



Paintings by Ausama al Khalil

Online Auction

21 April – 5 May 2022





# Paintings by Ausama al Khalil

Online auction commencing

21 April 2022, 10 a.m.

and concluding

5 May 2022, 9 p.m.

To view works and make a bid visit

<https://uk.givergy.com/ArtAuction2022>

Detail of *Imprisonment* by Ausama al Khalil



Ausama al Khalil

## **Long Journey: Ausama al Khalil**

An Iraqi artist and interior designer, Ausama al Khalil was in James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough, recovering from serious injuries inflicted during torture, when I first met him. In Iraq, Ausama had been a distinguished interior designer, having obtained a degree in Fine Art from the Department of Interior Design, Baghdad University. His real joy, however, was painting and drawing. With his business partner, he had a successful interior design business in Baghdad but was forced to leave the country of his birth to escape persecution and torture. He was deeply affected by the subsequent murder of his friend and business partner, as well as the enforced separation from family and friends. After seeking asylum in the UK in 2006, he settled in Middlesbrough.

Ausama became very interested in the project that we and a group of friends set up for Baghdad Central Hospital for Children, providing support and medications at a time of war and conflict in Iraq.

Along with others, we encouraged Ausama to take up painting again, and he had some successful exhibitions in the North East. Ausama died in December 2016 at the age of 49 – a tragedy brought on by the depression that had become so hard for him to bear. His unsold art portfolio of some 30 paintings was bequeathed to us.

As an artist, Ausama had held exhibitions of his work throughout Iraq and Jordan. He worked in a number of mediums, creating abstract and modern realist pieces. Having lived through many wars, and witnessed much brutality, the colours of war are starkly present in his work. As a victim of torture, Ausama was left with enduring pain and disability – both his knees had been broken when he was captured.

Throughout his journey from Baghdad to England, he carried with him memories of the cities and towns he experienced, contrasting in his work motifs of war and peace, and skies filled with the colours of the Middle East. His later work increasingly explored the light, colours and textures of his new home, and the differences he felt in the rhythm of East and West. Ausama would often say that the paintings were ‘about my life, the struggles but also about the very good childhood memories.’

Ausama had exhibited his work at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA), Minsteracres in Northumberland, and other northern centres of art. In a documentary he said: ‘When I am painting, I am feeling I am alive. Painting gives the power to feel alive. When painting, sometimes my mind does not think about my suffering and this gives me hope for the future.’

We believe his collection offers a unique perspective on the trials and tribulations of refugees and those seeking asylum, escaping war and civil unrest. It explores the journey between cultures and continents; the denial of rights; the difficulties of adjustment and assimilation, of displacement; the care and recovery from torture and repression; and the role of art in therapy and reconciliation. These paintings are his lasting legacy.

Several successful retrospective exhibitions at MIMA and other centres in the North East have brought Ausama’s work to the attention of a wider audience. We feel now is the time to share this legacy with a new group of collectors.

Proceeds from the auction will be used to provide funds for two charities that were close to our dear friend Ausama: Baghdad Central Training Hospital for Children, and Freedom from Torture.

Ausama was respected not only in art circles, but also in many local associations. He was known to his neighbours in central Middlesbrough as “Sam” – a gentle, courteous figure, who for a short brief period flourished with the support of his Iraqi friends in the area. Who could have guessed that figures such as Saddam Hussein had sought out Ausama, a successful interior designer, to work on his palaces? This task was an added stress for Ausama, but he could see the funny side as he recounted this and many other episodes from his time in his beloved city, Baghdad.

His work as an accomplished interior designer paled into insignificance when he talked about his “real love, painting”. We are fortunate to share this love in his paintings, and, of course, the memories of his gracious spirit and many gifts.

