

## **Tracing an Archeology of Experimental Video in Cairo.**

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In the continuing technological explosion of transportation and information that began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that replaced the post-Enlightenment explosion of print capitalism, we have the problem of the “global village”, which Arjun Appadurai described as the idea that cultural processes are forged through media. This is a problem, Appadurai implies, in the ways that the “global” is imagined as a village, where homogenization across cultural differences is often activated by shallow and utopian ideas of globalization that work to eradicate important cultural differences. Commenting on a new role for the imagination in social life, Appadurai referred to it as “central to all forms of agency,” itself a “social fact”, the key “component of the new global order”.<sup>i</sup> He asserted that we should ask not how such complex, overlapping fractal shapes (shapes that change in scale depending on how we see them) of the imagination constitute a stable system, but rather what are this system’s dynamics and processes. This enables us to look at cultural productions within their own contexts and not comparatively by a measuring stick of technological advancement. Furthermore, while he suggested that media produced, shared and exchanged between places is a primary conduit of the imaginative field of social practices, we have yet to more sufficiently examine our points of difference from one cultural field to another before any imagined unities can blend more authentically with reality. Those today who extol the positive virtues of global communications and networks, do not adequately acknowledge the undeniably dark side of globalization, which is experienced and understood as economic and cultural imperialism in third world countries. In addition, there is still often the situation of lack

of access to the means of production, as a result of poverty and poor training facilities, and this leads to huge technical and qualitative disparities between works produced across the globe. In light of this, the intersection or imbrication of art and politics cannot be dismissed.

In the case of Egypt, a third world country known to be the second largest recipient of financial aid from the United States, the merging of new technologies and art mostly takes place in the field of digital video production, video installation and electronic music performance. This has everything to do with lack of resources and the lack of mainstream educational training in the higher technologically advanced areas. However, there has appeared in the last ten years a small group of experimental artists, who have distinguished themselves in the international art world, and are now uniquely placed in what has become a market of the “Arab avant-garde.” In the following pages, I will trace a tentative genealogy for this group of experimenters, for the purpose of addressing the subject of the “Arab avant-garde” in the field of globalization studies about art and new technology. Terms such as “interstitial” and “accented” have been used to name a category where the experimental North African, Middle Eastern, South Asian and East Asian post-colonial artist can find shelter for their works. The way these times are most clearly distinguishing is due to the fact that most of these artists have difficulty showing their work in their countries of origin. One has to be attending a film festival in Rotterdam, a biennale in Sao Paulo, an art gallery in Paris, or has to have enough bandwidth to download a compressed video file if the work is stored on the Internet. This is the real interstitial space – that of “found” space, no space, curated

space, or virtual space, and these spaces have now entered a global marketplace in the transmission of art between cultures.

From the outer periphery of a discussion about new technologies and media, it is relevant to look at the status of satellite communications. Naomi Sakr's study of intercultural flows in relation to some of the major Middle East satellite channels launched at the beginning of the 1990's, applies Appadurai's model. She concludes that technology, images and money must follow an isomorphic path, having the same structural properties, because they form both the motivation and the main characteristic of satellite broadcasting. But she also concludes that the exercise of power through these satellite channels was far from de-territorialized, as evidenced in the close ties between people, money and ideas in the Middle East satellite television sector, which are held tightly together by the nature of power relations in the Middle Eastern states, where governments and politicians wield power over the regional/local stations in pursuit of their own agendas. The global reach of these satellite channels was thus heavily circumscribed by flows of money, power and technology that were determined from the start. What appeared to be heterogeneous in nature became homogenous in scope - dictated by the power hegemony it reinforced. Sakr points out that globalization sometimes refers to a set of policies designed to turn the world into a single place, with the suggestion that an increasing part of the globe is becoming enmeshed into a single system, through processes that are said to be paralleled by a developing consciousness of the world as a single society (homogenizing discourse). She explains how effective this interpretation was for business in the 1990's, which used globalization discourse to urge

governments to remove barriers to foreign trade and private investment such that companies could treat different parts of the world as if they were the same.<sup>ii</sup>

Sakr's study and conclusions are noteworthy when trying to grasp the complex political and technological context of experimental video production in Egypt. While satellite television, a cipher of high technology, has become increasingly available to the mass population, independent and experimental production of video is limited to a very small group. The close ties between media and government suggest how difficult it is for independent projects and productions to flourish in this environment. Experimental uses of technology and narrative structures, as seen in the works of Hassan Khan and Sherief el Azma, often involve a critique and gesture of rebellion against political, societal, and even generic artistic forms such as melodrama and soap opera in fiction film and television.

