

Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah

The passing of Sheikh Nasser al Sabah is an immeasurable loss to the art world. He was one of the greatest collectors of his generation and a pioneer in the field of Islamic art. He was one of the first to realise that Islamic art was a collecting category that had been largely overlooked by the art market, where world-class works of art could be picked up at a fraction of the prices paid for their counterparts in Western art sales. Sheikh Nasser and Sheikha Hussah collected with a passion and dedication that is only to be found in true collectors. Together they formed a collection that is unsurpassed in its quality and unmatched in its comprehensiveness.

There is one memory of Sheikh Nasser that stands out for me and that was a particular occasion when I was telephone-bidding with him and Katie Marsh during an auction at Sotheby's. Katie and I were in London, and Sheikh Nasser I learnt afterwards was in India... watching tigers. There was one lot in the auction that I knew he really wanted and as the lot approached I became increasingly nervous that we might lose the connection. When the lot finally came up I could hear Katie desperately repeating "Sheikh Nasser, do you want to bid? Sheikh Nasser, do you want to bid?" Nothing, no response. We missed the lot. Afterwards I rang Katie back and asked what happened. She said that a tiger had approached at precisely the moment when the lot came up and Sheikh Nasser didn't want to speak in case he disturbed the creature and scared it away! It struck me then, that for all his love - indeed his immense passion - for art and for collecting, he still chose to be in the moment with that tiger.

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