



Report on AFAC's Visit to Egypt

From 15 to 22 May 2011

AFAC Explores the Cultural Scene in Egypt After the Revolution

For visitors to Egypt today, it is clear that February 11th, 2011, the day Mubarak stepped down 2011 was not the end of the revolution, but its beginning. Protests continue, albeit in smaller numbers; cafés and walls are full of political flyers; taxicabs are now a place for political discussion and commentary on the latest demonstrations, sit-ins, and court trials of the symbols of the previous regime.

Cairo's famous street energy is magnified by the increased freedoms. And this surplus of energy did not spare the cultural scene in Egypt. On the contrary, it seems that the spontaneous revolutionary spirit sweeping the country has impacted this sector the most, notwithstanding the fear of an uncertain future, constant wariness and dissatisfaction with the slow progress of change and reform.



1 Mugammaa Al Tahrir, the largest government administrative complex in Egypt overlooking Tahrir Square that witnessed the first protests of the January 25 revolution

These were the general impressions from our visit to Egypt. We aimed to observe closely the cultural and artistic scene after the revolution, and to explore the most urgent needs and opportunities for cooperation in the cultural domain, in a country considered to be the Mecca of Arab intellectuals and artists and a general benchmark for the Arab cultural situation.

As in any place witnessing political change of this magnitude, the number of political parties, groups, and gatherings increased quantitatively and qualitatively. Many artists who previously tried to distance themselves from political life now see that politics has become a responsibility that cannot be avoided.

Sunday 15 May 2011

Before being introduced to new culture and arts initiatives...

Over dinner with Hassan Jraitely, one of the most prominent activists in the independent theater movement in the country, in downtown Cairo close to Tahrir Square, we had the chance to familiarize ourselves with the hardships faced by performance artists under Mubarak. The



2 The Nile, seen from Qasr El-Nil in downtown Cairo

dinner included Mohammat Talaat, also active in the performing arts domain, Rasha Najdi, and Marwa Saoudi, who co-founded a civil company to provide technical support for independent artists and manage their work. They also initiated "Ihna Btou' el Autobis" (We are from the bus), which will be discussed later. Hassan explained

how commercial theater is attracting the majority of

Egyptian talent, and detailed the tribulations of independent theater initiatives due to a lack of support from the government and a monopoly on international support for performance arts by famous theater groups and institutions. This makes it more and more difficult for performance artists early in their careers to implement projects and launch themselves in the field.

Hassan also spoke about his personal experience, which explains, to a large extent, the obstacles imposed by political interference in culture and arts in Egypt before the revolution. A few years ago, the Ministry of Culture commissioned Hassan to establish a theater, "The Hangar", funded by a foreign donor. The theater was intended for use for training actors and staging performances and festivals where independent artists can participate. Some time later, Hassan received a phone call instructing him to launch the theater before it was ready, because "the Minister needed a launching ceremony."

This is but one indication of the interference by state bureaucracy in the performance arts field under Mubarak. The interference is due to state control of the sector through its employment of 90,000 actors, directors, and technicians under the Ministry of Culture. This comes in addition to laws prohibiting artists from joining the Actors and Professionals Union unless they hold a university degree and bars any non-union member from performing in public theaters, which are also controlled by the state and represent the great majority of theater spaces.

Monday, May 16 2011

In Egypt, there are also partners...

Our first morning in Cairo was spent at one of the institutions, which contributed to establishing AFAC. Oussama Rifahi, AFAC's Executive Director, visited the offices of "Al Mawred Al Thaqafy" (Culture Resource) in Cairo and met with Basma Hussein, former member of AFAC's Board of Trustees. The meeting focused on Mawred's latest projects and ideas for initiatives, while, Rifahi presented AFAC's latest projects, its achievements over the past few years, and summarized the new strategy for the coming period. The meeting contributed to identifying common interests in the work of both organizations and highlighted areas of possible mutual cooperation.

A chance for convergence and mutual support...

