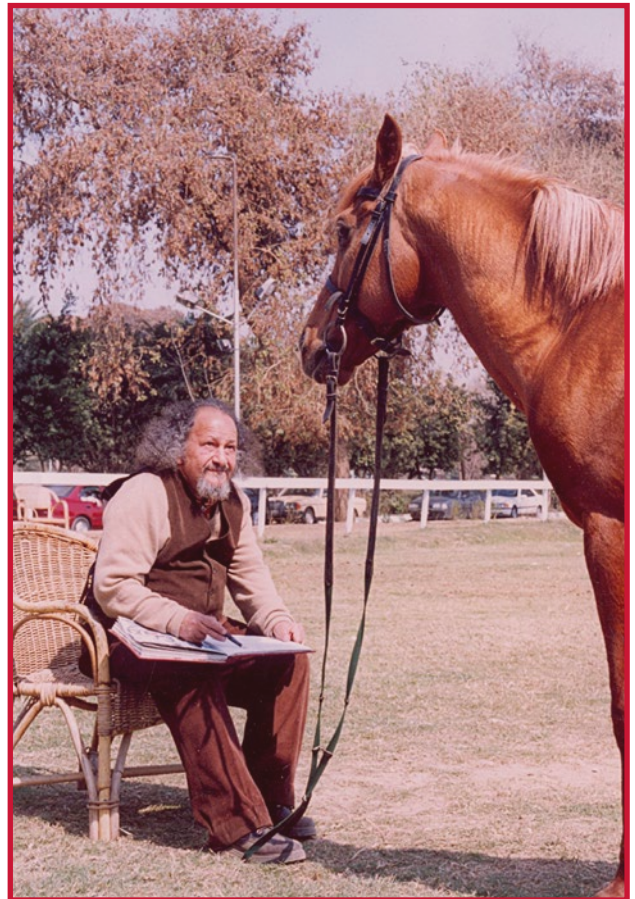


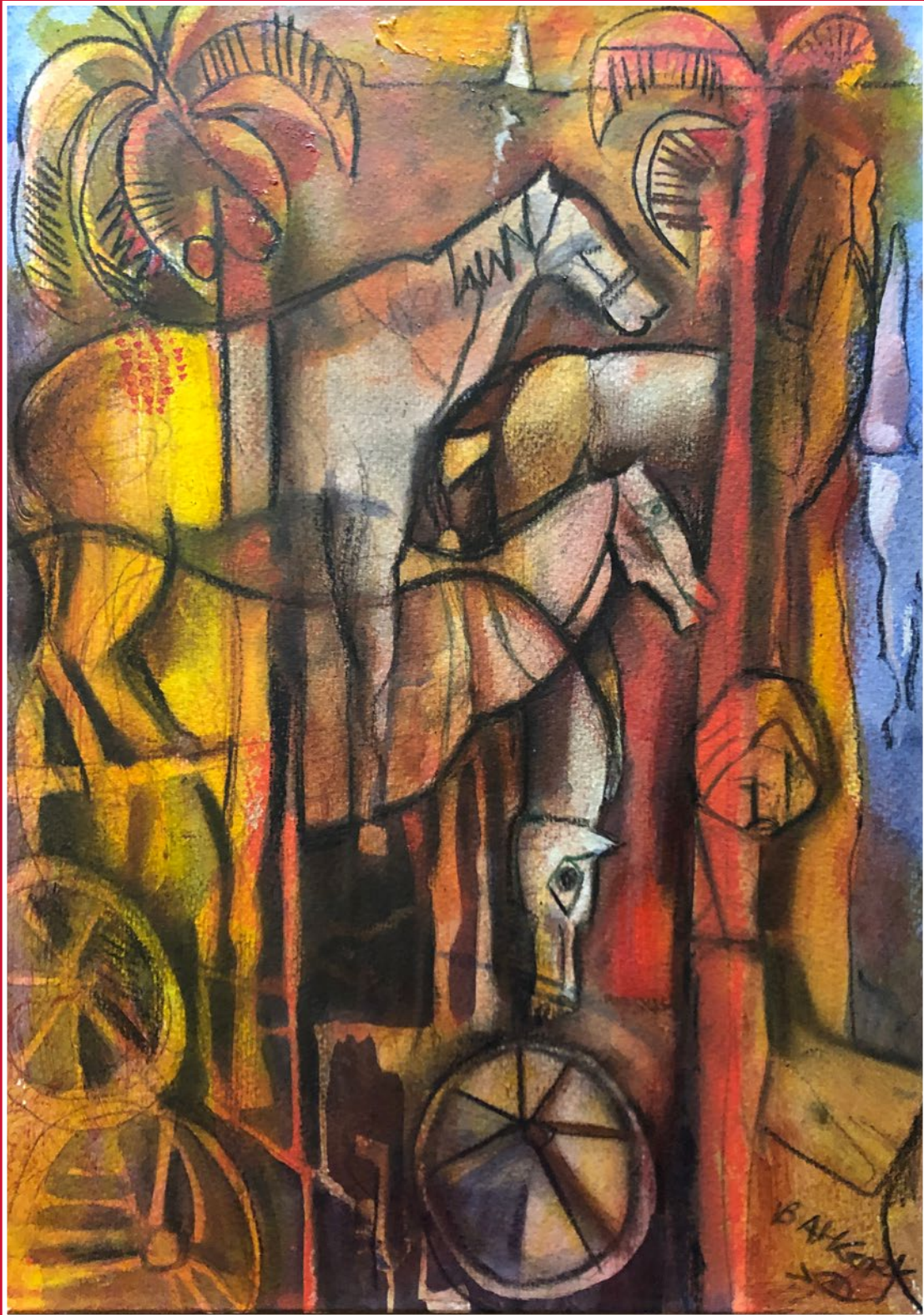
George Bahgoury

A Giant of Egyptian Modern Art and Admirer of the Arabian Horse

■ by *Judith Wenning*

Arabian horses fascinate one of the leading contemporary artists in Egypt. George Abdel Masih Al Bahgoury – or George Bahgoury – is called “the grandfather of caricature” or “the Egyptian Picasso” and his works are considered national treasures. Bahgoury was born in 1932 into a Coptic Christian family in Bahgora, a small village in Upper Egypt. This is also where his name “Bahgoury” meaning “coming from Bahgoura” derived from. George Bahgoury started drawing from a young age. His childhood was marked by tragedy. His mother passed away when he was just three years old. His father was an English teacher at private schools and a very quiet, introverted man. George Bahgoury found comfort and support by an aunt, a kind woman who cared for him, and took him out to visit people and places. These experiences later found their way into his artworks when he painted as an adult, living abroad.





Horses in Luxor



Dancing Horses

In the year 1953 he began his career as a political cartoonist and was featured in the important weekly newspapers "Sabah Al Khair" and "Rose El Youssef" from 1953 until 1975. Focussing on political satire, George Bahgoury's work was stamped by a humorous spirit. This showed up also much later in his paintings. In 1955, he graduated at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Zamalek, Cairo where the very influential Hussein Bikar had guided him. Bikar was one

of Egypt's most prominent artists of the 20th century. A few years afterwards, in 1975 Bahgoury decided to stop publishing as a cartoonist, despite of his established career in this field.

A far-reaching decision for George Bahgoury was to leave his home country for Paris enrolling in the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. He says of himself that he was

