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## 26 Egypt

The Mediterranean Basin has been a space of cross-cultural exchange since Antiquity. Trade routes connected Egypt with the world at large and fostered the circulation of products and ideas. These commercial and cultural interactions took a new turn after Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798 and intensified when the Suez Canal was completed in 1869 and the country became a British Protectorate in 1882. Many European intellectuals chose Egypt as a place of residence, and, conversely, many Egyptian writers and artists studied and received their training north of the Mediterranean. The transnational exchanges between Europe and the Middle East had a profound effect on literature and the arts in Egypt. There was a stimulating circulation of ideas between European expatriate communities and the local intellectual élite, and this gave rise to a process of transculturation, in which a variety of Modernist trends played an important rôle.

In contrast to the situation in western Europe, where Modernism was a response to rapid technological development, Modernist culture was embraced in Egypt as a force that could induce cultural and political change. European aesthetics stood in marked contrast to indigenous folk culture and the traditions of Islamic art. By adopting some of the artistic tendencies of Europe, the cultural vanguard could develop a programme of modernization which pulled the country out of a pre-modern state of existence and into the twentieth century.

This entry focusses on contacts between Egypt and Italy and maps out some of the cross-cultural exchanges that took place in the fields of literature, theatre and the fine arts. It identifies key actors and intermediaries who introduced Futurism to – and propagated it in – the land on the Nile and outlines how this process of cultural transfer affected the birth of a Modernist culture in the country.

## Literature and Drama

### Egypt and international Futurism

The region south of the Mediterranean is not traditionally understood as one of Futurism's spheres of influence. However, Egypt played a significant rôle in the movement, for F.T. Marinetti was born there and lived in Alexandria until he was fifteen. In several of Marinetti's works we can find memories drawn from his native country, for example in *Mafarka le futuriste: Roman africain* (*Mafarka the Futurist: African Novel*, printed 1909, but dated 1910 on cover) and in his Free-Word composition *Dune* (1914), or in the setting of the novel *Gli indomabili* (*The Untameables*, 1922).

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He returned to Egypt in 1929 and 1938 and wrote some travel notes about his experiences there. They were included in *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista. Una sensibilità italiana nata in Egitto* (An Italian Sensibility Born in Egypt, published posthumously in 1969), and *Il fascino dell'Egitto* (The Charm of Egypt, 1933), and show how the mythical dimension of Egypt served as a profound source of inspiration for him. From these books, especially the latter one, we can deduce that the founder of Futurism knew how to behave in Egyptian society and that he could understand a few words in the spoken Arabic typical of this country, as he had been exposed to it in childhood.

Besides Marinetti, a number of other Futurists travelled to Egypt and visited its cosmopolitan cities. Valentine de Saint-Point (1875–1953), for example, the author of the *Manifeste de la femme futuriste* (Manifesto of the Futurist Woman, 1912) and the *Manifeste futuriste de la luxure* (Futurist Manifesto of Lust, 1913), moved to Egypt and eventually died there in 1953. Likewise, Bruno Corra (1892–1976) travelled to the Nile in 1925 when he was seeking inspiration for his novel *Sanya, la moglie egiziana: il romanzo dell'oriente moderno* (Sanya, the Egyptian Wife: the Novel of the Modern Orient, 1927). The painter Tato (pseud. of Guglielmo Sansoni, 1896–1974) also visited Cairo for longer and shorter periods to seek inspiration for his work. Yet, despite this traffic between Italy and Egypt, neither Egyptian critics nor artists of Arabian descent took a great deal of interest in Futurism. The *Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism* (1909) was not translated into Arabic at the time, and scholars investigating Arab responses to the Italian avant-garde or to European Modernism have not found any signs of a 'local' reaction to Futurism in Egypt, which contrasts with the positive reception that Surrealism received in the *Les Essayistes* group, active in Cairo between 1924 and 1934 (see Khalil: *The Arab Avant-Garde*).

