

Selections

from the Contemporary Egyptian Art Scene



Curated by Ehab Ellaban

vol. 2



Society often seeks to understand more about a culture or human beings through various forms of creative expression. Art as opposed to the written or spoken word has an intrinsic transcendent quality. It communicates an expression, idea or mood without boundaries or limitations. This exhibition aims to focus on the diverse and eclectic visual expression that provides a glimpse into the contemporary Egyptian art scene today.

The artists, subjects, media and style channeled in this exhibition could not be more diverse; however they are all linked by their pivotal role in the Egyptian art scene today. Gallery Ward aims to consistently showcase a handpicked collective of contemporary Egyptian artists through a series of exhibitions titled 'Selections', the first having been launched in April 2013. In the long term, this series will provide the viewer access to an extensive array of contemporary art from Egypt, allowing for better exposure, deeper understanding and a more relevant dialogue. We hope you enjoy this exhibition that will hopefully leave you curious and looking forward to more from Gallery Ward.

By Ehab Ellaban
Gallery Ward - Chief curator

Featured Artists

- Ahmed Kassim
- Armen Agop
- Atef Ahmed
- Ayman El Semy
- Essam Darwish
- Essam Marouf
- Mohamed Ardash
- Nagla Samir

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Cairo Dubai Riyadh

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Ahmed Kassim

Born in Doha, Qatar 1984
Lives and works in Cairo, Egypt.

Ahmed Kassim graduated in 2007 from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Helwan University in Cairo.

Since moving to Egypt in 2002, Kassim has participated in various collective exhibitions in cities including Cairo, Alexandria and Luxor as well as in Doha in Qatar. His work was featured annually from 18th to 23rd Youth Salons, Palace of Arts – Opera House in Cairo (2007-2012), where he remarkably won First Prize for painting during the latter three years.

In 2011, Kassim debuted as a notable artist at his first solo show at Safarkhan Art Gallery in Cairo, where he continues to hold a yearly solo exhibition to date.

Kassim's caricature like, satirical style employed in his vibrant paintings conjures an accurate reflection of popular socio-political culture in Egypt today. With post-revolution conflict and disorder over spilling on the streets and through the media outlets of Cairo, Kassim portrays an iconographic narrative that reads like an unfolding story, albeit unstructured and chaotic. The effective signs all relevant to contemporary culture help the viewer connect the dots and create a fragmented yet charming snapshot of current times, one that signifies elements of ideologies and events on the top of people's minds in Egypt today.



Game 2: Snakes & Ladders by Ahmed Kassim (2011), Oil on Canvas. 220 X 180 cm

Armen Agop

Born in Cairo, Egypt 1969

Lives and works in Pietrasanta, Italy.

As part of his training, Armen Agop apprenticed at the painter Simon Shahrighian's studio for five years prior to graduating with a degree in sculpture from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Helwan University in Egypt in 1992.

In 1998, a few years after graduation, Agop received the Sculpture Prize at the Autumn Salon, Cairo. Later in 2000, he was awarded the prestigious Prix de Rome, Italy's state award for artistic creativity.

After his move to Italy, Agop's work enjoyed high visibility there, he showed at notable institutions including the National Gallery of Modern Art; The Egyptian Academy, and the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca in Rome; The Centro Culturale L. Russo, Pietrasanta; Arte Fiera, Bologna; the Biennale Internazionale d'Art Contemporanea di Firenze in 2001, where he achieved Second Prize; and the 7th Biennale Internazionale di Scultura della Regione Piemonte in 2010.

Outside of Italy, his work has been featured in 'Sculptori della Provincia di Lucca', Florida, 2002; the Toyamura International Sculpture Biennial, Japan in 2003 and 2005; Veksolund Gallery, Denmark between 2006-2010; Art Sawa Gallery, UAE in 2009; The 4th Beijing International Art Biennial, China in 2010; Art Stage, Singapore in 2011 and '25 Ans de Creativite Arabe', Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris in 2012.

Throughout his international success however, Agop has consistently maintained a presence in the Egyptian Art exhibition circuit, most significantly, his participation in the 11th International Cairo Biennial in 2008.

Agop's monochromatic works delicately executed in smooth, flowing forms, lend them a universal quality, free of the nuances of time and place. The effortless outlines of the sculptures contrast with their immediate and compelling effect on the viewer.



Untitled by Armen Agop (2008), Bronze. 114 X 38 X 24 cmh



Untitled by Armen Agop (2008), Bronze. 102 X 24 X 24 cmh

Atef Ahmed

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

Atef Ahmed received a BFA in Art Education from Helwan University, Egypt in 1995. In addition he holds a diploma in Folklore from the Arts Academy in Egypt which he received in 1999. For eight years, Ahmed was granted a full scholarship for his art practice from the Egyptian Ministry of Culture from 2001 to 2009. Ahmed is a member of the Plastic Artists Syndicate, the Egyptian Society of Folk Arts and Cairo Atelier.

