



Acrylic on canvas - 40x50 cm - 2010



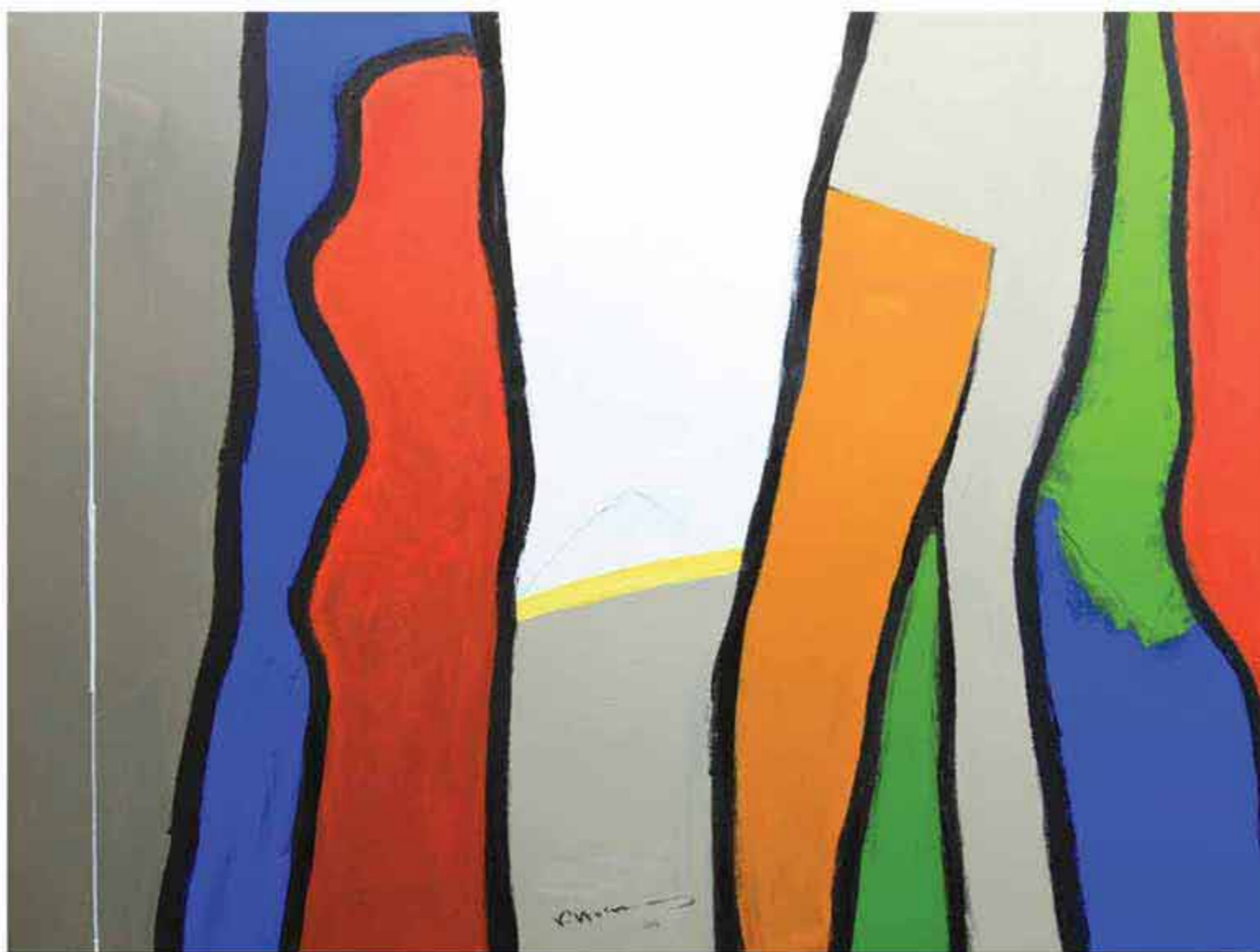
Acrylic on canvas - 200x200 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 120x150 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 70x90 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 150x200 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 150x200 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 150x200 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 120x200 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 100x150 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 100x150 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 100x150 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 100x100 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 50x70 cm - 2010



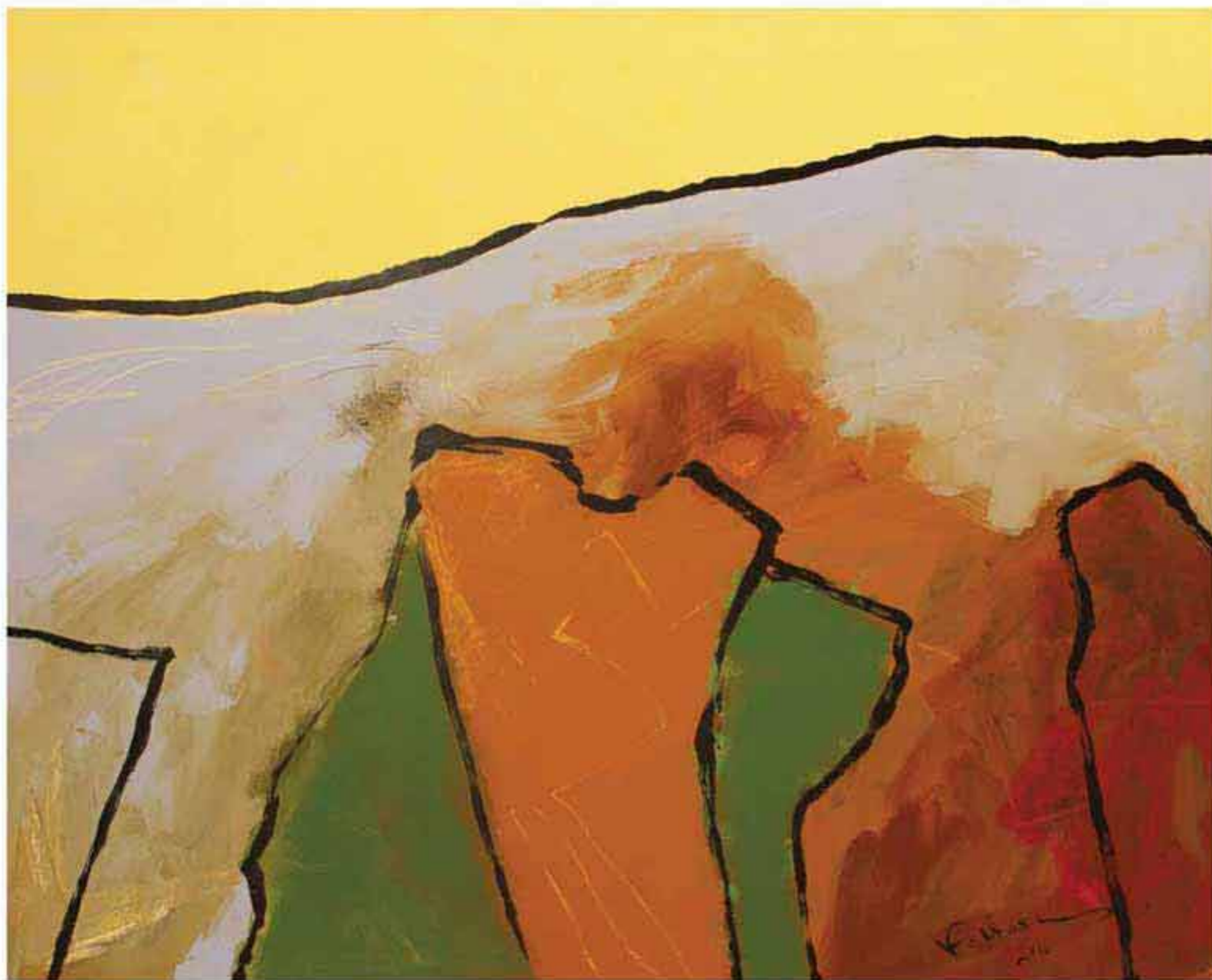
Acrylic on canvas - 50x60 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 100x150 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 150x200 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 120x150 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 120x150 cm - 2010



