



Fata Morgana

Completed: 17-02-2022

In this series, we continue to follow the adventures of Lawrence in search of the Prince of the Nile. In this new chapter, the Egyptologist stumbles on a mysterious desert town, a place full of carnal pleasures and sensual delights.





Jean-Léon Gérôme - Le charmeur de serpents



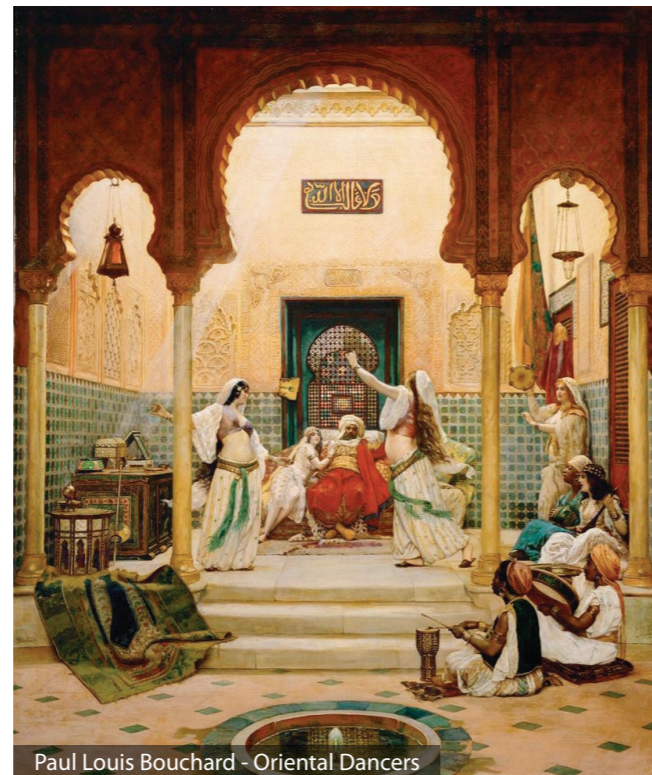
Frederic Leighton - Athlete wrestling with a python

The Orientalists

The stage for this series was inspired by the works of 19th-century Western artists who specialized in Oriental subjects, the so-called *Orientalist*. After Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and the colonization of large chunks of the Middle East by the Western powers, many artists, especially French painters, began to take an interest in these exotic countries. Many of them used bright and vibrant colours, depicting in minute detail a mystified world imbued with eroticism, art and religion. One of the most successful of these artists was *Jean-Léon Gérôme*.

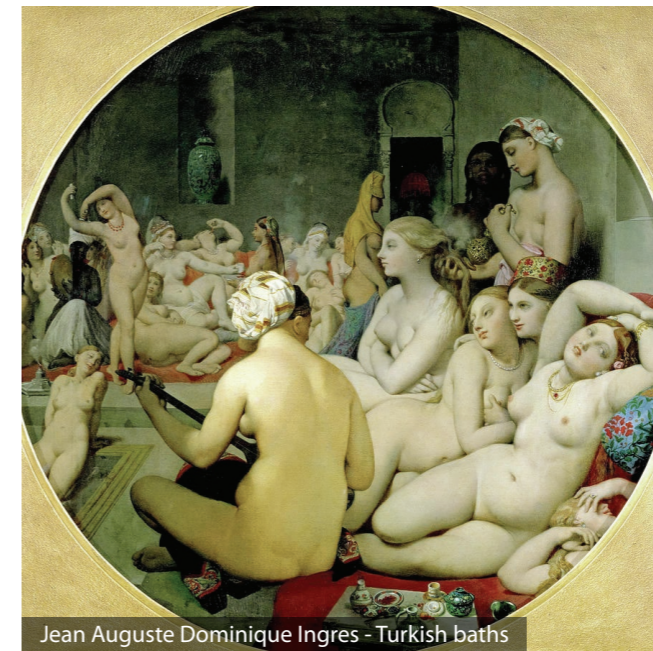


Ludwig Deutsch - A nubian guard



Paul Louis Bouchard - Oriental Dancers

His paintings were so widely reproduced that he was probably the world's most famous living artist by 1880. But, from the List of Orientalist Artists, you can see that it was a far-ranging and diverse group of artists, writers and academics. Although these academic works no longer have the same high esteem - often associated with stereotypes, romantic fantasies or even imperialistic propaganda - I think they still convey the mystery and beauty of the Orient, and the fascination these artists had for that region. It's a remarkable contrast with how the modern Western world regards the art and culture of the Middle East.



