

## **Manufactured Democracy**

### **Historical background:**

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 for Kurds particularly for better future in the Iraqi territory. Later, Iraq undergone one of 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. A large part of the violence was directed against the Kurdish community. It is estimated that the number of Iraqi citizens who have lost their lives since 2003 exceeds two million many were Kurds especially minority groups such as Yezidi and Christians. 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 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.

## **Project Statement**

**“Manufactured Democracy”**, 2021-2025, ink on paper, plexiglass, lightboxes, and video art 22”x22”, series of 40.

A series of handwritten Arabic and Kurdish calligraphy of the names of individuals who lost their lives in civil wars in Iraq from 2003 to 2017. The work on paper, placed on lightboxes, is highlighted by the light reflected through fingerprint calligraphy. Fingerprints refer to the first Iraqi elections after the invasion, in which voters dipped their index finger in Ink after voting, a process known as the "Purple Fingers Elections."

The ‘Purple Fingers’ are a metaphorical spotlight, a testimony, and the evidence of a crime, where the perpetrator left behind fingerprints. It is a manufactured delinquency against humanity as a result of the superb Uncle Sam’s foreign policy. It is proof of human greed and inanely cruel nature. The massive fingerprints consist of the microscopic names of civilians who lost their lives between 2003 and 2017 because of the international proxy 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 and historian Dawood Murad Khatari. The names in the IBC organization list are in the English alphabet, and I transfer them back to Arabic or Kurdish origins. Manufactured Democracy is an example of a human’s savage attitude that has never learned from history lessons and has only become more pronounced as knowledge and science advance. 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.

## **Credit**

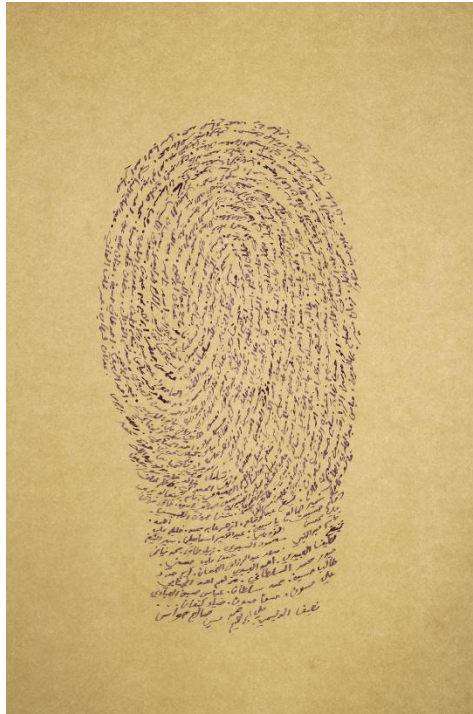
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### Video Part Statement/ Label

**“Manufactured Democracy” (video) 2025, 1:10:38 minutes**

The video features a Latin alphabet list of names, age, gender, date, and place of deceased and missing individuals following the Iraq War II. The form was collected from official announcements and media reports by the Iraqi Body Count organization. This list served as the primary reference in creating the project, *Manufactured Democracy*. The details of the list highlight the disregard and significant oversight of individuals, as well as the multi-layered colonial and cultural oppression that occurs when translating names from Arabic origins to Latin scripts or Kurdish names to Arabic phonetics written in Roman alphabets.