

Empowering the Next Generation of Creative Leaders – Gaza

Annual Report 2020



Introduction

The Gaza program at Dar-Alkalima University College is an initiative launched by the College in late 2019 to explore opportunities of providing services in Gaza given the extreme deterioration in living conditions and lack of opportunities for young artists and talented individuals in the Gaza Strip.

The program aims to:

- 1- Enhancing the skills of young artists and talented Gazan youth
- 2- Improving the exposure of artists by creating networks and opportunities for exhibiting and marketing their productions locally and internationally and establishing job creating opportunities through the activation of the Young Artists Network created by DAK in 2020 and enhancing the role of artists in community initiatives created and lead by them.
- 3- Recognizing exceptional artists through local awards

While the program was launched in July 2019, a lot of preparatory work had to be conducted during the first few months in order to be able to coordinate and establish a presence in Gaza such as identifying a venue for activities, introductions and coordination with local organizations in addition to identifying potential teachers, trainers and staff in Gaza. The actual implementation of program activities started in December 2020 and spanned over 2020 and are ongoing.

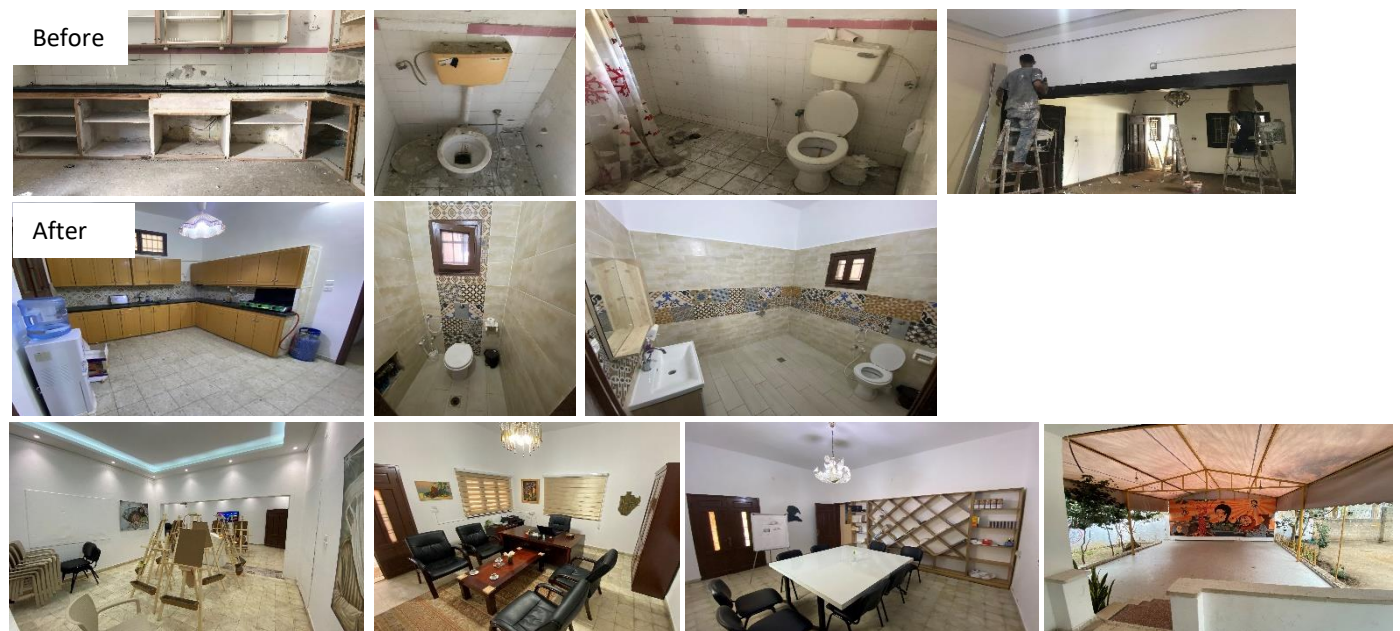
In March 2020, the operational context became quite complicated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Strict lockdown was imposed on West Bank and Gaza and entry to Gaza was restricted and all borders closed rendering Gaza under dual blockade. Entry into Gaza was only allowed to returning citizens through Rafah Crossing point with Egypt and the authorities imposed a 21-day compulsory border quarantine at government supervised facilities before individuals were allowed back to their homes in Gaza. This was thought to protect Gaza from a real humanitarian disaster if COVID-19 spread widely in Gaza as the already fragile healthcare system cannot handle additional burdens. However, in August 2020, the first community case of COVID-19 was confirmed and the authorities imposed a strict lockdown in Gaza that extended throughout September and was followed with weekend and night curfews and additional restrictions on social gatherings and community activities.

