

THE ART OF
JEAN-LÉON GÉRÔME
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.

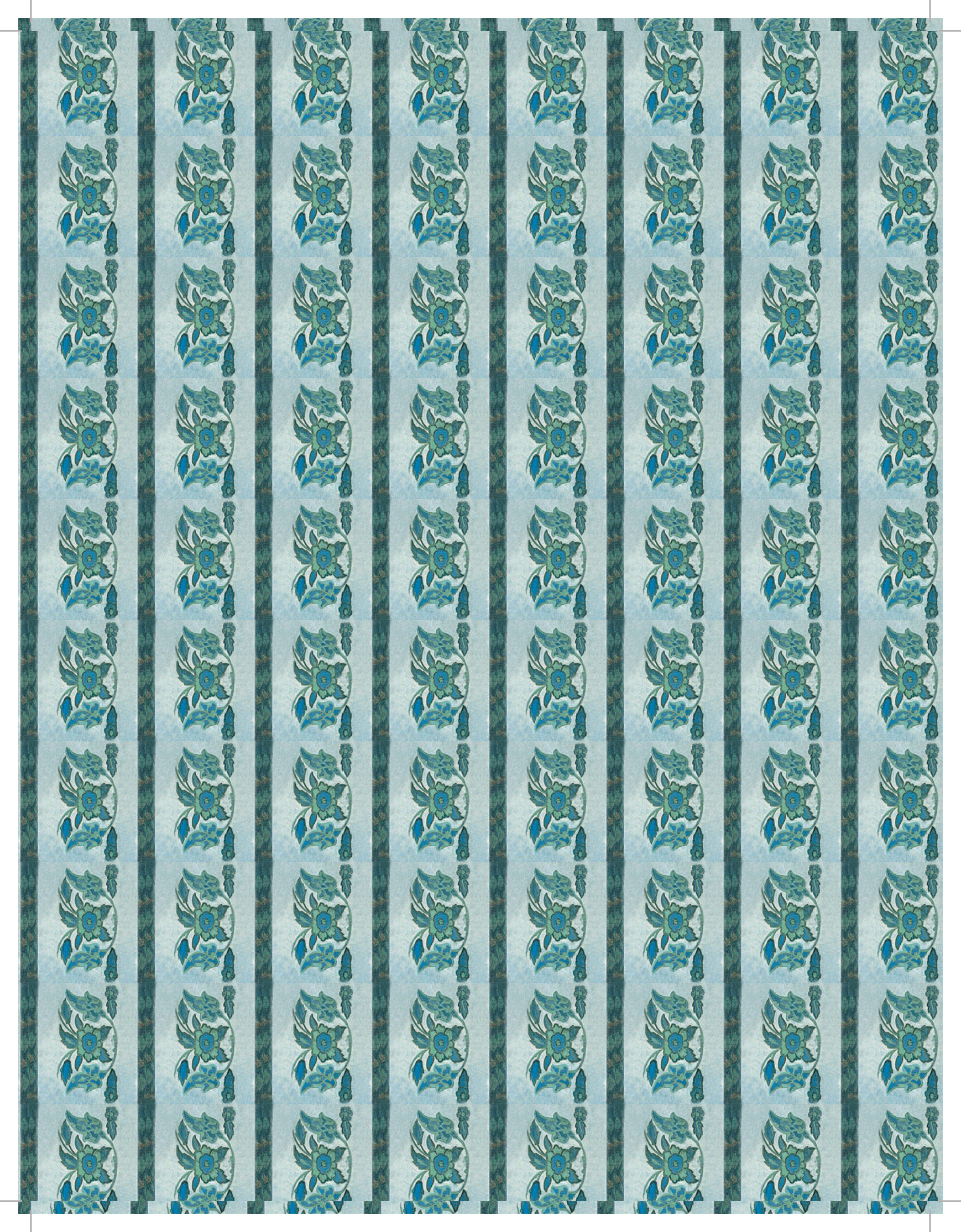
JEAN-LÉON GÉRÔME

Jean-Léon Gérôme is arguably the best-known and most influential of the orientalist painters and sculptors. Born in 1824 in northeastern France, he moved to Paris when he was sixteen to study painting. By 1845 he had been accepted as a student of the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts, where he eventually became a highly respected and an extremely influential instructor.

During Gérôme's impressive career he received many honors. Early in his career he was awarded second-class and third-class medals from the *Salon de Paris*. In 1865 he was elected a member of the Institut de France. In 1867 he was promoted to an officer of the Légion d'honneur. In 1869, he was elected an honorary member of the British Royal Academy. He was awarded the Grand Order of the Red Eagle Third Class by the King of Prussia, Wilhelm I. In fact, his honors and fame were such that he was invited, along with the most prominent French artists, to attend the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

When he died in 1904 at the age of 79, Gerome was quite famous, but at his own request, he was given a simple burial service without flowers. His Requiem Mass, however, was attended by a former president of the Republic, prominent politicians, and many of his fellow artists. He was buried in the Montmartre Cemetery in front of the statue Sorrow that he had cast for his son Jean, who had died five years earlier.

Cover: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *A Bashi-Bazouk and His Dog* (detail)



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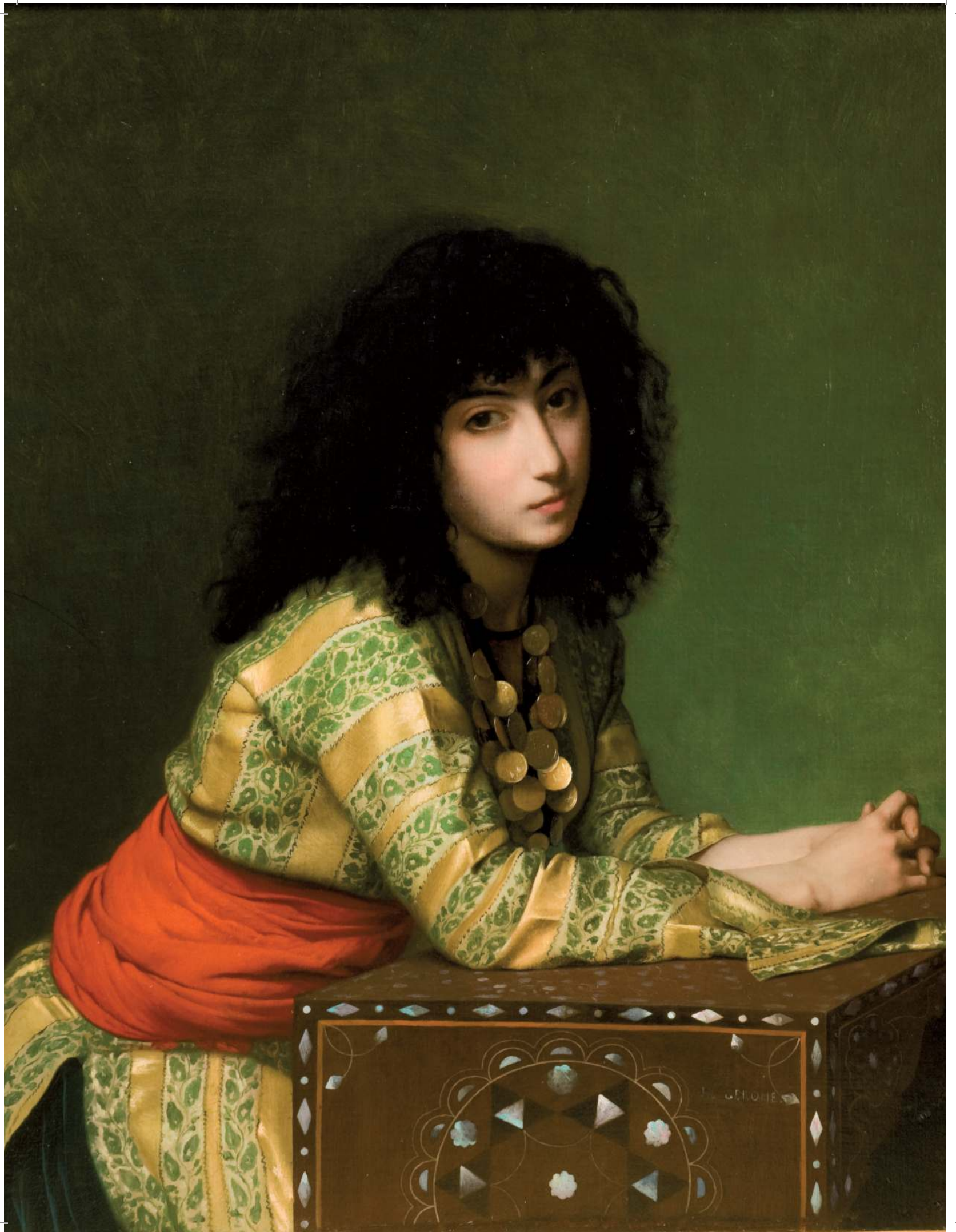
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Opposite: *Egyptian Girl*

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*

I am fortunate to have in my collection a very special selection of the outstanding paintings of the master, Jean-Léon Gérôme. Since acquiring my first Gérôme a dozen years ago, my deep appreciation for the academic excellence of his work has only increased. An artist much respected by his contemporaries, Gérôme's influence on his peers and on subsequent generations of Orientalists cannot be overstated.

Gérôme's consummate ability to incorporate fine detail into all of his work, from large landscape scenes, to intimate interiors and the highly elaborate details on the clothing of many of his subjects, has made his art extraordinary. Whether it's *The Muezzin* with Cairo lit by the afternoon sun as the backdrop, the beautiful interior of *The Blue Mosque*, or the play of light and the reflection in the water in *After the Bath*, I never tire of studying the minute detail Gérôme painstakingly incorporated into each of his paintings.

Gérôme visited the Near and Middle East seven times, often organized trips and safaris for his friends, and even spoke basic Arabic. All of this is reflected in his paintings, which provide immediacy and first-hand experience, as we note in the accurate observance of traditional prayer poses in *The Blue Mosque*. In addition, there is intimacy, wit and gentle humor in his oeuvre, for example in the painting *Une plaisanterie*.

Even though he was critically acclaimed by his academic contemporaries and enjoyed immense success at the Paris Salons, Gérôme did not always comply with the "established rules" for painting. Nineteenth century artistic taste preferred its large-scale historical paintings to represent a heroic, dynamic moment in history, picturing a triumphant moment, or one full of suspense and action. For example, most artists of that time chose to depict Napoleon mid-battle, with a determined look in the eyes, or proudly sitting on a rearing horse in triumph. However, Gérôme decides to completely ignore these unspoken rules in his great historical narrative, *Napoleon and his General Staff in Egypt*. Instead of a triumphant general in battle, the moment he chooses to depict is one of defeat, somber mood, and contemplation rather than action.



A Bashi-Bazouk and His Dog

minute detail, and deep interest, curiosity and understanding of the Near and Middle East are, in my opinion, the characteristics that make Jean-Léon Gérôme such a coveted artist. It is my wish for this booklet to provide a glimpse of his unique style and talent.

A similarly contemplative stance can also be observed in Gérôme's excellent painting *Bonaparte Before the Sphinx* (see image on p.47) where, before the battle and with the troops in the background, Napoleon faces the great Egyptian Sphinx. Also entitled *Oedipus* after the mythical king of Thebes who was the only one to answer the Sphinx's riddle correctly, the painting can be viewed as Napoleon's attempt to measure himself against the great heroes of the past (Oedipus as well as the Sphinx). However, the shadow on Napoleon's face cast by the Sphinx, as well as his minuscule size when compared to the monumental statue, can both be read to symbolize his subsequent defeat.

This gentle subverting of the established rules, his passion for vivid colours, sense and appreciation for

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>.

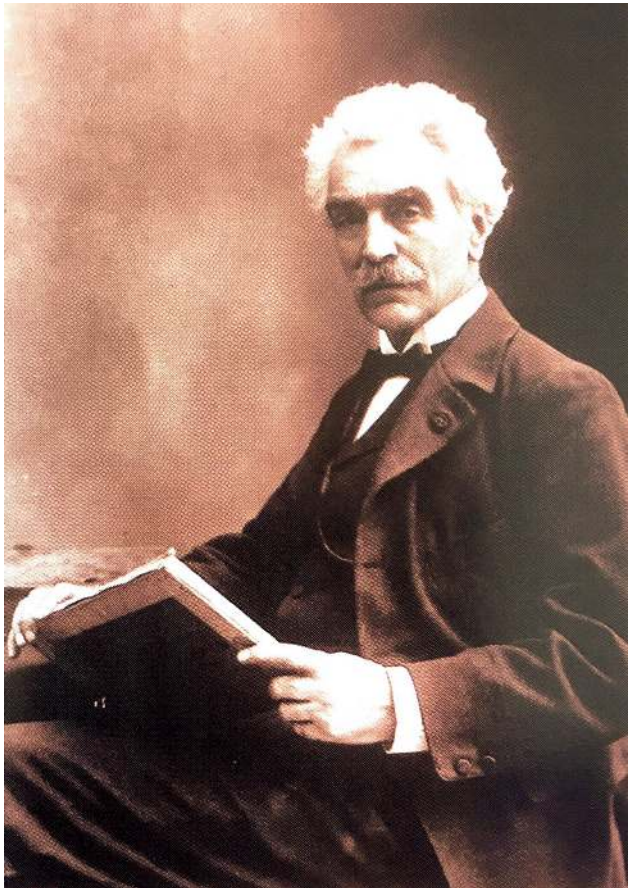
JEAN-LÉON GÉRÔME

FRENCH (1824 - 1904)

Jean-Leon Gérôme's admirable depictions of life in the Near East - in cities, in deserts - were born of his love and admiration of the Islamic countries of the Mediterranean from Algeria to Turkey, an area that he visited at least seven times when travel was arduous, transportation uncertain and, in general, somewhat hazardous - that is, he visited the Near East before travel became tourism, regulated, tame and comfortable. Between 1857 and 1875, he organised four major safaris for himself and small groups of companions, safaris that lasted several months. He learned enough Arabic to hire and deal with his own dragomen and other retainers; he experienced the common illnesses of travellers and even had a good friend die on one trip; he was shaken down by the rebellious tribes of Petra, attacked by sandstorms and drenched by tempests. On the way he sketched every day in oil on prepared paper: landscapes, buildings, men and women, etc. He collected clothing, artefacts, properties and accessories which he brought home to Paris. The inventory of his possessions, when he died, listed 173 ethnic costumes, and, for himself, two business suits.

