



Arabic Calligraphy And The Deepening Of National Identity In Saudi Plastic Works

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Abstract

The research deals with a discussion of an important aspect, which is the Arabic calligraphy and how to consolidate it through the Saudi plastic arts in order to deepen the national identity as one of its cultural symbols. Also, the research discusses some provisions of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which focuses on the need to preserve the Saudi identity and highlight it in various sectors, and consider Arabic calligraphy as one of its cultural legacies that must be preserved and highlighted in various fields, through the Ministry of Culture launching its vision in promoting the sectors of culture in its various arts and fields and highlighting the Arabic calligraphy as one of the symbols of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2021.

The research also presents the works of some Saudi artists and how they dealt with Arabic calligraphy in their works, in a way that reflects the Kingdom's culture in a contemporary artistic style. The researcher made applications of Arabic calligraphy in plastic art on master degree students in the Department of Art Education and presented their works and discussed them, and the researcher reached the following results:

- 1- Preserving the national identity is an important pillar of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, and every citizen can participate effectively in achieving its goals.
- 2- The plastic arts are an active field in achieving the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, focused on this research in showing Arabic calligraphy as one of the elements of preserving national identity.
- 3- The Arabic calligraphy can be one of the symbols of the Kingdom cultural identity.

Through practical experiment and by asking the students, it was found that the experiment benefited in consolidating citizenship and belonging, and gave the students multiple ideas to participate in plastic art in achieving national identity through Arabic calligraphy in various fine schools; and They have proposed many constructive ideas which are a new core for new research in this regard.

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Keywords: calligraphy - Arabic – national identity - plastic works - Saudi Arabia.

Research background:

Arabic calligraphy is one of the most prominent fine arts that characterized the Arab and Islamic culture, and it has become an original art of importance among the arts. Calligraphy has a vital role and a profound impact on understanding, knowledge, embodiment of ideas, and highlighting feelings.

Arabic calligraphy was distinguished as an art of originality, as it stems from a purely Arab spirit, this spirit that was strengthened when it was associated with the Holy Qur'an, and Muslims admired it, and the matter did not stop at this point, but rather became related to the aesthetic, emotional and religious aspect.

Arabic calligraphy is a mirror that reflects originality and Arabism, and even Islam. The ancient, due to the importance of Arabic calligraphy and its close contact with the Arabic language, and its history and aesthetics in its architecture, details and forms, which highlight a creative cultural stock that reflects the richness of Arab culture.

Preserving the Saudi identity and highlighting it in various sectors is an important requirement for every Saudi citizen, as confirmed by the Kingdom's Vision 2030, and through the Ministry of Culture launching its vision to advance the sectors of culture in its various arts and fields and highlighting the Arabic calligraphy as a symbol of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the year 2021, the researcher sought to Employing this symbol in this study by linking it to this symbol in the most prominent areas and interests of the Ministry of Culture, which is the field of plastic photography.

Research problem:

Arabic calligraphy is distinguished by a special taste that reflects the culture of society, its originality and Arabism, especially the Islamic religion. To research and include the national identity within it, and therefore the researcher sees the importance of Arabic calligraphy in consolidating this unique relationship between the plastic arts based on the expression of Arabic calligraphy and how this is an important element in deepening the national identity. The research problem is summarized in the following question:

Is it possible for Arabic calligraphy to contribute to deepening national identity in Saudi plastic arts?

Research importance:

1. Presenting the implications of the aesthetic values of Arabic calligraphy and its connection with the cultural influences of the members of society.
2. Emphasis on national identity as one of the important concepts presented by the plastic arts.
3. Enriching the Arabic library with a conceptual language on national identity and the importance of deepening it in various fields.

Research aims:

1. Monitoring the most prominent Saudi artworks that deepen the national identity through Arabic calligraphy.
2. To highlight the aesthetic elements that characterize the Arabic calligraphy.
3. Reaching the technical and objective features of Arabic calligraphy that reflect its connection to the national identity.
4. Identifying the most important objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

Research hypotheses:

It is possible to deepen the national identity by using Arabic calligraphy in the Saudi plastic arts

Research limits:

Objective limits: The research is limited to studying a selection of plastic art solutions for Arabic calligraphy in order to deepen the national identity.

