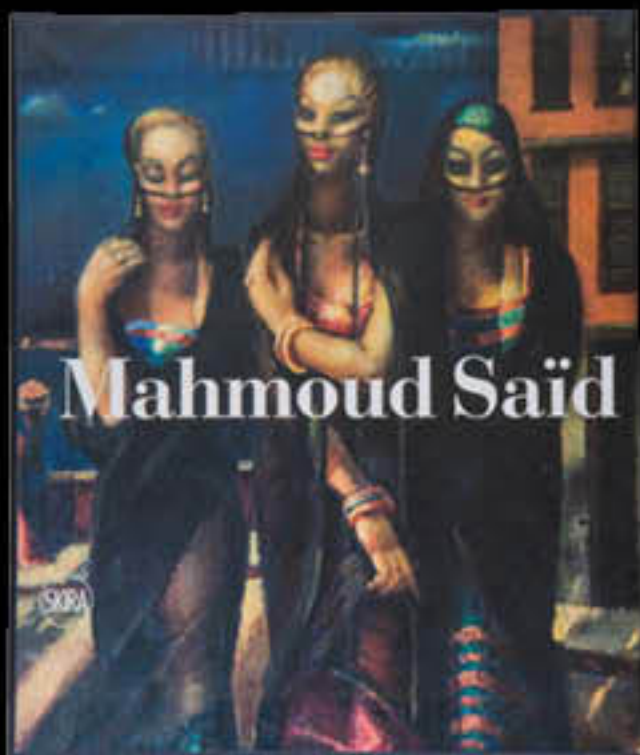


# MAHMOUD SAÏD: *Catalogue Raisonné*

*As the first ever published survey of any Middle Eastern artist, this thorough catalogue raisonné of the renowned Egyptian modernist incorporates all works of art, including paintings and drawings, by the artist known to date as well as in-depth essays related to his outstanding oeuvre and some rare archival material including photographs, correspondances and other documents. By **Rebecca Anne Proctor***

