

## In Peace and with Compassion

May – October 2013

Cairo, Egypt & London, England

Curators: Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler and Dr. Reda Abdel Rahman

As Egypt sought its path into the future following the January 25, 2011 uprisings, the 2013 CARAVAN Festival of the Arts had the theme “In Peace and with Compassion ...The Way Forward”. Sponsored by the Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt, and supported by the British Council, the festival and public art exhibition opened May 9, 2013 in Cairo, Egypt and ended October 1, 2013 at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, England. The festival in Cairo, in addition to the public art exhibition, focused on literature, film and music.

This unique arts festival had the objective of using the arts a means for intercultural and interreligious interchange between the cultures and creeds of the Middle East and West. The festival and exhibition in Cairo, held at the historic St. John’s Church-Maadi, a center for interfaith dialogue for over 80 years, attracted thousands of visitors from around Egypt and the world. And in London, over 120,000 viewed the public art exhibition when it was showcased at St. Paul’s Cathedral over the course of a month.

The Honorable Dominik Furgler, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United Kingdom (and formerly Swiss Ambassador to Egypt), said: “I am particularly delighted to be directly associated to this wonderful initiative. In a world and time where sectarian tension, prejudice or ignorance seem to prosper, we must do whatever we can to further dialogue and the mutual knowledge about our religious traditions and convictions. This exhibition is doing just that, with the arts uniting us as a language of love and peace.”

**The heart of the 2013 CARAVAN Exhibition of Art was the visual public art exhibition.** Over 45 premier Egyptian and Western visual artists were invited to participate in what was a truly one-of-its-kind public art-oriented exhibition that followed in the footsteps of an approach to public art that featured painted animals, yet with an added depth in its symbolism, intention and message. This first happened in Zurich, Switzerland in 1998, when painted fiberglass cows appeared around the city. Chicago followed suit in 1999, and other cities around the world have since done something similar with painted fiberglass animals (elephants in London, bears in Paris, etc).

The subject for the CARAVAN public art exhibition was the donkey. The donkey symbolizes peace in both Islam and Christianity, and is found in both the Bible and the Qur’an. Examples are numerous, such as Jesus and the second Caliph, Omar Ibn El Khattab, each riding donkeys when they entered Jerusalem, signifying that they came in peace. This is why the first part of the title was “In Peace.....”. The donkey in the Middle East also represents the poor, as it is an animal of burden; this is especially the case in Egypt and throughout much of the Middle East. Hence the full title of the exhibition was “In Peace and with Compassion.” Through this art initiative the participating artists were making a public statement that the way forward for Egypt among all faiths, and in Egypt’s relationship with the rest of the world, was “in peace and with compassion”. Each participating artist paint and decorated two fiberglass donkeys (one life-size and the second 1/4 life-size) that were sculpted specifically for the exhibition by the noted Egyptian artist Dr. Reda Abdel Rahman.

The “In Peace and with Compassion” public art exhibition was co-curated by CARAVAN founder and president, Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler, and participating celebrated Egyptian artist Dr. Reda Abdel Rahman. Participating artists included a diverse range of noted Egyptian contemporary artists such as George Bahgory, Ibrahim El Dessouky, and Mohamed Abla, to expatriate artists such as the well-known award-winning Norwegian artist Britt Boutros-Ghali.

## **Cairo, Egypt**

The exhibition and festival was officially opened in Cairo, Egypt on May 9, 2013 by Muslim and Christian dignitaries, and all 90 painted fiberglass donkeys were showcased at St. John’s Church-Maadi. Following the opening night, the 45 life-size painted fiberglass donkeys were placed throughout Cairo at strategic public locations for six weeks (hotel lobbies, art galleries, cultural centers, universities, schools, community associations, etc.), where they achieved huge amounts of interest.

**For film, literature and music**, special participating guests at the 2013 CARAVAN Festival of the Arts were the noted Egyptian actor **Amr Waked** (who has starred in films such as *Lucy*, *Contagion*, *Syriana* and *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*), who gave a talk before the screening of his latest Egyptian film, *Winter of Discontent*, **Dr Alaa El Aswany**, the best-selling novelist of *The Yacoubian Building*, who gave a talk and signed his newly released book, *The Automobile Club*, and the renowned oud (lute) composer and player, **Georges Kazazian**, whose music in a closing concert captured a translucent way of playing the oud.

The exhibitions both in Cairo and London received extensive coverage by the Arab and Western media. Twenty percent of all art sales went to Egyptian charities assisting the poor regardless of creed.

