



fortune-teller--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

قارئة الفنجان - زيت على توال



Consultation--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

التشاور - زيت على توال





Kiss--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

القبلة - زيت على توال



Two dancers--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

الراقصان - زيت على توال





Motherhood (3)--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

امومه ٣ - زيت على توال



Motherhood (4)--oil on canvas

122x102 cm

امومه ٤ - زيت على توال





Blackboard--oil on canvas

82x62 cm

السيورة - زيت على توال



Family--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

العائلة - زيت على توال





Consultation (2)--oil on canvas

122x102 cm

التشاور ۲ - زيت على توال



Traditions--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

التقاليد - زيت على توال





Balance--oil on canvas

122x102 cm

الأتزان - زيت على توال



Fun--oil on canvas

122x102 cm

اللهو - زيت على توال





Fortune-teller (3)--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

قارئة الفنجان ٢ - زيت على توال



Twins (3)--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

التوأم ٢ - زيت على توال





rest--oil on canvas

71x101 cm

الراحة - زيت على توال



Consultation-(3)--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

التشاور ٣ - زيت على توال





Motherhood (5)--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

امومه ۵ - زيت على توال



Textile--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

النسيج - زيت على توال





Dream--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

حلم - زيت على توال



Time--oil on canvas

71x101 cm

الزمن - زيت على توال





Thinker--oil on canvas

122x102 cm

المفكر - زيت على توال

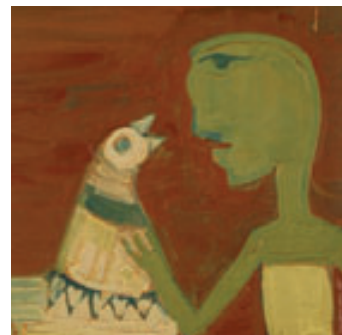


Meditation--oil on canvas

102x71 cm

التأمل - زيت على توال





# Painting







Guard (4)-brass

40x40x240 cm

الحارس ٤ - نحاس



9

### **The Rebellion:**

We have here what drives us to measure the contemporaneity and the volume of the space between Sobhi Guergues and Mahmoud Mukhtar. For the former is the descendant who carries within him the rebellion against the old, just as Mukhtar carried within him rebellion against the historical break. When we see Sobhi Guergues in his exhibition at the Ufoq Hall, we cannot but murmur:

“this then is Mahmoud Mukhtar who gave birth to the talent of sculpture after his death.”

**Ahmed Fouad Selim**



that express themselves in the form, in the distance, in the vacuum, in the mass and in the interpenetration of volumes, as if they were yellow papers that rise in confrontation of the “hostage” artist making him postponed and resigned to confess.

That is not what we find in the works of Sobhi Guergues who remained, as we have already said, an artist who contemplates the dust as he walks and who, like his sculptures, seeps into the memory, into things and into everything that exists until he becomes one of his own statues standing in the exhibited space.

In short, he is an artist unlike any other.



Movable-brass

30x34x57 cm

المتحرك - نحاس

### **The Imaginary:**

Sobhi Guergues imprisons the vacuum within the mass and mobilizes this imprisonment of the vacuum sometimes in what resembles a human totem which remains hidden from the viewer. It is an attempt to transform the unseen into a sign and to transform the imaginary into a statement about truth.

We wonder at this rapprochement between Sobhi Guergues and Anthony Caro, that which calls upon us to understand the sculptures made of hollow tin by both artists. In the eighties, Caro was concerned with the structure of the form and the systems of performance between volume and vacuum. That is why he did not close the hollow. Whereas Sobhi Guergues in the eighties was concerned with the spirit which, in the final analysis, represents the sacred idol and the martyrdom, hence the closing of the hollow which is tantamount to an act of rebellion and disobedience.

It is a radical disparity between the two, yet also a closeness which declares the content of the flexible metal materials and their techniques.

Whereas the sculpted scene in the work of Sobhi Guergues masters the specificity of transforming the individual into the collective, i.e. into partnership with the viewers, we do not find the same thing in the works of Caro, since, on the contrary, his sculptures do not appear to have this quality of collective partnership. They do not project this radiating warmth which we find the sculptures of Sobhi Guergues.

In spite of this savage tragedy with which Sobhi Guergues mobilizes his memories, we find his statues full of pride because they imagine that they represent the salvation of the human idea without any pretension of pointing referring to a mythological source, even though they do come from that source.

