UNDERCURRENT
Contemporary Egyptian Art
14.05.09
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I am pleased to have assumed patronage of this event and consider it an enjoyable duty to deliver a short foreword here. I would like to start by thanking everyone who contributed to the organisation of this unique exhibition, which I see as an excellent platform for Egyptian and Emirates artists to interact and share experiences and creative ideas. I believe that art galleries are an essential part of any society. Their primary role is to share thoughts, issues and promote better understanding between people with the public.

When we decided to hold this exhibition, we did not think twice, as Egypt enjoys a very special relationship and historical ties with the UAE, shared by His Highness Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and His Excellency President Hosni Mubarak. This exceptional relationship, which has been growing steadily and rapidly in all fields, including literary and artistic, has helped in strengthening the cross-cultural communications between the two countries, preserve Arab identity, and support joint cultural projects.

Hosting an art exhibition of this size and value in the UAE serves as recognition of the emergence of the country as an important contributor to contemporary art. The creative art works of artists from the Emirates are becoming a regional language understood by broad segments of the UAE's citizens and residents and have become an extraordinary ambassador for the country's values, cultural heritage and creativity.

This exhibition represents the wealth and variety of artistic talent in Egypt. Through these wonderful pieces, the Egyptian artists tried to describe the small details of the Egyptian culture and the realities of human society, which visitors will surely enjoy. This exhibition of Contemporary Egyptian Art is undoubtedly a great opportunity to learn more about the Egyptian school of contemporary art as well as an opportunity to promote artistic excellence in our region.

By offering a platform for artistic collaboration, exhibitions like this will serve significantly to raise the profile of Arab art and artists.

H.E. Abdul Rahman Mohammad Al Owais,
Minister for Culture, Youth & Community Development
The United Arab Emirates

Art is a universal language that does not require translation; it is a mirror of people and feelings. The history of plastic arts in the Arab World goes back to the beginnings of the last century and the arts now inhabit a prominent social space. Throughout this period, Egypt held the torch and produced a great group of men and women who represented the first modern generation of artists, soon followed by other multi-faceted perspectives that have enriched the art movement in the Arab world.

Ambitious Arab countries, leveraging artists’ production in the region, have managed to establish a cultural and artistic mood that has helped to create an internationally recognised market for plastic arts.

I was delighted to become the guest of honour of 14.05.09 - Undercurrent, Art Sawa’s exhibition of Contemporary Egyptian Art in Dubai, in which a group of Egyptian artists express the momentum of the region’s rich and diversified styles that merit our awe and admiration.

This exhibition is an important initiative, one where both established and up-and-coming Egyptian artists display their work in a generous gesture destined to propel the Arab art movement to the prospects it so deserves. I commend Art Sawa and this group of artists for this endeavour.

H.E. Farouk Hosny
Minister of Culture of Egypt
Acknowledgements

Art Sawa is deeply grateful to:

H.E. Abdul Rahman Mohammad Al Owais, Minister for Culture, Youth & Community Development of the United Arab Emirates for his high patronage and unwavering support

H.E. Farouk Hosny, Minister of Culture of Egypt, our guest of honour for his patronage

Dubai Culture and Arts Authority for its support

Mr. Abd El Raouf Samy, Chairman of Heliopolis Electric Co. and Chairman of the Egyptian Business Board for his Individual Sponsorship

An Individual Sponsor and friend who wishes to remain anonymous

Algebra Capital for its faith in Art Sawa and its continued support

Egypt Air for its kind sponsorship of airline tickets

Emirates Airlines for its kind sponsorship of airline tickets

Contemporary Practices Magazine, our media partner on this occasion, and Aida Eltorie for her editorial contribution to this publication

Mohamed Talaat, Director of the Palace of the Arts in Cairo for his invaluable assistance in the coordination with the artists

Nadine Farah and Francis John Contreras for this, Art Sawa’s first publication

Modern Printing Press for its support in publishing this book

The friends of Art Sawa: Anmarie, Barry, Benita, Dina, Geralyn, John, Josee, Nadine, Nasser, Sovan, Tony and Raju for all their hard work in making this exhibition possible and special thanks to Ibrahim El Dessouksi for his gracious support.

Foreward

I would especially like to thank H.E. Abdul Rahman Mohammad Al Owais, Minister for Culture, Youth & Community Development of the United Arab Emirates and H.E. Farouk Hosny, Minister of Culture of Egypt for their patronage and unwavering support. I also thank Dubai Culture and Arts Authority for its support and all the 29 participating artists for their enthusiastic participation in this adventure.

Art Sawa, with its impressive roster of artists from the region, is a distinctive art platform featuring artists from the Middle East, North Africa and neighbouring countries. Art Sawa, which translates to Art Together, is a vision and aspiration that its space be a venue that facilitates and fosters interaction and dialogue, and inspires an exchange between artists and the public through art and passion.

It is in this spirit that Art Sawa has brought together 29 influential contemporary Egyptian artists for 14.05.09 – Undercurrent. This collective of contemporary Egyptian art spans many Schools and Practices, and artists both well-established and at the cutting-edge of the Egyptian art scene have specifically created new works for this outstanding group show.

Tomany Egyptian contemporary artists, the urban landscape provides a central focus and inspiration. Cairo represents the main focus of 14.05.09 - Undercurrent, its growing metropolis, its energy, its geographical, political and socio-economic environment and the impact of these forces on Egyptian culture and art.

Dubai and Cairo’s growth demonstrate an impact and electric energy, though each coming from entirely different places. One rooted in millennia of history and civilisation, of human artistic expression dating back thousands of years; the other emanating from a small trading community that in a moment of great opportunity decided to stand up and be counted, to create a major 21st Century hub for Commerce, Finance, Logistics, Media and the Arts. These two energies and their coming together is a major catalyst for a deeper dialogue and the rationale for bringing 14.05.09 – Undercurrent to the UAE.

Amel B. Makkawi
Founder & Director, Art Sawa
14.05.09 - UNDERCURRENT, Against the common and the hackneyed...

All too often, those who curate Egyptian art abroad find themselves drawn to the common, stereotyped, and accessible. As the western media drum up the impression of contemporary Egyptian art, the average curator finds himself, or herself, caught up in a web of political, social, and cultural stereotypes. Consequently, a certain type of aesthetics evolves, eclipsing all other possibilities. You will hear curators claiming that the alternatives they rule out were not contemporary enough, urgent enough, or real enough. The reason is that such curators are incapable of traversing the geographical boundaries of local, ethnic, or religious spectrums. Their outlook often detracts from the immense potential of the region, blocking the way for art that transcend the immediacies of politics, equity, religion and identity. The champions of contemporary art often subscribe to stereotypes that distort their perspective and thereby hinder the faithful representation of contemporary Egyptian art and diminish the scope of what the viewers are offered in terms of artistic variety.

The main aim of 14.05.09 - Undercurrent is to go beyond such limitations and explore the fullness of the Egyptian art scene. In the scope of this exhibition, Art Sawa made sure to provide you with a vision of reality that maintains the intricacy of context without sacrificing the colourfulness of mood. The works shown in this exhibition emphasise the diversity of style and extensiveness of material representative of the inexhaustible reservoir of Egyptian artistic talent.

Egypt is a country with artistic substance and depth, as well as an energetic past maintained by generations of creative men and women. The extensive array of work that describes this legacy is as material representative of the inexhaustible reservoir of Egyptian artistic talent. The founding fathers of the modern artistic movement identified Egypt with placid scenes from the village, reminiscences of the fertile farmland, the Nile River and harbouring seaports. The mother of the world was indeed the nurturing mother of the land. She stood tall above the Sphinx in red granite, petting its feline head in the middle of a bustling square by Cairo University. She was also the blonde blue-eyed beauty with large gold earrings hinting a timid smile, draped in a black veil beside the Mediterranean Sea.

Art was accompanied by modernity and it brought a variety of real, surreal and folkloric aspects to cultural heritage and identity. This was the era of the pioneers, of figures such as Sobhi Guergues, whose experiment in avant-garde sculpture saw a move away from the more sedate practice of other artists of his generation. Interestingly, it was the pioneers who first formulated the concept of the institutions that now nurture art in contemporary Cairo. In passing on the torch to artists to newly created institutions, they laid down the groundwork for the organisms that have arisen since – those that house worlds of culture, biennials of painting and salons of young artists. This facilitating environment continues to evolve to this day, with the function of a space taking on a whole new dimension in our digital age, as the clamour grows for new media, installation and video art.

Until 1967, social and national developments had been taking place at a regular pace. The farmer tilled the land and grazed his livestock, feeding the economy with natural resources, and the consumer traded goods in and out of the region with his neighbours within the United Arab Republic. With the Six-Day War came a decline of the social's movement, consequently ending the Socialist Realist trends in Egyptian art that had evolved from the early pioneers. The art of the Proletariat, adopted through-eastern European associations during the time of the socio-communist movements in Egypt since 1958, came to an abrupt end with the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser on September 28, 1970. After the 1973 war, with the total collapse of the Pan-Arab Movement, Egypt abandoned its soviet pattern of socialism and adopted an open market policy. This allowed for the emergence of two directions in the art movement in the 1970s: one an echo of the Socialist Realist's approach and the other, an innovative approach to non-figurative and social-political art. Artists such as Hazem Taia Husseir, Farghali Abdel-Halef, Mustafa Farid Al-Rasaz, Abdelsalam Eid, Farouk Wahba and Ahmed Nawar adopted non-figurative approaches amid the decline in figurative propaganda, bringing the first wave of alternative artists to shore.

Mohamed Talaat
Director, The Palace of Arts, Cairo

14.05.09 - UNDERCURRENTS

The politics of art and culture in contemporary Egypt are a genuine reflection of the country's historical affluence. As a result of the vast social and political undertowings that swept the country's civil functions into social apathy, the space that artists inhabit today is naturally quite different from that of a century ago. The opening of the first fine arts school in 1906 and the turning point in the country's cultural policies in the 1950s created an Occidental-driven society thanks to a group of passionate visionaries who occasionally travelled to Europe and returned to their monarchist land with concepts of identity. What seemed like a conscious decision to disregard the overwhelming experiences of a colonialised entity finally gave realisation to a Modern Egypt.

The first weighted notion of Modernity in Egyptian art gave birth to artists such as Mahmoud Mohktar, Ragheb Ayad, Mohamed Nagy, Mahmoud Said, and later Abdel Hady El-Gazzar and Hamed Nada among others. At a time when Egypt was at its most prosperous, they brought forward a body of work that, though romantic, was also reflective of cultural determination. Egypt, heir to the ancient civilizations, a province of Islamic governance overthrown by Ottoman defeat and French and British occupation, finally shaken by the end of the monarchy in 1952, remained a land that transcended through many cultures. Egypt will always be commonly recognised as Oum El Domsa ("Mother of the World" in Arabic), regardless of the stand it takes in the pan-Arab Republic.

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1 Sculpture of Nahdet Masr, (aka Renaissance of Egypt), the first National Project; the funding for the public sculpture came from community mobilization that led to Egyptian citizens successfully raising the funds for the casting and molding of the sculpture.

2 The depiction of the Alexandria girl, daughter of the Mediterranean Sea, is a recurring motif in Kahlil Gibran’s paintings.

3 The Arab Israeli-conflict, also known as the Six Day War took place from June 5-10, 1967 between Israel and the armies of Egypt, Jordan and Syria.
Whether or not these artists’ genres can be referred to as a post-national project for their collective views on portraits of the city, and for the mass mediated ironic and politically astute, Shaalan’s offered a satirical look at society and Afifi’s was empathic with the conditions of the population. Whether mass appeal or Mohamed Abla, Mohsen Shaalan and Fathi Afifi however, continued to move inexorably onto an international platform. As students and workers in the 1970s and object had its own character and relayed its own story. This was a local voice, well-reserved and maintained in an ever-changing establishment.

