



## Assalaam Alaikum!

Greetings again to our members and friends in this our second issue of MWWWI Monthly Newsletter! Insh'Allah, it finds you well and writing. Please remember to send us suggestions for improvement and announcements of literary and Islamic events. Certificates are available for last month's workshop (5 AED at the Dec. meeting.).

Editor - MWWWI

## ARABIC MATCHMAKING: How to Bring Cultures together with typeface design'

Zakia Iman Shahbaz

*Have you ever looked at the Arabic signs of your favorite stores, malls, restaurants and billboards in the UAE and wondered whether the Arabic and English typography\* matched? Probably not. But that is what Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFares, founder of the Khatt Foundation (Center for Arabic Typography) did. Why? Because through her research she realized that there is need for Arabic typography to evolve into a more modern sophisticated type. The Arabic type used commercially*

*\*The art or process of printing with type*

*Continued on page 2*

*Sharjah World Book Fair! Dec. 5 -14, [www.swbf.gov.ae](http://www.swbf.gov.ae)*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 [Sheikh Mohammad's Knowledge Conference](#)
- 1 [Arabic Matchmaking](#)
- 3 [Series: Coming to Know Islam, Part. 1 -My First Impression of the Middle East,](#)
- 3 [A Special Occasions I and 2](#)
- 3 [Quotes](#)
- 4 [The Poetry Corner.](#)
- 4 [Calendar of Events](#)

## Sheikh Mohammad's \$10 Billion Knowledge Initiative

**To create miracles and find solutions for the knowledge vacuum in the Arab and Muslim World**

**Maryam Ismail**

The Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation Knowledge Conference, held at the Madinat Jumeirah Hotel, was a hit for those who appreciated a good meal. We were served breakfast, lunch, and afternoon tea. What more could one ask? Well, having the opportunity to participate in Sheikh Mohammad's groundbreaking knowledge conference was a meal in itself that will have far reaching implications for the region and the world. Observations, critiques, and experiences were plentiful; the problem was that the group that this conference was meant to serve, the Arab youth, was for the most part, absent.

The question for me is then, who is listening? The intention to increase knowledge within the UAE and the Arab world, is a noble idea and long overdue. It is hoped that their findings and suggestions will be heeded by the Ministry of Education.

The marketing manager, who put the whole thing together said, "We are going to print a thousand books in Arabic. We want to increase the knowledge of the Arabic speaking world." Fatima al Sayegh, a professor at Al Ain University said, "This is not about only knowledge in Arabic, but about knowledge in all areas."

As I worked the floor of the conference, I also met, the lovely Mona al Marri, head of the Dubai Press Club and organizer of the Complete Woman Program, which is aimed at improving the lives of women. One of her aims is to educate the locals (Emiratis) about their past. She said that she would quiz them on the name of a special pearl called jiwana, an old Emirati word.

---

*"The development of man is the foundation on which a nation is built. This building cannot be considered complete without first developing the citizens who are regarded as human wealth."*

*Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum*

---

Even the older locals don't know this word." She remarked. This is one of the problems that are being

Continued on page 2

has lagged far behind Latin type in terms of cost, variety and design quality. This may be due in part to a lack of a well-established Arabic typography tradition that can guide and educate newcomers to the field of Arabic type design. This is separate from Arabic calligraphy which continues to be one of the most beautiful and expressive of calligraphic traditions. It is venerated as Islamic art's highest achievement. But Arabic typography is seen as a commercial necessity. The art of calligraphy and the craft of typography have become two separate and independent professional fields, each with its own conventions and applications.

Visual culture just like a city can impart a certain identity to its citizens so a script can lend a certain identity to a language and to a culture's cherished heritage. The Arabic script is an emblem of the Arab/Muslim cultural identity. As the world moves forward towards a more international (design) society, there is more need for Arabic fonts that can support multi-scripts. Arabic needs to evolve into an equally beautiful expressive type.

---

### **The Arabic script is an emblem of the Arab/Muslim cultural identity**

---

In, Latin type designs, since the Industrial Revolution has undergone progressive change and has harmoniously comparison evolved along with technological developments of its times. By contrast Arabic type has experienced disjointed jumps in its development into today's digital fonts. There have been some movements towards modernizing Arabic script and adapting it to modern means type production (1930-1960s), these ideas were not popular or widely integrated into the visual culture of the Arab Muslim world. Fortunately the situation has changed with the advent of the PC and the internet and a growing awareness of the potential market benefits of a global culture.

---

### **There is a need of talented graphic designers to be pioneers with fresh perspectives about Arabic type design in the Middle East and lucrative design opportunities for a new generation.**

---

Enter Huda Smithshuijzen AbiFares, currently Professor and designer, American University in Dubai, and founder of The Khatt foundation (Center for Arabic Typography), a nonprofit foundation dedicated to research and to cultural activities between Europe and the Arab world. One of the activities is creating a virtual design community for Arab designers with a presence on the international design scene. One of the results of this was a multi faceted event presented by American University on Nov.8, 2007: a lecture on Arabic typography and design, the presentation of the Typographic Matchmaking Project and a book signing for: **Typographic Matchmaking**, Building cultural

continued on page 3

addressed, to educate the locals about their past to develop strong roots for a progressive knowledge based society for the future. The Arabs need to know that their contribution played a crucial role in the Industrial Revolution of Europe and the phenomenal progress the West has made over the past several centuries.

