

# CHRISTIE'S

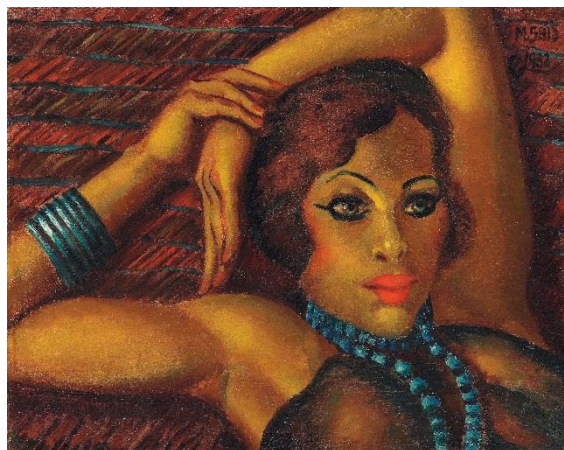
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## CHRISTIE'S ANNOUNCES: MIDDLE EASTERN MODERN & CONTEMPORARY ART IN LONDON

**London / Dubai** - Christie's announces the launch of a new marquee event in London, entitled "Middle Eastern Art", which brings together exhibitions and auctions from the Islamic and Indian Worlds, Rug & Carpets (now being integrated into the Islamic sale) as well as for the first time Middle Eastern Modern & Contemporary Art in London. The exhibition at Christie's London opens to the public on 21 October, and the auctions will take place on 25 and 26 October.

After holding solely Middle Eastern Modern + Contemporary Art auctions in Dubai for the past 11 years, Christie's has taken the decision to move their October auction to London to further enhance the international appeal and recognition for Middle Eastern Art. The traditional March sale week will continue to take place in Dubai and will occur during Dubai Art Season.

Christie's upcoming auction for Middle Eastern Modern and Contemporary Art in London will be taking place on Wednesday 25 October at 7.00pm, presenting a curated sale around the modern masters and the Contemporary artists from this part of the world, with approximately 60 works, mostly consigned by private collectors, and led by an important group of works by Egyptian artists, highlighted by their recognised master Mahmoud Saïd (Egyptian 1897-1964).



The recently published *catalogue raisonné* of Mahmoud Saïd, co-written by Valerie Hess from Christie's, revealed that Mahmoud Saïd painted two versions of *La fille aux yeux verts* (*The Girl with Green Eyes*). One painted in 1931, which is still part of the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo and a year later, in 1932 *La fille aux yeux verts (réplique)* (*The Girl with*

*Green Eyes (Replica)*), originally in the collection of Charles Terrasse, the first director of the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo, and now for sale at Christie's.

The identity of the sitter is unknown but its intriguing subject makes it stand out within the Alexandrian master's oeuvre. The early 1930s were marked by a series of family and friends' portraits that Saïd produced and yet, it was also in those years that the 'Mahmoudsaïdian' woman appeared in the artist's oeuvre, characterised by several signature features namely the almond-shaped eyes outlined by *kohl*, the voluptuous red lips, the golden complexion and the bulbous chest. *La fille aux yeux verts (réplique)* epitomizes Saïd's female character and by stripping her of her name, she embodies the essence of Egyptian female beauty (estimate £80,000-120,000).

*Hanem* also exemplifying Saïd's depictions of 'plebeian' women, and an exciting rediscovery within Mahmoud Saïd's oeuvre. To date, *Hanem* was only known through a poor quality black and white image but shortly after the artist's *catalogue raisonné* was published, it emerged from a private collection in Canada (estimate £120,000-180,000).

**Ramses Younan** (Egyptian 1913-1966) became a founding member of the 'Art and Freedom' Society, whose motto 'Long Live Degenerate Art' was defined in their revolutionary manifesto published in December 1938. Painted in 1940 *La Passion Sauvage* or *La Passion Devorante* is Younan's most complex composition that recognised him as one of the forerunners of the Arab Surrealist movement. *La Passion Dévorante* brilliantly incarnates various struggles: an inner struggle between the conscious and the subconscious, an outer struggle with society's conformism, a physical struggle with politics and war, and an artistic struggle with academic art and 'emptiness' (estimate £100,000-150,000).



