

Huda Lutfi

Dawn Portraits

12 January – 6 February 2017

Gypsum is pleased to show “Dawn Portraits”, a solo exhibition by artist and cultural historian Huda Lutfi. Lutfi is renowned for her meticulously crafted and politically charged collages, assemblages and installations incorporating found material that she hunts for in the flea markets, bookstores and workshops of Downtown Cairo where she lives and works. Alongside her compelling visual chronicles of Cairo and its loaded history, Lutfi has continued to paint a steady stream of personal, expressive portraits of women.

For her show at Gypsum, Lutfi presents a collection of more than 60 new small-scale works that she calls her Dawn Portraits. Carving out a quiet meditative time in her early morning to pause and reflect, she paints sculptural faces using gouache paint on Chinese gold leaf paper. Other than the recollection of her own features or her mother’s face, Lutfi works from memory. The tightly cropped portraits, whether frontal or in profile, are asymmetrical and often androgynous. Delicate pieces of jewelry such as earrings or necklaces adorn the ears and neck of these women - softening the severity of their features. In a sense, Dawn Portraits carry on Lutfi’s exploration of gender and women’s relations in a masculinist society and her representations of femininity rest outside conventional modes.

BIO

Huda Lutfi works like an urban archeologist, digging up found objects and images as loaded fragments of history. She then re-packages them using *bricolage* as an interceptive strategy. Recognizable objects, images and icons are re-contextualized and made to tell a different story, playing on collective memory and shared iconography. In doing so, Lutfi blurs cultural timelines and boundaries in her work. Multi-layered and playful, Lutfi is known to work with a wide range of media, painting, collage, installations, assemblages, and more recently with photomontage and video.

Trained as a cultural historian and, with her second career as an artist, Lutfi emerged as one of Egypt’s contemporary image-makers. She received her Doctorate in Islamic Culture and History from McGill University, Montreal, Canada (1983), and has been teaching at the American University in Cairo until 2012. Drawing upon the historical, cultural and local experiences of Egyptian society, Lutfi began exhibiting her artwork in the mid-1990s. She has exhibited locally and internationally in both international galleries and museums: Alexandria, Cairo, Dubai, Bahrain Paris, Marseille, London, The Hague, Frankfurt, Bonn, Thessaloniki, Virginia, Texas, Ohio, Dakar, Bamako, Tunisia, and Venezuela. Lutfi currently lives and works in Cairo.