Acrylic on canvas - 120x150 cm - 2010

FAROUK HOSNY

2011

F. HOSNY

The Hosny music had to listen to the complaint of unfulfilled consciousness. Lyricism had to be curtailed and only internal echoes were allowed. Serenity reigned supreme in Hosny's space. It is as if he bows to the power of introspection set free by the artist this time. It is as if he contemplates the accumulation of experience over the years.

Even the nature of acrylic – his favourite medium – that resembles his overflowing dynamic nature, seems to have been subjected accordingly to the exigencies of the downbeat condition. Dilution of a plan for the clash of palette against palette is achieved with a view to experiencing the serene landscape, peaceful flow, and the contemplative rambling on canvas, exchanging its presence in so far as it is an explosive material with a dignified presence launched by a filling substance and a covert agent and a balancing fulcrum to stabilize all elements whereby those elements represent the mental perspective of the visual.

In his current exhibition, Farouk Hosny presents meanings and essence of meanings. He exhibits a transformation in which the signifiers produced by a variety of style fluctuate. Meaning is superficial whereas essence reaches beyond appearances to a subterranean level of sign and metaphor. It is a stage reached when the fluctuation in meaning owes much to the density of styling. The essence of meaning is based on varying levels of signification and influence. It is an invitation to contemplate the effect of alternating between the straightforward and the metaphorical and give credence to the power of metaphor and condensation with a view to delve deep down to the aesthetic roots in our minds.

Farouk Hosny's art is his means for introspection and learning about the world. He contemplates and engages in a spiritual exercise through art. He dispenses with words and depends instead on the absolute quality of colour aiming at engaging with the eternal in a spiritual, lyrical burst that goes beyond time and place. Hosny rearranges his external relations with the world he gazes on and takes part in the dialectic between chaos and order. This exhibition witnesses Farouk Hosny's move from nature to nurture.

Dr Yassir Munji

refractions that reflect deferred lights trying to escape the hegemony of a heavy cloud, and still in other times adopts reflections from colours that melt within it and lie adjacent to it; grey in this case reflects blue sky, merges with traces of melting green, or surrenders to the siege of blue and yellow. Grey may also be captivated by black lines that force it within strict bounds. However, soon enough grey comes back with a vengeance as it spreads out to the maximum space possible to captivate colour areas and hunt for signs and forms, or rather occupies a dumb area, thus squatting on the borders of the canvas to control the surge of elements. Visual signs consequently turn into pigments reeling beneath the vibration of colour as material presence, and light as a colour manifestation.

The emotional charge in the works displayed in this exhibition is evasive to a great extent. Hosny's relinquishing of his usual bursting dynamism, except for a few works, and his adoption of a serene contemplative plan imbued the works in general with emotional non-saturation. Onlookers promenading among these works may hear a monologue of complaint about emotional incompleteness: an unconsummated love, seething anger that stopped short of exploding, desire that remained within the boundaries of wish. Then an arrow darts from its bow in the direction of non-signifying ghosts that would symbolically imply that consciousness is still captivated by a still unsatisfied wanderlust. Meaning is infinite whereas images are finite and the more images available may still fail to grasp meaning. The object of our vision still evades the overreaching mind.



9a - Serge Poliakoff - Composition - 1960



9b - Farouk Hosny - Acrylic on canvas - 2010

allows variations of units. He uses black to frame his elements as an outline and a barrier to separate areas. He also stretches it over areas that move vertically and horizontally to offer equilibrium. He also inserts it in forms that float in the void to slow down the rush of other forms so that the floating elements be still governed by a slow dreamlike tempo. Hosny may also give black free rein to fragment the scene from its middle thus distributing the elements on both sides of a gaping ravine yearning for an impossible reunion. Black may also be raised high on a horizon that harbours the possibility of rain thus limiting the ambition of a pyramid to a sublime outreach (Plate no. 1). Hosny also exercises control over the colour black as a linking element between forms and the void of the plane, as well as a visual sign with an arrow head that invites onlookers to follow the movement in a predetermined route. As a modulating instrument, Hosny scatters lean variations of black that vary in length and straightness and react in relation to spotting, hatching, continuity and winding lines.

In an almost similar fashion, Hosny controls the use of the colour white in his works for the 2011 exhibition. Though he did not use it as much as he used black, his ultra sensitivity in choosing its positions and his expertise in deciding upon its density and scarcity presented white as the rudder for both design and dynamic plans and the fulcrum for fine tuning the combination of volume, spaces, void and illusory depth.

The present exhibition is also a triumph for Hosny's use of the rich colour palette that featured in a thick, generous and fresh form. Even in those areas where colours are transparently felt the malleability of layers on top of one another is never missed. A humid dewy transparency is achieved rather than dry porous roughness or the transparency of diluted colours. Hosny manages the richness of his colour palette through various means: the combination of brush strokes and the effects of brush hair on the surface, deleting, inserting, chipping, scratching, hatching, compounding and mixing colour pastes. Also paramount are areas of colour that protrude over the canvas plane sometimes used for shadowy or light effects; such technique recalls familiar works in murals whether in relief or protruding. There are also works where areas of colour reached such a degree of opacity and withdrawal that a graphic character is produced recalling silkscreen products.

Even though Farouk Hosny never gave up his favourite straightforward colours – blue in particular – he nevertheless introduced a new pattern of hybrid and derived colours where shades of grey secure a prominent place. It is to be noted that the colour grey acquires an exceptional luster as it sometimes borrows the limpid quality of shallow waters that trail on the edge of the land, and some other times makes a distinguished appearance in graded

peels off any ghost-like personification leaving them open to anticipation. Implicit statements flow then in an enormous void that does not promise an imminent interpretation (Plate no. 8).

Cross referencing may also draw us to the Russian Serge Poliakoff (1906-1969) (Plate no. 9a, 9 b). However, visual saturation in Hosny's works sets perception straight and direct us to Poliakoff's serene monuments that tie his world down in sheer contrast with the euphoria that inspires Hosny's elements that float accordingly on the surface of unseen primal waters while the effect of such support for the floating elements is still retained in areas and distances.

