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**ART AND LIBERTY :
RUPTURE, WAR AND SURREALISM
IN EGYPT (1938 -1948)**

19 OCTOBER 2016 - 16 JANUARY 2017

GALERIE DU MUSÉE AND GALERIE D'ART GRAPHIQUE
MUSÉE, LEVEL 4

**ART AND
LIBERTY**

#ExpoArtEtLiberté

**Centre
Pompidou**

ART AND LIBERTY : RUPTURE, WAR AND SURREALISM IN EGYPT (1938 - 1948)

19 OCTOBER 2016 - 16 JANUARY 2017

4 October 2016



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7 July 2016



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Ramsès Younane, *Untitled*, 1939
photo : Haitham Shehab
H. E. Sh. Hassan M. A. Al Thani collection, Doha

PRESS RELEASE

ART AND LIBERTY : RUPTURE, WAR AND SURREALISM IN EGYPT (1938 - 1948)

19 OCTOBER 2016 – 16 JANUARY 2017

GALERIE DU MUSÉE AND GALERIE D'ART GRAPHIQUE
MUSÉE, LEVEL 4

Art et Liberté: Rupture, Guerre et Surréalisme en Égypte (1938 – 1948) is the first exhibition devoted to the group known as *Art et Liberté* (jama'at al-fann wa al-hurriyyah): a constellation of Cairo-based artists and writers formed around Georges Henein in the 1930^s and 1940^s.

Founded on 22 December 1938 with the publication of the manifesto *Vive l'art dégénéré* (Long live degenerate art!) the group Art et Liberté provided a young generation of artists, intellectuals and activists with a mixed platform for promoting numerous cultural and political reforms. The group's members played an active role in the dynamic network of intellectuals and artists linked with the Surrealist movement. At the start of the Second World War, in an Egypt under British colonial domination, the Art et Liberté group became part of an international cultural and political movement defying fascism, nationalism and colonialism. In challenging the Surrealism, they endeavoured to construct a contemporary literary and pictorial language with a global reach as well as roots in local political and artistic concerns.

At the invitation of Catherine David, deputy director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne in charge of research and globalisation, the independent curators Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath of Art Reoriented have amalgamated the results of five years' in-depth research with hundreds of interviews recorded in the field in Egypt and several other countries.

They have selected nearly 130 paintings, works on paper and photographs dating from the late 1920s to the early 1950s, and a large number of archive documents (historic photographs, film footage and early manuscripts never previously exhibited). These works, many of them making their first appearance, have been patiently borrowed from over 50 public and private collections in Egypt and eleven other countries.

By assembling for the first time these works and this corpus crucial to understanding the Surrealist paradigm in all its complexity, this historic exhibition outlines an overall vision of the *Art et Liberté* group, one of whose figureheads was the Egyptian writer, poet and journalist Georges Henein (1914-1973).

The event is one of the various projects staged by the Centre Pompidou to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of André Breton (1896-1966).

After the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the exhibition will travel to the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, the Kunstsammlung K21 in Düsseldorf and the Tate Liverpool in England, between 2017 and 2018.

At the same time as the exhibition, an international seminar entitled *Art et Liberté* (1938-1948) and modernity in Egypt: beyond the postcolonial discourse will be held on 25 November 2016 at the Centre Pompidou in partnership with the INHA (National Institute of Art History). A lavishly-illustrated 256-page catalogue will also be co-published by SKIRA and the Centre Pompidou.

Four other versions will be published in English, German, Spanish and Arabic. The book contains the first published visual records of this period of Surrealism in Egypt.

The exhibition and its international tour have been made possible thanks to:

Principal support from H. E. Sh. Hassan M. A. Al Thani

Generous support from the Montblanc Cultural Foundation

Generous support from the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development



On the social media:

