

# Hashim Samarchi

Historical works  
from the 1960s

Grosvenor  
Gallery



H. Samsonov

# Hashim Samarchi

## Historical Works from the 1960s

25 March - 24 April, 2026

**Grosvenor  
Gallery**

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Described by Jabra I. Jabra as one of the most significant Optical artists from the Arab world, Hashim Samarchi's career is a tale of two halves.

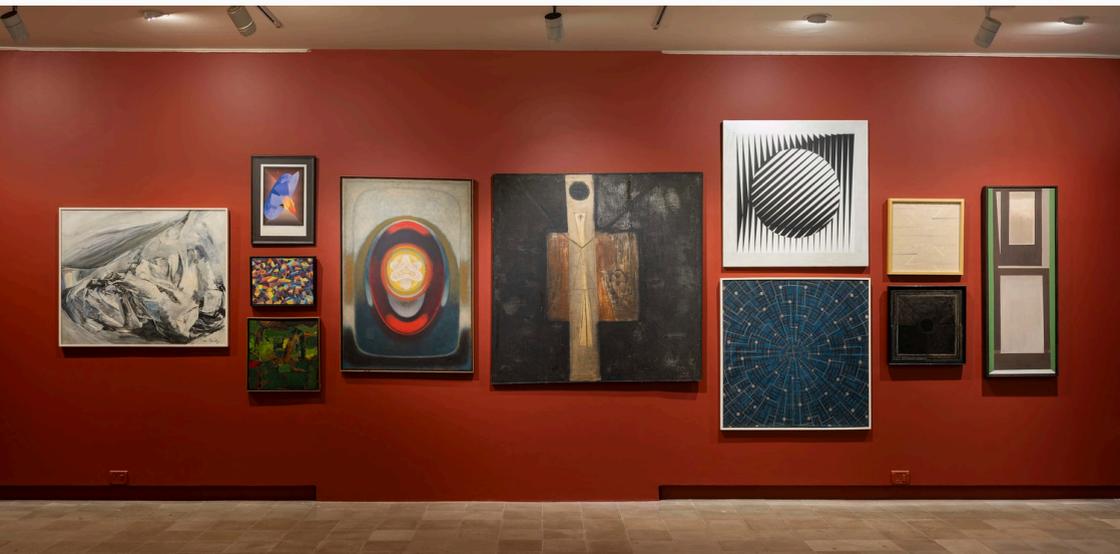
Hashim Samarchi was born in 1939 in Mosul, Iraq. He studied painting and drawing at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad from 1954 to 1957, and then at the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Baghdad from 1962 to 1966.

After graduating from the Academy, he worked for a while as a drawing teacher in Saudi Arabia. In 1967, he was nominated by the Iraqi Artists Association for a Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation fellowship. From 1967-69 he lived and worked in Lisbon alongside Rafa al-Nasiri and Salim al-Dabbagh, producing experimental paintings and prints, which would lead him ultimately to his optical works of the 1970s.

He returned to Baghdad in 1969, whereupon he co-founded *al-Ruyaa al-Jadidah* (New Vision Group) with Dia al-Azzawi, Mohammad Mehr al-Din, Rafa al-Nasiri, Saleh al-Jumaie, and Ismail Fattah.

The Group championed a freer, more personal style of art than many of the Iraqi art groups that had gone before, but also encouraged the use of heritage and tradition as forms of inspiration. It was a highly politicised group defined by the ideals of Pan-Arabism (the idea of creating unity across the 'Arab World', a region sharing a common language, history, and culture). Nada Sabout has kindly allowed us to reproduce part of her recent essay *All Manner of Experiments: Legacies of the Baghdad Modern Art Group*, which goes into greater detail about the group. This text accompanies the 2025/26 touring exhibition of the same name, currently on display at NYU in Abu Dhabi.

After the group disbanded in 1972, Samarchi illustrated posters and poetry books and worked with the Iraqi Ministry of Information on the cultural magazine *Afaq Arabiyya*, also participating in several print biennials throughout Europe.



'Gallery view | *Resonant Histories: India & the Arab World*, JNAF Gallery, CSMVS Museum, 2025. Hashim Samarchi's work, *Square and Circle* (1969), pictured.  
Courtesy: Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, CSMVS & Barjeel Art Foundation

In 1981, he fled Iraq, entering exile in Britain. Whilst in London, he worked in the studio of Dia al-Azzawi for the better part of a decade, working infrequently on his own practice. He lived in West London and passed away in December 2024. His work is in the collections of the Dalloul Art Foundation, Beirut; The Ibrahim Collection, Amman and Baghdad; The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon and Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

In this exhibition, we are displaying early watercolours by Hashim, as well as graphic print works from the late 1960s, alongside archival material relating to his life and career.

