



Ticking
Oil on Canvas
171

60 x 80
1996

عقارب الساعة
زيت على توال



استلهامات السفر

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2008

Traveler Scribbles IV

Ink on Paper



استلهامات السفر

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2007

Traveler Scribbles III

Ink on Paper



السيادة

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2008

Dominance

Ink on Paper



المسئولية

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2008

Responsibility

Ink on Paper





Strangling Ambitions

40 x 47

تطلعات خانقة

Ink on Paper

2009

رسم بالأقلام السوداء على ورق





Traveler Scribbles VIII

Ink on Paper

179

40 x 47

2009

تجليات السفر

رسم على ورق



دراسة لوجه رجل

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2008

Study of Face of a Man

Ink on Paper



المازق

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2008

Cornered
Ink on Paper



الرجال برؤوسهم

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2000

The Heads of Men

Ink on Paper



تجليات السفر

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2008

Traveler Scribbles VI

Ink on Paper



تجليات السفر

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2009

Traveler Scribbles IX

Ink on Paper



تجليات السفر

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

2009

Traveler Scribbles X

Ink on Paper





Renewed Love

74 x 93

Inks & Watercolor on Paper

2008

187

جددت حبيك ليه

أحبار ومائيات ملونة على ورق





Stud from the South

65 x 84

وتد من الجنوب

Oil on Canvas

1996

زيت على توال

189





Mystic Love
Oil on Canvas
191

50 x 120
2009

سحر اللیل
زیت علی توال





Nude
Oil on Canvas
193

50 x 120
2009

فتاة عارية
زيت على توال

تقاسيم الحب

رسم على ورق

40 x 47

1984

Potential Love

Ink on Paper



مشروع حب

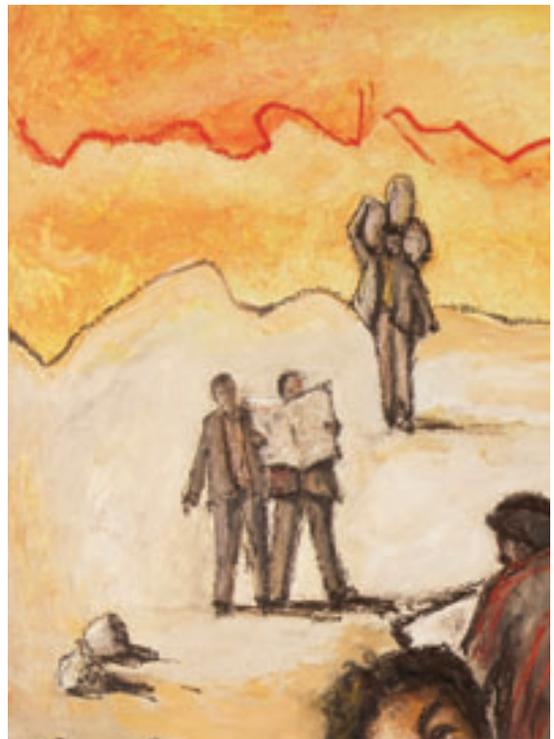
رسم على ورق

40 x 47

1984

Movements on Love

Ink on Paper





Wandering off
Oil on Wood
197

160 x 160
2003

الهائمون في الارض
زيت على خشب





Memories of the Fall

60 x 80

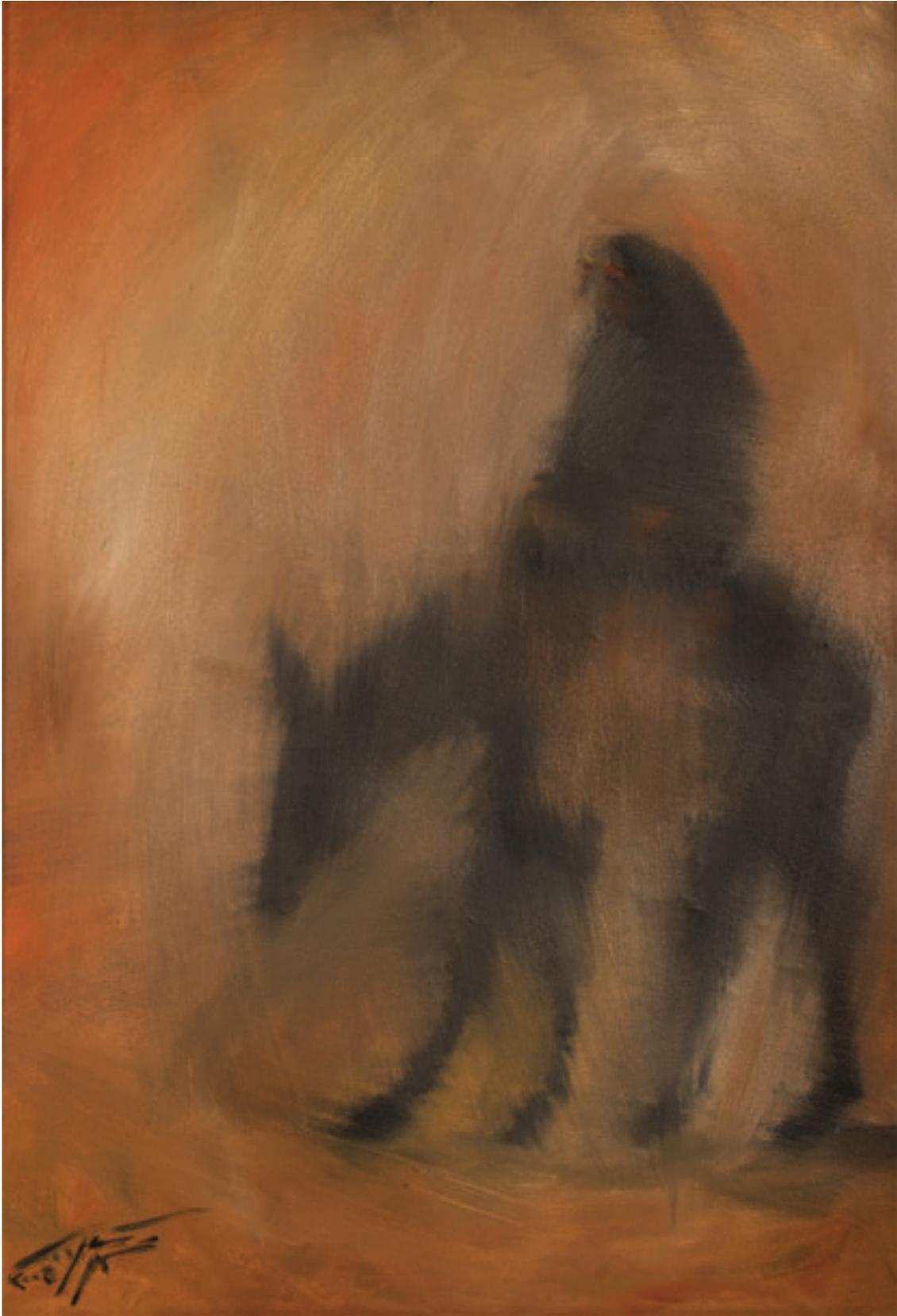
ذكريات الخريف

Oil on Canvas

2005

زيت على توال





Woman on a Donkey

60 x 80

إمرأة على الجمال

Oil on Canvas

2005

زيت على توال

201

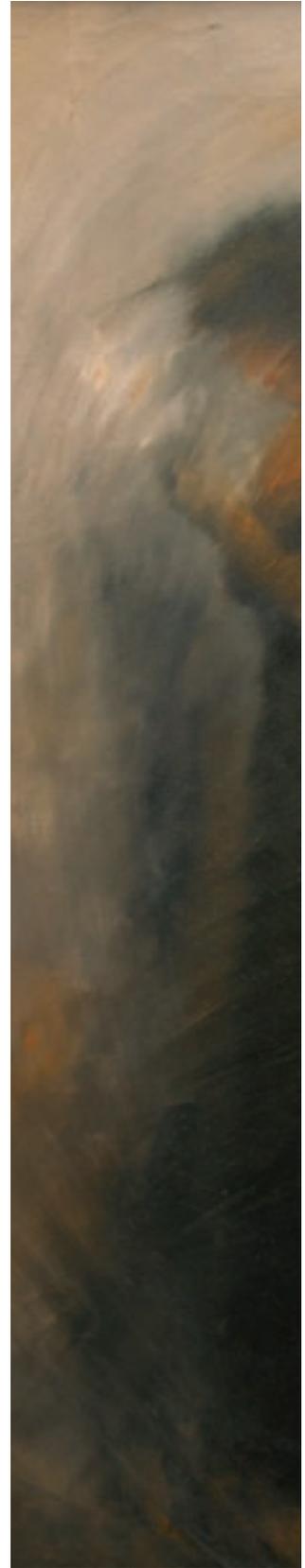


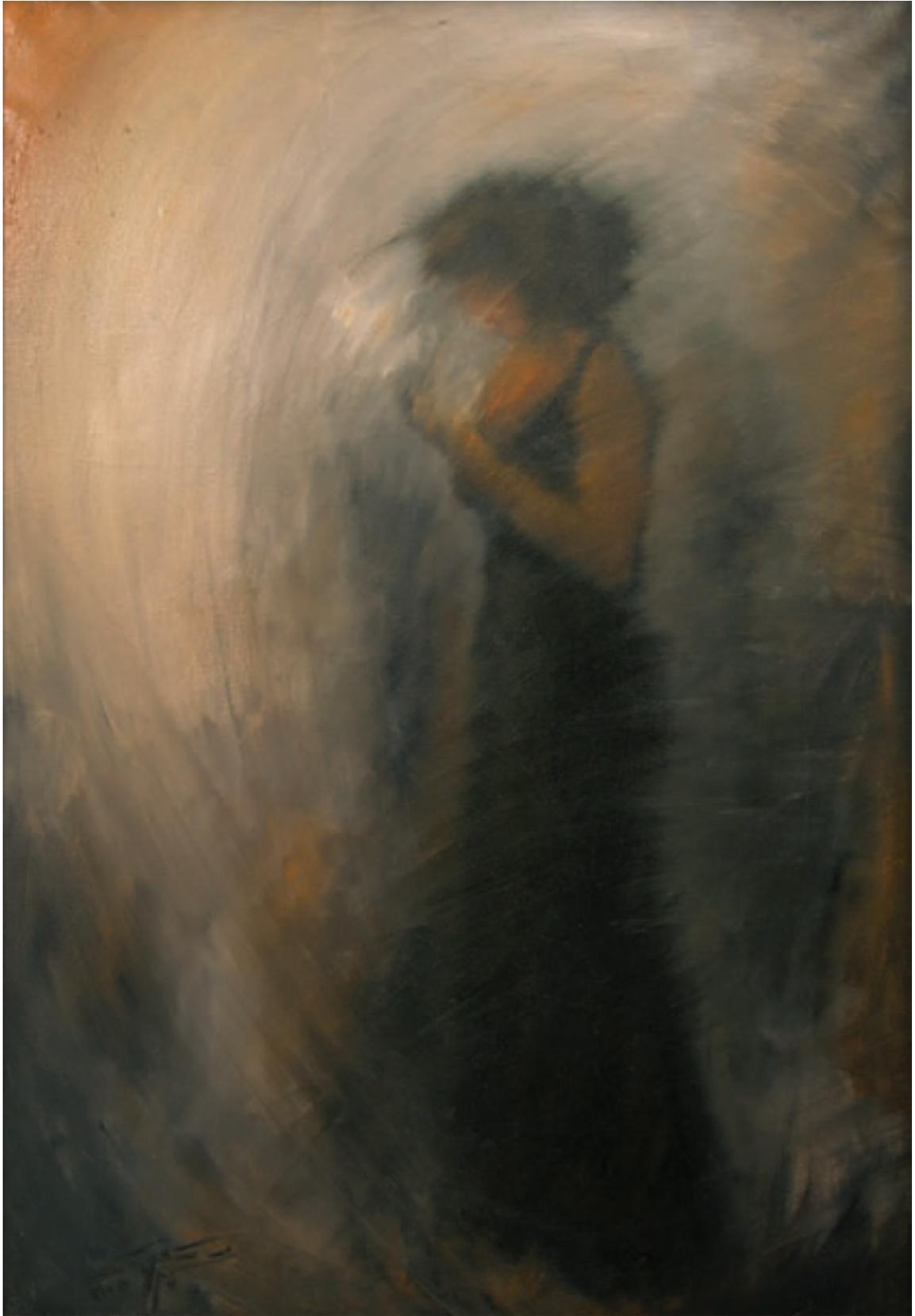


Dream Canoe
Oil on Canvas
203

60 x 80
2005

قارب الأحلام
زيت على توال





(Flowers of) Mirage

70 x 100

السراب (زهور تتلاشى)

