

Some forty years ago, Sheikh Nasser, on one of his visits to the gallery I had at the time in St James's, London, told me that his wife, Sheikha Husa, had a diamond ring and asked if I had ever seen one. As a member of a fourth-generation jewellery family, this seemed an odd question. I replied that yes, of course, I had seen a diamond ring. "I am sure you haven't", he countered. The more I insisted that I was well acquainted with diamond rings, the more he said that he doubted me. Eventually, he said that he would see if his wife could come and show it to me. A few days later, Sheikha Husa kindly came in and showed me her diamond ring. It was a complete hoop of diamond, a large, flat, single diamond with a finger-sized hole through the middle of it. A glittering, faceted hoop. It had been made by one of the major jewellery houses earlier on the century. A truly remarkable object.

It is a simple story, but it sums up much of what I recall of Sheikh Nasser: a love of beauty and rarity, an enthusiasm for jewellery and an engaging sense of humour. There is a sad addendum to the story because I believe that this ring was one of the objects never recovered after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Now too Sheikh Nasser has gone, an even rarer gem, but he leaves many fond memories among those who were privileged to know him and, of course, the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah which houses his and Sheikha Husa's incredible collections. He was a visionary and pioneer in collecting Islamic art and the first to establish a major centre in the Gulf to study, preserve and display it. He will be greatly missed and never forgotten.

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