Charles Moore  
London, 2026



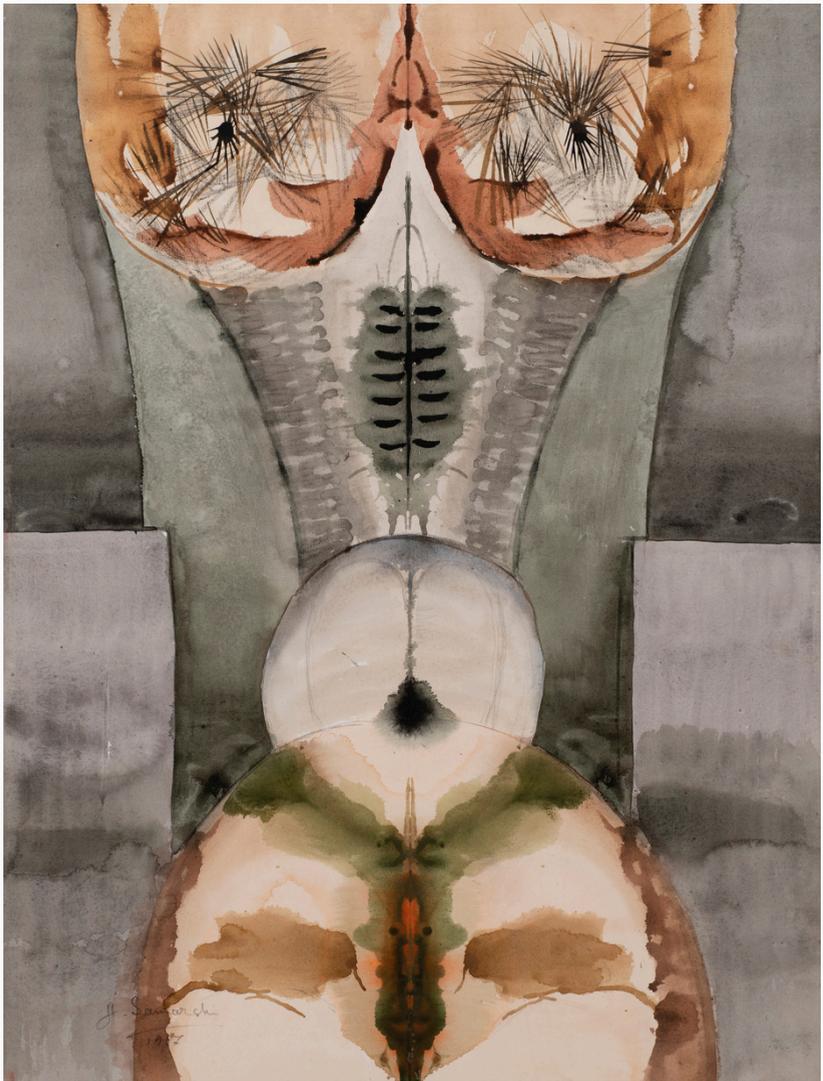
**1. *Untitled (Abstract Forms)*, 1967**

Signed and dated 'H. Samarchi/ 1967 Lisbon' in two places

Ink and wash on paper

64.5 x 49.6 cm

25 3/8 x 19 1/2 in



**2. *Untitled (Body, Grey/Orange)*, 1967**  
Signed and dated 'H. Samarchi 1967' lower left  
Ink and wash on paper  
79.2 x 57.2 cm  
31 1/8 x 22 1/2 in



**3. *Untitled (Body, Grey/Green)*, 1967**  
Signed and dated 'H. Samarchi 1967' lower left  
Watercolour and crayon on paper  
79 x 57 cm  
31 1/8 x 22 1/2 in

Opposite: Exhibition of Samarchi's watercolours, Baghdad, 1967. Nos. 5 and 6 pictured





**4. *Untitled (Body, Blue)*, 1967**

Signed and dated 'H. Samarchi 1967' lower left

Watercolour and ink on paper

49.5 x 49.2 cm

19 1/2 x 19 3/8 in



**5. *Untitled (Body, Orange)*, 1967**  
Signed and dated 'H. Samarchi 1967' lower left  
Watercolour and ink on paper  
49.5 x 64.5 cm  
19 1/2 x 25 3/8 in



