

الطبعة الفنية لدي الفنان أحمد نوار: بين البعد الثقافي والتوجهات الفنية المعاصر

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الطبعة الفنية لدي الفنان أحمد نوار: بين البعد الثقافي والتوجهات الفنية المعاصر

الملخص:

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة نقدية معمقة لأعمال الفنان المصري أحمد نوار، مع تركيز خاص على إبداعه في مجال فن الطباعة بوصفه وسيلة فنية تعبّر عن الهوية الثقافية وتواكب التحولات المعاصرة في الفن. يستعرض البحث المسار الفني المتنوع لنوار، منذ بداياته المتأثرة بالواقعية الرمزية، مرورًا بالمرحلة التي تزامنت مع مشاركته في الحرب، والتي كان لها أثر بالغ في تشكيل رؤيته الفنية، وصولًا إلى تبنيه أساليب التجريد الهندسي والرمزية البصرية للتعبير عن قضايا الانتماء، الاغتراب، والوجود الإنساني في ظل تحولات اجتماعية وسياسية حادة.

يكشف البحث كيف تمكن نوار من استلهام عناصر التراث المصري المتنوع من الزخارف الإسلامية والهندسية إلى التأثيرات القبطية والفن المصري القديم ليشكل بها لغة بصرية خاصة، مزج فيها بين الأصالة والانفتاح على الحركات الفنية العالمية، مثل السريالية والتجريد الرمزي. كما يبرز البحث مدى تأثير الأحداث السياسية والاجتماعية، خصوصًا تجربة الحرب، على محتوى أعماله وأساليب تنفيذه، حيث اتجه إلى استخدام الخامات الجاهزة، والأسطح العاكسة، والتقنيات التجريبية لتوسيع حدود فن الطباعة.

اعتمدت الدراسة على تحليل بصري لأعمال مختارة، ضمن إطار نظري يستند إلى مفاهيم الهوية الثقافية، والعولمة الفنية، ودور الفن في التعبير عن الذات والمجتمع. وتخلص إلى أن نوار يمثل حلقة وصل إبداعية بين المحلي والعالمي، ومرجعًا هامًا في تطور فن الطباعة المعاصر في مصر والعالم العربي، لما تميز به من قدرة على إعادة صياغة الرموز والأساليب لخدمة قضايا فكرية وإنسانية عميقة.

كلمات مفتاحية :

البعد الثقافي ، الفن المصري المعاصر ، احمد نوار ، الطبعة الفنية .

Ahmed Nawar's Printmaking Art: Between Cultural Aspect and Contemporary Artistic Tendencies

Abstract:

This study provides a critical analysis of the artistic journey of Egyptian artist “Ahmed Nawar”, focusing on his contributions to the field of printmaking as both a cultural expression and a contemporary artistic medium. The research examines how Nawar’s work reflects a deep engagement with Egypt’s cultural heritage, including Islamic geometry, Coptic art, and Ancient Egyptian art, while simultaneously interacting with international art movements such as Surrealism, Geometric Abstraction, and Symbolism. His use of symbolic elements like the dove—often depicted wounded or confined—highlights themes of struggle, peace, and resistance.

The research explores how Nawar’s personal experiences, particularly his involvement in military service and exposure to the trauma of war, significantly shaped his visual language. His works often incorporate ready-made objects, reflective surfaces, and experimental techniques that challenge traditional printmaking conventions, revealing his innovative spirit. The study also investigates the duality in Nawar’s compositions, balancing geometric and organic forms, darkness and light, tradition and modernity.

Through visual and contextual analysis, the paper emphasizes Nawar’s role in redefining printmaking within a contemporary Egyptian and global framework. It concludes that Ahmed Nawar’s work acts as a cultural bridge—preserving identity while embracing global dialogue—cementing his status as a pioneering figure in modern Arab printmaking.

Keywords: cultural aspect, contemporary Egyptian art, “Ahmed Nawar”, printmaking.

Preamble:

Art serves as a conduit between historical heritage and contemporary expression, encapsulating cultural identity and evolving artistic influences. “Ahmed Nawar”, a prominent figure in Egyptian printmaking, integrates traditional and modern elements, utilizing symbolism, geometric abstraction, and expressive techniques to construct a distinct visual language. His artistic development reflects the socio-political transformations of Egypt, transitioning from figurative realism to experimental approaches incorporating mixed media and abstraction.

Nawar’s contributions to printmaking extend beyond technical proficiency, positioning the medium as a platform for cultural narration and artistic exploration. This study examines the progression of his work, emphasizing its significance within contemporary Egyptian art and its engagement with global artistic discourse.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research seeks to address the following questions:

- How does Ahmed Nawar’s printmaking reflect Egypt’s cultural heritage while engaging with contemporary artistic trends?
- What are the key visual and conceptual elements that define his approach to printmaking?
- How have historical, social, and political contexts influenced his artistic production?
- In what ways does Nawar’s work contribute to the evolution of contemporary Egyptian printmaking within a global framework?

By examining these aspects, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of Nawar’s artistic legacy and its broader implications for printmaking as a medium of cultural expression.

Research Hypotheses:

1. Ahmed Nawar’s printmaking reflects a synthesis of Egyptian cultural heritage and global contemporary artistic movements, demonstrating how traditional identity can coexist with modern aesthetic approaches.
2. The symbolic and stylistic elements in Nawar’s artworks such as geometric abstraction, the dove motif, and the use of ready-made objects are deliberate tools to express themes of struggle,

alienation, and hope, shaped by personal experiences and socio-political events.

