

Mainstreaming the Margins and Marginalizing the Mainstream in Contemporary Egyptian Culture

OCTOBER 26-27, 2025
HILL HOUSE,
AUC TAHRIR CAMPUS
CAIRO, EGYPT

OCTOBER 28, 2025
NOIR ART ZONE,
CAIRO, EGYPT



The American
University in Cairo
School of Humanities
and Social Sciences

Mainstreaming the Margins and Marginalizing the Mainstream in Contemporary Egyptian Culture

Organised by Ramy Aly (AUC), Sophie Frankford (King's College London) and Frédéric Lagrange (CEDEJ)

October 26-28, 2025
AUC Tahrir / Noir Art Zone

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Bringing together practitioners and scholars working on entertainment, arts, literature and language, this interdisciplinary conference is devoted to the complex relationship between mainstream and margin in contemporary Egyptian culture. Egypt's cultural industries have undergone profound transformations in recent years. How are these transformations serving to unsettle boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture, legitimate and illegitimate expression? Are these boundaries more fluid now than in previous eras, or does historicising our 'exceptional' contemporary moment reveal more continuities than ruptures? This conference provides an opportunity to think about repositioning Egypt, and the region more broadly, as a place of knowledge production; a place from which theory emerges, not just be applied or localised.



DAY 01

SUNDAY 26TH OCTOBER, 2025

(Hill House, AUC Tahrir)

Time	Description
09:30 am - 10:30 am	COFFEE AND ARRIVALS
10:30 am - 12:00 pm	KEYNOTE SPEECH + Q&A <i>Frédéric Lagrange</i>
12:00 pm - 13:30 pm	PANEL 01: PERFORMING GENDER Fayrouz Karawya –Reinventing Localism: Masculinity in Egyptian Drama amid Regional and Global Polarisations Salma Shaaban – <i>Kalām Banāt</i> : Women’s Āmmiyyah Poetry and Performance in Contemporary Egypt Florie Bavard —Egyptian Women Artists, Bodily Exploration, and Digital Circulation on Instagram (2018–2023) <i>Chair: Frédéric Lagrange</i>
13:30 pm - 15:00 pm	LUNCH
15:00 pm - 17:00 pm	PANEL 02: THE MESSAGE AND THE STATE Menna Omar – Censorship of Egyptian Cinema: Legislation, Practise and Impact Jihan Shaarawi – Adapting Ahmed Khalid Tawfik: On the Evolution of Fear in Egyptian Media Maïa Bouatouch Legrand & Yasmin Shafei – <i>Lām Shamsiyya</i> : Between Influencing and Reflecting Public Discourse Andrew Simon – Family Planning, the Popular Press, and the Making of a Comedic Crisis <i>Chair: Joel Gordon</i>

DAY 02

MONDAY 27TH OCTOBER, 2025

(Hill House, AUC Tahrir)

09:30 am - 10:30 am	COFFEE AND ARRIVALS
10:30 am - 12:30 pm	<p>PANEL 03: CLASS AND THE EGYPTIAN CULTURE INDUSTRY</p> <p>Amr Abdelrahim – Turning Rhymes into Dimes: The Crucial Role of Intermediaries in the Mainstreaming of Egyptian Rap</p> <p>Dalia Ibraheem – Purity and Genre: Boundary Work and Value Making in Producing and De/appreciating Mahraganat Music in Egypt</p> <p>Dina El-baradie – From Shaabi Streets to Streaming Charts: Negotiating Legitimacy and Identity through Egyptian Music Production</p> <p>Amani Elhabiby – محمد رمضان في منزلة بين التهميش و السيادة في الفضاء الثقافي المصري</p> <p><i>Chair: Sophie Frankford</i></p>
12:30 pm - 14:00 pm	LUNCH
14:00 pm - 15:30 pm	<p>PANEL 04: POPULAR ARCHIVES</p> <p>Lucie Ryzova – Archiving at The End of Times: History from the Margins in Contemporary Cairo</p> <p>Walter Armbrust – An Engine of Amnesia and Abundance: Digitization and the History of Ramadan</p> <p>Tania Sheikhan – Performing the Archive: Egyptian Artists and the Re-animation of Marginal Histories</p> <p><i>Chair: Ifdal Elsaket</i></p>
15:30 pm - 16:00 pm	COFFEE BREAK
16:00 pm - 18:00 pm	<p>PANEL 05: ASSERTING A BADEEL – ALTERNATIVE CULTURAL CREATIVITY</p> <p>Omar Refaat – The Caretakers: Holding Space in the Apocalypse</p> <p>Maria Doss – Reviving the Voices: Egyptian Audio Drama on YouTube and its New Creative Ecosystem</p> <p>Engy Sarhan – Whose Art Counts in Contemporary Egypt?</p> <p>Sofia Smith – How to Mediate a Moral Panic: Media Technologies, Women's Sexuality, and the Formation of Moral Publics in Egypt</p> <p><i>Chair: Ramy Aly</i></p>
18:30 pm	CONFERENCE DINNER (For Presenters / Chairs)

DAY 03

TUESDAY 28TH OCTOBER, 2025

(Noir Art Zone, Cairo)

14:00 pm - 14:30 pm

COFFEE AND ARRIVALS

14:30 pm - 16:30 pm

PANEL 06: CREATORS' PANEL

Mahmoud Sayyed – Theatre Maker

Huda Lutfi – Visual Artist

Yassin Zahran – A&R Director, Takwene

Chair: Salma Mobarak

16:30 pm - 17:00 pm

COFFEE BREAK

17:00 pm - 18:00 pm

CLOSING REMARKS

Ramy Aly & Sophie Frankford



SCAN HERE
TO REGISTER



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