Black enjoys an exceptional presence in the exhibits. It exceeds in its variety its former presence in the works of the eighties. It is different from our experience of it in Motherwell, Tapes and Klein, as well as George Rouault (1871-1958) before the three of them. Hosny controls the colour black displaying a stylistic overflow and an imaginative broadness that



8 - Farouk Hosny - Acrylic on canvas - 2010

4. Farouk Hosny 2011: manifestations of excess and metaphorical essence

The current Hosny exhibition earns a legitimate presence. The survey attempted above points to the fact that such an exhibition is a condensed winding up of an experience harvested in its maturity. This exhibition is the apotheosis of more than forty year experience of creative overflow that was adumbrated in the nineties. Furthermore, the 2009 and 2010 exhibitions paved the way for its birth and consequently the 2011 exhibition fulfilled its promise as Hosny crowned his artistic achievement and consolidated his persuasive, metaphoric, allegoric and allergic strains. Also paramount is his teleological marginalization of a myriad of elements that used to make an appearance in his previous works: some are fused in one another with a view to combine essences and reach victoriously to conclusive statements. This is best expressed in the words of the American art critic Joan Nickles about some previous works: "Farouk Hosny's abstract art points strongly to the realization that absolute forms do exist (with or without structure), that these forms radiate their own constant source of light, and that they mysteriously and spontaneously appear from the darkness" (Farouk Hosny: Personal, Professional and Artistic Website).



7a- Kazimir Malevich - Two Figures - Oil on canvas - St. Petersburg Museum



7b - Farouk Hosny - Acrylic on canvas - 2010

Deceiving memory imbued some of the visual signs in the paintings exhibited. There is an attempt to recall Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935) not through his famous suprematism but rather through some of the works he accomplished fifteen years later: vertical fragmentary presentations of skeletons of plane figures (Plate no. 7a, 7b). However, it dawns upon us that pure reception that rises above cross references presents Hosny's work in tragic silence that

combinations of multi-layered thickness of his colour palette and splash of coloured areas and veins are roughly structured in calculated spaces, while the accumulation of paint layers one over the other makes their appearance. Also distinct is his use of a brush that is not saturated with colour that scratches the surface with the leftover of a dying colour conferring upon the canvas the power of suggesting lights that yearn to be let loose in a melodious early morning beauty (Plate no.6). Such are the individual characteristics of Hosny's latest period which make his works stand out in comparison with contemporary abstract experiments that are subject to prefabricated aesthetic recipes.

In the last four years, Hosny elevated certain distinctive forms and signs in his works alternating his use of them all. This appeared for instance in his emphasis on rectangles and triangles in his 2006 exhibition and his variations on the white crescent form that make a striking appearance in the composition of a great many number of paintings in his 2007 exhibition; these variations produce elongated as well as reduced shapes saturated with the maximum possible colour palette, thus catching the eyes of onlookers who follow a momentary flow of a shooting meteor.

An analysis of his works accomplished in 2008 and 2009 reveals a blunting of the sharpness of Hosny's basic colours through the use variations of ochre, violet, and various degrees of green, thus reducing the direct influence of his basic colours chief among which are blue and red dominating principal separating sections in his pictorial plane as mass is born from the heart of the void. His structural orientation with marked preference for geometric relations also takes precedence – a feature that appears in mature form in his present 2011 exhibition, which I consider the legitimate product of his eloquent and pointed formal shortcuts that characterized his 2010 works. Those works carry the imprint of a serene intellect, thus producing a visual crystallization of layers of seething unconscious feelings that formed over the years; while a considerable dynamic equivalence between reason and emotion is produced. There has also been a tendency evident in 2009 and 2010 towards hard-edge painting. However, dynamic vitality that is lacking in the works of hard-edge painting masters has maintained its presence in Hosny's works. Movement still retains its power in Hosny's works as a persuasive motive in the design space of his paintings. Reclining lines impose their hegemony on the composition in its entirety suggesting continuity and a rushing outward movement, privileging the intellectual over the wild aesthetic in a great many number of his present exhibition.

Since 2000, his works have become generally a paradox for the authority of nature in a sense that proscribes the risk of converting his visual symbols into real life elements, unless philosophic interpretation allows it. Looking at his works in the last ten years, one cannot help but feel a halo of good omen permeate them and promise a projected spiritual salvation that serves as a defence against the blows of time. Also felt is a yearning towards the ideal of beauty as an end in itself and an attempt to fall back on the painting as a guide in mute chaos, a chronic accumulation of memories, as an intuition that longs for resisting the fear of death. Barriers fall between the painting as visual pleasure and the vision that imparts the metaphysical. On the technical level, the variation of transparency and opacity in the colour palette starting from the middle of that period, especially in the works he completed in 2006 and 2007 where



6 - Farouk Hosny - Acrylic on canvas - 2007

These, however, are surface comparisons that miss many essential points chief among which is the nature of abstraction itself which concerns the primary relationships between the objects of vision and their essence. This is an adventure undertaken by the artist to explore these relationships, their technical props and their reflecting images. It becomes therefore necessary that those structures, images, signs, combinations and approaches be studied by a variety of artists to unlock their secrets and find out the variables that link them with the primary elements of painting. A warning against such comparisons should also be made to avert the inevitability of losing track of Hosny's unique standing as an artist. Instead, attention should be directed to his unconscious bursts, spontaneous impromptus, wild tension, and psychosomatic feelings. Teleology disappears to the advantage intuition as the process goes on and the colours take shape on the canvas. Onlookers cannot help but feel the relationship of this distinctive style with Hosny's preference of acrylic that dries fast.

There run parallel the inevitability of the onlooker's feeling of the musicality of his works and their lyrical quality as well as his accomplished colours whose value increases given his selection of a limited number of colours whose combination and adjacent positions suggest the emergence of a spectrum of colour tones in the space of the canvas; let alone the creative variety in his works and the values of ambiguity, mystery and paradox that bridge the gap in his works between the real world and abstract absolutes. These are all characteristics and capabilities that Hosny polished throughout long years and several stages especially in the first ten years of the third millennium.

Starting from 2000, the design plot in Hosny's paintings appear strikingly mature. His visual elements and noted signs that continuously appear in the following years became firmly established: his wild triangles, vibrant lines, rhythmic ringing tones, and simultaneously assaulting, pointing and evading arrows as well as his flying and splashed out spots in the space of the canvas. Hosny has appeared in control of his visual elements, capable of moving them around, setting them aflame, pacifying, abridging, fusing them and deriving combinations of them.

Void has also been launched as a primary value in his works especially those he accomplished in 2005. Those works crystallize a cosmic sense that displays dynamic dignity. This featured greatly in 2006 as his forms surrendered their wildness and his light plan became well composed and non-blattant, but rather subjected to the established and rational holistic design of the paintings. This appeared in particular in his experiments from 2007 to 2010.

as a truce expressed in the distance between the vibrations of signs. Hosny also aspired to a horizon that dispenses with the borders of the canvas. The same stage witnessed colossal works like those displayed in his 1994 exhibition in the Arts Compound, Zamalek.

