

AHMED MORSI

Biography

Ahmed Morsi was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1930. In 1954, he graduated from the University of Alexandria, Faculty of Arts with a major in English Literature. During the years 1952-53, he studied art in the studio of the son of Italian master Antonio Becci, whose former students included Seif Wanly, in Alexandria. Early on, Ahmed Morsi was initiated into Alexandria's literary society as well as the city's very own rising group of artists. By his early twenties, he was participating in group shows with Egypt's most notable modern artists, including A Al Gazzar, H El Telmisani, I Massouda, F Kamel, H Nada and M Moussa. His last studio in his birth city was at the Alexandria Atelier and he was one of the few handpicked artist selected to exhibit at the opening of the city's Museum of Fine Arts. Morsi was also writing poetry and developing this talent in parallel with his painting and in 1949, he published his first Diwan, "Songs of the Temples / Steps in Darkness" at the age of 19.

He moved to Baghdad, Iraq in 1955, where he taught English to supplement his two-year stay, but primarily to sever his dependence on his beloved city, Alexandria and its influence on him. This was a time of a cultural renaissance in Iraq, when Baghdad was a center for the literati, the artists and the intellectuals. It was in Baghdad that he developed a friendship and a working relationship with several Iraqi writers and painters, among them Abdel Wahab Al Bayati, Fuad Al Takarli and Ardash Kakavian; and these relationships continued to produce noteworthy creative cooperation as well as life-long friendships throughout the coming decades. It was also in Baghdad where the artist developed his talent for art criticism and was invited to cover major Baghdadi exhibitions for local papers.

Returning to Egypt, he moved to Cairo in 1957. In these years, Ahmed Morsi was the first Egyptian to work alongside Egypt's acclaimed playwrights, Alfred Farag, Abdel Rahman Al Sharkawi, designing stage sets and costumes for The National Theater and the original, Khedieval, Cairo Opera House – art forms that had until then previously been relegated only to Italian designers. He also partnered with Abdel Hadi Al Algazzar and co-designed stage sets for an American play at the Cairo Opera House. Other projects with Al Gazzar included a book of Morsi's poetry alongside Al Gazzar's drawings. The book was never published due to Al Gazzar's untimely passing, however the poetry/drawings live on. In 1968, he co-founded the avant-garde magazine "Gallerie '68" with Edwar Al Kharrat, Ibrahim Mansour, Gamil Atteya, Sayed Hegab and others and served as its Editor-in-Chief. This publication immediately became Egypt's most reputable cultural source as the voice of the new modernism. With these years began the Artist's journey into the new world of criticism in Egypt, publishing critiques on both art and literature, both of which remaining intimate domains.. He wrote two items for Grand Larousse Encyclopedia (1975); "Art in Egypt" and "Art in Iraq". Again the pioneer, Ahmed Morsi introduced a new creative vehicle to the art public in Egypt with his 1995 show: "The Artist's Book". Following his exhibition, a new Biennial, The Artist's Book, was created in Alexandria, under the auspices of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

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Though his writings remained prolific, subsequent to 1967, Morsi took a decision to stop writing poetry and only returned in 2001 at the request of his childhood friend Edwar El Kharrat to write a piece commemorating Kharrat's 75th birthday. Morsi's poetry could not be contained any longer and subsequent works culminated in the publication of several new Diwans.

In 1974, Ahmed Morsi moved to New York City, where he continues to paint, write and critique from his Manhattan home. In 1976, like many artists residing in the NYC area, he took up the art of lithography at The New School and added yet another dimension to his creative tools and in the last 20 years, the Artist embraced photography – the last art form to be included in Ahmed Morsi's extensive palette.

ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES:

Among the Solo Shows – Egypt:

1953	First solo show at the University of Alexandria - Alexandria
1958	Cairo Atelier - Cairo
1958	Alexandria Museum of Fine Arts - Alexandria
1959	Cairo Atelier - Cairo
1960	Alexandria Museum of Fine Arts - Alexandria
1961	Alexandria Museum of Fine Arts - Alexandria
1966	Cairo Atelier - Cairo
1969	Cairo Atelier - Cairo
1970	Cairo Atelier - Cairo
1973	Akhnatoun Gallery - Cairo
1973	Soviet Cultural Center - Alexandria
1989	Akhnatoun Gallery - Cairo
1991	"Cavafy Suite", Mashrabia Gallery - Cairo
1995	"The Artist's Book", Mashrabia Gallery - Cairo
1996	Akhnatoun Gallery - Cairo
2003	Akhnatoun Gallery - Cairo
2005	Akhnatoun Gallery Cairo
2012	"Metaphysics", Gallery Misr - Cairo

Among the Solo Shows – International:

1956	Al Wazireyeh Gallery, Society of Iraqi Artists - Baghdad
1970	The Place Gallery - London
1975	Columbia University - NYC
1977	Asif Gallery - NYC
1985	Alef Gallery – Washington, DC
1987	Vorpal Gallery – SoHo, NYC
1996	Accademia d'Egitto - Rome

Among the Group Shows:

