

The British
Museum



Bridging Voices

Dia Al-Azzawi

10 August, 2017

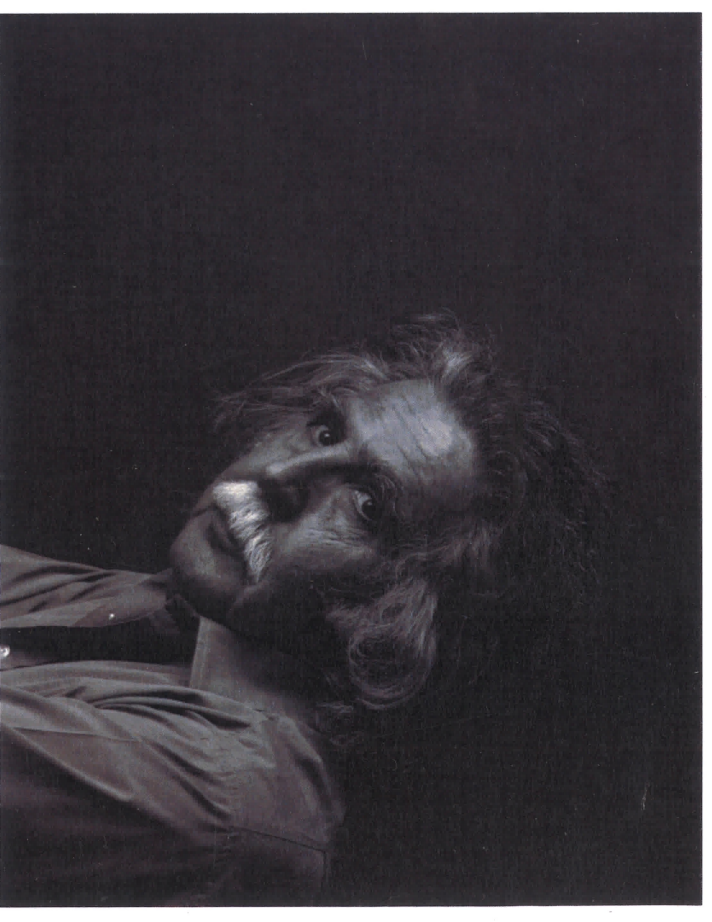
Clore Education Centre

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The Artist

Dia Al-Azzawi

(b. 1939, Iraq)



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A seminal figure of modern Iraqi art, Dia al-Azzawi (b. 1939) had a pivotal role in modernizing Arab art and elevating it to a level of international recognition. Studying archaeology in Baghdad University, Azzawi gained a deep insight into the pre-Islamic and Islamic cultural heritage of Iraq. At the same time he profoundly explored modern European art styles and movements, which enabled him to develop a wider artistic vision and pictorial language. Ancient Assyrian and Sumerian texts and Arab poetry played a significant role in the further development of Azzawi's visual aesthetics and philosophical content.

In 1976, upon moving to London permanently, Azzawi discovered the art of Islamic manuscripts, which inspired him to revive the Islamic tradition of manuscripts (daftars) and create artists' books featuring Arab poets' writings. "The writing is often a simple document. When it is integrated within a work of art, it gains an important aesthetic power", states the artist*.

Dia Al-Azzawi: Bridging Voices focuses on Azzawi's artist's book dedicated to the 10th century prominent Arab poet Abu Tayyib ibn al-Husayn Al-Mutanabbi (d. 965). The display features two pages from the portfolio of eight silkprints, offering insights into the main pictorial and aesthetical characteristics of Dia al-Azzawi's work.

*Dia Al-Azzawi, translated from French by Valérie Hess, <http://www.azzawiart.com>

**Artist's Book, portfolio of silkscreen prints
Dia Al-Azzawi (b. 1939, Iraq), 2007**

Love and Eyes are the main literary motifs in Dia Al-Azzawi's artist's book, featuring selected poems from the Diwan of the famous Arab poet Al-Mutanabbi. Fusing the text with the rich composition of the work, Al-Azzawi develops an artistic monologue with the poet, visualizing Al-Muttanabbi's voice through vibrant colours, abstract patterns and strong characters. The artist translates Mutanabbi's lyrics into a sensorial narrative of gaze and identity, inviting the viewer to engage in an intimate dialogue with the image and the text.

