

## Visual and Symbolic Analysis of Naiel Mulla's Experience in Saudi Graphic Art: A Case Study

**Maryam bint Muhammad Al-Omari**

Associate Professor, Department of Painting and Printing, College of Design and Arts, Princess Nourah Bint Abdul Rahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

### Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the experience of Saudi artist Naiel Mulla in the field of graphic arts (printmaking), recognizing it as a pioneering artistic journey that contributed to establishing this medium within the local visual arts scene since the 1990s, and opened new pathways for print-based expression in Saudi Arabia. The study adopts a visual and symbolic analytical approach by examining six selected artworks that reflect the diversity of techniques and methods employed by the artist—from linoleum, wood, and zinc engraving to the incorporation of textural materials and hand coloring as independent expressive elements. The findings reveal Mulla's deep visual awareness and his ability to harmonize local cultural symbols (such as palm trees and Arabic calligraphy) with emotionally charged abstract compositions. The study also highlights his key role in introducing the printing press to the Kingdom, marking a turning point in the development of local printmaking practices, alongside his international participation that helped position Saudi graphic art in global professional platforms. His works serve as a visual mirror of identity and belonging, and as a tangible expression of a comprehensive artistic experience that merges technical mastery with multilayered symbolic content.

### Paper History:

Paper received May 21, 2025, Accepted July 08, 2025, Published on line September 1, 2025

### Keywords:

Contemporary Saudi Art, Visual Analysis, Symbolism in Art, Saudi Graphic Art, Visual Identity

### References:

- 1- Al-Rasees, Muhammad. (2010). History of Fine Arts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Riyadh: Ministry of Culture and Information.
- 2- Al-Sulaiman, Abdul Rahman. (2023). Readings in the Saudi Fine Arts Movement. Saudi Society of Fine Arts - SEAF.
- 3- Al-Omari, Maryam Muhammad bin Mutab. (2024). The Historical Development of Artistic Printing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Research in Art Education and the Arts, 25(1), 1-30. Faculty of Art Education, Helwan University.
- 4- Mulla, N. (1994–2003). Archive of Graphic Illustrated Works. PDF file and digital images.
- 5- Mulla, N. (2023). Tashkeel: Miniatures. Jeddah: Dar Al-Tashkeel.
- 6- Mulla, N. (2023). The Story of Graphic Arts in Saudi Arabia and My Experience. Unpublished manuscript.
- 7- Nayel Mulla. (1999). Participation in the Egypt International Graphics Triennale. Cairo Triennale Catalog.
- 8- Al-Watan Newspaper. (2023). History of Printing and Engraving Arts. <https://www.alwatan.com>.
- 9- Rasis, M. (2010). The History of Visual Art in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Riyadh: Ministry of Culture and Information.
- 10- Al-Suleiman, A. R. (2023). Readings in the Saudi Visual Art Movement. Saudi Association of Visual Arts – SEAF.
- 11- Al-Amari, M. M. B. M. (2024). The Historical Development of Artistic Printmaking in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Research in Art Education and Arts, 25(1), 1–30. Faculty of Art Education, Helwan University.
- 12- Mulla, N. (1994–2003). Archive of Graphic Artworks. PDF file and digital images.
- 13- Mulla, N. (2023). Tashkeel: Miniatures. Jeddah: Dar Al-Tashkeel.
- 14- Mulla, N. (2023). The Story of Graphic Art in Saudi Arabia and My Experience. Unpublished manuscript.
- 15- Mulla, N. (1999). Participation in the International Graphic Triennale – Cairo. Cairo Triennale Catalogue.

- 
- 16- Al-Watan Newspaper. (2023). The History of Printmaking and Engraving Arts. Retrieved from <https://www.alwatan.com.sa>
  - 17- Al-Hazmi, F. (2019). Cultural Representation Through Printmaking in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Middle Eastern Art*, 6(2), 115–130.
  - 18- Al-Juhani, L. (2018). Art as a Reflection of Society: The Role of Printmaking in Modern Saudi Art. *Saudi Journal of Visual Arts*, 7(1), 55–66.
  - 19- Al-Mutairi, R. (2021). The Techniques and Innovations in Printmaking. *Journal of Modern Art and Design*, 10(4), 200–220.
  - 20- Artland. (2023). What is Printmaking? Techniques and History. <https://magazine.artland.com/what-is-printmaking/>
  - 21- Artland Magazine. (2023). The Significance of Graphic Arts in the 21st Century. Retrieved from <https://magazine.artland.com>
  - 22- Elkins, J. (1996). *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*. Simon & Schuster.
  - 23- Forrer, M. (1991). *Hokusai: Prints and Drawings*. Prestel Publishing.
  - 24- Hassan, M., & Al-Mansour, A. (2020). Printmaking Techniques in Contemporary Arab Art. *Middle Eastern Art Journal*, 12(3), 88–105.
  - 25- Panofsky, E. (1972). *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*. Harper & Row.
  - 26- Rubin, J. A. (2016). *Approaches to Art Therapy: Theory and Technique*. Routledge.

**CITATION**

Maryam Al-Omari (2025), Visual and Symbolic Analysis of Naiel Mulla's Experience in Saudi Graphic Art: A Case Study, *International Design Journal*, Vol. 15 No. 4, (September 2025) pp 431-438