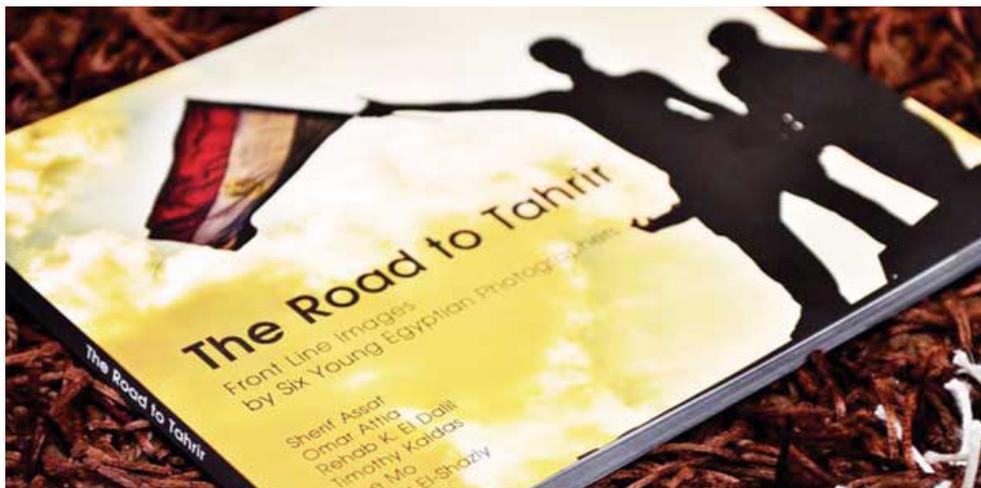


A sincere visual record of the revolution in 'The Road to Tahrir'



The Road to Tahrir.

By **Mariam Hamdy/ Special to Daily News Egypt** **October 4, 2011, 3:42 pm**

Having heard of the latest book release by the American University in Cairo Press titled "The Road to Tahrir," I was sceptical and already exhausted at what I was about to read. Bookstores have been filled to the brim with books about the revolution, most of which are empty pseudo-analytical chronicles by authors who are exploiting the revolution to get their 15 minutes of fame by sheer force.

Furthermore, art galleries that have pounced on the clichéd images of Tahrir have saturated the market with every possible intifada-like composition available. The merits of some of the involved photographers aside, the majority banked on the colossal event itself to carry their work through rather than their personal skills. "The Road to Tahrir" however has proven to be a refreshing exception.

The best part of this book is its decided lack of pretentiousness. "The Road to Tahrir" is a photographic diary of the three weeks spent in Tahrir Square, cleverly described in the book's introduction and blurb as the visual record of 'the journey from tear gas to tears of joy.' The book is one that everyone who has lived through this historical event would appreciate, as it conjures up the fleeting moments of excitement, fear, confusion as well as the hope that engulfed us during those 18 days, the hope that many of us have already lost.

The featured photographs are not particularly 'artistic' in their approach nor are they trying to be. This in itself represents a much welcome break from the current stew of conceited revolution-related photography circulating in our galleries, books and online databases today. Although the balanced compositions, excellent cropping and a few good angles set these images in a different league, what truly distinguishes them from similar works is their focus on the actual recording of the event rather than the aesthetics of the photograph. They contain none of the sensationalism that our 'new and improved' national newspapers present in their photography.

The images are presented in chronological order, from January 25 to the March 19, the day of the constitutional referendum. The beauty of this book is its simple layout. Every day is titled after the name given to it by political activists — January 28: Friday of Anger, February 2: Battle of the Camel, February 11: Friday of Departure, accompanied by well-written introductions, followed by the photographs taken of each day.

The introductions, co-written by Omar Attia and Timothy Kaldas, are involving but not overly emotional and factual but not dull or obvious, conjuring an aura of nostalgia and pride every witness to the revolution will undoubtedly enjoy.

The photographers are six young Egyptians: Sherif Assaf, Omar Attia, Rehab K. El Dalil, Timothy Kaldas, Zee Mo and Monir El Shazly. With the exception of El Dalil and Kaldas, the rest of those involved do not practice photography for a living. They are all however avid photographers who attempted to capture the spirit of the revolution as they were revolting, not all knowing each other at the time.

The names of the photographers are featured only on the book jacket, as the photographs are not labelled, so that you're not aware of who shot what. This not only reduces clutter in the book, but is a further testament to the photojournalistic approach that the book aims for.



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The book is the equivalent of a collage of the revolution, excellently serving the purpose of being a visual record of the event. The photographs are not heart-stopping — if seen framed on a wall, they probably wouldn't grab one's attention — but for what they sought out to do, and in the context where they're placed in, they are perfect and not inflated. "The Road to Tahrir" is an enjoyable album to keep for those who'd like to show their children what they were one day involved in, and what they as Egyptians are capable of.

"The Road to Tahrir" is published by the American University in Cairo and is available in bookstores across Cairo.



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