

## **Examples of sports scenes in the ancient civilization of Iraq**

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### Abstract:

The ancient civilization that lies between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers is known as the civilization of Assyria, Nineveh, Babylon, a country with a geographical location that has commercial importance in the ancient time among the various eastern countries. The ancient Iraqis recorded it on the walls of caves, tombs and in their temples, where people practiced many sports and games, including swimming, fishing, running, jumping and dancing. During the battles, in addition to using them to the military side, as the army has become a distinguished class in society, men acquired physical skills that prepare them to fight battles. The monuments recorded all kinds of military exercises associated with this era, which would prepare young people to use weapons and tools such as the sword, arrow, bow, shield and spear. Physical activity is of great importance since more than three thousand years BC and they put the core The first came to the idea of physical education and sports, and they realized the close relationship between the safety of the body and the safety of the mind and soul, so they were interested in sports with the aim of maintaining their health and improving their bodies. The one inhabited by the Iraqi man stated that the nature of the environment required not neglecting the physical fitness of the individual, who had to provide himself with a strong and capable body so that he could preserve his entity and obtain his livelihood in addition to protecting himself and his family from the danger of his enemies from man or animal. The environment in which man lived was full With trees and vast areas of land and rivers, which gave him more opportunities to practice the sporting aspect, as the environment was an accurate test that eliminated the weak and highlighted the forces and decided to survive for reform, as the environment was full of wild predatory animals and other animals that benefit man to provide his daily food for him and his family members, so he will have to chase these Animals whose demise daily in order to obtain food

Where many activities were associated with ancient religious occasions and feasts, they also practiced many forms of physical activity and were also applied to army training, especially in

the Assyrian period, which was distinguished by strength, speed, determination, ability and courage, those qualities that an individual acquires from learning sports, especially defensive ones, so the Iraqi person realized The old man with his instinct and experience that his speed and strength are among the most important elements of his safety and survival.

The problem of the current research can be formulated by the following question:

- What are the representations of sports scenes in the arts of the ancient civilization of Iraq?
- Second, the importance of research

1-Shedding light on the representations of sports scenes in the ancient civilization of Iraq, and the intellectual fields, scientific findings and artistic creations that accompanied them.also the need for it:

- It benefits researchers, artists, critics and those interested in the history of arts, especially Iraqi formation.
- 2- It benefits colleges and institutes of fine arts and related cultural institutions.

Third: the purpose of the research

Identify representations of sports scenes in the arts of Mesopotamian civilization

Fourth: Research Limits:

- 1- Objective limits: the research is determined by studying the representations of sports scenes in the arts of the civilization of Mesopotamia
- 2- Spatial boundaries: Iraq
- 3- Time limits: 200\_300 BC

Fifth: Defining the terms:

A\_ Representations of language: the word of accommodation. It is said: This is his likeness and likeness, as it is said similar and similar in meaning. Ibn Berri said: The difference between similarity and equality is that equality is between those who are different in sex and those who are in agreement, because equality is the equivalent in the amount, and there is no difference between the two. Its jurisprudence, its color is its color, and its taste is like its taste. If it is said: He is absolutely the same as him, then it means that he fills his mouth, and if it is said: He is similar to him in such-and-such, then he is questioned in one direction rather than another (Ibn Manzur, p. 18)

B\_ Representations idiomatically: to be similar: it means: the two things are similar, and the thing is similar, and it is said: So-and-so is similar to so-and-so is similar to him, and the similarity is only between those who agree in quality or quality. So they are the two participants in the specificity, i.e. in the completeness of the essence, or they are the two who block one

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another in the possible, obligatory, and impossible rulings. Each of the two participated in the completeness of the essence, so they are identical, and if they do not share in it, they are mutually exclusive (Jamil Abu Salbya, pp. 338-339)

C\_ sport Language: sport: (noun) plural: sports, source of contentment, physical sport: exercises that pertain to the human body and give it strength and flexibility, an activity that includes physical effort and skill, governed by laws or habits that are usually practiced in a competitive manner, lack of sport is harmful to health, spiritual sport: exercises to strengthen Spirit.

D\_ Sports idiomatically: softening the body, humiliating it and normalizing it to perform certain tasks, self-discipline and elevating the spirit are exercises to strengthen the spirit.

