

MOATAZ NASR - *The Tunnel*

GALLERIA CONTINUA / BEIJING March 24 – May 27, 2012

*Sometimes I feel as if I am holding a large loop to make things clear and seen for those who can't or maybe can
but avoiding and sometimes in some work I act like a channel, a channel to bring to life people's screams.*
Moataz Nasr

Galleria Continua is pleased to announce *The Tunnel* the first solo exhibition by Egyptian artist Moataz Nasr in China, one of the leading exponents of contemporary pan-Arab art.

Showing complex cultural processes currently underway in the Islamic world, the work of Moataz Nasr surpasses idiosyncrasies and geographical limits and voices the worries and torments of the African continent. The feeling of belonging to a specific geopolitical and cultural context and the need to maintain a link with his homeland are key elements of the artist's life and work. Art and life are inseparable for him. His childhood memories, frustrations and the society in which he is evolving seem to fuel his paintings, sculptures, videos and installations. Moataz Nasr's work concerns Egypt with its traditions, people, colours, without ever slipping into the exoticism or creating distance. It appears, on the contrary, close to everyone's preoccupations. In fact, Egypt is just a background, a territory inhabited by human beings whose fragility is universal, as are indifference, powerlessness and solitude, weaknesses inherent in human nature.

Commenting on the show, the curator Simon Njami writes: *The Tunnel is a concept of confinement, of fear, of uncertainty. It could be argued that it is a metaphor for a state of illness whose outcome is unknown. All that is known is that it's curable. That there is hope. And that it's necessary to struggle to keep the flame of life burning. The tunnel is a dark place. A sort of hell that we enter of our own free will and by trial and error. We advance by fits and starts, cautiously, afraid of bumping into a wall at each step. It is underground, like the kingdom of Hades, a subtle prison that prevents people from seeing the sun. And we are forced to return to a state of infancy. Which imprisons us in a disturbing and hostile anti-nature. The artist straightaway places us in a clear opposition between darkness and light, freedom and imprisonment, joy and sorrow. Contrasting, contradictory concepts that, through their opposition, create the tension that is at the root of this exhibition presenting the schizophrenia through which the countries of the Middle East and the Maghreb are passing, like an epidemic. The tunnel to which Moataz Nasr refers obviously reflects the way that he perceives the situation in which his own country, Egypt, finds itself.*

[...] The system set up by the artist at the Galleria Continua illustrates the tension between the visible and the invisible, this age-old opposition between the principle of desire and that of reality which obliges the Egyptian people to carry out a permanent renegotiation of its daily situation. The visible, the reality, is the exterior. It is the makeshift walls that have turned Tahrir Square into a fortified high-security camp. In the exhibition, the omnipresence of a Big Brother that aims to control lives and thoughts is represented by balloons, a metaphor for the police. Balloons that block the view, that obstruct and prevent us from seeing what is happening further away. We have to clear ourselves a way through them to get to a more open space, which could be, even if the artist is not necessarily aware of it, the now mythical Tahrir Square. We cannot escape the drawing that takes up the whole of a wall and dominates the space by imparting to it its rhythm. This allegory, which looms over the whole structure, would suffice, in itself, to sum up the concept of the exhibition. A sort of pyramidal staircase at whose summit is set an eagle, the emblem of Egypt. Symbol of a dream whose fulfilment, apparently within our reach, requires a special effort. Laid out around this main axis, the ideal to be attained, we find, face to face, the people and their potential tormenters. The crowd and the city, represented by Cairo Walk, men and women, painted in these twenty-five figurines on shelves, like passive objects that allude to Chinese sculptural traditions, and the three Falcons. There is no need here to dwell on the meaning of these birds of prey that for a while appeared on the Egyptian flag. There are also eagles made out of matchsticks, a technique of which the artist is fond.