We met Nada Thabet, a performance artist who is very active today, over lunch at L'Orangette. Inspired by the revolution and committed to the reclaiming of public space and efforts to maintain the revolutionary spirit gripping Egypt, Nada is part of the Free Coalition for Culture, which is working on street theater performances, under the title

"Fan Midan" (Art of the city square). The performances are due to be staged every Saturday in one of the public squares, which witnessed demonstrations during the protests against the Mubarak regime.



3 Artist Nada Thabet



4 From the right, Rasha Salah, Oussama Rifahi, Rasha Najdi, and Nada Thabet

with other, helping artists find suitable working teams to implement projects they are working on.

While "Fan Midan" is moving ahead, Nada is also following up on a project closely linked with the work of AFAC-- creating networks of cultural initiatives throughout the Arab World.

"Meetphool.com" is a website that aims to create a forum for all performance artists in the Mediterranean region, through providing personal pages for each artist. The pages will permit artists to publish their latest news, announce their latest projects, and communicate

In response to our question about the problems performance artists in Egypt face, Nada emphasized the scarcity of performance spaces. She also lamented the state's control over most spaces and the lack of government and international funding in this domain.

On our way to the general meeting...



5 From the right, Rachad Chamoun, Rasha Salah, Rasha Najdi, Nada Thabet



6 Painting from an exhibit by Lana Ghassan in Gallery Makan



7 Gallery Makan in Zamalek

Cairo open meeting...

After a long drive through Zamalek, our taxi headed to the Development Support Center, where we held an open meeting with artists and activists from the cultural field. The AFAC team gave a presentation on the fund and its work over the last four years, detailing the grants and application process, in addition to a brief on the most important projects being developed with AFAC's support.



The presentation was followed by a Q&A, with one audience member inquiring about the criteria for awarding grants and how one can identify the connection between the project's objectives and the Arab situation. Another question was about the sources of AFAC's funding and their impact on its autonomy. Some questioned the sparse resources allocated by AFAC to translation work. The team explained that this was not based on a premeditated decision but was merely a coincidence. Participants also



expressed concerns about the difficulty they face in filling-out application forms, especially the language barrier in the applications for the Arab Documentary Film Program, which is in English only. In addition, members of the audience spoke about the great difficulty of transmitting in writing projects that are based on dance and physical expression, which can only be judged by their

resulting performances. Another problem mentioned was visual and performance artists' lack of experience in budgeting for a project. It was suggested that a solution would be for AFAC to recommend institutions that provide technical support in the various Arab countries, in order to help artists write project proposals and identify the costs. Others recommended the launch of a special grant for contemporary dance, which remains a marginalized genre in Arab countries.

Some participants also expressed fear that the presence of big names in arts and culture on the list of AFAC grantees might dissuade many young artists, who lack confidence in their ability to compete with such names, from applying. Oussama Rifahi and AFAC's Grants Manager Rasha Salah explained that the multi-criteria evaluation process, the high number of annual grants, the diversity of professional and geographic backgrounds of the jurors, and their diverse ages guarantees the fairness of the process and ensures an equal opportunity for all those who apply, regardless of their fame or years of experience.



Moving away from AFAC's grants process, participants reiterated the issue of scarcity and governmental control of performance spaces. They expressed a vital need for long-term grants that can support projects aiming to establish theaters, performance and training spaces, in addition to other infrastructure necessary for artistic and cultural life in the Arab World, in general, and Egypt, in particular, to flourish. This sparked a spontaneous and unofficial discussion, which continued during the coffee break with many side conversations taking place.

Returning to arts initiatives by youth following the revolution...

After AFAC's presentation and subsequent discussion, we joined "The Coalition of Young Artists for the Revolution" at a café, an initiative that was launched by youth after a constitutional referendum held in March. Many artists who believe in the need to build a civil democratic state in Egypt stated that it is their duty to use their talents to support this aim. The coalition began work on producing a film, which documents the revolution through interviews with people who were active during the protests.



8 From the right, Reem Higab and Mohammad Farid

Other artists in the coalition are working on directing satirical political street theater and interactive performances planned for public spaces such as factories, town squares, and cafés. The coalition also plans to use other media, such as graffiti and posters, which they believe will ensure the continuity of their impact. With the support of "Ihna Btou' el Autobis", these performances will visit areas outside of the city center that have not had the chance to interact with the democratic ideals and practices that emerged in Tahrir Square during the demonstrations.

