

RHYTHMIC WORDS

Young poet to represent Mideast in world competition

Rabab Chamseddine, a 21-year-old Lebanese poet, is headed for Paris for the World Poetry Slam next year after winning the Beirut Poetry Slam with works that tackled notions of self and country

Al-Monitor | Beirut

Her trophy nearby and new fans offer hugs and praise, Rabab Chamseddine, a 21-year-old Lebanese poet, was high after her win at the 2018 Beirut Poetry Slam. “I am feeling more than great. I just want to smash everything. I am way too excited,” she said about her thoughts on representing the Middle East next year at the World Poetry Slam.

Slam poetry is different from traditional spoken word performances “because it’s a competitive performance,” organizer Maysan Nasser explained. Ten artists present two poems, each one three minutes long and judges score their performance and content. “The contestants have nothing on stage apart from their words,” Nasser added.

Held at Station Beirut, an art space in the Lebanese capital, the event featured poets ranging from published writers to novices performing for the first time, reading their poems in Arabic and English.

Beirut has hosted previous slam competitions but this year’s event offered something new. The winner of the slam will travel to Paris next year to participate in the World Poetry Slam: the Middle Eastern representative to compete against poets from Austria to Germany.

Chamseddine will be this representative, winning over the audience and judges with her performance of “Not Your Type of Woman” and “To Honey,” heartfelt original poems exploring the complexities and fluctuations of identity in the Middle East.

Born into a Lebanese family in Ivory Coast, Chamseddine moved back to Lebanon at the age of 11. A native French speaker, she wrote her first poem, “Solitude,” in elementary school. She described it as “a very sad poem for a nine-year-old.”

However, her poetry has always been intensely personal, reserved mainly for her diary. When she turned 18, she befriended a woman named Dima who introduced her to spoken word poetry. “I had to process it [her death] and had to go through grief,” Chamseddine said. “And when I was almost over it, I wrote my first [English poem], called ‘The Long Drop.’”

Thereafter, Chamseddine sought to emulate her friend. She started studying literature at the American University of Beirut and began writing in English.

During her studies at AUB, she performed her first ever spoken word poem in front of her class.

SHOW

Saudi artists on show at German art festival for first time

Arab News | Berlin

Picture an idyllic landscape in the Uckermark region, a pristine Brandenburg lake district an hour north of the bustling metropolis of Berlin.

Adjacent to a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, created to protect an area rich in natural beauty, a group of like-minded artists, art enthusiasts and nature lovers have banded together to foster an exchange between town and country, art and nature.

Nonprofit association Friends of the Uckermark created the biennial UM Festival, which is held on the first weekend in September to showcase contemporary art, literature and music in several villages and natural sites.

Initially, the participants came from Berlin and Brandenburg but this year the sixth edition of the festival attracted an international crowd. Along with creators from Germany, Switzerland and Japan, Jeddah artists Lina Gazzaz and Bricklab were among the 22 selected contributors. Following on from the first German participation at Jeddah’s 21,39 art festival this year, this Saudi presence at UM18 is another milestone in the cultural exchange between the two countries.

Bricklab, brothers Abdulrahman and Turki Gazzaz, contributed an installation titled “Tem-



Lina Gazzaz impressed visitors – adults and children