

Modern Art from Kuwait: Khalifa Qattan and Circulism

By

Muayad H. Hussain

A thesis submitted to the
University of Birmingham
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History of Art
School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music
University of Birmingham
January 2012

Abstract

This thesis explores the life and work of the Kuwaiti artist Khalifa Qattan (1934-2003). The first chapter views Qattan in the context of twentieth-century visual culture in Kuwait. It also shows the European influence on his work, as he lived and studied in Britain in the 1950s. A second chapter is dedicated to Qattan's aesthetic theory called Circulism; it shows that it is a philosophy and a style, and situates Circulism between western and Arabic sources. The third chapter deals with the Gulf War of 1991 as a particular topic in Qattan's work, and compares his work about the war with the work of John Keane, the British artist who was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum as an official recorder to cover that war. Considering western and Arabic writings on the war, this chapter argues that different visual interpretations of the war are rooted in an 'insider' and 'outsider' experience. A conclusion discusses the general problems involved when viewing non-western visual cultures with western eyes. An appendix, a bibliography and a list of illustrations followed by 69 illustrations conclude the thesis.

Acknowledgments

I first would like to thank Allah for providing me with the knowledge and strength to complete this work. I thank my wife Athoub and my two daughters Dana and Aya for their support and for being by my side throughout the years. I thank my parents for their love and prayers for me. Special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Dr. Jutta Vinzent for her guidance and encouragement. Big thanks to Mrs. Lidia Qattan for the time and effort she offered me. Last but not least I thank my sponsors the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training and the Cultural Office in the Kuwaiti Embassy in London.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. Qattan's Cultural Identity	11
Qattan's Artistic Stages	12
Pre-Oil Visual Culture in Kuwait	13
Architecture of Old Kuwait	19
Woodwork	22
Metalwork and Textiles	24
Influence of Islamic Art on Kuwait's Visual Culture	26
British and Western Influence	28
School Period	29
Modern Art in Egypt	36
Qattan the Teacher	44
Leicester Period	45
Back to Kuwait	51
Circulism Develops	53
Changing Kuwait	55
Older Qattan	61
The Performative	63
2. Circulism	66
Overview	66
Circulism as a Manifesto	70
The Reception of Circulism	77
Critics' Views in <i>The Apple</i>	82
The Language of Circulism	86
Formalist Elements of Circulism	88
Curved and Circular Lines	88

Colour -----	93
Colour as a Symbol -----	94
Colour in the Quran -----	102
Theoretical Elements of Circulism -----	107
The Location of Circulism -----	113
3. The Stolen War -----	117
Introduction -----	117
Heikal and an Arab Perspective on the War -----	120
Rajab's View of the Invasion of Kuwait -----	124
Baudrillard and Media -----	131
The Media Warrior -----	140
The War Artist -----	153
War Art and Media -----	159
Keane in Post-War Kuwait -----	163
Circulism and War -----	171
The Prophecy in Qattan's <i>Deep Wound</i> -----	173
The Stolen War -----	179
Conclusion -----	184
Appendices -----	201
Bibliography -----	215
List of Illustrations -----	227
Illustrations -----	235

Introduction

This thesis explores the work of the Kuwaiti artist Khalifa Qattan (1934-2003).

Khalifa Qattan is one of the pioneering figures of the art movement in Kuwait during the 1960s and 1970s. He was the first artist born in Kuwait to have a single artist exhibition in Kuwait – which was held at the Najah School in 1953, the same year he left for the UK to study at Leicester College of Art and Technology, and he was the first Kuwaiti artist to exhibit his work outside of Kuwait, namely in Chiostro di San Romano in Ferrara, Italy and in the Egyptian Museum of Modern Art in Cairo, both in 1962. Qattan also had exhibitions in London (Egyptian Club, 1964) and Whiteleys Hall, 1996), Roma (Palazzo Delle Esposizioni, 1964)), Washington and New York (exhibitions arranged by the Kuwaiti Embassy, 1966), Beijing (National Modern Art Gallery, 1981) and several Arab cities including Qatar, Bahrain, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco and others. Qattan was the founder and first chairman of The Kuwait Formative Art Society in 1968. In 1962 he became one of the first professional full-time Kuwaiti artists when he was appointed as a supervisor for the Free Atelier which was established in 1960. Between 1962 and 1963 Qattan started developing his own style which he called Circulism and for which his work became synonymous in the Arab art world.

Literature Review

Twentieth-century Arab and Middle Eastern art has received increasing attention in the past decade, especially after the inclination toward globalisation and the quick development of communication technology which has changed the interaction of cultures. Another aspect that has drawn attention to Middle Eastern art and culture are

the political events taking place in the region which are directly affecting life in the west. Events which might have started with the incident of 11 September 2001 and its aftermath of wars and security threats, all of which were, arguably, ignited by misunderstandings between cultures. Lately the political and social changes in the region, which became known as the Arab Spring, are once again drawing the attention to the Arabic culture in order to abolish the orientalist image that was built about the area during the past two hundred years and present a new, right-minded image based on an understanding through knowledge. Many efforts have been made lately to close the cultural gap and provide that missing understanding, including Fassih Keiso's *The Body in Twilight* (2008), which concentrates on the representation of the body, sexuality and politics in contemporary Arab art, and the more generalising book on *Modern and Contemporary Arab, Iranian, Indian and Pakistani Art* (2008). Saeb Eigner brings also Iran to the fore in his monograph *Art of the Middle East: modern and contemporary art of the Arab world and Iran* (London and New York (2010)). Furthermore, there are events such as a session in Art Association of Art Historians' 2010 conference in Glasgow titled *New Perspectives on the Art of the Middle East: from ancient history to the contemporary*, and cultural events such as *Shubbak: a window on contemporary Arab culture* which took place in London during July 2011 and consisted of a programme of visual arts, film, music, theatre, dance, literature, architecture, lectures and discussion aiming to 'celebrate Arab youth empowerment and freedom of expression through the arts'¹ draw attention to this area. Quite outstandingly in terms of time is Fran Lloyd's edited volume *Contemporary Arab Women's Art. Dialogues of the Present* that was published on the occasion of the exhibition *Dialogue of the Present* held at the Hot Bath Gallery in Bath and four other

¹ Unknown author, 'London festival of contemporary Arab culture', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=602294182>, accessed 25/1/2012

locations in 1999, introducing the work of 18 Arab women artists before the flood of publications and events.

Despite this increased attention to art from this region and the fame which Qattan received during his lifetime, little has been published on Qattan to date. There is a wealth of material about Khalifa Qattan including media coverage of his work, exhibitions and life. For my research I have had access to the private collection and archive held by his wife, the artist and writer Lidia Qattan. Lidia Qattan owns a large collection of his work and has an archive of books, magazine and newspaper articles, exhibition catalogues and video tapes related to Khalifa Qattan and his work. Most of the archival resources I used in this thesis regarding Qattan are part of that collection. Lidia Qattan also wrote the book *Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan* which contains Khalifa Qattan's biography, an introduction to Circulism and an analysis of a collection of his work in which she believe, in a way, he gave a prediction of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait which happened in 1990. She also contributed to *The Apple* which was published after the exhibition bearing the same name. I recorded three interviews with Lidia Qattan between February 2008 and July 2009 in which we discussed Khalifa Qattan's work and philosophy and a broad cultural matters relating to art and culture in Kuwait. I also visited the De Montfort University in Leicester, which was called Leicester Colleges of Art and Technology in the 1950s, when Qattan was a student there. Most of the material from the old college is lost, though I managed to find some useful resources: an old prospectus' and minutes of meetings of the woodwork department, at which Qattan was enrolled. Most of the books in Arabic cited in the bibliography were printed in Kuwait and thus are only available locally in bookshops, the Kuwait National Library and Kuwait University Central Library, where I was able

to consult particularly those regarding the history of education in Kuwait. . The local knowledge demonstrates the relative isolation of this topic and thus gives this thesis submitted in English at a British university an even greater relevance in order to recognise modern art in Kuwait. For the work of John Keane discussed in comparison with Qattan's work in the third chapter, I consulted the exhibits and the archival material related to the *The Gulf War 1990-1991* show of John Keane's photographs held at the Imperial War Museum.

As will be discussed in the first two chapters, it is not only that Qattan's art suffers from a lack of previous critical discussion in the western sense, it is also that art history, art education and criticism as disciplines are dealt with in Kuwait and the Arab world differently from what the western reader might expect. In fact, the reception of Qattan's work and of Circulism, including the coverage it received by critics in Kuwaiti and the Arab press, makes finding a stable ground on which one can build a – western – critical approach of the subject a difficult and complex matter. As an example of that difficulty, the main source to the theory of Circulism in this thesis is the writing of Lidia Qattan, Khalifa Qattan's wife who was the one to coin and theorise Circulism as discussed in the second chapter. Other writers dealing with Qattan's works have rarely discussed critically either his work or Circulism as such. Furthermore, as shown in the following chapters, there is a lack of, as in the western sense, a critical framework of art history in which his work could be placed, as art history as such and art education in the western sense does not exist (yet), which also raises fundamental questions as to how to write about Arabic art. As this thesis has been written for a degree at a British university, the guidelines were clear: Qattan's work has been discussed in a typically western, critical art-historical framework,

despite, in the light of Said's insight in *Orientalism* and Foucault's emphasis on knowledge as power, this kind of approach can still be interpreted as an overpowering of the west of the (Middle) East.

Because of the lack of publications on Qattan, the aims of my research are; first to establish the theoretical background by contextualising Qattan's life and work in a broader framework of art education and art tradition; then to study Circulism and compare it with modern art movements in the west; and finally, to analyse Qattan's paintings according to the theory of Circulism by concentrating on his paintings of the Gulf War. Hence, this thesis aims to contribute to this recently increasing interest in Middle Eastern, Arab and Kuwaiti cultures, particularly regarding the widening of the empirical and geographical boundaries of modern art in order to show how much a theoretical re-writing of modernism in a globalised world is needed.

Approach

My thesis is influenced by Homi K. Bhabha's seminal book *The Location of Culture*. Circulism, and Qattan's work in general, form a complex cultural case study that is hard to be viewed from the perspective of the western canon alone since the circumstances, and timing, of its development do not match other known western art movements. Circulism, for example, also does not have a written manifesto similar to other art movement in the west, and it was influenced by some non-western cultural, political and religious processes. I will also view Qattan's work in the context of Arab sources and thus independent from canonical western approaches and thus defying the 'Orientalist' look as critiqued in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. In this way, I hope to do justice to a body of work that demonstrates in an exemplary way the

interconnectiveness and merging of western and Arab resources and thus to contribute to differentiate modernism. The reasons for choosing Bhabha and Said's texts will be outlined in the chapter with the argument of the 'insider's view'.

Structure of the thesis

In accordance with my research questions and overall aim of the thesis, a first chapter will explore Qattan's life as an artist. Part of that study will be around the visual culture in Kuwait during the first half of the twentieth century, a subject which is rarely discussed in the west and very little is known about. I will discuss how that culture developed and in at what state it was when Qattan was born and raised and how it later developed after the boom of the oil-driven economy. I will try to present an interdisciplinary view of the social, cultural, economic and political changes in Kuwaiti society that might have affected Qattan's mentality and pushed him into developing Circulism.

In the second chapter I will study how Circulism was received and what was written about it. I will discuss the main principles of Circulism as a concept or philosophy and as a visual painting style, and how both the philosophical and visual elements of Circulism are integrated with each other. I will study the relation between Circulism and other modern western art theories, how related are they and what sets them apart.

In the third chapter, I will explore one of the major themes Qattan covered in his work as an application of Circulism, which is the Gulf War. In this chapter I will compare Qattan's view of the war as an 'insider' and how it would differ from the view of a western artist who is dealing with the same war. As such, I will explore the work of

Keane who was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum London as an official war artist to produce a visual view of the Gulf War.

In this thesis, I will argue that a comprehensive understanding of Khalifa Qattan and Circulism can only be obtained by studying it from 'within' Such a study requires comprehensive knowledge of the subject in question; this is particularly challenging, when not only different languages, but also widely differing cultural backgrounds, separated by geography, history and religion are involved, as in the case of Khalifa Qattan. Art more than language, as it seems more accessible in general, can demonstrate how different an insider view and that of an outsider is, as shown in the thesis' second chapter. Both the first and the third chapters attempt to understand the artist in relation to his different cultural backgrounds from an insider view; this means not only that the different backgrounds are comprehensively studied as mentioned above, but also argues that the person who studies the subject has acquired a multi-perspective view that is more easily obtained by an autobiographical experience of and education within the cultural frameworks in which the artist lived and worked; in other words, being raised in Kuwait and studying in Britain may help understand an artist with a similar biographical history better than an 'outsider'.

The insider's view and the approach to the thesis

The reader might notice that the structure and the approach in some parts of this thesis is written in what might be considered a different style than the expected art historical academic study; as argued above, this not only reflects the educational hybrid cultural background of the writer of this thesis who received his training in Kuwait which is, in western terms, more based on empirical research and art appreciation, followed by a

postgraduate degree in Britain where the author obtained knowledge of critical art history, but also demonstrates sensitive awareness of the hybrid subject studied here.

My analysis is based on Bhabha's seminal book *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha, as will be detailed later, proposed the idea of the locality of culture which is more affected by a temporality than historicity², and that temporality makes culture more complex and hybrid 'than can be presented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism.'³ His concept of locality of culture is even more crucial when dealing with the culture of the 'other', as it is easier for the scholar to be lured to generalisations and stereotypes when dealing with the exotic and unknown.

Furthermore, recognising and then 'dismissing' the stereotype by processing it through one's own judicial system without taking into account the significance of 'colonial' power presents as much danger. Bhabha states that to 'judge the stereotyped image on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it'⁴, and judging of Qattan's work using that 'political normativity' is one of the fears I had in this thesis. It is not enough to distinguish Qattan's work as an exotic cultural event if one would still process it through the judgment of the western canon, as that would lead to dismissing the stereotype instead of 'displacing' it. Therefore, one must be reminded that Qattan's work as represented in this thesis is not what one would coin 'western' art and the ideas presented in Circulism are not 'western' concepts, therefore they should not be judged as so, but they are complex 'hybrid' concepts which are the result of a process of splitting between the historic past (*pedagogical*) and the contemporary present (*performative*) as Bhabha states.⁵ It is not enough to

² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, 2006, p.200

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220

academically analyse Qattan's work without first understanding the background it came from and being aware of the danger of exerting western cultural power on it.

Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* are also important to understand the danger of the exertion of western cultural power, particularly when dealing with an artist such as Qattan. One might expect the work of Qattan and an idea such as Circulism, as many 'isms' of the twentieth century, to be directly influenced by the work and movements of other modern western artists and theorists, and therefore expects a direct visual analysis of Qattan's work and direct comparison with the work of those western artists. But as I believe, and as I will try to prove in this thesis, the demand of direct and immediate analysis and comparison is by itself an orientalist exertion of power. The western reader must try to understand the culture of the 'other' as it is (in this case Qattan or Kuwaiti art) and understand the whole spectrum of that culture in order to be able to analyse and understand the true meaning of its signs. This understanding from 'within', in my opinion, is the appropriate route to take in order to close the cultural gap between the so called 'west' and 'east'.

There is a danger in the approach I have stated above which I must clarify. As I am a 'Kuwaiti' writer one might assume that I have nationalist intentions by attempting to give Qattan, Circulism and Kuwaiti culture in general an exaggerated importance. I believe the contrary to that assumption, as being educated in Kuwait gives me the advantage of understanding Qattan and, more importantly, his cultural background from the 'inside'. At the same time, my education in a British university allowed me to find the western critical language to discuss Qattan's work while being aware of the dangers of framing it by the western modernist canon. As an 'insider' not only will I

be aware of stereotypes, I will also be able to explain them and deal with them critically 'as they are', without needing to dismiss them and continue judging the stereotyped image as a 'foreign' event that should be normalised by comparing it to an equivalent in the west, or as Bhabha terms it, to produce the 'other' as 'entirely knowable and visible'⁶.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.101

1. Qattan's Cultural Identity

I have chosen to dedicate the first chapter of my thesis not to Circulism itself as a standalone concept or a *historical object*, but instead to show Circulism as a *subject of a process*⁷. If we are to consider Circulism as just another *ism* from the hundreds⁸ of manifestoes of the twentieth century then it may not mean much to us; one might say that it would lose its significance. My argument is that what is significant about Qattan's work, and Circulism in particular, is its hybrid nature, as Homi K. Bhabha has outlined in *The Location of Culture*. This hybridity is not just one of *western* and *eastern* art as might be assumed, but is a result of a complex interdisciplinary process, or what Bhabha calls the *performative*.

For Bhabha, cultural identities emerge between what he terms the *pedagogical* and the *performative*. The pedagogical refers to the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy (that is, past events, repetitious continuity, history, education), while the performative refers to the 'subjects', who are contemporaneous, present, and constantly challenging history. Out of this performative process emerges ambivalence, evoking and erasing the totalising boundaries. The result is that cultural identity is never pure or 'holistic but always constituted in a process of substitution, displacement or projection'⁹. Cultural hybridity is fluid and constantly produces and reproduces itself.

⁷ *The Location of Culture*, pp. 208-209

⁸ See Mary Ann Caws (editor), *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, Nebraska, 2001

⁹ *The Location of Culture*, p. 233

The *process* of Circulism requires an understanding of Circulism's context, not just its content, and the environment in which it was produced and developed. That understanding requires us, for example, to study the state of the art scene in modern Kuwait in the mid-twentieth century. Although modern 'Arab' art is not the field of this thesis, at least a general knowledge is required¹⁰ of that art, and of how differently it was perceived when compared to art in the 'west'. In order to understand how Circulism emerged and developed as a cultural identity, and what it meant, we must first study Qattan's life as an artist, his education and the events that may have influenced his thoughts and his art, since those cultural, social, psychological, economic and political elements are all part of the cultural process that shaped Qattan's identity and was then reflected in his art.

Qattan's Artistic Stages

Using the term 'stages' should be dealt with carefully, since the word might indicate a sense of separation and natural progression. In fact, the effect of the transition between the so called 'stages' on Qattan's work usually happens gradually and probably unnoticed at the time. It is only when looking at Qattan's work retrospectively that we would notice the changes and differences discussed, and thus attempt to categorise them into stages.

The historical stages discussed here deals with the development of the Qattan's early attempts to find himself as an artist up until the coining of the term Circulism, and how those events might have inseeded the idea. Khalifa Qattan's early artistic development can be divided into four stages. The first is his first exposure to the so-

¹⁰ Art in other parts of the Arab world had an effect on Kuwaiti art. That influence will be discussed in more detail later.

called 'vernacular' styles of Kuwaiti and regional art, or the artistic aspects of everyday life in pre-oil Kuwait (1934-1946). The second is his life as a student in Al Mubarakiya School, the first 'modern' formal school in Kuwait, and later as a teacher in Al Najah School (1946-1953). The third is his life in England as a student at Leicester Institute of Art and Technology (1953-1958). The fourth period starts with his return from England to Kuwait and lasts until the time of his second Italian exhibition, which arguably marks the maturity of Circulism (1958-1964). From 1964 onward one can argue that Qattan has established himself as a professional and independent artist with his own style and identity. He continued to work and produce art, his work being still affected by the environment surrounding him up until his last days. Later in this chapter and in the next two chapters I will go into more details of what changes had happened to Qattan's art and his Circulist theory and how it was adapted and applied by him to the work he produced after the coining of Circulism.

Pre-Oil Visual Culture in Kuwait

Young Qattan did not practice or have significant exposure to art as known in the 'western' sense before he started school. Although art was part of the everyday life of Kuwaitis in one way or another, it was not taught in schools as a standalone subject until 1936¹¹. One can argue that the mere concept of 'art', as understood in the west, was not known to the majority of Kuwaitis before the 1930s. Indeed, the word 'art', in Arabic (*Fann*), is more strongly associated with music than with visual art; the word *artist* is usually used to describe a musician rather than a visual artist or an artisan. Music in Kuwait, and in other countries in the region, had a longer history; it was associated with social and political events such as weddings and wars, as well as

¹¹ Fouzia Al Abdulghafoor, *Tatawor Al Taaleem fe al Kuwait* (The Development of Education in Kuwait), Kuwait, 1983, p. 345

the sailors' songs that were sung on board ship or in celebration of their return from their marine journeys. On the other hand, the visual culture in Kuwait at that time was built around the more practical crafts and applied arts; apart from architecture, it largely consisted of textile, wood and metalwork, as will be outlined below. Easel art was not common, or even known, in the area until the cultural transformation that took place in the mid-twentieth century.

The study of early Kuwaiti visual culture up until the 1950s is essential to understand the visual environment into which Qattan was born, and in which he lived his childhood and adolescent years. This period is a key element in the *performative*, and understanding it from a *Kuwaiti perspective* is essential if we are to put a cultural event such as Circulism, and Qattan's work in general, in a subjective context that challenges the pedagogical objectivity which oversimplifies the subject and usually presents and studies Kuwaiti art and culture in general from what one may call an *Orientalist* perspective, or present it as cases of traditional Islamic art or as basic crafts, such as in Marilyn Jenkins's *Islamic Art in The Kuwait National Museum: the Al Sabah Collection* (1983) or Yaqub Yusuf Hijji's *The Art of Dhow-building in Kuwait* (2001). In the next section I will demonstrate how such resources must be connected and looked at in whole as being part of the elements that construct Kuwaiti visual culture and not as direct representation of it. Ship-building, which I will discuss later as an example of the craft of woodwork, might not normally be looked at as a form of 'art', and therefore an art historian might not include it in a study of the art of a modern artist, yet I am including it here not as a direct representation of art in Kuwait, but part of my demonstration to the practical approach of the traditional craftsmen in contrast to the attention to aesthetics. When connecting ship-building and

woodwork to architecture to textiles and metalwork in pre-oil Kuwait, as will be done next, one can start to establish a mental picture of the way Kuwaitis approached their visual culture up until the mid-twentieth century. These elements might not be what an art historian would typically study when looking for proposed influences on an artist, but they might be the only visual influences to be found in pre-oil Kuwait. They also represent cases of hybridity and show the cultural effects and influences of the cultures Kuwaitis had relations with, particularly trade relations, such as India and east Africa.

I will discuss the pre-oil Kuwaiti visual culture in detail, because to date very little has been written about it, especially in English. When I started the research for this thesis in 2007, searching Google for the term 'Kuwaiti art' brought few results, and most of those brought discussions of Islamic art collections in Kuwait. Today a search will bring up more websites and blogs discussing art in Kuwait, many of them run by young Kuwaitis and relates to the current contemporary art scene in Kuwait. The traditional and modern art of Kuwait has still not been properly documented as it is still reserved in the memories of the older generation of Kuwaiti artists and in very few books and publications which are mentioned in this thesis or included in the bibliography. Academic searches using Google Scholar and library catalogues still yield very few results related to Kuwaiti art.

I found three books in English that deal with the subject: two were published in Kuwait and are very unlikely to be found outside the country; the other was published in Cairo. *Kuwait Arts and Architecture* (1995) is a collection of essays edited by Arlene Fullerton and Geza Fehervari¹². The essays deal with Islamic art collections in

¹² Arlene Fullerton (editor), Geza Fehervari (editor), *Kuwait Arts and Architecture*, Kuwait, 1995

Kuwait, archaeological findings, architecture and modern art, although the modern art section does not cover the span of the transitional period (1940s-1960s) I cover in this chapter, but discusses the later period (from the 1960s onward). *Contemporary Art in Kuwait* (1983)¹³ is another collection of short essays about subjects such as folklore arts and crafts in Kuwait, art education and art institutions. It contains biographies of Kuwaiti artists, and more than 100 colour plates. Interestingly, the book contains an essay by Khalifa Qattan titled 'The Free Atlier [sic] of Fine Arts: The launching pad of formative art in Kuwait', in which he describes the formation of the Free Atelier and its activities. Meanwhile, the book *Colors of Enchantment* (2003), edited by Sherifa Zuhur (2003)¹⁴, contains an essay by Wijdan Ali titled 'Modern Painting in the Mashriq', in which she describes the beginnings of modern art in the eastern Arab region and the way in which western art replaced the classical Islamic art during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in different parts of the Middle East. Although she gives a wealth of information regarding art in Egypt and Lebanon, there is little (less than two pages) about art in the Arabian Peninsula. Indeed, in one paragraph she claims that the 'paintings made during the 1950s and 1960s throughout the Arabian Peninsula can be characterized by their primitive figurative style. Adhering to no consistent art school, they depicted their subjects realistically and in basic colors.'¹⁵ Given the 'Modern' approach used by artists such as Khalifa Qattan, this is hardly an accurate description of the art of the region at that time!

In the first half of the twentieth century, while art was accessible to many westerners in museums, churches and public spaces, that kind of exposure hardly existed in

¹³ Unknown editor, *Contemporary Art in Kuwait*, Kuwait, 1983

¹⁴ Sherifa Zuhur, *Colors of Enchantment: Theater, dance, music and visual arts of the Middle East*, Cairo, 2003

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 383

Kuwait. The Kuwaiti painter and art collector Tareq Rajab, a contemporary of Qattan, says about that period:

In Kuwait in general at the time, painting and drawing had virtually no role and except for the few pictures we saw in imported magazines, we had no idea at all. There was no painting and drawing tradition in that harsh desert society. Indeed some of the only drawings I saw in my early childhood were the stylized charcoal drawings made by sailors of their favourite *Booms* or *Baghlas*, two of the grandest and most renowned of the old sailing ships for which Kuwait was famous and which sailed the high seas to India and East Africa. We also had in our house large cupboards brought from India with glass paintings of peacocks and gardens. And then there were the hand written and illuminated manuscripts of the Quran that I saw in my grandfather, Sayid Omar's, small library.¹⁶

Similarly, Khalifa Qattan states that:

Up to the fifties, the so-called formative arts or fine arts did not exist in Kuwait, as they are known now, such as painting portraits by oil or water paint, engraving, clay moulding, sculpturing or bronze work. This is of course with the exception of some coloured decorative work undertaken by masons or carpenters in gypsum or wood to beautify wainscoting or cornices along lines close to ceilings in parlours. Such

¹⁶ Tareq Rajab, *Tareq Sayid Rajab and the Development of Fine Art in Kuwait*, Kuwait, 2001, pp. i-ii

decorations were also common on the doors of houses or rooms and on sailing boats.¹⁷

Different styles of art were known in Kuwait, some of them imported from Persia, India, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. The imported styles that affected Kuwaiti arts were a natural outcome of the trade journeys made by Kuwaiti ships to those and other parts of the world. The arts I will discuss give a clear evidence for the early hybridity of the Kuwaiti culture and show how it could not be simply categorized as Arabic or Islamic but unique and independent in one way or another. Drawing similarities to other neighbouring cultures is a valid argument, yet the differences in Kuwait's history and its social and political system do differentiate it. All these particularities are important to us when we study Qattan's work as they arguably would affect his cultural background.

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, one of the main characteristics of the visual culture of pre-oil Kuwait, as will be discussed, is simplicity. The simple architecture and the generally plain visual items of everyday life symbolised to Qattan the purity of life at that time, compared to the material life of post-oil Kuwait. He expressed this concept of purity of the past in his work *The Ship of Goodness and Generous Hand* (1975) (Fig. 62). In this painting Qattan represents 'goodness' as being carried by an old sail ship with a big white sail, and white in Qattan's vision is the colour of purity as will be discussed in the second chapter. Through the ship wheel

¹⁷ Unknown editor, Khalifa Qattan, 'The Free Atelier of Fine Arts: The launching pad of formative art in Kuwait', *Contemporary Art in Kuwait*, Kuwait, 1983, unnumbered page

we see a scene of an old Kuwaiti neighbourhood and a small family standing in the middle of the sandy yard in front of the simple old houses. The wheel, being a circle, represents continuity, meaning that goodness will be preserved as long as we kept our old values, symbolised by the family. In the background we see the dangers brought to society with the passing time, symbolised by the frowning man and the sun and moon behind him. To protect the ship we see the mother shielding this danger with her simple black *Abaya* she is wearing over her head. The old ship, the simple buildings, the traditional cloths and particularly the *Abaya* are all elements Qattan brought from a period of time when things were 'simple' during his childhood, and he used them as symbols of goodness and generosity in this painting and in others. This is one of the main reasons which make understanding the past of the Kuwaiti visual culture a must in order to understand its direct influence on Qattan's work. The elements of that visual culture might not be 'art' in the western sense, and it may not be a subject that is usually studied when an art historian deals with a western artist who commonly finds his influences in books, schools and art galleries, but for Qattan they represent an important part of the performative process that constructed his cultural background.

Architecture of Old Kuwait

Before Kuwait City started to be built in the eighteenth century the area which was known as Al Qurain¹⁸ was a trade path between Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula, and as a port for trade with India. It was occasionally inhabited by nomadic tribes who roamed Arabia with their camps. The first fort by the bay (known as the

¹⁸ Some resources refer to it as Kazema.

*Kout*¹⁹) was built by the Bani Khalid tribe, and from that fort Kuwait City expanded as more tribes started to settle in the area. The old Kuwait City (before the 1950s) consisted largely of clusters of simple mud houses and buildings close to the beach at the entrance of Kuwait Bay, and separated from each other by narrow streets and empty sandy squares (*Barahas*) (Fig. 1). The city was surrounded by smaller villages such as Hawally and Jahra, some of which provided the city with agricultural foodstuffs and acted as a connection to the overland trade. Deeper in the desert lived the Bedouin tribes, which moved around the land with their tents and caravans. The sandy *barahas* provided the local playgrounds for young kids, and so did the beaches of the bay. It was around those *barahas* and beaches where young Qattan spent his playtime during his childhood and witnessed what he interpreted later as the simplicity of the place.

As an example of the simplicity of the houses of the old Kuwait City we will study the case of *Diwaneyyat al Assawosi* (Fig. 2), one of the oldest surviving buildings in Kuwait, built in the early-nineteenth century, is described by Evangelia Simos Ali, an Australian-born Greek architect married to a Kuwaiti, as 'the surviving men's reception courtyard of a razed early 19th century merchant's house on the eastern sea front. Of compact size, the building exemplifies the simple, almost austere, indigenous architectural tradition in its clear lines and conspicuous lack of over-decorative detail in both masonry and woodwork. It is classical in that it is a plastered, single storey row of rooms arranged around a central courtyard and constructed of mud, coral stone

¹⁹ Kuwait is a diminutive for the word Kout in Arabic.

and timber.²⁰ The open courtyard (*Housh*) type of house was the common architectural design in Kuwait and the surrounding parts of the region (Fig. 2 and 3). This design helps to cope with high temperatures by ensuring an easier airflow, while the mud used in its construction reflects the sun-rays and keeps moisture within, hence cooling down the passing airflow, which results in a natural air-conditioning system. 'The only concession to style is a sensitive use of the segmental arch in the lunettes and the main entrances - which are probably of a later date.'²¹ (Fig. 4) The use of arches as a decorative element varies from one house to another, and the degree of elaborateness may have been directly proportional to the social status of the house owner.

While smaller houses consisted of one courtyard, larger houses had more than one, each with its own function. In order to provide a more comprehensive and precise image of the old Kuwait City that Qattan grew up in I will include another example of the more - relatively - 'complex' buildings of the city. *House of al Bader*, for example, 'is not limited to a men's reception area and to family, service, kitchen and livestock quarters, but also includes a business courtyard complete with stables and a separate yard for the bathrooms adjacent to the family quarters'²². As for the arches, 'by far the loveliest and most unique features of the house are the pointed-arch arcades and the elaborately detailed arched entrance portals in the reception and family courtyards'²³ (Fig. 5). The origin of this unique architectural style is 'attributed to the hand of a Persian craftsman or master builder and was a style much repeated in local

²⁰ Arlene Fullerton (editor), Geza Fehervari (editor), Evangelia Ali, 'Retracing Old Kuwait', *Kuwait Arts and Architecture: a collection of essays*, Kuwait, 1995, p. 177

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 178

²³ *Ibid.*

architecture throughout the later 1800s and early 1900s'²⁴. The *House of al Bader* even has a second storey containing summer rooms and a *Badgir* (Persian for 'air catcher'), a tower built on the roof of the building, which directs the air to flow along its three or four chambers and into small holes or windows inside the rooms below. The *Badgir* technology is probably imported from the eastern coast of the Gulf, and is known by different names in other regions, such as Bahrain, Qatar and Dubai.

What matters to us when looking at the work of early Kuwaiti architects is the fact that, in general, they worked with a purpose-driven mentality rather than an artistic one, hence producing mainly functional buildings with a limited interest in design. These buildings were even produced without any construction plans²⁵. Social differences were maintained through differences in the size, quality and complexity of the buildings, but even the palaces of the highest social stratum were constructed with the same basic elements and materials. One must also take into account the influence of foreign cultures on the style of the buildings in Kuwait, creating hybrid forms which were mostly functional (due to the demanding environment and the general poor living conditions of the people), yet enriched with imported decorative touches such as arches and woodwork elements.

Woodwork

The wooden doors of some of the old Kuwaiti houses are among the few architectural elements that are, relatively, elaborately decorated. At the entrance of the house would be either a single or double wooden door (Fig. 4). Doors were often decorated with different sizes of hemispheric brass nails, and occasionally could be found ornamented

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179

²⁵ Like many of the early craftsmen the builders worked without a written or drawn plan or design. Instead all depended on the knowledge and skill of the master craftsman.

with geometric shaped carvings along the frame. Those doors were compared to 'museum pieces' by Paul Case in *The National Geographic Magazine*:

The old houses were beautiful in their plainness, but the large teak doors took my fancy. They are hand-carved, studded with big flat nails in patterns, and bearing large wooden locks with wooden keys shaped like toothbrushes.

I found myself looking at door after door. The larger ones, for convenience, often had a smaller door cut into one of the halves. Some bore the same designs seen on the sterns of dhows. Many doors had graceful brass knockers like those made in Isfahan.²⁶

Further examples of traditional woodwork are the large wooden chests which used to be decorated in the same style as the wooden doors, with brass nails and geometric carvings. In addition to their function for storage they were also considered as decorative pieces of furniture. The *Embayat* chest, as it is known, used to be given to the bride as her wedding gift by the groom's family, to store her personal belongings, as with the *Cassone* in sixteenth-century Italy.

In addition, some of the large Kuwaiti trade ships were decorated with carved taffrails, in a manner reminiscent of the Portuguese galleon²⁷. Those decorations were rare, because the traditional sailing ships were built for practicality, by craftsmen who

²⁶ Paul Edward Case, George Rodger, 'Boom Time in Kuwait', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Washington, December 1952, p. 788

²⁷ William Facey, Gillian Grant, *Kuwait by the First Photographers*, London, 1999, p. 101

worked without any kind of written or drawn plans or schemes. The decorated ships photographed by the Australian photojournalist Alan Villiers in 1939 were types of vessel called *Ghanjah* or *Baghlah* (Fig. 6); these were very large and therefore very stable ships, used to transfer the more valuable goods such as dates, ivory and slaves between the shores of the Gulf, Shat Al Arab, India and East Africa²⁸.

On their return from India Kuwaiti trade ships brought essential goods such as food, spice and building materials, as well as luxury goods such as gold, chinaware, ivory, textiles and silk. The movement of trade brought not only the goods themselves, but also the visual culture of the regions the ships visited. The Indian style of jewellery making is a good example of the Indian influence on the Kuwaiti visual culture.

Metalwork and Textiles

The relation between the Kuwaiti traders and the Indian jewellery makers was reciprocal. Pearls from the Arabian Gulf were exported and sold to the Indian jewellers, and in exchange the latest trends of Indian jewellery were imported back to Kuwait and the Gulf region. The Indian gold goods were in high demand in Kuwait, and the different designs and styles were well-known to merchants and customers. Given this familiarity and demand, it was only natural for the Indian skills and expertise to be transferred to Kuwaiti jewellery makers, who developed their own style, highly influenced both by the Indian origins and by other influences such as east African styles²⁹.

²⁸ Zuabi Al Zuabi, *Kunooz Al Fan Al Kuwaiti Al Moaser* (The treasures of contemporary Kuwaiti art), Kuwait, 1995, p. 25

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p 26

In addition to jewellery design, another visual influence from India on the Kuwaiti visual culture was in women's fashion. Despite the differences in the way women dressed in Kuwait and India, due to cultural and particularly religious differences, Indian textile goods were in no less demand than Indian gold. Fashion design and making were among the very few artistic activities practiced by women in Kuwait before the second half of the twentieth century; most of the other arts and crafts were dominated by male craftsmen. Although Kuwaiti women covered their bodies with a very simple black robe or cloak called *Abaya* when going outside their homes, they nevertheless paid attention to fashion even if it was only worn inside the home or at special women's gatherings on occasions like weddings and *Eid* celebrations. The value and lavishness of a garment differed according to its intricacy and to the type and quality of the fabric. Silk and other delicate imported materials were used for the more elaborate dresses and robes like the *Darraa`h* and *Thoub*, and were embroidered with geometric and organic designs³⁰.

In Qattan's painting titled *Time* (1979) (Fig. 33) we see a woman leaning on an old and decayed building. The decayed building looks like one of the buildings of old Kuwait city, earth coloured and built using mud bricks for the walls and wood boarding for the ceiling. In contrast, in the background we see the more modern concrete buildings creeping in and pushing the remains of the old city out of the way. Like the women in *The Ship of Goodness and Generous Hand* the woman in *Time* is wearing a simple *Abaya* on her head and covering most of her body, as women did in the past and as old ladies still do until today. Women in the majority of Qattan's work appear more 'modern', with no *Abaya* or head scarf; the use of *Abaya* in his work can

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p 27

be interpreted as a Peircian symbolic sign signifying the traditional Kuwaiti values and customs which has changed after the oil-driven wealth, as will be discussed later. In this work we see the old traditions being wiped away by the materialism brought in to the country in the name of modernity and development. Qattan would not object modernity itself, what he is protesting against, as symbolised by the *Abaya* covered woman, is the social and cultural change that has been brought with it with the passing of time. For Qattan, the simple old Kuwait that we discussed earlier is a symbol of goodness and purity, a reminder of his childhood in the old city, and the way the country changed, both physically and culturally, was later the basis on which he constructed Circulism as will be detailed later.

Influence of Islamic Art on Kuwait's Visual Culture

Despite the fact that Kuwait is located geographically at the heart of the Islamic world, the 'classical' Islamic art did not have a direct and prominent influence on the Kuwaiti visual culture when compared to the major big cities surrounding it. Kuwait did not exist before the seventeenth century, and therefore did not witness the period of the cultural peak of the Islamic civilization in the eighth and ninth centuries³¹. Moreover, in the early days of its existence, Kuwait was one of the less known, and ignored, small cities during the ruling Ottoman Empire, due to its arid situation at the fringes of the desert and to the tribal nature of its inhabitants, who lived a much simpler life than in the neighbouring big cities like Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo and the Persian cities like Shiraz and Isfahan.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28

Although the classical Islamic 'arts' did not impact the Kuwaiti visual culture directly, the Islamic and Arabian culture and its conservative nature did impact on it significantly. Architectural elements of the old Kuwaiti house, such as internal open yards and the rarity of external windows, are designed to preserve the privacy of the house, and especially of its female residents. Another sign of the Islamic cultural influence is the extreme rarity of human and animal representations in the designs used to decorate houses, fabrics or utensils.

It is a wide-spread believe that depicting human and other living forms is prohibited in Islam, even though one can find numerous examples of figurative depictions by Muslim artist throughout Islamic history. In *Painting in Islam* Thomas Arnold explains that the original evidence from the Quran and the Prophet's Hadeeths³² do not give a conclusive condemnation to all forms of living depictions³³, and that later generations of Muslim scholars are the ones who enforced the stricter believes regarding the matter³⁴. Arnold also explains that 'the condemnation of the painting of living figures was a theological opinion common to the whole Muslim world, and the practical acceptance of it largely depended on the influence of the theologians upon the habits and tastes of society at any one particular time.'³⁵ Therefore, in Kuwait in the twentieth century we find Qattan, like many other 'modern' Kuwaiti artists, did use human and animal figures in his art. In his early work as a student at Al Mubarakiya School he had no reservation at all about painting figures and faces³⁶. Later on, during his Cubist period, his work became more abstract, as we will see, but as he developed

³² The sayings and deeds of the Prophet.

³³ Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam: A study of the place of pictorial art in Muslim culture*, New York, 1965, pp. 4-8

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 8-9

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 13

³⁶ See figures 16 and 17.

his style his figures once again became more obvious. Qattan's depiction of living figures can be thought of as an evidence for the complexity of his cultural identity on one hand, and on the other for the social and cultural change in Kuwait that took place during the mid-twentieth century. Therefore one can not presume that since Qattan is a Muslim artist then what he produces must be filed under 'Islamic Art'. Conversely, his depiction of living figures, which is part of his complex cultural identity, can not be solely attributed to him being influenced by western art as one might assume, since, as history shows us, figurative art existed in Islam for centuries and the social acceptance of it was influenced by several cultural, social and political factors as Arnold explained. This matter, as I have proposed at the beginning of the chapter, is part of the process that forms the *performative*.

British and Western Influence

It is very unlikely that Qattan would have been exposed to any kind of British³⁷ art at that time, since the British mandate was more oriented towards political, military and economic matters rather than culture. The protection agreement between Kuwait and Britain (1899) stated that Britain would be in control of foreign affairs, while domestic policy remained in the hands of Kuwait's rulers³⁸; hence the British government had no involvement in matters such as culture and education in Kuwait. In addition, Kuwaitis at the time, and Kuwaiti rulers in particular³⁹, did not encourage the idea of westernisation and preferred to maintain their Arab and Islamic cultural traditions.

One can also argue that the British mandate had no interest in exporting British 'culture' to the area, especially when compared to Napoleon's French Expedition of the

³⁷ Kuwait had been a British protectorate since 1899.

³⁸ See Miriam Joyce, *Kuwait 1945-1996: An Anglo-American Perspective*, London, 2004, p. x-xiv

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xix

late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, which brought to Egypt the western cultural, political and even scientific concepts that had been 'born with the French Revolution'⁴⁰. The British mandate in India, conversely, had a more direct influence on the local Indian culture. In the eighteenth century the East India Company gave Indian artists instructions in European drawing, in which 'shading and single-point perspective were expected to eliminate their "drawbacks"'⁴¹.

These were the main arts and crafts objects or domains that dominated the Kuwaiti visual culture when Qattan was growing up from the 1930s to the 1950s. One can assume that young Qattan saw some of the visually pleasing elements mentioned above and observed their makers, and that must have contributed to his artistic development. Other than having a direct visual influence on his art, the concept of simplicity has also become an important part for Qattan.

When Qattan started school (1946) he was faced with a different kind of culture. There he learnt about 'art' as a standalone subject, not as a secondary part of the scenes and objects of everyday life. Education in Kuwait, and art education in particular, is a subject that deserves deeper investigation, since it was for some time something very different than in the west as will be discussed next.

School Period

Education is a crucial factor in the shaping of both the pedagogical and the performative parts of the process that formed Qattan's art. Studying the education system in Kuwait on one hand allows us to know the sort of training Qattan received

⁴⁰ *Colors of Enchantment*, p. 363

⁴¹ Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 14

and how that has affected Qattan's style, which is the pedagogical part. On the other hand, discussing the development of education in Kuwait, and art education in particular, allow us to have a broader view of Kuwaiti culture, which, as will be discussed in the second chapter, affected the social reception of Circulism, and Qattan's reaction as a result of that reception. The following discussion of art education in Kuwait is also particularly important since it has never been brought to the English reader before, and to compose it I consulted a number of resources only available in Arabic. To understand art education in Kuwait, one first needs to consider that prior to the twentieth-century provision for institutional education in the western sense was generally very basic. Classes were held inside the house of the local religious teacher, who was called *Mutawaa* or *Mulla*, and included teaching of the Quran, Arabic reading and writing and basic maths. Most of the classes were for boys only, but there were some classes for girls taught separately by a female teacher.

Al Mubarakiya School, established in 1912, was the first formal school in Kuwait with its own independent buildings and staff (Fig. 7). When it first opened classes included the basic subjects taught by the *Mutawaa*, with the addition of subjects such as history. In 1913 English was introduced to the curriculum, with the support of the *Arabian Mission of the Reformed Church in America*⁴², which had been giving classes in English and typing since 1911⁴³. Some of the early teachers in Al Mubarakiya School were recruited from other Arab countries, especially from Palestine and later from Egypt.

⁴² Known by Kuwaitis as *Al Ersaliha Al Amrikeya* or *The American Mission*

⁴³ *Kuwait 1945-1996: An Anglo-American Perspective*, p. xvii

Art was introduced into the Kuwaiti school curriculum between 1936 and 1937⁴⁴. According to Tareq Rajab, when 'art as a subject was incorporated into the timetable of our school, it was because such subjects were taught in Egypt and Palestine whose systems of education were copied at the time'⁴⁵. One of the early art educators in Kuwait was the Kuwaiti teacher Sayed Hashem, who supervised art activities in Al Mubarakiya School during the 1940s and taught the students skills such as clay modelling and rope making⁴⁶. Hashem used basic materials in his art lessons. He would ask his students to collect the clay the water carrier ships threw by the beach at the end of their journey from the shores of Shat Al-Arab⁴⁷. They would then use this clay for pottery and sculpture work. He also asked them to collect coir fibre and taught them how to curl it into ropes. Hashem taught his students drawing by asking them to copy the designs he drew on the blackboard into their notebooks⁴⁸. Of the early art teachers and their teaching methods Tareq Rajab says sarcastically that 'an art lesson meant copying a drawing of a hen on the blackboard done by a teacher whose only qualification was his ability to draw birds'⁴⁹.

At that time art education, or 'drawing' as it was called, was taught as a 'secondary' subject, in contrast to 'primary' subjects such as maths or language, and it was treated more like an extracurricular activity. Teachers who taught art also taught other subjects; they were not art specialists. It can be concluded that art teaching in Kuwait at that time (in the 1940s) had little to do with modern art in the 'west', either as a

⁴⁴ *Tatawor Al Taaleem fe al Kuwait* (The Development of Education in Kuwait), p. 345

⁴⁵ *Tareq Sayid Rajab and the Development of Fine Art in Kuwait*, pp. ii

⁴⁶ Abdullah Muhana, Baheja Bahbahani, *Al Taaleem fe al Kuwait Men Al Alef Ela Al Yaa* (Education in Kuwait From A to Z), Kuwait, 1993, p. 346

⁴⁷ Due to the lack of sufficient water sources in Kuwait water used to be imported by ships from Shat Al-Arab, the delta formed from the confluence of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers south of Iraq.

⁴⁸ Abdullah Taqi, 'The Contemporary School and Development of Fine Arts in Kuwait', Unknown editor, *Contemporary Art in Kuwait*, Kuwait, 1983, unnumbered pages

⁴⁹ *Tareq Sayid Rajab and the Development of Fine Art in Kuwait*, p. i

theory or as a medium. Western art tools like the easel, canvas and paint brush, and conventional mediums like marble or bronze were not used and were probably not available (or known) to the Kuwaiti art student. Even the imitative teaching method was still far from the free-thinking and free-expression advocated by modern artists since the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Nevertheless, as 'vernacular' as it may look when compared to 'western' art, art as taught in Al Mubarakiya was still a step ahead of the 'traditional' arts and crafts known in Kuwait before that time.

During the 1940s, teachers from Egypt like Yahya Buhamda and Al Musawwir Badran⁵⁰ introduced Al Mubarakiya students to modern (western) art for the first time⁵¹. The first Kuwaiti to study and teach art solely was Mujib Al Dosary (1922-1956); after studying art in Egypt (1945-1950) he returned to teach at Al Mubarakiya School. In 1952 Al Dosary was sent on a scholarship to the UK for one year after which he returned to Kuwait to teach in Shuwaikh High School⁵². Al Dosary taught pioneering Kuwaiti artists such as Tareq Rajab⁵³, but it is unlikely that he would have taught Khalifa Qattan, since Qattan left Al Mubarakiya School the same year Al Dosary joined it.

Khalifa Qattan joined Al Mubarakiya School in 1946. This was a life-changing event for him, as he said in an interview published in *Alam Al Fan* magazine in 1974⁵⁴. His old school, Al Sharqiya, had been far away from his home, and that, combined with

⁵⁰ 'Al Musawwir' in Arabic could mean 'The Painter' or 'The Photographer'. It is not known whether 'Al Musawwir' is his real name or a nickname given to him because he worked as an artist or art teacher. It is also unusual to have the 'Al' in front of first names as it is usually associated with last names.

⁵¹ *Al Taaleem in Kuwait Men Al Alef Ela Al Yaa* (Education in Kuwait From A to Z), p. 346

⁵² Yahya Sowailem, 'Mujib Al Dosary... Al Muallim Al Methali (Mujib Al Dosary... the ideal teacher)', *Al Jarida*, 28/10/2007, electronic version, <http://www.aljarida.com/aljarida/Article.aspx?id=29937>, accessed 23/5/2008

⁵³ *Tareq Sayid Rajab and The Development of Fine Art in Kuwait*, Kuwait, 2001, iii

⁵⁴ Unknown author, 'Thekrayat Al Fannan Al Tashkeeli Khalifa Al Qattan (Memories of the visual artist Khalifa Qattan)', *Alam Al Fan*, Kuwait, December 1974, p. 16

his young age, had meant that he had hated going to school, but when he grew up and joined Al Mubarakiya he became a 'better student'⁵⁵. In another interview, when asked about when he had started to love painting, Khalifa Qattan said 'I don't know, I think painting is a primal thing which was with me since birth, but I never realised its existence until I felt my "self" pushing me to practice it when I was 15 years old'⁵⁶. Qattan started practicing art in 1949 when he was at Al Mubarakiya School. His wife, Lidia Qattan, notes that for Qattan the 'interest in art was spurred by Mohammed Sleman, an Egyptian teacher with an eye for talents'⁵⁷. At that time, as told by Lidia Qattan⁵⁸, his teacher used to encourage him to keep drawing and painting, even outside school. He painted subjects from everyday life, like scenes from the waterfront with the workers at the port, and every time he presented a new work the teacher would encourage him by giving him 'candy' as a present. This experience, according to Lidia Qattan, not only inspired him to focus more on art and painting, but also taught him to observe the reality of life and feel the suffering of his people, something that was reflected later in his Circulist concept.

What Lidia Qattan means is that Qattan's observation of the hard life he saw Kuwaitis living before, or more exactly at the beginning of the oil-driven economic revolution⁵⁹, his interacting with and scrutinising of the ordinary people of the 'old' Kuwait, gave him the ability to sense their suffering and hardship. In pre-oil Kuwait Kuwaitis relied on two main resources to make their living: the Bedouins depended on

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Unknown author, 'Al Circulism: fannan men Al Kuwait yabtaker madrasah jadeeda fe al rasem (Circulism: an artist from Kuwait invents a new school of painting)', *Al Arabi*, Kuwait, October 1964, p. 126

⁵⁷ Lidia Qattan, Khalifa Ali Hussein Al Qattan 1934-2003 Artist-Philosopher Pioneer in the Kuwait art movement, unpublished typescript, 29 pages, private archive of Lidia Qattan, Kuwait, 2009, p. 3

⁵⁸ Muayad Hussain, Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008, unpublished digital recording, 105 minutes, private archive of Muayad Hussain, Birmingham, 2008

⁵⁹ Kuwaiti oil exports began in 1946.

the desert for herding and trading, while the people of the city depended on the sea for fishing, trading, pearl diving and crafts such as ship building. Given that Kuwait lacked many basic natural resources, such as fresh water and farming lands, we can conclude that life during that era was a completely different experience for Qattan, and it left a unique place in his memory. To illustrate the ordinary style of living in Kuwait during the first half of the twentieth century, Miriam Joyce describes how:

Life continued in the traditional simple pattern. Between the world wars available food was limited to rice, fish and a few vegetables. Meat was rare and sometimes there simply was not enough food. As a result, malnutrition was prevalent. Few Kuwaitis wore shoes or sandals; both men and women walked barefoot. Electricity had not yet been installed. During the summer heat it was customary to sleep outside on the flat roofs of the sun-dried mud brick homes.⁶⁰

This description gives a brief picture of life in Kuwait during the depression⁶¹ that was due to the trembling global post-war economy, but affected Kuwait in particular because of the disruption to the Kuwaiti sea trade, and because the pearling industry, one of Kuwait's most important economic pillars, had been hit hard by the invention of Japanese cultivated pearls, which drove down the price of the once valuable commodity. The traditional ship making industry was also affected, first because of the war, and later by the introduction of larger, faster and safer modern ships. Apart from a few merchants who profited from goods smuggling, most Kuwaitis struggled

⁶⁰ *Kuwait 1945-1996: An Anglo-American Perspective*, p. xviii

⁶¹ Lewis R. Scudder III, *The Arabian Mission's Story: In Search of Abraham's Other Son*, Michigan, 1998, p. 254

and starved during that period. Even though Qattan was raised in a family of relatively wealthy merchants, as a young boy he experienced life in that era, and that experience became imprinted on his mind for the rest of his life.

While most children of his age were preoccupied with having fun and playing games in the streets or on the beach, Qattan's artistic assignments set him apart. Later on, as will be discussed below, these early experiences helped form the 'realistic' and observational nature of the Circulist theory, and the influence of this pre-economic revolution practice can be seen in some of his later works, sometimes indirectly, but directly in cases such as his work *Kuwait Diver* (1964) (Fig. 8). In this painting we find Qattan depicting element which he observed during the old days of Kuwait, such as the pearl diver and the old sailing ship. By the 1960s, when Qattan painted *Kuwait Diver*, the Kuwaiti economy has moved away from its dependence on the traditional maritime industry to the oil industry which brought to the people of Kuwait an easier lifestyle. In this painting Qattan recalls not just the visual observations he witnessed in the past, but he depicts the physical and psychological hardship he noted while observing the life by the port, as his school teacher had directed him. One can see the effect of tiredness on the diver's eyes and forehead. One can also sense fear in those eyes, fear from the dangers of the sea symbolised by the shark swimming beneath him and the darkness of the night above him. Furthermore, one can see hope in the painting symbolised by the pearl shell, and the moon in the sky which resembles a perfect pearl, the *Dana* (), which is the dream of every diver and the subject of many of the songs the sailors sing on board of their ships.

The observational approach that Qattan worked with since his early days as an artist, and later was the base on which he developed Circulism, can be traced back to the direct influence of his teacher Mohammed Sleman. Little is known about Mohammed Sleman, the Egyptian teacher who gave Qattan his art assignments, or of the kind of art he taught his students at Al Mubarakiya. Therefore, it is useful to consider art and art teaching in Egypt at the time, as that provides the artistic background of the teacher who was probably the first direct influence on Qattan's artistic mind.

Modern Art in Egypt

Compared to Kuwait, Egypt had been exposed to western art for a much longer period. While Mujib Al Dosary, the first Kuwaiti art teacher, was introduced to western art and brought it back to Kuwait in the mid-twentieth century, Wijdan Ali tells how Muhammad Ali Pasha, who became the Ottoman Wali (ruler) of Egypt in 1805 after the end of the French occupation and the defeat of the Mamluk rulers, sent several study missions to Europe, which concentrated on learning the arts of engraving, painting, and sculpture, among other subjects. On their return, members of those study missions taught at technical craft schools.⁶² Muhammad Ali Pasha 'did not attempt to transfer Egypt itself to the West, but rather preserved its heritage and Eastern customs, albeit mixed with Western civilisation and science. He thus connected Egypt's present to its past while creating a modern Egyptian renaissance based on development in both the Eastern and Western worlds.'⁶³ Pasha's attempts at creating a modern yet 'eastern' Egyptian culture were continued by his successors, and in the visual arts we see how Egyptian artists, although adapting some of the western art styles, had their own 'Arabic' touch, especially in the subject matter.

⁶² *Colors of Enchantment*, p. 364

⁶³ Abdel-Moneim El-Gemeiy, 'Educating Egypt', *Al Ahram Weekly*, Cairo, 27 October 2005, electronic version, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/766/sc2.htm>, accessed 28/3/2009

Although we know little about Qattan's teacher, Mohammed Sleman, we can assume that he was educated in Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century. To better understand what kind of education he might have received and what kind of art his contemporaries in Egypt learned and produced, we shall study a better known Egyptian artist who lived, studied and worked during the same period, although, as will become evident, information about modern Egyptian artists is sparse compared to what we know about western artists.

Ragheb Ayyad (1892-1982) attended the School of Fine Arts in Cairo, said to have been the first institution in the Arab world to teach western art.⁶⁴ It was established in 1908 by non-Egyptian teachers⁶⁵, after a suggestion from a French sculptor to Prince Yusuf Kamal⁶⁶. In 1923 Ayyad went to Italy to continue his studies.⁶⁷ He adopted a western painting style similar to Post-Impressionism, taking into account the themes and intentions of Gauguin's work in particular. Yet, one can still notice an addition he made to that style, perhaps inspired by ancient Egyptian art, seen in the poses of the figures in his paintings and the layered way in which he composes his elements. Ayyad's work deals mainly with everyday life in the Egyptian countryside (Fig. 9). He painted the farmers, marketplaces and landscapes of Egypt, which is similar to what Sleman taught Qattan to do. Thus, while the style and approach was modernist and took its models from the west, the subject matter was Egyptian.

⁶⁴ *Colors of Enchantment*, p. 366

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 364-365

⁶⁶ Rushdi Eskandar, Kamal Al Mallakh, Sybhi Al Sharoni, *Thamanoona Aaman Men Al Fan 1908-1988* (Eighty Years of Art 1908-1988), Cairo, 1991, p. 15

⁶⁷ Unknown author, 'Al Seera Al Thatayah (Ayyad's biography)', *Egyptian Ministry of Culture, Sector of Fine Art*, <http://www.fineart.gov.eg/Arb/CV/CV.asp?IDS=1852>, Accessed 3/4/2010

It has been reported that during his early years of art education Ayyad used to visit Al Kharanfash Neighborhood ⁶⁸, a place where foreign artists had established a centre for their studios in the early-nineteenth century, and was often compared to Montparnasse in Paris in that it was a meeting point for artists and intellectuals from all around the world⁶⁹. Foreign artists visiting Egypt in the nineteenth century covered a variety of subjects in their art work, but few addressed the 'everyday life' in Egypt as much or as well as the English painter John Frederick Lewis (1805-1876), who came to Cairo in 1941 and lived there for 10 years.⁷⁰ While he had his share of what could be called traditional oriental topics, such as the Harem scenes and mythical characters like the Mamluk Beys, he also portrayed 'everyday' scenery from the marketplace, the mosque and the desert.

