

## **PULSATIO – VISUAL BREATHINGS OF LIFE**

Mohamed Taha Hussein (1929) is a leading personality of modern art in Egypt. After a figurative phase in the 1950's, he studied at the Fine Art Academy in Dusseldorf in Germany, and became personally acquainted with the artists of the 'Zero' group, including Gotthard Graubner and Heinz Mack, who each told me they have fond memories of meeting Taha Hussein. His experience in Dusseldorf motivated Hussein to abstraction. He immediately understood that it is not useful for him as Egyptian merely to follow his German colleagues, but he needed rather to find a similar objective or universal informal painting through his own cultural background.

In the 1980's Hussein found his path while creating strong idiosyncratic paintings, founded in his profound understanding of Sufism. His inspiration at this time came from nature, from structures of stones, water and plants. These works are made up of contrasting dots, strong geometric signs, symbols and calligraphic slashes. It makes sense to know that these powerful works were created by an artist from an Islamic country, although the artist could also have originated from Asia. These works demonstrate the power of manually painted calligraphy, which is on purpose unreadable, and as such a basic universal human expression that, instantaneously and pure visually, provide a sense of meaning.

At the age of eighty-six the artist is propelling his creativity to yet another level of powerful and dynamic abstraction. The paintings that are presented under the label "Pulsatio" (Latin for heart beat) in a natural way build on the impressive earlier Basmalah works.

With strong brushstrokes indicating not more than a hint of Arabic calligraphy, these works are even more about the continuous and compelling pulsating forces of life and nature. Powerful and colorful breathings of life. The hand-ordered compositions evoke the visual sensation as if one is looking at rough edged and abstract particles streaming and exploding in many directions, or if still some shapes are looming. Shapes that occasionally could be the dim outline of a human being, or part of a tree or the surface of water shimmering in sunlight. But it is not clear yet if they will become actual shapes.

The strong loose forms provide the impression as if the compositions are dissolving, or, to the contrary, are clustering into becoming. This is emphasized by Taha combining larger and small, thicker and thinner forms, providing an interesting spatial dimension and allowing a pulsation between foreground and background. A push and pull force more complex than painting in the 1950's. These complex and contradicting impressions, exemplifying the sensation of life's pulsation, cause a natural and pleasant bewilderment in the viewer.

While one cannot know what one is looking at, one cannot help noticing the sheer viewing of these paintings gives a strong and pleasant feeling. In my opinion the best socio-political meaning of art is art providing another person an experience that will help that person to cope with his/her own life. An experience evoked by just looking, allowing your eyes and brain to roam. Mohamed Taha Hussein's new works certainly belong to that category.

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As artist Ilgen participates in the 56<sup>th</sup> Biennial Venice 2015. In 2008 he participated in the 11<sup>th</sup> Cairo Biennial.