He participated in a number of important group shows, among them the '3rd International Photographic Art Exhibition' in Chengdu, China, 2010; 'Undercurrent' at Art Sawa Gallery in Dubai, 2009; 'International Encounter of Arts' in Sanaa, Yemen in 2009; '2nd African Festival' at Algeria Museum of Arts; 'Book Fair' in Germany, 2004; 'Al Nitaq International Festival' in Cairo, 2001; the 3rd & 4th Port Said Biennales, Egypt, 1996 & 1998. In addition, his work was regularly exhibited at the Salon of Youth, Cairo from 1992 to 2003.



Cotton Candy by Atef Ahmed (2012), Mixed media on Canvas. 142 X 138 cm (each)

Ayman El Semary

Born in Kafr Shokr-Kalubia, Egypt, 1965
Lives and works between Cairo and Kalubia, Egypt.

Ayman El Semary completed his MA in painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Helwan University, Cairo in 1995, and he achieved a PhD in art education at his Alma Mater in 2001.

From 1995 onwards, El Semary regularly exhibited his work between Cairo and Alexandria. On the international arena, he participated in exhibitions representing contemporary Egyptian art in a number of countries such as China in 2002, Algeria in 2005, the Czech Republic in 2006 and Germany in 2007. The same year in 2007, he represented Egypt at the Venice Biennale. Most recently, El Semary participated in Photofest Houston in 2013 and Caravan Art Festival, London in 2013.

Amongst the accolades he has achieved throughout his career are Grand Prize, the 7th Youth Salon, Cairo in 1995; Grand Prize, International Union for Plastic Arts Critiques (AIKA), in 1997; Jury Prize, 10th Youth Salon, Cairo in 1998; Best Partition Prize, International Dubrovnik Biennial, Croatia, 1999 and the Honor Prize and Bronze Medal at the Alexandria Biennial, Egypt, 2003.

Born and raised in the Egyptian countryside, El Semary's rural background has provided him with a rich source of inspiration, the effect of which is almost tangible in his oeuvre as his works often echo the texture and palette of the walls of rural buildings that formed a backdrop to his upbringing. His interest in alternative materials and non-conventional techniques has steered his practice from the onset of his career as a multidisciplinary artist, moreover, it allows him to freely move between painting, using mixed media, sculpture, installations and at times video and photography in order to successfully render the subject at hand. El Semary has been working as a Professor of visual arts at the American University in Cairo since 2004.



Top Left:
The Journey 12 by Ayman El Semary (2012),
Mixed media on reclaimed wood.
120 X 120 cm



Top Right:
The Journey 11 by Ayman El Semary (2012),
Mixed media on reclaimed wood.
120 X 120 cm



Bottom Right:
The Journey 13 by Ayman El Semary (2012),
Mixed media on reclaimed wood.
120 X 120 cm

Essam Darwish

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

Essam Darwish completed his formal education by acquiring a Ph. D. in sculpture from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Helwan University in Egypt.

His more recent exhibitions include the 'Egyptian Contemporary Sculpture Exhibition', 2004 and 2007 in Serbia and Yemen Respectively; 'Faces of Egypt', Alexandria Library, 2006, and an exhibition on Egyptian noble prize winner laureate Naguib Mahfouz, Alexandria Library, 2011. Darwish has participated in the Third and Fourth Beijing International Biennale in 2008 and 2010 respectively.

Many of Darwish's sculptures stand in public arenas worldwide. Commissioned by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, 2003, a granite statue of Venus grace the facade of Edfu University in Edfu, Aswan; a marble and stainless steel creation named 'Together', for which he received second prize in the Emaar International Symposium Dubai, UAE, 2004, 'The Philosopher', a marble statue erected at the Alexandria Library, Egypt, 2006 and 'The Olive Tree' at the Qanrato Venerato stadium, Greece in 2011.

Darwish's works are exhibited in the National Museum NOMAC, China, the Modern Art Museum in Cairo, Egypt, the Open Museum, Aswan and the Alexandria Library, Alexandria, Egypt. In addition to being a full time artist, Darwish works as a Professor of Sculpture at the Faculty of Art Education at Helwan University in Cairo.



Darwish by Essam Darwish (2013), Bronze. 80 X 33 X 31 cmh

Essam Marouf

Born in Cairo, Egypt 1958

Lives and works between Cairo and Amsterdam.

Essam Marouf completed his bachelor's degree in 1981 from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Helwan University in Cairo where he specialised in mural painting. After his graduation, Marouf spent three years at the Accademia di Bella Arte in Rome continuing his studies.