Attiat Sayed, an advocate in her own right, was a press illustrator in two prominent and mass-produced political journals in Cairo: Al Gomhouriyya (The Republic) and Al Masaa (The Evening). Today, a painter, illustrator of poetry and literature, her classical approach takes on a deeply subjective attitude, giving her canvases a certain sense of humour. The objects in her art continue to convey through the simplicity of her lines the stories behind her social narratives, as though each object had its own character and related its own story. This was a local voice, wellreserved and maintained in an ever-changing establishment. Whether or not these artists’ genres can be referred to as a post-national project for their collective views on portraits of the city, and for the mass mediated representations, there is a clear sensibility in the systematic representation of his work.

Hazem El Mestikawy, living and working between Cairo and Vienna, is originally from Beni Suef (Middle Egypt) and grew up in the suburbs of Cairo. Greatly influenced by the sculpture and architecture of Ali Amarnah, El Mestikawy clearly bridges both practices in his installations. Addressing the concepts of mappings, stampings, and archival findings, there is a clear sensibility in the systematic representation of his work.

According to Wikipedia’s definition of Socialist Realism “a teleologically-oriented style that has its focus on the furtherance of the goals of socialism and communism. Although it shared social realism, a type of art that realistically depicts subjects of social concern.”

Another sculptor living and working abroad is Armen Agop who moved to Italy in 2000. Agop forges his sculptures into simple shapes. Working in granite, basalt or bronze, he delivers what initially seems to be finely cut convex and concave curves reflecting a meditative volume to an absolutely weighty object. Upturned by a gravitational pull, Agop elongates the rounded form with a finely pointed end and that routes the straight lines and undulating curves in uplifting directions.

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The third wave of artists proposed and encountered in this exhibition, consists of Ahmed Askalany, Wael Darwesh and Hanafy Mahmoud who address their internal and figural painting with photography in what was initially divided into two plastic schools, allowed Ibrahim to develop a multimedia approach to his art. The third wave of artists proposed and encountered in this exhibition, consists of Ahmed Askalany, Wael Darwesh and Hanafy Mahmoud who address their internal and figural painting with photography in what was initially divided into two plastic schools, allowed Ibrahim to develop a multimedia approach to his art.

Hind Adnan, a classically trained artist who continues to work with models, infuses her profoundly atmospheric paintings with a near lyrical quality, drawing not only on the mood suggestions of her models but also on the viewer’s participation, creating what is in effect a three-way conversation. In contrast, Howaida El Sebaee’s abstract treatments of a very real concern, that of the effects of industrialisation on humanity and society, offer a very contemporary and personal outlook on a deeply pressing social issue.

The second wave represented in this exhibition includes figurative artists such as Hanan El Sheikh, Hend Adnan and Atif Ahmed Ibrahim, and Howaida El Sebaee, a more abstract painter. Hanan El Sheikh’s epicomplexity. She uses an underappreciated form of painting that directs your attention to how uncomplicated mundane objects can only become to their own becoming, infusing our own personal narratives. Her bicycles, for shadow the simplicity of the white-grey interior space, allowing for the loneliness of the object to take on a character as it tilts to the side, leaning against the wall, identifying with its perspective as it lays on the ground, knocked over and out of shape.

Atif Ahmed Ibrahim takes us back to the foklicistic arts in a second and third form of artistic practices after the traditional two-dimensional formats. Firstly, he seeks to occupy body arts as a form of theatrical expression, and secondly, he actualises his theatre using foklicistic designs on sets. Combining both abstraction and figurative painting with photography in what was initially divided into two plastic schools, allowed Ibrahim to develop a multimedia approach to his art. Hend Adnan, a classically trained artist who continues to work with models, infuses her profoundly atmospheric paintings with a near lyrical quality, drawing not only on the mood suggestions of her models but also on the viewer’s participation, creating what is in effect a three-way conversation. In contrast, Howaida El Sebaee’s abstract treatments of a very real concern, that of the effects of industrialisation on humanity and society, offer a very contemporary and personal outlook on a deeply pressing social issue.

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The third wave of artists proposed and encountered in this exhibition, consists of Ahmed Abla, Wael Darwesh and Hanafy Mahmoud who address their internal and figural observation of foklic behaviours in varied forms. Ehab El Libban and Haytham Nawar are two other artists of this wave that have made their mark in a multitude of ways.

Ehab El Libban is a practicing sculptor and newly appointed commissioner of the Cairo International Biennial. He is also the Director of Horizon One Gallery located on the Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum site. He, and other prominent figures such as Mohamed Talaat, Director of the Palace of Arts and an artist in his own right, have made their mark in a multitude of ways.
vii Founded in 2005 by Artist Mona Marzouk and Critic Bassam El Baroni.

vi Randa Shaath: Under The Same Sky, Cairo, Ed. Catherine David. Witte de With/

She documents the lives of the people living in rooftop apartments. What deems towards congestion also brings forth a sense of new happenings that existed all along only to serve a new meaning. Well recognised for her Rooftop Series, Shaath had also published her work in the book completely capture and isolate daily scenarios in the streets of Cairo, and what might come off as motion in stills, have been transfigured and transliterated into photographically.

Another artist to make use of unusual media is Hanafy Mahmoud, also concerned with the human condition, who has chosen to document their encounter with the city and confront the emotions engendered by that encounter and Maha Maamoun. Shaath, Samir and Maamoun are all three women who have worked professionally as press photographers, graphic designers and curators, in addition to their photographic practice. They have all chosen to document their encounter with the city and confront the emotions engendered by that encounter photographically.

From another perspective, Maha Maamoun established her signature for her Cairocape Series with horizontal shots capturing a strip of a woman’s dress, specifically in what serves a commonly seen floral design against a backdrop of defragmented traffic. It is through this stop/look motif on a dress, amongst the pressures of urban environments, that the elongated coloured print can offer a mundane yet significant perspective on a social hubbub.

Nagla Samir’s images are a fusion of her photography and graphic skills, and her work is right on the pulse of the street – she does not document the street so much as draw us off it, engaging us in her thought process and making us active participants of her inner discussion.

In the late 1990s, the institutional support previously available to young artists emerging from the Youth Salon began to be replaced by support from alternative sources. This development resulted in the rise and strengthening of non-commercial privately funded spaces also considered alternative-media spaces due to the support they began to provide to new and experimental projects. The Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum (ACAF) and The Contemporary Image Collective (CIC) are both examples of such initiatives. These organisations, alongside galleries supported by the Ministry of Culture such as Horizon One and Mahmoud Miskhar Gallery, began nurturing a strong and emerging body of artists, coming out of not only the Cairo and Alexandria art scenes but also the performing arts scene from Minia, Beni Suef, and Qena.

vii Under the direction of Mohammed Alham.

The FOURTH WAVE

The fourth and last wave represented here is composed of students of the prevalent undergraduates, such as Ahmed El Shaer, George Amy, and Manwa Adel. One example of these are newly created partnerships between artists and innovative institutions and spaces is to be found in the work of Ahmed El Shaer, a painter, sculptor and video artist with Medrar IX, a newly founded space for contemporary arts and emerging video artists. El Shaer combines video games with street scenes, overlapping congestion of the mind with the congestion of reality. What is usually dissociated as dreams and nightmares, formulates non-institutional sociopolitical commentary on the unsettling landscape in Egypt today. El Shaer’s work is suggestive of the strength of the grandchild of the revolution who has not seen war but has heard the stories, played the video games and is conscious of the continuous illusion to it in the media.

Of the youngest of the fleet graduating from the Faculty of Fine Arts is George Amy. He came to recognize his illustrations as comic narratives of the daily happenings in Cairo’s swarming life. His images occupy popular reality. Varying from street scenes of bridges, buses and crowds to desire self-portraits channelled over one another, allowing the commotion of the self to be repeated in daily contexts. Manwa Adel is one of several young talents nurtured by some of the spontaneous initiatives by practicing artists to encourage and support the work of the youngest generation. Using her art as a form of escapism, she seeks an eternal element such as “universality” to maintain and preserve her outlook on existentialism. Involved in design and advertising, such elements are beautifully relayed in her combined photo and computer graphic prints. Fusing her words with her art, she seeks to unite her thought process in visual fragments.

Such artists are just a few examples of what might not have been conventionally encouraged by an official establishment, but have thrived in any case.

The UNDERCURRENT

There is no doubt that without the early support of a Ministry of Culture as active and influential as Egypt’s has been, the contemporary art scene today would not have developed in such diverse and energetic ways. Both the official support given to the arts by the Ministry over the years, and more recent development of alternative venues and art institutions have been crucial additions in the positioning of Egypt as one of the most exciting centres of contemporary art in the world today.

A recent work that won the Grand Prize at the Youth Salon in March 2009 is a good example of this perhaps unintended collaboration between official and unofficial sources of support for the arts. It is a video produced by two very young artists, Mohamed Zayan and Eslam Zein, entitled “80 Million.” The video shows two men themselves performing on an instrument that is not there. Drumming fast with their hands to the rhythm of a Daba, the sounds overwhelm the screen with a simple image of two young men in a semi-dark space zoning into a sense of a crowd, an overflowing current of sounds that reflect the population density in the city today. Such a work produced by two artists no older than 22, is a keen reflection on the type of critical arts that are yet to emerge from this new generation.

14.05.09 – Undercurrent has come to Dubai to serve the direction of this streaming traffic with works by twenty-nine artists offering bold and palpable narratives. This is a collective of artists’ works that reflect their thoughts, tastes and desires as an example of what can come out from behind the scenes, from behind the surface currents and from behind the direction institutions tend to recognize them for. From within the country, a group of leading and emerging artists have decided to be a part of a collective show that will offer a resident body of works under the theme of a “direction” or a “purpose” initiated by a historical foundation, and culled with a present-day reportage on what more can come out of contemporary arts in Egypt.

For references and further reading, please turn to page No. 125.
THE ARTISTS

AHMED ASKALANY
AHMED EL SHAER
AHMED NAWAR
ARMEN AGOP
ATEF AHMED IBRAHIM
ATTIAT SAYED
EHAB ELLABAN
ESLAM ZEIN
ESSAM MAROUF
FATHI AFIFI
GEORGE AZMY
HANAFY MAHMOUD
HANAN EL SHEIKH
HAYTHAM NAWAR
HAZEM EL MESTIKAWY
HEND ADNAN
HOWAIDA EL SEBAEE
IBRAHIM EL DESSOUKI
KHALED SOROUR
MAHA MAAMOUN
MARWA ADEL
MOHAMED ABLA
MOHAMED AL FAYOUUMI
MOHAMED ZAYAN
MOHSEN SHAALAN
NAGLA SAMIR
RANDA SHAATH
SOBHI GUERGUES
WAEL DARWESH
AHMED ASKALANY
Born in 1978, Nag Hammadi, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

Sculptor Ahmed Askalany is an artist who can rouse emotions and provoke thoughts from stone. His cheeky human and animal figures are a saucy fray into the genre, and the artist does not just display idealised figures, but shows them in all their gaseous and bloated glory. In a manner that pokes gentle fun at himself and others, Askalany’s figures are the mirror image of his attitude to life. I like to bring happiness to people - there is no need to bring sadness.

His figures are cartoonish in their physicality. There is more lard in them than sinew. Corpulent and obese, they recline in ungainly poses. He strives to make an immediate connection with his audience. His sculptures, like toys with which they share a certain caricaturish joyfulness, speak up front. Askalany is not one for doing things simply for their inner meanings. His art is more a matter of the gut than the heart. He speaks directly. But his expressiveness does not stop there – there is also emotion in his work.

Askalany’s use of palm leaves and resin to show figures in prayer are profoundly moving. With a few deft wrinkles of the leaves, he envelops his figures in a sacred, spiritual aura. If he is influenced by Henry Moore’s reclining figures, Adam Henein’s depiction of animals and Rodin’s physicality, Askalany is no less connected to the traditional materials and craft methods of ancient Egypt. Woven palm leaves and resin offer him an essential association with his native roots in Upper Egypt.

