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The Legacy of Muslim Scientists, House of Wisdom, Sharjah. (Supplied)

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SHARJAH: What do Wallada Al-Mustakfi, Rufaida Al-Aslamia, Dayfa Khatun, and Aminatu have in common? They are all distinguished women in Islamic history that you more than likely have never heard of before. That is about to change thanks to a new painting by the acclaimed Iraqi artist Afifa Aleiby, whose colorful “A Wonderful World,” pays tribute to 16 noteworthy Muslim women whose names have faded away over time.



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Commissioned by the Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah, the painting will be on public display at the House of Wisdom in Sharjah until the end of Ramadan and will later be transferred to the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization.

Aleiby's work is a companion piece to a 1988 painting titled "Islamic Scientists," by the late Syrian artist Mahmoud Hammad and currently in the collection of Barjeel Art Foundation.



The Legacy of Muslim Scientists, House of Wisdom, Sharjah. (Supplied)

In his composition, Hammad highlighted 16 influential male scholars and physicians, including Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. “Exhibited together for the first time, these artworks stand as a powerful reminder of the transformative impact of these intellectuals, both men and women, on the history of Islamic civilization,” reads a wall text. The recent unveiling event opened with a panel talk, where Aleiby and Hammad’s daughter, Lubna Hammad, discussed the displayed artworks.

Aleiby noted some of the difficulties in taking on this open-call commission, including a lack of resources, literary and visual. “Some of these women have only two or three lines written about their history and role,” she said.

In her detailed piece, dotted with symbolic elements (such as the proud peacock and a library of books) and set against a serene landscape, Aleiby depicted notable women of medicine, astronomy, poetry, science, education and military leadership who lived between the 7th and 17th centuries in Africa, Andalusia, India, and the Arab world.

One of these figures is Razia Sultana, who was born in the 13th century and went on to become the first and only female ruler of the Delhi Sultanate in India. From the 11th century, there is also a depiction of Safiyya bint Abdullah Al-Riyy, who was a skilled calligrapher and poet in Andalusia. Another Andalusian woman of poetry is the rebellious and liberal Wallada Al-Mustakfi, who formed a literary salon that was a meeting point for male and female voices.



Topics:	AFIFA ALEIBY
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