The 'spores' of Futurism settled in Egypt only due to a group of expatriate Italians and remained an isolated phenomenon in the land of the Pyramids. The presence of a Futurist offshoot in Egypt was in large part the result of the activities of one person: the lawyer Nelson Morpurgo (1899–1978), who lived there from 1920 to the late 1940s. Morpurgo's family came from Istria on the Adriatic coast, and they migrated to Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century. Carlo Morpurgo, Nelson's father, established a law firm in Cairo, which had an Italian community of about forty thousand in 1917 and sixty thousand in 1939. At that time, foreigners were very welcome in Egypt, and the tax-free régime of the Ottoman Capitulations, which conferred rights and privileges on foreign subjects resident or trading in the Ottoman dominions, ended only in 1949. Due to these arrangements, European communities, in particular from Italy, France and Britain, set up flourishing trading links and commercial enterprises in Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Petricoli: *Oltre il mito*).

Although Morpurgo's father was agnostic and Nelson converted to Catholicism in 1918, the Morpurgo family always had links to the transnational and multicultural Jewish community, whose presence in Egypt was historically intertwined with that of the Italians. Egyptian Jews also made a major contribution to the Francophone press

in the country – from *La Semaine égyptienne* (The Egyptian Week) to *L'Égypte nouvelle* (The New Egypt) and *La Revue du Caire* (The Cairo Review) and took part in the literary life of cities such as Cairo and Alexandria. They played an important rôle in trans-communal intellectual exchange between Jews, Muslims, Italians, Greeks and others. Morpurgo's attitude, as we shall see below, perfectly reflected this cosmopolitan milieu, and the multiple affiliations of intellectuals from the Jewish community helped to spread the ideas of Futurism in Egypt.

## Morpurgo and the Futurist movement in Egypt

Morpurgo was born in Cairo in 1899, but educated in Athens and Padua and later at the Liceo Manzoni in Milan. Completely bilingual in Italian and French, he earned two degrees in jurisprudence: one in Paris in 1924 and a second one in Rome in 1933. While still a schoolboy, he read *Lacerba* (1913–1915), the literary and artistic review founded by Giovanni Papini and Ardengo Soffici in Florence. Feeling drawn to Futurism, he met Marinetti at a student demonstration in support of Italian intervention in the First World War. He completed his 'apprenticeship' at the Futurist headquarters in Milan, where he spent a great deal of time arranging press reports on Futurism from *L'eco della stampa* (The Echo of the Press) and reading the volumes published by Marinetti's Edizioni futuriste di "Poesia" (Morpurgo: "Primo incontro con Marinetti a Milano").

In 1916, Morpurgo became involved in the preparation of the first posthumous exhibition of Umberto Boccioni's works at the Galleria Centrale d'Arte in Milan. Following Marinetti's example, Morpurgo enlisted as a volunteer in the First World War and in 1919 joined the Italian Expeditionary Corps in Palestine. Subsequently, he established himself in Cairo and took over his father's law office. In 1920, he founded the *Mouvement futuriste: Direction pour l'Égypte* (Futurist Movement: Directorate for Egypt) and, for more than two decades, organized theatre performances, soirées, lectures, recitations of Words-in-Freedom poetry, debates and conferences. He contributed to various French- and Italian-language publications and wrote a series of articles on Futurism for *Roma: Eco dell'Oriente Italiano* (Roma: The Echo of the Italian Orient), a periodical widely distributed within the Italian community in Egypt.

Morpurgo's first collection of poetry was *Il fuoco delle piramidi* (The Fire of the Pyramids, 1923), published by the Edizioni futuriste di "Poesia" and quickly acknowledged as one of the most successful examples of Words-in-Freedom in the *secondo futurismo* period (Viazzi: "Marinetti collaudatore", 200–201). Morpurgo's second book, *Pour mes femmes* (For the Women in My Life, 1933) was published by the Cairo weekly *La Semaine égyptienne*. The book was bilingual, with a French translation undertaken by Jean Moscatelli, a friend of Morpurgo's and a leading poet of a Surrealist group based in Cairo, named 'Art et Liberté' (Art and Liberty). A particularly favourable review by the aforementioned Valentine de Saint-Point launched

the book, which was well distributed within the cultural and artistic circles of Egypt, especially in the French-speaking milieu. The poems were much less influenced by Marinetti's 'freewordism' than those in *Il fuoco delle piramidi*, and only a few of them still employed the aesthetics of visual poetry. The abstraction, the universalism and the syncretism which had characterized the first collection gave way to a poetic language derived from the *crepuscolari* ('twilight poets', a late-Symbolist group in Italy) who were closely linked to the Egyptian context and landscape.