Oil on Canvas

2005

زیت علی توال





Ripply Winds
Oil on Canvas
207

80 x 60
2005

عواصف ناعمة
زيت على توال





Winter in Rome

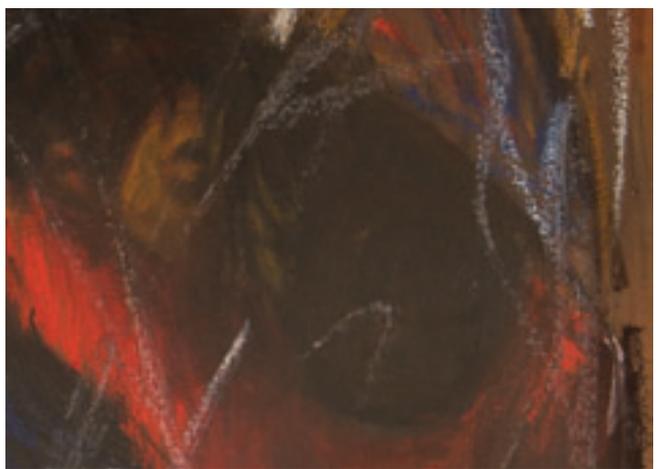
80 x 60

الشتاء في روما

Oil on Canvas

2005

زيت على توال





Warmth in Paris

50 x 70

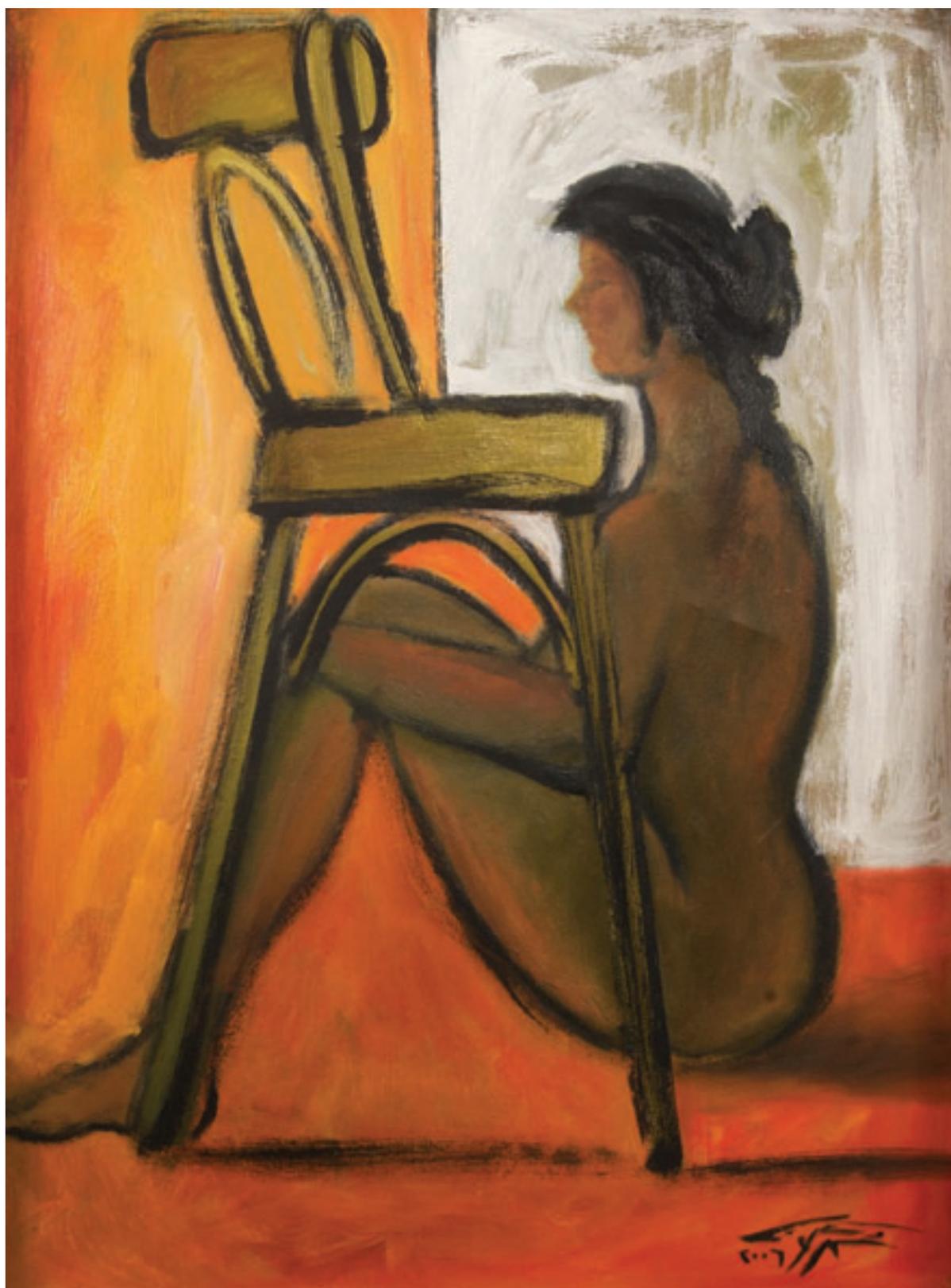
دفاء باریس

Oil on Canvas

2006

زیت علی توال

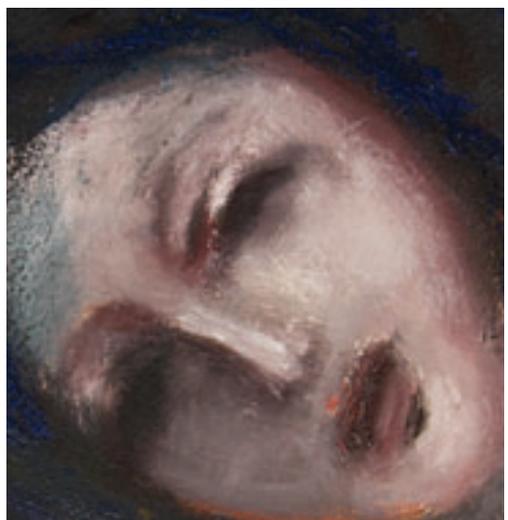




Under Control
Oil on Canvas
213

60 x 80
2006

تحت السيطرة
زيت على توال





Moment in Fall
Oil on Canvas
215

70 x 100
2009

لحظة خريف
زيت على توال





The Party Tonight

Oil on Canvas

217

70 x 100

2009

المساء والسهرة

زيت على توال





Sans Titre
Oil on Canvas
219

60 x 80
2006

بدون تعلیق
زیت علی توال





Infatuated
Oil on Canvas
221

154.5 x 130.5
2009

أهواك
زيت على توال





Banks of the Nile
Rapidograph Ink on Paper
223

70 x 100
1991

على ضفاف النيل
رابييدو جراف على ورق





Frozen Moment

Oil on Canvas

225

70 x 50

2009

فتاة... ولحظة

زيت على توال

Exhibts

Slightly More Than Half My Life

Thirty-five years have elapsed –in fact slightly more than half my life– since my fusion with the passion for my art, a fusion, unmatched and incomparable to all other passion.

