



*Embraced Couple*, around 1915  
Bronze, 21 x 14 x 13 cm



Jussuf Abbo, around 1935  
© Jussuf Abbo Estate



*Head of an African Man*, 1929  
Charcoal on paper, 45.1 x 34.5 cm



*Sleeping Man*, not dated  
Charcoal on paper, 51.3 x 38.4 cm

Jussuf Abbo was born in Safed/Palestine in 1888 into a jewish family of farmers. After a short stint in Jerusalem as a stonemason, he moved to Berlin in 1911, where he studied sculpture between 1913-1918 at the Königliche Akademie der Künste.

He was a well-known personality in the bohemian scene of Berlin in the 1920s, and was especially famous for the bedouin tent he had constructed in his atelier, where he would sleep. He exhibited in some of the most established galleries of his time (Paul Cassirer, Ferdinand Möller, Alfred Flechtheim, J.B Neumann, Herbert von Garvens..). His work was also acquired by major private collectors and German museums in Berlin, Hanover, Chemnitz, Hamburg and Mannheim.

In 1935, he escaped the Nazi regime with his family to London with a counterfeit Egyptian passport, where he died in 1953, destitute and forgotten.



أفاق AFAC

The Arab Fund For Arts and Culture  
الصندوق العربي للثقافة والفنون - أفاق

SAID BAALBAKI PRESENTS:

JUSSUF ABBO

(1888-1953)

THE SCULPTOR IN THE BEDOUIN TENT

## JUSSUF ABBO (1888-1953) The Sculptor in the Bedouin Tent

When in March 2014 I was fortunate enough to happen upon Jussuf Abbo's work for the first time, I did not know that this 'encounter' would soon turn into an obsession. I had no prior knowledge of the scope of his work and the success he had enjoyed a century before. For four years, I found, collected, restored, and inventoried his work, as well as collected information in documents and other material traces that would guide my reconstruction of this tragic destiny; stone by stone, like a mosaic piece ravaged by time.

It is rare to find a more meaningful expression that sums up the experience and passion of an art historian, collector, and publisher than this sentence by Paul Westheim, "What I collected were not pictures and sculptures but rather people – intellectual, creative people, for whom I became an engaged advocate, and whose characters I was able to experience..."

The Jussuf Abbo project is an attempt to save what remains of this life. It is also a response to the fictionalizing practices in our artistic landscape today. It is in search of a real and truthful life that I embarked on this adventure; to borrow Martin Buber's expression once again, "all actual life is encounter". Jussuf Abbo's project is a reflection on the territorial and identitarian – especially national – belonging of the artist.

'Das Heimatmuseum' is a private collection that is interested in all forms of historical-cultural production and practice of the Levant.

Said Baalbaki



*Else Lasker-Schüler, around 1920*  
Etching on paper, 18.8 x 11.2 cm



*Mother and Child, around 1920*  
Watercolor on paper, 52 x 69 cm

## JUSSUFF ABBU\*

Else Lasker-Schüler, 1923

On his humble divan, he rests, as if at his parent's home.  
But that is in Safeth below an infatuated heaven.  
The mother within dreams wistfully of Jussuff.

And at the clay plantation of his studio,  
White people gaze quietly enshrouded from stone  
Mysteriously toward the East.

Artfully engendered and shepherded in cloaks,  
Devoutly live Jussuff Abbu's stone creatures;  
Scrupulously investigated is their value to be.

Wondrously, there is breath in the stone,  
And lips form a love-long smile,  
In the marble maid, a heart blossoms.

–! There – behind iron bars – is it merely a dream?  
Roars Abbu's young tiger, brown bespeckled:  
'Zuckeri nja siddi?'

With deferentiality, great Jussuff addresses his guest  
'Lord' Mohammed.  
Thus it is he establishes the majesty of all of the noble animals.

And speaks the language of Bedouine princes,  
Who learned from the desert birds their calls.  
Perched upon wild horses he rode with the tribes as a child.

All white has Jussuff's heart remained,  
Though his brows like ancient forests overgrown,  
Beshadow his Galilee eyes.

When he seeks out the psalm of the Yeminite priest,  
Every note of the harp floats Hebraic to Jehova,  
From Abbu's sacred temple of art, and into the blue kingdom.

*Translated from German by Nathan Moore.*  
*\*This is the version of the name used by ELS*