

# THE FIRST EGYPTIAN COLLECTIVE OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN VENICE.

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1. Ahmed Kassim, break up, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 150x100cm - Courtesy of the artist.  
2. Ahmed Kassim, chances, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 150x100cm - Courtesy of the artist.



The first experimental Egyptian collective of Contemporary Art in Venice was the initiative of the Italian artist, Egypt-born Enas Elkorashy aiming to present the Egyptian artists for the first time in Venice. This is the first exhibition of its kind bringing the art of two Egyptian generations for the first time outside of The Venice Biennale. The five artists provide a range of different styles between one other to vary the examples of Egyptian art.

All of the artists gained their art degree in Egypt. Four of them live in Cairo except Enas Elkorashy, who has lived in Venice since she graduated from Fine arts Cairo 2008. Moving to the city of art, exploring the contemporary

art in the world through The Venice Biennale and travelling around Europe. Living in Italy all influenced her artworks and the contemporary art world now around her contrast greatly against the academic art study she had in Cairo. She decided to turn her first personal exhibition in Venice into The First Egyptian collective in Venice, and chose the perfect time to present the artists - one week before the inauguration of The 55th Venice Biennale - when artists, critics and journalists are all present. Enas Elkorashy aimed to exhibit what it is not expected from the Egyptian artists, even it's quite normal in Egypt. Obviously the media for the Middle East and Middle Eastern art has affected the world, even many Egyptian artists are internationally renowned but it's not enough for presenting the



1. Ibrahim El Desouki, diptech A, 2011, oil on canvas, 125x90cm - Courtesy of the artist.  
2. 2011 - diptech b - 90x125cm - oil on canvas - Courtesy of the artist.



contemporary Middle Eastern art around the world. Still the world thinks that the Middle Eastern art is influenced with the Islamic cultural and the oriental traditional. Particularly in this age of instant global communications Middle Eastern artists, especially the young generation, has no limits; the artist can't be inside the traditional limits and yet still shape his imaginations and ideologies. Not only is the Middle Eastern artist influenced by the politics, life and the media in his own country, but also by the media and the art made with the freedom other artists have all over the world. As today's generation of talented artists are in the midst of the cultural and religion upheavals, their artworks are overt in incorporating their political and social critiques.

The idea of The First Egyptian Collective of Contemporary Art in Venice was shocking the exhibition visitors by showing what is not expected from Egyptian artists due to what is seen in the media about the politics and lifestyle of the Middle East. It was a great success in getting the point across and was a real eye opener for people. Ahmed Kassim's (1984) artworks are the most unexpected in the exhibition with his unlimited imagination full of fantasy influenced with politics, revolution, Muslim Brotherhood, government, people, media, music....Egypt. Doesn't care for the political and social critiques. Painting his own reality, painting whatever passes through his mind without any consideration. Aya Elfallah (1986) with her nude paintings is really not expected from an





- 1. Reda Abd Elrahman, *I a secular, I am everyone series*, acrylic on canvas, 150x120cm, Courtesy of the artist, 2013.
- 2. Reda Abd Elrahman, *I a secular, I am Jews series*, acrylic on canvas, 150x120cm, Courtesy of the artist, 2013.
- 3. Reda Abd Elrahman, *I a secular, I am Christian series*, acrylic on canvas, 150x120cm, Courtesy of the artist, 2013.
- 4. Reda Abd Elrahman, *I a secular, I am Muslim series*, acrylic on canvas, 150x120cm, Courtesy of the artist, 2013.



Egyptian female artist. Expecting the Oriental traditional and the Islamic cultural shape the artist's artwork and her ideologies. Aya's artworks touch the visitors with its personality and the different sentiments on them. Reading through her artworks what she felt in different periods in her life. Seeing parts of her room where she lives and get out all her artworks. Simply Aya leaves entering to little part of her personal life but with limit. Enas Elkorashy (1986) participated with her fashion European artworks. Specifically her last artworks mixing the Egyptian traditional doll (Aroset Elmoled) with her passion of fashion, imagining the Egyptian traditional doll made from sugar (which is almost non existent anymore) is back and in the fashion week. An interesting mix between Egyptian historical objects with European cultural styles, demonstrating the effect European culture had on the artist since living in Italy. Reda Abd Elrahman (1964) Believing in Marx Say "religion is the opium of the masses" he presented himself in four self-portraits - 3 decorated with different religion's symbols as well as one with the peace sign - titled: I am everybody. The religion can change but the person stills the same. Presenting himself as a Muslim, Copt and Jewish to demonstrate his message for peace.



1. Enas Elkorashy, artwork on artwork, pin-up girls 2050 series, 2009-2012, mixed media on MDF, 100\*70 - Courtesy of the artist.  
1. Aya El Fallah, sleeping man, 2012, mixed media on canvas, 140x100 - Courtesy of the artist.

Summarizing lots of speaking and discussions in an artwork by providing a simple yet strong message. And finally, Ibrahim Eldessouki (1969) was presenting his strong academic artworks with their dreamy reality in the city on the contemporary art, which is very uncommon to see the beauty of the academic artwork, especially in the biennale time. Visitors commented, "It's so lovely to see again real academic artworks and by a good artist as well". Using colors mixed with attention to generate a range of tones at the same time using both dreamy and epic colour to evoke a sense of tenderness and delicacy. The exhibition is co-curated by Daniella P. Baciqlupo and Enas Elkorashy with collaboration with the Fine arts sector in Egypt and the ministry of the cultural in Egypt, Armenian center for studying and documentation in Venice, cultural foundation Latin America in Venice and Italian association of young architects in Venice. Musical contribution came from Venice Jazz Club in the inauguration and Iranian musical contribution in the closing of the show in an attempt to bridge the gap between different art scenes in the Middle East.

