

ARTIN**IRAQ**TODAY

IN MEMORY OF JABRA IBRAHIM JABRA

# ART IN **IRAQ** TODAY: PART IV

CURATED BY DIA AL-AZZAWI

DIA  
AL-AZZAWI

## SOLITUDE

Creative work is a way of escaping self-imprisonment and entering into that which lies beyond the genre of the artist, which is nothing but a physical, changeable production. When I render the ideas I have into symbols and shapes, the very act of forming and sculpting in order to establish the tangible structure impacts the different meanings that I want to impart to my work, often altering it in nuanced ways. This artistic effort is more like an attempt to chase coincidence, in the hope that it will reveal to me the possible and thought-provoking metaphors of finding joy.

I sometimes paint for my own satisfaction, and at other times because of social and ethical circumstances. An empty painting is a coffin without a body, and as an artist I try to distance myself from this. Often, passion acquires a welcoming presence when ascribing the work to its history, and any title suggested remains less important than the work itself. People often interpret an art work through its title; however, my motive is for the viewer to use the title to initiate a dialogue with the work. Perhaps there is some validity in using a title as a means of understanding the subject of a work, but it must also be acknowledged that the title alone does not fully encapsulate its creative intent. Dialogue is a way of giving meaning to units and shapes within a work, converting what seems to be irrational into something with purpose, or into a powerful feeling for investigating the richness of the art work.

Artistically, the elements that give a work its personal identity are innate and intrinsic and are not the result of technical skill alone. Throughout history, such elements have been related to symbols and dates from an ancient memory; a history comprised of many identities which contain many different references. This ascription has not been identified by token symbols, but is a result of the search for the mutual memory of human civilisation. A memory of this sort is not confined to any single group of people by virtue of ownership. It, instead, signifies human contribution as a whole, in the history of civilisation. Its expanse is identified in accordance with its long or short presence in the development of culture and society.

Dia Al-Azzawi  
London  
January 2011

DIA AL-AZZAWI

b. Baghdad, 1939

EDUCATION

- 1962 BA in Archaeology, Baghdad University, Baghdad University, Baghdad
- 1964 Diploma in Fine Art, Institute of Fine Art, Baghdad

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1965 Al-Wasiti Gallery, Baghdad
- 1966 Gallery One, Beirut
- 1969 Sultan Gallery, Kuwait
- 1973 Gallery Raslan, Tripoli, Lebanon
- 1975 National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad
- 1976 Gallery Nadhar, Casablanca
- 1977 Sultan Gallery, Kuwait
- 1978 Patrick Seale Gallery, London
- 1980 Galerie Faris, Paris  
Gallery Central, Geneva
- 1981 Basel Art Fair, Galerie Faris, Paris  
FIAC, Galerie Faris, Paris
- 1982 Intercontinental Hall, Abu Dhabi
- 1983 National Council for Art and Culture Gallery, Kuwait
- 1984 Alif Gallery, Washington, DC
- 1986 Royal Cultural Center, Amman
- 1988 Claudine Planque Gallery, Lausanne
- 1990 Ali Gallery, Washington, DC  
Galleri Nakita, Stockholm

- Vanazff Gallery, Gothenburg
- Galerie des Art, Tunis
- Galerie D’Art 50 x 70, Beirut
- 1992 Flandria Gallery, Tangier
- 1994 Al-Manar Gallery, Casablanca  
Ab’aad Gallery, Amman  
Galerie D’Art 50 x 70, Beirut  
Al-Sayed Gallery, Damascus
- 1995 Gallery Claude Lemand, Paris
- 1996 Art Center, Bahrain
- 2002 *Retrospective Exhibition*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris
- 2003 *Palestine and Mahmoud Darwish: Large Polyptychs, Drawings, Prints and Books*,  
Cité du Livre, Aix-en-Provence
- 2004 *Recent Paintings*, Claude Lemand Gallery, Paris  
*St’Art - Strasbourg’s Art Fair: Recent Paintings*, Claude Lemand Gallery, Paris
- 2005 *Recent Paintings*, Claude Lemand Gallery, Paris
- 2006 Kalemmat Gallery, Aleppo  
4 Walls Gallery, Amman  
Dar Al Funoon Gallery, Kuwait  
Claude Lemand Gallery, Paris
- 2009 ADMAF, 6<sup>th</sup> Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Festival, Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi  
Meem Gallery, Dubai

