



Irina and Maher Naji



Born in Primorsky Territory, Russia, in 1965, Irina started painting at a very young age. She studied arts from 1976 to 1980 in Sevastopol, Ukraine, and fine arts from 1984 to 1989 at Baron Stieglitz Academy of Art and Architecture in St. Petersburg, Russia, where she met the artist Maher Naji. They married in 1987 and moved to Gaza in 1994. Their first shared exhibition was held at the Ministry of Culture in Gaza City in 1995.

Irina and Maher have four children, three of whom were born in Gaza. Having spent most of her time engaged in raising her children while painting on the side, Irina worked from 2004 to 2012 in various cultural centers and organizations, including the

Conversation with the Family, Irina Naji.



Eastern Tale, Irina Naji.

A.M. Qattan Foundation's Children's Center, Palestine Is Our Home Center, and the Women's and Community Empowerment Center, while also giving art lessons at various organizations. Since 2012, she has been working as a freelance artist. Fond of the Palestinian people and their culture, traditions, and aesthetic heritage, she made the conscious decision to express their plight in her artworks.

Irina has participated in many regional and international art events and exhibitions. Her first solo exhibition took place at Dar Zahran Cultural Center in Ramallah in 2014; she was unable to attend due to travel restrictions. Among her most recent projects is the series *Cities of Palestine* that displays a new style. Irina's paintings have been exhibited and bought by the Palestine Museum US in Woodbridge, CT, and by private collections in Canada, Germany, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and elsewhere. You can find her work on Instagram or Facebook under Irina Naji.

The Naji family originated in the now depopulated village Al-Sawafir Al-Shamaliyya on the southern Palestinian coast, and Maher Naji was born in 1963

in Jabalya Refugee Camp, where he completed his primary and secondary education. In 1983, he went to Russia, where he earned a bachelor's degree in art and a PhD in architecture at Baron Stieglitz Academy of Art and Architecture in St. Petersburg. Having returned to Gaza in 1994, Maher worked as a lecturer at the Islamic University's Faculty of Architecture. Until 2007, he also served as director of the Department of Housing Policies at the Palestinian Ministry of Housing.

At the same time, Maher continued his career as an artist, exhibiting his paintings in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Dubai, the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and elsewhere. More than 150 works have been sold worldwide. Currently, Maher is working on two projects: documenting traditional Palestinian folk costumes and visually representing the lives of Christ and the Virgin Mary in the context of the true Eastern environment in which they lived.

For more information and to view a display of Maher and Irina's artworks, visit naji-art.com/en.

Al-Quds, Maher Naji.

