

## Essam Marouf by Arno Kramer

The portrait never went out of fashion. It is probably the favourite subject of all in the history of painting. And artists still see possibilities to create something new when reproducing the human head. In addition, the portrait has always been an opportunity for stories or reflections; about feelings, sorrow or anxiety, about beauty of course and suffering, but also about the likeness to a portrayed person, about imagination and whatever else you got. The portrait just might be the area of envisaged introspection.



This portrait of Essam Marouf is classic in its structure and fiercely modern in its execution. The head is renaissance in concept, in a classical way, but through its execution and the bold colours, it takes on a whole new character. We do not actually see a modern person. Due to chosen form and colour it fascinates immediately, maybe because it looks so simple. The painter has given the work the least dynamic, plasticity en expression possible, but underneath something is brewing. It's alive in its silence. The averted look only enhances that feeling. The reference to antiquity not only derives from that serene face but obviously also from the suggested headgear. Is it really headgear, or is it hair? Maybe Essam Marouf wants to tell us something else? Probably not. This is a study about how to avoid plasticity in a painting and still give the work inner power. And a degree of sensitivity that is expressed in the face. The use of colour also contributes to this originality and power. Essam Marouf has made a truly contemporary painting in which several aspects from the history of painting are manifested, in a subdued and subtle way.