

# black and white activity guide

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MATHAF  
STUDENT ART  
COMPETITION

The Black and White Activity Guide features select art works executed in black and white created by modern and contemporary artists from Mathaf's collection. The select artworks are divided into four themed sections to facilitate discussion and understanding of the subject matter with your students. Each image is accompanied by a description and questions about the artwork. We encourage you to examine and explore how these artists use black and white to express a feeling or message.

Project the images of the artworks in your classroom and/or print out copies to look at with your students. When discussing the art works, allow students to imagine and give as many answers as possible.

**We recommend themes according to age levels.**

**For All levels**

I am an Observing Fannan

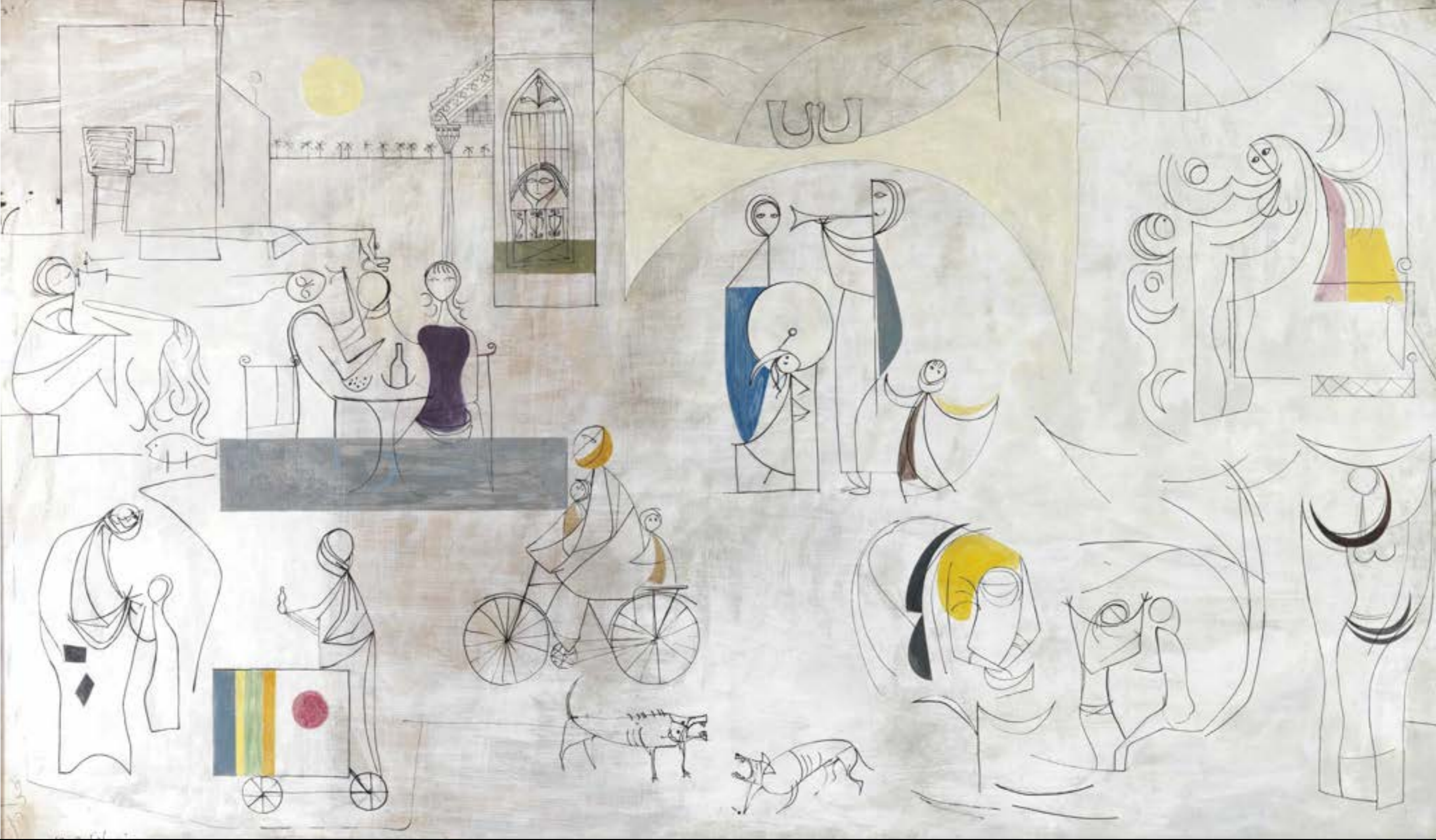
I am an Experimental Fannan

I am a Story Telling Fannan

**For Preparatory and High School Levels**

I am a Critical Fannan

i am an observing fannan  
looking at lines, shapes, and colors



Baghdadiat  
Jewad Selim  
1956  
Mixed media on board  
98.5 x 169 cm

# baghdadiat

## by jewad selim

Jewad Selim is considered one of the pioneering Iraqi artists of the modern era. In his artwork, Selim addressed a variety of themes related to Iraq, and his main concern was creating symbols particular to his country. He often portrayed the daily lives of Iraqi people in his paintings. Selim entitled his paintings of the 1950s *Baghdadiat*, this series of paintings were inspired by folk life, traditions, and everyday human interactions in the city, which Selim depicted using simplified lines and shapes.

## questions

### **What do you see?**

(Give students time to observe, notice and share as many observations as possible.)

### **What do you see that makes you say that?**

(Ask students to explain what they see and give evidence of their observation.)

### **What colors does Selim use in his painting?**

Can you name them all? If we were to remove the colors what would remain?  
How would that change the painting?

### **What shapes do you see?**

Is there one shape that keeps repeating? Can shapes have meaning?  
What do you think these shapes represent?

### **Motherhood is an important theme for Selim and he used the crescent to symbolize “the mother”.**

What is important for you? What shapes or symbols would you use in your art to show it and how? (Ask students to sketch a human or animal figure using geometric shapes.)

### **Are you able to see lines?**

What kinds of lines are they? (Students can name the types of lines they see, or for fun, they can imitate the lines using their fingers, hands and bodies.)

## SOURCES

**Shabout, Nada. Forever Now: Five Anecdotes from the Permanent Collection.**

**Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, 2012.**





Title unknown  
Hussein Madi  
1975  
Engraving on paper  
35 x 30 cm

# title unknown by hussein madi

Hussein Madi is a Lebanese-born artist who continues to practice his art in Beirut. Madi makes use of the art of calligraphy and tries to take these symbols back to the time when writing was half-picture, half-symbol. He uses the art of “huroufiyah” which are experiments in modern art with a focus on the Arabic letters, and manipulates the letters into a pictography (symbols representing concept, object) to create new symbolic iconography.

## questions

### **What do you see?**

Give students time to observe, notice and share as many observations as possible.

### **What do you see that makes you say that?**

Ask students to explain what they see and why they think it looks a certain way.

### **Examine each panel individually:**

What shapes do you see? How many lines did the artist use? What are they? What language did the artist use to create his artwork? Can you make out a word and read it?

### **How does the artist use black and white in his work?**

What do black and white symbolize when it comes to writing? Each of the nine images could be seen as a personal stamp or a “visual signature.” Ask your students to design their own visual signature that is unique and represents something about them.

## SOURCES

**One Fine Art, “Hussein Madi”, [http://onefineart.com/en/artists/hussein\\_madi](http://onefineart.com/en/artists/hussein_madi), 1997**  
**Shabout, Nada, “Sajjil: A Century of Modern Arab Art”, pg. 275, 2010**





Jabal Abu Ghneim  
Ahmed Nawar  
1979  
Resin sculpture  
17 x 27 x 16 cm





Jabal Abu Ghneim  
Ahmed Nawar  
1979  
Resin sculpture  
17 x 27 x 16 cm

# jabal abu ghneim by ahmed nawar

Ahmed Nawar is from Cairo, Egypt. His work is diverse and speaks of ancient roots with a direct reference to Egypt's iconic symbol, the pyramid. He combines geometric and organic elements by integrating the static and the dynamic. In *Jabal Abu Ghneim*, Nawar is addressing regional connections and the rights of existence for Palestinians. This artwork is made up of three resin sculptures in three different colors: frosty pink, white and black.

