

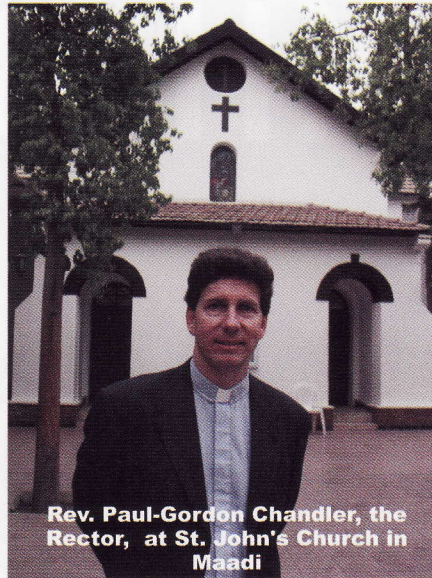
East and West

Journeying Together through the Arts

An unprecedented gathering of renowned Egyptian and Western Artists come together to use Art as a bridge for intercultural and inter-religious dialogue

Under the banner *On A Caravan: East and West Journeying Together through the Arts*, twenty highly respected and recognized Egyptian and Western artists have formed an artistic initiative with the goal of building bridges of understanding and respect between East and West, Muslims and Christians.

Sponsored by the historic Church of St. John the Baptist/Maadi (a.k.a. St. John's Church) the Episcopal/Anglican Church in Cairo that serves the international diplomatic, business, educational and NGO communities, the *On A Caravan* initiative seeks to highlight how the visual arts serve as one of the most effective mediums of building bridges of friendship, respect and sharing between the Middle East and the West. St. John's Church, founded in 1931 as the last church designed by the eminent architect



Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler, the Rector, at St. John's Church in Maadi

Sir Herbert Baker, who built churches from Cape Town to Cairo, serves as a unique catalyst for Christian/Muslim relations due to the local respect it has developed over the last 76 years with the Islamic authorities, and more recently, due to the post 9/11 Dialogue Agreement between the Anglican Communion and Al Azhar, the intellectual and spiritual heart of Sunni Islam.

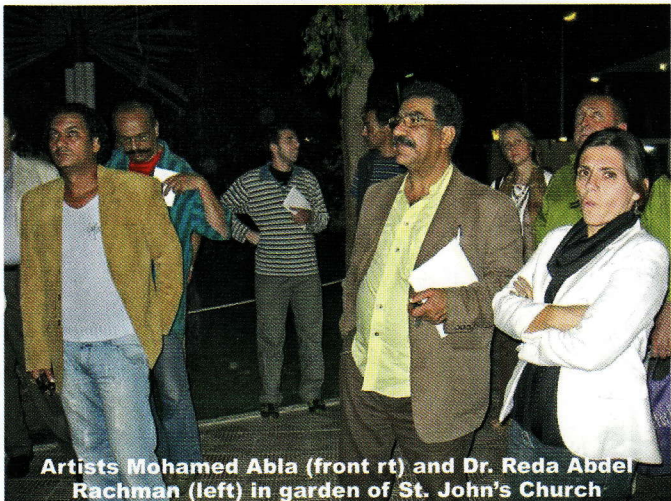
"In this increasing chasm of misunderstanding and discord between the Middle East and West," says Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler, author and the Rector of St. John's, and curator of *On A Caravan*, "Our day calls for a whole new kind of movement: one that builds on what the two hold in common. And art, a wellspring of the spiritual journey, can serve to build this much-needed bridge. Our challenge is to see art as Leo Tolstoy, the Russian novelist, saw it, when he said, 'The task of art is enormous... Art should cause violence to be set aside. And it is only art that can accomplish this.'"

The aim of the symposium is to explore the relationships between the East and West through the media of painting / printmaking and fine arts. The symposium, which will result in a highly publicized exhibition, was launched in the grounds of one of Maadi's (southern suburb of Cairo) elegant historic villas. Participants include a diverse range of artists ranging from one of Egypt's leading contemporary artists, Mohamed Abla, to artist Dr. Reda Abdel Rahman from the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, to local artists, both Egyptian and expatriate, who are being given the opportunity to join together with these more established artists.

These twenty artists from both Egypt and the West are each producing two pieces of work on ideas that reflect the collective theme: *East and West Journeying Together*. Focusing on that which the Middle East and West, Muslim and Christian, hold in common, with an emphasis on "building bridges" between the two, the artists will draw inspiration from ideas such as: peace, harmony,



British artist Roland Prime sharing at Artists' launching for On A Caravan



Artists Mohamed Abla (front rt) and Dr. Reda Abdel Rachman (left) in garden of St. John's Church

compassion, goodwill, forgiveness, love, understanding, reaching across and exploring the relationship(s) between East and West. In addition, the physical building of the historic St. Johns' Church will also inspire their artistic expressions.

Internationally renowned Egyptian artist Mohamed Abla, who is participating in *On A Caravan* as well as facilitating an interactive art day for all the participating artists, at the launch said, "I am living this bridge. As a Muslim, I married a Christian, and I profoundly believe in this idea of using art to build an alliance of understanding and friendship."

At the end of January 2009 all 40 works of art will be exhibited within St. John's Church for a selling exhibition from the January 29th to February 5th (the opening reception is at 8 PM on January 29). Over a thousand are expected to attend this unique event. The programme is generating significant interest from the international media.

"We hope that through this initiative," said Roland Prime, a participating British artist who is also helping to facilitate the symposium/exhibition, "We can learn and pass on these skills to others, so that all can live without division and respect and love the 'other.'"

The participating artists include:

Egypt & Middle East

Mohamed Abla-Egyptian, Dr. Reda Adbel Rahman-Egyptian, Omar El Fayoumi-Egyptian, Hany Rashid-Egyptian, Dr. Farid Fadel-Egyptian, Maher Ali-Egyptian, Hisham El Zeiny-Egyptian, Mansour Ahmed-Egyptian, Randa Fakes-LoGerfo-Jordanian/American

The West

Dorian Haqmoun-Swiss, Julie Oxenforth-British, Isolde Kadry-Egyptian/German, Maria Maher-USA, Roland Prime-British
 Connie Fiorelli-Australia, Lucy Westwood-British, Kimberley Odekirk-USA, Anne du Boistesselin-France

On A Caravan: East and West Journeying Together through the Arts

Curated by Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler
 Facilitators: Mohammed Abla and Roland Prime

www.oncaravan.org
www.maadichurchstjohn.org/caravan.htm