Nevertheless, the college managed to continue its endeavors in Gaza and find and renovate a venue to house its activities and to organize training and other events during this period, some online, and some events with restricted attendance to ensure the safety of the participants and prevent infection and at the same time move forward with establishing a significant presence for the college in Gaza. However, activities with children and activities involving international coordination for exhibits were not feasible given the circumstances.

This report covers all activities conducted between January and December 2020.

Venue Rental and Rehabilitation

The initial stage of the project in 2019 began by searching for a venue to establish a presence for the college in Gaza. An appropriate location was identified for rental during the first month and rental negotiations were established with the owners but unfortunately soon after the negotiations began, the facility that we were interested in was leased to another organization. Therefore, the search for an alternative venue continued until we identified the French Cultural Institute in Gaza as an appropriate venue to begin offering classes while we continue searching for an independent location. Property rental costs were higher than we expected therefore the search for a somehow independent location that could house a college in Gaza was quite difficult. So in order to proceed with our activities, the college negotiated an agreement to rent a room at the French Cultural Institute in order to avoid losing more time in searching for a suitable venue. In July 2020, an appropriate house that could house our activities was located in Gaza City that we were able to negotiate a rental agreement within our budget starting August 2020. However, since the house is quite old, a lot of renovation work had to be conducted in addition to ensuring the house is appropriately furnished and equipped to host courses, events and exhibitions in the future. Renovation equipping and furnishing was concluded by October 2020 and the Gaza DAK venue was ready to host training workshops starting November. There are still opportunities to develop the facility but we worked with the available budget to ensure that is functionally adequate for the time being. It is worth noting that some young artists helped during the renovation and are already visiting the venue and helping the two staff members as needed to setup and implement various events. Some also gifted some of their artwork to be displayed on the walls of the college and they feel belonging when they see their artwork on the walls. Finding and establishing an independent location for the college in Gaza was a significant achievement in 2020 as it has boosted our ability to host artists and network with other organizations independently and for young artists in particular, having a venue to meet and interact freely is quite valuable. Having the venue also helps the college also host activities for other grassroots small organizations in Gaza. We expect to have greater flexibility in implementing activities in 2021.



Activities by Objective

Objective 1: Enhancing the skills of young artists and talented Gazan youth

In 2020, six professional courses were conducted as highlighted in the table below. The courses were conducted in two rounds one beginning in Dec 2019 until March 2020 and the second round beginning in October 2020 until December 2020. A total of 111 participants joined these courses with an equal distribution of males and females. The selection of the courses was based on needs assessment conducted locally in Gaza.

			Duration	Total Number of participants	Male	Female
1	Round 1	Photography	Dec 2019 – Feb 2020	25	15	10
2		Principles of Design	Dec 2019 – Feb 2020	21	10	11
3		Video Art	Jan- Mar 2020	12	6	6
4	Round 2	Sculpturing with Cardboard	Oct- Dec 2020	15	2	13
5		Aesthetics	Oct- Dec 2020	18	10	8
6		Art Gallery Management - online	Oct- Dec 2020	20	12	8
		TOTAL		111	55	56

Below are some pictures of the students engaging in various sessions of the training courses.

Round 1 December 2019 – March 2020 courses:



Round 2 courses – October -December 2020



Exhibitions for Round 2 Courses are planned in January 2021.

Objective 2: Improving the exposure of artists by creating networks and opportunities for exhibiting and marketing their productions locally and internationally

One of the key objectives for the college is to shed light on the artwork produced by young artists in Gaza. Therefore, following every training course or within other events organized, the college ensures that it organizes local exhibitions to display the artwork of young artists in Gaza . The following Exhibitions were organized during 2020

I- “We shall have life on this land” Photography Exhibition – January 2020 – Gaza

In January 2020, the college organized a photography exhibition entitled “We shall have life on this Land” which also included an award ceremony for Gazan photographers who participated in the 2019 Karimeh Abbud Award to honor their participation which constituted about 65% of all participation. The exhibition was hosted by the French Cultural Center in Gaza on January 13, 2020 and attended by more than 120 individuals and 18 local photographers were recognized during the event.

