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The potential for installations to create new directions for Saudi Arabian art

Badawi, Hanadi

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The Potential for Installations to Create New Directions for Saudi Arabian Art

By
H. Badawi

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Abstract

In 2001 when this research commenced, there was little understanding in Saudi Arabia of the opportunities digital art could provide for artists, how it could be integrated with or used instead of painting, and the effects the enlarged vocabulary could have in communicating difficult social issues. As a result, this study aimed at filling a gap in knowledge through reviewing contemporary Saudi art. This, in turn, helped me to understand the position of my practice. The study also aimed at developing a means of expression in which traditional art can be combined with digital media and showing how this combination provides a new direction for Saudi art by raising awareness in Saudi Arabia about complex issues. In addition, the study aimed at determining the acceptability of this new form of art to artistically literate Saudi artists through gathering audience's reactions to the developed artefacts.

This study comprised of several stages: discovering the state of art in Saudi Arabia and where it fits into the global stage; documenting my journey as an artist and understanding my practice; the creation of the installation and its reception, all of which was documented in a reflective journal. Through reflecting on my practice, I transformed my work from simple traditional pieces of art to more complex installations concerning everyday gender politics. I interviewed 20 practicing artists, noting that the majority of their work used traditional forms of art rather than digital art. A week-long exhibition on gender differences in Saudi Arabia was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The feedback from the exhibition showed that, although there is not a strong appreciation of digital art in Saudi Arabia, the audience was able to understand the different components of the

installations and the underlying issues being portrayed. They were able to bring their own experiences to the situation and reflected on the installations accordingly.

The study contributes to knowledge by providing a review of contemporary Saudi Artists as there is no significant literature that documents this in Saudi Arabia. It also contributes to knowledge by exploring and developing artefacts that incorporate different technologies and by showing that digital media and traditional art can be used together to articulate complex social issues arising in everyday Saudi life. Finally, it fills a gap in knowledge of how Saudi audiences engage with works that use a combination of traditional and new art to express such issues.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research investigates how digital media and traditional art (see 1.4 for definition of terms) can be combined to create a new form of art in Saudi Arabia that might be used as a means of self-expression and to facilitate debates about complex social issues in the kingdom.

International digital media artists were reviewed to see where the Saudi artists were positioned internationally. As there is little written about Saudi artists, interviews were undertaken which gave greater understanding both for my work and to contribute to a more general knowledge and understanding of contemporary Saudi artistic practice. This informed the development and positioning of my practice culminating in a final exhibition comprising a series of mixed media installations about traditional gender roles in contemporary Saudi society. While the Saudi society has been moving forward in fields such as technology and industrialisation, it has also maintained some aspects of traditional culture. Through mixing traditional ways of art such as painting and digital forms of media such as sounds, lighting and motion pictures, the installations incorporated a mixture of cultural symbols and artistic metaphors that suggest both the new and traditional ways of Saudi society. In order to measure the ability of an educated Saudi audience to understand and engage with works that use means that they – by and large – have little experience of viewing, interviews were undertaken at the exhibition.

In the thesis I will argue that the combination of digital media and traditional art provided a richer means of expression than using only one medium, and gave the audience a more direct and immersive experience of art and the issues raised in the work.

This opening chapter provides the context and background of the research, its main aims and objectives, and its importance, approach, stages, and structure. An overview of the results is also presented. As the written thesis only offers limited insights into the work, DVDs and reflective journals also form part of the submission. These are briefly described, and the way the submission is best approached by the reader is outlined.

1.2   Context

The modern development of Saudi Arabia began with the discovery of oil in 1930. Though modernisation accelerated areas such as industry, overall progress was slow and sometimes opposed social development such as women's education and the use of technology. For example, it was not until the mid 1990s that Saudi Arabia introduced the global system for mobiles, followed by internet services in the late 1990s. Since then, life for the people of Saudi Arabia has changed immensely, and digital technology has brought a change that is evident in the lives of the Saudis, both inside and outside their homes.

Such forms of technology enabled access to other cultures and provided different ways of seeing information which was visual and immediate. Moreover, technology has now become an integral part of the educational system, and new educational institutions that promote technology, such as King Abdullah's University for Science and Technology (KAUST), have been established. However, despite digital technology becoming common in the commercial, industrial, educational and social aspects of life in Saudi Arabia, it is seldom seen in the field of art.

In my work I have taken some developments in technology to create work which has immediacy and relevance to the audience, and which creates a break with traditional art as Saudi people know it (see section 1.4 for definition of traditional art).

1.2.1 Biographical Influence

Exploring my personal biography as a Saudi artist reveals why I have became interested in digital media. My background as an artist has influenced the design of this research. I completed my BA in Fine Arts at King Abdulaziz University (KAU), Jeddah in 2002. There I was introduced to art through a very didactic way of learning where teachers were the main source of knowledge. At such time lecturers were required to follow a prescribed syllabus rather than to encourage students to be creative or innovative. Furthermore, more than 50% of the required courses for the undergraduate programme were related to education rather than art.

After graduation, I taught at the same art department from which I had graduated. I was filled with enthusiasm and modelled my teaching on how I had been taught, for example, by concentrating on "traditional" aspects of art such as painting, handwork crafts, ceramics, and Islamic calligraphy. After extensive reading, visits to art exhibitions outside of Saudi Arabia, and continuous exploration of art and technology via the Internet, I started to appreciate the limitations of this style of teaching and learning. Later, I became conscious of how my practice as a teacher of art was guided by guidelines and regulations imposed by the university, and how modern art was undervalued, not only at KAU, but also in Saudi society.

Under the umbrella of modern art, "Digital Media" emerged as a concept that caught my interest as a new medium of expression. Digital technology (see 1.4 for definition of terms) in art was seldom seen in Saudi Arabia, the exception being Hesham

Maghrabi (2007). Hence, I saw it as an area with great possibilities for experimentation and study in Saudi Arabia.

With the development of all fields in the country, art was one of the fields the government supported. Scholarships were available for female artists and academics to pursue their education abroad and I was granted a scholarship to continue my higher studies in the United Kingdom. I became adamant about the need to extend my practice, and those of my students into digital media. With this in mind I registered for the MA in Digital Media offered by Coventry University. This opened up the digital world, and I started to experiment with the ways in which digital media could be used, for instance in animation. After completing the MA in 2004, I decided to pursue my aim of merging and integrating digital technology with traditional forms of art. I wanted to show how this integration could create a new means of expression, hoping that digital art would spring from the traditional forms of art in Saudi Arabia.

It was clear that the installations I created led to a direct experience between the audience and this new form of art. More specifically, as my exhibition developed, it became evident that I was exploring the way in which gender politics are experienced in everyday life. This gave my work a new perspective and added novelty to its aims and approach.

1.3   Aims and Objectives

1.3.1   Aims

On the basis of the above considerations, the aims of this research are:

1   To contribute to the knowledge and understanding of Saudi art by reviewing contemporary Saudi artists

2   To understand the position of my own practice through a review of contemporary Saudi art and culture

3   To develop a means of creative expression that combines traditional art and digital media that is new to Saudi Arabia

4   To show how the combination of different technologies provides a new direction for Saudi art by enabling complex issues to be raised.

5   To determine the acceptability and comprehension of artefacts which combine traditional art and digital media to 'artistically literate' Saudi audiences.

1.3.2 Objectives

The following specific objectives are identified:

1. To review contemporary Saudi artists by interviewing them and discussing their ideas

2. To reflect on my practice and growth as an artist.

3. To create a series of works that will allow a Saudi audience to understand the opportunities afforded to them by the use of technology, drawing on the themes of traditional and contemporary Saudi Arabian culture.

4. To understand the audience's reactions to the installations.

1.4 Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, I read many books in which these terms were used. I also checked Oxford English Dictionary. After comparing how they are defined in these books, which is not always consistent, with the way that I use them, it became clear to me that I needed to provide a glossary of how these terms will be used within this thesis. These are stated below.

Abstract art: A form of art that has no reference to figurative reality, but suggests another reality through colour, form and means.

Conceptual art: A form of art that is intended to convey an idea without using a traditional art object such as classic painting or sculpture.

Digital media: A range of artistic works and practices that use digital technology as an essential part of the creative and presentation process.

Digital art: A form of electronic media where data is stored on media such as DVDs, Internet, etc.

Digital technology (digitisation): Digital tools which can be electronically manipulated such as animation sound, etc.

Installation: Art that is installed and exhibited within specific sites, that incorporates diverse materials and uses the exhibiting space to create an immersive environment.

Traditional art: Forms of art that use materials that have been practiced for generations such as painting, drawing, sculpture, craft material, printing. When used in connection with Saudi art, 'traditional art' also encompasses a depiction of scenes that are representative and frequently affirmative, rather than expressive or symbolic

1.5   Proposed Contributions to Knowledge

This study proposes the following contributions to knowledge:

1. The interviews of contemporary Saudi artists provide a significant contribution to the knowledge and understanding of contemporary Saudi art practice.

2. It demonstrates the exploration and development of artefacts that incorporate different technologies, using a reflective methodology. In Saudi Arabia this is almost unknown.

3. It shows how digital media and traditional art can be used together to express complex issues relevant for Saudi Arabia.

4. It documents the reactions of an educated and art literate audience to the issues and techniques used in the exhibition, which helps to assess the level of readiness for this form of art in the kingdom within this class of people.

1.6 Research Approach

To fulfil the aims and objectives of this research, I reviewed literature and exhibitions relating to digital media and art in order to expand my knowledge. This enabled me to see the type of work currently being created and the themes being considered, in relation to my field of interest. For inspiration and themes for the artefacts, I visited locations such as museums and went to everyday meeting places such as the fish market, the wholesale fruit market and the seaside in Jeddah. I also visited historical places that signify the traditions and culture of Saudi Arabia and studied pictures of those places I could not visit for religious reasons.

During the initial stage of my research, nine artefacts were produced in a traditional way using acrylic paints and inserting DVDs in the artefacts. These early experiments were essential in allowing me to see how digital media and traditional forms of art could be integrated and be effective in achieving my aims. These artefacts formed the base, or the initial milestone for my progress through a long journey. Simultaneously, I noted my progress in a reflective journal which included a combination of descriptive material and critical analysis. This material led to developing new perspectives on my practice; consequently, the journal became an important source of data for my research.

In the second stage, I read more intensely about the work of the artists Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat, Bill Viola, and Gary Hill. Their work inspired me to alter the perspective and style of my original work. I became more inclined toward abstract and conceptual art. Visits to museums and galleries such as the Fassbender Gallery in Chicago and Brooklyn Museum in New York also influenced my perspective on art. The installations of artists such as Gerda Meyer Bernstein made me realise the importance of finding and selecting appropriate materials for the different types of work I do and inspired me to represent my ideas through abstraction and installation art.

In addition, I interviewed 20 renowned contemporary Saudi artists. This helped me contextualise my work. I noted that the majority of these dealt with traditional forms of art. This motivated me to experiment further so that I could create a unique means of self-expression that would be accepted by people in Saudi Arabia. Upon further reflection, I noticed that my style of art had begun to change, and my installations reflected what I wanted to say in a more subtle manner. I was conscious that I was influenced by international artists such as Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat and Bill Viola. As I delved further into this journey, I continued writing my reflections in my reflective journal.

In the third stage of my research, my ideas became more concrete, and I began portraying gender issues through concepts that were related to women in the Saudi society. By utilizing cubic installations, multiple screens, and DVDs, my installations presented contemporary themes for the audience to reflect on. An illustration of this is my artefact, "The Magic Mirror." This was created in the first stage of my work, and was later modified and integrated into a more complex installation, "Freedom." This installation reflects the issue of women trying to gain freedom in Saudi Arabia through introducing the hugely disputed issue of women driving in Saudi Arabia.

In stage four, I held a week-long exhibition in Jeddah in May 2009 during which I collected the views of an artistically articulate audience about my work. For the exhibition, I rented an apartment and divided it into seven chambers, so each installation was located in a separate room. The preparations and my journey towards this exhibition have been recorded in a DVD for use in my research and teaching.

In stage five I have collated the findings into this submission and reflected upon them.

1.7　Overview of Results

An overview of the results shows my progress through the various stages of my journey as an artist (included in the DVD). Not only did I transform my work from simple traditional pieces of art to more intricate installations, but I also created a narrative on gender politics as experienced in everyday life. The integration of media and traditional art provided an innovative means of reflection, some of which were shocking for an indigenous Saudi audience, leading them to think more deeply about the issues raised. The feedback from the exhibition showed that the audience accepted the installations. They also brought their own experiences to the situation and reflected on the installations accordingly. The majority liked and enjoyed them, therefore, fulfilling the second aim.

1.8　Overview of Thesis and Guidance on How to Approach the Different Components

This research has progressed over several years. The thesis follows a chronological order that presents the process I followed in conducting my research from a theoretical as well as a practical point of view. In order to show the development of my artwork and the accompanying maturation of ideas, the submission is comprised of four complementary elements:

1. DVD documenting practice: This shows the focus of my thesis and provides insight into my method and approach to art. It is the result of the integration of multimedia.

2. DVD of the exhibition: This has been produced in the form of a teaching resource comprising full interviews with some Saudi artists, with their permission, and the way in which the work progressed. This will have great significance for young Saudi artists who want access to more experienced artists' views.

3. A sketchbook and an extract from my journal showing the development of ideas and reflections on the artefacts that were developed to form the final exhibition.

This demonstrates the evolution process of my ideas, themes, and cultural influences.

4. The written thesis

To conclude, this research has been a long but productive journey in which I endeavoured to achieve my aims of developing a means of creative expression combining digital media and traditional art which was new to Saudi audiences. Through this, I have learnt different ways in which traditional art can be combined with digital media. It is hoped that the outcomes of this work, the thesis, DVDs and selected parts of the reflective journals will be used as reference points for art students and those wishing to become media artists, and art historians who want to pursue research in and understand contemporary practice in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 2

Background Information

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the context of my studio practice. As well as discussing contemporary art, it will discuss the cultural and social backgrounds that underpin my work. In the article "Afterimage", Marla Fernandez (2004: 16) states that digital media can be a powerful tool for portraying many current social issues including those that relate to traditional culture because of what it has to offer. Digital media is a relatively new genre in comparison to traditional forms of art, and in a global world in which the internet, computers and digital imagery are omnipresent; it is an effective way of translating the social world into the artistic world.

The exhibition produced in this research was comprised of installations that used both traditional and digital means, which were juxtaposed to suggest the tensions between contemporary and traditional life in Saudi Arabia. Since Saudi Arabia cannot be compared to developed nations in the West in terms of art and technology, it was thought that Saudi audiences viewing the installations may not be used to interpreting this medium (audience's reactions have been analysed in chapter 6) despite their familiarity with TV and computers. This unfamiliarity with digital media was exploited to offer different perspectives on contemporary Saudi culture.

2.2 Background

Little was documented at the outset of this study about the practice of contemporary Saudi artists. There are no art journals to encourage artists or art historians in Saudi Arabia to conduct research and publish its results. There are rarely any gallery

discussions, or symposia and no conferences on art related issues. Most of the literature available is historical such as the work of Dr. Mohammad Al-Rusais, (unpublished) who is both an artist and academic. His book, written in Arabic, is a chronological study covering what he terms the five phases of the development of art in Saudi Arabia (see section 2.5 and chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1 for details). Other published works provide overviews of art in Saudi such as those written by Suhail Al-Harbi (2003) and Ahmad Falmban (2010, 2007). Al-Harbi's book is similar to Al-Rusais' book and includes a synopsis of the artists' most famous works. Falmban's book includes a list of artists' names with more detailed demographic information about them such as their age, qualifications, year of graduation (if appropriate), country they studied in, and list of personal exhibitions. Most of the other publications are either area specific or about art as an educational subject matter (e.g. Al-Suliman 2000; Al-Juaid 1997; Baghdadi 1997; Al-Farsi 2001; Radawi 1987). They are anecdotal and descriptive rather than analytical and evaluative. In general, most of the publications are not comprehensive as they do not give an in-depth analysis of the practices of Saudi artists and do not explore their purposes, philosophies or contexts.

A visit to the museums and archives in Saudi Arabia including the Jeddah Gallery for Fine Arts, Al-Roshan, Abdul Rauf Khalil Museum, Al-Alamia Gallery, and Saudi Art Centre revealed that digital art is not of concern to Saudi artists. The types of art on display in these galleries, public and commercial, were: painting, drawing, sculpture, pottery and ceramic, calligraphy, collage, and graphics. This lack of focus on digital art or a combination of both traditional and digital assured me that this is a field that requires more attention and is worth experimenting with, which, in turn, enabled the contextualization of this study and also informed the research on themes for artefacts. It was also noticed through observations of works of art and through reflective thoughts that Saudi artists rarely tackle including sensitive topics such as gender differences. This, together with my

readings and discussions with Saudi artists, inspired me to choose gender differences as a topic for my exhibition and consequently my study.

There has been no significant literature documenting the development of artists' practice or their audience's reaction to their work, and apart from a study conducted by Hesham Maghrabi (2007) (see section 2.7 for details), nothing has been documented about the acceptability of artefacts which use digital media or a combination of traditional art and digital media. This is not surprising since there are no galleries in Saudi Arabia that show digital installations.

The aim of this chapter is to help the focus of this study and in particular to contextualise and make sense of the emerging data. What will follow will be a discussion of the history of modern Saudi Arabia, its growth in the fields of education, IT and art, and the history of contemporary art in Saudi Arabia. The discussion also covers the development of multimedia and installation art, issues of gender in the region, representation of gender in art and female artists working in multimedia, especially those dealing with gender issues.

2.3   History of Saudi Arabia

No understanding of the art scene in Saudi Arabia can be achieved without understanding the country's history, culture and development of many aspects such as education, technology, and art.

2.3.1 Cultural Contextualization

The culture of Saudi Arabia has been founded on hardships. Over the centuries, the climate in Saudi Arabia has been so inhospitable that the people, who were mainly Bedouins, had to evolve a way of life that remained arduous and unchanged, which was

reflected in their culture. Scott, the author of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, encapsulates this by writing:

> The Bedouin way of life is hard, uncluttered, and unhurried; it brings
> closeness to God to those who live it fully. Despite the onslaught of
> technology, Saudis as a whole assuredly esteem their old traditional
> way of life and many city dwellers seeking a break from the hurly
> burly of modern life return to spend days and nights in the desert,
> to enjoy again for a short while the simple life of their forefathers.
>
> (2006: 23)

For centuries, the life in the arid land of Arabia remained unchanged, controlled by its geography and a desert area (The Empty Quarter) extending approximately 2.2 million square kilometres. The country's coasts lie on the Red Sea to the west and the Arabian Gulf to the east. Its neighbouring countries are Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Bahrain, Egypt, and Sudan (Long 2005).

2.3.2 Historical Background

Despite its harsh nature, Saudi Arabia, (formerly called Najd and Hijaz) hosted many significant civilisations such as Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Abaddian. These civilisations have left behind great ruins scattered across the country such as Madayen Saleh, Medyan and Okhdood (Falmban, 2007: 11). Equally important, Pharaonic Egypt stretched from the west and extended its culture into Saudi Arabia. The most important thing, however, as Al-Rasheed (2002: 8) emphaises, is that Saudi Arabia is the homeland of Islam, the location of the two holiest shrines of Mecca and Medina and the direction of all Muslims' five daily prayers.

Understanding Saudi culture stems from understanding the Wahabi movement which was a movement organised by Mohammad Ben Abdel Wahab and Muhammad Ben Saud in 1780, calling for revival of what they perceived to be social virtues to bring about a return to The Golden Age of Islam (Al-Rasheed, 2002: 8). These two men represented

faith and power, and since they formed their alliance, the face of Saudi Arabia has changed. Saudi Arabia, in its current state was established and united in 1932 and was named after the ruling Al-Saud family.

2.4   Growth of the Country

Saudi Arabia's history changed with the discovery of oil in the 1930s, under the rule of King Abdulaziz who laid the foundation for the modern development of the country (Hamdan 2005). The country gained great momentum in all areas, especially in education and technology. Indeed, the great boom that took place in the second half of the twentieth century dramatically changed the lives of the Saudi people, making them rise from poverty to wealth.

2.4.1 Education

Interest in education grew after the discovery of oil in 1935. Prokop (2003) reports that public schools for boys were opened while girls stayed at home, where, upon request, a Sheikh would teach them basic writing and the Qur'an. The first schools for girls were opened in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Al-Hariri 1987). The late King Faisal and his wife Queen Iffat were faced with great opposition by the conservatives in the country. However, the king's determination led to education being available to all Saudi men and women in the early 1980s (Al-Rawaf and Simmons 1991). In recent years, especially since the accession of King Abdullah to the throne in 2005, great emphasis has been placed on education. New universities have been built and an impressive number of students have been granted scholarships to study abroad, with a particular stress on women's education. This research is in line with the government's efforts to promote education and technology.

2.4.2 Information Technology in Saudi Arabia

Since the early nineties, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has witnessed a change in communication methods, including the visual, due to the advent of the Internet and satellite (the Arabsat was launched in 1985) communications. These two innovations have provided access to other cultures and enabled everyone to have access to information that was completely restricted prior to this time. Every individual in Saudi Arabia became affected by these changes, which influenced various aspects of social life, making the citizens more liberal in their view of the world (Gagnet 1999: 89). In other words, the availability of digital technology and access to the internet brought about a new way of accessing and perceiving information, which also included a more international view of art. The artists were expected to be influenced by these transformations; even the methods and raw materials that could be used by the artists were different from the ones used previously. This exposure to a broader range of art, together with the changes of education and use of materials, meant that there was a growth in artistic styles and ideas.

2.4.3 Art in Saudi Arabia

Al-Rusais (unpublished) divides the history of art in Saudi Arabia into four phases. The first phase witnessed the beginning of the art movement in Saudi Arabia and the beginning of the formal study of art inside and outside the country. It stretched from 1953 to 1970. Pioneer artists that belong to this era include Abdulhaleem Radawi, AbdulAziz Hanmmad, Mohammad Saleem, Dia Aziz Dia, together with the first women artists, Safiyyah Binzager and Muneera Moselli. These early artists struggled for art to be recognized and were faced with a lot of opposition. The first ever documented artist, Mohammad Marasem, had only two people visiting his exhibition, while AbdulAziz Hammad had no visitors at all and ended up destroying his paintings (Falmban 2010). Raw

materials, tools and specialized technical books were almost non-existent in this initial period which led most of the artists to focus on painting rather than other forms of art.

There are several reasons why art was not of prime importance at that time. According to Suliman (2000), many artists first began the practice of art before pursuing any formal study of it which meant that the standard was variable, and also Saudi society was not educated or literate enough to understand art. The first Art Education School was opened in 1964. The teachers were artists who came from other Arab countries especially Egypt. Moreover, art was considered socially undesirable due to certain religious positions, and no income could be generated from the practice of art, which discouraged many potential artists.

The second phase of art, according to Al-Rusais (unpublished), extended from 1971 to 1980; during this period, the Arabic Saudi Society for Culture and Art was established. Its main aim was to promote art and encourage young talent, and to represent the country regionally and internationally. The School of Art for Men was opened at King Saud University in 1975. Women had to wait a further ten years to get the opportunity study art, when, in 1985 the School of Art for Women was opened at the same university. During this period students were sent overseas to countries such as Egypt, Italy, Spain, France and America to gain undergraduate degrees in art. With the government's efforts to change the country into a more modern one, many students were also sponsored to do postgraduate degrees in art. This stage, as Al-Rusais (unpublished: 59) confirms, also witnessed the beginning of using artworks to beautify places as palaces, streets, roundabouts, and squares. Most of these works were sponsored by the government, or donated by the royal family, big companies, and businessmen.

Phase three (1981-2002) witnessed an expansion of scholarships to other countries (Al-Rusais unpublished: 89). This period saw the opening of more art galleries, private and

public, starting more art schools at university level, forming artistic groups, and beautifying governmental buildings. It also witnessed the showcasing of art around the kingdom through mobile exhibitions. In addition to the efforts of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of External Affairs that organised external exhibitions, institutions such as the National Commercial Bank, Aramco and Saudi Airlines played a major role in encouraging artists (Falmban 2007: 77). The efforts of Saudi Airlines were notable; a contest used to be held every two years, and prizes were awarded. Most importantly, it arranged for mobile exhibitions, which helped in exposing the artists' works to a larger audience abroad. Unfortunately, Saudi Airlines activities stopped eight years ago (Falmban 2010:14). The fourth phase extended from 2003 to 2010, during which the Ministry of Culture and Media was founded. The main aim of this ministry was to promote different forms of art, create awareness in the society, foster relations between artists and their societies inside and outside the country, and protect artists' copyrights (Al-Rusais unpublished).

Like all artists, Saudi artists are constrained even in their use of materials. At the early stages of their practice and due to the earlier lack of materials, artists resorted to whatever was available around them to produce their works. For example, as reported by Falmban (2007), most of the artists from the middle and northern areas of the country, which are mostly deserts, frequently used earthy colours. Those coming from Dawadmy areas produced works of sculpture more than other artists. Colours of nature with its high mountains and clouds could be traced in the works of artists coming from the south, while those coming from the western areas such as Jeddah and Makkah use Islamic forms of art and calligraphy more than artists in other areas due to its closeness to Ka'ba.

Saudi artists are also located in their practice in time and place, and I am no exception. According to Hamdi (1994:1), the cultural and geographical environments are

the most important influences which inspire artists to produce art. This is applicable to the Saudi context whereby the effects of change have had an impact on art and the way that it has been perceived (Wahba 1994:87). Some of these social and cultural effects were reflected in the figurative heritage paintings of houses in the Kingdom, and the various ways in which raw materials were used. For example, Al-Rawacheen (wooden windows with brown hues to highlight shadow and light) is a regular feature in the works of many artists such as Adnan Americi, Munawar Ozraei, Bakr Shaykhoun and Saleh Al-Khattab (See figure 1 for his work "The Arabic House"). The main themes in my work are also social and cultural and relate to particular traditional architecture. However, the vocabularies that I use augment this figurative tradition, and by combining different techniques and mediums, suggests the debates around contemporary issues, without having a prescriptive meaning. (See chapter 3 section 3.3 and chapter 4 section 4.2 for more details on my practice).

Figure 1: Salah Al-Khattab (1978), "The Arabic House" (Al-Harbi 2003:73)

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The phenomenon of painting landscape and natural objects such as trees, flowers and water shows Saudi artists' link to nature. It is part of the figurative tradition. Among the most famous works of art representing this trend are: Ahmed Al-Araj's "The Environment," and Tawfiq Al-Humaidi's "Boats in the Gulf" (Al-Harbi 2003) as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Tawfiq Al-Humaidi (1978), "Boats in the Gulf" (Al-Harbi 2003:115)

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Drawing detailed human figures has always been a controversial topic in education in Saudi Arabia as students are prohibited from drawing these due to religious reasons. This does not mean that artists did not draw full figures. Abdul Jabar Al Yahya's "Captain Delco" (See figure 3) is considered one of the oldest portraits in the country dated 1953. Others include "The Old Fisherman" by Khalil Hassan Khalil and "The Portrayal of Self" by Dia Aziz Dia (See figure 4). Al-Harbi (2003) reports that Dia uses the Renaissance artists as an example by making the characters appear like perfect models of human form. Although I do include figures in my art, these have been made expressive through manipulation, enlargement and visibility not due to religious purposes but to serve certain purposes in the installations.

Figure 3: Abdul Jabar Al-Yahya (1953), "Captain Delco" (Al-Harbi 2003: 106)

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Figure 4: Dia Aziz Dia (1980), "Portrayal of Self" (Al-Harbi 2003:106)

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Representations of the Islamic faith are also shown in art in Saudi Arabia. Minarets and domes appear in works of Saudi artists. Occurrences of Islamic symbols such as the moon were also commonly used in these artists' works. Mohamed Siam used his art as a realistic documentary of these representations. His aim was to trace the changes in places of special interest such as Makkah.

Some artists used Islamic symbols as icons to reinforce religion. For example, Osman Al-Kharashi attempted to portray the spiritual atmosphere of Islamic faith in his painting "Spirituality" (Figure 6) by using visual elements he thought would create a special spiritual environment such as the Qur'an, Zamzam and essence oil. According to him, in his painting the Holy Koran can be heard, the essence oil rising from the incense burner can be smelt, and the holy water, Zamzam can be drunk (Al-Harbi 2003: 129). All the viewer needs to do is imagine it. The potential of achieving this effect would have been maximised had the work been executed using digital media. For example, I used Zamzam as a symbol of life accompanied with sound effects of water exploding in my installation "Symbols of Ka'ba", which I think appeals to the senses of the viewers and engages them (See chapter 5, section 5.4.1).

Figure 5: Osman Al-Kharashi (1982), "Spirituality" (Al-Harbi 2003:129)

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In addition to using Islamic symbols as a representation of reality, and as icons used in different contexts, some artists such as Hamad Al-Harbi, used them symbolically. His paintings were not figurative; they belonged to the Surrealist School as claimed by Al-Harbi (2003). He used domes and minarets of varying forms and sizes to create a symbolic element related to Islam. One of his works is "Islamiyyat" which is shown in figure 6.

Figure 6: Hamad Al-Harbi (1986), "Islamiyyat" (Al-Harbi 2003:129)

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One of the artworks that derived its importance from its theme is "Muharram One Thousand Four Hundred" (See figure 7) which was painted by Dia Aziz Dia in 1980; it represented a very powerful historical issue relating to a temporary invasion of the Holy sites of Makkah and Medinah at the beginning of the 1979. The picture depicts Ka'ba and

in front of it are a huge body of a snake and the head of the rebel chief with blood around it. Despite the cruelty shown, the image has reference to the end of this invasion and the dawn of a new beginning of peace, as claimed by the artist (Al-Harbi 2003). Being a Saudi artist myself, my work is also open-ended and deals with issues in a symbolic way (see chapter 5 for details on my work).

Figure 7: Dia Aziz Dia (1980), "Muharram One Thousand four Hundred" (Al-Harbi 2003: 135)

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Saudi artists at this time also addressed issues related to the problems and concerns of neighbouring Arab countries. For example, in his portrait "Coming," Salah Al-Nogaidan presented the Palestine Conflict by portraying Al Quds; located on the front pane is a barbed wire and the marks of steps breaking those barriers and moving forward toward the mosque, as figure 8 shows.

Figure 8: Salah Al-Nogaidan (1987), "Coming" (Al-Harbi 2003: 134)

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Another theme Saudi artists dealt with was women. There are many paintings of women with traditional clothes and jewellery (see figure 9). The clothing and accoutrements are symbolic, and using them seems to be one of the ways artists have linked to their Saudi tradition. Unlike my installations, in most of these works there seems to be a cultural idealisation of a woman's role. Sometimes, women were depicted in relation to certain roles in the society as mothers, housewives, hostesses, etc. (see chapter 3, section 3.2.2.3 for more details on women as a theme in Saudi artwork). For example, through her paintings, Safiyyah Binzager gives viewers the opportunity to discover and share intimate moments that reflect women's roles in Saudi culture in the past. In "Morning Talk" (see figure 10), she shows a typical morning ritual that women used to perform in the past. Women used to gather over a cup of coffee in the mornings in one of the houses, usually a house of a well off family, have a chat, talk about their plans for the day and then go to do their chores for the rest of the day; some of what is seen here may have disappeared as a life style pattern or have survived but transformed to another form (meeting in cafes) due to progress and modernity.

Figure 9: Khaled Yassin (1991), "Bedouin Woman" (Al-Harbi 2003:168)

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Figure 10: Safiyyah Binzager (1988), "Morning Talk" (http:/www.daratsb.com) [accessed on 31 July 2007].

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Some Saudi artists were inspired by Western art and tried to draw on the icons of this art using Western means. Al-Rusais (unpublished: 180) states that access to modern means of communication and studying art abroad led to Saudi artists being affected by different schools and styles. This effect varied depending on the countries they studied in, their educational background, their social background, and their openness towards other cultures.

Al-Rusais (unpublished: 181) explains that Saudi artists sometimes described themselves as followers of certain schools of art. For example, Dia Aziz Dia, Safiyyah Binzager, and Huda Al-Omar followed the principles of the Realism School. In their paintings, they expressed nostalgic feelings and reflected nature, but they moved away from the problems of the society. The same can be said about other artists' attempts to follow the principles of Impressionism. Some artists such as Nawal Moseli, Ahmad Falmban, and Abdullah Shaher mixed this with realism. Other artists such as Muneer Al-Hajji, Shareefa Al-Sudairi, and Hanan Al-Ghamdi were affected by Surrealism and dealt with topics that have oriental and Arabic references, which took them away from the

western concept of Surrealism. AL-Rusais also reports that artists' use of Abstractionism was weak, especially at the beginning; later it improved and varied. Mohammad Al-Rusais, Abdullah Idris, and Hashem Sultan are some of the artists who used Abstractionism. The use of Cubism by artists such as Mohammad Siam and Ali Hweidi is also described by Al-Rusais as being simple, readable, but not deep enough. In short, these movements were considered and absorbed into Saudi Art, but the concepts were interpreted differently within their new context.

Several Saudi artists integrated traditional and modern art. Ayman Yusri did this to bring out his ideas and convey them to his audience. He, in particular, dealt with the everyday emotions of life, such as the feelings of desolation expressed by expatriates living in Saudi Arabia far away from their countries and families. In 1988, he incorporated an image of the Mona Lisa in his painting, "The Mona Lisa" (See figure 11). He placed it in a new setting where her face was surrounded by a mask typically known in African villages as Dadaban (Al-Harbi 2003: 196). He used these masks in an attempt to disguise the identities of his characters to eliminate social differences between them. This mask was turned into what can be read as a sardine tin with a key that can be used only from the outside. Face masks are scattered underneath, which could symbolise how people may have several faces they use when it suits them.

Figure 11: Ayman Yusri (1988), "The Monalisa" (Al-Harbi 2003:196)

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Bakr Shaikhoun also integrated traditional and modern art. In 1996, he used his issue led art to portray the subject of the sudden abundance of wealth in Saudi Arabia, through his painting "The Memory of the Years of Abundance" (see figure 12). In it, he painted an old Saudi banknote which was used when petrol was first discovered and brought wealth to the country. On the note he wrote: "My father died and left me 1000 riyals (£150). I wish I had a thousand fathers who had left me 1000,000 riyal (£150,000)" (Al-Harbi 2003: 194). Al-Harbi explains that Bakr Shaikhoun raised the issue of values and principles and how wealth affected society negatively; he could see how the materialistic values prevailed to the extent that people cared only about money even if it cost them losing their loved ones. The banknote was magnified in an unusual manner to create a sense of insecurity on the part of the audience. Though both Shaikhon and Yusri dealt with complex social issues such as wealth and identity, they have not attempted to deal with gender.

Figure 12: Bakr Shaikhon (1996), "From the Memory of the Years of Abundance" (Al-Harbi 2003: 194)

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Abdullah Ashour also used mixed media to integrate traditional and modern art. He designed an unusual abstract artefact using the digits (click) of the keyboard and named it

"Click." Every image he designed had a specific code on it, providing symbolism. On his website, it is stated:

> All communication & globalization in the web begins with this keyboard, in just one click…it is interesting how universal this tool has become speaking the same language but also has been customized to speak all languages… even more interesting the infinite uses that one can do with it, not limited to a single action, but while at it, and with a click of a button you feel that the world is in your hands and you are geographically located everywhere. (Ashour 2007)

In producing it, he extracted keys from a variety of keyboards and randomly assembled them on a smooth wooden board. He added small electric transistors which created a visual effect together with sounds of keyboard ticking, a mobile, internet modems, and medical devices in an ICU. All of these sounds made the viewers feel part of the click world, crossing geography and making the distance much closer to them. He wanted to create human awareness that co-exists with art, connecting the mind to the environment. In this sense, his art is close to mine as I too aimed to connect my audience to their environment by using familiar sounds.

Figure 13: Abduallah Ashour (2007), "Click" (http://www.ashourart.com) [accessed on 12 Dec 2010]

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Abeer Fatni picked up local themes from life in Saudi Arabia where she studied and still lives. One of the pieces she produced is called "The Bag." She used different materials

such as iron, wood, fibreglass, glass, and colours to form a bag that is the size of a room. The audience was able to enter the room, explore the inside which was covered with sayings by international figures and come out with their own stories. Abeer is a colleague of mine, and we studied and worked together; we share our aspirations and have similar ideas about the use of material especially exaggerated forms.

Figure 14: Abeer Fatni (2007), "The Bag" (http//www.Abeeralfatni-a4.com) [accessed on 3 Feb. 2011]

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2.5   Development of Multimedia

It is hard to review the complete history of multimedia in a few pages. As a result, this section will give a brief history of multimedia with emphasis on those aspects that are relevant for my practice, namely the use of video and performance in early feminist work, the use of projected film and the development of the immersive field of practice.

After the 2nd World War there were a number of key developments in art that are relevant for the context of my work. These include the overlap between art and life, where the role of art could be the critique of social and political issues, the use of different, non hierarchical media in large installations, the overlaps between the different genres of art, dance and theatre, and the assertion that individual experiences were valid as subject matter. John Cage, a writer, artist and musician had a great influence on the practice of

East Coast art, through his affirmation of the link between everyday life and art. He emphasised "art as an idea and "the elements of 'chance' in art as a valid way of making a work" (Rush 1999: 23).

The second half of the 20th century was specifically dominated by the commercialization of the moving image. Television and film became major sources of entertainment with video standing in opposition to television and being used widely by different sorts of activists. Rush (1999) and Lovejoy (2004) suggest that the physical qualities of the Portapak, which was introduced as a medium in video art by Nam June Paik in 1965, were appealing to video artists because it was relatively light, affordable, flexible, easy to use, and practical as images could be stored on inexpensive reusable video cassettes. It also provided immediate feedback as the image captured by the camera could be seen immediately, with no processing lag time.

