

THURAYA AI-BAQSAMI as a PAINTER

The Kuwaiti formative artist and writer, does not only define her work to the world through her Art, but her paintings are a manifestation of what women have achieved in the last decades. She has painted vividly the notion of the brutal Iraqi invasion to Kuwait in 1990 and the sufferings and nightmare that followed.

Her paintings like "Motherhood, Confusion, Freedom, Coming Sadness, Femininity, Waiting, Imaginary Barrier, Arabic Night etc." reflect concern for women in general. Her paintings convey mood and depth in a subtle way and the harsh realities for women are tones down to a placid quietness by concealing them in rich colors of purple, green and blue, ruled by a powerful imagination and a distinct style. Mrs. Al-Baqsami uses a variety of media and enjoys creating different bodies of work. Her paintings are generally done in acrylic whilst her print work uses relief print, linocut, collagraph, monoprint, screen print, etching and lithography.

In addition, she also produces drawing, illustrations and ink and print collages. Sketches are an essential part of her working process.

Thuraya Al-Baqsami has wielded the power of her free flowing drawings and the definition of her lines to the vision of symbolic expressionistic works. Her colors achieve a highly emotive, poetic quality and spiraling, spinning strokes build a mass of controlled, organic activity that is very impressive. She enjoys the power of imagination and transfers stories into art in a very distinctive manner.

Appears as a writer to rise above the prose of life, and does not set foot upon the deserted earth, burnt by the sun and the rich streets, that pulsates ostentation in the oil state of Kuwait. Thuraya releases an unmet directness, and sense of solidarity with everyone whose fate has been dominated by injustice and suffering. It has not stopped her curiosity about life and people, as equally it has not been a barrier to her fantasy - lively, full of colors and courage - inseparable features of her artistic and literary work.

She is an exceptionally sensitive compassionate and rebellious witness of the reality around. To see and not to be moved by what you see, to freely exist amidst the impossible and limitations of existence, to follow fleeting beauty and not to allow it to be extinguished in the mind. To be oneself and create - these are the determinants of her life credo, after all universal everywhere on earth.

Thuraya Al-Baqsami's artistic ability and writing is creative and sharp, while at the same time being the conveyor of artistic truth, the mirror into which contemporariness should glance being not divided into the borders of culture, gender and parts of the world. There have appeared many articles within Kuwait and the Gulf on the subject of the life and creativity of Thuraya Al-Baqsami.

In 1997 there appeared the first monograph in Arabic written by Dr. Barbara Michalak-Pikulska, Head of Arabic Department, Institute of Oriental Philology, The Jagiellonian University, Crakow, Poland, entitled 'Thuraya Al-Baqsami - Between a Brush and a Pen'. An attempt to systemize her literary workmanship as well as examining the significance of her artistic work.

It was chiefly meant to draw attention to Thuraya Al-Baqsemi's literary activity as she was in 1993 honored as the first woman with the prize of the Kuwaiti Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS). The prize was awarded in recognition of her book entitled 'Cellar Candles', while in 1997 she was awarded the State Award for Children's Literature for the book '*The Recollection of Small Kuwaiti Fatuma*'.

Prof. Dr. Miroslav Klivar, World Distributed University, Bruxelles (Belgium), In Honour of the Kuwaiti Artist and Writer Thuraya Al-Baqsemi during the Award giving ceremony on the occasion of the opening of her 40th Personal Exhibition at MIRO Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic on the 2nd of May 2001:

Meeting tradition, new ideology and seeking oneself is typical of the present Arabic and especially Islamic art. In this way we can characterize also the artwork of the Kuwaiti artist Thuraya Al-Baqsemi.

Her works have become part of the world graphic culture - her exhibits are shown in many countries of Europe, Asia, America; and she is represented in art collections of the USA, China, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, France etc.

Her works radiate the exotic world of Arabic and Islamic culture; the artist, however, breaks tradition in many ways, especially in the way of colour composition of the wall painting, and the way of acknowledgement of the author's signature on her works, which had not been always common in the history of this culture. Further on, we can follow the way how she links both figurative and abstract forms in her paintings, in spirit of modern art, overstepping thus the dogma of fear of picturing human beings, which is a sort of common feature. However, Thuraya Al-Baqsemi is very well aware of the fact that the figurative expression has been a frequent phenomenon in the Islamic art; for example, it is known in folk art where animal and human shapes appear.

It is well known that picturing human beings can be found in the history, too, as for example in the desert settlements of the Umajja caliphs.

The art of painter Thuraya Al-Baqsemi originates especially from the roots of Arabic art and culture. We shall not understand her works, if we do not know the specificity of this art. We look at pictures where the dominant role is played by script and ornament.

It is in close relation with the Islamic doctrine of tauhid (in Arabic "teuhid" means unity, monotheism). Tauhid represents the symbol of a unique God - Allah, and a man should manage the world created by Allah in harmony with the God's will. The muslim's mind is directed at the timeless existence of Allah.

It was the principle of tauhid that has influenced the abstraction and ornament, removed from the three-dimensional picturing and applying the maximum stylization of natural motives. In the structure of this ornament we can find both the repetition of particular elements, as well as the decoration-arabesque, which is based on connecting and disconnecting. We can find these arabesques in the minaret of Lednice in Moravia and they are familiar to us. However, in contrast to our concept of art, arabesque in the Arabic culture has also linked to the script.

This combination is characteristic of many buildings, applied art, ceramics, etc. It starts with the concept of Arabic script understood as the world of God and is inspired by the Arabic calligraphy - a beautiful handwriting. In this culture,

caligraphy has always been a noble art, and was practised even by some of the monarchs. In the works of Thuraya Al-Baqami we can also find her sense of plays (puns) caligrams, which are pictures from letters arranged in different ways. She also uses the mirror effect.

The artist also knows the Arabic shadow-plays. The aesthetic principles of symmetry and asymmetry here come alive side by side.

In the Koran, we can find two official terms: karim (noble) and taqwa (devoutness). These two terms are those which can express the substance of the art of the painter Thuraya Al-Baqami, whom we welcome in MIRO Gallery in Prague.