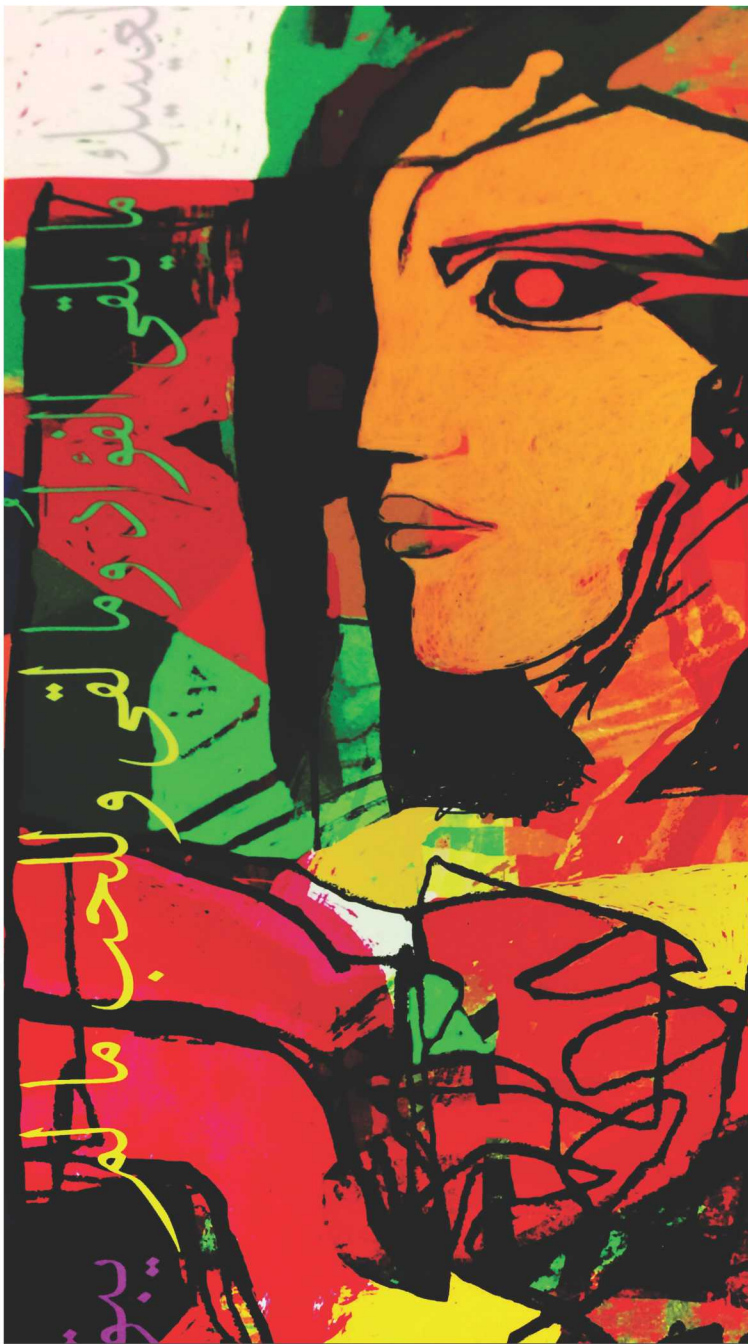


عيناك

ما يلقى القواد وما لقي
والحبيب ما لقي
يقو مني

Assaoua





Dia Al-Azzawi, Artist's book, 2007

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لَعَيْنَيْكَ مَا يَلْقَى الْفُؤَادُ وَمَا لَقِيَ
وَاللُّحْبُ مَا لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنِّي وَمَا بَقِيَ

وَمَا كُنْتُ مِمَّنْ يَدْخُلُ الْعِشْقُ قَلْبَهُ
وَلَكِنَّ مَنْ يُبْصِرُ جَفونَكَ يَعْشَقُ

المتنبي، القرن العاشر الميلادي

Your eyes are what love finds and finds
In love things don't stay for me yet continue

I wasn't one into whose heart love came
But who sees your eyelids is the lover

Al-Mutanabbi (d. 956)

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