

To write a remembrance of Sheikh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah is not an easy task. I cannot state that the frequent meetings we had in Kuwait during the almost past twenty years have changed my life, but certainly those meetings made it a better one. The occasions in which I had the privilege of sitting close to him in Mahbula and later on in Yarmuck, have always been important moments.

To write and acknowledge that Sheikh Nasser has been a genial collector is a commonplace, but also an incontrovertible truth. Such as the fact that them (because it is impossible for me to divide Sheikh Nasser from his love, wife and companion Sheikha Hussa) have been true pioneers in the *,tout court* Gulf – and not only there – of the rediscovery, if not discovery of Islamic Art. All the others followed this path.

But it is not the great and refined collector that I want to remember here, but the Man. The man I have seen and met. I am only a little piece of a great mosaic puzzle that he sketched. Sheikh Nasser wasn't a simple person, although he was an easy man. I am trying to say that despite his unbelievable knowledge in so many fields, he had no need to brag about it. Not humble, absolutely not. But easy: he had the noble gift of putting people at their ease, and this was coming to him naturally, without any effort and without posture. And his always careful glance, full of his fantastic irony.

The first time I met him in Mahbula, many years ago, I was a bit frightened by this meeting; I remember that Sue, my incredible and dearest Madame Sue, simply told me: "Do not pretend with him: be what you are!" And I always followed this suggestion. I also remember with a smile and great nostalgia so many meetings in which as usual I was dressed with gaudy colors and my bow ties, and combinations probably not so orthodox, and crossing his sight at the very beginning a bit ironic if not perplexed, but I am sure a peculiar one. He was a curious man, again a gift no one can teach you. Then his sight has been in a way transformed: he looked at me and was nodding, like the confirmation of a thought, never a judgement; I like thinking that he was happy to find me back as I was.

My meetings with Sheikh Nasser have been more than nice. I never felt myself questioned or under trial (as it was common with other collectors and even colleagues; it would not be fair to mention their names...), but on a common field in which you could interact, even speaking freely and without limits, because always Sheikh Nasser was putting me to complete ease. Probably I told him several nonsense, but he never made me feel

out of place: he accepted different opinions, maybe calling you “stupid”, but I never thought he was offensive, it was confidence, something precious.

An indelible remembrance is one of his visits in Mahbula; I don't know for what reasons he asked to open the drawers with jewels which were at the back of Sue's chair. He started to open them and to show those masterpieces to me and I started to cry, slowly and without any noise; a big emotion and a lost of control; frankly a bit embarrassing. He noticed it, and stories. He had a of course, but went on explaining so many details prodigious memory and an immeasurable knowledge, matched only by his human sensitiveness. That human sensitiveness is something you cannot learn: you have it or not. That day I felt so close to him in the contemplation of beauty. Unforgettable.

I know that in many respects I have had a very lucky life. Even because I had the fortune of meeting such an extraordinary Man. True. It is impossible to forget him and it is mandatory to honour his legacy. His passage on earth and his message cannot be disregarded. I am sure that the Beauty which has been his best companion throughout his life will be with him for eternity. Amen.

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