

## **War, Freedom and Me**

Since I left Iraq in 1978, the country has been swept by constant war and destruction. For most Iraqi refugees who left at that time, the hope was one day to be able to return - we were always connected by our own dreams to our place of birth.

Through my drawings, I connect my past with my present and the hope for the future. The drawings themselves reflect my understanding of reality; and of the struggle between life and death, which are the two basic themes of Ancient Mesopotamian art. The main subject of my drawings has been related to the ongoing Iraqi tragedy and to the wider human condition. They reflect a crucial period for my native country Iraq.

Drawing is my daily activity. The majority of my drawings are not sketches for larger art work. Like those on display here, they are finished work in themselves.

I have lived in many different countries and studied their art history, and so I have been inspired by these cultures and their way of using lines, forms and colours. All of the symbols that exist in my drawings have their own interpretation related to the theme of life and death. My country's own heritage, Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Islamic Art etc., has an important place in these drawings but no more or less than other influences from other cultures.

In 1991, the Gulf War broke out. By then I was living in Sweden. During the 43 days I saw how my lovely cities, including Baghdad, were bombed. I saw the destruction of my memories. During this time I created 43 drawings and a day-by-day diary. These drawings were a turning point. The 43-day war changed my life forever - it put a stop to life as an adventure and started a life of question marks. The diary was shown at the British Museum Word into Art Exhibition, in 2006.

For my generation, the dream of freedom has always been an obsessive idea. But as the years has passed by, the dream has become more distant. We may never realize it, given the current situation in my country. The theme of my drawings will continue to be a struggle between life and death, as it was for the Ancient Sumerian artists.

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