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1967 First International Triennial, New Delhi
- 1971 *Contemporary Arab Art*, National Museum, Nicosia
- 1975 Seventh International Painting Festival, Cagnes-sur-Mer  
International Summer Academy, Salzburg

**1976** Second Arab Art Biennial, Sao Paulo  
**1980** Salon de Mat, Paris  
FIAC, Galerie Faris, Paris  
Salon d’Automne, Espace Cardin Gallery, Paris  
**1981** Seventh International Grafik Triennale, Frechen  
**1984** British International Print Biennial, Bradford  
*First Arab Contemporary Exhibition*, Museum of Modern Art, Tunis  
**1985** Musée Hubert d’Uckerman, Grenoble  
**1986** Salon Comparaisons, Grand Palais, Paris  
Semitic Museum, Harvard University, Massachusetts  
*Contemporary Arab Art*, The Mall Gallery, London  
**1987** Third International Biennial Exhibition, Taiwan  
**1988** *Olympiad of Art*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul  
*Azzawi, Jumaie, Nasiri*, Kufa Gallery, London  
**1989** *Contemporary Art from the Islamic World*, Barbican Centre, London  
*Arab Graphic Art*, NCCL, Kuwait  
**1997** *Five Visual Interpretations*, Green Art Gallery, Dubai  
**1998** *Azzawi & Nasiri*, Gallery La Teinturerie, Paris  
**2001** *Machreq - Maghreb: Paintings and Books*, Claude Lemand Gallery, Paris  
**2002** *Masters of Tondo*, Claude Lemand Gallery, Paris  
*The Kinda Foundation Collection*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris  
**2003** Colas Foundation, Boulogne  
*Broken Letter, Contemporary Art form Arab Countries*, Kunsthalle Darmstadt, Darmstadt  
**2004** *Art Books and Painting*, Claude Lemand Gallery, Paris  
**2005** *Portraits of the Bird: Books and Drawings*, Claude Lemand Gallery, Paris  
*Homage to Shafic Abboud*, Claude Lemand Gallery, Paris  
*Contemporary Iraqi Book Art*, University of North Texas Art Gallery, Denton, Texas  
**2006** *Portraits of the Bird*, Bastia Festival of Arts, Paris  
*Word into Art*, British Museum, London

**2008** *Word into Art*, British Museum, Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC), Dubai  
*Iraq’s Past Speaks to the Present*, British Museum, London  
*Iraqi Artists in Exile*, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, Texas  
**2009** *Modernism and Iraq*, Columbia University, Wallach Art Gallery, New York  
**2011** *Art in Iraq Today: Part IV*, Meem Gallery, Dubai

**SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

Arab Monetary Fund, Abu Dhabi  
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris  
British Museum, London  
Colas Foundation, Paris  
Development Fund, Kuwait  
Gulbenkian Collection, Barcelona  
Harba Collection, Iraq and Italy  
Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris  
Jeddah International Airport  
Kinda Foundation, Riyadh  
Library of Congress, Washington, DC  
Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha  
Museum of Modern Art, Amman  
Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad  
Museum of Modern Art, Damascus  
Museum of Modern Art, Tunis  
The Saudi Bank, London  
Una Foundation, Casablanca  
The United Bank of Kuwait, London  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London  
The World Bank, Washington, DC

