

Nermine Hammam

Egyptian photo artist



Photography, digital collage,
and mixed media

Working between Cairo and London. Selected biographies, statement, works, exhibitions, collections, press references, and studio contact.

<https://www.nerminehammam.com/>

At a glance

Short biography

Nermine Hammam (b. 1967, Cairo) is an Egyptian photo artist working between Cairo and London. Her layered, digitally manipulated images have been shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, and are held in international public collections.

Medium biography

Nermine Hammam (b. 1967, Cairo) is an Egyptian photo artist working between Cairo and London. Trained as a filmmaker at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, she works through digital manipulation, painting and archival layering to make images that hold the tension of something just outside view.

Her work has been shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; IVAM, Valencia; the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum, Geneva; the Musée du quai Branly, Paris; and the X Bienal de Cuenca, Ecuador. Her work is held in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, and the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Horcynus Orca, Messina. She received the Freedom to Create First Prize in 2011.

Born	1967, Cairo
Based	Cairo and London
Medium	Photography, digital collage, painting, archival layering
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Biography

Nermine Hammam (b. 1967, Cairo) is an Egyptian photo artist working between Cairo and London. Trained as a filmmaker at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, she worked on Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* during its Egyptian shoot before turning to photography in the late 1990s.

Hammam's practice begins with the photograph and moves through digital manipulation, painting, collage and archival layering. Across series including *Upekkha*, *Cairo Year One*, *Metanoia*, *Wétiko: Cowboys and Indigenes*, *Ma'at and A'aru*, she stages familiar images — the soldier, the icon, the wounded body — and works them until they stop obeying their original meanings. The cinematic foundation persists: her images operate as suspended frames, holding the tension of something just outside view.

She has exhibited at the Mosaic Rooms, London; Rose Issa Projects, London; Townhouse Gallery, Cairo; Safarkhan Gallery, Cairo; Tintera Gallery, Cairo; Hôtel des Arts, Toulon; Gypsum Gallery, Cairo; the Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Paris; and the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman. Her work has been shown in over one hundred group exhibitions internationally, including *Light from the Middle East* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; *She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; *Arab Contemporary* at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; *In Rebellion* at IVAM, Valencia; *Human.Kind: Prix Pictet* at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum, Geneva; *Social Calligraphies* at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; the *X Bienal de Cuenca*, Ecuador; *Rencontres de Bamako*; *Photoquai* at the Musée du quai Branly, Paris; and the *Jaou Tunis Biennial*.

Her work is held in the public collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam; the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Horcynus Orca, Messina; and Durham University, UK. She received the Freedom to Create First Prize in 2011, and her work has been recognised by the Julia Margaret Cameron Award and the Worldwide Photography Gala Awards.

Artist statement

The edge of the photograph can exclude as much as it includes. That is what I trust least about the photograph, and what the work begins with.

The photograph is taken, then altered, layered, painted through, and returned changed. The final image is not a record. It is the residue of what the image was trying to conceal.

There is a moment when a symbol stops obeying itself — when the soldier appears fragile, when ceremony reveals violence, when the body in trance becomes political. Familiar images are where power hides most effectively, and where it can also be undone. The work returns again and again to bodies caught at the threshold: between fear and ritual, military and tender, public and private. That threshold is where the surface begins to break.

My foundation is cinematic — sequences, cuts, silences, suspended frames. Even when the work is still, it holds the tension of something just outside view, something happening, or about to happen, at the edge.

Beauty is never neutral. Seductive surfaces, ornament and painterly colour slow the eye down, not to soften violence but to bring the viewer in through pleasure and leave them with the structures beneath it: gender, militarism, faith, empire.

Since the revolutions, the mechanism of trust between the image and the viewer has collapsed. I do not try to restore it. The work asks what remains when the image no longer obeys the story it was made to serve.

Selected works

The image section is selected from the website and arranged for press, curatorial, and institutional use. Captions are intentionally compact so the works hold the page.

2011-2012	Cairo Year One	Upekkha and Unfolding
2014	Wétiko	Historical image, myth, and political fabrication
2009-2010	Metanoia	Institutional space, abandonment, and altered photographic memory
2011	Ma'at	Archetype, ritual, feminine power, and cosmological balance
2022	A'aru	Myth, matter, death, and metamorphosis
2006-2007	Ashoura	Ceremony, collective trance, and ritualised pain
Contact	Image requests	info@nerminehammam.com

Upekkha

Upekkha brings photographic figures into idealised landscapes drawn from old postcards. Through digital collage, Nermine Hammam explores the relationship between figure and setting, stillness and movement, and the familiar and the imagined.



The Break

Upekkha, 2011
Photography, digital collage
60 x 60 cm



The Molten Alphabet

Upekkha, 2011
Photography, digital collage
90 x 60 cm

Unfolding

Unfolding combines stylised Japanese landscapes with images of police brutality circulated after Egypt's 2011 revolution. Drawing on the form of Japanese screens, Hammam conceals scenes of violence within foliage and ornament, asking viewers to look beyond the decorative surface.



