

## Khubuz Riqaq

Khubuz Riqaq is the title of this painting by Dr. Shetha Faraj Abbo Al Numan (121 cm by 109 cm), oil on canvas 2017.

It displays an Iraqi daily activity that is practiced by women across the northern parts of Iraq, which is backing the Riqaq bread or what is called Khubuz Riqaq that is different from the regular bread (Khubuz).

The dough of this bread is prepared overnight to allow the yeast to work, in the early morning women split the dough to small handful portions, each portion is spread to a very thin layer using a wooden pipe called (Shobak), the thin dough is cooked on a hot metal shield with live fire beneath it, later on the thin layer of the dough is placed on the hot metallic curved shield which is usually made of brass, beneath this metallic shield live fire that is made from burning date palm tree chunks is introduced.

The baked bread becomes thin and crispy with special flavor of the smoked wood. Because of its dry nature, this Khubuz can survive for months, as it's usually kept rapped in dry cloths in cardboard boxes. This Khubuz becomes handy during the extreme cold or snowy seasons when outdoor bread backing becomes impossible. In order to soften this dry Khubuz, its wrapped with wet linen material and in few minutes you can taste the most delicious bread you can imagine, It is served with cheese and mint or tomato for breakfast or afternoon tea, it can also be used dry after bedding layers of it in the bottom of a casserole, to be submerged with meat soup and meat chunks (Tashreeb).

I used my unique style in representing this scenario which I called (the Shathry style) the name Shathry is combined from two Arabic words, this first part (Shath) is the first sellable of my name and the second part (ry) is the second sellable of the Arabic word for circle. In my style I translate the back ground and the foreground into circular and oval shapes. Since I believe that circles are the most perfect shapes (as per the Greek philosophy because it lacks corners) I sponsored this shape to structure all my art work, with this I added special motif and characteristic that can distinguish my style in a modern authentic approach.

Between the repeated overlapping oval shapes of the foreground and the circular shapes of the back ground I placed the lady baker in a proposed middle ground to create active perspective and provide depth to the scene. Most of my characters come from the Iraqi legacy and tradition, with this I try to document the daily traditional life of Iraqi people with modern flavor.

Using the geometric shapes and spaces adds a contemporary approach to my work and elevates the concept to a unique style that is considered rare and exhausting to execute. The rooster with its cheerful colors is placed in the middle ground behind the lady to add dynamicity to the seen, it also indicates to the early hours of the day were this activity usually takes place.

The colors of my characters are inspired from the basic circle of colors, however the colors of the back ground and the foreground comprises shades and hues of the natural colors. This contradiction in colors and shapes prints the dominance of my characters, it also provides the visual scene with dynamicity. Moreover the repeated patterns of the overlapping geometrical shapes creates interesting rhythms which provides the structure to the painting with stability, unity and individuality.

By Dr. Shetha Faraj Abbo Al Numan

