



When Images Speak

Highlights from the
Dubai Collection

مقتنيات دبي
DUBAI COLLECTION



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Cover image: Shafic Abboud
La Robe Palmier, 1971
Oil on canvas
65 x 36 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

When Images Speak, What Do They Say?

By Dr. Nada Shabout

“What do pictures want?” is a question on which W.J.T. Mitchell reflected in his 2005 book of the same title.¹ Fundamentally, the question asserts the notion that pictures have agencies that extend beyond their makers’ and receivers’ intentions. Mitchell states that, “The question to ask of pictures from the standpoint of a poetics is not just what they mean or do but what they want – what claim they make upon us, and how we are to respond. Obviously, this question also requires us to ask what it is that we want from pictures.”² The claim thus is for a mutual relationship between pictures and people, both with their agencies and desires. In many ways, images tell us about the world we inhabit.

Mitchell’s inquiry into the “pictorial turn,” designated a primacy to pictures that at times rivals the textual as they both inhabit our understanding of visual culture, particularly in the contemporary world of fast and fleeting images. Yet the question of “what do pictures want?” remains relative for our understanding of images through history. Mitchell tells us that pictures should be, “understood as complex assemblages of virtual, material, and symbolic elements.”³ Images are a particular form of pictures, as Mitchell explains. Questions we ask images vary but always include, who made you? where, when and why were you made? And what are you trying to tell me? They are essentially questions that would help us understand a work of art, its meaning, significance and place in history. Mostly, of course, images keep us pondering without simple or direct answers. They tell us that they are complex and require in depth engagement and interaction. They in fact want us to learn more than what we think they are capable of telling us.

As an exhibition, When Images Speak invokes the question of what do images want, while giving us clues for possible answers, as it opens paths to us into the rich and diverse visual production in the Arab world during the twentieth century, and across to the current times. The selection of works included in this exhibition is neither exhaustive nor complete. Clearly there are many other principal protagonists of both the modern and contemporary periods who are missing. However, through these works, we can enter various

key conversations and debates that were pertinent in advancing the visual arts as well as contributed to constructing the modern cultures in the region.

With works largely from the collection of HH Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the founding group of artworks that launched the Dubai Collection initiative in the spring of 2021, together with loans generously offered by other patrons of the initiative, the exhibition equally contemplates a compendium of dialogues possible through the nature of this innovative initiative that brings several threads and conversations together.⁴ While private collections are always expressive of their collectors’ visions, these collections being no exception, through their selective and curated merger, they equally form discourses that are theoretical as much as they are pictorial, and that allow for interpretations and provocations that would help us understand the modalities and power of culture at a number of given moments of history.

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W.J.T. Mitchell

The works of art in When Images Speak collectively introduce many of the dominant beliefs, critical inquiries and social dynamics of their times, and particularly reflect on the nationally charged questions around the mid-twentieth century in the Arab World.⁵ Along with major political shifts – with particular attention to the creation of the Arab nations following struggles for independence – artists of the Arab world were aware of the need for developing a distinct visual language capable of expressing their new self. They were also aware of their social responsibilities as artists and their role in educating their audiences through their art and actions. In forming national identities and iconography, those artists played a vital role that further aided in the construction of the national consciousness. These works, thus offer us examples of how they explored and navigated the complex and rich history of post-colonial and post-national connectivity, intersections, and collaborations between artists of the different Arab countries.

Equally, they show us how the negotiations of modernism by Arab artists unfolded during the past century and its evolution into the contemporary trends of today. The accommodating grouping of the works into three intersecting and overlapping themes is directed by the conversations activated by and between the works. The groupings equally reflect the common issues of concern across the Arab world as investigated and contemplated by some of the most influential and progressive artists who shaped the modern movements. The twentieth century witnessed the formation of many art movements and collectives throughout the region. Artists were debating the appropriateness of some styles, the necessity of invoking certain subjects, while constructing locally significant aesthetics adept to represent their past and present within a wider international context.⁶ Most of the works exhibited here defy a simple stylistic classification and instead flow between the allocated different spaces. The artists themselves span the region, with many living in diaspora, yet they intersect through their realities, imaginations and constructions.

Of specific significance is to highlight here the role of the Emirates Fine Arts Society (EFAS), formed in Sharjah in 1980, and specifically through their magazine Tashkeel launched in September 1984, in opening new spaces for dialogue after many closed in the other cities of the Arab world due to wars and disruptions during the 1980s

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and 1990s. EFAS and Tashkeel essentially allowed for a continuation of these conversations, as well as the ability to reflect on the successes and failures of their previous activities, while moving forward with new concerns and in new directions. A good number of the artists in this show (Fateh al-Moudarres, Abdul Qader Al Rais and Rebab Nemr, to name a few) were engaged with Tashkeel and with the Emirati art scene through the magazine: as contributors or featured artists and through invitations to exhibit in EFAS’s regular exhibitions. The activities of the Society aimed to establish and grow roots locally, regionally and internationally.

Most importantly, EFAS charted a new oath for the development of art in the United Arab Emirates. While in the last decades of the 20th century the UAE became a host for many of the Arab modernists through various projects, at the turn of the 21st century it played a more pivotal role in the evolution of artistic practices by artists of the Arab world. The multitude of programs and initiatives, including Art Dubai – an art fair that operated more as an institution – supported contemporary art within a larger global context, not only in terms of production and exhibition but as a hub

1. W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

2. *Ibid.*, xv.

3. *Ibid.*, xiii.

4. See <https://www.artdubai.ae/dubai-collection/>; and “Dubai is building an art collection -- without buying any art,” CNN Style, <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/dubai-art-collection-spc-intl/index.html>, published 11th August 2021.

5. See Anneka Lenssen, Sarah Rogers and Nada Shabout, *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents*, The Museum of Modern Art, 2018.

for commercial and intellectual exchange that was largely missing in the region.

When Images Speak offers to the public a selection of artworks that in many ways exemplify this process of evolution, through the perspective of the city that hosts them today.

Abstract Variations

Works in the Abstract Variations grouping speak to the place and complex relationships Arab artists had with notions of abstraction in the development of modern art in the Arab world. Large and open, the grouping brings together a wide range of conversations. Many works in the other two groupings would easily fit here as well. Abstraction in the Arab world signalled a focus on form rather than subject, without necessarily fully abandoning narrative, as a specific Arab trend for most of the twentieth century that continues today.

Abstraction occupied many artists during the mid-twentieth century who debated this transformation

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in meetings and in press. Some saw the transition into abstraction as a sign of progress and maturity, where artists would engage with a heritage that is very familiar and comfortable with abstraction – be it ancient, like Mesopotamian, or pharaonic or Islamic in its various dynasties and history – and with modern international styles alike. They saw it as a form of resistance. Others worried about its usefulness and legibility for an audience who is not familiar with modern art. They questioned abstraction's ability to connect with the public and argued it prohibited art from playing a more direct role in the national education. The debate, heated at times, equally reflected another preoccupation with the role of artists in educating the “taste of nations » and artists' responsibilities to their societies.⁷

The engagement with the Arabic letter is a specific form of abstraction that was popular throughout the region. The trend, which includes various experiments that centered or encompassed the forms of the Arabic alphabet became widely known as Huroufiyah (Hurufiyya) from the 1980s onwards. As an aesthetic category, Hourufiyah is a contested term that is disliked by some scholars, who prefer to think of the works in connection to Islamic calligraphy, and hence would refer to artworks as “calligraphic abstractions.” Some prefer to call it “textual abstraction,” which with then include works beyond the realm of Arabic speaking artists, to include work by Iranian and Pakistani artists for example.⁸

However, hourufiya here would specifically speak to a conscious deconstruction the modern Arab artists performed to free the letters from the hegemony of the text or its sacred history in connection to the Quran. In some works, artists do highlight it as part of a new modern language of daily life, such as in the fragmented but recognizable letters of Ali Omar Hermes and Hassan Massoudy. In others works, like that of Omar El Nagdi, it is purely a malleable abstract form in a composition. Many artists experimented with the Arabic letter in their work, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s in reaction to sentiments of pan Arabism and organized meetings that led to forming the Union of Arab Plastic Artists. It was a useful identity marker that allowed for identity to be part of their search into abstraction. For most artists, it then ran its course and usefulness and they generally abandoned it.

Societies in Transition

Societies in Transition exhibits a number of conversations on style and subject connecting works by artists from different Arab countries at varying times. A dominant need for artists early in the twentieth century, was to grasp how to negotiate the notion of ‘nation’ as it was being formed into coherent geopolitical entities. While navigating diverse styles and techniques, topics that concerned those artists centered on societal changes and shifts that were taking place in their newly formed nations. In exploring who they were becoming as citizens of nations, they investigated their societies, histories, family structures, mythologies, and cultures. Consequently, they opened dialogues between nations and individuals. Nevertheless, the scope of local struggles for independence soon revealed their strong interdependency with regional developments, and in the contemporary works, with global issues of concern.

Many of these works push the line between myth and reality, and as such consciously contribute to new historical constructions. Aside from the significance of the specific subjects of the work, we can discern an emphasis on the dynamic interactions and relationships portrayed, which necessarily contradict the timeless, ageless, static portrayal of Orientalist art. These works, thus provide evidence of resistance to colonial representation, while equally being critical of internal policies adopted by the new nations. They articulate the artists' understanding and negotiations of the self through societal relationships and through shared, pervasive elements of narrative.

Examples included here are works that probed traditional lives in popular and old neighborhoods of various Arab countries, but also stories of rural migration that added tension to major cities in the process of modernization. The work navigates the politics of the time: poverty, insecurity and displacement, which necessarily contradicts the image of optimism and prosperity extended by the rulers of new nations. Women's position and role in the new nations is also questioned in several works. The painting by Naziha Salim, for example, displays a group of Iraqi women wearing the traditional Iraqi Abayya, situating them as such within a specific class and tradition. They gather around tea, a popular Iraqi tradition, but their poses and expressions speak to the uncertainties of the change they are experiencing.

Cities of the Arab world express continuity as well as change. For some artists, the urban structure allowed for a method of constructing an ideal imaginary of the nation. Painting cities, thus became a method of constructing, and documenting.

Families, and motherhood specifically, were popular subjects during the mid-twentieth century as well. In Gazbia Sirry's painting, the figure of the mother is portrayed as the backbone of this family that does not include a dominant male figure. The title, The Six Immigrants, however, references a missing figure – we assume the father – who is absent in this structure.

Exploring historical roots, another important theme, provided a way for artists to ground the newness of their modern nations into a long and solid past. Investigating meaning in their histories validated their recent understanding of national coherence, but also supported their search of national and local iconographies, as in early works like that of Hassan Soliman, which explores pharaonic iconography and meaning.

While resolving various formal stylistic concerns, works in this group explore interpretive memories of cultural practices and their new meanings in society. They equally negotiate psychological insights and reflect on anxieties and struggles of the time.

6. Shabout, Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics, University of Florida Press, 2007; Shabout, “The Challenge of Arab Art,” In Editors, Chris Dercon and Avinoam Shalem, Future of Tradition - Tradition of Future, Prestel Publishers, Munich, 2010; and Shabout, “Rethinking Contemporary Arab Art,” in Arab Express: The Latest Art from the Arab World, Mori Art Museum, Japan, 2012.

7. See “Exploring Abstraction,” In Modern Art in the Arab World: 242.

8. See Suheyda Takesh and Lynn Gumpert, ed., Taking Shape: Abstraction from The Arab World, Grey Gallery, NYU, 2020.

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Evoking the Environment

The group *Evoking the Environment* expresses Arab artists' preoccupation with their surroundings. The environment – both natural and constructed – constituted another important concern during the twentieth century. The practice allowed artists to introduce the public to different modern styles, as the array presented in this group attest. For example, I would argue that landscape painting was a good exercise that allowed Arab artists before the mid-twentieth century to experiment freely with various techniques. Most of the works on display here share in their abstract approach to the natural or urban scape in that they are mostly devoid of inhabitants. Many negotiate different meanings that go beyond the image represented: they navigate relationship to the land or rural life and the changing urban settings of city life through shared, pervasive elements of narrative.

In general, in the Arab world, there has been more interest in urban-scapes than landscapes. Cities of the Arab world express continuity as well as change. For some artists, the urban structure allowed for a method of constructing an ideal imaginary of the nation. Painting cities, thus became a method of constructing, and documenting. Equally, however, it allowed artists to critique the change they experienced through registering the ongoing destruction of small towns and villages or their assimilation into larger urban areas, as the country

developed its modern identity. Capital cities, as such, became the focus of the artists' imagination for the way they represented new cosmopolitan centers, with all of their challenges.

Painting nature as the main subject, at the same time, remained a peculiar period experimentation in Arab art. Whilst practiced by some artists, it never gained enough popularity or developed into a genre of interest. In countries like Lebanon and Palestine, a specific interest in landscape painting grew and was sustained, expressing explicit associations that differed distinctly from other countries of the Arab world. For example, in Saliba Douaihy's series of painting, one of which is included here, he negotiated his intimate relationship with his home-village, which equally facilitated his transition into complete abstraction. Nouri Al Rawi also produced a series of paintings portraying his home town, Rawa in Iraq. However, his focus mostly lamented the modernization of the city that was erasing its identity and celebrated the unique characteristics that were disappearing under such transformation. On the other hand, Iraqi artist Faiq Hassan's early work of a picturesque view is hallmark of pre mid-twentieth century painting in Iraq that sits in stark stylistic opposition to Amer Al Obaidi's stylized representation of a constructed scape of the later period, where the figure of the horse carries political and historical significance.

For Layla Al-Attar, landscape provided a psychological space of introspective examination of the role of gender in society. Finally, for Shakir Hassan Al Said, excavating the effect of the passage of time on the walls of his city, provided him with an exercise into abstraction and the different aesthetic theories he was developing at the time.

When Images Speak is the first in a series of exhibitions by the Dubai Collection that will continue to contextualize artists from the Arab World and its neighboring countries. Each iteration will include many of the vital but missing voices from the conversations invoked here that will necessarily widen their scope and depth. More than their themes and messages, these objects are beautiful works of art that signify artists' visions and imaginations. They are also documents of their times that narrate a history of interconnectedness, shared hopes and struggles. We hope that the works in this exhibition intrigue you the viewer to see more. They are your entry into a wealth of ideas and multitude of voices.

The Depth of the Surface: Modern and Contemporary Art of the Arab World

By Sarah Rogers

We enter the composition by boat, on a calm, flowing river that meanders diagonally off into the left-hand corner of the canvas. On either side of the river, tall trees – their historical presence suggested by the wide girth of their trunks – hug the waterway; their delicate dance with the sunlight bathing the river in vibrant patches of green, blue, orange, and reds. Nestled behind the trees, a row of brownish buildings with dark cavernous windows guides the viewer's eye along the river and into the vanishing point in the distance. Together, these elements – the winding waterway, trees that stretch up to meet the frame of the canvas, and architectural structures weathered by time – create a composition of immense depth that moves the viewer's eye through the canvas: a visual journey that mirrors the suggested physical water journey that is the subject of this landscape.

Iraqi artist Faiq Hassan's vibrant and dynamic landscape dates to the mid-twentieth century, representative of the painter's deep engagement with his country's visual culture. Prominent for his role in several Iraqi modern artist collectives, including the well-known Pioneers, the first art collective founded in Baghdad in the first decades of the 20th century, Hassan dedicated his practice, alongside other artists working in Baghdad during the second half of the 20th century, towards a modern art grounded at once in Iraq and its rich heritage and within the broader discourse on what we now term, global modernism. These artists and collectives, in dialogue with artists throughout the Arab world and international community, participated in what has been termed an expansive, "transregional imaginary," during this cultural explosive period of the modern.¹ As both archival documents and the painted surface suggests, artists of the Arab world during the second half of the 20th century, training and working at home and abroad, read and engaged with artistic debates and art criticism across a multitude of languages, visited exhibitions of art that crossed histories and geographies, and voraciously debated in the press the visual language and artistic practices that formed modern art in way that was meaningful both artists and audiences.

In many ways, seemingly innocuous and aesthetically pleasing landscapes such as this painting by Faiq Hassan, included in the exhibition *When Images Speak*, allow us to traverse not only the Tigris River but also the depths of modernism across the Arab world. Hassan's brushwork, which suggests the fractured play of light that dissolves the material presence of tree trunks and architectural structures, indicates the artist's engagement with late nineteenth and early twentieth century theories on the effects of light and color that animated conversations among artistic circles. Such debates resonated with the radical politics of anarchism in post-revolutionary France, far removed from the contemporary perspective of European Impressionism and Post-Impressionism as purely rooted in the realm of aesthetics, divorced from politics.² This beckons us to also ground Hassan's painting in aesthetic interventions into politics of the painting's own time, one in which the particularities of landscape spoke to the project of the nation state, as well as to an art historical genealogy that witnessed the first generation of modern artists in the Arab world deploying the genre of landscape as many of those received their artistic training in the drawing program of the military academy of the Ottoman Empire.³ Beneath the surface of Hassan's painted canvas is a trove of artistic histories.

Nejib Belkhdja's contemporary landscape, dating to 2007, the year of the artist's passing, offers a visual comparison to Hassan's work. In distinctly different visual language, Belkhdja's landscape sits on the two-dimensional surface of the canvas. Saturated colors of black, white, and sky-blue segment the composition into rhythmical horizontals that dynamically traverse the canvas. Without shading and a focal point, the composition reads at first of movement across the surface rather than as three-dimensional depth. Yet as identifiable forms emerge—the minarets and domes of mosque architecture—the painted surface asks viewers to contemplate what might speak beneath the painted surface. Depth emerges not from compositional

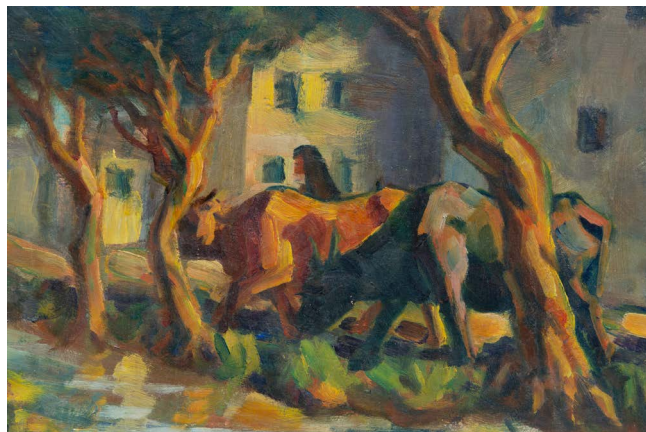
1. See Anneka Lenssen, Sarah Rogers, and Nada Shabout, "Introduction," in *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2018): 20. As noted in our introduction, our discussion of the modern as both a transregional and global imaginary builds off the scholarship of anthropologist Kirsten Scheid. See her, "The Agency of Art and the Study of Arab Modernity," *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* (MIT-IJMES), no. 7 (Spring 2007): 6–23.

2. See Patricia Leighton, "Fénéon's Anarchist Avant-Gardism," in Félix Fénéon: *The Anarchist and The Avant-Garde*, eds. Starr Figura et als. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2020): 93–105.

strategies but rather the illusion of architectural form. A modern pioneer of Tunisian art, Belkhodja's work has long engaged with the false divide between abstraction and calligraphic figuration. This later piece, following Belkhodja's work with architect Slah Smaoui on the artistic village of Ken in Tunisia, speaks to the modernist play of abstraction and its engagement with the multiplicity of identity so carefully outlined in Nada Shabout's introduction for the exhibition.

Modernist architectural form is also at play in the calligraphic works of Ali Omar Ermes from Libya. Mobilizing Arabic calligraphy against the background of a canvas that has been richly textured through the build-up of the painted surface, Ermes transforms linguistic signifiers of language into architectural structures that fill the canvas with subtle suggestions of presence and void. In the 1997 piece included in this exhibition, Ermes' choice of royal blue lettering against a yellowish-green background creates a dynamic movement in which the calligraphy both simultaneously pushes into the depth of the canvas and floats atop the ethereal bedding of abstracted color.

A tacit interest in creating an illusion of depth through the actual material presence of paint on the surface of the canvas is seen in Lebanese artist Chafic Abboud's 1973 work. A later work, but one representative of Abboud's larger body of work, the painting included mobilizes thickly applied paint to draw immediately focus to the materiality of his medium. A delicate overlay of paint, without any reference to



geometrical shape or compositional focal point, moves the eye continually across the composition. Interested in painting as a young child, Abboud spent weekends with his family in Bikfaya, where he would paint alongside Beirut-based French artists Georges Cyr and César Gemayal. Although Abboud studied engineering at the encouragement of his family, he eventually left for Paris in 1947 to dedicate his studies to art. In Paris, Abboud's compositions exhibited a loosening of his brushstroke and a sustained interest in the materiality of paint on canvas; indeed, he mixed his own pigments.

In dialogue with Abboud's practice is that of fellow Lebanese artist, Saliba Douaihy, who born in 1915 also moved abroad to New York City, the art capital of the post-world war II period. Similar to many abstract painters, including Abboud, Douaihy launched his career as a figurative and landscape painter. Unlike other abstract painters, however, Douaihy continued his mixed media practice as one that was both abstract and figurative, as seen in his stained glass works in churches throughout Mount Lebanon, Massachusetts, and New York. Whereas Abboud works up a painterly quality on the canvas, Douaihy's saturated colors are carefully delineated suggesting the hard-edge geometric abstraction that occupied a number of painters throughout the second half of the 20th century. Depth is revealed as the distinctive lines between colors zip throughout the canvas.

There are figurative works as well in the exhibition that share an interest in the play of surface and depth, suggesting both an aesthetic investment but also serving to beckon towards an acknowledgement of the dynamic and varied histories of modernism in which these artists participate. In two paintings by self-taught Algerian artist Baya Mahieddine (1931-1998), colorful birds, butterflies, and stylized floral patterns explode across the surface of the paper. These vibrant vegetal patterns and fantastical flying figurations often encircle or frame a

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Lamya Gargash

central female figure or figural grouping. Orphaned as a child, Baya—as she is popularly known in the art world—became recognized in Paris avant-garde artistic circles after prominent French dealer Aimé Maeght saw her work during a 1945 trip to Algeria, during which time Baya had been adopted by a French intellectual colonial settler. Works such as these are often considered by critics at the time and now as fusing motifs from Arab and Kable heritage with the ideals of Surrealism and French modernist experimentations. Yet her visual imagery also invites a complex reading of the ways in which colonial politics undercut the global modern art world.

The political complexities of contemporary life infuse the photographic landscapes of Emirati artist Lamya Gargash. Born in 1982 and a graduate of the American University of Sharjah, Gargash photographs abandoned or semi-inhabited spaces and architectural sites as the material traces and visual metaphors for the contingencies and dynamic movement of modern life. In *Drapes* from 2014, we witness both the interior and exterior of the corner of a room comprised of windows. The drapes, collapsed on the floor, useless towards their original intention, now allow the room to be flooded with light from the outdoors, intermingling the public and private spaces. The intimacy of the domestic space, once cared for, is deserted. Gargash's focus on drapery and light recalls the use of chiaroscuro and drapery to create a heightened sense of drama in Baroque paintings and sculptures. Here however, the disarray of the abandoned interior offers a site of quiet contemplation

rather than heightened drama, the aftermath rather than the narrative climax.

Saudi artist Maha Malluh is another artist engaged with light and surface, and in conversation with artistic practices of the historic past to reflect on the present. In *Bar Coding II*, Malluh revisits the early photographic practice of the photogram, one of the earliest pre-photographic concepts whereby a surface — often a paper — is chemically treated so as to render it sensitive to light. When objects are placed on paper and it is exposed to sunlight, the paper where the sunlight is blocked by the objects will not change color, leaving a visual trace on the surface. Modern artists such as the Dada artist Man Ray revisited this process, termed Rayograms after the artist's last name, to experiment with the role of chance in artistic practice, a removal of the artist's hand in the very process of bringing an artwork into being. In *Bar Coding II*, Malluh brings together a photographic process that dates as early as the 17th century with contemporary objects and the concept of bar coding as a contemporary form of surveillance —previously relegated to photography as deployed by science and the state in the 19th century. A collusion of the public and private spheres is suggested in the objects revealed in Malluh's image: necklaces and keepsakes share the same surface as a series of figures posed with their arms above their heads — recalling the stance required to pass through airport security or when confronted by the police (“hands above the head”). Moreover, the presence of Arabic writing and palm trees in the necklace chains reference to the artist's own geographical rooting. Indeed, the early histories of photography in Europe — beginning with Daguerre's announcement to the French public in 1839 — immediately tied to photography to the region as early partitioners championed the strong sunlight in aiding with exposure time.⁴ And, as scholars have documented, whereas early photographers in the region, then under the Ottoman Empire, deployed the camera for commercial and imperial interests, here Malluh intertwines those histories so that the binaries of early photographic interventions in the region are broken down and visually share the same surface now.

To begin an essay with Faik Hassan's landscape from the first half of the twentieth century and to conclude with Malluh's contemporary photographic work may, on the surface, read as a strange and disjointed journey. Yet what I hope to suggest with a focus on the artistic conventions of surface and depth throughout a diversity of works included in this robust collection is that the possible conversations among these works articulate the rich and multi-faceted histories of modern and contemporary art in the region.

3. See Ulrike al-Khamis, “An Historical Overview, 1900-1990s,” in *Strokes of Genius: Contemporary Iraqi Art*, ed., Maysaloun Faraj (London: Saqi Books, 2001): 21; Shabout, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007): 20. Reeve S. Simon includes courses in calligraphy as well as drawing as courses in Ottoman military academies. See her, “The Education of an Iraqi Ottoman Army Officer,” in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, eds. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991): 157.

4. See Louis Jacques Daguerre, “Daguerreotype,” and Dominique Francois Arago, “Report” both in *Classic Essays on Photography*, edited by Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Press, 1980), pp. 11-25.

Adam Henein

Egypt, 1929 - 2020

Born in 1929 into a family of metalworkers, Egyptian sculptor Adam Henein modelled a clay figure of Ramses II at the age of eight. That marked the beginning of an artistic journey that catapulted Henein onto the international art scene.

Celebrated for his sculptural work in bronze, wood, clay, and granite, Henein transforms solid material into ethereal presences through the use of simple lines, capturing the essentials of modernist form. Distinguishing his body of work is the way in which the artist interweaves universal themes—motherhood, birds, boats and prayer among them—with references to Egyptian icons such as pyramids, obelisks, Pharaonic kings and hieroglyphs. Henein also draws on his heritage in abstract and representational paintings, a series of which are completed on papyrus, and share with his sculptures a poetic simplicity of visual form.

After receiving a degree in Sculpture from the School of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1953, Henein continued his training in Munich and Paris, where he lived for 25 years until 1996. Since returning to Egypt, Henein has contributed greatly to the country's cultural landscape, particularly in Aswan, where he founded the city's annual International Sculpture Symposium. Henein has received numerous awards for his work, which has been exhibited in Egypt, the Arab world, Europe, and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Umm Kulthum, Undated
Bronze
160 x 50 x 50 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

When Images Speak:

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DUBAI COLLECTION

When Images Speak presents artworks largely from the collection of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the founding group of artworks that launched the Dubai Collection initiative in the spring of 2021, together with loans generously offered by other patrons of the initiative.

While private collections are always expressive of their collectors' visions, this collection being no exception, further introduces some of the main and dominant nodes and thoughts in the Arab World, particularly around the mid-twentieth century. Overall, the works here navigate the negotiations of modernism by Arab artists during the past century and its evolution into contemporary trends.

The chosen works of art represent some of the most influential and progressive artists who shaped the modern movements in the region as well as reflect the critical inquiries and social dynamics of their time. The twentieth century was one of major shifts and changes that resulted in

founding the different countries of the Arab World, following periods of colonization and struggles for independence. In forming national identities and iconography, those artists played a vital role that further aided in the construction of the national consciousness.

The exhibition is divided into three broad and overlapping categories that conjure up a variety of conversations among the works and the artists. Most of the pieces exhibited defy a simple stylistic classification and instead flow between the allocated different spaces.

The artists themselves span the region, with many living in diaspora, yet they intersect through their realities, imaginations and constructions. More than their themes and messages, these objects are beautiful works of art that signify artists' visions and imaginations. They are also documents of their time that narrate a history of connectedness, shared hopes and struggles.

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Abstract Variations

Abstraction signals a focus on form rather than subject, without necessarily fully abandoning narrative, as a specific Arab trend for most of the twentieth century and continues today. Discussion among Arab artists during the mid and second half of the twentieth century debated the transformation. For some, it was a form of resistance that drew from a heritage that understood abstraction on several levels. Others questioned abstraction's ability to connect with the public and argued it prohibited art from playing a more direct role in the national education. The trend includes various experiments that centered or encompassed the Arabic letter that became widely known as Huroufiyah from the 1980s onwards. A broad category, abstraction can be seen in many works throughout the various themes in the exhibition.



