LEAD-IN: Art may have not started during the Egyptian revolution, but from the ancient Egyptian times. Nevertheless, the 25th of January revolution played a major role in putting a stop to suppression of the old corruption regime and allowed the Egyptian citizens to have the freedom of speech and the freedom to express their feelings and imagination creatively. Nowadays, art scene remains in a state of change, experiencing a kind of chaotic freedom as demonstrators return to the heart of Cairo Tahrir Square. A-U-C’s Shaimaa Naiem reports.

During the 25th of January, people in Tahrir in Egypt; downtown Cairo have been given the opportunity to express their freedom using art which led to the emergence in increase in the amount of graffiti displayed around Cairo. The explosion of caricatures and cartoons became the high artistic value because it expresses protestor’s freedom of expression and conveys it quickly to the audience.

The revolution, of course, contributed to the enlightenment of the art within a new era of democracy says Nada Fathy, an Art student at The American University in Cairo:

   FATHY: “It changes during the revolution especially for the photo journalists they took a very very big place as people documenting everything that happens. It is very different that an old other creative parts of arts, the photo journalism is now more respected for documenting.”(0:23)

During the revolution people expressed their feelings through graffiti on walls because at that time media was being censored; the full image or the true image of events in Tahrir and other cities in Egypt was covered in a misleading way, the internet was considered the bridge and the only way for the truth and for the instant interaction between Tahrir and Facebook users, who are considered the flame of the revolution.

   FATHY: “I think art took a very very big an efficient place affect the revolution and actually created the revolution, a big part as people use it as expression (self –expression) very much and even calligaiyfe and photography, before the revolution people did not real considered art as something important for self expression but after the revolution everything change, people respect art more and they go to gallery more examples like time house gallery In Wasat Al Balad since in Tahrir anyway.”(0:33)

The right freedom to expression is particularly important for media, which plays a special role as the bearer of the general right to freedom of expression for all. Alia Mahdi is a blogger. She believes freedom of expression after the revolution has given her the chance to publish her nude
photos online without being censored. In other words, she thought that exposing herself on the internet is part of a revolution ongoing since 25th January. However, most of the people disliked her way of thinking and she has been beaten up and mobbed when she showed up in Tahrir Square.

FATHY: “if we give examples like Aliaa Mahdi, people tend to like judge a lot of people. Judge how art should expressed actually art is freedom of expression cannot say and judge what is wrong, culturally we say this is wrong because accordingly to our religion it Haram and (forbidden) but if she wants to do so, but people cannot go to her blog and watch it. She is free to do whatever she wants as long as people not forced to watch what she is doing.”(0:34)

(Music)

Egypt 25 January revolution is a history day that succeeded in removing Hosni Mubarak from the Presidency, however the decades- old regime has yet to fall over. Egypt’s attention after the revolution has focused on political and social issues; the arts field is trying to relocate itself with in a seemingly new reality. The revolution had made marvelous changes in that small period of time. In 18 days in which protestors successfully get rid of Mubarak regime, and the months after, they have witnessed an explosion of an unmanageable artistic force. Many artists had hidden their opposition behind symbolic colors and shapes, but after the revolution they have the ability to express their arts without any censorship.

AUC has made an exhibition photo gallery about Tahrir Square. They have collected pictures about 25 January revolution and displayed it at the Bassily Hall expressing what have happened in the revolution. David London was a professor in JRMC department and he was the one who come up with this idea during his teaching period. He asked his students in his course to collect most the revolution pictures in order to maximize them and print them as well. This project was assigned for them throughout the semester Spring 2011 and the murals went up at the end of the Spring semester.

Manal Hamady is an IMC major at AUC.

HAMADY: “Dr David London was so admired after by the revolution. It had a great effect on him so he deiced to do something next generation or every generation enter university will see the achievements of the revolution the whole 18 day in one poster. The idea was not just collecting photos as much as we can, but it was focused more on when you stand in front of one poster you can see the 18 whole days in front of you, so it was a great idea by him.” (0:42)

As we can see the revolution had a marvelous effect on people as they succeeded to deliver their messages through Facebook, although the media was not telling the truth. Besides, one of the doctors in the Mass Communication department sponsored an idea, which was to collect natural photos from Egyptian revolution such as, mobile phones, the Internet and Facebook as well. His main goal was to collect unique and not clattered pictures. The pictures that are at the Bassily Hall was created from one of the art vision which is called “ Mosaic style” it is like puzzles connected with each other, far away a person can see a shape and when they come near it shows a lot of different pictures collected together to form one.

