Anneka Lenssen

267 words

**Jaafari, Nazem al- (1918--)**

Al-Jaafari was one of the first painters in Syria to achieve recognition as a professional artist. He has pursued a semi-romantic realist style for the whole of his career, specialising in portraits and drawings of old Damascus in particular. Born in Damascus, Syria, Al-Jaafari’s formative years were characterised by a restless search to attain advanced training. He went to Turkey in 1941, returned to Syria, attended some of the earliest civic art clubs in Damascus including Studio Veronese (est. 1941) and the Association of Arab Arts (est. 1943), and in 1944 traveled to Cairo to study oil painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts, completing a degree in 1947. He would travel again in 1953-54, moving to Brazil for a year before returning to Syria permanently. In Damascus, he taught at secondary schools, briefly taught at the College of Fine Arts before designing, completed a vast body of landscape and portrait paintings, and executed a number of commissions for postage stamps and medals. Because of his career-long commitment to realistic painting, Jaafari’s work was frequently featured in Syrian exhibitions sent to the countries of the Soviet bloc.

**References and further reading**

Atassi, Mouna, and Samir Sayegh (1998) *Contemporary Art in Syria, 1898-1998*, Damascus, Syria: Gallery Atassi. (Contributor’s comment: Most comprehensively illustrated volume on modern Syrian art).

Al-Khaldi, Ghazi (2006) *Muṣawwir Zaytī : al-Mu’assis al-Muʻallim al-Rāʼid fī Masīrat al-Funūn al-Jamīlah fī-l-Jumhūrīyah al-ʻArabīyah al-Suria (Oil Painter: Founder, Teacher, Pioneer in the Fine Arts in the Syrian Arab Republic)*. Damascus, Syria: Ministry of Culture, 2006. (Contributor’s comment: A 400+page monograph on the artist produced by the Syrian Ministry of Culture).