



T.C.
ÇANKIRI KARATEKİN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

**Contemporary Abstract Art in Iraq: An Analysis of
Geometric and Lyrical Paintings**

Omar Haitham Mohialdeen ALBUBADRAN

MASTER'S THESIS

Supervisor
Prof. Dr. Muhammed Emin SOYDAŞ

Çankırı – 2022

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Omar Haitham Mohialdeen ALBUBADRAN

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Prof. Dr. M. Emin SOYDAŞ
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FOREWORD

This thesis deals with abstract art in contemporary Iraq, which is defined by painting in particular. As a plastic artist, I have recently been more interested in abstract art, which led me to choose this subject for my master's thesis.

In connection with the completion of this work, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. M. Emin Soydaş.

I am grateful to him who honored me by bearing his name, and who sacrificed for me, my dear and precious father; to my dear mother, the bond and sanctuary, my family; and to everyone who contributed to my education. I also extend my thanks to all the professors for their contribution to the completion of my studies. Thanks also go to my friends who encouraged me to complete this study.

01/11/2022

Omar Haitham Mohialdeen ALBUBADRAN

ABSTRACT

Thesis Title : Contemporary Abstract Art in Iraq: An Analysis of Geometric and Lyrical Paintings
Author : Omar Haitham Mohialdeen ALBUBADRAN
Supervisor : Prof. Dr. Muhammed Emin SOYDAŞ
Thesis Type : Master's

This study was founded on the desire to understand contemporary Iraqi abstract art in order to better clarify the foundations and aspects of abstraction. Abstraction is the reduction of everything that surrounds us from its reality, and its reformulation with a new artistic vision in which the artist's sense is manifested through colors, movement and imagination. Abstract art and philosophy are closely related because abstraction has a deep philosophical aspect in reading paintings. In the thesis, the two most prominent trends, namely geometric abstraction and lyrical abstraction, their most prominent artists are mentioned before giving information on Iraqi art in general and contemporary abstract art in particular. As the core study of the thesis, a sample of paintings by Iraqi artists is analyzed. Through the analysis, the differences among the abstraction styles were identified, such as the method of color formation.

Keywords: abstract art, painting, contemporary Iraqi abstract art

ÖZET

Tezin Başlığı : Irak'ta Çağdaş Soyut Sanat: Geometrik ve Lirik Resimlerin Analizi

Tezin Yazarı : Omar Haitham Mohialdeen ALBUBADRAN

Danışman : Prof. Dr. Muhammed Emin SOYDAŞ

Tezin Türü : Yüksek Lisans

Bu çalışma, soyutlamanın temellerini ve özelliklerini daha iyi açıklığa kavuşturmak amacıyla çağdaş Irak soyut sanatını anlama arzusu üzerine kurulmuştur. Soyutlama, bizi çevreleyen her şeyin kendi gerçekliğinden indirgenmesi ve sanatçının anlayışının renkler, hareket ve hayal gücü şeklinde tezahür ettiği yeni bir sanatsal vizyonla yeniden formüle edilmesidir. Soyut sanat ve felsefe yakından ilişkilidir çünkü soyutlamanın resim okumada derin bir felsefi yönü vardır. Tezde genel olarak Irak sanatı, özelde ise Irak'ta çağdaş soyut sanat hakkında bilgi verilmeden önce, en öne çıkan iki akım olan geometrik soyutlama ve lirik soyutlama ile bunların başlıca sanatçılarından bahsedilmektedir. Tezin temel araştırması olarak, Iraklı ressamalara ait resimlerden seçilmiş bir örneklem incelenmiştir. Analiz yoluyla, renk oluşturma yöntemi gibi konular bakımından soyutlama üslupları arasındaki farklılıklar tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: soyut sanat, resim, Irak çağdaş soyut sanatı

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1. INTRODUCTION

Art is the tool that the artist uses to express himself/herself, and a means of communicating feelings and ideas to explore the formal elements in the artwork. Artists of art schools transformed their expressions through their influence on the surrounding community by expressing their feelings for art that was under the influence of science, and new and recent discoveries. Most artists resort to experimentation in a variety of artistic fields beyond the sensitive field. One such area is the use of the works of artists from art schools. Abstraction is one of the schools of contemporary art that has spread widely in the modern era. It can be said that abstract art is the art of behavior or spirit for those who aim through symbolism to reach the absolute and the word abstraction in contemporary plastic art; it is a description of the process of extracting essence from the natural. Taking the form and presenting it in a new form means getting rid of all traces of reality and linking to it. It does not depict the shapes in their familiar templates, but rather depicts their basic form more like an abstraction by omitting and simplifying many of their details according to their own nature. The contemporary plastic movement in Iraq raises multiple questions regarding the structure of art and the stages that this movement has undergone, since the beginning of this century until its last years. Those interested in culture are encouraged to publish analyses, ideas and studies examining the emergence and development of artistic trends and methods.

Contemporary Iraqi painting is considered one of the artistic and cultural fields that occupied an important part of the contemporary Iraqi art scene. The works of Iraqi artists have varied styles and trends, and many of them showed the clear influence of the styles of European and other abstract art schools in recent times, in different directions. Some of them took a European style and integrated it into the Iraqi reality in beautiful productions mixed with the culture and history of Iraq.

1.1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The formation of artistic achievement is subject to several artistic criteria, which differ in their entirety from the method of expression, inspiration and embodiment of reality, so we find that the multiplicity of art schools provided choices for the artist.

Here are a few aspects related to abstract art: The difference between symbol and form in the abstract school, the basics of reading abstract art paintings, the factors that make this art style difficult for the recipient to understand, the relation of the painting to its title.

The problem of this thesis focuses on the current state of abstract art tradition in Iraq, and seeks to understand and analyze it.

To define the research problem, the below questions are raised:

- 1- What are the basics and development of contemporary Iraqi abstract art?
- 2- What are the characteristics of different styles in contemporary Iraqi art as represented by the paintings?

1.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The current study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the most prominent artists of the Iraqi abstract school and their works.
- To understand abstraction in contemporary Iraqi art and also the types and methods used in the paintings.

1.3. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of the research lies in shedding light on the tendency of abstraction and showing its characteristics in reduction and condensation in paintings. This topic is the one that has received great attention by contemporary artists. Therefore, this research can benefit students, artists, researchers, and those interested in abstraction and its properties.

The reason for choosing the Iraqi abstract art is that it is one of the international schools and there are few researchers who have worked in this field. My research on abstraction deals with it in general and particularly with respect to contemporary Iraqi art along with the analysis of examples from Iraqi artists. It is one of the important and difficult technical schools, and has received great attention from contemporary artists in Iraq. Many Iraqi artists are now interested in discovering the relationship between geometric paintings and lyrical paintings. Therefore, it seems reasonable to carry out academic works covering this topic. The study provides examples of contemporary Iraqi paintings and thus study aims to reveal and identify the properties of reduction and condensation in these paintings of abstract nature. Therefore, it aims to point out the use of geometric and lyrical styles.

1.4. SOURCES AND METHOD

First, relevant literature was searched and reviewed: books, articles, theses, resources, websites, panels and other materials. Some experts and artists were also interviewed to get suggestions regarding the research topic and questions. Then, based on the knowledge gained from appropriate sources and artworks, a theoretical framework was provided and also an explanation of the basics of abstract art and contemporary Iraqi art, including an attempt to analyze geometric abstraction and lyrical abstraction. After that, a sample group of paintings from contemporary Iraqi abstract art of all kinds were identified and obtained from the artists, from the internet, or from other secondary sources. These paintings, which belong to the period between 2000 and 2022, were analyzed and the findings were presented.

1.5. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study conducted by Al-Husseinawi (2011) indicates that the abstraction in the art of painting is a process of reduction and simplification of the form to reach its essence. Although abstraction has its supplies and historical civilizational origins, it is an artistic movement with beautiful visionary foundations. It is represented by the products of Kazimir Malevich, Vassily Kandinsky, Mondrian, Schoenmakers, Jackson Pollock, Theofan Doesburg, and others.

The study by El-Sayed “investigated the abstract trend in sculpture and its relationship to environmental aesthetics. The research was about the abstract school of art that appeared in some ancient civilizations, such as the old Egyptian civilization. The ancient Egyptians were among the first peoples to use abstraction. Abstraction was also used in hieroglyphic writing, where the eye, water, the Nile River and the falcon were used. These drawings show how Egyptian artists extracted these shapes from nature and put them in new areas of writing to give new meanings” (Ramsis, 1996). The study shows that the Egyptian sculpture was influenced by many factors and that the contemporary Egyptian sculptor was influenced by Egyptian culture.

The study by Al-Sayyad (2018) is about designs for textile paintings inspired by Kandinsky's abstract art and executed in the Goblan style. The research aimed to study abstract art, where it deals with its upbringing, values, artistic, and aesthetic features. It also shows how to employ this art in developing the designer's design thought. In particular, the study identifies the Kandinsky's creative sources and his way of building shapes and formations, and also Kandinsky's artistic stages and the executive and applied methods of his textile paintings, and it shows the importance of these paintings as one of the interior architecture vocabularies.

The study by Muhammed (2017) is about creative vision of digital abstract arts. It discusses the benefits of digital abstract arts in artistic formulations to enrich the decorative aspect of contemporary women's fashion. The study indicates that the digital technologies have become the language of the times, as digital systems are introduced into the computer unit to be transformed into artistic designs that can be used in the field of fashion design.

The work of Ali (2003) focuses on contemporary Iraqi painting as one of the artistic and cultural fields that has occupied an important space in the contemporary Iraqi art scene. The beginning of this art was at the hands of a few Iraqi artists, and this number increased, especially after sending a number of Iraqi artists to European countries for the purpose of studying painting. The art of contemporary Iraqi painting began to expand little by little until it became in its current form. The works of Iraqi artists differ in styles and trends and the works of many of them appear to be clearly

influenced by the methods of European art schools in their various directions, and this is also accompanied by a temporal discrepancy between the works of Iraqi artists and the works of European schools, which reflects the existence of a state of time and technical delay within this framework.

The purpose of the research of Al-Saadi (2018) is to explore and identify the semantic and aesthetic content of the ancient Iraqi painting within the limits of the research, which studies the frescoes in the palace of Mary in the old Babylonian era between 2000-1500 BC during the Mary dynasty. The first topic deals with the emergence of art and its relation to man. The second section deals with the study of the art of drawing through the ancient Iraqi ages, including pottery, pottery and murals, with a detailed study of the drawings. The third chapter includes the research procedures, the research tool and its methodology and the analysis of the samples.

Al-Kaabi's (2021) work is consisted of four chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the methodological framework for the research. The research problem ended with the following question: What is strangeness? What are his representations in contemporary Iraqi painting? The second chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework, which deals with strangeness, concept and origin, and also with contemporary Iraqi painting. The third chapter is devoted to the research procedures, the artworks are analyzed by adopting the descriptive approach (the qualitative content analysis method). The fourth chapter is devoted to the results of the research, including: 1- Surprisingness in contemporary Iraqi painting represents a love and desire to deal with Western artistic subjects to express the cultural environment of the West. 2- Experimentation with contemporary Iraqi artistic styles contributes to creating representations of artistic wonder by addressing issues of Western plastic culture.

Abdel-Amir (2014) attempts to study the aesthetic values of the attributes in contemporary Iraqi artworks by relying on the principles and elements of configuration. The research is limited by the period between 1950 and 2001, and looks at the experiences of modern art, and spatially d'affaires in Baghdad Centre for the Arts. With regard to determining the terminology, the researcher has identified the following terminology which is located at the heart of research, namely:

aesthetic, attribute, geometric, contemporary painting. The researcher concludes as follows: Geometric features emerged through the expression of the line by the mechanisms of movement and direction and type of measurement and relationships which reveal a whole aesthetic geometric drawing feature of contemporary Iraqi art; new angles used throughout animated geometric shapes to create forms of strange to find some kind of authoring renewed.

Al-Araji (2016) relies on studying the aesthetics of composition and its techniques in general, and Iraqi painting in particular, and dismantling this composition and studying its elements in order to reach the common artistic features that distinguish it: All human arts are about assembling elements to create a new composition based on a set of visual units including shape, line, color, texture, size, space and light value. The artwork includes many elements in the unity of the whole, so that it makes these elements a theme that represents a work of art through the interdependence of the plastic elements. The aesthetic aspect of the composition, which is the cause of what follows it, is the functional aspect that is codified in form, as it reveals an aesthetic that leads to the non-determination or reduction of the aesthetic and functional structure, which are mutually reinforcing and affected by each other, and the best example of that is the approach of contemporary Iraqi art.

1.6. AN OVERVIEW

Each artist has his own way of expressing his personality and his idea that revolves in his imagination. The artist transforms everything in nature to other things that are considered new, and according to his own perspective. Based on that, the abstraction is defined as a set of operations on bodies and shapes to form the main lines and basic structure of the shape (El Halawani, 2009).

Abstractions are used to delete increments and emphasize fundamentals. The processes end when the artist finally comes to a form entirely of his own. The final shape is completely stripped and the first shape is changed. It is noticeable that the abstract style avoids simulating the elements. In addition, it evokes aesthetic responses and links the spaces, dimensions and colors of its artistic components. Abstract art consists of combining surfaces, shapes, colors and shades in a distinctive

way. The aesthetics of this art come from the direct realization of the relationships between these surfaces, colors and shades. Abstract also refers to the abstraction of shapes (Reed, 2001).

The beginning of abstraction was by the cubist artists, as they began to move away from nature. They projected what is in nature into a new mold based on their own way away from the basic forms, as they exist in nature (Osborne, 1981). The creator in art, his ideas are subject to a framework of experimentation in pursuit of excellence and innovation. Sometimes the artist reaches the source of the inspiration that was brought to them (El Halawani, 2009). Abstraction sometimes retains the natural origin after the finishing process such as deleting all the details that have no relationship in the artwork. Abstraction is not meant to abstract content, but rather aims to abstract form and preserve content.