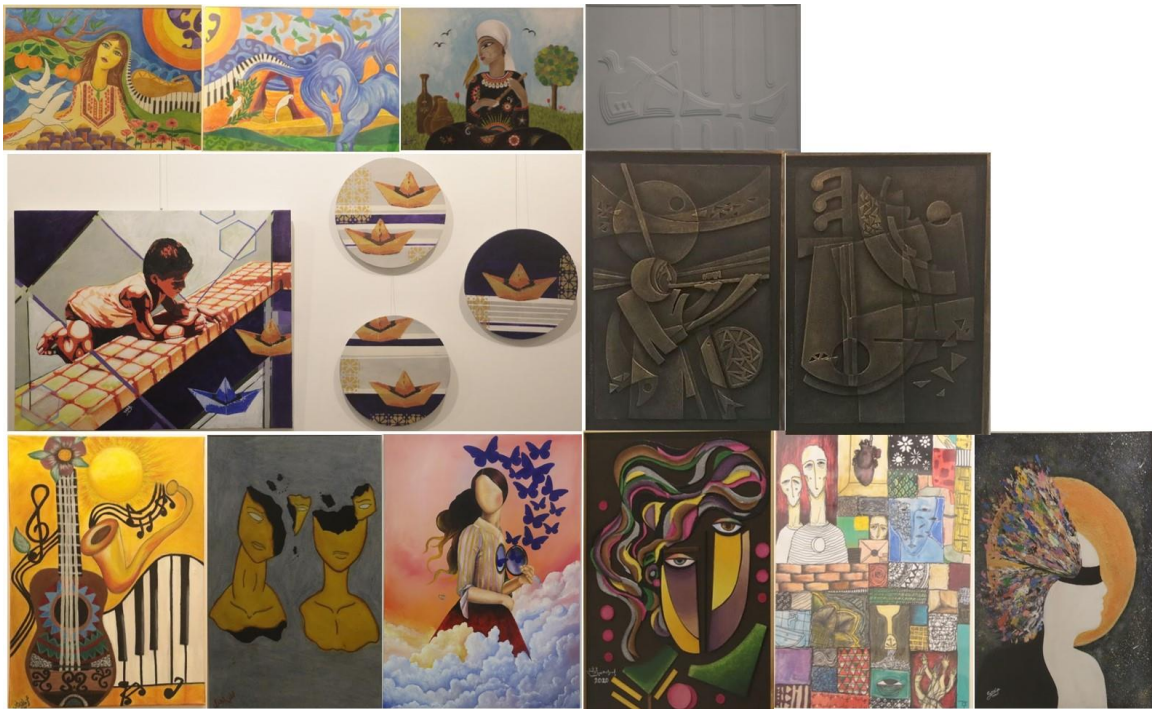


2- Eye on Gaza Exhibition – March 2020 – Gaza

As part of their training, students in each training course were asked to work on a project to be considered their graduation project and displayed in an exhibition in Gaza. The name of the exhibition was EYE ON GAZA and the students participated with 66 photographs captured by the students from daily life in Gaza and 33 art works by the Design course students. The exhibition was launched by the French Consul in Gaza at the French Cultural Institute and was attended by several cultural and art centers representatives in Gaza in addition to the trainers, students, their families and their friends and spanned over three consecutive days starting March 3, 2020. For some students, this was their first exhibition and they were very excited to participate and show off their work.



Eye on Gaza Exhibition Opening



Some artwork by the Principals of Design course participants

3- Beautiful Palestine Exhibition – October 2020 (Bethlehem)

The “Beautiful Palestine” Exhibition was launched in Bethlehem on October 12, 2020 hosting 13 artists, 5 of which were from Gaza. Their artwork was shipped from Gaza to Bethlehem to participate in this exhibition. For some of these young artists, it was the first time that their artwork leaves the borders of Gaza to be displayed in exhibition. Through this exhibition two artworks for artists from Gaza were also sold and for those two, it was the first time they actually sell their artwork. Such opportunities for young artists create new realms that they have not thought of before.

“Fawaz Saleh, who participated in the exhibition said he had to work for a whole month in order to buy material to be able to produce his painting and when his painting was sold, he was thrilled. It is his first time participating in an exhibition outside Gaza and his first sale ever.”

