

## NEW MAPS TO AN OLD TREASURE

I was born in Bohriz, Diyala, province, Iraq in 1959, near one of the oldest cities of ancient Mesopotamia, Tel Asmar. When I was ten years old I visited the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. For the first time I saw a lot of art work from very old Mesopotamian civilizations, it was my first impression of art. After that I began to visit the Museum regularly, and maybe this is why I decided to become an artist.

In 1978, I left my country for Algeria where I started my education as an artist. I did not enjoy the instruction at the Art School in Algeria. Instead, my greatest teacher was the Algerian nature and climate. It is a tremendously beautiful country! This was where my interest in colours was awakened. I got to know the culture, the dress, the folklore, the light. It was all extremely beautiful and very different from what I was used to in Iraq. Algeria was what first made me love colours. Going to Algeria was also the beginning of my travels around the world, and I am still in exile.

When I left Algeria I first travelled in the Middle-East. Finally I went to Russia where my Fine Arts education started in earnest. This new environment was very different from North Africa or the Middle East.

I first lived in student housing in Moscow, near the Andrea Rubilov Museum. By then I was especially excited by Russian icons and Rubilov was the greatest painter of icons in the 15th century. His work made a great impression on me. One year later I moved to Leningrad and started to study mural painting including icons. I loved their colours and their great depth of feeling.

The Art Academy was near world famous Museums and Libraries such as the Hermitage, the Russian Museum which has a large collection of icons, and the Saltikov Shedren Library which houses a great number of Arabian and Persian miniatures from the 10th to the 16th century. With the guidance of my Professor, Oleg Ivanovitch Kosnitsov, I was able to study these different legacies in depth and use my insights in my own art.

Having completed my studies in Leningrad, in 1989 I moved to Sweden, a very modern society. Here I met, yet again, another culture and environment. It is a northern culture with a northern light and colours.

From my Russian period, I had started to take an interest in science. I had become acquainted with the theory of colours and this was something I continued to pursue in Sweden; colours from three different points of view, 1) colours in the environment, 2) colours in the arts, and 3) colours from a scientific perspective (in physics).

Since August 2000, I live in England. The cultural atmosphere and the new society around me has given me the opportunity to see colours from yet another perspective. During these years I have managed to develop my approach in a new direction and I have deepened my understanding of the subject. The turning point was the beginning of my ongoing project '*Colour and Mind*,' in 2004. It began 20 years after I started to study colours systematically and is an extension of this long time interest. The project

is based on exhibitions under different sub-titles and presenting different contents. So far I have had four exhibitions in this series dealing with different problems.

To summarize, I would say that I have studied art from these three view points (environment, art, and science) to create a global style through which I can reflect my own understanding of reality. In 1998, for the introduction to my exhibition in Sweden, with the title '*New Maps to an Old Treasure*', I wrote: "For fifteen years I have been trying to paint the light. The light that I see in front of me and the light I see inside me. Light is the oldest event in the Universe. The colours that we see are only a small part of the big event. How big is it? We don't know much about it. Light is our oldest treasure; my paintings are an attempt to create new maps to discover this treasure in front of us and inside us."

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