I never spent time nor energy to position myself in a marketing frenzy for fame; I was much more concerned with my art, and my passion to be part of it. I released my mind, my hands and my will to the realms of utter experimentation: its continuous problematic, discoveries, infatuation with medium and content, and desires that became obsessive with the entity of art itself. As a consumer of art, I was always attracted by vigorous brushstrokes if the likes of Salah Taher, or a sensual bronzed complexion of Mahmoud Said's models, or an infernal red formulated by Seif Wanly and placed on an equally challenging golden patch on an unexpected location of the composition. Or those heretic painted incantations by Abdel Hadi El Gazzar, a philosopher in his own rights, and a painter of exceptional qualities. And those codes and symbols of Eros encrypted by Samir Rafe'e, or Hassan Soliman's biased, and ultimate, passion for different shades of grey to mimic shadow and light. The list is endless for me, from the sensible and innovative Taheyya Halim to the socialist Bourgeois Enjy Eflaton, and many other creators who manage to ignite my passion every time. Throughout those years, I fell speechless a thousand times when confronted by works of Modigliani, Gauguin, Matisse and Picasso. I lived it all, consumed it all, and fell in love with it all, a thousand times. I painted, I colored and I moved from one painting station to the other. I lived it all, and it is all myself and my art.

Mohsen Shaalan



2008 / *[Signature]*

Knock Knock
.. We Are Here
2010

MOHSEN SHAALAN

Mohsen Shaalan:

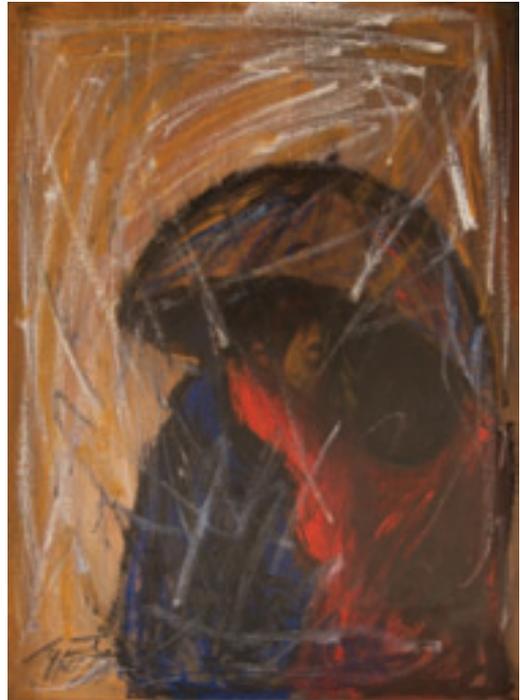
Excavating the Archives of Cairo

Civil States is the title of the exhibition held at Ebdaa Gallery in Mohandesseen.

The fifty paintings and drawings reflect samples of people in their daily situations that the artist selected carefully for his subject matter. Those come from the streets and alleys of old Cairo, and trace the slightest imperceptible change that evolves in its society. Scenes from the ally, the café, the movie theater or simply caught in a banal activity in the street, Shaalan creates a revisionist narrative with his personages and their intimate details that he scatters around the canvas in calculated strokes.

The artist seems intrigued by the intricate relationships between his feminine and masculine figures in moments of serenity, desolation or jealousy. In his black and white watercolor paintings he attempts to paint features that tell of emotions, harmonious or interrupted, transliterating that by vibrant and wavy brushstrokes. Shaalan delves in the deepest pits of society and persistently chooses the commoners and marginals to be the heroes of his canvases. He targets moments of intensity, be it joy or sadness, nostalgia or desire, hope or aspiration to a better future; he finds that on facial details, the marks of time on the hands and in the eyes of the younger children.

The space his heroes play within is almost any place filled with human emotions, even if devoid of people within this space. The presence of their traces is quite sufficient for the artist, bags, plates or a handkerchief that retains the fragrance of its owner, any trace will do. Time is timelessness, any time will do, as long as there are dreamy regards, and people who taste joy and pain. The figures/people are deliberately neutralized so as not to identify nor denote a particular moment in time. The foggy effect that the artist successfully creates exhausts whoever will look for space



or time within the surface. Despite their apparent inert states of energy, or their air of romance aided by solid painterly techniques, the works carry within them a premonition of an impending event, a climax of some sort is expected to storm, and soon. Even the color attenuated and controlled, except for a “sudden” appearance to a crimson red or an equally surprising cobalt blue over an inherent monochromatic field/background in ochre, brown or grey. Such surprises characterized the artist’s works since his early years as a professional painter in the seventies, and continue to evolve to surprise us today as they did before in previous stages of his career.

Yasser Sultan

Noss el Donia, December 28

Mohsen Shaalan: Excavating the Archives of Cairo
By: Yasser Sultan





masculine, can express social situations by attraction or repulsion. Shaalan's interest in politics exceeds the limits of the canvas to taking actual positions; on one group exhibition, he withdrew from the exhibition before the opening because the curatorial arrangement of the work did not match his political concept.

In his practice, Mohsen Shaalan adopted a multiplicity of painting mediums: oils, water-based paints and inks. His versatile painterly techniques allowed him to experiment freely around his chosen social and political themes. Most conspicuous trait is his narrative: most of his people are restrained individuals striving for freedom and attempting breakthroughs of all sorts. There is an overt expression of sorrow, sometimes agony and melancholy in their facial and expressions and body language. The artist may seem pessimistic on a first regard to his works, but a closer look to the entirety of the body of works, we discover the subtle sensual layers that express a romantic love for life, depicted by couples engulfed by veils of sandstorm, wind or fog.

Mohsen Shaalan shares with his viewers a body of work that addresses what is called today | the corporate world "the glocal", a fusion of the terms "the global" and "the local"; his works talk to the universal audience in a visual language of crystal clarity and humorous accessibility.

Mohamed Morsi

Noss el Donia

25/10/2009



his canvases. All share the social space, and all share the same daily conflict.

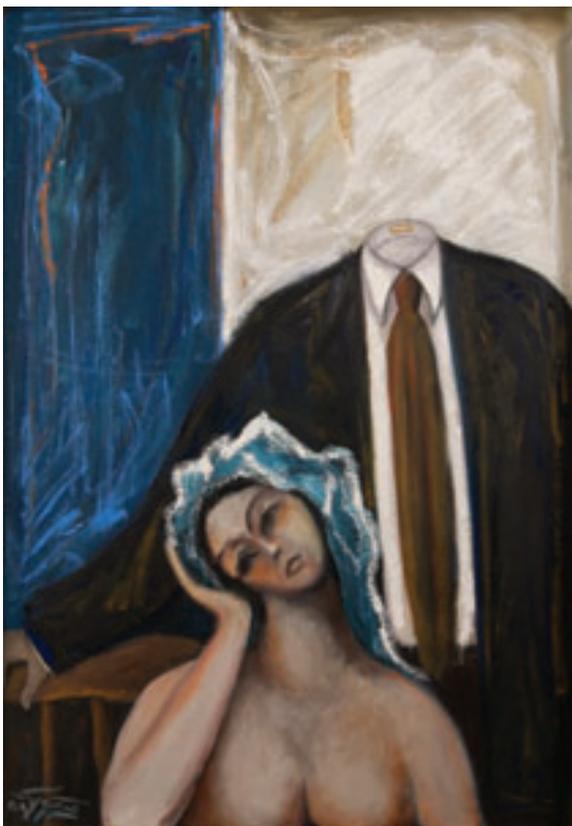
In Shaalan's praxis, he does not believe in art that is devoid of the human element, of figures, of people, no matter how versatile the painting techniques are of the painter; the human aspect has to exist on the canvas. Some solid non-human motifs appear in repetition on many of the canvases; the chair/seat is one such element. To Shaalan it is a power element. It symbolizes perhaps the ultimate power of whoever is on the throne; the throne at the very end is a seat, a chair of some sort. It is also a social symbol denoting issues of wealth and power. Another visual symbol that becomes recurrent in the works of the artist is the elegant necktie, a code perhaps encrypted to announce social elitism and delicate lifestyles, but when such a symbol transforms into

