

Cairo's 'Summer Portfolio' photography show examines Egypt's past and present



- From Cairo to Brooklyn, photographic consultancy Tintera aims to bring together global photographers

CAIRO: In an apartment block in Zamalek — Cairo's affluent western district where heritage buildings whisk visitors back to the Egyptian capital's grand past — is a surprising find: A white-walled gallery and consultancy called Tintera, which specializes in photography of Egypt by Egyptians and foreigners. It was established in 2019 by Heba Farid and Zein Khalifa, with the aim of raising the profile of both contemporary and historical photography of Egypt.



For the latest updates, follow us on Instagram [@arabnews.lifestyle](https://www.instagram.com/arabnews.lifestyle)
(<https://www.instagram.com/arabnews.lifestyle>)

“Photography’s power is in documenting our lives, conceptually as well as through documentary approaches,” Farid tells Arab News. “As certain images of Egypt are ever-present in the global collective memory — images of monuments and conflict tend to be what remain — our mission is to be a destination where an alternative image of Egypt emerges.”



Amina Kadous, 'City Entrapped.' (Supplied)

When photography first started to become widely popular in the 19th century CE, photographers from around the world travelled to Egypt to capture not just the country’s multitude of ancient monuments, but, as Farid says, “its abundance of light.”

“Tintera is committed to elevating the status and value of fine art photography in Egypt,” Khalifa says. “We are exporting ‘another Egypt’ and, while doing so, building a strong collectors’ base, drawing the attention of curators, and engaging specialized and general audiences alike.”

Tintera's "Summer Portfolio" show is an example of the founder's aims, presenting works from their roster of more than 20 artists.

In the main exhibition area, a large collection of portfolio boxes are on display alongside many framed or matted prints. Visitors are invited to handle the prints directly (with the provided gloves, of course) and there is a thin hanging rail installed so that they can curate their own selections. Such an intimate handling of fine-art photography is a rare treat that truly enhances the viewing experience.

Each photographer's work presents a different view and experience of Egypt and its people. Highlights include works by Amina Kadous, an award-winning Egyptian photographer with a background in visual art. In her ongoing series "City Entrapped" she explores how portraits of iconic Egyptian public figures, such as Presidents Sadat and Nasser, still exist in many public spaces.

For Kadous, Cairo is a city that is always in constant change yet somehow stays the same.

"A city trapped in its own past and stretching to an unknown future. Cairo, a city of icons that is itself iconic," Kadous writes on her website. "I see through these breaths and gasps of time, endlessly in flux and endlessly in chaos. A city where the only thing that is constant is change."

Nermine Hammam — an established visual artist with a background in film — employs her signature technique of digital manipulation, hand coloring and layering of images on a collection of black and white vernacular photographs taken on the beaches of Alexandria in "A'aru," a series named for the ancient Egyptian concept of the afterlife. But, the Tintera founders explain in an article on Hamman's website, here the artist "inverts" the concept. "Rather than it being an idyllic world yet to come, Hammam shows us a once-almost-perfect world on the brink of destruction. For Hammam, this ... is the Alexandria of her past ... a place of perceived innocence."



Anthony Hamboussi, 'Sharat il-Nil,' from 15 Mayo Bridge, Agouza, Giza Governorate, Cairo Ring Road, 2014. (Supplied)

Egyptian Brooklyn-based photographer Anthony Hamboussi is one of the latest additions to the Tintera roster. In his series “Ring Road,” he examines the contemporary urban landscape of Cairo and neighboring areas which have morphed over the past century because of uncontrolled urban growth. His evocative photographs show how poor planning and mismanagement of heritage sites have put the city’s historic significance into a state of crisis.

The emerging Egyptian visual artist Maria Saba strikes a more intimate note in her “Urban Jungle” series, which captures the artist in a variety of poses in public urban spaces in Egypt and France, allowing her to examine issues relating to identity and place

in the two countries and cultures in which she lives. The black-and-white photographs are nostalgic, melancholic and haunting; Saba seems to be searching for herself in the midst of these sprawling ever-changing urban landscapes.

Tintera's "Summer Portfolio" show runs until September 7 at the gallery.