As a non-Muslim, Gérôme's experience of life in Egypt and the Holy Lands was of the public life, prayers in mosques and outdoor activities. He developed a great love for the desert: his safaris took him to Fayoum and up the Nile, or across the isthmus to the Sinai Peninsula, across the latter to al-Acabah and then up the Wadi al-Araabah into Palestine and Syria. Gérôme had the good luck to be born to a prosperous silversmith father who recognised, encouraged and financially supported his vocation as a painter. His father's shop was on the main street of Vesoul, a small but busy agricultural centre east of Paris, on the way to Basel. The young Gérôme took drawing courses for five years at his high school and a course in oil painting in his last year. He often voiced his gratitude for the instruction of his lycée drawing master, Claude-Basile Cariage (1798-1875) - said to have been in the atelier of Jacques-Louis David. In a funeral eulogy, Gérôme thanked Cariage specifically for teaching him to think of the relative proportions of objects, training him in placement or the correct depiction of figures in perspective while recording the full weight and balance of their bodies in contrapposto, and especially for teaching him to criticise his own work. He may have learned even more about placement from his atelier master in Paris, Paul Delaroche (1797-1856), whose splendid command of legs and stances is displayed across his famous hemicycle mural in the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, a mural that depicts a congregation of the great artists of antiquity and modern times standing in a frieze around the thrones of Ictinus, Phidias and Apelles, ancient Greek masters who represented architecture, sculpture and painting.

A business acquaintance of Gérôme's father knew the renowned Delaroche and aided young Gérôme's entry into his private atelier in Paris. A boy of sixteen, he arrived in Paris with an allowance of one hundred French francs a month which, for a student, was a generous income that not only kept him in relative comfort, but also helped feed and warm his less fortunate studio companions.



Gerome about 65 years old. Photograph, ca. 1889.
Private Collection.

The suicide of a student - the mortified outcome of an elaborate ruse by his fellow students in Delaroche's studio - made Delaroche decide to stop teaching; he took off for Italy in 1843. Gérôme, already a favourite student, accompanied him and he remained in Italy for a year. He often recalled that year as the happiest time of his life. He went out sketching daily, often far from Rome. He drew gladiatorial gear in the Naples museum and ancient statuary in Roman museums, street scenes in Rome, and the landscape of the Campania with its costumed countryside, grazing cattle, and the Grecian temples of Paestum. All subjects that he thought, with foresight, he might want to use in the future, which he did.

When Gérôme returned to Paris he entered the studio of Charles Gleyre (1808-1875), who had taken over Delaroche's atelier. Gleyre was another master of great technical ability, and he taught a very safe oil technique. Gérôme stayed with him just long enough - six months - to

make himself eligible to enter the Prix de Rome contest of 1846 as "a student of Gleyre". Nevertheless, he was disqualified in the early rounds of the contest because of his weak figure drawing. Delaroche, now his mentor, advised him to redeem himself by painting a large composition with two figures for the Salon of 1847. The painting he prepared, with two large nudes was the famous *Cock Fight*.¹ It seems to have been painted under the supervision of Delaroche, although the idea of painting a genre scene set in antiquity was picked up in Gleyre's atelier. With this painting, Gérôme broke the rules of decorum: both large canvases and antique subjects were only for serious themes, and genre paintings depicting everyday life were always small or modest in format; and he had painted a genre scene set in antiquity in a large history-painting format! The work, praised in the press by the famous poet and critic Théophile Gautier, made Gérôme famous, enough so that he soon started to earn his living from portraits and various state commissions.

In 1852 he talked the Comte de Nieuwerkerke, the Minister of Education, into giving him a grand commission for the Universal Exhibition of 1855; his proposal was to paint a large allegory that would flatter by inference the Emperor Napoleon III: a scene representing the Emperor Augustus as the founder of the Roman Empire that endured four centuries (Napoleon III had just founded his own empire). In

¹) Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

the immense but formidable *The Age of Augustus, The Birth of Christ*,² Augustus sits on a throne with adoring hoards of people - all studied ethnic types from the conquered lands of the Roman Empire - paying the centrally-enthroned Augustus homage.

With the money from the commission, Gérôme took a group of friends to Egypt for a six-month-long visit. When he returned to Paris, he showed five Egyptian scenes at the Salon of 1855. The success of these paintings gave a new and profitable direction to his career - he became an Orientalist - and within a decade he was earning enough to support himself, to marry, to buy a large house, and to continue his long and expensive trips in the Near and Middle East.

During the rest of his very productive life, about half his production was of Orientalist subjects. They are inventive, precise and wonders of colour as well as of linear composition. It is his amazingly objective and correct drawing that gives his figures such presence. Even when the figures are heavily bedecked with costumes, his great command of stance, posture, balance, solidity, volume and weight come through, as well as the character and personality of the portrayed - everything you could ask for in figure painting. And of course his placement was flawless for the most part. On those practically regular visits to the Near and Middle East, Gérôme made many oil-on-paper sketches, of a rather small size, to be used for backgrounds. He also sketched native models, bought their costumes and brought them back to Paris, where professional models could pose in them. His fine, detailed, many-layered oil technique could only be practised in a dustless studio at home.

Over the years he regularly sent paintings to the annual salons where he won many honours. He became the head of an atelier at the École, a post he kept for forty years, teaching more than two thousand students. He built an international reputation, and his influence spread through his students all over Europe, in North and South America, and in Russia and Turkey. And he continued to travel.

The great allegory of the Salon of 1855, with its implied flattery of Napoleon III, had associated Gérôme with the Second Empire. Even so, as he became famous his prices became so high that the imperial government ceased giving him commissions. After the fall of Napoleon III in 1870, Gérôme stayed somewhat out of the public eye for a few years until he made a grand comeback at the Salon of 1874, entering three anecdotal paintings set in the seventeenth century, the most famous being *The Grey Cardinal*, in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston since 1906 and always on display since then. The success of these paintings - all painted at the height of his powers and all three with a subtle wit - quickly re-established his career, and he retained his popularity as a teacher, a colleague and an almost official voice at the École. He was active on committees, both charitable and professional. He had a small but faithful group of artistic and literary friends, many of them former students. Even in the democratic Third Republic, he persisted in his relationships with older friends of the imperial court, resuming his friendships with Princess Mathilde (niece of Napoleon Bonaparte) and the Duc d'Aumale (son of King Louis Philippe I) after they were allowed to return from exile.

2) 1855, Musée de Picardie, Amiens.



The Grey Cardinal (L'Éminence grise), oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

In the 1870s, he tried his hand at sculpture and produced large pieces, often bought by the state. His sculptures, as well as his paintings, were realistic to the smallest details. For example, the great bronze, *Gladiators*,³ exhibited at the Salon of 1878, shows heroic accuracy of costume and weaponry.

Seemingly without suffering the decline of old age, he was active to his final years as a painter and sculptor, as a teacher at the *École* and as a convivial party and travel companion. The evening before he died he stayed up late at a dinner with several painter friends. The next day, 10 January 1904, a servant bringing him morning coffee found him dead in his bed. He was eighty years of age.

³) Musée d'Orsay, Paris

AFTER THE BATH (FEMMES NUES. SCÈNE DE BAIN)

Signed 'J. L. GEROME.' (lower right)

Oil on Canvas

32½ x 26¼ in. (82.6 x 66.7 cm.)

Painted ca. 1881

Provenance:

William Astor, New York

William Henry Haussner and Frances Wilke Haussner, The Haussner's Restaurant Collection, Baltimore

The Haussner's Restaurant Collection, Sotheby's, New York, 2 November 1999, lot 31 (illustrated)

Anonymous sale, Sotheby's, New York, 2 November 2010, lot 11

Literature:

Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Paris Photographs: Gérôme, Œuvres* (Paris: Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque nationale)

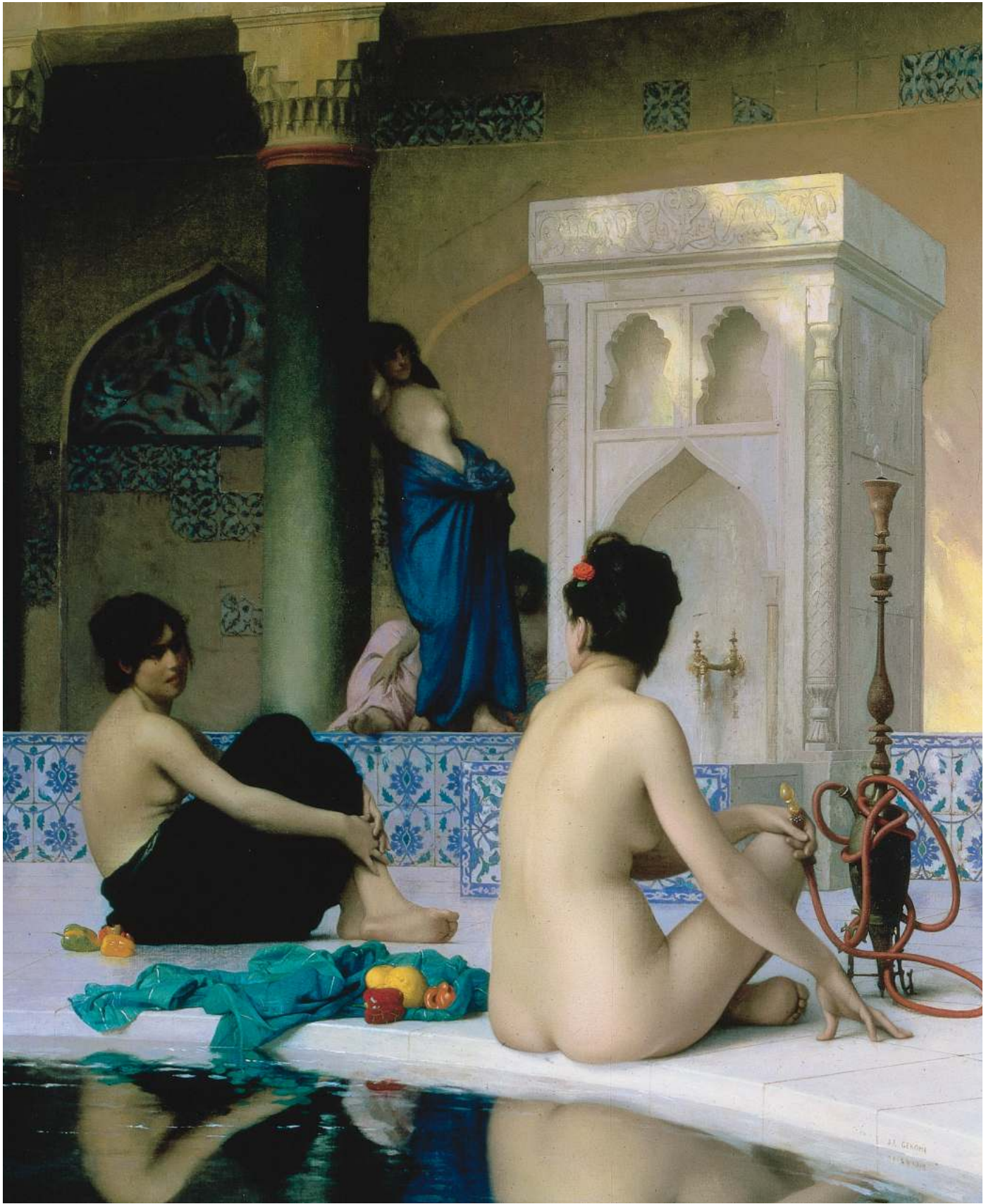
Edward Strahan (ed.), *The Art Treasures of America* (Philadelphia, 1879), Vol. III, p. 5, illustrated opp. p. 9, in the 1977 facsimile edition, Vol. II, pp. 71–72, 78 (as *Moorish Bath*), illustrated opp. p. 69

Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme (with a catalogue raisonné)* (London & New York, 1986), pp. 248–49, no. 297, illustrated p. 249

Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme (monographie révisée et catalogue raisonné mis à jour)* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 2000), p. 302, no. 297, illustrated pp. 128, 303 (as *Femmes nues. Scène de bain*)

Stephen R. Edidin, 'Gérôme's Orientalism', *Gérôme & Goupil, Art and Enterprise*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, 2000), illustrated p. 136 (the woodburytype after the painting as *Odalisques Bathing*)

Mary G. Morton, 'Gérôme in the Gilded Age', *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904)*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, 2010), p. 189 (as *Moorish Bath*)



After the Bath

Beginning in the 1870s, Gérôme produced a group of bath scenes, with *After the Bath* among the most accomplished examples. The composition follows a motif famously developed by early nineteenth-century artists like Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. In the present work a group of female bathers - with dampened hair and in various states of undress - gather around a reflective pool. Each figure holds a distinctly different pose from the seated nude, her spine flexed, her neck softly twisted as she turns to her companion, to a shadowed figure standing in contrapposto, a saturated blue robe held across her pale body. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Gérôme does not eroticise the bathing scene - instead, the work serves as a careful examination of the human body and its skeletal structure, subtle muscle movement, and textured skin. From the 1870s, Gérôme's intense anatomy studies for his sculptures were further put to use in his paintings supported by observation of professional models in his Paris studios.

