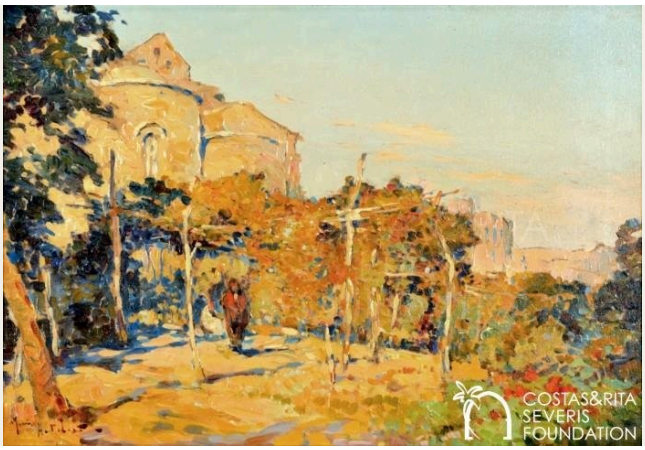
NICOSIA, CYPRUS

Centre of Visual Arts and Research: Masterpieces

Paintings, watercolours and drawings from the CVAR in Nicosia: twenty works, many of them by artists visiting Cyprus



The Centre of Visual Arts and Research stands in the old walled city of Nicosia. It opened in 2014 to house the Costas and Rita Severis collections of paintings, costumes and historical material connected with Cyprus. Travellers and visiting artists made many of the images. That makes them valuable as records, though it matters who was doing the recording. They show what visitors chose to paint and, where captions were added, what those visitors believed about it.

This selection of twenty takes in harbour views of Kyrenia, buildings in Famagusta, the salt lake at Larnaca, flower studies, pencil studies by Léon Bakst and a portrait of a woman by an unknown painter. Some works are much better documented than others. Several are anonymous, and the oldest has only a tentative attribution. Allan E. Balfour is at the other extreme. He wrote his own captions, recording where he was and what he took each site to be, and not everything he believed can be taken as fact.

Artline selected these works from the museum's documented holdings, independently of the museum. Some may be away on loan.

Explore this selection in Artline

See the selected works alongside books and events from their period, or compare when the artists lived. The books and events provide context, not evidence of direct influence. Works without confirmed dates remain in this guide.

Artworks in context Who lived when?

artlines.org/guides/cvar-nicosia

The selection · 20

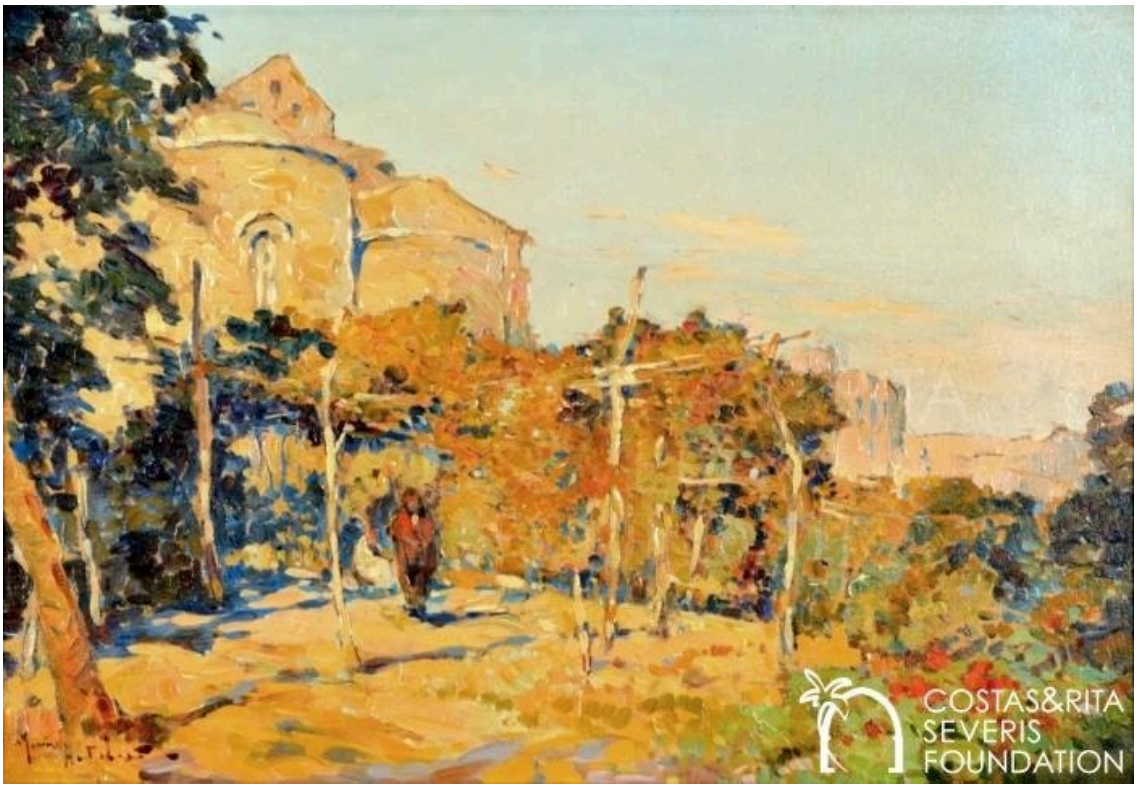
1. Saint George Xorinos, Famagusta
   Martin Henry Robert · c. 1930
2. Portrait of Mrs Razzini
   Anonymous · c. 1889
3. Salt Lake, Cyprus
   Charlotte Artizzone · c. 1950
4. Trees at Platres
   Anonymous · c. 1950
5. Carob Stores in Kyrenia Harbour
   Catherine Betty Crawford · 1933
6. From Pedoulas
   Catherine Betty Crawford · 1933
7. View towards Agia Irini Bay and Morphou
   Esmé Scott-Stevenson · c. 1879
8. A Male Figure
   Léon Bakst · 1921
9. Ancient Artefact
   Léon Bakst · 1921
10. Ancient Female Statue
    Léon Bakst · 1921
11. Cyprus: Shaving a Priest
    Anonymous · c. 1840
12. Salt Lake, Larnaca, with Stavrovouni
    Allan E. Balfour · 1938-03-09
13. The Lighthouse, Kyrenia
    Allan E. Balfour · 1938-03-05
14. Bellapais Abbey
    Allan E. Balfour · 1938-03-01
15. Flowers
    Catherine Betty Crawford · 1933
16. Kyrenia
    T. H. Pritchard · c. 1925
17. Ruins at Amathus
    Anonymous [Pars?] · 18th century
18. The Mosque at Famagusta
    Francis Arundale · 1833
19. View from a Wooded Hilltop, Cyprus
    Unknown artist · c. 1900
20. Ancient Statue
    Léon Bakst · 1921