1954	Inaugural exhibition of the Museum of Fine Arts, Alexandria
1954	Limited group show with A Al Gazzar, H El Telmisani, I Massouda

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- and the Alexandrian sculptor M Moussa at the Societe d'Alliance Francaise - Alexandria
- 1954** 1st Biennial of Mediterranean Countries at the Museum of Fine Arts - Alexandria
- 1955** Limited group show with I Massouda, H El Telmisani, F Kamel and H Nada at the Museum of Modern Art and Cultural Center - Alexandria
- 1956** 2nd Biennial of Mediterranean Countries at the Museum of Fine Arts - Alexandria
- 1958** Second limited group show with A al Gazzar, H El Telmisani, I Massouda, F Kamel ammd M Moussa at the Alexandria Museum of Fine Arts – Alexandria.
- 1958** 3rd Biennial of Mediterranean Countries at the Museum of Fine Arts - Alexandria
- 1968** Limited group show with Ahmed El Rachidi, Adam Henein, Hassan Soliman, George El Bahgoury, Gamal Mahmoud, Daoud Aziz, Saad Abdel Wahab, Saleh Reda, Safeya Hilmi Hussein, Omar El Nagdi, Ali Desouki, Kamal Khalifa, Mohamed Hagrass, Mostafa Ahmed, Mostafa El Hallag, Makram Rizkallah and William Izhaq at the Cairo Atelier - Cairo
- 1971** El Wasti International Exhibition - Baghdad
- 1996** 6th International Biennial of Cairo - Cairo
- 1996** Member of committee of jurors - 6th International Cairo Biennial
- 2007** 1st Egypt “Salon” at Amir Taz Palace - Cairo
- 2007** Limited group show – “Spirit of the Moment ... Spirit of the Image” – with Ahmed Fuad Selim and Hilmi El Tuni at Ebdaa Art Gallery - Cairo
- 2012** Limited group show, “Surrealism, Present-day Cairo” at The Gallery - Cairo
- 2016** “Looking at the World Around You: Contemporary Works from Qatar Museums” at the Santander Art Gallery, Madrid
- 2016** Limited group show, “Debunking Orientalism” at The Untitled Space and curated by SYRA Arts – SoHo, NYC

ACQUISITIONS:

Egypt (Egyptian Museum of Modern Art, Alexandria Museum of Fine Arts and Private Collections)
Qatar (Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art)
Sharjah, UAE (Barjeel Art Foundation)
Kuwait (Private Collections)
Iraq (Private Collections)
France (Private Collections)
United Kingdom (Private Collections)
United States (Private Collections)

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

First non-foreigner to design sets and costumes for the Egyptian National Theater and old Khedival Cairo Opera House

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- productions– Cairo:
- Designed stage sets and costumes for the first play written by Alfred Farag, “The Fall of the Pharaoh”
 - Co-designed with Abdel Hadi Al Gazzar settings for the American play “Revolt of the Dead”
 - Designed stag sets for the first play written by Abdel Rahman Al Sharkawi, “The Tragedy of Jamila Bohreid”
- 1956-1957** Began writing Art Criticism for Iraqi news paper, Al Akhbar - Baghdad
- 1968** Co-founded “Gallery ‘68” magazine serving as Editor-in-Chief - Cairo
- 1995** Introduced to the art public in Egypt “The Artist’s Book”. Thanks to this pioneering effort, The Alexandria Library established a Biennial solely for this new creative vehicle, “The Artist’s Book”

THE OTHER FACE OF CREATIVITY:

- 1949** Published his first collection of poems, “Songs of Temples / Steps in Darkness” - Alexandria
- 1957-1974** Covered the activities of art in Egypt for the 2nd Program Radio in Cairo and participated in the radio program “Culture News Around the World”
- 1959** Co-translated “Eluard: The Poet of Freedom and Love” with Iraqi Poet Abdel Wahab Al Bayyati,, published by Al Maaref Bookshop - Beirut
- 1959** Co-translated “Aragon: The Poet of Resistance” with Abdel Wahab Al Bayyati, published by Al Maaref Bookshop - Beirut
- 1968** Took a decision to stop writing poetry out of a sense of estrangement following the 1967 war
- 1968** Co-published the avant-garde magazine, “Gallery ‘68”, along with Edwar Al Kharrat, Ibrahim Mansour, Gamil Atteya and Sayed Hegab – which played a pivotal role in developing the new-modernism of Arabic literature
- 1970** The Iraqi Ministry of Culture published his book, “Picasso”; Translated “A View from a Bridge” by Arthur Miller, which translation and play was staged in the 1970s by The National Theater
- 1975** The Iraqi Ministry of Culture published his book, “Introduction to American Black Poetry”
- 1997** He reclaimed the poet who was exiled 30 years prior, without calculation
- 1999** The Supreme Council of Culture published his study, “Contemporary American Poetry I”
- 2001** The National Center for Translation published his book “Readings of Contemporary American Poetry II”
The League of Books published his book, “Contemporary American Poetry III”
- 2011** The Supreme Council of Culture published his book, “American Contemporary Art”
- 2012** The Supreme Council of Culture published his Anthology, “The

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Collected Poems”