KUWAIT: Little kids stopped scribbling on walls and waited, in anticipation, the finishing touches on a beautiful mural that was being painted to cover all the ugly black marks they had left on one of the walls of a power transformer in their neighborhood.

This mural was their first introduction to the growing and the widely controversial “Street Art.” This art, which began in response to young people’s socio-political environment, took a turning point in the 1970’s and 1980’s to become a true form of artistic expression.

The 26-year old Omar Al-Oraiman told KUNA that he experienced firsthand how influential street art could be on his community when he was approached by member of Al-Qairwan Cooperative Society, Nasser Shlayweeh Al-Mutairi, to paint the power transformer that had been vandalized by the little kids.

“I was thrilled to volunteer. It was an opportunity that was given to me not only to express myself through art but also to induce a sense of responsibility and volunteerism into the little kids who were watching me the whole time I was turning the very wall they had destroyed into a beautiful piece of art, ” he said. “It was a powerful life lesson for all of us, ” Oraiman pointed out. “And it was learned through art, most particularly street art, because it can be seen and appreciated by everyone on the street. ”

Oraiman’s little project brought people together, the government, the artist and the kids, for the best interest of their community. “And that’s how much influential the message of street art is, ” he concluded.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Enzi, has taken up graffiti for its “unlimited and open creativity. ” “There is no rule that tells you what you should or shouldn’t do, ” he explained. “I can use no colors or all colors in the rainbow. I can combine any style or genre of art with any feel,” Enezi said, who was introduced to this art, one kind of street art, by a classmate at the age of 13.

The 24-year old artist expressed his respect to public property and said he wouldn’t paint on any wall unless it was asked of him; otherwise, he would just paint on abandoned properties. After many years of attaching the “graffiti” stigma to this art, graffiti is getting the respect it deserves; even though, one of his pet peeves is when someone calls this expression of art as “a bunch of scribbles,” Enezi frustratingly said.

Surprisingly, the scene of street art in Kuwait has become “progressive,” Fay Al-Homoud, founder of Q8streetart said to KUNA. “I felt local artists needed support and recognition,” Homoud, driven by the passion for this art which she acquired from her travels, decided in 2012 to create Q8streetart on Instagram, a local platform to document and showcase Kuwait street art.

“ ‘My efforts are not only focused on showcasing artwork as I am equally passionate about bringing the artist to the forefront. ’ ” Homoud went on saying that because of the progressive scene of street art, it has been admirably accepted in the country. “Corporate vendors such as banks and telecom companies as well as other establishments use street art in their numerous events and launches.”

Nonetheless, street artists are very respectful of public properties, Homoud clarified. In order to avoid labeling this expression of art as vandalism she said that artists are well aware of the restrictions, rules and regulations set by the municipality. “It is not considered vandalism, if an artist creates a public piece after acquiring all required licenses and documentation,” she added that municipality does sometimes refuse drawing on schools, mosques and private residences. —KUNA