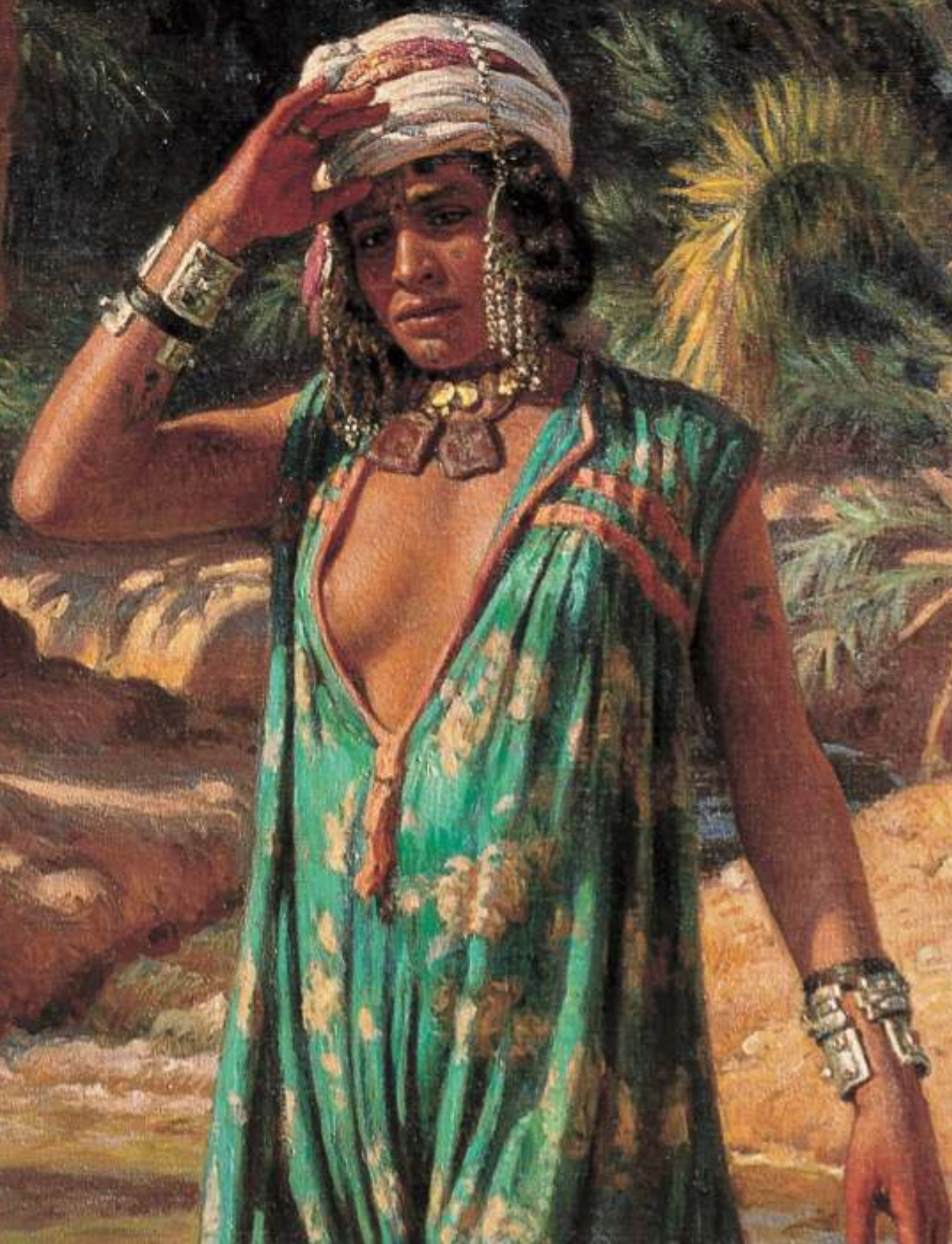


THE ART OF
ÉTIENNE DINET
FROM THE SHAFIK GABR COLLECTION



THE COLLECTION

The Shafik Gabr Collection is a physical manifestation of the collector's relationship with the world of the Orient, an appreciation of the differences as well as the similarities in American and European visions and expressions of that world, and the opportunity such a collection presents for dialogue and a developing appreciation between the Western and Oriental worlds.

Beginning with his first acquisition, *Egyptian Priest Entering a Temple* by Ludwig Deutsch, Shafik Gabr has, over the course of almost three decades, assembled a collection that is impressive both in its richness and variety. With a large number of works by famed Austrian artist Ludwig Deutsch, as well as some of the finest examples of work by the great Orientalist masters such as Jean-Léon Gérôme, Frederick Arthur Bridgman, Gustav Bauernfeind, David Roberts, John Frederick Lewis, Étienne Dinet and many others, the Collection has become one of the most complete and magnificent tributes to the world of Orientalism in private hands, and therefore an important collection for scholars and art lovers alike.

ÉTIENNE DINET

Born in 1861, the son of a prominent French judge, Étienne Dinet studied at the Lycée Henry IV in Paris from 1871 to 1881, in preparation for admission to the École des Beaux-Arts. While attending the École des Beaux-Arts he studied in the studio of Victor Galland. The following year he studied under William Bouguereau and Tony Robert-Fleury at the Académie Julian and exhibited for the first time at the Salon des Artistes Français.

In 1884 Dinet traveled to southern Algeria, with a team of entomologists and came back the following year on a government scholarship. It was at that time that he painted his first two Algerian paintings: *les Terrasses de Laghouat* and *l'Oued M'Sila après l'orage*.

In 1887 Dinet and Léonce Bénédite, director of the Musée du Luxembourg, founded the Société des Peintres Orientalistes Français. And in 1889, together with Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier, Puvis de Chavannes, Auguste Rodin, Carolus-Duran, and Charles Cottet, Dinet founded the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. That same year Dinet won a silver medal for painting at the Exposition Universelle.

By 1903 Dinet was living most of the year in a house he bought in Bou Saâda, Algeria. And, by 1908 he had converted to Islam, eventually changing his name to Nasr'Eddine Dinet. The respect he earned from the native Algerians was reflected by the fact that 5,000 attended his funeral on 12 January 1930 in Bou Saâda, where the former Governor General of Algeria delivered the eulogy.

Cover: Étienne Dinet, *Bather in Oasis* (detail)



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Opposite: *Spectators Admiring a Dancer* (Detail)

INTRODUCTION

Orientalism*

The art of face-to-face engagement between East and West, of listening, looking, and learning with the objective of understanding cultural, religious, and ideological differences to allow for a better world by constructing bridges of understanding between all the peoples of this Earth.

**definition by M. Shafik Gabr*

It gives me great pleasure to present this brief overview of the art of Étienne “Nasr’Eddine” Dinét in the Shafik Gabr Collection. What first attracted me nearly a quarter of a century ago to the paintings of Étienne Dinét was the unique combination of intensity and softness in his work, as illustrated in the first painting I acquired, *The Children of Bou-Saâda on the Terrace*, an oil grisaille on panel painting intended to illustrate *Le Désert*, a collection of Saharan tales and legends.

Dinét’s strength was his ability to capture fascinating images of Algerian lifestyle based on his complete immersion in Algerian culture and Islam. Travelling to Algeria first in 1884, Dinét soon became transfixed by the culture. By 1903 he was living most of the year there and by 1908 he had converted to Islam, eventually even changing his name to Nasr’Eddine Dinét.

In many of his paintings, Dinét has shown the true life and culture of the contemporary Algerian society, reflecting their liberal and open characteristics, which was at times in stark contrast with the more conservative aspects of Western society at the time, for example, see *Night Dance* and *The Lovers*.

Dinét’s deep understanding of the Algerian people and their culture, as well as his talent as a portraitist, allowed him to engage the viewer, not only as an observer but as a participant, as in his painting *Spectators Admiring a Dancer*, in which he invites the viewers to use their imagination in order to complete the scene.

