

Google Doodle celebrates Egyptian artist Seif Wanly's 109th birthday

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The Google Doodle celebrating Seif Wanly's 109th birthday. (Image: Google screenshot)

When Arabs think of modern art's origins in the Middle East, the name Seif Wanly (1906 - 1979) springs to mind.

Seif would have been 109-years-old today. And while he is still remembered by art enthusiasts worldwide, Google celebrated his birthday with a very special Doodle of his famous 1950 painting "Untitled."

This inspirational Egyptian painter introduced [modern art](#) to Egypt, after studying at the studio of Italian artist Ottorino Bicchi (1878 - 1949) in Alexandria.

But having been born into an aristocratic family may have played a role in Seif's involvement in the art world. The privileged artist, along with his

four sisters and younger brother Edham, were home-schooled by private tutors in their lavish Urfan Pacha Palace in Alexandria.

When Bicchi set up an art studio in Seif's hometown in 1929, the Wanly brothers were the first among his students. Seif, who was 23 at the time, and Edham had already shown a keen interest in art, having spent a fair amount of their free time painting at home.

Upon Bicchi's departure in 1934, the brothers were so inspired by their teacher, that the following year, they established their very own art studio together with their friends, the painter Ahmad Fahmi and the filmmaker Mohammed Bayoumi.

It was during the 1950's that the brothers began to regularly tour Europe. They visited France, Italy and Spain, where they sketched and painted numerous scenes of ballet, opera and theater performances, as well as landscapes.

Seif and Edham had a very close work and personal relationship; their works were influenced by one another's and together, they introduced "modern pictorial trends in Alexandria and were among the first to depict international subjects, breaking away from the folklorist style of their contemporaries," according to Encyclopedia.org.

Perhaps the only difference between them was that Seif signed his paintings using just his first name, while Edham signed his by the name of Wanly or E. Wanly.

When Edham passed away in 1959, Seif's grief was heavily visible in his work. In that period, he began to introduce a darker palette of colors and shades in his paintings.

Twenty years later, Seif passed away in Stockholm, where he was preparing an exhibition of his Scandinavian landscapes.

The Wanly brothers were a true gift to the art world in Egypt and worldwide. Their work is displayed at the Seif and Adham Wanly Museum hosted in the villa of the Mahmoud Saïd Museum in Alexandria, the Museum of Fine Arts in Alexandria, the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art in Cairo, the Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, as well as in numerous private collections around the world.

Some of Seif's international recognition came in the form of auctions. Numerous works by the artist were sold at auction, including "Untitled" sold at Christie's Dubai "Modern & Contemporary Arab, Iranian & Turkish Art" in 2014 for \$117,750. There have been several articles about Seif Wanly, including "Sotheby's to Sell Fresh Said Works," written by Marion Maneker for Art Market Monitor in 2010.

Most recently, on March 15, 2015, [Google Doodled Egyptian cinema genius Shadi Abdel Salam](#) in celebration of his 85th birthday.

To read the Wanly brothers' full biography, click [here](#).

By Arwad Khalifeh

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