**Artist's City** (2011)  
Acrylic on canvas  
190 \* 190 cm





**Imaginary Garden** (2011)  
Acrylic on canvas  
190 \* 190 cm



**Hope** (2011)  
Acrylic on canvas  
190 \* 190 cm



**Zorah On Her Terrace, Marrakech (2011)**  
Acrylic on canvas  
220 \* 180 cm (2 parts)



**Dripping On Red Rose (2011)**  
Acrylic on canvas  
180 \* 110 cm



**Green Field, Marrakech** (2010)  
Acrylic on canvas  
120 \* 181.5 cm (2 parts)





**Red Field, Marrakech** (2010)  
Acrylic on canvas  
190 \* 150 cm (2 parts)



RAFA  
AL-NASIRI

## MY VISUAL RESOURCES: PLACE AND TIME BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

When the Chinese came to Baghdad in 1959 loaded with works of ivory, copper, silk, ceramics and printmaking, I was still a student in the last year of my studies at the Institute of Fine Arts. The most wonderful Chinese antiques and masterpieces were organised and displayed in the main hall of the Institute so we, the students, could see them dozens of times every day.

What attracted our attention and made us marvel most was a beautiful masterpiece comprised of fourteen ivory balls of varying sizes, all contained inside one ball, revolving smoothly around their pivot. Personally, however, I was drawn to the collection of watercolours and Chinese ink prints. Most of these were by the internationally renowned artist Qi Baishi (1864-1954) whose work I closely followed in his hometown of Beijing.

Since that time, I became quite attached to traditional Chinese painting and realised that it differs in many aspects from European art. During the years I studied at The Central Academy of Fine Arts in Peking (1959-1963, at the time it was named Peking, later to be known as Beijing) when I began to practice the Chinese technique of painting, I grew to love it even more. I was attracted to it simply because it seemed to have within it, all the essential elements of outstanding art, based on and sustained by, the spirituality of the human being, as well as the elements of place and time. It is also wholly consistent with the Oriental philosophy of life in its approach to nature and the universe, and in its sensitivity to visual elements in all their aspects.

The ink paintings of the artist Qi Baishi were my entry point into Chinese art, ancient and contemporary. An exceptional artist, he was the reference for all the ink paintings I loved throughout those years. His works on paper demonstrate the powerful strokes of the wide Chinese brush, mixed with the delicate lines of another brush. His paintings are also different from those of his contemporaries, and even from his ancestors, by means of the harmony of their colours. Especially so, when he uses black with its varying shades, or in applying conflicting colours through the use of watercolours and black, always with a unique brushstroke eliminating the forms of flowers, birds and other natural shapes.

I also loved the art work of the great contemporary Chinese printmakers, particularly Li Hua (1907-1994), who was the first to teach me the principles of printmaking, in the practical sense, when he was a professor at the Central Academy in Beijing. I was influenced during the early years of my studies by his woodcuts because of the simplicity of the technique he used and for its profound and powerful ability in expressing the human condition. With his varying techniques, he outclassed tens, even hundreds, of Chinese printmakers, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, despite the fact that all his prints were in black and white.

I was also greatly influenced by my famous teacher and instructor in art and life, Huang Yu Yi (b. 1927) who supervised me during all the phases of my studies at the Academy, as a teacher, a supervisor and a friend. I learned much from his accuracy, dedication and patience throughout the period of my printmaking courses, in the application of traditional natural colours or watercolours which is an old Chinese technique requiring speed and attention throughout the printing process. The number of wooden clichés required for the production of one print may reach tens, even hundreds, ranging from the smallest sizes to the largest.

Huang Yu Yi took good care of me. He had good relationships with Chinese artists, based in Hong Kong, who would provide him with the latest art books and magazines, which he would show me whenever he received them. Because of this, I became aware of the latest artistic trends of the West, which enabled me at the same time to draw comparisons between the arts of the East and West.

In the summer of 1965, a couple of years after my return to Baghdad from China, I went with two of my brothers on a road trip. Over a period of around two months, we drove through twenty-four Arab and European countries. During this memorable trip, I came into direct contact with Western art. I visited the world's most famous museums such as the Museo del Prado, Louvre, British Museum, Rome's Museum of Contemporary Art and Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. I was amazed by the magnificent paintings of Velasquez, Goya and El Greco, as well as those of Rubens, Rembrandt, Turner and other renowned artists.