Humour is ever present in his creations. Askalany cocks a snook at the concept of the ideal human body. The heads on his figures are very small when compared to the bulbous bodies and hands, legs and bellies are swollen. I exaggerate the body to show that people use their muscles more than their brains. Most people are all power and no brain. An Askalany creature is Everyman who wants to make space for himself in a world that does not acknowledge his existence. He is the person who makes himself ridiculous because he does not have the wits to match his ambition. Therein lies the humour.

Askalany works mainly with four materials: polyester, palm leaves, bronze and stone. Every medium has a message - and I can say things with all media. He has his ear to the ground and his basic inspiration comes from people. He relates to life through everyday situations and his subjects come from all walks of life.

Askalany’s short career has thus far been blessed with success. He won the best young artist award at the Cairo International Sculpture Biennial in 1999, claimed first prize for sculpture at the 10th Youth Salon in Cairo in 1999 and has been selected to represent Egypt at the 2009 Venice Biennial.
“Simplicity is my philosophy
– to convey the idea directly to the viewer without going into too much detail.”

Ahmed Askalany
Ahmed El Shaer completed his BFA in art education at the Helwan University of Cairo and works as a web and multimedia designer at the Ministry of Culture. His work is mainly in Video art and he has exhibited over twelve video films at national and international exhibitions and biennials, works for which he was awarded the Honorary and the First Award for Video Art at the Youths Salon. He has also received two grants from the Summer Academy for Fine Arts in Salzburg, Austria, the first one of these a nomination by renowned artist Mohamed Abia in 2006 and the second grant in 2007 with artist Vale Export. He has studied a new form of video art ‘Machinima’ (video game video art) with Chinese artist Fengmeng Bo, who chose him as Best Student in Class. His work forms part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art in Cairo.

CAIRO UNDER ATTACK

Cairo - the capital’s long history and vocabulary are full of contrasts between the loaded historical neighbourhoods, the rich and the poor, and the indiscriminate inclusion of all in this huge city. Cairo Under Attack represents the internal aggression of people and pollution and Mtnaqdadtha. The first part builds on a combination of live video, the third dimension and video games, and the second part utilises a different visual as a parallel expression of the same concept.

AHMED EL SHAER

Born in 1980, Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2009 MidEast Cut, International festival for alternative film and video, Denmark & Finland; McKee, 1st International Video Art Festival, Damascus; Final Exhibition of the Cairo - Alcente Media Art Workshop, Alcente Art Centre, Alcente, Spain 2008 Final Exhibition of the Cairo - Alcente Media Art Workshop, Cairo Art Centre, Cairo; Ordos International Video Art Festival, Ordos (Programme: Contemporary Practices, Oriental; 3rd Biennale de Arte Contemporânea de Sâo Paulo, Sâo Paulo, Brazil; Cairo - Alexandria Media Art Workshop, Alexandria Art Centre, Cairo)

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


"Cairo Under Attack is the completion of my project of working with concepts from my society and with my technique of mixing live video and 3d elements.”

Ahmed El Shaer
Ahmed Nawar graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1967 and pursued his studies in Spain with a scholarship between 1971 and 1975, obtaining a professorship in Graphic Arts and Mural Painting from the San Fernando Academy in Madrid. From the very beginning, Nawar has been recognised as a genius of his age, a ground-breaking artist who has remained at the forefront because of a consuming need to discover, experiment and speak of his convictions through his art.

His artistic achievements, both individual and as part of the Axis group which he co-founded in 1981 to renew and energise the art scene in Egypt, have been outstanding, earning him prizes, awards and distinctions throughout the world. He holds the Egyptian State Order of Arts and Science (1979), a Nobel Gold Medal for his participation in the Nobel Commemorative Festival (1983), the Order of Merit of King Juan Carlos of Spain (1992), the French Order of Officer of Arts and Sciences (1995), The Medal of Honour of Russia (2006), to name but a few. His work is collected by individuals, museums and cultural institutions worldwide, including the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art in Cairo, the Spanish Museum of Modern Art in Madrid, the National Museum in Amman, the National Museum of Modern Art in Cracow, the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris and countless others.

If his influential approach to art and his international recognition were not enough to confirm Nawar as a central figure in the development of the arts in Egypt, his official capacity would surely do so. He has been pivotal in the furthering of the arts, a tireless and selfless supporter of arts education, promotion and creativity. He has been the Head of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture’s Sector for Plastic Arts since 1988 and, previous to that, had founded and directed the Faculty of Fine Art at Menia University. While Head of the Museums department of the Higher Council for Antiquities between 1994 and 1999, he was instrumental in the rescue of Nubian heritage in his role as General Supervisor of the Nubia Rescue Fund.

Like traditional aesthetic and plastic art values, the process of artistic creativity, throughout history, has been largely inspired by certain social, economic, political and spiritual circumstances. Since the beginning, not only has man been haunted by the absolute authority of a supreme, uncanny power but he has also been aware of the battle between good and evil. Such an eternal struggle between good and evil became a traditional aspect of life. The process of creativity, therefore, became the product of its age.

AHMED NAWAR
Born in 1945, Gharbia, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
2003 50th Venice Biennial; 100 Artists, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria 2002 Solo, Palestine, 54 Years of Occupation, Zamalek Art Centre, Cairo; 25 Years, Zabat Art Centre, Cairo; Victims of Upper Egypt Train, Al Ahram newspaper gallery, Cairo 2001 Egyptian Contemporary Art, Elsah Gallery, Cairo; Egyptian Extraordinary Exhibition of Arab Contemporary Egyptian Art, Cairo, Contemporary Egyptian Egyptian Prints, Cairo; Artists, Cairo; Generation One, Olga Gallery, Cairo; Guest of Honour, Di Muhr International Symposium of Multimedia, Lebanon 2000 Solo, From Egypt to Portraits to Jebel Abu Ghoneim, Centre of Arts, Cairo; Picasso Gallery, Cairo; Guest Gallery, Cairo 1999 Guest of Honour, 4th Multi International Biennal, Malta; Solo, Museum of Modern Art, Vienna; Sketchbook, Diouf Gallery, Cairo; 1998 Solo, Institute du Monde Arabe, Paris; Solo, Diouf Gallery, Cairo, Solo; Ismailia Centre for Plastic Arts, Ismailia; Cultural Council, Abu Dhabi 1997 Solo, Ismailia Centre for Plastic Arts, Egypt; Solo, National Council for Culture and Arts, Kuwait; Modern Art Museum, Rome 1996 1995 Solo, Spanish Cultural Centre, Cairo; 1995 Solo, Spanish Cultural Centre, Cairo; 1994 Zamalek Extra Gallery, Cairo; 1993 Solo, Ismailia Centre for Plastic Arts, Egypt; Solo, National Council for Culture and Arts, Kuwait 1992 1991 Solo, Spanish Cultural Centre, Cairo 1990 Solo, French Cultural Centre, Cairo 1989 Guest of Honour, Havana International Biennial, Havana; Akhenaton Art Gallery, Cairo; 1988 Solo, Arabesque Art Gallery, Cairo, and exhibitions with the Axis Group, Group 15, and some solo exhibitions in Cuba 1987 1986

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

AHMED NAWAR

Ahmed Nawar

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AHMED NAWAR

Ahmed Nawar

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AHMED NAWAR

Ahmed Nawar

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Further, the process of creativity developed into an attempt at seeking to explore and analyze its own essence, references and signs. Accordingly, under the traumatised change of human values, intellectual and creative aspirations underwent a state of restlessness. These human values, so deeply enrenched over centuries, were sought to deepen peace, prosperity and equality. These much sought after values were also conceived to reinforce man’s freedom, sovereignty and his religious and political rights.

Such beliefs are at the very core of Ahmed Nawar’s body of work, be it his painting, engraving, installations, architectural constructions and art for the public domain. He is often referred to as one of the few artists of the ‘Egyptian Movement’ who is able to practice ‘thinking in art’ and the belief that creativity is as much inspiration as it is a mental state.

His groundbreaking Trilogy, the graduation project that won him unanimous acclaim, incorporated mathematical and geometric shapes and Islamic inspired designs and patterns. He has been at the forefront of innovation ever since, combining oil painting with new developments in graphic art, installation and technologies such as video, laser and sound to bring his creations into being.

The triangle has accompanied him from the start, and is a strong leitmotiv of his work. His triangular muse traces its roots to the triangle of the Nile Delta, which is the source of the underlying rhythm and original myth of Egypt. When combined with the square, the inspiration of Islamic architecture, the resulting octagonal and star shapes take on a new significance and initiate a dialogue between geometric and physical figures. The seemingly inexhaustible permutations of the geometric shapes so central to his art over the years are testament to their enduring significance and inherent transformational qualities. They can in turn be representational of stars, screens, weapons or even simple pyramids, or be elements of composition, or convey a sense of movement – their pure beauty makes the possibilities endless.

A highly skilled graphic artist, his impressive technique and craft are heightened by a harmonious sense of composition and colour. The aesthetic value of his work is in no way overshadowed by his technical brilliance, but rather served by it, so that his emotional and intellectual inspiration carry his humanist message through.
“Art does not limit itself to recording or documenting events. Art has established itself as a universal outcry and as a sign of condemnation. Ongoing conflict has prompted the production of outstanding works, which can be considered a chronicle and an expressive testimony to mankind’s folly. There is no doubt that the collective will of artists, and their determination, will remain decisive weapons in the struggle to safeguard the future and to strengthen principles of justice, humanity, hopes and dreams.”

Ahmed Nawar

1 Egypt 21st Century, 1996, mixed media (acrylic), 120 x 85 cm
2 Man & Energy (9), 1995, mixed media (acrylic and construct art), 60 x 60 cm
3 The Spirit of Civilisation A, 2005, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 cm
4 The Spirit of Civilisation B, 2005, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 cm
5 The Spirit of Civilisation C, 2005, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 cm
6 Man & Energy (7), 1994, mixed media (acrylic and construct art), 60 x 60 cm
Armen Agop first apprenticed in the studio of artist Simon Shahrigian in Cairo before graduating from the sculpture department of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Helwan University, Cairo in 1992. He subsequently received an Assistant Researcher Scholarship from the Faculty of Fine Arts and taught there between 1997 and 2000.

Agop participated in many diverse shows throughout Egypt before receiving the State Prize of Artistic Creativity, “Prix de Rome”, in 2000. After moving to Italy, he began to show at the National Gallery of Modern Art with the exhibition Diario degli artisti stranieri a Roma and has continued to show internationally ever since. He has participated in several international exhibitions such as the Guillin Yuai Paradise International Sculpture Exhibition in China and the Toyamura International Sculpture Biennial in Japan, both in 2003, the Egyptian Contemporary Art Exhibition in Spain and the Bergen Fylkesgalleri Exhibition in Norway.

Agop’s works are represented in the Egyptian Modern Art Museum in Cairo and the Open Air Museum in Asswan, the Open Air Museum of St Martin Park, Comblain-au-Pont, Belgium, and Coral Springs Museum of Art in Florida, USA.

The hands of Armen Agop, sculptures speak a language of sensuality and curves. They are graceful both in form and movement, while articulating their own individuality. Peaks and ridges give way to curves and sinews. When the peaks are pronounced they lend a clear sharpness to the composition and when they are a mere suggestion, the piece takes on a softer, more peaceful tone.

A Sufi spirit is expressed within the dense and strong character of each essential form. In quiet confidence they sit, content within themselves, making no requests. Each work is complete and yet they exemplify a unifying thread that runs through all Agop's work—a thread that melds conviction, austerity and optimism.

