

What's On

Faculty members hold thought-provoking discussions

AUK, Dartmouth College host research workshop with Prof Anderson

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 1: The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) at the American University of Kuwait (AUK) embarked on a collaborative initiative with Dartmouth College to conduct a workshop presented by Professor Emeritus Jon Anderson on the ways in which research papers can gain visibility in the academic community.

The workshop, titled "Getting Your Research Noticed: From Keeping Track to Keeping Score in Academic Publishing," had Professor Emeritus Jon Anderson as its main speaker. Dr. Anderson's areas of expertise include social and cultural anthropology, contemporary Middle East, information technology cultures and globalization and civil society.

Attended by AUK faculty members, multiple topics were discussed throughout Dr. Anderson's presentation, such as the various databases available in which research papers can be published and their exclusive differences, the circulation of findings, the importance of reference librarians, and the planning of publication strategies. Emphasis was also put on how different disciplines have different sequences of publication and a comprehensive review

AUK Professor Dr. Hesham Al-Awadhi authors new book on Kuwait history

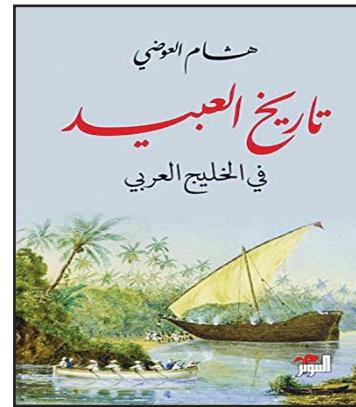
KUWAIT CITY, Sept 1: In his new book, Dr. Hesham Al-Awadhi, professor of history and international relations at the American University of Kuwait (AUK), discusses the role slaves played in the Kuwaiti community in terms of society, culture, civilization, language, art, customs, food, and clothes.

"Slaves were the most influential labor force from the pearl diving period to the petroleum production period and it's not shameful to shed light on this type of history. In fact, it is necessary to highlight this particular era in order to reconcile with it," states Dr. Hesham.

The book acknowledges the



Left: Dr. Hesham Al-Awadhi, professor of history and international relations at the AUK. Right: Book cover of the new book by Dr Al-Awadhi.



contribution and influence slaves had in the Arab Gulf. It's also an all-encompassing and inclusive publication that seeks to include all groups of people, especially those marginalized and eradicated by traditional history, instead of solely focusing on the elites.

Upon being asked about the reasoning behind choosing what is considered a delicate subject matter, Dr. Hesham explained that he chose this topic precisely because it is sensitive, and this is what motivates him to research and write in the field of history. He stated that the goal behind any research is to reveal stories, add new insights and new analysis.

Tim Niblock, an emeritus professor of Middle East politics, praised the book, "It's a topic that has always been hidden behind the scenes, and it is an important and necessary part of the history of the Arabian Gulf." Additionally, Jerzy Zdanowski, a professor at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, also expressed his appreciation towards Dr. Hesham's research, "I am happy that a Kuwaiti is continuing research on the issue of slaves in the Gulf."

Using over 50 sources and exclusive British documentations, The History of Slaves in the Arab Gulf addresses a part of the past that is seldom talked about.

based on the American model of higher learning. The language of instruction is English. More information on the American University of Kuwait can be found at www.auk.edu.kw

DAI



Maha Al Essa and Zainab Al Baqshi with the participants of the Children's Art Workshop.

Films reflect the spirit of Children's Art Workshop

Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyyah bids farewell to 25th cultural season with a film

By Chaitali B. Roy
Special to the Arab Times

On Aug 25, Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyyah (DAI) brought the curtain down on their 25th cultural season with two short films titled 'The Making of the Journey' and 'The Journey of Ibn Battuta' — their final project for the Children's Art Workshop. As a cultural organisation, the DAI has created a rich legacy by focussing on art as a diplomatic agent that explains Islamic civilisation in broader terms.

Through its many programmes and research, it has fostered knowledge, information, understanding and contributed immensely to enhancing cultural knowledge for generations inside and outside Kuwait. Their programme for children has set benchmarks in learning and cultural engagement.