Since the goals and tools of the initiatives are very close to a similar initiative in Tunisia, which was also launched after the revolution, the AFAC team, which visited Tunis in April, suggested that the coalition gets in touch with Tunisian artist Salima Karawi and share their experiences.

Tuesday 17 May 2011

Visual arts in Egypt...

The artist Amal Qinawi met with Executive Director Oussama Rifahi to discuss the current state of visual arts in Egypt and the obstacles faced by visual artists in a country famed for this practice since time immemorial, dating back to before the engravings by the Pharaohs, which fill archaeological sites around the country. The meeting also touched on the various schools of art that govern the Egyptian visual arts scene.

Three art initiatives in one building...



9 The office of Zero Cinema Productions

Director Tamer El Said, who received a film grant from AFAC in 2007, gave us a warm and generous welcome at his office on the sixth floor behind one of the synagogues in Cairo. El Said briefed us on the latest developments on his first feature film “Ayyam Al-Madina” (City Days) and showed us the trailer. He also spoke about “Zero Productions,” a company formed in 2008 along with two of his friends in order to support alternative cinema and challenge the monopoly of big production companies on the film industry in Egypt. “Ayyam Al-Madina” was the first project launched by the company. El Said informed us that AFAC’s funding was a big factor in the success of this ambitious project, since it was the first institution to support the

film and had accepted the risk of participating in the production of a long film that mixes documentary and fiction by a director with little experience in this field. According to El Said, this support helped him obtain funding from other sources that covered a large chunk of the budget. Following the first initiative, Zero Productions has worked on many other projects that put it on the right track in the field of film production.

The fifth floor of the same building houses another initiative that emerged from the spirit of the January 25th revolution. El Said worked with a group of friends to launch an alternative media center called “Mousirrin” (Adamant), aiming to support the efforts of Egyptian activists in documenting the revolution and the repercussions in the streets, and to produce media and journalistic material in support of the revolution.



10 The office of Mousirrin

The center also works on training the general audience on using more sophisticated documentation tools, such as modern cameras and editing equipment. Opposite Mousirrin on the same floor, Zero Productions is planning to launch an independent film center next July. The center will include a projection space, a library



11 Tamer El Said with the company's administrator

of independent films, an editing space, and a space for meetings where independent directors can work on their projects.

The crisis of spaces again...

After the long visit to “Zero Productions”, we headed to Filfila restaurant in central Cairo for lunch with two of the most active modern dance performers in Egypt, Karima Mansour and Mohammad Chafik. Mansour also highlighted the problem of a lack of spaces for artists in the dance field. Karima’s problems were not limited to the lack of spaces for performances but also the chronic lack of spaces for training and rehearsals.



12 Karima Mansour and Mohammad Chafik

Karima explained that in spite of the many spaces owned by the Ismailiyah Company in downtown Cairo and the company’s readiness to provide access to artists, the one-year time limit for using the space is an exaggerated waste of already scarce resources used by the artists for renovation and equipping the space. Karima’s views concurred with those of dancer Mohammad Shafiq who expressed the difficulties faced by artists, and dancers in particular, in securing the necessary funding for their projects. He added that artists’ lack of expertise in administration, project planning, and cost analysis is a major hindrance to accessing already scarce resources.

Wide angle...



13 Mia Jancovic

Cairo’s buildings are beautiful and deserve to be photographed, but this is not the reason behind the creation of the Contemporary Image Collective (CIC) by a number of photographers and artists from Egypt and around the world in 2004. The main aim of the center is to support the empowerment of Egyptian photographers, raising their levels of confidence in their work and its importance, and imbuing an appreciation of the topics that they tackle.

The center also provides paid lessons and workshops in the art of photography, and free workshops in artistic photography. It contains a dark room available for rent at a negligible cost for photographers. The CIC space also considers the needs of their audience and contains a library, video archives, and a photography exhibition space which showcases the work of Egyptian and international artists, in addition to pictures taken by participants in the center’s workshops.

