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5 Egyptian artists to know

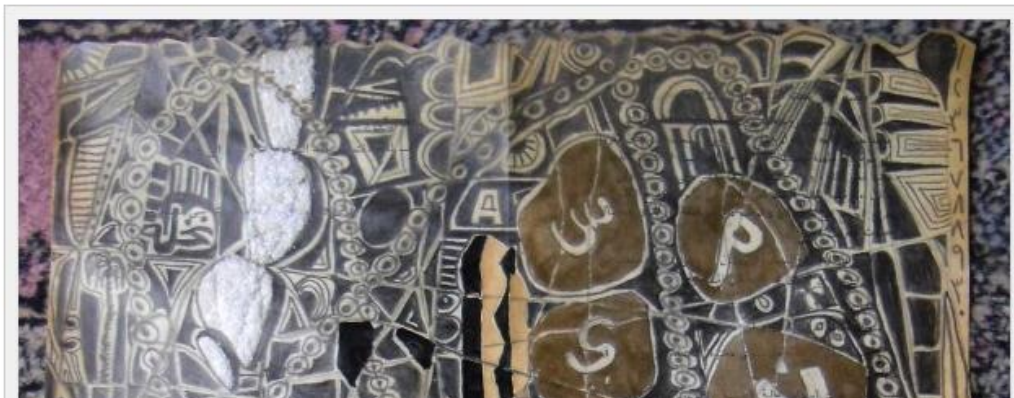
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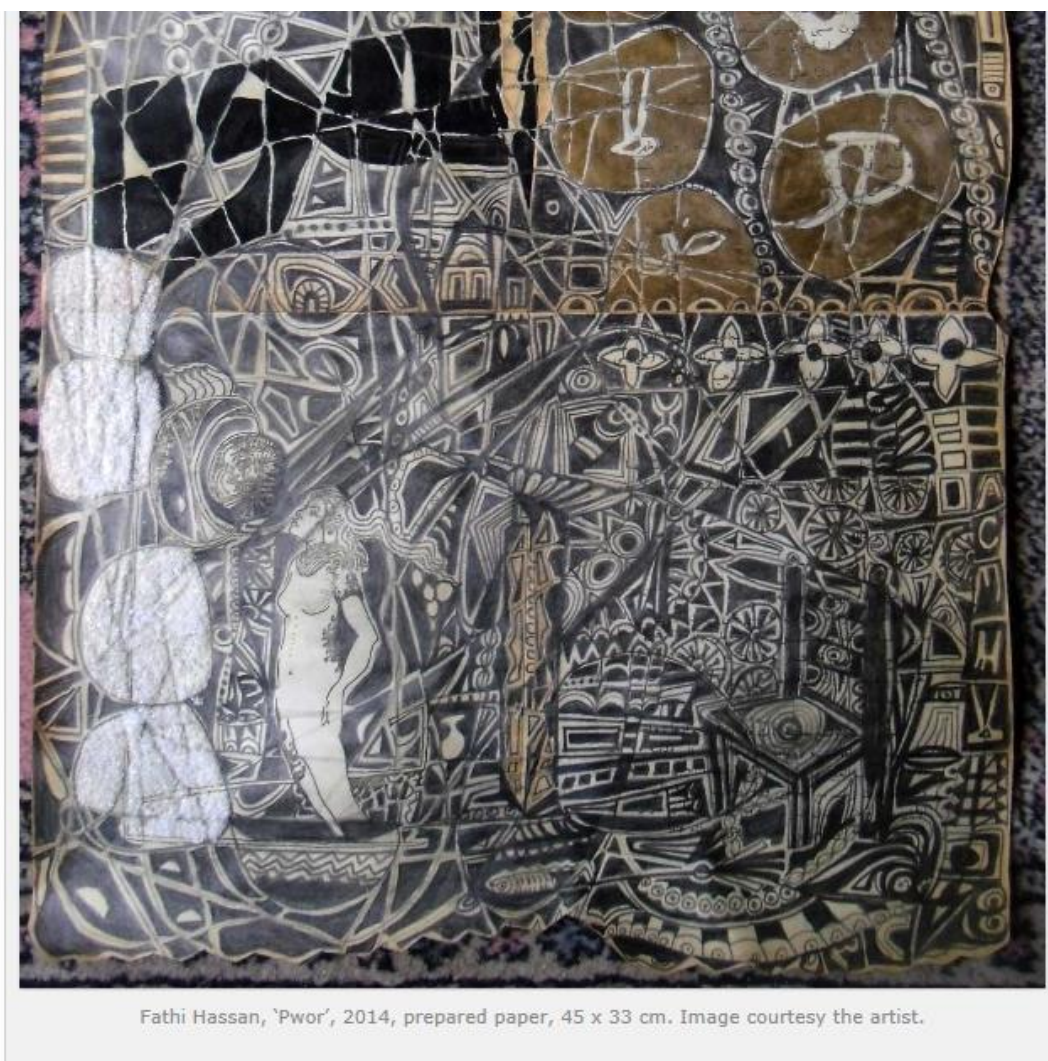
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Art Radar brings you 5 Egyptian artists working with innovative practices.