The 2019 Children's Art Workshop, the inspiration behind the two short films 'The Making of the Journey' and 'The Journey of Ibn Battuta', was managed and implemented by Maha Al Essa in partnership with filmmaker Zainab Al Baqshi. Maha Al Essa is an extraordinary young Kuwaiti woman. A former docent of DAI's pioneering docent programme, she has matured into a knowledge expert, thought

leader and museum facilitator. "For seven years, I've been developing and conducting the Children's Art Workshop at the American University of Kuwait," she says when asked about her involvement with the project. "It is a six months' workshop. Every year the focus changes from developing the children's skills, creativity, critical thinking to collaboration and communication, using the exhibition and objects of the al-Sabah collection. Each year we have a different final project, a play, a film or an exhibition, and for CS 25, the final project was a film."

The Children's Art Workshop at the DAI is based on the remarkable al-Fann exhibition at the American University of Kuwait. The exhibition is a rich mosaic representing a wide range of representative examples of Islamic art spanning from Spain to China. "al-Fann: Art from the Islamic Civilization", from the al-Sabah Collection, includes 200 objects presented in two primary themes.

The section 'Origins of Islamic Art' displays objects in chronological order, from the 7th century CE through the 16th century CE, including the Ottomans, the Safavids in Iran and the Mughals in the Indian subcontinent. The second theme shifts the focus to the four dominant motifs in Islamic art: calligraphy,

arabesque, figurative and repeating geometric patterns.

Renaissance

Ibn Battuta is a renaissance character in Islamic history and culture. He combines in himself the best of the golden age of Islamic culture. Ibn Battuta journeyed through the lands featured in the al-Fann and learned about their history, art and culture. "By bringing his story to life as a film, we attempt to help the children comprehend the al-Fann exhibition," explains Maha. "It helped the children construct meaning about the Islamic lands, their connections, their roads, their people and their objects as represented in the al-Fann exhibition.

The cultural exercise began with reading rehearsals that questioned the words of the story and their meanings, the emotion, the shifts between loneliness and triumphs and research into life in the 14th century. "It was a great deal of work because although all the lands were Islamic, they were so distinctive from one another, different and individualistic. Therefore the research had to be a group effort."

"Once the research was done, the production began inspired by 'The Adventures of Prince Achmed, 1926' to present the story through shadows, where these ancient cit-

ies are brought to life in an abstract silhouette format, which would solidify the construction of meaning in the children's minds and allow all of them the chance to be the main character," explains Maha. But the project came to a sudden stop due to the pandemic for seven months until filmmaker Zainab Al Baqshi came up with a solution.

Exhibition

Zainab Al Baqshi is a young creative whose involvement with the DAI began in 2019 when she shot a

film for the mirrored nature exhibition. She conceptualised, directed and shot the two short films centred on the Children's Art Workshop titled, 'The Making of the Journey' and 'The Journey of Ibn Battuta.' The films are sleek and well-edited, and they reflect the spirit of the workshop, which encourages learning, creative thinking and assimilation. They also capture the unexpected creative journey brought on by the pandemic. "It was interesting to be able to document this workshop and watch the

children as they grow creatively and to see how the entire project unfolds and where their hard work takes them," says Zainab of her experience. Speaking of working with the children, she says, "This is my second time working with the children. And with every session, I am amazed at how talented and creative they are! It's been an eye-opening experience, and it's always fun to work with them."

The pandemic changed the dynamics of the entire team. It delayed the project for a year. "We weren't sure we would ever come back!" says Zainab.

"I got frustrated at first because everyone worked hard on this project, and we were so close to the finish line! After a few months in lockdown, I reached out to Maha Al Essa to find a way to make it happen. We discussed how we would go about creating this film in the safest way possible. And that's when she had her meetings with the children through zoom to discuss how we would shoot and revise and discuss Ibn Battuta's story. And after a while, we agreed that we're going to create the story and film the children at Yarmouk Cultural Centre with social distancing, and we ended up with a product that we are happy with and proud of."



Maha Al Essa and Zainab Al Baqshi