01 / 20

Saint George Xorinos, Famagusta

Martin Henry Robert

c. 1930 · Oil on canvas · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Robert approaches the church across a foreground of trees and cultivated ground. Its stone walls appear beyond them as part of a farmed landscape, not as a monument pushed to the front. Famagusta looks very different in Francis Arundale's much earlier watercolour of the mosque, later in this selection, where a Gothic building and a minaret share the town's skyline. Robert sets his church among fields.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00001

02 / 20

Portrait of Mrs Razzini

Anonymous

c. 1889 · Oil on board · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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The sitter's name has survived; the painter's has not. Mrs Razzini's dark dress with light trim stands out against the pale background, and her hands rest near her waist. That pose gives the portrait its formality. Among the landscapes, plant studies and drawings in this selection, it is the only work devoted to a named individual.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00023

03 / 20

Salt Lake, Cyprus

Charlotte Artizzone

c. 1950 · Oil on canvas · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Lake and sky lie in pale horizontal bands, broken by slender palms and stems. Artizzone puts little else on the canvas, so the thin uprights are what show how far the open water extends. Her title names only the island. Allan E. Balfour's watercolour of the salt lake at Larnaca, later in this selection, is more particular: it names the place and the distant mountain, and his inscription records the day.

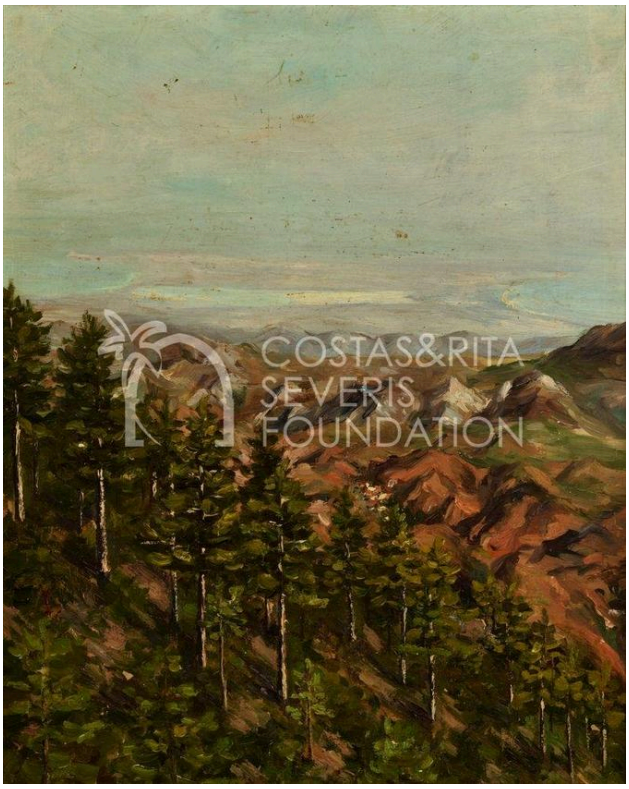
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00040

04 / 20

Trees at Platres

Anonymous

c. 1950 · Oil on board · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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The slope is shown through the trees themselves, which grow denser or sparser as the ground falls away. Darker trunks hold the foreground, and hills carry the view into the distance. No record of the painter's name survives.