From sound and performance to multimedia and installation, here are 5 artists from Egypt that are changing perspectives on contemporary art from North Africa.



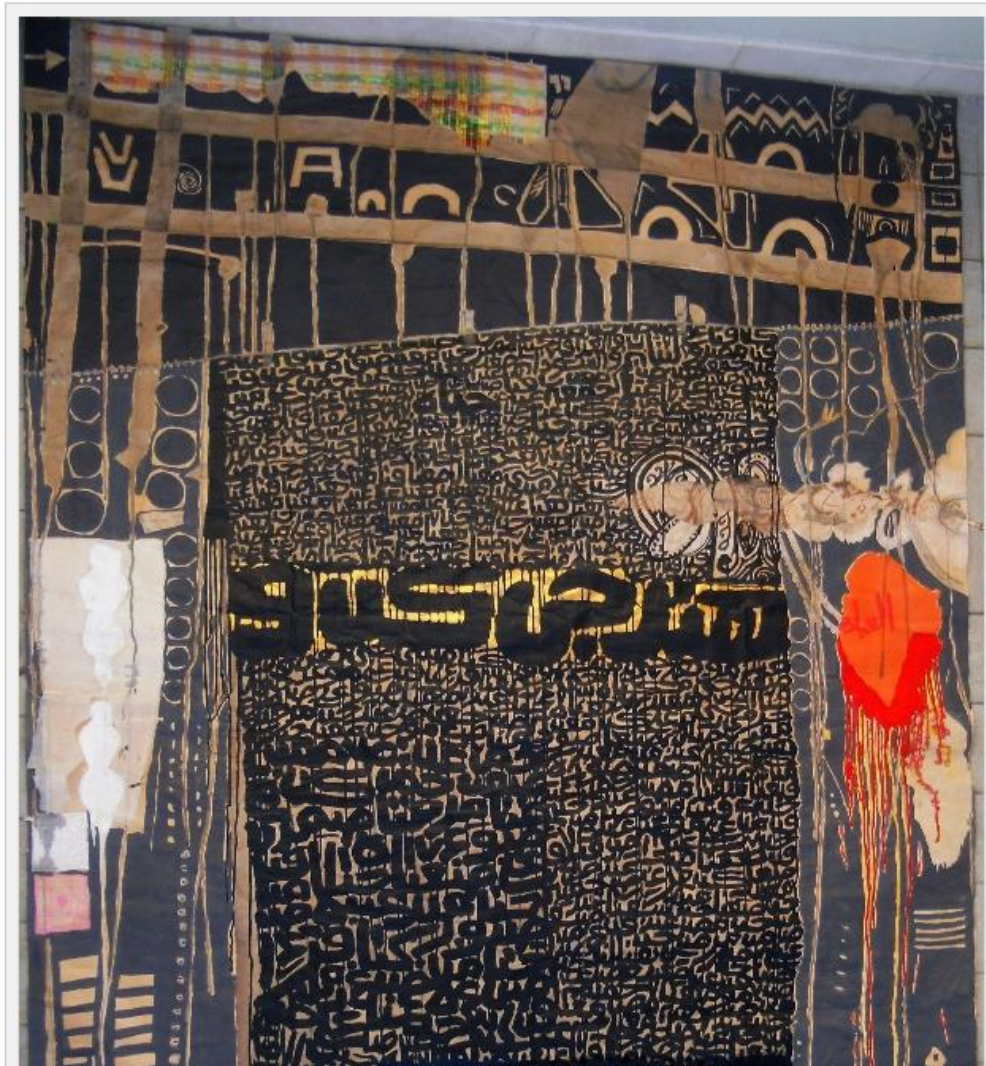


Fathi Hassan, 'Pwor', 2014, prepared paper, 45 x 33 cm. Image courtesy the artist.

Fathi Hassan

Nubian artist **Fathi Hassan** (b. 1957, Cairo) creates works that question the meaning of language, as well as examine the feelings associated with forced migration and displacement. Working with drawing, painting, sculpture and installation, Hassan experiments with the written and the spoken word, and explores how ancient languages have been erased by colonial domination. Hassan's invented **Kufic**-inspired script addresses the ambivalence inherent in written language and the graphic form. He plays with the symbols, textures and calligraphy of his Nubian heritage, exploring the space between graphic symbolism and literal meaning.

Hassan's work reflects his transnationalism and cultural hybridity. In a series of works, he painted the Arabic phrase *Haram Aleikum* ("Shame on You") to question the wisdom of letting daily humiliations, disrespect