CULTURAL EXHIBIT

Creation and Dissent

Gürçim Yilmaz, Vural Özdemir, Salma El Tarzi, Sondos Shabayek, Azza Abo Rebieh



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We think that it is through looking at problems that the transformative role of culture and creation can be better understood and that, therefore, we needed to boost the voice of non-institutionalized actors and discover some independent projects. The price of this freedom when it comes to building a project is the overwhelming fragility of these projects: economic concerns, bureaucratic pressure coming from institutions and, in some cases, the physical integrity of the involved people being put at risk. We do not aim to provide an exhaustive list of creators. Rather, we aim to shed light into the artistic dissidences as spaces of resistance and freedom with experiences from Syria, Turkey and Egypt.

Selection of texts

Frontiers and conflicts

Azza Abo Rebieh

Salmon Swimming Against the (Political) Current

Gürçim Yilmaz , Vural Özdemir

Ramblings of female Cairene artists

Salma El Tarzi , Sondos Shabayek



Gürçim Yilmaz

Gürçim Yilmaz is a writer, editor, curator and a researcher in cultural studies. Born in Hannover, Germany, she grew up in Ankara, and currently lives and writes in Istanbul. She completed her degree in Communications at Ankara University and her Master's Degree on Media & Cultural Studies at METU in Ankara. In 2015, she was a writer in residence in Barcelona at Jiwar Creation & Society, contributing to art projects with concept development and narrative-writing since 2017. Yilmaz works as a journalist for national newspapers, TV channels, publishing companies, and also as a communications expert, editor, translator and writer. Her articles and fictional stories were published in various magazines and newspapers.



Vural Özdemir

Vural Özdemir is a researcher on critical theory of technology and Feminist Studies of science and technology. He lives and writes in Toronto, Canada. He was an invited speaker at the World Economic Forum Meeting in Davos in 2020. He trained as a medical doctor in Ankara, and completed a PhD dissertation and postdoctoral work in genomics and personalized medicine at the University of Toronto. His research focused on the question “why do individuals respond differently to the same medication, particularly in psychiatry?”. In his academic projects, he examines ethics and critical governance in all fields where knowledge is produced, and writes across the “two cultures divide” to bridge medicine and political science. His articles appeared in academic and journalism forums such as the British Medical Journal, Personalized Medicine, J. Clinical Psychopharmacology, Plos One, Project Syndicate, Agos Weekly, Duvar English, Gazete Duvar, Milling and Grain, Psychiatric Times, and Hürriyet Daily News.



Salma El Tarzi

Salma El Tarzi is a Cairo-based filmmaker, visual artist and essayist. Her independent directorial debut, *Do You Know Why?* (2004), won the Rotterdam Arab Film Festival Silver Award. In 2013, she directed her first feature-length documentary, *Underground/On The Surface*, which explores the local subculture of electro-shaabi music (also known as *mahraganat*) and won the 2013 Dubai International Film Festival award for best directing. That year, she returned to painting and drawing after a 14-year-long hiatus, culminating in the completion of a co-authored nonfiction graphic novel on institutional and societal gender-based violence during the first years of the 2011 uprising in Egypt to be released in 2021. Since then, she has authored another autobiographical artist book that was launched in February 2020, in parallel to an ongoing research project about the representation of desire and normalization of rape culture in mainstream Egyptian cinema: *Yataman Wa Honna El Raghebat* (*They refuse but they want*).



Sondos Shabayek

Sondos Shabayek is a writer, filmmaker, scriptwriter and director. She worked as the Director of The BuSSy project, a performing arts project that documents gender based stories and presents them on stage. She has over 10 years of experience in facilitating storytelling workshops, documenting personal narratives and directing public performances. She is also the Founder & Director of Tahrir Monologues, a performance of true stories from Egypt's revolution. She wrote and directed award winning *Girl*, a short film about harassment in Cairo. She also wrote *The night before*, a short film about Female genital mutilation (FGM). Prior to her work in theater and film, she studied Mass communication and broadcasting and she worked for more than 6 years as journalist and editor. Her journalistic work focused on exploring, exposing and discussing social taboos in Egyptian society.



Azza Abo Rebieh

Azza Abo Rebieh is a Syrian artist and printmaker, graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus 2002. She has been Artist Protection Fund fellow at the American Academy in Rome for 4 months (2019-2020) and she is now based in Beirut. She was one of 30 women sharing a cell in the Adra prison in Damascus, detained because of her art and her activism. Her drawings have been shown at the Drawing Center in New York, and her solo exhibition was exhibited in 392 Rmeil 393 Galley. In addition, her project Beirut "Traces" was presented with a talk at King's College, in the UK, and also in the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. The British Museum obtained three of her etching artworks in 2014. She won the first prize of the Youth Printmakers in Damascus and the Ostrobothnian Museum obtained her artwork.