

## **Manufactured Democracy**

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**Website project link: <https://www.huneremin.com/manufactured-democracy.html>**

Video link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgOog8dQ12Q&feature=emb\\_imp\\_woyt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgOog8dQ12Q&feature=emb_imp_woyt)

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### **Project Statement**

Manufactured Democracy is an art installation with more than 20 lightboxes, each 24 x 24 inches. On each lightbox, a piece of paper covers the light. In the shape of a Fingerprint, with an average size of 16 x 8 inches, I handwrite in Arabic calligraphy the names of Iraqi individuals who lost their lives in civil wars in Iraq since 2003. The work on paper, placed on lightboxes, is highlighted by the light reflected through fingerprint calligraphy. Fingerprints are references to Iraqi elections where voters dip their index finger in purple Ink after voting.

I participated in the first alleged Iraqi democratic elections after the coalition invasion, which led to the removal of the brutal Baath regime. The process was known as the ‘Purple Fingers’ election of 2005. Images of my fellow citizens flashing their inked index fingers resonate in my memory. The ‘Purple Fingers’ was a symbolic representation of a glance of hope when Iraq was undergoing the most devastating domestic violence in its modern existence, caused by evacuated security forces, dismantled intelligence agencies, and unsecured borders opened to terrorist organizations funded by big local powers. Iraq had become a proxy battleground for international conflict. It is estimated that the number of Iraqi citizens that lost their life since 2003 exceeds two million. Since the invasion, Iraq has faced infrastructure destruction, national division, and mass migration inside and outside the country.

In 2013, I moved to the United States to pursue my education and never returned. After earning my MFA in painting, I worked as an art handler/ truck driver traveling across the country. Living in D.C., I witnessed the pros and cons of the political system in the United States. Driving trucks over interstates has shown me a fragile country suffering from swamps of poverty and debt because of massive income inequality and a poor education system. I observed flashy commercial signs selling the American Dream. Giant media propaganda machines portray false happiness, freedom of choice, and equality. A system feeds on the fear of the other and alienates progressive, forward-

