

What's On

PET

PALACE

people & their pets

Look out for the Arab Times series, the Pet Palace, and read about how people and their animals enrich each other's lives.

The Palace welcomes submissions by our readers. If you'd like to tell the world about your pet, send us a photograph and accompanying article for publication.

— Editor



By Iddris Seidu
Arab Times Staff

He is an outcast, who nobody wants to see. He has no name. Then again what's the use of a name for someone whom nobody wants to call! A nameless unwanted kitten, subsisting out of garbage cans and rodents in abandoned corners of buildings!

He lurks in the darkness of the stairwell as it is less frequented and the approach of any human will be foreboded by the hollow footfalls echoing through it.

It's as if the cat knows that people don't like him. Whenever someone walks past it, he ducks his face, looking down. Kids like to play with him and invite him clicking their tongues to play with them.

But he is not interested. When they persist to the point of irksomeness, pulling his tail and throwing things at him, he gives out an angry snarl, bearing his fangs and unleashing his claws.

The kids flee cooing on thrilled feet. But they return with more antics, and the poor kitten has to shift to some other location. He vanishes under a car, where the children can't hound him.

The garbage cans at the staircase of each floor take care of the kitten's hunger. He would scrounge at the garbage cans, tearing through the plastic bags for a few morsels of food.

Exploring five floors everyday keeps him satisfied. A few kind souls in the apartment building leave some food near the cans for

him. However, the Harris doesn't approve of it as it messes up the staircase and redoubles his cleaning chores.

His white coat is dirty and has grey patches on it. Hard living has left some marks on his face. One of his ears is clipped at the tip as if bitten off in a street brawl.

The light of the camera flash made his eyes glow like electric bulbs. He hotfooted down the stairs hugging his darling darkness, and away from the insulting light that mocked his frailties.

He is tired of the ominous laughter of the children who are loath to leave him alone. The grownups on the contrary are too rude. The most endearing sounds coming from grownups are shoos asking him to clear out. The question is: Is he invading our space, or are we his?

Kuwait

click

Latest

Continued from Page 24

Storytime at ACC 3:30 pm on scheduled Saturdays — Nov 7, Nov 21, Dec 5, Dec 19, Jan 9, 2016, Jan 23, Feb 6, Feb 20, March 5, March 19, April 2, April 16 May 7, May 21.

Children's Art Workshops: The Children's Art Workshop (CAW) is for children ages 9-12; CAW Jrs is for children 6-8. The programmes are often combined, with slight adjustments in the projects to ensure that every participant is challenged in a creative way. In addition to introducing the children to multiple aspects of Islamic art and culture, the programme also includes activities that require the participants to further develop leadership, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills.

The sessions are open to the public and are free.

However, you do need to register your child/children by emailing info@darmuseum.org.kw

Sessions schedule through December 9:30-11:00 am at the Amricani Cultural Centre.

Nov 7: Movement in Art, part 1; Nov 14: Movement in Art, part 2; Nov 21: Movement in Art, part 2; Nov 28: Field trip to Al Shaheed Park; Dec 5: Park-based poster project.

Writing for Children: Writing for Children is a programme for 8-12 year olds, incorporating many aspects of the successful "Writing to Read" programme. During each six week programme, the participants will write and illustrate a story for children. The Carnegie Corporation completed a study a few years ago which concluded that increasing how much children write "improves how well they read." In addition, the children will have to figure out the best way to create pictures that help tell their story.

Each meeting will run from 3:30-4:30 pm. At the end of the six week session, two copies of a compilation of all the completed stories will be made for the children's library. In addition, one copy of each completed story will be printed and bound for the child.

Writing for Children — Amricani Cultural Centre
Saturdays 3:30-4:30 pm
Nov 7, Nov 14, Nov 21, Nov 28, Dec 5.

CS 21 CAW Tots activities begin:

CAW Tots, Amricani Cultural Centre's programme for potty-trained children ages 3-5, has proven to be impressive or rather, the children participating have proven to be impressive. The CAW Tots idea is to take one subject and concentrate on it for six weeks, utilizing art, children's books, and discussions to reinforce key ideas. All these sessions are built around the Harvard University Graduate School of Education Artful Thinking Palette: observing and describing, comparing and connecting, questioning and investigating, finding complexity, exploring viewpoints, and reasoning. As a result, the kids, just 3-5, are not just glancing at art, but really looking at it, thinking about it, talking about it and then, being inspired by it. All sessions are held at the Amricani Cultural Centre from 9:30-11:00 am.