Independent music in Egypt... Heavy productions and heavier problems...

The Jesuit Center in the popular neighborhood of Faggalah is one of the most active centers for arts and culture in Egypt. During our tour of the center, the director of the theater, Mohammad Talaat, introduced us to the librarian and to the film school program developed by the center. Through intensive courses, the program works on teaching young persons the art of film production. The center also provides filming and editing equipment for first-time projects that are later screened at a yearly festival organized by the school. It also hosts artists from different countries in its studios and dormitories.

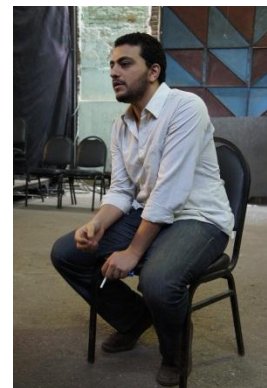


14 Racha Najdi and Mohammad Talaat

In the Jesuit Theater, built through personal efforts and lots of improvisation, we meet with two young people, Salam Yousri, one of the founders of the “Tami” group, and Tamer Abu Ghazaleh, the founder of “eka3” for alternative music productions. In addition to his activities with the Tami group organizing musical street theater that uses dialogue, Yousri is working on a new project, the Cairo Chorale that will include workshops for people with no previous singing experience. Its songs will tackle various social and political issues and will be performed at events following the workshops. Yousri aims to



15 Tamer Abu Ghazaleh



16 Salam Yousri

expand the activities of the Chorale, which plans to tour Beirut and London and to later travel abroad Arab countries and states with large Arab diaspora communities. “eka3,” formed by Tamer Abu Ghazaleh, is active in Cairo, Amman, and Beirut in the field of alternative music production and music for independent films. It also organizes the “Kaza Mada” festival, also known as “Rhythm Meetings.”

Tamer and Salam explained that both projects’ are in need of funding for the proposed tours, and inquired about AFAC’s grants process and its various programs.

To expand our knowledge of independent music in Egypt, we visited the Cairo Jazz Club in



17 The Cairo Jazz Club

Mohandiseen. Although a nightclub, the space plays an important role in supporting independent music in Egypt. Since its establishment by Ammar Dajani, Akram Sharif, and others, the club’s program has included concerts that began as weekly events and soon became daily, allowing independent musical groups to perform in front of audiences. Ammar and Akram inform us about “Puzzle,” a music festival that hosts musicians from around the world who participate in workshops to produce concerts combining

Eastern and Western musical styles together with Egyptian musicians. The organizers insist that Egyptian and foreign artists benefit greatly from this project, since it affords them the opportunity to experience new musical styles. Following an increase in the number of bands, the owners of the club formed the Cairo Company for the production of independent Egyptian jazz and blues and to manage the different bands hosted by the club, who require technical and administrative support and lack the necessary experience.



Media personality Aida Saudi also stressed the problem faced by Egyptian artists in sound engineering and quality recording. She added that this makes it more difficult for her to diversify the music showcased in her TV program, since she does not find much independent Egyptian music with the sound quality sufficient for TV broadcast. Amro Jalal Yehia, the founder of Sound Sign studio, which produces independent music, added that the

small number of suitably equipped studios in Egypt and the lack of highly-trained personnel in modern sound engineering equipment and sound recording makes the production of good quality independent music in Egypt more difficult, especially with the absence of funding to utilize better equipped international studios.

Wednesday, 18 May 2011

A ray of light in solving the spaces dilemma...

The expansive Townhouse Gallery is situated close to the squares that witnessed some of the fiercest battles during the protests that brought down former President Mubarak.



18 Rawabet theater

It is close to a number of political party offices that were historically opposed to the regime of the NDP, as well as near the “Takiiba” café, once a safe haven for young political activists following various pre-revolution demonstrations. After a short discussion about the attacks the center suffered and the role it played during the revolution in providing a space for political meetings, director William Wells escorted us on a tour of the spaces and buildings at the center. Next to the “Factory,” where the center’s exhibitions are held, is a small library and store that sells the products of young Egyptian designers, in addition to car mechanic garages that are sometimes used by the center as spaces for theater and performing arts productions. A three-storey building across the alley includes a hostel for artists and studios, in addition to multi-purpose rooms, administrative, and special programs offices. The center also owns ten extra theaters on the roof of one of the nearby buildings, used by artists for a symbolic fee. “Rawabet” theater is also in the same alley. It was created through the personal efforts of a number of Egyptian artists, using space provided by Townhouse.

