

Amal Kenawy

Egyptian artist Amal Kenawy has a visual repertoire as often diverse as it is surprising. Covering a spectrum of mediums as well as techniques, Kenawy seems to often reinvent herself in much the same way the actor does on screen.

Her agility as an artist perhaps stems in part from her academic background, which is equally varied. Born in Cairo (1974), where she currently resides and currently works, Kenawy studied film and fashion design at the Academy of Fine Arts' Cinema Institute (1997-1999) before receiving a BA in painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Helwan (1999).

The artist's break came early, with a series of awards, including the 1998 UNESCO Grand Prize at the Cairo Biennale, that propelled her fast onto the international biennale circuit. Her trajectory, however, was questionable given the many obstacles of resources and home-grown support, but Kenawy - once described as "prodigious" merely for her output - has proven herself a voice to be reckoned with in the long-term, rather than merely a trendy flurry of activity amidst a creative

industry where trend potential seems something of a requisite.

Kenawy's visual language brings in its own ingenuity a tangibility to the ethereal worlds she inhabits and explores. She journeys through desire, dreams, doubt, pain, and the intricate interweaving that laces reality and imagination. In her more recent works she makes a departure in form, elevating from the more personal to connect with much larger issues of global and human strife. In her more recent examinations of the fabric of society, with its wealth and greed, excess and decay, and the fundamental truths of life and death and the trajectories to there, Kenawy's growing concern for the state of contemporary Egyptian society offers a mirror to much broader issues of international concern. Her voice strengthens with these most recent works, as does her seeming urge to produce, and in her departures from the personal to the political, she positions herself on a platform that steers clear of common clichés and cements her, Amal Kenawy, as a production to be followed.

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Amal Kenawy. Why Not Exhibition, Palace of the Arts, 2010. Image Courtesy of the Palace of the Arts Gallery (Cairo)

