

CHRISTIE'S

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14 WORKS OF LEBANESE ART SOLD TO BENEFIT THE MOKBEL ART COLLECTION

DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING LEBANESE ARTISTS & RAISE THEIR PROFILE INTERNATIONALLY

Dubai - This season, Christie's Dubai is pleased to present an exceptional sale bringing together some of the finest works of art from leading collections in each country of the region. Notably, Christie's will be offering 14 outstanding examples from artists such as Paul Guiragossian, Farid Aouad, Aref Al Rayess and Ayman Baalbaki from the Mokbel Art Collection, one of the most prestigious collections of Modern and Contemporary Lebanese art.

The Mokbel Art Collection is a project dedicated to endorsing Lebanese art, showcasing the richness of Lebanese cultural heritage throughout the Middle East and beyond. Founded by Johnny & Nadine Mokbel in 1998, this collection started by acquiring hand-picked masterpieces and has now become a multinational project dedicated to supporting established Lebanese talent, as well as promoting new Lebanese artists as they seek international acknowledgment. To continue their efforts to promote Lebanese art on an international scale Johnny and Nadine have decided to part with 14 of their nearly 100 works of Lebanese art and have entrusted Christie's with the sale of these in their spring auction of Modern and Contemporary Arab, Iranian and Turkish art to be held on 18 March at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers Hotel.



Over half of the 14 works of art offered from the collection are by **Paul Guiragossian** (1926-1993), Lebanon's most acclaimed modern master, whose works can be found in many private collections as well as in the collection of the Vatican Museum in Rome.

Summer Day I and Summer Day II (above 1st and 2nd from left), both executed in 1992 were the first two paintings Mokbel bought back in 1998 directly from the Guiragossian family. In *Summer Day I* the paint captures a dense clumps of flowers caught by a slight breeze on a blazing hot summer's day. Not only is *Summer Day I* surprising due to its overall brightness and luminosity, but also because of its daring, almost kaleidoscopic shifts in scale, hue and tonality (estimate: \$40,000-60,000). Although the technique used in *Summer Day II* is similar to that of *Summer Day I*, here, large, flat, contrasting areas of vivid pigment are augmented by small dark accents and linear arabesques (estimate: \$40,000-60,000).

People in Yellow (above; 3rd from left) was painted in the mid-1980s by Guiragossian and was also also directly acquired from the artist's family. Although the artist is mainly described as an abstract painter, his work has never been 'non-

figurative' - *People in Yellow* has figurative references all over, even in the title, and is perhaps best read as a miasma of jostling body parts (estimate: \$150,000-250,000).

Guiragossian's strong belief in family forms one of the core elements of his work, and *Mother and Child in Mandorla* (above 4th from left) from 1983-84, features the icon of the Mother and Child. The intensity of the picture is contained within the curves flowing through the superbly patterned blue headscarf of the first woman's head, down to the left across the slit of her dress and up across the hem of the second woman's robe, continuing up to the waist and back of the third woman, intentionally forming a protective mandorla – another signature of Guiragossian's distinct style (estimate: \$80,000-120,000).



Ayman Baalbaki was born in 1975 in Odeisse, South Lebanon. As a child growing up during the Lebanese civil war and Israeli occupation, he was forced to leave his village and relocate to Beirut. His background and childhood have greatly influenced Baalbaki's work as an artist over the past 10 years. As a result, many of his paintings feature aspects of his life as a refugee in Beirut or reconstruction efforts in the city in the post-war era.

Babel was painted in 2005 and unlike the traditional portrayal of the Tower of Babel in the paintings of Hendrick Van Cleve (ca. 1525-1589) and Pieter Brueghel the Elder (ca. 1530-1569), which

shows precise, classical architecture and an animated landscape, Baalbaki portrays the tower in a rather ghostlike landscape without any human activity and instead one is left with the angry aftermath of God's curse. The viewer becomes part of the moment when God releases His anger on the people of Babel as punishment for their attempt to create a tower 'whose top may reach unto heaven.' Depicted is the moment of the curse and with the sun illuminating the tower and the moonlight seeping through from between the dark clouds in the sky, it is as if God has stopped time to express his fury (estimate: \$150,000-200,000).

Faris Aouad was born in South Lebanon in 1924 and lived in Paris most of his life. This will be the first time the artist has been represented in a Christie's auction and his work is best known for their expressions of solitude. He used scenes of lonely strangers in bars and cafés, people walking down the street, passengers embarking on trains and fishermen at work to convey his own feelings of loneliness. Moreover, his attachment to the familiarity between the streets of old Beirut and Paris are a recurring emotional fixture in his work, as in *Sortie de Métro* dating from the early 1970s (estimate: \$15,000-20,000). *Homo Flux* also executed in the early 1970s, is a prototype of Farid Aouad's expressionism, where the self-reflecting human becomes unable to collect his thoughts; the artist does not paint portraits, but sensations. He wants to paint the process of thinking – movement and change, not objects – his objective is to illustrate the metamorphosis of his subjects, their stream of consciousness, which is why everything in the painting seems to flow, reflecting their relationship with something else in transition (estimate: \$50,000-70,000).





Born in Saida, Lebanon in 1979, **Tagreed Darghouth** received a Diploma in Painting and Sculpting from the Lebanese Institute of Fine Arts in Beirut in 2000 and went to Paris to study Space Art at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs where she graduated in 2003. In *Green Grass*, executed 2010, several skulls emerge against the backdrop of a thickly applied impasto non-descript space, we are confronted with one subject matter: that of death, of the inescapable fate to which we all must succumb. It raises the perennial concept of the transience of human life. Deeply reminiscent of Vanitas, paintings typical of the Dutch School in the 16th and 17th Century, her subject matter fortifies the notion of

memento mori "remember you will die." Her complex brushwork of gold, red and amber tones signify slow decay, a metaphor for the ephemeral quality that is life. Despite this certainty of death Darghouth refers to "Yellow Sun" an example of one of the several codenames given by the British Military to their nuclear arsenal around the Second World War as part of what was paradoxically called the "Rainbow Programme".

Further works from the Mokbel Art Collection to be offered on 18 March in Dubai are *Shatek El Hadi* by **Aref El-Rayess** (1928-2005 estimate: \$80,000-120,000); *Silhouettes en Lumière* by **Farid Aouad** (estimate: \$15,000-20,000) and *Family Portrait* (estimate: \$80,000-120,000), *The Guardian* (estimate: \$12,000-18,000), *Untitled, Family* (estimate: \$8,000-12,000) and *Shaddade 2* (estimate: \$10,000-15,000) all by **Paul Guiragossian**.

Sale date: 18 March at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers Hotel at 7.00pm

Preview: Sunday 15 March from 2.00pm until 18 March midday, same location

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2014 that totalled £5.1 billion / \$8.4 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 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. Private sales totalled £916.1 million (\$1.5 billion) in 2014, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Christie's has a global presence with 54 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Shanghai, New Delhi, Mumbai and Dubai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*