

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF ART EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA
WITHIN HIGH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF ART EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA WITHIN HIGH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Dina Abdelhamid Lutfi

This dissertation focuses on understanding how art education is structured within high schools and colleges of Saudi Arabia, and investigates why educational institutions are focused on traditional art. While contemporary art is not a part of curriculums in high schools and colleges, in fact, practicing artists produce both traditional and contemporary artwork outside of educational institutions. The dissertation points to a disconnect between how art education is structured and perceived within educational institutions and how students learn and perceive art and art making during their transition from high school art to college art, and later as practicing artists.

Interviews, observations, and document analysis illuminate how administrators, art educators, students, and artists perceive art and art making. Findings uncovered two main categories influencing the status quo: institutional dynamics and social dynamics. The art education system in Saudi Arabia is influenced by what is culturally acceptable, at the high school and college level. There is, however, a difference in terms of the liberty

students are provided depending on their educational level. Practicing artists in Saudi Arabia also discuss the difficulties they face as a result of making contemporary art. The lack of knowledge about contemporary art has made it challenging to find supportive audiences in Saudi communities because of their ignorance about contemporary art and the availability of new media to inform them. Social dynamics such as religion, tradition, and gender are critical underlying factors directly linked to institutional structuring of art education. The findings in this study also reveal how older practices relating to arts and crafts are considered to represent ideal and acceptable art forms.

Discussion and educational implications point to institutional and social dynamics at play, which hinder the progress of art education inside and outside of educational institutions. I recommend that change could take place gradually to improve the outlook on art education. Taking steps, such as educating individuals at the administrative level about contemporary art, ensuring educators possess proper qualifications to teach different forms of art, and considering the age group of students may go a long way in improving the value of art in Saudi society.

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DEDICATION

*To my mother, Professor Maha Abdel Hadi,
and my father, Professor Abdel Hamid Lutfi for their endless love, support, and
encouragement throughout my life.*

*To my inspirational siblings; my big sister, Rania Lutfi, and big brother, Hadi Lutfi,
for their wisdom, kindness, and care.*

Thank you for believing in me.

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Onward,
D.L.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

My desire to focus on art education in the Arab region has emerged from my own experiences and observations as a student. I grew up in Saudi Arabia, in a conservative society where I completed my K-12 education. Throughout my education, art classes were centered on the same things: to make something that was beautiful, not to draw any living things, and to use drawing or painting as the usual methods for making art. My understanding of art and art making was very limited earlier on in my education. At school, I learned that if you wanted to make art, it had to be something “girly” or “traditional.” In my art classes, we were told to make art from memory and to also draw inspiration from Islamic architecture, Arabian jewelry, and nature to create art. I was not exposed to art history, any artists, or famous works of art until I traveled abroad and visited museums, and then later on at the college level.

During my first year as an undergraduate visual arts student in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), I was introduced to the history of Western art among other art classes; it provided me with an abundance of knowledge about artists, different forms of art, and what it meant to the world. But there was a burning question in my mind, “Where does contemporary Arab art fit into our education?” Throughout my undergraduate years in the

UAE, I learned about Western art and art making techniques, from Western professors, but I did not learn anything about Arab art or artists. There were no Arab art educators in my program, and no art educators from other parts of the world who had an interest in teaching art from the Arab region. From my perspective, within educational institutions, there seemed to be no sign of modern or contemporary Arab art.¹ It has become apparent to me that there is a disjuncture between Arab societies and newer forms of Arab art inside and outside of educational institutions.



Figure 1. An example the use of Islamic Art (calligraphy), which is also considered a traditional art form: The *kiswa* (fabric that covers the Ka'bah in Makkah) being sewn with holy excerpts from the Qur'an with the use of silver threads covered in gold.

It is important to understand that there are distinctions between the different types of art that exist within Arab countries, and Saudi Arabia specifically. Islamic art is described as the visual arts produced since the 7th century, the genesis of Islam, and created by people who lived within the lands dominated by Islamic populations.

¹ Although modern and contemporary art are situated in different time periods, both of the terms are used. Modern Arab art is mentioned in the problem statement and literature review because it paved the way for contemporary Arab art. Additionally, it is also mentioned because as a history, it is not taught in educational institutions in the Arab world. The study itself, however, will focus on contemporary art and artists in Saudi Arabia.

Traditional art is also seen as a form of Islamic art, since its distinctive characteristics are originally heavily based on calligraphy in fear of depicting the human form as being idolatry. In more contemporary times, it also includes the depiction of landscapes, Arabian scenery, jewelery, and it continues to shy away from figurative portrayals (Ali, 1997).



Figure 2. An example of Saudi modern art by pioneer female artist Safeya Binzagr, 1975, *A Scene of Dancing Saudi Women in Their Traditional Dresses*, 100 x 70 cm.

Modern Arab art is a movement that began in the 19th and 20th centuries. It reached countries in Africa before the Arabian Peninsula. Most modern Arab art movements began by mimicking Western art and techniques. Although there is no fixed definition for these newer forms of art, it is generally characterized by using new forms of media, commonly believed to be borrowed from the West, to create art that is Arab conceptually and thematically (Figure 2). Most Arab countries identify with a contemporary movement in Arab art that began twenty to thirty years ago, depending on the geographical location in the Arab world. Most Arab art historians agree that what

characterizes contemporary art is the use of new media to create art that is inherently Arab in its content and speaks to contemporary Arab experiences (Shabout, 2010).

Within K-12 schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia, the teaching of art focuses more on traditional art making conceptually and technically. At the college level, art programs are dedicated to teaching traditional and Islamic art. Within these institutions, traditional and Islamic art are studied from an historical rather than an analytical perspective, and little attention is given to new trends in art or its contributions to regional and international aesthetics (Shabout, 2007). K-12 schools in Saudi Arabia are facing a similar predicament; the majority of schools are focused on teaching traditional arts and crafts, or using drawing and painting to create artworks that are nationalistic or patriotic. In other instances, students are asked to create specific landscapes or to use memory to make a beautiful piece of artwork. In the late 1960s, the Ministry of Education started issuing guidelines for schools and colleges to follow. The guidelines instruct art educators to plan lessons based on nature, places, and objects. It is common for art teachers in schools to ask their students to specifically make a certain drawing or painting, without giving them much choice to be individually expressive in their art making (A. Eissa, personal communication, July 10, 2015). These guides are usually followed meticulously in K-12 schools, and more loosely at the college level where students have more freedom to choose their subject matter and may even incorporate the portrayal of figures in their art making.

Since the 1990s, there has been a change in terms of the degrees educators must hold. In the past, art teachers at the high school level were not required to hold a college degree in art or art education; it was simply enough to undergo a few months of training

at an art institute, and some had no training whatsoever. Today, art teachers are required to have a Bachelor's degree to teach in high schools. In colleges, art educators are required to hold a Bachelor's degree, and preferably a Master's degree in some form of visual art (A. Eissa, personal communication, February 13, 2017). These changes in the educational system are beneficial on the surface; however, there is only one university in Saudi Arabia that actually offers Master's and Doctoral degrees in art and art education, which limits the possibilities of earning such a degree locally. Consequently, the different educational experiences and working environments of high school and college art educators may influence the ways in which they teach art to their students, and the ways in which they perceive art themselves. Also, if there are no breadth classes in colleges that expose students to a range of art, artists, art criticism, or art theory; what are art students learning about art?



Figure 3. A female traditional Saudi patterns painter from Asir Province painting a door.

The segregation of students by gender in schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia also has an influence on how males and females are taught. When thinking about visual art, what comes to mind is the participation of males and females in the arts. In Saudi Arabia, however, art programs in higher learning are available to women only with the exception of one university that houses a college of art that was established initially for men due to a shortage of art teachers for boys K-12 schools. The art program was later expanded to accommodate women to meet a similar need in girls K-12 schools. The program offers students an education centered on working with different media in addition to preparing them to teach students. The only programs offered in other universities, to males, which relate to visual art, are degree programs in architecture. This problem also influences how practicing artists are educated. Within K-12 schools, boys are offered art classes until the 7th grade, and subjects that are considered more appropriate for males later replace art classes. Within girls K-12 schools, most high schools offer art classes to females until the 11th grade, while others only offer art classes until the 10th grade (H. Hani, personal communication, June 6, 2015). This poses the question of how students make the transition from high school art to college art, given that there is a gap between their sophomore year in high school and their freshman year in college.

The educational institutions in Saudi Arabia that I refer to in this study are K-12 schools and colleges. This study will, however, focus on high schools in relation to K-12 education, and colleges of art specifically. These institutions are defined by the Ministry of Education as significant for providing educational environments within the framework of the Saudi Arabian education policy; they are structured to prompt the quality of

education outcomes, increase the effectiveness of scientific research, encourage creativity and innovation, and develop communities through a cultural and national identity.

Through K-12 schools and colleges, the Ministry aims to create an educational system that builds a globally competitive knowledge-based Community. The gender-segregation within educational institutions becomes more prominent at the college level; not only are males and females segregated physically, but there is a separation in what the Ministry of Education deems appropriate for males and females to pursue educationally, and eventually, professionally. In reality, the numbers of institutions that cater to women's art education clearly outnumber the men's, which also explains the large number of emerging female artists in the country.



Figure 4. Manal Al Dowayan, *Gold Chains*, 2009. Silver gelatin fibre print, 51 x 41 cm.

This issue also sheds light on the large number of self-taught male artists in both traditional and contemporary arts. Additionally, the lack of available institutions for men has led many artists to undergo their education abroad, mostly in the West, which may influence their art making and the way it is received by Saudi Arabian audiences when they return home. Females also pursue art education abroad but for different reasons, such as pursuing a graduate degree in a particular form of visual art that may not be offered in Saudi Arabia (L. Harbi, personal communication, October 3, 2015).



Figure 5. Manal Al Dowayan, 2006, *I am an Educator*, silver gelatin fiber print, 41x51cm

Outside of educational institutions in the last decade, there has been a boom of contemporary Saudi artists focusing on using new media to create art that is rooted in current events but still relate to an Arab identity with the use of elements, such as, Arabic calligraphy and jewelry; an example of this is Manal Al-Dowayan's photographs about women's rights to an education (Figure 4). That is not to say there were no contemporary artists twenty or thirty years ago. In the 1950s many male artists studied art abroad in the West and returned to Saudi Arabia to become practicing artists. It was not common for

women to travel in pursuit of education because it was not deemed culturally appropriate. Traditional artists have been on the art scene longer, and are more focused on Arabic calligraphy and landscapes (S. Mazen, personal communication, August 4, 2015). In contemporary times many of the aspiring traditional and contemporary male artists continue to seek art education abroad or are self-taught, while the female aspiring artists have more opportunities to attend art colleges in the country.



Figure 6. Abdunnasser Gharem, 2007, Portrait of the Artist from the performance *Flora and Fauna*, digital print, 60cm x 85cm.

The issue of how contemporary and traditional art intersect outside of educational institutions is one worth investigating because it will illuminate how educational experiences influence artistic practices and perceptions about art; through exploring what type of educational experiences have led artists to pursue a particular type of art making, given that schools and colleges seem to be providing students with an art education that may not necessarily connect to the art being produced by artists working in the public sphere, more specifically, with the contemporary art that is being made.

Many Saudi contemporary artists see their artwork as a platform through which to initiate a conversation about the social, religious and political systems in place. The male artist, Abdunnasser Gharem, 2007 performance *Flora and Fauna*, started a dialogue about the environment as the artist walked the streets of his village in Saudi Arabia with a plastic sheet over his body, only receiving oxygen from a tree that he carried with him.



Figure 7. Njoud AlAnbari, 2015, *Elementary 240*, mixed media.

Njoud AlAnbari, a Saudi female artist also comments on Saudi culture through her artwork. Through a series of photographs titled *Elementary 240*, she discusses how society recycles the same traditional ideals that may be false or do not apply to contemporary times. She examines how the educational system allows for these messages to exist, and considers how their effects influence how people choose to live their lives in Saudi Arabia (Figure 6). Through one of these images, she shows students making a mural with a female authoritative figure, an art educator or another figure of influence, observing the students. She uses elements in the mural that connect to one another; for

example, the female figure is veiled, and the mural suggests in Arabic that a woman's veil represents her honor. There is a contrast in the central images between a veiled woman, and one that is not veiled. The mural uses swords as a warning symbol, and there are instructions scattered across the mural telling females how they should behave; do not do drugs, do not travel abroad, do not watch obscene movies, do not listen to music, do not behave like non-Muslims.

In addition to the art that is created by artists outside of educational institutions, the venues in which they showcase their artwork also play a part in audiences' perceptions of art. There are a growing number of art galleries in Saudi Arabia, roughly sixty of them. However, most of these galleries are privately owned and are not sponsored by the government. The galleries are also mostly centered in Jeddah, a city in the Western Province of Saudi Arabia, which is considered to be the most open-minded part of the country. Although governmental cultural support systems, such as the Ministry of Youth, in Saudi Arabia do exist, and expresses one of its missions as promoting the arts, inside and outside of educational institutions, the fact remains that it promotes art that is traditional and nationalistic (F. Tahlawi, personal communication, September 3, 2015). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia does not have many museums and galleries that would assist in exhibiting new forms of artistic expression to Arab societies. The small number of these establishments exacerbates the problem of Arab people's unfamiliarity with contemporary Arab art (Ali, 1997).

Several studies on contemporary Arab art by Arab art historians and educators conclude that Arabs focus on traditional arts because they do not consider these newer forms of expression to be inherent to Arab cultures due to the fact that many examples of

artworks follow Western techniques (Ali, 1997; Shabout, 2007; Zuhur, 1998). However, other studies have suggested that they are simply not familiar with these new developments in artistic styles and concepts because they have not been exposed to them inside or outside the classroom (Bahnassi, 1980, 1985). Arab Art historian, Afif Bahnassi, blamed the educational systems in the Arab world that have neglected cultural studies and have only recently started translating available texts on Arab and Islamic art. He also attributed the public's disregard for modern and contemporary Arab art to their unfamiliarity with it and its apparent lack of cultural ties to their heritage. In research conducted by art historian and educator, Nada Shabout (2010), she asserts that there is a confusion among many Arab art educators, and Arabs in a larger sense, as they find it difficult to differentiate between Islamic art, traditional art, and Modern and contemporary Arab art.

In light of this unfamiliarity over the years, some scholars such as Bahnassi (1985) view the teaching of contemporary Arab art as an integral part of art education in Arab countries. He also stressed the significance of the ideas that are introduced into contemporary Arab works since they represent many Arab experiences socially, culturally, politically, and religiously. These complex issues concerning art education led me to conduct a pilot study in the summer of 2015 that required permission from the Ministry of Education. It consisted of interviews, field observations, and focus groups. The field observations focused on dialogues between art educators and their students about examples of modern and contemporary Arab art I selected through special approval from the Ministry, and took place with a group of high school students and college students separately. The five sessions at the high school lasted for 40 minutes each, and

the five sessions at the college were also 40 minutes in duration. The non-participant observations did not follow a specific structure. I sat at the back of each art classroom at the high school and university and observed the educators and their students discuss the artworks. The selected artworks were different from the art the students made in their classrooms since they portrayed figures; the images were paintings and photographs. My observations were focused on spoken words, interpretations that emerged, and the students' perceptions. I conducted three focus groups for this study. The first focus group was held with three high school art teachers and three college professors. The purpose of this focus group was to gather additional data to supplement the individual interviews I conducted, and to create a platform between different educators (who are also practicing artists) where they could discuss their perceptions on modern and contemporary Arab art within the context of art education especially in Saudi Arabia. These educators were chosen because they had some knowledge about modern and contemporary Arab art. The second and third focus groups took place with the high school students and the college students separately. They were facilitated so the students could discuss what they had taken away from the dialogues about modern and contemporary Arab art.

Many common themes emerged from the observations, interviews, and focus groups; the majority of participants in this study referred to society, religion, tradition, and gender. After analyzing the findings, it became evident that these are issues that are deeply embedded in the participants' thinking and in Saudi Arabian society. Other themes that emerged focused on art education within schools and colleges, and highlighted important responses that reveal valuable information that goes beyond the scope of only responding to works of art. The data that emerged from the pilot study have

showed that the works of art were viewed as providing new interpretative spaces that can be collective or unique based on a viewer's individual perceptions. Moreover, the artworks in this study also generated responses that allowed participants to make connections with their surroundings and societies, in addition to facilitating social and cultural aesthetic experiences and learning.

Based on the findings of the pilot study, I argue that thoughtful engagement with modern and contemporary Arab art offered these participants opportunities for exchanges that produced new perspectives, seeing their own familiar surroundings anew, and exposure to the array of existing contemporary artwork. The findings of this pilot study suggest that incorporating newer forms of art into the classroom not only expanded students' knowledge about forms of art that were not traditional, but also engaged students to discuss art both formally, conceptually, and offered opportunities for reflecting upon one's own society.

Problem Statement

Given that educational institutions in Saudi Arabia are focused on traditional art, contemporary art is not a part of curricula in high schools and colleges, and that practicing artists produce both traditional and contemporary artwork outside of educational institutions raises the problem of a disconnect between how art education is structured and perceived within institutions and how students learn and perceive art and art making during their transition from high school art to college art, and later on as practicing artists.

Research Questions

Given that teaching of traditional art is dominant in high schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia, and given that artists do make traditional art outside of educational institutions in addition to contemporary art, what are the factors that contribute to creating differences in how art and art making are perceived within educational settings and outside of them?

Specifically:

1. Do high school and college art educators influence their students with their own artistic practices or do they solely follow a set of predetermined guidelines set by the school or Ministry? What criteria determine how art is taught and made within educational institutions?
2. In what ways does art education in high schools and colleges influence students' perceptions about art, and their transition from one level of education to the next?
3. In what ways do practicing contemporary Arab artists in Saudi Arabia differ from traditional artists, who have been actively making art in recent years, in terms of their education and perceptions about art making?

Assumptions

Assumptions Debated

1. Given that art is only taught until middle school within boys' K-12 schools, and in one men's college in Saudi Arabia, and given that girls learn about art until 10th and 11th Grades in high school, and that there are many women's visual art

colleges, I am assuming this accounts for the larger number of female artists and female art educators in the country.

2. Given that there are many art colleges for women and only one art college for men in Saudi Arabia, I am assuming that art and art education is culturally perceived as a career path and profession more suitable for women.
3. Given that schools and colleges are segregated in Saudi Arabia, I am assuming that educational guidelines differ according to gender.

Assumptions Not Debated

1. Given that contemporary art is not taught in high schools and rarely taught in colleges, I am assuming that many students and art educators in Saudi Arabia are not familiar with contemporary art or artists.
2. Given that Islam governs many aspects of life in Saudi Arabia, I am assuming that social norms play a role in how art and art education is approached within educational institutions and outside of them.
3. Given that there are differences in how students in high schools and colleges learn about art, I am assuming that the students approach art and art making differently.
4. Given that curriculums are structured differently in high schools than in colleges, I am assuming that art educators influence their students' art making through the use of certain guidelines.
5. Given that not many museums and gallery spaces exist to promote art and art making in Saudi Arabia, I am assuming that students' main understanding about art is generated within educational institutions.

6. Given that contemporary art is being made in the outside of educational institutions, I am assuming a change has occurred in the way Arab artists in Saudi Arabia perceive art, as they are beginning to embrace new media and concepts.
7. Given that practicing artists in Saudi Arabia make traditional or contemporary art, I am assuming the artists who make either type of art have different educational backgrounds or experiential factors, which led them to approach art making differently.

Limitations of the Research

As an Arab, my role as a researcher in this investigation may be biased. Since I was raised and educated in Arab countries, I may interpret spoken words or observations based on my own cultural, religious, and social experiences. Clarifying my bias from the outset of this study is one approach I have used to resolve this issue, so that the reader understands my position and any assumptions that may influence the inquiry. Another way to approach this limitation would be to avoid the pitfall of advocating that contemporary art should be a part of educational curriculums as opposed to actually investigating the reasons behind this issue and what can actually be accomplished through research.

Saudi Arabia is a conservative country, and most of the schools and colleges are segregated. As a female, I will only be able to gain access to classrooms and students in all-girls high schools and women's colleges. Although some aspects of the study will involve male participants, such as male artists, the study focuses on female participants in

relation to educational settings. However, by using several sites, cases, and situations that maximize diversity in the study of art education and art making inside and outside of educational settings will allow results to be applied by readers to a greater range of other situations. In this study, the variation is achieved by purposeful sampling.

It is important to note that the Arab world consists of many countries and each is diverse in its own respect; therefore, one cannot theorize that art education in Saudi Arabia can represent art education in the Arab world at large. Similarly, another limitation is that the study will not cover the entirety of Saudi Arabia either. Therefore, the sample is not one that is representative of all high schools and universities throughout the country.

The literature I have gathered has helped me lay a foundation for understanding the research problem I am investigating, however, there is very little research conducted about art education specifically in K-12 schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia. This limitation encourages an exploratory research approach and may serve as an important opportunity to identify new gaps in the literature and to describe the need for further research.

I will be investigating art education in three high schools and two colleges for the purpose of this research. These are the only institutions in Saudi Arabia I will be permitted to gain access to for my research at this point in time. It is important to also note that the research is limited by the number of documents I was able to find, the number of interview participants, and observations that took place at the high school and college level. There are three high schools and two colleges discussed within this study; six observations were conducted within the high schools, and eight took place within

colleges. This is also a limitation since more time was spent observing college settings. Although generalizations about art education cannot be made about the entire country through these five institutions, these sites may be significant for uncovering similarities and differences between how art is taught in high schools and colleges. Uncovering the ways in which art is taught in educational institutions may also be helpful in understanding how art education has influenced practicing artists' decisions to make art that is traditional or contemporary.

The participants involved in this study within educational institutions, and outside of them are also limited and cannot represent all educators, students, administrators, or artists in the country. However, the small number of participants will allow for more focused investigation and the collection of rich data.

Value and Application of the Study to the Arts and Art Education

This study focused on investigating how art education in Saudi Arabia is structured and perceived within educational institutions and outside of them. In an attempt to uncover the multiple layers that guide art education and art making in Saudi Arabia the study investigated the reasons why art is taught in a limited way in K-12 schools and colleges. Additionally, in order to understand the root of the divide between contemporary and traditional art within educational institutions and outside of them, the study explored how students are educated about art, their transition from high school to college, and how art education may have influenced their artistic practices beyond the high school and college levels. This study may provide insight into understanding the criteria that guides art education through communication with administrators, educators, students, and artists, in addition to observations and documents analysis.

It is imperative when trying to research art education in Saudi Arabia, that one takes into consideration that most educational institutions do not teach contemporary art from the region, and that art taught within educational institutions does not progress along the same lines as art outside of them. The problem then is that Arab art from the region goes unnoticed, under researched, and unaddressed by the societies at hand, and societies at large. Stake (1995) states, “issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts. All these meanings are important in studying cases” (p. 17). Procedures and techniques were driven by the Multiple Case Study approach described by Yin (2009) and the Collective Case Study approach defined by Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995). This qualitative multiple case study involved the participation of High school art educators and their students, college art educators and their students, high school principals, university presidents, traditional and contemporary Saudi Arabian artists, in addition to employees from the Saudi Ministry of Education. It is a multi-site research endeavor that focused on interviews, observations, and gathering data from documents in the field.

Since the central focus of this research was to understand how art and art education intersect inside and outside of educational institutions, and to investigate how contemporary art is situated and perceived within the educational system in Saudi Arabia, and outside of them, organizing this research as a multiple case study provided an opportunity for cross-case analysis, and allowed for findings across different sites and individuals to emerge and be compared to one another. In contrast, a study that is organized around one particular setting would run the risk of documenting only the

effects of a particular school or college, and would not offer much insight into the larger structure of art and art education within different structures of society.

The advantage of conducting a study with multiple sites is that when the data is gathered, it can be constructed comparatively. This allowed the research to compare and highlight values and ideas across sites without favoring a particular set of data over another. The research questions that are the foundation of the study were best suited to a multiple case study design because this approach allowed for rich and extensive descriptions of the phenomenon that is under investigation (Merriam, 1998), as the situation under study occupied several variables of interest (Yin, 2013). A multiple case study approach provided the opportunity for multiple sources of data to inform the research.

Personal Context

I spent the majority of my life in Saudi Arabia, but I have had a multicultural upbringing. I was raised in a household of successful academic parents who value education and the significance of learning, and was taught to appreciate education and learning as a process. I have graduated successfully with a Bachelor's Degree in Visual Communication from The American University of Sharjah in the UAE representing a distinguished structured graphic design program. I was awarded this degree in 2009. I received a well-rounded education in many classes: Analogue photography, digital photography, printmaking, drawing, painting, illustration, typography and a variety of other studio-based and art theory classes. In addition to the previously mentioned courses, I have also taken art history courses and history of graphic design at this reputable

institution. At the end of my third year into the Visual Communication program, I attended a 3-month Summer Study internship program at Boston University that profoundly strengthened my understanding of Visual Communication through coursework and practical graphic design experience at a non-profit organization. These years of education made me realize that art is not something that is made simply for aesthetic purposes, it can be a powerful medium to communicate ideas and shape minds. This has managed to imprint and enhance my character with potent communication and artistic skills.

In the field of visual arts I have definitely developed a passion for photography, photojournalism, book design, poster design, and painting. I am also interested in issues that can be communicated through art, such as sociological issues. I have taken classes in social psychology and sociology. I received the great honor of being accepted as candidate for a Master of Arts in Art Education at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia for the Fall 2010 semester. I received my Master's degree in May 2012. My Master's in Art Education has strengthened my knowledge of the Visual Arts and exposed me to the ways in which art can be a learning experience inside and outside the classroom. I received a rich education under the instruction of great educators and learned about new artists and art movements. My classes ranged from the history of art education to art criticism and contemporary culture. This experience taught me that research is a big part of learning in the arts and can be a source of learning about one's own surroundings, in addition to learning about cultures.

In 2013, I was admitted to the Doctor of Education Program in Art and Art Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Throughout my time as a student in

this program, I have learned about the artistic development in children, adolescents, and adults. I have also learned about the history of art education and philosophies in art education. Additionally, I have taken important classes that relate to the history of Arab and Islamic art. Throughout my undergraduate and graduate education, I have learned a lot about Western art and artists within my programs. I have also spent the past six years researching modern and contemporary art and artists from the Arab world.

From my perspective and from that of contemporary writers in the field, the art education I received, and many students continue to receive in Saudi Arabia, limits the perception and understanding of art to traditional art. During my undergraduate years and beyond, I began to understand that you can also talk about art through critiques and discussions, and that there are existent rich histories to be learned about different genres of art and art making. If students at a young age are taught that art means one thing, and that they can only make it a certain way, we are left with a generations that will pass on the idea that you should make art the way you are told to, and that right or wrong exists in art making.

My Eastern and Western experiences have illuminated many important issues about art education in Saudi Arabia. I am coming into this study with some preconceived notions of my own that stem from personal experiences of living in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Through the literature and data collection processes, this study may highlight some of the preconceived ideas I had, but may also bring to my attention other complex issues regarding art education in Saudi Arabia. Through this research, I hope to investigate art education in order to help strengthen the fundamentals of teaching and learning in the visual arts and expand Arab people's knowledge about art and art making.

Summary

Chapter I provided an introduction to the subject of the study and presented the problem statement, related research questions, assumptions and limitations. It presented a brief background regarding how art education is approached in Saudi Arabia, in addition to a personal biographical framework.

Chapter II will review the literature on contemporary art, traditional art, Islamic art, art education, and recent views towards art and art education in Arab countries and Saudi Arabia.

Chapter III will discuss the methodology that was used in this research and explain the type of study, sites, and participants. Finally, the collection, treatment, and analysis of data are described.

Chapter IV will focus on the emerging themes that resulted from the interviews, observations, and archival documents.

Chapter V will discuss the findings of the study alongside the literature.

Chapter VI will discuss the educational implications of this investigation and its pedagogical outcomes.

Chapter VII will provide a conclusion for the study.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, I will first describe art education and its development in Saudi Arabia in relation to neighboring countries. Second, I will discuss the associations made by scholars between Islamic art and modern Arab art, Western influences on Arab art, and how they have influenced the development of modern and contemporary Arab art and Arab people's perceptions of it. Following, I will discuss art education in Saudi Arabia. Next, I will discuss how the lack of art criticism in the Arab world has affected art education in Arab countries and how modern and contemporary Arab art is received. Lastly, I will present scholarly arguments on Arab attitudes towards modern and contemporary Arab art and rethinking art education approaches.

Art and Art Education in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf

Beginnings of art in the Arabian Peninsula. In her exhaustive research about Islamic art and contemporary Arab art, art historian, Wijdan Ali (1997) describes that throughout history, most parts of the Arabian Peninsula have been isolated from the rest of the Islamic world. However, even before the dawn of Islam, trade connected the ports of the southern and southeastern coasts, as well as Mecca. But commercial ties between

Arabia and the rest of the world weakened as trade routes changed. Only the Hijaz (the Western Province of Saudi Arabia today), where Mecca and Medina have obtained a special religious status since the rise of Islam, maintained ties with the rest of the Western world. When empires of Islam rose and fell, their cultural achievements barely influenced the peninsula. Nevertheless, Ottoman influences were present in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina and the Haram Mosque in Mecca. The Ottoman government restored and enlarged these sites because of their religious significance.



Figure 8. A woman weaving a carpet at Al-Janadriyah Cultural Festival, 2016.

Like the rest of the Arab world, Najd (the Central Province of Saudi Arabia today) and Hijaz became part of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. The 18th century, however, saw the rise in Central Arabia of the Wahabis, “a new sect of zealous Muslims who wanted to purge Islam and return it to its alleged primitive strictness” (Ali, 1997, p. 119). The movement declined in the late 19th century but was reawakened in 1902 by the founder of the Saudi Dynasty. During the first quarter of the 20th century, Ibn Saud (the

founder of Saudi Arabia), with the help of the British, was able to create for himself a kingdom that extended from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. In 1926, he declared himself king, and with the blessings of Great Britain, founded the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Ali, 1997). According to extensive research conducted by Philip Hitti (2002), in 1933, the American Oil Company received its first concession in Saudi Arabia; this provided a source of income to the Saudi government and people and altered the state of their nomadic lives. The British announced their intention to withdraw their military forces from the Persian Gulf in 1968. This led to the creation of the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman. The Arabian Gulf Co-operation Council was established in 1981 as an economic and political union of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait. The council still exists and consists of oil-producing states that share a common historical, cultural, and political background.

Ali (1997) explains that at the start of the 20th century, Arabia was far from any cultural influences apart from Hijaz and its sacred association with Islam because of its geographical isolation. The people in the peninsula satisfied their need for artistic expression through crafts, the most common of which were “weaving, embroidery, silver and gold jewelry making, wood-carving and naïve two-dimensional decorative paintings on boats, walls, and doors of houses and mosques” (p. 120). Craftsmen found their sources of inspirations for their designs, choice of color, and subject matter in their local environments. Their art making was self-contained and did not borrow from any outside sources. Local crafts began to decline when oil was discovered, simultaneously, the interests of Western powers in the Peninsula rose.

Western art in Saudi Arabia. The new forms of expression that appeared in the modern Arab world were uncommon, especially in countries with a distinctly Bedouin background. To Arab consciousness, the word, as in poetry, has a more significant role as an artistic expression (Lughod, 1986). The word enjoys high prestige and high esteem. For one reason, it is linked to the *Qur'an*, the Islamic book of revelation whose language and rhythm is meant to be recited (Eigner, 2010). Also, for people that spend the majority of their nomadic life in the desert, language is considered to be lighter baggage (Lughod, 1986).

An extensive study carried out by Gibb and Bowen (1950) on the effects of Western civilization on Arab cultures has shown that the development of Arab visual art in the context of global modernism began at the dawn of the 20th century. It was a direct result of the increased exchange and mutual influence between Orient and Occident. In his seminal book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) argues that the profound changes that the 19th and early 20th centuries brought with them as a consequence of industrialization, the colonizing of Arab states, and the stronger economic interest in the use of the Orient's resources made themselves felt in all areas of Western and Oriental worlds including the art scene.

Although the significance of self-taught native artists exposed to Western art should not be overlooked, as Bahnassi (1985) argued, it was mainly those educated in the newly established art schools that represented the first generation of modern Arab artists. Shabout (2010) argued it was the pioneers of each Arab country who conceived the fundamental concepts of their countries' modern art movements, and consequently mutual concepts were shared throughout the Arab world. She also explained, that before

art education became a part of school systems, only upper-class members of society could afford art lessons, and European instructors taught art. National movements emerged that rejected the domination of European influences of any sort on Arab societies, and called for embracing the arts as a significant way to represent national culture. However, due to the absence of accomplished Arab art educators and artists at the time, art schools established in the early 20th century hired European instructors (Zuhur, 1998).

Nashashibi (1994) explained in her own broad research on modern Arab art, that the first half of the 20th century was recognized as period that introduced and familiarized Arabs with Western art; this period was referred to by Arab artists as “the learning stage” (p. 72). She argued, the Arab artists focused on learning the visual concepts and techniques of European artists through copying existing artworks, mostly nature, in an effort to innovate the borrowed styles into what she called a more “Arabized” environment, and that this was a necessary period for Arab artists to gain confidence and to master the Western formal means of expression. However, it also made them conscious of a sense of alienation from the Arab public and amplified the disconnectedness between their past and present. This led to what she named the “self-discovery stage.” (p. 73) In this stage, the artists attempted to solve the previously mentioned problem by directing their attention to local themes that Arab audiences could identify with.

Many Arab artists perceived learning the language of Western art as a part of keeping up with modernization. According to Ali (1997), three main factors were instrumental in introducing Western art into the Arabian Peninsula. Western art concepts became present in Arabia in the 1950s through educators who came from abroad to teach

in the modern educational system. Although the earliest modern schools were sporadically founded – they already existed as early as 1925 in Saudi Arabia. However, the 1930s and 1940s, the *kuttab* was the most common form of education; a group of young children would assemble around a tutor, in a house or a mosque, to memorize the Qur'an and learn discipline and good manners.

A modern educational system gradually replaced the traditional one, and by the 1950s, schools teaching a variety of subjects became the norm. In addition to providing a wider spectrum of subjects, these modern schools also assumed additional roles; they became community centers for social and cultural activities, including public gatherings, sporting events, plays, and exhibitions (Ali, 1997). These social activities promoted engagement between the local community and the schools that met the needs of people. With regards to children, schools replaced village squares where they spent most of their time playing, and the classroom became a venue that provided guidance in drawing lessons (Ali, 1997).

In her research, Ali (1989), asserts that the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia introduced drawing lessons into their curricula, followed by painting, both taught according to the competence of the art teachers employed. When art education was first introduced to the curriculum in Saudi Arabia, the art classes were basic, and taught by local instructors who had no art training whatsoever. However, the Ministry later realized that a modern educational system required qualified instructors, and teachers were selected from Arab countries such as Iraq and Egypt. Art instructors were among those chosen although none was an established artist. Many Arab teachers flocked to Saudi Arabia because they were attracted by the financial benefits offered to them, and they

became influential in shaping first generation of modern Arab artists in the 1950s since many of these teachers were educated in their homelands and Western countries (Ali, 1989). Ali (1997) also explains that the works of those locally trained artists consisted of portraits and landscapes made in a primitive style that followed basic academic principles of three-dimensional drawing and easel painting loosely. Some artists copied well-known works by European Renaissance painters.

Government scholarships are the second factor that helped introduce Western art trends into Saudi Arabia and the region. Educational authorities in the Gulf created opportunities for aspiring art students abroad to study art. The third factor that helped introduced Western art to the Arabian Peninsula was the formation of art societies, which played an important part in the development of a modern Arab art movement. Ali (1997) listed these societies as the Kuwaiti Society of Fine Arts (1967), followed by the Modern Art Society in Bahrain (1969), the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and the Arts (1973), the Kuwaiti National Council for Culture (1973), the Emirates Society for Fine Arts (1980), and the Qatari Society for Fine Arts (1980). According to Ali (1989), all these societies, whether publicly or privately founded, received official subsidies, and were instrumental in furthering the arts. They arranged exhibitions at home and abroad, established contacts with other Arab and international artistic institutions, started collections of works by local artists, awarded prizes in the fine arts to local and Arab artists, and spread artistic awareness among the public. These societies were not restricted in any way by a single style; they assumed roles of artists' associations and unions. Ali (1997) described them as "a mixture of art fraternity, art institute, artists union, and government cultural department" (p. 121).



Figure 9. Dia Aziz Dia, 1969, *Untitled*, Oil on canvas, 122x90 cm.

Pioneers of modern Saudi art. According to Ali (1997), until the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were no trained modern artists in Saudi Arabia. She also mentioned that the first of the early Saudi artists to be sent abroad was Abdul Halim Radwi (1939-2006), who trained at the Accademia di Belle Arte in Rome and later obtained his Ph.D. in art history from Spain. He was a painter and sculptor who emphasized the significance of drawing from one's own cultural heritage in a modern interpretation. Another early pioneer painter mentioned in Ali's (1997) research is Mohammed Mosa Al-Saleem (b.1939), who began painting and teaching art in the late 1950s without any previous formal art training. Aside from a few fragmented calligraphic paintings, his works mainly depict desert landscapes. The artist Dia Aziz Dia, one of the also one of Saudi Arabia's early pioneers who was sent to Rome on a government-funded scholarship to study art in the 1960s, was inspired by surrealism, which made its way into his paintings (Figure 9). Safeya Binzagr (b.1940), a female pioneer in Saudi modern art, was the first Saudi female to hold a solo exhibition of her work.

Ali (1992) asserts that other artists made calligraphic paintings but also incorporated the local culture by mixing geometric and floral arabesque motifs, Islamic architectural shapes of domes, along with Arabic letters and words. This kind of mixture is found in the work of many Arabian artists who combine local crafts motifs with calligraphy for the sole purpose of bestowing an Arab and Islamic identity on their work. Many contemporary artists today have also adopted the method of using Western techniques to communicate Arab concepts and experiences.



Figure 10. Abdulhalim Radwi, 1995, *AlMadina Al Monawara*, Oil on canvas, 100 x 80.5 cm.

The outcomes of Western influences on modern Arab art. The change that occurred in art from Islamic to Arab are still debated in terms of it being an outcome of an intellectual need or Western influences. But scholars such as Boullata (1997) have argued that Islamic art originated from a religious ideal, while modern Arab aesthetics resulted from national ideals. Scholars (Ali, 1997; Watriss & Roques, 2014) have also

argued that imitating Western art was vital in order to break away from a strict artistic tradition, and promote artistic creativity. Iraqi critic Farouq Yousif (2004), and Karnouk (2005), explained that turning to European painting in the 20th century was not about artists escaping from their heritage, but it was a solution Arab artists needed to renew their artistic imagination, and embrace nationality.

When Arab artists arrived at the point of comfort in relation to learning the visual language of Western art, and experienced artistic freedom, they attempted to utilize their new-found techniques and concepts in their search to find an art that could represent their present their Arab identities; this was a common goal among artists who experienced colonization in their homelands (Watriss & Roques, 2014). Their dissatisfaction with solely focusing on Islamic art or Western art, led them to modern art, in which they decided to combine the art of their past and with the newly learned art of their present.