Rev. Canon Paul-Gordon Chandler, Founder & President of CARAVAN said of the Cairo exhibition and festival; “It is more critical than ever that ‘creative demonstrations of dialogue’ be created”.

## **London, England**

Following the public display of the donkeys throughout Cairo, 25 life-size donkeys were selected to travel in the name of peace and compassion to the renowned St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, England for a major art exhibition in the south nave aisle of the cathedral.

The unique interfaith art exhibition, *In Peace and with Compassion*, was hosted at St. Paul’s Cathedral from August 30-September 23. Regarding the showcasing in London of the painted donkeys from Egypt, Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler, founder and president of CARAVAN, and at that time Rector of Cairo’s St. John’s Church (from 2003-2013), said: “This exhibition as a creative demonstration of interreligious dialogue and intercultural exchange which seeks to communicate the important message of tolerance between Christians and Muslims, living together in peace and with compassion; it is a message that comes ‘out of Egypt’ for the world.”

The Reverend Canon Mark Oakley, Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, said: "There are over 40 million donkeys on this earth and 96% of them live alongside the poorest people of the world. They are known and loved for their hard work, resilience, loyalty and stubbornness. They have been used for the best and worst of human intentions: from carrying the war wounded to medical help at Gallipoli, to bearing explosives to kill in today's war zones. Jesus chose a donkey to symbolise the divine humility. Similarly in the Islamic tradition, the Prophet was carried by Ya`fūr. This exhibition, by both Muslim and Christian artists from Egypt, calls us to remember the peoples of that country today and what can be achieved together rather than apart. It also, at a time when both Muslims and Christians suffer persecution for their faith in many places, reminds us that just as the donkeys journey together in the Cathedral towards the Holy, so humans only become spiritually alive when they travel together in peace and with compassion."

Mark Stephens, British Council Country Director, Egypt, said: "We are delighted that the CARAVAN Festival of the Arts has forged this link with St Paul's Cathedral to bring these beautiful decorated donkeys to a London audience. One of the British Council's goals is to connect people through the arts, which is why we have supported the festival, which aims to use the arts to bridge cultures. We hope these artworks will generate as much interest in London as they did in Cairo."

Over 120,000 people viewed the painted donkeys at St. Paul's Cathedral. Following the exhibition, the painted donkeys were auctioned by a Sotheby's auctioneer, with all profits going to charities in Egypt that serve the poorest of the poor, regardless of their creed.

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## **Participating visual artists for the exhibition in Egypt:**

### ***Egyptian Artists***

Adel Naseef  
Adel Tharwat  
Ahmed El Kut  
Ahmed Kassim  
Alaa Awad  
Ashraf Reda  
Ayman El Semaary  
Ayman Lotfy  
Carelle Homsy  
Emad Ibrahim  
Farid Fadel  
Gamal Ez  
George Bahgory  
Hakim Jmaien  
Hayam Abdel Baki  
Hend Adnan  
Hisham El Zeiny  
Ibrahim El Dessouky  
Karim Abd EL Malak  
Keizer  
Khaled Hafiz

Maged Mekhail  
Marwa Adel  
Moataz Nasreldin  
Mohamed Abla  
Mohamed Talaat  
Omar El Fayoumi  
Rania Fouad  
Reda Abd El Rahman  
Sabah Naim  
Sameh Ismail  
Shayma Aziz

## ***Western Artists***

Anne-Francoise Giraud, France  
Barbara El Nimra (Gerber), Switzerland  
Britt Boutros Ghali, Norway  
Claire Marie Pearman, UK  
Cosima Lukashevich, USA  
Julie Oxenforth, U.K.  
Katrina Vrebalovich, USA  
Kimberly Odekirk, USA  
Marian Villadsen, Denmark  
MARS, Switzerland  
Renata Dyk, Poland  
Renee van Lille-Demetroudes, South Africa  
Sonja Moser, Austria

## **Participating artists whose donkeys were selected for exhibition at London's St. Paul's Cathedral:**

Egypt: Adel Naseef, Adel Tharwat, Ahmed El Kut, Ahmed Kassim, Ashraf Reda, Ayman El Semary, Carelle Homsy, Farid Fadel, Gamal Ez, George Bahgory, Hayam Abdel Baky, Hend Adnan, Ibrahim El Dessouky, Karim Abd EL Malak, Khaled Hafiz, Marwa Adel, Moataz Nasreldin, Mohamed Abla, Mohamed Talaat, Rania Fouad, Reda Abd El Rahman, Sabah Naim, Sameh Ismail

Western: Anne-Francoise Giraud (France), Claire Marie Pearman (UK)