

The year in visual arts



Francisco Toledo Borges's "Zoologia Fantastica."

By **Mariam Hamdy** December 23, 2008, 2:00 am

The visual arts scene in Egypt in 2008 has witnessed a substantial vibrant mixture of productions. Fortunately, the good exhibitions have been more so than the bad. The awful productions - and there have been quite a few - have been peppered with the genuine efforts exerted by both artists and curators in creating enjoyable shows, both diluting their mediocrity and allowing art viewers a measure of taste.

There have been several foreign artists who were a great asset to the city's current art scene. Their works present a wider scope of what's happening in the visual arts scene around the world, allowing Egyptian art lovers to observe both the similarities and differences between Egyptian and international art.

The most memorable of those is Francisco Toledo Borges's exhibition at the Mahmoud Mokhtar museum, which hosted some of the most skillfully executed watercolors seen in Cairo for quite a while.

On the note of skill, there have been a few exhibitions by younger artists whose works have matured significantly both in terms of concept as well as technique. Chief among the memorable shows were Nadine Hammam's "Akl Aish and Ayman Ramadan's "Hekaya exhibited at the Townhouse Gallery, both of which have been warmly received by both critics and viewers. Hammam's work was conceptually sound and managed to bridge a gap between painting and graphic design, not to mention tackling the sensitive subject of nudity quite eloquently. Equally eloquent was Ramadan's hauntingly touching installation, whose concept was simple and while the execution was nothing less than perfect.

The Townhouse gallery was the Mecca for most art followers this year (as well as for the last few years) in Cairo, and there are whispers of indignation at this particular fact.

The sense of slight resentment isn't a product of jealousy, but rather of the fear possible monopoly.

It isn't, or shouldn't be, news to anyone that the visual arts suffer the least possible attention span by its viewers more so than any other art form. Many have raised a concern that this attention span is encouraged to get even narrower if one sole art space becomes the ultimate center of attention, and there have been indeed many efforts to steer audiences away from by the likes of Artellewa, Cairo Atelier, El Masar Gallery and Mahmoud Mokhtar museum's space. Though these efforts have proved somewhat successful, they may just need to watch and learn from Townhouse's excellent marketing that expertly uses a variety of techniques such as Facebook groups, posters and pamphlets that flood all the key points of the city and jam the email inboxes of the gallery's fans.

A space that has done just that and succeeded in gaining considerable momentum is the Cairo Image Collective (CIC). Their efforts are both visible and successful, hosting excellent shows, solid workshops and a strong collection of up to date artist talks and lectures.

The strew of ultra contemporary shows have been rightly interrupted by the works of Artist giants presented by the Zamalek Art Gallery, the first and foremost of respectable private spaces in Cairo, as well as the Cairo Opera House's palace of arts, Extra Gallery and the newly born El Masar Gallery.

These exhibitions are growing into excellent outlets for art dealing as well as a great historical archive for students and young artists alike. Of these, Mohamed Abla's latest exhibition "Labyrinth was a personal favorite and the highlight of the



Related Stories

There is no related article

[Most Read](#) [Commented](#) [Emailed](#)

[24 hours](#) [3 days](#) [Week](#)

[Daily News Egypt: Final words](#)

[No to a bloody future for Egypt](#)

mature evolvement of an artist. True to form, Zamalek Art Gallery is currently holding another iconic artist's latest collection, Zeinab Al Sageny's "Scenes from Life till the end of the month.

The year ended with quite a bang: with PhotoCairo4 and the Cairo Biennale. PhotoCairo4, that was launched last week, is a collection of works exhibited over four locations in downtown Cairo: The Townhouse Gallery, Cairo Image Collective (CIC), A downtown Apartment and the Hungarian Cultural Institute. The work, varying from photography, video and sounding installations is both intriguing and thought-provoking.

Though some significantly more successful than others, all the works are worth seeing if at least for their excellent curation. The Cairo Biennale, about to be inaugurated, is promising to offer a great selection of artwork, with Egypt being represented by George Fikry and Armen Agop. Both events are a fine end to a year characterized by creative production, and heralding a promising start for 2009.



[What's This ?](#)

 [Add Comment...](#)

[About Daily News Egypt / International Herald Tribune](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertising Guide](#) | [Subscribe to the International Herald Tribune / Daily News Egypt](#) | [Subscribe to DNE e-paper](#) | [E-paper](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Sitemap](#) | [Archive](#)

[Cartoon](#) | [Blogs](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Events](#)

© Daily News Egypt 2009, All Rights Reserved.

Technology Managed by El Motaheda Web Designs 