E\_ art language: art: the art of the thing: decorate it. Mastering the thing: its arts varied (Louis Maalouf, pg. 596)

F\_ Art idiomatically: "It is the expression that takes an intermediate material, through which the artist expresses his aesthetic emotions, whether what he sees in nature, or what he sees in imagination, with the eye of thought in order to transfer it to others" (Hassan Muhammad, p. 38)

### Chapter II

The first topic

The historical roots of the sports scene

This civilization arose about four thousand years BC and was known as the civilization of Assyria, Nineveh and Babylon. Perhaps the geographical location of the countries of the Mesopotamia, the Tigris and the Euphrates, which made it enjoy the fertility of the lands and the abundance of agricultural production enabled it to occupy an important place in human history like Egypt and among the most important factors that enabled this prosperity Civilization and its imposition on the known world at the time, as it was considered a trade corridor linking India in the east, Syria and Egypt in the west, the Arab countries in the south and Amena in the north.

As the history of the sports movement of the Mesopotamian civilization was characterized by three main directions:

1-Occupational orientation:

The purpose of the sporting activity was closely related to the type of activity practiced, as the physical activity belonged to the farmers and artisans in order to serve the land and perform the work desired from them.

2-Military orientation:

The officers used it for the purpose of maintaining their prestigious position in the midst of Babylonian society and defending the country.

3-Religious orientation:

As for the priests, the supervisors, and the rich, they preferred mental training and the practice of some sports, which are dominated by the religious aspect, such as dancing on the occasions of sacred marriage and New Year's parties.

Where it is sufficient to see the purpose in order to be able to put a picture of the solution to the sporting activity, as it received a small amount of organization, as were the schools run by the priests in the temples. Beyond that, the education was carried out in the manner of vocational training that was undertaken by the father, and the warrior was training during military plans and hunting. He excelled in hunting animals using (arrows, spears) and other hunting tools, as the experienced soldiers trained the soldiers. The sons of the nobles also played games and swimming (Yahyawi Al-Saeed, pg. 102\_105)

Many activities were associated with ancient religious occasions and feasts, as they established colors of physical activity for the sake of military readiness. The peoples of this region practiced the colors of physical and sports activity related to the development of physical fitness such as wrestling and the use of sharp machines and weapons. They had their methods of hunting, especially hunting lions, and they also practiced exercises Physically in their spare time, as well as fishing, swimming and some water games.

The legend of Gilgamesh (the legendary wrestler) highlights the importance of sport in general and wrestling in particular for the ancient Iraqi people, which reached the point of sanctification, so they mixed between

As a ritual of religious rites and between wrestling as a competitive sport and championship, I found evidence indicating that the youth of the upper classes were receiving lessons in swimming, physical exercises, archery, and horse riding (Ahmed, Abdullah Farghali, pg. 39.)

Archaeological explorations indicate that at the beginning of the historical era there was a high mathematical culture among the "Sumerians". Professor "Wooly" who excavated in "Ur" found the skeletons.

For members of the entourage of men and women

As well as chariots and bull structures that were used in parties, festivals and sports games as well as wars, in addition to the presence of cups next to their owners. There is historical evidence dating back to the dawn of the second Sumerian dynasties "3000 BC" in the form of cylinder seals engraved with scenes of wrestling and boxing. The historian Professor Joseph Klima states in 1963 in Prague that wrestling and boxing were of great importance to the peoples of Mesopotamia, and the Sumerians were the first to be interested in wrestling and boxing, and excavators discovered antiquities dating back to "4450 BC. M. wrestling scenes and music were carved on it. This Sumerian obelisk is the first and oldest trace in the ancient world that proves the Sumerians' use of the drum with wrestling. Professor "Frentisch Kratke" Prague 1964 indicated to the interest of the Sumerians and most of the peoples of Mesopotamia in wrestling and other sports.

The inhabitants of Mesopotamia practiced various forms of physical and sports activity, which left their traces on the successive civilizations after man turned to a civil life and progress and

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the dawn of the ancients dawned their civilization relying on themselves in science, knowledge, morals, beauty and human ingredients. The progress in the field of art, painting and sculpture that society has reached has left clear imprints indicating the practice of the inhabitants of this civilization for various sports. The ancient man left drawings on the walls of caves of various types of animals that he hunted, including wild bulls, goats, horses, birds and lions, and in that he was skinning animal skin that was

He hunts them and cuts off their bodies to eat them intentionally, or grilled, after discovering fire, in addition to its importance in defending himself against predatory animals (Isa, Liqa Jalil, p. 34)

It is worth noting that hunting with arrows had a special sanctity for the ancient Iraqis, and at that time the gods blessed the hunter for his hunting by handing him the bow and arrow, and this is confirmed by some scenes in the cylinder seals dating back to the first millennium BC around it the ritual of presenting the bow by the goddess Ishtar To the fisherman in his honor.

