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Christie's to auction 48 'spectacular' pieces from esteemed Dalloul Collection of Arab art

► The sale features work by artists including Mahmoud Said, Mohamed Melehi and Etel Adnan, with a selection of pieces on show in Dubai from October 23 to 26



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Mohamed Melehi, Untitled. All Photos: Christie's



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Dozens of artworks from the [Dalloul Collection](#) will be entering the market next month, in a sale that is set to become one of the decade's most significant auctions of Arab art.

The [Christie's](#) sale, titled Marhala – Highlights from the Dalloul Collection, will be held in its London headquarters on the evening of November 9. The auction is momentous not only because it marks the first time that pieces from the esteemed Dalloul Collection are coming under the hammer, but because of the high-profile artists represented in the sale.

The auction is listing 48 works, including pieces by [Mahmoud Said](#), [Mohamed Melehi](#), [Etel Adnan](#), [Samia Halaby](#), [Dia Al Azzawi](#), [Inji Efflatoun](#) and [Ibrahim El-Salahi](#).



Fille a l'imprime (Girl in a Printed Dress) by Mahmoud Said (1938). Photo: Christie's

“The collection we are selling is probably the strongest and most impressive coming to the market in a long, long time,” [Ridha Mourni](#), deputy chairman of Middle East and North Africa at Christie’s, says. “Almost all the artists we have are superstars.”

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"This is why the sale is absolutely spectacular," he says. "The quality of the works we are presenting is very, very high. I don't think there will be a comparable collection coming in a sale for a long time."

The Dalloul Collection is regarded as one of the most significant assortments of modern and contemporary Arab art in the world, containing prized pieces from across the Middle East. The collection was started by married art collectors Ramzi Dalloul and Saeda El Husseini Dalloul. The couple began acquiring Arab art in the 1970s; the collection is now overseen by their son, Basel Dalloul, and his Beirut visual arts institution, the Ramzi and Saeda Dalloul Art Foundation (Daf).

"This is really unique," Moumni says. "You don't have a lot of families collecting Arab art for almost six decades."



Basel Dalloul with Samia Halaby's Green and Earth painting. Photo: Basel Dalloul

Dalloul and Moumni worked together to curate the selection for the Christie's sale. Parting with pieces from his parents' collection may have been an emotional process for Dalloul, but it comes as part of his mission to continue their legacy.

"My father was a visionary art collector, who continued to collect until his passing in 2021," Dalloul says. "I continue his legacy of collecting and I am committed to supporting new and emerging talent across the region whilst bringing these masterpieces to the attention of a new generation of collectors around the world."

"My late parents collected art and acquired modern and contemporary artworks from Christie's over many years and I continue to do so," he adds. "The sale of a small number of works has been in discussion with Ridha Moumni for some time."

A highlight of the Marhala auction, and the lot with the highest estimate, is Said's *Fille a l'imprime* (Girl in a printed dress). The oil painting dates back to 1938, during the height of the Egyptian artist's output. The work is estimated between \$455,000 and \$715,000.

"It is an absolute stunner," Moumni says. "You don't usually get much Mahmoud Said, but when you do, it's quite an impressive work."

Two paintings by Marwan Kassab-Bachi, known simply as [Marwan](#), are also featured. *Kopf links gedreht* (Head turned left) is emblematic of the swirling landscape-like portraits the late Syrian artist is known for. It is estimated between \$23,400 and \$32,500.



Kopf links gedreht (Head turned left) by Marwan Kassab-Bachi (1972). Photo: Christie's

"We also have a Marwan from the marionette series," Moumni says. "It is a very rare painting." *Marionette*, painted in 2014, is estimated between \$78,000 and \$104,000.

Halaby is also represented in the sale through two works. Her *Green and Earth*, painted in 2014, features her kaleidoscopic, vibrant approach towards abstraction that has become idiosyncratic of her output. The work is estimated between \$52,000 and \$78,000. *Return*, on the other hand, is an example of her work from the late 1970s, when the artist was delving into methods of abstraction that gave the impression the landscapes depicted were illuminated from within. The work, produced in 1978, has an estimate between \$91,000 and \$130,000.

A mesmerising work by El-Salahi, meanwhile is estimated between \$39,000 and \$65,000. Created in 2001 with coloured ink on Bristol board, the work is an abstraction of a palm tree depicted with clean horizontal and vertical lines. An untitled vinyl work by Melehi is also a highlight and a rarity, given its incorporation of Arabic calligraphy. Produced in 1982, it features the

Moroccan artist's idiosyncratic tidal patterns and is estimated between \$91,000 and \$130,000.

Adnan's *Al-Tayyeb Salih, Daw al-Bayt*, a piece typifying her coveted leporello book approach, is another of the selection's prized pieces. A 26-page piece made in 2011 using watercolour and ink on Japanese paper, the work is estimated between \$52,000 and \$78,000.



Al-Tayyeb Salih, Daw al-Bayt by Etel Adnan (2011). Photo: Christie's

Moumni emphasises that many of the lots presented are masterpieces in themselves, and would be considered individual highlights in other auctions. "We have an amazing painting by Dia Al Azzawi, *Summeria Face*, which was in the exhibition Beirut in the Golden 60s that recently closed," Moumni says. "We have exceptional pictures of [Ahmed Mater](#) from the series *Human Highway*. We have an amazing, large-scale *Untitled* painting by [Ayman Baalbaki](#) from 2009 that is also one of the highlights of the sale."

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The artworks that will be auctioned at Christie's are a small fraction of the Dalloul Collection, which contains more than 3,000 pieces. The decision to sell the selected artworks, Dalloul says, comes with the intent to further diversify the collection. Dalloul's

parents were known to accrue numerous modern works from individual artists. By selling some of them, the collection is aiming to bring in more contemporary names.

"I have decided to sell a select number of works from the Dalloul Collection at Christie's in order to refine the collection whilst simultaneously continuing to grow it by identifying and collecting new talent, and emerging Arab art," Dalloul says.

A selection of the Marhala artworks were displayed at Frieze London, which concluded on Sunday. A selection of pieces will be displayed at the Dubai

branch of Christie's from October 23 to 26, before a London viewing from November 1 to 8.

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