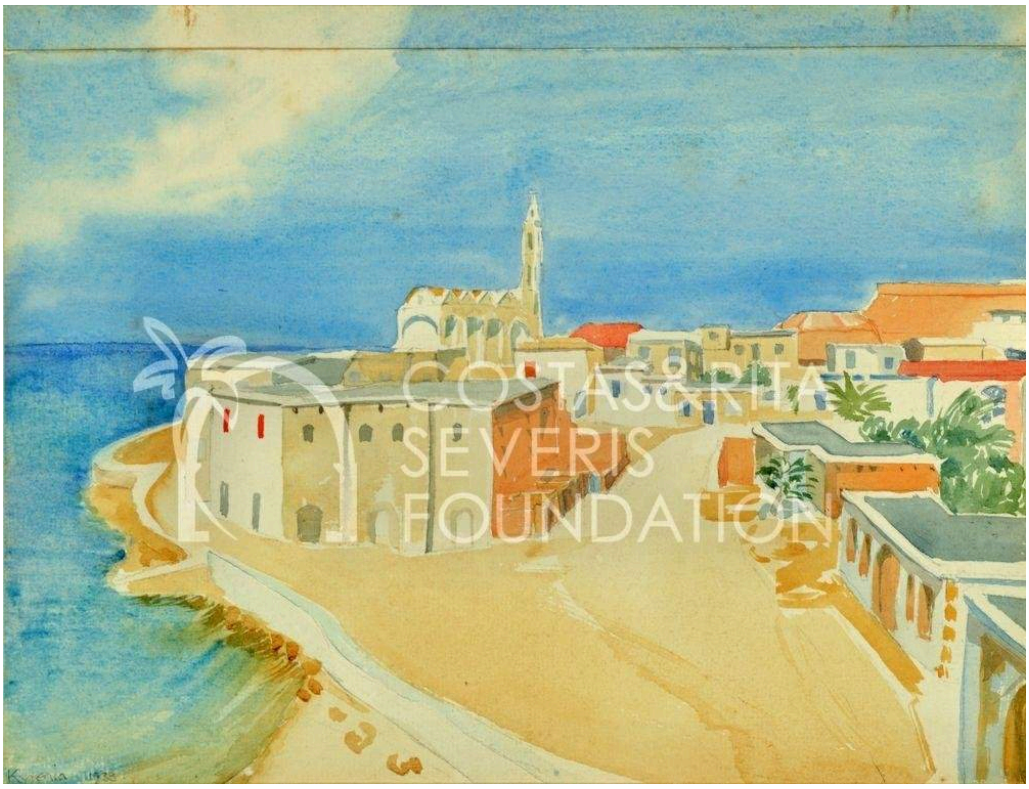
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00028

05 / 20

Carob Stores in Kyrenia Harbour

Catherine Betty Crawford

1933 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Crawford's title identifies the waterfront buildings as carob stores. They follow the curve of the shore and face the water, and with the broad quay in front of them they give the harbour a working edge. Kyrenia appears more than once in this selection. T. H. Pritchard's view attends to masts and reflections, and Balfour's to the lighthouse. Only Crawford's tells us what the buildings were for.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00007

06 / 20

From Pedoulas

Catherine Betty Crawford

1933 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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The title names Pedoulas, but Crawford painted no view of the place. Instead the sheet holds flowering stems, with their branching joints, leaves and blossoms kept separate on the open paper. Were the stems picked there? Nothing on the sheet says so, and nothing else explains how the title relates to the plant.

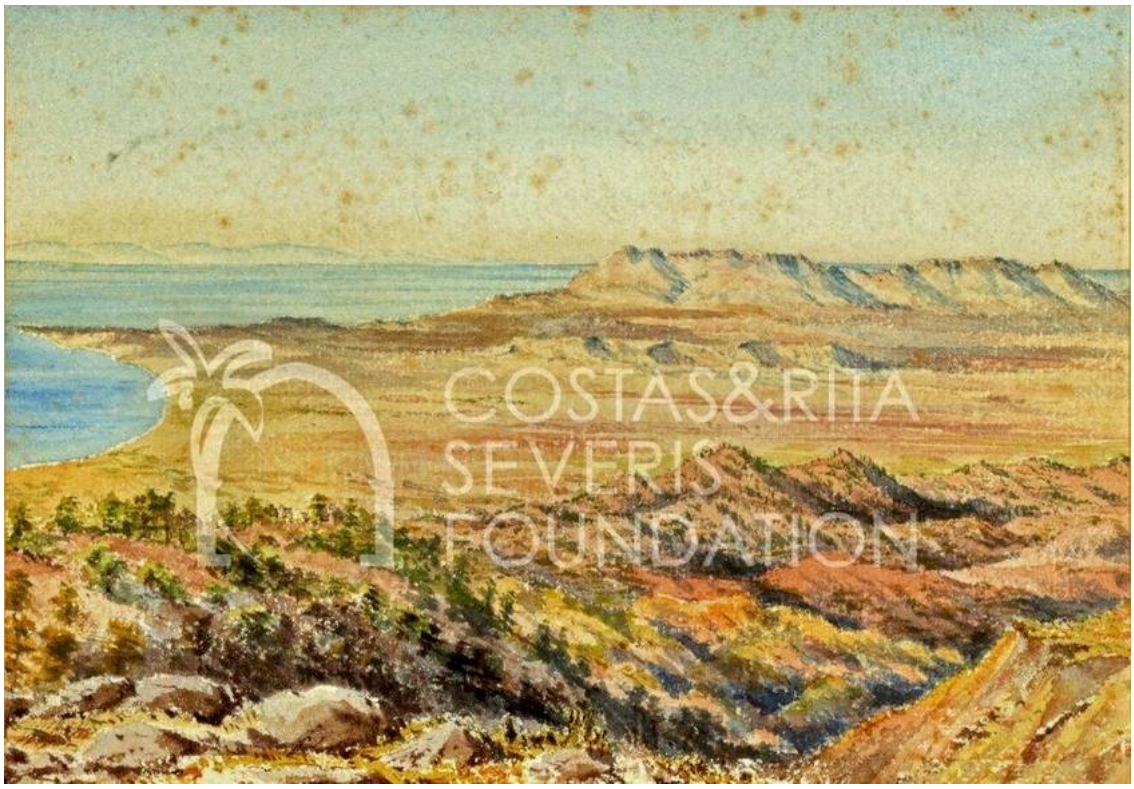
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00013-01