John and Margaret Hinman  
April 2022

## Acknowledgements

This online auction would not be taking place without the generous support and enthusiasm of the following:

Elinor Morgan, Kate Moses, Helen Welford – *Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA)*  
Bini Araia, Jenny Earle, Elvis Katoto, Mark Sutcliffe – *Investing in People and Culture (IPC)*  
Sabine Nierhoff, Lesley Atkinson, Anna Bendijk, Poppy Barton Topple, Helen Coyne,  
Shirley Mansfield – *Freedom from Torture*  
Hassan Wadi – *North East Iraqi Community*  
Azad Mohammed – *Saabat Gallery, South Bank, Middlesbrough*  
Joe Cornish – *Joe Cornish Gallery, Northallerton*  
Dr and Mrs Ahmed  
Members of the North East Iraqi Association

## A note on the titles of Ausama's paintings

The titles and brief commentary to some of the works are based on my discussions with Ausama when visiting him in his home in Middlesbrough. He used to explain the reasons for designating his paintings in a certain way. There is, unfortunately, no other information available on the works other than the memories of these conversations. We are torn in our views as to how therapeutic some of Ausama's paintings were for him. Towards the end of his life, he was drawn to similar pictures in his portfolio, especially the work *Ausama's Tortured Foot*.

Margaret and I will always appreciate the way Ausama explained the works of other painters on our visits to exhibitions. We took him to York on several occasions, including to see the David Hockney exhibition. He would spend hours just looking at one painting. He also commented on the shape and style of medieval effigies in York Minister and other historical places of interest.

John Hinman



## **Paintings by Ausama al Khalil in the Middlesbrough Collection**

MIMA cares for three paintings by Ausama Khalil in the Middlesbrough Collection and these works hold many stories and memories. Made while living in Middlesbrough, the paintings depict historic buildings from Ausama's home city of Baghdad and street scenes as he remembered them from his childhood, before the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. The streets are eerily desolate and Ausama explained that this lack of human presence represents the abandonment of cities caused by conflict, turning them into mementos of a lost homeland.

In 2016, MIMA presented these three paintings in an exhibition that examined migration and displacement. The significant works added a personal narrative to the project. In the run up to the exhibition and following an initial introduction from Bini Araia, Ausama built relationships with the MIMA team and during the opening event, his words on his past life and experience of making art in Middlesbrough moved the team and audience immensely. In 2017 MIMA presented a memorial display of Ausama's paintings entitled 'The Long Journey', put together in partnership with Investing in People and Culture and Margaret and John Hinman. The presentation illustrated Ausama's past life and his experience of making art in Middlesbrough and raised awareness of the struggles faced by people seeking asylum.

MIMA has a civic mission to put art into action. The Middlesbrough Collection held at MIMA comprises over 2,350 works of art and craft made by British and international artists from the mid-1800s to today. It is actively used and platformed through exhibitions and projects and with artists and communities to raise debate, open discussion and generate new possibilities. MIMA's artistic programmes address urgent issues such as climate change, migration, inequality, ageing, social isolation, wellbeing, and relations between people, and the world's natural resources.

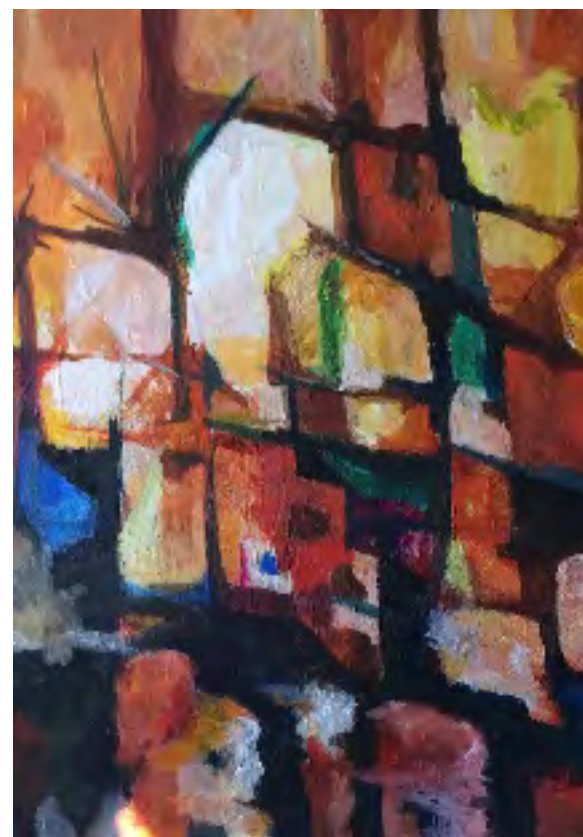
Helen Welford  
MIMA Exhibitions and Collection Curator



The Old District 2  
2013; Acrylic paint on canvas;  
80 x 60 cm  
Middlesbrough Collection



Early Morning  
2013–14; 80 x 60 cm  
Middlesbrough Collection



I Can't Say Goodbye  
2016; 70 x 50 cm  
Middlesbrough Collection

*Proceeds from the auction will be used to provide funds for two charities that were close to Ausama: Baghdad Central Training Hospital for Children, and Freedom from Torture.*

## Baghdad Central Training Hospital for Children

Our appeal was a local initiative in the north east of England. The main purchasing requirement was for paediatric chemotherapy drugs during the war in Iraq. With all funds paid into a registered charity, thanks to our guaranteed transportation arrangement, over £150,000-worth of paediatric oncology drugs and equipment were flown to Baghdad in the first few years of the project, despite war and civil unrest.

