

THE ART OF
ITALIAN PAINTERS
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 both scholars and art lovers.

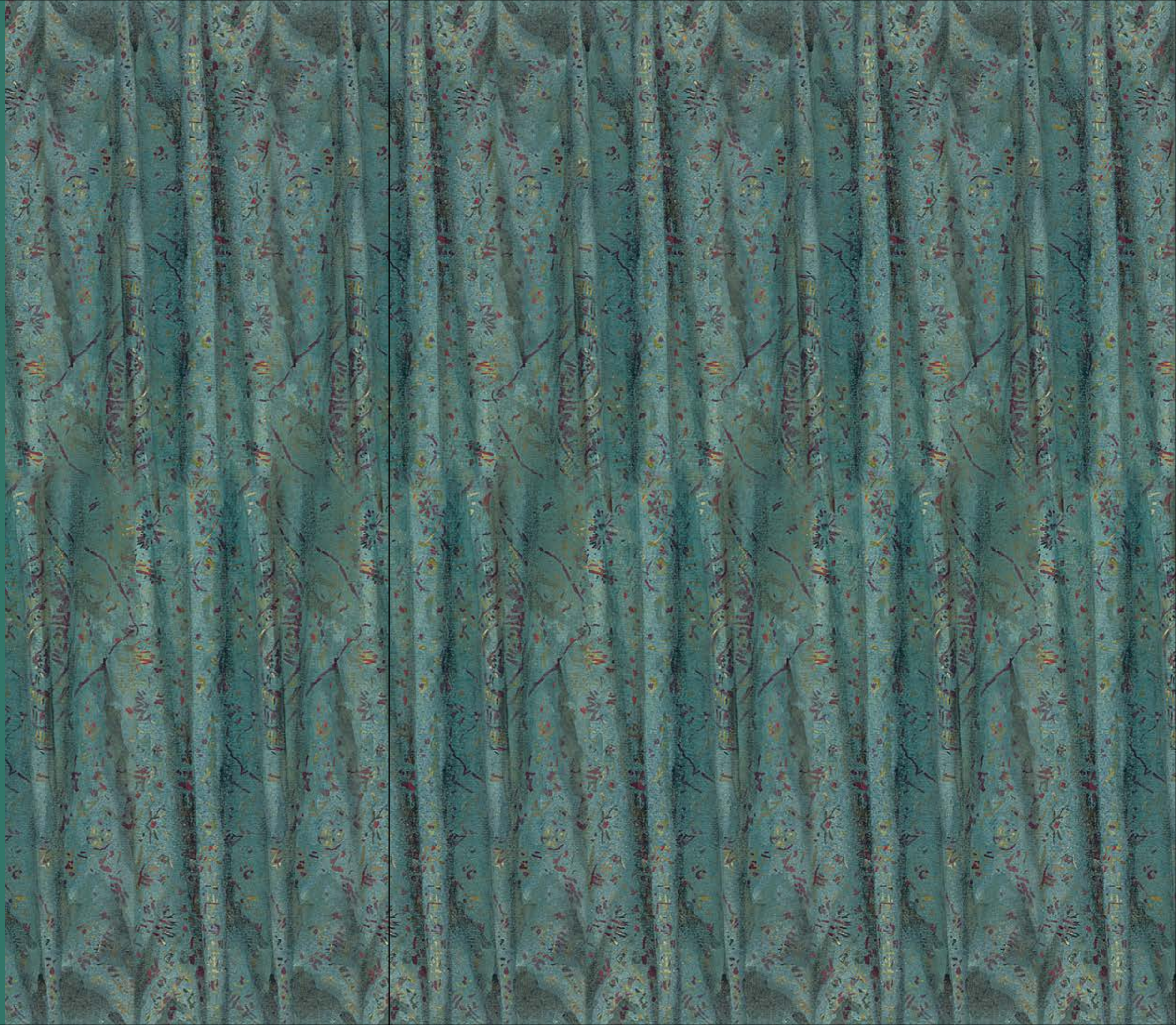
ORIENTALISM IN ITALY

Italy is undoubtedly one of the most culturally rich countries in the world, and houses some of the world's most important works of art. The reasons behind this are complex and manifold, but it is undoubtedly partially due to the multitude of different cultural influences on its artists. In 19th century, many Italian painters drew their inspiration from the Middle East and North Africa, where they travelled and spent time exploring the intricacies of the culture in order to represent it in their paintings.

The Shafik Gabr Collection prides itself on having prime examples of the exquisite array of Italian Orientalist art. This booklet explores the works of Filippo Bartolini, Hermann Corrodi, Nicola Forcella, Girolamo Gianni, Alberto Pasini, Giulio Rosati and Gustavo Simoni.

Having actually visited the places in the Orient which they painted, these artists were able to achieve great authenticity, immediacy and accuracy of idiosyncrasies in depicting everyday scenes, architecture, local people, clothing and customs of the culture and society of the countries they visited. This made them well-respected and popular with their peers and art aficionados alike.

Cover: Corrodi, *Kiosk of Trajan, Philae on the Nile*



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Opposite: Giulio Rosati, *A Game of Tavli*

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

Orientalist traveller painters of the 19th century were early globalists, pioneers of communication between the East and the West, and their paintings can be considered the first newsreels. This movement spanned many countries. Artists from all over Europe and the United States took numerous, often hazardous journeys to Egypt, Persia, Turkey, Palestine, Syria, Algeria, and all over North Africa and the Middle East. These journeys enriched both the artists and the locals of the places they visited – cultural exchange and learning always took place. Furthermore, the travels of Orientalists were culturally enriching also to the places of origin of those artists, as they brought home with them experiences, friendships, artifacts, and a whole array of knowledge about the culture, art, customs, architecture, nature, and even dress of the people from faraway Eastern lands.

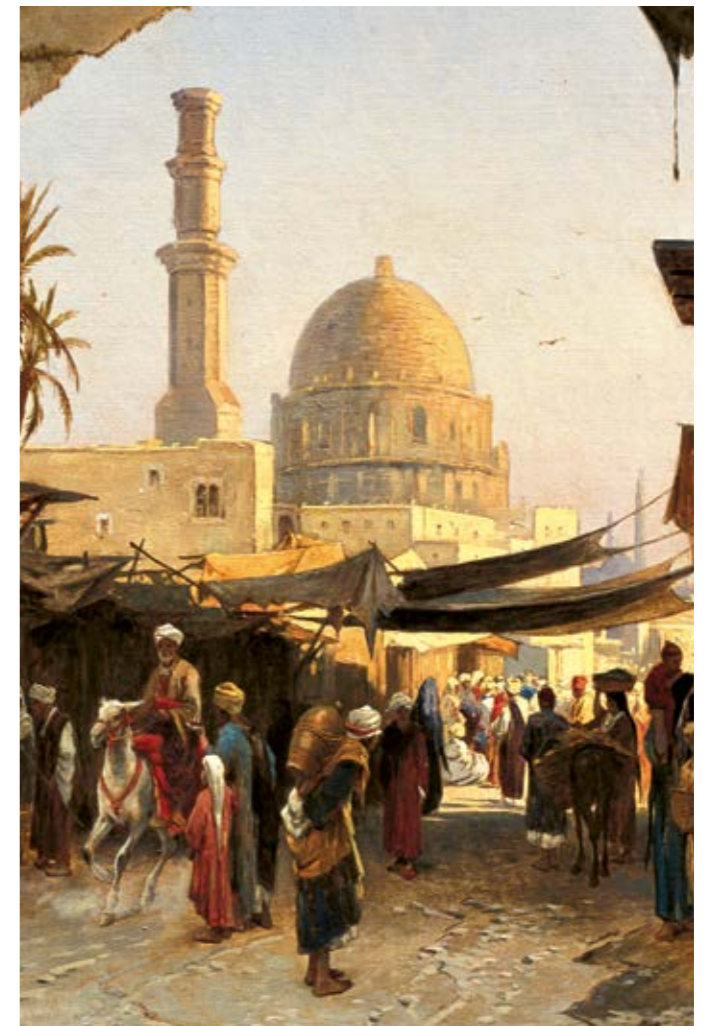
In this booklet I will focus on the works of Orientalists from Italy whose works I am fortunate to have in the Shafik Gabr Collection - Filippo Bartolini, Hermann Corrodi, Nicola Forcella, Girolamo Gianni, Alberto Pasini, Giulio Rosati and Gustavo Simoni.

All of the seven famous painters were fascinated by the Orient, so much so that they took their time and effort to repeatedly visit it. Hermann Corrodi travelled throughout North Africa and the Middle East, visiting Egypt, Syria, Cyprus and Constantinople. Nicola Forcella lived in Cairo for many years and taught in the Khedival art school there. We know that Girolamo Gianni visited Egypt, although not much is known about the details. Alberto Pasini accompanied the mission of the French diplomat Prosper Bourée to Persia where he spent a year painting the people, local customs and landscape – and fascinated with the Orient, he later travelled to Egypt in 1860, Constantinople between 1867 and 1869, and to Asia Minor and Syria in 1873. From 1877 to 1879, Gustavo Simoni travelled to North Africa where he visited Tunisia and Algeria, and then returned to North Africa on several occasions during the 1880s.

For two of these artists - Filippo Bartolini and Giulio Rosati - we do not have details of their travels to the Middle East. However, their paintings attest to their intimate knowledge of the Orient, such as the intricate details of the Middle Eastern architecture, clothes, artifacts and customs. It is sufficient to take a look at Bartolini's or Rosati's images of carpet sellers, traders, horsemen and warriors, to safely presume that they have witnessed them first-hand.

Giulio Rosati became one of the most accomplished Italian Orientalists - the highly finished style he achieved is more traditionally associated with the hyperrealist oil paintings of artists such as Ludwig Deutsch and Jean-Léon Gérôme. His attention to detail and his superb technical capability with watercolour made his paintings look almost more 'real' than the photographs from which most were derived.