a rope that strangles liberties, it trespasses its initial purpose. Another symbol of wealth and power is put to examination, as seen by such symbols, and on the expressions on the faces of Shaalan's heroes. There is a continuous quest to attain power, even on the most intimate of spaces. The use of symbols, excessive at times, and the figurative approach combined with the accessible narrative of commoners and the working class is reminiscent sometimes of political cartoons. He uses the symbol of the "empty coat" to represent the submissiveness of the Arab personality --as he himself expresses--, since the "uninhabited coat becomes a continuum to host nothingness and void. This void cannot fill the coat, which is a classical Western dress code for the inteligenza, and the bourgeoisie. The void is the current regressive regional culture we have to live through today and it cannot size/fill the coat. This practice of straightforward coding is confirmed by the choice of the titles for the exhibition projects, like "till further notice", and other similar titles. Again to Shaalan, politics is an indispensable part of the artwork, and every artist should have a belief/ideology, and a sustainable project to explore and defend. It could be socially political too, where the human element, be it feminine or

Mohsen Shaalan: the Global, the Universal and the Local

A principal characteristic in his paintings, Mohsen Shaalan possesses a visual language that manages to talk to the viewer on several levels. The canvases are loaded with symbols and codes, almost obsessively, of local subject matter. His painterly techniques and his

assimilation of modern and contemporary art schools of the twentieth century all render his works to be “multilingual”, i.e. talk to viewers anywhere in the world. Shaalan’s paintings, charged with his very Egyptian psychological built-up, transcend geopolitical terms like



“globalization” and “universality”. Though the artist’s career has an element of an international arm --i.e. he exhibited throughout the past two decades several times internationally-- Shaalan seems concerned by the attention of his local audience, as if he paints for the Egyptian viewer. His subject matter, like the paintings of Om Kolsoum, exhibited at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris,

is always recognizable by his local audience. More often they are regular Egyptians, commoners or of the working class, performing activities of their banal daily life that is full of struggle; normal people crossing the streets, workers, handymen or public employees, passing through a gas station, seated idly on cafes or just dwelling in the urban space are all “made” heroes for a second on

Mohsen Shaalan: the Global, the Universal and the Local
By: Mohamed Morsi

with men watch while standing on a hole in the ground, and rows of bystanders include a security officer and a red ambulance, and a man seated on a café with his daily paper dangling from over the table?

In this project, all canvases carry codes and symbols. In one work, *Man in a Whirlpool*, we see only the body after the head has been totally submerged in water, and in another, *Barren Tree*, where men and women exist below a tree devoid of all leaves. Both works recount the helplessness of the human species; man becomes exposed, compromised, naked and unprotected. In “*Contemporary Adam*”, a man --apparently Adam himself-- carries Eve over his head together with his property, supplies as well as a chain. The work carries a beautiful sense of social critique to the social constraints imposed by man upon the feminine and the masculine together. In another canvas a man and a woman lie sleeping head-to-toe upside down to each other as if to represent lack of communication and aborted dialogue. A woman is painted filling almost the entirety of the canvas while miniscule male figures are juxtaposed to the gigantic figure; the message is clear: Shaalan glorifies the feminine.

Other works details of everyday life that are inhabited by an intense emotional human charge. Laypeople struggle in the rain and in the sun, donkey riders with facial expressions reflecting hard work in extremes of weather conditions and sagesness of the long years. Female figures with soft feminine features executed in smooth lines and brushstroke reflect a romantic air; every face becomes a space for expression of emotions and reflection.

In all the works we are confronted by the load reflected on the facial expressions of the contemporary commoner, perhaps his reflections and happy moments too. Such works glitter with their diversity of elements that embody the rise and eclipse of the twentieth century man.

Salah Bisar

Published in *Hawa*, March 3, 2007

Apple and Eve: Mohsen Shaalan's solo

Since his early career as a visual artist, Mohsen Shaalan chooses titles to his works and to his paintings that define his personal language and respects the values he set for his practice. The titles of his consecutive solos narrate successfully his process of thinking: “civil states”, “what the wind brings”, “lessan asfour”, “solely black”, and more recently “status quo”. In “status quo”, the artist figurative representations express the struggle of laypeople on canvases that are impregnated with social and political symbols.

The Degas Gallery in Alexandria hosts Shaalan's most recent series: “with respect to time difference”. The show comes as a warm visual “breeze” in the winter cold, with paintings and drawing executed in the past two decades and continues to confirm Shaalan's concerns with problems of the contemporary man.

The title, “with respect to time difference” denotes exiting all norms, and delving instead into an alternative and audacious dimension shared by elements of the feminine and the masculine, a novel Eve, her apple and a contemporary Adam. This ethereal universe, is it a world of expression, a space that spans critical expression to a symbolic one. And exceeds it sometimes to an alternative real, a surreal, otherwise how can we explain a canvas transformed into a field, much reminiscent of a photojournalist story, where the focal point of interest becomes a woman sleeping on a bed,



Apple and Eve: Mohsen Shaalan's solo
By: Salah Bisar



Shaalan, though, seems to retain the imaginative of an innocent child smothered by his grandmother's fables and fairy tales in cold winter nights. He many times sees the world as an infinite and impending resource to his drafts and drawings and his fluid inks that will embed in the pores of the white paper. The margins will inevitably disappear between the somber and the lit of the drawn narrative, a narrative acquired during his childhood in the older parts of the city, in Boulak, Cairo's first Nile port ever.

Born to a mother from Cairo and an Alexandrian father, Shaalan's upbringing in a historical suburb with its street and architectural details of old aesthetic, that date as early as Napoleon's French Campaign, all influence his painterly praxis. He got infatuated at an early age with art, rhymed poetry, folk tunes and epic storytelling. Engulfed by such diversity in the verbal and visual heritage of his popular entourage, Shaalan always found an infinite source to quench his thirst for novel reference in his art. His grandfather Aly Shaalan was a prominent journalist and writer who owned two publications, Masr (Egypt) and El Nil (the Nile) that hosted the prodigious Yehia Hakki's debut in creative writing.