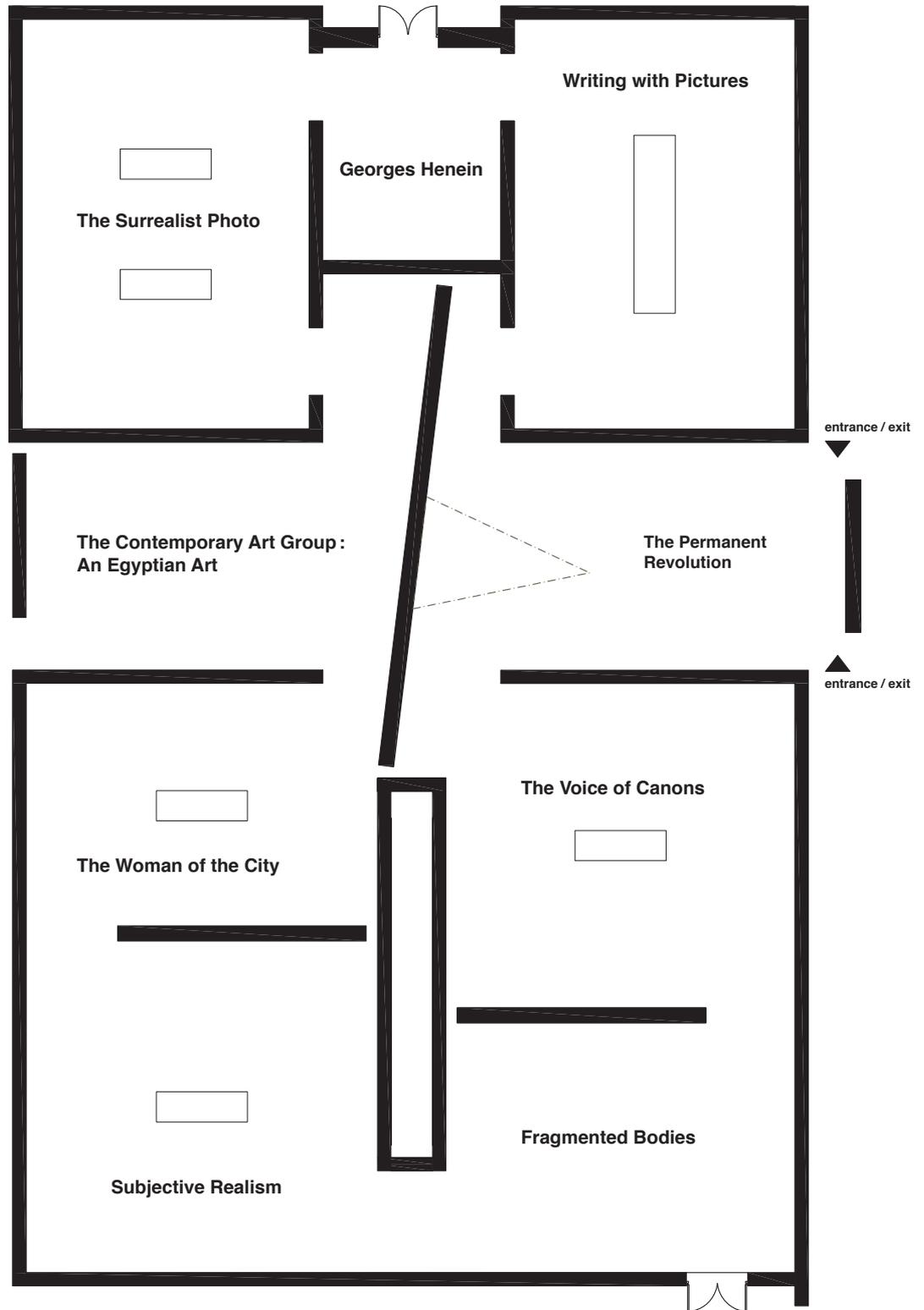


#ArtEtLibertéExpo
@centrepompidou
<https://twitter.com/centrepompidou>



<https://www.facebook.com/centrepompidou.fr>

2. PLAN OF EXHIBITION



EXHIBITION CIRCUIT

SECTION I

“ The Permanent Revolution ”

Art and Liberty Group, *La séance continue*, 1945

By the late 1930^s, when Art et Liberté emerged onto the Cairene arts scene, a state-endorsed culture of exhibition practices was firmly in place. This was best exemplified through the annual “Salon du Caire” that was organized by the highly conservative “Société des amis de l’art”. The 1927 exhibition, for instance, attracted as many as 55,000 visitors. Underlined by nationalism, these exhibitions enforced the classification of artists according to nationality. In line with Surrealism’s rejection of the alignment of art with political propaganda, Art et Liberté rebelled against the conflation of art and national sentiment. They also rejected the notion of art for art’s sake whereby pictures had become a platform for the recycling of the same pictorial allegories and literary metaphors that did nothing to challenge the world. Some of Art et Liberté’s most polemically charged writing was directed against the artists who belonged to this camp, and who had become fundamental to a local canon that Art et Liberté would seek to reshuffle, and even eliminate altogether.

SECTION II

“The Voice of Canons”

The catalogue of Art and Liberty’s first exhibition, 1940

Art et Liberté’s sense of liberty was augmented by the growth of Fascist ideologies that, beyond their firm grip over Europe, had been on the rise in Egypt since the early 1930^s. While Cairo was not on the frontlines of war, Egypt was nonetheless de facto at war by virtue of being under British Colonial rule. The country was obligated to put its national resources along with its entire infrastructure at the disposal of the British. By 1941, an overwhelming 140,000 soldiers were stationed in Cairo alone, and troops and tanks swarmed the city streets. A profound engagement with the war, and the destruction that it caused, were leitmotifs across the whole spectrum of Art et Liberté’s art and literature, including caricature and literature. Surrealist depictions of battlefields and images of destruction capture the state of anxiety fueled by the raging war. Several Art et Liberté members who encountered personal loss and displacement, reflect on their experiences through symbols of death and haunting images of the Apocalypse..

