



**MASTERPIECES OF
ORIENTALIST ART
THE SHAFIK GABR
COLLECTION**

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illustrations

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WITH WORLD ATTENTION

still focused on the 'Arab Awakening', how is *cultural* dialogue between the East and the West faring? Does anyone care? Egyptian art collector and tycoon Shafik Gabr believes that Orientalist paintings can further understanding between the Arab and Western worlds.

Not only is such dialogue a bridge-builder, as indeed is Shafik Gabr, but it is of real cultural importance right now as the struggle for democracy thrashes on. Gabr is adamant that although Orientalist paintings are often criticised as colonial – and indeed erotic voyeurism or charming kitsch – instead they are valuable historical documents of the heritage of a fast-changing region.

"For many years we Arabs did not reconcile ourselves to Orientalism", Gabr says. "Now, from these paintings, we're getting to know about our own traditions and are owning them – we owe the Orientalists a great debt,

because, although much of what they painted lives on today in our streets and villages, we constantly need to be reminded of the richness and value of our culture. They were early globalists who brought the Arab world to the West and really contributed to mutual understanding. Far from colonising their subjects, these artists actually bridged the Oriental and Occidental worlds".

Buyers of Orientalist art, many of them Middle Eastern, are aware that it is much more than a repository of pictorial memories, precious as those are. As the region invests in museums, art institutions and art education, Orientalism is increasingly perceived as a valuable part of the region's heritage.

Gabr's collection of museum-quality Orientalist art is the most complete and magnificent in private hands in the world today. *Masterpieces of Orientalist Art: The Shafik Gabr Collection* builds on a previous monograph showing how the collection has expanded in the last few years, with more than 43 new additions, some of which are very important, including works by luminaries of the genre such as Gerome 1, Ernst, Deutsch 2 and Lewis. The book includes a foreword by Gabr, emphasising the main theme of his collec-