I was also deeply impressed by the Expressionists and numerous other contemporary artists. Over time, I discovered that that I favoured some painters over others, who, in turn, have influenced my own art work. In particular, I should mention the Dutch painter, Rembrandt (1606-1669). I steadily and assiduously studied his paintings and engravings during those years. I would often visit a museum, especially the Louvre, only to view his works. Rembrandt's paintings helped me understand the sensitivity of light and shade in the painted or engraved image, and to learn to transfer and gradate with colour, from the lightest areas to the darkest.

As for the great British painter, JMW Turner (1775-1851), I spent much time contemplating the magnificent compositions he created with his abstracted landscapes which capture the essence of time and place consecutively.

In 1967, the Gulbenkian Foundation granted me a two-year fellowship for training in Gravura, Lisbon. At this time, the West was undergoing major and quite rapid social and political transformations, and art reflected many of these changes. There were many forms of modern art developing such as abstract art, Pop art, Earth art and performance art; all undergoing different phases of creative transformation, ranging from experimentation to maturity. Calligraphy was also a popular art form amongst the abstract painting techniques in Europe at the time. One of the most distinctive calligraphists was the French artist Georges Mathieu (b. 1921) who used both Latin and Eastern characters in a completely free way, creating a magical world from the movement of his brush and oil colours in paintings, which he executed in large dimensions. He was the first artist to influence me when I started investigating calligraphic elements in my art work. It was he who drew my attention to two important visual resources available to me: the Arabic and Chinese characters which had inspired me for many years. Thereafter, I began to insert Arabic characters into my abstract compositions and continue to do so today. I use Arabic calligraphy in my art work, regardless of its linguistic connotation, to establish a kind of formal identification between nature and man; as well as between place and time. It is a sort of spiritual and mental exercise of the daily artistic creation of life.

Over the past seven years, and specifically after my homeland, Iraq, was occupied in 2003, I started

searching for new visual resources to enable me to express my physiological status and the extreme pain and agony of witnessing the torture of the people of my country, wishing and hoping for liberation or salvation from the deterioration and disappearance of a veteran country, once the cradle of the world's most elegant civilisation, many centuries ago. In response to this, I sought shelter with poetry. It was poetry that put me on the right track when it made me reach harmony and balance between my existence as a human being and the basic mission of my life as an artist.

The great Arab poet Abul Tayeb Al-Mutanabbi (915-965 AD) was the first to aid me in tracing that track, with the opening lines of his nostalgic poem:

*How to entertain with no relatives, no homeland?  
No drinking companion, no cup and no habitation.*

This was the first visual image from which other works were to spring, both in painting and printmaking, later being extended to include poems of other great poets from different ages, like Ibn Zaydun (1003-1071 CE):

*I remembered you at Al Zahra' in longing,  
Where the horizon is cheerful and the land's surface is clear.*

And from Al-Jawahiri (1900-1997) I chose the opening of his poem 'O Tigris':

*I greet you from afar, O greet me back,  
O blessed Tigris, river of gardens green\**

This was followed by a poem by Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), 'The Almond Blossom,' Etel Adnan's lament entitled 'A Library Set on Fire,' and selected poems from May Muzaffar's book, *From That Distant Land*.

In my latest project, I have dedicated my work to the poem of the Andalusian poet Ibn Zaydun, 'I Remembered You in Al Zahra' With Longing,' where eight paintings are placed together, each measuring two square metres, entitled *Homage to Ibn Zaydun*. I tried to combine the supreme status of his beloved, Princess Wallada bint al-Mustakfi (1009-1078) who is described as, 'Unique to her time in her amiability, prettiness and literary merits,' within the scope of time and place (Andalusian Córdoba) where this romance took place. I used as few symbols as possible to represent the status of the harmony between poetry and music, between nature and the imprint of man, to reach a semi-abstract expression, so as not to move away from Ibn Zaydun's description of nature's aesthetics, which he creatively mixed with the agitated feelings of love. His description renders magnificent images from which I benefited in my artistic style where I have combined painting with printmaking.