The school of abstract art was concerned with the natural origin and viewing it from an geometric angle. In other words, the scenes turn out to be just triangles, squares and circles. Abstract painting resembles strokes, scraps of paper, or shards of clouds. Rather, abstraction is just interconnected elements that do not have direct visual evidence. They carry with them a summary of the experiences that the artist has, which are expressed in his own way or style (Amhaz, 1996).

Abstract art has a different mixture of styles from common origins: geometry, objectivity, constructivism, and other forms. More specifically, it means extracting the ideas and representing them in abstract form. The term abstraction in contemporary art describes the process of extracting the essence from the natural form, and then presenting it in a style that is different from the traditional form. Art, no matter how different its manifestations may be, is based on abstraction. Geometric abstraction is about virtual images of nature forms based on geometric art represented by lines, distances and colors. In addition, it relies on elementary geometric shapes that the artist can use as groups and relationships to produce artwork (Hassan, 1998). Abstract art is the transformation from partial characteristics to universal qualities and from individual to absolute generalization. This art requires the abstraction of nature, it needs reduction and simplification, and the disclosure of its hidden secrets and mysterious meanings, whether it is completely abstract or

semi-abstract (Osborne, 1981). Abstraction in art is used to explain the essential form, search and make all tangible details abstract and present them in a new form, with a focus on the provisions of the abstract plastic relations of lines, shapes, spaces and colors and make them bear a distinctive character that is interconnected in form and content. The relationships in the artwork are not necessarily relationships in the external form, but rather relationships based on internal sympathy for meanings. Any work of art includes a degree of abstraction in the sense of simplification and cancellation of details and preservation of what is essential and necessary in the shapes and elements drawn on the artwork. It moves the forms of nature from its accidental image to its eternal essential forms, as it transforms from partial characteristics to universal qualities and from individual to absolute generalization. It is the art that has completely abandoned the familiar image and built new forms on pure relations, sometimes not based on the familiar reality.

1.6.1. The Concept of Abstraction among Philosophers

According to Herbert Read, the term “abstract” means: “what is derived from nature, and it represents a kind of purity associated with the essential form, abstract from tangible details, and it is an artistic trend that expresses the depth of thinking that is related to the requirements of the era, and it represents a transitional stage.” From reality to a new reality, it is an absolute world of purity folded on spiritual meanings that are related to the elements, laws and structural foundations of forms that represent nature, as well as linked to harmonious harmony, and the realization of an idea (Rid, 1969).

Plato says, "I do not mean by the beauty of shapes, what people expect like the beauty of living things or images." Then he goes on to say: "I mean straight lines, arcs, flats, and the stereoscopic shapes resulting from them with lathes, rulers, and angles, and he says:" These shapes are not relatively beautiful, they are absolutely beautiful (Rid, 1968).

Analyzing Plato's view, we find that he rejects the imitation of nature, and calls for the search for beauty resulting from the creation of abstract geometric shapes, because he believes that the aesthetic values stem from the subjectivity of these

shapes, and not from their attachment to things from nature that indicate them. “Many artists and philosophers have built their opinions on abstraction on the basis of comparing visual plastic arts with audio arts, such as music” (Hasan, 1972).

It was also the Platonic and Pythagorean views that inspired the German philosopher "Schopenhauer" with his aesthetic theory of art, which calls for the abstraction of forms from their natural conditions, by separating the natural form from them to be like music. Schopenhauer explains to us his opinion on abstraction, saying: “If the music, which is based on its melodious sounds, is based on abstract sounds that have nothing to do with natural sounds, yet we enjoy its beautiful melody, then why is this not the case in the visual arts such as sculpture and photography?” (Mohamed, 2002).

That is why Gogan was looking for music in his paintings, and he used to say: “Before the artist discovers what he presents, or expresses in his artistic work, he admires the magical harmony of the colors of this work” (Pohripny, 1979). Therefore, Gogan moved away from the form as an aesthetic value, and searched for the color content as an intended value for itself, the saturation of the musical tone in the artwork. Cézanne says that “the natural shapes tend to the simplicity of geometric shapes, including: what is spherical, cylindrical, and conical, and there is no doubt that we notice these geometric shapes clearly, in many forms of nature, when we see the stem of the tree taking a cylindrical shape, and that many fruits such as apples and oranges, but celestial bodies such as the sun and the moon take that spherical shape, as we often see that the tops of mountains and treetops, as well as some fruits such as pears take in their general shapes conical or semi-conical positions” (Mohamed, 1999).

1.6.2. Characteristics of Abstract Art

Abstract art is based in the first place on drawing completely abstract shapes and models apart from the similarity in their natural or unnatural forms, relying on the principle of reducing ideas and forming them by colors without distinguishing lines and clarifying them in drawing. The artist who works in abstract art and its types has the advantage of being able to control different forms and types, whether fictional or realistic. Its appearance is at the beginning of the 20th century, specifically in 1910.

Its idea came from its name where the term abstraction refers to the liberation of form or rid it of any resemblance to reality and truth. The school of abstract art paid attention to the natural origin, and saw it from a geometric angle, where the painting turns into triangles, squares and circles only, and the abstract painting appears more like torn pieces of paper, pieces of rocks or clouds. That is, mere interconnected pieces that do not have direct visual evidence, although they carry in something of summarizing the plastic experience that the artist lived, and in general the abstract idea in painting, as it seeks to search for the essence of things and express them in concise forms that carry artistic experiences in painting, which raised consciousness of the abstract artist. And the word "abstract" means getting rid of all traces of reality and what is associated with it (Atea, 2011).

Abstract art aims to erase the image of nature in order to reach the absolute image. It is the art that transfers the forms of nature from its original image to its basic and abstract forms (Fredric, 1997), where it transforms from partial characteristics to universal features. Therefore, abstraction reveals its hidden secrets and mysterious meanings in the painting, whether the geometric abstraction is comprehensive or partial. The simplification of arcs and curves, whether complete or semi-abstract, gives a suggestion of the idea content on which the artwork is based. One of the most important characteristics of abstract art is that the shapes in abstract art do not represent nature in any way. Works depend primarily on the artistic relationships of line, color and space. The forms of abstract art see and do not represent nature, but the organization of these forms is what conveys many meanings and works that have a direct impact on the feelings of other arts, especially in architecture, furniture, textile printing, design of modern machines and devices such as the car, radium and some other household appliances. What the abstract artist brought from the abstract forms is like the Islamic artist brought when he expressed himself in abstract forms. It can be seen on walls in mosques, on doors or windows, or in Arabic tapestries or carpets (Fredric, 1997).

1- Geometric: The idea takes on geometric shapes. The pioneer in this type was the painter Wassily Kandinsky.

2- Lyrical: It consists of overlapping smooth shapes and curved lines. One of the pioneers of this style was the painter Paul Klee.

All the artists who dealt with impressionism, expressionism and symbolism most often ended up with abstract artistic works, and used the school's style. Abstraction is advanced in art today where the artist extracts the idea from the nature by contemplating it and thinking carefully about the resulting creation (Armstrong & De Zegher, 2006).



2. ABSTRACT ART AND ITS DIRECTIONS

2.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In general, contemporary abstract art was one of the artistic trends that tried to destroy the reality by getting into the substance and inner content. It represented the non-objective art (Amhaz, 1981). Following this trend, the lyrical abstractionism of Kandinsky emerged. Kandinsky attended to the color more than the form. He called his art the internal necessity art (Bahnasy, 1982). Critics named this art a non-figurative or non-objective art. It became one of phenomena of the plastic art in the beginning of the twentieth century. This is in line with the concept of abstractionism, which is non-figurative and non-representative, Kandinsky arrived at color painting directly in lyrical abstraction (Shamout, 1998).

Abstract art appeared as a result of a reaction against the naturalism that took place in the eighties of the nineteenth century. There were two directions according to the weight imposed on each of them on the content or on the form. The art is completely spiritual. It needed a link in order to generate the outcome of the combination of these two trends, which became called the abstract art (Fakhri, 1990).

Abstraction is one of the most important artistic methods that absorbed the mental trend. It focuses on achieving a balance between mind and imagination. However, abstract art does not always follow the same mental path. For example, the works of Kandinsky and Koya are differ from the others in the architectural style such as the works of Mondrian. They both aim to reach one goal despite the diversity of style between them (Mohamed, 2002).

Within the limits of the independent, the abstract pictorial vision and the abstract method do not work to break up the image of the external world. However, they reveal its essential truth by picturing it when it unleashes this mix of colors physically. It brings to a state of balance expressing that external and organic harmony including the cosmic and the subjective. There are countless artistic styles and techniques, which work within the moods of abstract artists (Fanjan, 1997).

The artists always seek to transcend the image and pictorial representation. They refuse to simulate and limit the perspective or nature that previous artistic currents called for. Signs and symbols that tell the meanings behind things can bypass the reality. That is based on the nature of the abstract artwork through lines, colors, spaces and ideal geometric shapes (Amhaz, 1996). The abstract method represents a philosophical point of view (the mystical art), where austerity, asceticism and sublimation exist to reach the ideal of things by accessing their essence. That is by reducing the parts of the thing from the artistic point of view. This is done by stripping them from their natural and organic forms so that the abstraction becomes complete. The other way is by limiting the membership of the forms. In this case, the abstraction is relative and the abstract style can become a symbolic style (Neumayer, 2001).

Mondrian was saying that the abstraction is the only way to approach the truth and return to the origins and beginnings (Düchting, 2000). However, that cannot be achieved unless the painter possesses a high degree of awareness and intuition that enables them to reach the highest levels of rhythm and harmony. To this day, the paintings of the Dutch artist are still displayed in major international museums, specifically those of abstract geometry with straight lines, squares, triangles and rectangles.

Some people may argue that abstract art does not require the technical skills of representational art. However, some others believe that it has technical skills. That difference between the ideas has become one of the major debates in modern art. The Russian abstract artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) said that abstract painting is the most difficult. It requires the artists to know how to draw well, and have the highest sensitivity for composition and colors (Düchting, 2000).

Abstraction is considered as one of the most influential developments in art history. Evolving from movements Europe in the early twentieth century it continued to thrive until contemporary times. Contrary to what is common, abstraction was not one of the achievements of the twentieth century. Forms of it appeared in an early era in the history of abstract art. This took their abstract forms as basic elements for the

construction of the abstract painting. Its primary purpose was to carry the absolute, abstract meaning (Al-Halabi, 2014).

However, what is common about abstraction is often related to its re-emergence in the modern era as an artistic movement as well as the analytical method that invaded Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, and continued to spread to the farthest point of the earth. Some historians say that abstract art can be traced back to its roots much further. Artists associated with movements were experimenting with the idea that painting could embody emotion and subjectivity through their work in realistic and non-abstract images. Examples of these are the impressionism and expressionism in the nineteenth century. Many ancient rock paintings, weaving patterns, and pottery designs have captured a symbolic reality rather than trying to present things. They can be seen in reality, but they used the symbol and semantics to express (Gooding, 2001).

Abstract art is part of the history of plastic arts. Its appearance dates back to the nineteenth century. During this period, many different representative and visual arts flourished. In addition, much artistic modernity went beyond traditional artistic classics. The influence of the science of philosophy and some new technologies opened the door for this art. Specifically, the abstract school became the modernist artistic method that expresses the social and intellectual problems prevalent in Western culture at the time (Moszynska, 2021).

It is necessary to refer to the art schools that supported the emergence of this form of plastic art in the nineteenth century. Three art schools contributed to the development of abstract art, namely the romantic school, the impressionist school, and the expressive school, which was the force of influence. The artwork in the works of abstract art stems from the visual sense and the artist's sense of what the abstract work refers. It was more than depicting things as they are, through total or partial abstraction that reflects specific symbols and connotations in a highly symbolic manner. These artistic characteristics of the works of abstract art are seen in a group of paintings of artists in the nineteenth century and beyond. Abstract art depends on moving away from the similarity between what is contained in abstract paintings and what is realistic or natural (Miranda, 1991).

This type of plastic arts is called subjective art or non-representational art. The abstract paintings contain of symbolic connotations of broad imagination, and reduction of human or sensory meanings. The abstract art contributes to a highly artistic expressive functionalism. It is able to restore forms and employ nature or human civilization in a pictorial manner that transports the beholder with abstract works to other worlds and not the same as it used to be. "In the strict sense of the word abstract, the abstract means separate or withdraw something from something else" (Al-Halabi, 2014).

The term can be applied to art that is based on simplification of form, where figures have been simplified or outlined. It is also applied to art that uses shapes and symbol, such as the geometric shapes or gestural signs that have no source in visual reality. Some artists of this pure abstraction prefer terms like concrete art or non-objective art. However, in practice, the word abstract is used generally, and the distinction between the two is not always clear. The moral dimension can be seen as representing virtues such as order, purity, simplicity and spirituality. Since the early twentieth century, the abstract art has constituted a central current of modern art. This difference between what is abstract and what is realistic may be embodied in the separation of content from the art form. That can be done in many different ways ranging in degrees from reducing and simplifying, such as reducing the details of visible elements of the form to completely eliminate them so that the content remains the only element in the focus of the artwork (Al-Halabi, 2014).

Since the time when man painted in caves, art remained a search for reality. Until the twentieth century, the artists were unable to separate themselves from their environment and context. The abstract art allowed an opening in a historical story that aspired to great social changes and aesthetic renewal. From its inception in the late nineteenth century until today, abstraction has manifested itself over the years. It is an incredibly versatile genre that has allowed its broad development in art. The abstract art take up space in the world, and it can now be categorized in hundreds of different ways and yet is still classified as abstract art. This includes genres such as abstract expressionism and lyrical abstraction (Team, 2019).