ARMEN AGOP

Born in 1969, Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works in Italy.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
2009, Rosa Parks Museum, Montgomery, Alabama, USA 2008, Cairo International Biennial, Cairo; Solo, Zamalek Art Gallery, Cairo; Salon Gallery 2, Palace of the Arts, Cairo 2007, Vevaskun Art Gallery, Denmark, Revenge International: Crime Contemporanea, Subrosa, Italy 2005, Zamalek Art Gallery, Cairo; Vevaskun Art Gallery, Denmark 2003, Solo, Centro di Arte Etnografica, Cagliari, Italy 2002, State Prize of Artistic Creativity Exhibition, Egyptian Academy, Rome; Egyptian Ministry of Culture, Cairo 2001, Winter Art Festival, Sarajevo; Young Egyptian Artists, Egyptian Academy, Rome; National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome

AWARDS

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

1 Untitled 3, 2008, bronze, 114 x 38 x 24 cm
2 Untitled 2, 2008, bronze, 102 x 24 x 24 cm
3 Untitled 1, 2008, bronze, 65 x 21 x 11 cm
“Simplicity is very complicated.”

Armed Agop
Atef Ahmed Ibrahim completed a License in Education and Arts in 1995, followed by a Diploma in Folklore from the Arts Academy in 1999. He was granted a full scholarship by the Ministry of Culture of Egypt in 2001-2009.

His work appears in private collections in the United Kingdom, Holland and Germany, as well as in public institutions in Egypt, such as the Ministry of Culture, the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art, the Cultural Development Fund and Tanta University.

Ibrahim's work includes a study on tattoos as a method of expression in folk art, stage design for theatre, workshops and participation in documentary films. He is a member of the Cairo Atelier, of the Egyptian Society of Folk Arts and of the Syndicate of Plastic Artists.

IN HIS WORDS

I began with painting and am now experimenting with combining aspects of painting and photography to develop a new form of surface expression. I layer a chromatic treatment over the techniques and materials of photographic prints on paper, wood and canvas. My style encompasses abstractions and figures and often blends the two. At the source of my work is the Egyptian character and person, who, though seen in his local element, is connected through the meeting of minds and ideas with others. This is a dialogue between coeval forces, sharing the same era and the same instinct to break out from the traditional.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2008 Egyptian Art, Kazakhstan 2007 Solo, Cairo Atelier, Mohamed Nagi Gallery, Cairo; International Symposium for Artists Bois, Cairo Atelier, Cairo; Self Portrait, Ahmed Shabaty Museum, Cairo; Agenda Exhibition, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria 2006; Family photography, Marakey, Al-Arfa Palace, Damascus 2005; Solo Exhibition of Cairo Atelier 2005-2006, Cairo; Plastic Works, Hanage Art Centre, Cairo; The Mediterranean Festival – Artists of Egypt, Mahmoud Said Museum, Alexandria 2004; Solo, Porslow Gallery, Salon du Image, Cairo; 5th Nile Salon of Photography, Palace of the Arts, Cairo; Dynasty of Coeval Egyptian Art, Journals of the Syndicate, Egypt, Frankfurt International Book Fair, Frankfurt 2003 Solo, Cairo Atelier; Mohamed Nagi Gallery, Cairo; Solo, Centre of Arts, Al-Helween Gallery No. 1, Cairo; Nitaq Festival of Art, Cleopatra Hotel, the Consulate of Italy, Cairo.

Also


AWARDS


And several other awards, prizes, medals and merit certificates.

“The ability to persevere in life stems from the ability to express feelings and thoughts through Art. It is a means of finding an alternative to the material life. Excluded people and human ideas are what most stimulate my desire to express myself.”

Atef Ahmed Ibrahim

1 Raheel (Departure), 2008, oil on wood, 200 x 90 cm
2 Tawahod (Lonely), 2008, oil on wood, 120 x 180 cm
3 Mokabalah (Meeting), 2008, oil on wood, 120 x 180 cm
Following obtaining her Diploma of Fine Arts from the High Institute of Art Education in Cairo in 1958, Attiat Sayed spent her working career as a press illustrator journalist at Cairo’s daily newspapers Al Gomhuria (The Republic) and Al Masaa (The Evening). She then devoted herself full time to painting and developed her artistic experience ever since.

Sayed’s approach to painting is one of exploitation and organic development. She never begins a painting with a finished image in mind, but rather discovers every detail, line, colour and volume by altering, replacing, deleting and adding according to the cues uncovered by this experimental process. The result is a surprising, unexpected form, that generates new relationships of colours and lines which endows her work with exaggerations and distortions, departing considerably from the actual real features of her models, objects and landscapes.

Sayed’s enriching blend of perspectives, vectors and lines in the very same painting is reminiscent of the different narrative lines in a modern novel. The richness of her palette in both her oil paintings and gouache colours doesn’t leave much room for lyrical pastel effects, but her contrasting strong colours take her painting beyond realism, into a daring exploitation of the profound element of dramatic imagination.

Artist Sayed excels in line-drawing, engraving, etching and experimentation with black and white techniques, such as using charcoal and black oil pastel, owing to her long experience as a press illustrator during which she depicted and interpreted short stories, poems, novels and portraits with special mastership of her drawings. She usually paints at a continuous non-stop pace, which requires huge psychic and physical energy and is testimony to her extraordinary ability for giving in a flow of inventive distortions.

**ATTIAT SAYED**

Born in 1935, Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

**SELECTED EXHIBITIONS**

- 2006 Landscape, Two Visions, Khan El Maghraby Gallery, Cairo; Egyptian Contemporary Art, Dubai Cultural Council, Dubai 2005
- 2005 Still Life, Gezira Art Centre, Cairo; A Flight with an Earthly Wing, Khan El Maghraby Gallery, Cairo; Egyptian Contemporary Art, Seoul 2004
- 2002 Yearning for Inspiring Shapes, Khan El Maghraby Gallery, Cairo 2000 Four Aspects of the Pyramid, Khan El Maghraby Gallery, Cairo
- Participations in several collective exhibitions of women artists between 1970 and 2000 and exhibitions at Al-Gumhuria newspaper’s gallery.

**MEMBERSHIPS**

- Member, Egyptian Press Syndicate, since 1960,
- Founder member, Egyptian Syndicate of Plastic Artists, since 1974.

1  Bikes, 2009, oil on canvas, 150 x 130 cm
2  Untitled 5, 2009, oil pastel, 35 x 50 cm
3  Untitled 4, 2009, oil pastel, 35 x 50 cm
4  Untitled 3, 2009, oil pastel, 35 x 50 cm
5  Bottles, 2003, oil on canvas, 130 x 80 cm
“The private creation process is a unique adventure in transforming inner anxiety into a tangible visual scene, a pressing experiment that must continue until it becomes a deep rooted habit, contrasting with the temporal or occasional decorative or just loose smearing of paint.

The genuine creative practice is therefore a hard, extended routine of anxiety and tension, that can only end in becoming a renewed inner taut movement, a fire that is never extinguished. Its climax is a newly created art work, the crystallisation and fusion of the inner soul of the artist and the outer visual world.

This process is therefore highly psychic, generous and sacrificing, always experimental and envisioning. It condenses the visual scene of the private soul, until the incarnation of this inner soul becomes a tangible thumbprint of the artist’s self in a work that is simultaneously scrupulous and definitive, yet vague and hazy.”

Attiat Sayed
Ehab Ellaban graduated in Fine Arts from Helwan University in 2000 and began his career as a sculptor while teaching at the Faculty of Arts in Cairo. He works as an independent artist and, since 2005, has served as the Director of the Horizon One Gallery, part of the Fine Arts Sector of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. In this position, his responsibilities have included curating a number of exhibitions of Egyptian and international artists, photographers and sculptors and participation in the annual editions of the Egypt Salon and the Egyptian Youth Salon. In 2008/2009 he became the youngest ever Director of the 11th session of the Cairo International Biennial and a member of the Jury for the mural competition of the 19th Youth Salon. Between 2002 and 2005, Ellaban was the Director of Artistic Programming at the Palace of Arts in Cairo where he curated several exhibitions and participated in curating the Cairo International Biennial and the First Salon of Sculpture.

Drawing inspiration from age-old statuary traditions, Ellaban pronounces heights, shapes and lengths in a disproportionately exaggerated way. Although his work is a play on volumes, his attachment to purity of form maintains a link with the more traditional expression of classical Egyptian statuary art. This particularity won him a selection to participate in the Aswan International Sculpture Symposium, an event that offers sculptors the opportunity to work with granite for the first time, in the traditions of pharaonic sculptors.

Ellaban’s sculptures are represented in private collections and in public spaces in Egypt, such as the Kaitbay Citadel in Alexandria and the open Air Museum in Aswan, as well as in Rotia Montana in Romania.
ESLAM ZEIN & MOHAMED ZAYAN

ESLAM ZEIN

IN HIS WORDS
I love all arts, contemporary or other, going to exhibitions and shows as they contribute to my artistic and thought development, and participating in workshops for all forms of plastic arts, but above all, I adore my work in the field of video art. I love singing and acting and often sit alone imagining what my future may be. My favourite pastime is listening to music, especially to Mohammed Monir and watching video art films.

I am a transparent and pure person, and this shows in my work. I like to represent ordinary and popular people and to do so simply and directly.

I hope that I will always have the opportunity to show my work in an open environment with no limitations or conditions, that my work reaches audiences throughout the world and that I continue to progress so that I may be an honour to myself, my family and my nation.

MOHAMED ZAYAN
Born in 1987, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

Although only recently exhibiting, Zayan has shown his video art at several events. In 2007, he participated in a video art workshop at Passage 35, showing his resulting work The Dream, and his video Soldier in your soldiers was given a public showing. In that year he also came Second in the Video Art Category at the Salon of the Higher Institute of Applied Arts. In 2008, his video-media installation The Hole was shown at the 1st International Media Art Forum for Youth (IMAFY) in Cairo and he came First in the Video Art Category at the Salon of the Higher Institute of Applied Arts. His participation in the Salon was under the supervision of Passage 35.

Eslam Zein and Mohamed Zayan are very recent graduates of the Higher Institute of Applied Arts. Their video co-operation, 80 Million, won the Grand Prize at the 20th edition of the Youth Salon in Cairo in March 2009.

80 MILLION
An attempt to focus on aspects of the Egyptian environment and to transfer these aspects into a rhythmic and visual expression.

80 Million, 2009, video, 3 minutes and 30 seconds
Essam Marouf graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts’ Painting section of the Helwan University in Cairo in 1981. He pursued his art studies between 1982 and 1985 at the Accademia di Bella Arte, Painting section in Rome, before moving to Amsterdam in 1986. His works are represented in the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art in Cairo, the ING Bank Collection and other public and private collections in Egypt, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Switzerland, Kuwait, South Africa, the United States of America, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Australia.

Marouf’s works are characterised by clear precision of form and the absence of any visible references to paint texture. Yet, a degree of sensitivity is expressed in the face, aided by the application of clear tones and the way in which the canvass’ structure is suggested. Marouf’s works are solidly two-dimensional, maintaining minimal anatomy and an essentially Byzantine frontalcy. Essam Marouf has succeeded in pushing the limits of portraiture, resulting in truly contemporary painting.

ESSAM MAROUF
Born in 1958 in Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works between Egypt and the Netherlands.

1 #0201, 2008, acrylic on linen, 230 x 195 cm
2 Detail, #EM0109, 2008, acrylic on linen, 230 x 195 cm
3 #EM0109, 2008, acrylic on linen, 230 x 195 cm
4 #0902, 2008, acrylic on linen, 150 x 195 cm

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS
2008 Other, 11th Cairo International Biennial, Cairo; Same story… different people, exhibition catalogue, Art Sawa, Dubai; Oum Kalsoum, The Fourth Pyramid, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Salon Gallery 2, exhibition catalogue, Palace of the Arts, Cairo 2006 Essam Marouf, Galerie Smarius, Kunst van de Dag, exhibition brochure, Sonnega, Herinneringsportretten van Essam Marouf, Leeuwarder Courant, exhibition brochure 1993 Essam Marouf, Mashrabia Gallery, exhibition catalogue, Cairo
“Painting... a magnificent medium to express myself... A magnificent way to build, in all freedom, my own and different world. With minimalism in form and colour, I try to give my paintings inner power and spiritual energy. These are the two factors that give paintings - in my eyes - their inconceivable power. This manner of seeing painting began over 25 years ago, when, while studying in Italy, I saw and fell in love with the work of the great masters, Giotto and Piero della Francesca.”