Let us, for example, contemplate his sculpture composed of five human limbs, lying horizontally on a table, and let us ask ourselves how Sobhi Guergues was able to convince us of a tragic human scene representing earthly violence and cruelty. Even though he cancelled the human traits, he placed before us the “imaginary” as being an actual reality.

Here, he is not presenting what is dying as much as consecrating what is living.

That is why the sculpture of Sobhi Guergues transcends what is reasonable into collective emotions. There is nothing useful to say here if we were to contemplate the memorized, stereotyped and imported stories of those who write in newspapers, stories



### The Balance:

An important aspect of the sculptures of Sobhi Guergues appears in the rhythm, the music and the balance. Undoubtedly, the nature inherited from his father, the musician, is within him. The sound which emerged from the metal holes of the wind musical instrument shaped the mastery and the embodiment in what resembles musical “pauses” in the metal used by the sculptor. There are silent signs of solid iron placed on the top of a flexible iron pole that leans like the mast of a Nile boat.

If one were to walk rapidly near this sculpture, it will move backward and forward sensitive sculpture faces the visitor in the main hall of the Museum of Modern Egyptian Art transforming the audible into the imaginary and hence into the three dimensional. I am familiar with many sculptures in that hall, yet this one alone is the one which, in my eyes, renews the system of order and rhythm in the museum hall. What is that mast if not the sound of the shepherd's pipe that Sobhi Guergues was playing at home. Something similar to the distances of silence between the keys of the “zither”, or similar to the sound that is rapidly swallowed up by the empty space within it, for he has seized the instant of sound from its moment in time and from the three dimensional.



Leader ship-brass and bronze

القيادة - نحاس + برونز

24x32x62 cm



Winter night-bronze

15x28x51 cm

ليل الشتاء - برونز



### The Totem:

In the course of more than three periods, Sobhi Guergues went through an experience which by its very nature transforming. This transforming nature comes from the fact that he works with half child and, may be, half a comedy. He sees things as they are but he covers them with clothes that are not theirs, that is why we clearly see Sobhi Guergues “the child” and Sobhi Guergues “the comedy”. Sobhi Guergues carves persons who are leaning or sitting or lying on metal stakes, or on pieces of wooden blocks, persons who could be human or a promised blessing in bird and animal, a promise similar to a “totem” which heralds the future.

Sobhi Guergues empties iron from its mass and it becomes dim metal boxes, closed upon themselves, devoid of their density as if preparing to rise into space.

He creates birds, animals and rampant creatures, the remains of human bones and human limbs on the tips of high stakes made of scrap iron, thus postponing their salvation and preventing them from the act of awareness of the world; he seems to be posing them on the stakes for the cosmic torture. With such works, Sobhi Guergues approaches the world of another artist called Barry Flanagan yet also moves away from him. The latter in turn selected the “rabbit” in his sculpture and poised him on iron stakes. It would be only right to say that Flanagan is the one to come close to Sobhi Guergues, since the latter mastered his sculpting experience a short time before the experience of Flanagan; thus the rabbit appears as if an objective equivalent of a human being trapped.

Yet, there is nothing in life as bright as celebrating the creation of something, and that is the difference between Sobhi Guergues and Flanagan: Guergues sculpts the thing as he found it within himself, whereas Flanagan sculpts the thing as it should appear to be.

Sobhi Guergues gives himself to the world, bears witness to it and predicts, while Flanagan stands outside the world and declares his protest.

Both are ironic, both are modern and both are aware of human suffering. Yet, Sobhi Guergues is a primitive who came from the clay of Egyptian temples and who has a spirit capable of reproducing itself in that bird which instinctively knows its way to its old abode wherein it was born.

## The Primal Nature:

I stopped before two sculptures, one within the scope of what is unspoken and the second about “the world of tragedy”. The first sculpture is composed of three statues that embody his vision of oppression and domination, brought by Sobhi Guergues from the accumulation of old proverbs: “I see not, I hear not and I speak not”.

Yet, the three statues are arranged side by side, each of them with its hand on its mouth. Thus, the artist is amending or perhaps correcting the old proverb, for the three statues encompass the act of seeing as well as the act of hearing, and the irony appears in the revelation of the amount of humiliation which is unexpressed.