3. Nawar's experimental techniques in printmaking challenge the limitations of traditional printmaking practices in Egypt, positioning him as a pioneer in expanding the medium's expressive possibilities.
4. His integration of local (Islamic, Coptic, and Ancient Egyptian) and global (Surrealism, Symbolism, Geometric Abstraction) elements in visual language contributes to redefining the role of printmaking as a medium for cultural narration and global artistic dialogue.

OBJECTIVES:

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Analyze Cultural Influences:** Examine how Ahmed Nawar's printmaking reflects Egypt's cultural heritage and its interaction with contemporary artistic movements.
2. **Identify Visual and Conceptual Elements:** Investigate the key symbols, techniques, and themes that define Nawar's artistic approach.
3. **Explore Socio-Political Contexts:** Assess the impact of historical, social, and political events on the development of his printmaking.
4. **Evaluate Artistic Contribution:** Determine Nawar's role in shaping the evolution of contemporary Egyptian printmaking and its engagement with global art trends.
5. **Highlight Innovation in Printmaking:** Explore his experimental techniques and their significance in expanding the boundaries of traditional printmaking.

Through these objectives, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of Ahmed Nawar's artistic legacy and its relevance within contemporary printmaking discourse.

METHODOLOGY:

This research follows a descriptive and analytical approach to examine Ahmed Nawar's printmaking within its cultural and contemporary context. The study is conducted through the following steps:

- **Literature Review:** Analyzing existing scholarly sources on Egyptian printmaking, contemporary art, and cultural identity to establish a theoretical framework.
- **Visual Analysis:** Examining selected works by “Ahmed Nawar” to identify recurring themes, symbols, and techniques.
- **Contextual Study:** Investigating historical, social, and political factors that have shaped Nawar’s artistic direction.

By integrating these methods, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Ahmed Nawar's printmaking's cultural and artistic significance.

Scope and Limitations:

1. Subject Focus:

This study focuses exclusively on the printmaking works of Egyptian artist Ahmed Nawar, analyzing their cultural, symbolic, and technical dimensions.

2. Temporal Scope:

The research covers the development of Nawar's printmaking from the 1960s to the late 2000s, examining key phases of his artistic evolution in response to historical and personal events.

3. Thematic Scope:

The study emphasizes themes of cultural identity, war, alienation, and innovation, with attention to how these are visually expressed through symbolic imagery and material experimentation.

4. Analytical Scope:

The research utilizes visual and contextual analysis supported by relevant cultural and art theoretical frameworks to examine the interaction between local heritage and global artistic influences in Nawar’s work.

5. Geographical and Cultural Scope:

The research situates Nawar’s work within the context of contemporary Egyptian art while also placing it in dialogue with international modernist and postmodernist movements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Ahmed Nawar’s printmaking necessitates an exploration of key scholarly perspectives on **Egyptian printmaking, cultural**

identity in contemporary art, and global influences on local artistic traditions.

1. Egyptian Printmaking and Cultural Identity

- Printmaking in Egypt has evolved as a medium for **cultural expression and social commentary**, with artists integrating traditional motifs and modern techniques (Gharib, 2003).
- Nawar's work reflects **Egypt's artistic heritage**, drawing from **Islamic, Ancient Egyptian, and Coptic influences**, aligning with research that highlights the role of printmaking in preserving identity (Martore, 2009).

2. Art and Socio-Political Influences

- Studies emphasize the relationship between art and historical events, showing how wars and political shifts shape artistic production (Peters, 2015).
- Nawar's response to conflict aligns with global discussions on art as a tool for resistance and **documentation**, particularly in post-war societies (Bahnasi, 1997).

3. Global Art Movements and Contemporary Printmaking

- Research on contemporary printmaking highlights the impact of Surrealism, Geometric Abstraction, and Symbolism in redefining traditional techniques (Belting, 2013).
- Nawar's engagement with European artistic movements reflects broader trends in cross-cultural artistic exchanges, reinforcing the argument that modern Egyptian art balances tradition and globalization (Ruiz, 2021).

This review underscores Nawar's significance within Egyptian and global printmaking, demonstrating how his work bridges cultural heritage, socio-political narratives, and international artistic discourse.

Introduction:

The cultural aspect of an artist plays a crucial role in shaping their identity and is often reflected in their creative output. This aspect is significant as it enables artists to tap into their cultural background, stimulating their imagination and fostering innovative approaches. As thinkers and philosophers of lines, colours, balances, and visual

rhythms, artists express their philosophy and vision of the universe, the world, the era, and humanity (Richards, 2019)

Throughout art history, it has been observed that great artists who have left a lasting impact were able to blend originality derived from their local national heritage with contemporary influences of their time. The cultural aspect of an artist shapes their personality, making them an aesthetic and intellectual witness to their era (Paolo Martore, 14 October 2009).

In the contemporary context, the cultural aspect of artists differs from that of earlier periods due to the prevalence of media devices, mass media, satellite networks, and the internet. These advancements have transformed the world into a global village, erasing barriers and cultural divides between local and global cultures. artists worldwide struggle with the complexities of navigating between the local and the global, nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Balancing the investment in the past to affirm identity while incorporating the evolution of the era is a challenging equation. The world has become interconnected and fragmented simultaneously, as exemplified by the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, conflicts in Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan, and tribal conflicts in Africa

Contemporary art reflects the complex issues that shape our diverse, global, and rapidly changing world. Through contemporary art, many contemporary artists explore personal or cultural identity, criticise social and institutional structures, or even attempt to redefine art itself. Although contemporary art does not have one, single objective or point of view, it can be contradictory and open-ended. However, several common themes have emerged in contemporary artworks, including identity, community, nationality, contemporary society, culture, politics, and more. (Marie Ruiz, 15 Jun 2021)

Given Egypt's rich artistic heritage and the relatively recent emergence of printmaking art in the country, it is essential to study this phenomenon in the Egyptian context. This research aims to explore contemporary Cultural aspects and analyse the cultural influences evident in the artwork of prominent Egyptian artist "Ahmed Nawar", specifically focusing on printmaking art.

