

For Immediate Release

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DIALOGUE AND DIVERSITY IN DUBAI SALE

Modern and Contemporary Art from the West, from India and from the Middle East and Beyond Meet in Christie's Inaugural Auction in the Region

Christie's Dubai Sale

Modern and Contemporary Art

24 May 2006



London/Dubai – Christie's inaugural auction in Dubai on 24 May will be led by an exciting, diverse and dynamic selection of international modern and contemporary works of art. Offering 128 works of art from the Arab world, Iran, India, Pakistan and the West, this is the first sale of its kind to take place in the region at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers at 8 p.m.

“The auction offers an unparalleled opportunity to acquire works of art that will provide thought provoking engagement as well as pure enjoyment,” says Edward Dolman, Chief Executive Officer, Christie's International. *“The art in this sale is built upon a rich artistic and cultural heritage. Yet all the work engages with ideas and issues of the last fifty years, including the quest for cultural, national and spiritual identity,”*

Modern and Contemporary Art from the ARAB WORLD, IRAN, INDIA, PAKISTAN

While international media may have focussed on other regions of the world as the contemporary art market has so dramatically developed, the Arab world and Iran have also been vibrant centres in the production of modern and contemporary art over the last century. In particular during the second half of the 20th century, following the post-war and post-colonial experience, modern art of the Middle East and North Africa has blossomed. Informed by a multitude of new pressures, including the fragmentation and consolidation of communities and states, and a quest for cultural, national and spiritual identities, art of the region and its diaspora provides an engaging and eloquent commentary on the times.

Pioneering artists from all over the Middle East region will be represented in this inaugural Christie's auction, many being showcased for the first time on the international art market platform. The Arab and Iranian works of art in the auction have been selected to represent this dialogue and the diverse fabric of modern and contemporary art from the region.



The juxtaposition of traditional forms and materials used in Arabic calligraphy and contemporary themes characterize the work of the **Tunisian** artist Nja Madhaoui (b.1937). Just as in 9th century North African Qur'ans, Madhaoui uses Indian ink on vellum, while his fluid letter forms are reminiscent of Far Eastern design. Examples in the sale by this artist include *Calligrams*, 1993 (estimate: \$15,000-18,000) executed in Indian ink and gold ink on vellum. A very different approach to calligraphy can be seen in the works of **Libyan** artist, Ali Omar Ermes (b.1945), where single Arabic letters executed in a broad hand and bold colours are set amidst a ground of early Islamic poetry in an historical *maghribi* script. *Sad* (estimate: \$25,000-30,000) is a thought provoking example of this popular artist's work to be offered in the sale.

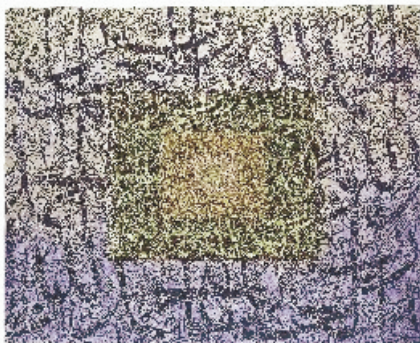
With its roots in Islamic and pre-Islamic art, abstract art in the Middle East has always found a strong following. This auction will showcase the work of the **Jordanian** artist Mona Saudi (b. 1945), whose beautiful worked stone sculptures demonstrate her profound understanding of the medium. Two of her most stunning works, carved from a green stone she has called 'Jordanian Jade' are included in the sale, *Growth* (estimate: \$12,000-18,000) and *Palestine in Green* (estimate: \$16,000-20,000). Resembling layered marble, it is worked so that its many veins of colour are an integral part of the presentation. Although highly abstract, they engage with two very different themes, one expressing the movement of heavenly bodies and another expressing her hopes for peace in the region.



The political and social climate of **Iraq** and **Syria** has produced some of the most memorable images in all of Arab contemporary art. In this sale will be powerful works by renowned artists. These include three works by Dia Al-Azzawi (Iraq. B. 1939) led by *Oriental Taqsim in red*, 1999 (estimate: \$20,000-30,000). Shakir Hassan al-Said (Iraq 1925-2004) and Mahmud Hamad (Syria 1923-1988) are also represented. A rare *Landscape* by Fateh Moudarres (Syria 1922-1999) (estimate: \$7,000-10,000), dating from 1973, is

offered alongside two other works by this renowned artist, *The Goodbye* (estimate: 8,000-10,000) and *The stray Buraq*, 1994 (estimate: \$10,000-15,000). In addition there are three superb works in the sale by Louay Kayali (Syria 1934-1978) including *Woman Sewing* 1974 (estimate: £25,000-30,000).

