

Overview of *Emerging Voices* project commissioned by the Rising Sun Arts Centre

Curator: Khadija Cecile Niang

Artist: Hadil Tamim

Community group: Reading Refugee Support Group

Project Commissioned by The Rising Sun Arts Centre

Funded by a Guild Commissioning Grant

Guild is East Street Arts support programme supporting and empowering artists to help them create more resilient and sustainable work

Feedback

Project Overview	<p>The Emerging Voices project had 3 main aims.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To support a young Curator at an early stage of their career and enable them to develop skills and experience of working in a participatory setting, utilising collaborative methods, supporting artists and communities towards realising a creative end product.2. To enable an Artist to develop their practice in a way which involves working in collaboration with others and gain exposure within the wider artistic community and new audiences for their work.3. To creatively engage a community group and involve them in thinking about the benefits of artistic work and support them to bring cultural expression into their space in a way which benefits them. <p>Khadija Cecile Niang was selected to be the curator of the project, and her responsibilities involved overseeing continued discussion and communication between all parties and offer continued support to the Artist as the project progresses. Being aware that depending on the situation regarding Covid-19, more or less of the project will take place online. Thus, having to put some thought into how this would work if restrictions meant we couldn't bring people together physically before the end of the project.</p> <p>As Hadil has a strong relationship with Reading Refugee Support Group, they were selected as the community group to collaborate with.</p> <p>Reading Refugee Support Group had weekly zoom on drop-in sessions on Monday mornings for their clients. We arranged for Hadil to run her</p>
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Islamic Art workshops in a break-out room during these drop-ins for 5 weeks.

We advertised this opportunity through flyers sent by email to RRSR clients.

The sessions went very well with Hadil giving an engaging insight into how to create her detailed Islamic art drawings, as well as giving insight into the theory behind the use of the flowers and the domes in Islamic art. The participants were very engaged and shared their progress with Hadil, some of which Hadil shared on her blog:

<http://hadil-art.blogspot.com/2021/01/islamic-arts-rising-sun-arts-centre-and.html>

During the sessions, Hadil asked all the participants to send her their favourite flowers as well as domes and buildings which represent their home countries. She also enquired about favourite colours and the curator logged this information for Hadil to use in the creation of the final piece.

Hadil's final piece incorporated the nationalities of all the participants in the workshop, each represented by their selected flower and dome, she also used the "Shamsa" design as Shamsa means "little sun" to incorporate the Rising Sun's role in the project.

The final artwork was unveiled through a zoom webinar which was advertised via email and social media with Marketing materials created by Khadija.

The webinar was hosted by Khadija and Larry Watson spoke on behalf of the Rising Sun Arts Centre and Jude Haste spoke on behalf of Reading Refugee Support Group. The webinar was then followed by a video which showed behind the scenes clips of the workshops (whilst keeping the anonymity of the participants for safe-guarding) with the end of the video unveiling Hadil's final piece.

The webinar then had a short discussion between Hadil and Khadija about the process of the workshops and Hadil's experience teaching as well as creating the final piece. There were also a few audience questions at the end.

The recording of the webinar will also be show by Reading Refugee Support Group as part of their Refugee Week programme in June.

<p>Reflections from curator</p>	<p>The Emerging Voices was my first experience curating. As an artist myself, I have always been intrigued by curating but despite having studied art at university, I never saw a clear pathway into it as a career.</p> <p>It is a role which I think is quite mystified within the art world and seems quite elitist, so when this opportunity came up, I was really excited to see what role a curator takes when they aren't the artist in the project.</p> <p>I learned so much through this experience as I definitely had quite a limited idea of the role a curator plays within a project. I have always thought about their role in the aesthetic aspect of an exhibition rather than being a coordinator and facilitator. It's been a great experience discovering how multifaceted this role can be and it has instilled a lot of confidence in myself. Because I had such a limited idea around the role of a curator, I was initially quite apprehensive about how to approach the project but I found it very fulfilling and it was great to have first-hand experience learning how to manage my time efficiently (as I currently work full-time), creating contracts and finding the best ways to facilitate communication between the artist and the two organisations.</p> <p>I felt very supported by the Rising Sun Arts Centre throughout and am also very grateful for the independence they gave me in the project. I feel that I achieved a lot more than I would have expected from myself and I will definitely carry this newfound knowledge and confidence not only in future curating experiences but also within my own art practice.</p> <p>It was a real pleasure being able to work with Hadil and discovering so much about her practice through documenting the project. Playing a role in the process which led to her creating such an extraordinary artwork was a very fulfilling experience.</p> <p>I have always been interested in finding a bridge between being involved with the local community and my own creative career and my experience doing the Emerging Voices project has opened my eyes to the many ways this can be done.</p>
<p>Feedback</p>	<p>From a workshop participant: <i>"I was delighted to join Hadil's workshop on Islamic art.</i></p> <p><i>She introduced us to patterns in design, which made me appreciate the intricacy and precision of the work. The pace of the workshop was good, and even a beginner like me, found it both rewarding and fulfilling. It was great to do something creative in lockdown.</i></p> <p><i>I was delighted to watch the webinar and see that each of the flowers and turrets that we chose had been included in the finished work by Hadil."</i></p>