Perhaps no other Orientalist artist attained the same degree of respect from both his peers and the subjects of his paintings. As a co-founder of the Société des Peintres Orientalistes Français and student of the École des Beaux-Arts, Dinét was highly respected among his peers. And as a resident of Algeria and a convert to Islam, he developed a profound understanding and appreciation of the subjects of his work, thereby earning their deep respect. In turn, he introduced the Algerian culture and society to the Western

world, affording the West not only a glimpse but also a profound understanding of a culture different than their own. Thus, Dinet's work is an essential part of my collection and likewise should be of any serious collection of Orientalist Art.

M. Shafik Gabr



The Children of Bou-Saâda on the Terrace (detail)

The mission of one of the Shafik Gabr Foundation's initiatives—*East-West: The Art of Dialogue*—is to promote greater mutual understanding by building bridges between emerging leaders from Egypt and the US, by instigating dialogue and the exchange of ideas between these two cultures. Established in 2012 in response to the increasing tensions building between the East and West, the Foundation sponsors and fosters exchanges between emerging leaders from Egypt and the US, and each year adds new countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Lebanon, Jordan, and Bahrain. For more information, please visit <http://eastwest-dialogue.org>.

ÉTIENNE DINET

FRENCH (1861–1929)

Born in Paris on 28 March 1861, Alphonse-Étienne Dinet was the son of a prominent French judge. He began studying art at the Académie Julian in 1881–82 with Adolphe-William Bouguereau. In 1884 he was invited to visit the Algerian desert with his artist friend Lucien Simon. The experience changed his life forever, leading him to develop a deep connection with Algeria that endured his entire life.

Following his first trip to Algeria, he frequently travelled between Algeria and Paris, and began extensively producing and exhibiting Orientalist works in Paris. During those trips he gradually immersed himself in Algeria's customs and lifestyle, learning Arabic and translating Arabic literature into French. Among his publications was a translation of an epic poem by Antarah ibn Shaddad and several books and journals based on his experiences in Algeria, which together with his paintings led to a better understanding of Algerian customs and traditions.

In 1904, following the death of his wife, he established a permanent base in Bou-Saâda where he bought a house, spending about nine months of each year in Algeria. By 1908 he had converted to Islam, eventually changing his name in 1913 to Nasreddine Dinet. And, in 1929 he undertook the Hajj to Mecca.

Dinet was renowned for depicting his subjects in a realistic manner. His favorite themes revolved around dancers, bathers, children and everyday life in Algeria, often featuring his fellow residents in his adopted town of Bou-Saada. His work is set apart from many other "Orientalist" artists, who never traveled outside their countries, by his understanding of Arab culture and language, portraying his subjects as

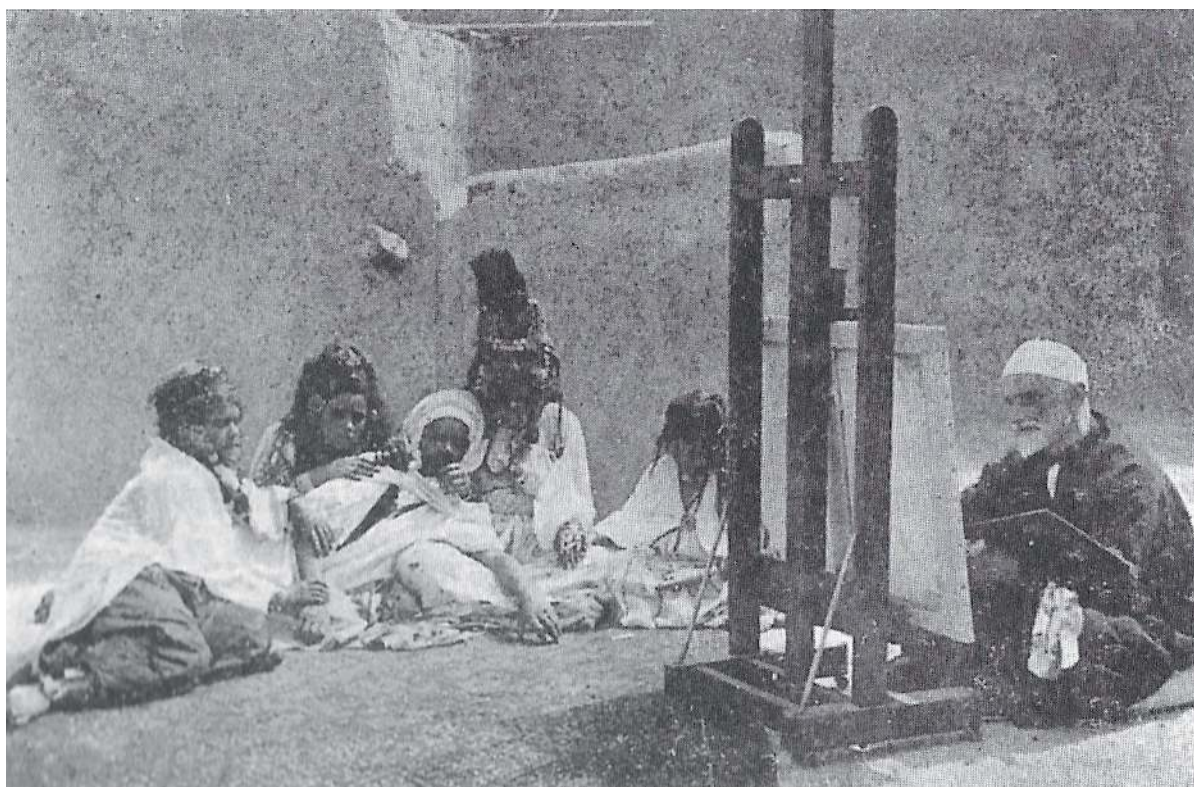


Cairo: Haze, Dust, and Morning Fumes

fellow members of a respected society. As an Arabic speaking resident, he was even able to find nude models in the rural areas of Algeria, where the traditions of modesty were less strictly observed.

Dinet was widely respected by both his peers in France and Algeria. During his lifetime he worked with several renowned artists, such as Paul Leroy, and exhibited in the Paris Salon as well as at the Galerie Georges Petit, where his paintings hung beside those of Sisley and other Impressionists.

In 1887 Dinet co-founded, with Léonce Bénédite (the director of the Musée du Luxembourg), the Société des Peintres Orientalistes Français. In 1889 he won the silver medal for painting at the Exposition Universelle and co-founded the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts with Meissonier, Puvis de Chavannes, Rodin, Carolus-Duran and Charles Cottet. So widely was he respected in Algeria that 5,000 of his fellow Algerians attended his funeral on 12 January 1930 in Bou Saâda, where the former Governor General of Algeria, Maurice Viollette, delivered the eulogy.



Étienne Dinet painting on his terrace, Bou Saâda, c. 1925

BATHER IN OASIS

Signed 'E. DINET' (lower left)

Oil on Canvas

39½ x 32 in. (100.4 x 81.3 cm.)

Painted ca. 1920

Provenance:

Private sale, Paris, 1995

Literature:

Étienne Dinet & Sliman Ben Ibrahim, *Tableaux de la vie arabe* (Éditions Piazza, 1922), p. 13 (illustrated)

Koudir Benchikou & Denise Brahimi, *La Vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 1984, 1991), catalogue raisonné no. 278

When depicting bathers, Dinet quoted and disrupted the odalisque tradition. Indeed, rather than painting an exotic beauty whose features have been modified in order to comply with European aesthetic ideals, Dinet advocated an alternative form of beauty, one that would be faithful to the reality of Algerian women. Indeed, this young Ouled Nail is not nonchalantly lying down in an Ingresque fashion. On the contrary, she stands proudly and confronts the viewer, staring at him, while her robe is quite revealing. With this representation, Dinet refused the fabricated images of the Arab woman and offered the reality of an Oriental beauty.



Postcard of Tunisian Beauty from Bizerte



Bather in Oasis

CAIRO: HAZE, DUST AND MORNING FUMES (LE CAIRE: BRUMES, POUSSIÈRES ET FUMÉES DU MATIN)

Signed, inscribed and dated 'A. Migeon/Souvenir du Caire/E. DINET 1897' (lower left) and inscribed on the reverse 'Tombeau des khalifes' (verso)

Watercolour, Gouache, Charcoal and Pencil on Paper

10 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ in (27,7 x 47,7 cm.)