Spatial limits: Saudi Arabia.

Time limits: the year 1443 AH.

Research Methodology:

This research follows the descriptive analytical approach in studying the plastic arts and their role in deepening national identity through Arabic calligraphy

Research terms:

Calligraphy:

Arabic calligraphy is the forms of Arabic letters of writing that appear in a beautiful and organized form, and were previously called pens, and are subject to rules and geometric proportions that the calligrapher adheres to, and there are many types, including (Kufi, Naskh, Thuluth, Commentary, Diwani, and Raq'ah) (Ezzedine, 2017: 255)

Fine Arts:

Works of art include more than what matters to the eye and more than can be explained by description, at the level of direct vision. There is also the figurative-symbolic level, in which the viewer promises to find what to complete his fragmented life. Attia (2007)

National Identity:

The concept of identity, belonging and citizenship behavior are essential elements of national identity, in which social relations, psychological needs of affection and love, and psychological and educational security play an important role in its formation, specifically in light of globalization and the accompanying contemporary technological and cognitive changes. (Abdullah, 2018)

First, the theoretical framework:

Calligraphy:

Arabic calligraphy is one of the most fertile fields of inspiration and creativity in Islamic arts, and it has become a science that possesses rules and assets, and the Arabic calligraphy artist has the method of using the Arabic letter in decoration and various artistic crafts, and Arabic calligraphy has become important in the basis of modern arts. (Al-Muqrin and Al-Qahtani, 2020: 50)

The functional dimension of Arabic calligraphy also expresses the principle of codification and documentation, for the purpose of exchange between individuals and groups, survival of time and achieving communication, across generations, and this is an essential task for any writing. This allows the writing to be easily and easily understood

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without ambiguity, ambiguity, correction or distortion. However, the art of Arabic calligraphy witnessed major gradations and transformations in its evolutionary path until types of fonts appeared with multiple aesthetic rules and controls, in order to generate an appearance or an aesthetic dimension with a distinctive and clearly defined feature. And civil, and in movable antiques of all kinds, where they perform decorative purposes, along with geometric, plant and architectural decorations. (Izz al-Din, 2017: 258)

Ezz El-Din (2017) mentions about Al-Husseini: The art of Arabic calligraphy is an independent art that has an aesthetic starting point, governed by its characteristics, methods, and paths. The Arabic calligraphy was distinguished as an art of originality, that is, it stemmed from an Arab spirit that purified it and developed, preserving its Arab characteristics away from foreign influences, especially when it was associated with the Holy Qur'an, and then Muslims admired it and their admiration for it did not stop at this point. Rather, it became related to the aesthetic, emotional, religious aspect. The effect of this is clearly evident in its connection with Islamic decoration with the units of Arabic calligraphy (259).

And Arabic calligraphy depends artistically and aesthetically on special rules that stem from the proportionality between the line, the point and the circle, and it uses in its technical performance the same elements that we see in other plastic arts, such as line and mass, not only in its moving sense physically, but in its aesthetic sense that produces a self-movement that makes the line flounder in luster My aesthetic is independent of its contents, and linked with it at the same time. (Abu Eisha, 2017, pg.5)

Al-Muqrin and Al-Qahtani mentioned on the authority of Nakhla and Abdel-Fattah (2020): Among the characteristics of Arabic calligraphy:

1. Compressive capacity: It is the ability to shrink in size or all parts to each other.
2. Al-Zawiyah: It is the ability of letters to be written in geometric shapes such as squares and rectangles. It appears in Kufic script.
3. Interlacing and overlapping: It is the interlacing and braiding of letters to become the form of clasps, as in the signature line.
4. Multiple form of one letter: It is the repetition of one letter and the formation of an aesthetic form.