The *Mouvement futuriste: Direction pour l'Égypte* attracted a small group of supporters among the Italian population of Egypt and several members from the French-speaking community. The former group included the painter and decorator Vasco Luri, the poet Renato Servi and the élite Royal Italian Army storm troopers Rodolfo Piha and Rambaldo di Collalto. Morpurgo stated that he was alone in his activities and collaborations during the second phase of the *Mouvement futuriste* in Egypt. The fact that the group's activities were exclusively based on his initiative is confirmed by the fact that 25 Rue Cheikh Abou el-Sebaah was the official address of both the Movement and of Morpurgo's law office.

Morpurgo's publications in both French- and Italian-language magazines and journals in Egypt suggest that the poet attempted to spread Futurism amongst a wide community of people and thus contribute to a worldwide literary and artistic revolution. He directed, for this purpose, a literary column entitled "Arti e lettere" (Arts and Literature) in the broadsheet *Roma*. He also organized free Sunday-morning lectures in film theatres and Futurist soirées in Cairo and Alessandria. These included stagings of plays by Umberto Boccioni, Paolo Buzzi, Francesco Cangiullo, Mario Dessy and Cesare Cerati, as well as theatrical adaptations of Words-in-Freedom by Marinetti and Mario Carli.

In June 1920, the group organized a performance of twenty-four Futurist plays at the Printania Theatre in Cairo. On 24 August 1920, a soirée at the Olympia Theatre in Alexandria followed, featuring poetry readings, a lecture on Futurism by Morpurgo and songs by Lydia Fosca and Signor Fugà. On 16 October 1921, the Ezbekiyyeh theatre (known among the Italians in Cairo as Teatro del Giardino) presented *Morfina!*, a show that was reminiscent of the comic theatre of the Italian actor Ettore Petrolini (1884–1936). In 1921, the weekly satirical review *Bar* printed some excerpts of *Colonerie* (Colonial Knick-knackery), a "comical-satirical-musical review" by Morpurgo and Carlo Bocca, which was successfully staged by the Vannutelli company at the Kursaal Theatre in Cairo on 1 November 1922.

Around the same time, Morpurgo created a regular radio broadcast in Cairo that ran until the nationalization of Egyptian radio in 1934. He also worked on various magazines and French- and Italian-language newspapers, such as *Roma*, *Le Journal d'Égypte* (Egyptian Newspaper), *La Bourse égyptienne* (The Egyptian Stock Exchange), *Le Progrès égyptien* (Egyptian Progress), *Il giornale d'Oriente* (Newspaper of the East), *Calligrammes: Art, science, littérature* (Calligram: Art, Science, Literature) and *Actualités* (Current News). His writings show that Morpurgo was an important

mediator on the Cairene cultural scene as a dramatist, performer, radio speaker and cultural manager, as well as having an interest in the fine arts, during the 1920s and thereafter.

## Marinetti's visits to Cairo

Morpurgo's efforts were directed towards a propagation of the aesthetic principles of Futurism, which he defined as "a marvellous edifice built with our own hands" (Morpurgo: "Cosa è il futurismo"). He was keen to contribute to the intellectual renewal of the Italian population in Egypt, and in this he had Marinetti's full support. Although personal encounters between the two men were rare, the mere fact that both of them were born in Egypt fostered a deep mutual esteem and respect. This friendship was reinforced during the visits Marinetti paid to the Italian colony in Egypt in 1929 and 1938.

During this period of second-wave Futurism, Marinetti sought to establish the movement as the font of all avant-garde movements in Europe. Starting with *Le Futurisme mondial* (Worldwide Futurism, 1924), he issued a series of writings in which he outlined the historical development of various art movements that had all sprung forth from Futurism (see D'Ambrosio: "Il futurismo nel mondo"). In the context of liberal Egypt and the international community that resided there, many European trends in the arts and literature were represented in the cultural life of the country. It was therefore essential for Marinetti to defend the position that Futurism occupied with regard to other art movements. During his visit in 1929, Marinetti gave lectures at the Circolo Italiano, at the Teatro Alhambra, at the Kursaal Theatre and at the Diafa (Hospitality) club. His lectures were held both in French and Italian, and attracted a multinational audience (see Strożek: "Marinetti's Visit to Cairo in December 1929", Bardaouil: *Surrealism in Egypt*, 60–87 and Paniconi: "Italian Futurism in Cairo").

