

The Road Ahead

Cairo's Caravan Festival of the Arts returns this month with compelling artwork that opens new discussions about the future of Egyptian society.

Few civilizations can exhibit the cultural and historical richness and diversity as Egypt can, home to thousands of years of cultural and artistic movements that reverberate throughout the region and the world. Egypt has long been the pulse of the Middle East; in the wake of the Arab Spring, the nation begins to slowly rebuild, resulting in another type of spring – a revitalization of thinkers, writers, and artists, ready to share their gifts with the world.

Caravan Festival of the Arts serves as the perfect platform for these creative minds, combining established and burgeoning artists for a spectacular multimedia exhibition held until May 5th. The theme this year is “The Road Ahead,” stimulating conversation about various topics related to Egypt’s future: sectarian strife, religious diversity, and living harmoniously. Appropriately, the exhibition is available for viewing in the historic St. John’s Church, a symbol of tolerance and dialogue in the community that regularly attracts over 20 nationalities in its congregation. “It could not be timelier,” says Founder Rev. Canon Paul-Gordon Chandler, “to

be involved in this interfaith aspect of peace-building in this country, toward promoting a sectarian-free Egypt.” The American Rector/minister of the church is well-versed in the subject of interreligious dialogue, having authored celebrated books such as *Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road: Exploring a New Path between Two Faiths*.

British artist Roland Prime has been tapped as the show’s curator this year, attracting 45 renowned artists from the Middle East and West, each of whom has submitted a piece of artwork that reflects the show’s theme. “Our desire through this fourth exhibition is to address the importance of religious harmony and unity for Egypt’s future,” Prime notes. The artwork speaks volumes: a woman painted in the style of a Catholic icon cries in Carelle Homsy’s “Egypt, My Egypt,” a desolate desert road stretches out towards one of Egypt’s ruins in Prime’s themed piece, and an abstract by Soha Sabbagh depicts conflict and movement in vibrant color.

The event will attract a wide array of prestigious and famous guests such as actor Khalid Abdalla of *The Kite Runner*, internationally-acclaimed author Ahdaf Soueif of *Map of Love*





Opposite: Carelle Homsy's Egypt, My Egypt. *Above:* Celebrated Egyptian actor Omar Sharif appreciates artwork alongside Rev. Paul-Gordon, the festival's founder. *Middle left:* Syrian artist Asmaa Tekkiedine's piece. *Middle right:* South African artist Renee van Lille Demetruedes' artwork. *Bottom left:* A painting by Roland Prime. *Bottom right:* Mariann Villadsen's contribution from Denmark.

and In the *Eye of the Sun*, Norwegian artist Britt Boutros Ghali, renowned American sculptor Erik Blome, religious leaders from a variety of faiths, as well as entertainers such as Egyptian actress Yousra and the Ana Masry Band. Don't miss the festival's literature night, where Ahdaf Soueif will discuss her new book, *Cairo: My City, Our Revolution*, a passionate account of political change in Egypt, protest by protest, day by day. While the country

faces an uncertain future, the festival offers a platform for self-expression and bridge-building between disparate elements of society, in the form of engaging and powerful art that will linger in your memory for years to come. ●

For more information about the festival, check out www.oncaravan.org. 20% of all art sales benefit regional charities that assist the poor.