

ELLIOTT FINE ART

Nineteenth Century to Early Modern

Adolfo Scarselli
(Florence 1866 – 1945)

Portrait of a man in a yellow headscarf

Signed and located lower right: *AScarselli / Cairo*

Oil on board

46.5 x 37.5 cm. (18 ½ x 14 ¾ in.)

Provenance:

Private Collection, Brescia.



This striking portrait, a symphony in yellow, was painted by the Florentine artist Adolfo Scarselli in Cairo at the turn of the 20th century. Little-known today, Scarselli studied at the Accademia di Belle Arte under Giovanni Fattori and exhibited widely in his native city, focussing primarily on street scenes and portraits.

Scarselli was in Cairo by 1904 and he stayed long enough to execute a number of high-quality oil sketches and portraits.¹ The present work is a particularly beautiful example of Scarselli's portraiture and is the only known example from the Egyptian trip in oil, the others being in watercolour or charcoal (fig. 1). The combination of looser brushstrokes in the clothing with a more polished face places the focus on the sitter's physiognomy whilst conveying a sense of spontaneity and vitality.

The sitter, with his distinctive facial scarification, is probably Nubian.

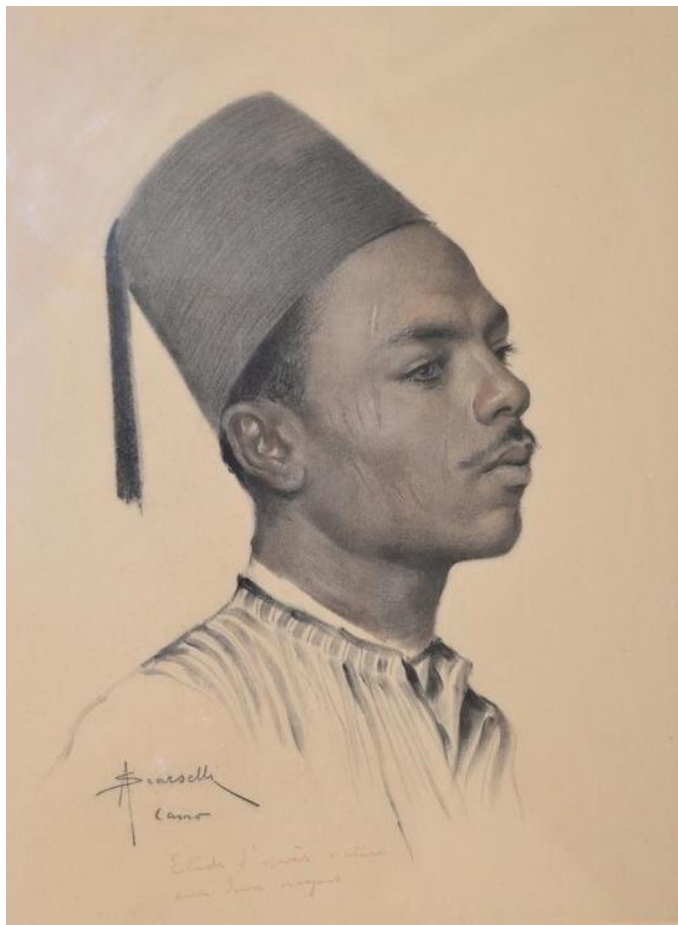


Fig. 1, Adolfo Scarselli, *Portrait of a man in a fez*, charcoal on paper, 51 x 28 cm, Private Collection

¹ An oil sketch of a Cairene street sold at auction is dated 1904 (Dorotheum, Vienna, 17 February 2014, lot 170). None of the other known Egyptian works carry a date.