SECTION III

“Fragmented Bodies”

Kamel el-Telmisany, *Don Quichotte n° 12*, February 1940

During the time of Art et Liberté, Cairo was a city marked by extreme economic inequality. The majority of wealth was held by a small percentage of feudal landowners and business magnates, while more than half of the population, mostly rural laborers and urban workers, suffered from dire poverty. Art et Liberté believed that this unfair distribution of resources was largely due to the bourgeoisie who obstructed the evolution of the lower classes. Revolution was therefore a necessary tool to destroy the hegemony of bourgeois mentality: economically, socially and artistically. In fragmenting the human figure, Art et Liberté harnessed Surrealism’s revolt against the bourgeoisie’s championing of Symbolism and Naturalism. In these traditional styles, the bodies of even the most wretched of characters were portrayed in an idealized fashion. In contrast, Art et Liberté painted deformed, dismembered or distorted figures in order to poignantly illustrate the harrowing economic injustice that plagued their society. The motif of the fragmented or emaciated body, as Art et Liberté called it, became a site of social as well as artistic protest. Through paintings that ranged from the miniscule to the monumental, Art et Liberté portrayed the body in a state of anguish within violent settings. These gained in resonance given the simultaneous unfolding of World War II and the increased circulation of images of maimed soldiers and scenes of battles and destruction.

SECTION IV

“Subjective Realism”

Ramsès Younane, *The objective of the contemporary artist*, 1938

Art et Liberté believed that Surrealism is at its core a calling for a social and moral revolution as well as an art movement. They coined a new term for Surrealism: “Subjective Realism”. Writing in 1938, leading Art et Liberté theorist and painter Ramses Younane depicted Surrealism as a movement in crisis, and differentiated two types of Surrealism. The first, best exemplified by Dalí and Magritte’s absurd juxtapositions, was considered excessively pre-meditated, leaving no space for the uncontrolled imagination. The second, consisting of automatic writing and drawing, was deemed too self-centered and not geared enough towards collective empowerment. Younan identified the need for a new type of Surrealism, which he called “Subjective Realism”, by which artists deliberately incorporated recognizable symbols into works that were initially driven by the subconscious impulse. Kamel El-Telmisany, another Art et Liberté theorist and artist, referred to this method as “Free Art”. Group members used these two terms interchangeably as they sought to develop a distinct visual language. This new “collective mythology” as Younane described it, expressed with full lucidity the responsibility of the artist within his or her own society.

SECTION V

“The Woman of the City”

Georges Henein, *Déraisons d’être*, 1938

Several Art et Liberté leading patrons and artists were powerful women such as Amy Nimr, Marie Cavadia, and Lee Miller. Making use of their international networks, they played an essential part in introducing Surrealism to Egypt. Through vigorous salons that they hosted in their homes, they connected several Art et Liberté artists who they also supported. The active role that these pioneering women played in shaping the group contributed to Art et Liberté’s strong feminist stand that was evident in many of their publications such as *al-Tatawwur* and *Don Quichotte*. In the visual arts, this concern took on a specific manifestation during the war years and some subjects became the main theme in many of the group members art works. Due to severe poverty and the massive influx of soldiers, large amounts of women were driven into prostitution. The suffering prostitute, or the “woman of the city” as Henein wrote

in his poem "Saint Louis Blues", is a theme that is explored in a large number of Art et Liberté paintings. The Group exposed the suffering of prostitutes by depicting them as solitary figures within surrealist settings, their bodies mutilated and distorted. Some were pierced with nails, while monster-like trees ravaged others. Unlike some surrealist practices where the dominant male gaze portrayed the female body as a sexual object, the Group criticized the eroticization of women. They highlighted the suffering of the prostitutes by portraying them as discarded objects that were ravaged by male consumption.

SECTION VI

The Contemporary Art Group: "An Egyptian Art"

Abd el-Hadi al-Gazzar, *Loisirs n° 21*, spring 1950

In 1946, some Art et Liberté members co-founded an independent collective under the name of the Contemporary Art Group that remained active until the mid-1950s. A few of the group members, such as Abdel Hadi el-Gazzar, Hamed Nada and Samir Rafi, would later become some of Egypt's leading modern artists. The Contemporary Art Group diverted from Surrealism by predominantly using a local vernacular consisting of a symbolic iconography borrowed from popular arts and crafts. From the late 1940s until the early 1960s, the question of how art can be made authentically Egyptian became a core concern for artists and intellectuals alike. This was furthered by the Revolution of 1952, and the nation-building project that followed in its wake. The Contemporary Art Group succeeded in being perceived by the public as a movement that invented the first truly Egyptian Art. On the other hand, the main artists of Art et Liberté, who had disbanded in 1948, saw the Contemporary Art Group as becoming a mouthpiece for a new form of nationalism.

