

Friday, 20 June 2008

Arts & Engagement



Anouar started four years ago to engage with wider communities by creating events that would bring them together, such as the Art & Engagement event that took place in April at Cornerstone Church in Milton Keynes. Supported by the Community Foundation, the program included guest speakers such as artists Dr Ahmed Mustafa and Soraya Sayed, photographer Peter Sanders and Dr Fuad Nahdi, the Executive Director at Radicalmiddle Way. The event also displayed a variety of Islamic paintings, calligraphy, ceramics, sculptures, silver-wear and oriental carpets.



Islam has been a frequent headliner in the media, and many associations go with it, and can be quite negative at times. However, Anouar Kassim, Chair of MKACH, wants to bring in a new positive association - Art. Islamic Art. He wants to build bridges between communities and to open a dialogue using art as subject, to inform about the richness that can be celebrated through Islamic art, and use the art to develop a deeper understanding of the culture behind it.

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The most common elements found in Islamic art and decoration is calligraphy, arabesques (repetition of floral or vegetal designs) and geometrical design. Literally calligraphy means 'beautiful writing'. Guest speaker Ahmed Mustafa, base much of his work on calligraphy, the understanding of shapes, numbers and geometry, and he uses the Arabic script to play a structural role in his paintings. His dynamic paintings and prints are full of colour and life, and the beauty of is that you don't need to understand the Arabic script to appreciate it. Soraya Sayed also gave a demonstration of Islamic Calligraphy as representing evocation of the principles of beauty and truth.

Through education comes insight and understanding, and as education has always been the backbone to Anouar's philosophy he hopes projects such as the workshops Ayesha Ansari is holding at MK College and the Arts & Engagement event, can further his quest to promote Islamic art to be enjoyed by the wider communities.