07 / 20

View towards Agia Irini Bay and Morphou

Esmé Scott-Stevenson

c. 1879 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Scott-Stevenson paints from high ground and sets out the land in successive distances: rough ground close by, ridges further off, then the coastal plain running towards the sea. The near ground gives a physical scale to the broad bands beyond. She also wrote about her life in Cyprus, and her book Our Home in Cyprus appeared soon afterwards.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00006

08 / 20

A Male Figure

Léon Bakst

1921 · Pencil · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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A bent arm and a few folds are enough to organise this lightly drawn standing figure. Bakst left the head unfinished and drew no setting, so the drawing concentrates on the pose and the way the fabric hangs. It looks like a quick study. His other sheets here have titles that name an ancient statue or artefact. This one does not say whether he was drawing a sculpture or a living model.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00043-12

09 / 20

Ancient Artefact

Léon Bakst

1921 · Pencil · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Bakst visited Cyprus in 1921 and made studies of ancient artefacts and sculpture, and the CVAR connects these Cypriot studies with his costume work. Here the object's profile takes up only a small part of the sheet, and darker strokes pick out one side. The drawing gives no archaeological context to show what the object was, and the museum's title is just as general.

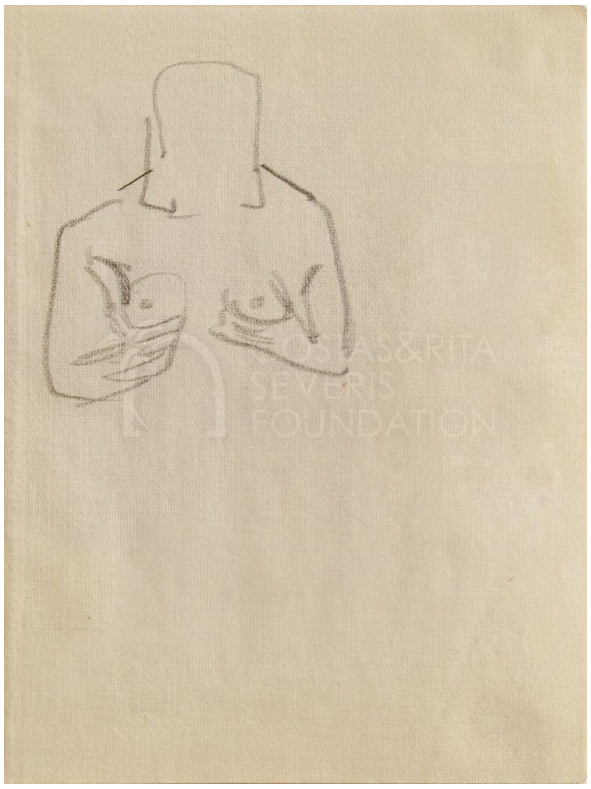
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00043-02

10 / 20

Ancient Female Statue

Léon Bakst

1921 · Pencil · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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The gesture of bent arms, with hands held near the chest, is repeated across the frontal torso, while the head is less defined. Bakst took this arrangement of the body from the sculpture and did not try to copy every part of it, so the gesture gets more attention than the face.