Lovejoy (2004:93) explains that within the modernist framework, video production as a valid practice for artists did not seem at first to "overlap with broader social attitudes about the congruency of culture, consumption, and ideology which were growing." However, Blackwell (2008) explains that the use of the Portapak suited the artistic projects that presented psychological possibilities that were open to interpretation by the viewers, who would sometimes interact with them. Such topics could not have been explored physically using static mediums. Moreover, and as Lovejoy (2004: 95) emphasizes, while film is thought to detach the viewer from present reality and makes him a spectator, video affords a sense of intimacy and enables the artist to communicate personal messages with no need for special crew. In the 1970s, video artists in Western Europe and North America were living in a time of relative peace and economic prosperity. In spite of apparently having everything, books such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique,* which was published in 1963, revealed the frustrations of many American women with regards to their

roles and opportunities. Other books, like Judy Chicago's *Through the Flower, My Struggle as a Woman Artist,* which was first published in 1975, demonstrated the difficulties of being a woman artist at that time.

Lovejoy (2004) and Blackwell (2008) state that feminists who were less rooted in traditional media such as painting and sculpture, which were thought operate within the male system, and were therefore the first to grasp and make use of performance and video. The Portapak appealed in particular to these women artists mainly because it was new, portable, and had no history or predetermined cultural or aesthetic values. Unlike film, it was seen as a personal rather than a collective institutional enterprise, and gave the opportunity for these artists to perform face-to-face in front of the audience. (Lovejoy: 96).

Dougherty (2007) reports that women began using the new medium unrestrictedly to explore contemporary issues. This was not possible in previously available mediums. Most of the video art produced was based in autobiography, performance, documentation and political interpretation of popular culture (Lovejoy 2004: 107-108). Drawing on consciousness raising events, rather than using 'patriarchal' themes, issues such as sexual freedom and imagery, freedom of expression, self-worth, and the quality of women's lives were common themes amongst female video artists. Dougherty (2007) emphasizes that these artists did not seek recognition or commercial success.

One of the methods feminist artists used in making video art was recording of the artists using the monitor as a mirror by directly addressing the camera in a confessional or actively gazing manner. For example, Joan Jonas, who has worked with media and performance since the 1960s, experimented with ways of integrating the public into her work. She comments how supplying a mirror –like reflection of the action altered the audience's perception of what they were seeing (Rush 1999: 43). Her performance "Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy" in 1972 focused on the engagement and tension that

exist between the viewer, the artwork itself and artist (Lovejoy 2004: 140). In her video, Joan Jonas addressed the issue of the objectification of the female body in the media. She presented a fragmented female image as being out of synchronization with a woman's identity. By staring at the viewer while the scenes play behind her, she created a layering of space and time and challenged the viewer to deconstruct the traditional representations of women as shown on television (Blackwell 2008). As in Martha Rosler's work, the television screen is used to frame the video; however, Joan Jonas blended pre-recorded footage into the recorded performance which was relayed on video (Blackwell 2008).

In her 1975 video, 'Semiotics of the Kitchen', Martha Rosler critiqued the socially prescribed image of a woman as someone who is happy with the roles assigned to her by society, i.e. as a housewife. For Martha Rosler, the use of the domestic space is very relevant, and draws on the work by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro called 'Womanhouse', which was in turn related to *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. In her work, Martha Rosler put on display traditional cooking implements and methodically picked them up, named them and demonstrated their use, banging the pan, chopping with the knife and stirring with the spoon, all in ways that represented frustration and anger. As Blackwell (2008) comments, doing this was the "tool" she used to expose the assumption that women are satisfied with their domestic role.

Martha Rosler furthered the metaphorical use of "tool" by formatting her video as a self-help television program. In the comfort of their own houses, the viewers would have immediate access to tools that could offer them a better way of life. Due to the authority of the television, the viewer is expected to obediently accept the visual and cultural messages they receive through the screen (Blackwell 2008). The set she uses is plain and the movement of the camera is controlled (Rush 1999: 80). This was done to give her performance a primitive quality and allow the reader to focus fully on her. The film was

meant to be shown on TV which finds explanation why some of the gestures represent throwing of the imaginary content outside the box ("Semiotics of the Kitchen" n.d.).

In general, feminist video female artists have placed great emphasis on the role of the body. Mona Hatoum created many actions and performances based on her own body during the 1980s, and so has the French multimedia performance artist, Orlan. Since the 1990s, Orlan has been undergoing surgical procedures to re-sculpt her body and face and recording these operations using video digitalisation and recordings. She even chose to remain conscious to direct the surgical performance for the camera (Rush 1999: 60).

Another important aspect that characterises video art is the use of projectors. The arrival of the powerful, relatively low-cost digital projectors by 1990 provided a shift in the use of video by artists (Rush 1999: 142). Projection devices can be used to enable "representing the often chaotic and random feel of multiple images competing constantly for our attention" (Rush 1999: 84). This availability of projectors helped in creating a new way of engaging with video imagery and opened up much more spatial and less object–oriented ways of dealing with the image as Rush (1999) claims. The projector enables the physicality of the monitor to disappear and be replaced by a more immaterial experience of projected image to occur. Blackwell (2008) reports that Bruce Nauman, Bill Viola, and Nam June Paik, were some of the artists who began to move from the confinement of the video monitor to single screen projected image in room environment (See chapter 4 and 5 for more information on Bill Viola's work).

One of the most prominent artists who used projection technology was Gary Hill. He created "Tall Ships" in 1992 in which he projected gray scale images of people on to the wall of a dark corridor. The people constantly move and appear to try to reach and interact with the viewers without producing any sounds. A girl runs forward towards the viewer while an old man glares at the camera. Without saying any word, there seems to be

an interaction between the viewer and the spirit world (Blackwell 2008). In the 1990s, both the monitor and projection played a big role in the work of many artists where each one of them brings its particular qualities to the work of art.

A much more iconoclastic and popularized mood was common in the British artists' work. In their provocative, humorous yet meaningful work, artists such as Sam Taylor–Wood, Georgina Starr, Fiona Tan and Gillian Wearing drew on their everyday experiences and explored themes of subjectivity (Lovejoy 2004: 113). Most of them drew on their every day experiences to produce their artwork. Irony has become a formal device in their work to enable the audience to cope with potential disappointment in the self and possible inequitable realities.

One of the original YBA's (Young British Artists) was Gillian Wearing who introduced herself to the art scene with a series of documentary photographs, "Signs" (1992 – 93), in which she approached strangers to write something about themselves on a white card (Ferguson, De Salvo and Slyce 1999: 45). Gillian Wearing's use of video is meant to expose the suffering and sadness found within human beings. Her work is described as a combination of every day incidents, documentation and theatrical production. It is not uncommon for her subjects to be pictured wearing different forms of masks showing the separateness between public and private (Ferguson, De Salvo and Slyce 1999: 102). Her use of fixed frame relates back to the work of Andy Warhol's 'Screen Tests' of the 1960s and blurs the line between reality and fiction (Tanya Bonakdar Gallery Website 2011).

Gillian Wearing continued with the theme of masks in her 1995 video projection, "Homage to the Woman with the Bandaged Face Who I Saw Yesterday Down Walworth Road" which lasted for seven minutes. This work came with subtitles rather than words which helped viewers to understand the theme of how people perceive each other. This

video projection was based on a real person she saw in the street; everything about her seemed normal except that her face was covered with bandage, which added a sense of mystery to her identity. It seemed like by being different from others, she has access to both worlds (Ferguson, De Salvo and Slyce 1999: 110). In one of her other works, 'Snapshot' (2005), she uses a series of seven single-projection videos framed by a candy-coloured array of plasma screens. All depict different stages of the female life cycle- from the innocence of early childhood to old age.

With the growth of technology in the 1980s an immersive field of practice emerged. The development of time based media in art helps the viewer to recognize a created 'world' that has a direct relationship with the real world. The combinations of light, sound and technology help the audience to understand the meanings because they require full interaction and stimulate dialogues within an extended space. Hanson (2004: 97) states that digital art forms "both act upon the perceiver's physical constraints and provoke the audience to reconstruct aesthetic assumptions." In other words, art works on a sophisticated audience who is willing to spend time with an image, theatre or video and interact with it. The viewer is required to sit for a considerable time in front of the work of art as it unfolds. Moreover, "the viewer must take up a position that is both inside and outside the work, and is thus presented with the spectacle of themselves as part of the work, which can be confronting to some (Cooke and Morgain 2005: para. 3).

Coulter-Smith (2006) emphasises that the viewer can be captivated by means of narrative immersion. Interactive video is thought to intensify the immersive effect when presented on a flat screen due to the involvement of the body as well as vision. Some of the artwork of Bill Viola and Gary Hill may be classified as immersive. They both used video to capture a stream of conscious thought, to show the mind's eye moving from one thing to

the next as a narrative complete with metaphors (see section 2.6 for information on Bill Viola).

Another important video artist who aimed to immerse the viewers in their work was Vito Acconci who explored the place of the body in art and life in several black and white single channel video works in 1971. Mèredieu (2005: 40) explains that Vito Acconci turned the video cameras into a means of communicating with the viewer. He used himself to confront the viewer's experience of viewing, addressing questions of privacy, power, subjectivity and identity. His work tests the limits of endurance of the artist's body and the viewer's powers of attention. In "Theme Song", made in 1973 Vito Acconci lies on the floor, shifting positions in front of a black and white couch. He looks directly at a very close camera and repeatedly invites the viewer to join him inside the camera as he smokes an endless cigarette (Rush 1999: 96).

However, artists did not always direct their performance to the public or seek interactivity with an audience. Artists like Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci sometimes performed in their studios, videotaped but did not show their performance to the public audience (Rush 1999: 48). These artists freed themselves from the confines of traditional art-making and focused on the physical process of art making which at times became the work itself. In their work the video camera represented the audience (Rush 1999: 48). Towards the end of the 20th century, most media performances were operated using digitised control boards, lights, sound, videos, films and much else.

2.6 Installation Art

Immersion is what make installation art different from other forms of art. Some installations were sculptural works that engage with gallery spaces, or are digital, or projected like films, take over the atmosphere of the gallery, in ways that envelop the audience into that constructed world. (Paul 2003: 70). In his review of the history of

multimedia video installations, Rush (1999: 122) explains that this practice appeared at the same time as single-channel video art. It came to the forefront in the 1970s with some of its pioneers being Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell, and Bruce Nauman. In 1968 Bruce Nauman made "Video Corridor" which was a tunnel formed by two long walls that lead towards two monitors placed on top of each other at the other end. While walking down the corridor, the viewer could see himself on these monitors from the back, as he was moving away from the camera, meaning that people could see themselves as others do in everyday situations (Rush 1999: 121). By showing the audience their own image, the artists gave them a shock of recognition that was new at the time. What was also new was the realisation in the viewer that they were also the performer who completed the work of art (Rush 1999: 124).

In 1983, Bill Viola made his immersive installation "Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House". He trapped himself in a room for three days. By trying to stay awake, he was showing how harsh time can be. In his notes: "There is nothing to wait for except to live in the next moment. Just living. Isolating time." (Viola 1995: 97). This work drew attention to the shrinking of space where the long shot shows a room that is a symbol of prison and security.

An example of another installation which brought the viewer into the heart of the installation was Marie –Jo Lafontaine's "At Five in the Afternoon", made in 1984 (Mèredieu 2005: 67). Due to its circular nature, this installation could be viewed from all sides. Imitating a bullring, the viewers were trapped into witnessing two contrasting Spanish activities of bullfights and flamenco dancing. In a sense, they become fully engrossed in the work to the extent that they almost become an element in the installation (Mèredieu 2005: 68).

The public function of art has been manipulated in the installations as it was in video art and films. As a result a number of installation, artists portrayed social issues, especially those related to identity. Following the lead of early video artists such as Joan Jonas and Vito Acconci, video installations at the end of the 20th century were used as a medium to examine the self. However, these have also tended to be projected films on an epic scale. One of these artists is the American Matthew Barney. In his "Cremaster cycle" from the early 1990s, he explored the ways in which a sculptural form could be manifest using cinematic language (Flood 2005). As well as showing in museums, he also has allowed these works to be shown on television and at the cinema. In many of his works he has explored different aspects of male identity beyond conventional boundaries through his occupation with "body parts and fluids, hetero and homosexual relations, athletics and alchemy" (Rush 1999: 151). However, male identity is also culturally determined. For example, gay men's identity was the theme of many works of art in the west. The installation "Toilet" 1986 by Adam Jones deals with the theme of having gay sex in public toilets, an act charged with excitement and danger. This is seen by many gay men as a crucial part of gay men identity (Cooper 1994). In 1989, Nicolas Lowe created his installation "(Safe) Sex Explained" in which he looked at the need of rethinking the complexities of gay men sexual behaviour because of AIDS and the need to confront prejudice, inviting an immediate emotional reaction (Cooper 1994).

Women's identity was the theme for many works of installations. Working in America, the performance artist and film maker Lynn Hershman Leeson developed her work from early feminist thinking, where intimate language, politics and art were fused, as can be seen in her film "Women Art Revolution", where she interviewed some of the key American feminist artists like Judy Chicago (womenartrevolution.com n.d.). As with those artists, the female body and how it was viewed and considered as a site of oppression was

central to her work. One of the many threads that has run through her work is the interest in the media creation of identities. In "Room of One's Own: Slightly Behind the Scenes", produced in 1992, she created a peep show related to the erotic depiction of women in the media. The viewer looks into a box, and when he or she has stepped on a carpet in front of the pedestal, images related to a bed, telephone or clothes, all of which are stored on video disk, are activated. An image of a woman shows and asks the viewer to look somewhere else. The viewer becomes a frustrated voyeur and then his or her gaze is reflected back from the small television at the back of the room (Rush 1999: 203-204). It is expected that with better video compression and bandwidth increase, interactive videos will continually become easier and wider in their audience

The artist, Robert Whitman, though a male, also dealt with female identity in his installation "Ebb" in 1996. He shows a bathtub full of projected bloody water with a woman climbing into it and the recedes into her body, reversing the menstrual flow (Rush 1999: 154). Countering the passive or biologically determined depictions of women, Pipipotti Rist's work during the 1990s explored a feisty version of woman, who did not conform. Her installation in 1997, "Ever Is Over All" consisted of two large screens that met at the corner of a wall. Time and speed were two important elements, as Pipipotti Rist juxtaposed shots of slowly changing long-stemmed red flowers with the movements of a glamorous woman walking down a street in a boasting manner, humming and smashing car windows (Rush 1999: 157).

Female artists in Britain such as Mona Hatoum and Gillian Wearing also produced installations that dealt with identity. Coming from Middle Eastern origin, Mona Hatoum also employed multimedia devices to deal with issues related to identity and the Middle East, as well as universal settings and themes such as oppression, vulnerability and resistance of the human bodies (Hatoum 2000). In her 1994 installation "Corps ètranger",

she used her body by inserting a tiny camera inside her and "projecting the video of her internal organs in a circular structure resembling an eyeball placed on the floor of a walk. Viewers are given the simulated experience of walking through the artists reproductive system" (Rush 1999: 156) (see chapter 4, section 4.4.2.3 for more examples of her work).

In her 1994 video installation "My Favourite Track", the prominent British artists, Gillian Wearing used five monitors with colours, sound and still video. Unlike many of her other installations, the mood is in this installation is relatively cheerful; Gillian explains that "My Favourite Track" is meant to be funny, and the participants knew it (Ferguson, De Salvo and Slyce 1999: 121). The monitors show five people singing the tunes playing on their walkmans but they can't hear themselves or each other due to the loudness of the tunes. The walkman means that the person can sing a song that is not there. It is a kind of isolating factor to escape reality even if it is a small place in their heads, and not bother about the surroundings. This installation shows the inability of the characters to articulate their emotions; the participants mumble and mistake their words, which forces the viewers back instead onto "the visual presentation of those who attempt to speak: their hideous masks, their surrogate bodies and their lips tight shut" (Ferguson, De Salvo and Slyce 1999: 52).

The viewing context is of importance to Gillian Wearing. She personally prefers showing her work in neutral spaces such as galleries because they do not interfere with her work, and she can control the whole environment; the fact that galleries are not provided with seats to view installation, including the long one, limits the number of viewers watching it at a time which provides a very personal experience with the work (Ferguson, De Salvo and Slyce 1999: 65). However, when going there, viewers show respect to the place in terms of their behaviour to the extent that it can be sometimes intimidating (Ferguson, De Salvo and Slyce 1999: 52). In "Western Security", produced in 1995,

Gillian questioned public behaviour within spaces such as galleries. She disrupted the sacred space of the gallery by staging performances of cowboys running through the Hayward Gallery, all carrying guns (see 2.5 for more information on Gillian Wearing).

Shirin Neshat, is a Middle Eastern installation artist who has been part of a very vibrant Iranian art and film scene in America. She has created a sustained exploration of social, political, cultural and psychological dimensions of women's experience in her native country. Charta (2001) explains that she uses her background and culture to create works that express universal ideas about concepts such as loss, meaning and memory through contextualizing her themes to the gender issues in the Islamic world(see chapter 5, section 5.4.2 for details on her work). Shirin Neshat used symbols such as the veil, headscarf, text, hair and body, through which they suggest contradictory ideas as repression, submission, resistance and aggression. I used similar symbols to express my ideas in ways that are sometimes similar and at other times different from hers. For example, I drew on the submission and resistance of Saudi women and how they are in the shadow of men by using their black gowns, abaya, which is similar to the chador Iranian women wear (see chapter 5, section 5.4.2 for details of particular works and how they inspired me).

2.7   Integration of Multi-Media and Traditional Art

Bowen (2003: 219) reported that exploring the effect of digital technologies and cyberspace on hand-made art processes is conditioned by the artists' perceptions of the new contexts. Consequently, using new media helps to juxtapose old and new ways of life related to the themes, a thing I applied to my installations (see chapter 5 for details on my practice). It was one of my motivations to prove that art in Saudi Arabia does not have to be only handmade using traditional techniques to represent society, but that by using digital technology the increase in visual languages available would enable the viewers to

undergo a visual experience of psychosocial constructions. I tried to create an environment in which the audience could be immersed.

Some critics, on the other hand, suggest that digital imaging interferes with the originality of art works, and therefore its values – both commercial and artistic – are compromised (Paul 2003: 267). This was touched upon in 1936 by Walter Benjamin who discussed the significance of the new media, though in a different context. In the essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin states that there are consequences that result from reproducing art. He describes his thoughts about film and photography in particular and points out that their reproducibility meant that the rituals and aura normally surrounding art have been negated (2005). The notion that digital imaging interferes with the originality of artwork is held by some Saudi art critics such as Wafa Khankar (2010:72) who considers digital media a form of 'visual pollution'. This includes graphic software, photography, media, posters, etc. She claims that when used by artists, these commercial forms of digital media limit the artist's creative abilities and leave nothing to the imagination. As I see it, Khankar's condemnation represents a call for Saudi artists to limit their potential and miss on many chances to create digital art. She is ignoring the fact that a mixture of traditional forms of art such as painting and digital media can give a new way of seeing and understanding the past through art and tradition, as Mirzoeff (2003: 8) suggests.

Plagens (2000: 3) reviewed artists like Paul Pfeiffer, who used a variety of technologies to integrate traditional art and digital media. He reported that Pfeiffer's work revealed more than just the surface meaning of the recorded image of the object, and instead established a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze as Chandler (2000: 1) claims. Paul Pfeiffer used digital imagery to convey a meaning that was beyond the surface, a result I desired to achieve in my artefacts.

Jeff Rothenberg (2002: 38), an artist, claims that the computer is a tool for imaginative invention and thus a good means of coping with a world of flux and flow. Inspired by such views, I have tried to find a new means to illuminate my thoughts beyond the limitations of traditional art and books. A growing awareness of the capabilities of computer technology and through reading reviews of other artists like Bill Viola, Shirin Neshat and Mona Hatoum, who have employed multimedia devices, helped me to extend my research to include and manipulate technological means, in order to convey my inner thoughts. During my exhibition, I exhibited hybrid artefacts, combining traditional art and digital media, as embodiments of a new form of creative expression of art in Saudi Arabia.

In my thesis, I present the argument that the incorporation of digital technology provides an effective visual stimulation that can be manipulated in various ways to develop a new area of meaning that will be illuminating for my Saudi audience. I attempt to explore the possibilities that visual culture can provide to my work in interpreting meaning to my audience, to enable them to see things in relation to past knowledge and belief. The common assumption held is that their positive response and feedback quantifies the success of the work within its site. This does not necessarily mean the work is 'successful'; it might simply mean that audience finds the subject easy to deal with. Saudi artists have rarely considered the topic of creating installations by integrating traditional art with digital media. This meant that no literature was available on how the viewers perceive it.

The only work I am familiar with is that of Hesham Maghrabi (2007) who investigated the process of shifting artistic activities from conventional studios and fine artist practices to installation art practices. He used a combined approach by studying literature within the field, holding an exhibition, engaging with artists as audience and conducting practical analysis. He also discussed the use of new technology in a body of work that he developed from abstract expressionist painting and reflected on his practice

tracing the changes that took place in his work. Maghrabi's structured work was a model that I referred to in my discussion of the findings of this research. However, Maghrabi did not combine different media in the final presentations, and in being abstract, the languages used to express the issues that he wanted to consider were different.

In his study, Maghrabi (2007: 146) considered the feedback of his audience in Saudi and Turkey as significant opinions that could help to adjust and to promote further development in his artworks' productions. He also claimed that the initial feedback provided him with confidence to carry on with his vision of improvement concerning the accomplishing of a unique new media abstract animation. The majority of the audiences in his second United Kingdom and Turkey shows in 2006 were specialists in the field of art and design. The majority gave positive reactions to the installation, but they did not think of his tool as entirely new. The researcher attributed this to the popularity of using the computer to create artwork in Turkey. In his exhibition in Jeddah in 2006, he aimed to see how Saudi audiences (artists) would react to this kind of art. The findings showed that they highly appreciated it. This is because, as the researcher thought, showing work created by a computer is new in Saudi Arabia, and viewers there are generally fascinated by any new challenges and changes in the field of visual art. The differences in reviews in the two countries show how audiences react according to the situation in which they are in and the culture and country they belong to.

The success of digital media art work in involving its users has also been proved successful by Woolner (2009) who created new artefacts using digital technology to help a community of people affected by an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The evaluation showed the success and effectiveness of the experiences from various perspectives such as teachers, students and staff. Yeh (2007) also studied the potential of multimedia art to stimulate personal expressions of, and reflection on childhood experience. The analysis of

the visitors' and users' responses to the installations showed that they were emotionally engaged at all levels and reflected on the artist's intention and the issues presented in the installation.

2.8 Gender Issues

Art has been used as a means of opening up discussions about complex issues, like gender. These have covered a range of topics which include articulating the contribution to culture and society of particular women artists and exposing the apparently seamless narratives of male histories that serve to exclude these contributions, as discussed in the work of Linda Nochlin (2006), to considering the reasons for exclusion and marginalization as in Griselda Pollock's "Vision and Difference" in 1988, to discussing the relationship of female experiences that vary from culture to culture, and within the subcultures of mainstream society, as argued in Marsha Meskimmon's "Women Making Art" (2003), to discussing real artworks of women artists as in some works by Shirin Neshat (Charta 2002).

In Western countries, the 19th century saw the beginning of first–wave feminism when women started demanding greater freedom and rights to vote, be educated and have professions. As a result, women started to enjoy some economic independence (Holmes 2009). The second wave of feminism during the 1970s emphasised women's rights to control their own bodies as well as their professional life. In Saudi Arabia, it seems women are still experiencing what women faced during the first wave feminism.

In the field of art, however, more recent feminist critical thinking acknowledges that 'women's art' is too broad and does not acknowledge the subjectivities of experience across and within cultures. Meskimmon questions the authoritative "I" who authored texts. She notices that it has always been asserted that:

the "intellectual subject capable of rational thought and the genius who created high art, was not a neutral subject, but masculine, heterosexual, white, Euro-ethnic, middle class and able-bodied-the normative subject of western epistemology and ontology. (2003: 71)

In this sense, a woman is the main mark of difference. She is "the 'object' rather than the 'subject' and thus mute, un-representable and unknowable, something that many artists who are women have subverted and questioned.

Cultural and social assumptions about gender differences are manifested in art. However, these differences are elusive when they appear natural because of the social systems in power. Writing in America, Linda Nochlin's landmark article of 1971 "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" raised a lot of questions about why women's creativity was ignored (Nochlin 2006: 22). This article opened a huge discussion and increased awareness about the question asked within art that placed women's artists within a weaker place. One of the assumptions Nochlin questioned was whether women are capable of greatness. Rather being biologically incapable, she questioned the educational and social structures that had surrounded women artists through the ages, which had excluded them from many of the normal ways of becoming professionals. In another article, "Women, Art and Power" Nochlin (1989) introduced some of the famous artworks that represented gender differences such as Jacques-Louis David's "The Oath of the Horatii" and explained that most of these dealt with implicit context of women's passivity, sexual availability, and helplessness, which made it difficult for any respectable English woman artist of the nineteenth century to create a convincing image of her professional situation. In areas other than art, there are representations that suggest the same things that Nochlin and Meskimmon have articulated.

Griselda Pollock (2006: 77) points to the fact that the situation had improved for women artists but sexual differences still matter to a great extent. Molly Nesbit (2006: 125) suggests that as women, the artists should not restrict themselves to the experiences of

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women and so does Martha Rosler (2006: 141) who adds that as a body, and as individuals, women artists fought to produce significant art that would generate questioning and the recognition of difference.

Gender asymmetry is universal, but the degree of inequality and the forms that gender inequality takes are interconnected with political, economic and social factors. Kimmel (2004: 99) and Holmes (2009) agree that gender is about difference, inequality and the power that men as a group have over women. Changes usually create tensions between the sexes. The more powerful group, represented by men in Saudi Arabia, seeks to reinforce the traditional hierarchical cultural patterns which retain their position of power (see Qawama in chapter 6, section 6.5.1.3). The male figure, regardless of his age, colour or education is in control. In many ways this is paralleled by the power systems where the histories, educational advantages and cultural narratives were constructed by white, educated males as suggested by Nochlin (2006, 1989) and Meskimmon (2003).

However, society as a whole has a great responsibility, since gender, as Holmes (2009: 8) asserts, is socially structured. The way a society chooses to structure different aspects such as family, education, class and work will influence how its people perceive gender. Nochlin's article (Nochlin 1989) raised awareness about the fact that it is the attitudes of the society and institutions that have led women not to be recognized in the art world, and by implication, stressed the importance of creating a world in which equal achievement will be made possible and actively encouraged by social institutions. She suggests that in a patriarchal society, women must conceive of themselves as equal to men. They must have the courage and the intellectual as well as the emotional commitment to make sure that their voices are heard and their achievements are recognised. Within this frame women can make choices for themselves and be active in changing people's perception. Such ideas inspired the way I approached my installations.

There is a lively debate in Arabian cultures about the role of the different genders. The Arab countries vary widely and differ significantly in the degree to which women are granted opportunities to exercise their roles as equal partners to men. The most striking differences are revealed in practices such as veiling, seclusion, segregation, education and work opportunities. In some countries like Tunisia, issues of women's rights are openly discussed, but in others such as Saudi Arabia they are violently contested.

Though coming from a much more liberal Arab country than Saudi Arabia, the Lebanese feminist, Magida Salman is not optimistic about the situation of women in the Arab world, and thinks that Arab women live in captivity, which is not their choice (Salman et al. 1987:6). Papanek (1990: 163) agrees with Salman that it is a big myth to say that a woman's nature makes her choose to sacrifice, and explains that this assumption is promoted by those in power. These positions are incongruent with Nochlin's notion that women's current position comes as result of a relation of external forces which works to their disadvantage, while those in control reap the benefits.

Islamic teaching says that men and women are equal. To clarify, Al-Munajjed (1997: 24-26) acknowledges that Islam accords both men and women the right to divorce, participate in social and religious activities, participate in political affairs and hold government positions. Women are entitled to as much freedom of expression as men; in the early days of Islam, they participated in serious discussions with the prophet himself, as well as with other Muslim leaders. Several reports in Islamic history describe women's visibility and participation in communal patterns and a considerable number of women warriors fought alongside the prophet. Al-Munajjed (2006) however, claims that the difference in their nature and economic position makes men's rights and liabilities a little greater than women's, a thing Salman (1987: 6) and Papanek (1990: 163) reject completely. Segregation emerged only later when Arab tribes started to settle in urban

centres among the richer classes when women were shut off from the rest of the household (Al-Munajjed 1997, 2006).

The practice of veiling is not part of Islamic law. The prophet did advise women to cover themselves modestly, but not to cover their faces when they are in the company of unrelated men. Many Saudi women, in cities and villages, tend to wear the veil. Moreover, it is officially deemed that women have no right to mix or socialise with unrelated men; as a result, the separation of the sexes is evident in every aspect in Saudi life. Chamberlin (2006) and Al-Munajjed (1997: 42) asserts that segregation for most Saudi women has become not only a way of life, but also a safeguard against 'too many complications' arising in the presence of men. Doumato (1996) reports that even the most liberal women in Saudi Arabia conform to such enforced rules of veiling so that those in power will be willing to hear them (p. 576).

The coexistence of the traditional and the modern in different aspects of life presents a major challenge to Saudi people in general, and women in particular, due to Saudi Arabia's specific Islamic tradition, namely Wahabbi teachings (Al-Rasheed 2002: 2). However, Al-Munajjed (1997: 6) discusses this as not being a great impediment to Saudi women taking part in the process of national development. She stresses that keeping an authentic Saudi identity is an essential element in the evolution of social entity of women in Saudi Arabia. El-Saadawi also calls for Arab women to understand that there is no conflict between one's authentic Arab personality and modern culture. Rather, the opposite is held true:

> a woman's ability to grasp her history and authenticity increases as she is able more fully to comprehend modern civilisation, and the new sciences, from East, West, South and North. Being female and Arab is not unlike the human personality of either sex in any other society: it is the product of that creativity which links the past with the present, the heritage with current civilisation, then goes beyond both history and heritage to a future which is freer, more just and more humane." (1988: 21)

El-Saadawi (1988: 19) thinks that accommodation between the old and the new is urgent and can be achieved easily if Arab women develop a highly critical outlook about their position by studying religion and the various interpretations about their position in Islam. They must link religious texts to historical and social contexts rather than see it through the minds of others, namely men, a thing that finds congruence in what Hamdan (2005) also suggests. Al-Farsi (2001:267) also calls for changes that conform to the Islamic Shari'ah, the changing needs of society as well as the requirements of modernisation.

Today, Saudi women can be found working in public and private sectors, doing jobs that were exclusively dominated by men such as journalism, banking engineering, law, etc. Al-Munajjed (2006) explains that though the pace of social reform is slow, it is happening and coming from within Saudi Arabia, with the support of the King himself. Such support from above resulted in the most remarkable advances in women's status in countries such as Oman and the UAE in the late eighties and early nineties when the governments' commitment to liberalising their countries in general created opportunities for women, as Talhami (2004: 29) confirms.

Talhami (2004:2) also claims that one of the reasons why Saudi Arabia is still behind the other Arab countries in terms of women's liberation and empowerment is due to its extreme cultural isolation and minimal contact with Western organisations. This is changing as many are now studying abroad, and many educated men and women are working hard to push for policies to improve the status of women. Open social media networking devices such as Facebook and Twitter in addition to YouTube and other open channels of communication, though extensively censored, are also opening new ways of exposure to other cultures.

2.9 Conclusion

In the past two decades, the effects of modernisation on everyday life have become more evident in Saudi Arabia. As technology becomes more advanced and widespread, the environment appears steeped with mass media images. In this chapter, several issues related to art in Saudi Arabia and the use of multimedia in art have been discussed, with particular reference to gender.

Since art has always reflected cultural changes, I find myself, as an educated Saudi female artist working in new media, attempting to make social comments through my art. I am interested in using digital technology and traditional art to create multi media that allows the audience to reflect on the tensions between contemporary and traditional life in Saudi Arabia. Yet, there are still many challenges ahead; such forms of art are not common in Saudi Arabia, so the audience and their reactions must be considered through each step of producing the artwork. As there is no record showing the involvement of Saudi artists in digital art, the next chapter will discuss the current situation in Saudi Arabia which was researched by interviewing contemporary Saudi artists.

Chapter 3

Review of Saudi Contemporary Artists

3.1 Introduction

In order to understand and contextualize my practice as an artist, it was important to review contemporary art in Saudi Arabia. However, at the beginning of my research there was insufficient published material on the subject, and although there have been some recent advances, there are still many gaps in knowledge. Hence, it is argued that the material provided in interviews with artists working in Saudi Arabia would be an important resource for future art students and a contribution to knowledge. It would also help to expose the work of Saudi artists to the rest of the world. This chapter provides an account of the data collection process and the analysis of the findings. These findings are discussed with reference to broader Saudi art literature.

3.2   Methods

3.2.1 Data Collection

The investigation of Saudi contemporary artists and the nature of their practice were initially undertaken through a literature review that included books and articles, exhibition brochures, websites as well as discussions with curators. These discussions entailed getting information about who the most famous artists were, what kind of art they practiced, what their work was about, how they marketed their work, who attended their exhibitions, how the audience received their work, etc. However, insufficient information which described their practice was found. Therefore, face to face interviews were arranged, where possible in the artist's studios. The selection of artists was made after having visited art galleries in Jeddah and holding conversations with professionals and specialists in the

field. Contact was made initially with eight artists who, once they had learnt about the aims of the research, were able to identify a further twelve artists: eight in Jeddah, two in Dahran, one in Tayef and one in Riyadh. Through interviewing twenty artists, I can claim that I was able to study a diverse range of work and ideas of practicing artists in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (See chapter 6 for details on interviews as a method for data collection)

In accordance with best practices (Creswell 2008: 226), an interview format of open and closed questions was drawn up, which ensured that the same information was collected from each artist (see appendix 1). The questions were designed to explore the current practices, their missions, beliefs, philosophies, style, inspiration, aspirations, and the perception of audiences to their work. The artists in Jeddah were interviewed face-to-face in their studios, allowing new and previous works to be referred to during the interview. The others were interviewed on the phone, as it was not possible for me to travel to their studios in different regions of the kingdom. However, they were asked if it was possible for them to be in their studios during the course of the interview so that they could have access to their works and as a result could refer to these works when needed, thus creating physical conditions similar to those surrounding the artists interviewed face to face.

The interviews were conducted in Arabic to ensure complete understanding. They were recorded with the permission of the artists, then transcribed and translated into English by a professional translator. The translation was validated by a second, bilingual (Arabic and English) artist to make sure that the translator had used the correct terminology.

All the interviewed artists were cooperative and gave sufficient data without leading the discussion away from its main focus. Although my aim was to understand the

position of my own practice through a review of contemporary Saudi practitioners, the conversation that took place was not the reciprocal interaction of two equal partners because I wanted them to say as much as they could about themselves and their practice. I tried to remain grounded in my questions and left the analysis till later. I was also aware that the interviews with the artists might be influenced by my beliefs and development as an artist, so I made sure that I documented all my concerns and hunches in a reflective journal which I constantly referred while collecting data from artists and while analyzing the collected data.

3.2.2 Data Analysis

Analyzing the data was achieved through reading and interpreting the transcripts of the artists interviews and my reflective journal, and where themes were linked to the same area, they were grouped together. This was followed by reflecting on the data and comparing and contrasting the narratives of the artists to trace certain patterns in their practice that may help make a map of Saudi artists' practice. In addition, a profile for each artist was prepared (see appendix 2) and a chart that summarized their main information was designed (Table 1).

The participants were asked to describe their experiences as Saudi artists so that an understanding of the nature of their works could be gained. After collecting demographic data (age, gender, and length of professional experience), the findings were organised according to the artist's purpose or mission of practice, philosophy of practice, themes, styles, audience, and aspirations for the future. In the end, my practice was compared to them.

Table 1: Background of the Saudi artists

Name	Age	Gender	Where educated	Type of art	Image
P1: Aa'tidal Etawi	Since 1977	Female	KSA	Surrealism and abstract symbolism	
P2: Abdullah Ashour:	Since 1985	Male	Abroad	**Paintings with Horofiyyat /abstract art**	
P3: Abdullah Hamas	Since 1974	Male	KSA	Abstract symbolism	
P4: Abdul Rahman Al-Suleiman	Since the early 1980s	Male	KSA	Various types of Abstract art	
P5: Abdullah Nuwawi	Since 1970	Male	Abroad	Expressionism and abstract art	This item has been removed due to third party copyright. The unabridged version of this thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester library, Coventry University.
P6: Abdullah Idris	Since 1970	Male	KSA	Abstract and pop art	
P7: Abdullah Rezeza	Since 1967	Male	Abroad	Realism, expressionism, abstract	
P8: Abeer Al Fatni	Since the early 1990s	Female	KSA	Cubism, sculpture, conceptual	
P9: Ahmed Falmban	Since 1967	Male	Abroad	Plastic art/ Photography/ expressionism and impressionism	
P10: Aiman Yusri	Since 1992	Male	KSA	Plastic arts /conceptual art	

P11: Bakr Shaikhon	Since the 1970's	Male	Abroad	Plastic art and monuments/ conceptual Art	
P12: Bassem Al-Sharqi	Since 2004	Male	KSA	Computer prints mixed with painting/ plastic art	
P 13 Fatima Imran	1985	Female	KSA	Abstract expressionism	
P 14 Fawziyah Sijnten	1980	Female	KSA	Realism	
P15: Hala Al-Aseelan	Since 2001	Female	KSA	Embroidered weaving	
P16: Mona Al-Ghassabi	Since 1990	Female	Abroad	Impressionism, realism and symbolism	This item has been removed due to third party copyright. The unabridged version of this thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester library, Coventry University.
P17: Muhammed Abdul Majid	Since 1966	Male	Abroad	Abstract paintings, ceramics and sculptures	
P18: Ola Hejazi	Since 2001	Female	Abroad	Oil on canvas mostly, metal carving	
P19: Radia Bargawi:	Since 1990	Female	KSA	Expression and surrealism art	
P20: Safiyya Binzagr	Since the 1960's	Female	Abroad	Plastic art /oil paintings	

2.2.1 Demographic Data

Demographic data were generated in relation to the participants' gender, age, and length of professional practice.