Where hunting lions was a practice that gained special importance in Mesopotamia, and its hunting was restricted to kings exclusively, since in the ancient Iraqi thought lions represented the savage force in nature that the king had to control.

The first documentation of the appearance of lions in ancient Iraqi daily life was in the role of Jemdet Nasr 3200-3000 BC, which is the last role of the pre-dynastic era, which followed the role of Warka, a small archaeological site 15 miles northeast of the city of Kish, which was represented in the hunting obelisk made of lions. It is made of black basalt stone, with a granular surface, which dates back to the third millennium BC and is currently preserved in the Iraqi Museum (Al-Nawab, Ruwaida, p. 244)

The domestication of animals, especially the dog that accompanied man since the Middle Stone Age, and whose relationship with him was a mutually beneficial relationship, helped the dog, thanks to its acute sense of hearing and smell, to track the trail of hunting and alert its owner to the approach of the enemy, and his owner rewarded him for that with his food from what was left From the hunt (Al-Dabbagh, Taqi, p. 114)

### Types of sports scenes

#### The second topic

1-Swimming: The excavations conducted on the ancient monuments found in parts of the world, including the insignificant inscriptions found on the Babylonian monuments and the drawings on the walls of the monuments of the Assyrian civilization, indicate that man knew swimming and practiced it since the beginning of his existence on earth, and a tablet was found depicting man swimming. In one of the Babylonian monuments more than (6000) years ago, as well as the inscriptions on the walls of the Trojan horse (5000) years ago, that man's knowledge of the skill of swimming is attributed to many reasons, including fleeing from predators and natural disasters such as volcanoes and earthquakes, or for hunting purposes to perpetuate his survival. Then for entertainment and recreation, so we can conclude that man has known swimming for thousands

of years and it is one of the first physical activities that man has eliminated. (Ismail, Hamoudi, pg. 13)

The land was not the only refuge for the old Iraqi, but the water was the place of security while sensing the danger on the ground, and there is no doubt that the abundance of water in Mesopotamia provided the opportunity for the Iraqis to learn swimming and diving and to master them. Water, which was necessary for the hunters and also for the soldiers, when there are times when they have to carry weapons under water (Ibrahim, Ismail, pg. 87-88)

Sovereignty in that era was the physical force that man uses to survive, and since the law of the jungle is the survival of the strongest, some literature assumed that prehistoric man was crossing the water attached to a tree trunk with resistance in front by a kind of walking or running with his feet, which brings him back to The water gives him confidence in himself, and when the person turned away from the predatory animal, for example, he found nothing in front of him but a pool of water and the predator in his heels, and he did not find enough time to return to the way he came, and in the immersion of despair, he found himself may prevent access to the other bank and his legs move with the same previous movement and his hands Not resting on the tree trunk that he was attached to, forcing him to move his arms violently to keep his head above the water, and thus swimming was born (Jamal, Bagfoul, pg. 30)

Swimming was done in the rivers, and it was a military sport even at that time soldiers sometimes used animal skins (skins) to cross the rivers and it was practiced by leaders such as the king of Ashurbanipal as depicted on one of the ancient paintings.

As the nature of the land of Mesopotamia and the presence of the two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, which are flooded in southern Iraq, all this was a factor and a motive for the practice of swimming. They climb the inflatable bag, and each of them places it under his chest, and one of the heads of the bag is held in his left hand, and he uses his right hand as a paddle that makes a movement from the desired direction. (Al-Khatib, Munther Hashem, p. 35)

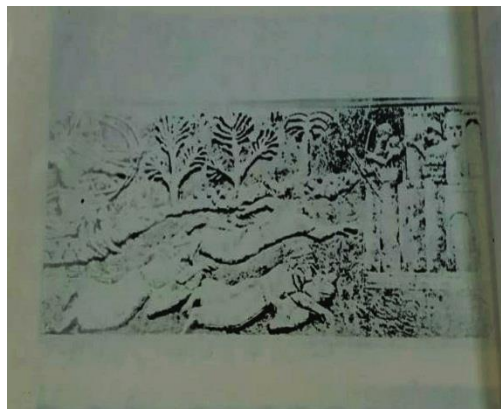


Figure (1):