The three statues appear as a primal nature that reveals a second primal nature, a nature parallel to the old proverb.

As for his other sculptures marked by tragedy, it is the closed lid which reveals what it contains and the two sides of which open up to show a human being preserved since primal times, a human being suspended between death and birth. A temporary human being postponed and helpless.

We contemplate the techniques and find them unlike any other in the works of sculptors. It would seem as if Sobhi Guergues no longer cares about the craft, only about the truth. He no longer seems to care about the duplication of sizes, what he cares about is the explosion. He no longer pays attention to what is heavenly, only to what is existential, to the world that he has made and which made him; he is no longer concerned with the mass and its weights, but only with the vacuum that he has carved and hides within the sculpture.



Way out (2)-brass and bronze

خروج ٢ - نحاس + برونز

12x25x55 cm



Queen and prince--oil on canvas

101x71 cm

الملكة والأمير - زيت على توال



Sobhi's closeness perhaps transcends all three of them, for he sculpts and paints and has probably cut out his pictures from an old wall or from a tattoo on a virgin rural door, or even from memories suspended in the burial chambers containing the remains of the ancients.

In all three arts we find the deliberateness that flirts with two classes, the class of artist makers and the class of those who buy in order to invest. In Sobhi Guergues, however, it is that which has to exist.

There are models between instinct, nature, the elemental, the primal moment and the memories of man, superior to all else because, as we have said before about his sculptures, they have the capacity to transform the individual into the collective.



Language of flowers--oil on canvas

71x101 cm

لغة الورد - زيت على توال



Artist's works in his studio

صورة لأعمال الفنان مجمعة داخل مرسومه

#### 4

### The Music:

Sobhi Guergues himself appears as a world closed upon itself, full of the secrets of the lost self whose dull eyes are turned inwards more than outwards. I looked at him when he spoke to me in a booming voice, both raucous and clear, realizing that the bud within him had bloomed. I contemplated his home composed of three storeys, full of statues that seem heaped as if on the day of judgment. I remembered and murmured: Is this not the world of the poor, of those who have the wisdom and the secret of the universe.

Sobhi Guergues decided to fill me with surprise and melancholy when he began to handle the old musical instruments to play certain tunes. The sound was expressive. His father had taught him rhythm, music and musical structure. Suddenly, he got up saying: Would you like to see my paintings... and began to put before me one painting after the other. He surprised me, for here he was in this poor marginalized neighborhood between Boulaq and Shobra, someone who had come close to the world of Penck in his early paintings during the sixties, from the world of Cucchi and John Michel Basquit in the paintings of the late eighties; all a three as well as others whom the West had elevated.

Yet who is he whose conscience would lead him to set things right.

### The Source:

There is that power contained in the sculptures of Sobhi Guergues, a power similar to a rite of nature. When we see his works, we feel that we have always seen them, that this is how they came into being. We feel that we have known him from our childhood to our old age; that our grandmothers have told us about them and that when we looked surprised, our grandmothers cut out paper dolls crucified like the ones carved by Sobhi Guergues in his own time. Hence, there capacity to transform the individual into the collective, i.e. they present a partnership among people so that when they see them, they arouse postponed memories that emerge from within the sculpture.

This intimacy between a sculpture of Sobhi Guergues and between an outside truth is a relationship that stands just like the statue itself, for it is not an intimacy related to a precise source as such to which we come back in order to explore or to find knowledge, it is rather a source that has a “cosmic” context and, in particular, it is an intimacy that bears an existential quality. The sculpture of Sobhi Guergues appears to us as if it makes itself by itself, away from its cre



Squatting-bronze      15x15x15 cm      الجالس - برونز

Let us contemplate these three wooden pieces cut out haphazardly and thus seeming to be made by nature itself, on the surfaces of which Sobhi Guergues set the image of primal man made of oxidized metal. The wooden pieces resemble blocks from which are born verbal memories inspired by the wise sayings of the sacred. This human being who is us is crucified between the esoteric signs of deeply buried creatures. We feel perplexed as we contemplate them; for what is that “nature” which dictated to Sobhi Guergues the patterns of this inspiration that places man in the margins.