Yousef Ahmed
Qatar, b.1955

Yousef Ahmad is one of the leading Qatari artists that started the Art movement in Qatar. He is an Art critic, an Art advisor as well as an Art educator. He was born in Al Jasra area of Doha in which he has recently been documenting from his memories and imagination. He graduated with a BA in Fine Arts & Education in 1976 from Helwan University in Egypt. Yousef has also earned his MFA in 1982 in Painting from Mills College in California, USA. Yousef is the leading figure to represent his country at international biennales and global Art events. In addition to drawing memories of his old neighborhood, Yousef Ahmed is also known for his abstract art in which he uses multi mediums to experiment with Arabic Calligraphy. Along with that, he had developed his own medium that consists of handmade Palm tree paper and special local pigments. His main goal is to create materials from the local environment of Doha to best represent the visual language and the ambiance of the country.

Yousef Ahmed became the first local Artist to run a solo exhibition dedicated to Arabic Calligraphy (huryfiyya art

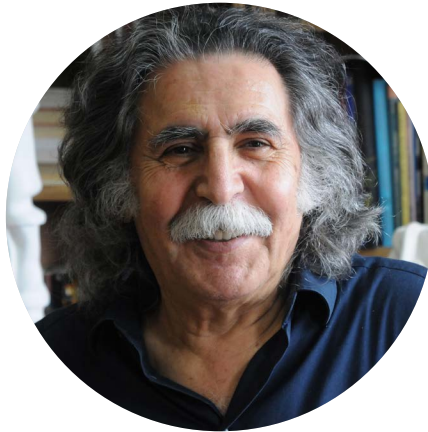
in Doha) in March, 1977. He has been also teaching Art appreciation at Qatar University for more than twenty years in which he taught Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali Al-Thani in history of Arts and Art appreciation. After that they worked together on collecting prominent art pieces that lead to the creation of MATHAF (Arab Museum of Modern Art) and the Orientalist Museum in Doha, Qatar. One of the most important books that Yousef published was *Al-Funoon al-Tashkeeliyyah al-Mu'ashirah fee Qatar* (Contemporary Fine Arts in Qatar) that documents Contemporary Fine Arts in Qatar. Yousef was also part of the Virginia Commonwealth University board members who was assigned to bring a branch campus here in Qatar. He is currently the only Arab who is part of the board advisory member board of Hand Papermaking Magazine (The only magazine dedicated to the art of papermaking)

Image and biography courtesy of Anima Gallery Doha Qatar.



Untitled, 2006
Mixed media on canvas
180 x 180 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Dia Al-Azzawi
Iraq, b.1939

Over more than half a century, Dia al-Azzawi's work has been shown in countless group and solo exhibitions worldwide, especially in Europe and across the Arab World (including three retrospectives: Paris, 2001; Abu Dhabi, 2009; Doha, 2016–17). As well as a large collection of limited-edition prints, his work has featured in myriad publications and can be found in numerous public and private collections. Best known as a colourist painter, Azzawi celebrates Arab culture in his work, while blurring the boundaries between artforms and embracing ever new technologies. His works can be distinguished by their impressive scale (especially monumental paintings, sculptures and architectural design) and the amalgamation of images and the written word (works on paper and artist's books).

Azzawi's artwork has been exhibited globally including a comprehensive retrospective held at Mathaf, Doha, in 2016–17. His work has been collected by public institutions worldwide, including the Arab Monetary Fund, Abu Dhabi;

The Barjeel Collection, Sharjah; Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; The British Museum, London; Calouste Gulbenkian Collection, Lisbon; Colas Foundation, Boulogne; Fondation ONA, Casablanca; Guggenheim, Abu Dhabi; Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman; Kinda Foundation, Riyadh; King Abdulaziz International Airport, Jeddah; Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, Kuwait; Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum (LACMA), Los Angeles; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad; Museum of Modern Art, Damascus; Museum of Modern Art, Tunis; Nabu Museum, Chekka (Lebanon); Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah; Tate Modern, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

Image and biography courtesy of Dia al-Azzawi.



The Falling Dot, 1972
Oil on canvas
120 x 120 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Rafa Al-Nasiri
Iraq, 1940 - 2013

Born in Iraq in 1940, Rafa Al Nasiri studied printing at The Institute of Fine Arts, Baghdad from 1956 to 1959. He furthered his Printmaking training in The Central Academy of Fine Arts in China from 1959 to 1963. He earned a Gulbenkian Foundation scholarship in 1967 to study print-making at the Gravura in Lisbon, Portugal.

His solo exhibitions have been held at venues such as The Sharjah Museum of Arts in 1997, The French Cultural Center in Amman in 1994, The National Museum of Fine Arts, Amman in 198, Green Art Gallery, Dubai in 2008, 2013- Bahrain Financial Harbor Gallery, Manama in 2013 and most notably, His Retrospective exhibition, Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman in 2013.

His international exhibitions include the 2nd Arab Biennale in Rabat in 1976, the 9th International Painting Exhibitions in Canne-Sur-Mer in 1977, the Arab Graphics Exhibition in London in 1978, the Salon de Comparaisons, Grand Palais, Paris in 1986 and the British Museum London in 2006 among others.

He has been honored with awards including the Honors Prize, International Summer Academy, Salzburg, Austria in 1974, the 1977 The Jury Prize, International Painting Exhibition, Canne-Sur-Mer, France and the 1986 First Prize, Baghdad International Festival of Art, Baghdad, Iraq.

Image and biography courtesy of Rafa Nasiri Studio, Amman, Jordan.



Untitled, 2005
Oil on wood
80 x 80 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Kamal Boullata

Palestine, 1942 - 2019

Kamal Boullata (Jerusalem 1942–Berlin 2019) is a painter and writer. Following Israel's 1967 Six-Day War and the annexation of Jerusalem, he was denied the right to return from Lebanon to his city of birth on the grounds that he was outside the country before the city's fall. In the last five decades he has lived in the USA (1968–92), Morocco (1993–96), France (1997–2012), and Germany (2013–2019).

Boullata is a graduate of the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome and the Corcoran School of Arts in Washington, DC where he co-founded the Arab American Cultural Foundation and Alif Gallery. While his early art works were figurative, he later found in abstraction an affinity with the geometric motifs and compositional principles of Islamic art and Eastern Christian iconography, both traditions familiar to him from his youth in Jerusalem.

His work is held in private and public collections including the British Museum, London; the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman; the Patronato de la Alhambra Islamic Museum, Granada; the Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah; the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art, Institut du monde arabe, Paris;

the Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman; the New York Public Library; the Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; The Arab Bank, Amman; the Bibliothèque Louis Notari, Monaco; the Ramzi and Saeda Dalloul Arab Art Foundation, Beirut; the Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal; and the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

A major and highly original innovator in the history of modernism in the Arab world, he is the recipient of a Fulbright Senior Scholar Fellowship in 1993 and 1994, he explored Islamic Art in Morocco and Spain. In 2001, he was awarded a Ford Foundation grant to conduct field research on post-Byzantine painting in Palestine.

Boullata was elected as a fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg/Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin in 2012. He is the author of four books on Palestinian art and the editor of several books on modern poetry and contemporary culture. A selection of his writings appears in *There Where You Are Not*, edited by Finbarr Barry Flood (Hirmer, 2019).



Illumination II, 2001
Acrylic on canvas
132 x 132 cm

From the Ali & Rafia Malas Private Collection

Ali Omar Ermes

Libya, 1945-2021

Ali Omar Ermes was an internationally renowned artist, writer, and speaker as well as a champion of many international causes. Above all, he was a thinker; a true ambassador of inter-faith and artistic dialogue.

Born in 1945, Zliten, Libya, Ali Omar Ermes travelled to England to further his education; he earned his diploma in design at the Plymouth College of Art and Design, Plymouth, 1970. Later attended the Central Saint Martins School of Art, London. On his return to Libya, he wrote extensively and headed the visual arts section of All Arts magazine, Tripoli.

In 1974, he returned to Britain after being appointed as a visual arts consultant to the festival director for the “World of Islam Festival” which was opened by HRH Queen Elizabeth II in 1976. During this time, he travelled extensively, meeting various artists, writers, calligraphers, museum officials and dignitaries throughout the Arab and Islamic world. In 1975, he returned to Libya, writing for further publications as well as continuing his travels and exhibiting his art work. In 1981, he settled in London where he lived ever since.

As an artist, Ali Omar Ermes was one of the most gifted contemporary artists of today and probably the most collected artist in the Arab and Islamic world. Ermes held over sixty exhibitions worldwide, with work displayed or housed in the collections of institutions such as the British Museum and Tate Britain, London; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow; Wereld Museum, Rotterdam; National Gallery of Jordan, Amman; State National Gallery, Malaysia; Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.; and LACMA, Los Angeles, among others in international public and private collections.

He was a painter who used the Arabic script, with all its rich multitude of literature and it's ever evolving visual expression, as the subject of his compositions. His distinctive technique placed the Islamic and Arabic identity in a contemporary light, by involving it in an accumulative but new form of expression. His work has been said to bring dynamism and vitality to the world of Islamic art and has been described as

“a bridge between the divide of cultures and languages”, as Dr James Allen of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, concluded. [Reaching Out, Saffron Books/Eastern Art Report, 1993]

As a writer and speaker, Ali Omar Ermes wrote and published numerous articles in English and Arabic newspapers and magazines on subjects such as identity, human rights, education, art and the media. He also spoke at international conferences and events including the European Parliament, Brussels, the Royal Commonwealth Society, Bibliotheca Alexandrina and SOAS University.

As a thinker, Ali Omar Ermes remained true to his Arab and Muslim/humanitarian roots, he derived his opinions on issues such as identity, art, culture and life from Islamic teachings and traditions. The issues Ali Omar discussed in his written works were also the driving force behind many of his paintings, as he believed that the role of artists and thinkers is to communicate topical cultural and social issues to audiences through various mediums of which art is but one.

Over the years, Ermes participated in various projects, including social and cultural activities and endeavours. He was the co-founder and chairman of Al Manaar - Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre in the Kensington and Chelsea Borough, London, formally inaugurated by HRH Prince Charles in May 2001. Al Manaar is an institution with a wide range of social, cultural and educational initiatives as well as religious facilities to the people of Kensington, London and it's surrounding areas.

He also served on the executive board of the London Civic Forum, an organisation that engages the capital's civil society in the regional governance of London. Ermes was the co-founder, and was the co-chairman, of the Forum of Faiths in the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Ali Omar Ermes sadly passed away on Saturday 10th July 2021. His legacy will live on through his inspiring ideas and works, the institutions he helped found, his dedication towards his communities and the pioneering art he created, that will influence generations to come.

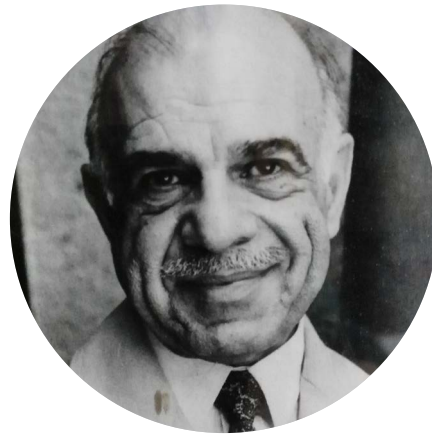


Meem, Tha, Alif -Turath (Heritage), 1997

Acrylic on paper, laid on canvas
243.1 x 159 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of Ali Omar Ermes' Family Estate.



Jamil Hamoudi

Iraq, 1924 - 2003

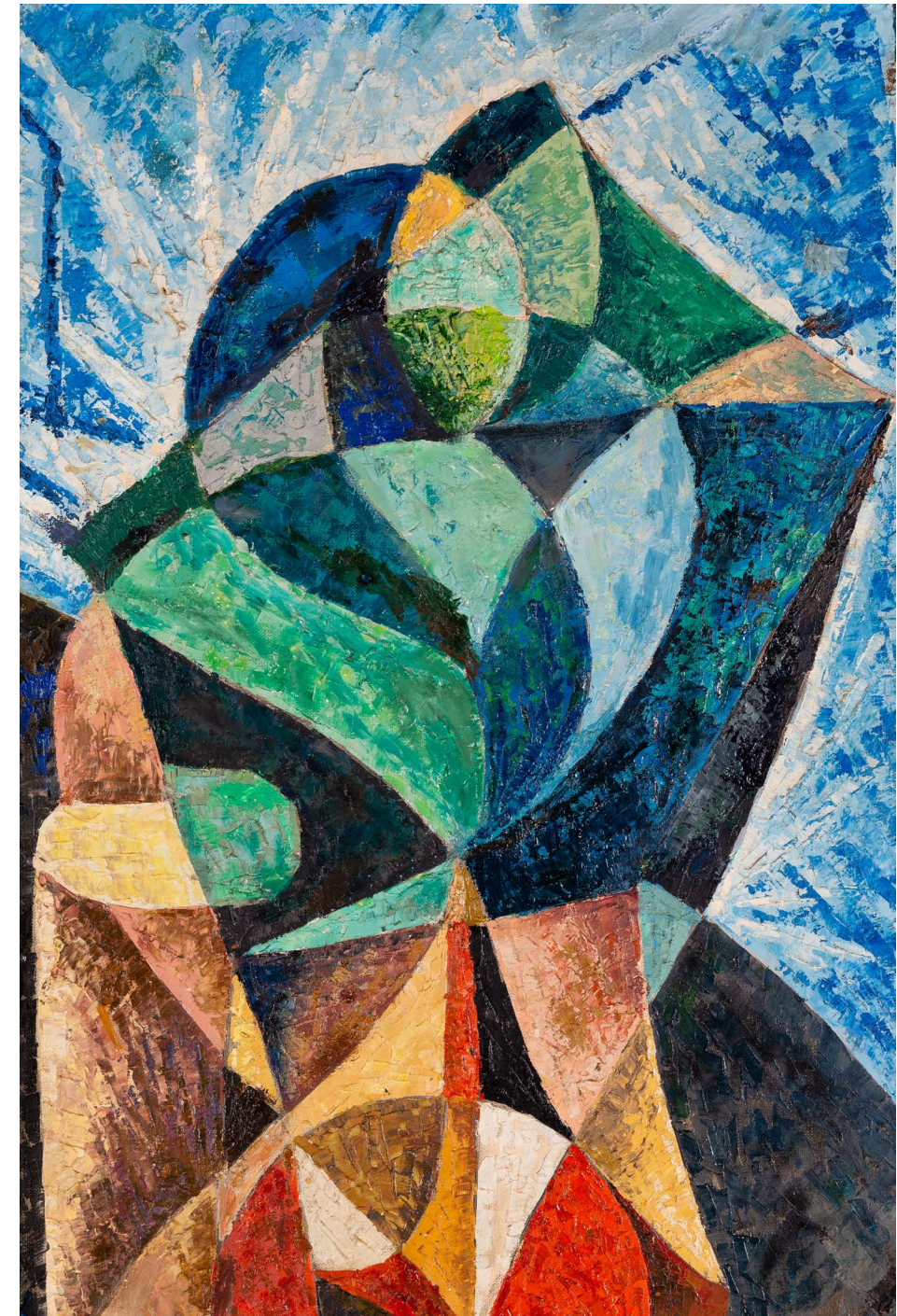
A leading figure in Iraq's modern art movement, Jamil Hamoudi is recognised for a semi-abstracted art form that creates colourful and dynamic geometric compositions. Through the techniques of repetition, line, and shading, the artist brings depth and movement to the two-dimensional surface and brings into sharp relief the angular forms of Arabic calligraphy and arabesque.

Hamoudi was a member of what is known critically as the huruffiyah movement, a critical term for the regional interest in calligraphy and the Arabic letter that was popular throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Hamoudi began his career in Baghdad as a self-taught sculptor working in a naturalistic style. In 1944, he began teaching drawing and art history at a school in Baghdad while also attending classes at the capital's Institute

of Fine Arts. The artist graduated in 1945 and two years later received a government scholarship to continue his training in Paris, where he studied at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Académie Julian, and École du Louvre. In addition, Hamoudi conducted research on Assyrian-Babylonian art and languages. His work is often considered to merge modern European aesthetics—particularly cubism and geometric abstraction—with his own cultural heritage to create a distinct formal language based on the spirituality of calligraphy.

Since his first solo exhibition in 1950, Hamoudi has exhibited internationally and his works are included in numerous museums and private collections worldwide. In his distinguished career, he was also a critic and published extensively on art.



Between Heaven and Earth, 1971
Oil on canvas
110 x 63 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

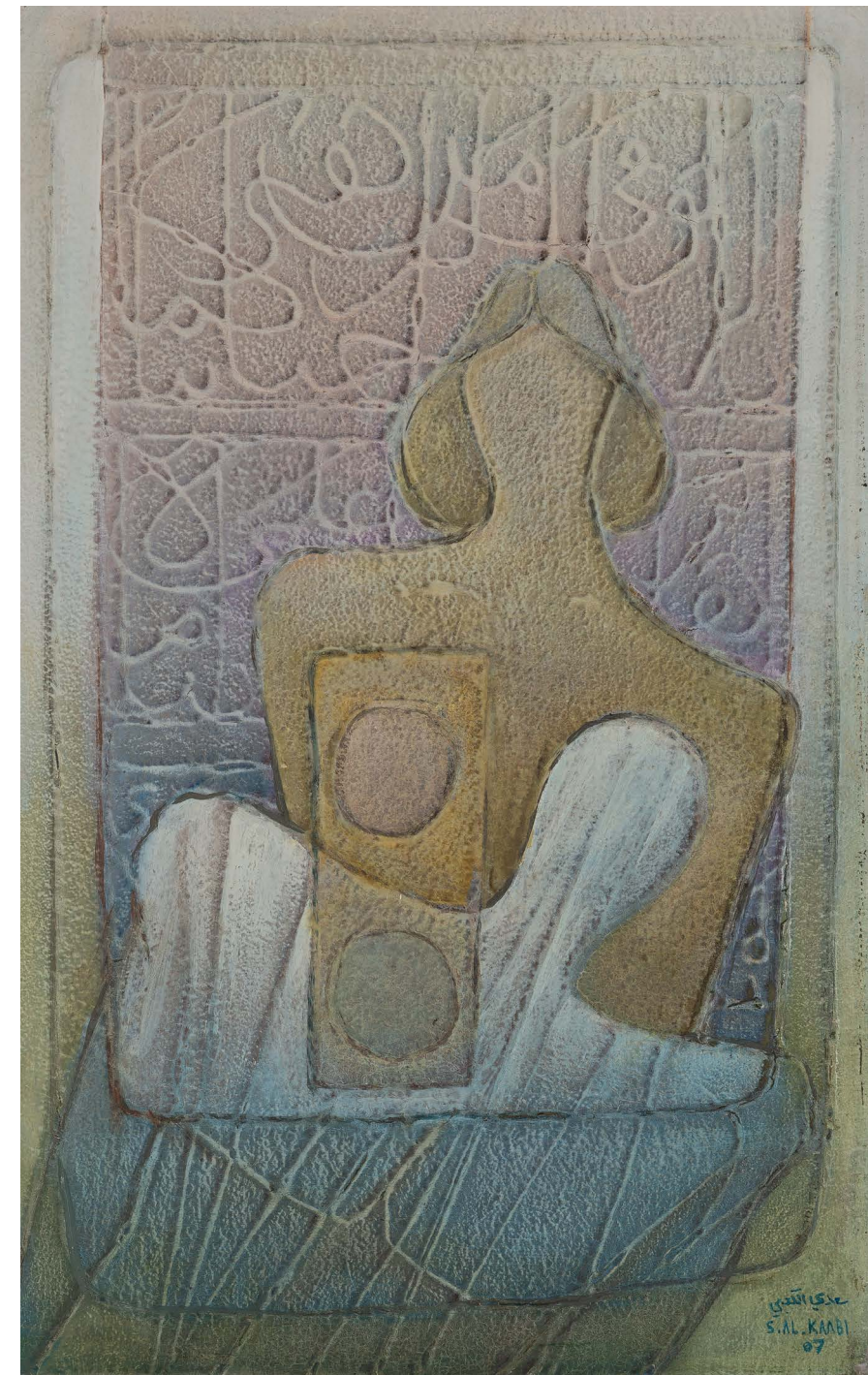
Text from the Barjeel Art Foundation website. Printed with the permission of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

Saadi Kaabi

Iraq, b.1937

Employing an expressive yet stylised approach, Saadi Al Kaabi's paintings draw from the rich and diverse reservoir of Iraqi art and heritage. His art in the 1960s experimented with Cubism and Expressionism, as the simplified planes and strong outlines present in the two pieces exhibited demonstrate. Marrying aesthetic influences from Cubism with those from Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Islamic art, Al Kaabi's work explores the nuances and contradictions of the human condition. Al Kaabi is a significant member of Iraq's second generation of modernist artists. A graduate of Baghdad's Institute of Fine Arts in 1960, the artist's signature style emerged in

the 1970s after two decades of involvement in the avant-garde modern art scene. Al Kaabi applies thick layers of paint in his works, using ginger earth tones to compose highly textured paintings. His practice forms part of a broader post-independence artistic approach in the Arab world concerned with fashioning a new national identity that involved looking to the past in search of cultural authenticity. Al Kaabi has participated in numerous international exhibitions, including the 1976 Venice Biennale. In the 1980s, he torched his personal archive of press clippings covering his career as a way of expunging the suggestion of his success to start anew.



Untitled, 2007
Etching printed on paper
80 x 50 cm

From the Ali & Rafia Malas Private Collection

Text from the Barjeel Art Foundation website. Printed with the permission of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

Marwan Kassab-Bachi

Syria, 1934-2016

Marwan Kassab Bachi, an internationally renowned artist, is regarded as one of the pillars of modern painting in the Middle East. Living in Berlin since 1957, Marwan's work embodies the influences of German Expressionism and Sufi mysticism from his native culture. His early works were figurative yet surreal representations of people. Since the early 70s, he increasingly focused on the face, until it became his main subject matter. Each painting is a product of several layers of faces repeatedly painted on top of each other in a flurry of color and brush strokes, in his attempt to discover the inner self, ultimately creating spiritual intensity and depth to his work.

Recent exhibition participations include: Making New Time, Sharjah Biennial 14, (2019); ARTE VIVA ARTE, Venice, Biennale (2017); Here and Elsewhere, New Museum, New York; Serralves Foundation, Porto; Barjeel Art Center, Sharjah (2014); Kunst in Berlin. 1945 bis heute, Berlinische Galerie,

Berlin; Beirut Exhibition Center, Beirut (2013); Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2009); Museum für islamische Kunst, Berlin (2008); Darat al Funun, Amman (2004); Institute du Monde Arabe, Paris (1993); Haus der Kunst, Munich (1991). His works can be found in international collections such as Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah; Guggenheim, Abu Dhabi; Tate Modern, London; British Museum, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Bibliothèque National de France, Paris; Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Darat al Funun, Amman; Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin; Kunsthalle Bremen; National Museum, Damascus; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg and many more international private collections.

Marwan passed away in Berlin, Germany in 2016. His soul lives on in his paintings.



Untitled, 1992
Pencil, aquarelle and oil on paper
107 x 86.5 cm

Charles Al Sidaoui, Private Collection, Dubai

Image and biography courtesy of Sfeir-Semler Gallery.



Shaikha Al Ketbi
UAE b.1995

Shaikha Fahad Al Ketbi is a visual artist whose multi-media practice spans across photography, drawing and installation art. Her work explores themes of self-awareness and blurs the line between fiction and reality. Her artistic practice involves instantaneous performative responses to isolated landscapes framed through her vivid, experiential dreams. Al Ketbi graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts, at the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises at Zayed University.

Al Ketbi's work has been included in exhibitions, including Neither Visible Nor Concealed in collaboration with

Rawdha Al Ketbi and Ayesha Hakhir curated by Rokni Ramin and Hesam apart of Beyond emerging artist program by Abu Dhabi Art (2019); From Within, Ministry of Culture KSA (2019); Al Rabi'a at Warehouse421 (2019); Perpetual Movement, London (2018), Ishara: Signs, symbols and shared languages (2019) commissioned by UAE Unlimited; and Tribe Magazine's Contemporary Photography from the Arab World in Washington, D.C (2017).

Image and biography courtesy of Shaikha Al Ketbi.



Awraq, 2018
Acrylic and charcoal on wood
244 x 61.5 cm

Snow Feinan Li Private Collection



Hassan Massoudy

Iraq, b.1944

Hassan Massoudy was born in 1944 in Najef, South of Iraq. He grew up amid the scalding heat of the desert, in a traditional Iraqi society characterised by strong religious beliefs, a high sense of solidarity and a keenness for festive gatherings. As a youngster, in this town where all images were prohibited, he fulfilled his passion for art by making drawings and calligraphies while investing all his energy to get paper and pigments. In 1961 he left for Baghdad and started working as an apprentice for various calligraphers. He visited exhibitions of modern art which fascinated him and from then on, started to dream of studying art. The unfolding political events and ensuing dictatorship prevented him to do so. He eventually left Iraq for France in 1969, freed from the oppressing regime but heartbroken. He got to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Paris where he first worked on figurative painting. But he did not stop calligraphy altogether; to pay for his studies, he was doing headlines in calligraphy for Arabic magazines. Over the years, calligraphy progressively got into his figurative painting and eventually took its place. In 1972, he created the show Arabesque with the actor Guy Jacquet joined a few years later by the musician Fawzy Al Aiedy. Arabesque was a public performance combining music and poetry together with calligraphies being performed and projected on a large screen. They did many performances across France and Europe over a period of thirteen years. Over the years, it brought more spontaneity in his gesture and a more instantaneous way for him to express himself. This experience marked a definite turn in Hassan's work.

The drawing of his calligraphy became swifter and his gesture richer. Traditionally Arabic calligraphy is done with black ink. To better express himself, he broke from the tradition and introduced other colours particularly on his work on large size paper. While creating new pieces, he put together on his own,

another show focusing on improvisations called Calligraphie d'ombre et de lumiere (calligraphy of light and shade). In that new show, calligraphies are created in front of the very eyes of the spectator; black letters contrasting with light. Phrases, words and letters are projected on the screen. With calm and control, each letter takes shape flowing freely in the bright light. Then the movement accelerates, the word charged with energy eventually finds its perfect balance. The aesthetic, geometry and rhythms of the calligraphy are unveiled. The compositions are born. The dynamics of the gesture gives birth to poetry.

In 1995, he is involved in the design of the stage set for the ballet Selim with the dancer Kader Belarbi from the Opera de Paris and the singer Houria Aichi on a choreography from Kaleménis. In 2005 he met the dancer and choreographer Carolyn Carlson, and the musician Kudsi Erguner. Together with three other dancers and three other musicians, they created the show Metaphore, a harmony of music, dance and calligraphy.

Creations from Hassan Massoudy are a subtle mix of present and past, oriental and occidental art, tradition and modernity. He perpetuates tradition while braking from it. Over the years he has purified and simplified the lines of his drawing. The words and phrases he draws come from poets and writers from all over the world or sometimes simply from popular wisdom. All his work is strongly inspired by a humanistic interest. The emotion that one may feel looking at his calligraphies comes from the movement of the lines, their lightness, their transparency, the balance between black, white, emptiness and fullness, the concrete and the abstract. From his training as a calligrapher in Iraq, Hassan Massoudy has kept the noble spirit of the craftsman who creates or invents his own tools and prepares his own inks.

Image and biography courtesy of Hassan Massoudy.



The Mountain, 2007

Ink on paper
101 x 79 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Hussein Madi
Lebanon, b.1938

Hussein Madi, painter, sculptor and engraver, born in 1938 in Chebaa in South Lebanon, is one of the Middle East's most famous artists. Between 1958 and 1962, he studied painting at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts in Beirut before joining Rome in 1963 to continue his studies at the Accademia di Belle Arti. Left for two months, he stays in Rome for 22 years! He learns everything from frescoes and mosaics to the work of bronze. It is precisely in Italy that he develops his approach to sculpture and proposes a method to create volume from folded, seamless forms.

His Toros, Birds, Woman with Cigarettes and other human silhouettes combine the radical geometrical plan with the elegance of the curve thanks to which Madi gives them a remarkable individuality. In his paintings, closely related to his sculptures - with the same vocabulary, the color in addition - Madi depicts the variations of a subject in its multiplication and reaches an exceptional depth and harmony. Elected by his peers, he stands as President of the Lebanese Artists Association between 1982 and 1992.

“Here’s the mystery of creation that inspired my art. There is a unity at the beginning that reproduces with differences; type, number, colour and dimension. All things that are born and die respond to these four categories. The repetition in my paintings is there on purpose and is a way to honour the creator.”

H. Madi in L'Orient 2019

Image and biography courtesy of Mark Hachem Gallery.