Some artists such as Bartolini, Forcella, Rosati and Simoni focused on the everyday lives of the people of the Orient – carpet sellers, musicians, café and market scenes (such as Bartolini's *Carpet Seller*, Corrodi's *Oriental Market Scene*, Forcella's *Coffee Shop* etc). Sometimes, however, the scenes were more of a military nature – such as *Arab Warriors* by Rosati or Corrodi's *The Ambush*. Others like Girolamo Gianni were more interested in the landscape scenes of the Middle East – ancient pyramids, temples, tombs etc, or maritime scenes like Pasini.



Hermann Corrodi, *An Oriental Market Scene* (detail)

All of the artists, however, have in common their utmost fascination with, respect for and meticulous study of the Orient.

Furthermore, they all showed great skill in balancing light and colour; in minutely focusing on the details of the draperies, patterns and facial expressions of their characters. Their paintings reveal a fascinating story of the Middle East experienced and truly lived in, and the effort that the artists made to understand the life, the people, and the culture of the countries they visited. All this combined proved to be vital for their success as Orientalists, and true ambassadors of the East.

M. Shafik Gabr

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://eastwestdialogue.org>

THE CARPET SELLER

Filippo Bartolini (Italian, 1861–1908)

Signed 'F Bartolini' (lower right)

Watercolour on paper laid down on card

20.98 x 14.49 in. (53.3 x 36.8 cm.)

Provenance:

Private sale, Paris, 1995

Oriental rugs have been a European passion since the sixteenth century, and their sale was a popular subject for painters, as much for the colour of the wares and the simplicity of the subject as for the ease with which the scene was reproduced in the studio.

A case in point is *The Carpet Seller* by the Italian painter Filippo Bartolini. He was active in Rome between 1865 and 1908, with 1880 as the year he painted his first watercolour of North Africa. *The Carpet Seller* in the Shafik Gabr Collection is one of several he painted of the same subject.

Although the details of the textile's design are not obvious, the Ottoman minaret (from which the call to prayer is given five times a day), rising in a line above the carpet, and the purchaser's costume, suggest that it is a prayer rug. The long wide-sleeved gown (*jubbah*) and the head covering of a soft collapsible red felt cap and blue tassel, around which a white muslin scarf is wound, identifies the buyer as an imam or a religious figure.

There are no known details of Bartolini's visits to North Africa or the Middle East. In Rome he lived at 48 Via Margutta, a fashionable street for artists where he was close friends with Gustavo Simoni, who had been in North Africa, and Enrico Tarenghi, who had painted in Egypt, and with whom he shared a studio.

However, Bartolini's undeniable knowledge of the details of the clothes and costumes in this and other paintings suggest that, rather than putting together images from available photographs, he most probably visited the places himself, and then used this experience to execute the paintings in his studio in Rome. Enrico Tarenghi and Filippo Bartolini were known to members of the so-called Simoni group, and they may have traveled to Algeria with Simoni in the early 1890s.¹

1) Rossana Bossaglia, *Gli Orientalisti Italiani: Cento Anni Di Esotismo 1830-1940*, (Marsilio, 1998), p.55.



The Carpet Seller

THE AMBUSH

Hermann Corrodi (Italian, 1844–1905)

Signed and inscribed 'H Corrodi. Roma' (lower left)

Oil on canvas

39¾ x 25 5/8 in. (101 x 65 cm.)

Painted in Rome

Provenance:

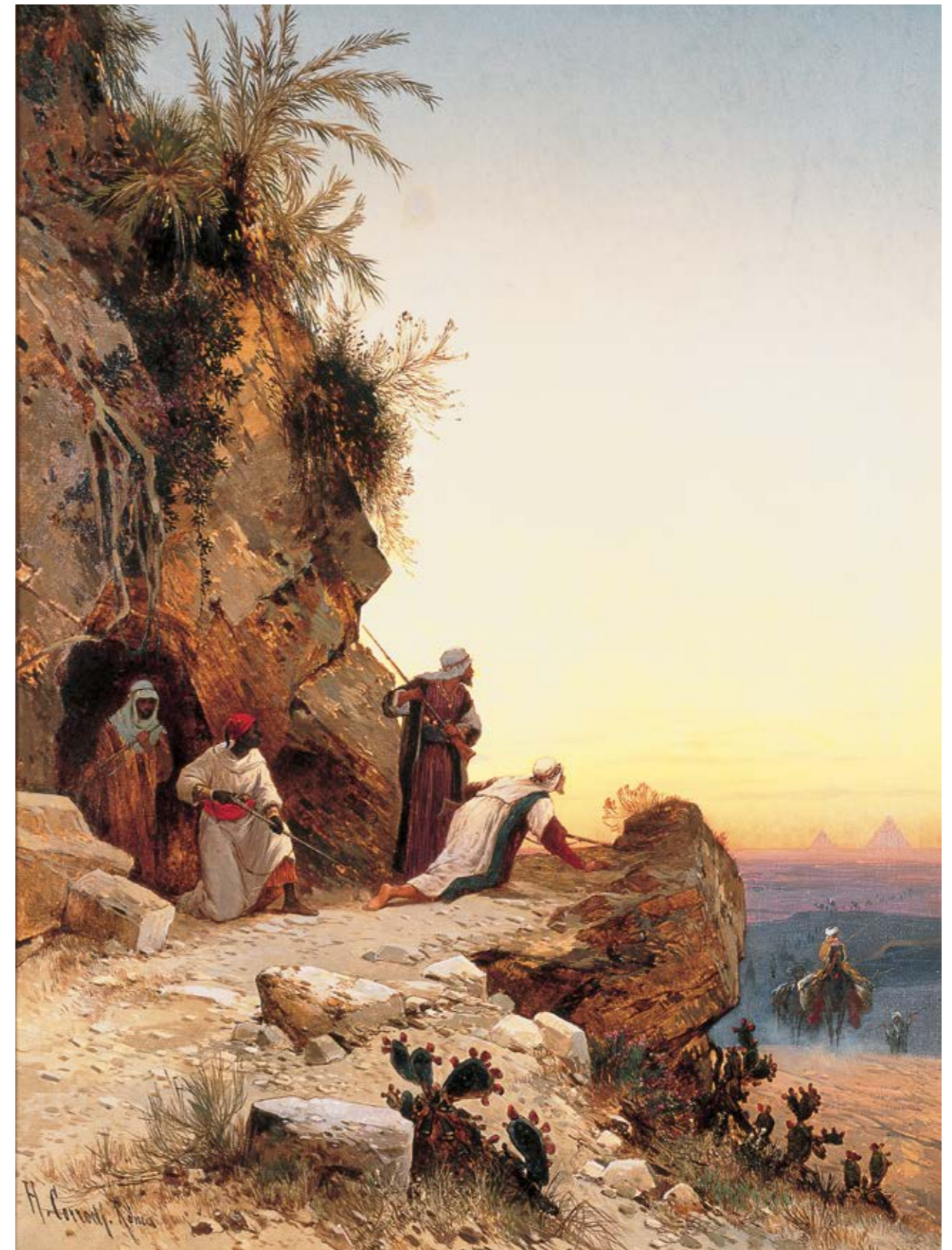
Sale, Christie's, London, 14 June 2006, lot 3

Hermann Corrodi's travels throughout Turkey, North Africa and the Middle East in the 1880s would provide him with his best-loved subjects. These would also include dramatic desert landscapes, emotive Nile views – often depicting ancient monuments at sunset – and bustling market scenes. Most of these works were painted in Corrodi's Rome studio, and later they were produced as etchings (Corrodi was also an accomplished printmaker).

In *The Ambush*, Corrodi creates one of his most dramatic images. Bedouin tribesmen, protected from sight by the crevices and rocky outcroppings of a desert cliff, eye an approaching camel caravan. The camel's saddlebags are laden with cargo, suggesting that the assault will be a profitable one.

Signed 'Roma', Corrodi makes no effort to hide the fact that this was a studio work. Probably painted after the completion of his travels, and dependent as much on travel accounts as sketches rendered on the spot, this composition, with its sweeping diagonal and its juxtaposition of mountain and plain (or, at times, monument and watery pool), would become a trademark of the artist. So too, the subtle presence of the pyramids in the background, their forms echoed by the advancing camels, and the rose- and golden-hued sky connect this work to others in Corrodi's oeuvre.

This particular subject must have been a favourite of the artist's, as a nearly identical version is in the collection of the Dahesh Museum of Art. This combination of exotic landscape and adventure may have been especially intriguing to Corrodi or his clientele, however the artist's interest in light seems to have been just as important. Each variant of *The Ambush* is marked by changes in the time of day, making them a series of explorations into light and its colorful effects. This was recognized by the critics, with one journalist for *The Magazine of Art* noting that in his paintings "just as in nature we never see two sunsets alike." Given the position at the Pyramids of Gizeh in the background, the ambush is taking place at the foot of the Mokattam hills in Cairo.



The Ambush

KIOSK OF TRAJAN, PHILAE ON THE NILE

Hermann Corrodi (Italian, 1844–1905)

Signed and inscribed 'H. Corrodi. Roma' (lower left)

Oil on canvas

39½ x 25¼ in. (100.3 x 64.2 cm.)

Provenance:

A private British collection

Sale, Christie's, London, 2 July 2008, lot 36

Among Hermann Corrodi's most beloved paintings are his skilfully-composed Nile views. In these the ancient monuments are illuminated by the shimmering, transient colours of the Egyptian sunset.

In this work, Corrodi portrays Trajan's Kiosk, also known as 'Pharaoh's Bed', perhaps the most frequently documented part of the temple complex on the island of Philae. Indeed, the precision of the artist's composition may owe something to the scores of contemporary photographs and prints that could be found in Europe by the end of the nineteenth century, and which he utilised in his studio in Rome. Of course, Corrodi himself must have also visited the site during his travels in Egypt.