As artist and art historian, Kamal Boullata (1997), has written in his well-crafted research,

The pentacle works of Picasso, Klee, and Matisse had pointed the way to a new generation of Arab artists who were to look into the Arabs' inner realms of vision... The imitator was caught up by his own shadow and the only way left was to dig down to deeper levels of the ground upon which the Arab stood. (p. 117)

Ali (1989) explains that Arab art developed in different directions as a result the different movements and schools that emerged. Two main schools defined modern Arab art since the end of World War II: the figurative and the abstract. Both schools draw their inspiration from the local visual heritage of the region. Artists of the figurative school mainly focused on themes involving nationalist or mythological subjects by converting the oral tradition into stylized visual narratives. Artists of the abstract school adopted a formalist viewpoint that, according to Boullata (1997), "is somewhat alien to a localized

definition of Arab vision;” (p. 123) in the abstract school, form can interchange between traditional Islamic art and Arabic calligraphy.

Accepting and mimicking Western representational aesthetics also freed some Arab artists from the prohibition against images (Shabout, 2010). It has been argued Western aesthetics became more acceptable to Arabs in a creative sense after it moved away from the realistic approach to art and naturalism; it was more acceptable in this manner because it did not clash with Arab/Muslim traditions. However, this was not the case. The artistic experience of the first half of the 20th century had shifted the preliminary public rejection of naturalistic art into a rejection of modern non-representational art trends by the public and the denouncement of new approaches to art as meaningless and lacking talent (Nashashibi, 1994).

Views on Education in Saudi Arabia Through Personal Experiences and Dialogues

From the literature and my own personal experiences as a student, art education in Saudi Arabia faces restrictions, at the high school level especially, in terms of media, lessons, and students’ freedom to make art in their own individual ways. In an informal conversation with a Ministry of Education employee who is currently working in the curriculum development department, I posed the question of why art education within educational institutions seems to be at the same place it was when I was in high school? The employee explained that art has always been perceived as an activity that could be done in one’s free time, and not a discipline that necessarily needs development like mathematics and science would. Artistic skills on the other hand, can be improved if an individual takes a deep interest in art making; however, the school system focuses on

subjects, which they perceive, may lead students towards a career that could have a larger and more direct influence than art could (F.Tahlawi, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

A former assistant to the Minister of Education also explained, “Saudi society can be fixed in its ways and belief system, and the room for innovation and creativity usually happens within the given cultural frame” (A. Mulla, personal communication, February 15, 2017). This sentiment ties into the reasons why lesson plans at the high school level and college level lean towards what is traditional, such as depicting Arabian architecture. In addition to what represents Saudi pride, such as desert landscapes. The absence of art history and art theory classes in high schools and colleges may also stem from the idea that what is being taught, and what has been taught over the years in Saudi Arabia, is all students need to know about art. In other words, students are given basic knowledge in media, themes, and personal expression (L. Harbi, personal communication, February 10, 2017). Consequently, if there is no interest in expanding students’ knowledge about art and art making, the “outcome is art that is only one sided, art is that just traditional and beautiful, and nothing else.” (A. Abdelhamid, personal communication, February 3, 2017).

Students at the college level, and the particularly those at the high school level, do not have many opportunities to be explorative with art; according to art teacher, “art education in Saudi Arabia is centered on making what you are told or guided to do, it is less about what you wish to make, and less about learning new things” (B. Bader, personal communication, February 25, 2017). Additionally, art educators at the high school level do not offer their students much variety in terms of art lessons. However, at

the college level, students have more flexibility with their use of media and their choice of artistic themes. A Ministry official asserts that there are many factors today that determine the direction of art inside and outside of schools and colleges; mainly the Ministry's guidelines, the schools' and colleges' guidelines, and the educator's education and experience (F. Al-Jami, personal communication, February 22, 2017). However, from my own personal experience, Saudi Arabia's conservative nature seems to be a big factor in education, and at the most basic level, there is gender segregation within educational institutions. In addition to art being perceived as less important than other disciplines, it is perceived as feminine. This may be why it is offered to boys until the 7th grade, and not offered as an option for males at the college level. This places restrictions on art as more culturally appropriate for women and less appropriate for men to pursue.

Yet, art continues to be made by practicing males and females outside of educational institutions. Although traditional arts are more widely accepted, the number of contemporary artists in Saudi Arabia is on the rise (A. Qatif, personal communication, February 14, 2017). Practicing artists in Saudi Arabia today have been educated in their homeland and abroad; some are even self-taught. The differences in how these individuals have been educated about art throughout their lives may be an important factor in the way they choose to make art today.

The Association Between Islamic Art and Modern Arab Art

In his extensive study on Arab societies, Nicholas Hopkins (1997), an anthropologist, explains that the Arab world is composed of many nations. An Arab in contemporary times is a citizen of one of twenty-two countries in the Near East and North Africa; they share a history, cultures, and language. Despite the commonalities, the

Arab world is diverse, comprising many ethnic groups, sects, and cultures. Even within the same country, one can encounter different dialects, traditions, and customs. Art historian, Salwa Mikdadi Nashashibi (1994) argues in her study about Arab art, that one must take into consideration that the development of “modern Arab art must be understood within the context of cultural changes taking place for over two centuries” (p. 33).

In their research on modern and contemporary Arab art, Watriss and Roques (2014) argue that one of the biggest obstacles that faces artistic practices in the twenty-first century Arab world is the “ongoing constructed oppositional binary” between traditional art and “new” art (p. 8). This issue is exacerbated by the lack of written historical resources or a discourse to view, contextualize, evaluate, and articulate this new creation; adding to the complexities is the nature of the contemporary production itself (Shabout, 2007). Islamic art historian, Oleg Grabar (1973) argued that it is vital to understand that there is a difference between Islamic and Arab aesthetics. In her own exhaustive research, art historian and art educator, Nada Shabout (2007) explained that some understanding of the history of Islamic art is significant to the comprehension of Arab art for two reasons. First, by gaining knowledge about the process of development of Islamic art the core structure behind the formation of its unique aesthetics, the changes in aesthetics that led to the development of Arab art will become evident. Second, Islam continues to be a significant component in molding Arab societies until this day and manifests itself in the arts, and Arab cultures.

Ali (1989) conducted a thorough study on the development of Arab art, which described that in the present context, Arab art continues to be linked to Islamic art and

artifacts. While many characteristics of Arab cultures have been reinterpreted within their respective modern contexts, the development of modern and contemporary art continues to be hazily understood. The issue seems to be directly connected to the meaning of the terms Arabic and Islamic, and the connections between Arab and Islamic historiographies (Ali, 1997). According to Shabout (2007), there are ongoing debates in the Arab world that aim to determine a distinction between “Arab” and “Islamic” attributes, in addition to historical identities throughout the history of Islamic civilization (p. 2). The main argument is that the pre-Islamic elements of Arab and other cultures were assimilated into the newly formed Islamic culture. Additionally, Ali (1997) contends that a number of intellectuals continue to argue that modern and contemporary art from the Arab world is essentially a continuation of Islamic aesthetics, altered to fit the modern age, and others perceive it as a replication or an inferior version of Western art.

Many scholars agree that the absence of written sources documenting artistic processes, techniques, or aesthetics led to the isolation of Islamic art from its social context (Brend, 1991; Hagedorn, 2009; Hillenbrand, 1999). Consequently, Western aesthetics became the departure point for Orientalist scholars who documented and studied Islamic art. As a result, Islamic art is still classified as “minor arts” or “decorative arts” in most history surveys (Shabout, 2007, p.14). In her research, Shabout (2010) examines the status of modern and contemporary Arab art, and poses the question: Are the historical circumstances that shaped Islamic art still valid for Arab countries today? A positive answer would do away with any characteristics involving artistic change or growth. The truth of the matter is that modern Arab cultures have evolved drastically from those of the beginning of the Muslim age (Nashashibi, 1994). The Arabs’ modern

and secularized ideas of the world led to changes in artistic practices, which in turn caused a change in aesthetics from Islamic to Arabic. Comprehensive research conducted by Boullata (1997), on modern and contemporary Arab art has shown that the events which took place in the last two centuries created opportunities for new discourses, which eventually provided the intellectual construct that shaped Arab art in its more contemporary forms. Hence, to claim that newer Arab art is simply a continuation of Islamic art is unreasonable despite apparent similarities perceived by some as a sign of continuity. Nevertheless, the crystallization of Arab art in the modern Arab world is not without analogies to the formation of Islamic art (Ali, 1997).

The ban on images. Scholars of Islamic art commonly believed that the prohibition of images basically meant that no images could be depicted (Grabar, 1973). In Islamic art, and contemporary art today, however, there are indeed pictures, even figurative portrayals. To better understand the issue and its role in Arab visual art, it is important at this point to address the issue of the ban on images. Islam does not forbid artistic activity per se. According to Ali (1989), the development of Muslim aesthetics was intimately linked to the Muslim view of the world; with regards to its forms, the interrelationship of the forms, the composition of the artwork, and the artistic conventions used to portray space, time, and existence. Muslims view Islamic abstraction as a cultural and collective expression of faith that serve the spirituality of Islamic monotheism (Grabar, 1973).

In the Holy Qur'an, there is no explicit or binding prohibition of images. Nowhere is there a concrete reference to the forbidding of images. It is the hadith that is concerned with the problematic aspects of images. The hadith is a corpus of the Qur'an from the

second half of the ninth century that consists of collections of the Prophet Mohammed's words and actions that were reported by his companions (Manzur, 2000). A source of the belief and the law of Islam, it determines, among other forms of behavior, what can be visually depicted and what cannot. According to the hadith, only inanimate beings or objects may be portrayed: plants, and trees, but not people or animals. This distinction may seem difficult to understand, however, religious laws have expressed the prohibition of depicting God and his attributes, and the interpretation of what these attributes are. In Islam, "God is transcendent. He cannot be represented or depicted. He is not only transcendent, but also ineffable" (Watriss & Roques, 2014, p. 19).

In the pre-Islamic era before the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Mohammed, the Bedouins living in the Arabian Peninsula worshipped a number of tribal deities (Grabar, 1973). Already built at the time, the Ka'aba in Mecca was the most important religious shrine in this region. Bedouin idols were installed around the Ka'aba in Mecca before the Prophet Mohammed brought to this region a monotheist religion – Islam – whose central pronouncement emphasized the unity of one transcendent God. God's words of revelation to Mohammed were a clear reference to the widespread polytheism of that time and thus indirectly to later proscription of images. When Mohammed arrived in Mecca, he had the idols that were installed in and around the Ka'aba destroyed. According to tradition, he made the following statement: "Angels do not enter a temple in which there are images." (Ahmad, 1956, p.80) This pronouncement, along with the destruction of idols, resulted in a prohibition against the portrayal of living or animate creatures in mosques or prayer rooms. During prayer, nothing was to distract Muslims' attention from God or to lead to the veneration of idols. According to Muslims

and Arabs who strongly uphold this view, the portrayal of living beings in a picture resembles an act of godlike creation. Yet the ban on images is not a fixed law that is in place for the general Islamic world community. Watriss and Roques (2014) argue that it is more of an ideological standpoint that is accepted by the majority of Muslims. Even with that general acceptance, this point of view has been transformed and differently interpreted over time.

After Mohammed's death, law schools came into being that established Islamic canonical law – the shari'a – based on the Qur'an and the hadith (tradition). These schools set the tone for the prohibition of images (Watriss & Roques, 2014). Since there are different points of view within the schools of law, there are consequently various interpretations, and the image ban and the restrictions on pictorial depiction have been followed in different ways in the Arab world. Within the developments in Islamic art that took place, every kind of mimesis was abandoned. Above all, sculpture was avoided, since it was equated with idols, which were strictly forbidden. Watriss and Roques (2014) have also argued that the ban on images, with all its complex and contradictory interpretations, continues up to the present. Although for the past hundred years or so there has been a painting tradition in Arab countries that developed from the influence of Europeans, problems arise, here and there, when a contemporary Arab artist makes figurative art. Photography is not completely excluded from this ideological difficulty either. Photography reached Arab lands in the 19th century, where it was treated differently from region to region (Melis & Leeuwarden, 2004). Since there were boundaries as to what could or could not be photographed, photography as an art form evolved cautiously and did not have the development or continuity it had in the West.

There were many different reasons for this. In their research, Watriss & Roques (2014) quoted two Arab artists they interviewed; the first, a Lebanese artist, Samer Mohdad, who stated “the religious banning of the reproduction of human faces was a factor that weakened the development of photography,” he also noted that many restrictions, “such as those against nude photography or any kind of work with the representations of the body, or images related to religious symbolism,” kept photography from evolving freely as it did in the Western world. The second, an Emirati artist, Mohammed Kanoo, who explained “from a historical perspective, photography was largely considered a Western import and considered to be a suspicious infidel technology to be avoided as it would abuse Islamic tradition of avoiding the depiction of human forms” (p. 21).

Melis & Leeuwarden (2004) explain in their significant book on photography from the Arab world, that portrait photography is a good example of how artists dealt with these complexities; portrait photography for representative purposes became popular in many places throughout the Arab world. In the 19th century, there were many photography studios in Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon. Today, however, restrictions on photographic representations are a subject that is still alive in countries such as Saudi Arabia.

Views on banning images in art. In order to clarify the issue of representation for Muslims, two *fatwas* (legal opinions or interpretations) were pronounced by religious clerics in the 1920s; the first, by Sheikh Mohamed ‘Abduh, an Islamic scholar, who legitimized the practice of fine arts and discussed the issue of banning representational and three-dimensional art in Islam. In keeping with his belief in applying commonsense

arguments to the reinterpretation of Islamic Shari'a (Islamic law) with respect to modern issues, Shabout (2007) quotes him in her research,

As for the Prophet Mohammed's saying: "Those who will be most tormented on Judgment Day are image-makers," it seems to be that since it was spoken in the age of idolatry, when images were used for distraction or were attributed magical powers, the artist was rightfully considered responsible for causing distraction away from or interference preventing the unity with God. Once these obstacles were removed, pictures of human beings became as harmless as those of trees and plants.... On the whole I think that the Islamic law (Shari'a) is far from prohibiting one of the best educational methods (art) once it was proven of no harm to either religious belief or ritual practice. (p. 17)

The second fatwa, by Sheikh Mohamed Bakhit, legalized on a theological level the use of photographic means of reproduction. However, the majority of both academic and popular discourse on the issue of representation in Islam returns to the hadiths and does not consider the most recent fatwas (Pieprzak, 2010). These discourses provided resistance to claims of legitimacy and authenticity made by modern and contemporary Arab artists by emphasizing the notion that the aesthetic identity of modern Arab artistic productions remained firmly rooted in religious condemnation of figurative art. The monumentality of such representations of modern Arab art also struck a blow at the authenticity of Arab painting and the authority of its painters. Pieprzak (2010) contends that the concept of constructed or "imagined" norms is fundamental to understanding how a discourse on the Arab-Islamic tradition in art arose because these discourses derived their authority from the interpretation of a very small textual base in sacred Islamic texts. As Oliver Leaman (2004) argues in his study, *Islamic Aesthetics*, "Although the destruction of images may have been given a religious rationale, that does not establish that they in fact had a religious rationale" (p. 36).

The Islamic banning of images, generally had a large influence on how visual art developed and was received in Arab countries, in contrast to art in Europe or the Americas (Watriss & Roques, 2014). The primacy of a discourse on Islamic art as a religious art that is uninterested in the secular world neglected a vibrant history of patronage, communication, and commentary through form, and a tradition of figuration represented in objects such as manuscript illuminations of history. Art in the Arab world was not all about timeless religion; rather the arts were deeply tied to the dynamic societies in which they were produced and responded to development (Shabout, 2010). Pieprzak (2010) asserts that when the majority of Arab Muslims believe that Islam bans figurative art, contemporary Arab artists must constantly explain and justify why their art is legitimately Arab and not Western, and that they spend more time attempting to establish the authenticity of Arab art in the Islamic and Arab world.



Figure 11. Nugamshi, 2015, artist performance; Nugamshi standing in front of his calligraphic art piece in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Although today's academic scholarship on Islamic art has done great things to move away from this understanding of modern and contemporary Arab art, popular and religious discourses in the Arab region often support pre-1960s academic discourse, which suggests the ban on images and untraditional forms of art (Shabout, 2010). While attitudes vary according to geographic location, gender, political affiliation, and education, many people in Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the Arab world, are quick to argue that art in the Islamic world is solely a celebration of the divine and that figuration is banned by the hadiths. The insistence of the Arab public on identifying their art as nonfigurative artisanal production based on their concept of Islamic art continues to neglect contemporary Arab artists' claims to be representative of an Arab cultural identity.

The Lack of Art Criticism and Venues for Art

The lack of art criticism. In the West, art criticism shares the responsibility of educating the public in understanding modern and contemporary art. Professional art criticism in the Arab world is rare; in fact, Arab art critics are generally either literary critics or artists, and are not trained in language of visual criticism (Zuhur, 1998). Given the absence of Arab art criticism; the Western model is the only available option. The contemporary art critic in general – and the Arab critic in particular – does not start with the work of art, providing an analysis of visual elements and the relationships between forms and colors, but rather with the artist's biography, relying on and repeating the work of other critics (Watriss & Roques, 2014). The lack of objective art criticism further contributed to the lack of understanding of modern Arab art in the Arab world.

The issue of art criticism is, in fact, part of a larger problem, involving art

education, aesthetics, and the valuation of art in Arab countries. Despite a few isolated studies by Arab historians and critics on the nature of contemporary Arab aesthetics, most of the studies are mainly conducted in the West with limited access to artists and artistic production in the Arab world. Aesthetics, “the science of beauty,” as an academic or cultural field has no place in the Arab world due to the lack of Arab art critics and art educators teaching students about these new forms of artistic expressions (Shabout, 2007, p. 48).



Figure 12. Interior decor of a traditional house in Saudi Arabia, which contains traditional art, Al-Tayebat Musuem, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Art and cultural education require time and investment in the education system as a whole (Shabout, 2007). In the Arab world there is little distinction between art as a profession and art as a hobby. Valuation is non-existent. Thus, today’s local Arab art markets are still dominated by art that caters to the taste of the masses, including copies of Orientalist works and the popular *hurufiyyah* (so-called modern calligraphic works) acceptable to the religiously inclined. Most professional Arab artists are only able to gain

stature outside their countries through international exhibitions or migration. Midyyine has argued,

What is needed is a critical and painstaking study of our self, society, and history. This means liberating art from all forms of censorship; from rigid canons imposed by congealed doctrines, whether of a political or religious nature. That is to say, art must be considered as a dimension of human tendency within the individual historicity of each nation and within a comprehensive global horizon. (Amirsadeghi, 2009, p. 42)

The limited number of art venues. The scarcity of galleries, museums, and art centers has also contributed to the problem of the separation between modern and contemporary Arab art and the Arab people. The concept of art spaces and exhibiting works remains the goal of every artist in order to gain an audience that will make a connection with the artwork. During the Islamic period, art formed part of the people's daily life. It surrounded them, appropriate forms appeared on the walls of their mosques, on their furniture, and in the books they read (Atassi & Schwartz, 2012). Along with its spiritual function, Islamic art had a utilitarian function as well, based on the concept of the totality of arts and crafts (Hillenbrand, 1999). Muslims had easy access to their art and did not need to go to a museum to view it. Thus, by adhering to the concept of a museum, the separation of fine arts and crafts was now observed. During the 1990s new – mainly private – efforts to establish art centers were undertaken to facilitate interaction among Arab artists and audiences. Although many museums and art galleries are emerging in Arab countries, the public does not have much knowledge or interest in the developments of Arab art because they are not taught about the value of art throughout their education (Zuhur, 1998).

One of the challenges that face contemporary Arab artists is in attracting a larger and more diverse audience to the spaces that feature their artistic productions. Opening nights of major art exhibitions draw essentially only the artistic community, the social elite, and the press. There has been a considerable change in the public's attitude toward modern and contemporary art, but efforts to draw larger audiences normally succeed when other cultural activities, such as Arabic poetry readings, accompany the art exhibit (Amirsadeghi, 2009).

Attitudes Towards Modern and Contemporary Arab Art

The modernized and Western pattern of conformity that governs most Arab cultures today is viewed as an invasion and a lack of authenticity, which has led artists to resort to merge the inherited with the learned. This authenticity is sought with references to the "inherited culture," which relates to *turath* (heritage) and Islamic tradition (Brien & Prochaska, 2004, p. 16). According to Zuhur (1998), tradition intensely opposes ideas accompanying foreign objects or imported ideas. That is essentially what leads Arabs to hold on to their past, but what also makes the study of history essential.

The need for authenticity in Arab art increased as anti-Western feelings and the fear of cultural invasion mounted in the face of the increasing dependency of Arab consumerism on Western products, on the one hand, and the revival of Islamic feelings, on the other. Consequently, many Arab intellectuals and art critics view modern Arab art as nothing more than an offshoot of Western art. Arab art critic, Farouq Yousif (2004) has written: "Our visual arts still draws on European art. They act like a mirror. Their changes do not always evolve from within but respond to outside events" (p. 58).



Figure 13. Exterior traditional painting of a traditional house in Saudi Arabia, Colors of Arabia: The Painter's Garden.

Shabout (2010) explains that since the mid 20th century, Arabs have been striving to achieve a form of self-expression that connects to their realities. The obstacles concerning tradition and modernity, past and present, is a result of the abrupt arrival of a superimposed modernization. Arabs had to absorb several hundred years of Western progress in a few decades (Gibb & Bowen, 1950). Boullata (1997) has also explained that whenever the application of modernity intensified, the return to tradition would also increase. This back and forth movement between the old and the new has become a defining characteristic of Arab cultures. The issue is identifying a unifying principle or characteristic in modern Arab art, similar to that of Islamic art, is that such a quest ignores the nature of modern and contemporary art.

Today's visual art is governed only by its own rules, as Zuhur (1998) contends, and defies classification and consistency. The history of modern and contemporary art, including progress in art, consists in the totality of individual effort, each with its own understanding of art and beauty, and not just in schools or organized movements. This seems to be the nature of modern and contemporary Arab art; it is not a unified organized movement but rather a plurality of styles and experiences, the sum total of creative individual experiments from various Arab countries.

Mohamed Makiya (2004), an Iraqi pioneer in architecture and urbanism, also stresses that the acceptance of works of art in Arab societies is also conditioned by public taste. The public expects art to correspond to its needs, not to surpass reality and traditional norms. Thus, Arabs do not always perceive Arab visual expression as a reflection of culture but rather –as in this case – a “counterculture” (p. 70). A deep-seated distrust of the colonialist and imperialist West has played a significant role in how modern Arab art is perceived in Arab societies. Mohannad Orabi (2009), a Syrian artist, has also argued that artistic creations that defy the prevailing tastes are seen as counter narratives that challenge the different Arab national identities (Iraqi, Egyptian, etc.).

While Western art is admired in many Arab countries, there are still countries and circles of people within societies who see the new forms of expression as something like “neocolonialism;” they fear losing their traditions and personal identity, not only in the field of art (Watriss & Roques, 2014, p. 26). Artists who are considered to be heavily influenced by Western culture and Western ideas may be regarded with skepticism.

There are a number of views surrounding the place of modern and contemporary Arab art within Arab societies in recent years. Daftari and Baird (2014) argue that the

relentless debate about the nature of Arab art only serves to limit its progress. Most Arab artists try to strike a balance between, on the one hand, artistic values related to tradition, each according to his culture and nationality, and, on the other, international styles. In their quest for authenticity, many artists are compelled to trace their creations back to their ancestors. Bahnassi (1985) asserts that the only way to resolve the “authenticity of a culture is to create works that are unique in their aesthetic foundations, rejecting all foreign elements, and relying on the personal and the cultural to merge in new ways that would begin to redefine the elements that make a culture work” (p. 17).

A growing number of Arab artists, some of whom took part in the search for an identity during the 1950s and 1960s, have nevertheless struck a balance between Islamic tradition and Western modernity (Brien & Prochaska, 2004). They have achieved a form of harmony between the self and the other by integrating the positive aspects of the other and maintaining an innovative discourse between tradition and modern Western art. They trust that their individual visions and styles cannot but reflect their sense of belonging to the Arab world, which is an innate element, and that their Arab or Islamic status does not conflict with being modern (Shabout, 2010).

Faced with the dilemma of their time, these artists have attempted to realize in their work not only individual style but a genuine Arab aesthetic that expresses the social dynamic of their people. According to Amirsadeghi (2009), their work achieves a form of resolution between the inherited and the learned that is still unattainable in other aspects of life. The multitude of individual visions presenting and re-presenting tradition in terms of visual expression has been an important factor in the creativity and cultural education, one that might well provide the key to Arab identities of the 20th century and beyond. In

such cases, confrontations with conservative movements that opposed the new ideas became more frequent. Zuhur (1998) has asserted, in the worst cases, governments sought to prohibit the new artistic developments and even so suppress them by force. In some countries, this situation promoted state-sanctioned art and made the practice and teaching of modern and contemporary art a dangerous undertaking, which forced artists to go underground. Charbel Daghir (1997), an Arab cultural professor, has also stated, “Our societies have not yet assigned value to the visual arts. Art is still in the realm of a very limited group. The art market is almost nonexistent in Arab countries. Without a relationship between the artist and society, we cannot produce art that resembles us” (p. 50).

The move toward modernism and the development of visual art in Arab countries did not develop without antagonism and conflict among different Arab art groups that formed, and the art they made. Some artists wanted to maintain Arab cultural legacies, such as classical calligraphy. Others wanted to demonstrate that they found modernization and renewal necessary to their work and to the modern Arab awareness of a global aesthetic discourse. Conflicts arose when traditions were newly interpreted as artists began to make critical artwork. Many of the artists who began testing the waters came to realize their art was not appreciated in their own country. In their native countries, they could not find a broad public audience, partly because possibilities for exhibiting were lacking, as hardly any galleries or museums existed. However, the more significant reason is because modern and contemporary Arab art was and continues to be seen by many as foreign, unconventional, and against religious and social norms.

Still today, many Arab countries continue to lack a corresponding infrastructure that would make it possible to bring modern and contemporary art closer to a broader public. Governments too have yet to support and patronize the arts in a substantial way. Educational facilities dedicated to art and art making are not common in all parts of the Arab world. Additionally, art programs in schools and universities are still lacking art educators who can teach modern and contemporary Arab art.

Broadening the Collective Understanding of Art Education

Research in art education have discussed the benefits of a good art education and suggest that the teaching of art should consider students' artistic development, diverse backgrounds, and expose them to different concepts, materials, and explorations. Through thoughtful experiences, art educators may teach their students that works of art hold different social, cultural, aesthetics, and personal meanings and interpretations, which are an extension of the limitless possibilities explored by artists. The visual arts consist of art and artifacts that portray “diverse traditions in forms that transcend the fixed norms of verbal language” (Burton, 2013, p. 18).

Learning new forms of art and art making will not lead students or artists to abandon who they are; but rather, to explore new areas. It would expand students' understanding about art and direct them to the critical study of self, society, and history. Additionally, liberating art from censorship and limited ways of viewing would encourage students to freely express themselves. Young people should not be taught to be passive when it comes to receiving knowledge, but should be encouraged to be independent thinkers and challenge mainstream ideas (Burton, 2013). Setting limitations in the art classroom can be detrimental to the learning process and could lead to students

losing interest in art making. If each class is structured the same way, and students do not have a say in how they approach art, they will not understand the possibilities of art, and will gradually begin to undervalue it. Such restrictions have a ripple effect, damage students' current perspectives in the art classroom and their societies, and ultimately their future perceptions (Burton, 2013).

Art as a discipline, and a field of practice is dynamic and continuously evolving. What is needed is a paradigm that “respects diversity of outcome,” and has “the capacity to embrace all young people within its purview” (Burton, 2013). How may art educators continue to teach traditional art, which is valuable when it comes to understanding the artistic styles that form Saudi Arabia's cultural and social fabric, while also introducing contemporary art practices without compromising or overstepping social values? In what ways may art educators engage with their students, share their experiences and knowledge, while simultaneously challenging their students? (Burton, 2013)

According to Erikson (1968), high school students, who are in the developmental phase of adolescence, are fully capable of understanding themselves and determining their own sources of influences, self-success, and a sense of individuality and identity. Important concepts, such as an understanding of one's self and critical thinking, take shape during adolescence. Offering students the room to develop their abilities, and reflect on their art making is important to their intellectual development as well. Rather than telling students how they should make art, lesson plans that include critical thinking skills, self-observation, and analysis are important in taking art education a step further (Whitmire, 1996). Green (1999) echoes this sentiment through the argument that teaching methods which encourage students to confront social norms and beliefs require critical

thinking skills that encourage students to identify challenging issues, become more analytical, and produce solutions through their art making (p. 80). It is this type of critical thinking which is needed to move art forward in Saudi Arabia; teachers “must become critical thinkers themselves” before they can teach their students to do so (Sternberg, 1987, p. 456).

Rethinking Art Education Approaches

A common way of approaching education is usually through associating the process of education with knowledge. James Allan (2015), a professor of Eastern art, commented on knowledge and education, “All too often, education is seen as synonymous with knowledge. But the acquisition of knowledge is only a part of education. For education is about training a student’s mind: it is the opportunity a student has to examine and assess a particular body of information, and then draw from it valid and worthwhile conclusions.” He also encouraged art educators to be selective with what they teach students since there is a plethora of contemporary Arab art that exists,

Those who devise courses in contemporary Middle Eastern art must be selective. And the staff available at any one institution will inevitably impose their own selectivity, so that their own interests and enthusiasms can flourish to their own benefit and that of their students. This is surely both possible and appropriate, for we can still use that limited body of material to train students to assess evidence, to make judgments, and to come to conclusions. That is education. (p. 105)

When subjects such as art history, criticism, and aesthetics are combined with studio practices, students’ learning becomes active rather than passive. Also, art making in the art classroom typically leads to informal discussions taking place; if the dialogue is directed properly in the sense that the students are making connections between their art making, and reflection, they may learn more about their own artistic processes, and

reinforce what they are learning in their history, criticism, and aesthetic classes. Through their own art making students may be able to draw connections between their own art and contemporary art that is being made in Saudi Arabia.

Burton (2013) explains that there are guiding principles that good art educators put to use when designing art lessons, teaching those lessons, and the ongoing assessment of students' art making. They are not fixed principles, but rather possibilities that can be explored within the realm of art education, even in the most complex teaching circumstances. What is needed is the collaboration between art educators, and their students, in creating curriculums that are flexible, and as dynamic as students' artistic development; "The learning needs of children, adolescents and those who teach them, thus, cannot be fixed in a time or place, and are ever evolving as they overlap, and inform each other" (Burton, 2013, p. 10). Art educators must understand that some students may possess special talents that can be developed, while others may need encouragement in order to overcome obstacles, however, all students must be challenged according to their individual art making abilities. Art educators are responsible for guiding and molding their students' learning processes, and simultaneously learning from them, and with them. It is the good art educators who pay attention to individual students, while also paying attention to how collective students' perspectives, and visual voices weave into the fabric that is the art classroom, and beyond. Burton (2013), also suggests that good art educators know how to move away from their plans when circumstances demand, and accommodate the "unexpected and untried" (p. 15). Art educators have the valuable opportunity of becoming researchers within their art classrooms, and studios; there is much to be learning from observing students and their progress that may assist educators

in “artistic-aesthetic learning” (p. 15). It is every art educator’s responsibility to remain open to unpredictable occurrences in their classroom, to be curious and critical, and develop their own theories based on what they hear and see,

Reflection of this kind encourages teachers to dig deeper into their own teaching lives rather than become dependent upon established conventions and theories of others. Developing theories of learning from within their own situated practice helps teachers become more insightful in their planning and keeping alive the relevance of their instruction.

Artistic development. The acquirement of techniques, and the insistence on acceptable results are necessary in the arts as they are in other subjects, but as in any of these fields, however, factual knowledge has to be introduced with much sensitivity (Arnheim, 1990). If a student is taught something new at the wrong time, it may be useless and meaningless because it may not fit with what they can understand at a specific time in their development. Arnheim (1990), also poses an important question, “Where does art education stand in relation to the task of forming a fully developed person?” (p. 55) He gives the answer that art education should operate as one of the three central areas of learning intended to equip the young mind with the basic abilities needed for coping successfully with every branch of the curriculum. The first of these three central areas is philosophy, instructing the student in logic, which is the skill of reasoning correctly, epistemology; the ability to understand the relation of the human mind to the world of reality, and ethics; to distinguish between right and wrong. The second central idea he discusses is visual training, where the student learns to use visual phenomena as the principal way of organizing their thought processes. The third area is language training, which enables students to communicate their thoughts verbally. These three areas, according to Arnheim (1990) would be useful to apply in art education because

they provide the basic preparation, and would entail a beneficial interrelation between the arts and other fields. However, without careful study of the current state of art education, and setting newer goals rather than referring to ones that have been set long ago, the situation will remain the same. Without the teaching of skills combined with artistic knowledge, students may find it difficult to locate their individual areas of competence that cultivate particular skills and achievements.

Art educators must also consider that not all students develop and grow at the same pace; their development differs based on their individual personalities and their art making experiences inside and outside of educational institutions (Burton, 2013). It is essential that art educators pay attention to the development of students' personal repertoires (Burton, 2013). From an early age, artistic development begins when children make their first marks on a surface, which are frequently made during infancy. These repertoires become more complex and expressive as individuals move through the phases of their childhood and late adolescence (Burton, 2013). Artistic development may be considered "linear" in a general sense; however, young people "make choices within their repertoires and move back-and-forth from earlier to later phases in response to particular experiences and challenges" (Burton, 2013, p. 16). Therefore, rather than imposing art making lessons with a disregard for artistic development, it is important that art educators better understand and research artistic development in children, adolescents, and adults. It is also important that art educators are aware of the abilities of their students, "this means being knowledgeable about the circumstances of their lives and the skills, strengths, interests, and abilities they bring with them into the art classroom for these may be very different from those exhibited elsewhere" (Burton, 2013, p. 16). In addition to art

educators and the art classroom, there are also social and cultural influences outside of educational institutions, such as families, the media, and friends. Thus the outside influences must not be separated from what takes place within the art classroom, and art education should be centered on weaving connections through students' individual and collective experiences and artistic repertoires; "a knowledgeable respect for materials and their possibilities, and of development and its potential, are essential guides to good pedagogical practice" (Burton, 2013, p. 17).

Summary

In chapter II, I reviewed the literature on contemporary Arab art and art education. It has become clearer through this literature review that the way art is perceived, taught, and accepted varies depending on geographical location. This may be a reason why some contemporary educational institutions have created programs solely based on Western art, while others are focused on traditional or Islamic art, and why some are against modern Arab art, and in some cases the teaching of art altogether.

The literature has also shed light on the training of modern and contemporary Arab artists; whether at home or abroad, it is either Western-oriented and follows Western norms, aesthetics and rules, or leans towards tradition and Arab heritage. Also, many contemporary Arab artists are searching for their artistic identity, in a way that permits them to merge their Western education and way of life with their Eastern origins. Additionally, almost all contemporary Arab artists, even those in progressive Arab countries, have found difficulty in communicating with Arab audiences within their societies. In addition to social norms, religion, and traditions playing a role in the

inclusion of contemporary arts within educational systems, the issue requires further research that may uncover more factors behind the disjuncture of art in schools, colleges, and art being made by practicing artists outside of educational institutions. The literature has also pointed to the importance of understanding how to teach art to students through a paradigm that embraces flexibility, understanding, and considers students' artistic development. The past of modern Arab art weighs heavily on the present; uncovering some of the main reasons why contemporary Arab art continues to be an enigma in Arab societies is a step forward in guiding my research and beginning to uncover the reasons behind divide between contemporary Arab art, art education, and people in the Arab region.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative study aims to investigate, document, and describe the dynamics of art education in Saudi Arabia through data collected from high school and college educators, high school and college students, in addition to principals and university presidents. Data were collected from traditional and contemporary artists, in addition to the Ministry of Education through employees and archival documents.

I observed art classrooms in three high schools for females; the observations took place in 11th grade classrooms since art is not taught in girls' high schools beyond the 11th grade, additionally, this particular grade was chosen in order to investigate the transition students make from high school to college art. I observed visual art classes within two colleges for females. Additionally, I interviewed two university presidents, three high school principals, three high school art teachers, four college professors and a student from each institution. I will also interviewed one female contemporary artist and one female traditional artist, in addition to one male traditional artist and one male contemporary artist, and three employees from the Ministry of education. This research also included the study of documents from the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia.

Data Collection

This qualitative endeavor focused on multiple sites and individuals. The strategy that I found suitable for it was the collective case study method. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observations in art classrooms, and archival documents. All the data for this study were documented using an audiotape recorder in addition to field notes.

Site Selection

Data collection procedures for this multi-site study took place in art classrooms in K-12 schools and art classrooms at the college level in Saudi Arabia. It is important to note that the high schools and universities in which conducted my research were women's educational institutions. Single sex institutions are dominant at all levels of education in Saudi Arabia. There are two main reasons why I chose these specific locations. Firstly, art classes are rarely taught in boys' schools and universities beyond the elementary level. Secondly, women, under normal circumstances, are not allowed in boys' schools, so I would not be able to observe classrooms in most boys' schools even if art classes were offered. This research endeavor was not based on understanding gender differences within educational systems and outside of them; however, data did emerge in the research that relates to gender and gender issues due to the nature of segregation in educational institutions and Saudi Arabian society.

Participant Selection

I used purposeful sampling, a type of sampling described in a study by Patton (1990), where he explains that findings from even “a small sample” yields “important shared patterns that cut across cases” (p. 172). Merriam (1998) also described purposeful sampling as being “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which most can be learned” (p. 61).

Table 1

High School Principals Participating in Interviews.

Participants	Participants' Education	Participants' Expertise
Private High School Principal (B.G.)	BA in Cultural Studies from Saudi Arabia, and an MA in Educational Leadership from Australia.	Principal of KFUPM School for 12 years.
Public High School Principal (M.F.)	BA in education from Saudi Arabia.	Principal of Al-Aziziyah School for 21 years.
Private High School Principal (O.Q.)	BA in psychology and an MA in Education from Saudi Arabia.	Principal of Al-Manara School for five years.

Table 2

High School Art Educators Participating in Interviews.

Participants	Participants' Education	Participants' Expertise
Private High School Art Educator (B.B.)	BFA from Saudi Arabia.	Has taught high school art for 27 years Grades 7-11 in KFUPM School.
Public High School Art Educator (L.F.)	BFA from Saudi Arabia, and a BA in Graphic Design from Bahrain.	Eleven years of experience in teaching high school art. She teaches grades 10 and 11 in Al-Aziziyah School.
Private High School Art Educator (S.R.)	BFA and MFA from London.	Seven years of teaching experience; teaches grades 7-11 in Al-Manara School.

Table 3

High School Students Participating in Interviews.

Participants	Participants' Education	Participants' Expertise
Private High School Student (M.M.)	10 th grade high school student at KFUPM school.	
Public High School Student (S.J.)	11 th grade high school student at Al-Aziziyah School.	
Private High School Student (S.H.)	11 th grade high school student at Al-Manara School.	

