



Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 06, Issue 01, 2017, 21-31

Article Received: 16-12-2016

Accepted: 22-12-2016

Available Online: 11-01-2017

ISSN: 2167-9045 (Print), 2167-9053 (Online)

The Significance of Omani Identity in the Works of Omani Painters

Fakhriya Al-Yahyai¹

ABSTRACT

The issue of identity has attracted interest from many researchers in different fields. In contemporary practice in the visual arts, identity is a unique subject. Artists in Oman are fortunate to be able to rely on a rich cultural heritage, which enables them to produce work that is based on the unique Omani identity. In addition, there are concerns that the effects of globalization and the removal of geographical borders between nations will lead to the importation of Western styles and symbolism into Omani art. Where this has happened in other parts of the Arab world, some of the unique features of Arab principles and cultural beliefs have disappeared. Thus, this study aims to highlight the symbolism and significance of identity in the works of Omani painters. It investigates the role of Omani painters in preserving Omani identity by using a descriptive analysis method to examine a sample of Omani artwork. The results of this study show that Omani artists are involved in expressing their perceptions of identity in a variety of ways using a range of related symbols.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Identity, Oman, Omani Painters, Omani Fine Art Movement.

This is an open access article under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

1.0 Introduction

Many scholars in the field of arts and culture agree that identity is a rich subject for studying several contexts of contemporary artwork (Al Jamel, 1997; Hanafi, 1998; Al Sayed, 2000; Al Nisari, 2002, Porter, 2003; Al-Yahiayi & Al-Amri, 2006; Al Hadhrami, 2010; Albertson, 2011; Al-Yahyai, 2012; Al Zubairi, 2012; Al-Yahyai, 2013; Ameen, 2013; Jelekäinen, 2015). For example, Marshall (2007) argues that art can be used to connect civilizations and investigate cultural identity. Moreover, reviews of literature in the arts have shown that art mirrors artist's identity. Furthermore, Jelekäinen (2015) believes that art can lend visibility to our culture and identity tangible because we express ourselves, our ideas, and our feelings in the process of creating artwork. Art also helps us to understand the identities of other cultures, which are interconnected. In this context, art plays a major role in improving artists' understanding of their identity and their cultural heritage. Writing on this matter, Halverson (2010) confirms the role of

¹ Associate Professor and Head of Art Education, Sultan Qaboos University College of Education, Oman. E-mail: fakhriya@squ.edu.om

the arts in creating a positive relationship between art-making processes and young people's development.

On the other hand, in the Middle East there are many concerns about the effects of globalization on identity and the ability of artwork to show that identity. According to Al Hamad (2001) and Attayia (2002), there are several consequences of globalization in the Arab world. Concerns about the effects of globalization have led many researchers from various fields to investigate different approaches to conserving cultural identity. Ali (1996) confirms that Arab artists have started to return to their cultural roots and dig into their heritage; she notes that contemporary artists in the Middle East and in Muslim countries in other parts of the world are becoming increasingly more interested in their cultural identity, focusing on their artistic values and aesthetics. For instance, Al-Sadoun (1999) investigates the eclectic and diverse approaches of Iraqi artists and examines their endeavors to define their artistic identity.

Thus, this study aims to shed light on the symbols and significance of identity in the works of Omani painters by addressing the concept of identity, identifying the threat to Arab identities posed by globalization, and analyzing symbolism in Omani artwork to review the role of Omani artists in preserving Omani identity. Moreover, the contribution of this study lies in recording the experiences of Omani artists who focus on exploring identity and revealing their role in preserving Omani identity. The main findings of this study show that numerous contemporary artists in Oman are exploring identity in a variety of ways. It also finds that Omani identity can be visually explored through the use of symbols, such as women, traditional dance, landscape, historical buildings, and traditional dress.

This study has been divided into five sections. The first section deals with research methodology (descriptive analysis method). And the second section will cover the background of the study. The third section will present artists' role in conserving identity. The fourth part will present symbols of heritage and identity in the works of Omani painters. At the end the last section present the conclusion.

1.1 Methodology

To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher uses a descriptive analysis method to understand the contribution made by particular Omani painters by analyzing examples of their artwork. This is done by analyzing the symbols of Omani heritage that reflect signs of identity. The painters included in this study are part of the Omani arts movement and use Omani motifs in their work. The sample consists of eight artists and twenty-one paintings.