Behind the kiosk's fourteen columns there are carved depictions of the Emperor Trajan making offerings to Isis, to whom the temple was dedicated, as well as images of Osiris and Horus. As impressive as these decorations were, it was the overall experience of the site that captivated Western travellers. "The approach by water is quite the most beautiful. Seen from the level of a small boat, the island, with its palms, its colonnades, its pylons, seems to rise out of the river like a mirage. Piled rocks frame it on either side, and the purple mountains close up the distance. As the boat glides nearer, between glistening boulders, those sculptured towers rise higher and even higher against the sky. They show no sign of ruin or age. All looks solid, stately, perfect."¹

This painting clearly shows that Corrodi was captivated by the atmosphere of the land. He has successfully transposed his visual inspiration onto a canvas and has captured the warm tones of the landscape and the contrast between the soft lines of the Nile river and the stark architecture of the Temple complex.

1) Amelia Edwards, *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile* (London, 1890), p.207



Kiosk of Trajan, Philae on the Nile

AN ORIENTAL MARKET SCENE

Hermann Corrodi (Italian, 1844–1905)

Signed and inscribed 'H. Corrodi. Roma' (lower left)

Oil on canvas

26 x 49 in. (66 x 124.5 cm.)

Painted in Rome

Provenance:

Sale, Sotheby's, London, 15 November 1995, Lot 38

Mathaf Gallery, London, 1996

Hermann David Salomon Corrodi grew up in an artistic family and, from 1860, he studied in the studio of Alexandre Calame in Geneva. In 1866, he entered the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, where he studied under his father, the celebrated Swiss landscape painter Salomon Corrodi (1810–1892).

He then travelled throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, visiting Egypt, Syria, Cyprus, Constantinople and Montenegro, soon gaining international acclaim as a genre and landscape painter, receiving commissions for history paintings from the British and Austro-Hungarian royal families.

In 1872, he studied in Paris, exhibited his works at Munich International Exhibition, and travelled to London where the Royal Family purchased several of his paintings. In 1873, he was awarded a Gold medal at the Vienna Universal Exhibition. From 1876, he used to spend winters in Rome and summers in Baden-Baden, where the German aristocracy commissioned his works, as Kaiser Wilhelm II who acquired his *Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem*. He was very appreciated by the English Royal Court and exhibited frequently in London; in 1881 *Storm in the desert, Egypt* was presented at The Royal Academy. He also exhibited in Rome, Vienna and Paris (1900 International Exhibition), receiving many prizes and honours.

In 1893, he was knighted 'Accademico di Merito' by the Accademia di San Luca where he had been a long time professor. He painted in his studio in Rome, inspired by the sketches and studies he had accumulated during his numerous journeys in the Middle East and using many oriental artefacts he had brought back with him.

Corrodi first travelled to Egypt during the winter of 1876 to 1877. This trip proved inspiring for the artist, who subsequently visited and painted Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries several more times. In this image, Corrodi synthesizes his strength as a landscape painter with that of his skills in genre painting.

An Oriental Market Scene is a genre scene as well as a landscape. It depicts various activities and figures typically found in an Eastern market – a lively trade of carpets, fruit, bread, and other goods, children accompanying their elders for their daily shopping etc. The market is also shown as a place for social interaction – as seen in the two figures smoking a *hookah* or smoking pipe on the right side of the painting or the people sat on the benches behind the running boy – presumably drinking a coffee or tea and discussing the order of the day.

Corrodi also offers a glimpse of what is beyond the market – with a masterful sense of perspective, through an arched stone gateway we can see the landscape in the distance – *feluccas* on the water and silhouettes of palm trees further behind. This balanced composition of the painting, with its rhythm of architecture, people and landscape, its delicate gradations of colour, and its play of light and shadow typify his gift for picturesque documentation.

An Oriental Market Scene is typical of Corrodi's work. Though the subject matter may change from canvas to canvas, there is always a sense of immediacy – be it the last few moments of daylight, magically captured by the artist's brush, or, as here, the figure of a boy, running full speed to clear the way for an elderly horseman. Such vignettes add narrative interest to each composition, transforming them from the pure landscapes of the artist's father into something exclusively his own.



An Oriental Market Scene



THE COFFEE SHOP

Nicola Forcella (Italian, ca. 1868–?)

Signed 'N. Forcella' (lower right)

Oil on canvas

22¼ x 17½ in. (56,5 x 44,5 cm.)

Provenance:

Sale, Gros-Delettretz, Paris, 22 April 1996, lot 298

Nicola Forcella was born in Castellaneta, in the south of Italy. He later moved to Cairo where he lived for many years and taught in the Khedival art school. By the end of the nineteenth century, he gained the reputation of being one of the most prominent Italian Orientalist painters based in Egypt and, even though his origins were not French, he participated in the exhibition of the Société des Artistes Français in Cairo with his brother Paolo¹.

Like the prominent French Orientalist Charles-Théodore Frère, who had also become a member of the Société des Artistes Français² during his lifetime, Forcella was decorated with the Imperial Order of Medjidie. This military order, instituted by the Ottoman Empire in 1852, was often conferred on non-Turkish nationals and might have been given to the artists as a testament to their esteemed status as Orientalist painters.

Besides the works which have appeared at auction, not much is known about Nicola Forcella's body of work, other than it was largely dedicated to traditional Cairene scenes.

In the present painting he depicts the interior of a coffee shop where a man sits smoking a *shisha*, a glass water pipe. Most cafés offered these pipes (also called *hookahs*) and still offer them nowadays. These locales are widespread and are amongst the chief social gathering places in Egypt and the Arab world, populated with an interesting array of colourful characters smoking, reading and passing the time. They provided Orientalists like Forcella with a rich repertory of subjects and compositional ideas.

The three figures in the interior are joined by a fourth one outside, and this compositional feature enabled the artist to fill the interior with natural light coming from outside the coffee shop. Moreover, having a glimpse of the exterior gives the painting a feeling of serenity and calm as we can presume that the shop is not situated in a busy street, but rather somewhere surrounded by trees and nature.

1) See Caroline Julet, *Les Orientalistes de l'École Italienne* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Edition, 1992), p. 135.

2) Société des Artistes Français (The Society of French Artists) was the association of French painters and sculptors established in 1881. Its annual exhibition was called the Salon.



The Coffee Shop

BY THE CALIPHS' TOMBS

Girolamo Gianni (Italian, 1837–1895)

Signed 'G. Gianni' (lower right)

Oil on board

9½ x 16½ in. (24 x 42 cm.)

Provenance:

Sale, Étude Tajan, Paris, 9 June 1995, lot 232b

Girolamo Gianni was born in Italy in 1837, and moved to Malta in 1868. Shortly after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Malta became the centre of the British naval presence in the Mediterranean, and Gianni began a twenty-year career specialising in maritime scenes, harbour views and portraits of ships under sail. Therefore this scene is an unusual subject for him.

Shortly before leaving his home in Malta to return to Italy, Gianni visited Egypt. There is little information about this trip, except for a painting signed and dated 1886¹.

The cemetery in this painting lies east of the Citadel in Cairo as a northern extension of the Qarafa, the great Southern cemetery (also called the City of the Dead, or Cairo Necropolis, it is a series of vast Islamic-era necropolises and cemeteries on the edges of Historic Cairo). The caliphs referred to in the title are a misnomer since the tombs belong to the Bahri Mamluk Sultanate period and are primarily associated with the rule of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, whose three-part reign from 1293–1340 was the longest and most glorious in Mamluk history. He was one of the great architectural shapers of the Citadel.

Gianni's artistic precision is such that the buildings are easily identifiable.² The earliest tomb in this part of the cemetery – the small ribbed dome in the centre – belongs to Ali Badr al-Din al-Qarafi. The ribbed dome to its right and the central minaret to its left are all that are left of the khanqah-mausoleum of the Amir Qawsun (1336), the wealthiest and most powerful court functionary during the last decade of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad's reign. Qawsun's complex, a residence for Sufis (Muslim ascetics) attached to his mausoleum, was the first major complex in this area.

The minaret to the far left and the two domes (one of them missing its ribbed top) to the right of Qawsun's minaret belong to the next complex, the khanqah-mausoleum of al-Sultaniya (ca. 1350). The patron was perhaps the mother of Sultan Hassan, a grandson of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad.

1) *A view of the Sharia al-Muizz il-Din Allah, near Bayn al-Qasrayn, Cairo*. Christie's, New York, *Orientalist Art*, 19 April 2006, lot 11.

2) Caroline Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), pp. 126-28.

Finally in the far distance, between the two minarets, is what remains of the tomb of Khwand Urduktakin (ca. 1315). She was first the wife of Sultan Ashraf al-Khalil, who by his victory at Acre drove the Crusaders from the Middle East, and then of his brother Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad.