Table 4

College Presidents Participating in Interviews.

Participants	Participants' Education	Participants' Expertise
College President (A.R.)	BA in sociology and psychology, MA in Education from the UK, and PhD in Higher Education from the US.	President of Noor College of Art for fifteen years.
College President (A.J.)	BA in World History and MA and PhD in Education from the US.	President of Funoon College of Visual Arts for six years.

Table 5

College Students Participating in Interviews.

Participants	Participants' Education	Participants' Expertise
College Student (M.S.)	Sophomore fine arts student at Noor College.	
College Student (T.H.)	Senior fine arts student at Noor College.	
College Student (R.L.)	Junior visual arts student at Funoon College.	

Table 6

College Art Educators Participating in Interviews.

Participants	Participants' Education	Participants' Expertise
Professor (H.L.), Noor College.	BFA from Saudi Arabia, and an MFA from the US.	Has taught painting for nine years.
Professor (M.E.), Noor College.	BFA from Saudi Arabia.	Has taught drawing for twelve years.
Professor (T.G.), Funoon College.	BA in Photography and Digital Media from Switzerland, and an MA in Art History from the UK.	Has taught digital photography at the college level for three years.
Professor (K.G.), Funoon College.	BA in Fine Arts from Saudi Arabia, and an MFA and PhD in Islamic Art from the UK and Scotland respectively.	Has taught History of Islamic Art, Drawing, and 3-D Studio for two years.

Table 7

Ministry of Education Employees Participating in Interviews.

Participants	Participants' Education	Participants' Expertise
Ministry of Education Employee (F.T.)	BA in Sociology and MA in Education.	Female official in Curriculum-Planning Department; worked in the Ministry for 20 years.
Ministry of Education Employee (N.K.)	BA and MA in Education.	Female head official in the Educational Programs and Activities Department, has been an employee at the Ministry of Education for 18 years.
Ministry of Education Employee (J.K.)	BA in Management and MA in Social Work.	Male strategic policy maker at the Ministry of Education for 31 years.

Interviews

Interviewing was the first method of data collection used in this study. A series of semi-structured interviews involved two college presidents, three high school principals, three high school art educators, four college art professors, one student from each

educational institution, and three employees from the Ministry of Education, two contemporary artists, and two traditional artists. I chose different individuals involved in different career paths to collect responses based on their diverse experiences in education. Interview participants were mainly asked general questions about how art is taught in schools and universities in Saudi Arabia, the criteria that plays a role in how art curricula are structured, and their perceptions about modern and contemporary Arab art.

Table 8

Traditional and Contemporary Artists Participating in Interviews.

Participants	Participants' Education	Participants' Expertise
Female Traditional Artist (O.T.)	BFA from Saudi Arabia.	Has been practicing traditional art making for 12 years.
Male Traditional Artist (F.D.)	Self-taught artist.	Has been a practicing traditional artist for 10 years.
Female Contemporary Artist (A.E.)	BFA and MA in Art History with a minor in Digital Art from London.	Has been a practicing contemporary artist for four years.
Male Contemporary Artist (M.A.)	MB BS in Medicine, BA in Graphic Design, and an MFA in Studio Arts from the US.	Has been practicing contemporary art for five years.

Each interview varied based on their responses and the follow up questions. Each interview lasted for one hour. The purpose of these interviews were to address the main research question, which is to investigate the differences between how art is taught and made in K-12 and college classrooms, and in the art created by traditional and contemporary Arab artists in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the main question was centered

on researching educational and cultural factors that influence how art and art making is perceived within high schools, colleges, and outside of educational institutions.

Interviews as a data collection method were also used to investigate the first and second sub questions, which relate particularly to educators and their teaching, in addition to students and what they are learning in their art classrooms. The participants being interviewed provided the information, stories, examples, and experiences from which I extracted answers to the research questions through case and cross case analysis. The interview protocols can be found in the appendices.

Observations

These observations took place in two particular sites: high school art classrooms and college art classrooms. The observations in this study were a second means of gathering data for the first, second, and third sub questions. The first question regarding educators, their education, and what guides their teaching were observed in the art classrooms. Simultaneously, what students are learning in high schools were investigated in relation to what they are learning in college art classrooms in order to better understand students' transition from high school art to college art.

Structure of observations. I conducted six observations at three different high schools (two per school), and eight observations within art classrooms at two colleges (four per college). Two observations were conducted with freshman, and two observations were conducted with seniors. Each session lasted for one hour. During these non-participant observations, I sat at the back of the classrooms and paid attention to the content of lessons, interactions between educators and the students, interactions among

classmates, spoken words, and the art making processes formally and conceptually. The purpose of these observations was to understand how art education is structured within classrooms in educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. As mentioned previously, these observations were only conducted within female educational institutions because I could not gain access to male educational institutions.

Archival Documents

With permission from the Ministry of Education, I studied documents and archival records in order to investigate the past and present guidelines set by the Ministry for female and male schools and colleges with regards to art education. Because archival documents are useful for their factual information, they provided a clearer picture of how art education has developed and evolved over the years within educational institutions, in addition to revealing the relationships among people and their institutions. These documents assisted me in understanding the differences that exist between art made within schools and colleges and outside of them.

Treatment of Data and Data Analysis

Analysis during data collection steps were used throughout the study. I wrote separate memos to myself capturing reflections, tentative themes, and ideas to pursue. Analyzing the data this way assisted me in the process of locating the emerging themes, in addition to assisting me with the organization and refinement of the data. The data for this study were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively for themes and recurring patterns of meaning. The categorizing analysis began with the identification of keywords and

segments of data that seem important and meaningful. Seidman (2013) described this as “marking what is of interest in the text” (p. 10).

Table 9

How Data from Interviews were Collected and Treated.

Research Questions	Data Type (Qualitative)	Data Source	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Interviews addressed the Main question and first sub question	Spoken words through interviews with Ministry employees, high school principals, and college presidents.	Primary Sources	60 minute audio taped interviews	Interview transcript analysis. Individual case analysis. Cross-case analysis was used to compare data within the same group and across groups to present and organize the findings thematically
Main question and first sub question	Qualitative (spoken words): Three high school art educators	Primary Sources	60 minute audio taped interviews	
Main question and second sub question	Qualitative (spoken words): three high school students	Primary Sources	60 minute audio taped interviews	
Main question and third sub question	Qualitative (spoken words): Two contemporary artists	Primary Sources	60 minute audio taped interviews	
	Qualitative (spoken words): Two traditional artists	Primary Sources	60 minute audio taped interviews	

Since I was using the multiple case study approach, I provided first a detailed description of each case and their settings, and the themes within a case; Creswell (2013) describes this as a within-case analysis. After transcribing and summarizing all the data collected from this research, I employed analysis strategies described by Berg and Lune (2012); I paid attention to individual responses and group interactions; explanations, patterns in terms used, ideas expressed, associations among ideas, and justifications. This resulted in developing a system of color-coding and creating topics and categories for successful analytical reading. Data were then organized into themes after the final analysis.

The four forms of data analysis as described by Stake (1995) were used in this study to analyze and compare data collected from interviews, observations, and documents. Firstly, I used categorical aggregation to seek a collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings would emerge. Secondly, I utilized direct interpretation where I looked at a single instance, and drew meaning from it without looking for multiple instances. Creswell (2013) views this as a means of taking the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful ways. Thirdly, I established patterns and looked for correspondence between two or more categories within an individual case by using the constant comparative method described by Merriam (1998). I also used cross-case synthesis described by Yin (2009); I then looked for similarities and differences among the cases. The data being analyzed were then compared with information generated in the same set of data or in another set. Finally, I developed tables from cross-analyzing the data. The categories and themes are presented in tables in the cross-case analysis section.

Table 10

How Data from Observations were Collected and Treated.

Research Questions	Data Type (Qualitative)	Data Source	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Observations Addressed the Main Question and First Sub Question	Spoken words in the art classroom, interactions, and dialogues. Photographs of students' artwork were taken in the classroom	Primary Sources	Audio taped six non-participants observations in high schools. Audio taped right non-participant Observations in two colleges: Observation duration: 60 minutes.	Direct interpretation, transcription, memos, and notes. Within case analysis and cross-case analysis.

Table 11

How Data from Documents were Collected and Treated.

Research Questions	Data Type	Data Source	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Main Question and First Sub Question	Qualitative: Documents from Ministry	Secondary Sources	Document Analysis	Documents were interpreted, analyzed, and incorporated coding content into themes

Addressing the Research Questions

Given that teaching of traditional art is dominant in high schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia, and given that artists do make traditional art outside of educational institutions in addition to contemporary art, what are the factors that contribute to

creating differences in how art and art making are perceived within educational settings and outside of them?

Specifically:

1. Do high school and college art educators influence their students with their own artistic practices or do they solely follow a set of predetermined guidelines set by the school or Ministry? What criteria determine how art is taught and made within educational institutions?
2. In what ways does art education in high schools and colleges influence students' perceptions about art, and their transition from one level of education to the next?
3. In what ways do practicing contemporary Arab artists in Saudi Arabia differ from traditional artists, who have been actively making art in recent years, in terms of their education and perceptions about art making?

Ethical Issues and Strategies

The ethical issues that arose during the study are categorized into issues prior to conducting the study, when beginning to conduct the study, while collecting data, analyzing data, and reporting data.

Ethical issues prior to conducting the study. Before embarking on the research endeavor, some issues included seeking approval from the Ministry of Education, high schools, and colleges participating in the study. Another issue was to gain permission from the participants, and to select a site. In order to address these issues, I submitted my protocol for institutional review board approval, identified and went through local

approvals, which proved difficult at the beginning as an outside researcher who would be spending time in the Ministry, and in classrooms.

Ethical issues at the beginning of the study. When beginning the study, some issues to consider were disclosing the purpose of the study, not pressuring participants into signing forms, respecting norms and traditions of people in Saudi Arabian society, and being sensitive to the needs of participants. In order to address these issues, I contacted participants and informed them of the general purpose of the study, and did not engage in deception about the nature of the study. I told participants that they do not have to sign forms. Additionally, I was fully aware of cultural, religious, gender, and other differences to be respected. I also obtained appropriate consent from parents as well as their children.

Ethical issues during data collection. During data collection, it was important to respect the sites, avoid deceiving participants, respect potential power imbalances, and the exploitation of participants through data collection methods, such as interviews. To avoid these issues, I built trust with the participants; discussed the purpose of the study and how the data will be used. I also avoided leading questions, withheld sharing personal impressions and experiences, and I avoided disclosing sensitive information.

Ethical issues during data analysis. When analyzing data, it was important to avoid siding with participants, avoid disclosing only positive results from the research, and respecting the privacy of participants. In order to avoid such issues, I reported

multiple perspectives, and reported contrary findings. I also assigned initials to the participants.

Ethical issues during reporting data. During the reporting stage of the research, I avoided falsifying authorship, evidence, data, findings, and conclusions; I reported data honestly, and avoided disclosing information that would harm participants. I communicated in a clear, straightforward manner, and used appropriate language for audiences of the research.

Validity Issues and Strategies

Researcher bias. One of these threats was bringing my own bias into the study. It is a study that emerged from my own personal experience; consequently subjective points of view may have the tendency to emerge. Clarifying my bias from the outset of this study is one approach I have used to resolve this issue, so that the reader understands my position and any assumptions that influence the inquiry (Merriam, 1998). Another way I resolved this issue was to ask myself throughout my research: What am I advocating as opposed to what can actually be done?

Reactivity. Similar to the previous validity issue, my own bias as a researcher, another validity threat was what Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) refer to as reflexivity. This was an issue when it came to designing the interview protocol and the nature of the questions being asked. Since minimizing my influence was not a meaningful goal for this qualitative study, one important solution I used was to avoid leading questions and to ensure that they were always open-ended. It was also important to keep in mind that

interviewees were not supposed to answer the research question, but rather provide stories, experiences, and examples. The responses they provided helped me extract the answers to research questions within case and cross-case analysis. I demonstrated clarity to the best of my ability in terms of thought processes during data analysis and subsequent interpretations.

Respondent validation. In order to ensure the credibility of the findings and interpretations, I solicited participants' views (Merriam, 1998). This approach involved taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account. According to Stake (1995), participants should “play a major role directing as well as acting in the case study” (p. 115). The participants were asked to examine rough drafts of the research, and to provide alternative language or interpretations. I did not take back to participants my transcripts or the raw data, but showed them my preliminary analyses consisting of description or themes in order to obtain their views of the written analyses as well as what may be missing.

Rich description. It was important for me to provide enough description to the readers so that they will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and whether the findings can be transferred to other situations (Merriam, 1998).

Multisite design. Using several sites, cases, and situations that maximize diversity in the study of art education inside and outside of educational settings allowed

for results to be applied by readers to a greater range of other situations (Merriam, 1998). In this study, the variation is achieved by purposeful sampling.

Confidentiality

The participants were informed that the data would be collected for the purpose of a research study, and that any information they provided would be handled as confidentially as possible. This research study was based on participants' freely volunteered informed consent. Additionally, forms were provided for parents of participants under the age of eighteen, and assent forms were provided for the minors. I explained fully and meaningfully what the research was about and how it would be disseminated. Participants were made aware of their right to refuse to participate, and understood the extent to which confidentiality would be maintained. They were aware of the potential uses to which the data might be put, and in some cases were reminded of their right to re-negotiate consent. As the investigator, I ensured that I would be the only individual to identify the responses of the participants, and would make every effort to prevent anyone outside of the research study from connecting individual subjects with their responses.

The participants in this study are anonymous. Any personally identifiable information that was collected will continue to be kept in a password-protected computer to guard this sensitive information. Direct and indirect information that identifies specific individuals was removed and replaced with a code. When presenting the data in the study, I used initials in place of the participants' names.

Summary

In this chapter I discussed the methodology that I used to conduct this research. I explained the three components of the study, which were the observations, interviews, and document analysis. I also gave details about the participants in the methods of the data collection, data treatment, and analysis. I concluded this chapter with ethical issues and strategies.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Since the aim of this study is to understand the dynamics of art and art education in Saudi Arabia inside and outside of educational institutions through document analysis, observations in high schools and colleges, in addition to interviews, the findings in this chapter will first be divided into individual cases, which consist of the Ministry of Education, three high schools, two colleges, two traditional artists, and two contemporary artists. The data within these cases are presented in the form of categories and themes that emerged during the collection and analysis processes. Secondly, this chapter will also include a cross-case analysis that will present the data across the individual cases to compare findings in order to provide a clearer understanding about art and art education in Saudi Arabia.

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the data were collected using document analysis, observations, and interviews. The findings collected from document analysis focus on the Ministry of Education's goals for art education in schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia, contain general information regarding male and female's art education, and present guidelines for K-12 schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia. The

observational findings in schools and colleges are presented in three sections: teaching method, art lessons and materials, and interaction in the art classroom. The reason they are divided as such is to provide a clear comparison between how art education is structured in high schools as opposed to colleges; in addition to understanding what factors determine how students make art, and the factors that determine how art educators approach and teach art within their individual classrooms.

The interview findings are first divided into two main categories: institutional dynamics and social dynamics. These two categories emerged from the initial analysis of individual cases. The institutional dynamics present findings that focus on responses discussing educational guidelines set by the Ministry, administrative guidelines, and the factors that determine why art is taught a certain way in schools and colleges and how it compares to art made outside of institutions by practicing artists. The social dynamics category presents findings that focus on how tradition, culture, religion, gender influence art education in a significant way at the high school and college level, and also influences the type of art that artists choose to make in their professional careers.

After the individual case analysis, the interview categories were further analyzed using the cross-case method and color coding, similar and different themes emerged across the board. Data from interviews conducted with Ministry of Education employees were cross-analyzed with data generated from college presidents and school principals' responses; data collected from high school art educators' interviews were cross-analyzed with data from college art educators; high school students' interviews were cross-analyzed with college students' interviews; and traditional artists' interviews were cross-

analyzed with contemporary artists' responses. The observational findings generated from schools and colleges were also cross analyzed and are presented in the same section.

The Ministry of Education Findings

Document Analysis

The following information is a report of the findings that were uncovered through analyzing documents at the Ministry of Education. These documents include a brief history of the Ministry, its educational goals, art education guidelines for K-12 schools and colleges, and annual reports on art education in Saudi Arabia. Although the Ministry of Education has kept a record of annual reports and guidelines over the years, there are some missing documents. The Ministry employees explained that they were either lost, or no new reports or guidelines were created for those years.

The establishment of art education in Saudi Arabia. Education in the early years of Saudi Arabia's formation was offered to students not through the modern conventional curriculums of schools today, but through the *Kuttab*; an educational system where a group of students gather in one room, and are taught the Holy Qur'an and good manners. However, the modern educational system established by the Saudi government that is based on the teaching of religion in addition to sciences, brought into being by the Ministry of Education, aimed to develop education by introducing new subjects to the curriculum. The Ministry of Education was first called the Directorate of Knowledge, and was formed by the government in 1925 to structure education in Saudi Arabia. Its was established in order to develop education and keep up with the progress of neighboring

Arab countries that had already established their own modern educational systems, such as Kuwait. The members of the newly established Ministry worked to evaluate existing educational institutions, and to establish new schools and colleges. The Directorate also focused on the development of students, which led to the formation of the first council of education to develop the quality of education and the curriculum in Saudi Arabia. This period of education chiefly focused on religion, and other subjects were kept on the periphery, and art education was not a part of the curriculum (A short History of the Ministry of Education, 2015). It is important to note that the first schools established in Saudi Arabia were for males, and it was not until 1955 that the first school for females opened; in 1960, the first Ministry of Education was established for women, separately from the male's Ministry, and was called the Presidency of Education (The Ministry of Education Report, 1961). In other words, art education was solely offered to male students in the past, but soon after was seen as a field more suitable for women in Saudi Arabia.



Figure 14. Students in Dar al-Hanan School in Jeddah, Ministry of Culture and Media.

The late King Faisal, and his wife the late Queen Effat viewed education for women as important and advocated for women's right to education. They also stressed

that a woman going to a modern school does not go against religion, as some people believed. His wife established the first girls' school in Jeddah, Dar al-Hanan, in 1955 (A short History of the Ministry of Education, 2015). In present times females dominate art and art education; this change occurred after newer subjects that were considered more suitable for males, were added to the male curriculum to replace art.

A published report on education states that in 1945, religion dominated 48.5% of the curriculum, Arabic became 34.3%, social studies became 5.9 % and math and science received 11.3% of class time (The Directorate Development Report, 1950). In order keep up with the development of education in neighboring Arab countries, and to ensure the ongoing improvement of the increasing number of schools and school subjects, the government transformed the small operating Directorate of Knowledge into a larger establishment called the Ministry of Education in 1953. Changes included new buildings, and the change of curriculums and school administrations, in addition to the inclusion of free time away from the school curriculum, designated by the Ministry as “leisure activities” (Transforming the Ministry of Education, 1955). These developments marked the first time leisure activities were included in the school day so that students may have time away from more demanding subjects. The Ministry of Education decided at that time to make art education one of the school leisure activities and subjects simultaneously.

The government's decision defined the start of the official inclusion of art education, which was called drawing at the time, in the K-12 schools. Additionally, when art was introduced in the 1950s, no education major was available to prepare educators to teach this subject, consequently, all teachers in the middle and elementary schools were

given permission to teach art without proper training. The Ministry of Education also stated in their guidelines (1951) that when there is a shortage of teachers, the “school administrators may choose any teacher in the school as a replacement, even if they did not possess the qualifications of an art teacher” (Ministry School Guidelines, p. 64). According a Ministry of Education letter sent out to K-12 schools in the 1950s, art activities “should be organized and directed by art educators, and in the case that there are not art teachers available, any teacher within the school maybe fill in for the art teacher” (Al-Hashmi, 1956).

According to the Ministry of Education report published in 1961, art did not become part of the Saudi school system until the year 1954, almost three decades after schools were first established. When art was introduced into K-12 schools, art classes focused solely on drawing. Such a heavy emphasis was placed on drawing because it was perceived as the most natural and basic way to make art, and it required simple tools. In the Ministry documents published in 1954, it also seems there was dominant interest in offering students art as a change of scenery from the other subjects in their curriculum and less of a focus on deepening their understanding of art making tools and approaches; the guidelines stated that art educators “are encouraged to teach students how to draw because it is the best method to teach them creativity, skills, and offer them a break from their daily tasks” (p. 21). Today, drawing remains a core component of art making in K-12 schools and in colleges, and in some instances is the only approach to art making that students are exposed to in their classrooms.

Saudi Arabia began to refine the first policy of education for its schools in 1957. Since then, drawing evolved as a subject in teacher preparation institutes and secondary

education general curricula. The Ministry of Education described the purpose of this program as a way to encourage students to appreciate, and understand their rich culture and heritage. A report on the condition of art education in 1958 stated,

Art education was introduced in 1957 to the teacher Preparation Institutes and secondary education general curricula. It was taught at these schools for one period per week. One general supervisor undertook the administration of this subject, created its curricula, and supervised its activities in schools (p. 19).

Art education became an authorized part of school curricula in 1958. This was a step forward for art education, but the curriculum had no underlying structure. The Administrator General of Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Education during that period enthusiastically supported the presence of art education in Saudi schools, and viewed it as necessary to make connections between the content of art and other subjects taught in school (Ministry of Education Report, 1960). The report states that art education must emulate religion and culture, which was seen as a crucial pedagogy in promoting the improvement of students' ability to advance their intellectual skills, "The arts in Saudi Arabia must adhere to our social and traditional norms, and these expressions will be created by focusing on drawing and making traditional crafts to sharpen skills, and reflect pride in one's identity" (p. 12). The Ministry of education was influenced by this particular administration to include art education as a necessary subject for all schools. However, despite the incremental improvements, art education was still placed under the control of the physical education and social studies department in the Ministry of Education rather than its own department.

Under the supervision of Youth Affairs a division called the "Art Office" was formed to structure art education, and drawing and craft subjects became the main goal of art in schools. Crafts were included in all general education stages in public and private

schools in 1962, and the name of the subject was changed from “Drawing and Crafts” to “Art Education.” A previous Ministry of Education Employee suggested that the name be changed to broaden the scope of the visual arts to keep up with neighboring countries, and to possibly introduce newer media in the future (A. Abdelhamid, personal communication, July 7, 2017). The Art office at the Youth Affairs at Ministry of Education was also changed to the Art Education Department, and Ministry of Education established a Department of Curriculums to construct a new general curriculum in 1964. One of its responsibilities was to develop a working curriculum that would meet the needs of Saudi schools; 1964 was also the year the first college of art was established in Saudi Arabia.

In 1965, the Ministry strived to create an Institute of Art Education that employed art educators from nearby countries since there were no art educators qualified to teach art education at the time. Students admitted to this institute were required to have completed intermediate level schooling. After three years of art education, they became certified to teach art. This arrangement suited the country’s goals for education, as it trained educators native to Saudi Arabia (The Ministry of Education Report, 1974). The curriculum in this institute focused on drawing, painting, and weaving. Most of these students specialized in one or two areas like drawing and painting. They focused on sharpening their artistic skills, not on acquiring teaching methods. The training program was more geared towards teaching students how to be artists rather than art educators. According to a report published in 1974, one reason was because textbooks were not available, and experienced art educators to pass on the knowledge were scarce (Ministry of Education Report, 1974).

In 1968, the department of curriculums made the first collection of guidelines and instructions for art teachers to meet the need of a more structured atmosphere in the art classroom. The reason was because art educators were not following organized or pre-approved lesson plans, which meant the classes had no particular focus or goals, and that the subject matter in students' art could go in any direction. Guidelines such as making connections between a student's direct environment and art were important to the Ministry. The Ministry created more teacher positions to employ more Saudis without regard to the qualifications of the teachers. When the Ministry of Education developed the first art education curriculum in 1968, it was presented as a wide-ranging guideline for art educators in Saudi Arabia. It offered art educators an encouraging method to teach their students through the use of well-organized lesson plans (Ministry of Education Report, 1968).

Art Education in K-12 Schools and Colleges in Saudi Arabia

K-12 schools and colleges normally adhere to the guidelines imposed by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Report, 2015), which from my own experiences as a student, play a major part in how teachers, students, and society at large perceive art and art making. The Ministry focuses on specific goals for art education that came into consideration when they consulted with art educators from neighboring countries to evaluate the benefits of art education and its importance in the school curriculum. They were framed in response to a need for determining outcomes for art education and to support development in the following areas: “emotional growth, intellectual development, physical development, perception, social development, aesthetics, creativity, the use of the senses, respect for and love of work, self expression,

self confidence, knowledge of tools, the expansion of knowledge in general and specifically knowledge of the terminology of art, and the ability to take advantage of free time in order to benefit the person and the society” (Ministry of Education Goals Report, 2005, p. 21). However, from my personal experience and observations in schools, it seems that many of these goals are not being realized in the art classrooms.

In 1968, the Ministry of Education created guidelines for evaluating students’ performance in art education within middle and elementary schools. The guidelines specified that 50% of the grade was focused on how students performed in drawing, and the other 50% relied on their craftwork (Ministry of Education’s Circular for student Evaluation, 1986-1994). One may conclude that art education in Saudi schools did not consider art criticism, aesthetics, and art history as integral disciplines in art education. In addition, the circular has also indicated that even if students have no percentage points in art education, they would not be given a failing grade. Some school officials also look upon art education as a very minor subject. When I attended K-12 school in Saudi Arabia, I felt art instructors were held in low regard in comparison to other disciplines, and art education, unlike other subjects in school. They did not encourage the teachers or the students to learn about the visual arts, aesthetics, art criticism, and art history. Art education was viewed as wasting students’ valuable academic time. School administrators have even changed low art grades for students who did well in mathematics and sciences. Additionally, the goals of teaching art education that was issued in 1977 and reissued again in 1988 did not indicate that teachers should experiment with techniques or media that would assist them in teaching art. From my

own personal experience, the lack of art education books and resources in libraries is another drawback for the art teachers and students.

Art education at the college level was introduced in the 1960s and 1970s. It was established under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Similar to K-12 education, there were also many instructors and professors who came from abroad to teach art in Saudi Arabia (The Ministry of Education Report, 1974). When programs were first established, there were many instructors from Europe and America. However, from the literature and my personal experience, it appears the majority of college art instructors hailed from Egypt, Iraq, Sudan, and other Arab countries. Most art colleges in Saudi Arabia are female colleges, and come with some restrictions, but students at this level have been given more room to explore different aspects of art making that are not given to K-12 students. The Ministry and educators give students at the college level more freedom to express themselves. For example, students at the college level are allowed to make figurative art and make portraits in a variety of artistic styles. The students, however, are normally encouraged to make art that will represent their Saudi and Arab heritage.

The first guidelines for teaching art education in schools, 1968-1971. In 1968, the Ministry of Education published guidelines that focused solely on drawing and crafts. Art educators were encouraged to follow them and to make modifications if needed, as long as they followed the main goals of the guidelines. The guidelines for K-12 students were listed briefly and generally, which allowed art educators much room to innovate. The introduction stated its purpose as educating students to appreciate their environments

in relation to places, architecture, traditional objects, and nature. These guidelines begin with some instruction for art educators, which are listed in the Ministry of Education Report (1968), as follows:

1. The art educator should respect the children's individual styles.
2. The art educator must relate drawing with crafts equally in the classroom.
3. Connections must be strengthened between art education and other school subjects.
4. The art lesson must encourage the students to create a relationship between their environment and society.
5. The art educator must be prepared with the required tools for each art lesson.
6. The art educator must foster collective experiences by encouraging students to take part in school exhibitions.
7. The art educator must formulate a syllabus that encompasses all the lesson plans and the purpose of the lessons. All lessons must be pre-approved by the Ministry and school administration.
8. The school is responsible for providing the art educator and art students with a space in which to make art in a creative environment (Ministry of Education Report, 1968, p. 115).

The guidelines also provide a clarification of the rationale of a general art education:

1. To encourage students to express what they wish to learn in relation to art when they have the opportunity.
2. Provide examples and visual aids in art lessons.

3. The art educator may provide students with the opportunity to make an art project of their own choosing.
4. The art educator must provide a variety of materials to offer the students options in art making.
5. The art lessons must teach students to trust their ability, have patience, and to be experienced in recognizing art from non-art.
6. Students must learn to keep a clean and neat classroom.
7. Students must be given the opportunity to make a self-inspired artwork.
8. Art educators must develop the students' ability to work together.
9. Art educators must foster in the students a sense of enjoyment in observation (Ministry of Education Report, 1968).

Although the Ministry of Education issued guidelines that indicated art teachers had the freedom to explore their ideas and use free expression, students in the classroom do not have complete freedom of expression. In fact, teachers choose the subject matter and some times interfere with the art making process by drawing directly on the students' artwork, or showing them examples they should mimic while they make art.

The Ministry of Education put into action new curriculums for elementary, middle schools, and high schools in 1971. The guidelines that were issued for elementary and middle schools were applied to female and male schools. They included drawing, painting, decoration of two-dimensional works of art, and three-dimensional production (handwork), including use of clay, and other environmental materials. The curriculums were also structured to familiarize students with art appreciation; which is still not practiced in schools in Saudi Arabia due to the scarcity of facilities and instructional aids;

art books, reproduction of artworks, in addition to the shortage of qualified art educators who possess training or knowledge in art history, art appreciation, and criticism. Since that time, the Ministry, with the exception of minor amendments to the annual guideline of the Ministry of Education, has made no new curriculum available.

The Ministry of Education made a decision to do away with art education from some middle public schools for boys in 1975. According to an employee at the Ministry “the reason given for this elimination was that the secondary education program was filled-up with other needed subjects” (A. Salah, personal communication, February 15, 2017). The minister of education at the time explained, “art education given in the earlier stages is sufficient, so that studying art at the secondary level is not considered necessary.” (Ministry of Education Report, 1975) Since then, the art education curriculum has changed in schools, but this new change does not offer teachers guidelines, as the previous model has. It instead instructs educators to devise their own plans. This may mean that a sense of continuity is lacking for students in these classes. Educators are not obligated to follow guidelines from 1968-1971; in other words, they have the options of returning to guidelines for inspiration or may choose their own focus, within the limits of what is acceptable according to the original guidelines. Curriculum guidelines encouraged art teachers to create lesson plans that would develop and strengthen students’ thinking skills, confidence, pride in the production of their artwork, and respect for the culture they belong to. Educators were shown how to incorporate art education into a broad-based educational curriculum that supported all the different educational areas. The educators learned how to develop suitable lesson plans drawn from the curriculum guidelines, and tailored them to students’ abilities, the availability of

materials in building and promoting a positive attitude towards tradition, religion, culture, and society.

In 1975, the Ministry also changed its requirements for art educators, and no longer allowed individuals with just a high school diploma to become art educators. Those seeking positions as art educators were required to complete two years of teacher education programs that had just been established at the time. In 1976 there were 562 foreign art teachers and 116 art teachers from Saudi Arabia who mostly graduated from universities in Egypt. The majority of the art educators who taught at schools, art teachers programs, and the college level were Egyptian. The Saudi art curriculum also mimicked the Egyptian curriculum with the adaptation of 3-D drawings, crafts, and Islamic decorations. In 1974, the first university in the Kingdom established the first Art Education Department. It was a four-year program to teach in elementary or middle school. Art educators at the college level also carried similar degrees as art teachers in the 1970s and 80s. However, in present time, college instructors and professors are expected to carry at least a bachelor's degree and in some case, only those with a Masters degree in art can teach students at the college level (Ministry of Education Report, 2015).

Curriculum for teaching art education in schools 1971-1988. The first formal curriculum for teaching art education in middle schools was issued in 1971, more than 10 years after the art program was established. The general goals for art education were to focus on Islamic heritage as it is represented in artwork and decorations. The following is a brief outline of the original art guideline. Each grade level was assigned one art class per week. The guideline was outlined in the following manner:

Kindergarten and elementary schools. Drawing and craft making should focus on the environment and history, religious holidays, and stories. Students were asked to draw from their imagination, memory, and tangible objects. They were also expected to make finger painting. Other lessons instructed students to portray themselves, family members, and friends. The craft making classes focused on the use of texture and dimension for expression. For example, students were asked to make free shapes by rolling, folding, and cutting paper to make their own creation (Ministry of Education Report, 1971).

Middle schools. Art education in middle schools also focused on the environment and history, holidays, and stories with a higher emphasis on decorations (Ministry of Education Report, 1971).

High schools. Students are expected to use various drawing schemes and decorations, and to experiment with ceramics, and various materials (Ministry of Education Report, 1971).

Curriculum for teaching art education in schools 1988- present. There were not many changes from the previous curriculum; the second curriculum emphasized similar goals for art education as its predecessor; it also focused on national and Islamic heritage.

Kindergarten and elementary schools. Classes were heavily focused on drawing. The curriculum stressed that art classes should focus on the environment, history, religious and national holidays, and stories (Ministry of Education Report, 1988).

Middle schools. Focus on environment and history, and free lesson plan, holidays, stories, decorations, and ceramics. Students are also expected to draw from memory or imagination tangible objects, simple decoration and finger painting. The students in crafts lesson are expected to make their own decorations using clay. Students also do simple modeling. Work with paper, with the use of colors or black ink (Ministry of Education Report, 1988).

High schools. Students at this level are expected to make the same art as the middle school students with an extra focus on decorations, and logo design. They are also expected to draw from memory. The crafts should focus more on Islamic decorations and calligraphy and handwork (Ministry of Education Report, 1988).

The Ministry of Education reissued the Curriculum for Teaching Art Education in elementary schools in 1988. The guidelines also included an explanation of the purpose of a general art education as same as the first curriculum (Ministry of Education Report, 1988). The above-mentioned findings portrayed the level of freedom offered to students to guide the content of their art classes. However, the approach of imposing themes and subject matter on students opposes the premise of encouraging free artistic expression introduced in the initial Saudi art education guidelines. In fact, it is inconsistent with the latest guidelines for teaching art, which required educators to “encourage students to express themselves for the sake of the cultivation of creativity in various media without any external intervention” (p. 4).

Curriculum for teaching art education at the college level 1964- present. The Ministry of Education issued guidelines, similar to those of K-12 schools, for college students in 1964, and has not changed them since with the exception of an amendment to the second guidelines, which adds “new media:”

1. Art educators must allow the students to express what they wish to learn about when they have the opportunity.
2. Art educators must motivate the students to create art through painting, drawing, and new media by using visual aids in the lesson.
3. Art educators must give the students the opportunity to make an art project of their own choosing.
4. Art educators must suggest a variety of materials for students to work with. The purpose is to provide students with options of creating art that is different, and to expose them to different techniques.
5. Art educators must encourage their students to trust their own abilities, to have patience during art making processes. Students are expected to understand the difference between art and non-art.
6. Art educators should teach students to be responsible in the studio space, and to always keep the studio clean after art making.
7. Students must be given the opportunity to make self-inspired artwork inside of the art classroom.
8. Art educators must develop the students’ ability to work together through the conception of a work of art and during art making.

9. Students should be encouraged to discuss and critique each other's artwork, and should be encouraged to learn artistic terms that will benefit their vocabulary
10. Art educators must find new and innovative ways to foster in the students a feeling of enjoyment in observation and developing attention to detail in art making.
11. Art educators must understand and respect that students have individual artistic styles; these differences should be highlighted within the art classroom verbally and artistically.
12. Art educator must encourage students to make art that reflects their surroundings, national identity, heritage, culture, and interests within limits that are socially acceptable.
13. Art educators must encourage students to master artistic skills if students show potential in specific areas.
14. Art educators must encourage the students to participate in national and international exhibits with their artwork. They should also be encouraged to participate in school exhibitions.
15. Art educators must create a syllabus covering the entire academic year, and the Ministry and the educational institution must approve the syllabi (Ministry of Education Report, 1968, p. 117).

Annual reports for K-12 schools and colleges. In addition to the guidelines published by the Ministry of Education, two annual reports were also published and placed in their archives. According to the Ministry, these were first published in the mid 1980s. However, there is no record of the reports published prior to 1990/1991.

Additionally, there is no record of reports between the years of 1991 and 1999. The last

annual report was published for the 1999/2000 academic years. The purpose of these reports was to provide a review of the guidelines, and assess art education goals.

An annual report on art education 1990-1991. The first annual report was written for the 1990/1991 academic years and began with some instruction for art educators to encourage the students to appreciate art and to help the development of students morally, emotionally, creatively, aesthetically, intellectually, and perceptually. In addition, the annual report was divided into drawing and crafts for each grade in K-12 schools; and did not specify the use of media for college students. It did however instruct art educators at the college level to encourage students to explore themes similar to those taught in school, such as nature, tradition, landscapes, architecture, and Arabian jewelry. As for the schools, it suggested that art teachers select the lesson plans from the environment, stories, imagination, society, and special days in the country. The annual report also suggested some materials used such as colored pencils, colored paper, simple clay, etc. For kindergarten and elementary school, it specified that art teachers should select the lesson plans for students from their daily lives. For crafts, the annual report suggested clay, cardboard, or other available materials.

For middle school and high school the annual report continued to recommend following the same lesson plans, and selecting new lesson plans from other class subjects such as history or geography class, which means making links between art education class and other subject classes. The students at this stage were expected to design simple decorations by using shapes. The annual report recommended working with paper, and any other available materials. These reports also showed examples of student art work in K-12 schools and colleges they envisioned as appropriate for students to make.

An annual report on art education 1999-2000. After reviewing the annual report from 1990/1991, it came to my attention that both of the annual reports encouraged art educators to follow the old annual reports from the previous years, which has led me to make the conclusion that the annual reports did not change drastically over the years. According to the annual report in 2000 "art education teachers should follow the annual reports for years 1998/1999 and years 1993/1994" (p. 1). In the reports, there was no policy for art educators to follow, except a few several instructions. The first instruction was to encourage the students to be qualified to critique their own artwork, which helps them to understand and appreciate art education. Next, art educators are expected to make the lesson plans interactive by using new instructional materials, and they should select new lesson plans for the students without repeating them. The other instructions encouraged art educators to organize art exhibitions at schools and colleges to display student work and create a sense of participation and accomplishment among the students.

There were no annual reports published after the year 2000, and guidelines have not changed since then. The most prominent change happened in K-12 schools during this 17-year period was the introduction of art education textbooks in 2008 for elementary, middle, and high schools. The required textbooks aim to enable students to focus on their skills and enhance their abilities in relation to drawing and painting, and to design products that are both functional as well as artistic. The book focuses on the history of traditional art techniques, and introduces students to ceramics, calligraphy, and weaving to produce cultural artifacts, learn the cultural vocabulary of these artworks and also the economic benefits of making traditional art. The textbooks are heavily word-based and contain few visual aids; they simply serve as general instructional guides for

how students should make art, and do not mention any type of art being made in Saudi Arabia other than traditional art.

In schools, students continue to have one art class per week, which from my experience is not enough time to develop their abilities or to understand and appreciate art. In addition, each 45- minute class is not enough time for art educators to provide motivation, support, and assist students in understanding and valuing art education. As the guidelines have suggested, students who show potential in a particular art making skill should be encouraged to master it, however, they do not have enough time in their art classes to achieve that either. On each subject, students in Saudi Arabia spend an average of eight hours per week of Islamic Studies, six hours per week of Arabic Studies, and four hours per week for science, mathematics, and English, while college students are able to dedicate more of their times to the arts (Report on Saudi Art Education, 2001). The interview responses in the following section will further illuminate how art education is structured in high schools, colleges, and their influence beyond the realms of educational institutions.