2.0 Background

From the beginning of the fine art movement in Oman, Omani artists tended to use symbols of identity and individual aspects of Omani heritage in their work. This not only reflects artists' awareness of the importance of this heritage but is a spontaneous outcome of what is available to them within the natural and cultural environment. Several types of heritage exist in works by Omani artists. White (2010) confirms this as follows: "Many artists depend on the landscape, wildlife along with everyday life to produce their artworks. In Oman, the landscape and aspects of cultural heritage are varied so that they provide stunning options for photographers and painters. Some of them produce artworks that tend to pure reality while others pursue an abstract form."

Some Arab critics and artists (Yousuf, 2008; Shahada, 2010; Al-Hanai, 2012; Abu-Zaid, 2013; Hameedh, 2013) believe that Omani heritage was a distinct feature of Oman's fine art until certain artists attempted to import symbols from other cultures. These artists spent time overseas, where they came into contact with other cultures and art forms. For example, Abu-Zaid (2013) confirms that, new technology became available to Arab artists. As a consequence, critics have called for a consolidation of Omani identity and demanded that artists do not move away from it or drift toward other identities.

This has increased awareness of Arabian heritage and identity and raised a number of related issues. It has generated a desire among some Omani artists to produce creative work that preserves Arabian identity, as its natural and cultural riches are considered to be the best sources of inspiration for Omani artists.

In spite of the concerns set out above and the call for the Arab world to consider the issue of identity, most Omani artists who follow the trends and styles of the Western schools do not ignore their Omani identity or Omani cultural symbols. Moreover, it is clear that these cultural symbols prevail and are deep-rooted in Omani art. In fact, this deep-rootedness has guaranteed artists a uniqueness that is the most important characteristic of Omani identity. Al-Yahyai (2013) believes that identity is the uniqueness that comes from a culture's customs, behavior patterns, tendencies, principles, and perspectives on the universe and life. Al Hamad (2001) regards identity as a human web of meaning, symbolism, and indication that creates purpose and meaning for oneself, one's company, the world, and the universe. From researcher point of view this differs from one person to another according to the physical and social environment that each of us is born into. Furthermore, it is characterized by stability: a group of people form a single common social and ideological identity, which acts like an umbrella. We are born with an identity, accompanied by philosophical and religious significance.

The Omanis are peerless in the Arabian and Gulf region in terms of their dress, language, and environmental awareness; as such, Omani artists reflect that uniqueness when representing the environment and the related symbolism. Since the process of focusing on heritage and the symbols of identity is primarily a matter of perception, it is not difficult for Omani artists to exploit these and represent them visually in ways that reflect Omani identity and its various aspects. The process of reflecting identity is not merely one of copying and reproducing cultural details; rather, it involves forming a new understanding and crystallizing a contemporary concept of heritage. In this regard, Al-Yahyai (2009) says:

The search for symbols of heritage and identity does not mean the inspiration of that heritage through literal copying or reproduction so that the work reflects its owner's identity. Nevertheless, it is a question of understanding, inspiration and the way in which an artist expresses their reality by conceiving cultural details, consolidating the clearest elements of the heritage and the distinction in manifesting the identity and features of society by taking an analytical approach to thinking. We do not believe that to maintain our heritage is to adhere to the past, but we must find some routes within it to start creating innovative details. Undoubtedly, modernism will come spontaneously via the search and prospection inside ourselves.

Therefore, Omani artists do use clear cultural symbols in spite of the widespread concerns about globalization leading to a loss of identity due to the willingness to follow trends and use new technology.

3.0 Artists' role in conserving identity

According to Martin & Nakayama (2010), identity is an important issue that is personal and unique. Al Hamad (2001) believes that Arabian and Islamic civilizations have an authenticity and uniqueness that guarantees that their art forms – for example, Arabic calligraphy, miniatures, and arabesque – are authentic Arabian styles of art. This suggests that the arts have the power to conserve Arabian and Islamic identity. In addition, we can say that the role of an artist is as important as that of a politician in sustaining the identity of a civilization or nation: an artist can influence the thinking of the public and thought-leaders through visual works that depict the philosophy, principles, and customs of Omani society.