His visit in 1938 had a great resonance in the Egyptian press because he was officially greeted as *Accademico d'Italia* and was invited by the local Fascist representatives to speak to both Italians and other foreigners in Egypt. On 23 March 1938, Marinetti gave a talk entitled "La Poésie motorisée" (Motorized Poetry) at the Scuole Littorie (repeated at the Club des Essayistes in Cairo on 24 March 1938, and the Ewan Memorial Hall on 25 March 1938). After repositioning Futurism in the context of the other European avant-garde movements as such as Dadaism and Surrealism, he recited several poems that evoked the roaring sound of a motor at high speed (Tamer: "Futurisme et poésie motorisée"). The meetings also contained a contribution from Morpurgo, who read to a bewildered audience from his poem *Thermomètre égyptien* (Egyptian Thermometer). On the occasion of Marinetti's lecture at the Club des Essayistes a dispute with the local Surrealist group took place. The leader of the association, Georges Henein (1914–1973), publicly attacked Marinetti for his allegiance to Fascism (see Bardaouil: *Surrealism in Egypt*, 60–87 and Paniconi: "Italian Futurism in Cairo").

Marinetti also attended Egyptian theatres as a spectator and familiarized himself with the contemporary Egyptian cultural scene, largely thanks to Morpurgo, who was perfectly integrated into local Francophone and Arabic-speaking cultural circles. From the documents that Morpurgo left behind after his death (see the “Morpurgo Collection” at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, General Collection and the “Archivio Morpurgo – Fondo Cherini” at MART, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Trento and Rovereto, Archivio del Novecento), we learn about the success of Marinetti’s visits and about the events that himself organized around them – such as the Futurist evening held at the villa owned by the influential businessman Carlo Grassi, an event on which Marinetti also reported in his memoirs, *Una sensibilità italiana nata in Egitto* (An Italian Sensibility Born in Egypt). According to Morpurgo, the intellectual and artistic élite of Cairo was invited to this gala dinner in honour of Marinetti, including prominent literary figures, writers, painters, sculptors, musicians, poets, actors and journalists of all nationalities: Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, French, English, Italian, Greek and Armenian (Morpurgo: “Marinetti in Egitto”, 54). The poet also mentions intellectuals and well-known Egyptian poets such as Ragheb Ayad, who had studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and had been trained by Ferruccio Ferrazzi; Taha Hussein, who was a figurehead of the Egyptian *Nahḍa*, or cultural Renaissance, and one of the founding fathers of the Modernist movement in Arabian literature; the poet Salih Jawdat, then the youngest member of the Apollo Group (*Ġamā’at Apollo*, a literary movement active 1932–1934); and the sculptor Mustafa Naguib (1913–1990), who had been educated in Italy, and his wife Saiza Nabarawi (pseud. of Zaynab Muḥammad Murād, 1897–1985), a pioneer of the Egyptian feminist movement. Interestingly, there were people of all religions: Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Copts, Jews, Muslims; also present were representatives of the Arabic-speaking press from both Cairo and Alexandria: *al-Ahrām*, *al-Akhhbār*, *al-Moqattam*, *Rose al-Yusef*, the Armenian *Houssaper*, the Greek *Kairon*, the Italian *Il giornale dell’Oriente* and the French *La Bourse égyptienne*, *Le Journal d’Égypte*, *Le Progrès égyptien*, *La Reforme*, *Images*, *Dimanche* and *Actualités*.

Clearly, Morpurgo moved at ease within the French- and Arabic-speaking cultural circles of the time; he had many contacts with the figures who were prominent in the cultural and theatrical life of Cairo and, over time, he wove trustworthy relationships with traditionalist poets such as Ahmad Shawqi (1868–1932) as well as with poets of the avant-garde, such as the Surrealist Georges Henein. Morpurgo availed himself of this network of acquaintances when organizing Marinetti’s visits to Cairo and the lectures held on that occasion (Morpurgo: “Marinetti in Egitto”, 54).

