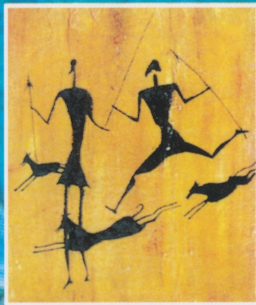
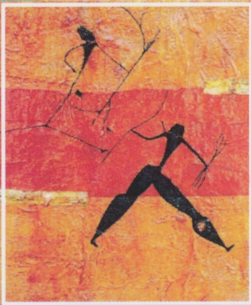


AL TASHKEEL



* Five from Far off:

Workshops and works that bring meaning nearer

Body Art, with its rituals and laboratory results, was present in Denmark. Abdul Raheem Salem drafted his ritual experience in Zar and body painting through a workshop presented there. He started with a pencil sketch of his project (lasted three days) at an 8 meter in width in his expressive style. Then he changed it into a distinct bodily movement when he, accompanied by the Emirates rhythms (Liewah), performed the Zar ritual, covering his body with nylon. While carrying out this ritual, inks were poured on him; and thus he found himself totally absorbed in the ritual. This constituted an abstract symbolic outcome of the codes of the body, melody, ritual and meaning (lasted seven days), for this famous traditional act. Therefore, the artist realized the difficult equation of mixing heritage with the extremist modernity in one distinguished work.

Abdul Kareem created an integrated atmosphere for his project in order to be shown in the form of an empty cube with a rectangular shape of three walls where the other walls remain only as a visual illusion.

The piece of cloth surrounding the body extends over the ground, then rises in a curved straight line on the acute angle of the wall, and breaks at the same angle at the roof. Thus the work turns out to be a metaphorical tent suggesting iFar offi from which he came, though



he is not that remote in fact but present in the city of the international biennial, and the capital of culture, that is, Shajah.

This vision was stressed by Karimah Al Shomaly in her workshop which she prepared two weeks before the start of the exhibition where she presented two new monumental works of her structural collection that she had previously contributed to the Sharjah biennial and received an award for them. Karimah inspired a host of cylinder pipe standing in vertical positions with different lengths signi-



fying women bodies, made of transparent plastic slices filled with colored solid pipes (yellow, red, blue, brown, black and white), and veiled with a black cloth to signify the veiled woman as a fashion and a heritage and a sign of existence, revealing, thereby, the cultural and social meaning of veiled Arab women. Since the artist belongs to this environment, she gives a deeper significance of the type of social development witnessed in the field of arts and culture.

Her other work was only a collection of pieces of cloth put in a standing position and distributed in various attitudes descending from a large rope made of date palm material signifying the different body movements that show the different degrees of suffering and try to rid themselves of their eternal rope. The third work had already been exhibited at Sharjah biennial. It symbolizes men's head covers and women's braids. The two sexes are symbolized by men carrying sticks and other accessories that represent the two in different forms and postures that allow the viewer take part in the action in order to put him within the game. The question that imposes itself here is that where are those people who are moving and where are we going?

The braids symbolize the traditional puzzle of the beauty of women in the past when the long hair was taken as a standard of beauty and feminism. Colors signify the diversity of women as was the case with the veiled women.

Jamila Hansen, a Danish journalist had interviewed Ms. Al Shomaly (b. 1965) (photos by Zenis) on 8th October 2003. In that interview Mrs. Al Shomaly said that she studied accounting at UAE university and then moved to the college of Arts there due to the fact that there was not such a College in Sharjah when she graduated from high school. She was trained to be a painter during the period 1990-1996 through taking painting cours-