The power of abstraction has also seeped into contemporary art. In addition, it continues to occupy a strong place in art fairs, trade fairs, and painting courses from the rapid revolt of what is known as abstraction. This group formed to counter the influence of the surrealists to the prominent abstract artists who still practice this genre today. It is clear that this genre will continue for many years to come and take its place in the artistic community. Abstract art uses a visual language of form, shape, color, and line to create a composition that may exist with a degree of independence from the world's visual references. Western art was supported by the logic of perspective and an attempt to reproduce an illusion of visible reality. That was during the period from the Renaissance until the mid-19th century. By the end of the 19th century, many artists saw a need to create a new type of art that would include fundamental changes in technology, science, and philosophy. The sources from which artists drew their theoretical arguments were diverse. They reflected the social and intellectual preoccupations in all areas of Western culture at the time (Gooding, 2000).

Abstract art, non-figurative art, non-objective art, and non-representational art are closely related terms. They are similar, but perhaps not identical in meaning. Abstraction refers to a departure from reality in the depiction of images in art. This deviation from accurate representation may be slight, partial, or complete. Abstraction exists along a continuum. The art aimed at the ultimate in realism can be said to be mere abstract art, at least in theory (Smith, 2011). That is because perfect representation is impossible. A work of art that takes liberties, such as changes color and shape in notable ways, can be said to be partially abstract. For example, it is unlikely to find references to natural entities. Symbolic art and total abstraction are nearly mutually exclusive. However, figurative and representational (or realistic) art often contains partial abstraction. Among the many art movements that embody partial abstraction is brutalism, in which, color is clearly and deliberately altered against reality. Abstraction is presented in all arts due to the fact that art is the result of what the individual artist sees. It is considered as the artistic works that are visually simple, but intellectually complex. Thus, the image created becomes abstracted from reality, far from realistic representation (David, 2005).

The explanation of Theodor W. Adorno was one of the important socio-historical explanations to abstraction. It has been offered for the increasing prevalence of abstraction in modern art. It stated that abstraction is a response and reflection of the increasing abstraction of modern art and social relations in industrial society. The social content of abstract art is precisely the abstract nature of social existence (Cunningham, 2005). By contrast, post-Young followers see quantum theories with their deconstruction of traditional ideas of form and matter. They see the basis for the separation of the concrete from the abstract in modern art (Aniela, 1978).

Certainly, it is difficult to accept a painting consisting of colors and shapes that do not represent anything. However, abstract art achieves an absolute concept of aesthetics in a tangible form. The abstract art is sometimes interpreted as a realization of the basic order of nature. It is purely an image of art, on the grounds that it is a purely aesthetic activity, which may contradict the principle of art as a representation or imitation of nature, which remained from 15th to 19th century (Attia, 2020).

It is important to understand that abstraction in art began in the late nineteenth century. During this time, the impressionists shocked the art world by trying to give an impression of their subject rather than represent it in a completely different way. The recent invention of photography at the time, posed the challenge to artists to convey images, the reason is that the camera could not have accomplished them. With a strong interest in the effects of light and movement in the subject, the impressionists portrayed every day scene and events (Smith, 2011). They were focusing on the overall visual impact rather than the details. Cézanne began to push painting more towards abstraction art. Abstract artists strive to be distinguished by their non-traditional, non-objective and non-representational art. Through their artworks, they allow the viewers to interpret the meaning of each artwork in their own way. Thus, abstract art is not an exaggerated or distorted view of the world. It is different from what can be seen in the Cubist paintings of Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso. That is because they offer a kind of conceptual realism. Instead, shape and color become the focus and theme as well (Gersh-Nesic, 2022). When the artistic

experience is referred to its geometric equivalent, its value depends on the artist who carries it with his experience and expertise (Mohamed, 1999).

The school of abstract art exists in different degrees and various forms. There are two main trends, one of which is the starting point of abstraction for the real world. In this trend, the artist chooses a form and then begins to simplify it while retaining some simple relationships that link the viewer to the original sources of abstraction. The other trend is a type that has no counterpart in nature, in which the source of inspiration is completely changed to shapes and colors without visual connotations (Ismail Allam, 1998).

Abstraction is considered as one of the contemporary art schools that have spread widely in the modern era. It can be said that abstract art is the mysticism of art that aims through symbolism to metaphysics to reach the absolute in abstract expression. It also aims to obtain artistic results through form, line, color.

2.1.1. Types of Abstract Art

The abstract art are divided into two types. The first type is the geometric abstraction and the second type is the lyrical abstraction. The impressionist school and the expressive and symbolic school with semantics affected all the artists. They end up with artworks that belong to the abstract school. The state of the abstract school is advanced in art today. Art, no matter how different its manifestations, is based on abstraction, and the basis of this art is the tightening of symbolic relations (Dewey, 1963). In addition, there are formal connotations between parts and the whole, or between details and formula. That is, everything melts in the crucible of the creative process authorizes the birth of a new creature.

The main idea of geometric abstraction type is based on geometric forms. The pioneer in this type was the painter Kandinsky. The second type is the lyrical abstraction or what is called curved lines abstraction because it has many curved lines and the harmony is like musical notes. Lyrical abstraction consists of

overlapping smooth shapes and curved lines, and one of the pioneers of this type was the painter Paul Klee¹.

Abstraction in art is used to define a purely simplified form that is stripped of all tangible and emotional details and presenting it in a different form. It focuses on integrating simplified plastic relations of lines, shapes, spaces and colors, and also making them bear a distinctive model of coherent form and content. Art integrates the artist's sense of touches that show spontaneity and simplicity. Connecting relationships in a painting or any other work of art are not necessarily relationships in the external form. It is rather relationships based on sense and internal sympathy for meanings (Abu Turbat, 1998).

2.1.2. Abstraction in Contemporary Iraqi Plastic Art

The contemporary abstract artists in Iraq used in their artistic style of paintings a different direction of abstraction. This direction is away from any form of contact with nature. In this case, it moves away from the familiar, but rather works to portray the form in an abstract image from realism. It is a way that contradicts it in a form that is closer to abstraction, by deleting many of its details, simplifying and evaluating it in a different way from what other art schools present according to its special nature, as it has moved away from traditionalism (Afifi, 1998).

Abstract art took a type of art prevalent in the paintings of contemporary artists. It is described as abstracting everything that surrounds us from its reality, and then reformulating it with a new artistic vision in which the artist's sense of color, movement and imagination is manifested. All the artists who dealt with the impressionist, expressive and symbolic schools are often seen on ancient historical traditions in western and eastern culture. They were not finished with works of abstract artwork of the story or topic represented by the painting. This idea began to change at the beginning of the twentieth century (Oraby, 2001).

1. Paul Klee was born on December 18, 1879, in the village of München-Buchsee.

2.2. THE FAMOUS ARTISTS OF ABSTRACTION

2.2.1. Wassily Kandinsky

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) is considered as one of the most important founders of abstract art in the movement of modern plastic art (Figure 1). He did many artistic works dealing with colors, lines, spaces, and conveying shapes to their abstract image. It is noteworthy that Kandinsky had an artistic personality that was affected by sounds and musical influences. He had gained this through the influence of the artist Wagner (Mufeed Awwad, 2016). Later living in Germany and France, Kandinsky is one of the pioneers of the art of the twentieth century. and moreover the main theorist abstraction. Together with Franz Marc and others he founded the group of artists known as "Der Blaue Reiter" in Munich. Then his art liberated itself more and more from this thing and finally culminated in "The First Abstract Watercolor" of 1910 (Düchting, 2000).

Wagner made him treat his paintings during their plastic construction as musical melodies. This made the color important in creating harmony, contrast, and reflection on his feelings. Kandinsky focused on color in his paintings, and the color he saw was a liberating element with its own expressive energy.



Figure 1 Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) (Mufeed Awwad, 2016).

One example of the Kandinsky's art works is shown in Figure 2. The name of the painting is "The Blue Rider". It is an oil painting executed in Bavaria. It is now held

in a private collection in Zurich, and shares its name with the art movement he would co-found with Franz Marc in the early 1910s.

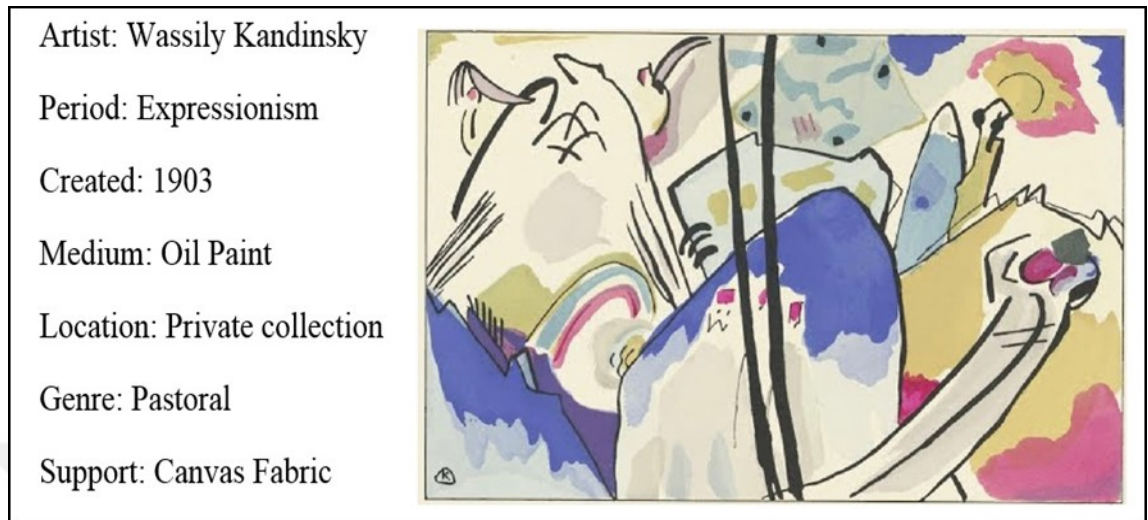


Figure 2 *The Blue Rider* (Mufeed Awwad, 2016).

2.2.2. Piet Mondrian

Piet Mondrian is one of the most famous founders of geometric abstract art in the modern plastic art movement (Figure 3) (Mufeed Awwad, 2016).



Figure 3 Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) (Mufeed Awwad, 2016).

He carried the impressionistic meaning, and then he left it and went to drawing gradually by simplifying things. To get further from the truth, he was then able to find a visual balance by using horizontal and vertical lines in his works in an equal way (Mufeed Awwad, 2016). One of his famous paintings, shown in Figure 4, is

Composition II with Red Blue and Yellow, done in 1930. It consists of thick, black brushwork, defining the borders of colored geometric figures.

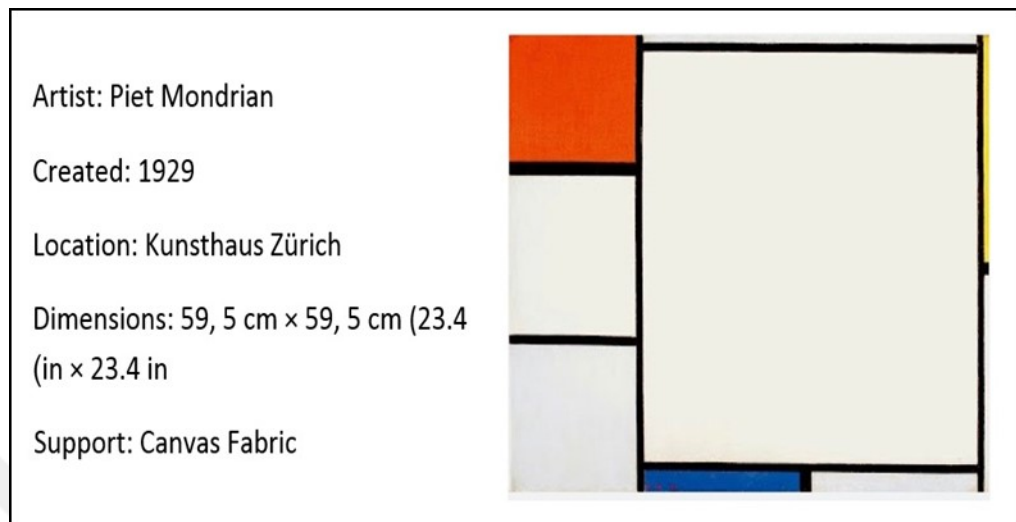


Figure 4 Piet Mondrian painting (Mufeed Awwad, 2016).

2.2.3. Umberto Puccini

Umberto Puccini is one of the most famous Italian painters. He was born in Reggio Calabria in 1882. He studied at the Technical College in Catania in Sicily (Figure 4). He has many sculptural works and paintings that reflect the dynamics of modern life. He also conveyed the image of modern life in written form through books and articles. He died in 1916. One of Puccini's most famous paintings is entitled "The City Rises", which he painted in 1910 (Phillips-Matz, 2002).

It is worth noting that Puccini owns a trio of famous paintings called "States of Mind". He painted them in 1911 to describe contemporary life in its temporary nature by highlighting its psychological dimension in the folds of his paintings (Figure 5).



Figure 5 Umberto Puccini (Phillips-Matz, 2002).

States of Mind I: The Farewells

Date: 1911; Milan, Italy

Style: Futurism

Genre: figurative

Media: oil, canvas

Location: Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New
York City, NY, US

Dimensions: 70.5 x 96.2 cm



Figure 6 *The Farewells* (Phillips-Matz, 2002).

“The Farewells” was the first of Boccioni's three-part series, *States of Mind*, which has long been seen as one of the high points of the futurist style in painting. Movement itself, the airplane, and the automobile provided the focal point of this picture. This work was about the modern machines that gave new meaning to the

word "speed." It was set in a train station, where Boccioni captured the dynamism of movement and chaos, depicting people being consumed by, or fused with the steam from the locomotive as it whizzes past. This painting is the chaotic movement of people and their emission in the form of waves, likening them to smoke rising from a train.

