

WRITING ON THE WALLS: TRANSITION, A PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES BY MYRIAM ABDELAZIZ

Myriam Abdelaziz

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The work of Egypt-born photographer Myriam Abdelaziz tells, in her words, the 'stories of its participants'. For Ibraaz, she presents images from her series *Transition*, a body of work that examines the aggressive dialogue used by the various protagonists in the recent Egyptian revolution. In doing so, *Transition* exposes the deep divisions within Egyptian society. Rather than showing dialogue, Abdelaziz says, the walls are a site for the collision of opinions and beliefs. By observing what has been graffitied and scrawled on walls across the country, we are thereafter able to read, if not engage with, the many conflicts at work in Egyptian society today.



When Hosni Mubarak was forced to give up the presidency of Egypt on the 11th of February, 2011, the SCAF (Superior Council for the Armed Forces) took power for a transitional period, promising to lead the country through the immediate post-revolutionary period and eventually to fair elections.

More than a year later, the transitional government is still in power and the status quo that has been ruling the country since Gamal Abdel Nasser (the second President of Egypt, ruling from 1956 until his death in 1970) is running things as they were before. Basic human rights are being violated, citizens are being tried in military courts, and the armed forces are firing on civilians, killing and injuring people in their hundreds.

Democracy seems a long way away.

Still, the will of the Egyptian citizens to finally express themselves has risen and freedom of expression is being scrawled over walls across the country. In Cairo, and in the downtown area, the walls have become an open space to express opinions.



Graffiti denouncing the actions of the army began to spread soon after the SCAF came to power; anti-revolutionaries and remnants of the old regime joined in the activity by trying to express their own opinions on top of the existing graffiti.

Transition presents the aggressive dialogue between all of these protagonists, exposing in turn the deep divisions that still persist in Egyptian society. This body of work aims to represent through wall graffiti what has been happening in Egypt during this long 'transition' and how society is experiencing it.

All aspects of society, including the SCAF, are engaged in this battle to make their opinions heard. Young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, liberals and conservatives, religious extremists and moderates, revolutionaries and anti-revolutionaries, pro- and anti-Mubarak activists – all are confronting each other's ideas on the walls. Although representatives of SCAF have been regularly painting over these manifestations of political expression, so as to fake a sense of normality, they inadvertently create yet more fresh white walls for the continuation of debates that will no doubt continue for some time to come.

Myriam Abdelaziz
Transition series, 2011
Photographs
Courtesy and © the artist



About the artist

Myriam Abdelaziz is a French photographer of Egyptian origins and born in Cairo. Her career began in marketing, after having studied Political Science, Journalism and Marketing. She decided to pursue a career in photography and graduated from the International Center of Photography in New York in 2006. She has been published in prestigious magazines such as *Newsweek*, *Time* and *Eyemazing* and her work has featured in various solo and group exhibitions in Europe, the Middle East and the USA.