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From Collector to Curator: The Inspiring Story of Dr Hasanein Al Ibrahimy



Tears streamed down my face under the sheltering branches of a massive Paulownia tree near the towering AGMEST group building. I -a 25 year old Iraqi art enthusiast- had just visited the building whose corridors and offices are decorated with years upon years of original Iraqi artworks, feeling astonished and overwhelmed by what the mere passion for art could achieve.

Safeguarding Iraqi Cultural Heritage: A Devoted Mission Amidst Adversity



Dice Game In A Cafe - Hafidh Droubi (Image Courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection)

this endeavor.

These efforts persisted until 2010, with the collection growing alongside diligent research, documentation, and digital archiving. Their scope extended beyond artworks to encompass books, documents, articles, brochures, and any relevant materials.

The year 2015 marked a shift in focus towards social media, followed by further expansion in 2016. The collection's treasures were lent to esteemed institutions such as MoMA PS1-New York, MISK Art Institute – Art Dubai Fair in UAE, Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University, and others. The gallery also opened its doors to art students, researchers, and visitors on specific days, aiming to foster a deeper connection with the public.

A Vision for the Future: From Collection to Iraqi Museum

The aspiration for the collection is to transform into an Iraqi museum, safeguarding the country's history and culture while sharing its artistic legacy with the world. Despite 25 years of progress, they believe their journey has only just begun. In response to inquiries about the collection's return to Baghdad, especially amidst the rising interest in Iraqi art and the establishment of new galleries, they revealed plans for a larger gallery in Baghdad, with

Dr Hasanain Al-Ibrahimi's profound passion had driven him to embark on a journey of acquiring original Iraqi artworks by eminent painters like Hafith Al-Droubi, Abdil Qadir Al-Rassam, and Hussam Abdul-Mohsen, ever since the late 1990s. The events of 2003 in Iraq and the subsequent destruction that occurred in artistic institutions ignited a fervor among Iraqis to safeguard this vital facet of their culture. For Dr. Ibrahimi, his urge to collect and preserve artworks evolved from a mere hobby to a devoted mission.

As many Iraqi families emigrated to Jordan and other places, Dr. Ibrahimi found himself settled in Amman. There, he encountered numerous Iraqi families looking to sell their artworks, which subsequently found a new home in his private collection. His collection expanded through acquisitions from auctions, museums, galleries, and even directly from artists' families.

A Labor of Love: Documenting and Sharing Iraq's Artistic Legacy

A new phase commenced in 2007 as Dr. Ibrahimi, accompanied by a small team of three, delved into methods of documenting, archiving, and verifying the collected artworks. They enlisted the help of knowledgeable individuals in Iraqi art and culture for

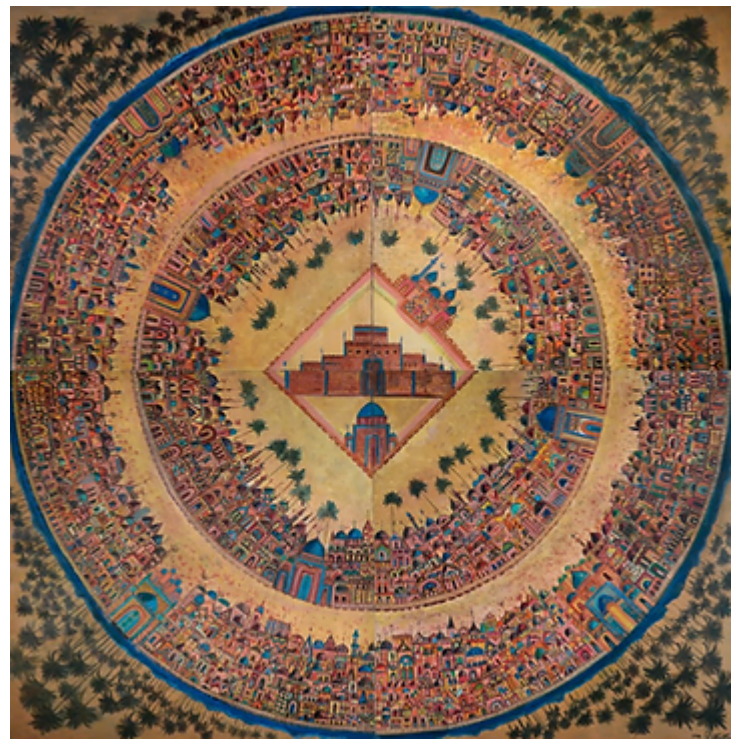
double the space of the one in Jordan. The preparations are underway, artworks are being transferred, and a grand opening is on the horizon.

