

BASSIM AL SHAKER (b. 1986, Baghdad, Iraq)

Lives and works in New York, USA

Bassim Al Shaker's artistic practice translates lived experience into layered compositions that blur the boundaries between trauma, satire, and hope. He works primarily in oil on canvas, and central to his practice is an exploration of memory as both material and structure. Drawing on the psychological residues of witnessing the brutality of war and ideological violence in Iraq, Al Shaker constructs paintings that suspend the viewer in a shared state of dissolution and envelop them in unstable spatial fields. In his recent works, he produces diffused halos, atmospheric gradients, and expanding forms that evoke states of rupture and renewal. Rather than depicting violence directly, these paintings register its afterimage, foregrounding the temporal and perceptual conditions that follow moments of catastrophe.

Al Shaker received his BFA from the University of Baghdad, where he later taught painting, and his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work has been presented internationally at major biennials, including the Venice Biennale (2013), documenta fifteen (2022), Sesc_Videobrasil (2023), and the Aichi Triennale (2025). Solo and group exhibitions include Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago (2024, 2023); FLXST Contemporary, Chicago (2021); South London Gallery, London (2014); with film presentations at e-flux Screening Room and Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival, Czech Republic (2022). His work has also been included in major art fairs, including Art Basel Miami Beach (2016, 2021–2024) and EXPO Chicago (2023). Al Shaker is currently a Mentor and Artist-in-Residence at 14C Residency, New Jersey. He was previously an Artist-in-Residence at the Arizona State University Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona (2013–2014). His work has been featured in publications including The New York Times, ArtNews, Artnet, e-flux, Art Asia Pacific, NewCity, WBEZ Chicago, and Phoenix New Times

EDUCATION

- 2011 Bachelor in Fine Arts, University of Baghdad College, Iraq
- 2021 Master in Fine Arts, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, USA

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Four Minutes*, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, USA
- 2022 *Moment of Silence*, Mana Contemporary, Chicago, USA
- 2021 *Human Crumbs*, USAXST Contemporary Gallery, Chicago, USA
- 2020 *One Year of Loss*, Green Leaf Gallery, Phoenix, USA
- 2015 *I Saw You in My Dreams*, Bentley Gallery, Phoenix, USA
- 2014 *Current Work*, 720 Gallery, Phoenix, USA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2026 *Other Expressions*, Bienvenu Steinberg & C, New York, USA
- The Art of the Game*, FIFA World Cup Host Committee, New York, USA
- 2025 *Aichi Triennale 2025, A Time Between Ashes and Roses*, Aichi Arts Center, Aichi, Japan
- 2024 *Barbershop Screening (Sada [Regroup])*, North View Gallery, Portland Community College, Portland, USA
- These Times*, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, USA
- WAR peace*, Gallery 14C, Jersey Ci, USA
- 2023 *Barbershop Screening, "rain... rain... rain..." - A Requiem*, Silent Green, Berlin, Germany
- Barbershop (Sada [Regroup])*, 22nd Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil, São Paulo, Brazil
- Barbershop (Sada [Regroup]) Screening and discussion*, e-flux Screening Room, Brooklyn, USA
- Surviving the Long Wars*, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, USA
- 2022 *Barbershop*, Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival, Ji.hlava, Czech Republic
- Barbershop (Sada [Regroup])*, Documenta Fifteen, Kassel, Germany
- Eye-dialect: Susanne Doremus selects*, Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, USA
- 2021 *Untamable Magic*, Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, USA
- 2020 *FACE to FACE*, Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, USA
- 2019 *Green Leaf Gallery Winter Show*, Green Leaf Gallery, Phoenix, USA
- 2016 *Arabian Breeders World Cup*, South Point Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, USA

GALLERY ISABELLE

إيسابل

- 2014 *Down_Under_Side*, ASU Art Museum, Tempe, USA
Welcome to Iraq, South London Gallery, London, England
- 2013 *To Sleep, with Life...*, ASU Art Museum Combine Gallery, Phoenix, USA
Beyond the Cloth, White Box Projects, New York, USA
Venice Biennale, Iraqi Pavilion, Venice, Italy