Gender

Nine participants were female, and eleven were male. This may not reflect the current gender distribution amongst practicing artists in Saudi Arabia which is difficult to establish due to the lack of official records. In his book, Al-Rusais (unpublished) tried to gather the names of all artists in Saudi Arabia, but this list is not comprehensive. He did, however, classify his list of artists into five generations (see chapter 2, section 2.4.3 for details on generations). Out of 34 artists whose names appear on the first generation list, only 3 were women. In the second generation list which includes some of the most famous names in the Kingdom 10 out of 92 were women. The third generation list mentions 47 names out of which 14 were women. The fourth generation list shows 21 names of women artists out of 44. This is very close to the sample I worked with. However, he did not mention any names of artists, male or female, under the category 'fifth generation', or artists who were mostly born in the 1980s, claiming that they are the future generation and still have a lot to learn and contribute before they can rise to national recognition. The rise in the number of female artists goes hand in hand with developments in the Kingdom (as described chapter 2), and the opportunities these women have been given to express themselves with confidence in the art world.

Age

Participants' ages ranged between 27-70 years. No artist older than 70 was part of the sample because no one of that age was identified by other artists. This could be due to the fact that no formal teaching of art was offered until the mid 1950s, and people in the past

were not encouraged to engage in artistic activities (Falmban 2008). Some artists claim that their work has become simpler but more mature with the passage of time. Abdul Rahman Al-Suleiman states:

> *The work has become more mature. As a person ages, people begin to simplify and summarize things. Similarly, this has happened in my artwork* (Abdul Raman Suliman)

Length of Professional Experience

The length of time that the interviewed artists had been practicing ranged from 2-46 years. Although some of the artists have permanent galleries, which comes as a result of owning these galleries and lucrative practices in Saudi Arabia, art is still less valued as a profession than other professions such as teaching, practicing medicine or working in a company. Many people consider it to be a hobby, rather than a profession. This is part of the value system in Saudi Arabia that does not value or allow forms of culture such as theatre and cinema. In most cases, the artists had a second profession in the fields of education, management or business to support themselves, as most of them did not sell their work.

3.2.2.2 Mission and Philosophy

The participating artists were asked to indicate their perception of the purpose of their practice as artists. The data analysis revealed that the interviewed artists can be grouped as follows: artists who produce work which mainly depicts Saudi culture; those whose work is issue led; those who produce art for pleasure and to make people love art; and artists who claim they have no specific purpose. Some artists in the first two categories sometimes shifted their purposes, which came as a result of being exposed to new forms of art or new experiences in life. Some had a combination of both. Not surprisingly, reflecting cultural practices and tradition was mentioned as a main purpose of art in most of the

artists' narratives. Abdullah Rezeza, a painter, who has been practicing art since 1967 was one of those artists who, in addition to depicting Saudi culture, was eager to link its past with its present:

> *My purpose is to convey themes and elements of our past in a modern way. My message is related to my culture and my heritage; I want our culture and heritage to connect with contemporary society...My practice aims to describe the heritage from the Najad. I specialize in the architecture of the region. I draw upon all of the old architectural designs and elements to create something new and convey new ideas relevant to our modern reality. Sometimes my pieces are mixed between reality and modernism* (Abdualla Rezeza)

It seems that the older artists started idealising the past using figurative traditions and showing traditional objects in their work. These included Abdullah Idris, Abdullah Hamas, Abduallah Nuwawi, Moammad Fadl and Safiyyah BinZagr who emphasizes the local identity of her art, justifying her purpose as a way of writing Saudi history with a brush.

Others claimed that they had an orientation towards themes about society. They pointed to their satisfaction in influencing society and bringing about positive change through their art. Unlike those whose mission was keeping Saudi traditions, an artist like Ayman Yusri perceived his mission as bringing attention to people's suffering through his paintings. The practices of Bakr Shaikhon, Ahmad Falmban and Radia Bargawi are also mainly issue led as they tried to draw attention to social problems such as abundance of wealth, poverty, and the invisibility of women. These artistic individual styles are sometimes identifiable as is the case with Radia Bargawi who is known to cover all women figures in her paintings with a cloth.

Such an attitude is significant because artists have a legitimate role to play in societies (Khankar 2010). This finding, however, is likely to have been influenced by the

sampling strategy for this study. It could be that this group of artists which was generated

through the snowball sampling techniques share similar values about the purpose of art.

Others practice art to express personal feelings and depict beauty. Among these are

Ola Hejazi and Fatima Imran:

> *My purpose is to enjoy what I'm doing and be happy. As an artist, creating pieces brings me pleasure and happiness...I don't have any message in particular. However, as a human being, I want to release myself from personal issues that have held me back in my life; with my brush and colours it's like I write a story that nobody can understand except me* (Ola Hejazi)

Art is Ola Hejazi's way of expressing herself in a conservative society. She claimed

that in her art she expresses herself freely and shows her work to the public, yet, she feels

safe using a language that only she can understand. She, the artist, remains the one who

knows what each stroke really means. This view of hers corresponds with the traditional

way of reading art which takes away the focus from the viewer to the artist. In her work,

which is a combination of Arabic calligraphy, painting using oil on canvas and metal

carving, she moves away from realism into symbolism. Ola was supported by the media,

which made her a celebrity. In 2007, Ola Hejazi sold 80 paintings, perhaps indicating the

popularity of non issue-led work with Saudi Arabians who buy art as decoration, though

decoration also has meaning and messages, rather than because they believe in the message

of the artist, as Abduallah Nuwawi states in an interview in Yemen Observer (Yemen

Observer 2009).

Some artists like AbdulAziz Ashour and Aatidal Etawi, both well-known abstract

artists who claim to be well received globally, thought that having a particular theme or

issue to pursue denies artistic creativity.

> *In my life, I've never worked on purpose or for a specific issue. I feel that working to further a specific cause will restrict the creative process; I think that artwork is emotional thinking...I never intend to put a message in my pieces but I hope the audience interprets my work in a way that conveys a*

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meaningful message applicable to them on an individual level (Aa'tidal Etawi)

The view of these artists that their art does not have a purpose is quite unorthodox as it is not possible for art to be about nothing. Nothing made by humans is neutral; there are messages about culture with everything made. Aatidal Etawi does not view art as a vehicle for making statements or expressing opinions; instead, the audience responds to her pieces whose subjects are open to multiple interpretations. This corresponds to Barthes's views who in his 1977 article, 'The Death of the Author,' focused on the reader when talking about the relationship between artistic purposes and the way that a text, for example, is read. He explained that the author had always been conceived of as the one who provided the meaning in a book. However, in the postmodern era the interpretation of the text is different from person to person, so it does not have a single meaning. It is the reader that brings together the strands of meaning for him or herself. Barthes's view was that with this death of the author as the maker of meaning, comes the birth of the reader who is the person in control of the interpretation (Barthes 1977: 2). The same principle can apply to the artist and the viewer where the meaning lies in the hands of the viewer. Morgan states that Bill Viola proclaimed that:

> The work does not belong to the artist, but lives instead in the consciousness of whoever views it. Art commences in the artist's withdrawal and struggle, which Viola likens to "the cloud of unknowing, or to "the dark night of the soul: Then the work belongs in time, where it is a gift ventured in faith (2004: 101).

Aatidal Etawi, in a way, contradicts herself in wanting people to find a message in her work when she herself claims not to have included one. Interestingly, this artist sold all her artwork in 1997. It could be that she knows what her audience wants and creates work that satisfies their needs. It is also noted that some of the artists who did not specify a purpose for doing art such Ola Hejazi, and Muna Al Gassabi belong to the younger

generation. Both were educated abroad and may be this gave them the courage to say that they do what they want to do, whenever they want to do it.

The purpose of art, the choice of themes and the choice of styles of expression cannot be divorced from the artists' beliefs, school of thought or even the philosophy that guides their practice and the type of art they prefer. This was articulated by the artists in terms of activities and skills that had significance for their professional development, such as reading scholarly books and works of literature, visiting art exhibitions and galleries, and applying new techniques in their practice. Several artists claimed that a work of art should adhere to both form and function; aesthetics and philosophy should go hand in hand. The artists used the word 'philosophy' as something that links to the traditions of philosophic thought. 'Aesthetics,' on the other hand, was used in reference to nature, creation and appreciation of beauty and taste. Abdulla Nuwawi is one of these artists.

> *Any work should have a special philosophy. When you choose the themes and you live in the society and interact with the elements of that society, you should be able to see the philosophy implied in the work* (Abdullah Nuwawi)

However, some artists thought that the artist creates the artwork, but it is up to the audience to decide the philosophy behind it.

> *The aesthetics is something I create, but the philosophy is something that I leave to the audience to discover* (Abdullah Hamas)

This brings again the importance of the contemporary audience being engaged in the appreciation and interpretation of a piece of art. Other artists I interviewed thought that aesthetics is not as important as philosophy. Ayman Yusri, for example, is philosophical in his treatment of his artwork.

> *In my opinion, the aesthetics are secondary. The value of the piece comes from the depth of the piece (* Ayman Yusri)

Unlike Ayman Yusri, Mona Al-Ghassabi thinks of aesthetics as being more important because it is what draws the audience to the work.

> *It's ok if my work only has aesthetic value because aesthetics are inherently philosophical. Furthermore, there are some philosophical artefacts that are ugly in my opinion. The aesthetically beautiful artefacts always touch the feelings of the audience because they are drawn to the piece* (Mona Al-Ghassabi)

It is possible that this artist's philosophy is linked to her perception of the purpose of her art which she describes as:

> *To express my personal feelings... for me, creating artwork is a way for me to relax. Creating artwork is not like a war where you must plan and prepare* (Mona Al-Ghassabi)

This artist stated that she was greatly helped by the media. In some cases, knowledge that a work has been created by a particular person, and presentation of a work in a context that is recognized as part of the art world may encourage people to look for appealing sensuous properties and interesting connections   between the ideas, emotions, and images the work provokes (Mullin 2003).

It is interesting that the three women artists who reported not having an issue- led practice enjoyed national artistic acclaim that is manifest in either materialistic gain or good reputation. This may reflect two things: the first is that unlike what might be expected in a context like Saudi Arabia, Saudi women artists are doing really well and are capable of success at a level similar or perhaps greater than a man's. These women managed to do so despite being excluded from many of the normal ways of becoming successful. This, however, cannot be proved unless an in-depth study of all their work is carried out by critics and specialists in the field. What cannot be said, however, is that gender of the artist is a key element in deciding the purpose of doing art; otherwise, it would be like saying women produce art that is feminine, which Nochlin (1989) and Mullin (2003) argue against. The second thing is related to the purpose of art. It is possible that the reported

lack of purpose for doing art or doing art for pleasure might be the artists' way of expressing their sense of freedom as opposed to saying that they are doing art for commercial purposes. .

3.2.2.3 Themes

The themes most of the artists dealt with were closely linked to their perception of their sense of mission as artists. Some of the topics the artists mentioned were death, severe illness, drugs, peace, love, brotherhood, children, women and even global warming. However, the most common themes were derived from the Saudi culture and history whether in an affirmative or negative way. This in a way is justified as Saudi Arabia is almost the only country in the Arab world that still holds to traditions such the segregation of men and women, the restriction of women's movement and behaviour.

A very important issue that emerged from the data was the theme of "women." Five artists had women as a subject in their artwork. Ahmad Falmban, Abduallah Edris and Abdullh Nuwawi, and Safiyyah BinZagr limited their message to traditional female topics and traditional ways of expressions. Radia Bargawi, on the other hand, dealt with elements related to the invisibility of women in the Saudi society and their marginalised roles. Bargawi has been practising art for almost 20 years. She thought of womanhood as being the greatest blessing of all. Part of her message was to portray the capacities of women and what they can achieve. Her main focus was on women as human beings rather than females.

> *The most important aspect of my artwork is to portray lives of women beyond the simplistic concept of female. I try to look deeply into the individual person, not their outward appearances …in all of my pieces, I cover the subject in fabric so that the audience is encouraged to examine this person in their totality, looking deeply inside themselves to discover the individual portrayed in my work...I look at the meaning of a woman's existence, her role in society, and that God gave the most valuable things to women. I hope to send this positive message to all women who view my*

> *work. I convey this message to all people in general, but to women in particular* (Radia Bargawi)

To her, women are mysterious creatures that are worth discovering (see appendix 2 for her profile). She described her latest artwork in which she claimed to have used mixed methods in the following narrative:

> *The important element in this image is the woman. Specifically, how she perceives her own value and her coexistence with those around her. In this picture, I am implying that the sitting, covered women are sad and without identity; even the one who is trying to stand up can't because the others are holding her back. However, even though this piece is sad like most of my work, the light portrays my feelings of hope for the future (*Radia Bargawi)

Admittedly, despite Radia Bargawi's work being confined to paintings, it had a very strong personal impact on me to the extent that it was initially one of the things that guided me, may be subconsciously, to choose gender as a theme for my installations. However, it remains the audience's choice to decide if the covered up figures in her paintings, which in most cases represent women and their invisibility in the Saudi society, are an affirmation of the status quo and are an illustration of what the artist sees, or if the underlined framework she had in mind was to encourage change. Regardless of how Bargawi's work is perceived, it has its own distinctive features. These features stem from her own beliefs as a Saudi woman who has witnessed different forms of oppression taking place in her society and as a Saudi artist who is trying to tackle a topic that is not highly encouraged by the institution of religion and tradition.

3.2.2.4 Styles and Materials

Due to its popularity around the world and in the Arab world, painting is considered the most common form of art in Saudi Arabia. It is considered by many artists to be more convenient and cheaper than other forms of art. Drawing, sculpture, collage,

pottery and ceramic, graphic and murals are also forms of art that are practiced by Saudi artists. The artists' narratives did not assert the priority of one type of art over another.

It has been noticed that Saudi art is hugely affected by the surrounding environment (see chapter 1 section 2.4.3). The artists I interviewed were no exception. Artists such as Abdualla Idris, Abduallah Hamas, and Abdul Aziz Ashour express their attachment to nature through a variety of ways that reflect the artists' adoption of an art trend such as symbolism, surrealism, abstractionism, cubism, and impressionism. Abdullah Hamas stated:

> *My personal evolution through various schools and styles of art (i.e. Classic, cubism, expressionism, abstract) has made me a special artist in the art community. The final piece should have good spacing, balance, colours, lines, subjects* (Abdullah Hamas)

Most interviewed artists stated that they usually make purposive decisions when they are working on their artworks. They study shapes and colours around them, and then they choose their materials accordingly. The most commonly used materials by the artists, as reported by them in the interviews, were oil colours, canvas, acrylic colours, gouache, water colours, pastel oil colours, plaster, sand, ink, iron, wood, fibreglass, glass, carton, etc.

3.2.2.5 Inspirations

To some artists, inspiration comes from inside and from their personal experiences at home and sometimes experiences gained from the countries in which they had studied, lived or visited. To others, it comes from external sources such as the study of great civilisations, and other artists, scholars and writers.

> *From the movement of things in our society and culture ranging from anything such as a carpenter to a dancer; I strive to capture the movement of these activities in life* (Abdullah Nuwawi)

Inspiration comes from my experiences; because I am a poet and I read a lot of poems. I pull much of my inspiration from what I read and write (Aa'tidal Etawi)

Some artists experienced tensions between who they are and what kind of art they can practice. Their exposure to other works of art has become more prominent, and as a result, their themes have changed, too. This implies that the materials and the artists' sense of using these materials may have changed during the course of their lives.

Although not many artists mentioned freedom of expression as a major barrier to their profession, it remains one of the most important barriers to displaying artists' work without censorship. Abdualla Hamas and Abdualla Idris, both older artists, long for more freedom to express themselves

I feel there are many things in my mind that I wish to use in my art, but I can't (Abdualla Hamas)

My aspiration is to continue my artwork with the hope to be given a greater area of freedom (Abdullah Idris)

The control by religious institutions interferes with the kind of topics that can be seen by the public. Many extreme Muslims argue that art is subversive when it comes to their religious beliefs and values. For example, they claim that painting full bodies is anti Islamic. Moreover, certain images or ideas are inherently immoral. Anything with a strong sexual content is often included in such a category. Politicians may also consider certain pieces of art as encouraging people to rebel. This means that in addition to the religious institutions' approval, permission has to be obtained from an official government body before the artists showcase any work of art. Artists have mixed reactions to this; some may conform while others would welcome the freedom of expression that would allow people to think positively about possible ways of making change.

The tension between becoming globalised and staying localised is reflected in the kind of work the interviewed artists produced. There is so much affirmative painting in

their work such as painting houses, palm trees, and nature. When inspecting these further and reflecting on their narratives, it became clear that some depict reality and reinforce their culture and rootedness as they have claimed (section 3.2.2.2). They are not critical, and their work is an idealisation of the world they see. It affirms the status quo as in the works of Safiyyah Binzager. Others tend to look beyond what they see and push the boundaries by using these figures as symbols of something bigger or as manifestations of culture that symbolises things they cannot express freely.

3.2.2.6 Audience

Most of the artists display their work in galleries and online, which enables a large audience of different ages and backgrounds to view their work. They try to engage the audience at emotional and cognitive levels, encouraging them to interact with the artwork. Artists like Ayman Ysuri and Radia Bargawi measure the success of their work against the audience's acceptance of this work.

> *Art, in my opinion, should allow the audience to be a part of the art... art should be shared with others and convey a piece of yourself to the audience* (Ayman Yusri)
>
> *When the audience takes time to view the work and thinks about the piece, my work is successful...I love it when my work engages the audience and inspires them to contemplate their own lives and the lives of others* (Radia Baragawi)

However, to be able to evoke such emotions, some artists believe that they should be honest in what they do and work on, developing their professional abilities and sense of sincerity.

> *It should not be judged only the basis of style or execution....it should be the sincerity with which the art is presented that gives it value. The purpose of art is to unite people through this shared feeling, so it has to be honest and sincere* (Ayman Yusri)

Conversely, the artist Ola Hejazi perceived art as a tool of self expression that does not necessarily involve the audience.

> *I don't believe that my work is important but I was born as an artist and I love to paint. I don't care if the people view or like my work. I feel that the important thing is that I produce something special and unique* (Ola Hejazi)

It could be that this artist's realisation that her work can be sold easily makes her take this stand; she is confident enough to say that what matters is her as an artist, not the audience, knowing that her work is in demand. Alternatively, it could be that her work is of high quality and the audience realises this and accepts it.

Some artists could trace the change in the audience's reaction to their work over the years. Most of these, Al-Rusais (unpublished) would term 'first' and 'second generation' artists, who started practicing art in the 1950s and 1960s. At this time they faced opposition and ultimate rejection when they displayed their work. They were battling with both religious scruples and audiences that were unused to viewing art. However, with the beginning of artistic galleries and a broader educated public, these artists have become appreciative of the fact that audience awareness of the "visual culture" has increased. They also managed to show their work outside Saudi Arabia, which gave them external exposure and reinforced their position as renowned artists. The following narrative sums up the situation which artists like Abdullah Hamas, Abdullah Al Rizeza, Bakr Shaikhon, Abdullah Nuwawi and Fawziyah Sijenten found themselves in at the beginning of their practice:

> *In the beginning, my work was not well-received in Saudi Arabia. During my 2nd exhibition after 18 years my work became more popular with the audience because the people's ability to appreciate and understand the value of art increased. Outside of Saudi Arabia, in places like Dubai, Madrid, Paris, London, and Vienna my work was well-received from the start* (Abdullah Hamas)

This external appreciation could be related to the cultural difference in the nature of the audience in other countries. Such audiences are more accustomed to a range of visual languages and are appreciative of the arts as a whole. It might also be the cultural connotations attached to these works of art that intrigued, for example, a European audience.

Most artists create art for all to see; however, some narratives do reveal that some artists are aware of the commercial value of their work. The following statements portray this attitude:

> *Although I don't choose my audience, the aristocracy is usually drawn to the plastic art; I am not choosing the audience, the audience is choosing me. Of course the statement of the art is important, but I must be aware of the commercial value because it is my profession, not just a hobby* (Bassem Al-Sharqi)
>
> *During the year I only make 4 pieces that will remain with the history of my culture. I don't create for fun. Each piece will sell between 150,000 and 250,000 Saudi Riyals (apprx. 30,000-50,000 Sterling Pounds) … My house is a piece of historical art. The government always brings famous foreigners and dignitaries to visit my home* (Abdullah Rezeza)

Bassem Al-Sharqi sold his work based on its commercial value as evaluated by the audience. Similar to the previously mentioned female artists, he stated that his art was not issue led, and that his mood controlled the expression portrayed through his art. As the interview with Abduallah Rezeza showed, he has built a good reputation and his work sells well. He is an authority in his field which depicts heritage from the Najd region. It happens that Najd is where the royal family comes from, which possibly also makes his depictions appeal.

To sum up, some artists partially measure the success and significance of their work against its selling value. They refer to economic values, but equate this to high quality of art at the same time. It is clear, though, that some produce work with a distinct tendency toward commercial art. It has not been studied why Saudi audiences buy certain

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pieces of art, but some artists have targeted a particular audience who can afford to buy something to put on their walls, and they find satisfaction in this. Such artists mentioned that they practice art to revive heritage, for pleasure and sometimes for no purpose at all. In fact, none of the artists who mentioned producing issue led works of art mentioned selling their work. On the other hand, there are the artists who produce figurative art without worrying about the gain they make. It is art that matters and they do not stop at anything to make it happen. Safiyyah Binzager refuses to sell her work; Abdul Rahman Al-Suliman also aims at depicting heritage and culture and making people love art.

> *I stopped selling after the first exhibition and I built this house in order to save the artworks for the coming generations* (Safiyyah Binzager)

It can be said that the artists' relationship with their audience is unique. Sometimes the audience can be accepting of the work and pay high prices for it, but at other times they remain aloof and show no interest. It is known that there is a need to encourage the culture of visiting exhibitions in Saudi Arabia as the average Saudi who assumes that art is for the specialists and the elite.

3.2.2.7 Aspirations for the Future

Most of the interviewed artists were satisfied with their performance, but a few felt a need to keep up-to-date and to continue their personal and professional development. They reported having aspirations for a better future: acceptance by the society, making a change in the society, being a part of a bigger art movement in the region, and recognition in other countries.

> *I can say that I'm not relaxed about my work yet; I feel like I have not expressed myself completely yet. I want to express more* (Ayman Yusri)

Recognition inside and outside Saudi Arabia was something most artists aspired to. There were times when the artists' success outside the country was better than the response they had internally. This boosted their confidence and raised their morale. Some artists

were very ambitious and hoped to leave a lasting legacy. Some wanted to set examples to other artists, start a new art movement, or engage in research relevant to their interests.

My art is not connected to any western school of art. Maybe it will be the beginning of an Arabian school of art (Abdullah Rezeza)

It seems that it is their individual styles, as in the case of Abdullah Rezeza, their mission and levels of commercial success that make these artists aspire to be pioneers.

However, the narratives identified certain barriers to artistic practice. For example, some artists mentioned lack of professional bodies that support artists, defend them, promote their work and allow them the chance to get together and learn from each other as a major barrier.

I hope to help all the artists to be connected in a greater community and share in their ideas (Abdullah Nuwawi)

Other barriers include: lack of funding, engagement in other jobs, lack of art courses outside the official educational system, the high cost of exhibitions, and the limited number of well equipped galleries. Al-Rusais (unpublished) reports that there are several galleries in Saudi Arabia that vary in their purposes. Most of these are in Jeddah. Some of these aim at encouraging art and culture and are founded by artists or those interested in art such as Abdul Raoaf Hasan Khalil for Heritage and Culture Centre, The House of Plastic Artists, Safiyyah Bin Zagr Gallery, Abdulhaleem Radawi Museum. Others are founded for commercial purposes and involve selling works of art and materials, organising exhibitions such as the Saudi Centre for Art, Inda' Centre for Art (for women and children), Pure Art Centre, and Roshan for Art.

As noticed, most of the prominent galleries are located in Jeddah, the most liberal city in Saudi Arabia, as depicted by many Saudi and non-Saudi people, according to Al-Gergawi (2009). Some of the people who came to perform pilgrimage in Makkah, especially from areas such as Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, settled in the area

bringing with them their own traditions which were more lenient and more liberal than those of Saudi Arabia. This mixture of nations created a homogeneous community that settled down in Jeddah, the neighbouring city which is located on the coast of the Red Sea. Of course, there are more galleries around the country, but most of them are either small in size, have ceased to show artwork, or have closed down.

3.3   Relevance to My Work

The narratives showed that most of those interviewed preferred traditional techniques and used material and objects that had been commonly used in Saudi Arabia for many years. Experimentation with digital art was not evident in their practices, and Installation Art was not used. This is unlike the situation in other countries in the Middle East such as Lebanon where artists started working with new media in the mid 1990s, and a small group of Palestinians in the Diaspora who are active in the Western art world (Einger 2010).

Reflecting on my practice and comparing it with that of these artists helped me decide what my practice should be like. It became evident that although my earlier work was of a traditional nature, I felt that I was moving in different directions, especially after I had earned my Master's degree. This is evidenced in the artefacts created in the initial stages of the PhD, which started to combine digital and traditional media (see appendix 3).

To some extent I could not locate my practice within the mainstream of Saudi art. It is true that I am rooted in my culture, and I am passionate about using my art to reflect my culture and traditions in a similar way to Safiyyah Binzager and Abdul Rahman Al-Suleiman. However, my work goes beyond that. I do not just want to show figurative traditions, which is in most cases affirmative. I am also juxtaposing ideas and mediums. Unlike paintings, which have a tradition of expectations within the kingdom, by combining this medium with digital media, where audiences can make interpretative links to other

digital forms (such as the documentary, television, and the internet), my issue led art suggests a globalised thinking, juxtaposed with something that is located in place and time.

The narratives of the artists in addition to my gallery visits in Jeddah and informal conversations with other artists revealed that there had not been any exhibitions of digital art in Saudi Arabia. This is confirmed by Maghrabi's (2007) findings. This means that the installations I create are novel to Saudi audiences. However, if I want audiences to react to and interact with my work, it is important to consider their possible reactions to it during the design and making of an installation. The meaning in my installations is not defined, but as suggested by Barthes (1977), the readers (viewers) are the people who interpret the work according to their understandings (see chapter 4, section 4.2.2).

3.4   Conclusion

The interviews were conducted to gain background information about contemporary Saudi artists. The most frequently cited factors that affect their practice were summed up under the following themes: purpose or mission, philosophy of practice, themes and messages, relation with audience, and aspirations for the future. Finally the relevance of my work to theirs is explained.

The exploration of the recent art practice in Saudi Arabia enabled me to compare my work with other artists in the country. In gathering this information it became apparent that very few Saudi artists have been working with digital media, and none had experimented with it in the manner I was contemplating. However, the work of these Saudi artists made me aware of some societal issues present in our society and the region such as gender. It also inspired me because most of them draw their inspiration from the common everyday life and culture of Saudi Arabia. I have also become aware that it is important for me to develop my own style and make it unique in portraying the region of Saudi Arabia. The next chapter gives a full description of my practice.

Chapter 4

My Practice and Methods

4.1   Introduction

This chapter documents my practice and growth as an artist exploring the different ways in which I have experimented with combining traditional art and digital media. Different reflection and learning frameworks are described, as well as the framework of reflection I employed. My artistic journey, which involved developing a series of increasingly sophisticated artefacts, is described, broken down into stages and then assessed. This exploration is evidenced in my journal and the increasing sophistication of the produced artefacts.

4.2   Describing My Artwork

The research started with the desire to create a new art form for Saudi Arabia which would combine traditional and digital media. When I commenced the research, I had little idea of the form this would take. The images spoke to me as I created and reflected on them, and over time an aesthetic emerged, which viewers of the final installations were able to appreciate, understand and see as being new to Saudi Arabia. The tension between traditional ideologies versus globalisation is apparent in my work; they do not merge seamlessly. I can describe it as a metaphor for the situation in Saudi Arabia with respect to old and new traditions. At the beginning I was trying to integrate traditional and digital art, but these remained separate. I found myself coming from a conceptual tradition, yet dealing with cultural symbols. It is apparent that the immediate situation or context of my work is within Saudi Arabia, but it is related to a broader one similar to the art of diaspora

embodied in the work of Shirin Neshat and Mona Hatoum whose influence is manifest in my work. I, however, differ in my focus on everyday gender differences.

I did not also change the form of art I used to practice drastically. The figurative tradition becomes manifest in the installations but slowly changes into an issue led one that stems from Saudi culture and Islam. The topics I deal with are quite difficult ones for conservative audiences to interact with. As such, I realised that since digital art is a new form of art within the kingdom, a detailed exploration of the processes of producing my installation would make a significant contribution. This chapter is included to enable others to understand something of the journey I made and the wide range of issues which were considered in realising my dream. These relate to gender differences, time (past, present and future), symbols and materials and the reflective process. The following is a brief description of these and how the role each one of them played in enriching my experience while preparing the installations.

4.2.1 Gender Issues

Initially, I did not set out to create work that explored gender issues in Saudi Arabia. My main concern was how the combinations of different means could be used to open up ideas about Saudi cultural issues. Through experimentation, reflection and discussion the common theme was revealed. In reviewing work of artists such as Shirin Neshat and Mona Hatoum, I became interested in the aspects of gender they depicted. From the review of contemporary artists (Chapter 3 section 3.2.2.3), I also noted that gender issues had not been greatly explored by the interviewed artists with the exception of Radia Bargawi, and most of what is presented in galleries was not concerned with serious issues about their lives.

As discussed in chapter two, Saudi society is patriarchal giving great authority and supremacy to the male members represented by the father, brother, husband, and son,

making them look powerful. This permeates all aspects of Saudi life, at home, in the workplace and other institutions. In a sense, my work draws on my lived experiences of me and those of my friends in the changing social economic Saudi context in the first decade of the twenty first century. In short, the focus of my work is on women's roles and expectations, their invisibility and the male dominance of women in everyday relationships.

I can claim that my work is new and innovative in terms of the juxtaposition of digital media, an international global means that has overtones of documentaries, films, etc., with a mode of painting that would be recognised in Saudi Arabia as traditional. This combination suits my purpose because it is about the relationship between traditional Saudi social culture and the pursuit of a more global outlook. In my work, there is a tension between the global and the local, liberalisation and traditional values. This tension is played out in the different subjects I deal with in my installations. In the end, I found that rather than 'integrating' elements, in many I juxtapose them. This causes a 'rub' in the consciousness of the viewer, and it helps to make the message less seamless and more open ended.

4.2.2 Time

Eric Hobsbawm claims that traditions which appear to be old may often be quite recent in origin and sometimes invented. Invented tradition is taken to mean:

> a set of practices, normally governed by overtly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. It is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant. (1984: 1)

It is not clear whether this concept of invented traditions applies to the religious situation in Saudi Arabia. Invented traditions are expected to happen when a rapid

transformation of society either weakens the social patterns for which old traditions had been designed (producing new situations in which they are no longer applicable) or when the old traditions and their institutional carriers no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible and cease to exist (Hobsbawm 1984: 4). The modernisation of Saudi Arabia has not been accompanied by the equivalent change in the social structures (Clarke 2007). The past of Saudi Arabia remains in the present with the two holy mosques gives providing a permanent link to the past. The rituals practiced fourteen centuries ago are still practiced exactly the same way on daily basis. The religious scholars still refer to past doctrine to deal with present issues that affect people's everyday practices. Adaptation, resulting from new ways of communicating, increased urbanisation, wealth and higher levels of education, was expected to take place in Saudi Arabia, just as in neighbouring countries. Some people are eager for change, but many still cling to the past, idealise it and live it in their daily practices. There is a tension in Saudi Arabia, with many claiming that they want to keep the cherished values of the past, yet use what modern life offers, assuming that they can protect their families from the 'adverse' effects of globalisation. The past to them is about the 'good old days'. These people's memories can be very selective:

> The element of invention is particularly clear … since the history which became part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of nation, state or movement is not what it has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured , popularized and institutionalised by those whose function is to do so. (Hobsbawm, 1984: 13)

Some traditional artists practicing in Saudi Arabia such as Safiyya Bin Zager choose to idealise the past, representing the old traditions and customs through their work and making it their mission to preserve and record cultural history in their paintings. My art speaks of the changes as well as of those practices that continue through considering the present while looking to the future The French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) placed time at the centre of philosophy; for him consciousness of reality was determined

by our lived experience of time, which is explained in the following quote: "What I call 'my present' has one foot in my past, and another in the future" (Rush 1999: 13). These subjective notions have been adopted by many artists who manipulated time in their works of art. They captured it, reconfigured it and created variations on it (Mèredieu 2005: 35). One example of this is Bill Viola (1995: 278) who draws on our perceptions of lived time as the fundamental basis and actual raw material of his work. To him all people are creatures of time and have been given the ability to extend the self into time with the capacity to anticipate and recall.

As a time based medium, recording in real-time or manipulating time in video art allows for multiple nuances of the experience of time. For example, time lapse can provide immediate experience of time just passed. In 1992, David Goldenberg had his video cameras "monitor audience who could see their images in mirrored chambers they were unable to enter. Past, present and future were collapsed in a maelstrom of self projection" (Lovejoy 2005: 123).

The visual artist Marty St James considers practicing with movement across time and space as essential elements in his understanding of form. His notions of working with time, translating movement into non-static forms and vice versa are a logical progression across his use of media. In his diary, he wrote: "images from the distant past are sent to me - people, places and things." "performances, ideas and energy frozen in time - they seem to all collide in a ball of memory" (Marty St James, n. d.).

The use of different media has enabled attention to be brought to the temporality of the art form. The possibilities of time being manipulated dramatically in multiple ways in video installations are massive (Rush 1999: 117). For example, in his interactive installation "Sonata" 1993, Grahame Weinbren attempts to create narrative using a unique response-type interface system where movements represent different temporal directions.

Moving to the right and left indicates the viewers move forward and backward in time. Down indicates expansions of the present, and up indicates introduction of material outside time (Lovejoy 2004: 193). Weinbren creates more subtle relationships in his non-linear narrative by exploring multiple points of view in his work to create a subtle effect on viewers that seems more like a psychological flashback than a separate response. The viewer has control of the interactivity and can move using the speed s/he desires; however, the viewer is not allowed to pass on at the high point of the intense climactic scene . Controlling speed at such moments remains in the artist's hands.(Lovejoy 1999: 194).

While working on my installations, I was aware of the difference between real time (linear) and psychological time (with no units of measurement) (Wainwright 2004:116). Lovejoy (2004: 192) explains that digital tools allow for non-linear narrative which allows for development of different narratives. They may have different aspects of a story going at the same time or mesh at climactic moments. Lovejoy explains that the non-linear relates viewers to their real daily experiences while cinema and television can only offer events and stories viewers can look at in a single direction with no power to intervene.

Time in art can said to have no particular pace or direction. It is measured in its depth and intensity rather than actual length. As such, time is perceived to pass at different rates depending on artists' and viewers' experiences. Wainwright explains that viewing is not just an instant immediate action that ends with the completion of the physical viewing. Its time extends as long as the work remains present in the mind of the audience. I wanted my audience to leave the exhibition with images and questions in their minds; my success in achieving this was shown in the audience feedback.

Another element that is related to the perception of time is the way speed was manipulated in the installations. Speed of sound and movement are used to represent the relative speed at which people live, and as a result, the narrative depends on the

juxtaposition of significant moments. This means that the notion of time is subjective, plastic and malleable within that experience, as Wainwright (2004: 116) suggests. A moment can be extended to serve a certain purpose as was in the case of the movement of the woman in relation to the man's in my installation "Habitat." Wainwright also proposes that when speed is slowed down, it proposes the same relationship of artwork to spectator for both painting and photography. In my installations, time is also expressed by using digital art which belongs to the present and the future to express how old practices are reflecting on present ones and still draw women to the past.

4.2.3 Use of Cultural Symbols

Cultural symbols can be found everywhere in every sphere of social life. Such symbols link the past to the present. Published on eHow website, the article, "Islamic Arabic Art," (2010) reports that the most note-worthy symbols in Islamic art are light, water, plants, the crescent moon and calligraphy. Mirrors were used in my installations to represent future dreams. Water was used as a significant symbol with multiple meanings such as life and continuity, most of them derived from the experiences of the Arab people of the desert. I used other traditional symbols such the door of a traditional house, key, and traditional clothes for men and women such as the shummag and the abaya. I used these in my installations in various ways, leaving the audience to interpret their meanings (see chapter 5, section 5.4 for the use of these symbols in all installations).

4.2.4 Materials

In the installations, a combination of traditional and modern equipment such as DVDs, projectors, tape recorders, videos, screens, artificial lights, wood, glass, clothes, sand, rocks, and mirror were used. Some of these materials were incorporated into the

physical creation of the image and to situate my work to the Saudi context, while others were used symbolically (see chapter 5 for a description of each installation).