## questions:

### **What do you see?**

Give students time to observe, notice and share as many observations as possible.

### **What do you see that makes you say that?**

Ask students to explain what they see and why they think it looks a certain way.

### **Take a look at the three art works.**

Do you see any repeated patterns? Can you point out similarities and differences between the three pieces?

### **Explain that a repeating pattern**

is a repetition of identical things such as lines, shapes, or forms.

### **You can show them this video to get an idea:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvzwQSJnKsA>

Then ask student to find repeating patterns in the world around them. For example, on a crosswalk there are repeating white lines. Post pictures of these things in the classroom for inspiration. Describe the different lines that you see. How many lines are there?

### **Does this remind you of anything that you have seen before?**

(If students guess "mountain", then you can move on to ask them about the different shades the sun would cast on a mountain. White during the day, pink at sunset, and black at night. If they see it as a pyramid, then discuss the similarities and differences between the pyramids and the artwork.)

### **How do you feel when you see the color black? Why?**

**How do you feel when you see the color white? Why?**

## SOURCES

**Al-Khudhairi, W, Chalabi, D, Shabout, N, "Sajjil: A Century of Modern Art", Skira Editore S.p.A., 2010.**



Sufic 6  
Armen Agop  
2009  
Bronze and black



Sufic 11  
Armen Agop  
2009  
Bronze and black



Sufic 10  
Armen Agop  
2009  
Bronze and black

# sufic 6, sufic 10, and sufic 11 by armen agop

Armenian-Egyptian artist Armen Agop creates contrasting sculptural pieces, with smooth, hard stone surfaces complemented by strong, angular lines and sharp points. Growing up in Egypt, he became acquainted with the notion that with continuous repetition of form, be it a dance, a sculpture, or the single line of the dunes in the desert, the eyes open to see more. "It was in the desert," he says, "where there seems to be nothing, that's where I learned to see". *Sufic* are sculptures made of heavy basalt and bronze and are organically shaped. The pieces are bottom-heavy with an edge that leads to either a single point on top, which makes them seem like whipped cream or Hershey's chocolate kisses.

## questions

### **What do you see?**

Give students time to observe, notice and share as many observations as possible.

### **What do you see that makes you say that?**

Ask students to explain what they see and why they think it looks a certain way.

### **How do you think these objects feel?**

Smooth, rough, sharp?

### **How are these two objects similar or different from each other?**

### **What materials did the artist use to make them?**

Can you see any lines? What shape are the lines? How do they flow?

### **What color are they?**

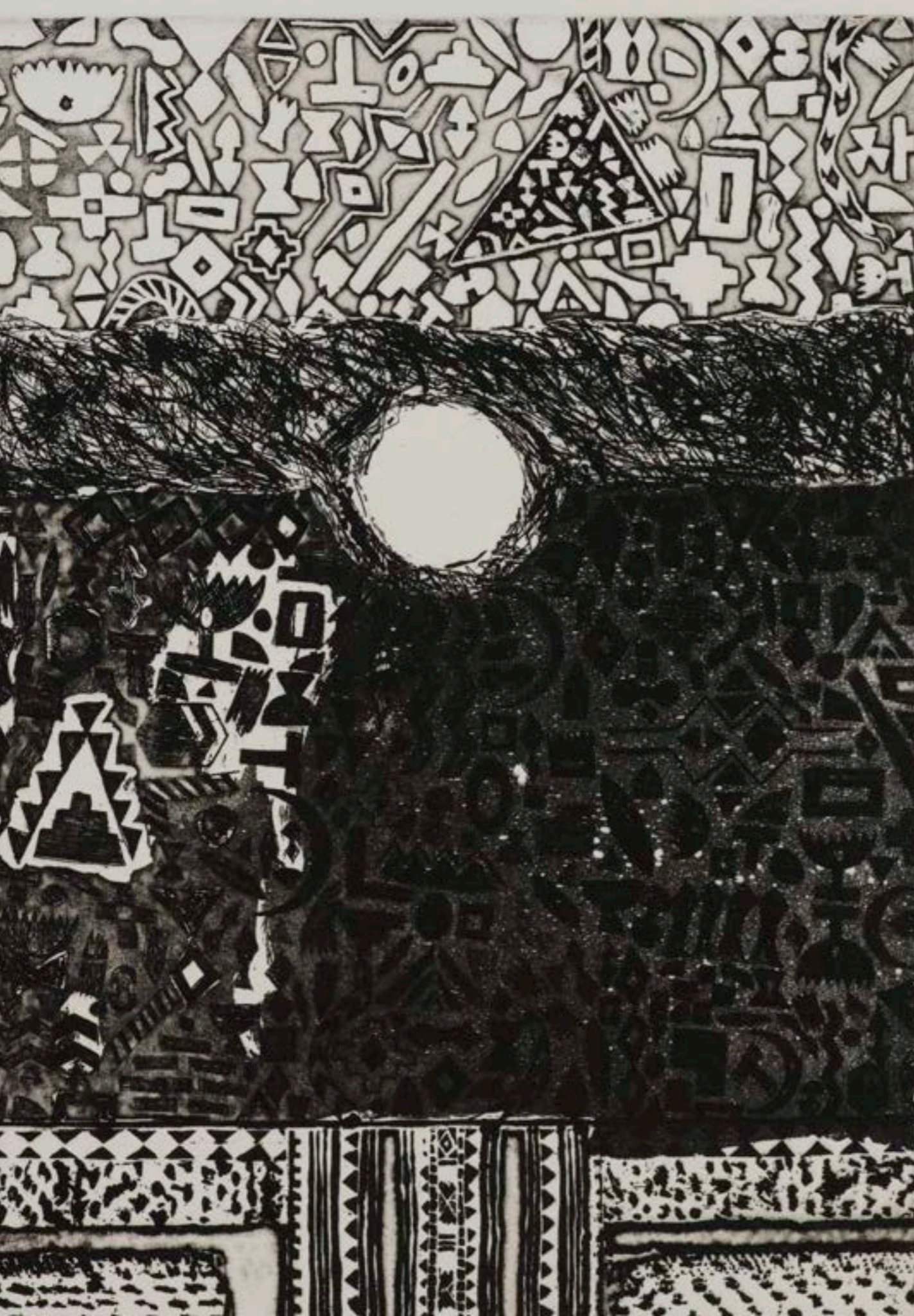
What if we change the color,  
What color would you choose and why?

### **Do these objects remind you of something you have seen before?**

## SOURCES

Hamdy, Mariam. **The breathing sculptures of Armen Agop.** Daily News Egypt, Cairo, October 2008, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-188112833.html>





Sun and Symbols  
Ahmed Al Assadi  
1999  
Etching on paper  
55.5 X 75.5 cm





Heritage and Symbols  
Ahmed Al Assadi  
1999  
Etching on paper  
55.5 X 75.5 cm

# sun and symbols and heritage

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## symbols by ahmed al asadi

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Ahmed Al-Asadi, an artist born and raised in Doha, presents his art from a unique perspective.

In his two pieces *Heritage Symbols* and *Sun and Symbols* we find elaborate patterns that are inspired by the Jabal Al Jassasiya Rock Carvings. These rocky ridges of carvings (approximately 900 of them) are stretched across the northern coast of Qatar and are a vital aspect of Qatar's heritage. In his work, Asadi looks deep into the symbols found in these rock carvings that date back to more than 300 BC, and deconstructs and re-interprets these symbols using new compositions, techniques and mixed media.