Founded in 1951 AMIDEAST, sponsors exchange programmes of artists, scholars and writers between the Middle East and America. In 1953 **Jewad Selim** (Iraqi 1921-1960) took part in the programme, which included exhibitions in Philadelphia, Chicago and Pittsburgh. As a



thank you he donated a painting entitled *The Watermelon Seller*, which AFME has now consigned for auction and the profits will help further artists to benefit from the programme. Painted in 1953, *The Watermelon Seller*, combines Selim's inspiration from his Eastern tradition and Western influences he obtained when studying in Paris, London and Rome. The watermelon represents modern Iraq, the land of the two rivers, with its intersection of the Tigris and Euphrates and hints to the novelty of modern Iraq. The composition is rendered in shapes and the crescent shape is taking a leading role in representing the watermelon slices, an association to the fertile crescent of the Middle Eastern region, which is historically considered as the cradle of civilization (estimate £200,000-250,000)

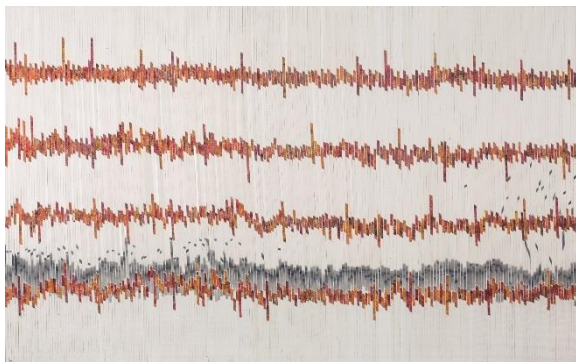




Bahman Mohassess's (Irani 1931-2010) *Tiresia did not know much about the Future* triptych is a rich composition by using captivating iconography depicting an interlacing of mysterious animals, hybrid creatures and strange figures that transport the viewer into another world. Mohassess chooses to depict hostility and fear through the representation of the legend of Tiresia, a temporary blind transgender prophet of Apollo in Thebes, whose wisdom and clairvoyance gave him an important role in Greek mythology.

The troubling idea of clairvoyance was Bahman Mohassess' main concern as well as the question about mankind and the abilities to cause atrocities is consequently raised in this work. Mohassess depicts a deep and universal human feeling: the fear of the future. In fact, by late 1976 and early 1977, Iranian economy and politics were in crisis and corruption, inflation and social discrepancies were at a height. The imaginary underworld is depicted in dark colours, sanguine textures and in an oppressive style evokes the story of Tiresia, who incarnate the artist himself, and his helplessness at not knowing what the future holds. The haunted figure with the globular eyes, conscious and horrified by what is yet to come, is Mohassess himself.

Mainly all paintings that Mohassess produced in Iran were destroyed right after the Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979 and as a result, this impressive triptych executed in 1976, is a rare witness of the artist's production as well as of the political situation in Iran during this time (estimate £200,000-250,000).



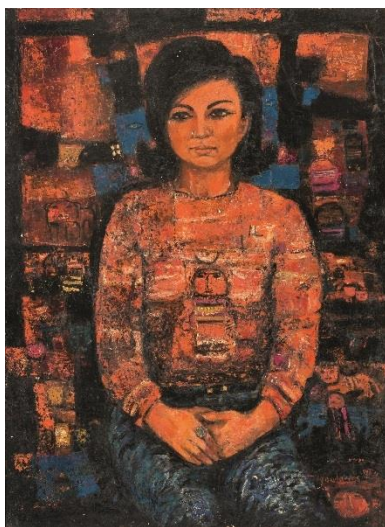
Renowned to be one of the most emblematic figures of Modern and Contemporary Iranian art, **Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian** (born 1924) depicts her own personality in the pieces that she creates. Using materials such as the mirror mosaic is historically reserved for important constructions in Iran and largely characterizes her oeuvre. She combines a traditional technique of glass mosaic and painting - developed during the Qajar dynasty

time, from 1785 to 1925 – with a real contemporary aesthetic, related to the western abstract art. *Heartbeat*, dissociates from the artist's other pieces whose shapes are mostly geometric.