Lewis is often considered an 'orientalist' artist. The Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif says that 'Of all the "oriental" paintings I had come across, only those of Lewis beckoned me in. At the simplest level, the world he shows is a happy one, filled with sunlight, people, animals, flowers, food. But something else is transmitted from his surfaces: empathy.' She continues: 'Lewis's truth, expressed in colour and brushstrokes, was a truth about the spirit of the place.'⁷¹ Soueif mentions that other artists, such as William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), came to the east 'ready with an ideology and a fantasy to impose upon the landscape and the people', 'making natives act out how [they think] natives should act - which is the problem with so many orientalist paintings of

⁶⁸ Unknown author, 'Qessa tasamoh masria baina Ragheb wa Yusuf Kamel (An Egyptian story of tolerance between Ragheb and Yusuf Kamel), *Egyptian State Information Service*, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/Story.aspx?sid=3579>, Accessed 17/12/2011

⁶⁹ *Thamanoona Aaman Men Al Fan 1908-1988* (Eighty Years of Art 1908-1988), p. 12

⁷⁰ Michael Lewis, *John Frederick Lewis R.A 1805-1876*, Leigh-on-Sea, 1978, p. 20

⁷¹ Ahdaf Soueif, 'Visions of the harem', *The Guardian*, 5/7/2008, Electronic version <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jul/05/art.exhibition>, Accessed 30/5/2009

"natives"⁷². According to her, the misrepresentation of reality in these works is problematic because they are marketed as 'observations' from the east, not as the artist's fantasies as they should be.

This section does not aim to be a detailed analysis of Lewis's orientalist works, because they are not the main subject of this thesis. Lewis's orientalist works have been reviewed in several publications such as Mary Roberts' *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist art and travel literature* (2007) in which she focused on the subject of the Harem in orientalist art, including Lewis's work. My aim nonetheless is to view his 'observational' work which can be compared to the work of Ayyad, Sleman and Qattan. One can notice that the observations Lewis has depicted might not be as close to the 'spirit of the place', as Soueif claims, as those of a 'native' artist who knows the place from the 'inside'. How different is Lewis's approach from that of other so-called Orientalists? How 'truthful' are his works? If those observations lack some truthfulness as I am arguing, how can they be explained according to the view of Said? If we set aside his obvious works of fantasy like the Harem scenes and the historically incorrect works like the Mamluks, many of his paintings express some kind of 'spirit of the place' as Soueif has termed it. He did get out to the streets, villages and deserts; he interacted with the real people living in those places, and this is reflected in his work. At the same time, by taking a closer look at his work one notices what can be called an 'exaggerated truth'. One obvious manifestation of this is in the over-elaboration of the landscapes and figures he painted. Comparing Lewis's painting with photographs taken in nineteenth-century Egypt can give us an indication on how 'accurate' they are. In *A Cairo Bazaar* (1875) (Fig. 10) we see – as the title

⁷² *Ibid.*

indicates – a scene from a typical Cairo market, with loud merchants trying to sell exotic coloured textiles to a group of amused women. The exaggeration here is noticed in the multicoloured costumes the figures are wearing, and also in the bright red and yellow coloured walls of the market, with its fancy Islamic decoration. The artist did not forget to include the camel, with the Bedouin Arab riding it, and even a donkey, as examples of exotic animals. Photographs are not the most impartial of historic documents as they too are posed and arranged representations of reality, which ultimately show us the point of view of the photographer. Nevertheless, a photograph is still, generally, a more accurate historical document than a painting, since it preserves at least the physical appearance of the photographed object. In a nineteenth-century photograph of a street scene in Cairo (Fig. 11) we see another part of Cairo in a time not far away from that of Lewis's painting, yet, even keeping in mind the lack of colour, we notice a much simpler scene, with less decorated buildings and less elaborate clothing. As a matter of fact, the simple *Jalabiyah* the men in the photograph are wearing does not differ much from the garment still worn in some parts of Egypt today, while the clothing of the seller and some of the men in Lewis's painting looks as if it could be from an earlier historical period. The decoration on the walls in Lewis's Bazaar, while it does look like something that could be found in a mosque, fort or palace, is not likely to be found in a market place. All these are clear signs of exaggeration, of an exotic backdrop to the otherwise romanticised or dramatised scenes.

Men wearing big, and on many occasions colourful, turbans is a recurring theme in Lewis's paintings, seen for example in *Interior of a Mosque, Afternoon Prayer* (Fig. 12). When compared to the dress of the *Students at Mosque of el-Azhar* (Fig. 11) the

difference in the size and colour of the turban is obvious. Moreover, the praying figure with the big red turban in the foreground of Lewis's painting is Lewis himself, and he seems to be wearing a pair of shoes or slippers while praying. That is a historical mistake by itself, as anyone walking, let alone praying, inside a mosque should take his or her shoes off!

So where is the 'truth' in Lewis's work that Soueif talks about? We can argue that he did capture the 'spirit' of the places he painted, but the images still represent a mixture of truth and fantasy, as if from what Edward Said has termed an 'imaginative geography'⁷³. Said argues that 'some distinctive objects are made by the mind, and that these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only a fictional reality.'⁷⁴ Those imagined objects which Lewis included in his work, although might not be what one would call a holistic and current 'truth' or reality, are symbolic Oriental representations of the 'east' (in this case Egypt) staged to fit the European imagination which has been 'nourished extensively' by stories of the Harem and Mamluks.⁷⁵ With his brush strokes Lewis not only mixed paint, he also mixed times and places he had seen or heard or read about. The ambition of this mixing of time and space may not be a devious personal or ideological agenda, but could simply be an attempt to meet what the market back home in Europe expected and demanded.

In contrast to the 'oriental' themed works of western artists that Ayyad saw in Al Kharanfash Neighbourhood, his work, while sharing Lewis's themes, was very different from it in terms of its 'realism'. If one compares Ayyad's representation of life

⁷³ See the chapter titled 'Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Orient' in Said's *Orientalism*, p. 49

⁷⁴ *Orientalism*, p. 54

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 63

in the fields (Fig. 9) with a photograph of the same terrain (Fig. 14), one can see how he captured the essence of that life. We see the simple, plain and earth-coloured clothing the farmers are wearing; gone are the bright, multi-coloured textiles as worn by the locals in Lewis's paintings. The animals in Ayyad's painting, in their colour and posture and the way they are integrated with the background and other elements of the scene, suggest to the viewer that they have a purpose; they appear submissive to their local master. Lewis's animals on the other hand, are often glorified for themselves and signify the rare and exotic experience (Fig. 15).

In the case of the Lewis/Ayyad parallel one finds two different approaches to the matter of pictorial 'reality' of life in Egypt. How did the two represent that life in their work? As would be expected, both artists claimed to have witnessed what they painted first hand, and stated that what they produced reflected what they observed. The outcomes, however, are very different: Lewis presented a deliberately exaggerated reality mixed with a fantastic view of the typically imagined 'other', while Ayyad caught the real 'spirit' of the 'local'.

Of course, Ayyad cannot represent all modern artists in Egypt, since there were many other artists at that time who worked in many different styles. On the other hand, the tendency to preserve the 'local' identity is a general ideology that has been adopted by many, if not most, Arab modern artists since the nineteenth century. This ideology began with the political intentions of Muhammad Ali Pasha to preserve the Islamic and 'eastern' heritage, as mentioned above, and intensified after the cultural, social and political clashes with European influence which were ignited (in Egypt) by the Urabi Revolt (1879) and the Egyptian Revolutions of 1919 and 1952, echoed in other revolts

in the area⁷⁶ against western colonisation and what were called the 'reactionary regimes' that harboured the colonisers.

Even in relatively more peaceful regions, such as Kuwait, the revolt against westernisation still existed in one form or another. First of all, as mentioned before, the nature of the British mandate in Kuwait allowed Kuwaitis to manage their own internal affairs, and therefore the social, cultural and political systems in Kuwait remained more or less independent. Therefore, the 'eastern' cultural identity remained intact in the life of Kuwaitis, and westernisation did not start to have an influence until approximately the late-1950s and early-1960s, when income from oil exports allowed Kuwait to develop the educational system and provide scholarships for Kuwaiti students to study in other Arab and European countries. On their return, those students would help to spread the western culture in Kuwait. Nevertheless, the oil-driven economic boost also brought with it a large number of Arab populations who came to work in the developing Kuwait. The Arab workers, along with educated Kuwaitis, spread the ideas of preserving the Islamic and Arabic culture and resisting all forms of westernisation, along with ideas calling for Arabian union and other nationalist agendas, as will be discussed later. So, while one might claim that colonisation was the cause of westernisation in some parts of the colonised world, it is also possible to argue that in Kuwait, westernisation began after (or just before) that colonisation came to an end. Qattan on the other hand was exposed to western culture prior to the 'westernisation' of Kuwait since he left to the UK before the independence and he faced the cultural change of Kuwait when he returned, and that had a critical effect of his art as will be discussed later.

⁷⁶ Including the revolts in Palestine, Syria and Libya among other countries from the end of the First World War until the end of the western mandates in the area in the late-1960s and early-1970s

By the mid-twentieth century artists like Ayyad had mastered the 'hybrid' style, the same style that was brought to Kuwait by Egyptian art teachers like Mohammed Sleman, who taught Qattan how to 'get out' and observe his people in the markets, streets and ports. Qattan learned the basics of the western language of art, that is, how to use a brush on a canvas, but he learned to use it to express his local Arabic and Kuwaiti thoughts and ideas.

Qattan the Teacher

Another turning point in Khalifa Qattan's life occurred in 1950⁷⁷, when he left Al Mubarakiya School to become a teacher at Al Najah School. He taught several subjects, including art⁷⁸. During this period Khalifa Qattan continued to practice art in his spare time. In 1953, during the end of the scholastic year festival at his school, Khalifa Qattan 'had arranged a special section in which he held his first personal art exhibition. He was the first artist ever to do so in Kuwait and the novelty was greeted with interest and appreciation by the public and the authorities.'⁷⁹ In that exhibition he introduced 25 to 30 works including watercolours, stencils and a few oil paintings⁸⁰. Although there is no known catalogue or leaflet for that exhibition, some of the paintings exhibited there still exist today. Examples of his early work are *Policeman* (1950-1952) (Fig.16) and *Jini* (1950-1952) (Fig. 17).

As mentioned above, Khalifa Qattan mostly used watercolour, oil and stencil prints.

As for his subject matter, he painted basic portraits of people he met in everyday life

⁷⁷ *Al Arabi*, p.126

⁷⁸ *Alam Al Fan*, pp. 16-17

⁷⁹ Lidia Qattan, *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, Kuwait, 1994, p.15

⁸⁰ Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008

in the dockyard or market⁸¹, like the sailors or policemen, or even fantasy figures like Jinnies. The works he produced during his school period were basic, and 'he did not follow any known rule or school of art, or to be exact he may have done so without even knowing'⁸² since at that time he had never studied or read about those art schools, movements or theories.

Leicester Period

After three years of teaching in Al Najah School, and after his 1953 exhibition, Khalifa Qattan was granted a scholarship to study abroad. His wish was to study art, since that was the field he loved, but he was told that art was not a desirable subject to pursue for the country at the time, and it was suggested instead that he study general woodwork engineering, in order that he could teach in the Industrial College on his return. He accepted the offer nevertheless, just for a chance to leave and explore a new world he had never known before⁸³.

Qattan was sent to the United Kingdom to attend a course in woodwork engineering at Leicester College of Art and Technology. In fact, my research found that there were two colleges in Leicester in the 1950s: Leicester College of Art, and Leicester College of Technology. In 1969 the two colleges amalgamated to form Leicester Polytechnic, which in 1992 became De Montfort University⁸⁴. It is not known why he was sent to the United Kingdom rather than any other country, but it seems that scholarship destinations were chosen by the director of the Education Council (later the Ministry of Education), a post then held by Abdulaziz Hussain (1920-1996), a writer and

⁸¹ *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p.15

⁸² *Al Arabi*, p. 126

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Unknown author, 'A brief history', *DeMontfort University - Leicester*, <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/aboutdmu/history/index.jsp>, accessed 23/5/2008

intellectual who went on to become Kuwait's ambassador to Egypt. Abdulaziz Hussain had been among the first Kuwaiti scholars to be sent to Egypt in 1939⁸⁵. After graduating he studied Education and Psychology at The University of London for two years from 1950⁸⁶. He became very impressed by the English educational system and by how that system gave the country what he considered to be a high standard of living⁸⁷. His decision to send Kuwaiti students like Khalifa Qattan to continue their higher education in the United Kingdom could be attributed to his life and education in Britain, and in pre-revolution Cairo.

To understand the kind of education Qattan received in Leicester and how it influenced his art, further research was undertaken regarding the programme he studied at Leicester College of Art in the mid-1950s. First, I discovered that the programme was not 'Woodwork Engineering' as some sources⁸⁸ call it, but 'Woodwork Machining'. The Woodwork Machining programme was taught in the Department of Building, the aim of which was 'to provide thorough training for those intending to take professional and administrative posts, and apprentices already engaged in the branch of the industry'⁸⁹. Other programmes taught in the Department included Quantity Surveying, General Building, Brickwork, Carpentry and Joinery, Plumbing and Timber Technology⁹⁰. The curriculum of the five-year Woodwork Machining programme included Technology, Workshop Practice, Geometry and Calculations,

⁸⁵ Sulaiman Al Askary (editor), 'Rehla fe aql raed al tanweer (A journey in the mind of the pioneer of enlightenment), *Abdulaziz Hussain wa Hulm Al Tanweer Al Arabi* (Abdulaziz Hussain and the dream of the Arabian enlightenment), Kuwait, 1995, p. 26

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33

⁸⁸ Sources such as *The Apple and Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*

⁸⁹ Unknown author, *Leicester Colleges of Art and Technology Prospectus 1953-54*, Leicester, 1953, p.

9

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10

Machine Drawing and Calculations, and Estimating and Construction⁹¹. One can conclude that all the courses taught in the programme, and indeed in the department, were of a technical rather than an artistic nature. Therefore it is safe to assume that Qattan's formal academic study was technical and related to the purpose he was sent for. Qattan was committed to the field he had been sent to study, but outside his formal programme he chose to educate himself in the field of art by practicing, visiting art exhibitions and contacting art teachers in his college⁹².

Lidia Qattan says that Khalifa Qattan got his Honours degree after six months, and then insisted on 'an extension of his study for full qualification. He got his wish and five years later he was back to Kuwait with a diploma and a second Honours degree.'⁹³ Qattan received his fourth year college certificate with distinction in the 1956-57 session⁹⁴, which would lead us to presume that he first joined the college in the 1953-54 session and graduated after 5 years at the end of the 1957-58 session. Therefore the six months after which Qattan got his first Honours degree must have started at the beginning of the second semester of the session of 1952-53. However, according to Lidia Qattan he obtained his scholarship one month after the end of the scholastic year festival of the Najah School in 1953, so it is not possible for him to have gone to Leicester in the spring of 1953! The other explanation for the first six months of Qattan's life at the College of Art is the probationary period which can take 'six months to one year, at the end of which parents are informed whether, in the opinion of the Principal and Staff, the students are unsuitable in their opinion for an Art or

⁹¹ Unknown author, *Leicester College of Art School of Building Prospectus 1955-56*, Leicester, 1955, p. 19

⁹² *Al Arabi*, p. 127

⁹³ *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 16

⁹⁴ Unknown author, Minutes of a meeting of the Advisory Committee in Woodworking Machine Subjects, held on the 27th November 1957, unpublished typescript, archive of De Montfort University, Leicester, 1957, Appendix B

Architectural career⁹⁵, but that still does not explain the first Honours degree or the five years extension. Apparently, Qattan joined the College in the autumn of 1953 for some sort of diploma, and received his first Honours degree in six months, although we do not have any record, either in Qattan's private papers or in the School, as the history of Leicester College of Art and Technology during the 1950s, especially for such short courses, is sparsely documented. At the end of this six-month course he was probably asked to return to Kuwait, and we can assume that he managed to convince the college administration to consider his first diploma as equivalent to the probationary period. At the same time he also persuaded the authorities in Kuwait to extend his scholarship for another four and a half years so that he could join a degree programme. That way he could graduate and return to Kuwait after five years.

In addition to the Department of Building, Leicester Collage of Art included other departments of a more artistic nature, such as the Department of Drawing and Painting, the Teacher Training Department (which trained art teachers), the Department of Dress Design and the Department of Printing. In an interview Qattan said that 'he was in contact with the art teachers in his college [even though] he never had the time to get a serious and regular art education'⁹⁶. There are very few historic documents covering student activities at Leicester College of Art in the mid-1950s, but it is common for art schools and colleges to organise annual exhibitions for the work of its students, and according to Lidia Qattan, Khalifa Qattan did participate in some of these exhibitions with the work he produced in his free time⁹⁷. The one documented

⁹⁵ *Leicester College of Art School of Building Prospectus 1955-56*, p.8

⁹⁶ *Al Arabi*, p. 127

⁹⁷ Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008

event Khalifa Qattan participated in was the decoration for *Leicester's Royal Visit* in 1958, for which he produced a woodwork piece⁹⁸ (Fig. 18).

Unfortunately, Qattan did not take any of the art works executed in Britain back to Kuwait, so it is hard to know exactly what kind of work it was or how much his style changed after leaving Kuwait. Lidia Qattan met Khalifa Qattan for the first time when they were students in the same English class; she knew he was an artist after he showed her a portrait he had made for the late Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Al Sabah, which she described as a 'very beautiful painting'⁹⁹. While Qattan was in England he took every opportunity to visit museums and art galleries, both in Leicester and in London¹⁰⁰. Although there are no first-hand accounts of the exhibitions Qattan attended, his wife recalls that he would visit the Royal Academy of Art whenever he visited London. Therefore, a list of the exhibitions held at the Royal Academy of Art might give us an indication of the kind of art Qattan might have seen during his life in the UK. A list of exhibitions held at the Royal Academy of Art between 1952 and 1958 can be found in Appendix I. Generally, one can assume that there was no single style or artist to which Qattan paid special attention. Even a visit to his personal library in his house in Kuwait shows that he had an interest in a variety of styles from Europe and all around the world, in addition to an interest in literature and even science. Qattan mentioned that he also visited art galleries in other European countries such as France, Denmark, Sweden, Holland and Germany¹⁰¹.

⁹⁸ Unknown author, 'Behind the Scenes for Q-Day', *Leicester Mercury*, 26-4-195?, unknown page number

⁹⁹ Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Al Arabi*, p. 127

Yet while he was interested in many different styles and periods of art, one style, Cubism, exercised the greatest influence on his later work. It is not known how or where he became attached to Cubism, but Lidia Qattan says that he 'was a bit taken by the Cubist painters' and particularly Braque, because 'he found there is more feeling, more emotion in his work'¹⁰². While he was in Leicester his painting style began to change from the free 'vernacular' developed in Kuwait, to a Cubist style. As mentioned earlier, the work he did in England was left and lost there, but one of his works, the piece he did for *Leicester's Royal Visit*, is documented photographically. In that work one can see a Cubist - maybe mixed with graphic design – influence, with its flatness and shallow space. Assuming that work was designed by Qattan himself, it provides evidence that the transition to the new Cubist phase started while Qattan was in Leicester, and developed later when he returned to Kuwait. It could also be that working with wood helped to develop his interest in Cubism, due to its flat and fragmented nature as a medium.

It was not surprising that Qattan should pursue a Cubist approach and be affected by Cubism at that time, since Cubism was one of the most widely discussed art theories during the mid- and late-1950s. One indication of this is the considerable number of books and publications dealing with Cubism or with its pioneering artists like Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque published between 1945 and 1961 in the UK and Europe. A sample of those publications can be found in Appendix II, which although may not be an exhaustive list of all the works that addressed the issue of Cubism during that period, but they give us a general idea about the existence of a genuine interest in Cubism at the time. This list is, for convenience, was derived from the catalogue of the

¹⁰² Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008

Library of the Barber Institute of Fine Art library, to get a more comprehensive list a researcher can search in the British Library, for example.

Back to Kuwait

After graduating in 1958, Khalifa Qattan returned to Kuwait and worked as a teacher in the Industrial College for about two months¹⁰³. He then worked as a construction supervisor in the Ministry of Education¹⁰⁴, a job which matched his academic education but not his aspirations as an artist. One can argue that the disappointment and internal conflict he felt at that time were reflected in his art, which continued to develop into a more Cubist form.

In Qattan's work *Impression of Venice* (Fig. 19), we find an obvious Cubist influence, especially from the works of Georges Braque during his Analytical Period, such as *Bottle and Fishes* (Fig. 20). By comparing the two works one can see a relative similarity in composition and lines; they also share a similar fragmented style. Nevertheless, Qattan's composition fills the frame, while in his work at that period Braque usually placed his composition in the centre of the frame, leaving a less crowded area around it. Works such as *Impression of Venice* and *The Roster* (Fig. 21) also show Qattan's own palette of pure vivid pigments, which later became a signature of his work, in contrast to the neutral browns used by Braque. What is said about Braque can also be applied to Picasso's work from the same period, since they shared a similar painting style during their Analytical Period.

¹⁰³ *Al Arabi*, p. 127

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Another artist to whom Qattan's Cubist work can be compared is Robert Delaunay. Like Qattan, Delaunay used strong bright colours and deliberately sought the power behind the relation between them. In Delaunay's *Sun, Tower, Aeroplane: Simultaneous* (Fig. 22) we notice the intense colours, and the use of curved lines which developed into circles in Delaunay's later works like *Portuguese Woman* (Fig. 23). The use of curved and circular lines and shapes is another stylistic concept Qattan adopted at the end of his Cubist period, and can be seen clearly in *The Roster*.

While Braque and Delaunay aimed more at abstraction and paid less attention to the subject matter, Qattan moved towards expressing his thoughts, feelings, memories and imagination through his work. In other words, while Braque and Delaunay painted still lifes, portraits and architectural buildings, Qattan continued referring to the subjects he had painted before going to the UK, out of his memory and imagination, in addition to the sights he had seen and experiences he had had during his life abroad.

It is important to note that when comparing Qattan's work to the work of Cubist artists my aim is not to imply that Qattan was directly influenced by those works in particular. The artist and works I mentioned in this section represent the visual similarity I noticed when compared to Qattan's work from this period. I am not trying to collect all the Cubists, or other, to whom Qattan's style could be compared to, but instead trying to show the similarities and differences to those styles and how one can visually notice how Qattan later moved away from those styles and formed his own. I will discuss the reasons of my objection to the idea of the *pedagogical* comparison between Qattan's works with the work of other western artist later when I will discuss Circulism and Surrealism in the second chapter of the thesis.

Gradually, Qattan's painting style began to drift away from Cubism to something new and different. In works such as *The Bear and the Fish* (Fig. 24) and *The Torrero* (Fig. 25), which he produced during the early-1960s, one can discern that drift from Cubism. The geometrical fragmentations are replaced by relatively simpler compositions defined with simple curved or circular lines and shapes. His work during that period also began to drift away from abstraction to more defined subjects. Despite the symbolic representation, both in subject matter and in the use of colour, subjects inside the work became easier to spot and define. The drift from abstraction towards 'reality' can also be traced through the titles he used for his works from the early-1960s. While his early Cubist works were titled in a descriptive way, like the works of other Cubists, he later adopted names such as *Birds Evolution*, *Woman's Psychology* and *Greediness*, which are less descriptive and more expressive. These changes started to occur after his first Italian exhibition in 1962, and it was in December of the same year, after his exhibition in Ahmadi City in Kuwait, that he first announced the term 'Circulism'.

Ciculism Develops

From his return to Kuwait from the UK in 1958, up until 1963, Qattan participated in several exhibitions, both solo and collective, in Kuwait, Egypt, Italy and Lebanon. Hence he was continually active as an artist and was interacting with other artists and cultures from different parts of the world. The exhibitions were organised either by the artist himself, or by the organisations that began to be established by Kuwaiti artists during the 1960s and 1970s, like The Kuwaiti Society of Formative Art (1967) and the National Council for Culture Arts and Literature (1972). Another significant

establishment which might have helped Qattan develop Circulism and his art in general, by giving him the time and resources to do so, was *The Free Atelier*, to which the Department of Education¹⁰⁵ appointed him as a professional artist in 1962¹⁰⁶.

The actual culture and art movement in Kuwait started soon after Qattan's return to the country in 1958. One of the first real cultural efforts to be made resulted in the arrangement of the Arab Literates Convention in Kuwait (1958). The convention was accompanied by an art exhibition under the title *The Arab Heroism*, which featured works 'representing the Arabic heroic acts and the distinguished Arab personalities'¹⁰⁷. In that exhibition Qattan presented one painting, titled *From the Ocean to the Gulf*¹⁰⁸, a well-known phrase used in nationalist propaganda since the mid-1950s, meaning the borders of the Arab World from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Gulf. In addition to being the first exhibition to feature exclusively the work of professional Arab and Kuwaiti artists (as opposed to the work of students and teachers) the exhibition was also considered by some, including Lidia Qattan, as an attempt to impress Arab visitors¹⁰⁹ by the cultural level the young country had reached even before gaining its independence. At that time the Kuwaiti government needed to promote Kuwait regionally and internationally as a modern country in all aspects, including art and culture, and to change the stereotype of it being a desert land rich only in oil. The ultimate goal of that promotion was to declare Kuwait an independent state and to join the Arab League and the United Nations alongside other regional and

¹⁰⁵ The 'Department of Education' later became known as the 'Ministry of Education'.

¹⁰⁶ Unknown editor, Khalifa Qattan, 'The Free Atelier [sic] of Fine Arts', *Contemporary Art in Kuwait*, Kuwait, 1983, pages not numbered

¹⁰⁷ Abdulsoul Salman, *Bedayat Maserat Al Fan Al Tashkeeli Fe Al Kuwait* (The beginnings of the Kuwaiti visual art journey), Kuwait, 1975, p. 67

¹⁰⁸ Yahya Suwailem, *Maaredh Al Rabee Wa Bedayat Al Tashkeel Fe Al Kuwait* (Spring exhibitions and the beginning of formative art in Kuwait), Kuwait, 2009, p. 96

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008

international associations and organisations. The first two of those goals were achieved in 1961, and the third in 1963. *The Arab Heroism* exhibition led to a further show titled *Spring Exhibition*, which has been held annually ever since¹¹⁰.

During the same period, cultural life in Kuwait began to thrive, with the return from abroad of newly graduated Kuwaiti artists and literates. After the first *Spring Exhibition* in 1959 the Department of Education established the Free Atelier, which provided the space, materials and supervisors for amateur artists to learn and practice art, all free of charge. After Qattan's first exhibition in Cairo in 1962, the director of Kuwait House¹¹¹ Abdulaziz Hussain, the same man who in 1953 had been the director of the Education Council who sent Qattan to Leicester, wrote a letter recommending Qattan as an employee at the Free Atelier. After nearly five years of having to deal with builders and contractors during his day job, Qattan was finally working as a professional artist sponsored by the Kuwaiti government.

Changing Kuwait

In addition to developments in the Kuwaiti art scene and in Qattan's life as an artist, several other interdisciplinary influences inspired the early development of Circulism. Chief among them was the transformation of Kuwait from a traditional poor Sheikdom to a new independent modern country. The resulting changes encompassed politics, culture and economics, and affected the core of the social, cultural and political life in Kuwait. Meanwhile, Qattan was observing and interacting with these changes.

¹¹⁰ After a break, the *Spring Exhibition* is still running annually today.

¹¹¹ Kuwait House is the name of the office which was responsible for the supervision of Kuwaiti students in Egypt.

The intense and rapid changes in Kuwait during the mid-twentieth century are too diverse to discuss here, but it is important to have a general idea about them in order to understand how Circulism was developed, since those changes were a crucial part of the *performative* that shaped Qattan's cultural identity. The main reason to study the social, political and economic development is the 'realistic' nature of Circulism. The Circulist artist should be affected by 'reality' and what he or she sees, hears, reads and experiences in everyday life, and he or she is expected to express those realities - in a symbolic manner - through his or her art. Expressing 'reality' is what Qattan started to do as he drifted away from his Cubist period. The concept of 'reality' and its relation to Circulism will be discussed in detail in the second chapter.

When Qattan left for Leicester in the early-1950s Kuwait was in the early stages of recovery from the effects of a post-war depression. The years of economic struggle, poverty and hunger were ended by the start of oil exports in 1946, just as Qattan began his formal education in Al Mubarakiya School. While he was still in school Qattan witnessed rapid changes in the core structure of Kuwait, and on his return Kuwait was only three years away from declaring its independence. This shows us how critical that period of time was in the history of Kuwait.

The economic and political transformations are discussed in detail by Miriam Joyce in her book *Kuwait 1945-1996: An Anglo-American Perspective*¹¹². She outlines the first attempts at oil excavation and the competition between the British and American companies to get the rights for excavation and production. She also considers the establishment of the Kuwait Oil Company and how, after the nationalisation of the

¹¹² See Miriam Joyce, *Kuwait 1945-1996: An Anglo-American Perspective*, London, 2004

Anglo-Iranian Oil Company by the Iranian government¹¹³, Kuwait suddenly became one of the biggest oil producers. That sudden wealth was directed to the development of the Kuwaiti infrastructure in the sectors of education, health, housing, transportation and every aspect of the modern state. The new economic prosperity also led to the migration of Kuwaiti workers, especially school-educated young Kuwaitis, from the traditional naval crafts to the new job opportunities. Old mud houses were bought by the government for large sums of money, and then demolished to make way for the construction of roads and infrastructure for the new Kuwait City. Residential building gradually expanded to outside of Kuwait's Wall¹¹⁴ due the increase in population. The expansion was also helped by the new easier transportation systems.

During that period Qattan witnessed how, after centuries of poverty and hardship, people were suddenly becoming rich. Gone were the old mud houses and dusty roads, replaced by air conditioned villas and concrete houses. Kuwaitis started to enjoy a large number of privileges, such as free health care and free education up to university level, including scholarships to study abroad. Employment was guaranteed to all Kuwaitis, especially in the public sector, with high, tax free, salaries. In other words, the days of hardship were long gone in the minds of most Kuwaitis, even so soon after the discovery of oil. The sudden wealth brought with it a sudden change in the Kuwaiti social mentality. One of the social drawbacks associated with the new mentality was the development of what Miriam Joyce calls the "Ana Kuwaiti", (I am a Kuwaiti) psychology¹¹⁵, which can be seen as an indication of arrogance. Indeed, arrogance, laziness, greed and hypocrisy are just some of the bad qualities thought of

¹¹³ *Kuwait 1945-1996: An Anglo-American Perspective*, p. 2

¹¹⁴ The old Kuwait City was surrounded by a 7 km long wall, built in 1920 to protect the city from external attacks. The wall, which was demolished in 1957, was the third wall in the history of Kuwait; the first two were smaller (built in 1760 and 1814) and were replaced as the city expanded.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82

as exacerbated by the new wealth. Many of these bad qualities were observed by Qattan and became an inspiration for work produced in the 1960s and 1970s, such as *Lick to Reach* (Fig. 26) and *The Expert* (Fig. 27), which will be discussed later.

In parallel to the economic development, social life in Kuwait changed significantly. The newly established projects required expertise which local Kuwaitis did not yet have. Foreign workers started to move to the young country from all around the globe. These new workers brought with them their own cultures and, in some cases, political agendas, some of which were adopted by some Kuwaitis. The early-1950s marked the beginning of Nasserism and Arab Nationalism among other political movements. Arab activists living in Kuwait, especially Egyptians, Iraqis and Palestinians, worked with Kuwaiti activists and, in some cases, caused trouble for the Kuwaiti rulers¹¹⁶ and their relations with the British government¹¹⁷. The reform movements in Kuwait, which had begun in the 1930s with the first attempts to gain democracy, now gained more power, which eventually led to the forming of a constitution and the first democratic parliament in 1962. This change came after more than two hundred years of absolute monarchy.

As soon as the protection treaty between Kuwait and Britain was cancelled in 1961, and the new country had declared its independence, the Iraqi president Abdulkarim Qassem announced Kuwait as part of Iraq. Arab and international forces, including British, were brought to protect the borders before Qassem withdrew his army¹¹⁸. This incident and other conflicts and wars that overcame the region between the 1960s and

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 54-55

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p 34

¹¹⁸ Unknown author, 'Middle East: Kassem's Corner', *Time*, 21/7/1961, electronic version: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,897810,00.html>, accessed 19/1/2009

1980s changed Qattan's view on Arabian Union, destroying the belief he had expressed in his 1958 painting *From the Ocean to the Gulf* which he produced for *The Arab Heroism* show that was discussed earlier.

The Expert (1963) represents what is commonly known in the Arab world as the Foreigner Complex (*Oqdat Al Khawaja*), which means the unjustified appreciation and preference of the expertise of foreigners over the local one. Nasser Al Hujailan¹¹⁹ claims that this complex got implanted in the mentality of the Saudis (and I might argue the Kuwaitis as well) in connection with the foreign experts who came to the area to work in the oil industry¹²⁰. The local people were impressed by the foreigners' ability to operate the complicated machines which they brought with them, an ability which at that time they did not possess due to the lack of training in that field. This psychological complex remained implemented in the Arabic mentality even after the local people gained the proper education and training which matched or surpassed that of the foreigner expert. According to Al Hujailan this complex still exist even today, and the foreign expert is still sometimes unjustifiably appreciated and is given leading positions in Saudi corporations over the local worker¹²¹. In *The Expert* Qattan expresses his own criticism of the Foreigner Complex, which in his opinion is one of the drawbacks the Kuwaiti society faced after the economic boost discussed above. In the painting the foreign expert is depicted - stereotypically - wearing glasses and smoking a pipe. Next to the expert we see his fair-haired wife/girlfriend. Although the expert is not necessary European or American, as experts

¹¹⁹ A Saudi writer and an assistant professor of Modern Literary Criticism in the Department of Arabic Language and its Literatures, King Saud University.

¹²⁰ Nasser Al Hujailan, 'Oqdat Al Khawaja Al Ajnabi (The foreigner complex)', *Al Riyadh*, Riyadh, 27/8/2006, electronic version, <http://www.alriyadh.com/2006/08/27/article181956.html>, accessed 16/8/2012

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

could be from any nationality (including Arabs), the blonde hair of the woman is a visual indication that the couple are not Kuwaitis. One also notices the golden coins the expert is holding in his wing-like right arm. To create a contrast Qattan depicted a typical headscarf-wearing Kuwaiti, who humbly stands before the expert in an emotionless face. Finally, in the background one notices the face of a figure (symbolising the Kuwaiti employee) who is left in the dark, astonishingly watching the foreign expert taking the generous credit and appreciation. One might suggest that this painting is a nationalist statement and that Qattan is presenting a dark image of the foreign 'other' using stereotypical signs. But by taking the study of Qattan's artistic stages detailed in this chapter into consideration I can argue that what is criticised here is not the 'expert' as such, but the Kuwaiti social perception of that expert. Qattan was taught by Arab and English experts in Kuwait and Britain, he exhibited his work abroad and even married a European woman, therefore assuming he had nationalist intentions would portray him as a hypocrite! Furthermore, the political events mentioned above which Qattan witnessed during the 1960s made him question the Arab Nationalist thought altogether. Therefore, by taking the above into account, I argued that what is criticised in *The Expert* is the Kuwaiti society itself which did not have the time to adapt socially and culturally to the rapid economic changes it faced. *The Expert* shows us a mature social observation by Qattan which he reached after experiencing life in Kuwait during the transitional period of during the 1950s and 1960s and expressed symbolically, and it shows how understanding the signs of this symbolic work depend on the performative study which I have presented so far.

Older Qattan

Khalifa Qattan was most productive artistically during the 1960s and 1970s. On his return to Kuwait from Britain in the 1950s, Qattan was a young man, full of hopes and dreams. He tried to achieve a lot by his art for the sake of his country. He talked and wrote about his hopes for the establishment of a union for Kuwaiti and other Arab artists, for Kuwaiti participation in the *Venice Biennale*¹²² and for a specialised art institute in Kuwait. He, and other Kuwaiti artists, took their work to exhibit abroad, sometimes on self-funded tours, aiming to introduce Kuwait around the world as a country of art and culture. Some of these dreams that Qattan had were achieved after an agonising journey, others were never fulfilled. That journey of struggle, which Lidia Qattan wrote about briefly in *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*¹²³, affected Qattan's art in terms of both quantity and subject matter.

As an example of Qattan's active period we can take a look at the show titled *The Apple* which took place in December 1975 in Kuwait. In that show Qattan exhibited 30 paintings dealing with the theme of 'apple'.¹²⁴ The apple was chosen to symbolise both femininity and sin (in the biblical sense). I will discuss the significance and what Qattan introduced in this exhibition in the second chapter. Here I might say that this exhibition in my opinion might be thought of as the pinnacle of Qattan's career as an artist for the following reasons: First, the exhibition came after a series of cultural 'achievements' that Qattan actively participated in such as the establishment of Kuwait's Formative Arts Society (1967), Kuwait Biennially (1969) and Kuwait Art Hall (1974). In 1974 Qattan also was the head of Kuwait's Formative Arts Society and

¹²² Khalifa Qattan, 'Al Kuwait wa Maaradh Al Bundoqeyah Al Duali (Kuwait and the Venice Biennale)', *Al Hadaf*, Kuwait, 5/12/1962, p. 10

¹²³ See *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 116

¹²⁴ Khalifa Qattan (Editor), *The Apple*, Kuwait, 1978, p. 6 (the Arabic section)

Kuwait's representative in the Arab Formative Artists Union, and member of several artistic and cultural committees in Kuwait. Thus, one can say that at the time of the show Qattan was one leading figures in Kuwait's cultural movement, and that brought additional attention to his work as an artist. Second, by the time of the exhibition Qattan has established his Circulist theory, and in 1978 has edited a book collecting many of the reactions to the exhibition in both Arabic and English in the book titled *The Apple*. In that book we can also find what one might call the 'Manifesto' of Circulism, although that term will be questioned in detail in the second chapter. Third, the fact that Qattan did not hold a major exhibition as critically acclaimed as *The Apple* afterwards during his life. He held an exhibition titled *Women I Have Seen* in 1978, which lacked the critical reception and the sensationalism of *The Apple* and had the theme of a series of portraits of women that Qattan known or seen, as the title suggests. By 1978 Qattan was preparing for an exhibition titled *The Egg* in which he deals philosophically with the theme of the story of creation. Qattan had planed to hold *The Egg* in 1980, but that exhibition did not take place until 2003, after he has passed away.

From the 1980s the volume of his work decreased. Lidia Qattan says that his artistic activity was reduced both because of his declining health and due to personal disappointments. The depression he felt pushed his art away from the confrontational attitude that had characterised his earlier work, in which he had criticised the social and political situations he lived in. For example, in his *Apple* series of the 1970s, he had dealt harshly and frankly with the subjects of women, sex and religion.

Qattan's work in the 1980s and 1990s to only slowed down, but also moved towards deep philosophical subjects regarding what Lidia Qattan calls the 'Human Drama'. In those works he discussed subjects relating to the nature of humanity and the meaning of existence. In his vision he tried to stay away from religious and even scientific views and the conflict between them, instead drawing upon his own philosophy. One example from this period is the above mentioned *The Egg* series in addition to the *Trees* series which will be discussed in the third chapter. In 1991, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and after the Gulf War, Qattan produced three paintings related to the war which he later exhibited, in addition to other paintings he produced 'before' the war, in Kuwait and London in 1996. Qattan's war-related work will be discussed in much detail in the third chapter.

The Performative

If I had started this thesis with the topic of Circulism itself as a manifesto, what it meant and what other art historical movements influenced it, then it would have been easy to assume that Circulism is the result of a simple mathematical formula:

$$\text{Western Experience} + \text{Eastern Experience} = \text{Circulism}$$

or

$$\text{Cubism} + \text{Surrealism} + \text{Social Realism} + \text{Traditional Kuwaiti Art} = \text{Circulism}$$

But that is not an accurate representation of Circulism or or Qattan's art. As mentioned above, cultural identities emerge between the pedagogical and the performative, between what Bhabha calls the 'historical objects' and the subjects of a 'present process'. That present process is the collectivity of all the elements mentioned above,

from Qattan's own biography, to traditional and modern influences on Kuwaiti visual culture, to the visual culture of the places Qattan lived, travelled to or read about during his life, together with the cultural, social and political changes he witnessed in his own country and in the surrounding area. Qattan's cultural identity is not the sum of the bits and pieces of individual experience he went through, but the engagement in what Bhabha calls 'the war of position' which establishes new forms of meaning.

Bhabha states that 'adding *to* does not add up but serves to disturb the calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification'¹²⁵. Cultural identities cannot be put into simple mathematical formulae like the ones above; we are required to find or create 'a cultural temporality that is both disjunctive and capable of articulating'¹²⁶ and that calls for an interdisciplinary approach (dealing with history, education, politics, economics and psychology, among others) in order to merge the pedagogical with the performative.

¹²⁵ *The Location of Culture*, pp. 232-233

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234

2. Circulism

Overview

Circulism is a concept which Khalifa Qattan developed, with the help of his wife the artist and writer Lidia Qattan, and became a style by which he was distinguished. It is important to notice that Circulism, as a written theory, was mostly developed by Lidia Qattan and it was her who first coined the name and advocated it in the articles and books she wrote, as will be detailed later. Khalifa Qattan's paintings, reciprocally, inspired the theory and were an application of it. Lidia Qattan, as one might argue, transformed, or translated, Circulism from its formalistic form into a literary one.

If it was to be compared to other modern art manifestoes, then like Surrealism, Circulism depends on the imagination and produces works in a dream-like world, but unlike the hallucinatory dreams of the Surrealists, Circulism deals with real-life drama and the struggle of the human soul. In other words it can also be compared to Social Realism since Qattan dealt with political, social, cultural and feminist issues, in a symbolic yet direct way which could be traced back to the historical and personal events, some of which we discussed in the first chapter, the artist witnessed. As a painting style, Circulism went through different phases or stages. Generally, Qattan used strong and fast brush or knife-strokes of intense pure or semi-pure pigments giving his work distinguished vivid and vibrant colour. When he first started developing Circulism he concentrated on the use of curved lines, hence the name 'Circulism', producing almost abstract forms. As the philosophy behind Circulism started to develop his style became less abstract and more figurative, he used symbolic

forms and colours to express his Circulist philosophy rather than the curved or the circular lines, as will be detailed later.

In *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan* Lidia Qattan insists on distinguishing between Circulism and Surrealism and points to the fact that some might get confused between the two because they both depend on imagination. She explains that ‘Surrealism is reminiscent of dreams; the artist dwells in fantasy-land far from the troubled world in which we all live.’¹²⁷ Lidia Qattan then describes Circulism involvement with the real world by the following statement:

In Circulism the artist lives among us, feeling what we feel and painting the drama that strikes him, entrenched in all the emotions and feelings that move us all, permeating it with his special sympathy born of knowledge and experience, so that it may emerge into an ennobling form that enriches our life by its vision, its foresight and moral value.

He must have a broad-minded view of the world around him and must probe deeply into the human soul and explore the many facets of human behaviour that make-up the human drama in all its colors, its light and shade, and then form an opinion that will shine through his work with a message, plain and eloquent for us to understand.¹²⁸

Lidia Qattan then points to the formalistic differences between Circulism and Surrealism by comparing the use of intense and bold colours by the Circulist artist to

¹²⁷ *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 71

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

the diluted, tented and softened contrast preferred by the Surrealists. She also points to the importance of symbols in the Circulist work. We will discuss Circulism's use of colour and symbols in more detail later in this chapter.

One might argue that some Surrealist artists dealt with political and social topics, particularly those related to war, and produced work not entirely inspired by the dream of a 'fantasy-land far from the troubled world in which we all live' as Lidia Qattan stated above. She explains that 'even such dreamers such as Salvador Dali cannot always escape reality and when they become involved in it, they produce works of special human value with a power and philosophy reminiscent of true Circulism.'¹²⁹ Later in this chapter this point will be further explained when discussing the object-oriented approach of Circulism, a concept which sets it apart from other twentieth-century modern manifestoes.

My goal in this thesis, as I have explained in the introduction, is not to do a direct comparison between Circulism and other modern art theories and movements as that defies the main argument I presented in the first chapter and will further defend in this chapter in the next. Circulism is an independent cultural event that originated in unique and complicated circumstances; it can be seen, in Bhabha's eyes, as the outcome of a process that caused a disturbance in the 'calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification.'¹³⁰ Direct historical comparison between Circulism and western modern concepts, as Lidia Qattan did, would be an attempt to look at it from the perspective of the western canon, the image resulting from that perspective will differ from the image resulting from looking at it

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73

¹³⁰ *The Location of Culture*, p. 234

from 'within'. Looking at Circulism, or any cultural event, from within means, first, having a deep understanding of its background, and second, abandoning the power brought in from preconceived reflections regarding it. To explain the latter point, when one builds an argument of comparing Circulism with other art concepts, such as Surrealism, Cubism, Futurism or Social Realism, there is a danger of viewing Circulism as an attempt to mimic those concepts on one hand, and of viewing it as a twentieth-century 'ism' which happens to originate from the 'east', which makes it an 'exotic', if not inferior, idea in the Orientalist sense. The discussion of the idea of looking at a cultural event from within will be the core of the next chapter, in which I will make a comparison, of the *performative* rather than the *pedagogical*, between Qattan's work and the work of John Keane, meaning that I will compare the complete process that affected the perception of the two artists regarding the war they both covered.

Nonetheless, I chose to mention the direct comparison to Surrealism (and Cubism in the first chapter) in particular, and not to Futurism or Social Realism as one might suggest, because Lidia Qattan did that comparison before in her writings. Lidia Qattan might have felt the need for these comparisons for two reasons; first, as stated above, to eliminate the confusion some might face when confronted with Circulism for the first time, which arguably was particularly important when it was first introduced, and in my opinion is as important in this thesis as Circulism is introduced to the western academia for the first time. Second, Lidia and Khalifa Qattan might have been, understandingly, influenced by the ideas of avant-gardism, similarly to other modern art movements of the time. I would also argue that those ideas of avant-gardism might have been fuelled by the media which presented Circulism as a 'new' concept

invented by an Arab and Kuwaiti artist, or as a 'national' triumph against the western culture, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Circulism as a Manifesto

Unlike other manifestoes of the twentieth century, there is no single document that was announced as a 'Manifesto of Circulism'. Instead, the theory of Circulism is explained and advocated through several essays and articles written by Lidia Qattan in numerous publications and in the two main texts about Circulism: *The Apple* and *The Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*. In addition, Qattan himself explained his ideas through several interviews in local and regional newspapers and magazines. However, the introduction to *The Apple*, seven short paragraphs¹³¹ signed by Khalifa Qattan, gives an introduction to the concept of Circulism. Although that introduction could not be called a 'manifesto', as will be explained later, it is the closest we have to such a document as it is understood in the west.

During the 1970s Qattan published a regular column entitled *Wojhat Nathar* (Point of View)¹³² in the daily newspaper *Al Rai Al Aam*. The columns, which dealt with art and culture in Kuwait, as well as social and political issues, were published under the pseudonym Abdulhareth Hussain: 'Abdulhareth' was the nickname Qattan's grandfather used to call him by, and Hussain was his grandfather's name. Qattan published the same type of articles using the same pseudonym in *Al Beetha Magazine*, which was published in Cairo by Kuwait House. Neither in *Al Rai Al Aam* nor in *Al Beetha* did Qattan discuss his own art or Circulism itself.

¹³¹ From the Arabic section of *The Apple*, pp. 11-12

¹³² The articles I have found are dated 13/6/1977 and 1/5/1978.

The term 'Circulism' was coined in 1962, after Qattan's return from his first international tour, which included exhibitions in Ferrara and Cairo, and was introduced publicly during his show in Al Ahmadi City in Kuwait in December of the same year. Qattan chose to hold the show in Al Ahmadi because he wanted to gauge the response toward his new concept from the reaction of a broad sample of nationalities, and as an area established to house the foreign workers who came to Kuwait to work in the oil industry during the 1940s and 1950s, Al Ahmadi had a diverse multinational population. One of the first publications to mention the term 'Circulism' was the *Al Watan*¹³³ newspaper in Kuwait, in an interview with Qattan in which he explained the basic concept of Circulism and spoke about his painting and exhibitions. In that interview Qattan also talked about the high level of attention his art attracted abroad, and how art was underappreciated back home in Kuwait, an idea that was to be repeated regularly in many of his interviews, and which later led to his depression period during the 1980s.

Although the term had been coined, there was still no single document containing an 'official' manifesto of Circulism. In order to explain what is meant by an 'official manifesto' one must first consider the definition of 'manifesto'. A manifesto is often defined as a public statement declaring principles, policies, intentions or a proposed programme, often political in nature. In addition to their use in politics (for example *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848, and *The United States Declaration of Independence* of 1776), artistic manifestoes were also very common during the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In her book *Manifesto: a century of isms* Mary Ann Caws collected an anthology of more than 200 artistic and cultural manifestoes

¹³³ Unknown author, 'Al Circulism: Madrasa Fanneya Jadedda Yabtadeoha Khalifa Al Qattan (Circulism: a new art school invented by Khalifa Qattan)', *Al Watan*, Kuwait, 3/12/1962, pp. 8-9

dating between the late-nineteenth and the late-twentieth century, covering the period from Symbolism (1880s) to Compactism (1995)¹³⁴. Caws describes a manifesto as 'a document of an ideology, crafted to convince and convert'¹³⁵. It thus has a goal of convincing the public in the, often new and avant-garde, idea it conveys through a 'deliberate manipulation'¹³⁶ of their views. The manifesto is loud, direct, and always fiercely opposing an 'older' idea, trying to position itself 'between what has been done and what will be done, between the accomplished and the potential'¹³⁷. One of the key characteristics of the manifesto, according to Caws, is the 'We-Speak', whereby there are three ends in the manifesto speech: the 'We' of the speaker against an opposing 'They', with the speech being directed towards a 'You' representing the reader or listener. It is important to discriminate between a manifesto and a definition, since 'a manifesto is generally, by mode and form, an exhortation to a whole way of thinking and being rather than a simple command or a definition'¹³⁸. The manifesto aims not simply to offer new information to the reader, but to change the reader's beliefs and mentality.

Janet Lyon, in *Manifestoes: Provocations of the modern*, talks about the manifesto as a writing genre. Lyon, like Caws, insists on the directness and fierceness of the manifesto and describes it as a single-minded way to declare a position, refusing dialogue or discussion and fostering antagonism¹³⁹. As a style the manifesto is 'insistently unmediated, that it appears to say only what it means, and to mean only

¹³⁴ Mary Ann Caws (Editor), *Manifesto: a century of isms*, Lincoln and London, 2001, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xix

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xxi

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xxvii

¹³⁹ Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the modern*, Ithaca and London, 1999, p. 9

what it says'¹⁴⁰. The form of the manifesto is 'complex', 'convention laden' and 'ideologically inflated'¹⁴¹. Lyon concurs with the idea that a manifesto challenges the current situation; she states that 'to write a manifesto is to announce one's participation, however discursive, in a history of struggle against oppressive forces'¹⁴².

To summarise, a manifesto is a statement of principles written to persuade the public (the reader) to believe in a new (avant-garde) idea to replace an older one. The 'nowness and newness' are essential, as a manifesto always opposes 'older' thought and broaches a 'new' and present concept which promises a different future. There is usually differentiation between the speaker (We), the old thought (They) and the receiver (You). A manifesto is not a call for discussion; it is a statement which forces an opinion, and opposes discussions of that opinion, in order to oppress an older view. Thus it is a missionary genre of writing with a direct, bold, forceful and passionate style.

By applying the characteristics above to well-established manifestoes such as the *Manifesto of Futurism* (1909)¹⁴³ by Filippo Marinetti, and André Breton's *Déclaration VVV* (1942)¹⁴⁴, we find that they serve as an accurate definition of what a manifesto is. The two manifestoes just mentioned represent two different styles of manifesto writing - the first is written in a bullet point form, while the latter is closer to an essay-manifesto - but both are short and concise and suitable for comparison with the closest thing we have to a Circulist manifesto, the introduction to *The Apple*.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ See Appendix IV

¹⁴⁴ See *Manifesto: a century of isms*, pp. 470-471

In the *Manifesto of Futurism* we encounter extensive use of the pronoun 'we', as in 'we intend', 'we say', 'we want', 'we stand', 'we will glorify' and 'we will destroy'. The opposition to the old and the aim to make change is present in the use of words such as audacity, revolt, struggle, love of danger, fearlessness, break down and destroy. Along with the 'we', the aim to change is directed towards a 'they' represented by existing literature, which 'has exalted a pensive immobility'; 'Time and Space', which are declared dead; and 'the museum, libraries, academies' which shall be destroyed along with 'moralism, feminism' and 'every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice'. The 'you' is represented by 'the man' who shall be hymned at the wheel, 'the poet' and the excited 'great crowds'.

In *Declaration VVV* one notices similar 'we-they-you' terms, such as 'we say', 'around us', 'our purpose', against 'the forces of regression and death', 'the enslavement of man by man' and 'all that is opposed to the emancipation of the mind', and directed at the public of 'the world', 'the mind', 'the man' and 'all writers and artists' who agree with the purpose. The purpose is to be achieved by 'the liberation of the man' and by bringing out 'the spirit that will not fail' in order to achieve 'victory' and 'liberation'. In both of these manifestoes the characteristics summarised above are clearly present, but how do they compare to the introduction of *The Apple*?

In the introduction to *The Apple*, titled 'The Idea of Circulism'¹⁴⁵ one can sense the presence of the 'we' and – to some extent – the 'you', but the 'they' cannot be found! Circulism in this essay is presented in scientific-like statements, closer to a logical justification of the idea, or a definition, than a declaration of a new 'revolution'. In this

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix III

introduction the writer is trying to declare a new idea, but he is advocating this idea by giving evidence and explanations that are left open for discussion and further study, rather than declaring a war against an older idea and suppressing a 'they', arguably because there were no other artistic 'challengers' at the time in Kuwait as detailed in the first chapter. There is a sense of 'newness' in the introduction, but there is no 'nowness'. Thus, Circulism is presented as a 'timeless', 'location-less' and 'person-less' idea which is not about the 'now', 'here' and 'we', but is applicable in any time or place by any person.

The scattered and fragmented nature of Circulism also sets it apart from other manifestoes of the twentieth century. While other manifestoes set rigorous rules, goals and concepts and usually had a group of 'loyal' devotees, Circulism is left open to the public. It is open for interpretation, discussion and influence, and no one can be exclusively included in or refused access to it. Throughout his life Qattan himself produced works in various styles, some of which do not 'look' or feel as if they belong to Circulism (as will be detailed later), but the 'flexibility' of the Circulist concept contained that variety.

The concept of Circulism is object-oriented with political, spiritual or philosophical aims; it is not artist-oriented. An artist does not have to enrol in or declare loyalty to Circulism; the produced work itself is what can or cannot be interpreted as being Circulist, regardless of the artist who produced it or even the time it was produced. When Lidia Qattan talked about Salvador Dali, she mentioned that she visited his museum in St Petersburg, Florida, and found that many of the works he produced at around the time of the war were based on some sort of what she called 'philosophy'.

For Lidia Qattan, this meant that Salvador Dali's work from that period, although surrealist and produced before the coining of the term Circulism, was based on something realistic and not completely imaginative, and therefore represented an application of Circulism!¹⁴⁶ She also pointed to the fact that Circulism 'did exist even before [Qattan], but people did not recognise it'¹⁴⁷. The concept of Circulism's existence before Qattan which Lidia is referring to here will be discussed further later when I examine the theoretical aspects of Circulism and the relation between Circulism, time and the fourth dimension.

As mentioned before, the writings about Circulism are scattered through various essays, articles and interviews; there is no manifesto. The lack of a Circulist manifesto can be attributed to many reasons. First, as mentioned above, the nature of Circulism is informative; it aims to complement and explain, not to challenge or revolt. Second, apart from the aims and goals of Circulism, the mere complexity and multilayered nature of its theory makes it hard to contain in a single document; one might say that it is easier to practice and apply than to write about. This leads us to the third point, which is the fact that Circulism emerged at a time when modern (western) art in Kuwait was still in its infancy. Therefore, even though the Circulist work of Khalifa Qattan evoked a positive reaction¹⁴⁸ in the art and literature scene in Kuwait in the 1960s and 1970s, it still did not attract many 'direct followers', that is, artists who announced their commitment to Circulism itself, and it therefore lacked 'we' potential. Similarly, there was no artistic 'they' existing in Kuwait, and thus Circulism had no local 'challenger' other than the economic, political and social changes we discussed at the end of the first chapter.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 103

The Reception of Circulism

In general, Circulism was received by local and regional press as a glorified 'avant-garde' art movement established by an Arab Kuwaiti young man. Thus, one can argue that Circulism was not received and discussed 'critically' at the time. The interview with Khalifa Qattan in *Al Watan*¹⁴⁹ daily newspaper, which marks the first published mention of Circulism, carried the headline, in Arabic, 'Circulism... A New Art School Created by Khalifa Qattan'¹⁵⁰. Despite this bold headline (Fig. 28a) however, in the five-page interview Circulism is discussed in only three short paragraphs. These mention Circulism's dependence on colour, circular lines and the depiction of feelings, along with a clarification of the differences between Circulism and Surrealism so that the reader would not be confused by the phonetic similarity of the two words (especially for non-English speakers). In an additional paragraph there is an analysis of the painting titled *A Bride* (Fig. 29), explaining the social background of planned weddings in Kuwait, which were still common at that time, and the psychological conflict seen in the bride's face. The interview includes a short biography of the artist, and discussion of his exhibitions in Kuwait and abroad, his opinion on art in Kuwait and the 'Arab World' as compared to art in other parts of the world, and on the topic of how art is appreciated in the 'west' more than it is in Kuwait. The tone of the interview is generally one of sympathy with an artist who had accomplished numerous achievements and yet was not appreciated in his own country or by his own government. In this interview the creation of Circulism is considered as one of those 'achievements', which also include his exhibitions in Kuwait and especially those

¹⁴⁹ A daily newspaper published in Kuwait

¹⁵⁰ *Al Watan*, p. 8

abroad, since Qattan is often praised as being the first Kuwaiti artist to exhibit his works in a foreign country.