The second painting is titled "Those Who Go" (Figure 6). In this painting, Puccini explains what he painted in the previous painting. He depicts people leaving from the train station, and distinguishes them with bright diagonal lines. Puccini says that this painting expresses a feeling of loneliness, anguish, and confusion.



Figure 7 *Those Who Go* (Phillips-Matz, 2002).

The last painting of the three is called "Those Who Stay" (Figure 7). This painting completes the previous series by describing the people who remain at the train station, by expressing them with the vertical lines in the painting, indicating their grief for those who left them.

States of Mind III: Those Who Stay

Date: 1911; Milan, Italy

Style: Futurism

Genre: abstract

Media: oil, canvas

Location: Museum of Modern Art
(MoMA), New York City,
NY, US

Dimensions: 70.8 x 95.9 cm



Figure 8 *Those Who Stay* (Phillips-Matz, 2002).

2.2.4. Carlo Carrà

Carlo Carrà is one of the most important Italian painters who dealt with abstract art. He was born in 1881, and died in 1966. He relied on emphasizing the importance of energy and technology in his paintings. His artworks are famous for their futuristic character of events, and realism in their embodiment (Gersh-Nesic, 2022).

In his works, he touched on cubist art, which had an impact on the artists of abstract art. An example is his painting "Painting of Sounds, and Noises and Smells", which was done in 1913. Carrà points out that he cares a lot about the harmony of the painting and the intersection of the senses in it. He focused on the intersection of seeing color in the painting with the smell of this color. Figure 8 shows one of the Carlo Carrà's painting.



Figure 9 Carlo Carra painting (Gersh-Nesic, 2022).

2.2.5. Jackson Pollock

Jackson Pollock is one of the painters that had great influence in modern art. He is a symbol of idealism in abstract art. He was an American painter who was born in 1912 and died in 1956. His abstract paintings are considered one of the greatest artistic achievements in the twentieth century (Solomon, 2001).

His work is characterized by being pantomime paintings carrying an unconventional artistic rhythm. Pollock used, during the late forties to the early fifties, unconventional tools and methods of painting that inspired by the methods of contemporary artists before him such as Pablo Picasso, and Joan Miro. Among his artworks are those shown in Figure 9 and 10.

Medium Oil, enamel and casein on canvas
Dimensions 43" x 8' 6"
(109.2 x 259.1 cm)
Credit Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bareiss Fund and purchase
Object number 429.1980



Figure 10 Jackson Pollock painting (Solomon, 2001).

Pollock made this painting over a period of several months. He started with figurative imagery, and later superimposed a network of black lines in order to veil the image. His veil was spread evenly across the canvas. He was preventing any center or focal point from emerging. Pollock modified flicker beneath the dense thicket of lines. This new compositional structure helped him to abandon his pursuit of a symbolic vocabulary. In addition, it helped him making progressively nonrepresentational works (Solomon, 2001).

Medium Oil on canvas with nails, tacks, buttons, key, coins, cigarettes, matches, etc.

Dimensions 50 7/8 x 30 1/8" (129.2 x 76.5 cm)

Credit Gift of Peggy Guggenheim

Object number 186.1952



Figure 11 Jackson Pollock painting (Solomon, 2001).

“Full Fathom Five” is one of Pollock’s earliest drip paintings. While its lacelike top layers consist of poured skeins of house paint, Pollock built up the under layer using a brush and palette knife. A close look reveals an assortment of objects embedded in the surface. Though many items are obscured by paint, they contribute to the work’s dense and encrusted appearance (Solomon, 2001).

2.2.6. Kazimir Malevich

Kazimir Malevich is one of the most famous pioneers of geometric abstract art. He was born in 1878 and died in 1935. He is a Russian painter who had been admired by art historians. Among his famous artworks is the Black Square painting, which is shown in Figure 11. He painted it in 1915. The Tate Foundation said, “This is the first time that someone has done by drawing a painting that was not for something” (Malevich, 2000).

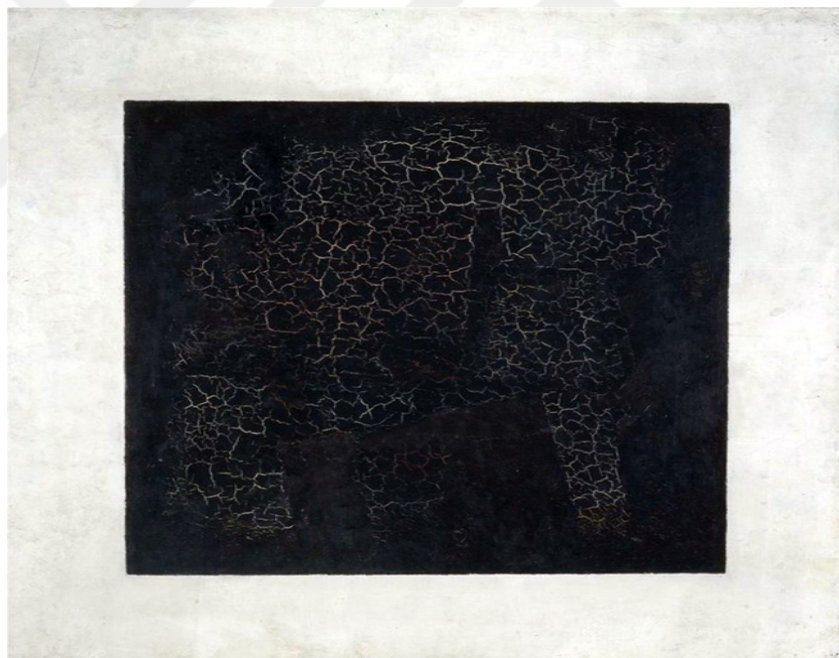


Figure 12 Kazimir Malevich painting (Malevich, 2000).

It is the most famous painting by the Russian artist, Kazimir Malevich, which he painted in several possibilities. Malevich painted this work in 1915 and depicted a black square on a white background. This painting belongs to Malevich’s supremacist works and an abstract current created by Malevich himself, in which the artist studied the possibilities of color and composition.

3. CONTEMPORARY IRAQI ART AND ABSTRACTION

Contemporary Iraqi art has been affected throughout its history by wars, revolutions and political changes. For centuries, the capital, Baghdad, was the literary and artistic center of the Arab world in the Middle Ages, but its artistic traditions suffered at the hands of the Mongol invaders in the thirteenth century (Roxburgh, 2014). It flourished during other periods, for example during the reign of Bir Bawadiq, or during the Ottoman era in the sixteenth century, when Baghdad became famous for painting Ottoman miniatures (Elaine, 2010).

Iraqi art during the Safavid period was influenced by Persian art and became a center for poetry and arts. As for the twentieth century, it witnessed a revival of art, as it combined both traditional and modern arts, and many prominent poets, painters and sculptors emerged who contributed to the balance of popular artworks, especially in Baghdad. These artists are highly regarded in the Middle East, and some of them have gained great international respect. The Iraqi art movement had a great impact on Arab national art in general (Roxburgh, 2014).

The art movement in Iraq was linked to its past, which was represented in the arts of Sumer, Waked and Ashur, and which carried between its folds the characteristic and artistic value of its leadership and its ancient history. The intellectual foundations laid by the Iraqi artist, which dealt with the social and psychological aspects, included the issue of art in the sense that transcended the limited social frameworks. The modern world is characterized by uniqueness and renewal putting a different technical fingerprint with implicit standards (Jassam, 2004).

The new art appeared in Iraq according to the political and intellectual transformations. Two stages can be distinguished in the history of modern and contemporary Iraqi plastic art. The first stage was the contemporary stage of European art in terms of its analogical aesthetics, and in terms of its revolutionary schools of form, which appeared in the nineteenth century. The second stage was the stage of modernity that appeared in Europe in the twentieth century, and based on absolute creative freedom, which reached art to the abstraction. This shift in art

continued, advancing towards the modernity invented by Europe, in thought, literature, art and architecture (Al-Rubaie, 2015).

Islamic art was characterized by the abstraction of forms in a highly expressive manner, expressing the spirit of religion and addressing and embodying the transcendent spirit, and was also distinguished by artistic unity in appearance and essence (Sabila, 2005).

What the contemporary Iraqi painter has achieved in terms of advancement, progress and growth as a result of going through the stages of establishment. The search for the roots of contemporary Iraqi art leads us to the beginning of the twentieth century. An actual existence through a series of comprehensive achievements was shown by a group of amateur painters who were called the first artists.

The Iraqi artist created his modern plastic language in addition to absorbing modernity's proposals and employing them in terms of vision and form as well as building mechanics, that is, in formation and treatments. We are now facing the experience of the contemporary Iraqi painter, which is rich in psychological and social connotations. It takes psychological and social dimensions as a starting point for expressing in different ways about the lived reality. With this influence, we find the aesthetic and artistic ways and mechanisms that show us how these legacies affected the aesthetics of the formation of Iraqi painting works through the presence of psychological and social dimensions. Contemporary Iraqi painting is a form of politeness, conscious and aware of the means of expressing the innermost human and social soul (Jabbar, 2018).

3.1. THE BEGINNINGS OF IRAQI FORMATION

Contemporary Iraqi art's inception is in the twentieth century as a cultural art similar to painting in European art, where the conditions of painting tend towards nature itself, as in the works of the painter Abdel Qader Al Rassam and Muhammad Saleh Zaki (Shaker, 1983).

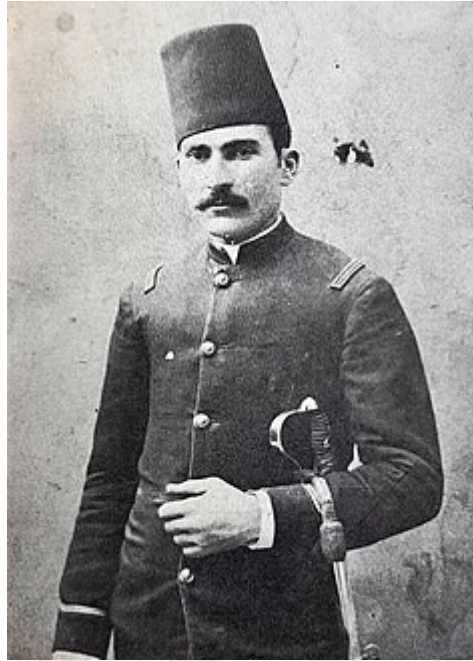


Figure 13 Abdul Qadir al-Rassam (1882 - 1952) (Floyd, 2022).

Al Rassam belongs to the first generation of Iraqi plastic painters and was one of the most prominent members of the group of artists who trained in Istanbul and brought their expertise to their motherland. This group of artists-soldiers is considered the first to introduce easel painting to Iraq at the beginning of the twentieth century. The painter, who was a realist style artist, was known for his spacious landscapes, highly accurate portraits, and faithful depictions of daily life scenes in Iraq at the time. Al-Rassam is one of the group of Iraqi officers who studied military sciences as well as art in Istanbul, and began his education around 1904 when the Ottoman Empire was still the main ruling authority in the region. As part of the curriculum in Istanbul, Abd al-Qadir al-Rassam and his colleagues were required to produce color paintings and sketches for military purposes. These images were keeping with the strict European academic style. Eager to deepen their new skills, members of this group of officers sought private training lessons in painting. The painter was apprenticed to a number of prominent painters residing in Istanbul who followed the contemporary French style. Although he was most distinguished for his oil painting, the painter in that period also worked in watercolor, depicting Istanbul with its crowds and markets. Al-Rassam's ambitions were hampered by the outbreak of World War I, but immediately after the war's end, when the artists-soldiers returned to Iraq, he

resumed his easel painting and, like his colleagues, focused on landscapes, military scenes, and archaeological sites (Floyd, 2022).



Figure 14 Abdul Qadir al-Rassam painting (Alrasaam, 2022).



Figure 15 Muhammad Saleh Zaki (1879-1888) (Al Madfai, 2018).

The first generation of Iraqi painters and drawing teachers had studied at the Military Academy in Istanbul, and among the curriculum of the study was Arabic calligraphy and miniature painting. Among these prominent artists are the artist Abdel Qader the painter, Hajj Muhammad Salim al-Mawsili, the father of the artist Jawad Selim, the artist Hassan Sami, the father of the artist Atta Sabri and the artist Muhammad Saleh Zaki, Asim Hafez, Nasser Awni, Shawkat Al-Khaffaf, Fathi Safwat and other famous painters at the time, and all of these became teachers of painting in Iraqi schools at the establishment of the Iraqi state and kingdom. The artists participated in many exhibitions, the first of which was a group exhibition in which these pioneering great artists participated with their young students at the Agricultural Industrial Exhibition in 1931 and they had a special pavilion for drawing, sculpture, planning and Arabic calligraphy (Al Madfai, 2018).



Figure 16 Mohamed Saleh Zaki painting (Zaki, 2022).

Dr. Khaled Al-Jader says that the beginning of contemporary art in Iraq can be dated to the post-World War I period with regard to painting and sculpture, as the first painter was an officer in the Ottoman army, Abdul Qadir al-Rassam, who was particularly concerned with the transfer of nature literally. There were the painters Haji Salim Ali, Othman Bey, Hassan Sami, and among the early contemporary artists, the two professors Asim Hafez and Muhammad Salih Zaki, and painting in Iraq witnessed the motives for that interaction, starting with sending delegates outside the country (Al-Rubaie, 1982).



Figure 17 Asim Hafez (1886-1978) (Khazal, 2019).

Asim Hafez was born in the city of Mosul in 1886 and died in 1978. He studied in Mosul and then entered the Rashidiya Military School in Baghdad. He was chosen to teach drawing in public schools. He remained as such for 19 years and during this period he was able to specialize in Arabic as well as French. Since his childhood, he studied this art in Paris at the hands of Professor Antoine Reynolds.



Figure 18 Asim Hafez, *Still Life* (Hafez, 2022).