Morpurgo’s journalistic writings show that he had considerable standing as a member of the Italian community in Cairo and as a representative of Egyptian cosmopolitanism. He played a mediating rôle between the Arabic-speaking scene and the multilingual foreign community in Egypt. He mediated between Marinetti and the local, largely Surrealist avant-garde (Paniconi: “Italian Futurism in Cairo”). Thus,



Futurism did play some rôle in the cultural life of the country, although it did not attract a numerous following.

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## The Fine Arts

### Introduction

Cross-cultural interactions between Egypt and Italy had a significant impact on Egyptian modern art. By the end of the nineteenth century, many Italian painters



had established their studios in Cairo and Alexandria and worked as professors in art schools. Additionally, a number of young Egyptians belonging to the generation of the so-called ‘pioneers’ received grants to study art in Italy, in particular in Rome and Florence. The presence of Italian professors and their commitment to improving art education and cultural institutions, combined with the mobility of young Egyptian artists, generated a substantial circulation of artistic ideas and practices between Egypt and Italy.

Perhaps one of the most tangible legacies of this migratory flow lies in the architectural design and urban planning of Cairo and Alexandria (see Godoli and Milva: *Architetti e ingegneri italiani in Egitto*; Volait: “La Communauté italienne et ses édiles”). But these transnational exchanges between Europe and the Middle East had also a major impact on the development of the visual arts in the region and greatly affected the development of Egyptian modern art (see Radwan: “Dal Cairo a Roma”). Although the present discussion focusses on Egypt’s multiple connections with Italy, one has to bear in mind that, during this period, similar processes took place involving other European countries, such as France or Great Britain, where Futurism had a notable presence.

King Fuad I (1868–1936) was a convinced Italophile, as was his son and successor to the throne, Farouk I (1920–1965), who acquired a number of Italian paintings to decorate his residences. Attracted by the European-oriented artistic taste of the ruling class in Egypt, a large number of Italians moved to Cairo and Alexandria, and some of them played a significant rôle in training a generation of young Egyptian artists. Equally significant was the establishment of an Egyptian Academy in Rome, as well as the representation of Egypt on the international art scene with its first participation in the Venice Biennale in 1938. These transnational exchanges and networks ultimately meant that Italian modern art, and Futurism in particular, left a mark on the formation of Egyptian art in the early twentieth century.

## Teaching the fine arts in Cairo

In 1908, the patron and art collector, Prince Youssef Kamal (1882–1967), together with the French sculptor Guillaume Laplagne (1870–1927), established a School of Fine Arts (*Madrasat al-funun al-jamila*) in Cairo (see Naef: *A la recherche d’une modernité arabe*; Shabout: *Modern Arab Art*). Their goal was to train young Egyptians in the traditions of European art. Accordingly, the administration of the new institution was entrusted to the hands of French and Italian artists until 1937, when the Alexandrian painter and diplomat Mohamed Naghi (1888–1956) was the first Egyptian to be appointed head of the school, succeeding the Italian painter Camillo Innocenti (1871–1961).

Italian artists not only played an important part in establishing the aesthetic canons of the institutions of art education, but were also active as artists. They found

a clientele among a privileged social class increasingly eager to acquire canvases with which to decorate their mansions and palaces. The appreciation and possession of European paintings served to reflect social status and functioned as a sign of belonging to a modern and cultured society. However, much of the art that enjoyed fame and status in Egypt either belonged to the Orientalist tradition and resembled European salon art, or pursued a Naturalist style of conventional still lifes, landscape painting, portraiture and street scenes. The young generation that had studied with Italian professors and had the opportunity to travel to Italy successively introduced novel painting styles championed by the *Macchiaioli*, Post-Impressionism and Divisionism.

Mohamed Naghi had many connections with Alexandria's Italian community. During his secondary studies at the Swiss School of Alexandria he befriended his fellow pupil Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888–1970), who was then drawn towards Parnassianism and Symbolist poetry but later had amicable relations with Futurists such as Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, F.T. Marinetti, Aldo Palazzeschi, Giovanni Papini and Ardengo Soffici (see D'Ambrosio: "Ungaretti e il futurismo"; Saccone: "Ungaretti, Reader of Futurism"; Viola: "Ungaretti, Marinetti e gli anni Trenta"; Zingone: "Kavafis – Ungaretti – Naghi – Marinetti"). Naghi was initially trained by the Italian painter Alberto Piattoli (dates unknown), but left for Italy in 1910 to complete his artistic studies at the *Scuola Libera del Nudo* at the Academy of Florence. Yet in Italy he received only a classical training; he also maintained relations with the Futurists, who played a significant rôle in his intellectual development.