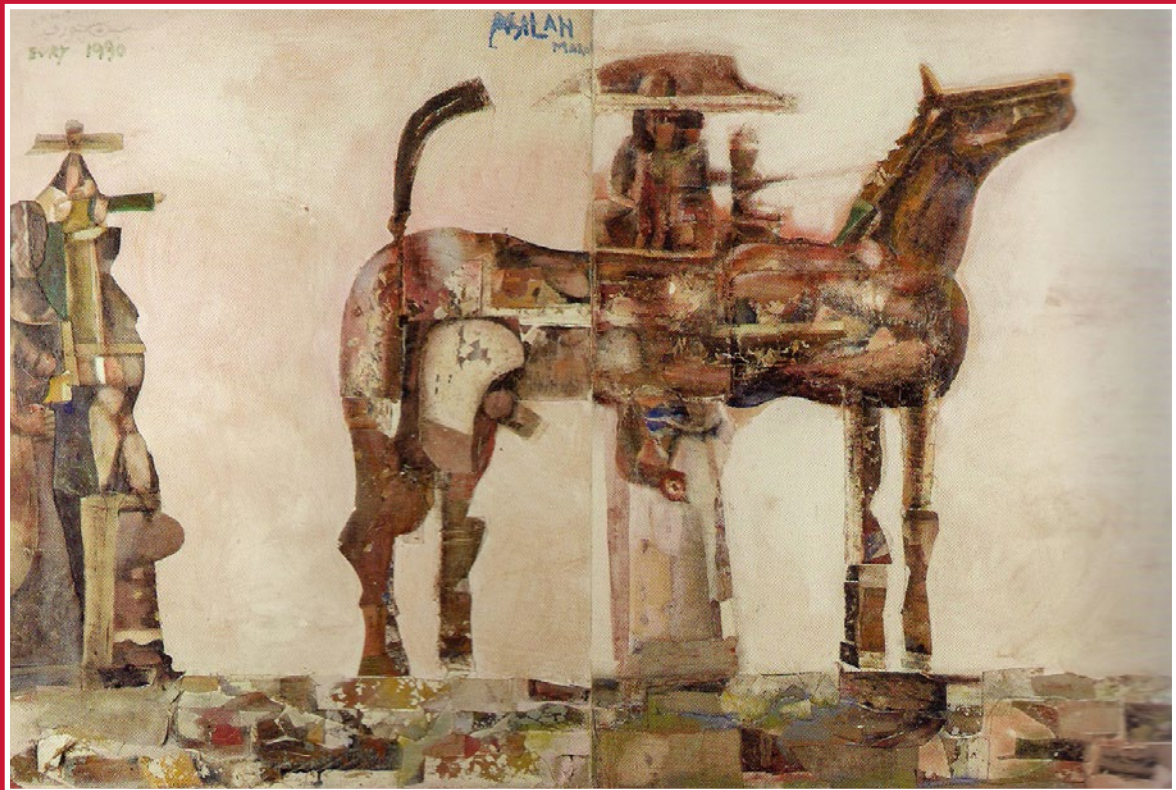


Dances with Horses

born twice – 1932 in Egypt and 1970 in Paris, France. Living for the following three decades in Paris indeed influenced Bahgoury's art on a large scale. The time in Paris definitely refined his talent in drawing, engraving, painting, sculpture, marionette art, writing novels, cinema and criticism. George Bahgoury is unquestionably a very versatile person. When talking to him, he impresses with his kind heart and charming charisma. "I always admired

Arabian horses", Bahgoury states with a smile. "I saw them in Egypt, Morocco and all other Arab countries I have visited. They are one of the few animals I like to paint. I always wished to ride a horse – like a bold knight. Unfortunately I never had the chance."

George Bahgoury remarks that in his opinion nobody can be a good artist without master drawing the horse. He admires



Aseela Horse

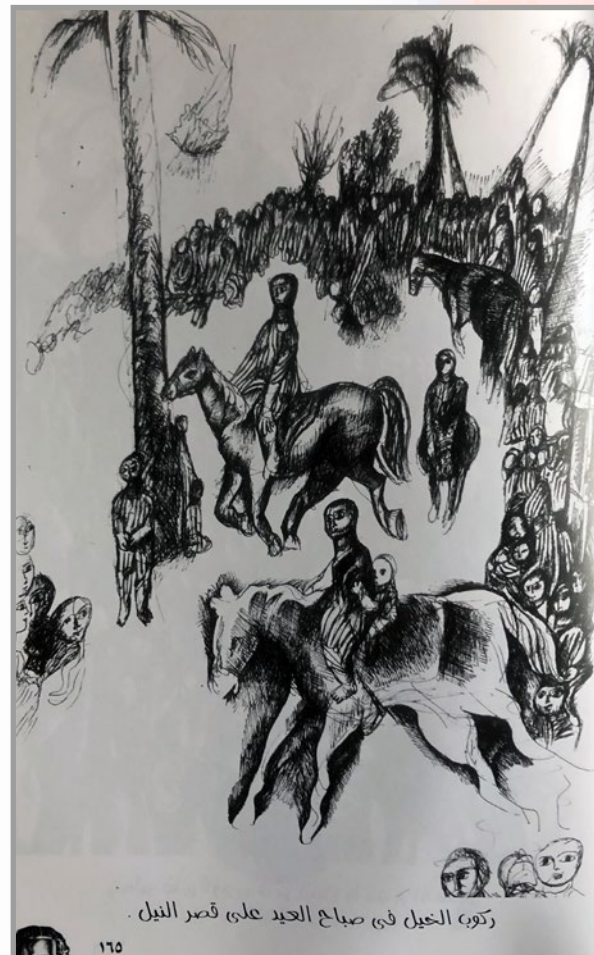




The Horse, lithograph

these beautiful creatures, especially their appealing face and the fact that they are smart, very strong, fast, and learn quickly.

Moreover, they can be hard workers and have dignity. This reminds the artist to humans. Bahgoury remembers that he used to love drawing Arabian horses in their stables and at races. Furthermore, he enjoys the dancing horses of Egypt. Regarding Arabian horses, George Bahgoury is especially fascinated by the expression on their faces and in action. Bahgoury points out that in chess the horse is the strongest and most powerful of all and has the upper hand on the games as shown in his painting named "El Hossan Sayed el Leaaba".



Feast Morning.
People celebrating by Riding Horses