Discussion:

The Cultural aspect of contemporary artists has undergone significant transformations compared to earlier periods, primarily due

to the advent of media, mass media, and global networks. These advancements have effectively diminished barriers, borders, and cultural divisions between local and global cultures, resulting in a more interconnected world. Consequently, the status of artists has evolved, and their work is no longer confined to traditional exhibition spaces, galleries, books, or specialized studies. Instead, their creations are disseminated through various media platforms and networks, reaching a global audience and inviting critical opinions, studies, and analyses (Belting, Z.F. (2013)).

The concept of the cultural aspect of contemporary artists can be delineated into two fundamental elements: a local heritage element and a global contemporary element. The local heritage element encompasses the aesthetic and historical backgrounds that have been crystallized and preserved throughout successive eras of history. It represents the artist's connection to their cultural roots, traditions, and historical influences, which shape their artistic identity.

On the other hand, the global contemporary element emphasizes the absorption of aesthetic and cultural currents that characterize the present era. This element encompasses various fields such as contemporary art, politics, economics, sociology, philosophy, and other human sciences. Artists are required to be aware of and engage with these contemporary influences in their artistic practice.

Contemporary artists often find themselves grappling with a sense of confusion resulting from the division between their cultural aspect and the broader international human cultural aspect. In this context, artists must strive to preserve, develop, and renew their Cultural Aspect as much as possible. This entails a dualistic approach, where artists maintain a strong connection to their cultural identity while actively participating in the global cultural dialogue.

In summary, the cultural aspect of contemporary artists is shaped by an interaction of their local heritage with global contemporary influences. Artists must navigate the complexities of preserving the element of cultural identity while actively participating in the element of global cultural discourse. This dualistic approach allows for the development and renewal of the artist's cultural aspect, enabling them to create meaningful and relevant artistic expressions in the contemporary world.

First element: Cultural Identity

Cultural identity refers to the shared identity of a cultural group based on various cultural categories such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality, and any social group with its own distinct culture (Richards, 2019) . It is a fluid process in which different social, cultural, and historical experiences change. Cultural identity is developed through a series of steps, including understanding culture through being immersed in those values, beliefs, and practices, identifying as a member of that culture dependent on their rank within that community, and developing relationships such as immediate family, close friends, coworkers, and neighbours. Cultural identity is important because it influences how we interpret and react to situations and shapes our sense of belonging (Esther Usborne, December 2014). It is a set of features that allow us to define a particular subject, so external identification is by searching for and identifying these attributes. Cultural identity is a system of ideas, feelings, and customs that do not reflect our personality but the group or groups to which we belong. This system takes the form of religious beliefs, moral beliefs, national traditions, opinions, and intellectual trends (Chen, 2014).

Identity is a complex and evolving construct that is shaped by various factors, including educational, social, and cultural factors. Identity development is a vital process that provides structure and order to self-knowledge, a sense of consistency and coherence to beliefs, goals, and self-knowledge, a sense of continuity for one's history and future, goals and direction, and a sense of personal control of one's choices and outcomes. Identity development is both an individual and social phenomenon, and it is a primary developmental task of adolescence. Successful resolution of the identity crisis leads to a secure identity, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self. Identity development is multidimensional and transitional, and it changes over time.

The cultural identity of the contemporary artist includes two main elements: **heritage** and **social and -political variables**. Heritage refers to the artist's cultural background and the traditions and values that have shaped their artistic practice (Martore, 2009). Social and political variables, on the other hand, refer to the broader social and political context in which the artist is working, including issues such as race, gender, and class. Contemporary art has the potential to contribute towards the development of social and cultural capital for people of all

ages, including older adults. Communicating heritage through contemporary art is also a strategy that has been proposed for heritage sites in various projects. Conservation of contemporary art involves understanding the social interactions and mapping social behaviours that are essential for their ongoing preservation

Heritage

Heritage is not a static entity of the past, but rather a living and evolving force that shapes our present and future. It is not merely a museum of ideas to be admired, but a theory for action and inspiration for behaviour. Heritage reflects the reality from which it originated and is influenced by the spirit of the times, the composition of the generation, and the stage of historical development. It is a set of interpretations that each generation gives based on its requirements and perceptions of the world (Bahnasi, 1997).

Heritage is not separate from the changing living reality, but rather an integral part of it. It is still relevant and influential in shaping cultural components and directing the behaviours of individuals in their daily lives. Contemporary art projects have increasingly appeared in heritage sites, demonstrating the ongoing connection and relevance of heritage in the present (Rebecca Farley, 2022) .

Contemporary art conservation recognizes the social interactions and mapping of social behaviours that are essential for the ongoing preservation of artworks. It acknowledges that changes to artworks are a product of the relations of many agents and their impact on the works at different moments in their biographies (Niki Black, 2020)

In summary, heritage is not a relic of the past, but a dynamic and evolving force that continues to shape our lives. It is intertwined with our present reality and cultural components, and contemporary art projects and conservation efforts reflect the ongoing relevance and influence of heritage in our society.