Farida Ibrahim, who also participated in the exhibition outside Gaza for the first time with a collage artwork made of newspaper on wood featuring a Palestinian women depicted from a photo by Khalil Raad, a famous Palestinian photographer, was surprised that her artwork was acquired by someone from Bethlehem. She questioned whether we were doing this as a charity for her and took her a while to believe that someone actually bought her artwork.

While the college seeks to expand exposure opportunities beyond Palestine, this year was challenging in organizing opportunities for international exposure through networking with international organizations to host exhibitions for artists from Gaza. Due to the pandemic and the closure of art organizations worldwide and closure of borders and restrictions on shipping no international exhibitions were organized this year. Three planned exhibitions in Munich/Germany, Uppsala/Sweden & Chicago/USA had to be postponed. However, the college will continue to seek for international exposure of young artists from Palestine and Gaza during the upcoming years and plans to establish a website for exhibiting and selling art.



Objective 3: Recognition of Excelling Artists

Ismail Shamout Fine Art Award 2020

DAK also launched the 2020 Ismail Shamout Award advertisement in January and received 87 participations from Artists throughout Palestine by March 2nd. The Theme of the competition this year was “Beautiful Palestine”. The exhibition and award ceremony were supposed to take place in April 2020 but both the assessment of entries and the related exhibit were delayed due to the onset of Covid-19 emergency in Palestine. The first Jury completed their ratings in July 2020 selecting top 13 to participate in the Prize Exhibit that was launched in October 2020 after receiving the actual painting from the top 13 participants, 5 of which were from Gaza, 2 from Jordan.

The second Jury was invited to attend the opening of the exhibit and to assess the final 13 artwork qualified for the final stage and the Jury concluded their assessment and determined the top 3 winners of the award which was announced during an award ceremony held on October 27, 2020 at DAK College in Bethlehem. The third prize winner was from Gaza and in order to honor other participants who made it to the final stage from Gaza, a special event was also organized at our venue in Gaza.



Ismail Shamout Exhibition and Award Ceremony in Bethlehem



Ismail Shamout Exhibition and Award Ceremony in Bethlehem



Ismail Shamout Award - Top Three Artworks

Coronagram Gaza 2020 (in collaboration with the French Cultural Center in Gaza)

In collaboration with The French Cultural Institute in Gaza, a photography award was also launched in May 2020 under the name Gaza-Coronagram to allow photographers to be engaged in the socioeconomic changes imposed by Covid-19 and to capture how Covid-19 is impacting Gazans. A total of 36 photographers participated and an online public vote was launched in August to determine the winners of the prizes.



A closed event was organized to distribute the prizes for the winners at our premises in Gaza and the winners were hosted to talk more about their photos.



Karimeh Abbud Photography Award 2020

Karimeh Abbud Photography Award was launched in September 2020 with the theme “2020-New World Disorder” to allow photographers to reflect on the contradictions of life during 2020. The competition consisted of a photography project submission consisting of three photos per participant. A total of 38 photographers participated and 12 made it to the final stage and coincidentally they were all from Gaza. Therefore, the college decided to setup the exhibition and the award ceremony in our new Gaza premises. The event is planned in early February 2021.

3- Oxygen Video Art festival – March 2020 – Gaza

The outputs of the video art workshop were twelve video art films that screened on the first day of the Gaza International Video Art Festival launched on March 4, 2020. The first day also featured a video conference address by renowned artist Steve Sabella who encouraged the effort invested in organizing this effort in Gaza and spoke about his video entitled “Great March of Return” and spoke about his new upcoming projects.

The college honored the participating artists with three prizes for the best three films based on the evaluation of technical committee. The three winning films were:

- 1- O2 by Mohamamd Nayef (m)
- 2- Poker by Khaled Jarade (m)
- 3- Unkonwn by Jehad Jarbou' (f)

The second day of the festival featured films produced by several local and international artists

International Video Art Festival – Gaza III
مهرجان الفيديوآرت الدولي – غزة (أوكسجين)
(Oxygen)