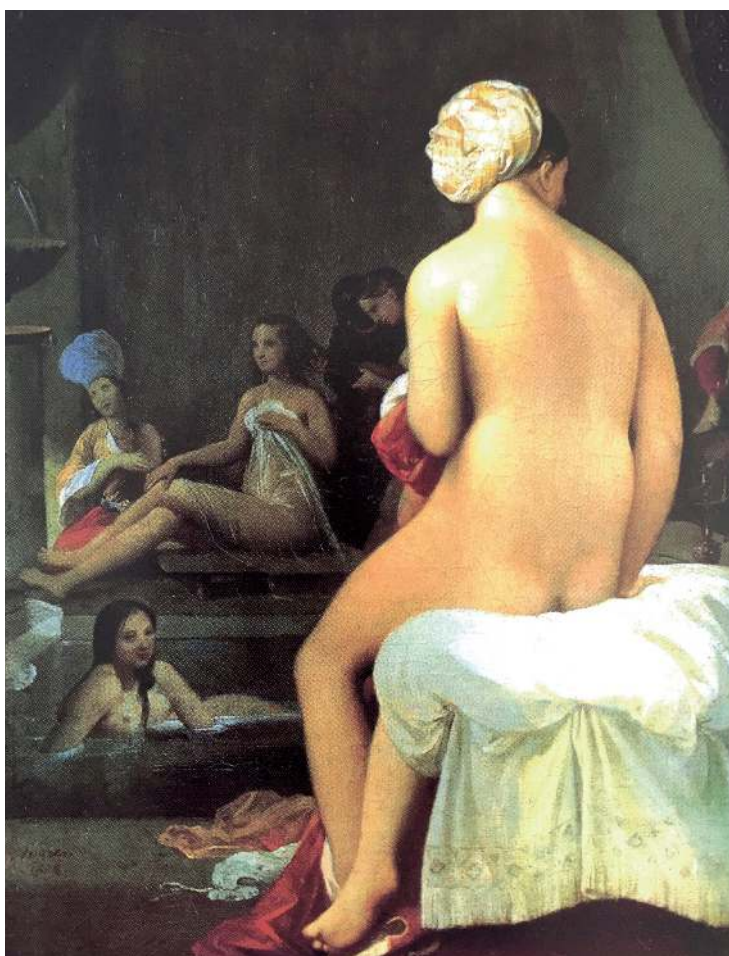
The architecture and decorations of *After the Bath's* interior may have been assembled from photographs and Gérôme's own props. When visiting Constantinople, Gérôme met the famous Turkish photographers, the Abdullah brothers;¹ he used their images of the city, mainly its interiors, as sources for his compositions' backgrounds. Further, the artist decorated his Paris studio with tiles, metalwork, fabrics and other Middle Eastern souvenirs.

Gérôme's visits to the Turkish city of Bursa's Sinan baths were likely important inspiration for *After the Bath*. Working in the baths on Men's Day (his presence among women would certainly have been forbidden), Gérôme naturally observed the casual society of the male bathers around him in the warm, steamy space. Gérôme's friend, Frédéric Masson, recorded the artist's account of the baths: "I was taken by the architecture... and they certainly offered a chance to study nudes. It wasn't just a question of going to see what was going on inside, and of replacing [some men by some women], I had to have a sketch of this interior; and since the temperature inside was rather high, I didn't hesitate to sketch in the simple apparel of a beauty just aroused from her sleep that is, in the buff. Sitting on my tripod, my paint box on my knees, my palette in my hand, I was a little grotesque, but you have to know how to adapt yourself as necessary."² Such first-hand experience provides a particular immediacy to *After the Bath*; each element of the composition suggests the warm, languorous luxury of the space and the soft, supple forms of the female body: the steamy water flowing out of a shiny, brass spigot, the *hookah* sending forth aromatic smoke, the glossy peppers, nubby oranges and ripe persimmons tucked among the bathers. Gérôme's use of light in *After the Bath* also closely captures a sense of space both architecturally and atmospherically. Turkish public baths consisted of a series of 'apartments' in which beautiful mosaics and tessellated pavements were illuminated by shafts of light from the small, round windows of the domed ceilings. In the present work, soft areas of shadow are broken by spots of light absorbed into cool, marble surfaces and splash across the pool, allowing for the vivid reflection of the bathers at its edge, the bright blue of discarded drapery dipping into the surface, and the artist's own signature, inscribed at the edge and mirrored in the water's surface.

1) Founders of the Abdullah Frères firm.

2) Frédéric Masson, 'J.L. Gérôme. Notes et fragments des souvenirs inédits du maître', *Les Arts*, 1902, page 30.

While the setting of *After the Bath* is based on buildings as they looked during Gérôme's lifetime, the bathing scenes were ultimately formed from the artist's imagination and aesthetic choices. Contrasted with the visual virtuosity of the composition, the 'reality' of the bathing scene mattered little to Gérôme's patrons - the great American industrialists and businessmen of the late nineteenth century. *After the Bath* was one of a number of Gérôme's works listed in the American critic Edward Strahan's 1880s inventory *The Art Treasures of America*. The visual brilliance of the painting reflected the connoisseurship of its first recorded owner William Astor. Viewing the work in Astor's private New York galleries, Strahan cited it as evidence that "there is no living painter, and there are few living writers, whose mind can be called so interesting as the mind of Gérôme".³



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *The Small Bathing Women, or Interior of a Harem*, oil on canvas, 1828. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Born into one of the great American dynasties, Astor ultimately became the wealthiest man in America⁴ and used his fortune to amass one of the most important collections of art in the late nineteenth century. Despite the prominence of Gérôme's patrons, by the turn of the twentieth century his œuvre had become largely and unfairly overlooked. Indeed, *After the Bath's* next recorded owners, Henry and Frances Wilke Haussner, are credited for their role in re-introducing the artist and his era. Soon after their first painting purchase in 1939, the Haussners built a collection that echoed their predecessors like Astor, J.P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt and Henry Walters. *After the Bath* hung in the Haussner's landmark Baltimore restaurant, where generations of patrons dined surrounded by the best examples of nineteenth-century art. The record-breaking sale of the Haussner's Restaurant collection in 1999 further evidenced the renewed and deserved appreciation of Gérôme's masterworks like *After the Bath*.

3) Strahan, 1977, page 72.

4) In 1890 upon the death of his father, and fellow Gérôme collector, John Jacob Astor.

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ARNAUT PLAYING A JOKE ON HIS DOG (UNE PLAISANTERIE)

Signed 'J. L. GEROME.' (lower right)

Oil on Canvas

23½ x 28¾ in. (60 x 73 cm.)

Painted in 1882

Provenance:

Acquired directly from the artist by Goupil & Cie, Paris (Ffr. 15,000). with Schaus, New York, 1882 (acquired from Goupil for Ffr. 26,000); acquired from the above by Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, until 1920

By descent to his daughter Mrs. Lucius Manlius Sargent (née Marian Appleton Coolidge)

By descent to her daughter Mrs. Francis Lee Higginson (née Hetty Appleton Sargent)

By descent to her daughter Griselda Higginson, until 1995

By descent to a private collection, Virginia

Anonymous sale; Christie's, New York, 25 October 1996, lot 76

Wendy Goldsmith, London

Private Collection, London

Anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 25 November 2009, lot 6

Literature:

Le Figaro illustré, (July 1901)

F.F. Hering, *Gérôme, his life and works*, (New York, 1892), p. 242

(Possibly) *L'Art Français*, (14 February 1891)

Gérôme (the artist's studio photographs, bound into 26 volumes), (Paris: Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque nationale), Vol. XV, no. 5

Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme (with a catalogue raisonné)*, (London & New York, 1986), no. 3, p. 250

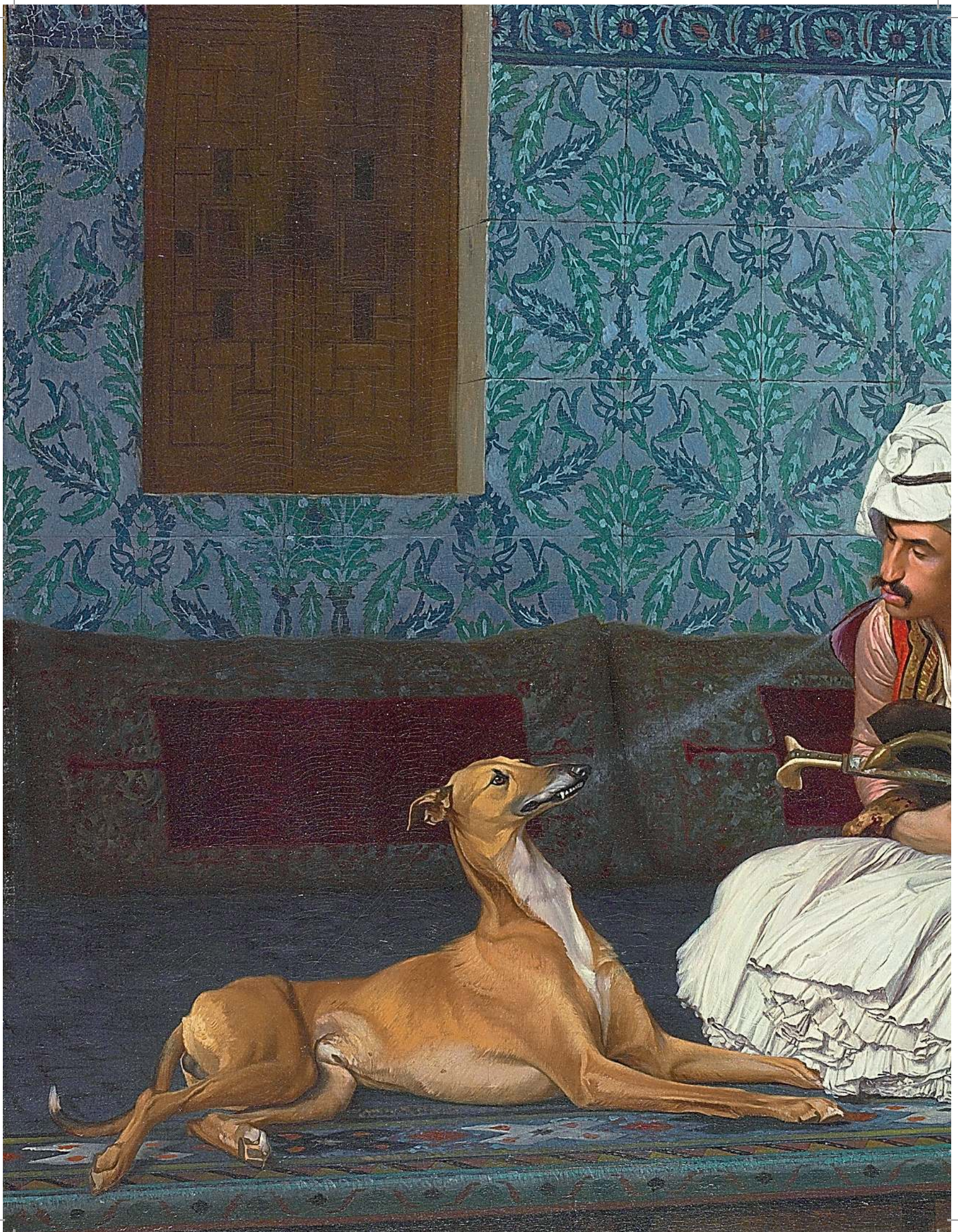
Gerald M. Ackerman, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Jean-Léon Gérôme (monographie révisée et catalogue raisonné mis à jour)* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 2000), p. 304, no. 307, illustrated p. 305

