week, with only seven countries clocking a drop. The worst affected countries in terms of total new cases are Ukraine, Hungary and Poland. When per capita infections rates are taken into account, Latvia, Estonia and Georgia are hardest hit. Kosovo, Luxembourg and Malta have seen the sharpest declines.

The current numbers remain below the daily record for the region, which registered an average of 284,000 cases per day between Nov 2 and Nov 8, 2020. But Europe now accounts for 55 percent of all new cases globally. Deaths are also on the rise. AFP data showed an average of 3,120 daily deaths on the continent in the previous seven days, up 16 percent from last week.

It's the first time deaths in the region have exceeded 3,000 daily deaths since May, though current numbers are still far from the record of an average of 5,735 deaths every day from January 14 to 20 this year. More than a third of the deaths recorded in Europe are currently in Russia, which reported 1,051 deaths on average every day, followed by Ukraine (485) and Romania (420). — AFP

## US, Bahrain conduct first...

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Since February, Iran and the Zionist entity have been accused of engaging in what analysts have called a "shadow war", in which vessels linked to each nation have come under attack in waters around the Gulf in tit-for-tat exchanges.

In August, Iran rejected Western allegations its drones were used in a deadly tanker attack off the coast of the United Arab Emirates. The Islamic republic accused the Zionist entity of concocting the "scenario" in a bid to undermine it. US Navy spokesman Tim Hawkins said yesterday's drill with Bahrain - dubbed "New Horizon" - was part of efforts to help enhance maritime



MOSCOW: A serviceman of Russia's emergencies ministry disinfects Moscow's Savelovsky railway station yesterday amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. — AFP