During the two sessions that I attended, I heard complaints about why the Arab world was not progressing and the main points were that there was a lack of academic freedom, not enough interest in providing teachers with support and mentors, and the fact that there are several social delays (nepotism, lack of culture of learning, and lack of critical thinking). There was also some discussion in which direction should this adventure to knowledge go? Should it focus on the Islamic or the *modern* aspects? There were also some comparisons between how the Arab world is faring compared to the US and the EU, the ironic part of that conversation was that despite the large number of academic elite in the room very few of them taught in the Arab world; many of them hailing from places such as Virginia Tech, Harvard, and American University, while others coming from different universities around the Arab world.


---

### **"It appears that the 21<sup>st</sup> century divide will be between communities with access to information and those without." Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum**

---

In the final session of the conference, it turned into a gripe session with one unnamed women who hit the nail on the head and was applauded for her efforts, "First, we are five years and one week late. The Arabs are stuck between the fantasy and reality of life. They are more interested in decoration and fun. Why are we so fascinated by the way people live in the EU and the West. We are snails when it comes to changing the world: ex., Iraq, Philistine, and Lebanon."

Insh'Allah, the knowledge conference was a success. We learned how far behind the Muslim/Arab world is and how far ahead the have to travel. It will sow the seeds of revival of a hunger for knowledge and new ideas that the Islamic world once pioneered and that changed the world. The final speaker pointed us in the right direction, he said, "You have the money, and you have the foundations, now you need to get to work to make changes."

Since Dubai's business leaders agree that it has been pretty hard to find skilled graduates to fill the need for 100 million workers, in the Middle East and North Africa, I think that he is right. 

---

### **"Always remember the human mind once stretched by new ideas never returns to its original state." Sheikh. Mohammad B. R. Al Maktoum**

---

bridges with typeface design.'

The lecture was about the collaborative design project between five internationally renowned Arab and Dutch design teams who worked for two years to design five new Arabic fonts to match a selected range of Dutch designer fonts. This project was coordinated by Huda Smithshuijzen AbiFares as an initiative of the Khatt Foundation. The book for sale at 150 AED, gives documentation of this design project. It also offers a new set of fresh, contemporary Arabic fonts (a CD in the book), that meet international standards ideal for bilingual design and communication in the Arab world of today. For more information about the book and the typographic project and Khatt Foundation activities visit, ([www.khtt.net](http://www.khtt.net)).  (Ref: Typographic Matchmaking..)

## A SPECIAL OCCASION!

On Saturday Sept. 8, Zakia Iman Shahbaz met with the U.S. contingent of MWWWI in Maryland hosted by Haleemah Abdul Muhaymin. It was an exciting visit, attended by eight sisters including her. She led the workshop using a lesson previously introduced to MWWWI by Leila Aboulela; when we exposed unknowingly during the writing exercise, our feelings about life, death and love. The U.S. sisters' contributions were no less intriguing and revealed a variety of writing styles.

They were enthusiastic about writing and eager to develop their small group into a working professional organization. The topics: how to get published and problems, encountered by Muslims involved in this process were also discussed. Insh'Allah, we agreed to network, share information and keep in touch via email about each group's progress.

## A SPECIAL OCCASION 2!!!

Congratulations to Maryam Ismail, who had her short story: ***Flying Rickshaw***, published in 'Time Out Dubai' Vol. 7, Issue 47, November 22, 2007, under the heading: Write for Us- p. 84

Congratulations to Fatima Tamayo who is MARRIED and EXPECTING!!! This is a miracle because the doctors told her it could never happen. She is in the Philippines and hopes to come back to Dubai soon.

### QUOTES:

**J. G. Ballard:** *"I try to write 1000 words a day and then edit it very carefully later before I type it out. I have been known to stop in the middle of a sentence sometimes when I've reached my limit. But self-discipline is enormously important; you can't rely on inspiration or a novel would take ten years."*

## Coming to Know Islam: Part 1 My First Exposure to the Middle East

It wasn't much different than today or any other hot day in the area of the Persian Gulf, except that I, a young soldier in the US military was beginning my inevitable path, the path to Islam.

We had arrived on a massive C-130, a great whale in the sky and hurriedly took our bags and our possessions for the next six months to be inspected and maybe rejected. No magazines with the pictures of women, not properly covered, according to Islamic Sharia were allowed to pass through this customs checkpoint and of course, no alcohol either. Although, I had no interest in this one, many of my colleges were wondering how they would survive without their daily drink after duty for the next six months. Some of them managed to obtain their spirits during their stay, but I don't know how.