Circular body-brass

20x60x65 cm

الجسم الدائري - نحاس

### The Mysterious:

When facing the work of Sobhi Guergues, the viewer wonders at the ebullience and power of expression. In other words, the viewer seeks that system that shaped the aesthetic of the sculpture, much more so than contemplating the facts of the aesthetic experience in the structure of the statue. In the works of Sobhi Guergues, we do not find ourselves imprisoned within the power of expression, we remain mere followers of a sharp and ironic imagination. As viewers, we are the ones who can complete the artistic product that meets our eyes in our capacity as partners in the work. But when it comes to the carvings of Sobhi Guergues, we find ourselves detached from the responsibility of completing the artistic work in our imagination. The opposite is true if we contemplate a sculpture by El Seguni or by Adam Henein or any other modernist. There is an event in the work of Sobhi Guergues that dispenses us from the responsibility of completing the product, that detaches us from our recent and ancient memories. The mysterious in his works produces a similar mysterious in the viewer which, in turn, creates a parallel imagination. This is because the significance in his work creates significance without a need in the viewer to complete the product in search of pleasure.



Dilemma (3)-brass

48x50x45 cm

اين المفرد ٢ - نحاس

# **An Insight into the Creativity of Sobhi Guergues From Nine Perspectives**

**By Ahmed Fouad Selim**

**1**

## **The Primitive:**

We feel insulted when a passer-by makes fun of the painting by Mahmoud Said entitled 'the City' for example, or of the sculpture "The Bride of the Nile", that masterpiece by Mukhtar. Such Mockery insults us, as if we had an opinion which we did not express, or as if the works of these artists teach us something about the meaning of our existence when they are mocked. We are not speaking here of aesthetics as such, but rather of its impact. That is what Sobhi Guergues leaves for us in his sculptures for his work contains a "collectivity" that identifies him. In other words, each one of us has a specificity as well as a partnership with the carvings of Sobhi Guergues whenever we meet them. We pause before a sculpture in a crucified position, or before a group of hands and thighs enveloped in a dim and hollow metal, then we walk away and are soon pursued by its impact.

There is no difference between the beautiful and the august if they are united to produce that impact in which the collective participates and on which they agree without declaring that agreement. When faced with the sculptures of Sobhi Guergues we share a feeling that takes us to the soul or to the sacred. For the artist does not present us here with beauty for sensual pleasure, but rather with a lingering impact that pursues and incites mental pleasure.

The sculptures of Sobhi Guergues contain a primitiveness that remind us of that African face caved by an anonymous member of the "fang" tribe in Africa, that which released the energy of creativity in the 20th century when cubism was born at the hands of Picasso. We keep turning around and around the sculpture of Sobhi Guergues wanting to know something about that other which is unexpressed within it, about that metal volume closed upon itself from all sides, about that vacuum from which he made a body hermetic to one and all.





Judge-brass

50x66x50 cm

القاضي - نحاس



### **Sobhi Guergues (1929)**

Graduated from the Faculty of Fine Art and did post-graduate study. Appointed professor of sculpture. Awarded scholarship to study in Florence Academy of Art. Got diploma in 1964. Guergues placed his unique hallmark on the modern Egyptian sculpture. His extraordinary experiment took root in the Egyptian Coptic art, which teems with signs of innocence and intimacy in the formative relationship. Guergues first made linear and thin sculptures, which displayed powerful expression. He then began to incorporate rough, linear relationship with strips soaked in liquid wax. The technique produced lava-like projections when the sculpture is cast. Guegues also brilliantly welded tin foils producing an atmosphere of intimacy and innocence. Guegues is widely known as a prolific and innovative sculptor. His innovative style and technique are manifested in his linear statues, the bulging strips, cylindrical heads with delicate features. In his latest works, Guergues also came up with a blend of cast elements, which are vibrant. These elements made from tin and iron rods impressively display the innovative technique for coloured and oxidized patina. Guergues inherited his talent for music from his family. He cleverly plays zither, flute and lute. He brilliantly transfers his intimacy and subtle feelings to his sculptures. In an acknowledgement of his art Guegues received a good number of prizes in international exhibitions. He also launched many solo exhibitions in Akhenaton Gallery at Kasr al-Nil in 1971, Akhenaton Gallery at the Centre of Art in Zamalek in 1981, 1994, Doroub Gallery in 1996 and Cairo Atelier in 2002, 2004. He also exhibited in many international exhibitions and biennales at home and abroad, which included the General Art Exhibition (several editions until 2004), Salon of Mini Works of Art, the First Sculpture Salon of Noble Materials in the Palace of Art in 2005 (special invitation), Venice Biennale in 1976, Alexandria Biennale for Mediterranean Countries in 1994, the 5th edition of Cairo International Biennale in 1994, National Art Biennale (Sun Path) in Ecuador in 2006. The most important prizes Guegues received included the first prize for sculpture in Alexandria Biennale for Mediterranean Countries in 1994 and the Prize of Cairo International Biennale in 1994. His works are part of the art collection in the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art in Cairo and major art museums and institutions in the US, France, the UK, Italy, Austria, Kuwait, etc.