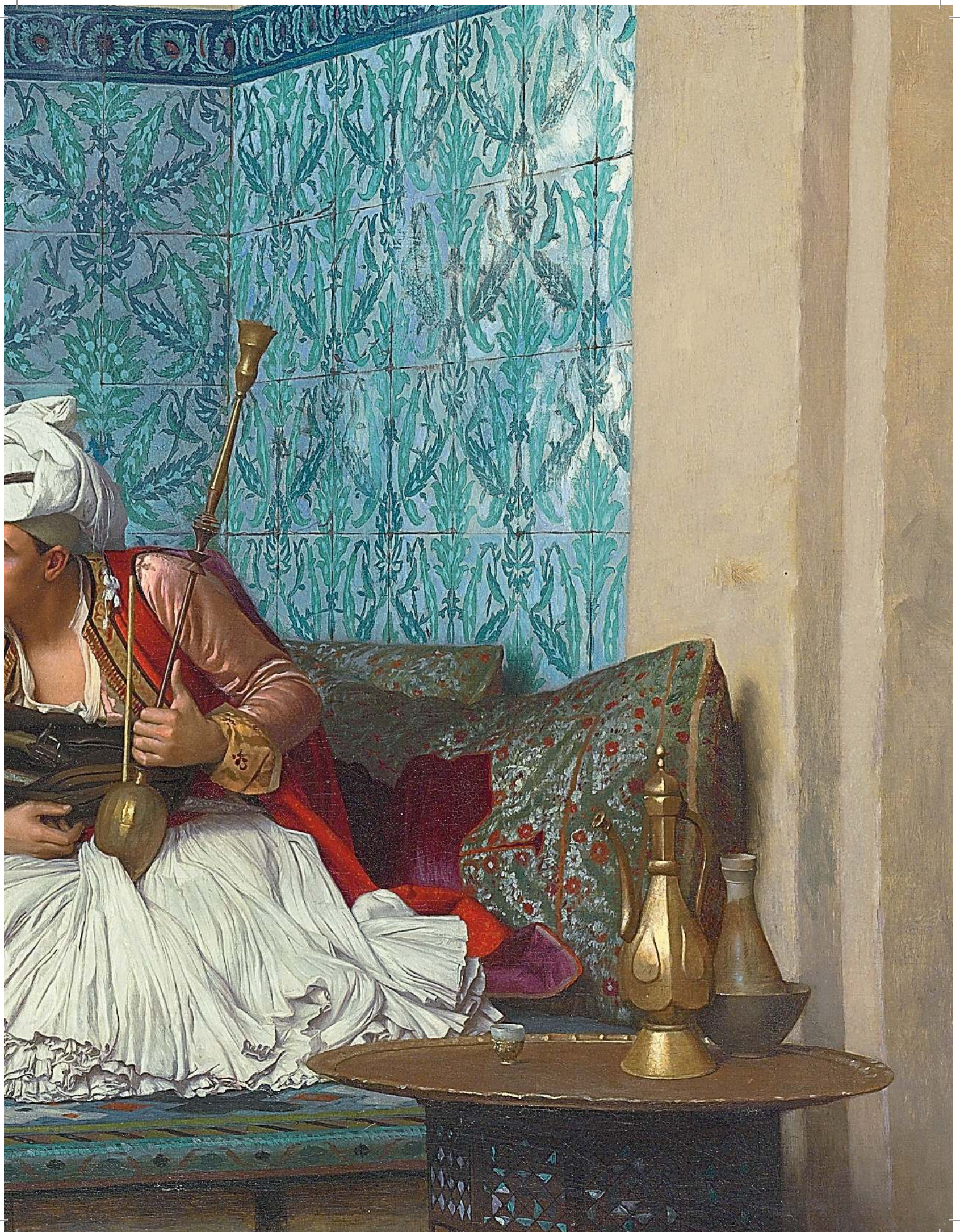
Kristian Davies, *The Orientalists, Western Artists in Arabia, The Sahara, Persia & India* (New York, 2005), illustrated p. 142

Arnaut *Playing a Joke on His Dog* (*Une Plaisanterie*) is one of Jean Léon Gérôme's masterpieces, painted when the artist was at the height of his powers. He portrays a touching moment of a man playing with his dog. A young Arnaut (an Albanian soldier in the Ottoman army) sits with his whippet on a divan in a room with a tiled dado. The Arnaut has drawn from the *hookah*, and playfully blows a stream of smoke at the whippet's nose. Although this may at first seem to convey cruelty, considering modern attitudes towards smoking, it is clearly meant as an affectionate tease. The hound is attentive to his master, while the Arnaut carefully returns his dog's gaze, the arch of his shoulders leaning towards the animal, again affectionately, the smoke binding them together as much as if they were touching each other (one side of the triangle they inhabit is amusingly outlined by the stream of smoke). The incident is further characterized by the convincing expressions on their faces: the man's puffed up cheeks, and the puzzled apprehension of the dog as the smoke tickles his nostrils. Gérôme manages to present the moment without sentimentality; neither gesture nor expression is exaggerated enough for the action to overshadow their mutual respect.



Arnaut Playing a Joke on His Dog





Gérôme himself was fond of dogs; the whippet was probably one of his pets, for it appears in several pictures from this period and in many drawings. The Arnaut wears a favourite garment from Gérôme's costume collection: the pleated Arnaut skirt, which the painter never failed to draw and paint freshly throughout his life, always with a different fall of the pleats, and different modulations of light and shadow on the multitudinous folds. Surrounding the man and his dog are innumerable examples of Gérôme's skills as a painter, and his exultation in deploying them.

This painting astounds with its technical brilliance. The extensive tile dado covers the wall behind the soldier and the dog, each tile reflecting in turn differing highlights and colour values; those on the right wall are seen in very accurate foreshortening. The pillows of the divan upon which the pair sits are covered with a decorated fabric whose intricacies of pattern enticed rather than frightened the painter as he brought them out of shadow into full light. And to the right, a small table cornered into near darkness sports a mosaic mother-of-pearl frieze whose gently glittering tesserae are another example of the painter's mastery of light values.

The still-life of two vessels and a cup are exquisitely painted, but they and the tray are so correctly drawn and coloured that they stay in their place in the soft, indirect light of the room. In fact, the splendid foreshortening of the tray, done without ostentation, sets up the space for the whole painting; the tray is, in effect, our entry into the room where the master and his dog sit. Examine the area around the tray and the still-life of vessels upon it: it is an area seemingly insignificant or unassuming, but painted as if it could be the most important passage in the composition; every object is correctly drawn, and accurately placed in clearly defined space and light. On top of the exact placement of the tray and the objects and drapery upon and around it, the sumptuous colouring - especially of the drapery over the tray, and the open space under it - is rich but well-behaved: everything stays in its place, building an almost palpable space. This area is a stunning example of Gérôme's skill, and his modest deployment of them. Throughout the painting, we can sense his joy in painting.

The provenance of this painting is impressive. It originally belonged to Thomas Jefferson Coolidge who was the United States Minister Plenipotentiary to France for a short time in 1892 and 1893; the painting stayed in the family until 1996. Coolidge acquired most of the paintings in his collection in Paris while he was Minister, although early records indicate that this painting was handled by Knoedler in New York City in 1892 (Knoedler was an art dealership founded in 1846 - one of the oldest commercial art galleries in the US).



Study of a Whippet, pencil drawing. Private Collection.

A BASHI-BAZOUK AND HIS DOG (BACHI BAZOUK ET SON CHIEN)

Signed 'J. L. GEROME.' (center left)

Oil on Panel

14 x 9 in. (35.6 x 22.86 cm.)

Painted in 1870

Provenance:

Goupil, Paris

W. P. Wilstach, Elkins Park, Philadelphia

Philadelphia Museum of Art (bequested from the above in 1893)

Samuel T. Freeman & Co., Philadelphia, October 29-30, 1954, lot 197

Possibly, Renaissance Galleries

Private Collection, Pennsylvania

Anonymous sale, Sotheby's, New York, October 23, 1990, lot 47

Private Collection, USA

Anonymous sale, Sotheby's, New York, 24 April 2009, lot 8

Literature:

Œuvres de J.-L. Gérôme (Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris),
vol. IX, no. 9

Edward Strahan, ed., *Gérôme: A Collection of the Works of J.L. Gérôme in One
Hundred Photogravures*, New York, 1881, illustrated

Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme (with a catalogue
raisonné)* (London & New York, 1986), pp. 216-17, no. 156, illustrated p. 218

Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme, (Monographie révisée, Catalogue raisonné mis
à jour)* Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 2000), p. 258, no. 156, illustrated p. 259



A Bashi-Bazouk and His Dog

In the urban setting of Cairo, Gérôme took a particular interest in elaborate depictions of the Arnauts, descendants of the Albanian soldiers brought to Egypt by its ruler Pasha Muhammad Ali, and their most colourful division, the Ottoman irregular mercenaries. The latter were known colloquially as bashi-bazouks, which means literally ‘damaged head’, and points to them being leaderless and without discipline.

Paul Lenoir, who accompanied Gérôme on two of his master’s tours of Egypt, described these men in his journal of 1881:

“Whilst attending a new conquest of Egypt by whoever it may be, these soldiers of ornament, these *opéra-comique* sentinels have no other duty than to pose for any itinerant photographer that might honour them with his patronage. Their costumes artistically open at the breast, their arms ‘de luxe’ as brilliant as inoffensive, their proud and disdainful attitudes, their least gestures, everything about them seems to have been most carefully studied.

Nothing, however, is more natural than these interminable moustaches *à la grecque*, which cut their visages in two like the two enormous horns of the buffalo, and which form the most appropriate ornament of these energetic faces, bronzed in the sun. The moustache, which has nothing Arab in its principle, is with the soldier of Cairo a sign of Albanese origin ... It was an innovation in a land in which the beard is held in the highest esteem, and where the respect which is due to a man is measured by the length of this hirsute ornament.

The soldier has become an indispensable part of almost any scene depicting the door of a mosque or the entrance to a palace. He is like the ‘Swiss’,¹ the chasseur of our ancestors, but having instead of the halbert about ten or a dozen weapons, sabres and pistols, artistically intercrossed in the compartments of a vast girdle of red leather, which gives him the aspect of one of the show-windows of the Divisme on the boulevard Haussmann.”²

In the present painting, elements of this description come vividly to life. Though the subject strikes a confrontational posture, his weapons are not drawn. The conspicuous display of guns and daggers becomes an opportunity for an exquisitely painted still life, rather than a vicious show of force. The saddle, too, removed from its steed and placed upon the grass-specked ground, reminds us only distantly of the furious pace, pounding hooves, and frenetic atmosphere of mounted battle. Even the nimble whippet is docile at this time. Despite such allusions to an erstwhile authority, however, and a diminished position of power, there is no mockery here. Unlike Lenoir, who took great pleasure in pointing out the

1) Swiss guards outside of the Vatican.

2) Quoted in ‘Arnaout of Cairo’, in Edward Stahan (Earl Shinn) (ed.), *Gérôme: A Collection of the Works of J.L. Gérôme in One Hundred Photogravures* (New York: Samuel L. Hall, 1881).

comical nature of the modern bashi-bazouk - from his open-collared costume to his “interminable” moustache - Gérôme invests his subject with dignity and grace. The man’s pink sleeves and loosely tailored leggings suggest a lean, athletic build, and his black vest is richly, if subtly, embroidered. His firm stance, clenched jaw, and sober stare, moreover, are unapologetic and unflinching; though history may have changed the circumstances of this dramatic figure, he is still the undisputed master of the scene.

Jean-Léon Gérôme was particularly fond of depicting Arnauts in various scenes and poses, such as in another painting in the Shafik Gabr Collection described on page 16, *Arnaut Playing a Joke on His Dog*, or for example in his painting *A Bashî-Bazouk Chieftain* (see image below).



A Bashî-Bazouk Chieftain, oil on canvas, ca. 1881-1882. Property of Terence and Katrina Garnett, California.

One of a series of striking single-figure studies in Gérôme’s expansive Orientalist œuvre, *Bachi-bazouk et son chien* well demonstrates the artist’s ability to seamlessly combine the arts of ethnography, costume study, and penetrating portraiture. Gérôme’s accuracy in each of these three fields was indebted both to copious sketches, made on the spot, and to a well-stocked studio in Paris, full of artists’ props, detailed photographs, and eclectic souvenirs of travel. The Arnaut skirt depicted here, for example, with its distinctive pleating and straight, simple hang, may be an early use of a new (and later, repeatedly utilized) property in Gérôme’s large costume collection. It is a tribute to the artist’s creativity that such a recognizable compositional device as this can be given a fresh sensation of movement and life in each of the images in which it appears, first through the careful delineation of sunlight and shadow, and next, through the subtle sway of the cotton folds. Indeed, in the present work and in this single garment, Gérôme is able to capture the barely-controlled energy and simmering emotion of this, surely unrepeatable, figure.

THE BLACK MAIDSERVANT (LA SERVANTE NOIRE)

Signed 'J. L. GEROME.' (center left)

Oil on Canvas

13³/₈ x 11 in. (34.5 x 28 cm.)

Painted circa 1877

Provenance:

Collection Donatis

Anonymous sale, Gros & Delettrez, Paris, 15 December 2008, lot 66

Gérôme's enduring interest in recording ethnic types - a practice that may be traced to his travels of the 1850s - earned the praise of several contemporary critics. Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) congratulated the artist for his "ethnographic veracity," and believed that his paintings could provide information reliable enough for anthropologists, scientists, and other respected scholars. So too, Gautier continued, Gérôme was fulfilling that peculiarly nineteenth-century passion for precise and reliable information about the human race: "M. Gérôme satisfies one of the most demanding instincts of the age: the desire which people have to know more about each other than that which is revealed in imaginary portraits. He has everything which is needed in order to fulfil this important mission."¹

In the present work, Gérôme has set his sights on one of his favorite - and most modest - of foreign subjects, the maidservant. The woman's armband is Sudanese, and may be made of either ivory or horn. Often these accessories were carved with designs, though the simple vertical marks on this particular piece are somewhat unusual. The woman herself may be either Lower Nubian or Sudanese, an identity which links her, along with her distinctively wound cloth headgear, to other figures in Gérôme's art.

Gérôme's paintings of fair-skinned Circassian women and their attentive black servants, often set against the richly adorned blue-and-white tiles of a *hammam*, or harem bath, comprise a distinctive subgroup within his Orientalist oeuvre.² In the context of these celebrated and much-debated images, the importance of *The Black Maidservant* cannot be missed.

1) 'Salon de 1857 IV,' *L'Artiste*, 5 July 1857, page 246.

