



دار الأثر الإسلامي

Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah The al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait

# Dar blows the dust off museums

‘Elephant in the City’ takes on the elephant in the room ... a puppet purge for Article 153

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Photos by Rizalde Cayanan, courtesy of DAI



Above: Exploring creativity by blowing glass in mini sessions conducted by Yadawi. Right: Free books on the wisdom tree in the big yard.

Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah marked International Museum Day at its Yarmouk Cultural Centre with a host of creative events and fun-filled activities that drew in young and old on a Saturday evening to highlight the importance of museums as institutions that serve society and its development. Attendees could experience a shadow puppet show or try their hand at some green decoupage with Yadawi conducting a “Soda Pop Art – Upcycle & Decopatch workshop”. Other ways to explore the world of creativity was by making beads or blowing some Glass in mini sessions conducted by Yadawi. In a special collaboration with Q8 bookstore, kids and adults were treated to a free book from ‘The wisdom tree’ in the big yard. On selecting a number, they would search through books suspended beautifully from the tree to find their match.

Mustafa Al Sabagh. The art production was handled by Dr Ibrahim Salam and the music and songs were the work of by Alfred Jameel and Adnan Bales.

Hooda Shawa, while introducing the show stated, “Once upon a time, before cinema screens or television screens or iPhones or iPads, there was a screen made of white cloth. Behind it was a source of light and moving cut out figures made of leather. This was the oldest form of theatre and storytelling – shadow puppet theatre. We are using a traditional art form to tell a new story, that of an elephant in the city.”

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) established International Museum Day in 1977 to increase public awareness of the role of museums in the development of society, and it has been steadily gaining momentum ever since. In 2018, International Museum Day garnered record-breaking participation with more than 40,000 museums hosting events in some 152 countries.

According to a press release by ICOM, International Museum Day



Right: The exhibition featured artworks in various media by local and regional artistes as well as by architecture students of Kuwait University

Below: ‘Elephant in the City’, a shadow puppet show by Taqa Productions in collaboration with Wamdha Puppetry from Cairo.

Among other cultural activities, visitors learned and experience the ritualized form of making and drinking coffee as it’s practiced in Ethiopia by participating in a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony. Pop-up shops like that of local artist Farah Bastaki featuring her striking ‘Andalusian Collection’ delighted visitors.

Another main feature of the event was the opening of the annual Abolish 153 Art Exhibition that aims to raise awareness on women’s rights issues in Kuwait. The exhibition, which is being hosted at the Yarmouk Cultural Centre for the rest of the week, features paintings created by a group of Kuwaiti and Arab artists in the hopes of promoting justice and equality between men and women.

The 5th edition of its annual fundraising exhibition also celebrates fourteen years since women obtained their political rights in Kuwait. The exhibition featured artworks in various media by local and regional artists as well as by architecture students from Kuwait University and two films made by students from the educational technology department at PAAET. Contributing artists included Abdullah Al Awadi, Aida Badr, Alia Mustafa Aref, Amani Althuwaini, Anas Alomaim, Anina von Winterfeld, Azza Alsharif, Bader Qabazard, Christine Hawath, Ghadah Alkandari, Fay Ibraheem, Fatima Kawtharani, Dr Jawaher Albader, Kerry Sellers, Majida Al Sabah, Maha Alasaker, Mai Al Moataz, Mohammed Omran, Mona Ruehle, Nab, Nevine Mattar, Omar Al Kaissi, Reza Doust, Sheikh Al Habshi, Shereen Audi, Somaya Abdulghani, Talal Hamadah, Thala Khair, Thomas Bosket, Venetia Norris, Warda Alkandari, Zahra Marwan and Zainab Qabazard.



Part of the Abolish 153 annual art exhibition.

2019, globally celebrated on May 18, will focus on the new roles of museums as active actors in their communities. ICOM believes that while preserving their primary missions – collecting, conservation, communication, research, exhibition – museums have transformed their practices to remain closer to the communities they serve. Today they look for innovative ways to tackle contemporary social issues and conflict and ICOM trusts that by acting locally, museums can also advocate and mitigate global problems, striving to meet the challenges of today’s society proactively. As institutions at the heart of society, museums have the power to establish dialogue between cultures, to build bridges for a peaceful world and to define a sustainable future.

As museums increasingly grow into their roles as cultural hubs, they are also finding new ways to honour their collections, their histories and their legacies, creating traditions that will have new meaning for future generations and relevance for an increasingly diverse contemporary audience at a global level. This transformation, which will have a profound impact on museum theory and practice, also forces us to rethink the value of museums and to question the ethical boundaries that define the very nature of our work as museum professionals. At once a focal point for the community and an integral part of a global network, museums offer a platform for translating local communities’ needs and views into a global context.



Right: Storytime at the International Museum Day. Below: Visitors learn the ritualized form of making and drinking coffee as practiced in Ethiopia.