**Commenting on his art Guegues says:** "I deeply love sculptures. Although my experiment seems to be difficult and hard, it has its special flavour. My experiment gives me the feeling of individuality. Achievements made by my great masters and pioneering predecessors have always been in my mind. However, after examining thousands of sculptures made by these great people I was determined to have my own experiment. I would always wonder: Why should I not add something new to the representational works? There is hardly any doubt that Guergues' experiment has been one of the most influential aspects in the modern Egyptian art.





Sobhi Guergues



As if you are in the company of your colleagues, revealing to them your pains and dreams. Coming across the latest works created by Guergues also gives you the impression that you are enjoying a leisurely stroll with your close friends. Guergues' entrusted his visions, features and aspirations to his human representations. He remains one of the most influential artists, who received the torch from the pioneering generation. His exhibition in the Horizon One Gallery eventually materialised after many plans were delayed and ambitions suspended. Guergues' exhibition has been consciously planned to live up to his art and his name. Guergues' abbreviates successfully a time-honoured history of aesthetics. He has taught us how to persuade the brass to speak up and how we could abstract human features in the bronze. Born in a family of musicians the sculptor performed like a clever musician to create the features of neighbours and craftspeople in the district of al-Qullaly in Cairo. His figures also represented coppersmith. He is known for being a prolific sculptor, who made themes energized with the sense of belonging, folk heritage and intriguing questions.

Coming closer to Guergues' unique world, I would be reminded of Albert Camus' 'the alien'. I discovered that Guergues' peace within him deepened his love to people around him. But he loved his art more than anything else. He stubbornly refused to join the line of artists seeking to receive an honour or a prize. Nor did he seek to propagandise his art or creativity. He devoted himself entirely to his art. Reciprocating I was enthusiastic to organise this exhibition to highlight the noble values in Guergues' works.

**Ehab el-Labban**

Director of Horizon One





Sobhi Guergues' human representations walk from old worlds. They give a saintly-like bow to the viewers. Their eyes are delicate and dreamy. They peacefully raise thier hands inviting us to deepen our sense of humanity and emotions, and in the meantime inspire life-loving people. Guergues' fingers transformed brass strips into human figures, motivating the viewer to gaze intently at a childlike dreamy world. Guergues' world is also shrouded in Sufi atmosphere. The sculptor's studio teems with all his unique vocabularies. Guergues consciously transformed his figures into bulging and cyldrical shapes. The faces of his bronze works seem to be coins minited in old ages to illustrate portraits of saints. Throughout his artistic career, the sculptor kindly urged his figures to repose peacefully in his heart, on walls, shelves and in rooms. Being a talented player of organ Guergues plucked the strings of emotions to give us access to his childlike world. In the meantime, he does not abandon his mythical visions, which lie in the middle of reality and uopia. Today, we celebrate Guergues' sculptures. He also appeared to have given up to an appeal from some figures to transfer them to canvas.

**Dr. Salah el-Melegi**

Chief of the Central Administration for Museums and Exhibitions





### **A sculptor with a frolicking child within**

Blessed with fully-grown creativity motivated by all elements of fecund imagination Sobhi Guergues always displays remarkable signs of harmony and grace, which are rarely found elsewhere. To me, Guegues also represents a fully-matured state of creativity, which is deeply attached to and inspired by his self and his unique world. These qualities are attributed to a rebellious, gifted and clever child. Guegues' child does not stop frolicking, scribbling and collecting and immediately scattering things [ideas] at his disposal. Exhausted, Guegues' child falls into a peaceful sleep and rise again more active and radical. That is why Guergues always comes up with such amazing signs of malleability in his work and adventurous attempts to break traditional and mainstream rules.

