

CARAVAN Festival of the Arts—2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

5th CARAVAN FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS—9-16 May 2013

(An artistic program of premier Middle Eastern and Western Artists using the Arts as a bridge for inter-religious and intercultural dialogue)

Cairo, Egypt, April 3, 2013

As Egypt seeks to find its path into the future, the 2013 *CARAVAN Festival of the Arts* has the theme “In Peace and with Compassion...The Way Forward”. Sponsored by the Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt, and supported by the British Council, the festival will be held from 9-16 May and will focus on visual public art, literature, film and music.

The *CARAVAN Festival of the Arts* was founded with the objective of building bridges of understanding, respect and friendship between East and West, and between Muslims and Christians, through the Arts.

Therefore, this unique art festival seeks to use the Arts a means for intercultural and inter-religious interchange between the cultures and creeds of the East and West. The annual week-long festival attracts thousands of visitors from around Egypt and the world. One of its unique aspects is that, to date, the festival has taken place at the historic St. John’s Church in Maadi/Cairo, a center for interfaith dialogue for over 80 years.

The heart of the 2013 CARAVAN festival is the visual public art exhibition. This year over 45 premier Egyptian and Western visual artists have been invited to participate in what will be a truly unique public art-oriented exhibition for Cairo. The exhibition resonates with the words of Banksy, the renowned English public street-artist; “I’ve learned from experience that a painting isn’t finished when you put down your brush—that’s when it starts. The public reaction is what supplies meaning and value. Art comes alive in the arguments you have about it.”

The 2013 CARAVAN visual art emphasis seeks to follow in the footsteps of an approach to public art that has featured painted animals. This first happened in Zurich, Switzerland in 1998, when painted fiberglass cows appeared around the city. Chicago followed suit in 1999, and other cities around the world have since done something similar with painted fiberglass animals (elephants in London, bears in Paris, etc).

The subject in Cairo will be the donkey. Each participating artist will paint and decorate two fiberglass donkeys (one that is life-size and one that is 1/4 life-size) that have been sculpted specifically for this year’s exhibition. Both donkey sculptures were sculpted by the noted Egyptian artist Reda Abdel Rahman.

The donkey symbolizes *peace* in both Islam and Christianity, found in both the Bible and in the Qur’an. Examples are numerous, such as both Jesus and the great Muslim leader Saladin each riding donkeys when they entered Jerusalem. This is why the theme is “In Peace.....”. The donkey also represents the poor, as it is an animal of burden, and this is especially the case in Egypt. Hence the full theme of the exhibition is “In Peace and with Compassion.” Through this art initiative the artists are making a public statement that the way forward for Egypt among all faiths, and in Egypt’s relationship with the rest of the world, is “in peace and with compassion”.

To be officially opened on May 9 at 7 PM by Muslim and Christian dignitaries, all 90 painted fiberglass donkeys will be on display at St. John's Church in Maadi, Cairo. The 45 smaller donkeys will be for sale on the opening night, with 80% of the profit going to the artists and 20% to Egyptian charities assisting the poor under the *Spirit of Giving* charity umbrella. However, following the opening night, the 45 life-size painted fiberglass donkeys will be placed throughout Cairo at strategic public locations for two weeks (hotel lobbies, art galleries, cultural centers, universities, schools, community associations, etc.). 20-25 life-size donkeys will be then selected for a traveling interfaith public art exhibition to venues in Europe.

The visual public art exhibition, co-curated by CARAVAN founder, Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler, and participating celebrated Egyptian artist Reda Abdel Rahman, includes a diverse range of noted Egyptian contemporary artists such as George Bahgory, Ibrahim El Dessouky, and Mohamed Abla, to expatriate artists such as the well-known Norwegian artist Britt Boutros-Ghali.

