

Who is Shameema?

I'm an illustrator. An artist is someone who paints pictures or abstract images. A sculptor sculpts figures. Designers devise patterns on cloth, wood or other surfaces. An illustrator creates images and pictures, to complement and explain written words. Just imagine Alice in Wonderland without pictures. Would a child enjoy Disney's Donald Duck stories with photographs of a plain old duck?

Where did illustration start for you?

I was born in beautiful Cape Town. Like most children I doodled and doodled, and then the doodles morphed into pictures that told stories. I was hooked. I did well at Livingstone High School with A passes and all. As with most parents and teachers, I was strongly advised to attend UCT to get a degree. My passion was elsewhere. Music was my second love after art. I wanted to illustrate CD covers and T-shirts with those vivid images that youngsters become addicted to. And faintly there was a yearning to become a Rock Star. These teenage fantasies weighed heavily. I did a Graphic Design degree-course at Cape Peninsula Technicon. Graphic design was a drudge, so in my 4th year I majored in illustration: I took to it with fervour and zeal; I haven't looked back.

What is art for you?

For me, art is as marvellous as a beautiful flower perfumed with the essence of joy. Illustration is the voice of self-expression that gives pleasure and added meaning to stories. Beautiful illustration is a delight similar to that of a welcoming smile on a face. It is also a gift to humanity, something to make the soul sing. It is, of course, also very personal. Hate some, love some.

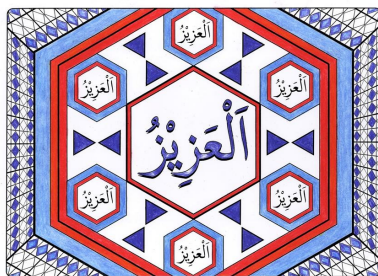
Who influenced or encouraged your journey into art?

My father and mother stood by me and encouraged me to bring forth the best artist in me. My father took me to galleries and opened my eyes to the stunning vistas that surround Cape Town. Soon I saw the colour-magic of creation all around me.

How do the restrictive notions of Islamic art affect you?

Art has no boundaries except those of common decency and good taste. Man-made restrictions are otherwise odious. Some say that figurative art is forbidden, yet early Islamic art had no such restriction, except for worshipping idols. Figures appeared on early Islamic coins. Some say that depicting eyes is forbidden. Why is the depiction of a nose or a mouth any different? Imagine Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece, the Mona Lisa, wearing sunglasses.

Illustration is an ideal way of enhancing teaching and



AL-AZIZ (THE VICTORIOUS)



AR-RAHMAN (THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE)

Shameema Dharsey's Art Journey



Shameema Dharsey doing what she loves in her studio.

understanding complex issues and vistas. Muslims should make good use of it. Take note of the Chinese saying: One picture is better than a thousand words. Remember that: Go even unto China for knowledge and education is an Islamic Hadith and command.

You have illustrated for National Geographic Kids, MacMillan Oxford and other great publishers. What are the other pinnacles, and lows, of your career as a free-lance illustrator?

I try to keep the lows to a minimum. No work and boredom are high on the list. Clients who don't value your work, and try to wheedle you out of fair remuneration for your talent, time and labour are annoying. 'Deadlines' are the devil's delights.

On the plus side is being your own boss, but I take all my work seriously. I have published two comics on the antics of my cats. A colouring book for adults is another high. My painting of Yoda, of Star Wars fame, is an on-going delight. The Oohs! and Aahs! for this very realistic piece of art still tickles.

My colouring book of the Asmaul Husna (The 99 names of Allah) is the latest and most exciting pinnacle.

How did the Asmaul Husna colouring book come alive.

My brother, Mukhtar, and I discussed the project of creating a colouring book with an Islamic art motif. The Asmaul Husna came to mind. This book, especially designed with Islamic 'sacred geometry' patterns was a big challenge.

I did rough sketches and possible designs to compliment the attributes. Matching the abstract concepts with definitive designs was difficult. But I think that we did well under the circumstances. Then came the collating process of matching designs with specific sizes and pages. Thanks to my graphic design background we overcame that mountain, garnering accolades from those who are in the book trade and early buyers. Publishing, finances and distribution were arduous and frazzled nerves, but at last we had a colouring book, primarily for adults, that was unique. The launch at Timbuktu Book Store went off well, and the public reception has been very favourable. The first printing was soon sold out, but new ones are available at Islamic Book stores or from myself at ShameemaDharsey@hotmail.com or Cell: 0722422420.

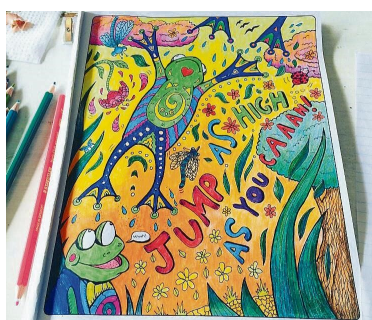
I must say that without the help of my brother Mukhtar (The terror!) this colouring book would not have been what it has become: a creation of love, research, perseverance, help and a lot of joy.

And a word for aspirant illustrators or artists

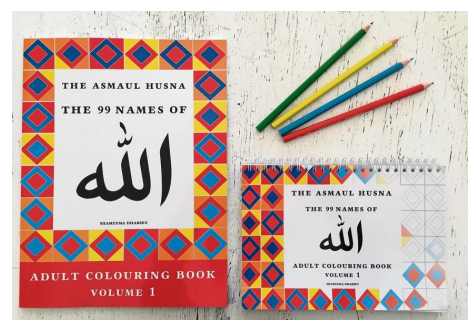
If you're not afraid of burning the midnight oil, go for it. All it needs is hard work, a smidgen of talent, a wide vision and love for all creation.



Shameema Original Art - Mousse



Shameema Original Art Frog



Asmaul Husna Colouring Book Sizes.