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Bonhams Breaks 10 Records for Lebanese and Middle Eastern Art

BY NICHOLAS FORREST | APRIL 29, 2016

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Hussein Bicar's "Nubian House" (detail)

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Bonhams broke 10 world auction records during its April 27 Middle Eastern and Lebanese Modern and Contemporary art sales in London, reflecting increasing global demand for Middle Eastern modern and contemporary art. The combined sales broke 10 world records for seven artists from the Art of the Lebanon sale

Bonhams
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and three from the Middle Eastern Modern and Contemporary Art sale.




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“It’s been a ground-breaking sale,” said Nima Sagarchi, head of Modern and Contemporary Middle Eastern art at Bonhams. “Despite the fact that many of the artists are well-established, both in Lebanon and elsewhere, this is the first time that many of them have come to the market. A number of pieces have been purchased by Lebanese buyers and in many ways it’s a great homecoming for the country’s modern and contemporary masterpieces. But it also marks a turning point in the importance of Middle Eastern art on an international stage.”


The top lot of the Middle Eastern sale and the highest price achieved overall was Egyptian artist Hussein Bicar’s “Nubian House,” which sold for £319,300 against an estimate of £70,000-£100,000, setting the record price for a modern Arab painting sold in London.

Lebanese artist Kahlil Gibran’s painting “Portrait of Mrs. Alexander Morten” was the top lot of the Lebanese sale, selling to a Lebanese institution for a final price of £182,500, almost 10 times the original estimate of £20,000-£30,000.

Other highlights included the sale of Lebanese artist Farid Aouad’s “Opera Garnier” for £74,500 against an estimate of £40,000-£60,000, and contemporary Lebanese artist Ayman Baalbaki’s “The Beirut City Centre Egg” for £86,500.

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