Lebanon, with its diversity and receptivity has always been at the centre of cultural exchange within the Middle East. Its capital, Beirut, is often referred to as the Paris of the Middle East and it is this international environment that has produced some of the greatest Lebanese artists whose works will be featured in the sale. Paul Guiragossian's (Lebanon 1926-1993) *Spring Festival* (estimate: \$28,000-35,000) and *Serenity* (estimate: \$28,000-35,000); Chafic Abboud's (1926-2004) *Fleur de Rouge*, 1961 (estimate: \$25,000-30,000) and *L'anniversaire*, 2000, (estimate: \$25,000-30,000) and Yvette Achkar's (*Untitled* (estimate: \$12,000-18,000) are superb examples from these very prominent artists oeuvres. Fadia Haddad (b. 1959) is also represented by *Songeurs de synonymes* (estimate: \$7,000-10,000).



Two major highlights by **Egyptian** artist Ahmed Moustafa (b. 1943) lead this section of the sale. *Orbits of Praise* (estimate: \$100,000-200,000) and *Where Two Oceans Meet* (estimate: \$100,000-120,000) are superb examples of his work. Additional highlights include Chant Avedissian's (b.1951) Cairo stencils that are striking recent works by this Egyptian artist of Armenian descent. In a departure from more sombre themes, these works focus on

icons of the 'Golden Age' of Egyptian cinema, music and politics during the 1930s to 1960s and form a thought-provoking yet humorous social commentary in their combined use of Pop imagery and local motifs. *Icons of the Nile* is estimated at between \$20,000-30,000 and the additional work by the artist in the sale *Kul hal Yazool* is also estimated at \$20,000 to \$30,000. Other Egyptian artists whose work is in the auction include Adel El Siwi, Farghali Abdel Hafiz Gazbia Sirry, Farouk Hosny, Adam Henein Mohamed Abla

Of all the countries in the Middle East, **Iran** has seen perhaps the greatest change during the second half of the 20th century. Cultural life in the Post-Revolutionary era has remained strong. Tensions between tradition and modern life find forceful expression in the photographs of female artist Shadi Ghadirian (b.1974) In her untitled print from the Qajar Series, she uses the photographic style of a formal 19th century portrait, with the sitter ironically holding a can of Pepsi (estimate: \$4,000-6,000). Additional works by Iranian artists include examples by Nasser Ovissi, Yaghoub Emdadian,



Sadegh Tabrizi, Fatemeh Emidiadian, Mohssen Vasiri, Massoud Arabshahi, Faramaz Pilaram and Mohammad Ehsai. A superb work by Sohrab Sepehri (b.1928), 1964 (estimate: \$40,000-60,000) is a further Iranian highlight.

Works by artists from North Africa, including **Algeria, Morocco** and **Tunisia**, are also offered in the sale. Three pieces by Rachid Koraichi (b.1947, Algeria) include *Untitled* that is estimated at \$40,000-50,000. Further paintings in the sale are by Fuad Belamine (b. 1950, Morocco) and Mohammad Kacimi (b.1942, Morocco).



Modern and Contemporary Art from INDIA

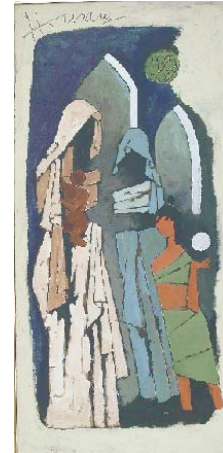
Christie's most recent sale in March 2006 in New York reflected the continuing growth of the Modern and Contemporary Indian art market as the auction sale realised over \$15.6 million with 14 artist records again being established at new highs. The proximity of Dubai to the Indian sub-continent and the current strength of the market lead to this superb inaugural sale and will provide the newest platform for this rising market in the international art market place.

Modern Indian artists have also embraced universal themes prevalent in the art of the second half of the 20th century. 1947 was the historic year in which India gained its independence from England and was partitioned into three different regions forming today's boundaries of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The resulting social challenges fostered new ideas of artistic expression within a group of artists who collectively became known as the Progressive Artists Group (PAG), who held their historic first group show a year later. Francis Newton Souza led the vanguard that includes, amongst others, Maqbool Fida Husain, Syed Haider Raza, Ram Kumar, and Krishen Khanna. Inspired by the currents of Western Art, these artists sought to divorce themselves from academic painting traditions and sentimental themes. The stylistic devices of Post-Impressionism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Surrealism, and Abstraction were married with Indian subject-matter and colour palettes to form a new movement in Indian art.