Untitled, 1989
Acrylic on canvas
204.3 x 153 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Nja Mahdaoui
Tunisia, b.1937

Nja Mahdaoui graduated from the Academia Santa Andrea in Rome and the École du Louvre in Paris in 1967. He pursued his academic training at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris with a scholarship from the Tunisian government. Nja has been Jury member and Honor guest of many international events and biennales and he is a member of the International jury committee of the UNESCO Prize for the Promotion of the Arts. He has received a number of distinctions and international awards.

Nja Mahdaoui is a visual artist, an explorer of signs. He has been portrayed as a “choreographer of letters”. His work, inspired by Arab calligraphy, is remarkably innovative as the aesthetic dimension of letters brings forth a sense of the poetic - highly rhythmic- arresting us with its rich abstract compositions. Thus, his creative approach is conveyed through the choice of material and medium. He has illustrated legendary or sacred myths, tales or manuscripts. For instance, he has illustrated stories from the collection of tales “One Thousand and One Nights” which have been the subject of an outstanding French edition, thus reminding us how the influence of Arab literature and culture on our world is immense.

Nja participated in numerous exhibitions worldwide including at Casa Arabe in Madrid (2010-2011), the Arab

World Institute (IMA) in Paris, the Hermitage Museum in St-Petersburg, the National Museum of Scotland and the Modern Art Museum in Baghdad, to mention only a few. In addition, he took part in performing art projects, introducing his work in performance art within the framework of theatre and dance such as an amazing body-writing performance in 1985 at La Maison des Cultures du Monde (the Home of World Cultures) in Paris and in 1987 at the Contemporary Art Museum Ludwig de Aachen in Germany. He has been working with many private and public institutions worldwide and has done monumental works for the Museum of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, the International Airports of Jeddah and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and the decoration of Gulf Air aircrafts in 2000. In addition, he is regularly represented at international art fairs such as in Basel, Paris, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Marrakech and Miami by Elmarsa gallery.

His works have been widely shown around the world in GCC, Asia, America, Africa and Europe and can be found in many private and public collections including at the British Museum and the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC, the Mathaf – Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, the Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA) in Paris, the National Gallery of Kuala Lumpur. He is considered as one of the major contemporary Arab artists. He lives and works in Tunisia.



Ghubar Rectangle 1, 2009
Indian ink and acrylic on parchment
80 x 13 cm

From the private collection of
Her Highness Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of the artist and Elmarsa Gallery, Tunis/Dubai.



Shaikha Al Mazrou
UAE, b.1988

Shaikha Al Mazrou (b. 1988, UAE) received her MFA in 2014 at the Chelsea College of Fine Art, University of the Arts, London where she was awarded the prestigious MFA Student Prize. Prior to that she studied at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah where she was recently a Sculpture Lecturer.

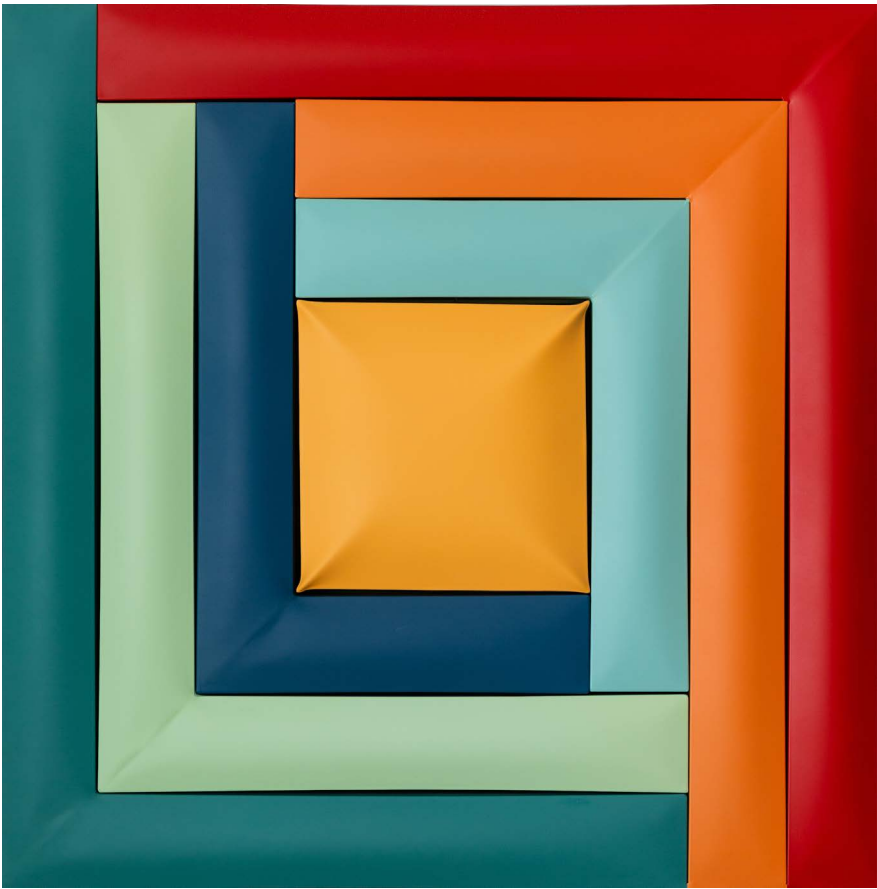
Recent solo exhibitions include Art Dubai, with Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2021), Rearranging the Riddle, Maraya Art Centre Sharjah, Sharjah (2020), Expansion/Extension, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2019), and Solo Projects, Abu Dhabi Art with Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2018).

She has participated in a number of group exhibitions including: Geometric Bodies: Regional and Diaspora Artists, The Arts Club, Dubai (2021), Blue, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2020), Paulo Cunha e Silva Art Prize Finalist Exhibition, Galeria Municipal do Porto, Porto (2020), Upsurge: Waves, Colour And Illusion, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2020), MATERIALIZE, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2019), Artissima, Dialogue section, with Lawrie Shabibi, Torino (2018), From Barcelona to Abu Dhabi: Works from the

MACBA Art Collection in Dialogue with the Emirates, organised by ADMAF, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi (2018); Beyond: Emerging Artists, Abu Dhabi Art (2017); Art of Nature, Abu Dhabi Festival, Umm Al Emarat Park, Abu Dhabi (2017); Homage Without An Homage, Art Dubai, Julius Baer Lounge, Dubai (2017); Faculty Show, Al Rewaq Gallery, College of Fine Art, University of Sharjah, Sharjah (2017); Abu Dhabi Art, with Lawrie Shabibi, Abu Dhabi (2016).

Al Mazrou is a winner of the Paulo Cunha e Silva Art Prize (2020). Her latest public art installation is a large scale marble sculpture entitled The Plinth (2021), commissioned as part of EXPO 2020's Public Art Programme. In 2018 she was awarded the first Artist's Garden commission by the Jameel Arts Centre for her public piece Green House: Interior yet Exterior, Manmade yet Natural (2018). She has also been commissioned by Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation, Abu Dhabi Art, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority and The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture.

Al Mazrou currently lives and works in Dubai.



Visual Space, 2021
Wet coated steel
90 x 90 x 5

From the private collection of Her Highness Sheikha Latifa
Bint Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi.

Mostafa Abdel Moity

Egypt, b.1938

Mostafa Abdel Moity obtained his degree from the Academy of Fine Arts in Alexandria in 1962. After graduating, he began teaching and continues to till this day. His style developed mainly into abstract paintings and sculptures, with Abdel Moity's signature use of harsh bold lines and color as well as shapes and geometrical patterns suggestive of outer space.

Over the years, he has held many positions including Vice President of the World Congress of Contemporary

Art in Venice in 1985 and Head of the Egyptian Academy in Rome in 1988. He has had over thirty shows in Egypt, Italy, and Spain, and participated in upwards of twenty international group exhibitions. He is also one of the founders of the Experimental Group, established in 1958. He has received awards such as The Nile Award for the Arts in 2021.



Roma, 1994
Acrylic on paper
165 x 165 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

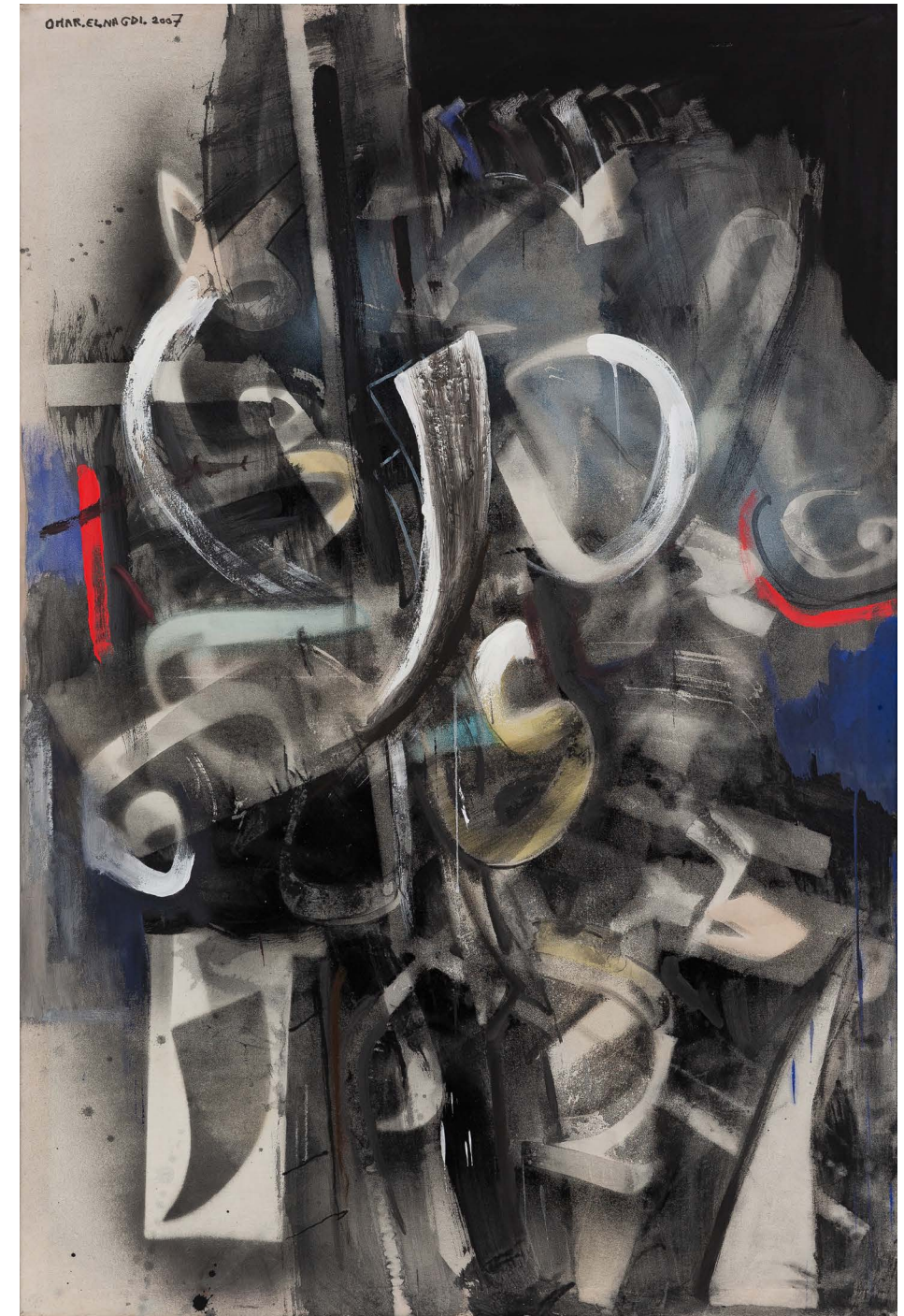


Omar El Nagdi

Egypt, 1931 - 2019

Artist, philosopher, and musician Omar El Nagdi is renowned for a series of works based on singular forms of calligraphy. Initiated in the 1960s and 1970s, El Nagdi's practice creates rhythmic abstractions based on the repetition of the Arabic numeral for 'one' (wahed), which shares its form with the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, alef. With minimal form, El Nagdi builds a pulsating and multi-dimensional composition that symbolises the indivisible nature of the divine. El Nagdi graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in 1953 (now part of Helwan University in Cairo) and continued his training in Russia

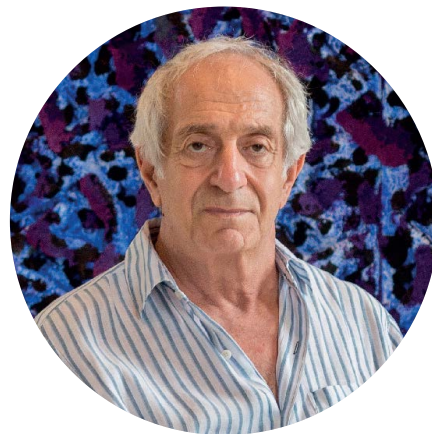
and Italy, graduating from the Academy of Venice in 1965. An active member of Cairo's art community, El Nagdi was a member of the Liberal Artist's group headed by Taha Hussein, and formed the Egyptian Mosaics Group in 1964. He received awards at three Alexandria Biennials in 1966, 1968, and 1974. Over the course of his career, El Nagdi has refused to commit to one particular artistic style and identifies his inspiration as the diverse cultures of rural Egypt and Cairo's popular urban district of Bab Al She'reya. His work is held in private collections and museums throughout the world.



Untitled, 2007
Mixed media on canvas
151.7 x 102.5 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Text from the Barjeel Art Foundation website. Printed with the permission of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



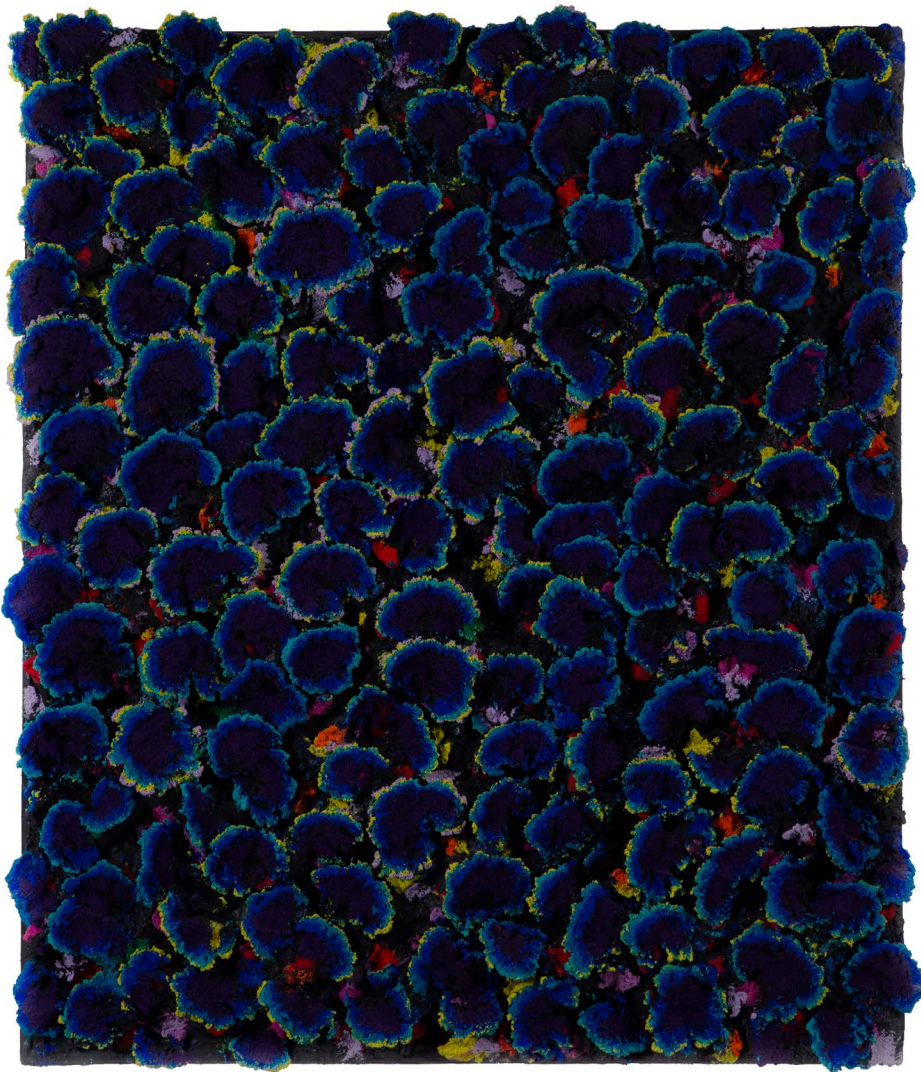
Nabil Nahas
Lebanon b. 1949

Nature figures prominently in the vibrant artwork of Lebanese-American artist Nabil Nahas, who intersects geometric patterns inspired by Islamic art with Western abstract painting techniques. His work often explores the emergence of order from disorder through patterns, fractals and labyrinths. To capture what he refers to as “the geometry of nature”, Nahas mixes substances like pumice, powder and volcanic rock into his paints to create different textures.

In one body of work, Nahas, born in 1949 in Beirut, paints recognisable forms of cedar, pine and olive trees – all of

which are native to Lebanon and hence reveal the artists origins. He often adorns his paintings with gold as often happens in Islamic art and uses blue to represent the Mediterranean sky. Nahas' large-scale paintings are striking, often inspired by the beauty of nature and the intricacy and complexity of Middle East culture. In another series of works, Nahas used bodies of starfish, sometimes cast in acrylic paint, on top of which he layered high-chroma acrylic paint.

Nahas has exhibited throughout the United States and Europe.



Fractal, Untitled, 1973
Acrylic on pumice on canvas
95.5 x 82.6 cm

Charles Al Sidaoui, Private Collection, Dubai

Image courtesy of Saleh Barakat Gallery/Agial Gallery.



Abdul Qader Al Rais

UAE, b.1951

Commanding considerable renown in the United Arab Emirates, Abdul Qader Al Rais explores the landscapes and traditions of his homeland. A self-taught artist, Al Rais' primary form of expression is painting and his influences are largely from Dutch Masters and French Impressionists. His early works were realistic renderings of landscapes, traditional Emirati architecture, dhow fishing boats and coastlines but Al Rais stopped painting in 1974 until he graduated from Emirates University in 1982. More political

themes permeated his work in the late 1980s and early 1990s, particularly in relation to Palestinian struggles. He later shifted his approach to a mixture of abstraction and calligraphy, focusing on the contours of Arabic letters, which are now regarded as his signature style. A retrospective of Rais' work was held at the Sharjah Art Museum in 2012 and some pieces also featured in the UAE Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015.

Image courtesy of Dubai Culture & Arts Authority.



Untitled, 2008
Watercolor on paper
112 x 82 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Untitled, 2008
Watercolor on paper
112 x 82 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Moneer El Shaarani

Syria, b. 1952

Born on the 6th of September 1952, Syria, Moneer Al Shaarani was a student of the Syrian master calligrapher, Badawi Al Dirany.

He Graduated in 1977 from the Faculty of Fine Arts. Damascus University and worked as a calligrapher since 1967, then as a designer of books and various printed matters as well as a designer of typefaces characters.

Al Shaarani designed more than 2000 covers and tens of logos, published educational booklets of six kinds of Arabic calligraphy. He also wrote several articles on Arabic Calligraphy and critiqued Arabic Islamic art. He contributed as artistic consultant to the work of the International Arab Encyclopedia and edited the entries of Arabic Calligraphy.

He participated in many group exhibitions, regional and international forums and conferences about Arabic

Calligraphy and the Arabic typefaces characters. He was honored in many Arabic art's societies including the Modernization Award in the first Arabic Calligraphy Biennial - al Sharija.

His works can be found in museum collections such as the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo, the Museum of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, Sharjah Museum of Arabic Calligraphy, Arabic Calligraphy Museum in Alexandria, the Museum of Islamic Art in Malaysia among others.

His work is in private collections worldwide, in Syria, Tunis, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Bahrain, U.A.E, Sudan, Oman, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Malaysia, Spain, India, Russia, Canada, USA & the UK, Australia.



Untitled, Undated
Red ink on paper
104.5 x 104.5 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

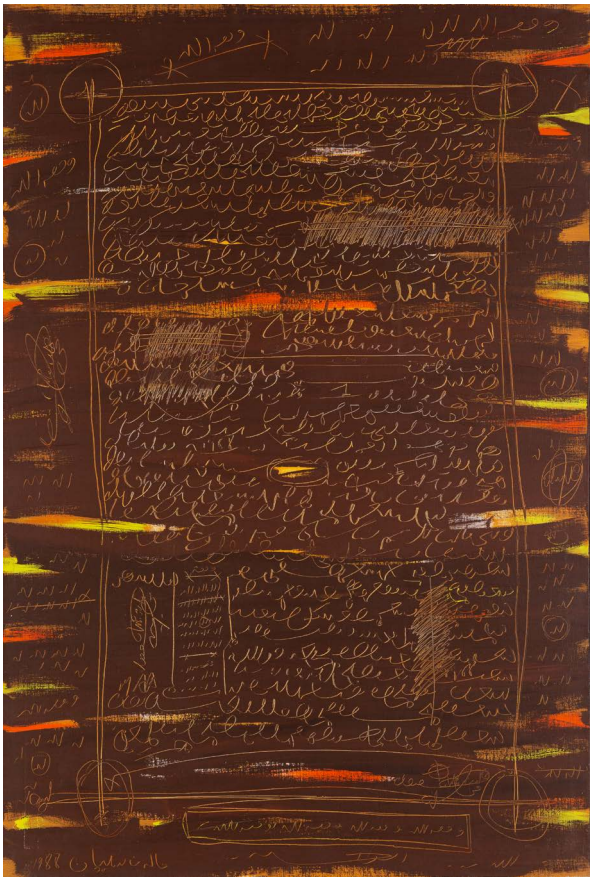
Image and biography courtesy of the artist and Art on the 56th Gallery.



Khaled Ben Slimane
Lebanon, b.1951

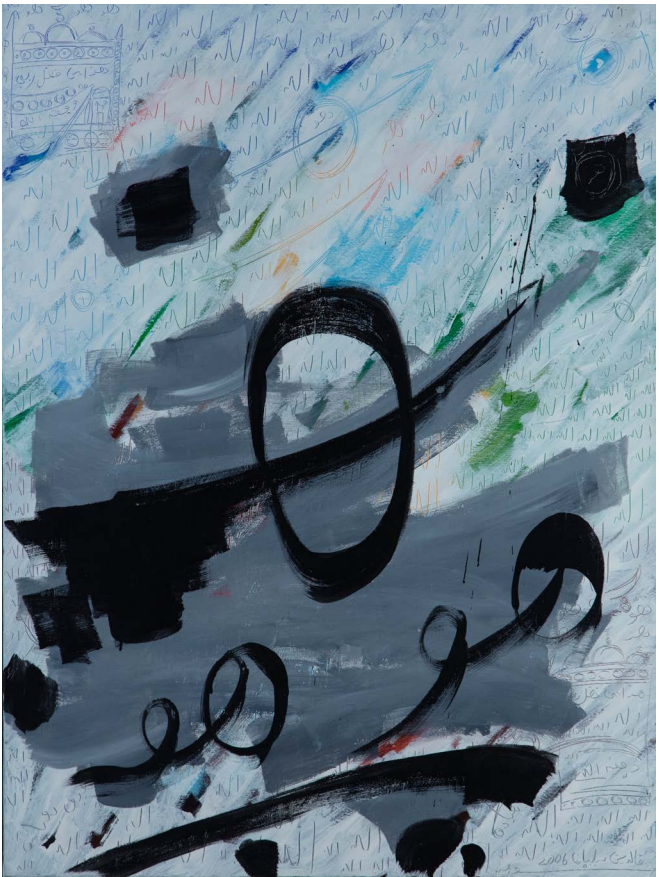
Khaled Ben Slimane was born in 1951, Nabeul, Tunisia and currently lives and works in Tunis, Tunisia. His multi-disciplinary practice includes paintings on paper, canvas and wood as well as ceramic and bronze sculptures. A synthesis of East and West, his work invokes Sufism through graphic repetition of words and phrases in a distinctive style, which is partly inspired by the masters he once met or worked with such as Miro and Tapes. Ben Slimane graduated from the Uscuela Massana of Barcelona in 1977 and Technological

Institute of Art in Tunis in 1982. His works have been exhibited alongside works by maestros like Miro, Picasso and Artigas. His works are part of various private and public collections including the British Museum, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C., the Idemitsu Museum of Arts in Tokyo, the Benaki Museum in Athens, the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts in Amman, the Badisches landesmuseum in Karlsruhe and the Museu de Ceramica de Barcelona.



Exploration no. 2, 1988
Oil on canvas
95.2 x 66.2 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Untitled, 2006
Acrylic on canvas
133 x 100 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Ceramic XXIV, 2006
Ceramic
52 x 50 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of the artist and Elmarsa Gallery Tunis/Dubai.

2

Societies in Transition

As part of the main modernist concern of the twentieth century, Arab artists delved into investigating society, history, family, mythologies, as well as exploring culture and articulating particularities and connections. They negotiated the notion of 'nation' as it was being formed into coherent entities and opened dialogues between nation and individual. Equally a form of resistance, their emphasis is on the dynamic interactions and relationships that necessarily contradict the timeless, ageless static portrayal of Orientalist work. The works articulate the artists' understandings and negotiations of the self through societal relationships, and through shared, pervasive elements of narrative. Nevertheless, the scope of local struggles for independence soon revealed their strong interdependency with regional developments, and in the contemporary works, with global issues of concern.



Sabhan Adam

Syria, b. 1973

Born in 1972 in Al-Hassaka, Syria, Sabhan Adam lives and works in Syria.

The painting of Sabhan, single in its kind, reflects a strong individuality. It can be influenced by the colors of his native soil and by his surroundings, but Sabhan considers that when he paints, he paints for “the world”. Through his mental identity, he represents humanity, grotesque creatures, without falling into the caricature. Badly developed,

monstrous, without being terrifying, the characters of Sabhan Adam are difficult to define or encircle.

The gestures of Sabhan express anger physically. This one is for the artist necessary engine: “I have much anger in me, the more I paint, the more anger I get” This recombining of mankind reflects the intrinsically personal vision of the painter of a humanity corroded by its faintness.

“Drawing is the medicine for my ill soul and it is the source of its purification. My aim is still contemplative, peaceful and innocent with crystal presence on this earth”.

Image and biography courtesy of Mark Hachem Gallery.



Untitled, 2007
Mixed media on canvas
279 x 135.5 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Afifa Aleiby
Iraq, b.1953

Afifa Aleiby was born in the city of Basra, Iraq.

She studied painting at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad and at the Surikov Institute in Moscow.

Following her studies, Aleiby travelled around many countries including Yemen and Italy before settling definitively in the Netherlands.

These travels have strongly impacted her work. Influences are traceable ranging from the Russian school to the masters of the Italian Renaissance and the Dutch Golden Age.

A recurring theme in Aleiby's paintings are figures of women portrayed in their most intimate moments, displaying their solitude, suffering, joy, struggle for emancipation and dignity. Afifa Aleiby has participated in numerous international exhibitions in countries such as Iraq, USSR, Yemen, Italy, Syria, Lebanon, England, the Netherlands and the US and her work is part of many private and public collections.

Afifa Aleiby lives and works in the Netherlands.



Yasmin, 2020
Oil on canvas
100 x 130 cm

The Cyba Audi Private Collection

Image and biography courtesy of Athar Jaber.



Sadik Alfraji
Iraq, b.1960

Sadik Kwaish Alfraji explores what he describes as ‘the problem of existence’ through drawings, paintings, video animations, art books, graphic art, and installations. The shadowy protagonist who often appears in Alfraji’s multimedia works represents a black void, a filter that allows him to explore the intricacies of life. By rendering his solitary character as a charcoal-coloured silhouette and minimising the formal properties of his compositions, Alfraji captures the expressed movements and subtle inflections of the body in psychologically laden environments.

The artist often records his own narrative in black and white scenes of this recurring figure, particularly the loss, fragmentation, and lapses in time that underline exile. Born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1960, Sadik Kwaish Alfraji lives and works in Amersfoort, Netherlands. He received a Bachelor of Fine Art in Painting and Plastic Art from the Academy of Fine Arts, Baghdad in 1987 and a High Diploma in Graphic Design from CHK Constantijn Huygens, Netherlands in 2000.

The artist’s solo shows include Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2017); Red Star Line Museum, Antwerp (2016); Galerie Tanit, Munich (2016); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2015); Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2015); Beirut Exhibition Center, Beirut (2014); Ayyam Gallery London (2015, 2013); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2011); Stads Gallery, Amersfoort, Utrecht (2010);

Station Museum, Houston (2008); Stedelijk Museum, Den Bosch (2007).