## questions

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### **What do you see?**

Give students time to observe, notice and share as many observations as possible.

### **What do you see that makes you say that?**

Ask students to explain what they see and why they think it looks a certain way.

### **Compare the two images:**

Discuss the lines, shapes, textures, and patterns that are visible.

### **How does the artist play with dark and light values in these works?**

### **Look at the composition**

How does Asadi divide the artwork visually?

Discuss the titles *Heritage Symbol* and *Sun Symbol*.

What symbols can you find, and what do they represent?

What do you see that reminds you of heritage or the sun?

### **Do you think the artwork is inspired by a place? If so, where?**

## resources

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**Amor, Kristin. Exploring Qatar's Mysterious Rock Carvings of Al Jassasiya.**

**<http://www.vagabondish.com/al-jassasiya-rock-carvings-qatar/#QbAKGi7heZvSIFit.99>, April 2011**

**Search online for images of the Al Jassasiya Rock Carvings and then have your students make comparisons between these images and the artworks.**

## SOURCES

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**Tarek Ghanem, Edit, Swalif: Qatari Art between Memory and Modernity (Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing, 2011)**

i am an experimental fannan  
exploring media and materials



Untitled  
Ahmed Al Hamar  
Mixed media  
122 x 55.2 cm





Untitled  
Ahmed Al Hamar  
Mixed media  
122 x 55.2 cm

# untitled by ahmad al hamar

Ahmad Al Hamar is a Qatari artist born in Doha in 1974. He studied art education at Qatar University and went on to work at several local art centers. He began making art in a realistic style, but later embraced an abstract, intuitive mode of working, using non-traditional art materials like fabrics, rust, and natural dyes in his paintings. This painting contains a layer of white fabric with pieces of black fabric layered on top, suggesting a thobe and abaya. Handprints and marks in black and white paint also emerge all over the painting.

## questions

### **Examine this artwork.**

What do you see? What do you see that makes you say that?

### **Look closer.**

How did the artist make the work? What materials did he use?

### **Imagine you could touch this work**

What kind of texture do you think it has? What would it feel like?

### **Although there are no people in this work, what traces of a human presence can you find?**

Do you think the artist was trying to tell a story? What could it be?

## resources

### **Swalif: The Artists Talk Video:**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1d\\_ZkDKraA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1d_ZkDKraA)

## SOURCES

**Tarek Ghanem, Edit, Swalif: Qatari Art between Memory and Modernity (Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing, 2011)**





Untitled  
Ahmed Al Haddad  
1995  
Ceramic Sculpture  
11 x 27x 22 cm



# untitled

## by ahmed al haddad

Ahmed Al Haddad is a ceramic artist who was born in Bahrain, studied in Egypt, and then worked in Qatar as an art teacher for more than twenty years. Al Haddad incorporates calligraphy into many of his ceramic works, and had experimented with the inclusion of local materials, such as Qatari soil, in his art works. This piece represents the idea of creative risk-taking, since it was a vessel that collapsed during the firing process. Although the final product was not what the artist originally intended, he still decided to display it.

## questions

**What do you notice about this work?**

**What does the shape remind you of?**

**Do you think this art work is beautiful or ugly? Why or why not?**

**Have you ever tried to make something and it didn't turn out as you expected? What happened?**

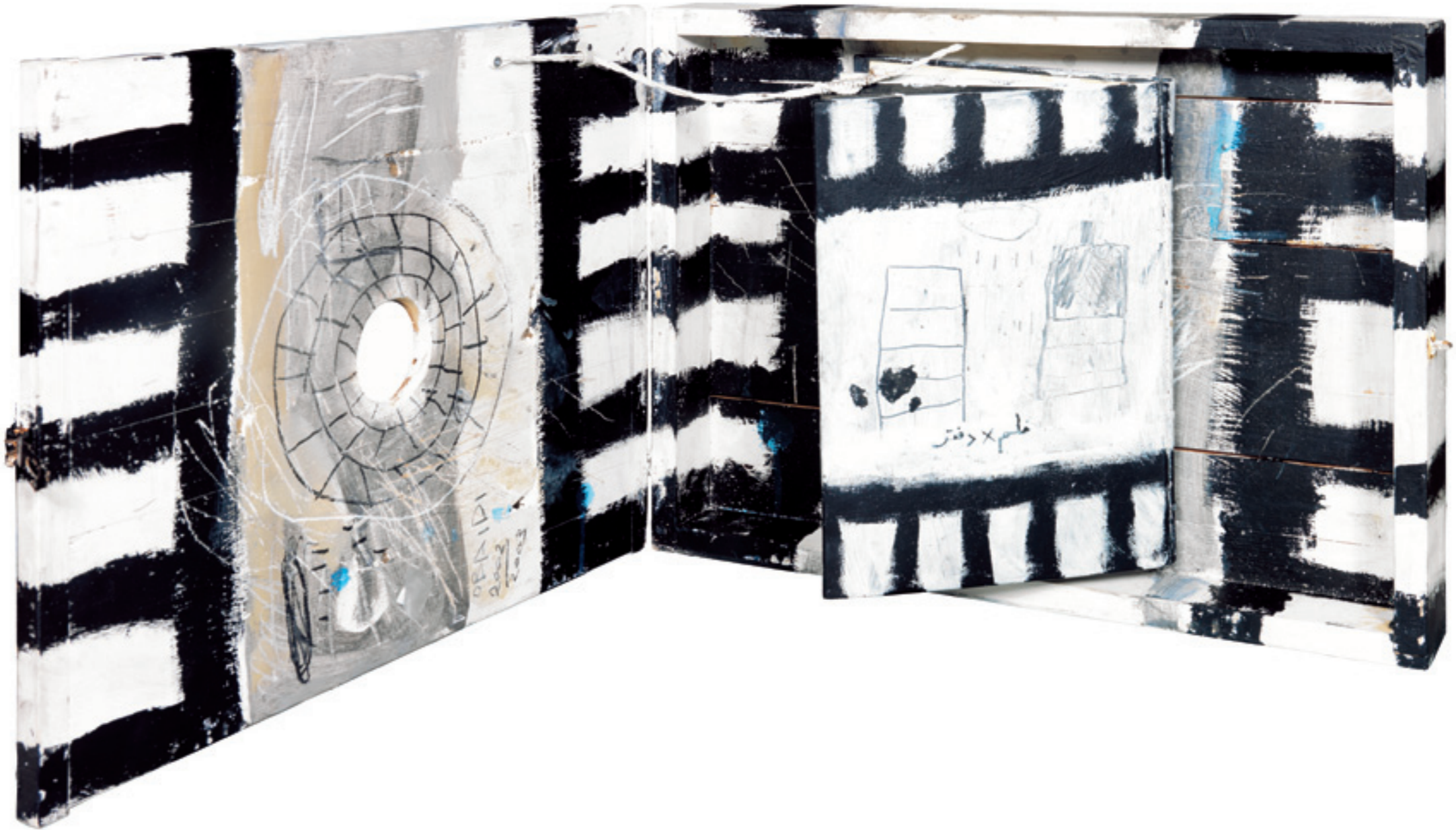
## resources

**Swalif: The Artists Talk Video:**

**[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1d\\_ZkDKraA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1d_ZkDKraA)**

## SOURCES

**Tarek Ghanem, Edit, Swalif: Qatari Art between Memory and Modernity  
(Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing, 2011)**



The Storyboard of Ramona  
Mahmoud AL-Obaidi  
2002  
Mixed media  
51 x 38 x 8.5 cm

# the storyboard of ramona by mahmoud al-obaidi

In this artwork, the artist Mahmoud al-Obaidi has created a hinged wooden box that swings open and holds a book inside. The box and the book are covered with the artist's paintings and drawings.

## questions

**What do you notice about this artwork?**

How is it different from a traditional painting or book?

**Why would an artist make a special box for a book?**

What do you think the inside pages of the book look like?

