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IRAQI ARTISTS IN EXILE RAFA AL-NASIRI

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SEVEN DAYS IN BAGHDAD



Nasiri 07



RAFA AL-NASIRI, "Seven Days in Baghdad", 2007, mixed media on paper 8 folded pages, each 13" x 27.5" (unfolded), Collection of Tala Azzawi

Rafa Al-Nasiri's unbound book *Seven Days in Baghdad* is a masterpiece that focuses on the American attack on his country. "Seven days" is a reference to those initial days of devastation and terror that Baghdadians endured during the US preliminary attacks, which deplorably targeted civilians. Portrayed on each of the ei

folded pages against a powerful abstract expressionistic background, a woman – perhaps a mother – shields her screaming eyes and throws her outstretched arms forward. Tragically, we know what towards towards what could only be an assailant or an oncoming assault.



RAFA AL-NASIRI, "Al Mutanabbi Street", 2007, mixed media on paper mounted on hinged wood frame, each panel 12" x 6" (extends to 36")

Rafa Al-Nasiri's *Al Mutanabbi Street* portrays the terrible destruction of the once-thriving and much celebrated historic book market of Baghdad that had been the meeting place of artists, filmmakers, writers, and intellectuals. Enclosed and bounded within the wood frames is the face of an unnamed woman, whose image the artist has shot, leaving multiple bullet holes. Next to each of the three repeated images are manuscripts revealing additional holes from a gunshot. Each frame is hinged to the next; presented in an accordion-like position, *Al Mutanabbi Street* bears an enduring and emotive presence.

From That Distant Land is a collection of poems in Arabic script written by May Muzaffar, a significant Iraqi writer who has published novels, poems, and short stories. Her themes evoke imagery that surrounds Iraqi culture and family life.

These are the most subtle and joyous of Rafa Al-Nasiri's works, superlatively complementing May Muzaffar elegant words with a Zen-like aesthetic harmony.



Rafa Al-Nasiri and May Muzaffar, "From That Distant Land", 2007, limited series of 6 etchings, each 15" x 16", Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

RAFA AL-NASIRI

born in Tikrit, Iraq, 1940.

Rafa Al-Nasiri received a diploma in painting from the Institute of Fine Arts, Baghdad in 1959, a BA in printmaking from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing in 1963, and a diploma in printmaking from The Gravura, Lisbon (Scholarship from The Gulbenkian Foundation) in 1969. He has derived much of his inspiration from the work of Chinese artists, such as the printmaking styles of Li Hua and the ink paintings Qi Baishi and Huang Yong Yu. Rafa taught painting and graphic art and design in Iraq, Jordan, and in Bahrain from 1964 to 2003, in addition to lecturing on art in different Arab and world capitals. In 1997, he published a book entitled Contemporary Graphic Art. He has held a large number of individual exhibitions from 1963 to the present in Hong Kong, Baghdad, Kuwait, Beirut, Casablanca, Paris, Beijing, Amman, Sharja, Manama, and Kampen. From 1965 to 2003, he has taken part in international exhibitions held in Germany, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Poland, United Kingdom, Norway, India, Brazil, France, South Korea, Egypt, and Switzerland. Living in exile since 1991, he is now a full-time artist residing in Amman, Jordan.

STATION MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

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