

THE VIDEO DIARIES

Khaled Hafez

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Khaled Hafez
The Video Diaries, 2011
Video, 6'19"
Courtesy of the artist

Cairo-based Khaled Hafez's latest work, *The Video Diaries*, is the artist's response to the revolution that swept through Egypt in January and February 2011. This three-channel video has been adapted for Ibraaz into a single-channel work in which three windows display footage either shot by the artist or taken from social and international media. These moving images - showing policemen; protesters singing and praying; and people apparently being shot or attacked by water cannons - run simultaneously across the three screens, while clocks urgently count down the seconds of the work's duration. A persistent, echoing beat; the sounds of a baying crowd; and a lachrymose guitar solo accompany the footage at different points.



Objectivity and subjectivity are explored in this piece, which shows on the one hand the chaos of concurrently unfolding events, but also the single voices and the fatal, symbolic narratives that became cornerstones for that chaos. Static images of the artist and blogger Ahmed Basiony, who was shot by snipers on Tahrir Square (his work was chosen to represent Egypt at the Venice Biennale last summer), and blogger Khaled Said, who was allegedly beaten to death by the police, appear onscreen. Yet their images quickly begin to morph, their features becoming abstracted into static confusion.

Hafez's interest in ancient and modern superheroes is evident in recent work, *The A77A Project: On Presidents & Superheroes*, in which the ancient Egyptian god Anubis traverses Cairo's contemporary streets. In *The Video Diaries*, however, the superheroes are the ordinary youth who took to the streets to make their grievances known. As such, Hafez's distillation of the revolution suggests a common need for a narrative to weave a path through the turmoil, while at the same time acknowledging the impossibility of ever being able to refine events into any single story or point of view - even as the media on both a local and international level attempt to.

The artist, whose videos, installations and paintings mine pop culture and historical events for material - sometimes collapsing the two, as in *The A77A Project: On Presidents & Superheroes* - explore interconnected themes such as time, memory and nostalgia for the past. *The Video Diaries* is an intimate reminder that as events recede from view, they gain an added patina of yearning and loss.

Laura Allsop

About the author

Khaled Hafez is a multidisciplinary artist living and working in Cairo.