The fluidity of the boundaries between public and cultural space is apparent in the spread of artists and staff along the street, and the familial atmosphere that exists between them and nearby shops. It is impressive how this socializing played a role in the emergence of many artists

who came there to work as guards or porters, only to discover that their real place is in the world of artistic creativity. Plastic artist Ayman Ramadan is a prominent example. After fleeing a dangerous life on the streets to the Town House where he worked as a guard, Ramadan discovered his natural talent in the visual arts and began producing work and installations of the utmost sensitivity and depth. His work became very famous in Egypt and around the world and has been exhibited at the Tate Modern in London.



19 Makan

From the Town House, stuffed with modern, experimental, and creative art, our taxicab headed towards “Makan.” Although both centers have received AFAC grants, “Makan” is very different. It focuses on the musical heritage of Northern Egypt, featuring the music of the Zaar, popular Mawawil (chants), and the music of Bedouin tribes. “Makan” hosts indigenous artists from the region and contributes to the conservation of this musical heritage by recording concerts and promoting them to a wider general audience.

To complete our tour of spaces for Egyptian artists, we visited the “Imad El-Din” studio founded by actor, director, and dancer Ahmad Al-Attar. The center provides a training space for performance artists and dancers. It also organizes workshops to train young performers and theater technicians, such as light and sound engineers, on the basics and skills of the performing arts. Attar’s main priority is modern dance. He provides grants for dancers under 35 to produce their personal dance performances and to benefit from the advice of some of the most prominent dancers hosted by the studio.



20 Ahmad Al-Attar

Attar explained that the lack of professional technicians trained in modern methods is a primary obstacle to developing high quality performances, in addition to state control over performance spaces. Furthermore, the scarcity of training and rehearsal spaces has led him to consider equipping an additional space for workshops, using the studio exclusively for rehearsals. According to Attar, spaces provided to artists by the Ismailiyah Company for free can be considered an important step in reducing this scarcity. Concerning the period following the revolution, Attar spoke about the problems faced by the 300-member Coalition for Independent Culture. The broad differences in the members’ backgrounds and interests have hindered the coalition from pursuing a comprehensive campaign for the renaissance and reform of the cultural and artistic scene in Egypt.

The studio's latest project is the "Downtown Gathering for Modern Art," which is expected to present a number of theater performances, music concerts, visual arts exhibitions, and film screenings across various locations in downtown Cairo.

Connecting with AFAC's grantees...



After a long tour of performance and rehearsal spaces, AFAC hosted a number of its grantees at the Swiss Club in Miniah, which recently witnessed clashes between Muslims and Christians. In a relaxed atmosphere, participants chatted to AFAC about their latest activities and learned about the fund's new projects and programs. The meeting was also a chance for Egyptian artists to network with artists from other Arab countries that have similar visions and initiatives, in order to increase the level of horizontal inter-Arab cooperation among cultural actors.



Thursday, 19 May 2011

The largest film industry in the Arab world and the impact of recent political events...

Gabi Khouri does not seem very troubled by the delays affecting current projects by Misr International Films (Youssef Chahine) due to the recent political turmoil. Khouri described a number of ambitious new projects aimed at supporting young feature-filmmakers. The company recently made a general call for proposals to produce feature films with directors from Egypt and residents of other countries invited to apply, in addition to applications by Arab directors living in Egypt, on the condition that the proposed production is the director's first or second full-length feature film. As a first step, the company aims to choose six films that it will support from the scriptwriting stage through the national and international distribution phase. The company will also assist in improving the quality of the selected projects with the assistance of industry greats who will advise the directors. This call is the first step in creating the Youssef Chahine Fund for cinema, with the same goals and vision but in a more institutional manner.



