

## Beyond Visual Differences: Art, Art History and Egyptology (Köln, 25 Jan 13)

Köln, Jan 25, 2013

Deadline: Dec 10, 2012

Katharina Stövesand

CFP Interdisciplinary Symposium: Beyond Visual Differences. Art, Art History and Egyptology in an intercultural Discourse.

A.R.T.e.s. galerie, a.r.t.e.s Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne, January 25, 2013.

Within the framework of the exhibition: Khaled Hafez | Deciphering the Past within the Present  
January 24 - February 28, 2013, A.R.T.e.s. galerie, Aachener Straße 217, 50931 Cologne

In the current globalized world, we are surrounded and infused with all kinds of images loaded with different symbols and different significance from diverse sources and heritages. However, the intercultural distribution of images is not restricted to the present as the discussion on a “visual” or “pictorial turn” might suggest. Images refer to universal human experience which different visualizations depend on cultural and temporal contexts. Thus, images have always been culturally bound and therefore loaded with different meanings which cannot be analyzed and understood without knowing the underlying visual traditions.

The Egyptian artist Khaled Hafez explores these multi-layered image circulations by combining icons of contemporary popular culture with inherited symbols of a Pharaonic past. In his artistic oeuvre, Hafez refers to a collective visual memory and ironically relocates Ancient Egyptian gods in a capitalist consumer world. By doing so, Hafez alludes to dichotomies such as modern/traditional, local/global as well as secular/religious in order to debate their synthesis and development to “global symbols”. The current world of consumerism strongly operates with these dichotomies and conventionalizes them into seductive visual products. With its underlying humour and sensitivity, Hafez’ work challenges the viewer to reflect on the absurdity of this polarized thinking. The art of Khaled Hafez therefore counts for more than a mere repetitive retrospect on the past art heritage. It rather refers to current events and entails political statements directed at the present changes in Egypt and the Arab World.

Through painting, video and installation, Hafez explores the different modes of narration in order to decode the „modi operandi“ of communication within images. In Hafez’ opinion, Ancient Egyptian wall paintings and modern mass media seem comparable to Jean Baudrillard’s Theory of Simulation. They both create an illusion and become a simulacrum of History.

On the one hand, the artistic oeuvre of Khaled Hafez raises broader questions on the particular position of the artist and the arts in a globalized world and on the other hand, on the general sta-

tus and interdisciplinarity of the sciences.

Hafez' artistic reference to the past visual and written culture of Ancient Egypt alludes not only to the conception of a cultural visual memory. It also challenges one to think about the notion of identity of a "non-Western" artist, who - in the case of Hafez - invokes Ancient Egypt as part of his intercultural heritage. This multi-layered combination, deciphering as well as re-evaluation of images from different backgrounds - cultures as well as epochs - also poses a challenge for academic analysis, which shall be discussed.

The interdisciplinary symposium "Beyond Visual Differences. Art, Art History and Egyptology in an intercultural Discourse" shall serve as a platform for a stimulating and critical discussion of these raised questions and reflect the position of our own scholarly practice. The aim is to expand the confines of academic disciplines by using the interdisciplinary approach of the Visual Culture Studies – with a special focus on Art History and Egyptology (however other disciplines are welcome).

We thus propose the following themes:

- Discussion of concrete artist' positions: How do artists from Africa/the Middle East deal with their particular "cultural heritage"? What are the meanings of these artworks and how do these artists take a stand on a globalized art world? This also involves general issues of inclusion and exclusion of "non-Western" art in an international art discourse.
- On a meta-level, a critical reflection on the academic disciplines shall be attempted, which is not only to stimulate a discussion on images from „non-Western“ cultures as defined by the Visual Culture Studies, but also to address the question of a "Contemporary World Art Heritage". In this context, theses on post-colonial discourses can also be discussed.

The aim of the symposium is to promote an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas, to outline current questions of research and explore new methodological approaches. The symposium is an initiative of the A.R.T.e.s. galerie in cooperation with the a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne.

Contributions from Art Historians, Egyptologists and researchers in the field of Visual Culture Studies are welcome. The symposium will take place in Cologne on the 25th of January 2013.

Please send your abstract (1.000 words max) on one of the above-mentioned topics, together with a brief biographical note and contact details (in English or German) to:

[artes.galerie@googlemail.com](mailto:artes.galerie@googlemail.com).

Deadline: December 10, 2012.

Please note that your planned presentation should not exceed 25-30 minutes.

For more details on the exhibition and the symposium, please take a look at:

<http://www.artes-galerie.uni-koeln.de/artes-galerie/>

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Khaled Hafez | Deciphering the Past within the Present

ArtHist.net

Vernissage and Artist's Talk: January 24, 2013, 6 pm. A.R.T.e.s. galerie, Aachener Straße 217,  
50931 Cologne | 1st Floor

Concept | Katharina Stövesand, Judith Bihr

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[www.artes.uni-koeln.de](http://www.artes.uni-koeln.de)

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