

# Common Humanity

Building Friendship, Respect and Understanding  
With the Arab and Muslim World



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## Works of Iraqi Refugee Artists Build Cultural Bridges at NYC Gallery

( **New York, NY - March 14, 2011**) **Gallery35**, 30 E 35th Street, will host “**Artists in Exile: Forgotten Iraqi Refugees in Syria**”—an exhibit of 28 new paintings by Iraqi artists who have fled from the war in Iraq and are now living in Syria. The public is invited to an opening reception on March 19 from 4-7. The show may also be viewed Saturdays 7-10 pm and Sundays 4-6 pm through April 9th. A closing reception will be held on Sunday, April 10th from 4-7pm.

The paintings will be sold by silent auction, concluding with the highest bids received by 6 pm April 10. Each painting in the exhibit has been purchased directly from the Iraqi artists by the New York City non-profit organization, Common Humanity. The sale of those paintings will enable Common Humanity to return to Syria to purchase a new round of paintings for another exhibit and thus to continue contributing to the livelihood of these courageous refugee artists and their families.

Mel Lehman, Director of Common Humanity who traveled to Damascus to obtain the paintings, said, “Visitors to this exhibit will get a rare chance to see something of the heart and soul of several of the 1 million Iraqi refugees in Syria who have been largely forgotten by us. This exhibit presents a unique opportunity to see Middle East artists who were influenced by their own ancient artistic heritage, by their study of modern Western art in school and also by the recent U.S. invasion of their homeland.”

**Common Humanity** seeks to build friendship, understanding and respect between the United States and the Arab and Muslim world. Common Humanity believes that the road to peace in these dangerous times is by moving past the clichés and stereotypes that separate us and instead by making new efforts to gain a deeper understanding of our shared common humanity. In addition to organizing these art exhibits, Common Humanity also organizes an annual cultural visit to Damascus in the spring and a medical delegation in the fall which brings doctors of various specialties to give lectures to their Syrian counterparts. Common Humanity is deeply grateful to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for its help in organizing this exhibit

**Gallery35** is cooperatively run by a small collective of emerging and professional artists. Operating as a committee of The Community Church of New York, Gallery35 presents 5 exhibitions each year including solo, small group and all-member shows.

**The Community Church of New York** is an independent congregation affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association. Community Church’s goal is to grow as a caring, justice-making, anti-racist, diverse, spiritual community. For more about the congregation, visit [www.ccny.org](http://www.ccny.org), call 212-683-4988 or visit them next to Gallery35 at 40 E. 35th St.

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One of the 28 new paintings from Iraqi refugee artists at Gallery35.  
Photo by Tim Shenk.