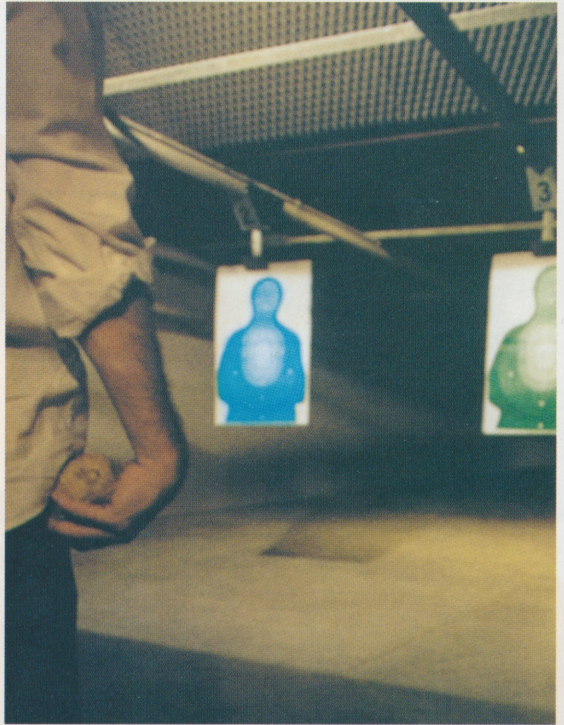
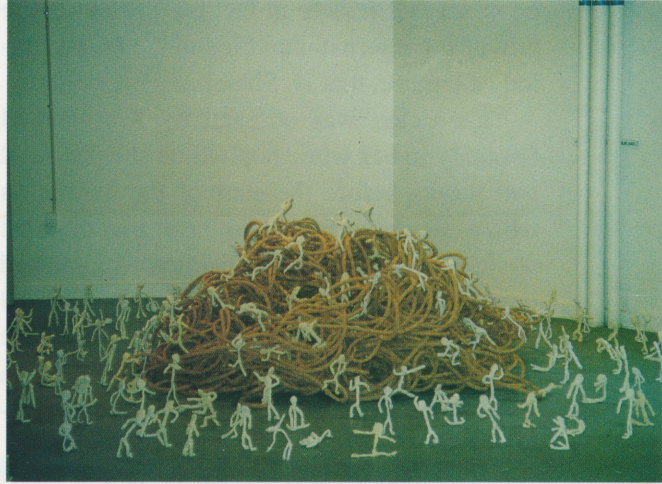




es. Then she started her artistic career, pointing out that there was no problem in being a woman painter in a muslim community. This proved that she was free to choose her career, and that there were famous women artists in her country who practiced contemporary arts that seem unacceptable in a society which tends to approve traditional works. She believes that the artist must work for himself and not as per the wishes of others. She, as a result, does not care whether they accepted her works or not. She highlighted her experience at the workshop during the weeks of her presence in Copenhagen. She was very much impressed by her visits to the museums and getting familiar with the original works of great artists such as picasoís. Though her stay in Copenhagen did not leave an impact on her workshop and exhibition, because they were already made in her native city of Sharjah, the journalist brought her attention that her works were without titles, Al Shomaly replied that his was made on purpose to give the audience the chance to fix the significances of these works.

Tariq Al Ghusian, (who introduced himself to the journalist as half-Kuwaiti, half Palestinian) presented three impressionistic pictures. They are personal pictures that express the Palestinian exile through the use of the symbol of ìgutraî (head coverî, while in another he gives his back to the viewer, looking at his far off country across the horizon of the Dead Sea (in a manner that reminds us of Casper Fredickís painting of a person standing on the Baltic beach meditating on the far off horizon). It is the same work that Tariq showed at Sharjah Biennial, expressing his political belief of return and that the Palestinian stone throwers will be stronger than their Sisyphian fate.

Khalil Abdul Wahid presented the same project that he had participated in Sharjah Biennial 6. M. Ahmed Ibrahim (Khor Fakan)





did not attend but his works did. Most of his works are taken from natural material: ìBrownî dry grass mixed with glue and paper powder and clay represent a controversial monument through its significance.

Certainly these are not rituals and rites as some would like to negate their socio-topographic-environmental dimension, turning the work into a pure artistic form as if it does not belong to the philosophy and vision of the artist and as part of his technical-intellectual expressiveness of ìthe art of Earthî, his defense of the environment and the necessity of protecting its virginity and cleanliness after being subjected and distorted to wars and catastrophes!

The Exhibition of the Five and the workshops were shown at the Royal Academy of Arts within the cultural and artistic cooperation between Sharjah Department of Culture and Information and the Academy. This event was opened on October 1 2003 in the presence

of Abdullah Aluwais, Director General of the Department, who highlighted the role of Sharjah in establishing cultural values and openness to other cultures through the vision of H.H. Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council, Ruler of Sharjah.

Dorothy Dahlin, the Danish artist who had previously participated in Sharjah 4th Biennial, 1999, attended the exhibition as representative of her country along with Dr. Elsa M. Pocardal, president of the academy who was entrusted with the task of developing the program of cultural exchange, which resulted in opening the contemporary Danish Exhibition at Sharjah Museum, and included selections of twenty one artists, followed by a show of researcher-poets and resulted in the establishment of ìFive From Far Offî: presence, workshops, and exhibition.