The same pattern of praise for the achievements of Khalifa Qattan can be found in a report in the Lebanese newspaper *Al Safaa*, published before Qattan's first exhibition in Beirut (1963). The report is titled 'Circulism... A New Art Style'¹⁵¹, and the subheads (Fig. 28b) read, in Arabic, 'Khalifa Qattan: The first Kuwaiti artist to exhibit his paintings abroad', and 'Arab art is a successful attempt towards reaching a global level'. These titles and subheads emphasise the sense of achievement of what could be called the 'avant-garde' approach when it dealt with Qattan and his work. The latter subhead can also be read as a political propaganda slogan similar to those of Arab Nationalism or the Nasserist movement, which were popular at the time and which glorified Arab culture and history, while calling for Arab unity. In this article mention of Circulism is limited to three sentences: a description of how Qattan abandoned Cubism for Circulism because Cubism did not convey his vision of life and humanity; of how space and all creatures follow the constant rule of circulation, and of how Qattan expressed those ideas through his art¹⁵². Other topics discussed include Qattan's biography and past exhibitions, art in Kuwait and Qattan's view of art in the 'Arab World', which he said was 'still at a lower level than the international standards'. Qattan also stated that 'the Arab League or any other regional organisation should try to encourage Arabic art by organising exhibitions and competitions'¹⁵³, which, bizarrely, is the opposite of what the subhead mentioned above is indicating, a discrepancy that might be attributed to the newspaper's own political agenda.

¹⁵¹ Robert Ghanem, 'Al Circulism... Osloob Fanny Jadeed (Circulism... A New Art Style)', *Al Safaa*, Beirut, 7/6/1962, p. 2

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 8

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

The rather 'shallow' reception Circulism obtained in the Kuwaiti and Arab press when it was first introduced could be due to the non-specialised nature of the publications or writers in question, keeping in mind that the daily press in Kuwait was very young at the time¹⁵⁴. Commenting on the 'shallowness' of this reception, a report in *Dunya Al Oroba* newspaper reads: 'Khalifa Qattan, the Kuwaiti Artist, was also subdued by Ridha Al Faily¹⁵⁵ with a shallow conversation which forced Qattan to give shallow answers, without asking him about the motives of the craziness of his paint brush which paints from the depth and refuses shallowness.'¹⁵⁶ Another extreme example of the shallow reception of Circulism was a report on Qattan's sixth exhibition in Al Mubarakiyah School, to which the writer adds 'I asked Khalifa Qattan about the meaning of the word 'Circulism' and he kept explaining it to me for half an hour, we were in different valleys¹⁵⁷. The best solution, my friends, is to visit the exhibition and see the Circulism with my own eyes. My brother Khalifa, is it not better [simpler] if you choose an Arabic name!!'¹⁵⁸

In the more specialised publication *Al Arabi*, a monthly cultural magazine published by the Ministry of Information in Kuwait, one can find a relatively more 'critical' approach to Qattan's work in a report published in 1964 and titled 'Circulism: An artist from Kuwait invents a new painting school'. Although the article presents Qattan's biography, it deals with it critically and connects the events of his life to his art. For example, the writer talks about Qattan's beginnings as an artist, and how he started to

¹⁵⁴ The first daily newspaper in Kuwait was *Al Rai Al Aam*, which was first published in 1961. Other, non-daily, magazines had been published in Kuwait since the 1920s, for example *Majallat Al Kuwait*, first published in 1928.

¹⁵⁵ A presenter on Kuwaiti Television

¹⁵⁶ Qassim Afyouni, *Dunya Al Oroba* (World of Arabism), Kuwait, 5/10/1963, unknown page number

¹⁵⁷ Meaning he did not understand anything, or 'we were on different wavelengths'.

¹⁵⁸ Unknown author, *Sawt Al Khaleej* (Voice of the Gulf), Kuwait, 24/10/1963, unknown page number

paint at the age of fifteen. He argues that even though the artist himself did not know why he was driven to paint at that age in particular, the fact that Qattan's circumstances forced him to leave school without finishing his formal education must have 'raised emotional storms within him, which caused the hidden talent to awaken and led him to use that talent to express those feelings he kept inside'¹⁵⁹. In addition to presenting and analysing Qattan's biography, the report analyses six of his paintings: *The Beginning of the End*, *Kuwaiti Diver*, *Jealousy*, *Blood Suckers*, *From the Inspiration of Ramadan* and *Glut*. Although the writer's name is not given, the publication itself is well known in the Arab region as a high quality source of general knowledge in the fields of history, art, popular science and medicine, literature and education, and that reputation can be seen reflected in the depth of this report when compared to the other publications mentioned above. *Al Arabi* usually presented the work of well-known international artists; Qattan was the first Arab artist to be featured since it was first published in 1958. Regardless of the shallowness of Qattan's reception by the local and regional press, the coverage drew attention toward the young artist and his new concept, and that attention was one of the main reasons why he was 'rewarded' by being featured in a publication such as *Al Arabi*.

As mentioned above, there was an Arab Nationalist political agenda in the Kuwaiti and Arab media to glorify Circulism as an avant-garde cultural movement. In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter, there was an inclination towards changing the image of Kuwait, to present the country as modern and civilised. By the end of the 1950s the Kuwaiti government was pushing to develop the cultural structure by supporting artists in preparation for independence; however, after the declaration of

¹⁵⁹ *Al Arabi*, p. 126

independence in 1961 and gaining international recognition, government involvement in culture gradually subsided, and attention was directed more towards other aspects of development. The public involvement - represented by the press - in cultural affairs did not subside, and the conflict between public interest and government neglect caused a sort of cultural crisis which, arguably, still exists today. The consequences of this crisis included delay in the establishment of some cultural necessities such as an artist's union, dedicated galleries, the biennale and an art college. Most of these demands were not met until the 1970s, while the art college is still awaiting approval. This disappointing state of affairs was reflected in the tone of the press coverage of Qattan's work during the early- and mid-1960s; rather than taking a critical approach towards Circulism, writers glorified it, in order to gain the attention and support of the government on the one hand, and to take over the role of changing Kuwait's image regionally and internationally after the abandonment of the government on the other.

To conclude, one of the main reasons why Circulism did not have a published manifesto is that, as a concept, it had no challenger, no 'they'. It was often compared to concepts such as Surrealism or Cubism, and such a comparison has been established in some publications, such as *The Apple*, but the main idea was that Circulism did not challenge those established manifestoes; rather it complemented them, due to its object-oriented nature as mentioned above. Furthermore, given the lack of critical reception, and the absence of any general cultural education of the public, no 'local' challenger to Circulism appeared. Apparently, the political, economic, social and cultural changes that had inspired the development of Circulism in the late-1950s changed direction after independence, driven mainly by the materialised lifestyle of

1960s Kuwait¹⁶⁰. Regardless of the reception of Circulism, Qattan continued to develop and challenge his own concept and style, and as the cultural level of Kuwaiti society improved so the critical coverage of Qattan's art and art in general increased. A good example of how the criticism developed during the first ten years after the announcement of Circulism can be found in *The Apple*, which also contains what can be considered one of the first attempts to write some kind of Circulist manifesto.

Critics' Views in *The Apple*

When studying the reception of Circulism in Kuwait, it is crucial that we look particularly at the change in approach between the time it was first introduced in 1962, and the publication of *The Apple* in 1978, three years after Qattan's exhibition in Kuwait under the same name. The book contains a number of articles, in Arabic and in English, discussing the topics introduced in the exhibited work and Circulism in general. The Arabic section contains 16 articles, in addition to 50 extracts from the exhibition guest book. Most of the articles had been published in various Kuwaiti publications, and one can discern a shift in style when dealing with the subject of Qattan's art towards a more critical and analytical approach.

In *The Apple* exhibition Qattan presented a collection of paintings with the theme of sex, feminism, religion and society, and he used the apple as the central symbol of the theme. Lidia Qattan wrote of the exhibition:

Sex in its social function has haunted the human mind in all ages at all times. It is the basic force in human social relations which strongly

¹⁶⁰ See John E. Frazer, 'Kuwait, Aladdin's Lamp of the Middle East', *National Geographic*, Washington, May 1969, pp. 636-667

influences the destiny of mankind. In his exhibition 'The Apple' Khalifa Qattan has achieved a pregnancy of expression that embodies many meanings, of which the obvious concern is the frail and yielding flesh. With clear insights and creative ability Khalifa has brought forth a clearvoyant [sic] representation of passionate desires in conflict with moral and social responsibilities.¹⁶¹

Critical writings in the book include an article by author and poet Abdullah Zakariyah Al Ansari, titled 'Al Fannan wa Al Toffaha' (The Artist and the Apple). He begins by expressing his view that 'the artist is the person who through his art can express his suffering in a truthful way and present to you a visionary art with a goal to achieve, painted by the artist's ideas and opinions. Art is not futility; it is an expression and suffering.'¹⁶² He then explains how, in this exhibition, Qattan has set a goal starting from the idea of an object such as the apple. The writer shows an understanding of the concept of Circulism by pointing to the repetition of stories and myths of the apple throughout history by artists, authors, poets and philosophers, and how that repetition can be seen reflected visually in the circular shapes covering the surface of the fruit, in lines with no beginning or end. The writer quotes Qattan's statement that 'hatred, greed and evil came down to earth at the same time as Adam, it will last forever, and we will never reach Utopia'¹⁶³, and he agrees that good and evil are eternally in balance. About the apple Al Ansari says that in Arabic literature the word *tuffaha* (Apple) indicates pleasant scent and beautiful sight, such that Arab poets used it as a symbol to describe the lover's rosy cheeks or the colour of wine. However, he points out that

¹⁶¹ Khalifa Qattan (Editor), Lidia Qattan, 'The Apple Exhibition', *The Apple*, Kuwait, 1975, p. 11

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 23 (Arabic section)

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 25

Qattan's use of the apple is contrary to that romantic view; he has used it to express his thoughts regarding mankind and the universe. The writer concludes that Qattan's approach is profound, and represents visionary modern art regardless of whether one agrees with the concept he presents, since it is in the 'warmth and strength of the expression'¹⁶⁴ that the truth lays.

An article by Abdulaziz Kamel, titled *Osraton Thalamaha Abnaooha* (A family unjustified by its own sons), takes a different critical approach. While Al Ansari saw the exhibition from a literary perspective, Kamel took the theological point of view. Although respecting the artist's freedom to express his vision, Kamel is opposed to the core idea of the exhibition. He describes how, 'the first impression I got from the story of the apple in the exhibition is that Adam and Eve were not justified... and us who came after them are both tyrannous and tyrannized', and 'the story of Adam and Eve with first sin as shown in the exhibition gives a sad and bloody impression'¹⁶⁵. He argues that this view is contrary to the Quranic teachings, that the time Adam and Eve lived in heaven was a period of preparation for the task of living on earth, and therefore the story of the forbidden fruit is not just a story of punishment for that particular sin. Therefore, the sons of Adam and Eve should not blame them for that sin, as Qattan implies, but should think instead of the divine justice in the story.

When we compare these writings from *The Apple* with the articles from ten years earlier, we find a significant difference in the critical approach towards Qattan's work. While the earlier reviews of Qattan's work concentrated on Circulism as an innovation in art by a Kuwaiti artist, emphasising nation-state identity rather than engaging with

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15

the art itself, we find the comments on *The Apple* dealing with Qattan's art more critically. That shift is understandable, since by the time of *The Apple*, thirteen years after the term Circulism had been coined, the work had become better known, appreciated and established, and therefore better understood by the critics. Moreover, newspaper critics would have gained more experience, or even been replaced by more specialised writers. By that time more newspapers had been established in Kuwait, and circulation had increased. Readers were also more knowledgeable about art: the education system was more developed, and students who had been sent abroad on scholarships were returning to Kuwait with new open cultural and social ideas.

This more artistically and culturally 'mature' environment could have been the catalyst for the attempt to write the first Circulist manifesto in *The Apple*. It could also be that Lidia Qattan herself, as the critic and promoter of Circulism, had gained greater knowledge about Circulism and believed the time was right to write about it, since there were people willing to read and understand. Given that the alleged 'manifesto' took 16 years to be written (between 1962-1978), it was not intended to announce a new idea or a revolutionary avant-garde innovation, but to explain and establish a continually changing and developing idea. The ideas expressed in *The Apple's* introduction do not differ greatly from what had been said since 1962 and was reported by the different publications that wrote about it before, but the concept was now presented in the concentrated form of a book which presented the idea of Circulism, explained, analysed and criticised it, and gave an example of it in the form of a thematic art exhibition.

From the points discussed above one notices that the understanding of the development of Circulism and its reception required an in-depth understanding of Kuwait's cultural development during the same period. The study of the reception of Circulism gives us an indication of the cultural environment in which Circulism was developed; it does not only document that development, it also shows us how that cultural environment helped in the shaping of Circulism and the way it was expressed and explained by Khalifa and Lidia Qattan. The fact that there is a gap of 16 years between first coining the term and then formulating it as a theory in the form of book or a 'manifesto' gives us an indication of the importance of Qattan's complex cultural background and how crucial it is to study it in depth and from the 'inside'. Circulism therefore, as I might argue, must not be studied as merely another twentieth-century 'ism', Circulism gains its importance from being an indication of the cultural development of Kuwait which, as I have shown so far, completely different from what might be called the 'western' culture of the same time. To study and judge a cultural event such as Circulism from a western perspective without taking into consideration the complexity of its history would result into what one may call a 'distorted image' that might not reflect the true image of the event as it was originally intended. This point will be clarified in the third chapter in which I will give the Gulf War and the art that was produced as a result of it as an example of how important the understanding of the cultural background is.

The Language of Circulism

As stated above, the closest we come to a manifesto of Circulism is what Khalifa Qattan wrote in the introduction to *The Apple*. In fact there are two introductions, one in English and one in Arabic, and they are not exact translations of each other. The

English introduction, 'The Idea of Circulism' can be found in full in Appendix III. Here Qattan first mentions the motion of the universe and its importance for our very existence. He talks about the importance of symbols in figurative art and how the curved line is used as a symbol of time and motion. Colours are also used as symbols to interpret or express human emotion or the situations evoked or affected by them, and he gives some examples of colours and their meaning. This introduction does not offer any explanation of the relation between the signifier (curved lines and colours) and the signified (time, motion and the human emotion). Nor does it go into much detail about the aesthetic aspects of Circulism.

In the introduction to the Arabic section of the book Qattan adds a new idea whereby he tries to explain the relation between the curved and circular lines and the expression of life and 'evolution' (*Tatawor*). He argues that because circular shapes have no starting or ending points, by tracing a circular shape we will be moving in an infinite loop, and this constant movement symbolises the 'continuity' of evolution. 'Instinct for example' says Qattan 'never ends with the end of individuals, it is unceasing, because it is born with every person, so it circles with humanity'¹⁶⁶.

The writings about Circulism by Khalifa and Lidia Qattan contain repeated use of vocabulary such as the terms 'motion', 'symbols', 'circular and curved lines', 'time', 'colour' and 'imagination'. These terms can be divided into two categories: formalist elements and theoretical elements. In order to understand the theory behind Circulism we will study some of these terms and their use in the Circulist language.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12

Formalist Elements of Circulism

It is difficult to define Circulism formalistically since it went through different stages, each with a different aesthetic. Khalifa Qattan tried different painting methods and styles, ranging from a rough pointillist style using palette knives and fast brush strokes, as in *Is Life a Cosmic Phenomenon?* (Fig. 30), to the use of long and smooth brush strokes to create smooth graduals of colours as in *Explosion* (Fig. 31); and from abstracts or semi-abstracts to highly figurative lifelike (realistic) scenes. However, throughout his life as a Circulist two elements remained constant: the use of colour and the use of the curved or circular line. These two formal elements are used as tools to express the theoretical and philosophical ideas that are the basis of Circulism.

Curved and Circular Lines

In an interview in *Al Arabi* magazine in 1964, Qattan talked about the philosophy behind his new painting style. The article described how:

His brush started running all over the canvas, while he was diving deep in his thoughts. His brush deliberately avoided drawing a straight line; it deliberately drew the line as a curve, the square and rectangle as a circle, and the cube as a sphere. It felt as if there is no such thing as a straight line, square or a cube in this universe, because everything moves in curved path to complete the eternal circle of continuity.¹⁶⁷

The curved and circular lines form the base of Circulism, and gave the inspiration for its name. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the late-1950s and early-1960s

¹⁶⁷ *Al Arabi*, p. 126

Qattan adopted Cubism, with its rugged and sharp lines and almost abstract shapes. Then, gradually his lines became softer, until one day Lidia Qattan noticed that his work had transformed into a new and different thing, closer to 'Circulism' than to Cubism¹⁶⁸.

Lidia Qattan described the 'revelation' Qattan had one night as he was working late in his studio after a hard and stressful day due to the unrelenting troubles he faced in his job as a construction supervisor. She wrote:

It was a night in December; a moon, half veiled by clouds, was playing hide and seek on the windowpane of his room.

Time was flowing but he was not aware of it. Thoughts of childhood, of family, of country, all that was dear and sacred to him were coming to his mind in successive waves. He found himself clinging on to those memories as if they were the only tangible entities in the frightening void he was floating.

From a minaret of a nearby mosque he heard the call for the Morning Prayer, when he felt a sudden rush of energy filling his soul. From the inner reaches of his consciousness a surging wave of creativity made him realise his true purpose in life.

¹⁶⁸ Muayad Hussain, Interview with Lidia Qattan on 29/7/2009, unpublished digital recording, 54 minutes, private archive of Muayad Hussain, Birmingham, 2009

Immerse [sic] in the glow of new faith he felt free, free to give expression to his feelings and thwarted expectations, as he began applying strokes of black pigment on the canvas, followed by bright vivid colours.

Khalifa worked in self-abandon, he was experiencing the joy of creating in total surrender to the flow of his imagination, pervaded by a feeling at once exhilarating and refreshing.

His visual perspective and his understanding of space and form had become clear, as he emerged with a form of expression more congenial to his mental disposition than any trend he had ever tried.

The result was the living testimony of an integrated experience, presented in its relation to personal judgment and common knowledge, brought forth in symbolic form.

The work he produced that early morning was the natural emanation of his soul reaching out for self expression in a form that gave coherence and reality to his feeling and judgment.¹⁶⁹

The first work he produced after this incident was *The Instrument of Evil*, followed by works such as *A Bride* (Fig. 29) and *Greed*. When reading Lidia's description above one might sense a religious implication, something reminiscent of the prophetic

¹⁶⁹ *Khalifa Ali Hussein Al Qattan 1934-2003 Artist-Philosopher Pioneer in the Kuwait art movement*, pp. 7-8.

revelations. This same hint is found in the title of Lidia's book, *The Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, which describes how some of the artist's works produced between the 1960s and 1980s predicted the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in the early-1990s. That prediction, as described by Lidia in the book, is in fact due to the human-driven nature of Circulism, since human emotions remain constant and revolve through time. Incidents that have inspired or been depicted by Qattan, or any other artist, will eventually be repeated, just as what happened to Lebanon in the 1970s and was depicted in works such as *Explosion* (Fig. 31) then happened in Qattan's own country during the 1990s. The Iraqi invasion and the works of the Prophecy will be discussed in more detail in the third chapter.

The alleged 'prophetic' turn from the Cubist to the Circulist form can be seen by comparing his work *Impressions of Venice 2* (Fig. 19), produced in 1958, in which one can still notice the Cubist influence, especially in the fractured dimensions and complex composition, with *The Roster* (Fig. 21), produced a year later. The comparison reveals two main points: first, in the latter work his painting had become more figurative and easier to understand, and second, the lines he used had become smoother and more curved.

Moving to another stage of Qattan's art, which Lidia Qattan calls the 'Transition Stage'¹⁷⁰, looking at a work like *The Bear and the Fish* (Fig. 24) we notice that the straight lines are almost completely gone. The number of elements constructing the composition is significantly reduced, so that figures and forms are much simpler and more easily distinguished. We also notice how Qattan had started to use circles or

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Lidia Qattan on 29/7/2009

closed curved lines to outline his shapes. The Cubist and the transitional stages lasted from 1958 to about 1962. As Circulism started to develop and evolve¹⁷¹ from 1962 onward, Qattan's work began to rely more on symbols rather than abstract shapes and lines. During the early and middle stages of Circulism Qattan's work did keep its circular and curved visual characteristics, but the theoretical aspect of Circulism was being developed rapidly, as will be explained later on. It was not until the mid-1970s that Qattan began gradually to abandon curved lines in works such as *The Trap* (Fig. 32), and even adopted life-like forms in some of his later works such as *Time* (Fig. 33).

Nonetheless, Qattan continued to switch between different styles throughout his life as an artist, without explanation. It could be that he was experimenting with different painting styles; it could also be that his chosen style was an expression of the impulse of the moment. Therefore it is hard to look at Qattan's art, especially during the period from the 1970s onward, as a continually 'developing' line of work in the formalist sense. Nor is it accurate, in my opinion, to think of his work and style in terms of 'stages' since, as mentioned, he would shift, randomly, from one style to another and from one subject to another, while at the same time the general change in his style would happen gradually, noticeable only by looking retrospectively at his work as a whole. Lidia's description of Qattan's 'stages' could also be compared to the approach of modernist critics to movements such as Cubism, and the works of Picasso and Braque. That description might be useful to simplify the development of Circulism, yet, I have stated my reservations earlier on the idea of comparing Circulism to other modern art theories in way that shows it as an attempt to mimic those western ideas.

¹⁷¹ Here developing and evolving does not mean 'improving'. It means that the idea itself keeps changing and moves from one form to another.

Generally, the curved or circular line, the single visual character from which Circulism took its name, represented the visual avant-garde element that differentiated Qattan's own style from the Cubist style he had used before. However, one cannot rely on this single visual element to 'distinguish' Circulism. First, the idea of an art 'innovation' based on the notion of using circular lines instead of straight ones is, even in the mid-twentieth century, no more than a shallow novelty if it is not based on a deeper theoretical foundation. Second, Qattan did not rely on the circular line in all his Circulist works. He did advocate the concept of symbolism in its use, he even relied on it in his early work, but he used different visual styles throughout his life.

Colour

Khalifa Qattan used an almost constant palette throughout his life, vivid pure pigments straight out of the tube mixed on the canvas itself using either a brush or a palette knife. In his work one rarely finds pleasant classical harmonic graduals or complementary colours over a neutral background. Colour for Qattan served a purpose other than being 'pleasant' to the viewer. In fact, many of his works are considered visually unpleasant in the traditional sense.

Using pure pigments gave Qattan the advantage of getting hues in the highest possible value; the more colours are mixed the less saturated they become, and this is something Qattan tried to avoid. His aim went beyond using colours to describe the elements in his painting naturally; colour for him served as a tool to add a symbolic merit to those elements. In some of his works, especially in the early stages, he dedicated considerable space of the canvas for planes of abstract colours surrounding

the main elements, as can be seen in *The Bear and the Fish* for example. As with his use of curved and circular lines, the use of abstract planes of colour subsided in his later works; colour was still used for its symbolic meaning, but it was contained within the elements of the composition rather than in abstract planes and forms.

Colour as a Symbol

Qattan's use of colour as a symbol or signifier was not a new concept: the idea goes back at least to antiquity. Many publications dealt with the subject of colour and its meaning such as *Colour: Art and science*, edited by Trevor Lamb and Janine Bourriau and *Colour and Culture: Practice and meaning from antiquity to abstraction* by John Gage. John Gage also wrote *Colour and Art* in which he describes how the Romans, for example, used purple in their national flag as a symbol of royalty¹⁷². At the beginning of the twentieth century the Theosophical Society published a table of colours and their meanings, in a 'key to the interpretation of coloured auras'¹⁷³. That table may have been 'available to the pioneers of abstract painting'¹⁷⁴ and may have formed the basis for the concept of expressing ideas using nothing more than abstract flat colours. Gage also relates colour to psychology by reviewing the opinions of artists¹⁷⁵ and scientists who tried to link the two to each other. What can be concluded from Gage's analysis is that the effects of colour on the human psyche were established using experimental psychology¹⁷⁶ and have been used in commercial life¹⁷⁷. Yet, 'mainstream psychology' would find the idea of colour associations hard

¹⁷² John Gage, *Colour in Art*, London, 2006, pp. 147-148

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 154

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Artist such as Kandinsky, who his views in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* will be detailed later.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81

to accept transculturally¹⁷⁸. Therefore, the association (or meaning) and effect of colour in art although undeniable, those associations and effects are mostly dependent on the cultural and contextual study of the whole art work. By studying Circulism one would find that Qattan created a system that took the cultural differences of the perception of colour into consideration. First, he provided the viewer with a key to understand his use of colour (even though it could be related to his own cultural background), and second, he associated several meanings (sometimes contradicting with each other) to the same colour which would depend on the context of the work to be understood, as will be detailed later.

There is no doubt that the symbolic colour system Qattan created, followed and advocated is crucial to understand the meaning behind his art. In Qattan's own local culture some colours have certain cultural signification; I will discuss later how colour is treated in the Quran, Islam's holy book, and how that might have influenced his ideas on the meaning of colours. More immediately, in the introduction of *The Apple*¹⁷⁹ Qattan introduced his own key to interpret the meaning of the colours in his paintings. We can summarise Qattan's key in the following table:

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 81-82

¹⁷⁹ See Appendix III

Colour	Meaning
White	Purity, faith
Red	Love, hate, danger, anger
Blue	Sadness, calmness, peacefulness, lifelessness
Green	Youthfulness, jealousy
Yellow	Maturity, prosperity, fear, hatred
Violet	Luck, fate

According to Peirce's system¹⁸⁰, colour can be looked at as a symbol; therefore by itself it does not have a meaning unless the reader associates that meaning. If we think of a colour as a word, then 'red' is a three letter word to describe the colour of blood or fire. The word red, in the English language, is a signifier to the colour (the signified) it describes, an agreed upon 'symbol', or an 'arbitrary' sign according to Saussure; the signifier can be replaced with the word *Ahmar* () in the Arabic language for example, and the sign will remain constant as long as one can understand the agreed connection. When language itself is ignored, colour as it is seen visually is an abstract entity, but what does it signify?

Colour is to the eye what a word is to the ear; one cannot understand it by itself due to its abstract nature. To understand a word means that it should be associated with a signified, whether an object, a feeling, a thought, an action or any given physical or mental 'thing'. Colour as a signifier on the other hand has no one specific signified; it can describe the physical appearance of an unlimited number of objects, thus it has an

¹⁸⁰ See David Crow, *Visible Signs*, Lausanne, 2003

unlimited number of signifieds. Regardless of its function as a physical descriptor, where there is agreement, a colour can also be a symbol of mental concepts.

According to Wassily Kandinsky, painting has two 'weapons': Form and Colour. In his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* Kandinsky explains that colour cannot stand alone as representing an object, while form can. 'A never-ending extent of red can only be seen in the mind; when the word red is heard, the colour is evoked without definite boundaries.'¹⁸¹ Red in this case is pulled back to its limited linguistic nature as a symbol, while form can become a symbol, index or icon according to its descriptive nature. The 'redness' of the red, as it is imagined by the mind, does not indicate or suggest attributes such as warmth, love, hatred or danger, what Kandinsky calls the 'indefinite impression on the soul'¹⁸². On the other hand he claims that what he calls 'the spiritual harmony' actually 'exists without any need for such subsequent attributes of warmth or cold'¹⁸³, meaning that colour has a 'definite' impression on the soul regardless of the nature of that impression. Kandinsky does not explain the existence of the spiritual harmony between the imagined colour and the attribute of warmth, but he gives an example of how one hears, in the soul, the sound of a trumpet whenever one hears the word 'trumpet', without having to hear the instrument itself being played. This example of the effect of the word 'trumpet' can be attributed to the symbolic nature of the word as a linguistic sign to a familiar sound. The word 'trumpet' is not directly or logically linked to the sound of that instrument, and if someone has never heard the sound of a trumpet, even if he or she recognises the instrument (i.e. has seen it and/or touched it), they cannot 'hear' the sound of the trumpet when they hear or

¹⁸¹ Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, ebook, 2011, <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5321/pg5321.html>, accessed 9/12/2011

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

read the word 'trumpet'. Therefore the impression of imagined colour on the soul can never be 'definite' as Kandinsky claims unless one has experienced, accepted and became familiar with that impression.

Nevertheless, the mind does not necessarily imagine abstract extended colours. Rather, colours are recalled by the mind associated with a form. The meaning of the colour depends on the form it is recalled as and the semiotic meanings of the signs this form represents, or as Kandinsky states, a 'warm red tone will materially alter in inner value when it is no longer considered as an isolated colour, as something abstract, but is applied as an element of some other object, and combined with natural form. The variety of natural forms will create a variety of spiritual values, all of which will harmonize with that of the original isolated red.'¹⁸⁴ The process of associating a meaning to a colour can be presented in the diagram:

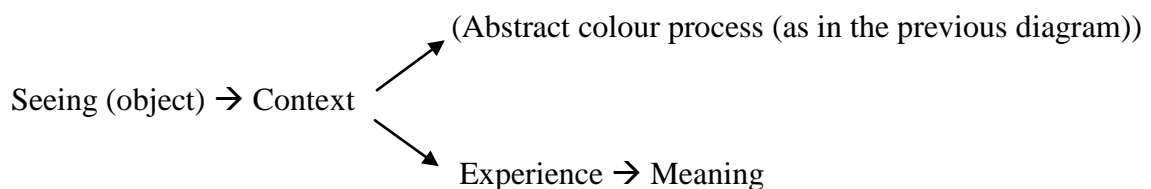
Colour (abstract) → Object (form) → Context (spiritual values) → Experience (harmony) → Meaning

This linear formula is not intended to be an accurate representation of the mind's colour association process. That process cannot be linear; it is more organic and chaotic; it differs from one person to the other, and any slight change in any of its elements can alter and disturb the process regardless of the end result. Because of the chaotic nature of the colour association process we find different 'meanings' associated with the same colour in different societies and cultures. While green, for example, is associated in the Saudi flag with the colour of clothing in heaven, a religious context resulting in a feeling of divine peace, the green 'of the original Mexican state tricolour

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

was glossed as symbolizing independence from Spain, although the present view is that, like the green of the Portuguese flag, it expresses hope, a concept taken from the colour of hope among the traditional Christian theological virtues¹⁸⁵.

Different meanings of the same colour can also occur in the same society and by the same person, depending on the context of the object and the person's current and past experiences. The same colour can have two or more contradictory meanings, so that associating a meaning with it becomes a harder (or more flexible) procedure when thinking of it in abstract terms. The colour red can mean love, hatred, danger or anger, according to Qattan's table. It is only possible to mentally determine the meaning when associating the colour to a form, and that association can be conducted in a way that is entirely mental (to think of the colour or read or hear its name), or by seeing and becoming aware of the colour in a physical state. Seeing the colour in a physical state does in fact induce another process, which either precedes the one mentioned above or bypasses it, as the following diagram illustrates:



The seen object, keeping in mind its context, can directly evoke a past experience when the object is itself a strong and direct indicator of the meaning. Therefore, a red heart shape will symbolise love, while a red flame will symbolise danger. Yet, someone with different past experience can still process those images differently. For

¹⁸⁵ *Colour in Art*, pp. 150-151

example, in the case of the red flame, a person who had worked in a furnace might interpret the redness of the flame as a source for making a living. Furthermore, if the seen object does not evoke an experience strong enough to give the colour a meaning, the mind might treat the colour in its abstract state and apply the process discussed above.

In conclusion, colour as a semiotic sign can be categorised according to its use. As an abstract element it is a symbol, since it has no direct or logical connection to any meaning in the way that 'words' are symbols. When a colour is presented as a form, either abstract or descriptive, it will be interpreted in association with the context. Therefore, in Peirce's system, a colour could be symbol, index or icon. As a symbol colour could have no logical connection with what it means, but relies on the viewer's learning the connection between the colour and the expressed meaning. As an index colour could have a logical connection to the meaning, for example painting a red face could be an indication of the portrayed person being shy or having a fever (even if he was not so in reality). Finally, colour could be an icon, meaning it could resemble the reality of the painted subject¹⁸⁶.

By giving the table of meanings of the colours in his paintings, Qattan purposely limited the viewer's experience to the symbolic meanings in order to convey his symbolic message through his pure and vivid colours. The viewer who is not aware of the key to Qattan's colours can still interpret the work through his or her own process by using their own experiences to create their own spiritual harmony to understand the meaning of the colour. When Qattan painted the figure in *A Bride* (1961) (Fig. 29)

¹⁸⁶ *Visible Signs*, p.33

with her green, yellow and red face, he did not leave it to the viewer to interpret those colours as iconic signs of the colour of her skin or makeup, nor as indices of her health for example; instead he wanted to express the hidden confused emotions. In that painting we see a figure of a woman in her bridal dress, with a wedding veil on her head and a bouquet in her hand. Yet, the woman does not show an expression of joy or shyness on her face as one might usually expect from a bride in her wedding dress. She instead looks confused, or even resentful. Her body is also anatomically incorrect with a very thin waist and a missing or invisible left arm. As for the colours, one notices that her skin tone is more of a greenish yellow than the average wheat-toned skin a Kuwaiti woman would have. One can also notice that there are two sources of light on the subject, a normal white light from the right shining on her left side, and a red one lighting her right side and giving it a distinctive red/orange tone. Using Qattan's colour keys we first find the whiteness of her dress a symbol of purity, even though we see some yellow and red spilled on some part of it. The green can be related to the youthfulness of the woman, but the yellow give us mixed values of maturity, prosperity, fear or hatred. So does the red which might dictate love, hate, danger or anger. Nonetheless, the cultural context of the painting leads us to related the confused look of the bride and the conflicted meanings of the colours used to the confusion, fear and anger the young woman feels because of the fact that she is about to be presented to a husband who she will be seeing for the very first time! Arranged marriage, which was a common practice back then in the early-1960s, caused women fear and confusion at the beginning of their marital life, and Qattan in this unusual wedding portrait tried to express those mixed and conflicting feelings symbolically with form and colour.

Colour in the Quran

In this section we I attempt to analyse semiotically the colours as they appear in the text of the Quran. There is a strong relation between the use of colour names in the Quran and their cultural and linguistic implications, since it gives us an indication of how colour is associated with certain cultural values and emotions. First, green is mentioned in the Quran¹⁸⁷ to describe the colour of the clothing and furniture in 'heaven'; the people who will live there 'will wear green garments of fine silk and rich brocade. They will be adorned with silver bracelets,'¹⁸⁸ 'reclining upon green cushions and the finest carpets'¹⁸⁹. Green it is also said to have been the Prophet Mohammed's favourite colour, and while there is no evidence for that claim, it has led to its use in the flags of some Islamic countries; for example the Saudi flag (Fig. 34) is a green rectangle with a white sword and the Arabic phrase *La Elaha Illa Allah Mohammadon Rasoul Allah* (there is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his messenger). The green colour along with the written phrase signifies the Islamic belief, while the Arabian curved sword stands for both courage and justice; as described in a classical Arabic poem, 'its edge [of the sword] is the edge between seriousness and playfulness'¹⁹⁰.

Green is mentioned in the Quran several times as a 'positive' quality. For example, it describes the prosperity of earth: 'Have you not seen how God sends down water from the sky, whereupon the earth becomes green? God is unfathomable, and all aware.'¹⁹¹ In the story of Yusuf (Joseph), 'The king said, "I saw [in a dream] seven fat cows which seven lean ones were eating, also seven green ears of corn and seven others which were dry. Tell me the meaning of this vision, my nobles, if you can interpret

¹⁸⁷ The Quran verses used here are from the translation by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan.

¹⁸⁸ Quran, [76:21]

¹⁸⁹ Quran, [55:76]

¹⁹⁰ From a poem by the ninth-century poet Habeeb Al Tae (also known as Abu Tammam)

¹⁹¹ Quran [22:63]

visions.¹⁹² The seven green ears were later interpreted by Yusuf as being seven years of prosperity for Egypt, while the seven dry ears symbolised the seven years of dryness that would follow.

Yellow, on the other hand, has two contradictory meanings in the Quran. First Musa (Moses) describes the cow which the Israelites must slaughter: "They said, "Call on your Lord for us, to show us what colour she should be." He answered, "God says she should be a bright yellow heifer, pleasing to the eye."¹⁹³ In this case, the intense yellow colour is a bringer of 'delight'. In another instance however we see yellow as a colour of depression: 'Yet if we send a wind and they see their harvest turn yellow, they will then begin to deny [Our favours].'¹⁹⁴ The harvest which is dead and dry, therefore 'yellow', is a cause of disbelief, as it is hated and thought of as a result of God's anger. Similarly, in another instance we find the rain as bringer of herbage of various colours, while the dead and withered crops are described as becoming 'yellow':

Have you not seen that God sends down water from the sky, guides it from springs in the earth, and then, with it, brings forth vegetation of various colours, which later withers, turns yellow before your eyes, and then He makes it crumble away?¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Quran [12:43]

¹⁹³ Quran [2:69]

¹⁹⁴ Quran [30:51]

¹⁹⁵ Quran [39:21]

Yellow is also used to describe the flames of hell: 'throwing up sparks as huge as towers and as bright as a herd of yellow camels'¹⁹⁶. Here yellow signifies the intense heat of the fire of hell.

Black is usually associated with negative meanings in the Quran. 'On the Day of Resurrection you will see those who uttered falsehoods about God with their faces blackened. Is there not enough room in Hell for the arrogant?'¹⁹⁷ Here the word 'blackened', or in Arabic *Muswaddah* (), more accurately means that the faces of the unbelievers will become darker as a sign of the lack of brightness due to shame and fear. The Quran did not use the word *Sawdaa* (), the term commonly used to describe the colour of black skin. The description of Judgment Day recurs several times in the Quran, and in each case the term *Muswaddah* (darkened) is used to describe the faces of the disbelievers; the common translation of this term as 'becoming black' is not accurate.

In contrast, the faces of the believers on Judgment Day are described as being whitened (or brightened):

On the day when some faces are bright and some faces are dark, it will be said to those with darkened faces, 'Did you reject faith after accepting it? Taste, then, this punishment for having denied the truth!' But as for those with shining faces, they shall abide forever in God's grace.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Quran [77:32-33]

¹⁹⁷ Quran [39:60]

¹⁹⁸ Quran [3:106-107]

The darkened face is also used to describe the state of shame or anger. For example, in the pre-Islam Arabia Arabs thought of daughters as a sign of shame, while sons were a cause of pride: 'When the birth of a girl is announced to any of them, his face darkens and he is filled with gloom. In his shame he hides himself away from his people, because of the bad news he has been given. Should he keep her and feel disgraced or bury her in the dust? How ill they judge!'¹⁹⁹

As can be noted, changes in physical appearance, specifically colour, associated with traumatic physical or psychological changes is a recurring theme in the Quran. The colours associated with these changes can be both iconic signs for the physiological state, and symbolic signs to visualise and emphasise the severity of the psychological effects of the situation. In another sign of the intensity of the hardship of Judgment Day, the Quran tells of the state of the sinners when the 'trumpet' is blown by the angels, declaring that on 'the Day when the trumpet shall be blown: We shall gather all the sinners on that Day. Their eyes will turn blue with terror.'²⁰⁰ The Arabic wording is that they will be gathered 'blue' (*Zorqan*). This was interpreted as meaning 'blue-eyed' according to the belief that eye colour becomes lighter as a result of severe thirst. It might also be translated as meaning that the skin becomes blue, perhaps due to lack of oxygen resulting from fear preventing proper breathing.

As mentioned above, white is used in the Quran to describe the brightness of the joyous faces of the believers. It is also the colour of a drink enjoyed by heaven's inhabitants: 'A drink will be passed round among them from a flowing spring: white

¹⁹⁹ Quran [16:58-59]

²⁰⁰ Quran [20:102]

and delicious to those who drink it, causing no headiness or intoxication.²⁰¹ The drink, which could be water, milk or wine, is described as being white, delicious and pure, all positive attributes. Yet white is not always thought of as a positive sign. In the story of Yusuf, the Quran says that his father Yaqoub (Jacob) cried at losing his son until his eyes became white as he lost his sight. 'And he turned away from them, crying, "Alas for Joseph!" His eyes went white with grief, and he was filled with sorrow.'²⁰² White in this instance symbolises a negative value, disease. The careful use of white can also be seen in the story of Musa and the signs with which he had to warn Pharaoh. 'Now put your hand inside your cloak next to your bosom and it will come out [shining] white, without any blemish.'²⁰³ Here the Quran stresses that Musa's hand became white 'without any blemish'. However, that very whiteness could indicate the presence of disease, the loss of pigment caused by vitiligo. Therefore white here can also signify a negative value, which is disease.

White has been acknowledged as the Prophet Mohammad's favourite colour. He recommended wearing white clothes and described those white clothes as being 'the best'. He also ordered white to be the colour of the shrines of the dead. White here could be thought of as having two contradictory meanings: the colour of the Muslim clothes that brings them closer to their prophet, but also the colour of a sad occasion, death. However, death is not necessarily something sad, since for the deceased it is the beginning of his or her new afterlife in heaven. White is also the colour that men should wear while doing their pilgrimage to Mecca, since it is a 'simple' colour that symbolises modesty and equality.

²⁰¹ Quran [37:45-47]

²⁰² Quran [12:84]

²⁰³ Quran [27:12]

Theoretical Elements of Circulism

I chose lines and colours to represent the formalist elements of Circulism, and I argued that there was strong link between those formalist elements and the theory and philosophy of Circulism. In the next sections I will study some of the main theoretical elements of Circulism. While studying the theoretical elements of the Circulist language one must note that the discussion will mainly be about the thoughts of Lidia Qattan, and not necessarily those of Khalifa. While Khalifa Qattan worked with the visual elements discussed above, it was Lidia Qattan who theorised those visual elements. Lidia Qattan, like Khalifa, was not formally educated in the field of visual arts or even humanities; she met her future husband in the 1950s while in the UK training as a nurse. She said of herself: 'I never knew that one day I'd become an artist. When I was in school when they ask me about the boy of my dreams I used to say he should be an artist or a poet, because artists and poets are sensitive just like me.'²⁰⁴ Lidia started practicing art in the late-1970s; she held her first exhibition in 1979 at Kuwait University, and later exhibited in the Free Atelier mentioned above.

Lidia started writing for the local English language newspapers as a freelancer in 1973, specialising in philosophy, politics, sociology, psychology and biography in addition to offering short stories.²⁰⁵ She also began translating Khalifa's Circulist philosophy linguistically, as opposed to the visual language in which Khalifa presented it, hence giving Circulism its written theoretical background. In a three-part article in *The Daily News*, titled 'What is Circulism?' she discussed in detail its theoretical and philosophical aspects. In that article, which was reprinted in *The Apple*,

²⁰⁴ Sheman Al Hadhena, 'Lidia: Khalifa Qattan taught me the philosophy of life', *Awan Newspaper* (from the electronic version), Kuwait, 6/9/2009, accessed 10/7/2010

²⁰⁵ Lidia Qattan, *The Woman's Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, Abdullah Al Salem Area, Ahmed Al Adwani Hall, Kuwait, April 2004, p. 2

Lidia Qattan argues that Circulism is not a 'fancy new name coined to embarrass the wondering observer or simply to satisfy a whimsical desire to add attraction to one's personal style in painting'²⁰⁶, but it is a complete and complex theory based on scientific, religious and philosophical ideas.

Lidia Qattan compares Circulism to Surrealism, in that both have the imagination as the main creative tool. 'Contrary to Surrealism's tendency to escape reality, Circulism insists on it; imagination is still the tool but it is made to serve a serious purpose.'

Lidia Qattan writes that, 'if Surrealism means escape into the world of a transcending reality, Circulism means involvement into the phenomenal world of existence; the realm of effect and causation, such as a human being feels and understands'²⁰⁷. Here Qattan is emphasising Circulism's involvement in the reality of life, in a way that can resemble scientific phenomena such as 'chemical reactions and electrical charges'²⁰⁸. Therefore, Circulism requires from the artist a direct and constant involvement and interaction with his surroundings or environment, and any interruption or attempt to escape from this interaction will cause him to enter the world of illusion. Qattan believes that this 'harmonious interaction of reason and imagination' elevates Circulism to a state of 'adult development of the human mind', and not 'merely a name coined to add a distinction to a style of painting or sculpture'²⁰⁹. Hence she ascribes to Circulism the properties of a humanist philosophy rather than a visual style.

Although Circulism accentuates what Qattan calls 'the human drama', it does not promote sentimentalism, pessimism or cynicism, as those romantic values offer a

²⁰⁶ *The Apple*, p. 18

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

blockade against reality and an escape to a world of illusion. Circulism instead deals with reality by positive analysis, understanding, criticism and honesty²¹⁰. The aim of Circulism then is to visualise thoughts, emotions and values rather than to hide from them behind the imagination. The Circulist artist needs to be alive and present while creating the work; to be alert and living his or her own experience in order to provide a translation of what they have lived. The aim of Circulism is to 'provoke the alertness of the observer' through 'constructive interpretation of contemporary events.'²¹¹ When presented through the symbolic process of Circulism those contemporary events become 'timeless'²¹², meaning that the artist must first be an observer of the world around him, and then his/her observations must be depicted symbolically, in order for the work to be 'alive' and circulating the ideas presented through them.

The notion of 'contemporary events' implies the importance of the element of time in Circulism. While the Surrealists mainly worked in a dream world, where time is suspended, and Cubism and Abstract theories were basically static in their nature²¹³, Circulism relied on the idea of time as a key element in the construction of the circular movement.

Time itself is an illusion created by the human intellect to describe the length of a transition period in relation to movement.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 19-20

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21

²¹² The idea of Circulism and time will be discussed next.

²¹³ Some Surrealist and Cubist in addition to Futurist artists did get involved with the idea of representing time and the fourth dimension artistically, although their attempts differs from Circulism's idea of the concept of time as will be detailed later. See Linda Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*, Princeton, 1983

Movement is inherent in matter and is responsible for the whole creation of things, including abstract entities such as thoughts and ideas.

Matter itself is indestructible; it can be transformed but never lost; this property clearly suggests that matter must undergo a re-cycling process.

The creative process is a harmonious interaction of distinct yet correlated cycles.

Movement implies [sic] dynamism, dynamism involves change but not necessarily creation, what constitute a creative evolving process are the interwoven cycles. When energy and matter are brought into an orderly process, which in itself forms a cyclic existence of its own, yet is correlated to a whole phenomenon of other cycles.²¹⁴

Therefore, based on the above scientific/philosophical integration Circulism centres upon the notion of the cycling and recycling of ideas, emotions, values and other abstract entities. There might not be a visual emphasis on curved lines in the Circulist composition, as Lidia Qattan says, but that is not fundamental since 'a Circulism artist portrays an essentially dynamic event, which is not bound by time nor space; a line in progression necessarily follows a geodesical transit; that is it follows the curvature of space while seemingly keeping on to a straight path.'²¹⁵ Qattan also emphasises the four-dimensional property of the Circulist composition, meaning that even if the composition seems to be static and describing one single incident at a moment in time,

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 24

it is indeed not so, since that 'static-ness' is a momentary illusion, like the illusion we experience when glancing at a time-piece to perceive the indication of the hour, while overlooking the fact that this hour is part of a continuous cycle of day/night movement²¹⁶.

From the above we conclude that there are differences between Circulism's perceptions of time than that of other modern art theories. Circulism did not try to formalise time or the fourth dimension itself or present a projection of it as some artists or theorist did, instead it dealt with time and space-time philosophically, by creating timeless works depending on the concept of recycling thoughts and feelings and other human concepts which transcend time. The works Khalifa Qattan exhibited in 1991 in relation to the Gulf War give us an example of Circulism's concept of time. Qattan represented the 1990-1991 events with work he had done many years before they have occurred, because the Circulist work is unique in its 'fourth dimensional property', as Lidia Qattan explains, 'by which an event is perpetuated not merely as an incident, but part of a cycle.'²¹⁷ Therefore, to explain the relation between Circulism and time we can say that in Circulism the concept of the artwork exists in the fourth dimension, outside of the constraints of our three-dimensional world, and it can appear again at anytime. The work Khalifa Qattan produced is not an attempt to visualise the concept of time or the fourth dimension or explain it, Lidia Qattan admits that time and 'whenever or how it came about is a captivating subject inviting lengthy speculations, but we must leave this to the experts, the philosophers and scientists concerned in this matter.'²¹⁸

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25

²¹⁸ *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 69

In comparison, modern artists such as Giacomo Balla expressed the effect of the four-dimensional space-time visually in works such as *Girl Running on a Balcony* (Fig. 63) in the form of a two dimensional painting. Marcel Duchamp tried to express the fourth dimension and the impossibility of comprehending it in his three dimensional work *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* (Fig. 64). In both works time (or the fourth dimension) were materialised by the artists and presented, in a way, as an abstract idea that allowed them to escape from the 'visual reality' and 'reject completely the one-point perspective system that for centuries had portrayed the world as three-dimensional',²¹⁹ as Linda Henderson explains, and artists such as Duchamp found an interest in the fourth dimension because it represents 'an alternative strain to the idealist visions of higher reality that supported the birth of abstract art.'²²⁰

Although Lidia Qattan wrote about the theoretical concept of time, as quoted above, we do not see an attempt by Khalifa Qattan to mimic modernist artists by expressing the theory of time or the fourth dimension itself or use it as a mean to escape reality, but instead by integrating it with the theory of Circulism and relating it to the so called 'human drama' and cycling of matter.

In Circulism, the abstract entities discussed above do exist, and have always existed. The artist is merely an observer and a user of these entities; he does not create them from scratch, but recycles them through his work. Thus, the artist does not create from nothingness; he is not a creator but a recycler who, as Lidia Qattan puts it, harmonically processes distinct yet correlated (existing) cycles. According to Lidia Qattan, since energy and matter are indestructible and can not be created from nothing,

²¹⁹ Linda Henderson, 'The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art: Conclusion', *Leonardo*, 1984, p. 205, electronic version, http://classes.dma.ucla.edu/Winter09/9-1/_pdf/2-henderson_fourth-dimension.pdf, accessed 2/8/2012

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

but get recycled from one form to another, and since the universe (including human beings) is compound of energy and matter, then everything is the result of that recycling process and there is nothing 'new'. The process of recycling includes human thought itself, since thought is the result of a transformation of energy in the brain. Similar to this concept of the recycling of elements is Roland Barthes' belief that 'the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture'²²¹. Just as literature is made of a collection of existing linguistic signs, so Circulist art is based on existing and never ending ideas, emotions and values. Both the author in Barthes' concept and the artist in Qattan's are 'scriptors', or recyclers rather than inventors. Therefore, Circulism does not aim to innovate or create new concepts or ideas as subjects of art, but to carefully observe the world and be inspired by its drama. By observing the world the artist gets connected to reality, which as a result drives the artist away from abstraction. One can argue that abandoning abstract art and insisting on realism defies beliefs of modern critics such as Gombrich's *Story of Art* which advocated the idea of progress which governed the change in western art since Renaissance until Expressionism and Abstract Art²²².

The Location of Circulism

Locating Circulism's place in culture is a difficult process. On one hand we see how Lidia Qattan compares it to western art historical theories such as Surrealism and Cubism, even giving it its own 'ism' in an attempt to locate it in a western avant-garde perspective. Historically, as mentioned above, the term Circulism was coined after Qattan's first exhibition abroad (in Italy and Egypt), and was first revealed to a mainly

²²¹ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image Music Text*, London, 1977, p. 146

²²² Sheldon Richmond, *Aesthetic Criteria: Gombrich and the philosophies of science of Popper and Polanyi*, Amsterdam, 1994, p. 56

western audience in Al Ahmadi. (At least, that was the intention when the venue was chosen.) Circulism also 'derives' from Qattan's early attempts at painting in a Cubist style. Hence it could be assumed that Circulism can be viewed as a western theory or concept, since it was inspired by western thought, derived from a western style and presented to be integrated into the western canon. However, I argue that this assumption would be incorrect since, as mentioned in the first chapter, looking at Circulism in a historical perspective gives us only the pedagogical and ignores the performative, and according to Bhabha it is the two together that form culture. This tendency to view concepts such as Circulism historically as 'western' or 'western-inspired' leads us to ascribe to them national identities, making them English, French or even Italian. In a similar way Kuwaiti and Arab newspapers tried to label Circulism as a Kuwaiti or Arab theory since, historically, it was conceived by an Arab Kuwaiti in Kuwait. It is for this reason that I began my thesis not by discussing Circulism itself as a historical event, but by explaining the performative that formed Circulism as a hybrid cultural event that is hard to locate geographically as 'eastern' or 'western' or as leaning more towards one of these locations. In the first chapter I presented an interdisciplinary (performative) view of Qattan and the psychological, social, political and economic aspects that formed his cultural identity, while in this chapter I have presented the historical and academic aspects (the pedagogical) of the concept he developed. It is only by combining the performative and the pedagogical that we can start to understand how hard it is to locate the position of Circulism culturally, since it is a new concept that does not 'belong' to a certain side or origin. As Bhabha states, the 'very possibility of cultural contestation, the ability to shift the ground of knowledge, or to engage in the "war of position", marks the establishment of new forms of meaning, and strategies of identification. Designations of cultural difference

interpellate forms of identity which, because of their continual implication in other symbolic systems, are always 'incomplete' or open to cultural translation.²²³

Therefore, the branding of Circulism as being 'eastern' or 'western', or European or Arab, should not be of importance. What matters is understanding the process that formed Circulism and the unique ideas that resulted from that process, as I have attempted to do in the first two chapters of this thesis.

²²³ *The Location of Culture*, p. 233

3. The Stolen War

Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to give a practical example of how Circulism was applied by Khalifa Qattan. War is a recurring subject in Qattan's work. Circulism's philosophy depends on the observation of the world as was discussed in the previous chapter, and Qattan happen to witness and observe several wars during his life. In this chapter I will study the subject of war in Qattan's work, and how he translated that subject through the language of Circulism which we discussed theoretically earlier in this thesis. I will also compare Qattan's approach towards the subject of war to other contemporary artists and thinkers and show how his expression differs and explain why. I will stress on the importance of the cultural background of the artist and the *performative*, which we discussed in the first chapter, in shaping war art.

I will explore the representation of the war in works by Khalifa Qattan and John Keane, who was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum, London in 1991. I will argue that there are significant differences between Qattan and Keane, differences which, as I will show, are rooted in the backgrounds from which these artists arrived: while Keane takes what one might call an 'oriental' westernised view of the war, Qattan looks from within what one may term an 'insider' perspective. When comparing the war paintings of Qattan and Keane one can notice two different political approaches. It is this difference that I will study in this chapter, with reference to Edward Said's discussion of 'east', 'west' and 'other' in his work *Orientalism*.

Many sources refer to the war in the Persian Gulf in 1991 as the First Gulf War, with the war that occurred in 2003 designated the Second Gulf War. On the other hand, many sources in the 'Gulf' area itself refer to the war of 1991 as the Second Gulf War, coming after the war between Iraq and Iran (1980-1989). The Gulf itself is known by all the Arab-speaking countries as the Arabian Gulf rather than the Persian Gulf.

Simple details like names show us the significance of different cultural perspectives between what can be called the 'west' and the 'east'. The discussion in this chapter will be around the Gulf War of 1991, and to avoid confusion it will be referred to as the 'Gulf War' without numbers. Who were the parties in that war? What was its cause? How was it received? These questions are not as simple as they sound when one considers the cultural background of the different groups that took part in the war, and of its observers.

Put most simply, the war was ignited in order to force the Iraqi occupation out of Kuwait, seven months after Iraqi forces had invaded it on 2 August 1990. Debate and controversy have stretched that simple cause to a conspiracy theory whereby the invasion itself was planned by external powers (i.e. the United States) in order to control the Arabian oil sources in the Gulf and to have a foothold on the soil of one of the richest and largest energy reserves in the world. Writers such as Mohamed Heikal have elaborated on the controversial theories and analysed the international situation before, during and after the war, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

The parties involved in the war were, on one side, Iraq, and on the other an international coalition. To elaborate, one can divide Iraq between Saddam Hussein and his ruling party, and the Iraqi people, who were also split between support for and

opposition to Saddam. The coalition included Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (on whose soil coalition forces were based), and non-Arab nations including the US. One must also consider Israel as being part of the conflict, even though it was not part of the coalition, as well as other Arab countries which were either neutral or supportive of Saddam Hussein. Mapping the relations between these conflicting parties is a complex matter, but gives us an indication of the different cultural backgrounds involved, which present multiple and overlapping views of 'otherness'.

I am using the terms 'east' and 'west' generally here, since one cannot categorise a collective perception of either side, if there is such a thing as a 'side' producing a united view. Perceptions of the war in the 'east' are as varied as those in the 'west'. Moreover, according to Edward Said, one cannot precisely define what either side is; the borders between the two sides are imaginary and ambiguous, created only to distinguish opposite cultural entities in order to exert power over them. Qattan is not the 'east' and Keane is not the 'west'; the comparison is mainly between the two artists, the environments and locations from which they witnessed the war, and their own cultural backgrounds. Indeed, one can hardly claim that Qattan's paintings represent only the 'east' since, as mentioned in the first chapter, he was educated in the UK and found inspiration in western art and culture. Therefore, Qattan's cultural identity cannot be regarded as simply eastern or Arabian; rather, according to Bhabha's views expressed in his book *The Location of Culture*, his work is an example of a visual culture that is hybrid and cannot be summed up in homogenous generalisations.

Yet while Qattan does not represent the east in the Orientalist sense, he does represent the perception of a Kuwaiti artist who (like many Kuwaitis) experienced the war from

'within', and had what can be called a 'native' cultural background that set him apart from Keane. The British artist found himself in an alien and 'exotic' land of 'very strange, bleak almost landscape'²²⁴, covering the war by the side of the British Army, commissioned by the Imperial War Museum in London as the official war artist. Therefore this chapter also questions the extent to which Said's theory of the 'other' can be applied to official war artists, with reference to both the political propaganda of creating binary constructions that involve an 'other', and the outsider's 'exotic' view of the 'other' in order to exert power.

