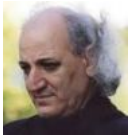


## Faisal Laibi



(/images/images/artists/Faisal\_Laibi.jpg)

Faisal's style had already evolved in Baghdad through his artistic exchange with significant Iraqi artists, even before he left for Paris to study at the National Superior School of Fine Arts of Paris in 1974. While abroad, the Iran-Iraq War broke out and was followed after by the Gulf Wars, convoluting the formation of a consistent artistic identity in the third wave of Iraqi contemporary art.

Many artists had fled the country but only a few have continued to maintain the lion's share of attention. Faisal Laibi Sahi created his own creative canon. He became one of Iraq's leading proponents of the arts, expressing the collective imagination of his country with an aesthetic and language of his own. Pictorial dreams that project nationalist imagery in a trans-cultural dialogue.

The artistic world that Faisal creates is rooted in what it means to be Iraqi. The highly acclaimed Baghdadi Coffee Shop series is Faisal's answer to Iraq's late modernism's formulation of painting in terms of flatness and opticality. He gives us an extremely articulate introduction to the Western alternative, the concept of the tableau – new perceptual approaches to reality – Modern Realism.

Last year he celebrated 50 years of painting. His retrospective follows a sequence of forms emulating the once Iraqi social sphere. Rendered in a pop-like colour spectrum, the works demonstrate Faisal's consummate skill as a painter.

The masterful composition together with an eye for decorative details in planes of pure colour, obliquely unfold stories that tend to abstraction. Without a doubt, his allusion to the figurative is thoroughly conceptual. Quintessential Iraqi scenes are masterfully rendered and cannot be compared to those produced by the most novel of "isms." It leads us back to the artist dealing with creation of the self. Faisal is an "other", as well as all others.

The Iraqi-British artist's depiction of the magnificent and boisterously epic history of Iraq's people inspires a whole nation with respect for its history and hope for its future. Faisal Laibi Sahi's paintings are embedded with a strong social content that examines power relationships between the individual and society – these masterpieces confirms his passionate commitment to Iraq is as undeniable as his genius.



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