

Egyptian Artist Adam Henein

Egypt Feature Story Egyptian Artist Adam Henein

by Lara Iskander



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Adam Henein, a lively older gentleman in his 70's, is one of Egypt's most famous artists apart from being the commissar of the [Aswan International Sculpture Symposium](#).

Henein's interest in art began at an early age. His first artistic encounter which led him to modern art, goes all the way back to 1938, when he was a student at Tawfiq Primary School.

At the age of eight he was first introduced to the glories of [ancient Egyptian art](#) and [history](#) during a history class fieldtrip to [Cairo's Museum of Egyptian Antiquities](#).



As he recalls, "As soon as I stepped in, I went crazy. When I saw those things I forgot all about my class and the history lesson. I lost my way but didn't care, because one thing kept leading to another. Of course as a child you don't know if this is reality or imagination. I knew those people were dead, but here they were, as concrete as anything, and I could touch them. Suddenly I had this weird feeling that I was discovering another world, away from the textbooks, physics and chemistry classes and breakfast with the family. A world where you could live and be very happy".

After that powerful experience, he returned home and modeled a clay figure of [Ramses II](#), painted it, and presented it to his father, a [Cairo](#) silversmith, who proudly took it to his shop in the Goldsmiths' Market and displayed it alongside his own work.



As a young man, Henein enrolled at Cairo's Academy of Fine Arts and graduated in 1953 with honors. Afterwards, he received a grant that allowed him to spend two years near Thebes, studying the paintings of [pharaonic tombs](#) where he also got a chance to observe and experience life in Upper Egyptian villages. That would become one of the influences in his work, along with many others. .

From 1953 until 1965, Henein spend considerable time between [Luxor](#), Germany and [Nubia](#) where he worked continuously on putting his academic knowledge into perspective. Nevertheless, it took him another two decades to start working seriously in stone which he had longed for but still had little chance of using at the time.

The European experience was definitely beneficial to his work and brought him into contact with the latest trends and extended his knowledge of Egyptian, Greek and classical European art. By the late 1960's, he thought of going to Paris, where he would settle until the early 1990s.



Gradually he was invited to exhibit in Morocco, Kuwait which was followed by other European galleries. It was in Paris that he started to establish connections with the public figures, among which was the Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni, then a cultural attach in Paris who showed much interest in the artists work.

His return to Egypt was gradual and he was then regarded as an artist of international fame and stature. He was asked in 1989 to participate in the restoration project of the [Giza Sphinx](#).

That was followed by the realization of the dream of establishing a sculpture symposium in Aswan, where artists from all over the world could work in granite. Aswan is the source of beautiful stones and has played an important political and cultural role in history. Today the city has become identified with the open air museum of the Aswan International Sculpture Symposium. The 11th session was recently held between the 15th January and 1st March.



Art work and Displays in Taz;



Sculptures in the yard at Haraneyya

The well known sculptor spends a considerable part of his time at his workshop in Haraneyya. His house and workplace are located just behind the grounds of Wissa Wassef



Art Centre. The house, designed by Wissa Wassef in the 1960's was supposed to be his residence, however in the wake of the war and under the Sadat regime, he and his wife went to Paris on a cultural exchange to an exhibition of contemporary Egyptian Art at the Musee Galliera along with 50 Egyptian artists, where they were supposed to remain for two months but eventually stayed there for 25 years. The Haraneyya atelier has a beautiful garden where Henein has on display many of his works. In the middle lies a central piece named Adams Ship.



Adams vision of placing his artwork in the middle of the garden and the ship are best put in his own words:

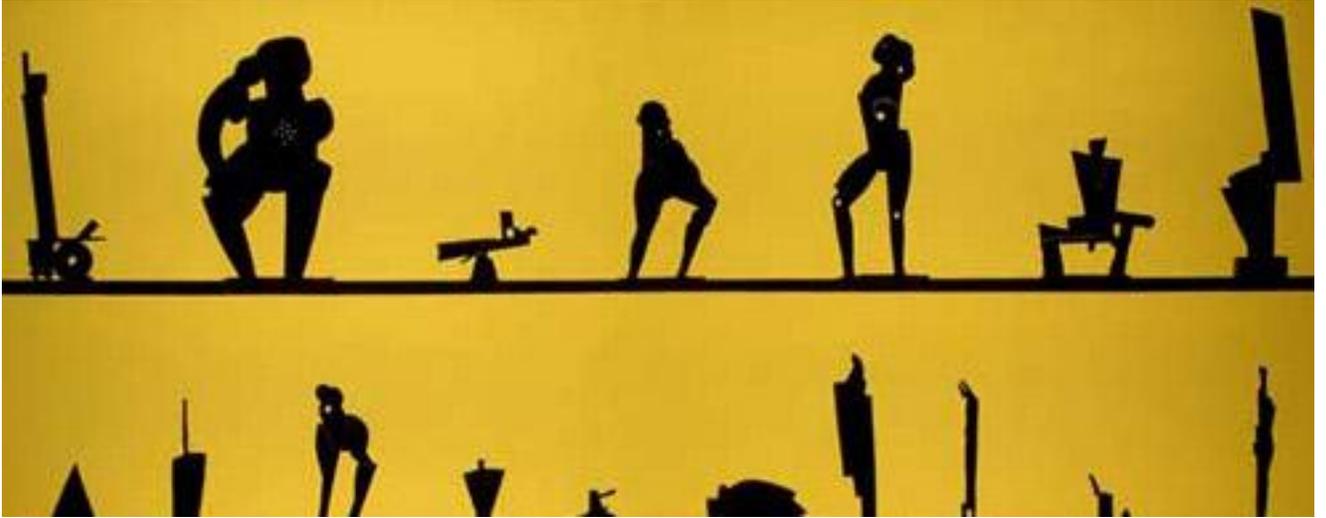
"In truth, the idea of exhibiting a sculpture in a museum or a room has always bothered me. The fact of actually exhibiting a work is somewhat artificial and forced, for the work is placed in a space which is not its natural space. I sought to get beyond this difficulty by making my studio garden into an exhibition space; but the result did not entirely satisfy me. It seemed as though I might have found a solution in the figure of the ship. I then remembered the preparatory drawings I had begun in the 1970's and which contained the image of one of my sculptures placed on a boat. The very next day, I did a scale model of the ship and when I felt that I had finally found the right solution, I breathed easier. The point was basically, to set up the statues in a place that is harmonious, from an architectural point of view, with the spaces for which they were made churches, temples, cities, palaces