Heikal and an Arab Perspective on the War

Reading *Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War*²²⁵ by the Egyptian writer Mohamed Heikal gives us an introduction to the ambiguity of the concept of the 'other', since he is an Arab, or from the 'east' as one might categorise, yet he presents the war from a perspective different from that of Qattan's. Studying Heikal's writings, in addition to providing us with a wealth of historical information regarding the war, shows us the different spaces of 'otherness' and how they are not always bound by national or geographical locations. In this section I will review Heikal's view of the war and will later compare it to the Kuwaiti view as presented by Jehan Rajab, who viewed the war from inside Kuwait in her book which I will study later.

In *Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War* one gets the impression that all the problems of the world are caused by 'oil' and the measures taken to control its sources. Oil - according to Heikal - has gained its importance from its status as the main

²²⁴ Unknown editor, John Keane, Excerpts from John Keane's video diary describing his experiences as Imperial War Museum's 'official recorder' in the Gulf, *The Gulf War 1990-1991 Photographs by John Keane*, unpublished typescript, 7 pages, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010

²²⁵ This review is based on the Arabic version of the book.

energy source for the construction of the industrial world since the mid-nineteenth century²²⁶. During the twentieth century oil provided the US with its military and political power, particularly since 'American oil was the central nerve and the fuel of the great machine [of the Second World War]²²⁷, and after the war the US gained its position as the leading global force despite the depletion of its own oil reserves, which made it necessary to look for alternative oil resources overseas, in the Middle East in particular²²⁸.

According to Heikal, oil has been the motive behind some of the most significant battles and war strategies, ever since Hitler broke his treaty with Stalin because of his ambitions regarding Caucasian oil, and invaded Romania because he wanted Romanian oil²²⁹. Meanwhile, oil has been at the centre of most of the problems in the Middle East, ever since what Heikal calls 'The First Oil War', by which he means the Arab/Israeli war of 1973 in which Arab oil-producing countries reduced their oil exports and banned the sale of oil to some countries in order to exert political pressure against the supporters of Israel, mainly the US²³⁰. Heikal argues that after that war the United States felt the necessity to have stronger control over Arabian oil, to prevent its use as a 'weapon' to weaken the American economy in the future.

Yet while the role of oil as an economic influence that affects international politics, and American politics, is undeniable, it cannot be the sole or main cause of the Gulf War in the way Heikal argues, marginalising the historical, cultural and social factors

²²⁶ Mohamed Heikal, *Harb Al Khaleej: Awham Al Quwah wa Al Nasr* (Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War), Cairo, 1992, p. 69

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72

²³⁰ See; *Ibid.*, p. 77-81

that he barely touches upon in his book. Even when he refers to the historical or cultural background of the war he presents it in a way that only supports his theory of oil and power, as will be shown later. Heikal, despite the wealth of his knowledge, manages to ignore some historical facts and to formulate others to suit his theory, and this is one of the biggest drawbacks of the book. For example, the historically complex issue of Iraq-Kuwait-Saudi Arabia borders is summarised by Heikal as being the result of a quick line drawn by Sir Percy Cox on a map²³¹; he states that borders did not exist before that due to the 'nomadic' nature of the inhabitants of this region who used to travel across 'oceans of sands'²³². Through this simplification Heikal marginalises a long history of relations between Kuwait, the Ottoman Empire, Britain and Arabia among other powers existing or with interests in this part of the world long before the discovery of its oil²³³. Instead, in the part of the book that deals with Kuwait and its history, he depicts the area as a desert inhabited only by nomadic tribes ruled by the Arab Sheiks until Britain got involved with those Sheiks in the hope of finding oil beneath the lands they controlled. This picture of Bedouins and oil is a typical orientalist vision of Arabia, a vision shared by other Arabs and westerners and which I argued against in the first chapter by showing the rich and diverse cultural history of the area. Heikal also simplified the long and complex political and diplomatic relation between Kuwait, Britain and the Ottoman Empire by presenting the protection treaty between Kuwait and Britain as a colonial conspiracy woven by Britain in order to dominate the region and defeat the Ottoman Empire and ultimately control the Arabian oil, while historically²³⁴ a diplomatic battle between the three parties resulted

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 271

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 76

²³³ For more on the long history of Kuwait and its borders and its relation with its neighbouring countries see Miriam Joyce, *Kuwait 1945-1996: An Anglo-American perspective*

²³⁴ See *Kuwait 1945-1996: An Anglo-American perspective*

in a secret agreement between Kuwait and Britain, due to the unwillingness of Britain to be part of the 'internal' conflicts of the area.

In addition, in a way that is complementary to Heikal's oil theory, we find that the writer tends to picture the Gulf War as a war of interests between America and Iraq. While he does have a rationale for that belief, we see in that picture a clear disregard for the humanitarian aspect of the case. The focus on the principle of 'oil interests' makes him overlook the fact that the humanitarian impulse is what moved people to support the Kuwaiti case and the build-up to war. Heikal goes no further than to hint that Iraqi forces in Kuwait were guilty of crimes against humanity, hints the reader could miss if he or she does not make the effort to seek them out, even though those crimes, along with the violation of the rules of international law, are what the war was supposed to be about. Heikal insists that the Gulf War was an 'American' war against Iraq and not an international war with the participation of thirty nations and the goal of liberating Kuwait from the invading Iraqi forces. In the last two paragraphs of the eleventh chapter of the second part of the book he quotes George Bush asking Norman Schwarzkopf²³⁵ whether the strategic goal of the war - the elimination of the Iraqi capabilities - has been achieved, and Schwarzkopf's reply that it had been completely achieved²³⁶. By selecting that particular quote, he chooses to ignore completely the goal of liberating Kuwait.

Finally, the book in general is historically rich, containing information not only about the Gulf War, but also regarding the region's history from the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially the period after World War II. In addition, Heikal's

²³⁵ Commander of the Coalition Forces in the Gulf War

²³⁶ *Harb Al Khaleej: Awham Al Quwah wa Al Nasr* (Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War), p. 566

theory of the war being the result of a long history of connected political and economic events was a new idea in the region when the book was first published in 1992. His idea contradicted the general view, presented by the media during and after the war, whereby the war was seen as a victory of 'the new world order'; Heikal's view was that this new order is in fact the order of the single polarity of power that is now in the hands of the United States. It should be noted that some of the ideas Heikal presented in this book are still common today, twenty years after the end of the war, especially since the Gulf War of 2003.

Rajab's View of the Invasion of Kuwait

Many books have been written about the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the Gulf War of 1991 from a political or military perspective, but there are few humanistic memoirs of life inside occupied Kuwait or about the struggle and frustration of the people living there during that period, especially written in English. Acquiring the knowledge of how life was like inside Kuwait during the occupation is important to us in order to understand the circumstances Khalifa Qattan faced and observed and later 'recycled' in the form of art, since Circulism depends on that concept as discussed earlier in the second chapter. Having the cultural and social background of the war as presented by someone who closely experienced it is as important as the political and economic background that Heikal presented in order to deal with the war as a cultural event, as that comprehensive look at the war is crucial as I have explained in the first chapter when discussing the *performative*, and that is why I will study the work of Jehan Rajab. The study of Rajab's work will also furthermore clarify the idea of the different spaces of 'otherness' as will be discuss later.

Jehan Rajab, author of *Invasion Kuwait: an English Woman's Tale*, was born in Brazil, educated in Gibraltar and Britain and lived in Kuwait for over 30 years before the invasion. She is married to the Kuwaiti artist and art collector Tariq Rajab and worked in the management of the Tariq Rajab Museum and as the director of the New English School in Kuwait. Having lived in Kuwait for such a long period, and having remained in the country throughout the Iraqi occupation, she is able to present a view of events from an 'insider's' perspective that is significantly different from Heikal's, a perspective that could be called a 'Kuwaiti' perspective. By analysing Rajab's work we will notice that the concept of 'east' and 'west' as presented by Said's *Orientalism* will become invalid, since, although Rajab gave herself the title of *English Woman*, her writings give us many signs of her having a Kuwaiti cultural background as I will point to in the following paragraphs.

Rajab did not just live the occupation from the inside; as I will demonstrate, she understood the cultural impact of that occupation and expressed it in an insider's manner. For example, Rajab knows and understands Arabic very well, and she provides an extensive glossary²³⁷ to explain the Arabic terms used in her book. According to Said, having a good knowledge of the language is important for a historian who is aiming to understand the intellectuals, and the culture, of the other, and that knowledge would take years of to be acquired²³⁸. What is more significant than the linguistic knowledge is that Rajab is aware of the cultural background of the language. As an example of how she understands the Arabic language/culture one can refer to her explanation of the Arabic word '*Dhuif*' when she discusses how Saddam Hussein referred to the westerner hostages he held during the first five months of the

²³⁷ Jehan Rajab, *Invasion Kuwait: An English Woman's Tale*, London, 1996, pp. viii-ix

²³⁸ Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, London, 1994, p. 20

occupation as 'guests' (*Dhuif*). Rajab explains the sarcasm in the use of that Arabic word by saying '*Dhuif*, the Arabic word for guests, who were so honoured in the Arab culture, now had different and less pleasant connotations'²³⁹. Here Rajab shows how Saddam Hussein manipulated the horrifying concept of hostage holding by processing the word 'hostage' through his propaganda and making it sound less threatening by replacing it with the word 'guest'. 'Guest' in Arab culture, since Arabs are the main target of his propaganda, is associated with great honorary status reminiscent of the old Arab traditions glorified by the stories of Hatam Al Taae, the seventh-century Arab poet who legend tells us used to slaughter 10 camels every night to feed his guests. Rajab also tells us how, driving home from the local supermarket with her husband's niece, she was chased by what she describes as a *Mukhabarat* (Iraqi secret police) car; she tells how, in order to let the *Mukhabarat* person know they were aware of what he was up to, they waved to him graciously; in return he involuntarily waved back courteously. Rajab comments that, however 'gross a person might be, Arab manners are not easily forgotten'²⁴⁰. Here we see how Rajab is aware that his waving back, even when he was not supposed to, was an Arabic cultural sign that is part of the unshakable 'Arab manners'. Even the feeling of disgust toward the Iraqi *Mukhabarat* shown by the use of the word 'gross' reveals a strong emotion towards the 'other'; Rajab is placing herself in an 'us' position, an insider's 'us' to be precise. Throughout the book one notices how she repeatedly uses the term 'we' when talking about Kuwaitis and people who were in Kuwait during the occupation, in opposition to the Iraqi invaders.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.127

Rajab was also affected by the Kuwaiti culture to the extent of having acquired some of what could be called the common stereotypes and generalisations toward the 'other' from the Kuwaiti point of view. In one instance, referring to an incident when an Iraqi soldier started swearing and cursing after seeing two Kuwaiti flags fluttering in the yard of the school she was the manager of, she states that 'unlike most other Arabs, Iraqis are well-known for their casual use of foul language'²⁴¹. Familiarity with this stereotype of Iraqis using 'foul language' and the ability to distinguish the Iraqi culture from 'most other Arabs', let alone to interpret the language the Iraqis use, are based on a background of knowledge that may not be available to someone who has not lived near Iraq or had close contact with the Iraqis for a period of time. The notion of Iraqis using foul language would originate from what Said calls the 'typical encapsulations'²⁴² from our prior knowledge of the 'other' which forms the lens through which 'they' are looked at, resulting in the half known facts (generalisations)²⁴³. Therefore, the kind of generalisation Rajab uses here indicates a degree of prior knowledge about the Iraqis, the kind of knowledge only a Kuwaiti or someone who had lived in Kuwait would acquire. Conversely, an 'outsider' might think that there is only one Arab culture and the peoples of Kuwait and Iraq use the same vocabulary and share similar manners since they both are Arabs since up until the twentieth century there were no such thing as a Kuwaiti or Iraqi states, and that generalised idea of the Arabs is absent from Rajab's writings.

In Rajab's narrative, unlike Heikal's, the main theme is the hardship of everyday life in Kuwait during the occupation, whether from the fear of being killed or kidnapped or

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 57

²⁴² Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, 2003, p. 58

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

the fear of looting²⁴⁴, or from the lack of food, services such as electricity, water and rubbish disposal, or the lack of reliable sources of information. None of these matters are touched upon by Heikal, or by other books that deal with the politics of the war. In Rajab's narrative we find the Iraqis portrayed as the occupiers, and the Allied Forces as the liberators there to help the oppressed Kuwaitis, unlike Heikal's presentation of the war being the result of a long global political and economic dispute over Arabian oil, led by the United States against Iraqi power. Rajab talks about the damage suffered by Kuwaiti hospitals and the impact on health services, to the extent that when she got ill, and when her son suffered an injury, they preferred to stay at home rather than go to the hospital, knowing that there was not much help to be found there²⁴⁵. She describes how 'while peace activists were calling for one more chance for "peace", the people of Kuwait were each allowed five small flaps of bread a day [while staying in queues] at the main bakery once or twice a day - queues that curled like some grey fearsome snake round and round and round the block again. In the end there was no bread at all.'²⁴⁶

These scenes of hardship and terror would be hard for an outsider to comprehend. Qattan on the other hand dealt with these scenes in his war related works, as will be discussed later, while an artist such as John Keane did not. What brings Rajab and Qattan's views together are both their actual experience of the war in Kuwait and their understanding of the Kuwaiti culture and their sympathy with that culture. Those scenes of terror and hardship are not to be found in Heikal's book, or in the majority of books published about the Gulf War, as the bibliography for this chapter shows. Most

²⁴⁴ Rajab, her son and some museum employees hid most of their museum collection away, fearing that it would be confiscated by the Iraqis, who searched their house twice looking for valuable goods.

²⁴⁵ *Invasion Kuwait: An English Woman's Tale*, pp. 139-140

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90

of the books consider the 1991 'War' itself as the main event; everything else is either a preparation for that war or a consequence of it. Rajab's book on the other hand is not titled *War Kuwait* but, tellingly, *Invasion Kuwait*, since the main events it describes began on August 2nd 1990 and ended on February 26th 1991, and took place mainly within the borders of Kuwait; anything outside that time and place is considered marginal. We will also see Rajab's view of the 'invasion' being the main event presented by the work duplicated by Qattan, as he too did not paint the war itself but showed the effect of that war.

The politics and military preparations Heikal writes about in so much detail and considers as the core of this war are dismissed by Rajab as a waste of time. She describes the desperation of the Kuwaitis at the delay in international action against the Iraqi forces: 'Everyone felt that the Allied Forces in Saudi Arabia were being built up too slowly [. . .] we all longed to see an American marine or desert rat coming up the street.'²⁴⁷ She says that the numerous visits to Baghdad by politicians and peace activists trying to convince Saddam Hussein to withdraw his forces from Kuwait and so prevent the war were used by the Iraqis 'as a way of playing for time'²⁴⁸. Explaining the feeling of Kuwaitis towards the idea of using force to expel the invading forces, she says that while 'killing and war were the last things anyone in Kuwait wanted, we wondered if words of peace were much use to the Iraqis, who had such different intentions. We also wondered how these activists might have felt had they been in our position, expecting every day to die from possible starvation, torture or plain murder. Did they really feel that the probable death of over 250,000 people was just a small

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 132

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141

matter? We did not particularly want to be a sacrifice to the idea of peace.²⁴⁹ The concern with the suffering, and even death, the Kuwaitis lived through during the period of occupation is clear in Rajab's narrative, as is the real effect of that occupation on their lives. Rajab demonstrates how the war was, for them, a necessity to relieve them from that suffering and fear. The sooner the war started - and finished - the better, regardless of what force was needed or where that force came from. What is important is to be liberated, as quickly as possible, before it is too late. Rajab therefore saw the war as being unavoidable, and in a way a welcomed and positive step towards ending the suffering of the people of Kuwait. This positive merit given to the war is absent from the work of John Keane who his work had an anti-war attitude as will be discussed later. Qattan on the other hand saw the positiveness of the war and expressed it in works such as *The Helmet* (Fig. 57) which I analyse later when studying Qattan's view of the war.

From the points raised above one can say that Rajab's cultural background, her closeness to the Arabic culture and subcultures, particularly the Kuwaiti and Iraqi cultures, and her first-hand experience of life in Kuwait during the months of the occupation, bring her book to a point closer to what Qattan may have experienced and to Qattan's own background as an 'insider'. She tells her story from a perspective similar to that from which Qattan expressed his own vision through his paintings of war and occupation. She shares with Qattan his experience and his cultural background, and that can be seen reflected in both of their cultural products. The effect of the shared cultures between the two is made more obvious when compared to the other artists and writers discussed in this chapter. One can also resolve that Rajab's

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64

nationality or birth place which makes her a 'western' did not affect her cultural expression (apart from her language and, arguably, her sympathy with other foreigners who lived in Kuwait). She acted and wrote as any Kuwaiti would, and we can see that in the closeness of her writing to Qattan's expression.

Baudrillard and Media

According to Jean Baudrillard, it is necessary to consider the role of the media in the war, and its cultural effect upon the reception of that war. One must examine how the media was manipulated and used as part of the arsenal by both sides in the conflict, and how that manipulation was directed not just towards the enemy, but also towards the domestic audience. The control and censorship of the flow of information affected both Keane and Qattan in one way or another, making it part of the powers that shaped the global cultural scene. Therefore I will dedicate this section to Baudrillard's view of the Gulf War and his view of the role of media in particular. I will then analyse both Qattan and Keane's perception of the war through Baudrillard's theory of the effect of the virtual war. In my opinion in order to making sense of Baudrillard's theory one must have a prior knowledge of the historical and political background of the war as his theory relies on it. For that reason I will discuss the history and politics involved in the war in more detail in the next few paragraphs.

Jean Baudrillard wrote three seminal articles before, during and after the battles that became known as Desert Storm or the Gulf War. In those articles he presented the idea that what was happening in the area was not a 'real' war; instead, he called it a 'virtual' war, a war which is not taking place and will not and did not take place in reality. In Baudrillard's view, one of the main goals of this war was to serve as a display of

power. The number of forces brought to the Gulf, the technology used and, most importantly to us, the media coverage of those forces, were all disproportional to what a real war would require. In parts of his articles Baudrillard presents a view comparable to Heikal's, stating that Saddam Hussein was a western creation who provided great service to the west, even going so far as to say that it was 'as though he were an agent of the CIA disguised as Saladin'²⁵⁰. Similar to Heikal, Baudrillard's approach leans towards politics, combined with a post-modern literary analysis of the war and its media coverage and, like Heikal, he writes from an outsider perspective with a strong sense of what Said termed Orientalism, as will be discussed later.

Baudrillard depicts the Gulf War as a 'non-war', 'characterised by that degenerate form of war which includes hostage manipulation and negotiation'²⁵¹. The stage upon which this hostage war took place was none other than the TV screen, and among those held hostage were the viewers, who also played a part; Baudrillard calls them a powerless 'phantom actor'²⁵². The TV viewer is induced to believe in a war that has not happened and will not happen 'in reality'; rather, Baudrillard believes that the whole situation is a game of deterrence, resulting from forty years of Cold War. According to Baudrillard, the history of the Cold War produced a state of 'anorexic war which can no longer devour the enemy because it is incapable of conceiving the enemy as worthy of being challenged or annihilated'²⁵³. This state is comparable to the situation Heikal described as pertaining just before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, when the United States found itself without a 'worthy' enemy that could justify its massive

²⁵⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, Indiana, 1995, p. 66

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 26

arsenal of armoury²⁵⁴, and when the weaponry manufacturers no longer had as big a market for their products now that the armament race had ended²⁵⁵. For eight years, the Iraq-Iran war formed an outlet for weapons manufacturers around the world, in addition to the wars in the Horn of Africa, South of Sudan, Chad, Lebanon, Central America and Afghanistan, among others. After the end of the Cold War the demand for their products subsided significantly; the need for a major new conflict was urgent, and one should be created if necessary²⁵⁶.

For an explanation of the building up of the 'worthiness' of Iraq one can refer to Heikal who explains that at the end of the Iraq-Iran war Saddam Hussein was considered a hero among a large proportion of the Arab masses²⁵⁷, and Iraq began to take on the role of leader of the Arab world (especially given that Egypt had been ousted from that position after the 1975 peace treaty with Israel)²⁵⁸. Furthermore, after the war Iraq had what was believed to be the fourth biggest army in the world, and the biggest army in the area, consisting of one million soldiers²⁵⁹, and was therefore considered a threat both internally and externally²⁶⁰. Internally, Iraq's economy was depleted after the war, and the Iraqi soldiers had no jobs to return to. This created a dangerous situation for the Iraqi government, which needed either to provide civilian jobs for the returning army²⁶¹, or to keep that army busy. Externally, the Iraqi media started a campaign

²⁵⁴ *Harb Al Khaleej: Awham Al Quwah wa Al Nasr* (Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War), pp. 215-221

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 215-221

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135

²⁵⁷ Even though by the end of the war there was no significant loss of territory on either side, and Iraq eventually accepted the 1975 Iran-Iraq Treaty of International Boundaries and Neighbourliness. See Dilip Hiro, *Dictionary of the Middle East*, London, 1996, pp. 97-98

²⁵⁸ *Harb Al Khaleej: Awham Al Quwah wa Al Nasr* (Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War), pp. 292-293

²⁵⁹ Dilip Hiro, *Dictionary of the Middle East*, London, 1996, p. 97

²⁶⁰ *Harb Al Khaleej: Awham Al Quwah wa Al Nasr* (Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War), pp. 142-144

²⁶¹ Dilip Hiro, *Iraq in the Eye of the Storm*, New York, 2002, p.33

against Israel²⁶², while Iraq also started threatening Kuwait regarding border issues and accused it, and the UAE, of flooding the oil market and so depressing the price of oil, which affected the Iraqi economy severely²⁶³. According to Heikal, all these factors (Iraq's new leading role, the unstable Iraqi economy and its effect on the army, and the threats towards Israel and Kuwait) were brought to the attention of the US government and raised serious concerns regarding Iraq's intentions in the area. This newly developing situation led to a kind of fulfilment of the 'enemy void' left by the end of the Cold War; hence one can assume that at last a new enemy was about to be created and given a state of 'worthiness'.

Baudrillard believes that for the war to be justified there was first a need to exaggerate its importance, since according to him neither Iraq nor Saddam Hussein was an 'enemy worthy of being challenged'. Hence it was also necessary to set the scene to accommodate that exaggerated importance and to prepare international public opinion for it, an opinion which helped in altering the cultural reception of the war. Of the situation during the period preceding the war Baudrillard wrote:

It is the de-intensified state of war, that of the right war under the green light of the UN and with an abundance of precautions and concessions. It is the bellicose equivalent of safe sex: make war like love with a condom! On the Richter scale, the Gulf War would not even reach two or three. The build-up is unreal, as though the fiction of an earthquake were created by manipulating the measuring instrument.²⁶⁴

²⁶² *Harb Al Khaleej: Awham Al Quwah wa Al Nasr* (Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War), p. 241

²⁶³ *Iraq in the Eye of the Storm*, pp. 33-34

²⁶⁴ *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 26

Among the main tools used for 'manipulating the measuring instrument' were the media channels. In order to make the Gulf War look like a 'real war' there was first a need to show Iraq as a worthy opponent that deserved and required a massive force to stop its aggression. Baudrillard's argument here conflicts starkly with what Rajab describes in her book, or what Qattan or any Kuwaiti would think. Baudrillard, like Heikal and - to some extent - Keane, sees the war as a conflict between the United States and Iraq, resulting from the instability of a political/economic situation caused by the end of the Cold War and the Iraqi-Iran War. Both Baudrillard and Heikal ignore the human perspective; both writers consider the situation inside Kuwait as a side effect of the conflict, not as its main cause, as will be outlined in detail below.

Baudrillard considers the Iraqi invasion and the situation inside occupied Kuwait as a 'reason' to justify the war and give it legal cover, and not that the UN resolutions were a 'result' of the Iraqi occupation that had already taken place and was preceded by a long political and social history. This conflict of perspective is one of the main differences caused by the complex cultural backgrounds of the viewers of the wars, and we can see the outcome of that conflict projected in the art and literature I am studying in this chapter.

According to Baudrillard, the relation between media and war is one of mutual promotion: 'The media promote the war, the war promotes the media, and advertising competes with the war.'²⁶⁵ Both sides of the Gulf War-media equation depended on the other: The war needed to be sold to the viewer, thus the media was controlled and directed by the makers of the war. It has become a common belief, expressed by

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31

Baudrillard, Heikal and Rajab among others, that this war was as much a media war as a war on the ground and in the field. It was the first war to be shown live to millions of viewers around the world in what is commonly believed to be 'real time' (although Baudrillard challenges that idea, as will be discussed later), and both sides tried to exploit that fact by controlling and manipulating the images presented in a way that served their own needs. It was important for the Allies (or the US in Baudrillard's view) to show the war 'happening', and to be shown in a glorified spectacle. TV was the theatre of choice to show and sell that spectacle of war to the viewer. It was therefore not the real war that was being sold, but the virtual one. According to Baudrillard, the image of victory is more important than victory itself, or as he states 'victory of the model is more important than the victory on the ground'²⁶⁶. The war was allowed to be extended, especially the air war, as this was a good way to 'show-off' power and create suspense before the dramatic finale. It was a war made and run by Ministries of Information, not those of Defence, as described by the Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani in his poem *Hawamesh Ala Daftar Al Hazeema* (Notes on the Notebook of Defeat), written in 1991 after the war:

Our war is not a war, our peace is not a peace

All that is shown to us...

is nothing but films

Our marriage is improvised

Our love is improvised

Just as love is at the beginning of a movie

Our death is pre-decided

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55

Just as death is at the end of a movie

In another verse he writes:

Defeat...

after a defeat...

after a defeat...

How can we win the war...

if the ones who acted...

photographed...

and directed...

were taught how to fight by the Ministry of Information?²⁶⁷

In this poem Qabbani, like Baudrillard, criticises the role media has played before, during and after the war. His criticism is directed mainly towards the Iraqi media, which depicted the result of the war as victory, regardless of what was shown on television. He describes the Arabs as having 'schizophrenia' for believing in victory after seeing the 'hungry and naked army... begging for a sandwich from their enemy while leaning down to kiss his feet!'²⁶⁸ That state of schizophrenia can also be used to describe the viewers of the other party's media. The war was promoted by the Allies as being what Baudrillard calls a 'soft'²⁶⁹ or a 'clean war'²⁷⁰, a war in which intelligent guided bombs were used to precisely target the Iraqi military while avoiding any civilian casualties. The way the war was shown by the media overawed the viewer by

²⁶⁷ Nizar Qabbani, 'Hawamesh Ala Daftar Al Hazeema (Notes on the notebook of defeat)', *Adab*, <http://www.adab.com/modules.php?name=Sh3er&doWhat=shqas&qid=68914>, accessed 31/12/2011

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 27

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.40

resembling the impressive spectacles of futuristic war movies and video games. This spectacle of power was an attempt to transpose the war into 'the virtual', where 'we are confronted with a virtual apocalypse, a hegemony ultimately much more dangerous than real apocalypse'²⁷¹. The virtual or soft war is a system created to control and process the 'hardness' of war, to give it a 'face-lift', to turn it into something easier on our conscience than the reality of its violence²⁷². 'We prefer the exile of the virtual, of which television is the universal mirror, to the catastrophe of the real.'²⁷³ In this cleaner virtual media war the other is rendered 'powerless without destroying its flesh'. This is 'worse than the other kind of war because it spares life. It is like humiliation.'²⁷⁴ Humiliation is the main point of Qabbani's poem, since by not showing the real effect of that virtual war Saddam was given a chance to appear victorious to the Arab masses. Qabbani describes the virtuality of the war and its effect as:

Comic and tragic
this battle of the Gulf
The swords did not meet
The knights did not duel
We have not for once seen Ashurbanipal²⁷⁵
All what was left of its history for museums...
are pyramids made from slippers!

Heikal believes that this virtual war succeeded in its mission of making the viewer believe in the cleanness of the war, right up to the moment that was marked as a

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 28

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40

²⁷⁵ An Assyrian king from the seventh century BC.

reality check, a disconnection from the virtual world, when news footage showed what looked like an Iraqi civilian shelter suffer a direct hit by an air strike, killing many among the hundreds seeking refuge inside it²⁷⁶. After weeks of images of guided missiles being launched, modern aircraft taking off and skies being lit up, for the first time the viewer saw images of the real effects of the war, the real damage those missiles and bombs could cause. Subsequently, the world was faced with scenes from the so-called *Highway of Death*, which were revealed to the media only after the war had ended, and which Keane has depicted in a series of paintings under the name *Scenes from the Highway of Death*, which we will discuss in detail later.

On the other hand, the media used the war to sell itself and its new concept of real time information. CNN showed in real time all the speeches of George Bush and Saddam Hussein. It showed Baghdad's sky being lit up by the fire of anti-aircraft systems, and Riyadh's sky as it received the Iraqi Scud missiles that were to be intercepted in the air by the Patriot missiles. The viewer rarely saw any 'action' on the ground, and even more rarely any 'reaction' to the live events he or she was witnessing. This created what Baudrillard calls the utopia of real time²⁷⁷.

Baudrillard suggests that the viewer was given the impression of being presented with real time, live from the heart of the event, coverage of the war. In fact, the 'live' images consisted of hours of spoken commentary filling the gap left by the lack of 'real' live footage from the field. The actual real footage was repeated time after time

²⁷⁶ The incident became known as the Amiriyah Shelter bombing. White House sources claimed that the site was used as a command centre for military communications, but civilians were admitted to the top floor of the site nonetheless. See; *Harb Al Khaleej: Awham Al Quwah wa Al Nasr* (Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War), p. 566 And; Unknown author, 'Crafting Tragedy', *The White House*, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/ogc/apparatus/crafting.html>, accessed 22/1/2012

²⁷⁷ *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 48

alongside the spoken commentary to give the 'impression' that coverage was 'live' and in 'real time'. Baudrillard indicates that 'CNN [sought] to be a stethoscope attached to the hypothetical heart of the war, and to present us with its hypothetical pulse'²⁷⁸. This process would not give the viewer a genuine and authentic coverage of the war, but rather a 'hypothetical' or virtual one that depended largely on the broadcaster's own analysis of the events. What 'real time' coverage of a war should provide to the viewer is the opportunity to – metaphorically – 'see them die live', or 'in other words that some event or other should overwhelm the information instead of the information inventing the event and commenting artificially upon it'²⁷⁹. Baudrillard suggests that only when that happens (the event overwhelming the information) would a 'real information revolution' exist.

The Media Warrior

Qattan and Keane both experienced the effect of media, but their experience differed in terms of quantity and sources. They also both had direct experience of the war, in that they were both in the field in the middle of the action in one way or another. But again, that experience was filtered through other social and geographical elements, their different cultural backgrounds and the locations in which they experienced events, and these affected their perceptions of the war. I am aware that perception may be influenced by many different factors, whether cultural and social background, or emotional connection to the experience of the war (as will be discussed later). In the following section I will concentrate my analysis on the effect of media on the work of Qattan and Keane, on how the two artists observed the war and the events leading to it through that media. I will do so by applying Baudrillard's vision of how the media

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

helped transform the Gulf War into a virtual war. Therefore it is important to look historically at the relation between the two artists and the media, and at what they experienced through that relation.

The Iraqi invasion began during the summer holiday of 1990. Thousands of Kuwaitis had left on vacation, and the invasion left many trapped outside the country, unable to return. Thousands more fled Kuwait during the first weeks of the invasion, terrified by the horror stories of killings, rape and looting that were circulating at the time. Some fled to Saudi Arabia through the desert; others left through the official borders when they were opened by the Iraqi government for a limited time during the first month of the invasion. However, many Kuwaitis refused to leave the country, preferring to stay and wait for the crisis to be resolved, and Qattan was among those who took that decision.

One of the first objectives achieved by the invading Iraqi forces was to take over the official Kuwaiti television and radio stations. Within the first few hours of the invasion, Kuwaitis and other residents of Kuwait stopped receiving official Kuwaiti television broadcasts. Kuwaiti radio on the other hand continued to broadcast in secrecy for a few days before it was shut down; the station then moved to broadcast from Saudi Arabia for a while, until the Iraqis started jamming the signal.

In 1990, satellite television was not as widespread as it is today. Very few households had access to unscrambled international TV broadcasts. Moreover, unfortunately for the satellite reception owners the technology of that time required large and hard-to-hide satellite dishes. Therefore, during the first months of the occupation armed Iraqi

Ministry of Communication employees started roaming the streets of Kuwait and confiscating the feed horns of every satellite dish they saw, rendering those dishes useless. The last non-Iraqi media sources left available to the residents of Kuwait were regional TV broadcasts, for example from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Dubai, which would start to severely weaken with the northern winds of winter, leaving radio as the one primary source of information, especially after the power blackouts Kuwait endured once the military action had begun.

Unlike television, which is an audio visual means of communication, radio broadcasts present the listener with a mental image of the events being reported. The residents of Kuwait under the Iraqi occupation could not see the political speakers, the mass demonstrations or – most importantly – the military build up and later on the actual attacks (apart from the very limited and distorted images shown by Iraqi media). Therefore, for many Kuwaitis the entrance of the Allied troops into Kuwait was not just their first encounter with the soldiers, tanks and vehicles of the liberating forces, it was actually the first time they had seen the image of those forces, and this was a new and special emotional experience.

During the military campaign (Desert Storm), most of the residents of Kuwait only heard and felt the impact of the explosions, perhaps saw flashes of light in the distance during the night, but never saw the cause of those explosions²⁸⁰. The cause could only be imagined. It was the opposite with the spectators outside Kuwait: they saw, or saw images of, the cause, but did not feel the impact.

²⁸⁰ Since many preferred to stay inside their homes and not go out except where necessary, due to fear caused by the news and rumours about Iraqis capturing people randomly from the streets of Kuwait and killing them or keeping them as prisoners. In addition, the Iraqis enforced a night curfew. See *Invasion Kuwait: An English Woman's Tale*, p. 161 and p. 175

In contrast, there were events some people inside Kuwait saw and experienced, while outsiders only heard stories about them; hence they could experience those events only in their imagination, and in some instances they doubted they had ever taken place. Although not all Kuwaitis witnessed killing, torture, rape, looting and destruction committed by the Iraqis, those who did suffered trauma that would affect them for years to come. The verbal transmission of those sights was another unofficial source of information, and the fear and paranoia arising out of Kuwaitis' feelings of captivity and oppression led to some facts being exaggerated or distorted, while the terrifying circumstances in which they were told meant that the stories left a similar traumatic effect on the listeners as on the witnesses. The subject of rumours was picked up by the Kuwaiti artist Hameed Khazaal. In his work *Rumour* (Fig. 35) he depicts two men facing each other, probably engaged in, or having just finished, a conversation. The man facing us wears a gas mask, a reference to the very real fears of the possibility of the use of chemical or biological warfare. Such fears were common before and during the war, since it was known that Iraq had used that kind of weaponry in the past, during the Iraq-Iran war and the fight against the Kurds in northern Iraq. The conversation between the two men is taking place in the dark. The stiffness of the figures signifies the state of fear and anxiety; depicting them in conversation refers to the many discussions among civilians on the probability of a chemical attack and the best reactions to it. Information regarding precautions against chemical warfare was scarce, and sometimes not very accurate. Leaflets were distributed instructing people to tape plastic sheets around every window in the house and to create their own gas masks by washing small pieces of coal and placing them inside cloth sacks; it was hoped that by using those sacks as masks to cover the mouth and nose, the coal would

absorb the dangerous chemicals before they got into the body. Those coal masks may not have been very effective in preventing the dangers of a mustard gas attack since 'it has been estimated that between 12% and 50% of mustard that is absorbed [by the body] will react with the skin and skin components'²⁸¹. However, civilians accepted the coal masks as a valid precaution against chemical attacks, regardless of scientific justifications, because in a war situation the masks gave the people a feeling of safety. One must also consider the isolation caused by the disconnection from the outside world, which sometimes left the communication gap to be filled with rumours and distorted facts. This isolation created a unique situation of solidarity among Kuwait residents, uniting them through a shared experience of captivity, which created shared feelings and emotions. One can argue that the shared experiences of the residents of occupied Kuwait, such as Qattan and Rajab, and the emotions resulting from them formed one of the main bases of the common cultural background which became part of their identity and which they expressed through their work. Keane on the other hand, who dealt with the terror of chemical warfare as well, but from the other side of the borders, expressed that fear differently as can be seen in the signs he used as will I discuss next.

Keane also referred to the fear of a chemical attack, in his painting *Ecstasy of Fumbling (Portrait of the Artist in Gas Alert)* (Fig. 36). In this self-portrait one notices the fright and confusion in the artist's eyes, even though he depicts himself in broad daylight, away from fighting and burning and surrounded by military personnel and vehicles, indicating a kind of security, and wearing full protective gear. In the painting he is shown encircled by what look like army leaflets with instructions on

²⁸¹ Charles Edward Stewart, *Weapons of mass casualties and terrorism response handbook*, Massachusetts, 2005, p. 47

survival, a paint brush in one hand and some medical pills by his side. This painting represents an event that Keane had experienced during his stay in the desert. While on a trip with the press representatives to a military hospital, 'the press's army minder suddenly ordered them to don their "Noddy suits" because of a Scud attack on the nearby town. Never having practiced dressing-drill, Keane was particularly bewildered and frightened by the emergency, which proved later to be a false alarm.'²⁸² According to Mark Lawson, 'Keane received "no training, no preparation, no briefing" before leaving for the Gulf except for a short session at an RAF base, where he took delivery of his "Noddy suit", as the protective outfit against chemical weapons were known.'²⁸³

The comparison between the works of Khazaal and Keane reveals two different ways of perceiving the chemical threat. In both cases the threat evokes fear and confusion, but the first is received with no reliable prior information (igniting the spread of rumours), and with primitive precautions (coal masks), while the latter is accompanied with an overwhelming mass of information and proper precautionary equipment (yet with inadequate training). The two different perceptions demonstrate the importance of information (media) in forming the reaction towards an event, whether that information takes the form of educational material, or a system of early warning in anticipation of an emerging danger²⁸⁴. The different perceptions also show that although some basic emotions, such as fear, might be shared as a response to an event, the expression of those emotions nonetheless differs according to the cultural and psychological background of the recipients, and the environment they are living in. In addition, one notices a visible calmness in the body language of the figures in Khazaal's painting, unlike the panic in Keane's. That calmness originates from the

²⁸² Mark Lawson, *Conflicts of Interest: John Keane, Edinburgh, 1995*, p. 65

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ The emergency warning system in Kuwait was not activated throughout the war period.

acceptance of the worst consequences of the expected chemical attack, in the belief that death as a martyr for the sake of Kuwait would be an honour, as Khazaal expressed in his article '*Al shaheed fe al aamal al tashkeelayah al Kuwaiteyah* (the martyr in Kuwaiti art works)²⁸⁵. The different approaches of the two artists towards a similar subject, and the different reactions shown in their work, give us an indication of the effect of their cultural backgrounds on that work. While Keane showed a strident expression of fear resulting from the experience he faced, Khazaal showed that fear in a calmer fashion.

Keane has depicted many scenes of the liberation of Kuwait, based on photographs and videos he took while in the country. For example, in *Scenes on the Road to Hell (I)* (Fig. 37), as in the original photographs (Fig. 41), we see delighted Kuwaiti children standing and running in the street; a girl in a red dress makes the victory sign with one hand, while holding a picture of the Emir of Kuwait in the other; another child is standing on a destroyed Iraqi tank holding his hands up in joy. Other important elements in this work include what looks like an American Armed Forces Humvee²⁸⁶ and a red Mercedes, which also appears in other works by Keane, such as *We Are Making a New World Order* (Fig. 38). For the children in *Scenes on the Road to Hell (I)* what was felt was pure joy at finally being free after seven months of repression, especially after actually seeing the forces of the liberating army and the destroyed tanks of their repressor, probably for the first time. The title of the work (*Scenes on the Road to Hell*) describes the road connecting Kuwait City to Safwan at the Iraqi border, which also became known as the 'Highway of Death'²⁸⁷ due to the high number of

²⁸⁵ Hameed Khazaal, '*Al shaheed fe al aamal al tashkeelayah al Kuwaiteyah* (the martyr in Kuwaiti art works)', *Altashkeely*, <http://www.altshkeely.com/kuwait/shaheed.html>, accessed 22/1/2012

²⁸⁶ High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle

²⁸⁷ Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The untold story of the Persian Gulf war*, Boston, 1993, pp. 428-429

Iraqi casualties who died there during the last two days of the war as they were bombed from the air while withdrawing from Kuwait. The connection between the title and the happiness of the Kuwaiti children might be read to indicate a joy emerging from the death and suffering of the other, a joy of a blood covered victory. However, given the explanation above, that would be a deficient and inaccurate understanding. The inclusion of the Humvee far in the background is a sign of the American hegemony in this situation, a sign of the Americans forcing the 'New World Order' that is governed by interests and driven by money and oil, symbolised by the Kuwaiti red Mercedes²⁸⁸. I wonder, however, whether Keane could truly understand what the girl in the red dress was feeling at the moment he saw and photographed her²⁸⁹. Keane's stay in Kuwait after the liberation was limited to six days²⁹⁰. Shortage of time, in addition to the continuing danger of the situation, probably prevented him from directly exploring the Kuwaiti perspective regarding the war, so that he learnt more about the Kuwaitis from the media than from directly connecting with them, and this is reflected in his paintings, as will be seen later in this chapter. One should also take into consideration that Keane was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum as an official recorder to accompany and cover (mainly) the work of the British armed forces, and to document his own experience of the war, not to cover or represent the Kuwaiti side.

Keane arrived in Saudi Arabia in February 1991, and stayed at the Dhahran

International Hotel before being sent to spend the first five weeks with the RAF and

²⁸⁸ More on the symbolism of interests, money and power in Keane's work will be discussed later in the chapter.

²⁸⁹ During his stay in the Gulf Keane took photographs as a reference instead of drawing sketches. An exhibition of Keane's war photographs was held in the British Imperial War Museum North, Manchester 18/9/2010-27/2/2011.

²⁹⁰ Excerpts from John Keane's video diary describing his experiences as Imperial War Museum's 'official recorder' in the Gulf, pages not numbered

the British Army as they trained in the desert. He also visited the forces in Bahrain. Later he stayed on a Royal Navy ship in the Gulf before spending five (or six)²⁹¹ days in Kuwait, starting on 27 February, one day after the liberation, and was then flown back to Britain²⁹².

In his video diary, Keane gave his impression of the situation as he arrived in Saudi Arabia:

One of the most interesting aspects of being here is finding out just how much people sit around and watch CNN, from journalists in the Dhahran International Hotel to the pilots waiting in their quarters between missions to even in the centre of communications, they have CNN on and it seems to me it is very much a kind of media war. [. . .] it seems to me that even being here, we don't know much more about what's going on. In fact, probably people back home who having had that information digested for them, probably know more about the overall situation.²⁹³

Even though Keane was near what would be the battlefield, he was treated and given access just like any other war journalist; 'sensitive' locations and information were blocked due to being in a military-controlled location. He notes that 'it was very

²⁹¹ The exhibition catalogue states that he stayed in Kuwait for five days. In the video diary Keane mentions that he arrived to Kuwait on Saturday and should leave the day after Wednesday (Thursday). Unless he left Kuwait earlier than he anticipated in his video diary, Keane must have spent six days in Kuwait (five nights).

²⁹² Unknown editor, *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs* by John Keane, unpublished exhibition catalogue, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010

²⁹³ Excerpts from John Keane's video diary describing his experiences as Imperial War Museum's 'official recorder' in the Gulf, pages not numbered

difficult to get any information about what was happening when I was on the ships. And I felt very isolated and away from everything.²⁹⁴ In the photographs he took and later exhibited Keane show us pictures of soldiers resting, reading, smoking (Fig. 39) and posing for the camera with their gear, standing beside or on top of their tanks and armoured vehicles. There are no pictures of 'action'. He had time to spend with the soldiers, to chat with them and to get to know their work: 'I've been made to feel very welcome. The Army are very accommodating, even given me my own tent, although it is only for one night, tonight.'²⁹⁵ From his photographs one can feel the tension build as the land war approached, with pictures of gatherings, meetings and intensifying preparations (Fig. 40). Nevertheless, he was not present when the army marched into Kuwait during the land battles; he had to watch it on television. When he arrived in Kuwait at the end of the war he did not see occupied Kuwait, nor did he see the liberation of Kuwait, he saw the end result of the war which, like all wars, was a scene of chaos and destruction. He saw the final product instead of the long process that produced those results.

Keane, like most journalists of that war, suffered from the policies set by the United States Department of Defence, which aimed at controlling media coverage. That policy is described in John MacArthur's book *Second Front*, published in 2004, as enforcing a form of indirect censorship on journalists. The idea of censoring information in wartime is not new; it goes back to the days of the American Revolutionary War when troops were accompanied by a controlled number of journalists, who were allowed to cover the war in exchange for limited censorship of

²⁹⁴ This quote was taken from the plate of the photograph *A gunner rests at his action station on board RFA Sir Bedivere* as it was exhibited in *The Gulf War 1990-1991*.

²⁹⁵ Excerpts from John Keane's video diary describing his experiences as Imperial War Museum's 'official recorder' in the Gulf, pages not numbered

information and restriction of access²⁹⁶. Similar methods of censorship have been enforced in wartime ever since, including during the two World Wars. The Vietnam War was an exception²⁹⁷, but the wider space given to the press in its coverage resulted in a strong anti-war opposition, which did not appeal to military commanders. Having learned from the 'mistakes' of the Vietnam War, in the Gulf War it was important for the leaders of the coalition to present to the public what Baudrillard calls a 'soft war', or at least a cleaner 'image' of the war. That concern about the cleanness of the war gained more importance after Saddam Hussein's threats to make the war into another Vietnam by fighting from street to street and by building big defence lines along the Gulf beaches. It was important to the coalition leaders to give the impression of being able to fight in an efficient manner that would win the war with limited loss of life among the Allies and among civilians. Therefore it was important to present their forces through the media as being well-trained and prepared against all Iraqi threats, including the possible use of unconventional warfare. Another image that needed to be advanced was the technological superiority of their weaponry, such that it was precise in hitting its targets and avoiding unnecessary damage.

MacArthur points out that from the moment the Bush Administration committed troops to Saudi Arabia, it 'never intended to allow the press to cover a war in the Persian Gulf in any real sense, and it intended to tightly manage what coverage it would permit'²⁹⁸. However, as important as it was to control media coverage of the war, it was also crucial not to turn the media against the war by total blockage, as

²⁹⁶ See Paul Cassell, 'Restrictions on Press Coverage of Military Operations: The Right of Access, Grenada and "Off-the-Record Wars"', *Georgetown Law Journal*, February 1985, electronic version, http://www.law.utah.edu/_personfiles/57/HIGHLIGHTS/C73georgelj931.pdf, accessed 26/4/2011

²⁹⁷ See Daniel Hallin, *The uncensored war: the media and Vietnam*, California, 1989

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6

happened during the invasion of Grenada for example²⁹⁹. Therefore, a balance between allowing journalists to work from the field, and giving them a controlled amount of freedom, was needed in order to promote the war in a positive way from the military point of view. To achieve that, the United States Department of Defence adopted the same method it had used during the invasion of Panama in December 1989, the establishment of the Media Pool. The National Media Pool consisted of representatives from each news medium in the US (television, news wire, newspapers, news magazines and radio)³⁰⁰, who were required to share the information and access they received from the Department of Defence. The media agencies were forced to accept this situation. Reporters were unable to travel by themselves to cover the war from Saudi Arabia, since they needed visas to enter the country. Collaboration between the US and Saudi governments ensured that journalists were only given those visas after the media agencies agreed on managing the news feed through the proposed National Media Pool. Through that pool, the Department of Defence gave the participating journalists access to locations they (the Allied commanders) selected by arranging accompanied field visits, providing opportunities for planned interviews with soldiers and commanders and holding press conferences and briefings. Michele Stephenson, of *Time* magazine, noted that the 'defence department designed this system to give the government strict control over the public's perception of the war, and for the government it worked perfectly'³⁰¹. As for the efficiency of the system, MacArthur quotes Lucy Spiegel from CBS describing the arrangement of the field visits for the journalists during the Desert Shield operation:

²⁹⁹ John MacArthur, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the 1991 Gulf War*, Berkeley, 2004, pp. 8-9

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 156

They would have already called ahead and everything was set up. You never really surprised anybody ... Like everything in the military, you had a mission to accomplish and that was to see, let's say, an air force base. You'd watch them take off and you'd watch them come down. You'd interview the crew and you'd go and watch them eat a meal and you'd talk to the CO [commanding officer], and you'd come home ... There will never be any journalist award given for that stretch [of time]. There were no great investigative stories. There couldn't be. You were too controlled. If you did go off the road and they found out about it, or you ran into somebody who reported you, you were brought in and your hands were slapped ... They'd yell at you: 'you had no business being up there without an escort. You know better than that.'³⁰²

Understanding how the censorship system worked in the Gulf gives us a close indication of how Keane was treated during his stay in the area and what he could and could not see. As mentioned above, Keane spent most of his time moving from Dahrhan to Bahrain to the borders, and when the land war started he joined a ship in the Gulf. What he saw during that period, or did not see, was reflected in the photographs he took of the soldiers posing, training or relaxing, or of the 'unneeded doctors on hospital ships smoking and playing cards as news of the rout filtered through'³⁰³. He saw most of the 'action' of the war on TV; when he arrived in the liberated Kuwait the war was already over and he saw nothing but the aftermath. Therefore, Keane's story is, more or less, the same as that of every photographer and journalist who was in the Gulf: he saw and did not see what everybody saw and did not see.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167

³⁰³ *Conflicts of Interests: John Keane*, p. 65

MacArthur notes that there were several obstacles that prevented journalists (and Keane for that matter) from producing 'good journalism' during the war. The first of these was the military censorship that constrained journalists and prevented them from obtaining any 'interesting' or unique stories, keeping in mind that journalists on the other side of the war faced similar restrictions, to say the least, enforced by the Iraqi government. But censorship was not the only obstacle; the nature of the war itself, its speed and its brevity, prevented any deep exploration of what was happening. Most of the war was fought from the air, leaving spectators with very little to see apart from the images and videos presented during the military briefings. The war on the land lasted only 100 hours; since most of the targets had already been destroyed, and the enemy was too weak and exhausted to fight back, the battles that happened on the ground were too brief to observe and report. The third obstacle was the element of fear, both among the journalists themselves, and among the military over the safety of those journalists, with the fear of chemical warfare especially strong. It was fear of becoming a casualty of the fighting that made Keane decide not to join the troops who crossed the border. Finally, there is the question of 'whether what took place should be called a war at all, since a war presumes two sides and the Iraqis barely fought back'³⁰⁴. Asking this question makes us wonder whether it is plausible to call the media coverage 'war journalism', or to call Keane a 'war artist'.

The War Artist

The question we must ask is: 'What is the relevance to the execution of an art work of being in the field and 'seeing' and experiencing the war first-hand?' John MacArthur

³⁰⁴ *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the 1991 Gulf War*, p. 148

states that some 'critics of traditional war correspondence argue that being at the front is greatly overrated as means of conveying the heart of the story'³⁰⁵, and that most of the necessary information could be obtained from Washington, especially in this controlled and restricted journalistic environment. Keane on the other hand, technically, is not a journalist, he is a painter. Does the painter, the war painter in particular, have to witness the event he is depicting? Does he or she have to 'see it' at all?

The first point to consider is that Keane's approach to painting frequently relies on visual references in the form of documentary photographs or film. The paintings Keane exhibited at the Pentonville Gallery in London in 1984 under the title *War Efforts*³⁰⁶ covered the event of the Falklands War, although Keane was not 'there' in the Falklands when the battles took place. Instead of witnessing the war first-hand he relied on newspaper photographs and TV broadcasts to formulate the visual reference he needed to produce his paintings. Keane depicts that war in two distinct ways: First we see images visually similar to the documentary photographs; for example, in *Romantic Encounter* (Fig. 50) we see a bird's-eye view of a war ship as if seen or photographed from a helicopter or an aeroplane, and a bomber jet composed perpendicular to the ship. Conversely, the angle of the scenes drawn by Linda Kitson during the same period of the same war are closer to natural eye level, and are shown as if observed from a shorter distance, as in *Sir Galahad Moored at Fitzroy* (Fig. 51). Kitson was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum to accompany the British Army to the Falklands during the war as an official war artist³⁰⁷; therefore she was

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149

³⁰⁶ *Conflicts of Interests: John Keane*, p.18

³⁰⁷ Unknown author, 'Contemporary War Artists: Linda Kitson: The Falklands War', *Imperial War Museum*, <http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.910>, accessed 7/8/2011

closer to the scenes she drew, and this is reflected in her work. The second distinct feature of Keane's work is his awareness of the media itself as a transporter of images and information. Mark Lawson notes that in using images from other forms of media, such as photography and film, Keane consciously challenges the new media that have played an important role in twentieth-century war documentation, replacing the artist, or the war artist in particular. According to Lawson, many 'artists chose simply to ignore the existence of photography (or to decline to enter the debate about which is better) but Keane takes it on directly. His works swallow and alter and comment on the images of rival form, as if to show that there is nothing to fear.'³⁰⁸ In addition to using media as a source for his works, Keane also directly refers to it, using images of the media itself, and text from newspaper cuttings. In his work *Still-Life (Insult to Injury)* (Fig. 52) Keane expresses his awareness of the impact of media by featuring a typewriter and a TV set as the subject of his still life. Here Keane is showing how television, press and art can be integrated into each other to produce different views and presentations of the event covered.

Lawson reports that for his coverage of the war in Nicaragua, Keane managed to travel and spend time in the country during the summer of 1987³⁰⁹. This allowed the artist to have direct interaction with the subject of his paintings, 'after his frustration at being reliant on second-hand media images'³¹⁰ as he was for his Falklands work. During his stay in Nicaragua he used tools and techniques similar to those he employed later in the Gulf; instead of sketching, he used a film camera, a notebook and a collection of found objects to later compose his paintings on the topic. He used the same technique in Northern Ireland (1989), Ollerton Colliery (1990) and then in the Gulf (1990). From

³⁰⁸ *Conflicts of Interests: John Keane*, p.18

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35

this we can conclude that, for Keane, having a visual reference has always been a key element in the process of creating his art. Instead of relying on others, he began to go to war zones to create his own documentary records from which to produce his artworks³¹¹, demonstrating a mediated view (as he did not paint there and then), but one that relies on his own experience, visual documentation and selection of material objects which become carriers of memory, connecting the two worlds.

In *Art and War*, Laura Brandon notes that there is no 'war art' entry in the 1986 edition of *The Oxford Companion to Art*; however, 'war art' is a common theme discussed on the Internet³¹². Brandon adds that the 'close relationship between the words "war" and "art" is not new, even if their use together is recent'³¹³. She outlines what she calls a 'long, rich history' between the two words and gives examples of war art dating from the rock-paintings in the Gasulla gorge near Castellón, Spain (c.8000-3000 BC) to the ancient art of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome and China, up to the so-called 'Wars of Terror' in Lebanon, Rwanda and Afghanistan.³¹⁴ Although war art is described as a genre in Wikipedia³¹⁵, Brandon argues that 'it is extremely difficult to define it in art-historical terms. It does not readily fit within familiar art-historical constraints and parameters, those categorisations of style, development, and label - genres - that have straight jacketed all art since the mid-eighteenth century and given us our view of the modern canon.'³¹⁶ She adds that war art 'does not really make up a traditional "genre" of art history. It encompasses many other genres - associated in particular with

³¹¹ For his coverage of the Bosnian conflict (1994), however, he went back to relying on second-hand material instead of being in the field.

³¹² Laura Brandon, *Art and War*, London, 2007, p.2

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p.3

³¹⁴ See *Art and War*, p.11-25

³¹⁵ Unknown author, 'War art', *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_art, accessed 25/6/2011

³¹⁶ *Art and War*, p.4

painting - such as landscape, portraiture, scenes from daily life, and still life.³¹⁷

Therefore, Brandon suggests that war art could be a 'super-genre', or categorised 'beyond genre'. This difficulty in defining war art makes it 'far easier to discuss the sort of art that war inspires than to fit it into a genre'³¹⁸. In the context of this study one can see that variation in the different approaches to representing the Gulf War between Keane, who as an officially commissioned artist translated his observations of the war into his paintings in a more or less documentary manner, and Qattan, who produced works that are emotional and deal with the war in a more 'spiritual' manner through his Circulist theory, as will be discussed later.

The so-called 'traditional role' of a war artist has been divided into two main categories: documentation and propaganda. Brian Foss adds a third purpose for commissioning war artists³¹⁹, 'To Keep Artists at Work'³²⁰, meaning to keep them employed after losing their jobs or commissions because of the war. As mentioned earlier, the depiction of war goes back to days of cave-painting and was subject of many artworks throughout history. Yet, to set a starting point which we can relate to artists such as John Keane one can study the beginning of the modern official commissioning of war artists which started with the establishment of the Wellington House. The goal of Wellington House, established in 1914, was to develop British propaganda in support of the British fighting forces; it commissioned 130 artists during the period of the First World War. At the time, sending artists to cover events at the front was more practical than sending photographers, as photography required the transport of heavy and sophisticated cameras and equipment to the field. In

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ Foss was discussing in particular the situation during the two World Wars.

³²⁰ Brian Foss, *War paint: art, war, state and identity in Britain, 1939-1945*, New Haven, 2007, p. 9

addition, the time needed to expose the film and then change the film sheet for every new picture rendered photography unfit for use as a medium to depict the battlefield. The artist, on the other hand, observed and sketched the scenes in the field in order to finish the final work afterwards.

Mark Lawson remarks that the kind of work that was produced by commissioned war artists such as John Singer Sargent 'was not as jingoistic as the government might have hoped and so the propaganda aspect of war art was receding'³²¹. In Sargent's painting *Gassed* (Fig. 46) we see a rather grim image of the war, soldiers lined-up with their eyes bandaged (probably resulting from a chemical gas attack) being led to the camp for treatment while more bandaged soldiers lie around them on the ground. This is not the kind of image a government, aiming to get its people fighting for the country, would use as 'propaganda' material. Keane refers to Sargent's work in his painting *Ecstasy of Fumbling*, where we see a postcard of *Gassed* in the lower right corner. The two paintings share a topic: the fear of chemical gas attacks. The title of Keane's painting is taken from English poet Wilfred Owen's *Dulce et Decorum est*, which describes a chemical gas attack on a group of soldiers during the First World War. In part of the poem Owen says:

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And floundering like a man in fire or lime...

