

## MAHMOUD MOKHTAR

### AL A SHAT ELNIL ou "Au bord du Nil" (1927-1929)

First reduction ( n°1)

Bronze, richly shaded dark brown patina

H : 118,5 cm, L : 30 cm, D : 27 cm

Lifetime cast signed "Moukhtar", "Susse Frères. Éditeurs Paris" and "cire perdue" details, with inserted pastille (without the "Bronze" stamp) on the edge of the base. Six examples cast this first and highest reduction between 1931 and 1939, with 5 lifetime casts including this one numbered "4"

Circa 1933-1934



The model for *Au bord du Nil* was created at the height of Mokhtar's career, after the inauguration of the monument *Le Réveil d'Égypte*, which the government declared a national event. This work revived the monumentality of ancient Egypt and became the manifesto of a desire for an aesthetic Egyptian Renaissance, of which Mokhtar became the representative.

The skyward thrust and hieratic monumentality of the work *Au bord du Nil* (On the banks of the Nile) combine the timeless vision of a dreamed-of Egypt - the woman in front of us can be either a contemporary person or an illusion of Upper Egypt - with the reality of the water carriers or fellah women strolling around the great river.

Mokhtar's vision is the result of long observation: the long draperies subtly reveal the silhouette and play with the light, while the balanced jars lean slightly over the twisted seat, as shown in shots from this period.

Mokhtar produced several representations of this theme, such as the group of 3 figures in granite, *Le Retour de la rivière* (1928), whose central woman is similar to our subject in her posture. There is a large stone copy of this subject, exhibited at the Galerie Bernheim Jeune in 1930, an exhibition devoted to the artist in which numerous busts were shown, as well as a large stone example of *La Fiancée du Nil*.

*"M. Moukhtar has returned to the shepherds of the delta, to the women draped in traditional veils, whose regal bearing and hieratic gestures have remained unchanged for a hundred centuries. It's still the water carriers, the amphora on their heads, bringing up from the banks of the Nile, with the rhythm of slow marches, the bathers on whose young bodies the wet wool is plastered. These peasant women are not the sisters of the heroic, grandiose statues, guardians of the deserted temples, but rather of the long, smooth figures that the pharaohs took to their tombs to guard the image of life".*

Jacques Baschet for *l'Illustration* on March 15 1930.

The bronze edition continues the illusionistic play of light on the surface in the manner of ancient polished stones such as granite or basalt. *Au bord du Nil* is available in 4 distinct sizes: H. 180 cm / H. 120 cm / H. 80 cm / H. 40 cm.

Only 6 examples were cast by Maison Susse in the 120 cm size, 5 period, one posthumous.

Our lifetime cast has a beautiful brown patina, the signature enhanced with white and the number "4" affixed to the tool, presumably for the 4th example.