

## Adel Tharwat

*By: Contemporary Practices*



Adel Tharwat, *Egyptian Beliefs*, Oil on Canvas, 2003, 120x80cm.

Each work of art is a language that embodies aesthetic content and a cultural experience. It is an aesthetic reflection of the self that occurs as a result of emotion and reason working together to translate thoughts, ideas, and feelings while their integrity is guided by several factors; most of important of them are culture and the degree of interaction with it.

A work of art is an emotional experience that pushes the artist to try expressing concepts, visions, and ideas through a process of putting elements of physical being in order and transforming them into a message or artistic narrative of meaningful value that the audience and the future would appreciate. An artwork produced is the visual equivalent of such message, in which the artist creates while in a state of combined reactions to current surroundings and recalls of past memories that have built within him artistic memory.

Following this introduction, an artwork can be described and summarized in the following equation or a formula; Idea + form + craft + content + expression + aesthetic sensitivity + degree of culture and artistic legacy of the artist. the product is a complete work of art, one that holds aesthetic value and reflects reality yet in itself is not actual reality.

*“It is from this framework that I found the beginnings of my project. I began searching for a particular artistic beauty and philosophy to structure the experience I intend to present as well as to distinguish my work among contemporary Egyptian art”* says the artist. *“I developed interest in popular Egyptian heritage as philosophical framework for my art”*.

A major factor that influenced Tharwat and shaped his artistic experience through the years was growing up in one of the most famous old districts - if not the oldest - in Cairo, *“Al Qalaa”* district. the place holds a wealth of symbols, motifs and visual signs and where an artist would live in the spirit of customs and rituals that stem from long histories.

For the next stage of this specific project (Egyptian Symbols), the artist started employing themes, motifs, visuals, and written texts used in all popular Egyptian rituals that are related to social celebrations, customs, and beliefs that developed in the collective conscious

and became a blueprint to that particular culture and that consequently have birthed those symbols and signs connected and expressive of man's relationship with his surroundings. That very relationship has been initiated since the dawn of history, when the Egyptian man formed a civilised life system supported by culture and philosophy. All of those terms, signs, symbols, texts, and visual blueprints that are associated with traditional ideologies are ineffable unless in the light of common understanding, which has essentially shaped the symbols and signs within a cultural narrative in its own cognition. In this context, an artist sees aesthetic and philosophical dimensions and when he chooses to apply it as the foundation of his art project it becomes significant, as the mediator between the artist and viewer. From this perspective, he present a collection of installation and mixed media paintings where I used organic materials and original scripts to interpret and expand meanings of manifestations from subjects of popular beliefs including certain taboos such as black magical objects known in arabic as “aamal” - a piece of paper with certain incantations - that the under-educated commonly use to achive certain goals.

He chose to portray a human representation of the female form because of its suggestive and determinative qualities that strengthen the connection with the artwork, in which it acts as mediator between artist and viewer on a visual level. It is an independent element with multiple signifiers that unfold meanings while at the same time raise questions driving the viewer to draw interpretative associations from the artwork. Furthermore it goes beyond presenting and receiving the artwork to the point where it materialises the idea and represents the core of absorbing the artwork, for all the its aesthetic, visual, representational, objective, and suggestive qualities. Therefore it is the centre of meaning and interpretation as it is a visual equivalent of the artist's inner feelings and ideas released to the outside world. *“My creative experience stemmed from those conceptual, philosophical, and aesthetic points. From which I presented more than fifteen solo exhibitions showcasing my growing interest in visualising subjects of popular Egyptian beliefs”* says the artist.