

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | January 2015
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CHRISTIE'S DUBAI TO OFFER *THE ICONIC JAMAL AL MAHAMEL II*



Dubai – On the night of 18 March Christie's Dubai will offer one of the most iconic Middle Eastern images ever produced – *Jamal Al Mahamel II* or *Camel of Burdens II* – by the Palestinian artist Suleiman Mansour. This work is a second version, painted in 2005, of the original work which has been created by Mansour over 40 years ago in 1973 as a simple expression of his relationship to his hometown. Depicting an elderly Palestinian man carrying a large sack in the shape of an eye, painted with a view of Jerusalem around the Dome of the Rock, Islam's third holiest site, this image is reproduced Palestinian households. It expresses and is closely linked with the notions of Palestinian identity and Jerusalem. The picture is estimated at \$200,000 and 300,000 and part of the proceeds will be benefitting initiatives that support artists in the region.

The original painting from 1973 was gifted to the late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi by the former Libyan ambassador to London and it is believed that the painting was destroyed during the 1986 American bombing in Libya in 1986. When

Suleiman Mansour met Ehab Shanti in 2005, then communications director at the United Nations Development Program in Jerusalem, it was suggested to him to bring Jamal Al Mahamel back to life, something Mansour had thought about since the potential loss of the original work. The second version shows some change -on a factual level, porters working in Jerusalem's Old City advised him to change the type of the rope used by the old man. On a more esoteric level Mansour wanted to integrate more of the city's Christian motifs, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which he had left out of the original because his concerns in the 1973 painting were primarily political.

But, much of the imagery stayed the same and the sack's ocular shape still hints at an Arab idiom that describes a loved one as the "pupil of one's eye" but its heaviness also reveals it as a burden. The

porter's presence in the middle of nowhere can still be understood as an echo of Palestinian life in exile. The city on his back represents the idea of the lost homeland that Palestinians "carry" with them.

Mansour, who was born in 1947 in Birzeit, studied at the prestigious Bazalel Academy of Art and Design from 1967 to 1970. For Mansour, art supports the continuation and revival of Palestinian identity, particularity when capturing images of land and people. Mansour, also a cartoonist, art instructor and author, has contributed greatly to art education and its promotion in the West Bank.

The larger and more colourful *Jamal Al Mahamel II* will be on public display as of Sunday 15 March until Wednesday 19 March at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers Hotel in Dubai, prior to its sale on the night of 19 March at 7.00pm.

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