Interview and Observation Findings

The interview findings from this study are categorized under institutional and social dynamics. The data are grouped according to the institutions and participants from the study. No observations were conducted at the Ministry of Education, but observations were conducted in high schools and colleges. The presentation of findings from those

observations will precede the interview findings in the case of schools and colleges, and will later be presented in the cross-case analysis along with the interview findings.

Ministry of Education Interview Findings

The following findings resulted from interviews with Ministry of Education Employees F.T. and N.K., and J.K.

Institutional dynamics. Institutional dynamics play a main role in how art education programs are constructed. The dynamics put forth by the Ministry include adhering to guidelines that focus on the use of certain media and themes at the high school and college level. They also differentiate between what is appropriate to be taught at in schools and colleges. According to a female official in the curriculum planning department of the Ministry, F.T., art educators are expected to follow the guidelines without deviation, but college art educators in particular have more opportunities to interpret some aspects without straying too far from what is expected to be taught. F.T. explains,

Within K-12 schools, we are exposing our students to a variety of subjects, and art is of course one of them. However, the purpose of teaching art in schools is not so students will become professional artists, just like the teaching of mathematics for example, is not so the students will become mathematicians. Truth be told, students do spend more time on mathematics than they do art. But what we want is for students to learn skills and patience through art that will help them develop creatively. College students majoring in the arts are more focused on solely on art, which is a big reason we give them more flexibility with their art making.

F.T. stressed that the role of the art educator is not diminished because of the existing guidelines; when they were set up for educational institutions and educators to follow, what was taken into consideration were the educators' technical and educational experiences. After all, the expectation is that educators must interpret the guidelines into

lessons to teach, and for the students to take those lessons and make something creative. F.T. explained that high school students have many subjects to keep up with, and the Ministry hopes that art can be a vent where students could make something tangible without having to read and memorize. At the college level, where students have decided to specialize in art, educators have more opportunities to intensively teach students about new media and techniques.

Another female Ministry official in the educational programs and activities department, N.K. explained that the mission at the Ministry is to facilitate education that is fruitful in terms of self-development for students, and collective development for society. Art education is seen as a form of self-development and art making is a considered a skill set that that they want students to learn in order for them to excel in other subjects, while simultaneously engaging in physical activities that reinforce Saudi culture,

Our goal is to instill our values and identity in our students regardless of their age or educational level. When art guidelines are created or improved upon, the focus is to offer educators a way to teach students about art in such a way that teaches them new skills, translates an understanding of everyday life into creative channels, and most importantly using their creativity in positive ways.

Social dynamics. The dominance of social dynamics in Saudi Arabia is not only apparent in daily life, but is a key component in what students are taught, and this has a direct influence on art education and art making. According to F.T., in the past, art was not a very big concern among Saudis. Art did exist, but in a very seamless and spontaneous manner; it was the embroidery in the clothes people wore, and the colors in which they painted the interior and exterior walls in their homes. Art was present in everyday life, and regarded as something that came naturally. In today's society, art is

something that is taught in schools and colleges as a field that can be studied, however, art in some of its contemporary forms are not widely accepted by society because of the differences that exist between contemporary and traditional art. Other members of society may not pay much attention to art altogether because it is not considered to be a necessity. F.T. argues, “From my own point of view, it seems that art is regarded as a luxury in Saudi Arabia, not a necessity unless it is functional.” F.T. added, Contemporary Arab art is rather new in Saudi Arabia, and it is unfamiliar territory for many, “I am not an expert in art, but I think contemporary art started out as something rebellious against having to conform to tradition, religion, and aspects of life some may view as social constraints. Traditional art or Islamic art is safe; it doesn’t offend or test conceptual boundaries.” She added, “Since the environment we live in is conservative, students in college normally learn about artists who make art that is appropriate for the place we live in. Which is why the lessons learned are usually about Islamic or traditional art.” The premise of what art should look like or what qualities characterize art is an ongoing debate everywhere in the world. In Saudi Arabia, however, what many people in society consider art must be something that coincides with social norms. F.T. explained,

Contemporary art that is being made in Saudi Arabia has similarities and differences when it comes to more traditional forms of art or Islamic art; the biggest difference is based on the idea of free expression. When we look at traditional or Islamic art, we see closeness to our beliefs and values; contemporary art on the other hand, does not follow a set of rules, it can be anything. This openness is something that may cause people in Saudi society to refrain from it. Within the Ministry, art is the least discussed subject when it comes to talking about the different disciplines being taught across schools and colleges. But when discussions about art do arise, contemporary art is perceived as something we are hesitant to introduce to students. People in society either give art too little importance, or do not understand it.

Both F.T. and N.K. explained that not all contemporary art is considered bad, but the exposure to it has potential to give students ideas that deviate from the conventional example the Ministry aspires to set. The main argument was that students must have pride in their culture, and for that reason, there is a sense of caution.

Despite the different perceptions that exist about traditional and contemporary art in Saudi society, the Ministry describes its mission as providing a well-rounded education, which includes art education, for males and females, that reinforces life in Saudi Arabia, and this reinforcement requires first and foremost a foundation of understanding of what Saudi society needs to move forward in relation to its values and identity. F.T. describes this foundation as being “made up of multiple entities, such as tradition, culture, religion.” She elaborated, “Art education is also set up in such a way. We are open to teaching our students multiple subjects and fields, as long as the teachings focus on human development, and of course must be beneficial.” N.K. explains,

As Saudi people, we have common values. We share a religion, Islam, which guides many aspects of our practical lives, including our perceptions. We are heavily attached to our traditions and culture, and normally view matters through that scope. So, in our societies, we view art as something that in a way mirrors our identities and values. We also view art as being functional and something of physical or mental utility.

Another social factor is gender segregation. It is enforced in Saudi Arabian daily life, and in educational institutions as a way to maintain conservative boundaries between males and females. However, the segregation also specifies what is appropriate for women and men to learn about and practice in schools, colleges, and in the work force. A strategic policy maker at the Ministry of Education, J.K., explained that art is perceived as necessary for females at different stages of their lives because it is widely perceived that this makes them accomplished girls and ladies. On the other hand it is perceived as

unconventional and untraditional for boys and men to be involved in art past a certain part in their lives, particularly adolescence because they are expected to focus their attention on masculine activities, “and this is precisely why a male practicing art as a profession, and not a hobby, is frowned upon, and why males are only taught art up to a certain age.” He argued that art is important for a student’s analytical skills and development, which is why it is taught to boys in the first place. However, it is later eliminated in hopes that men would not pursue it as a possible career prospect. F.T. also discussed male art education, “it has always been the tradition for men to support their families, and this means a man must have a career that fulfills this duty. Art is taught to boys as an extra activity, but it cannot be a stable source of income in Saudi Arabia.”

N.K. described art education for females, and why it is considered especially important in their case, “Traditional art made by females is a way to teach young ladies how to be passionate and patient nurturing mothers who make their surroundings beautiful.” She added, “this means representing themselves in their artwork, and making art that shows they are educated young ladies, who are proud of their culture and heritage.”

Al-Aziziyah Public School Observation Findings

These findings were gathered from the two observations conducted in an 11th grade art classroom.

Teaching method. During both observations, and upon entering the art classroom, which was rather small and disorganized, I noticed that it took the art educator almost five minutes to get the full attention of her students. The already limited time of

the art class was cut short due to this. To get their attention, she clapped her hands, and told the students that if they did not want lots of homework, they would need to focus in class. The students quickly sat up properly in their seats, and gave their undivided attention to the teacher. The classroom felt small with all 24 students inside it. They sat close to one another; I began to think they did not have much space to move around, let alone explore and make art.

The art educator began by discussing the focus of the art lesson with her students. The materials that will be used, and the time frame students have to complete their artwork. She used sentences such as, “You will only use cultural objects,” and “Remember to make art the way I will demonstrate it to you, so you can get the best results.” There were no assignment sheets handed out to the students, and the students listened attentively to their teacher’s instructions. She used the blackboard in the classroom to demonstrate how she expected students to draw; she also showed them students’ drawings from previous years that she regarded as important examples for them to aspire to. She informed the students that the lesson expectations were to make their drawings and paintings look as beautiful and realistic as possible.

Art lessons and materials. The first observation was conducted during a lesson on traditional objects, such as, pottery used in homes for functional and decorative purposes. The lesson also involved drawing traditional objects from photographs. The second lesson was similar in its content but was centered on making a colored version of the object drawing using paint. Each student had a drawing pad, colored pencils, pens, markers, and paint.

Interaction in the art classroom. As the students began to draw, the art educator reminded them to be aware of specific aspects to improve while making their artwork, such as, “add a line here” or “add more shade here.” The students appeared to be silent most of the time and focused on drawing. Some of them would speak to their classmates while drawing.

When the class time ended, the teacher asked the students to complete the drawings at home and bring them in the following class for submission. The students gathered their art materials and left class. There were no critiques or reflections on the art making process during the sessions I attended.

The teacher was at her desk during the majority of both class sessions I attended, and she occasionally walked around the classroom as the students continued to draw and paint in complete silence for the remainder of the classes. Once in a while the art educator explained, “Remember, the goal is to look at these objects, and not only study and translate their form, but to also understand what it is you are drawing, what does this object mean to you?” Most of the questions she asked were rhetorical, and students would occasionally look up at her while she was talking, but then return their gaze to the sheet of paper in front of them. Some students tried to draw their chosen objects concisely, while others used more stylistic approaches.

Al-Aziziyah Public School Interview Findings

The following findings emerged from the interviews conducted with the high school principal (M.F.), the art educator (L.F.), and the 11th grade student (S.J.).

Institutional dynamics. During the data collection and analysis phases of this study, I discovered that a common institutional factor throughout schools is that art educators struggle with having to follow strict guidelines, and compromise dearly with regards to giving students more freedom to make art, and when planning their lessons. But another issue they face is funding. In order to ensure the continuation of any subject within an educational institution, proper funding must be provided. From my own personal experience, it is not uncommon for schools to receive little funding for arts, and some public schools may have a shortage of art teachers from time to time in male and female schools. Principal M.F. sees it as her “duty to ensure there are enough funds for art education, and to sign off on the lesson plans that art teachers present at the beginning of each academic year.” She also explains, “Although art education is available in my school, and other schools, by educational standards it is considered an activity, not a necessity, and this leads to budget cuts in the arts.” She elaborated on this response by explaining that if a subject such as science required more time or attention, the art class could be cancelled and replaced.

Art making and art teaching within high schools are also limited by the content, themes, and materials used. Art educator, L.F., explained, “I enjoyed making art when I was growing up, but I always felt that as a student, I didn’t have much of a choice in the art I made. I was determined to become an art educator who gave students more freedom.” However, when she became a teacher she understood the complications that result from the intersection of society and culture and education.



Figure 15. An 11th grade student's pen drawing of a traditional Arabian coffee pot, 2017.

She also stated, “Teaching high school has made me realize that Saudi Arabian society has a long way to go in terms of making actual changes to how art can be taught. I find myself having to teach the same lessons every semester with slight variation.” As an art educator, she is “expected to teach according to the guidelines the Ministry provides,” and is unable to “introduce new types of art into the curriculum.” But her education as a graphic designer, who teaches high school art, encouraged her to “move away from making art for art’s sake and focus on teaching students to communicate with their art. L.F. explained, “Since students can’t make art that portrays figures, I teach my students communication through color and form.” One of her art education goals is to teach art classes that include introducing students to art that is being made in Saudi Arabia, including contemporary art, she added, “We don’t teach students about contemporary Arab art because many educators aren’t knowledgeable about it. The educators who do

know very much about art face obstacles because of the objections from the Ministry and administrators.”



Figure 16. (Left) Watercolor illustration of a coffee pot and cups by an 11th grade student, 2017.

Figure 17. (Right) 11th grade student's drawing of a traditional garment worn by Arabian women, 2017.

Students also share the sentiment of needing new lessons, and learning about new artistic practices. The student, S.J. explained, “I want to learn more things about artists in Saudi Arabia, and how they find inspiration to make their art.” She also added, “Since we were kids, the media we use haven’t changed. I would like to practice art by learning new things, not repeating old lessons.”

Social dynamics. As mentioned previously, there is great attention paid to structuring education to mirror tradition and culture in Saudi Arabia. Knowledge is tailored not only to age, which is the case in many parts of the world, but is also tailored to gender. According to the principal, M.F., when it comes to determining how subjects

are taught in schools and colleges, females are not taught the same subjects as males because the educational system has specific ambitions for what roles each gender can and should perform. In the past, craft making, for example, was practiced by men and women, and still is in some rural parts of Saudi Arabia. However, drawing and painting, is seen as something only females should practice. Principal M.F. explained,

Males can make art, but men are expected to pursue other fields, which is a reason why schools do not teach art education in male's schools past a certain age. The way art is taught in girls' schools and female colleges taps into the very persona of a Saudi female, her surroundings, the culture, and tradition.

The student S.J. Said, "We usually make art about society, respecting tradition, and showing female identity by drawing feminine objects, but not actual females." Another response she gave indicated that students are aware of these gender expectations, "I want to study art and become an art teacher or artist. I want my art making to be about showing women they can make anything they wish, and choose on their own how they will accomplish their artistic goals."

The scope in which Saudi Arabian communities perceive art contributes to neglecting to develop teaching methods and curriculums, and excludes art forms that do not match the guidelines previously set. The principal, M.F., said, "There are many people within educational institutions that are very open to learning about new forms of art, but there are also communities that are less understanding." She added,

The way we view art has everything to do with social beliefs and educational priorities. On the one hand, art is not seen as a serious field to pursue, nor is it seen as something lucrative in the financial sense. Many would argue that students are better off learning something they could actually make a living out of, and making art would be child's play. Art is also very much understood in its traditional sense, and newer art that is being made is seen as an invasion on our art; it is an art that is not inspired by our own culture but rather something that came from the outside. An ideal situation would be changing the understanding of art among students at a very young age, and teaching them that art is not just a

hobby, it can be a tool for communication, and beautiful all at once. The most important thing in education is to keep an open mind, and art education is the same in that sense. That is easier said than done in our communities. Although art has not changed much in our schools, we try to keep a positive mindset that attitudes will change towards art.

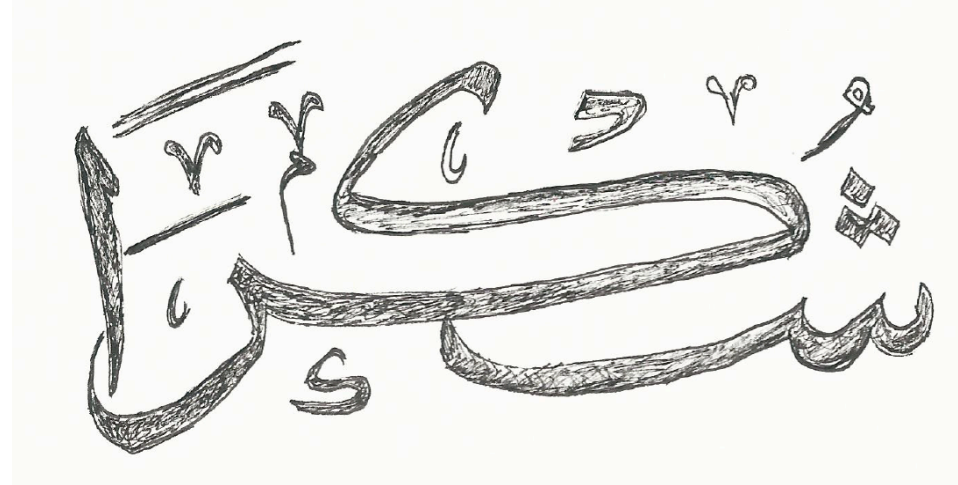


Figure 18. Arabic calligraphy by an 11th grade student; “thank you”, 2017.

The art educator, L.F., explained, “People view art the way they learned about it; they define it as something that has beautiful characteristics, is traditional, and socially acceptable. Which in turn makes people perceive contemporary Arab art as foreign and socially rebellious. The education system has been the same for a long time; art has to fit in the context of our traditions.” The principal, M.F., also commented on contemporary, traditional, and Islamic art,

Contemporary art can be a reflection of our present and our past. It can even use history and culture as inspiration in relation to current events. Islamic art is also a reflection of time periods, and traditional art shows the practical side of art. School curriculums and college art programs cater to values and adhere to norms that have been set a long time ago.

These perceptions can go a long way in influencing upcoming generations' knowledge about art. The student S.J. explained she can recognize traditional art if she saw it outside of school, but is “unsure what contemporary art would look like.”



Figure 19. Another example of an 11th grade student's Arabic calligraphy “knowledge is light”, 2017

Al-Manara Private School Observation Findings

These findings were gathered from two observations in an 11th grade high school classroom.

Teaching method. As I was sitting in the back of the classroom, 23 students walked in and took their seats in a very organized fashion. The art educator immediately began both classes by giving brief 5-minute lectures on making art that relates to one's own environment. She asked the students to think about art making as a representation of Saudi society, and to reflect on what makes the area they live in a unique place. Students took notes of what was being said, and asked questions, such as, “What is a right way to

represent Saudi society? What is a wrong way?” To which the art educator responded, “It depends on how you perceive right and wrong, but a generally acceptable right way would be to show reality as it is, and a wrong way would be to show a false reality.” Another student followed up with a question, “But is there a right or wrong when it comes to making art?” The art educator responded without thinking, “No, there should be no right or wrong.”

Art lessons and materials. During the first observation the art teacher handed out images of landmarks in Saudi Arabia and asked the students to look through them, choose an image, and practice drawing that image in pencil. She asked the students to sketch how they planned on drawing the images, and to spend time on a second drawing that would be more succinct. As homework, the students were expected to visit a place they thought was beautiful, take a photograph of it, and bring the image to class the following week to repeat the same lesson. The second lesson was similar in its content; the teacher asked the students to use the images they considered important in their society and draw them using either pencils or paints. The students also had the option of sharing with their classmates the reason behind choosing a certain place, and why they perceived it as important.

Interaction in the art classroom. Similar to the previous classes I observed in another school, the art teacher did most of the talking in the classroom during the explanation of the art lesson. She also walked around the classroom and told students they should use the materials in different ways, and focus on making their lines thin, thick, light, and dark. She would occasionally ask a student to hand her a pencil, and

would demonstrate on the students' drawings. A few of the students were very talkative with each other. They borrowed materials from one another, commented on each other's artwork, and occasionally had brief discussions with their teacher.



Figure 20. Watercolor painting of a mosque by an 11th grade student, 2017.

Most of the locations the students had chosen were mosques and historical Saudi buildings. The students chose these places for religious or traditional significance. One

student explained, “Mosques are everywhere, so it only makes sense that I would choose to draw a mosque.” Another student argued she chose a mosque “because it’s not just a religious symbol, it’s a cultural one.” One of the students viewed historical buildings as “a reminder of what life was like when Saudi Arabia became a country.” The students were able to communicate their ideas and verbalize their thoughts easily. Although both lessons seemed to flow peacefully without much resistance, some students expressed their unhappiness with not being able to choose the themes themselves. One student exclaimed, “Miss, next lesson, can we make art about something different we choose?”

Al-Manara Private School Interview Findings

The following themes emerged from interview responses with high school principal (O.Q.), the art educator (S.R.), and the 11th grade high school student (S.H.).

Institutional dynamics. The strictness of guidelines is an issue to art educators that have been educated in the Saudi Arabian systems, and even more so to other educators who received a vastly different education abroad. According to principal, O.Q., many art educators have become frustrated with the inflexibility of the art curriculum, especially those who earned their art degrees in the United States or Europe. She explained, “In this school we have talked about changing the art curriculum and introducing some art history, inviting artists for talks, or introducing students to artists’ work; but that is something the Ministry has not approved at this point.” She also emphasized,

It is not that the Ministry does not wish for art to progress, it is the sensitivity of the issue; it’s the belief that art that is not traditional will make us move away from our heritage combined with a lack of knowledge about art. Art has always

flourished under circumstances where it is not restricted, and that is our biggest obstacle to overcome.



Figure 21. Pen drawing of a traditional Arabian fort by an 11th grade student, 2017.

Art Educator, S.R., explained, “I have always tried to apply my expertise in fine arts and art history to art education, but have not been able to get far. I tried to introduce art history lessons as part of the curriculum, but my suggestions were met with objections from the Ministry.” She informed me that her education has made its way into the classroom from a technical aspect rather than a conceptual one, since the art students make has to fit a certain social and cultural standard. Specifically, her art education has found its way into the classroom through trying to initiate dialogue during and after art making. This did not occur in the other two high school art classrooms I observed.

Students are equally frustrated by these institutional factors; the student, S.H., explained, “I used to like making art in school, but that changed because I feel like I don’t get to make art the way I want. Using pencils and watercolors is nice, but the ideas

we make are always the same. I wish we could use other materials to make art that is 3-D and not just 2-D.”

Social Dynamics. Social factors also contribute to the nature of art and art making. Other responses in the interviews indicated one factor that hinders the progress of art education and art making is how it can be automatically perceived in a negative light when it moves away from what is considered socially familiar. Principal O.Q. explained,

Art is widely regarded as an extracurricular activity in Saudi Arabia. I think most people do not really give art much thought. They usually associate the words “art” and “artistic” with something they think is beautiful and impressive visually. The guidelines are meant to be followed because they create a sense of order in relation to art and society. What is problematic about art that is not traditional is that it is very lofty and free; it can be anything you want it to be. In a society where not everything is acceptable or appropriate, art becomes a risk rather than an asset. The biggest fear is the backlash from conservatives and religious people regarding things that appear in contemporary art. For example, teaching students about portraying people, and figures is something many parents may also be uneasy toward, not because the human body is taboo, but the idea of opening new doors gives art educators less control in guiding students in a way that does not break away from tradition.

Art educator, S.R., explained, “At the school level, there are very little discussions that take place regarding contemporary Arab art. Art in a general sense is perceived as something to do in order to pass the time.” The student, S.H., explained, “Art to me is a personal way of expressing your thoughts. In art people should have a choice in what they want to make and how. Tradition doesn’t give us a choice.”

Art educator S.R. shared the principal and student’s sentiment, “It is within art education that students begin to learn about society, and if we only teach them how to make art in limited ways, what does that tell them about their society?” She also added, “Teaching art in school has helped me understand that social structures have their

shortcomings as well as advantages. Saudi Arabia has neglected art not by eliminating it all together, but by failing to see its potential as a tool that could be aesthetic and educational.”



Figure 22. Pen drawing of a traditional necklace by an 11th grade student as part of the mural, 2017.

Due to the fact that Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country, and religion is held in high regard in all aspects of life including education, art forms that are traditional and Islamic, such as calligraphy, are revered due to their celebration of Islamic values. According to principal O.Q., “Islam is used to measure and evaluate what goes into the education of

male and female students in schools and colleges. What we choose to teach our students must be beneficial in accordance to our capabilities, and our religious identities.” She explained that Islam is also a religion that encourages Muslims to think and progress, and, in a sense not developing art education would be doing it an injustice.

She also emphasized, “There are of course religious and conservative individuals who might not accept these new art forms, just like certain forms of literature have been banned from the country because they are controversial.” Not teaching contemporary art in schools also occurs out of fear from religious authorities, “We need to make sure that what we teach in our schools does not step on any religious people’s toes. This could cause problems for institutions.” Despite these restrictions, not all individuals at the administrative level oppose newer forms of art, O.Q. added, “ I have always had a passion for education that challenges old knowledge, and contemporary Arab art is valuable in informing, debating, and even at times criticizing. It is art that makes you think, and is not so obvious and straight forward as traditional or Islamic art.” Art educator, S.R., explained, “Traditional and Islamic art are good at being safe and mimicking everyday life in Saudi Arabia. Contemporary art is challenging to everyday life.”

KFUPM Private School Observation Findings

The following findings were gathered during two observations in an 11th grade art classroom.

Teaching method. As I was seated at the back of this spacious, and well-lit classroom, the students walked into the classroom. They were very talkative as they came

streaming into the space, but grew quieter as they took their seats. They all directed their gaze towards the art educator who was standing in front of her desk patiently waiting for the students to get settled in before she began talking. She greeted the students and informed them that they would be working on a group project as a class. The 25 students would be painting a mural in the schoolyard. It was not the first time the class worked as a group, but would be the first time they made art on a surface other than paper. The students seemed to be rather excited with this new project. One student quickly asked, “What’s the mural about?” Another said, “How big will it be?” The art educator responded, “It would be about three themes combined together, and the scale would be discussed by the class as a group.”



Figure 23. A pen drawing of a mosque by an 11th grade student, 2017.

Art lessons and materials. In the first lesson I observed, the art educator explained that the mural would consist of a combination of nature, places, and objects. The students would be responsible for brainstorming, sketching ideas, and finalizing a composition as a group. The students spent the entire class time working in groups, and discussing how the mural would look. By the end of the class, they had chosen a composition that consisted of palm trees, clay vases, historic architecture, and Arabian jewelry. They were not told they had to choose these specific things, but it seems they have become accustomed to making art about certain themes, and these objects and places are what struck them as important elements to be included in the mural.

During the second lesson, the students came to class as usual and put the finishing touches on their sketch of the mural. They decided to fill three walls with the mural, and divided the tasks among themselves. The teacher informed the students that she set up the art materials on the tables and instructed each group to gather their large paint buckets and brushes and to follow her to the large schoolyard. I followed the students and their teacher and watched them set down their paint and tools near the walls.

Interaction in the art classroom. The teacher asked them to create a rough outline of their ideas and informed them “there might not be enough time to finish the entire mural,” and they “could finish it during the following class.” The students excitedly began racing the clock trying to get as much as they could done. I spent the time walking from one wall to the next, observing from a distance so I would not disrupt the dynamic of the class. The students were engaged in their respective groups carefully discussing how they will execute their ideas on a large scale. Many of the students asked

their teacher for guidance and inquired about how to paint certain details and fit everything proportionately on the panels since they were not used to making art in such a large scale. The teacher gave the students plenty of attention and answered all the questions patiently and to the best of her ability. They stopped painting the murals once in a while and each group would look at the progress their classmates were making on other panels. The students briefly discussed how their murals were coming along and what meaning they attributed to the art in progress.



Figure 24. A pen drawing of traditional earrings by an 11th grade student as part of the mural, 2017.

KFUPM Private School Interview Findings

The following themes emerged from interviews conducted with the principal (B.G.), an art educator (B.B.), and a 10th grade high school student (M.M.).

Institutional dynamics. A common thread throughout this study has been how administrators express helplessness when it comes to having a say in how art education can be taught, and how most schools base teaching on what would align with social expectations and students' ages. The principal, B.G., explained,

High schools and colleges have different ways of approaching art. As a principal, I do have a say in what art can be taught, but I am mostly following instructions given to me. Colleges have more flexibility when it comes to teaching art and the education they offer because it is a level where students have matured more, and are specializing in art. In schools, students are going through stages where they are still learning different things and in many cases, have not decided what career to pursue. So, we focus on teaching them a basic skill set, and do not introduce any outside influences for multiple reasons. First, it is a system that has been in place for many years, and is not very easy to change. Second, we want students to use their own environments and everyday life for their artistic inspiration. Thirdly, it is crucial that the art being made does not go against religious, social, or traditional norms.

Art educator, B.B., explained, "As a high school art educator, I do not have a say in what type of art can be taught in my classroom. I am obligated to create my lesson plans around certain guidelines, and have them approved. I do my best to teach students new techniques during drawing and painting lessons." She added,

The art I teach is almost identical to the art I learned about in school and college. It feels like a cycle since I am educating my students with the same knowledge I received. As art educators, we cannot teach contemporary art in schools because it goes against the Ministry's guidelines, which restrict art as something that must be taught as a way to highlight social feature, embrace religion, and show patriotism; these are things contemporary art may criticize.

Students who are keen on making art have thoughtfully expressed their dismay, the student, M.M., explains, "The art we learn about is always about expressing memories, places, and things but never people. We only paint and draw, and my classmates and I would like to learn new things like digital art. When you get used to using the same tools, it feels like we are not moving forward."

Social dynamics. From my own personal experience, ideas about art cannot be very easily changed. The idea that art needs to be beautiful to be considered as art is one of those instances. In Saudi society, this seems to be a solidified perception. This idea goes hand in hand with supporting traditional art since it is considered to be the epitome of not only beauty, but a connection with heritage, which is valued greatly. The principal, B.G., explained, “From my work experience, and my own education, art in Saudi Arabia is always linked to beauty; they are inseparable. Therefore, if you want to make art, then it has to have an element of beauty.”

The art educator, B.B., explained, “Making and teaching art in Saudi Arabia raises your awareness about what you choose to make your art about. I am constantly asking my students to make art about something that represents life in Saudi Arabia, and it is actually hard for them to break away from wanting their art to look beautiful.” She added, “The art we teach students at a young age has imprinted this concept in their mind that if their art does not look beautiful or even somewhat realistic, they are not good at art.”

She emphasized that this influences artistic decisions for students when they practice art making after they graduated, “There are artists who continue to make traditional art once they graduate because they have been taught that this is what is beautiful, and others who have been influenced by different styles, or make art for other purposes, such as communicating an idea, who are considered unconventional.”



Figure 25. A pencil sketch of a palm tree by an 11th grade student during brainstorming ideas for the mural, 2017.

Students are sensing that traditional arts are influencing the content of their art making, and inhibiting them from communicating ideas that may not necessarily be “beautiful” by conventional standards. The student, M.M., explained, “Art and art making are about finding ways to show beauty through colors, lines, and shapes.” She added, “I am not sure if I want to become an artist, but I wouldn’t mind. If I do choose to study art, I will study in a foreign country where they teach you everything about art

making, not just the how to make it beautiful because that's how art should be or because I'm a woman.”

But Traditional art is more widely welcomed in Saudi Arabia inside and outside of classrooms, not only because of the its social acceptability, but because some skills such as craft-making are passed down from generation to generation, and through family members. The principal, B.G., explained,

I only very recently started learning about contemporary art. When I was in school, we only learned about traditional art. But it was not only school that showed us traditional art, it was our families. It was a skill that was passed on through crafts, and embroidery. I am less familiar with Islamic art. I do however sense more similarity between traditional and Islamic art, and fewer similarities between contemporary art and traditional art in terms of meaning and materials.

It is also the familiarity that makes it difficult for contemporary art to find its way into society. The art educator, B.B., explained, “It is the sense of continuum from one generation to the next that makes traditional art more ingrained in the minds of the Saudi people. When something has existed for as long as traditional or Islamic art have, it is hard to break away from what is familiar.”

Noor College of Art Observations Findings

The following findings were gathered from observing four art sessions at the college. Two observations were conducted in a drawing studio, and two were conducted in a painting studio.

Teaching method. During the drawing studio observations, the drawing professor entered the studio, and the 12 students were already present before their art educator entered the room. They had each set up their workspace. After their professor greeted them, they were each handed an assignment sheet that contained information about their

upcoming assignment, the goals, media they could use, and the outcomes. The professor discussed the assignment with them; the goal of the lesson was to draw a still life that was set up in the classroom. They were encouraged to ask questions, and discuss ideas about how they would like to approach the assignment.

Similarly, the students in the painting studio were also prepared when their professor walked in. The painting easels were set up, and the students were well equipped with painting materials, canvases, and were wearing appropriate painter's wear. The professor also entered the studio, greeted her students, and began a dialogue with them about their next lesson. She handed them their assignment sheets, and informed them the lesson was about painting market scenes. She gave them the option to choose any market they preferred.

Art lessons and materials. The drawing students used different drawing materials in their art making, such as charcoal, colored pencils, and graphite. Some students also used mixed media. The lesson goal was to draw variations of the still life from different sides, using different materials, in order to get a sense of how drawing can be exploratory and incorporate play. These drawings did not have to be realistic, but could be if that is what the students desired.

The painting students had the option of using oil paints or watercolors, and were also given the option of how big or small they wanted their canvases to be. They were also asked to choose how they wished to use color, and whether they wanted their paintings to mimic reality or be more imaginative.

Interaction in the art classroom. Students in the drawing studio were quiet at times, and very talkative when they would take breaks to look at each other's work. Their professor would walk around and ask them about their drawing approach rather than tell them how to draw.

The painting studio shared a similar atmosphere. It was a very energetic studio; students were mixing colors, experimenting with different brushes and strokes before making marks on their canvases. They were very engaged in the colors and forms they were making. Some students would walk over to their classmates' workspace and ask how they achieved a certain color or tone. The professor seemed impressed by the ongoing dialogue between two of the students. A student asked her classmate, "What about this particular market caught your attention enough to want to paint it?" To which the student replied, "Although the colors of the fruits and vegetables are enough to capture my attention, it's how the people working in the market interact with each other that's captivating. It's a very noisy environment, but if you listen closely, there is plenty of storytelling going on." These responses were insightful because the students were not solely painting forms anymore, they were putting plenty of thought into what they were making.

What is most noticeable in both classrooms is how the students are given opportunities to have dialogues about art making at all times. There are critiques that take place to discuss progress, but there are also conversations that occur between educators and students, which encourage students to speak about their artistic experiences without hesitation.

Noor College of Art Interview Findings

The following findings emerged from interviews with the college president (A.R.), the painting professor (H.L.), the drawing professor (M.E.), the senior fine arts student (T.H.), and the sophomore fine arts student (M.S.).

Institutional dynamics. After observing art educators and students at the college level, and conducting the interviews with them it became more evident that the possibilities of teaching and making art at the college level are more available than they are in high schools,

President A.R. explained,

My job is to make an environment for educators and students to work in cohesively to develop ideas about art and design. The purpose is to foster art education that not only teaches students how to make art, but also offer them the opportunity to innovate. Colleges that teach art are built on more fluid pillars. There is the Ministry of education's guidelines that we must take into consideration as an institution, and then there is our college's implementation of teaching art more innovatively without bending the rules. I encourage our professors to bring their own knowledge and experiences into the classroom, and offer students freedom to make art based on their own choices. When I say freedom, it does come with some limitations. That means the art needs to respect the environment in which it is produced. It cannot be something that goes against the government, religion, and social norms. I realize that is not exactly what freedom entails, but it is how the situation must be in order for us to teach art.

There are other factors that contribute to the flexibility students experience at the college level, such as the educational and artistic experiences the art educators possess; the painting Professor, H.L., explained,

In college, the art education experience is more diverse because you are interacting with educators who have different backgrounds and understandings about art, and students who are eager to learn about art in a more freeing manner. I teach painting to all freshmen, seniors, and the levels in between. Students learn about the potential of form and colors, and how combining them can lead to making art that is both visually interesting and meaningful. In terms of art education, my responsibility lies in making sure students are challenged in order

to develop their skills. Most importantly, I do my best to offer students room to make the art they want and striking a balance between freedom of artistic expression, and social appropriateness. Being educated in the United States was vastly different from my education in Saudi Arabia, and what stood out the most to me during my education abroad was the extent to which tolerance and acceptance existed in my environment, but more importantly on a social scale. Making certain aspects of art acceptable at the college level, such as portraiture, for example is not as problematic as it used to be, as long as it is not an offensive or vulgar portrait for example.

The senior fine arts student, T.H., explained, “College art offers a sense of individuality that high school doesn’t. We can’t make absolutely anything we want, but we can explore our strengths and weaknesses in art making and learn new techniques. The art we make now has more feeling, and feels less like we are constantly drawing still objects.” She also said,

I mostly use painting and photography because I feel that both are very expressive. Painting has the potential to depict an idea realistically or in a stylized way, and photographs capture reality. I some times combine the two in my art making. I pursued art at the college level because I felt that I grew up in a society where everything was either black or white. There was a harsh sense of conformity, and very little individuality. To my disappointment, the art we made in school was just as rigid as social views. But I was optimistic that as a college student, I would learn to make art with as many media as possible even if I could not make art exactly the way I wanted. And I use my free time to make the art I want, and hopefully when I graduate I will continue to do so.

The sophomore fine arts student, M.S., said, “I include portraiture in my art making, which is something I couldn’t do in school. We make art using painting, drawing, photography, printmaking, and 3-D modeling and sculpture as well. The use of different media gives us options to choose how we want to make art.”

The painting professor, H.L., stated, “The biggest thing to consider when teaching at the college level is how different it is from art in school. I remember making art in school felt so repetitive, we were always asked to make the same art over and over along the years.” According to H.L., censorship also comes into play in schools and colleges,

“it is like art education is under surveillance, and as educators we have to control art making and discussions about art, not because we want to, but because we have to. Art outside of school faces censorship as well, but artists are free to make what they please and face the social consequences later.”

The drawing professor, M.E., stated,

I was educated in the same environment in which I am currently teaching. When I was a student, art education focused mostly on trying to draw to make something look real, and the subject matter we used for our artistic inspiration was the same subject matter we used in middle school and high school; it always had to be something common socially and traditionally. We were expected to always represent an element that showed some kind of patriotism towards Saudi society. What is taught in schools and colleges scratches the surface of what is being made in the real world. Art education in Saudi Arabia has a way of providing you with a certain amount of knowledge about art, but then you are left repeating the same themes and ideas in your artwork out of fear that if you stray too far from what you are told, then people will not respect you as an artist. There is a lot more pressure to follow the rules when students are in school or college, and when they become artists later on, this social pressure continues to follow them around.

In addition to striving to offer more flexibility to students at the college level, educators have stressed the importance of teaching art as a tool to be used in daily life. The drawing professor, M.E., explained, “My aim is to teach students the fundamentals of drawing and how it can be used not just as an art form, but a skill that can come in handy when solving everyday life matters. I teach drawing as way of combining art making harmoniously with social engagement.” She emphasized that this is something she does not impose on her students, but what does come into the classroom from time to time is teaching students to develop their skills and work on their own style of drawing, in addition to striking a balance between what they choose to draw and how it will be received by people who look at it.

Naturally, students still have a curiosity when it comes to learning new things, and that includes new art movements within their society. The sophomore fine arts student, M.S., explained, “We have a lot of hands-on practice at the college level, but I feel like we could benefit from learning about art movements that are taking place in Arab countries.” She also mentioned her transition from high school art to college art, “It was very challenging moving from high school art to college art because we were taught very little about what art actually is. In school there was a right and wrong way of making art, and in college there is no right or wrong; just different approaches.”

Social dynamics. Saudi Arabian society views traditional and contemporary art from different positions. The college president, A.R, explained, “Art perceptions are different from one generation to the next. Older generations tend to see art as a way of preserving culture or tradition while simultaneously representing an image of what life is like. While the younger generations have taken more personal approaches to art in a way that reflects identity.” She explained that she has had many discussions with professors about the direction that art is headed in. Contemporary art always comes up in the discussion. But people who are not very keen on learning about art may not consider contemporary art because it is different, and might not even call it art. Another response she gave was in relation to the differences in how high school and college students are taught about art and the amount of time spent on art education. “One class of art per week is not sufficient to teach students about art, especially since college students tend to learn more techniques, and have more freedom in art making. Art needs to be taught until the 12th grade, so that students are able to transition into college art without being overwhelmed.”