The experiences of Iraqi art remained limited and revolved around realistic simulations, natural scenes and images until the royal Iraqi government began to send talented students to Europe for the purpose of studying art, so the number of artists who traveled abroad for the purpose of studying art increased. The first students such as Akram Shukri went to England to study art. Faeq Hassa went in 1935, Atta Sabri and Hafez al-Droubi in 1937, as well as Jawad Selim in 1938, among others, most of whom returned when the Second World War broke out in September 1939, to revive the artistic movement amid the devastation of the war (Khazal, 2019).

Thus, the openness to the currents of modern painting deepened the vision in the structure of Iraqi painting, which witnessed new artistic productions rich in their forms, as the impressionist style was the turning point towards modern methods (Shakir, 1983).

3.2. ABSTRACTION AND GEOMETRICAL FORM IN CONTEMPORARY IRAQI PAINTING

The period of the 1940s for contemporary Iraqi art is discovery, amazement, and anticipation. It was during this period that some Polish artists began to migrate to Baghdad because of the war. The artists Jawad Salim, Faeq Hassan and Atta Sabri got acquainted with these foreign artists and the first thing that the Polish did is to alert these young painters to the value of color and its enormous potential, as some of them had studied in Paris and took pointillism as a method, and the young Iraqi painters had to discover a new world.

Nowadays lyrical abstraction still exists. Many young contemporary artists have realized their potential and have used what they have observed from the visual experiences that abstract artists have produced for more than half a century. The geometric and decorative abstraction of the Arabic letter constitutes a distinctive feature in the style of the artist Jamil Hamoudi. The artist Jamil says: "My art remains the one that is inspired by life from its expressive and abstract folds, moving between human values, relying on the aesthetic of the Arabic letter, expressing its belonging to our civilization and two nationalities." The artist Faraj Abbou says that

the abstract form is the expression of its ideas and contents, whether social or subjective, and it has expressed by abstraction at several levels or in several directions that can be linked in the end to the artistic, literal concern (Kamel, 1980).

Akram Shukri is considered the first Iraqi artist to practice abstraction, influenced by the American artist Bullock's method. At a time when abstract art did not have a clear presence on the Iraqi art scene, Iraqi art during the period paved the way for the emergence of abstraction and turned sharply from diagnostic school drawings to absolute abstraction and dimension (Shaker, 1983).

Jawad Selim's experience in Iraqi painting and his commitment to the abstract method on the one hand, and his discovery of the heritage aesthetic values that crystallized through this particular method on the other hand, reveals to us in turn his cultural and human position as a creative artist who was able to maintain his balance between his civilization and global civilization together (Al-Saeed, 1991).

In 1951, Jawad Selim founded the Baghdad Group for Modern Art, which focused its research and experiences in the field of linking heritage with schools and currents of modern art that Iraqi artists learned in Europe. He sought to mix with techniques and methods of Islamic and local folk art with modern European art to create Iraqi art with a local flavor and global aspirations (Al-Saeed, 1991). He was trying to create a style that defines the features of an Iraqi-Arab drawing and is influential in the civilization of this era. His works express research and study that seeks to reach the most profound means of embodying his human vision, as he constantly challenges the direct relationship between form and direct content (Kamil, 2008).

Faeq Hassan was known with several stylistic characteristics ranging from realism, abstraction, symbolism and documentary, and he relied on aesthetics with an objective root, and of course we cannot exclude his works with an abstract tendency (Asim, 2004). Where the stages of his art passed through many stations, each of which reminds us in a way of one of the currents that prevailed in modern painting, it moved from impressionism to cubism and then to abstraction and finally to a kind of realism in which the artist tries to depict certain aspects of the life of villagers or

Bedouins in Iraq. Faeq Hassan was rushing to unload all his huge academic experiences through realistic scenes, including natural ones (Jabra, 1986).

He drew horses, scenes of life in the desert, the traditions of the Bedouins, the aesthetics of the desert environment, tents, horses, falconry, and other subjects that he used to depict with studied color climates with a realistic academic sense that became the hallmark of his works and an authentic art school. Many of his students studied at the Institute and College of Fine Arts and he formed a trend as a distinguished artist in the path of contemporary Iraqi painting (Al-Rubaie, 1982).

It seems that he preferred stability to reality and was able to achieve abstraction and take it into the space of realism, expelling the hybrid features from his art (Abdul-Amir, 2004). As his drawings dealt with art as inseparable from the reality of life and establishes a national art that is linked realistically to the real Iraqi life, with high technical and skill, he reconsidered everything that is popular and Iraqi, looking for the personality in his drawings with his affirmations on the various topics he wanted to express the national content in the language of drawing (Kamel, 2008).

Mahmoud Sabry invented his theory of quantum realism in 1972 and his works tended towards geometric abstraction, in which the artist changed his style radically from realism as a trend to abstraction (Kamel, 2008).

The works of Ismail Al-Sheikhly appeared in a geometrical direction in which there was a simplification of geometric spaces: faces are circles and clothes are a group of rectangles and triangles, bodies and squares mixed with a regular structural relationship. This artistic direction appeared under the name of geometric abstraction after the Second World War. As for the form in his works, it is easy to perceive quickly due to its possession of its own limits on the one hand, and the colors chosen by the artist on the other hand. In addition, we find that the form is coherent and organized, reflecting the background that suggests fluidity, fluidity, isolation and lack of influence (Mahoud, 1982)

In most of his drawings, the artist Hafez Al-Droubi approached the cubist style in analyzing and synthesizing the general form from simplified parts, and these parts overlap among themselves to give a perspective. The artist strives hard to focus the

content of his aesthetic facts (Al-Rubaie, 1982). Hafez's paintings appear with sharp-angled formations with cubic surfaces and formations of geometric shapes such as rectangles, triangles, circles, and others, but the subject remained preserving its value and appearance, as the shadow and light continued to play a beautiful role in the process of expression (Shamoud, 2016).

The method of splintering scenes and breaking them into decorative units or adjacent polished surfaces was adopted, which collectively contribute to preserving the unity of the subject to be photographed or its architectural structure in line with two trends in the history of painting, namely abstraction and cubism. Also there is tendency to analogous events with the pictorial system of Arab and Islamic decoration and the desire to destroy contexts of traditional view and resort to flatness (Al-Zaidi, 1964). He dealt with the spatial scene of the city with a vision that combines reason and emotion, for the form for him is nothing but a surface, so he penetrated the study of the motivation of form (Kamel, 2008).

Rafi' al-Nasiri has gradually moved towards expressionism in particular and sometimes abstraction. His stylistic treatments, at first glance, have a design or geometric concern, but the artist, with this accuracy and in an abstract style, expressed the reality of painting among other existing solutions, for his abstract painting was not stripped of deep emotional contents and symbolic expression (Kamel, 2008). Al-Nasiri fell under the magic of the Arabic letter, and although most of his drawing was abstract, he made use of a complete phrase of a mostly religious nature, but then he searched for the formal values of individual letters in his new plastic variations (Jabra, 1986).

Al-Nasiri relied on a part of the literal vocabulary with its written rules and grasped its expressive and aesthetic dimensions within the pictorial surface in the light of color treatments according to the context followed, while stressing the point that constitutes the first root or the basic starting point of the letter as well as its spiritual and ideological connotations and tried to integrate the possibilities of the plastic letter and its graphic tendency (Jabra, 1986).

One should not overlook the experience of Rakan Dabdoub, for his formative style that almost embodies his overall idea of art. In other words, the parts - the paintings and the details inside them - represent themselves to express the whole. He is critical of the tendency, as in a number of Saad Al-Tai's satirical visions of paintings, both in style and in content.

In general, we find that there are issues that are still under discussion, and this phenomenon can be called empirical. The artist's adoption of criticism in style reaches the degree of irony, and stylistic irony sometimes indicates the extent of his awareness of the meaning of the concept of independent painting or based on its components and itself. The artist deepens his subjectivity by abandoning the familiar or the traditional achievement, as he may struggle with himself, but always struggle with it to get out of the impasse of the static concept of "beauty" (Jabra, 1986).

The contemporary Iraqi artistic movement, which emerged as a result of the development of many factors, had an effect in bringing about a revolution against the old art method. It was a new starting point at the level of the structure of the form, which moved away from the foundations and classical concepts as much as it approached the oriental arts of an abstract nature.

It is a form of comprehensive renewal of the concept of arts and ways of expressing them, starting from the artist's view of society and art, and society's view of art as well as a reaction resulting from the development created by the Industrial Revolution, so art had to undergo a qualitative shift. Contemporary art is what can be called art today, i.e. it is the latest that the technical schools have reached of new systems and patterns (Aghamlek, 1986).

3.3. A LOOK AT THE CONTENT OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Contemporary Iraqi art can be described as art that is still in the framework of construction and development, because it is the artistic method that prevailed in the post-modern art period until now, and this means that contemporary art has not been fully formed. But some features of this approach seems clear, including that the contemporary art curriculum is based on creative thinking rushing towards departing from the schools of traditional art, with a diversity that mixes concepts in an

unconstrained presentation style, that resists superficiality and the unilateral dimension of presentation, which allowed the audience and technology to be among the active parts in the works of art that fall under the name of contemporary art (Al-Turabi, 1999).

The content of modern art is about abstraction, moving away from traditional ideas that tend to represent reality in a clear and realistic manner without complexity and this was despite the multiplicity of styles and types of modern art, while contemporary art is art that expresses the post-modern art period. To this day, contemporary art can be considered a new approach to art, as it is a curriculum that is not related to the previous art schools, and it belongs to the life of society in this moment more than anything else (Al-Khuza'i, 1997).

Contemporary art is affected by globalization and expresses multiculturalism, and this has given contemporary art a renewed spirit and patterns that are produced in multiple ways and different concepts day after day, starting from abstract and plastic art and conceptual art, to the art of forming colors and inks and the use of printer, light, video and music. All these tools are used by contemporary artists to produce new artworks that express the spirit and methodology of contemporary art (Al-Rubaie, 1982).

Abstract art continued during the last century and in the world of contemporary art we can look at abstraction as being present in all arts due to the fact that art is the result of what the individual artist sees as artistic results in works that are simple from a visual point of view. But it is an intellectual tool that allows the viewer to interpret in an open space of dialogue, as the image or scene is captured at a specific moment in time, a number of elements may be deleted or changed and thus the created image become abstracted from reality away from realistic representation (Moszynska, 2021).

It is noteworthy is that abstraction has taken an important place in the modern painting in Iraq. There are contemporary Iraqi artists who took abstraction as a starting point for mixing with other methods of painting. Thus, the levels of work range according to the abstract method of painting (Shaker, 1983). Abstraction in

contemporary Iraqi plastic art is a clear feature, especially in the works of many young artists, so that trends such as realism, expressionism or surrealism have retreated before the abstract trend was noticed by the observer of the various exhibitions and art halls. Iraqi artists became a source of inspiration for many who paint in Iraqi folk art, as they balance its color spaces in what looks like a geometric abstract art installation or a lyrical abstraction (Jabra, 1986).

We see the integration of the elements of the artwork such as line, color, movement, psychological expressions, and ideas that give the work the ability to influence and attract, and sensory and mental influence, and all these factors are organized according to the concept of aesthetics, which gives art its human character, adding to the artwork depth, attractiveness, and stirring emotions in abstract art (Khazal, 2019).

Salem Al-Dabbagh, the artist who reached his aesthetic conclusions by drawing, was distinguished by his liberal revolutionary tendency. This prompted him to sever his connection with the ideas that were being put forward regarding the issue of drawing inspiration from heritage or aligning it with contemporary. It is remarkable in al-Dabbagh's first abstract experiments that they appeared mature and were not mere primitive attempts. This confirms that the painter, who possessed great skill in the field of traditional craft, had been familiar with global abstract methods in depth, and when he decided to go ahead with the experience of pure abstraction, that decision was only a reflection of his refusal to separate painting and nature, which shows his complete bias towards beauty (Yousef, 2018).

Finally, art historian Nada Shabout points out that Iraqi art is still largely undocumented, and that the West has a very simple idea of Iraqi art. The problems associated with documenting a complete picture of Iraqi art have been exacerbated by the fact that many 20th century artists and art historians have been exiled and cut off from their heritage and current activities (Shabout, 2009).

3.4. THE ARTISTS



Figure 19 Jawad Selim (1919-1961) (Al-Aezamii, 2001).

Jawad Muhammad Salim is an Iraqi painter and sculptor. He is considered one of the most influential sculptors in the history of modern Iraq. He became a well-known artist by co-founding the Baghdad Modern Art Group, an art group that encouraged the exploration of techniques combining Arab heritage and modern art. Jawad Muhammad Salim Abd al-Qadir al-Khalidi was born in Ankara to Iraqi parents from Mosul, and grew up in an artistic family famous for drawing. His father, Haji Selim, was a military officer stationed in Ankara at the time of Jawad's birth, but he returned to Baghdad in the 1920s. His father was an artist, his mother was a skilled embroidery artist, and his brothers Souad, Nizar and Naziha were all plastic artists. Since his childhood, Jawad had been making clay statues that imitate children's toys, and he completed his primary and secondary education in Baghdad (Al-Aezamii, 2001).



Figure 20 Jawad Selim, 60x70 cm oil on canvas, 1953, *Street Musicians* (Jawad, 2022).



Figure 21 Hafez Al-Droubi (1914-1991) (Floyd, 2022a).

Hafez Al-Droubi is primarily mentioned for his work as a teacher and developer of art education in Iraq during the mid-twentieth century, but he was also an active painter and had a great talent for capturing the beauty of everyday life through a complex technique with shapes and colors. Al-Droubi is considered one of the pioneers of modern Iraqi art as he made many contributions at an early stage to its development. Al-Droubi began his formal art education at the Accademia Reale in Rome and was one of the first Iraqi artists to study art abroad. He later received his

BA from Goldsmiths College, University of London in 1950. After studying in Rome, he returned to Iraq and became an active participant in the emerging art scene. During the period of his artistic formation between Rome and London, the artist took several steps in order to raise the practice of art in Iraq to a professional level. In 1941, he established the first free Iraqi studio, allowing aspiring artists to learn and practice art. Over the next decade, Al-Droubi opened other ceremonies of the same kind at Baghdad University's College of Arts and Sciences, where he was able to supervise and encourage new talent. Several ceremonies of the same style were opened around Baghdad, and each studio was supervised by a well-known artist. This system has proven to be effective, as many famous Iraqi painters received their first training in these ceremonies (Floyd, 2022a).