SECTION VII

« The Surrealist Photo »

Ahmed Rassim, *Le Progrès égyptien*, June 7, 1945

From the mid-1930s, Art et Liberté photographers such as Ida Kar, Hassia, Ramzi Zolqomah, Khorshid, and Van Leo made use of various techniques such as solarization and photomontage, which had become central to surrealist photography. Lee Miller, who resided in Cairo from 1933 until 1939, was associated with Art et Liberté and produced some of her most striking surrealist photography during that period. The Group created absurd images in which they further explored the deconstruction of the human form, and the alienation of the familiar within diverse types of surrealist settings. Similar to how other surrealist photographers employed primitive masks and objects in order to criticize the euro-centric colonial vision of the world, Art et Liberté used photography to criticize the nationalist exploitation of Pharaonic Egypt. They challenged the viewer's familiar perception of ancient monuments and artifacts through playful compositions and absurd juxtapositions.

SECTION VIII

Georges Henein

The surrealist poet and provocateur Georges Henein played a central role in the founding of Art et Liberté. Born in Cairo in 1914 to an Egyptian diplomat father and an Egyptian-Italian anti-fascist mother, Henein experienced cosmopolitanism from a young age spending his early years between Egypt, Italy, Spain and France. He started introducing surrealist ideas to Egypt as early as 1934 through various publications, even before meeting Breton in Paris two years later. In 1936, Henein was among the signatories of *La Vérité sur le Procès de Moscou*, a declaration in response to the “Moscow Trials” against Trotsky by the Stalinist Communists. Henein delivered his seminal lecture *Bilan du Mouvement Surréaliste* in Cairo on February 4, 1937, marking a quasi-official inauguration of the Surrealist movement in Egypt. This was followed on December 22, 1938 by the publication of Art et Liberté’s founding Manifesto *Vive l’Art Dégénéré* to which Henein was the main contributor. In 1947, Breton assigned him the secretariat of CAUSE, an international coalition for post-war surrealists. Henein’s loyalty to Breton came to an end in 1948 due to increasing disagreements in vision. This rupture, along with increasing local political challenges ultimately led to the dissolution of Art et Liberté.

SECTION IX

“Writing with Pictures”

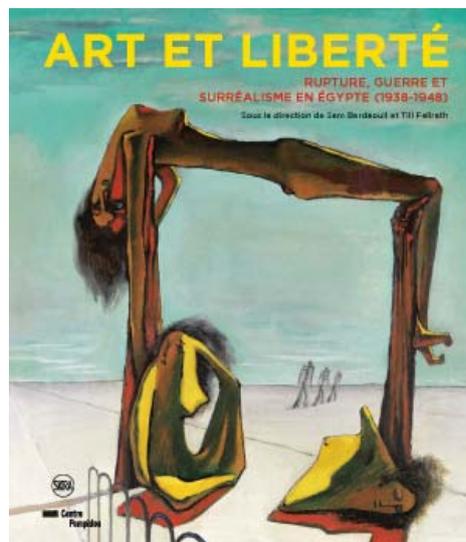
Albert Cossery, *La Semaine Égyptienne*, March 17, 1941

One of the defining traits of Art et Liberté’s creative expression is the close correlation between their visual art and literature. Several of Georges Henein’s texts, for instance, were based on imagery derived from works by some of the Group painters such as Kamel El-Telmisany, Amy Nimr and Mayo. In turn, his surrealist poetry led to some of Art et Liberté’s most striking artworks by Inji Efflatoun and Ramses Younan. Equally so, Albert Cossery’s literary portrayal of poverty, provided several group painters such as Fouad Kamel, Abdel Hadi eEl-Gazzar and Robert Medley with haunting subject matter. Between 1939 and 1940, the Group produced three innovative journals: *Don Quichotte* in French, *al-Tatawwur* in Arabic and the bilingual bulletin Art et Liberté. From the early 1940s and into the mid 1950s they also ran two publishing houses, Les Éditions Masses and La Part du Sable, which disseminated the writings of predominantly francophone authors such as Albert Cossery, Edmond Jabès, Mounir Hafez, Yves Bonnefoy, Jean Grenier, Philippe Soupault, Gherasim Luca and Arthur Lundkvist.