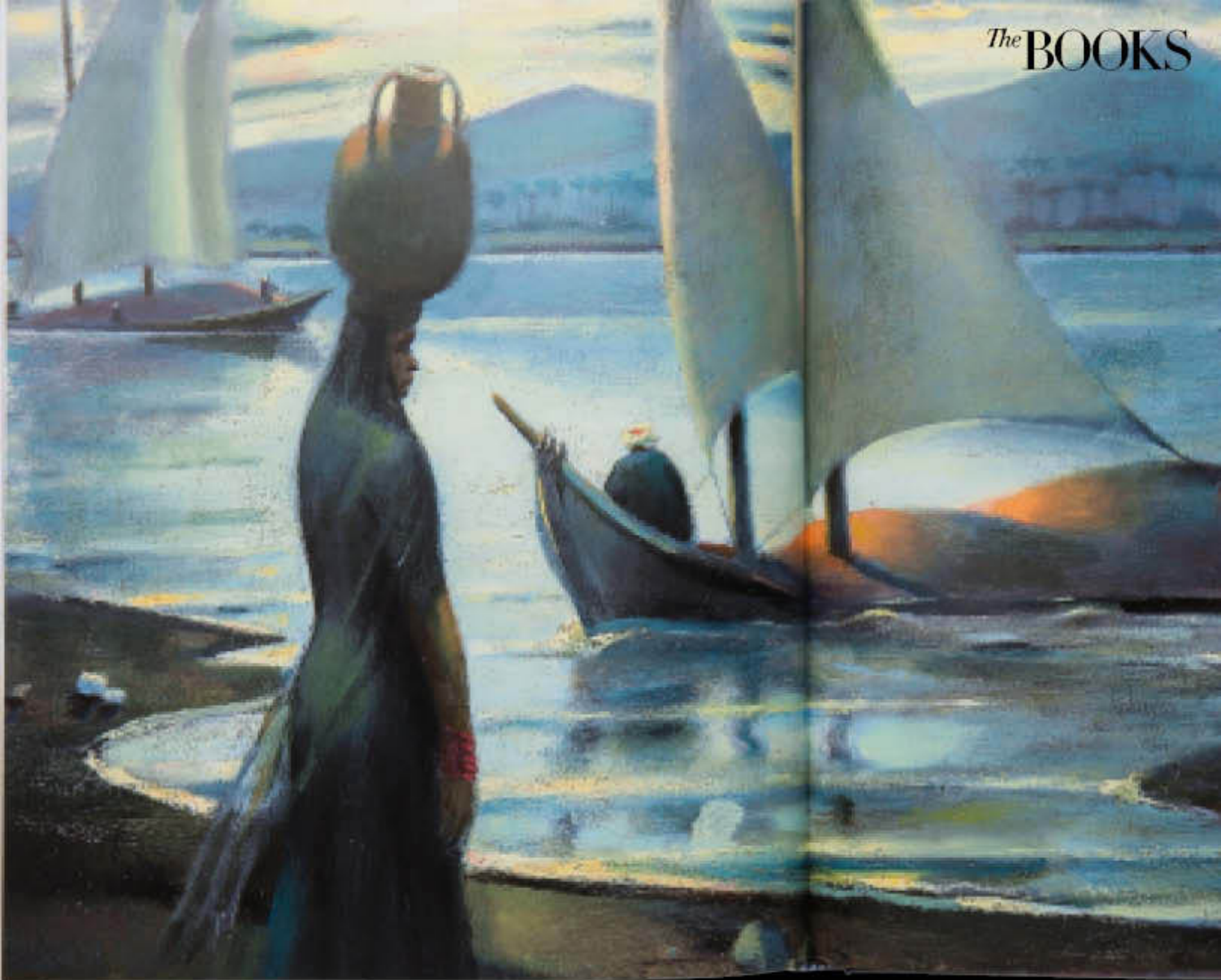


Above and facing page: Mahmoud Saïd Catalogue Raisonné

One of the greatest Middle Eastern artists of the twentieth century, Egyptian master Mahmoud Saïd (1907-1964) is known for his *tableaux* capturing lush Egyptian landscapes, traditional peasant life in the rural country side as well as enrapturing portraits of Egyptian women. Over the last decade countless works by Saïd have made records at auction. In April 2010 at Christie's Dubai Sale, *Les Chadoufs*, painted in 1934, was the top lot of the evening selling for \$2,434,500 (Dhs8,939,484) and setting a record for the sale of any modern painting by a Middle Eastern artist. Just a few months later at the Christie's Dubai Sale in October 2010, Saïd's *Whirling Dervishes* topped that record when it sold for \$2,546,500 (Dhs9,353,294), well exceeding its high estimate of \$400,000 and establishing a new world auction record for the artist. The painting, like all of the artist's works, captures the beauty of Egyptian heritage and culture. It depicts a traditional Islamic ritual of six identically dressed Mawlawi dervishes who expressively twirl in enchantment while performing a Sema or dance. There have been many more top prices at auction for the artist over the years – each time reinstating the magnificence of Saïd's oeuvre.

This year, the artist has made history once again: the catalogue raisonné of his work published by Skira in Milan marks the first ever literary oeuvre of such calibre on a Middle Eastern artist. Written and researched in co-authorship between Valérie Didier Hess, Business Director Christie's Middle East and Dr. Hussam Rashwan, a prominent Alexandrian collector of modern Egyptian art, the two-volume tome comprises 382 paintings and 36 unidentified works of which 56 are newly discovered and 51 illustrated for the first time; 379 drawings most of which have never been published as well as 238 documents and photographs of archival material. A breathtaking hardcover replete with beautiful reproductions of the artist's work, the two volumes also offer 11 scholarly articles on the subject commissioned and





written by leading academics in the field, including Nada Shabout, Dr Amal Nasr and Mohamed Salem, among many others. Also presented are 17 seminal articles on the subject of Saïd's work and Egyptian art previously of difficult access and here translated from French and Arabic into English for the first time.

Flip through the carefully reproduced pages of this crucial literary artefact in the field of Middle Eastern art history, and the reader will relish in a plethora of information on the realm of Egyptian modern history and its artistic milieu. A vital tool for any student or lover of the region and its art, this catalogue raisonné opens up a much-needed portal into art historical documentation of Middle Eastern art history. In fact, the first essay in volume 1 titled *The Catalogue Raisonné of Mahmoud Saïd within the Context of International Art Market Law: New Legal and Practical Perspectives* by Yasser Omar Amine, an esteemed intellectual property lawyer in Egypt, explores issues of authenticity in the fast-developing art market of the Middle East as well as how necessary the catalogue raisonné is for the region's art. "Surprisingly, the catalogue raisonné has until now been a neglected tool in the art market of the Arab world and remains somewhat unfamiliar to the players in the field," writes Amine

underlining the importance of the traceability and identification of artworks within the realm of an artist's global production. Other chapters delve into the exploration of Egyptian identity through Saïd's work; the artist's dialogue with European art; Saïd and the international art market and the materialism and spirituality inherent in the artist's timeless *oeuvre*.

An obligatory compendium for all lovers of the Middle East and its art, *Mahmoud Saïd: Catalogue Raisonné* is the result of five years of dedicated research on the subject. The idea was born in 2010 when Christie's was entrusted to sell the private collection of Dr Mohammed Saïd Farsi, the former mayor of Jeddah, who was an avid collector of modern Egyptian art. The collection included 10 works by Mahmoud Saïd. It was during this time that Didier-Hess met Dr. Rashwan and they embarked on the project to create a *Catalogue Raisonné of Mahmoud Saïd's oeuvre*.

A work of art itself, this monumental tome is a historical feat for the region and the world. With it, Middle Eastern art secures an international reach in the global art world and thus the opportunity to be loved and cherished by an international audience. ■

Edited by Valérie Didier Hess and Hussam Rashwan. Published by Skira. [mahmoud-said.com](http://mahmoud-said.com) and [skira.net](http://skira.net)