Based on his lengthy experience in film production, Khouri informed us of the problems faced by the Egyptian film industry. He outlined them as follows: the weakness of marketing and distribution mechanisms and the lack of professionalism of companies in carrying out these tasks. Therefore, Khouri stressed the need to develop a distribution sector in Egypt, making it more professional, specialized, and according to a clear strategy. After being introduced to AFAC's programs, Khouri expressed his willingness to collaborate with the fund on the production of feature films.

Meeting with Shadi Nchouqati...

Following a short break, the AFAC team visited plastic artist Shadi Nchouqati at his personal training center (Ard Al-Liwa'). After introducing his work, Shadi showed us around the center, which hosts students of fine arts and provides them with training in digital arts. In addition to the skills learned by the trainees, the training program aims to turn them into trainers who can, in turn, share their knowledge with other young artists.



21 Shadi Nchouqati in his exhibition



During our meeting, Nchouqati, who is one of the organizers of the Cairo pavilion at the Venice Biennale, receives a phone call informing him that the Egyptian state has booked only one room for five of the artists participating in the Biennale. The Cairo pavilion's main theme this year is the story of the martyr Ahmad Bassiouni. Nchouqati informs us that this is just a fraction of the problems faced by Egypt's participation in Venice due to a lack of support.

Dinner in AFAC's honor...

On Friday evening, AFAC was the guest of honor at a dinner banquet held by Rita Jansen, the wife of the EU ambassador to Egypt. In addition to the ambassador, the dinner was attended by Egyptian actor Mahmoud Hamida, young director and AFAC grantee Fawzi Saleh, civil society activist Mohammad Agati, representative of the British Council Kathy Costain, representatives of the Ministry of Culture Hossam Nassar and Ashraf Reda, Ali and Ranwa Shaath from "Digital Expression," and Basma Al Hosseini, the general director of "Al Mawred Al Thaqafy" (Culture Resource).



22 Rasha Salah and actor Mahmoud Hamida

The attendees discussed the realities of arts and culture in Egypt, the main problems faced in this sector, and the major initiatives and projects being developed.

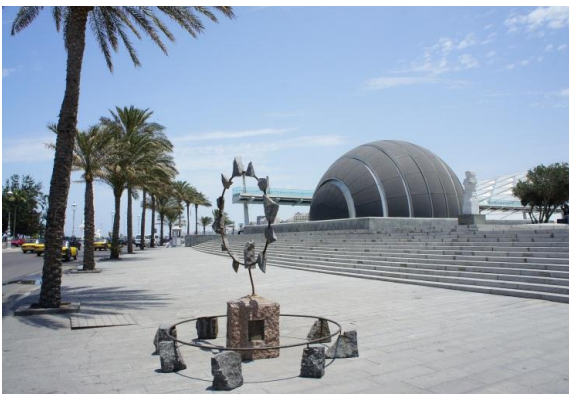
Friday, 20 May 2011

Alexandria again and again...

We take the early morning train to Alexandria, Egypt's second most populous city and a haven of cultural and artistic activity. After visiting its massive library we head to the "Bokra Ahla" (Tomorrow is more Beautiful) festival, which aims to raise funds for the city's children's hospital.



23 From the Bokra Ahla festival



24 Library of Alexandria

During the festival, which hosts a number of tents for designers, restaurants and refreshment stands, we meet the Origami artist "Oz'Oz" who organized many of the activities and exhibitions around the festival, in addition to concerts. "Oz'oz" informed us about the project for the Arab Origami Center, which aims to raise awareness about this form of art and to market the work of Arab Origami artists.

An open meeting in Alexandria...

Following a tour of the festival, we head to the “Resodance” center, which provides lessons in modern, ballet, flamenco, and ballroom dancing, in addition to yoga and painting for the young and old. Alexandrian dancers can also rent rehearsal spaces at the center.



25 Part of the audience in the the Alexandria general meeting

As in Cairo, AFAC organized a general meeting at Resodance, attended by a large number of performance artists, film directors, dancers, and plastic artists. AFAC spoke about its history, achievements, various programs, and future initiatives. It went on to provide a detailed explanation of the application and evaluation processes used to award grants.

