

# MUSTAFA AL HALLAJ

Country: [Palestine](#) • Exhibition: • [Night was paper and we were ink](#)



**SABRA AND SHATILA**  
Mustafa Al Hallaj  
[PALESTINE](#)

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Born 1938, Jaffa, Palestine  
Died 2002 Damascus, Syria

By Isabella Ellaheh Hughes

Best known for his graphic arts, Palestinian artist Mustafa Al Hallaj moved with his family to Damascus in 1948 when he was forced to leave his homeland. His Palestinian heritage was a central point of inspiration and much of his work combines symbols, folklore, and references from Palestinian history. In his 1993 woodcut print *Sabra and Shatila*, Al Hallaj references one of the worst atrocities in Arab contemporary history. In 1982, under the watch of the Israeli army, up to 3500 Palestinian and Lebanese civilians were brutally murdered over the course of a day and a half by Christian Lebanese militiamen allied to Israel in the refugee camp of Shatila and the adjacent neighborhood of Sabra in Beirut. Al Hallaj emotively depicts the silhouette of a woman on the ground encountering a winged angel, the sun and moon. Al Hallaj was a founding member of the trade union committee of the General Union of Palestinian Writers and

Journalists and helped establish an art gallery dedicated to Naji al-Ali in Damascus. He died in 2003 after rescuing his famous work *Self-portrait as Man, God, the Devil* from an electrical fire in his home studio, by running in to save other works. His work has been exhibited globally and is held in numerous private and public collections around the world.

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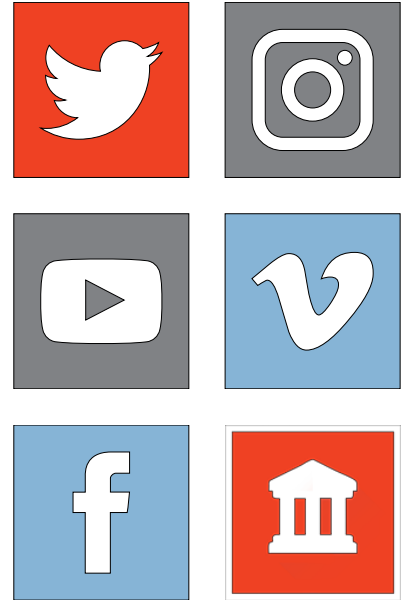
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