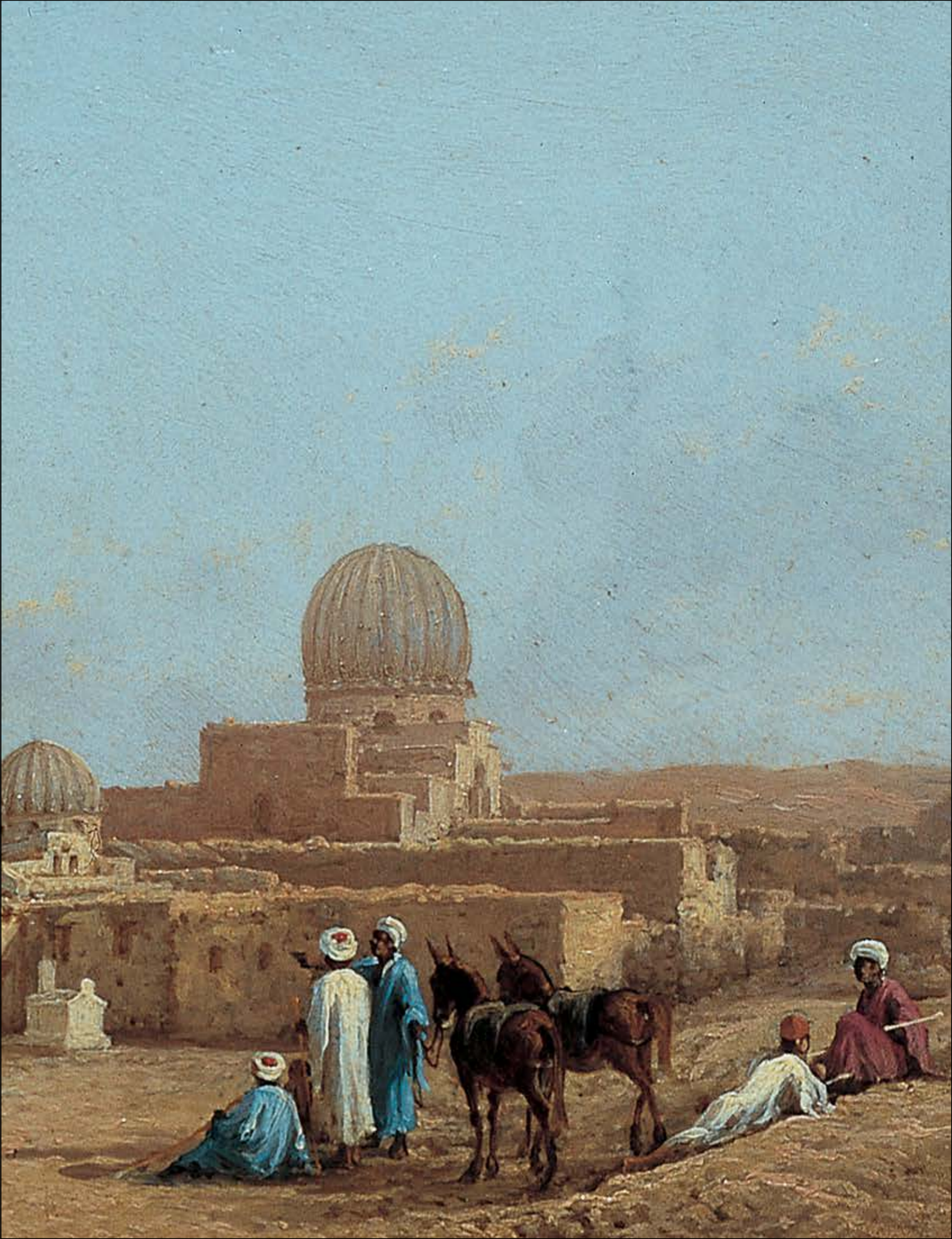
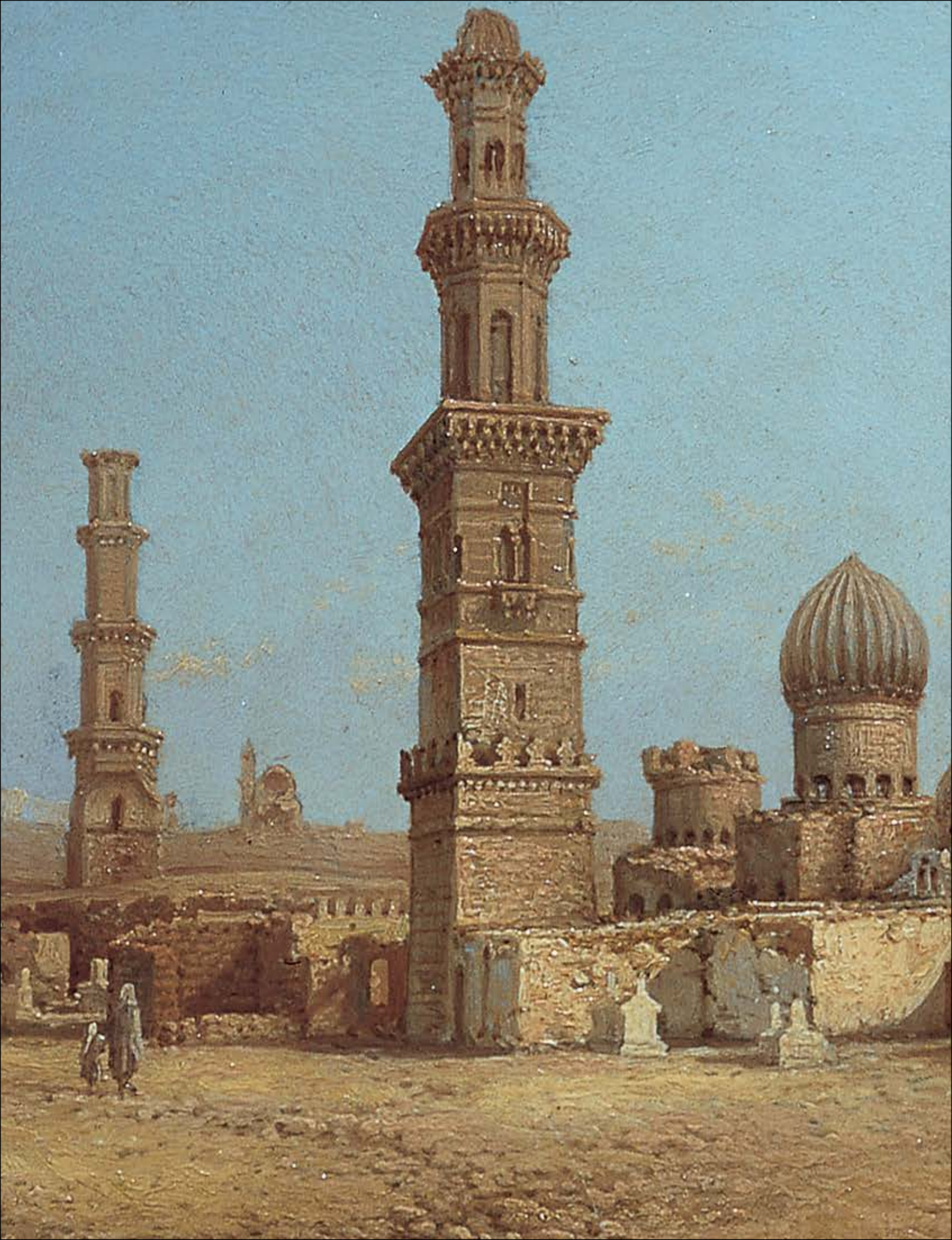
In front of these monuments to power and privilege are the smaller burial places of later individuals: oblong slabs above the burial vault, positioned southeast towards Mecca, with stelae at each end to indicate the resting place of head and feet.

However, Gianni was not satisfied with depicting solely the architecture. He was also interested in painting the daily life of Egyptians, sometimes with an ideal vision but nevertheless substantiated by a strong realism. He decided to insert human presence in the painting and, in doing so, connect the ancient structures to the present.

Thus, the present-day Egyptians, depicted resting in front of the cemetery, and the woman and child walking in the distance, are shown as natural successors to the famous and celebrated rulers of Egypt's Mamluk past. It also shows a commendable trait in the character of Egyptians – the respect they have for their ancestors. Therefore, reading this image as a reflection on Cairo's present and its deep-rootedness in the past tells us that Gianni's works are certainly realistic, but they are also poetic. Additionally, the figures serve to accentuate the masterful perspective and depth of the painting.



By the Caliphs' Tombs



HALT BY THE PYRAMIDS

Girolamo Gianni (Italian, 1837–1895)

Signed 'G. Gianni' (lower right)

Oil on cardboard

9½ x 16½ in. (24.2 x 42 cm.)

Provenance:

Étude Tajan, Paris, 9 June 1995, lot 232a

Although Girolamo Gianni specialised in maritime scenes of Malta where this Neapolitan artist lived since 1868, his paintings produced as a result of a visit to Egypt should not be ignored. The site is the Gizeh plateau (although difficult to determine with certainty, these mortuary structures were likely built between 2600 BC and 2500 BC), developed by the Fourth Dynasty kings of the Old Kingdom as a final resting place for themselves, their wives, nobles and officials who populated the Memphite court. Interestingly, Gianni does not depict the largest of the Gizeh pyramids (often called the Great Pyramid, it was built by Khufu, who is believed to be the son of Sneferu, the founder of the 4th dynasty).

Instead, as a focal point of the painting Gianni chose the pyramid which is situated southwest of the Great Pyramid – and that is the one of Khafre (Chephren) – Khufu's second son, distinctly recognisable by the outer casing of tura limestone still in place at its peak. Gianni's view features its east and south faces.

In depicting the pyramid, Gianni decided not to include the mortuary temple, the guardian Sphinx, the causeway, the temple of the Sphinx and the valley temple, all features of the east side, and well preserved remnants of Old Kingdom funerary practices. He concentrated instead on the size and volume of the tomb itself. In front of the south face is what is left of a small pyramid (a queen's burial?) after most of its superstructure had been quarried away. In the distance, to the left of the palm trees, is the pyramid of Khafre's son and successor Menkaure (Mycerinus). The small pyramid of his queen is beyond.

The ancient tombs are lit by the light of the full moon. They are the subject which occupies most of the canvas. In the shadow and shelter of some trees, and outlined only by the red glow of a camp fire, is the family who has halted for the night.

As in the previously discussed painting *By the Caliphs' Tombs*, Gianni inserted human figures in the scene not only for scale, but also to describe and evoke a certain connection and natural succession

1) James Parry, *Orientalist Lives: Western Artists in the Middle East 1830-1920* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2017), p.79.

between Cairo's famous past (this time the Pharaonic era) and its present. The scene also serves to create an interesting narrative, and lets us imagine who the people are, if they are travelling far, and for what reason they embarked on their journey.

Ancient monuments of Egypt, especially the Pyramids, captivated many Orientalist artists in the nineteenth century. Some painted them with scientific accuracy, some with an evocative sense of place – and Gianni in this painting combined both.

