

Pack of Cards

By **Madame Sososttris**

* Have you noticed, dears, how everyone these days seems to be either going to or talking about La Bodega? This time there was a very good reason for wanting to be there, as the management team was celebrating, with a special event, the long-anticipated completion of their snazzy lounge across from the restaurant. To do this in the style that such a momentous happening deserved, an art exhibition was presented featuring works by artists **Elizabeth Washburn, Mira Shihadeh, Moataz Nasreddin** and **Mohamed Abl**. My dear colleague **Tanya Goudsouzian** was at a loss to describe the décor: she could not decide if the mood was ultra-modern Oriental, Art Deco or New York grunge, she told me. As we walked through the restaurant, Tanya spotted a large number of friends and acquaintances, prominent among them businessman **Said (Sal) Sakr**, who was busy celebrating his 30th birthday. **Brigitte Lefebvre**, Dior's representative for the Middle East, as elegant as ever, was dining with a small group of friends, while, at another table, **Susan Sabet**, fashion editor of Cleo magazine, was doing the same, looking stunning in an olive ensemble. As we inched towards the door, Tanya stopped to talk to **Walid Khoury** from the Canadian Embassy, businessman **Salah Malik** with his sisters **Jocelyne** and **Viviane**, visiting from Beirut, Business Monthly Editor **Neil MacDonald**, his lovely wife **Yasmeen Siddiqi**, editor of Medina magazine, and American journalists **Paul Schemm** and **Andrew J Tabler**. One thing is certain: if you are hankering for an incognito quiet dinner with your chosen partner, La Bodega is not the place to go.

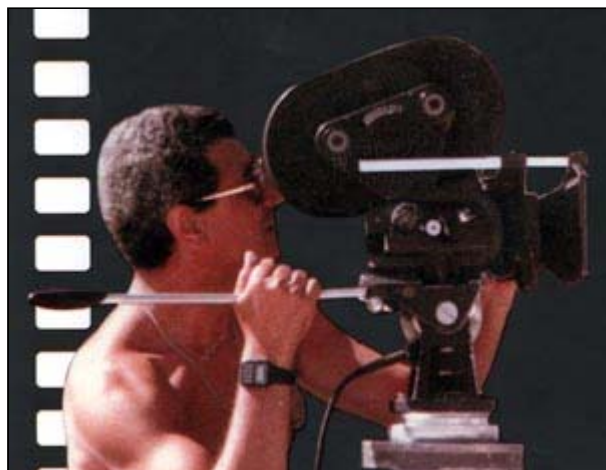


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SEARCH



* My very dear friend the chairman of Bavaria Egypt, Dr Engineer Nader Riad, has just published a very unusual book. It is a tribute to his older brother, the prominent film director Nagui Riad. In very few words and many striking images, he has succeeded in capturing the essential character of the prolific production of the man he calls his life's friend. Nagui, as I am sure you may know, directed the famous documentary Ka as well as an impressive number of documentaries and feature films. The book also includes testimonies from dear friends and close family members. When I think, dears, that Nader is a renowned engineer who is recognised as a pioneer in the realm of fire extinguishers, I can only marvel at his literary and artistic talent in producing such a fascinating and visually pleasing anthology. Isn't this a lovely family story?



* Another very dear friend of mine, Maged Farag of Royal Albums and Club Mohamed Ali fame, has decided to go one step further and do something new. He has just published a superb tome entitled L'Egypte Illustrée written by none other than Azza Heikal, author of L'Education alexandrine and presently Master of Languages at the National Institute of Languages and Oriental Civilisations in Paris. There is little I can add to the compliments Maged has already received from those who have had a chance to leaf through this collection of works by Orientalist masters who painted Egypt in its most suggestive aspects: the best of Gérôme, Prisse d'Avennes, Eugène

Fromentin and Kees Van Dongen (to name just a few) are all represented in glorious colours. Needless to say, the book has pride of place on my best coffee table and I no longer need to rack my brain for topics of conversation with my occasional guests. They are so busy poring over the book that they forget all about me and to forget me is no easy feat, dears, as I keep reminding them.

* When he is not publishing books, Maged Farag is busy organising weddings (among other things), and the latest I attended was an event to remember. Around the beautifully illuminated pool, at the Mohamed Ali Club Michel Nathan, an accountant with Egyptian American Bank, and his ravishing bride, dentist Rania Nabil Wassef,



entertained their friends and families during the most elegant of wedding receptions. Professor of Pathology at Qasr Al-Aini hospital Dr Nabil Wassef, his charming wife Mima, Nathan Youssef of the American Express Bank and his equally charming wife Samia welcomed the guests, who danced the night away. Soon after the reception, Michel and Rania flew to Singapore and Bali, where they will be spending their honeymoon.



* As summer ends, I find myself reminiscing about a holiday spent in Valencia not so long ago, strolling the cobbled streets and nibbling on tapas in little out-of-the-way bodegas. Lucky, then, that the Generalitat Valenciana

(the regional government of Valencia) in Spain, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture in Egypt, is presenting an exhibition entitled "Orientalism in the Painting of Antonio Muñoz Degra'n."

You would have spotted me -- discreet as I may have been in my black lace mantilla, I never manage to go unnoticed for long -- if you had been at the inauguration, presided over by several dear friends of mine: Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni, Spanish Ambassador to Cairo Alfonso Ortiz, President of the Generalitat Valenciana Eduardo Zaplana Hernández Soro and General Director of Museums and Exhibitions Hamdi Shehata at Horizon I Gallery, in the Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum. The exhibition will last until 30 September, and showcases an essential stage in the the early 20th-century Valencian painter's career. I was quite transported by his vision, and I am sure you will be too.



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