Heritage is not a static entity of the past, but rather a living and evolving force that shapes our present and future. It is intertwined with our present reality and cultural components, and contemporary art projects and conservation efforts reflect the ongoing relevance and influence of heritage in our society (Martore, 2009).

Social and political variables

The cultural identity of contemporary artists is not only shaped by their heritage but also by the social and political variables of the society

in which they live. Authenticity in art comes from the sincere expression of the artist's personality, which is part of social life and influenced by various aspects of the environment, faith, culture, and events. Society has played an influential role in art throughout history, and philosophers and thinkers have addressed the relationship between art and social changes and their impact on artistic creativity (Paolo Martore, 14 October 2009)

The original treatment of topics derived from social life helps the artist to express their individuality and depict the new processes taking place within the community. The artist's ability to highlight the human features of the reality of their contemporary society and reveal new realities is a criterion of authenticity and sincerity. Lev Tolstoy stressed the need for literature and art to be associated with the photography of reality, and the artist expresses society in all their works. Tolstoy believed that the importance of art increases in its spread among people of different classes and cultures, and its authenticity and quality are linked to the number of people who are affected by it (Bahnasi, 1997).

Contemporary art has the potential to present authentic life experiences, interrogate social perception of identity, and critique systemic issues that marginalize individuals in society. Many artists approach social issues, the environment, and politics not only as themes to explore but also as areas to effect change, which has implications for the role of the artist in society. Social, political, and cultural issues provide frameworks in which educators can teach art, interpret art, and make art (Peters, 2015).

Therefore, social and political variables are an essential aspect of the cultural identity of contemporary artists. Authenticity in art comes from the sincere expression of the artist's personality, which is part of social life and influenced by various aspects of the environment, faith, culture, and events. Contemporary art has the potential to present authentic life experiences, interrogate social perception of identity, and critique systemic issues that marginalize individuals in society.

Second element: Global Culture

Culture is a dynamic concept that is key to the way humans have successfully adapted to the environment. Cultural universals are patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies, such as the family unit. Globalization increasingly restrains cultural forms, practices, and possibilities, and there is a dynamic within the culture of

innovation and restriction. Transculturality is a concept that captures some of the living traits of cultural change as highly diverse contemporary societies become globalized. Cultural diversity is related to the dynamic process whereby cultures change, and it is related to the universally shared principles on which our common humanity is based. A global culture, if it were to exist, would need to operate on multiple levels simultaneously, encompassing the fusion of diverse cultural elements, embodying a set of universal human values and interests, manifesting as a unified scientific discourse, and characterized by reciprocal communication. By striking a balance between cultural diversity and shared human values, a global culture can foster meaningful intercultural exchanges and promote a sense of interconnectedness among societies. A global culture should be selective in its assimilation of various cultural elements, ensuring that the originality and integrity of each culture are maintained (Buzan, 2010)

Global culture is a multifaceted phenomenon that transcends time and place, drawing from diverse sources and lacking a specific historical context (Watson, 2014). It is characterized by a shared language and a playful, abstract approach to entertainment, reflecting the technological basis of modern global communication systems. The emergence of global culture has given rise to a new intellectual artistic class, which engages in critical discourse within this global cultural framework. The impact of global culture on lifestyle has been explored in various studies, which have found that globalization is inevitable and global culture is the commodification of culture and practice of any locality in the world (Belting, Z.F. (2013))

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include Hollywood films, fast food restaurants, pop music, and fashion. However, it is important to note that cultural globalization does not necessarily lead to a single-world culture, as localized responses still exist. The language of global culture is rooted in essence and offers technical problems and solutions, utilizing popular culture as a means of abstract entertainment. The power of language in shaping culture has been studied by linguists, who consider language as a cultural, social, and psychological phenomenon (Crozet, 2017).

The movement of world civilization from east to west and the emergence of modern civilization and global transportation have led to the spread of cultural interaction around the world, including Egypt. The interaction in Egypt is distinguished from that in many regions of the world because it is not a process of replacement and melting, but rather a process of civilized exchange transculturation or cross-acculturation interference, an electoral mixing process from which the Egyptian personality emerged as it was always of a strong and buried character without ever losing its original strength. The spread of Hellenistic culture in the ancient world is an example of cultural exchange, where Greek art and life were influenced by other cultures, and the expansion in the territory during Alexander the Great's conquests brought greater possibilities for mutual cultural exchanges (Herring, 2022). However, cultural imperialism, the imposition of one culture onto another, has historically been linked with military intervention and conquest. The phenomenon of cultural imperialism has been studied in various disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, and ethics (Tobin, 2020).

The process of cultural interaction with the West in Egypt has gone through different stages. The first stage was characterized by reckless tradition, where attempts were made to turn Egypt into a "piece of Europe," and Latin letters were proposed. The second stage was a reverse reaction to the introduction of a new civilization, where some extremism demanded a return to the past and intensified "Salafist" radical movements. This stage was also characterized by the political uprising, and its success led some to a new extremism that reached a degree of ignorance sometimes. However, the third phase started quickly and continued until today, which is the stage of balance, where the Egyptian realized that he must be loaned, but a rational electoral metaphor. The third stage is characterized by the combination of the

original and the intruder, old and new, between tradition and tradition, in varying proportions and balance and calculated choice (Hamdan, 1994). The Egyptian realized that he should be proud of what his ancestors offered for civilization and history, but he should not depend on it too much. The relationship between language and culture is cyclical, with society and culture influencing the words that we speak, and the words that we speak influencing society and culture. Cultural imperialism, the imposition of one culture onto another, has historically been linked with military intervention and conquest (Tobin, 2020).