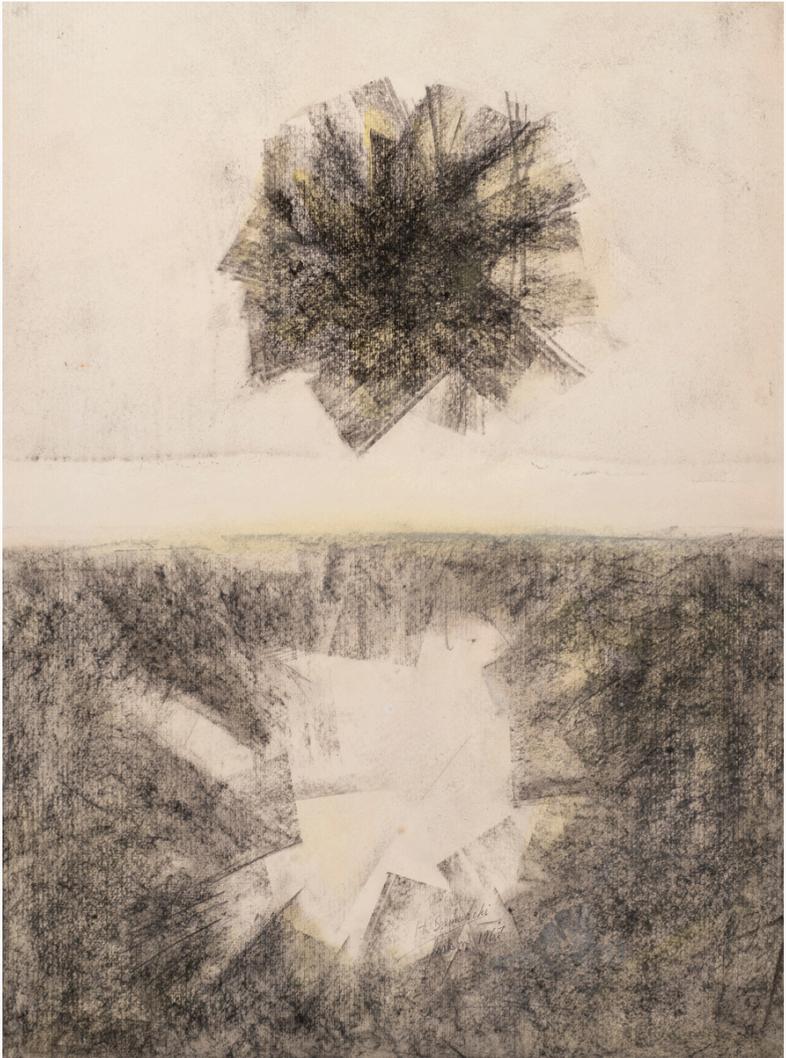
**6. *Untitled (Composition in Green and Black)*, 1967**

Signed and dated 'H. Samarchi/ 1967 Lisboa'

Ink, charcoal and wash on paper

79 x 57.5 cm

31 1/8 x 22 5/8 in



**7. *Untitled (Positive/Negative)*, 1967**  
Signed and dated 'H. Samarchi/ Lisbon 1967'  
Lithograph ink on paper  
76.2 x 56 cm  
30 x 22 in



*“The work I carried out in the first phase consisted of impressions, fantasies and compositions inspired by nature or imagination. After that, I started studying the dot and the configurations it leaves behind during its path and movement.*

*“The dot therefore becomes the line, and the line in its turn becomes the shape, and repetition of shape becomes the subject matter of the artwork and the impact these shapes have on the personal vision; the same goes for colour, its gradation and combination with other colours, since a different combination of colours produces a different impression on the viewer.”*

Hashim Samarchi  
September 2018





**8. Figure No. 1, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 7/10

Etching on paper

Image: 34 x 24 cm / 13 3/8 x 9 1/2 in

Sheet: 54.5 x 37 cm / 21 1/2 x 14 5/8 in



**9. Figure No. 4, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 8/10

Etching on paper

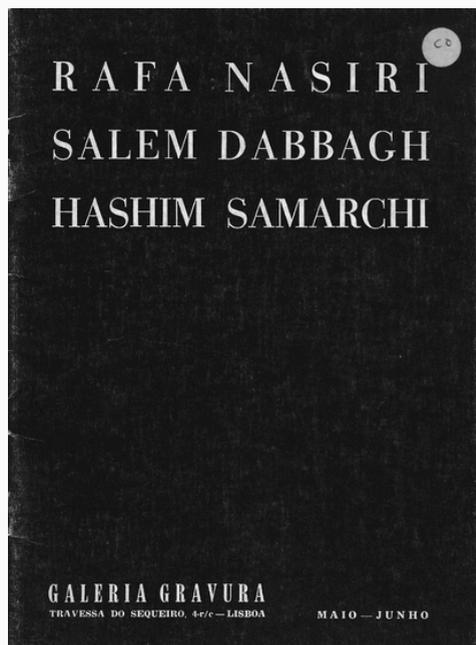
Image: 24.4 x 19.8 cm / (9 5/8 x 7 3/4 in)

Sheet: 56.2 x 37.8 (22 1/8 x 14 7/8 in)

'Hashim al Samarchi has been an abstract painter right from the start. Like most 'graphic' artists, he has always shown great love for delicate lines, geometrical forms and contrasting colours, often limiting himself to black and white. This made him particularly susceptible to Op art, for which, when he took it up, he was well-equipped: he had the required finesse and minute workmanship. He has since achieved a distinction in this field, which makes him the most prominent Op artist in Iraq, perhaps in the whole Arab world.

