

**Kuwait Times: What did you study and where did you graduate from?**

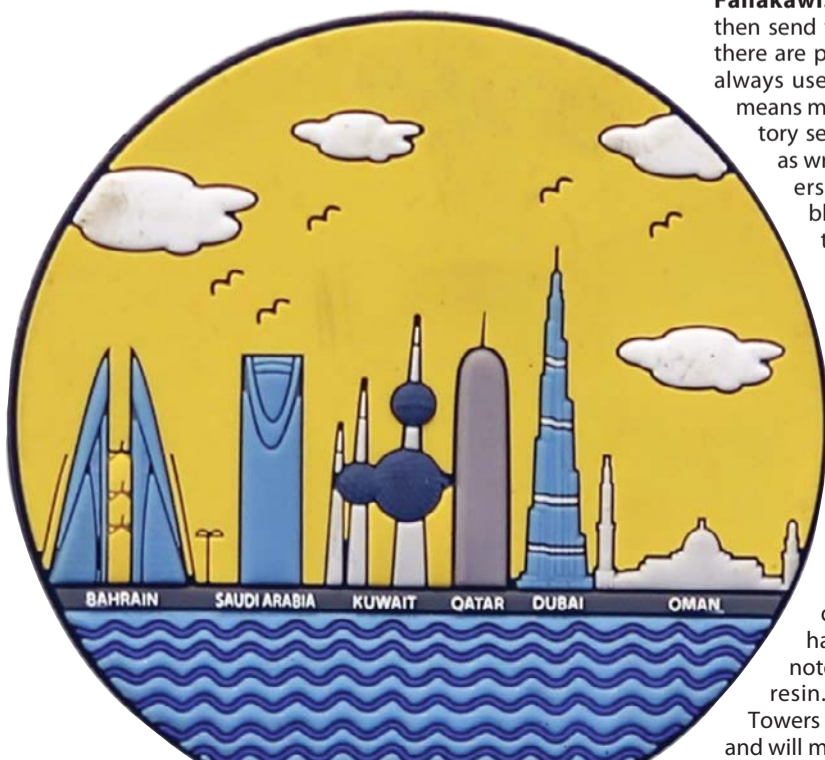
**Tariq Al-Failakawi:** I have a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the Arab Open University that I obtained earlier this year. Before that, I studied Basic Education at Kuwait University, which I didn't complete, as I didn't like it. My studies helped me a lot in this work, as I started this project of making souvenirs while I was still studying. I applied what I learned from administration, marketing and others.

**KT: How do you design the items?**

**Failakawi:** I do all the designing myself. I imagine the designs of the magnet and draw it on paper; then my Filipino assistant, who is a professional graphic designer, makes it on the computer. Sometimes he suggests some additions to the design. I was keen that all my items should be high-quality products.

**KT: What was the first item that you designed?**

**Failakawi:** The magnet collection was the first. I designed five different models, all including symbols of Kuwait. One of them has the skyline of all GCC countries, which includes a popular landmark of each country, which my sister helped in designing. The letters magnet includes a Kuwaiti landmark in every letter. These took me four months to design, including sending it to China and getting the samples. They are all 3D magnets. I started selling them from January.

**KT: Where do you sell them?**

**Failakawi:** My problem was where to sell the magnets. I first put them up on Instagram, but I realized we needed sales outlets, as Instagram is mostly used by Kuwaitis, and tourists won't search on Instagram for a souvenir. I first displayed the magnets in a shop called Buqsha at Avenues Mall, as many GCC tourists visit it. I also displayed them at Dar Haa gift shop in the Avenues and in Sanabel Tower. When selling my items, these shops take a percentage of the revenue. Sales were moving perfectly, especially during February.

I'm glad many people liked them and I sold around 600 pieces of each design within a month and half at all the shops and Instagram. I'm planning now to sell my items in Trolley supermarkets that are located at fuel stations and some universities and malls - a total of 15 branches. I'm also planning to sell my souvenirs in hotels.

**KT: Where do you make your items?**

**Failakawi:** I design all the products myself and then send them to China for production. In China, there are producers of varying quality levels, and I always use high-quality manufacturers, even if it means more expense. Some samples that the factory sent me were done in a wrong way, such as wrong colors or size. For instance, the towers on the magnet were green instead of blue, and the letters magnet was smaller than what I wanted.

I'm planning to design a new item every six months approximately, so I can order twice a year. I aim to have something new all the time. Even tourists who repeatedly visit Kuwait can always find new designs.

**KT: What came next?**

**Failakawi:** I designed a notebook 'Ya Biladi' in one color and size. It included a quote by late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. It took me around four months to finish. The quantity is almost sold out, and now I have prepared a new design for another notebook. Then I made a 3D building from resin. I didn't like the first model of Kuwait Towers as it had many mistakes, so I scrapped it, and will make it again in a different factory.

Then I designed my favorite item and one of the most successful items - the moneybox, in the design of Kuwaiti water towers. It was my bestseller in the latest fair that I participated in. I also designed mugs and changed some details as they were almost plain, and in the next edition, I added more details to have more pictures. For apparel, I started with the kids' t-shirts in two designs. For adults, I designed around 10 different images on two colors - white and black. The t-shirts are made from organic cotton in Portugal by a Kuwaiti company. I give them my design and they print it for me. It's of high quality and will not get damaged with washing. Every two months, I think of new items to design.

**Items for 2018**

I'm now working on packages that include different items such as magnets, a moneybox and a t-shirt to be given as gifts to visitors, especially in hotels or delegations of ministries. The box will be made of steel to protect the items. I'm also working on designing a new moneybox in the shape of an oil barrel, which will also be made of steel. I'm preparing a painting on canvas including Kuwaiti symbols. I made one handmade sample which is not for sale, and I will be selling them in the future after printing them. I'm also thinking of designing snow globes and pens.

**KT: What are your plans for this year, in addition to having sales outlets?**

**Failakawi:** I'm planning to add models of traditional Kuwaiti dhows that will be handmade in Kuwait. I already met some of the artisans and I saw that their work is perfect. As these dhows will be handmade, their numbers will be limited. I hope I can open a shop to sell my goods in. I tried at Mubarakiya, but the rent was ridiculously high, and I was disappointed. So I'm thinking to get a booth there, as I see Mubarakiya is the most suitable place for my items. Also, I'm planning to open a shop or stall in the Avenues by next February, as it's visited by many tourists.