At that time, during the UN sanctions and even before the war, 6,000 children were dying each month. A total of 570,000 children died from malnutrition and disease between 1990 and 1996. Since then, this figure is estimated to have reached over 1.8 million. In addition, the trauma of two wars and mounting violence has traumatised children. According to official UN figures, it is estimated that 500,000 children are in need of psychological treatment.

At the time of war, a report by the International Committee of the Red Cross stated that "According to the Iraqi Ministry of Health, more than half of all qualified doctors had left the country". Another report, by the Washington based Brookings Institute, estimated that over 2,300 doctors had been killed and over 300 kidnapped. The numbers are thought to be much higher but are difficult to quantify. Doctors tended to be from wealthy families and were a key target. Many lived in the hospital for months at a time rather than risk returning to their homes.

Baghdad Central Hospital for Children, like most hospitals, is still in a perilous state, and your help would be most appreciated. If you wish to make a direct donation to support hospitals in Baghdad, please visit the Just Giving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/PODC-Iraq>

John Hinman  
Founder, Baghdad Hospital for Children Project

## Freedom from Torture

Torture causes long-lasting mental and physical pain. At Freedom from Torture, our aim is to help people come to terms with their experiences and enjoy lives that are as full and happy as possible.

Many people think that once people fleeing torture arrive in the UK, they are safe and can get on with their lives. That is not the case. We work alongside survivors to raise awareness and campaign for survivors' rights in the UK. Our counsellors, psychotherapists, doctors, care coordinators and pain management specialists help people through the long recovery journey. We offer one-to-one therapy, group activities and other support including for physical pain.

Every day in our five centres we support men, women and children from more than 70 countries, and by now offering online services we are able to see so many more. They have all been forced to flee for their lives, often enduring dangerous and terrifying journeys to get here. They have come to a place where sanctuary is available but sadly, often faced with a hostile public and political attitude towards refugees.

By bidding in the auction, you are showing your humanity, compassion and solidarity with these survivors. I hope you will bid generously in the knowledge that, while investing in a unique piece of artwork, you are also making a real difference to their lives and the lives of so many more who need us.

Sabine Nierhoff  
Freedom from Torture  
[www.freedomfromtorture.org](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org)  
Registered charity:  
England 1000340; Scotland 39632



To make a bid (between 21st April and 5th May 2022),  
please visit  
<https://uk.givergy.com/ArtAuction2022>

### **How to bid & conditions of the auction**

Please take a moment to read the conditions of sale. The proceeds raised by this auction will go to Freedom from Torture and the Baghdad Children's Hospital. To bid in the auction, please use the Givergy interactive bidding system using the link above. The auction will open at 10am on 21st April 2022 and close at 9pm on 5th May 2022. No bidding will be possible after 9pm on 5th May.

By bidding for any lot you agree to be bound by these terms and conditions (T&Cs).

1. You must be 18 or over to bid for any lot in this auction. All bidders must be capable of forming legally binding relations under applicable law.
2. When you place a bid for a lot you are contractually bound to complete the transaction if you place the highest/winning bid for that lot.
3. A lot will not be sold if the highest bid for it is below the minimum reserve price.
4. It is the winning bidder's responsibility to arrange payment by debit card, credit card, bank transfer or cheque within seven days after the auction. A lot will not be delivered until payment in clear funds has been received in full. Ownership of the lot will only transfer after such payment.
5. We reserve the right to cancel, terminate or withdraw this auction and/or completion of any transaction and/or to reject your participation or bid – e.g. if you do not comply with these T&Cs or if circumstances beyond our reasonable control prevent us from delivering a lot.
6. You acknowledge that the description and condition of a lot are consistent with the information supplied to us and that we are not liable for inaccurate or misleading descriptions. All work is "sold as seen"
7. All conditions, representations and warranties not expressly set out in these T&Cs are expressly excluded to the fullest extent permitted by law.
8. We are not responsible for any loss, damage, claim or costs associated with you taking part in this auction.
9. Prizes are non-transferrable and have no cash alternative.