2) *The Moorish Bath*, 1870, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



The Black Maidservant

THE BLUE MOSQUE (LA MOSQUÉE BLEUE)

Signed 'J. L. GEROME.' (lower right)

Oil on Canvas

28½ x 40¼ in. (72.4 x 102.2 cm.)

Painted in 1878

Provenance:

Boussod Valadon, Paris, 1878

Knoedler's, New York, 1879

Wells Collection

Their sale, American Art Association, New York, 12–13 November 1936, lot 47

Eli Whitney Debevoise Collection

Their sale, Christie's, New York, 24 October 1990, lot 92

Galerie d'Orsay, Paris, 1995

Anonymous sale, Christie's, New York, 14 February 1996, lot 30

Private Collection, London

Anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 14 June 2006, lot 26

Literature:

Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme (with a catalogue raisonné)* (London & New York, 1986), pp. 242–43, no. 268 (illustrated)

Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme (monographie révisée et catalogue raisonné mis à jour)* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 2000), p. 294, no. 268, 295 (illustrated)

Kristian Davies, *The Orientalists: Western Artists in Arabia, The Sahara, Persia and India* (New York: Laynfaroh, 2005), pp. 264, 266 (illustrated)

Olga Nefedova, 'Orientalism in Art', *Antiq.Info*, no. 48/49, January-February 2007, p. 17 (illustrated)

Olga Nefedova, *A Journey into the World of the Ottomans: The Art of Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671–1737)* (Skira, 2009), pp. 22–23 (illustrated), p. 63



The Blue Mosque

The *Blue Mosque* is a very strong and accomplished painting from one of Gérôme's best periods, the 1870s, when he was trying to disassociate himself from his connections with the fallen regime of Napoleon III. Gérôme had spent most of the Franco-Prussian war in London and did not send anything to the Parisian Salons until 1874, when he made a spectacular return into public favour with three witty scenes from seventeenth-century French history: the great *Éminence grise*,¹ the *Rex Tibicen*² depicting Frederick the Great playing the flute in a rococo room at Sans Souci after a hunt (his hunting paraphernalia and dogs are on the floor), and *Molière et Corneille*,³ with the two poets uncomfortably collaborating on the text for a royal entertainment.

Gérôme did not visit Istanbul as frequently as he did Cairo and Jerusalem, unlike his friend, the Italian painter, Alberto Pasini (1826–99), who haunted Istanbul. Gérôme must have passed through the city on the way back to Paris from some of the long trips he had taken to the Holy Lands before he painted *The Blue Mosque*. However, as his trips were winter forays that extended into the early spring, he was usually in a hurry to get back to Paris to prepare for the Salon in May and would not have dallied long in the city. However, in the spring of 1875, having nothing of note planned for the Salon of that year, he

1) Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

2) Lost.

3) Private Collection.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قبر النبي محمد وآل بيته الطيبين الطاهرين



اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى نَبِيِّكَ مُحَمَّدٍ

FL. SERONE

seems to have made a special trip just to Istanbul, where he spent part of the spring, perhaps in the company of Pasini, a companion who would have been a good guide to the city.

Both artists produced a series of Istanbul subjects after the trip of 1875, some of which Pasini sent to the Salon of 1878, and in the same year several Turkish subjects by Gérôme appear in the stock books of his dealer in Paris, Boussod, Valadon & Cie. The list included the painting, *The Blue Mosque*, entered in April 1878 as no. 12975. It is not the interior of the large and famous Mosque of Sultan Ahmet, built between 1609 and 1616 and more popularly called the Blue Mosque, but rather an earlier building by the great architect Sinan, the Rustem Pasha Mosque, ca. 1550.

Gérôme, probably on the trip in 1875, painted a small oil sketch of the interior of the mosque;⁴ it is the exact model for the view of the mosque in the larger canvas, except it is of a smaller area, so that Gérôme had to improvise some peripheral details in the larger composition. For example, he had forgotten that the *minbar* had a filial on the top. He invented or copied other details elsewhere, e.g. the decorations of the two flanks of the wall.

Gérôme had started an earlier version of the large composition; he left it unfinished, not content with the space. The unfinished version has shown up in auction, finished by a weaker hand.⁵

The Blue Mosque depicts a group of Muslims at prayer before the blue-tile-covered *mihrab* of the Rustem Pasha Mosque in Istanbul. The mosque is a masterpiece of the great architect Sinan who built it between 1550 and 1560. As in all mosques built by Sinan, the space is wide and bright, intellectual yet magical. The building is also famous for its decoration of fine Iznik tiles on the walls and on the columns.

The great array of tiles around the *mihrab* reflects some spots of sunlight from high windows on the left. The tiles remain bright in the shadowless general light around the niche and become dark in the shadow cast by the *minbar*. The blue shimmer of the porcelain surfaces sets the spatial background and atmospheric ambiance for the twelve worshippers facing the *mihrab*. These effects are the result of a marvellous control of values, one of Gérôme's most precious talents as a painter.

The stalwart bashi-bazouk, with the great calves on the left, is just about to step into the line and join the prayers. His body is clearly outlined against the tiles as he shifts his balance from one leg to the other and leans into the rhythm of the other figures that move across the canvas. Gérôme composes by shapes, bulky body shapes and their movements, as well as by colour. The colour is daring; the bright yellow costume of the man in the middle is surrounded by the yellowish stone decoration at the top of the niche. His bright colour also makes a connection with the formal closure of the composition in the vertical formed by the bright light on a balcony and the santon's white gown.

4) Musée Garret, Vesoul, 22 x 31 cm.

5) See Sotheby's, New York, 23 April 2008, lot no. 193, illustrated.

The long-haired, half-nude figure seated to the right is a *santon*, a local holy man who lived as a hermit in either the forests or the mountains outside the city and who came into town regularly to beg for alms and food. Such ascetics were still visible in the mid-twentieth century in inland cities in Turkey, where they were referred to as *Tarzans*. Much respected by the populace, their semi-nudity was accepted as a sign of their austere piety.

This kind of tight, detailed painting was not done on site, but at home in a bright, dust-free studio. He would not have used amateur native models, but professional Arab models who lived in Paris. They were called in, one at a time, dressed up in costumes from Gérôme's enormous stock and then posed for Gérôme. The figure studies were entered into a sketch - a good schematic of the whole composition - with correct perspective and careful placement of each. Some of the minor figures were from older drawings and others were improvised or "painted from memory", as was the professional phrase used at the time. The greatest attention was given to the participants in the very front rows, to the perspective exactness of their placement, and to the maintenance of space around each figure. Once the sketch was finished it was squared off so that it could be transferred to similarly-proportioned squares on a canvas. Somewhere in this process, a small oil sketch of the finished work in colour would be prepared in which the placing of the figures and the colour scheme was developed. No colour sketch for *The Blue Mosque* has shown up, probably because the oil sketch Gerome had done in 1875 (see note 4) had captured the colour scheme and was enough to go by.

When Gérôme sat down to paint the canvas within the outlines of his transferred composition, all the conceptual work was done, and he knew exactly what he was going to do. Consequently his work and his surfaces are very clean. For him, the execution was pure, unproblematic pleasure.

Gérôme certainly knew that in the mosque the worshippers in communal prayer prayed and changed positions and gestures in unison. Two reasons may have caused him to paint them otherwise: one was to avoid a monotonous row of equal shapes and enable him to set up a rhythm of bodies in movement, and he may also have wanted to show all the proper prayer positions, as described and depicted by Edward Lane in his famous book, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 1836. Gérôme took five of the poses from Lane's plates.



Sequence of symbolic prayer poses described by the Arabic linguist and Orientalist scholar Edward William Lane (1801-1876), in his highly acclaimed *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1860)

EGYPTIAN GIRL (JEUNE FILLE ÉGYPTIENNE)

Signed 'J. L. GEROME.' (lower right)

Oil on Canvas

18³/₈ x 15 in. (46.7 x 38.1 cm.)

Painted ca. 1877

Provenance:

Goupil, Paris, no. 12380, acquired directly from the artist, December 1877

Knoedler, New York

H. Victor Newcomb

Anonymous sale, New York, 1903

A.B. Meyer; American Art Association, New York, 1923, lot 252

Anonymous sale, Parke Bernet, New York, 1958, lot 252

X.L. Lisman, Vermont; Sotheby's Parke Bernet, New York, 15 June 1979, lot 410B

National Museum of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan

Private Collection, Jordan

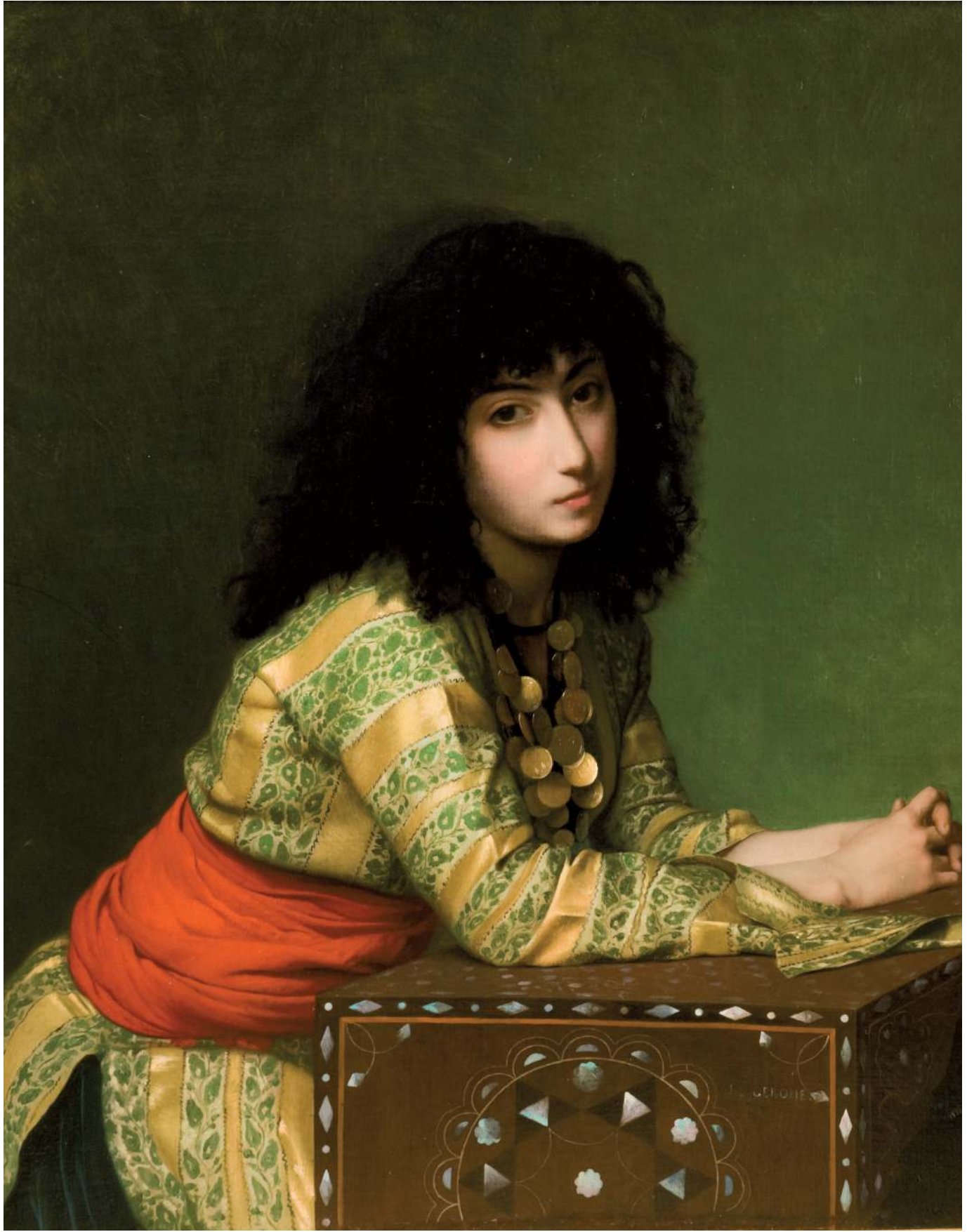
Anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 2 July 2008, lot 92

Literature:

Œuvres de J.L. Gérôme (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale-Cabinet des Estampes), Vol. III, p. 8 (illustrated)

Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme (monographie révisée et catalogue raisonné mis à jour)* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 2000), pp. 121, 292–93, no. 262 (illustrated)

Lynne Thornton, *Les Orientalistes Peintres voyageurs* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 2001), p. 129 (illustrated)



Egyptian Girl

A contemporary of Jean-Léon Gérôme once remarked: "Every time Ingres sees a Gérôme he must ask himself, 'Wasn't he one of my students?'" The example of Ingres as a portraitist of elegant women - *en grande toilette* in superb settings and with their appropriate upper-class airs - was so prevalent that his influence could not be escaped. This went against Gérôme's early-developed predilection for objective observation and description. As a result, most of his early portraits of women, although stalwart attempts to paint young ladies *à la mode d'Ingres*, came out as mixtures of an Ingresque pose and Gérôme's severity in decoration, and anatomical correctness, not at all lush, not at all piquant.

When he painted the *Egyptian Girl* in the mid-1870s, Gérôme was an independent painter at the height of his powers and popularity; he could paint any subject he chose and sell it. He no longer needed to be subservient to the taste of the market, nor to heed the naive suggestions and vain objections of finicky sitters. His independence is further manifested by his choosing the model himself, setting her pose and paying her: a reversal of portrait practice.

