

# In The Hot Seat

... with Hala Jardaneh Tieby

We asked one of the city's biggest movers and shakers for the secrets to their success then we asked the people closest to them for the truth. Get the scoop on what makes gallery owner **Hala Jardaneh Tieby** tick straight from her inner circle.



**W**hat inspired you to open your own gallery?  
Orient Gallery

came about by pure coincidence. My father already had a space in Shmeisani, and a friend of the family convinced me to take a look at it and consider turning it into an art gallery. She was absolutely right. We started working on it immediately and launched it in 1996. When I first opened the gallery, there were very few other galleries in Amman, so I felt that it was a much needed platform for local artists to present their work.

**What is a typical day in the life of Hala?**

My day starts at the gallery at around 9:30 in the morning, where I stay till around three. I go to the gym for an hour after work three times a week, and then home to my 12-year-old daughter. I believe that having a family is a big responsibility; a mother has to achieve a balance between doing her job and raising her children. With today's advanced technology, I am able to continue working from home and stay on top of things throughout the day.

**What's unique about the Orient Gallery experience?**

First and foremost, we offer collectors a large variety of art pieces by renowned local and regional artists. We also provide creative services that show our commitment to the

artists we feature, as well as the collectors we seek to please.

**How do you choose your artists?**

**What are your criteria?**

After 19 years of running the gallery, we established certain standards for the art that we display in our exhibitions. Our aim is to encourage young Jordanian artists that have strong brush strokes, good artistic talent, and the potential to add something to the local art scene.

**What struggles did you face when you were in the process of opening the gallery?**

In 1996, there was no e-mail, social media, or SMS services. Communicating with our collectors involved calling every one of them and sending hard copy invitation cards. Also, local awareness of art at that time wasn't as strong as it is now, which made it much harder to sell art. It wasn't easy to market the work of Jordanian artists because collectors thought that the local art scene wasn't well developed.

**Have you sold any controversial art in your gallery? If yes, what were people's reactions?**

In the year 2000, I had an exhibition

for Syrian artist Sabhan Adam, which was his very first in Jordan. His artwork was considered controversial at the time, because it wasn't the traditional art that people were used to. I remember that most collectors didn't appreciate his art and thought it was very different from what they liked to look at. Selling controversial art to local collectors has always been difficult, but after a few years they'll become more open to it and might even start collecting it as well.

**What is the most interesting thing about your job?**

My favorite thing about my job is, without a doubt, meeting different artists and collectors. It's a special relationship that bonds us with our artists; we fall in love with every piece of art they produce and display them all at the gallery.

**In your opinion, why is it important to collect art?**

For some collectors, it can be part of their investment strategy, which can also be a decorative item for their home and a source of pleasure. Also, when collectors include art from across the globe in their collection, they end up learning a lot about different cultures far and wide.

## ACCORDING TO HATEM

### How did you and Hala meet? Was it love at first sight?

I met Hala when we were juniors in high school. We were classmates and became very good friends almost immediately. However, it wasn't until we went to different universities that we realized that we had feelings for one another.

### What are the qualities you love most and least about her?

I love Hala's ability to balance her responsibilities at work with her responsibilities towards her loved ones. What I like the least about her, is that she's very organized and systematic, which are obviously very good qualities, but she's often easily annoyed by things she didn't plan or expect.

### Describe Hala in three words.

She's compassionate, devoted, and my soulmate.

*"I love Hala's ability to balance her responsibilities"*

**HATEM TIEBY**

*Her Soulmate and Supporter*



## ACCORDING TO SAMIA

### What do you admire most about Hala?

There are many things that I admire about Hala but the one thing that I like the most is her kindness.

### What is she like to work with?

Hala is always on the go, constantly developing new strategies and ideas to improve the gallery. This makes working with her interesting as well as challenging.

### What are Hala's biggest strengths?

She's clever, organized, and honest.

### Does she work well under pressure?

Hala is a very systematic person and does not like to work under pressure. If she's stressed out, her nerves get the best of her. She sees this weakness in herself and that's probably why she tries to keep her work organized, in order to avoid putting herself under a lot of pressure.

*"Hala is always on the go"*

**SAMIA KAKISH**

*Her Loyal Colleague and Friend*



**GEORGES BASSIL**  
*Her Great Friend*



*"I actually asked her if her gallery is a decent one"*

**TAMARA HAJ HASAN**  
*Her Life-Long Friend*



*"Hala is great with numbers and figures"*

## ACCORDING TO GEORGES

### What is your most cherished memory with Hala?

There's one memory that Hala and I still laugh about, which is the way I responded to her proposal to have my first exhibition in Amman at her gallery back in 2003. I actually naively asked her whether or not her gallery is a decent one.

### What qualities do you love most about her?

Her honesty and loyalty.

### What habits does she have that some people don't know about?

She plays Candy Crush every night before going to bed.

### Does Hala give good advice?

She's a Scorpio, just like me, and Scorpios don't like advice.

## ACCORDING TO TAMARA

### What are Hala's strengths?

Hala is a doer! She's determined and destined to succeed in everything she does.

### What are her weaknesses?

I would say her heart. Hala is a very emotional and empathetic person, which makes her go out of her way when she shouldn't.

### Describe Hala in three words.

She's loyal, pure, and kind.

### Does Hala have any secret talents?

Numbers! Hala is great with numbers and figures them out in a matter of seconds. She also has a great eye for value which is a trait she's had since we were teenagers. ■