

The first thing that comes to mind when I recall my sporadic conversations with Sheikh Nasser during the periods I spent researching the glass collection in Fintas is a sense of his boundless energy, relatively short-span but extremely focused attention, and always being a couple of steps ahead of me.

The glass collection was literally growing as I was researching and writing about it: I was trying to fit it into an art-historical framework so that the publication wouldn't result in just a collection catalogue but in a manual for the study of this fascinating aspect of Islamic art. Every time I arrived in Kuwait, dozens of new works awaited me and from my perspective they needed not only to be researched and integrated into the catalogue (thus forcing me to rearrange sequences, cross-references, and more) but also to be integrated in the art-historical narrative (thus forcing me to rewrite bits and pieces of the introduction and conclusion to the various chapters).

As I sat down at my desk and started to think a bit grumpily "... I will never finish this book ...", Sheikh Nasser would appear out of thin air (I suppose one of his many abilities), greet me very cheerfully and declare something along the lines of "... Carboni, see what I just bought for you, aren't you happy?! ..."

I was obviously both delighted and alarmed at the same time. However, such a disarming attitude, which can only come from someone who is passionate about collecting and a dedicated patron and mentor, totally won me over every time it happened. Sheikh Nasser had a natural talent to make people feel comfortable, to make them feel appreciated, to make them feel respected. This doesn't happen very often among people with his background, legacy and responsibilities, and I feel privileged that I was allowed to have a glimpse into his world and his personality.

My further interactions with Sheikh Nasser were in more formal settings either at The Met or in London, during which many other colleagues competed to get his attention. However, I believe that those brief animated exchanges we had in Kuwait were always in the back of his mind when we greeted each other in these occasions, as a sort of ongoing complicity between patron and student/scholar/writer that was offered the privilege to put on paper a compendium of his collecting efforts in the area of Islamic glass.

I will always remember him this way, a sparkle in his eyes, quick words, and great communicative energy. Bless his soul!

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