GRANTS, AWARDS & RESIDENCIES

- 2023 Honorable Mention for *Barbershop (Sada [Regroup]) 22nd Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil* São Paulo, Brazil
- 2021 Longform Artist-in-Residence, *Ox-Bow School of Art*, Saugatuck, Michigan, USA
- 2018 Artist-in-Residence *Green Leaf Arts District* Phoenix, USA
- 2013 International Artist-in- Residence, *ASU Art Museum*, Phoenix, USA
- 2005 First Place, *United Nations International Organization for Human Rights*

FAIRS

- Art Dubai (2016)
- Art Basel in Miami Beach, Miami Beach, USA (2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2016)
- EXPO Chicago, Navy Pier, Chicago, USA (2025, 2024, 2023)
- Scottsdale Arabian Horse Show, WestWorld of Scottsdale, Scottsdale, USA (2017, 2016, 2015)

PUBLICATIONS & PRESS

- 2025 Max Crosbie-Jones, "Aichi Triennale 2025, 'A Time Between Ashes and Roses,'" *e-flux*, October 27, 2025
Eugenie Shin, "10 Outstanding Artworks from Aichi Triennale 2025," *Tokyo Weekender*, September 19, 2025
Yoshihisa Obita, "Look up at the preciousness of life," *Chunichi Shimbun*, August 25, 2025
- 2024 Gareth Kaye, "Seven exhibitions to see in Chicago this winter," *Art Basel*, November 18, 2024
Bassim Al Shaker, "Resurrection" (2024), *Northwestern Law Journal des Refusés*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 10
- 2023 Rijin Sahakian, "To Accelerate Time: Reflections on Artmaking in Post-invasion Iraq," *World Records Journal*, Volume 8, Article II, September 2023
Kerry Cardoza and Micco Caporale, "Fall in Love love with Chicago's visual arts scene," *Chicago Reader*, September 22, 2023
Zach Long, "As a young artist, he was tortured. He lived to paint about it." *WBEZ Chicago*, September 7, 2023
Ryan Fazio, "After the Bombs: Bassim Al Shaker Paints From Experience in a War Zone," *Newcity Magazine*, September 6, 2023
Brian Hieggelke, "Art Top 5: March 2023," *Newcity Magazine*, March 1, 2023
- 2022 Amitha Amranand, "Art of Precarity: A review of some of the best exhibits at documenta fifteen," *Bangkok Post*, October 13, 2022
Frank Wasser, "Is Art Rooted in Life? Documenta, Now," *Flash Art*, September 21, 2022
Andrew Berardini, et al., "Did Documenta Work? Reflections on Kassel before the Last Days," *Spike Art Magazine*, September 5, 2022
Mateusz Sapija, "Field Notes: The Question of Funding, Eltiqa, and Sada [Regroup], Documenta 15," *Art & Education*, July 2022
Ben Davis, "Documenta 15's Focus on Populist Art Opens the Door to Art Worlds You Don't Otherwise See - and May Not Always Want to," *Artnet News*, July 6, 2022
Adrian Searle, "Welcome to the fun house! Sharks, skaters and smelters liven up Documenta 15," *The Guardian*, June 23, 2022
Diane Bou Khalil, "Iraqi Artist Bassim Al-Shaker Paints His Own Revolution," *Borderless Magazine*, February 2, 2022
- 2021 Ysabel Pinyol Blasi, "Monira Foundation Presents in Good Company: a Mana Contemporary Chicago Exhibit," *Monira Foundation*, December 8, 2021
- 2019 *Rembrandt Quiballo*, "Bassim Al Shaker opens Green Leaf Gallery," *JAVA Magazine*, March 6, 2019. Lauren Gilger, "Iraqi Artist Opens New Gallery in Phoenix," *KJZZ*, February 1, 2019
Lynn Trimble, "Bassim Al-Shaker Curating the New Green Leaf Gallery in Midtown," *Phoenix New Times*, January 7, 2019