Figure 22 Hafez Al-Droubi, 70x90 cm oil on canvas, 1973, *If I See an Orchard in Baghdad* (Al-Droubi, 2022).



Figure 23 Faraj Abbou (1921-1984) (Kamel, 1980).

Faraj Abbou was born in the city of Mosul. He graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1950 and from the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome in 1954. He taught art and painting at Al-Hilla High School, and the Teachers House in Baqubah until 1945. He taught drawing at Al-Adhamiya High School from 1950 to 1952. He studied at the Institute of Fine Arts, and then at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Baghdad. He worked as a professor of art, and headed the plastic department for a number of years. He also held the position of acting dean several times, where he was one of the most prominent contributors to its establishment and the laying of its academic foundations. He studied free planning in the Architectural Department of University of Baghdad for many years. He belonged to the Society of Friends of Art. He was a founding member of the Iraqi Plastic Artists Association in 1956 (Kamel, 1980).



Figure 24 Faraj Abbou, 60x80 cm oil on canvas, 1973, *Abstraction* (Abbo, 2022).



Figure 25 Khaled Al-Jader (1922-1988) (Floyd, 2022b).

Khaled Al-Jader was a very active participant in the Iraqi modern art movement. He held several prestigious positions and belonged to many artistic institutions and organizations over the course of his distinguished artistic career. Al-Jader's works are known for their landscapes and village scenes, created with wide brush strokes. He was inclined to impressionism and his works show many of its aesthetic tools, but his exploration of styles and subjects made him transcend these aesthetic symmetries with impressionism to produce what the Palestinian writer Jabra Ibrahim Jabra

described as the distinct Iraqi character. He graduated in 1946 with two degrees, one in art and the other in law. After that, he traveled to Paris on a government scholarship to continue his studies at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in 1954 and obtained a doctorate in the history of Islamic art from the Sorbonne University. While residing there, Al-Jader participated in the Paris Salon. Upon his return to Baghdad, he accepted the position of dean at the Institute of Fine Arts, where he stayed for several years. In 1962, under the supervision of the President of the University of Baghdad, he founded the Academy of Fine Arts with his colleagues Dr. Aziz Shalal Aziz and Dr. Asaad Abdul Razzaq, and then served as dean of this academy. Through these managerial activities, Al-Jader demonstrated his commitment to developing an institutional model for art education in Iraq, and with his academic positions, he served at the same time as the head of the National Committee for Fine Arts at UNESCO (Floyd, 2022b).

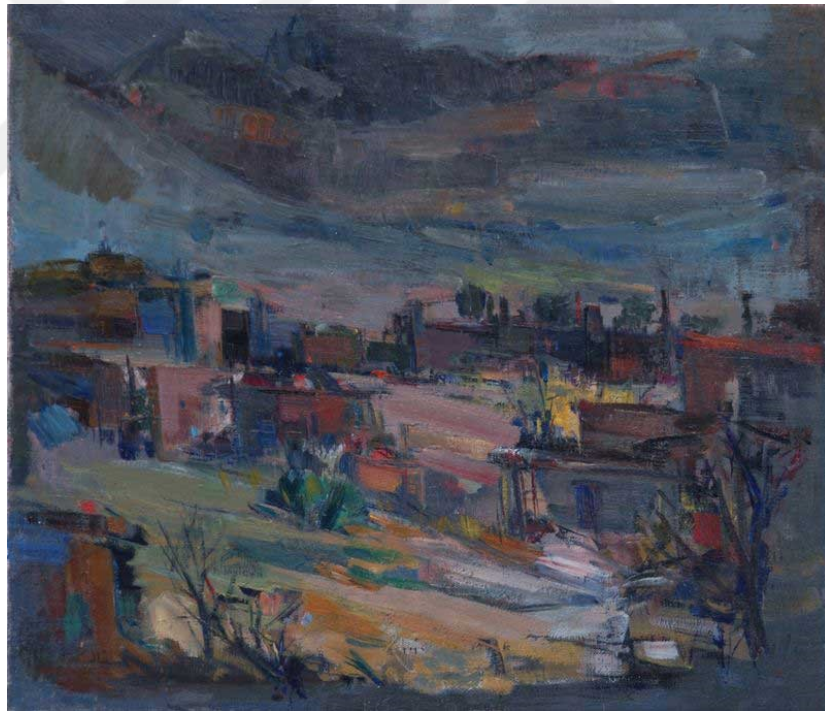


Figure 26 Khaled Al-Jader, 60x80 cm oil on canvas, 1973, *Village in the North* (Al-Jader, 2022).



Figure 27 Faiq Hassan (1914-1992) (Floyd, 2022c).

Faiq Hassan is often referred to as the father of Iraqi modern art. During his artistic career he took on many roles within the burgeoning Iraqi art scene, including educator and founder. In the crucial decades of the 1940s and 50s, Hassan was devoted to the creation of an art form that would express the growing feelings of national pride amongst Iraqi citizens. He was also interested in developing his own technical skill and that of his students. In later decades, Hassan would remain a leading artist in Iraq and his artistic legacy continues to be a powerful influence. Born in Baghdad in 1914, Hassan remembers his childhood as a series of art experiments, as he would master one media and move on to the next. A typical experiment involved mud from the Tigris River sculpted in the shape of horses and people. He did not consider himself bright in the traditional sense as he neglected his schoolwork. His talent for art-making, however, developed with ease and he was encouraged by his teachers. One teacher in particular, the artist Muhammad Khidir, became Hassan's mentor and artistic example. He considered Khidir a master of color subtleties, whose work would later point the way for Hassan's own investigations into color theory (Floyd, 2022c).

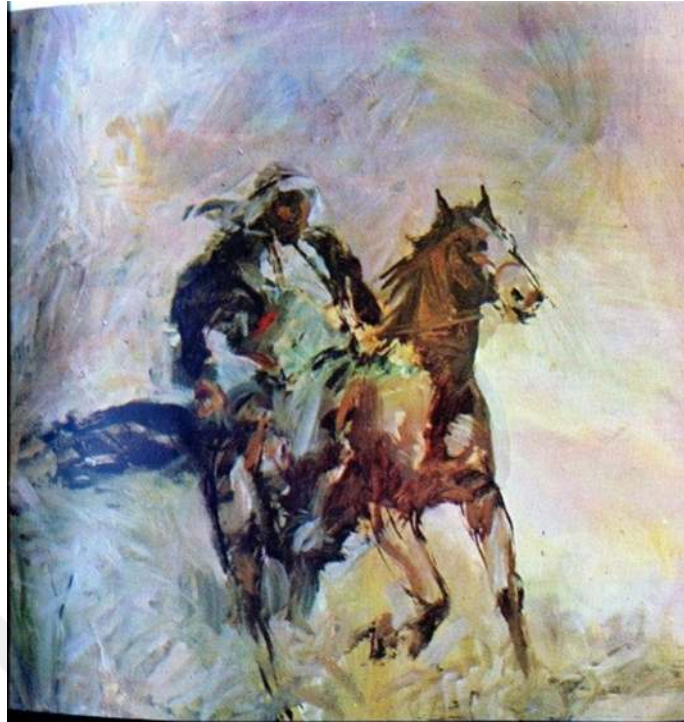


Figure 28 Faiq Hassan, 70x60 cm oil on canvas, 1982, *Knight* (Fayiq, 2022).



Figure 29 Dia Al-Azzawi (1939) (Al-Bahloly, 2022).

Dhiaaldin Khamas Al-Azzawi was born on 24 April 1939 in Baghdad, Iraq; lives and works in London, United Kingdom and Doha, Qatar.

Dia al-Azzawi was introduced to the arts by his older brother Majeed who was involved in the theater. Al-Azzawi possessed a natural inclination to draw, as a

child often reproducing illustrations from magazines or sketching scenes of family life. He was encouraged to develop his talents by his teacher Ibrahim, and after being expelled for participating in demonstrations supporting Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956, those talents succeeded in getting him reinstated into school. After graduating from al-Markaziyyah high school in 1958, al-Azzawi enrolled in the College of Arts, Baghdad where he studied archaeology, graduating in 1962. At the College of Arts, al-Azzawi came into the orbit of al-Marsam al-Hurr (The Free Atelier) held by the artist Hafidh al-Droubi, which included such poets as Muzaffar al-Nawab, artists like Tariq Mathlum, and the theater director Abdallah Hubba. Al-Droubi encouraged al-Azzawi to continue studying art by enrolling in night classes at the Institute of Fine Art, which he finished in 1964. Following the general tendency in the fifties for artists to organize into groups, al-Droubi had formed the Impressionist Group, which al-Azzawi joined, even though the work he was doing was closer to that of the Baghdad Group for Modern Art, formed by the artist Jewad Selim (Al-Bahloly, 2022).



Figure 30 Dia Al-Azzawi, 70x60 cm oil on canvas, 1966, *The Old City* (Al-Bahloly, 2022).



Figure 31 Salim Al-Dabbagh (1941) (Touati, 2022).

Salim al-Dabbagh, the renowned Iraqi painter and printmaker, is one of a generation of artists who enriched the progress of modern art movements in Iraq dating back to the mid-1960s. Born and raised in Mosul in 1941, al-Dabbagh developed a love for the traditions of his hometown, a love which soon metamorphosed into a cultural pursuit. From 1958 to 1961, al-Dabbagh studied at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad. He was trained by a number of prominent modern Iraqi artists, including Jawad Selim, Faiq Hassan, Ismail al-Shaikhly and Khalid al-Rahhal. After obtaining his degree in painting, al-Dabbagh continued his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad from 1961 to 1965 where he was a member of the first graduating class. The faculty included modernist artists Roman Artymowski from Poland who worked with engraving and printmaking, and Burkow Lazsky from Yugoslavia, known for his mural paintings. Though trained in purely classical and realistic artistic techniques, al-Dabbagh and some of his fellow students manifested their initial daring attempts to experiment with semi-geometric compositions and artistic abstraction. The Iraqi art critic May Muzaffar states that al-Dabbagh had no established relationship with art in his childhood. However, when he came across some photographs of Vincent Van Gogh's paintings, he became fascinated, if not entranced, with their aesthetic features. Nominating Van

Gogh his first "master", al-Dabbagh's delved into the unknown, a new world that paved the way for his artistic journey (Touati, 2022).



Figure 32 Salim Al-Dabbagh, 89.5x79.5 cm acrylic on jute, 2000, untitled (Al-Dabbagh, 2022).



Figure 33 Rakan Dabdoub (1941-2017) (Safa, 2017).

Rakan Dabdoub was born in Mosul in 1941 and graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1961, after which he completed his higher studies of plastic art at the Rome Academy in 1965. Dabdoub worked as a professor of art at the College of Engineering, Department of Architecture at the University of Mosul, and continued this work until his retirement in 1993. Dabdoub's first participation was in the annual Italian newspaper exhibition and he received a diploma and a silver medal for the years 1962 and 1963, after which he won the Dante Prize in an exhibition held by Italian-Arab cultural relations in Rome in 1962, and he also won the second prize in the San Romano competition held by the Rome municipality in 1962. Perhaps these beginnings were a reason for Dabdoub to form a difficult figure in Iraqi and Arab formation in general, until he held more than thirty-five exhibitions of his personal works in Iraq and the world. In addition to painting, the teddy bear has productions in sculpture, planning, photography, wood carving, bronze, alabaster, pottery, mosaic, graphics and many other products in various arts (Safa, 2017).



Figure 34 Rakan Dabdoub, 120x140 cm oil on canvas, 1986, *Unreadable Letters*, (Dabdoub, 1986).



Figure 35 Akram Shukri (1910-1983) (Al-Hadithi, 2008).

Akram Shukri was born in the city of Baghdad in 1910. He studied the art of drawing in England in 1931 and at the Western Intermediate School, Baghdad. HE contributed to the establishment of the Friends of Art Group in 1940 / Member of the Iraqi Plastic Artists Association. Shukri participated in the annual exhibitions of the Friends of Art Group Which and also in most of the annual exhibitions of the Iraqi Plastic Artists Association (Al-Hadithi, 2008)

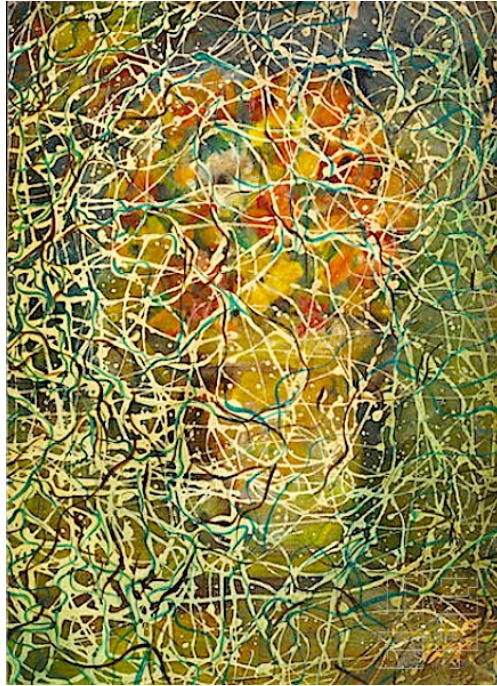


Figure 36 Akram Shukri, 80x140 cm oil on canvas, 1962, *Abstract Composition* (Shukri, 2022).



Figure 37 Atta Sabri (1913-1987) (Floyd, 2022d).