In general, the works in this stage were characterized by a jovial marine sense. Lines make their presence as an uninterrupted continuity that enforces the interrelationship of forms and draws up the conciliation between the dynamic and the designed. Consequently, movement expanded physical space and elevated it to a heavenly horizon that sparkles with pleasure.

Furthermore, this stage contained adumbrations – as did the eighties – looking forward to the 2006 exhibition, and formal styles that were retained in the unconscious of the artist for almost twenty years to make an appearance in the 2011 exhibition.

Comparison is rife at this point as well as classification that originates in primary perception. Consequently, temptation arises to draw up links with leading abstract painters and their works: the American Robert Motherwell (1915-1991), structural ornamentation in paintings by the Italian Afro Basaldella (1912-1976), certain works by the American Franz Kline (1910-1962), or certain works from the last stages of Adolf Gottlieb (1903-1974), especially the ones that intersect with the signs of Tapies, or those that recall the celebration of the sublime in the works of the American Clyfford Still (1904-1980), or works in lyrical abstraction and Tachism where his compatriot Samuel Lewis Francis (1923-1994) stays away from his surface ornamentation so that veneration may be accorded the void as a primary value.



5b- Antonio Tapies - Hand on head - Lithograph - 1983



5a- Farouk Hosny - Acrylic on canvas - 1984

overflow of the American artist Jackson Pollock (1912-1956). However, Pollock appears epileptic and possessed by the phobia of void, while Hosny found refuge in a serene area that controlled the wildness of his lines thus subjecting his paintings to the logic of open space freedom as contrasted with an illogical overflow of freedom. Adumbrations of certain stylistic trends appear also in the eighties. These trends appear later in the exhibitions of the third millennium especially in the 2006 exhibition.

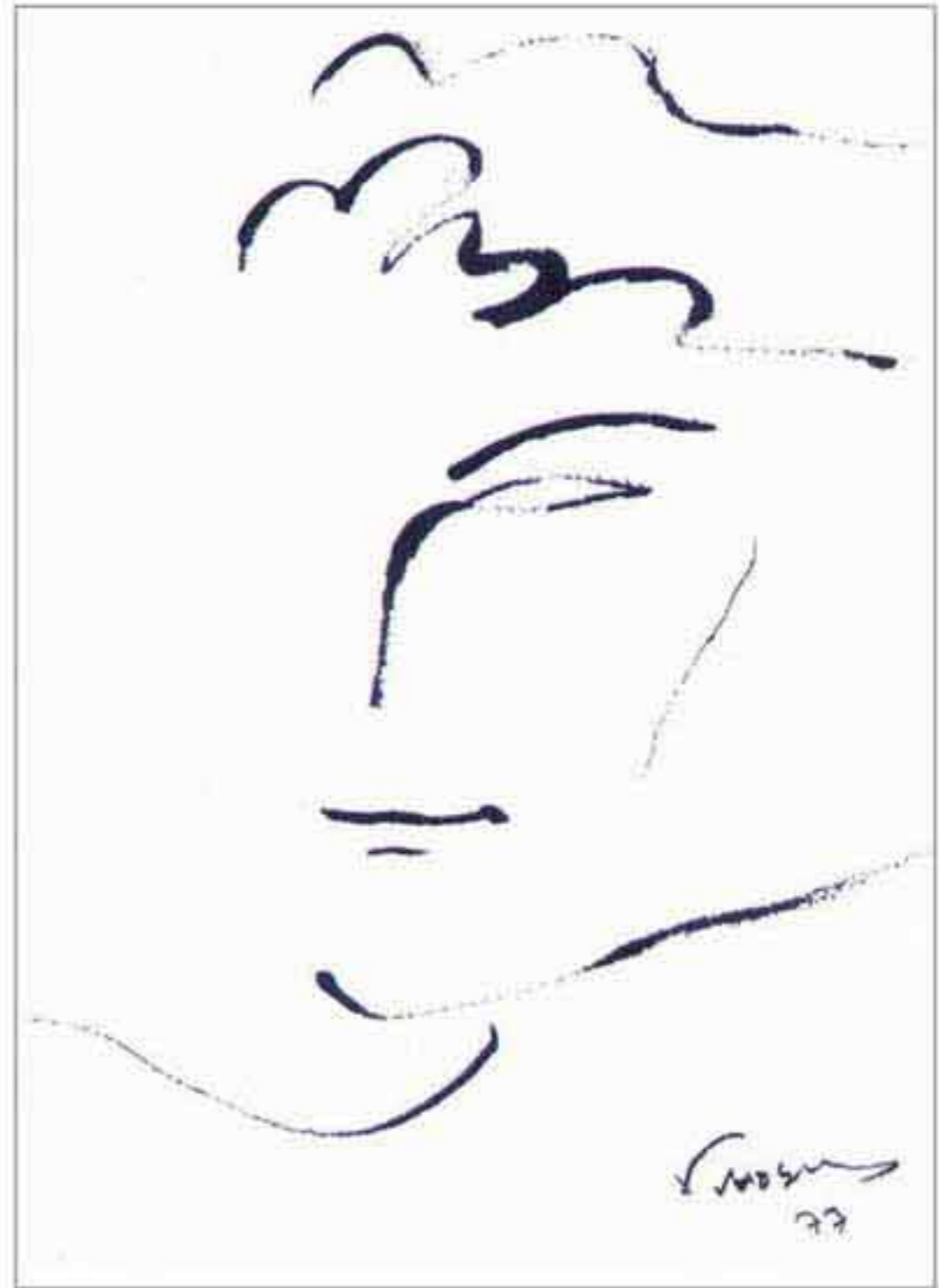
In the nineties, Farouk Hosny took a decisive turn that witnessed the rebirth of the natural scene. However that natural scene freed itself from the equivalent reality, while the artist set out on an adventure of combining forms and bringing in antitheses, and working on conciliations between their serene stability and dynamic wildness. Void/space was still there



4- Farouk Hosny - Acrylic on canvas - 1986

and a white velvety fogginess. Those features also characterize the paintings of the Chilean Roberto Matta (1911-2002) in the mid-fifties. Furthermore, Hosny managed to digest Picasso's method in the fifties and went on to reproduce it skillfully in the eighties (Plate no. 3a, 3b).