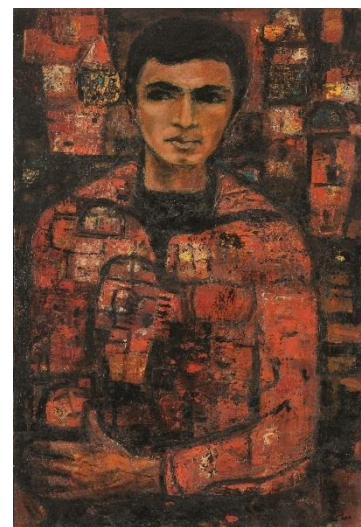
Here, Monir Farmanfarmaian realised an impressive work keeping this technique of the reverse glass painting on mirror which shows only four red lines going horizontally from on extremity to the other. The creation reminds the electrocardiogram which basically convey the heartbeats in a screen: the painted lines hug the shapes of the mirror and this creates sort of waves in movement, like a repeating cycle. Thus, the idea of longevity or eternity as a theme could be maintained in that there is not a beginning or an end in the composition (estimate £60,000-80,000).



Considered as one of the most expressive and emotive artists of today's Contemporary Iranian art movement, **Koorosh Shishegaran** was born 1944 in Iran. Working in different mediums, Shishegaran pulls inspiration from Iranian visual culture. He is best known for his dynamism, vigor, and vitality to create explosive, expressionistic compositions, where he delves into the modern human condition and creates his own painterly language to portray different facets of reality. In the present composition executed in 2005, Shishegaran uses cool blue tones and touches of yellow hues to describe an abstracted figure. Shishegaran cultivates abstraction and at the same time he creates a three-dimensional form by using his extensive brushwork and bold colors, conveying a wide range of emotions (estimate £20,000-25,000).



Described as “father of the modern art movement in Syria”, **Fateh Moudarres** (Syrian 1922-1999) remains one of the most illustrious personalities of Middle Eastern culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His oeuvre is a fantastic marriage between past and present, tradition and modernity, and creates an extraordinary universe of its own. He usually depicted unidentified people in his paintings but just not in the two works presented in this auction.

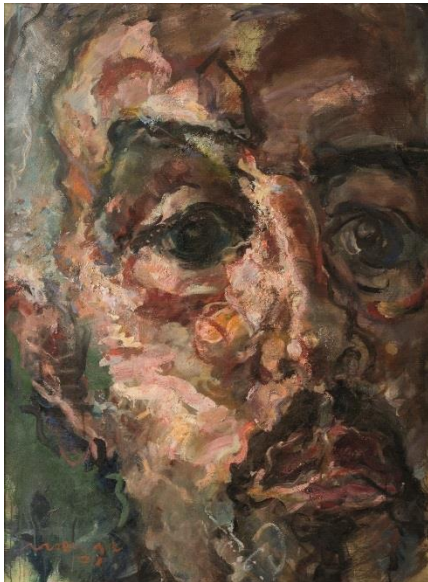


*Untitled*, depicts Amal Al-Ghazi, an important figure of Syrian society, friend and patron of the artist. Painted in 1974, Amal represents motherhood, as she is holding a young child, whose round-arched head - borrowed from the Assyrian statuary - is a recurrent pattern in the master's paintings. The discreet perspective of the painting transforms the canvas into a bas-relief, showcasing the sitter in a straight position. The background is made of geometric elements and the composition reflects Fateh Moudarres's fascination for Christian iconography by including a fish, traditionally symbolizing the first sign of belonging to the



Christian community. Moudarres added golden leaves to the canvas, a reference to the technique used in icons, to underline the sacralised moment of motherhood, who loves and reassures (estimate. £30,000-40,000)

*Untitled*, portraying Giath Al-Ghazi, Amal's brother, celebrates the fatherhood by using the same iconography as in the other portrait. Here, the sitter is embracing many young children and becomes the personification of strength and protection and moreover, the red tones heat the scene in order to emphasize the idea of shelter, illustrated by the embrace (estimate £30,000-40,000).