4.3   Methods

4.3.1 Reflective Journal

Researchers are similar to artists in their attempts to devise new ways of looking at things. For Schön (2002: 13), such artistry is an exercise of intelligence and a kind of knowing. Through engaging with their experiences, practitioners are able to learn, understand their learning process, reflect on it, and develop critical thinking and problem solving skills that would impact on the direction that work has taken. Moreover, reflection, as Moon (1999: 123) reports, enhances professional practice and develops personal constructs of meaning and one's view of the world. It also enhances creativity by making better use of intuitive understanding, and provides an alternative 'voice' for those not good at expressing themselves. Reflection is claimed to engage the brain; deepens one's self understanding and helps contain troubling emotions so that one can gain new perspectives.

Influenced by views of scholars such as Schön and Moon, I used a journal to record my feelings and reactions to my activities as a researcher and as an artist. As Moon (1999: 1) mentioned, a journal is "a tool for self-discovery, an aid to concentration, a mirror for the soul, a place to generate and capture ideas, a safety valve for the emotions, and a training ground for the writer, etc." Moon claims that journal writing and reflection are often "extolled by those concerned with creative, professional, personal and spiritual development (1999: 4).

In the field of art, reflection can help artists make more sense of what they do. It enables the artist to pursue his or her preliminary creative work. The Greek artist, Angeliki Avgitidou, recommends using reflection and goes on to say that reflection has surpassed its conventional role and has become part of the art practice itself (Maghrabi 2007); the details

and the reflection might facilitate the production of the artwork when, for example, the artist reflects on his or her personal experiences in the context of specific ideas. Rodgers and Smyth (2010) emphasise that reflection is not conducted enough in design, and it is important to reflect on the things created. Many artists, including the Spanish surrealist Salvador Dali (1904- 1989), have used journals to document ideas, help reflection and suggest new work. Other artists such as Helen Chadwick also used diaries.

Some of Chadwick's notebooks are available on the Henry Moore Institute archive website. In them she wrote notes to herself about the suppliers, made lists, thought about her aims, used drawing and drew sketches, criticised her work, etc. In addition, she wrote possible dialogue lines which revealed a lot about her interests (Leeds Museum Galleries and The Henry Moore Institute Archive Website n.d.; Wyver 2008). In my journal, I drew sketches, made lists, wrote notes and rough ideas for the installations, thought about the symbols and messages, looked at my thoughts in a different way, wrote research and reading notes especially about the artists that influenced me the most (see sections 4.4.2.2 and 4.4.2.3), and documented my visits to places. My journal also contained my thoughts about the installations (see section 4.4.2.2), the audience's reaction, the analysis of the audience's feedback and much more. It also allowed me to take time for considering things without losing track of them or forgetting about them. For example, in my diary I wrote:

> *Need to remember to change the Ka'ba and look for a different sound track. The one I thought of using is not as good as I thought. Need to check for other sound!!! (28 Dec 2008)*

In short, my reflections provided a logical means of documenting my learning and collecting evidence for self-evaluation.

4.3.2 Proposed Framework for Reflection

Several frameworks of reflection were proposed. DPL (2006) reports that one of these was Kolb's which was proposed in 1984 and included a typical presentation of four

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learning stages on a four-stage cyclical flow diagram. This model has been critiqued by Heron (In DPL 2006) who argued that sequential nature of the model ignores the fact that stages can be jumped or missed out completely. In addition, the circular model may also give the impression that the stages are equal in time and emphasis and that the classification of learners' styles is based solely on the way learners rate themselves rather than through standards or behaviour (DPL 2006). Gibb's model which was proposed in 1988 represents a fundamental shift from the ideas of Kolb as it refers to the key processes within reflection itself, rather than reflection as a process within general learning (Pickles n.d.). According to Pickles, the model assumes repetitive experiential contexts and is split into six key areas.

Though these models are good for certain fields, one wonders to what extent they can be applied to art; they do not necessarily map what action an artist does before or during a creative process. Rather than having rigid situations that rarely change, the artist deals with the unknown. Moreover, since the idea is to keep moving forward allowing at the same time for change and as a result learning from experimentation, these models can be a basis for a new model of reflection, but rather than being circular can be spiral.

Donald Schön asserts that reflective thinking plays an important role in the growth of professional learning, and enhances the ability to improvise and 'think on one's feet' (Smith 2000: 3). Schön (2002) focuses on three elements of thinking: learning system, double-loop learning, and reflection-in-and-on action, which have become an integral part of educational activity. Particularly relevant to my practice is Schön's ideas about reflection in action. Reflection-in-action involves examining experiences and feelings, and attending to theories in use. It entails building new understandings to inform change in the situation. In reflection-on-action, theories and ideas are tested out, which will allow for developing further responses and moves without having to follow established ideas and

technique. Things are thought through, for every case is unique. The act of reflecting-on-action enables spending time exploring reasons for action and so on. In doing so, sets of questions and ideas about activities and practices are developed. Practitioners build up a collection of images, ideas, examples and actions that they can draw upon. As they work they can bring fragments of memories into play and begin to build theories and responses that fit the new situation (Schön 2002: 10).

Schön's proposal is very significant to my practice. People can draw upon experiences and reach understandings generated through reflection-in-action or sometimes leave things and return to them later. In reflection-in-action, the artists try to refer to experiences and theories to justify their practice and reach new understanding. By using reflection-on-action, the artists try to test these theories and move away from them if they prove unfit for their purposes by developing their own set of questions about their practice. The production of each multimedia installation was accompanied with a lot of reflection linking all the stages of production together.

I have opted for an eclectic framework that I put in a spiral form to show how ideas develop and how each one is affected by the one preceding it and affecting the one following it. As mentioned earlier, to facilitate my work, I kept a journal in which I wrote my notes, reflected on them, changed ideas according to emerging themes, evaluated my practice, tried out new things, and evaluated my practice again in an interactive cycle (see section 4.4.2.2). To be more specific, the main stages I describe in my reflections are:

1. Understanding present knowledge

2. Understanding of / inspiration by other artists' work

3. Reflection on ideas and themes while and after working

4. Experience /analysis of action and feelings

5. Evaluation of ideas of others and understanding how new ideas map into old ideas

and knowledge

Figure 15: Artist's Reflection Framework (Reflection for Learning 2003)

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I can see that I have grown in various ways at each stage. The evolution of my work is the best evidence for this. In the initial stages of my work, I placed my goals, values, framework and strategies into the background and just place emphasis on the techniques of traditional art. My reflection was directed towards making the strategies more effective. Later, it moved in the direction of "double-loop" learning, when I questioned the role of the framing and learning systems which formed the base of my actual goals and strategies. With reference to my work, double-loop learning occurred when I changed from using traditional art to the integration of digital media within installations, which even brought about a change in my objectives. Although my art became more abstract, a theme related to gender differences began to emerge, which enabled the audience to relate my work to their experience. Subsequently, double-loop learning added to my appreciation of experiential learning.

I linked the process of thinking on my feet with later reflection-on-action. Recordings, talks, feedback after the exhibition and videos were considered (see chapter 6 for audience's reaction). The act of reflecting-on-action enabled me to explore why I acted as I did, what was happening in the group at the exhibition and how the audience reacted to my work. I developed sets of questions and ideas about my activities and practice. I had a collection of images, ideas, examples and actions that I could draw upon and use for my reflective thought, some of which are: a guest book with comments, questionnaire, and recorded feedback from interviews conducted during the exhibition, DVD of exhibition, and media report about the exhibition. These articles served as valuable pieces of information that I used as feedback because from them one can tell I see an unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one. "Symbols of Kaába" is an illustration of this, as the story of Hajjar serves as a precedence to decode the meaning of this installation. I did not have a full understanding of things before, but when I looked at the situation, I was influenced by and used what had gone before, what might come, my repertoire, and my frame of reference. As I progressed I brought fragments of memories into play and began to build responses that were suitable for the new situation.

Throughout the whole process, I reflected on my practice continually. For instance, one of the early artefacts, named in my diaries as "Gulf Door," (see appendix 3) was later exhibited within my installation as the "Talking Window" which was a site-specific piece with a multi-layered effect, with sound /picture effect. This experimentation taught me to reflect on my work and alter ways of executing work. Thereby the simple artefacts made in the initial stage of my work transformed to more complex ones embedded within multimedia installation. My final installations showed that my style and way of working had transformed entirely, especially as I used only two of the artefacts I had made in the first phase of my study. My efforts toward the exhibition that I held in Jeddah in May 2009

were well-rewarded, as the installations were received positively by the audience and the media (see appendix 6). This will be explored further in chapter six. In evaluating and reshaping their work with the audience in mind, artists are being their own audience, as suggested by Austin and Vogelsang (2003). This way, reflection can be instrumental in helping the artists to test their options by viewing their work from the point of view of the audience as well their own perspectives.

It was of great importance for me professionally to develop material that documents my journey as an artist. The experimentations, readings, and my visits to the museums helped me through and enabled me to gather material for a DVD, which was a kind of a visual journal I kept referring to. I produced a resource based on my reflections. My aim is not for other artists to reproduce my work, but make use of the steps I have taken to produce other material other artists can use easily, both nationally and internationally.

4.3.3 Challenges on Reflection

Admittedly, at the beginning of this research, it was difficult to write my inner thoughts in a journal. Making reflection public was a concern for me as I am a very private person and was not used to sharing my feelings and thoughts with others. Moreover, sometimes it was difficult for me to know what to write, and when I did, it was mostly descriptive. At times, I wondered if there was anything that was worth writing; there was a lot on my mind and many decisions to be made. I also thought that I did not have the time to record anything on paper. However, it was this same reason that made me convinced that keeping a journal and reflecting on my practice was the best way to keep myself organized and lead me to be a better practitioner. I also read a lot about reflection, and with time, I realized the benefits of disclosing my thoughts

One of the first decisions to make was about the form that my journal would take. I started by writing notes here and there, and then decided to use a notebook journal though

it is less flexible than a digital one. It was handy, and I could carry it around wherever I went and take notes whenever I was able to. Helen Chadwick used black hardcover notebooks using a pencil and ink on paper. Sometimes, she used coloured pens to highlight certain ideas. Her ideas were sometimes messy, scrappy and 'all over the place' which, according to Wyver (2008: 2) makes them more engaging and more revealing. Some pages were fully covered with information while others are almost empty; nevertheless, they remain a rich source of information. I also did not follow a strict format in my writing and wrote whatever came to my mind using whatever medium available: pencils, pens, markers, etc.

One of the most challenging things about keeping a journal was writing my thoughts and ideas on the spot. I tried not to postpone taking notes even if it meant jotting down what came into my mind as this could generate other thoughts and experiences that would enrich both the research and the art work. Another decision I had to make was the language of writing. I did not want to struggle with words, so I used Arabic in my writing. I felt more comfortable writing in Arabic especially when I wanted to express my frustration about something.

Another challenging situation was trying to keep my notes as an artist separate from my notes as a researcher. It was sometimes hard to draw a line between the two. I ended up mixing my notes about my roles. I noticed through my reflections that I was so much focused on my role as an artist to the extent that it sometimes led me away from my duties as a researcher. Reading related literature, for example, was not a priority at some points because I was so much taken by the installations. In my journal, I wrote:

> *The exhibition is taking much of my time. I am tired but I am enjoying it. I am also worried I will forget I am doing it as part of my PhD. I need to keep doing my literature review (3 March 2009)*

Moreover, I did not start the analysis of the data I had on artists according to the action plan I prepared earlier. The journal was there to remind me that I should be doing both forms of research. I also needed to always remind myself of going back to the systematic way of getting visitors' feedback rather than just rely on personal views. In my journal, I wrote:

> *It feels so good that most of the visitors liked the exhibition. I felt proud. Need to check if what I noticed from their informal feedback is similar to what they mentioned in the interviews. May be they said what they said to please me (4 Dec 2009)*

I made the distinction between my two roles clear whenever I reread my diaries, and when I started doing the final analysis. I found that the movement between the two roles brought new thoughts and made me see the holistic picture of my practice. To be able to do so, I always read the notes I put in my journal several times, with and without reflections. I, for example, found that many ideas and new understandings emerged which made me change things. For example, concern for the audience's reactions sometimes led to changes in the installations. I sometimes wondered if this consideration was at the expense of spontaneity, which is something I cherish as an artist. I expressed my concerns in my diary:

> *It is true that there is a lot of creativity in the installations but I sometimes feel I think a lot about what to do here or there. I just wonder if these conscious decisions would affect my art. Is my art for me or them? (30 Sep 2006)*

However, I dismissed such thoughts because digital art is new to Saudi audience and research is needed on audience's reactions to this new form of art.

In conclusion, as a researcher, I have striven to acknowledge my role and be fully aware of my effect on the research. The journal helped me to be systematic in my data collection and analysis, which helped me to explore emergent themes from the data and compare these themes with my previous assumptions, just as Taylor (2005) recommends. As an artist, I managed to engage with the development of the artworks without losing

sight of the coming step as a researcher. I managed to keep track of my aims, draw on other people's experiences, and see how they related to my practice (see 4.4.2.2 for details).

4.4 My practice

Throughout the process of conducting this research, I looked at my practice from two points of view: experimental practice in multimedia and traditional art and reflective practice on my development.

4.4.1 Experimental Practice

In the experimentation process, I began reviewing the lessons learned throughout my life, becoming more flexible in using them practically. Initially, my artwork indicated illustrations of familiar objects like the desert (see appendix 3). I could see that my Islamic beliefs were reinforced in my style of work and choice of themes. Eight artefacts were made in the preliminary stage of the PhD research using traditional art and multimedia, out of which only two were utilized in the final installations because they were the only ones that were related to the theme of the exhibition.

4.4.2 Reflective Practice

After early experimentation with traditional art and digital media in the first phase, I felt that I needed to express myself in a more unique way. Reflection was the method I used to keep the stages of my work together. In them I documented my motivation, direction as an artist and growth and all matters related to my exhibition and the audience. Following the interviews with the Saudi artists I compared their work to mine, drew similarities, such as the purpose, nature of practice, imagery and themes. My practice differed in the extent and type of digital media used and the motivation to involve the

audience. The more I reflected on the subject, the greater my conviction became that installations would be my area of experimentation

4.4.2.1 Direction of Artwork and Evidence of Growth as an Artist

With this purpose, my search was directed towards conceptual art and installations. The initial phase of the work was very conventional. I began visiting places of cultural significance in Jeddah, where I have always lived, taking innumerable pictures at different times of the day. I visited public places such as the marketplace, fish market, seashore, and desert. I also went to places where women can move without harassment such as the inner street parallel to the sea where families, men and women can walk freely. The reason why they freely communicate here could be related to the socioeconomic status of the area as it is thought of as more prestigious, which implies that people are more open to other cultures and more used to seeing women on their own. Another place was what people call the Pregnant Women Street which is located in a less privileged area in Jeddah but which people have come to accept as a place where pregnant women can have regular walks.

Most of the experience and material gained from these expeditions were used during the initial stages of my work and constituted the first part of my learning in which I started considering possible themes and experimented with material. In my journal I wrote:

> *It could be a great idea to depict women walking in the Pregnant Women Street followed by men or drivers who are supposed to be there to safeguard them. I saw that sometimes men walked in front of women instead of behind them. (20 Nov. 2006)*

> *I think Bait Naseef is a good reflection of culture. I like its architecture style. (20 Nov. 2006)*

By that time, I had started reading various books on modern art and thus was inspired by what digital art offers.

I took my first initiative in making installations by transforming my traditional paintings, merging them into installations that were more abstract than the original ones.

With an intention to explore the integration of traditional painting and digital technology, I completed the first picture 'Magic Mirror' with a girl looking into a mirror, and within the space of the mirror I set a DVD. The monitor in the mirror portrayed sights indicating the past, present and future of KSA. The underlying message was the girl looking into the future of her country, Saudi Arabia, now developed from a desert to a modern country with all the conveniences that are available in the 21st century. It was up to the audience to interpret what they see and if they are satisfied with this transition. A journal entry that I wrote at the time displays my feelings clearly.

> *My purpose is to find a new way of communication between the audience and the artefact and create an impact that is simple but powerful. I feel that it is important for each person to enjoy what I represent yet find an individual interpretation for what he/she looks at (25 May 2006)*

These quotes represent a stage that I was at when I was thinking about how my means matched my intentions.

> *When I chose the subject of my artefact, the first thought that came to my mind was the desert and the woman looking at her reflection in the mirror. The desert predominantly represents the Arabian World in general and Saudi Arabia specifically. Of course, the woman denotes the changes that have helped the females to become educated. She has managed to find her hopes, inspirations and dreams being realized in the present day. The most important part of my artefact is the mirror because it is symbolic of all the changes that have been made possible. Thus it shows progressive development from ancient to modern times. It is only through digital usage that I could make my mirror magical! This was my belief (23June 2006)*

> *By using digital technology I was able to expand my area of representation. By using a digital screen I was able to display a series of ideas in a limited space, this was not possible to do so using contemporary art. Furthermore, I could give an insight to the audience that was more profound and effective (25 June 2006)*

> *The visual impact of the screen is longer lasting and definitely more innovative. As it is a part of human nature to look for something different and new, I expect my artefacts to make a difference socially and culturally by decoding the message that I my trying to convey (17th July 6)*

I included "The Magic Mirror" (figure 16) in one of my final installations because of its symbolic significance. Nevertheless, the first version of "The Magic Mirror" did not satisfy me entirely; it was too simple to be interpreted in multiple ways by the audience. With the help of active criticism and reflection I was able to develop it. I reviewed the points made by those around me and decided to add more objects like rocks, plants and sheep. I also added a sophisticated frame to the mirror. Originally, "The Magic Mirror" showed a film that I made using media technology and software, Final cut Pro and Premier. It also included pictures from the TV local Saudi Channel and the internet. It displayed ancient Arabia, slowly transforming to modern times. The contrast and brightness also indicated day and night, setting a comparison between ancient and modern Arabia. The film symbolized the way life has transformed in Saudi Arabia. The door opens and closes in the film to provide a special effect for the onlooker. Now set in the installations, this artefact looks different, but the content remains the same - Saudi Arabia yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It is essential for all women to be able to see that they are realizing their hopes and dreams, while keeping their values and traditions intact. The mirror reflects their aspirations and future dreams.

Figure 16: Hanadi Badawi (2005), "The Magic Mirror", Personal Collection

I tried to be extremely objective toward the comments of people who viewed my artefacts because I was aware that an artist's work improves with every comment that he/she gets. I kept all the comments in mind while I was working on my series of artefacts, maintaining at the same time my creativity and individual style.

4.4.2.2 Inspiration and Progress in Practice

Bill Viola's work and writings, along with Mona Hatoum's and Shirin Neshat's installations, motivated me greatly to find ways of creating a narrative for my audience with the element of surprise in it. This led to the creation of more abstract work. The influence of these artists is evident in my work, too. In my journal I wrote:

> *I was greatly inspired by Bill Viola's video installation, Room for St. John of the Cross, which I came across in August 2008. Its cubic structure resembled 'The Ka'aba," the Holy mosque at Makkah. This piece inspired me to such a great extent that I set about creating my installation, "Symbols of Ka'aba," (5 Sept 2008)*

My journal entry also says:

> *Ka'ba is different, the place is different, the religion is different yet I can't but see a connection. I think I can create something similar in concept, yet unique in its structure and message. The audience are different and this will make all the difference (25 Sept 2008)*

While reading books and articles in which Bill Viola's digital art and conceptual media are presented and discussed (Violette 1995; Townsend 2004), and studying the work he displayed on his website, I became attracted to his style and the spiritual concepts presented in his work. In analyzing Bill Viola's works, I developed a more profound understanding of the underlying ideas that he presented such as spirituality, responsibility and the self through his use of elements such as space, time and light. In his work there seemed to be an interaction between the art and the viewer. I was influenced by the environment in which the installation was placed and the objects within it providing

symbolic value (see chapter 5.4.1 and section 5.4.5 for his influence on specific installation).

The construction of my installations followed a process of evolution for which Shirin Neshat was one of the inspirations. Unlike my work which is focused on gender differences in everyday context, Shirin Neshat's work deconstructs stereotypical western representations and the role of the Muslim women in general, particularly in Middle Eastern society (Charta 2002: 90-93). Both of us place the spectators in the midst of the work to involve them in the action and come up with a narrative and so relate it to their own way of life based on personal interpretations. Some motifs come from the social and cultural lives of the people of Iran and Saudi Arabia, such as the "Chador" and 'Abaya', which serve the common purpose of covering the woman from a man.

The gender issue related to the position of females in Islamic societies is apparent in both her work and mine. Both "Turbulent" and "Habitat" (see section 5.4.6 for illustrations) display a type of narrative that is tied to the functions on a visual and sonic level. The viewers have to rely on their own imagination to construct meanings. Alimanestianu states that Shirin Neshat's installations invite the viewers to compare past with present (1999: 17) unlike mine which despite drawing attention to the past, focuses on current practices and have an invitation for the viewers to think of solutions for the future more than draw comparisons between the past and the present.

In addition to Bill Viola and Shirin Neshat, I was inspired by Mona Hatoum's ideas presented in her different works. The affective, psychic dynamic of the interaction between the viewer and Mona Hatoum's work denotes an extraordinary interaction, in terms of space, placement and scale. The spatial and architectural formations and magnified size of the objects and installations impact on the viewers (Hatoum 2000: 15). The way she magnifies objects and the arrangement of lighting have an uncanny effect on the viewer

conveying a meaning that is quite unlike the original object (Noble 2002: 178). I was inspired by her use of the exaggerated scale of objects/people and believe that it gives the installations a different meaning. I used this technique of enlarging video images in "Generation Gap" to create a narrative that shows the man in a dominant position because of the size, scale and expressions portrayed. I did the same with "Who is in the Box?" as I used objects that have a personal and social context such as head-covers to convey spatial meanings to mere objects because of their cultural significance.

Moreover, Mona Hatoum believes that "The experience of an artwork is physical, and the connotations and associations follow after the initial physical experience to activate a psychological and emotional response" (Hatoum 2000: 28). In "Pull", the spectators were invited to pull on a hank of hair that turned out to belong to a real person, the artist herself. By designing her work this way, Mona Hatoum aimed at involving the spectators by pushing to a point where they stop being spectators and become part of the work (Archer, Bret, and de Zegher 1997: 74). In "Who is in the box?" I aimed to create similar feelings of disturbance and shock by locking a real woman in a box. I invited the audience to open the door for the locked lady after their gradual realisation that it was a person who was locked in. Whether the audience chooses to be part of the change and open the door or leaves the woman inside remains a personal choice that stems from their own experiences. The key is there, and those trapped women need help from anyone who can offer help, male or female.

In addition to being inspired by her use of exaggeration and shocking elements, I was affected by Mona Hatoum's use of materials. For example, in her artwork, "Keffieh" 1993-1999, she takes a familiar object (traditional black and white Palestinian head scarf for men) and defamiliarizes it. The installation comprises the headscarf, which also symbolises masculinity and dominance in addition to being an embodied symbol of the

Palestinian struggle, with the linear patterning embroidered with long, waving strands of women's hair, being laid on a table. Some of the hair does not conform to the lines, break up the patterns and spread randomly at the edge. Garb (2006: 256) comments that:

> Made to decorate a traditionally male headscarf, the embroidered hair brings the external signifier of female sexuality, usually covered in the Arab society, into bodily contact with the potential male wearer of the scarf. The keffieh with its strong political connotations, standing for a resistant Arab and Palestinian masculinity, is here feminised through the appropriation of the decorative line by the traces of a woman's body.

These scarves are usually made by the invisible hands of women, but this keffieh makes this invisibility of women whose labour and bodies are conventionally hidden from sight visible. It is a kind of covert protest. Moreover, many Muslim women cover their hair because it is associated with sexuality. The women's hair gives the scarf a hint of familiarity, femininity and even intimacy in addition to a contrasting feeling of revolt thinking that someone else will be wearing this hair (Garb 2006: 265).

After studying the works of these artists, I was encouraged to begin improvising and incorporating ideas in my work based on my own experience. A definite change in my perspective emerged at this stage for I began modifying my work from two to three-dimension, adding depth to whatever I made. This produced a multi-screened environment instead of a two dimensional one which helped the audience to create a subjective interpretation and provided action and fluidity that would not have been possible on a single flat surface. I also began the process of continually modifying my artefacts, without faltering, until they sometimes changed into something different. I associate this change in my work to what Schön calls the "learning systems" (as cited in Smith 2009: 3). I realized how the work of other artists such as Shirin Neshat, Bill Viola and Mona Hatoum had assisted me in planning, implementing, and reviewing my actions according to mental maps.

4.5 Conclusion

In my practice as an artist, I explored, experimented and applied my knowledge and reflective insights. I moved forward away from media being inserted into paintings, to media being combined with painting, and then through the use of multimedia installations not all of which were displayed in the final exhibition. The impact of Schön's work on reflective practice has been significant in organizing my work as an artist. I was able to reflect in and on action and even before and after action. I evaluated my artwork production step by step, making any changes that might be required on reaching the next step of making the installations, which were the result of hard work. The next chapter will describe these installations in detail.

Chapter 5

Creation of Exhibition

5.1 Introduction

Through the integration of digital media and traditional art, the exhibition created for the purpose of this research addresses issues related to gender roles adopted in Saudi society. The audience can clearly perceive a man and woman in each installation, with the exception of the installation entitled "Symbols of Ka'aba." All installations portray the same man who symbolises the masculine qualities developed within the Saudi cultural framework.

This chapter commences with a discussion of the management of the installations and the challenges encountered followed by a description of the seven installations.

5.2 Challenges

There were many challenges involved in building the installations relating to the site, size of exhibition, expenses, restrictions within Saudi Arabia, the equipment, storage, technical support, training the volunteers, and video filming. Choosing the site for the exhibition was a major decision. It was necessary to obtain the appropriate space to fit the installations, each of which required its own separate space. Above these requirements were the legalities related to religious law that needed to be overcome. These restrictions mean that gaining permission to hold public exhibitions is not easy. Each piece needs to be explained and justified to the authorities. In such circumstances, it is possible that I would not have been given permission to hold the exhibition or could have been asked to change the installations or even destroy them. As a result, I was reluctant to publicize my work or seek funding from the government. This also meant that almost everything was conducted

away from the gaze and control of the authorities. I did eventually obtain late permission from the authorities, during the exhibition, when the Deputy Minister of Culture and Media, also an artist, heard about the exhibition and came to see it. He was impressed and suggested that I could use my art to represent Saudi Arabia in other countries.

During the construction of the exhibition, I experienced first hand the gender issues I was portraying. It was not possible to carry out the project without using male technicians. Culturally, it is not acceptable for a woman to spend time alone with unrelated men in confined places. Finding the qualified people or training them was resource intensive, and I drew on the support of my friends and family, especially my husband who sacrificed his time to accompany me in the preparatory phases of the exhibition. The actors were drawn from my social circle; the male figures came from my immediate family such as my father and my husband, which was convenient and granted me freedom of movement and expression.

5.3 Management of the Project

Each installation had its own perspective with no frame like a conventional image. The use of multimedia provided the images with a lifelike quality that knew no boundaries which assisted the spectators to conceptualize the traditional settings in Saudi Arabia. The elements within the work were created in a way that stimulates the viewers' imagination to give them meaning according to their own experience and expectation.

The exhibition space is a major element in the formation and display of any artwork. Doherty emphasizes the importance of this space as it affects the relationship of the art objects to each other, the architecture and also to the audience. He explains that the modern gallery space: the white cube, created an aestheticised, but apparently neutral space, that in being so different to the everyday meant that "the outside world must not come in" (1999: 7).

Space was an integral part in my exhibition. A sizeable flat in a tranquil place close to the beach and away from the busy city life of Jeddah was rented. The serenity and beauty of the surrounding area created a soothing effect on the spectators as they arrived. Before walking into the flat, just by perceiving the sea and land converge on the horizon, the audience would achieve a calm and relaxing disposition enabling them to focus on the interior.

The exhibition space was divided into seven chambers in which the installations were built, each with its own narrative. Attention was paid to all details. A team that consisted of a carpenter, an electrician and helpers was assembled to help. The flat was cleaned, painted and carpeted to reduce the effect of the sound and produce the desired effect. Projectors and other equipment were added along with natural elements such as stones to reduce echoes as the place was empty. The windows were covered with white curtains.

In the interior of each room, contrasting colours were used to create tension indicating the conflicting issue of the roles and expectations of men and women. The walls were painted specifically to blend with the context of each installation. Some walls were painted white while others were painted black or dark brown to accentuate the installations and to provide a depth to subjects portrayed on the screen or reflected on the walls. The ceilings of each room were painted white to set a contrast against the other colours. In addition to their formal qualities, black is the symbolic colour that women cover themselves with, and white relates to the clothing that men adorn themselves with due to the desert heat.

In some installations, multiple layers and drapery were used to help the audience to deconstruct meanings from a broader context related to culture and tradition; blurring the boundaries between recorded past time and real time displayed on a TV screen or DVD.

Moreover, the element of time was manipulated in multiple ways. For example, "Symbols of Ka'ba" is not a literal translation of a religious historical story. Just like "Veiling" or "Room for Saint John of the Cross", it is a linear trace which "transfers the narrative into a new medium, into the future, while at the same time referring back all the time into the past (Wainwright 2004: 116-117) (see 4.2.2 for more information on time).

5. 4   Description of the Installations

All the installations are a product of my tradition and culture and speak of my social background despite being highly influenced by works and styles of other artists. While developing the installations, I followed research threads which suggested that technology can give artists the opportunity to effortlessly reposition and combine images, use filters and colours, and increase the potential for new creative forms. Such forms can capture the imagination of the audience and lead them to perceive everyday experiences in a different way because of the medium and the way that it has been manipulated.

In my installations, the value of digital images is derived in part from its role as a flexible and accessible information provider. When used in combination with, or juxtaposed against traditional forms of art, it increases the ability of images to engage the audience and also enhances their perceptions of the installations. Images have the power to stir people emotionally depending on the broader cultural meanings given to them. Moreover, the meanings within each image are multiple as new ones are suggested with each viewing. My images are produced in relation to the social and aesthetic conventions of Saudi Arabia. This process of interpretation is derived from the time the viewer takes with each installation, and whether consciously or not, artistically literate viewers use semiotic tools to understand the signification, or meaning of images. The following is a description of the installations and the images and symbols they carry.

5.4.1 Symbols of Ka'ba

The Ka'ba is set within the great Mosque in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. When God "Allah" asked Abraham to leave his wife, Hajar, and son, Ismail, in the desert, no water or food was provided for them there. Hajar went from one mountain to another (Sa'y journey) looking for water, which means that Sa'y is associated with water as Shafaat (1985) reports. When a miracle happened and Holy water sprouted from the well of Zamzam. As a ritual of the Islamic pilgrimage, Muslims follow the path that Hager took seven times. This means that although many centuries have passed, Muslims follow the footsteps of a woman, Hager. Ka'ba also has an immense cultural value to all Muslims, and they aspire to visit it. For this reason, it became an important symbol in my work which the audience would relate to.

Figure 17: The Ka'ba, Personal Collection

The gender tensions are not immediately apparent in this installation, but if the layers of reality are removed, the narrative of Hajar and Abraham becomes evident. In my opinion, Hager had the strength to survive and to fend for herself without a man. This denotes the importance that God has granted to women in Islam. Therefore, I wanted to connect the Muslim Saudi audience to their cultural history through the installation. To enhance the audience's experience, I developed a multi-media installation that used 2

DVDs and a projector, which connected the audience physically and spiritually to a real time virtual representation on the screen using elements such as the desert, a woman's fearful screams, a baby crying, and water exploding. All these were used to immerse the viewers and create empathy for Hajar's suffering. The black cube, representing the Ka'ba, shows a contrasting image. On one hand, it is associated with closeness, safety, and hope. On the other hand, behind this structure, a violent sand storm is projected on two walls providing a sense of depth and vastness, creating at the same time a feeling of fear and hopelessness.

Giving the Saudi audience images they can emotionally relate to such as Ka'aba plays a great role in making their experience deeply immersive. The viewers know the story, and the installation images take them back in history to a time full of suffering, but it is an experience they have never come across in reality so all the sounds they hear and the images they see put emphasis on sensory immediacy. The still image becomes a focus for concentrated meditation and gives them an immediate experience of the past event. The sequence of sounds they hear represent a sequence of incidents: the creaming, the crying, and the burst of Zamzam. These three events that come from different sources and almost in a chronological order represent a sequence of time that helps the listener to understand the story and react to it.

Some of the symbols I used are traditionally related to Saudi culture, they have cultural significance, and the audience was expected to relate to the concepts within each installation and arrive at some understanding of them certain context (See chapter 6 section 6.5.1.4 for audience's interpretation of symbols). These symbols were sometimes used in a conventional way so that I could locate my work within the Saudi context and not alienate the audience, who might be reassured seeing a familiar form in the midst of this art form. My journal entry says:

I don't want the audience to feel they are strangers when they see the installations. There must be something they recognize and start with. (5 Dec. 2008)

However, they were not just turned into artistic constructions for artistic purposes or for the purpose of enjoyment as I did change things in them. The changes I made were various. The Ka'ba is usually fully covered with a black and gold cloth (see figure 18); in the installation, the Ka'ba is a huge structure of 200X200 (cms.) square, painted black on two sides, while the other two show brick walls. Originally, only a single wall was created, but upon reflection I felt it did not convey what I wanted it to do, so I changed it to give greater depth and impact. When I saw the result, I could visualize the Ka'ba from the audience's point of view, in addition to my own.

Moreover, I changed the place known to be the source of Zamzam water and replaced the door of Ka'aba with a high window and added a shelf with a bowl of water to the scene. This change was done to draw the audience away from the traditional story to what goes beyond it and the lessons that can be drawn from it. In addition, I aimed to create a tension that would help the audience to connect subjectively with the installation and think profoundly of the sanctity of the concept. By doing so, they can create new narratives in relation to their culture and religion. I wanted them to consciously think of the difference between what they traditionally know as Ka'ba and what they see in the installation and derive different meanings accordingly. Initially, there was dim diffused light inside the Ka'ba. With slight modification, the lighting was changed into yellow which altered the overall effect.

Figure 18: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Note drawing of "The Symbols of Ka'ba"
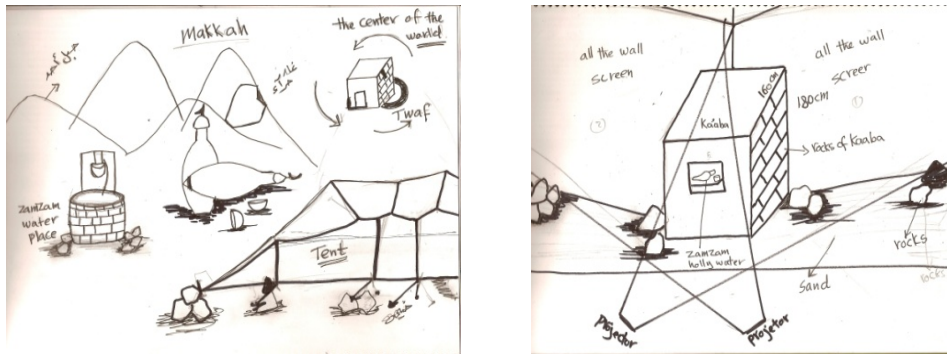
Figure 19: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Diagram of "Symbols of Ka'ba"
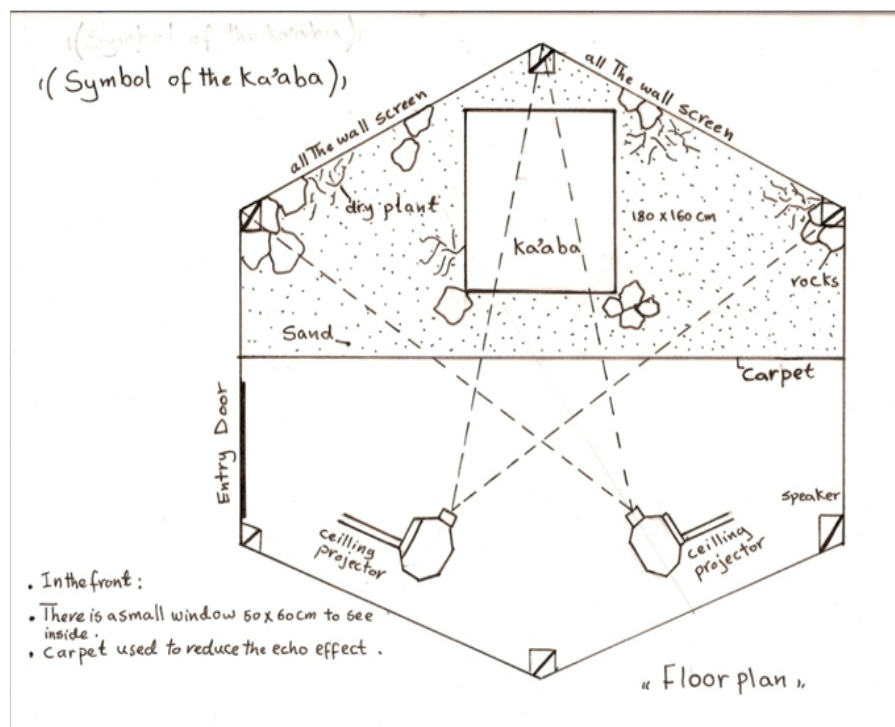
Figure 20: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "The Symbol of Ka'ba", Personal Collection

Figure 21: Hanadi Badawi (2009), The Symbols of Ka'ba", Personal Collection

The use of traditional and symbolic images relates to the description of symbolic signs by the American philosopher Charles Peirce in the 19th century in his semiotic analysis. According to Peirce (as cited in Sturken and Cartwright 2001:30), "the signifier (word/image) is distinguished not only from the signified (meaning) but also from the referent, or the object itself. In addition, Peirce defined categories of signs based on different kinds of relationships between signifiers and signified. For instance, he made a distinction between symbolic and iconic signs. Unlike icons which resemble their objects, symbols sometimes bear no obvious relationship to their origins, but are carriers of meaning through culturally constructed language systems (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 140)

Through my work, I hoped to display symbolic signs in addition to the iconic ones. An image of the "cube" used by Bill Viola in his installation "Room for St. John of the Cross" and by me in "Symbols of Ka'ba" convey messages directed towards different spectators, belonging to two different religions and cultures, Islam and Christianity, in different contexts to an audience who most probably will perceive these differently. This brings back to the point that art depends on the context. My use of the cube is different from his use because I have different knowledge and understanding of it through being rooted in Islam.