## The 'pioneers' in Rome and Venice

Once a talented painter obtained a diploma from the School of Fine Arts in Cairo, he was sent to Europe with a government grant to complete his artistic training. As might be expected, the French professors in Egypt sent their best pupils to Paris, while the Italians directed them to Rome or Florence. In 1925, the first director of the drawing and painting section of the School, Paolo Forcella (dates unknown), arranged for three of his most gifted students, Ragheb Ayad (1892–1982), Youssef Kamel (1891–1971) and Mohamed Hassan (1892–1961) to be trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome. Ayad and Kamel had already visited Italy in 1921 and 1922 to study works of art and monuments they had previously known only from black-and-white reproductions. These exchange arrangements with France and Italy show that an extended stay in Rome or Florence came to be seen as a *passage obligé* in the career of many Egyptian artists. Their studies abroad had major implications for their careers, because, on their return, many of them were appointed to influential positions in schools, museums or other cultural institutions.

The state-funded travel grants provided Egyptian artists with an opportunity to broaden the scope of their artistic practice and to develop networks in an international environment. When Ayad, Kamel and Hassan arrived in Rome, they had to

learn Italian before entering the Academy of Fine Arts. They shared the same studio and were supervised by the Roman painter Umberto Coromaldi (1870–1948), but they also encountered Italian Futurists such as the painter Ferruccio Ferrazzi (1891–1978), who had a significant influence on Ragheb Ayad’s work (see Bardaouil and Fellrath: *ItaliaArabia*; Corgnati and Barakat: *Italy*).

Ferrazzi had joined the Futurist movement in his early career before turning towards a Neoclassical style that brought him closer to the Novecento movement (see Mantura and Quesada: *Ferruccio Ferrazzi*; D’Amico and Vespignani: *Ferruccio Ferrazzi*; Tallarico: *Futurismo di Ferrazzi*). His *Scuola di decorazione* at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome had a considerable impact on Italian mural art, which became one of the favoured media of expression for Futurists such as Gerardo Dottori, Fillia, Enrico Prampolini, Giuseppe Preziosi, Pippo Rizzo and ex-Futurists such as Mario Sironi and Gino Severini. This new trend culminated in the *Manifesto della pittura murale* (Manifesto of Mural Painting, 1933) and *La plastica murale* (Wall Decoration, 1934), and the two occasions of the *Mostra nazionale di plastica murale per l’edilizia fascista* (National Exhibition of Wall Decoration for Fascist Buildings), held in Genoa (Palazzo Ducale, 14 November 1934 – 11 January 1935) and Rome (Mercati Traianei, October–November 1936) (see Godoli: “Il futurismo e la plastica murale”; Golan: “Slow Time: Futurist Murals”; Grueff: “Plastica murale”). Ayad shared with Ferrazzi an interest in decorative painting, especially Ferrazzi’s *encausto* technique. Although Ayad’s activity as a decorator is not very well documented, it was an important aspect of his career, as he was commissioned in Egypt to paint several decorative projects in churches and other public buildings.

In April 1926, Mohamed Hassan, together with his colleague Ragheb Ayad, visited the fifteenth edition of the Biennale, which was marked by the participation of the Italian Futurists (see *I futuristi italiani alla 15. Biennale veneziana*; Fabbri: “La scena di tutte le scoperte”; Migliore: “Macchina di visione”). The *Mostra del futurismo italiano*, curated by F.T. Marinetti, was presented in the pavilion of the USSR and included sixty works by leading figures of Futurism, such as Fedele Azari, Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Fortunato Depero, Fillia, Enrico Prampolini, Pippo Rizzo, Luigi Russolo and Tato (see *XVª Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte della Città di Venezia: Catalogo*, 228–231). In his unpublished travel report, Ragheb Ayad expressed his admiration for the Futurists, whose influence is perceptible in the dynamic lines and vibrant touch that characterized his work from this period (see Archival sources, ‘Ayyad: *Taqrir min rihlati fi mudun Flurinsa, Siyana wa-l-Bunduqiya*).