Beautiful Horse, lithograph

George Bahgoury has published six books so far; three of them were dedicated to art. He received numerous prestigious awards, and has been widely displayed in galleries and museums as for example the Louvre Museum in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art in Amman, Jordan, the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo etc. Besides of a number of art works owned by state collections, his paintings grace many private collections as for example the Egyptian embassies in

England and France.

He staged a multitude of exhibitions in Egypt and abroad and had so far around one hundred exhibitions internationally. His style can be described as expressionist and cubist, often featuring strong, bright colours. George Bahgoury's works are full of vibrancy and energy. His later works tend from cubism to a more expressionist style with bold lines and



The Young Knight

strong, dynamic colours. He was certainly influenced by the French Pablo Picasso and the German Paul Klee as well as the Egyptian pioneer painters Youssef Kamel and Hussein Bikar. George Bahgoury paints old-fashioned folklore and modern habits. His body of works depicts people and street life and ranges from Islamic subjects, politicians, motherhood, and musicians to many other motifs. The Arabian horse is a recurring theme. His paintings evoke a

sense of nostalgia, with his painting he recalls an Egypt he doesn't want to disappear. Upon a special invitation from the Society of Art Lovers in Paris, his artwork was selected to represent the Egyptian Pavilion at the Louvre Museum in 1999. Here his painting "A Face from Egypt" was awarded a Silver Medal. □