While for most of the last decade there has been a crisis in the Egyptian film industry, it has been the birth of experimental video production and video installation. Film directors and critics have variously diagnosed this cinema crisis. Whether it is attributed to one or a combination of factors - the defeat of 1967, Nasser's nationalization of the cinema in the 60's during which social realist films were nearly a generic mandate and thus oppressive to artistic expression, or the privatization in the Sadat era and the subsequent flight of producers elsewhere – without a doubt, the most powerful external ingredient that changed the Egyptian film industry was the Saudi market, which has been a major market since the late 1950's. By the 1980's Egyptian studios were mostly

producing TV melodramas for export to the Gulf States, and by the mid-1990's, Egyptian film production had declined by 75 percent and nearly 80 percent of film studios were leased out to television stations<sup>iii</sup>. Now, a decade later this estimate is still valid, but what we see now in the Egyptian cinema is a confirmed state of confusion – financial, aesthetic, narrative, technical – which is but a reflection of the general sociological, cultural, and ideological confusion history has wrought in the last 50 years. However, this state of confusion and the direction of film production towards television and satellite programming, has also contributed in certain ways to the cultivation of a minor experimental video scene. Often installation and video artists refer to television sitcoms, talk shows, famous stars, or classic Egyptian films now owned by satellite channels, because this has become the cultural archive, or repository of cultural history that has the most widespread meaning on the popular level.

The production of video art in Egypt began around 1996, with people like Hassan Khan making formalist essays and visual poems, and Sherief El Azma finishing film school in the UK. Before this time, there was little if any concept of audio/visual experimentation circulating in the art world and the public film world in Cairo. The well-known exception is Shady Abdel Salam's 1966 film, *Il Mumiya*, [Night of the Counting Years], which is considered to be the first Egyptian "art film" because of its modernist enfoldment of plot, narrative ambiguity and primacy of artistic visual details to convey meaning. Although this locus of experimental video production is relatively new, it is not at the same technologically sophisticated level as that of the new media discussed amongst theorists and artists of developed countries. Most theories of new media have

spoken from economically inflected production standards that characterize the first world, without, until very recently, acknowledging this determination, and have employed terminology like “global village”, interactivity, liberated agency and community, in positive, utopian terms. What has not until recently been addressed, is that “outside” the developed world, media circulates through different channels, between different landscapes, and in different ways that are regionally, politically and historically determined.

Michel Foucault’s notion of archeology is useful to deploy in asking the following questions: what is the discourse in which Egyptian video art participates; what discursive formation can we trace; what discursive practices are engaged; how are these artistic practices of resistance formed against cultural hegemony and homogenizing discourse; how do these practices enhance our discussions of “global” culture; and in what ways do their performances of resistance affirm non-transcendental notions of the spirit?<sup>iv</sup> Foucault’s notion of discourse as “a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined,” “the space of exteriority in which a network of distinct sites is deployed,” helps to illuminate the space of this artistic production, which is characterized by relations of fluidity, contingency and dispersion. He proposed a view of history, texts, books, oeuvres and statements in terms not of unities moving towards grand totalities that can be broken into chronologically progressive and significant frames, but rather as contingent, fluid, fragments moving across a complex network of information exchange. This archeology, or new historical practice, aspires to the “intrinsic description of the monument,” the monument being the

object of historical investigation<sup>v</sup>. This would in turn “operate a de-centering that leaves no privilege to any center,” in the words of Mark Poster - not to do away with history but rather with the form of history that is related to “the synthetic activity of the subject”<sup>vi</sup>.

Prevailing thought holds that there is little if any new media production or artistic use of communication technologies in Egypt. This thought is basically correct if one restricts the sphere of communications technologies to everything beyond the computer interface used as an editing platform for digital video, email correspondence and research. Internet technology is available in Egypt but has yet to be made systematically available to the majority population for us to talk about grassroots political groups and humanistic art projects conducted via IT. Two reports, the April 2003 ITT Report by the American Chamber of Commerce, and the December 2003 on-line report from the Oxford Business Group, provide useful statistics. In the last few years Egypt has begun several initiatives, among which is its Information Society Initiative that aims to “modernize the country, encourage the use of IT in business and spread computer literacy,” addressing the seven areas of infrastructure development: IT education, e-government, use of IT in business, adapting the legal framework to the computer age, using IT to deliver better health services, and applying it to “the preservation of Egypt’s cultural heritage.” Additionally, in 2002 the “Free Internet” and the “PC for Everyone” projects were launched and have greatly increased the use of IT in the public sector. More than 20,000 computers were sold during the first three months of 2003, under the latter program, which allowed Egyptians to buy computers through installment payments on their phone bill. Apparently, Internet users increased from 600,000 in 2002 to over