Study and analysis of Ahmed Nawar's' printmaking through the cultural aspect

"Ahmed Nawar" (1945)

The concepts and styles of the artist "Ahmed Nawar" evolved throughout his artistic career, and during his interaction at each stage with various cultural influences and excites, his career has gone through several creative stages that began since joining the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo, where he created a collection of distinctive paintings between 1962 and 1968, in which we find a dramatic expression whose lines involve smoothness packed with rebellion, and the ability to synthesize and condense elements to highlight the symbolic meaning (Dwider, 8 Sep. 2023)

In 1967, "Ahmed Nawar" presented his graduation project at the Faculty of Fine Arts, marking the beginning of his artistic journey and the crystallization of his artistic logic, which gave birth to various innovative forms. His project consisted of a monumental trilogy titled "The Day of Reckoning." (figure 1) This trilogy presented narrative images of resurrection, accountability, hope, regret, heaven, and hell. However, Nawar, with his talent, managed to embody the scene of vision within a context that lies between perception and sensation, reality and imagination. He intensified light and darkness amidst the signs of movement, employing the contrasting position to evoke levels of "supra-realism" and bring back the eternal scene depicted by Michelangelo in his monumental mural "The Last Judgment" at the Sistine Chapel in Rome. This masterpiece served as the primary inspiration for Nawar's epic work, which he had witnessed during a summer trip to Europe, igniting his creativity and challenging his artistic abilities as a student at that time.



figure 1

Ahmad Nawar "The Day of Reckoning." 270 cmm * 296 cm

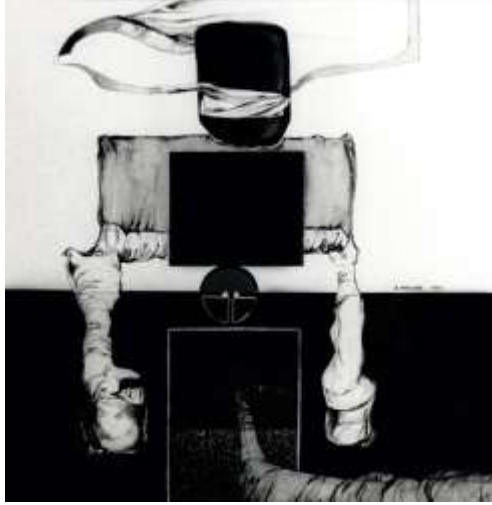
<http://www.fineart.gov.eg/arb/cv/Works.asp?Ids=580&whichpage=25&pagesize=12>

The second driving force behind Nawar's artistic development was the trilogy "The Gardens of Delight" by the artist "Hieronymus Bosch". This trilogy, as critics have affirmed, possessed a dramatic and narrative character, emphasizing tension in its scenes. However, these characteristics diminished in subsequent stages, particularly after Nawar turned towards a symbolic style in expressing his vision.

The years Nawar spent in the war had a profound impact on his cultural and emotional being, turning him into an artist who rebelled against reality. In 1971, he presented his sudden exhibition, where he displayed real cannon barrels, fragments of tanks, parts of ground-to-air missiles, and remnants of iron shrapnel. Nawar did not merely present these elements in their sensory and cognitive content; he intensified them, making them an expression of the extent of human damnation. His artworks in this exhibition reflected his style of expressing ideas through the use of diverse materials and ready-made objects. Thus, he became one of the first Egyptian artists to employ ready-made objects in conveying valuable ideas.

This bold phase gave rise to a new stage in which the artist expressed the horrors of war and the martyrs of conflicts. Even after leaving military service, the war's effects continued to resonate in his artistic mission during his four-year journey to Spain. There, developments and transformations emerged in his primary theme: the human figure. He not only distorted it as before but sometimes concealed it within mummy-like shrouds. Human-like creatures filled with wounds appeared, wrapped in bandages, bandoliers, and straps,

woven around their bodies in a dark, square void as if they were the bodies of martyrs who fell in war. Despite the initial impression of a focus on athletic creation, the observer discovers that the artist has not yet abandoned the narrative character. Nevertheless, his compositions do not adhere to conventional design principles; instead, they reveal the artist's diverse and astonishing innovations. (figure 2)



(figure 2)

Ahmad Nawar intaglio printmaking, 1972

<http://www.fineart.gov.eg/arb/cv/Works.asp?Ids=580&whichpage=13&pagesize=12>

The Spanish stage of Ahmed Nawar's paintings is almost limited to a dialogue between "Al-Mada" (The Range) and "Al-Insan Al-Maskh" (The Disfigured Human). The two exchange positions and roles, as "Al-Mada" occupies a bold and large space in some works, leaving mummy-like coils at the bottom, and this black range is not satisfied until it devours the edges of the coils and captures them in its possession.

The terrifying silence space changes and wears in other paintings robes resembling the texture of wound stitches, as in the painting "The Ascent." The viewer may be surprised by the appearance of his "illuminated balloon" creatures from an unexpected corner of the painting, heading towards its center. The unexpected designs of "Nawar" shock and amaze the viewer, and upon contemplation, they find that they were necessary to highlight the alienation of humans in a desolate existence, connected to others only by frail, torn ribbons. Even

when he removes the shrouds and wears the shiny spacesuit of astronauts, submerged in light, which resembles the manifestations of saints in darkness, if the viewer contemplates this human, they find it a scattering of elements that can only be gathered in the imagination. He collected them in a symbolic metaphysical style through which he wanted to express the alienation, pains, and loss of humans in the time of war. When "Nawar" was accompanied in Spain by memories of war, he also had an important element close to himself in the majority of his works, which is the beloved square shape for the Muslim artist. From it, he extracted the octagonal shape and countless other variations.

