

Husain Albanay

A RISING STAR FROM KUWAIT



The Savior, terracotta sculpture.

■ by *Judith Wich-Wenning*

Art has a long tradition in the Middle East and Kuwait even boasts the oldest modern arts (circa 1860s to the 1970s) movement in the Arabian Peninsula. Starting in 1936, Kuwait was the first country in the Gulf to grant scholarships in art. In the past few years, Kuwait's art scene has boomed enormously. Now an artist from Kuwait is entering the art scene for Arabian horses. Husain Albanay is multi-talented and is making his mark as a sculptor and painter. His art combines the beauty and fascination of his

past, tradition and culture with modernity. At the moment Husain Albanay is still a newcomer but we will certainly be hearing a lot more from him in the future.

Husain Albanay was born in Kuwait in 1991. He has been drawing since he first learned how to hold a pencil. Horses had caught his attention already when he was a child, however his interest in them increased when he became an artist.



The artist with one of his fantastic works.

In 2012, after studying for four years in the field of art education and fine Art in the art department, Husain Albanay graduated from college in Kuwait. He then specialised in oil painting and sculpting. However, he didn't find that enough for him, so he expanded his knowledge and expertise through online courses from master artists throughout the world. This enabled him to become the artist he is today.

"Art is my way of expressing the beauty around me and the Arabian horse is an exceptional creature that deserves featuring", Husain Albanay points out. But how did he become interested in Arabian horses? Husain was on a vacation in a hotel that had a polo field. From there he got the idea of creating an art-work that features a polo player riding on his horse. He started working on a polo horse when he got home. Then one of his friends, an Arabian horse breeder,



Amira, bronze.



M. Najla, bronze statue.

called and suggested that he should start sculpting Arabian horses instead. He asked him to sculpt one of his own mares. So, Husain Albanay went to his friend's farm to take the measurements of the mare and to get a feeling of the horse so that he could reflect that on his work. Husain remembers: "From that moment I got enchanted by the beauty of these creatures inspiring me to create wonderful artworks."

Husain Albanay is deeply fascinated by Arabian horses. He points out that between the Arabian horse and him, as an Arab individual, is a strong connection as these horses played a major part in Islamic and Arabian cultures. What

attracts him the most is their distinctive head shape and body and their authenticity.

Husain Albanay has visited multiple Arabian horse stud farms and also attended the wonderful shows at Bait Al Arab, Kuwait State Stud. Here he has also attended a workshop regarding Arabian horse sculpting held by the American artist Karen Kasper. Husain Albanay hopes to travel to international Arabian horse shows in the future as well.

Besides of Arabian horses, Husain Albanay paints excellent portraits, still lives and landscapes. His portraits are



The large-sized bronze statue of M. Najla.

extremely appealing, especially the lively expression of the eyes. He sculpts also people and nature as for example birds. Albanay enjoys discovering new techniques and incorporates them into his artwork. His preferred medium concerning painting is oil paint as these are naturally sourced. The technique that he uses the most is Alla Prima (wet on wet). "Alla prima" means "at first attempt" in Italian and is a painting technique in which layers of wet paint are applied to previously administered layers of wet paint. This means that the artist does not wait until the layers are dry. So he can finish his work in only one session if he wants to. The difficulty of this technique is a certain unpredictability.



M. Najla, bronze statue.

Especially watercolours will bloom in an unforeseeable way. Many artists struggle with this, while others – like Husain Albanay – achieve fantastic results. He apparently understands how to manipulate and control paint.

As for sculpting, he uses both oil and water based clay depending on the work size and subject. Moreover, Husain Albanay has also worked excellently in Terracotta. In fact, the Terracotta piece "The Savior", showing a rider on camelback leading a prancing Arabian horse and accompanied by two Saluki dogs, is one of Husain Albanay's best artworks so far. It shows the Arabian heritage and desert life while the



Two cheetahs, bronze.

warm colour underlines its atmosphere. The certain fragility of Terracotta adds to its preciousness. Terracotta (“baked earth”) has a long tradition in art. Already in prehistoric art as well as in ancient times, as for example in Chinese pottery or in old Egypt, it was a desirable medium. It is very fascinating to watch a gifted artist like Husain Albanay create a beautiful work of art out of a fairly coarse, porous lump of clay. Then the sculpture is fired until it gets hard.

Another fantastic piece created by Husain Albanay is a large-sized bronze sculpture of an Arabian horse head, which now adorns the garden of a private Arabian horse stud farm in Kuwait. It is very impressive and fascinates the spectator from all angles. The refined details are especially noteworthy here.

In the recent past, Husain Albanay received an important assignment for the Kuwait Egyptian Event, held in January

2022. He created 21 trophies for this much talked about show. All of them were hand-made separately. They are fabricated of glazed ceramic, which has a complex creation process. Everything started with a piece of simple clay. Then Husain Albanay created beautiful works featuring a refined Arabian head. The artist had to fire the trophies three times: First was the biscuit firing, then the glaze firing and finally, after adding gold lustre for the base a third and last time in the special oven.

Asked from where he gets his inspiration for his work, Husain Albanay does not hesitate a second. He states that his inspirations come from two main sources, nature and old master paintings. He remarks that studying and analysing nature is a major thing in mastering art. He devotes time every year to study the nature through outdoor live painting abroad, for example in the Netherlands. Husain Albanay



Husain Albanay's bronze sculptures fascinate the spectator.

always encourages his students to go out for their connecting with nature in order to understand it better. He also makes sure to go out and see original artworks up close in various well-known art museums. One of his favourites is the important Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Moreover, Husain Albanay loves to browse through art books to learn more about new techniques and fellow artists.

Husain Albanay explains that he admires the American painters John Singer Sargent and Richard Schmid. They are upon the artists that elevated his art skills to another level and his path in art was greatly influenced by their artworks and philosophy. John Singer Sargent (1856 – 1925) is considered the leading portrait painter of his generation. Furthermore, he was a very talented landscape painter and



Plain air painting, Iceland, oil on canvas.

water-colourist. Richard Schmid (1934 – 2021) was a realist artist and has won nearly every Fine Art Award in America. Husain Albanay has intensively studied the works of these two masters.

Husain Albanay has participated in numerous art exhibitions in Kuwait, Sharjah and Dubai. He received a number of art awards, as for example three times in a row the “Sami Mohammed Award”. Today Husain Albanay lives with his wife in Kuwait City and spends half of his day as an art teacher in the educational field and the other half as an art instructor enabling professional artists. He regularly holds workshops in painting and sculpting,

for example also in horse sculpting. Husain Albanay is a member of the “Portrait Society of America”. His art is intended to bring a message of peace, love, hope and faith. His motto is “Art is about the way you live”.

Asked after his dream connected to Arabian horse art, Husain Albanay ponders and responds that he would like to create new, beautiful and innovative Arabian horse artworks. Moreover, he would like to sculpt famous purebred Arabian horses. He has countless plans and hopes for his future and is making his way to achieving them one by one. Having his first solo exhibition is one of his priorities for the future. Husain Albanay is certainly one to watch for. □



Plain air painting, Vondel Park,
Holland, oil on canvas.