




Alienation and Discourse in Art

*There are a lucky few of us who can channel their thoughts and opinions in art. These gifted artists portray life, events, thoughts, and beliefs in their own way and leave it up to our own visual interpretation to understand it and relate it to our personal thoughts and beliefs and see how they fit into our lives. The newly inaugurated venue of **Al Masar Gallery**, in Cairo, recently hosted two of the most gifted contemporary artists; **Sami Aboul Azm** and **Georges Bahgoury** best known for their unique style and thought provoking compositions.*

For Sami Aboul Azm's first solo exhibition, "*Alienation*" is portrayal of Egypt's current state and the people's overall perceptions and feelings. The first few weeks after Egypt's recent revolution were filled with pride, happiness, excitement and hope at finally having a chance to achieve justice, freedom equality and human dignity. However, the current situation could not be further from the once glimmering light of hope. Aboul Azm describes the nation's current feelings of alienation, separation and fear that can be felt through our daily interactions with family, friends, colleagues or even passersby. The separation is not just extroverted but Aboul Azm also portrays it as a struggle within one's self which results in a feeling of numbness, the artist communicates the idea of 'alienation within the nation and not from the nation.'

Sami Aboul Azm, born in 1967, began his artistic career by participating in *Youth Salons, National exhibitions* and several local as well as *international exhibitions*. His activity gained him publicity and contributed to his establishment in the art field which eventually led to his contribution to the Egyptian Museum of Modern Art. His distinctive and realistic style of figurative art is his signature which he uses to convey a subconscious philosophical state of alienation and isolation through contradicting elements and blending colours. The subject of his work is usually related to political issues or instances of social alienation.

