



SYRA Arts Presents “Debunking Orientalism”

April 12th – April 17th 2016

Showing at The Untitled Space: 45 Lispenard St, New York, NY

Opening Reception: April 12th, 6pm-8pm



SYRA Arts is pleased to announce an upcoming group show, “**Debunking Orientalism**”, featuring works by emerging and established artists who live and work out of Egypt, from Cairo to Beheira to Sohag to Alexandria. The show will run from April 12th – 17th 2016.

The exhibition offers a window onto a landscape comprised of a multiplicity of approaches, styles and engagements by artists working simultaneously and engaging with various narratives within the art scene in Egypt. In recent years, the art of the region has been subject to a cultural clustering which effectively flattens the varied artistic production by viewing it as contingent upon geopolitical context. Egypt's long history with Orientalism has subjected it to both internal and external visual paradigms that epistemologically cling to such Eurocentric notions.

The diversity of artists represented in this show, curated by Nagla Samir, celebrates the pluralism and dynamism of the contemporary Egyptian art scene. The works resonate locally and internationally, without necessarily pandering to the model of ‘hybridity,’ which has been a favored mode through which to view regional art – as operating in a liminal space between East and West. Some of the artists work out of Egypt, whilst some engage directly with their surroundings, and others create an altogether unique visual vernacular.

Muhammad Mahdy's calligraphic, gestural paintings push beyond the boundaries of the textual, reorienting our attention to the aesthetic qualities of script, no longer as a vehicle for meaning but rather as an expressive mode in itself. Ahmed Morsi's surreal landscapes and portraits juxtapose features from Coptic, Pharaonic and modern folk Egyptian visual languages, offering up new narratives and creating a visual dialogue with his forerunners from the Egyptian Surrealist Group (founded in the late 1930s). Farouk Hosny's gestural, vibrant palette speaks the universal language of formalist abstraction in a cultural response to Western abstract expressionism.

More recently, awareness has grown, of the value in acknowledging the multiple changes taking place over different timelines around the world. This exhibition hopes to further that awareness and challenge perceptions about art in Egypt that still stem from Orientalist impulses.

Since 2011, SYRA Arts has been dedicated to representing the variety and depth of Middle Eastern art to both art lovers and discerning collectors by bringing cutting-edge and rising artists to the United States.

For a PDF of the exhibition catalogue, please contact Sylvia Van Vliet Ragheb: Sylvia@syra-arts.com or +1(703) 944-3824.

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