Selected group exhibitions include the Katzen Art Center, American University Museum, Washington (2017); Iraq Pavilion of the 57th Venice Biennale, Venice (2017); British Museum, London (2017, 2015); TRIO Biennial, Rio de Janeiro (2015); P21 Gallery, London (2015); 56th Venice Biennale, Venice (2015); Abu Dhabi Festival, Abu Dhabi (2015); Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2015); LACMA, Los Angeles (2015); FotoFest Biennial, Houston (2014); Samsung Blue Square and Busan Museum of Art, Seoul & Busan (2014); Ikono On Air Festival, online and broadcasted (2013); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012); Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2012); Centro Cultural General San Martin, Buenos Aires (2012); and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha (2010).

Alfraji’s works are housed in private and public collections including the British Museum, London; National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad; The Art Center, Baghdad; National Gallery of Fine Arts Amman; Shoman Foundation, Amman; Royal Association of Fine Arts, Amman; Novosibirsk State Art Museum, Russia; and Cluj-Napoca Art Museum, Romania; Los Angeles Country Museum; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



In Baghdad, Under the Freedom Monument, 2013
Indian ink, charcoal, acrylic, rice paper on canvas
270 x 600 cm

The Samawi Collection

Image and biography courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.



Fateh Al-Moudarres

Syria, 1922 - 1999

Fateh Al-Moudarres was born near the city of Aleppo, in northern Syria. He lived in a rural area, amongst Arab, Kurdish and Turkmen peasants. His harsh childhood, especially after the killing of his father, had psychological effects on his behavior, his art and his literary writings. Moudarres displayed a natural talent for drawing at an early age, growing close to his art teachers Munib Naqshbandi, Ghaleb Salem and Wehbe Al Hariri who educated him and taught him the principles.

In 1940, he traveled to Lebanon and studied English at the American University of Beirut. After graduating from the university, he returned to Aleppo, Syria, to work as an English teacher and an art teacher. In 1956 He traveled to complete his studies at the Royal Academy in Rome,

after obtaining a scholarship, where he studied under Italian artist Gentilini. In 1972 He received his doctorate from the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris.

He exhibited extensively during his career and published various books. In 1952, he participated in the Syrian Artists Exhibition in Damascus and won the first prize in painting. He won several prizes including the gold medal from the Italian Senate in 1962, the prize of honour at the Sao Paulo Biennale in 1963, the state award for fine arts in Damascus in 1986. Additionally, he wrote a three-part book on the history of art in 1954.

He passed away aged seventy-seven in 1999. After his death, he was awarded the Syrian Order of Merit.



Levant Borders, 1997
Oil on canvas
98 x 98 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection, Amman.

Jaber Alwan

Iraq, b. 1948

Born in Babylon, Iraq, in 1948, Alwan graduated from the Institute of Fine Art in Baghdad in 1970. In 1972 he arrived in Rome and started painting in the famous Piazza Navona.

In 1975 he gained a diploma degree in Sculpture from the Rome Academy of Fine Art. Ten years later the Municipality of Rome awarded him the prize of Best Artist, the first foreigner to receive this prize.

He has works on permanent display in the Museums of Modern Art of Baghdad, Damascus, Qatar and Kuwait, the Opera House of Culture in Cairo, the Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara, and the Academy Museum, Ravenna among many; His work is part of numerous private collections across the world. Alwan lives and works in Rome, Italy.



The Yellow Skirt, 2004
Oil on panel
152 x 167.5 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of Athar Jaber.



Asaad Arabi
Syria, b.1951

Widely respected as an early innovator of contemporary painting in the Arab world and a prominent art theorist and critic, Asaad Arabi has continuously reinvented his painting style in an attempt to depict the rhythms, sensuality, and concealed narratives of urban environments, particularly in his native Syria. Arabi's fascination with cities and the spaces that define them has included an extensive investigation of how inhabitants influence the formation of culture in such settings—a focus that has led to colourist approaches and abstracted forms in addition to early experiments with modernist figuration.

Arabi's decades-long career dates back to the 1960s, when he trained with Guido La Regina, an Italian painter that encouraged a new school of abstraction among students at the University of Damascus. Emerging from this aesthetic shift, Arabi's insistence on formal experimentation quickly secured his status as a leading painter in Syria. The artist's later usage of geometric abstraction reverberated throughout the region as a renewed interest in Islamic art and aesthetics took hold in the 1980s. In recent years, Arabi has alternated between pure abstractions that are reliant on tonal variations as affective details to expressionist depictions in which figures appear to merge with their environments.

In recent years, Arabi has alternated between pure abstractions that are reliant on tonal variations as affective

details to expressionist depictions in which figures appear to merge with their environments. He began to investigate the intricate link between sound and sight through his portraits of highly renowned Egyptian singer, Umm Kulthum. Through this series of portraits, the artist has managed to represent the delicate balance between voice and vision.

Born in 1941, Asaad Arabi graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus before moving to Paris, France in 1975, where he received a diploma in painting from the Higher Institute of Fine Arts, and subsequently earned a PhD in Aesthetics from the Sorbonne University.

Arabi has exhibited in the Middle East and North Africa for more than sixty years and has been featured in solo and group shows throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States, most recently at Galerie Roy Sfeir, Paris, France (2019); Ayyam Gallery, Beirut (2017); Galerie Frederic Moisan, Paris, France (2017); Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, USA (2017); Galerie Frederic Moisan, Paris, France (2017); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2015); and Sircov Gallery, Brest, France (2019).

Arabi's works are housed in public and private collections such as Institut du Monde.



Les immigrés de la Cité, 2007

Acrylic on canvas
206.4 x 168 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.

Assadour

Iraq, b.1953

Assadour Bezdikian is a Lebanese/Armenian artist best known for his engraving. He studied at the Pietro Vanucci Academy and went on to further his training at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris from 1964 to 1970. During this time, he studied under French painter Lucien Coutaud.

He has exhibited both in his native Beirut and internationally in cities such as Paris, Luxembourg, Tokyo, and Rome. He was a fixture at the Sursock Museum Salons between the

years 1962 and 1966 and has been honoured with awards such as the Museum of Modern Art Award, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia in 1983, the Silver Medal at the Biennale Internationale de l'Estampe and the Grand Prix de la Ville de Paris in 1984.

His work is included in the collections of Sursock Museum, L'institut du Monde Arabe, the British Museum the Victoria & Albert Museum among others important public and private collections.



Untitled, 1941
Oil on canvas
113 x 151 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Ayman Baalbaki

Lebanon, b.1975

Ayman Baalbaki was born in 1975, the year the Lebanese Civil War started. He received his bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from the Lebanese University in Beirut, Lebanon, and a diploma of Etudes Superieures in Space Art at the ENSAD, Paris, France. He completed his D.E.A in "Art of Images and Contemporary Art," in Paris VIII in 2003. Recent exhibitions include Arabicity/Ourouba curated by Rose Issa at The Middle East Institute in Washington D.C., USA (2019); the 13th Cairo Biennial, Egypt (2019); Glasstress 2019 curated by Vik Muniz and Koen Vanmechelen at the Berengo Center for Contemporary Art and Glass in Murano, Italy (2019); Le Monde Arabe Vu Par Ses Artistes at Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, France (2018); Scripted Reality at Lawrie Shabibi in

London, UK (2018); Hommage à Marwan at Galerie Pankow in Berlin, Germany (2018); Blowback at Saleh Barakat Gallery in Beirut; Lebanon (2016); and Thin Sin: Six Artists from Beirut at Taymour Grahne Gallery in New York, USA (2014); among others. His work is featured in private collections and museums such as the Tate Modern, the Ramzi and Saeda Dalloul Art Foundation, Fondation Carmignac, and KA Private Art Space. A monograph of his work with essays by Philippe Dagen, Paul Ardenne, Thierry Savatier, and Nayla Tamraz is forthcoming.

Ayman Baalbaki will represent Lebanon at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022 with Danielle Arbid.



Untitled, From the Mulatham Series, 2012
Acrylic and oil on printed fabric laid on canvas
111.5 x 82 cm

Charles Al Sidaoui, Private Collection, Dubai



George Bahgoury
Egypt, b.1932

George Bahgoury was born into a Coptic Christian family in Bahgoura, a small village in Naga Hammadi, Upper Egypt hence the name of his family, 'Bahgoury' (coming from Bahgoura).

In 1953, he embarked on his career as a political cartoonist, a role that would see him featured in Sabah Al Khair and Rose El Youssef. In 1955, he studied painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Zamalek, Cairo, under the guidance of the Egyptian artist Hussein Bikar.

In 1970, he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris. Soon thereafter, in 1975, he ceased publishing as a cartoonist.

A Silver Medalist for his painting "A Face from Egypt", Bahgoury's artwork has been widely displayed in galleries and museums, including the Louvre Museum, the Museum of Modern Art in Amman, the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo.



Untitled, Undated
Mixed media on canvas
81 x 78.5 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of Dina Samir.

Flavia Codsí

Lebanon, b.1961

Born in Lebanon in 1961, self-taught Beirut based painter, Flavia Codsí worked as interior designer before becoming a fixture on the Lebanese fine art scene since the mid-nineties. She worked as an interior and furniture designer and a later a freelancer in interior perspective drawings all throughout the Lebanese civil war. Codsí executed several trompe l'oeil murals in Lebanon in collaboration with artist Fulvio Codsí. When shifting into the world of fine arts, Codsí began recreating scenes and sceneries of her native city and went on to illustrate a children's book on the rapidly disappearing heritage houses in Beirut.

Inspired by a mélange of artists and their techniques, such as Leonardo Da Vinci's ink drawings, Frida Kahlo's vivid

tales of her subjects and Magritte's surrealist wittiness, Codsí has now distinguished herself as a realist artist, using oil paints as her preferred medium, to accomplish life-size portraiture of the human condition. Between 1994 and 1996, she won three consecutive prizes from the Sursock Museum's Salon d'Automne in Lebanon and in 2010 she was awarded the first prize of the Lebanese Diaspora International Art Exhibition in Beirut. Ever since, Codsí has exhibited and participated in numerous collective exhibitions, in Sharjah, Dubai, Sydney and London. Her paintings continue to inspire people to use them as visual realities, as ideas for stories, short movies, design covers for books, and have featured in magazines and even for poster campaigns.



Don't Let the Cuckoo's Nest, 2010
Oil on canvas
213 x 186 cm

The Samawi Collection

Courtesy of Flavia Codsí.



Safwan Dahoul

Syria, b.1961

With a career spanning over three decades, Safwan Dahoul is now a household name both regionally and internationally. As one of the foremost painters in the Arab world, the artist has repeatedly demonstrated how contemporary modes of figuration can describe the psychic terrain of a region that is in constant flux. Throughout his career, Dahoul has managed to include varying artistic styles while still keeping to his core identity and style.

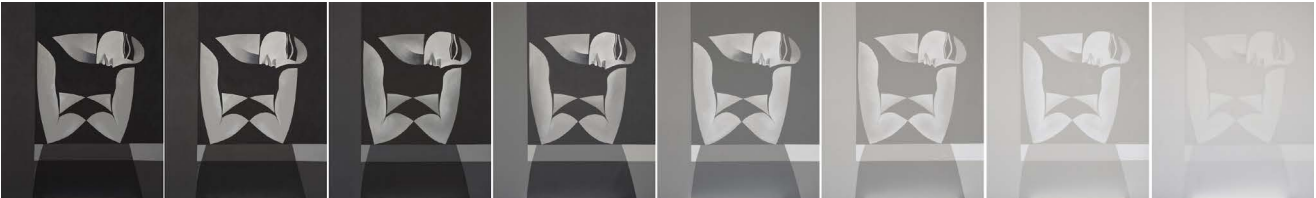
Dahoul is mostly known for his beautiful melancholic and monochromatic works that present influences from the Cubist style of Picasso ranging to Assyrian and Pharaonic art. Since the late 1980s, the artist began an ongoing body of work investigating the dream state. Simply entitled the Dream series, these works have explored the physical and psychological effects of alienation, solitude, and longing that punctuate the human experience at various stages in life.

Partly autobiographical, this seminal body of work uses the formal properties of painting to recreate the subconscious sense of enclosure that surfaces during times of crisis, whether in the event of mourning, estrangement, or political conflict. The artist's recurring female protagonist facilitates this visceral experience through her contorted body, often-vacant eyes, and minimised yet monumental physicality. Depicted in the confinement of ambiguous settings, her presence is defined by the placement of various objects

that seem to deepen the state of her disaffection, as even the familiar becomes a trigger of distress.

Born in 1961 in Hama, Syria, Dahoul was initially trained by leading modernists at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus before travelling to Belgium, where he earned a doctorate from the Higher Institute of Plastic Arts in Mons. Upon returning to Syria, he began teaching at the Faculty of Fine Arts and was a prominent member of the Damascus art scene. In the span of a decade, Dahoul nurtured a new generation of artists as an active mentor whose evolving aesthetic often ignited new directions in painting. Given the trajectory and status of his painting style, Dahoul's career is regarded as a crucial link between modern and contemporary Arab art. Dahoul's paintings are held in numerous private and public collections, including the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; National Museum, Damascus; The Samawi Collection, Dubai; The Farjam Collection, Dubai; the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Kuwait.

Recently, he has participated in solo and group exhibitions at Ayyam Gallery DIFC and 11 Alserkal Avenue, Dubai (2018, 2017, 2016); Samsung Blue Square and Busan Museum of Art, South Korea (2014); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2014, 2011); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2014); Ayyam Gallery.



Dream 59, 2013
Acrylic on canvas
120 x 800 cm

The Samawi Collection

Image and biography courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.



Salah Enani
Egypt, b. 1955

In 1977, Enani Graduated from the Faculty of Arts in Cairo, where he worked as an art teacher. Enani also worked as an Artist at Ros Al Youssef and Sabah el Kheir Magazines for more than ten years, and was chosen to be the director of 'Al Ghouri Palace for Egyptian heritage' from 1988 to 1996. Salah Enani is currently living and working as an Art professor at the Faculty of Art, Cairo.

Enani had many solo exhibitions abroad such as: Nicosia -Cyprus 1984, Egyptian Academy for Arts – Rome 1985 and Institut du Monde Arab – Paris 1989, and group Exhibitions such as: Drawing Triennial – Nottinburg 1986, and Sharjah Museum – UAE 2000, One world Exhibition – Germany

1992 and that's where his famous painting titled Cairo was acquired by Ulm Museum in Germany.

Enani's most famous Artworks are: 'Naguib Mahfouz' - 1988 which was painted for the occasion of the author being granted the Nobel Prize, '100 years of enlightenment' – 1990 and 'Egyptian Cinema' 1991. The Artist has been granted the prizes of the Cairo's International Biennale - 1989, Films association prize on his painting titled Alexandria more & more. Enani's work has been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo, Ulm Museum of Modern Art in Germany and the Cairo Opera House.



Untitled, 2006
Mixed media on canvas
120 x 149.5 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of Al Masar Gallery | Contemporary Art | Zamalek, Cairo.



Lamya Gargash
UAE, b.1982

Lamya Gargash (1982) is a Dubai based photographer who lives and works in Dubai. Her photographs of Emirati society in public and private settings are among her most recognized work. Gargash focuses on the preservation of certain aspects of traditions and cultures, and how others have been lost with time. Her work fuses together interior design, theatrical elements and museum displays as she addresses generational shifts with an undertone of nostalgia.

Lamya received her Masters of Arts in Communication Design from Central Saint Martin's in the UK in 2007 after graduating from the American University of Sharjah in 2004. She was the first Emirati artist to represent the UAE at the country's first National participation at the 53rd Venice Biennial in 2009. Gargash has participated in numerous

group shows in Canada, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Japan and France.

Additionally, she participated in several film festivals such as Locarno Film Festival, Switzerland; Osaka Film Festival, Japan; Amsterdam Arab Film Festival, Netherlands; Paris Arab Film Festival, France and Dubai International Film Festival, UAE. Throughout her career Lamya has won a number of awards for her work in film and photography. In 2004, Lamya received first prize in the Emirates Film Festival, as well as Ibdaa Special Jury Award for her movie titled, Wet Tiles.

Her work is included in the collections of the Barjeel Art Foundation and Sharjah Art Foundation.



Drapes, 2014
Chromogenic color print
60 x 60 cm

A.R.M. Holding Art Collection

Image and biography courtesy of Lamya Gargash and The Third Line, Dubai.



Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim

UAE, b.1962

Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim (b. 1962, UAE) came of age as an artist in the UAE in an era in which the visual arts were not yet valued culturally or taught in university degree programs. In 1986, when he met the late artist Hassan Sharif (a founding member of the influential Emirates Fine Art Society), Ibrahim was pulled out of a secluded practice and carved out unshakable friendships and collaborations that have formed the foundation for the creative community that defines the UAE today.

In March 2018 Elements, a survey of works spanning three decades of his practice, was presented at the Sharjah Art Foundation, curated by Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi. Ibrahim's recent solo exhibitions include Dusk Till Dawn, Cromwell Place, London with Lawrie Shabibi (2021), Memory Drum (2020) and The Space between the Eyelid and the Eyeball (2019) at Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, as well as a series of solo shows at Cuadro Gallery, Dubai (2018, 2016, 2015, 2013).

Ibrahim's public works include: Hugs (2020), Sustainability Pavilion, Expo 2020, Dubai, UAE, commissioned by Expo 2020; Falling Stones Garden (2020), Al Ula, Saudi Arabia, commissioned by the Royal Commission for Al Ula and Desert X; Grocery (2019), Madinat Zayed Market, Abu Dhabi, UAE, commissioned by Ghadan 21, Government of Abu Dhabi as part of the For Abu Dhabi initiative; Untitled (2019), Reem Central Park, Al Reem Island, Abu Dhabi, UAE, commissioned by Aldar Properties PJSC in partnership with Abu Dhabi Art; Kids' Garden (2019), Sheikh Khalifa Medical City, Abu Dhabi, UAE, commissioned by Abu Dhabi Health Services Company; and Bait Al Hurma (2018), Al Mureijah Square, Sharjah, commissioned by the Sharjah Art Foundation as part of the exhibition Elements.

Ibrahim's group exhibitions include participations in But We Cannot See Them: Tracing a UAE Art Community, 1988-2008 at The NYUAD Art Gallery (2017); The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Yay Gallery, Baku (2015); the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi (2016); the 53rd Venice Biennale, Venice (2009); the Sharjah Biennial (1993, 2003 and 2007); and the Dhaka Biennial (2002 and 1993). Select institutional exhibitions include the Kunstmuseum, Bonn (2005); the Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah (2005 and 1996), the Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen (2002); Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (1998); Sittard Art Centre, the Netherlands (1995), and the Exhibition for the Emirates Fine Art Society in the Soviet Union, Moscow (1990).

He received the first prize for sculpture at the Sharjah Biennial in 1999 and 2001 and has been a member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society since 1986, founding Art Atelier at the Khor Fakkan Art Centre in 1997. He has participated in artist residencies at Trans Indian Ocean Artist Exchange, Kochi Murzi Biennale, India (2016); A.i.R Dubai (2015); Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2009) and Kunstcentrum Sittard, the Netherlands (1994-1996, 1998-2000).

His works have been acquired by significant international collections, including Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah; Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Art Jameel Collection, Dubai; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Kunstcentrum Sittard, Sittard; The British Museum, London; and Le Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

In 2022 Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim will present a solo exhibition at the National Pavilion of the UAE at the 59th Venice Biennale, where he will represent the UAE. Ibrahim works and lives in Khorfakkan, United Arab Emirates.



Sitting Man Series, 2013
Oil on canvas
80 x 60 cm each

A.R.M Holding Art Collection

Image and biography courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi.



Louay Kayyali
Syria, 1934 - 1978

Depictions of banal daily struggles and the social and physical deprivation of the masses intertwine the artwork of Syrian painter Louay Kayyali during his prolific yet short-lived career. The Aleppo-born artist began painting at the age of 11 and held his first solo show at 18. Highlighting the individual struggles evident on the fringe of larger socio-political realities in the Arab region, Kayyali's artwork provides a window into the lives of the deprived majority. His signature technique of painting on masonite chipboard contributed to the worn-yet-resolute nature of his solidly defined figures, often rendered with quiet, downcast gazes. *Woman Sewing* captures a fleeting moment

of a seamstress' ascetic routine of stitching clothing. Kayyali, who secured a scholarship in 1956 to study at Rome's Academy of Fine Arts, participated in a range of fairs during his time in Italy, including representing Syria along with Fateh Moudarres at the 1960 Venice Biennale. After the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War with Israel in 1967, Kayyali sank into a deep depression and destroyed a series of politically charged charcoal drawings that epitomised the Arab struggle. Suffering from psychological distress and addiction through his 30s, Kayyali stopped painting until the early 1970s. The artist died tragically in a fire at the age of 44 in what some have deemed a suicide.



The Sock Seller, 1972 or 1973
Mixed media on panel
123.5 x 104 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Text from the Barjeel Art Foundation website. Printed with the permission of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



Baya Mahieddine

Algeria, 1931 – 1998

Self-taught Algerian artist Baya Mahieddine was born in 1931 and died in 1998. As an adolescent, Baya was encouraged by a French couple, living in Algeria, to pursue art. Fabled gallerist Aimé Maeght and writer André Breton, organized her first exhibition in Paris in 1947 at the age of sixteen. Baya's colourful mélange of surreal, childlike imagery, rich in symbols and ornamentations from her Arab-Berber origins drew the attention of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, with whom she later collaborated in his renowned studio

in Vallauris. Since, her work has been exhibited extensively in various museums and galleries. In 1982, Baya had an exhibition at the Museum Cantini in Marseilles inaugurated by French President François Mitterrand. In July 1987, she was honored by Algerian president Chadli. In 2018, Grey Art Gallery at New York University organized her first North American exhibition “Baya: Woman of Algiers”. Baya's work is the subject of various publications and her works can be found in numerous public and private collections worldwide.



Femme et poissons volants, 1978
Mixed media on paper
90.5 x 115.5 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of Elmarsa Gallery Tunis/Dubai.



Maha Malluh

Saudi Arabia, b.1959

A Riyadh-based artist. Born in Jeddah, Lives and works in Riyadh, London, England and Vienna. Maha Malluh is greatly influenced by her spiritual connection to the historic region of Najd, with its strong religious and cultural heritage, colorful patterned fabrics, and old Najdi architecture, all elements that greatly influence her art.

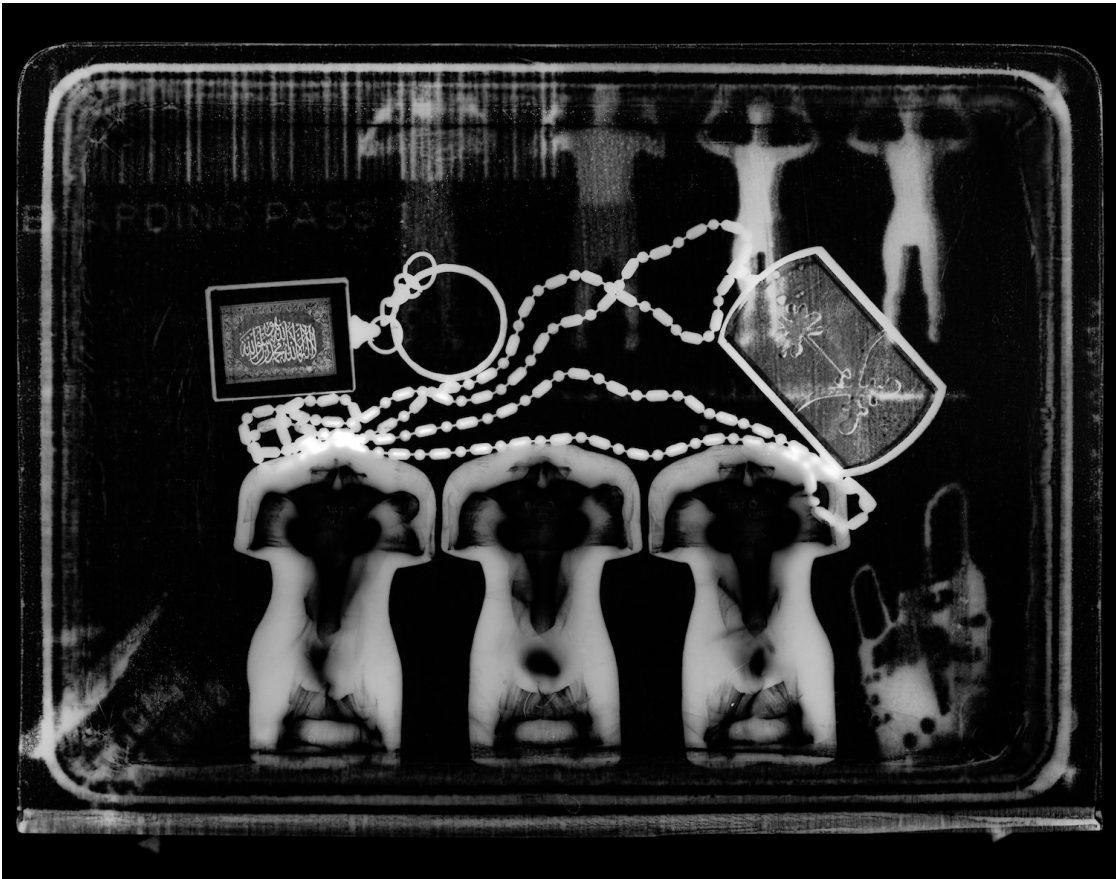
Maha has an BA degree in English Literature from King Saud University in Riyadh and a certificate in Design and Photography from De Anza College in California. She has been exhibiting both in Saudi Arabia and internationally since 1976. However, unlike most artists who have been working for a long time, who tend to adopt an artistic routine, Maha continues to radically develop her practice and her most recent work is in fact her most experimental.

Her artworks examine the emblematic and cultural symbols of Saudi Arabian civilization. She has always been inspired by her country, which she defines as a land of contrasting images and ideas. Her early work used traditional canvas, on which she created collages, using local fabrics and photographic images of traditional buildings.

Over the past fifteen years, Maha has explored, experimented and expanded the art of the photogram, an

early turn of the century photographic technique invented by Fox Talbot, which captures a photographic image without the use of a camera, by exposing photosensitive paper directly to a light source. The arrangement of objects interrupting the passage of light determines the photogram's appearance. In her photogram series, Maha's arrangements of personal items explore both how our objects define us and tell the story of the little things in life which are priceless and give us joy. At the same time, they chronicle the great changes that have continued to occur in Saudi Arabia over recent decades, with the resulting clashes between tradition and modernity. Her most recent work include mixed media installations, which use found objects that can be seen as historic symbols of collective Saudi identity, amongst them are massive chinco dishes, cassette tapes of religious lectures, discarded oil barrels and metal doors typical of the region.

Malluh had her first solo 'Capturing Light' at Gallery O in Riyadh (2007). Her work is included in a number of important museums and private collections, including the British Museum & Tate Modern in London, Center Pompidou in Paris, The Mac in Vienna, the Louvre & Guggenheim Abu Dhabi UAE and lately SFMOMA, USA.



Bar-Coding II from Tradition and Modernity Series, 2010
Duratran Lightbox
124 x 158 cm

The Samawi Collection

Image and biography courtesy Galerie Krinzinger and the artist.



Sliman Mansour
Palestine, b. 1947

Born in 1947 in Birzeit, Palestine, Mansour studied fine art at the Bezalel Art Academy in Jerusalem.

Mansour has tailored his comprehensive portfolio around the Palestinian struggle as he was absorbed during the first years of his career with the Palestinian identity drawing inspiration from old cultures of the area, Palestinian folk culture, and landscape in Palestine. His recent work is centered on the individual figure to convey the different states of exhausting anticipation or loss and pain, resulting from his experience of living under the occupation.

Mansour has contributed extensively to the development of an infrastructure for the fine arts in Palestine. He was the head of the League of Palestinian Artists from 1985 to 1990. Mansour and other artists established the 'New Vision' art movement in 1991 to boycott Israeli art supplies by using local materials. In 1994, Mansour co-founded Al-Wasiti Art Center in East Jerusalem and served as its director from 1995 to 2003. He contributed to establishing the International Academy of Art Palestine in 2004. Mansour taught at numerous cultural institutions and universities in the West Bank. Also, a professional cartoonist, Mansour published from 1981 to 1993 in Al-Awda weekly and Al-Fajr English Weekly. He is a co-author

of "Catalog of the art of Palestinian Embroidery" 1986 and "Palestinian folk costumes" 1985.