Egyptian Girl is a beautiful young girl who looms out of the darkness of the background and the blackness of her mane to look at us without noticing us. Her mood is not a social confrontation of class aloofness, as in Ingres, but of distance; she stays in her own world of thought. Whatever her social or professional position, she is not playing coquette.

Gérôme uses features that resemble or are parallel to those of Ingres and at times they are even inspired by him. For instance, the geometrical organisation here is not a counterpoint to the sinuous outline of figure and costume as in Ingres's portraits, but a disciplining cage, asserting the power of reason through geometric organisation. It is also a metaphor for the sitter's detachment.

Eroticism saturates Ingres's portraits. It is aroused by sinuous outlines and dramatic distortions of anatomy and proportion. Ingres's accessories sparkle and entice, and the patterns of the fabric work their way to the very corners of the painting: sumptuousness prevails. Gérôme's anatomy is very correct, his proportions splendid, and his accessories behave themselves, as do the patterns and folds of the costume. Objective description prevails, but is nonetheless enticing.

Both artists were great draughtsmen and colourists. Ingres was a master of clarity, able to evoke frissons by arabesque lines and eccentric anatomy, as well as by the fullness and vivacity of his decorations. Although Gérôme idealises his women - albeit not so much as Ingres - he puts different factors into play, such as the fullness and heaviness of form. He also exploits space, filling it up without cluttering it. No one doubts that the girl's arms in the sleeves of the jacket are anatomically correct, full, fleshy and pressing against the heavy material. The varying values of colour and light on the jacket counterpoint the dazzling glitter of the coin necklace on her chest. The weighty cloth of the jacket curves around her body as it alternately clings to her arms and puckers up, wrinkling and distorting the carefully studied pattern. As in Ingres, these feats of observation and technical assiduity do not detract from the solidity of the girl's presence. Deeply introverted, she too is stilled among the finery on the strong vertical axis. Much in the canvas is reminiscent of Ingres, yet Gérôme is less inclined to generalise into linear extravagances,

but preferred to exploit chiaroscuro - in tandem with line - to add the mystery of individuality rather than of public personality.

The young girl stands alongside a chest with inlaid mother-of-pearl and coloured wood decorations, her elbows and supple hands resting on its top surface. One notices at once the broken triangle of the composition. The open side gives weight to her posture and support to her pensive, almost sad expression, which may simply be an accurate depiction of the mood of the model during a long pose, for her expression is much the same as an unfinished study of the girl, sold by Goupil, in 1877.

Egyptian Girl belongs to the great series of genre portraits of the late 1880s, that can be called the 'Women of Constantinople series'. These were painted by Gérôme after a short trip to Istanbul where he evidently went on a great shopping spree, buying expensive women's clothing for his studio. The beautiful jacket on this model seems never to have been used by him again, whereas the necklace of coins is a familiar subject in some of his other paintings.

An example of another painting in Gérôme's 'Women of Constantinople series' is *Veiled Circassian Beauty* (see image below), painted a year earlier. The *Veiled Circassian Beauty* bears similar facial features to the *Egyptian Girl*, and we can observe the same rich subtlety, the pensiveness of her facial expression and the absent-minded repose of her hand.



Veiled Circassian Beauty, oil on canvas, 1876. Private Collection.

THE MUEZZIN (LE MUEZZIN)

Signed 'J. L. GEROME.' (lower right)

Oil on Panel

16 x 11½ in. (40.5 x 29.5 cm.)

Painted in 1865

Provenance:

Goupil & Cie., Paris

Gambart, London

Christie's, London, 16 May 1896

Arthur Tooth & Sons (purchased at the above sale)

Christie's, London, 3 November 1977, lot 110

Anonymous sale, Sotheby's, London, 2 June 2010, lot 102

Literature:

Academy Editions (ed.), *The Orientalists* (London, 1979), no. 48 (as *The Call to Prayer*)

Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme (with a catalogue raisonné)* (London & New York, 1986), pp. 218–19, no. 164 (illustrated)

Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme (monographie révisée et catalogue raisonné mis à jour)* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 2000), pp. 260–61, no. 164 (illustrated)

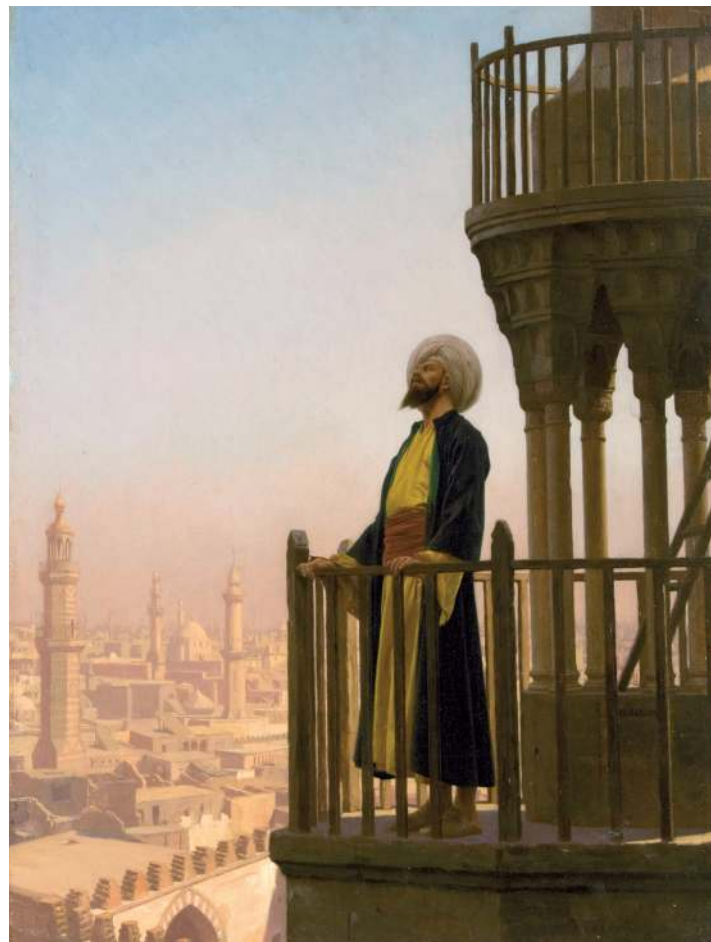
Painted in 1865, this evocative painting captures the moment on a hot afternoon as a muezzin begins his call to prayer atop a minaret, and Cairo falls silent below him. With great mastery, Gérôme evokes the utter stillness both of the city and of the desert air, the heat made almost palpable to the viewer through the contrast between the shade cast by the minaret and the brilliant, hot light beyond. It is likely that the high dome in the background is the Mosque of Sultan Hassan. In subject, the work relates to Gérôme's painting *La Prière au Caire*,¹ shown at the Paris Salon the same year, of a group of men praying on a Cairo rooftop, and in Gerald Ackerman's words "one of Gérôme's most successful compositions". A larger version of the painting, almost identical in composition, is in the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.

A muezzin is a chosen person at the mosque who leads the call (*al-adan*) to Friday service and the five daily prayers (*as-salat*) from one of the mosque's minarets. Though chosen to serve for his good

1) Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

character, voice and skills, he is not considered a cleric, but rather comparable to a Christian sexton. When calling to prayer, the muezzin faces the *qiblah*² while he cries out the *adan*. The institution of the muezzin has existed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. The first muezzin was Bilal ibn Ribah, who walked the streets to call the believers to come to prayer. After minarets became customary, the office of muezzin in cities was sometimes given to a blind person, who could not look down into the inner courtyards of the citizens' houses and thereby violate their privacy.

Gérôme visited Cairo many times, and the details of this painting demonstrate both his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Middle East recorded in sketches he made on location and his profound respect for some of its most distinctive cultural traditions. As in his numerous paintings of men at prayer inside mosques, so too in this outdoor view he could combine his admiration for Muslim piety and Islamic architecture.



The Muezzin

2) Direction of the Ka'bah in Mecca.

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NAPOLEON AND HIS GENERAL STAFF IN EGYPT (LA GÉNÉRAL BONAPARTE ET SON ÉTAT-MAJOR EN ÉGYPTTE)

Signed 'J. L. GEROME.' (lower left)

Oil on Panel

22.78 x 34.40 in. (58.4 x 88.2 cm.)

Painted in 1867

Provenance:

Sold by Adolphe Goupil to Henry Probasco, Cincinnati, 1867

Adolphe Goupil through Knoedler's, New York to Robert L. Kennedy, 1870

Ainslie Galleries, New York, 1928

Private Collection, Chicago, thence by descent

Christie's, New York, 11 February 1997, lot 11

Private Collection

Anonymous sale, Andrew Clayton-Payne, London, 2010

Exhibition:

Brooklyn, Brooklyn Art Association, December 1872, lent by Robert L. Kennedy, New York

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, September 1873, lent by R.L. Kennedy

Literature:

Earl Sinn (under the pseudonym Edward Strahan), reproduced in *Gérôme, A Collection of the Works of J.L. Gérôme in One Hundred Photogravures* (New York, 1881–83)

Fanny Field Hering, *Gérôme. The Life and Works of Jean-Léon Gérôme... From Autobiographical Notes and Letters*, etc. (New York, 1892), pp. 208–09

Henri Roujon (ed.), *Les Peintres illustres : Gérôme* (Paris, 1912), no. 63 (pub. in English as Albert Keim, *Gérôme [Masters in Color]*, New York, 1912)

Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme (with a catalogue raisonné)* (London & New York, 1986), no. 172 (illustrated), described as 'Lost'

Lynne Thornton, *Du Maroc aux Indes. Voyages en Orient* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 1998), p. 8 (illustrated)

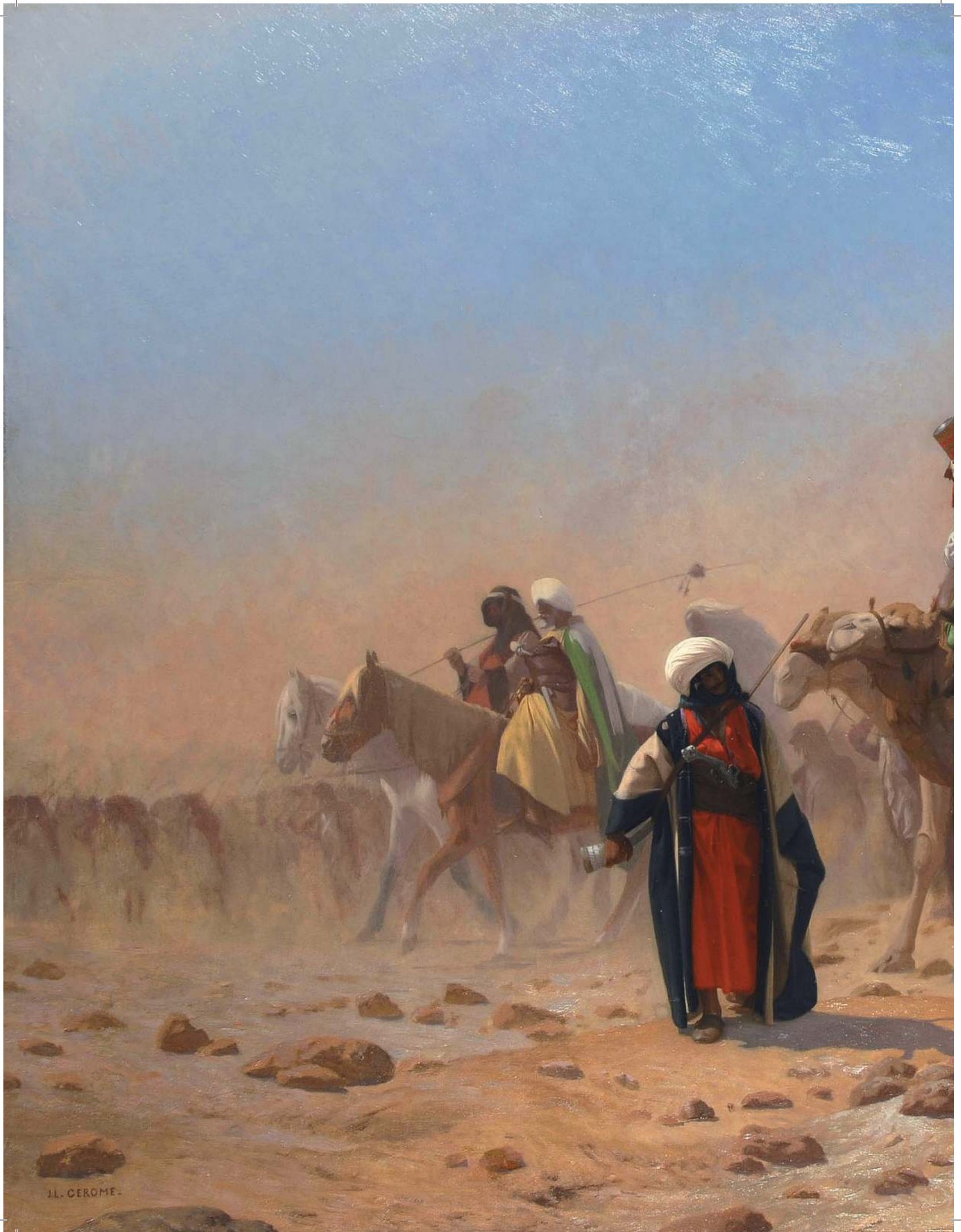
Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme (monographie révisée, catalogue raisonné mis à jour)* (Courbevoie/Paris: ACR Édition, 2000), pp. 260–61, no. 164 (illustrated).

