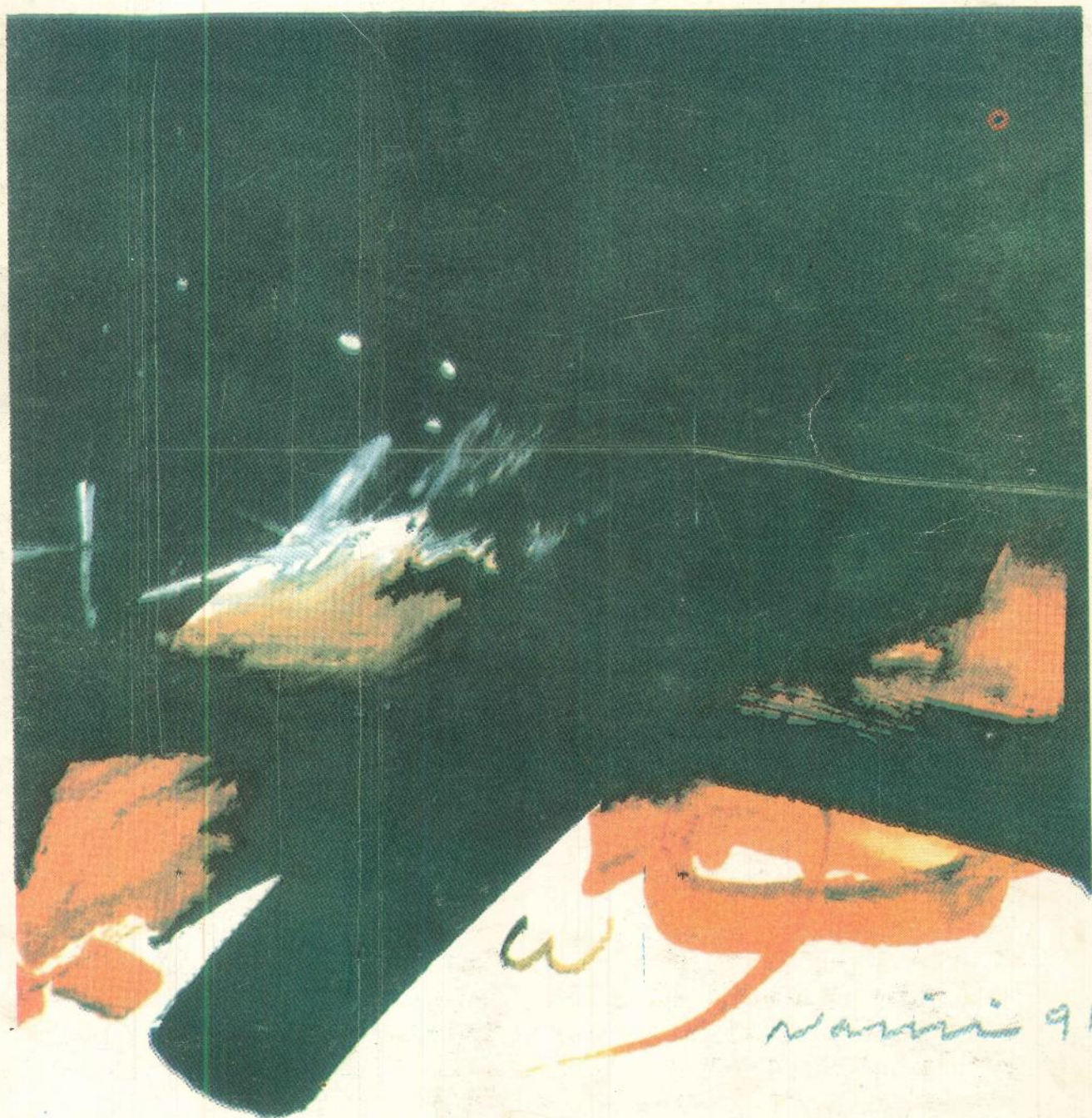
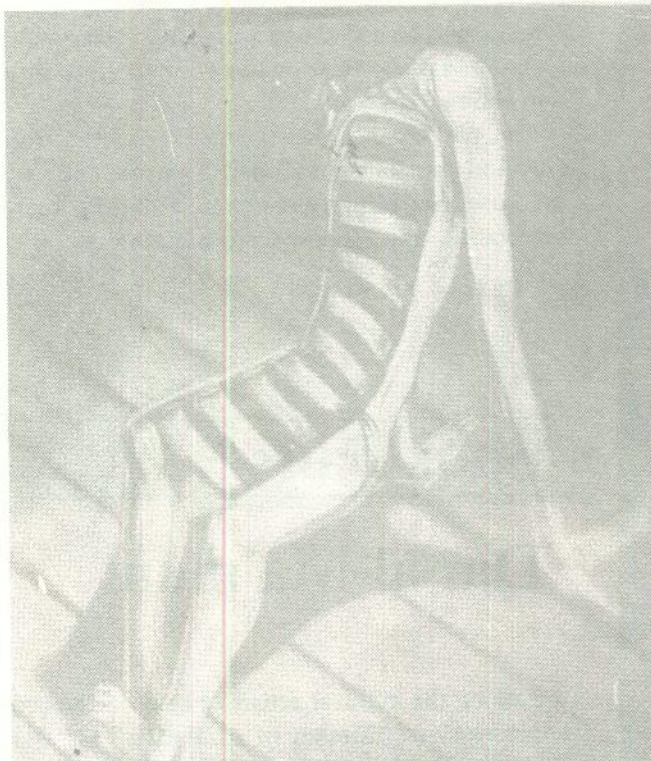


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"The man and the chair," the main theme of Ala' Bashir latest exhibition

Exhibitions

Ala' Bashir

The new paintings by Zla' Bashir (Saddam Art Centre, July 1993), can be described as an artistic project rather than an exhibition because they share joint artistic elements with one theme.

Most of his paintings on display depict a chair and a man taking different positions but, they (the man and the chair) are tied to each other and, sometimes, the frame of the painting becomes the bond of both of them.

In other paintings only the loin-cloth of the man is left on the chair reminding us of ruin and death.

One painting depicts the man as part of the chair on which he is sitting, with his head dangling. The chair has only two legs, the other two are replaced by the man's feet. There is a window in the background, but the light it brings in is pale and restricted.

In another painting, the chair is part of man's body. But, this time, the man's head is cut off and his arms and legs act as the chair's four legs, while another painting indicates Dr. Bashir's skills in what can be called an "anatomizing painting." Accurately drawn legs of the man are left on the chair creating a shocking image.

Ala' Bashir's paintings, however, stay for a long time in the viewer's mind not only for their special style, but also because they are always disturbing and shocking. They seem as real as everyday human suffering. At the same time, they seem illusionary just like dreams or nightmares.

Shakir Hassan al-Sa'ed, a famous Iraqi painter and intellectual, described Ala' Bashir's exhibition as evoking reality and unreality at the same time. Ala' Bashir agreed with al-Sa'ed, saying that he did try to combine the visible and the invisible.

In a bid to explain the idea behind his "project," Bashir wrote on a big board at the entrance of the hall a passage entitled "dialogue of awakening".

Anyway, some believe that it would be better to leave these high-value works to the minds of viewers without making them "tied" to any limited interpretation, because every recipient has his own way of receiving such symbols, regardless of their original significance.

Ala' Bashir, 54, graduated from the college of medicine in Baghdad and obtained a Ph.D degree in plastic surgery from London. He took part in many art exhibitions held at home and abroad. He is the holder of the second prize of the Baghdad International Poster Exhibition (1982) and the gold prize of the Baghdad International Art Festival (1988). ♦