



SALON 94

AHMED MORSI

*DETAIL FROM A
MURAL*

NOVEMBER 12 – DECEMBER 18, 2021

Ahmed Morsi: Detail from a Mural*Adam and Eve, 2021*

It has been said that Ahmed Morsi (born 1930) “paints his poetry and writes his paintings.” With a seven-decade oeuvre that spans paintings and poetry composed in his birth city of Alexandria, Egypt in the late 1940s and 1950s to more recent works from his New York studio where he has resided since 1974, Ahmed Morsi is one of the most prominent living Egyptian artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

While never part of an established artistic school, Morsi’s work can be considered under the larger umbrella of global Surrealism—a revisionist category that looks beyond the narrow, Parisian-centric definition of surreal practices policed by avant-garde purists such as Andre Breton. Coming of age in the late colonial period in Alexandria where French, Italian, Greek, Armenian, and Syrian cultures thrived alongside the local inhabitants, Morsi had

firsthand exposure to European avant-garde art that was regularly exhibited in the city's thriving cultural milieu. Morsi's early work was influenced by modernist masters such as Picasso, Brancusi, de Chirico, and Giacometti—and this early exposure to first generation Surrealism also transpired in his work as a translator and art critic. Morsi authored the first Arabic monograph of Picasso in 1969 and translated the surrealist writings of Paul Éluard and Louis Aragon into Arabic.

After leaving Alexandria for Baghdad and later Cairo, Morsi left the Middle East to immigrate to New York in 1974. While Morsi did show his paintings and continue to write poetry in America, his work was never fully recognized in his new homeland. Morsi's status as an exile was an important part of his identity, and even served as a muse for his painting and writing; as such, even when he exhibited in SoHo at the height of the 1980s art boom, the enthusiastic reception of his paintings quickly evaporated when Morsi refused to renounce his Egyptianness for a more assimilated identity. As the American art world was practically monocultural in the 80s, there was no space for an artist who constructed a practice in relationship to a faraway homeland; as such, Morsi remained hidden in plain sight in the center of Manhattan, working prolifically in his midtown studio under the cover of his exile status. Until now, with much of the art historical canon under revision, it has been challenging to appreciate this complex expatriated artist who uniquely synthesized Surrealism with his Middle Eastern visual and literary heritage. As Morsi has said of his decades in New York, a well-kept secret of his own making, "My work has always been here. I have always been here. Busy working."

In November 2021, Salon 94 will present a seminal selection of Morsi's work that spans six decades. Made between 1948 and 2010, these emblematic paintings will showcase his unique figurative style, characterized by their dream-like narratives and unconscious, fragmentary invocations of his Egyptian homeland. This presentation is concurrent to Morsi's inclusion in PSI's "Greater New York" that is turning its attention to the crucial intergenerational dialogue between artists in our city's vibrant art scene.

—Alison Gingeras

Ahmed Morsi: *Detail from a Mural* is on view by appointment at 3 East 89th Street from November 12 to December 18, 2021.

Please go to salon94.com/visit to schedule your appointment.

For additional information on Ahmed Morsi, please contact [Andrew Blackley](#).

For press inquiries, please contact [Michelle Than](#).