'A foundation of Samarchi's art is the exploitation of the triangle, the square and the circle in combinations, the repetition of which is one of the secrets of their seeming movement. Optical delusion is a legitimate part of the creative process here, and it can only be realised through exquisite draughtsmanship and unfailing resourcefulness in the invention of geometrical shapes. Moreover, Samarchi has the ability to create unexpected visual effects which give the viewer an intense mental pleasure...

Lisbon, Galleria Gravura, *Nasiri, Babbagh, Samarchi*, May-June 1968





A journalist with Rafa al-Nasiri, Salim al-Dabbagh, Hashim Samarchi, Lisbon, 1968

'Such a style is of course the very extreme of abstraction, in which form is completely drained of any emotion that might be associated a priori with other kinds of abstract art. An influx of another kind of feeling replaces emotion - a feeling of surprise, of wonder, of opening up to a sense of beauty that suddenly makes itself conscious in one. For some viewers, this feeling may be as strong as vertigo.

'For in Samarchi's art there is a suddenness of impact like that of an arrow flying in a dazzling curve: its effect is one of freshness, delight, amazement. It is the nearest thing possible to pure music, where sound and pleasure in it both have an absolute value evasive of description except through the thing itself. Such work brings to us a vision of innocent experience - the sort of experience which is an ever - new discovery of the powers of perception lying hidden in man.'

Jabra I. Jabra, 1974



**10. Composition No. 13, 1967**

Signed, dated and numbered 8/10

Etching and aquatint on paper

Image: 24 x 29 cm / 9 ½ x 11 ½ in

Sheet: 56 x 75.5 cm / 22 x 29 ¾ in



**11. Composition, 1967**

Signed, dated and numbered 10/10

Etching and aquatint on paper

Image: 29 x 24 cm / 11 ½ x 9 ½ in

Sheet: 75.5 x 56.4 cm / 29 ¾ x 22 ¼ in



Samarchi with Ismail Fattah, 1966

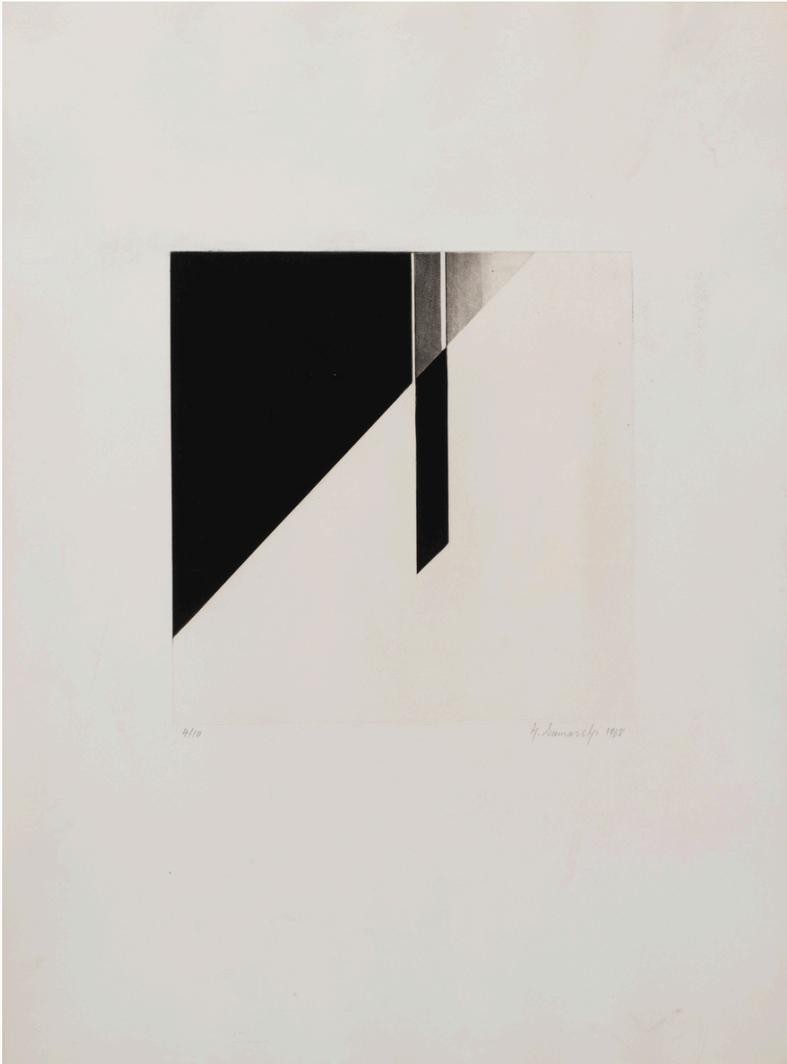
...a new collective of artists who were nurtured by the ideals and members of the Baghdad Group was formed in 1969: *al-Ruyaa al-Jadidah* (New Vision Group). The group consisted of artists Dia al-Azzawi, Hashim Samarchi, Mohammad Mehr al-Din, Rafa al-Nasiri, Saleh al-Jumaie, and Ismail Fattah (al-Turk), who defied the legacy of the 1950s artists while simultaneously building on it. The group's manifesto, published in October of the same year under the title "Towards a New Vision," expressed the group's philosophy in a strong language of defiance and rejection of social, cultural, and perceived political conditions and limitations. It was not a new school of art but an activist reaction to injustice. They declared:

