Alex Seggerman

**Said, Mahmoud ((1897-1964)**

Said’s vibrant canvases portray nude Egyptian women, stylized Lebanese landscapes, and glamorous Alexandrian aristocrats. Born in 1897 in Alexandria to a prominent, landowning family, his father, Mohammed Said Pasha, served as prime minister in the 1910s. The family’s luxurious villa in the Gianaclis neighborhood today houses the Mahmoud Said Museum. Said first trained with a local Italian artist, Amelia Casonato da Forno, before graduating from the Cairo School of Law in 1918 and studying art at the private Académie Julian in Paris in 1920. Said worked as a lawyer at the *Tribunaux Mixtes* (Mixed Courts), a vanguard institution of international law for Alexandria’s cosmopolitan community. Said painted on weekends in a simplified, almost decorative style with rich colors. He depitced Alexandrian elites in luxurious clothing with refined gestures, but also painted sensuous nudes on bed sheets or in front of invented Egyptian landscapes. These nudes portray darker skinned women who resemble the *fellaha* (peasant) symbol ubiquitous in contemporary Egyptian visual culture, clashing with his upper class depictions. The Egyptian Surrealist group adopted Said as an honorary member and included his work their exhibits in the late 1930s. After ending his legal career in 1949, Said served on organizing committees for museums and exhibitions, including the Biennale de la Mediterranée. Said embodied a cosmopolitan spirit and eschewed the more overt nationalist imagery of his Cairene peers.

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