

[ARABIC ZONE > Cross-curricular]

Visual art and Arabic language learning: exploring and creating around the work of Ali Omar Ermes.

Reem Abdelhadi, Luma Hameed, Fatima Khaled and Jim Anderson



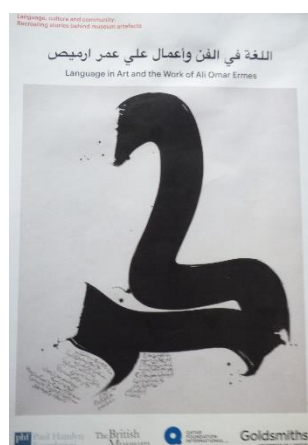
'La', 'Kalla', 'Wa Lan' No-Never-Not ever (ولن كلا لا) by Ali Omar Ermes (Actual size 1.5m x 1.2m). Presented from right to left. (With permission of the artist)

In this blog post we introduce you to a cross-curricular and creative approach to teaching Arabic involving visual art. The approach brings context and purpose to language learning enabling deep engagement with culture and awakening personal, emotional and aesthetic dimensions.

We have been fortunate in being able to work with renowned artist, Ali Omar Ermes, whose work may be described as a form of 'textart' as his paintings incorporate Arabic letter shapes or short/abbreviated words as well as extracts from Arab poetry over the ages.

<https://www.aliomarermes.co.uk/>

To support teachers in applying the approach in practice we created the resource pack 'Language in Art and the Work of Ali Omar Ermes', published by Goldsmiths, University of London in 2108. The pack is aimed primarily at intermediate and more advanced learners but can easily be adapted for lower levels.



<https://mdstmr.wordpress.com/arabic/a-resource-pack/>

The resource focuses on both content and language and is consistent with Project Based Language Learning (PBL). It is founded on a 3-stage pedagogical framework progressing from Approaching to Exploring before moving into the final stage of Creating:

1.	<i>Approaching</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking to previous learning and experience • Sharing and discussing ideas in pairs/groups • Formulating questions • Building up key words
2.	<i>Exploring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching • Connecting and comparing • Analysing and interpreting • Developing language knowledge and skills across genres
3.	<i>Creating</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-imagining • Re-mediating • Re-presenting

Recognising that this approach might be new to many teachers a companion professional development resource was developed by Goldsmiths Teachers Centre and Qatar Foundation International and includes video clips from a whole day workshop that took place at Goldsmiths:

<https://www.qfi.org/resources/goldsmiths-resource-pack/>

You are guided through each section with short contextualising text, questions to think about and related materials. The workshop PPT and a detailed Planning Guide are also available:

<https://mdstmr.wordpress.com/arabic/aprofdev/>

Finally, there is a report on the use of a unit from the resource with a class at the Peace School. This is based on La-Kalla-Wa Lan (See images above)

<https://mdstmr.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/peace-school-20181.pdf>

Students of Fatima Khaled have continued exploring and creating around paintings by Ali Omar Ermes and this includes work around Ba Ayoon (painting and poetry). The work of two students, Yusra Budraa and Sobhia Anfal Boularas, which focuses on the environment has been included in a showcase on Goldsmiths Critical Connections: Multilingual Digital Storytelling website:

<https://goldsmithsmdst.com/our-planet-showcase-2021/>

Those interested in a fuller discussion of visual art in language learning and the work described here may like to look at:

Abdelhadi, R., Hameed, L., Khaled, F. and Anderson, J. (2019) Creative interactions with art works: An engaging approach to Arabic language-and-culture learning. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 14(3), 273-289.
doi: 10.1080/17501229.2019.1579219.