GALLERIACONTINUA / Beijing 常青画廊 / 北京

8503, Dashanzi 798 Art Factory, 2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang Dst. Beijing, 100015 China
中国北京市朝阳区酒仙桥路2号, 大山子798艺术工厂, 8503信箱, 邮编100015

tel +86.10.59789505 | fax +86.10.59789774 beijing@galleriacontinua.com.cn | www.galleriacontinua.com

To get there we follow a man, from the back, projected onto a wall, who seems to be showing us the way. The elevation in itself, the effort required by the ascent, is an invitation to calm and concentration. We are going to gain access to the inner space, that of meditation and mental strength. The strength that makes it possible to defy and to resist. The dervishes, the lions and the neon light that illustrates Ibn Arabi's profession of faith are all elements that allude to reflection, to calm. The same lions, guardians of the Qasr al-Nil Bridge in Cairo, that Nasr has made one-eyed in a photomontage which we will find upstairs. Strength carries no weight in this universe. It is rendered absurd by the harmony of the proposals. And the artist proves, if there were any need, that real power is not to be found in extreme demonstrations, but inside ourselves. It is only this calm and this asceticism that allow us to find the path of light.

*The last stage brings together new pieces and old ones. The eagle, in all its glory, keeps watch. It will not allow the falcons to deprive Egyptians of their aspirations. On the skins, two inscriptions that tell us we have finally emerged from the tunnel. The first, taken from Sufi philosophy, signifies "light on light". And the second is the sign of infinity. We might think that we can rest at last. Let ourselves go. Forget. That would not be at all like the artist, who is reminding us that the battle is not over. That it is necessary to maintain our vigilance and the spirit of freedom. That freedom is a daily struggle that involves us all. The one-eyed lion is there to remind us of the tunnel. And, if there were still any need, the video *The Echo* completes the discourse. In this journey through time that shows us two Egypts faced with the same problems, at a distance of some forty years. Perhaps the exhibition *Le tunnel* represents the third facet of this forever unfulfilled quest.*

Moataz Nasr was born in 1961 in Alexandria (Egypt). He lives and works in Cairo. After studying economics, he decided to change direction and take a studio in Old Cairo. This self-taught artist gained local recognition marked by many prizes before breaking into the international art scene in 2001, notably winning the Grand Prix at the 8th International Cairo Biennial.

The artist has participated in many important international art events, including the Venice Biennale (2003), the Seoul Biennale (2004), the Sao Paulo Biennale (2004), the Yokohama Triennale (2005), the Canarie Biennale (2008), the Lubumbashi Biennale (2010), the Thessaloniki Biennale (2011) and group events such as *Arte all'Arte* (San Gimignano, 2004), *Africa Remix* (Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf, 2004; Hayward Gallery, London, 2005; Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2005; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2006; Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, 2007), *Ghosts of Self and State* (Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2006) and, last but not least, a solo exhibition at The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Darat al Funun, Amman, Jordan, 2006. The most recent group shows to which he has contributed include: *Machine-RAUM*, Vejle Art Museum and Spinning Factory, Vejle, Denmark, 2007/2011; *Traversées (Crossings)*, Grand Palais, Paris, France, 2008; *Les Recanters Internationales de la Photo*, Centre Cervantes, Fes, Morocco, 2008; *MidEast Cut*, The Danish Film Institute & Backyard Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark (2009); *African contemporary art*, Exhibition Center, Algiers, Algeria, 2008; *Made in Afrika*, National Museum, Nairobi, Kenya, 2008; *Taswir, Islamische Bildwelten und moderne*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany, 2008; *21st Century: Art in the first Decade*, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia, 2010; *Time After Time: Actions and Interactions*, Southern Exposure, San Francisco, USA, 2012.

In the sufi garden site specific-installations *The Maze-The People Want the Fall of the Regime* (Château de Blandy-les-Tours, Blandy, France; Gothenburg, Sweden; Jardin des Tuileries, Paris, France, 2011) Nasr uses the Egyptian slogan cried out in Tahrir square, the same one that gathered together like in one and only strong body thousands of people fighting for freedom in his country and beyond, starting the Arabian spring.

In 2008 Moataz Nasr founded Darb 1718, a non-profit cultural and exhibition centre in the middle of Cairo, the mission of which is to promote Egyptian contemporary art and a knowledge of international art, to create an archive of works and to set up and maintain an up-to-date, on-line archive of Egyptian art. Darb 1718 also organizes seminars, screenings and projects in order to inform and heighten the awareness of the local community.