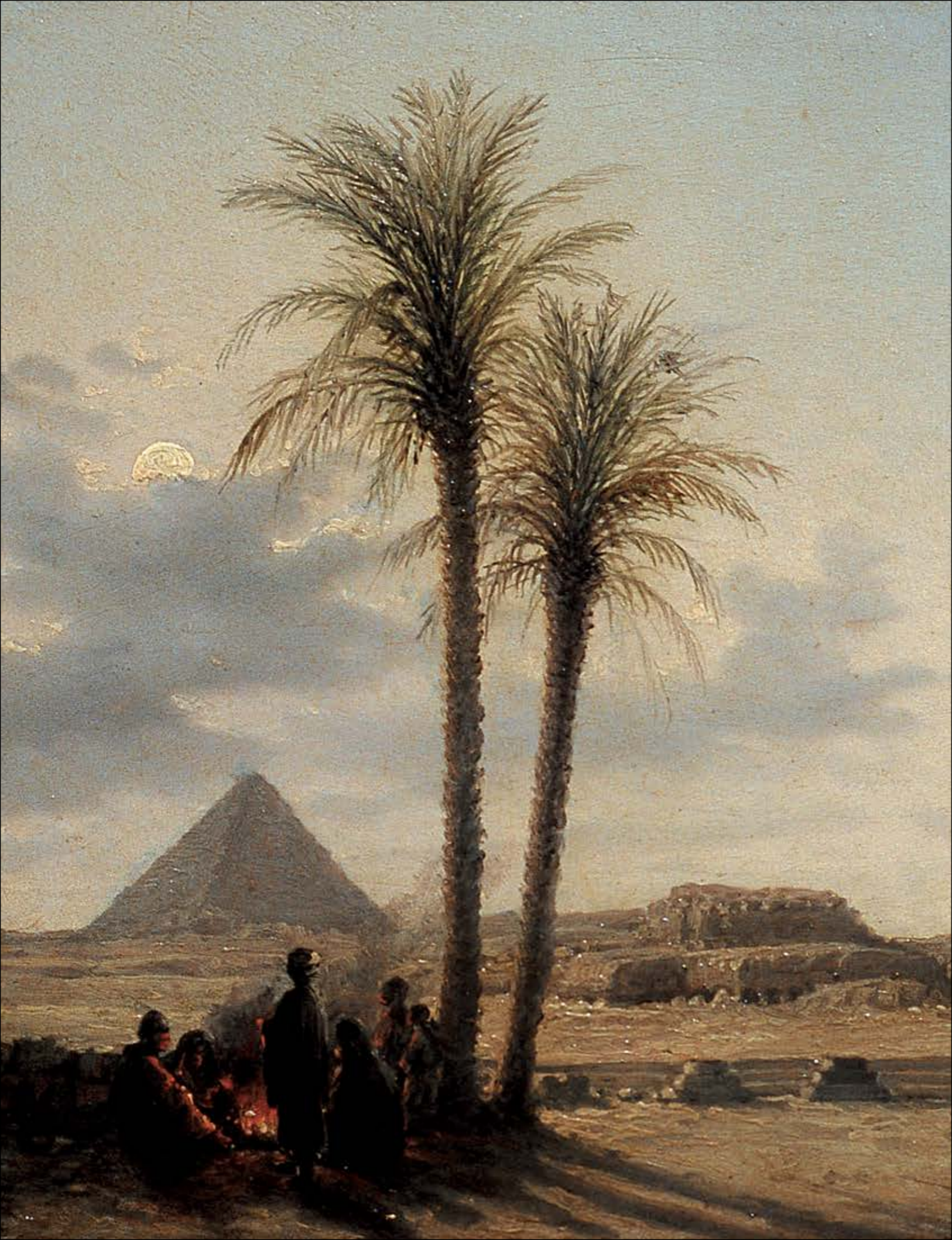
For many artists travelling to Egypt, it became increasingly imperative to get away from the hordes of other foreign travelers. By the mid-nineteenth century the more popular sites, such as the Pyramids, had become so well visited as to be too crowded in the opinion of some.

Nonetheless, few artists could afford to ignore the Pyramids, as they remained popular with the buying public, as well as being a majestic subject to paint. However, it became ever more important for artists to find different perspectives of what were increasingly familiar scenes. William Holman Hunt achieved this with his painting of the Sphinx (*The Sphinx, Gizeh, looking towards the Pyramids of Sakhara, 1854*), viewed from behind and thereby stripped of its obvious iconography.¹

Even though Gianni chose a popular subject for this painting, he chose an unconventional angle, further accentuated by not depicting the largest of the pyramids. The pale blue colour of the sky, white haze rising from the ground, the transparency of light tones, reflections and shadows, everything here creates an image of an almost mystical mirage. *Halt by the Pyramids* reveals both the artist's fascination with the country's Pharaonic architecture and his romantic point of view.



Halt by the Pyramids



THE NILE

Alberto Pasini (Italian, 1826–1899)

Signed 'A. Pasini' (lower right)

Oil on canvas

14 x 24 in. (36.5 x 61 cm.)

Painted in 1860

Provenance:

Ferria Collection, Turin

Private Collection, Novara, 2008

Exhibited:

Parma, Palazzo del Giardino, *Mostra Retrospettiva d'Arte Emiliana*, 1913, no. 21

Milan, Galleria Centrale d'Arte, *Esposizione postuma delle opere del pittore Alberto*

Pasini, piemontese, 1917, no. 11, pl. XIII

Milan, Galleria Manzoni, 1973

Parma, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Parma, *Alberto Pasini da Parma a*

Costantinopoli via Parigi, 1996, pp. 90 and 213, no. 16

Literature:

Vittoria Botteri Cardoso, *Pasini* (Genova: Sagep Editrice, 1991), no. 204

Alberto Pasini, the most famous of the Italian Orientalist painters, initially trained in Parma in the Accademia di Belle Arti when he was seventeen. His draughtsmanship was noticed by the artist Paolo Toschi, a highly respected cultural figure, who encouraged the young Pasini to find a new life in Paris. Thus, he joined the workshop of Charles and Eugène Ciceri. In Paris he learned how to incorporate elements of light and colour in his art. He first exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1853.

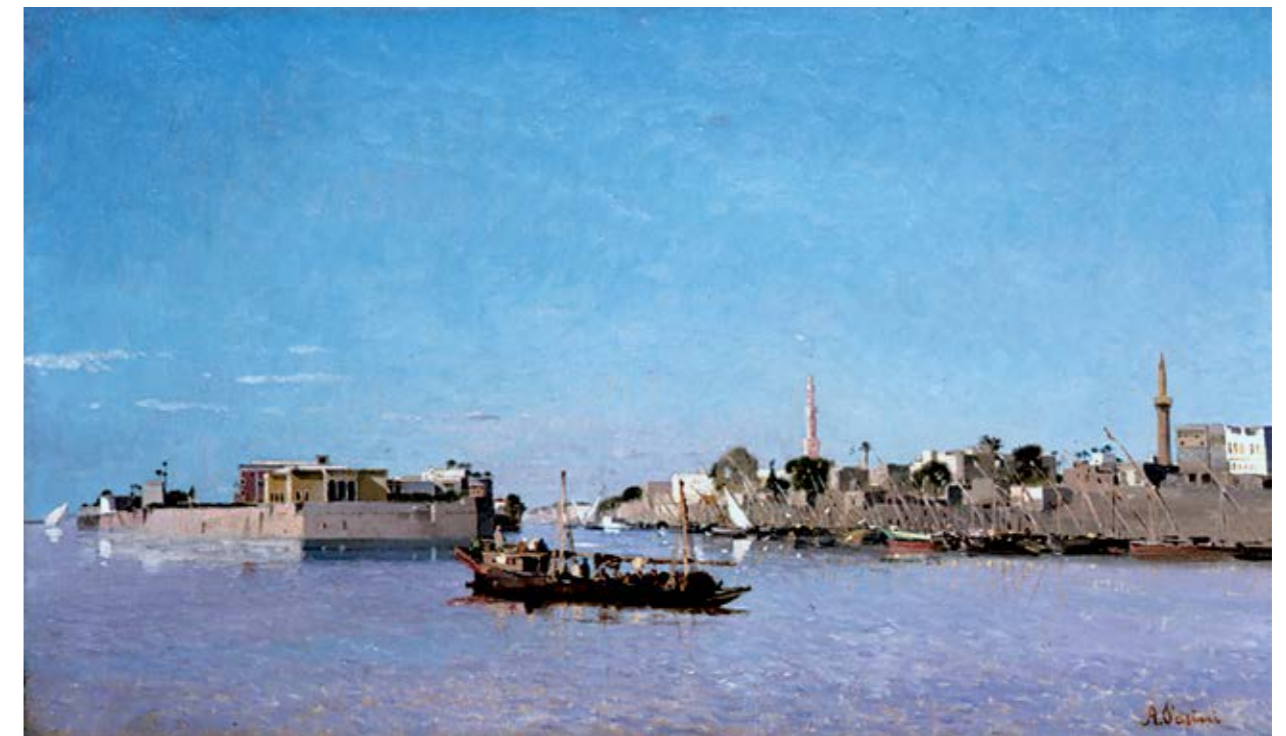
It was Théodore Chasseriau who introduced Pasini to the Orient by arranging for him to accompany the mission of the plenipotentiary minister Prosper Bourée to Persia in 1855. There he spent a year painting the people, local customs and landscape. The visit was crucial to Pasini's future artistic formation as he made a definitive move to fully embrace the Orientalist genre.

Fascinated with the Orient he later travelled to Egypt in 1860, which provided the inspiration for the present work, Constantinople between 1867 and 1869, and to Asia Minor and Syria in 1873. During these travels, Pasini produced numerous drawings and lithographs, which served as invaluable sources for the finished paintings which he produced and exhibited for the remainder of his long and esteemed career.

As a result of his travels, Western audiences were exposed to the artist's glittering colour palette which suffused his landscapes and architecture with rich light effects. Back in Paris, Pasini's artistic qualities were soon acknowledged and he was appreciated for being a talented colourist and even more talented painter of light, an impeccable draughtsman and a rigorous landscape composer, a lively narrator and a strict illustrator of reality – a reality in which the decadence and the symbolist borrowings of the end-of-the-century exoticism are entirely absent.

This delightful Nile scene can be counted as one of the artist's rare North African scenes. The detail achieved in this small-scale canvas showcases Pasini's mastery as a draughtsman, and the subtle tonal changes in the blues of the sky and water reveal sensitivity to the effects of sunlight.