Essam Marouf
Fathi Afifi obtained his diploma of Technical Secondary Schools in 1968 and qualifications in Fine Arts in 1974, 1975 and 1981. He was a specialist technician in military factories and has worked committedly with the General Workers Union in the field of theatrical stage design. He has overseen the establishment of the Department of Fine Arts for the General Federation of Youth and has painted murals for the Minerals and Engineering industries. His involvement in industry has greatly influenced the direction of his work.

He has participated in numerous exhibitions and biennials, both in Egypt and internationally, and won the award for the 7th Cairo International Biennial.

His works are represented in private and public collections, such as the Museum of Egyptian Contemporary Art in Cairo, the Conference Centre in Nasr City, and in the city of Graz in Austria.

Afifi is a talented painter and draughtsman who began his journey in art in the mid-eighties, painting the daily routine of workers, showing factories, machines and tools and unsparingly expressing the weariness of his subjects. His power of observation, occasional nostalgia and the empathy he so clearly feels towards his fellow Cairenes as they go about their daily lives of work and family, tragedies and festivities, results in a powerful translation of his own memories and understanding of his environment.

Work and labourers feature strongly in Afifi's art. With the rise of Egypt's ambition to become an industrialised and powerful nation, labour, industry and the machine took on huge value and in Afifi's art, labourers are the heroes who realise this ambition. Many Egyptian artists in the 1960s were heavily influenced by images of machinery, cranes, gigantic metallic structures and industry, representing these images in their art or producing art generated by their new found understanding of welding and industrial techniques. Afifi, through his experience of working in military factories, among molten iron, huge pipes, steam, extreme heat and grinding sound had his own unique view of the world of industry and labour. His art reflects his compassion and empathy for the men at the centre of this industrialised world, and avoiding pathos, his work is a lyrical homage to these men.
“I rely on the truth to remain free from traditional formulations. It is the original source that enables an artist to distinguish himself from the traditional, or from a form of creativity that is essentially copied, and it is that original source that imbues a character with its novelty, originality and distinctiveness.”

Fathi Afifi
George Azmy is an Egyptian illustrator based in Cairo. During his bachelor years at the Fine Arts Faculty of Helwan University in Cairo, Azmy worked in several design houses, which established him as a reputed graphic designer on graduation. He was later awarded the Cannes Lion and Clio advertising awards for his art direction at several global advertising agencies.

In 2007, he held his first solo exhibition Planet Cairo, followed by a group exhibition Breaking Boredom, both held at the Townhouse Gallery in Cairo.

Azmy is also a prominent stand up comedian and his skits feed off the sharp observational skills that he employs in his art work. Spanning subjects from the day to day bureaucracies of a city, to the most intimate details of a young man’s life, Azmy’s work is as darkly humoured as it is deeply insightful.
Hanafy Mahmoud received his B.A. in Art Education with honours in 1993. He was a researcher at the faculty of Art Education at Helwan University in Cairo between 1997 and 2002 and has been teaching at the Faculty since 2002.

The work of Hanafy Mahmoud demonstrates the artist’s deeply felt engagement with some of the central issues of existence and the meaning of life. Fundamental to his art is the close observation of the sensual and psychological dimensions of humankind.

His paintings consist of life size individual figures or groups of men and women, often nude, set against dream-like backgrounds. He breaks with tradition in his use of surfaces and materials and the result is truly individual and untraditional.

IN HIS WORDS

Many faces moving here and there, in a mass of expressions and silent eyes. Faces frowning but expressing intensely what thoughts are going on inside this external border. This deep-seated silence that is simultaneously intense and loudly expressive preoccupies, affects and influences me a great deal.

The prime source of my inspiration in my works is the human condition and the events that surround it.

The crowded street, public transport packed with silent, frowning faces fitted with expressions of refusal and objection and discontent, this affects me. All that is related to the social, political or economic situation of man.

Humanity is pivotal to my works and my concerns.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2009 Solo, Ebdaa Art Gallery, Cairo 2008 11th Cairo International Biennial, Cairo; 17-12-08
2008 11th Cairo International Biennial, Cairo; 17.12.08 -- Opening, Art, Sawa, Dubai; Salon Gallery 2, Palace of the Arts, Cairo; Festival of Art Creativity, Palace of the Arts, Cairo; The International Day of the Environment, Artists View, Saad Zaghloul Cultural Centre, Cairo; 2007 Festival of Art Creativity, Palace of the Arts, Cairo; Solo, Khalifa Gallery, Gezira Art Centre, Cairo; Egyptian Arts Museum, Alexandria, Spain 2004 Stars of the Day, Artson One Gallery, Cairo; Contemporary Egyptian Art, Dubai Cultural Council, Dubai 2004 5th National Exhibition for Fine Arts, Cairo; Solo, Bituminous Galleries, 44, 45, 46, 47, Zamalek Art Centre, Cairo; Ramadan, Cairo; Ekhnaton exhibition, Cairo 2004 Frankfurt International Book Fair, Youth Salon, Cairo Solo in 2004, 2003, 2002, 2000, 1999, 1997, 1995, Solo, Rabie Kedle Gallery, Cairo; Ekhnaton, Cairo; Light of the Shape, Palace of the Arts, Cairo 2003 28th National Exhibition for Fine Arts, Cairo 2002 Solo, Jarir Fine Arts Gallery, Cairo 2002 Solo, Hanafy Mahmoud, Al Amaar Gallery HE Zamalek Art Centre, Cairo; Salon of Miniature Works of Art Solo in 1998, Cairo;

AWARDS

2004 Golden Pyramid for Painting, Youth Salon, Cairo 2000 Jury Prize, Youth Salon, Cairo 2000 Solo, Hanafy Mahmoud, Akhenaton Gallery (4) Zamalek Arts Centre, Cairo; Salon of Miniature Works of Art Solo in 2004, Cairo

1 Same Face C, 2009, oil on canvas, 155 x 155 cm
2 Two, 2009, mixed media on plexiglass, 100 x 140 cm
3 One, 2009, mixed media on plexiglass, 100 x 140 cm

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


1 Same Face C, 2009, oil on canvas, 155 x 155 cm
2 Two, 2009, mixed media on plexiglass, 100 x 140 cm
3 One, 2009, mixed media on plexiglass, 100 x 140 cm

1994 Youth Salon Encyclopedia, 1st Edition, Cairo

Hanafy Mahmoud

“The human being, in all his gladness and concerns. This is the central element in my painting, and the reason that I always use the human figure to express my concepts.”

Hanafy Mahmoud
Hanan El Sheikh graduated with a B.Sc. from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Helwan University in Cairo in 1996 and an M.A. in Islamic painting in 2003. She has taught at the Faculty of Fine Arts since 1998. El Sheikh has devoted much time to arts education for children since 1996, teaching at the El Gezira Club, the summer school of the Faculty of Fine Arts, the Neda pre-school for deaf children and as an ABACUS instructor at UC MAS Egypt.

El Sheikh has also set her talent to the stage, painting most of the backdrops of the stage scenes for the Cairo Opera House Theatre between 1996-2001, for productions by companies such as Opera Taiss and Ballet of Osiers. She has participated in numerous exhibitions, biennials and events, in Egypt and abroad, and received several awards for her work, which is now represented in private national and international collections.

IN HER WORDS

I think of an idea, a simple one, the simplest idea around which to build a painting, and search for an object that has a meaning for everyone, such as bicycle. We all know the bicycle, but how do we perceive it? It may represent a child at play, or a worker using it as a daily mode of transport or as a work tool, or something else altogether. For me, it is an object of great balance. I take the image and begin to play with it. I balance it visually, but it is not really in balance at all. It has no rider, no spokes or chains, and although it is a very real bicycle, it is actually not real at all. It may have a feeling of balance, but this is a game as it cannot realistically have that balance.

To me, the colour white has a sense of deep space, of air, though it can also be as solid as a wall. I work on canvas with oils, starting with a very dark preparatory layer of deep brown oil colour and only then painting on the light. I cover the canvas again by using a palette knife, leaving lines of this dark layer to come through, as if I were drawing them. To obtain different degrees of white, I use different types of opaque and transparent white oils and use a dry brush to paint in my object to give it a rougher appearance.

“For me, Art is Life. A painting is a part of Life, and not only of my life, but of anyone else’s who sees it. This is why I always approach my painting with simplicity and try to balance real life with the magic box that is the painting. The painting is to me as simple as it really is, but to viewers, it will mean whatever it will mean to them. I paint to know myself, and when I do come to know myself, I will stop painting. But I cannot truthfully see that happening.”
Haytham Nawar graduated with a B.A. in Fine Arts, with a major in Print Making, from the Department of Graphic Design at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo in 2000. In 2007, he presented his M.F.A. thesis on The Effect of Digital Treatments on Contemporary Visual Arts at the same faculty. He is currently preparing a second M.A. of Advanced Studies in Art and Design in Scenography at the Institute of Design and Technology, at the University of the Arts in Zurich.

Nawar has worked as an illustrator and graphic designer in an advertising agency, as a university lecturer in Advertising and as a creative designer for the Bibliotheca Alexandrina; he also continues to write as an art critic for Egyptian fine art magazines.

Nawar's work, for which he has won many awards, is represented in several private collections in Egypt, Syria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland and in numerous public collections. These include the National Centre of Fine Arts, the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art, the Cultural Development Fund and the Cultural Palaces in Cairo as well as in the Mairie de Sarcelles in France.

Nawar reflects the present reality of Egyptian youth, in the midst of the circumstances that surround it, through his choice of feelings, through his artworks that take the human body as an element of expression, and which examine the movement of the body in a search for meaning. His artworks reflect pure individuality, even egomania, and individuality is a part of society’s conditions. Working with different techniques, from drawing to video, light and sound, and using situations of antagonism to reinforce the features of his work.

THE OTHER

The Others…
The Others are portraits, Egyptians' portraits… your family, your friends. They are Us…
The other side of each portrait is the other side of us…
Each portrait is two parts…
Different mood, different atmosphere…
This is the moment we become two…
The One becomes Two…
Same time, Same portrait…
But, it is the other side…

“The human body is a language in itself”
“It is not in life, but in art that self-fulfillment is to be found.”

Haytham Nawar

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Born in 1978, Gharbia, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo and Zurich.
Hazem El Mestikawy graduated with a B.A. in Art Education from the Sculpture Department of Menia University. Since showing at the 1st Youth Salon in Cairo in 1989, Hazem El Mestikawy has participated in numerous national and international exhibitions, sculpture symposia, events and biennials. His work is widely collected throughout Egypt, Europe and the United States, with his sculptures in the collections of National and International Museums, and several Austrian, Czech, Egyptian, German, and Swiss cities and sculpture parks.

The practice of Hazem El Mestikawy swarms around the realms of physics, architecture, urban design, sculpture, and visual tricking. Trained initially in the traditional mediums of sculpture, he plays with light and shade, with volume and its surrounding space, negative and positive, while tackling the sculptural form; he skilfully probes the opposing forces of his geometric forms.

In his sculptural masses, El Mestikawy does not stop with elements that satisfy regular sculptors, as he pushes the boundaries of the discipline to create site specific installations, to make it difficult even for the specialist to identify the works: they are sculptures, installations, and definitely inspired and influenced by architecture. What adds to the visual mystery is his attention to the details of his surfaces; he juxtaposes several visually opposing surface effects: textural versus smooth, warm versus cool, legible versus flat monochromatic.

On the conceptual level, one can confidently describe El Mestikawy’s practice as having ingeniously assimilated both ancient Egyptian and Islamic art and architecture, as well as the contemporary minimalist art philosophies; this cumulative assimilation leads El Mestikawy to deconstruct, or rather dismantle centuries-old motifs that are embedded in Egyptian and Middle Eastern cultures, be it arabesque mashrabiyyas and/or geometric patterns based on the recognizable forms of the square, triangle, circle and rectangle to create works that are both sophisticated and accessible.