Moataz Nasr

Born in Alexandria (Egypt) in 1961.
He lives and works in Cairo.

Solo Shows

- 2011 ***In a Nutshell***, Selma Feriani Gallery, London, UK
Moataz Nasr -The Maze (The People Want the Fall of the Regime), MAP, Mobile Art Production, Gothenburg, Sweden
Réactions en chaîne, Château de Blandy-les-Tours, Blandy, France
The Other Side of the Mirror, Galleria Continua / San Gimignano, Italy
- 2008 ***A Memory Fills with Holes***, Galleria Continua / San Gimignano, Italy
Cairo walk, Sultan Gallery, Sabhan, Kuwait
- 2006 The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Darat al Funun, Amman, Jordan
Entrapment, Galleria Continua / San Gimignano, Italy
- 2005 ***The Echo***, Touchstones Art Gallery, Rochdale, UK
- 2004 Falaki Gallery, The American University in Cairo, Egypt
Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
- 2003 Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
Franco Riccardo Gallery, Napoli, Italy
- 2002 Franco Riccardo Gallery, Napoli, Italy
"Espace-La Bodega" Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
- 2001 Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
- 2000 Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
Egyptian Cultural Center in Paris, France
- 1999 Al Ahrām House Gallery, London, UK
Akhnaton Gallery, Centre of Fine Art, Cairo, Egypt

Group Shows

- 2012 Moataz Nasr-Loris Cecchini, Studio Carlotta Pesce, Bologna, Italy
Aboard the Heart of Gold, VII Bologna Art First, Palazzo d'Accursio (Piazza Maggiore), Bologna, Italy
Museum School and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- 2011 ***Dancing on the Edge***, Amsterdam, Netherlands
The Maze (The People Want the Fall of the Regime), Hors Les Murs, Jardin des Tuileries, Paris, France
Machine-RAUM, Vejle Art Museum, Spinderhallerne and Bryggen/Urban space, Denmark
A Rock and a Hard Place, Old Intersections-Make it New, III Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, State Museum of Contemporary Art (SMCA), Thessaloniki, Greece
The Mystical Self, Video Art Project, Veneto Regional Archive for Video Art, Verona; Visual Container e [BOX] Videoart project space, Milano, Italy
Revolutionary Bodies, Isola dell'Asinara (Sassari) and Berchidda, Italy