The work is also an important visual document as, from Pasini's vantage point, it is possible to identify various Cairene monuments: the island on the left is the tip of Rauda Island with the Palace of Hassan Pasha al-Munastirli (ca. 1830) in the foreground and the conical roof of the Nilometer to the right. On the right bank, the Ottoman minaret, to the right, belongs to the Mosque of Abdin Bey (1660) while the other minaret, towards the centre, belongs to the Mosque of As-Suwaydi (ca. 1430).



The Nile



A. Vasini

ARAB WARRIORS

Giulio Rosati (Italian, 1858–1917)

Signed and dated 'G. Rosati 1896.' (lower right)

Pencil and watercolour on paper
29¾ x 22½ in. (75.5 x 56.5 cm.)

Executed in 1896

Provenance:

Sale, Christie's, London, 15 March 1996, lot 108

Mathaf Gallery, London, 1996

The Italian school of Orientalism is characterised by a distinct energy, and much of the talent that sprung from local academies was shaped by exposure to or knowledge of the work of Spanish painter Mariano Fortuny y Marsal who, during his long sojourn in Rome, produced some of the most electrifying masterpieces of the Orientalist genre. His paintings were charged with a painterly energy and movement that local academically trained artists had never witnessed. In addition, the Italians had a strong affinity for the medium of watercolour which was a difficult and challenging medium to master. The artists showcased in these pages, particularly Giulio Rosati and Gustavo Simoni, stand as the unequalled masters of this medium.

In *Arab Warriors*, Giulio Rosati pushes the group of men close to the foreground in order to show off his talent in rendering sharp, crisp lines with watercolour which is a far more unpredictable medium than oil paint. We can assume that the men in the foreground are preparing to make a move, with the main figure showing the way forward, as the figure in the back of the group is summoning the other men, who can be seen sitting in front of what seems like a tent.

The renderings of the men, their elaborately decorated weapons and brightly coloured scarves and sashes have an almost photographic accuracy, and we can observe the minute characterization in the faces of the depicted – for example, the self-confidence and assuredness of the man leading the mission.

Rosati, just like Hermann Corrodi, seems to have been intrigued by scenes which combine exotic landscapes and adventure, and these types of paintings must have also proved captivating for his Western clientele. Full of narration, energy, and effective composition, these dynamic paintings are a testament to Rosati's mastery.



Arab Warriors

THE CARPET SELLER

Giulio Rosati (Italian, 1858–1917)

Signed 'Giulio Rosati' (lower right)

Watercolour on paper

20¾ x 13¾ in. (51.7 x 35 cm.)

Provenance:

Sale, Christie's, London, 26 June 2007, lot 86

Giulio Rosati began his training around 1875 at the Accademia di San Luca where he studied under Francesco Podesti and Dario Querci. He quickly became tired of painting in the Academic tradition and joined the studio of the popular Spanish history and genre painter Luis Alvarez Catalá who later became the director of the Prado Museum in Madrid.

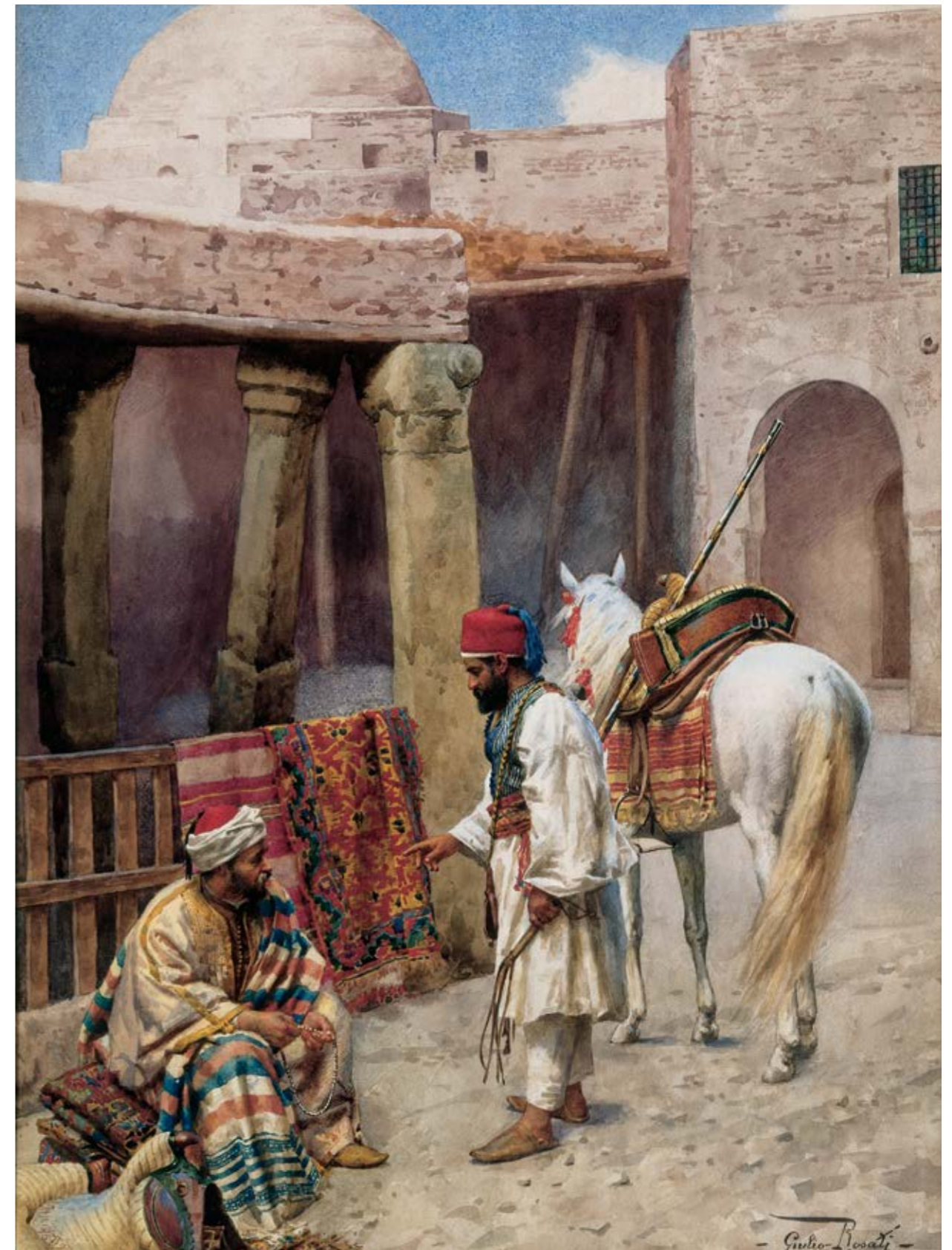
Catalá belonged to the colony of Spanish painters in Rome, led by Mariano Fortuny, whose Orientalist works met with great critical acclaim in Rome in the 1860s and which would have been an inspiration to aspiring Italian Orientalists like Rosati.

Attracted to the vogue in Orientalist painting during his lifetime, Rosati almost exclusively dedicated himself to this growing genre. Even though there is no evidence that he travelled to North Africa, the paintings themselves attest to the fact that he most probably did - Rosati was able to portray the Eastern world with great finesse and became one of the most famed Italian Orientalists of his time.

He skilfully depicted scenes in which he incorporated meticulously depicted objects, costumes and other North African trinkets. The manner in which he painted the textiles in his compositions – and particularly the carpets – was exceptional, as seen in *The Carpet Seller*.

Both men's clothes and accessories are depicted with minute detail, and we can even see a weapon on the horse similar to the muskets depicted in *The Arab Warriors* (even the red *fez* or *tarboosh* with the red tassel is similar to the one in the previous painting) – perhaps indicating that the man talking to the carpet seller is of a military or warrior orientation.

The vivid colours and intricate details of the carpets and materials are even more emphasized against a neutral background of the stone structures, and bring to the forefront Rosati's impressive artistic skills.



The Carpet Seller

THE CARPET TRADER

Giulio Rosati (Italian, 1858–1917)

Signed 'Giulio Rosati' (lower left)

Pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper

21 x 14¼ in (53.3 x 36.1 cm)

Provenance:

An important private collection

Sale, Christie's, London, 15 December 2015, lot 68

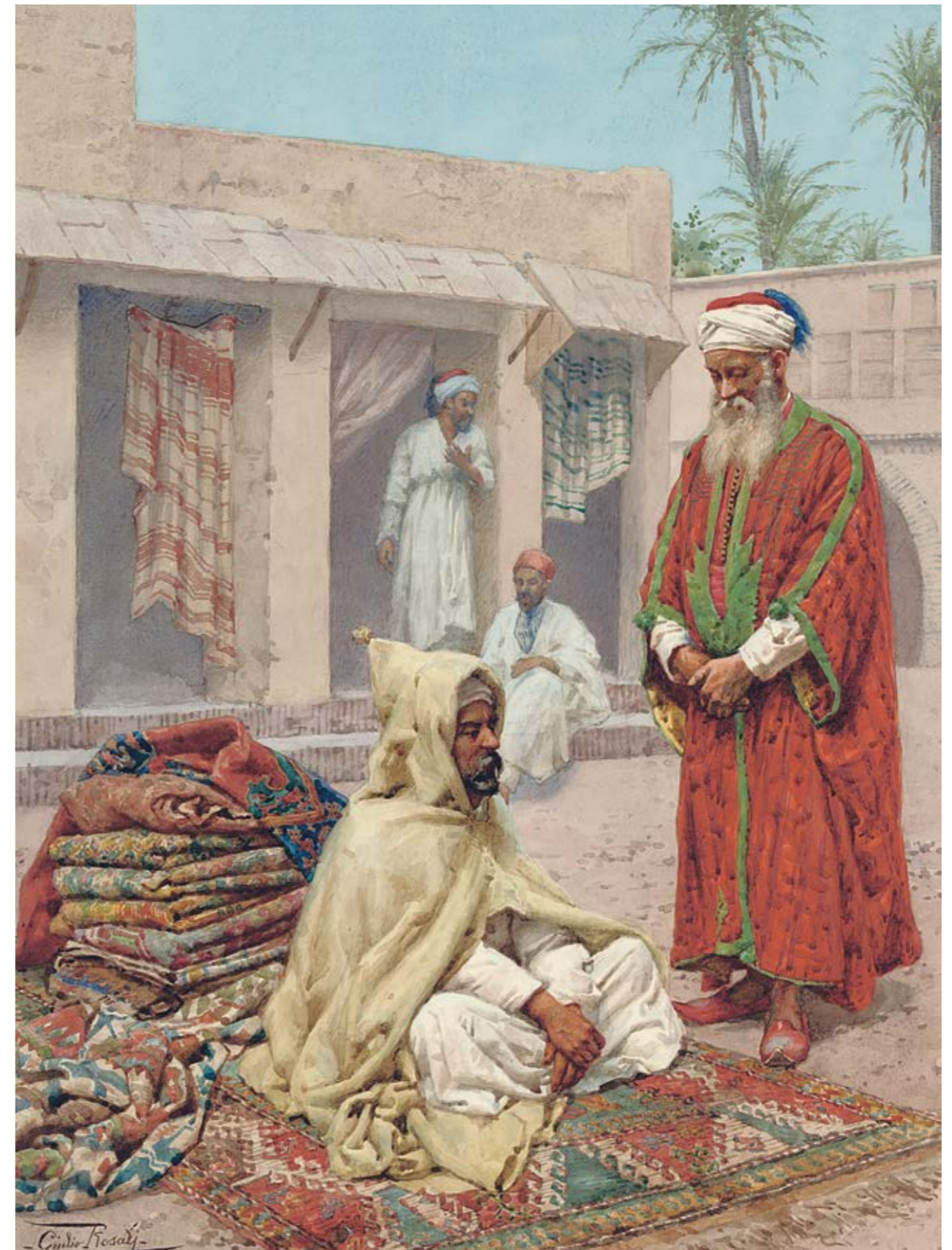
As in the previous painting described in this booklet, *The Carpet Seller*, Rosati chose a simple, neutral backdrop, against which the vivid colours and the patterns of the Oriental rugs are even more striking.