³²¹ *Conflicts of Interests: John Keane*, p. 64

Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.³²²

Similarly to Sargent's painting, Owen's poem gives a graphic description and horrifying image of the war. By referring to the works of Sargent and Owen, Keane tries to show his historic knowledge of the subject he is painting, and borrows symbols from the two artists to express the idea of fear and confusion. This also demonstrates how Keane wants to put himself in the tradition of English culture.

War Art and Media

With the advances in photography and film technology after the First World War the reliance on war art as a documentary medium receded. Newspapers depended more on the work of photographers such as Robert Capa, who used the compact Contax camera³²³ with its advanced 35mm rolls of film to capture instantaneous images from the middle of the battlefield quickly and discreetly (Fig. 45). By 1990 the advances in technology and televised journalism allowed 'live' transmission of video footage from the war zone to millions of viewers around the world, and this left 'war artists' to fill a role very different from the one they had in 1914. Keane is aware of the changing role of the war artist, and believes that TV and photojournalism 'are fulfilling a role that has to do with conveying information for tonight's news or tomorrow's breakfast table'³²⁴. He states that he felt relieved and liberated that war artists are no longer

³²² Unknown editor, Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce et Decorum Est', *The First World War Poetry Digital Archive*, <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/3303>, accessed 27/6/2011

³²³ Richard Whelan, *Robert Capa: A Biography*, Nebraska, 1994, p. 214

³²⁴ *Conflicts of Interests: John Keane*, p. 64

required to produce work targeted at the press, since: 'I could try to redefine what being a war artist was. I didn't see my goal as perhaps a previous generation of war artists had. I didn't have to merely record what happened and I had no obligations to produce propaganda. In fact, I could address such questions as the political constraints on the other media. I saw myself as being outside all that. Quaint or not, I was able to be a bit of a maverick.'³²⁵ Even so, Keane did toy with the idea of true representative painting (documentary), particularly during the first stage of his commission in the Gulf before the land war and before entering Kuwait. Julian Stallabrass comments on the work of the first stage of Keane's commission:

Keane was first assigned to the RAF and as a commissioned artist of record made paintings of their encampments which draw on old devices and are not so very different from many works made during the two world wars. These pictures are often quite pretty, for the artist could hardly but be fascinated by the unfamiliar light and space of the desert, and within it the disposition of military equipment and personnel.³²⁶

Keane used the photographs he took during his stay in the Gulf as a direct visual reference, with elements being copied from the photographs and recomposed on the canvas. Although Keane used video and photographic cameras to 'sketch' what he saw and later based his paintings on those sketches, his paintings did not always portray a direct representation of those photographs or videos. For example, *Scenes on the Road to Hell (1)* borrows a mirror image of the figures of the little girls from the

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ Julian Stallabrass, 'Painting Desert Storm', *The Courtauld Institute of Art*, http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/people/stallabrass_julian/PDF/KEANE.pdf, accessed 27/6/2011. Originally published in *New Left Review*, London, September-October 1992, pp. 102-109

photograph *A Kuwaiti Child Celebrates on an Abandoned Iraqi Tank* (Fig. 41a) and the figure of the boy on top of the tank from another photograph (Fig. 41b) to create a scene both 'documentary' in some of its elements, since it is a representation of the elements in the photographs, and imaginative in its structure, since those elements have been rearranged by the artist to form a scene which does not represent the ones he saw. Scenes and elements captured by Keane's own camera are not his only source of visual reference: in a work such as *Every Time We Say Goodbye* (Fig. 42) we find a direct visual influence of images that were presented through TV and press. In this painting we see a Tornado jet in the process of dropping its bomb load from thousands of feet up in the sky, framed by what looks like frames from one of the videos commonly presented during the military press conferences, showing the precision of the guided smart bombs. Another kind of visual influence from the media can be witnessed in his awareness of its presence and his presentation of the media as part of the war itself. In *Scenes on the Road to Hell (5)* (Fig. 43a) a news cameraman is one of the main figures of the composition, shown recording a video of a dead Iraqi soldier. This painting is, in essence, an almost exact representation of the photograph *An American Soldier Films the Body of a Dead Iraqi Soldier* (Fig. 43b), although Keane dressed the photographer in his painting in civilian clothing, while in the photograph he is wearing a military uniform.

Most of Keane's paintings, like the news footage shown on live TV, are not scenes of actual fighting. Other than the picture of the Tornado and the trails in the sky shown in *Distant Shudder* (Fig. 44), there is no evidence of fighting taking place, no pictures of 'them dying', as noted by Baudrillard and outlined above. The pictures, painted or photographed, are either of the preparation for the fight or of its aftermath; there are

no pictures resembling Robert Capa's *Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death* (Fig. 45a) or his pictures from *D-day* (Fig. 45b), or paintings resembling RCW Nevinson's *La Mitrailleuse* (Fig. 53). No scenes of active fighting were visible to the artist during his stay in the Gulf, just as they were not visible to most of the journalists who covered the war or, in some cases, even the fighting troops, if one takes Anthony Swofford's word for it. In his novel/memoir *Jarhead*,³²⁷ Anthony Swofford, a soldier in the US Marines during the Gulf War, describes how he spent long months in the desert and participated in the battles of Desert Storm without having a chance to shoot a single shot from his sniper rifle. Swofford even wonders if he was part of a fight at all, especially when he compares what he witnessed with the stories his father had told him about the war in Vietnam: 'Did we fight? Was that combat? When compared to what we've heard from fathers and uncles and brothers about Vietnam, our entire ground war lasted as long as a long-range jungle patrol, and we've lost as many men, theatre-wide, as you might need to fill two companies of grunts.'³²⁸ The stories of Vietnam, in addition to the war movies Swofford and his fellow Marines watched before the battles began, convinced him that he was going to witness the same sort of 'action'. In reality, this war was different; in its fast pace and long range it was not what was expected by Swofford, or by any spectator.

As the nature of war has changed, so too has the visual representation, whether factual or artistic. Pictures of fighting soldiers in long ground battles have become less common, and this is true for the Gulf War, the Gulf War of 2003 and, in particular, what has become known as the war on terror. Rupert Smith, Commander of the British

³²⁷ Anthony Swofford, *Jarhead*, New York, 2003, Kindle edition

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, location 3301

armoured division³²⁹, has criticised 'the lack of understanding and appreciation by senior politicians of the way [the Gulf War] had been planned and fought. [. . .] Their general thesis was that this was "the war that never happened" with modern forces rounding up huge numbers of hapless, ragged, ill-equipped troops.'³³⁰ He describes the Gulf War as 'the first war of the technological era, and possibly the last tank war'³³¹, and explains that 'Generals do not plan wars intending to fight; if they can, in an ideal world, they achieve the result they require *without* fighting'³³², adding that the Gulf War did achieve its results with minimal fighting, as was planned. Smith then states that one 'might feel sorry for the journalists involved, who complained they'd covered far more exciting and hard-fought campaigns'³³³. Smith's sympathy might also be directed towards writers and painters such as Swofford or Keane, who were expecting, or maybe hoping, to see fighting taking place.

Keane in Post-War Kuwait

As Keane arrived in Kuwait after its liberation, the scenes he depicted began to change to the actual results of the war. While Keane had been engulfed by the exoticism of the desert when he first arrived in Saudi Arabia, it was another kind of overwhelming feeling that he encountered as he arrived in Kuwait. In his video diary Keane describes Kuwait as being 'in complete blackness by night with a curfew in the evenings. There have been some pretty grim tales about torturing, murdering, looting, raping and so on, and there is a kind of stench of, a stench of death if you like about the place, which is

³²⁹ Hugh McManners, *Gulf War One: Real voices from the front line*, London, 2010, Kindle edition location 56

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, location 152

³³¹ *Ibid.*, location 155

³³² *Ibid.*, location 162

³³³ *Ibid.*, location 166

not pleasant at all.³³⁴ As Keane's helicopter approached Kuwait he was greeted with the sight of burning oil wells and a thick cover of black smoke, a terrifying first impression of the state Kuwait had been left in after the war. Keane visited the burning oil wells and inspected them closely; he describes the uniqueness of the experience of being there in person, saying that 'from being there [something] you didn't really feel from just watching it on television, was the roar, the roar of the flames'³³⁵. Keane was able to witness the scenes of destruction, death, and at the same time triumphs and joys, a confusing and dense combination of visuals and feelings, about which he says that it is 'only really after the event that things began to sink in. ...when I was there I was too busy dealing with the immediacy of what was happening in front of me'³³⁶. For an artist, rather than a journalist, those experiences and the feelings and the thoughts they arouse are, arguably, essential in building a cultural image of the war, unlike the factual image that concerns the news reporter. More senses are stimulated when experiencing the event in person, and that is what motivates the artist. In Kuwait Keane started seeing up-close the end results of the war, after weeks of waiting and observing from a distance. In addition, he was liberated from the constraints of the Press Pool. While Keane's earlier work from the field played on the exotic or romantic nature of the war, with titles such as *Every Time We Say Goodbye*, *Distant Shudder* and *Alien Landscape*, we find the paintings depicting the post-war situation to be more emotional and shocking, with titles such as *Scenes on the Road to Hell* and *Ashes to Ashes*, and sometimes more political and critical of the war, such as *Looking for Evidence* and *We Are Making a New World Order*. Titles are important when

³³⁴ Excerpts from John Keane's video diary describing his experiences as Imperial War Museum's 'official recorder' in the Gulf, pages not numbered

³³⁵ From the plate of the photograph *A sky filled with the black smoke from Kuwait's burning oil wells* as it was exhibited in *The Gulf War 1990-1991*.

³³⁶ From the plate of the photograph *An abandoned Iraqi tank in Kuwait City after its liberation* as it was exhibited in *The Gulf War 1990-1991*.

analysing Keane's work since they are part of the work itself, and he seems always to inscribe the title of the painting at the bottom of the canvas. Lawson considers the titles of Keane's paintings to be one of two central aspects of his work (the other is his attitude towards media), and describes them as 'wordy, editorial, polemical and, generally, punning. [...] Rather more in the manner of a novelist than a painter, his works usually begin with a phrase or title scribbled in a notebook.'³³⁷ Therefore, one can assume that when comparing the titles of Keane's work before and after entering Kuwait, we will find a reflection of the change in his perception of the war, as will be shown in the following.

Although Keane kept to his documentary-style way of painting, with scenes close to those of the photographs he took for visual reference, he played on the juxtaposition of the elements of those compositions in order to bring his own 'non-documentary' approach, or 'maverick' touch, to covering the war. Here 'documentary-style' refers to what could be called the 'traditional' role of a war artist or an 'official recorder'³³⁸, which was, during the Second World War, 'to create a historical and artistic record of Britain's involvement in war and to bolster morale through exhibitions and publications'³³⁹. According to Laura Brandon, although the Imperial War Museum has commissioned artists with a variety of painting styles, abstract artists were traditionally excluded, since a sense of 'reality' is expected from war art. The assumption that the product of commissioned war painting must be a representation of the 'visual reality' of war, or to be what one might classify as 'documentary-styled',

³³⁷ *Conflicts of Interests: John Keane*, p. 18

³³⁸ That was Keane's official title as assigned by the Imperial War Museum since Britain was not officially at war with Iraq when the commission began. See Unknown author, 'Contemporary War Artists: John Keane: The Gulf War', *Imperial War Museum*, <http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.911>, accessed 29/6/2011

³³⁹ *Art and War*, p. 60

must be dealt with with caution, as one can see in the case of Peter Howson. Some works of war art have been criticised for being 'overly imaginative', such as Howson's *Croatian and Muslim* (1994), which depicts two Croatian men torturing and raping a Muslim woman. Howson was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum in 1993 to cover the Yugoslav Wars, and accompanied the British forces participating in the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia³⁴⁰. Of all the works he produced and exhibited from his visit to Bosnia the rape scene in *Croatian and Muslim* probably caused most controversy and debate. The debate revolved among two central issues: first, when Howson's exhibition *Bosnia* was held in the Imperial War Museum in September 1994, the violence of the scene led to a sign being put outside the exhibition area warning viewers that the exhibition may not be suitable for young children³⁴¹. The second cause of debate was, as mentioned above, the fact that the work was 'overly imaginative' since the artist based it not on his own 'observations', but on what he heard from eyewitnesses. Brandon describes that debate:

Although he diligently recorded what he saw, back in Britain Howson began to paint rumoured atrocities - rape and castration - as opposed to what he had seen. Public debate ensued. The concept of war artists as eyewitnesses is strong, and people expect their work, like journalists' reports, to be in some degree truthful. Thus they tend to reject overly imaginative reconstructions, even if such pieces derive from a profound belief in knowledge that terrible things do take place in war [. . .] and do matter. Howson defended his approach to *The Times* (19 September

³⁴⁰ Unknown author, 'Contemporary War Artists: Peter Howson: Bosnia', *Imperial War Museum*, <http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.912>, Accessed 30/6/2011

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Accessed 10/8/2011

1993): at least half of the Imperial War Museum's paintings, he claimed, did not come from events the artists had actually seen.³⁴²

Brandon wonders about Howson's motivation for depicting what he did not 'visually' witness, whether it was 'a desire to depict what was known but not witnessed? Or was it a wish to bring home the almost unimaginable brutality of war by transforming that same level of horror to the imaginable?'³⁴³ Either way, the 'public expectation' of an official war artist (or recorder) is for them to produce works that resemble what they have witnessed in the field of the war rather than what they have imagined or been told, and that was the basis of the criticism Howson faced. Keane on the other hand 'defends' his work by insisting that he simply painted images that he 'witnessed'³⁴⁴, and perhaps the photographs he captured with his camera and later exhibited separately can serve as 'evidence' proving the authenticity and truthfulness of his statement of the war, as much as they do as personal record.

Similar to the 'punning' titles he used for his work, the scenes Keane painted are constructed using elements from photographs he took at the scene combined in a manner that transmits to the spectator the idea he is reaching for, giving his works a mixed documentary/expressive merit. The 'visual pun' of including a representation of the red Mercedes and the little girl making the victory sign, with the American Humvee and the destroyed Iraqi tank in the background of *Scenes on the Road to Hell (I)* is one example of Keane's style of 'punning' expression. Most of these elements could be 'proven' to have been seen by Keane while he was in Kuwait, giving the painting its documentary quality. Nevertheless, as described before, Keane's 'choice' of

³⁴² *Art and War*, p. 96

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 97

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69

this combination of elements, in addition to the title which is in fact part of the work, opens the door to a range of assumptions as to what Keane is trying to 'express'.

Another painting, *Mickey Mouse at the Front* (Fig. 47), provoked criticism as being an anti-war statement, as it was assumed that Keane was mocking the war and stamping it as an American product. The figure of Mickey Mouse and the shopping trolley are believed to be signs of commercialism and Americanism, as are the crushed Pepsi can and the dollar bills framing *We Are Making a New World Order* (Fig. 38). Stallabrass analyses *Mickey Mouse at the Front* describing it as:

a collection of reminders of the more inconvenient aspects of the great victory. Laid out in front of a fortified city are various elements: a palm tree hunched over unnaturally³⁴⁵ like some rearing worm, its fronds brushing the ground, serving to indicate environmental catastrophe; a shopping trolley full of weaponry, a symbol of conspicuous military consumption where combat becomes a consumer good, a motif which nicely links the expenditure of 'ordnance' with the inviolable Western freedom to consume; worst of all (for the press), a grinning Mickey Mouse squatting upon a plinth as if defecating, an image of America, and more broadly of chewing-gum culture, complacently and even blissfully presiding over the catastrophe.³⁴⁶

Lawson reports that the painting was criticised in *The Sun* as causing outrage among the families of dead soldiers, with the paper describing it as showing 'Mickey Mouse

³⁴⁵ In fact, Keane depicted a rather realistic representation of a dead palm tree which he also photographed at the scene.

³⁴⁶ 'Painting Desert Storm', pages not numbered

sitting on a lavatory amid the destruction of Kuwait³⁴⁷. In response to the criticism Keane demonstrated that this painting is not an 'imaginary' work, but something he actually witnessed on the seafront of Kuwait. 'I was thinking of the American influence on Kuwait . . . on the "Mickey Mouse defences" of the Iraqis against an invasion from the sea that never came. But, above all, it was just a startling image that I had witnessed in that arcade.'³⁴⁸ He described the sights that he saw and photographed, and later exhibited, of the trolley filled with ammo, the dying palm tree and the figure of Mickey Mouse, which was in fact a children's amusement ride and not a 'fictional' figure sitting on a lavatory as the press believed. Does the fact that Keane 'saw' those elements and even photographed them make his work, to some extent, direct and pure documentation of the war? And is Mickey Mouse, as Keane tried to prove, merely an amusement ride rather than a political statement? I will argue that it is not.

Based on Keane's comment cited above, *Mickey Mouse at the Front* may not have been an intentional political statement at the time it was painted; however, one can argue that the critics gave the painting a political meaning regardless of Keane's intentions. When the figure of Mickey Mouse is viewed as a sign, this sign could be thought of as a Peircean icon realistically representing the physical appearance of the children's ride Keane saw near the beach, in the same way a photograph would. The figure of Mickey Mouse has been placed in a scene constructed by the artist alongside other elements he has seen on the seafront, such as the shopping trolley, the dead palm trees, the Kuwaiti flag on the ground, the stool, the barricades on the shore and the smoke-covered sky. It was the artist's choice to create this scene of destruction and

³⁴⁷ *Conflicts of Interests: John Keane*, p. 69

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

comical contradictions, hence separating them from their iconic function and making them more symbolic, especially when looked at from the political perspective. The idea that the Mickey Mouse figure in Keane's work is a symbolic sign is supported by the fact that the artist used a similar figure in a symbolic manner in works painted later, after the war. In *Choice* (Fig. 48a), painted in 1993, a child wearing a Mickey Mouse costume pushes a shopping trolley against a background that looks like London in ruins. This painting was part of an exhibition titled *The Struggle for the Control of the Television Station*, first shown in New York in April 1993³⁴⁹. Most of the works referred to the political and economic changes of the early-1990s: the Gulf War, probably the main event to have affected Keane due to his personal experience, was added to events such as the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall. It has been argued that in this exhibition Keane takes a rather sarcastic look at the alleged 'triumph' of capitalism and at how in fact the capitalist western world with its economic troubles 'looks anything but triumphant'³⁵⁰. The Mickey Mouse costume also appears in the central panel of *The Struggle for the Control of the Television Station* (Fig. 48b), this time holding a red can of a fizzy drink and standing next to a man loading a pile of money bills into a shopping trolley which is being pushed by a blindfolded skeleton, a rather surreal scene when compared to Keane's previous 'documentary' work. In these paintings Keane uses Mickey Mouse in a noticeably symbolic manner. In 1994 the child in the Mickey Mouse costume returns to Keane's work, this time pushing a trolley full of chopped pork in the middle of a burning city in *Renouncing Violence* (Fig. 49), Keane's response to the Yugoslav War, in which he represents the western 'indifference'

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 83

³⁵⁰ See *Conflicts of Interests: John Keane*, pp. 84-95.

toward that war according to Lawson's interpretation³⁵¹. Forming the link between Mickey Mouse and western capitalism and consumerism, and rereading *Mickey Mouse at the Front* retrospectively under that symbolic, rather than iconic, sign, bring us to a realisation that this painting ridicules the war situation and blames the 'childishness' of the Americans, who sought to benefit economically from it.

Hence Keane's works of the Gulf show two sides: he refers to the exoticism of the scenes he observed in the desert, but also makes political comments. While the works discussed earlier deal with issues such as the unknown landscape, unknown enemy and the role of the media in the war, those mentioned just above show Keane's political stand. *Mickey Mouse at the Front*, *We Are Making a New World Order* and the *Scenes on the Road to Hell* series refer to the final stage of the Gulf War as well as the political reflection upon the war.

Circulism and War

War is a recurring subject in Qattan's work. Part of the Circulist theory is the idea that the artist must interact with his environment, or as Lidia Qattan puts it: 'Circulism means [the] involvement into the phenomenal world of existence; the realm of effect and causation, such as a human being feels and understands.'³⁵² Being part of the surrounding environment means interacting with social and political matters. This approach to art may have been influenced by the fact that Qattan lived in a place and time of almost constant political conflict: four major wars with Israel (1948, 1956, 1967 and 1974), a long and complex civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990), a very close one just to the north of Kuwait between Iraq and Iran (1980-1988) and a long history

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.97

³⁵² Khalifa Qattan (editor), Lidia Qattan, 'What is Circulism?', *The Apple*, Kuwait, 1975, p. 19

of political clashes between his own country and its northern neighbour, which was concluded in 1990 with the most traumatic and personal war the artist had ever witnessed, since it was the war that directly affected his life.³⁵³

Qattan interacted with those conflicts, which he witnessed personally and through the media. He felt that it was his 'duty' as a Circulist artist to respond to these wars with his art. However, unlike Keane, Qattan does not document war; his work is inspired by, but not a direct depiction or representation of what he saw, read or heard. The imaginative nature of Circulism demands that the artist stay away from direct depiction of reality, which is what documentary, arguably, is all about. What Qattan does is to explore the human factors that ignite or result from war. He talks about greed, for example, as a cause of war, and of fear as a result of it, and tries to represent the emotional aspects of war rather than its material or political characteristics. In one sense, Qattan's war paintings are closer to a philosophical or abstract reflection on the war. This 'abstract' nature of his thought means, first of all, that it is sometimes hard for the spectator to relate the symbolic elements in Qattan's work to a specific historic incident; his works seems to lack documentary value if the observer does not have a prior knowledge of its historic background. Second, the abstract nature gives his work a generic value, whereby the abstract concepts of 'greed' and 'fear', for example, can be applied to any similar human conflict or situation (i.e. other wars), and that notion of the cyclical nature of thoughts and values is at the core of Circulism, as discussed in the second chapter. The abstract thoughts Qattan has portrayed as inspired by the Lebanon Civil War can be recycled to fit the atrocities of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the war in the Balkans, the war in Afghanistan or even the Crusades. According to the

³⁵³ For a brief history of the Middle East and its conflicts see Dilip Hiro, *Dictionary of the Middle East*, London, 1996

fundamental theoretical basis upon which Circulism was built (as discussed in detail in the second chapter), the basic human thoughts and instincts remain the same, whether in the eleventh century, the 1970s or the twenty second century. While philosophical and scientific ideas might change over the years and from one place to another, basic instincts, feelings and values remain constant, regardless of time and place.

The Prophecy in Qattan's *Deep Wound*

During a period of personal depression in the 1980s, Qattan produced what has become one of his most famous paintings, *The Deep Wound* (Fig. 54). The painting contains several elements which I will first point to, and then discuss how they were analysed as symbols by Lidia Qattan, adding my own thoughts on their possible interpretation. It is a self-portrait in which an imprisoned, long-bearded and wounded Qattan looks straight at the viewer. The main figure is faced by six Arabian men observing him, with some sort of an animal. There is also a whirlpool, from which a figure similar to a Jinni is emerging (or being sucked in), and a fiery cave with another figure hanging upside-down from its feet. Two strange looking tree trunks can be seen: one green and decayed or cut, and one red and carrying an egg-shaped white object. The green tree trunk looks like a hand reaching for the taller red one. In the background we see a cracked wall and a pillar of fire and smoke. On the two prison bars the figure is holding is written in Arabic: 'Happened 9-12-1983 Khalifa' and 'Painted 9-2-1984 Qattan'. It is very rare for Qattan to sign and date his work, therefore one is led to believe that the writing on the bars is not a mere signature, but part of the work itself. The date and signature are another symbol (or in Peircean theory an indexical sign), placed intentionally in the painting by Qattan. Lidia Qattan tells us that the artist painted this work 'as a spontaneous reaction to a traumatic experience

that befell Khalifa and left a deep scar in his soul³⁵⁴. We do not know what the direct cause of this traumatic experience was. Khalifa and Lidia Qattan on the other hand have associated this painting with events that happened more than six years later, giving it what could be called a 'prophetic' merit.

The symbols of *The Deep Wound*, though intentionally chosen by the artist as a representation of a personal 'traumatic experience', were in 1991 read in a different way. In *The Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, Lidia Qattan interprets the symbols of *The Deep Wound* as relating to the events of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which started on August 2nd, 1990. According to Lidia Qattan's analysis, the sadness on the figure's face represents the feelings of Kuwaitis after the tragic events that followed the invasion; there is the shock of the event itself and of the atrocities that followed it. The long beard resembles the appearance of many Kuwaiti men who let their beards grow during the months of the occupation due to a general feeling of depression or to the lack of men's toiletries, which started to run out before the end of the occupation. The wound on the figure's chest signifies the stab of the Arab neighbour, and the hands holding the green bars signify the solidarity of Kuwaiti people during the months of the crisis. The six Arabian spectators, according to Lidia, stand for the six Arab nations who stood with Saddam against Kuwait in the meetings of the Arab League, the countries of *Al Dhed* (opposition) as they became known to Kuwaitis³⁵⁵, and the small animal represents the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, since Palestine was not a country in its own right. The crack on the wall can also be interpreted as a symbol of the rift that opened up between the Arab nations as a result of this war. The

³⁵⁴ *Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 84

³⁵⁵ The countries of 'opposition' are those Arab countries that did not support the Arab League resolution passed on 3/8/1990 condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Those countries are: Jordan, Yemen, Sudan, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Mauritania, Iraq and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

whirlpool and the figure emerging from or being sucked into it is Iraq, with all the trouble caused to it by this war. The tortured figure hanging from its feet represents the mutilated bodies of Kuwaiti and Arab men and women who had been tortured by the Iraqi soldiers and intelligence agents (*Mukhabarat*). The tall red tree, according to Lidia Qattan, symbolises the hand of the Kuwaiti resistance, holding a bomb or explosives, while the green one is the spirit of Kuwaitis after the liberation: damaged, but ready to rebuild the ruined country. I would argue that another possible interpretation, based on Circulism's symbolic system as discussed in the second chapter, is that the white egg shape is the spirit of Kuwaitis held high in the sky, since white in Qattan's table of colour meanings³⁵⁶ represents purity and faith, which could hardly describe a bomb. Since green is the colour of jealousy and envy, the green tree could be a hand reaching for that white spirit, trying in vain to destroy it. Finally, the fire and smoke bring to mind the burning oil wells sabotaged by the Iraqis, causing a blackened sky and long-lasting destruction to the environment.

The Deep Wound was not the only painting to be reinterpreted or reread in the light of the events of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War. Fifty-two other paintings that had been produced by Khalifa Qattan before the 1990s were exhibited in Kuwait and abroad in a show entitled *The Prophecy*, which was intended to narrate the story of the invasion and the war. Khalifa and Lidia Qattan probably intended the show to be an expression of patriotism, which was a common feeling among Kuwaitis at the time. During the Iraqi occupation Qattan did not paint any work related directly in its subject matter to the situation in which he was living; instead he continued working on the trees series he had begun during the late-1980s. The trees he painted may not have

³⁵⁶ For more detail about the table of colours see chapter 2 and appendix III.

the symbolic power of his other Circulist works, but instead expressed the feeling of personal depression and helplessness, as was discussed in the first chapter. The depression deepened during the days of the occupation, but Qattan could not express his feelings freely in his art. There was a danger that the Iraqi *Mukhabarat* might suspect his intentions if he were to paint subjects criticising the occupation or even referring to it. Being a Kuwaiti painter was dangerous enough at that time, since there was a fear that artists would be forced to cooperate with the occupiers and paint in support of the Iraqi propaganda. As discussed before, the trees Qattan painted were executed in harsh, fast knife or brush strokes, with bold, strong colours, such that some of the trees showed a resemblance to the darkened skies and burning land he saw or imagined Kuwait as (Fig. 55)³⁵⁷.

After the liberation of Kuwait Qattan produced three paintings on the subject of the war: *The Band*, *The Helmet* and *The Document*. In *The Band* (Fig. 56) we see a faceless bust of a man in traditional Kuwaiti dress of *Ghotra*, *Eqal* and *Besht*³⁵⁸. In the background there is a featureless landscape in green, yellow, orange and brown, with small pearls scattered on the ground. That the figure is faceless and in a featureless land could signify the loss of identity Kuwaitis suffered during the occupation; the garments are the only remaining features of the figure's Kuwaiti identity, while the pearls refer to the Kuwaiti history of pearl diving; they are symbols of the civil disobedience against the occupier. Lidia Qattan analyses the faceless man as symbolising the Arabs, who were torn apart because of the war. She indicates that because of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait the Arab nations were divided into those who

³⁵⁷ Lidia Qattan discussed Khalifa Qattan's work during and after the Iraqi occupation in the recorded Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008.

³⁵⁸ *Ghotra*: the white head cover. *Eqal*: the black circular tube securing the *Ghotra*. *Besht*: a robe traditionally made from camel hair and decorated with golden threads.

supported the invasion and those who condemned it, creating a political gap between the two groups. She also argues that Israel benefited from the invasion, since Iraq used the justification of historical rights in its claim that Kuwait was part of Iraq, just as the Israelis did in their claiming of Palestinian land. If one were to accept the Iraqi historical claims, rather than the modern political and social facts, then by the same token the Israeli claims must be accepted, according to Qattan. Finally, Lidia Qattan states that the Americans finally found a justification for the existence of their forces on Arab land in the name of providing protection against any future Iraqi threats. This state of weakness, division and confusion is depicted in *The Band* in the symbolic form of a faceless Arab man and the featureless landscape and broken pearl necklace³⁵⁹.

Whichever way we analyse *The Band*, it shows us a subject matter unlike anything in Keane's work. The subject is Arab/Kuwaiti and the case is mostly Arabian, not American or western. There are no direct visual signs of the western or American influence on the war; indeed, there is no direct sign of the war at all: no soldiers, tanks, jet planes or guns. We do find a sign of the war in the painting titled *The Helmet* (Fig. 57), in which we see a soldier's helmet penetrated by a desert flower. Lidia Qattan describes this work simply as 'beautiful', a rather rare adjective used for Qattan's paintings. Like *The Band* this painting is simple both in construction and in subject matter, especially when compared to Qattan's earlier work. *The Helmet* can be seen as a direct and easy reference to peace overcoming war, or good defeating evil. It also shows the war as a positive event which, regardless of its destructive effect, brought an end to the suffering of the people of occupied Kuwait, a view he shares with most

³⁵⁹ Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008

Kuwaitis and was expressed by Jehan Rajab as discussed earlier. In comparison to *The Deep Wound* for example, one notes an obvious change in terms of the level of complexity. The simplicity of these works could be attributed to the poor state of Qattan's mental, psychological and physical health³⁶⁰ from the 1980s, added to the trauma, stress and exhaustion of witnessing and living through the occupation.

A more direct reference to the traumatic effect of the Iraqi occupation can be seen in *The Document* (Fig. 58), a shocking depiction of a mutilated human torso with the head, arms and legs amputated and with visible torture marks on the skin. In the lower part in the centre of the painting Qattan placed a copy of a letter found among the remains of the fleeing Iraqi forces. In that document we read orders issued to the Iraqi *Mukhabarat* to torture any suspected members of the Kuwaiti resistance before starting their interrogation. Qattan may not have witnessed the tortures himself, but during the occupation horror stories of what happened in the Iraqi interrogation rooms were common, and after the liberation there emerged photographs and documents that proved the truth of those rumours.

The three paintings discussed here present us with strong emotional images inspired by the war. They were inspired not by visual references from the media, as in the case of Keane's early works from the war, but mainly by psychological, social or political factors (if one accepts Lidia Qattan's analysis) originating from the feelings of fear, injustice and loss of identity. Unlike the Pepsi can or the dollar bills Keane used in *We Are Making a New World Order* and which can be interpreted as political symbols,

³⁶⁰ Qattan suffered from diabetes from the 1980s, which affected his sight and his health in general.

Qattan presents the letter shown in *The Document* as direct (iconic in a way) historical evidence, as if to prove the authenticity of the subject he is depicting.

The Stolen War

A work such as *The Document* shows the Kuwaiti side as the centre and victim of this war, a concept almost completely absent from the work of Keane, Baudrillard, Heikal and many other western and Arab artists and writers. The general image of the 'Kuwaiti' in Keane's work is either as triumphant, what could be described as the dancer on the Iraqi grave, as in the case of the girl in red in *Scenes on the Road to Hell (I)*, or as a mere spectator of a war that happened on his or her land, such as the man observing the oil fires in *We are Making A New World Order*. Stallabrass describes the Kuwaiti man in Keane's work as an 'inconceivably rich Arab of reality and legend, a figure that on one level is an oppressor, on another oppressed, being the subject of the protracted discourse of Orientalism'³⁶¹. Stallabrass refers to the man in *We Are Making a New World Order* as an 'Arab man', not even a 'Kuwaiti' man.

Keane, Baudrillard, Heikal and Swofford all attempt to stamp the Gulf War with an American seal, presenting it as a conflict over power and resources which just happened to be fought on Kuwaiti land. Kuwait, for them, is on one hand the geographic place where the war took place, and on the other the fuel of the war or the prize to be won by the victor, rather than the main subject and biggest victim of that war, as presented in Qattan's work. Throughout Swofford's *Jarhead*, for example, variations of the word 'Kuwait' appear 56 times, and 50 of these refer to the geographic or political entity of Kuwait (Kuwait City, Kuwaiti border, Amir of

³⁶¹ 'Painting Desert Storm', pages not numbered

Kuwait, map of Kuwait... etc); only six refer to the Kuwaiti people. In one paragraph Swofford expresses his thoughts about the war frankly by saying:

I wish I can speak to him honestly and say: I am a grunt, dressed up in fancy scout/sniper clothes; I am a grunt with limited vision. I don't care about a New World Order. I don't care about human rights violations in Kuwait City. Amnesty International, my ass. Rape them all, kill them all, sell their oil, pillage their gold, sell their children into prostitution. I don't care about the Flag and God and Country and Corps. I don't give a fuck about oil and revenue and million barrels per day and U.S. jobs. I have a job. I'll walk the rest of my life. I'm a grunt. I'm supposed to walk and love it.³⁶²

Baudrillard asks an important question when he discusses the significance of the Gulf War: 'Who, apart from the Arab masses, is still capable of believing in [this war] and becoming inflamed by it?'³⁶³ He states that unlike 'earlier wars, in which there were political aims either of conquest or domination, what is at stake in this one is war itself'³⁶⁴; that is, he believes the objective of the war was 'to prove its very existence'³⁶⁵, hence the need to exhibit the 'spectacle', which was well captured and demonstrated by Keane's work. The spectacle of the war does not make Baudrillard believe in the war; hence, the war did not take place. The 'Arab masses' on the other hand, according to Baudrillard, are the only ones who are able to believe in the war, even though he does not specify who those 'Arab masses' are: the Kuwaitis? Iraqis?

³⁶² *Jarhead*, location 226

³⁶³ *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 32

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Saudis? Palestinians? In *The New Orientalists*, Ian Almond criticises Baudrillard's repeated use of the term 'Arab masses', and accuses him of being 'untroubled by the unmistakably colonial implication a term such as "the Arab masses" may have. [...] an expression no French thinker can use, not even ironically, without re-evoking a long succession of French colonial observation on the non-individuality and tribal, clannish inclination of the Arab mind, its inherent resistance to democracy and critical thinking, and so on'³⁶⁶. It is the same 'colonial observation' of 'the non-individuality' of the 'Arab masses' that turned around the faces of the Kuwaiti men in Keane's paintings to face the distant horizon instead of the spectator.

As proof that the war did not accomplish its aims Baudrillard pointed to the fact that Saddam remained in power, ignoring, like Heikal, that the major aims of the war were to end the Iraqi occupation and to liberate Kuwait. Keane's work seems to present a view of the war that shares Baudrillard's doubt of its achievements. As mentioned earlier, the *Scenes on the Road to Hell* series, *We are Making a New World Order*, *Mickey Mouse at the Front* and *Oil Painting* (Fig. 59) all portray a grim and dark image of destruction, characteristic of Keane's work as an anti-war liberal. In addition, there is an emphasis on the American involvement in the war, picturing it as an American-Iraqi conflict, or America against Saddam Hussein, as it is occasionally presented by Baudrillard. Finally, Keane's work highlights the involvement of the petrodollar as the main motivation for the war. The local men (Kuwaitis) in *Day for Night* (Fig. 60), for example, are shown from the back looking at the burning oil fields, as if hiding their identities, while showing off their bright red Mercedes to the viewer; both the oil and the Mercedes are symbols of the wealth that was used to finance the

³⁶⁶ Ian Almond, *The New Orientalists: Postmodern representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard*, London, 2007, p. 167

war. In another painting we see a dead Iraqi soldier lying on the ground, and Keane punningly titles the scene *Oil Painting*, as if representing this tragedy as a work of art painted by Gulf oil, the Gulf money.

Is it true that the war achieved nothing, as stated by Baudrillard? From the discussion in this chapter I would argue that the 'war' itself was not aimless; it is Baudrillard's conception that deprives the war of its significance and presents it as an aimless showing off of power. That is the view of the 'outsider' who filters the war through his Oriental agenda, bringing to it his own cultural background of what 'war' is and what it should achieve. While Keane chose to paint the dead Iraqi soldier in *Oil Painting*, a shocking and ugly image to show the ugliness of the war and the destruction it left behind, in *The Helmet* Qattan expressed his view of the end of the war as the beginning of a new hope, represented by the flower emerging from the soldier's helmet. Qattan as an 'insider', like Rajab and all Kuwaitis, believed the war had an aim and achieved it. If that were not the case he would not have produced the paintings he did, indeed, as Rajab feared, he might not even have been alive.

Conclusion

Before Khalifa Qattan began developing what became known as Circulism he went through various 'stages' in his life. During those stages he had a variety of cultural experiences, from the pre-oil Kuwait to the newly developed modern country it became, in addition to his life in England and Europe. Understanding the cultural framework which influenced Qattan had and lived around are important to grasp as they form the *performative* which, in addition to the art-historical influences, was the main source of inspiration of his art and thought. The political, economic and social changes he witnessed affected his perspective on the world, and one can see this reflected in the change in his work from the early 'simpler' art he produced as a school student in the Najah School, to his Cubist work as he returned from the United Kingdom, to the creation of his own Circulist style as he became engaged in the life of newly independent Kuwait. The oil-driven boost to the economy brought with it changes in the Kuwaiti mentality, which Qattan observed and later expressed in his art. Those changes affected Qattan and his art both directly and indirectly; as an observer he expressed them through his art as in some of the work we discussed earlier such as *Time* and *The Ship of Goodness and Generous Hand*, and it affected the progress of his thought as I have explained regarding how Circulism as a manifesto had to shift and change according to the reception it got from society. The study of Qattan's artistic stages gives us far more than a historical overview of his biography; it also provides an insight into the major elements that shaped his artistic vision. One can argue that without going through these stages Qattan would not have reached a point in his life at which he was able to express his stress and frustration in the shape of a philosophy of art. For the sake of simplification, one can argue that if Qattan had not

grown up during the era of pre-oil Kuwait, then travelled to live in a completely different, western, society, and finally returned to the newly rich and fast changing Kuwait to face the frustrations of work as a construction supervisor, then the 'half veiled moon' incident mentioned in chapter two would never had happened. This shows how the development of Circulism was a complicated cultural process that cannot be simplified as a pedagogical hybridity between western and eastern art. Other Kuwaiti artists from the same era did not seek to develop painting styles that could be called avant-garde, even though they studied abroad and became aware of the western art of the time. They instead adopted the western styles as they were, calling themselves, for example, Cubists, Surrealists or Realists.

The argument above does not contradict the fact that the development of Circulism was indeed dependent on twentieth-century western ideas on modernism, which glorified avant-gardism and the need to create new distinct ideas, presented by way of manifestoes that challenged other contemporary ideas, and promoted in the form of new 'isms'. Lidia Qattan promoted Circulism as a modern art concept in its own right. She also compared Circulism to other modern art theories such as Cubism and Surrealism, viewing it as unique and different, and as contributing to the history of art movements of the twentieth century. As I have detailed earlier when I discussed the reception of Circulism, the Kuwaiti and Arab media picked up Circulism as an expression of nationalism and presented it politically as: 'we' can produce cultural achievements that are equal to what 'they' (the west) can achieve. Although I do not believe that a direct comparison between Circulism and the western modern movements as Lidia Qattan did is justifiable, for the reasons outlined at the beginning of the thesis, I explained that I included those comparisons for the sake of simplifying

the complex concept of Circulism and the changes it went through. Circulism is a cultural event that originated in complicated and unique circumstances by a performative process; therefore it should not be presented as a historic nationalist statement and be compared to what one might call a 'western counterpart'.

Circulism did not have in the strictest sense what can be defined as a manifesto and therefore, as I have argued, it should not be defined as an avant-garde art movement in the sense of the western canon. Similarly, Circulism did not challenge existing ideas, even if Lidia Qattan tried to prove that it was different, and did not try to promote itself or persuade the public to believe in its concepts. It was closer to an aesthetic philosophy, which embraced art originally produced under the umbrella of other art movements and theories. At the beginning Circulism was associated with a distinct painting style dependent on the curved and circular line, but as the theoretical aspects of Circulism developed, the stylistic elements became less important. On the other hand, from the very beginning, the part played by colour was more theoretical than aesthetic. Colour in Circulism has a symbolic, rather than merely descriptive, meaning. The system of colours and meanings that Qattan used for his work has cultural roots that set it apart, since colours as they are used in Circulism are generally Peircian symbols, which depend on the cultural background of the artist and spectator. Qattan's own system was a product of his own cultural background and concepts of meaning, which might have been partly influenced by the Quran, as was demonstrated. Since Circulism was not presented as a manifesto, and did not aim to attract followers, it can be assumed that Qattan's colour system can be applied only to his own work, and is not meant as a general rule to interpret the work of other artists.

Hence it can be concluded that Circulism is indeed a unique cultural process that cannot be thought of as simply another 'ism' in the western sense. Therefore, it is not possible to locate Circulism geographically, as 'eastern' or 'western'. Like Lidia Qattan before me, in this thesis I applied what one may call a western method to study and analyse Circulism, using the theories set by western intellectuals. However, that fact adds to the complexity of the matter, since this thesis is targeted towards the western academic audience. One can argue whether a 'hybrid' concept such as Circulism should be understood using western methodology and compared to western art, or whether it should be viewed using an eastern method. In my study of the writings in *The Apple* I explained how it is possible to look at Qattan's artwork from an Arab and Islamic perspective, or what one might call a 'poetic' approach³⁶⁷ which, although considered outmoded in western academia, is still quite popular in Arabic culture³⁶⁸. Similarly to the work Qattan has produced regarding the Gulf War, some of Qattan's works, such as *The Elected MP* (Fig. 61), arguably cannot be fully understood if one would not be familiar with the social and political background of Kuwait. Or in another term, they can not be fully understood if looked at from the 'outside' rather than from 'within'. For example, in *The Elected MP*, in western societies which regard elections as the expression of democratic choice and parliaments as representing liberty and freedom, we find Qattan apparently mocking that system by presenting the elected members of parliament as mutants carrying both human and animal features. One might conclude from this that Qattan was against the democratic process, which was not the case. In this painting Qattan is criticising the hypocrisy of politicians who appear to the voters as 'innocent as a lamb' before the election, only to dismiss those

³⁶⁷ Such as the view of Abdullah Zakariyah Al Ansari which I mentioned when talking about the critical receptions in *The Apple*.

³⁶⁸ For more on the subject of criticism in the Arab world see Ibraheem Al Haydari, *Al Naqd Bayn Al Hadatha Wa Ma Baad Al Hadatha* (Criticism between modernism and postmodernism), Beirut, 2012

voters and their needs, as if with a 'thumbs down' gesture, once safely elected to power. The lamb itself might also refer to the practice of presenting generous banquets to voters during the electoral campaign, feasts that often included 'Quzi' (roast lamb with rice). Qattan presented a similar image in his work *Lick to Reach* (Fig. 26), which shows how someone might do anything in order to reach his goal, in this instance symbolised by the green ladder. The ladder being green might be explained as symbolising the way to the 'green hall', which is the name under which the parliament hall in Kuwait is commonly known as. The creature in *Lick to Reach* looks similar to those in *The Elected MP*, indicating Qattan's continuing belief in the corruption of the social system, and its effect on the democratic processes in Kuwait. This is an example of a social and political analysis explored from the inside, since it would be extremely hard to understand the signs Qattan used if these works were to be looked at from the outside by someone who is not familiar with the society Qattan came from.

As discussed in the third chapter, the Gulf War represents a good example of the differences not only between the 'classical' cultural viewpoints of the east and the west as suggested by Said, but as well the differences in perspective between what I have called the 'inside' and the 'outside'. We noticed how Keane, Baudrillard and Heikal not only presented the war from a political perspective different from that of Qattan, Rajab and Khazaal, but also how that perspective effectively marginalised the 'insider' (the 'other' in their view), that is the Kuwaiti or the Iraqi. This notion of cultural marginalisation is not an arbitrary one; it is rooted in the cultural background of western thinkers such as Keane, Baudrillard and Heikal. Heikal might not be 'western' in the geographical sense, but he is included here because he originally

wrote his book in English and for the western reader, and because he regarded Kuwait and the Arabs of the Gulf as an 'other', as was discussed earlier.

The art and literature of the Gulf War does not only demonstrate Qattan's view of the war, but it also raises a question of a 'double hegemony' which the performative study of that view brought to surface. The first level of hegemony is led by the United States, and the second by western intellectuals, as I will demonstrate. On one hand we find Keane/Baudrillard/Heikal challenging America's striving for cultural and political dominance after the end of the Cold War under the cover of the New World Order. This aim to dominate through leadership is a form of imperialism in which, as Edward Said argues, 'the idea of American leadership and exceptionalism is never absent; no matter what the United States does, these authorities often do not want it to be an imperial power like the others it followed, preferring instead the notion of "world responsibility" as a rationale for what it does'³⁶⁹. Said also discusses the role of the media before and during the Gulf War, arguing that 'the media play an extraordinary role in "manufacturing consent" as Chomsky calls it, in making the average American feel that it is up to "us" to right the wrongs of the world, and the devil with contradictions and inconsistencies. The Gulf intervention was preceded by a string of interventions (Panama, Grenada, Libya), all of them widely discussed, most of them approved, or at least undeterred, as belonging to "us" by right. As Kiernan puts it: "America loved to think that whatever it wanted was just what the human race wanted."³⁷⁰ Said criticises intellectuals who provided support for the American neo-colonial ambitions by picturing Iraq (or Arabs in general) as a dictatorship of inferior cultural importance, therefore justifying the war against it in order to rectify the

³⁶⁹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London, 1994, p. 345

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 346

wrongs it had committed. He states that 'such writing as this is symptomatic of the intellectual will to please power in public, to tell it what it wants to hear, to say it could go ahead and kill, bomb, and destroy, since what would be being attacked was really negligible, brittle, with no relationship to books, ideas, cultures, and no relation either, it gently suggests, to real people. With such information about Iraq, what forgiveness, what humanity, what chance for humane argument? Very little, alas.'³⁷¹ It is under these circumstances of being overwhelmed by American pro-war chants and displays of power that Baudrillard and Keane introduced their so-called anti-war cultural statements. Therefore one can assume that the art and literature they produced is in fact a cultural 'reaction' to the American hegemony. This reaction may appear to be a liberal anti-imperialist argument which is opposed to pleasing those who are in power or telling the public what they want to hear, but it is itself, I will argue, another kind of hegemony.

If we were to structure the power struggle played out through the Gulf War we would see the following, albeit over-simplified, timeline:

- 1) Kuwait and Iraq historical/economic/political tension.
- 2) Iraq exerts its power over Kuwait and occupies it.
- 3) The US exerts its power over Iraq (and arguably the world).
- 4) Intellectuals attack the American military and cultural hegemony, marginalising 'others' such as Kuwaitis and Iraqis in the process.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 360

The result of this history of power struggle, as it is presented in the work of Keane and Baudrillard, is not what one would call a cultural revolution against western imperialism; rather it is a substitution of the 'official' American imperialism with another intellectual 'Eurocentric' one. In other words, it is a case of the 'west' vs. the 'west', the west rising against itself. Keane does criticise the American hegemony in the Gulf, but in doing so he creates a new kind of subalternity where the marginalised (Kuwaiti) 'other' is pictured either as an accomplice to the crime of the destruction of Iraq, or as simply turning his back to the spectator, as if out of guilt, trying to hide from its gaze. In the case of the Iraqi 'other', we find him dead, destroyed, defeated and left without any sign of pride. It is an extreme reaction to American imperialism, a cultural 'exterminism'³⁷² as Said calls it. Said explains the Arab support for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as a reaction against injustice, as in the Palestinian case, which led to a cultural, and military, build-up against everything western, thus producing Arab nationalism.

Taken far enough this produces exterminism, the notion that if you do not get your way or something displeases you it is possible simply to blot it out. That notion was surely in some way behind Iraq's aggression against Kuwait. What sort of muddled and anachronistic idea of Bismarckian 'integration' was it to wipe out a country and smash its society with 'Arab unity' as the goal? The most disheartening thing was that so many people, many of them victims of the same brutal logic, appear to have supported the action and sympathized not at all with Kuwait. Even if one grants that Kuwaitis were unpopular (does one

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p, 362

have to be popular not to be exterminated?) and even if Iraq claimed to champion Palestine in standing up to Israel and the United States, surely the very idea that a nation should be obliterated along the way is a murderous proposition, unfit for a great civilization. It is a measure of the dreadful state of political culture in the Arab world today that such exterminism is current.³⁷³

My argument is that this exterminism affected not only the Arabs who supported Saddam Hussein, but also western intellectuals, who rose up blindly against the so-called American imperialism for the sake of opposition. Unlike the 'Arabs' who justified their 'nationalist' support for Saddam by considering him a hero fighting American evil, those western intellectuals gave no frank justification for their stance. Keane, as argued before, portrayed the war as a painting of death, patronised by the Arab oil. Baudrillard showed the war as a spectacle of power and dominance, treating the two sides as morally equivalent and stating that the 'Iraqis and the Americans have one thing in common, a heinous crime which they (and with them the West) share. Many things about this war are explained by this anterior crime from which both sides sought to profit with impunity.³⁷⁴ The question remains: What was the alternative to that war? None of the intellectuals discussed here provides a convincing answer. There is a reason for that failure to provide an answer; that reason forms one of the bases of this thesis, and is my justification for returning here to my discussion of the war.

My argument is that the question was irrelevant from the start, because it evokes a moral value that undermines any attempt to answer it. Not intervening in the Gulf

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 57

militarily would have meant not only leaving one of the world's biggest oil reserves in the hands of Saddam Hussein, which is what Heikal demonstrated, but more importantly, it would have meant leaving the life and existence of a whole society in the hands of a known dictator. The moral choice made by those intellectuals who opposed the war was to ignore the humanitarian aspect, or at least to accord it less importance than their argument against the big bad USA. They created an imaginary 'Orient' which consisted of some weak and negligible peoples who were about to be controlled by an external imperialist power. They made it their duty to rise against that so called imperialist power in support of the helpless dominated people. By marginalising the people of the Gulf, by depicting the turned-around Kuwaiti and the dead Iraqi, Keane is culturally colonising them 'as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction.'³⁷⁵ So does Baudrillard, for example by talking about 'the Arab masses' as discussed before. Criticising the war for the cultural colonisers seems to be their attempt to stand against America, because the suppression of the American hegemony in their view is what the world, and the 'degenerate' people of the Gulf, need. Should the oil-rich peoples of Kuwait and the languid people of Iraq 'die' in the fight against American imperialism? The answer seems to be yes, as they presented no alternative to this assumption, being ignorant of the fate of the 'other' in the 'Orient' which they created and for whom they spoke.

Said claims that from 'long before World War Two until the early 1970s, the main tradition of comparative-literature studies in Europe and the United States was heavily dominated by a style of scholarship that has now almost disappeared. The main feature

³⁷⁵ *The Location of Culture*, p. 101

of this older style was that it was scholarship principally, and not what we have come to call criticism.³⁷⁶ Said adds that it is 'not a vulgarization of human history to remark that a major reason why such a view of human culture became current in Europe and America in several different forms during the two centuries between 1745 and 1945 was the striking rise of nationalism during the same period'³⁷⁷. He goes on to link culture to nationalism by explaining that it is 'evident that when most European thinkers celebrated humanity or culture they were principally celebrating ideas and values they ascribed to their own national culture, or to Europe as distinct from the Orient, Africa, and even the Americas'³⁷⁸. But did that national representation really change after the 1970s as Said claims? Are the cultural products of Keane, Baudrillard and Heikal not driven by some sort of nationalism which makes them value their own national culture more highly than the culture of the 'other'? Which leads us to one of the main questions asked in this thesis: is it not a form of nationalism to study Qattan through a western canonical approach rather than his own 'native' culture?

Today's western canon may have the appearance of being liberal and anti-imperialist, but as I have demonstrated above, at its core it is not. The culture of the 'other' is still seen as inferior and should be represented and be spoken for. Any attempt to study that culture will do so according to the western canon, applying western (national) ideas and values. Take for example a work such as *Contemporary Arab Women's Art: Dialogues of the Present*, a relatively early (1999) attempt to present Arab art to the west. The 18 artists featured in the book, and the exhibition titled *Dialogues of the Present*, which toured the UK in 1999, represent a doubly marginalised group: they are Arabs, and they are also women artists. The book, and the exhibition, aimed to

³⁷⁶ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 50

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

'provide a knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of Arab women's contemporary art practice by focusing on the work of artists who currently live in the vastly different spaces of the Middle East, North Africa and Great Britain'³⁷⁹. The artwork is presented in the second part of the book, accompanied with statements from the artists, and their biographies. The first part contains four essays, which deal with some of the concepts I discussed earlier in my thesis, such as the scarcity of sources related to contemporary Middle Eastern art, and how little is known about it in the west, and give a historical view regarding the development of art, identity and the representation of Arab women. It is noteworthy that most of the essays are by writers born in or living in non-Arab countries (Tina Sherwell is an exception since she lives in Jerusalem). Even more significant, the bibliography reveals that the writers' views have been filtered through the canon of western culture, represented by authors such as Frantz Fanon, Stuart Hall and Rasheed Areen, in addition to Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. Texts by Arab authors, such as Wijdan Ali and Huda Sha'rawi, were originally written in English and published in or for the west. An exception is the well researched 'Elements of Empowerment: Support systems in women's art practice' by Salwa Nashashibi, which tries to identify 'the diverse elements which are part of the current support systems which have contributed to the success of women artists in different areas within the Arab world. It also aims to provide an understanding of the different cultural and historical contexts in which Arab women in the Middle East and North Africa practise as artists.'³⁸⁰ For this essay Nashashibi interviewed Arab women artists and then visited art institutes to gather the material she needed for her historical study. The main reason for that, of course, was the scarcity of resources dealing with her subject.

³⁷⁹ Fran Lloyd (editor), *Contemporary Arab Women's Art: Dialogues of the Present*, London, 1999, p. 9

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70

The essays in the first part of *Contemporary Arab Women's Art*, as important as they are to introduce the subject to the western reader, give an impression that the artists are not capable of presenting themselves, as if what they say about their art (in the second part) is not enough, as if they need a 'western' voice to speak for them and transfer their thoughts to the western audience, and to adjust those thoughts to fit the western canon. By making this point I do not intend to be negative, since I believe it is necessary in the current western cultural state to do what Fran Lloyd did in her book; indeed, I have done something similar in this thesis. It is also true that even the work of western artists is usually presented through the eyes of the critics, but in these cases they would use a 'language' similar to the language of the artist; in other words, there is no filter of 'translation' regarding cultural background involved. According to Said, 'language', as a product of culture, however, plays a major part in the process of representing the 'other', as I will discuss in the next section. Similarly to literature, on which Said based his views, visual language depends on meanings, and when the critic interprets the works through the filter of his or her own cultural translation they might lose their original meaning as I have explained and demonstrated throughout this thesis. The need to pass the 'other's culture' through the filter of the western canon, while sometimes necessary, is evidence for the fact that the 'other' described by Said is still affected by western culture, albeit in different forms. Recognising the 'other' is not enough, as that would be similar to what Bhabha terms as dismissing the stereotype rather than displacing it³⁸¹, as was discussed at the beginning of the thesis. However, how can we overcome this issue? How can the displacing of the stereotype be achieved?

³⁸¹ *The Location of Culture*, p.95

In *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said emphasises the importance of language to understand other cultures. He states that 'a Western historian trying seriously to understand intellectuals in those other, different traditions would also be required to spend years learning their language'. Lidia Qattan and Jehan Rajab, as discussed before, serve as examples of the importance of language to understand the local culture: both were born in non-Arab countries but lived in Kuwait for decades and have an excellent understanding of Arabic and Kuwaiti culture. Said goes on to argue: 'Yet despite all this difference and otherness, despite the inevitable erosion of the universal concept of what it means to be an intellectual, some general notions about the individual intellectual [...] do seem to have more than strictly local application.'³⁸² One such notion is nationality. Said demonstrates that no modern intellectual speaks Esperanto, the universal language; each is born into their own language and they use it not just as a means of communication, but as a means of finding their own identity and perspective³⁸³. Language itself is a product of culture which is both affected and manipulated by society, and at the same time affects and manipulates the society speaking it, as Said explains:

But alas it is only too easy to repeat collective formulas, since merely to use a national language at all (there is no alternative to it) tends to commit you to what is readiest at hand, herding you into those stock phrases and popular metaphors for 'us' and 'them' that so many agencies, including journalism, academic professionalism, and

³⁸² *Representations of the Intellectual*, p. 20

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

expedient communal intelligibility, keep in currency. All this is part of maintaining a national identity.³⁸⁴

It is therefore the obligation of the intellectual to be conscious of and to challenge the cultural constraints set by language and nationality and not to be tempted to give up and 'side with the more powerful'³⁸⁵. Said adds that the intellectual is often looked to by the public during times of crisis to represent them and talk about their suffering. He demonstrates how 'many novelists, painters, and poets like Manzoni, Picasso, or Neruda, have embodied the historical experience of their people in aesthetic works which in turn became masterpieces'³⁸⁶.

