

Hesham Nawar



Nawwar, *The Fall*, 1989

Born in 1967 Hesham Nawar is a sculptor, painter, photographer and installation artist. Having studied at Helwan University's faculty of Fine Arts evening classes, Nawar is clearly knowledgeable about the history of both Egyptian and European art, the latter he – like many of his Egyptian contemporaries – acquainted himself with through books and the Internet. Nawar took the Egyptian art scene by storm in 1989 by winning the Grand Prize for sculpture at the First Salon of Young Artists. His work, a suspended life-size sculpture of a man

falling from height, ignited controversy amongst the then conservative academics, audiences and artists alike.

The work was made out of recycled paper pastes, ropes and glue on a wire skeleton. Ever since, Nawar has led a successful local career with occasional –but excellent– international and regional appearances like The Sharjah Biennale, the then Mascot Biennale and the seminal 2001 exhibition Cairo Modern Art in Holland at the Fortis Circus theater in Den Haag, Holland.

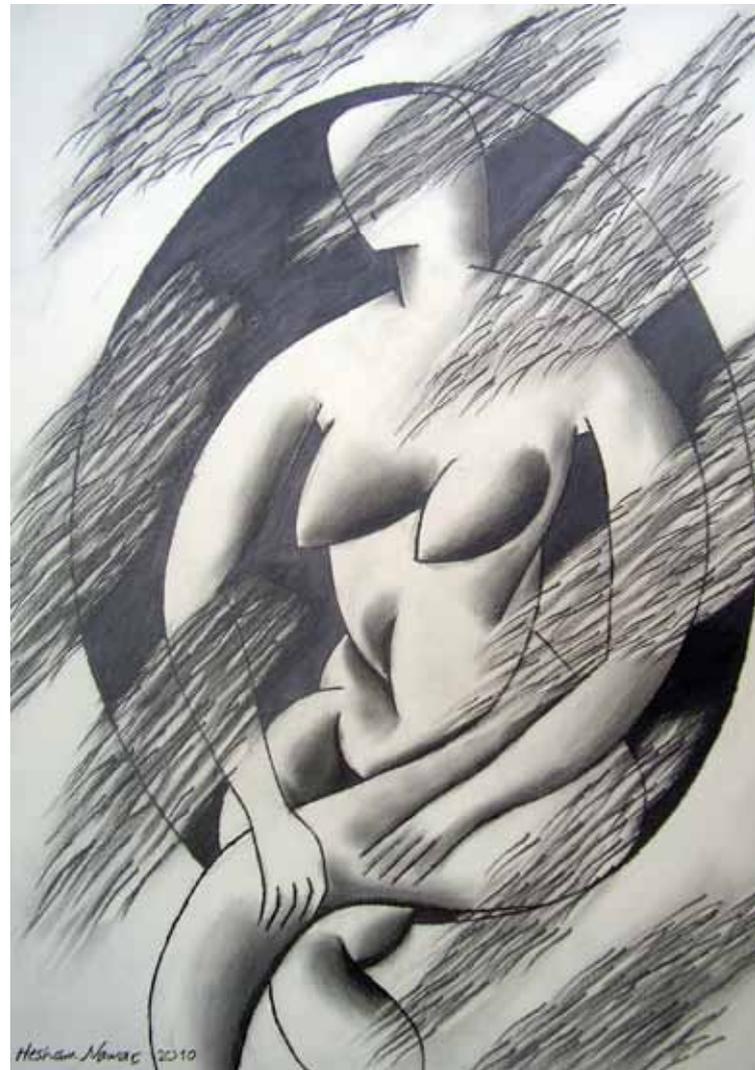
Nawar has shown at numerous public and private galleries in Cairo for over two decades. Technically, he works in series, working in his small studio/residence in the suburb of Tawkifeya. Nawar draws inspiration from local Egyptian folk heritage as well as the country's ancient history. His *modus operandi* includes collecting images in innumerable computer folders and later processing them in a diversity of media.

It took Nawar a decade to come to the conclusion of his series *Monochrome Eternal Hill*. The paintings – varied in texture and often built up into deep relief – all include a hill-like shape. This hill originates from the old Egyptian creation myth which tells of a time when the whole world was water. From this water rose a hill upon which the sun god Atum sat to create everything else. The shape, which Nawar started using in 2002, is present in a lot of other ways in Egypt; the obelisk, pyramids, wheat stores, pigeon houses and so on. To Nawar, much of the potential lies in the fact that these forms are not quite geometric or organic. In 2004, Nawar started making all his 'hill forms' in a specific burgundy colour - a colour related to clay.

His photography series entitled *How to Look at the World with One Eye* is about how everyone has a very personal inflexible viewpoint. A related installation was a re-reading in strings of sequins (looking in reproduction strangely like neon) of Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man* and a detail of Michelangelo's Vatican ceiling – the fingers of God and Adam. In Nawar's version Leonardo's diagram is no longer about how to draw a figure, but about man against the world - Michelangelo's fingers became aggressive, judgmental, each containing a gun. In this way, Nawar's research probes the capacity of art to

change meaning over time.

Nawar's work is currently taking a new technical direction, moving towards black and white photography, and almost Magritte-inspired drawings of women's bodies.



Nawar, *untitled pencil drawing*, 2010