However, Attayia (2002) is concerned about the effects of globalization on the cognitive and ethical aspects of identity. The purpose of cultural globalization is to disseminate a false enjoyment of life

through fashion, entertainment, food, and art in order to change thinking and preferences in a way that destroys the unique characteristics of nations and their societies. Furthermore, according to [Abdullah Abd El Khaliq \(1999\)](#), the concern with globalization is that it promotes values that may cause the demise of the prevailing social and ideological principles that characterize each nation, especially religious values. He argues that these concerns have made the search for what is an authentic representation of the Arabian civilization a major concern for thought-leaders. The researcher suggests that rather than avoiding technological development under the pretense of conserving our ideological principles and origins, we can benefit from globalization through careful selection of its positive values. Only in this way can we develop and evolve in the midst of these tremendously fast-paced times.

According to [Abd Al Saeed \(2002\)](#), the emergence of globalization has caused a shift in loyalty: diminishing loyalty to a particular societal culture and increasing loyalty to a global one in which all people and nations become equal; they are freed from every type of fanaticism to a particular ideology and are opened up to a wide range of ideas without any narrow-mindedness; they are freed from every sort of irrationality resulting from the former distinction of a nation or a definite ideology; and they are free to adopt rational knowledge and a neutral culture. However, a threat exists in the inability to make distinctions between different cultures. Globalization for someone is might be considered as risk to principles and norms and Islamic ethics, because of its inherently Western way of thinking, which directly and indirectly oppresses the main features of Arabic culture and imposes Western features and ethical meanings on Arabian societies.

This has also been highlighted by [Al Zubairi \(2012\)](#) in the context of global art. He explains that during this period of globalization, the Arab world should not isolate Arabian artists but should liberate them from their dependency on others. Yet, their allegiance is to Western approaches, which are dominating the Arabian arts movement under the pretext of the globalism of art.

Additionally, [Shareif \(1999\)](#) describes the case of people in developed countries being unable to decide between continuing to develop their identity or preserve their existing identity. He adds that this is a case in which people are experiencing confusion, comparing the principles that form their own identity with the surrounding cultural invasion that has established a generality in fundamentals and concepts. With reference to Shareif's inquiries (1999: 19), this has resulted in scholars conceiving two opposing paths: a person either follows the path of globalization and its undesirable social shifts or tries to eschew it. By eschewing it, the person is unable to develop. [Shareif \(1999\)](#) answers this argument by saying, "It is impossible to match the low ethical principles with the prevailing economic ones in capitalist societies, because the resistance to, and refusal of, thoughts that cannot be harmonized with our fundamental concepts require us to find new realistic alternatives and ideas." The solution he proposes to the threat of globalization is to waste no more time talking about the cultural invasion without encouraging creators and innovators to find alternatives in order to fill the cultural and intellectual gaps and confront foreign ideas.

Consequently, as mentioned by [Hanafi \(1998\)](#), defending a cultural identity against the threat of globalization cannot be done in isolation or through the rejection of others. However, it can be done by rebuilding the old heritage, eliminating all constraints in order to mobilize and develop our own cultural elements. Heritage can also be restored by renewing the language that is connected with it, including specific legislative terminology, to create a rich and open language made up of everyday terms to describe the tangible and intangible levels of heritage.

To achieve this, artists need to preserve the meaning and symbolism of their culture. However, some believe that Arab artists are being prevented from exploiting their heritage because they do not have the ability to assimilate it into one integrated unit containing what is written or copied. Artists must recognize that the symbols and forms they borrow from the heritage contain hidden meanings, philosophies, and ideas. We find that artists are consuming, reproducing, and copying these symbols until there are no more symbols left to use. Addressing this concern requires a deep exploration of the intellectual and artistic aspects of heritage in its different forms, including literature, poetry, plastic arts,

and others, rather than simply engaging with Western approaches and experiences that have been produced by specific, unrelated cultures and social conditions.

This responsibility should be shared by everybody, including artists. In the case of dealing with the threat posed by globalization, the artist who is aware of this is able to maintain their identity so that it becomes natural to share it with others, contributing it to establishing a common global culture. No matter how small a person's contribution, it is better to contribute something than nothing. An artist's involvement, even in a work of art that manifests the artist's own identity, is a challenge to the globalization era. At the same time, it is an attempt to revive their heritage: to follow the customs and traditions that guarantee the preservation of their cultural identity in a time of the dissolution of cultures. It is clear that artists have a strong ability to present societal issues in a context that is in agreement with their heritage and identity if they are aware of how to select those that are most suitable and present them in a form that belongs to their identity and culture. On this point, *Al Jamel (1997: 73)* stresses the great awareness and identification of the identity and distinctiveness of the artist. According to Al Jamal, artists must have a visual and cultural balance exploration in their work if they are to alleviate Euro-American influences in particular and create opportunities for a culture of communication and participation that will provide a global critical front that can challenge the supremacy of the global system.