The painting professor, H.L., explained her perceptions through teaching art at the college level,

I would have to say that teaching art has made me more aware of the impact a single work of art can have on society at large. As an artist in other parts of the world, you expect people to look at what you made and interpret it, but you don't really expect any exaggerated responses. In Saudi Arabia, the artist must not only consider what the work of art means to them, they must take into account the audience's feelings and reaction. And so, you are working with this extra element of being socially and culturally responsible because you are trying to make art that is acceptable. Teaching art in Saudi Arabia makes art making a responsibility towards others that must be carried out carefully. But that is not something that can be said for every single person you come across in Saudi Arabia; there will be people who will not accept art as a whole because it goes against religious values, or it does not resemble art in its traditional appearance. My task is to teach students how to understand their audience, and to make art that is thoughtful without bordering on being offensive. If we could introduce students to new techniques, new artists, and new art, this would offer students insight into how to communicate and respond to things around them and translate it into art making. Being exposed to different ways of making will lead to more dialogue, which is the fuel for creation.

The drawing professor M.E. explained that art is something that develops naturally at a young age, and should be perceived as a form of necessary exploration rather than an activity or threat to education,

Teaching college level art has definitely made me more aware of a need to understand not just how to teach art, but the psychology of the society we live in. Many people would argue in order to become a better art educator; you simply need to have a plan and follow it, but what art educators really need is to be consciously understanding the direction in which society is moving. Art has always been about representing one's own ideas, but ultimately art is a reflection of who we are and where we are coming from. Art educators in this college have been educated in Saudi Arabia and abroad, so they view contemporary art as a form of development of art; especially in a society where art is still standing still in schools and colleges, and facing obstacles such as gender segregation. Students are eager to graduate from high school and some times college so they can make the art they want to make. It is normally people who are not very interested in art that criticize contemporary art as being outsider art, and against what Saudi society stands for. Contemporary art would add a dimension of freedom to students' art making, and create an atmosphere of free thinking as well.

The president, A.R., also discussed why authoritative or religious individuals who are aware of contemporary art are opposed to it, “Contemporary art is still met with some resistance, partly because a lot of the art is trying to make a statement about something artists and people are displeased with.” She explained that there is art talking about women’s rights or freedom of speech in the public realm; these are issues that are sensitive, and are being talked about,

In any progressive country, it would be normal to discuss these issues. In Saudi Arabia, it is frowned upon to start a dialogue about things that could upset authority figures. There is a space and a presence for contemporary art, but there is also a big part of society that would not call it art, and would refer to it as “trouble” because of the effect it may have on young minds. Traditional or Islamic art is considered a way of playing it safe. While contemporary art is risky.

The painting professor, H.L., argued, “the ones most accepting of contemporary art are people who are not afraid of change.” But she emphasized there is a sense of order that art educators need to follow for art education programs to continue to exist, “If we look at the root of the issue, it always leads back to not being able to do something because of what religious leaders will say, or how traditional people will react. In matters of education, progress and expansion are important, but not if they overstep a social boundary.”

The senior fine arts student, T.H., explained why she believes contemporary art is not as common as traditional art within institutions, and outside of them, “Contemporary art that is considered odd and irrelevant because people do not take the time to understand it or perhaps have never seen it in person. It is hard to change common ideas in people’s minds, especially since art has been taught the same strict way for many years.”

The sophomore fine arts student, M.S., explained, “I think traditional and contemporary art have their own qualities that make them equally important in society. They both represent culture and society, but they do so differently. The way I perceive art, and the way people perceive it, is dependent on how we were taught about it.” Her thoughts on this matter were that most people make art for a few years in school, and understand it the way they are told by their teachers, “People in Saudi society see art through a very narrow perspective. So narrow that they have a clean-cut meaning of what art should look like.”

Funoon College of Art Observation Findings

The following findings were gathered from observing four art sessions at the college. Two observations were conducted in a photography studio, and two were conducted in a drawing studio.

Teaching method. While observing both photography classes, all twelve students were present in class when their art educator entered the studio. The first class I attended was focused on student critiques. The students printed pictures they had taken based on a lesson that was given to them the previous week. As they pinned up their photographs, their professor asked them to carefully examine each other’s work and look at the formal elements, and the overall meaning they derive from the photograph if any at all. The students were the ones directing the conversation, and the art educator occasionally asked them questions to create more opportunities for discussion, such as asking a student, “You mentioned the composition is good, what made you say that?” The second class

was essentially a continuation of the work the students had done the previous class, with an addition of new photographs.

The drawing classes followed a similar structure. The educator walked in, greeted the students, and asked them to pin up all the drawings they had made since their last session. The lessons focused on self-portraits, and students were drawing themselves any way they chose to. They were continuously working in class, and it seemed, as there was a cycle of thinking, making, and then discussing. They were curious about how their classmates were drawing themselves. One student talked about how “drawing yourself is something challenging because it is so personal.” While observing two photography classes, and two drawing classes, what is noticeable is that the art educators were flexible in their teaching approaches. Each class had 12 students, and the educators gave all the students opportunities to share their ideas, thoughts, and to offer their own individual suggestions to their professor about lessons they wish to have in the future.



Figure 27. Pen drawing by a senior college student, 2017.

Art lessons and materials. The images discussed in the first photography class were based on students' choosing a theme that interested them; some students chose to photograph people, and others chose to photograph public places. They were also expected to write a paragraph to reflect on their theme and why they chose it. After the critique, the students discussed their new lesson for the following week, which was to continue to develop their chosen theme but to give attention to composition, form, colors, and the details included in each photograph. The second class I observed also consisted of a critique; there was a pin-up of the work as soon as the class began.

The two drawing classes I observed were about drawing self-portraits in different ways. During the first class, students had brought drawings they were already working on one variation of their portraits. The assignment for the following week was to draw the self-portraits in a different manner. For example, if they had drawn themselves in realistic way, they would make a stylized drawing the following week.

Interaction in the art classroom. The interactions that took place in the photography classroom were very engaging. Since both sessions I observed were centered on critiques, it was a very interactive atmosphere between the educator and the students. They discussed difficulties they had while photographing; technical, and some times social obstacles when they were photographing people in public and public places. They also focused their attention on discussing similarities and differences in their photographs, how to make a good photograph, and how to create photographs with focal points depending on what they want their audience to see. Students gave short presentations about their themes, and spoke confidently about their processes.

The drawing classes I observed also focused on critiques. Students were asked to take a short break from drawing, and walk around the studio to look at what their classmates were doing. They listened attentively to what their educator and classmates were discussing, and shared their own ideas about the materials they were using and how their choice of material related to the drawing style they had selected. It was a back and forth dynamic of making and discussing that took place during both observations. There was a sense of community among the students and their educator, in addition to a sense of freedom in art making.

Funoon College of Art Interview Findings

The following findings emerged from interviews conducted with the president of the college (A.J.), the history of Islamic Art, drawing, and 3-D studio professor (K.G.), the photography professor (T.G.), and the junior visual arts student (R.L.).

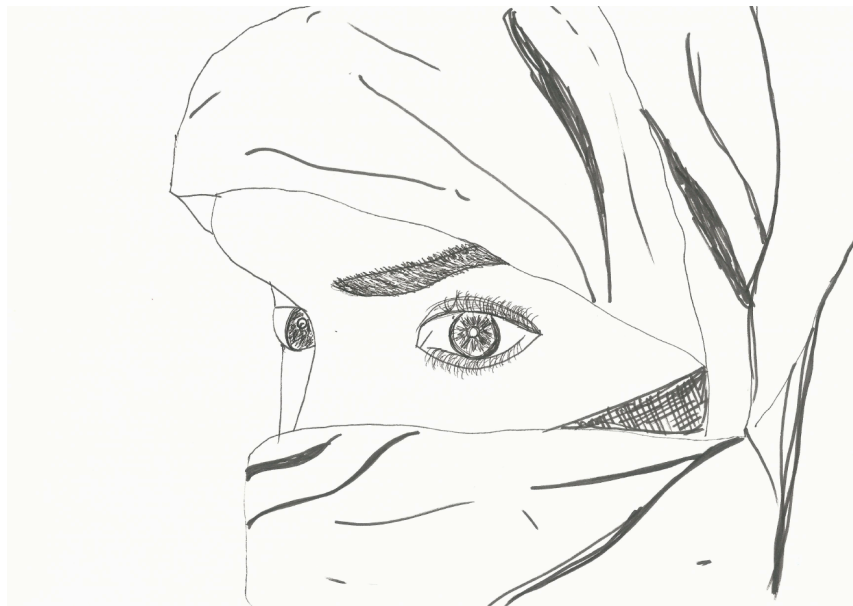


Figure 28. Pen drawing by a freshman college student, 2017.

Institutional dynamics. Responses about beauty arose again during the interviews, but in this case, some participants described the issue as society's lack of knowledge about the potential a work of art can have without relying on beauty. The valuation system of art based on beauty becomes problematic when encountering contemporary forms of art because they are not necessarily beautiful in the traditional sense, but nevertheless, are considered to be art. This causes people to push away this unfamiliar terrain of the contemporary. The president, A.J., explained that it is an unfortunate even within educational settings that art is often characterized mainly by beauty. He explained this stems from a deeper social understanding about art that makes its way into institutions, "Art in Saudi Arabian society means beauty. I think that is the most common word that comes to mind when people here think about art or even assess it. If some one is looking at a work of art, they will evaluate how much of a piece of art it genuinely is by how beautiful it looks."

The history professor, K.G., also shared the president's sentiment and elaborated that viewing art through the lens of beauty only stems from a lack of knowledge, "Teaching students about art has made me self-conscious about the need to provide everything I know about art because Saudi society feels behind on it out of fear, ignorance, and inexperience." She added, "As an art educator, it is important to place art in its social and cultural context; in Saudi Arabia people automatically associate art with tradition or something stemming from it, and this is considered contextualizing in a way but it prevents people from seeing other forms of art as being art."

The photography professor, T.G., explained, "Most people in society view contemporary Arab art either as something they are not familiar with, or don't perceive it

as art.” She raised the point that contemporary art is even compared to the arrival of satellite television in Saudi Arabia, “It is mostly out of fear that contemporary Arab art will influence Saudi Arabian culture negatively; it is a similar reaction to when Internet or satellite television were introduced, and religious and conservative people were completely against it and tried to ban it.”



Figure 29. Watercolor by a junior college student, 2017.

The president, A.J., explained that she has spent the last few years trying to introduce new majors and new media to art education. The college recently introduced photography as a minor, which is a big step forward in terms of innovation since the most common art forms found at colleges are usually painting and drawing, and a graphic design major was also introduced. She added,

There are certain elements that determine how education is structured. As an educational establishment we are certainly obligated to apply the guidelines we received from the Ministry; this applies at any level of education. In schools,

however, art education is taught almost the same way throughout a student's education. They make art about the same topics or ideas, and they execute the artwork using the same media they used the year before. That is because art education is given less importance when other subjects take center stage. At the college level, students are pursuing art as their main subject, and so the criteria shift according to the need. Students have a variety of classes, professors, and make art in a variety of ways.



Figure 30. Pen drawing by a sophomore college student, 2017

The art educators are hopeful that their diverse educational backgrounds will set the stage for the eventual inclusion of contemporary arts one day. The art history professor, K.G.,

said, “Having an artistic background combined with an art history background has impacted the way I teach students about art history. It has given me a way to link history to the present time, and students’ art making.” The photography professor, T.G., explained,



Figure 31. Pen drawing by a sophomore college student, 2017

I am in what is considered to be a new field or art form in Saudi Arabia. My responsibility is to teach students that conventional ways of making art, such as painting, have become known as art by common practice. Similarly, photography is also an art form, but it all depends on how you choose to use it. The fundamental aspect has been trying to teach students that the art they learned about growing up still exists, but there are new ways of making art now. It is knowledge that is created in the classroom, but art is something that one begins to

grasp by social experience. My art education abroad showed me that certain art movements begin because of certain social, religious, or even cultural circumstances; photography is not an art movement per se, but in Saudi Arabia it is definitely a drastic change in approaches to art making because photography was not considered an art form in the past. In fact, many people still don't consider it art. The media that is being used in colleges especially has definitely evolved to meet the same tools that are being used by practicing artists, but what is vastly different is the content. In the public sphere, there is more flexibility with content.



Figure 32. Pen drawing by a sophomore college student, 2017

The student, R.L., explained, "I use photography and typography and integrate them. My art is usually very communicative, and is about people and society. The idea of

using photography excites me very much because I did not get to make art using photography when I was in school.” She also emphasized that the biggest difference between high school art and college art is “the sense of artistic independence given to students at the college level.”



Figure 33. Sketch by a senior college student during class, 2017

Art educators recognize the advantages of art education at the college level, but also realize that there is much-needed improvement at both the high school and college levels. The president, A.J., said,

The best art programs in the world are not necessarily programs that are the oldest, but programs that introduce a variety of teaching methods and opportunities for students to make art individually and collectively within their schools and colleges, and in their free time. Much development is needed in terms of teaching students to be independent thinkers and makers, and hopefully we will find a way despite the limitations of society and culture.



Figure 34. Pen drawing by a junior college student, 2017

Art educators also discussed their impressions of their own initial educational experiences in Saudi Arabia. The history professor, K.G., said, “I was very underwhelmed by the education I received in Saudi Arabia, especially during my school

years. I was very interested in gaining more experience in studio practice, but I was also very interested in learning more about Islamic art.” She also emphasized that art being made in schools, colleges, and outside of them share similarities and differences in media, style, and the influence on audiences. The biggest difference is that a practicing artist is not told directly how they should approach art, “they are free to make art as they please, and some times face the consequences later because of social disapproval. However, in schools and colleges there are certain protocols to be followed, and the main purpose of these rules is to prevent situations of social uproar.”

The educators also felt that some times the lack of acceptance of contemporary art is cultural but also generational. The photography professor, T.G., explained, “What art education lacks in Saudi schools and colleges is a sense of understanding and acceptance. When I started teaching photography, I noticed what people consider as art varies from culture to culture. Even within our own culture art is seen differently from one generation to the next.”

The issue is not only contemporary and traditional art, but also the state of art in general. The fact that it is not offered to students past the 11th grade propagates an understanding that art is not as important as other subjects. It also makes it more difficult for students to make a smooth transition from high school art to college art if they choose to pursue it in the future. The college student, R.L., explained, “Past ideas about art that I learned in school made college art seem very different in a positive way. But if I hadn’t been practicing art on my own after the 11th grade, my classes would have been much more difficult because of the gap year between 12th grade and college.”

Social dynamics. The presence of different kinds of art in Saudi society are seen as opportunities for inspiration or educational growth, or they are viewed as deviating from what is known art. President, A.J., explained,

Contemporary Arab art has changed our perceptions and expectations of what art can be, and that is something positive. However, this shift in the paradigm when it comes to the meaning of art is not without turbulence. As we are living in a time where people in Saudi society have become more outspoken with their words, and with their art. But we must not forget where we are and the rule of the land. That is the risk with contemporary art, there are certain lines that should not be crossed, such as religion for example, and when these things are brought up as something to be debated in an artwork, then it is not seen as art but as an attack. Contemporary art has become a big part of art, one cannot deny that, but traditional art is more favorable in our society. Art educators see it as an interesting phenomenon. Some see it as having shared characteristics with traditional art, and others find it to be vastly different. I think that is how society sees it, as having a different aura than traditional art; it is non-conformist.

The art history professor, K.G., explained, “In artistic circles, people are usually very aware and enthusiastic about contemporary art because they see the value in breaking free from tradition. However, in a general sense, the majority of society would not recognize contemporary art if they saw it, therefore, depending on the artwork might not even consider it to be art.” She also said, “The way Saudi society functions is to encourage education in all forms, as long as it does not overstep the boundaries of religion, and altering the Saudi identity in any way. This is what scares authority figures about contemporary art.”

The college student, R.L., said, “Art in my country has a hard time finding a place in communities if it is not traditional. Contemporary art in Saudi Arabia is not very new, but people still don’t know what it is. Unless you are some one interested in art like me, there is a slim chance you will learn about art that is not traditional.”



Figure 35. Pen drawing by a senior college student, 2017

Traditional Artists Interview Findings

The following findings emerged from interviewing a female traditional artist (O.T.), and a male traditional artist (F.D.).

Institutional dynamics. Through interviewing artists, it became evident that the institutional dynamics that Ministry employees, principals, high school art educators, high school students, college presidents, college art educators, and college students have an influence on how artists choose to make art. The female traditional artist, O.T., explained, “I chose to make traditional art because it is the type of art we were taught in school. Throughout high school and college, and even after graduating, it was the only art I knew.” She also emphasized that the art education she received in school and college has helped her develop her technique. Conceptually, however, the themes in her art are identical to what she made in school. O.T. added, “I would say that there is a divide when it comes to how art is taught in schools and what is made by artists later on because art education in schools especially is very monotonous and repetitive that it hinders one’s ability to move forward as an artist.”

Some practicing traditional artists are beginning to see a value in contemporary art. The male traditional artist F.D. explained, “The subjects taught in schools are meant to fit a certain identity expected of students; this identity relates to one’s beliefs and modality of thought. Contemporary art can influence people to challenge their norms, which can lead to generations of people who think differently from what the educational system wants.”

The debate about traditional and contemporary artists is also part of a wider debate, which is the institutional decision to eliminate boys’ art education at a young age,

and the reluctance to offer males art as a major in college has also had an influence on male artists. The male traditional artist, F.D., discussed his pursuit of a different major that was expected of him rather than what he had in mind because of familial pressures, but also because his educational experience led him to the conclusion that it was the appropriate thing to do, “Although I studied business, and run our family business, art is more than a hobby to me.” He also said, “I still remember my art lessons in school, and drawing places from memory. That is an element that continues in my work, I paint places in Saudi Arabia, mainly landscapes or areas that were once inhabited.”

Not offering students the options to choose subjects, such as art, may pigeonhole students, and force them to choose subjects or majors that are not their first preference. Moreover, not receiving art education past a certain age could discourage young people from making art, or limit the way they choose to approach art intellectually and in the physical act of making it. F.D. argued,

As a student I was frustrated when we weren't taught art past a certain point, and I was even more disappointed to find out that I couldn't pursue art in college. But throughout school, I always painted in my free time. It is something that stayed with me beyond my college years.

The male traditional artist, F.D., expressed that there is a sense of unfairness in art education, and that is felt in male's education, “Art does not belong to one gender and everyone should have an opportunity to make it if they wish to.” He is a dentist who learned how to make art on his own, “I never stopped making art, even when they didn't teach it to us in school anymore.”

O.T. also explained, “A fundamental issue that needs to change is that art is only for women, and not men. Also, if a woman is making art, it has to be done in a polite

feminine manner. When art is seen as being a woman's area of expertise, it divides opportunities among individuals unequally. It robs people of their right to learn."

Social dynamics. Becoming an artist in Saudi Arabia is not always the desired career families have for males, but some times it is not preferred for females either; the female traditional artist, O.T. explained, "When choosing art as my major, I remember even my family was against the idea because art is not considered something you can make a living out of in our society. There is still this idea floating around that art is not as important as other professions." The artist found that this lack of support goes hand in hand with a type of social refusal to accept art they have never seen before, or even accept a member of their family becoming an artist.

The traditional artists spoke about their own art making, and the contemporary art made by other artists. The female traditional artist, O.T., said, "Islamic art has a spiritual presence in its forms and colors. The environment in which we live, our societies, and our communities are what shape traditional art and Islamic art." She also added, "What traditional and contemporary Saudi art have in common is that they both focus on Saudi society, however, traditional art tends to be about glorifying it, and contemporary art is about social and cultural issues."

The male traditional artist, F.D, said, "Islamic and traditional art are connected in style and content, and have links to time periods, societies, and contexts. Contemporary art rises from culture also, but it is less about highlighting it, and concentrates on breaking barriers and social constructs with a hint of sarcasm some times." He also explained that what makes an artwork traditional in Saudi Arabia is representing the most obvious aspects of society, while contemporary art brings out what is under the surface.

According to F.D., this does not make traditional art superficial; it is more straightforward. He also emphasized, “Traditional art is what most people grew up learning, and to the majority this is what art is. Contemporary art is absent from art education, and it is difficult to say what people may think. I think many are unaware of its existence.” He argued that contemporary art is controversial because it has plenty to do with stating exactly how you feel about a matter, and “when something challenges politics or culture, it becomes threatening to Saudi society.”

Contemporary Artists Interview Findings

The following themes emerged from interviews with a female contemporary artist (A.E.), and a male contemporary artist (M.A.).

Institutional dynamics. The experiences of artists studying abroad have given them the opportunity to reflect on their art education in Saudi Arabia. The female contemporary artist, A.E., said, “My educational choice to study in London was based on the fact that I felt I was deprived of a wholesome art education in Saudi Arabia; what was missing was the element of freedom.” She emphasized that her art education abroad has made her focus on making visual art that communicates rather than just looking beautiful. She explained, “There is a clear divide between art education within schools and this divide exists in making art available based on certain rules and terms that do not necessarily exist as drastically at the college level or the public sphere. The limitations imposed on students prevent them from knowing about art and artists.”

Although traditional art is the norm, some artists who have grown up around it perceive it as limiting, and choose to make art that is freeing in their own respective

ways. The male contemporary artist, M.A., explained, “Growing up and being surrounded by tradition and convention felt very confining, and as I began to learn about art, I learned about generating ideas and thoughts that did not have to be conventional. There is no right or wrong when you make contemporary art, which is a very freeing thought.”

Social dynamics. After the increase of contemporary art making outside of educational institutions, artists have made it one of their goals to carve out a place for themselves in the art scene among traditional artists, but also society at large. Acceptance and tolerance has become the goal many contemporary artists hope to achieve by fostering a social understanding towards art. The female contemporary artist, A.E., explained,

In Saudi Arabia, it feels like contemporary art does not stand out as something of importance, and this some times makes artists question whether you they need to change the way they make art in order to have an audience. If you look at traditional art, it always has an audience because it is what Saudi people have grown accustomed to. But contemporary art is seen as younger people’s expressions in the form of being displeased with tradition and society, and wanting to change it to suit their needs. What people do not comprehend is that contemporary art can be seen as a vehicle that will create disorder through thought. When people are not inspired by something, they have no incessant need to change their surroundings. However, when a work of art for example inspires one to think about the way they are living their life, this in turn causes a change in thoughts, which can lead to change in behavior and actions. Change is not a bad thing.

The male contemporary artist also described his educational experiences and perceptions about art, M.A., said,

One of the biggest things you learn when you undergo an art education program that gives you exposure to different forms of art is that you gain a sense of tolerance towards understanding different points of view. That is something that comes through especially when showing some one my art; many people don’t understand at times or may have a negative comment, and I have grown to accept

this because I realize art education in Saudi Arabia has not provided the proper foundation for students, which leads them to view art in a limited way; art can only be what they taught us in school. Saudi Arabian society has always glorified traditional art, and still sees contemporary art as an outside influence.

The artists also demonstrated an awareness of the characteristics of Islamic and traditional art forms. They stressed that contemporary artists do not necessarily deny or overlook the existence of these forms, and can some times even be inspired by them. The female contemporary artist, A.E., explained, “Islamic and traditional art have a sense of nostalgia attached to them; they revolve around the roots of what it means to live like a Muslim, and in the context of Saudi Arabia, what values they uphold in their lifestyle. Contemporary art is about challenging the status quo.” The male contemporary artist, M.A., explained,

Islamic art is usually what gets its inspiration from divinity, and symbolizes a connection with one’s religion through objects that not only honor Islam, but also represent moments or periods in time. Traditional art like Islamic art, has a functional aspect to it at times, but also represents one’s pride in one’s own culture. Contemporary art is vastly different, although it could be similar, but contemporary art can be what you want it to be. There are no defining characteristics really.

Similar to male traditional artists, contemporary male artists also experience gender segregation. In some instances, it could be even more difficult for a man to make contemporary art since it is less accepted. The male contemporary artist, M.A., explained,

A big divide between becoming a practicing artist and learning about art is the gender separation during education, and the stigma one might face as a practicing artist. This idea that art is something feminine, and should not be made by males past a certain age is outrageous. This in itself contributes to a bigger question, which is what defines art? Does gender define art? But the bigger divide that has come through from the responses is how art is taught to students as a hobby or activity, that is not to be taken seriously, or something that has to be done a certain way with rules and regulations.

Cross-Case Analysis

The following section will include a cross-case analysis of the observations that took place at high schools, and colleges. It will also include responses from the interview participants. The findings will be compared in the form of tables, and the emerging themes will be discussed in more detail. First, the high school and college observations will be presented in the form of a table. Second, findings across cases will be presented as follows: responses from Ministry employees, college presidents, and principals will be compared; responses from high school and college art educators will also be compared, responses from high school students and college students will be compared, and responses from traditional and contemporary artists will also be compared.

Cross-Case Analysis of High School and College Observations

The observations conducted in high schools and colleges have brought to light some differences and similarities about how the educational system is structured in Saudi Arabia. Art educators in high schools were strict with regards to how their students made art. They instructed them how to do so, and at times physically showed them how to make marks on a paper. The materials they were allowed to use were limited, and the themes in students' artwork were similar throughout all the schools. They focused on places and objects, and not actual people. There seemed to be a distance from exploring themselves as individuals, or those around them through their art making. Some students verbally participated in their art classes, but the dialogues were brief since the art educators were the ones dominating the conversations.

The college students were given assignment sheets to read, so they could discuss the direction of their art making. They were not told how to make art, but were guided through dialogues with their art educators and fellow classmates. The media used at the college level was more vast and diverse than those used at the high school level. The college students and high school students shared similar themes when it came to art making, but the college students also focused on the portrayal of people. At the college level, most of the students were outspoken, and participated heavily in critiques and class discussion; their art educators did not dominate the conversations.

Table 12

High School and College Observation Findings.

Art Classes	High School Observations	College Observations
Teaching method	Art teachers verbally explain to students how to make artwork.	Art educators give students the assignment in writing, and explain it verbally.
	Art teachers may show students examples they should copy.	Students are given freedom to make their own individual art.
Materials	Students mostly use pencils and paints.	Students use traditional media; mixed media, photography, and digital media.
Lesson plans	Lessons are focused on making traditional art.	Lessons can be traditional, but students have more freedom with media and subject matter.
Classroom interactions	Art educators dominate dialogues, educators rarely engages students. Students do not reflect on their artwork.	Students and art educators are continuously interacting, engaged in art making, critiques, and having dialogues about their artwork.

Cross Case-Analysis of Interviews

After analyzing the data that resulted from the interviews, and the emergence of two main categories: Institutional and Social Dynamics in the first part of the findings chapter, the data was analyzed further for the emergence of recurring themes. Details of responses were studied across participants, and similar responses generated the themes listed in the tables below. The themes fall under the categories of institutional and social dynamics, but are presented in a more dissected manner in the tables below. Participants from the individual cases were grouped with their counterparts from other cases. These themes also serve the purpose of summarizing the data that has been gathered throughout the study.

Cross-case analysis of Ministry of Education employees. Cross analyzing findings from interviews with Ministry of Education employees generated five themes; goals of art making, art and tradition, social values and identity, art and gender, and traditional art vs. contemporary art in Saudi Arabia.

Goals of art making. The Ministry's guidelines for high schools may offer educators room to interpret some aspects without straying too far from what is expected to be taught. At the college level, where students have decided to specialize in art, educators have more opportunities to teach students about practicing artists and art. Art education is seen as a form of self-development and art making is considered a skill set that they want students to learn in order for them to excel in other subjects, while simultaneously engaging in physical activities that reinforce Saudi culture.

Art and tradition. The significance of tradition in Saudi Arabian society is apparent in both the document analysis and interviews, and this has an influence on art education and art making. Art has existed for a long time but was not controversial among Saudis because it mainly served a functional purpose. It has always been present in everyday life in the traditional sense, and regarded as something that came naturally. In today's society, art is something that is taught in schools and colleges as a subject that can be studied, and contemporary Arab art is rather new in Saudi Arabia, it is unfamiliar territory for many, and is regarded as an opposition to tradition.

Table 13

Ministry of Education Employees' Interviews.

Themes	Employee (F.T.)	Employee (N.K.)	Employee (J.K.)
Goals of art making	Art must be taught and made in a manner that fits with Saudi society's conservative nature.	Art education needs to reinforce Saudi culture.	
Art and tradition	Islamic and traditional art support religion Contemporary art is considered rebellious.		
Social values and identity	Tradition, culture, and religion structure art education.	Shared social values guide education and perceptions.	
Art and gender	It is unconventional for men to become artists.	Females should make beautiful art.	Males should not be making art past a certain age.
Traditional art vs. contemporary art	Traditional and Islamic art share closeness with our beliefs.	Contemporary art is not given importance.	

Social values and identity. This theme emerged several times during the document analysis stage, and during the interviews conducted with the Ministry employees. The Ministry describes its mission as providing a well-rounded education, for males and females, that reinforces life in Saudi Arabia, and this reinforcement requires first and foremost a foundation of understanding what Saudi society needs to move forward in relation to its values and identity. This foundation encompasses tradition, culture, and religion. Art education is set up in a way that must accommodate these aspects.

Art and gender. Gender segregation exists in educational institutions in Saudi Arabia as a way to maintain conservative boundaries between men and women. However, the segregation also specifies what is appropriate for women and men to learn about and practice in schools, colleges, and in the work force. Art is perceived as necessary for females at different levels in their lives because it makes them accomplished ladies. On the other hand it is perceived as unconventional and untraditional for men to be involved in art past a certain part in their lives, particularly adolescence because they are expected to focus their attention on masculine activities.

Traditional art vs. contemporary art. What art should look like or what qualities characterize art is an ongoing debate everywhere in the world. In Saudi Arabia, however, what many people in society consider art must be something that coincides with social norms. Contemporary art that exists outside of educational institutions may have some similar characteristics to traditional forms of art or Islamic art. However, the biggest

distinction that differentiates it from its more traditional counterparts is the element of free expression. Ministry employees have argued that art is not discussed within the Ministry as frequently as other subjects, and contemporary art is given even less importance because it is dimly understood, and out of fear of social backlash.

Table 14

Interviews with Principals and College Presidents.

Themes	Principal (M.F.)	Principal (O.Q.)	Principal (B.G.)	College President (A.R.)	College President (A.J.)
Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia	Art is an activity not a necessity.	Frustration with the curriculum has been met with objections from the Ministry.	Artistic freedom is different in high schools and colleges.		Students need to be independent thinkers and makers.
Gender roles	Males and females are taught differently				
Perceptions about art education in Saudi Arabia	Contemporary art represents the present and past.	There is a lack of knowledge about art.	Art is associated with beauty.	Contemporary art is met with resistance; many people see it as "trouble."	Art in Saudi Arabia means beauty.

Cross-case analysis of interviews with high school principals and college presidents. Cross analyzing findings from interviews with high school principals and college presidents resulted in three themes; limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia, gender roles, and perceptions about art education.

Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia. One of the biggest setbacks in high schools is how art is limited by the content, themes, and materials used. Art administrators are becoming more aware of the complications that result from the intersection of society, culture, and education. Principals find themselves in a position where they are continuously asking educators to teach their students the same things about art each semester, and the lack of knowledge about contemporary art and techniques, combined with strict guidelines makes it more difficult to introduce students to new materials. The argument among administrators is, college students are given more flexibility because they are specialized in art. They have also argued this system has been in place for many years, and is not very easy to change, and it is important that the art making does not go against religious, social, or traditional norms.

Gender roles. Females are not taught the same subjects as males because the educational system has specific goals for what roles each gender can and should perform. In the past, crafts, for example, was a skill that men and women could share, it still is in some rural parts of Saudi Arabia. However, drawing and painting, is seen as something females can practice.

Perceptions about art education in Saudi Arabia. High school principals and college presidents have suggested that perceptions about art are different from one generation to the next. Older generations tend to see art as a way of preserving culture and reflecting beauty while simultaneously representing an image of what life is like.

While the younger generations have taken more personal approaches to contemporary art in a way that reflects their individual identities.

Cross-case analysis of interviews with high school and college art educators.

Cross analyzing findings from interviews with high school and college art educators resulted in four themes; limits of art education in Saudi Arabia, tradition and society, perceptions about art education, and traditional art vs. contemporary art.

Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia. High school art educators who are faced with limitations in the ways in which they can teach art have tried to find alternative methods, so that their students do not feel as though they are missing out on art making, such as replacing the prohibition of image making with the intense explorations of forms and colors. Other high school art educators explained they have no choice but to be content with the guidelines provided. Although college art educators seem to have fewer restrictions than the high school educators, they too are wishful for more artistic freedom for themselves and their students. The feeling of being under surveillance, and having to stay within the boundaries of what is culturally acceptable adds a burden to the teaching of art.

Tradition and society. The scope in which traditional Saudi Arabian communities perceive art contributes to neglecting to develop teaching methods and curriculums, and excludes art forms that do not match the guidelines previously set. There are many people within education that are very open to learning about new forms of art, but there are also communities that are less understanding.

Table 15

Interviews with High School Art Educators.

Themes	Art Educator (L.F.)	Art Educator (S.R.)	Art Educator (B.B.)
Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia	Themes, content, and materials are limited.	Art history must be incorporated.	The art taught resembles what I learned in school.
Tradition and society	Art needs to be acceptable traditionally and socially.	Art teaches students about their society,	Tradition is embedded in society because it passed down.

Perceptions about art education in Saudi Arabia. Teaching art in Saudi Arabia makes art making a responsibility towards others that must be carried out carefully. The art educators argued there would be people who will not accept art as a whole because it goes against religious values, or it does not resemble art in its traditional appearance. Art educators teach students to understand their audience, and to make art that is thoughtful without bordering on being offensive. Art has always been about representing one's own ideas, but ultimately art is a reflection of the individual and collective self. Many art educators have been educated in Saudi Arabia and abroad, so they view contemporary art as form of development of art. This is especially true in a society where art is still standing still in schools and colleges, and facing obstacles such as gender segregation. Their students are eager to graduate from high school and, at times, college so they can make the art they wish to make without restrictions.

Traditional art vs. contemporary art. The art educators in this study expressed the importance of placing art in its social and cultural context. It was argued that in Saudi Arabia people automatically associate art with tradition or something stemming from it, and this is considered contextualizing in a way but it prevents people from seeing other forms of art as being art. The lack of knowledge about art leads people in society to view traditional art as the beautiful representation of one's heritage, and contemporary as the retaliation against it.

Table 16

Interviews with College Art Educators.

Themes	Painting Professor (H.L.)	Drawing Professor (M.E.)	History Professor (K.G.)	Photography Professor (T.G.)
Perceptions about art education in Saudi Arabia	College art teaches flexibility.	"Art is a reflection of who we are..."	Experienced art educators are an asset.	The media used in colleges has evolved.
Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia	Art making in schools is repetitive and censored.	Art in Saudi Arabia is expected to be nationalistic.	Students in schools are told how to make art.	Schools and colleges lack a sense of acceptance.
Traditional and Islamic art vs. contemporary art	People are afraid of change.		Contemporary art is different and unconventional.	

Cross-case analysis of interviews with high school and college students. Cross analyzing findings from interviews with high school and college students resulted in four

themes; limits and possibilities of art education in Saudi Arabia, gender roles, tradition and society, and traditional art vs. contemporary art.

Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia. High school students argued they needed new lessons, and wished to learn more about new artistic practices and artists. While college students felt a sense of artistic independence in their art making, they too were interested in learning about the newer forms of Saudi Arabian art being made outside of educational institutions.

Table 17

Interviews with High school Students.

Themes	Student (S.J.)	Students (S.H.)	Student (M.M.)
Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia	I would like to learn new things about art.	I want to make art the way I want to.	We would like to learn new things in digital art.
Gender roles	We make art about the same themes.		I want to study abroad to learn more.
Tradition and society	Students are more familiar with traditional art.	“Tradition doesn’t give us a choice.”	

Gender roles. High school students felt the themes of their art making were also gender specific and at times an unnecessary characterization of what represents females. The connections continuously made between women and objects that represent women in Saudi Arabia, such as the jewelry is seen by students as a constant reminder of gender roles.

Tradition and society. The high school students felt their art focused on society, respecting tradition, and showing female identity by drawing feminine objects rather than being allowed to express individuality. The college students felt less frustration than the high school students about the subject matter they were given in their assignments due to the flexibility they experienced in their art making studios.

Table 18

Interviews with College Art Students.

Themes	Student (T.H.)	Student (M.S.)	Student (R.L.)
Possibilities of art education in Saudi Arabia	College art offers individuality.	Moving from high school art to college art was challenging.	There is artistic independence in college.
Traditional and Islamic art vs. contemporary art	People consider contemporary art to be odd because they do not take the time to understand it.	“Traditional and contemporary art have their own qualities that make them equally important...”	“Art in my country has a hard time finding a place in communities if it is not traditional.”

Possibilities of art education. College students felt a sense of artistic independence in their art making, and felt it would benefit them to about the newer forms of Saudi Arabian art being made outside of educational institutions.

Traditional art vs. contemporary art. Some college students felt as though contemporary art can be odd and irrelevant because people do not take the time to understand it or perhaps have never seen it in person. The common perception among the

students was the difficulty in changing common ideas in people's minds, especially since art has been taught the same strict way for many years.

Cross-case analysis of interviews with traditional and contemporary artists.

Cross analyzing findings from interviews with traditional and contemporary artists resulted in four themes; social values, limits of art education in Saudi Arabia, traditional art vs. contemporary art, and art and gender.

Social values. Traditional and contemporary artists argued that the subjects taught in schools, and even colleges are meant to fit a certain social standard expected of students. On the other hand, contemporary art is perceived as a way to influence people to challenge their norms, and lead newer generations to think about art differently and unconventionally, and consequently may change social views towards art.

Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia. The traditional artists in this study explained that one of the main reasons they chose to pursue traditional art was because this was what they learned about in school, the only type of art they have been exposed to, and what would be the most appropriate to make as practicing artists. The contemporary artists also felt restricted during their education in Saudi Arabia, which led them to pursue art education abroad, and practice making art the way they chose to, and not the way they felt they had to.

Traditional Art vs. contemporary art. One of the dominant themes that emerged from the findings was that traditional art is a direct result of the cultural and social

environment in Saudi Arabia. It is highly influenced by people's lifestyle and behavior; whereas, contemporary art is considered a challenge against convention.

Art and gender. The traditional and contemporary artist discussed how gender influenced their education, and continues to influence their artistic practices. The male artists were frustrated by how art education is not offered to males past a certain age, and is later considered to be frowned upon as a career choice for males. The female artists also argued against the expectation that females should only make art that represents femininity.

Table 19

Interviews with Traditional and Contemporary Artists.

Themes	Female Traditional Artists (O.T.)	Male Traditional Artist (F.D.)	Female Contemporary Artist (A.E.)	Male Contemporary Artist (M.A.)
Social values	Art is not seen as important as other professions.	Subjects are meant to fit norms.		
Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia	Traditional art is all we learned about.	No choice to pursue art is frustrating.	Freedom is needed in art education.	Convention is confining.
Islamic and traditional art vs. contemporary art	Communities shape art making.	Contemporary art breaks barriers.	Contemporary art challenges the status quo.	“Contemporary art can be what you want it to be...”
Art and gender	Art is not only for women.	Unfairness in relation to male art education.		Male practicing artists feel stigmatized.

