

By Preethi Janice D'Sa is a Dubai-based freelancer

Royal touches

The headdress of Queen Shubad (or Pua-bi) of Ur was without doubt an exquisite piece of jewellery. Made of a precious metal, it had beautiful wispy gold leaves running across the crown.

“From the headdress arose a handful of gold carved flowers each cradling a lapis lazuli gemstone,” says Fahima Fattah, an artist who was inspired by pieces of jewellery worn by the Sumerian Queen who lived in about 2600 BC. The queen herself was supposedly one of the most beautiful women of her time, says Fattah.

“She also wore heavy gold earrings while her neck was dressed in all manner of gold necklaces studded intricately with gemstones.”

Queen Shubad's grave was discovered at the Royal Cemetery of Ur (now south of Iraq) between 1922 and 1934 by British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley.

Her grave, it seems, was the only one untouched by pillagers even though it contained precious artefacts in gold, bespeckled with gemstones such as lapis lazuli and carnelian.

Fattah, an Iraqi-born Canadian, remembers seeing a few of the pieces in museums.

“Her jewellery is charming and I have her in mind whenever I sketch and paint jewellery, trying to imagine how that piece would look on her. Sadly, most of her pieces went missing from the National Museum of Baghdad in 2003,” she says.

So overwhelmed was Fattah by the beauty of the headdress that she decided to do a rendition of the Sumerian Queen in oils. In fact, the queen became the theme of Fattah's solo art exhibition held in Abu Dhabi at the Arjun Gallery in February.

Fattah, her husband Yousuf and their children left Iraq after the second Gulf War. “I was very sad to leave my home, which was full of my paintings that reflected my childhood and heritage.”

The Fattahs first moved to the UAE and then to Canada. Fattah is all praise for her husband, whom she says encouraged her to paint. She has also been invited to appear on TV shows to discuss her paintings.

“Painting was my respite from the sorrow and pain of war and its consequences. What can be more difficult than [leaving] a country whose culture and tradition you hold so close to your heart?”



PHOTOS BY GRACE PARAS/ANM

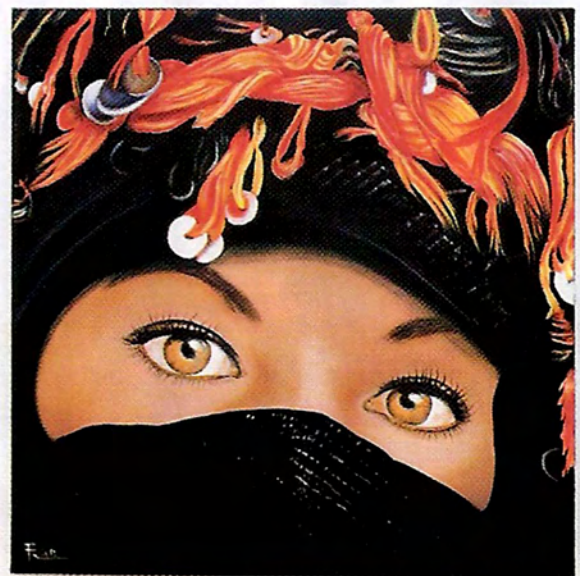
Fattah also finds clay pots fascinating in terms of art. “I can still smell the earth whenever I paint pots.”

Her aim in art is to “capture daily scenes from my childhood as well as memories of a distant past. My Iraqi friends are able to connect with those feelings and the warm glow of happiness spreads across their faces when they see these images,” she says.

Despite the painful past, Fattah’s works are never dark and gloomy. “I don’t want to portray darkness in my paintings – only hope; hope for my country and my countrymen.”

Fahima Fattah can be contacted on ffattah@gmail.com or visit her website at www.ffattah.blogspot.com

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Eyes and eyes only... an oil painting by Fahima Fattah, an artist of Iraqi origin. “I don’t want to portray darkness in my paintings,” says Fattah (top)