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## Lot 1 Tortured Soul

Kindly donated for sale by  
Dr and Mrs Ahmed  
*£100 minimum bid*

Painting was Ausama's refuge, and after encouragements from his friends he found great comfort in his love of the outdoors and painting landscapes. His career in Baghdad was in interior design, and he worked on many prestigious projects, including for Saddam Hussein and other members of the regime. This caused Ausama a great deal of anxiety; with his business partner, he much preferred to choose his own clients and projects.

To bid for any of these works, please visit:  
<https://uk.givergy.com/ArtAuction2022>

## Lot 2 Ausama's Tortured Foot

£100 *minimum bid*

This painting of the artist's badly scarred and damaged foot was very important to Ausama, both as representation and reminder of torture. Ausama was grateful for the practical support and encouragement he received from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (now called Freedom from Torture). However, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was a constant in his life after he escaped from his kidnappers.





## Scenes of Old Baghdad

Ausama painted many scenes of old Baghdad. The narrow streets and walkways with second floor windows almost providing an arch across the street are very evocative of the city of his birth. All of his paintings show empty streets, devoid of everyday life, as if to emphasise dispersal and flight from the city. John and Margaret Hinman asked Ausama to paint two street scenes for their own collection, showing inhabitants going about their daily routines. The paintings reminded them of The Shambles in York.



Lot 3 Old Baghdad 1

80 x 60 cm

£100 *minimum bid*



Lot 4 Old Baghdad 2

79.5 x 60 cm

£100 minimum bid



Lot 5 Old Baghdad 3

80 x 60 cm

£100 *minimum bid*



## Lot 6 Busy Street Scene in Old Baghdad

80 x 60 cm (with frame); 68 x 48 (without frame)

£150 *minimum bid*

This painting is rare because the artist was generally reluctant to include figures in his paintings of old Baghdad. Ausama felt that the soul and life had left the city. John Hinman asked for a painting depicting figures rather than a deserted street scene. This painting was finished in 2009/10 at what transpired was a good time in Ausama's life.