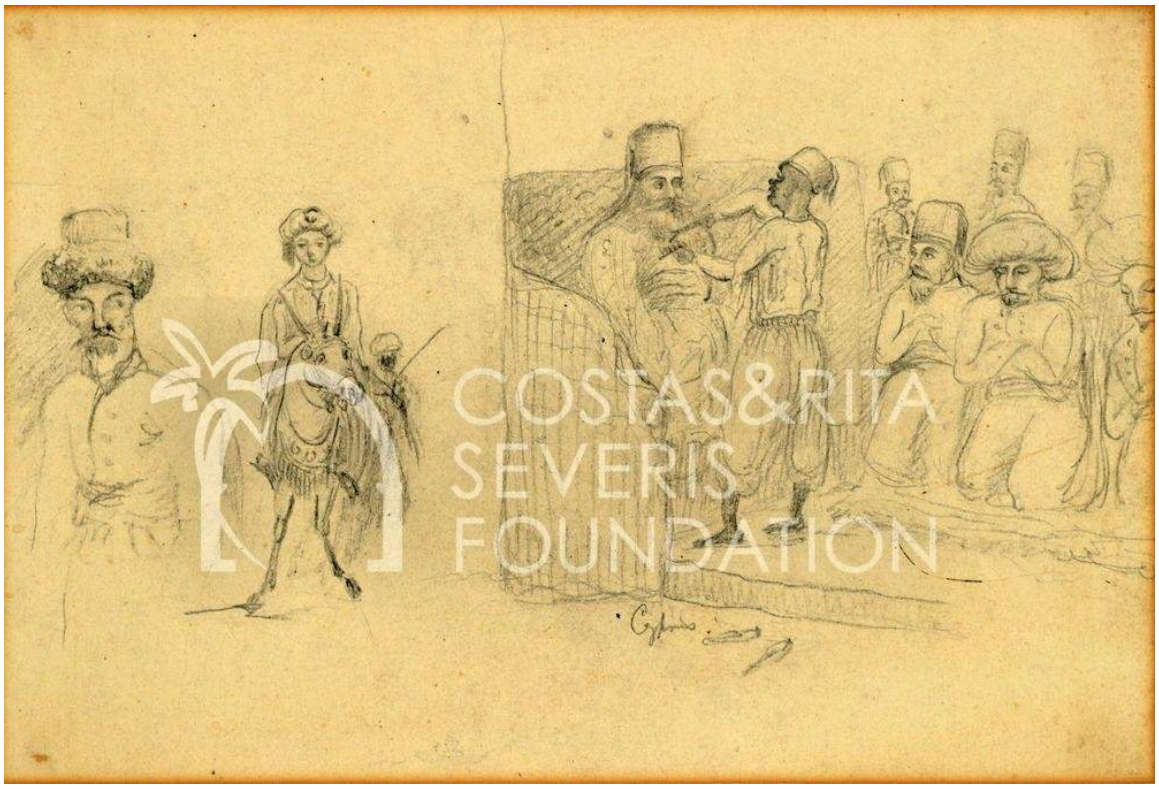
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00043-05

11 / 20

Cyprus: Shaving a Priest

Anonymous

c. 1840 · Pencil drawing · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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The caption is specific where the drawing is loose. It names the task in hand, shaving a priest, but the interior is only sketched in, and the nearby objects leave much of the setting unclear. Other figures gather round the seated man, which makes this a small group scene rather than a portrait of one person. The drawing does not tell us who they all are or what the occasion was.

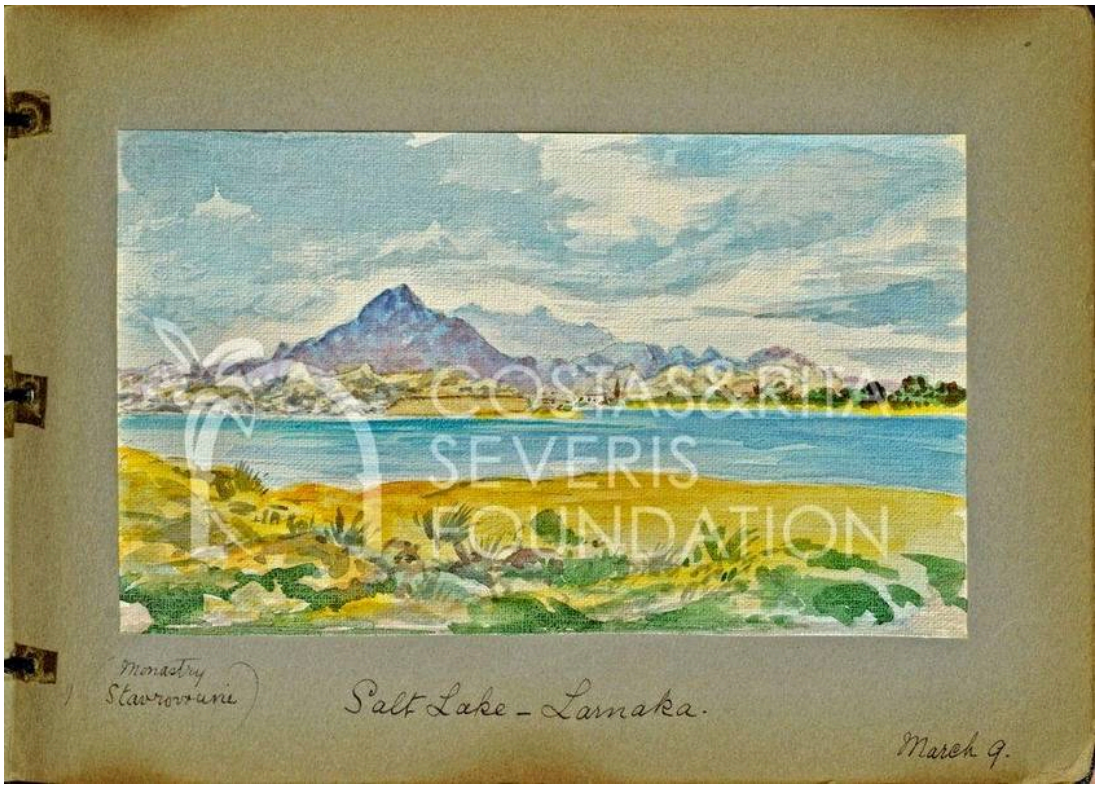
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00009

12 / 20

Salt Lake, Larnaca, with Stavrovouni

Allan E. Balfour

1938-03-09 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Water fills the view, and the title identifies the distant mountain as Stavrovouni. Balfour's inscription gives the place and the exact day. His other watercolours in this selection carry similar dated notes, so each one reads as a stop on a journey. Taken in date order, his sheets in this selection go from Bellapais Abbey to the lighthouse at Kyrenia and finish here at the salt lake, all within the same month.