The eighties witnessed the advent of an eloquent stepping down of colour in Hosny's works. A great many number of his paintings was cloaked in neutral shades basically monochromic. In these paintings the wild black clashed with the serene white while the grey came in batches that were graded from simple fog to murky dusk. However, an internal glimpse of an implicit tender colour was not totally absent – but rather few colourful spots tender and circumspect found their way



3b - Farouk Hosny - line drawing - 1977

to the canvas while red and blue little splashes led the deceiving matrix (Plate no. 4). The same stage witnessed the birth of his technical arsenal that kept him company in later stages reaching its climax in his experimentation in 2006 and 2007. It was then that Hosny varied in the thickness of his colour palette from the extreme of murky richness to the extreme of revealing transparency while handling the brush in its movement between the extremes of saturation and drought. Hence rough areas found their way within soft colourful saturation leading to distinction in vision. Lines played a role in giving the lead to area and offering its serenity a dynamic statement. In this same stage, Hosny's visual theses made their appearance producing elements whose equal may be found in the paintings of the Spanish artist Antoni Tàpies I Puig (1923-) who incorporated short crosses and their variants of mathematical signs. However, Tàpies is more prone to instinct and early childhood, and more interested in recording a fading memory, whereas Hosny appears more youthful and giving through the temptation of painting as an act in itself (Plate no 5 a, 5 b). Also in the eighties, action painting appeared in a rush in some of Hosny's works. Dancing butterflies could be seen representing the harvest of his personal feelings upon canvas, thus recalling the unconscious

conciliation between the essence of abstraction and the presence of the image in the framework of both mysticism and alphabetism; Mounir Kanaan (1919-1999) focused on giving expression to aesthetic tension arising from geometrical abstraction. Perhaps it is Fouad Kamel who is the closest to Hosny's method for his work carried a spate of overflowing feeling the same as Hosny's works that burst out in overwhelming energy that echoes in his pictorial planes and responds to the actively free and wild lines.

Research that links Hosny to Kandinsky (1866-1944) and Claude Monet (1840-1926) is in my opinion irrelevant. In spite of the fact that Hosny's colouring talent is undeniable and that his paintings boast a mesmerizing colourful rhetoric, yet it should be noted that Kandinsky was more involved in defacing the pictorial plane and presenting his visual terminology ornamentally, besides saturating his areas with lines and colours. It should also be noted that while Monet seeks lighting ornamentation according to impressionist principles, Hosny allows void a dominating and domineering presence. Furthermore, kinetic energy finds its way in Hosny's painting, whether in its potential or free-playing forms. Hosny thus stands apart from other abstract art painters. He is for instance worlds apart from the example of Bradley Walker Tomlin (1899-1955) whose pictorial plane is broken into fragments that overpopulate it.

A close observer of Hosny's work since his turn to abstract art in 1969 discovers a foundational stage, in the seventies. It is a decade marked by ardent research and an attempt to come by a personal imprint. His visual elements at this stage were not yet replete with their later dynamic bursts because the kinetic plan was controlled by the design and a serene restricted rhythm. Such a style is justified by Hosny's bases in the natural landscape characterized by an essential tranquility. In this stage, Hosny looked beyond to the works of western icons: Joan Miro (1893-1983) whose paintings are characterized by shoving lines within the space of the pictorial plane and microscopic nature of his elements (Plate no. 2) in addition to opacity in lighting



3a - Pablo Picasso - line drawing - 1950



2- Farouk Hosny - Oil on canvas - seventieth

Interestingly enough it may be noted that critics who held back from discussing Hosny's stylistic and structural composition did more harm than good (which harks back to the problematic of art criticism in the introduction to this paper). Unfortunately, they gloss over the dialectic that an artist engages in with his predecessors. Authenticity, it should be noted, is measured by the sincerity of an artist's reaction and his fierce challenge in relation to previous artists. Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) is a case in point as he produced some of his best works driven by dialectic and stylistic engagement with previous artists who were equally famous. From 1954 to 1973, Picasso underwent a passionate desire to analyse, deconstruct and restructure works produced by earlier masters according to his own vision. His **Las Meninas** (1957) engages in an intertextual dialectic with the original by his Spanish predecessor Diego Velazquez (1599-1660). It is also worthy of note that Velazquez's **Pope Innocent X** was subjected to an intertextual rendering by the Anglo-Irish artist Francis Bacon (1909-1992).

Prior to Farouk Hosny, Egyptian abstract painters drew inspiration from a variety of styles and methods, or from the structural composition of two or more schools of painting. Ramsis Younan (1913-1966) fused abstract art and surrealism; Fouad Kamel (1919-1966) explored the potential of action painting and the overflow of tachism; Salah Taher (1911-2007) mediated a

a transparent luster that the artist reached out to pluck from the horizon that extends in an open universe. He presented them in the serenity of a guru who is intent on introspection. I therefore developed a sense of contemplative teleology that is closer to the joy inspired by those fleeting moments that direct waves of intuitive knowledge upon my consciousness, thus setting me free from a confused state of past hesitation.

3. Farouk Hosny on the abstract scene: stages, transformations, and frameworks

A review of Farouk Hosny's past experience and the stages of his artistic development as well as the sources of his intellectual background and visual resources is an essential introduction to his present exhibition. Hosny's stages of transformation and the pictorial reservoir held by his rich imagination side by side with an encyclopedic artistic knowledge are regenerated by his passionate love for creativity and an ardent desire to polish his technical tools. Consequently, allusions and signs that belong to that rich heritage surface to engage in a dialectic relation with Hosny's visions while he exercises the art of modification and recasting, looking for distinctive notes in the realm of the potential.

It is indeed surprising that previous literature on Farouk Hosny did not research the effect of the visual framework on the development of his style. Neither did it look into its persuasive presence in the various important stages of his career. An exception would be a few articles that made a slight reference to the phenomenon content with the name dropping of western abstract painters in a very abrupt manner, in the context of abstraction or abstract expressionism in general. I find the lack to be quite unfair to Farouk Hosny the artist as it presents him as an artist who made a sudden appearance on the scene of abstract art without any foundations upon which his art is based and justified. Consequently, the position of Hosny on the national and international map suffers greatly. It is also a lack that deprives his devotees and art scholars of appreciating his position on the abstract scene and understanding the extent of his contribution in the development of style and vision that may have been proposed by others who nevertheless stopped short of the undertaking. Bridging the gap in literature reveals Hosny's structural fitness and the malleability of his visual imagination as he deals with the givens of international abstract art. He therefore visually engages from the position of an equal making full use of intertextuality, implications, modifications, deleting and inserting insofar as fresh output is proffered carrying his distinctive stamp and his unmistakable visual terminology.

2. Problematic of the Abstract and the Temptation of Interpretation

The third space that interpenetrates the context of Hosny's art lies in its attachment to abstraction/abstract art which is still a stranger to Arab taste that has not yet taken a decisive stance towards it but rather hesitates in dealing with it on its proper aesthetic conditions in spite of all claims to the contrary, and the fact that a good many number of the élite developed that taste and that it made its advent upon the Arab fine arts scene more than seventy five years ago. Mukhtar Al Attar (1922-2006) gave expression to this problematic in his description of the repercussions of the first Hosny exhibition in Cairo, right after the latter's return from Rome: It was a remarkable event, the colourful artist Farouk Hosny put his informel [abbreviation of "art informel"] paintings for the first time on display in Al Salam Gallery. The creative context witnessed a shift from the staple works that have inundated our galleries ever since the modernist surrealists started their movement in the mid-thirties of the previous century ... L'art informel is known to have emerged in post-war Europe (1939-1945), and samples have found their way in dictionaries and encyclopedias; however, this trend has not been seen among our abstract painters. Hosny's works looked quite odd in the midst of paintings by other artists but they were imbued with a sort of mystery and magnetism that provoked thought, appealed to the imagination and inspired unrestrainedly". (Farouk Hosny: Personal, Professional and Artistic Website).