My persistence in displaying written text (a verse of Ibn Zaydun's poem) along with images of large sized paintings in this collection - which render an imagined picture of the woman he loved, Wallada bint al-Mustakfi, in addition to symbolic references to the Andalusian city of Córdoba - came to me spontaneously. Yet, it may also be the result of the visual influences I acquired from my daily observations of the masterpieces decorating Al-Hariri's *Maqāmāt* (prose with intervals of conspicuous rhetorical poetry), by the Iraqi painter and calligrapher Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti (thirteenth century CE). This book combines writing with paintings of highly accurate and creative depictions of nature and humanity in its varying daily life situations as inspired from the written text of Al Hariri's poetic prose.

Rafa Al-Nasiri  
Amman  
November 2010

\* translated by Hussein Hadawi, excerpt cited in Venetia Porter, *Word into Art* (London: British Museum Press, 2006), p.8.

**RAFA AL-NASIRI**

b.Tikrit,1940

**EDUCATION**

- 1959** Diploma in Painting, Institute of Fine Arts, Baghdad
- 1963** BA in Printmaking, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing
- 1969** Diploma in Printmaking (Scholarship from The Gulbenkian Foundation), The Gravura, Lisbon

**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

- 1963** ITU Gallery, Hong Kong
- 1965** Czechoslovakian Cultural Center, Baghdad
- 1966** Gallery IA, Baghdad
- 1969** Society of Iraqi Artists, Baghdad
- 1970** Sultan Gallery, Kuwait
- 1973** Contact Gallery, Beirut
- 1975** Sultan Gallery, Kuwait
- 1976** Gallery Nadhar, Casablanca
- 1977** Sultan Gallery, Kuwait
- 1979** Al Rewaq Gallery, Baghdad
- 1980** Sultan Gallery, Kuwait
- 1981** National Museum of Fine Arts, Amman
- 1983** Galerie Faris, Paris
- 1984** Al Rewaq Gallery, Baghdad
- 1985** Sultan Gallery, Kuwait
- 1986** Al Rewaq Gallery, Baghdad
- 1989** Central Art Gallery, Beijing

- 1990-92** Nasiri Graphic Studio, Baghdad
- 1992** Exhibition with Ali Talib, Shoman Foundation, Amman
- 1993** Gallery 50x70, Beirut
- 1994** French Cultural Center, Amman
- 1996** Art Center, Manama
- 1997** Sharjah Museum, Sharjah
- 1999** Bahrain National Museum, Manama  
Atelierhaus Eglau, Kampen, Germany
- 2001** Rochan Gallery, Jeddah
- 2002** Al Riwaq Gallery, Manama  
4 Walls Gallery, Amman
- 2004** 4 Walls Gallery, Amman  
Atassi Gallery, Damascus  
Green Art Gallery, Dubai
- 2006** Al Riwaq Gallery, Manama
- 2007** Sultan Gallery, Kuwait
- 2008** Green Art Gallery, Dubai
- 2010** Nabad Gallery, Amman

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 1966** Iraqi Graphic Art Exhibition, Berlin
- 1967** *Three Iraqi Artists*, Gravura Gallery, Lisbon
- 1969** *Three Iraqi Artists*, Gallery One, Beirut
- 1971** *Four Iraqi Artists*, National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad
- 1972** *Arab Art*, National Museum, Nicosia  
*Four Iraqi Artists*, National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad  
*Three Iraqi Artists*, Gallery One, Beirut
- 1973** Joint exhibition of six Iraqi and Syrian artists, National Museum of

Modern Art, Baghdad, Arab Cultural Center and Archaeological Museum, Damascus

**1974** *Seven Iraqi Artists*, National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad

**1975** *Iraqi Graphic Artists*, Iraqi Cultural Center, Beirut  
Graphic exhibition for three Iraqi artists, National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad

