

INFORMATION STATEMENT

The Art of Orientalism

27 April 2026 · Sotheby's, London



M. Shafik Gabr at Sotheby's London

OVERVIEW

On the evening of 27 April 2026, the Shafik Gabr Foundation hosted a private exhibition and dinner at Sotheby's London, *The Art of Orientalism: THE POWER OF ART FOR WORLD PEACE*. A curated selection of 51 works drawn from the Shafik Gabr Collection, of more than 200 Orientalist paintings, widely regarded as one of the most significant collections in private hands. Guests representing over 31 countries gathered for an evening that brought together art, diplomacy, and dialogue in the spirit of the Foundation's enduring mission: fostering meaningful exchange between East and West.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Built over 33 years, the Shafik Gabr Foundation's Orientalist collection began by chance with an encounter in Paris, when M. Shafik Gabr came across a painting of Cairo that compelled him to explore the genre. What followed was three years of studying Orientalism before acquiring his first work, a disciplined approach that has shaped a collection of exceptional depth and quality.

The collection focuses exclusively on Orientalist Traveller Painters: artists from the United States, Britain, and across Europe who journeyed to Egypt, North Africa, the Levant, Persia, and Turkey in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. Painters represented include British, John Frederick Lewis, who maintained a studio in Cairo for a decade; French, Jean-Léon Gérôme who crisscrossed through North Africa; American, Frederick Arthur Bridgman, travelled extensively to Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, and wrote several books, including *Winters In Algeria*; and French, Étienne Dinet, who settled in Algeria and embraced Islam and performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. These artists engaged directly with the societies they visited. Their works serve as vivid, layered visual records of a world encountered first-hand.



Old man and Young girl by Edouard Verschaefelt



The Nubian Guard by Ludwig Deutsch

THE EVENING

The dinner brought together an exceptional gathering of royals, diplomats, statesmen, business owners, scholars, and art historians. Distinguished guests included HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; HSH Prince Philipp and HSH Princess Isabelle of Liechtenstein; ambassadors of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom of Jordan; and notable figures from the United Kingdom, including The Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood and the Rt Hon. Kwasi Kwarteng.



HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



M. Shafik Gabr, HSH Prince Philipp, Mrs. Gigi Gabr, and Princess Isabelle of Liechtenstein



Rt. Hon. Tobias Ellwood



Lord Stephen Ball

Shafik Gabr focused on the fact that today's leaders would benefit from the lessons Orientalist travel painters learned, in terms of the necessity of face-to-face engagement and significant investment of time to reach positive results. Claude Piening, Head of Department, 19th Century European Paintings at Sotheby's, spoke about what sets the Orientalist Traveller Painters apart, the risk they took, the depth they brought, and the bridges they built, and why this collection is the most significant of its kind. The evening's keynote was given by The Rt. Hon. Tobias Ellwood, who addressed the state of global security and the pressing need for principled, informed leadership. He is the author of the forthcoming *Ten Steps to Prevent World War 3*. HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Lord Harry Rosebery, Honorary Chairman of Sotheby's, offered closing reflections on the evening and its significance. Lord Stephen Ball, Chairman of the Queen Elizabeth II Commonwealth Trust, closed the proceedings by presenting Shafik Gabr with the Gold Queen's Commonwealth Emblem on behalf of His Majesty King Charles III, in recognition of his work.



Claude Piening



Lord Harry Rosebery

KEY THEMES

Art as a Bridge Between Civilisations

A central thread of the evening was the conviction that the work of the Orientalist Traveller Painters, rooted in direct encounters and genuine curiosity, serves as a cultural bridge between East and West. The works on display were not the product of armchair imagination but of artists who took considerable personal risk in travelling, observing, and recording the societies among which they lived. In a world of deepening division, their legacy reminds us that understanding is built not on assumption but on presence, and that art, more than almost any other medium, has the power to make that understanding last.

Face-to-Face Engagement and the Imperative of Dialogue

M. Shafik Gabr drew a direct parallel between the commitment of the Orientalist Traveller Painters, who invested sustained time in the regions they depicted, and the qualities required of effective political leadership today. Citing the Camp David Accords of 1978, he reflected on the transformative power of human connection between President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin: a moment when two leaders saw each other not as political leaders but as human beings. In a world with over 50 active conflicts, the Foundation reaffirms its belief that deep, sustained, time-intensive, and face-to-face dialogue remains the most reliable foundation for lasting peace.



