

# Masterpieces from Egyptian artists

[Farah El Alfy](#) July 19, 2007

The word masterpiece originally referred to a piece of handcrafted art produced by a journeyman in old European guild system. Each piece of art was admired for its perfection, elegance and beauty.

The Zamalek Art Gallery is holding its fifth Masterpieces exhibition this summer, which lives up to its name by featuring an exceptional collection from prominent Egyptian artists including many exclusive pieces. It's hard not to gasp when you first enter and see the different works, rarely displayed in one room.

Noha Khoury, manager of the Zamalek Art Gallery says, "In this exhibition we are trying to bring the old and new works of many great artists.

Renowned artist Gazbia Sirry has a dominant presence in the gallery with works from different periods in her life adorning the walls.

One room features a variety of her paintings from the 50's and 60's including Om Saber from the collection entitled Om El Shaheed (Mother of the Martyr – influenced by the Denshwai incident), her self-portrait from 1966 and a painting from 1951 of a teacher and her inner self.

Most of the paintings in this room will go to the museum dedicated to Sirry at the American University in Cairo's new campus, and are not for sale.

In the main room of the gallery is her latest painting, Fantasy of Life 2007, a cheerful painting that is part of her upcoming 2008 exhibition. Pieces from her desert exhibition are also on display.

From the start of her career, Sirry's style has always been abstract

expressionism. "I don't sit in front of scenery and paint, said Sirry in a prior interview with The Daily Star Egypt. "I live, I go everywhere...and an accumulation of living and seeing all this is submerged in my subconscious...and they come when I paint.

Another room is dedicated to Zeinab El-Sageny and the late Abdel Rahman El Nachar, the well-known art couple. The pieces hanging on the walls were brought in from their museum on the Cairo-Alexandria desert road. The exhibition also holds more recent work from El-Sageny, and it is easy to see how her style has evolved when comparing it to her work from the 70's. Unlike most artists, she started out with an abstract style and is now utilizing a more realistic one.

What stands out the most in El-Sageny's current style is the Egyptian folkloric and pharaonic art imbedded in her modern simplistic work. The folkloric influence stems from her own childhood while the pharaonic style is a product of her study of Ancient Egyptian art while pursuing her master's degree.

"In anything ancient Egyptian any part is a masterpiece... If you take the feet alone it's a masterpiece with great simplicity, she once told the Daily Star Egypt in praise of the ancient skills.

Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni is famous for his abstract paintings, which he has been perfecting for decades. Today his signature style is a fusion of cultural influences, depicted through the use of different shapes, colors and structures. In contrast to El-Sageny, Hosni's old and new paintings are identical in style, which he acquired on a trip to France in 1960.

Hosni says that although his work as minister keeps him very busy, he still manages to paint. "The time finds me honestly.the times are rare yet effective. I just feel the desire, he said. He described his paintings as "abstract.a mere visual relation.

Another comparison of old and new are the ink on paper drawings of Rabab Nemr. One is done in classical black and white, a style she is most recognized for, and in another she introduces color.

Farghali Abdel Hafiz, a distinguished artist from Dairout, Middle Egypt, also has old and new pieces on display. In both, the use of mixed media and colors is prominent. "This exhibition is all about pushing art in the direction of authenticity and advocating emotions, he said previously during an exhibition on Aswan, "Art is not simply about aesthetics, on the contrary, aesthetics is the technique used to reach a certain sensation.

Masterpieces V holds some unique pieces including an oil on rice paper painting by pioneer artist Tahia Halim, sculptures from Adam Henien and a special piece by Injy Eflaton done in 1982.

Also on exhibited are works from artists Mohamed Abla, Effat Naghi and Mostafa Abdel Moity.

Masterpieces V Zamalek Art Gallery 11 Brazil Street, Zamalek. (02) 2735 1240 10:30 am – 9 pm, except Fridays Until September 30