

November Around the World Initiative launched

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HE SAYYID BADR BIN Saud Al Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs, launched 'The Glorious November Around the World' initiative in the presence of Hamoud Bin Mohammed Al Azri, General Supervisor of Oman Qaboos Website, at his office at Bait Al Falaj on Monday.

Oman Qaboos Website is dedicated to showcasing the personality of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said to the world in 30 in-

ternational languages.

Al Busaidi hailed the distinguished international initiative launched by the website as it provides an important e-window to showcase loyalty and gratitude to His Majesty on the occasion of the glorious 47th National Day celebrations.

He appreciated the efforts of all those working at the website to allow all people around the world to affirm loyalty and gratitude to leader of the victorious march His Majesty and share the Sultanate's joy

of the Glorious National Day, each in his/her own language for the first time in the world.

The initiative received a wide support by the accredited embassies in the Sultanate, as well as the Sultanate's embassies abroad through inviting peoples outside and inside the Sultanate to take part at the event.

The website management will provide the invitation to participate banner for all relevant organisations in different languages starting.

Oman News Agency

Seeking voice through art

Rawan Al Mahrouqi, an Omani artist, is a spokesperson for women

♦ MARY PHILIP MUSCAT

RAWAN AL MAHROUQI, an Omani artist, is a spokesperson for women's liberty.

Almost all her works speak about her intense longing for freedom.

"You can say I am obsessed with it. Having had my freedom taken away from me when I was young, I found myself always trying to take it back and I'm not sure if I will ever stop. It's embedded in me."

She is a feminist through and thorough. "I have always thought strongly about the double standards in my society and I hated it since I was a child. So I always create works that speak on gender equality and basic human rights."

Rawan finds inspiration from people around her and her artist friends.

"When we all meet together at the gallery, I find more ideas as we discuss with each other. I don't just paint any person at any pose or stage. Whenever I want to paint someone, I take the photographs myself. I try to capture the person as I see them. And then I paint from the reference photos I have taken."

She says she loved doing portraits from her childhood.

"I have been always drawing. My mother tells me I would constantly draw on the walls too. I remember sketching when I was young. I think I only started painting when I was a teenager. I'm all self-taught. Maybe if I had taken classes I think I would have started painting earlier!"

She uses sculpture, animation, illustration, drawing and installation art for her medium of expression.

"My style of painting is realistic when I do these portraits I love working on hyperrealism because to me it's like meditation, I am so focused on my work that I forget about everything else. I usually find myself drawn to darker, calmer colours. I also really love blue", she says.

For Rawan, each painting means different things to different people. So she does not want to define what the viewer sees in her works. It is open to each one's own perspective.

"There are many aspects



Rawan (third from left) with her artist friends.



to each painting. I don't like to say this is what I mean by this painting because it means different things for different people and I don't want to stand in its way," she says.

Her subjects are more

often women and always preferred to draw or paint girls from her childhood days.

"I'm not sure why it is so. Maybe because it is much easier for me to create something that looks like

me. It comes naturally to me," she smiles.

Her portraits of two people, who are significant in her life, reveal the underlying strength and beauty of a character she wanted to portray. Her works bare out the underlying theme of the intense struggle for freedom women have always sought and been denied eternally.

Her painting 'Maryam' is on her intimate friend. "It represents life, light and youth. It is a merging of my best friend and me. It is all about two women feeling lost and looking for some freedom, yet staying content and serene at the same time," she says.

Her second painting 'Untitled' captures an elderly woman slowly sipping tea in the morning and in deep pensive thought. Her profound contemplation underlines Rawan's explanation that this work documents a difficult time in her life.

"The older woman is a

family member of mine, who is actually much younger than she looks in the painting, but the years and troubles she has been through seems to have aged her in that moment. It was a time full of uncertainty and darkness for her," she says. "There was this need for a wee bit of light to fill up the dark room of her life. I tried to capture that quiet moment of her drinking tea with a play on light and shadows to symbolise her hiding perhaps."

Rawan wanted to portray multiple emotions of fear, love, freedom, confusion and despair. She says, "The feelings in both painting are opposites but love is common."

She has participated in nine exhibitions until now, the majority being in Oman with the exception of one in Sharjah and two in London. She has received the best presentation award at the Stal Gallery Emerging Artists in 2015. Besides being a certified makeup artist, she also does commissioned paintings.

Rawan dreams of travelling around the world with her art and have success in her career.

Sculpture, illustration, reading and animation are among her passions. She uses a lot of different mediums from water colours to oil paints. She says, "I don't like to restrict myself to one medium. It depends on my mood."

Sa'eedi, Unicef official hold talks on health

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MINISTER OF HEALTH HE Dr Ahmed Mohammed Al Sa'eedi received Lana Al Wreikat, Representative of United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef), in the Sultanate on Monday.

Al Sa'eedi welcomed the Unicef Representative wishing her success in her new duties in the Sultanate. He praised the cooperation between the Sultanate and the Unicef in the health field, emphasising the need for strengthening the collaboration between the Ministry of Health and Unicef in health and childhood domains.

Al Wreikat expressed



Al Sa'eedi in talks with Lana Al Wreikat.

her admiration of the Sultanate's health system development and the achievements made in health areas pertaining to woman and child health, as

well as the immunisation programme.

The meeting was attended by officials in the Ministry of Health.

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Big turnout at Zumbathon event

♦ STAFF REPORTER MUSCAT

ZUMBATHON CHARITY event Pink Party, to raise funds for the Oman Cancer Association (OCA), turned out to be a lively, happening event at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Baushar on Friday.

Women and girls from the age of 12 upwards dance, rocked, swayed and shashayed, keeping time to some great music and pounding rhythms, making a big difference to the cause of cancer awareness.

Explaining the concept behind this 'Pink Initiative', Marissa Pontilla from the International Karate Academy, said: "This is the second consecutive year that we are organising this charity event to raise funds for OCA."



The members who participated in the Pink Party.

A resident of Oman for over 28 years, Marissa has been instrumental in popularising Zumba in Oman and for bringing Zumba Instructor training to Oman.

With an international team of 11 from nine countries, part of the Zumba Instructors Network, Marissa put the rest of the women and girls through a lively and routine of different moves. She said: "Today several

of my students have become Zumba instructors and have spread the love and passion for Zumba Fitness dancing all over the Sultanate", she added.

The other Zumba instructors included Mila (Indonesia), Nijinka, Vinu and Sarah (all from India), Dalal (Oman), Maritess (Philippines), Ana (Slovenia), Amal (South Africa), Zeina (Tanzania), Sophie (Sweden) and

Raquel (Columbia).

The Zumba dancing and fitness programme was created by Alberto 'Beto' Perez, a Colombian dancer, in 1990. It involves dance and aerobic elements with accompanying music that is mainly Latin but also incorporates various genres of music and associated martial arts moves, squats, lunges and other aerobic techniques.

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