

PRESS RELEASE

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RARE PAINTING BY EGYPT'S FORMER QUEEN FARIDA COMES TO AUCTION IN THE UK



Abstract Landscape by Queen Farida, the former Queen of Egypt (1921-1988)
Estimate £7,000–9,000 (Lot 27)

LONDON. MAY 2026. Excitement is building at Olympia Auctions as a painting by Queen Farida, the former Queen of Egypt (1921–1988) and first wife of King Farouk of Egypt (1920–1965), is set to appear at auction in London this June. This presents collectors with a unique opportunity to acquire a work by one of the most fascinating figures in Egypt's royal history.

Offered in the **Modern & Contemporary African and Middle Eastern Art sale at Olympia Auctions on Wednesday, June 3, 2026**, *Abstract Landscape* in oil on gold paper was created by the queen who, following the collapse of Egypt's monarchy, transformed herself into an artist in exile. The work comes from a private London collection, having previously belonged to the noted art collector Dr Mohammed Said Farsi (1935–2019), a prominent Saudi Arabian urban planner and art collector, best known for serving as the Mayor of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia from 1972 to 1986 and celebrated for transforming Jeddah into an open-air museum, by installing hundreds of public sculptures along the city's corniche. It was then acquired by the present owner in 2013.

Born Safinaz Zulficar in Alexandria in 1921, Queen Farida became one of the most admired women of her generation after marrying King Farouk in 1938. It was during this period that King Farouk, following a tradition established by his father King Fuad I, encouraged that members of the immediate royal family bear names beginning with the letter F, and Safinaz subsequently became known as Farida. Celebrated for her elegance and public popularity, she became a defining symbol of Egypt's monarchy during its final years. Their marriage captivated the nation and established Farida as one of the most recognisable figures of modern Egyptian royalty.

Yet the story of Queen Farida extended far beyond palace life. Her marriage ended in divorce in 1948 and only a few years later the monarchy itself came to an end, following the Egyptian Revolution of 1952. While King Farouk departed into exile, Farida embarked on a profoundly different path, turning away from royal ceremony and towards painting as a means of rebuilding her life.

Art became both a sanctuary and life purpose. Encouraged by her uncle, the celebrated Egyptian artist Mahmoud Said, (1897–1964), who is widely regarded as 'the founding father of modern Egyptian art', Queen Farida developed a visual language shaped by memory, spirituality and her enduring connection to Egypt. Living between Beirut, Switzerland and Paris, she painted landscapes and abstractions that reflected both nostalgia and reinvention.

For many years, Queen Farida's achievements as an artist were overshadowed by the drama of her royal biography. More recently, however, her work has attracted renewed scholarly and institutional attention. Her paintings are held in important collections including the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo and the Royal Jewelry Museum in Alexandria. A 2025 exhibition at Liwan Gallery in Cairo further renewed interest in her artistic legacy, presenting her work alongside that of her granddaughter, Yasmine Perreten. *Abstract Landscape*, offered in this June's sale, belongs to a deeply personal chapter of her artistic career. Executed in oil on gold paper, it reflects the luminous surfaces and atmospheric quality that came to define her mature style, often imbued with reflections on memory, place and identity. It is offered with an estimate of £7,000–9,000 (Lot 27).

Commenting on the work, specialist Janet Rady, from Olympia Auctions African and Middle Eastern Art department, said: "Queen Farida occupies a unique place in Egyptian history. While she is remembered as the former Queen of

Egypt and wife of King Farouk, her achievements as an artist are now receiving renewed attention. Because her paintings are so rarely seen on the market, opportunities to acquire one are exceptionally limited, so we are delighted to be able to offer this work for auction.”

Also featured in the same sale, is another painting connected to the story of Egypt’s political and social history, bringing together two prominent figures from the country’s 20th century past in one auction. A portrait of Mahmoud Hamed, the former Governor of the Central Bank of Egypt (serving from 1986-1993), by the artist Kamel Moustafa (1917-1982). Mahmoud Hamed’s tenure as Governor of the Central Bank of Egypt came at a pivotal moment in the nation’s economic history. Serving during a period of significant transition in the late 1980s and early 1990s, he helped steer Egypt’s banking sector through a changing financial landscape, playing an important role in shaping the foundations of longer-term monetary stability and economic reform.



**A portrait of Mahmoud Hamed, the former Governor of the Central Bank of Egypt, by Kamel Moustafa (1917-1982)
Estimate £3,000-£5,000 (Lot 16)**

Known as one of Egypt's leading portraitists, Kamel Moustafa built a reputation painting members of the country's political, intellectual and professional establishment, becoming a trusted artistic chronicler of modern Egyptian life. As well as gaining a reputation as a leading Egyptian painter, he was also an educator, who was associated with the second generation of Egypt's modern art movement. Trained at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo and later at the Academy of San Luca in Rome, he developed a highly disciplined style rooted in classical realism, anatomical precision, and careful tonal balance. His artistic reputation grew through depictions of Egyptian landscapes, rural life and especially portraits of prominent national figures, blending European academic methods with distinctly Egyptian themes. In this portrait his accomplished realism and technical precision are brought to bear on a sitter associated with one of Egypt's most important financial institutions, resulting in a work that speaks to power, prestige and national history.

More than simply a likeness, the portrait is an exercise in authority. Through composed posture, controlled colour and a finely balanced composition, Moustafa presents Mahmoud Hamed with a commanding stillness that speaks to both character and status. The restrained palette and subtle handling of light, reinforce an impression of stability and institutional confidence, reflecting the authority expected of a leading public figure during a transformative period in Egypt's history.

The portrait's provenance adds another layer of significance. Coming from the celebrated Zulficar family, whose name is deeply woven into Egypt's legal, political and royal history, the original owner of the work was Queen Farida's brother Sa'id Zulficar. The work is now being consigned by Queen Farida's great nephew. At a time of growing international attention on 20th century Middle Eastern art, the work offers collectors and historians alike an opportunity to acquire a painting that connects some of the defining personalities and institutions of modern Egypt. The portrait is in oil on wood and carries an estimate of £3,000-£5,000 (Lot 16).

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