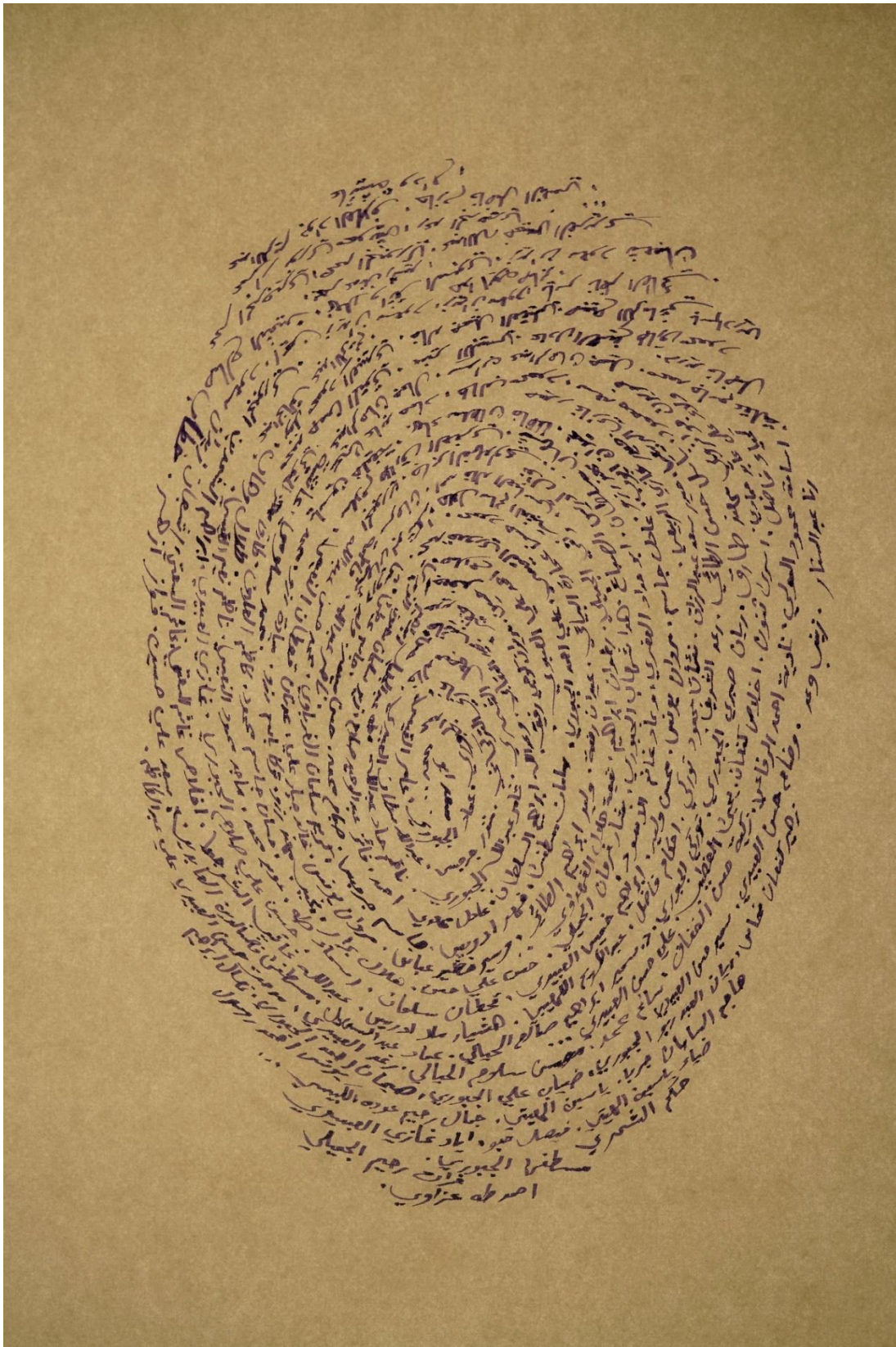
thinking movements. A manufactured system serves the one percent's lavish and wasteful lifestyle while enslaving the rest, leaving behind a destroyed environment. In general, the system seems designed to suppress the truth and desensitize the public about rivers of blood and suffering around the globe. In front of massive, barely occupied bright skyscrapers lays dust, dirt, and long lines of homelessness and blindfolded workers—a fake factory of freedom to be exported to other parts of the world.

At some point, I realized the picture of my colorful, innocent childhood in a small village in southern Kurdistan /Northern Iraq has been muddied and assaulted by the hands of powerful, filthy rich, corrupt individuals, standing behind extravagant podiums preaching democracy, freedom, and prosperity in the world. It was my moment of a rude awakening to think that the lives of millions of powerless people are being run over by strong destructive tanks and weaponry (such that history has never seen) of a few. At the same time, the rest of us are distracted by meaningless circus play.

The 'Purple Fingers' are a metaphorical spotlight, a testimony, and the evidence of a crime, where the perpetrator left behind fingerprints. It is manufactured delinquency against humanity, and innocent Iraqis, committed by the superb uncle Sam. It is proof of human greed and inanelly cruel nature. The massive fingerprints consist of the microscopic names of civilians who lost their lives since 2003 because of the international war in Iraq. The lines represent insignificant mass and the loopholes of remorselessness of the politicians. The names are collected by a non-profit organization called Iraqi Body Count. The names in the IBC organization list are in the English alphabet, and I transfer them back to Arabic. Manufactured Democracy is an example of a human's savage attitude that has never learned from history lessons and only became more pronounced as knowledge and science advances. It is my expression of frustration and pain when I observe that the collective human conscience has been murdered by a handful of selfish malevolent cancer cells.



**Manufactured Democracy, Ink on paper, 24 x 24 inches (each panel)**



Manufactured Democracy (close up), Ink on paper 24x24 inches



**Manufactured Democracy (close up), Ink on paper 24x24 inches**