

## Vessela Farid's collection depicts the art of authenticity



Related Stories

There is no related article

By **Mariam Hamdy**      **March 31, 2008, 2:00 am**

Contemporary Egyptian art is difficult to identify and classify - a reflection of the lack of a definitive modern Egyptian identity in general. Art suffers from the same positive and negative connotations of "being Egyptian as much as Egyptians themselves.

In terms of geography, curators of international exhibitions are often at a loss as to whether to exhibit works from or about Egypt under an African, Mediterranean or Middle Eastern heading. Egyptian artists, or those whose work deals with Egyptian culture, will tell you that it's none of the above.

Perhaps one of the key reasons for this dilemma is due to the fact that modern art has always attempted to blur these classifications. However, the reason may as well be that there aren't plenty of artists whose work can be defined as Egyptian in either content or style.

A number of artists - such as Salah Taher and Gazbiya Serry - succeeded in creating a unique style that helped lay the foundation for modern Egyptian art. However, there are fewer artists who managed to capture the country's complex spirit in paintings - Mahmoud Said being one of these rare artists. His work can't be defined as anything but Egyptian; a feat many long for but few achieve.

Vessela Farid made this difficult task look almost effortless. Her work is spectacularly local, managing to steer clear of the superficial approach of most foreign artists. Her attention to her subject's form and body language is brilliant, and her work excels in its adamant refusal to fall victim to the romanticized oriental wash most artists sweep across paintings of Egypt.

A collective show of her paintings entitled "The Egyptian Woman is currently being exhibited at the Gezira Art Center in Zamalek, and on walking through the exhibition one is saddened to have lost such a talent.

Vessela Farid passed away last year at the age of 93, leaving behind a substantial body of work for art lovers to cherish and students to learn from. This particular show constitutes a collection of paintings that embody exemplar studies of Egyptian country/peasant life. Predominantly women, the subjects of her studies are patiently observed and sensitively portrayed.

Most of the subjects are sitting on the floor, crouching or cross-legged, with a slight tilt which comes about from how their heads rest on their hands - a sitting position that is easily recognizable by any Egyptian. Even when reclining, as some of Farid's women appear, or rigidly standing, as a group of young men are portrayed, she constantly manages to look for and capture the indigenous aspect of her characters and setting in the works.

The composition of her pieces is always studied, sometimes balanced and otherwise experimental. When subjects are squeezed in the corner of a canvas, they are balanced by blocked areas of paint in their background. An example of excellent composition is seen in two paintings depicting a standing row of young men in jeans, confronting the viewer.

Huddled and somewhat strained in the tight canvas, the men's body language seems awkward, achieving the nervously defiant pose Farid seems to have wanted to convey.

Her choice of colors is a mixture of earthy and pastel tones that are occasionally interrupted by a primary red, blue or a bright magenta. Colors capture the essence of the Egypt's rural scenes, and strike a chord with anyone who has ever visited the

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

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

[Daily News Egypt: Final words](#)

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

countryside.

Her method of capturing light through color is reminiscent of Pierre Bonnard's work, and her calculated yet urgent medley of brushstrokes are quite like Monet's. These references place Vessela's style in the whereabouts of Impressionism - a school whose style of painting in organized chaos echoes Cairo lifestyle.

Vessela Farid's works are an enchanting experience and a perfect example of a quintessential modern Egyptian art that's yet to blossom and be explored.

A catalogue of exhibited works will be available at the Gezira Art Center by the end of this month, and it's a must-have for all art lovers, both Egyptian and foreign.



[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 2008, All Rights Reserved.

Technology Managed by El Motaheda Web Designs 