

Cairo

**Mohamed Abouelnaga, Ahmed Badry, Sabah Naim,
Mina Nasr, Alexandra Wey**

Pyramids, papyrus and pharaohs - mummies, mausoleums and mosques. Most likely, these are the first associations a visitor of Cairo comes up with. However, apart from that the Egyptian metropolis has a very lively and remarkable contemporary art scene to offer. Especially after the political downfall of Hosni Mubarak's regime in 2011, there has been a recovery of the cultural life in Cairo. Liberated, artists from all kind of backgrounds show their attitudes and exhibit their works openly since then. The art scene presents itself, conform to the recent development, colorful and multi-faceted. It is this aspect of diversity that is reflected in the current exhibition. The visitor gets the chance to understand in how many different ways the megacity Cairo can influence creative working. On top of this, the displayed art works surely manage to capture the spectator in an entertaining and stimulating way.

Mohamed Abouelnaga's (*1960, Tanta) art pieces can easily be linked with a very old, traditional, Egyptian handicraft: The manufacturing of papyrus. As one of the very first artists from the Middle Arabian World Mohamed Abouelnaga had the opportunity to devote himself to the production of papyrus in both Japan and Egypt. In his collages he uses paper made from palm leaves that he fabricated himself. In doing so, he certainly underlines his origins and connects his works to the ancient Egypt. However, when it comes to the subject of his art he is involved in contemporary topics and the general life in Cairo. Also, he deals with these issues in a quite critical way as one can see in his art works „Four Trees in Tahir Square“ (2012).

„The provisionary that lasts“ (2013) by **Ahmed Badry (*1979, Cairo)** is a perfect example for the presentation of everyday life in an Egyptian metropolis. In a humorous way the sculpture shows the tendency of modern inhabitants of Cairo to help themselves with provisional solutions. In contrasting this particular characteristic with the generally very accurate Western lifestyle he even intensifies this habit. At the same time he discusses the issue of temporary solutions in his society in general, since in many cases it is the temporary way of problem solving that becomes permanently lasting in the end.

In her works, **Sabah Naim (*1967, Cairo)** focuses on the deconstruction of daily experiences in Cairo. She observes busy people living in Cairo who are anonymous to her and captures their everyday business in her photographs. Afterwards, she edits the pictures individually and consequently separates the shown humans from their context. This kind of documentation enables her to illustrate the atmosphere and temperament of Cairo appropriately, and also to display her own perception of the city.

Mina Nasr (*1983, Cairo) regards himself as an observer of contemporary society and analyses and documents it in his art pieces. In his work series „Beauty from Egypt“ (2014) he deals with the serious and important topic of lost and stolen Egyptian artifacts. His big sized paper works communicate the smuggler’s disregard for these culturally important, ancient art pieces and also the ignorance of those who tolerate the illegal export or even support it. The artist points out clearly the cultural loss the whole Egyptian society experiences as a result of this smuggling.

The photo series “DurchSichtCairo” (2010) [SeeThroughCairo] by the Swiss photographer **Alexandra Wey (*1978, Zug)** is about the matter of visible and non-visible. During her stay in Cairo she captured impressions of the city that are true and unveiled to her with her camera. By taking pictures through a reflecting glass plate she enables the spectator not only to see the motif itself but also what is not visible at first sight: the scenery behind the photographer. Alexandra Wey manages to create both a conceptual and visual multilayered complexity. On top of this she even goes one step further: Instead of printing the photography on simple Kodak paper she prints it on the front and the back of a plexiglas. With the help of a particular installation and illumination of the pieces a shadow of the motif as a further layer comes into existence that is another fascinating effect for the spectator.

The group exhibition “CAIRO” at the AB Gallery Lucerne runs from February, 1st 2015 to March, 28th 2015.

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