Mansour has received numerous awards in recognition of his achievements. Notably, Mansour received the Palestine Prize for the Visual Arts in 1998, the grand prize in the Cairo Biennial in 1998 and the UNESCO-Sharjah prize for Arab culture in 2019. Mansour's work has been shown and collected by many museums, including The British Museum, UK, Arab Museum of Modern Arts, Qatar, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Barjeel Art Foundation, UAE, Jordanian museum and Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jordan and Institut du Monde Arabe, France. He has held solo exhibitions in Ramallah 1981, the United Nations New York 1992, Stavanger City Hall Norway, Cairo Biennale 1998, Ten Years in mud Ramallah, Nazareth and Gaza 2001, Sharjah Museum 2003, Almaamal Gallery, East Jerusalem 2007, Retrospective 2011 Alhoush Gallery Jerusalem, Ramallah and Gaza, Art Dubai 20017. His group exhibitions include Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow, 1980, Jordan National Gallery, Amman, 1991, institut du Monde Arabe, Paris 1996, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, 2003, Santas Ghetto, Bethlehem 2005 Louvre Abu Dhabi 2021. He currently lives in Jerusalem and works in Ramallah.



Untitled, 1985-2009
Oil on canvas
180 x 130 cm

From the Ali & Rafia Malas Private Collection

Image copyright Fares Suleiman Mansour, courtesy of Sliman Mansour.

Rabab Nemr

Egypt, b.1938

Rabab Nemr currently lives between Cairo and Rome. Her oeuvre includes still-life paintings and every-day scenes reflective of her native Alexandria defined by her instantly recognizable structured figures. She paints and draws using an architectural approach, and often incorporates elements of nature including cacti, fish, and boats reminiscent of her seaside hometown.

She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts from the University of Alexandria in 1963 and her Doctorate from the San Fernando Academy of Madrid University in 1977. Nemr is a member of the Alexandria Atelier and the Fine Arts Syndicate. She has exhibited extensively throughout her career including the

Exposition of Egyptian Art at the Academy of Egypt in Rome in 1991 and Municipal Gallery, Italy in 1992. Locally, she has held solo shows in Zamalek Art Gallery in 2003, 2004 and 2007 and Khan-Al-Maghraby in 1992 and 2000 among others. Her awards include the Merit Prize in Drawing from the Sharjah Biennale in 1994 and first prize in the Alexandria International Biennale in 2007.

Nemr's work is part of the collections of the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art in Cairo, the Museum of Fine Arts in Alexandria, the Mahmoud Said Center, Cairo Opera House, Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, and the Museum of Islamic Modern Art in Amman.



Farewell, 1985
Mixed media on panel
141 x 91 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Artwork courtesy of Zamalek Art Gallery.

Samir Rafi

Egypt, 1926 - 2004

Representations of Egyptian daily life infused with surrealism and symbolism characterise the artwork of Samir Rafi, who emphatically captured the surrealist movement spearheaded by Ramsis Yunan and Georges Henein. Rafi was a prominent member of the Contemporary Art Group, an artist collective founded in 1946 that emphasised the relationship of art to society and popular culture and adapted modern forms and technique. The artist received critical acclaim during the 1950s from Aimé Azar, a teacher of aesthetics at Ain Shams University, who noted how Rafi accentuated the tragedy of modern life. In a famous work Les Gardes du Mokattam (Guardians of the Mokattam), Rafi

represented figures assembled near the hills in Southern Cairo, a known gathering place for Sufis prior to the 1952 revolutionary coup.

After attending secondary school under the famous art teacher Hussayn Yusuf Amin, Rafi became a graduate of the School of Fine Arts in Cairo. He earned advanced degrees in art and pursued Ph.D studies in art history at the Sorbonne. Exhibiting widely and taking part in numerous international exhibitions during this period, Rafi later returned to Cairo to assume a role as an art professor at the School of Fine Arts and engage in art journalism.



Seated Man with a Cactus, 1991
Mixed media on panel
114 x 95 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Text from the Barjeel Art Foundation website. Printed with the permission of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

Naziha Selim

Iraq, 1927 - 2008

Iraqi plastic artist Naziha Selim Abdel Qader studied at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad and graduated in 1947. She also studied art in Paris and graduated from the Higher Institute of Fine Arts in 1951. Additionally, she studied mural painting under the French artist Fernand Léger and furthered her training in East Germany, specializing in children's drawings and theatre drawings. Selim contributed to the formation of the Modern Art Group in 1953-1954 with the artist Shaker Hassan Al Said, the artist Muhammad Ghani Hikmat and Jawad Selim. She

also contributed to the establishment of the Iraqi Plastic Artists Association.

She taught art at the Institute of Fine Arts until 1982 and dealt with women's issues, work, and childhood, in a manner that expressed her mood and personality.

Selim died in 2008 at the age of 81, after suffering from an incurable disease.



Untitled, 1996
Oil on canvas
101.5 x 106 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts.

Hassan Sharif

UAE, 1951 - 2016

Hassan Sharif (1951-2016) made a vital contribution to conceptual art and experimental practice in the Middle East through 40 years of performance, installation, drawing, painting and assemblage. Prior to leaving the UAE to study in London in 1979, Sharif gained attention for his cartoons published in the UAE press - ironic, outspoken critiques of the rapid industrialisation of the Emirates and political deadlock of 1970s Arab Nationalism. As an artist, he rejected calligraphic abstraction, which was becoming the dominant discourse in the Middle East at that time, and pursued instead a pointedly contemporary vocabulary, drawing on the non-elitism and intermedia of Fluxus and the potential in British Constructionism's systemic processes of making.

Sharif graduated from The Byam Shaw School of Art (now part of Central Saint Martins) in 1984 and returned to the UAE shortly after. He set about staging interventions and the first exhibitions of contemporary art in Sharjah, as well as translating art historical texts and manifestos into Arabic so as to provoke a local audience to engage with - or at least reject - contemporary art discourse. Beginning in 1982, Sharif began to formulate and document private performances of mundane activities (e.g. discussing art in a toilet cubicle with the faculty of The Byam Shaw School, jumping or digging holes in the UAE desert). Simultaneously, he began work on what he referred to as Experiments - formal exercises, like counting cars on a street in Dubai or tracing every instance of the letter 't' on a page of The Daily Mail newspaper. These absurdist and purposely boring practices were initially performed, in part, as an ironic response to the functionality of economics and globalisation: uselessness as gesture. This critical stance, what he termed 'positive irony', has since been developed on in subsequent works in other mediums.

Sharif started creating his Objects in the 1980s using found industrial materials or mass-produced items purchased in markets and stores around the UAE.

Weaving these objects together with rope, coil and twine, the heaps and bundles that Sharif created became a visualisation of the surplus of mass-production - the commonly unseen by-product of the UAE's globalised, consumerist society that developed since the formation of the UAE. His Objects - which handed cheap, mass-produced or discarded materials back to society as artworks - were a vital instrument in provoking and engaging UAE audiences with contemporary art in the 1980s. Sharif's Semi-Systems were initially informed by British Constructionism and particularly Kenneth Martin's notion of 'Chance and Order'. He invented a set of rules, following this system to create line drawings that transform within a grid and colour studies on paper. Sharif revealed in the mistakes and errors that naturally occurs in the monotonous creation of the work, believing that "Art' is a result of errors."

In addition to his own practice, he also encouraged and supported several generations of artists in the Emirates. Sharif was a founding member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society (founded in 1980) and the Art Atelier in the Youth Theatre and Arts in Dubai. In 2007, he was one of the four artists to establish The Flying House, a Dubai institution for promoting contemporary Emirati artists. His works are held in the collections of the Sharjah Art Foundation; MAMCO, Geneva; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate, London; Guggenheim New York and Abu Dhabi; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; M+ Museum, Hong Kong and Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Yinchuan, among others. In 2017, a major retrospective of his works, entitled *Hassan Sharif: I Am The Single Work Artist*, curated by Hoor Al Qasimi was held at Sharjah Art Foundation. This retrospective has travelled to the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in 2020 and is currently on view at the Malmö Konsthall, Malmö. The exhibition will be on view at the musée d'art moderne et contemporain (MAMC), Saint-Étienne, in spring 2021.



Venus and Fish No. 6, 2009

Acrylic on paper

84.1 x 59.5 cm

Snow Feinan Li Private Collection

Image and biography courtesy of Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde.

Gazbia Sirry

Egypt, b.1925

Born in Cairo, Gazbia Sirry studied fine arts and became a professor in the painting department of the Faculty of Art Education, Helwan University. Gazbia is considered one of the leading Egyptian artists, with a varied and innovative career of more than 50 years.

Her career is rich and diversified, and is characterized by an extraordinary versatility. It would be difficult, though, to confine and limit Gazbia in any traditional school, although her vivid and bold brushstrokes share features with Neo-Expressionism: a school of individuality and personality. With a rich curriculum, including more than 50 personal exhibitions, from Paris to Washington, D.C.,

from Venice to Sao Paolo, from Kuwait to Tunis, official purchases by international museums, international prizes, scholarships and important university chairs, Gazbia continues to paint for the love of art, a way to express her joys and fears.

Gazbia Sirry's art is distinguished for renewal where she expressed the feelings and traditions of the Egyptian woman during the 1960s. In the 1970s, she used the pyramid images and constructional mixture in her works for expressing the daily life of the Egyptian woman, and in the 1990s she helped in liberating the Egyptian woman from the old traditions through her work.



The Six Immigrants, 1960
Mixed media on canvas
102 x 76.5 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Courtesy of Safarkhan Gallery, Cairo.



Hassan Soliman
Egypt, 1928 - 2009

Hassan Soliman was an instrumental figure in the development of 20th century Egyptian art. Soliman was also known for his art criticism and writings in addition to being a talented draughtsman. His infamous painting 'The Last Supper' (1967) was his rendition of Leonardo DaVinci's fresco, replacing Christ with an anguished Egyptian man, alluding to the devastating effects of 1967's Six-Day War.

Soliman earned a degree in painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1951. He furthered his training in Italy, graduating from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan in 1966. His time spent in Europe exposed him to

Picasso's 'Guernica' and the works of Goya and Leonardo DaVinci who shaped his ability to evoke melancholy through a dimmed grey, sepia color palette and shading techniques. He has participated in exhibitions in Egypt since 1952, including the Cairo Atelier in 1995, Al-Mashrabiya Gallery in 2001 and has also represented Egypt in the Venice Biennale.

His work is included in prestigious private and public collections worldwide, including the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art in Cairo, the Al Sharekh Collection and the Dalloul Art Foundation.



Untitled, 1967
Oil on canvas
62 x 80 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image courtesy of Al Masar Gallery | Contemporary Art | Zamalek, Cairo.

Seif Wanly

Egypt, 1906 - 1979

Employing a distinct style of bright colours, form and composition, the paintings of Seif Wanly blend the geometry of simplified shapes with Futurist and Cubist influences.

Born in Alexandria into an aristocratic Egyptian family, Wanly was privately tutored in art. In his portraits we find characters in self- reflective gestures detached from the pace of life. While some of his paintings capture live entertainment, theatre and musical performances such as travelling circuses and ballets, as seen in Russian Ballet (1958-60), Wanly's primary concentration was to depict

daily life. In Mother and Child (1957), he explores maternal intimacy, while Nocturne (1953) features a reflective scene of a solitary driver dozing on his a horse drawn taxi. The artist established an art studio in Alexandria in the 1940s with his brother Adham Wanly that was open to the public and any-one interested in the arts. In the late 1950s, Wanly travelled to Nubia to produce a series of paintings and drawings portraying life in Upper Egypt for a governmental project to document culture and conditions prior to the relocation that occurred to enable construction of the Aswan High Dam.



Untitled, 1941
Pastel on paper
44 x 56 cm

Private Collection of El Shaer Brothers

Text from the Barjeel Art Foundation website. Printed with the permission of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

3

Evoking the Environment

Cities of the Arab world express continuity as well as change. At times, painting cities became a method of constructing, and documenting, an ideal imaginary: the nation. At other times, it registered the ongoing transformations of small towns and villages into larger urban spaces, as each country developed its modern identity. Eventually capitals, representing new cosmopolitan centers with all of their challenges, became the focus of the artists' imagination. Painting nature as the main subject, at the same time, remained a peculiar period of experimentation in Arab art. Whilst practiced by some artists, it never gained enough popularity or developed into a genre of interest. Nevertheless, artists continue to find ways to engage with their changing environments.



Shafic Abboud

Lebanon, 1926 - 2004

Shafic Abboud was born in 1926 in Lebanon. He comes from a family of mountain peasants and his father was a trader in the Lebanese capital. Abboud studied engineering but was passionate about painting and quickly veered towards the Academy of Fine Arts in Beirut.

He left Lebanon in 1947 to settle permanently in Paris in the Parc Montsouris district. Whilst in Paris, he enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux-arts and trained in the workshops of Fernand Léger, André Lhote, Othon Friesz and Jean Metzinger. During the 1950s his paintings evolved towards abstraction. He exhibited in galleries, fairs and prestigious salons including the 1st Biennale de Paris, Salon des Réalités Nouvelles and Fiac in Paris. He also exhibited in Beirut, all over Europe and the United States. Abboud moved in the

Parisian and Arab intellectual and artistic circles, rubbing shoulders with Paul Veyne, Georges Duby, Helen Khal, Adonis, Etel Adnan and Georges Schéhadé. He took part in the complex dialogue between Orient and Occident.

He was Parisian by adoption, a fine painting technician and a great colourist. He is considered one of the major Arab artists of the 20th century. Very early on, his works were acquired by national and private European collections such as Center Pompidou, Museum of Modern Art in Paris, Institut du Monde Arabe, Tate Modern and British Museum in London. They are also included in Arab museums in Lebanon, the National Museum of Jordan, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi project, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Qatar and in Dubai among others.



La Robe Palmier, 1971
Oil on canvas
65 x 36 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of the Shafic Abboud Estate.

Layla Al-Attar

Iraq, 1940 - 1993

Layla Al-Attar was born in Baghdad, Iraq and was the younger sister of celebrated Iraqi artist Souad Al-Attar. Layla was brought up in a cultured and open family, to an accountant father and an affluent mother.

In 1955 She won the first prize in the world competition for children's drawings in New Delhi, India.

From 1962 to 1965 she studied and graduated from the first session of the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad. In 1966 She founded "Adam and Eve Group" and participated in its

first founding exhibition in Baghdad. In 1968 she participated in the first exhibition of the Basra community at the hall of the National Museum of Modern Art in Baghdad. Her solo exhibitions include "Shahrazad and Shahryar" at the National Museum of Modern Art in 1973 and "Women, Land, Giving" at Al-Riwaq Hall in 1980. She participated in the Kuwait Biennale, Cairo Biennale and the second Arab Biennale in Baghdad in 1976.

Her life was tragically cut short after a missile attack struck her house in 1993.



Untitled, 1991
Oil on canvas
66 x 78.5 cm

From the private collection of His Highness Sheikh
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection, Amman.



Fateh Al-Moudarres
Syria, 1922 - 1999

Fateh Al-Moudarres was born near the city of Aleppo, in northern Syria. He lived in a rural area, amongst Arab, Kurdish and Turkmen peasants. His harsh childhood, especially after the killing of his father, had psychological effects on his behavior, his art and his literary writings. Moudarres displayed a natural talent for drawing at an early age, growing close to his art teachers Munib Naqshbandi, Ghaleb Salem and Wehbe Al Hariri who educated him and taught him the principles.

In 1940, he traveled to Lebanon and studied English at the American University of Beirut. After graduating from the university, he returned to Aleppo, Syria, to work as an English teacher and an art teacher. In 1956 He traveled to complete his studies at the Royal Academy in Rome,

after obtaining a scholarship, where he studied under Italian artist Gentilini. In 1972 He received his doctorate from the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris.

He exhibited extensively during his career and published various books. In 1952, he participated in the Syrian Artists Exhibition in Damascus and won the first prize in painting. He won several prizes including the gold medal from the Italian Senate in 1962, the prize of honour at the Sao Paulo Biennale in 1963, the state award for fine arts in Damascus in 1986. Additionally, he wrote a three-part book on the history of art in 1954.

He passed away aged seventy-seven in 1999. After his death, he was awarded the Syrian Order of Merit.



Levant Borders, 1997
Oil on canvas
98 x 98 cm

From the private collection of
His Excellency Abdul Rahman bin Mohammed Al Owais

Image and biography courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection, Amman.



Willy Aractingi
Lebanon, 1930 - 2003

Willy Aractingi took to painting when he was 12 years old. Born in New York in 1930 and quasi orphaned early in life, he was brought up in Cairo and moved to Beirut, Lebanon in the late forties where he practically abandoned his art to raise a family.

A few years before the Lebanese civil war, he starts a modern art gallery exhibiting the likes of Fassianos, Niki De St Phalle and Alan Davies. Inspired, he started sketching, then painting again using every spare minute of his busy schedule. In the mid-eighties, he is painting full time and in 1989 he starts on his Magnum Opus illustrating the 244 fables of French poet Jean de La Fontaine which he completes seven years later in 1995. He painted assiduously until his death in 2003.

He described himself as a naive primitive artist. His style full of colours and humour is said to be reminiscent of Douanier Rousseau and Paul Gauguin but stand unique and with a quality very much its own.

His paintings are mostly oil or acrylic on canvas and reflects distinctive periods in his life. His early paintings are small, raw and innocent. His later work is more complex and larger in size.

His subjects reflect his environments and include not only the La Fontaine fables and tales but also his immediate surroundings. Landscapes from his trips to Chicago, Miami, Cairo, illustrations of Lebanese folkloric tales and representations inspired from his family life. Willy Aractingi has showed his work in over one hundred exhibitions either as one man shows or in mixed exhibitions. His work was displayed in Lebanon, France, the United Kingdom and the USA.

A permanent exhibit of about one hundred of his Fables could be found until his death at a museum on the Jean de La Fontaine historic route near Paris, France. Recently, his family donated 230 fables by Jean de la Fontaine to the Surssock Museum in Beirut, but this is only a tiny part of his work. Thus Willy's memory will be preserved forever.

Image and biography courtesy of the Aractingi family.



Tarzan Othello et Desdemona, 1990
Acrylic on canvas
150 x 140 cm

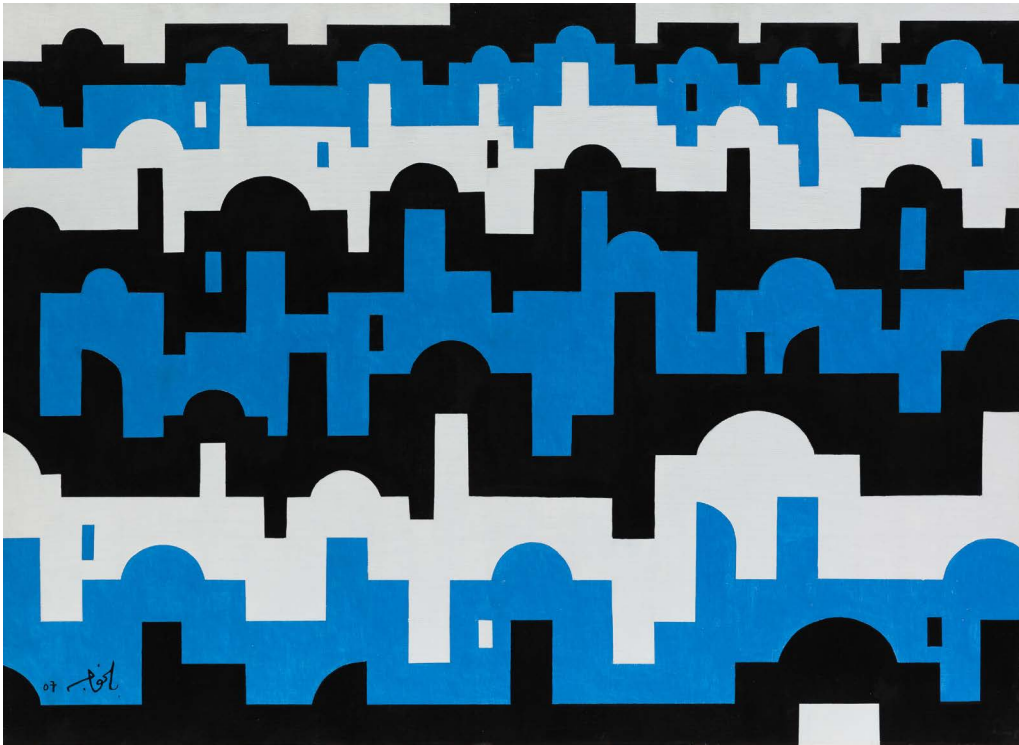
The Mokbel Art Collection



Nejib Belkhodja
Tunisia, 1933 - 2007

Born in the Tunis medina to a Tunisian father and Dutch mother, Belkhodja studied at the School of Fine Arts in Tunis and started exhibiting in 1956, and he was awarded the Tunis Municipal Prize at the Salon International that year. Belkhodja goes on to travel to Paris, where he takes part in the Biennale in 1965, 1967 and 1969 and to receive the National Award for painting in 1968. Drawing on the modern

art styles he encounters during this time, his paintings incorporate elements of Arabic calligraphy and Islamic architecture to create a unique style of his own. Belkhodja's work has been presented in numerous exhibitions worldwide from Tunisia, the United Kingdom, France, Egypt, Morocco, and Germany to the United States. In 1991, he held an exhibition in Tunis with the Iraqi painter Dia Azzawi.



Bleu, Noir Et Blanc, 2007
Acrylic on canvas
78.5 x 105 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of Elmarsa Gallery Tunis/Dubai.



Abdallah Benanteur

Algeria, 1931 - 2017

Benanteur began drawing and painting at the age of 11 and went on to become recognized as a pioneer of Algerian modernism. His non figurative art reflected his struggles living in Paris, away from home.

He graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Oran in 1948 and moved to Paris in 1953 to begin his career as an artist. During this time, he attended the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Montparnasse. He started printmaking and illustrating, and produced over 1,500 artists' books in his lifetime, often collaborating with Algerian poets and Sufi mystics. He also worked as a Professor at the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and at the Ecole des Arts décoratifs. Benanteur's exhibition history includes solo shows at

various galleries in France including Claude Lemand Gallery, Étienne Dinet Gallery and Galerie Bernier and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Algeria. He has also been included in various group exhibitions worldwide including venues such as Palais des Beaux-Arts in Marseille in 1983, Word into Art, organized by the British Museum, Dubai in 2008 and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha in 2010 amongst others.

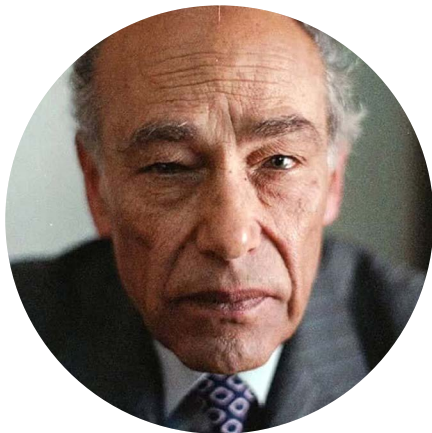
Benanteur is included in the collections of Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, National Museum of Fine Arts in Algeria, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Algeria, Barjeel Art Foundation and Mathaf: Museum of Modern Art in Qatar.



Les quatre éléments, 1992
Oil on canvas
88 x 72 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image © The Estate of Abdallah Benanteur. Courtesy Galerie Claude Lemand, Paris.



Naseer Chaura
Syria, 1920 - 1992

Naseer Chaura was born in Damascus, Syria in 1920. His parents wanted him to study medicine, but he wanted to study art, which he followed through with.

In 1938, he held his first solo exhibition at the Damascus Officers Club. In 1939, he travelled to Italy, but his trip was cut short due to the war which forced him to return to Syria.

He graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1947, and furthered his training at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus where he studied oil painting.

In 1950, he travelled to Europe to discover European art movements and returned to Syria and participated in

various exhibitions. He took part in an exhibition at the National Museum in Damascus in 1953 and won first prize. 1984 A comprehensive exhibition was held for him at Ebla Art Gallery in Damascus in 1984 and in 1990 he participated in the international Exhibition of Landscape Art in the Czech Republic.

In 1970, he was appointed agent for the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus and was also awarded the Syrian Arab Order of Merit in 1982.

He passed away aged seventy two in 1992 and is considered to be a pioneer of impressionism within Syrian Modern Art.



Landscape, 1987
Acrylic on canvas
84 x 63.8 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

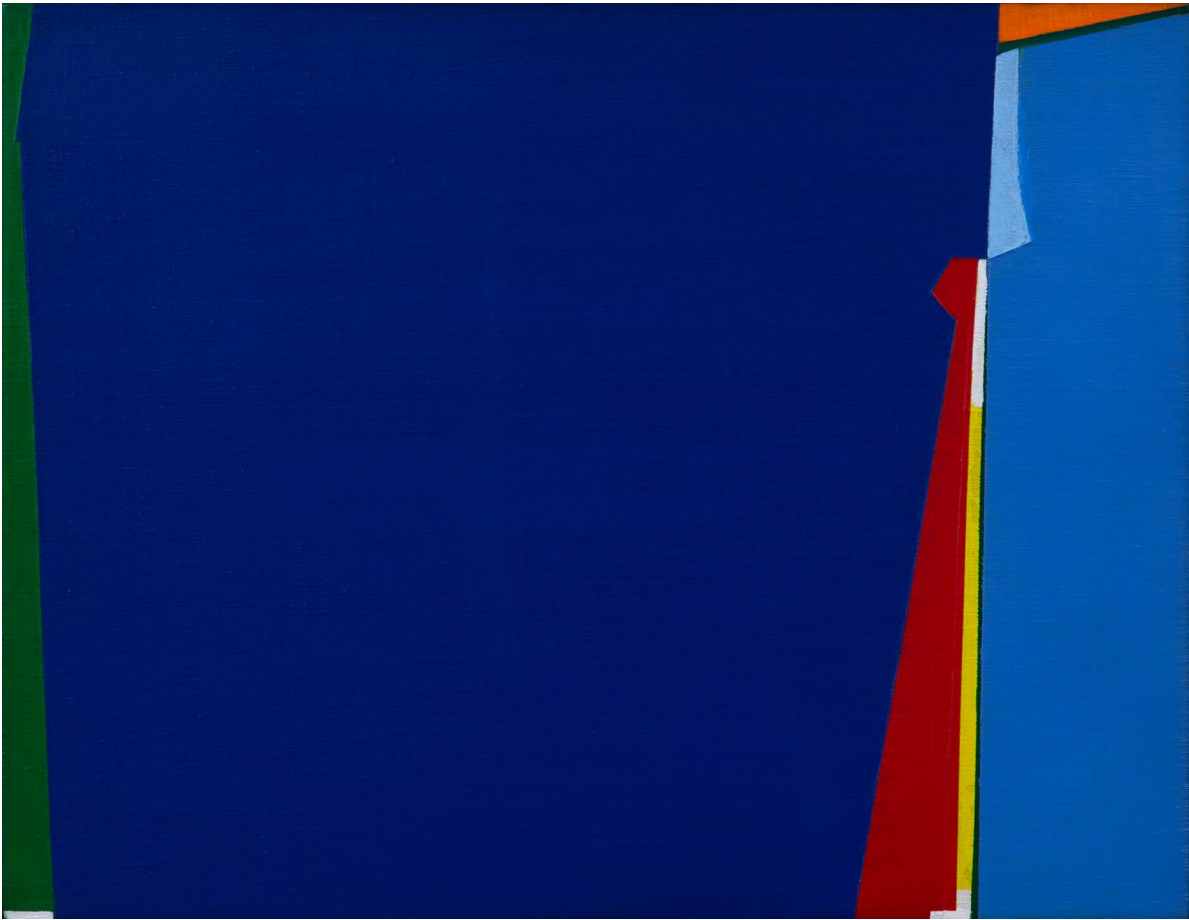
Image and biography courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection, Amman.



Saliba Douaihy
Lebanon, 1915 - 1994

Much of Saliba Douaihy's practice is characterised by a minimalist aesthetic revealing a deep interest in colour and form and is usually painted with a precise, hard-edged style executed with a minimalist rigour. His work investigated depth and space as well as a search for the sublime in the most basic elemental forms. He began painting as an apprentice to the Lebanese painter Habib Srour and his early works reveal an impressionist style that was concentrated on his love for the landscape of his homeland. However, it was after moving to New York in the 1950s and meeting artists such as Mark Rothko, Hans Hofmann, and Ad Reinhardt that his style took a turn towards minimalism. Untitled (circa 1960s) is exemplary of the later years of his practice, which

was also inspired by the works of Josef Albers. Vast swathes of blue take over most of the canvas and are spliced with brilliant tones of red, yellow, and green. The shapes are asymmetrical, laying on a single plane, producing a flat quality to the composition. Douaihy's paintings are part of museum collections, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University in Ithaca; and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He has exhibited in Beirut, New York, and Paris, with select group shows including Lebanon Pavilion, World's Fair, New York (1938); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania (1952); and Seven Decades at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1967).



