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Amer Alobaidi: a Perspective on a Des Moines Based artist Who made His mark on the World



May 27, 2013

***My First article, at The Urban Vibe College Newspaper, Des Moines Iowa-USA.**

Published:

October 3,2011

Editor of the Newspaper, Brad Morgan

Photography by: Alexandra Borzo Fay & Sumerian Bedor

Amer Saleh Alobaidi is a world renowned American-Iraqi artist whose paintings can be found in nearly every major museum of modern art in the Middle East. He has exhibited internationally, recognized with honors, and his artwork is in numerous private collections. Mr. Amer Alobaidi was the former Director of the National Museum of Modern art in Baghdad and former general director of the Fine Arts in Iraq.

He has shown his paintings and earned awards in exhibitions and galleries in cities on several continents.

Mr. Alobaidi's career began in 1934. He grew up in a large family who encouraged his passion for art throughout his childhood. His talent and mastery of design and color gained him early recognition when he won the first prize in Ibiza, Spain, at the age of 22. He began his career teaching art in Saudi Arabia, then started designing illustrations for newspapers, magazines, and children's publications in Iraq.

Amer's achievements in cultural ministry gradually propelled him through the administrative ranks of the Iraqi government's best art museums. He organized national festivals, painted murals in airports across the country and traveled the world to display his work in Egypt, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, India, Brazil, Russia, France and Spain. To understand Alobaidi we must take a close look at his art work and spend hours on it;it could take days to be involved in the artist's journey and find out more about his achievements

between Iraq, Middle Eastern, and European countries; which is why I've contributed several of his significant approaches at the beginning of this article. His art subjects used to discuss the weakness and strengths of human beings as well as the different interpretations for the hunger and homeless people by using effective symbols to grab the audience's attention. Symbols such as the chair with powerful men can show the opposite in the same theme of the painting; encouragements, hospitality, birds, and women as a sign for peace, horses that refers to history and Arabic-Iraqi culture in the main theme.

**American-Iraqi Artist Amer
Alobaidi.
Photo credit by: Alexandra
Borzo Fay**



"Regardless of what religion, language, and color of skin, ethnicity, and sexual orientation we have, we all laugh, the same, cry the same, hurt the same, and love the same." Amer Alobaidi



Painting title: "Training the Wild Stallion "

Alobaidi reveals the symphony of color in his personal rendition of abstract expressionism with purpose as well as spontaneity. Often times Mr. Alobaidi uses texture techniques in most of his newest artworks; he started using this style perhaps in the middle of the nineties and it continued with him for 23 years until now. The only differences we would notice clearly at Alobaidi's style are the colors and themes which they usually changes between every five or ten years approximately.

During my interview with the artist Amer Alobaidi, I spent hours enjoying our talk about his personal experience in the art field. Gradually, I moved to the question why he left his native country Iraq and how he decided to come and live in Des Moines, Iowa in August of 2008. Was it his choice? How did he find the art market in United States especially in Iowa since his arrival until today?

Amer Alobaidi answered: "Well, I didn't leave my country when the war started on Iraq in 2003 nor even thought to move and say good bye to my beloved city- Baghdad- after the invasion. But my son was killed in January, 2006, by a roadside bomb while he waited for his mother and me in the car, it one of the saddest days I've ever seen and experienced in my life." "That was impossible to see and believe the fact that my son was gone forever in that explosion! I still feel the pain when I see the hope and peace are killed in my country, and it became a theater for violence, crime, and innocent displacement," said Alobaidi, 67 year-old.

Photo credit by Alexandra Borzo
Fay

To escape the ongoing violence in Baghdad, Amer and his family fled Iraq in 2007, along with most of his county's cultural and intellectual elite who have been targeted for widespread attacks by extremists. After taking the

asylum in Syria, Alobaidi's family was referred for resettlement's to a third country by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). They arrived in Des Moines, Iowa in August, 2008 through the sponsorship of the Refugee Cooperative of Lutheran Services in Iowa/ Catholic Charities. They carried five suitcases and Amer brought only one painting on a rolled canvas.



Family returning to the village

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Amer Alobaidi

**American-Iraqi Artist
Amer Alobaidi**



Then he added, the best opportunity he has gotten was the past year in 2010 for art presentations at Des Moines Area Community College. He was invited by Ewa Pratt, ESL District Chair on behalf at DMACC Diversity Commission to present on six DMACC Campuses. Ewa Pratt said "Mr. Alobaidi's lectures and art shows were extremely successful, very well attended, and followed by many interesting questions from the audience whose curiosity was peaked by Amer's beautiful art and refugee experience." Moreover, she mentioned that "We are very fortunate to have Amer reside and create an outstanding art in our community." Ewa Pratt said. On the other hand, Amer liked this experience, enjoyed the discussion questions from both faculty and students, he was very glad to see the attendance from mostly who's interested in Art majors and the other audience who came to cover his lectures between Urban Campus and the other campuses in advance. He talked about his experiences before and after he became a professional artist. That took him back in the memory to 32 years ago when he was teaching at the institute of Fine Arts between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Alobaidi's said "one of the best ways to get young people interested in art when we make it prominent into every school system, whereby all students would at least be introduced to { visual } art, music, and the performing arts as they learn more and have a good background studies about the other cultures in terms of history, and society. Also, it is a good tool to use in political standards to solve a lot of issues that the world has suffered from until this decade." The he added "I honestly see that-art topics are the best language to connect all the people and make them relate to each other around the entire world," The Iraqi artist Amer alobaidi said.

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