Lot 7 Old Baghdad 5  
Acrylic paint on canvas; 91 x 61 cm  
£100 minimum bid

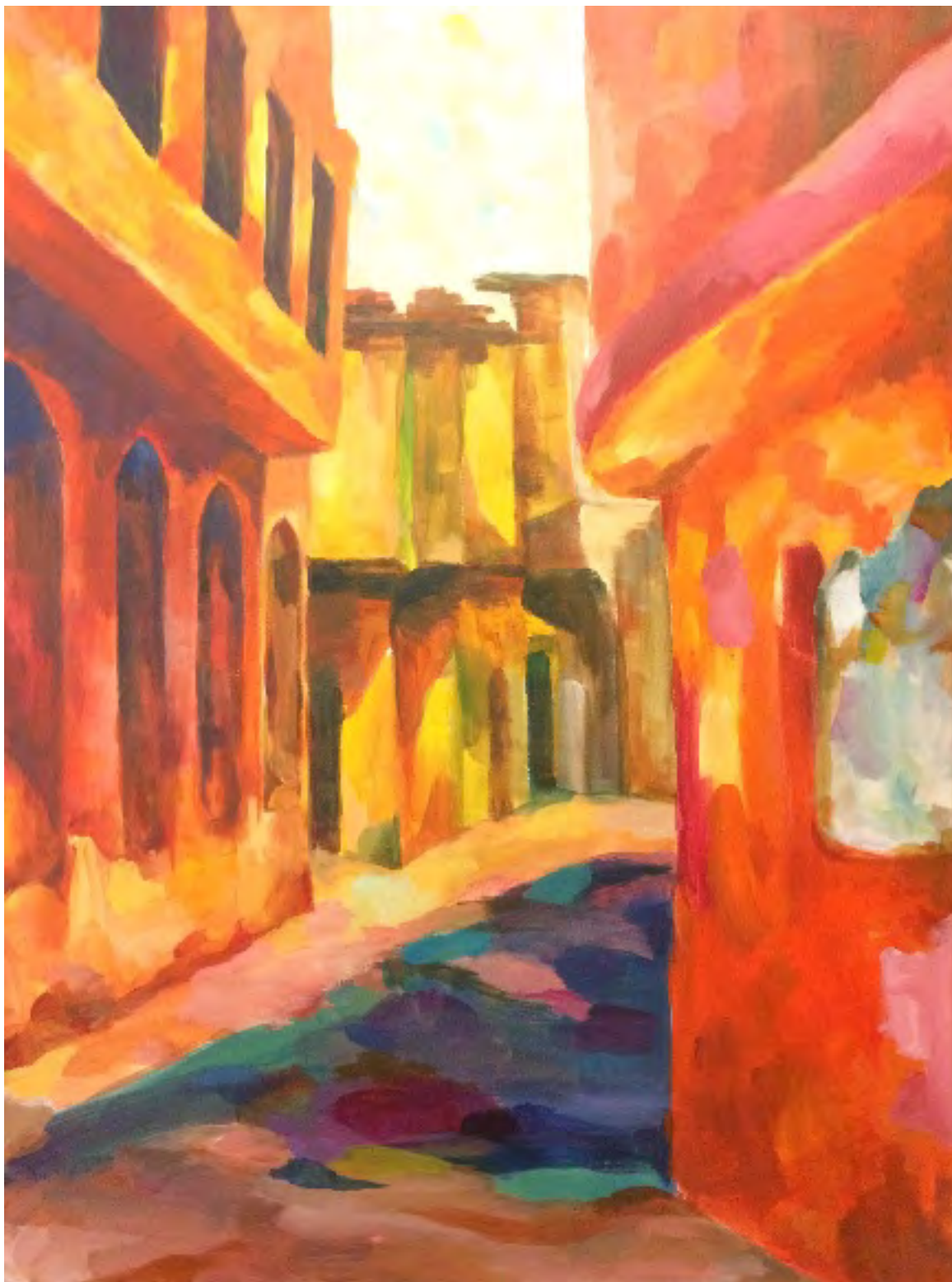


## Lot 8 Imprisonment

Acrylic paint on canvas; 60 x 50 cm

*£100 minimum bid*

The painting evokes a world of restraint and obstacle, denial and 'no exit', emphasised by the barbed wire.