one million by early 2003, although the reliability of this statistic has been questioned. A more reliable indicator of IT market growth and potential is the growth of cellular phone service, which now has 6 million subscribers to the two companies Mobilnil and Vodafone, quite an improvement over the initially reported statistic of 654,000 in October 1999. But this has not resulted yet in any critical art projects involving Internet based, or wireless interactive technologies.

Another effect ascribed to new media is its definitive break from technologies and discourses of modernity. Mark Poster has described the main characteristics of the resistance of new media to modernity as their “complication of subject-hood, their denaturalizing the process of subject formation, their putting into question the interiority of the subject and its coherence.”<sup>vii</sup> In the Arab world, however, subject-hood is already complicated, subject formation is variously denaturalized and interiority made incoherent without the advent of new media. The de-centered subject is revealed in different ways than in the West, most typically understood in terms of increasing religiosity and fundamentalisms as responsive to regional instability and economic problems. But this understanding also makes it convenient for Westerners to look no further and in no other directions. Tunisian film director Nouri Bouzid has described the defeat of 1967, typically blamed for many of the socio-economic problems in the Middle East, as only one mark in the general decline in the Arab world that had been brewing for centuries. The Arab and the Middle Eastern subjects have long been de-centered, and this would naturally be reflected in the artistic works of the intellectual, including the film director and the experimental artist. Furthermore, it is worth reminding ourselves that the



historical de-centerings of the third world have largely contributed to the formation of post-structural theories of the dispersed subject (as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam remind us, leftist structural linguistics of the 1960's was deeply indebted to the anti-colonialist critiques of third world Francophone writers like Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon.<sup>viii</sup>), and thus critical questioning of hegemonic discourse is also part of the cultural fabric in a place such as Egypt, which has long been the repository for the best of the Arab cultural artifacts. It can be argued that the video artists in Egypt re-invigorate what is now the old order of experimental film and video, in their particular social critiques and meditative responses to the globalized culture in which they live. In this context the value of experimentation, of poetic speech in an electronic image-based form, has a primacy that in some ways is lost in a cybernetic suit of armor or taken for granted in the West.

When viewed next to a first world model, the experimental use of media in Egypt relies on communication technologies that are more simply configured, but no less technologies of communication. The first world pre-occupation with newness that always accompanies technological developments having to do with communications, seems to automatically confer meaning on form - when it is consciousness of the speaking/receiving subject, with all its de-centerings that attributes and produces meaning, not the actually machinery itself. Let us establish a few facts that determine the production of experimental video in Egypt: there are very few opportunities granted to artists to support their work; technology is prohibitively expensive to the majority of people who would want to invest in camera, computer, and software, to become

independent video-makers; customs tax on imported electronics has been recently lowered by significant degrees but there are additional new costs to compensate for this drop; local prices of imported computers are as much as 30% higher than their original cost; the institutions that offer training in the digital video and film media are few and under-funded; the private sector has not invested enough money to properly support a local film industry; and the social attitudes towards art (under which non-commercial, independent and experimental film/video are subsumed) divide art into folkloric traditional craft forms, or classical or modern, art forms such as music, painting, etc., that, on the institutional level, are mostly studied by girls from affluent families. The existing world of experimental video floats ambiguously between those of the film industry and art.

We cannot dismiss the appearance of new media in the art world of Cairo simply because it is not the same kind of new media available and being employed in the developed world. From Foucault's notion of history as archeology and text as part of discourse, we can ask what is the discursive formation or body to which these (video) works adhere, speak, and transform their subjects. We can then trace a discursive formation that includes other visual artists like Wael Shawky (who, in his installations, plays with east/west oppositions, pastiche and parody, architectural spaces that replicate real neighborhoods around a video projection – playing with simulacrum). We can include contemporary novelists like Sonallah Ibrahim (who uses narrative agency to critique multinational corporations and the effects of globalization on Egyptians). We can include Egyptian film directors like Mohamed Khan and Khairy Bishara both of whom

manage to make commercial and independently produced work; as well as the context of Egypt's film crisis. We can extend beyond the national site towards the regional (the Lebanese video artist Akram Zaatari) and then the directional and global.

