

Emotional exhibition: Bahgory on Revolution

Sara Elkamel, Saturday 28 Jan 2012

'Bahgory on Revolution' showcases the paintings of Egyptian-resident-in-Paris; overflowing with colour, sheer emotion and carrying the spirit of Tahrir



"Never did I imagine that the echo of one scream, one call: 'The [Egyptian] people want...' could give way to a revolution, and a million revolutionaries, then eighty million more. I'm one of those," states Georges Bahgory.

After decades of art, manoeuvring from Egypt to France and translating his frustrations and energy on canvas, Bahgory again finds inspiration in his homeland.

The maverick studied art at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1955, then moved to Paris. Expanding his artistic expertise, Bahgory explored drawing, engraving, literature and cinema. Egypt has always been Bahgory's inspiration, where he fuels his creative energy; and Paris is where it is unleashed, materialising into charged art.

Listening to the chants of a nation resound throughout the skies, Bahgory's spirits were liberated. Peering up at his life-size canvases, you can sense freedom staring back at you. Most of his canvases are jam-packed with colours and shapes, depicting protesting men and women in his typical cubist style. Georges Bahgory is not at all tight-fisted with colours; his paintings are dressed in a diverse and rich palette.

"From Tahrir Squares to my studio, I walked with arms raised up waving among the droves - millions of them. I chanted yet again," Bahgory says.

In his studio, Bahgory started working, trying to capture history on canvas, “it was as if my arms had become a brush after the first revolution,” Bahgory’s statement reads. “As if my five fingers have turned into hot red, orange and yellow colours; mirroring the flames around me and inside my own chest.”

Bahgory’s work frequently expresses his Egyptian heritage and tackles themes of identity. Artists divulge their deepest feelings in their artwork; drawing upon the world around them, their canvases emerge as a mirror to their soul. “My own screams have become the canvases that you see in this exhibition.”

Some paintings depict revolution-scenes, such as the infamous “Battle of the Camel,” where horses and camels carried armed thugs into Tahrir Square to attack protestors.

Suddenly you are strolling through a history book, written by Bahgory’s paintbrush. Contrasting with the typical black and white sketch documenting the battle, the canvas is a lively and busy scene, where horses and camels fly dramatically over thousands of protestors.

Walking through the silent, spacious gallery in Zamalek, surrounded by a year of Bahgoury’s art, you are overwhelmed with the energy of the colours and the motion on canvas. In one of the paintings, the Egyptian flag’s eagle leaps off the flag and into the sea of colour beyond.

Bahgory presents a revolution-themed exhibition that is not limited to revolution. His beloved Om Kalthoum appears in one of his paintings, and two self-portraits reiterate that this exhibition is highly personal. Bahgory changes with his country, and its energy shapes his artwork.

Programme:

Now - 17 February 2012

ALMASAR Gallery for Contemporary Art

Baehler's Mansion 157b, 26 July Street, Side Entrance on Isaac Jacob Street, Ground Floor, Zamalek

Hours: Saturday – Thursday, 11am-9pm

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/33021.aspx>