We reject the artist of divisions and boundaries. We advance. We fall. But we will not retreat. We present to the world our new vision. ... We reject social relationships that lead to deceitful masquerades, and we reject things that are given to us as charity. We justify of our existence through our journey of change. ... We defy the world. And we reject the military and intellectual defeat of our nation [our ummah]. We glorify the popular war of liberation in the chests of the martyrs, the glory of our nation.

Thus, the New Vision Group were explicit in confronting their contemporary realities and expanding their understanding of tradition beyond national borders. The revolutionary tone of their manifesto resonated widely in the region and would materialize in the initiatives to unify Arab artists in the 1970s.

*All Manner of Experiments: Legacies of the Baghdad Modern Art Group*  
Nada Shabout, 2025





**12. Composition No. 1, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 4/10

Etching and aquatint on paper

Image: 33 x 32.4 cm / 12 ½ x 12 ¼ in

Sheet: 75.5 x 56.2 cm / 29 ¾ x 22 ⅛ in



**13. Composition No. 2, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 5/10

Etching and aquatint on paper

Image: 33 x 32.4 cm / 12 ½ x 12 ¼ in

Sheet: 75.5 x 56.2 cm / 29 ¾ x 22 ⅛ in



**14. *Composition No. 3*, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 10/10

Etching and aquatint on paper

Image: 32.5 x 32 cm / 12 3/4 x 12 5/8 cm

Sheet: 50.6 x 48.4 cm / 19 7/8 x 19 1/8 in



**15. *Composition No. 6*, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 1/15

Etching on paper

Image: 25 x 25 cm / 9 7/8 x 9 7/8 in

Sheet: 41.3 x 42.3 cm / 16 1/4 x 16 5/8 in



3/15

G. Rambow 1968

**16. *Composition No. 6*, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 3/15

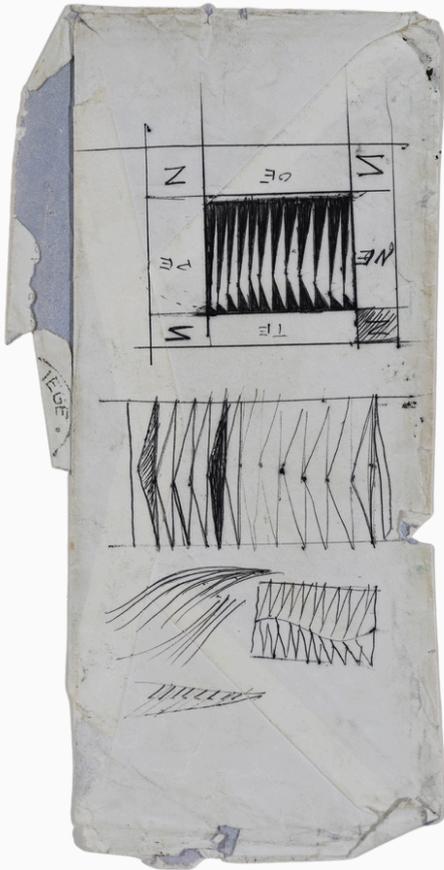
Etching and aquatint on paper

Image: 32.5 x 32 cm / 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 12  $\frac{5}{8}$  cm

Sheet: 75.6 x 56 cm / 29  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 22 in



**17. *Untitled, (Composition)*, 1968**  
Signed, dated and numbered 2/10  
Etching and aquatint on paper  
Image: 29 x 29 cm / 11 3/8 x 11 3/8 cm  
Sheet: 75.7 x 57 cm/ 29 3/4 x 22 1/2 in



*"In Samarchi's art, there is a suddenness of impact like that of an arrow flying in a dazzling curve: its effect is one of freshness, delight, amazement. It is the nearest thing possible to pure music, where sound and pleasure in it both have an absolute value evasive of description except through the thing itself."*

