

Fusion calligraphy

Former Dhahran resident's art blends East, West

JRVINE, California — Kinda Hibrawi, a young Arab-American artist of Syrian descent who grew up in Saudi Arabia, including 10 years in Dhahran, is making a name for herself in California's hothouse fine-arts world.

Her artwork, which gives Arabic calligraphy a modernist twist, has received critical acclaim at solo and group exhibitions throughout California. She is currently working on paintings for a show in June 2006 that were inspired by a trip to the Greek island of Santorini.

Born in Riyadh in 1978, Hibrawi said she spent her formative years in the Mideast, where her artistic sensibility developed. She said she feels a fundamental need for her artwork "to reflect the richness of the Middle East's Arab character coupled with Western diversity." As a child, she lived in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and the United States.

All her siblings also had a Middle Eastern upbringing. Hibrawi's father, Khalouk Hibrawi, worked for Saudi Aramco from 1979 until he retired in 2000, except for a one-year hiatus from 1987-88, and ended up in the company's Government Affairs organization. The family moved to Dhahran from Riyadh in 1985, and all of the Hibrawi children attended Dhahran schools.

Hibrawi said the Dhahran community offered a wide array of artistic opportunities — in school and out — when she was growing up, and that her art teachers were always

encouraging and motivating. "The facilities for art programs throughout Saudi Aramco were amazing," she said. "And I could often be found molding clay on one of the many pottery wheels." She said she begged her parents to enroll her in every after-school art class they could.

It was at the Saudi Aramco health center in Dhahran that she first saw the artwork of Tunisian calligrapher Lassaad Metoui, who interprets in paintings the poetry of Khalil Gibran. Metoui's prints were displayed in patient waiting rooms.

"He is the artist who inspired me to pursue Arabic calligraphy," Hibrawi said. "His work speaks to a generation of Arabs who have been influenced by different cultures and traditions."

After graduating from Dhahran School, Hibrawi attended high school in Bahrain for three years, and then completed her senior year at The

Williston Northampton School in Easthampton, Massachusetts, in the United States. "My art instructor there, Marcia Reed, became a mentor who greatly influenced my art," she said. "She pushed me to reach my potential and



^ A stylized self-portrait of California artist Kinda Hibrawi, who grew up in Saudi Arabia.

> Hibrawi's colorful, vibrant artwork fuses the traditional calligraphy form with modern themes and styles. Her intricate paintings generally have simple, often one-word, titles, such as "Eternity," "Wisdom," "The Delivery of Good News" or "The Eye is the Window to the Heart."





taught me about painting techniques and composition. I had my first exhibition at the school when I was 18.”

Hibrawi spent her freshman year of college in Beirut, Lebanon, and then moved to southern California in 1998, where she enrolled at California State University at Fullerton, majoring in illustration and graphic design. After graduation, she worked as a graphic/web designer for a computer sales/distribution company, and in 2004, with a partner started the commercial art business My Popart, LLC. My Popart (www.mypopart.com) specializes in creating affordable, personalized fine art and prints for the home and office.

Hibrawi’s personal artwork is on display at her web site, www.kindahibrawi.com. Her

paintings range in size from 30 by 40 inches to 48 by 72 inches, and larger. “I work on the floor and move round the painting to paint, almost like a dance,” Hibrawi said. “I find that moving around the painting allows me to connect to the overall piece better.”

She is currently represented by the Chiarini Gallery in Santa Ana, California. ■

^ This Hibrawi painting, acrylic on canvas, is titled *Al-Khuloud*, the Arabic word for “Eternity.” The colorful, vibrant piece is named after Hibrawi’s mother, whose first name is Khuloud, and measures 30 by 40 inches.

< This snapshot shows Hibrawi as a child, second from right in front, participating in a grade school performance in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

