

# Gulf Today

## Key Rembrandt drawing for landmark auction by Sotheby's in Saudi Arabia

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Young Lion Resting by Rembrandt.

Muhammad Yusuf, Features Writer

Later this month, Sotheby's will bring to Saudi Arabia the most important Rembrandt drawing to appear at auction in 50 years. Estimated at \$15–20 million, Young Lion Resting comes to market from The Leiden Collection, one of the world's most significant private collections of 17th-century Dutch and Flemish art. The drawing will be on public view at Diriyah's Bujairi Terrace January 24-25, alongside the full contents of Origins II — Sotheby's forthcoming second auction in Saudi Arabia — ahead of its offering at Sotheby's New York on February 4.

The proceeds from the sale will benefit Panthera, the world's leading organisation dedicated to the conservation of wild cats, co-founded by philanthropists Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan and his wife, Daphne Recanati Kaplan. Panthera is actively engaged in the Middle East, where it is spearheading the reintroduction of the critically endangered Arabian leopard to AlUla, in partnership with the Royal Commission for AlUla. Young Lion Resting is being sold by The Leiden Collection in partnership with its co-owner, philanthropist Jon Ayers, Chairman of the Board of Panthera.

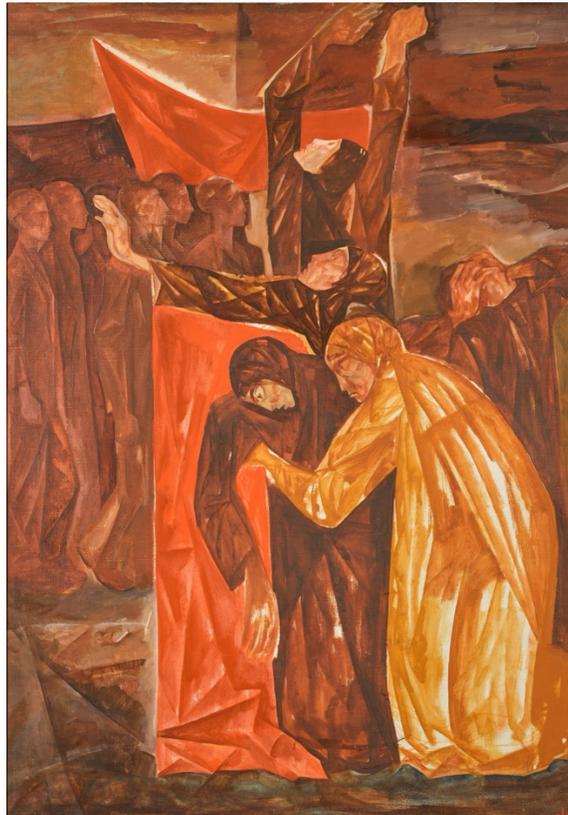
Capturing the lion's power, poise and restless energy with noteworthy subtlety, Young Lion Resting is one of only six known Rembrandt drawings of lions, and the only example remaining in private hands. Rembrandt would have been in his early to mid-thirties when he executed the small yet intensely intimate work, and the immediacy of the image suggests it was drawn from life — though precisely where the artist encountered the lion, remains unknown.



Safeya Binzagr's work Coffee Shop in Madina Road.

Long before Rembrandt ever sketched a lion in 17th-century Europe, lions roamed northwest Arabia, alongside leopards. Their presence still endures in AlUla's landscape, carved into ancient rock faces and most powerfully embodied in the Lion Tombs of Dadan, where stone lions have stood watch for some 2,000 years. For Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan, the drawing holds deep personal meaning, since it marks his first Rembrandt acquisition — he would go on to acquire no fewer than 17 paintings by the artist. “Releasing it now, with proceeds directed towards conservation, gives the work a living future, linking art, heritage and the protection of wild cats,” says Sotheby’s.