In its attempt to present an analysis of Qattan and his art by considering the cultural, social, economical and political framework, this thesis constitutes a contribution to the understudied modern visual cultures of Kuwait, . Moreover, the approach of the subject through Said and Bhabha draws awareness to the fundamental issues involved when studying modern visual cultures other than western. To do so I have tried to understand it from within, using its own language. I believe that to represent and understand the culture of the 'other' is inevitably a complicated effort. A number of constraints make it difficult for the western intellectual to truly understand eastern culture without passing it through the moulds of their own cultural views formed by their own cultural experiences and upbringing. The west is in need to accept the so-called 'other' in a different mode, and like any great cultural change, this can only be achieved through a long and slow process, with a great deal of effort. On the other hand, the eastern intellectual needs to understand the western perspective and strive to

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33

present his own culture to the west while maintaining as much of its core essence as possible in order to avoid wearing western glasses through which they view themselves. This thesis is understood as contributing not only through its subject matter – Qattan and Circulism can be seen as having produced visual examples which attempted to create a true dialogue – but also its form to view Kuwaiti culture from within, by using as many Arabic and Kuwaiti resources as possible, and by giving a thorough cultural background to the English speaking western reader. The performative/pedagogical approach I have used in this thesis can be a model for other art historians and cultural scholars to close the cultural gap between societies. While western academia began and now widely accepts the ‘other’ as a subject of a thesis, it rarely reflects the legitimacy of the viability of approaches other than western critical inquiry, a topic which this thesis attempts to provide. This thesis is thus a contribution also to question the western scholar’s hegemony of their own culture.

Appendix I

A list of exhibitions held at the Royal Academy of Art between 1952 and 1958:

- 1952-3 22 Nov - 1 March - Dutch Pictures 1450-1750
- 1953 12 March - 28 June - Kings and Queens A.D. 653 - 1953
- 1953 13 Aug - 25 Oct - Drawings by Old Masters
- 1953 21 - 31 Oct - Royal Academy Students' Premiums Exhibition
- 1953-4 5 Dec - 6 March - Flemish Art 1300-1700
- 1954 13 March - 27 June - Works by Augustus John, O.M., R.A.
- 1954 28 Sept - 26 Nov - Exhibition of the Diploma Works of living Members with selection of earlier works dating from c.1870.
- 1954 22 - 30 Oct - Royal Academy Students' Premiums Exhibition
- 1954-5 27 Nov - 27 Feb - European Masters of the 18th Century.
- 1955 Feb - Flaxman Drawings from the Royal Academy's Collection
- 1955 28 March - 18 June - Exhibition of Diploma Works
- 1955-6 29 Oct - 19 Feb - Exhibition of Portuguese Art 800-1800
- 1955-6 3 Dec - 26 Feb - English Taste in the 18th Century from Baroque to Neo-Classic
- 1955 6 - 17 Dec - Royal Academy Students' Premiums Exhibition
- 1956 8 - 31 Jan - Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association 'Tradition in Silver': Exhibition of Officers' Mess Silver.
- 1956 10 March - 30 June - Exhibition of Works by Sir Alfred J. Munnings, K.C.V.O., P.P.R.A.
- 1956 8 - 29 Sept - Arts Council. Children painted by Dutch Artists 1550-1820.

- 1956 17 - 26 Oct - Royal Academy Students' Premiums Exhibition
- 1956-7 24 Nov - 3 March - British Portraits
- 1957 12 Oct - 15 Dec - Exhibition of Works by Sir Gerald Kelly
- 1957 8 - 23 Nov - Royal Academy Students' Premiums Exhibition
- 1958 4 Jan - 9 March - The Age of Louis XIV
- 1958 15 March - 1 June - Exhibition of Works from the Paul Oppé Collection:
English Watercolours and Old Master Drawings
- 1958 2 July - 14 Sept - The Robinson Collection: Paintings from the Collection of
the late Sir J.B. Robinson, Bt., lent by the Princess Labia
- 1958 17 Oct - 10 Dec - Paintings and Drawings by Sir David Wilkie, R.A. 1785-
1841
- 1958 21 Oct - 1 Nov - Royal Academy Students Exhibition

Appendix II

Publications found in the library of the Barber Institution of Art in the University of Birmingham:

Cubism:

Dorival, Bernard, *Les étapes de la peinture française contemporaine. T. 3, Depuis le cubisme, 1911-1944*, Paris, 1946

Kahnweiler, Daniel Henry, *Juan Gris : his life and works*, London, 1947

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso*, Berlin, 1949

Hochschule, für Bildende Künste, *Werke Französischer Meister der Gegenwart*, Berlin, 1952

Moll, Oskar, *Oskar Moll*, Berlin, 1953

Schmeller, Alfred, *Cubism*, London, 1956

Golding, John, *Cubism : a history and an analysis*, London, 1959

Habasque, Guy, *Cubism : biographical and critical study*, Geneva, 1959

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso (born 1881) : cubism to the present*, London, 1959

Rosenblum, Robert, *Cubism and twentieth-century art*, London, 1961

Larionov, Mikhail Fedorovich, and others, *Larionov - Gontcharova*, Milano, 1961

Braque:

Tate Gallery, *Braque and Rouault*, London, 1946

Braque, Georges, *G. Braque*, Rotterdam, 1956

Braque, Georges, *G. Braque*, London, 1956

Elgar, Frank, *Braque, 1906-1920*, Methuen, 1958

Russell, John, *G. Braque / illustrations*, London, 1959

Richardson, John, *Georges Braque*, Harmondsworth, 1959

Picasso:

Picasso, Pablo, *Exhibition of paintings by Picasso and Matisse*, Paris-London, 1945

Picasso, Pablo, *Pablo Picasso : thirty important paintings from 1904 to 1943*,
London, 1945

Picasso, Pablo and Matisse, Henri, *Picasso Matisse exhibition*, London, 1945

Barr, Alfred Hamilton, *Picasso : fifty years of his art*, New York, 1946

Éluard, Paul, *A Pablo Picasso*, London, 1947

Lewisohn, Sam A, *Picasso before 1907 : loan exhibition for the benefit of the Public
Education Association, October 15 - November 8, 1947, Knoedler Galleries ... New
York*, New York, 1947

Hess, Hans, *French paintings from the Kessler collection : exhibition, May 1948, City
of York Art Gallery*, York, 1948

Picasso, Pablo, Hentzen Alfred, *Pablo Picasso : Zweiundfünfzig Lithographien aus
den Jahren 1945 bis 1947*, Germany, 1948

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso : 55 lithographs 1945-1947*, London, 1948

Picasso, Pablo and Haus, Waldsee , *Picasso*, Berlin, 1949

Picasso, Pablo and Kahnweiler, Daniel Henry, *The sculptures of Picasso*, London,
1949

Raynal, Maurice, *History of modern painting. from Picasso to Surrealism*, Geneva,
1950

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso in Provence*, London, 1950

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso*, London, 1953

Buchholz, Gallery, *Picasso : recent lithographs*, Geneva, 1952

Curt Valentin Gallery, *Picasso Pablo, Pablo Picasso, 1950-1953*, New York, 1953

Picasso, Pablo ,*Picasso*, London, 1953

Raynal, Maurice, *Picasso : biographical and critical study*, Geneva, 1953

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso, 1938-1953*, London, 1954

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso : oeuvres des musées de Léningrad et de Moscou, 1900-1914*, Paris, 1954

Maison de la pensée française, *Picasso : oeuvres des musées de Léningrad et de Moscou et de quelques collections parisiennes 1900-1914 : catalogue des oeuvres exposées*, Paris, 1954

Lieberman, William Slattery, *Pablo Picasso : blue and rose periods*, London, 1955

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso : 63 drawings 1953-54 ... 10 bronzes 1945-53*, London, 1955

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso : peintures 1900-1955*, Paris, 1955

Sotheby's, Cockerell Sydney Carlyle Galsworthy Ada, *Catalogue of an exceptionally interesting assemblage of modern literary manuscripts, autograph letters, presentation and association copies ...*, London, 1956

Picasso, Pablo and James, Philip, *Picasso : fifty years of graphic art : an Arts Council Exhibition*, London, 1956

Picasso, Pablo and Guterman, Norbert, *Picasso's Vollard suite*, London, 1956

Wittgens, Fernanda, *Picasso*, Milan, 1957

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso ceramics : catalogue*, London, 1957

Hanover Gallery, *Post Picasso Paris*, London, 1957

Baxandall, David and Moltzau, Ragner, *From Cézanne to Picasso : the Moltzau collection*, London, 1958

Picasso, Pablo, *Picasso : an exhibition of lithographs & aquatints, 1945-57*, Auckland, 1958

Kunsthalle, Bremen, *Von Dürer bis Picasso : Meistergraphik : Zweiter Teil der Ausstellung "Zwölf Jahre Wiederaufbau"*, Bremen, 1958

Rosenberg, Jakob, *Great draughtsmen from Pisanello to Picasso*, Cambridge, 1959

Picasso, Pablo and Hunter, Sam, *Picasso (born 1881) : cubism to the present*, London, 1959

Appendix III

The Idea of Circulism

In observing the phenomenal world, we realize that, matter in movement is the Universe, we are acquainted with.

If all the ends were reached, and no transition was requisite, movement would come to a stop; the Universe would cease to be.

At every pulsation matter, in its infinite variety of forms, is never the same.

The spiritual world of the human mind, too, is part of the same periodic and rhythmic sort of actuality.

The physical and chemical processes, that constitute the world of perception, are the result of motion and energy.

Is motion that gives the illusion of time; so that what we experience, is a world in fourth-dimension, in which activity within activity, cycle within cycle, seems the rule of being.

In figurative arts, as in other means of communication, symbols are powerful mediums.

In "Circulism" the curved line is an universal symbol, suggestive of time-motion and change.

Specific colours, taken in general interpretation, are either suggestive of liberated energy, or expressive of human emotions, and the situations created or influenced by them. We have, for instance, white for purity or faith.. etc.. Red for love, hate, danger, anger... etc...

Blue for sadness, calmness, peacefulness... lifeless... etc.

Green for youthfulness... jealousy... etc...

Yellow for maturity, prosperity... fear, hatred... etc

Violet for luck, fate... etc...

By the symbolic medium of curved lines and colours, serious interpretation of life's dramatic event, is represented in its fullness. Hence the inherent appeal to the intelligence, emotion, and imagination, each "Circulism" interpretation presents.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ *The Apple*, 5-6

Appendix IV

The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism

F.T. Marinetti

We had stayed up all night, my friends and I, under hanging mosque lamps with domes of filigreed brass, domes starred like our spirits, shining like them with the prisoned radiance of electric hearts. For hours we had trampled our atavistic ennui into rich oriental rugs, arguing up to the last confines of logic and blackening many reams of paper with our frenzied scribbling.

An immense pride was buoying us up, because we felt ourselves alone at that hour, alone, awake, and on our feet, like proud beacons or forward sentries against an army of hostile stars glaring down at us from their celestial encampments. Alone with stokers feeding the hellish fires of great ships, alone with the black spectres who grope in the red-hot bellies of locomotives launched on their crazy courses, alone with drunkards reeling like wounded birds along the city walls.

Suddenly we jumped, hearing the mighty noise of the huge double-decker trams that rumbled by outside, ablaze with colored lights, like villages on holiday suddenly struck and uprooted by the flooding Po and dragged over falls and through gorges to the sea.

Then the silence deepened. But, as we listened to the old canal muttering its feeble prayers and the creaking bones of sickly palaces above their damp green beards, under the windows we suddenly heard the famished roar of automobiles.

“Let’s go!” I said. “Friends, away! Let’s go! Mythology and the Mystic Ideal are defeated at last. We’re about to see the Centaur’s birth and, soon after, the first flight of Angels!... We must shake at the gates of life, test the bolts and hinges. Let’s go! Look there, on the earth, the very first dawn! There’s nothing to match the splendor of the sun’s red sword, slashing for the first time through our millennial gloom!”

We went up to the three snorting beasts, to lay amorous hands on their torrid breasts. I stretched out on my car like a corpse on its bier, but revived at once under the steering wheel, a guillotine blade that threatened my stomach.

The raging broom of madness swept us out of ourselves and drove us through streets as rough and deep as the beds of torrents. Here and there, sick lamplight through window glass taught us to distrust the deceitful mathematics of our perishing eyes.

I cried, "The scent, the scent alone is enough for our beasts."

And like young lions we ran after Death, its dark pelt blotched with pale crosses as it escaped down the vast violet living and throbbing sky.

But we had no ideal Mistress raising her divine form to the clouds, nor any cruel Queen to whom to offer our bodies, twisted like Byzantine rings! There was nothing to make us wish for death, unless the wish to be free at last from the weight of our courage!

And on we raced, hurling watchdogs against doorsteps, curling them under our burning tires like collars under a flatiron. Death, domesticated, met me at every turn, gracefully holding out a paw, or once in a while hunkering down, making velvety caressing eyes at me from every puddle.

"Let's break out of the horrible shell of wisdom and throw ourselves like pride-ripened fruit into the wide, contorted mouth of the wind! Let's give ourselves utterly to the Unknown, not in desperation but only to replenish the deep wells of the Absurd!"

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when I spun my car around with the frenzy of a dog trying to bite its tail, and there, suddenly, were two cyclists coming towards me, shaking their fists, wobbling like two equally convincing but nevertheless contradictory arguments. Their stupid dilemma was blocking my way—Damn! Ouch!... I stopped short and to my disgust rolled over into a ditch with my wheels in the air...

O maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your nourishing sludge; and I remembered the blessed black beast of my Sudanese nurse... When I came up—torn, filthy, and stinking—from under the capsized car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart!

A crowd of fishermen with handlines and gouty naturalists were already swarming around the prodigy. With patient, loving care those people rigged a tall derrick and iron grapnels to fish out my car, like a big beached shark. Up it came from the ditch, slowly, leaving in the bottom, like scales, its heavy framework of good sense and its soft upholstery of comfort.

They thought it was dead, my beautiful shark, but a caress from me was enough to revive it; and there it was, alive again, running on its powerful fins!

And so, faces smeared with good factory muck—plastered with metallic waste, with senseless sweat, with celestial soot—we, bruised, our arms in slings, but unafraid, declared our high intentions to all the *living* of the earth:

Manifesto of Futurism

1. We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness.
2. Courage, audacity, and revolt will be essential elements of our poetry.
3. Up to now literature has exalted a pensive immobility, ecstasy, and sleep. We intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the punch and the slap.
4. We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath—a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*.
5. We want to hymn the man at the wheel, who hurls the lance of his spirit across the Earth, along the circle of its orbit.
6. The poet must spend himself with ardor, splendor, and generosity, to swell the enthusiastic fervor of the primordial elements.
7. Except in struggle, there is no more beauty. No work without an aggressive character can be a masterpiece. Poetry must be conceived as a violent attack on unknown forces, to reduce and prostrate them before man.
8. We stand on the last promontory of the centuries!... Why should we look back, when what we want is to break down the mysterious doors of the Impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed.
9. We will glorify war—the world's only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for woman.
10. We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind, will fight moralism, feminism, every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice.
11. We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervor of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives

whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.

It is from Italy that we launch through the world this violently upsetting incendiary manifesto of ours. With it, today, we establish *Futurism*, because we want to free this land from its smelly gangrene of professors, archaeologists, *ciceroni* and antiquarians. For too long has Italy been a dealer in second-hand clothes. We mean to free her from the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards.

Museums: cemeteries!... Identical, surely, in the sinister promiscuity of so many bodies unknown to one another. Museums: public dormitories where one lies forever beside hated or unknown beings. Museums: absurd abattoirs of painters and sculptors ferociously slaughtering each other with color-blows and line-blows, the length of the fought-over walls!

That one should make an annual pilgrimage, just as one goes to the graveyard on All Souls' Day—that I grant. That once a year one should leave a floral tribute beneath the *Gioconda*, I grant you that... But I don't admit that our sorrows, our fragile courage, our morbid restlessness should be given a daily conducted tour through the museums. Why poison ourselves? Why rot?

And what is there to see in an old picture except the laborious contortions of an artist throwing himself against the barriers that thwart his desire to express his dream completely?... Admiring an old picture is the same as pouring our sensibility into a funerary urn instead of hurtling it far off, in violent spasms of action and creation. Do you, then, wish to waste all your best powers in this eternal and futile worship of the past, from which you emerge fatally exhausted, shrunken, beaten down?

In truth I tell you that daily visits to museums, libraries, and academies (cemeteries of empty exertion, Calvaries of crucified dreams, registries of aborted beginnings!) are, for artists, as damaging as the prolonged supervision by parents of certain young people drunk with their talent and their ambitious wills. When the future is barred to them, the admirable past may be a solace for the ills of the moribund, the sickly, the prisoner... But we want no part of it, the past, we the young and strong *Futurists!* So let them come, the gay incendiaries with charred fingers! Here they are! Here they are!... Come on! set fire to the library shelves! Turn aside the canals to flood the museums!... Oh, the joy of seeing the glorious old canvases bobbing adrift on those

waters, discolored and shredded!... Take up your pickaxes, your axes and hammers and wreck, wreck the venerable cities, pitilessly!

The oldest of us is thirty: so we have at least a decade for finishing our work. When we are forty, other younger and stronger men will probably throw us in the wastebasket like useless manuscripts—we want it to happen!

They will come against us, our successors, will come from far away, from every quarter, dancing to the winged cadence of their first songs, flexing the hooked claws of predators, sniffing doglike at the academy doors the strong odor of our decaying minds, which will have already been promised to the literary catacombs.

But we won't be there... At last they'll find us—one winter's night—in open country, beneath a sad roof drummed by a monotonous rain. They'll see us crouched beside our trembling aeroplanes in the act of warming our hands at the poor little blaze that our books of today will give out when they take fire from the flight of our images.

They'll storm around us, panting with scorn and anguish, and all of them, exasperated by our proud daring, will hurtle to kill us, driven by a hatred the more implacable the more their hearts will be drunk with love and admiration for us.

Injustice, strong and sane, will break out radiantly in their eyes.

Art, in fact, can be nothing but violence, cruelty, and injustice.

The oldest of us is thirty: even so we have already scattered treasures, a thousand treasures of force, love, courage, astuteness, and raw will-power; have thrown them impatiently away, with fury, carelessly, unhesitatingly, breathless, and unrelenting...

Look at us! We are still untired! Our hearts know no weariness because they are fed with fire, hatred, and speed!... Does that amaze you? It should, because you can never remember having lived! Erect on the summit of the world, once again we hurl our defiance at the stars!

You have objections?—Enough! Enough! We know them... We've understood!... Our fine deceitful intelligence tells us that we are the revival and extension of our ancestors—Perhaps!... If only it were so!—But who cares? We don't want to understand!... Woe to anyone who says those infamous words to us again!

Lift up your heads!

Erect on the summit of the world, once again we hurl defiance to the stars!³⁸⁸

³⁸⁸ <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/manifesto.html>, accessed 29/1/2012

Bibliography

Unpublished literature and other primary sources

Academic session in Association of Art Historians' conference, New Perspectives on the Art of the Middle East: from ancient history to the contemporary, Glasgow, 2010

Academic session in Association of Art Historians' conference, Colour: What Is It, and What Does It Mean?, Coventry, 2011

Afyouni, Qassim, *Donya Al Oroba*, Kuwait, 5/10/1963, (private archive of Lidia Qattan)

Hussain, Muayad, Interview with Lidia Qattan on 23/2/2008, unpublished digital recording, 105 minutes, private archive of Muayad Hussain, Birmingham

Hussain, Muayad, Interview with Lidia Qattan on 29/7/2009, unpublished digital recording, 54 minutes, private archive of Muayad Hussain, Birmingham

Hussain, Muayad, Interview with Hameed Khazaal on 20/1/2011, unpublished email correspondence, private archive of Muayad Hussain, Birmingham

Qattan, Khalifa (Editor), *The Apple*, Kuwait, 1978

Qattan, Lidia, Khalifa Ali Hussein Al Qattan 1934-2003: Artist-philosopher pioneer in the Kuwait art movement, unpublished typescript, 29 pages, private archive of Lidia Qattan, Kuwait

Qattan, Lidia, *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, Kuwait, 1994

Unknown author, Minutes of a Meeting of the Advisory Committee in Woodworking Machine Subjects, held on the 27th November 1957, unpublished typescript, archive of DeMontfort University, Leicester

Unknown author, *Leicester Colleges of Art and Technology Prospectus 1953-54*, Leicester, 1953

Unknown author, *Leicester College of Art School of Building Prospectus 1955-56*, Leicester, 1955

Unknown editor, Keane John, Excerpts from John Keane's video diary describing his experiences as Imperial War Museum's 'official recorder' in the Gulf, *The Gulf War 1990-1991 Photographs by John Keane*, unpublished typescript, 7 pages, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester

Unknown editor, *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, unpublished exhibition catalogue, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester

Unknown author, *Sawt Al Khaleej*, Kuwait, 24/10/1963, (private archive of Lidia Qattan)

Secondary literature

Al Abdulghafoor, Fouzia, *Tatawor Al Taaleem fe al Kuwait* (The Development of Education in Kuwait), Kuwait, 1983

Almond, Ian, *The New Orientalists: Postmodern representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard*, London, 2007

Arnold, Thomas, *Painting in Islam: A study of the place of pictorial art in Muslim culture*, New York, 1965

Al Askary, Sulaiman (editor), *Abdulaziz Hussain wa Hulm Al Tanweer Al Arabi* (Abdulaziz Hussain and the dream of the Arabian enlightenment), Kuwait, 1995

Atkinson, Rick, *Crusade: The untold story of the Persian Gulf war*, Boston, 1993

Al Awadhi, Sulaiman, *Khalifa Al Qattan: Al fannan al insan* (Khalifa Qattan: The artist the human), Kuwait, 2007

Barry, Ellen, 'Protests in Moldova Explode, With Help of Twitter', *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/08/world/europe/08moldova.html>, 7/4/2009

Barthes, Roland, *Image Music Text*, London, 1977

Baudrillard, Jean, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, Indiana, 1995

Bhabha, Homi, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, 2006

Brandon, Laura, *Art and War*, London, 2007

Case, Paul, Rodger George, 'Boom Time in Kuwait', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Washington, December 1952, pp. 783-802

Cassell, Paul, 'Restrictions on Press coverage of Military Operations: The right of access, Grenada and "Off-the-Record Wars"', *Georgetown law journal*, February 1985, electronic version,
http://www.law.utah.edu/_personfiles/57/HIGHLIGHTS/C73georgelj931.pdf

Caws, Mary Ann (editor), *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, Lincoln and London, 2001

Crow, David, *Visible Signs*, Lausanne, 2003

Eigner, Saeb, *Art of the Middle East: modern and contemporary art of the Arab world and Iran*, London and New York, 2010

Eskandar, Rushdi, and others, *Thamanoona Aaman Men Al Fan 1908-1988* (Eighty Years of Art 1908-1988), Cairo, 1991

Facey, William, Grant Gillian, *Kuwait by the First Photographers*, London, 1999

Foss, Brian, *War paint: art, war, state and identity in Britain, 1939-1945*, New Haven, 2007

Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences*, London, 1994

Frazer, John, 'Kuwait, Aladdin's Lamp of the Middle East', *National Geographic*, Washington, May 1969, pp. 636-667

Freeth, Zahra, *Kuwait Was My Home*, London, 1956

Fullerton, Arlene (editor) and Fehervari, Geza (editor), *Kuwait Arts and Architecture*, Kuwait, 1995

Gage, John, *Colour and Culture: Practice and meaning from antiquity to abstraction*, California, 1993

Gage, John, *Colour in Art*, London, 2006

El-Gemeiy, Abdel-Moneim, 'Educating Egypt', *Al Ahram Weekly*, Cairo, 27 October 2005, electronic version, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/766/sc2.htm>

Ghanem, Robert, 'Al Circulism... Osloob Fanny Jadeed (Ciculism... A New Art Style)', *Al Safaa*, Beirut, 7/6/1962, pp. 7-8

Grunwald, Henry, 'Trying to Censor Reality', *Time*, 7/11/1983, electronic version, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,949885,00.html>

Al Hadhena, Sheman, 'Lidia: Khalifa Al Qattan allamani falsafat al hayat (Lidia: Khalifa Qattan taught me the philosophy of life)', *Awan Newspaper*, Kuwait, 6/9/2009, electronic version (no longer online)

Hallin, Daniel, *The Uncensored War: the media and Vietnam*, California, 1989

Al Haydari, Ibraheem, *Al Naqd Bayn Al Hadatha Wa Ma Baad Al Hadatha* (Criticism between modernism and postmodernism), Beirut, 2012

Heikal, Mohamed, *Harb Al Khaleej: Awham Al Quwah wa Al Nasr* (Illusions of Triumph: Arab View of the Gulf War), Cairo, 1992

Henderson, Linda, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*, Princeton, 1983

Henderson, Linda, 'The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art: Conclusion', *Leonardo*, 1984, p. 205, electronic version, http://classes.dma.ucla.edu/Winter09/9-1/_pdf/2-henderson_fourth-dimension.pdf

Henderson, Linda, 'Linda Henderson: Signs of the Fourth Dimension in 20th Century Art and Culture', *Vimeo*, digital video, 60 minutes, <http://vimeo.com/12898190>

Hijji, Yaqub, *The Art of Dhow-building in Kuwait*, London, 2001

Hiro, Dilip, *Dictionary of the Middle East*, London, 1996

Hiro, Dilip, *Iraq in the Eye of the Storm*, New York, 2002

Hoeveler, Diane (editor) and Cass, Jeffrey (editor), *Interrogating Orientalism: Contextual approaches and pedagogical practices*, Ohio, 2006

Al Hujailan, Nasser, 'Oqdat Al Khawaja Al Ajnabi (The foreigner complex)', *Al Riyadh*, Riyadh, 27/8/2006, electronic version, <http://www.alriyadh.com/2006/08/27/article181956.html>

Jenkins, Marilyn (editor), *Islamic Art in the Kuwait National Museum: The Al Sabah collection*, London, 1983

Joyce, Miriam, *Kuwait 1945-1996: An Anglo-American Perspective*, London, 2004

Kandinsky, Wassily, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, (ebook version),
<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5321/pg5321.html>, 2011

Keiso, Fassih, *The Body in Twilight*, VDM, 2008

Khanam, Frida (editor) and Khan, Maulana Wahiduddin (translator), *The Quran*, New Delhi, 2010

Khazaal, Hameed, 'Al shaheed fe al aamal al tashkeelayah al Kuwaiteyah (the martyr in Kuwaiti art works)', *Altashkeely*, <http://www.altshkeely.com/kuwait/shaheed.html>

Lamb, Trevor (editor) and Bourriau, Janine (editor), *Colour: Art and science*, Cambridge, 1995

Lawson, Mark, *Conflicts of Interest: John Keane*, Edinburgh, 1995

Lewis, Michael, *John Frederick Lewis R.A 1805-1876*, Leigh-on-Sea, 1978

Lloyd, Fran (editor), *Contemporary Arab Women's Art: Dialogues of the present*, London, 1999

Lyon, Janet, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the modern*, Ithaca and London, 1999

MacArthur, John, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the 1991 Gulf War*, Berkeley, 2004

MacKenzie, John, *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts*, Manchester, 1995

Mahalawi, Hanafy, *Mohammad Hasaneen Heikal Wa Awhamoh An Al Quwah Wa Al Naser* (Mohammad Heikal and his illusions of power and victory), Cairo, 1992

Mason, Alfred and Barny, *Frederick, History of the Arabian Mission*, New York, 1926

McManners, Hugh, *Gulf War One: Real voices from the front line*, London, 2010,
Kindle edition

Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922*, Cambridge, 1994

Muhana, Abdullah and Bahbahani, Baheja, *Al Taaleem fe al Kuwait Men Al Alef Ela Al Yaa* (Education in Kuwait From A to Z), Kuwait, 1993

Nasreldin, Nashwa, 'Return to Kuwait: Class of 1990', *Al Jazeera*,
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/classof1990/2010/08/20108111558791226.htm>
1

Al Nowri, Abdullah, *Qessat Al Taaleem Fe Al Kuwait Fe Nesf Qarn 1300-1360 Hejryah* (The story of education in Kuwait in half a century 1300-1360 AH), Kuwait, 19??

Qabbani, Nizar, 'Hawamesh Ala Daftar Al Hazeema (Notes on the notebook of defeat)', *Adab*,
<http://www.adab.com/modules.php?name=Sh3er&doWhat=shqas&qid=68914>

Qattan, Khalifa, 'Al Kuwait wa Maaradh Al Bundoqeyah Al Duali (Kuwait and the Venice Biennale)', *Al Hadaf*, Kuwait, 5/12/1962, p. 10

Qattan, Lidia, *The Woman's Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, Abdullah Al Salem Area, Ahmed Al Adwani Hall, Kuwait, April 2004

Rajab, Jehan, *Invasion Kuwait: An English woman's tale*, London, 1996

Rajab, Tareq, *Tareq Sayid Rajab and the Development of Fine Art in Kuwait*, Kuwait, 2001

Al Refaee, Najeeb, *Muthakarat Naeb Areef Men Quwat Al Edwan Al Iraqi* (Memoirs of an Iraqi soldier of the invading forced), Kuwait, 1993

Richmond, Sheldon, *Aesthetic Criteria: Gombrich and the philosophies of science of Popper and Polanyi*, Amsterdam, 1994

Roberts, Mary, *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist art and travel literature*, North Carolina, 2007

Al Rumayhi, Mohammad, *Al Khaleej Laysa Neftan* (The Gulf is not oil), Beirut, 1995

Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism*, London, 1994

Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, London, 2003

Said, Edward, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith lectures*, London, 1994

Salman, Abduroul, *Bedayat Maserat Al Fan Al Tashkeeli Fe Al Kuwait* (The beginnings of the Kuwaiti visual art journey), Kuwait, 1975

Salman, Abduroul, *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh* (Khalifa Qattan: His life and works), Kuwait, 2007

Scudder III, Lewis, *The Arabian Mission's Story: In Search of Abraham's Other Son*, Michigan, 1998

Shabout, Nada, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab aesthetics*, Florida, 2007

SouEIF, Ahdaf, 'Visions of the harem', *The Guardian*, 5/7/2008, electronic version
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jul/05/art.exhibition>

Sowailem, Yahya, 'Mujib Al Dosary... the ideal teacher', *Al Jarida*, Kuwait, 28/10/2007, electronic version,
<http://www.aljarida.com/aljarida/Article.aspx?id=29937>

Sowailem, Yahya, *Maareth Al Rabee Wa Bedayat Al Tashkeel Fe Al Kuwait* (The Spring Exhibitions and the beginnings of visual art in Kuwait), Kuwait, 2009

Stallabrass, Julian, 'Painting Desert Storm', *New Left Review*, London, September-October 1992, pp. 102-109, electronic version, *The Courtauld Institute of Art*, http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/people/stallabrass_julian/PDF/KEANE.pdf

Stewart, Charles, *Weapons of mass casualties and terrorism response handbook*, Massachusetts, 2005

Suwailem, Yahya, *Maaredh Al Rabee Wa Bedayat Al Tashkeel Fe Al Kuwait* (Spring exhibitions and the beginning of formative art in Kuwait), Kuwait, 2009

Swofford, Anthony, *Jarhead*, New York, 2003, Kindle edition

Unknown author, 'London festival of contemporary Arab culture', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=602294182>

Unknown editor, *Contemporary Art in Kuwait*, Kuwait, 1983

Unknown author, 'Thekrayat Al Fannan Al Tashkeeli Khalifa Al Qattan (Memories of the visual artist Khalifa Qattan)', *Alam Al Fan*, Kuwait, December 1974, pp. 14-17

Unknown author, 'Al Circulism: fannan men Al Kuwait yabtaker madrasah jadeeda fe al rasem (Circulism: an artist from Kuwait invents a new school of painting)', *Al Arabi*, Kuwait, October 1964, pp. 124-129

Unknown author, 'Al Seera Al Thatayah (Ayyad's biography)', *Ministry of Culture, sector of fine arts*, <http://www.fineart.gov.eg/Arb/CV/CV.asp?IDS=1852>

Unknow author, 'Qessa tasamoh masria baina Ragheb wa Yusuf Kamel (An Egyptian story of tolerance between Ragheb and Yusuf Kamel)', *Egyptian State Information Service*, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/Story.aspx?sid=3579>

Unknown author, 'A brief history', *DeMontfort University - Leicester*,
<http://www.dmu.ac.uk/aboutdmu/history/index.jsp>

Unknown author, 'Meeting in the Desert', *Time*, 14/4/1961, electronic version,
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,872259,00.html>

Unknown author, 'Middle East: Kassem's Corner', *Time*, 21/7/1961, electronic
version, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,897810,00.html>

Unknown author, 'Britain to the Rescue', *Time*, 7/7/1961, electronic version,
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,872527,00.html>

Unknown author, 'Where the Money Is', *Time*, 24/5/1963, electronic version,
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,830468,00.html>

Unknown author, 'Toward a New Kuwait', *Time*, 24/12/1990, electronic version,
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,972015,00.html>

Unknown author, 'The Gulf War: An in-depth examination of the 1990-1991 Persian
Gulf crisis', *PBS*, multimedia website, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/>

Unknown author, 'Al Circulism Madrasa Fanneya Jadeda Yabtadeoha Khalifa Al
Qattan (Circulism.. a new art school invented by Khalifa Qattan)', *Al Watan*, Kuwait,
3/12/1962, pp. 8-9

Unknown author, 'Crafting Tragedy', *The White House*, [http://georgewbush-
whitehouse.archives.gov/ogc/apparatus/crafting.html](http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/ogc/apparatus/crafting.html)

Unknown author, 'Ahmadinejad hails election as protests grow', *CNN World*,
[http://articles.cnn.com/2009-06-13/world/iran.election_1_street-protests-voter-
irregularities-iranian-president-mahmoud-ahmadinejad](http://articles.cnn.com/2009-06-13/world/iran.election_1_street-protests-voter-irregularities-iranian-president-mahmoud-ahmadinejad), 13/6/2009

Unknown author, 'Contemporary War Artists: Linda Kitson: The Falklands War', *Imperial War Museum*, <http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.910>

Unknown author, 'War art', *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_art

Unknown editor, Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce et Decorum Est' , *The First World War Poetry Digital Archive*, <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/3303>

Unknown author, 'Contemporary War Artists: John Keane: The Gulf War', *Imperial War Museum*, <http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.911>

Unknown author, 'Contemporary War Artists: Peter Howson: Bosnia', *Imperial War Museum*, <http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.912>

Whelan, Richard, *Robert Capa: A Biography*, Nebraska, 1994

Al Zuabi, Zuabi, *Kunooz Al Fan Al Kuwaiti Al Moaser* (The treasures of contemporary Kuwaiti art), Kuwait, 1995

Zuhur, Sherifa, *Colors of Enchantment: Theater, dance, music and visual arts of the Middle East*, Cairo, 2003

List of Illustrations

Fig.1) unknown photographer, *Aerial view of Kuwait City*, probably in the 1940s, monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in *Kuwait Arts and Architecture: a collection of essays*, Kuwait, 1995, p. 182

Fig.2) Muayad Hussain, *Part of the Courtyard of Diwaneyyat al Assawosi*, digital photograph, Kuwait, 2002, (private collection of the author)

Fig.3) Feras Malallah, *One of the courtyards of House of Al Bader*, digital photograph, Kuwait, 2010, (private collection of the author)

Fig.4) E. Simos Ali, *Main entrance of Diwaneyyat al Assawosi*, unknown date, colour photograph, unknown size, published in *Kuwait Arts and Architecture: a collection of essays*, Kuwait, 1995, p. 176

Fig.5) Feras Malallah, *One of the courtyards of House of Al Bader*, digital photograph, Kuwait, 2010, (private collection of the author)

Fig.6) Alan Villiers, *Baghlah*, 1939, monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in *Kuwait by the First Photographers*, New York, 1999, p.100

Fig.7) Alan Villiers, *Al Mubarakiyah School*, 1939, monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in *Kuwait by the First Photographers*, New York, 1999, p.111

Fig.8) Khalifa Qattan, *Kuwait Diver*, 1964, oil on canvas, 63 x 52 cm, published in *Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, Kuwait, 1994, p. 37

Fig.9) Ragheb Ayyad, *To the Animal Market*, 1970, oil on board, 62 x 90cm, published in Artnet,
http://www.artnet.com/Artists/LotDetailPage.aspx?lot_id=E2834A5817DCF910B1D51D793D5DB4DA, accessed 24/1/2012

Fig.10) John Frederick Lewis, *A Cairo Bazaar - The Dell'l*, 1875, oil on panel, 75 x 52 cm, published in *Orientalist Art*, <http://www.orientalist-art.org.uk/lewis9.html>, accessed 24/1/2012

Fig.11) Zangaki Brothers, *Rue du Vieux Caire*, 1875, monochrome photograph, 20 x 27 cm, published in *Luminous Lint*, <http://www.luminous-lint.com/app/image/342551398612434803501/>, accessed 24/1/2012

Fig.12) John Frederick Lewis, *Interior of a Mosque, Afternoon Prayer (The 'Asr)*, before 1857, unknown medium, 31 x 21 cm, published in *Tate Britain*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/britishorientalistpainting/explore/religion.shtml>, accessed 24/1/2012

Fig.13) Zangaki Brothers, *Students at Mosque of el-Azhar*, 18??, silver print photograph, 28 x 22 cm, published in <http://kiva.lib.utk.edu/egypt/items/show/670>, accessed 24/1/2012

Fig.14) Zangaki Brothers, *Sakiyeh Driven by a Camel*, 18??, silver print photograph, 27 x 21 cm, published in <http://kiva.lib.utk.edu/egypt/items/show/673>, accessed 24/1/2012

Fig.15) John Frederick Lewis, *Greetings in the Desert*, 1855, watercolour, 35.5 x 48 cm, published in <http://www.orientalist-art.org.uk/jfl6.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig.16) Khalifa Qattan, *Policeman*, 1950-1952, stencil print, 80 x 60 cm, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

Fig.17) Khalifa Qattan, *Jini*, 1950-1952, stencil print, 80 x 60, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

Fig.18) unknown photographer, *Leicester's Royal Visit*, 1958, monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in *Leicester Mercury*, Leicester, 26/4/1958, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

Fig.19) Khalifa Qattan, *Impression of Venice 2*, 1958, oil on canvas, 40 x 48 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, Kuwait, 2007, p. 29

Fig.20) Georges Braque, *Bottle and Fishes*, 1910-2, oil on canvas, 62 x 75 cm, Tate collection, published in <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=1447&roomid=3651>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig.21) Khalifa Qattan, *The Roster*, 1959, oil on canvas, 50 x 50, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, p. 30

Fig.22) Robert Delaunay, *Sun, Tower, Aeroplane: Simultaneous*, 1913, oil on canvas, 132 x 131 cm, published in <http://www.albrightknox.org/collection/collection-highlights/piece:delahunay-sun-tower-airplane>, accessed 4/9/2012

Fig. 23) Robert Delaunay, *Portuguese Woman, 1916*, oil on canvas, 136 x 175 cm, published in <http://www.columbusmuseum.org/collection/detail.php?id=10>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 24) Khalifa Qattan, *The Bear and the Fish*, 1960, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

Fig. 25) Khalifa Qattan, *The Torrero*, 1960, oil on canvas, 60 x 40, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

Fig. 26) Khalifa Qattan, *Lick to Reach*, 1967, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatom wa aamaloh*, p. 34

Fig. 27) Khalifa Qattan, *The Expert*, 1963, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Al fannan al ensan*, Kuwait, 2007, p. 25

Fig. 28a) *Circulism in Arabic press highlights (Al Watan)*, newspaper clip, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

Fig. 28b) *Circulism in Arabic press highlights (Al Safaa)*, newspaper clip, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

Fig 29) Khalifa Qattan, *A Bride*, 1961, oil on canvas, 70 x 50 cm, Published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, p. 33

Fig 30) Khalifa Qattan, *Is Life a Cosmic Phenomenon?*, 1979, oil on canvas, 40 x 55 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Al fannan al ensan*, p. 86

Fig 31) Khalifa Qattan, *Explosion*, 1978, oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Al fannan al ensan*, p. 71

Fig 32) Khalifa Qattan, *The Trap*, 1974, oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm, published in *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, Kuwait, 1994, p. 65

Fig 33) Khalifa Qattan, *Time*, 1979, oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm, published in *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, Kuwait, 1994, p. 66

Fig 34) *Flag of Saudi Arabia*, published in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Saudi_Arabia.svg, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 35) Hameed Khazaal, *Rumour*, unknown medium, unknown size, 1993, (private collection of Hameed Khazaal)

Fig. 36) John Keane, *Ecstasy of Fumbling (Portrait of the Artist in Gas Alert)*, 1991, oil and mixed media on canvas, 152.5 x 107 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 37) John Keane, *Scenes on the Road to Hell (1)*, 1991, PVA and crayon on paper, 114.5 x 85 cm, Imperia War Museum collection, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 38) John Keane, *We Are Making a New World Order*, 1991, oil and mixed media on canvas, 170.5 x 233 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 39) John Keane, *Off Duty British Troops Resting Beneath Camouflage Netting*, 1991, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010, (reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)

Fig. 40) John Keane, *General Rupert Smith at Briefing*, 1991, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010, (reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)

Fig. 41a) John Keane, *Kuwaiti children celebrating in Kuwait City shortly after its liberation*, 1991, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010, (reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)

Fig. 41b) John Keane, *Kuwaiti child celebrates on an abandoned Iraqi tank in Kuwait City shortly after its liberation*, 1991, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010, (reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)

Fig. 42) John Keane, *Every Time We Say Goodbye*, 1991, oil and video stills on canvas, 128 x 143 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 43a) John Keane, *Scenes on the Road to Hell (5)*, 1991, PVA on paper, unknown size, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 43b) John Keane, *An American Soldier Films the Body of a Dead Iraqi Soldier*, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991:*

Photographs by John Keane, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010,
(reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)

Fig. 44) John Keane, *Distant Shudder*, 1991, PVA and crayon on paper, 76 x 51 cm,
published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig 45a) Robert Capa, *Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death (The Falling Soldier)*, 1936, monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/photography/genius/gallery/capa.shtml>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig 45b) Robert Capa, *An American soldier landing on Omaha Beach, D-day*, 1944,
monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in
http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1648361_1419267,00.html, accessed
30/1/2011

Fig. 46) John Singer Sargent, *Gassed*, 1919, oil, 231 x 611 cm, Imperial War Museum
collection, published in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gassed.jpg>, accessed
30/1/2012

Fig. 47) John Keane, *Mickey Mouse at the Front*, 1991, oil on canvas, 173 x 198 cm,
Imperial War Museum collection, published in
<http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 48a) John Keane, *Choice*, 1993, oil on canvas, 51 x 40.5 cm, published in
<http://www.johnkeaneart.com/struggle.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig 48b) John Keane, *The Struggle for the Control of the Television Station (Central panel)*, 1992, oil on canvas, 198 x 198 cm (central panel), published in
<http://www.johnkeaneart.com/struggle.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 49) John Keane, *Renouncing Violence*, 1994, PVA and crayon on paper, 114 x
84.5 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/struggle.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 50) John Keane, *Romantic Encounter*, 1984, PVA on canvas, 183 x 152.5 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/ancient.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 51) Linda Kitson, *Sir Galahad Moored at Fitzroy*, 1982, conte crayon and oil pastel on paper, 29.5 x 42 cm, published in <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/15400>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 52) John Keane, *Still-Life (Insult to Injury)*, 1984, PVA and crayon and collage on paper, 76 x 99 cm, published in *Conflicts on Interest : John Keane*, Edinburgh, 1995, p. 19

Fig. 53) CRW Nevinson, *La Mitrailieuse*, 1915, oil on canvas, 61 x 51 cm, published in <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=10599>, accessed 30/1/2012

Fig. 54) Khalifa Qattan, *The Deep Wound*, 1984, oil on canvas, 85 x 105 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, p. 27

Fig. 55) Khalifa Qattan, from the *Trees* series, 1990, oil on canvas, 56 x 46 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Al fannan al ensan*, Kuwait, 2007, p. 90

Fig. 56) Khalifa Qattan, *The Band*, 1991, oil on canvas, 62 x 52 cm, published in *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 61

Fig. 57) Khalifa Qattan, *The Helmet*, 1991, oil on canvas, 46 x 56 cm, published in *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 57

Fig. 58) Khalifa Qattan, *The Document (Iraqi Hatred)*, 1991, oil and mixed media on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, published in *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 59

Fig. 59) John Keane, *Oil Painting*, 1991, oil on canvas, unknown size, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 31/1/2012

Fig. 60) John Keane, *Day For Night*, 1991, PVA and collage on paper, unknown size, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 31/1/2012

Fig. 61) Khalifa Qattan, *The Elected (MP)*, 1965, oil on canvas, 53 x 65 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, p. 34

Fig. 62) Khalifa Qattan, *The Ship of Goodness and Generous Hand*, 1975, oil on canvas, 150 x 100 cm, published in *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 35

Fig. 63) Giacomo Balla, *Girl Running on the Balcony*, 1912, oil on canvas, 125 x 125 cm, published in <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/giacomo-balla/girl-running-on-a-balcony-1912>, accessed 1/8/2012

Fig. 64) Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, 1915-23 (reconstructed in 1965-6), Oil, lead, dust and varnish on glass, 277 x 176 cm, published in <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-the-bride-stripped-bare-by-her-bachelors-even-the-large-glass-t02011>, accessed 1/8/2012



Fig. 1

unknown photographer, *Aerial view of Kuwait City*, probably in the 1940s, monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in *Kuwait Arts and Architecture: a collection of essays*, Kuwait, 1995, p. 182



Fig. 2

Muayad Hussain, *Part of the Courtyard of Diwaneyyat al Assawosi*, digital photograph, Kuwait, 2002, (private collection of the author)



Fig. 3

Feras Malallah, *One of the courtyards of House of Al Bader*, digital photograph, Kuwait, 2010, (private collection of the author)

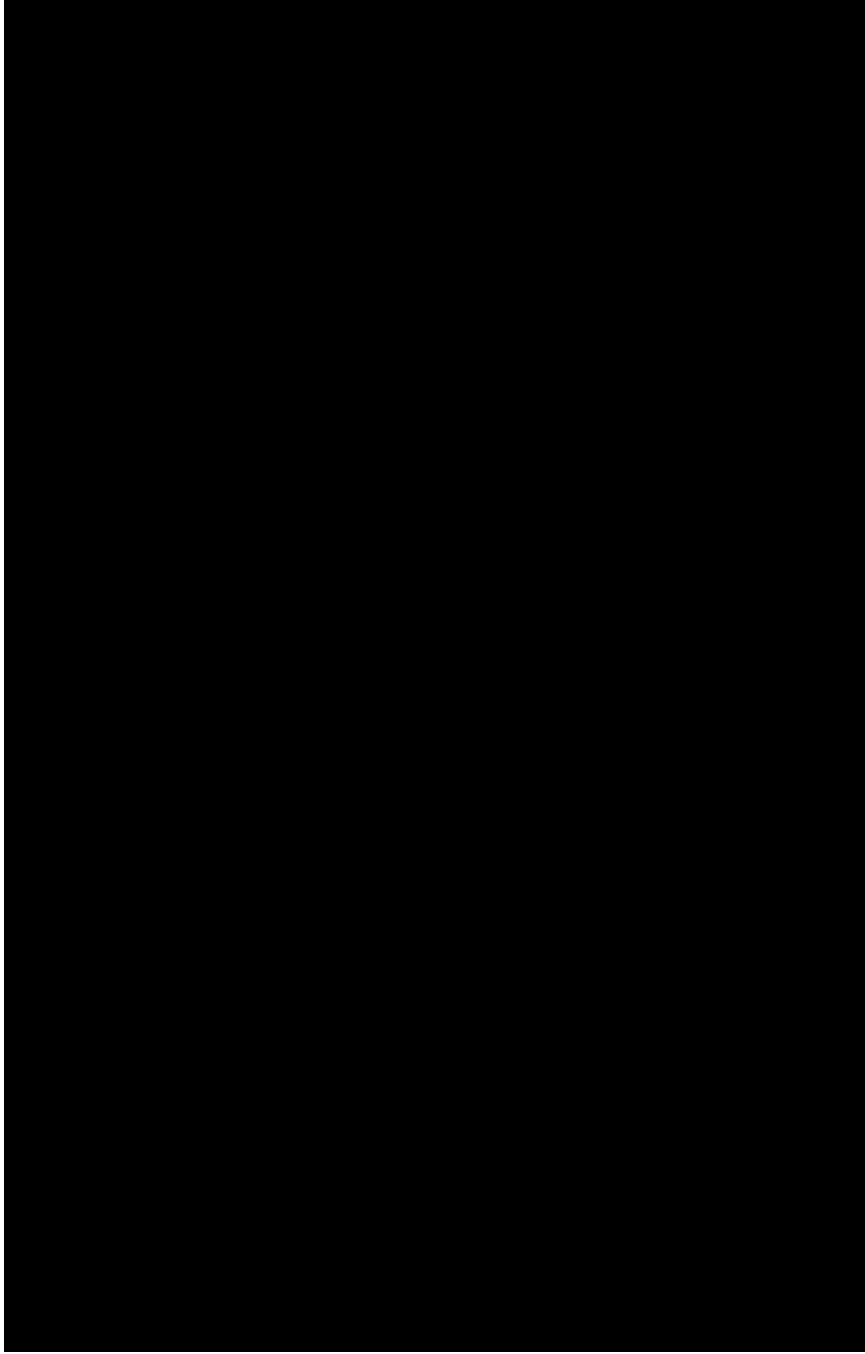


Fig. 4

E. Simos Ali, *Main entrance of Diwaneyyat al Assawosi*, unknown date, colour photograph, unknown size, published in *Kuwait Arts and Architecture: a collection of essays*, Kuwait, 1995, p. 176



Fig. 5

Feras Malallah, *One of the courtyards of House of Al Bader*, digital photograph, Kuwait, 2010, (private collection of the author)

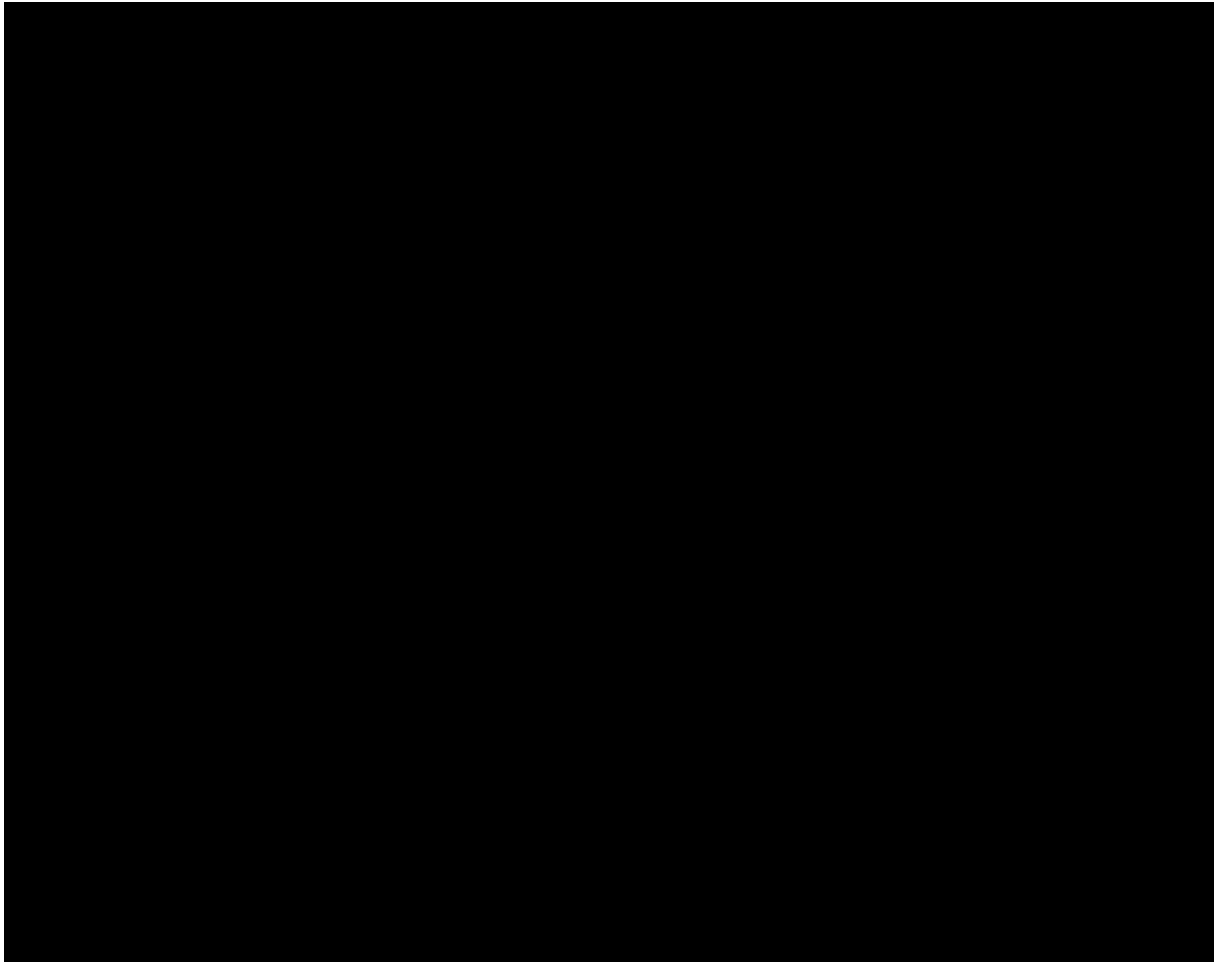


Fig. 6

Alan Villiers, *Baghlah*, 1939, monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in *Kuwait by the First Photographers*, New York, 1999, p.100

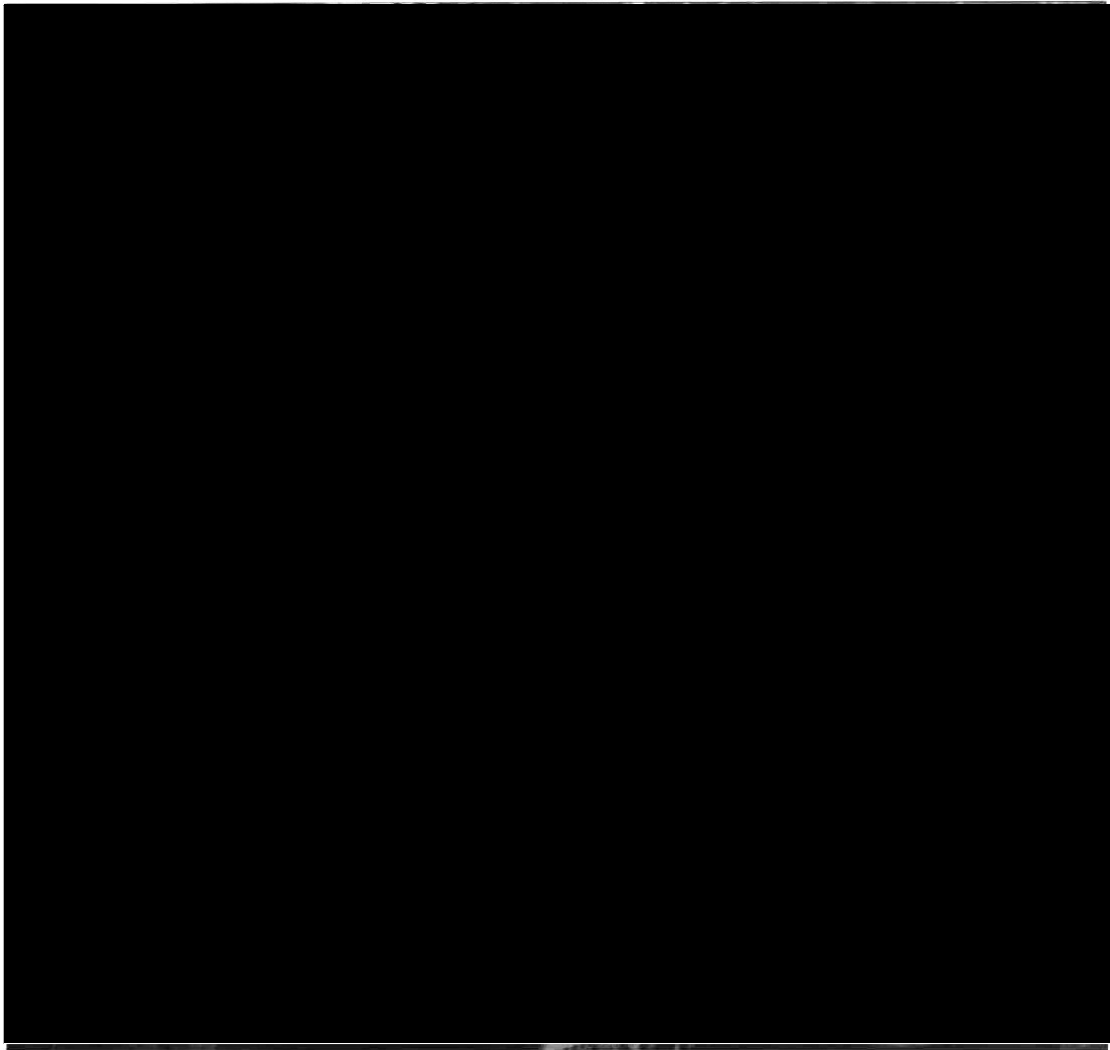


Fig. 7

Alan Villiers, *Al Mubarakiyah School*, 1939, monochrome photograph, unknown size,
published in *Kuwait by the First Photographers*, New York, 1999, p.111



Fig. 8

Khalifa Qattan, *Kuwait Diver*, 1964, oil on canvas, 63 x 52 cm, published in *Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, Kuwait, 1994, p. 37