The artist enjoys both local and international exposure as some of his most recent exhibitions include: 'PAN Amsterdam', Galerie Helga Hofman, Alphen aan de Rijn, NL, 2012; Institute du Monde Arab, Paris, 2008 and 2012; 'Art Paris Abu Dhabi', Art Sawa, 2010; 'Same People..Same Story' Galerie Helga Hofman, 2011; ME.NA.SA Art Fair, Beirut and Marrakech Art Fair, Ward Art Center, Marrakesh, both in 2011, and Museum Complesso del Vittoriano, Rome, 2007. In his hometown, he has held several exhibitions, including; 'Muse' Ofok Gallery, Museum M. Khalil, Cairo, 2011; 'Still Valid', The American University in Cairo, 2011; '100 Years of the Faculty of Fine Arts' and the 11th International Cairo Biennale, 2008.

With strong influences from his experiences in Europe and the Middle East, Marouf's work has been showcased among a number of private, corporate and museum collections, both locally and internationally.



Untitled 5 by Essam Marouf (2014), Acrylic on Linen. 120 X 100 cm

Mohamad Ardash

Born in Cairo, Egypt 1964

Lives and works between Cairo, Egypt.

Mohamed Ardash holds a Ph. D in Graphic Design from Helwan University in Egypt. Since 1987, his work shows a mix of painting and photography for which he received several awards. He has held several solo shows as well as participated in national and international group exhibitions. In Egypt, he took part in The Human Figure at Palace of Arts in and Portrait Exhibitions at Horizon One Gallery, both in Cairo in 2010.

More recently, in 2011 his work was exhibited at FA Gallery in Kuwait in Familiar Features; in 2012 at Syra Gallery in Washington DC and Palm Springs; and in 2013 featured in Rester Partir, Le Voyage Impossible in Voies Off Festival in Arles.

Ardash is a freelance practitioner in advertising and print media and he is an Associate Professor of Design.



Higher State by Mohamad Ardash (2013), Acrylic on Canvas. 100 X 100 cm

Nagla Samir

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

Nagla Samir is a Contemporary media artist and culture operator.

Her work falls within diverse disciplines; including photography, digital image, video and installation. Her work explores with social norms vs. spiritual aspects.

She held several solos and participated in group national and international exhibitions. Her work was awarded prizes, among which is the Award of the 24th Alexandria Biennial for Mediterranean Countries. Her most recent project entitled "Lost in Transmission" is currently exhibited in Lulea Art Biennial, Sweden.

She holds a Ph.D. in visual communication. Samir works as a part time Assistant Professor of Art and Design at The American University in Cairo.

Her curatorial projects include IMAFY (International forum for media art for youth in Egypt), "A Survival Guide", and "Liberation: A Process Review".

She founded Passage 35 Center for contemporary art, and worked as Director of the Sharjah Art Gallery at the American University in Cairo.



Left:
Teacher & Child by Nagla Samir (2006),
Photographic print on Plexiglas.
50 X 70 cm



Middle:
Holding Flowers by Nagla Samir (2006),
Photographic print on Plexiglas.
45 X 70 cm



Right:
Elder Brother by Nagla Samir
(2006), Photographic print on Plexiglas.
50 X 25 cm

Gallery Ward

Originating in Cairo, Gallery Ward was founded in 2010 by 3 partners; Abdulaziz Al Abdulkader, Yaser Askar with the creative direction by established Egyptian curator Ehab Ellaban. Having headed the Cairo Biennale twice as well as being the director of Ofok, a prominent exhibition space at the Mahmoud Khalil Museum in Cairo and the curator of landmark projects such as the Institute du Monde Arabe, 25 Years of Arab Creativity, Ellaban has had his hand on the pulse of the Egyptian art scene for the past decade.

Gallery Ward is committed to introduce, showcase and promote multifaceted and compelling artistic productions from the Middle East both regionally and internationally while ensuring a supportive environment and platform from which works of art from the region, with a focus on Egypt, can assume their due significance on the global arena.

In today's tenuous yet highly dynamic climate, Arab art is witnessing a period of unprecedented attention. By transcending geographical limitations and political boundaries, art from the region is poised to become a key player in the discourse that activates global art production today. With this premise in mind, Gallery Ward aims to play a central role in being a driving force behind the growth and enrichment of art from the Middle East region at large. Furthermore, with the belief that Egyptian art has historically, and in the present day, been an essential agent and plays a galvanizing role in art and culture from the region, Gallery Ward aims to provide a focus on the contemporary Egyptian art scene by introducing and showcasing works by some of the most dynamic Egyptian artists living and working in Egypt and abroad today. Thereby facilitating a more complex and compelling dialogue surrounding Middle Eastern art in general.



Riyadh Dubai Cairo

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