

## Hala Abu Shady



**Abushady, *Om Ahmed's Lady*, photograph, 2009**

Born in 1984, Hala Abu Shady is an interdisciplinary artist. She works in video, drawing, animation, photography and installation. She holds a BFA in art and education from Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt and has taught New Media at the Art and Design Academy, Cairo, since 2006.

Adel uses human models in her videos and photographs. Her work is autobiographical and deals chronologically with female rites of passage. In her 2007 work *Pink*, a male voiceover denounces women as discardable and easy while a girl in a white wedding dress moves around in everyday, sometimes specifically male,

situations: sitting alone with an ashtray at a café, waiting by the side of a busy road, running along the pavement, on a bus surrounded by older men. Shots of men talking to the camera, about or with women, follow. In one, her cousin talks rudely on the phone to his girlfriend, telling her what to wear and demanding that she brings him food. In another, her brother smokes while talking about smoking as a way of life. The only woman in the video doesn't speak.

The work seems angry. The combination of gritty documentary and the magical realist element of an out-of-place bride is relatable yet mysterious. The narrative and feeling are strong

but ambivalent, undogmatic: it's unclear if the bride is really wearing the dress or imagining it, whether she hates it, wants it, or both. She's in a position of wondering, an alien and alone in her position. "A girl is like a balloon," one of the men says, "if you keep her inflated – let her feel good about herself – she'll explode."

*Attention Please*, a 2009 production 4 minute video, cuts footage of eyeliner being applied to an eye with shots pointing down at the camera-holder's walking feet, a party scene and women giving the protagonist advice. Some shots are unstable and full of ambient noise, while others are clear portrait shots of an advice giver – Abu Shady's sister in niqab, advising her to think about God and heaven, her mother (a Professor of Applied Art) arguing that she must finish her education. Towards the end, the eyeliner is removed from the eye and sighs are audible. Abu Shady says she wanted to make the film to

remind her of the days when she was lost.

Abu Shady does all the technical steps and procedures of video/filmmaking herself; filming, editing and sound. Her studio is her computer, her camera, her mobile phone, and the outside world in which she always carries them. Sound clips of ambient sounds are improvised using everyday objects.

In one series of inkjet prints, the model is a student of an art academy who has double-life and is unable to tell her neighbours about her job. The project is reminiscent of Cindy Sherman's and Sophie Calle's works.

In *Placenta*, a 2010 production 3-minute video, the artist combines ultrasound shots from her pregnancy with shots of blood dripping from a ceiling crack. The work is intimate and embodies perfectly her obsession with female rites of passage in a controversial society.



Abushady, *Pink*, video still, 2007