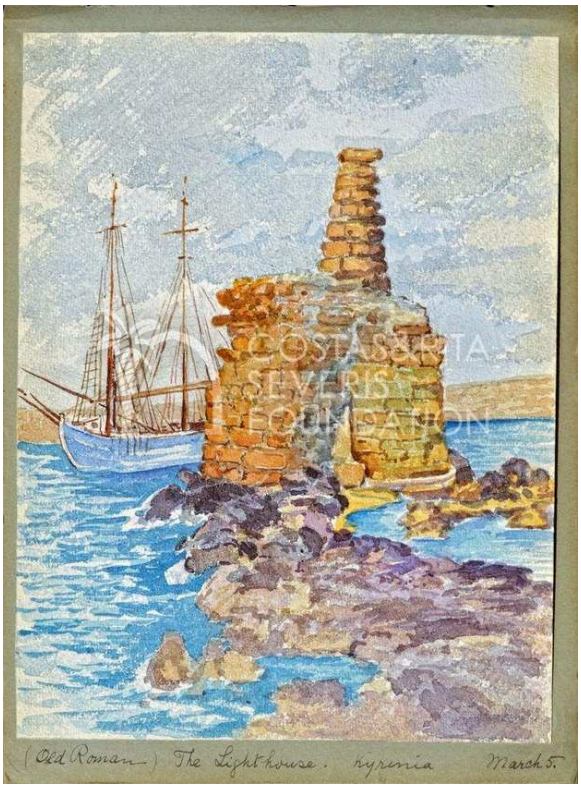
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00044-21

13 / 20

The Lighthouse, Kyrenia

Allan E. Balfour

1938-03-05 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Balfour brings the tower close enough for its masonry to show against the water, and beyond it a sailing vessel extends the harbour view. His caption calls it an "old Roman" lighthouse. That records how Balfour understood the tower; it is not an archaeological dating.

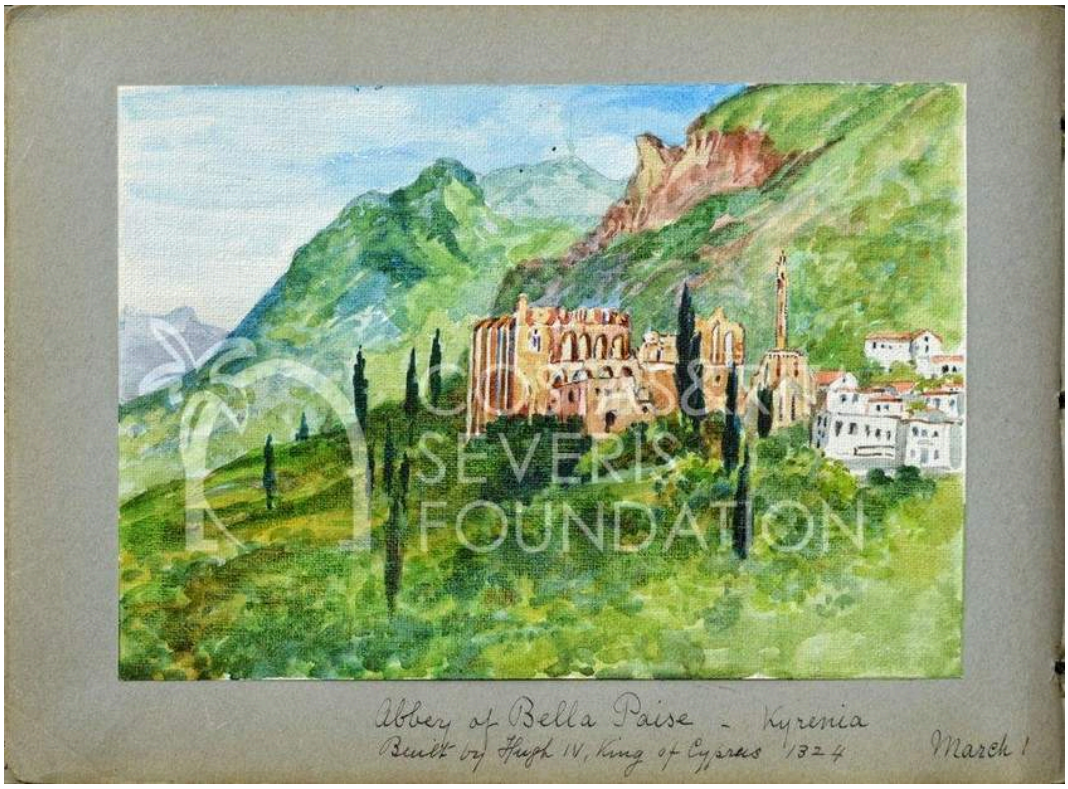
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00044-10