Painted in Cairo in 1897

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, Christie's, Paris, 17 December 2008, lot 1

Dinet visited Egypt in 1897. His letters about this subject are published in the biography written by his sister, Jeanne Dinet Rollince, *La Vie de E. Dinet*, (Paris, G-P Maisonneuve, 1938).

In the book *Mirages : Scènes de la vie arabe*,¹ he recalled the magical moments when he observed Cairo from afar whilst listening to the muezzins' call to prayer from the elegant minarets of the many mosques. As he watched the birds whirling around in the air, and the haze rising from the nearby Nile - like a cloud of incense, mingling with the steam coming out of the houses - he wrote that the mirage spread all over the immense city, as though helping it to dissimulate the beauty and so many memories.

This painting was dedicated to Gaston Migeon (1861-1930) who, as curator of the Louvre Museum from 1902 to 1923, built up its first collections of Islamic art. Gaston Migeon also organized exhibitions, wrote books, including *Le Caire, le Nil et Memphis* in 1928, and was closely linked to many collectors and artists, notably Dinet.

Dinet's finished work was exhibited a number of times in Paris and Düsseldorf. It is illustrated on page 129 in *Mirages*. The preface was written by Léonce Bénédite, curator of the Luxembourg Museum in Paris and a friend of the artist.

The watercolour was executed on the spot in Cairo, it is a study for an oil on cardboard, dated 1899.² A similar panorama shows Cairo in the evening.³

1) Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim, published by Henri Piazza in 1906 and then in popular editions in 1908 and 1922

2) Illustrated in Koudir Benchikou & Denise Brahimi, *La Vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 1984, 1991), catalogue raisonné no. 445.

3) Koudir Benchikou & Denise Brahimi, *La Vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 1984, 1991), catalogue raisonné no. 444.



Cairo: Haze, Dust, and Morning Fumes





THE CHILDREN OF BOU-SAÂDA ON THE TERRACE

(SUR LES TERRASSES UN JOUR DE FÊTE À BOU-SAÂDA)

Signed, 'E. DINET' (centre left)

Oil Grisaille on Artist Board

19½ x 15½ in. (49.5 x 39.4 cm.)

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, Étude Tajan, Paris, 7 November 1994, lot 120

This grisaille was meant to illustrate one of Dinet's books, written in collaboration with his friend Sliman Ben Ibrahim: *Le Désert*, a collection of Saharan tales and legends. The image is set in Bou-Saâda, a small and charming oasis where Dinet had settled in 1904. Bou-Saâda, which means 'City of Joy' in Arabic, was praised for its dreamy quality by the numerous artists that visited it: the river that passed there was seen as a real source of life in the desert, the blooming vegetation recalled the Garden of Eden.

Dinet, as a witness of this heavenly place, decided to record it in his work. The little girls of the village are gathered on the roof of a house in order to see the celebrations that are taking place in the streets beneath. With their playful smiles, their make-up and their jewellery, they are also symbols of the life that blossoms in Bou-Saâda. This work is a variant of an oil on canvas by Dinet entitled *Festival Day on the Terraces in Bou-Saâda* (*Sur les terrasses un jour de fête à Bou-Saâda*) also known as *Girls on the Terrace* (*Fillette à la terrasse*), which was donated in 1933 to the Musée Fabre in Montpellier.¹

Dinet mastered the ability to present his subjects through a combination of intensity and softness of manner that invites the viewer to become a participant. This is seen in the present work as well as in *Council in the Night*, *Night Dance*, and *Spectators Admiring a Dancer*, amongst others.

1) Koudir Benchikou & Denise Brahimi, *La Vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet* [Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 1984, 1991], catalogue raisonné no. 175). Two studies for this painting are also reproduced by Koudir Benchikou & Denise Brahimi, op. cit., page 86 and page 88, catalogue raisonné nos. 176 and 177: *Deux Fillettes sur une terrasse* and *Fillette tenant un bébé*.



The Children of Bou-Sââda on the Terrace

COUNCIL IN THE NIGHT (CONCILIABULE DANS LA NUIT)

Signed 'E. DINET' (lower right)

Oil on Canvas

44½ x 57in. (113 x 145 cm.)

Provenance:

Purchased from the artist by the father of the present owner in Algeria in 1923

Exhibition:

Algiers, *XXVe Salon Officiel de la Société des Artistes Algériens et Orientalistes*, 1924, no. 65 (titled *Conciliabule dans la nuit* and loaned by the father of the owner)

Literature:

Marion Vidal-Bué, *L'Algérie des Peintres, 1830-1960*, Paris, 2002, p. 241, illustrated

Though best known for his depictions of the women and children of Algeria, and in particular the dancers of the Ouled Naïl tribe, *Council in the Night* occupies an important place in Dinet's Orientalist *œuvre*. Dinet's admiration of Bedouin culture is reflected in several of his paintings, including *The Lookout* of 1906, also in the Shafik Gabr Collection, and in the details of his biography. His frequent travels with Bedouin tribes and profound respect for their way of life inspired a preservationist philosophy, and a sustained critique of France's enduring and escalating colonialist policies. Dinet's efforts at "salvage ethnography" in fact mark each of his canvases, and give to his paintings a depth of meaning and a purpose that are often overshadowed by the sheer brilliance of their visual effect.

In the present work, Dinet presents a rare glimpse into the masculine world of Algerian tribal society. Five men, four with flintlock muskets, crouch down together in the dark of night. (The heavily armed nature of this composition is unusual in Dinet's *œuvre*, and may indicate his desire to correctly record the modernization of the Bedouin, as well as their more traditional cultural and social practices.) Each of the men wears asage green *burnous*, an elaborately wrapped white turban, and a white *djellaba*. The liberal use of chiaroscuro - a vestige, perhaps from Dinet's academic training and appreciation of the works of the Renaissance masters - adds drama to the scene; the composition glows like the burning embers of the fire that must, though not visible, illuminate the temporary gathering spot of this group.

The faces of the men bear a range of rapt expressions. Dinet's consummate skill as a portraitist - again, attributable to a conservative academic education based on the study of physiognomy and the classical human form - is evident in the individualization of each striking countenance. Certain of these figures must have been particular favorites of the artist, as they appear in other works of Dinet. The figure on the left, for example, can be found in *Head of a Man (Tête d'homme)*, *Hunter on the Look Out in the*

Dunes (*Chasseur à l'affût dans les dunes*), and *A Brake in the Revolt* (*Halte de révoltés*), while the eldest member of the group, grasping a cane, bears some resemblance to one of the men in *Spectators Admiring a Dancer* (see page 34). The repetition of these figures from canvas to canvas serves to create a self-referential narrative of sorts; like stills from a very personal movie, they work together to tell a story beyond that depicted in any single composition.

Despite the intense realism of these figures, and the precision with which Dinét has recorded each element of the environment around them, the subject itself is an ambiguous one. Why have these men gathered at such a late hour, and why have they come so heavily armed? Are their whispered words and elaborate scheming meant to protect themselves from a forbidding entity close at hand, or are they - as hunters, bandits, or smugglers - the real danger that brews? One interpretation of the painting is that the armed men depicted are resisting the French occupation. Dinét's obvious delight in crafting such captivating scenarios, and his uncanny skill at bringing them so persuasively to life, may be indebted to the lengths he himself went to experience Algerian culture. Having devoted nearly forty years to a residence in that country and converting to Islam in 1913, one contemporary critic found it possible to claim that, "... Dinét, in a large measure, has become one of the strange people he loves to paint ... he looks and acts the Arab chief."¹

Contemporaries' appreciation of Dinét's distinctive approach, and fascination with his avant-garde lifestyle, is evidenced by the sheer volume of Orientalist works he created and sold during his lifetime, and the adventurous circumstances of their procurement. Purchased in Algeria in 1923, *Council in the Night* is one of scores of paintings sold from his villa in Saint-Eugène (located in the outskirts of Algiers) to private collectors who travelled specifically to meet Dinét. This particular work was then immediately exhibited in Algiers (at the XXVe Salon Officiel de la Société des Artistes Algériens et Orientalistes of 1924 [no. 65], one of the many Salons and organizations Dinét participated in in North Africa and Europe), before being lost to view until today.