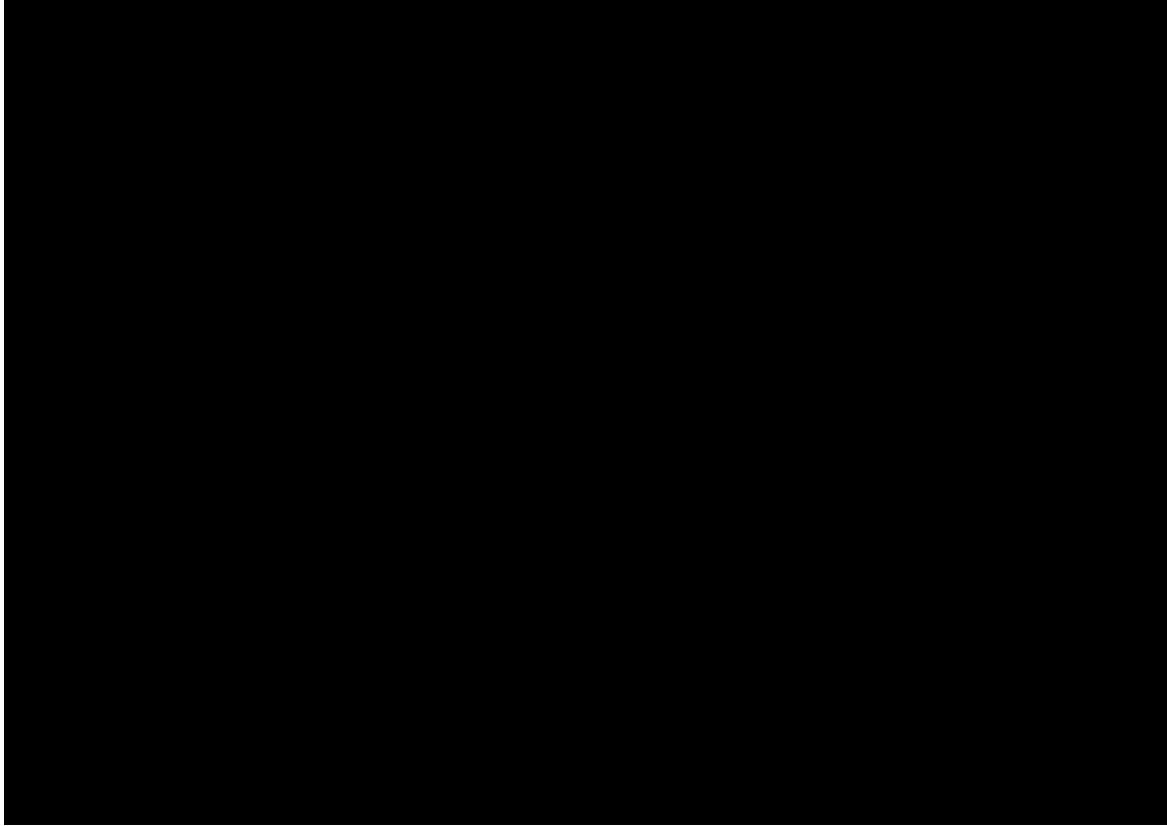


Fig. 9

Ragheb Ayyad, *To the Animal Market*, 1970, oil on board, 62 x 90cm, published in Artnet, http://www.artnet.com/Artists/LotDetailPage.aspx?lot_id=E2834A5817DCF910B1D51D793D5DB4DA, accessed 24/1/2012

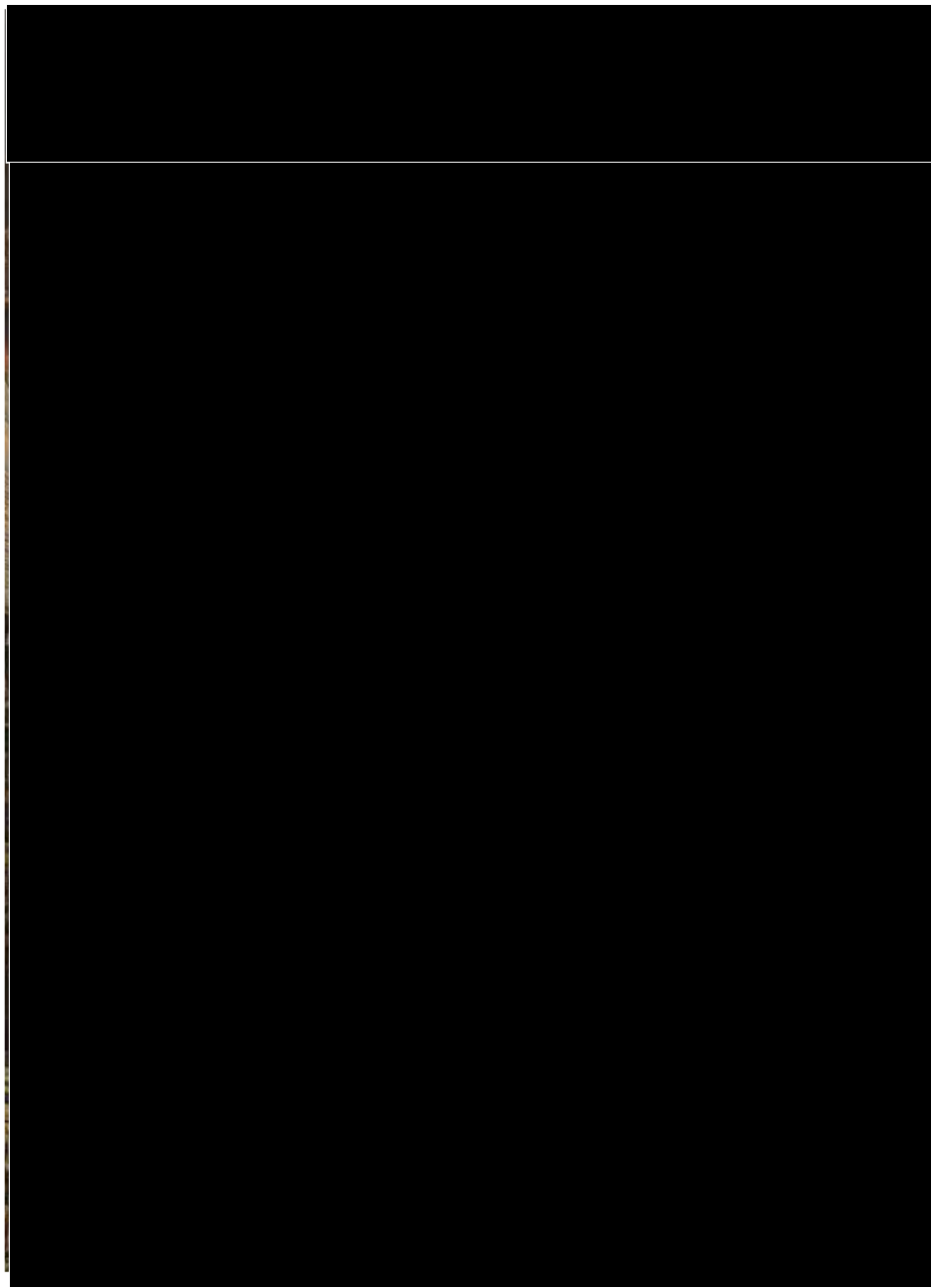


Fig. 10

John Frederick Lewis, *A Cairo Bazaar - The Dell'*, 1875, oil on panel, 75 x 52 cm, published in *Orientalist Art*, <http://www.orientalist-art.org.uk/lewis9.html>, accessed 24/1/2012

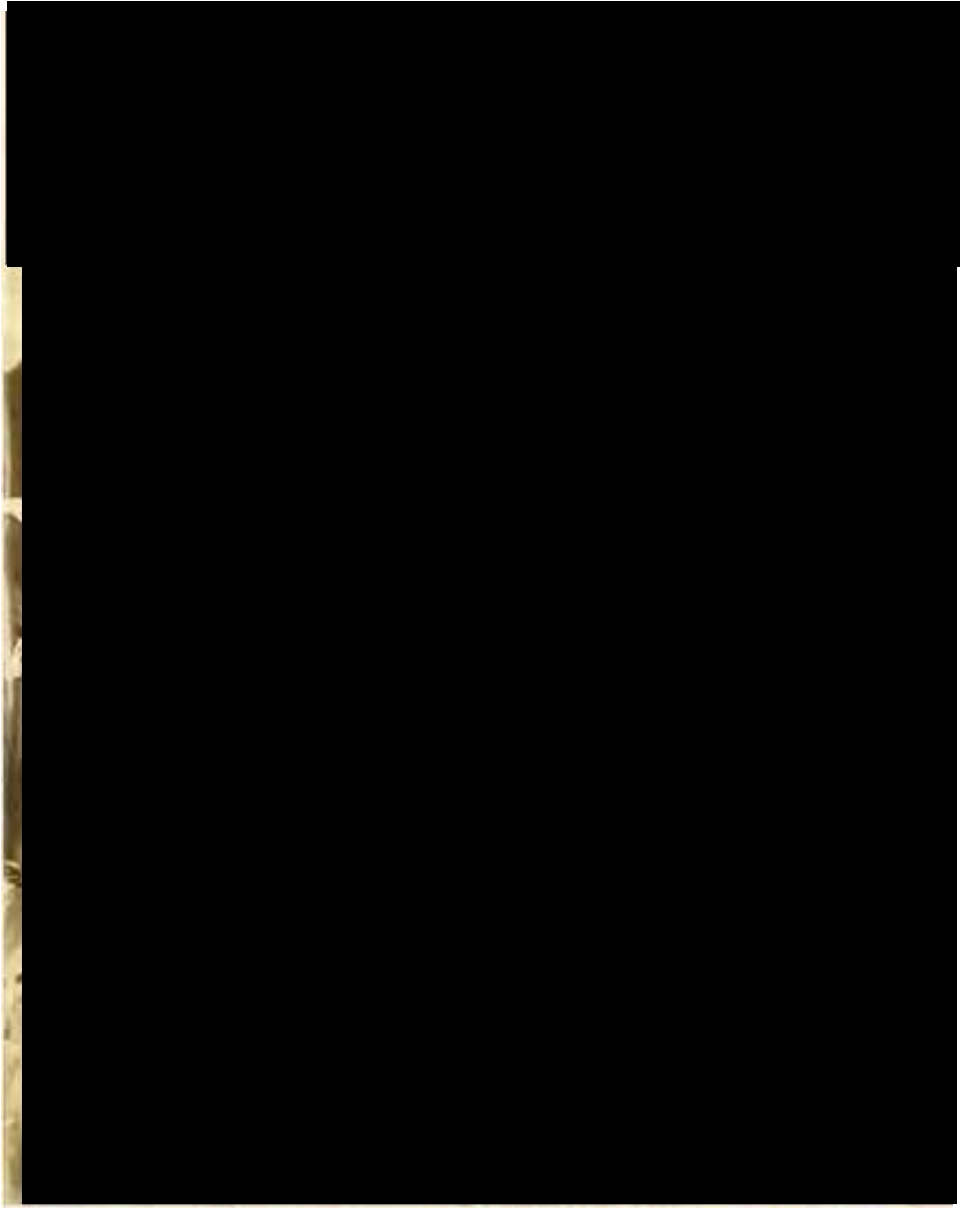


Fig. 11

Zangaki Brothers, *Rue du Vieux Caire*, 1875, monochrome photograph, 20 x 27 cm, published in Luminous Lint, <http://www.luminous-lint.com/app/image/342551398612434803501/>, accessed 24/1/2012

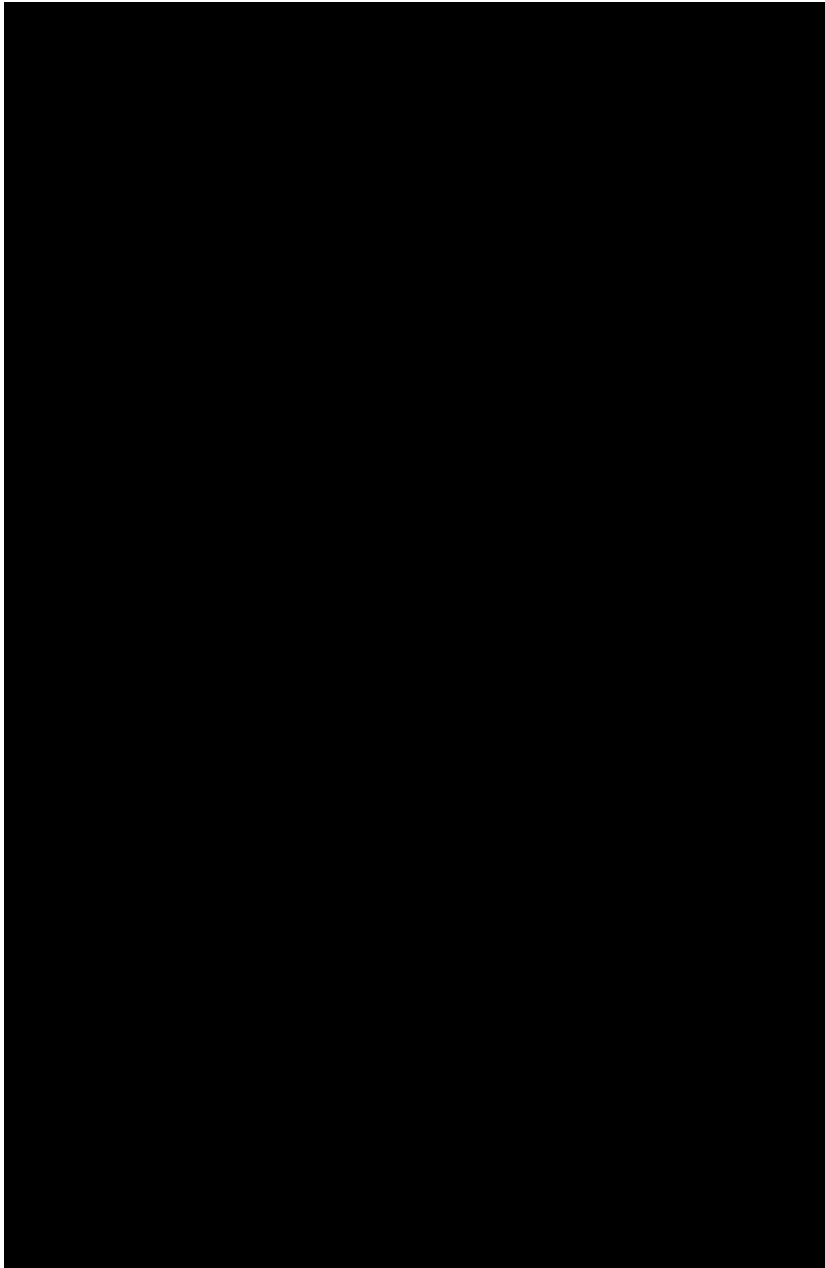


Fig. 12

John Frederick Lewis, *Interior of a Mosque, Afternoon Prayer (The 'Asr)*, before 1857,
unknown medium, 31 x 21 cm, published in *Tate Britain*,
<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/britishorientalistpainting/explore/religion.shtm>,
accessed 24/1/2012



Fig. 13

Zangaki Brothers, *Students at Mosque of el-Azhar*, 18??, silver print photograph, 28 x 22 cm, published in <http://kiva.lib.utk.edu/egypt/items/show/670>, accessed 24/1/2012



Fig. 14

Zangaki Brothers, *Sakiyah Driven by a Camel*, 18??, silver print photograph, 27 x 21 cm, published in <http://kiva.lib.utk.edu/egypt/items/show/673>, accessed 24/1/2012

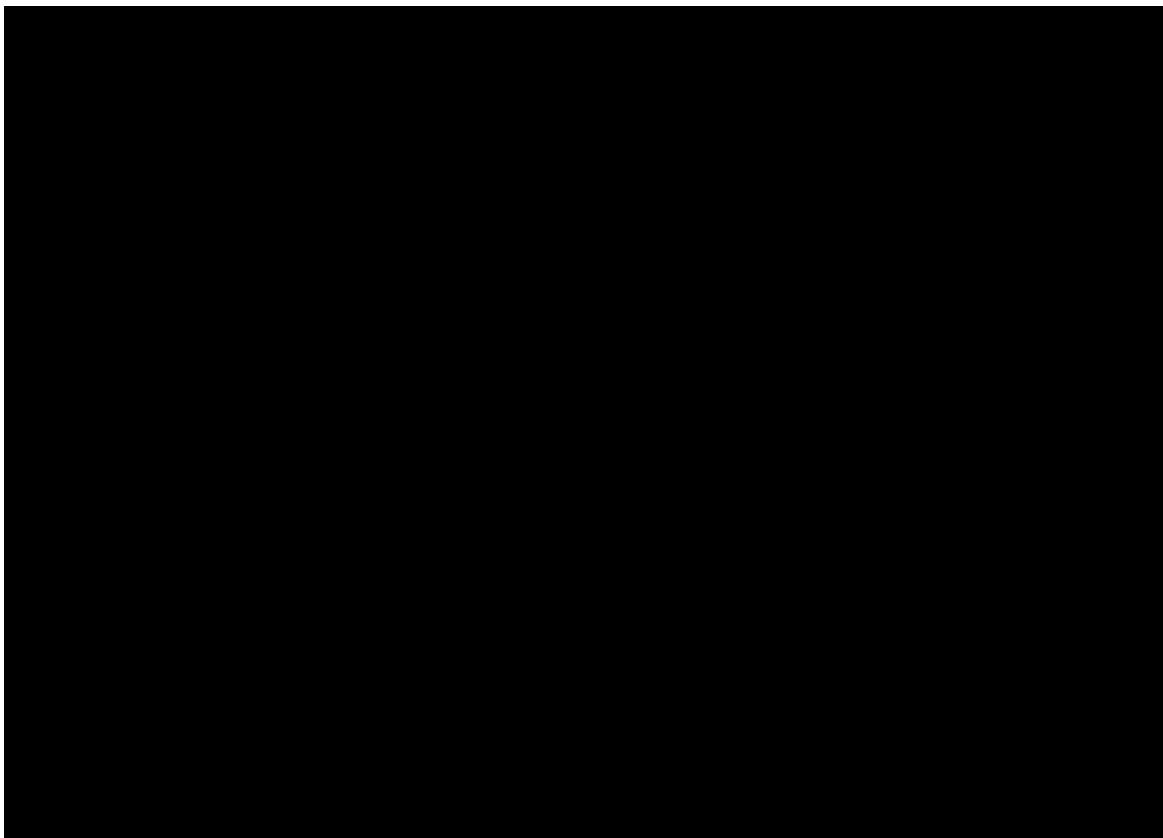


Fig. 15

John Frederick Lewis, *Greetings in the Desert*, 1855, watercolour, 35.5 x 48 cm, published in <http://www.orientalist-art.org.uk/jfl6.html>, accessed 30/1/2012



Fig. 16

Khalifa Qattan, *Policeman*, 1950-1952, stencil print, 80 x 60 cm, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)



Fig. 17

Khalifa Qattan, *Jini*, 1950-1952, stencil print, 80 x 60, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

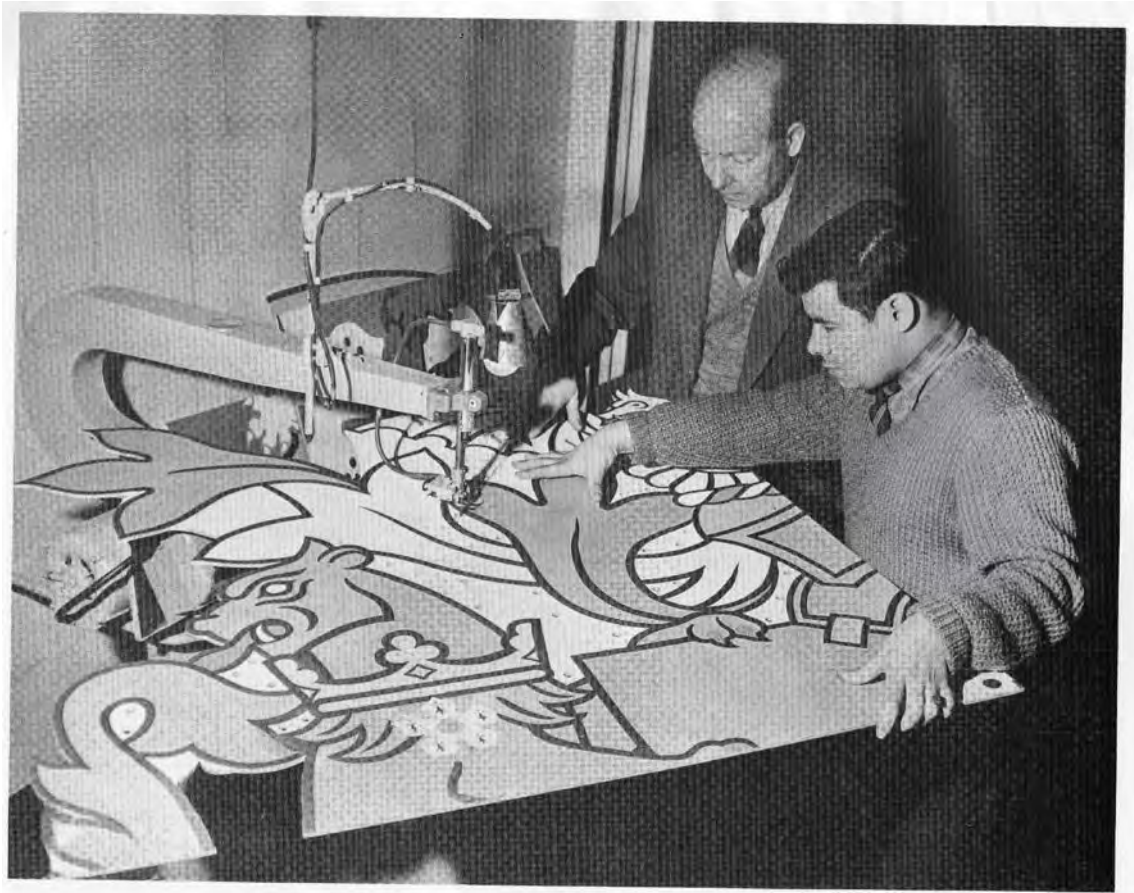


Fig. 18

unknown photographer, *Leicester's Royal Visit*, 1958, unknown medium, unknown size, published in *Leicester Mercury*, Leicester, 26/4/1958, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

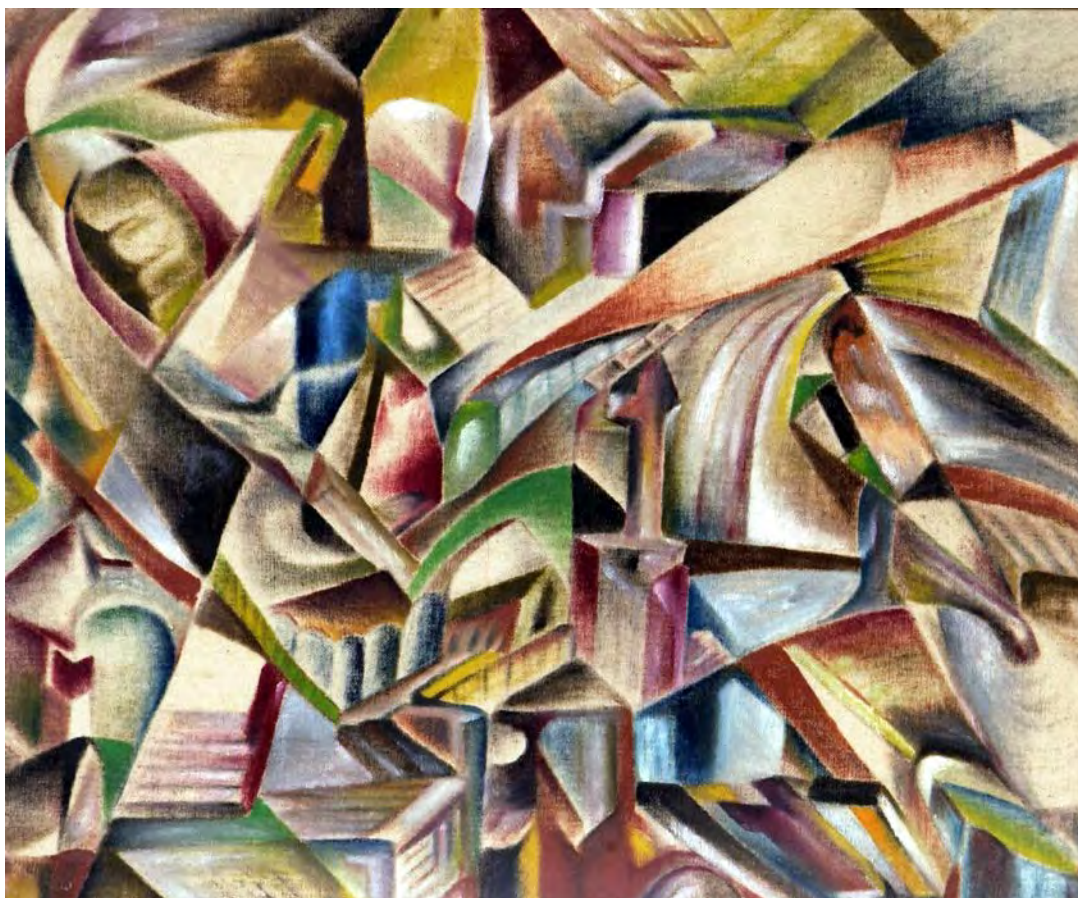


Fig. 19

Khalifa Qattan, *Impression of Venice 2*, 1958, oil on canvas, 40 x 48 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, Kuwait, 2007, p. 29

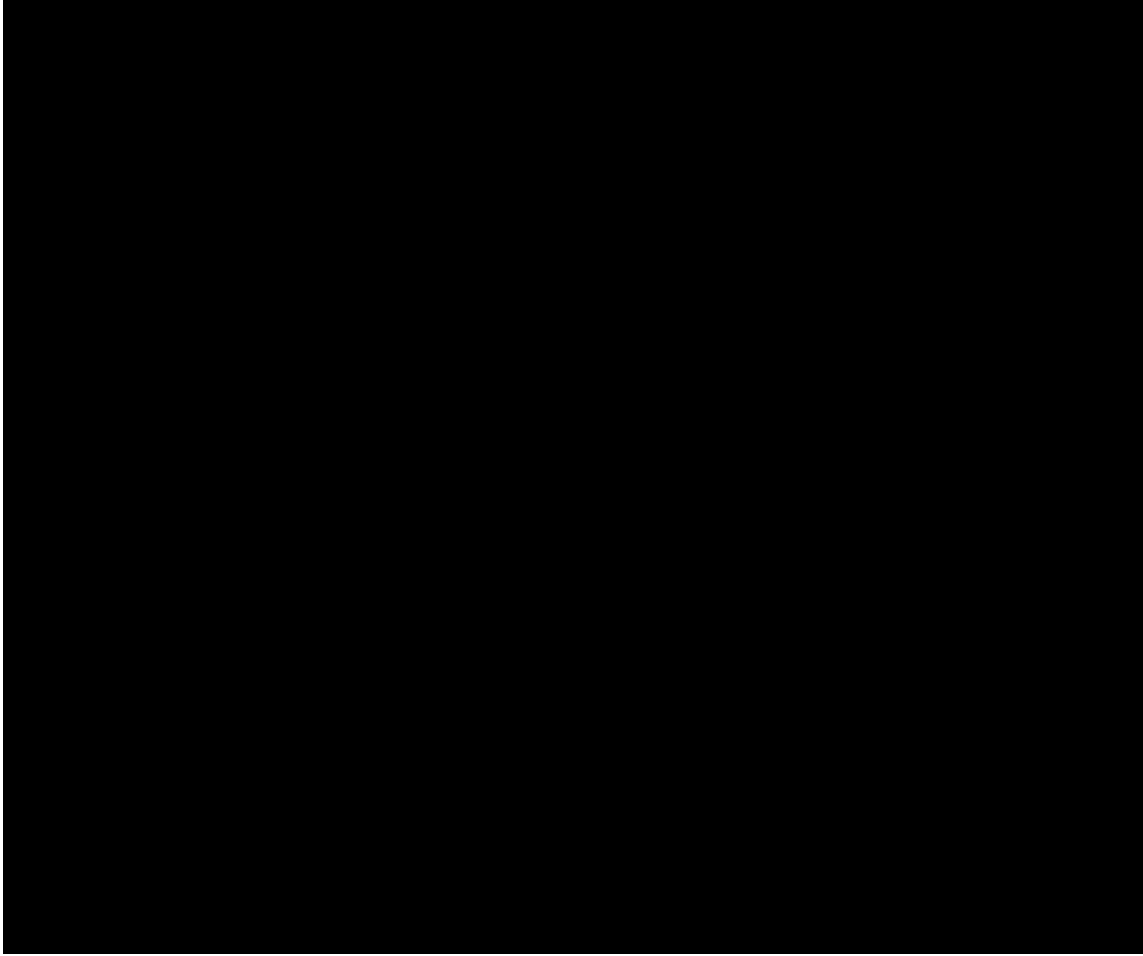


Fig. 20

Georges Braque, *Bottle and Fishes*, 1910-2, oil on canvas, 62 x 75 cm, Tate collection, published in <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=1447&roomid=3651>, accessed 30/1/2012



Fig. 21

Khalifa Qattan, *The Roster*, 1959, oil on canvas, 50 x 50, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, p. 30

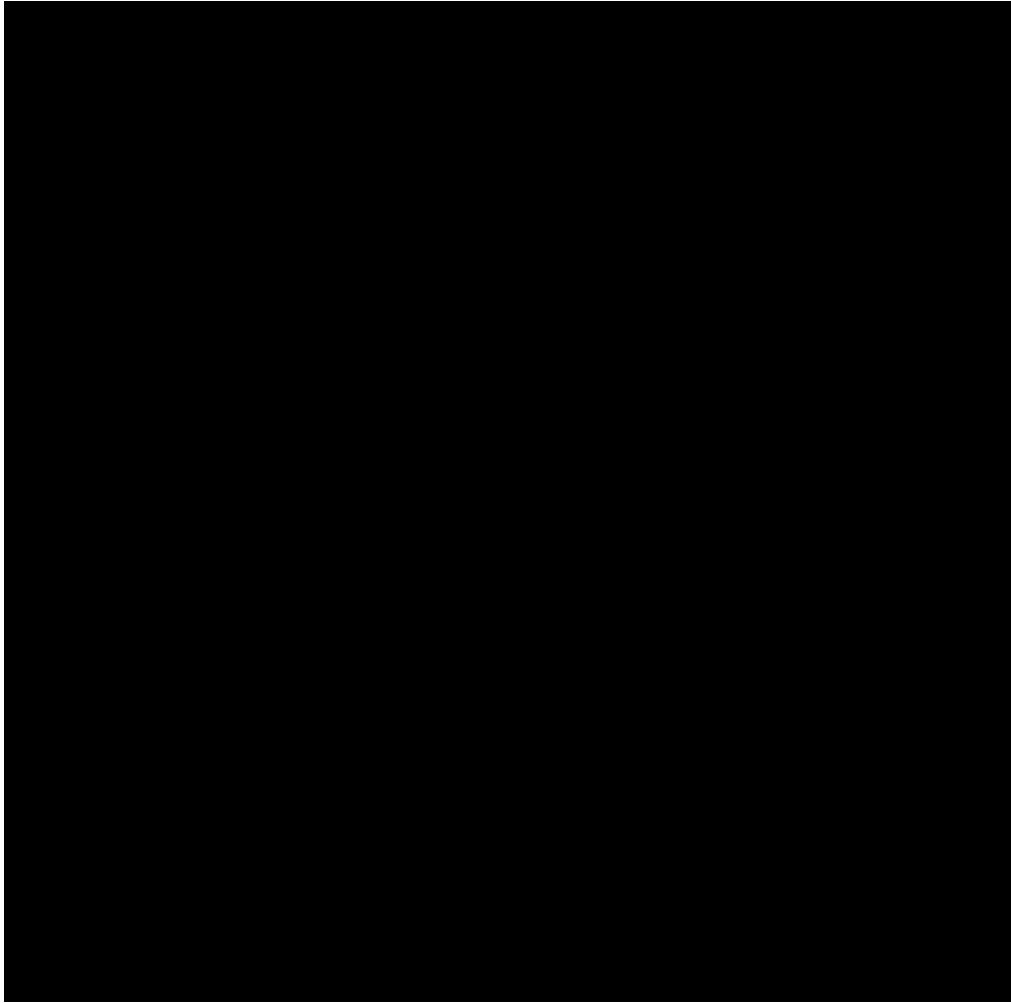


Fig. 22

Robert Delaunay, *Sun, Tower, Aeroplane: Simultaneous*, 1913, oil on canvas, 132 x 131 cm, published in <http://www.albrightknox.org/collection/collection-highlights/piece:delahunay-sun-tower-airplane>, accessed 4/9/2012

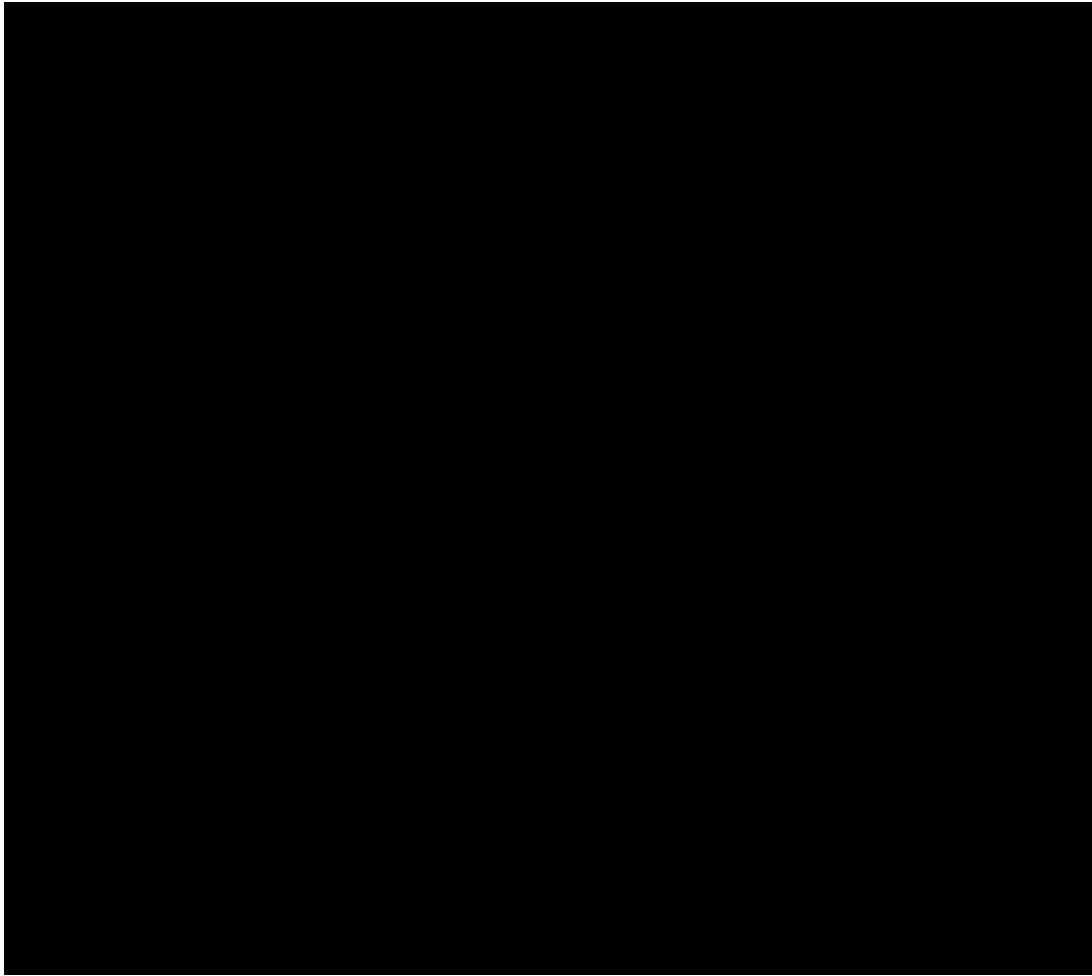


Fig. 23

Robert Delaunay, *Portuguese Woman*, 1916, oil on canvas, 136 x 175 cm, published in <http://www.columbusmuseum.org/collection/detail.php?id=10>, accessed 30/1/2012

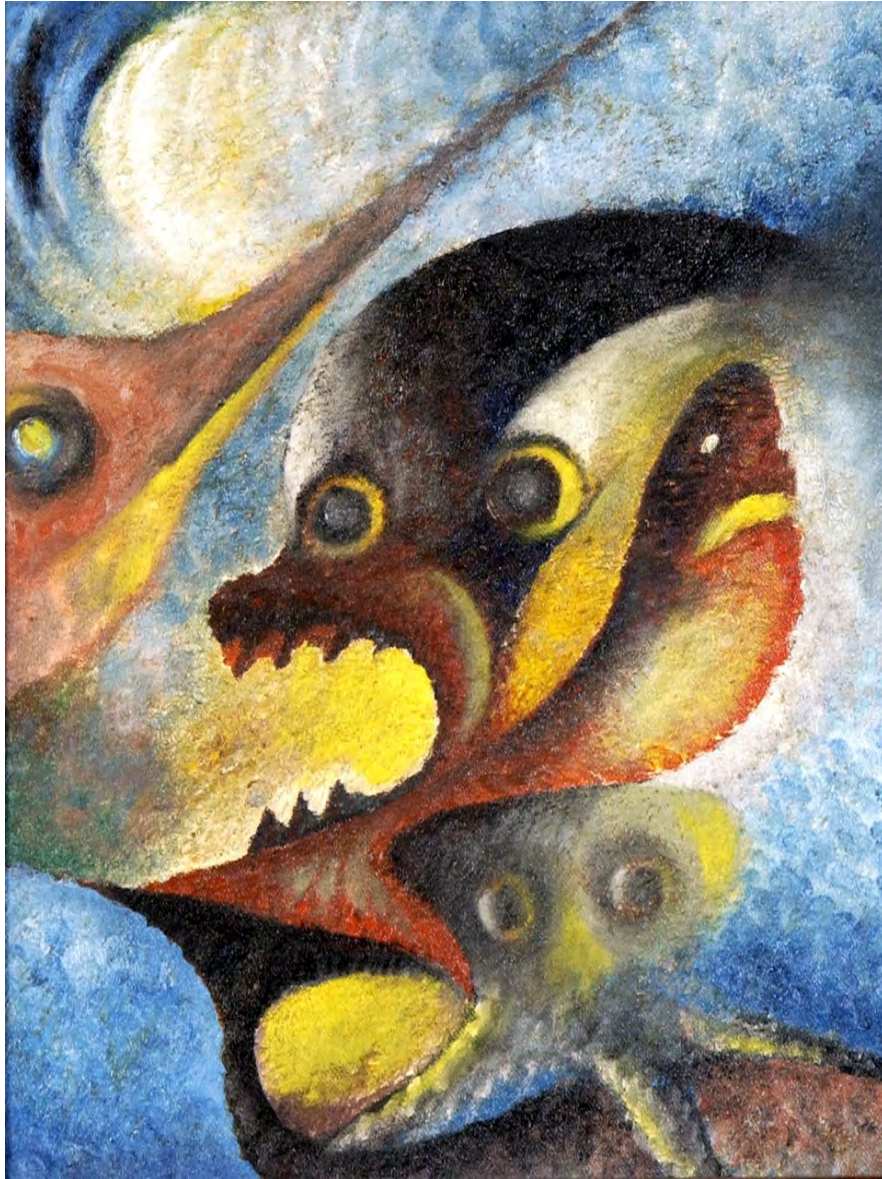


Fig. 24

Khalifa Qattan, *The Bear and the Fish*, 1960, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

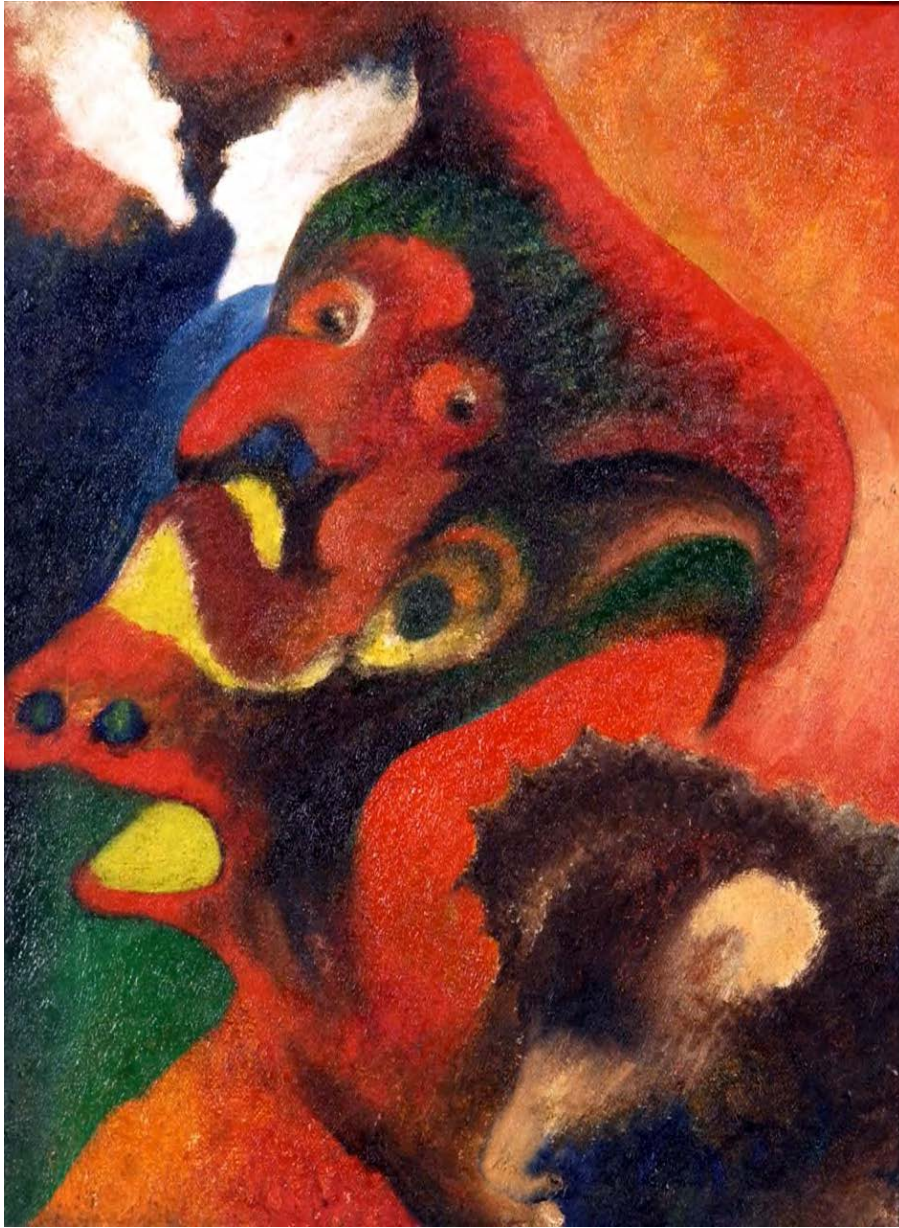


Fig. 25

Khalifa Qattan, *The Torrero*, 1960, oil on canvas, 60 x 40, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)



Fig. 26

Khalifa Qattan, *Lick to Reach*, 1967, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatom wa aamaloh*, p. 34



Fig. 27

Khalifa Qattan, *The Expert*, 1963, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Al fannan al ensan*, Kuwait, 2007, p. 25



(a)



(b)

Fig. 28

a) *Circulism in Arabic press highlights (Al Watan)*, newspaper clip, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

b) *Circulism in Arabic press highlights (Al Safaa)*, newspaper clip, (private collection of Lidia Qattan)

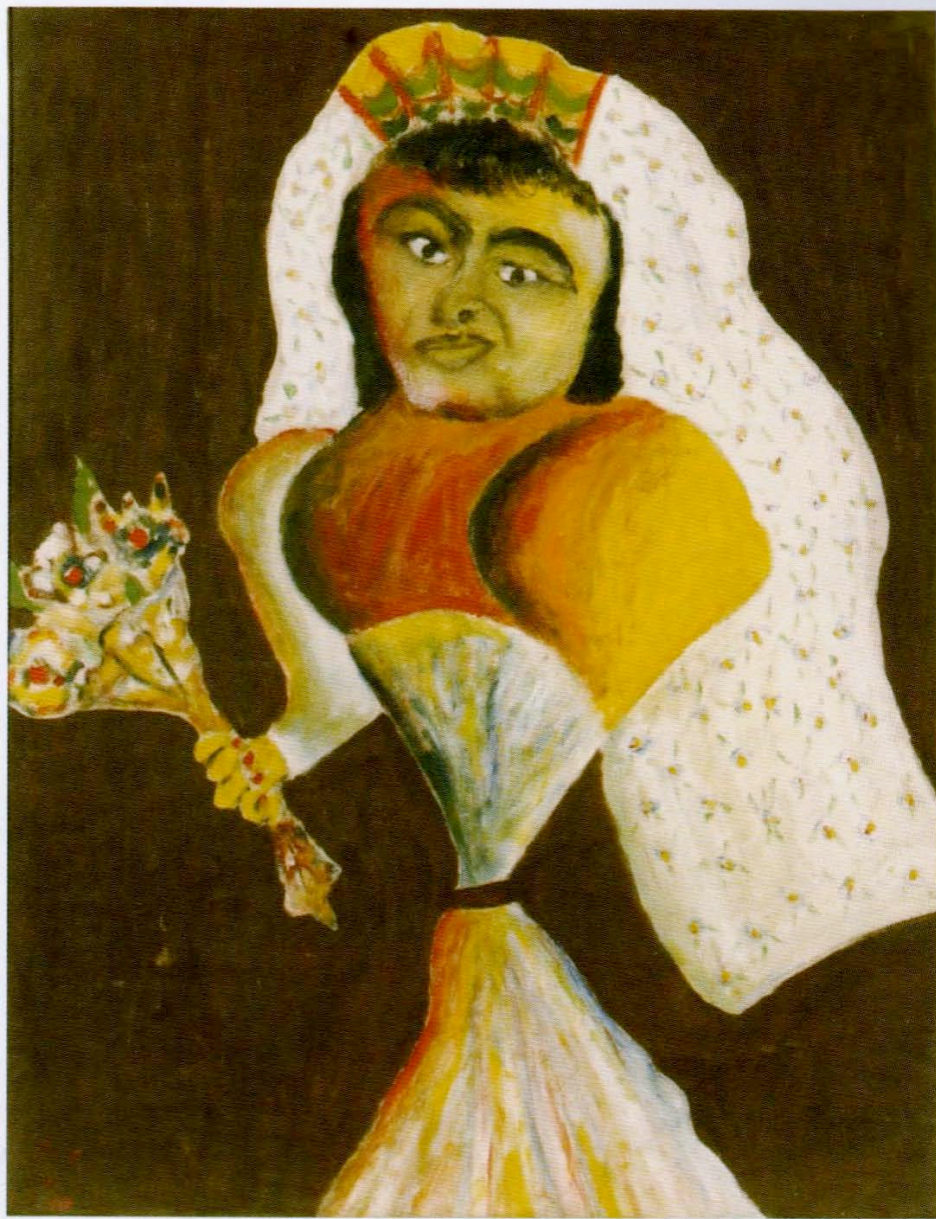


Fig. 29

Khalifa Qattan, *A Bride*, 1961, oil on canvas, 70 x 50 cm, Published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, p. 33

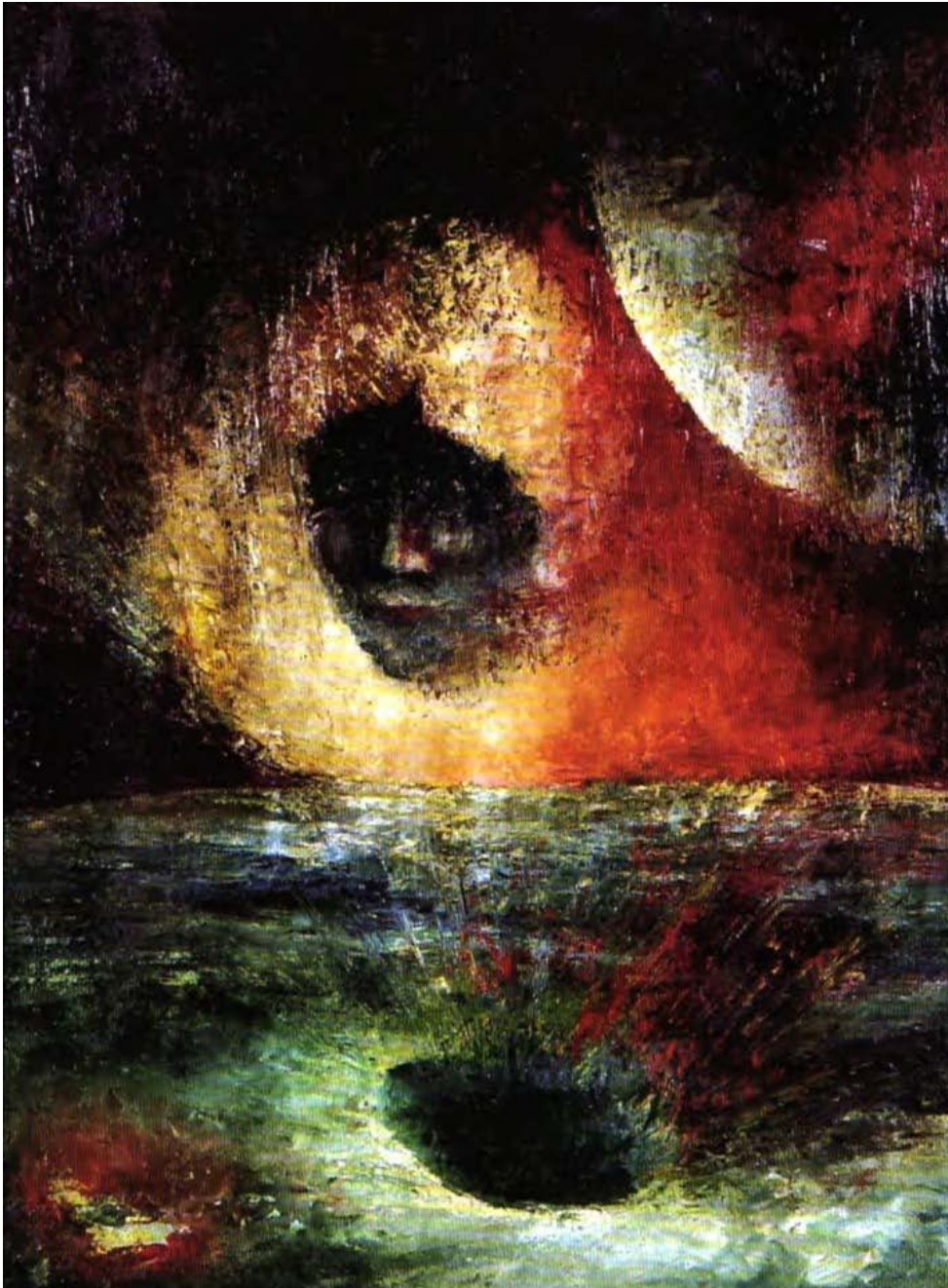


Fig. 30

Khalifa Qattan, *Is Life a Cosmic Phenomenon?*, 1979, oil on canvas, 40 x 55 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Al fannan al ensan*, p. 86

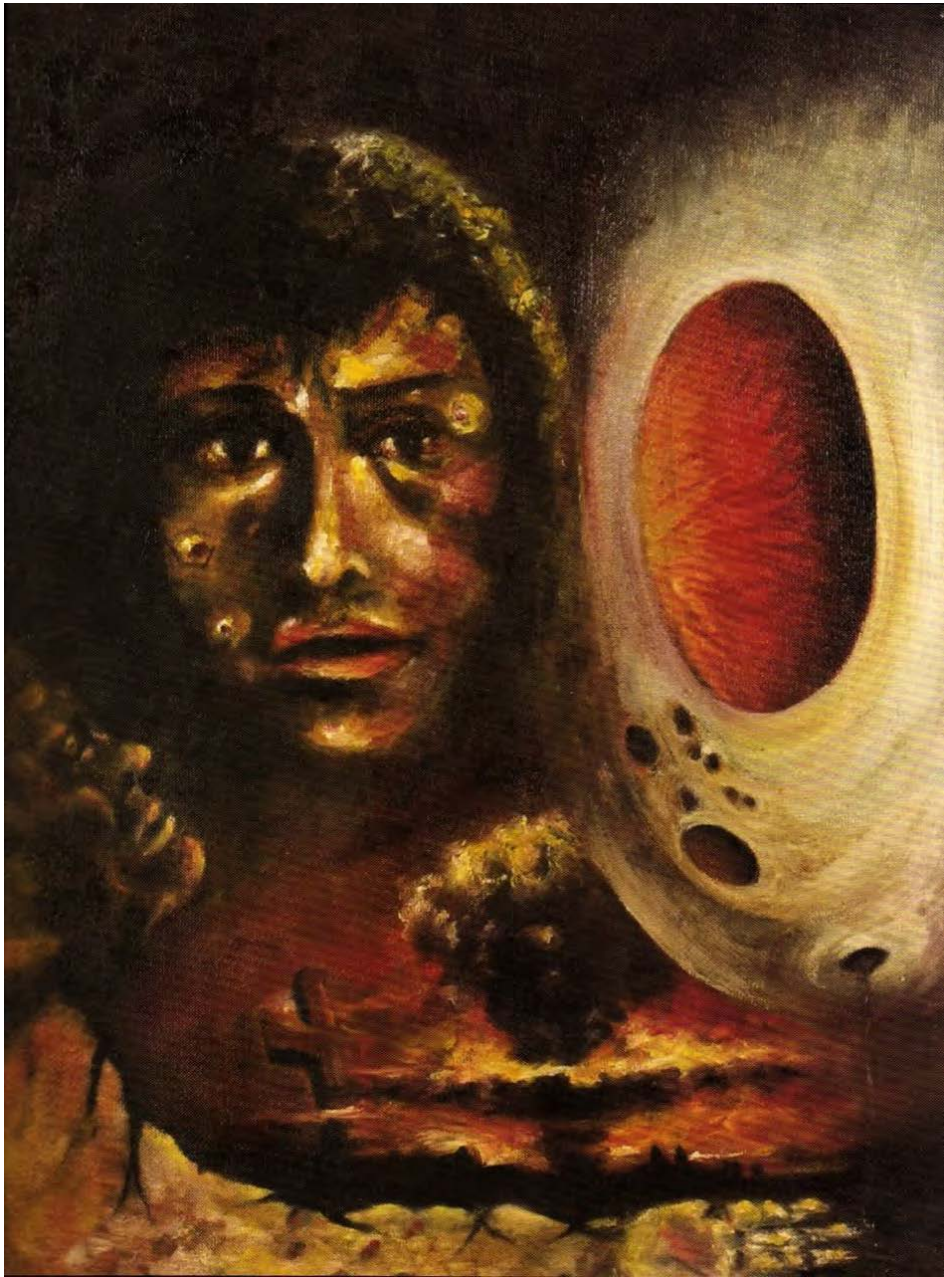


Fig. 31

Khalifa Qattan, *Explosion*, 1978, oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Al fannan al insan*, p. 71

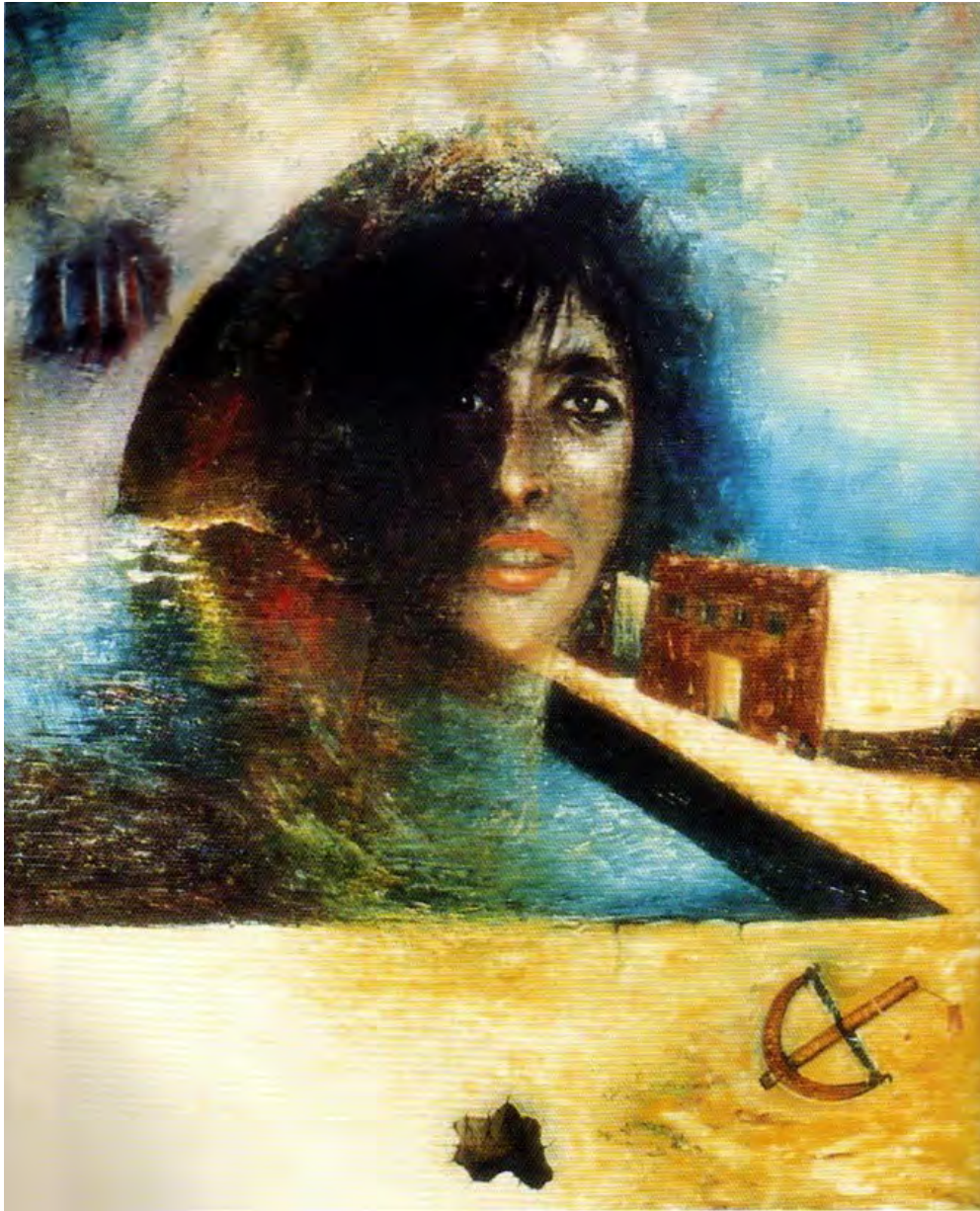


Fig. 32

Khalifa Qattan, *The Trap*, 1974, oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm, published in *Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, Kuwait, 1994, p. 65