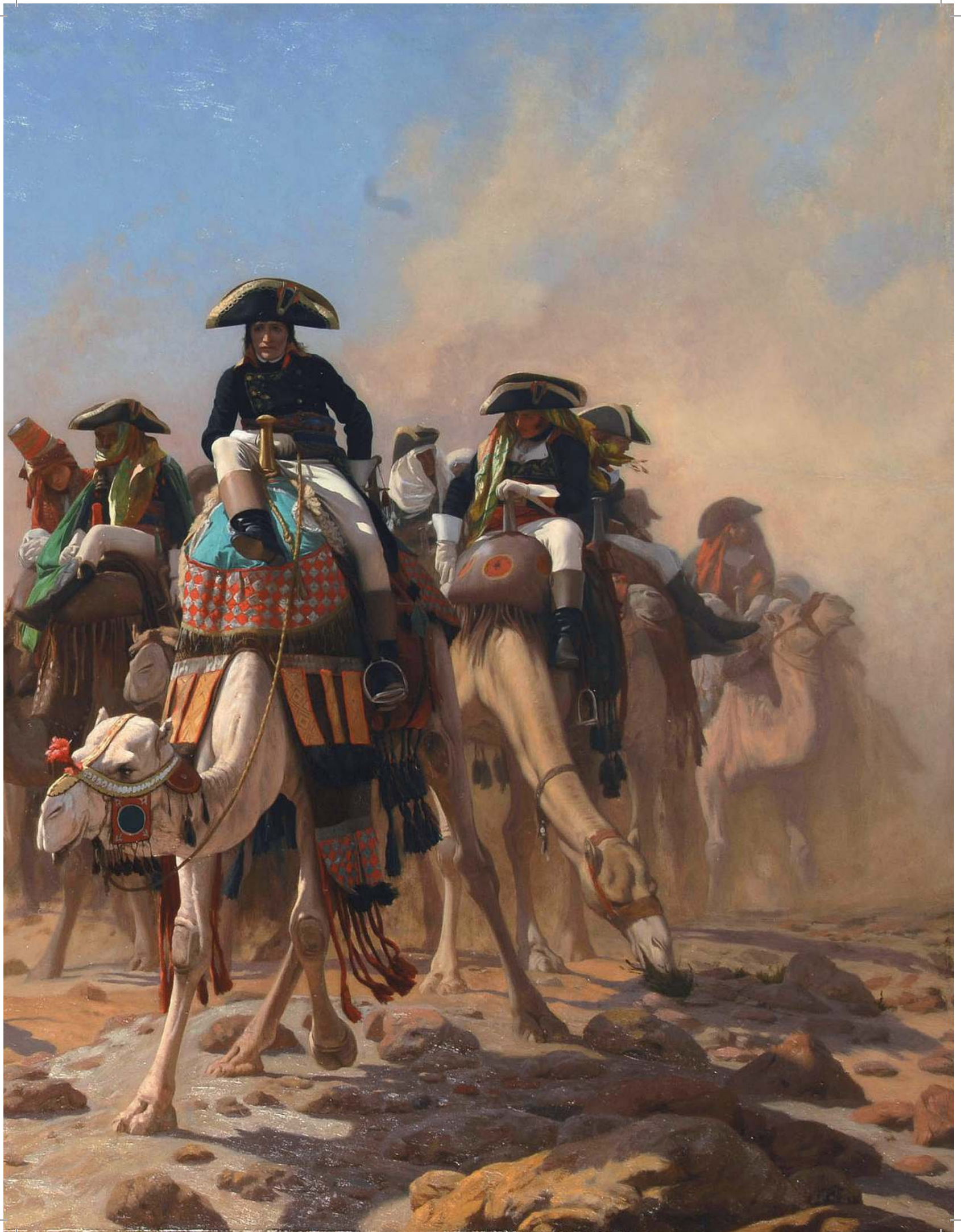
In the late 1860s, Gérôme painted a small group of remarkable paintings showing Napoleon during the Egyptian campaign of 1798-99, which are among his most compelling images. He was to return to the same theme in the 1880s and in his sculpture of the 1890s, an indication of how much importance he attached to it. Almost exactly a century had passed since Napoleon's birth in 1769, but his life and times - in retrospect, a glorious period in French history - had become the stuff of legend. Gérôme profoundly admired Napoleon and must have realised that he was uniquely placed to depict this particular phase of Napoleon's career; he was already famous for his Egyptian genre subjects and landscapes, derived from extensive travel in the region from the mid-1850s onwards.

Gérôme's Napoleonic subjects evoke the notion of destiny; in each of the paintings, Napoleon is shown deep in thought, a striking contrast to conventional military subject paintings depicting specific incidents in a campaign or heroism in the heat of battle. In *Napoleon in Cairo* (*Le Général Bonaparte au Caire*, Princeton University Art Museum), the young general is shown on his own, set apart from his waiting groom, deep in contemplation. *Oedipus* (Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument), exhibited at the Salon of 1886, imaginatively sets Napoleon in silent dialogue with the Sphinx, the young man of destiny confronted by the enigmatic gaze of a monument thousands of years old; intriguingly, this painting and its pendant, *Bonaparte at Cairo* (*Le Général Bonaparte au Caire*, Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument), were to be bought by William Randolph Hearst in 1898.



Napoleon and His General Staff in Egypt





Napoleon and His General Staff in Egypt is compositionally the most ambitious of Gérôme's Napoleonic subjects of the 1860s and by far the most atmospheric. Here we can be in no doubt of the extreme conditions faced by Napoleon and his army during their short and ill-fated Egyptian campaign. Gérôme's friend Frédéric Masson, who had travelled with him in Egypt and was to become a respected biographer of Napoleon, described this painting, noting "the hot breath of the wind... the heat and the burning sand which blinds the officers of his staff... the golden mist raised by the Khamsinn... the frightful lassitude which takes possession of the best trained men save those who have compelled the body to be the docile slave of the mind."¹ For Masson, this is not primarily a realist history painting, superbly executed as it is; it is about a state of mind. We are meant to recognise only one figure, that of Napoleon, who commands the composition, as he considers his future course of action: "He hesitates between the two halves of the world which he holds in his hands; he ponders upon the fate of Alexander, of Caesar... unconscious of suffering, his dream embraces the universe!"² Only Napoleon is capable of ignoring the horrors of the desert as he contemplates his destiny.

Is the viewer intended to understand this painting as representing a specific episode in the Egyptian campaign? By the 1860s, numerous memoirs by Napoleon's closest aides had been published, as had his own correspondence, so that Gérôme would have been able to read first-hand accounts. Among the most vivid and reliable descriptions of the campaign was that by Napoleon's secretary, Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, whose memoirs were published in 1831. By far the worst episode was the army's retreat from Acre in late May 1799, following the fruitless siege of the fortress, where the French were outmanoeuvred by an alliance between Djezzar Pasha, the Ottoman military governor and the British under Sir Sidney Smith; Napoleon had lost four thousand men, a third of the total force that had set out from Cairo, and had 1,200 wounded soldiers. The French army was effectively defeated by a terrain for which it was unprepared. The retreat across the desert was terrible, as Bourrienne described: "An all-consuming thirst, the total lack of water, the overwhelming heat, the tiring march through the burning sand dunes, made the men lose all sense of compassion, so that they succumbed to the most cruel selfishness... I saw them throw men off their stretchers, officers who had amputated limbs whom they were ordered to carry, who had even given them money for their troubles... The sun, in all its power in the clear sky, was obscured by the smoke of the fires we had set to lay waste. Behind us the desert that we had made, before us the privations and the sufferings that awaited us."³ It is very probable that Gérôme's painting represents this episode in the campaign.

There could hardly be a more dramatic or telling expression of the collision between two cultures than Gérôme presents here. The incongruity of Napoleon and his officers in their uncompromisingly

1) *Les Lettres et les Arts*, 1886-1889, of which Masson was the editor and in one issue of which he discusses Gérôme's Napoleonic subjects. This was translated by Fanny Field Herring, *Gérôme: The Life and Works of Jean Léon Gérôme. From Autobiographical Notes and Letters, etc.* (New York: 1892), pages 208-209.

2) Ibid

3) Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, *Mémoires* (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831), Vol. 1, page 223.

western uniforms, struggling on camel back through the desert, is perfectly depicted. As Frédéric Masson observed, Gérôme's mastery in evoking the clouds of fine, suffocating sand is remarkable. While the oil sketch⁴ established the essential structure of the composition, it is only in the finished painting that one can appreciate the subtlety with which he contrasts the searing sun that beats down on Napoleon and his mount, with the clouds of drifting dust stirred by the soldiers and their steeds as they march across the desert. Gérôme attached considerable importance to meticulous sketching and note-taking of every detail, whether of landscape, exotic costume or animals. Théophile Gautier had noted in 1859 that this extended to endless drawings of camels from every angle! Over the years, he built up a vast stock of studies that formed an invaluable resource. In addition, he brought back all sorts of exotic items to use as studio props; the inventory taken after his death included 10 Oriental saddles - such as that on Napoleon's white camel - as well as 173 costumes. Gérôme also owned various items of Napoleonic memorabilia, including two of his great black hats, one of which he made the subject of a late painting ca. 1900-4⁵ that he very appropriately gave to Frédéric Masson, Napoleon's biographer.

The oil sketch in the Hermitage is dated 1863; the finished painting is undated, but is generally thought to have been painted around 1867, the date when Adolphe Goupil first sold it to an American collector, Henry Probasco of Cincinnati. In 1863, Gérôme had married Goupil's daughter Marie, and from this time Goupil generally handled all his sales, developing his American clientele very astutely. In due course, Goupil was succeeded by his former American partner, Knoedler. Gérôme's reputation in America was further enhanced by Goupil's understanding of the importance of selling high-quality prints, generally photogravures, after his paintings. So well-known did his name become that many young American art students wanted to study with him; by the 1870s, he had a very large class in his atelier, over 100 students, of whom at least 60 were Americans.

Napoleon in Egypt 1798-99

The invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798 at the head of an army of some 40,000 soldiers was an astonishing yet characteristically bold initiative. He was twenty-eight years old, had waged a brilliant campaign in Italy in 1796-97 and skilfully established himself both as a military hero and as an increasingly influential figure in French politics. On his return to Paris at the end of 1797, he was initially ordered by the Directory⁶ to plan the invasion of England, but by February 1798 it was apparent that French naval power was inadequate to confront the British navy. Napoleon therefore reverted to an earlier scheme that had been rejected out of hand by the Directory - an expedition to seize Egypt and establish a strong French presence in the Middle East, thereby threatening Britain's access to its trading interests in India. He found an ally in the foreign minister, Talleyrand, who likewise saw it as a strategic move to block British colonial expansion, particularly if after securing Egypt, an expeditionary force could set out

4) Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.

5) Musée de la Bibliothèque Thiers (Institut de France), Paris.

6) The five-man government of France between 1795 and 1799

overland to India to unite with the fractious Indian princes and drive out the British: high ambition indeed. Threatened by Napoleon's growing domestic popularity, the Directory decided that they wanted him removed from the centre of power and sanctioned the plan. Napoleon had confided to his secretary Bourrienne prior to departure: "Europe is a molehill... Everything here is worn out. My glory is slipping from my grasp, tiny Europe has not enough to offer. We must set off for the Orient; that is where all the greatest glory is to be achieved."⁷

Planning the campaign was an immensely complex matter, particularly since no one in the army had any idea what to expect in terms of terrain, climate or resources. But Napoleon, ever ambitious, saw Egypt as the starting point for a new empire in the Orient. He was also determined to make it a scientific and historical expedition as well as a military one. Thus, over 150 archaeologists, naturalists, mathematicians and chemists were recruited to discover the secrets of an ancient civilisation and the economic possibilities of a reputedly highly fertile country. Arguably, it was the achievements and discoveries of these men that was to be the most remarkable and long-lasting result of the whole misguided enterprise.

Landing in Egypt in July 1798, and having taken Alexandria, Napoleon was faced with military opposition on a huge scale - some 60,000 troops - outside Cairo. His clever tactics and cool nerves resulted in victory at the Battle of the Pyramids, and Napoleon seemed for a while to have made himself unchallenged master of Egypt. The British, however, were determined to curb his advance as soon as possible, and through brilliant seamanship on his part and lack of preparation by the French, who failed to anticipate his attack, Horatio Nelson captured or destroyed all but two ships of the enormous French navy. Straightaway Napoleon was land-bound and his ambition for dominance of the Mediterranean was frustrated. Nonetheless, the French succeeded in consolidating their land power in Egypt, and Napoleon began once more to plan for an expedition to India and eventual defeat of the British there. Within a few months, Napoleon felt that he had gained full control of Egypt. The Ottoman Empire, however, had no intention of relinquishing power in the region to foreign invaders.

In February 1799, alarmed by the presence of Napoleon, the Ottomans decided to send a large force to push him out of Egypt. Napoleon decided to take the initiative himself and fend off this threat. Thus he took some 13,000 men to Syria,⁸ formed into divisions commanded by Generals Reynier, Kléber and Bon, with a division of cavalry under General Murat, a brigade of infantry and cavalry under Brigade Chief Bessières, a camel-company under Dammartin, and engineers and sappers under the wooden-legged General Caffarelli (who, like Bon, was to die in action). One of the youngest officers in his army, Napoleon's seventeen-year old stepson, Eugène Beauharnais, was also among those who set out for Syria.

Napoleon led this army in the conquest of the coastal towns of Arish, Gaza, Jaffa and Haifa; the attack on Jaffa was particularly brutal. Discovering that many of the defenders were former prisoners of war,

7) Ibid. Vol. 2, page 334.

