

# George Bahgory's nostalgic dreams

George Bahgory reflects his longing for the past in his new collection

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The country seems to have been immersed in some kind of nostalgic pool. Whenever you bump into someone from the older generation, they start to regale you with tales from the past: how Egypt was a more beautiful place and how the people were kinder. Their eyes sparkle with long-lost memories and days that have gone by, and you are left wondering

Bahgory's exhibition invites viewers to share his nostalgia  
(Photo from Al Masar Gallery)

why you were not born in such an enchanting time. Even the younger generation is nostalgic as well for things they never witnessed. On social media websites, people share images of past Egyptian royalty and clean streets of the 1960s. It seems that the current reality is making Egyptians want to escape to another time when things were better.

Veteran artist George Bahgory is no different. His latest collection boasts various paintings about the past, from people sitting at traditional cafes to singers of a time long gone to colourful self-portraits of a younger version of the artist. He explains the collection in the following passage:

"I sit on the pavement of a café in Cairo painting these difficult yet hopeful times the nation is going through. I paint people strolling by on the street, a man with his wife and kids and I paint the worker passing by. I closely watch their facial expressions while they play cards and the backgammon. I paint these difficult times and at times I happily paint people's smiles, humour and the sounds of their laughter as they sit at the café.

I have a fond memory of former Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, as I used to draw his caricature on the cover of Rose Al Youssef magazine in my twenties. He was a great man foreshadowing a thriving future for the country. Years passed and the country has suffered ever since, and as an artist and as a citizen in this country I've never forgotten him, and that's why I have a painting of him in this exhibition. Now, there's a new hero named Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi who greatly reminds me of Abdel Nasser's legacy.

However, the hero of this exhibition remains the simple man selling the bread loaves on the street. This is the exhibition, and this is my inspiration by this wounded nation. There are no words but there are my paintings to read and my lines to explore. They mirror the eternity of the past, the hopes of the present and future, and I urge the viewer to have a visual reading of my paintings where the words are represented in one line moving across the painting creating a passionate language."

The exhibition continues until 23 February at Al Masar Gallery in Zamalek.