The installation "Symbols of Ka'ba" had both similarities and differences to Bill Viola's work "Room for St. John of the Cross." Drawing on these similarities and differences helped me to understand where I stood as an artist and led to the creation of a different narrative environment in which the Saudi audience is immersed. Like Bill Viola's, my installation is the size of a room; hence designing the architectural plan for the exhibition became a creative work of art. Bill Viola's work is constructed around two enclosures, the public and private. The inside enclosure is set inside the outside one and is

accompanied by contrasting sounds; there is a corridor leading to the private space allowing viewers to see inside the structure. However, this act of seeing is done by bending awkwardly to see inside. This bending is a reflexive action that draws the attention back onto the viewers who then consider their private selves in relation to public world (Townsend 2004: 127).

What the viewers see and hear is a consequence of their location in a certain space and a particular time. In Viola's work, the inner cell seems to mirror those terms in a more complex manner. The viewers take a step back and another forward, a step between self and others, a step for self-evaluation. In my installation, the past and the present mesh together. There is no need for the viewers to look inside the window because their present is a reflection and continuity of their past.

Figure 22: Bill Viola (1999), "Room for St. John of the Cross" (http://www.sfmoma.org/media/features/viola) [accessed on 20 May 2006].

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Figure 23: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "The Symbols of Ka'ba, Personal Collection

Unlike "Room for St. John of the Cross," "Symbols of Ka'ba" has no corridor that leads to the inside space of the installation or that separates it from the outer space. Moreover, the window is placed in a higher position discouraging viewers to look inside. There is unity in the background with the area surrounding the inner and outer space having a similar landscape representing that the present blends with the past.

5.4.2 Walls of Shumaag

"The Walls of Shumaag" is a large cube of two metres; a space is made with plastic pipes from which several white shumaag are suspended giving a feeling of an enclosed private area, signifying "home." The walls around are painted black giving the eye a converging perspective. An image of a man fixing his red shumaag is projected on a white shumaag that is reflected on the wall behind a much larger image. This action is commonplace in Saudi Arabia and can be seen at home, in cars, or in the marketplace. Such common gestures form the symbols of the everyday lives of the members of the society. Behind him is a reflection of a black silhouette of a woman, projected as a shadow

on the wall. She is trying to move next to him, but she cannot and is always in the background. He seems to be apathetic towards her, as if she is an object of no significance.

Figure 24: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Note drawing of "Walls of Shumaag"
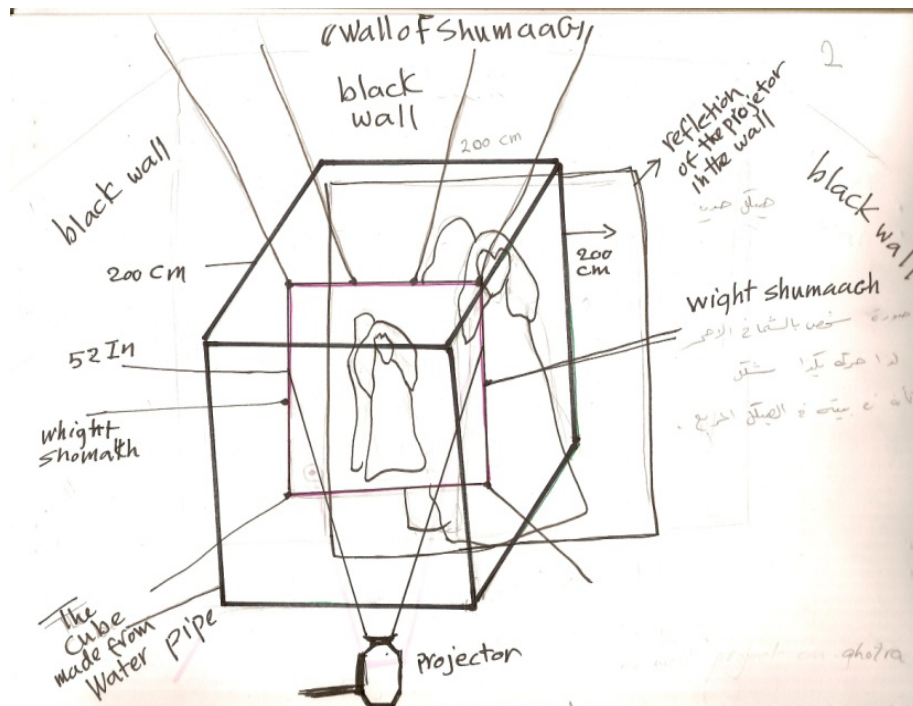
Figure 25: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Diagram of "Walls of Shumaag"
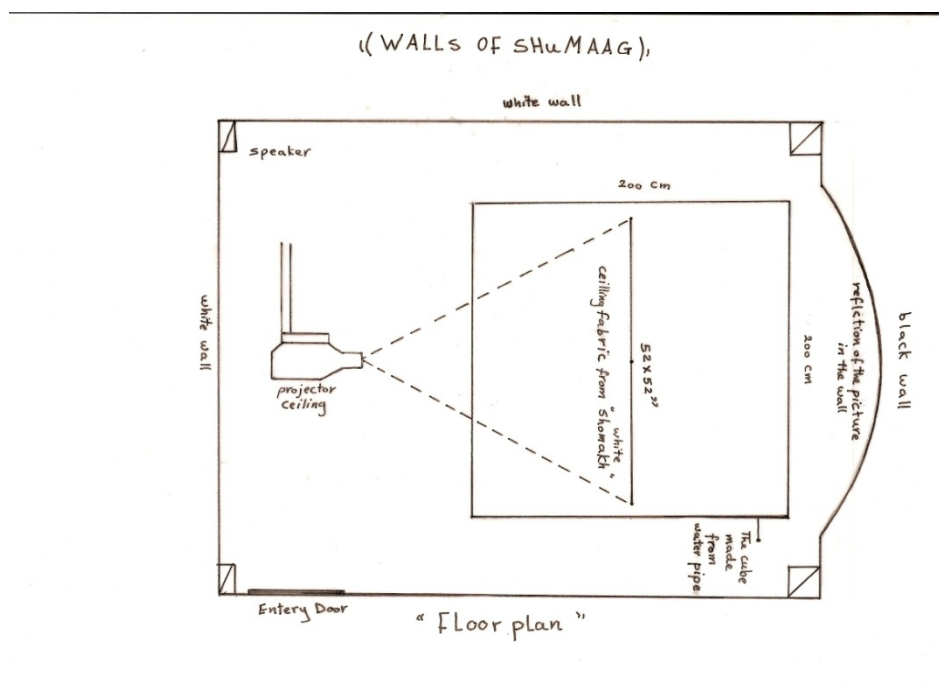
Figure 26: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "Walls of Shumaag", Personal Collection
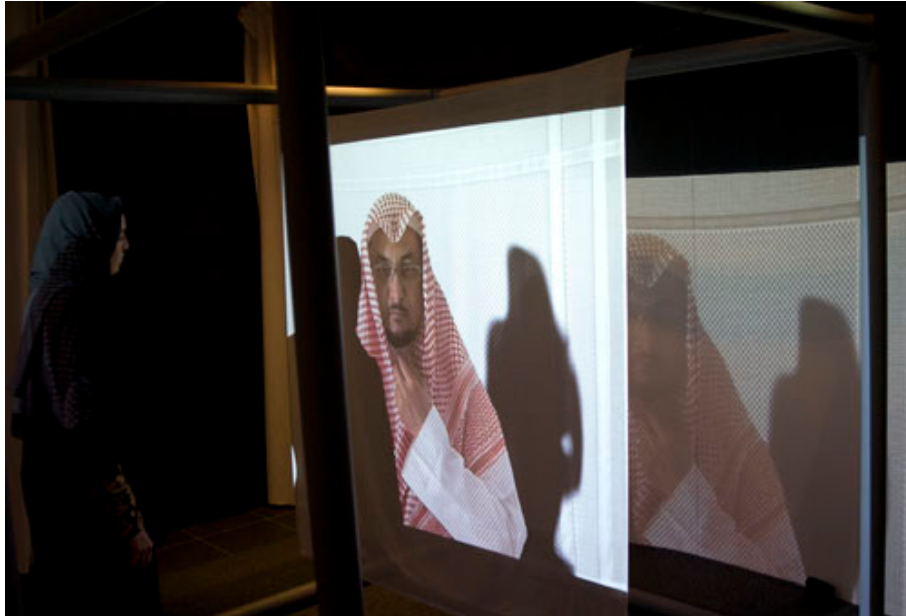
In this image, the man and woman have an association within the walls, but are always distant. The shadow of the woman is symbolic. She remains behind the man. My theme is suggestive of the deep-seated differences between the sexes in Saudi culture and the manner in which they are viewed in and by society, and to western civilizations.

I found "Turbulent" by Shirin Neshat (1998) a very potent video installation related to gender. She showed visual and aural opposites on two facing screens. On one, a male singer performs to an applauding audience, and on the facing wall a woman stealthily moves in a black 'chador' or cover, with only her back showing. She tries to sing but only cries of despair emerge. These cries can be interpreted as a plea or protest against her inability to perform in public as women are banned from singing in Iran (Charta 2002: 52). She also conceptualizes interplay of opposites through contrasts of black/white, male/female, empty/full auditorium. Similarly, in "Walls of Shumaag" there is a man and woman who never unite on the screen. This enables the audience to juxtapose the gender status in Saudi society. The woman constantly tries to come next to the man but is unable to do so; she ends up behind him in the form of a black shadow. He is in a more powerful

position than her, due to political, cultural and religious reasons. Unlike the woman in "Turbulent," the woman in my installation is completely invisible. She is not screaming, yet she is moving persistently and with some speed. She resembles a big black shadow with no specific details. The viewers will have to create her details based on their experiences.

Figure 27: Shirin Neshat (1998), (http://www.filmmakermagazine.com/issues/fall200/reports/turbulent.php) [Accessed 12 Jan 2011]

Figure 28: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "Walls of Shumaag", Personal Collection

Shirin Neshat's use of the woman's movement and stillness is a depiction of reality. She sees that Iranian women move quietly and slowly, and as a result change seems to be far away despite all their whispers and screams. Despite sharing some of her ideas, the woman in my installation is persistently moving despite being in the shadow. The shadow can be seen as resembling her secret attempts to move out of the man's control. The moment is extended to remind us that she will always be there, secretly looking for a place of her own.

5.4.3 The Talking Window

The installation, "The Talking Window", displays a structure similar to an open window, nailed on a large piece of dark wood pasted on a wall. Inside the window, there is a television screen on which there is an image of a woman walking on the street, with only her back visible. Like all the other women characters in my installation, she is wearing the black abaya which fully covers her. In front of this image, there is a small piece of wood attached by a stick. On this square there is a projection of an image of a man peering through the window with only the back of his head showing. This might create several interpretations and impressions among which is that he is constantly watching the woman wherever she is going. In the background, there is a buzz of conversation. The words cannot be heard clearly. This may be interpreted as relating to the woman as seeing a woman walking alone on the street is not common in Saudi Arabia. Although the woman in this image is walking towards her destination, she does not seem to make much progress towards it. However, in contrast to the darkness of her image, a blue sky penetrating the clouds is lying ahead.

Figure 29: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Note drawing of "The Talking Window"
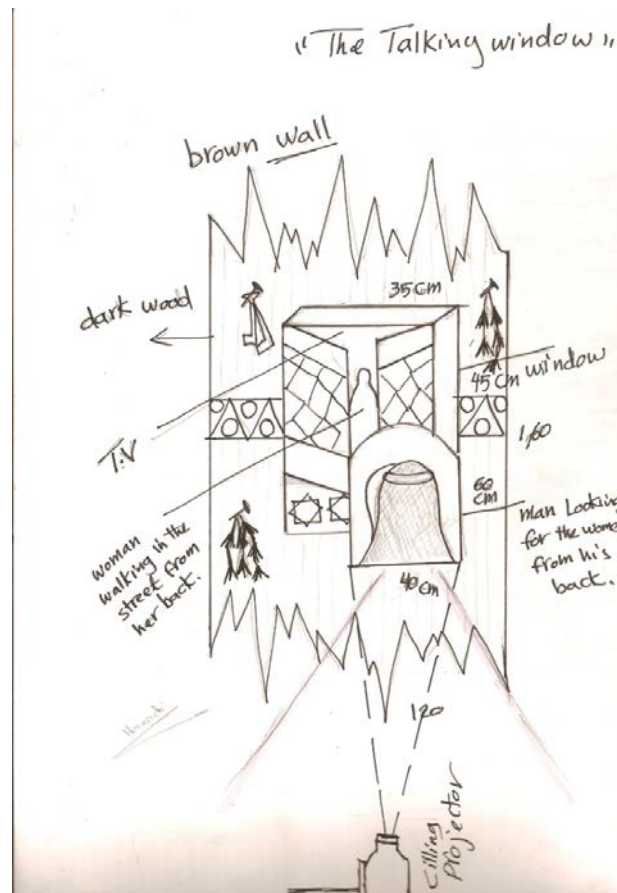
Figure 30: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Diagram of "The Talking Window"
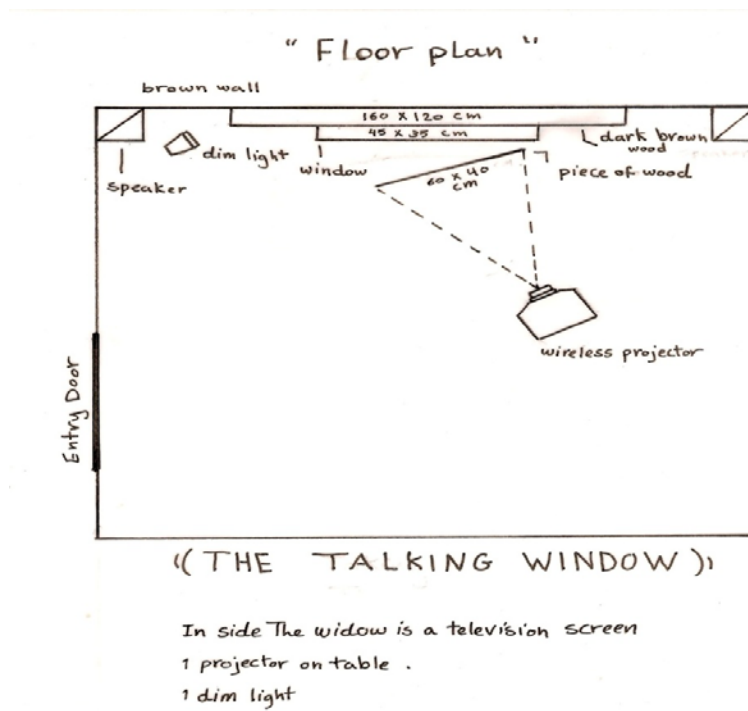
Figure 31: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "The Talking Window", Personal Collection

The man who is watching the woman may either be viewed as a symbol of a supporter or as a means of deterring her progress, for he seems to pay attention to the people gossiping. The audience's interpretation is influenced by the images of the window, the keys, the woman's cloak (Abaya), and the man's head cover, all of which are symbols of the Arabic culture and tradition within which the woman and man are placed. The black cloak refers to women's confinement to certain roles; the head cover represents men's dominance; the key represents the road to freedom while the slightly open window refers to the opportunities awaiting women. The meaning that spectators construct from these will depend on their own experience and cultural sensitivity.

Gary Hill's installation "Hole in the Wall" (1974) provided a new idea for my installation, "The Talking Window." His work comprised of a monitor placed in an external wall of a room presenting a real time recording with sound and image of the cutting of a hole (Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg 2001-2002). It uses an appropriately multi-layered wall. The layers can all be seen as each one is removed until a landscape becomes visible. The idea that I used in my installation was the monitor being placed in the hole; however, in "The Talking Window," the monitor mounted in the window and a mixture of

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sound and light and a projector were used to show a multidimensional image of a covered woman in abaya. An old door from one of my earlier artefacts "Gulf Door" was used to frame the screen. This addition added a cultural accent to the installation to blend with the Arabian traditions.

Figure 32: Gary Hill (n.d.), "Hole in the Wall" (http://www.garyhill.com) [accessed on 2 July 2008].

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Figure 33: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "The Talking Window", Personal Collection

5.4.4 Who is in the Box?

This installation consists of a 100x50 cm wooden box with glass on one side and a symbolic golden key, designed like a palm tree, hanging above the lock. The box is placed on a black carpet in front of a black wall. A large spot light is focused on the box and reveals a woman locked inside it. From the projector above the box, an image is produced on the opposite wall showing a man's face with negative facial expressions. There is a continuous recording in the background of male voices: a father warning his daughter, a husband giving orders, and a son commanding his mother. However, the sounds are produced without their mouths moving. This denotes a show of male dominance and chauvinism and is an indication of a patriarchal society that is predominantly conspicuous in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 34: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Note drawing of "Who is in the Box?"
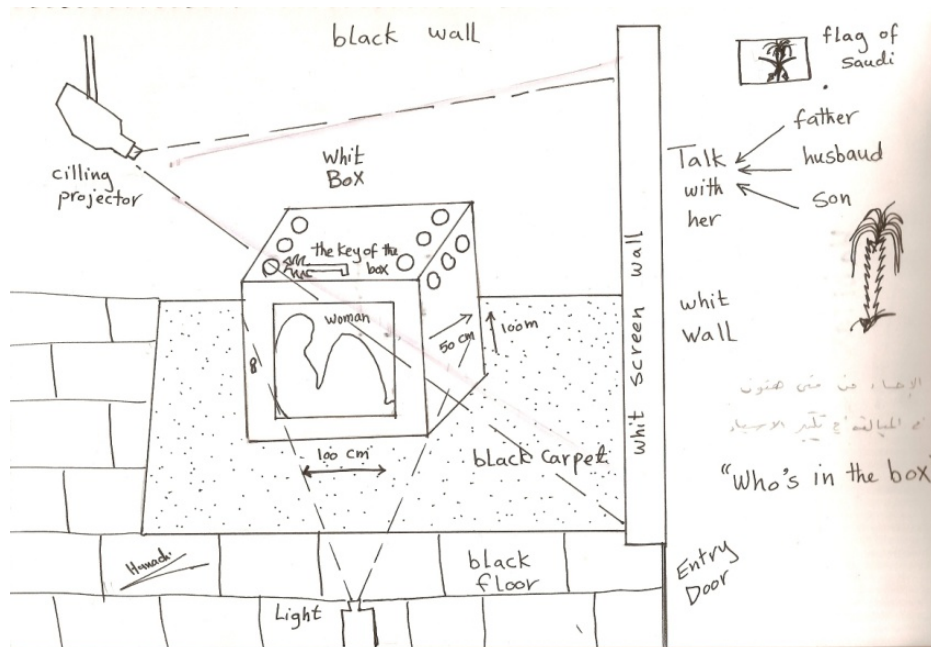
Figure 35: Hanadi Badawi (2008) Diagram of "Who is in the Box"
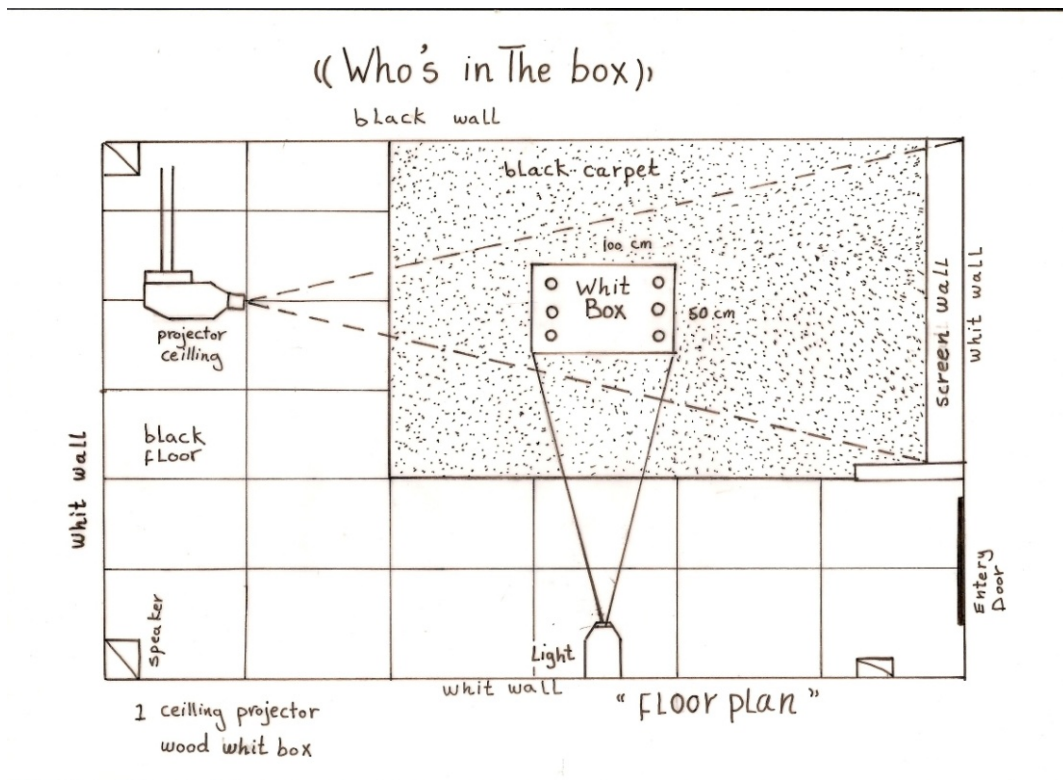
Figure 36: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "Who is in the Box?" Personal Collection

In this installation, "the key" is symbolic; it is conveniently placed for anyone to pick up and use to open the door, but they need to take that responsibility. The colour "black" is also symbolic because it juxtaposes with the white of the box, indicating that the interior is different from the exterior. It also references the black "abaya". The message I try to communicate is that change can be brought about easily; otherwise, it does not align with the education and wealth that the people have attained. On seeing this piece, it was expected that the spectators would be able to empathise with the subject. On the other hand, it is a reminder that each individual must start thinking profoundly about this issue, as this is an era of hope and change (see chapter 6, section 6.5.1.3 for audience reaction). They can start the change if they choose to do so.

5.4.5 Generation Gap

This installation comprises of seven shumaags. These are suspended in the room from the ceiling by metal wires and fishing lines. The largest one is placed in the centre measuring 52 sq. inches; moving outward each one is reduced by 2 inches; the two extreme ones are 46 sq. inches only. Thus, the effect of the image is largest on the centre piece; nevertheless, it diminishes as the size of the cloth reduces towards the extreme ends.

Figure 37: Hanadi Badawi (2009), " Generation Gap", Personal Collection

This installation has some relation to "The Veiling" (1995) by Bill Viola where images of a man and a woman, appear on separate screens and move gradually from dark to bright areas through a series of nocturnal landscapes. The images are projected into parallel layers of loose cloth. The translucent cloth diffuses the light and the two figures penetrate further into the layers where they meet on the central veil (Morgan, as cited in Townsend 2004). Gen Doy (2003) has explored certain aspects of drapery and the ways it has been used in visual culture. Doy's argument exposes the topic of drapery as both rich and problematical in relation to contemporary visual culture. Drapery connects to the representations of sensuality, luxury, veiling, issues of gender and the art/craft. Tyler and Ione (n.d.) claim that it is hard with draperies to locate the convergence or a vanishing point.

Figure 38: Bill Viola (1999), "The Veiling" (http://www. sfmoma.org/media/features/viola) [accessed on 20 May 2006]

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Figure 39: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "Generation Gap", Personal Collection
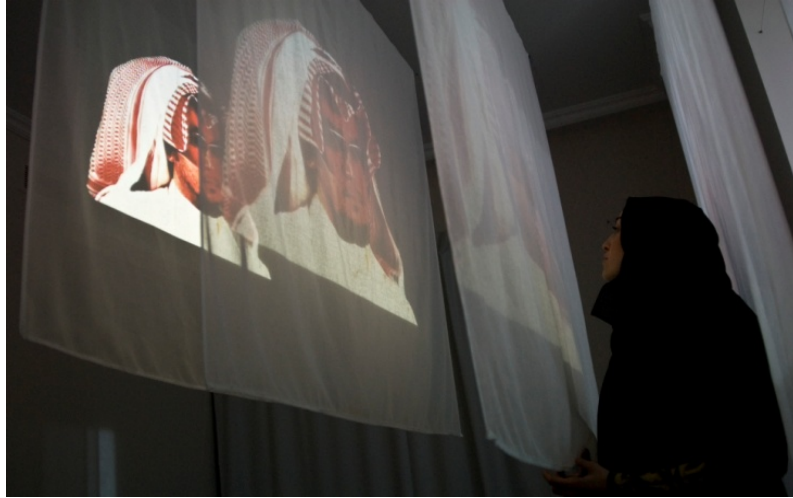
In my installation, the figures are of a father and a daughter. When they intersect, the image remains diffused and fuzzy representing their faint relationship. If the spectators stand in the centre, they can hear music, loud and disruptive from both directions, representative of the conflicting relations between the generations, especially in connection with young women. There are everyday sounds that only the man seems to hear such as twittering of birds. The girl, on the other hand, is surrounded by more modern noises such as cars and helicopters. Whenever their eyes meet, they look unhappily at each other. However, they do merge on the suspended material in the centre, though the image is diffused, signifying that modern life can coexist with the past.

Through this installation, I try to show that the spiritual struggle between the generations is behind the veil of common everyday events. I want to make my audience realize that the generation gap is widening consistently due to factors like technology, and it may be difficult to bridge this gap.

Figure 40: Hanadi BAdawi (2008), Note drawing of "Generation Gap"
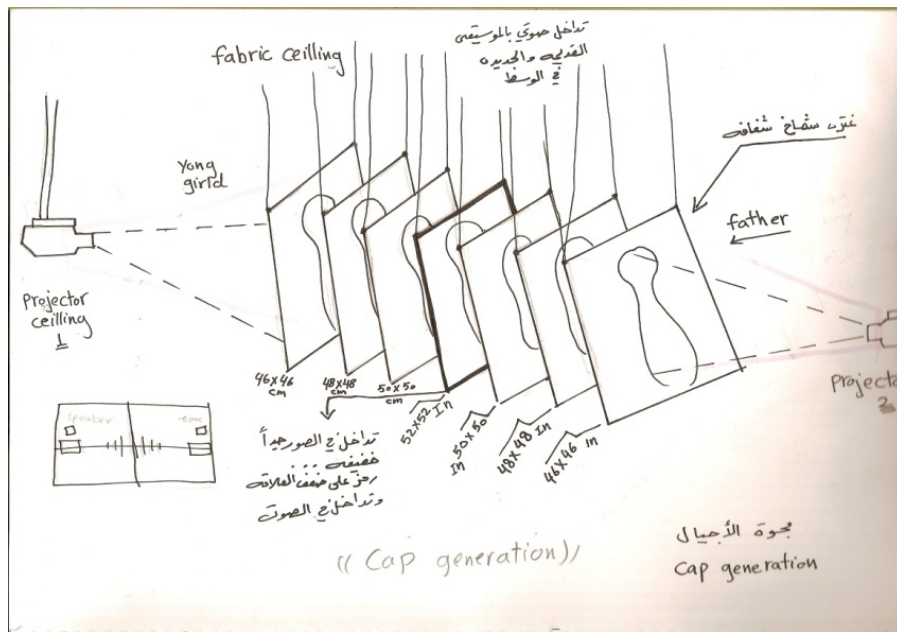
Figure 41: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Diagram of "Generation Gap"
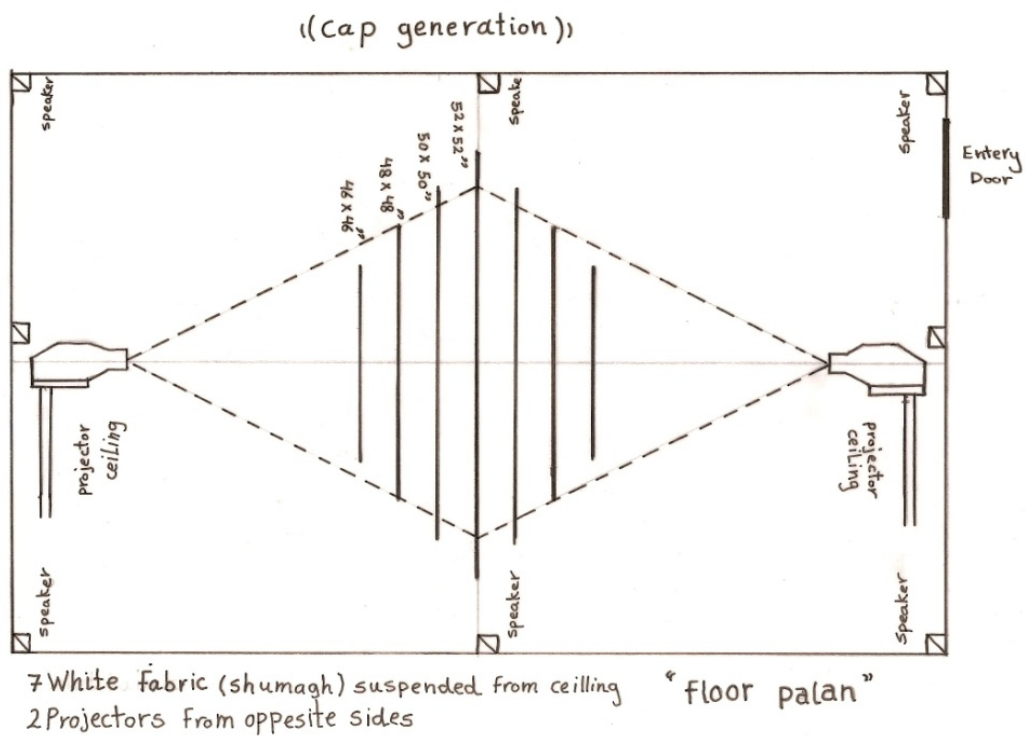
Figure 42: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "Generation Gap", Personal Collection

5.4.6 Habitat

This installation shows a room in a 3 dimensional traditional house made of bricks, commonly found in Asir in the south of Saudi Arabia. The houses in Asir are famous for their wide shape at the bottom, narrowing at the top. The traditional house in the installation is symbolic. The exterior of the house is an embodiment of the culture and tradition. It represents the past. Inside and around the house is a sequence of images unfolding in time; there is a moving image and with it a beginning and an end. The interior is replete with cultural references as well as the modern life style. The traditional house which was used in "Habitat" was used in a way similar to the way figurative painters use it. However, some of the audience saw it as a sign of harmony, while others saw in it the contrast with contemporary lived life (see chapter 6 section 6.5.1.4).

Technology is integrated with cultural symbols by using three projectors that reflect on two opposite walls parallel to each other; space and light are employed to shift the attention of the audience to the conflicting images of a man and a woman walking in

opposite directions. Not until a sound emerges from the house, does one look in that direction. In fact, a kind of dialogue is created between the images and the sound, possible only through this medium. The sounds of the footsteps from within the house add a new dimension in the construction of meaning for this installation. This is similar to what Shirin Neshat did in "Rapture", produced in 1999, as she showed the contrast in the image of men and women in Islamic society: men occupy a fortress while women emerge from forsaken land. Men are standing upright while women are crouched in a low position. Men appear to be more ordered while women chaotic. Even the camera moves in different directions over men and women, looking up to the men and down to the women. This visual event is marked by a grand Qur'anic recitation (Charta 2002: 55). In "Habitat," I manipulated the movement of men and women where I depicted both sexes walking in the opposite directions to each other although both the man and the woman have their house or habitat in common.

The audience is left free to interpret their movement. Some audience members might think that the man and the woman are on their way to the house. They may interpret that the man and woman are required to always uphold their traditions and customs despite their differences because their common connection is the house. Yet, there is a gap between them that needs to be bridged. This becomes clear as when one of them enters the house, the other leaves it. The man is walking with a sprightly gait, but the woman is trudging with difficulty as if she is carrying a heavy burden. Again, this raises the issue of equality of men and women.

The audience can hear the sounds of electronic gadgets and see reflections of modern life such a fax machine and a cell phone inside the house, indicating the presence of modern technology, which is expected to bring the man and woman to a common

understanding. On the floor, there are grains of sand, indicating the older forms of life. In front of the house, there is a small window through which the audience can look inside.

Figure 43: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "Habitat", Personal Collection

Figure 44: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Note drawing of "Habitat"
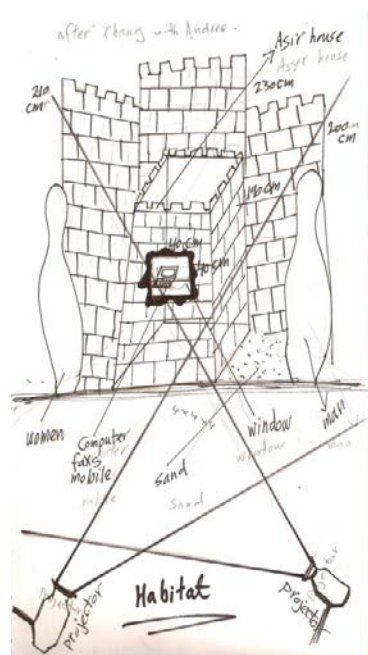
After   Before
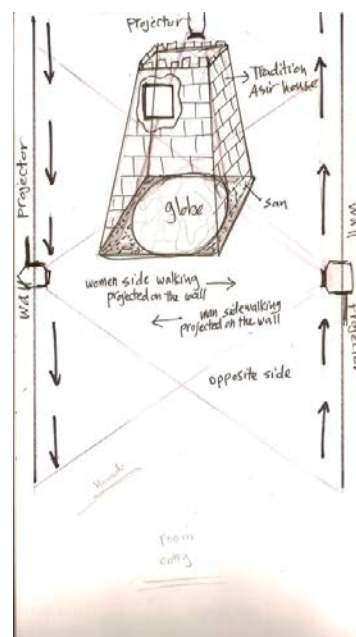
Figure 45: Handi Badawi (2009), "Diagram of "Habitat"
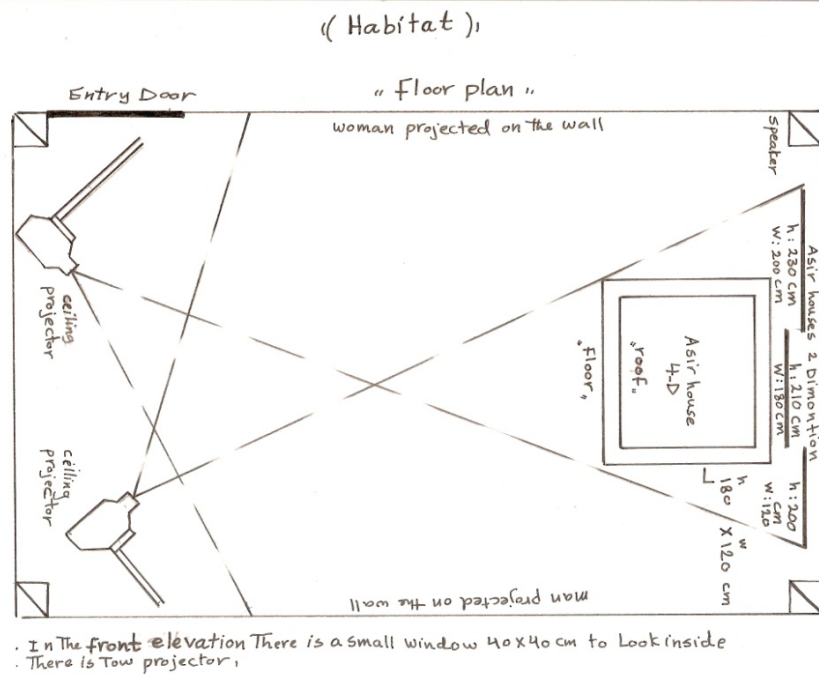
Figure 46: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "Habitat", Personal Collection

5.4.7 Freedom

There are three frames and three levels in this installation. The background has a brown wooden frame placed on a brown wall; there is an elevation of 10 cms with the help of brown sticks. On its top, there is a mirror with an elevation of 20 cms. The mirror is scratched randomly to create an abstract design. A reflection can be seen in the mirror through the transparent portion of the mirror. A woman holding a mirror can be seen. Inside the mirror, there is a screen that displays a Bedouin lady driving in the desert going towards the highway and disappearing out of sight. Through this installation, I have tried to bring about awareness to the fact that Bedouin women have been driving in the desert for many years, using their pickup vans to do jobs men usually do such as moving goods from one location to another. It is ironic that educated women living in modern cities cannot drive, while Bedouin women in smaller towns and villages can do so without being prosecuted.

