

**A TRIBUTE TO THE DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT: THE SCHIRN PRESENTS AN IMPRESSIVE PANORAMA PAINTING BY AMNA ELHASSAN IN THE ROTUNDA**

**AMNA ELHASSAN**

**DECONSTRUCTED BODIES – IN SEARCH OF HOME**

**NOVEMBER 4, 2022 – FEBRUARY 12, 2023**

**PRESS TOUR: NOVEMBER 9, 2022, 11 AM**

In her paintings and prints, the artist Amna Elhassan (b. 1988) depicts the sociopolitical changes and cultural resistance in Sudan with a special focus on the women in her country. In the exhibition “Amna Elhassan: Deconstructed Bodies – In Search of Home,” the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is presenting the artist’s first large-format wall painting *December* (2022) in its publicly accessible Rotunda from November 4, 2022, to February 12, 2023. In the inner Rotunda walkway on the first floor, Elhassan is also showing more than twenty paintings and prints which have been created since 2019, some of them specially for the exhibition. Following the revolution in Sudan in 2018–19, the artist’s work has undergone a lasting change. The central theme of her selection of works for the Schirn is the status of women in Sudan and the perception of their bodies by society.

In the copious panorama painting *December* (2022) in the Schirn Rotunda, Elhassan processes the crushing of the democracy movement in Sudan and refers to the Khartoum massacre in 2019. This was perpetrated by government troops to put a violent end to the peaceful Sudanese Revolution (also called the December Revolution), which had led to the overthrowing of the thirty-year dictatorship of the former president Omar al-Bashir. The revolution involved country-wide protests and a three-month-long occupation of the square in front of the army headquarters in Khartoum. During the massacre, women were raped, and many of the bodies of the victims were thrown by the attackers into the waters of the Nile. Elhassan’s painting shows the subject of the Nile as the river of life and death. It takes a stand against the assumption that death represents the end of individual dreams and ambitions. The three women portrayed in the painting represent the victims of the Sudanese Revolution. Elhassan also incorporates Arabic lettering, referring to the graffiti in public space which was used in the resistance movement not only to communicate political demands or to provide information about the dates and locations of the demonstrations, but also to honor the memory of the victims. Here, Elhassan touches on commentary by her mentor, the Sudanese artist Hatim Koko, who has for instance described her work as a “celebration of women.”

In the inner Rotunda walkway, on the first floor of the Schirn, the artist is showing a selection of everyday scenes and portraits of Sudanese women, celebrating in her work their strength and resilience in this time of political and social change. Characteristic of Elhassan’s painting style is her experimentation with different techniques, including analogue and digital drawing methods, oil, acrylic, and spray paints, and her approach to working in layers on canvas and paper. At the Schirn, Elhassan expands the pictorial space of the paintings beyond the canvas and thus inscribes the works into the exhibition space. Here, too, the artist introduces lettering beside the works, among other things street names, unofficially renamed by the civilian population during the revolution and dedicated to the members of the demonstration who had been killed.

**Dr. Sebastian Baden**, director of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, stresses: “Amna Elhassan is an important voice of artistic self-empowerment in Sudan. With her location-specific panorama painting in the Schirn Rotunda, she sets a sign for courage and commitment to a living democracy. The artist dedicates a forward-looking monument in painting to the victims of the Khartoum massacre. At the same time, her work is a tribute to the courageous women who represent the driving force behind the social transformation in Sudan.”

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The curator of the exhibition, **Larissa-Diana Fuhrmann**, explains the artist's working method: "A characteristic of Amna Elhassan's art is the way she works in layers. She produces her motifs on the canvas or paper layer by layer, and at the Schirn she is now doing the same, but for the first time in an expansive format. With this multilayered approach, the artist reveals the complex reality in Sudan and the struggle for emancipation and liberation. By incorporating graffiti and extending the paintings into the exhibition space, Elhassan links the protests on the street directly with the museum space at the Schirn."

