

## Hashim Samarchi

### Historical works from the 1960s

12 March – 10 April 2026

Grosvenor Gallery  
35 Bury Street  
London SW1Y 6AU



*Composition No. 3, 1968*

*“He has achieved a distinction in this field which makes him the most prominent Op-artist in Iraq, perhaps in the whole Arab world.”*

Jabra I. Jabra, 1974

Grosvenor Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of historical work by **Iraqi optical artist Hashim Samarchi (1939-2024), one of the founder members of the hugely influential New Vision Group in Baghdad in 1969.** The exhibition consists of watercolours and prints from the late 1960s. It will be presented alongside archive material and photographs from the period and coincides with an exhibition of work by Dia al-Azzawi at Richard Saltoun Gallery.

The exhibition will run at the gallery in London from **13 March – 10 April 2026**, with an **opening reception on Thursday, 12 March** from 6-8pm.

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.

*“[In Portugal] 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.”*

Hashim Samarchi, 2018

After returning to Baghdad in 1969, he co-founded the hugely influential *Al-Ru'yah al-Jadida – (The New Vision Group)* with Dia al-Azzawi, Ismail Fattah, Muhammad Muhraddin, Saleh al-Jumaie and Rafa al-Nasiri.

The *New Vision Group* championed a freer, more personal style of art than many of the Iraqi art groups that had gone before, but it 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).

*"We believe that heritage is not a prison, a static phenomenon or a force capable of repressing creativity so long as we have the freedom to accept or challenge its norms... We are the new generation."*

New Vision Group manifesto

After the disbanding of the group 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. 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. He lived in West London and passed away in December 2024.

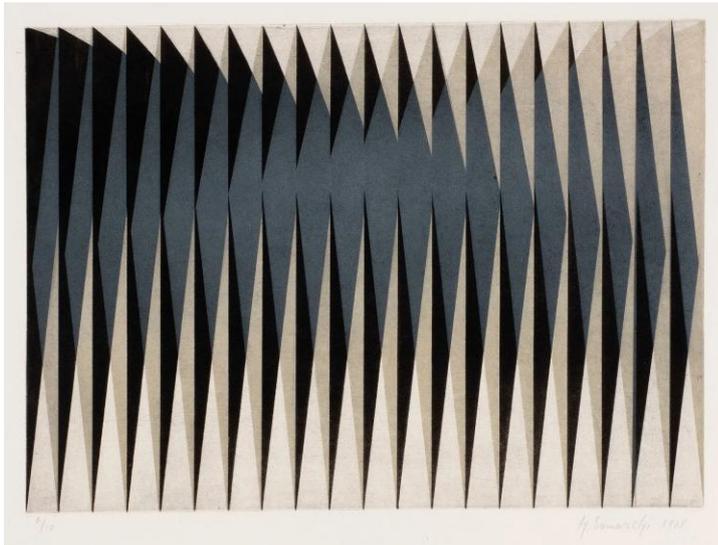
His work is in the collections of the Dalloul Art Foundation, Beirut; The Ibrahimi Collection, Amman and Baghdad; The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon and Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.



Left: *Untitled (Body in Grey)*, 1967  
Watercolour and ink on paper, 79.2 x 57.2 cm



Right: *Untitled (Abstract on Green)*, 1967  
Ink and wash on paper, 79 x 57.5 cm



*Movement No. 2*, 1969

Etching and aquatint on paper, 28.8 x 39.6 cm (image)



*Composition No. 6*, 1968

Etching and aquatint on paper, 42 x 42 cm (image)

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