Session One:
Nov 7, Nov 14
What is art from the Islamic world?
Nov 21, Nov 28, Dec 5

Nov 8

Indian cultural evening: The Embassy of India in coordination with the National Council for Culture Arts & Letters (NCCAL) is organizing a cultural evening of Bhangra Group led by Daljit Singh on Sunday, Nov 8, 2015 at 7:00 pm at Shamiya Theatre (opposite Shamiya Cooperative) and on Monday, Nov 9, 2015 at 7:00 pm at the Indian Embassy auditorium (Diplomatic Enclave). The visit of the group to Kuwait is sponsored by ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations), New Delhi.

Nov 13

FOCC Calendar of Events: FOCC (Friends of CRY Club) announces the calendar of events for the year 2015-16:
CRYchess: Nov 13, 2015 (0900 to 1700); CRYwalk (Mahboula) Nov 27, 2015 (0900 to 1130); CRYwalk (Abassiya) Dec 18, 2015 (0900 to 1130); CRYwalk (Salmiya) Jan 22, 2016 (0900 to 1130); CRYcket Apr 8, 2016 (0630 to 1830).

All events are on Fridays. Notices and press releases will be issued approx. 1 month in advance. But don't wait, get yourselves in the training gear, right away. Contact No: 99364073, 99578073, 66810338, 97990162, 66204295.

Continued on Page 27



Flamingos settle throughout the year at the Kuwaiti shores, particularly the Shuwaikh beaches which turn into their local habitat. (KUNA — Ghazi Qafaf)

New Look

Old houses were simple, organic and functional

Zahra aims to preserve traditional architecture

This is the second in a series of articles on Zahra Ali Baba, a young architect and chief curator of the Temporary Research Consortium.

— Editor

By Lidia Qattan
Special to the Arab Times

Architecture is much more than the mechanic of building a structure, it is a whole set of cultural, spiritual and historical values linking a people in time and space; it is an art that underlies the framework of a strong defined development from its simplest form to its highest attainment reflecting a period in the history of a nation, or of an era in the history of humanity.

An architectural structure becomes a work of art when it gives visible form to an ideal or principle on which the life of an institution depends. Even in its most humble structure: a mosque, a castle, a tower or a house, each is the visible sign of human activity that embodies a spiritual, artistic quality of its own.

The development of architecture is dictated by the means available as well as by the prevailing climatic conditions. In Kuwait as in the whole Gulf area in which there is no local timber or stone for building, pre-oil architecture developed to suit both the climate and the local means. Houses were built of coral-rocks, lib (a mixture of straws and mud to a binding consistency) for mortar, and mangrove for roofing, the only imported material.

The old day's architecture was a traditional art handed down from father to son. The local architect, the "Ostad" made use of no blueprints or sophisticated tools during building, yet he often-created beautiful and sophisticated structures. Good examples are: Bait Al Beder (close to the National Museum), Bait Dixon, the Diwanyah Al Shemlan, Bait Jaber Al Ghanim (Now the Free Atelier), the Diwanyah of Mullah Saleh, and Bait Al Ghanim, all

built on the waterfront of Kuwait city. Incidentally they are the only remnants of a pre-oil architecture in Kuwait preserved for posterity.

Ingenuity

Studying their structure Zahra can only imagine the ingenuity of indigenous architects in building their town in those days, of which nothing remain but the few buildings mentioned and the fading memories in the mind of old timers. The few black and white photos of the town only give a limited glimpse of the old town. I had the privilege of coming to Kuwait when a large portion of the old Kuwait was still existing and many people were still living in their humble homes, so I had a good glimpse of the way they used to live and of the town they built through ingenuity and common wisdom.

