

CHRISTIE'S

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Dubai – As a result of the publicity surrounding the announcement of the sale of a 2005 version of Suleiman Mansour's *Jamal Al Mahamal* by Christie's Dubai in January this year, Christie's have been approached by a London-based collector who believed he may own the original work with the same title. Following a visit by the Christie's team to appraise the work, Christie's can confirm that this is indeed the original which was painted in 1973.

Michael Jeha; Managing Director Christie's Middle East: "Selling works at auction is a very transparent process and it is always encouraging when, due to our widely distributed catalogues both in print and online, new information about a work comes to light. We have recently been approached about the survival of the original version – an exciting re-discovery. As a result, the version consigned to the Dubai sale will now be described as version III of the subject, not the second version as published. It is highly gratifying that, as a result of our announcement, a treasure of the Palestinian art world believed to be lost has been re-discovered."

The version believed at the time of consignment to have been the original work painted in 1973 and later gifted to the former Libyan leader Muammar Al Gaddafi and believed to have been destroyed in 1986 is now known to be the second version from 1975, with the first version from 1973 belonging to the collector in UK. Since the discovery of the original work the artist, Suleiman Mansour has confirmed that there are only three versions ever made of the subject by his hand.

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 in nearly all 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.

Lot 82 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.

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