Untitled, 1968
Acrylic on canvas
51 x 61 cm

Charles Al Sidaoui, Private Collection, Dubai

Text from the Barjeel Art Foundation. Printed with the permission of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



Amine El-Bacha

Lebanon, 1932 - 2019

Born in Beirut, Lebanon and lived and worked between Beirut, Lebanon and Paris, France.

Amine El Bacha's work spans painting, drawing, illustration, sculpture, as well as writing. He completed his studies at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) in 1957, and in 1959, received a scholarship from the Embassy of France to pursue his studies in Paris at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. El Bacha's illustrations have been featured in numerous poetry volumes, including Alain Jouffroy's (1965), Léopold Senghor's (1978), and Nadia Tueni's (1983) and in many newspapers and journals including the Al Nahar and Assafir Newspaper, Lebanon and the Al Arabi Journal, Kuwait. His body of work also encompasses murals, mosaic, tapestry, furniture, ceramic and jewelry. Two of his most famous murals include the Club des Artistes mural, Vincennes, France, and the mosaic of the church of San Martino, Legnano, Italy. His work has been exhibited, among others, at the Alexandria Biennale (1962);

the National Museum of Modern Art (Paris, 1964, 1966); the 6th Conches Biennale (Paris, 1965); the Kreislery Gallery (Madrid, 1978); the Institut du Monde Arabe (Paris, until present); The British Museum (London, 1989) and the Sursock Museum (Beirut, 2017) among others.

El Bacha wrote and illustrated several books of short-stories, fiction and plays in Arabic including the play "The Suicide" in 2009, and "The Night's Sun" in 2012. Major prizes include the Love Prize and the Cita Eterna Prize. In his lifetime, El Bacha received numerous international prizes: he became a laureate of Lebanon's Education Ministry in 1959, was awarded the Gold Medal of the Citta Eterna Prize, Rome, and the title II premio Internazionale d'Arte, Ottrano d'Argento, both in Italy in 1976, as well as Spain's Medal of the Order of Merit in 2012 and the Medal of Merit of the President, Lebanon, 2019. His works are part of numerous prominent private and public collections internationally.



Méditerranée, 2004

Oil on canvas

145 x 205 cm

From the private collection of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of Mahita El Bacha Urieta, on behalf of the Amine El Bacha Foundation.

Hakim Ghazali

Morocco, b.1963

Hakim Ghazali was born in Casablanca, Morocco in 1966. He, earned a BFA in his home country, attended the School of Applied Art Printing in France as well as the Haut School of Art and Design in Amiens.

His individual exhibitions include Green Art Gallery Dubai in 1996, Maison Romaine Epinal, France in 1988 and most recently So Art Gallery in Casablanca among others. He has exhibited his work in group exhibitions at the International Biennale, St. Quentin in 1992, the International Trade Centre in Dubai in 1998, Sharjah's International Biennial and the Zurich Museum in cooperation with Oryx Foundation.

He has been honoured with awards from Artistes du Monde in 2003, the first prize award at the Sharjah Calligraphy Biennale in 2006 and the first prize in the International Arabic

Calligraphy Competition from the Ministry of Culture in Abu Dhabi in 2007.

His works are in the permanent collections of the British Museum, Business Skool Londres GB, Carei Art Museum Roumania, Written Art Foundation Frankfurt Germany, Ministry of Culture Abu Dhabi, DIFC Dubai, Al Dar Dubai UAE, Sharjah Art Museum UAE, Societe Generale des Banques Morocco, Palais Royal Morocco, Accademie du Royaume du Maroc Rabat Morocco, Oryx Foundation Zurich Swizerland, Meissen museum Meissen, Museum Funf Kontenente Munich Germany.



Andalousia 2, 1999
Mixed media on canvas (paper, ink, acrylic)
189.6 x 214.5 cm

From the private collection of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Courtesy of So Art Gallery

Zeinab Abdel Hamid

Egypt, 1919 - 2002

Zeinab graduated in 1945 from the Academy of Fine Arts in Alexandria, Egypt. Her graduate work was done at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid, Spain with further studies in Mexico in 1964. In 1969, she became a professor at the Academy of Arts in Helwan, Egypt. She is a highly regarded artist, peerless in her field; her work is reminiscent of the first works that paved the way for Cubism: finely crafted Expressionism, where everyday city life imposes a context filled with memories, betraying a world of full relationships between people brought together by pure chance.

Her elements are all subordinate to the service of an architectural nature where the dividing line is what separates one shape from the other, despite her love of crowds that characterizes most of her work. Zeinab has been exhibiting her work since 1949 as a leading woman artist working in oil and watercolor.

One of the founders of the Modern Arts Group in 1947, she has received many Egyptian and international awards and has represented Egypt in numerous international exhibitions since 1950. She was commissioned to paint a large-scale work for the al-Ahram newspaper building. Her art is found in many public locations in Egypt, as well as in

private collections in Egypt, Germany, United States, France, Spain, and Mexico. From 1947 to 1948, she took part in Art exhibitions organized by the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo and the Art Museum in Alexandria. She also participated in the “Ten Pioneering Women” that opened in 1975 to mark the Woman Day, The 11th Alexandria Biennale, the 1st Fine Art Syndicate Exhibition that was inaugurated by Egypt’s First Lady in Monstery Palace in 1979, the General Exhibition held by the Art Administration in 1984 and the General Exhibition inaugurated by President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak on placing the cornerstone of the New Egyptian Opera House Building in 1985.

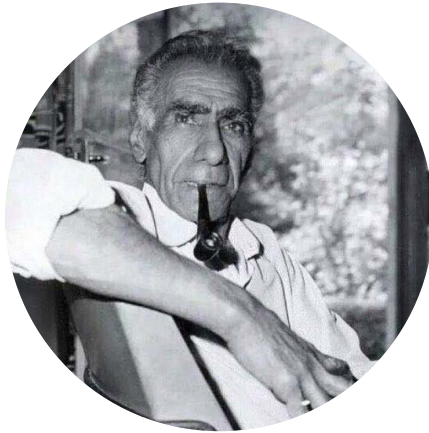
She participated in international Exhibitions such as the Egypt-France Art exhibition in Paris in 1949, represented Egypt in the 25th Florence International Art Biennale in Italy in 1950, Collective Art Production Exhibition at the Fine Art Club in Madrid in 1952, Art exhibition in Andre Morris Art gallery in Paris in 1954, Budapest and Vienna in 1963, The Egyptian Contemporary Art Exhibition in Greece and Bahrain in 1986 and The Egyptian Contemporary Art Exhibition in Rome in 1991. Zeinab was honored during festivities marking the 50th anniversary of the Faculty of Art Education in 1993 & 1994 and during festivities marking the 26th National Art Exhibition in 1999.



Untitled, 1949
Mixed media on wood
65.5 x 67 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Courtesy of Safarkhan Gallery, Cairo



Faiq Hassan

Iraq, 1914 - 1992

Faiq Hassan was born in 1914 in Baghdad. His father died when he was young and his maternal uncle, who worked as a gardener in the royal court gardens, raised him. As a young child, Faiq Hassan was fond of art and his uncle encouraged him to develop his talent. He accompanied his uncle to work from time to time and by chance, King Faisal I noticed his drawings of landscapes. He admired them and promised to send him to study art in Europe. Despite the death of King Faisal I in 1933, he was awarded a scholarship at the expense of the Iraqi government to France.

In 1938, Hassan graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He returned to Baghdad shortly after and took on teaching roles and exhibited his work in various group exhibitions. From 1939 to 1940 he contributed to the founding of the 'Painting Branch' at the Institute of Fine Arts and started teaching painting and sculpture. Together with theatre artist Hakki Al-Shibli, they founded the Iraqi Theater. In 1941, he participated in the first exhibition for 'Friends of The Arts Association in Baghdad'. In 1942, he took on a teaching role at the "Institute of Fine Arts" and participated in their first annual exhibition. In 1943, alongside Jewad Selim, he designed scenes for the play "Al-Watan" and "The Doctor Against his Will", which were exhibited at the Institute of Fine Arts. He also participated in the third exhibition of the Friends of The Arts Association at the British Cultural Institute.

In 1950 he founded the Pioneers Group", and participated in all its exhibitions until 1962. Hassan participated in many

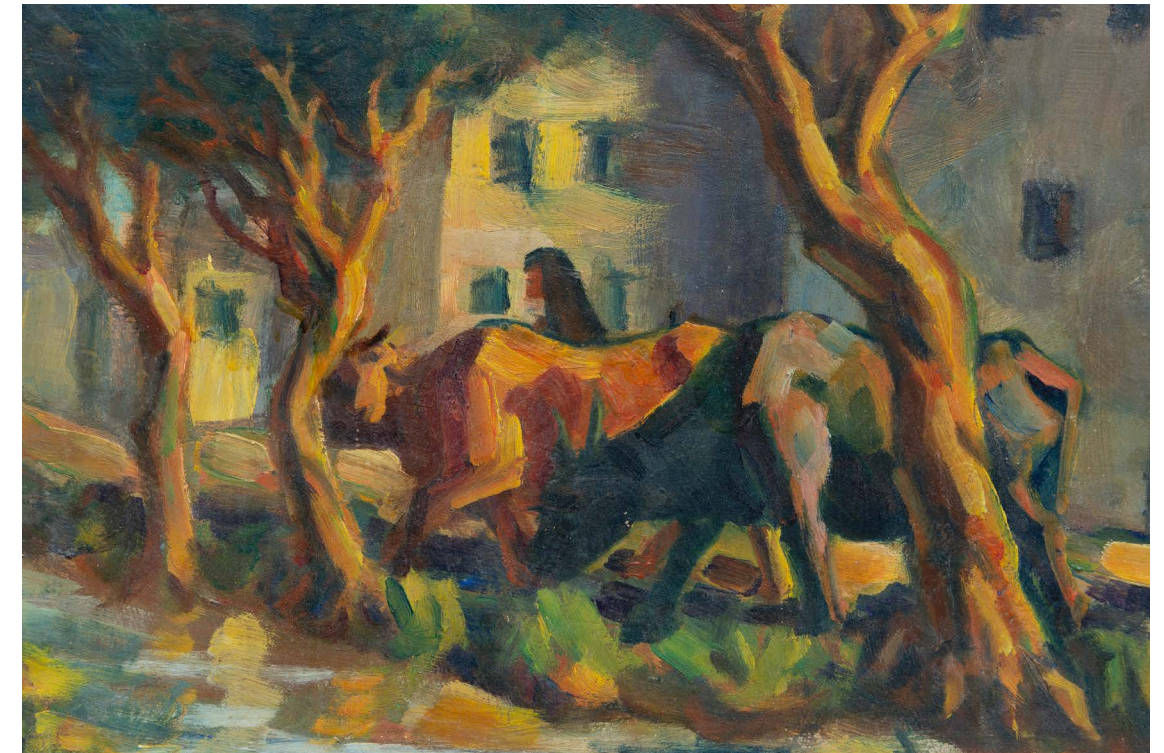
exhibitions during his career, including the third 'Pioneers' exhibition, and an exhibition with Ismail Al Cheikhli in India in 1955. In 1958 he participated in group shows in Morocco and Tunisia, with his contemporaries Jewad Selim, Ismail Al-Cheikhli and Khaled Al-Jadir.

1967 He founded the "Al-Zawiya Group", with Kadhim Haider, Muhammad Ghani Hikmat, Ghazi Al-Saudi, Valentinus, and Ismail Fattah. He left the 'Pioneers Group' and participated in "Al-Zawiya Group" first exhibition at the National Museum of Modern Art and then held his sixth solo exhibition at the Friends of the Middle East American Cultural Center in Baghdad. He was also appointed head of the Iraqi Fine Arts Department.

Hassan received many awards during his longspanning career including the Dutch Aviation Award at the Baghdad Exhibition for Painting and Sculpture, the golden award as the best Iraqi artist from the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1964 and won the knight medal in the arts and literature from France in 1984.

In 1976 he installed many art works in Baghdad, including two oil works for the headquarters of the offices of the Central Bank of Iraq. He became vice president of the International Fine Arts Association and head of the Iraqi delegation at the eighth conference of the International Association of Fine Arts in Baghdad.

He passed away in Paris in 1992.



Untitled, Undated
Oil on panel
62.3 x 83 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection, Amman.

Amer Al Obaidi

Iraq, b.1943

Amer Al-Obaidi currently lives in exile in the United states. As a young boy, he was fascinated with the cracks in dirt and began sculpting early on. Al Obaidi is known for painting and sculpture, most notably for his paintings depicting the Arabian horse, an emblem of tradition, strength and freedom. He is known to be inspired by Arab folklore, Iraqi traditions, and traditional Iraqi horse riders. Throughout his life, he has seen disaster and tragedy first hand in war-torn Iraq, losing his son to a bombing, where his wife was also injured. He currently lives in Iowa where he still paints, cares for his wife and remains embedded as one of Iraq's most important living artists.

In 1969, Al-Obaidi graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad. During his studies, he began creating small illustrations for magazines and children's books. Also during this time, he joined his contemporaries such as Ali Talib, Saleh al-Juamaie, founding the group 'The Innovationists', who opposed tradition, instead opting for new methods. Their first group exhibition took place at the National Museum of Modern Art in Baghdad in 1965.

Post graduation, he moved to Saudi Arabia where he taught painting until his return to Iraq, which saw him land roles at the Iraq's Ministry of Culture and Director of the National Museum of Modern Art, a prestigious role he held for 10 years. He continued to paint during this time.

His exhibition history includes group exhibitions at the First Arab Biennale in Baghdad in 1974, the Sao Paulo Biennial, in Brazil in 1979, Intact, Iraqi Art, Iraqi Spirit, Aya Gallery, London, UK in 2002. Recent solo shows include Lost in the Maze of Immigration at Des Moines Social Club in Iowa in 2015, in which he shed light on being an immigrant in the United States.

Today, his works are in the public collections of Barjeel Art Foundation in the United Arab Emirates, Hussain Ali Harba Family Collection, the Dalloul Art Foundation in Beirut and the Azzawi Collection in London.



Untitled, 1982
Oil on canvas
153.5 x 241 cm

From the private collection of
His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Nouri Al Rawi
Iraq, 1925 - 2014

Nouri Al Rawi was born in Iraq in 1925. He showed an interest in literature and art as a young boy. During his career, he wrote several literary articles for newspapers and magazines in Iraq, such as 'Al-Rafidain' and 'Al-Manahil' and publications in Beirut and Egypt. In 1941 he graduated from the Teachers Institute in Baghdad and was appointed teacher at two high schools.

In 1953, he became friends with well-known artist and poet Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab, with whom he translated and published the biographies of many Impressionist artists. In 1956, he joined the Iraqi Plastic Artists Association and also worked as a tv presenter on fine arts programs for upwards of twenty years. His program was one of the most successful in Iraqi history, and educated society about visual arts and international and Arab modern masters. Al Rawi founded the National Museum of Modern Art with the help of the Gulbenkian Foundation and went on to become its director for twelve years. During this time, he wrote the

books "Reflections on Modern Iraqi Art" and "Introduction to Iraqi Folklore".

In 1962 he studied typographic design and montage in Yugoslavia for one year. He also wrote a book about the late artist Jewad Selim and joined the 'Pioneers Group' in 1964. He participated in various exhibitions including "The Battle" in the hall of the National Museum of Modern Art in Baghdad in 1968. He was appointed the Director of Art Exhibitions in the Public Arts Directorate in 1972, a position he held for 7 years. 1973 He participated in the fifteenth exhibition of the Visual Artists Association at the Plastic Artists Association in Baghdad and became a member of the Iraqi National Committee for Arts (IAP) affiliated with UNESCO.

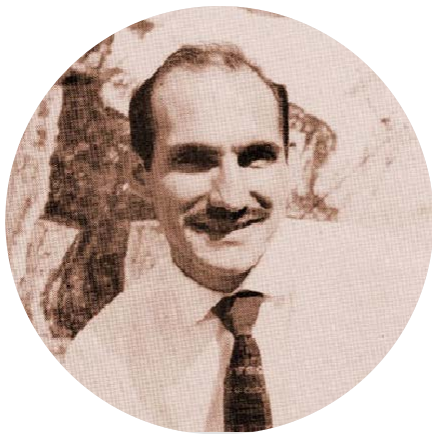
He held solo exhibitions in Iraq, Hungary, Paris and Amman and also participated in a joint exhibition with his son Raed Al-Rawi in North Carolina, in the United States. The artist passed away in Baghdad in 2014.



Untitled, 1986
Triptych canvas
95 x 273 cm

From the private collection of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Image and biography courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection, Amman.



Shakir Hassan Al Said
Iraq, 1925 - 2004

Considered a key figure in Iraq's modern art movement, Shakir Hassan Al Said used art as a vehicle for spiritual reflection. After receiving a degree in social science, Al Said pursued painting at Baghdad's Institute of Fine Arts, where he studied under Jewad Selim and held his first solo show in 1954. He co-founded the Baghdad Group for Modern Art with Selim before travelling to study in Paris at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts. Upon his return to Baghdad, Al Said taught at the Institute of Fine Arts and developed an art

philosophy known as the One Dimension; forming an artist collective of the same name. One Dimension referred to the realm between the visible world and that of God, where transcendence results in the disintegration of the self. While familiar with such methods of analysis as Structuralism and Deconstruction, Al Said was particularly influenced by Sufi thought and experimented with ways in which pictorial surfaces could be transcended, often using holes and lacerations in his works.



Untitled, 1988
Paper
70 x 52.5 cm

From the private collection of
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Hedi Turki

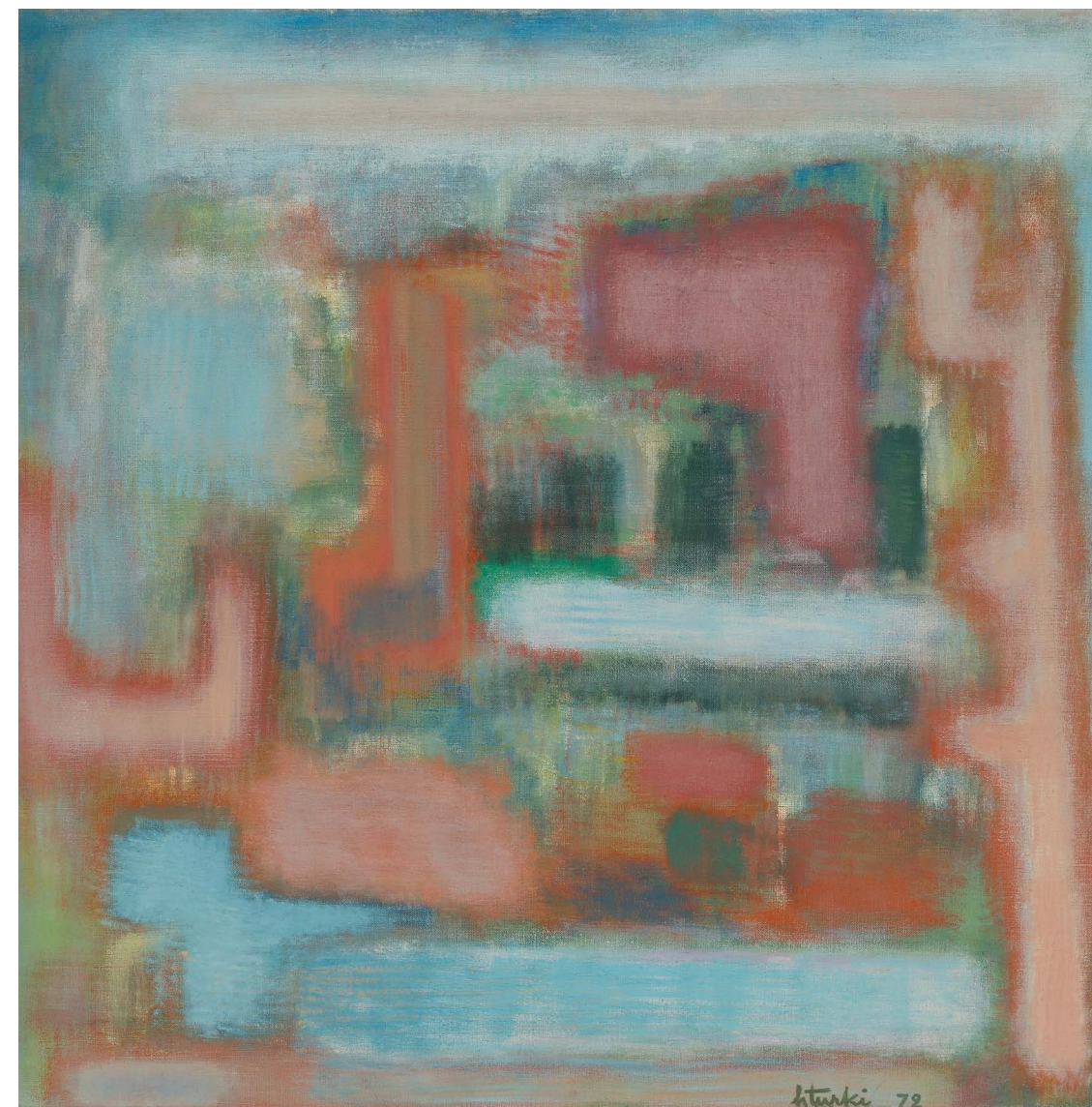
Tunisia, 1922 - 2019

About Hedi Turki (Tunisia, b. 1922 - 2019) Born in 1922 in Tunisia, Hedi Turki was born in Tunis to a family of Turkish origin. His grandfather, Hacı Hamid Semerci, emigrated from Turkey to Tunisia in 1870 as an Ottoman army major. Turki attended his primary education from 1928 to 1936, then went to the Sadiki College, before going to the Lycée Carnot between 1936 and 1940. He abandoned his studies after the death of his father, Mustapha, in 1939, in order to support his family as he was the eldest of seven brothers. He worked in numerous odd jobs such as; an apprentice's tailor, a clerk, and a labourer in an oil mill. He married Jamila Skhiri in 1948 after the death of his mother in 1945.

He began to learn the principles of pictorial art, self-taught, and then in 1964, he joined the School of Tunis until 1940. In 1951, he completed a refresher course of two months in Paris at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. He then obtained a scholarship for two years (1956-1957) at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, he later returned to Tunis in 1957, and taught drawing at the Lycee Technique Emile Loubet. In 1959, he travelled for three months in the United States, where he discovered and enrolled into abstract art at Columbia University. From 1963 until he retired in 1985, he taught art at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Tunis. He continued to travel,

study and work during his life, particularly in England (1971), Nigeria (1977), and South Korea (1978). Turki made a second journey to the USA in 1979, where he met George Segal in California.

Turki was instrumental in the founding of the Ecole de Tunis (School of Tunis) as well as in the establishment of both the National Union of plastic and graphic arts of Tunisia and the General Union of Arab Plastic Artists. His work has evolved over time, a nationalist vocation at first, usually figurative like most members of the School of Tunis. Turki then became strongly influenced by Abstract Expressionism following his trip to the United States, where he was mainly inspired by two renowned American painters: Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) and Mark Rothko (1913-1970). Since his first visit to the USA, he has been reacting in response to the pictorial academic style and folklore representations of the Ecole de Tunis, thus introducing abstract painting in Tunisia. Turki's abstract style is marked by a deep sense of Tunisia and a somewhat religious aspect, which distinguishes it from other artists of his time. His abstract paintings include Organ of Light (1984; Tunis, Cent. A. Vivant) and Memory of Finland (1984-5; Tunis, Cent. A. Vivant). He lives and works in Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia.



Les Thermes d'Antonin, 1972
Oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm

From the private collection of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Al Tashkeel Magazine

First published by the Emirates Fine Arts Society in 1984, Al Tashkeel has grown to become an important resource for the arts society over the last three decades. The magazine had a small production, with only 21 publications printed during a time of limited resources and few art writers. Al Tashkeel employed artists who studied abroad such as

Hassan Sharif to contribute to its writings, which covered local and international exhibitions, essays and commentary on global fine art movements.

Today, Al Tashkeel magazine is still considered a valuable archival tool for the understanding of the UAE art scene.



Hakim Ghazali featured in Al Tashkeel Magazine



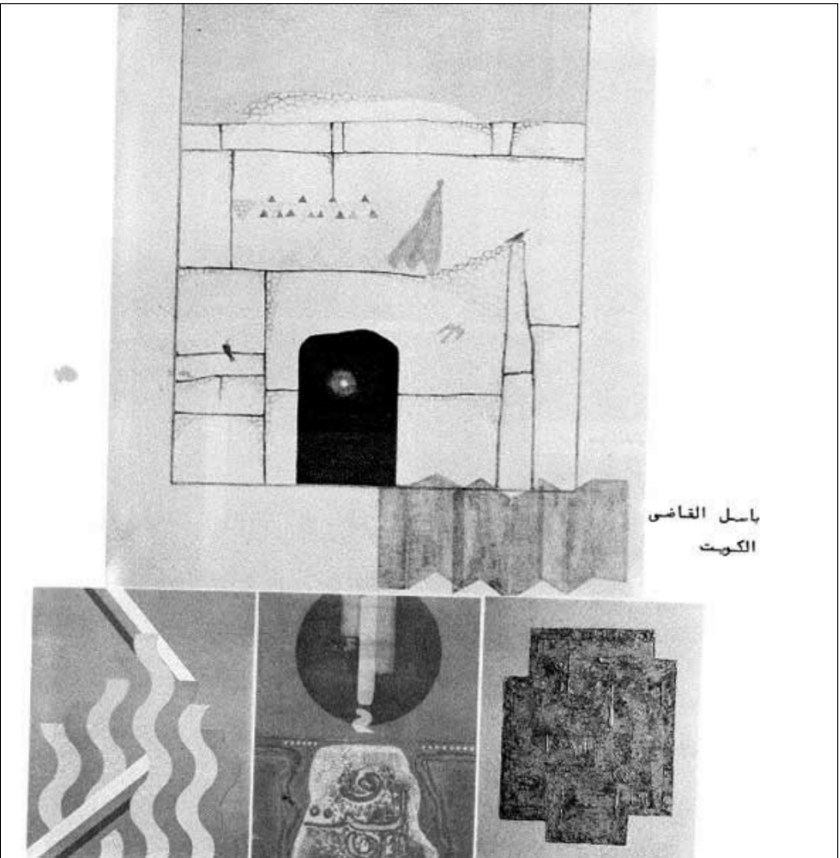
Rabab Nemr featured in Al Tashkeel Magazine



Safwan Dahoul featured in Al Tashkeel Magazine



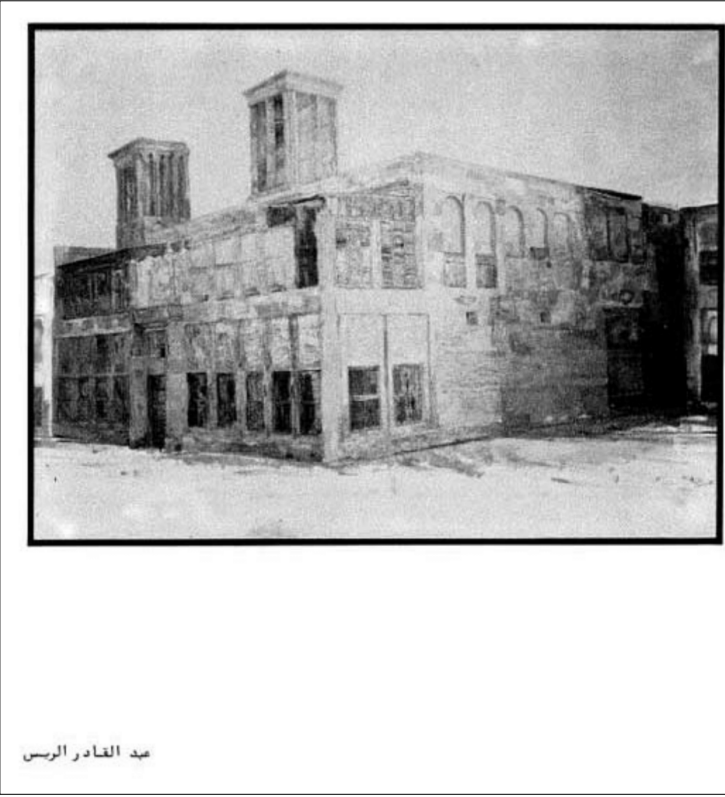
1984 cover, Al Tashkeel Magazine



Rafa Nasiri featured in Al Tashkeel Magazine



Shafic Abboud featured in Al Tashkeel Magazine



Abdul Qader Al Rais featured in Al Tashkeel Magazine

Archive

Explore our growing catalogue of primary archival material featuring the artists in the exhibition; this is an ongoing project with new content being gathered regularly.

This chapter would not have been possible without the support of the artists, artist studios, galleries and artist estates; seeing these visual memories and observing the artists in their element is truly joyful.

