

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S CONTINUES TO LEAD THE WAY AS CONTEMPORARY ARAB, IRANIAN, INDIAN AND WESTERN ART UNITE FOR FORTHCOMING AUCTION



ALI OMAR ERMES (LIBYA, B. 1945)

Meem, Tha, Alif: Turaath (Heritage)
signed and dated in Arabic (lower left)
acrylic on paper mounted on canvas
98.1/2 x 59in. (250 x 150cm.)
Painted in 1993 (estimate: \$85-100,000)

Dubai/London – Following the success of Christie's inaugural auction in Dubai in May 2006, and to reinforce the leading position of the company in the strategically important Middle East market, Christie's, the world's leading auction house, is delighted to announce an expanded set of sales. An inaugural sale of **Contemporary Jewels and Watches** (please see separate press release) on the evening of 31 January 2007 will be followed by a second evening sale of **International Modern & Contemporary Art**, to be staged at the **Jumeirah Emirates Towers** hotel at **7.30pm** on **1 February 2007**. The International Modern and Contemporary Art sale will showcase works from many of the most prominent Middle Eastern, Iranian, Indian and Western Artists.

Since Christie's hugely successful inaugural sale in May 2006, the Middle Eastern art market has experienced a catalyzing effect in recent months, with a number of new galleries and public exhibitions opening on an almost weekly basis. Christie's February 2007 sale is a further indication of the region's cultural diversity with an even more comprehensive selection of Arab, Iranian, Indian and Western works that will feature alongside a particularly strong contemporary photography section.

The sale includes an extensive and extremely interesting collection of Indian, Iranian and Western art. Commencing with an expanded selection of Arab art, the sale comprises work by artists from a wider spread of countries than in the May 2006 auction with works being represented from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE.

“In response to the intense interest and record sales generated by our inaugural Dubai sale in May, the 2007 auction brings with it a larger and more comprehensive collection of works and, with its core elements of Middle Eastern and Indian art, we anticipate an even higher level of excitement and participation,” said Michael Jeha, Managing Director, Christie’s Dubai.

“We are delighted to have established a sponsoring partnership with Credit Suisse, and look forward to working together with one of the leading global providers of financial products and services in Investment Banking, Private Banking, and Asset Management. With the backing of Credit Suisse and support of our local sponsor, Dubai Multi Commodities Centre, Christie’s is proud to be continuing to drive the local art market, raising the standard and profile of art in the region and in bringing to Dubai works from across the globe, making art more accessible to the region,” Jeha continued.

Works by prominent Gulf artists - including two very different paintings by one of the most important artists of the UAE, Abdul Kadir Al-Rais – are set to cause a stir in February. Abdul Kadir Al-Rais’s *Yesteryear* 1995 (estimate \$40,000-60,000) is inspired by Gulf architecture whilst a larger abstract painting from 2006 (estimate \$25,000-35,000) can be described as a landscape of calligraphy.

The Lebanese section includes works by several painters hailed as ‘modern masters’; two paintings by Chafic Abboud, *Projet de tapisserie*, 1966 (estimate \$25,000-35,000) and a blue composition, 1961 (estimate \$18,000-22,000); two by Paul ‘Guiragossian, *Les Fiancailles* and *Autour l’enfant* (both estimated at \$35,000-45,000), and also works by Hussein Madi, Amine El-Bacha, Hugette Caland and Assadour. Contemporary works by up and coming Lebanese artists include strong pieces by Bassam Geitani, Hannibal Sroujie and Nabil Nahas.

Among the Syrian modern paintings are unusual works by the late artists Louay Kayali, Fateh Moudarres, Nasser Chaura and Mahmoud Hamad. The Syrian scene remains one of the most interesting in the Middle East, and included in the 2007 auction are contemporary works by Sabhan Adam, Youssef Abdelke and Safwan Dahoul.

Tunisia is particularly well represented with three works by Nja Mahdaoui, including one over two metres high, *Calligraphic Abstraction*, (estimate \$40,000-60,000), as well as paintings by Hatem al-Mekki and Ahmed Hajeri, and transfigurations by Rafik El-Kamel and Guider Trikki; a ceramic piece by Khaled Ben Slimane is set to cause a stir.

Among the highlights are two excellent works by Libya's most famous artist, Ali Omar Ermes, *Alif Succoon* (\$55,000-75,000), and the huge and spectacular *Meem Tha Alif* (Estimate \$85,000-100,000). In his powerful paintings, inspired by early- or pre- Islamic poetry, Ermes uses letters singly or in groups to evoke the message of the verses.

The Egyptian group includes a spectacular calligraphic work entitled *Expending in God's Cause* (Estimate \$100,000-120,000) by Ahmed Moustafa who, in the 2006 inaugural sale, smashed auction records for work of art by an Arab artist. Also featured are paintings by the 'pioneers of Egyptian art', including works by Ragheb Ayad and the dramatic mixed media 'The Drowning of Nubia' (1960) by Effat Nagui (Estimate \$25,000-35,000). Living artists are represented by works from Farghali Abdel Hafiz and Gazbia Sirry, Omar El-Nagdi and Farouk Hosny. A beautiful abstract work by Farouk Hosny (\$40,000-50,000), an Alexandrian who worked as the director of El- Anfoushy Culture Palace, is a highlight of the sale. Hosny's works from the 1960s depict landscapes and seascapes of the Egyptian coastline. Later in that decade, however, a trip to France 'changed' Hosny's style and he embarked on a series of abstract paintings, for which he is ultimately renowned. His use of bold, flat colours and powerful abstraction, peppered with symbols that seem at once pharaonic and mechanistic. Included in the February sale is a composition in vivid blue which is said to be one of his most lyrical.