Fig. 33

Khalifa Qattan, *Time*, 1979, oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm, published in *Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, Kuwait, 1994, p. 66



Fig. 34

Flag of Saudi Arabia, published in
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Saudi_Arabia.svg, accessed 30/1/2012



Fig. 35

Hameed Khazaal, *Rumour*, unknown medium, unknown size, 1993, (private collection of Hameed Khazzaal)

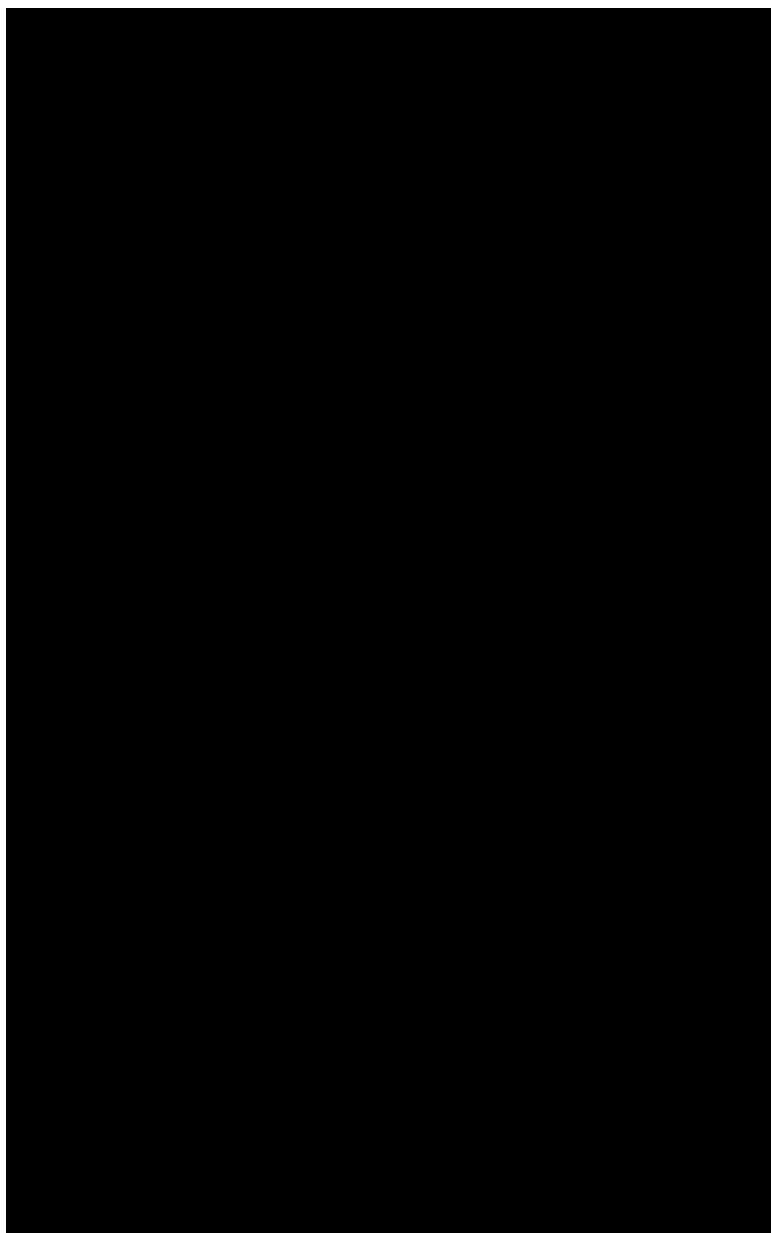


Fig. 36

John Keane, *Ecstasy of Fumbling (Portrait of the Artist in Gas Alert)*, 1991, oil and mixed media on canvas, 152.5 x 107 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

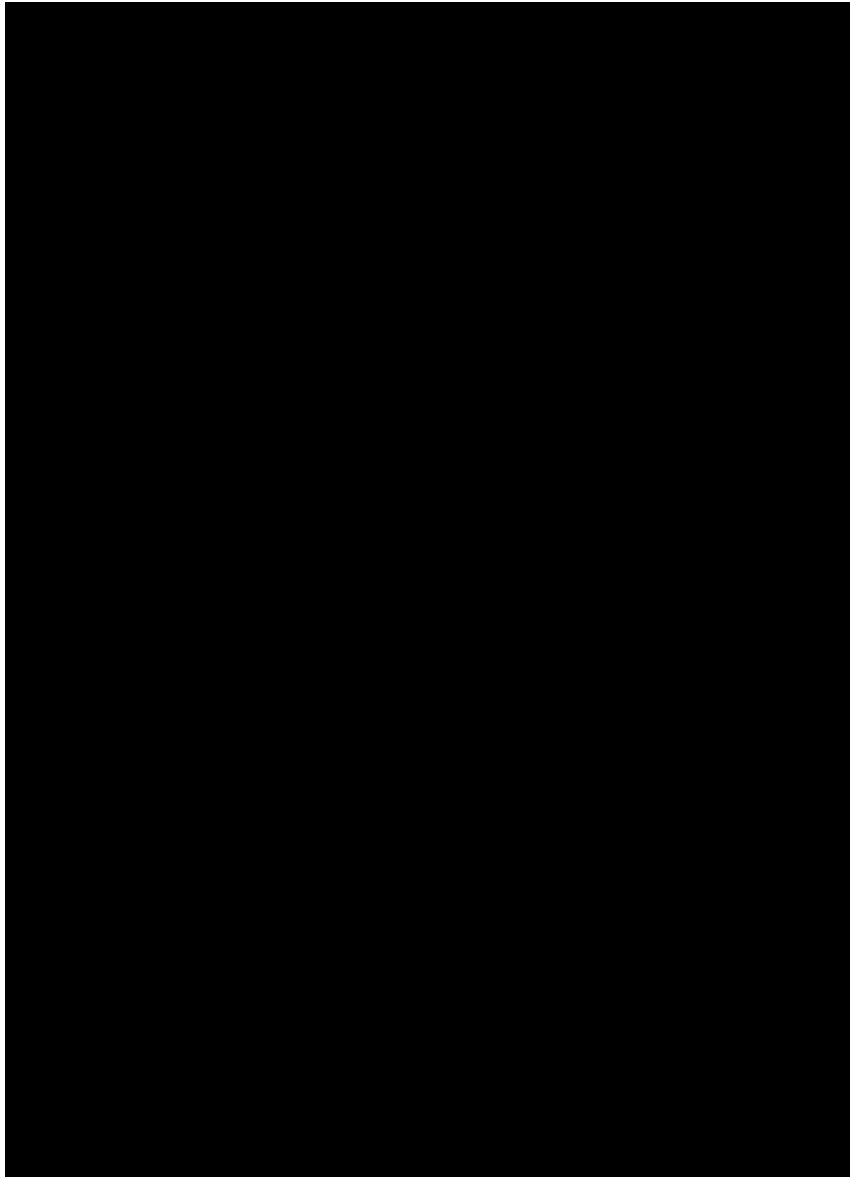


Fig. 37

John Keane, *Scenes on the Road to Hell (1)*, 1991, PVA and crayon on paper, 114.5 x 85 cm, Imperia War Museum collection, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

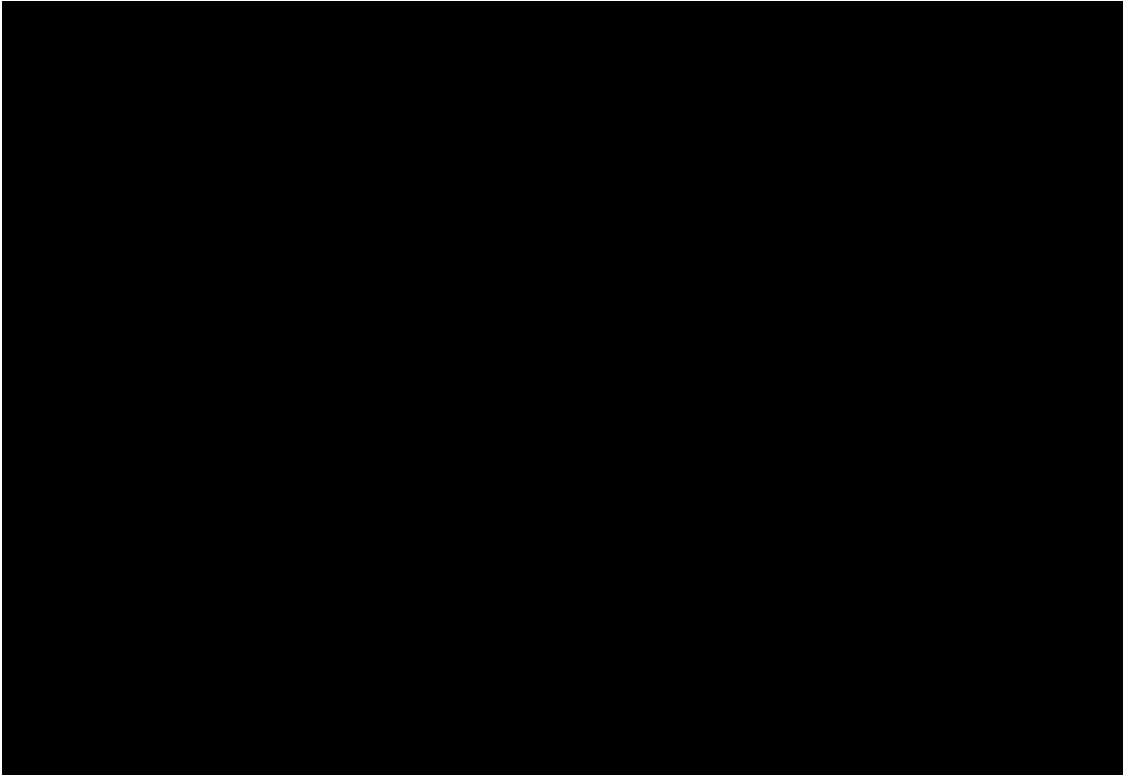


Fig. 38

John Keane, *We Are Making a New World Order*, 1991, oil and mixed media on canvas, 170.5 x 233 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

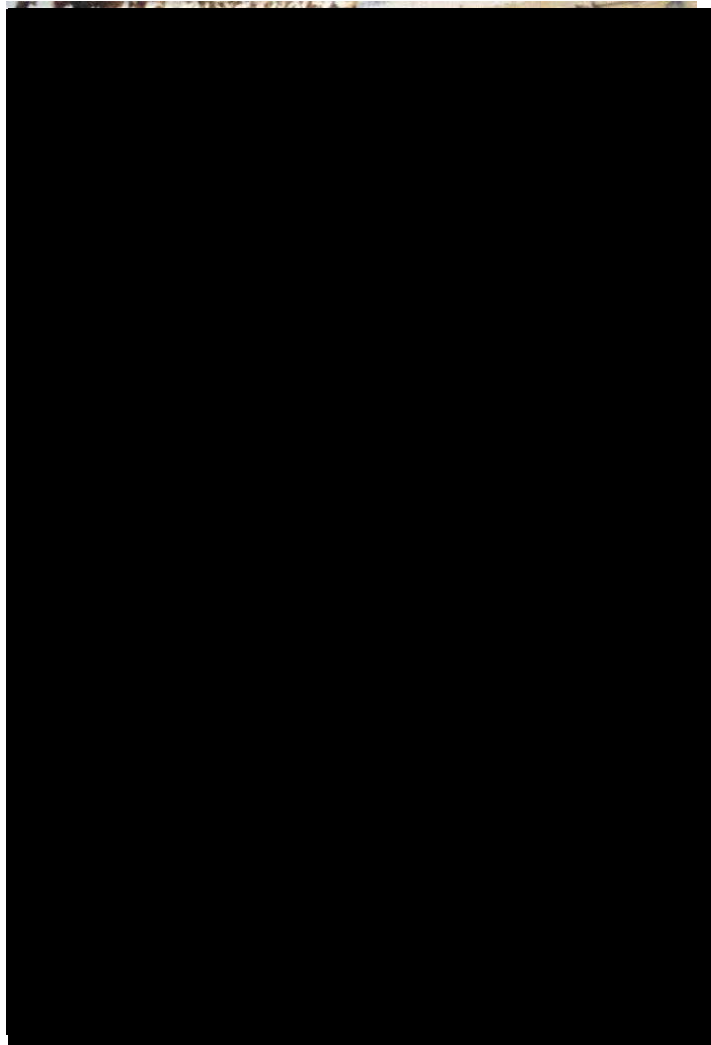


Fig. 39

John Keane, *Off Duty British Troops Resting Beneath Camouflage Netting*, 1991, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010, (reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)

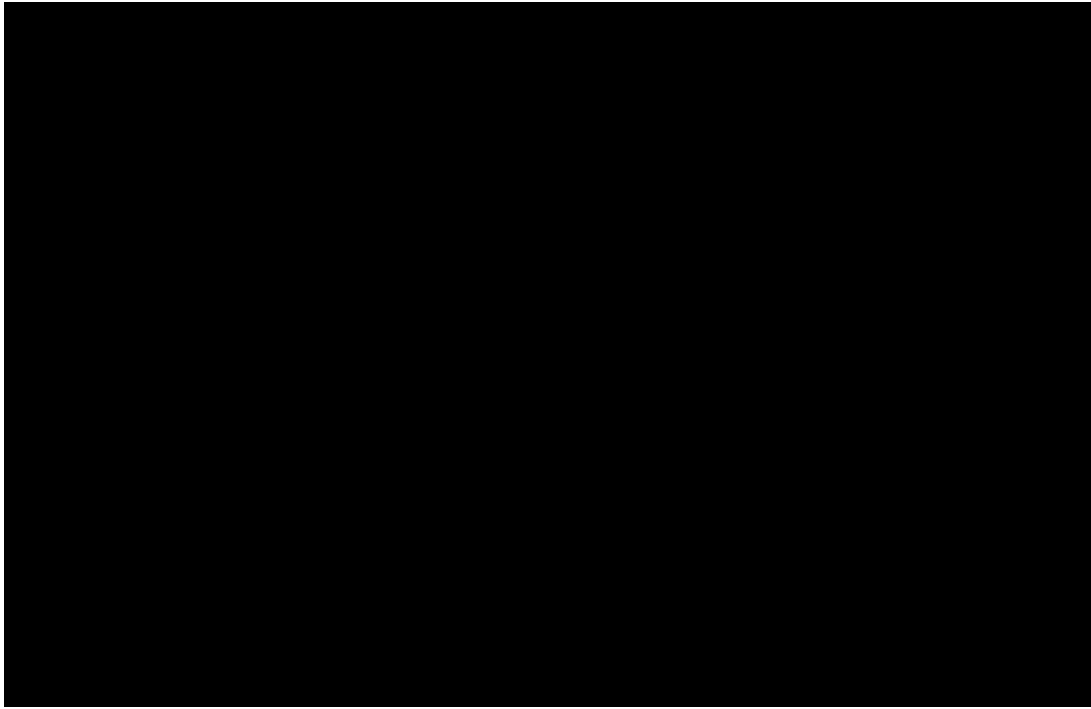
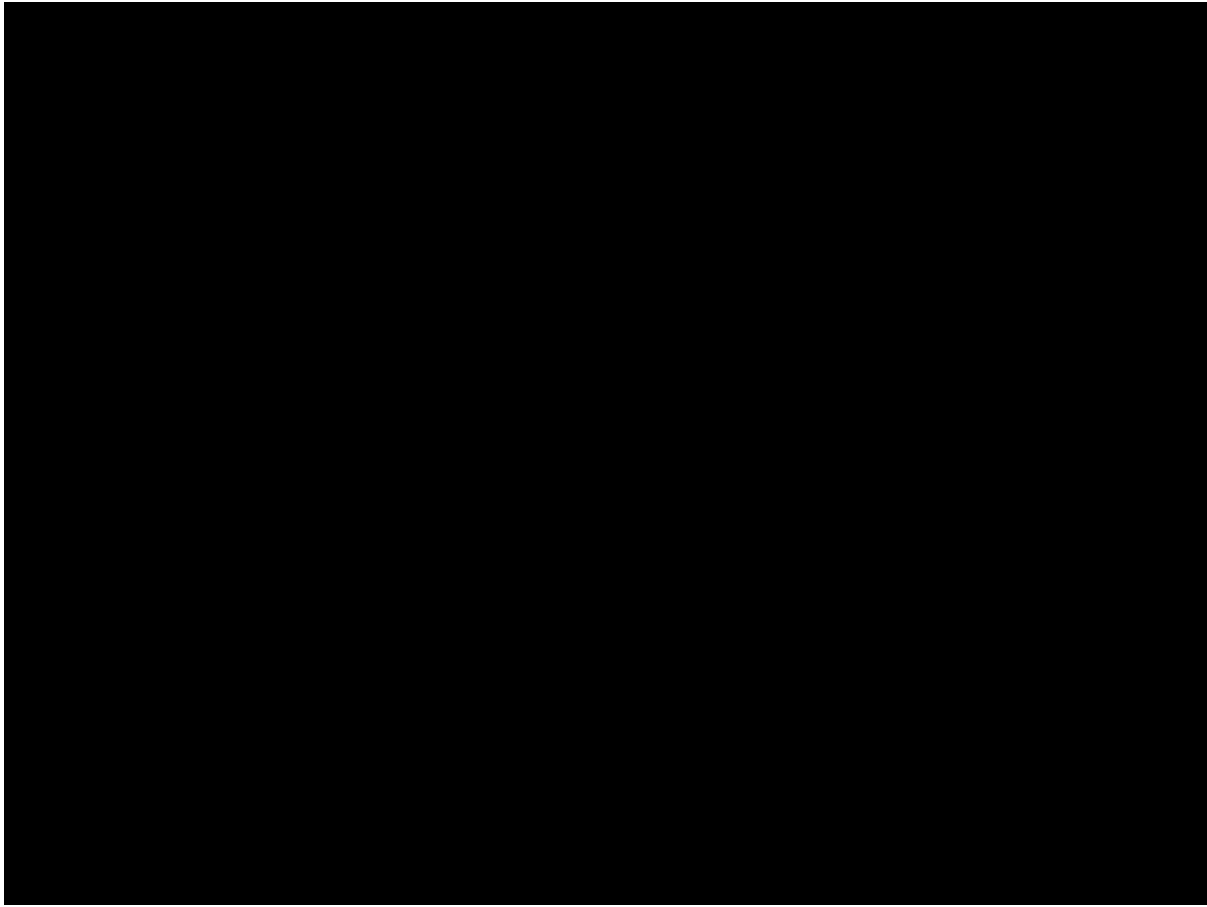


Fig. 40

John Keane, *General Rupert Smith at Briefing*, 1991, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010, (reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)



(a)

(b)

Fig. 41

a) John Keane, *Kuwaiti children celebrating in Kuwait City shortly after its liberation*, 1991, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010, (reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)

b) John Keane, *Kuwaiti child celebrates on an abandoned Iraqi tank in Kuwait City shortly after its liberation*, 1991, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010, (reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)

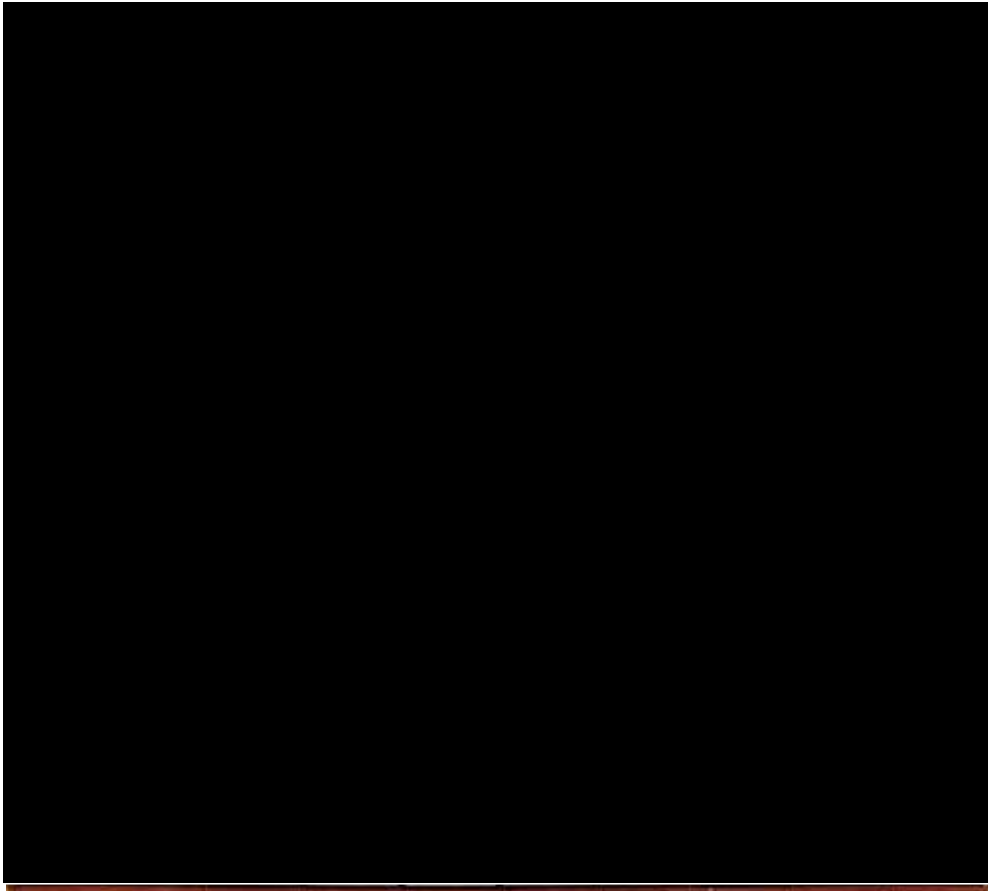
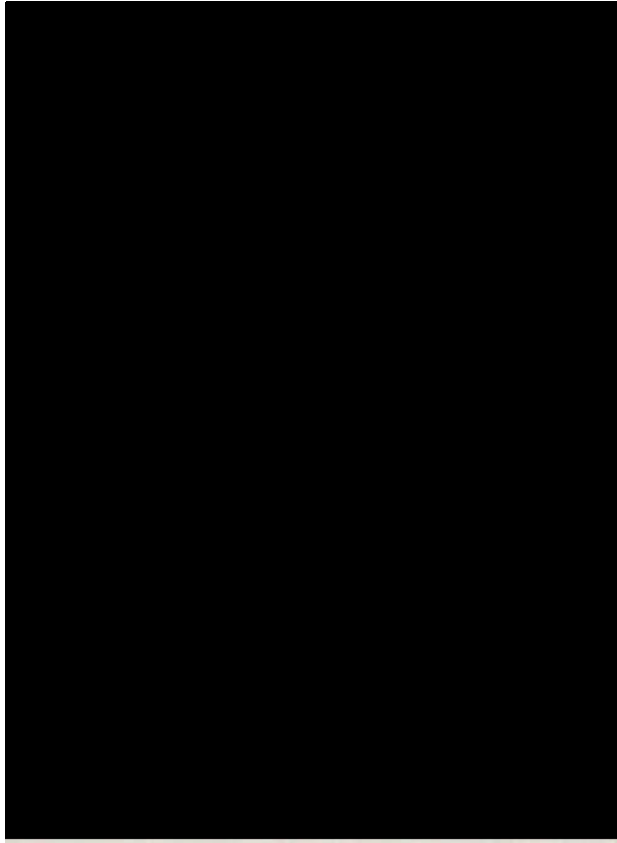
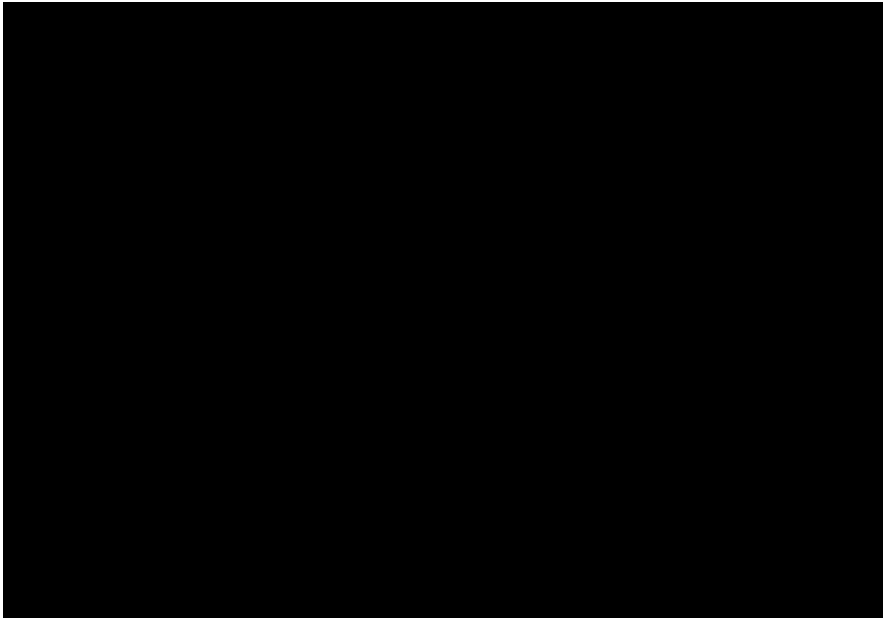


Fig. 42

42) John Keane, *Every Time We Say Goodbye*, 1991, oil and video stills on canvas, 128 x 143 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012



(a)



(b)

Fig. 43

a) John Keane, *Scenes on the Road to Hell (5)*, 1991, PVA on paper, unknown size, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

43b) John Keane, *An American Soldier Films the Body of a Dead Iraqi Soldier*, colour photograph, unknown size, displayed in *The Gulf War 1990-1991: Photographs by John Keane*, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, 2010, (reproduction photographed by Muayad Hussain)

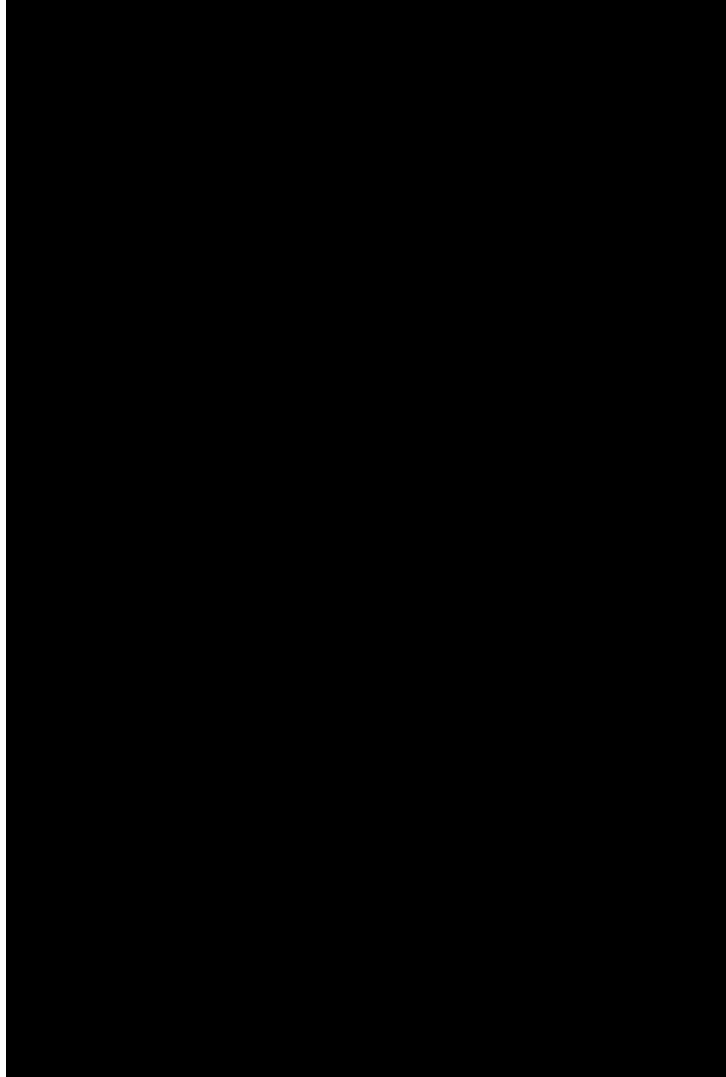


Fig. 44

John Keane, *Distant Shudder*, 1991, PVA and crayon on paper, 76 x 51 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012



(a)



(b)

Fig. 45

a) Robert Capa, *Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death (The Falling Soldier)*,
1936, monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/photography/genius/gallery/capa.shtml>, accessed 30/1/2012

b) Robert Capa, *An American soldier landing on Omaha Beach, D-day*, 1944,
monochrome photograph, unknown size, published in
http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1648361_1419267,00.html, accessed
30/1/2011



Fig. 46

John Singer Sargent, *Gassed*, 1919, oil, 231 x 611 cm, Imperial War Museum collection, published in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gassed.jpg>, accessed 30/1/2012

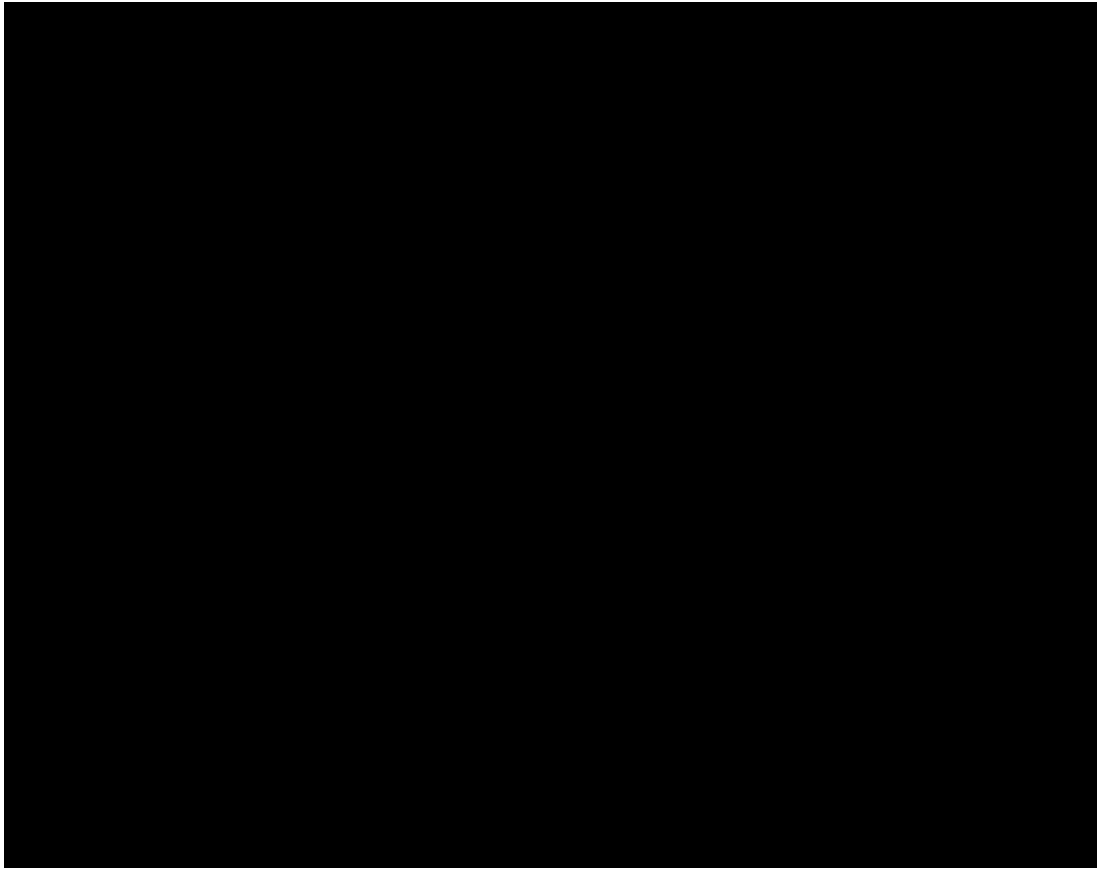


Fig. 47

John Keane, *Mickey Mouse at the Front*, 1991, oil on canvas, 173 x 198 cm, Imperial War Museum collection, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 30/1/2012



(b)

Fig. 48

a) John Keane, *Choice*, 1993, oil on canvas, 51 x 40.5 cm, published in
<http://www.johnkeaneart.com/struggle.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

b) John Keane, *The Struggle for the Control of the Television Station (Central panel)*, 1992, oil
on canvas, 198 x 198 cm (central panel), published in
<http://www.johnkeaneart.com/struggle.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

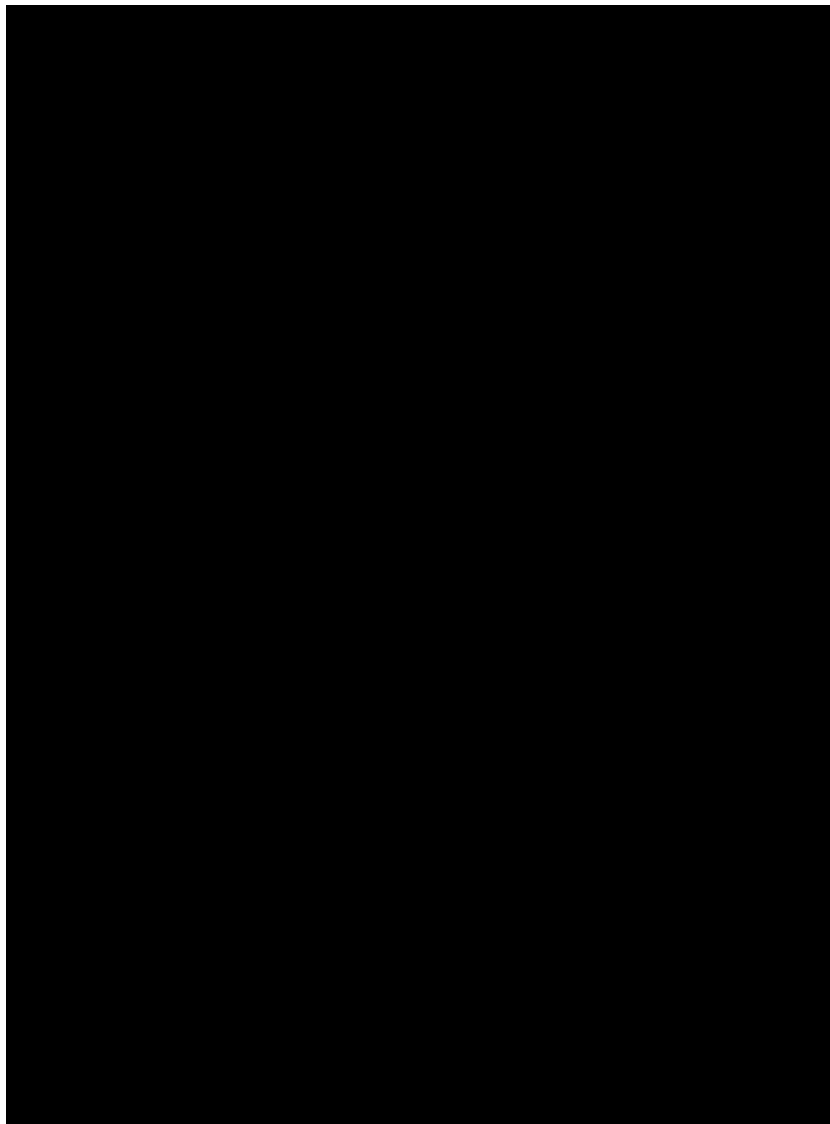


Fig. 49

John Keane, *Renouncing Violence*, 1994, PVA and crayon on paper, 114 x 84.5 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/struggle.html>, accessed 30/1/2012

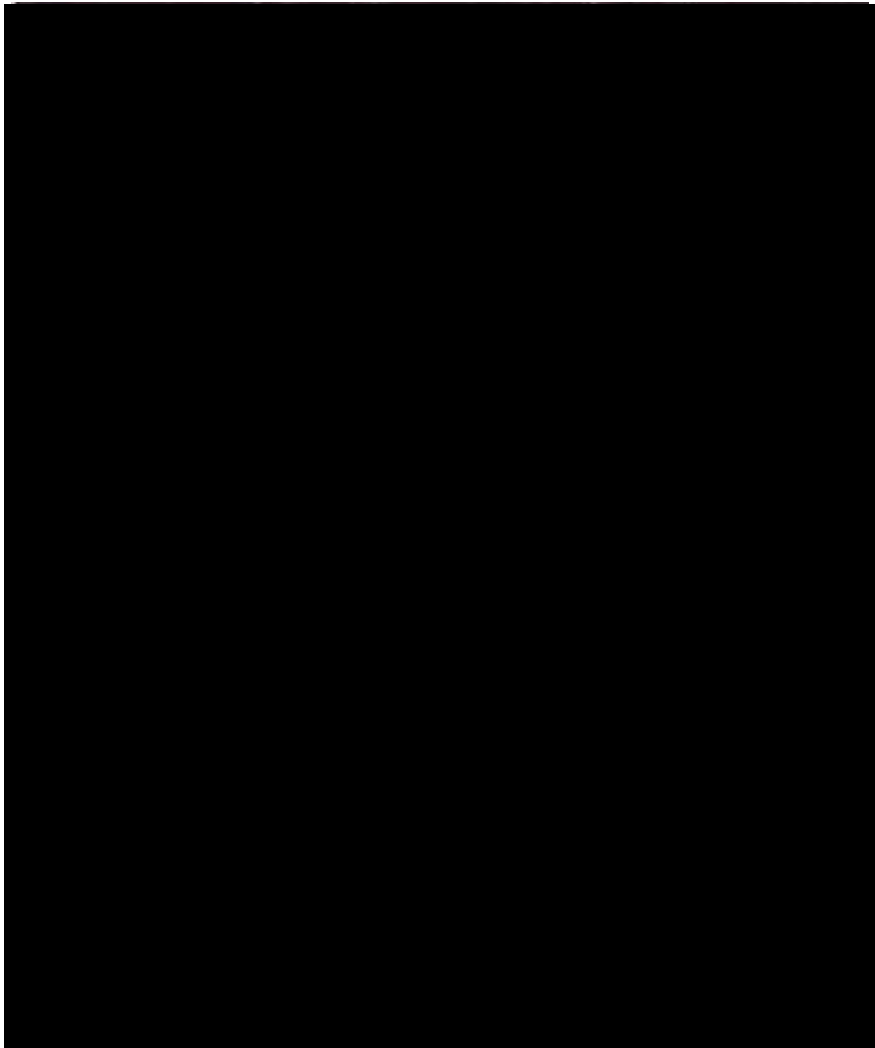


Fig. 50

John Keane, *Romantic Encounter*, 1984, PVA on canvas, 183 x 152.5 cm, published in <http://www.johnkeaneart.com/ancient.html>, accessed 30/1/2012



Fig. 51

Linda Kitson, *Sir Galahad Moored at Fitzroy*, 1982, conte crayon and oil pastel on paper, 29.5 x 42 cm, published in <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/15400>, accessed 30/1/2012



Fig. 52

John Keane, *Still-Life (Insult to Injury)*, 1984, PVA and crayon and collage on paper, 76 x 99 cm, published in *Conflicts on Interest : John Keane*, Edinburgh, 1995, p. 19



Fig. 53

CRW Nevinson, *La Mitrailleuse*, 1915, oil on canvas, 61 x 51 cm, published in <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=10599>, accessed 30/1/2012



Fig. 54

Khalifa Qattan, *The Deep Wound*, 1984, oil on canvas, 85 x 105 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, p. 27

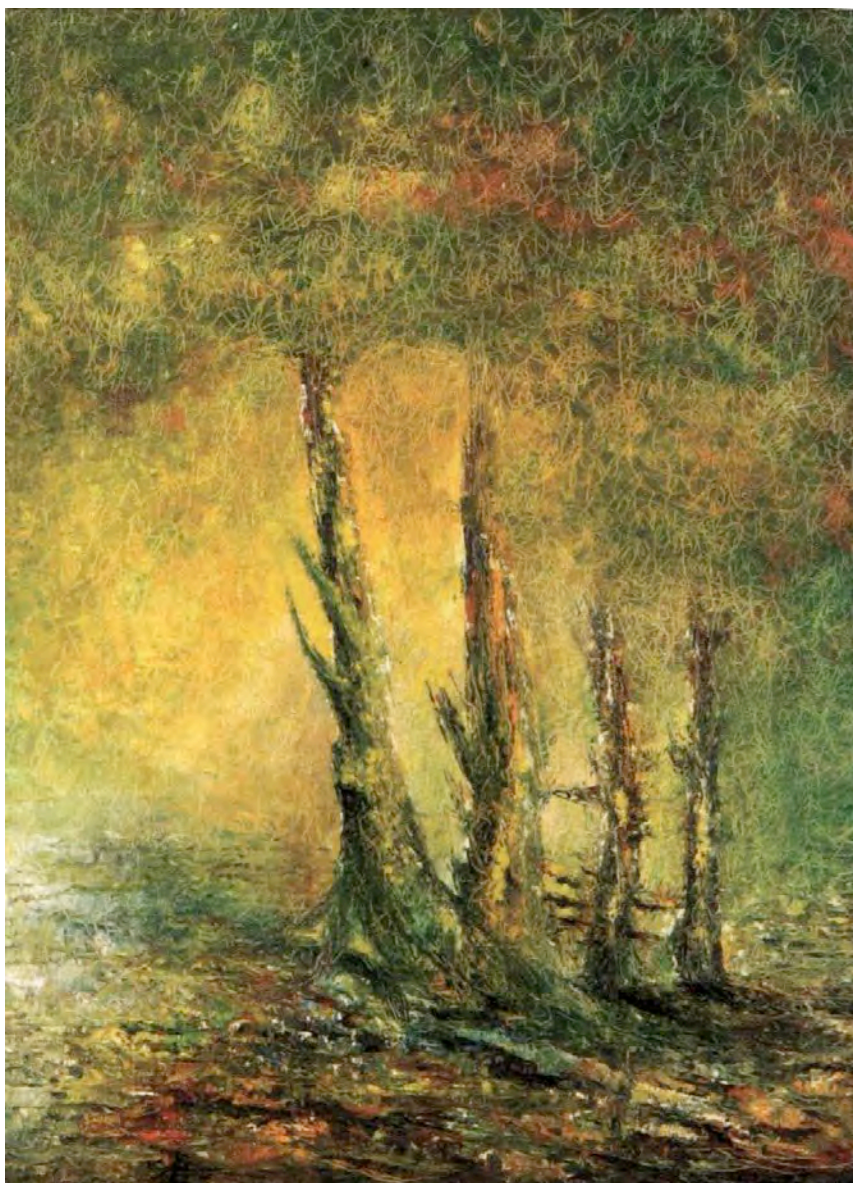


Fig. 55

Khalifa Qattan, from the *Trees* series, 1990, oil on canvas, 56 x 46 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Al fannan al ensan*, Kuwait, 2007, p. 90



Fig. 56

Khalifa Qattan, *The Band*, 1991, oil on canvas, 62 x 52 cm, published in *Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 61



Fig. 57

Khalifa Qattan, *The Helmet*, 1991, oil on canvas, 46 x 56 cm, published in *Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 57

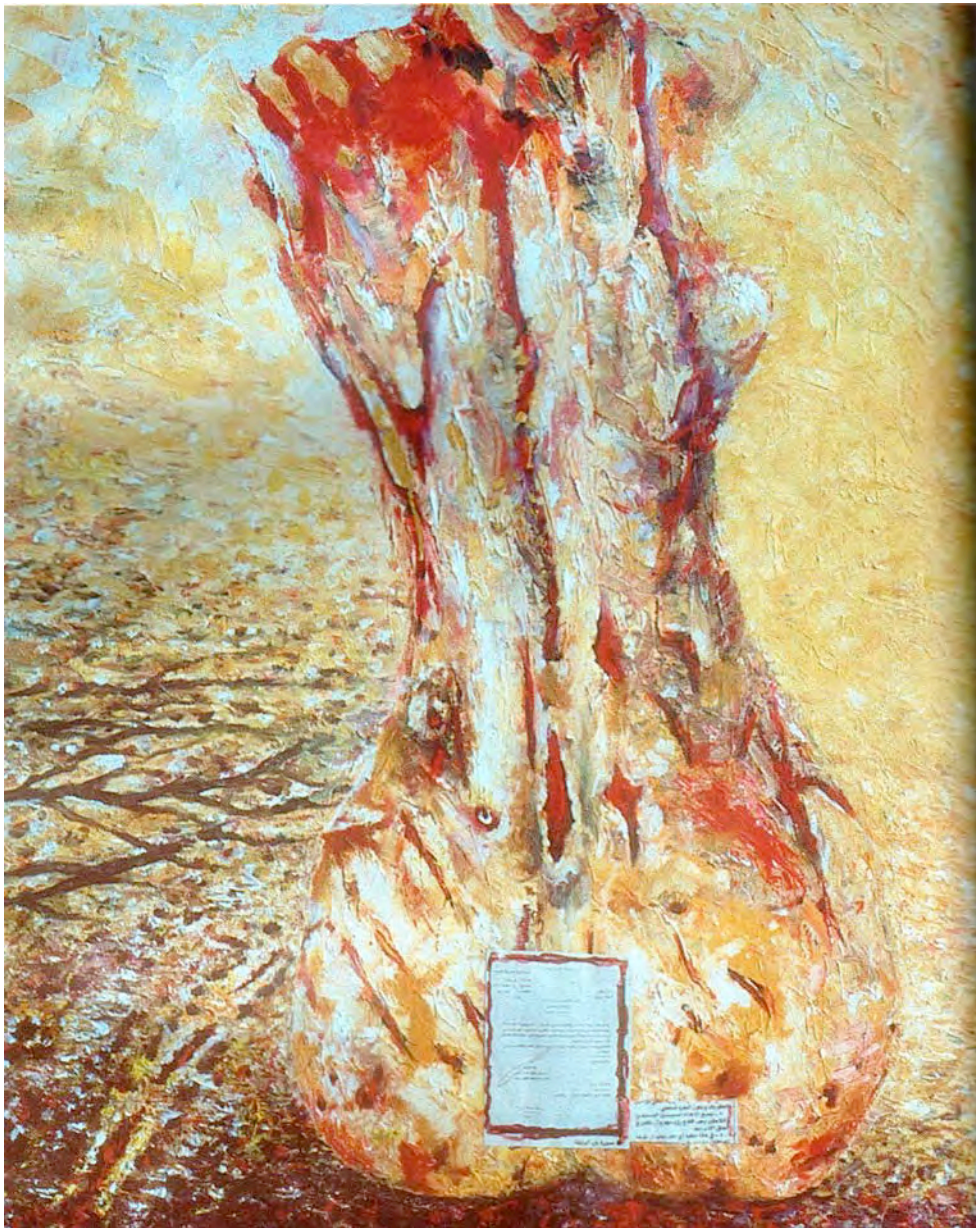


Fig. 58

Khalifa Qattan, *The Document (Iraqi Hatred)*, 1991, oil and mixed media on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, published in *Prophesy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 59

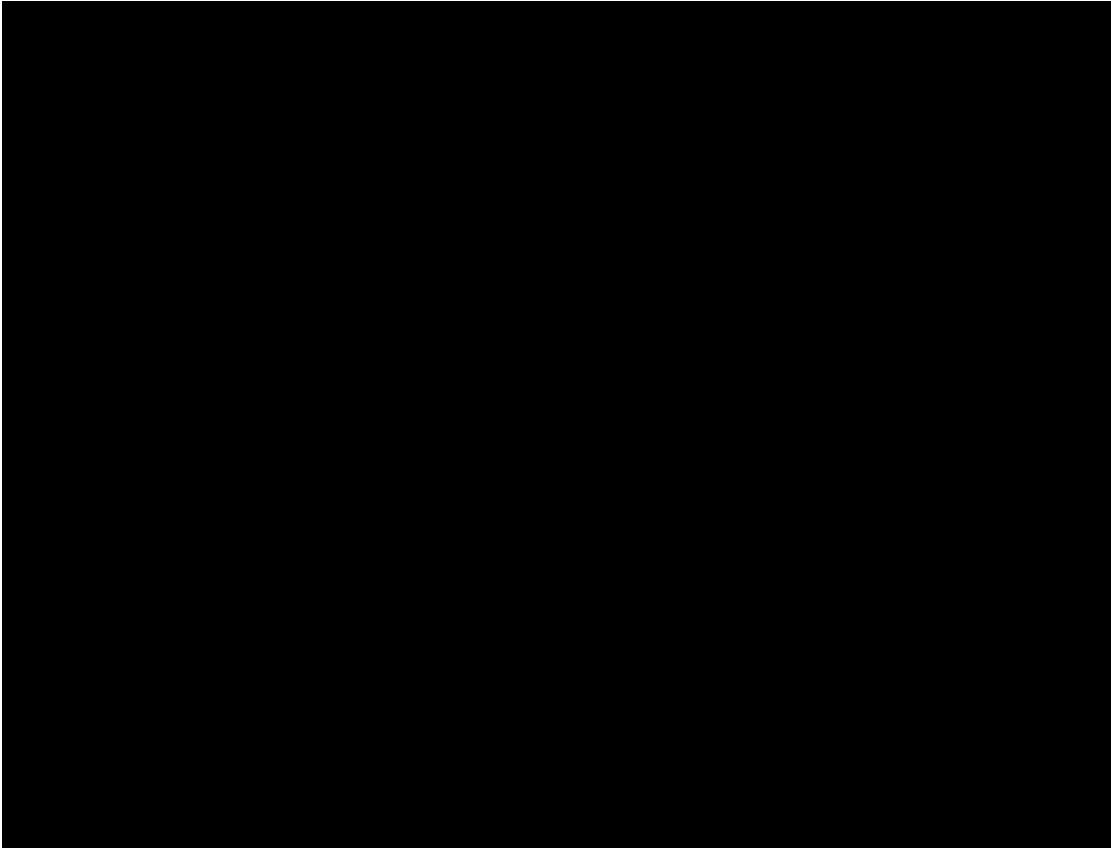


Fig. 59

John Keane, *Oil Painting*, 1991, oil on canvas, unknown size, published in <http://www.johnkeanart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 31/1/2012

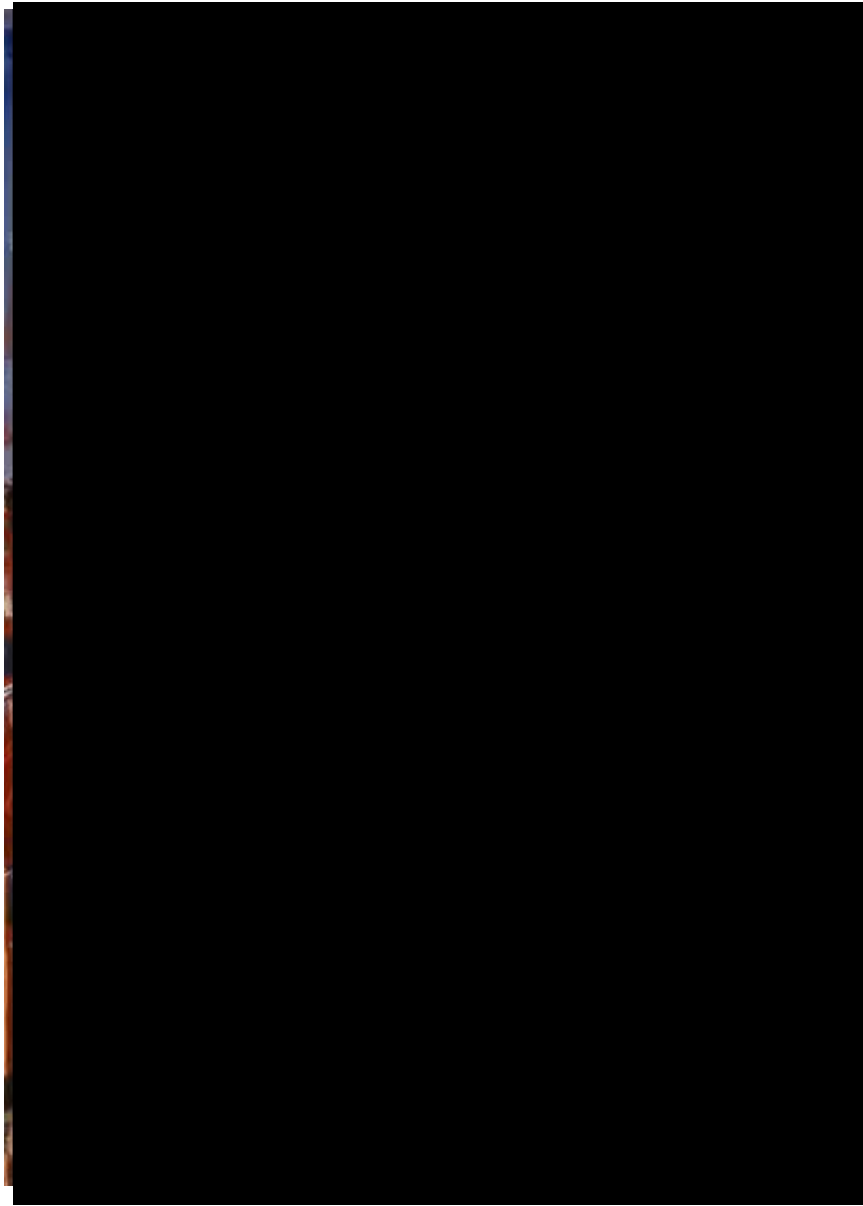


Fig. 60

John Keane, *Day For Night*, 1991, PVA and collage on paper, unknown size, published in <http://www.johnkeanart.com/gulf.html>, accessed 31/1/2012

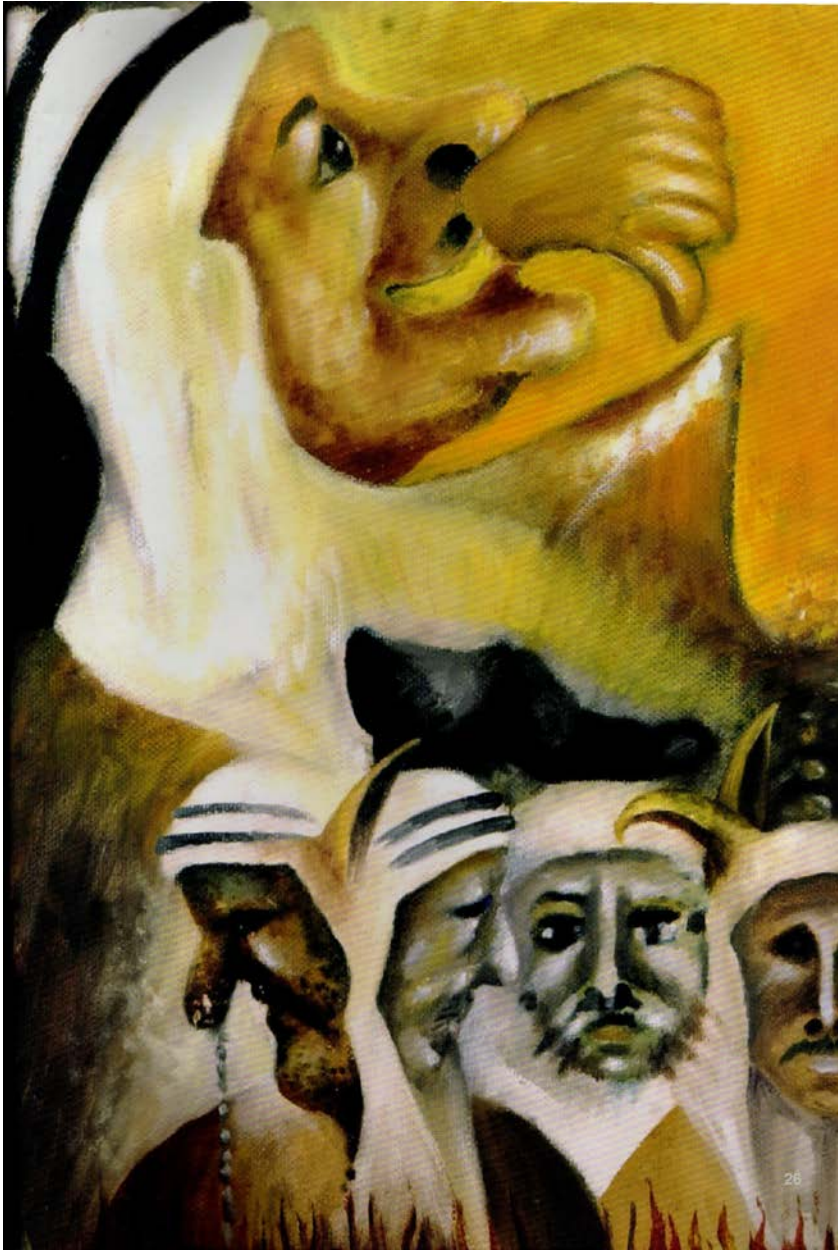


Fig. 61

Khalifa Qattan, *The Elected (MP)*, 1965, oil on canvas, 53 x 65 cm, published in *Khalifa Al Qattan: Hayatoh wa aamaloh*, p. 34



Fig. 62

Khalifa Qattan, *The Ship of Goodness and Generous Hand*, 1975, oil on canvas, 150 x 100 cm, published in *Prophecy of Khalifa Qattan*, p. 35



Fig. 63

Giacomo Balla, *Girl Running on the Balcony*, 1912, oil on canvas, 125 x 125 cm, published in <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/giacomo-balla/girl-running-on-a-balcony-1912>, accessed 1/8/2012



Fig. 64

Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, 1915-23 (reconstructed in 1965-6), Oil, lead, dust and varnish on glass, 277 x 176 cm, published in <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-the-bride-stripped-bare-by-her-bachelors-even-the-large-glass-t02011>, accessed 1/8/2012