- Resistance*, Amsterdam, Holland
- 2010
- Fames: Family Vaudeville*, DARB1718, Cairo, Egypt
Sphères 3, Galleria Continua / Le Moulin, Boissy-le-Chatel, France
21st Century: Art in the first Decade, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia
Time After Time: Actions and Interactions, Southern Exposure, San Francisco, USA
Hiwar, DARB1718, Cairo, Egypt
Rencontres PICHA, Biennale de Lubumbashi, Lubumbashi
Common Sense. We are less Greek than we think, St. Michael, Eppan-Appiano, Italy
Miraggi, Castelli in terra di Brindisi e Taranto, Brindisi, Italy
MOATAZ NASR-DARB1718, *GEO-graphics. A map of ART practices in AFRICA, past and present*, Bozar, Brussels, Belgium
Idoles, Galleria Continua / Le Moulin, France
Un peu, beaucoup, passionnement..., Galerie Alice Mogabgab, Beirut, Lebanon
BARAKAT/The Gift, Stux Gallery Chelsea, New York City, USA
Hiwar / Discussion, Galerie Le Violon Bleu, Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia
Il piacere del collezionista, Finstral, Unterinn am Ritten, Bolzano, Italy
African Marketplace, International Film Festival, Rotterdam, Netherlands
Light/Sound/VideoNight, Finstral, Unterinn am Ritten, (BZ), Italy
- 2009
- Taswir, Islamische Bildwelten und moderne*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany
Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art - Thessaloniki International Fair), Thessaloniki
Made in Afrika, National Museum, Nairobi, Kenya
Amnesia, Nairobi Arts Trust / Contemporary Art of East Africa (CCA EA), Nairobi, Kenya
[un]defined09 - Merano Arts Festival, Caserma F. Rossi, Merano (Bz), Italy
Reflections of Africa, MAMA - National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art; *The African Contemporary Art*, Exhibition center, Alger, Algery
Tawassol – Contact, Artericambi, Verona, Italy
Festival International d'Art Video de Casablanca, Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Ben M'Sik, Casablanca, Morocco
Mediterranean, Palazzo Rospigliosi, Rome, Italy
Traversées, Bab Rouah and Bab Elkbir, Rabat, Morocco
Coexistencias / Coexistences, II Bienal de Canarias, Centro de Arte La Regenta, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
MidEast Cut, The Danish Film Institute & Backyard Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark
Shoes, Ebdaa Art Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
- 2008
- Al Madina*, Ebdaa Art Gallery, Mohandessin, Egypt
Traversées, Darb 1718, Cairo, Egypt
Resilience, Galleria Continua / Le Moulin, France
Les Recontres Internationales de la Photo, Centre Cervantes, Fes, Morocco
Traversées (Crossings), Grand Palais, Paris, France
11 Artists from Africa Remix – fringe touring exhibition, Mbabane (Swaziland); The Cultural center of Maputo, Maputo (Mozambique); Alliance Francaise, Pretoria (South Africa); Alliance Francaise, Port Elizabeth (South Africa); Alliance Francaise, Johannesburg (South Africa); The cultural center of Windhoek, Windhoek (South Africa)
- 2007
- Dans la ville et au-delà, Recontres Africaines de la Photographie de Bamako 2007*, Paris
11 artists from Africa Remix – fringe touring exhibition, Maseru (Lesotho); Durban (South Africa); Cape Town (South Africa)
Machine-RAUM – a biennale for video art and digital culture, Vejle Art Museum and part of the Spinning factory, Vejle, Denmark
The Sneeze, Durban Art gallery, Durban, South Africa

- L'invention de la mémoire*, Espace Jeumon, Saint-Denis la Réunion
24th Memorial NADEŽDA PETROVIĆ, Belgrade (Belgrade), Serbia
AFRICA REMIX, Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
A.B.O. - curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, Bologna Artefiera, Bologna, Italy
- 2006 **Another World. Bamako 2005**, La Centrale Electrique/European Center for Contemporary Art, Bruxelles, Belgium
AFRICA REMIX, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden
Un autre monde – 6e édition de la photographie de Bamako, BnF, Paris, France
L'image révélée : de l'orientalisme à l'art contemporain, Musée de la Ville de Tunis, Palais Kheireddine, Tunis
3rd Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial 2006, Japan
AFRICA REMIX, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
Cross-Currents: Water as a Metaphor for (African) Identity?, Tufts University Art Gallery, Aidekman Arts Center, Medford, USA
Ghosts of Self and State, Monash University Museum of Art, Monash, Melbourne, Australia
CCA 94th Annual Conference, CCA – College Art Association, Boston, USA
- 2005 Bamako Biennale for African Photography, Mali
International Triennale of Contemporary Art, Yokohama, Japan
Sharjah Biennale, UAE, awarded the Grand Prize
AFRICA REMIX, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Mediterranean Encounters, Sicily, Italy
Forming with Light, Palace of Art, Opera House, Cairo, Egypt
4x4, Artists Space, Broadway, New York, USA
Arte all'Arte 10, Museo del Cristallo, Colle Val dell'Elsa, Siena, Italy
Imagining the Book, Alexandria Library, Egypt
Loose Your Identity, Kunstverein Kreis, Ludwigsburg, Germany
Museum of Contemporary Art, Baheia, Salvador, Brazil
French Cultural Center, Damascus, Syria
AFRICA REMIX, Hayward Gallery, London, UK
- 2004 25th Sao Paulo Biennale, Sao Paulo, Brazil
Busan Biennale, Busan, South Korea
AFRIKA REMIX, Museum Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf, Germany
Dak'art Biennale, Dakar, Senegal. Awarded the Ministry of Culture Prize
Museo del Cristallo, Colle Val d'Elsa (Siena), Italy
La Forma delle Nuvole - Arte all'Arte 9, Arte Continua, Montalcino, San Gimignano, Poggibonsi, Colle di Val D'Elsa, Siena, Buonconvento, Italy
Le Opera e I giorni, Triennale, Certosa di Padula, Italy
Milly Pozzi Arte Contemporanea, Como, Italy
Sneeze 80x80, Athens, Greece
Castello di Trani, Bari, Italy
- 2003 Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
Espacio Arte Contemporaneo Camargo, Spain
Disorientation, House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany
- 2002 Dakar Biennale, Senegal. Awarded The Biennale Prize 2002
Unplugged, Arts Electronica Festival, Linz, Austria
Video Marathon, Chisinau, Moldova
Galleria Civica d'Arte Contemporanea Premio Suzzara, Suzzara, Italy
You Can Touch, Espace Karim Francis, Cairo, Egypt