Summary

This chapter explained the findings that resulted from data collection through document analysis at the Ministry of Education, observations in high schools and colleges, in addition to interviews with various participants within the Ministry, high schools, colleges, and with practicing traditional and contemporary artists. The findings involved two steps. First they were divided into institutional and social dynamics, which govern how art education is structured within educational institutions, and how it is made and perceived outside of educational institutions. Second, the cross-case analysis generated smaller themes that fell under the overarching categories of institutional and social dynamics.

The institutional dynamics focused on the Ministry of Education's guidelines for schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia. The art education system in Saudi Arabia is highly influenced by what is culturally acceptable, at the high school and college level. There is, however, a difference in terms of the liberty students are provided depending on their educational level. The themes included in students' art making are, however, generally the same, and focus on representing what administrators feel is a pride in a national Saudi Arabian identity by representing places and objects that are inherent to the Arabian heritage. Artists who practice their art making in Saudi Arabia have also discussed the difficulties they face as a result of making art especially when it is contemporary art. The lack of knowledge about contemporary art has made it challenging to find supportive audiences in Saudi communities because of their lack of knowledge about contemporary art forms and the use of new media to provide them. Their opposition towards the subject matter in contemporary art has led to a stir due to its communicative nature and at times

criticism of Saudi society. The social dynamics such as religion, tradition, and gender are the main contributing factors connected to the institutional dynamics. Islam plays a role in how the Saudi people choose to live their everyday lives, and what is acceptable in relation to art education. The contradiction, however, appears in instances where students at the high school level should not represent figures because they are taboo, but students at the college level are allowed to do so. The educational structure in schools and colleges also enforces the maintenance of tradition in art making. Older practices relating to arts and crafts are considered to be ideal and acceptable art forms.

The interview responses also clarified that minimal exposure to contemporary art generates negative perceptions towards it, labels it, as something foreign that does not coincide with what is traditionally acceptable. Gender segregation has also influenced art education; the chances of females and males equally pursuing the arts as their career paths. Ministry documents and employees have stated that males are expected to only learn about art making until the 7th grade, which lowers their chances of pursuing art later on since it is not offered to them at the higher education level within Saudi Arabia.

The second part of this chapter lists themes that emerged after cross-case analysis. The themes are a more detailed version of the institutional and social dynamics, and serve the purpose of summarizing the main topics discussed by the interview participants. These themes cover the main responses given, and are grouped into tables based on who the participants were. Ministry employees were placed together, as were high school and college administrators, art educators, students, and traditional and contemporary artists.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Many common themes emerged from the document analysis, observations, and interviews. Within the institutional dynamics category, several of the participants discussed the limitations imposed on art education in Saudi Arabia, in addition to the lack of knowledge about contemporary art. The majority of participants in this study also referred to the social dynamics that guide art and art education, such as religion, tradition, and gender. After analyzing the findings, the themes that emerged highlighted important responses that reveal valuable information, which explains the relationship between art, art education, and the factors that influence them. This chapter is designed to respond to the literature, and findings in relation to the main research question and sub questions:

Given that teaching of traditional art is dominant in high schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia, and given that artists do make traditional art outside of educational institutions in addition to contemporary art, what are the factors that contribute to creating differences in how art and art making are perceived within educational settings and outside of them?

Specifically:

1. Do high school and college art educators influence their students with their own artistic practices or do they solely follow a set of predetermined guidelines set by the school or Ministry? What criteria determine how art is taught and made within educational institutions?
2. In what ways does art education in high schools and colleges influence students' perceptions about art, and their transition from one level of education to the next?
3. In what ways do practicing contemporary Arab artists in Saudi Arabia differ from traditional artists, who have been actively making art in recent years, in terms of their education and perceptions about art making?

Institutional Dynamics of Art Education

Guidelines, limitations, and possibilities of art education in Saudi Arabia.

The modern educational system that replaced the traditional one proved to be a big change in Saudi Arabian life. By the 1950s, schools were teaching a variety of subjects, and also became community centers for social and cultural activities, including public gatherings, sporting events, plays, and exhibitions (Ali, 1997). Although I came into this study with assumptions of my own regarding social influences on education, the study has made it clearer that art education within the modern educational system is directed heavily by social factors. The literature and research findings all point to tradition, culture, religion, and gender as dominant factors in shaping art education, and perceptions about art inside and outside of the classroom. But what has also become evident is that the value of art education is not realized as a crucial part of educational

curriculum, but rather a replaceable addition to education. The initial introduction of art into the curriculum designated it as an activity to be practiced in one's free time. The first steps the Ministry took by introducing "leisure activities" in the school day placed art education on the periphery from the start (Transforming the Ministry of Education, 1955). The female Ministry official, F.T., explained that high school students have many subjects to keep up with, and the Ministry views art as a vent where students could make something tangible without having to read and memorize, on the other hand, at the college level, where students have decided to specialize in art, educators are encouraged to intensively teach students about new media and techniques. This approach places less importance on K-12 art education.

During an informal conversation with a Ministry of Education employee, I asked why art education within educational institutions has not changed much from the time I was in high school? The employee explained that the dominant view towards art has always been that it is an activity rather than a discipline that needs the same level of attention that other subjects would. The school system focuses on subjects, which they view as promising, and may lead students towards a career that could have a larger and more direct influence than art could (F.Tahlawi, personal communication, February 10, 2017). A former Ministry employee also explained, "Saudi society can be fixed in its ways and belief system, and the room for innovation and creativity usually happens within the given cultural frame" (A. Mulla, personal communication, February 15, 2017). This sentiment ties into the plethora of factors that guide the dynamics of art education in Saudi Arabia. Students are focusing on the same themes, using the same materials, and the absence of art theory classes in high schools and colleges may also stem from same

idea that what is being taught, and what has been taught over the years in Saudi Arabia, is all students need to know about art. In other words, students are given basic knowledge in media, themes, and personal expression (L. Harbi, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

What was surprising to find in relation to the Ministry of Education documents was the lack of continuity and outdated guidelines and information about the progress of art education in Saudi Arabia. The content was basically a repetition of the same goals for many decades. What was also surprising to find through the documents, observations, and interviews was that much of what is stated about the importance of art education for students developmentally is not realized in the art classroom. Despite the Ministry of Education stressing the importance of a flexible art education curriculum, there are still restrictions.

Guidelines and Curriculums. In 1968, the Ministry of Education created guidelines for evaluating students' performance in art education within middle and elementary schools. The guidelines specified that 50% of the grade was focused on how students performed in drawing, and the other 50% relied on their craftwork (Ministry of Education's Circular for student Evaluation, 1986-1994). One may conclude that art education in Saudi schools did not consider art criticism, aesthetics, and art history as integral disciplines in art education either. In addition, the guidelines have also indicated that even if students have no percentage points in art education, they would not be given a failing grade.

When the first formal curriculum for teaching art education in middle schools was issued in 1971, the general goals for art education were to focus on Islamic heritage as it

is represented in artwork and decorations, and this continues to be the case, especially within high schools. The guidelines that were issued for elementary and middle schools were applied to female and male schools. They included drawing, painting, decoration of two-dimensional works of art, and three-dimensional production (handwork), including use of clay, and other environmental materials. The curriculums were also structured to familiarize students with art appreciation; which is still not practiced in schools in Saudi Arabia due to the scarcity of facilities and instructional aids; art books, reproduction of artworks, in addition to the shortage of art educators who possess training or knowledge in art history, art appreciation, and criticism. Since that time, the Ministry, with the exception of minor amendments to the annual guideline of the Ministry of Education, has made no new curriculum available.

The Ministry of Education published guidelines in 1968 that focused solely on drawing and crafts, which they explained served the purpose of educating students to appreciate their environments in relation to places, architecture, traditional objects, and nature. As art made its way into K-12 schools, art educators chose to focus their attention more on drawing and less on crafts. The guidelines stated that art educators “are encouraged to teach students how to draw because it is the best method to teach them creativity, skills, and offer them a break from their daily tasks” (p. 21). Additionally, the goal of teaching art education that was issued in 1977 and reissued again in 1988 did not indicate that teachers should experiment with techniques or media that would assist them in teaching art. Today, drawing is still a focal point component of art making in K-12 schools and in colleges, and in some instances is the only approach to art making that students are exposed to in their classrooms. Although the Ministry does see the value of

using drawing in the art classroom, it is depriving students of exploring with other types of media, and techniques. Crafts are also included in guidelines, and curriculums, however, from the observations I attended, and after looking at students' work, it seems that art classes during the academic year focus on drawing more than anything else.

In her research, Ali (1989), asserts that the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia introduced drawing lessons into their curriculums, followed by painting, both taught according to the competence of the art teachers employed. When art education was first introduced to the curriculum in Saudi Arabia, the art classes were basic, and taught by local instructors who had no art training, however, the Ministry later realized that a modern educational system required qualified instructors, and teachers were selected from Arab countries such as Egypt, and later on locally. Art instructors were among those chosen although none was an established artist. Many Arab teachers who moved to Saudi Arabia to teach art molded the talent of the first generation of artists in the 1950s. Despite the training many of these art educators received in art that was not traditional, the Ministry urged them to direct their attention towards teaching traditional art only. In 1976, there were 562 foreign art teachers and 116 art teachers from Saudi Arabia who mostly graduated from universities in Egypt. The majority of the art educators who taught at schools, art teachers programs, and the college level were Egyptian. The Saudi art curriculum mimicked the Egyptian curriculum with the adaptation of 3-D drawings, crafts, and Islamic decorations only. The Ministry of Education missed a valuable opportunity that influenced art education negatively; instead of embracing the diversity in the art educators' backgrounds, and educational experiences, they restricted the teaching of art, which meant art educators could not share their knowledge, and students had to

continue to view art through a narrow scope. Consequently, if there is no interest in expanding students' knowledge about art and art making, the "outcome is art that is only one sided, art that is just traditional and beautiful, and nothing else" (A. Abdelhamid, personal communication, February 3, 2017).

The Ministry of Education reissued the Curriculum for Teaching Art Education in elementary schools in 1988. The guidelines included an explanation of the purpose of a general art education as same as the first curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1988). The findings portrayed the little freedom offered to students to guide the content of their art classes. The approach of imposing themes and subject matter on students opposes the premise of encouraging free art expression introduced in the Saudi art education goals. In fact, it is inconsistent with the latest guidelines published for teaching art, which "required a teacher to encourage students to express themselves for the sake of the cultivation of creativity in various media without any external intervention" (p. 4).

Curriculum guidelines encouraged art teachers to create lesson plans that would develop and strengthen students' thinking skills, confidence, pride in the production of their artwork, and respect for the culture they belong to. Educators were shown how to incorporate art education into a broad-based educational curriculum that supported all the different educational areas. The educators learned how to develop suitable lesson plans drawn from the curriculum guidelines, and tailored them to students' abilities, the availability of materials in building and promoting a positive attitude towards religion, culture, and society. However, what continues to take place, in high schools especially is the repetition of the same lessons and themes without taking into consideration students' artistic development.

Annual reports. The first annual report was written for the 1990/1991 academic years and began with some instruction for art educators to encourage the students to appreciate art and to foster the development of students morally, emotionally, creatively, aesthetically, intellectually, and perceptually. In addition, the annual report was divided into drawing and crafts for each grade in K-12 schools; and did not specify the use of media for college students. It did however instruct art educators at the college level to encourage students to explore themes similar to those taught in schools, such as nature, tradition, landscapes, architecture, and Arabian jewelry. As for the schools, it suggested that art teachers select the lesson plans from the environment, stories, imagination, society, and special days in the country. These types of instructions are problematic because they set in place predetermined plans for exactly what students should make. They also encourage students in college who are in an environment where they wish to develop new skills, to revert to previous ways of art making. The annual report did mention a minor change that would be beneficial to apply in art classrooms, and that is the selection of new lesson plans from other class subjects such as history or geography class, which means making links between art education and the rest of the curriculum. If applied, this type of educational approach may help students draw connections between art and other subjects, in addition to using art as a tool to visualize and think about everyday contexts.

After reviewing the annual report from 1990/1991, I realized that both of the annual reports encouraged art educators to follow the old annual reports from the previous years. This led me to make the conclusion that the annual reports were not

updated and improved upon over the years, which points to a gap that needs to be addressed in terms of studying and re-evaluating teaching methods. According to the annual report in 2000 "art education teachers should follow the annual reports for years 1998/1999 and years 1993/1994" (p. 1). In the reports, there was no policy for art educators to follow, except a few several instructions. The first instruction was to encourage the students to be qualified to critique their own artwork, which helps them to understand and appreciate art education. Next, art educators are expected to make the lesson plans interactive by using new instructional materials, and they should select new lesson plans for the students without repeating them. The other instructions encouraged art educators to organize art exhibitions at schools and colleges to display student work and create a sense of participation and accomplishment among the students. Since the amount of annual reports are minimal in relation to the number of years art education has become a part of the curriculum, it seems there is a need that must be addressed by the Ministry and educational institutions in terms of observing classroom settings and ensuring that such instructions are enforced. There were no annual reports published after the year 2000, and guidelines have not changed since.

Limitations of art education in Saudi Arabia. One change happened in K-12 schools since the year 2000, which was the introduction of art education textbooks in 2008 for elementary, middle, and high schools. The required textbooks aim to enable students to focus on their skills and enhance their abilities in relation to drawing and painting, and to design products that are both usable as well as artistic. The book focuses on the history of traditional art techniques, and introduces students to ceramics, calligraphy, and weaving to produce cultural artifacts, learn the cultural vocabulary of

these artworks and also the economic benefits of making traditional art. The textbooks are heavily word-based and contain few visual aids. Although the introduction of textbooks are important as resources in art education, they simply serve as general instructional guides for how students should make art, and do not mention any type of art being made in Saudi Arabia other than traditional art. In other words, the textbooks repeat the guidelines set forth by the Ministry.

The limited amount of time students spend on art also exacerbates the issue of a diminished importance of art education. In schools, students continue to have one art class per week, which from my experience is not enough time to develop their abilities or to understand and appreciate art. In addition, each 45- minute class is not enough time for art teachers to provide motivation, support, and assist students in understanding and valuing art education. On each subject, students in Saudi Arabia spend an average of eight hours per week of Islamic Studies, six hours per week of Arabic Studies, and four hours per week for science, mathematics, and English, while college students are able to dedicate more of their times to the arts (Report on Saudi Art Education, 2001).

Students at the college level, and particularly those at the high school level, do not have many opportunities to be explorative with art; according to art teacher, “art education in Saudi Arabia is centered on making what you are told or guided to do, it is less about what you wish to make, and less about learning new things” (B. Bader, personal communication, February 25, 2017). Additionally, art educators at the high school level do not offer their students much variety in terms of art lessons. However, at the college level, students have more flexibility with their use of media and their choice of artistic themes. The issue is not only introducing variety to the curriculum, or a debate

about contemporary and traditional art, it is also the state of art in general. The fact that it is not offered to students past the 11th grade propagates an understanding that art is not as important as other subjects, as mentioned previously, but it also makes it more difficult for students to make an uninterrupted transition from high school art to college art if they choose to pursue it in the future. This lack of continuity in art education may also overwhelm students when they begin their college education. The college student, R.L., explained, “Past ideas about art that I learned in school made college art seem very different in a positive way. But if I hadn’t been practicing art on my own after the 11th grade, my classes would have been much more difficult because of the gap year between 12th grade and college.” As discussed in the literature, young people should not be taught to be passive when it comes to receiving knowledge, but should be encouraged to be independent thinkers and challenge mainstream ideas (Burton, 2013). Imposing limitations in the art classroom can be harmful to the learning process and could lead to students lose interest in art making. If each class in a similar fashion, students will not understand the possibilities of art, and will gradually begin to undervalue it. Such restrictions have a ripple effect, damage students’ current perspectives in the art classroom and their societies, and ultimately their future perceptions (Burton, 2013).

Through interviewing artists, it became evident that institutional dynamics have an influence on how artists choose to make art, and how they perceive art. Female traditional artist, O.T., explained, “I chose to make traditional art because it the type of art we were taught in school. Throughout high school and college, and even after graduating, it was the only art I knew.” She also emphasized that the art education she received in school and college has helped her develop her technique. Conceptually,

however, the themes in her art are identical to what she made in school. O.T. added, “I would say that there is a divide when it comes to how art is taught in schools and what is made by artists later on because art education in schools especially is very monotonous and repetitive that it hinders one’s ability to move forward as an artist.” Some practicing traditional artists are beginning to see a value in contemporary art. The male traditional artist F.D. explained, “The subjects taught in schools are meant to fit a certain identity expected of students; this identity relates to one’s beliefs and modality of thought. Contemporary art can influence people to challenge their norms, which can lead to generations of people who think differently from what the educational system wants.” Students who are keen on making art have thoughtfully expressed their dismay, the student, M.M., explains, “The art we learn about is always about expressing memories, places, and things but never people. We only paint and draw, and my classmates and I would like to learn new things like digital art. When you get used to using the same tools, it feels like we are not moving forward.”

The debate about art education also surrounds traditional and contemporary artists, and is part of a wider debate, which is the institutional decision to eliminate boys’ art education at a young age; the reluctance to offer males art as a major in college also has an influence on male artists. This not only relates to gender roles, which I will discuss later in the chapter, but designating an area of study or expertise to males or females is problematic. The male traditional artist, F.D., discussed his pursuit of a different major that was expected of him rather than what he had in mind because of familial pressures, but also because his educational experiences led him to the conclusion that it was the appropriate thing to do, he mentioned “I still remember my art lessons in school, and

drawing places from memory. That is an element that continues in my work, I paint places in Saudi Arabia, mainly landscapes or areas that were once inhabited.” Artists who are self-taught may learn much about art without formal training or education; however, being unable to pursue education due to a lack of choice in the matter may pigeonhole students into majors that are not their first preference. Moreover, not receiving art education past a certain point could discourage males and females from pursuing art education, either because they view it as less important than other subjects, or because it belongs to a gender, prevents young people from making art, or limits the way they choose to approach art intellectually and in the physical act of making it. F.D. explained,

As a student I was frustrated when we weren't taught art past a certain point, and I was even more disappointed to find out that I couldn't pursue art in college. But throughout school, I always painted in my free time. It is something that stayed with me beyond my college years.

The experiences of artists studying abroad have given them the opportunity to reflect on their art education in Saudi Arabia. The female contemporary artist, A.E., said, “My educational choice to study in London was based on the fact that I felt I was deprived of a wholesome art education in Saudi Arabia; what was missing was the element of freedom.” She emphasized that her art education abroad has made her focus on making visual art that communicates rather than just looking beautiful. She explained, “There is a clear divide between art education within schools and this divide exists in making art available based on certain rules and terms that do not necessarily exist as drastically at the college level or the public sphere. The limitations imposed on students prevent them from knowing about art and artists.”

Proper funding is another consequence of the lack of importance given to art, which is common in other parts of the world. From my own personal experience, it is not

uncommon for schools to receive little funding for arts, and some public schools may have a shortage of art teachers from time to time in male and female schools. Principal M.F. sees it as her “duty to ensure there are enough funds for art education, and to sign off on the lesson plans that art teachers present at the beginning of each academic year.” She also explains, “Although art education is available in my school, and other schools, by educational standards it is considered an activity, not a necessity, and this leads to budget cuts in the arts.” She elaborated on this response by explaining that if a subject such as science required more time or attention, the art class could be cancelled and replaced. The issue of funding creates obstacles not only in terms of providing proper classrooms or equipment, but also further embeds the idea that art can be replaced at any given time.

Restrictions in the art classroom. The strictness of guidelines is an issue to art educators that have been educated in the Saudi Arabian systems, and even more so to other educators who received a more diverse education abroad. According to principal O.Q., many art educators have become frustrated with the inflexibility of the art curriculum, especially those who earned their art degrees in the United States or Europe. She explained, “In this school we have talked about changing the art curriculum and introducing some art history, inviting artists for talks, or introducing students to artists’ work; but that is something the Ministry has not approved at this point.” The art Educator, S.R., explained, “I have always tried to apply my expertise in fine arts and art history to art education, but have not been able to get far. I tried to introduce art history lessons as part of the curriculum, but my suggestions were met with objections from the Ministry.” She informed me that her education has made its way into the classroom from

a technical aspect rather than a conceptual one, since the art students make has to fit a certain social and cultural standard. Specifically, her art education has found its way into the classroom through trying to initiate dialogues during and after art making. This did not occur in the other two high school art classrooms I observed.

High school students are equally frustrated by these institutional factors; the student S.H. explained, “I used to like making art in school, but that changed because I feel like I don’t get to make art the way I want. Using pencils and watercolors is nice, but the ideas we make are always the same. I wish we could use other materials to make art that is 3-D and not just 2-D.” Art educators and administrators recognize the advantages of art education at the college level, but also realize that there are improvements to be made at both the high school and college levels. The president, A.J., said,

The best art programs in the world are not necessarily programs that are the oldest, but programs that introduce a variety of teaching methods and opportunities for students to make art individually and collectively within their schools and colleges, and in their free time. Much development is needed in terms of teaching students to be independent thinkers and makers, and hopefully we will find a way despite the limitations of society and culture.

Art educators also discussed their impressions of their own educational experiences in Saudi Arabia. The history professor, K.G., said, “I was very underwhelmed by the education I received in Saudi Arabia, especially during my school years. I was very interested in gaining more experience in studio practice, but I was also very interested in learning more about Islamic art.” She also emphasized that art made within educational institutions and outside of them share similarities and differences in media, style, and the influence on audiences. The biggest difference is that a practicing artist is not told directly how they should approach art, “they are free to make art as they please, and some times face the consequences later because social disapproval. However,

in schools and colleges there are certain protocols to be followed, and the main purpose of these rules is to prevent situations of social uproar.”

The influence of institutional dynamics on the teaching of art. During my K-12 education in Saudi Arabia, I felt art educators were held in low regard in comparison to other disciplines. Art education was viewed as wasting students’ valuable academic time. School administrators have even changed low art grades for students who did well in mathematics and sciences. The Ministry of Education also stated in their guidelines (1951) that when there is a shortage of teachers, the “school administrators may choose any teacher in the school as a replacement, even if they did not possess the qualifications of an art teacher” (Ministry School Guidelines, p. 64). According a Ministry of Education letter sent out to K-12 schools in the 1950s, art activities “should be organized and directed by art educators, and in the case that there are not art teachers available, any teacher within the school maybe fill in for the art teacher” (Al-Hashmi, 1956). This changed in 1975; the Ministry also changed its requirements for art educators, and no longer allowed individuals with just a high school diploma to become art educators. Those seeking positions as art educators were required to complete two years of teacher education programs that had just been established at the time, which was a minor improvement in terms of determining who can teach art to students.

Although the Ministry of Education issued guidelines in 1968 that indicated art educators had the freedom to explore their ideas and use free expression, students in the classroom do not have complete freedom of expression. From personal experience, and the observations I conducted in high schools, art educators choose the subject matter and some times interfere with the art making process by drawing directly on the students’

artwork; with the exception of one high school, which I observed, that encouraged students to make art as a group, and discuss how they wished to approach art making among themselves. Although the subject matter was already chosen for them, there was still potential in the way the students were outspoken, and engaged in making art together. Another art educator asked questions, such as, “Remember, the goal is to look at these objects, and not only study and translate their form, but to also understand what it is you are drawing, what does this object mean to you?” There was hardly any interaction between the students, and their art educator. While asking questions about students’ art making can be beneficial to their artistic processes, their participation in class discussions would have been more helpful rather than the educator dominating the dialogue.

In another high school I observed, students were inquisitive, and took notes; they asked questions, such as, “What is a right way to represent Saudi society? What is a wrong way?” To which the art educator responded, “It depends on how you perceive right and wrong, but a generally acceptable right way would be to show reality as it is, and a wrong way would be to show a false reality.” Another student followed up with a question, “But is there a right or wrong when it comes to making art?” The art educator responded, “No, there should be no right or wrong.” They were curious about their surroundings, and were looking for ways to contextualize what they observed in their everyday settings through art making. Although the art educator did her best to answer questions, not all the students were engaged in the dialogue; the students who did engage in dialogue were able to communicate their ideas and verbalize their thoughts easily. Conversations such as these may prove productive and encourage students to become more analytical and aware of their direct environments, but also conscious about how

they choose to make art. Some students expressed their unhappiness with not being able to choose the themes themselves. One student exclaimed, “Miss, next lesson, can we make art about something different we choose?” The art educator, B.B., explained,

The art I teach is almost identical to the art I learned about in school and college. It feels like a cycle since I am educating my students with the same knowledge I received. As art educators, we cannot teach contemporary art in schools because it goes against the Ministry’s guidelines, which restrict art as something that must be taught as a way to highlight social feature, embrace religion, and show patriotism; these are things contemporary art may criticize.

She added, “The art we teach students at a young age has imprinted this concept in their mind that if their art does not look beautiful or even somewhat realistic, they are not good at art.” Students also share the sentiment of needing new lessons, and learning about new artistic practices. The student, S.J. explained, “I want to learn more things about artists in Saudi Arabia, and how they find inspiration to make their art.” She also added, “Since we were kids, the media we use haven’t changed. I would like to practice art by learning new things, not repeating old lessons.” One big issue this imposes is the restriction of art making to involve one’s immediate surroundings, and forces students to continue making art about the same objects or places. If they were offered more opportunities to choose from broader themes, their art making would be more diverse, and more educational in the process. For example, instead of focusing their art making on only Saudi Arabia, students could learn about other cultures by making art about other places.

Art making and art teaching within high schools are also limited by the content, themes, and materials used. Art educator, L.F., explained, “I enjoyed making art when I was growing up, but I always felt that as a student, I didn’t have much of a choice in the art I made. I was determined to become an art educator who gave students more

freedom.” However, when she became a teacher she understood the complications that result from the intersection of society, culture, and education. She also stated, “Teaching high school has made me realize that Saudi Arabian society has a long way to go in terms of making actual changes to how art can be taught. I find myself having to teach the same lessons every semester with slight variation.” As an art educator, she is “expected to teach according to the guidelines the Ministry provides,” and is unable to “introduce new types of art into the curriculum.” But her education as a graphic designer, who teaches high school art, encouraged her to “move away from making art for art’s sake and focus on teaching students to communicate with their art. L.F. explained, “Since students can’t make art that portrays figures, I teach my students communication through color and form.” One of her goals is to teach art classes, which introduce students to art that is being made in Saudi Arabia, including contemporary art, she added, “We don’t teach students about contemporary Arab art because many educators aren’t knowledgeable about it. The educators who do know very much about art face obstacles because of the objections from the Ministry and administrators.”

There is an obvious difference between how high school and college students interact with their educators and classmates during their classes. College students are given more opportunities to discuss art, and reflect on it through written formats, classroom critiques, and informal dialogues with their classmates and art educators. They are given assignment sheets that contain information about their upcoming assignment, the goals, media they could use, and the outcomes. They are using new media to make art, and have more choices with their artistic themes in terms of portraying figures for

example, which is something not present in high schools. However, students in college are not taught about art outside the realms of traditional or Islamic art.

In the first college I observed, the professor discussed the assignment with the students during their drawing class; the goal of the lesson was to draw a still life that was set up in the classroom rather than having the students draw solely from memory or photographs, which is common practice at the high school level. They were encouraged to ask questions, and discuss ideas about how they would like to approach the assignment. The students used different drawing materials in their art making, such as charcoal, colored pencils, and graphite. Some students also used mixed media. The lesson goal was to draw variations of the still life from different sides, using different materials, in order to get a sense of how drawing can be exploratory and incorporate play. These drawings did not have to be realistic, but could be if that is what the students desired. The students were engaged and very talkative when they would take breaks to look at each other's work. Their professor would walk around and ask them about their drawing approaches rather than tell them how to draw.

Similarly, the students in the painting studio were also prepared when their professor walked in. Their painting easels were set up, and the students were well equipped with painting materials, canvases, and were wearing appropriate painter's wear. The professor entered the studio, greeted her students, and began a dialogue with them about their next lesson. She handed them their assignment sheets, and informed them the lesson was about painting market scenes. She gave them the option to choose any market they preferred. The painting students had the option of using oil paints or watercolors, and were also given the option of how big or small they wanted their canvases to be.

They were also asked to choose how they wished to use color, and whether they wanted their paintings to mimic reality or be more imaginative.

The painting studio shared a similar atmosphere. It was a very energetic studio; students were mixing colors, experimenting with different strokes and brushes before making marks on the canvas. They were very engaged in the colors and forms they were making. Some students would walk over to their classmates' workspace and ask how they achieved a certain color or tone. The professor seemed impressed by the ongoing dialogue between two of the students. A student asked her classmate, "What about this particular market caught your attention enough to want to paint it?" To which the student replied, "Although the colors of the fruits and vegetables are enough to capture my attention, it's how the people working in the market interact with each other that's captivating. It's a very noisy environment, but if you listen closely, there is plenty of storytelling going on." These responses were insightful because the students were not solely painting forms anymore, they were putting plenty of thought into what they were making. What is most noticeable in both classrooms is how the students are given opportunities to have dialogues about art making at all times. There are critiques that take place to discuss progress, but there are also conversations that occur between educators and students, which encourage students to speak about their artistic experiences without hesitation.

I observed a similar learning environment in the second college. While observing two photography classes, I watched students as they pinned up their photographs, their professor asked them to carefully examine each other's work and look at the formal elements, and the overall meaning they derive from the photograph if any at all. The

students were the ones directing the conversation, and the art educator occasionally asked them questions to create more opportunities for discussion, such as asking a student, “You mentioned the composition is good, what made you say that?” The second class was essentially a continuation of the work the students had done the previous class, with an addition of new photographs. The interactions that took place in the photography classroom were very engaging. Since both sessions I observed were centered on critiques, it was a very interactive atmosphere between the educator and the students. They discussed difficulties they had; technical, and some times social obstacles when they were photographing people in public places. They also focused their attention on discussing similarities and differences in their images, how to make a good photograph, and how to create photographs with focal points depending on what they want their audience to see. Students gave short presentations about their themes, and spoke confidently about their processes.

The drawing classes followed a similar structure. The lessons focused on self-portraits, and students were drawing themselves any way they chose to. They were continuously working in class, and it seemed, as there was a cycle of thinking, making, and then discussing. They were curious about how their classmates were drawing themselves. The educators gave all the students opportunities to share their ideas, thoughts, and to offer their own individual suggestions to their professor about lessons they wish to have in the future. There was a focus on critiques, and students were asked to take a short break from drawing, and walk around the studio to look at what their classmates were doing. They listened attentively to what their educator and classmates were discussing, and shared their own ideas about the materials they were using and how

their choice of material related to the drawing style they had selected. It was a back and forth dynamic of creation and engagement that took place during both sessions. There was a sense of community among the students and their educator, in addition to a sense of freedom in art making.

Students are well aware of this flexibility at the college level, as one senior fine arts student, T.H., explained, “College art offers a sense of individuality that high school doesn’t. We can’t make absolutely anything we want, but we can explore our strengths and weaknesses in art making and learn new techniques. The art we make now has more feeling, and feels less like we are constantly drawing still objects.” She also said,

I mostly use painting and photography because I feel that both are very expressive. Painting has the potential to depict an idea realistically or in a stylized way, and photograph captures reality. I some times combine the two in my art making. I pursued art at the college level because I felt that I grew up in a society where everything was either black or white. There was a harsh sense of conformity, and very little individuality. To my disappointment, the art we made in school was just as rigid as social views. But I was optimistic that as a college student, I would learn to make art with as many media as possible even if I could not make art exactly the way I wanted. And I use my free time to make the art I want, and hopefully when I graduate I will continue to do so.

The sophomore fine arts student, M.S., said, “I include portraiture in my art making, which is something I couldn’t do in school. We make art using painting, drawing, photography, printmaking, and 3-D modeling and sculpture as well. The use of different media gives us options to choose how we want to make art.”

The painting professor, H.L., stated, “The biggest thing to consider when teaching at the college level is how different it is from art in school. I remember making art in school felt so repetitive, we were always asked to make the same art over and over along the years.” According to H.L., censorship also comes into play in schools and colleges, “It is like art education is under surveillance, and as educators we have to control art

making and discussions about art, not because we want to, but because we have to. Art outside of school faces censorship as well, but artists are free to make what they please and face the social consequences later.”

Naturally, students still have a curiosity when it comes to learning new things, and that includes new art being created within their society. The sophomore fine arts student, M.S., explained, “We have a lot of hands-on practice at the college level, but I feel like we could benefit from learning about art movements that are taking place in Arab countries.” She also mentioned her transition from high school art to college art, “It was very challenging moving from high school art to college art because we were taught very little about what art actually is. In school there was a right and wrong way of making art, and in college there is no right or wrong; just different approaches.”

The need for art viewing spaces. Art and cultural education require time and investment in the education system as a whole (Shabout, 2007). From my personal experience, and the interview responses, there is little distinction between art as a profession and art as a hobby. Thus, today’s Arab schools and art markets are still dominated by art that caters to the taste of the masses, and art that is acceptable to the religiously inclined. Most professional Arab artists are only able to gain stature outside their countries through international exhibitions or migration. Midyyine has argued,

What is needed is a critical and painstaking study of our self, society, and history. This means liberating art from all forms of censorship; from rigid canons imposed by congealed doctrines, whether of a political or religious nature. That is to say, art must be considered as a dimension of human tendency within the individual historicity of each nation and within a comprehensive global horizon. (Amirsadeghi, 2009, p. 42)

The scarcity of galleries, museums, and art centers has also contributed to the problem of the separation between contemporary Arab art and the Arab people. During the Islamic period, art was a part of the people's daily life. Forms surrounded them on the walls of their mosques, their furniture, and their books (Atassi & Schwartz, 2012). Along with its spiritual function, Islamic art had a utilitarian function as well, based on the concept of the totality of arts and crafts (Hillenbrand, 1999). The male contemporary artist, M.A. explained, "Traditional art like Islamic art, has a functional aspect to it at times, but also represents one's pride in one's own culture." The Ministry employee, F.T., also said, "From my own point of view, it seems that art is regarded as a luxury in Saudi Arabia, not a necessity unless it is functional." Muslims had easy access to their art and did not need to go to a museum to view it. Thus, by adhering to the concept of a museum, the separation of artists from their audiences is now clearly observed. During the 1990s new – mainly private – efforts to establish art centers were undertaken to facilitate interaction among Arab artists and audiences. Although many private art galleries are emerging in Saudi Arabia, the public does not have much knowledge or interest in the developments of Arab art because they are not taught about the value of art throughout their education (Zuhur, 1998). One of the challenges that face contemporary Arab artists, more so than traditional Arab artists, is in attracting a larger and more diverse audience to the spaces that feature their artistic productions.

Social Dynamics of Art Education

Religion and art. Religion is a factor that carries much weight within Saudi Arabian society. Decision makers, such as those in the Ministry, have explained that Islam is what guides how people live their lives and is part of how education should be

designed at all levels. The Ministry carefully issued guidelines for teachers to choose subject matter according to the appropriateness of student ability, availability of materials in building and promoting a positive religious doctrine on the subject of Islam, and a positive outlook on culture and society. The Islamic banning of images, generally had a large influence on how visual art developed and was received in Arab countries, in contrast to art in Europe or the Americas (Watriss & Roques, 2014). The primacy of a discourse on Islamic art as a religious art that is uninterested in the secular world neglected a vibrant history of patronage, communication, and commentary through form, and a tradition of figuration represented in objects such as manuscript illuminations of history.

Consequently, it has influenced how art education is perceived and situated in schools and colleges. This is evident in the following responses by the principal, O.Q., “there are of course religious and conservative individuals who might not accept these new art forms, just like certain forms of literature have been banned from the country because they are controversial,” and “We need to make sure that what we teach in our schools does not step on any religious people’s toes. This could cause problems for institutions.” These examples shed light on the dilemma that art education faces. The desire to introduce new material or new ways of making art would be problematic under such circumstances because people’s mindsets would have to change first.

According to the literature, attitudes about contemporary Arab art vary depending on geographic location, gender, political affiliation, and education, yet many people in the Arab world are quick to argue that art in the Islamic world is solely a celebration of the divine and that figuration is banned (Shabout, 2010). It is an obstacle to make a

broader public understand the value of an art education that introduces students to new forms of Arab art and art making if there are actual strict inhibitors enforcing this negative idea. Religious and social censorship play a major role in determining how art education will progress, and will influence K-12 students in addition to students in higher education. The educators in this study explained they are not able to introduce new material without the Ministry's approval and that the Ministry would not grant them the opportunity to do so as a long-term adjustment to art curriculums. There is also a stark contrast in how art making is approached in high schools and colleges. For example, art in high school classrooms focuses on landscapes and objects, whereas art at the college level allows students to experiment with making images that contain figures, and creating portraits. The argument is that figures should not be portrayed because this goes against Islamic practices. From my observations, I found that figure representation in different forms is introduced to colleges based on the availability of an art educator who is capable of teaching students how to do so, with discretion of course. In high schools, the representation of figures in art is still prohibited, and is deemed inappropriate for students to include any in their art making.

Scholars of Islamic art commonly believed that the prohibition of images basically meant that no images could be depicted (Grabar, 1973). In Islamic art, and contemporary art today, however, there are indeed pictures, even figurative portrayals. To better understand the issue and its role in Arab visual art, it is important at this point to address the issue of the ban on images. Islam does not forbid artistic activity per se. The development of Muslim aesthetics, in terms of its conception of forms and their interrelationship, the composition of the work, the painterly conventions used to indicate

space, time, existence, and reality in general was intimately linked to the Muslim view of the world (Ali, 1989). Muslims perceive Islamic abstraction as a cultural, intellectual, and communal expression of faith, its main goal being to serve the purity of Islamic monotheism (Grabar, 1973). Administrators in the Ministry and some educational institutions continue to hold on to this belief. However, this is indeed a contradiction since images of people exist in the art being made in colleges and outside of educational institutions. Additionally, it is common practice for Saudi people to commission painted portraits and photographs of the Saudi royal family. These images can be found in public places all over the country.

According to Watriss & Roques (2014), the Islamic banning of images generally had a significant influence on the development of visual art in Arab countries, in contrast to art in Europe or the Americas. This ongoing issue of giving attention only to Islamic art as a religious art that is uninterested in the secular world neglects a vibrant history of patronage, communication, and commentary through new ways of art making. Shabout (2010) explains, art in the Arab world was not all about timeless religion; rather the arts are deeply tied to the dynamic societies in which they were produced and responded to development. Pieprzak (2010) asserts that when the majority of Arab Muslims believe that Islam bans figurative art, contemporary Arab artists must constantly explain, justify, and spend more time attempting to establish the authenticity of Arab art in the Islamic and Arab world. The insistence of the Arab public on identifying their art as nonfigurative artisanal production based on their concept of Islamic art continues to neglect contemporary Arab artists' claims to be representative of an Arab cultural identity.