Council in the Night

1) *Brush and Pencil*, January 1904, vol. XIII, no. 4, p. 255.





THE LOOKOUT (LE GUETTEUR)

Signed and dated 'E. DINET 1906' (lower right)

Oil on Canvas

19¾ x 24 in. (50.3 x 61 cm.)

Painted in 1906

Provenance:

Private collection, France

Anonymous sale, Christie's, Paris, 17 December 2008, lot 15

Dinet's paintings depict everyday life, including Muslim festivities and devotions, and dramatic scenes, with a rare realism and understanding. His subjects are shown experiencing illness, sadness, mourning, repudiation, blindness, dispute, vengeance, and the constant struggle to survive the unrelenting and blinding sun of the Sahara desert, which Dinet personally experienced twice in the 1880s.

Dinet particularly admired the courage of the Bedouin hunters, solitary, poor, but passionately attached to their arid territory, and sustained by their faith in Allah. His portraits of these men, including the present work, were painted after he had settled in the more convivial Bou-Saâda in 1904.

In this painting Dinet pays careful attention to the details in the rifleman's face in particular, and to some extent his flintlock rifle, while the background and costume tend toward impressionism. Regardless of the blending of styles in this painting, the color palette and use of light are unmistakably Dinet's.

While we do not know what the subject in this painting is on "the lookout" for, whether enemy or prey, he seems intent on maintaining a careful lookout rather than readying himself to shoot. By comparison, in Dinet's *Hunter on the Look Out in the Dunes*¹ (*Chasseur à l'affût dans les dunes*), the subject bends over his gun, ready to shoot his prey. In another work, *Gazelle Hunter*² (*Chasseur de gazelles*), the subject rests his gun on his shoulders, carefully holding the burning hot metal barrel with the cloth of his burnous. That painting was exhibited in the 1903 Salon des Peintres Orientalistes français, while a variant was shown in the Dinet retrospective at the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, which was painted as an illustration for his book *Elfiâfi oua el Kifâr or Le Désert*. Written in collaboration with Slimane Ben Ibrahim and published by Henri Piazza in 1911, *Elfiâfi oua el Kifâr or Le Désert* is an homage to these nomads.

1) Koudir Benchikou & Denise Brahimi, *La Vie et L'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 1984, 1991), catalogue raisonné no. 70.

2) Koudir Benchikou & Denise Brahimi, *La Vie et L'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 1984, 1991), catalogue raisonné no. 72.



The Lookout

THE LOVERS (LES AMOUREUX)

Signed 'E. DINET' (upper right)

Oil on Canvas

35 x 45¼ in. (89 x 115 cm.)

Painted in 1828

Provenance:

Jeanne Dinét-Rollince

Louis Viriot

Anonymous sale, Versailles, 8 March 1981, lot 79

Anonymous sale, Enghien-les-Bains, France, 16 October 1983, lot 37

Djillali Mehri, Paris

Private Collection, Paris

Exhibition:

Paris, Petit Palais, *Centenaire de la conquête de l'Algérie*, 1930, no. 459

Literature:

P. Seutenac, *Renaissance de l'art et de l'industrie*, November 1931, p. 323 (illustrated)

K. Benchikou and D. Brahimi, *La vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Dinét*, Paris, 1984, p. 237, no. 328 (illustrated) and reproduced in color, p. 132

Étienne Dinét et les peintres orientalistes, Djillali Mehri Collection, Paris, 1988, p. 51, no. 71 (illustrated)

In *The Lovers*, one of Dinét's last works before his death in 1929, the artist presents an important subject in Orientalist painting: the reclining female figure. In Dinét's ever-inventive hands, however, the tradition of the odalisque has been disrupted and transformed. Held firmly in the arms of a young Arab man, and clothed in layers of voluminous fabrics, Dinét leaves little room for Europeans' voyeuristic gaze. The sober expression and penetrating stare of the Arab man, moreover, as well as his possessive grasp, deny the glosses of playful eroticism or explicit sensuality that might typically be associated with this theme, and leave in their stead an unfiltered and brazen look at all aspects of modern Algerian life. The embracing by couples depicted in many of Dinét's paintings is a reflection of the liberal and open characteristics of the Algerian society at that time.

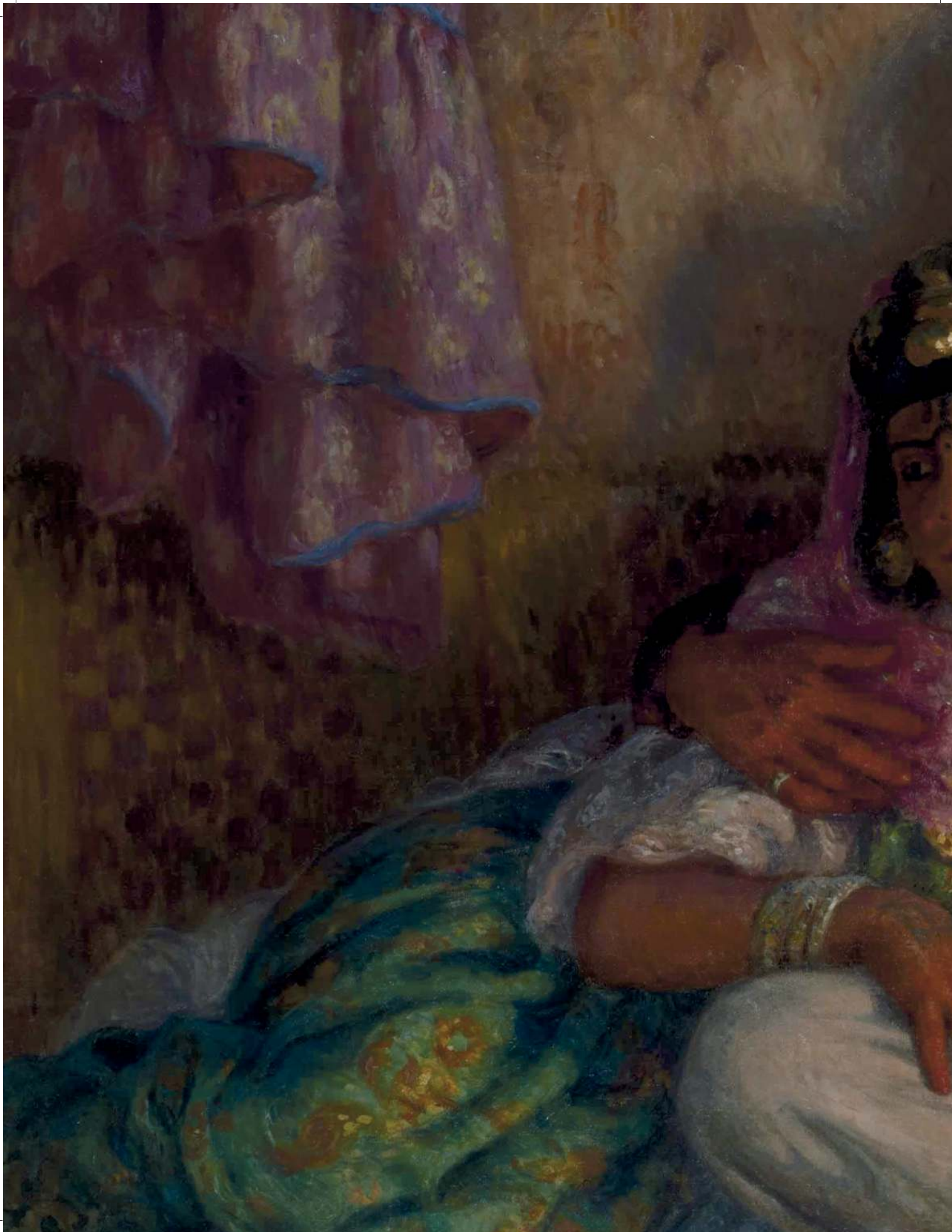
Dinét's confidence in his ability to render Algeria as it was, with little concern for Western expectations or desires, arose from the details of his own biography. Having moved to that country after a transformative visit in 1884, Dinét immersed himself in the local culture, learning Arabic and formally converting to