2- Ball games: The game of ball and stick was known as a Sumerian-Akkadian game, which was played with marriage ceremonies during the reign of King (Gilgamesh) in Uruk around the year

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2600 BC. Other men instead of horses, and the Epic of Gilgamesh stated that he was oppressing his subjects by exhausting the youth with endless competitions playing that sport

Some historians assert that the Iraqis were the first to play it based on a valuable and important archaeological plaque that was discovered in 1977 in the city of (Nafar) near Afak in the Qadisiyah Governorate (Diwaniyah) by a team of Iraqi experts and dates back to the nineteenth century 1900 BC. The image of the painting is a The legs of a person and in front of his feet a ball of normal size compared to human feet and the person is in a state of motion that suggests that he is preparing to kick the ball. All historical discoveries reinforce this exciting Iraqi discovery. The archaeological painting discovered in (Nafar) proves the existence of the game in ancient Iraq and that the Iraqis were the first to play it four years ago. Thousands of years ago, with the spread of the Mesopotamian civilization to other peoples and civilizations through mutual trade relations, and good relations prevailed between the Mesopotamian civilization and the civilization of China, including the Chinese took the game from the Iraqis and developed it according to their circumstances and religious rituals, and the evidence for this is that the oldest document dating football in China dates back To the year 1150 BC. From this it is clear that the Iraqi document is much older than the Chinese document. The Arabs played football and inherited it from their ancestors from the land of Mesopotamia, according to Mark A. For the Iraqi historian Mikhail Awad, the Arabs played football before other nations.

\_3Equestrianism: The first appearance of horses during the era of the third dynasty of Ur was during the period of King Shulgi, the second king of Ur dynasty around 2050 BC, as despite their responses in small numbers, these texts made it clear that the horses were placed under the care of people where these people vaccinate horses with grain Because of its scarcity and importance, its gender and age were mentioned by some researchers. Some researchers believe that horses and their confirmed use in ancient Iraq are showing a number of clay molds in which images of horses with knights on their backs are clear. They were used as domesticated animals for riding. The banner of Ur recorded the first appearance of a military chariot drawn by horses. Where does the history of these paintings extend?

Between the end of the third dynasty of Ur and the era of Isin Larsa and the beginning of the ancient Babylonian era, most of them came from the cities of central and southern Iraq. (Al-Hashimi, Rida Jawad, p. 243)

\_4Boxing: Excavations have proven that the Sumerians practiced boxing and used the oldest glove in the history of boxing at that time. A cylindrical seal representing the beginning of the descent of wrestling and boxing in the Sumerian era, around 2050 BC, was found in Tell (Harmal). A pottery figure dating back to the Babylonian era was also found, estimated at about 2000-1750 BC, and representing a boxing scene.

(Al-Khatib, Munther Hashem, p. 32-33)

Where clay murals were discovered depicting men practicing boxing, although boxing is much older than that, as the fact that the fist is used to strike for the purpose of defense or attack is a

mechanism for survival and we can imagine how the nature of the primitive beating It can develop into training activities in hunting and warfare and then eventually, into an organized sport like "boxing" with the development of any sport that was used specialized equipment and which evolved over time as the literary and archaeological evidence left by the ancients provided many details about boxing in the ages This art picture is one of the oldest pictures of boxing in ancient times. It appeared in this mural made of clay, which was found in Ashnona, Tel Asmar, now in Iraq. The history of this The mural dates back to the early third or second millennium BC, and boxing is known as an ancient art of self-defense and a sport that needs strength and skill in performing punches and intelligence in attack and defense, so it is A sport in which art triumphs over strength, as boxing appeared with the advent of humanity. The first man learned at the beginning of his life to walk and run. During the natural instinct of man to defend himself, before discovering the primitive weapon, he needed his hands and fists to defend himself (Ahmed, Samer Abdel Hadi, 1)

### Chapter III

#### Search procedures

##### First, the research community

The current research community included (30) samples of artwork that the researcher was able to collect according to the following justification:

\_Clarity of sports scenes photographers, as they are found in international museums, and their images are available in technical, historical and archaeological books.

