Alex Seggerman

**Mukhtar, Mahmoud (1891-1934)**

Mahmoud Mukhtar deftly blended Pharaonism with neoclassicism to create modern, nationalist sculpture. Born in 1891 in Tanbara, he enrolled in the first class at the École Égyptienne des Beaux-Arts in 1908. After graduating top of his class in 1912, Mukhtar traveled to Paris on government scholarship to join the studio of French sculptor, Jules-Felix Coutan at the École des Beaux-Arts. In response to the 1919 Revolution in Egypt, he sculpted *Nahdat Misr* (Egypt’s Reawakening) for the Salon des Artistes Français in 1920. The work depicts a peasant and a sphinx, representing the magnificent history of ancient Egypt and the agricultural prowess of the Nile Valley. After many years of public fundraising, a monumental version of the sculpture was unveiled in 1928 in Bab el-Hadid Square, facing the Cairo railway station. Because of *Nahdat Misr*, Mukhtar rose to national prominence, maintaining studios in Cairo and Paris. In 1930, he exhibited bronze, marble, and stone pieces at the renowned Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris. In these works, he blended Pharaonic imagery with a stylized, classicist aesthetic. The most famous, *Khamasin*, portrays a peasant woman battling the sand storms, her cloak blown back, revealing her body. Mukhtar continues to be esteemed as Egypt’s most famous sculptor despite his early death of leukemia in 1934. His works, Nahdat Misr in particular, played an active role in larger history of modern Egypt.

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