and exploitation go unopposed. **Arabic serves as his vehicle** to reflect on history, identity and individual life choices. At times, Hassan adds numbers written in Arabic, Indian or Latin scripts referring to important dates in his life or historical events meaningful to the places he has lived in.

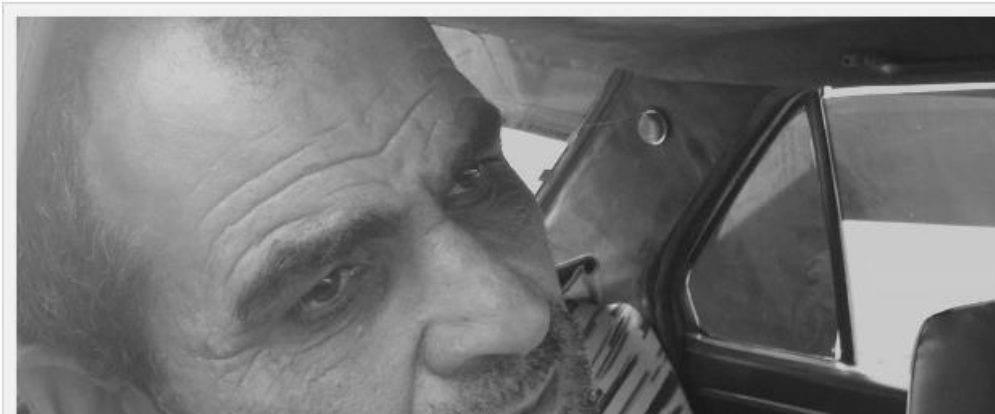




Fathi Hassan, 'Carpet', 2013, 195 x 145 cm. Image courtesy the artist.

Hassan's latest exhibition "**Fathi Hassan: Migration of Signs**" highlights works that serve as allegories of the diasporic condition, spiritual journeys and reform movements like the Arab Spring. Hassan's works continue to illustrate the continuous transformation of language: meaning is not fixed, rather it transforms over time as it moves from one context to another.

Hassan has exhibited internationally at institutions and events such as the **Smithsonian Museum of African Art**, the **Venice Biennale** (1988) and the **Dakar Biennale** (2008). His work is in the collection of the **Metropolitan Museum of Art**, the **V&A**, the **British Museum** and the Smithsonian Museum of African Art, among others.