Among the major works by Syed Haider Raza (b.1922) in the sale is *Ciel Bleu* dated to 1957 (estimate: \$100,000-150,000). Time spent in the French countryside during the 1950's inspired Raza. Stylistically the work also reflects the legacy of Mughal and Rajasthani miniatures. Post-1970, Raza entered a new phase in his artistic career using elements from Sanskrit and tantric texts as a return

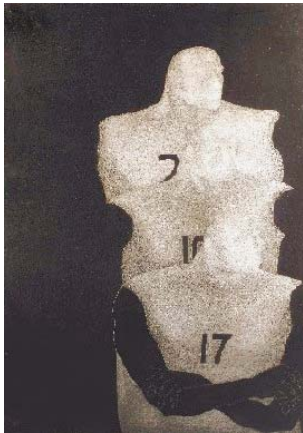


to his Indian roots. Raza's *Sourya* (Sun), is a highlight of the sale (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) depicting an arrangement of shapes reduced to their essence as the earthy colours evolve from light to dark following the natural sequence of day into night.



The celebrated 91-year old artist, Maqbool Fida Husain (b.1915) is well represented in the Dubai sale with a number of works spanning his decades-long career as an artist. Major highlights include his well known depictions of horses, *Equus*, 2005 (estimate: \$200,000-250,000), *Untitled* (estimate: \$120,000-150,000) and *Mother Teresa* (estimate: \$200,000-250,000).

Francis Newton Souza's *Green Landscape* from 1960 (estimate: \$120,000-150,000) and *Monsoon* from 1958 (estimate: \$180,000-220,000) represent the highpoint of his career with his use of thick energetic brushstrokes almost violently applied to the surface. *Green Landscape* was illustrated in one of the seminal initial publications on Souza by E. Mullins in 1962. At two metres wide, a large work, *Goa Landscape* from 1990 (estimate: \$200,000-250,000) is a serene rendering of the artist's childhood home.



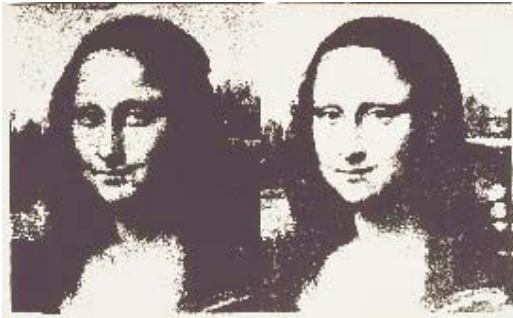
One of the most sublime works in the sale is by Rameshwar Broota (b.1941). Titled *Numbers*, the painting (estimate: \$80,000-120,000) depicts three proto-human figures against a dark monochromatic backdrop. This significant work represents a shift in Broota's oeuvre following his discovery of a knifeblade technique that strips layers of paint to create subtle shading and texture without the benefit of preparatory works on paper.

Major artists from Pakistan and Bangladesh are also represented in the sale which includes a large and powerful work by Sadequain (1937 - 1987) who takes inspiration from the Pakistani poet, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, with a vivid depiction of hanged figures under a blazing sun that also resembles a mushroom cloud. The painting (estimate: \$70,000-90,000) takes its title from verses written by Faiz to commemorate Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed for treason after being convicted of passing nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union. Other artists from the region include: Zainul Abedin, Ijaz ul Hassan, and Zarina.

Modern and Contemporary Art from the WEST

The dialogue between East and West continues in the selection of Modern and Contemporary Western art included in the sale. While many Arab, Indian and Iranian

artists derive inspiration from western movements in modern art, it is from the culture and tradition of the East that so many modern Western artists derive their motivation. For example, the embroidered tapestries of the Italian artist, Alighiero Boetti. Boetti called Kabul his home until the Soviet invasion in the late 1970s, and it was during his Kabul years that he commissioned local Afghani artisans to weave his well-known creations. Drawing upon the ancient tradition of embroidering to tell a story, Boetti often incorporated and interspersed Farsi texts within these works. His *Quando le parole sono stanche*, 1987, is included in the sale and estimated at \$14,000-18,000).



Andy Warhol (1928-1987) also embraced similar themes to those seen in the art of Egyptian artist, Chant Avedissian (b.1951). Warhol is renowned for celebrating the commonplace items of everyday life in his work, elevating them to new heights. Superb works in the sale by the artist are *Double Mona Lisa*, 1978 (estimate: \$120,000-160,000) and the silkscreen *Fish* (estimate: \$35,000-40,000). Additional highlights from this section include examples by Bridget Riley, Richard Prince, Christo, Sam Francis and Victor Vasarely.

“We hope that the layering of dialogues: East intersecting with West, and Modernity overlapping with Tradition that make up the unique themes of this sale, will complement the newest platform on the international art market stage – Dubai – a city that so elegantly embraces these ideas,” continues Jussi Pylkkanen, President of Christie’s Europe, International Director of Modern Art and the sale’s auctioneer.

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