Jabra I. Jabra, 1974



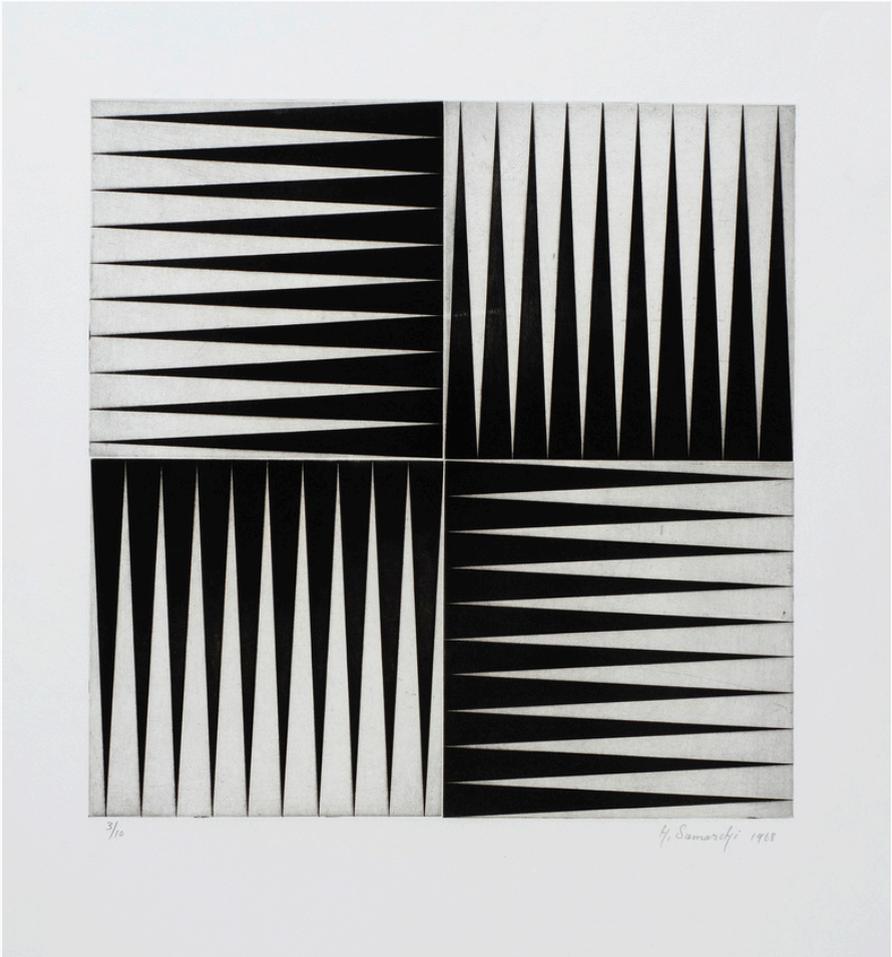
**18. Movement No. 4, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 4/10

Etching on paper

Image: 39.5 x 39.5 cm / 15 ½ x 15 ½ in

Sheet: 75.8 x 56.2 cm / 29 7/8 x 22 1/8 in



**19. *Composition No. 6*, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 3/10

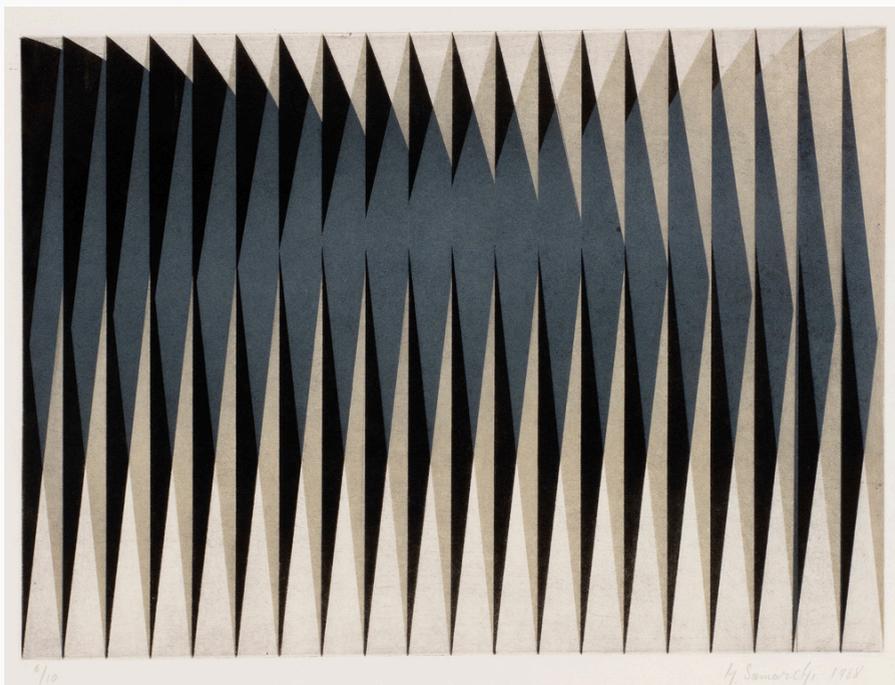
Etching and aquatint on paper

Image: 39.5 x 39.5 cm / 15 1/2 x 15 1/2 in

Sheet: 75.5 x 56.2 cm / 29 3/4 x 22 1/8 in



**20. *Untitled, (Composition)*, 1968**  
Signed, dated and numbered 9/10  
Etching and aquatint on paper  
Image: 39.5 x 39.5 cm / 15 ½ x 15 ½ in  
Sheet: 75.5 x 56.2 cm / 29 ¾ x 22 ⅛ in