3. THE ARTISTS

MOHAMMAD ABDEL LATIF
KHALIL ABDUH
SALIM AL-HABSCHI
HUSSEIN YOUSSEF AMIN
ANONYMOUS
ERIC DE NEMES
ANGELO DE RIZ
INJI EFFLATOUN
ABDEL HADI EL-GAZZAR
HASSAN EL-TELMISANI
KAMEL EL-TELMISANY
MAMDOUH MUHAMAD FATHALLAH
THIERRY FORMINTELLI
GEORGES HENEIN
IDABEL
IDA KAR
FOUAD KAMEL
MAHMOUD KHALIL
IBRAHIM MASSOUDA
MAYO
ROBERT MEDLEY
LEE MILLER
HAMED NADA
AMY NIMR
ROLAND PENROSE
MAHER RAEF
SAMIR RAFI
MAHMOUD SAÏD
LAURENT-MARCEL SALINAS
SAROUKHAN
AHMED SAWWAN
RATEB SEDDIK
ETIENNE SVED
VAN LEO
RAMSÈS YOUNANE
RAMZI ZOLQOMAH

4. PUBLICATIONS



ART ET LIBERTÉ. RUPTURE, GUERRE ET SURRÉALISME EN ÉGYPTE (1938 - 1948)

Edited by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath

Catalogue co-published by SKIRA Paris and Editions Centre Pompidou.

Four versions will be published in English, German, Spanish and Arabic

Format: 24 cm x 28 cm

256 pages, 250 illustrations

Price: €35

This book retraces the first exhibition on the Surrealist movement in Egypt.

It takes readers deep within this artistic world, still little known in Europe, through over 200 unpublished works situated in their context.

Far more than a question of aesthetic explorations, the movement was fired by a genuinely revolutionary impulse based on thinking that went decidedly against current opinions and conformism.

Through numerous literary and visual media (painting, drawing and photography), this catalogue immerses us in the vibrantly dynamic artistic world of Thirties and Forties Egypt.

Works by its most important protagonists are represented, including the visual artists Abdel Hadi el-Gazzar, Kamel el Telmisany, Fouad Kamel, Ida Kar, Amy Nimr, Samir Rafi and Ramsès Younane, together with poets and writers including Albert Cossery, Georges Henein, Edmond Jabès and Anwar Kamel.

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Foreword

Serge Lasvignes

Preface

Bernard Blistène

THE «ART ET LIBERTÉ» GROUP AND THE RADICAL REFORM OF SURREALISM IN EGYPT (1938 – 1948)

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The voice of the canons

Fragmented bodies

The woman of the city

Subjective realism

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Georges Henein

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Anthology/

Egyptian Surrealism and Degenerate Art in 1939

Don Lacos

The publishers «Masses» and «La Part du sable»

The history and significance of a publication project

Marc Kober

5. EXCERPTS FROM CATALOGUE ARTICLES

FROM THE SECTION “SURREALISM IN EGYPT : THE EARLY PROTAGONISTS”

There is no doubt as to the central position of Surrealist poet Georges Henein when it comes to the introduction of Surrealism to Egypt. Every respective historiography, and there aren't many, locates or at least references the seminal lecture entitled *Bilan du Mouvement Surréaliste* that he delivered in Cairo on February 4, 1937 as a quasi-official inauguration of Surrealism in Egypt. It is, however, important to note that Henein's Surrealist and leftist leanings begin to surface in 1935 through his contributions to two publications: *Un Effort*, a monthly periodical published in Cairo by Les Essayistes, a Francophone literary group, and *Les Humbles*, a Marxist-Leninist journal that was printed in Paris.(...)

Henein's father Sadek Henein Pacha was an Egyptian diplomat. His mother was Italian-Egyptian Mary Zanelli. His father's career meant that Henein would spend his childhood between Cairo, Madrid, Rome and Paris where he eventually completed his secondary education at the Lycée Pasteur de Neuilly and went on to study at the Sorbonne. This early cosmopolitanism allowed him to equally master Arabic, Italian, Greek, English and French. This in turn enabled him to navigate the various worlds in which he roamed with the ease and confidence of a “flâneur des deux mondes”.

In 1936, Henein meets Breton. In a letter dated April 8, 1936 Breton already reveals to Henein his awareness of the latter's efforts to promulgate Surrealism in Egypt: “The imp of the perverse, as he deigns to appear to me, seems to have one wing here, the other in Egypt.” From there on, Henein would become the main conduit for developments on the international scene into the local circuit.

During a sojourn in Paris in 1936, Henein attends the Surrealist meetings that Breton called for to discuss and take a stand towards what became known as the Moscow Trials. A manifesto, or more precisely a declaration, entitled “La Vérité sur Le Procès de Moscou” was read by Breton in a meeting on the 3rd of September of 1936 and was signed by those present. Henein was one of the signatories. So was Yves Tanguy, one of the main organizers whose famous poems *L'Évidence Poétique* would later appear in the first issue of the Art and Liberty group's periodical *al-Tatawwur (Evolution)*. In a letter to Henri Calet from December 1938, Henein asks his friend if he could pass on Art and Liberty's manifesto of December 22, 1938 entitled “Long Live Degenerate Art” that was circulated “yesterday” to the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Calet obliged and a short announcement was printed in the issue of February 1st, 1939 with the heading “The East is working for the defense of Western culture.” Similarly, in February 1939, a short text announcing the founding of Art et Liberté appeared in the second issue of Clé, the F.I.A.R.I.'s (Fédération Internationale de l'Art Révolutionnaire Indépendant) bulletin that was published in French from Paris. The same issue included a text of literary criticism on Franz Kafka's *The Castle* by Henein. The previous issue also included a text by Henein, this time a review of Marcel Jouhandeau's book *Chroniques Maritales* (Marital chronicles). Art and Liberty's manifesto would also get republished in The London Bulletin's issue of April 15, 1939 due to Henein's friendship with Roland Penrose, one of the journal's founders and a leading figure in British Surrealism.