Figure 47: Hanadi Badawi (2008), Note drawing of "Freedom"
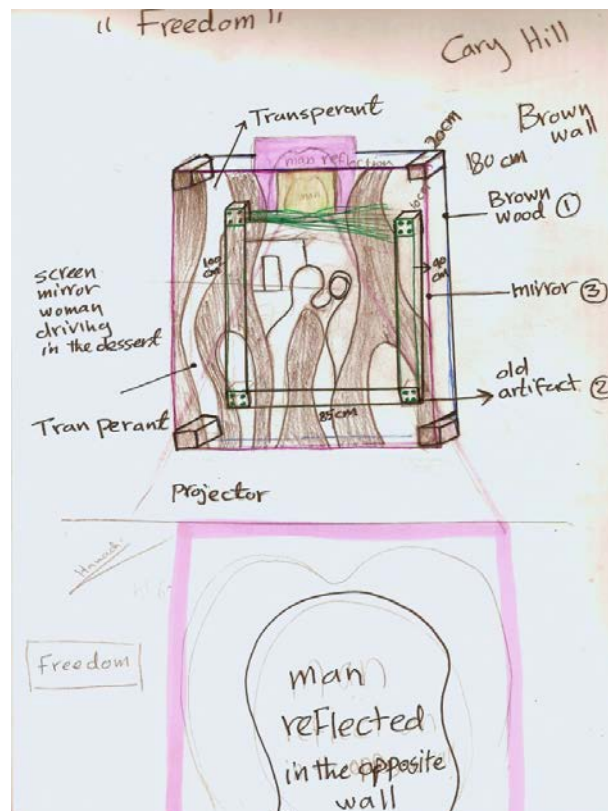
Figure 48: Hanadi Badawi (2009), Diagram of "Freedom"
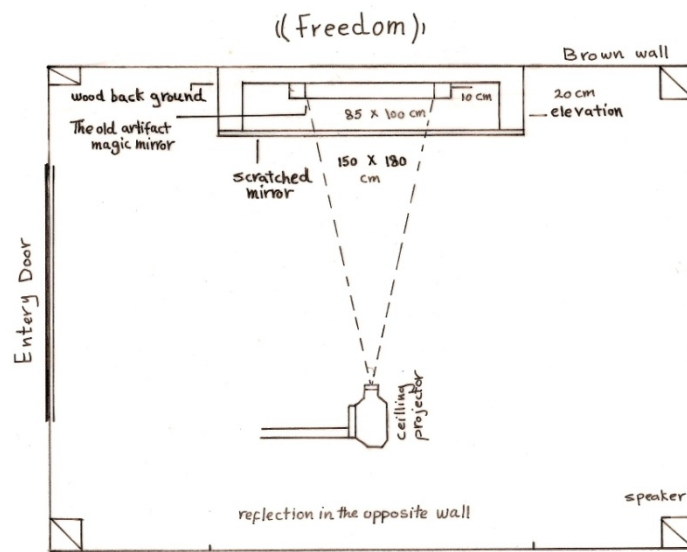
Figure 49: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "Freedom" , Personal Collection

Figure 50: Hanadi Badawi (2009), "Freedom", Personal Collection

In the installation, there is also a large reflection of an extremely angry man on the opposite wall. He seems to be upset about the woman's independence. All three images are formed in different sizes and at different locations. The first one is in a small square in the mirror; the second one is on the wall behind the mirror. Finally, a huge exaggerated one is placed on the opposite wall. This installation is reminiscent of Bill Viola's technique used in his 7-hour long video, "Passage" which shows a wall fully composed of a projection screen upon which a young child's birthday party is shown. The faces and bodies move extremely slowly, and an amplified sound rumbles inside the narrow space into the body of the viewer (Morgan 2004: 89). Bill Viola makes the viewers interrogate whether they should depend on familiar perceptions, especially in relation to memory and the perception of time. They engage in what they perceive consciously and what they sense unconsciously (Morgan 2004: 90).

Similar to Bill Viola's technique, in "Freedom," a huge image is reflected on the wall opposite the scratched mirror. The enlarged image brings about a sense of uneasiness. I, however, tried to be innovative in my use of video imaging, along with the mirror and glass, manipulating reflection, shadow and sound. The transparent glass and mirror also display a special quality so that the subject looking into them appears a part of the surroundings, with the digital image looming behind. In addition, the layers created with the piece of wood and scratched mirror helped me in producing a unique effect with the image of the angry man being multiplied in proportion, in varying sizes in separate areas. This focuses the spectator's vision on the nature of space, light and shadow creating an illusion, which attains an unreal quality.

In "Freedom," both a painted artwork and digital image can be compared. It is seen that the life of the artwork does not represent more than an instance, but the digital image goes beyond the artist's thought to create a narrative connected to the present and future.

5.5   Conclusion

Seven installations, some of which exhibit how digital media can be juxtaposed with traditional art were created. The management and challenges of these installations were described and discussed in this chapter. Moreover, a description of each installation and the motivation behind creating them were also given.

The effect that I tried to achieve through experimentation with digital media provided special effects that allowed the notion of virtual space to be designed, a novel experience for my local audience. Therefore, it was one of my aims to explore the possibilities that the installations could provide to enable the audience to see things and interpret meaning in relation to their past knowledge and beliefs.

Chapter 6

Audience Experience

6. 1 Introduction and Aims

When people come from different cultures, classes, and stations in life, their experiences will be different; therefore, individual subjectivities need to be articulated. The audience will pick on those things depending where they are from. For example, if the artists want to show their artworks in Saudi, the Saudi audience will be able to pick on certain things, while the same exhibition in another country will be viewed differently as was the case with Maghrabi's (2007) audience. Artists as well as audience bring their experiences, constraints and 'baggage' to the artwork.

Each piece of artwork in my exhibition had a story that was personally significant to me, and which could be shared with members of the audience; alternatively the audience can come with their own stories. In my journal I wrote:

> *It is worrying me how I can capture my audience' interest. When I am thinking of the installations, the audience jumps to the picture. I start imagining what their reaction would be (24 Sept 2006)*

It is rare to have digital exhibitions in Saudi Arabia, which means very little is known about how Saudi people react to this form of art or to other works of art dealing with themes and styles such as the ones the artists talked about in their narratives, including works of art dealing with gender issues. This relative lack of experience in viewing digital art, combined with the contentious subject matter means that the audiences' interactions and experiences might be unpredictable. Maghrabi (2007) gathered information in relation to his exhibition, but the type of art he displayed was different from the kind of work these artists created, and his audience were only drawn from fellow artists. Like Maghrabi (2007), my art is different from the Saudi artists discussed earlier,

and because my audience needed to be invited, they were also inevitably partially biased in terms of their knowledge of art.

In combining digital art with more traditional forms of art, I hoped to lead the audience to a point of understanding and acceptance of digital art. Each installation was made to capture the audience's attention by suggesting narratives that accentuate the inequality of relationships between male and female members in Saudi families through a means of exaggeration. This research fills a gap in knowledge by examining the audience's reaction to the installations by involving them emotionally and creating a connection between them and the installations. Therefore, one of the aims of this research was to examine the extent to which the audience accepted and understood the artefacts which combined traditional and digital art.

This chapter commences with an explanation of the rationale for choosing interviews and questionnaires as methods for collecting data on the audience's experiences. The second part presents a description of the background of the audience, prior to discussing their views on the installations.

6.2 Philosophical Perspective

In order to gain an understanding of the audiences' reaction, it was necessary to decide which kind of methodological approach would be the most appropriate for collecting data. There are two paradigms that can be followed to study the nature of reality that can provide the basis of knowledge. These are phenomenological inquiry, which is commonly associated with qualitative methods and aims at understanding the meaning, and logical positivism, which is associated with quantitative methods and tests generalizations based on measurable variables (Suter 2006: 140). In adopting a positivist approach, researchers rule out any possibility of subjectivity by using specific tools such as standardised tests and statistical analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2003 :83). The

phenomenological paradigm, by contrast, proposes that the social world should be studied in its natural state and expects a more reflective interaction between subject and object. In this method, the researcher attempts to discover the participants' definitions of the situation, which reflects their perceptions and interpretations of reality, and how these relate to their behaviour (Creswell 2008; Denscombe 2007; Suter 2006).

Factors such as the purpose of the study, its questions, and resources available affect how the research is designed, conducted, analysed and reported (Bryman 1994). The main motivator for the choice of the methodology for collecting data for this study stemmed from its purpose which was to understand people's attitudes, feelings and interpretations of the installations. This requires a research design that allows participants' freedom of expression and gives good understanding of what is taking place based on rich contextual data.

6.3   Data Collection Methods

Since the audiences' comments were related to their background (e.g. education, gender, age), comparing their receptivity to the installations was important and as a result, a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (questionnaire and interview) was used. Understanding the audience's experience of the installations required asking them questions about the overall exhibition, each separate piece, and setting this against their experience of art and the answers of others. Background details were collected through a questionnaire. This helped in providing baseline information about this newly introduced form of art in Saudi Arabia, and in setting down the parameters for the interviews. The interviews clarified the quantitatively derived findings, a triangulation that aimed at reaching more consistent findings.

Interviews were held with 50 visitors to the exhibition to obtain information about their experiences while watching the installations. These were not representative of the

general population in Saudi Arabia. The sample was limited in two aspects. First, it was limited geographically to Jeddah residents. The residents of Jeddah are known to be more open to other cultures and less conservative than those in other Saudi cities; Jeddah also hosts many galleries and activities for artists (see chapter 3, section 3.2.2.6 for more information). This might be an indication that those residing in Jeddah might be more accepting of different art forms and the issues it raised.

Secondly, the exhibition was not opened to the general population in Jeddah. The audience was selected from personal acquaintances who were artistically aware, yet willing to participate. This kind of art is new to Saudi artists, let alone the general Saudi audience. It is likely that a general Saudi audience would not possess the skills required or have the liberality to appreciate contemporary forms of art that engage directly with complex social issues. Thus, the sample was limited to those who would be most likely to understand the art and be receptive of it. The sample included both males and females of various ages. As most of the audience could be regarded as having some levels of art literacy, it was assumed that most would have a higher level knowledge of digital art than many in Saudi Arabia.

A number of artists residing in Jeddah were contacted, including some of those previously interviewed, those who regularly attended galleries and exhibitions, and personal acquaintances who said they were interested in art. 70 people were invited to the exhibition with the hope that 50 would take part in the research. Invitations in the form of text messages were sent to these people, which allowed for instant confirmation of attendance. They were given details about the study, its purpose, how their comments would be used and the time they needed to devote to filling in the questionnaire and the interview on site. They were all assured that their anonymity would be protected, and that they could withdraw at any time.

In the following sections each method is introduced and discussed in turn.

6.3.1 Questionnaire

Rating scales are commonly used to collect opinion data. Suskie (1996: 33) explains that Likert-style rating scale is the best known rating scale. In such respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements. Suskie claims that rating scales are efficient and permit easy comparison; however, they may yield biased results because people are inclined to agree rather than disagree with a statement.

The questionnaire (see appendix 4) was developed with reference to the research questions and issues raised in the literature review. It included closed questions to produce data that allowed comparison to be made between participants (Suskie 1996: 33). The questions sought information on:

- knowledge of multi-media installations;

- knowledge and perception of digital art;

- how the current exhibition is different from previous work;

- attitudes and feelings towards installations and gender differences;

- the success of the installation in reflecting the social issues intended.

The responses were captured on a 7-point rating scale, where the numbers reflected the feelings of the respondent with 7 being 'No' or 'Never' and 1 'Yes' or "a lot". The questionnaire was piloted with three peers who had similar characteristics to the expected visitors of the exhibition to check whether the questions were understandable and that the questionnaire was participant friendly. All three completed the questionnaire without difficulty, so there was no need to modify any items.

The questionnaire was prepared in both English and Arabic. Only three participants chose the English version. All respondents filled the questionnaire immediately after

viewing the artwork and help was ready if clarification was needed. No problems arose in this respect.

6.3.2 Interviews

Interviews were used to explore individual reactions to the installations. Rose (2007: 83) reports that interviews are commonly used to collect audience feedback on visual material. They may be structured, semi structured, and unstructured (Kvale 1996, King 1994). Interviews are recommended to explore a phenomenon about which little is known, understand context, verify the results from other forms of data collection, illuminate responses from a questionnaire and conduct initial exploration to generate items for a questionnaire (Creswell 2008: 411-412).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used (see appendix 5 for the interview schedule) to elicit detailed responses about the installations and to discuss the wider issues which their viewing might have triggered. The same 50 people who completed the questionnaire participated in the interview. Interviews were conducted by research assistants who were familiar with interviewing techniques, the installations and the purpose of the research. The interviewers were free to use additional probes to elicit further answers at their discretion but they were not allowed to ask leading questions. Each interview was conducted in a secluded corner in the exhibition, ensuring privacy and anonymity. I attended in my capacity as the artist, talking to the audiences and taking brief notes about reactions which I thought could be used to help interpretation of the responses.

The questions were designed to provide an understanding of the viewer's experience, what they saw in each installation, their understanding of the themes of the show, how they felt about it and interpreted it, and their overall willingness to consider gender issues. Care was taken to ensure that the questions would draw out comments from the audience that would not bias their responses.

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The interviews were conducted in Arabic to allow the audience members to express themselves freely. The interviews were recorded for later analysis. Verbatim transcripts were not made due to the large amount of data collected. Redundant information was filtered and ideas organised based on the interview schedule.

6.4   Quantitative Data Analysis

The items in the questionnaire were coded and entered into an Excel spreadsheet, which enabled efficient organization of data and basic statistical manipulation. For the purpose of this study, descriptive statistics were sufficient to categorise the responses of the audiences. The mean, mode and range were calculated in relation to each question. The response rate was 100% due to the fact that the questionnaires were given to the participants just after they saw the exhibition. The analysis of the questionnaires showed the following:

6.4.1 Results and Discussion

The analysed data were organised into the following:

6.4.1.1 Background Information

Background detail was collected on the visitors' nationality, sex, age, education, and occupation.

Nationality

All the respondents were citizens of Saudi Arabia. The invitations to the exhibition were sent to these as they were the target audience. This item was included in the survey to make sure only Saudi nationals completed the questionnaire. Audiences from other nationalities were welcomed to the exhibition but were not invited to participate in the research.

Gender

23 females (46%) and 27 males (54%) answered the questionnaire. The intention was to include a balance of both genders. However, no assumptions were made regarding how this would affect perceptions of the installation. Reference to gender has been made in the analysis when it was evident that the audience's views might have been affected by this.

Age

The audiences were divided into two groups: old and young. The age for the young ranged from 20-35 (20 participants, 40%) and for the old 36+ (30 participants, 60%). 35 was determined as the cut off age to differentiate between two periods in Saudi Arabia: Those who started practicing art and finished their education before 1990, and those who witnessed the change and development in technology and commenced their professional careers (artistic or otherwise) in the early nineties. Similarly to gender, reference was made to age only when a difference was thought to be attributed to age.

Education

The educational qualifications of the audience ranged from general secondary school certificate to a PhD. In detail:

- 4% were high school graduates,

- 6% were diploma holders,

- 64% were BA graduates,

- 20% were MAs

- 6% had a PhD.

92% claimed their main qualification was related to art and design. The effect of educational level and nature of the course may be reflected in the audiences' understanding

of the installations, the kind of terms they used to describe the work and their opinions of it.

Occupation and Interest in Art

60% of the audience characterised themselves as artists. The remaining 40% were engaged in allied professions such as architecture, graphic design, curation or art criticism. 16% of the audience had an interest in art or were familiar with it through their education. Overall, it may be concluded that the audience had a higher level of art literacy than would have been found in the general population.

The findings of the questionnaire are presented in the following section. These are grouped into sections under the heading reaction to feral aspects of the exhibition that cover the audience's knowledge of multi-media installations, attitudes to gender differences, and reaction to the installations.

6.4.1.2 Reaction to Formal Aspects of the Exhibition

A multi media exhibition was defined by most of the audience as an exhibition which included art and technology. 27 participants had visited a multi media installation before, either in Dubai or in Western countries. As such, it was expected that this experience would enable them to critique and comment on the installations in an authoritative manner. However, most of these participants stated that the installations were very different from what they had seen before (mean = 1.06, modal =1). Further discussion revealed that their previous experience had been of smaller installations, having less digital effects and less motion. Some of the younger visitors who had graduated from design schools that offer digital media courses in their programmes, had been exposed to computer generated mages rather than installations.

The audience admired the different media elements in the installations and thought that they combined well together (mean=2.02, modal= 1), but many admitted that they were not aware of all the media elements in the installation without being told about them (mean =3.82, modal =7). Their comments in the Guest Book also included a lot of "surprise statements" about this form of art. Most of the viewers, whether they had previous experience with installation art or not, thought that the exhibition would help people understand conceptual art further (mean =1.84, modal =1) and that the exhibition had helped them to understand more about multimedia art (mean= 1.48, modal= 1). In the Guest Book some of the comments were:

> *An addition to the art scene in Saudi; made me see for myself what digital media is like and how it can be used in art.* (Young male artist)

In addition, the majority thought that the exhibition would motivate other artists to work in a similar way (mean= 1.62, modal =1). This was reflected by comments in the Guest book in which some indicated that this would open new doors for other artists to do similar work. Most of the participants understood the meaning of the pieces before they talked to the artist (mean =2.44, modal= 2). Though this may have been a leading question, the majority of the audience reported a willingness to visit similar art exhibits (mean=1.28, modal=1). No marked differences were found between the different groups of audience in their perceptions of the installations.

It should be remembered that the level of art appreciation of this audience was far in advance of that of many Saudi's. This means that the findings cannot be generalised to the general audience of art exhibitions in Saudi Arabia. Unless a culture of entertainment and education based on venues such as digital media galleries, cinemas and theatre is developed, Saudi audiences will remain short of experiences which bring them into direct contact with new forms of art. This echoes the suggestion given by Cooke and Morgain (2005: para. 3) who suggest that "the roles of viewer/user/listener/participant do not come

naturally; these roles are learnt practices and strategies just like the appreciation of any other art form." This goes with Khankar's (2010) suggestion, though written in a different context, that Saudi audiences need training on how to appreciate artworks by participating in art appreciation classes and through promoting the culture of art viewing in Saudi Arabia. Since this is a new form of art, it might be worth considering educating the spectators to gain insights in digital media art and its appreciation because it is different from traditional arts. These findings are also congruent with the findings of the study conducted by Hesham Maghrabi (2007) whose Saudi audience appreciated his work.

6.4.1.3 Attitudes to Gender Differences

Most participants reported that the themes reflected contemporary issues (mean =1.75, modal =1) and that the installation conveyed the relationship between men and women in Saudi Arabia (mean =1.06, modal =1). No marked differences were found between the groups in terms of age, gender, or those who have been exposed to multi media exhibitions before. Young women, however, pointed to "Generation Gap" artefact as the one they felt most connected with. These young women felt restricted and misunderstood which may explain why they related to this installation the most.

The audience also reported that they were aware of the messages the artist wished to convey (mean 2.28=, modal =3) through the installations and that the installations made them think more about the relationship between men and women in Saudi Arabia (mean =1.94, modal =1). They reported that the work reflected the artist's origin and that her use of Saudi cultural symbols was appropriate (mean= 1.98, modal= 1). In relating this to their own experiences, the majority thought that gender differences are already debated in Saudi Arabia (mean= 2.84, modal= 1). This is also evidenced in the international literature in which audiences have been reported to have understood messages that are culturally sensitive or contain elements of exaggeration, such as the reactions to the works of the

artists Mona Hatoum and Shirin Neshat whose cultural backgrounds are reflected in their work and could be perceived by the audiences as such.

6.4.1.4 Interaction with the Installations

The majority felt part of the work (mean 2.48, mode 1), and connected to it (mean= 2.04, mode =2). When asked if they would visit a similar exhibition again, the majority said they would (mean= 1.28, mode =1). They also did not think that the same ideas could be portrayed by painting alone (mean 1.72, mode 1). This accords with Paul's (2003) suggestion that technology can assist disparate elements to blend more seamlessly with the focus given on a new simulated form of reality. The audience felt part of the installations, connected with them and reflected on their own experiences. This may have been influenced by the growth of television and computers in Saudi Arabia, where 'reality' is seamlessly packaged and is experienced in a very different way to painting.

The information derived from the interviews, questionnaire and guest book confirmed that this audience accepted digital art as a new form of art in Saudi Arabia, just as Maghrabi (2007) reported. This may have been assisted by the integration of traditional art and symbols.

To conclude, it can be claimed that the exhibition achieved its goal of introducing this form of art which integrates digital art with traditional art in Saudi Arabia. It is hoped that the success of this exhibition might lead to other artists being inspired to create similar work. No difference was found in the way in which different groups of the audience regarded the exhibition.

6.5 Findings and discussion of Qualitative Data

Qualitative analysis requires rigour and involves interaction with the data (Creswell 2008: 245). It also involves reflecting and creative interpretation. In this study, I was

concerned that my prior knowledge, understanding and passion for digital art might influence my interpretations and make me assume things instead of looking for them. To overcome this, I reflected on my actions and tried to separate my role as a researcher from my role as an artist.

The qualitative data were subject to content analysis; a coding framework was developed from the questions and a thematic analysis, looking for trends in the data was conducted. Creswell (2008) explains that involving another person reduces the researcher's subjectivity, so I asked two researchers who had not been involved in the interviewing process to listen to the interviews and write their analysis of the material. Findings were discussed in order to ascertain whether the analysis was consistent. Whenever there were discrepancies, which was expected as each brought her interpretation to the text, we discussed them together, as Creswell (2008) and Kumar (2005) advise, until the analysis was finalised. The findings were collated in a narrative form, in which they were summarised, and evidence (quotes) was provided from the interviews and Guest Book.

The focus of the qualitative analysis was the audiences' reactions to the exhibits. The audiences explored each installation and reflected on their experiences freely before discussing their experience in a semi structured interview. In the analysis, the results were collated and grouped under the category audience interaction. This includes understanding the message (gender differences), the viewers' interaction with the installations and the emotions they provoked and the symbols used in each installation. A table was created to organise the data by age and sex of the participants, then by type of response, if it was positive or negative. The following codes have been used to refer to different groups of participants: young female artist (YFA) older female artist (OFA), young male artist, (YMA), older male artist (OMA) young female art literate (YFAL), older female art literate (OFAL), young male art literate (YMAL) and older male art literate (OMAL).

6.5.1 Audience Interaction

Le Meur (2002) argues that once art is in the public realm, the viewer, through interpreting the work, can finish it, and through taking part in its realization become its co-author. Dinkla (1994) also remarks that interactive art allows the viewer to intervene in the action in relation to the work of art. While responding to the installations, two things surfaced. The first was the audience's emotional engagement with the installations. The second is their interpretation of the characters and events depicted in the installation.

6.5.1.1 Understanding the Story and Message (Gender Relationships)

The installations were not discussed with the audience beforehand. Although the majority of the participants claimed to understand the intended messages in each installation, when probed, it was found that the extent to which the message had been understood varied. For example, in the installation, "Symbols of Ka'ba," an association between the installation and the real story of Hajar was established. In particular, the older generation understood its religious connotation. This might be attributed to the fact that religion is still alive for many of the older generation and forms a greater part of their lives. A comment such as:

> *A woman needs help, but she can always overcome difficulties and challenges* (YFAL)

shows that some members of the audience were aware of a gender related theme, though it was not clearly illustrated in this installation. Metaphorically, it might seem right to assume that the message some of the audience understood was that history has shown how resilient women in these areas were, and how they became an example for the whole Muslim world to follow.

The conflict between men and women was a common theme that the audience detected as part of the message of most of the installations. For example, in "Walls of

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Shumaag," the majority of the audience related the installation to the status of men and women in Saudi Arabia and the conflict between the sexes, highlighting men's superiority and their high self regard: men's focus on themselves, their needs and their requirements; they act in a selfish manner. The older spectators, men and women artists and the art literate, emphasised gender segregation and marginalisation of women, a thing they may have personally experienced. Helped by the title, "Generation Gap," the majority of participants came to the conclusion that the installation showed a conflict between a father and his daughter. However, they attributed this problem to the introduction of technology.

> *Relations between father and daughter are strained due to technology.*
> *Communication between different generations is unclear. The*
> *relationship between them seems weak and forced. He's upset with her*
> *modern life* (YFAL)

In many cases in Saudi Arabia the old generation tends to control all major decisions regarding their children's future, especially if they are females.

In "The Talking Window," there were mixed views. The majority of spectators, especially the older ones, indicated that the installation was about men supporting women while other comments referred to miscommunication between men and women stating that:

> *Men and women live in different worlds, not being able to reach each*
> *other; there will always be an "argument between the man and the*
> *woman* (OMA)

In "Freedom," the majority of the audience moved away from its intended meaning and thought that it was about the much debated issue of women driving in Saudi Arabia.

> *A woman wants to drive and her father doesn't want her to but women*
> *are changing. They are dominating things in life* (YFA)

Some linked the message to the desire for women's independence, and to men not approving of this because they feel threatened by their success. Women's determination to succeed was also mentioned as part of the message. This was clear in "Symbols of Ka'ba,"

and "Freedom" where female viewers in particular commented that nothing would stop women achieving their goals:

> *The man wants to ignore the woman, but he can't; she will always try to be successful"* (YFAL*)*

> *"He feels that the woman is one of his rights. He feels challenged by her, but she is challenged by the situation. She is feeling uneasy because the man is watching her from all directions, but she will do what she is convinced of (*YFAL)

Such responses might subconsciously reflect how some men are still doubtful and even finding it hard to see women determined to realise their dreams. This doubt and mistrust on the part of men were mentioned repeatedly by the participants as part of they see in the installations. Young females in particular mentioned it in their interpretation of the story in "The Talking Window", and the older men and young male artists mentioned it when they interpreted "Habitat."

Sexual relations as theme were mentioned on several occasions. For example, in "Walls of Shumaag," though most thought that it was about the vanity of men, some thought it was ironic that the grooming was undertaken to attract women.

> *He is fixing his shumaag. He wants to look good and well groomed; as usual he wants to attract the other sex* (YMA).

Similarly, in "The Talking Window," Some female younger audience read the message as:

> *A man flirting with a woman; both flirting with each other* (YFA)

and even the taboo of:

> *a pregnant woman facing gossip or breaking the boundaries*
> (YFAL).

Sexual relationships are not discussed openly in the Saudi society, and it is interesting to see that younger women raised the issue of pregnancy. Men and women are not allowed to indulge in illicit sexual relations and if discovered receive equal punishment. However, it is the woman who is blamed and brings dishonour to her family.

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One of the reasons segregation is enforced is to safeguard the purity of women (Al-Munajjed 2006). It would have been interesting to have pursued this further and encouraged a true discussion of issues.

When asked how they interpreted the installations, most of the audience said that it came from their own experience and what they saw around them. The audience brought their experiences to the artwork, just as Meskimmon (2003) suggests. The audiences picked on the gender issues based on their own everyday experiences as Saudis within the Saudi culture.

6.5.1.2 Emotional Engagement with the Installation

The audience expressed various feelings about the installations. In "Symbols of Kaaba," almost everyone felt the peace and tranquillity that Ka'ba provided. The changes I made (see chapter 5, section 5.4.1) did not change the way they felt about it. This probably came from their instilled beliefs that Ka'ba will always be the haven of every Muslim. Unexpectedly, with this came a contrasting feeling of pain. Some women felt uncomfortable and related Hajar's suffering to the pain and suffering of women in modern Saudi Arabia.:

> *I had a strange feeling of terror and sadness overcoming me while I was watching the video and the installation. I felt like someone had gripped my heart* (YFA)
>
> *It reminded me of how girls were buried alive in the pre-Islamic era and women were thought of as a source of shame to the family* (OFAL).

Such strong feelings of sadness and terror reflect how women of all ages can sympathise with other women and learn from their experiences.

A similar feeling of pain was expressed by the majority of the audience towards the woman trapped inside the box in "Who is in the Box?" The young females shared her sadness because they thought she was a prisoner of the country's old customs and

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traditions. This emotional engagement led a young woman in the audience to blame men for this brutal act:

> *I felt bad for her, but this represents the reality of our society and the mentality of Saudi men. They can sometimes treat women like animals* (YFAL)

One woman viewer refused to enter the chamber when she realised the person in the box was a woman. She was disgusted and terrified, an indication that the medium I used was successful in provoking a reaction on the part of the audience, even if it does not lead to the desired action which is releasing the woman. Many expressed their frustration with how people sometimes misinterpret religion and link it to traditions:

> *People understand religion in a different way; they misunderstand it and do things accordingly* (OMAL).

This misunderstanding is common in many Arab and Muslim countries. This is why El-Saadawi (1988) urges women to study religion and know their rights. One woman from the old generation differed from others in showing acceptance of the situation:

> *This is the situation of women in the Saudi Arabia. Nothing is strange about it* (OFAL).

Whether such comments stem from frustration or convention remains to be investigated. Some men in the older generation even justified what they were seeing:

> *Man is justified in controlling her; the man rules* (OMAL)

Some men (OMAL) refused to open the door when they were told they could. This can be interpreted through Nochlin's explanation of men's power and control over women (Nochlin 1989).

The analysis of the responses to the installations showed that they were emotionally engaged at all levels and reflected on the artist's intention and the issues presented in the installation. This accords with Yeh's (2007) findings that digital media art work can help stimulate reflection on experience even with autistic children who find it hard to

communicate with others. Due to its energetic nature, this type of art can be used to raise awareness that might lead to discussion to influence societal change. It was noticed that the audience talked to each other about it and wrote in the guest book their feelings about what they saw and how things are changing slowly in Saudi Arabia. Though effecting change was not one of my aims, raising the level of awareness of such issues, and bringing them into the open is a starting point for this. Additionally, the audience did not remain isolated in their consideration of the art work. They actually shared their experiences/feelings with each other when they went round the exhibition. I as an artist was going around stimulating them to express their feelings and share them with others. Much of that is documented in my journal.

The only significant response between the participants was that the younger women were more sympathetic towards the women's situation. This could be taken as an indication that the Saudi society is changing and women's voices are gradually being heard. It was noticed that 'Who is in the Box?' was the one the participants felt most strongly about. This response was more related to the medium I used than the issue itself. The added value of using an actual person rather than an image made it more shocking. Seeing the woman locked in required an immediate response. There was no time to think; only act.

The participants appreciated expressing themselves emotionally in relation to the installations. This was the aim of the researcher who believes that this is what gives installation art its sense and significance, just as Reiss (1999) asserts. Unlike paintings, installations enable the viewers to be part of the artwork, complete it and interact with it (see section 2.5 and 2.6 for more information on immersion). The audience reflected on their own experiences and were gaining additional insights into society (gender issues)

through their viewing of the installation and thinking about things in a new and radical way.

When they were asked to describe their feelings of interacting with the installations, the majority expressed positive feelings: In the Guest Book, a member of the audience wrote:

> *Amazing art; it really surprised me!* (OMA, 17/5/2009)

Another one stated:

> *I never thought I would see someone who dares to show women and men in this bold way. It shocked me but at the same time made me happy that someone is doing it at this level. Really great!* (OFAL, 16/5/2009)

Another guest wrote,

> *Huge effort, modern thoughts, new ideas expressed in a very elegant way. Your vocabularies, structure and material are all amazing and reflect who you are...I am going home with issues to think about.* (YMAL, 20/5/2009)

This deep and continuous thinking about the installations goes with Bill Viola's views. He proclaimed that the most important place his work occupies is in the mind of the viewer (Morgan 2004: 101).

6.5.1.3 Interpretations of Characters and Events Depicted in the Installation.

In addition to expressing their own feelings about what they saw, the viewers analysed the characters in the installations. In "The Talking Window," despite being optimistic, most of the viewers especially the older ones interpreted the woman's feeling in the installation as being *"sad"* *"confused," "lost," "frustrated,"* *"dissatisfied,"* *"lonely," "angry"* and *"trapped"*. Most of these came from older viewers who interpreted the installations more negatively. Some comments are:

> *She is going the wrong way, walking endlessly without a destination* (OFAL)

> *She is running away from something like abuse* (OMAL)

To this audience, a woman is still afraid; she still does not know what she wants, and she has not set her priorities correctly. A man summed up the situation saying:

> *No matter what the woman achieves, marriage is the only natural end* (OMAL)

In contrast, the man was described as being *"free,"* *"powerful,"* and *"responsible."* However, these views contrast with another view expressed by some young women who think that despite their strength, men are not actually as confident as one may think:

> *The man is worried, but the woman is free…the man spies in the darkness, but the woman walks in the light freely…She is going in the direction of an unknown path, but it leads to freedom and she is going towards something better…She is going to improve her career and will be able to do any job she wants* (YFA)

Other interpretations (from both genders) focused on lack of mutual trust between men and women:

> *Distrustful of each other and both of them feel negatively towards each other"* (OMAL)

In "Generation Gap," the majority thought that the man was angry and frustrated. However, they gave various reasons for this frustration such as the lack of responsibility on the part of the younger generation who misuse their freedom, creating barriers between them and the older generation. Others thought he was confused and blamed himself for this lack of communication. Some detected a feeling of loneliness on the part of the man:

> *He is not angry; he is just lonely and thinking about his situation because he is living in his own world* (OMA)

Such comments were made especially by the older audience and reflected how people can become confused about what is right and wrong and fearful of the consequences.

The audience also noted the relative position of men and women in the installations. In "Habitat," comments such as:

> *Look at men walking in the front and women in the back. It is what he expects her to do, to follow him. When they go shopping, he is always in the front and she is in the back* (YFAL)

show how some of the audience looked at elements of place and linked them to the status of men and women in everyday life situations. Others perceived their movement as a step forward:

> *The man is walking behind the woman, supporting her and together they are starting a modern life. They both wanted to improve the situation for both of them…they are going towards modern life leaving the past behind* (OMA)

Other responses expressed exactly the opposite:

> *They are very slow like they are forced to change, like someone is controlling them* (OMA).

It seems that the perception of what constitutes fast or slow movement played a role in the audience's interpretation. This confirms that careful manipulation of materials and effects can lead to different interpretations. For example, the speed of pacing could have been at different levels; delays could have been introduced so that the two did meet up, or they could have stopped at the house; direction of the movement and the clarity of the pictures could have been altered. The audience were careful observers of the effects and interpreted the meaning of subtle cues in the installations. Whether the two sexes will reach a meeting point was questioned by many viewers who thought that the circular walk in "Habitat" indicates they will never meet, and even if they do, it is not clear how close they become.

It was noticed that some of the audience highlighted roles specified for men by traditions. These roles are associated with the concept of *qawama*. Qawama means that the man is responsible for the woman and should fend for her (Wadud 1992; Mahdi, n.d.). Some men think of it as a privilege but take it as an excuse to exert control over women without having to justify it, claiming that is a right granted to them by God. However, it

was surprising that some older males thought that the man in the installation saw this responsibility as a burden:

> *The woman is a burden on the man. He envies the woman for being free from family responsibilities. He has a lot on his shoulders unlike the woman*; *he wants to be free* (OMA)

It seems that men also felt that they were being discriminated against in society, which is something that was not considered while preparing the installation.

In some of the installations such as "Generation Gap" and "Habitat," modernisation seems to be a reason why misunderstanding is taking place between the men and women, no matter what roles they take. In "Habitat," less than half the viewers thought that technology would bring the man and the woman closer and enhance their communication:

> *It will make them closer and their relationship will be better with technology. It will provide a means to meet each other but only if they use it in a civilized way, it will be good, if not they will suffer. It depends on how they use it* (YFA)

Others feared that women will be discriminated against and might not be allowed to use technology,

> *It will create a wider gap because he will use it, and she will not* (OMA)

Some were extremely pessimistic and had no hope that technology would change the situation. The same reaction was recorded as a response towards "The Generation Gap":

> *The relationship will be torn apart, because there is no communication; technology will make the already complicated relationship more complicated* (OMAL)

Some thought that the older generation must keep updated with changes in technology as it makes the job of bridging the gap between them much easier.

As expected, the installations created a discussion that can be seen in the audience's response about whom in society is responsible for creating change. Most of the audience showed willingness to use the key to let the woman out in "Who is in the Box?" Two of them, however, put conditions to allow this to happen:

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The woman needs to be controlled after her exit (OMAL)

One older viewer was worried about the fast pace of change:

No, we should open for her step by step (OFAL*)*

Another old viewer thought that the political situation and the control of the religious institutions may not allow for this to happen, and so he was not willing to use the key to open the box.

The key is not helpful; it can't open as a result of conditions existing in the country (OMAL)

Very few rejected the idea completely. They were reluctant to open the door because they feared that it would disturb the harmony in their lives or stir problems. As Holmes (2009) states, the way a society chooses to structure different aspects will influence how its people consider gender. The audience varied in their perception of how gender equality would be attained. Some put it in the hand of women and stated that they were to blame for their weak position

It is the fault of women because they tolerate what is happening to them and due to their silence nothing will change. She chose to stay in (YFAL)

In "Habitat," some of the audience thought that the woman continued to drag herself back. She is responsible for her state:

Every time a man approaches a woman, the woman hurries to separate herself. She is shutting off any attempt by the man to understand her. She is segregating herself (OMA)

This goes with Al-Munajjed's (1997) suggestion that women find in their veils a defence against society and a safeguard against many complications arising from the presence of men. Some of the audience suggested that women should willingly choose to create change; they suggest ways to do it:

The woman should get out of the box but only if she is convinced that she needs to so; women need to realise that they have rights" (OMA).

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This starts by realising the reality of their situation. They need to be bitter about it and break the box. They should speak out and not tolerate. They should know their rights in Islam and defend their ideas (OFA)

Some of the young audiences had more faith in the abilities of women. Some commented that:

Every woman is ready to use the key and take her freedom. The Saudi women are ready to take their freedom (YFAL)

In response to the question, "How could the female come more to the foreground?" different answers reflecting the changing views in Saudi society were obtained. Some felt this could be achieved with the acquisition of knowledge and power. This finds support in El-Saadawi's (1988) and Talhami's (2004) calls that women need to become educated, gain places of power to create changes for themselves and others. Others, especially young men, think that women need to be more assertive and demand change. Some even said that rights are taken not given. Others indicated that through persistence and negotiation women can reach their goals.