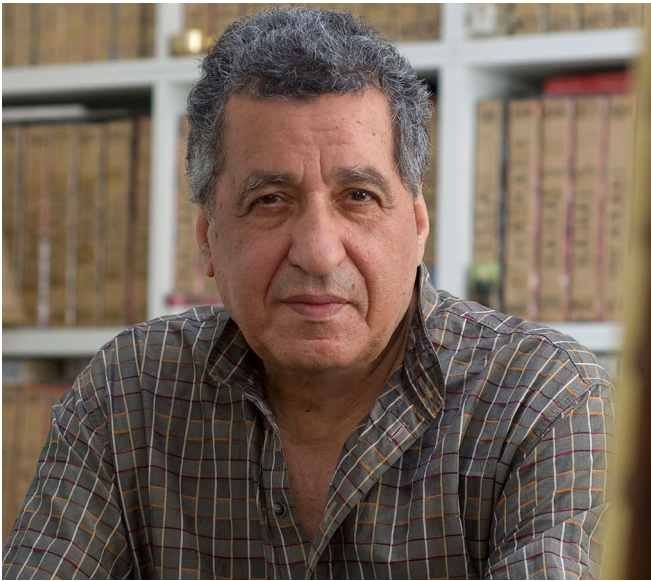
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- Ibrahimi Collection, Amman
- Maha Malluh
- Mark Hachem Gallery
- Motion Gallery
- Nahas Studio
- Omar El Nagdi Estate
- The Samawi Collection
- The Third Line, Dubai
- Sadik Alfraji
- Sfeir-Semler Gallery
- Shafic Abboud Estate
- The estate of Hassan Sharif and Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde

Abdallah Benanteur

Algeria, 1931 - 2017



Prologue by Marc Hérissé

Benanteur's paintings are magical, poised between abstraction and figuration. Transparent, glowing with countless colours and always associated with a precious prismatic refinement, they recall, without ever actually showing them, Brittany's endless spaces, the sea and the deserts before which this painter dreamed throughout his Algerian youth. Poetry is a constant in this artist's noble and singular world, about which Youri wrote so tellingly : Magnificently aloof, far from groups and modish cliques, he invents his own space, creates his personal time.

In the eighties, the works painted by this great artist dazzle us with fragments of splintered lights. Here we are at the very core of true impressionism, beyond any figuration, that figuration which the painter was to discover later on, and which he learned to express in such an allusive and sensitive manner after his travels in Italy. Do I mean that I prefer this period to another ? No. I love Benanteur altogether, for that splendid dimpled touch which lets the entire prism's iridescence shine forth.

From year to year, the Algerian artist, born in 1931, enchants me ever more through his increasing sureness of touch. This painter, who has superbly mastered the synthesis between figuration and abstraction, overwhelms us by two huge polyptychs, simply and enigmatically entitled Triomphe. These works, in which some might see a harmonious

combination of colours, nonetheless lead us, if we so wish, towards a large army arising from the shadows. This personal pantheon's limbo affords us glimpses both of Rembrandt or Rubens, as well as friends alive or dead, cast for all eternity ; you can also see there a tutelary mother-goddess haloed in a lunar brightness. We might glimpse immense landscapes in which one can find one's way or lose oneself. He has enlarged his strokes, and, under the diaphanous transparencies, embracing the same watercolour-like fluidity, the same light glazes, and beneath vaporous mists, light still surges like a sun in all its glory.

The underlying nostalgia of lost horizons, like in those "Pays - Paysages", painted by the great Algerian artist, is but one of the facets of his inner world. His splendid oeuvre, universal in its reach, is not only limited to the recurrent viewing of the surroundings of Mostaganem. That is the departure point for a journeying which the artist invites us to share with him. Our eye is forever flickering, marvelling, unable to distinguish the abstract from the figurative, every canvas providing, from one moment to another, a new approach: and so they are revealed to us, multiple, polymorphs, harbingers of mystery, which, like every major work of art be it dramatic, symphonic, poetic or literary, is so rich that one can decode it and interpret it in various ways. Here the tondos, shown among the large square canvases, are not an aesthete's entertainment, but a focal point, a symbol for the eye and its iris. The palette is iridescent, diaphanous, airy, transparently

vibrant, maintained through a very sure touch, masterly, poetic and virile. Flashes of light, be they sunny or stormy, take you beyond the painting's confines. One is reminded of Turner when faced with these shimmering lights. It is quite another world, but it holds the same magical quality.

Benanteur's paintings have formal and sensitive beauties, with a strong visual impact, being neither figurative, insofar as the image could replace a photographic object, nor abstract, because there are always rooted within the elements of a deeply observed and felt nature. The recent works are lyrical landscapes, in which the imaginary struggles with deeply buried memories. A floating world, close to that of Chinese painting, in which top and bottom are interchangeable within a limitless space. But Benanteur never leaves any empty spaces, and his surface is worked over with coloured inflections, recalling air's transparencies, or water's motions, or else that of scudding clouds, leading to liquid and atmospheric fusion. All of these pictorial sensitivities are obtained from a fine scrumbling, worked over like watercolour with a very sure hand. His colours, sometimes diaphanous, sometimes opaque, provide all the changing beauties of the sun's spectrum. The light emanating from them is finally the incarnation of the earth's song.

Translated from French by Ann Cremin.

Exile and Kingdom by Rachid Boudjedra

This genius engraver not only lives abroad, in Paris, where he settled at the age of twenty, but he also inhabits a voluntary metaphysical exile. He is absent from the world and he experiences his work (as an engraver) as a form of asceticism. He stays buried within himself, fascinated by his inner world, in a kind of cosy, muffled interiority. Because this man is metaphysically over-sensitive. Through printmaking, he can afford himself some kind of respite, he can overcome his own fears. He paints in order not to feel the cold, to bypass death and frost. While Benanteur is awkward when faced with everyday life, his pen opens overwhelming craters in space. His etchings are a support on which to peg his obsessions, his nostalgia for Mostaganem, his passion for Hallaj and Ibn Arabi's sufi texts, his painful vision of the world. When making his etchings, Benanteur displays an incantatory form of writing, constantly shot through with the mists of the unsayable and the impalpable, a passion for the world scored by his tools, signs sketched with unexpected and unpredictable gestures, a kind of yearning towards the eternal and the immeasurable. Brief, incisive gestures, freighted, despite a kind of restraint, of propriety. In these etchings, Benanteur attempts to combine the meanings of reality with absence and refinement. Thus, this Algerian becomes universal. His stroke is constantly erased by God, biffed by eternity. Here, nothing is left to the anecdotal, the folkloric or the exotic. As far as he is concerned, a painter

creates his signs out of the void and aridity. Immobility is a part of his way of living, whereas most of our painters tend to gesture grandly. And in that Heraclitean immobility, we find all of the world's serenity and its complex flavour. If exile made of this immense engraver a man deeply buried in the underground of being and metamorphosis, his kingdom, over which he reigns supreme, is limitless, impregnable ! Maybe that is why he wears his genius lightly. Benanteur does not vociferate. He is the only Algerian painter who has a genuine and international universality. For it was in his terrible solitude, his obstinate silence, his sudden mysticism, and his transcendental instinct that he discovered his genius, his passion for spurting forth, as well as his innate feeling for lines and incisions.

Translated from French by Ann Cremin.

The River and the Volcano by Claude Lemand

Born in 1931 in Mostaganem, Abdallah Benanteur was brought up in an Algerian family and cultural environment, specifically enthralled by writing and illuminated manuscripts, by mystic Muslim poetry, by Andalusian music and songs. In 1953, he settled down in Paris, which he transformed into his own capital of life, creation and international outreach. He was influenced by the great masters of the museums in France and Europe, yet he managed to create his own personal oeuvre, producing lyrical landscapes infused with the light of his Mediterranean homeland and that of his adopted Brittany, as well as landscapes that are sometimes abstract or dotted with silhouettes of people walking.

Solitude and Creativity. Benanteur is not a media-savvy, worldly or intellectual artist, clever at handling concepts and elaborating sophisticated theories, adapted to various means of communication. Nature and History fashioned him thus : solitary, independent, anxious, proud and hardworking. If he works so hard, if his graphic production is volcanic, that is his temperament : he cannot escape it, he cannot do otherwise. Strong willed, earthy, positive and optimistic, nothing can prevent him from working at what he believes to be his duty as a man and a painter, the task he must accomplish. Work is also his natural way of subduing his anguish and his anxieties, of responding to life's tragic forms and, for him as for so many other men, of responding to history's tragedy. His solitude is creative, his work is life saving, and his output is a source of hope : if Humankind is capable of beauty, it shall be capable of justice and of peace.

Light and Light. Lacking his native Mediterranean light, Benanteur did not seek out, unlike so many other painters, a similar, physical quality of light, in the South, in Spain or Greece ; rather, he sought out a different light, a complementary one, that of painting, of his painting. The natural ideal of his previous life environment, a ceaseless

object of nostalgia, was replaced by an environment suited to his creations : he spent his summer holidays in Brittany and not in the warm and sunny climes of the South. When he paints, engraves or creates books, he isolates himself within a filtered light, whether in his painting studio or in his graphic arts workshop. When he spent four successive months of August in Italy, his eyes perceived the country's light but his vision was entranced by the light in ancient Italian paintings, which enhanced his palette from 1981 onwards.

Poetry and Artist's books. A brilliant typographer, designer and engraver, he designed and produced his books entirely by himself, as much the work on the paper itself, as the printing of all the proofs on his hand press. Between 1961 and 1994, he created a hundred bibliophile books, on ancient and contemporary poems, from the East and the West : Muslim and Christian mystics, poems from Persia, Japan, Europe, France or Algeria : Attar, Djami, Gréban, Al-Hallaj, Misri, Rumi, Khayyam, Nezami, Saadi, Issa, Dickinson, Hölderlin, Rimbaud, Yourcenar, ... Etching became his privileged technique, on slate, lead and linoleum, then on copper and zinc. From 1994 onwards, Benanteur mostly created an exceptional and impressive group of over 900 books in a single copy, based on the texts of more than 300 poets world-wide : poems in their original language, or translated in French, or in bilingual editions (French + German, English, Chinese, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Persian or Russian, ...). He unendingly varied the sizes, layout, paper, texts (composed, incrustated, manuscript) and the illustrative techniques (watercolours, sketches, drawings, gouaches, wash drawings, embossings, original imprints different for each book, ...). These thousand and one books revealed his exceptional qualities as a book artist : his overwhelming creativity and his absolute virtuosity in the orchestration of the various components provided each work with an original reading rhythm. No twentieth century artist, nor in any other century, nor any civilization, has proved to have so much energy and imagination in the creation of so many admirable and unique books, in such a short span of time. A truly great master!

Ideology and Creativity. The social and historical concept that Benanteur's social self has of the world and of mankind is simple, manichean and conflictual, reflecting the irreducible antagonism and warfare between two entities antithetical by their very nature : good / evil, the rich / the poor, the exploiters / the exploited, the colonizers / the colonized, the aggressors / the aggressed, the criminals / the victims, ... This concept, overly marked by a certain period's ideology, led automatically, in his paintings and in his graphic works, to sharply contrasting compositions and colours, to diptychs and polyptychs where each panel was the opposite of

the other. In the facts, and from the very beginning, this worldview had very little impact on his creative self : on the contrary, the paintings and watercolours, the etchings and the imprints, the diptychs and the polyptychs are articulated in perfect harmony, like complementary images, similar and different, mirror images, indefinitely. In actual fact, his work is rather more the reflection of an idealist, humanist, and universalist vision, born of two conceptions of the world that influenced him successively, and whose categories informed him powerfully, for they correspond to his human, aesthetic and social ideal : the Sufi movement he knew as a child and as an adolescent in Algeria (poems, songs, processions, calligraphy and illuminated books) and the utopian communist movement that influenced him in the fifties in France, both of them close to that Far Eastern Buddhism, whose poets and painters he knows and admires so much (wisdom, poetry and painting : ideal landscapes and man's modest and harmonious place within nature). Benanteur would have liked to live and work in a country and during a time where that human, aesthetic and social ideal still endured : e.g. the late Middle Ages in Europe or the pinnacle of Arab-Andalusian civilization.

Translated from French by Ann Cremin.

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Abdul Qader Al Rais

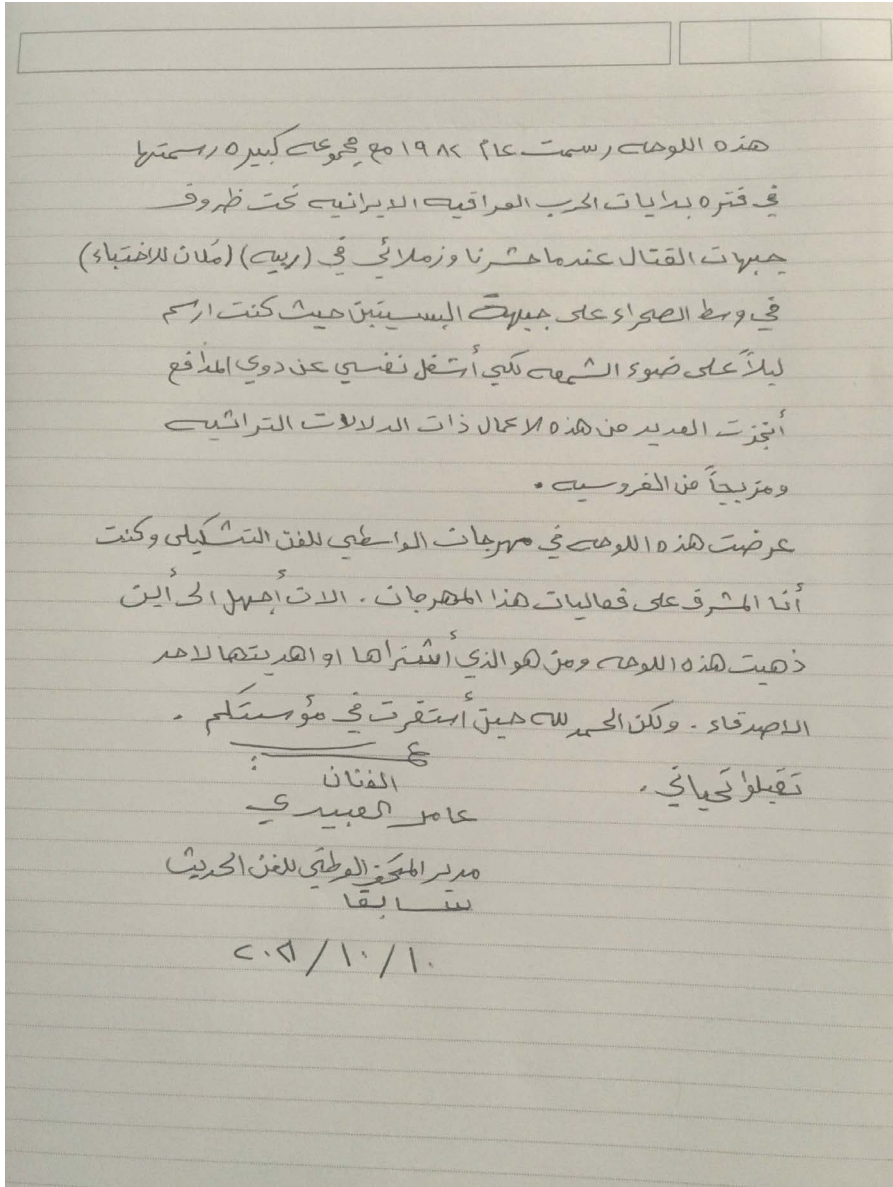
UAE, b.1951



images courtesy of Dubai Culture Arts Authority

Amer Al Obaidi

Iraq, b.1943



Letter from Amer Al Obaidi

Courtesy of Bedor Al Obaidi

Asaad Arabi

Syria, b. 1941



Widely respected as an early innovator of contemporary painting in the Arab world and a prominent art theorist and critic, Asaad Arabi has continuously reinvented his painting style in an attempt to depict the rhythms, sensuality, and concealed narratives of urban environments, particularly in his native Syria. Arabi's fascination with cities and the spaces that define them has included an extensive investigation of how inhabitants influence the formation of culture in such settings—a focus that has led to colourist approaches and abstracted forms in addition to early experiments with modernist figuration.

Arabi's decades-long career dates back to the 1960s, when he trained with Guido La Regina, an Italian painter that encouraged a new school of abstraction among students at the University of Damascus. Emerging from this aesthetic shift, Arabi's insistence on formal experimentation quickly secured his status as a leading painter in Syria. The artist's later usage of geometric abstraction reverberated throughout the region as a renewed interest in Islamic art and aesthetics took hold in the 1980s. In recent years, Arabi has alternated between pure abstractions that are reliant on tonal variations as affective details to expressionist depictions in which figures appear to merge with their environments. In recent years, Arabi has alternated between pure abstractions that are reliant on tonal variations as affective details to expressionist depictions in which figures appear to

Courtesy of Ayyam Gallery

merge with their environments. He began to investigate the intricate link between sound and sight through his portraits of highly renowned Egyptian singer, Um Kalthoum. Through this series of portraits, the artist has managed to represent the delicate balance between voice and vision.

Born in 1941, Asaad Arabi graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus before moving to Paris, France in 1975, where he received a diploma in painting from the Higher Institute of Fine Arts, and subsequently earned a PhD in Aesthetics from the Sorbonne University.

Arabi has exhibited in the Middle East and North Africa for more than sixty years and has been featured in solo and group shows throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States, most recently at Galerie Roy Sfeir, Paris, France (2019); Ayyam Gallery, Beirut (2017); Galerie Frederic Moisan, Paris, France (2017); Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, USA (2017); Galerie Frederic Moisan, Paris, France (2017); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2015); and Sircov Gallery, Brest, France (2019).

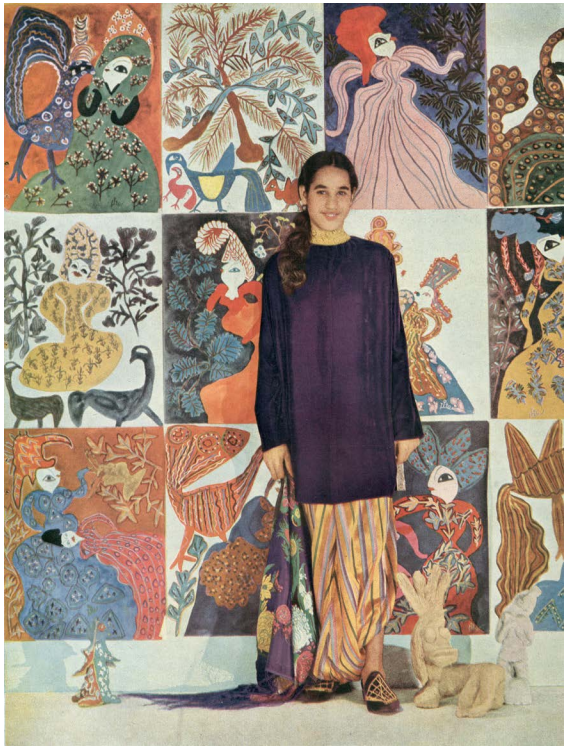
Arabi's works are housed in public and private collections such as Institut du Monde Arabe; the Barcelona Contemporary Museum of Art; the National Museum, New Delhi; the National Museum of Korea, Seoul; Los Angeles County Museum; and Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

Baya Mahieddine

Algeria, 1931 – 1998



Baya's portrait at Galerie Maeght



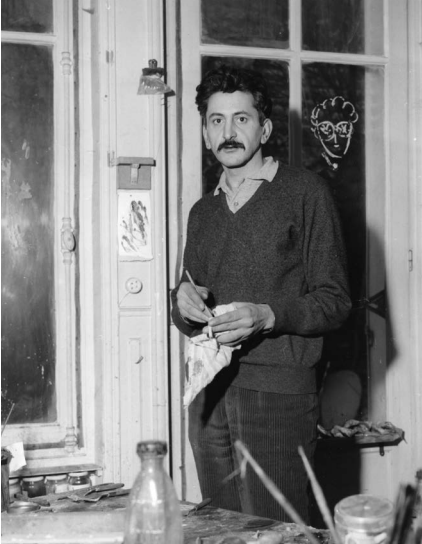
Courtesy of Elmarsa Gallery Tunis/Dubai

Shafic Abboud

Lebanon, 1926 - 2004



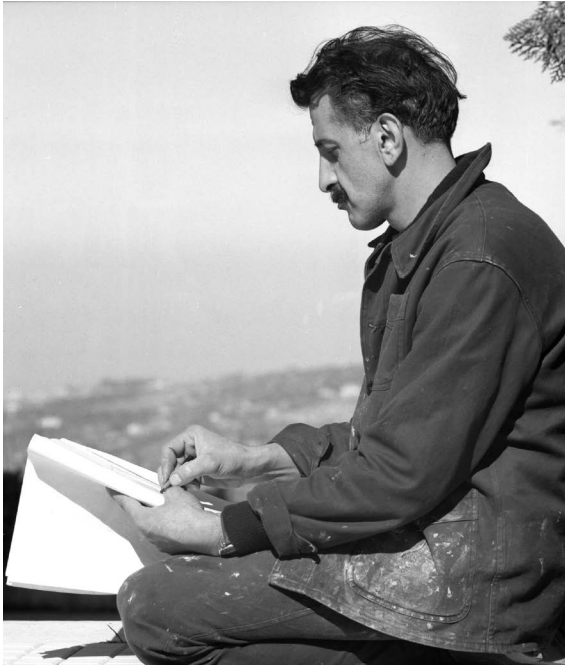
Abboud, 1973, Paris



Abboud, 1959, Paris



Abboud, 1995, Paris

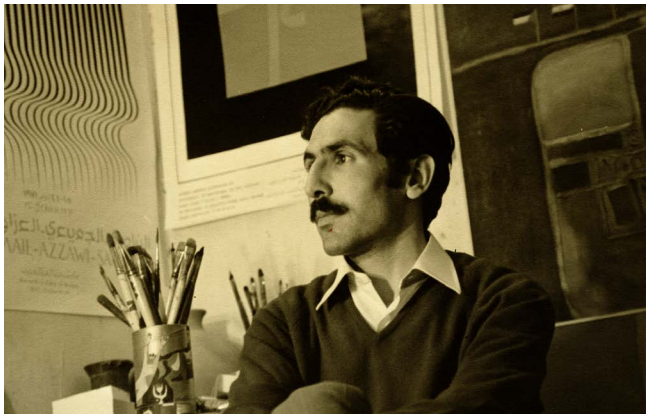


Abboud, 1973, Liban



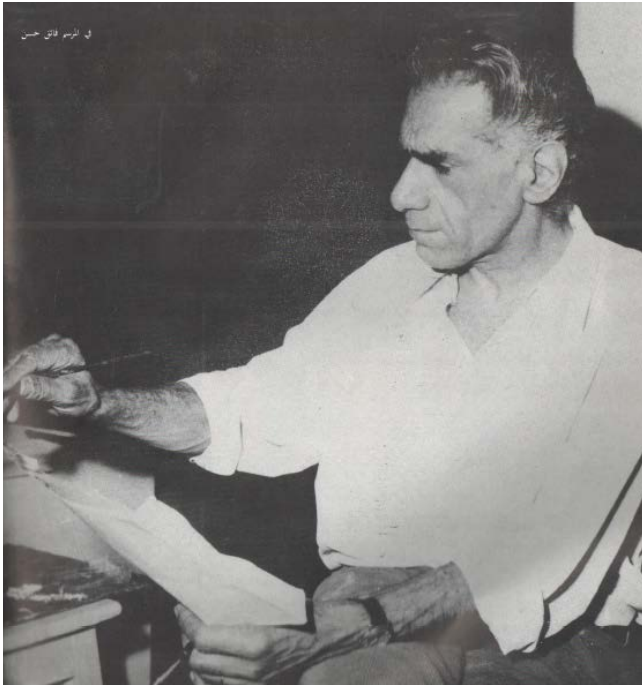
Courtesy of the Shafic Abboud Estate

Dia al-Azzawi
Iraq, b.1939



Courtesy of Dia al-Azzawi

Faiq Hassan
Iraq, 1914 - 1992



Courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection, Amman

George Bahgoury
Egypt, b.1932



Courtesy of Dina Samir

Hakim Ghazali
Morocco, b.1963

Andalousia، إذا،
عنوان الكراسة التي قدمها حك
الغزالي، تضمنت صوراً :
لوحات مختارة من أعم
«الجدران» مال فيها إ
الألوان الباردة - الفات
كمقاربات لتلك الجص
والرملي الواقعية، مع ضرب
عريضة من الأوكر الشاه
والرصاصي والترابي الوس
بعضها مشغول على الكانفا
وبعضها على الورق أو الخشب
Play Wood وكلها من إنت
عام ١٩٩٩ وقياسات ٢٠٠x٠
سم وبما يدنو منها مساحة، ل
بعضها تمت بقياس ٣٠x٥٠ سم
على الورق بخاصة، وبتقني
ومواد مختلفة ixed
Technic

وحكيم الغزالي حاصل ع
البكالوريوس (فنون تشكيلية
من الدار البيضاء - وشها
الفنون التطبيقية وفنون الطبا.
من فرنسا، ثم أكمل دراسته
الكلية العليا للفن والتصميم
قسم التكنولوجيا الحديثة وه
الفيديو / فرنسا، وكان عض
بيت الفنانين) في باريس و



اللوحة: للفنان حكيم الغزالي من مجموعة «أندلس»: مواد مختلفة علي قماش
١٠٥x١٥٥سم - إنتاج ٢٠٠٠

Courtesy of So Art Gallery

Hassan Massoudy
Iraq, b.1944



Courtesy of Hassan Massoudy

Hassan Sharif
UAE, 1951 - 2016



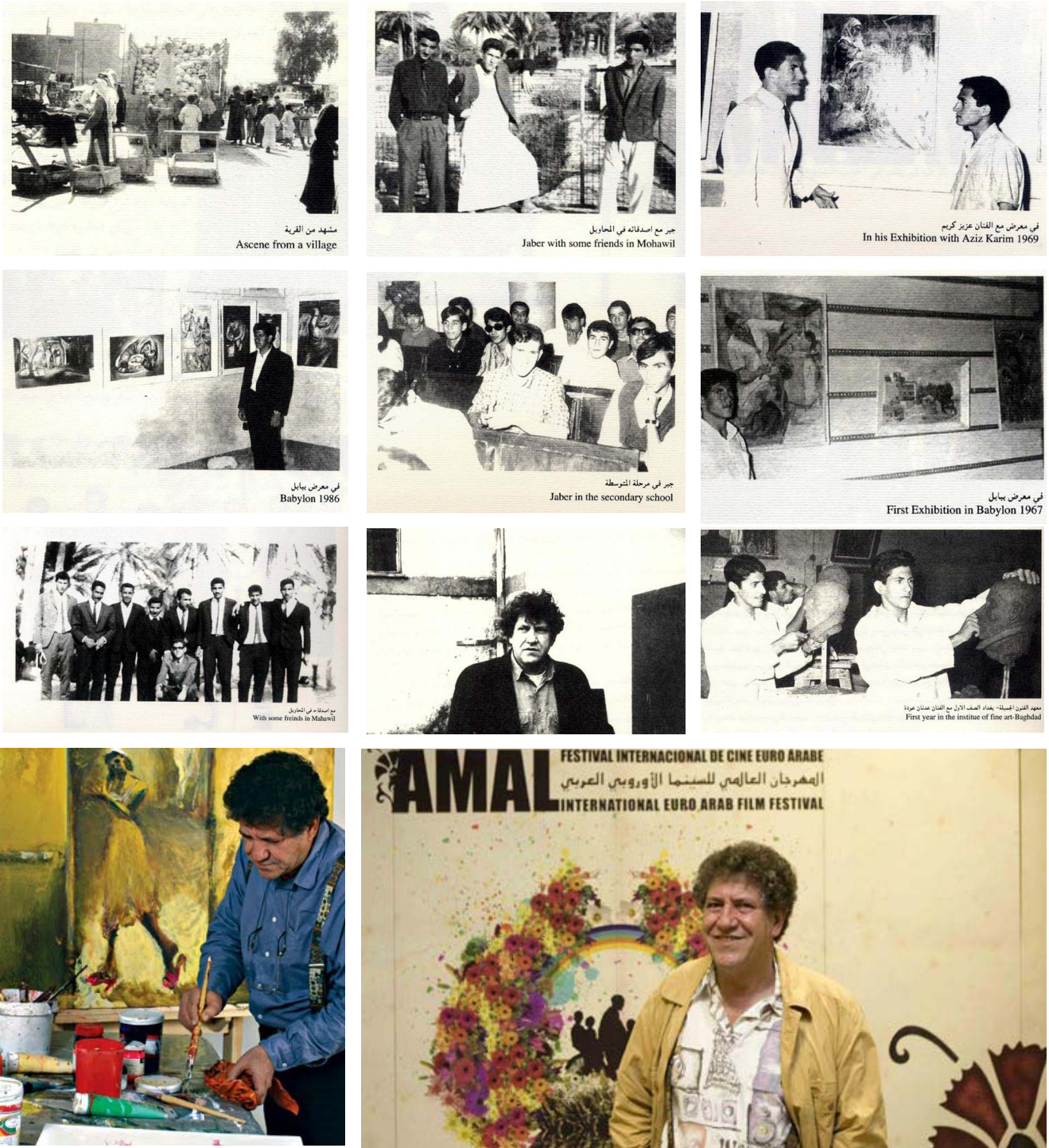
Courtesy of the estate of Hassan Sharif and Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde

Hussein Madi
Lebanon, b.1938



Courtesy of Mark Hachem Gallery

Jaber Alwan
Iraq, b.1948



Courtesy of Athar Jaber

Jamil Hammoudi
Iraq, 1924 - 2003



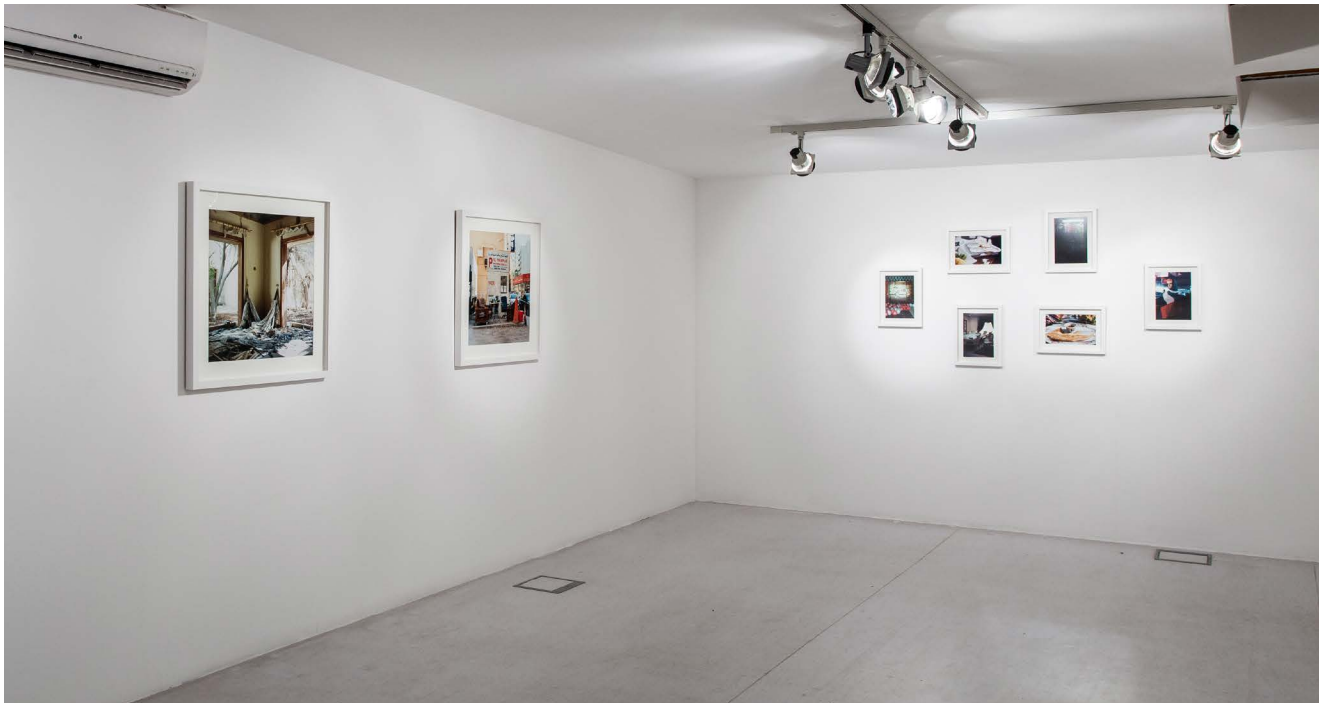
Courtesy of the Hammoudi Estate

Khaled Ben Slimane
Lebanon, b.1951



Courtesy of the artist and Elmarsa Gallery, Tunis/Dubai

Lamy Gargash
UAE, b.1982



Courtesy of Lamy Gargash and The Third Line, Dubai

Maha Malluh
Saudi Arabia, b.1959



Text about the images; the road to mecca, screened and barcoding I & II for “TERMINAL” and for “INSTITUTE OF MONDE ARABE” exhibitions

Our age of modernity has catapulted us into a whirlwind of travelling. Angled from a specifically Saudi Arabian perspective, Maha Malluh's work exposes the contrasting experiences that traditional vehicles such as camels provide from today's modern method of aero planes. The modern Saudi Arabian subject no longer enjoys the freedom of traversing expansive desert dunes, relatively unobstructed and unscrutinized. Previously unoccupied by the ugly machinery of screening equipment and the probing eyes of surveying bodies.

Containing intimate trinkets and personal possessions, our baggage is exposed to the public sphere. Things always wrapped up, protected, embraced as our precious memories of a distant past are put under the piercing gamma rays of airport screening systems. In other words the private sphere is x-rayed into the public arena. These private pieces are then metamorphosed into images on the security screens to be categorized into 'safe' or 'threat'.

Throughout this process, we are turned into passive subjects, having no power over this process of publicizing our lives, our memories and our vulnerabilities.

Travelling becomes that which has ourselves stripped to the very essence. Our spiritual core and educational make-up

are subject to being processed using data storage systems. Even our religion and education comes under scrutiny and are turned into potential security threats. It seems that wherever we turn we are confronted with an agent of surveillance. Even our intimate childhood memories are not saved from the brutality of the gaze. What was once innocent and charming begins to raise eyebrows.

The works in the series are primarily concerned with security checks at airports terminals. Underlying post 9/11 security checks is an exaggerated greed to increase sales at duty free centers around the world. Our objects and our bodies are screened in order to throw out items which can be bought from the Duty Free area. From makeup to bottled water, it seems nonsensical to throw things over 100ml only to repurchase them after the security checkpoint. Part of the series 'Tradition and Modernity', Malluh unveils the modern experience of screening for Saudi Arabians. Travelling becomes an act involving being probed, searched, having one's privacy invaded. Through a series of checkpoints our baggage is screened, our passport photos scrutinized and our identity searched.

Unfortunately, modernity, with its increasing technological advancement, comes hand in hand with screening. Yet this does not mean we cannot also use this to scan the discourses which have made this possible. Using photograms is one way of reclaiming and arranging our objects, speaking in ways not possible when screened by security officials. Their use is one way of talking back to power.

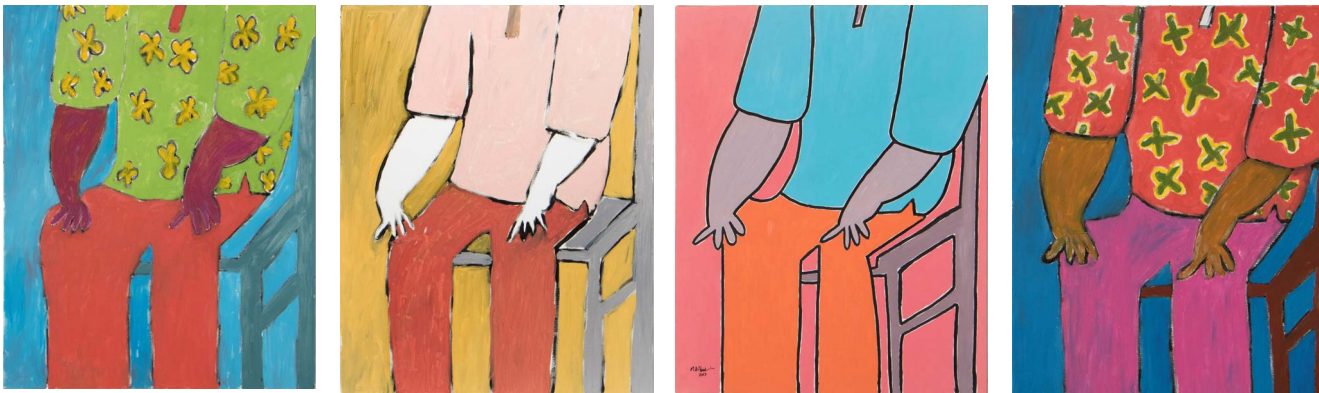
Courtesy of Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna

Marwan Kassab-Bachi
Syria, 1934-2016



Courtesy of Sfeir Semler Gallery

Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim
UAE, b.1962



Courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi

Moneer El Shaarani
Syria, b. 1952



Courtesy of Haleem El Shaarani and biographies courtesy of Art on 56th Gallery

Nabil Nahas
Lebanon b. 1949



Courtesy of @Nahasstudio photography by Farzad Owrاند

Nejib Belkhodja
Tunisia, 1933 - 2007



Courtesy of Elmarsa Gallery Tunis/Dubai

Nja Mahdaoui
Tunisia, b.1937



Courtesy of Elmarsa Gallery Tunis/Dubai

Nouri Al Rawi
Iraq, 1925 - 2014



Courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection, Amman

Omar El Nagdi
Egypt, 1931 - 2019



Courtesy of the artist's estate and Motion Gallery

Rabab Nemr

Egypt, b.1938

Sabhan Adam

Syria, b.1973



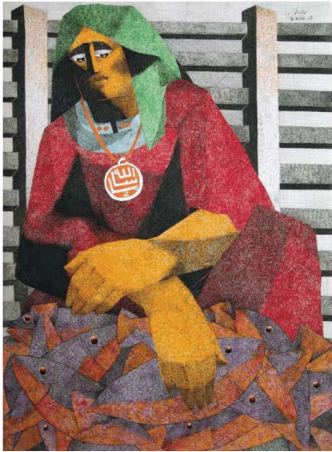
فنانون عرب

التشكيلية المصرية رباب نمر .. تغزل لوحاتها بالخطوط

محمد حمزة- القاهرة
تعيش الفنانة (رباب نمر) داخل عالمها الفني الزاخر بالمفردات والعناصر المتميزة الخاصة جدا والتي تجمع فيها بين الواقع والتخيل وكأنها تروي لنا قصة الحياة بأسلوبها المفرح أو بمعنى آخر تأخذ الحقيقة وتشكلها عبر ثقافتها في تصويرات متناصفة مع بعضها بطريقة فنية بارعة لتناجتها، وأيضا تدهشنا كل فترة بروق إلتاجها المتجدد الذي لا يسير وقلنا لتتمطية ثابتة. لقد بدأت الفنانة التجريب بالحرير الصيني هذه التحفة المائتة بالرسم عناصرها بالحرير. يصعد أخرى مكانها، وبه بعض الأحيان تنقل الأسود في أرائل العام 1985 والتي كانت الأسود على ألوان الأبيض. الرسم على لوحات ضخمة مجهزة موضوعة تعتبر في وقتها مرحلة جديدة وقلقة مفاجئة أول الأمر كانت (رباب) تضع الورق على حامل الرسم. وهكذا أصبح لديها قدرة فائقة على خلق عالمها الخاص لتسم بالبراعة والإتقان والابتداء. جامعا أعمها على منطدة الرسم إلى أن صوبت ونظم وتخلع وتعلم خاص بها تخلق به. تضمن عليها الحالة الفنية فتتجه مباشرة إلى وتعد به لتذكرنا بالتمن الصديق الذي تعوبه الأشكال وحيز الفراغ وأيقنا التأكد بين الطل والتوق لتخلق عالم فريد لم يشاهده من قبل. وفي طهرت العلاقة الرومانسية بين الرجل والمرأة في عدد من أعمالها في هذا المعرض حيث تظهر أنصاف التيات الوردية كحورع في لوحاتها التسويرية بالألوان الزرنية تترى أو يزيد... إلى أن تنهض من التورمة لتنعن لوحة. ورا، الأشياء الفنية التي تشهيا.

24

أو متحركة فتصيراته دالما تكون استيطانية. لقد. رسمت الفنانة الحيوانات الأسطورية الخرافية ذات الخصائص الصلية والجانب الحادة والمقاير العجاجة بالإضافة إلى الزواحف والثعابين والحيتان السامة بأجسادها الفينة والقوية على نفسها. تلك الحيوانات والطيور التي ترجع إلى خيالنا، المتقاء، ذلك الطائر الخيالي ذو الأجنحة العريضة والجسد الحيواني الضخم مع جيون الديناصور للتحريض الذي لا يند على الحركة في هذا العالم الجديد المزدحم بالبشر وآلاته المتكررة.



لتي تنقدها اليوم جيون البشر بالترحم من وجودها التوحش وزعافتها الصلية ومعالها الجارحة وعضلاتها القوية وأشكالها البهيمة القززة للنفس إلا أني عوئها وكأنها تنظر عذرية سادقة وقلقة متشابهة وفيها على سجينها بعيدة عن الحدة والسكر والكذب والخداع. وعلى التسق لنفسه من ناحية التقنية أقامت (رباب نمر) معرضها "أبيض وأسود" في قاعة المهرى ببارمك عام 1998 ولكن بأسلوب أكثر تنجما شبيته الزهور والتباتات والأشجار. وقد ظهرت العلاقة الرومانسية بين الرجل والمرأة في عدد من أعمالها في هذا المعرض حيث تظهر أنصاف التيات الوردية كحورع في لوحاتها التسويرية بالألوان الزرنية تترى ليزدهم عن عيون المتطلعين بينما يظهر القدر

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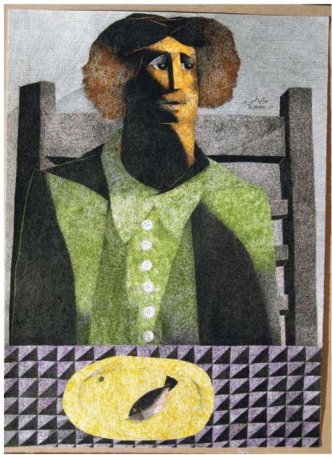
وإذا تأملنا تجربتها الإبداعية من خلال بعض معارضها الخاصة الأخيرة نجد أنه في تشكيلها تكون له تجربته الخاصة وعالمه الخاص معرضها التام في المركز الثقافي الإيطالي في الذي يحتويه ويسيطر عليه وبعبارة فالإنسان عذري هو العنصر الأساسي في عملي وأحيانا نوحاها للرسم بالابيض والأسود جمعت فيها حيواناتها الخرافية من زواحف وديناصورات وطيور وأسماك وثباتات وزهور متخيلة كلها مع البشر حيث تربطت تلك الكائنات الحية مع بعضها في حب وسلام.



والتحوم المثيرة في السماء. ومن هذا المعرض يقول الفنان الراحل (محمود عبد الله) "يؤكد واقع التصوير عند (رباب) في هذه الأصايل على نزوع تحمكه الفطري والملكة وغبيرة الفقاء، يأخذ بها النزوع إلى الوصول لتحقيق عالم من المسنوي الأفلاطوني الثاني، ومن المسنوي الثاني لما فوق الطبيعة، عناصر من الطيور والأسماك والتباتات والإنسان والتصور، بخطوط مألوفة تحفظ الفطرة وجودها وتقيم المنطقة بين العلاقات ويصلي كيانها مرصودا بغبيرة البقاء. وإذا شاركتنا معرضها الذي أقامته في قاعة الزماتك للفنون عام 2005 تحت عنوان "أبيض، أسود، لون، نجدها قد زودت بعض لوحاتها بألوان الحرير الصيني الثقيلة باستحياء، مع سيطرة الأبيض والأسود على العمل وكأنها تجرب فعل اللون وتأثيره. وهذا تقول (رباب) : "كان الأبيض والأسود هما العنصران الأساسيان في تحقيق عالمي الفني وكان الأسود بطبيعة الحال يؤكد مناطق الطفل في الصورة، بينما الأبيض يؤكد الضوء وبخامة الحرير الصيني بأصنافها غير المصودة تحقق درجات عديدة من الأسود وتفتيحها باستخدام طقم،"الرايدوبور" بألوان درة منه قلادة على تحقيق تكامل تعبيري. في الصورة، وأتبع السطح بهذه الخامة التيبية. وهذه الأداء الطيبة حيث يصبح الحرير جزءا من تسليح خامة الورق. وفي معرض سابق بدأت المفارقة، ويصير تلمعا معرا من الضوء، وهكذا أصبح الأبيض هنا لا يقوم بتحقيق القيمة الصورية. ويستخدام الرينة في التدرج إلى الصورة على استحياء، في بعض المساحات الضيقة لتحقيق دلالة. لقد تعرضت (رباب نمر) في تجاربها الحديثة وحي ما تختزنه في ذاكرتها المعجونة بتجرباتها واثقوية طبعا لتفهمية المنحصر السابق عليه يستعني في بعض مساحاته اللون والذي

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بملاصهم التقليدية بألوانها الزرنية، والأحمر السافقة من ألوان التي تؤكد أروق القلب على الطائفة الصفرية بأحد أصايل الفنان العالمي خان موح، (أكي البيطاش) مع المارق الكبير في التناول والأسلوب.



أما لوحها عن التشاور والتشارك فقد أعطتها الفنانة اهتماما خاصا حين جمعت بعض التشاور مع بعضها البعض على شاطئ البحر، بخطوط الحبال المتشابكة بألوان بهيجة كالتشوكواز والأحمر، مما جعل اللوحة تتناغم داخلها الموسيقي والبهجة. وفي لوحة أخرى جمعت فيها تسروا البحر، مسن صيد وافر ظهر وكأنه موهورات وأحجار كريمة تتلألأ بين أصدى الصيادين بينما ملاصق الصيادين التشديدية تلم دورا ههما في حوارها المتصل، مع تأليفها بأسلوب يتناسب مع عناصرها الزخرفية وكأنها تصميم أزياء لتسوية. ونحن نشاهد لوحها عن سوق السمك كنا نشعر بالصحيح وسواح الباعة والتجار وينهم كيمات كبيرة من الأسماك الطيبة التي تجميهم من كل مكان، تلك اللوحات التي سلاها عن أحرفها بالناسير والمفردات البتية والتي يعتار أهل شواطئ البحار وزينها كلب بوم. وقد تروقت الفنانة على نفسها في لوحين مشترك من قسده السراع والألق التسع بين مفرداتها، بينما يفرح طائران بحب وتماثل في رسم اللوحة تقريبا أبا الثانية تتضمن مركبين بأشترتهما وكأنهما يجاذبان الحوار وسط فضاء لانهائي خالي.

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الصورة بالكامل لدرجة أن الفنانة اقتضت جزءا من لباس رأسها الأخضر من أعلى، بينما لم تظهر بعض أطراف ألبانج بعدا ألين، مع خلق الفراغ الموجود أمامها والأسماك الطازجة التي تعرف طرازها من من عوئها البراقة. أما خلفية العمل فقد نسجت بسور خليبي تظهر قواعد الفنانة الطويلة الممتد عليها من الخلف موارض أفقية متوازية بإحكام. وتذكرني لوحها،"الصيدون" لافيو الكوشيتة،



Sadik Alfraji
Iraq, b.1960



Beirut Exhibition Center in 2014

EXCERPTS AND IMAGES FROM SADIK ALFRAJI
MONOGRAPH

Ali's Boat

Ali is a young boy who I met in Baghdad for the first time in 2009. He was 11 years of age then, and we only saw each other for a few days in the family house. Ali is my youngest nephew. The morning I left Baghdad, he handed me a sealed envelope, which he sincerely asked me not to open till I returned home to the Netherlands. I promised, and kept my promise, and I only opened his nicely decorated envelope when I reached home with my family. In it was a letter with the names of my children and his own name. In the middle a drawing of a little canoe-like boat with one simple sentence written, saying: "I wish my letter takes me to you."

One simple, honest sentence and a boat, which held his dreams... As if he hoped that these words and that letter, if

opened in the right place, at the right time, would perform a kind of magic, his own Abracadabra or Open Sesame, which would take him far, far away just the way he used to go on this boat in his dreams. His letter in a sealed envelope was attempt to escape reality, with a boat and a few words, to a strange world of fantasy. He had put his dream on a boat not knowing that his humble boat had carried me to him instead of bringing him to me. He didn't know that his boat was actually my boat that I used to dream of, a boat that I could take to leave my house, my family and my homeland when I was young, eager to escape the misery and explore the world. And it is now the same boat I dream of to carry me back there as a child, embracing the playgrounds of my childhood that spread between the thresholds of our house up to the vast horizons. My work is mainly built around that letter, the image of Ali's boat and my own impressions of that world of childhood where I grew up and where Ali is now.

Sadik Kwaish Alfraji
Amersfoort, 2014

Courtesy of Ayyam Gallery

Safwan Dahoul
Syria, b.1961



الجميلة
بلجيكا ١٩٩٧
ليعود إلى دمشق
ونخرط في
التدريس
بجامعتها،
وبالكلية التي
تخرج منها.
منذ العام
١٩٨٩ أقام
معرضه (٨٩ -
٩١ صالة
السعد، ١٩٩٣
صالة عشتار،
٩٤ بروكسل، ثم
بمبنى البرلمان
هناك ٩٥
واستمر بصالة
المسرح الملكي
الفلمنكي ٩٧ وصالة تموز ببروكسل أيضا ٩٧ ثم
اتاسي بدمشق ٩٨ ويوشيري الكويت ٩٩ والفيروز
البحرين ٢٠٠٠ والسيد ٢٠٠١ والفنار الكويت
٢٠٠٢... وها هو في مدينة دبي للإعلام بتنظيم
من جاليري (قزح).
٢- **ثائر هلال**
قدم ثائر هلال ١٩٧٦ في (غرين آرت -
غاليري) أربعين لوحة هي إشتغالاته التي وضع لها
عنوان (توقيعات) وكان قدمها في المجمع الثقافي
في أبوظبي عام ٢٠٠٢.
ولأنه الكاتب المكرس للفنانين السوريين، قدم
الناقد طلال معلا لهذا المعرض وسابقه بمقالة
عنوانها (توقيعات مراكز التريب) أكد فيها على
رسوم ثائر هلال التي لم تخرج عن إطار عام من
التنظيم والمنهجية منذ سنوات، يقف في تطوير
نظرتة إلى مفهوم تجريدي يعتمد على تكامل
الأجزاء التي يسعى من خلالها لتقديم وجهة نظر

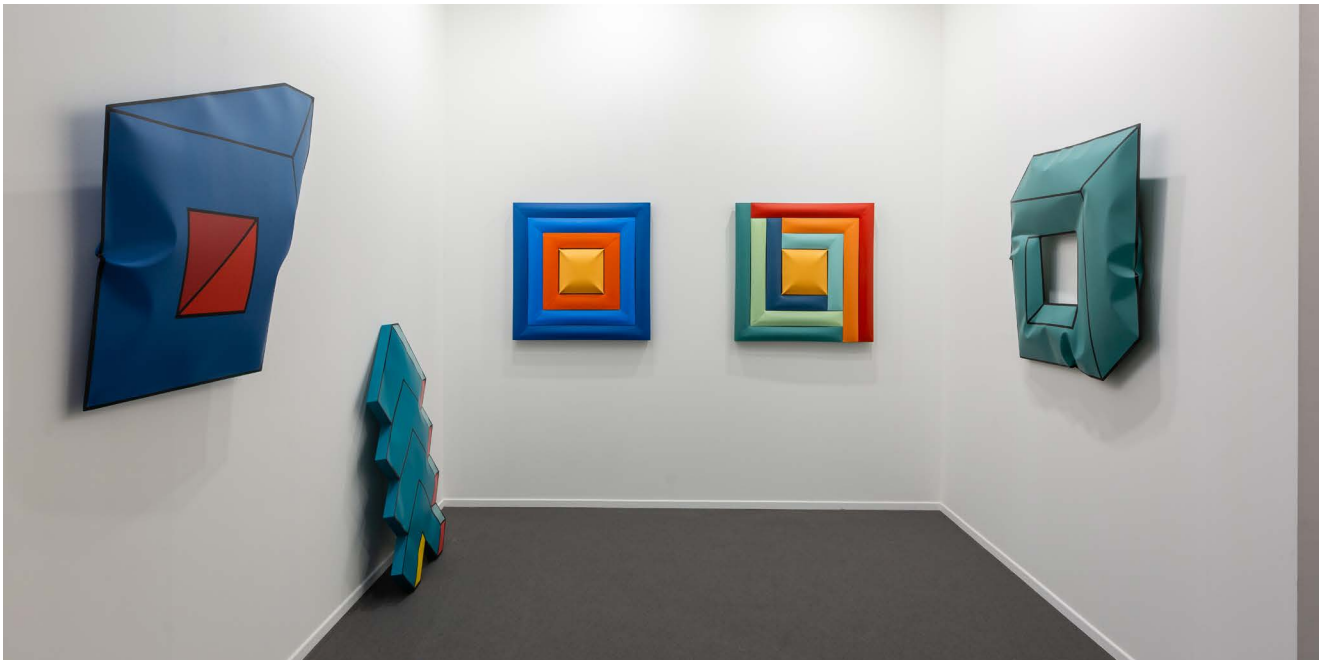
Courtesy of Ayyam Gallery

Saliba Douaihy
Lebanon, 1915 - 1994



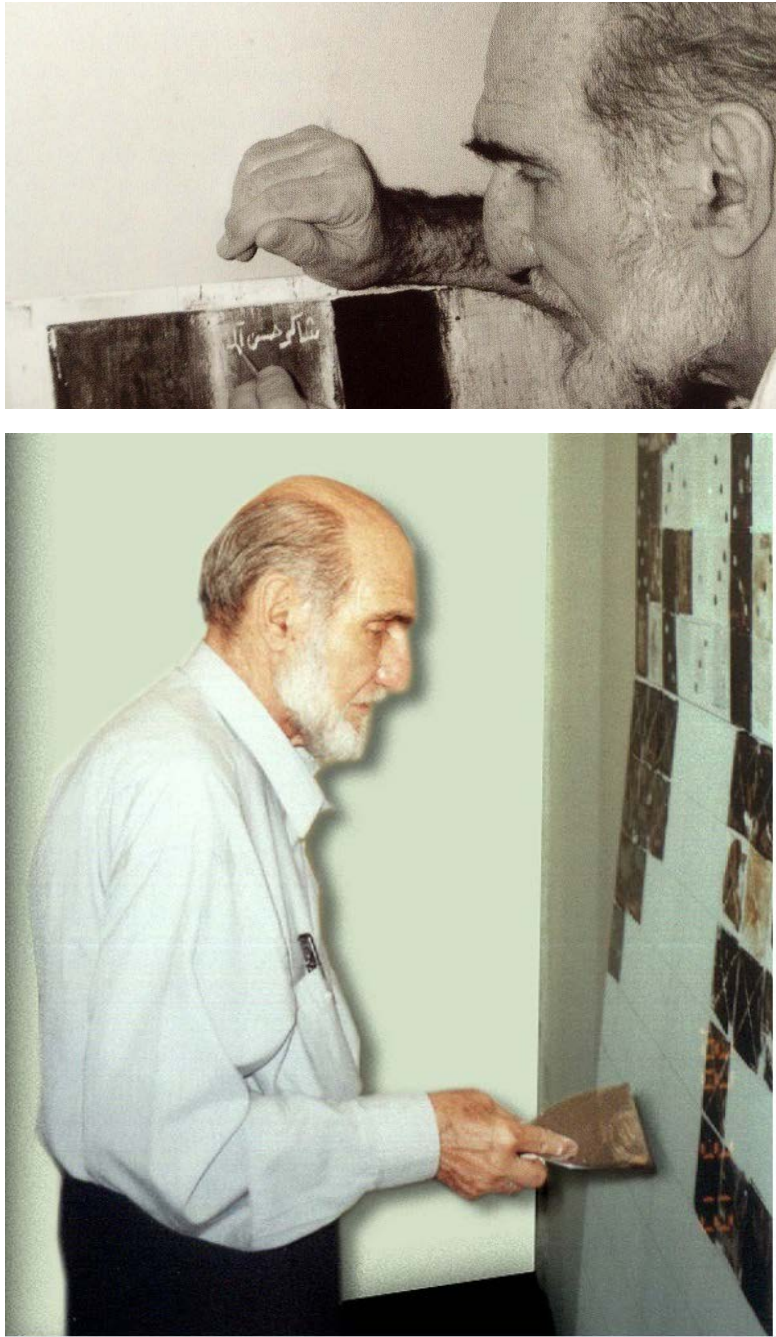
Courtesy of Saleh Barakat Gallery/Agial Gallery

Shaikha Al Mazrou
UAE, b.1988



Courtesy of Lawrie Shabibi

Shakir Hassan Al Said
Iraq, 1925 - 2004



Courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection, Amman

Willy Aractingi
Lebanon, 1930 - 2003



Courtesy of the Aractingi Family

Acknowledgments

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DUBAI COLLECTION