Atta Sabri is considered one of the early pioneers of Iraqi modern art, honored alongside Faiq Hassan and Hafidh al-Droubi. In many ways, Sabri's career

mirrors that of his contemporaries. He was educated in the arts abroad and his works show a blending of western art techniques with an Iraqi essence. The artist is well-known for his pleasing representations of the Iraqi countryside. Done with a subtle skill, Sabri's canvases exhibit the beauty of the landscape and the customs of its inhabitants. Sabri completed his early education at the Dar al-Mualimin or the "House of Teachers" in Baghdad in 1934. He then went on to teach at local schools. Like other artists of his generation, Sabri won a government-sponsored scholarship to pursue the arts in Europe. He travelled to Rome to study at the Accademia di Belle Arti in 1937, but was forced to return home at the outbreak of World War II. During the years between 1940 and 1944, Sabri was employed at the Department of Antiquities in Baghdad. In 1946, Sabri was again presented with the opportunity to study art abroad and finished his BFA in London at Goldsmiths College and the Slade School. After graduating in 1950, he held a professorship at the Institute of Fine Art in Baghdad, among other institutions. Sabri taught until 1960 and later became Inspector of Fine Arts (Floyd, 2022d).



Figure 38 Atta Sabri, 35x45 cm oil on canvas, 1955, *Natural Scenery in Northern Iraq* (Sabri, 2022).



Figure 39 Mahmoud Sabry (1936-2012) (Hourani, 2022).

Mahmoud Sabry was born in the city of Baghdad, completed his preparatory studies and obtained a diploma in social sciences from England in 1949. He studied art personally and he was a member of the Iraqi Artists Association. He studied and researched a special theory in art known as the “Quantum Reality”. He participated in the exhibitions of the Pioneer Group until 1962. He held a personal exhibition in Prague in 1971 (Hourani, 2022).



Figure 40 Mahmoud Sabry, 90 x72 cm oil on canvas, 1963, untitled (Sabry, 2022).

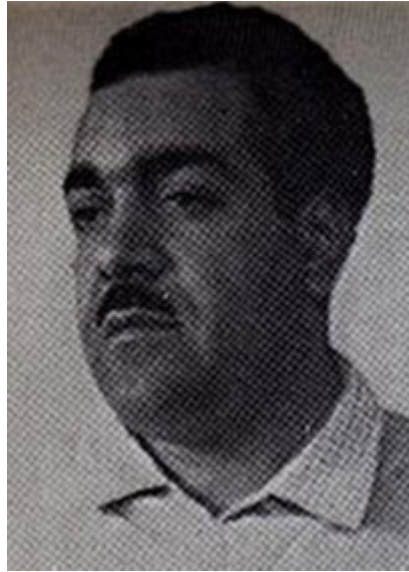


Figure 41 Ismail Al-Shaikhly (1924-2002) (Floyd, 2022e).

Ismail al-Shaikhly is considered an early pioneer of Iraqi modern art. He developed a unique style that resulted from a diverse set of influences. His mature works are instantly recognizable for their abstracted human figures, vibrant color combinations, and obscured backgrounds. However, there were many iterations of al-Shaikhly's favored subject matter, Iraqi village life, over the course of his career. Like others of his generation of artists, al-Shaikhly was a versatile painter who experimented with various modes of Representation. As a result, his oeuvre exhibits a range of stylistic references and negotiations. Al-Shaikhly was educated at the Institute of Fine Art in Baghdad and was a member of the first graduating class of 1945. At the institute, the artist studied under Faiq Hassan, one of the leading figures in the Iraqi art world, and was his most gifted student. After graduating, al-Shaikhly became its first alumnus to study abroad, attending the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1951. He returned to Baghdad and was an influential member of the Pioneers Group, an artist society founded by Faiq Hassan. He became the group's leader in 1962 after Hassan stepped down. Al-Shaikhly was also a founding member of the Society of Iraqi Plastic Artists and joined the Iraqi Artist Society. Professionally, his most distinguished position was as the director general of the Directorate of Plastic Arts in Baghdad (Floyd, 2022e).



Figure 42 Ismail al-Shaikhly, 100 x80 cm oil on canvas, 1989, untitled (Sheikhly, 2022).

After the end of the founding statements of the artistic groups 1972, the statements of the last era were issued by some artists to clarify their artistic visions between 1956-1972, such as the renewal in modern painting by Jawad Selim and the contemplative statement by Shaker Hassan Al Said, or the experience of Dia Al-Azzawi and the rich occurrence of Yahya Sheikh, or the statement of quantum realism of Mahmoud Sabry. After the dominance of specific and common stylistic features in the discourse of Aleppo in a minority and the chronological consequence in Iraqi painting, it borrowed a lot from the outside with intentions, vocabulary and stylistic units, and affected the general character of artworks in Iraqi painting, in the mid-eighties a generation of painters appeared, which is considered an extension and legitimate heir of the generation of the sixties, continuing with the generation of the nineties. This generation of painters witnessed wars, encouraging bloody physical killings and the diversification of culture in mobilization for war. The eighties generation found itself face to face with a new contemporary vision, accompanied by the technical and ideological changes that the world was going through, keeping pace with, and facing the need for a change in trends and experimental methods, and getting rid of its

holiness. The generation of the eighties believed, albeit to varying degrees, that painting, by its denial nature, establishes its connection with its past through separation, and that any artistic transformation is not born in the womb of the artistic transformation that preceded it, and that the artistic transformation does not herald the coming of another artistic transformation (Alrabiei, 1985). The experience of this modernist generation employed technology and personal style by reconciling the local with the international trend of art and was made of the ideas circulating in the body of Iraqi art such as originality, locality, heritage, technical identity, all of which follow the source privacy, exclusivity and experimentation (Shaker, 1983).

The artistic experience in the 1990s is similar to the artistic experience in 1980s. Through the same artists, or by presenting the same ideas and similar experiences, it was the beginning of changing from the experience of previous years, by presenting more newly artistic visions in an attempt to differentiate from more than half a decade of the experience of the pioneers and founders of the contemporary Iraqi movement. This is mostly due to the influx of new generations of artists with ambitions and goals that transcend tradition and seek to follow in the footsteps of the ancients (Asim, 2004).

4. SAMPLE PAINTINGS FROM CONTEMPORARY IRAQI ABSTRACT ART

4.1. ANALYSIS

1



Ali Rashid, Iraq, 120x120 cm, acrylic on jute, 2016, *Forests*, غابه, artist's private collection.

This painting is considered one of the lyrical abstract paintings. The artist used this painting on canvas, and he used a group of gray and blue colors with different degrees and some whiteness. As we can see through the image of the artwork, we notice a network of saturated lines and colors falling on it spontaneously without planning. For the forests, the lines express the trees in an abstract way far from reality and the way colors are distributed in harmony with the sky, water and tree branches. We notice from the top of the painting the light blue and dark blue color and in the middle of the painting branches or trees and from the bottom of the painting a water blue color to white and some gray, although the painting was painted in an abstract way. The artist studied the method of distributing colors and the process of forming branches in a chaste style, expressing what is going on inside. The artist is of feelings, represented by the density as forests (A. Rashid, personal communication, 2021, November 16).



Dia Azzawi, Iraq, 120x100 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2008, *Meditation*, تأمل, artist's private collection.

This painting is considered one of the geometric abstract paintings drawn on the canvas. We see through the painting a mixture of intersecting and overlapping lines. The artist used a mixture of hot and cold colors, red at the top and bottom of the painting, and orange, blue and white in the center of the painting, a form of color chaos, and its shape with geometric lines. He expressed it in chaos and war. Of course, modern artwork accepts interpretation, and every recipient sees it differently from the other, and this is the aesthetic of plastic art. And surely the artist has an idea (D. Azzawi, personal communication, 2022, January 11).



Mehr El Din, Iraq, 120 x 300 cm, acrylic with airbrush on canvas, 2007, untitled, بدون عنوان , artist's private collection.

This painting is considered lyrical abstract art due to the lack of straight lines. The artist used neutral colors in the blue and gray background at the bottom and top of the canvas distributed in an irregular way. As we can see through the image of the artwork, we notice a network of lines and saturated colors falling on it automatically without planning. There are also some irregular brushstrokes, and the red in the middle of the painting, on its black side, which expresses sadness and death, and the white in the middle of the painting to attract the recipient (M. El Din, personal communication, 2022, March 19).



Mohamed Bahr, Iraq, 100x70 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2012, *Fall Fetus*, سقوط الاجنه, artist's private collection.

This painting is a lyrical abstraction where the artist used a mixture of colors, gray and blue colors used often as neutral colors, on the top of the painting. Gray is a mixture of black and white, and at the bottom of the painting we see white and shows us a girl on the ground, and red is a symbol of revolution, and blood on black is sadness. We notice from the top of the painting the light blue color and dark blue and in the middle of the painting are branches or trees and from the bottom of the painting a water blue color to white and some gray, although the painting was painted in an abstract way and the color distribution is also spontaneous (M. Bahr, personal communication, 2022, March 25).



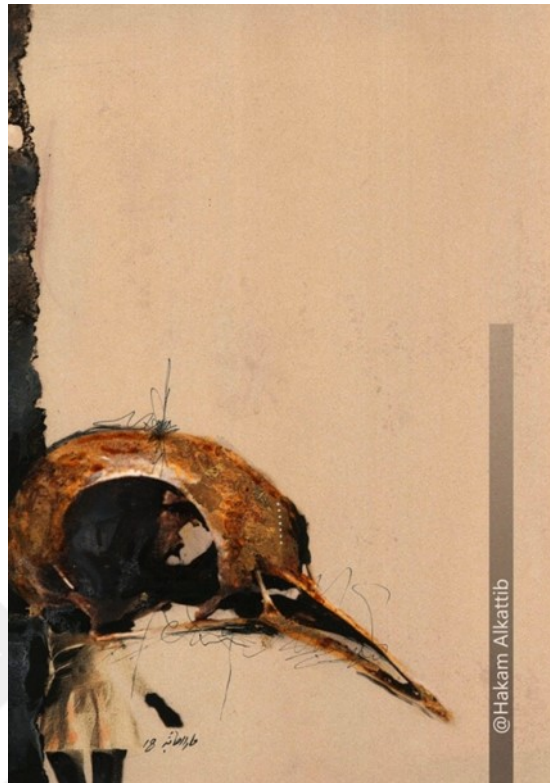
Saad Najm, Iraq, 100x70 cm 2013, oil on canvas, *Childhood Remnants*, بقايا الطفولة, artist's private collection.

The work is an abstraction painted on canvas. The painter used a mixture of blue, red, orange, white and some dark black or indigo. In general and spontaneously distributed on the background of the work, he used contrasting colors of orange and luminous blue. The style is geometric. The lines can be clearly traced, in addition to using colors and lines automatically, there are some mixed drawn lines. The artist studied the method of color distribution and the process of forming branches in a chaste style, expressing what is going on inside. The artist reflected feelings in a scene of a child in the midst of a chaos of colors that expresses the children in the cemeteries (S. Najm, personal communication, 2022, January 18).



Hamed Al-Rashidi, Iraq, 100x55 cm, 2018, acrylic and inks, *Formation*, تكوين, artist's private collection.

From the first look at the painting, you know that it is a geometric abstract art. It was painted on the canvas. The method of distributing the color in the background is manifold. We notice it in the form of squares and unorganized geometric shapes in a chaos of composition at the top of the painting and the triangle in the middle of the painting for balance and the ball is there to attract attention. At the bottom of the painting we find the colors blue and gray, neutrals are distributed in a geometric way to be a balanced ground for the painting. The artist expressed the difference in composition between the triangle and the circle (H. Al-Rashidi, personal communication, 2022, February 13).



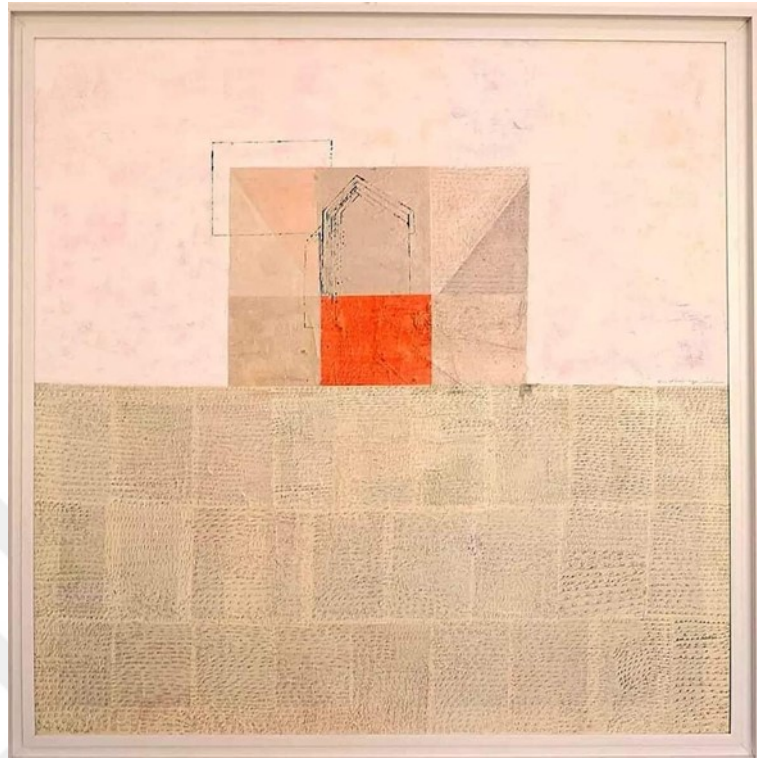
Hakam Alkattib, Iraq, 30×40 cm, oxides and inks on photo paper, 2021, untitled, بدون عنوان, artist's private collection.