Moreover, *Al Sayed (2000)* emphasizes the importance of selecting the best from heritage: "We have to take from the inheritance the innovative and creative parts and ignore the inactive ones. We take the first not to address its content and meaning in order to display and repeat it but to extract the form and add to it things from our life, era and experiences." Furthermore, *Al Ali (2006)* urges artists who are searching for distinct Arabian characteristics to deepen their search in the intellectual and artistic areas of this heritage instead of engaging with Western trends and experiences that bring out social conditions that do not belong to Arabic culture.

Consequently, artists play a difficult but effective role in conserving their cultural identity against a backdrop of the fusion of cultures. Confronting globalization and finding distinctive characteristics is a critical issue for artists, which requires great care and cautiousness. In this regard, *Arzaqi (1998)* describes how Muslim artists are confused as a result of being exposed to two cultures: an authentic Arabian one, which is derived from heritage and ancestry, and a contemporary one, which artists cannot detach themselves from or avoid, since they must experience it. *Al Kamisi (1988: 69)* confirms that the threat to identity in contemporary Arabian thinking is a crisis of awareness. Awareness is closely linked to identity, as awareness, here, is a feature shared by everybody; however, only a few people are able to express it.

As people who are engaged in the sphere of visual arts, we must seriously consider the process of fossilizing the clearest and most distinctive aspects of Omani culture, while exploring how we can address our heritage in a contemporary manner. In this respect, *Ismael (2003: 8)* focuses on the artist's role in responding to globalization, arguing that "as Arabs, we must search for what complies with our authenticity and civilisation and derive great benefits from it as an antidote to all the superficial manifestations of the Western thought. We must not separate ourselves from the technological and scientific cultural development on the basis of maintaining our ideological principles." *Ismael (2003:9)* also states, however, that we must learn how to benefit from the many positive aspects of this fast-paced era and how to deal with negative attitudes in order to develop.

In relation to the arts, *Ismael (2003: 8)* suggests that it is important take advantage of the positive aspects of globalization by using media, such as television and the Internet, to ignite the human passions that directly affect thinking, cognition, perception, and principles. In this way, it is possible to restore the glories of Islamic art and its ethical principles in a way that influences beliefs and social behavior in order to prepare future generations to deal with the transformations caused by globalization in a positive way.

In fact, on the Arabian level, a large proportion of artists have attempted to use modern technology to depict an authentic Arabian identity. In the next section, we present some of the works of Omani artists and discuss how their interpretations of identity have benefited from aspects of modernization.

4.0 Symbols of heritage and identity in the works of Omani painters

Artists' reflection of cultural forms, whether they are related to physical heritage (represented in architecture, archaeological sites, ancient cities) or what is known as literary and artistic heritage (including music, clothes, jewelry, manuscripts, handicrafts, and others) are undoubtedly some of the cultural aspects of Omani heritage and symbols of its identity. Symbols of Omani culture and heritage have a strong presence in artists' work, as the environment and its features inspire Omani artists. They exploit aspects of the country's physical heritage, as represented by architecture, archaeological sites, and ancient cities. Most of the artists mentioned in this paper incorporate elements of physical heritage into their work and are aware of the importance of taking advantage of the richness of Omani heritage. However, fewer Omani artists have benefited from the country's literary and artistic heritage. As a consequence, their artwork does not benefit from non-physical heritage, such as etiquette, ideas, beliefs, proverbs, folklore, and so on. This section of the research highlights some of the physical and non-physical symbols of heritage and identity found in some of the works of Omani artists.