We may well ask the following questions Foucault asks of the new historical subject, towards experimental video in Egypt. In response to his question concerning "what form of relation may be legitimately described between these different series," my tentative answer would be in their tone, form and order: the tone of irony, the form of anti-melodrama, and the order or dis-order of segmenting stories into disjunctive units, emphasizing their relations and their gaps. Foucault asks, "What vertical system are they capable of forming?" My response: the vertical system might be held together by a common thematic of rebellion against order, authority, patriarchy, militant nationalism and normative gender designations. Foucault asks, "What interplay of correlation and dominance exists between them?" In some aspects, Hassan's video work approaches Lebanese video maker Akram Zaatari's video work - with the emphasis on text and textuality. Sherief's video approaches Akram's compositionally, with the emphases on lighting, graphics and mise en scene; all three are very deliberate in their images, in their ordering of space, and the connections / boundaries between sections. Hassan's work more transparently theorizes (with words/text or the speaking voice) in his pieces, while Akram's critical foundations are implied by the structural elements of his work. These are just a few examples of the types of questions we could ask.

In his study of the statements of 19th century doctors, Foucault asked these

questions to understand how the statements were formed: “Who is speaking? Who among the totality of speaking individuals is accorded the right to use this sort of language? Who is qualified to do so? Who derives from it his own special quality, his prestige, and from whom, in return, does he receive if not the assurance, at least the presumption that what he says is true? What is the status of the individuals who - alone - have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse?” Such questions are implicit in some of Hassan Khan’s installation work. He considers the institutional sites, as Foucault does his 19th century doctor, from which Hassan produces his critique, and from which the discourse derives its originary legitimacy. Hassan takes Foucault’s analysis of the institutions of the hospital and/or prison (with their constant surveillance, codes, systematic observation, run by a hierarchized staff body) and transfers these qualities to the site of media as a similar kind of authoritarian institution in Egypt with its complicated relations to the West from its historical situation in the Middle East; with the relations between individual and state; with the immobilizing development issues that impact on subjectivity; and with the economic/political problems that translate into social problems on the gender, class and religion fronts. He poses a resistant speech/discourse via images. He takes on political critique in the awareness of his social formation and the structural formations of his environment; subsequently the politics of speech and of his speaking within and from this place operate on both grounds of form and content. In all of his works, video is very consciously the site of his discursive practice - made distinct in his particular use of the medium, in general, from Sherief El Azma, where the site of discourse is where the work extends outside itself, towards discussions of gender and identity construction. They both

share Foucault's orientation, where discourse is connected to politics - and discourse and practice are never innocent. The subject is the consequence of social and historical processes, not one we should assume as a source of intelligibility.

We can see echoes of Foucault's questions, or at least their mode of questioning in Hassan Khan's video and installation work: "What is a theory? What is a concept; what is a text?" Hassan focuses on discontinuities and ruptures in his environments, whether the specific locales or urban flows in Cairo, the reconstruction in Beirut, those between the practice of video-making and the subjects recorded, those within the speaking subject, or those between the discourse he invokes and his (discursive) practice. In *Tabla Dubb*, (2002) he de-centers the usual divisions between sender/receiver, producer/consumer. This is a 45-minute live performance that fuses documentary and poetic images of Cairo, joining fragments based on rhythm, graphics, beat, punctuation, metaphor and repetition. It consists of 23 audio and video loops that are assembled live from two VCR's, two CD players, video and audio mixers, a live camera feed and a microphone. The images are driven by an ensemble of highly percussive and drum based sound; the visual relations are forged across various montages, which begin with tall buildings dissolving into subway trains and Citi-busses looping into themselves. Movement crawls across these repetitions, emphasizing enclosure in a circuit of location and culture-specific meanings. For example in "Tabla Dubb No. 9" one of his more recent tracks in this work, a stationary image of an underground pedestrian tunnel connecting Al Azhar and Al-Hussein mosques in Islamic Cairo is the object against which super-impositions of people crossing fade in and out. A recitation of the poem for

prophet Mohamed's birthday (Mawlid al Nabi) is amplified, echoed, fragmented and looped, puncturing the space of performance with sentences about knowledge and its transmission, sent through the tunnel as if it were a telephone connection to the spiritual plane from the city. Religion is not the topic, nor is it fetishized as a cultural artifact; rather telecommunication is presented to us in the low-tech, urban Islamic milieu - the sacred and the profane are not separate in this scene of everyday life. Knowledge is transmitted in the process of engaging with this urban environment, living and moving around such historically signifying monuments. This is a tactile and sensorial knowledge of a place, which is the very least that the poorest people and the largest segment of the population in this environment can attain.

