

Artists reflect Egypt's revolutionary spirit

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Egyptian artists inspired by revolution

Dubai, United Arab Emirates (CNN) -- Artists have been quick to reflect their experience of Egypt's revolution and its new political landscape in their work.

Egyptian artist Khaled Hafez completely changed one of his paintings in response to the pro-democracy demonstrations in Cairo's Tahrir Square, in time to be exhibited at the Art Dubai fair last month.

He said: "This piece is based on the revolution and certain personal experiences I had in Tahrir Square. So every element of people here I have seen with my own eyes in Tahrir Square. From the sniper to the tear gas riot police, who came to the square without any organized assignment or objectives."

Art Dubai, one of the Middle East's best-known contemporary art fairs, attracted collectors from all over the world to see the work of more than 500 artists in some 80 galleries.

It included two works by Mohammed Taman, an Egyptian artist who lost an eye to a police rubber bullet during the protests. One of the works showed the riot police detested by the pro-democracy protestors and the other is of his former president.

This idea of revolution has given me an inspiration to start something new.

--Zakaria Ramhani, Moroccan artist

Hafez, like many Egyptian artists, interrupted his work to join the protests in Tahrir Square.

He said the experience had a profound effect on him.

"Everything took a different turn now," said Hafez. "We lost friends, we lost families, we lost mentees, we lost students. And we've seen people losing their lives, giving their lives actually as a gift for all of us.

"What I always blamed on my generation -- I am 47 today -- is that my generation and the one which preceded us, while we always criticized and condemned and complained, we never shed blood, we just shed tears.

"I think this generation of young adults -- boys and girls -- who did this revolution, those young Egyptian artists who were there, spending the night there, those are the ones I'm learning from now.

"As an artist I'm learning a lot from them now. So my next work will be everything I have learned in the past few months."

Moroccan artist Zakaria Ramhani exhibited a painting called "Bye Bye Hosni" to reflect the fall of the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

"This idea of revolution has given me an inspiration to start something new in a new way because it's a little different to what I have done before," he said.

Egyptian artist Nadine Hammam had been creating "Let's Love" -- the latest in a series of works on gender politics -- when the politics of people power brought her work to a halt as she immersed herself in the demonstrations.

She said: "Based on my experiences in Tahrir, I spoke to a lot of people, I sort of lived with the people, if you wish. We shared food, we shared moments, we shared laughter, we shared tears, we shared expectations together."

Hammam believes art can make an important contribution to documenting historic events.

"It has a crucial role," she said. "I think art reflects the people and reflects what's happening in the country and I'm pretty sure my next work will be on what's happening in Egypt."

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