In 1991 I hosted his solo at the Akhenaton Galleries in the Center of Arts, Zamalek. Thirty canvases, mixed media works and drawings announced rebellion against his very own realty at the time, and tested his salvation in art. The works carried a load of neglected elements and leftovers that questioned standard aesthetics, proving, perhaps, that beauty is a myth when it is devoid of message and of the struggle to think. He adopted a Dada approach, working between the rough, the smooth and heretic revolt. His exhibition in Alexandria today marks his itinerary of slightly over a quarter century; it crowns an important and exciting voyage, and begins another for the years to come.

Ahmed Fouad Selim

Al Kahira, February 2, 2007

Mohsen Shaalan: Between Daumier, Yehia Hakky and Aly Shaalan



Mohsen Shaalan's solo exhibition at the Degas Gallery in Alexandria is very much worth visiting.

As I watched and contemplated this body of work that comprises eighty paintings, the image of Honore Daumier (1808-1879) and his work seeped through my mind. This great French realist and impressionist tackled several mediums that included painting, sculpture, printmaking and cartoons, and is considered as one of the undeniable leaders of impressionism of the late nineteenth century.

Shaalan in his own turn possesses a brush of irony and sarcasm, poetic and social, provocative and bitter, and at times of caricature and revolting. So was Honore

Daumier who painted exhausted passengers of the third class on Paris trains as they cram over each other, and the crooked high court judges who—according to Daumier—manipulated the law and its interpretations for illegal profit. Not only the judges were subject to Daumier's acid sarcasm and fury, but also prosecutors and attorneys were also not immune. Daumier illustrations of Spain's Miguel de Cervantes's Don Quixote demonstrate his capacity to depict those who brag about their pretentious imagination. Here the juxtaposition between Daumier's illustrations and Shaalan's drawings of a similar subject matter comes to mind: prisoners and porters, street peddlers and donkey riders, governors and governed, the hungry, the oppressed and the marginal. Figures are toppled down or hide behind a virtual curtain of desert sandstorms. They are blind-and-ear-folded, their mouths taped and their hands cuffed, they are shrouded in funerary fabric that arouses pre-burial terror. A man carries a cuffed woman in a dwell in an urban space amongst disappointed laymen and women, those prototypes/stereotypes we cross every day in city streets every morning. In one project, Shaalan places discarded pieces of wood in a vertical pattern over the painted figures on the canvas, evoking in the mind of the viewer the image of prison, with what it entails of incarceration and the unjustly incarcerated behind those diabolical barriers.

**Mohsen Shaalan: Between Daumier, Yehia Hakky
and Aly Shaalan
By: Ahmed Fouad Selim**



2009

العقود

من الجزائر
توليد 2009



kinetic energy that prevails inside each and every canvas. He successfully finds the core of his own sought aesthetic values: personal, united and inherent.

Mohamed Rizk
Cairo 2010



in and its known problems. These characters, shady and shadowy, flicker as mysterious lights carried around and about by clouds of incense from a distant past. The faces reflect what lies deep inside their owners; deep down something is viable and pulsating, some magnetic force that drives us to contemplate and think.

Mohsen Shaalan attempts to discover this profound, and secret, wound that lies inert inside all of us, and in his trials he probes people and things, solid and live; he plans to shed light on “everything”. A surprising world gradually unravels by the artist’s own creative energy, a melancholic world of nostalgia of the human and her/his alienated soul. This world is on the one hand very strange, on the other equally familiar, where the artist paints while continuously crossing between contradictory elements: reality

and its absence, meanings and their negations, even colors and their somber shadows. The content of the subject matter is seemingly fragmented, while a closer scrutiny declares a serious approach to discover the bonds and ties that weaves the countless “heavy” symbols and motifs together in an amalgam necessary for the creation of Shaalan’s controversial alternative reality. What would be in other conditions be a clear symbol, like the necktie, is given another function that defies its standard logic of use. The necktie is given another meaning, a parallel history with different indicators.

Shaalan’s paintings guide us to stand on the tangential points of reality and fiction, the soul and its indispensable carnal body, without any inkling or confirmation to which side of the line we stand. We are left in a state that offers aborted serenity, a wild state of ambiguous precision; even happiness is fused with nostalgia. The forms and compositions are created in a formula that evokes in us comfort and surprise. The figures appear to want to escape the boundaries of the canvases to attain solicited liberty; we are almost certain they will not proceed, as they –as well as ourselves—know that time for definitive salvation is not due, not just yet.

The authentic value in Mohsen Shaalan’s work lays in his formula of this inert yet

The Mystery of the Soul and the Presence of the Body in the Works of Mohsen Shaalan

For his solo exhibition at the Guezira Art Center, Mohsen Shaalan offers an overt inclination towards the human element that transcends his intimate personal universe to a comprehensible world that talks to the general public.

In today's complex contemporary culture, a creative project becomes capable of exceeding basic values of aesthetics when the artist manages to transform it –the project– from the esoteric “personal” into the accessible “general”, and from the seemingly banal “familiar” to the understandable yet complex core of the everyday activity of the layperson.

Shaalan offers the realms of his universe: an intricate mesh of layers, each carries a sensual experience that offers a continuum of a dynamic movement, all woven in a very personal fabric that is a characteristic of the artist's universe. Each movement seeks to uncover elements of particularities and specificities of the artists' creatures, his “things” and before all: his humans, and what their bodies –as a tool for expression– offer us, the viewers.



he artist does not offer us simple figures, men or women, a bird or a beast; Shaalan offers a complete life with its complete set of agitations. The offered world is charged with anxiety, strangeness and of an equally mystic soul that the artist celebrates frequently its secrets, while continuously researching in his quest for answers. His approach attempts to demolish all physical and virtual barriers between the conscious and the subconscious. The artist's characters roam between their physical existence and their identity as simple mythical elements in the legend. Forms squat in eternal state of waiting, sometimes releasing sounds, screams, shadows and other obscurities. Their faces do not forcibly carry identifiable features or details, as we know them in the real world. They just persistently unravel their unleashed inert energies derived from their real physical world we live

**The Mystery of the Soul and the Presence of the Body
in the Works of Mohsen Shaalan**

By Mohamed Rezk

crow to complete the pessimist scene, a sole witness to the painter's act of suicide using his own necktie. Almost a "forensic" shot tells us what had just happened: the necktie engulfs the painter's entire body while his head dives in the shirt, his eyes are both afraid, in total defeated and in desperate submission. The scene is staged: a mannequin model hosts the artist's tuxedo, and a ghostly shadow of a medusa-like apparition, afraid and disheveled in its own sense. Thirsty plants dry and shed their leaves completes the scene.

This painting project provides a state of objectification of the sacred human, transforming them into entities without will or deliberation as seen by their appearances: bodies bound together by striated ropes, all dressed up in masquerade swan costumes and all, even their lovers, are in a state of meekness and submission. Shaalan succeeds in conveying to us his sarcastic proposal of objectification, or in straightforward description: "the human as an object ". The only sign of soul in the almost lifeless bodies is the eyes, and those reflect fright, frustration and subjugation.

