

LATIF AL ANI (b. 1923, d. 2021, Baghdad, Iraq)

Latif Al Ani (1932 – 2021) was a photographer who lived and worked in Baghdad, Iraq. With a career spanning the late 1950s to the late 1970s, Latif Al Ani is today considered the founding father of Iraqi Photography.

Al Ani captured, mostly in black and white, the transformations in urban and rural Iraqi society, offering a unique gaze and testimony of the transitional and prosperous moments in Iraq's modern history. During two decades, the photographer produced an extensive and invaluable archive and document of the socio-political, economical and cultural landscape.

Al Ani started his career as a photographer for the Iraq Petroleum Company in the 1950s and, later in the 1960s, rose to the post as the Head of Photography at the National Iraqi News Agency.

The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war prompted his decision to cease his photographic journey once and for good. In 2000, artist Yto Barrada met Latif Al Ani during a research mission in Iraq with Wilfried Blanchard from which Barrada brought his practice to the attention of the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut. Since then, the foundation has acted as custodian preserving Al Ani's archives.

The work of Al Ani has been presented in many group exhibitions including the National Pavilion of Iraq, organized by the Ruya Foundation and curated by Philippe Van Cauteren, at the 56th Venice Biennale (2015) which toured to S.M.A.K. (Museum for Contemporary Art), Ghent (2016) and the Erbil Citadel, Iraq (2017), as well as *Bagdad Mon Amour* at Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Paris (2018) curated by Morad Montazami. A survey exhibition curated by Hoor Al Qasimi entitled *Latif Al Ani: Through the Lens 1953 – 1979*, was presented at Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE (2018), while he also participated in *Crude*, the inaugural exhibition of Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai (2019), curated by Murtaza Vali. Al Ani's first eponymous monograph, published in 2017 by Hannibal Publishing (and Hatje Cantz), won the prestigious 2017 Historical Books Award at Rencontres d'Arles. Al Ani is also the subject of a documentary produced by Iraqi director Sahim Omar Khalifa and Belgian filmmaker Jurgen Buedts entitled *Iraq's Invisible Beauty*. In 2015, Al Ani became a Prince Claus Laureate.

EDUCATION

- 1964 Colour Photography Course, Gevaert School of Photography, Antwerp, Belgium
- 1954 Received formal training and mentorship under British photographer Jack Percival

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 *Image Keepers: Photographic Works from the Sharjah Art Foundation Collection*, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
All Manner of Experiments: Legacies of the Baghdad Modern Art Group, sponsored by The Farjam Foundation, Hessel Museum of Art, New York, USA
- 2024 *The Circle Was a Point*, The Foundry, Dubai, UAE
- 2023 *In the Heart of Another Country: The Diasporic Imagination Rises*, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
In The Heart of Another Country, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Germany
Through the Lens: Latif Al Ani's Visions of Ancient Iraq, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW), New York University, New York, USA
- 2022 *Latif Al Ani: Documenting The Unforgettable and the Forgotten*, Farjam Foundation, Dubai, UAE (Solo)
Baghdad, "a Modern Place" (1958 – 1978) Latif Al Ani, La Virreina, Barcelona, Spain (Solo)
- 2019 *Vetera Novis Augere*, Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai, UAE (Solo)
- 2018 *Crude*, curated by Murtaza Vali, Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai, UAE
Bagdad Mon Amour, curated by Morad Montazami, Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Paris, France
Latif Al Ani: Through the Lens 1953-1979, curated by Hoor Al Qasimi, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE (Solo)
3rd Beijing Photo Biennial, Beijing, China
Latif Al Ani, La Galerie de la Filature, Mulhouse, France (Solo)
- 2017 *Invisible Beauty*, Erbil Citadel, Erbil, Iraq (Solo)
- 2016 *Latif Al Ani: New Baghdad*, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, Columbia University, New York, USA (Solo)
Latif Al Ani: New Baghdad, The Graham Foundation, Chicago, USA (Solo)
Latif Al Ani: New Baghdad, LAX ART, Los Angeles, USA (Solo)
Invisible Beauty, curated by Philippe Van Cauteren, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent, Belgium
- 2015 *Invisible Beauty*, curated by Philippe Van Cauteren, Pavilion of Iraq, Biennale di Venezia - 56th International Art Exhibition, Venice, Italy

- 1972 *Photographs of Cairo*, Iraq Cultural Week, Baghdad, Iraq
1968 *Iraqi Journalists*, Arab Journalist Union, Cairo, Egypt
1967 *Latif Al Ani*, University of Bahrain, Bahrain (Solo)
Latif Al Ani, Kuwait University, Kuwait City, Kuwait (Solo)
1965 *Today's Iraq*, Ministry of Culture, Berlin, Germany (Solo)
4th International Be Photo, Berlin, Germany
1964 *American Life*, American Society of The Middle East Friends, Beirut, Lebanon
American Life, American Society of The Middle East Friends, Damascus, Syria
American Life, American Society of The Middle East Friends, Cairo, Egypt
American Life, American Society of The Middle East Friends, Jerusalem
American Life, American Society of The Middle East Friends, Jordan
American Life, American Society of The Middle East Friends, Baghdad, Iraq
1963 *Faces and Facets of Iraq*, American Society of The Middle East Friends, Los Angeles, USA
Faces and Facets of Iraq, American Society of The Middle East Friends, New York, USA
Faces and Facets of Iraq, American Society of The Middle East Friends, Washington D.C, USA

AWARDS

- 2015 Prince Claus Laureate

COLLECTIONS

Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah
Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon Farjam
Foundation, Dubai

PUBLICATIONS

- 2018 *Hoor Al Qasimi, Kathleen Butti and Mu'assasa al-Šāriqa li-l-funūn, Latif Al Ani: Through the Lens, 1953-1979*, Sharjah Art Foundation
2017 Latif Al Ani, Hajte Cantz, 2017, ISBN 978-3-7757-4270-2

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

With or without a camera: Latif Al Ani's Iraq, by Catherine David, | 2015 Prince Claus Awards Book | 2015 Golden age images of Iraq by 'the father of Iraqi photography' | The Washington Post | November 2018 Picturing Iraq in a Bygone Era | The New York Times | July 2018
How Latif Al Ani captured Iraq's golden era through a lens | The National | May 2018
Through the Lens 1953 - 1979 | Art Asia Pacific | 2018
Capturing the social fabric of Iraq | Gulf News | December 2017
Latif Al Ani and Iraq's Golden age | Financial Times | December 2017
Driven underground by Saddam, 'Iraq's greatest photographer' Latif Al Ani is honored at Last | CNN Style | November 2016
Baghdad through Latif Al-Ani's Lens | Jadaliyya | April 2016