

GALLERY

MAKING WAVES

GYPSUM GALLERY

Laura Cugusi observes how a relative newcomer to Cairo's gallery scene plans on serving as a game-changing model for the promotion of Contemporary art from Egypt, the region and beyond.

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arly March 2015, and it's a hectic time for Gypsum Gallery's director Aleya Hamza. Stacks of boxes and wrapped frames fill the immaculate rooms of the space, the smell of fresh paint still in the air. In the midst of preparations to open the gallery's new venue, Hamza is also getting ready for two major international art fairs in which Gypsum is taking part for the first time: the Armory Show in New York and Art Dubai, where works by artists Mona Marzouk, Doa Aly, Setareh Shahbazi and Basim Magdy will be showcased.

Since its inauguration in October 2013 with an exhibition of photographs by Iranian-born Shahbazi, Gypsum's short history has been packed with activity. Nine solo shows, three international art fairs, a move to a larger space, a goodly number of sales and extensive coverage in the international press are the main highlights, as well as the indirect success of individual gallery

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artists featuring in major group shows in New York, Paris and London. The gallery was conceived and created by veteran Cairo curator Hamza who, having worked in the independent Contemporary art scene for the last 10 years is well aware of the inherent difficulties, specifically the gap she perceives in the local cultural panorama.

"There was no reference point in Egypt for representing artists, so I had to teach myself how to function step by step," Hamza admits. "Practically speaking, there are no institutions in Egypt that collect Contemporary art and nor is there any market for it. I didn't want to target only an audience of private local buyers who would invest in art just to decorate the interior

of their houses. I was much more interested in conceptual practices and experimentation with form."

A NEW SPHERE

Marking its first anniversary, Gypsum relocated to a large ground-floor apartment comprising four high-ceilinged and spacious rooms in the quiet leafy neighbourhood of Garden City, only a short walk from the Nile and a few blocks from Tahrir Square. In the past few years Garden City has emerged as a hub for artists and media professionals, attracted by independent art spaces such as Medrar and Nile Sunset Annex, and art cafés such as Room

This page and opening spread:
Installation view of Mahmoud
Khaled's *Painter On A Study
Trip (Composition)*, 2014.

Facing page: Ali Younis,
UAR – Coat Of Arms I, 2014.
Mixed media, 48.5 x 38.5 cm.

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