**If you were going to make a special book of your own writing and drawing, what would it be about?**

**Have you ever combined two things into one to create something new, like a painting and a book?**

**The printed page of a book is usually black and white only.**

Why do you think this artist chose to use mainly black and white in this work? Where is there color in the piece?

## resources

**View this artist's work in Doha at the Katara Art Center in Fall 2013:**

<http://www.kataraartcenter.com/>

<http://www.obaidiart.com/My-Home-land>

## sources

**Al-Khudhairi, W, CHalabi, D, Shabout, N, "Sajjil: A Century of Modern Art", Skira Editore S.p.A., 2010.**





You Never Left  
Youssef Nabil  
2010  
Film and hand-colored  
gelatin silver prints  
50 x 75 cm

# you never left

## by youssef nabil

Youssef Nabil is a video artist and photographer originally from Cairo who now works in New York. He takes photographs in black and white and then colors them by hand, recreating an old process that was used before color photography became widely available. Many of his works are about his own personal life story and his experience leaving Egypt to live abroad, and his love of old movies. Perhaps he chooses to hand color his photographs to show the nostalgia one feels on remembering the past.

### **Artist Quote**

“First I only wanted to work in black and white. I refused to use any color film. For me it was a bit commercial, less artistic, and had nothing to do with my cinema inspirations. I first wanted to make work inspired by the old Egyptian black-and white-films, because people were more beautiful in black and white, and I wanted to still show that. Then later on I had the need to see my work in color, so I decided to hand-color my black-and-white photographs...which would still keep this old cinematic feeling that I liked.”

From [http://www.youssefnabil.com/articles/conversation\\_with\\_hans\\_ulrich\\_obrist.html](http://www.youssefnabil.com/articles/conversation_with_hans_ulrich_obrist.html)

## questions

### **Look closely at the image.**

What details do you notice?

What words would you use to describe this person?

### **How would this image be different if the artist had not painted on it, had left it black and white?**

**Have you ever changed one of your own photographs,** by hand or on the computer? Why did you do it? Did you like the way it turned out?

**Do you have old family photographs in black and white and in color?** How are they different? Which ones do you like looking at more?

### **Have you ever tried taking black and white photographs?**

What is different about them than color photographs?

## sources

**Bardaouil, Sam and Fellrath, Till. Told, Untold, Retold. Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Dec. 30, 2010, Doha, Qatar.**

## resources

**Visit the artist's website: <http://www.youssefnabil.com/>**



Beit il Shaar  
Salim Al Dabbagh  
Mixed media on panel  
79.5 x 89.5 cm  
2000



# beit il shaar

## by salim al dabbagh

Salim Al Dabbagh is an Iraqi artist who currently lives and works in Baghdad. In his paintings, he is inspired by the landscape of the desert, and by his childhood memories of Bedouin tents and black and white movies.

### **Quote from the Artist**

“On my way to school, I used to see how they made and wove tents in the streets, the black color along with the wall, I liked the contrast of the black and white when I was a child. Even the movies I used to see during my childhood were black and white movies. I do not like colorful paintings or colorful movies. Even now, I prefer black and white photography over color. These are the elements that inspire my artworks.” Mathaf Interview with Salim Al Dabbagh, November 2012

## questions

### **What do you see in this image?**

Look at it very closely, what new details do you notice?

### **What colors seem closer to you and which seem to move away?**

### **Can you think of a word that describes the artwork?**

### **What materials do you think the artist used to make this work?**

Why did he choose those materials? What effect do they create?

What natural materials do they remind you of (skin, hair, sand, etc.)

### **What kind of landscape do you think inspired the artist?**

Have you been to the desert in Qatar? What does it look and feel like?

### **Why would an artist choose to work with only shades of black, white, and brown?**

What effect do the paintings have on you?

## SOURCES

Shabout, Nada. *Forever Now: Five Anecdotes from the Permanent Collection*. Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, 2012.



Saqr  
Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed  
bin Ali Al Thani  
2006  
Feathers on Fabric  
174 x 180 cm

saqr (falcon)

by sheikh hassan bin mohamed

bin ali al thani

Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali Al Thani is the founder of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. He is also an artist and designer, and he created this work in 2006 for the Asian Games Fashion Show. It is a woman's dress made from black and white falcon feathers that spell the word "Qatar" in Arabic, and it was also worn by Sheika Moza.

questions

**What do you see?**

**What part catches your eye the most?**

**Can you guess what the piece is made from?**

**Can you think of a word that describes what you see?**

**Falcon feathers are an unusual material.**

Why do you think the designer chose to use them for this piece?

**Have you ever created or worn an outfit made from unusual materials?**

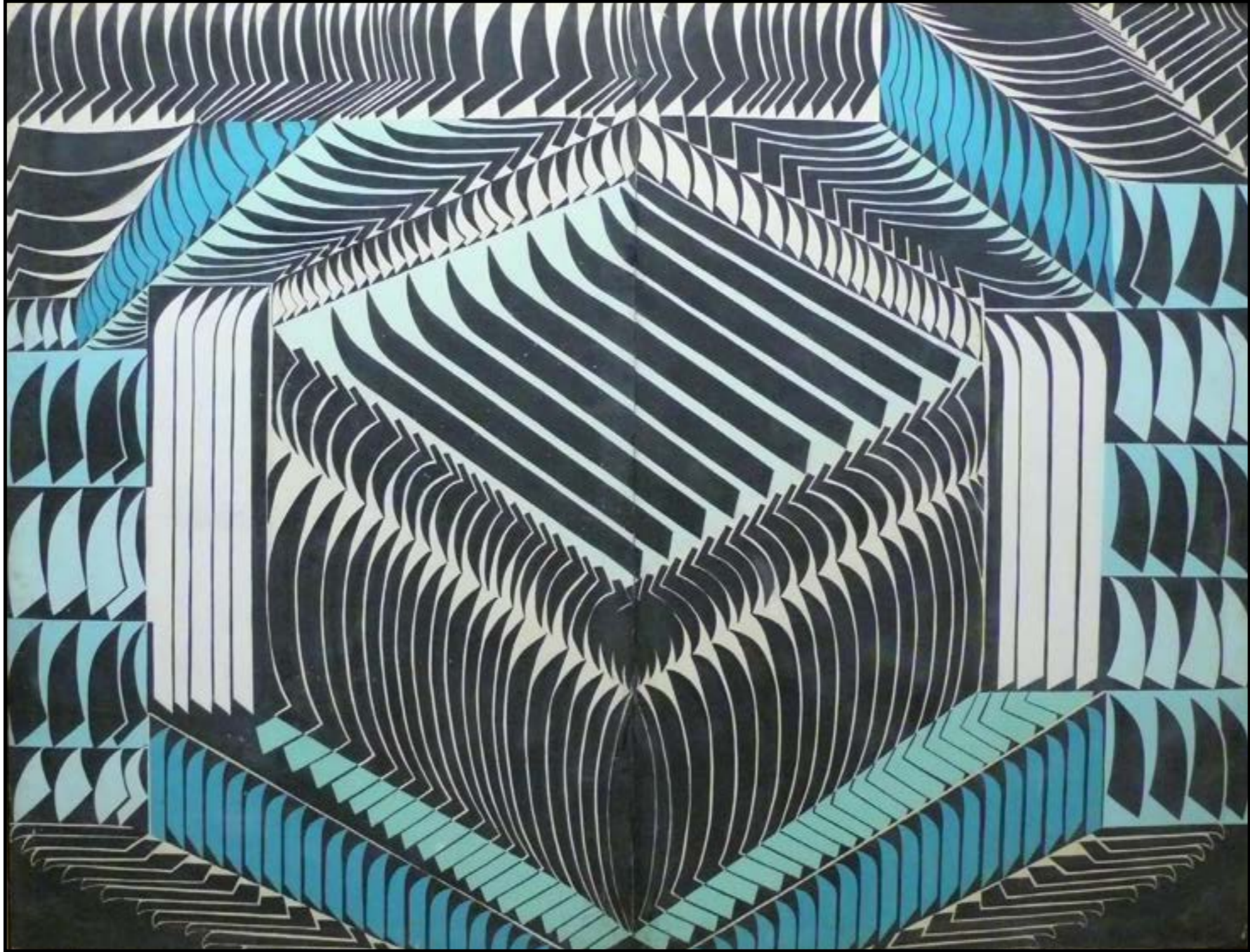
What did you like about it?