14 / 20

Bellapais Abbey

Allan E. Balfour

1938-03-01 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Trees and a green slope surround the ruined arches, setting the abbey in a wider landscape. Balfour's caption on the mount records his visit and gives his understanding of the site's history.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00044-28

15 / 20

Flowers

Catherine Betty Crawford

1933 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Open flowers, buds and leaves grow from a single branching stem, so the plant appears at several stages of growth at once. Against the pale background every junction is clear. Crawford relies on the spaces between the parts, which lets the small plant fill the sheet while each structure stays distinct. From Pedoulas uses the same method. Her watercolours here all date from 1933, including the carob stores at Kyrenia.

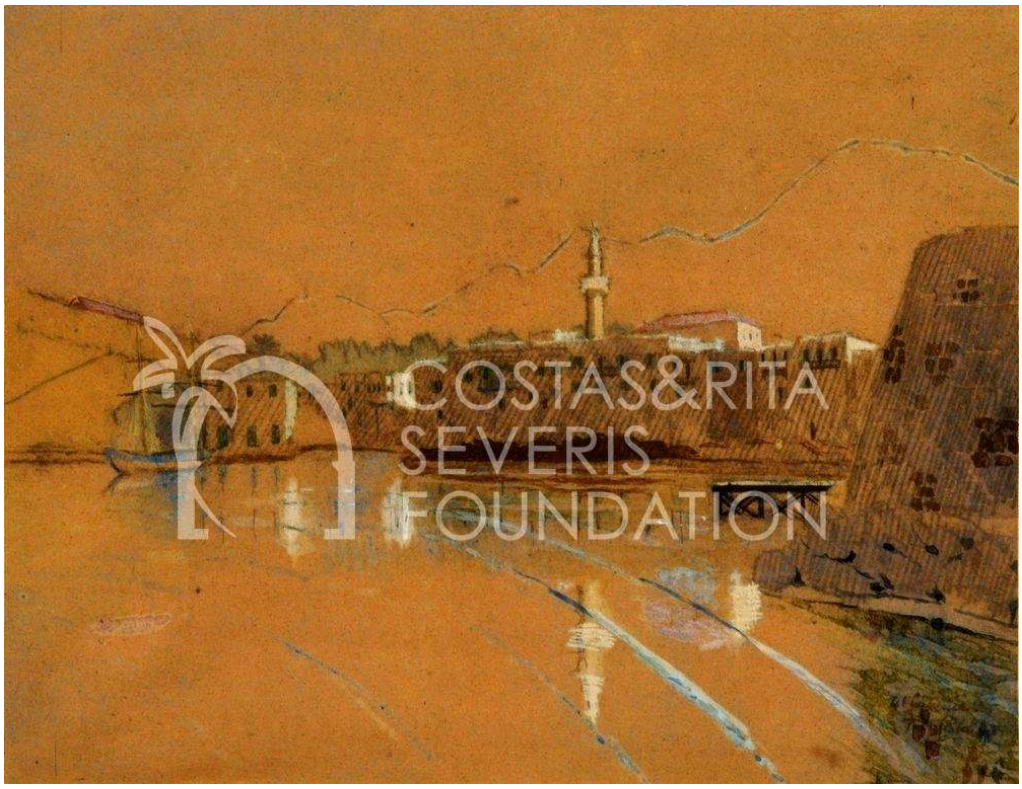
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00013-06

16 / 20

Kyrenia

T. H. Pritchard

c. 1925 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Pritchard draws buildings and masts in fine lines, and their reflections carry some of the verticals down into the water. Not every area has its own wash. The warm-toned paper shows between the marks, and in places the bare sheet supplies the colour.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00017

17 / 20

Ruins at Amathus

Anonymous [Pars?]

18th century · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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The question mark in the attribution matters. The museum tentatively associates this watercolour with Pars, but the attribution remains uncertain. It is the oldest work in the selection. An irregular border encloses ruins, trees and small figures, and beyond them mountains open out, so that the figures look tiny against the breadth of the landscape.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00025

18 / 20

The Mosque at Famagusta

Francis Arundale

1833 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Arundale's title calls the building a mosque, and a minaret shares the skyline with it, but the architecture he drew is Gothic. The title and the stonework belong to different stages in the building's history; in his view the older building is still standing despite the changes. Small figures and lower structures around it show that the place is lived in. This is a historical view, dated 1833, and the site does not necessarily look like this today.