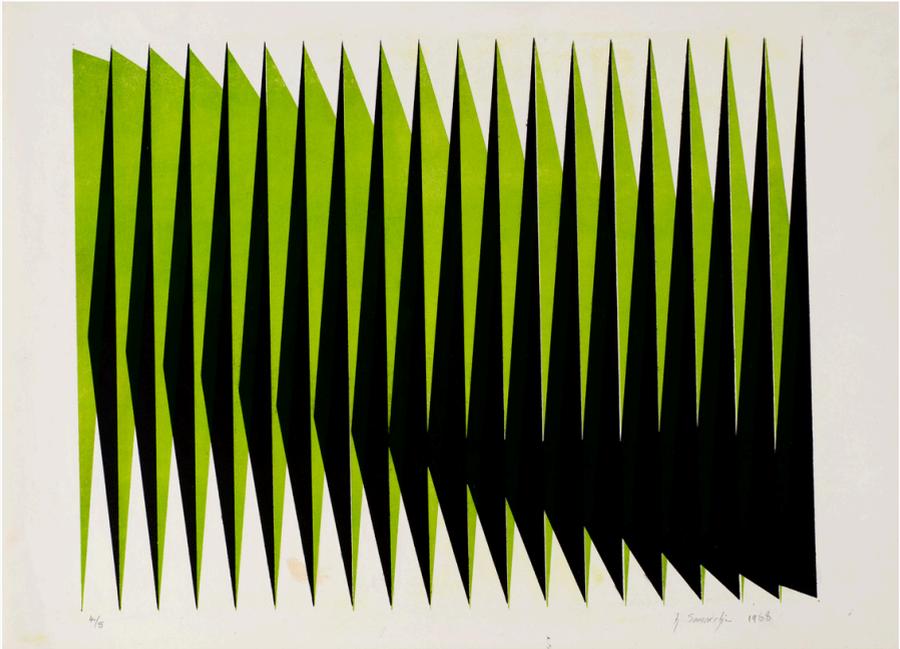
**21. *Untitled, (Composition)*, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 4/10

Etching and aquatint on paper

Image: 28.8 x 39.6 cm / 11 3/8 x 15 5/8 in

Sheet: 48.5 x 56.4 cm / 19 1/8 x 22 1/4 in



**22. Movement No. 6, 1968**

Signed, dated and numbered 4/5

Screenprint on paper

Image: 43.5 x 56.3 cm / 17 1/8 x 22 1/8 in

Sheet: 49.8 x 70 cm / 19 5/8 x 27 1/2 in

## Hashim Samarchi

1951 – 1954

Attended Al-Hadba Secondary School

1954 - 1957

Graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts, Baghdad

1957 – 1961

Taught Art in Iraq

1965

International Book Art Exhibition, Leipzig

Participates in L'Exposition Itinerante de Peinture at the Nicolas I. Sursock Museum in Beirut with a painting titled *Crucifixion* (1965)

Al Wasiti Art Gallery, Baghdad, *Paintings and Prints by Students: Salim El Dabbagh, Mehdi Muttashar, Ali Talib, Yahya El Sheikh, Hashim Samerchi and Faik Hussein*, June-July 1965

1966

Graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, Baghdad

Centre of English Studies, Baghdad, *Graphic Art Exhibition*, 15 – 30 October (Mahmouda Ali Mohammed, Salim Al-Dabbagh, Hashim Samarchi and Yahya Al-Shaikh)

Neue Berliner Galerie, Berlin, *Neue Grafik Aus Der Republik Irak*, 29 September – 30 October

1966-67

Taught at Al-Farouq School in Al Dammam, Saudi Arabia

1967

Berlin, *Intergrafik 67*, 20 May – 30 July 1967

'*Careras Craven A*' exhibition of Arab Art, Awarded first prize for his oil painting, *Composition of Sights*

Portugal, *XIII Salao do Outono*, 9 – 21 December 1967

Exhibition of watercolours held in Baghdad, 1967/68

1967-1969

Awarded a scholarship by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon to study Graphic Art (with Rafa al-Nasiri and Salim Dabbagh).

