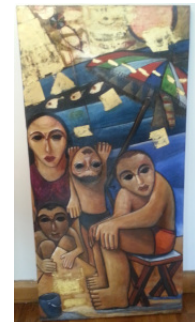


On Art & Lemons.02/12/2013

## Lotfi Guirguis



I've always been a firm believer that Modern Egyptian Art has a very distinctive flair that's quite different from anything we've seen in the modern era internationally. (It needs to be clarified that modern is not contemporary- Modern Art starts from the late 1800's and runs till the 1960's, whereas contemporary Art is anything after. I speak here of the former).

Modern Egyptian Art kept up with modern styles from all over the world and managed to keep them relevant and Egyptian, creating what is ultimately a unique and particular style of our own. I can't quite explain it- but for those who have seen a good amount of local modern artwork, there's a fingerprint that's quite discernible. I can best describe it as a dusty palette- anyone who has spent a week in Egypt would recognise it instantly. Perhaps it's the crowded compositions; figural representations in our Modern Egyptian art heritage tend to be somewhat tight and suffocating, mirroring the lack of negative and personal space in our own lives in this country. Whatever it is, it is a tangible quality

that can be quickly picked up after thoroughly looking at a few solid examples of Modern Egyptian art. (Visit the **Modern Egyptian Art museum** (<http://www.modernartmuseum.gov.eg/index.htm>) to get an idea. Ignore the presentation & the hideous architecture of the actual building and try to focus on the work itself).

Guirguis Lotfi is an artist who has managed to pick up on that fingerprint and mould it to create his own. Having had his PhD supervised by the brilliant **Hamed Nada** (<http://arteeast.org/pages/artists/hamed-nada>), Guirguis was well-equipped to create paintings that are quite majestic despite their mundane everyday subject matter. Using Egg tempera and gold leaf on wood, Lotfi stays true to his Coptic roots, as well as further enhancing his iconographic approach to portraiture. All his characters and protagonists look like dwarfed saints, or more specifically, contemporary *Fayoum portraits* (<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/The-Oldest-Modernist-Paintings.html>). The paintings are quite a sight- beautiful and mysterious depictions of everyday events that are weighed down by an incredible sadness. They are definitely worth seeing live. You can see the entire collection of his works at *ArtTalks*, (<http://www.arttalks.org/contact.php>) and till then, read more about Guirguis Lotfi at their website **here** (<http://www.arttalks.org/artist.php?id=971440964>).

(<https://mariamhamdy.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/sahra-fi-el-hussein.jpg>)

(<https://mariamhamdy.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/siga.jpg>)

(<https://mariamhamdy.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/sobou3.jpg>),