Here, the trader and the prospective buyer are not as animated in their conversation, and the scene taking place is one of contemplation (perhaps they are thinking about their final prices? Or the man in the red and green robe is simply a passer-by, greeting the trader).

The Middle East had (and still has) one of the most quality driven rug buying markets in the world. It is a region of extremely fine silk rugs and some of the finest wool rugs in the world. Its people are great lovers of the woven arts and as such, have always coveted the finest examples of carpets. Moreover, in the Middle East, a good carpet has always been more than an image of splendour woven in fabric – it was an asset, something meant to preserve the value of money for years – an insurance policy to be handed down and, in hard times, sold.

The two carpet scenes by Rosati in the Shafik Gabr Collection are amongst the artist's finest examples, and showcase his sensitive characterization of the figures, vividness of colours and textures and a photographic accuracy of minute details.

In particular, Rosati focused intently upon draperies, intricate Islamic patterns and carefully judged colour balances. The atmosphere of the marketplace with its spirited trading and subtle dealmaking appealed greatly to collectors in Europe. By combining all his talents, the theme of carpet sellers became one of Rosati's favourite themes and the almost flawless colour in these superbly preserved works shows Rosati's skills at their best.



The Carpet Trader

A GAME OF TAVLI

Giulio Rosati (Italian, 1858–1917)

Signed 'Giulio Rosati' (lower left)

Pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper

20½ x 13¾ in. (52.1 x 35 cm.)

Provenance:

A private European collection

Sale, Christie's, New York, 22 October 2008, lot 26

Tavli, or backgammon, is an ancient game which comes from the East and the early civilisation of Mesopotamia. Although mentioned frequently throughout history and evidence of it found in archaeological digs, the origin of *tavli* is not known. The oldest *tavli* board was found in the excavations of Ur, one of the most ancient cities in the world. Excavations in the Burnt City of Persia have shown that a similar game existed there around 3000 BC.

The literal definition of the word *tavli* in Greek is board. The rules consist of three individual games. One of them is the well-known western backgammon called '*portes*,' the other two are '*plakoto*' and '*fevga*'. The object of all three games – like backgammon – is to move all your checkers in the designated quarter of the board (home area) and collect them.

The Italian Orientalists specializing in watercolor all worked in close proximity in the studios on the Via Margutta in Rome. Of the group, which included Giuseppe Aureli, Ettore Simonetti and Enrico Tarengi, Giulio Rosati was the most accomplished. The highly-finished style he achieved is more traditionally associated with the hyper-realist oil paintings of artists such as Ludwig Deutsch and Jean-Léon Gérôme.

In his enormous corpus of work Rosati concentrated on the artefacts and customs of the Middle East which made the region so intriguing to a Western audience. Rosati documented the game of *tavli* being played by men in interiors or coffee shops in a series of several colourful watercolours, the present work being one of these. The three men depicted here are enjoying the game, as well as their coffees and shishas.

The artist's love of brilliant colors and his meticulous attention to detail, particularly evident here in his rendering of carpets and fabrics, elevate his work far above the photographs taken of the same subjects. As with many of his French and Italian contemporaries Rosati collected a great number of Middle-Eastern objects which, woven into his compositions, add a further dimension to his work.



A Game of Tavli

A HORSEMAN STOPPING AT A BEDOUIN CAMP

Giulio Rosati (Italian, 1858–1917)

Signed 'Giulio Rosati' (lower left)

Watercolour on paper

21 x 14¼ in. (53.3 x 36.2 cm.)

Provenance:

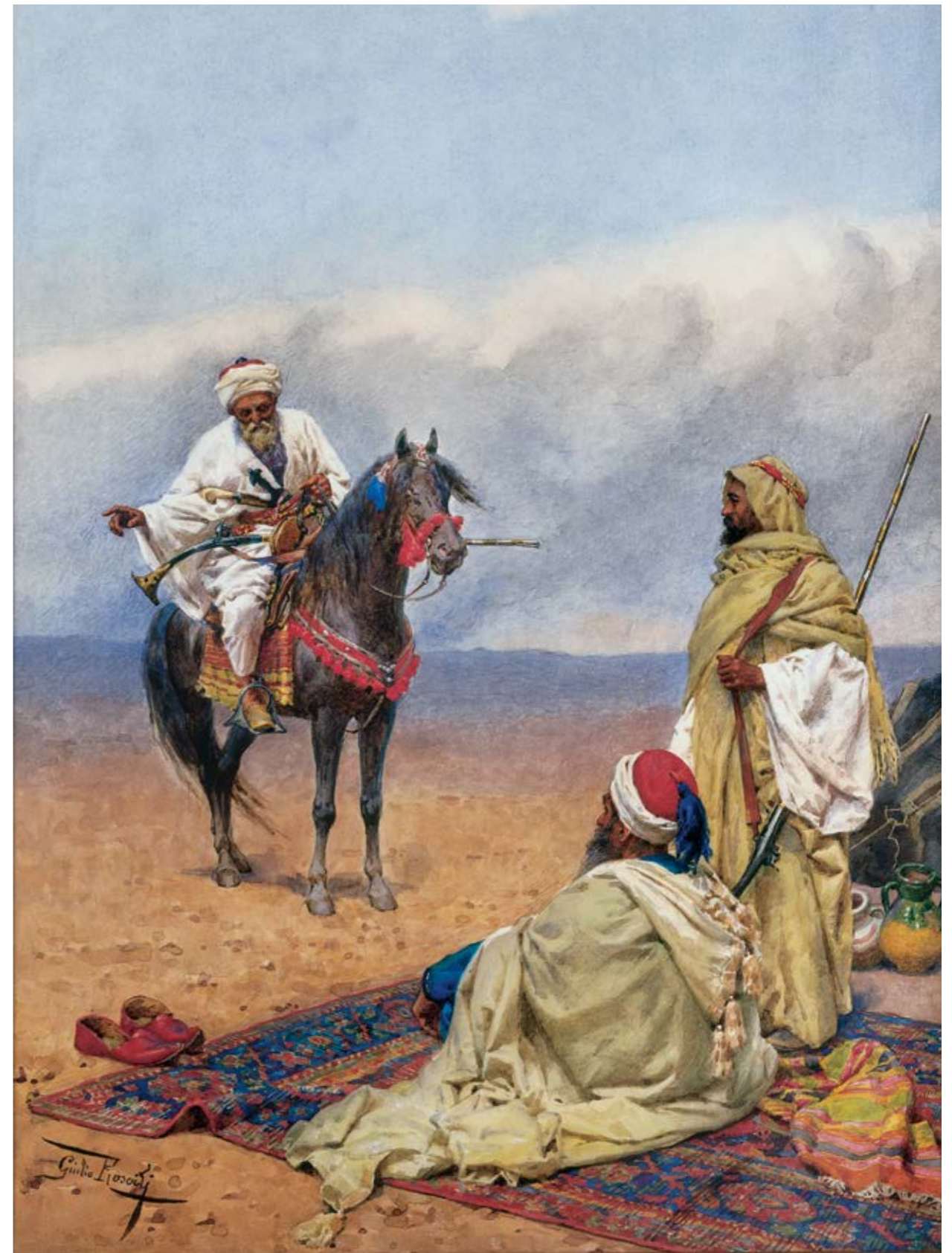
Sale, Christie's, London, 26 June 2007, lot 85

Rosati's favourite subjects revolved around bazaars, harem scenes, encampments in the desert and warriors. Whether they were warriors ready to go to battle such as seen in *Arab Warriors* or simply Bedouins resting in their camps such as in the present painting, he depicted his compositions with such a wonderful sense of accuracy that his scenes resembled real snapshots of everyday life in the desert.

The Bedouin people are an ethnic group of nomadic Arabs who have historically inhabited the desert regions in North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Upper Mesopotamia and the Levant, moving from place to place in the harsh deserts of the region. The English word Bedouin comes from the Arabic *badawi*, which means "desert dweller". The name has traditionally been used to differentiate between nomads who made a living by raising livestock (the Bedouins) and those who worked on farms or lived in towns. These nomads were a source of fascination for many artists who visited Egypt and the Middle East in the 19th century, and Rosati was no exception.