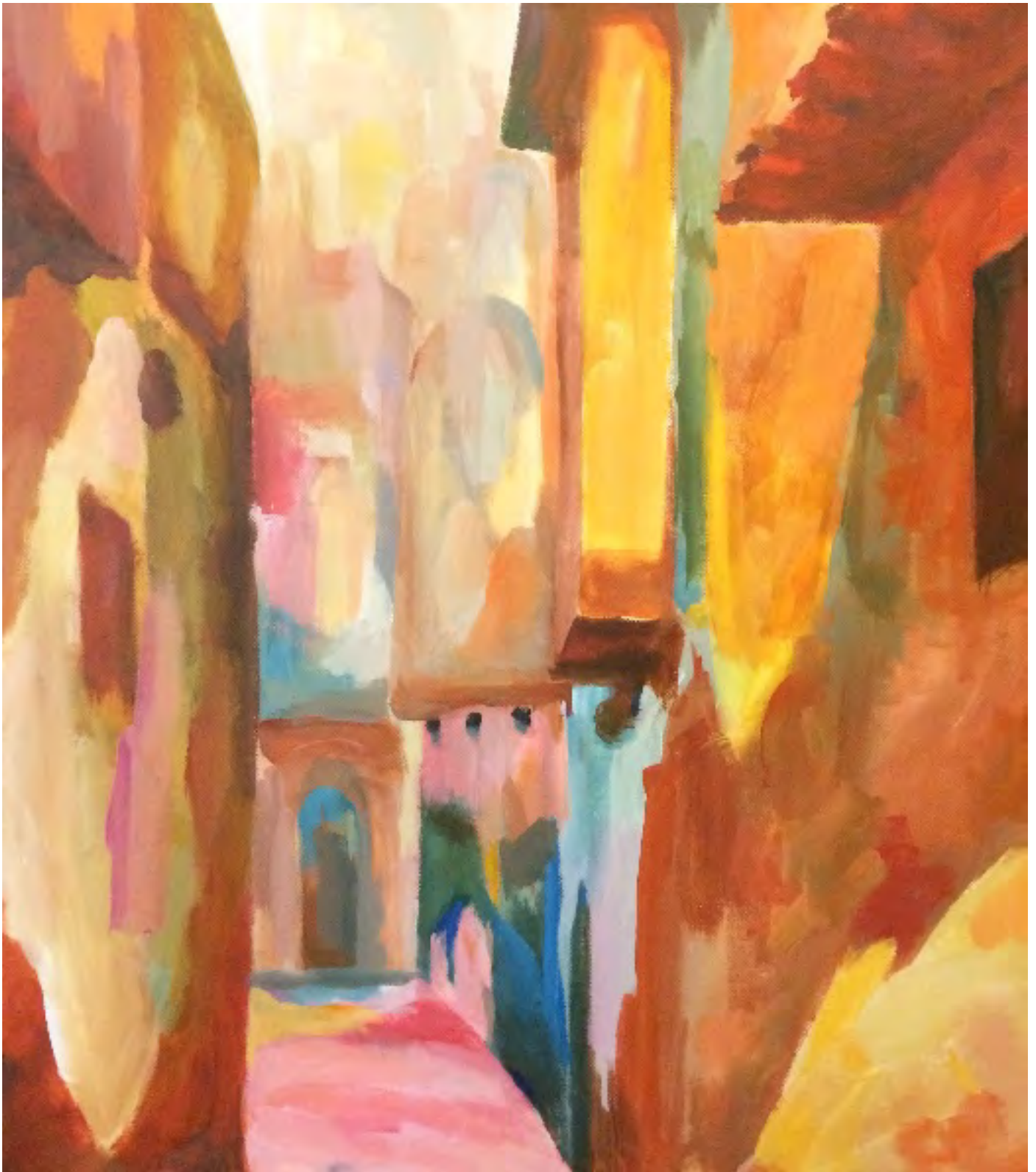


## Lot 9 Let Me Dream

Acrylic paint on canvas; 80 x 60 cm

£100 *minimum bid*





Lot 10 The Childhood Alley

Acrylic paint on canvas; 60.5 x 60.5cm

£100 minimum bid



## Lot 11 Summer

Acrylic paint on canvas; 60 x 60 cm

£100 *minimum bid*



**Lot 12 The Shadows Remain**

Acrylic paint on canvas; 60 x 60 cm

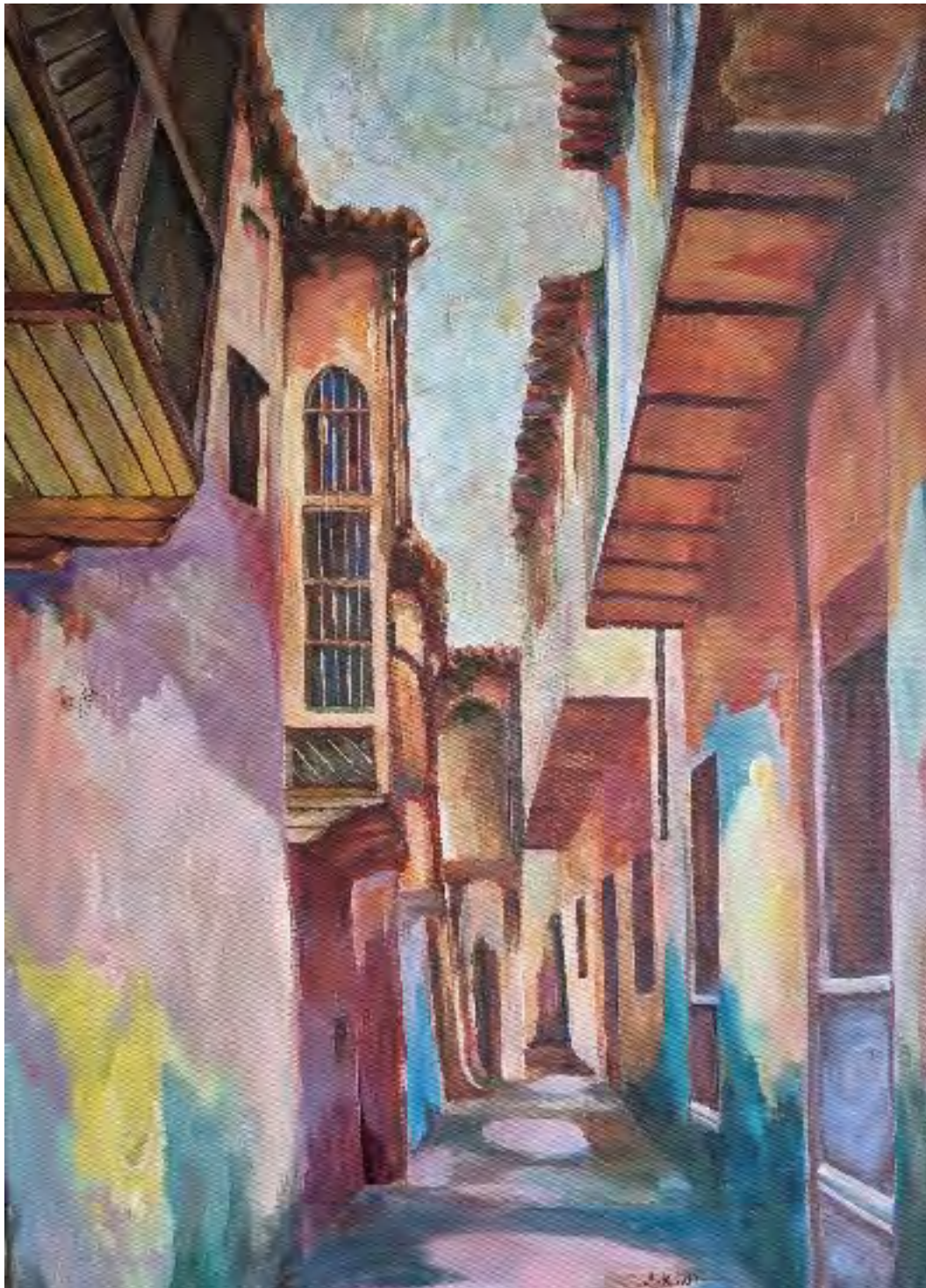
*£100 minimum bid*



Lot 13 The Old District 1

69 x 48.5 cm

£100 minimum bid



Lot 14 Baghdad Old Road  
Kindly donated for sale by Dr and Mrs Ahmed  
*£100 minimum bid*



Lot 15 Three Trees  
*£100 minimum bid*



Lot 16 Untitled

Acrylic paint on canvas; 61 x 61 cm

£75 *minimum bid*



Lot 17 Untitled  
*£75 minimum bid*





**Lot 18 Diaspora**

Acrylic paint on unstretched canvas; 50.5 x 40.5 cm

*£100 minimum bid*

Here there is a strong sense of people on the move, people who have no choice, who are displaced from their homelands.



## Lot 19 Which Road?

Acrylic paint on wood; 43 x 30.5 cm

*£75 minimum bid*

Uncertainty about the future underlies this painting. So many journeys, so many plans, but which road to take?



## Lot 20 River People

Acrylic paint on board; 40 x 30 cm

*£100 minimum bid*