##### Second: the research sample

The research sample was selected according to the (intentional) sample, and the selection was made by (3) samples from the research community

##### Third, the research method

The researcher relied on the descriptive approach by (content analysis) method



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Fourth, sample analysis

model (1)

Theme name: wrestling

Year or century: 2600 BC

Al-Aidiyah: Iraq Museum - Baghdad

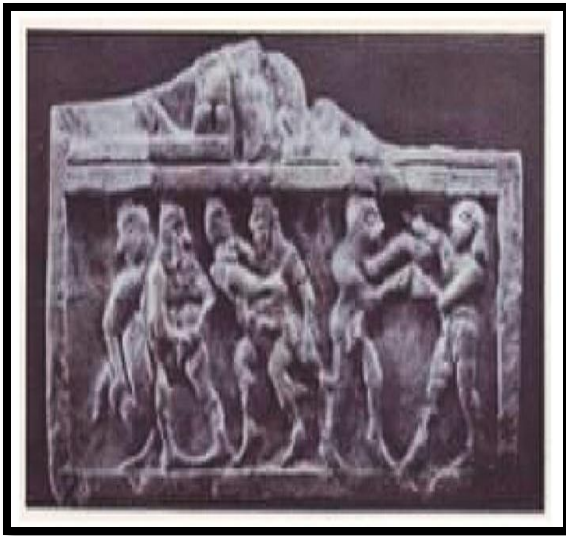
Size: 10.2cm Height\_8.8cm Width

Material: copper

Work analysis:

The work consists of two semi-naked males, except for what covers their private parts. There is nothing on their bodies except a thick rope stuffed with a soft material, a passage between the two legs, and the body is loosely bound by it. This belt is made of leather to withstand the violent pull during the start of the descent. It was found between the areas of Tal (Agrib) and Khafaji in (Diyala Governorate). We notice above each of the wrestlers' heads a vessel whose mouth is upward, where the position of the wrestlers and the erection of the head indicate that each of them diverts as much as possible, keeping his vessel above his head, just as holding them both indicates that each of them prevents the balance of the other from being disturbed to bring down his vessel. This is what makes us believe that the wrestlers are engaged in wrestling. It differs in its practice and laws from the pure wrestling that we know about in the rest of the artifacts. The two wrestlers practiced in the battle of the belt, where the winner would take the opponent from the belt and throw him on the ground, both of them have their legs rooted in the ground so that they are rooted with great forces so that the wrestler can balance his body in addition to maintaining the straightness of his back. We notice their bodies being pushed forward, which provides them with more balance, in addition to their heads touching each other on the shoulders of each one of them, and the hands of each of them sticking to the other's belt for perfection. Head for lifting and throwing on the ground, and this requires physical strength for the wrestler. We usually see the details of their bodies from the muscles of the hands and legs. They have

great physical strength. They were raised with fierce animals. The detailed scene shows that this type of sports activity was common and familiar to the workers who made such dramatic pieces dynamically. Most of the opinions have suggested that such artwork could be one of the vows made to the temple, where the pots are dictated by the gifts presented to the temple. It was put on this head. It should be noted in this regard that the practice of sports in ancient Iraq, in particular the game (wrestling), was related to a number of religious rituals, fertility and virility, and had a prestigious position among people, so that it was more loved by viewers because it gives and increases a person's strength with a moral aim to He can face the conditions of life he was living at the time. What such artistic scenes represent is a religious celebration, and wrestling was one of his rituals.



model (2)

Theme name: wrestling

Year or century: 3000\_ 2340 BC

Al-Aidiya: The Iraqi Museum - Baghdad

Size: Width 21cm

Material: limestone

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### Work analysis:

The artwork represents a votive painting found in (Khafaji) in the temple (Ninto), where the painting consists of six men in a place similar to a wrestling arena, where the game each two of the wrestlers makes different movements by the wrestlers, as this artwork dates back to the era of ( Kish) The movements of the athletes were evident through the different situations, where the first scene on the right shows the athletes who are facing each other and holding each other by the arms in an attempt to throw the opponent and lose him balance, as each leads to restrict his movements and discover the weaknesses of each of them, and this scene is stronger than the remaining two scenes Evidence for the wrestlers' legs firmly rooted in the ground and not toppling the other wrestler, while the previous two scenes we notice the mid-curvature of some wrestlers, indicating the end of a wrestler or the victory of one of them. A case of loss by



observing the central scene. As for the scene on the left, one of the opponents may appear and he grabbed the leg of the other from behind and punched him hard in an attempt to bring him down on the ground, where we notice the movements, strikes and The punches made by the guts may be similar to the hand strikes in the sport (Judo). This technique is called (Kata-Juruma) and it means an individual system of training used in (Karate) exercises and the martial arts found in Japanese wrestling. The artwork that represents wrestling has been characterized by the art of abstraction The absolute, as this appears on the position, size, and relationship of people to each other, represented in

the position of the vertical, inclined and horizontal axes. As for the match, both players may strive during the fight to bring the other down to the ground in compliance with the law of the game, which considers the player a loser in the event of his fall to the ground.

