

MEDHAT SHAFIK | *PALMIRA*

CURATED BY PIETRO MARANI

May 18 – June 24, 2017

opening, Thursday May 18, 2017, H 6:30 – 9:30 pm

Marcorossi artecontemporanea

Corso Venezia 29, Milan, Italy

Marcorossi artecontemporanea has the pleasure of presenting in Milan, and simultaneously in Verona gallery, Medhat Shafik's new solo show *Palmira* paying homage to the beautiful Syrian city known as the bride of the desert, where archaeological sites have been destroyed by the militia of the self-styled "Islamic State".

In an artistic dimension extirpated from the natural flow of time and all religious and political disputes, Shafik's work is a poetic reconstruction of the ancient splendour of Palmira, halfway between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates, a symbol of brotherhood where East and West come together.

In this new cycle of works on jute canvas and cotton paper made by hand specifically for the artist in Sicily, oil paints and acrylics blend with gauze and fabric in splendid colours, antique wood, rust, plaster, pigments and naturally coloured strands of wool, all overlapping in a metaphor of the stratification of history.

The artist sums up his artistic philosophy: *"I seek to symbolically recover archaeological sites, which represent human memory, the essence of civilisation. I want to metaphorically rebuild Palmira; Palmira can be anywhere, because to me it is a symbol of the restoration of civilisation, the long wave of humanity, and at the same time its destruction. Palmira is all of us, or rather, we are all Palmira, and we must not be destroyed."*

The curator of the exhibition in Milan, Pietro Marani, Full Professor of Modern Art History with Politecnico Milano's School of Design and author of numerous publications, particularly on Leonardo da Vinci, involved the University in the project by exhibiting a site specific installation by the artist at the Bovisa Campus and holding a workshop with students.

In addition, during the "prima pAReTe" initiative presented by Patrizia Nuzzo, visitors to Galleria d'Arte Moderna Achille Forti in Verona's prestigious Palazzo della Ragione will be welcomed by an installation created by Medhat Shafik specifically for the occasion, continuing the artist's partnership with cultural institutions in Verona which began in November 2007 with his solo show "Le città invisibili" at Palazzo Forti and continued with his participation in a major exhibition entitled "Il Settimo Splendore" inaugurating Palazzo della Ragione. The Galleria d'Arte Moderna collection also includes "La dimora del Poeta", an evocative installation Shafik created in 2004.

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Medhat Shafik, works from the "Palmira" cycle, 2017, mixed media on canvas, 150 x 150 cm each

Medhat Shafik was born in Egypt in 1956 and has lived and worked in Italy since 1976. A world-renowned artist mentioned on the New York Metropolitan Museum's web site as one of the most interesting 20th century artists in the Arab world, Shafik combines the atmospheres and colours of oriental art with the most advanced compositional techniques of the western avant-garde movements. According to Pierre Restany, "*He represents the successful meeting of two cultures – his native eastern culture and western culture, in which the symbol becomes a secret happening... it's as if Action Painting, or the modes of informal art in Europe, were combined with the light touch of hieroglyphics*". His consecration came in 1995, when the Egypt Pavilion he represented with two other artists at Biennale di Venezia won the Golden Lion for participating countries. In 2011 he held a solo show at Fondazione Stelline di Milano curated by A.C. Quintavalle, while in 2012 Palazzo della Pilotta in Parma hosted a retrospective of his work curated by CSAC. A monumental sculpture the artist carved out of Carrara marble has been on exhibit in the Sculpture Garden at the Idroscalo in Milan since 2013. In 2014 he exhibited in Dubai, in the Arab Emirates, and in Doha, Qatar. In 2015 he participated in the international review *Nel Mezzo del mezzo* presented by Christine Macel, Marco Bazzini and Bartomeu Mari in Palazzo Sant'Elia, Palermo, and his work was acquired for the permanent collection of Palazzo Riso Museum. In 2016 a number of his works were added to a prominent collection in Riyadh, and he participated in the *ArteForte. La Babele di linguaggi e di simboli legati ai conflitti* exhibition, with installations at Forte Larino and Forte Corno, and the *Gli artisti del silenzio* exhibition in Palermo.

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