The intriguing aspect of El Mestikawy’s practice is his insistence on working with cardboard and cartonage paper-based materials; this use of ephemeral material that requires particular care in handling, exhibiting, maintaining and conserving is unique, since nearly the entirety of his inspirational references, be it ancient Egyptian, Islamic or minimal art, are all conceived and constructed in eternal materials: concrete, stone, treated wood or metal.
Mestikawy’s research in form entails a continuous construction-deconstruction process, eliminating along the way many details, a process reminiscent of ancient Egyptian sculpture, where details were abstracted ingeniously without any loss of visual narrative, a trait that gave ancient Egyptian sculpture its distinct specificity from other Mediterranean (Greek or Roman) sculpture, though rich in detail but no more informative than the Egyptian. The Egyptian colossal sculpture has always been identified and characterized by the simple yet powerful lines that transform the ton-heavy stone mass into perfect portraiture with minimal detail.

The ancient aspect of El Mestikawy is linked and related to minimal art in its near-industrial perfection, though the uniqueness in his work lies in an integral difference: both ancient and minimal arts, though simple in form, are heavy in weight and mass, they both need teams of artists and artisans to produce, and they need a factory or a factory-like studio to produce. All Mestikawy pieces of sculptural installations are created in and by a one-man-factory: the works, created from their initial sketches to the box they are carried away in, are made by Hazem el Mestikawy himself; the process and the stages of this operation are undertaken with utmost love and pleasure.

“Harmoniously ordered geometrical proportion and rhythmically repeated elements are the basic structure of pattern design. This introduces the theme of symmetry, which exists in the correct correlation of measurements of the various elements of the plan, be it a simple or complex plan, and between each of these elements and the whole.

When every element of the construction or installation is set in proportion through the right correlation of height, width and depth, and when all these elements find their balance in the design, rhythm is obtained. Further, when this is properly applied to the installation, we obtain eurhythm. Thus, rhythm is the Art work process in the fourth dimension of time, and eurhythm is the notion of a three dimensional installation, in proportion with the Art of space.”

Hazem El Mestikawy

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:
2008 From Athens to Marseille to Cairo, catalogue, Palais Des Arts, Marseille 2007 Baggage, El Nafeza, Cairo; Occidentalism, Karim Francis Gallery, Cairo; 40th Krastal Stone Sculpture symposium, world pool, catalogue, Cairo 2006 Type Faces, Present/Verlag and Museum für Kultur, Waidhofen/Ybbs Museum, Austria; UND, Riter Verlag and Gallery Akram's Art, Vienna 2005 Trap-Labyrinth, NO Documentation Center of Modern Art, St. Pölten, Austria; National Exhibition for Fine Arts, catalogue, Cairo 2004 HAUSRUCK International Sculpture Symposium, catalogue, Austria; Art Out of the Suitcase, catalogue, Art Museum Olten, Switzerland 1999 Sculpture Compositions, catalogue, Ekhnaton Galleries, Cairo; and numerous other exhibitions, participations and public collections since 1986.

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HEND ADNAN
Born in 1970, Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

Hend Adnan received a B.A. from the Painting Department of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo. She has shown her work in many national and international exhibitions, festivals and meetings and her work is represented in both Egyptian and international collections.

Adnan treasures the ability to work freely in oil colors and with live models, respecting shadows in all their forms, working psychological moods and feelings into realistic representations and colours that bring together all the characteristics of oil colours with an emphasis on texture.

IN HER WORDS

Like floating colours melting deep within a silvery light, shadows have more depth than colour itself. The colour of hair is Egyptian pure black, and is as fundamental a colour as reds, ochre transforms into gold when it blends with sunlight. The shadows refer to their original colors, even deep inside closed regions, just like the Nile water’s shadows under rays of sun.

In the preparatory phase graphite or charcoal, and sometimes pastels on coloured paper, are used to make several sketches in order to achieve the right form and construction for the painting.

Oil colors are used in thick textured colors or in lighter shades, with a large brush, and distributed for an effect that ranges from the transparent to the opaque, adding or removing in an attempt to obtain various textures.

The model is the source and the base of an artwork. Every work is an interpretation of one of the emotions and moods that is hidden by the model’s features. The success of an artwork depends on its ability to transfer this invisible impression to the viewer so that he becomes a positive participant in the painting. The viewer interacts with this impression, which controls his feelings and affects his mood through the physical features of the model; both the stable composition and the carefully chosen colour help in condensing the psychological impression.

“Art gives us an experience that is free from the disturbing conditions of actual life. An experience that is entirely removed from bodily physiological accompaniment, and our experience has the purity, the intensity, and the abstraction of a dream.”

1 Harmony C, 2009, oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm
2 Harmony A, 2009, oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm
3 Harmony B, 2009, oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
2009 Arab Artists exhibition, El Arabi magazine, Kuwait
2008 100 Years of Fine Arts, Palace of Arts, Cairo
2007 Egyptian Contemporary Art, Cairo
2006 Festival of Small Art Works, Cairo
2005 Creation of Arab Women, Palace of Arts, Cairo
2001 In the frame exhibition, Picasso Gallery, Cairo

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS
2008 Salon d’Automne Catalogue (cover, poster and invitations), Paris
2006 Stars of the Day, Horizon One Gallery, Cairo
2005 The Femininity Aesthetics, Fargaly, Ibrahim, Elbaet, Cairo
2002 Real Life, Egypt Today, Cairo
2001 Real Life, Egypt Today, Cairo
2000 Four Aspects for the Pyramid, Khan El Maghraby Gallery, Cairo
Howaida El Sebaee graduated from the Painting Department of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Alexandria University with honours in 1994, joining the faculty there in 1995. She wrote her M.A. thesis in 2001 on Dadaism in Modern Painting and Its Effect on Contemporary Egyptian Painting, and her Ph.D. thesis in 2004 on The Industrial Transformation and Its Effect on Painting Art from The Renaissance Until the 20th Century at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Alexandria University.

El Sebaee has been deeply involved in nurturing the development of the arts in Alexandria, especially through her work with the Alexandria Atelier. Joining the Art School there in 1989, she became a member of its Writers and Artists group. She is also a member of the Fine Arts Syndicate of Egypt, has been invited to speak at the Youth Salon in Cairo on many occasions and has participated in several editions of the Conference on Plastic Arts in Egypt.

Her varied interests have seen her participate in several workshops with prominent international artists, publish and translate the book Marcel Duchamp from English into Arabic, as part of the National Translation project, an initiative of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. She has also published Post-modernism Arts in Egypt and the World.

El Sebaee has shown her work nationally and internationally and her works are represented in private and public collections, including the Palaces of Culture and the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art in Cairo, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria and the Conference Hall in Sharm El Sheikh.

IN HER WORDS

A machine is the basic indication of an industrial society. Its assembled parts mingle in our life. The brain’s achievements advance, and the feelings hide, so the material dominates while nature disappears. The machine mixes with nature until it becomes a part of it. The machine imposes itself on creation, and as a result has become an element of contemporary aesthetics, forming a work of art. We pursue the shapes of factories and parts of machines, especially those rusted machines, as they reflect humans or inner organs resembling the human body. Thus we see that the result of the shape and mechanism of machines, as well as the movement of smog that devours everything it passes, have become a general climate, both physically and psychologically, in the same way that the sound resulting from mechanical movement engenders nervous tension in contemporary man. It is the language that is directly spoken in an age which happens to be ours. The machine is the genotype that interferes in our innermost reality; it is a visual formula for the scientific bourgeoisie of our contemporary life and it is the first comprehensive attempt at expressing modernism with all its definitions.
The machine is a profound element that evokes the past and the present as it justifies the continuous revolt against authentic social thinking, transformed into personal power. The decisive transformation to a feudal civilisation by way of the machine has been a reality in the era of plutocratic industrialisation. This transformation has become an element for the collapse of human thinking in general and this has defeated social stability. All that is material has determined all that is spiritual. Hence the society of the machine has become a huge tomb for human aspiration because it has created an atmosphere of tension and has caused the ugliness of social industrial society, and this more so than had been caused by industrial development itself.

“Freedom is not in itself a matter of choice, it is a necessity, is unavoidable and is the essence of human existence.”

Howaida El Sebaee

1 Spotlight 1, 2007, mixed media (oil and acrylic on canvas), 180 x 200 cm
2 Spotlight 2, 2007, mixed media (oil and acrylic on canvas), 180 x 200 cm
IBRAHIM EL DESSOUKI

Born in 1969, Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

After studying painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Zamaek (Helwan University), Ibrahim El Dessouki received his doctorate in 2003 on the dynamics in painting. He is currently an Associate Professor. He has participated in many national and international exhibitions and has shown his works throughout Europe, the Arab world and Asia.

Ibrahim El Dessouki is a painter of highly condensed style in portraiture as well as in still life painting and landscape.

His is a unique, elaborate and highly meticulous treatment of shades, and his refined textures echo and give repercussion to his feelings through a very special and distinctive use of paint, carefully kneaded to create simultaneously dreamy and epic tones of colour. His shapes of women, who pose, at times, to inspire awe and bewilderment, show details and mutations of varying degrees of dimness, shades and light, to evoke a sense of tenderness and delicacy. All these elements find their voice in the many thick layers of rich and varied tints of paint and result in a painting that is extraordinarily vital and poetic.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ibrahim El Dessouki is concerned with direct observation, employing a methodic approach to his work where the interior settings are carefully staged before the models.

His work expresses the sanctity of the body for Egyptian women, blended with the appeal of feminine tenderness, and consciously omitting his model's face and character so as to condense this dreamily alluring aspect without suggestion of the erotic. Further, his figures are occasionally idealised and monumentalised by their foreshortened forms.

The application of subtle shades, fine tones, and smooth and highly finished surfaces form the basis of his visual language, expressed through layers of rich colour superimposed with transparency.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
2008 17.12.08 - Creative Expressions, Art Sawa, Dubai; Art Sawa, Art Fair, Abu Dhabi art fair, Abu Dhabi, 22.10.08 - Opening, Art Sawa, Dubai; Oum Kalsoum, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Trilogy of the Mediterranean, Grenoble, France; Egypt; Palazzo Art, Manzelle: Salon Gallery 2, Arts Palace, Cairo; 2007 Festiss Arte, Placentia, Akko, Spain 2006 16th Cairo International Art Biennial, Cairo; Stars of the Day, Horizon One Gallery, Cairo; 2005 Stars in the Youth Salon, The Egyptian Academy of Arts, Rome; Art and Spirit, Arts Palace, Cairo; 2004 Life, Gestina Art Centre, Cairo; 2003 Egyptian Exhibition, Safiyo: Winter Festival, Sarapone; Panorama of 20th Century Egyptian Art: 100 Years, 100 Artists, 100 Artworks, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

1 Living Cairo 3, 2009, oil on canvas, 185 x 110 cm
2 Living Cairo 1, 2009, oil on canvas, 185 x 110 cm
3 Living Cairo 2, 2009, oil on canvas, 185 x 110 cm
"Art, be it poetry, visual art, drama or dance, is the transformation of what is real into magic; it is also the conversion of what is magical into a tangible reality, for we are able to perceive that, beyond those infantile voices, there are primordial voices. And we guess at the being of those most archaic voices, deep and sagacious, that spoke the language of legend, and we feel them as more than mere legend, as simultaneous dreams and symbols."

"Art is essentially that dream and that puzzlement which confronts each of us, squeezing and drenching out our very own soul, while imposing on us, so as to accomplish that feat, that primodial image, the image of the sphinx. The riddle and the puzzle drown us in the realm of dreams. They continuously undermine our being with the most terrible enigmas, beguiling us by revealing the most terrible questions to our eyes and souls, our free souls, as they strive to free themselves from the claws of the Animal, which lies crouched inside our body, itself a vicious jail."

Ibrahim El Dessouki
KHALED SOROUR

Born in 1965, Damanhour, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

Khaled Sorour is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Art Education and the General Supervisor of Graphic Design at the public authority for the Cultural Palaces. He was an Assistant Commissioner for the Egyptian pavillion at the 52nd Venice International Biennial in 2007 and holds a Ph.D. from Helwan University.