When Ragheb Ayad returned to Cairo after having spent four years in Italy, he suggested to the government the creation of an Egyptian Academy in Rome. The sight of the many foreign academies established in the Italian capital had led him to imagine a similar institution for his country, which would function as an artists’ residency and facilitate cultural exchange. This proposal came at a time when King Fuad I was intensifying diplomatic relationships with Italy. When, in 1936, an agreement was signed to found the Egyptian Academy in Rome, Fuad I appointed the artist and diplomat Sahab Rifaat Almaz (dates unknown) as director of the Academy. The first years of the

institution coincided with the accession to the throne of Fuad's son, King Farouk I, and the official independence of Egypt. Farouk I was keen to cultivate the diplomatic ties with Italy that had been initiated by his father in order to maintain stability in the region, particularly with regard to the strategic implications of Mussolini's occupation of Ethiopia (1935).

Mohamed Naghi, who headed the Egyptian Academy in Rome between 1947 and 1950, affirmed his admiration for the Italian Futurists. As a fervent nationalist, he found affinity with the patriotic ideals of the Italian movement and promoted the social and political virtues of a national art that could serve and reflect the progress of a nation (see Naghi: "Art et Dictature"). As mentioned earlier, Naghi maintained a close friendship with Giuseppe Ungaretti, and it appears that he also had great respect for Marinetti, who, just like him and Ungaretti, was born and raised in Alexandria.

Naghi paid tribute to Marinetti in one of his major works, entitled *L'École d'Alexandrie* (The School of Alexandria), which he had begun to paint after the Venice Biennale of 1939. This large allegorical painting was one his most ambitious works and occupied him for more than ten years. The title and subject of the work echo Raphael's fresco *Scuola di Atene* (The School of Athens, 1509–1511) in the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican, which depicts the triumph of Reason and Faith by synthesizing the philosophical and theological thought of Ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy. Naghi's ambition was to transpose this idea of depicting several branches of knowledge, ancient and modern, to the other side of the Mediterranean. The master of the *cinquecento* gave classical philosophers the countenance of contemporary thinkers and artists (Raphael himself, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Giuliano da Sangallo, Bramante, Baldassare Castiglione, Il Sodoma, Perugino). Naghi's *School of Alexandria* similarly blended figures of ancient and modern times. Behind the mathematician Archimedes, we can see Marinetti and Ungaretti. Among the crowd of intellectuals who form part of the philosophical legacy of the city founded by Alexander the Great, whose equestrian portrait figures in the centre of the composition, we can discern the writer Taha Hussein, the politician Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid and the feminist intellectual Huda Shaarawi. Thus, by portraying Marinetti in his *School of Alexandria*, Naghi included Futurism as part of the narrative of Egyptian intellectual history.

Although other Egyptian art movements, such as Surrealism with the establishment of the Art and Liberty Group; see Bardaouil: *Surrealism in Egypt*), flourished in Egypt in the 1930s, the dialogue with Italian Futurism, both from an aesthetic and from an ideological perspective, continued. Egyptian Surrealism was founded as a counter-movement by the writer and poet Georges Henein (1914–1973) in reaction to the lecture, "La Poésie motorisée", which Marinetti held in 1938 at the Club des Essayistes in Cairo. Despite the tensions created by the ideological differences between the leading figures of these movements, their coexistence in Egypt generated an intellectual space where lively intellectual debate could thrive. Thus, Futurism helped to stimulate the emergence of an Egyptian avant-garde, as well as the development of a cosmopolitan art scene.

AU: Please provide opening parenthesis in the sentence "Although other Egyptian art movements, such as ..."

## Conclusion

An examination of the migratory flows and transnational circulation of persons, ideas and images between Egypt and Italy demonstrates that Italian artists played an important rôle in defining certain criteria of art education and artistic developments in Egypt. Starting in the early twentieth century, with artists who belonged to the *Macchiaioli* and Divisionist movements and were active as administrators of the School of Fine Arts in Cairo or as educators in their Alexandrian studios, these interactions were consolidated by the encounter of young Egyptian artists with Italian Futurism in Italy. Moreover, the ideas of personalities such as Marinetti and Ungaretti, whose writings and lectures were published in the local press, had a major impact on Egyptian intellectuals. Futurism was therefore, for the ‘pioneers’ mentioned here, not simply an aesthetic, but also a social and political rôle model.

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