Ausama was interested to hear that John Hinman had consulted Baroness Emma Nicholson about the Baghdad project. Baroness Nicholson had formed the AMAR Foundation in 1991 to assist the Arabs in the marsh and river region of southern Iraq.



## Lot 21 Boxes of Memories

Acrylic paint on board; 53 x 33 cm

*£100 minimum bid*

Ausama was forced to leave so much of his life behind in Baghdad. He brought with him to the North East many photographs of happier times.



Lot 22 Distant Mountains  
Acrylic paint on canvas; 40 x 30 cm  
£75 *minimum bid*



Lot 23 Still Life (Unfinished)  
Acrylic paint on canvas; 25.5 x 30.5 cm  
£75 *minimum bid*



Lot 24 Darkness into Light  
Acrylic paint on canvas; 31 x 25.5 cm  
£75 *minimum bid*



Lot 25 Longing (Celebration)  
*£75 minimum bid*





Lot 26 City Chaos

Acrylic paint on unstretched canvas; 50.5 x 40.5 cm

*£100 minimum bid*

The painting vividly demonstrates the chaos and disruption of war and conflict.



Lot 27 Untitled (Abstract)  
Acrylic paint on mounted card; 60 x 50 cm  
*£100 minimum bid*



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Registered charity:  
England 1000340;  
Scotland 39632  
[www.freedomfromtorture.org](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org)