8) This province of the Ottoman Empire encompassed virtually all of present-day Israel, Jordan and the Lebanon as well as Syria.

supposedly on parole, Napoleon ordered the garrison and 1,400 prisoners to be bayoneted or drowned to save precious French bullets. Increasingly troubled by bad weather, inadequate provisioning and disease - chiefly bubonic plague - Napoleon then found that he was outmanoeuvred at the fortified port of Acre through a temporary alliance between the military governor



Oedipus, oil on canvas. Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, San Simeon, California.

Djezzar ('Butcher') Pasha and a detachment of the British navy under the command of Sir Sidney Smith. After laying siege to Acre for two months, Napoleon was forced to retreat - while sending dispatches to the Directory in Paris giving a very different account of events. The retreat began slowly, hampered by the number of wounded French soldiers. To speed up the march, Napoleon ordered the poisoning of those unable to keep up with the main body of the army, arguing that the Ottomans would have tortured stragglers. After a gruelling journey through the deserts of Syria - probably the subject of Gérôme's painting - the army returned to Egypt in late July and immediately had to deal with an attempted Ottoman amphibious invasion at Aboukir. This Napoleon was able to defeat, and his reputation among the army in Egypt was in some measure restored. But he was already planning his next move; with the Egyptian campaign having turned into near-failure and, with rumours reaching him of political instability in Paris, Napoleon decided to cut his losses and take his chance in France. In late August he quietly abandoned Egypt, leaving the troops under Kléber's command, while he evaded the British naval blockade in the Mediterranean, landing at Fréjus on 7 October. The Egyptian expedition had in reality failed in every purpose save that of preparing for the next phase in Napoleon's career, the ruthless and successful coup of November 1799, when he overthrew the Directory and established himself as First Consul.

Meanwhile in Egypt, General Kléber was left to face angry French troops and the British navy, as well as growing insurrection in Egypt and harassment by Ottoman forces. Though Kléber managed to defeat an army of 30,000 at the Battle of Heliopolis in March 1800, and suppressed an insurrection in Cairo, he was assassinated in June by a Syrian student. Command of the French army passed to General Menou, but unable to withstand British and Ottoman force, and with an army depleted by around 13,000 deaths, many from disease, the French were forced to surrender. Under the terms of Menou's surrender, their army was repatriated in British ships, while the British were also ceded many of the remarkable antiquities collected by the French archaeologists who had accompanied Napoleon, chief among these treasures being the Rosetta stone. By the Treaty of al-Arish of 25 June 1802, all hostilities ceased, and Egypt returned to Ottoman rule.

THE SWORD DANCE AT A PACHA'S

Print

9 ³/₁₆ x 11 in. (23.3 x 28 cm.)

1881, Published by George Barrie, Philadelphia

By the mid-1850s, reproductions of Gérôme's paintings were beginning to appear in print-shop windows throughout Europe, Britain, and in major cities up and down America's East Coast. The publication and widespread distribution of these graphic images, calculated to introduce an international art-buying public to a wide variety of Gérôme's works at different (and relatively modest) price points, as well as to promote pictures offered for sale, was indebted to one of the nineteenth-century art world's most transformative and entrepreneurial figures, the art dealer Adolphe Goupil (1806-1893).¹ By 1863, the same year that Gérôme married into the Goupil family and just four years after formalizing his contract with the firm, Gérôme earned the distinction of being Goupil's most reproduced artist and, along with Meissonier (1815-1891), Cabanel (1823-1889), and Bouguereau (1825-1905), the most familiar to his clientele by name.

Amongst the most popular of the prints produced by Goupil were Gérôme's Orientalist paintings, including those of the *ghawazee*, or Egyptian dancing girls. Gérôme had executed a series of paintings depicting these infamous performers, engaged in the *raqs sharqi* (belly dance) or woman's solo dance (*raqs baladi*), by the mid-1870s; the best known of these was *Le Danse de l'almée* (1863, Dayton Art Institute), exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1864. Though it caused some degree of scandal (which only served to fan the popularity of the work), the subject of the Eastern dancer was a familiar one to most: by the middle of the nineteenth century, an account of the Middle East – whether in print or in paint – was considered woefully incomplete without reference to an evening of dance.

Gérôme himself had witnessed the famous *raqs baladi* while in Fayoum in Egypt in 1868, just two years after a ban against such performances had been lifted. Not surprisingly, given his ethnographic interests and compulsion for technical perfection, Gérôme's depictions of the event were nearly flawless in every detail. Postures, costumes, and accessories, many of which were acquired from the dancers themselves and would find their way into the artist's famously Orientalized studio in Paris, correctly reflected the idiosyncrasies of the art. (Later audiences would have recognized Gérôme's care in this regard, having themselves witnessed a corps of Middle Eastern dancing girls at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris.) Such realism aside, the women in these works were often favorite models of the artist's, hired off the streets of Paris and posed according to sketches and notations the artist had made on site. This interplay between

1) The painted version of the present work, for example, was published by Goupil as a photogravure [1878-1909], a part of the firm's "Photographic Gallery" [1875-1904], and as a diaphanograph with optional hand-colored borders [1875-1876, 1884-1893]; these sold for 6 francs, 10 francs, and 20 or 25 francs, respectively.

truth and fiction, Egypt and the studio, would in fact become a signature of the artist, and a modern art historical point of contention.

In the present work, Gérôme provides a glimpse of one of the most dramatic forms of *raqs baladi*: the *raqs al sayf*, or sword dance. A *ghazia*, left hand on hip, balances a long sword atop her head and her body on the tips of her toes. Contrary to the weighty, grounded nature of the traditional *raqs sharqi* and other *raqs baladi* dances, Gérôme's lithe performer appears to defy gravity rather than obey it. Her distinctive comportment aligns her unexpectedly yet persuasively with yet another group of Gérôme's Orientalist compositions: The swirling drapery of a twirling dervish (ca. 1889, Private Collection), the energetic maneuvers of a *bashi-bazouk* (1878, whereabouts unknown), and the acrobatic leaps of two weapon-wielding men in a Cairene interior (*La Danse Pyrrhique*, 1885, Private Collection), all provide fascinating points of comparison with this lyrical work, and suggest a previously unrecognized teleology in Gérôme's expansive oeuvre.



The Sword Dance at a Pacha's.

J. Gérôme

The Sword Dance at a Pacha's

The woman holds a second sword in her right hand, its curved blade echoing the lines of her lower body and providing an ironic gloss in its juxtaposition of femininity and weaponry. Over her loose, Turkish-style pantaloons, gathered at the ankle and worn below the waist, she has wrapped and tied a decoratively striped shawl. Its placement around her hips would have emphasized the pelvic movements of the dance she performs. A bolero-style satin waistcoat, tightly fitting to reveal the contours of her upper body, is accented by a necklace of large round coins similar to those on her forehead. The woman's torso and arms are enveloped in an undergarment of transparent muslin, revealing and concealing the figure underneath. The visibility of her midriff indicates that this is a private performance, meant only for inside the home. The dancer's face is also covered with transparent gauze, this time from a veil that cascades and swirls behind her.

The dancer's animated display of acrobatic skill – a feat meant to honor a guest through the incorporation of a valuable possession into the dance itself – stands in sharp contrast to the more sedate left hand side of the composition, where the Pasha of the picture's title presides. He, smoking a *narghileh*, sits cross-legged on a *mastabah*, or raised bench, quietly observing the event before him. His *mashrabiyyah* chair is positioned under a carved arch and is surrounded by his guests and four Arnaut soldiers, two on each side. A spellbound monkey, the pet of this elite household, completes this figurative group. (The addition of this exotic animal may have been biographical in part: Gérôme himself had a monkey named Jacques, who frequented his studio and dined with him in formal attire.)

Opposite the Pasha a group of *almehs*, or learned women, has gathered. They sing, play music, and clap along with the seated musicians at their side. The musicians play a variety of traditional Arabic instruments, including a *rababah*, a *nay*, and a tambourine. One singer stands, unable to contain his enthusiasm. He leans forward to more emphatically beat his *darbukah*, or drum. Numerous sketches for these and others of the figures in the composition exist; many are repeated in other works and would become favorite motifs of the artist (for example, Gérôme's series of paintings depicting Arnaut soldiers in their distinctive skirts).

The size and architecture of the house, with its intricate woodwork, high ceilings, fine carpets, and substantial chandeliers, reveal the wealth and status of the owner, as do the marbled and tiled walls and carefully displayed *objets*. Like many nineteenth-century artists, Gérôme was probably given entrée into some of Cairo's finest Mamluk homes, where he could make numerous architectural sketches for use toward these and other paintings. Many of his pictures feature similar interiors to those of his colleagues, and may indicate Gérôme's familiarity with their exhibited paintings, or, perhaps, a shared network of local houses visited and sketched on-site. The setting of the present work, for example, as well as the composition as a whole, bears a strong resemblance with the paintings of another leading Orientalist, the British artist John Frederick Lewis (1805-1876). Lewis's works were well known in France and in Europe and America by the time this print was published – in large part due to the circulation of engravings, lithographs, and other reproductions after Lewis's enormously popular art.



The Sword-Dance at a Pacha's.

Artist *J. Gerome*

The Sword Dance at a Pacha's

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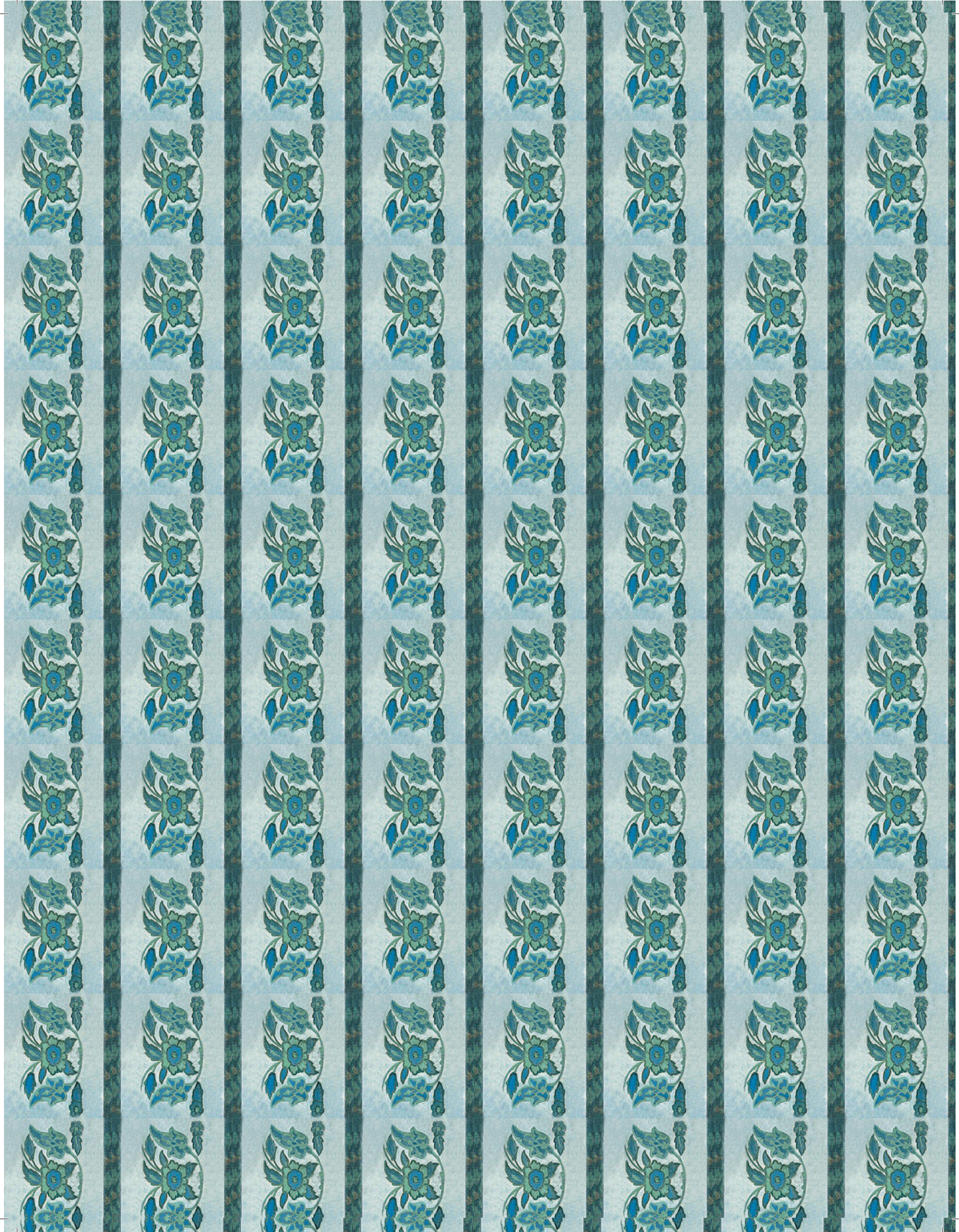
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M. Shafik Gabr, Chairman and Managing Director of the ARTOC Group for Investment & Development, is a renowned leader in international business, one of the world's premier collectors of Orientalist art, and an accomplished philanthropist.

ARTOC, established in 1971, is a multidisciplined investment holding company with businesses in infrastructure, automotive, engineering, technology and real estate, over the past three years focusing on technologies, both startups and mature companies plus bioscience.

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, The Middle East Institute 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.

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Back Cover: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Muezzin*

