

About the Artist

Najim H. Chechen, born in Kirkuk, Iraq, is a Turkmen, Iraqi-American who has been living in the US for the past 23 years. He is a professional artist who creates sculpture, pastels and drawings and who has over 30 years experience sculpting and drawing the human figure.

Mr. Chechen earned a Masters of Fine Arts degree from Pratt Institute in 1984 and Bachelors of Fine Arts degree from the Academy of Fine Art, University of Baghdad in 1970. He founded the Fine Art Studios Sculpture Center in Orange County, NY which operates both a year round series of workshops for adults as well as a bronze casting foundry. He is also co-founder of the Hudson Valley Sculptors Society, an organization of sculptors who live and work in the Hudson Valley. He is also Director of Art for the NY Turkmen Institute. Mr. Chechen has exhibited locally, nationally and internationally. He has been awarded numerous awards, scholarships and honors.

After the invasion in 2003, Mr. Chechen went back to find his family after an absence of 23 years. The occasion was bittersweet and at times searing for Mr. Chechen. Several sisters' husbands had died in the war; his brother lost his foot and his nephew a leg. Many friends had died. Mr. Chechen has relatives in both his hometown of Kirkuk and Irbil. His mother, five sisters, two brothers and their children are experiencing many hardships now.

"In this exhibition, my recent works reflect the dreams for the future that Iraqi people have. The moms, dads and kids of Iraq have dreams too, just like everyone else. All the work I have created results from the personal suffering I have experienced both as a person born in Iraq and as an expatriate living abroad painfully separated from my roots and the family I left behind. My work bears witness to the truth I have lived. It is a record that aims to make visible the poignant ordeal that is experienced daily and that touches the personal lives of so many. With my recent sculpture, I aim to represent the invisible spirit and soul and make it visible. All my figures peer out at the world and ask what will follow next. They look with anticipation, with hope. They are vulnerable but they love life and have a will to survive."