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## Mahmoud Said - An Artist that Revolutionized Modern Egyptian Art

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An artist of international acknowledgement and fine artistic vision, Mahmoud Said was born in Alexandria, Egypt, the second largest city after Cairo. Alexandria formed the subject of many of his paintings, including the depiction of local Egyptian scenes of peasants, prayers, and of course, the Mediterranean sea, the coast along which he grew up.

Mahmoud Said enjoyed a steady upbringing, attending some of the best schools and moving on to a career in law, to accomplish the wishes of his father, a Pasha of high local stature. After the passing of his father Mahmoud Said continued fulfilling his father's dreams until 1947, at 50 years of age, he began to pursue his own dream in a formal manner, painting. Before this time he would practice it only as a hobby, but had nonetheless created a significant body of work. He had also gained invaluable artistic direction from accomplished artists and learned the skills of masters through studying the fine art displayed in museums and galleries in Europe.

His years of study and practice had given him a unique style that received substantial attention in contemporary Egyptian art. His paintings were novel and mesmerizing, with a rare three-dimensional quality unlike other artists in the region. His art also almost always had cultural reflections that were entrenched in his scenes of peasant girls dressed in traditional attire, of crowded architecture in the city, of groups of men praying, and most importantly, the effect of the vivid sun, the glaring light, and the stillness of a tradition.

With a sculptural or relief affect, his paintings capture the true underlying form of the subject, portrayed with dramatic contrast and a brilliant juxtaposition of light and shadow. His choice of composition is also compelling and was certainly a turning point in contemporary Egyptian art. Both his subjects and compositions present a stunning depiction of local Egypt, with a brilliant palette of true colors that bring out the life in Egyptian culture.

The artistic achievements of Mahmoud Said paved the way for many younger Egyptian artists, giving them courage to pursue their aesthetic dreams and expand their knowledge of color, form and technique.

Today, many of Said's works are on display at the Modern Art Museum at the Cairo Opera House. After his death, his family donated several of his artworks to the Ministry of Culture. His home in Alexandria has been under construction for several years as an effort to transform it to the Mahmoud Said Museum, and is intended to accommodate all his paintings as a permanent collection, in addition to showing the artwork of several other significant Egyptian artists of his time.

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