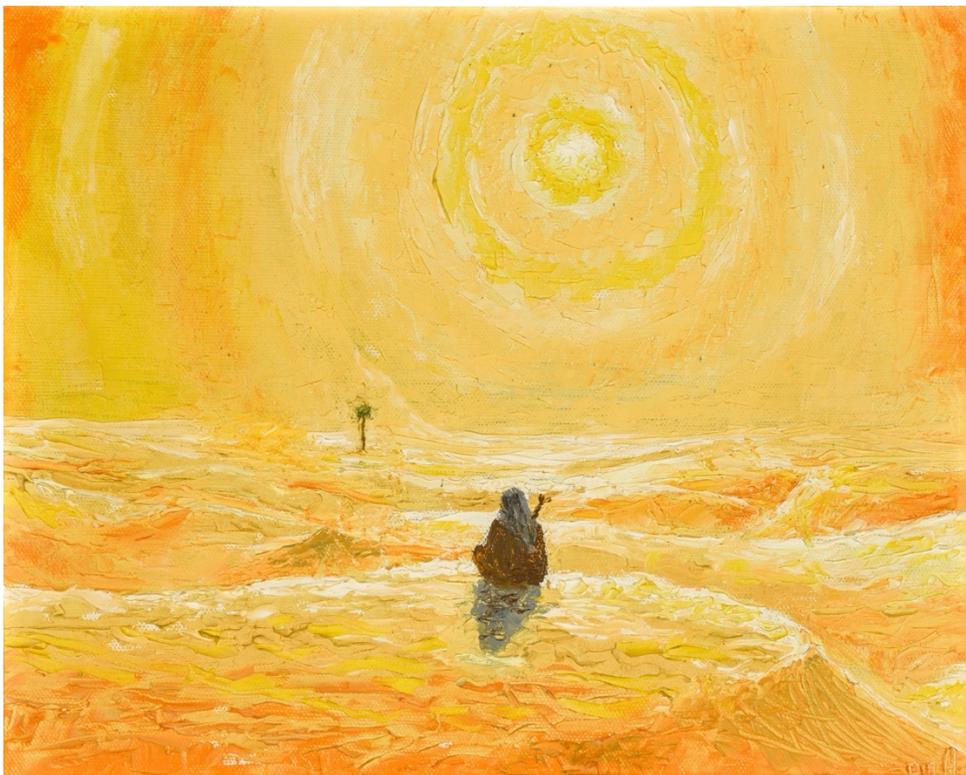
From 2017 to 2024, Dr. Kaplan served as Chairman of the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage (ALIPH). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a founding member of ALIPH and is represented on the Board by Prince Badr bin Abdullah Al Saud, the country’s Minister of Culture and Governor of the Royal Commission for AlUla. The exhibition in Diriyah — the birthplace of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and home to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of At-Turaif — will also, for the first time, present the full range of works offered in Origins II, a sale of modern and contemporary art featuring leading Saudi and Middle Eastern artists, alongside renowned international names such as Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Anish Kapoor.



Demonstration by Mahmoud Sabri.

Comprising 64 lots, the pre-sale exhibition will remain on public view throughout the week, culminating in the open-air auction on January 31 in Diriyah – the Destination Partner for Origins II – at the amphitheatre. The sale promises auction debuts for Saudi artists Mohamed Siam and Dia Aziz Dia, among the notable voices of the Kingdom’s second generation of modern artists, presented alongside their trailblazing peers, including Safeya Binzagr, Abdulhalim Radwi, and Mohammed Al Saleem. Carving a niche of its own is a rare alabaster figure of a woman from ancient South Arabia, which stands as a testament to Saudi Arabia’s cultural and artistic sophistication. The week-long celebration of art and culture, coinciding with the opening of the Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale 2026, will also feature a series of talks as part of the Biennale’s official programming.

They include Safeya Binzagr and Her Legacy, a panel discussion featuring members of her family and academic colleagues, January 25; Introduction to American Pop Art: Focus on Roy Lichtenstein, January 26; Introduction to Auction & Collecting, January 27; Iraqi Modern Master Mahmoud Sabri (1927–2012): From Social Engagement to Quantum Realism, January 28; and Picasso in the 1950s and 60s: A Master at Work, January 30. Sotheby’s has a rich history of supporting the cultural ecosystem and its infrastructure in the Gulf. In February 2025, it staged the first ever auction in Saudi Arabia, with an ‘Origins’ sale in Diriyah - it brought over \$17 million and attracted participants from 45 countries, with almost a third of buyers hailing from Saudi Arabia.



Dia Aziz Dia's artwork La Palma (The Palm).

In September 2025, it was a sponsor and key partner to Riyadh's inaugural Cultural Investment Conference, the first of its kind in the Middle East. At the event, Sotheby's presented Safeya Binzagr's Coffee Shop in Madina Road, a highlight of its forthcoming second auction in Saudi Arabia.

Sotheby's lent its support to the Kingdom's first Contemporary Art Biennale in 2022, and to the inaugural Islamic Arts Biennale in Jeddah in 2023 and the second edition this year. Sotheby's also partnered with the Diriyah Biennale Foundation for their 2024 edition, hosting a series of talks and workshops as part of the public programming. In 2017, Sotheby's held the first ever charity auction in the Kingdom, and in 2013, hosted the first ever highlights exhibition to be staged in Saudi Arabia by any international auction house. In late 2023, Sotheby's was officially incorporated in Saudi Arabia and opened an office in Riyadh landmark Al Faisaliah Tower, designed by Norman Foster and famous for being the first skyscraper built in the country.