IN HIS WORDS

My work is inspired by scenes of the functional that are different from the reality of contemporary Egyptian life; the Egyptian people’s blended elements of their heritage are re-established and are formulated by my own vision.
1. Take Five, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 146 x 146 cm
2. Bicycles & Jacket, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 146 x 201 cm
In this series, Cairoscapes (2003), I wanted to create more personal cityscapes of Cairo – ones that respond to the complex and often intimidating nature of contemporary Cairene urbanity, by creating spaces where tensions inherent in the city are balanced somehow.

My point of view of the city is that of the pedestrian. Eye-level and up-close rather than the distant and encompassing bird's eye view common in cityscapes. Hence, the format of the series that seeks to convey a texture of the quotidian city through microcosmic fragments or glimpses rather than to summarise with the grandiose overall.

“There in the city, Cairoscapes (2003), I wanted to create more personal cityscapes of Cairo – ones that respond to the complex and often intimidating nature of contemporary Cairene urbanity, by creating spaces where tensions inherent in the city are balanced somehow.”

Maha Maamoun

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS


SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

2007 Domestic Tourism, Tokio: Ayegger; Fast-Forward, Dufour, Bursam, Kerber; Christoff Verlag, Baden-Baden; Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography, Enwezor, Okwui, New York 2003 Remote Connection: Wala, Contemporary Art Workshop, Ramadan, Dina, Cairo; Contemporary African Art no: 18 (Spring/Summer), Mika, NY: Art in the Middle of War, Ramadan, Dina, Cairo Times, Volume 7, Issue 6 (April), Cairo; Nostalgias Old and New, Ryan, Nigel, Al Ahram Weekly (December), Cairo
Marwa Adel graduated from the Advertising Department of the Faculty of Applied Art at Helwan University in 2005. She is currently an assistant lecturer at the same department and faculty as well as a member of the Syndicate of Plastic Arts and the Syndicate of Applied Arts Designers. She was invited to participate, for two years running in 2007 and 2008, in the AAW Youth Salon at the Alexandria Atelier and the Youth Salon in Cairo. In those same two years, she was invited to participate in the annual exhibitions of the Lovers’ Society of Fine Arts, winning the Photography Award on both occasions. In 2008, she also participated in the 1st International Media Art Forum for Youth (IMAFY) exhibition and won the First Prize at the Oriental Weavers Design Contest; in 2007, her work was shown in an exhibition at the German Cultural Centre.

IN HER WORDS

My artwork is an attempt at showing the evolution and the infinite conflict between some fundamental forms of existence that live in a state of permanent contradiction and antagonism. It is the discovery and revelation of the relationship between form and essence, spirit and materiality, image and ideas. It is the metamorphosis of primitive to supreme, passing through humanity.

“I believe above all that I wanted to build the palace of my memory, because my memory is something else, my only homeland.”

Marwa Adel

1. Silence, 2008, photography and computer graphic, 70 x 170 cm
2. Movement, 2008, photography and computer graphic, 70 x 102 cm (3x)
3. Peace on Earth to Men, 2008, photography and computer graphic, 55 x 130 cm
4. Remaining despite your attempts, 2008, photography and computer graphic, 50 x 185 cm

IN HER WORDS

Sometimes I feel I am a prisoner to customs and traditions. I see and do things I do not like, but cannot say anything, and want to do other things, but cannot, because of these traditions. I have used a root and darkness to reflect and express the sense of imprisonment I feel I live in. I feel I am living in silence.
MOVEMENT

What makes us move forward in our lives? Is it our dreams or our bodies? I have used the human body in different positions to give the effect of movement, and used text to refer to dreams. Placing the text on the body shows that our dreams and our bodies make us move forward, and that we need both to do this.

PEACE ON EARTH TO MEN

We are always trying to run away from our memories in life, be they good or bad, but when we face these memories or facts, we find them unclear and hazy. However, there is one fact of life we cannot ignore or run away from, and that is all that peace on earth is to men. I have used this concept in my work, where the memories facing us are hazy but the real fact in our life is the one wrapping the girl. This is what we face in our society and what we hope will change someday, and we should look to all our memories as facts.
REMAINING DESPITE YOUR ATTEMPTS

I have tried to express the feeling of pain and loneliness and the stress I felt for a long time because of people wanting me to do what they wanted, without caring, and pushing me to achieve dreams they could not achieve. I have used facial expression and hand movement to express the feeling of pain, convulsion and resistance to the dreams of others, and have used the words to express my own dreams, those I am trying to fight for.
Mohamed Abla is a painter, engraver, sculptor, installation artist and photographer. He is an innovator who mixes techniques and has developed a reputation for his experimental and deeply socially committed work. His work is represented in many private and public collections, of which the permanent collection of the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art. In 2006, he founded the Fayoum Art Centre, the objective of which is to provide an oasis of creativity and a meeting point for dialogue for artists throughout the world. He is also the founder of the Caricature Museum in 2009, an initiative to honour the art of Egyptian satirists and their role in relaying the emotional, social and political condition of Egypt.

Abla is concerned with the wider social issues that affect modern-day Egypt. His canvasses are filled with a multitude of people from all walks of life, animals and modes of transport, that are often juxtaposed against loosely depicted scenes of Cairo and headings borrowed from local newspapers. Some of these headings read: Egypt at the Auction House, New Corruption Scandal, and Thank your God. Against this backdrop, spontaneous brushstrokes and roughly applied lines express people's movements and gestures, actively capturing the effect of radiant and optimistic faces despite the sea of suffering and pressure. As a result, Abla succeeds in conveying the sense of hope and optimism that is so central to the belief of many ordinary Egyptians.

In the process, Abla presents a comprehensive range of modern-day Egypt; people blend with buildings, animals and trucks producing a complex picture that illustrates all the contradictions and fascinations of today's Egypt.
“In my use of colour, line and simplicity of composition, I have tried to declare my affiliation to Beauty. I have lived an experience with powerful ties to the concept of time and entertained the idea of the hidden beauty of the old… nostalgia.

I know how hard it is to draw new meanings from familiar images; to take ancient symbols and display them in the present. Yet, at the same time, I have faith that art has its own special laws and magic, permitting us to draw together a multitude of conflicting images.”

Mohamed Abla
Mohamed Al Fayoumi obtained his first diploma from the Secondary Industrial School and his B.A. from the Faculty of Agriculture at the Open University. He later pursued his studies at the Faculty of Fine Arts and has also obtained a Diploma in Arabic Calligraphy. His work is represented in the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art.

A sculptor who portrays Egypt’s poorer urban and rural people, he delved deep into the observation of rural and underprivileged urban women, bringing out their character in solid stable masses with a few exaggerated details that give his work its Expressionist nature, and makes him well-loved by a broad audience.

When Al Fayoumi depicts Egyptian folk characters, he breathes considerable energy into his subjects. As a sculptor, Al Fayoumi is obsessed with the details and fullness of the human figure, and does not shy from illustrating the scars of overworked people and the country in which they live. He summons humanity in dimensions of huge generosity and truthfulness of touch, and does so in the fast rhythm of modern dialect and the absolute rigour of technique. For Al Fayoumi, sculpting is the essence of art, a heritage passed on from the depth of history, and one to which he is personally committed. When he sculpts animals, birds, and fish, he pares down their wildness, turning it into a peculiar stillness, one with an energy that signals to the limitless reservoir of human experience he draws upon. His grip on detail sets him apart from his contemporaries.

MOHAMED AL FAYOUMI
Born in 1963, Al Fayoum, Egypt. Lives and works in Egypt.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS
2008 The International Day of the Environment, Artistic View, Sa’ad Zaghloul Cultural Centre, Sa’ad Zaghloul Cultural Centre, Cairo 2003 Egyptian Contemporary Art in the 20th Century, Egyptian Ministry of Culture, Cairo 2002 Youth Salon Encyclopaedia, Fine Arts Sector, Egyptian Ministry of Culture

MEMBERSHIPS
Syndicate of Fine Artists, Cairo Atelier, Theatre Club, Association of Mukhtar Friends, Talents Association of the Culture Palace

AWARDS

1 Fellah, 2003, bronze, edition 3/8, 40 x 44 x 53 cm
2 Om el Saad, 2000, bronze, edition 6/7, 43 x 44 x 60 cm
3 Detail, Om el Saad, 2000, bronze, edition 6/7, 43 x 44 x 60 cm
Mohsen Shaalan has served art well, not only as a successful artist, but also as a driving force behind the Egyptian Ministry of Culture’s ambitious plans to nurture, support and develop Egypt’s thriving art scene. As the Head of the Ministry’s Fine Arts Sector, his responsibilities are many and varied. Besides teaching, organising and curating many exhibitions since the mid 1970s, he has participated in his official capacity in exhibitions held in international museums and represented Egypt as a Commissaire in Egyptian exhibitions abroad. He has taken part in conferences, symposia, cultural and academic seminars and round tables in national and international cultural events.

Shaalan is responsible for reviving interest and know-how among skilled Egyptian craftspeople, and has encouraged them to pass on their skills and experience to younger generations. He was commissioned to develop plans to upgrade art museums and to draw up the calendar and themes of national and international events, including art biennials. As director of the Cairo International Biennial, he has been ideally positioned to foster greater exchange and contact between cultures of the East and West and has encouraged the Egyptian government to play a more prominent role in the international arts world.

In addition to his artistic achievements and to his leading role in the Egyptian art scene, Shaalan is popular for his contribution to literary and intellectual circles in Egyptian society and in Arab countries. He is a poet of repute and his critical articles are frequently published in Egyptian and Arabic newspapers.

Shaalan is the recipient of numerous awards and his work is represented in the art collections of museums such as the Modern Egyptian Art Museum in Cairo, of major banks and institutions such as the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., of Egyptian embassies overseas and foreign embassies in Cairo. His work features in the private collections of individuals in Egypt, and in Arab and European countries.

MOHSEN SHAALAN
Born in 1951, Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

MEMBERSHIPS
Member and a Counselor of the Fine Artists Syndicate, Member of the Fine Arts Committee of the Supreme Council of Culture, Founding Member of the International ARTAPEDIA Institution of the Dominican Republic

1 Neither love him Nor can leave him, 2008, oil on canvas, 190 x 160 cm
2 Handcuffed, 2009, oil on canvas, 100 x 70 cm
Shaalan is a painter and draughtsman, an enthusiast for representational art. Since he set out on his artistic journey in the 1970s, humanity has been Shaalan’s prime concern. He came up with admirably powerful signs of expression provoked by a philosophical and intimate dialogue between his human figures, swathed in gloomy and restive atmospheres. Shaalan’s works are also an intellectual exploration of the relationship between man and woman, who are the driving force behind human communities anywhere in the world.

His roots in Boulak, a prominent and popular district in Egypt, have found great resonance in his work, with his depictions of the problems of ordinary Egyptians; indeed, the human figure is an essential part of his artworks. To Shaalan, the appeal of portraiture is that it enables him to explore a range of emotions and the complex dimensions of human experience, sometimes showing facial expressions in a very definite manner, and sometimes showing expressionless features.

Shaalan’s drawings and paintings highlight his brilliant use and judgement of inks, graphite and colours. Most of his artworks, beginning in the 1970s, contain symbols of literary, social, political and humanitarian ideals, revealing a commitment to Expressionism with dramatic impact.

“Music of the generation of Mohamed Abdel Wahhab is a passion of mine, and this great musician has been instrumental in drawing me deeply into the creative process and into the arts. I also love Omm Kalthoum and the lyrics of El Sonbaty and El Kathabguy.”

Mohsen Shaalan
NAGLA SAMIR
Born in 1969, Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works in Cairo.

Nagla Samir graduated from the Faculty of Applied Arts in 1992 and joined the Egyptian art movement as a photographer and media artist in 2003, after years of practicing commercial design as Creative Director for Integrated Media International agency. She obtained her Ph.D. in Applied Arts in 2002 and has worked as a Lecturer of Visual Communication & Advertising Design since then, publishing studies and articles on Design and Contemporary Art. She continues in her activities as a freelance designer in the fields of Advertising, Interior Design and Theatre Scenography, and has been the Director of Passage 35 Hall since 2006.