model (3)

Theme name: Boxing

Year or century: 2nd millennium BC

Ownership: Paris, Louvre Museum

Size: Height 60cm \_ Width 85cm

Material: stone

Work analysis:

The work represents two opposing boxers in a position during the fight, who have a beard and wear sports jackets, and they face each other with their right and left arms crossed in a similar position parallel to the middle for boxing, each of them in a state of readiness to defend himself or deliver an offensive blow against his opponent, as we observe by watching the work Boxers do not wear sports gloves that are placed in the hand, but at the same moment we see a strap placed around their wrists and they wear pants that reach the knee. We see that the position of boxing is very similar to the position taken by boxers and trainers at the present time, and this indicates the interest of the ancient Iraqi people to the game and its historical depth in addition To highlight the details of the body, where the muscles of the hands and legs appear to depict the importance of athletic abilities and physical strength. These details indicate that the two boxers were subjected to sports training before the competition, meaning that the boxer begins to build the muscles of his body through the exercises he used to perform so that he can face his opponent with all strength, perseverance and speed Lightness, movement, flexibility and a great degree of courage and determination to confront this on one side and on the other hand to defend itself and to develop fitness In order to be able to face the dangers of the life in which he lives, he had to find means to maintain his strength and security, as boxing was one of the defensive means for the ancient Iraqi man. One of the dual defensive methods that the people of Iraq used and paid special attention to, and it became an organization with its own rules, systems and clothes. At that time (music) was used in the game of boxing. Drums, cymbals and the like were used to time the movements of the boxers and increase their enthusiasm and add a state of pleasure and joy to the spectators. Boxing is a game Authentic with people for self-defense.

The fourth chapter

Research results :

1\_ The interest of the old Iraqi artist in the topics of sports as in model (1), he highlighted it in many scenes from the tombs of kings, palaces and temples throughout the ancient Iraqi history, which proves the importance of sports for the private and public.

2\_ Emphasizing that the ancient Iraqi art is not a static art free of movement, as in the model (2) (3). Through research and study, the researcher confirmed the extent, strength and richness of the sports movement in the murals of ancient Iraqi art throughout history since ancient times.

3\_ The importance of studying and practicing the ancient cultural heritage for art students.

4\_ The old sports scenes confirm that most of the scenes are diverse in different situations, especially in the movement of sports people, as in model (1) (2) (3).

Conclusions:

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- 1\_ The constructions representing the idea of sports scenes varied with the diversity of types of artwork, and the structural diversity had an aesthetic display that translates the content of the idea to be formulated.
- 2\_ The representations of the idea of conflict through sports scenes are achieved through the marriage between the imaginary depiction of events and the realistic implementation of the forms and the aesthetics of the organizational foundations of construction.
- 3\_ All the executed scenes, which translate the idea of sports scenes, were of a documentary and documentary structure for the ancient events of the ancient Iraqi man.

### Recommendations:

- 1\_ Issuing specialized publications (magazines, periodicals, newspapers) on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis, concerned with the development of Iraqi art.
- 2\_ Informing the contemporary Iraqi artist about the old artworks related to sports scenes and other works of art to benefit greatly from them.
- 3\_ Providing sufficient resources for postgraduate students and providing approved websites for international and local plastic arts.
- 4\_ Spreading cultural and artistic awareness to learn about the murals of ancient Iraqi art in all its eras, and to preserve and care for them through media and communication devices, and to comment on them by specialists from sculptors and archaeologists.

### Suggestions:

- 1\_ Conducting a comparative study between the sculptures of sports scenes and the sculptures of the countries of the Nile, the Greeks and the Romans.
- 2\_ Conducting a comparative study between the sculptures of contemporary sports scenes and contemporary Western sculptures.

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