More recently Hassan completed a 52-minute 4-channel installation, *the hidden location* (2004), which opened in the Chantal Crousel Gallery in Paris, but has yet to be performed in Cairo. Never failing to engage critically, this demanding work is divided into no less than 10 sections which give us a selected "scan" (in the words of the artist) of his contemporary social environment: a woman's admission to a friend in a public bathroom of her affaire with a foreign man; a corporate executive explaining, in English, the skills-building games the company's employees must play; a conversation between Hassan the artist and his friend "Mo" in talk-show format about Mo's multiple and contradictory personalities, as perhaps brought out in his discussion of the role of furniture objects from his family's house; a cashier and his veiled girlfriend, a secretary, meeting on a bridge; tourists posing for the camera in downtown Cairo; cargo ships full of imported goods passing at Port Said; electronic gadgets piled up in a shop in a popular

section of Cairo; an exclusive housing area on the outskirts of the city; an employee going to work in downtown Cairo while we see him changing from his day clothes to a soldier's uniform, and while the camera and he rotate circularly as the environment appears to change; a dog in a living room approaching the camera. In this work there appears to be a play between movement and stasis where things and people are shown to be moving, where the camera moves around things, and where the environment appears to move, through their fragmentations across the 4 channels; yet as a whole, the result seems to be a still-life of particular moments that compose an idea of a place, the hidden location perhaps that we are scanning but that is not located by precise coordinates.

Sherief El Azma's orientation is different from that of Hassan Khan. His videos engage in a self-conscious play with film genres within documentary and narrative modes, occasionally deploying the tools of pastiche and irony, by which Frederic Jameson identified and described post-modern cinema of the early 1980's. Sherief also plays with what Jean Baudrillard has identified as floating signifiers (images, signs, words) that are distant from their referents (real things). In *Pilot for an Egyptian Woman's Soap Opera*, (2003), which Sherief describes as part B-movie and part melodrama, the real memoirs of a former Egyptian airline hostess are folded into an experimental narrative of gender dysphoria. There are four settings in the film: the training rooms where the airline hostess candidates are being prepared by a head hostess for their future roles by testing their presentation skills through tense questionnaires about social backgrounds and singing competitions; the airplane cabin during multiple flights which carries only male passengers, most of the time a grotesque "count" and his macho

body guard; the behind the scenes area for the airline hostesses on the plane, and the staging of intimate exchanges between women, characterized by shaky hand-held camera work and harsh white lighting; and the desert where the hostess trainer struggles in her pumps and uniform to reach a rock and deliver some hard-earned wisdom to her protégé, the trainee who's nose bleeds, while she performs her duties in the cabin with an unflinching smile. The constructedness of gender is being exposed, most perfectly through the use of pastiche and irony as it refers to film genres and gender genres, the codes of which it violates at the same time.

Hassan Khan and Sherief El Azma have responded to the film and television legacy in Egypt by dispensing with tradition, influence, and the idea of "spirit," in a way that echoes Foucault. They distinguish themselves against mainstream, narrative and dominant cinema while they have frequently commented on television's cultural weight; their works are distinctly local in space and colloquial in reference, while also distinct from the trends, idioms and history of the film industry. This rejection of, or definition against the past is reminiscent of Ortega Y Gasset's early 20th century description of the modern artist as a man outside of culture. He theorized about modern art that was always inevitably unpopular, in his essay *The Dehumanization of Art*. He claimed that modern art is unpopular, has no commercial appeal and is not understood by the masses. It divides the world into the masses who cannot understand it, and the few who appreciate it and grant it its social value. These later few tend to be artists themselves. Rather than condemn the new art for excluding the masses, he implicitly critiques the masses for too easily rejecting what they do not understand - and reminds us that to understand



something does not mean one has to agree with or like it. He points out other characteristics of the modern art: reliance on the tool of irony; the treatment of art as “a thing of no transcending consequence”<sup>ix</sup>; and this, the most characteristic feature - its “dehumanization of art” in its movement away from 19th century realism, to which the masses identified through human sentiment. The new art is extremely ironic and ridicules itself - and although Ortega is describing modernist art, these tendencies are echoed in the context of contemporary experimental video in Egypt. It is not insignificant that these video artists, who dwell between the film and the art worlds, have much to resist and define themselves against - one of which is the overwhelming tendency of Egyptian cinema to follow melodramatic, comedy and musical genres, void of the spirit of innovation or challenging subject matter.