**What do black and white represent in the culture and traditions of Qatar?**

sources

**Tarek Ghanem, Edit, Swalif: Qatari Art between Memory and Modernity  
(Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing, 2011)**





Al Ka'aba  
Omar El-Nagdi  
2009  
Oil on canvas

al ka'aba

by omar el-nagdi

Omar El-Nagdi is an Egyptian artist born in 1931 in Cairo. In this painting of the Kaaba in Mecca, he experimented with depicting space through repeating shapes, which make the image seem three-dimensional, almost like a sculpture. The black and white shapes suggest that the painting stretches on into infinity, perhaps giving the painting a spiritual meaning.

questions

**How is this painting similar or different to other images you have seen of the Kaaba?**

**Does the image look flat or three-dimensional to you?**

**The artist chose to use mostly black and white in this work, but he also added the color blue. Why do you think he chose to do this? What is special about the color blue?**

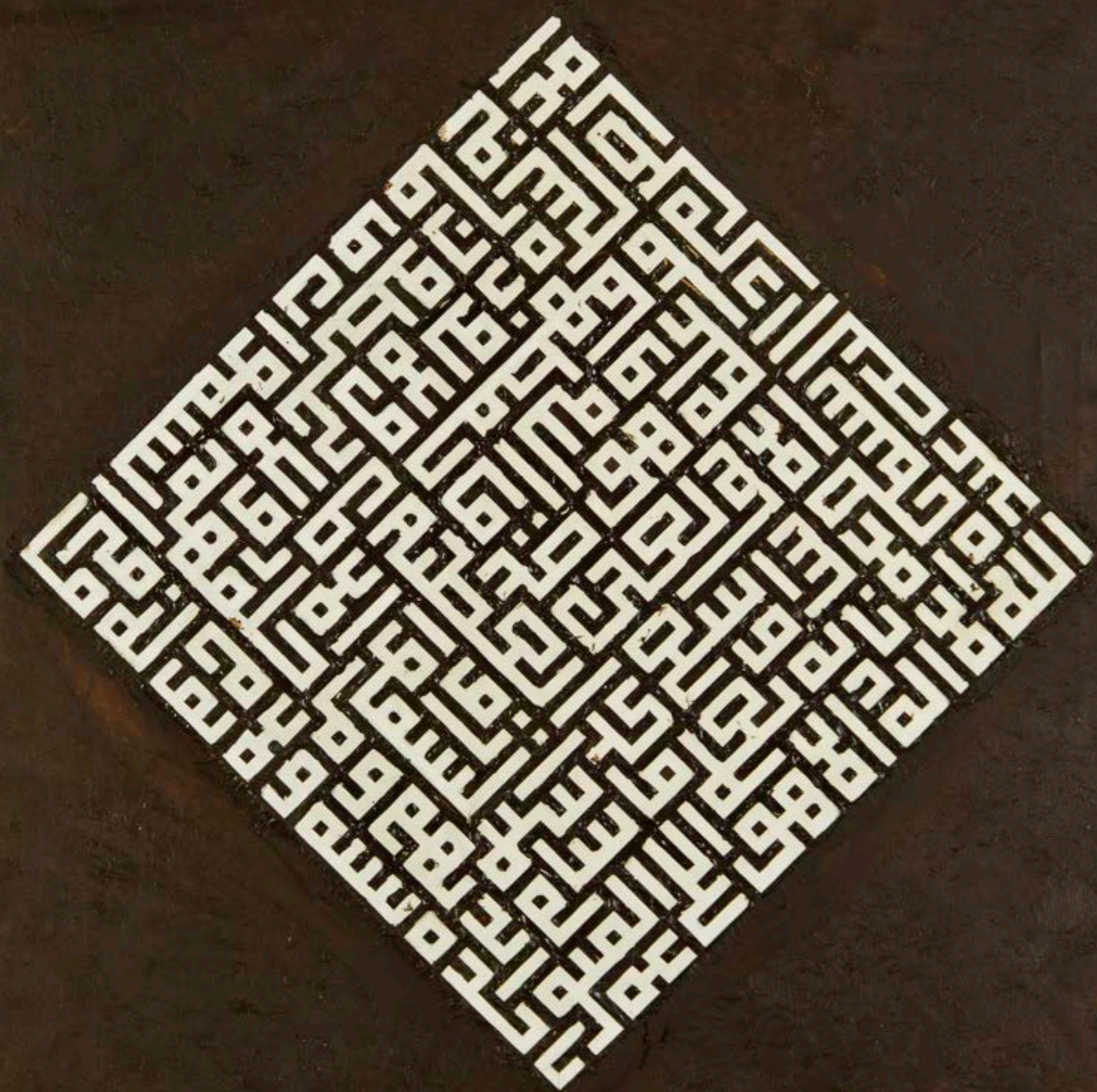
resources

**For other artworks related to Mecca and the Hajj, visit the exhibition at the Museum of Islamic Art this fall:**

**<http://www.mia.org.qa/exhibitions/hajj/en>**

i am a story telling fannan:  
narrative and history





Ayat al Kursi  
Issam El Said  
1970  
Oil on canvas  
91.2 x 9.14 cm



# ayat al kursi by issam el said

This oil painting on canvas has a strong graphic presence. What appears as a labyrinth or a maze to the non-Arabic speaker, is in fact Issam's re- interpretation of the Quranic verse (Ayat al Kursi) using classical kufi calligraphy.

## questions

### **Look closely at the art work.**

What do you see?

What does it remind you of?

### **Have you seen writing or patterns like this before?**

Where?

### **Why do you think the artist chose to hang the work at an angle, so it makes a diamond rather than a square shape?**

### **If you were going to write a story or a poem and place the words into an abstract shape, what shape would you choose?**

(This is called concrete poetry- give it a try!)

### **Why did this artist choose black and white for his piece?**

How would it be different if he used color?

## resources

### **How to Write a Concrete Poem**

<http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/news/how-to-write-a-concrete-poem/>





Features from Qatar  
Jassim Al Zaini  
1973  
Oil on board  
48.5 x 78.3 cm



# features from qatar

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## by jassim al zaini

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Jassim Al Zaini was a pioneer in Qatar's art scene. One of the first Qatari artists to travel abroad for academic art training, much of his work documented the social and economical changes in Qatar during the 1950s and 60s. His artwork shows his knowledge of the modern painting styles of cubism and abstraction, while reflecting scenes of daily life in Qatar. In *Features from Qatar*, Zaini examines the connection between a man and a woman wearing traditional black and white Qatari clothes. It is left up to the viewer to interpret how the two figures are related and what the narrative might be.

## questions

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**What do you see?** Give students time to observe, notice and share as many observations as possible.

**What do you see that makes you say that?** Ask students to justify their answer.

**Discuss narrative, setting, tone, characters and mood with the students.** Who are the people and how are they related to each other? Where is this (room, country, etc) and how do you know that?

**What else can you notice in the painting?**  
(For example, do they notice the masbaha or prayer beads?)

**What colors does the artist use?**  
Why do you think the artist used those colors?

**How would the mood or feeling of this painting change if the color was taken away?**

**There are many symbols in this painting.**

A symbol is something that represents something else. For example, heart is a symbol for love.

**What symbols do you see in this painting?**

What do they represent?