In *A Horseman Stopping at a Bedouin Camp* we are witnessing a conversation among the characters, and Rosati stages each figure carefully in order to achieve a harmony and balance in his composition. It seems as if the old man is giving the two men who are resting a warning that danger is not far away. Our eyes are drawn to the interaction between the men, but also to their carefully depicted dress, the details of their weapons and the intricate pattern of the slightly worn-out carpet.

This work is an excellent demonstration of Rosati's skill and ability to represent subjects and reproduce scenes which seem even more accurate than photographs, and to create a special atmosphere which showed his peers in Italy what life in the Orient was really like.



A Horseman Stopping at a Bedouin Camp

THE MUSICIANS

Gustavo Simoni (Italian, 1846–1926)

Signed and inscribed 'G. Simoni Roma' (lower right)

Pencil and watercolour heightened with arabic gum on paper

24½ x 38¼ in. (62 x 97 cm.)

Executed in Rome

Provenance:

Mathaf Gallery, London

Sale, Christie's, London, 15 March 1996, lot 70

Gustavo Simoni studied as a pupil of Salvatore Betti, along with Giuseppe Ferrari and Enrico Tarenghi, at the Accademia di San Luca from 1861 to 1866. His works were in vast majority watercolours, a medium he apparently preferred and which he truly learned to master over the years. By 1875 he was among the first members of the Società degli Acquarellisti founded by Ettore Roesler Franz and Nazzareno Cipriani.

From 1877 to 1879 he travelled to North Africa where he visited Tunisia and Algeria. He stayed for the most part of his journey in the Algerian town of Tlemcen and began studying mosques and Muslim subject matters. Shortly after, Simoni got married and returned to Paris, where he had a son, Paolo. He and his family then lived between Italy and Spain, while he regularly exhibited his works in Rome. In 1886 he presented two Algerian subjects at the Società degli Amatori e Cultori di Belle Arti: *Sulla terrazza a Tlemcen* and *Danza Negri*.

Simoni would return to North Africa on several occasions during the 1880s. In 1885 he painted a watercolour representing a caravan in the desert of Kabylia, *La Halte de la caravane*, which is now part of the Searight Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Gustavo Simoni won the gold medal at the Paris Salon of 1889 with his monumental painting *The Fire of Persepolis*, then was rewarded in 1895 at the Exhibition of Fine Arts in Rome. King Umberto I was one of the prestigious clients of the painter. At the end of the 19th century, Simoni opened a studio in Paris and was commissioned for many orientalist artworks, namely watercolours and large oil paintings. Back in Rome, he founded his own Orientalist painting school.

1) Félix Augustin de Pulligny (Vicomte), *Six Semaines En Algérie: Notes De Voyage D'un Membre Du Congrès Scientifique Tenu À Alger (avril 1881)*, (Paris : Canson ed., Rue des Beaux Arts 13), p.25 (<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5789230h.texteImage> , accessed 31 March 2020).

The painter represented the atmosphere of his settings and the precise movements of his characters with clear and delicate colours. Gustavo Simoni's favourite oriental themes included caravans, street scenes, carpet dealers, musicians and souks.

The Musicians represents a theme that fascinated Simoni and which he painted on numerous occasions: North African musicians. In 1881 a member of the French Scientific Congress who had visited Algeria the same year, published a memoir titled *Six Semaines en Algérie* and described an experience he shared with Simoni while he was visiting him in Tlemcen. The artist had taken him to a local festival with Algerian musicians and dancers and the duo shared an evening amongst the locals: "It's evening. We enter a lighted courtyard smoky lamps; in the center, a tree; against a wall, a dozen musicians squatting on mats, make the deafening noise of their instruments."¹ *The Musicians* was without a doubt inspired by similar events Simoni regularly attended while he lived in Algeria.

Completed in Rome, this work was most definitely based on sketches which Simoni did during his stay in Tlemcen and even though not painted in situ it conveys a remarkable sense of realism, as if the composition was in fact a photograph of a local Algerian recital.

In this animated scene, the mannerisms and facial expressions of each of the men are sensitively portrayed – they come to life, especially set against the neutral background of the wall. The exquisite tactile rendering of the carpet makes this work by Simoni a *tour de force*. The large scale of the work reveals the artist's commitment to the medium of watercolour and demonstrates his remarkable ability to recreate scenes he once witnessed with admirable accuracy.



The Musicians



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Emily M. Weeks

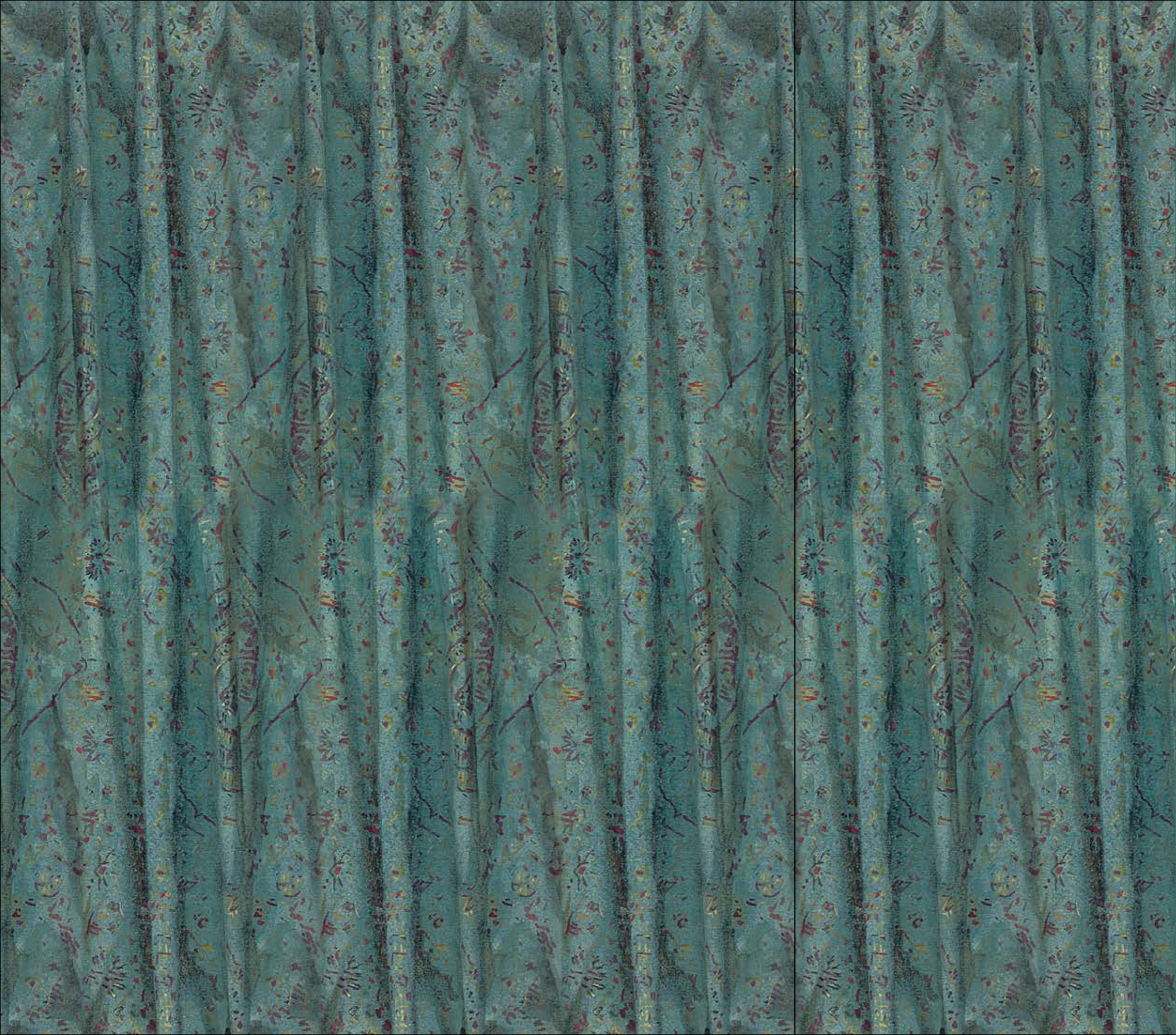
Contributed the essays for the paintings: *The Ambush; Kiosk of Trajan, Philae on the Nile* and *An Oriental Market Scene*.

Emily M. Weeks received her Ph.D. from the Department of the History of Art at Yale University. 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; she is also the acknowledged expert on Jean-Léon Gérôme. Dr. Weeks has also organized and contributed to a number of critically acclaimed exhibitions. 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. Books on Orientalist picture frames and the influence of amateur photography on Orientalist art, a critical catalogue featuring Ludwig Deutsch's Egyptian and Orientalist works, and a revised print and digital catalogue raisonné for Jean-Léon Gérôme are forthcoming.

Caroline Williams

Contributed the essay for the paintings: *The Carpet Seller* (Bartolini), *By the Caliphs' Tombs* and *Halt by the Pyramids*.

Caroline Williams has been focusing on Egypt since 1962, when a visit to Cairo and the Nile led her to graduate studies in Middle East history (Harvard University) and Islamic art and architecture (American University in Cairo). Her publications and research interests range from *The Islamic Monuments in Cairo: The Practical Guide* (now in its 7th edition) to articles on the European artists (Pascal Coste, David Roberts, John Frederick Lewis, Jean-Léon Gérôme) and photographers (Francis Frith) who discovered Egypt in the nineteenth century, and most recently, a study of contemporary Egyptian painters.



Mr. Shafik Gabr, Chairman and Managing Director of 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 businesses in infrastructure, automotive, engineering, construction and real estate, over the past three years focusing on investment in technology and artificial intelligence.

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, Board Member of Stanhope Capital, International Chairman of the Sadat Congressional Gold Medal Committee and Member of the Parliamentary Intelligence Security Forum. Mr. Gabr is Member of the Metropolitan Museum's International Council and serves on the Advisory Board of the Center for Financial Stability, Advisory Board of The Middle East Institute and the Global Advisory Council of the Mayo Clinic. 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.



Bartolini