5. Modifiability: It is a property that means substitution and change in the familiar shapes of letters, so the versatility of these letters and the possibility of drawing and formulating them in other forms of geometry.
6. Movement: Arabic letters and their parts as straight and soft abstract lines, horizontal and vertical or arched and oblique, and the overlapping of these letters and the systems of their connection and separation give the impression of movement.
7. Ajam: It is the addition of dots to letters to distinguish similar letters from one another with the aim of correct reading.
8. Tashkeel: It is the appending of the diacritical marks to the letters for the purpose of correct reading and keeping away from incorrect reading.
9. Whiteness: Calligraphy is generally described with quality and beauty if its eyes (the eye and the gin) are opened, which are the spaces of space in the white letters that leave its mark after writing as the letter (waw - mim - fa - qaf - sad).
10. Filling the void: After knowing the characteristics of Arabic calligraphy, its volatility, its components and its aesthetic capabilities, it is necessary to fill the void and move the line easily and fill the spaces aesthetically (53).

The characteristic that placed Arabic calligraphy in the ranks of the plastic arts and deepened its aesthetic and artistic purposes in addition to its functional dimension is the characteristic of composition and linear composition. These inscriptions accommodate a larger number of texts if they are measured by the single inscriptions above the line” (Izz al-Din, 2017: 259).

As Ezz El-Din (2017) mentioned about Ismail: Formation in Arabic calligraphy is one of the important and prominent characteristics in it, which gave it flexibility and wide ability to form, diversity and creativity, and established the concept of form and its expressive and semantic dimensions derived from the linguistic text, as it solved the problems of the formal organization of letters and words. It is easy to create innovative written forms (259).

National identity and Arabic calligraphy:

The upbringing of a person is not just about providing him with an abundance of knowledge, but rather it requires providing him with a value system that contributes to building a conscience that directs his behavior and controls his behavior, to achieve social affiliation and affiliation with the Indian nation (200).

Citizenship may take many forms according to the nature of each era and its variables. Citizenship in the context of globalization and the industrial revolution included the quest to build a global citizen that adheres to universal human values (Al-Dahbhan 2015).

All of these values are considered part of the activation of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which states the importance of preserving the country's cultural heritage and deepening the national identity through it.

From this point of view, the Saudi Ministry of Culture, during its adoption of the year of Arabic Calligraphy 2021, worked to enhance the presence of Arabic calligraphy in all governmental and private sectors and individuals, in addition to its presence in local and international forums and conferences, and to enhance the knowledge and educational role that the ministry adopts in its activities during this year. With this initiative, the Ministry will open new horizons in dealing with Arabic calligraphy. And that is by transferring it from a source of knowledge to an icon that represents the Saudi identity, renewed art, and cultural heritage. (Initiative of the year of Arabic calligraphy).

Among the most important objectives of the initiative of the Year of Arabic Calligraphy, which were clarified by the Ministry :

-To highlight the art of Arabic calligraphy as an art in its own right, in a way that reflects the richness of Arab culture.

Presenting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an incubator for Arabic calligraphy, a sponsor of it, and a pioneer in supporting it.

Spreading the culture of using Arabic calligraphy among young people.

- Unifying the efforts of the concerned sectors and individual initiatives that seek to preserve the art of Arabic calligraphy and protect it from extinction. (Initiative of the year of Arabic calligraphy)

The formation of the national identity as an affiliation between thought, existence, and affiliation education in light of contemporary changes, requires cooperation between the institutions of socialization, considering that education is a continuous process, and contemporary trends must be adopted in: educational methods, curricula, and modern teaching method, such as blended education, since it stresses On the development of creative (or divergent) thinking, an active mind, and cooperative learning (Abdullah, 2018).

Classroom and extra-curricular activities, and cultural, sports, social, artistic and aesthetic activities, play an important role in the growth of the national character. Moreover, the growth of the individual's personality is an integrated whole, as education is a continuous process, and the mechanisms that shape it are multiple, and characterized by dynamism or creative development, and the essence of national identity is national affiliation with its three components: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Hassan. 2007).