## **Conclusion**

This focus on the video works of Hassan Khan and Sherief El Azma is not done to grant them a sovereignty in the world of experimental Middle Eastern video, nor to draw a contrived portrait of the state of non-commercial experimental video-making in Egypt, but rather to stress the diversity, complexity and difficulty of this environment that has debilitated what could otherwise be a vibrant and prolific video-producing scene - in a country long recognized for its cinema industry, and a region increasingly changing as it becomes both more technologized, and destabilized by Western economic and military interventions. One may wonder why Beirut, which has an active video art scene, is different, if it is not a particular zeitgeist or spirit. The answer appears to reside in the different history, development and legacy of colonialism; the different local economic

and power structures; more funding for the arts and a closer network of artists; their promotion by a curator like Christina Tohme; a differently formed bourgeois class who consume and produce alternative art to a slightly greater degree; and perhaps the Lebanese artist's greater willingness to participate in the marketing of his/her own work, while demurring and expressing ambivalence about the "Arab-experimental" category.

Furthermore, video production developed very differently in Egypt than in Beirut, where the video culture developed as a result of satellite television stations LBC and Future TV, which tapped into the talent of either journalists who covered the war, or young graphic designers and others who had been trained abroad or at LAU (Lebanese American University)<sup>x</sup>. What is happening now with digital video in Egypt is that regents of the older guard of independents - Mohamed Khan and Khairy Bishara (and similarly in Syria, Mohamed Malas) - are turning to independently produced digital video as a liberation from the constraints, bureaucratic, financial and otherwise, of working in the film medium and within the film industries in their own country. In 2004 Khan premiered his film *Klephty* at the 7<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Arab Cinema at L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris; in 2005 Malas premiered his film *Bab al Maqam* in Amman at the Francophone Arab screening. Both films have not been screened in commercial theaters in their own countries, and Bishara is still editing his film. Meanwhile, a younger generation, both graduates from the Higher Institute of Cinema and others, are buying their own digital cameras and editing gear, working collaboratively or solo, applying for international grants, and working in the industry to support the production of their own works.

But beyond peripheral glances, it is not terribly fruitful to compare Cairo and Beirut. In Cairo the individual wades through a sea of socio-economic problems, that greatly shapes the experience of time, space and subjectivity. Very soon there may be a more level playing field between the fringe video artist and the independent film directors, thanks to the digital video revolution. In this context, regardless of the high-religiosity of the society (Muslim majority and Christian Coptic minority), we find hint of the importance of spirit - which I broadly interpret as the spirit to imagine, to be imaginative, to create without concerns for profit, to stand apart from the majority of society, and to critique normative ideologies. This is a radical notion of spirit. The production of experimental video in Cairo, that questions surrounding grand narratives, that critically responds to its social environment, that critiques institutionalized power structures, and that travels beyond itself (through exhibition networks) is the affirmation of creative agency, and in this sense, spirit, working against great odds and socio-economic pressures. In this way, the burden of cinema (which could just as easily be the burden of normative society) is also a gift that forces newness and critical positioning into being. It does this perhaps violently and harshly, but this has frequently been the relationship between old and new forms. Experimental video is not going to come out from the shadows of the television and film industry in Egypt, but it has its place as a site of critical cultural production that questions how we comprehend the role of technology as an end and a statement in itself.

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## Endnotes.

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<sup>i</sup> Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. Quoted in Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 31

<sup>ii</sup> Naomi Sakr, *Satellite Realms – Transnational Television, Globalization & the Middle East*, p. 23/24

<sup>iii</sup> According to film critic Mohamed Al Assyouti, since the economic policy changes of the Sadat era and as a direct result of the 1967 defeat.

<sup>iv</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*

<sup>v</sup> Foucault, p. 7

<sup>vi</sup> Mark Poster, “Post Modern Virtualities”, from *The Information Subject*, p.141

<sup>vii</sup> Poster, “The Archeology of the Future” from *The Information Subject*

<sup>viii</sup> Ella Habib Shohat and Robert Stam, “Film Theory and Spectatorship in the Age of the Posts” from *Unthinking Eurocentrism*.

<sup>ix</sup> Ortega Y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art*, p. 13

<sup>x</sup> This is further elaborated in Laura U Marks’ article “What is That *and* between Arab Women and Video? The case of Beirut”, *Camera Obscura*, 18.2 (2003). Duke University Press.