**1976** *Iraqi Contemporary Art*, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris

**1977** *Seven Iraqi Artists*, Iraqi Cultural Center, London

**1978** *Arab Graphic Exhibition*, The Mall Gallery, London

**1979** *Iraqi Contemporary Art*, Modern Art Museum, Messina

**1982** *Contemporary Arab Graphic Art*, Gallery Graffiti, London  
*Twelve Arab Artists*, Galerie Faris, Paris

**1983** *Second Contemporary Arab Graphic Art Exhibition*, Gallery Graffiti, London  
*Iraqi Graphic Exhibition*, Iraqi Cultural Center, London

**1984** *Contemporary Arab Art*, Al Seiaha Gallery, Tunis

**1985** *Contemporary Arab Art*, Blackman & Harvy Gallery, London  
Asilah Festival, Asilah

**1986** *Contemporary Arab Art*, The Mall Gallery, London

**1988** *Azzawi, Jumaie, Nasiri*, Kufa Gallery, London

**1989** *Between Tigris and Euphrates*, Institute du Monde Arabe, Paris  
*Contemporary Art from the Islamic World*, Barbican Centre, London  
*Arab Graphic Art*, Cultural Council Gallery, Kuwait

**1990** *Seven Iraqi Artists*, Nasiri Graphic Studio, Baghdad  
*Seven Iraqi Artists*, Shoman Foundation, Amman

**1991** *Contemporary Iraqi Art*, University of Nevada, Reno

**1993** *Four Iraqi Artists*, Al-Wasiti Art Gallery, Casablanca

**1994** *Four Iraqi Artists*, Alif Gallery, Washington, DC

**1997** *Three Graphic Arab Artists*, Darat Al Funun, Amman  
*Five Iraqi Artists*, Green Art Gallery, Dubai

**1998** *Azzawi & Nasiri*, Gallery La Teinturerie, Paris

**1999** *Iraqi Graphic Art*, Darat Al Funun, Amman

**2005** *Improvisation*, Al Riwaq Gallery, Manama  
4 Walls Gallery, Amman  
*Contemporary Iraqi Book Art*, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas

**2006** *Word into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East*, British Museum, London

**2007** *Art Books: Exhibition for Modern Iraqi Artists*, Art Books Center, New York

**2008** *Iraqi Artists in Exile*, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, Texas

**2009** *Modernism and Iraq*, Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, New York

**2010** *My Home Land*, Art Sawa Gallery, Dubai

**2011** *Art in Iraq Today: Part IV*, Meem Gallery, Dubai

## INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

**1965** International Graphic Exhibition, Leipzig

**1968** First International Triennial, New Delhi

**1969** First International Graphic Biennale, Liege

**1972** International Graphic Biennale, Fredrickstad  
Fourth International Poster Biennale, Warsaw

**1974** Fifth International Poster Biennale, Warsaw  
International Biennale for Drawings, Rijeka

**1975** Third International Triennial, New Delhi

**1976** Second Arab Biennale, Rabat  
International Graphic Biennale, Fredrickstad  
Sixth International Poster Biennale, Warsaw  
Fourth International Biennale for Drawings, Rijeka

**1977** Ninth International Painting Exhibition, Cagnes-sur-Mer  
Seventh International Poster Biennale, Warsaw  
Twelfth International Graphic Exhibition, Ljubljana

**1978** Eighth International Graphic Biennale, Brno

- Arab Graphics Exhibition*, Iraqi Cultural Centre, London  
International Graphic Biennale, Fredrickstad
- 1979** Fifteenth Biennale Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo  
*Baghdad International Poster Exhibition*, Iraqi Cultural Centre,  
London and Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad
- 1980** Eighth International Graphic Biennale, Krakow  
International Graphic Biennale, Fredrickstad
- 1982** Seventh Graphic Biennale, Bradford
- 1984** Seventh Mini Print Biennale, Seoul  
International Graphic Triennial, Fredrickstad
- 1986** Salon de Comparisons, Grand Palais, Paris  
Sixth Triennial, New Dehli
- 1989** International Graphic Triennial, Fredrickstad
- 1990** Intergrafik, Berlin
- 1992** International Graphic Triennial, Fredrickstad
- 1993** International Graphic Triennial, Cairo
- 1995** International Graphic Triennial, Fredrickstad
- 1998** Euro Art, Geneva  
International Graphic Triennial, Fredrickstad
- 2000** International Graphic Triennial, Cairo

