

Remembering Ahmed Basiouny



Multimedia artist Ahmed Basiouny was killed with a single shot to the head in Tahrir Square.

By **Mariam Hamdy** /Special to Daily News Egypt **February 10, 2011, 1:11 am**

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For the first time in my career covering Egypt's art scene, I can take pride in having known an artist who lived and died for his country. Ahmed Basiouny, 31, visual and multimedia artist, musician and teacher at the Faculty of Art Education at Helwan University, was killed during protests on the "Friday of Anger," January 28, 2011.

Basiouny was killed with a single shot to the head in Tahrir Square when peaceful, defenseless protestors were ambushed by the police. He, like many of the demonstrators on that day, was beaten up earlier yet refused to surrender to police brutality or return home. His last Facebook status, posted one day before, read: "If they want war, we want peace. We are better: I'll practice restraint till the end."

The perseverance we've been seeing as the revolution unfolds, was nothing new to Basiouny. An artist known for encouraging his students and peers to work freely and without limits, Basiouny was talented, upbeat and above all, giving.

Trained as a painter and draughtsman, he also dabbled in many art forms, including installation art, before finally settling on sound, interactive and performance art in 2007. His last art project, which he discussed with me at the 11th Cairo International Biennale in 2008, was exhibited in "Cairo Documenta," an independent contemporary art exhibition at the Viennoise Hotel in Downtown Cairo last December.

The work was a digitally interactive installation that used open source software that constructed words in the Arabic language, that in turn relayed conceptual messages written by the movements of the participants. Although the concept sounded difficult to digest, the piece was genuinely intriguing.

Most of Basiouny's work banked on the viewers' curiosity, denying them the position of idle receivers and pushing them to be active creators in their own right. His work was simply a medium through which his viewers became more involved and aware of his artistic constructs. He was so enthralled by digital arts that involve viewers that he worked on a PhD thesis on interactive electronic art and the ideology behind open source programs. His students have vowed to continue the research he started.

Perhaps it was his love for sharing knowledge and experiences that led Basiouny to be more interested in interactive art and it was certainly what propelled him to become a teacher at the faculty from which he graduated.

Not only is Ahmed Basiouny remembered as a devoted friend to his students, he was known as a man who genuinely wanted to spread the knowledge about his new-found interest and craft. For the last five years, Basiouny has been running an independent sound art workshop for free. He was the first artist/teacher to organize such a progressive workshop in a city where no university program formally introduced classes in significant digital or contemporary electronic art forms.

Basiouny was not the brooding, philosophic type: he was a fun, lively and spirited man who had his finger on the pulse of what was contemporary yet relevant in electronic music. His last performance, which I had the pleasure of attending, was staged at the "100 Live Electronic Music Festival" at Darb1718 in May 2010. He had already started a new direction in his work, incorporating 'shaabi' singing with electronic music. Subtle yet memorable, the catchy song "Abu Asala al Dish" was as entertaining to watch live as it was to hear on the 100live radio — currently paying homage to the artist with a compilation of his songs.



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One can speak volumes about Basiouny's work and life as an artist and his genuine belief that sound and music can help bridge the gap between creators and audience in our society. It's devastating to know that had he not been martyred so suddenly, we would have enjoyed more of his inventive, exceptional and adventurous musical creations.

All of his students, friends, family and his two children Adam and Salma, must know that their teacher, friend, relative and father did not die in vain. He was a true Egyptian who died for the same reason he lived. Ahmed Basiouny died trying to make others listen. As homage to his life and cause, we must get them all to listen.



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 **ahmed badawy**

dr.a.bassiony how are u? iknew that u are away i hope that i see you soon they said that u are dead they are stupid u r with us u see us hear us u r happy now i think u r smiling like us u r beautiful in soul i hope that u didnt go away i know that u r comfortable there this what makes me not angry of u

 **Ibrahim Elmasry**

God pless him he was the best friend of my son I loved and respect him he was areal .

 **shady elnoshokaty**

God bless him , he was a great talented man ,Artist ,father and Friend, losing someone like him is the worth for any nation , what about killing him by one of her policemen who still running , hiding somewhere until now in the Dark !.

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