In spite of the fact that Al Attar describes Hosny as the "colourful artist" – a description that brings into focus the controversies surrounding the concept of "Art informel" in its entirety and relegates it back to the primacy of drawing as imitation of worldly appearances, a state of affairs that the pioneers of Art informel struggled to escape from let alone escape what the father of abstract art: Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) had established, Al Attar's statement is significant because it marks the début of Farouk Hosny, the nature of his reception by critics who function within the autonomy of the art of painting rather than the interpretation of an art that mirrors reality.

It is perhaps owing to this circumstantial context that I held back for years an analysis of Farouk Hosny's work. However, Hosny's latest exhibition, in Ofok Gallery, was an occasion that brought down my self-imposed barriers that were entrenched because of the force of habit. I therefore subjected the works on display to deliberate meditation with a view to delving deeply into the reasons of the change that came upon Hosny's creative style. These paintings, despite their apparent place in the tradition long adopted by Hosny in line and style for the last forty years, are different in spirit as they appear cloaked in a controlled dignity never lacking in

interpretation invites a discussion of the problematic of interpretation in cases of artists who belong to different cultural spheres.

However, the Islamic/Orientalist/script/calligraphic approach to Hosny's works is not held unanimously by western critics. Nuridsany is invited again to voice a contrary opinion in the same Figaro article: "let me express my gratitude to Farouk Hosny for not basing his abstract art on Arabic script, as all too many artists from his part of the world have done". He turns critically afterwards to the concept of regional classification of artists and disproves it by saying: " Art critics and art historians have the annoying, but convenient, habit of considering artists not only in terms of schools or movements but also with regard to their national origin" (Farouk Hosny: Personal, Professional and Artistic Website).

The same view is shared by the American anthropologist Jessica Winegar who disagrees with most critics of Hosny – in very much the same vein as Nuridsany, as regards the local environment they claim to hold the centre of his work, and the hegemony of the oriental culture over his intellectual principles. She writes: «Hosny ... [is] closer to other groups of Egyptian artists who approach the dilemma not as a choice between East and West but as part of a general context in which they pursue their individual artistic projects. ... as [an Egyptian], [he sees himself] as naturally influenced by [his] background and environment, but as [an artist], [he engages] with the artistic heritage and possibilities offered throughout the world. In this sense [he is] not constrained by the local debates» (Farouk Hosny: Personal, Professional and Artistic Website).

The preceding discourse hopefully summed up my argument as regards the misinterpretation of certain western critics of Farouk Hosny's works against the local and oriental background. The aforementioned discourse also referred to specimens of critiques that accumulate by the dozen blocking the view of potential researchers who aspire to present a fresh review of Hosny's art that is unhindered by hackneyed or prefabricated structures that have long beset the career of our artist and masqueraded as his very own official meta-texts. The previous section has revealed that such views are no more than attempts open to review, criticism and refutation. Furthermore, it has been also revealed that abstract art possesses the potential of carrying antithetical messages even in the writings of specialized western critics who are supposedly knowledgeable about the prevaricating nature of abstract art. All this lead us on to a problematic that is closer to the characteristics of abstract art as a visual source for Hosny's creative arguments.

art. Giovanni Carandente espouses this interpretation as he says: "Farouk Hosny is today considered a pioneering artist who has added a typically Western culture to his ethnic matrix and has enriched his innate Islamic roots with the European pictorial culture. ... Even though his work reflects the lunar mystery of the desert, it sometimes depicts the ardent glow of sunsets over the Nile, displays the indecipherable signs of Kufic inscriptions or the sublime scrawls of Arabic script." (Farouk Hosny: Personal, Professional and Artistic Website). The same view is shared by Mario Penelope who writes: "Using shrewdness and wisdom, he reconciles the non-iconic representation of Quranic laws with Western artistic culture, assimilated and autonomously re-elaborated in Paris and then in Rome. He cannot be considered just as an abstract painter, since he operates in the more poetic area of gestural and material experiences and expresses the view of a symbolic reality, mixed with the absorbing and harmonious memory of the desert landscapes of his motherland or the calligraphic signs of his language" (Farouk Hosny: Personal, Professional and Artistic Website).

In my opinion, this is an unjustified interpretation as it is based on oriental exoticism and an outlandish emphasis on the desert land of Egypt. Furthermore, it is an interpretation that imposes Islamic calligraphy and ornamentation upon Hosny's abstract art in spite of the radical difference between Islamic abstraction that accords the divine a sublime place and the visual carnivalesque and the emotional spate embedded in abstract expressionism under which Farouk Hosny's works may be generally classified. According to those critics, Hosny, upon religious grounds, opts for abstraction in order to avoid incarnate art. Nothing is further from credibility as scholars of the Farouk experience from the beginnings up to the present never miss the warmth of joviality in his works. Farouk's choice of abstraction goes back to an overflowing passion or extreme perplexity as to grasping the energy of life. It is a choice that points to a conviction on the part of the artist of the failure of figuration to possess the pleasures of life he sets his eyes fondly on. Hosny aims at no less than devouring life and drinking its wine to the dregs. Such a passion can never be content with the presentation of reality or producing a replica of appearances. It is therefore necessary to declare the failure of figuration and opening up to the abstract gust of intuition. This was the starting point for Farouk's art in 1969, and ever since that date his work has witnessed the roaring rush of life in lyrical terms that express his overwhelming yearning to melt in life itself. Therefore, looking upon Hosny's work from the perspective of Islamic abstraction is an error of judgment that is brought about by the failure to research the essence of his works and his cultural roots. This is obvious in Penelope's reference to Quranic bases for the rejection of incarnation as it was the prophet's tradition and not the Quran that contains strictures on this matter. Such a warped

a locus of echoes within dimensions and distances in Hosny's paintings. The power of illusion grips the onlookers as the artistic components break free from their concrete frames in a way that parallels the freedom of their creator from the oppression of traditional artistic structures.

Another traditional influence on Farouk Hosny's art is the Giza plateau as the timeless pyramid compound inspires the triangular derivations that join forces in the space of his canvases. Such geometric presence constitutes a semiotic incidence that retains the historically signified origins. Consequently, the very existence of the image is surpassed reaching beyond to a symbolic ambivalence open to a myriad of potentials. It is to be noted though that as Hosny waxes lyrical as he presents a combination of these triangular notes, he spares no effort in blunting their sharp lines and curbing their drive towards the sublime; thus postponing the inevitability of their inherent rise couched in their pointed frame (Plate no. 1). He succeeds in his endeavor through mixing rigid geometry with an organic flaccidity that surrounds those triangles and dresses them up in spontaneous strokes that draw its impulsive wildness from his hands-on performance and his physical mobility as he feverishly embraces his painting. These organic lines are transformed into domed bends and protrusions that may find their legitimate correlative in the terrible arch of the Sphinx in his eternal crouch. Such interpretation justifies the tense paradox of the geometric and the organic in Hosny's *œuvres* – thus, nature in all its variety, as seen



1- Farouk Hosny - Acrylic on canvas - 2009

in the Egyptian environment, harmoniously combine in a matrix whose manifestations flow incessantly disproving the claim of the desert by western critics.