The extensive collection, comprising over 2000 artworks, adorns the corridors and rooms of the towering corporate building, even the stairs that lead up to an entire floor solely dedicated to these treasures. Now, the team's effort culminated in a five-volume series, a comprehensive archive of the Ibrahimi art collection. The first volume, already available, introduces the history of Iraqi art. The second volume, covering the 1960s to 1980s, is set for publication soon.

"Our message is simple: to revive Iraqi art and place it at the forefront where it rightfully belongs. Iraqi art had a profound impact on the broader Arabic art scene, particularly in the 1960s," shared Areej, a

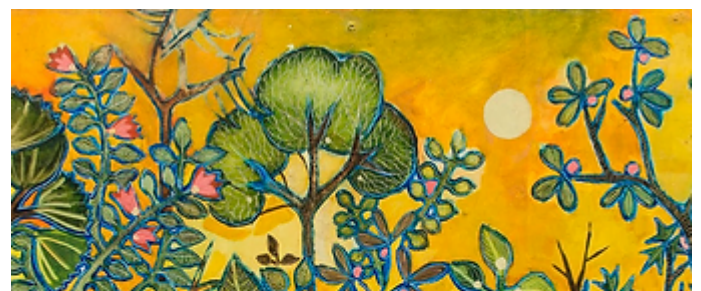


Rawa Dreams - Noori Al Rawi (Image Courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection)



Circular Baghdad - Widad Al-Orfali (Image Courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection)

member of Al-Ibrahimi's team. She gifted me the first volume of their "Museum in a Book" series. Then, she graciously guided us through what seemed to be an endless array of artworks stacked on the walls in a tapestry of colors, history, emotions, and heritage that continued seamlessly through the stairs, corridors, and up to the exit door. As I left the building carrying the heavy art book and an even heavier heart.



Eden Paradise - Suad Al Attar (Image Courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection)

Embracing Art's Resonance: A Message for All

Here I find myself, a 25-year-old Iraqi art enthusiast, tears streaming down my face under the sheltering branches of a massive Paulownia tree. The weight of responsibility bears down on me as I endeavor to recount the narrative of this place. Truth be told, I've been delaying the writing of this article for some time now, plagued by doubts of my qualifications or worthiness to chronicle such an admirable endeavor.



Behind the Bars - Mahmood Obaidi (Image Courtesy of the Ibrahimi Collection)

However, I've come to realize that my uncertainty does not align with the essence of the Ibrahimi collection's message. You see, the heart and soul of their noble pursuit is embodied by individuals who are art enthusiasts, art lovers—passionate people akin to myself, passionate people akin to you, dear reader.

I found solace in that realization. Whether it's a small painting gracing a wall in your bedroom, a collection of artworks nestled in your phone's gallery, or over 2000 artworks gracing a colossal building in Amman, if you make room for art in your life, rest assured, there is room in art for you.

If you find yourself in Amman, and you want to explore something unique, that tells a story of Iraq through the ages, that is not reported, visit the Ibrahimi Collection. Their commitment to preserving Iraqi art and heritage in the face of unprecedented challenges is inspiring. We thank you Dr Hassanein for what you and your team have done for future generations.