Samir has participated in several national and international group exhibitions such as the Youth Salon, National Exhibition for Fine Arts, Nile Salon for Photography, Contemporary Arts Festival for Egyptian Women and the Salon of Small Art Works. She has held two solo exhibitions at the Gezira Art Centre in Cairo in 2005 and 2007 and her work has been shown as far afield as Algeria, Italy and Nepal. She has been awarded several prizes, of which the Award of the 24th Alexandria Biennial for Mediterranean Countries in 2007. Samir has served as a Jury member for the Youth Salon and for the Nile Salon for Photography and has curated several exhibitions and cultural events, amongst which the 1st International Media Art Forum for Youth in 2008.

Inspired by the pop culture, her art work is based on photography, graphically manipulated, installed and lit to enhance the concept of her project.

"An artist, curator, art teacher and commercial designer... Leading multiple lives, in a diverse city of contradictions, that offers an infinite range of possibilities... a life of extremes. Stimulating discussions through unconventional art projects, that tackle the transgression of social taboos, raising questions concerning censorship..."

“My work may seem personal, spiritual, or even remote from direct themes related to nationalism, yet I am driven by the essence of the city as a source of inspiration.”

Nagla Samir

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
2009 Curation, Creative Female Artists from Egypt, Vienna (also Berlin); Curation Roto project, El-Ehtihar, Cairo; Curation, Fugitive Projects Ritm Collectives, Swane, USA 2008 Oum Kalsoum, Institut du Monde Arab, Paris, Curation, 1st International Media Art Forum for Youth, Cairo; Images from Egypt (also curation), Kathmandu 2007 What’s Happening Now?, Palace of the Arts, Cairo; Mediterranean Biennial Awards, Assisi, Italy; Solo, Tribute to Their Spirits, Gezira Art Centre, Cairo 2005 Solo, Body & Soul, Gezira Art Centre, Cairo

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS
2008 Fonoun Masreya, Issue No.15, January, Ministry of Culture, Cairo, Oum Kalsoum, The Fourth Pyramid, Institut du Monde Arab, Paris 2007 What’s Happening Now?, exhibition catalogue, Palace of the Arts, Cairo; Art, No. 190 (March), Cairo, El Quahera, No. 396 (November), Cairo; El Quahera, No. 398 (December), Cairo; Al Ahram International, No. 46179 (November), Cairo

1 City Scape, 2009, C-print, edition 1/2, 124 x 110 cm
2 City Scape 2, 2009, C-print, edition 1/2, 124 x 110 cm
CITY SCAPE

The concept for City Scape emerged from an early work of mine concerned with the conflict between body and spirit. I was putting myself under pressure to cover most of the nude figure in wings, while maintaining the original form that I consider to be beautiful and attractive. It was then that I realised that this process was exactly what was happening on the streets of Cairo – a manoeuvre to veil by assumption, yet reveal beyond exposure! It must be the unspoken and hidden statement under social and cultural pressure.

Inspired by advertising billboards that invade the city scape, I started playing with the concept as social teasers, to enhance the statement of the effect of the media on shaping perception and triggering desire when least expected.

Perfect beings are manifested, and wings cover most of the figure while maintaining the original form that is gracefully beautiful yet seductive. The wings are those of a locust, an insect known to invade in massive numbers, consuming all and leaving damage and infertility in its wake.

City Scape is the master piece; City Scape 2 refers in its structure to the pharaonic concept of repetition in displaying perfection.
Randa Shaath was born to a Palestinian father and an Egyptian mother and lived in Beirut, Lebanon between 1969 and 1977; she is now based in Cairo.

She received her BA in Middle Eastern Studies from the American University in Cairo and her MA in Visual Mass Communication from the University of Minnesota, USA.

Shaath worked as a photographer for Agence France Press in Egypt and Gaza in 1994, and for the Al-Ahram Weekly newspaper from 1993 until 2004. She taught photography at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Algiers in 2005 and graduating seniors at the Modern English School of Cairo between 2005 - 2007. She is a contributing photographer and editorial board member of Zawaya magazine in Beirut and is currently the Photo Editor for Al Sharouk newspaper in Cairo. In addition to her photo-journalism work and teaching, Shaath has worked as a designer and photographer for children’s books and as a still photographer for documentary and feature films.

She has worked on various projects documenting daily life in Palestine, Nubian villages, and Cairo. For the Cairo project, she captured daily life in the city, on the streets and the rooftops, and on its forgotten islands.

CAIRO SIDEWALKS
(Unfinished project)

I spent over 2 years studying and documenting life on Cairo’s rooftops. I discovered a unique daily life among communities that are often an overlooked extra detail in a complex city of 17 million souls. I decided to get back down to the street level. Cairo sidewalks provide no demarcation between public and private space. Many Cairenes live much of their daily life in the streets, and for some it is home. The dynamics of the street create behaviorial and dress codes not seen elsewhere and often a level of psychological if not physical violence. After photographing for a few months, I stopped working on my project to reflect. My goal is not only to document and archive what I see, but also to challenge. I felt I could no longer continue photographing the will of a strong determined people coping with a tough life, in moments of beauty and personal dignity, as I did on the rooftops. The scene I confronted on the streets was disturbing, often coarse in its ugliness. The question was how to document those surviving this affront, resisting rage, and coping with despair? I took the challenge to witness the daily interactions on sidewalks and the multi-layered dynamics that exists in public spaces. I was not always successful in capturing the hard times we live in. The problems are not only economic; there is a continuous low-grade level of violence, a lack of privacy. So this work I started, I will try to continue as a testament of how we cope and thrive among the urban patchwork of Cairo with its noise, vehicles, animals, vendors, crowds, men, women, friends, lovers, commuters and strangers.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

“My passion is to roam around to meet people and discover places; it is a blessing to be a photographer, able to freeze these moments and later contemplate.”

Randa Shaath
Sidewalks (1-3), edition 1/12, 2004-2008, B&W photographs, 100 x 66 and 66 x 100 cm

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


Numerous images published in newspapers and magazines including: Photographers International, Time, Independent, NZZ, DSL, Camer Austria, Tamas 2, Zawaya and Antenna.
Sobhi Guergues graduated from the faculty of Fine Art and continued his postgraduate study with a scholarship to study at the Florence Academy of Art, from which he graduated in 1964. He was subsequently appointed professor of sculpture and embarked on a long and productive career as a sculptor and painter. In addition to his artistic achievements, Guergues is a fine musician, having been instructed by his father, himself a musician, in rhythm, music and composition. He plays the other, the flute and the lute – choices of instruments that are reflected in the vibrant, mischievous and optimistic nature of his works.

It is near impossible to overstate the importance of Guergues’ experiment and the influence it has had on Modern Egyptian art. No anthology of Egyptian or Middle Eastern 20th Century art would be complete without reference to his groundbreaking practice. Guergues has placed a unique hallmark on modern Egyptian Sculpture, and he has received countless awards and prizes in recognition of his work. His works are part of the collection of the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art in Cairo and are in major art museums and institutions in the US, France, the UK, Italy, Austria, Kuwait and other countries.

Sobhi Guergues is known to be a liberated sculptor who rebelled against rigid moulds, his strong sense of irony placing him in the forefront of Egyptian avant-garde sculptors. His extraordinary experiment took root in Egyptian Coptic art, which teems with signs of innocence and intimacy. Guergues first made linear and thin sculptures, which displayed powerful expressions. He later began to incorporate rough, linear relationships with strips soaked in liquid wax, this technique producing lava-like projections when the sculpture is cast.

Guergues is widely known as a prolific and pioneering sculptor. His innovative style and technique are manifest in the linear statues, the bulging strips and the cylindrical heads with delicate features. In some later works, Guergues also developed a blend of cast elements, made from thin iron rods, impressively displaying a new technique for coloured and oxidized patina.

In Guergues’ work, there is a sense of collectivity that identifies the artist, though each sculpture is the individual expression of an ebullient and observant mind. He brilliantly transfers his intimacy, subtlety and whimsy to his sculptures, ensuring an immediate yet also lingering impact.

**SELECTED EXHIBITIONS**

- 2007 Sobhi Guergues, Horizon One Gallery, Cairo; Salon Gallery 2, Cairo
- 2006 Cairo International Biennial, Cairo; National Art Biennial (Sun Path), Ecuador
- 2005 Salon of Mini Works of Art, Cairo; 1st Salon of Sculpture of Noble Materials, Palace of the Arts, Cairo
- 2004 Solo, Cairo Artline, Cairo; General Art Exhibition (also several editions up to 2004)
- 2002 Solo, Cairo Artline, Cairo; Cairo 1996 Solo, Droub Gallery, Cairo
- 1994 Alexandria Biennial for Mediterranean Countries (First Prize for sculpture), Alexandria; Cairo International Biennial (Prize), Cairo; Solo; Akhenaton Gallery, Zamalek Art Centre, Cairo; Solo; 1993 Solo, Meheran Gallery, Zamalek Art Centre, Cairo; Solo; 1992 Venice Biennale, Venice
- 1976 Venice Biennale, Venice
- 1971 Solo, Akhenaton Gallery, Kasr al-Nil
- and other numerous exhibitions and participations.

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS**

- 2007 Sobhi Guergues, Horizon One Gallery, Cairo; Salon Gallery 2, exhibition catalogue, Cairo; Egyptian Contemporary Art in the 20th Century, Al Razaz, Dr Mustafa, Egyptian Ministry of Culture, Cairo; The Giant Within, Al Ahram (July), Cairo

**SELECTED EXHIBITIONS**

1. Deliberation, brass, 36 x 34 x 28 cm
2. Attempt to Rise, brass, 33 x 33 x 34 cm
3. Meditating, brass, 44 x 45 x 94 cm
I deeply love sculptures. Although my experiment seems to be difficult and hard, it has its special flavour. My experiment gives me a feeling of individuality. Achievements made by my great masters and pioneering predecessors have always been on my mind. However, after examining thousands of sculptures made by these great artists, I was determined to enjoy my own experiment. I have always wondered: why should I not add something new?

Sobhi Guergues
Wael Darwesh graduated with excellence from the Faculty of Art Education of Helwan University in Cairo. He obtained an MFA and PhD in the philosophy of drawing and painting. Since 1998, he has been a teaching member of staff of art faculties. Darwesh is the winner of a number of local and international prizes and certificates of merit. His works are represented in numerous private collections and public collections such as the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art, the 15th May Museum and the Alexandria Library.

The paintings of Wael Darwesh place emphasis upon painterly qualities over representational values; bold brushwork, strident and contrasting colours cover the picture plane whilst the subject matter acquires a high degree of simplification and abstraction. This, in turn, is set in sharp contrast to the descriptive titles resulting in new possibilities of interpretation.

For Darwesh, the surface becomes a patchwork of distinctive colours with figures set in prominent brushstrokes and clear outlines with hardly any modelling. He succeeds in conveying emotional exuberance, dynamism, energy and surface animation.

Darwesh has experimented widely with different genres of art, such as drawing, painting, photography, installation, video art and contemporary media. In his artistic vision, a work of art displays a message, and technique is the artist’s platform through which the idea evolves into a visual entity.

**IN HIS WORDS**

In my mixed media projects, I try to probe several phenomena that constitute permanent obsessions for me, such as time, its relevance to the subject matter employed, elements of migration, gender, identity, a few amongst many themes that attract several Egyptian artists of my generation.

Technically, I apply assemblages to create installation / sculptural states that transcend simple two-dimensional art forms; through the studied and experimental use of collage, I combine colour, calligraphy, textile, and various textural media to explore issues of space and the passage of time.
“In the past few years I have been much concerned with the changing perceptions and the state of continuous social metamorphosis that Egypt has witnessed in the past three decades.”

Wael Darwesh
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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