It is also to be noted that some western critics are way off the mark as they bring the assumed desert influence together with a fundamentalist background of Arabic calligraphy and Islamic

seasons. The medieval city of Cairo, with its gray mosques, seems to have developed through a concatenation of vast expanses of terrain the color of tarnished gold, as if the shapeless earth still aspired obscurely to assume a shape. The spirit and soul, however, do not have millennia to appreciate the imperceptible changes. We always feel the need for immediacy, for something ineffably sudden and circumscribed that projects the self into the center of the universe. An artist can re-create the changing skies of Paris or Rome at the desert frontier " (Farouk Hosny: Personal, Professional and Artistic Website). The difficulty with this kind of reading lies in the fact that it willfully ignores the sea and the coastline, a significant environmental influence highly responsible for sparking off the roaring visual visions that never cease to amaze us. Accordingly, Hosny produced paintings that reflect whole experiences vibrant with sparkling sea foam, and boats that seem to be rocking on their symbolic planes as they follow the intuition of colour and the compass of lines. This is all evident in his artistic output during the eighties and nineties. It should be noted that owing to his early years in Alexandria, Hosny is a sea person to the bones. One is drawn, before a great many number of his paintings, in the heart of a familiar experience that one shares with the artist – it is an experience of heaving waves that rush in all its vigor out of his heart. Sea breezes moistened with iodine flow freely from Hosny's Alexandrian lungs sometimes blowing layers of color blend. There are areas where these blends shrink and shiver under an overcast sky and others where the artist tenderly pacifies the rage of the elements and bestows upon his colour blends continuity, grace and transparency. Such an experience offers alternate feelings of warmth, humidity and cold, and the splashing of waves breaking on the coastline. Memories of Farouk Hosny leave their imprint on the visual imagination of the onlooker who relives the artist's experience as he watches the free glide of seagulls that leave behind them a trail of dynamic lines along the path of unseen arrows let loose by arcs of clouds towards an unidentified destination. It is an experience that overpowers the onlooker with raging winds and seasonal Alexandrian nawwa storms and still deceives him with a blanket sea on those days when hardly a ripple is seen. Eventually, a wave pulsating with colour vibrates and reveals to the eyes the secret of that sense of beauty that always haunts the young man from Alexandria.

Other environments may well influence Hosny's vision as Egypt's topography offers a sense of plain, level and uninterrupted continuity. Upper Egyptian landscape is a case in point. This is where parallel combinations of the Nile and the mountains with the green in between reign supreme. Hosny produces the visual correlative of that landscape as he broadens the plane surface in his paintings, however small these may be, for the onlooker to take it all in. The void becomes a hegemonic value in itself. Governing, guiding and separating strokes flow endlessly and create

made it their business to analyze the “Minister’s” œuvres.

Such writings sometimes attempt to establish a link between Hosny’s chance experiences and certain visual symbols and signs integrated in the composition and structure of his paintings. Ahmad Fouad Selim (1936-2009) expressed an opinion that may be considered a case in point as regards a Hosny exhibition in 2006, following some controversial personal statements by the artist. The critic interprets geometric units and visual symbols in the paintings, especially the triangle – a typical Hosny motif, as signs of triumph and overstepping the crisis. According to Selim, rectangles hark back to loaves of bread – an incursion into local tradition. (“Farouk Hosni: Min Zaman Al I’tikaf Ila Ma’rad Al Tamarud”, *Jaridat Al Qahira*, 345, 23rd January 2007).

It is precisely this critical tendency that prompts Michel Nuridsany, the French critic, to write in an article published in *Le Figaro*: “I have read with some astonishment a few of the texts written about Farouk Hosny, in which Egypt is discussed more than his works. Could this be a resurgence of Marxist criticism, which makes the artist the product of his time, his class, and his culture, and grants little to his own personality? Or could it be, rather, a liberal trend, which sees the artist as a representative of his nation, like boxers, tennis players, soccer players, and athletes in general, who do battle, their thoughts on the flag, their hands over their hearts, listening to their national anthems? ” (Farouk Hosny: Personal, Professional and Artistic Website).

Conversely, a great many number of non-Egyptian critics insist on forcing a traditional oriental background and the desert landscape into their critical evaluation of Hosny’s works regarding both factors as visual and rational sources for these works. Such an interpretation runs parallel to the “minister of culture” obsession perpetrated by Egyptian critics. Apparently, the exoticism and orientalism that characterize the general western view of the East in addition to the dominant “desert” perspective feature as a stumbling block that constrains western criticism of Hosny’s artistic creativity which – though it springs from the culture of the other – is produced by an artist who consciously adopts an essentially western approach with the utmost decorum. Western critics consequently take a position that seems to reflect their own proper vision of the East and its culture rather than present an independent interpretative reading of Hosny’s works.

Such a “traditional” “desert” interpretation can be seen in Enzo Bilardello who writes: “The gold of the pharaohs is a presumptuous but useful metaphor for the expanse of sand, the impact of the rocky desert, and the southern light that never dims with the change of

1. Circumstantial Space:

Historic Precedence, Inter-textual Mass and Intertwining Contexts

The duality of artist/politician has not been a unique phenomenon in history. Consequently, the art and politics of Farouk Hosny should not be regarded as a singularly odd manifestation. History gives us a simple yet truthful answer.

Creative geniuses in the various arts feature on a long list of names that belong to different nations and cultures. Those artists dabbled variably in politics but still stood their ground in intellectual circles: their meteoric rise to artistic fame overshadowed their political renown. They are artists first and foremost; hence the near absence of references to their political career in almost all critical studies where the political gives way to the artistic. New in-depth studies and fresh exploration of their creative genius and artistic works will always be produced by scholars, critics and researchers.

Difficulties besetting research work about the art of Farouk Hosny start with the sheer volume of previous literature that discussed his work in dozens of occasions. This body of criticism, produced by Egyptians and non-Egyptians alike, varies in perspective and depth of analysis. A newcomer to the field, therefore, has to face the challenge of familiarizing him/herself with this critical literature to avoid repetition and to prepare for a dialectic exchange with certain unjust evaluations that overloaded Hosny's *œuvres* with teeming interpretations mostly based on integrating his public achievements with his creative productivity. An example of such warped writings is research on "phases" in Hosny's career tied up with the public offices he held since his graduation from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Alexandria, 1964, in the State Information Service, Al-Anfushi Palace of Culture in Alexandria, the Egyptian Embassy in Paris as a cultural attaché (1971-1978), the Child Culture Centre in Cairo, the Accademia d'Egitto in Rome as deputy Director, then Director and eventually the Minister of Culture since 1987. Critics may have contented themselves with selecting a single "phase", let alone those who

Farouk Hosny 2011: Delving into the Heart of the Matter

Dr. Yassir Munji

Saturated with vivid color and constructed of delicate calligraphic elements, Farouk Hosny's paintings appear to emanate with the clear bright Mediterranean light of his native Egypt. Composed with exquisite balance, enigmatic imagery, and a dynamic palette, Hosny's paintings speak the language of the modern world.