THE FORMATION OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS OF DISPLACED WRITERS AND ARTISTS

The war had driven to Cairo a disparate number of writers and artists. Some were refugees like writers Lawrence Durrell and Olivia Manning who in mid-spring of 1941, when the Nazi troops were marching onto Athens, fled by boat from Greece to Alexandria. Durrell would be posted to the press office at the British Council in Cairo. There, he would meet Bernard Spencer who had also been evacuated from Athens three months earlier. Together with Robin Fedden, a professor of English at Cairo University, they would start the literary journal *Personal Landscape* on whose pages writer and painter Amy Nimr, an Art and Liberty group artist and patron, would in 1945 publish a literary critique of the Greek-Alexandrian poet Constantine P. Cavafy. Nimr was an accomplished painter who had studied at the Slade in London in the late 1920^s. By the time Art and Liberty emerged onto Cairo's arts scene, she had become quite established both locally and internationally with several solo shows to her name in a number of renowned galleries in Paris and London, and a prolific painting trajectory evidencing, besides Surrealism, a heterogeneous stylistic language. Besides her exhibiting with Art and Liberty, Nimr played a pivotal role in their formative phases through providing the group with a cultural salon in her Zamalek home, as well as introducing them to the intellectual trends that were emanating from the Henry Miller circle at the Villa Seurat in Paris. Nimr kept a studio at 101 bis La Tombe Issoire within Villa Seurat's alley of sprawling modernist buildings that by then had become the place to be for the artists and writers of the avant-garde. There, she would create some of her most striking Surrealist paintings. (...)

Another non-Egyptian who arrived to Cairo as a British soldier and would take part in the same fifth Art and Liberty exhibition was Robert Medley, an English painter who had exhibited at the London International Surrealist Exhibition of 1936. Prior to Egypt, Medley was an active member of the London Surrealist circle, and a close friend of Roland Penrose, who along with Mesens were the group's foremost leaders. Penrose's diary from 1930 to 1940 reveals that the two met on a regular basis. Medley, beyond his artistic ties with the English Surrealists, was also actively involved in the organization of various types of Surrealist activities as evident, for instance, in a report that appeared in the first issue of *The London Bulletin* of April 1938 where we learn that "On the evening of Wednesday the 26th of March, Mr. Robert Medley and a full moon presided over a debate between Realists and Surrealists." Moreover, before the War, Medley had taught painter Rateb Seddik, one of Art and Liberty's members at the Chelsea College of Arts. Like many other artists such as Anthony Gross, Edward Bawden and Edward Ardizzone, just to name a few, Medley arrived to Cairo with the deluge of British and Commonwealth troops that were stationed in Egypt and along the North African coast line.(...)

During the Second World War, Cairo provided a relatively safe haven for a wide assortment of political activists ranging from anti-Fascist anarchists to Jewish intellectuals fleeing from the ever-expanding Nazi sphere. There was Angelo de Riz, for instance, an art teacher at the Lycée du Caire. An ardent anti-Fascist, de Riz had left Italy at some point towards the mid 1930^s.

THE RISE OF LOCAL FASCIST SENTIMENT

On the tenth of January of 1936, a one thousand strong parade of uniformed youth marched through downtown Cairo declaring their allegiance to the King and to their party. These were 'al-qumsan al-zarqa' (The Blue Shirts), a para-military organization belonging to the Wafd political party. The Blue Shirts would prove to be, even if temporarily, an effective remedial course to resuscitate the party's dwindling popularity. Named after the color of their shirts, these units of quasi-soldiers would take to the streets, infiltrate demonstrations, and, if needs be, even resort to acts of public violence in order to quell the rise of anti-Wafd sentiment. By the summer of 1936, reports were circulating that the number of Blue Shirts had reached as many as twenty thousand.

