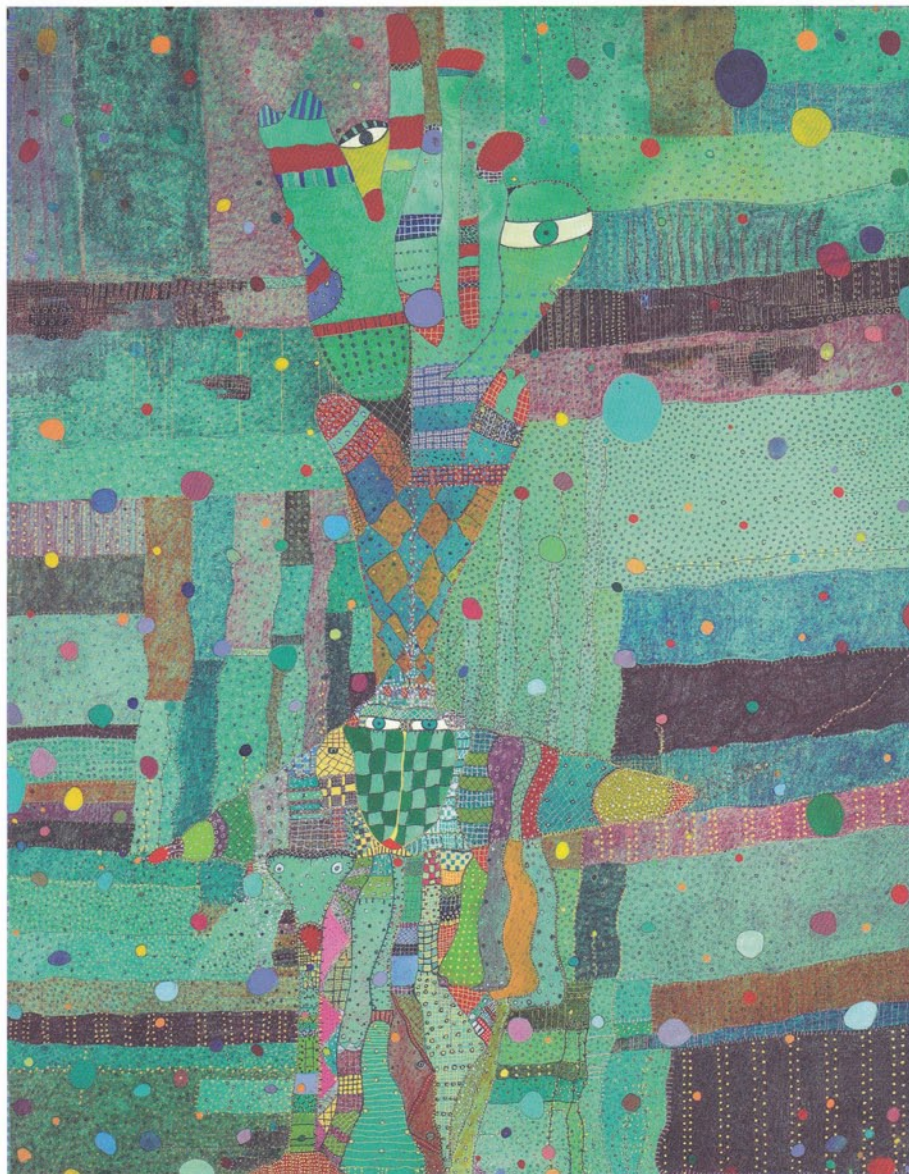


# SELECTIONS

ARTS / STYLE / CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND

#38



• IN CONVERSATION WITH COLLECTORS • THE ART OF OPERA IN THREE DIVERSE GUISES • IN THE LIBRARY WITH GREGORY BUCHAKJIAN •  
• YOUSSEF TOHME ARCHITECTS REIMAGINES BORDEAUX • ROBERT POLIDORI IN NEW YORK • EMERIC LUISSET: THE LAST WATER WAR •  
• INSIDE VIEWS WITH BRUCE PAGET • FORGING CONNECTIONS: CURATED BY LINDA KOMAROFF •

THE COLLECTORS ISSUE

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Nadine and  
Johnny Mokbel

Veteran collector Johnny Mokbel bought the two pieces that would mark the beginning of the Mokbel Art Collection with his wife Nadine in 1998. Over the last two decades, they have built a significant collection of modern and contemporary Lebanese art, and remain dedicated to promoting Lebanese art and artists to new audiences on a global level.

**When did you start collecting art and what prompted you to start doing so?**

It was 1998 when we first bought two artworks by the modernist Paul Guiragossian. At that time, and until about ten years ago, the prices were still affordable and the supply of highly rated pieces was still mostly accessible.

## Inside the Mokbel Art Collection

Veteran collector **Johnny Mokbel** discusses his significant collection of modern and contemporary Lebanese art, setting records and why children are innately artistic

by India Stoughton

**Can you tell us a little about your collection? How big is it? What kind of art do you collect?**

In our efforts to promote the Lebanese art scene, we have decided to concentrate exclusively on buying modern and contemporary art from Lebanon, and every piece in our collection has its own favourable specificities. As to how big our collection is, rather than talk about the number of pieces I'd rather describe it in terms of percentage of museum quality pieces. In that respect I can say it is not less than 95 percent.

**Do you exhibit your artworks? If so, where do you usually hold exhibitions? Do you loan out pieces to museums and art galleries and, if so, which ones?**

Last year we loaned out *Le Depart*, a masterpiece by Paul Guiragossian from his Armenian massacre series, to be shown during the Istanbul Biennale.