HAMADY: “So we started throughout the semester the three to four months collecting photos from our mobiles and our friends cell phones, from the internet and we are just focused
more from mobile because it was unique. It was not so clattered and so published everywhere so we collected over eleven thousand photo from Tahrir square and from our friends mobile and our cell phone. We linked with this with art vision which is called Mosaic style so that it’s like a puzzle connected with each other or from far you can see a great shape and when you get near to the poster, you can see every each and each picture.” (1:09)

Professor London’s main goal was to finish the project before the semester ends Spring 2011. His goal was successfully achieved. He wanted the revolution to be always remembered by people and always wonder about the story behind it.

(Music)

Graffiti in Cairo streets proved to be a successful artistic way of expression, which demonstrated the existence and the messages it conveys, according to Shady El Noshokaty visual arts professor at AUC.

NOSHOKATY: “Graffiti art when you talk about revolution, of course revolution is a huge social movement, huge social strong. Revolution is not like a movement something which is change the whole environment all around; political, social whatever, everything become different it is not developing, but it is different it is another side. It is completely another side. Graffiti as revolutionary art because graffiti is an art which is related to all social movements when people are allow to speak about what do you think loudly when spraying in the wall, writing, graving, printing white and black poster, cheap poster and just hanging it on the wall. It is just about giving your voice a power that shows to everyone on the street because that what you really want to show your voice to everyone walking around in the street. Those people who doesn’t know you, so graffiti does not exist before in our Egyptian scene and doesn’t exist because there was a law before which control that kind of artistic.” (1:29)

Mainly, there are two different kinds of arts; mass media and visual arts. Visual arts or contemporary arts have much different kind of definitions and many different directions. There is a clear separation between what mass media is and what a visual art is.

NOSHOKATY: “Mass is kind of art which it deals with people, its artist which could be program designer, could be a designer in magazine or could be a singer even an artist as long as they can make a production and this production shown in television or in a poster, hanging in a wall or in a book. This is all could be art as mass medium as mass art. Of course, mass art is much more connected to people because everyone see magazine, see television every one walk in the street so such kind of art is more attached to life of ordinary and normal people who walks in the street. Those who do that art think about kind of messages all of Those who do that art think about kind of messages all of the time because they think about sending that message to others through their art.” (1:04)

No one can deny that the flame of the revolution started from the social networks and from youth based upon their frequent use of Facebook and the Internet either on their mobiles or computers. So as we have taken in schools, globalization and technology turned the whole world into one country without any borders, so what about a country with 27 governorates. The youth succeeded to gather and repel the old regime.
NOSHOKATY: “The movement on the Facebook I found it very very interesting. How people can make jokes, how people can make fun of serious issue, and it’s hilarious how people can think creatively to use image or old film or put text on film or make editing to create a very nice interesting message which is very fun it is typical Egyptian. Also the movement on the Facebook related to how Egyptian use political statements to address that kind of statements strong, but they did it in a very light comedian hilarious way by playing with words and playing with images. I think movement on Facebook is not less than graffiti on wall because you still having that kind of interaction and dialogue discussions sometime it is very hard and harsh, but some others is very fun and this coming with nice jokes than other with coming with bad words, some other coming with image and link some of the Videos to Ismail Yassin. The whole archive in YouTube and you select what you want to say with making joke.”(1:23)

(Music)

Art remains a great challenge for all independent artists which mean Egyptian revolution had a sparkling effect in arts. Only historical perspectives will assist in shaping creativity in art and that will make it more valuable. In other words, those perspectives will come within the near future as art will launch developing their creativity and valuable artistic expressions of Egypt’s revolution. Liberty is the key word that Egyptian people are calling for and it’s no more to be censored and their voices are taken into consideration.

Shaimaa Naiem, AUC News.

Interviewees

I would like to thank those who have contributed to the making of the audio documentary.

AUC Professor Shady El Noshokaty, from the art department.

Nada Fathy an art major.

Manal Hamadi an IMC major.

Credit goes to Youtube for song -*Esbat_Makanak by Cairokee.*