World Geographical Association, Lisbon, *Al-Nasiri, Samarchi, Al-Dabbagh*

1968

Exhibition of Paintings, Lisbon

Galeria Gravura, Lisbon, *Exposição De Gravura*, Curso 68, August

Participated in the *First Indian Triennale*

Galeria Gravura, Lisbon, *Rafa Nasiri, Salem Dabbagh, Hashim Samarchi*, May-June

1969

Returns to Iraq and joins Al-Ru'yah al-Jadida 'Towards a New Vision Group' with Dia al-Azzawi,

Rafa al-Nasiri, Ismail Fattah, Muhammad Mahruddin and Saleh al-Jumaia

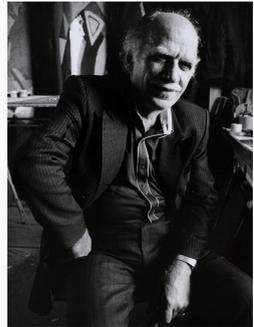
NGMA, Baghdad, Towards a New Vision

Participates in the Premiere Biennale Internationale de Gravure de Liege, Belgium

Gallery One, Beirut, Iraqi Graphic Art - Nasiri. Salem. Samarchi, June 1969

Gallery Aya, Baghdad, Hashim Samarchi

Samarchi at Gallery Aya, founded by Rifat Chadirji



1970

National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad (NMMA), Baghdad, *Azzawi, Al-Nasiri, Al-Jumaie, Samarchi, Muhraddin, Ramzi, Sheikh Nouri*

Sultan Gallery, Kuwait, *Hashim Samarchi*, 1970

*3rd Biennale International de la Gravure Cracovie* (Kracow) Poland, 1970

*3<sup>rd</sup> International Poster Biennale*, Warsaw, Poland

1971

NMMA, Baghdad, *The First Dimension*, Jan–Feb

NMMA, Baghdad, *Nasiri – Jumaie – Azzawi – Samarchi*, 15–12 March

Marbad Poetry Festival, Baghdad, *Exhibition of the Plastic Arts*, 1–5 April

Sultan Gallery, Kuwait, *Iraqi Art Exhibition*, December

1972

*4<sup>th</sup> International Poster Biennale*, Warsaw, Poland, 1972

NMMA, Baghdad, *Iraqi Art Today*

NMMA, Baghdad, *4 Artists from Baghdad, Al-Nasiri, Al-Jumei, Al-Azzawi, Al-Samarchi*

1973

*The First Biennale of Arab Art*, Baghdad, 1973 (logo designed by Samarchi)

1974

NMMA, Baghdad, *Seven*, April 1974

*5<sup>th</sup> International Poster Biennale*, Warsaw, Poland

1975

*6<sup>th</sup> International Print Biennale*, Krakow, Poland, 1975

1977–78

NMMA, Baghdad, Six Iraqi Artists: Dhia Azzawi, Rafa Nasiri, Hashim Samarchi, Maki Hussain, Tariq Ibrahim, N. Ramzi, December 1977

Iraqi Cultural Centre Gallery, London, *Contemporary Arab Graphics*, 1978

NMMA, Baghdad, *Exhibition of Iraqi Posters*, 1979

1986

Saddam Art Centre, Baghdad, Baghdad International Festival for Plastic Arts

1993

National Centre of Fine Arts, Cairo, 1<sup>st</sup> Egyptian International Print Triennale

1999

Darat al Funun, Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jordan, Summer 99

2012

Grosvenor Gallery, London, *Modern Arab Masters*

2019

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, *Art and Architecture between Lisbon and Baghdad: The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Iraq, 1957–1973*

2023

Grosvenor Gallery, Abu Dhabi Art, Hashim Samarchi, November

# Hashim Samarchi

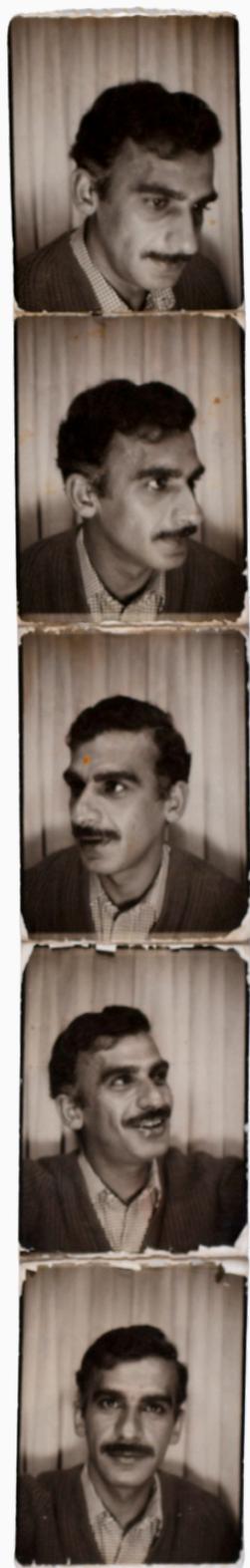
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