Anwar Sonia is one of the most well-known artists within the Omani fine art movement. Most of his depictions of the features of Omani life are realistic, but he makes use of many different artistic styles and techniques. His interest in the individual aspects of Omani heritage is clear, as he is continuously searching for them in his work. Anwar Sonia is a good example of how artists reflect Omani identity by including specific details. Symbols that are significant to Omani identity, including particular landscapes, forts, and castles, appear in his work. He records the features of Omani dancing by depicting traditional dress in a way that allows the viewer to touch and taste Omani identity through compacted and moving features on the surfaces of bright Eastern colors. In addition, the viewer is able to identify the dances and their geographical regions depicted. Anwar Sonia is keen to create a formal, dynamic, and chromatic unity that engages the viewer in a rhythm that can be enjoyed with the eye and the ear. There is a dynamic harmony in the detail of his paintings, as shown in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4. He is known for his preoccupation with the search for timeless meaning in Omani heritage; not content with expressing ideas, he tries to achieve a harmonious style that is aesthetically significant, bringing spiritual meaning to his work.

Rabha Mahmood has also established a distinctive style and method to reflect the identity and symbols of her homeland. She focuses exclusively on the characteristics of the Omani woman and her traditional dress. In Rabha Mahmood's early paintings, Omani women appear in the form of small, blurry, crowds. She gradually leads the viewer to an awareness of the importance of each figure, as if she is trying to take a family photograph that captures the significance of each person; that is, each figure has her own dominance. Al-Yahiayi (2013:75) describes her artistic experience as innovative. She also describes the dreamlike quality of how her subjects appear on the canvas, with indistinct and childish features; it is only possible to see that they



Figure 1: Artist: Anwar Sonia, Title: The Drummer
Size: 200x100 cm
Medium: Oil on canvas
Year: 2000



Figure 2: Artist: Anwar Sonia, Title: Nizwa Market
Size: 200x120 cm, Medium: Oil on canvas, Year: 2005



Figure 3: Artist: Anwar Sonia
Title: weavers, Size: 120x100
cm
Medium: Oil on canvas
Year: 2004



Figure 4: Artist: Anwar Sonia, Title: grinders
Size: 120x100 cm
Medium: Oil on canvas
Year: 2005

are shy and delicate women. The women try to hide behind curtains. We distinguish the separate entities of the women, who huddle together in the center of the paintings, through the decorative diversity of their clothing. Each figure has her own independent form and presence. At the same time, this composition unifies the artwork as a whole, as can be observed in the works shown in Figures 5 and 6.



Figure 5: Artist: Rabha Mahmood
Title: Omani Women
Size: 140x200 cm
Medium: Oil on canvas, Year: 2011



Figure 6: Artist: Rabha Mahmood, Title: Omani Women II,
Size: 300x200 cm
Medium: Oil on canvas
Year: 2011

Maryam Abd Al Kareem is keen to revive the physical Omani heritage. She paints images of buildings and doors, focusing on the horse as a symbol of Omani and Arabian identity. Furthermore, she makes symbolic reference to non-physical Omani identity, which are manifested in the depictions of social events, such as weddings and religious ceremonies.

Maryam Abd Al Kareem's style in these works is decorative and detailed. Each detail has its own characteristics and shape. As described by Al-Yahyai (2012), "Her recent work is based on the assembly and direct transfer of single heritage motifs into modern art, so that the viewer can recognize shapes and styles through this process." The visual structure of those details gives Maryam Abd Al Kareem's work a chromatic and formal unity. The artwork has a sense of rhythm due to the combination of colors and textures used to paint the details and differentiate their identities (see Figure 7).



Figure 7: Artist: Maryam Abd Al Kareem, Title: Abstract
Size: 200x140 cm
Medium: Oil on canvas
Year: 2011

Rasheed Abdul Rahman has had a strong presence since the beginning of the Omani art movement. His early works are in the tradition of realism, but he has explored most artistic styles. He is one of those who have plunged into the depths of Omani heritage, Rasheed Abdul Rahman is one of the most creative and committed artists. He is well known for his efforts to use symbols of Omani heritage, depicting aspects of nature in Oman and the Omani woman.

Al-Yahyai (2009:31) asserts that "no matter what style his paintings have, they bear implications linked to the identity, significance of desert life as well as the human struggle for survival. Yet, they are correlated with the Omani environment so that they are easily understood by the viewer." In Rasheed Abdul Rahman's paintings, we observe a constant search for expressive details that facilitate the process of integration of contradictory concepts, such as the old and the new. His work demonstrates art is capable of representing the past and the present, as shown in Figure 8.



Figure 8: Artist: Rasheed Abdul Rahman, Title: Women, Size: 100x100 cm, Medium: Oil on canvas, Year: 1997

Idrees Al Hoty has the ability to identify Omani heritage and its symbols.