- 2001 ***Intresecus-Extrincus***, Studio Casoli, Milan, Italy
Ambiente: Le Area Non Protette, Palazzo Pretorio Sala del Consiglio Comunale, Sondrio,, Italy
 Cairo Modern Art Exhibition in Denhag, Holland
 7th International Cairo Biennale. Opera Arts Palace, Egypt. Awarded the Grand Prize
 Participated with Martin McNally in Al Nitaq Festival, Downtown, Cairo, Egypt
- 2000 ***The Palm Tree***, Mashrabia Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
... with Egyptian and Italian artists, Gezira Art Center, Cairo, Egypt
 Prepared and participated in the art exhibition ***For Jerusalem*** in Hanager Opera House, Cairo, Egypt
 La Bodega, Cairo, Egypt
 Cairo International Biennale for Ceramics, Opera House Arts Palace, Cairo, Egypt
 Nitaq Festival of Art, Downtown, Cairo, Egypt
- 1999 27th National Exhibition for Fine Arts, Opera House Arts Palace, Cairo, Egypt
 Small Artworks at the Center of Art Cairo, Egypt
- 1998 26th National Exhibition for Fine Arts, Akhnaton Center of Art, Cairo, Egypt
The First Show for Artists over 35 years and honored, Museum of Fine Arts (Hussein Sobhy), Alexandria, Egypt
 4th Cairo International Biennale for Ceramics, Center of Art, Cairo, Egypt
The Days of Kom Ghorab, Cairo, Hanager Gallery, Egypt
- 1997 25th National Exhibition for Fine Arts, Center of Art, Cairo, Egypt
 Heliorama exhibition at the French Cultural Center, Heliopolis, Cairo, Egypt. Awarded the Prize of Painting
- 1996 24th National Exhibition for Fine Arts, Center of Art, Cairo, Egypt
- 1995 7th Salon of Youth, Center of Art, Cairo, Egypt. Awarded the Third Prize 2005.

Public Art

- 2006 MACRO collection permanent work, Macro, Rome, Italy
- 2005 Permanent Installation at Museo del Cristallo, Colle val d'Elsa, Italy
- 2001 Permanent installation at La Bodega lounge (Hurricane), Cairo, Egypt
- 2000 Permanent installation at Diwan bookstore in Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt

Workshops

- 2002 Close Up Workshop, 3 Egyptian artists with 3 Swedish artists, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo
 Workshop The Open Studio in Townhouse Gallery Cairo (10 Egyptian and 10 foreign artists)
- 2000 Participated in the Fashion Design workshop at the University of Applied Arts, ending in a number of exhibition in the Gezira Arts Center, Townhouse, Zeinab Khatoun and the Goethe Institute in Cairo, Egypt

Others

- 2009 **Global Art Forum**, Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar
- 2008 ARTIST TALKS CCCS, Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzi, Firenze, Italy
- 2000 Member of the Jury Board at the 15th Art Festival Sondrio, Italy
Commissary of the Egyptian Contemporary Art exhibition in Nikosia, Cyprus, Egypt
- 1996/98 Participated in **Kom Ghorab Project** in Old Cairo, Egypt