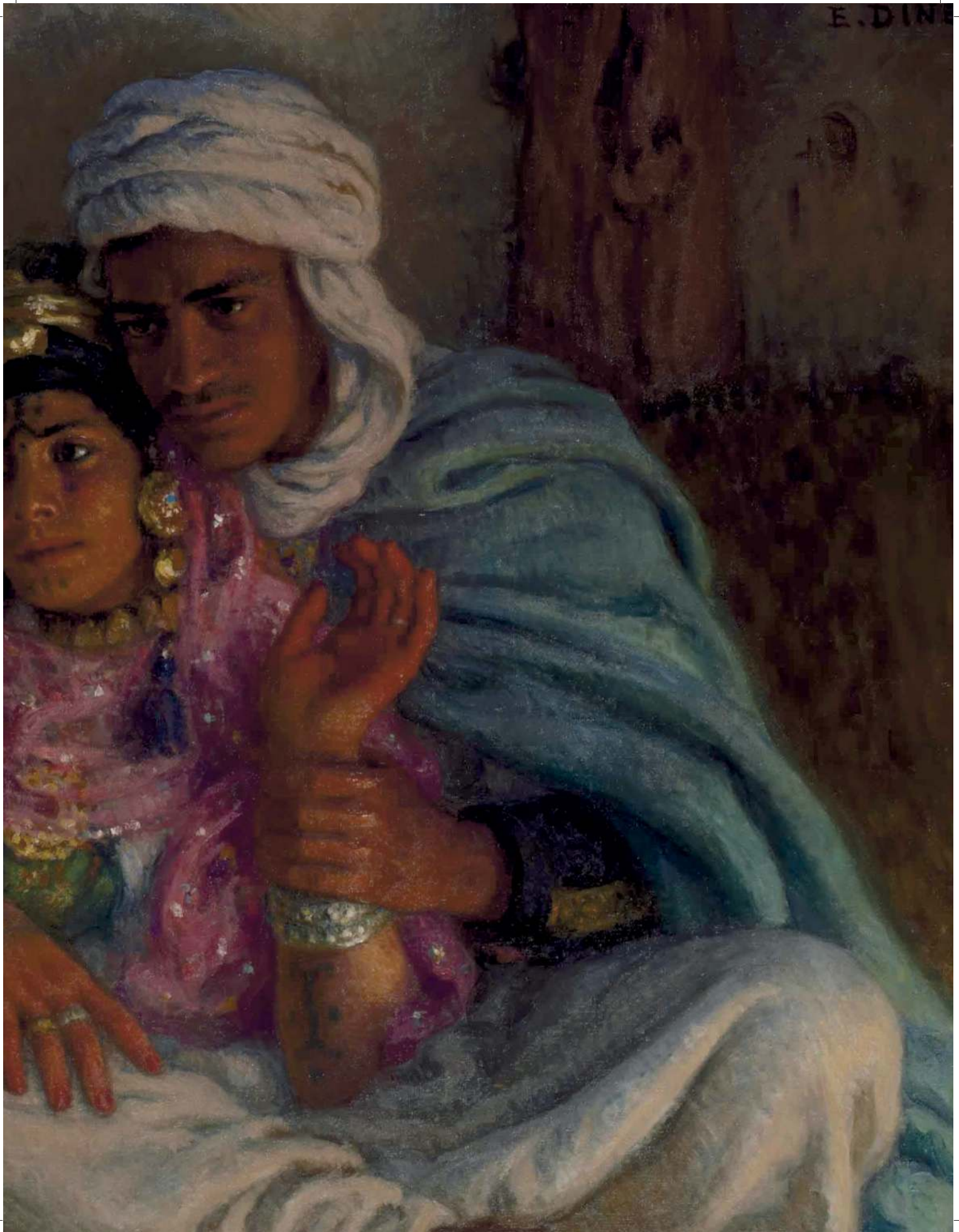
Islam in 1913. (Dinet was among but a handful of Europeans to accomplish the Haj or pilgrimage to Mecca; he did so in 1929.) Such extraordinary efforts to embrace Algerian culture and, he would later proclaim, to “promote Franco-Muslim mutual understanding,” were reflected in the intensely realistic paintings that Dinet produced from the last decade of the nineteenth century forward. Many of these images were based on first-hand observation and on contemporary photographs, which Dinet used both for their documentary advantages and for formal inspiration: the cropped edges and close-up views featured in many of Dinet’s compositions are heavily indebted to this mechanical device.

Not content to merely replicate the camera’s lens, however, or to offer what ethnologists could also ably do, Dinet added his own, distinctive mark to each of the paintings he created. In the present work, a confectionary palette and a flurry of impressionistic brushstrokes serve to reject the starkness and stillness of photography and the calculated methodologies of a scientist’s approach, and remind the viewer of the artist’s active involvement in the architecture of the scene. Dinet’s actual presence is documented by a slightly earlier (c. 1925) photograph of the artist on his terrace, painting a man in the embrace of four Ouled-Naïl women, possibly even his wife and daughters (fig. 1). In addition to such staged tableaux, and indicative of his appreciation and knowledge of North African visual and literary arts, Dinet may also have been inspired by Arabic poetry and Islamic miniatures, which often featured embracing couples and other amorous scenes.



The Lovers





NIGHT DANCE

Signed, inscribed and dated 'E. DINET Laghouat 1891' (lower right)

Oil on Canvas

22½ x 28½ in. (57.3 x 72.4 cm.)

Painted in Laghouat in 1891

Provenance:

Léonce Bénédite Collection

Mrs. Maynard

Anonymous sale, Gros-Delettrez, Paris, 12 December 1995, lot 188

Exhibition:

Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, *Exposition internationale de peinture*, 1891–92, no. 29

Paris, Société nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1892, no. 347

Paris, *Exposition de l'Art musulman* (premier Salon des Peintres orientalistes français), 1893, no. 270

Paris, *Rétrospective Dinet à l'Exposition coloniale internationale*, 1931, no. 31

Literature:

Étienne Dinet & Sliman Ben Ibrahim, *Mirages* (Paris: Éditions Piazza, 1906), p. 169 (illustrated)

J. Dinet-Rollince, *La Vie de E. Dinet* (Paris: G-P Maisonneuve, 1938), p. 70 (illustrated)

Koudir Benchikou & Denise Brahimi, *La Vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 1984, 1991), catalogue raisonné no. 257, p. 37 (illustrated)

Olga Nefedova, *A Journey into the World of the Ottomans: The Art of Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671–1737)* (Skira, 2009), p. 71 (illustrated)

When painting the Algerian world, Dinet committed himself to authenticity. To him, the East was neither a world of sexual fantasy nor a basis for ethnographical research. He resented those clichés, so popular at the time amongst his colleagues, and he decided to adopt a truthful and respectful approach to the exotic motifs he painted.

