

## Beauty and Women Celebrated at Inter-Faith Art Exhibition

by Jayson Casper, Arab-West Report, 4 May 2012

‘We came here today to satisfy our soul for its need of beauty.’ With these words Azhar Sheikh Muhammad Jamī’ addressed the crowd at the Caravan Festival of Arts, hosted by St. John the Baptist Church in Maadi, Egypt.

But then he continued, rather surprisingly given the oft-assumed perspectives of Muslim scholars, ‘When you look to the heavens, you see beauty and love. When you look to the kingdom of earth, you see beauty and love. When you look in the faces of people, you see beauty and love...

‘And when you look at the form of a woman, you see beauty and love.’

The rector of St. John’s is Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler who stated, ‘Art is one of the best means for encouraging friendship among those with differences.’



Sheikh Muhammad Jamī’

Bishop Munir



Rev. Paul-Gordon  
Chandler

This evening, these differences were in short supply. In addition to Jamī’ mentioned above, Chandler introduced Bishop Munīr, head of the Anglican diocese of Egypt, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa, and Dr. Mahmūd ‘Azab, head of the Azhar committee for interfaith dialogue.

Bishop Munīr declared, ‘Many things divide us, but love, the love of God, brings us together. When we love God truly, we love each other also.

‘Art also serves a role in bringing us together.’

Bishop Munīr is also a participant in the exhibition, supplying one of his photographs. Referring to it, he stated, ‘The road ahead in the revolution is to realize we are all in one boat.

‘We must take care of this boat, which is Egypt. We must also row in the same direction.’

Dr. 'Azab declared, 'Religion as a sign of civilization is an inspiration to scholars and artists alike.

'Christianity is the religion of love, Islam is the religion of mercy, and Egypt is in dire need of both.'

The Caravan Festival of the Arts also featured two prominent Egyptian performers.

Yusrā is a famous Egyptian actress, and has also been honored by the United Nations as an advocate for the oppressed. She stated, 'The arts are one of the most powerful ways to bring society together.



Rūla Zakī



Yusrā

'This is true even though those who wish to restrict freedom also often wish to restrict art.

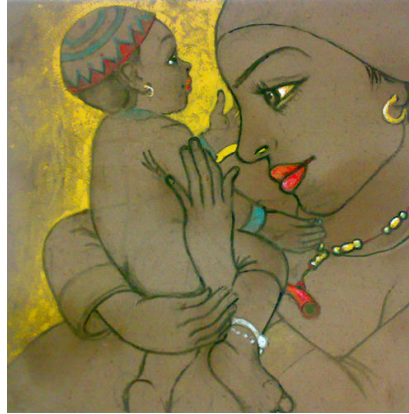
'Art unites us, it is a language of love, a language of peace; it goes straight to your heart.'

Yet Yusrā expressed concern for the future as well. 'One year after the revolution we are starting to hear voices that threaten our freedom.

'This scares me, but it also makes me want to fight harder for it. 'You can never negotiate a person's freedom.'

Rūla Zakī is a popular Egyptian singer. Though she offered no remarks, she captivated the crowd through her beautiful rendition of 'People of the Book', celebrating the unity of Muslim and Christian in Egypt.

The Caravan Festival of the Arts exhibition was entitled 'The Road Ahead', contemplating the future direction of the Egyptian revolution. It featured 45 artists from both the East and the West.



'Motherhood and the Future' - Dr. Ahmad Salim, Egypt; Hailing from Aswan, this image depicts the Nubian people of Egypt and their hope for the future.



'Colours of Hope' - Renee van Lille-Demetroudes, South Africa; note the iconic revolutionary scenes of priests and imams embracing, under the banners of Facebook and Twitter.