(...) Art and Liberty's sense of freedom was augmented by the realities of a raging war, and articulated with a pressing awareness of the growth of Fascist and totalitarian ideologies within Egypt. Emerging against the backdrop of the Second World War, Art and Liberty would reject Fascism, which beyond its firm grip over Europe, had been on the rise in Egypt since the early 1930s and was beginning to pose a highly felt threat at home. On December 22, 1938 their founding was announced through their bilingual, Arabic –French manifesto *yahya al-fann al-munhatt / Vive l'Art Dégénéré* (Long Live Degenerate Art). A first interpretation of the manifesto could frame it as a reaction to the Fascist and Nazi crusade against the avant-garde in Europe. One could also read in it an echo of the July 25, 1938 Manifesto of the Fédération internationale de l'art révolutionnaire indépendant (FIARI). While not entirely misguided, such readings are certainly not sufficient. The ideologies that were designating the movements of the avant-garde as entartete Kunst were simultaneously at play in Egypt, and were manifesting themselves, albeit in different conditions, through an authoritative, hegemony over the arts by state-related associations on the one hand, and a rigorous local chapter of Futurists that was highly connected with the Fascist party on the other. In May 1939, Art and Liberty, following a lecture by Marinetti in Cairo, would reveal their uncompromising rejection of any alignment between Fascism, nationalism and art. Alexandria-born Marinetti, the father of Futurism, had arrived to Cairo as a delegate of the Fascist government of Italy. By then, he had already been elected by Mussolini as a member of the regime-aligned Reale Accademia d'Italia (The Royal Academy of Italy). Marinetti's visit to Cairo a few months before the outbreak of the Second World War, which coincided with the simmering of local Fascist sentiment, is by far one of the most relevant occurrences to consider when constructing the immediate background against which Art and Liberty's Manifesto was penned and the Group was founded. Art and Liberty's mockery on the evening of May 9, 1939 was targeted at a legendary figure who had revolutionized the artistic landscape of Europe upon publishing his Manifesto of Futurism in 1909. F. T. Marinetti would find himself on the receiving end of some of the future members of Art and Liberty's most insolent attacks to date, turning what had started as a conference on Futurist poetry into a scandalous brawl.

THE RECONSIDERATION OF SURREALISM AND ITS CANON

Art and Liberty's self-perception as central to the discourse and formulation of a new chapter in Surrealism's trajectory, provides us with an example in late modernism that challenges one of art history's most contested meta-narratives; that modernity, in this case represented by the Surrealist movement, was a Western (French) invention that took place in Europe (Paris and to a lesser extent London) to then be simulated decades later by the non-West, but to lesser effect, in this case Egypt. This notion still underlines the much-contested binary correlations of centre vs. periphery, the metropole vs. the colonies, the West vs. the non-West.

None of these dichotomies hold ground as far as Art and Liberty are concerned, for they envisioned themselves as partners within a fluid movement comprising of international networks whereby their role in instigating change and contributing artistically and intellectually was as valid and legitimate as that of any other Surrealist chapter anywhere else in the world.

[...]

In other words, a full understanding of the contributions of the Art and Liberty Group can only become possible once we allow ourselves to shed our pre-established knowledge of what we have come to "know" in advance of Surrealism and, therefore, of what it must look like and how it must be expressed. Only then can we fully grasp Art and Liberty's significant position, not only in regards to the evolution of modernism in Egypt, but towards the construction of a new definition of Surrealism, one that contributes to an inclusive vision of art history where the particularities of the peripheral are no longer seen as dichotomous with the authority of the central, and perhaps even to an extent where such oppositions are no longer visible.

Art and Liberty's deliberation, alteration, and implementation of Surrealism while simultaneously conversing with the global and attending to the local, highlights the great benefits that were reaped from the literary and artistic networks of the 1930s and 1940s; networks that transcended national and geographical barriers and loyalties to include a younger generation of international writers and artists, such as the ones in Cairo. Within this prolific and far-reaching network, enhanced to its peak by the diasporic effects of World War II, a new generation of Surrealists could connect on an international scale. This was a generation that was intent on questioning all the givens of the movement in search for relevance and renewed artistic and political agency. The example of Art and Liberty, therefore, and the entanglement of their activities with a complex network of literary and artistic hubs dispersed in cities as far-flung as Cairo, Athens, Paris, London, New York, and San Francisco—and in the case of Surrealism we can easily add Prague, Mexico City, Fort-de-France, Santiago de Chile, and Tokyo just to name a few— challenges the regionalist approach to the study of modernity demonstrating that it is ultimately the power of an idea to inspire and rally people around it, that triggers the significant shifts that mark the course of history.

6. INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER, 11 a.m.- 7 p.m. Petite salle, Forum - 1

Free admission within the limit of seats available

SPOTLIGHT ON EXHIBITIONS

ART ET LIBERTÉ (1938-1948) and modernity in Egypt: beyond the post-colonial discourse

This study day sheds light on the role of the «Art et Liberté» group in the development of modernism in Egypt and the construction of Surrealism. The event, staged by exhibition curators Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, the InVisu laboratory of the INHA (national institute of art history) and the Research and Globalisation Department headed by Catherine David, broadens thinking on the «Art et Liberté» group to a reconsideration of modernism today, aimed at working on a more inclusive concept of art history.

