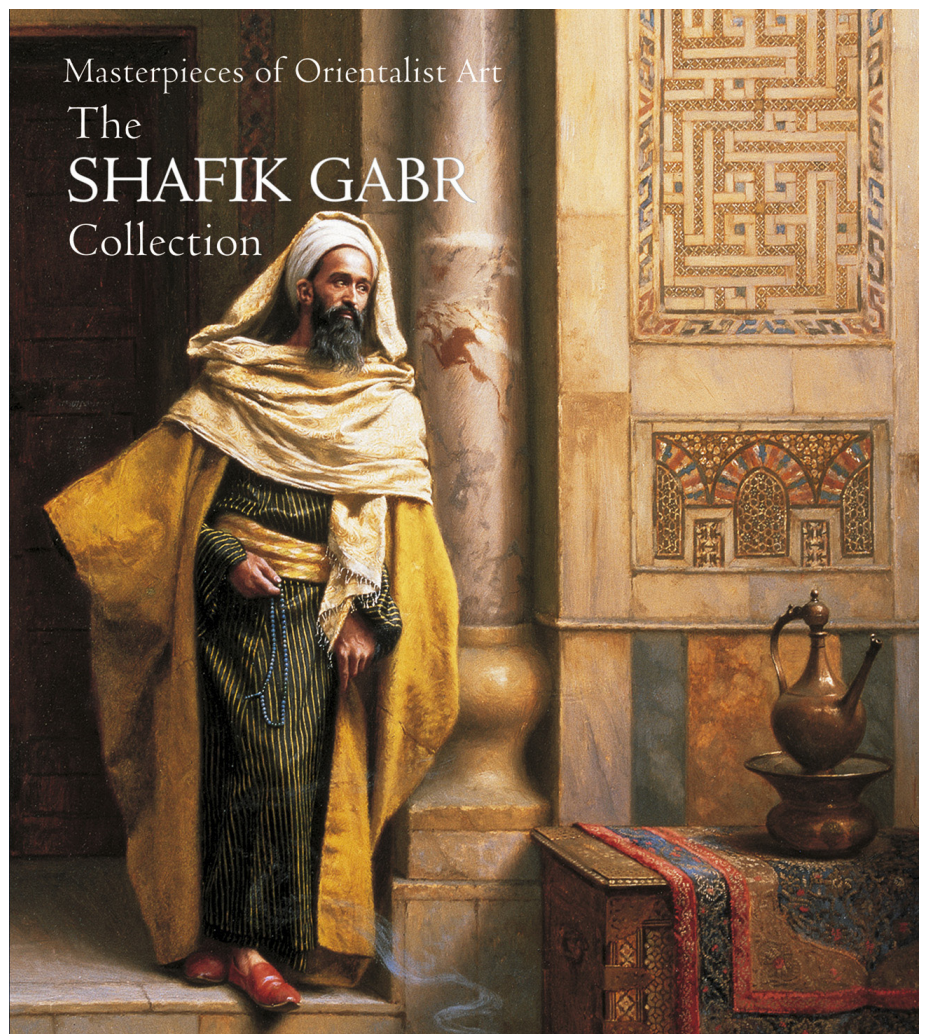


‘MASTERPIECES OF ORIENTALIST ART: THE SHAFIK GABR COLLECTION

CHAIRPERSON AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE ARTCO GROUP, CHAIRPERSON AND FOUNDING MEMBER OF EGYPT’S INTERNATIONAL FORUM AND FOUNDER OF THE SHAFIK GABR FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, SHAFIK GABR HAS INITIATED SEVERAL PROGRAMMES IN THE AREAS OF SPORT, LITERACY AND ART, PROMOTING GREATER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF THE ARAB WORLD AND THE WEST.



AN AVID ART COLLECTOR, SHAFIK GABR’S PERSONAL ART COLLECTION COMPRISES SOME OF THE FINEST EXAMPLES OF THE GREAT MASTERS OF ORIENTALISM. HIS NEW, LAVISHLY ILLUSTRATED BOOK, ” MASTERPIECES OF ORIENTALIST ART: THE SHAFIK GABR COLLECTION”, WHICH INCLUDES ESSAYS BY SOME OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED EXPERTS IN THE FIELD, REFLECTS THE IMPORTANCE ORIENTALIST ART HAS IN THE WORLD.

You are one of the world's premier collectors of Oriental art. What is Collecting Art?

Collecting art is a passion that involves a choice by a person or persons involved in learning and expressing process.

You have a passion for European and American artists of the 19th and early 20th centuries, who travelled to the Middle East and immersed themselves in the local culture and way of life. Was there something specific that helped develop your interest in this theme?

Discovery, travel, knowledge and bridge building are passions of mine. I had very little knowledge of Orientalist traveller painters until I was introduced to them in Paris in 1990. Orientalist traveller painters came to the Middle East as discoverers, not as colonisers or occupiers and they immersed themselves in the local culture, society and way of life. Some of them made repeat visits; others lived in one place for an extended time, like Frederick Lewis, who lived in Cairo



for 10 years. Dinet married an Algerian, became a Muslim, visited Mecca and wrote a book. These Orientalist traveller painters were early globalists and bridge builders.

What was the first work you purchased that made you feel like a

“collector”?

I haven't felt like a collector until now. I'm passionate about the art I like and for which the visual and content message is clear for me.

How have you decided on the art you collect and the direction your collection has taken? Was it planned from the start or has it grown organically?

At the beginning it grew organically. However, as I learnt more and became much more involved, I continue to try to establish a direction for my collection to cover all aspects of Orientalism.

What's the last artwork you purchased?

John Frederick Lewis, 'Bedouin Camel Driver and Camel'.

What's it like to live with your collection?

Like living with diverse family members.

How have your tastes changed



since you started collecting?

It has matured, become more extended and has benefitted from knowledge and a 'learning curve'.

If you could add any piece of artwork to your collection, from any time period, which work would that be?

There are so many that I could choose. There is not one piece that I would specify. At the present time I am researching a number of paintings that I wish to add to my collection.

You have been collecting for many years and your collection comprises of some of the finest works by the great masters of Orientalism. How does your relationship with certain pieces of art change over time?

The relationship with art is like a relationship with other human beings; it does change over time and some pieces become closer and their message becomes stronger, and vice versa. The reality is that an articulated message in the genre of Orientalism is very powerful for those who understand it.

You have produced a lavishly illustrated book of your collection, what made you decide to publish such a book?

I decided to publish a book about my collection and Orientalism for multiple reasons; to share my collection, to provide a view about Orientalism expressed by a number of experts, and to provide a visual articulation of the various phases of Orientalism.

Do you see this book as a portrait of yourself?

I leave the answer to this question for others to determine.

You are a highly successful businessman and philanthropist,



involved in many social causes; The Shafik Gabr Foundation most recently launched “East-West: The Art of Dialogue”, a new charitable initiative, attended by Tony Blair, the former British Prime Minister and now envoy to the Middle East. This is meant to encourage and stimulate dialogue between the Arab world and the West. In your opinion can art bridge social and cultural divides, and if so, how can it?

I definitely believe that, at this time, there is a major East West gap in

understanding and a critical need for bridge building within a 'win-win' framework. Art can definitely play an instrumental role in bridging divides and reinforcing common values of understanding and tradition. The Shafik Gabr Foundation, launching the *East-West: The Art of Dialogue*, is focussing on art as bridge building but also on other aspects such as science, media, law and entrepreneurship. The exchanges that the Foundation hopes to undertake are focussed specifically on this 'bridge building' objective, especially at a critical time like now.