A Leap In Faith

Unfolding, 2012

Photography, digital collage

53 x 22 cm



Hibiscus

Unfolding, 2012

Photography, digital collage

53 x 26 cm

Wétiko

Wétiko: Cowboys and Indigenes combines historical paintings of the American West with photographs of the Arab Spring. The series examines how images shape narratives of power and violence, and how changing an element can change the way a scene is read.



The Defeat of Crazy Horse

Wétiko, 2014

Constructed photographic series

100 x 70 cm



Roping a Rustler

Wétiko, 2014

Constructed photographic series

100 x 70 cm

Metanoia

A quiet archive of interiors, presences, institutional memory, and psychological atmosphere.



Untitled

Metanoia, 2009
Photography



Untitled

Metanoia, 2009
Photography

Ma'at

In Ma'at, Nermine Hammam uses her own face to inhabit a constellation of female figures drawn from art and popular imagery. Combining symbols of masculine and feminine power, these constructed portraits approach image-making as a ritual of transformation and a search for harmony.



Kneecap Planet

Ma'at, 2011
Digital collage, mixed media
100 x 190 cm



Spacetime Bruise

Ma'at, 2011
Digital collage, mixed media
100 x 190 cm

A'aru

Twenty-two works built from snapshots of men posing on the beaches of Alexandria between the 1930s and the 1960s, painted into fifty years later.



Clearing Unity

A'aru, 2022

Photography, drawing, digital collage



Shadow Of The Fish-Head

A'aru, 2022

Photography, drawing, digital collage

Ashoura

A photographic sequence of ceremony, crowd, devotion, and collective image-making.



Untitled

Ashoura, 2006
Photography



Untitled

Ashoura, 2006
Photography

Selected exhibitions

2026

El Marsam: Modern and Contemporary Art from Egypt

Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., USA

2025

Wétiko Exhibition

Cairo Photo Week 2025, The Garage, Downtown Cairo, Egypt

2024

Jaou Tunis: 7th Edition Biennial of Contemporary Art

Tunis

2023-24

Human.Kind: A New Look at Humanitarian Photography Through 10 Editions of the Prix Pictet

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum, Geneva

2022

Summer Portfolio Show

TINTERA, Cairo, Egypt

2022

A'aru

Tintera Gallery, Cairo

2021

Miscegenation on that One Photograph

Cairo Photo Week, curated by Khaled Hafez

2017-18

She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World

Canadian War Museum, Ottawa, Canada

2017-18

In Rebellion: Female Narratives in the Arab World

IVAM, Valencia

2017

We Shout and Shout

But No One Listens: Art from Conflict Zones, CAMP, Copenhagen

2017

I AM

American University Museum, Katzen Arts Center, Washington, D.C.

Selected exhibitions continued

2017	I AM Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman
2016	Social Calligraphies: East–West Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw
2016	She Who Tells a Story National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.
2016	Les Parfums de l’Intranquillité Hôtel des Arts, Toulon
2016	Complicity Gypsum Gallery, Cairo
2015	She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, USA
2015	She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World Cantor Arts Center, Stanford, USA
2015	Cherchez l’Erreur Institut des Cultures d’Islam, Paris
2014	Arab Contemporary: Architecture & Identity Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk
2014	An Ocean of Possibilities 21st Noorderlicht International Photofestival, Fries Museum, Leeuwarden
2014	Wétiko: Cowboys and Indigenes Rose Issa Projects, London

Selected exhibitions continued

2014	Wétiko: Cowboys and Indigenes Houston Center for Photography
2013	Cairo. Open City: New Testimonies from an Ongoing Revolution Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany
2013	She Who Tells a Story Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
2012–13	Light from the Middle East Victoria and Albert Museum, London
2012	Le Printemps de Septembre: History is Mine Toulouse
2012	Cairo Year One Mosaic Rooms in association with Rose Issa Projects, London
2012	Anachrony Safarkhan Gallery, Cairo
2011	Rencontres de Bamako 9th Biennial of African Photography
2010	Metanoia Townhouse Gallery, Cairo
2009	Metanoia I dimenticati Fondazione Horcynus Orca, Messina

Collections and awards

Public collections

Victoria and Albert Museum, London — three works from Upekkha

Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam — five works from Unfolding and Upekkha

Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Horcynus Orca, Messina — complete Metanoia (2009) series

Durham University Collection, UK — Hitch-hiking (2012), from Unfolding

Awards

2012 Julia Margaret Cameron Award for Women Photographers — Honourable Mention

2011 Freedom to Create — First Prize

2011 Worldwide Photography Gala Awards — First Prize, Beauty Around Us

2010 Jacob Riis Editorial and Documentary Award — Runner-up

2010 The Invisible World Portfolio Selection — Finalist, Honourable Mention

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Selected press

The New York Times

A Show of Strength by Middle Eastern Women Photographers

Kerri MacDonald · 26 August 2013

The New York Times

The Familiar Transformed with the Unexpected

Susanne Fowler · 2 January 2013

The Washington Post

A Woman's Place in the Middle East? For Some, It's Behind a Camera

Philip Kennicott · 15 April 2016

Foreign Policy

Art Is a Window to the Arab World's Soul

Kim Ghattas · 3 May 2016

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Representation

Independent

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