Speakers: Marc Kober, Francesca Rondinelli, Catherine Farhi, Peter Gran, Clare Davies, Nada Shabout, Nadia Radwan and Mohammed El-Shahed.

Event proposed by Catherine David, Mercedes Volait, Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath

FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER, 2 - 6 p.m. Cinéma 2, Forum -1

Free entry within the limit of seats available

SPOTLIGHT ON EXHIBITIONS

REGARDS SUR LA MATIÈRE DES ŒUVRES

This study half-day looks at the principle guiding the restoration of certain works presented in the exhibition Art et Liberté: Rupture, Guerre et Surréalisme en Egypte (1938-1948) – an analysis of the conservation conditions in a given context: the material nature of supports. Organised by the Research and Globalisation Department headed by Catherine David, supervised by Véronique Sorano-Stedman (Centre Pompidou), Cinzia Pasquali (Atelier Arcanes) and Sigrid Mirabaud (Institut National du Patrimoine).

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Abdel Hadi el-Gazzar
Mahasseb il-Sayyidah, 1953
 Oil on board - 60,50 x 92 cm
 Collection Yasser Zaki Hashem, Le Caire



Founding Manifesto of Art et Liberté Group, Vive l'Art Dégénéré,
 December 22, 1938
 Paper pamphlet. 24.9 x 34.9 cm
 Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Édimbourg



Georges Henein
Surrealist Portrait of Gulperie Efflatoun, 1945
 Gelatin silver print - 6,40 x 8,60 cm
 Courtesy Arab Image Foundation, Beirut



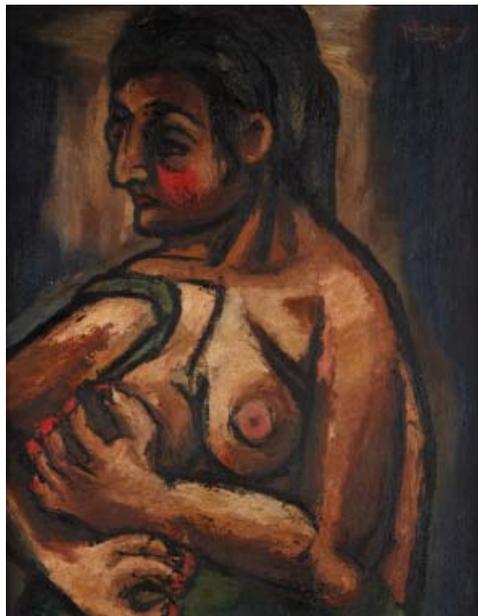
Ramsès Younane

Untitled, 1939

Oil on canvas- 47 x 36,50cm

photo : Haitham Shehab

Courtesy H. E. Sh. Hassan M. A. Al Thani collection, Doha



Kamel el-Telmisany

Untitled (Nude), 1941

Oil on canvas - 49 x 64 cm

Courtesy Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah



Ida Kar

Still Life, c.1940

Bromide on paper print. - 23,40 X 22,80 cm

Courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London

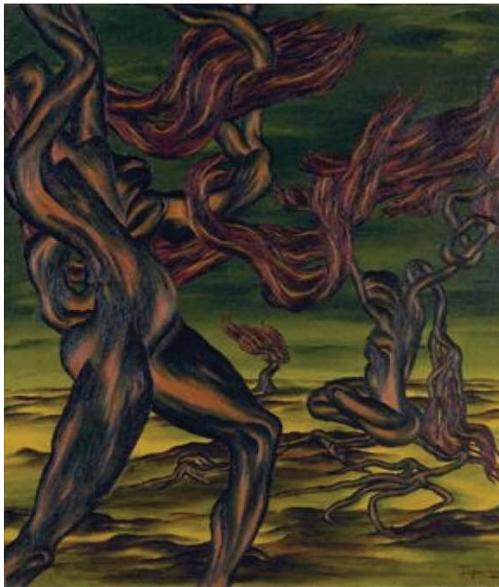
**Mayo**

Coups de bâtons, 1937

Oil on canvas- 167 x 243 cm

Sergio and Renata Grossetti Collection, Milan

© Adagp, Paris 2016

**Inji Efflatoun**

Untitled, 1942

Oil on canvas - 71 x 60,50 cm

Courtesy private collection

**Fouad Kamel**

Untitled, 1940

Oil on carton - 70,50 x 50 cm

Courtesy private collection



Rateb Seddik

Untitled, c. 1940

Oil on wood- 120 x 220 cm

Courtesy Rateb Seddik Museum, Cairo

7. USEFUL INFORMATION

USEFUL INFORMATION

Centre Pompidou
75191 Paris cedex 04
telephone
00 33 (0)1 44 78 12 33
metro
Hôtel de Ville, Rambuteau

Opening hours
Exhibition open 11am - 9pm
every day except Tuesdays

Admission
14 €
Reduced price: **€11**
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CURATORS

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath
Art Reoriented