Discourses about Islamic art provided resistance to claims of legitimacy and authenticity made by modern and contemporary Arab artists by emphasizing the notion that the aesthetic identity of modern Arab artistic productions remained firmly rooted in religious condemnation of figurative art. The monumentality of such representations of modern Arab art also negates the authenticity of Arab painting and the authority of its painters. Pieprzak (2010) contends that the concept of constructed or “imagined” norms is fundamental to understanding how a discourse on the Arab-Islamic tradition in art arose because these discourses derived their authority from the interpretation of a very small textual base in sacred Islamic texts. As Oliver Leaman (2004) argues in his study, *Islamic Aesthetics*, “Although the destruction of images may have been given a religious rationale, that does not establish that they in fact had a religious rationale” (p. 36).

Art in the Arab world was not all about timeless religion; rather the arts were tied to the societies in which they were produced and responded to development (Shabout, 2010). Pieprzak (2010) asserts that when the majority of Arab Muslims believe that Islam bans figurative art, contemporary Arab artists must continuously justify why their art is legitimately Arab and not foreign or a cultural invasion; they spend more time attempting to establish the authenticity of Arab art in the Islamic and Arab world.

Responses in some of the interviews indicated one factor that hinders the progress of art education and art making is how it is can be automatically perceived in a negative light when it moves away from what is considered socially familiar. Principal O.Q. explained,

What is problematic about art that is not traditional is that it is very lofty and free; it can be anything you want it to be. In a society where not everything is acceptable or appropriate, art becomes a risk rather than an asset. The biggest fear is the backlash from conservatives and religious people regarding things that

appear in contemporary art. For example, teaching students about portraying people, and figures is something many parents may also be uneasy toward, not because the human body is taboo, but the idea of opening new doors gives art educators less control in guiding students in a way that does not break away from tradition.

Due to the fact that Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country, and religion is held in high regard in all aspects of life including education, art forms that are traditional and Islamic, such as calligraphy, are revered due to their celebration of Islamic values. According to principal O.Q., “Islam is used to measure and evaluate what goes into the education of male and female students in schools and colleges. What we choose to teach our students must be beneficial in accordance to our capabilities, and our religious identities.” She explained that Islam is also a religion that encourages Muslims to think and progress, and in a sense not developing art education would be doing it an injustice. Despite these restrictions, not all individuals at the administrative level oppose newer forms of art, O.Q. added, “ I have always had a passion for education that challenges old knowledge, and contemporary Arab art is valuable in informing, debating, and even at times criticizing. It is art that makes you think, and is not so obvious and straight forward as traditional or Islamic art.” The art educator, S.R., explained, “Traditional and Islamic art are good at being safe and mimicking everyday life in Saudi Arabia. Contemporary art is challenging to everyday life.”

Gender roles. There is great attention paid to structuring education to mirror tradition and culture in Saudi Arabia. Knowledge is tailored not only to age, which is the case in many parts of the world, but is also tailored to gender. The findings from this study, and my own personal experience have made it clear that gender segregation plays a role in the direction art education has taken over the years, and influences the art being

made within and outside of institutions. In addition to art being perceived as less important than other disciplines, it is perceived as feminine. Males are only encouraged to practice art making until the 7th grade, and not given the opportunity to pursue it at the college level. This places restrictions on art as more culturally appropriate for women and less appropriate for men to pursue, it also poses the idea that males cannot be artists or artistic past a certain point in their lives, only females can.

Saudi Arabia was not always opposed to males studying art as they progressed in years; there were a number of male artists being educated abroad. Some received private lessons about art in Saudi Arabia, and others were educated abroad; such as, Abdul Halim Radwi (1939-2006), and Mohammed Mosa Al-Saleem (b.1939), who were mentioned in the literature review (Ali, 1997). The first schools established in Saudi Arabia were for males, and it was not until 1955 that the first school for females opened. In other words, art education was solely offered to male students in the past, but soon after was seen as a field more suitable for women in Saudi Arabia (A short History of the Ministry of Education, 2015). In present times, females dominate art and art education; this change occurred after newer subjects that were considered more suitable for males were added to the male curriculum to replace art. The Ministry of Education made a decision to do away with art education from some middle public schools for boys in 1975. According to an employee at the Ministry “the reason given for this elimination was that the secondary education program was filled-up with other needed subjects” (A. Salah, personal communication, February 15, 2017). The minister of education at the time explained, “art education given in the earlier stages is sufficient, so that studying art at the secondary level is not considered necessary” (Ministry of Education, 1975).

Universities and schools have been segregated for decades, and the fact that the sample selected for this study was almost entirely female tells an interesting but rather focused story about how art and art education is perceived in Saudi Arabia. While art classes are available in many K-12 schools in Saudi Arabia, they are mostly only available in girls' schools. This leaves a large percentage of male students out of the art education equation. Additionally, at the college level, the available art-related majors are normally reserved for females and not males. Which means that studying art in Saudi Arabia at the college level is not a viable or common option for men who would like to have access to such an education or career. These types of distinctions further stigmatize art and art education in Saudi Arabian society; in addition to art being restricted and undervalued, it is also seen female-oriented, which means a large part of the population does not recognize art in general as an important component of education. Such separations solidify the idea that if art only belongs to a particular group, it is therefore something that is inessential to both male and female education. The male contemporary artist, M.A., explained,

A big divide between becoming a practicing artist and learning about art is the gender separation during education, and the stigma one might face as a practicing artist. This idea that art is something feminine, and should not be made by males past a certain age is outrageous. This in itself contributes to a whole other issue, which is what defines art? And if a man is making it, can we still call it art? But the bigger divide exists in how art is taught to students as a hobby that is not to be taken seriously, and something that has to be done a certain way with rules and regulations.

The male traditional artist interviewed in this study, F.D., expressed that there is a sense of unfairness in art education, and that is felt in male's education, "Art does not belong to one gender and everyone should have an opportunity to make it if they wish to." He is a dentist who learned how to make art on his own, "I never stopped making art,

even when they didn't teach it to us in school anymore.” The female traditional artists, O.T., also explained, “A fundamental issue that needs to change is that art is only for women, and not men. Also, if a woman is making art, it has to be done in a polite feminine manner. When art is seen as being a woman's area of expertise, it divides opportunities among individuals unequally. It robs people of their right to learn.”

Yet, art continues to be made by practicing male and female artists. Although traditional arts are more widely accepted, the number of contemporary artists in Saudi Arabia is on the rise (A. Qatif, personal communication, February 14, 2017). Practicing artists in Saudi Arabia today have been educated in their homeland and abroad; some are even self-taught. The differences in how these individuals have been educated about art throughout their lives are an important in understanding the ways they choose to make art today.

A male Ministry of Education employee, J.K., explained that art is perceived as necessary for females at different stages of their lives because it is widely perceived that this makes them accomplished girls and ladies. On the other hand it is perceived as unconventional and untraditional for boys and men to be involved in art past a certain stage, particularly adolescence because they are expected to focus their attention on masculine activities, “and this is precisely why a male practicing art as a profession, and not a hobby, is frowned upon, and why males are only taught art up to a certain age.” He argued that art is important for a student's analytical skills and development, which is why it is taught to boys in the first place. However, it is later eliminated in hopes that men would not pursue it as a possible career prospect. F.T. also discussed male art education, “it has always been the tradition for men to support their families, and this

means a man must have a career that fulfills this duty. Art is taught to boys as an extra activity, but it cannot be a stable source of income in Saudi Arabia.”

The Ministry official, N.K., described art education for females, and why it is considered especially important in their case, “Traditional art made by females is a way to teach young ladies how to be passionate and patient nurturing mothers who make their surroundings beautiful.” She added, “this means representing themselves in their artwork, and making art that shows they are educated young ladies, who are proud of their culture and heritage.” According to the principal, M.F., when it comes to determining how subjects are taught in schools and colleges, females are not taught the same subjects as males because the educational system has specific ambitions for what roles each gender can and should perform. In the past crafts for example was a skill that men and women could share, it still is in some rural parts of Saudi Arabia. However, drawing and painting, is seen as something only females can practice. Principal M.F. explained,

Males can make art, but men are expected to pursue other fields, which is a reason why schools do not teach art education in male’s schools past a certain age. The way art is taught in girls’ schools and female colleges taps into the very persona of a Saudi female, her surroundings, the culture, and tradition.

The student, S.J., Said, “We usually make art about society, respecting tradition, and showing female identity by drawing feminine objects.” Another response she gave indicated that students are aware of these gender expectations, “I want to study art and become an art teacher or artist. I want my art making to be about showing women they can make anything they wish, and choose on their own how they will accomplish their artistic goals.”

The Ministry official, N.K., pointed to how art should be made by females, “Traditional art made by females is a way to teach young ladies how to be passionate and

patient nurturing mothers who make their surroundings beautiful.” She added, “this means representing themselves in their artwork, and making art that shows they are educated young ladies, who are proud of their culture and heritage.” Another Ministry official, F.T., discussed the opposite side of the gender spectrum with the explanation, “it has always been the tradition for men to support their families, and this means a man must have a career that fulfills this duty. Art is taught to boys as an extra activity, but it cannot be a stable source of income in Saudi Arabia.”

The acceptance and rejection of art. The new forms of expression that appeared in the Arab world were uncommon, especially in countries with a Bedouin background. Ali (1997) explains that at the start of the 20th century, people in the past satisfied their need for artistic expression through crafts, the most common of which were “weaving, embroidery, silver and gold jewelry making, wood-carving and naïve two-dimensional decorative paintings on boats, walls, and doors of houses and mosques” (p. 120). Craftsmen found their sources of inspirations for their designs, choice of color, and subject matter in their local environments, and their art making was self-contained.

In 1958, the Administrator General of Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Education enthusiastically supported the presence of art education in Saudi schools, and viewed it as necessary to make connections between the content of art and other subjects (Ministry of Education Report, 1960). The report states that art education must emulate religion and culture, which was seen as a crucial pedagogy in promoting the improvement of students’ intellectual skills, “The arts in Saudi Arabia must adhere to our social and traditional norms, and these expressions will be created by focusing on drawing and making traditional crafts to sharpen skills, and reflect pride in one’s identity” (p.12).

Modern and contemporary Arab art is viewed by a number of Arab intellectuals and art critics as nothing more than an offshoot of Western art. Boullata (1997) has also explained that whenever the application of modernity intensified, the reversion to tradition would also intensify. Dagher (1997) has also stated, “Our societies have not yet assigned value to the visual arts. Art is still in the realm of a very limited group. The art market is almost nonexistent in Arab countries. Without a relationship between the artist and society, we cannot produce art that resembles us.” (p. 50) Today’s visual art is governed only by its own rules, as Zuhur (1998) contends, and defies classification and consistency. The history of modern and contemporary art, including progress in art, consists in the totality of individual effort, each with its own understanding of art and beauty, and not just in schools or organized movements. This seems to be the nature of modern and contemporary Arab art; it is not a unified organized movement but rather a plurality of styles and experiences, the sum total of creative individual experiments from various Arab countries.

Mohamed Makiya (2004), an Iraqi pioneer in architecture and urbanism, also stresses that the acceptance of works of art in Arab societies is also conditioned by public taste. The public expects art to correspond to its needs, not to surpass reality and traditional norms. Thus, Arabs do not always perceive Arab visual expressions as a reflection of culture but rather –as in this case – a “counterculture” (p.70). Orabi (2009) has also argued that artistic creations that defy the prevailing tastes are seen as counter narratives that challenge the national identity. The painting professor, H.L. explained, “In Saudi Arabia, the artist must not only consider what the work of art means to them, they must take into account the audience’s feelings and reaction. And so, you are working

with this extra element of being socially and culturally responsible because you are trying to make art that is acceptable.” Mohannad Orabi (2009), a Syrian artist, has also argued that artistic creations that defy the prevailing tastes are seen as counter narratives that challenge the different Arab national identities (Iraqi, Egyptian, etc.). The sophomore fine arts student, M.S., explained, “I think traditional and contemporary art have their own qualities that make them equally important in society. They both represent culture and society, but they do so differently. The way I perceive art, and the way people perceive it, is dependent on how we were taught about it.” Her thoughts on this matter were that most people make art for a few years in school, and understand it the way they are told by their teachers, “People in Saudi society see art through a very narrow perspective. So narrow that they have a clean-cut meaning of what art should look like.”

The presence of different kinds of art in Saudi society are seen as opportunities for inspiration or educational growth, or they are viewed as deviating from what is known art. President, A.J., explained,

Contemporary Arab art has changed our perceptions and expectations of what art can be, and that is something positive. However, this shift in the paradigm when it comes to the meaning of art is not without turbulence. As we are living in a time where people in Saudi society have become more outspoken with their words, and with their art. But we must not forget where we are and the rule of the land. That is the risk with contemporary art, there are certain lines that should not be crossed, such as religion for example, and when these things are brought up as something to be debated in an artwork, then it is not seen as art but as an attack. Contemporary art has become a big part of art, one cannot deny that, but traditional art is more favorable in our society. Art educators see it as an interesting phenomenon. Some see it as having shared characteristics with traditional art, and others find it to be vastly different. I think that is how society sees it, as having a different aura than traditional; it is non-conformist.

The president, A.R., also discussed why authoritative or religious individuals who are aware of contemporary art are opposed to it, “Contemporary art is still met with some

resistance, partly because a lot of the art is trying to make a statement about something artists and people are displeased with.” She explained that there is art talking about women’s rights or freedom of speech in the public realm; these are issues that are sensitive, and are being talked about,

In any progressive country, it would be normal to discuss these issues. In Saudi Arabia, it is frowned upon to start a dialogue about things that could upset authority figures. There is a space and a presence for contemporary art, but there is also a big part of society that would not call it art, and would refer to it as “trouble” because of the effect it may have on young minds.

While Western art is admired in many Arab countries, there are still countries and circles of people within societies who perceive the new forms of expression as something like “neocolonialism;” they fear losing their traditions and personal identity (Watriss & Roques, 2014, p. 26). Artists who are seen as heavily influenced by Western culture and Western ideas may be regarded with skepticism. There are a number of views surrounding the place of modern and contemporary Arab art within Arab societies in recent years. Daftari and Baird (2014) argue that the relentless debate about the nature of Arab art only serves to limit its progress. Most Arab artists try to strike a balance between, on the one hand, artistic values related to tradition, each according to his culture and nationality, and, on the other, international styles. In their quest for authenticity, many artists are compelled to trace their creations back to their ancestors.

Bahnassi (1985) asserts that the only way to resolve the “authenticity of a culture is to create works that are unique in their aesthetic foundations, rejecting all foreign elements, and relying on the personal and the cultural to merge in new ways that would begin to redefine the elements that make a culture work” (p.17). A growing number of Arab artists, some of whom took part in the search for an identity during the 1950s and

1960s, have struck a balance between Islamic tradition and Western modernity (Brien & Prochaska, 2004). They have achieved a form of harmony between the self and the other by integrating the positive aspects of the other and maintaining an innovative discourse between tradition and modern Western art. They trust that their individual visions and styles cannot but reflect their sense of belonging to the Arab world, which is an innate element, and that their Arab or Islamic status does not conflict with being modern (Shabout, 2010).

The multitude of individual visions presenting and re-presenting tradition in terms of visual expression have been an important factor in the creativity and cultural education, one that might well provide the key to Arab identities of the 20th century and beyond. In such cases, confrontations with conservative movements that opposed the new ideas became more frequent. Zuhur (1998) has asserted, in the worst cases, governments sought to prohibit the new artistic developments and to suppress them by force. In some countries, this situation promoted state-sanctioned art and made the practice and teaching of modern and contemporary art a dangerous undertaking, which forced artists to go underground. Charbel Dagher (1997), an Arab cultural professor, has also stated, “Our societies have not yet assigned value to the visual arts. Art is still in the realm of a very limited group. The art market is almost nonexistent in Arab countries. Without a relationship between the artist and society, we cannot produce art that resembles us” (p.50). The female contemporary artist, A.E., explained,

In Saudi Arabia, it feels like contemporary art does not stand out as something of importance, and this some times makes artists question whether you they need to change the way they make art in order to have an audience. If you look at traditional art, it always has an audience because it is what Saudi people have grown accustomed to. But contemporary art is seen as younger people’s expressions in the form of being displeased with tradition and society, and

wanting to change it to suit their needs. What people do not comprehend is that contemporary art can be seen as a vehicle that will create disorder through thought. When people are not inspired by something, they have no incessant need to change their surroundings. However, when a work of art for example inspires one to think about the way they are living their life, this in turn causes change in thoughts, which can lead to change in behavior and actions. Change is not a bad thing.

The male contemporary artist, M.A., discussed his educational experiences, and his understanding of art,

One of the biggest things you learn when you undergo an art education program that gives you exposure to different forms of art is that you gain a sense of tolerance towards understanding different points of view. That is something that comes through especially when showing someone my art; many people don't understand at times or may have a negative comment, and I have grown to accept this because I realize art education in Saudi Arabia has not provided the proper foundation for students, which leads them to view art in a limited way; art can only be what they taught us in school. Saudi Arabian society has always glorified traditional art, and still sees contemporary art as an outside influence.

The Need for Cultural Studies and Art Criticism

Several studies I mentioned in the literature review on contemporary Arab art by Arab art historians and educators conclude that Arabs focus on traditional arts because they do not consider these newer forms of expression to be inherent to Arab cultures due to the fact that many examples of artworks follow Western techniques (Ali, 1997; Shabout, 2007; Zuhur, 1998). However, other studies have suggested that they are simply not familiar with these new developments in artistic styles and concepts because they have not been exposed to them inside or outside the classroom (Bahnassi, 1980, 1985). I would argue that the introduction of art criticism into curriculums, and an understanding of the development of modern and contemporary Arab art within a cultural context is crucial for a solid understanding of arts other than traditional and Islamic.

Arab Art historian, Afif Bahnassi, blames the educational systems in the Arab

world that have neglected cultural studies and have only recently started translating available texts on Arab and Islamic art. He also attributes the public's disregard for modern and contemporary Arab art to their unfamiliarity with it and its apparent lack of cultural ties to their heritage. In research conducted by art historian and educator, Nada Shabout (2010), she asserts that there is a confusion among many Arab art educators, and Arabs in a larger sense, as they find it difficult to differentiate between Islamic art, traditional art, and Modern and contemporary Arab art. In light of this unfamiliarity over the years, some scholars such as Bahnassi (1985) view the teaching of contemporary Arab art as an integral part of art education in Arab countries. He also stresses the significance of the ideas that are introduced into contemporary Arab works since they represent many Arab experiences socially, culturally, politically, and religiously.

In the West, art criticism shares the responsibility of educating the public in understanding contemporary art. Professional art criticism in the Arab world is rare; in fact, Arab art critics are generally either literary critics or artists themselves and possess no training in the language of visual criticism (Zuhur, 1998). The lack of objective art criticism further contributed to the lack of understanding of contemporary art in Saudi society. The issue of art criticism is part of a bigger issue, involving art education, aesthetics, and the valuation of art in Arab countries. Despite a few isolated studies by Arab historians and critics on the nature of contemporary Arab aesthetics, most of the studies are mainly conducted in the West with limited access to artists and artistic production in the Arab world. Aesthetics, as an academic or cultural field has no place in the Arab world due to the lack of Arab art critics and art educators teaching students about these new forms of artistic expressions (Shabout, 2007, p. 48).

Understanding distinctions between what traditional and contemporary arts offer may help promote the acceptance of newer forms of art. The male traditional artist described these differences from his own point of view, F.D, said, “Islamic and traditional art are connected in style and content, and have links to time periods, societies, and contexts. Contemporary art rises from culture also, but it is less about highlighting it, and concentrates on breaking barriers and social constructs with a hint of sarcasm some times.” He also explained that what makes an artwork traditional in Saudi Arabia is representing the most obvious aspects of society, while contemporary art brings out what is under the surface. He also emphasized, “Traditional art is what most people grew up learning, and to the majority this is what art is. Contemporary art is absent from art education, and it is difficult to say what people may think. I think many are unaware of its existence.” The student, S.J., explained she can recognize traditional art if she saw it outside of school, but is “unsure what contemporary art would look like.” There is also a lack of knowledge about what contemporary art is, N.K. also stated,

Within the Ministry, art is the least discussed subject when it comes to talking about the different disciplines being taught across schools and colleges. But when discussions about art do arise, contemporary art is perceived as something we are hesitant to introduce to students. People in society either give art too little importance, or do not understand it.

Perceptions on Traditional and Contemporary Art and Artists

Saudi Arabian society views traditional and contemporary art from different positions. The college president, A.R, explained, “Art perceptions are different from one generation to the next. Older generations tend to see art as a way of preserving culture or tradition while simultaneously representing an image of what life is like. While the

younger generations have taken more personal approaches to art in a way that reflects identity.” She explained that she has had many discussions with professors about the direction that art is headed in. Contemporary art always comes up in the discussion. But people who are not very keen on learning about art may not consider contemporary art because it is different, and might not even call it art. Traditional art is more widely accepted in Saudi Arabia inside and outside of classrooms, not only because of its social acceptability, but because some skills such as craft-making are passed down from generation to generation, and through family members. The principal, B.G., explained,

I only very recently started learning about contemporary art. When I was in school, we only learned about traditional art. But it was not only school that showed us traditional art, it was our families. It was a skill that was passed on through crafts, and embroidery. I am less familiar with Islamic art. I do however sense more similarity between traditional and Islamic art, and fewer similarities between contemporary art and traditional art in terms of meaning and materials.

It is also the lack of familiarity that makes it difficult for contemporary art to find its way into society. The art educator, B.B., explained, “It is the sense of continuum from one generation to the next that makes traditional art more ingrained in the minds of the Saudi people. When something has existed for as long as traditional or Islamic art have, it is hard to break away from what is familiar.” She emphasized that this influences artistic decisions for students when they practice art making after they graduated, “There are artists who continue to make traditional art once they graduate because they have been taught that this is what is beautiful, and others who have been influenced by different styles, or make art for other purposes, such as communicating an idea, are unconventional.” Ali (1989) conducted a thorough study on the development of Arab art, which explained, Arab art is still associated with Islamic art and artifacts. While other aspects of Arab cultures have been reinterpreted within their modern context, the

development of modern and contemporary art remains only dimly understood. F.T. also added, Contemporary Arab art is rather new in Saudi Arabia, and it is unfamiliar territory for many. According to Shabout (2007), there are ongoing debates in the Arab world that aim to determine a distinction between “Arab” and “Islamic” attributes, in addition to historical identities throughout the history of Islamic civilization (p. 2). Additionally, Ali (1997) contends that a number of intellectuals continue to argue that modern and contemporary art from the Arab world is essentially a continuation of Islamic aesthetics, altered to fit the modern age, and others perceive it as a replication or an inferior version of Western art.

T.G., explained, “Most people in society view contemporary Arab art either as something they are not familiar with, or don’t perceive as art.” She raised the point that contemporary art is even compared to the arrival of satellite television in Saudi Arabia, “It is mostly out of fear that contemporary Arab art will influence Saudi Arabian culture negatively; it is a similar reaction to when Internet or satellite television were introduced, and religious and conservative people were completely against it and tried to ban it.” The female traditional artist, O.T., “What traditional and contemporary Saudi art have in common is that they both focus on Saudi society, however, traditional art tends to be about glorifying it, and contemporary art is about social and cultural issues.”

The change that occurred in art from Islamic to Arab are still debated in terms of it being an outcome of an intellectual need or Western influences. But scholars such as Boullata (1997), have argued that Islamic art stemmed from a religious ideal, while modern Arab aesthetics were a result of a national ideal. Scholars (Ali, 1997; Watriss & Roques, 2014) have also argued that imitating Western art was vital in order to break

away from a strict artistic tradition, and promote artistic creativity. Iraqi critic Farouq Yousif (2004), and Karnouk (2005), explained that turning to European painting in the 20th century was not about artists escaping from their heritage, but it was a solution Arab artists needed to renew their artistic imagination, and embrace nationality.

Art educator, S.R., explained, “It is within art education that students begin to learn about society, and if we only teach them how to make art in limited ways, what does that tell them about their society?” She also added, “Teaching art in school has helped me understand that social structures have their shortcomings as well as advantages. Saudi Arabia has neglected art not by eliminating it all together, but by failing to see its potential as a tool that could be aesthetic and educational.” Many scholars agree that the absence of written sources documenting artistic processes, techniques, or aesthetics led to the isolation of Islamic art from its social context (Brend, 1991; Hagedorn, 2009; Hillenbrand, 1999). Consequently, Western aesthetics became the departure point for Orientalist scholars who documented and studied Islamic art. As a result, Islamic art is still classified as “minor arts” or “decorative arts” in most history surveys (Shabout, 2007, p. 14).

The principal, M.F., said, “There are many people within education that are very open to learning about new forms of art, but there are also communities that are less understanding.” She added,

The way we view art has everything to do with social beliefs and educational priorities. On the one hand, art is not seen as a serious field to pursue, nor is it seen as something lucrative in the financial sense. Many would argue that students are better off learning something they could actually make a living out of, and making art would be child’s play. Art is also very much understood in its traditional sense, and newer art that is being made is seen as an invasion on our art; it is an art that is not inspired by our own culture but rather something that came from the outside. An ideal situation would be changing the understanding of

art among students at a very young age, and teaching them that art is not just a hobby, it can be a tool for communication, and beautiful all at once. The most important thing in education is to keep an open mind, and art education is the same in that sense. That is easier said than done in our communities. Although art has not changed much in our schools, we try to keep a positive mindset that attitudes will change towards art.

Although traditional art is the norm, some artists who have grown up around it perceive it as limiting, and choose to make art that is freeing. The male contemporary artist, M.A., explained, “Growing up and being surrounded by tradition and convention felt very confining, and as I began to learn about art, I learned about generating ideas and thoughts that did not have to be conventional. There is no right or wrong when you make contemporary art, which is a very freeing thought.” The male contemporary artist, M.A., explained,

Islamic art is usually what gets its inspiration from divinity, and symbolizes a connection with one’s religion through objects that not only honor Islam, but also represent moments or periods in time. Traditional art like Islamic art, has a functional aspect to it at times, but also represents one’s pride in one’s own culture. Contemporary art is vastly different, although it could be similar, but contemporary art can be what you want it to be. There are no defining characteristics really.

Summary

This chapter explained the findings in further detail alongside the literature. The outcome of the study has demonstrated that art education in Saudi Arabian high schools and colleges is influenced by institutional dynamics, and social dynamics; the institutional dynamics are mainly directed by social factors. I came into this study with personal experiences of being in the Saudi educational system for the duration of my K-12 education. I also had initial assumptions that art education was governed by the

country's conservative nature. However, the findings demonstrated the extent to which tradition, religion, and culture are the driving forces of the social and educational structures. The literature, documents, and participants played a crucial role in understanding why high school and college art have a specific way of approaching art education, and how traditional and contemporary artists perceive their own educational and artistic experiences.

There are many contradicting perceptions within educational institutions that have surfaced during the course of this study. Firstly, the Ministry of Education clearly mentions the importance of art education for the intellectual, physical, and social development of students, in addition to their emotional growth, perception, creativity, the use of the senses, respect for and love of work, self expression, self confidence, knowledge of tools, the expansion of knowledge in general and specifically knowledge of the terminology of art, and the ability to take advantage of free time in order to benefit the person and the society” (Ministry of Education Goals Report, 2005, p. 21). The Ministry seems to acknowledge that art is beneficial to students in the guidelines, however, it differentiates between the duration of art education for males and females; males only learn about art until the 7th grade and females only learn about it until the 11th grade in order to give attention to other subjects in their final year of high school; which makes the transition to college more difficult. Secondly, guidelines such as giving students the freedom to make art are not realized in classrooms. Thirdly, I embarked on this study to better understand why art education in Saudi Arabia solely focuses on traditional arts, and disregards newer forms of art making in high schools, and some colleges; the findings have shown that students in high schools do not learn about

contemporary art being made in Saudi Arabia. College students are more advantaged in terms of being exposed to newer art making techniques, and enjoy more artistic freedom than the high school students. However, when it comes to actually learning about the contemporary art being made outside of educational institutions, they are in the same position as high school students. Additionally, there are two main aspects to the neglect of the contemporary arts in Saudi Arabia. The first lies in a lack of knowledge or unfamiliarity to newer forms of art. The second is a refusal to move away from traditional art out of fear that contemporary art may influence society in a manner that opposes set social conventions and religion.

Saudi Arabia continues to lack an infrastructure that would make it possible to bring modern and contemporary art closer to a broader public. The government too has yet to support and patronize the arts in a substantial way. Additionally, art programs in schools and universities are still lacking more freedom in the teaching of art and art making, in addition to art educators who are qualified to teach modern and contemporary Arab art. The influence of tradition extends into the art classroom, which is obvious from many responses. Many administrators and art educators in this study explained school curriculums and college art programs cater to values and adhere to norms that exist in Saudi society. This represents a significant issue, which is the stagnancy and inflexibility of the educational infrastructure, which relies solely on tradition instead of finding innovative ways to progress. Incorporating tradition into education is by no means a negative thing, however, when it is primarily used as the educational backbone and what dictates how curriculums are designed in male and female schools and colleges, and may impede progress and restrict learning.

In Saudi Arabia, there is not much of a progressive ethos with regards to art education. Rather than providing them with inviting materials, and giving them some sense of artistic freedom, from a young age, students are told how to make art, and what to make it about. Art begins to look the same, especially at the high school level, and students' aspirations become how to copy whatever model they are given. Although college students have recently been given opportunities to use new media in their art making, there is still a whole side of art that students are not exposed to. According to the literature and interview responses, the lack of attention given to teaching students about contemporary art and artists is a result of the visual arts being neglected as a field of study, and the perceptions towards it as something that is solely a direct representation of tradition or something that serves a utilitarian function. This distance between art and society has created a lack of knowledge about art, which has led to a dismissal of any art that is considered foreign. The undermining of the importance of art has also led to the decision that males should not continue to be given art in school or college, and should not consider it as a career. This has created an unbalance, and a society that is dominated by female art administrators, educators, and artists.

At times at the high school and college level, students may be encouraged to talk about their feelings or purpose in creating a particular work, but for the most part, there is unlikely to be a discussion of history or aesthetics. The emphasis becomes solely on artistic production: historical, reflective, or aesthetic issues are not incorporated as a significant component of high school or college level education in the visual arts. In Saudi Arabia, one can conclude that the cultivation of art from the Islamic and traditional past and present is a principal goal in art education; however, at the high school and

college level, what is needed is an effort to combine traditional and contemporary approaches, values, and historical considerations in the visual arts. This poses more questions: what can be taught, how can it be taught, and what could the educational outcomes be?

Beyond the realm of educational institutions, traditional and contemporary artists continue to associate their art making with what they have learned as students in Saudi Arabia. Traditional artists felt drawn to this type of art making because it is the only art they have known in their environment. While contemporary artists experienced art education in Saudi Arabia as well, they felt as though they were being restricted, and chose to pursue their art education abroad. Both traditional and contemporary artists continue to make art in Saudi Arabia, and although both types of artists face their own challenges, it is the contemporary artists who have yet to find audiences outside of artistic circles, and within educational institutions.

Chapter VI

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The intent of this study is to understand the dynamics and different ways art and art education exist in educational institutions and outside of them in Saudi Arabia. Studying documents, observing educators and students, and interviewing various participants has created a better understanding of how art education does not exist as an isolated entity, but is governed by many complex issues.

Through this chapter I will discuss the educational implications for art education in Saudi Arabia through a lens, which encourages changes in perceptions towards new forms of art through dialogues, aesthetic experiences with works of art, and the potency of critical thinking in art education. I will also suggest alternative ways of approaching art education to create environments inside and outside of the classroom that are more open to students' individual artistic expression.

Moving Forward with Arab Art Education

For art education to progress, and for contemporary Arab art to become a part of curriculums, many aspects of would need to change. There must be an understanding

among administrators, art educators, and students that both traditional and contemporary art are created by “human beings like themselves who have been shaped within the multiple influences of particular socio-cultural worlds and times” (Burton, 2013, p. 17). Teachers’ qualifications to teach contemporary Arab art, the schools’ preparedness for a change in the curriculum, and even the age group of students being taught must be taken under consideration. Raising awareness about contemporary Arab art is occurring through small exhibitions in galleries in Saudi Arabia, and through contemporary artists’ exhibits on an international level. However, the larger issue that remains is not only how to educate a broader public about newer forms of Arab art, but how to educate Saudi Arabians, and other Arabs, about the value of art. This not only must happen at an administrative level, but also needs to be addressed through new vistas, such as creating opportunities for art workshops, events, and even art conferences. Before contemporary art can be introduced and accepted, Saudi people need to understand that art is not only about the act of making, and is not isolated from reality. It should be taught in the context of society, history, culture, and contemporary times. Changing perceptions about art would be a challenging, especially with the existence of traditional barriers and religious people who believe that newer forms of art are taboo, but it is not an impossible endeavor.

The Ministry of Education must reevaluate the place of art education within curriculums. In the past, there was little need to examine the relationship between arts education and core subjects, however, today, because of the poor performance of students in critical-thinking skills, low test scores in general, and the diversity of the student population, arts education has become a valuable means of improving learning outcomes

for students across the board (Mahlmann, 1999). A 2005 report by the Rand Corporation called “A Portrait of the Visual Arts” argues that art education offers students more than just a creative outlet; it may actually help them connect to the larger world, eventually improving upon community cohesion. Other studies have even concluded that art improves students’ academic performance, while others have argued otherwise, such as Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland (2007) published a study which argued the arts do not in fact improve academic performance, and why it does not matter.

Whether or not art courses improve grades, art education should receive support for what it offers on its own merit. In a later study entitled, *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education* (2009), Winner and Hetland focused on the benefits accrued through classes in painting, drawing, sculpture and the other visual arts. They observed the classes and interviewed the art educators afterwards, asking them questions about their goals, and what type of learning they were trying to effect. Their study did reveal that art education’s benefits could not be measured easily through test scores; these benefits include improvement in visual analysis skills, better critical judgments, justifying those judgments, and learning from mistakes. An important take away from studies that oppose or support art education is that not everything has to have direct practical outcomes or purposes; art education is experientially significant because it pushes forward the idea that a question could have multiple answers, or a problem can be solved in more than one way. Collaborating with other educators to integrate arts education with subjects such as math, science, and history may be a step forward in changing perceptions about art.

Dewey (2005) argued that art is connected to intelligence, and should be a part of education. He explained, arts education is a process that yields first experience, then a product. Hatfield (1999) also stressed that the future of art education is dependent on acknowledging it as a vital facet of the school curriculum and appreciating its influence on student creativity, motor skills, and cognitive development. When students are given opportunities to reflect on their art making, they are consequently more aware of the ways in which they make art without being told how to, and may have independent objectives for how they wish to make art. Encouraging students to make art that not only praises society, but also comments on it may also create a wider acceptance and understanding of contemporary art.

There were promising beginnings in art education in Saudi Arabia; the literature has shown that in the past the Saudi government was also interested in investing in educating Saudi students abroad in countries where students could learn techniques, and make art that was different from the traditional art being made in Saudi Arabia. They perceived learning the language of other types of visual art as a part of keeping up with modernization. However, the Saudi social perspective shifted from a brief acceptance to the rejection foreign elements and returned to solely focusing on Islamic and traditional art. One could argue that if Saudi Arabia revisited broadening their acceptance of contemporary art, art education will be given room to flourish inside and outside of educational institutions.

Connecting Audiences and Art: Imagination and Aesthetic Experiences

An important matter that administrators and art educators need to consider is “not all young people will become artists, yet all are capable of constructing and

expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings through and in response to visual images.”

(Burton, 2013, p. 47) Looking back on the pilot study I conducted two years ago has made me understand that making art is one part of the educational experience, but there is also a collective aesthetic experience that occurs when people look at art and discuss it as a group. The students that took part in the study described the dialogue sessions as opportunities to reflect. As Maxine Greene (2001) has explained,

Works of art do not necessarily nor automatically give rise to what we think of as aesthetic experience. Not only do we have to learn to attend, to lend our lives to the works before us; we must, as I have said repeatedly, learn how to notice what is to be noticed...how to respond to the qualities in particular works, how to engage as living, incomplete human beings in search of connection, in search of ourselves. (p. 103)

Art educators should visit museums, art galleries, and artist studios with their students frequently, and should also involve parents in these trips. Seeing objects and artworks in reality offer a different viewing experience than images. Through discussions about physical works of art, educators may offer students live examples of different artistic styles and themes of art making. More importantly, the artworks students see in these spaces may have been made during different periods; this in itself creates opportunities for dialogues across different time spans. Art educators may benefit their students by having a certain goal or lesson plan in mind from the visit. Thus, educators must visit the venues in advance; carefully observe what is on display, and an awareness of details (Burton, 2013).

Art educators should develop skills, such as, “observing, examining, deducing, comparing, contrasting, relating structure to function,” they must also expand students’ “knowledge base by promoting research into the social, historical, economic, and technological contexts within which objects and artworks are found.” (Burton, 2013, p.

131) Students need to understand how concepts have evolved over time, and the different ways in which art making has made its mark outside of educational institutions as a vehicle that represents heritage, change and progress, functionality, and society. Art educators may use the opportunity of visits to encourage students to engage with artworks by reflecting on their own experiences, and help them in ways that spark their curiosity; in other words, art educators should ensure that activities held outside of the art classroom find their way back into ongoing art projects, and future art lessons.

Exposing students to contemporary artworks, inside and outside of the classroom, is also important because it relates students to society, culture, history, emotions, ideas, reality, imagination, and being human. The arts are an opportunity to express what we think, what we feel, what we love or hate, and what we hope to make others see. As Greene (2001) states, “we are concerned with possibility, with opening windows and alternative realities, with moving through doorways into spaces some of us have never seen before” (p. 44). Contemporary art shows our fragile sides, things we want to change, what we want from the future and admire from the past, things that move us, matters that bother us. It is part of humanity to want and need to express those things. But the issue is not only finding ways for people in Saudi Arabia to see art, it is also about encouraging them to share what they actually perceive while viewing the works of art.

In addition to visiting artist studios, high school, college students, and their art educators may also benefit from artist visits in the classroom. These visits help students appreciate the arts more by learning about the diversity that exists in art making, approaches, skills, knowledge, and connecting to the artists through the lens of shared experiences and challenges in artistic processes; According to Burton (2013),

The professional artist can bring into the classroom the aura of the cultural context in which young people live their daily lives. Artists represent living traditions and can raise significant questions both about the past, the roots and traditions from which they spring, and about future practices and concerns. Artists can also raise questions about the relationship between the producers of art and the divergent movements, styles, and social institutions that have accommodated them (p. 132).

