

Artist Afaf Arafat (1928–2014)



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Bath Academy in Britain. This choice came as a welcome opportunity because Afaf had quit her studies at the University of Cambridge due to harassment she had experienced at the hands of a Zionist teacher. In 1971, Afaf obtained another scholarship to study at the University of Tennessee in the United States, where she was awarded a master's degree with honors. Her years abroad allowed Afaf to visit some of the most important museums in Western Europe, the United States, and the Middle East.

Afaf then worked for the Jordanian Ministry of Education, where she served

as an inspector of art education, prepared a curriculum for art instruction, and represented Jordan at UNESCO's 1976 regional conference for art education. Schoolchildren always held a special place in Afaf's heart, and she defended their right to have art education as part of their curricula and considered it very important to instill cultural awareness from a young age.

These responsibilities, however, did not prevent Afaf from practicing art. Expressing herself through oil, collage, and watercolor, the transparency and delicate beauty of the latter particularly intrigued her. The Palestinian countryside figures prominently in Afaf's work. So does the old city of Nablus with its sad *harat*



The City of Nablus.



By Naseer Arafat

The Palestinian artist Afaf Arafat was born and grew up in the old city of Nablus, where her father was a religious leader.

She was attracted to art as a young child and showed promise in one of her earliest works, when she drew the jasmine tree that climbed the walls of her father's *diwan* (public reception house). Having received her secondary education in Jerusalem, she was awarded a three-year scholarship in 1952 to study painting, photography, and ceramics as well as art education at

Diwan (residence) of the artist's father Sheikh Omro Arafat in Nablus.





Port of Aqaba, 1975. Oil on board, 83 x 69 cm. Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

(neighborhoods) that suffered much damage during Israeli invasions. Other pictures display the splendor of Palestinian heritage, whether in costume or architecture.

Afaf held several solo exhibitions in Nablus, Jerusalem, and Amman and participated with other artists in various exhibitions around the world. She received awards from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Culture, the Jordanian Artists Association, the Jordan Ministry of Education, and, last but not least, Nablus Municipality. Afaf also represented Jordan at a number of art conferences, including the International Art Conference of Amsterdam in 1969. Her paintings are held by several individuals and institutions, chief among them

Nablus Municipality, the National Museum, the Central Bank, and the Jordanian Ministry of Information in Amman.

Naseer Arafat is an architect and development and planning specialist who has in-depth knowledge of conservation theory and practice. He is the author of the book Nablus: City of Civilizations and host of the Facebook page of the same name.

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