Hassan Khan, 'Blind Ambition', 2012, single channel black and white video, dubbed and synchronised voices, HD video shot on a Samsung Galaxy SII cell phone, 45 min., edition of 6 + 1 AP. Image courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

Hassan Khan

Hassan Khan (b. 1975, Cairo) is a multidisciplinary artist working with image, sound, text, space and situation to create mesmerising ambiances, performances, sculptures, videos, installations and a variety of other artworks. Son of film director Mohamed Khan, the artist was exposed to art at a very young age and started experimenting with a variety of artistic media. As a composer and musician, he is inspired by traditional *chaabi*, mixing it with contemporary sounds. As an artist, he defies any sort of stereotype or definition: images, texts, videos, objects, spaces and sound, at times all coexisting together in one single work.

Several of Khan's works are collaborative, completed with participation of local craftsmen and performers. *The Agreement* (2011), for instance, features ten common, low-budget Egyptian household objects manufactured with a group of craftsmen, such as a pink and blue glass sculpture or a colourfully painted fruit plate. The accessories, displayed on a shelf, are accompanied by five short stories written by Khan, offering impressions of the lives of five different people in Cairo.



[Click here to watch Hassan Khan's 'Jewel' on youtube.com](#)

In his acclaimed six-minute film *Jewel* (2010), commissioned by Doha's **Mathaf** for its inaugural exhibition "**Told/Untold/Retold**" (2010), Khan worked with two actors/performers on the choreography and composed the music himself.

Khan has widely exhibited around the world and participated in influential events such as **Manifesta 8** (2010), **DOCUMENTA(13)** (2012), the **New Museum Triennial "The Ungovernables"** (2012) and **Liverpool Biennial** (2014), among others. As a musician, he has performed in venues worldwide and has composed soundtracks for theatre. This year, he will also be taking part in the **Sharjah Biennial 12**. His work is part of important institutional collections, including **LACMA**, **Guggenheim Abu Dhabi**, **Centre Pompidou**, **Mathaf**, **Walker Art Centre** and **MUDAM**, among others.



Susan Hefuna, 'Building' series, 2014, bronze, black patina, dimensions variable. Image courtesy Pi Artworks Istanbul/London.

Susan Hefuna

Egyptian-German multimedia artist **Susan Hefuna** (b. 1962, Egypt) draws upon her mixed heritage to create work in a wide range of media, from drawing, photography and sculpture to installation, video, performance and participatory projects. Hefuna is fascinated by the structures of connection that inhabit public spaces and become the framework for people's interactions. She explores the ways in which such networks become visible through cultural customs, architectural models and city planning.

A recurring pattern in her work since 1990, the *mashrabiya* screen – an intricate wooden or stone lattice work in traditional Egyptian architecture – lends itself to Hefuna's exploration of networks and their actual visual representation through drawings, sculptures and other works. Her abstract drawings in ink and pencil on multiple sheets of tracing paper oscillate between the two- and three-dimensional, and evoke cityscapes, molecular structures and constellations.



[Click here to watch Susan Hefuna's 'Al Arez' on vimeo](#)

NOTATIONOTATIONS (2013) was a collaborative project with a choreographer, in which her video installation of a bustling, lower Manhattan intersection – a literal mapping of people and places – becomes a live drawing performance. In *Vantages* (2012-2013), commissioned by the **Serpentine Gallery** in 2010, Hefuna **explores the Edgware Road neighbourhood in London** – dubbed "Little Cairo" or "Little Beirut" – through in-depth video portraits of particular locations, such as the tube station or the Lebanese café Al Arez, documenting life between two cultures.

Susan Hefuna has exhibited worldwide and in international events such as the Sydney Biennial (2012) and the **53rd Venice Biennale** (2009). Her work is in the collection of the British Museum, the V&A, New York's **MoMA**, LACMA and **Sharjah Art Museum**, among others.