In "Nawar's" works, the triangle shape appeared clearly in his Spanish stage, opening up striking avenues of innovation. With the appearance of the triangle, the gradual or flat range disappeared, and the surface of the Intaglio Print became enriched with integrated triangles - in terms of space and colour. A new dialogue between organic and geometric shapes emerged, in addition to the drama of form and space.

His journey continued in the 1980s towards geometric abstraction through works in which the dialogue between geometric and organic shapes appeared. The geometric vocabulary grew, starting from the square and ending with a network of small squares. As for the organic element (the human), it returned in the form of "the dove." The dove appeared in varying manifestations, sometimes acquiring wilderness from the law of the jungle to defend its existence, and sometimes appearing lost in space or screaming without an echo. In all cases, it appeared besieged, compressed by violent forces. It resists sometimes and surrenders at other times, using the dove in a symbolic style that expresses freedom and peace. (figure 3)



(figure 3)

Ahmad Nawar intaglio printmaking

<http://www.fineart.gov.eg/arb/cv/Works.asp?Ids=580&whichpage=11&pagesize=12>

The artist “Ahmed Nawar” belonged to the "Al-Mahawer" group in the early 1980s, and his journey continued towards geometric abstraction with a symbolic character. He aimed to combine contradictions between organic and geometric shapes, between form and space, between the three-dimensional and the flat, between light and dark, and between warm and cold colours. The artist does not place the opposites in a state of separation but in a state of interaction and conflict.

In the 1990s, the works of the artist "“Ahmed Nawar”" brought a new addition to his creative experiments in the direction of geometric abstraction, which he was known for. He added thin wooden grids to his paintings, highlighting some organic shapes, whether flat or three-dimensional. This was done to emphasize the dramatic sense and dialogue between organic and geometric forms. His style shows influence from Islamic Mashrabiya in its relationship with space, as he used these wooden grids and gave them colours that interact with the other colour spaces within the artwork.

During that period, the artist began using ready-made objects and tools that represent the era of modern technology. For example, he used parts

of electrical wires, batteries, pipes, and electronic circuits. He also used organic shapes assembled from coloured wooden sculptures. He used mirrors to appear behind his wooden grids, reflecting the image of the viewer and creating a dialogue between the viewer and the artwork.

“Ahmed Nawar” distinguished himself in the 1990s with his assemblage works, which progressed gradually and deliberately, through the assembly of harmonious elements that expressed the underlying idea in his artworks. His graduation project from the Faculty of Fine Arts was the starting point for his artistic career, where his world and artistic boundaries became clear. It was a large divided painting called "The Day of Resurrection," depicting human groups awakening from eternal slumber, with distorted faces merging with the earth and the universe. The painting as a whole presented an imaginative vision characterized by romance, reflecting his deep belief in religious ideas and showcasing his fertile imagination. (figure 4)



(figure 4)

Ahmad Nawar, Fayoum Faces

<http://www.fineart.gov.eg/arb/cv/Works.asp?Ids=580&whichpage=3&pagesize=12>

His artistic journey in the field of printmaking can be summarized in the following stages:

First stage: It is characterized by his beginnings until 1966, during which he focused on executing his works engraved on zinc plates using

the known intaglio techniques, such as acid etching with a needle and the aquatint method of watercolour effects

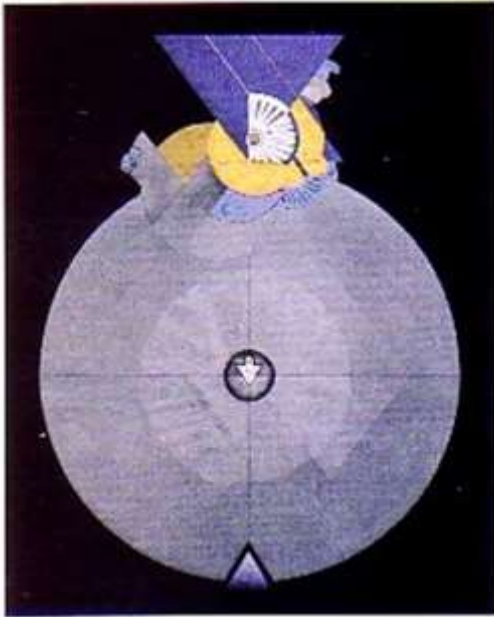
Second stage: He began using the intaglio technique, and this technique allowed him to achieve multiple colours and printing levels for a single artwork. It also achieved colour gradations accompanied by transparency through colour mixing, giving the artwork richness and depth in colour. These techniques helped him in attempting to blend between organic or gelatinous forms and geometric forms. In general, we can classify the artist Nawar as an abstract artist, although he sometimes leans towards surrealism, within the framework of geometric abstraction based on national roots. (Gharib, 2003)

The artist "Hussein Bicar", Egypt (1913 - 2002) wrote about Nawar, saying: "The artist intensifies his tragic and human feeling in his visual content to the extent that matches his creative talent, manual skill, and artistic richness. He delves into his inner self, which is ignited with a sense of suffering and resists pressures with all its severity... and the suffering of engaging in battles that are not decided by defeat or victory. Then he releases his distorted creatures, and their limbs sway in a desolate void that fills the heart with awe and panic, without hindering the continuation of the struggle for the victory of life. The harmony between geometric spaces and other elements, which may be human or semi-human, creates the eternal dialogue between geometric perfection, which symbolizes durability, and organic disintegration, which reveals some stages of the cycle." (Ahmed, 1985)