Young people will be shaping the world in the future, and to fully understand the diversity of cultures, and the contemporary world, it is essential that they understand how artistic traditions and legacies have emerged; “Artists not only bring culture into classrooms and studios in many, sometimes subtle ways, they also confront traditional notions of excellence by presenting the arts as contemporary, dynamic modes of creation” (Burton, 2013, p. 132). Artists may also share their experiences of how they became established, and displayed their work in exhibitions. It is also important for art educators and their students to collaborate with artists, and learn new modes of thinking; this helps educators in their practice by acquiring new information, skills, media, and practices from an alternative point of view, and creates a sense of imagination to their own artistic practices, their students’ art making, and the interpretations that result from observing and making. By interacting with both traditional and contemporary art and discussing their practices, art educators and their students will start to feel a sense of belonging to a larger group who share similar circumstances; students can begin to understand that visual art made outside of educational institutions is not isolated and reserved for a particular group; it is made by individuals just like them. Art educators may also introduce their students to exemplary works of art; the advantage of this would be the opportunities for students to explore new imaginative perceptions in their own art making. The disadvantage is that students may mistrust their own ideas and skills, and

feel that they must create art that is identical to the examples being shown to them. However, the works of art will create an environment for rich learning when art educators facilitate thoughtful engagement with works of art that evoke reflection and students' experiences, and think carefully about the genres they wish to introduce to the lesson, in addition to carefully choosing appropriate timing during the lesson to introduce the selected artwork (Burton, 2013). Giving students time to observe, reflect, and interpret the art works will inspire their participation through imagination.

Art educators may focus students' responses to works of art through open-ended questions that focus on "evidence," "speculation," concepts, and "possibility," such as, what do you see in the artwork that makes you say that? What is the first thing that catches your eye in this image/design? What is the artist trying to communicate? How would you approach this idea/theme from your own point of view? What have you learned from looking at this image/design? (Burton, 2013, p. 135) Art educators may think of other ways to focus their questions depending on the selected artwork, they may relate it to formal qualities, social or historical contexts, and personal experiences; what is most important is facilitating a dialogue that flows with ease. Art educators may use these dialogues as introductions to art history, aesthetics, and thoughtful critiques of the images they see in popular culture (Burton, 2013).

The Teaching of Art

Traditionally, the role of the art teacher is limited to developing the manual and visual skill of the students who learned to draw accurate shapes, and to copy the appearance of a still life or object correctly. The persistence of a pedagogy, which entails that students make art with the outcome of a perfect or realistic product in mind or has

shifted in many parts of the world, but remains the same in Saudi Arabia. There are still standards of correctness and excellence to be met, and rules to be obeyed. Such restrictions diminish the value of art education. Learning becomes forced and mechanical; it constrains the artistic development of young people, and takes artistic freedom and turns it into a repetitive copying of objects.

High school years and early college years are pedagogically when students have the capacity to learn about the significance of art in societies through investigation of their local communities and the art being made within them. Fortifying this period of exploration by meeting established traditional and contemporary artists, policy makers, and educators outside of their own educational institutions may broaden students' understanding of the agency of the arts, and the diverse ways in which art connects to society (Burton, 2013). Some students in Saudi Arabia, particularly at the college level, are fortunate to have more open-ended experiences when exploring materials, ideas, and directions of dialogue. Other young students, particularly at the high school level, "become locked into school art practices and the undiluted conventions of the fine art tradition, which serve the expectations of teachers and schools more fully than students themselves" (p. 52). This becomes problematic because students may find that art does not meet their individual needs, and begin to distance themselves from art making. However, if students have the ability to make art in an educational environment that is more supportive, artistic development and visual experiences may flourish in meaningful ways.

An important educational concern that has been a focus of this study is that students in the high school and college levels are at an age where they are entering

culture more fully, and are participating members with their own thoughts and ideas, however, many of these students do not have experiences with mature works of art.

Burton (2013) poses the following questions in relation to this issue,

In the absence of formal exposure to works of art through art history, the study of aesthetics or criticism, what kind of aesthetic responses can they be said to have? To what extent are aesthetic responses nurtured by the formal study of art at this age or dominated by media images? Of what should the formal studies of aesthetics consist? (p. 55)

Burton (2013) also mentions that research has begun to shed light on the aesthetic responses of two sets of young people: those with a formal background, and those without a formal background in art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. Young people who do not have formal training tend to connect to works of art through their own personal experiences. This is an important finding that should encourage art educators to give students opportunities to lend themselves to works of art, and guide them in pursuing meaning through their observations. Through guiding dialogues with students, art educators will offer students a way to be expressive, construct meaning, and inform their own art making.

Lesson planning. Good lesson planning is critical when it comes to supporting the artistic development of students (Burton, 2013). Art educators should consider lesson plans not as rigid rules, but as “underlying principles and rehearsals for classroom action and preparing teaching strategies” (p. 61). Once art educators have thought of a vision and set goals to achieve for their art education program, they can move on to planning lessons that will assist them in reaching the set goals. Burton (2013) explains, lesson plans go through two stages of planning: the first is an initial exploratory plan, which is essentially necessary elements that give the lesson focus through thinking about

materials, process, techniques, the product that will result, the objective, and what should be said to the students verbally at the beginning of the lesson, and throughout; the second is more refined and creates a framework that leads to the desired learning. A good art lesson should focus on challenging and supporting different learning needs, foster dialogue, and offer opportunities to learn new information and practices (Burton, 2013).

Materials are important in art lessons, and should be thought about in advance. At the high school level in Saudi Arabia, students are exposed to a limited variety of materials than college level students. An important part of learning, and stepping away from one's comfort zone, is to encourage students to explore and play with different materials. This type of engagement not only offers students opportunities to use traditional and digital media that will influence the ways they choose to make art, and influence their thought processes, it will also encourage art educators to experiment and play as well. Art educators should experiment with selected materials before they introduce them to students; additionally, when they select materials for a lesson, it is important that they feel comfortable "in their knowledge of the traditions, possibilities, and processes" (Burton, 2013, p. 63).

Burton (2013) explains, experimentation with materials and processes offer many possibilities for creating and expressing meaning "if they are introduced in a way that is consonant with youngsters' ideas even when these ideas are based in concepts or feelings and are non-figurative" (p. 63). Creating a good lesson depends on art educators' abilities to guide and encourage students to reflect on their different observational, emotional, and everyday experiences so that they may be able to translate and contextualize them through art making. It is important that students engage in open-ended play, and are given

the space to experiment on their own; “for if youngsters become increasingly reliant upon the teacher’s knowledge and skills, they find little room for their own visual voices and imaginations and become bored, eventually finding art inhospitable to their expressive needs” (p. 65).

There is much debate in art education research in relation to art making processes, and the outcome of these processes; but which holds more importance? Students can learn by engaging thoughtfully in their processes and reflecting, and they may also learn from appraising their art making (Burton, 2013). Art educators should consider beforehand if an art lesson will lead students to respond to the ideas that emerge as they work, and how the opportunities of art making in the classroom may be used to teach students how to evaluate their own efforts as they progress in a given lesson, and during class dialogues. The outcomes of an art lesson should reveal the diverse approaches of students, and a thoughtful art educator will encourage different outcomes, which result from different student perspectives. Art educators must ask themselves before lessons, and while refining their future lessons, whether the choice of materials chosen for a lesson will offer students the opportunity to make art that reflects their individual backgrounds and experiences, how the product will accomplish the specified learning objectives, how the outcome will be evaluated, and the ways in which aesthetic values will be strengthened? (Burton, 2013)

An art lesson may start simply by forming an objective for learning before choosing a material, process, and the outcome. The objective is what specifies what will be learned, but how it is learned depend on other essential parts of the lesson: materials, processes, and the outcome of art making. When planning lesson objectives, art educators

should keep in mind that students may possibly be at different developmental phases. Thus, what must be considered is how “learning may be internalized” by students in different phases (Burton, 2013, p. 70) Art educators can create variety in their lesson planning by giving their emphasizing their objectives differently.

Burton (2013) explains art educators are often focused on problem solving, as a guide to planning their lessons, but this is approach is limiting, and ultimately, art lessons will often involve problem solving as art making processes unfold. Objectives are useful to learning when they are “clearly focused and about fundamental learning yet open to a variety of interpretations by youngsters within one class who will be developing at different rates and perhaps in different ways” (p. 72). Burton (2013) gives examples of teaching objectives through materials: activities such as using shapes and colors to express feelings and relationships, and developing imaginative ways to combine materials such as fabrics and fibers to create collages, and learning to experiment with line textures, weights.

Students may also experiment with subject matter; for example, understanding that there are differences between the shapes that form landscapes, and those that form urban areas. Students may also be encouraged to learn art concepts and techniques such as making abstract two-dimensional and three-dimensional art, learning how to render, making how to make balanced compositions, and learning perspective. The objective of critiquing art is also beneficial to the learning process; “learning to study multiculturalism,” and how different people choose to make art will teach students “different artistic traditions, cultural and social roles for art, different availability of materials, different personalities of artists,” and “different political commitments.” (p. 79)

Additionally, art educators should teach students the differences between the use of traditional and new media in art making, to recognize that different artists use different styles in their art making, and to use language to verbally express their thoughts. Encouraging students to respond to their own art making and other works of art offers students the opportunity to evaluate their own art making, where it is headed, and how they perceive other works of art in relation to their own art making and experiences. The use of language should not be underestimated when considering objectives and lesson plans; “the careful use of language in the visual arts lesson can play a complementary and provocative role in stimulating responses whose outcome can only be ordered and expressed through materials” (Burton, 2013, p. 82).

Well-planned dialogues during art making or critiques hold more weight than telling students what to do or think. Art educators should strive to ask thoughtful questions that will challenge thinking and inspire reflection; they should also ensure dialogues are open-ended, conversational, comfortable, and flow organically. At times, students may not know how to begin their art making. Therefore, art educators may step in to guide students through questions that will help them think out loud; students may have questions of their own, and discussing any concerns they may have will make their art making processes flow with more ease.

Assessment in art education. According to Burton (2013), “Making and appraising art, for all young people, provide a means of reflecting on, organizing, expressing, and sharing experiences of themselves, and their world.” (p. 15) Similarly, art educators are also appraising their own teaching pedagogies in relation to what is taking place within their classrooms. Assessment in the arts must be respectful of the nature of

the field of art, which should not be assessed the same way as subjects such as math and science. Art education is more open to interpretation, and students in the arts “need to become aware of the interplay among historical, aesthetic, critical, and practical experiences as this structures their thinking and opens them to the larger socio-cultural context in which they live” (Burton, 2013, p. 112). What art educators should be assessing is how their students are creating their own individual meaning, how they explore their surroundings and the world, how they formulate their ideas, and the ways in which they use their knowledge, skills, and imaginations (Burton, 2013). Assessment must also consider students’ different rates of artistic development, and must be sensitive to the abilities of students. Students should also be able to play a role in their own assessment, since they are some times more insightful when it comes to evaluating their own art making than their art educators.

When art educators assess their students’ performance, they must be aware of students’ interests and needs. Art educators may benefit from working together to assess students art; “this often leads to new learning for the teachers and also, ultimately, a fairer appraisal for the pupil’s work.” (Burton, 2013, p.112) Assessment serves several purposes, such as gaining a better understanding of obstacles students may face during art making, learning to compare students’ learning to each other, evaluating if objectives have been achieved through an art lesson, and administrators may determine if art educators are fulfilling their responsibilities in the art classroom. “Formative” and “summative” assessment should take place throughout the academic year and at the end of the year; formative assessment is beneficial for keeping track of students’ progress, and making needed changes in the curriculum if need be; summative assessment should

be prepared at the end of the semester of academic year as a report on students' progress (Burton, 2013, p. 113).

Assessment may take place through different strategies. Assessing students' progress through "observations and dialogue" is a simple way art educators may understand how students' ideas are being shaped, and may gain an awareness of areas of difficulty for students. Through a supportive dialogue, art educators may reinforce learning, offer students clarity in terms of their own objectives for the art lesson, and may teach them how to evaluate their own work and that of their classmates; simultaneously, reflective assessments through dialogue may also offer art educators ideas about how to improve their own instructional and artistic practices. Art educators may also be able to extract ideas for lessons from their students, and learn about individual capabilities while they are engaged in group projects, such as the lesson mentioned in this study where high school students painted a mural. Through writing, sketches, and photographs, art educators may document their thoughts, discoveries, and impressions learned from ongoing assessment in their journals (Burton, 2013).

In high schools, art educators may also use "benchmarks" in their assessment of students' art making; "benchmarks art often thought of in terms of statements that express exemplary learning used as reference points against which youngsters efforts can be judged." For example, students in the 10th and 11th grades may be "assessed against a standard model" of achievement, specified for that grade (Burton, 2013, p. 114). Art educators may collaborate with each other to determine the benchmarks and when they will be applied during the school year. Art educators may also involve their students in benchmark assessment by giving them the opportunity to select a specified number of

“benchmark” art works; this type of assessment allows students to participate in self-reflection, and encourages them to interpret what they have learned in accordance with their own interests and experiences (Burton, 2013).

To make the experience more beneficial and reflective for both art educators and students, art educators may select criteria for the assessment of selected works of art, by asking thoughtful questions, such as, “what is learned from the objective of the lesson of which the chosen work is the outcome?” Does the artwork portray any previous learning experiences? Is new learning evident in the outcome? Was the artwork planned in a thoughtful manner? Were imagination, technical skills, and other resources used? Were obstacles addressed in class critiques and discussions? How so? (Burton, 2013)

Assessment through portfolios can also be used as important tools of assessment once or twice a year for high school and college students; they provide a wider view of students’ progress and artistic development over a period of time. They also offer art educators a comprehensive view of the direction of students’ ideas in art making. Prior to using portfolios for assessment, art educators should ensure they are familiar with the developments taking place in the art classroom. Portfolios are important assessment tools for students because it gives them “ a sense of pride” in their art making achievements, and offers them a way to follow their own progress.

Organizing art exhibitions of students’ visual art is also another method of assessment. Exhibitions are generally more public affairs, as opposed to portfolio assessment, which is usually restricted to a limited number of individuals in the art classroom. Exhibitions, on the other hand, offer students more exposure as art educators and students from other schools and colleges may visit to appraise the work; they also

provide venues for parents to get involved in their students' artistic development. All students should be encouraged to participate, and may work with their art educators to select the work they wish to show in the exhibition. It would also be valuable for students to add personal statements to accompany the artwork, so that viewers may understand the concept and underlying ideas behind the making of a work of art. Portfolios may also accompany the artwork in the exhibition, in case viewers wish to see more of a students' art making. Viewers may evaluate students' artwork and offer feedback by also following provided criteria; art educators may present viewers with questions, such as, does the work in the exhibition reveal different student experiences? Do the works show evidence of the use of "imagination, careful application of technical skills to ideas, and integration of research resource?" What are "strengths of the art program as exhibited in pupil work and areas for new endeavors"? (Burton, 2013, p. 117)

Burton (2013) also discusses the importance of using art making to contribute to the community. Students' artistic learning experiences should not only be restricted to the classroom, but should also extend into their society. They may undergo internships in local galleries, cultural sites; participate in artwork sales to benefit good causes, in addition to participating in developing the aesthetic environment within their own schools. Older students should also be encouraged to engage in many art related activities in their communities; they may intern with art educators at the high school and college level, apprentice with practicing artists, participate in social awareness campaigns through designing brochures and posters, making art related gifts for ill children and adults, and participating in exhibition designs. Such participation is significant to student learning because it helps them understand that artistic practice is not limited to lessons in

educational institutions, but may also enrich their personal experiences in the world, and assist them in gaining a strengthened self awareness of how they may use their own art making to reach people in their communities. Students may document their participation in their journals, take photographs, and use these experiences towards their portfolios and exhibitions.

Testing can also be used to assess students' artistic development. At times, art educators may be required to conduct tests in the visual arts. Tests can be a beneficial assessment tool provided they are structured to respect how students learn in the discipline of art, and there is an understanding that administering tests do not provide a holistic assessment of students' artistic development, but rather a restricted moment in time with a limited set of challenges. Thus, tests should not be the only strategy to assess student learning, but rather part of a comprehensive assessment process; "teachers and administrators must recognize that what such tests will offer will be, inevitably, a very incomplete picture of learning in practice" (Burton, 2013, p. 118).

Through assessing their students' art making, art educators can keep track of their own effectiveness by taking notes as events unfold during lessons through paying close attention to dialogues, unanticipated responses, obstacles students may encounter, how pupils respond to the chosen subject matter in relation to their individual interests, and the range of final products of the art lessons. Art educators may also use assessment tools used for students to reflect on lessons; were there any issues students had in relation to learning during assessment through dialogue? What strengths and weaknesses do benchmarks make evident about students' learning? How are portfolios integrated as a part of the learning and assessment processes? What do group projects reveal about

teaching and learning over a period of time? How do students project their artistic learning onto their communities? How does the community respond to students' art programs? What do tests reveal about students, individually and collectively, and their observations, imaginations, and interpretations of their artistic learning? How do parents and families perceive students' artistic learning and their art programs? (Burton, 2013)

Art educators should reflect on their assessment strategies by dedicating time to think about how much liberty they have to “design their own sequence of learning”, how they can create a balance between designing their own instruction with the Ministry of Education requirements, and think of ways to ensure goals are clear to students and are “developmentally appropriate” (Burton, 2013, p. 123). Art educators can focus on improving their instruction by spending time exploring the Ministry of Education's standards, and finding way to tailor them to the needs of the students. They may also add variety to students' lessons through the use of imagination, and considering the sequence of lessons and how students' learning will flow from one to the next.

Recommended Strategies for Developing Art Education in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi educational system needs a framework in which to identify academic standards, to measure student progress, and to provide the support that students may need to help meet the standards especially at the high school level. This could influence a change in the ways administrators and educators evaluate art education in regards to student achievement and goals. It is imperative that art educators have a clear and flexible “vision” of what they perceive as valuable in their students' education; their “vision is formed from a set of philosophical commitments based in values, beliefs, and insights

about art and culture made flexible by the realities of personal teaching experiences as they evolve over time” (Burton, 2013, p. 19).

Goals should be tailored to the learning context and needs of the students. As Burton (2013) explains, “While goals act to provide direction for more detailed planning of individual lessons, they are also temporary end-points arrived at as a consequence of carrying forward and connecting different experiences in learning.” (p.19) They may also learn that observing, listening, and learning new skills are ways to investigate their own society, in addition to a range of diverse people, places, and communities. There are other goals that can be applied to art education curriculums; for example, the Ministry of Education already has its own set of goals to be applied within schools and colleges. Each goal should not be seen as an entity that stands on its own, but rather a set of ideas that overlaps with other ideas, and is supported by other goals (Burton, 2013). It is important to consider that there may be limitations placed on goals art educators may have for their art lessons; for example, they may conflict with the Ministry of Education’s goals for art education.

In this case, art educators may collaborate with each other, and use their imaginations to tailor their goals to what is culturally acceptable. They may also meet with the Ministry of Education employees to suggest introducing new goals to the curriculums in high schools, and colleges that do not conflict with social and cultural views. Another limitation one must consider is how the materials or artistic processes used in the art classroom may influence achieving goals. The background experiences students bring with them to the art classroom are also diverse, and these differences may result in various responses to art lessons. Additionally, the number of students in the art

classroom, the space and facilities in which the class is taught, and the range of developmental phases of the students must also be taken into consideration when planning, and implementing art lessons and goals (Burton, 2013).

A clear understanding of limitations can be beneficial to art educators in terms of innovating and finding new ways to implement goals, and work on achieving them beyond restrictions; “It is important that teachers and practice teachers feel themselves empowered to use their imaginations and personal knowledge and break the cycle of being told what to do and how to practice their skills by those (administrators and teachers) who often have little deep knowledge of the discipline” (Burton, 2013, p. 23).

What is needed in arts education in Saudi Arabia is art making, perception, and reflection. A learner-centered approach is what invites reflection, in addition to deep and personal engagement, employing arts and imagination in opening up new insights and connections (Burton, 2000). What Burton suggests by a learner-centered approach is to invite students to bring their own experiences into the arena of learning, and to be asked to reflect on and explore possibilities that may engage their thinking. Further, students should be offered skills and insights in the arts where their imagination could be broadened within the context of their realities, which will in turn help them create a sense of continuity between their art making and the culture they live in (Burton, 2000).

There are many changes to consider when improving upon art education in Saudi Arabia. A big change that is long overdue is the incorporating art education in K-12 male schools past the 7th grade, and at the college level. The Ministry should also include art education in the curriculum past the 11th grade in female schools. There must also be a focus on increasing the duration of art classes for males and females, or offering them

multiple times a week. During my observations, not all the classrooms in high schools were properly equipped for conducting art lessons; schools need to be provided with the proper spaces and settings for students to make their art; the college level studios I observed were well lit, spacious, and were up to standard in terms of providing a suitable environment, and the tools for art making.

Within high schools and colleges, art educators should clarify expectations regarding their role, and the student's role at the beginning of the academic year (Martens, 1992). Designing objectives for lessons that are appropriate to developmental abilities of students will assist art educators in acknowledging the diversity of students in the classroom in terms of their personal experiences, backgrounds in the visual arts, individual developmental phases, and ensure that art lessons are "as varied as the individuals in the class" (Burton, 2013, p. 31) A focus on thinking, the use of imaginations to move beyond conventions, encouraging students to explore differently with materials and ideas in ways that inform their personal experiences and individuality problem solving, and decision-making can be achieved through good lesson planning. (Burton, 2013). Improvement in language development happens as students verbally discuss their thinking and making processes, and art educators should respect the needs of the individual learner in addition to the group dynamic. Art educators should involve parents in students' art programs, and discuss their children's progress, in addition to informing them about the importance of artistic development in learning, how development takes place, and how it can be supported; art educators may write letters that "share information and expectations." (Burton, 2013, p. 147)

Art educators may invite students to reflect as they are working, keep journals, help them develop an awareness of their thoughts, and art making choices, by paying attention to them as they work, asking questions about their art making, providing time for class discussions, honoring their efforts, and asking them to make associations with ideas and feelings (Burton, 1980; Taunton, 1984). Educators may create a more active learning experience by and inquiring about what type of feedback the students are seeking in terms of what they find helpful, be it verbal or written (Martens 1992). Lessons can be made more engaging when students are given the opportunity to make art that is personally meaningful in relation to their own experiences; whether from memory, imagination, fantasy, direct observation, analysis of works of others; “past, present, or from popular culture” (Burton, 2013, p. 19).

Art educators should show the work of artists in class, and may choose them based on referential, chronological, stylistic, topical, specific artist, integration with a them from another artwork, multidisciplinary in relating to another discipline, and cultural enrichment (Irvine, 1984, p. 17). Art educators should present contemporary artworks to students in classrooms, chosen in a specific media, to encourage discussions that may inspire new lessons for curriculums. Art educators should carefully observe their students at work, and listen carefully to their responses during class dialogues and critiques; this will assist art educators in understanding students’ developmental interests (Burton, 2013). If students face an issue in relation to art making, art educators must not assume they know the answer; rather they should further discuss it with the student to make sure they truly understand the issue themselves before a solution can be suggested. This creates a communicative relationship between the student and art educator (Burton,

2013). Students must be given space to explore their ideas, even if they seem difficult or unconventional, so that they feel the art classroom is a secure place for students to engage in dialogue, explore and share thoughts, and feel freely (Burton, 2013).

It is essential that art educators scrutinize textbook information, and guidelines for outdated information. Additionally, by continuing to make their own art, and immerse themselves in their personal experiences, may lead to the discovery of new techniques and materials. Educators may also benefit from keeping a journal that is personal and professional to document observations, ideas, and new information that will serve as a regularly updated resource (Burton, 2013).

Attending workshops and conferences may encourage artists, art educators, and policy makers to discuss the commitment to reflection on creative and critical thinking in Saudi Arabian society; This type of engagement community will also help art educators stay up to date about developments in the field (Burton, 2013). Reading art journals regularly may help educators stay updated on contemporary artistic practices, and assist them in discovering new ways to introduce new artists and artistic styles into the classroom (Burton, 2013).

Observations, such as the ones conducted in this study, in schools and colleges and observe students, which take place for a sustained period of time, and assist educators in developing lesson plans (Burton, 2013). Additionally, observing other art educators provides a better understanding of how lessons are carried out, and how objectives are reached in other classrooms (Burton, 2013). Art educators, artists, policy makers, may consider working together often to foster a community of art making that focuses on collaboration to dissolve obstacles in art education through exchanging their teaching

experiences, and discussing what is beneficial vis-à-vis what is detrimental to the learning process, and working towards collective solutions for schools and colleges.

As art educators search for solutions to improve art education, they may begin by informing and educating Ministry of Education officials, school administrations, university presidents, and other administrators who oversee education and set basic standards or rules about the importance of art and artistic development. From experience, many administrators do not know much about art in general, and newer forms of art. Bringing to their attention to art from the region, and other cultures, may create a turning point for art and art education; this may take place through annual and bi-annual meetings, facilitating workshops for administrators and educators, and encouraging out of school activities that focus on engagement and interaction.

Envisioning Art Education in Saudi Arabia as a Feature of Global Phenomena

Global education programs are centered on understanding and embracing the differences within various cultures, in addition to highlighting the common factors shared by people around the world. When placing art education in Saudi Arabia in the global context, it should be approached through the study of culture in relation to international concerns and local communities simultaneously. The UNESCO Road Map for Art Education describes its goals for creativity and cultural awareness in the 21st Century as promoting a “common understanding among all stakeholders of the importance of Arts Education and its essential role in improving the quality of education. It endeavors to define concepts and identify good practices in the field of Arts Education” (p. 3).

The number of children with access to education is growing, however, the quality of education remains low in most countries of the world (Road Map for Arts Education,

2006). Providing education for all members of Saudi Arabian society is important, but it is equally vital that students are given an education of good quality. “Quality education” is defined in the UNESCO report as learner-centered and defined by three principles: “education that is relevant to the learner but also promotes universal values, education which is equitable in terms of access and outcomes and guarantees social inclusion rather than exclusion, and education which reflects and helps to fulfill individual rights.” (p.6)

Learning in and through the arts can improve “active learning; a locally relevant curriculum that captures the interest and enthusiasm of learners; respect for, and engagement with, local communities and cultures; and trained and motivated teachers” (p. 6). In Saudi Arabia, partnerships may be created between different entities such as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, and Ministries of higher education and through researching cooperative policies and budgets for class projects that take place inside the art classroom in K-12 schools and colleges. Partnerships among Ministries of Education and Culture and municipalities in neighboring countries to connect the education system and the cultural world, through creating projects of collaboration between cultural institutions and schools may position art and culture at the center of education rather than at the margins through informed decision-making (Road Map for Arts Education, 2006).

All members of Saudi Arabian society must be engaged in the attempt to ensure that the new generations of this century acquire the knowledge, skills, values, ethical principles, and the morals to become responsible citizens of the world. Universal education, of good quality, is fundamental; however, it can only be good quality if, through art education, it “promotes the insights and perspectives, the creativity and

initiative, and the critical reflection and occupational capacities which are so necessary for life in the new century” (Road Map for Arts Education, p. 14). What is needed are practical materials for teaching in schools and colleges, as well as support from school administrators, community leaders, art educators, government policy makers, and private foundations. Art must be studied in a context in which people are connected through their societies and nations on local and international levels. The coming years in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries may become a time of celebrating individual and collective accomplishments in the arts, and shaping a future in which students in schools and colleges gain access to global knowledge and understanding in and through art.

Summary

The implications I discussed for art education in Saudi Arabia encourage changes that could improve attitude towards art education, and teaching students about contemporary art. Educating administrators about contemporary art, ensuring art educators possess proper qualifications to teach different forms of art, taking into consideration the age group of students being taught, and creating more spaces for making and viewing art may go a long way in improving the value of art in Saudi society.

In discussing the implications for this study for art education, I discussed Dewey’s argument that in relation to art and intelligence, and should be a part of education. Hatfield also stressed that the future of art education depends on recognizing it as an important aspect of the school curriculum and appreciating its influence not only on fostering creativity, but also on student cognitive development and motor skills. When

students are given opportunities to reflect on their art making, they are consequently more aware of the ways in which they make art without being told how to, and may have independent objectives for how they wish to make art. Encouraging students to make art that not only praises society, but also comments on it may benefit students, and create a wider acceptance and understanding of contemporary art. I also discussed Maxine Greene's views on how looking at works of art, and engaging with them helps us not only to understand ourselves, but to also understand what is happening around us. I also discussed Burton's strategies for teaching and learning that may assist in the improvement of art education in schools and colleges. Art educators must remain aware that young people are influenced by social and cultural realities that play a role in forming their everyday lives, and must pay attention to how their students situate themselves within their environment by exposing them to different experiences, such as visits to art galleries, and dialogues about works of art.

I am hopeful these strategies may be implemented, and contribute to the development of art education in Saudi Arabia, and art appreciation. Gradually approaching art as an important subject rather than an activity may be a positive step forward in a wider public's understanding of art making as significant part of human development, which may lead to an acceptance and tolerance of exploring art beyond the realms of tradition; in this light, art education may be seen as a necessary vehicle for human development that represents history, reflects everyday experiences, and challenges familiar ideas.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

Focusing on art education in Saudi Arabia has emerged from my own experiences and observations as a student. This study has made it clearer that art education in Saudi Arabia has not undergone much change. Students continue to make what is considered traditional art, and are not exposed to art history, artists, or mature works of art. After conducting this research I continue to ask, “where does contemporary Arab art fit into art education in Saudi Arabia and Arab countries?” but I am now also asking, “how can we fit contemporary Arab art into art education in Saudi Arabia and Arab countries?”

Since educational institutions in Saudi Arabia are focused on traditional art, contemporary art is not a part of curriculums in high schools and colleges, and that practicing artists produce both traditional and contemporary artwork, raises the problem of a disconnect between how art education is structured and perceived within institutions and how students learn and perceive art and art making during their transition from high school art to college art, and later on as practicing artists in the public sphere. The problem then is that Arab art from the region goes unnoticed, under researched, and unaddressed by the societies at hand, and societies at large. My research questions emerged from this problem, and were designed to understand art education through a

variety of participants and institutions. The questions investigated the factors that shape perceptions about traditional and contemporary art, the teaching of art, the learning of art, and how art is made inside and outside educational institutions.

Stake (1995) states, “issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts. All these meanings are important in studying cases” (p. 17). Procedures and techniques were driven by the Multiple Case Study approach described by Yin (2009) and the Collective Case Study approach defined by Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995). This qualitative study involved the participation of High school art educators and their students, college art educators and their students, high school principals, university presidents, traditional and contemporary Saudi Arabian artists, in addition to employees from the Saudi Ministry of Education. It was a multi-site research endeavor that focused on interviews, observations, and gathering data from documents in the field.

Organizing this research as a multiple case study provided an opportunity for cross-case analysis, and allowed for findings across different sites and individuals to emerge and be compared to one another. The research questions and sub-questions that are the foundation of the study were best suited to a multiple case study design because this approach allowed for rich and extensive descriptions of the phenomenon that was under investigation (Merriam, 1998), as the situation under study occupied several variables of interest (Yin, 2013). A multiple case study approach also provided the opportunity for multiple sources of data to inform the research.

The findings from the research were categorized into institutional and social dynamics. The institutional dynamics focused on the Ministry of Education’s guidelines

for schools and colleges in Saudi Arabia. The art education system in Saudi Arabia is highly influenced by what is culturally acceptable, at the high school and college level. There is, however, a difference in terms of the liberty students are provided depending on their educational level. The themes included in students' art making are, however, generally the same, and focus on representing what administrators describe as pride in a national Saudi Arabian identity by representing places and objects that are inherent to the Arabian heritage. Artists who practice their art making in Saudi Arabia have also discussed the difficulties they face as a result of making art especially when it is contemporary art. The lack of knowledge about contemporary art has made it challenging to find supportive audiences in Saudi communities because of their lack of knowledge about contemporary art forms and the use of new media to provide them. Their opposition towards the subject matter in contemporary art has also caused a stir due to its communicative nature and at times criticism of matters in Saudi society.

The social dynamics such as religion, tradition, and gender are the main contributing factors directly linked to the institutional dynamics. Islam plays a role in how the Saudi people choose to live their everyday lives, and its presence also dominates what is acceptable in relation to art education. The contradiction, however, appears in instances where students at the high school level should not represent figures because they are taboo, but students at the college level are allowed to do so. The educational structure in schools and colleges also enforces the maintenance of tradition in art making. Older practices relating to arts and crafts are considered to be ideal and acceptable art forms. The interview responses also clarified that minimal exposure to contemporary art is what generates a negative perception towards it, and labels it as something foreign that

does not coincide with what is traditionally acceptable. Gender segregation has also had a role in art education, and the chances of females and males equally pursuing the arts as their career paths. The Ministry documents and employees have stated that males are expected to only learn about art making until the 7th grade, which lowers their chances of pursuing art later on since it is not offered to them at the higher education level within Saudi Arabia. This has caused art and art education to be dominated by female administrators, art educators, and artists.

Discussion and educational implications also focused on institutional and social dynamics at play, which impede the progress of art education in high schools, colleges, and outside the realm of educational institutions. I recommend that change may occur gradually to move art education forward in terms of approaching art education with clear strategies, objectives, and plans, and ways to introduce students to traditional and contemporary art inside and outside of the classroom. Taking steps, such as educating administrators about contemporary art, ensuring educators possess proper qualifications to teach different forms of art, and taking into consideration the age group of students being taught may improve the value of art in Saudi society. Strict religious and cultural traditions may create obstacles, however, gradually learning to approach art as an important subject rather than an activity may be a positive step forward in a wider public's understanding of art making as significant part of human development, which may lead to an acceptance and tolerance of exploring art beyond the realms of tradition. As art educators, we cannot force people to accept art as a legitimate field, but through studies like this one, opportunities arise to illustrate that understanding how a society

approaches art are important not only for knowledge, but for reforming and developing the actual process of education.

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Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Modern Arab Art: Modern Arab art is a movement that began in the 19th and 20th centuries. It reached countries in Africa before the Arabian Peninsula. Most modern Arab art movements began by mimicking Western art and techniques. Although there is no fixed definition for these newer forms of art, it is generally characterized by using newer forms of media, commonly believed to be borrowed from the West, to create art that is Arab conceptually and thematically.

Contemporary Arab Art: Most Arab countries identify with a contemporary movement in Arab art that began twenty to thirty years ago, depending on the geographical location in the Arab world. Most Arab art historians agree that what characterizes contemporary art is the use of new media to create art that is inherently Arab in its content and speaks to contemporary Arab experiences.

Islamic art: The term encompasses the visual arts produced from the 7th century onward by people who lived within the territory that was inhabited by or ruled by culturally Islamic populations.

Orientalism: Orientalism is a term that is used by art historians, literary, and cultural studies scholars for the imitation or depiction of aspects of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and East Asian cultures (Eastern cultures). Western writers, designers, and artists usually create these depictions. In particular, Orientalist painting, depicting more specifically “Arab lands,” was one of the many specializations of 19th-century Academic art, and the literature of Western countries took a similar interest in Oriental themes. Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, much academic discourse has begun to

use the term "Orientalism" to refer to a general patronizing Western attitude towards Middle Eastern, Asian, and North African societies. In Said's analysis, the West views these societies as static and undeveloped, thereby fabricating a view of Oriental culture that can be studied, depicted, and reproduced. Implicit in this fabrication, writes Said, is the idea that Western society is developed, rational, flexible, and superior.

Hadith: Hadiths are the collections of the reports claiming to quote what the prophet Muhammad said verbatim on any matter.

The Ka'aba: The Ka'aba, the most holy site in Islam, is a cuboid building at the center of Islam's most sacred mosque ,in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is considered the "House of God." Wherever they are in the world, Muslims are expected to face the Ka'aba when performing performing their daily prayers.

Shar'ia: Shari'a is the basic Islamic legal system derived from the religious precepts of Islam, particularly the Qur'an and the hadith.

Fatwa: A fatwa in the Islamic faith is the term for the legal opinion or learned interpretation that a qualified jurist, can give on issues pertaining to the Islamic law. The person who issues a fatwa is called, in that respect, a Mufti.

Sheikh: Sheikh is an honorific title used for outstanding scholars of the Islamic sciences.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol for Administrators

- 1) Tell me about your work here at the Ministry/ school / college, and your role in relation to decision-making that concerns art education?
- 2) What do you think art means to people in Saudi Arabian society? In what ways is art present in everyday life within Saudi Arabia?
- 3) What criteria determine how guidelines for art education are set within schools or colleges?
- 4) What are your thoughts on contemporary Arab art, and how it is situated in Saudi society? How do you perceive it as opposed to traditional or Islamic art?
- 5) How do the people you interact with in society, and here within this institution view modern and contemporary art from the region?
- 6) What would you say are some reasons students are not taught modern and contemporary Arab art from your own point of view?
- 7) Do you see a value in educating students about artists and art from the Saudi Arabia?
- 8) Is there anything else you can think of along the lines of what we have been discussing regarding modern and contemporary Arab art?

Appendix C

Interview Protocol for Educators

- 1) Talk about yourself and your education.
- 2) Why did you choose to pursue art and art education as a profession?
- 3) In what ways has teaching in Saudi Arabian schools/colleges influenced your views on art?
- 4) Tell me about your work here at the school / college, and your role in relation to decision-making that concerns art education?
- 5) In what ways has your art education made its way into your art classroom?
- 6) In what ways has what you learned in school and college about art differ from what is being made outside of educational institutions?
- 7) What are your thoughts on modern and contemporary Arab art, and how it is situated in Saudi society specifically, and Arab countries generally?
- 8) How do the people you interact with in society, and here within this institution view modern and contemporary art from the region? How do they perceive art in a general sense?
- 9) What would you say are some reasons students in Saudi Arabia are not taught modern and contemporary Arab art from your own point of view?
- 10) Do you see a value in educating others about artists and art from the Saudi Arabia?
- 11) Is there anything else you can think of along the lines of what we have been discussing regarding about art and art education in Saudi Arabia?

Appendix D

Interview Protocol for Students

- 1) Tell me about yourself and your education.
- 2) What does art and art making mean to you?
- 3) Are you familiar with any traditional or contemporary artists and their artwork?
- 4) What are your views traditional/contemporary art in Saudi Arabia? How do you perceive art in a general sense?
- 5) When you make art in school/college, what does the content of your art usually revolve around (themes, concepts, etc)?
- 6) What would you like to learn more about in your art classroom?
- 7) What type of media do you use and how does it influence the art you make
- 8) For high school students: Would you be interested in pursuing art at the college level? If so, what are the reasons, if not, what are the reasons? What do you hope to achieve with art and art making?

For college students: What made you choose to pursue art at the college level? What have you learned during your high school education that has made its way into your college education? How would you say art education in high school is different from college? How is it the same?

- 9) Is there anything else you can think of along the lines of what we have been discussing regarding about art and art education in Saudi Arabia?

Appendix E

Interview Protocol for Artists

- 1) Tell me about yourself and your education.
- 2) What made you choose to make traditional/contemporary art?
- 3) In what ways would you say traditional and contemporary artists co-exist or intersect in Saudi Arabian society?
- 4) In what ways does has your art education made its way into your art making?
- 5) What makes an artwork traditional and what makes it contemporary in Saudi Arabia?
- 6) What are your thoughts on contemporary Arab art, and how it is situated in Saudi society specifically?

Is traditional art rooted in Saudi Arabian culture, and how has it evolved over the years?
- 7) How do the people you interact with in society view traditional/contemporary art in Saudi Arabia? How do they perceive art in a general sense?
- 8) What would you say are some reasons students in Saudi Arabia are not taught contemporary Arab art from your own point of view?
- 9) Given that you are an active traditional/contemporary artist, would you say a divide exists between how art is approached within educational institutions and outside of them?