I discovered, as I worked, things I had never even suspected before, and above all that the sculptures, once placed in the ship, took on new mythological meaning, even as their mutual relationships changes. I finally found what for so long I had been looking for.

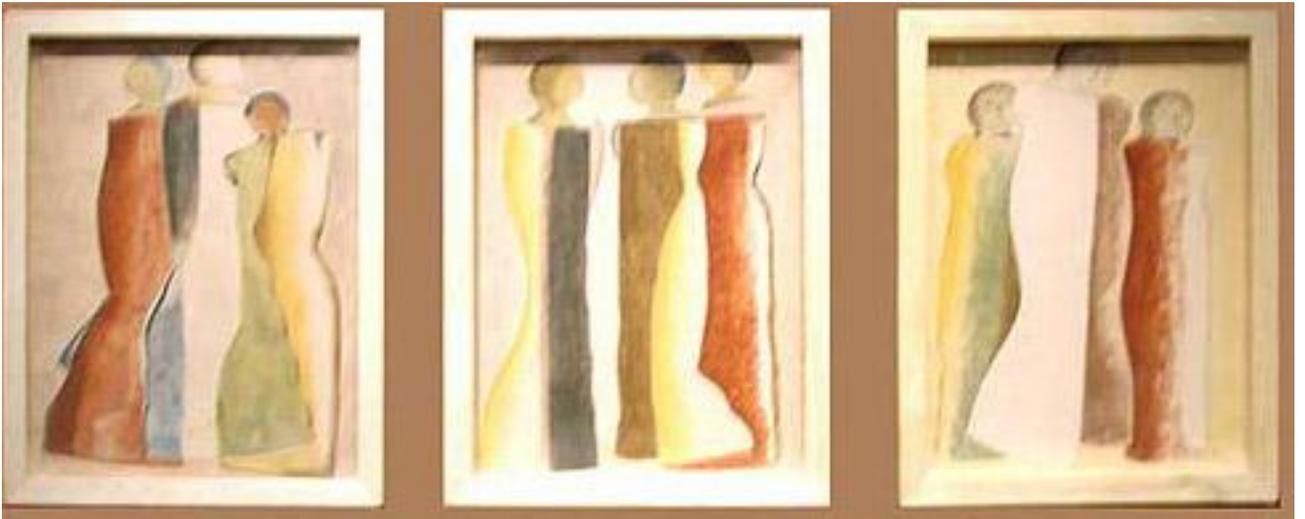
It also struck me that the sculptures, spread out in the garden, all around the ship like the Goat, the Warrior I, Nabta, the Owl, Window, Confidence and others- ended up being par to a common and homogenous world, which the ship summed up in its concrete form."

The grounds of the workshop are usually open to visitors who want to venture out of the city and the traditional displays at art galleries and appreciate the art works in their original location. Some of his famous pieces such as the Dynastic Bird, Fisherman and Donkey, also displayed in the garden of Wissa Wassef Centre are found there.



One of the displays of Adam Henein

Henein is also a painter who has developed a pictorial technique of great importance to him; painting on papyrus using natural pigments bound with gum Arabic. The influence of his sculpture is obvious on his painterly work.



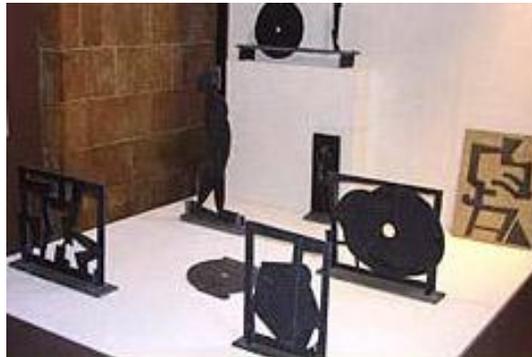
Displays of Adam Henein

Adam Henein's work was displayed in many of the major galleries in Europe and in New York. The past years, Henein has been dividing his time between Harraniya and Aswan though he continues to travel extensively.



Paintings and sculptures at Taz

Artist Adam Henein, currently has an exhibition of his sculptures and paintings in the recently restored palace of Al Amir Taz in Saliba Street. The art works are beautifully displayed in the palace where each piece seems to belong in the ancient and authentic spaces. The Exhibition is held until the 20th.



Various Small Statues;



Sculptures at Hayaneya

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