	<p>Feedback from the webinar</p> <p><i>"Many thanks for your invitation. I very much enjoyed the event. It is always good to see such high quality work and the culmination of effective and meaningful public engagement. I shall look forward to keeping updated on progress. Congratulations and very well done to all involved."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Terry Adams (Relationship Manager for the Arts Council + Rising Sun) <p><i>"I attended the Emerging Voices webinar and thought your artwork was beautiful and an amazing visual demonstration of celebrating diversity, similarities and differences".</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anna from Reading Voluntary Action <p>Email to artist Hadil:</p> <p><i>"Dear Hadil</i></p> <p><i>Your art work was wonderful. I do love that dark blue. I want my new kitchen in that colour. I really enjoyed again watching you create. I could watch you for ever! I was so fascinated to see how you coped when you managed to spoil the painting half way through. You have such wonderful patience as well as skill. A perfect demonstration of how art really is about as much inspiration as sheer hard work and persistence. I admire that so much. You just picked yourself up and started again.</i></p> <p><i>I would so much love to see the real thing. I looked on the web site for the studio tour but couldn't see your name and find where you will be. I would really love to have a copy of it. I know your work was originally in ceramics. Could the painting go onto a plate or bowl? Or even a high quality poster so that those of us with very little talent and persistence could always feast our eyes on your work.</i></p> <p><i>Can you tell me where you will be on the studio tour and I will look forward to seeing you there soon.</i></p> <p><i>Best wishes"</i></p>
<p>Were the aims reached</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To support a young Curator at an early stage of their career and enable them to develop skills and experience of working in a participatory setting, utilising collaborative methods, supporting artists and communities towards a realising a creative end product.

I felt very supported and feel that I gained valuable experience in all the aims set out. The experience wasn't just valuable in terms of knowledge but also in self-confidence. I have always been passionate about collaborative methods but never really know how this could practically apply within curation and this has opened my eyes to how multifaceted and exciting this role can be.

2. To enable an Artist to develop their practice in a way which involves working in collaboration with others and gain exposure within the wider artistic community and new audiences for their work.

Hadil expressed having really enjoyed the process of working collaboratively, she found the work especially meaningful since it represented community members from a group she has a strong relationship with. She also expressed learning new skills in having to create workshops in an online way. Through hosting the webinar we have also had the opportunity to expose Hadil's work to audiences who may not necessarily have been able to/know about it had it been in person, in Reading.

3. To creatively engage a community group and involve them in thinking about the benefits of artistic work and support them to bring cultural expression into their space in a way which benefits them.

From the feedback, participants benefitted in many ways. A few of the clients really enjoyed the process and are working with Hadil after the workshop. Some participants expressed the enjoyment and mindfulness they felt through not only engaging with the lessons but also through watching Hadil's artmaking process.

It was also a great way to reconnect with their cultures and expressed how through Hadil's work they really appreciated the beautiful flowers of their home countries and how unique they are as we often can take them for granted.

The final artwork



**Flowers and domes from workshop participants
All incorporated into the final artwork**

Senegal:
Flower/ Baobab.
Building/ Beautiful Mosque.

Zimbabwe:
Flower/ Flame Lily
Building/ Traditional homes.



Kenya:
Flower/ Orchid.
Building/ Traditional Home



Sudan:
Flower/ Hibiscus.
Building/



Nepal:
Flower/ Rhododendron.
Building/ National museum of Nepal.

Turkey:
Flower/ Tulip.
Building/ Ethnography Museum of Ankara



Syria:
 Flower/ Jasmine and Hibiscus syriacus.
 Building/ Traditional home.



France and UK:
 Flower/ Primrose and yellow Jasmin.
 Building/ Baroque squares in Arras,
 Nord-Pas-de-Calais



United Kingdom:
 Flower/ Iris Flower.
 Building/ Gap, Broad street, Reading.