What do you see that makes you think that?

What is story in this painting?

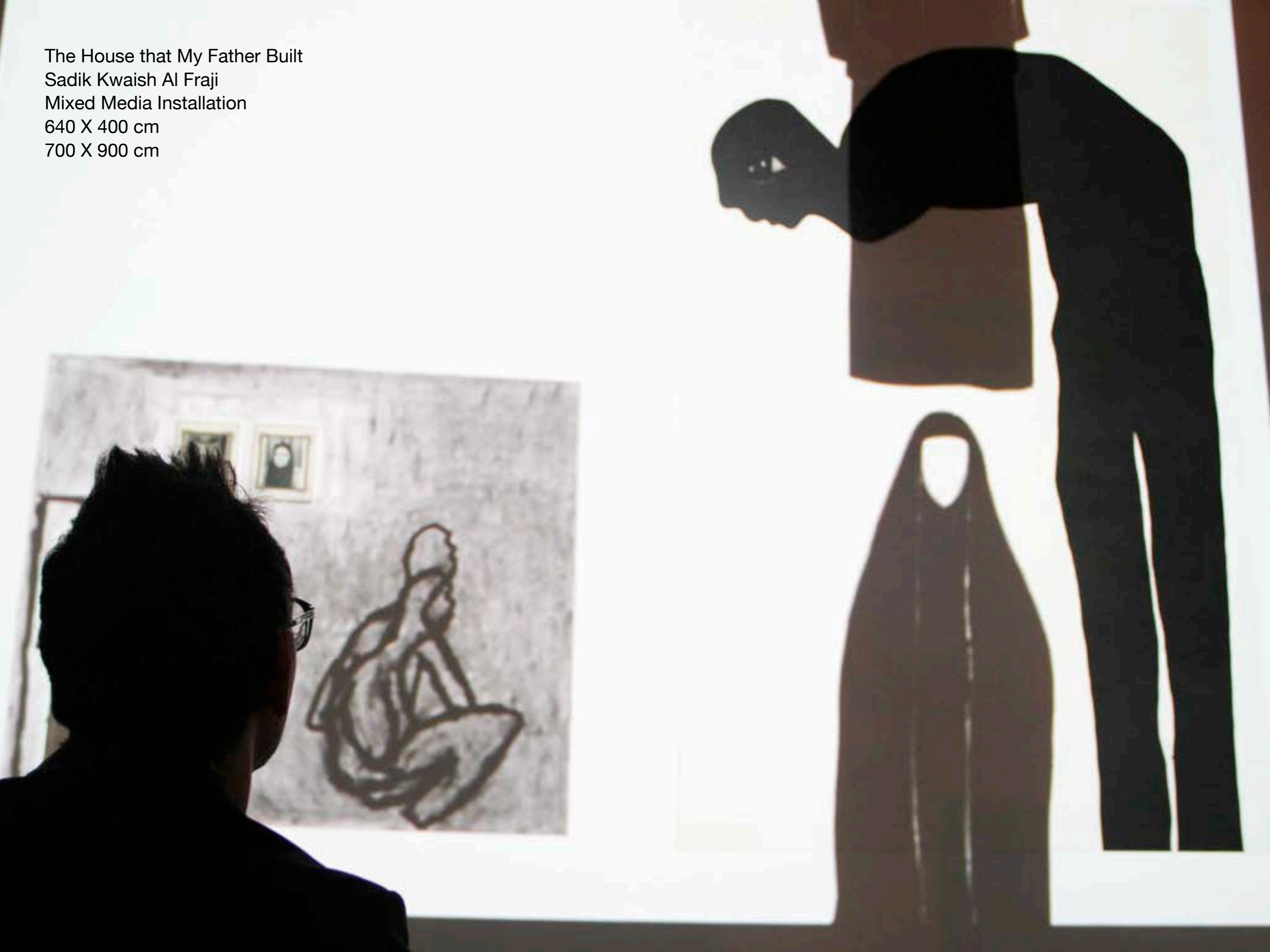
How does the artist feel about this particular subject?

## SOURCES

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Al-Khudhairi, W, Chalabi, D, Shabout, N, "Sajjil: A Century of Modern Art", Skira Editore S.p.A., 2010.

The House that My Father Built  
Sadik Kwaish Al Fraji  
Mixed Media Installation  
640 X 400 cm  
700 X 900 cm



# the house that my father built by sadik kwaish alfraji

“I do not paint out of luxury, and do not seek beauty, but as an attempt to reason the world and myself. Yet, always, the result does not exceed a restless sort of crying,” says Sadik Kwaish Al Fraji, who is a visual artist, print maker and designer. To Sadik, art and philosophy are one. His work examines thought and the human condition, often personified in a somber, giant, black figure. *The House that My Father Built* is a moving animation film that tells the story of the artist’s intense and emotional journey back to his family home in Baghdad, where he visited his late father’s bedroom and found only a few belongings and an overwhelming flow of memories. The final artwork consists of some of his father’s belongings, including clothing and portraits mounted on a wall, with a video projected onto the wall behind the clothing.

View Al Fraji’s animation film and discuss it with students.

<http://vimeo.com/28503557#>

## questions

**What did you see happening in the video?**

Which parts stood out to you most?

**How did the artist structure the story?**

What happened at the beginning, middle and end?

**How do the image and sound work together to create a story?**

What did you feel as you were watching the movie?

What do you think the artist wanted you to feel?

**How does the use of black and white affect the way you view the story?**

## SOURCES

**Bardaouil, Sam and Fellrath, Till. Told, Untold, Retold. Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, 2010, Doha, Qatar.**





The Tomb of Time  
Lara Baladi  
2010  
Porcelain prints  
350 x 350 x 300 cm



The Tomb of Time  
Lara Baladi  
2010  
Porcelain prints  
350 x 350 x 300 cm



# the tomb of time

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## by lara baladi

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Lara Baladi is a Lebanese artist who works and lives in Cairo. Her work is a process that includes gathering, interpreting and re-interpreting images, starting with photography and ending with large-scale installations. The idea for this work grew out of a difficult time when Baladi was caring for her father at the hospital. She took note of each coffee cup consumed by the many friends and relatives who came to visit. Then she began photographing each coffee cup, documenting a time, a feeling, and personal story of each guest. Also, the number of coffee cups indicated the length of time her father spent at the hospital.

*The Tomb of Time* consists of the photographs of each coffee cup, printed on porcelain (instead of paper or canvas). The viewer can see the bottom of the coffee cup as if reading a fortune. The porcelain is mounted inside a large stone structure, surrounded by the figures of angels and floral motifs on the walls and ceiling. The tomb acts as a spiritual retreat, where the viewer is surrounded and comforted by the memories of close friends and family.

## questions

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### **What do you see?**

Give students time to observe, notice and share as many observations as possible.

### **What do you see that makes you say that?**

Ask students to justify their answer.

### **How does Baladi capture time in her artwork?**

**Did the artist intend to create a certain feeling or mood in this work?** What feelings does this work evoke?

### **Why did she use black and white colors?**

What is the importance of the coffee cups in this artwork?

**Explain the story of the artist caring for her father in the hospital, and why she chose to photograph each coffee cup.**

**Where would you choose to go if you were facing a difficult time? Why?**

How would you choose to represent that?

## SOURCES

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Bardaouil, Sam and Fellrath, Till. *Told, Untold, Retold. Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art*, Dec. 30, 2010, Doha, Qatar.