Though the old Kuwait town had been partially destroyed and the new city planning was well underway one could still see the distinguishing urban-features born of logic and common sense in the old architecture. Humble though were the means with which the town had been built it possessed a distinguishing urban-architecture, dignified in its ratio and proportion as result of logic and common sense in building it. Houses were simple, organic and functional, with satisfactory aesthetic qualities; decorations in the interior or exterior of buildings consisted of simple motives visually compelling and pleasing to the beholder.



Lidia Qattan

Her involvement in project needing restructuring made her acutely aware of the cultural loss her country has been suffering since mid fifties when the old Kuwait town was systematically destroyed to make way for the new city

planning. At the time of the demolishing concerned young architects, writers and men of culture tried to stop it before it was too late, but their protests and warning fell on deaf ears until nothing remained of the old town but the few remnants above mentioned, which belong to families of the elite merchant class considered worthy of preservation.

Zahra's nostalgia for the place of her happy childhood since she left Ahmadi, while making her to go back now and then to see the old house and relive the memory, her own disappointment in seeing that the house in which she used to live has been destroyed, makes her yet more aware of the nostalgic feelings old timers in Kuwait for their old town, for the firij in which they were born and grew up, for the Bara'a in which they used to play, for the tortuous narrow streets in which as young boys they used to run their goat or their sheep to the meeting place early in the morning for the shepherd to take them to pasture out of town.

With the disappearance of their old town they are missing that sense of belonging that rooted them to their ancestral past; for they have nothing tangible to hold on to or to show to their children and grandchildren of how life used to be in those frugal days.

Heritage

Even of their most proud historical heritage, the city wall their forefathers built in the summer of 1920, to guard off an Akhwan attack, no longer exists, what remains are few gates, which having been restructured don't give them that genuine architectural feature and human touch of the people who built it. With nothing to hold on to the roots of their ancestral past they also have lost that strong sense of community that welded them in the past.

Through researching on the architectural background of her country Zahra can visualize the logistics involve in the building process of those days and admire the instinctive capacity of old



Zahra Ali Baba (right), with a colleague at the workplace.

architects in the handling of space in their almost mathematically calculated proportion of open to solid surfaces in fighting off heat and sandstorms. Though the material they used in building was humble, the houses they created were fairly durable, most importantly they provided insulation of at least ten degree centigrade from the intense heat of summer and the cold of winter. A simple house could be completed within one week. Helping the "Ostad" were groups of men some specialized in digging coral rocks from the sea, others digging clay, still others were transporting the material to the building site where the lib was prepared. Lime was extracted on location burning the clay with household rubbish collected in a pit at the end of every district in town. If a poor man needed to add one room or two to his house, all his neighbors joined to help him under the direction of the Ostad; within one day the room was finished and painted with lime. The songs the builders sang to lend unison to their work, nowadays form part of the Kuwaiti folklore.

The first departure from the traditional architectural character in its simplicity of form and honesty of structural expression took place in

Kuwait at the turn of the twentieth century, when Sheikh Mubarak ordered a two-storey building to be erected in down-town to hold his daily audience. For the first time imported sun-dried bricks and cement were used in the construction; the architectural design itself was an innovation in its simplicity. Subsequently three more impressive buildings appeared: the Seif Palace, Sheikh Khaza'al's Palace (known as Bait Al Ganim, which Zahra and her team have been recently engaged in digging and restoration), and Sheikh Khaza'al's Diwanyah, which had been converted into an ethnographical museum in the early sixties, the first ever in the country and was destroyed during the Iraqi invasion of 1990-91. All these buildings were a good example of Iran-Iraq influence.

A wholesale departure from local architecture was witnessed in the fifties and sixties in the country when the oil revenues began pouring in and people's life style began changing dramatically. What emerged was a jumble of free styles, an architectural gymnastics fitting nowhere in the encyclopedia of factors concerning latitude, physical conditions and most importantly Kuwait's heritage!

Many of the buildings, especially private villas were devoid of architectural substance or significance, with no relation to the sun, to the seasons, to social mores or to the science of architecture, let alone to the art of design and construction! The mistaken sense of monumentality produced large and costly constructions, whose usable space was pony in comparison to the volume of the building itself.

In the seventies the contorted structural gymnastics of the fifties and early sixties were replaced by an architecture focused on greater simplicity and honesty of expression, what remains of this architecture are some buildings Zahra is now striving to preserve.

To be continued