Having been trained at the very conservative Académie Julian, he soon rebelled against the strict rules of official painting. The young Dinet was looking for a freedom of means and subject that he could not find in the French artistic scene at the end of the nineteenth century. His quest for spontaneity was achieved

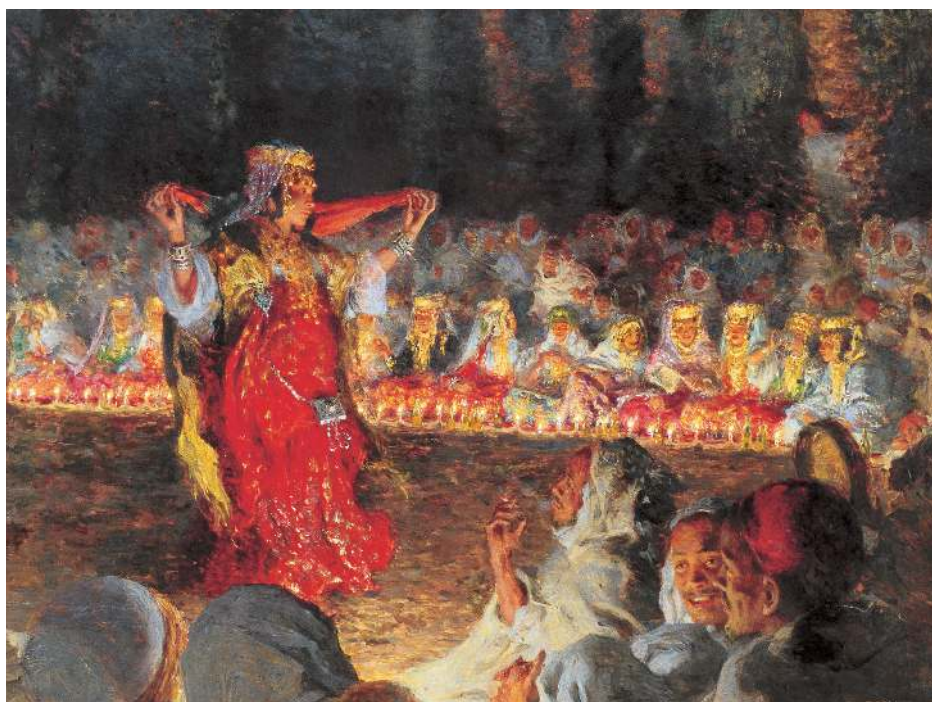
in 1884, during a life-changing trip to Algeria. This journey was both a personal and artistic revelation for the artist. From then on, he focused his work and attention on the depiction of this Saharan life he loved so much: its landscape, rituals, people and costumes.

Laghouat is a South Algerian oasis in which Dinet stayed for quite a long time. It was, at the time, a gathering place for the Ouled Nail, a Berber people who were renowned for their liberalism, openness and fascinating provocative dances.

In the present painting *Night Dance*, Dinet depicted night festivities that took place during his stay at Laghouat. This celebration was the occasion for the Ouled Nail to show off their skills by performing in front of a large crowd gathered to admire them. The painter gave the viewer a very faithful representation of each dancer's impressive and elaborate costume: heavy jewellery, complex head-dress, the woman's hair tied in braids, made-up eyes, tattooed skin, coins worn on the chest. This woman, with all her exotic attributes, does not correspond at all to the ideal of "beauty" promoted in the West at the time. Because of his commitment to reality, Dinet refused to soften those differences, he did not alter the elements to which Western eyes were unaccustomed. Thus, his realism, bright colours and rapid touch provide the viewer with an honest vision of those forgotten times and places.



Émile Fréchon
Dancer of the Ouled Nail Tribe.
Photograph, ca. 1898.



Night Dance





SPECTATORS ADMIRING A DANCER (SPECTATEURS ADMIRANT UNE DANSEUSE)

Signed, and dated 'E. DINET / 1905' (lower left)

Oil on Canvas

33 x 40¼ in. (84 by 102.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Galerie Allard, Paris

Marquis du P. (by 1911)

Verney Seymour Ackroyd, Bradford, Yorkshire (by the 1940s); thence by descent

Exhibition:

Paris, Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1906, no. 402 (as *Dans un café de danseuses [un groupe de spectateurs]*)

Paris, Galerie Allard, 1924 (as *Groupe de spectateurs admirant une danseuse*)

Literature:

Étienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim, *Mirages*, Paris, 1906, p. 171, illustrated

Louis Vauxelles, *Le Salon de 1906*, Paris, 1906, p. 32, illustrated

Les Arts, Paris, no. 53, May 1906, p. 12, illustrated

Camille Mauclair, *Action africaine*, no. 3, March 1912, p. 8, illustrated

Afrique du Nord illustrée, no. 287, 30 October 1926, p. 7, illustrated

Gabriel Audisio, *Larousse mensuel*, no. 318, August 1933, p. 473, illustrated

Denise Brahimi and Koudir Benchikou, *La vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet*, Paris, 1984, p. 196, no. 154, catalogued & illustrated (as *Groupe de spectateurs dans un café de danseuses*)

Painted shortly after Dinet moved permanently to the Algerian oasis town of Bou Saâda, and in the same year that he became an Officer of the Légion d'Honneur, *Spectators Admiring a Dancer* is both one of the artist's most typical and most exceptional works. Dinet's interest in the women of Algeria, and in particular the dancers of the Ouled Naïl tribe, was well established by 1905, and images of these performers had become a prominent part of his now-exclusively Orientalist oeuvre. (Dinet's *Night Dance* of 1891, also in the Shafik Gabr Collection, is an early example of this theme.) Unlike these works, however, in which the elaborate costumes and rhythmic gestures of the female dancers are made the focus of the composition, here the dancer is an absent presence on the scene, evoked only by the gestures and expressions of the men who watch her perform. Dinet's technique here invites us to imagine both how and to what the men depicted are reacting.

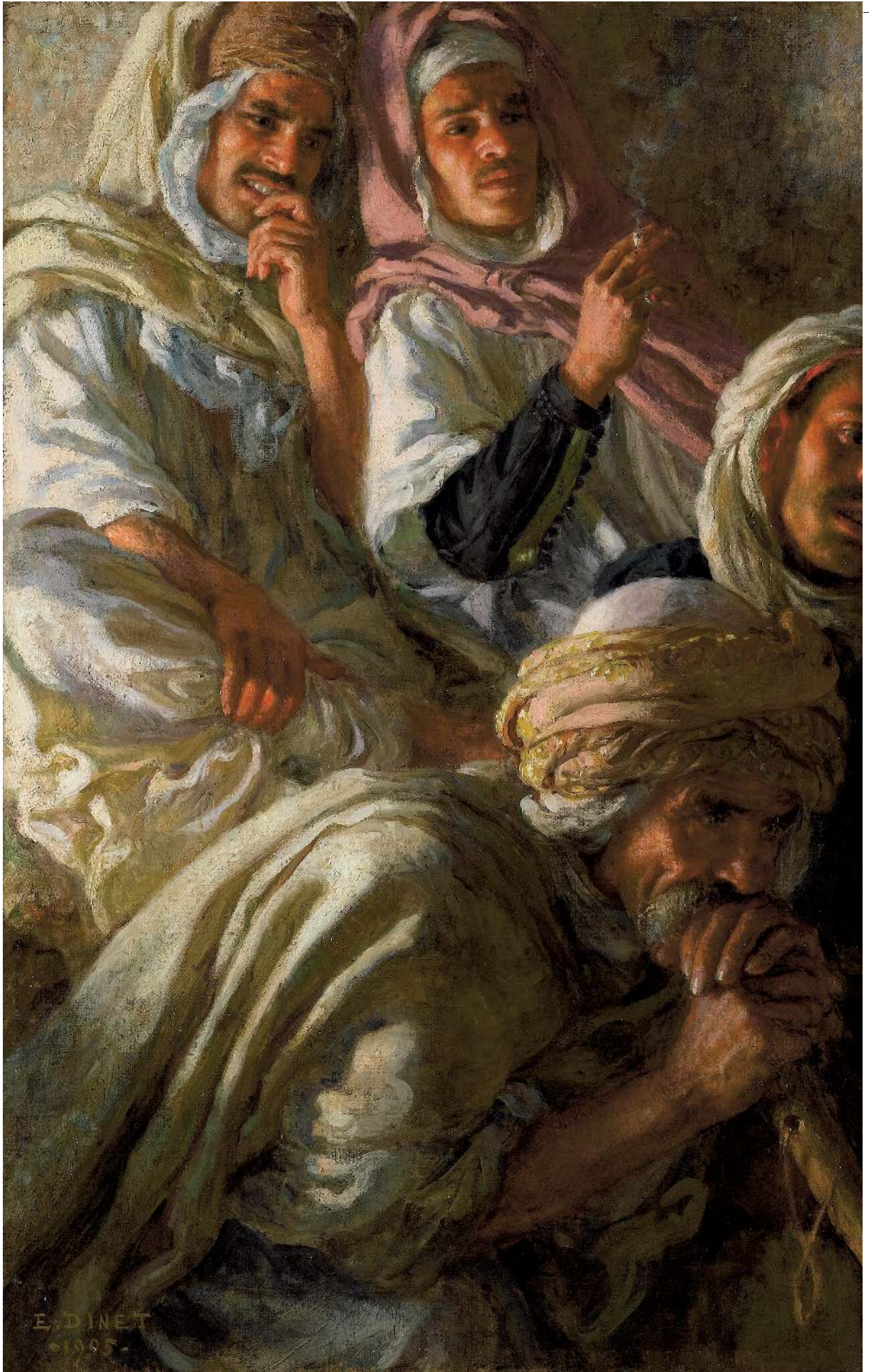
The dramatic, raking light that crosses Dinet's canvas highlights the countenances of each of the men in the audience, emphasizing their various states of rapt wonder and delight. (The critic George Lafenestre [1837-1919], writing on Dinet in 1890, had commended the artist for his understanding of light and shadow, and numbered him "among the first to express the extraordinary and unexpected effects of the sun on figures in the open air."¹) The artist's belief in the narrative potential of facial expression, and its importance to the meaning and interpretation of a work of art, is here made abundantly clear: Each visage that Dinet records demands individual attention, as it not only provides information about the nature of the unseen performance, but about the lives and distinct temperaments of the spectators as well. As one man languidly smokes his cigarette, another intently sips his tea, and a third puts his hands to his head in a gesture that hovers between comfortable practicality and utter disbelief; in their miens and in their actions, and in the weathered face of the mustachioed elder in the foreground, with steel-blue eyes locked forward, Dinet confirms his reputation as an accomplished portraitist and documenter of human emotion.