Shaalan also –successfully— is capable of infusing joy and sensibility through his use of irony and critical sarcasm. In a series of canvases, he acidly mocks the nouveau riches, the social strata that exploits the open market economy through staging theatrical scenes loaded with this strata's symbols and codes like playing cards, kitschy attire in velvet or synthetic fabric and hair styles that reflect low taste. In a more recent work Shaalan depicts a female violinist in a dark velvet dress performing in total concentration while seated on a chair that floats in the space of the canvas. A young male figure listens in devotion in oblivion to his surrounding, to the softly knit curtains on the corner, the snowy fog that swallows ambient details, or to his own simple café chair that is out of place. The ethereal atmosphere transliterates a romantic air that is metaphysically trans-real. Those lovers, as well as other lovers who are omnipresent in multiplicity on Shaalan's canvases, with his audacious brushstrokes loaded with bright colors reflect a love of life that is sensual and colorful. The artist --through the use of color, oil-sticks, brush lines, marks and prints-- guides the viewer to where he wants us/them to be.

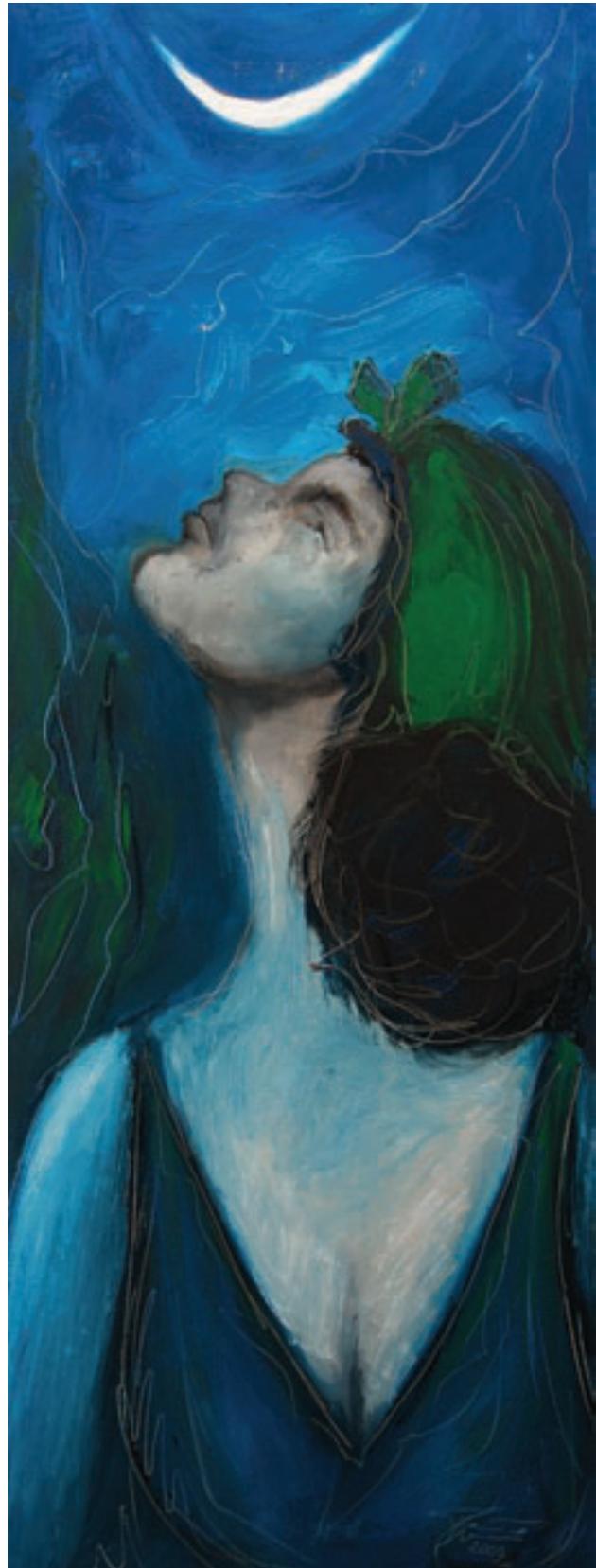
The rhythm Shaalan creates by his versatile techniques is awakening to the senses, and defines the artist as a contemporary romantic painter, his battery of versatile techniques is charged by literary concepts as well as a personal ironical approach to his subject matter that is bound by the artist's own creative energy. And that cherishes life as it comes, harsh sometimes, while joyful and warm at others.

Dr. Mostafa El Razzaz

December 2009

in Alexandria in 2007— reflected multiple impressions of distortion; we see subjects as if through concave or convex mirrors, or through an active typhoon, or from below a glass bowl filled with water.

In recent years, Shaalan's cumulative experience allowed him to dwell freely on his road to a personal visual language. His canvases testify that he abandoned the bold lines that defined his figures and intersected dynamically around the inert subject matter, revolving for the most part around the struggling laymen and women in the urban space. What remained though from Shaalan's earlier works is the air of sorrow that still engulfs the figures. In his more recent works, he trades panoramic "shots" for entire families for close-ups and zoomed-in frames that are much more expressive to more personal emotions, and demonstrative of details that tell us more about his subjects, and about their frustrated struggles with their day-to-day issues that forbid them from properly seeing or being properly seen. Those hide behind virtual walls, inside minute slots, submissively succumbing to strangling shrouds like in nightmares. The paintings provide a sarcastic regard to life in an overcrowded city, while its introvert inhabitants, decapitated sometimes, handcuffed other times, implode in a psyche that attempts flight of life itself. Entities and "things" move in this crowded universe amongst its inhabitants, creating a warm sense of nostalgia to relics and ancient objects: windows, door peepholes, sculpted or decorated metal fences, wooden ornamental staircase or table decorative pieces, the painters own easel holding a barren canvas with a



Between the Warmth of life, and its Overt Subjugation

Since his early career that debuted in 1973 with his first solo at Alexandria's Culture Palace of Samer, Mohsen Shaalan proved to be an artist who possesses a complex regard to life that is ironic in temperament, full of dynamism, enthusiasm and openness to the novel. Around two decades have elapsed since his earlier projects in china ink, works that were representation of simple laymen and women in their modest daily life. The drawings and paintings were very much reminiscent of verses of the prodigious poet Beiram el Tonsi: both shared in their respective mediums content of bitter sarcasm that host an energy found in black comedies, best-expressed in the Egyptian proverb: "a burden that cannot make you cry, inflicts a smile on you".

In later works, Shaalan's oil and mixed media paintings demonstrated composite elements; object-based assemblages made out of ready-mades, parts of window frames, seats, braided fabric, neckties and ropes, all engulfing around the painted human element, competing with it for co-existence, despite the apparent pseudo-harmony that unite both. The works testified for —and in fact also against—the contemporary urban practices committed against the environment.