The Omani woman and her clothing are one of the most prominent aspects of his work, with the veil having a prominent appearance in his paintings. It is worth mentioning that Idrees Al Hoty is bold in his painting and outlining of the details. He uses intersecting straight lines and arcs that are reminiscent of futurism and cubism.

At times, these lines and shapes create geometrical spaces, while at others the shapes are dynamic, based on the chromatic space. Therefore, his paintings have a dynamic style, which the eye can contemplate and move with. They are also characterized by unity; the lines of the painting lead the eye from one detail to the next. His paintings blend women's faces, doves, arched domes, horses, and other symbolic items in overlapping sections. In addition, despite the convergence of the colors, the artist's use of color encourages the viewer's eye to travel within the frame of the painting. He studies

nature by distributing a block of color and intersecting lines in multiple directions, as shown in Figures 9, 10, and 11.

Saleem Sakhi uses a particular style and method to depict one of symbols of Omani identity, the Arabian Oryx, to represent Omani heritage.



Figure 9: Artist: Idrees Al Hoty, Title: Burqu (2), Size: 60X45cm, Medium: Oil on canvas, Year: 2000



Figure 10: Artist: Idrees Al Hoty, Title: In Black, Size: 60X50cm, Medium: Oil on canvas, Year: 2000



Figure 11: Artist: Idrees Al Hoty, Title: Dialogue, Size: 30x30 cm, Medium: Oil on canvas, Year: 2013

The Arabian Oryx is present in most of his artwork. Hence, the Oryx accompanies the artist as a symbol of his homeland. He depicts this animal as a creature pursuing him, referring to a mutual dominance between them (see Figures 12 and 13). Al-Yahyai (2013) argues that:

The Oryx has been his concern and obsession. He has presented it in some works, such as paintings and sculptures. Therefore, the Oryx has sneaked into his paintings and has become one of his accompanying symbols. Saleem has relied on the abridgment process in drawing it and on introducing a brilliant abstract to outline the elements and details, as the viewer finds the white Oryx at the front of the painting, in groups or individually, in spite of the richness of colours that he depends on to present a visual picture in most of his works.

Fakhriya Al-Yahyai as been describes by Shaheen (2011) is one of the illustrious names in Omani art and has contributed to giving Omani art an international identity by traveling abroad to study and by holding many exhibitions inside and outside Oman in virtue of this. Her latest artwork, which demonstrates her involvement with one Omani symbol, reconfigures combinations to express a view of its distinctive features. She concentrates on the cultural aspects of the Bedouin Omani veil. She represents it as a visible and invisible barrier in contemporary art. She uses the veil as a cultural symbol in her work, as shown in Figures 14, 15, and 16.



Figure 12: Artist: Saleem Sakhi Title: The Return, Size: 102x74 cm Medium: acrylic on canvas, Year: 2001



Figure 13: Artist: Saleem Sakhi, Title: The Return, Size: 110x70 cm Medium: acrylic on canvas Year: 2000

Mosa Omar is passionate about Arabian heritage and its symbols; the chromatic and human harmony of symbols and ancient cities appeals to him. He uses mixed media on canvas and draws upon stories and aspects of daily life in Oman. Mosa Omar searches for symbols that reflect the redolence of the past on corners of buildings and in traditional markets. In an interview, the artist states that he endeavors to



Figure 14: Artist: Fakhriya Al-Yahyai Title: Veil &Unveil Size: 40x30 cm Medium: Mixed media Year: 2015



Figure 15: Artist: Fakhriya Al-Yahyai Title: Veil &Unveil Size: 40x30 cm Medium: Mixed media Year: 2015



Figure 16: Artist: Fakhriya Al-Yahyai Title: Veil &Unveil Size: 40x30 cm Medium: Mixed media Year: 2015

explore implicit and explicit spaces in history in order to reflect on our daily lives and explore the spirituality of humanity (*Times News of Oman*, 2014). As can be observed in Figures 17, 18, and 19, his paintings are rich in color and include details



Figure 17: Artist: Mosa Omar
Title: Dream Coat
Size: 110x60 cm
Medium: Mixed medium
Year: 2009



Figure 18: Artist: Mosa Omar
Title: Dream Coat
Size: 60x55 cm
Medium: Mixed medium



Figure 19: Artist: Mosa Omar
Title: Dream Coat
Size: 110x40 cm
Medium: Mixed medium

that draw the viewer into opulent miniatures that deeply engage the viewer in unique Arabian attributes. Mosa Omar tries to find details that are significant to Arabian and Islamic heritage in general in order to give his work an Arabian scope.