Remarkably reconciling his childlike innocence and immense knowledge he gained over years Guergues gave the password, which helps break the codes of his curious philosophy and totems dissolved elaborately and sarcastically into fine iron. Guergues' substances seemed to be extracted from his tissues and cells. He distinguished himself by his metal and spiral forms. Motivated by the child within, he invited us to journey a dreamy world, in which figures are levitating closer to the wall of the space and come in contact with curiously-shaped strips, which provide a sense of security; different figures apparently fixed at the centre appeared to be racing ahead of a bike. At this moment, our curiosity is aroused, prompting us to gaze intently at Guergues' unique world. We appreciatively introduced the sculptor within an unprecedented and comprehensive vision. There is hardly little doubt that this well-researched documentary exhibition will stir up the enthusiasm of curious viewers, who are seeking to read, study and think it over.

**Mohsen Shaalan**

Head of the Sector of Fine Arts



Sobhi Guergues' exhibition in Horizon One at Mr. & Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum strongly testifies for the noble achievements made by one of the most influential artists in Egypt's art movement. Guegues' creativity undoubtedly influenced viewers in Arab countries as well. He created an immensely big number of sculptures, which are unique and extraordinary.

Minister of Culture  
**Farouk Hosni**





## **Index**

- 156 Introduction by artist Farouk Hosni, Minister of Culture
- 154 Introduction by artist Mohsen Shaalan, Head of the Sector of Fine Art
- 152 Introduction by Dr. Salah el-Melegi, Chief of the Central Administration  
for Museums and Exhibitions
- 150 Introduction by artist Ehab el-Labban, Director of Horizon One
- 147 Biography of artist Sobhi Guergues
- 144 An Insight into the Creativity of Sobhi Guergues From Nine Perspectives  
By Ahmed Fouad Selim
- 128 Paintings
- 94 Sculptures

## Highlights

artist Mohsen Shaalan

Head of the Sector of Fine Arts

**Dr. Salah el-Melegi**

Chief of the Central Administration of  
Museums and Exhibitions

**Mrs. Olfat el-Gendi**

Chief of the Central Department for  
Financial and Administration Affairs

**Alaa Shakwer**

Director of the Principal Centre for  
Information Technology

**Ms Dalia Mostafa**

Director of the Technical Office and  
National & International Affairs

**Mohamed Diab**

General-Director of National and  
International Exhibitions

**Ms. Mervat Hamza**

General-Director of PR and Information

**Ms Rawia Abdel-Rahman**

Director of Information Department

**Mahmoud Sif-Eddin**

Information officer at the Office of the  
Head of the Sector of Fine Art

**General Administration for Technical  
Support for Museums and Exhibitions**

**Ms. Samia Samir**

General Director

**Mahmoud Khalil**

General Supervisor

**Mohamed Gadalla**

Director of Graphic Design and technical  
supervisor of the Catalogue

**Ms Nariman Mohamed al-Hadi**

Director Editing & Revision Dept.

**Maher Ghali Habib**

Chief of Publication

**Ismail Abdel-Razek**

Print supervisor

### Organisation & Display plan

Horizon One

artist Ehab el-Labban

Director of Horizon One

**Ms. Kariman Samir**

Officer of Administrative and Technical  
Affairs

**Ms Reem Kandeel**

PR and Information Officer

**Ms. Hala Ahmed Hassan**

Technical member

**Ms. Salha Shaban**

Technical member

**Riham Said**

Information

**Shaiymaa Mostafa Yehia**

Technical member

**Ahmed Soliman**

Administrative support

**Ms. Douaa Ibrahim**

Administrative Affairs

**Mohamed el-Shahat**

Technical member

### In collaboration with

**Saleh Abdel-Sabour**

Designer of poster, invitation card and the  
Catalogue cover

**Ms Sarah Mostafa**

**Ms. Nawal Salah-Eddin**

Photography

**Ms. Nehad Salem**

Translator of the critical study from Arabic  
to English (Ahmed Fouad Selim)

**Ms. Nevin Lamie**

Translator of the critical study from Arabic  
to French (Ahmed Fouad Selim)

Introductions Translated by

**Mohsen Arishie**

**Joseph Azer**

Graphic designer

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The exhibition is planned and  
organised by artist  
**Ehab el-Labban**





Sobhi Guergues



سوبي.ج

Sobhi Guergues