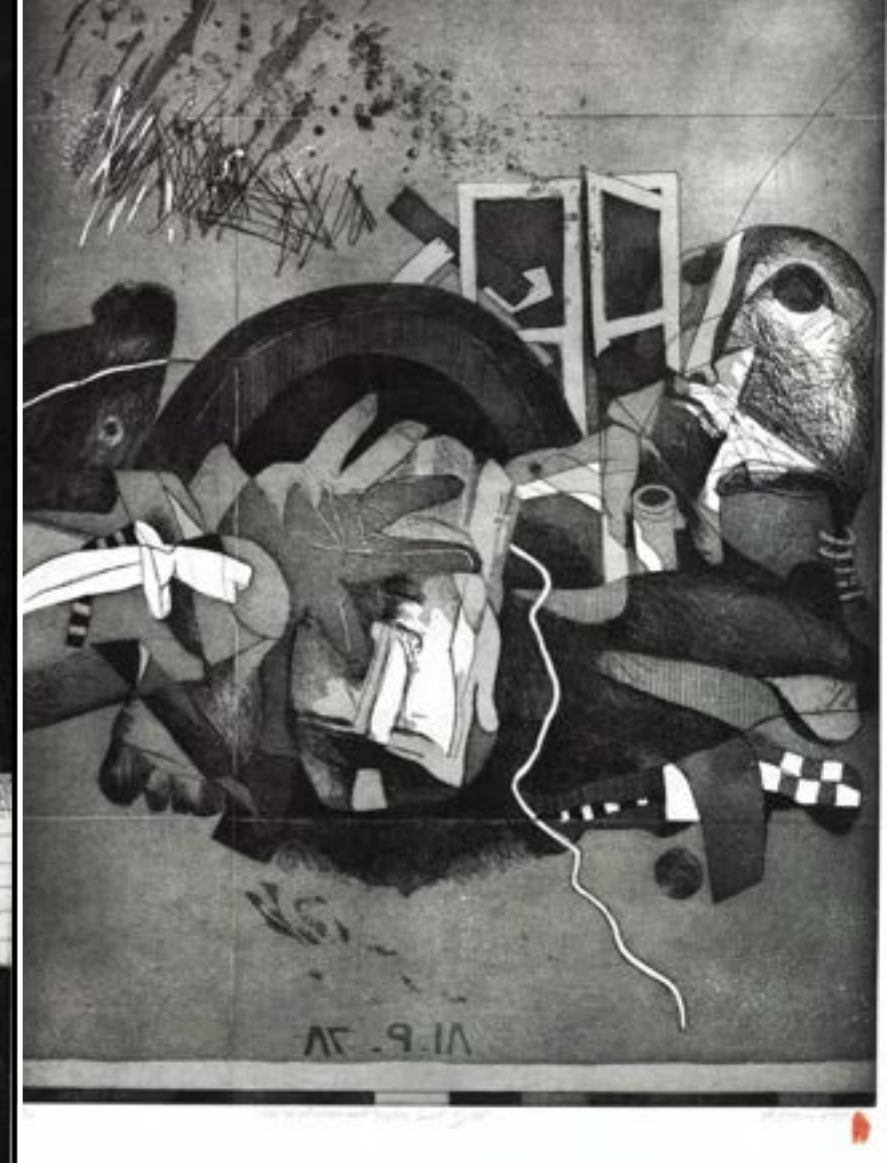
i am a critical fannan

examining emotions, culture, and social issues



We Are Not Seen but Corpses (The Massacre of Sabra)  
Dia Azzawi  
Etching and lithograph on paper  
100 X 70 cm  
1983





We Are Not Seen but Corpses (The Massacre of Sabra)  
Dia Azzawi  
Etching and lithograph on paper  
100 X 70 cm  
1983





We Are Not Seen but Corpses (The Massacre of Sabra)  
Dia Azzawi  
Etching and lithograph on paper  
100 X 70 cm  
1983

# we are not seen but corpses (the massacre of sabra) by dia azzawi

Dia Azzawi is an Iraqi modern artist. He frequently addresses themes of war and violence, and events in his home country. In this instance, he was inspired by a poem by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, addressing the Sabra and Shatila Massacre. The artist has made an earlier, larger work referencing the massacre which can be compared with students. Azzawi's cubist work often reminds viewers of Pablo Picasso's anti-war painting, *Guernica*.

## questions

**Examine this artwork. What do you see?**

What do you see that makes you think that?

**Look closer –describe the artists' technique.**

How did they create this artwork?

**How does the artist use color?**

How does he use black, white and grey to guide your eyes?

**What is the emotional tone of this artwork?**

How does the artist convey that?

**The artist was responding to the Sabra and Shatila massacre.**

What does the artist have to say about war and violence? How do you know? What do you see that makes you think that?

## resources

**Farhat, Maymanah, "Dia Azzawi's 'Sabra and Shatila Massacre',"**

**in Jaddaliya, October 27, 2012,**

**<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8056/dia-al-azzawis-sabra-and-shatila-massacre->**





100 Words of Love  
Ghada Amer  
Painted cast resin  
185.4 x 183 cm  
2010



# 100 words of love

## by ghada amer

Ghada Amer is a leading Egyptian contemporary artist. She often addresses issues of discrimination and prejudice in her work. *100 Words of Love* is an installation constructed from black resin that was molded into an egg-like shape. Amer then took various instruments (a kitchen whisk, paint brushes, etc.) and splattered the resin with bright, colorful paint. Look closer at the resin. You will see 100 Arabic synonyms for love, as well as the English word "Love." Underneath, the artist has placed lights which cause the words to cast a shadow on the wall, encircling the artwork. Examine how the artist uses all of these intertwining elements (words, shape, form, light and color) to critique stereotypes.

## questions

### **Examine this artwork.**

What do you see? What do you see that makes you think that?

### **Look closer and describe the artist's technique.**

How did she create this artwork? What material did she use?

### **The artist has taken one material (black resin) and covered it with color.**

What effect does this create?

### **How does the artist use light and shadow as a part of this artwork?**

**If your students can read Arabic, ask if students can identify any of the words.** Why do you think the artist chose to tangle the words together so that they are difficult to read?

**When the artist was living and working in internationally, she encountered many stereotypes of Arabs (that Arabs are angry, terrorists, etc.).** How does she respond to these stereotypes? How does she critique them?



Fragile  
Cai Guo-Qiang  
Gunpowder on porcelain panels  
2011

# fragile by cai guo-qiang

Cai Guo-Qiang is a contemporary Chinese artist, who uses gunpowder to create his artworks. (His name is pronounced *Sigh Gwoh-Chang*). *Fragile* is composed of 480 handmade porcelain tiles. The artist carefully sprinkled gunpowder onto the tiles to create the Arabic word *هش* or hash, meaning fragile or brittle. The gunpowder was then ignited to burn the word into the tiles. The individual panels contain images of nature, including chrysanthemums (a Chinese symbol of long life) and peonies (a Chinese symbol of wealth). The artist spent several months working in Doha, Qatar and this artwork was inspired by the Arab world's connections and similarities to his homeland.

## questions

**Examine this artwork.** What do you see? What do you see that makes you think that?

**This artwork is composed of 480 porcelain tiles. Each tile is handmade and unique.** Look closely at one tile. What do you see?

**Ask if any students can explain what the artist has written onto the tiles. The artist used gunpowder to burn the word on to the tile. The artist frequently colors his gunpowder with medicinal Chinese herbs to get a yellow or orange color; however, here the artist has chosen to use gunpowder that burns black.**

Why do you think the artist chooses to work in this spectacular way? What does the explosion add to the artwork? How would the artwork have been different if he had just used black paint?

**Why do you think the artist chose to use the colors black and white? What do these colors symbolize?**

**The artist spent several months working in Doha and was inspired by the many similarities between Qatar and his home country.** What do you think this work symbolizes?

What is he critiquing about both countries? What do you see that makes you think that?

