

Alternative Museum of The Sudan



عقار إضوان لتجارة الرقيق



White Flag

Amado Alfadni
Exhibition

Curated by
Najlaa El-Ageli

SULGER-BUEL GALLERY

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On the Cover: Amado Alfadni | Colonialism is Light - fabric pattern 1
2022 | digital print on cotton twill | 70x300cm

Editorial Credit: Nahla Al-Ageli

ALTERNATIVE MUSEUM OF THE SUDAN

Curatorial Statement



Amado AlFadni
Untitled (2020)
photo transfer-monoprint
30x40cm

Amado AlFadni is an artist who was born in Cairo, Egypt in 1976 to Sudanese parents. His childhood environment was composed of both the Cairene street and the traditions of a Sudanese household. The relationship and the tension between these two different cultures strongly influenced his views, making him question the subject of identity with its related rhetoric, as well as the variables of nation and ethnicity in his work.

Fearlessly through his art Amado engages with forgotten historical chapters that are difficult to digest, as he then references them with the current state of things. Based on his dedicated and passionate study with documentation, he delves into sore and sensitive passages of time that have been ignored, to make a credible case for those who thus far have not been heard, nor given a platform to speak of their anguish, pain, hurt and trauma, to understand the dotted lines left behind.

The 'Alternative Museum of The Sudan' is Amado's first solo exhibition in London, that traces the findings of his five-year journey and research into the buried histories of the people of the Sudan who were badly affected by colonialism and other interruptive external forces. His multimedia works revive the local stories and reflect upon the fate of his Sudanese ancestors, revealing an incomprehensible exploitation of the African people, from the earliest times up to the present.

The show also draws upon the artist's interest in the notion of authenticity when an identity has come into contact with a colonial factor and or an aggressive power subjugation. He utilises postcards, photographs, and oral archives to reveal some of the complex relationships that have ensued from the interplay between colonial dominance and how that has affected Black Africa as well as the intermingled histories of the people living in the unique geographical zone of where the Sudan meets Egypt and North Africa.

The 'Alternative Museum of the Sudan' project will serve as a repository of the material constructed in tribute to Amado's subjects, such as the Bint El Sudan installation. Shedding light on the history of the popular Sudanese perfume that has been made and sold for decades and is still on the market, it draws parallels between the past and the present through the changing image of 'a Sudanese Princess' as we follow her visual transformation through the marketing labels over time, revealing how the female Sudanese figure has been manipulated through the masculine glare.

Amado's Kandaka or 'Queen' series also investigates the portrayal of the Sudanese woman, but this time through the Western-colonial gaze as evidenced by the old colonial postcards that are still in circulation today. This has recently opened huge academic and artistic discourse with the dilemma of how we should be treating these photographs, as we now question the conditions under which these women were made to model for the mainly European cameraman.

On display also will be the 'Askari Soldiers' series, the 'Ace of Spades' and 'Black Ivory', in which Amado deconstructs the wider colonial narrative and its treatment of the Sudanese, as he disseminates the work by re-appropriating it to contextualise his own representation. In effect, he is offering the safe space to offer the dignity and acknowledgement of the men we now see, bringing up the feeling of respect in the viewer, and to ask questions and seek some answers.

In 'Black Ivory', for example, Amado investigates a recorded voice in the Sudanese Shilluk language of one of the thousands of kidnapped survivors who were forced to transport ivory from Sudan to Egypt. The recording tells of how he was later sold as a soldier by Britain to France to fight in colonial Mexico. Used as a 're-appropriated' historical device, it restores the non-sequential energy of a lived historical memory, a fundamental component of meaning in representation. It also rescues the real narrative of those who have left behind no documents nor records, indicating that history can only ever be fragmentary and chopped up, made up of dissonance and that it is always provisional!

While in 'Ace of Spades', Amado opens archive material connected to the slave soldiers trade, using iconic photos which he has manipulated with motifs that raise and answer questions about the Sudan and other colonised African countries. By producing monoprints, he adds the 'Tazaker Alhurriya' or 'Freedom tickets' that were given to those who were enslaved in Egypt to indicate the end of their slavery. As he states: *"This is lifelong work digging into generations of hidden history buried under colonialist culture that persists to this day."*

Through his installations, Amado delves into the complexities of culture and identity in the aftermath of colonial presence, with a critical yet aesthetic eye that results in incredibly captivating artwork. In particular, he questions the British and Egyptian colonial stay and intervention in Sudan, beginning with the time of Queen Victoria, followed by King Farouk of Egypt.

The artist has said that his work was essentially based on two elements: the Askari archived colonial photos and uniforms, and the patterned language of African textiles that first emerged in African culture through the use of the Dutch wax prints. These printed fabrics, at first based on Dutch-inspired designs, were quickly adapted by African women who turned them into local apparel. They in fact became a method of communication and self-expression, as they integrated colors, shapes, and visual elements with shared and intended meanings. Following that same tradition, the artist created his own Dutch prints and used them as a medium to convey his ideas.

Amado has stated: *"My work discusses the relationship between the included and excluded and opens dialogue on issues of identity and politics. By working with forgotten historical events and current state policies, I raise questions of power dynamics between the individual and authority on the social and political level. It gives a voice to the marginalized minorities."*

AMADO ALFADNI

Artist Statement

As a Sudanese diaspora Cairene artist, I was influenced by two distinct environments. At home, I lived the culture of Sudan. My mother would tell stories about her hometown in Old Dongla, Sudan on Fridays mornings over milky tea and ha'ysh (homemade Sudanese biscuits). She would remember her own childhood and how she used to dig with other children in search of "stone cats" (ancient Egyptian cat statues) to give to tourists in exchange for sweets.