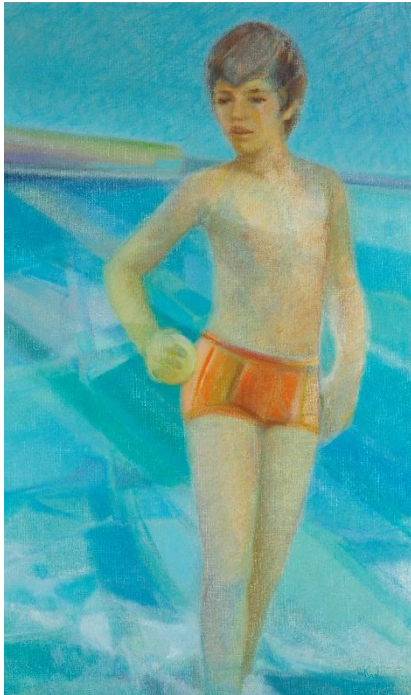


Showing a unique style, the Syrian artist **Marwan Kassab-Bachi** (Syrian 1934-2016) was born in Damascus and after completing his studies, he left for Berlin where he remained until his death last October. Undeniably inspired by the German Post-War era, Marwan concentrated on the creation of fascinating portraits, called "faces landscapes", at the beginning of the 1970's.

*Untitled*, painted between 1976-1977 shows the sitter's face in a three-quarter view, entirely occupying the canvas. Using colourless earth tones and hues of grey, green or ochre applied in thickening brushstrokes, increases the intensity of the subject. As a matter of fact, the deep gaze of the man seems to be blurred and directed to a distant and unknown beyond. As Marwan depicts the psychological introspection of his figure, he also creates a feeling of empathy for them (estimate £45,000-60,000)

**Shaffic Abboud** (Lebanese 1926-2004) is undoubtedly the art icon in Levant. In the 1970's, he started innovating his technique by working with materials such as mixed terracotta, strings, ropes and tapestry. *La Veste Chinoise* painted in 1980, presents on a plain background, the sumptuous closing of a Chinese veste, by using a multitude of colours which illuminate the canvas and reminds traditional Chinese costumes. He used geometrical forms, mostly quadrangular, as yokes sewed to each other as well as the brightness of certain colours - yellow and white – by emphasising on the quality of the jacket, probably embroidered of precious threads or even set with precious stones; which makes it feel and look heavy. The splendour of mosaics found in Byzantine art certainly inspired the painter too, "*I am Byzantine*" he said himself. Besides, the curving lines and the flexibility, the subject remains moving and gives an impression to be alive as it adopts an intriguing position. The shoulders are effectively seen in front view whereas the chest is leaning forward and a silhouette emerges as if walking toward the right side of the canvas. The object is vertically represented and appears to be personified to the extent that it is treated such as a portrait (estimate £60,000-80,000).





“Each color has its own climate, creates its own particular world; inviolate, each color speaks with quiet seduction,” claimed the Lebanese artist **Helen Khal** (Lebanese 1923-2009). With that said, Khal explored the diversity of different colors and their contingency to others. In Helen’s work, abstraction and figuration complement each other. Although she loved expressing herself with abstract formations, the need to return to the human figure and the obvious shapes of nature constantly dawned over her. In the foreground is an image of a young boy in swim shorts while the background is a bundle of cool, blue colored, rectangular shapes that seem to be making out the presence of a pool or the ocean. Obviously inspired by the colors of the Mediterranean, Khal still manages to incorporate aspects of Americana. By combining elements of the Orient and Americanized concepts, she is able to captivate her fascination by the light of the Mediterranean coast while simultaneously playing on her attraction to form and color exemplified by a bold use of horizontal lines (estimate £25,000-30,000).

## NOTES TO EDITORS:

### Public exhibition

21 and 22 October	12.00-5.00pm
23 October	9.00am-4.30pm
24 October	9.00am-8.00pm
25 October	9.00am-4.00pm

### Auctions

Modern and Contemporary Middle Eastern Art

25 October 2017 at 7.00pm

Art of the Islamic and Indian worlds including oriental carpets

26 October at 10:30am

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### **About Christie’s**

Christie’s, the world’s leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in first half of 2017 that totalled £2.35 billion / \$3 billion. Christie’s is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Christie’s offers around 350 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie’s also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

Alongside regular sales online, Christie’s has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

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*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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*Images available on request*

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