Dinet's ethnographic precision - reminiscent of the collage-like facial studies of Emile Deckers (1885-1968), an artist also in the Shafik Gabr Collection - was not without qualification. Indeed, the artist's own impassioned enthusiasm for his subject matter may be gauged by the impressionistic style of the work, with its animated brushstrokes and swirling, sinuous lines of thickly applied paint. These more emotive formal qualities - a far cry from the stillness and cold objectivity of the photographic images that often inspired him - imbue the canvas with a sense of immediacy and vitality, and suggest the energy and engagement of the hand that created it.

Dinet's enduring study of the Ouled Naïl tribe, and North African culture more generally, was also aided and informed by his close personal friendship with the Algerian writer Sliman Ben Ibrahim (1870-1953). (Their bond was allegedly forged in 1888 when Sliman saved Dinet's life during a desert skirmish.) As a cultural insider, Sliman provided Dinet with a wealth of valuable information, and gave him entrée into those aspects of Algerian society that were denied to most. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that in this painting Dinet withholds his newfound expertise, eliminating the one figure European audiences would undoubtedly have most wanted to see. (Likely begun in Algeria and completed during his annual return to Paris each winter, *Spectators Admiring a Dancer* was exhibited at the Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1906 [no. 402]. An engraving after this work was included in Dinet's *Mirages* published in the same year, a project undertaken with Sliman, to whom this painting was inscribed [on reverse] and dedicated.) Confounding all expectations, and offering a viewpoint that few other commercial artists would have dared, *Spectators Admiring a Dancer* stands as a highly original - and deeply personal - contribution to the genre.

image on next page: *Spectators Admiring a Dancer*

1) "Les Salons de 1890," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, vol. 3, Paris, 1890, p. 925. For similar recognition and praise, see Léonce Bénédite, "Art et Orient: L'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet," *Art et décoration* 14 [1903], p. 308.)





WRESTLING BATHERS (LA LUTTE DES BAIGNEUSES)

Signed, 'E. DINET' (lower right)
Oil Grisaille on Artist Board
18 x 13¾ in. (45.7 x 35 cm.)

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, Étude Tajan, Paris, 7 November 1994, lot 119

Exhibition:

Paris, *Rétrospective Dinet à l'Exposition coloniale internationale, 1931, no. 53*

Literature:

Sliman Ben Ibrahim, *Le Désert*, illustrations en couleurs d'Étienne Dinet (Paris: Éditions Piazza, 1911), p. 57 (illustrated with title *Un Groupe de joyeuses compagnes s'amusant à lutter*)

Bathers were one of Dinet's favourite subject matters and certainly the part of his œuvre that has been the most misunderstood and misinterpreted. *Wrestling Bathers* belongs to a series of grisailles meant to illustrate *Le Désert*, a compilation of Saharan tales, collected by Sliman Ben Ibrahim, translated and illustrated by Dinet. This version, a variation of a larger painting,¹ depicts two young women, set in the middle of nature, displaying their young and beautiful bodies to the viewer. They are wrestling and this childish game actually enhances the roundness of their curves and the suggestiveness of their poses.

When presented with this painting, one might think that Dinet is moving away from the realism he usually complies with. The world he offers the viewer is an ideal garden that resembles a lost paradise. He is entering the realm of Orientalist fantasy. Yet that is not at all the feeling Dinet intended to convey in this work. Though the painting looks like a fabrication, it faithfully describes everyday life as it was in Bou-Saâda at the time: during the summer, young women would do the laundry in the river. There, if they thought they were safe from male gazes, they would undress and play in the water. Dinet shows the girls as they would have been, full of energy and life, with their traditional head-dress and heavy jewellery. This painting of an ordinary day at Bou-Saâda is absolutely out of the ordinary for a Westerner: it carries a strong sensual appeal and erotic charge.

1) This work is a variant of an oil on canvas entitled *La Lutte des baigneuses*, dated 1909, Koudir Benchikou & Denise Brahimi, *La Vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Dinet* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 1984, 1991), catalogue raisonné no. 293.



Wrestling Bathers

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- Léonce Bénédite, "L'oeuvre d'Étienne Dinet," *Art et décoration*, vol. 14 (1903), pp. 305-15
- Léonce Bénédite, "Étienne Dinet," *L'Art et les Artistes*, vol. 10 (1910), pp. 163-72
- Roger Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930*, Berkeley, 2003
- Denise Brahimi, with a catalogue raisonné by Koudir Benchikou, *La vie et l'oeuvre de Étienne Dinet*, Paris, 1984
- Étienne Dinet and Sliman ben Ibrahim, with ornamental pages by Mohammed Racim, *Khadra, danseuse Ouled Naïl*, Paris, 1926
- Jeanne Dinet Rollince, *La vie de Étienne Dinet (1861-1929)*, Paris, 1938
- Étienne Dinet et les peintres orientalistes: collection Djillali Mehri*, exh. cat., Paris, 1988
- Barkahoum Ferhati, "Le musée national Nasr Ed din Étienne Dinet de Bou-Saada; Une expérience avortée," *NAQD*, vol. 17, issue 1 (2003), pp. 73-96
- Frederick W. Morton, "Étienne Dinet, Painter of the Orient," *Brush and Pencil*, vol. 13, no. 4 (Jan. 1904), pp. 250-60, 262, 266
- James Parry, *Orientalist Lives: Western Artists in the Middle East, 1830-1920*, Cairo, 2017 (forthcoming)
- François Pouillon, "Legs colonial, patrimoine national: Nasreddine Dinet, peintre de l'indigène algérien," *Cahier d'Études Africaines* vol. 30, no. 119 (1990), pp. 329-63, 392
- François Pouillon, *Les deux vies d'Étienne Dinet, peintre en Islam: l'Algérie et l'héritage colonial*, Paris, 1997
- Louis Robin, "Étienne Dinet, peintre de l'Islam," *L'Action africaine*, vol. 24 (1913), pp. 206-15
- Paul Siblot, "Étienne Dinet," *Recherches biographiques sur l'Algérie*, vol. 2 (1984), pp. 28-40
- José Silbert, "Le peintre orientaliste Étienne Dinet (1861-1929)," *Mémoires de l'Académie de Marseille*, 1930, pp. 121-28
- Lynne Thornton, "Étienne Dinet," in *Les orientalistes, peintres voyageurs*, Paris, 1983, pp. 202-7
- Marion Vidal-Bué, *L'Algérie des Peintres, 1830-1960*, Paris, 2002
- Shoku Watanabe, "Imperialism, Islam, and the Transformation of the Self: The Pilgrimage of Nacir ed-Dine Dinet (1861-1929)," *IDE (Institute of Developing Economies) Discussion Paper*, vol. 634 (March 2017)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

Lynne Thornton

Contributed the essays for the paintings: *Cairo: Haze, Dust and Morning Fumes* and *The Lookout*.

