

JULY 4, 2017

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POSTED ON [APRIL 21, 2015](#)

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## WORLD'S FIRST AUCTION OF IRAQI MODERNISM SETS WORLD RECORD PRICES

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(<http://www.culturedworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Lamea-by-Jewad-Selim-1919-1916-sold-for-£176500.jpg>)

*Lamea by Jewad Selim (1919-1916) sold for £176,500*

The first dedicated auction of Iraqi Modernism anywhere in the world, held yesterday at Bonhams London, set several new world records and made a total of £1,237, 250. Most of the artists in the sale saw new records established for their work and the total was the highest for any group of Iraqi paintings offered in any auction.

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**The sale was followed by a sale of Modern and Contemporary Middle Eastern Art and the two sales made a combined total of £2,473.050.**

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The highlight was Cubist Cockerel (1955) by Shakir Hassan Al-Said (1925-2004), which sold for a new world record at auction for the artist of £194,500 against an estimate of £25,000-35,000. Al-Said, together with his teacher, Jewad Selim, (1919-1961), formed the first modern art movement in Iraq in 1951: The Baghdad Group of Modern Art.

The cockerel is a recurring motif in Arabic culture, and was often the subject for ancient pottery, metalwork and embroidery. It is also the bird which wakes the Islamic world for morning prayer, signalling the coming of the day.

Jewad Selim's portrait of the celebrated Iraqi poet and academic, Lamea Abbas Amara also established a new auction world record for a portrait by the artist. It was estimated at £60,000-100,000 but sold for £176,500. Selim was a sculptor and painter, born in Ankara in modern-day Turkey. After studying in Europe, Selim returned to Iraq and was appointed Head of the Sculpture Department at Baghdad's Fine Art Institute, a position he retained until his death.

Lamea Abbas Amara, the subject of the portrait, was a student of Selim's at the Institute. She became a celebrated poet – she popularised free verse in Iraq and became the country's foremost champion of gender equality and social justice.

Lamea is a perfect representation of the influence of European art on Selim's work, recalling the palette and textural qualities of post-impressionists like Cézanne and Toulouse Lautrec.

Among other works to set new records were an untitled painting by Ismael Fattah which sold for £146,500 (estimate £32,000-40,000) and View of Ashra by Abdul Kadir Al Rassam which made £98,500 (estimate £20,000-30,000).

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Nima Sagharchi, Head of Modern and Contemporary Middle Eastern Art at Bonhams, said: 'This is an important moment in the history of Iraqi art. The auction brought together some of most significant works of Iraqi art from the past century and the response of collectors has shown that the international market now recognises the value and significance of art from Iraq.'

Works in the Modern and Contemporary Middle Eastern Art sale also made records. Five lots of works by and about the Lebanese artist Kahlil Gibran, which had been estimated at £12,600, sold for over £135,000.

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