Isolation by *Sami Aboul Azm*

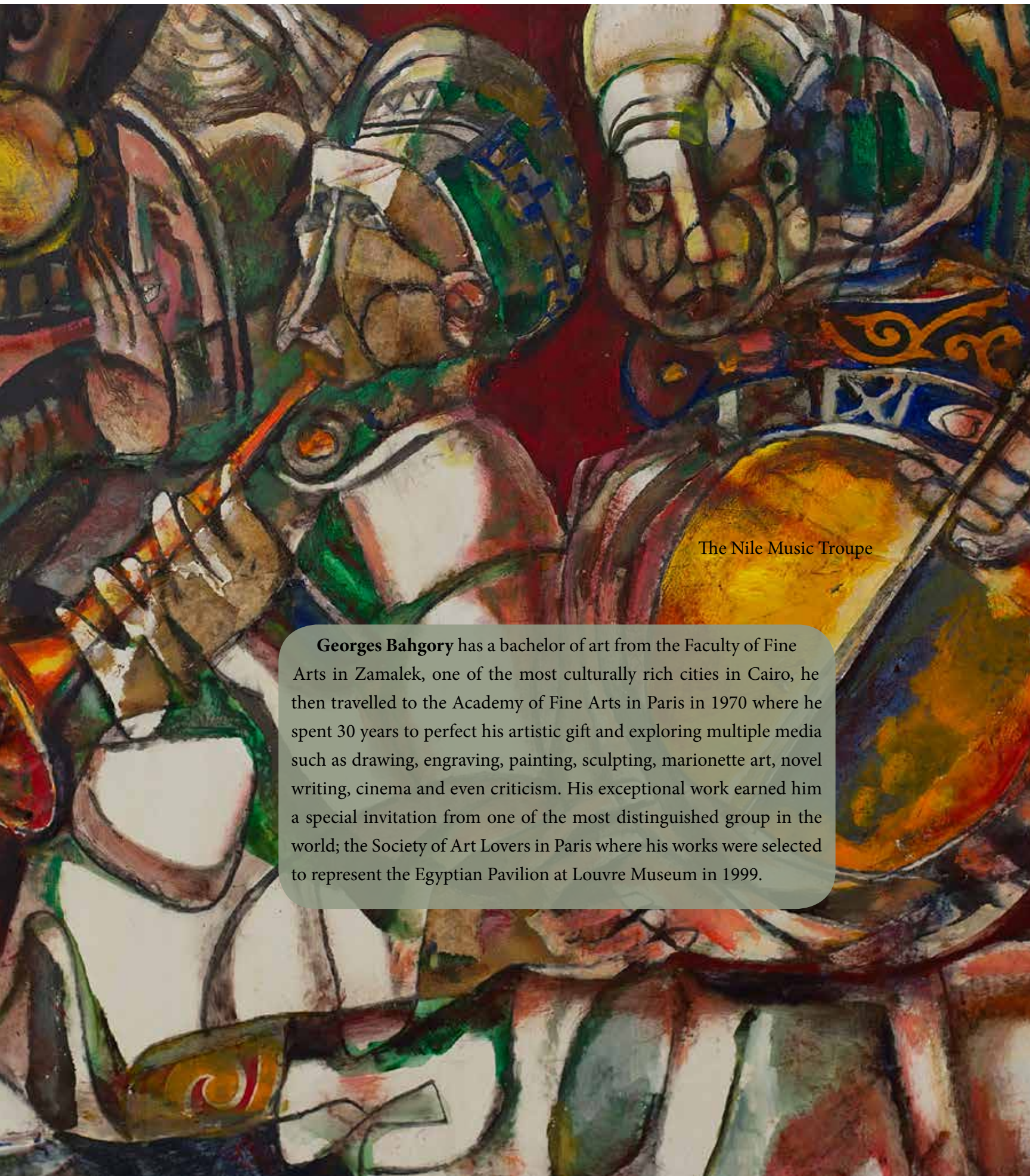


“Isolation” by Aboul Azm is a painting of three women wrapped in white sheets, two of which are lying on the floor and gazing into the nothingness while the third one is sitting between them and through her vacant eyes you can imagine her wondering “where has my life gone?” and “what did I do to deserve this?”. The positioning of the bodies in the picture portrays the women as being neglected, abandoned and discarded like trash. The expression on their faces is of numbness and pain and maybe even shame. The third one is looking away. The scene can be interpreted as the leftovers of an act of violation that the women were unlucky enough to survive, live through and be reminded every day. The puzzling aspect is that they are wrapped in white sheets. The sheets are clean and white traditionally represents peace and innocence, in our culture these types of sheets are usually used to wrap the deceased as we lay them in their graves or coffins but in this composition they are wrapped around these women even though they are clearly alive. It may symbolizes how their souls are dead and/or how the sheet is trying to replace the innocence someone else took away from them. The boots cast away at the bottom of their feet are clearly men’s boots since they are too big on their feet, signifying the remains of a men’s presence. Finally, the environment they are placed in is in the middle of nowhere with no significant landmark, it is as if they are tossed away with no one close enough to help them or take notice.

Quartette

About Azm’s alienation theme is sometimes mirrored by Georges Bahgory’s collection titled **“Dialogue of Mind Soul”**. The artist portrays his inner dialogues between his mind and soul, we are all guilty of drifting off and wondering about our lives, hopes, dreams, flaws and artists like Bahgory are talented enough to be able to convey their inner most thoughts onto a canvas while the majority usually allows them to drift into space only to creep into our minds at a later time. The collection features Bahgory’s personal portrayal of Egyptian daily lives, familiar scenes and traditions. Unlike About Azm, Bahgory expands his coverage of the Egyptian feelings to include his own memories, social personas, traditional symbols and uses the **“Khayameya”** print in most of his paintings to emphasis the Egyptian heritage even more.

Sufism - El Mawlaweya



The Nile Music Troupe

Georges Bahgory has a bachelor of art from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Zamalek, one of the most culturally rich cities in Cairo, he then travelled to the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris in 1970 where he spent 30 years to perfect his artistic gift and exploring multiple media such as drawing, engraving, painting, sculpting, marionette art, novel writing, cinema and even criticism. His exceptional work earned him a special invitation from one of the most distinguished group in the world; the Society of Art Lovers in Paris where his works were selected to represent the Egyptian Pavilion at Louvre Museum in 1999.



The Dancer & the Musician

His outstanding work "*A Face from Egypt*" received the Silver Medal award and his name was added to the list of great masters of art. Bahgoury is a star by any means not only did his work win a medal at the Louvre but he created two granite works during the Aswan International Symposium of Sculpture, he was voted the No. 1 Artist of Portraiture in France, Italy and Spain, he was a candidate of PhD, he published "*Trilogy of Icons*", a novel which was acclaimed by prominent literary critics such as **Dr. Salah Fadl** and **Edwar Al Kharat** and he even co-starred in a French film. The definition of the over achiever indeed.

Sami Aboul Azm and **Georges Bahgoury** are a select few of the prominent Egyptian artists which challenge our perception, explore our thoughts and make us proud to be represented by them in their exceptional field of work.