Others thought that the change had to start with men:

Changing the mentality of men in this society can cause change; by liberating the minds of men, the situation will change (YFAL)

The older men, in particular, indicated that the support of the man is an important key in effecting change. Their view is that only when the man is convinced that the woman should be given her rights and gives this his full support can everyday practices that work against women be changed. Various responses by viewers from different categories focused on man's inability to accept change. The attributed motives behind this resistance varied. Some thought it was because the man values tradition, and he is afraid that if the female attempts to challenge society and the traditional roles assigned to her, he will be the one to blame:

The woman is disobeying the traditions of society, so he is worried about problems that might cause; he is afraid that she will be out of control

> *...he thinks a woman's place is at home. He fears for his position and thinks that her independence will affect his masculinity* (OMAL)

Others were more and attributed resistance to the male's desire to protect the woman:

> *He is worried about her; he is protective towards her* (OMAL)

Others put the responsibility of creating change in the hands of the wider society because it can decide the nature of every day relationship between men and women. One of the comments in "Who is in the Box?" was:

> *The woman is in solitary and is pressurised from all sides. Excessive restrictions put on women by society are too many. The man is very important and the woman is nothing* (YFA)

Those who were not surprised seeing a woman locked in said:

> *It is not strange. It is a part of Saudi customs. It portrayed an accepted culture of domination by men in our society* (YFAL)

Some described the Saudi society as: *"Despicable" "Narrow-minded"* and *"Ignorant"*. The participants agreed that change can be created by changing the way the society thinks about the position of women which also agrees with Nochlin's (1989) proposition that the society should take responsibility to create change. Some thought the change should not be rushed and that it should be gradual:

> *It will happen with the passage of time. You can't enforce it on the society. Some people don't want it, men and women* (OMAL)

Some older artists stated that unless the Saudi people open up to other cultures, no change will take place. This accords with Talhami's (2004) advice that Arab people need to see good role models of how women are treated. Only one older male participant completely rejected what he thought the installations were trying to suggest.

> *This is not a true portrayal as very few women are restricted in Saudi society like this. It is exaggerated* (OMAL)

This viewer understood that the exaggeration was an intrinsic part of the installation art; nevertheless, he objected to it and rejected the fact that women are restricted in Saudi

Arabia. This difference shows that when the audiences bring their own experiences to the situation, various interpretations can be achieved and contrary thoughts provoked.

6.5.1.4 Symbols

In "Symbols of Ka'ba," Ka'ba, and Zamzam holy water were identified as traditional Saudi symbols. In "The Walls of Shumaag," the shumaag was a central feature in the installation. It was, therefore, important that the symbol and all that it embodies was understood. In the installation, it was used to represent men's dominance, which is something many viewers detected. However, from their responses, an age related bias was noticed. Over three quarters of the older group, who were mostly men, thought that the shumaag represented men and their masculinity. Someone interpreted the shumaag as a wide screen which represented the world with its complexities. In "Symbols of Ka'ba," an older member in the audience thought of the window as:

the way to go into the beautiful world (OMA)

Unlike the connotation given to the shumaag as a complex world, this remark about Ka'ba could be linked to the sense of spirituality and hope that is attached to it.

In "Who is in the Box?" some related the box to society with the constraints imposed on women, and the key as a symbol of a woman's freedom, hope, and potentials. Unexpectedly, some thought the key symbolised men, their controlling ways and how the answer is in their hands. Interestingly, the shumaag and the key were both interpreted in very different ways, as symbols for control and symbols for freedom. These differences can be attributed to the different social identities of the viewers, as Rose (2007) suggests.

In "Habitat," the majority related the house in the installation as a cultural symbol that represents the unique Saudi way of living, combining elements of the past with the present:

> *It is a development of old culture. From the outside it is our past and heritage, but inside there is technology...it symbolises Saudi heritage integrated with modern technology* (OMA)

However, this harmonious way of living was not detected by other viewers. Rather, it was seen as representing the conflict the Saudi are facing on daily basis:

> *The difference between generations and the Saudi society with its contradictions; we use technology but we live in the past... the old houses represent the old rigid mentalities."* (YFAL)

In addition to the traditional symbols, some components were interpreted symbolically. For example, the black shadow in "Walls of Shumaag" was associated with conventional connotations such as *"women" 'abaya' 'devil', 'shadow', 'ghost' and 'slave'*. These interpretations came mainly from young women who were art literate. The audience also emphasised the seclusion of women and hiding them behind abaya. This is confirmed in comments made by young female audience:

> *Woman in the prison behind the man, hidden in the abaya* (YFA)

These interpretations, however, does not necessarily reflect Saudi society's attitudes towards abaya. In fact, it is probably the colour, black, and what it represents that the audience was thinking of as negative. This finds evidence in the variation of styles and colours that the abaya design has lately started to enjoy especially among young women. In response to whether the relationship shown between the men and women is symbolic of Saudi society, most of the audience gave 'yes' as an answer.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the research methods used to collect data about audiences' reaction towards gender differences in the kingdom through the integration of multimedia and traditional art in Saudi Arabia. Even though this was the first experience of some of the viewers with digital media art, they accepted it and understood the concepts being presented as their quotes illustrate. As an artist, it was confirmed that using methods

such as exaggeration were successful in drawing people's attention to certain areas. I did not expect all the audience to understand or agree with what I was proposing, but it was satisfying to see that most did. I felt I achieved my goal and that this could lead to further experimentations. This success is a mark in my career as an artist and as a teacher as it is going to be an incentive for me to introduce this form of art to my students and encourage them to experiment with it in an innovative manner which will open further research opportunities. However, I am aware that exhibiting such work in other areas of Saudi Arabia to more conservative audiences may yield a completely different reaction.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusion

7.1   Introduction

Introducing a new form of art such as digital art combined with traditional forms of art in a very conservative environment such as that of Saudi Arabia is an uncertain business. When this is combined with tackling a sensitive issue such as gender differences, it becomes more challenging to both the artist and audience. This chapter examines how the aims and objectives of this study have been achieved and what the contributions to knowledge have been. It also discusses the limitations of the research, and proposes recommendations for future work.

7.2   Overview of the Journey

The research aimed to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of Saudi art. It also aimed to understand the position of my own practice as a Saudi artist and contextualise my practice. This has been achieved through a review of contemporary Saudi art and culture (chapter 2). As little has been written about this, I supplemented my review with interviews of 20 contemporary Saudi artists (chapter 4). I have also discussed the way in which my work has been inspired by Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat and Bill Viola. My reflections have shown how I opened up myself to new ideas and allowed the experiences of other artists to inform my practice (see chapter 4 and 5 for details on how this was achieved).

Moreover, the research aimed to develop a means of creative expression that combines traditional art and digital media that is new to Saudi Arabia and show how the combination of different technologies provides a new direction for Saudi art by enabling

complex issues to be raised. The review of digital art also revealed how technology has provided artists with new tools with which they can create engaging experiences for audiences, which demonstrates the potential of these tools to express complex issues. Because of the camera, a work of art, as painting, travels to the spectator rather than the spectator to the painting. In its travels, its meaning is diversified (Berger 1977: 19).

I used the style and material of art that is traditional and affirmative in the Saudi context to portray or suggest various traditions. The video projections, with the global associations of that media, were used for suggesting other possibilities, or ideas that were left open ended. This integration and juxtaposition of means provided an innovative way of opening up ideas about current social issues for an artistic and educated Saudi audience, who were a mixture of the traditional conservative audience and those who are more liberal in their views.

The installations began as nine artefacts using acrylic paints and DVD inserts. Through reading about artists such as Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat, Bill Viola, and Gary Hill I was inspired to change my style and move towards abstracting my ideas and presentation. The interviews with contemporary Saudi artists showed that they were not experimenting with digital art, and that there was little digital art being practiced in the kingdom. This motivated me to experiment further to create installations as a new direction for Saudi Arabian art. I kept experimenting until my ideas became clearer and more concrete, and focussed on portraying gender issues (see chapter 4, section 4.3.1). The final installations can be viewed as an important, innovative step when considered in the context of Saudi Arabian art: I transformed my work from simple traditional pieces to more intricate installations, creating a narrative which explored gender issues as experienced in everyday life. Compared to other artists, the mediums I used are different, the immersive environment is different and the subject is more focused.

Through the course of the PhD, I began to understand that gender issues were of central importance for me. This has required research into the past and present position of Saudi women, and their future aspirations. I chose gender differences as a theme because it relates to me as a Saudi woman and artist. There have been many times when I have felt constrained just by being a woman. I dealt with gender differences from a perspective different from other artists. I tried to show the nature of these differences in their everyday relationships through integrating digital media and traditional art, which I believe could engage the audiences' senses and make it easy for them to understand the message.

Finally, the study aimed to determine the acceptability and comprehension of artefacts which combine traditional art and digital media to 'artistically literate' Saudi audiences. They comprised artists, people interested in art, people working in professions related to art or those from educated sectors in the society. (see chapter 6 for criteria of choosing the sample). As a result, when the artwork was complete, a week-long exhibition was held in Jeddah in May 2009 (See DVD for documentation of the production of installations). The journey was also documented in my reflective journal. During the week of the exhibition, the views of the audience were collected. The findings show that what they saw was new to them; consequently, it may be hypothesized that if it was new to this audience, it would be new to the wider Saudi population. The findings also indicate that although the audiences were not well-versed in this form of practice, they accepted and admired the different media elements in the installations. They thought the exhibition would further people's understanding of conceptual and multimedia art, and that the success of this exhibition might instigate other artists to explore the potential of new media to create conversations about sensitive issues in Saudi Arabia.

The majority of the audience felt the installations were effective in conveying different dimensions of gender issues in Saudi Arabia. They felt part of the installations

and could relate what they saw to their own experiences. This interaction gives installation art its sense and significance as Reiss (1999) claims. Saudi men, represented by the male audience, are observing the changes and are supportive, neutral or opposing. These positions reflect the beliefs of many Saudi people on the nature of the relationship between men and women and how it reflects on their everyday experiences. In short, the issue of gender differences are related to this specific social economic Saudi context, and it is these aspects that I have addressed in my installations and expected viewers to reflect on. I must admit, though, that although I secretly was hoping that my work would urge people to act, at least in the confined setting of the exhibition, I was not primarily trying to effect change or start a revolution as I know that in a country like Saudi Arabia, that is deeply rooted in its culture, trying to do so might create complications that I admittedly was not ready for.

This is not to say that the status of women in Saudi Arabia is not changing. Fatani (2004) states that plans have been implemented for the reformation of the social and economic structures in the society. The government is granting women more freedom in travel, education and employment. Such changes allowed me to study outside the Kingdom. However, to many Saudi women, the change is unexpectedly slow (Al-Rawaf and Simmons 1991). As women have been making progress, there has been a "cultural and political backlash in the form of conservative Islamist movement" (Pharaon 2004: 360). For example, Saudi women are still not allowed to drive, travel without a guardian, open a bank account or walk around without wearing abayas.

Lewin (as cited in Burns 2004: 986) proposes that change is a process that is shaped by the interaction of driving forces for change and restraining forces impeding change. One of the most important driving forces that were expected to accelerate change was the introduction of technology and globalisation in Saudi Arabia especially that new technology devices and electronic social networking have become an integral part of

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almost everybody's lives especially the young people. The new media allowed an increasingly rapid diffusion of cultural values based on the idealised western values as Castles (2000: 6). These values were expected to create a desired change on the part of many women. Moreover, the encouragement the Saudi women get from King Abdullah is considered a big driving force that was expected to enhance the position of women in Saudi Arabia.

The question remains 'why isn't change happening at a higher rate?' Lewin (as cited in Burns 2004: 986) argued that the most effective strategies for change rest on reducing the restraining forces, and it seems that these have the upper hand in Saudi Arabia. The inherited Saudi culture embodied by the dominance of men in all aspects of life and the authority given to religious scholars who are all men are restraining forces impeding change. In addition, change is not linear, and unforeseen events may be encountered. For example, the latest revolutions against the ruling systems in the Arab world may be expected to negatively affect the line some officials are taking to support women as it brought up again the supremacy of the authority of the religious institution in Saudi Arabia. This alliance may come at the price of effecting change, as the religious scholars have regained their authority at a time when their grip was loosening especially in the city of Jeddah. In other words, the current situation is Saudi Arabia might remain unless a holistic approach is taken to effect social transformation where the local factors are analysed to help understand how change can be effected, as recommended by Castles (2000).

7.3   Contributions to Knowledge

It is argued that this research, including the installations, reflections on practice and the interviews with practicing artists represents a large development in art practice in Saudi Arabia and in the understanding of the current position of art in the kingdom. This is

important because until relatively recently the profession was undervalued and marginalised. It provides insight into the work, motivations and feelings of contemporary artists, enabling them not to be seen in isolation but as a start of movement in Saudi Arabia. Lastly the development of the installations show how new and old media can be used to inform and promote debate about current social issues. As such, the study makes the following contributions to knowledge:

1. It provides a review of contemporary Saudi Artists and the areas of art they pursue, which fills a gap in knowledge because no significant literature documents the works and ideas of these artists in Saudi Arabia.

2. It demonstrates the exploration and development of my works which incorporate different technologies to explore gender issues, which is something new to the art scene is Saudi Arabia.

3. It presented to a discriminating Saudi audience the opportunity to engage with works that use a combination of traditional and new media that articulate complex social issues arising in everyday Saudi life and then has discussed the reaction of this group to the new art forms. As these were 50 interviews, it can be argued that it is a snapshot of how educated and art literate people in the kingdom would perceive such work at this time.

7.4 Limitations of the Research

Limitations in this research relate to the sample of artists interviewed and the audience attending the exhibition. Many of these relate to the restrictions on travel and communication I faced as a female researcher, the size of the art community and restrictions in the arrangement of the private view.

Firstly, being a female restricted my movement and hindered attempts to reach artists outside Jeddah or Saudi Arabia. As a woman, I cannot travel alone, and it is not

socially accepted for me to talk to a man without the presence of a guardian. This meant I was unable to conduct face to face interviews with a number of artists and could not see how they worked in their studios. Interviewing more artists would have given richer data that might have revealed more information about current and future directions of Saudi art.

In terms of the exhibition, invitations were only sent to a limited number of visitors who are all residents in Jeddah. It could be argued that the views of those who come from different areas and more conservative communities might have been different from those recruited in this study. This means it cannot be claimed that SA is ready to accept work of this type (see chapter 5 for challenges and difficulties of putting the exhibition together). However, it can be argued that the reactions of those attending the exhibition represent a cross section of the feelings of those who have an understanding of art and Saudi society at this present time.

The data collection methods may also have given rise to some limitations. Interviewing the audience myself may have produced different results. I tried to minimise bias through using trained interviewers and assuring audience members that their responses would be anonymous and used for research purposes only. Using other methods such as observing audience and recording their natural response might have yielded different and more spontaneous results.

Installations, like the ones I exhibited are usually displayed in spaces that allow for interaction. Finding the right setting in the right area and preparing it for the actual construction of installation was difficult to manage, for example when the photographer hired for documenting the opening of the exhibition did not arrive. Moreover, lack of funding was a major obstacle, as renting the flat and building the installations was expensive.

7.5 Future Plans

Following on from the findings of this research, the following points are proposed:

1. Investigation of the appetite of new students in Saudi Arabia to become digital artists

2. Understanding and removal of the barriers to the presentation of art in public galleries

3. Investigation of the effects art might have on social and cultural movements in Saudi Arabia

7.6 Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the potential for installations to create new directions for Saudi Arabian art. In doing this, seven installations were developed. Producing the installations was a challenging yet rewarding experience that provided me with the skills and confidence to continue working with digital media to express other social issues stemming from a Saudi context. The success of the exhibition is an invitation to Saudi artists to open up to new mediums and styles of expressions.

Finally, the exhibition was noticed by people who hold power in Saudi Arabia. As a result I was asked by the Deputy Minister of Culture and Media to be ready to represent Saudi Arabia in other countries. Moreover, in December 2010, I received an invitation to take part in an exhibition that will be taking place in the summer of 2011 which aims at promoting digital art in the region. This recognition is important in my practice as an artist as it shows that my exhibition was remembered and will be documented as the first of its kind in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Saudi Artists Interview Schedule

1. How would you describe your practise?

2. How long have you been an artist?

3. What type of art do you practise?

4. What is your purpose?

5. What message are you conveying with your art?

6. What kind of audience are you targeting?

7. Is the work shown in a gallery, online etc? Are the intended audiences related to a particular artistic milieu, social class?

8. Why do you think your work is important or significant?

9. What is more important to you, the statement of art or its commercial value?

10. How is your work received, in Saudi Arabia and internationally?

11. Where do you get your inspiration from?

12. Which artists in KSA and elsewhere have influenced your work?

13. Do they have a favourite author, philosophy that creates certain thought worlds for them?

14. Are you looking at other cultures to find this framework of perception?

15. What if your work ends up having only aesthetic value instead of philosophical?

16. How do you differentiate the two?

17. How do you perceive the role of media in promoting your artwork?

18. What do you consider as complete art?

19. What do you think has been left out from your work and do you plan to pursue it?

20. Where do you aspire to be in the future?

21. What is the structure of this image of yours?

22. What is formally important for you in this image and why?

23. What are you implying in this image?

24. How can you compare it with your latest image?

25. Can you see any changes in your style, quality, or message?

26. How do you see that your art has developed over the years?

27. What do you hope to do in the future'?

Appendix 2: Artists' Profiles

Abdul-Aziz Ashour:

Abdul-Aziz Ashour has been working as an artist since 1985. He started with traditional Arabic art and then he shifted to abstract art later in his career. His message is to draw attention to modern problems. As part of his effort to inspire the viewer, he inserts hidden meanings in every painting. Ashour targets an audience of educated people who like himself could create a change in the society. His shows are shown in galleries and on his website, ashourart.com. His first exhibition of traditional art was so successful; many wanted to affiliate themselves with his studio and work. He continues to hope for greater exposure, and though he believes his work is important, he knows that his artwork will be tested for its importance by its ability to withstand the test of time. Through his artistic discovery, he has realized that the value of his artwork is best measured in the degree to which it brings him satisfaction, not monetary gain. He has won international trophies for his artwork such as Bangkadesh Binalli, Golden Sa'fa in Kuwait. Despite his success, he still laments the low level of support the Saudi society provides to its home-grown artists.

At one point in time, Ashour was so inspired by writing that he left painting to become an author. During this time he developed his humanistic thinking and appreciation of dialectic thinking. With the passage of time, Ashour noticed that his style was evolving. It developed from figurative art to abstract art. He sees his role as an artist to "revolt and disobey"; however, he sees his vision growing as his message changes with his maturity. His future goals are to spread the viewpoint of the dialect of humanist thinking and to incorporate more media in his work.

Abdul Rahman Al-Suleiman

Abdul Rahman Al- Suleiman has been an artist since the early 1980s and held his first personal exhibition in 1983. His works span a variety of mediums, including oil on canvas, pastels, watercolours and inks. He is a self-described abstract artist, whose works are characterized by a progression of increasingly abstract, simplified concepts. In the 1980s, Al-Suleiman was concerned with abstract tradition as a western form of art but maintained enough oriental details so that viewers could immediately understand the intended message of his art. Al-Suleiman cites Arabian heritage and the nation's history as the main inspirations for his work. These appear in his paintings frequently. Al-Suleiman's work now predominately depicts Saudi Arabian culture as it was in the past and as it relates to current events of today. He attempts to take elements of Saudi Arabian daily life, such as domestic culture, and transfer it to different shapes, while maintaining aspects of the old elements. There is an aspect of nostalgia in his work. Over time, these elements have become simplified in his increasingly abstract works. This style predominates in his latest work.

Al-Suleiman describes his artwork as a vehicle for personal reflection, through which he is constantly looking for a better understanding the Arabian identity. While Al-Suleiman's artwork does not have a broad audience in his home country of Saudi Arabia, it has been well received abroad and he received several awards for his artwork such the First Prizes – 7th, and 8th Exhibition for Contemporary Saudi Art, Riyadh, 1987 and the First Prize – Exhibition of the 2nd Competition of the Saudi Society for Culture and Arts in Al-Hasa, 1982. Al-Suleiman aspires to be an artist who can describe everything around him, while cultivating a greater interest in the visual arts in Saudi Arabia. He hopes to draw, live and exhibit his work for the people and ultimately participate in the plastic art movement in the Arabic world. Al-Suleiman's artwork can be viewed at his personal gallery in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia or online at www. Solimanart.com

Radia Bargawi:

Radia Baragawi has been an artist since 1990. Her first exhibition was in 1992. She used elements of expressionism and surrealism. Baragawi's art examines human life. Women's issues tie into all her pieces on a basic philosophical level, as she explores what is the core concept of being "female." As she addresses the inner questions of women, her intention is to look so holistically at the subjects of her work that the audience engages in their own self-discovery. The goal of her artwork is to convey the message that the meaning behind a person's existence, their very role in society, is based on a deep understanding of the self, discovered through self-introspection. Along the way, people, and especially women, are meant to understand that God has given them valuable gifts. Baragawi's hope is to share this message with all of her own society, and spread it beyond the boundaries of her own country. This message is of great personal importance to Baragawi, because it is meant to express an honest declaration of her own voice, uncontrolled by others.

Even though the artist is committed to the success of the message of her artwork, even if to the detriment of its commercial success, the artist has enjoyed widespread acclaim in Saudi Arabia. She claims that in Saudi Arabia, her work been received exceptionally well, and she enjoys the distinction of having no negative criticism published to describe her work. She shares her work with exhibition groups that display their artwork outside of Saudi Arabia. In creating her works, Baragawi credits her inspiration with a commitment to observing the intricacies of her everyday life as a woman in Saudi Arabia. The artist Aziz Dia, a Saudi Arabian artist, has been a big influence on her work, especially when she was a young artist starting out. Her traditional medium has been oil and canvas; however, as she draws to create new ideas for pieces, she has begun to evolve in her attempts to convey the same themes with different techniques.

Abdullah Hamas:

Abdullah Hamas has been an artist since 1974. Hamas' work depicts the everyday life in the Aseer region of Saudi Arabia, with an emphasis on its traditions and heritage. His primary style is abstract symbolism, and describes his work as appropriate for all audiences. Over the course of his thirty-five year career, Hamas is satisfied with his creative expression as a means of recording the heritage of Saudi Arabia in a modern way for newer generations. Through his work, Hamas would like the world to realize there is complex, sophisticated art created by people from Saudi Arabia. Hamas cites other Middle Eastern artists as his main sources of inspiration, including Magid Al-delimi, Yahaya Abdul Jabar and Jawad Salim; all from Iraq.

While Hamas is a popular artist today, in the beginning his career, his artwork was not well-received in Saudi Arabia. His work did not gain popularity until 18 years after his first exhibition in 1974. He credits his later success to the people's ability to appreciate and understand the value of art in a modernizing Saudi Arabian setting. However, outside of Saudi Arabia in countries such as Dubai, Egypt, Spain, France and England, his work was very well received from the beginning of his career. When asked how he measures the increase in popularity in his home country of Saudi Arabia, he notes consistent commercial interest in purchasing his pieces. While Hamas is a successful commercial artist, he believes the message in his work is the driving force for his creativity. Additionally, he believes that any piece of art that is aesthetic without philosophical meaning is not art. The aesthetics are something he creates, but the philosophy is something he wants the audience to discover. Hamas's work is characterized by using few colours, often as few as four or five, while becoming increasingly simple. However, Hamas's artistic message about life in

Aseer region of Saudi Arabia, and religious heritage remains consistent. Hamas' work may be viewed and purchased in galleries throughout the Middle East.

Ola Hejazi:

Ola Hejazi has been an artist since 2001, focusing on painting with elements of surrealism. To her, painting is part of her identity, and each piece she creates is like a new individual she interacts with. When she began her career, she painted mostly oil on canvas; however, in her time in London she began to experiment with metal carving. This experience has helped expand her techniques in her oil painting and allowed her the opportunity to begin to mix both media.

Hejazi is fortunate, as she proclaims her art brings her a high level of personal satisfaction and pleasure. This is probably because the theme behind all of her artwork is very positive and she only presents work that he likes, and discards work she does not like. While there is no unifying meaning Hejazi is trying to impart in her work, she does insert many personal stories, especially those about the issues she feels she has overcome in her life. With her use of colour, she writes a story that others can try to interpret, but that only she can decode.

Hejazi targets an audience of all ages on his website, olahejazi.com, and she also presents in galleries in Jeddah such as Al-Roshan His work combines Arabian elements with modern style. Notwithstanding the fact that Hejazi sells at least 80 pieces every year for the past few years, she does not believe commercial success is as important as achieving artistic excellence. Furthermore, she does not believe her work is even that important, instead relying on her own love of painting to keep her motivated to paint. While she does ultimately care if people view her work, or if her work becomes very well known, she still does appreciate the message and confidence boost when people do buy her art.

Eventually Hejazi developed a tie with a special audience that appreciated his different viewpoint and supported his artwork. The support came a little earlier outside of the country, especially in Paris, where her work was well-received and inspired curiosity because of her nationality. .

Hejazi's influences are widespread. She credits her childhood in Lebanon for providing so many memories. As she grew older, she visited other countries, touring other galleries and gaining exposure to new ideas. She no longer worries about the details she sees reflected in his work. She now experiments with deeper colours than she used to, a technique she feels reflects the evolving maturation of her work. As she progresses in clarifying her vision, Hejazi hopes that her audience becomes larger and that her artwork becomes better known to many different kinds of people.

Abdullah Rezeza:

Abdullah Rezeza is a Saudi Arabian artist whose practice aims to describe the heritage of the Middle, or "Najd", region of Saudi Arabia. Since 1967, Rezeza has specialized in the architecture of the region, emphasizing the aesthetics of the found on the door frames of old buildings in the Najd region. He draws upon all of the old architectural designs and elements to create something new and convey new ideas relevant to modern reality. His pieces often mix between realism and modernism. Rezeza's artwork is characterized by his use of paint mixed with sands of the desert.

Through his studies in Italy, he realized he had a very rich culture in Saudi Arabia and decided to become a specialist in that aspect of his personal heritage. Rezeza hopes his work will remain as part of the history of the country; during the year he only produces 4 pieces, which each sell for approximately 30,000 British Pounds. While Rezeza does not

follow one identifiable style of art, he hopes his artwork will pave the way for an artistic movement in Saudi Arabia, cultivating a style unique to the Arabian Gulf.

Muhammed Abdul Majid Fadl:

Muhammed Abdul-Majid Fadl has been an artist since 1966. Throughout his career, which began in Sudan, his work has attempted to depict the beauty in life. After he moved to Saudi Arabia his work evolved, and in 1990 he began to focus on environmental issues. Fadl paints abstract paintings, molds ceramics, and creates sculptures, a diverse skill set that helps him to highlight his social message through different media. He hasn't tried to combine these into installations; they are just different areas of concern.

Fadl's message is tailored to reach its audience, shed light on social issues, and inspire the viewer to seek a remedy. For this reason he targets all classes in his society and displays his work in many different places, including his personal gallery and in collaborative exhibitions in larger halls. Fadl's work, highlighting social issues, has been very well received in Saudi Arabia and internationally. Fadl believes the popularity of his work stems from the universality of his messages.

Three artists have served as the most influential inspiration for Fadl: Ibrahim Alsalahi from Sudan, Ahmed Muhammed Shibrain, and Dennis William. In addition, Fadl credits Almutanabi and Nazik Mlaaika as being his favourite authors. Fadl also looks to other cultures and their perspectives on issues facing the world to try to create an aesthetic that conveys his social philosophy as a universal message.

Fadl's work has evolved as quickly as the world's problems have changed. In some current works Fadl looks to the plight of the world's oxygen supply, alluding to images in the Quran that warn against an imbalance in the environment in an abstract manner. The new painting highlights his changes in technique, one that his followers have seen evolve into using shape and size in new ways. The most important change in his work is that the messages were initially only domestic but has since grown to be regionally and globally relevant. Ultimately, Fadl hopes that in his universal message about the environment his identity as an Arab Muslim shines through in his work.

Abdullah Nuwawi:

Abdullah Nuwawi has been an artist since 1980 and his work is described as a combination of expressionism and abstract concepts. Throughout his career, Nuwawi has focused his attention to studying how things move. His subjects include the human body, vehicles, etc. However, his work is characterized by a distinctive lack of detail, especially when depicting women. He often uses vertical lines in his work to represent the civilization and development in the society, in conjunction with colours that are found in a desert climate. The predominant themes of Nuwawi's work include movement, as it exists in the environment, traditional dancing, and the population; He attempts to connect all of these things through his artwork. Additionally, Nuwawi tends to use a variety of materials such as plaster and sand to bring texture to his works, which include paintings and sculptures. When asked to describe the inspiration for his work, Nuwawi cites all issues in Saudi Arabian society that are related to peace, love and brotherhood, and believes his artwork is appropriate for all ages.

Initially, Nuwawi's work was not well received because it was very unusual for the Saudi Arabian public to accept his abstract and contemporary style of art. However, Outside of Saudi Arabia, Nuwawi's work was widely accepted because the pieces expressed unique elements of a foreign culture. While Nuwawi is still honing his craft, he considers a piece complete once the idea and the techniques are well matched and suited for the work. Nuwawi's dedication to art is partially driven by the lack of artistic

involvement and appreciation for art in his native Saudi Arabia. However, he hopes his work will ultimately help all Saudi Arabian artists to be connected in a greater community and share in their ideas.

Mona Al-Ghassabi:

Mona Al-Ghassabi has been an artist since 1990, the purpose of her artwork has always been to express her personal feelings about difficult concepts like death, illness, or drug addiction. Sometimes her varied message, so she gears her works for a very wide audience who might buy her work

Al-Ghassabi shows her work in local galleries as well as in the online gallery saudiarts.net. By contributing to the discourse on a particular issue, Al-Ghassabi's work is ultimately important to the emotions of her audience. The statement of her art is far more important to her than the commercial value; however, she has enjoyed a wide appreciation of her work in Saudi Arabia, the United States, London, Paris, Cairo, and Poland. She has appreciate wide curiosity in her work because her status as a Saudi Arabian artist.

Al-Ghassabi credits the Saudi artist Radia Bargawi as her greatest inspiration, both in the way she thinks about her art, and in her technique. Outside of Saudi Arabia, Al-Ghassabi has been most influenced by Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Matisse. Her father, an author and poet, has also been a big inspiration. Given the widespread nature of her influences, it is no surprise that she often looks to other cultures to highlight certain messages in her work.

Aesthetics are more important than a clear meaning as to the philosophy underpinning any piece that Al-Ghassabi creates. This is because, for her, aesthetics are inherently philosophical and draw in an audience more effectively than something with an explicit philosophical lesson. Ultimately, it is this goal that has shaped Al-Ghassabi's use of all the elements of light, theme, colours, and space in her work. She hopes her voice as an artist continues to grow in popularity during her lifetime.

Abeer Al Fatni:

Abeer Al-Fatni has been an artist since the early 1990s. Her artwork consists of sculpture and painting, and is predominantly conceptual. During the first 7 years of her career, Al-Fatni concentrated her work in Cubism, aiming to rearrange people's perception of life. Al-Fatni's work attempts to bring new meaning to old concepts that are ever-present in Saudi Arabian culture. She used big objects and magnified them even further to get her messages through.

Al-Fatni credits her grandmother, a tailor, as her earliest influence on her artistic interest and style. At a young age, she would always sit beside her and watch the colours and the lines of the thread, imagining the many things that could be created. Today, Al-Fatni is motivated by the constant questioning of existence and living a meaningful life. Al-Fatni believes that an artist's creative philosophy is only conveyed when he or she deeply contemplates the piece. However, she defines completion of a piece only occurs when the piece is able to reach a broad audience without difficulty, where they are willingly drawn into the work and allow their minds to contemplate its meaning. Al-Fatni hopes to incorporate more issues of human nature in her work, that allow various segments of the Saudi population to contribute in abstract collage pieces, expressing his or her feelings.

Hala Al-Aseelan:

Hala Al-Aseelan has been working as an artist since 2001. Her primary medium is in embroidered weaving, a traditional method into which she has incorporated new styles.

In Al-Aseelan's mind, weaving is no longer the method to create a tent, but also beautiful pieces of art. In fact, in Al-Aseelan's hands, a weaving is a piece of art that can incorporate abstractionism, cubism, and realism. Al-Aseelan's target audience is broad, and she focuses on showing her work primarily in galleries, to members of all walks of society. For Al-Aseelan, weaving is a significant art because it is a fresh take on a traditional craft. She works to address the rationale behind original weavings, alluding to the realism of traditional weaving craft. This is in contrast with other weavers, who typically approach weaving from the perspective of how it is done within new technologies.

Even though Al-Aseelan's focus is primarily on the quality of her artwork, she has received wide critical acclaim and success in Saudi Arabia. She showed a colour painting and a duplication of the frame in weaving side-by-side in Jeddah in 2009, The name of the piece was "Where is the Truth?" which was quite popular because it forced the viewer to decide how to define "truth." There is no official support for artists in Saudi Arabia, but the public's admiration helps provide motivation.

Al-Aseelan is inspired by her readings and teaching; however she most admires Kandinsky for his unification of art and music. In Saudi Arabia she looks to Mohamed Siyam as one of her main influences, especially in his abstract expressionist pieces. She is also inspired by the ideas of Jhan Diwi, a writer who says that art is experience. This quote has inspired Al-Aseelan to experiment with new styles as a way to clarify her artistic voice.

In the future, Al-Aseelan would like to start an annual exhibition that is solely weaving in Saudi Arabia. She believes this would be a success for her because it would allow the public to view weaving as one package of art, history, and philosophy. As her style evolves, she is looking to improve her use of colour as a way to capture exactly her feeling as she weaves.

Ayman Yusri:

Ayman Yusri has been an artist since 1992. His work is distinct in that he does not restrict himself to one medium, but rather uses what he feels is the best technique to bring a particular idea to life. Throughout the first 10 years of his career, he used an artistic style that involved masks that originated in poor African villages. The dominant theme and inspiration for Yusri's work is the notion of universal humanity and how it relates to sharing with and inspiring others. Throughout his work, Yusri challenges the audience to take away a variety of meanings from his work by studying his paintings emphasizing his belief that the value of a piece is drawn from the deepness of its malleable message. His work is issue led and it is mostly about finding one's identity.

Yusri draws upon feelings of desolation to inspire his work. While he doesn't credit one particular Saudi artist as a great influence on his work, he credits some of his creative evolution to their sharing of philosophies and idea. Outside of the kingdom, his work reflects inspiration from every artistic movement since postmodernism such as abstractionism. Yusri aspires to be a famous artist whose work could inspire people from all over the world.

Fatma Imran:

Fatma Imran has been working as an artist since 1985. At the beginning she started with engravings documenting the history and heritage of Arabic culture. She later moved into an era of oil paintings and abstract themes. Today she paints abstract expressionism as it relates to a Saudi context. The message Imran tries to convey in her work is that art is a thought before being a profession. *?*

Imran targets her work to all members of society. Imran has deep artistic integrity; she does not care about the commercial value of her work. However, she has received critical acclaim in both Saudi Arabia and internationally. Imran was the first artist to participate with metal engraving. In Saudi Arabia, where the audience is primarily interested in more classical works, her work was not at first very widely accepted. However, after a while, tastes changed and her works started to be acquired outside and inside the Kingdom at a much larger rate. Though she has now reached some success, support for her work was lacking for a long time.

Imran's primary inspiration comes from her readings. Within the Kingdom, she draws on the Saudi artists Abdullah Nawawi and Bakr Shaikhoon. Outside the Kingdom, she admires Waged Nahle of Lebanon, Naja Mahdwi of Tunisia, as well as Cézanne and Kandinsky.

Imran is soon to announce that she will begin making artwork in three dimensions using techniques she has acquired along the way. To make these types of three-dimensional objects requires her to mix oil, caulk, paper, and inks to create a sparse abstract style. In taking this new direction, Imran hopes to inspire many more viewers to close the gap between modern art and the mainstream audience.

Bassem Al-Sharqi

Bassem Al-Sharqi has been a professional, full-time artist since 2004. The dominant themes of his work are drawn from Saudi Arabian heritage and the way the society has been modernized by new technology and ideology. Al-Sharqi's work is mainly inspired by his mood at the time the work is created. He believes that the artist's personal state and artistic essence is portrayed through their art. However, his work is differentiated from his Saudi contemporaries because he attempts to touch upon themes often over-looked in Saudi Arabian society. The predominant inspiration for his work is drawn from his personal life experience. Additionally, Al-Sharqi's work is unique from other Saudi Arabian artists interviewed for this project, because he openly draws from cultures outside of the Arabian Gulf, and broader Middle East. His work is heavily influenced by cultures from all over the world and he hopes to use such inspiration to address his chosen issues Al-Sharqi's work has been well received in Saudi Arabia, and there is usually a strong turnout for his exhibitions. Outside of Saudi Arabia, like in Abu Dhabi, the attendance of his shows is just as high.

Bakr Shaikhon:

Bakr Shaikhon has been an artist since the 1970's and his first exhibition was in 1981 in Rome, where he was pursuing his artistic studies. He began his career in plastic art and sculpture, but now he works in conceptual art. Shaikhon prides himself on having diverted from the typical painting route of most artists; instead he focuses on mixed media to convey abstract concepts like the pulsing of a street and humanitarian messages. Shaikhon targets his message to all levels of society, primarily in galleries. Each of his pieces takes months to finish, which ties Shaikhon strongly to the value of the message conveyed in his work. He does not care as much about the commercial significance of his work, though he has been recognized both in Saudi Arabia and internationally. In 1975, his work took first place in an art competition sponsored by his university in Rome.

For inspiration, Shaikhon looks first to the moral support of his best friends. He most admires the work of Abdel Haleem Razwi, a Saudi Arabian artist. . His early influences were the Cubists. For philosophical inspiration, Shaikhon looks to Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche and other philosophers he came across through his readings. Without a doubt his influences are international.