**INTERNATIONAL PRIZES**

- 1974** Honours Prize, International Summer Academy, Salzburg
- 1977** The Jury Prize, International Painting Exhibition, Cagnes-sur-Mer
- 1978** Honours Prize, Fourth International Graphic Biennale, Fredrickstad
- 1986** First Prize, Baghdad International Festival of Art, Baghdad

**INTERNATIONAL JURIES**

- 1980** Jury member, Third World Graphic Biennale, London
- 1982** Jury member, Baghdad International Poster Biennale
- 1987** Jury Member, Intergrafik, Berlin
- 1995** Jury Member, International Graphic Triennale, Fredrickstad
- 1997** Jury Member, International Graphic Triennale, Cairo

**Homage To Ibn Zaydun (2010)**

Acrylic on canvas  
200 \* 200 cm



**Homage To Ibn Zaydun (2010)**  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 \* 200 cm





**Homage To Ibn Zaydun (2010)**

Acrylic on canvas  
200 \* 200 cm





**Homage To Ibn Zaydun (2010)**

Acrylic on canvas  
200 \* 200 cm



**Homage To Ibn Zaydun** (2010)  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 \* 200 cm



**Homage To Ibn Zaydun (2010)**

Acrylic on canvas  
200 \* 200 cm



**Beyond Time** (2010)  
Acrylic on canvas  
180 \* 180 cm





**Beyond Time** (2010)  
Acrylic on canvas  
180 \* 180 cm



ALI  
TALIB

## BETWEEN

The works from my *Tangera* series (2009) encourage me to find the answers to questions related to the meaning of existence, more specifically, my existence in such a complicated and diversified world; a world where, on one level, the past overlaps with the present. Do such intersections take me to what I call, ‘my personal history with its varying times?’ My earlier years and the ideas generated during that time - such as being released from the works I found similar to my experience - follow my pursuit of personal needs in order to create visual elements for the structure of the painting with the different ways of processing employed in its formation.

This topic is merely the start of building the layers of a realm for different visual elements: abstract components, forgotten remains, an indication of a distant past. I have always been drawn to the existence of such elements. They submit to my present needs, avoiding any emotions, and away from the obsession of having a relationship with the past.

I am not a man who creates a distance between painting and his personal state of being, testing his relationship with the space in which he moves. In my dreams, the murals of the gates of the city are replete with that which is invisible to refugees in their nightmares about their distant past. It is a difficult game. The sanctity of the colours floating in a mazy space reveals to me the secrets of history, escaping from numerous contemporary demands. I surprise the eye with visions worthy of profoundly honest prayers, with an incantation of a silent love amidst the solicitude of expatriation. The painting is just like finding an incomparable secret after enduring hardship.

From the beginning, I have been preoccupied by the subject of humanity. It has been like a voice rising up from an empty field, a window, a glass door, or from the end of a missing horizon in the darkness. Prosperity, for which I prayed, chased me over the years; one day, it is just like the mask of an actor with a broken heart, the next day it is a face examining the history of its relations and dreams, and on the following day it gathers its passion and memories of every enamoured lover passing by. In my work, *Passion* (2009), the head rendered, with its variant components, became

the page of a book that has never been read; a brush painting the dance of the sovereign lady and her thunderous embrace at the moment of her eternal departure. The painting is a butterfly which leaves its secret for the silence of the wind in search of an incomparable secret.

Every painting has its own history; not the history of its formation, but the history of the pain which accompanies me while testing its paths, and the failure to reach its intended endings. It is the history of its relation to what is settled in my heart, its existence as a part of my experience which acts as a laboratory of aesthetic thoughts and emotions capable of transforming into another phase. The practice of artistic production and its appreciation is the power that achieves balance for an imbalanced equation, and for me, it is a worthy compensation.