For film, literature and music, special participating guests at this year's *CARAVAN Festival of the Arts* will include the noted Egyptian actor **Amr Waked** (who has starred in films such as *Contagion*, *Syriana* and *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*), who will be giving a talk and a screening of his latest film, *Winter of Discontent*, about the Egyptian Revolution, **Dr Alaa El Aswany**, the best selling novelist of *The Yacoubian Building*, who will give a talk and sign his newly released book, *The Automobile Club*, and the renowned oud (lute) composer and player, **Georges Kazazian**, whose music captures a translucent way of playing the oud.

Thousands are expected to attend and it will be covered by the Arab and Western media. All attendance is free of charge, but 20% of all art sales go to Egyptian charities assisting the poor regardless of creed.

In Egypt, while the outcry from many political and religious groups in condemning sectarian tension has been impressive, there is significant work still to be done. Hence, says Rev. Canon Paul-Gordon Chandler, Founder of the *Caravan Festival of the Arts*, "It is critical that 'creative demonstrations of dialogue' be created".

WEEKLY PROGRAM of the CARAVAN Festival of the Arts—9-16 May 2013

(held at St. John's Church/Maadi—<http://www.stjohnschurchmaadi.org>)

On the corner of Port Said Rd & Rd 17 in Maadi

***Opening Night of the CARAVAN Festival of the Arts—9 May 26 (Thursday) at 7 PM (19h00)**--Opening presentations by **Muslim and Christian dignitaries, and the Ambassador of Switzerland**. All 90 fiberglass donkeys together with the 45 participating premier visual artists that painted them will be present.

***Film Night—11 May at 7 PM (19h00)**--Egyptian actor, **Amr Waked**, has starred in movies such as *Contagion*, *Syriana* and *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*. He will be giving a talk and there will be a screening of his latest film, *Winter of Discontent*.

***Literature Night—13 May (Monday) at 7 PM (19h00)**—**Dr Alaa El Aswany**, best selling novelist (*The Yacoubian Building*) and writer, will give a talk and sign his newly released book, *The Automobile Club*.

***Musical Concert—16 May (Thursday) at 7:00 PM (19h00)**—Concert featuring the renowned oud (lute) composer and player **Georges Kazazian**. Kazazian has published a dozen albums of his music which 'capture a translucent way of playing the oud'.

The participating visual artists include:

Egyptian Artists

Adel Naseef
Adel Tharwat
Ahmed Sabry
Ahmed Kassim
Alaa Awad
Ashraf Reda
Ayman El Semary
Ayman Lotfy
Emad Ibrahim
Farid Fadel
Gamal Ez
Georg Bahgory
Hakim Jmaien
Hayam Abdel Baki
Hend Adnan
Hisham El Zeiny

Ibrahim El Dessouky
Karim Abd EL Malak
Keizer
Khaled Hafiz
Maged Mekhail
Marwa Adel
Moataz Nasreldin
Mohamed Abla
Mohamed Talaat
Omar El Fayoumi
Rania Fouad
Reda Abd El Rahman
Sabah Naim
Salah El Meligy
Sameh Ismail
Shayma Aziz

Western Artists

Anne-Francoise Giraud, France
Barbara El Nimra (Gerber), Switzerland
Britt Boutros Ghali, Norway
Claire Marie Pearman, UK
Cosima Lukashevich, USA
Julie Oxenforth, U.K.
Katrina Vrebalovich, USA
Kimberly Odekirk, USA
Marian Villadsen, Denmark
MARS, Switzerland
Renata Dyk, Poland
Renee van Lille-Demetroudes, South Africa
Sonja Moser, Austria

CARAVAN Festival of the Arts

Founder/Patron, Rev. Canon Paul-Gordon Chandler

Website: www.oncaravan.org/exhitibion5/index.htm

Facebook--CARAVAN Festival of the Arts:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Caravan-Festival-of-the-Arts/156946157687350>

YouTube—CARAVAN Festival of the Arts 2013:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-jiYcwzCYI>

For more information or to request an interview, please contact Paul-Gordon Chandler at email: info@oncaravan.org. Photographs available upon request.