

## Mohammed Ghani Hikmat: The Sculptor of Baghdad

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Iraqis in Baghdad watch the local television broadcast, showing an image of Iraqi sculptor Mohammed Ghani Hikmat who died in hospital in Amman, Jordan. (Photo: AFP - Sabah Arar)

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**With the passing of sculptor Mohammed Ghani Hikmat at the age of 82, Iraq has lost one of its leading cultural and artistic icons. The pioneering artist left behind many landmarks in Baghdad, including the statue of Shahrayar and Shahrazad, Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves in Kahramana Square, Hammurabi, and the installation of Sindbad the Sailor at the entrance of the Rashid Hotel.**

Mohammed Ghani Hikmat's work is as prolific and diverse as the history of his home city, Baghdad. It includes monuments and sculptures ranging from a mural at the City of Medicine and the al-Mutanabbi Statue, to fourteen murals in one of Baghdad's churches, representing the Stations of the Cross.

During the 1980s, Hikmat sculpted one of the gates of the UNICEF complex in Paris and three wooden gates of the Tiesta De Libra Church in Rome, a first for a Muslim Arab sculptor. He is also the creator of the *Great Arab Revolt* mural in Amman, sculpting five doors of an old mosque in Bahrain, in addition to a number of large statues and fountains.

Hikmat helped construct the *Freedom* monument, which was designed by his teacher, the late Iraqi sculptor Jawad Salim, who passed away before its completion. It summarizes the Iraqi nation's journey from British occupation, through the monarchy, and to the republican era. Hikmat's work is heavily influenced by Sumerian art, Babylonian monuments, and artwork from the Abbasid period.

Iraqi cultural and artistic circles anticipated the completion of his four new works commissioned by Baghdad's municipality in several city squares: *Baghdad* in Andalus Square, *Saving Iraq* in Al-Mansour District, *The Magic Lantern* near the National Theater, and *Baghdad's Poems*, beside the Beirut coffee shop. But before Hikmat could see his works come to life, he suffered a stroke and kidney failure, which led to his passing last Monday in Amman.

This article is an edited translation from the Arabic Edition.

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