artnet Auctions Hosts “Speak Up: Women's Voices in Middle Eastern Art”

New York, October 31, 2017—artnet Auctions is pleased to present a sale dedicated exclusively to artworks by women artists from the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. “With works by some of the most sought-after and internationally acclaimed female artists, this sale aims to challenge Neo-Orientalism and the Western stereotypes on the impactful role of women in the region,” explains artnet Auctions Senior Specialist of Modern and contemporary Middle Eastern Art, Bibi Naz Zavieh. Featuring paintings, prints, sculpture, and photographs from a variety of price points, this auction represents the artists that have pushed the boundaries in a male-dominated world, such as Fahrelnissa Zeid, Shirin Neshat, Tala Madani, Dana Awartani, Susan Hefuna, Rana Begum, Jowhara AlSaud, and Selma Gürbüz.

Leading the auction is a painting titled Free Elements from the artist Princess Fahrelnissa Zeid, following her much celebrated solo retrospective at the Tate Modern. Born and raised in Turkey, Zeid married into the Iraqi royal family and spent her life traveling throughout the Middle East and Europe. Her art, much like her life, is a synthesis of Islamic, Byzantine, Arab, Persian, and European culture and its influences, and Free Elements exemplifies this fusion. Completed in the 1960s, this painting, estimated at $20,000–25,000, is comprised of uniquely Sufi allusions, Zeid's iconic, vibrant color palette, and a European perspective of abstraction. The inclusion of Zeid in this sale also represents her prominent role in the world of female artists, as she dedicated the later part of her life to mentoring women in the arts.

For the first time artnet Auction's Middle Eastern Department is proud to offer a work by South Asian artist and winner of the 2017 Abraaj Group Art Prize, Rana Begum. Born in Bangladesh before moving to London at the age of six, Begum uses her colorful works to blur the lines between sculpture, painting, and architecture. No. 290 (in four parts) is a wall-mounted sculpture, estimated at $4,000–6,000, which plays with the notion of space and perception.
Among the photographs included in this sale is a work by famed Iranian artist, Shirin Neshat. Her 1995 photograph *Face to Face with God*, from the iconic *Women of Allah* series, radically challenged Western views of Iranian womanhood and placed Neshat at the forefront of contemporary photography. Estimated at $10,000–15,000, this work references Islamic martyrdom and depicts a woman mimicking a peaceful death while holding a rifle close to her body. Neshat’s subject lies at the complex intersection of faith, gender politics, and violence to create an image that maintains its poignancy today.

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