Plastic Arts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:

The plastic art in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is more than half a century old, was able at this stage to innovate and fly away, and witness many of the tremendous developments that affected it, until it became replete with exquisite artistic methods, reflecting the modern spirit, and in harmony with the contemporary art movements in The world, and is deeply connected in its features and visions with the most important international art schools (Al-Ghamdi, 1441), and perhaps one of the main reasons for the development of the plastic movement in the Kingdom is to send a group of students and teachers to the cities and capitals of the world to study in general and the arts in particular and to see everything that is New in this field. In order for artists not to deviate from the original path of the arts, and in light of this new current cultural climate, which is mainly characterized by a focus on the production of knowledge and the type of systems of thought, a call must be made to motivate Saudi creators to continue the path of pioneers in the early twentieth century and to increase the number of Saudi works that depend on the Saudi heritage to confirm identity Patriotism, which is one of the pillars of Vision 2030, to preserve the cultural heritage and put it in a contemporary art form and confront the current that promotes Western currents.

The plastic art is one of the fields that have a distinct role in achieving the vision of the Kingdom in a cultural and developmental framework, where the plastic artist reflects the culture of his homeland through his artistic concept, which in turn interacts with the community and contributes to the development of his conscience.

Arabic Calligraphy in Saudi Plastic Arts:

Examples of Saudi artists who have dealt with Arabic calligraphy in their artwork are the artist Abdel Nasser Gharem, who is one of the most important artists in the Arab Gulf region.

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Gharem has a conceptual artistic style fraught with high symbolism, which makes the viewer think, meditate, and guess the meaning, as in the “Message and Messenger” coin Figure -2- In this coin, Gharem employed Arabic calligraphy in a creative and elaborate way, such as engraving on stone. Quranic and other Arabic writings that made his inspiration prove and define his Saudi national identity.



Figure -2- Abdel Nasser Gharem - Work (Risala wa Rasoul)

As for the Saudi artist, Ahmed Mater, a plastic artist and doctor who combined the two skills to bring us works and a very deep thought, expressing his paintings with different styles and techniques related to his Islamic identity, Arab culture and Saudi nationality. A plastic artist and a doctor who combined the two skills to bring us works and a very deep thought, expressing his paintings with different methods and techniques related to his Islamic identity, Arab culture and Saudi nationality.

They were asked by Arabic calligraphy in his contemporary works in an original way, as in his work (Rays) Figure -3- in which the strength of calligraphy, color and work becomes clear, through the use of Arabic calligraphy with a bold expressive power that astonished everyone and gave his work a beauty and a unique meaning, he used in his work extracted natural colors From his Saudi environment, such as coffee, saffron, turmeric, and pomegranate, and others, as if they are integrated into one system to deepen the national identity in the eye of the recipient and make the Arabic calligraphy a symbol of citizenship.

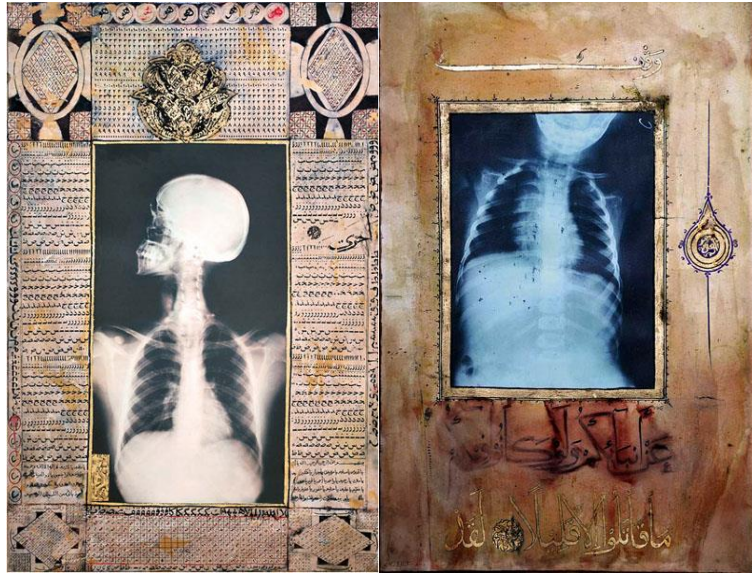


Figure -3- Artist Ahmed Mater- Work (Radiation)