The artist also says about one of his exhibitions, "In my current exhibition, I engage in a specific intellectual framework, which is a continuation of what I presented in my previous works. The experiment is based on organizing organic forms within a unified geometric framework, based on two intersecting squares that form the eight-pointed star. They intersect with the overlapping spaces of the squares, close, distant, spacious, separate, and united. The compositional elements move perspective-wise until they align, and the remaining fixed elements fold back. This system governs the dynamic geometric formations in which organic forms merge with the geometric elements resulting from the intersection of the squares. The idea focuses on achieving a structural geometric system that allows for reconfiguration in harmonious and diverse variations while preserving the basic boundaries of the composite octagonal shape." (Wahba, 2008)

The goal of these structural compositions is to reach a cosmic world where organic forms intertwine in geometric origins in harmony and movement. The experience of fusion that I present represents a concept of human conflict, where I imagine the organic entity lying at the heart of the painting, drawing the inner world of man and his surrounding external world.

Between the years 1990 and 1996, Nawar's experiment was engaged in two rivers: the first is the fragmentation of the previous symbol from 1945 to 1980. The second is the "political" thesis in the overall artwork. His political works expressed the harsh years of war (1967-1970). The harsh years of war for Nawar represented a rebellious conscience that involved self-resistance, rejecting conditions, and changing reality. Therefore, his sculptures of bullet casings and paintings of torn human flesh in the field of colour are part of the essence of his creative process Nawar. The triangle, for example, can be the head of a machine gun, and the peace dove we know can turn into a knife embedded in human flesh. The scattered intestines of a comrade's body are nothing but a protest against the evils of humanity and barbarism. We find that Nawar has used the dove as an alternative to the idea of convergence around peace. Therefore, the content of art for Nawar consists of the idea, while its form consists of tangible material images. In the last four years of the 1990s, Nawar began using music for tragedy, sound for terror, light for slaughter, darkness for cruelty, the hand for the power of domination and oppression, gypsum cubes for freedom, mirrors for exposing the duality of self, and colour density for energy leakage and dedication to thinking in the space of a painting. The symbol here is saturated to the point of complete execution, and it is related to the point of cognitive stagnation, where the systems of experience are not stimulated in the hands of perception or imagination.



(figure 5)

Ahmad Nawar, untitled. Intaglio print

<https://www.fineart.gov.eg/arb/cv/Works.asp?Ids=580&whichpage=19&pagesize=12>

In this printmaking (Figure 5), we see an extension of the concept of the goal in terms of dividing the circle with two perpendicular diameters and the appearance of another circle near the centre of the painting. The artist used the arrow as a symbol, influenced by the idea of attrition warfare in which the artist participated as a sniper. We also observe in this painting an extension of the idea of dialogue between the geometric and organic, as well as the artist's emphasis on contrast. There is a contrast between light and dark, form and feathers, and a colour contrast between yellow and blue. Here, the influence of Spanish culture, which the artist "Ahmed Nawar" was influenced by, is manifested. Spanish culture relies on contrast to emphasize meaning and expresses human suffering as a central theme.

Cultural Aspect in the works of artist "Ahmed Nawar":

Cultural Identity:

Ahmed Nawar's artistic expression reflects influences from various cultural sources. Islamic geometry plays a significant role in his works, as evidenced by his adept use of diverse geometric patterns.

Additionally, his paintings inspired by the faces of Fayoum demonstrate a clear influence from Coptic art.

Social and Political Influences:

Nawar's experience of attrition warfare and the broader context of the Arab-Israeli conflict have had a profound impact on his artistic development. These social and political influences have shaped his artistic perspective and thematic choices.

Global Cultural Influences:

Nawar's artistic journey has been influenced by global cultural movements. The Surrealist movement, in particular, has played a significant role in shaping his artistic style, especially during the early stages of his career, as observed in his graduation project. Throughout his artistic journey, geometric abstraction has also been a prominent influence, evident in his compositions that rely heavily on geometric shapes. Furthermore, the Symbolist school has left its mark on Nawar's works, as seen in his deliberate use of symbols such as the slaughtered dove, wounded dove, upside-down dove, dove shot in its body, suffocated dove, and imprisoned dove amidst a forest of intertwined lines. These symbols embody the duality between the geometric and organic elements in his art. Nawar's incorporation of elements from other art forms, such as music, and sound, and the use of three-dimensional and flat elements, further emphasizes the directness of his artistic ideas.

In conclusion, Ahmed Nawar's artistic expression is deeply rooted in cultural influences, including Islamic geometry, Coptic art, social and political contexts, and global cultural movements such as Surrealism, geometric abstraction, and Symbolism. These influences have shaped his artistic identity and contributed to the unique visual language evident in his works.

Key Visual and Conceptual Elements in Ahmed Nawar's Printmaking and His Innovations in the Art of Printmaking

Visual Elements:

1. Geometric

Forms:

Nawar's work frequently features **squares, triangles, octagons, and grid structures**, reflecting influences from Islamic geometry. These shapes serve not only as compositional frameworks but also as symbolic structures representing order, continuity, and metaphysical harmony.

2. Organic

Forms:

In contrast to the geometric, Nawar incorporated **distorted human figures, wounded doves, and shrouded bodies**, symbolizing fragility, struggle, and human suffering. These elements often appear within or against rigid structures, emphasizing tension between chaos and control.

