A FACE FROM JERUSALEM

Shihab Al-Qawasmi



A Man Fueled by the Sharpness of Passion and the Firmness of Experience

Jerusalemite artist Shihab al-Qawasmi is a man ablaze with passion and shaped by a life of hard-earned experience. Born at Bab al-Silsila in 1959, he carries in his heart the memory of the neighborhood that witnessed his childhood – until the 1967 Naksa brought the destruction of the house and the entire quarter, and Shihab and his family found themselves in Wadi al-Joz. From amid the ruins, his first artistic steps were born: drawings of his old home and neighborhood, images that never left his soul.

Shihab studied in Jerusalem's schools, then specialized in art education and graduated from the Bezalel Academy in 1977, continuing his intellectual and artistic journey in Austria and France. He practiced design and graphics for many years, yet painting remained his inner calling – until he devoted his life to it as a mission and a duty toward his city.

Today, Shihab turns his brush into a vivid visual tool of documenting Jerusalem. Presenting exhibitions locally, across the Arab world, and internationally, he introduces the world to the city's history and identity. The title "Jerusalemite artist" has become both his signature and a medal worn on his chest.

Going beyond painting, Shihab has published the significant documentary book Kan Ya Ma Kan: Jerusalem a Hundred Years Ago, which has received high acclaim and was chosen by the Jordanian monarch as an official gift, presented to Arab leaders at the 2017 summit.

Despite this contribution, Shihab faces a major challenge: Invitations to exhibit abroad often require him to cover his own travel expenses, placing a heavy burden on him. Yet he continues, believing that Jerusalem is a treasure that has been entrusted to its people, that every kind word, every poem, and every painting is a line of defense for its authenticity.

Shihab's message is clear: Pass on to future generations the responsibility of preserving heritage and protecting it from erasure and theft. For in the end, Jerusalem is much more than ancient stones, it is an identity, a spirit, and a story told by the artist's brush and the human will.