As for the artist, Saknah Hassan, she is a Saudi artist from Qatif. She has talent and deep thought. Most of her works are digital, oily, inspired by the beautiful national heritage elements that will deepen the national identity, such as the Saudi woman in her popular dress and veil. Her works are rich in authentic heritage details. The "Musnad" line in these works in order to deepen the national identity with other heritage symbols in an aesthetic way and creative formulation striking in its works Figure -4-.

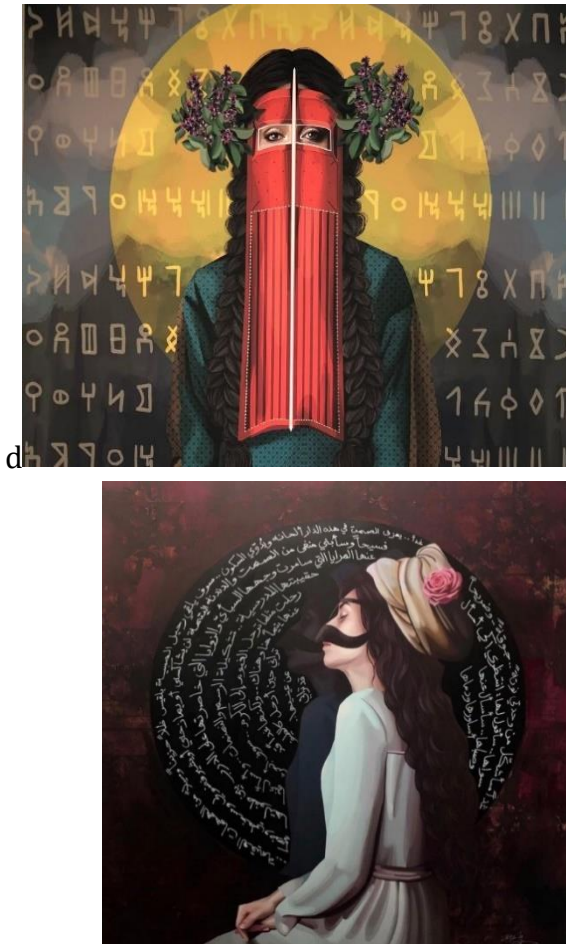


Figure -4- Artist Saknah Hassan (multiple works using the ancient Thamudian script and modern Arabic calligraphy)

As for the artist, Zaman Jassem, he is an artist who always seeks to develop himself. He considers that everything familiar is expired, as he is always looking for new and advanced. Zaman believes that art, like other sciences, cannot develop and move without knowledge. Being an artist who adheres to his Arab identity, he says, "If identity has no place in our artistic production, so I try through my experiences to communicate this aspect, so that the identity does not become alienated and becomes a purely passing experience".

We see in Jassim's work that there is a clear inspiration for the Arabic calligraphy above it in a contemporary conceptual way. In his work (the other) figure -5- he collected a number of satellite dishes that broadcast foreign channels and engraved and engraved on them words in Arabic calligraphy in a creative and beautiful way in an attempt to deepen the identity Nationalism, no matter how advanced and westernized it is, and the transmission of the cultural heritage of the homeland to other countries, as transmitted by satellites.