3. Symbolic

Imagery:

Recurring symbols include:

- **The dove** (wounded, confined, inverted): a metaphor for peace, loss, and resistance.
- **The arrow**: reflecting themes of war and targeting.
- **Light and darkness**: visual contrasts symbolizing spiritual dualities and psychological states.

4. Color

Contrast

and

Texture:

Nawar employed bold contrasts—particularly between **yellow and blue, light and shadow**—to evoke emotional and spatial depth. He also utilized textured surfaces to enrich the tactile experience of his prints.

Conceptual Elements:

1. Cultural

Identity

and

Heritage:

His work is deeply rooted in Egyptian cultural motifs drawn from **Islamic, Pharaonic, and Coptic art**, emphasizing a dialogue between tradition and modernity.

2. War

and

Human

Struggle:

Influenced by his military experience, many works reflect themes of **violence, martyrdom, alienation, and resilience**, often depicted through fragmented or bound figures and symbolic devices.

3. Existential

and

Metaphysical

Inquiry:

Nawar's prints explore the **human condition**, spiritual judgment, and emotional trauma, often through surreal and symbolic narrative compositions.

4. Interaction

Between

Space

and

Viewer:

The use of **mirrors and reflective surfaces** in some of his works invites the viewer into the composition, blurring the line between artwork and observer, and reinforcing the personal nature of the themes.

Notable Innovations in Printmaking:

1. **Use of Ready-Made Objects:**
One of the first Egyptian artists to incorporate **ready-made materials** such as **tank parts, wires, mirrors, and found metals** into printmaking, transforming traditional two-dimensional prints into **three-dimensional assemblages**.
2. **Mixed Media Integration:**
Nawar blended traditional intaglio and relief print techniques with **painting, sculpture, and installation**, pushing the limits of what printmaking could encompass.
3. **Experimental Surfaces and Grids:**
Introduced **wooden grids**, inspired by **Islamic mashrabiya**, into his works to create both visual rhythm and conceptual layering, reinforcing the interplay of heritage and abstraction.
4. **Symbolic and Spatial Complexity:**
Developed complex **layered compositions** where geometric and organic elements interact dynamically, often within a symbolic architectural framework. This created a "**visual architecture**" unique to his style.
5. **Print as Narrative Space:**
Moved beyond decorative or illustrative printmaking to treat each work as a **conceptual and narrative space**, conveying stories of personal memory, national identity, and human fate.

Influential Artistic Visits and Their Impact on Ahmed Nawar's Printmaking

Ahmed Nawar's artistic journey was profoundly shaped by his visits to several European countries, particularly during his early and mid-career stages. A pivotal moment was his visit to Italy, where he encountered Michelangelo's *The Last Judgment* at the Sistine Chapel. This experience left a lasting impression on his imagination, directly inspiring his graduation project titled *The Day of Reckoning*, which displayed dramatic, symbolic compositions influenced by Renaissance aesthetics and metaphysical themes.

Furthermore, his extended stay in **Spain** during the early 1970s marked a transformative phase in his printmaking practice. There, he was exposed to Spanish visual culture, characterized by intense emotional contrasts, rich symbolism, and experimental forms. Spanish influences encouraged him to explore the dialogue between **geometric abstraction and organic form**, and to push the expressive limits of intaglio techniques. His use of stark contrasts between light and dark, and the symbolic use of space and fragmented human figures, can be traced to this period.

While there is evidence that his visits to **the United States**, the research suggests that Nawar was intellectually and visually aware of global contemporary art trends, including developments in American conceptual art and mixed-media practices. These global interactions whether through travel or cross-cultural exposure enabled Nawar to integrate **international modernist and postmodernist ideas** into a distinctively Egyptian visual language, establishing him as a pioneer in redefining printmaking in the Arab world.

Research Findings:

- Ahmed Nawar's printmaking reflects a synthesis of Egyptian cultural heritage and contemporary global artistic influences.
- His works incorporate Islamic geometry, Coptic iconography, and Pharaonic symbols to express national identity.
- Exposure to international art movements such as Surrealism, Symbolism, and Geometric Abstraction enriched his visual language.
- War experiences and political events had a profound impact on his themes, particularly the portrayal of human suffering and hope for peace.
- Recurring motifs such as the fragmented human figure and the dove symbolize struggle, alienation, and the desire for harmony.
- Nawar transitioned from figurative realism to experimental abstraction, using mixed media, ready-made objects, and reflective surfaces.
- His innovative techniques pushed the boundaries of traditional printmaking in Egypt.

- Nawar's works serve as both artistic expressions and cultural narratives, documenting personal and collective memory.
- He played a pioneering role in modern Egyptian and Arab graphic art, influencing future generations.
- The study affirms his importance in the dialogue between local identity and global contemporary art.

. Recommendations

- Further scholarly research is encouraged on Ahmed Nawar's lesser-studied works, particularly those that incorporate new media and installation elements, to explore their role in expanding the scope of contemporary printmaking.
- Art institutions and universities in Egypt and the Arab world should integrate the study of Ahmed Nawar's printmaking techniques and artistic philosophy into academic curricula to preserve and transmit his artistic legacy.
- It is recommended to establish curated exhibitions and digital archives dedicated to Nawar's work, facilitating greater public access and international engagement with his contributions to modern art.
- Contemporary artists are encouraged to study Nawar's approach to blending heritage with experimentation as a model for engaging with cultural identity in a globalized art context.
- Cross-cultural studies comparing Nawar's work with that of international printmakers could provide valuable insights into the universal and localized aspects of visual expression.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on documenting and analyzing the socio-political contexts of modern Egyptian artists to understand how art responds to historical events and national identity.

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