Arnaut Playing a Joke on his Dog & The Blue Mosque by Jean-Léon Gérôme

Global Security and the Quality of Leadership

Rt. Hon. Tobias Ellwood offered a wide-ranging assessment of the current global security environment, noting parallels with the pre-war climate of the late 1930s: a weakening of international institutions, the rearmament of nation states, the rise of non-state actors, and the compounding threats of artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and climate change. He called for a renewal of strategic thinking, stronger democratic leadership, and greater international coordination among like-minded nations. Despite the gravity of the challenges, he expressed confidence in the capacity of engaged, informed citizens and leaders to shape a better course.



HE. Ambassador Manar Dabbas and M. Shafik Gabr



M. Shafik Gabr, Dale Buxton, and Rt. Hon. Tobias Ellwood

CONCLUSION

The Art of Dialogue is an initiative rooted in the belief that art is a bridge, one that outlasts conflict, crosses borders, and opens doors that politics cannot. History has shown that it only takes one person to take an actual step. The Foundation exists to create the conditions in which that step becomes possible.



Hugo Stempfel



M. Shafik Gabr, Gigi Gabr, HE. Ambassador Ashraf Swellam, and Jumana Swellam



Jules Irens, Harriet Kwarteng, Caroline Dalmeny, and Rt. Hon Kwasi Kwarteng



Makena Timmins and Congressman Van Taylor



Abdellatif El Mennawy and Jon Wilks



HE. Katrin Eggenberger, Youssef Shorafy and M. Shafik Gabr



M. Shafik Gabr and Julia Munoz



Malak Gabr, M. Shafik Gabr, and Gigi Gabr



M. Shafik Gabr and Jorge Coll



M. Shafik Gabr and Daniel Pinto



M. Shafik Gabr, Gigi Gabr, and HE. Ambassador Mansoor Abulhoul



Napoleon and his General Staff in Egypt by Jean-Léon Gérôme




 Monday 27th April 2026
Gehan and Shafik Gabr
 love the pleasure of hosting
The Art of Orientalism
 Dinner

Orientalism*
 The art of Eurocentric imagination between East and West, of
 Oriental Exoticism, and Orientalism, the process of modernizing
 colonial, religious, and linguistic differences in order to create a
 world of contrasting images of understanding between all the
 people of the earth.

*Orientalism is the only system that
 will ever hold the world together.
 -Edward Said

*Orientalism by M. Shafik Gabr

White Wine:
 2023 Pinot Noir from Burgundy, France
 Ghazal, Italy

Red Wine:
 2023 Cabernet Sauvignon, Bordeaux, France

Menu

Appetizers
 Marinated Beef of Yellow Tomatoes, Mint, Eggplant
 Olive Oil, Croutons, Basil, Wild Berries (v)
 Or
 Salmon Tartar, Lemon Infused Olive Oil, Avocado
 Micro Herbs

Main Course
 Fillet of Beef, Potato Gratin, Glazed Baby Carrots
 And White Rice
 Or
 Pan Fried Sea Bass, Champagne Beurre Blanc, Jersey
 Royals, English Asparagus, Salmon Rice
 Risotto of Spring Herb Risotto, Lemon, Brown
 Butter (v)

Dessert
 "The Three Egyptian Pyramids"
 Chocolate Duxelles, Salted Caramel Creams, Chilled
 Cream Mousse
 Or
 Lemon and Verbena Sorbet
 Tea or Coffee
 Orange Blossom Macarons
 Dates of Almond Cheesecake



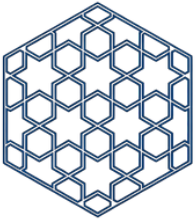
The Offering by Ludwig Deutsch



Entrance



Champagne Pyramid



The
SHAFIK GABR
Foundation



Delight of the Home

Oil on Canvas

Edwin Longsdon

THE SHAFIK GABR COLLECTION

Connect with us



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