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Figure -5- Artist Zaman Jassem and his work (The Other)

Practical experience:

The researcher conducted a practical experiment on Master of Art Education students in the drawing and plastic arts course in 2021 AD. The topic of national identity and how to preserve it through Arabic calligraphy was discussed, and how to achieve this through the plastic arts. The practical results were as follows:

First work:

It represents the method of forming the painting and its schematic drawing, and the figure shows how the student was able to identify the important elements of the artwork and collect them in one frame focusing on the most important elements of the authentic Saudi Arabian culture, the purebred Arabian horse, in addition to another symbol of the Arab culture, which is the Arabic calligraphy that wraps around the horse element. It is intertwined with him in an authentic professional artistic way that documents authenticity and heritage in a contemporary way, and the work is characterized by a color and formal diversity that expresses the Saudi national identity Figure-6-.



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Figure -6- An oil composition for the student (Naqaa al-Nasr) showing how to focus on a symbol of Saudi culture, the purebred Arabian horse, in addition to letters from the Arabic calligraphy.

Second work:

It represents a panel divided into three parts dealing with the element of the Saudi woman in her popular dress (Al-Shalki), which is famous in the Najd region, with some elements of Saudi heritage such as the palm tree and traditional inscriptions, as well as the addition of Arabic calligraphy as a ribbon that combines the three panels in one work, so that the linear element overlaps with other elements of culture and heritage in one fabric. The student paid attention to the color in the shape and the floor in order to reflect the general taste of the painting, as well as the fine details of the inscription on the canvas (Fig. -7-).



Figure -7- shows the work of the student (Haifa Al-Haqbani) for the interactions of Arabic calligraphy with other elements of the Saudi heritage using oil-colour painting.

Third work:

It represents another direction of the plastic work, which focuses on the identity of the Arabic calligraphy logo adopted by the Ministry of Culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In our daily life, despite the openness we live in, it gives an indication of the deepening of the cultural heritage and its preservation with the current contemporary figure -8-.



Figure -8- The work of the student (Hajar Al-Asim), in which the identity of the Arabic calligraphy was combined with the dress of contemporary women and gives an indication that it is possible to deepen the national identity in the features of modern contemporary.

Fourth work:

The student, in Figure -9-, made a composite artwork consisting of drums of different sizes, drawing and forming the identity of the Arabic calligraphy that was adopted and launched by the Saudi Ministry of Culture for the year 2021 with its different colors and forms, and the student relied on choosing her idea on an important element of the artistic heritage culture in the Kingdom The Saudi Arabian drum, which has been famous since ancient times as a symbol of music and art, is considered a heritage of poetry that is still used in various forums. These drums also included another important element, which is the Arabic calligraphy with its identity, which was launched and adopted by the Ministry of Culture.

Its artistic work included two important elements of the Saudi national identity, namely preserving On the popular heritage and cultural heritage in a contemporary way, the contemporary style of abstract formation, but the formulation of the elements added a touch that emphasizes the national identity under study.

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Figure -9- The work of the student (Mona Al-Mutairi) in a contemporary abstract image of Arabic calligraphy with one of the symbols of the authentic heritage, the drum.

Fifth work:

The student, in Figure -10-, has done an artwork using oil colors, which is a woman with her well-known Saudi features, black hair, traditional dress (Al-Shalki), and the golden hamma that covers the top of the head, in addition to some Arabic fonts in the background, which embodies the cultural link and national identity between Saudi women, folklore and calligraphy Arabic.



Figure -10- The work of the student (Haya Al-Amira) oil colors embodying the national identity of the empowered Saudi woman in her traditional dress and Arabic calligraphy.

Results:

It is clear from the theoretical study of the research and by looking at the Kingdom's vision 2030, the following results:

1. Preserving the national identity is an important axis of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, and every citizen can participate effectively in achieving its goals.
2. The plastic arts are an active field in achieving these goals, which is concentrated in the current research in highlighting the Arabic calligraphy as one of the elements of preserving the national identity.
3. Arabic calligraphy can keep pace with the times and openness and present it in a contemporary artistic way that would deepen the cultural identity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

As for the practical experience and by asking the students, it was found that the experience benefited in consolidating citizenship and belonging and gave the students multiple ideas to participate in plastic art of its various types and to study it in achieving national identity through Arabic calligraphy.

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