This painting is distinguished by a unique technique in the work, and the artist has worked on polyethylene oxides and inks on photo paper that comes out something new. Few artists in this field are unfamiliar, but distinct. The artist used gray in varying degrees and a little blue and light coffee-violet in the background. The layout is irregular, and we notice the presence of a doll and a hollow bird's head, which means that it is old and has been around for a long time, and the doll expresses the child (H. Alkattib, personal communication, 2021, December 6).



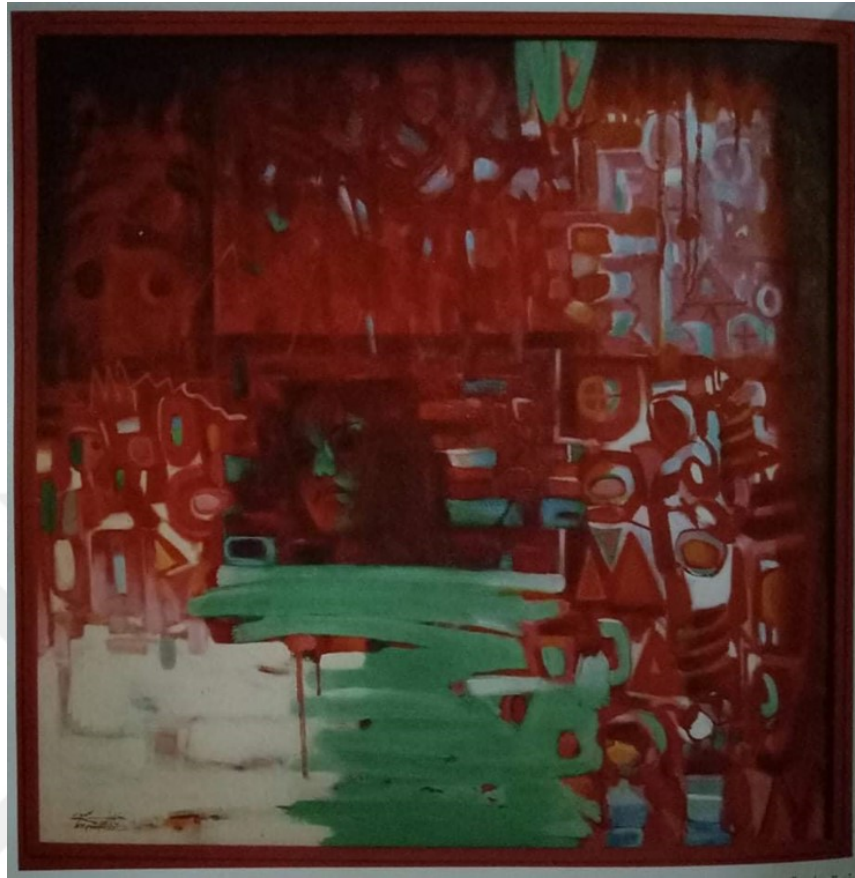
Omar Al Chalabi, Iraq, 80x60 cm, oil on canvas, 2012, *Roses in the Middle of the Thorns*, الورود في وسط الأشواك , artist's private collection.

This painting is considered a lyrical abstraction because of the presence of arcs painted on the canvas. The shape and subject include an arc surrounding the flowers, and its shape is stable amid a chaos of formations, in stark red. At the bottom of the painting we see red in varying degrees. The artist used it for the purpose of visual attraction and to attract the recipient to enter into the objectivity of the painting. We notice in the center of the canvas the circles of orange and green balloons also in the form of leaves. The artist's goal is to express freedom, giving and goodness in the midst of the chaos of destruction, as we can see through the image of the artwork, we notice a network of lines and saturated colors falling on it automatically without planning (O. Al Chalabi, personal communication, 2022, January 9).



Haider Fakher, Iraq, 120x120 cm, oil on canvas, 2022, *Talisman of Baghdad*, طلاسـم بغداد , artist's private collection.

This painting is a geometric abstract art painting with a name that suggests the name of the capital of Iraq, Baghdad. The artist used this painting on the canvas, and he used a group of white and pink colors and other colors in varying degrees. As we can see through the image of the artwork, we notice a network of straight lines and squares inserted by incomprehensible letters called incantation and the method of distributing colors in harmony between the top and bottom of the painting. In the middle there is the square in red to attract the recipient, but the artist studied the method of color distribution and the process of forming branches in a chaste manner, expressing what is going on inside (H. Fakher, personal communication, 2022, March 21).



Khalif Mahmoud, Iraq, 100x100 cm, oil colors on canvas, 2000, *Remains of a Woman*, بقايا سيدة, artist's private collection.

The painting is considered a lyrical abstract art. The artist used this painting on the canvas, and he used a group of red colors at the top of the painting and distributed it spontaneously and in varying degrees, green and white at the bottom of the painting and the mirror in the middle of the painting to attract the recipient to enter into the objectivity of the painting. In addition, green is the anti-red color for the purpose of aesthetic events and pleasure for the recipient. What we can see through the image of the artwork, we notice a network of lines and saturated colors falling on it automatically without planning. Although the painting is painted in an abstract way, the artist studied the method of distributing colors and the process of forming line and color in a chaste style, expressing what is going on inside. The artist's goal is to express homeland, freedom, giving and charity (K. Mahmoud, personal communication, 2021, March 5).

4.2. RESULTS

The research sample models revealed a clear diversity in the stylistics of artistic works, as geometric abstraction and lyrical abstraction. Geometric abstraction uses straight lines and geometric shapes such as square, triangle and rectangle. Lyrical abstract paintings use curved lines that resemble musical notes and are more spontaneous in style and expression.

The stylistic vision of the contemporary Iraqi painter is linked to several references, namely historical arts, Islamic art, folklore and modern European art, and this was reflected on the personality of the Iraqi artist, where he/she was affected in their history and also influenced by modernity, so you see diversity in stylistics in the personality of the Iraqi artist.

The effect of psychological and social implications appears through abstract or distorted expression, reduction, geometric and lyrical, and by using deletion, addition, flattening and relations, psychological dimensions appear in the samples. It varies from artist to artist.

The establishment of pioneering groups in Iraq during the fifties of the twentieth century had a clear impact on consolidating the artistic identity of the Iraqi formation according to a stylistic vision with multiple artistic characteristics. Because of the migration of the Iraqi artist to Europe for the purpose of study, most of the Iraqi artists in this era studied outside the country and were influenced by the art revolution at that time.

The cognitive and intellectual systems of the modern European painting currents contributed to the crystallization of stylistic visions of the Iraqi artists by directly familiarizing themselves with the products of these artistic currents, during the stages of scholarships and fellowships in European countries. The intellectual contents in the models of the research sample are closely related to the artistic forms on the diversity of their stylistic visions of the Iraqi artists and their structural formulation, and are closely related to the indicators and ideas that those forms carry.

Expressive values played an important role in revealing the diversity in the stylistic visions of Iraqi painters, according to the diversity of these values in methods,

mechanisms and types of expression, and at the level of forms and contents. The Iraqi artists sought, through their paintings, to confirm the true image and the social reality that they depict, an image of a reality in the country's politics, and also photographing history. The works of Iraqi artists reflected their artistic ability to use the elements of building the artwork, such as artistic skill in using color, brush, calligraphy strength and other artistic elements.



5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1. CONCLUSION

It is not possible to talk about abstraction in plastic art without going back to search for its introductions before the beginning of the twentieth century, when artists were using abstract art elements (line, colour, shape, texture, and space) to describe the world and nature around them, daily dealings, narrate and reinterpret historical events, or use art to illustrate religious stories and communicate them to the public in a simpler way, and for many centuries the illustrative or expressive function dominated the concept of fine art. While looking at abstract paintings, the viewer should ask himself questions, and the matter here is close to thinking and mental enjoyment, not just visual enjoyment, because abstract artists want to focus on feelings and ideas by creating a story that each recipient follows according to his psychological, cultural and human background. That is, the abstract work may be more than one interpretation according to the view of each spectator.

The difference between geometric abstract paintings and lyrical abstract paintings from a philosophical point of view is that lyrical abstract paintings are more emotional for the recipient than paintings that rely on expression in their painting: the emotional aspect or the historical aspect, among many aspects that the artist takes in his expression. Geometric abstract paintings are harsher because of the composition, which uses lines and geometric shapes with sharp angles. And the difference in color in the paintings as we note by separating samples and models in the research shows a slight difference in the way the color is presented or subtracted on the expressive or lyrical abstract paintings, and it is clear that the colors are brighter. And spontaneously, light colors and contrasts of colors are distributed to create depth and space. We see the using of colors within geometry to create spaces, areas, and surfaces in a painting, revealing true depth and rendering in shadows and light. This depends on the artist's style, influence on art schools, and his scientific and practical background in reworking and creating paintings from several aspects.

The Iraqi environment has been included in international paintings and schools and the impact of international schools on Iraqi art has developed through scholarships provided to Iraqi artists in Europe and the rest of the world. This resulted in a

mixture of international art, Iraqi art, and the way to create Iraqi-style paintings. Similarly, many Iraqi artists migrated outside the country due to the conditions that Iraq lived through, such as wars, siege and its cut off from the outside world. Artists also faced displacement and killing in different time periods, one of the reasons that also led to the artist's inability to view and view paintings. The Iraqi artists took their responsibility to produce paintings through cultural heritage and the diverse environment, to produce paintings describing the state and history of Iraq and the most prominent events that they experienced.

Despite the difficulties, Iraqi art continues to keep pace with international art, and now in Iraq, an artistic revolution is taking place through exhibitions as well as access to Western arts. The research contributed to finding the differences between geometric abstract paintings and lyrical abstract paintings, by referring to the impact of international abstract art on Iraqi art and how it was formulated. A group of abstract paintings were chosen as a sample and models of Iraqi artists and analyzed, so that an attempt was made to understand their creation within a popular heritage of Iraqi art and also to find out the differences between geometric and lyrical styles, in terms of color and composition.

Basically, the word “lyrical abstraction” produced by the artist George Mathieu refers to an artistic tendency that was quickly described as amorphous art and differs from geometric formalism and is distinguished by its radical rejection. It is spontaneous, rhythmic rather than mechanical, or random projection of colors, or rubbing the surface of the painting with non-traditional tools, techniques used by some surrealists before them.

Geometric abstraction, which appeared in the 1920s, was preferred by an important number of artists after World War II, among them Jean Diwan, Victor Vasarely, Jean Derolle and Richard Mortenson. It remains an abstract current characterized by the intensification of color within an expressionist tendency, such as by the artists Asger Yorn, Karl Abel, Guillaume Corneille, Georges Colignon and Jacques Ducey.

Abstract art depends on the simplicity of shapes and colors, to make its impact as a type of art with a distinctive character. This type of art is far from an accurate

description of the reality or nature of things. The importance of abstract art lies in its ability to inspire a new image of the human mind about the limits of imagination and the limits of our ability to create something completely unique in the world and different from traditional art. Art philosophy is significant in general, and useful in creating artistic ideas; and abstract art has a philosophical aspect in reading paintings because it is an art whose paintings are difficult to read and interpreted by the recipients according to their point of view that differs. Of course, the abstract artwork accepts the interpretation, and each recipient sees it differently from the other, and this is what the aesthetic of plastic art is, and certainly the artist has a special and different idea.

The research revealed the difference between geometric paintings and lyrical paintings from contemporary Iraqi art. One of the clear differences is that geometric abstract paintings take straight lines and geometric shapes and their lines are harsh. Lyrical abstraction takes curved lines that resemble musical notes and is more spontaneous and its style of drawing is very simple and also more expressive.

Iraqi abstract paintings differ from international abstract paintings due to the nature of Iraqi art and the artist himself in presenting the Iraqi heritage and culture as distinct from the world because of the difference in the Arab environment and culture from an artistic point of view. The international abstract school's point of difference from Iraqi abstraction is in reducing the idea and presenting it even in terms of color, composition and vocabulary used according to the environment, culture and impact.

History has an impact on the character of the Iraqi painter, and this was reflected on the paintings. Iraqi plastic art has a very deep history. It is deeply rooted and is linked to the civilizations that Iraq witnessed, whether in Sumer, Akkad, Babylon or Nimrud, where the caves were filled with those drawings that express the societal urbanization in those eras. Iraqi plastic art began to be influenced by Turkish influences mixed with an Arab and Islamic civilizational heritage, and this was through a group of amateur painters who studied painting in the Ottoman military schools in Turkey, where they were taught the art of painting as one of the basic curricula complementing their academic studies. At the beginning of the thirties, the

Iraqi Ministry of Education sent the first missions of Iraqi artists as first tidings of the contemporary Iraqi artistic awakening.

The rapprochement in Iraqi and European art is a result of Iraqi art pioneers leaving from time to time to Europe to study and learn European and international art in general and apply it using themes such as environment, civilizations, the history of Iraq and the suffering of the Iraqi people. Iraqi expatriates in various countries of the world transferred their global artistic experiences to the Iraqi interior through exhibitions and social networking sites, including the Internet. Despite the migration of Iraqi artists and their influence on international abstract art, the Iraqi artist remained influenced by the Iraqi character and historical heritage, as reflected in their paintings.

Iraqi art was affected by the succession of crises of wars and by the Iraqi reality, so it introduced a culture of war and after the war increased the suffering of the Iraqi artists, who was no longer able to convey it. They could not find anyone to support them or spread their creativity; so many Iraqi artists became prisoners of the tragic reality. The suffering of Iraqis during the period of wars, political changes and siege in particular had imposed restrictions on Iraqi art due to the lack of communication with the outside world and as art is an emotional performance, it was natural for artworks to appear in it.

5.2. SUGGESTIONS

More detailed scholarly and artistic research need to be done on the tradition of Iraqi abstract art.

The library of the relevant colleges could contain materials of abstract art documenting the life and work of contemporary Iraqi artists.

Art professors could teach students about abstract art and arrange visits to art galleries in general.

It is possible to hold art exhibitions and explain the abstract paintings to the visitors, specifically for young people and art students, due to the difficulty of interpreting them.

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