In addition to a lack of spaces, which Alexandria shares with Cairo, the participants complained about a chronic lack of support, and the absence of promotion and distribution channels for art in the city and in Egypt in general. Participants inquired about AFAC’s grants mechanisms for those who receive partial funding for their projects. They stressed the need to assist grantees in finding complementary funding through recommendations to other donors in the field of arts and culture. They also inquired about the criteria of “linking” used by AFAC.

Participants recommended the introduction of a feedback mechanism for creative projects, which were not selected for an AFAC grant, due to the lack of experience by applicants in explaining their projects. This can be achieved by recommending companies or programs specialized in technical and administrative support for artists. In this context, some of the attendees informed us of an initiative by eight theater groups in Alexandria to tackle this issue. The “Alexandria Forum for Theater and Modern Arts” currently manages the work of the eight groups and will expand to include other groups and artists as beneficiaries. Another suggestion was for AFAC to organize a traveling festival, showcasing projects that received its grants. Yet another recommendation was for developing programs that support the training of administrators in the sector to ensure the effectiveness of arts management in the Arab world.

Some participants positively noted the absence of a condition on the sale of art works resulting from AFAC grants. Others emphasized the frustration of younger artists who see that the fund supports artists with more experience. We explained the role of the criteria and the high number of grants provided yearly, which should abate their concerns.

Saturday, 21 May 2011

The new Minister of Culture and the obstructed reform process...



26 Fawzi Saleh and Iman Hamida

After the long journey to Alexandria, AFAC's team returned to Cairo for a quick tour of archaeological sites with director Fawzi Saleh. It was an opportunity to discuss problems faced by Egypt's independent film industry.



27 Oussama Rifahi and Egypt's Minister of Culture, Imad Abu Ghazi

Later, AFAC's team met with Egypt's Minister of Culture, Imad Abu Ghazi, whose appointment made many people hopeful, although some artists we met expressed their disappointment with the actual progress of reform. We communicated to him the greetings of our board

members Dr. Ferial Ghazoul and Dr. Mohammad Barrada and had a brief discussion about the situation of culture in the region. Mr. Abu Ghazi then informed us of his ministry's latest project, a cultural caravan that will take theater performances on a tour to Egypt's remote regions. He then elaborated on the difficulties he faces, due to the young age of the transitional ministry, its limited powers, a lack of funding, the long-standing calls for wage increases for the more than 63,000 employees after transferring 30,000 to the Ministry of Archaeology, and the decrease in revenue after splitting the two ministries. This comes in addition to the tremendous diversity of demands, the chronic need for funding, and the substantial number of theaters that require renovation and rehabilitation. This means that we should not expect miracles from the ministry. He added that reform could not happen in a short period of time.

Meeting with the coordinating committee of the donor's conference...



AFAC then met Mokhtar Qoqash and Renata Pabsh from the coordinating committee of the donors forum to discuss arrangements for the 2011 event hosted by AFAC in Beirut.

28 From the right, Rasha Najdi, Rasha Salah, Mokhtar Qoqash, Oussama Rifahi, Renata Pabsh

Trip Summary

Returning to Beirut, we had a brief opportunity to reflect on our trip to Egypt. It was clear that there is an urgent need to increase AFAC's resources and for the creation of other independent Arab funds to support culture and arts. This is due to the chronic demand for support in all areas of Arab cultural life. We established that Egypt is unique in its dire need for financial and technical support and the massive shortage of spaces for performance, trainings and rehearsals. This is a major obstacle facing Egyptian artists, especially those who are active in the performing arts. Another problem that stands out is the lack of professional technical cadres in light and sound engineering, one of the major challenges faced by the independent cinema and alternative music sectors.



By comparing the artistic initiatives that AFAC encountered in its tour of various Arab countries, it is clear that we made the right decision to support horizontal cooperation among artists and cultural practitioners in the Arab world. Finally, there is a need for cooperation among Arab donor agencies to provide the highest level of effectiveness in a sector that faces scarce resources and many problems.