Lecture 13: Letters between Cairo & Bagdad

(Part I) Surreal Cairo

Middle-East: defined by the common language arabic (precedes Islam but heavily associated to it).

→ In the 40's emerges an Egyptian surrealism, group lead by Georges Henein (poet) how a number of colonial subject find visual + language in associat° with surrealism literary + visual: Vive L'Art Degeneré (response to the Nazi exhibition) 1938
→ Moment where Cairo is heavily populated with Europeans. see Ramsès quote in Shalem Insistance that Egyptian artists have to know what international art is like, (the issue is not cultural invasion). True Egyptian art should not fight international heritage.

(1939)
→ Youssef's composition portrays a woman's body on a cord placed within a landscape. (1947) automatist gesture, then filled with a second conscious work (figuration) Fouad Kamel repetit° of the same sort of motif, template for filling in different still life elements in the foreground. Where/how does this cosmopolitan impulse begin to change in 1950?

→ Abdel-Hadi El-Gazzar, reads in his vers° of surrealism: emphasis more on individual & his freedom (artists connect to freedom+ Benjamin's view) as well as internationalism.
Vs 1950's: growing emphasis on nat° and nation-state
Le Fou Vert (1951), The Past, Present and Future (1951) speaks to a premodern past → a figure (present) → a key (not yet fully articulated future)
Un Djinn Amoureux (1953): move away from the canvas (guash & ink on paper) Imagery of writing, script, illusion (indicative of the book), it is also more explicitly egyptian, calls for national collective unconscious
The Hymn on the Beatles (1953) // see Shalem on it, absurd (uneasy) alignment

Part II Letters around Bagdad

→ 1960's : painting arabesque : calligraphic abstract°
Yaumane, Arabesque (1961), using them as ground for semi-abstract compst°
Dialog w/ surrealism : see p°casso Mo Tobey (cubism) to introduce
writing into the space of painting, but here letters themselves are
used to support the composition
(reclaim a heritage + represent EU arts) // as invention of the pre-colonial
→ Shabout traces these modernist deployments to Madiha Omar (potential
of calligraphy realised in the US), experiments in calligraphy with
lebanese artist Choucair (Saloua) Self-Portrait à la Matisse The Green Stripe
she studied in the studio of Fernand Leger // Les Peintres Celebres (1948)
inspired by Three Women. Experiments with calligraphy as a material form
Etel Adnan (lebanese) working on an artist book format
in Iraq, Zenderoudi illuminations, using calligraphy as a motif.
+ Mukhtar (neo-pharaonism : Egyptian Awakening)

Of Morocco and Mulligans

→ In reference to Ahmed Cherkaoui (grows up near casablanca, trained as an artist
in calligraphy, travels to Paris in 1956 and also Warsaw)
Illumination (1965) and Talisman II (1966), funded by Unesco (internationalism)
[the artists circulate according to that] he is being paid to observe his own culture
(having studied EU modernism, he goes back to studying regional art)
Deliberate fusion that defines his work :
tapestry, geometric design & pottery (fascination with signs) but also see how
he's engaged with Paul Klee (more pared-down figuration)
Cherkaoui Oeil (1961) - Klee Mask (1921)
Where the Bengal school rejects them (colonial educat°) vs in Morocco they
support training in traditional crafts (Cherkaoui reject naturalism and claims
both arts traditional to a region and also arts from Europe)
→ Also references to Dubuffet (art Brut / informel / tachisme)
Signs (1962) as reference to Dubuffet (1946)
→ Dialogue with legacy of cubism (calligraphy in the canvas)
as well as automatic drawing (surrealism)

Midterm · comma elevard (formal, content, historical context, theme discussed in the course)
// put that in your introduction
// express the different ways which the shows in different paintings
(points to things to support claims, give concreteness to the arguments)
Ideally, mix of visual analysis as well as context + articles

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→ Bagdad Modern Group (Irak) : Jewad Selim : Baghdadiat and Bahdadiat
simplified geometry, unmodeled field of color
Monument of Freedom (1959, unfinished) large bronze figures in relief
→ Shabout : model of engagement w/ modernism marks strg v. different than in South American (that's what Torres Garcia tried but failed to do)

Part II Avant-Garde and class
→ Nigeria. Chica frames her essay around educat° (legacy of colonialism)
Ben Enwonwu, Going (1961) criticizes the school for its allegiance to the Commonwealth
// what is the place of modernism in art education + concerns on modern
(mutual antagonism)
While Chica argues that figures that are articulated in front of planes of color (Lokeke, Ina Mun ↔ Picasso, Painter and Model, or Irandelle Amon, Mimi)
→ ~~Her~~ assessments ~~is~~ we are wedding the cream of our natural art to the EU modes of visual language
Bringing our art to painting through techniques of EU modernism

Part III Manaba / ~~CO~~ BRA
~~Copenhagen~~ ~~Amsterdam~~ ~~Brussels~~
→ Asger Jorn, Ravnen ; descreat° of painting
Pedersen, Red Masks ; (color)
Constant, Cat , graffiti, outsider art
Jorn, The Avant-Garde doesn't quit, relat°ship with Kitsch
Manabas, Painting (1950) : gestural automatist