

I remember meeting Sheikh Nasser in it must have been 1984, in the warehouse at Christie's. At that stage our Islamic department was so much less important than the opposition, but he wanted to see what we had. Although it was the head of the department who was showing him round, he made a point of including me in the conversation, discussing with me a finely engraved copper bowl that had taken his fancy. It is now in the collection (LNS 263 M).

Most of all it is his ebullience that comes to mind, his enthusiasm for art, for taking enjoyment from life, and from interacting with people in his delightfully informal way. I have many memories of his sitting on the sofa, either at Mahboula or more recently in Yarmouk, playing with objects, loving to discuss them, their intricacies, and indeed at times their attributions. He loved challenging me with things at the periphery of what I knew. All this was done without any malice at all, just the pure enjoyment of playing with, and learning about these extraordinary items he had collected.

For me however the visit that comes foremost to my mind was one where I was on a fleeting visit to Kuwait. It was about 5-8 years ago, and had made an appointment to see him in his grand elevated position of head of the Amiri Diwan. I presented myself at the Palace, was shown to the correct building and then along long corridors until I eventually reached his office. We had half an hour together, discussing various things. As I walked away I felt that it was fine as a meeting, I was glad to have paid my respects, but felt that it had not really "worked" – we were both in a relatively formal mode, not an aspect of Sheikh Nasser that I was used to. "Oh well", I thought, "good to have said hello," and headed on to my next client.

Half an hour later as I was driving my phone rang. It was Sheikh Nasser. "William, we are going to have some fun, clear your afternoon!". For me this was easy, but I do not like to think how complicated that was for him. Anyway an hour later we were driving together, first to a warehouse full of Indian architectural elements, spending time envisaging how they could be used and which could go together. We were indeed having fun – this is a task both of us clearly relished. We then drove down to Mahboula where everybody assembled, we had a delicious late lunch, and then spent the afternoon discussing objects that he had recently bought, some of which I had never previously seen the like of. It was such an enjoyable afternoon, all the more so for being completely unanticipated. And for me the whole way it panned out summed up so many of the qualities that made Sheikh Nasser such a wonderful man.

I was in Kuwait again in December and, although Sheikh Nasser was not well enough to receive visitors, I was touched that he made frequent enquiries about my wellbeing while I was there, so typically considerate, especially bearing in mind his own condition.

William Robinson