**Amna Elhassan** (b. 1988, Khartoum, Sudan) studied architecture at the University of Khartoum and at Sapienza University in Rome, before registering for a studio program at the Khartoum Arts Training Center (2017–19). In recent years, Elhassan has exhibited her works at international venues, including HFBK University of Fine Arts Hamburg, Germany (2022), Egypt Int'l Art Fair, Cairo, Egypt (2021), FNB Art Joburg, streamed online from Johannesburg, South Africa (2020), Afriart Gallery, Kampala, Uganda (2020), and Journées d'Art Contemporain de Carthage (JACC), Tunis, Tunisia (2019), and at various venues in Sudan, such as Khartoum Contemporary Art Center, Khartoum (2018), Rashid Diab Arts Centre, Khartoum (2017), National Museum of Sudan, Khartoum (2016), and Yalla Khartoum, Khartoum (2015). During the 2022 summer semester she was a guest lecturer at the HFBK in Hamburg, teaching on the subject of "Art During Times of Crisis." Elhassan lives and works in Khartoum.

Numerous contemporary art positions have already been presented in the Rotunda of the Schirn, including works by Carlos Bunga (2022), Caroline Monnet (2020), Karla Black (2019), Maria Loboda, Neïl Beloufa (2018), Philipp Fürhofer, Lena Henke (2017), Rosa Barba, Peter Halley (2016), Heather Phillipson, Alicja Kwade (2015), Andreas Schulze (2014), Yoko Ono (2013), Bettina Pousttchi (2012), Barbara Kruger (2010), Eva Grubinger (2007), Jan De Cock (2005), and Ayşe Erkmen, Olafur Eliasson (2004).

## ARTIST TALK

On Thursday, December 1, at 7 p.m., the artist Amna Elhassan will speak with the curator Larissa-Diana Fuhrmann and with artist and researcher Rund Alarabi from the artist collective Locale about the works and concept of the Rotunda exhibition "Amna Elhassan. Deconstructed Bodies – In Search of Home," as well as about how the Sudanese Revolution affected artistic creativity. Admission free of charge, limited seating. Reservations can be made in the online shop at [schirn.de/shop](https://schirn.de/shop).

**PAINTING WORKSHOP WITH AMNA ELHASSAN** On two consecutive evenings, November 16 and 17, at 6 pm, the Schirn offers interested participants the opportunity to take part in a painting workshop with artist Amna Elhassan. The artist will introduce participants to the creative process of painting. In an introductory part, Amna Elhassan will shed light on how art can be used as a tool for political participation. The workshop will also address victims of political violence in conflict societies, focusing on the recognition of their rights and needs. In the artistic-practical part, the participants will be active themselves and can express their own thoughts with different materials and techniques.

Participation free of charge, in English, registration binding under [fuehrungen@schirn.de](mailto:fuehrungen@schirn.de), duration: approx. 120 minutes

**CATALOG AMNA ELHASSAN**, edited by Prof. Martin Köttering and Dr. Sebastian Baden, with contributions by Larissa Fuhrmann together with Nina Lucia Groß and Magdalena Grüner, foreword by Martin Köttering, president of the Hochschule für bildende Künste (HFBK) Hamburg, and Sebastian Baden, director of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, bilingual edition (German/English), 44 pages, 22.5 x 30 cm, softcover, sewn binding, published by Materialverlag HFBL Hamburg, ISBN: 978-3-944954-69-1, price 12 €

# **SCHIRN** KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT

**VENUE** SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, 60311 Frankfurt am Main  
**DURATION** November 4, 2022 – February 12, 2023 **INFORMATION** [www.schirn.de](http://www.schirn.de) **EMAIL** [welcome@schirn.de](mailto:welcome@schirn.de) **TELEPHONE** +49-69 29 98 82-0 **ADMISSION** Free of charge, no registration required **VISITOR INFORMATION** You will find all information about your visit and the currently valid hygiene measures at [www.schirn.de/besuch/faq](http://www.schirn.de/besuch/faq) **CURATOR** Larissa-Diana Fuhrmann **ASSISTANT** Fanny Bengsch

**HASHTAGS** #AmnaElhassan #Schirn **FACEBOOK, TWITTER, YOUTUBE, INSTAGRAM, PINTEREST, TIKTOK, SCHIRN MAGAZIN** [www.schirn.de/en/magazin](http://www.schirn.de/en/magazin)

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