## resources

**“Cai Guo-Qiang” in Art 21, <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/cai-guo-qiang>.**

**To get a sense of the artist's process, you can show students these videos:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-Qlj7E6CR8>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oETTQVGP1w>





Screams from Sarajevo no. 1  
Yousef Ahmed  
Acrylic on Canvas  
160.5 X120 cm  
1995





Screams from Sarajevo no. 2  
Yousef Ahmed  
Acrylic on Canvas  
160.5 x120 cm  
1995

# screams from sarajevo no. 1 and screams from sarajevo no. 2 by yousef ahmed

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Yusef Ahmed is a Qatari artist, who began his career exploring calligraphy and later began creating large scale works using silkscreen and etching. His use of color, material and technique are highly personal. *Screams from Sarajevo no. 1* and *Screams from Sarajevo no. 2* were created in 1995, in response to the highly televised Bosnian War (1992-1995).

The artist dipped thick rope in acrylic paint, and then used the rope to apply paint to the canvas. Discuss why Yusef Ahmed chose to change his process from painting, drawing or etching to work in this way. If possible, compare Yusef Ahmed's painting to photojournalists' coverage of the Bosnian war or coverage of contemporary conflicts. How does the work of an artist compare?

## questions

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### **Examine this artwork.**

What do you see?

What do you see that makes you think that?

### **Look closer and describe the artist's technique.**

How did he create this artwork? How does the artist use material to express ideas and emotions?

### **How does the artist use black and white as part of his work?**

How are Sarajevo no. 1 and Sarajevo no. 2 different from each other?

Would you respond to this work differently if it were in color?

Why or why not?

### **If you feel comfortable discussing this issue with your students, compare Yusef Ahmed's painting to photojournalists' coverage of the Bosnian war or coverage of contemporary conflicts.**

How does the work of an artist compare?

What do you think the artist is criticizing?

What do you see that makes you think that?

## resources

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"Yusef Ahmed," <http://www.qma.com.qa/exhibitions/mallawal/index.php/en/yusef-ahmed>.

Taylor, Alan, "20 Years Since the Bosnian War," in *The Atlantic*, April 13, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2012/04/20-years-since-the-bosnian-war/100278/>.





“Y, Why?”  
Buthayna Ali  
22 Cement and rubber sling shots  
77 x 200 cm  
2010

# y, why? by buthayna ali

Buthayna Ali was born in Damascus, Syria and currently works in Canada. Her work *Y, Why?* consists of a collection of 22 cement slingshots varying in height from just 77 cm to 200 cm. They are scattered around a room, and the long elastic parts are stretched back to varying degrees of tension. Each slingshot's size and stretched elastic represents the ratio of forced immigration from the 22 Arab countries. The choice of a slingshot turns forced immigration (whether by war, poverty, etc.) from an invisible process to a highly visible and concrete form. In her artist's statement, she writes: "I focused on the Arab countries and how these countries shoot out their citizens like stones."

Uproot them from difficult conditions that they create, from their memories, from their histories...and these people hope to have the freedom from these heavy conditions. Do they really feel it? Many questions enter my mind... and many wh(y)s? SO...WH(Y)?

## questions

### **Examine this artwork.**

What do you see? What do you see that makes you think that?  
How are the objects similar or different from each other?

### **What patterns can you observe in this artwork?**

What relationships do you see between the objects (size, location, etc.)?

### **The artist chose to use grey concrete to create these objects.**

Why do you think she chose this material? Why do you think she chose to use only black and gray instead of adding any color?  
What do you see that makes you think that?

**The artist chose to create sculptures that visitors could walk around instead of a painting mounted on the wall.** How does the form add to the meaning of the artwork?

The sizes of slingshots related to the size of their countries. The rubber would reflect the migration rate.  
"I researched migration over the last 10 years.  
I want to reflect a time period in my life"

Concrete is the material of our buildings and our walls which separate us. It gives us a cold feeling like those countries.  
Which country will give us this cold feeling?  
The one who shoots us out or the one who receives us?  
So...Who & WH(Y)?"

## resources

Ali, Buthayna,  
"Y, Why?" [http://www.buthaynaali.com/Y%20\\_%20Why.htm](http://www.buthaynaali.com/Y%20_%20Why.htm)





Practice ZERO TOLERANCE  
Adel Abdessemed  
Terracotta  
2013

# practice zero tolerance

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## by adel abdessemed

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Adel Abdessemed is an Algerian-born contemporary artist who works with a variety of media. This artwork is made of terra cotta, blackened by exposure to high heat. According to the artist, “I have-recreated, in terra cotta and at a one to one scale, the hulk of a burned car that was impounded after being on the street in the *banlieues* [suburban neighborhoods] of Paris in late 2005.” The title was taken from a speech by then French Interior Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, declaring zero tolerance towards the rioters. (Adel Abdessemed quoted in Artforum, 2008)

## questions

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### **Examine this artwork.**

What do you see? What do you see that makes you think that?

### **Describe the object.**

What does it look like? What does it remind you of?

### **How does the artwork compare to cars that you see every day?**

What is missing from this car?

**The artwork is made of terra cotta, which is normally a deep red-dish brown color. The artist chose to heat the terra cotta until it blackened.** How does the process (burning until black) change your understanding of the artwork? Why would he choose to burn it? What emotions does he seek to convey?

### **The artist has described the process of making this artwork as “attack”, instead of calling it sculpture.**

What does his description tell you about his intentions?

The artist was inspired by riots in France. The title refers to a comment by a French government official declaring “zero tolerance” for the rioters. Read this short article about the origins and causes of the riots:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2005/06/200849155655200149.html>

What was the government’s attitude towards the people rioting?

### **What do you think the artist is criticizing?**

**What do you see that makes you think that?**

## SOURCES

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Sholis, Ben, “Adel Abdessemed,” in Artforum, October 13, 2008, <http://artforum.com/words/id=21266>.

Hou Hanru, “To Live Dangerously!” in Adel Abdessemed *Je Suis innocent*, ed. Philippe-Alain Michaud (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2012), 156.

Rowling, Meagan, “French riots borne of mutual exclusion,” in Al Jazeera, June 5, 2005, <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2005/06/200849155655200149.html>.



Soldaten  
Adel Abdessamed  
Charcoal on paper  
184 x 130 cm  
2013



# soldaten

## by adel abdessemed

Adel Abdessemed is an Algerian-born contemporary artist who works with a variety of media. *Soldaten* is not one work, but a series of charcoal drawings on paper. Each drawing is of a single soldier, armed, and standing at the ready. The drawings are approximately life sized and displayed in a row, as if you are confronted by a brigade of soldiers. Abdessemed was inspired by a work by the British artist,

Richard Hamilton, called *The State*. *The State* specifically refers to the British occupation of Northern Ireland, while Abdessemed's soldiers are more ambiguous. Whose army do they belong to? What do they represent? Let your students decide.

## questions

### **Examine this artwork.**

What do you see? What do you see that makes you think that?

### **Describe the subject of the artwork.**

Who is it? What are they doing? How do you know?

What material has the artist used to create this drawing?

### **The artist was inspired by a painting called *The State* by the British artist, Richard Hamilton:**

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hamilton-the-state-t06775>.

Compare *Soldaten* to Richard Hamilton's painting.

How are they similar? How are they different?

**Abdessemed only uses black and white in his drawing,** while Hamilton uses color. What tools or materials does Abdessemed use? Why do you think Abdessemed chose to use charcoal on paper? How does it make his work different from Hamilton's?

**What emotions or tone do you think Abdessemed wishes to convey with his drawing?** How do you know? Consider the materials and the way that he displays the artwork. Consider the different emotions that Hamilton conveys with his soldier.

### **What do you think Abdessemed is criticizing in his artwork?**

What do you see in the drawing that tells you that?

## resources

Luke, Ben, "Man on fire: Adel Abdessemed brings his work to Mayfair," London Evening Standard, January 3, 2013, <http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/exhibitions/man-on-fire-adel-abdessemed-brings-his-work-to-mayfair-8436674.html>.

Riggs, Terry, "Richard Hamilton, *The State*, 1993" The Tate Modern, December 1997, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hamilton-the-state-t06775/text-summary>

the end