



Ion Perdicaris

(1840 Athens, Greece – 1925 Chislehurst, England)

Ion Perdicaris -- the only child of a penniless Greek immigrant who made a fortune in the northeastern United States -- studied art at celebrated ateliers in Paris. While in Europe, he fell in love with a married Englishwoman, Ellen Varley. (His portrait of Ellen hangs just to the right of the Arab Horseman.) The couple arrived in Tangier in the early 1870s, even before her divorce. They settled down with her four children, building two luxurious homes (El Minzah, Aidonia).

Tangier drew Perdicaris for a host of reasons. As a painter, Perdicaris was charmed by Moroccan design, visible in his oil painting of the Arab Horseman. His romantic attachment to Morocco may also be seen in the photograph (in glass case) of a 'Moorish' tea party the couple threw for British artists at one of their Tangier homes. Rather than being shunned for their adultery, Perdicaris and his bride became leaders of Tangier society. They were proud of fighting for virtuous local causes: she gave parties benefiting charities; he served on the Sanitation Committee; he attacked the diplomatic practice of selling foreign 'protection' to Moroccans so they could evade the sultan's laws and taxes. Perhaps incidentally, buying land here allowed him to become a successful businessman like his father.

In 1904 local warlord Raisuni tried to boost his power by kidnapping Perdicaris and his stepson. Raisuni held the two men to ransom for six weeks. When Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz agreed to pay \$70,000 and make Raisuni pasha of the area around Tangier, the two men were released. Perdicaris left Morocco, sold his property, and never returned.

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Stacy Elko

(1965? – 2020)



American artist Stacy Elko painted 'Three Men' from a photograph she took in Tissint, a village deep in Morocco's south. She wanted the large size of the painting to cut down on any voyeurism: the workers are watching us, just as we are watching them.

Elko arrived in Morocco in 1988 as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

She stayed for ten years, working first as an advisor to beekeepers, then in health and sanitation, but always as an artist. She could not tear herself away. When she had to leave briefly in 1991, she feared she would "lose" Morocco and hurried back to drink in the inspirational force of the place and its light. Even when visiting relatives in Poland, she painted doorways she had seen in Chefchaouen. She remained enchanted by the phosphorescent light in that Rif mountain town at dawn on a rainy winter day. Sometimes she employed Moroccan henna patterns in her own, self-administered tattoos.

When Elko finally managed to tear herself away from Morocco, her creative expression blossomed in remarkable new directions. While teaching at the Texas Tech School of Art, she wrote two science fiction novels and one children's book, made three short films, and launched an Arts in Medicine Initiative using digital technology to help stroke victims express themselves. Elko died of cancer in 2020.

Marguerite McBey

(Philadelphia 1905- London 1999)

Marguerite McBey was one of Tangier's leading hostesses and philanthropists and a devoted custodian of her husband's memory. Moroccan society and art fascinated her, as witness the many paintings by Moroccan artists she donated to the Legation.

Marguerite Loeb trained as a bookbinder. Her father, of German origin, had provided her with a comfortable youth in Philadelphia, sending her to study in Switzerland and Paris in 1925. Her disapproving parents pulled her back home from an affair with the much older Austrian artist Oscar Kokoschka. (Exactly forty years later, Kokoschka acknowledged their bond in his charcoal sketch "Souvenir from Marrakech.") In 1930 she met the magnetic and celebrated Scottish etcher.

Shortly after their marriage in 1931, the sun drew the McBeys to Tangier. Their fascination with Morocco caused them to stay. So did the social freedom the city offered during the International Zone period. The McBeys' lives in Tangier could be bohemian because they were well-heeled. Not only their money, but also their frequent travels to homes in London and New York, as well as the permissive culture of the International Zone, protected them from scandal.

Marguerite did not blame James when she abandoned her craft and art. "I gave up my bookbinding, and even though he gave me paints and brushes and urged me to use them, I never did," she once observed. "I thought that one painter in the family was enough." After James' death, she reversed this decision and took her own art seriously. She liked watercolor because it was unforgiving: it demanded that she capture immediately the thrill of what inspired her in the south of Morocco and Tangier.



James McBey

(Foveran, Scotland 1883-Tangier 1959)

James McBey, Scottish etcher of international renown, chose to spend over twenty years of his adult life in Tangier. He loved Morocco with increasing intensity from the moment he arrived in 1912 until his death in 1959.

Born illegitimate in 1883 into an Aberdeenshire family of modest means, McBey taught himself to sketch by studying a library book. In 1912 he embarked upon an adventurous trip to Tetuan and Tangier, where he recorded his fascination in etchings, on display in the entry stairwell. His growing fame as an etcher led the British government to appoint him an official war artist in the Middle East during WWI.

In 1929, days before the Wall Street Crash, McBey traveled to the United States for the first time. There he met his future wife, Marguerite Loeb. In 1933 the couple bought and rehabilitated a cottage on Tangier's Old Mountain Road overlooking the ocean. There, like the Perdicarises, they entertained a bohemian crowd of artists. Enchanted by women, McBey romanced, among others, Clémence Bonnet-Mathews, the woman in red whose ancestors' portraits you saw in the International Crossroads gallery. McBey painted this portrait, like the 'Girl in White', in the 1930s, his most creative Moroccan period.

The Second World War saw the couple living in the United States. Despite becoming an American citizen in 1942 and a successful portrait painter, McBey longed to come home to Morocco, which he remembered as "heaven." Upon their return in 1946, McBey continued to paint appreciative watercolors and sensitive portraits like 'Zohra' (1952).

McBey's tombstone bears in Arabic the simple message, "He Loved Morocco."

George Apperley

[Isle of Wight, England 1884- Tangier 1960]

Apperley's 1952 portrait of Marie Carmen Raida tells three different kinds of love stories. First, it expresses parental love for a dead child. Marie Carmen's parents – Max Raida and Ernestina Bennani – commissioned the British artist to paint this portrait of their daughter soon after she died unexpectedly from a virus at the age of thirty-two. They gave Apperley two photographs of her so he could choose the best features of each.

The second story speaks of love across religious lines, sometimes without the sacrament of marriage.

Marie Carmen's parents had been married in the Catholic church, but none of her grandparents belonged to the same faith or were even married to each other. Max Raida's father was an Austrian Catholic, while the mother of his three sons in Tangier was Jewish and raised Max's brothers as Jews. Ernestina Bennani's father was a Spanish Catholic who was already married and therefore could not marry her mother, who was herself the child of a French Christian mother and a Muslim father.

Does this story mean unions across faith or without marriage were readily accepted in nineteenth and twentieth century Tangier?

Not necessarily. Some suggest that Marie Carmen did not follow the Spanish fashion of using her mother's maiden name because she wanted to conceal her Muslim ancestry. Other evidence hints that the stigma of illegitimacy led Marie Carmen's uncle to commit suicide.

The third story concerns Apperley himself, a painter who fell in love with two different countries, Spain and Morocco. He moved from England to Spain during the First World War, and in the early thirties to Tangier, where he is buried.