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres - Turkish baths



Gabriel Morcillo Raya - A Turbaned Oriental

The Harem

When Laurence enters the main building of the city, he finds a palatial courtyard. A comfortable and cool place in the shadow, with soft couches, refreshing fountains, lush vegetation and sweet music. It's a male harem, and several young men rest like "odalisque" on comfortable beds surrounding a pond. This image refers to the eroticized artistic genre so popular with the Orientalists, where women of the Ottoman court were represented mostly nude in a reclining position, often in the setting of a harem. It's interesting that this genre was so popular, at a time when women were fighting hard for emancipation in the West. The (male) artists (and public) apparently preferred to see their women

as a passive objects of desire, confined indoors and wasting their lives, as a courtesan caged in a seraglio. Hard to imagine a famous artist doing that in our time...

I always wanted to make a series about a male harem, for I haven't found many examples of that, and I don't think there're many examples in history or in art as well.

There are some indications that male harems did exist, like Al-Hakem II, the Caliph of Cordoba in tenth-century Spain, who probably kept both female and male harems. Male odalisques are also hard to find. Most paintings are from far more recent times and are often just meant as a mockery or parody of the genre.



Steeve Beckouet



Streets of Morocco by Stonemason

The Settings

To create these settings, I used only a few models. Some were used in previous chapters of this project as well.

For the city, I used a model called *Streets of Morocco* by the 3D artist Stonemason, and parts of the interior of the Harem are were created with the *Temple of Sand*, *Arabian Dreams* and *Aslan Court*.



Temple of Sand



The temple of Philae

Philae

In the second part of *Fata Morgana*, the hero of the story walks into a whole different world. This time the settings are the flooded ruins of an ancient Egyptian temple. Is Lawrence getting closer to the Prince of the Nile?

The scene was inspired by old photos and paintings of the flooded temples of Philae, a small island originally located near the First Cataract of the Nile in Upper Egypt.

The temples were inundated after the construction of the Aswan Low Dam in 1902. The height of the dam was raised several times and by the end of the 1920s, the entire



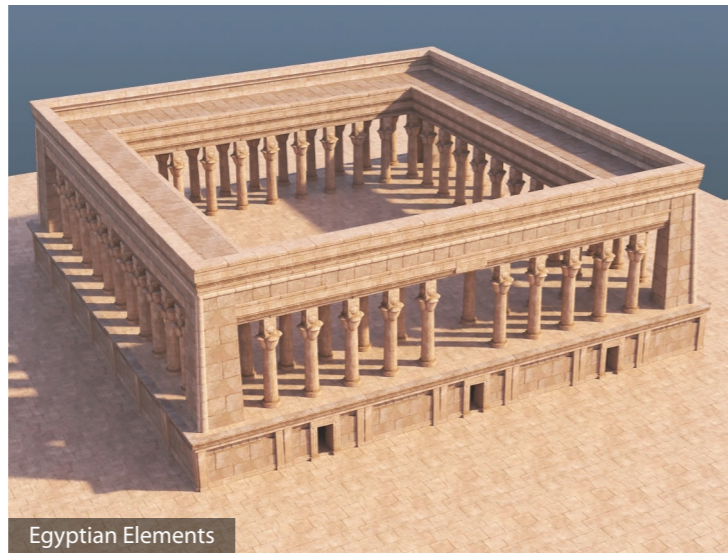
David Roberts - The temple of Philae

complex was nearly permanently submerged. The only times the temples were visible was from July to October, when the sluices were open and tourists could visit the ruins in small boats.



Ernst Carl Eugen Koerner - The temple of Philae

All the buildings were Eventually dismantled and moved before the 1970 completion of the Aswan High Dam. They are currently located on Agilkia Island in Lake Nasser. The flooding was, of course, very damaging to the buildings, but the rising waters created at the same time a very interesting and mysterious landscape that inspired many artists.



Egyptian Elements

The models used for this part of the story are *Egyptian Elements* and *Egyptian Ancient Temple*.



Egyptian Ancient Temple