Ali Talib  
The Hague  
October 2010

**ALI TALIB**

b. Basra, 1944

**EDUCATION**

- 1966** BA in Painting, Academy of Fine Arts, Baghdad
- 1980** MA in Graphic Design, Helwan University, Cairo

**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

- 1964** Mubarakia Gallery, Kuwait
- 1976** National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad
- 1985** Al Rewaq Gallery, Baghdad
- 1988** Orfali Gallery, Baghdad
- 1992** Exhibition with Rafa Al-Nasiri, Shoman Foundation, Amman
- 1993** Balka Art Gallery, Amman
- 1994** Gallery d’Art 50 x70, Beirut
- 1997** Arts Center, Manama
- 2001** Al Riwaq Gallery, Manama
- 2003** De Vrije Academie, The Hague
- 2004** Glerie Concourt, The Hague  
United Nations Humans Settlements Programme, Barcelona
- 2006** Orfali Gallery, Amman
- 2007** Attasi Gallery, Damascus
- 2008** Green Art Gallery, Dubai
- 2009** Karim Gallery, Amman
- 2010** Dar Al Funoon, Kuwait

**SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 1964** *Graphic Art Exhibition: Four Artists*, AIA Gallery, Baghdad
- 1965** *Innovationist Group*, first exhibition, National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad
- 1966** *Innovationist Group*, second exhibition, National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad
- 1970** *Shadow Group*, second exhibition, National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad
- 1972** *Arab Art*, National Museum, Nicosia
- 1974** *Seven Iraqi Artists*, National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad  
First Arab Biennale, Baghdad
- 1975** Third International Triennial, New Delhi  
Seventh International Painting Festival, Cagnes-sur-Mer
- 1976** Second Arab Biennale, Rabat  
*Iraqi Contemporary Art*, Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris
- 1978** *Arab Art Exhibition 2*, Iraqi Cultural Centre, London
- 1979** *Iraqi Contemporary Art*, Modern Art Museum, Messina
- 1984** First International Cairo Biennale, Cairo
- 1986** Salon de Comparisons, Grand Palais, Paris  
First Baghdad International Festival of Plastic Arts, Baghdad
- 1987** International Poster Exhibition, Grand Palais, Paris
- 1988** First International Biennale, Ankara
- 1990** *Seven Iraqi Artists*, Shoman Gallery, Amman
- 1994** *Four Iraqi Artists*, Alif Gallery, Washington, DC
- 1995** Second Sharjah Biennale, Sharjah
- 1997** *Five Iraqi Artists*, Green Art Gallery, Dubai
- 2000** *EU-MAN Exhibition*, Kaapelitehdas, Helsinki and M-Art Gallery, Vienna
- 2001** *The Outside of the Inside, EU-MAN Exhibition*, M-Art Gallery, Vienna  
*The Outside of the Inside*, Manege Museum, St Petersburg
- 2004** *Cite International des Arts Exhibition*, Cite International des Arts Gallery, Paris
- 2009** *Iraqi Artists in Exile*, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, Texas



- 2010    *Mirages: 17 Artists*, Centro Cultural Banko do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo
- 2010    *Art in Iraq Today: Part IV*, Meem Gallery, Dubai

AWARDS

- 1986    First Prize, First Baghdad International Festival of Plastic Arts, Baghdad
- 1995    First Prize, Second Sharjah Biennale, Sharjah

**Scene 3** (2010)  
Acrylic and collage on canvas  
160 \* 130 cm



**Scene 2 (2009)**

Acrylic and mixed media on canvas  
160 \* 130 cm



**Scene** (2010)  
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas  
200 \* 200 cm





**Dedikodu** (2010)  
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas  
200 \* 200 cm





**Out Of** (2010)  
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas mounted on canvas  
236 \* 196 cm



**Nymph** (2010)  
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas mounted on canvas  
236 \* 196 cm

This catalogue is published in conjunction with the *Art in Iraq Today: Part IV* exhibition held at Meem Gallery, Dubai, 13 March - 18 April 2011.

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