

## Ahmed Badry: Fascinated by the Temporary Solutions



Scissors, 2012, Cardboard, 20x6x2cm. private collector.

Seeing the sculptures of Ahmed Badry in photographs is not at all like seeing them in real life. The whole impact of those usual day to day objects that Ahmed keenly sculpts, is overwhelming for he blows them out of proportion making his versions tens of times larger than the real life objects. The huge proportion is definitely intriguing and gives objects like the car emergency hammer or the toilet cleaning brush, new qualities, weight and meaning. Yet another surprise awaits the visitor to Badry's exhibitions or Studio; Are these sculptures made of acrylic like one would expect

nowadays? "No, they are all cardboard," Badry would answer. A vital trait for an artist, Badry sure doesn't lack, is the inquisitive eye. He persistently searches for items and images related to the collective visual memory. Badry starts with his own memory then looks for signs and images, in private and public spaces, that are part of the day to day life yet are by no means perceived as creative cultural elements. "In the Faculty we were instructed to search for the fragments of the scene that look different. I started out searching for things that grabbed my attention, sometimes on the very personal

level as well. Things that relate to my visual memory or to the collective visual memory,” says Badry.

Badry, born in Cairo in 1979 and graduated from the Faculty of Art Education, Cairo - Egypt in 2003. Though some artists rank the school as being of lower category compared to the Faculties of Fine Arts and Applied Arts, Badry and many of his colleagues believe that they have an edge. The faculty gave them the chance to experiment with materials; they don't specialize according to the art branch, and for five years they study sculpture, pottery, illustration, design, typography, textile, etc. with the main objective of getting to carry out projects with any given material and to learn about the possibilities and limitations of each material. But it was not only his school years experience that made him master playing with different materials; Badry had a great artistic and technical experience working for three years in a factory in Switzerland where large scale works for leading artists are carried out. Badry was married and living in Switzerland for over 3 years (2009 – 2012) when he applied for this job and got accepted.

According to him, the factory is the second or third largest factory worldwide dedicated to this purpose. Workers were mostly artists and specialized chemists and technicians to guarantee the quality and precision of work. “We once accomplished 2.5 meters statue out of layers of wax,” says Badry. The main project that Badry has been working on over the last three years is ‘The Provisionary that Lasts’ or better said ‘temporary solutions’. Some details are usually missed by people while others stand out as odd, creative or shocking; a clothes hanger with two light bulbs at either ends serves as a chandelier, a drill with reversed scissors attached to it chuck serve as whipping instrument and an iron is inverted to serve for heating a piece of pizza. Those temporary solutions that Egyptians tend to adopt more and more everyday to overcome technical problems that they face in their daily life. “It is true that those temporary solutions that we see around us everywhere, are a sign of creativity yet they represent a problem: the solutions remain temporary not for good,” says Badry who believes that poverty makes people resort to such solutions to cope with the lack of resources which makes them unable to seek the help of professional technicians as simple they can not afford their services. Badry

spent one year preparing for this project and dedicated the last two years to producing tens of picture, sketches, cardboard sculptures all capturing those out of the box, awkward and sometimes dangerous solutions. In spite of the fragile and short-lived nature of cardboard, Badry sees it is quite suitable for expressing ‘the temporary’. When shown to European public most of the items of the project seemed quite shocking especially that some of them presented solutions involving electricity and went totally against all safety measures. The project however was smoothly received by the Egyptians public, “Why should an Egyptian be surprised; probably he has done it one day”, Badry said referring to a statue of an electric multiple outlet where an unfitting plug is connected through two bare nails. Badry grew up in a middle class district where there were many workers around, and they were coming up with those temporary solutions all the time. “When I travelled abroad I figured out that this happens only in Egypt and elsewhere they have standard solutions and objects are made to last for good. It is not only about money but some of those solutions are even prohibited by law in other countries,” Badry said. When it comes to painting, Badry is still interested in usual objects; a bus ticket or a traffic sign, the logo of Egypt's most popular tea brand etc. His relatively small subjects are often omnipresent in local everyday routines and at the same time they are of great functional importance, and this is what he tries to highlight; the function and influence of such object on our daily life. Badry's solo exhibitions include ‘Made in China’ in 2009 with Anastasia Katsidis, Kasko-Basel, Switzerland and ‘Al Qahira’, Cairo Atelier, Cairo in 2007. He has participated in several group exhibitions both locally and internationally. During his stay in Switzerland, Badry got the Pro Helvetia scholarship for three months, he also got residencies in London, Rome, Paris and Salzburg. As per the prizes, Badry's awards include the Grand Prize of the 20th Youth Saloon in Egypt and an honorary prize in the 2nd Korea Biennial for Pottery.

Now, Badry has a deal with Artists Pension Trust (APT) for twenty years whereby the Trust will buy one work per year. Badry is also very proud that one of his sculptures is now on display in the Museum for Manufactured Response to Absence in Kuwait.