



Al Masar Gallery: Gallery Collection



Gallery Collection at Al Masar

To mark its four year anniversary Al Masar Gallery in Zamalek has decided to combine some of the best art that it has exhibited over the last four years in what they've titled the 'Gallery Collection' exhibition. Combining influential artists such as Georges Bahgory, Leila Izzat and Adel El Siwi, the result is an enriching and potent display of art.

Considering the overall number of artists being displayed, the exhibition literally eats up every wall of the space. Paintings are found hung in the back offices, in the hallways and literally everywhere there is surface area. The items are not in any specific order and paintings by different artists were almost randomly hung around.

The styles and approaches vary greatly; Taha Hussien paints in vibrant speckled colours matched with abstract stick figures swept across the canvas, while next to his work, a more subdued piece by Leila Izzat depicts two horses in washed colours.

There are several highlights in the exhibition. A piece by Ahmed Farid has people painted as blocks of colour, resembling crayons in a box. Hamdi Attia uses typography on his more abstract dreamy scene of flying hot air balloons dripping in paint; the caption reads '*Paid for by photojournalism and art*'. A large piece by Omar El Nagdy has textured paint that looks like it's been mixed with sand, or like the canvas has been covered in blue cinnamon sugar.

Other standouts include pieces by Georges El Bahgory. Considered one of the fathers of Egyptian caricature, Bahgory's characters portray the same exaggerated visual language associated with this genre. A painting with a lady that bears some resemblance to Om Kalthoum shows her grasping onto a handkerchief, pleading in some way with her eyes directed at the sky. Her round cheeks and cartoon elements make for a charming, and dare we say cute, outcome. Another absolutely captivating piece by Bahgory is hung in another room of the gallery and unlike the above-mentioned piece; there is something distinctly dark and twisted about it.

What seems like mixed media, the sizable piece is blander in colour than his other work but the subjects are, on the contrary, animated and moving. With an upside down horse at the top right corner, a seated camel and a painted blue portion that may signify the Nile, the rest of the canvas is filled entirely with faces and hands. Crowded and overwhelming, the characters look like an overcrowded bus of refugees struggling to breathe or get out. It is most absorbing.

Another notable item in the show is the sculpture 'King of the Throne' by Sobhy Guirguis. His little alien character, as it shall be referred to, is quirky, funny and heart-warming for some reason. Essentially an abstract figure, the small black structure has a long face with bug eyes and a solemn expression. Little hands stick out from somewhere behind its elongated head and beneath it its feet stick out, sturdy on the ground.

Bringing together such a lavish collection of artists under one roof has proved to be a great venture. The exhibition is engaging and fulfilling; it gives a thorough picture of the Egyptian art scene.

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