Salah Al Aalwe has a genuine ability to identify Omani heritage and its symbols. He attempts to record specific features of Omani dance by painting traditional dress that gives viewers a sense of Omani identity. The Omani woman and her clothing are one of the most prominent elements of his work, with the veil making dramatic appearances (see Figures 20 and 21).



Figure 20: Artist: Salah Al Aalwe
Title: women from Galan, Size: 100x70 cm, Medium: oil on a canvas
Year: 2004



Figure 21: Artist: Salah Al Aalwe, Title: Omani women, Size: 65x40 cm
Medium: oil on a canvas
Year: 2005

A great many artists have attempted to make strong use of Omani heritage, which symbolizes Omani identity. It is not possible to mention all of them in this research; however, they include Zakia Al Barwani, Nawal Attiq, Mohammed Fadhil, Mohammed Al Saigh, Efitkhar Al Badawi, Juma Al Harthy, and other artists mentioned in the book *Art Movement in Oman*.

5.0 Conclusion

This research on what it means to investigate the significance of Omani identity in the artwork of Omani artists may be considered, in theory and in practice, as a contribution to the discipline of visual arts conserving Omani identity. The research finds that some practicing Omani painters are expressing their understanding of the concept of identity through their work. However, some artists limit themselves to copying and repeating the same symbols and do not take full advantage of the opportunity offered by the Omani heritage.

In conclusion, it can be said that, to a large extent, Omani painters are attempting to employ the details of Omani identity in their work. As mentioned previously, practice of Omani identity is distinguished at the Arabian level by virtue of what exists and is exhibited.

Having said this, it is essential that artists pay greater attention to things around them so that they do not suffer a similar fate to that of other Arab cultures due to the impact of the global era on their heritage. We would like to emphasize the importance of the search for, and benefits of, Omani non-physical inheritance, which is currently underrepresented in the work of Omani artists. Thus, further research needs to be done in order to examine Omani practice in other art disciplines, including sculpture, print, and photography.