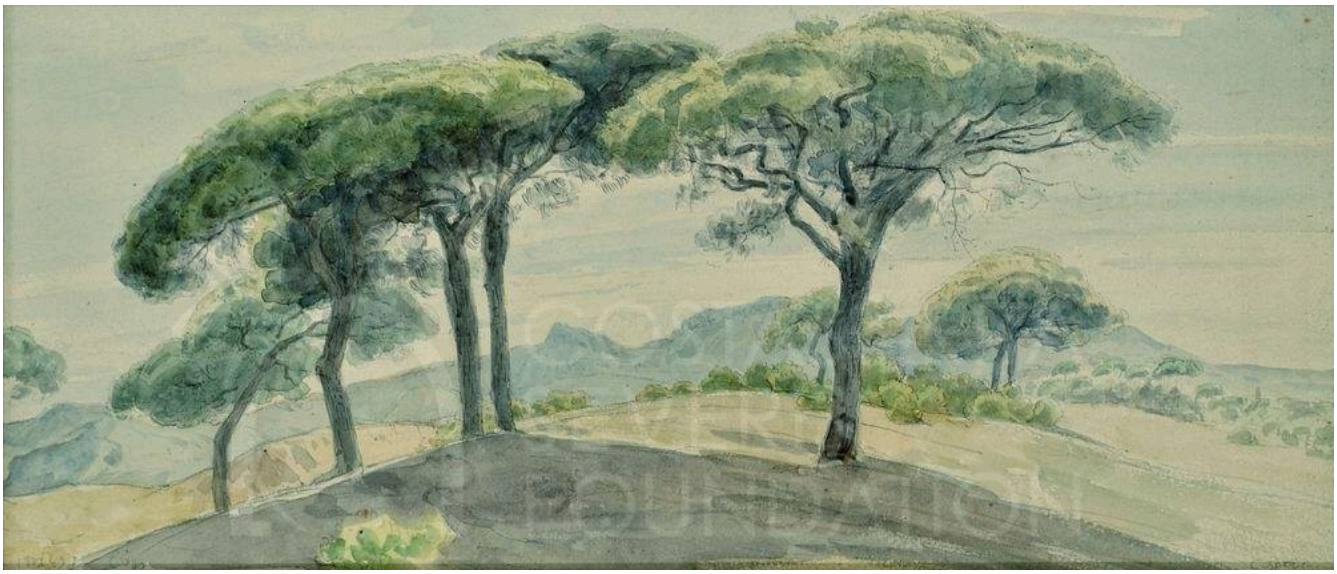
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00041

19 / 20

View from a Wooded Hilltop, Cyprus

Unknown artist

c. 1900 · Watercolour · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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Broad tree crowns are the strongest shapes in this watercolour by an unknown artist, held up on thinner trunks above the low ground. The trees stand apart from one another, and the gaps between them break up what might have been a continuous mass of green across the hilltop. In Trees at Platres, also by an unknown painter, the spacing of the trees works differently: they thicken and thin to show the slope.

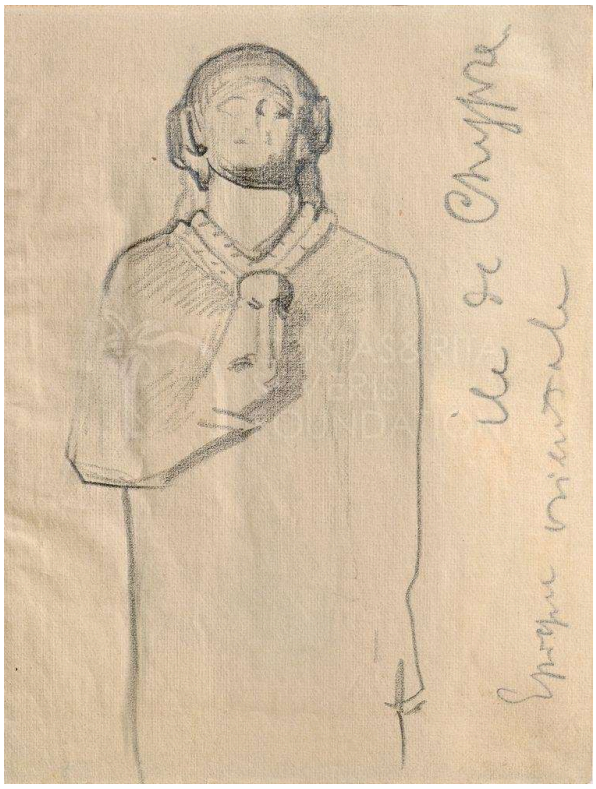
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00030

20 / 20

Ancient Statue

Léon Bakst

1921 · Pencil · Centre of Visual Arts and Research



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This small sheet from Bakst's visit to Cyprus has an annotation as well as a drawing. A few contours give the pose of the frontal statue, including a hand held towards the chest, a gesture similar to the one in Ancient Female Statue.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: PNT-00043-01

Using the records

The linked object records give the inscriptions and catalogue details that this guide only summarises, among them Balfour's captions and the annotation on Bakst's small statue study. They matter most where the name of a building or an attribution is uncertain, such as the tentative link between the Amathus ruins and Pars. Present-day place names, access and condition need to be checked separately. The selection is based on collection records, not on what is currently on display, and permission to reproduce an image is a separate question from permission to visit the museum.

Further reading

Our Home in Cyprus

Esmé Scott-Stevenson (1880) · Free digitized English edition through Google Books; availability and sign-in requirements can vary.

Esmé Scott-Stevenson's first-hand account of living and travelling in Cyprus, published in 1880. She painted the view towards Agia Irini Bay and Morphou in this selection, so you can read one of the artists in her own words and compare the book with her picture. She writes from a British colonial viewpoint.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12

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