Shaalan hence hosts in his conscience the city and its inhabitants, the urban space and those who occupy it, those who adopt attitudes of style and desire that reflect urban aspiration. The artist is not concerned with notions of "heritage", nor its alleged elements, and throughout his



career he never adopted its motifs or sought to create the ultimate "oriental artwork". On the technical level too, he never consumed his canvases with the exhaustive process of layering and un-layering, just strong and bold brushstrokes, loaded with thick and bright colors.

Shaalan then produced a body of work in China ink and oils that demonstrated futuristic nature, with kinetic masses in limitless space. Impressions of cloudy movements and minimal details that blend in broad wavy brushstrokes before colors are completely dry. The works —exhibited in Degas Gallery

**Between the Warmth of life, and its Overt Subjugation
By Mostafa El-Razaz**

Cultural Panorama, Egyptian Cable Satellite TV.
Egyptian Stars, Egyptian Cable Satellite TV.
Pioneers of Enlightenment, Egyptian Cable Satellite TV.
Moment of Creativity, Egyptian Public TV.
Critical Contributions on Print Publications
Akhbar Al Adab, Egypt
Al Sada, UAE
Nahdet Masr, Egypt
Al Quahera, Egypt
Al Mossawar, Egypt
Nos el Donia, Egypt
PRISM, Egypt

Commissioner & Official Delegate

1997 Folk & Traditional Handicraft Festival, Spain.
2001 Egyptian Cultural Week, Lisbon, Portugal.
Egyptian Contemporary Art, Lisbon, Portugal.
2002 Egyptian Art, Dominican Republic.
2004 Traditional Handicraft Exhibition, Frankfurt Book Fair, Germany.
Claude Monet: Long River, New Century, Santa Julia Museum, Italy
2005 Grand Prize, Egyptian Academy in Rome, Italy.
Mediterranean Fine Arts Schools Encounter, Algiers, Algeria.
The West as Seen by The East, Valencia, Spain
2007 Egyptian Cultural Week, Rabat, Morocco
2007 Biennale Internationale de Sarcelles, France
Egyptian Cultural Center, Paris, France
Egyptian Art, Alicante, Spain
Algiers Arab Cultural Capital, Algeria
2008 Pierre Auguste Renoir, Rome, Italy
Trilogie Mediterraneane, Marseille, France
2009 Second Cultural Cooperation Encounter, Norway
Turin Book Fair, Italy
Second Africa Festival, Algiers, Algeria
Second Painting Encounter, Damascus, Syria
Jerusalem Arab Cultural Capital, Damascus, Syria

National Office Positions

1988 Technical Director Amireyya Printing
1989 - 1993 Technical Director National Center of Fine Arts
1993 - 1995 National Director National Art Studios, Ministry of Culture
1995 - 2000 Director Technical and Media Office, Fine Arts Sector
2000 - 2001 Director Traditional Handicraft Center
2001- 2002 Deputy Minister of Culture for Center of Art Production
2002 - 2006 Deputy Minister of Culture for Museums and Exhibitions
As of 2006 Deputy Minister of Culture for Fine Arts Sector

Mohsen Shaalan: Extra Information

Current Position

Head of Fine Arts Sector, Egyptian Ministry of Culture

Education

Bachelor of Art and Education, 1974

Inspiration

His numerous encounters with the Alexandrian pioneer painter Seif Wanly, and his close friendship with the late painter Taheyya Halim left a conspicuous impact on Shaalan's paintings and drawings. Before her death, Halim asked Shaalan to supervise the establishment of a museum with her own name. Shaalan is particularly inspired by the painting and praxis of the sixties painter Abdel Hadi el Gazzar, and his exquisite and personal blending of motifs of the local popular culture in magic realist—or almost surrealist—painting formula. Shaalan uses music as an integral part of his studio practice, and gets inspired by the music of the legendary Mohamed Abdel Wahab, the national icon Om Kolsoum, and the phenomenal trio composers Reyad El Sonabty, Zakareyya Ahmed and EL Kassabgy.

Memberships

Syndicate of Visual/Plastic Artists

Board of Directors of Cairo Opera House

Board of Advisors, Higher Authority of Cultural Palaces

Board of Advisors, Art Education Faculty, Helwan University

Board of Advisors, Restoration Center, Archeology School, Cairo University

Board of Visual Arts Committee, Egyptian Supreme Council of Culture

Coalition of Writers and Artists (Cairo Atelier)

National Society of Fine Arts

Egyptian Fine Arts Society

Wekalet El Ghoury (Vice President)

Annapronna Society, Dominican Republic

Conferences

1999 UNESCO Folk and Culture Preservation, Beirut. Lebanon. UNESCO Folk and Culture Preservation, Smithsonian National Museum, Washington DC, USA.

2000 100 Years of Women Liberation, Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo.

2001 Second Encounter for Folk Preservation, Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo.

Round Tables & Seminars

Nineties Dialogue Center of Arts, Zamalek, Cairo

Public Art Fine Art Society, Cairo

Fabric Center Helwan

Radio & TV Broadcast Shows

Mohsen Shaalan with Gabi Latif, World Service, Mont Carlo Radio.

Mohsen Shaalan

Born in Cairo, Egypt in 1951; lives and works in Cairo.

Solo Shows Include:

- 1976 Drawings on the Fog, French Cultural Center, Cairo.
- 1987 Khamaseen (Sand Storm), Arabesque Gallery, Cairo.
- 1991 Concerns from Egypt, Center of Arts, Zamalek, Cairo.
- 1995 In Sole Black, Cairo Atelier.
- 1997 Values of the Street, Cairo Atelier.
Fragments, Al Ahram Newspaper, Cairo.
- 1998 Lessan Asfour (Baked Rumors), Spiro Gallery, Maadi, Cairo.
- 2003 Till Further Notice, Picasso Art Gallery, Zamalek, Cairo.
Civil States, Ebdaa Gallery, Cairo.
- 2004 Selection from a Previous, Alexandria Creative Center, Alexandria.
- 2005 The Red Shop, Cairo Atelier.
And Winds Arrive, Salama Gallery, Cairo.
- 2007 Respecting Time Zone Differences, Degas Gallery, Alexandria.

Public Collections

Museum of Modern Art, Egypt
Library of Congress, Washington DC, USA
President Jimmy Carter's private collection
Al Ahly Bank, Cairo
Exterior Egyptian Spanish Bank, Cairo
Arab African Bank, Cairo
National Conference Center, Cairo
Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo
Mubarak National Library, Cairo
Cairo Opera House, Cairo
Al Ahram Newspaper, Cairo
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cairo
Alexandria Creative Center, Alexandria
Syndicate of Journalists, Cairo
Cairo Airport, Cairo
Coalition of Writers, Cairo
Syrian Ministry of Culture, Damascus, Syria



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Mohsen Shaalan