References

- Abu-Zaid, E. (2013). Contemporary Issues of Fine Arts in Sultanate of Oman. A chapter in book entitled "The Omani Plastic arts: the reality of practices and approaches of experiments". The Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Muscat Oman Printers & Stationers.
- Al Ali, A. (2006). Heritage and cotemporary in contemporary Arabian plastic art. *Cultural Aklaam*. Retrieved December 20, 2014 from: <http://www.net/forum/Showthread.php?4850>
- Albertson, R. (2011). Art and identity: the high school artist. Published MA thesis. University of Iowa. Retrieved December 29, 2016 from: <http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/2667>
- Ali, W. 1996. The right to write: calligraphic works from the collection of the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts. *Art Exhibition Catalogue*. Amman: Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts Press.
- Al Hadhrami, M. (2010). Journey of Omani plastic art in 40 years. *Al berwaz*. Omani Society for Fine Arts, 1 (2), 67–68.
- Al Hamad, T. (2001). *Arabic cultural in the globalization era*. Lebanon: Dar a Al Saqi.
- Al-Hanai, M. (2012). The Fine Arts: what it has and how it should be?, *Future Magazine*, Sultanate of Oman, year 4, Number 6. July.
- Al Jamel, S. (1997). *Arabic transformations*. Amman: Al Ahlieh.
- Al Khamisi, A. (1988). *Education and Arabs challenges*. Cairo: Alam Al Kitab.
- Al Nisari, A. (2002). Omani plastic arts welcoming heritage and humanity in modern texts. *Nizwa*, 29, Muscat: Oman Establishment for Press Publication and Advertising.
- Al-Sadoun, M. (1999). A contextual analysis of contemporary Iraqi art using case studies. PhD dissertation. The Ohio State University.
- Al Sayed, M. (2000). Complying heritage to the era. *Arabization Journal*, 20 (December). Tunisia: The Arabic League Educational Culture and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). Retrieved October 15, 2014 from: www.acatap.htmlplanet.com/arabization-j/accessories/Jour-7.htm
- Al-Yahyai, F. (2009). The Omani heritage motives as an approach to teach the course of modern painting to students in the Art Education Department at Sultan Qaboos University. *Researches in Art Education and Arts* 26 (26), 21–42.
- Al-Yahyai, F. (2012). The history of Omani women in the fine arts. *The International Journal of Arts Theory and History*, 7 (1), 1–20.
- Al-Yahyai, F. (2013). Samples of identity and its indications in works of Omani artists. In the Ministry of Heritage and Culture (Ed.), *The Omani plastic arts: the reality of practices and approaches of experiments*. Muscat: Oman Press.
- Al-Yahiayi, F. & Al-Amri, M. (2006). *Plastic art in Oman*. Tunisia: The Arabic League Educational Culture and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).
- Al Zubairi, M. (2012). *Concepts in the Arabic formation fine arts: fears and hopes*. Sharjah: Directorate of Arts, Department of Culture and Information Sharjah.
- Ameen, M. (2013). Arabic calligraphy: migration towards the end of formation plastic arts: Ali Al Nasif Al Taboli as model. *Arts Magazine*, 146 (November). Kuwait: National Council for Culture Arts & letters.
- Arzaqi Burkan, M. (1998). Is transformation building the identity or distorting ? *Fikr wa nakd Magazine*, 12. Retrieved June 16, 2014 from: http://www.fikrwanakd.aljabriabed.net/11_20_table.htm.
- Attayia, G. (2003). Globalization and its reflection on the Arab world. Paper presented at the Educational Forum of Geography, Social Studies and Psychology, 29–30 April, Fujairah.
- Halverson, E. R. (2010). Artistic production processes as venues for positive youth development (WCER Working Paper No. 2010-2). The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin Center for Education Research. Retrieved September 23, 2015 from: http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publication/working_papers/papers.php
- Hameedh, M. (2013). Situation of Fine Arts in Oman: readings & critical visions. A chapter in book entitled "The Omani Plastic arts: the reality of practices and approaches of experiments". The Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Muscat: Oman Printers & Stationers.
- Hanafi, H. (1998). Position and function of Arabian heritage in the shadow of globalization and peculiarity. Paper presented at 4th Arab Conference, 4–6 September, Philadelphia University, Jordan.

- Ismael, G. (2009). Islamic treatment in art education within globalization. Globalization and the priorities of education Symposium. King Saud University. Saudi Arabia.
- Jelekäinen, E. (2015). Immigrant artists' intercultural identity formation and development process through art making. Published master's thesis. University of Jyväskylä.
- Marshall, C. M. (2007). Cultural identity, creative processes, and imagination: Creating cultural connections through art making. *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*, 25, 1–12. Retrieved December 20, 2016 from: http://www.art.ccsu.edu/marshallc/research/Deconstruct_ArtProcess/cul_id_article/JCRAE%20Marshall.pdf
- Martin, J.N. & Nakayama, T.K. (2010). *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*. Boston, USA: McGraw-Hill.
- Porter, E. (2003). Omani fine arts welcoming heritage and humanity in modern texts. *Nizwa*, 35, Muscat: Oman Establishment for Press Publication and Advertising.
- Shahada, H. (2010). The Omani Society for Fine Arts is a sample of the Renaissance beauty, Middle East online Magazine. Retrieved November 20, 2016 from: <http://www.middle-east-online.com/?id=82986>
- Shaheen, M. (2011). The dialectic of art and the beauty of nature, Kuwait Magazine, number 337, 2 November. Retrieved October 20, 2015: <http://www.kuwaitmag.com/index.jsp?inc=5&id=11358&pid=1474>
- Shareif, Y. (1999). *Identity: Identity and the authority of the intellectual question in the era of post-modernism*. Egypt: Merritt Publishing and information.
- Times News of Oman* (2014). Omani artist Moosa Omar explores humanity through art. Retrieved June 19, 2014 from: <http://timesofoman.com/article/33433/Oman/Omani-artist-Moosa-Omar-explores-humanity-through-art>
- White, S. (2010). *The Art of Oman*. In Qaboos Patron of Peace & Oman Land of Civilizations, Fine Arts Festival, Muscat. The Omani Society for Fine Arts.
- Yousuf, M. (2008). The Art Movement in Oman: Features of Development and Direction of Expression. Thwara newspaper. Retrieved December 20, 2015 from: http://thawra.alwehda.gov.sy/_print_veiw.asp?FileName=9863716820081105220236