Armen Agop, 'Untitled 107', 2010, granite, 10 x 110 x 35 cm. Image courtesy Art Plural Gallery.

Armen Agop

Italy-based Armenian-Egyptian artist **Armen Agop** (b. 1969, Cairo) creates sculptures that have been called "**futuristic, other-worldly UFOs, yet at the same time ancient, spiritual and meditative.**" Agop observes that what remains of a civilisation or culture after its disappearance are its artworks.

Drawing upon this belief, the Armenian connection to *koyadevel* (to exist and continue to exist) and the Ancient Egyptian dream of eternal existence, Agop creates artworks that defy the notion of time, in both material and form. Timeless in its essence, Agop sustains that "Sculpture seeks no attention from the outside world. It is content with its own being".

Using granite, basalt and other hard, durable stones, Agop sculpts forms with swelling curves, strong angular lines and razor-sharp edges, delicately balancing on their supporting surfaces, free-standing or wall-mounted. Their fluidity hides their solidity behind an illusion of delicate weightlessness, like that of mercury. Agop explores his material with the minutiae of a scientist, working it, polishing it and lending it a balance that transforms the age-old granite into a precariously still, yet balanced 'being'.



Armen Agop, 'Untitled 109', 2010, granite, 136 x 35 x 20 cm. Image courtesy Art Plural Gallery.

Almost holding a life of their own, with their subtle movement, Agop's black sculptures are an expression of the relationship between man and nature. His art lies between the contemporary and the ancient, combining the heritage of the material with the sensual forms emanating from the future. Agop believes that sculpture is indeed timeless, that it transcends all eras, all definitions and that it is not a trend of the now, but rather it is "transcontemporary".

Armen Agop has exhibited internationally, including at events such as the Beijing International Art Biennale (2010) and Cairo International Biennale (2008). His works are in various sculpture parks around the world and in the collection of Mathaf and the Egyptian Modern Art Museum, among others.





Ahmed Badry, 'The Provisionary That Lasts', 2013, mixed media, 165 x 68 x 443 cm. Image courtesy AB Gallery.

Ahmed Badry

Ahmed Badry (b. 1979, Cairo) is interested in exploring the collective visual memory. Badry uses ordinary and common signs, objects and pictures from private and public spaces that are part of our day to day existence, such as a bus ticket, a traffic sign or the logo of the most popular brand of tea in Egypt. Through his practice, Badry transforms small yet omnipresent, apparently meaningless objects, into something of greater significance and weight. Blowing up their size, transforming their meaning and at times multiplying their image, Badry instills these objects with a new essence, hovering between the useful and the useless.

Ultimately, Badry highlights their function and influence in our lives, with a personal interpretation of their existence through his uniquely shaped pictorial language. His inventive line drawings, for instance, depict everyday objects and appliances combined with one another in functional solutions that no manufacturer had envisioned for them. A coffee machine stands atop an upside down iron, as if the latter were a stove. A toilet seat is re-adapted as a basketball hoop, while a key is fixed to the top of a faucet to replace its missing handle.

Other objects are coupled in seemingly accidental ways, becoming unusable. A toilet stands in the way of a door, which cannot open. A staircase is blocked by another one going in the opposite direction. A faucet is redesigned so that the water stream will miss the sink.



Ahmed Badry and his artwork 'The Provisionary that Lasts', 2013, mixed media, 165 x 68 x 443 cm.
Image courtesy AB Gallery.

His project *The Provisionary That Lasts* (2013) consists of an oversized large Swiss triple socket with corresponding cable made of cardboard and two long nails stuck in the first box and projecting into the air like antennae. The work addresses the ways in which people in Egypt and elsewhere deal with daily situations and find temporary solutions to a problem. The Swiss plug is re-adapted the Egyptian way to connect safely, with two nails.

Badry has exhibited internationally in institutions and events, and has undertaken a variety of residencies around the world. He participated in the 13th Cairo International Biennale (2013).

C. A. Xuan Mai Ardia

636

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