الفنانين المشاركين بورشة ومهرجان الفيديوآرت الدولي

03:11	(جُزْز)	1- براء العياور
04:44	(المنجول)	2- جهاد جربوع
01:51	(بوكس)	3- خالد جرادة
04:00	(هوايس)	4- نيساء سلامة
03:43	(دراو لغزو)	5- روان لشرقي
04:45	(جوط أوكسجين)	6- تضاء أحمد
04:03	(المسراة)	7- عزرا الفايح احمد
04:01	(القرنيت)	8- سها العنيس
02:12	(القدر والبشر)	9- مبروان نكصار
03:40	(O2)	10- محمد نايف
03:10	(لا نهائية)	11- محمد زقوت
02:40	(المدنية الاكثر خطورة)	12- مؤيد ابوامونة
04:40	(طمشورة)	13- فارس عياش

International Video Art Festival and Workshop
(Oxygen)

Civic Engagement Training among Artists in Gaza

Beginning mid May 2020, Dar Al-Kalima University College (DAK) established a partnership with Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi Center for Culture and Development in Gaza to deliver a training in civic engagement to artists who have been previously engaged in art courses with the DAK Training Center in Gaza. The aim of the training is to promote the role of young artists as members of the civil society and enhance their knowledge and skills in civic engagement and formulation community initiatives.

A total of **26 individuals (15 Female and 11 Male)** from the fields of Art and Media participated in the 30-hour training program (over 10 sessions) that covered the following topics

- Main concepts of civil society and civic engagement
- Democracy
- Equity and Equality
- The role of Youth
- Principles of Advocacy
- Planning community initiatives and campaigns



During the final four sessions of the training, participants were split into three groups and asked to design three initiatives that tackle a local problem within their community. The three groups worked on designing the following initiatives:

- 1- Promoting vocational training among young women in Gaza
- 2- Preventing social stereotyping and related bullying in Gaza
- 3- Promoting knowledge of Palestinian heritage among children and youth in Gaza.

A feedback and evaluation was held with the participants during the final session and they noted the following:

- They learned a lot of concepts and information that was new to them
- The trainers were very knowledgeable in their fields

- The commitment and the engagement of the participants during the training was very high and helped achieve the goals of the training
- The final few sessions that they used to develop their initiatives were very beneficial and allowed them to apply the information and the knowledge they gained in practice
- The participants re-iterated the importance of carrying these initiatives forward and implementing them on the ground.
- Multiple participants noted that more time is needed for such courses because the information shared is extensive.

Establishing The Young Artist Network

In June 2020 and in order to reach and remain in touch with young artists in Gaza, the college formed an online platform using WhatsApp to communicate news and events with young artists in Gaza. Also to gain more insight about our target audience, we asked them to fill an online form that gathers details about their artistic interests. To date about 132 have signed up online and we can communicate directly with them through the group.

In July 2020, 70 members of the group met for the first time to get acquainted and get to know more about the network. The session included a brainstorming session on the needs of young artists in Gaza and the challenges they face which they identified as resource availability in terms of the ability to buy material to produce especially among unemployed young artists, lack of professional development opportunities and limited exposure opportunities locally and internationally.

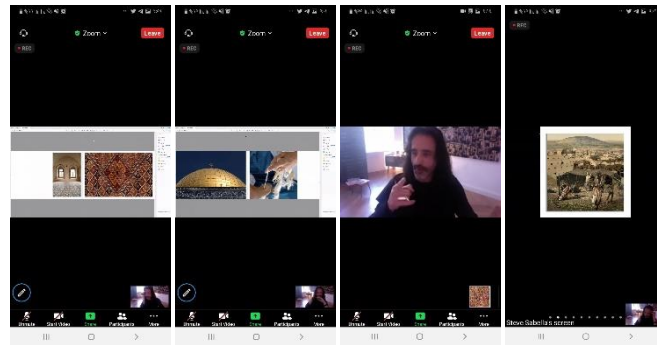
They identified the need for:

- Ongoing professional development workshops and events in various fields of fine arts and also performing arts
- Online talks and exchange of experience between local and international artists
- Development opportunities on the optimal use of social media platforms for increasing artists exposure and training on the use of social media tools
- Marketing and pricing artwork
- Workshops on proposal development and concept development for artists
- Developing the CV for the artists and artist portfolio
- English language for artists

Accordingly, and in response to some of the identified needs, DAK organized a session with George Lama a renowned Palestinian art collector and acquirer to talk about the tools he uses in assessing and pricing artwork.



In September 2020 as part of the artist network activities as well, DAK organized an online talk with Artist Steve Sabella with about 40 participants in which he shared his 2020 productions and answered questions from the audience about his journey and philosophy as an artist.