Lynne Thornton worked for Sotheby's London from 1960 to 1971. She then settled in Paris, where she was named an accredited expert to the French auctioneers. Her books, articles for the international press, as well as contributions to exhibition catalogs for museums, galleries and private collectors, have been published since 1966. She has specialised in Orientalist and Africanist paintings since the mid 1970's.

Emily M. Weeks

Contributed the essays for the paintings: *The Lovers*, *Council in the Night*, and *Spectators Admiring a Dancer*.

Emily M. Weeks received her Ph.D. from the Department of the History of Art at Yale University in December 2004. Currently she is an independent art historian and consultant for museums, auction houses, and private collectors in America, Europe, and the Middle East. Her areas of expertise include Orientalism and nineteenth-century British and European visual culture. Dr. Weeks has lectured widely in these fields, both in the United States and internationally. Dr. Weeks has also organized and contributed to a number of critically acclaimed exhibitions, including *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting, 1830-1925* (2008-2009; organized by Tate Britain). Her extensive list of publications includes contributions to scholarly anthologies, academic and popular journals, books on Orientalist art, numerous exhibition and auction catalogues, and content for museum websites. Dr. Weeks's first book, *Cultures Crossed: John Frederick Lewis (1804-1876)* and the *Art of Orientalism*, was published by Yale University Press in 2014.

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Mr. Shafik Gabr, Chairman and Managing Director of the ARTOC Group for Investment & Development, is a renowned leader in international business, one of the world's premier collectors of Orientalist art, and an accomplished philanthropist.

ARTOC, established in 1971, is a multidisciplinary investment holding company with investments in infrastructure, real estate, engineering and automotive. Over the past three years, its focus is shifting to technology and biosciences.

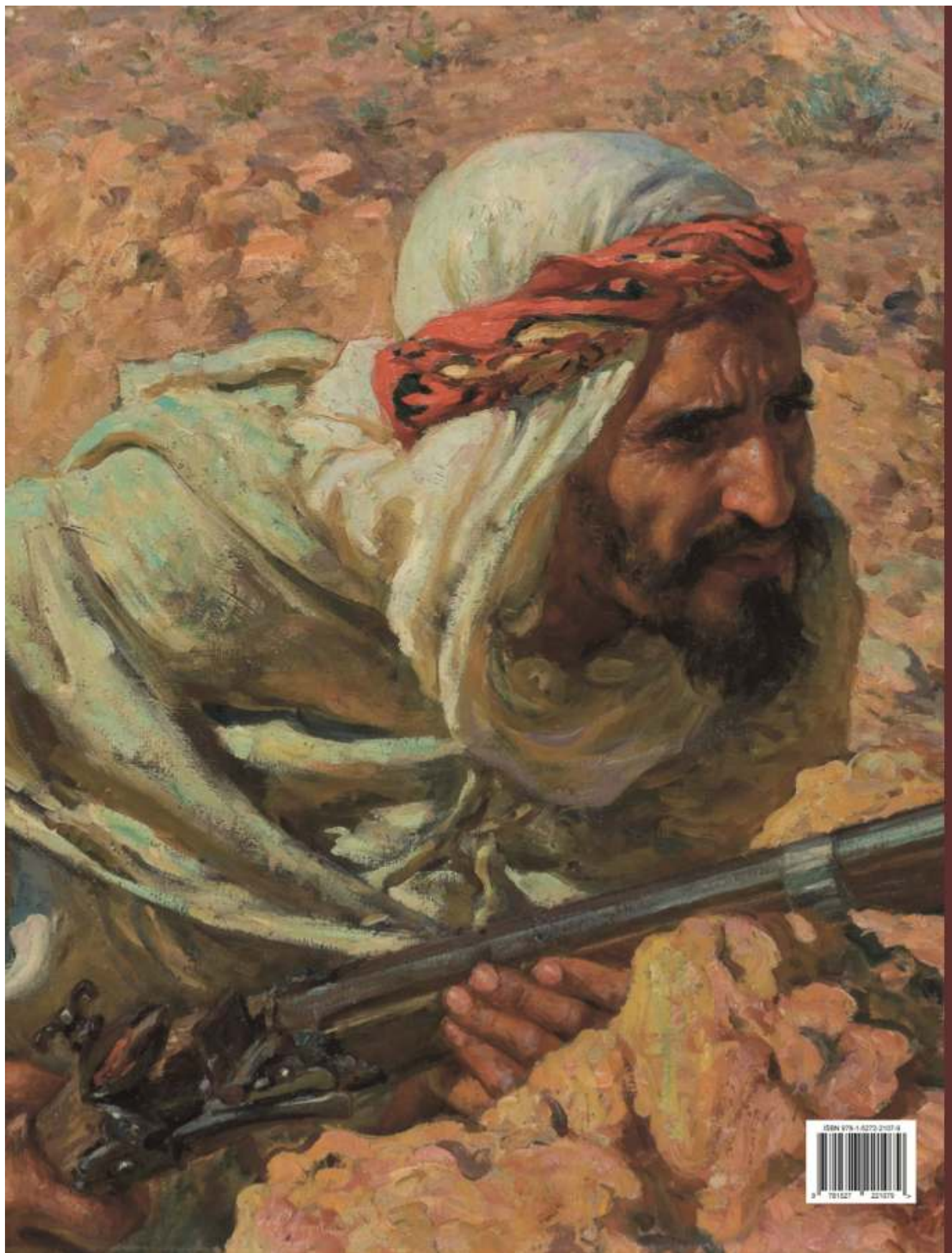
Mr. Gabr is the Chairman and a founding member of Egypt's International Economic Forum, member of the International Business Council of the World Economic Forum and serves on Yale University President's Council on International Activities. Mr. Gabr is a Founding Member of the Wilson Global Advisory Council and Member of the Metropolitan Museum's International Council. Mr. Gabr serves on the Advisory Boards of Omega Capital, Stanhope Capital, LLP and the Global Advisory Council of the Mayo Clinic. Mr. Gabr is also a member of the Friends of Fletcher, Tufts University. Mr. Gabr was a founder of the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt in 1982, serving as its first Egyptian President from 1995 until 1997.

Among Mr Gabr's numerous awards are the Foreign Policy Association's award for Corporate Responsibility (2009), the Meridian Global Citizen Award (2014), the Middle East Institute's Visionary Award (2014), the American University in Cairo's Global Impact Award (2015), the College of Mount Saint Vincent's Saint Vincent de Paul Award (2016), the Drew University's Peacebuilder Award (2016), and the Policy Direction and Leadership Award from the London Center for Policy Research (2017).

Through the Shafik Gabr Social Development Foundation, Mr. Gabr is helping to improve education and health throughout his native Egypt. In 2012 Mr. Gabr established in the US the Shafik Gabr Foundation which launched in November 2012 the East-West: The Art of Dialogue initiative (see www.eastwestdialogue.org) promoting exchanges between the US and Egypt with the purpose of cultural dialogue and building bridges of understanding.

Mr. Gabr holds a BA in Economics and Management from the American University in Cairo and an MA in Economics from the University of London.

Back Cover: Étienne Dinet, *The Lookout* (detail)



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