As we stepped out of the door of the massive aircraft, the eyes of the awaiting customs inspectors, men of course, quickly fixed on us, that is, the female soldiers... We were the only women in Saudi Arabia not required to wear Islamic covering. We were not required to cover our hair. As soldiers of the US government, we were not required to cover, according to Sharia. Some of the men enjoyed the view and yet others would look away modestly, avoiding the second glance.

It was very hot that day. I can still see the heat rising from the black, tarred asphalt of the airport. I can't remember whether we arrived in Dhahran or Riyadh, but our destination was Dhahran, Khobar Towers. After passing through customs and managing to keep everything, we made our way to the buses, then, to our living quarters.

Many rumors passed amongst the soldiers. One in particular was that the buildings, we were to live in, had been built for the nomadic men of the dessert. They refused to live in them because they were more than one story high. It was said that they did not believe in living higher than another. I still wonder about that today.

As we drove down the highway, we saw sporadic small herds of camels and goats. There were many white tents, with water tanks, which painted the beige sand... These were homes of the nomadic men, which had refused the tall buildings, which we were to inhabit. The men of this great sea of sand went going about their daily life peacefully as the keeper's of the desert. The sand appeared like an ocean before me rising in crests and plunging deeply. I imagined the top of the mountains and the similitude between them, the sea and even the desert. Everything seemed to flow and to have a similar pattern of life, even this scarce and parched region of the world.

To be continued: J.O.Y. 

## The Poetry Corner

~ Sincerity ~  
For the Sake of Allah

The Muslim woman who wears hijab for the sake of  
Allah

She does not waver when faced with ridicule or  
condescension.

Allah comes first in her life.

She withstands discrimination,

Her character defies and invalidates the  
misconceptions that surround her.

She covers herself because she loves and strives to  
obey Allah.

Society may label her as uneducated, oppressed,  
backwards, and primitive,  
Her heart remains firm.

It does not matter if she does not appear fashionable,  
glittery, or revealing.

Obeying Allah is her priority, not fashion, popularity,  
or attention.

She stands out as an individual,  
Distinct within society.

The Muslim woman who restrains her desires,  
and prioritizes her life based on what pleases Allah.  
She surrenders her dreams and worldly pursuits for  
His sake.

And is steadfast in her purpose,

When her choices are scorned, denounced, and  
misunderstood.

Her decisions are made based on what will please  
Allah, not what pleases people.

She strives to put Allah and Islam first, not wealth or  
worldly success.

To her, Allah matters most.

The Muslim woman who does everything for the sake  
of Allah

She does not pause in the absence of thanks or praise.

Her actions are for Allah alone.

She knows that Allah sees everything.

When she is alone

Her sincerity to Allah prevents her from straying.

When the world's pleasures tug at her,

She remembers Allah.

For her, Allah's pleasure comes first.

Allah gives her the strength to endure

The strength to persevere

Her sincerity helps keep her on the path of Allah.

Her trials, pain, and losses

Strengthen her.

Her intentions must be renewed,

Her sincerity evaluated,  
Every day,  
Every minute if necessary  
Praise or condemnation mustn't draw her away from  
why she is here,  
To obey Allah and seek His pleasure.

When we leave this world,  
It doesn't matter how much we had,  
How beautiful or successful we were.  
The only thing that matters is if we obeyed Allah  
If Allah is pleased with us.

Does the world guide our path or does Allah?

"O you who believe! Take care of your own selves.  
If you follow the right guidance, no hurt can come to  
you from those who are in error.  
The return of you all is to Allah.  
Then He will inform you about all that which you  
used to do."

Surat Al Ma'idah [5:105]

Nadia Hakkou/Nov. 2007 

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### Important MWWWI Meeting Dates!

Day: First Tuesday of the month.

Time: 11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Dates: 2007 - Dec. 4

2008 - Jan. 1, Feb. 5, Mar. 4, Apr. 1, May 6,

June 3, July 1

#### SPECIAL EVENTS: MWWWI DECEMBER MEETING

PLACE – ZAKIA IMAN SHAHBAZ'S BAYT, SHARJAH – POT LUCK!

TIME – 11 AM TO 1 PM

DATE – DECEMBER 4, 2007

**Workshop:** Presenter: Aisha Hanif

Topic: "Aisha introduces Randa Hamwi Duwaji". Just a little background, Randa Hamwi Duwaji is a Syrian Muslim writer and poet. She has written children's books in Arabic and then translated them herself into English. She is the author of three volumes of poetry

**Member News:** Nadia Hakkou: Is moving to Morocco; Insh'Allah, she will return soon.

**Library:** Zakia donated to the library:

- *Modern Arabic Literature, the Best Fiction and Short Stories of the Arab World*
- *The Wink of Mona Lisa and other Stories of the Gulf*
- *Telling Tales: an Oral History of Dubai*
- *Typographic Matchmaking - Building Cultural Bridges with Typographic Design*

Contact: Zakia: [ummfaiza@yahoo.com](mailto:ummfaiza@yahoo.com)

Nabila: [nabila.usman@gmail.com](mailto:nabila.usman@gmail.com)