Works by Iraqi artists in this sale include four very different paintings by Dia Al-Azzawi, two from the 1990s and two rare earlier paintings from the 1970s. A moving portrait of her late sister by Suad Al-Attar and paintings by Ismail Fattah and Khaled Rahhal complete the Iraqi section.

Headed by important calligraphics by Mohammed Ehsai - *Divine Names*, 1999 (Estimate \$50,000-70,000) and *Divine Names*, 1996 (Estimate \$20,000-25,000) - the selection of modern and contemporary Iranian art is especially strong. Two calligraphic sculptures by Parviz Tannavoli - one in bronze entitled *Standing Heech* (estimate \$50,000-70,000) and another in fiberglass, *White Heech* (estimate \$20,000-25,000) - are of particular note. There will be also be three mixed media works by Massoud Arabshahi, as well as paintings by Bahman Jalali, Farid Lashai and Farah Ossuli. Younger artists include Farhad Moshiri, Allahu Akbar (estimate 18,000-25,000) and Rokny Haerizadeh.

Contemporary photography will feature prominently in the 2007 sale. This section includes a large print on canvas by the Iranian master Abbas Kiarostami and another piece by his prodigy, Bahman Jalali, as well as strong works by the Egyptian, Youssef Nabil - including the last in his series of three, *Natacha Atlas* (Estimate 20,000-25,000).

Susan Hefuna, an Egyptian, uses the metaphor of the *mashribiyya* (wooden screen), and her piece, *Woman Behind a Mashribiyya* (Estimate \$15,000-20,000), is an auction highlight. In addition, works

by the Iranian photographers Shirin Neshat and Shadi Ghadirian - both of whom performed extremely well in the 2006 May auction – will also be featured.

Acknowledging the importance of Dubai as South Asian hub, contemporary Indian art also forms a major section of the 2007 auction. This market has seen bounding growth in the past few years due to the rising Indian economy. Influenced by both Western and indigenous factors, Indian artists have embraced universal themes prevalent in art from the second half of the twentieth century. The sale focuses on works by South Asian artists created largely after 1947 – the year in which India gained its independence from England and was thereafter partitioned into three distinct regions, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The resulting post-independence social turmoil fostered new ideas of artistic expression within a group of artists who formed a collective known as the Progressive Artists Group (PAG). Founded by famed Indian artist Francis Newton Souza in a effort to revolutionize Indian art and respond to the breakthrough in Western modernism, the PAG held their first exhibition in 1948 and showcased works by Souza, Maqbool Fida Husain and Syed Haider Raza along with Akbar Padamsee and Ram Kumar. All of these artists are included in the sale.

Top lots include a stunning depiction of Horses by India's most well-known artist, and part-time Dubai resident, Maqbool Fida Husain (estimate: \$200,000-250,000), executed in a powerful red palette, inspired by Japanese red lacquer; the horse or stallion has been a central part of Husain oeuvre since his first depiction of the animals in 1951 when he was inspired by a trip to China. During his time there he studied Han and Tang pottery horses, and spent hours in front of the equestrian statues of Marino Marini in Italy. The horse is a virulent and strong creature which has become a personal symbol for the artist. Another highlight of the Indian section is a large landscape by the modernist painter Ram Kumar (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) whose arid landscapes often straddle the boundaries between abstraction and naturalism. Another important work that is part of the Indian section in this sale is a work by Syed Haider Raza, painted in 1963 entitled *Vallee de Gorbio*, an oil on canvas and estimated to fetch \$80,000-120,000.

“Accompanied by a select group of Western works, Christie's February 2007 auction is set to build on the success of the inaugural sale and, with Christie's at the helm, further confirm the Middle East as a major player in the burgeoning international art market,” concludes Jeha.

- *Christie's auction of Contemporary Middle Eastern and Western Art will be conducted on February 1st 2007 at 7:30pm sharp.*
- *The sale of Contemporary Watches and Jewels takes place at 7:30pm on January 31st 2007.*
- *Viewing is open to the public between 12pm and 10pm from 29-30 January, and between 10am and 5pm on January 31st.*
- *For catalogues and further information, please telephone +971 4 361 5323*

Notes to Editors

Christie's presence in the GCC was established in April 2005. The opening a representative office in the Middle East – which makes it the first international auction house to have a permanent base in the region – reflect the growing activity in the international art market as well as the mounting demand and the importance of the Middle East to this sector. Participating in extensive charity events in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Dubai, Christie's events are part of an ongoing program of exhibitions as well as educational and cultural seminars organized in the region. Sponsorship has been secured from Credit Suisse and the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre.

Christie's is delighted to announce two new additions to their Middle East team. Lulu Al Sabah as advisor to Kuwait and Abdul Rachman Al Zayani as advisor to Bahrain. Both bring a wealth of experience and passion in the arts, jewellery and the Middle East as a whole.

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Dubai Multi Commodities Centre was created in 2002 as a strategic initiative of the Dubai Government to establish a commodity marketplace in Dubai. Rated 'A' by Standard & Poor's, it provides the market infrastructure that brings together a wide range of commodities activities, and is committed to serve the needs of participants in the gold, diamonds and commodities markets. Resident companies of Dubai Multi Commodities Centre are offered highly attractive benefits under a free zone status, including a 50-year guaranteed tax holiday, 100 per cent business ownership, full ownership of business premises, and a secure regulated environment.