

# CAIRO ART BLOG

on emerging art in Egypt

## Art Picks: Weaam El-Masry

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*We're asking art professionals in Egypt to pick a work by an Egyptian emerging artist and tell us why it's important to them. This week, Fatenn Mostafa, founder of ArtTalks Egypt, comments on the art of Weaam El-Masry.*



*"To Follow Without Halt, One Aim," pen, Chinese ink and acrylic on hard paper, 2013.*

“The first time I saw a work by Weaam El-Masry, I knew she was different and that I had to find her. And I am glad I did, because not only did she turn out to be an outstandingly promising artist but also an amazing human being. ‘The Golden Fly’ series is one of the best works I have seen within the Egyptian contemporary art scene during 2013. It is a complex and courageous combination of images in a deeply moving environment. Building on the personal, it weaves together timelessness and universality supported by outstanding drawing abilities.”

“‘To Follow Without Halt, One Aim’ is a beautifully moving and immersive painting/drawing from this series that invites the viewer into the realm of the artist’s narratives and perplexing psyche. Tackling the position of women in our society with a sense of unease, this work incites both anger and hope; confusion and determination. One doesn’t know if the depicted woman is broken and kneeling as a sign of giving up

or if she is actually fighting back to stand up on her feet to follow her dreams again.”

“Unraveling that psychological pain, that longing for freedom away from the harsh shackles of our demanding society, this work is timeless and universal in portraying the perseverance of women who want to follow a certain path, in any society and at any point in time. The beautiful title of the work is an undeniably optimistic hint – to guide the viewer that there is hope.”

“The kneeling woman is visibly overweight – a constant feature in El-Masry’s older works. While it seems to be reflecting a personal wound and struggle for the artist, it is also a deliberate stance against the society’s demands of women to be thin and to be objectified – all of which El-Masry refuses, rebels against and doesn’t shy away from revealing and attacking. This back and forth from personal to universal and from immediate to timeless is what makes El-Masry’s concept compelling and engaging.”

“The absolute though nervous control of line has become El-Masry’s signature drawing technique. And in this series, ‘The Golden Fly,’ and this work in particular, her ‘draughtsmanship’ is unparalleled.”

“Weaam El-Masry chose a difficult path when she developed ‘The Golden Fly’ series in 2013. While many artists indulged in the ongoing turbulence of the Egyptian revolution, she stayed loyal to all the issues close to her heart – relationships, religion, gender. She understood that these were the essence of her visual language and she held onto them. And despite all the hopes of the January 25 events, all those issues she put on the table are still as relevant, if not more so, today.”

“This latest series combines all the ‘must have’ factors...the majority of Egyptian artists are technically strong, but too many are weak on the conceptual level. Too many don’t go that extra mile to ensure perfectionism in the quality of their work. El-Masry excels on the three fronts: technical mastery, an innovative and profound take on the never-ending gender issue, and perfectionism in quality and delivery of the work.”

“A multi-award winner, El-Masry researches, peels the onion, goes beyond the superficial or the clichés. She seeks profound answers, and she is driven by her personal voyage that she doesn’t shy away from sharing with the public. Her work is genuine and intimate, like an autobiography. And it is made with pride; this you can immediately sense. This fearless honesty with overweight nude bodies invades the space and hypnotizes the viewer. To liberate him. To liberate her. Very few artists can manage to do that.”