Born in 1942. in Alexandria, Egypt, Hosny studied there at the Academy of Fine Arts before his appointment as Director of El-Antoushi's Culture Palace in the mid-1960s. In 1971 he took up residence in Paris, where he served as the cultural attaché and Director of the Egyptian Cultural Center, and later in Rome where he directed the Egyptian Academy from 1979 until 1987. Hosny returned permanently to Cairo in 1987 when he was appointed to his current post as Egypt's Minister of Culture. All the while, he continued to pursue his career as a painter, garnering multiple shows in Alexandria and Cairo, as well as exhibitions in international venues such as Paris, Rome, Vienna, Bahrain, Kuwait City, Tokyo, Washington, and New York.

Over time, Farouk Hosny's style has changed gradually from the realism of his early seascapes and landscapes to a richness and beauty where the iconography is less orthodox. On the occasion of Farouk Hosny's exhibition in 1999 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Director Philippe de Montebello commented on this transition when he wrote that "his works reflect his internationalization of modernist trends but his pictures are always infused with his innate connections with the light and color of his native land".

To Farouk Hosny we owe our thanks for agreeing to this exhibition in Fort Lauderdale and Houston. It is our pleasure to introduce his paintings to new audiences and show the contemporary side of Egyptian art, which has been so dominated in recent years by the presence of the 18th dynasty and King Tutankhamen.

Irvin M. Lippman

Executive Director

Museum of Art I Fort Lauderdale Houston

It's not often that one meets an artist capable of carrying forward such an artistic discourse through time, such a powerful gift for cultural order; with a commitment undertaken at the highest levels of public life.

Farouk Hosny belongs to this small circle of artists and is, actually, a most original painter: one who has been, in his time, at the helm of some of his country's most prestigious cultural institutions- even holding the office of Egypt's Culture Minister.

But it should be noted straight away that the co existence of these various roles does not derive from some generic eclecticism, or from a particular form of activism. An artistic vocation is foremost in the personality of Farouk Hosny - the persistent conviction that art releases the power of his messages, above all into a society where passion is probably at its most refined, and where it can be joined with cultural organisation and political astuteness.

Hosny's journey between art and duty makes one think once again of other great twentieth century personalities: the President poet Senghor, Nobel prizewinner Andre Malraux - writer of 'The Human Condition' and 'Hope', as well as Minister of Culture in General De Gaulle's early governments.

Farouk Hosny's painting, as has been pointed out before, has the same formal unquietness as Klee's and has its own dynamic reason too - a continuous affirmation of the searching artistic spirit. Hosny is an artist who remains truly contemporary, who describes modernity not as emphasis, but instead by projecting images that denote the entire unresolved complexity.

Vincenzo Maria Vita

His art depends on unearthing different internal paths- he refers to them as "rhythms"- through the medium of painting.

It is important to recognize that this self is not exclusively Egyptian, French, or Italian. It encompasses all of these and more.

Hosny is after the self before it has a particularized identity, emotions before they have names and feelings before they are controlled. Searching for the roots and meaning of the sensory, he avoids the cerebral because it is full of intention. Although he sometimes appreciates the cerebral in the work of others and values the attempts of earlier artists to grasp the sensual, Hosny believes that art has not yet exhausted its relationship with the senses.

While his interest in expression references artists from Miro, Kandinsky and the Fauves to Tapies and even some of the American Abstract Expressionists, it also traverses frontiers beyond those artists left off.

Jessica Winegar

Academic researcher of anthropology

For all its lack of identifiable subject matter, Farouk Hosny's paintings are open to being understood by the viewer as an ongoing abstract 'interpretation' of visual phenomena in the real world: buildings, landscapes, objects, and even outer space. Suggestions of forms are rendered with just enough detail for them to hold the visual space around them, but not so far as to push the resemblance too close to the literal. Even the presence of a pyramid in one of his canvases remains ambiguous enough for us to wonder if indeed it isn't simply an inverted triangle in space. In Hosny's rendition, it is a sign for "pyramid," in much the way that the pyramid itself functions as a symbol of worldly forces working in concert with the divine.

Hosny manifests a justifiable restlessness about categories of 'abstract' and representational because an abstract painting is not conjured up from a mere arrangement of color, shape, and line, even if these form its essential parts.

On the contrary, an abstract painting proposes new variations on such fundamental relationships as the internal proportions of a rectangle, or the dialogue between the picture's interior and its edge. It even suggests that the world outside the painting is considerably more abstract than is usually thought to be the case, which introduces a nearly metaphysical layer of visual interpretation. For these reasons, an abstract painting can be as real as the environment in which it is placed, and Hosny's art has the capacity to fully engage almost any kind of visual surroundings.

Part of the immediate appeal of Hosny's paintings is their seeming casualness. A single bold brushstroke might be reinforced by a barrage of related gestures, or it might simply lay raggedly across the painting's surface like the trace of a spontaneous incident. Once the constituent areas of the painting have been articulated and an internal balance has been struck, the artist rarely sees the need to continue to add further, unnecessary visual cues. If the suggestiveness were to be replaced by too much clarity, then the painting's capacity to evoke multiple realities would be diminished.

This casualness may seem to be the result of a less than disciplined attitude toward the act of painting but nothing could be further from the truth. In the genre of abstract painting that Hosny has embraced, everything must happen in preparation for the brushstroke touching the canvas. There are few second chances, not much margin for correcting errors, and no room for erasure at all. We see both the process and the image simultaneously, and it is the fusion of the two that enables the painting to hold onto our attention, even after we've noticed that it isn't a painting 'of' anything. In a sense, it is a painting unto itself, and Hosny's skill at enabling his art to pursue its own point of reference also makes it a symbol of the unfettered imagination, perpetually making new links between the world of tangible phenomena and the world inside our thoughts.

Dan Cameron

Director of Visual Arts, Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans

Reviews of Farouk Hosny's art by:

American art critic **Dan Cameron** 2007

American art critic **Jessica Winegar** 2000

Italian art critic **Vincenzo Maria Vita** 2008

American art critic **Irvin M. Lippman** 2007



Farouk Hosny's latest achievements on display in Ofok Gallery constituted a big challenge represented on the one hand by intense debate about the proper display philosophy, which could help suggest answers to the potential of abstract work to provoke curiosity and broaden the person's imagination. On the other hand, Hosny is known for paintings rich in optical pleasures and aesthetics, which arrest the viewer's attention and overwhelm his thoughts. That is why the curator of Hosny's exhibition should have a good knowledge of the unique qualities and specialties of abstract art. Hosny is also adopting an exceptional experience in this genre of art, which seeks to explore the 'essence'-not attempting to copy the reality. Accordingly, the curator in this respect should appreciate the spirituality in Hosny's exceptional abstract before suggesting the best display philosophy, which could shed light on the psyche and the spirit of the exhibits; and help achieve a relationship with former abstract adventures. In other words, we are not only concerned with symmetries. We are chiefly interested in interpreting intellectually Hosny's new spirit in his new exhibition.

Ehab El-Labban

Director of Ofok Gallery

FAROUK HOSNY

Curated by
Ehab El-Labban

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قاعة أوفوك
Ofok Gallery

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