As his work matures, Shaikhon hopes to continue relating to the newest, most vibrant movements in his local art scene. In his more than 40 years as an artist, he understands now that beautiful art must be linked to a philosophy. In the future, he hopes to continue growing as an artist and continue to feel satisfaction from his work.

Aa'tidal Etawi:

Aa'tidal Etawi has been an artist since 1977. Etawi's first personal exhibition took place in 1986; in total, over the years, she has done 9 personal exhibitions. Etawi describes her artwork as emotional thinking, and rarely uses her pieces to convey a particular message. She thinks that when an artist attempts to convey an issue in a piece of work, it ultimately restricts the natural course of the creative process. More specifically, Etawi explains that she never intends to put a message in her pieces but hopes the audience interprets her work in a way that conveys a meaningful message applicable to them on an individual level. Etawi's artwork has been well received both in Saudi Arabia and abroad. From the beginning of her career, she feels audiences have accepted her work because it is unique and mature. Etawi cites her personal experiences and interest in poetry as the primary inspiration for her artwork; ultimately hoping her artwork conveys various aspects of human emotions. Etawi hopes to expand her creative portfolio and believes she has many projects ahead of him.

Abdullah Idris:

Abdullah Idris has been working as an artist since 1970, painting abstract and pop art. His recent work has taken on important social themes, particularly the degree to which humanity's increasingly consumerist culture has caused the destruction of the natural environment. As a long as he has been an artist, he has understood that good ideas are only worth the degree to which he can turn the ideas into a concrete expression.

Idris targets his message of cultural awareness to women. While he understands that commercial value is important and cannot be ignored, he is most interested in the artistic value of his artwork. Fortunately, his focus on the quality of his work has paid off. His work has met critical and commercial acclaim in Saudi Arabia. That is not to say that his road to success has been easy. Idris's main inspiration comes from his art education and his readings. His favourite Saudi Arabian artist is Abdel-Haleem Razvi. Elsewhere, he admires Picasso, Jasper, Johns, Said Wae'ili of Egypt, Hassan Al Saeed of Iraq, and Pail Nohar of Lebanon. Jean Paul Sartre, Pascal, and Descartes with their very different philosophies of being –As one can see from the breadth of his influences, he is inspired by many cultures.

Through his artwork Idris's ultimate goal is to inspire conversation about topics not typically discussed in by Saudi Arabian society.

Ahmed Falmban

Ahmed Flimpan has been an artist since 1967. He describes his work as artwork that deals with societal problems At the beginning of his career, the subject of his work included natural catastrophes, poverty, sickness, wars, hunger (Famine), violence, Flimpan has participated in 9 international exhibitions and 6 within Saudi Arabia. While his work received critical acclaim internationally, the difficult subject matter of his work was not well liked within Saudi Arabia. However, Flimpan believes that his work is not about whether it is "liked" or not. He ultimately strives to address difficult issues and realities of Saudi Society as he remembers them from the early years of his life.

Safiyyah Bin Zagr:

Safiyyah Bin Zagr has been working as an artist since the 1960s and her first art exhibition was in 1968. Bin Zagr primarily creates sculpture and oil paintings. She says that they are "intermingled with [her] soul" and that they all contain subjects meant for maintaining the heritage of her community. In creating her pieces, she builds upon research and documentation of certain cultural findings. Her art is a mere depiction of reality whether in its past or present form. She intends to write history with her brush and make the viewer hold the knowledge of times past in our era. For this reason, she directs her artwork toward a market of children, students, and expatriates. Binzagr shows her artwork primarily in galleries, though she does also have an internet site, safiyabinzagr.com. She is little concerned with commercial value of her artwork. In fact, she has not sold a piece since her first exhibition. She built a home to house all of her artwork for the coming generations.

In Saudi Arabia, the initial reception of her artwork was warm and it laid the foundation for later art exhibitions. Outside Saudi Arabia, she also has enjoyed success. She had an exhibition in London in 1973 to introduce herself as an artist and also to introduce Saudi Arabia as a source of artwork. In 1980 she had another exhibition in Paris, London, and Geneva. All of her shows were self-financed.

Binzagr is very inspired by her Arabic heritage. Because she has put all her artwork in one place, Binzagr has already met one of her goals for her career. Today she hopes to continue evolving in her artwork, and reach for more international exposure of the heritage she preserves in her pieces.

Appendix 3: Describing my Old Practice (Based on Journal

Notes)

In the year 2004 while doing my Masters in England, I had to take a course in Media and Design which was very difficult for me at first because my specialised field was art and I had not concentrated on computer technology before in Saudi Arabia. I was only interested in doing things manually with paint, brush etc. During a whole long year I managed to learn a lot about different kinds of software programmes such as making cartoons, graphic designs, and films. I realized that it had created an awareness in me that I could use most of these programmes to enhance my work.

As soon as I finished my Masters, I started to think about doing my PhD. and all the time at the back of my mind I had a single thought of merging my skills of art with digital technology because I wanted something that would portray my thoughts as well as my skills most effectively, and digital imagery presented a greater scope of presenting the multitude of ideas that I wanted to display in a single composition. In addition, it was important for me to use digital imagery because I wanted to relate my personal experiences to my rich social and cultural background that could be further enhanced in this manner rather than a traditional painting. Moreover, with enhanced technology in the Middle Eastern region it is only appropriate that I use a media that is gaining momentum.

In March 2005 I started looking for references related to digital technology in connection to painting and art but my efforts were useless because I could locate anything related to what I had in mind and was not satisfied with my quest. The aim of my research was to make new forms of representation by merging old and new means of visual and technological languages. In my opinion, the artist rewrites history with his/her paint brush giving alternative perspectives for society to ponder over. The same is true in my case also, as there are tremendous changes taking place in Saudi Arabia. With the discovery of oil in the 50's, Saudi Arabia has been transformed from a vast and barren desert to one of the most developed countries in Asia. Above all, education has progressed a lot. The past twenty five years have seen Saudi society change from a rigid traditional one to a modern flexible one and I am a direct product of this experimentation. I will exemplify it with my own example. A decade ago, girls were not allowed to even travel abroad alone, and now the government is encouraging them to study abroad. My studying abroad is an example of this concurrence by my family and the government. I have experienced these changes firsthand and it has had an effect on me in all walks of life. The inspiration for my work is obtained by reading, watching movies and by travelling but above all it comes from my interaction with people both in my country and abroad. I was greatly influenced during my years of study for my masters and knew that I had to put my feelings on paper creating something that was individualistic but practical. I feel blessed because I was allowed to study and travel both in my country and abroad, which kept me inspired. Fifty years ago, when the first girls schools opened in the kingdom there were barely any students in them because society greatly opposed it. Presently, it is quite the other way around.

My purpose was to find a way of expression that would communicate to the audience the meanings I wish to convey through my artefacts and create an impact that was simple but powerful. I feel that it is important for each person to find an individual interpretation to the artefacts.

In future years, I presume that artefacts with the integration of traditional and digital technology will be a common sight. I also believe that within a matter of few years

digital technology will become so easily available, as well as affordable that such artefacts will become as inexpensive as a watch or calculator.

In addition, by using digital technology I was able to expand my area of representation. By using a digital screen I was able to display effectively a series of ideas in a limited space, this was not possible for me to do so using contemporary art. Furthermore, I could give an insight to the audience that was more profound and effective. The visual impact of the screen is longer lasting and definitely more innovative. This is the main reason that cinema has progressed so greatly in the last century. As it is a part of human nature to look for something different and new.

"The Magic Mirror"

When I chose the subject of my artefact, the first thought that came to my mind was the desert and the woman looking at her reflection in the mirror. The desert predominantly represents the Arab World in general and Saudi Arabia specifically. Geographical features of Saudi Arabia indicate that the Empty Quarter, a desert where nothing grows, forms a large part of this region. The woman symbolises the changes that have helped the females to become an educated part of this society. They are no longer only a domestic part of the house; rather they have progressed in different fields, both nationally and internationally. The woman is looking into the mirror to realize her hopes, inspirations and dreams and amend things that do not please her. Usually, women look at a mirror to improve or fix their visage and fulfil their vanity. With the present king taking office some two years back, a lot of emphasis has been on the betterment of education, career and business related to females, and previous restraints have been removed. The most important part of my artefact is the mirror because it is symbolic of all the changes that have been made possible. Mirrors denote reflection and the images that I have used reflect the changes that have been so significant in this region, that are shining and bright. Thus it shows positive and progressive development from ancient to modern times. It is only through digital usage that I could make my mirror magical!

I have used shades of brown that are as realistic to the desert life as possible, so that the audience can get a taste of the simplicity, ruggedness and emptiness of the desert life in Saudi Arabia and can be transformed in time for a few moments. Even the desolate mud hut is shown in true sand colours, to provide an appropriate background for the shepherdess and her flock of sheep, which is a true factual picture even now a few miles away from the main towns. The colour of the girl's hair and her loose robe symbolise the Arabian woman. Her partial profile makes her more mystical and magical, like Scheherazade in the Arabian Nights.

The style of the mirror is contrasting to the background of the desert; however, I chose it to create a modern impact. The screen is a focal point of attention. It is meant to transform the ideas of the audience within a short space of time. Just like media technology changes things within seconds, so does the visual imagery in the artefact. Audience who have no idea of this part of the world can get an overview of it all in a few seconds and can travel through time. The images that are shown in the mirror begin with the door opening and leading the audience through time. In addition the door in the picture unifies it.

The "door" is a key symbol in this artefact because it indicates an opening through which Saudis are travelling socially and culturally and becoming part of the global village. The movie also begins from the door because once the audience enters it they go through a transformation of thought. The door indicates an old structure that stands for values, traditions and heritage that Saudis cherish and guard completely. Foreigners who visit Saudi Arabia for the first few times are quite familiar with the gates, doors and walls that

are prettily decorated but are often high and sturdy. These represent the high structures that were built not too long ago secluding areas, often a wall was built around the area barricading it.

The reflection in the mirror is supported by a film that I made using media technology and software Final cut Pro and Premier. I also used pictures from the local Saudi Channel and the internet. The film begins with pictures of ancient Arabia, slowly changing to pictures of modern times. The brightness contrast also gives a special meaning indicating not only day and night, but also a comparison between ancient and modern Arabia. It symbolises how life has transformed for most people in Saudi Arabia. The door opens and closes in the film to provide a special effect for the onlooker. As this artefact is meant for a mixed audience, I want my message to be simple and clear - Saudi Arabia yesterday, today and tomorrow.

When I actually began the process of drawing and painting this artefact, I faced a few problems, but with the help of active criticism and review I was able to overcome them. At first I painted only the girl, desert and house with any plants or animals or rocks. However, when Rolf saw my work he suggested that I should add more objects to my painting. When Andree saw my artefact, she remarked that it was strange that there was no greenery in the painting. At the time these remarks were made the painting was not complete – there was no film or screen. I reviewed the points made by those around me and decided to add more objects like rocks, plants and sheep. As far as the mirror is concerned, I always knew that I wanted one in this artefact but I also became aware that it needed a specific frame to blend with my ideas, because the mirror is something ordinary; it is the frame that adds a special value to it. That is why I chose a style commonly found in vanity mirrors

The mirror is yet another symbol of my fantasy. For every woman it is very important to be able to see herself realize her hopes and dreams while keeping her values and traditions intact. It is time that people realize that a Saudi woman is just as modern and innovative as any other and she is proud of her heritage. The mirror reflects her aspirations and future dreams. Through this image I want to achieve a universality of womanhood that is evident in females all over the world. I gained my inspiration from a few artists, both non-Arab and Arab, but I am particularly impressed by Dia Aziz Dia and Safia bin Zagr.

I like Dia's work, despite the fact that it is not always easy to find an objective in his paintings, because his subjects are characterised by their context, whether he is painting a face or an aspect of everyday life.
As Said Al Seraihi quotes: "Dia's faces bear features that are the very expression of the inhabitants of the Saudi land, with all their hidden secrets."(Dia Aziz Dia 30)

I can easily compare my work with Dia's because even my subjects are characterised by the surroundings I create around them contextually. When a friend of mine saw this artefact she commented that the subject of my painting, the girl, seems to be finding her position in society – in the mirror. I feel that as an artist I owe it to my cultural heritage to create an image that is true to life but displays the dreams and hopes of the people around me, especially the women.

I am extremely objective toward the comment of people who have viewed my artefacts, because I represent their thoughts and feelings to the world around me. I am aware that an artist's work improves with every comment that he/she gets and I plan to keep all the comments in mind while I am working on my series of artefacts. Nevertheless, I am proud of my work and hope to maintain my creativity, style and integrity throughout.

Other people who saw the artefacts thought it was innovative, different and unusual but traditional. I am happy that I was able to make a statement about my folklore and culture. Even though Dia and bin Zagr represent the Saudi culture clearly in their paintings,

I can see my work distinctly different from theirs because of the integration of digital technology with classical art.

"War"

In November 2005, I was pensive about my next artifact and was sitting and reading a book when my stepson, Sari came up to me with an unusual question, "Why are we studying and spending so much time going to school?" he asked. When I showed surprise at his question, he added that "we will die soon as the war is sure to destroy us." This subject threw me off course and suddenly set me thinking because I had not realized how the war and terrorism around the world was affecting the younger generations' fears and hopes, even in Saudi Arabia. Usually, young Saudi students study history related to their region at the primary level, so I was really surprised. For a child of twelve years I thought it was really a profound question but an issue which needs to be addressed, both in the Arab World and internationally. Thus I used this to inspire me to create this artefact. As is my style, I have tried to portray my theme simply but artistically, with the use of minimum colours and clear lines. I probably chose the two young Saudi boys as my subject because I had my son in mind and other boys like him. Their apparel is the traditional white thobe that signifies our culture. The tan and brown colours which dominate the painting also represent the colours of the desert and the surrounding areas.

The focal point in this picture is the wall and the two boys close to it. This artefact depicts what is happening in the world today, of which the Arab World is so much a part of. The wall symbolises war and terror that is widespread internationally. One of the young boys is painting on the wall and has written the word "STOP" denoting that even the children are affected by the war. The Danger sign which is in red on the wall also is indicative of the same thought. However, the other boy is building a structure with blocks showing that he has hope that one day his dreams might materialise and become true. The viewers notice that the boy is unable to complete his structure because of his inner fears. On an International level these children want the world to understand that they need peace and harmony to be able to attain a promising future. The "O" in the word stop has a dual purpose; when the DVD is functional it connotes that there is war around, with the help of the images this is made clear and more than a single idea is conveyed. The other meaning of "O" is to show a hole in the wall, which is so dismal and dark. In addition, without the digital intervention, the meaning of the painting cannot be interpreted precisely.

The clear blue sky is in contrast to the danger sign because on the other side of the wall is peace, harmony and tranquillity and the sky covers or protects the purity there. The boys want this wall to be removed so they can go towards eternal peace. Nevertheless, it seems an arduous task for such young boys to raze this wall to the ground, and the chances are they may hit their head against the wall in trying to do so.

The tiled flooring depicts the modern times and the present international influence in the Arab World. If one looks at this artefact at a distance one gets the feeling of a path being formed with the lines of the tile layout, leading towards infinity but being stopped by the wall, much like the hopes and aspirations of the younger generation, that are being marred by world events today.

On the floor, are models of minarets with the crescent, a sign of Islamic Peace that the boy with the bricks will put up when he finishes constructing his building. However, he is facing a problem trying to construct because of the hole that one can see. It is also worthwhile to remember that the word "STOP" is written in English, an international language that everyone understands and uses commonly in the Arab World. I did not use Graffiti to paint the word "Stop" because I want people to understand the plea of the boys clearly. I do not want people to imagine that these youngsters are protesting about just anything. This is an issue which should be understood by everyone, a message for world peace.

Most important addition, to this painting is the digital image set in the middle of the picture within the "O" showing images of war, such as, guns, cannons, war pictures and injured people, taken from documentaries and the television, that are a part of national and international news presently. The images are of war and terrorism around the world. They are real everyday facts related to the current affairs and cannot be denied just by turning off the Television or the computer. We as artists and thinkers need to address the issue on an international scale.

Pondering on the casual comments that I got from the people who saw my painting, I decided to do the following:

Add some dirt on the floor to depict the scene.

Paint more objects on the floor, like rope, chain etc.

Make the crescent larger to make the symbol of Islam more prominent.

Paint a sun in the sky to denote sunshine.

The dirt symbolises the multifarious problems that are present in this world and surround the children. It blends into the brown background with its signs of lurking danger that is so prominent in the lives of the young ones. The chain and rope remind one of prisoners and war much like what is happening in the war around the world. In contrast, the crescent signifies a positive sign as it is a typical insignia of the Muslims and is mostly found on top of minarets and other forms of Islamic architecture. It provides a certain amount of relief from the threat of symbols of war. Above all the sun is a sign of providing hope and warmth in this bleak and ominous scene.

The uniqueness of every painting is related to the place where it resides says John Berger. When the camera reproduces a painting, its meaning multiplies and fragments into many meanings. This is vividly illustrated by what happens when a painting is shown on a television screen. It enters the atmosphere of the viewer. Because of the camera, the painting travels to the spectator rather than the spectator to the painting. In its travels, its meaning is diversified. (Berger 1977:19)

The positive and negative aspects in this artefact almost balance themselves and perhaps the atrocities of war will diminish when mankind recalls what miseries it brings with it, so we can hope that the younger generation do not suffer destruction and death.

"**The Veiled Woman of Sandy Arabia**"

This artefact displays a backdrop of sand from within the poles of a tent. Inside the tent is a Bedouin woman, who is leaving behind the desert life and emerging towards modern times. Above her head is a trellis, that shows her transition from the desert to modern Arabia, (a few years back), and the door indicates a new emergence or progression in the international arena. Her face is veiled but her position in the picture shows a sense of determination that she brings along with all her tradition. The jewellery is traditional and forms a unique part of her recognition. She seems proud and resolute, but she is ready to make changes to her life and depart from the open door. Once again my style is predominantly arabesque, it shows my pride in being an Arab. The colours are dark and bold because the decision that this Bedouin woman makes is bold in itself. Red and black are both colours worn in parts of the Arabian Peninsula. I have tried to create a semi-abstract artefact to create a sense of mystery behind the Arabian woman.

Digital imagery is to be used in a slightly different manner on this picture. A projector will reflect the images related to the Arab World on the picture from afar. Other picture lights will be fitted in the trellis to reflect light on certain parts of the picture, and will emerge above it. The lighting will be used to help audience decode my painting, in their independent manner. The digital images will take people through a journey that starts in ancient times and ends in modern times in the Arabian Peninsula, which is changing and modernising so fast.

I was inspired to paint this picture because I had a photograph of mine in this attire, taken during one of my wedding ceremonies. This is a real-life image that any Saudi women may have. Now, when I see myself after passing my Masters and having gone through a long journey, which I am still continuing for a better and more prospective future, I can't believe it. Surely, it is difficult for people to think that a woman like me could ever wear this heavy traditional veil and yet be a part of the international community at the same time. When people saw this it took them a while to decode, but my point in this artefact is that the woman has emerged from her past and is now passing through the door to go towards a more independent future.

The 3D effect of this picture is quite prominent, because it connotes the different stages of her life. For instance the desert life is definitely behind her and she is in the tent, close to the trellis, which signifies her life now, slightly modern, but the most symbolic object is the door from which she is ready to depart. Even the cloth is draped in a manner that gives one the feeling that she is taking a step forward. This is true of most Saudi women, who are working hard to educate themselves and become more aware of what is

happening in the rest of the world. Previously, doors and gates, had a special significance in this area, but now things are changing and women are forming an important part of the workforce.

Two colours that are most prominent in this artefact are red and brown denoting a sense of mystery that surrounds the Arabian female. The only human part of her body that can be seen is her right hand, with her index finger pointing in a set direction. This indicates that when the women emerge from their veil they have a set objective and goal to follow. Of course the many yards of fabric draped around her forms kind of a curtain and the trellis is the frame for it; still this woman may seem intriguing to others who believe in her despite the many layers from which she has to emerge. A viewer commented that this painting shows three phases of a women's life – childhood, teenage years, and maturity, shown by the desert, the trellis and the door. The desert is like the childhood simple and uncomplicated, the trellis denotes the teenage years spent in the early days of Saudi Arabia (when it began its modernisation process) and the mature years will be projected with an overhead projector showing animations of new buildings and development in Saudi Arabia. This painting is analogous with the present state of Saudi women who are educating themselves for higher degrees and are being encouraged by the government to take part in various social activities. The burden of the many folds and Bedouin jewellery is being uplifted from them.

"Risk"

The title of this artefact is "Risk" a word that has a meaning not only in English but also in Arabic. Both the connotations are related to this piece of art. In English "risk" means taking a chance, which is in turn connected to fate; whereas, in Arabic the same word means the money and earnings that Providence has allocated for you in this life. All Muslims have their faith in "risk" that is given to them by God, Almighty. Again risk is associated by an Arab with fate.

I was inspired to paint this artefact because I belong to Jeddah, a renowned port. Even today, when I drive downtown I can see the sea beside the streets, and boats and steamers dotting the horizon. A large part of Jeddah is reclaimed land and it is not far behind in history that I can picture the fisherman in the painting. However, Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Middle East have progressed immensely, especially in the fishing industry and have greatly modernized their facilities in the shipping area. I thought

it was appropriate for me to display this development in marine biology through digital and linear media. The advent and advancement in this area could easily be captured through my eyes and portrayed in different parts of the world.

In this artefact, I have used technology more extensively than the two previous artefacts. I also managed to narrate a series of events in a story form covering a certain period. In the previous artefacts I used the media to show images in the form of mere flashes. While doing this artefact I felt more confident and focused; besides I was more comfortable using the media visualising its impact on my audience. Nevertheless, I feel that all my artefacts have a common relationship with each other. They manage to show with the help of digital media more complex thoughts than would have been possible just by using a single medium. This aspect is very important because it shows the change and development that has occurred in the Arab World within the short span of my growing up. It is imperative that my audience visualise me within the perimeters of my background, as my work is also a representation of what my audience experience. I think it is very important for me as an artist to convey my message as clearly as possible with the use of my artefacts.

Now, I would like to analyse my painting to reflect on the positioning and objects displayed. As usual my paintings or artefacts portray the Arab World. The fisherman is wearing clothes belonging to the area. The kettle and the tea are so prosaic of this culture. It is also traditional for the fishing community to make the wire baskets using a simple tool like a hammer. Above all, the lantern is a symbolic object belonging to this rustic community. There is a lot of folklore attached to the lantern in Arabia. It is still used in festivities although the cities are over-illuminated with bulbs today. The central figure in this artefact is the fisher man; he occupies most of the dimensions of the painting because it is around his life that many changes have evolved within a short period of 50 years. I have tried to show these changes in the DVD. He is looking up in an expectant manner at the lantern, where the digital media is used, because his hopes are involved in what is to come in the future, that is now. Culturally the typical Saudi fisherman has become an individual of the past, but he needs to be recalled by the present generation. I think for all progressing countries and their people it is necessary to recall their history. The fisherman with his basic facilities is no longer existent because the fishing boats have been replaced by trawlers and powered motorboats. The government has developed the fishing industry to make it part of the modernisation programme. The lantern, rope, and hammer are appealing because of their simplicity and rustic beauty that add tranquillity to the scene. We need to recall this because fishing is still a part of the livelihood of many people and forms a part of the Arabic tradition and its surroundings. The lantern is elevated higher than the rest of the objects so that the fisherman looks up to it, perhaps at its light that sheds a ray of hope on him. His eyes are blurred by the reflection of light that is blinding, even to him.

Enhancing my techniques, I have used silver paint to raise the level of the wires of the fishing net from the flat surface. Similar to my previous painting, in which I used sand to make it more tactile. I have painted mostly in blues, greens and yellow; because blue denotes tranquillity; green indicates peace and harmony, and yellow represents the desert that is a part and parcel of our region.

It is interesting to note, that after I completed my sketch, I painted the piece of wood in blue, to show a different level. It is there to provide a stimulus to the audience to evaluate what is behind this piece of wood, which in reality is a part of a modern ship. It is placed in proximity to the fisherman because it is every fisherman's dream to own a ship one day. However, it is at a different level because it denotes the future. The fish in the netted basket seem so alive and vibrant to lend a realistic view to the picture. The wires

that the fisherman is using to weave may seem to some like a cage, but actually this cage is his safe haven that provides him with a space protected by his faith in God, and his belief that God is his only Provider. According to some comments received: Rolf, the research supervisor said that the wires seem that the fisherman has built a cage around him and this could be his religion. Moreover, Dr. Huda Zai, my external expert gave the following observations:

To build another frame with a gap of 15 cms. (in dark brown) around the original frame so that more space is created and complete it with some objects emerging into the empty space, like the piece of wood, and the wires. While preparing the documentary, to be placed in the glass of the lantern, I ensured that the images represented the true story of the fishermen in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, I used the local Saudi Channel to gather the images.

"**Drums and the Saudi Heritage"**

Annually the traditional arts and cultural heritage of Saudi Arabia is exhibited at a Cultural Festival held outside the capital of Riyadh at Janadriyah. As it is hosted under the patronage of the King, formal preparations are made under the auspices of the National Guard for this occasion. The festival is coloured with traditional poetry, music and dancing acts. Music possesses a universal language and most foreigners fallaciously assume that Saudi Arabia does not entertain this mellifluous language. On the contrary, Saudis are very traditional and utilize instruments in their musical raps that are allowed in Islam. The "Douf" or Taar is a circular wooden frame with animal hide pulled tautly on it. On tapping the surface with the palms it produces a loud musical throb, just right to make Arabs tap their feet and dance on its regular beat. It symbolizes life and the social connotation correlated with the simplicity of Saudi society. All celebrations involve some type of musical activity with this basic instrument interspersed with fireworks and dancing that lingers on one's memory long after it has departed.

This artefact with Saudi drums or "Douf "shows a glimpse of a general celebration with men in the forefront of the picture. It is important to note that in Saudi Arabia men and women have segregated gatherings, whether it is a wedding or Eid celebration party. This identifies the Saudi culture; therefore, this painting has a special meaning related to the social norms here. It is noteworthy that the majority of the Saudi population is Muslims, so they follow similar cultural traditions. Two prominent features of this artefact

are the drums and the Saudi men. Their headgear called the "Shumaaq" and part of their white robe sets them apart from other nationalities. Although the headdress is worn by men in other Arab countries, too; the colour, kind, and the way of adorning it differ from one Middle East Country to another.

In the twenty first century when most countries have given up the formal head cover, it is still customary for men to wear a Shumaaq and for the women to put on a scarf covering their hair, in Saudi Arabia and the neighboring countries. In the past, Saudi men used the Shumaaq for protection against heat, sun, and strong sandstorms much like a cowboy's hat, but now it is used as a traditional dress code. The tassels or pom-poms are in multifarious colours, showing the happy mood displayed in this picture. It clearly shows a common celebration. Special additions to this artefact are the two screens that I plan to attach within the drums, so far I have used only a single screen. I hope to capture the reactions of the audience and get their feedback on this issue. Each screen will represent a different type of folk dance from the Janadriyah Festival.

When I completed this oval shaped artefact, I realized that the space within looked a bit crowded because of the two drums set with the screens, then as a modification I decided to place the painting on a larger square frame measuring 100 x 80. This resolved the matter and added a touch of uniqueness to the painting. Besides after finishing the painting I also felt that the Shumaaq was the most eye-catching item, so it was appropriate to paint extra lengths of the fabric on the surrounding surface, too.

"The Sound of the Arabian Drum"

This artefact I called "The Sound of the Arabian Drum" because of the effect it produces on the common man of this region, whether young or old. Actually, my previous artefact inspired me to draw another picture but this time on an actual drum. I found a large Arabian Drum from the market and used it as a natural background to paint on because I wanted to give a feel of the real drum. I used colours like red, brown, grey, black and white to paint fuzzy outlines, not detailed, to show many men close to the lower rim of the drum. In the centre I left a large square unpainted showing the real hide, so that the natural quality impresses upon the minds of the audience. It is also notable that though the men are not detailed, one can see the swords emerging from their hands, because the sword dance is a traditional Saudi Dance that is often practiced during celebrations.

This artefact is different from the others because I have used only light and sound but not DVDs. I have also painted on the other side to create a special effect. It is customary in Saudi dancing to use traditional artefacts such as the sword, drum and horse.

Therefore, I thought it appropriate to paint three men on the horse, dancing with swords in their hands symbolizing the Saudi Heritage reminding people of the time when soldiers used to go to war on the horses and play the drum before and after war.

The lights at the back of this artefact create a special animation effect accentuating the scene, because through the thin hide the painting with the three men can be reflected once the lights are turned on. There is also a provision of traditional sound that blends with the background. In addition, the picture behind is positioned exactly within the unpainted square in the front providing a special vision to the audience out of the ordinary. Moreover, this drum is placed within an irregular framework of wood painted like an old brick stonewall, depicting something from the past. This artefact is a tribute to the nomads who have retained our traditions through their craft.

Traditional Brilliance

Modern conveniences have reached the Bedouin and hill tribes, yet the aesthetic beauty of the homes they fashioned straight from available sand stone, clay and rock is undeniable. Each piece of construction was chosen carefully to form a strong wall lasting centuries. The word "Arabian" has a mystique connotation, like the Arabian Nights, both for the inhabitants of this region and outsiders. Majestic domes and slender minarets are undoubtedly a distinctive feature of Arab life, so are the houses and forts that dot the landscape of Saudi Arabia. They have a unique characteristic that cannot go unnoticed by viewers, a special essence lent by their unusual construction and poise. Actually, I was arrested by the ruins of the first Saudi capital, Dir'iyyah, in Riyadh that inspired me to make this artefact. I hope that the abstract nature of this painting will motivate my audience to look beyond the window-like opening and transcend them into a time in the past. In an interesting book *"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" (p 102)* it is detailed that at the beginning of the 20th. Century Abdul Aziz ibn Saud captured the Musmak fortress and this city became his base to conquer the area from the Arabian Gulf to the Red Sea. Since 1932 this region has been called the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. All the construction was in a mud brick style around the fort with its desert background. Today the city of Riyadh has buildings of the most modern architecture, but the mud-brick houses of the past are a traditional emblem not only in this region but the rest of Saudi Arabia, too.

Traditional Brilliance is an artefact that seems simple but is saturated with history and geography of Saudi Arabia. It is an abstract of a portion of a wall/construction that represents the geometrical squares and triangles typical of the Arabian architecture. The motif and theme are the regions heritage, as well as the wooden door that adorns courtyards in the desert. The entrances to the houses are closed by such large rectangular

wooden doors, and the triangular opening maintains the privacy of the inmates of Saudi households. To capture the reality of the scene, I have added the door in light and dark brown, so that it looks decorated in geometrics burned into the pale wooden surface. As the key feature of the use of mud was the need for ongoing care and attention, patching up crumbling walls, repairing storm damage, I have endeavored to create this effect with the use of tan as the background for the wall, interspersed with dark brown fine lines to establish the cracked and crumbling effect. Usually around doors and windows white plaster was used by masons to reinforce the shape and also to accentuate it, as many triangular shapes lined the forts and houses. Besides, white gave some kind of relief to the eye in the scorching desert heat. The focal point in this artefact is the lantern, a symbol of brightness and brilliance, because of which I have given my artefact its name. My external supervisor in Saudi Arabia, Ms. Huda Zaki advised me to paint the corners of the wall a darker shade so that a circular frame is created around the lantern and the opening, so that the brilliance within the lantern juxtapositions with the darker surrounding illuminating the lantern.

It has both a traditional and a cognitive connotation because even now Saudis from the older generation reminiscence about the time when there was no electricity even in the towns of Saudi Arabia and mostly had to depend upon the age-old tradition of using a lantern to provide light. In addition, it is placed spatially in front of the opening to indicate how its light brightens up the space within the building and perhaps relates to the progress and stability of this region in the past fifty years. It speaks volumes about the people who march forth with the rest of the world in the wake of development keeping their traditions as a part of their identity.

A special feature merging digital technology with traditional painting is the DVD placed within the triangular opening. It has a video, showing clips of craftsmen from Janadriyah, a traditional folk fair is held at this place every year to honor the craft and traditions of Saudi Arabia. Once again this video would assist my audience to link the many facets of this region and unravel the mysteries revolving around Arabia.

'Gulf Doors'

Since I was a child, I was intrigued by old symbols of Arabic civilisation. I still remember how when I was six years old, I went with my family to Taif. I was fascinated by its old traditional houses which have beautiful large wooden door with different patterns and

quality of wood that reflect the social class its residents belonged to. The same features can be seen in Makkah where I was born and in the old area in Jeddah.

I noticed that the doors have an ornamental value in addition to maintaining the privacy of the Saudi households. People that that the door is the thing people see from outside and wanted it to say a lot about them. It is the opening that leads them into the comfort of their house and takes them out to the outer world. They are the first thing to see and the last thing to see when they get in or out of their homes. As a result, a lot of care was put into designing them.

When I moved to Jeddah, I started looking at the doors and windows of old houses from a different perspective. My interest grew even further when I started doing my Masters and then my PhD. I noticed how the old houses in Jeddah are neglected and rarely maintained. It was clear that they were deserted and if it were not for the high cost of demolishing them, they would have knocked down a long time ago. I felt so sad for their conditions and felt like I had a responsibility keeping them alive my own way. I was not trying to reflect reality as much I was trying to revive an ancient form of art. I took pictures of many doors and old buildings and found myself thinking of integrating them into my work. My ideas started to materialise and I started thinking of my installation Gulf Doors.

To give it a sense of reality, I used colours and material similar to the ones used in reality. I decorated it in geometrics burned into the pale wooden surface.

Appendix 4: Audience Questionnaire

Background information

1.   Nationality

2.   Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female

3.   Age   :   ☐ 20-35   ☐ 36-50

4.   What is your occupation?

5.   Would you describe yourself as an artist?   ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please give brief details: _____

6.   What is you highest level of education?

7.   Was this is a subject allied to art and design? ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, please give brief details:_____

8.   How familiar are you with art in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East?
Not at all ☐ ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐ A lot

Please give your overall impressions of the exhibition. Please be as candid as possible. Most of the questions have a 1 to 7 scale for you to indicate your response. If you would like to make comments and suggestions these would be most welcome

1. Have you seen any multi media installations before? ☐ Yes   ☐ No
    a. If yes please give details_____

2. To what extent is the work different from what you have seen before?
    A lot   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐ It does not

3. Did the different media elements combine well together?
    Yes   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐ No

4. Were you aware of all the media elements in the installation without being told?
    Yes   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐ No

5. Did you understand the meaning the artist wished to convey?
    All the time ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐ Never

6. Do you think the themes raised reflect contemporary issues in Saudi

   Yes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ No

7. Did the exhibits cause you to think more about the relationship between males and females in Saudi society?

   All the time ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Never

8. Do you think such issues are debated already in Saudi?

   All the time ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Never

9. Was appropriate use made of cultural symbols?

   Yes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ No

10. Would you visit such art if it were on display?

    Yes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ No

11. Do you think the same ideas could be portrayed through painting alone?

    Yes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ No

12. How much did you feel part of the work?

    All the time ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Never

13. Was it easy for you to connect with the experiences?

    All the time ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Never

14. How far does the work successfully reflect the artist's origin in Arabian tradition and culture?

    A lot ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ It does not

15. Which pieces did you feel most connection to? (please circle those appropriate)

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

16. How effective is the work in conveying a debatable relationship between men and women in this region?

    A lot ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ It does not

17. Would this exhibition further people's understanding of conceptual art?

    Yes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ No

18. And of multimedia art?

    Yes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ No

19. Do you think this work will motivate other artists to work in a similar way?

Yes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ No

20. Did you understand the meaning of the pieces before you talked to the artist?
    All the time ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Never

Appendix 5: Audience Interview Schedule

1. Symbol of the Kaaba
   o Can you tell me what the main message that the artist was trying to convey?
   o What Saudi symbols have been used?
   o What did you feel when you watching the video?
   o What is the story being shown in the video?
   o Which part of the installation made you feel safe?
2. Walls of Shumaaq
   o What are the symbols which have been used?
   o What does the black shadow represent?
   o What issues does this raise in terms of society?
   o What should the man do?
   o Do you think that the relationship between them is symbolic of Saudi society?
   o How could the female come more to the foreground?
3. The Talking Window
   o What is the story of this work?
   o What do you think are the feelings of the two people in the exhibit?
   o Do you think the man is concerned about the woman?
   o Do you think he wants to catch her?
   o Where do you think the woman is walking to?
   o What do you think the gossips are saying?
4. Generation Gap
   o What is the installation about?
   o Do you think the faces meet in the middle? What is the result of this meeting?
   o Why might the man be angry?
   o Were you aware of the sounds they were listening to?
   o Do you think that such a gap exists?
   o Is there any way of reducing this?
5. Who is in the Box?
   o What are the cultural symbols this is drawing from?
   o What are the influences on the woman in the box?
   o What do you think has locked her in the box?
   o Did you notice anything about the men and what they were saying?
   o How is it possible to free the woman?
   o What does the key represent? Would you be prepared to use it?
6. Habitat
   o What does the house symbolise?
   o How would you describe the movement of the people
   o What does this pattern of movement mean?
   o What does the inside of the house represent?

- How do you think the relationship between male and female will change because of new technology?
- Were you aware of any sounds (e.g. the footsteps and the sounds coming from the house)?
- Did these add anything to the installation/your experience?

7. Freedom
   - Can you tell me the story that is shown in this artefact?
   - What do you think is the meaning behind the story? Is it a metaphor?
   - Why do you think the man is angry?
   - Does he have a right to be angry?
   - You are part of the installation. What do you feel about your position in this?

Appendix 6: Media Coverage

Two reports from Al-Riyadh Newspapers and Design Magazine

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