The college also seeks to share opportunities with young artists that are available through other organizations working in Art. Through the online group, the college share advertisements by other organizations for exhibitions, internships and competitions.

The college organized a workshop with Shababeek Gallery on the application process for Art internships offered by them and the application process and the do's and don'ts in the application process in order to improve their chances in receiving internships.

Similarly, DAK will continue to organize such online networking opportunities for the young artists to get to know and talk to other renowned Palestinian and International Artists



Similarly, DAK will continue to organize such online networking opportunities for the young artists to get to know and talk to other renowned Palestinian and International Artists.

Community Activities and Initiatives

Young artists were also invited through the network to participate in group and community initiative lead by the college. Interested artists register for the activities and join in planning and implementing multiple activities. During 2020, young artists have participated in the following group activities:

Lighthouse school child friendly school environment

Based This activity entailed painting the school wall with paintings prior to the beginning of the school year to welcome the children to a more child friendly environment. A total of 10 artists participated in the activity.



Covid-19 anti bullying and stereotyping initiative

This activity involved three activities: 1- painting a mural highlighting the psychological distress caused by bullying and stereotyping, 2- a group activity on the Gaza beach distributing anti bullying messages 3- a videoart production highlighting the distress caused to individuals who are subjected to bullying. A total of 9 young artists participated in the planning and implementation of this activity



Independence Day activity for artists

This activity was a structured recreational activity for artists on the Independence Day that was organized with the Gaza municipality to paint a mural in a new beach facility for the public. A total of 35 artists joined and participated in this activity.



What's next?

The objectives of the Gaza program will remain the same, however the activities will expand as now with the venue well-established we can have further flexibility in planning and organizing our activities. In 2021 the college will continue to seek official registration and accreditation by the Ministry of Higher Education for the training center in Gaza in order to be able to offer a full diploma program. But since the accreditation process may take some time, the college will continue to offer professional development opportunities for artists and training for young talented individuals who want to experiment with Art.

The development of the venue will continue in order to be able to accommodate the various needs of the courses and also deal with the electricity problem in Gaza. In 2021, the college will install solar panels that will make electricity available for the college all the time.

With the available venue the college will also continue and expand on hosting exhibitions for young and established artists.

Given improvements in the operational environment under the pandemic, the college will also seek to initiate in 2021 the art activities for children which were not at all possible during 2020. These activities will target children under 18 in coordination with local schools and clubs and other community-based organizations working with children. These activities are also meant to create short-term employment opportunities for young artists who will help lead these activities with children.

In 2021, the college will also work on developing a website for exhibiting and marketing Artwork from Palestinian artists including artists from Gaza. And will work on perhaps coordinating with international organizations to host exhibits for Palestinian artists if the COVID-19 situation improves to allow for such activities to take place.

Progress against performance indicators

	Indicator	Planned Y2	Achieved
1	Number of courses implemented	4	4
2	Number of Students participating in courses	60	80
3	Percentage of students satisfied with the courses		
	Sculpturing with Cardboard	100%	
	Aesthetics	97%	
	Art Gallery Management	56%	
4	Number of local exhibitions held	2	4
5	Number of Awards organized	3	4

Links to videos and social media posts

Karimeh Abbud Award Ceremony and Exhibition – Bethlehem

<https://www.facebook.com/Karimeh.Abbud.Photography.award/videos/452381492085176/>

Karimeh Abbud Gaza Award Ceremony

<https://www.facebook.com/PalestineTv/videos/1816838818441256/?t=15>

Photography Course

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sxfckl-Ukc&t=53s>

Principals of Artistic Design Course

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1xSMfcX4tA&t=111s>

Video Art Workshop

<https://www.facebook.com/hmohamedharb/videos/10221865084524528/>

Eye on Gaza Exhibition

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxhPOoxOEW0>

Video Art Festival

<https://www.facebook.com/hmohamedharb/videos/10221865084524528/>

Ismail Shamout 2020 Opening event

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=345723856761364>

Other activities can also be found on our social media pages:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Dar-al-Kalima-University-College-of-Arts-Culture-Gaza-Training-Center>

Instagram: https://instagram.com/daralkalima_gaza?igshid=1a6e4xwqbto5d

Youtube: <https://youtube.com/channel/UCQDgbsLmRAbuBvmWWitg1Gw>