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Invitation to Private Preview – Reina Sofia, Madrid – February 14, 2017 – “Art et Liberté: Rupture, War, and Surrealism in Egypt (1938 – 1948)”

AL MASAR GALLERY | CONTEMPORARY ART

AL MASAR GALLERY is delighted to invite you to the opening of

Art et Liberté Rupture, War, and Surrealism in Egypt (1938 – 1948)

for the second presentation of its international tour
Tuesday, February 14, 2017 at 20:00

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain

Level 4, Sabatini Building

Calle de Santa Isabel, 52, 28012 Madrid

‘ INVITATION CARDS FOR THE PRIVATE PREVIEW ARE AVAILABLE AT AL MASAR GALLERY ‘

After its critically acclaimed debut at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the second iteration of the exhibition at the Reina Sofia in Madrid highlights *Art et Liberté*'s multifaceted connections with Spain. Georges Henein, one of the main founders of the Group spent his adolescent years in Madrid from 1924 to 1926. Between 1936 and 1940, he would write a series of poems denouncing Franco's ideologies and rise to power. Moreover, when the Group's manifesto *Long Live Degenerate Art* was published in December of 1938, Picasso's *Guernica* appeared on it as an illustration of the document's antifascist stand. 79 years later, the iconic painting and the Group's manifesto are united, for the first time, under the same roof.



Salim Al-Habaschi (Mogli) – Au bord du lac -ink and pastel on paper – 1948

PRESS

“Through this exhibition we get an unprecedented glimpse into what, hitherto, has been one of Surrealism’s overlooked chapters.” **Frieze Magazine, London** ([Click Here](#))

“The curatorial vision underpinning the exhibition provides a strong platform for the exchange of ideas that allows us to rethink what we knew

about our own art history." **Al-Kahera Review, Cairo** ([Click Here](#))

"The exhibition allows us to discover 10 years of an intense creative outburst, of deeply moving painters, of poets and free thinkers. Kudos!" **Le Figaro, Paris** ([Click Here](#))

About the Exhibition

Art et Liberté: Rupture, War and Surrealism in Egypt (1938 – 1948) is the first comprehensive museum exhibition of its kind about the Art and Liberty Group (*Art et Liberté-jama'at al-fann w' al-hurriyyah*), a collective of surrealist writers and artists living and working in Cairo.

Five years in preparation, the exhibition consolidates the findings of extensive primary research and hundreds of field interviews conducted in Egypt and worldwide. It showcases the work of 36 artists with more than 130 paintings, works on paper, and photographs dating from the late 1920s until the early 1950s. The exhibition equally features more than 150 archival documents, historical photographs, film footage, and primary manuscripts, most of which have never been exhibited before. In reuniting these artworks and documents, drawn from around 50 public and private collections from Egypt and 12 other countries, this historic exhibition charts for the first time a precise chronology and offers an all-encompassing presentation of Art et Liberté.

Art & Liberty Group was Founded on December 22, 1938 upon the publication of their manifesto *Long Live Degenerate Art*, the group provided a restless generation of young artists, writers, intellectuals and political activists, with a heterogeneous platform for cultural and political reform. The exhibition highlights the active role that Art et Liberté played within a complex international and fluid network of surrealists, spanning cities such as Paris, London, Mexico City, New York, Beirut and Tokyo. At the dawn of the Second World War and during Egypt's colonial rule by the British Empire, Art et Liberté was globally engaged in its defiance of Fascism, Nationalism and Colonialism.

The exhibition is organized around a number of sections that reflect the thematic concerns and artistic practices of the group. One section, for instance, explores Art et Liberté's treatment of the human body, responding to the destruction, poverty and prostitution brought by the war. Another, highlights the idea of "Subjective Realism", the group's definition of Surrealism that frames it's differentiated pictorial and literary expression. One section is devoted to photography, illustrating the group's adoption of techniques dear to the Surrealists such as photomontage and solarisation, and the use of the surrealist photograph to critique nationalism, notably here through the irreverent representation of Ancient Egyptian monuments. In addition, the exhibition provides an excursion into the Contemporary Art Group, a collective of artists whose members – some of whom were affiliated with Art et Liberté – are among the most recognized of Egypt's modern artists.

Through exploring the various themes that permeate the work of Art et Liberté, the exhibition sheds light on the group's advocacy of the liberation of artists from the confines of geographical boundaries and political propaganda. Through their new definition of Surrealism, a movement they perceived as one in crisis and in need of renewal, the group sought to achieve a contemporary literary and pictorial language that was as much globally engaged as it was rooted in local artistic and political concerns. Moving beyond the polarizing dichotomies of Saïdian Orientalism and post-colonial discourse, this exhibition sheds light on Art et Liberté's negotiation of Surrealism, and advocates an inclusive vision of art history.

International Exhibition Tour

Musée national d'art moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris (France):

19 October 2016 – 16 January 2017

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (Spain):

14 February 2017 – 28 May 2017

Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen K21, Düsseldorf (Germany):

15 July 2017 – 15 October 2017

Tate Liverpool, Liverpool (U.K.):

17 November 2017 – 18 March 2018

Publications

Academic Monograph

The exhibition content is based on a 352-page academic monograph on the Art and Liberty Group and Surrealism in Egypt. Published by I.B.Tauris in London, this is the most comprehensive study on the topic to date.

Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group

By Sam Bardaouil

I.B.Tauris, London, 2016, 352 pages, 104 illustrations, ISBN 978-1-78453-651-0

[Purchase a copy of the academic monograph \(Click Here\)](#)

Exhibition Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue in five separate editions.

Spanish Edition

Art et Liberté: Ruptura, Guerra y Surrealismo en Egipto (1938 – 1948)

Edited by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath

Skira Editore Milan, 2016, 224 pages, ISBN 978-2-37074-049-6

English Edition

Art et Liberté: Rupture, War and Surrealism in Egypt (1938 – 1948)

Edited by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, with a contribution by James Gifford

Skira Editore Milan, 2016, 224 pages, ISBN 978-2-37074-031-1

Arabic Edition

(جماعة الفن و الحرية: الإنشقاق و الحرب و السريالية في مصر (١٩٣٨ – ١٩٤٨)

Edited by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath

Skira Editore Milan, Italy, 2016, 256 pages, ISBN 978-2-37074-050-2

French Edition

Art et Liberté: Rupture, Guerre et Surréalisme en Égypte (1938 – 1948)

Edited by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath

Skira Editore Milan, Italy, 2016, 256 pages, ISBN 978-2-37074-030-4

German Edition

Art et Liberté: Umbruch, Krieg und Surrealismus in Ägypten (1938 – 1948)

Edited by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, with a contribution by Doris Krystof

Skira Editore Milan, 2016, 224 pages, ISBN 978-2-37074-048-9

[Purchase a copy of the catalogue \(Click Here\)](#)

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‘ for direction to the Exhibition : www.museoreinasofia.es ‘

Previous post

Events | At " Centre Pompidou, Paris" - Private Preview - October 19, 2016 - "Art et Liberté: Rupture, Guerre, et Surréalisme en Égypte (1938 - 1948)

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