

Press Release

Issam El Said: Artist . Scholar . Thinker

Jan - Apr 2006

www.issam-el-said.co.uk



Farewell (Al Wida')
Oil on canvas
76x63cm
1961

Coinciding with London's [Festival of Muslim Cultures 2006](#); ayagallery is proud to host this unique exhibition featuring a rare collection of works by one of Iraq's most distinguished multi-talented artists, the late [Issam El-Said](#) (1938-88). The first ever since the artist's untimely death, this exhibition includes artworks, some of which have never been shown before, in a range of media providing insight into the artist's life; background, intellect, artistic and scholarly achievements during what was relatively a short life span, where he died in London 1988 at the age of 50. The creative work of Issam El-Said be it painting, sculpture, printmaking, calligraphy, design or architecture shows his dedication to the expression of the Islamic cultural identity, wonderfully demonstrating that the spiritual values of Islam can be integrated within the practice of art and architecture.

Born in Baghdad 1938, Issam El-Said was the son of Sabah Nuri El-Said and grandson to Nuri El-Said Pasha, who was the Iraqi prime minister from 1930-58. El Said achieved a BA Architecture from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 1961; studied Art at Hammersmith College of Art and Design, London, 1962-4 and prepared for a PhD on the *Methodology of Geometric Proportioning in Islamic Architecture* at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1988, which was sadly not completed due to his death that year. Key extracts from his

thesis however were published in the book *Islamic Art and Architecture: The System of Geometric Design*, 1993. El Said was also the co-author of *Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art*, published by the World of Islam Festival, London, 1976 and contributed numerous articles on Islamic art and architecture published in Europe and the USA. Soon after his death in 1989 the Issam El Said Foundation published *Issam El Said: Artist & Scholar**, a tribute to and celebration of the artist and his achievements.

Issam El Said's artworks are in private and public collections world wide including the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; MOMA, New York; the National Museums of Modern Art in Baghdad and Amman and important others. He held numerous solo-exhibitions and took part in group shows in the Middle East, Europe and the USA. His works, which have also been sold through renowned international auction houses like Christies and more recently Bonhams (London- April 2005) are highly sought after by collectors world-wide with an increased rise in demand particularly over the past year.

In the words of **Mushtaq Parker** "The untimely death of the Iraqi artist, Issam Sabah Nuri El-Said, in London at the tender age of 50, has deprived the Arab and Islamic world of one of its brilliant icons. His artistic temperament underlined a creative genius which touched all his activities, whether as a printmaker, painter, decorative designer of furniture, lamps, carpets and tiles, architect and etcher. Perhaps the saddest legacy of this Cambridge architecture graduate will be his unfulfilled ambitions and his unfinished work."

* The book *Issam El Said: Artist & Scholar* and selected artworks are available for purchase from ayagallery.
The exhibition runs alongside newly acquired Iraqi art drawn from ayagallery's In-House collection.

Special Open Days: Saturday & Sunday 25 & 26 March 2006 . 1-8pm on each day

Visits to ayagallery at all other times are by advance appointment.

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