**Do you belong to any art organisations? Which ones?**

In 2010 we created The Art Collectors Society page on Facebook, which is a project dedicated to increasing awareness of the art scene in Lebanon and advancing Lebanese art throughout the Middle East. We do this mainly by sharing daily international art news that can be useful to readers to help them understand how the art market functions. We already have more than 40,000 followers.

**The Mokbel Art Collection is approaching its 20th anniversary in 2018. Can you share some landmark moments in the process you and your wife Nadine have gone through to create the collection and promote Lebanese talent?**

The Christie's Dubai sale in March 2015 was one of these memorable moments. During the auction we succeeded in setting new sales records for artists including Ayman Baalbaki, Aref Rayess, Farid Aouad and others.

**You created a children's book, *Lebanon's Got Talent*, to introduce children to the Mokbel Art Collection. Why do you believe it's important to educate young children about art?**

We believe it's all about encouraging what comes naturally to children: curiosity. Nadine's book aims to expose children to the contemporary art world in Lebanon through our collection. I think that in a way you don't instil an appreciation of art in children — children already have it, and it's the responsibility of institutions like schools and museums to create programmes that develop it. ■





Paul Guiragossian,  
*Le Depart (Melancholy)*,  
oil on canvas, 100 x 70 cm









Aref Rayess, *The Desert*,  
oil on canvas, 76 x 121 cm

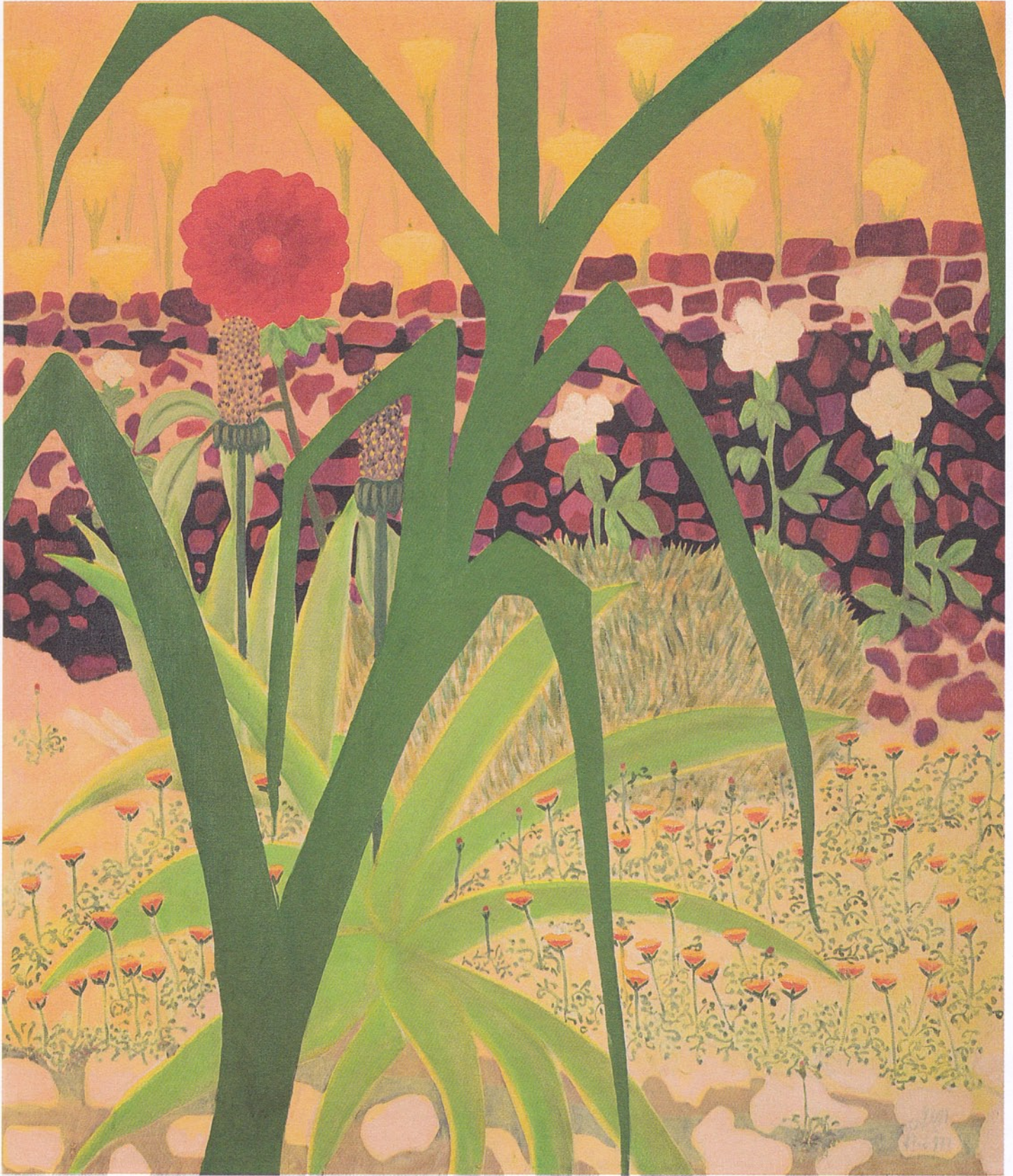




above:  
Aref Rayess,  
*Soukhour Meyrouba*,  
oil on canvas, 80 × 110 cm

opposite page:  
Aref Rayess,  
*Al Rabiḥ — Al Zouhour*,  
oil on canvas, 115 × 99 cm





THE MOKBEL  
ART COLLECTION