I grew up captivated by my mother's amazing stories of therianthropy (where humans take animal form), her family's expeditions in the south to capture slaves, and how her father decided to leave the family slavery business and settle down on our island next to the river Nile.

The very smell of our house in Cairo evoked Sudan, with the scent of Bint el Sudan perfume mixing with incense. Memories of Sudan were also housed in a tin box of old family photos.

Family and friends visiting from Sudan would bring homemade peanut butter, spices, and cassette tapes from relatives back there. I first met my cousins during a trip to Sudan when I was six.

My father, a descendant of a Sufi family, came to Cairo in 1951 as a young scholar heading to Al Azhar University. He dropped out, bought a car, and worked as a taxi driver in the city he fell in love with. He only went back to Sudan once: for his wedding. His stories revolved around the Cairo of the 1950s and 1960s and his encounters with celebrities, including the time he met Mohamed Naguib, an Egyptian-Sudanese who became Egypt's first president in 1953, and who found my father a job in an oil company.

My Egyptian school was another formative influence. It was there that I discovered a different version of the black identity that I lived in family stories and within the diaspora community. At school I studied a history in which the image of Sudan was negative, while the media constructed the infamous image of the 'black' Arab. It is this clash between different constructions of Blackness that I have had to endure and worked to understand.

Being raised in downtown Cairo, a cosmopolitan space and location of the American University, French schools, and many ethnic communities, opened my eyes to another layer of my black identity through encounters with diverse black communities. My outlook expanded further thanks to the American shows aired on Egyptian TV that presented an image of black characters different from the stereotypes found in Egyptian productions.



*Passport photos of
Zakya Ibrahim Rahma
and Abdulhamed Alfadni*

My practice as a painter has afforded me a space to recreate an identity where my Nubian heritage meets my Cairene present.

The 2011 revolution raised many questions about contemporary political and social history and threw into question the imaginaries of the monarchy and foreign minorities created by sixty-years' worth of post-1952 propaganda. Given these trends for constructive historical revisionism and contestation of negative images of the other, I turned to the British and Egyptian colonial archives in search of alternative images of Sudan.

I wanted to investigate the real history of slavery between Sudan and Egypt, especially how slaves became soldiers in the nineteenth century. In an attempt to allow silenced history to speak, I moved away from official historical sources, focusing my research on the "Egyptian" battalion (comprising mostly Sudanese) that fought during the second French intervention in Mexico in the 1860s. The Khedive had gifted those slave soldiers to Napoleon III. The result of my work is the no1:Black Ivory Project.

Starting with a list of names of Sudanese soldiers who fought in the Mexican French war, I came across an interview with a soldier, Ali Al-Jifoon Effendi, in an English magazine from 1902. He talked about his kidnapping as a child and how he fought as a soldier in three colonial armies, British, French, and Egyptian. Alongside the historical events that he recited, he told stories of transformation (therianthropy) that were similar to my mother's stories.

This spurred me to make an audio installation to tell his story. I decided to use his mother tongue, Shilluk, which is spoken by the southern Sudanese Shilluk tribe, a tribe linked to my own family's history as slavers. First, I went to the Shilluk community school in Cairo, but I could not find a translator. Everyone refused to meet me because of my family's past. Next, I went to the priest of the Shilluk church to persuade him to nominate a translator. After an extended conversation, the priest agreed to translate and narrate the story himself.

During a residency in southern Morocco on one of the caravan routes to North Africa for slaves, I looked for slave culture's influences on Moroccan culture and discovered that Sudan was not unusual as a family name and was referred to in slave songs (gnawa), with lyrics such as "Mother, they stole us from Sudan." (Here Sudan refers to their unknown home in the wider region of Sudan, not the modern political borders.)

That experience led to the Alternative Museum of the Sudan, a project which investigates the identities of the Sudanese region (East Central, West, and Sub-Saharan Africa) as expressed in nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial propaganda.

Modern colonial propaganda contributed to the formation of stereotypes of black communities and Blackness which we have internalized to become part of our vision of ourselves. With this understanding comes the possibility of reforming the image of Black identity from our own perspective. The exhibits of the Alternative Museum of Sudan display and articulate a hitherto unspoken history.

*Amado Alfadni
Cairo 2022*

ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES



My artistic journey with Amado Alfadni started in 2017 with the 'Ace of Spades' project. This was his series of monoprint, and photo-transfers based on discovered colonial archives that feature locally recruited African soldiers who served with the Egyptian, German, British and French colonial armies in Africa as well as overseas during the 19th and 20th Centuries.

Following this Alfadni experienced an internal transformation with his revolutionary work inspired by Adam, the 'first man', in which the artist urges viewers to see the virtuous through an unprejudiced lens, looking at the story of human creation in Western theology. Interpretations, depictions and the tales revolving around Adam vary across many sects and cultures, and he is referred to both in the Western world and as Mahungu in Western Africa.

The 'Mahungu' project was a milestone for Alfadni, because he daringly introduced a new interpretation of not only Adam the first man but extending the fold to include a presentation of virtuous figures throughout history. Along the way Alfadni touches upon and reveals every artist's endless journey of broaching the subject of identity through creating alternative narratives, subverting dominant structures and challenging ideas and ideologies.

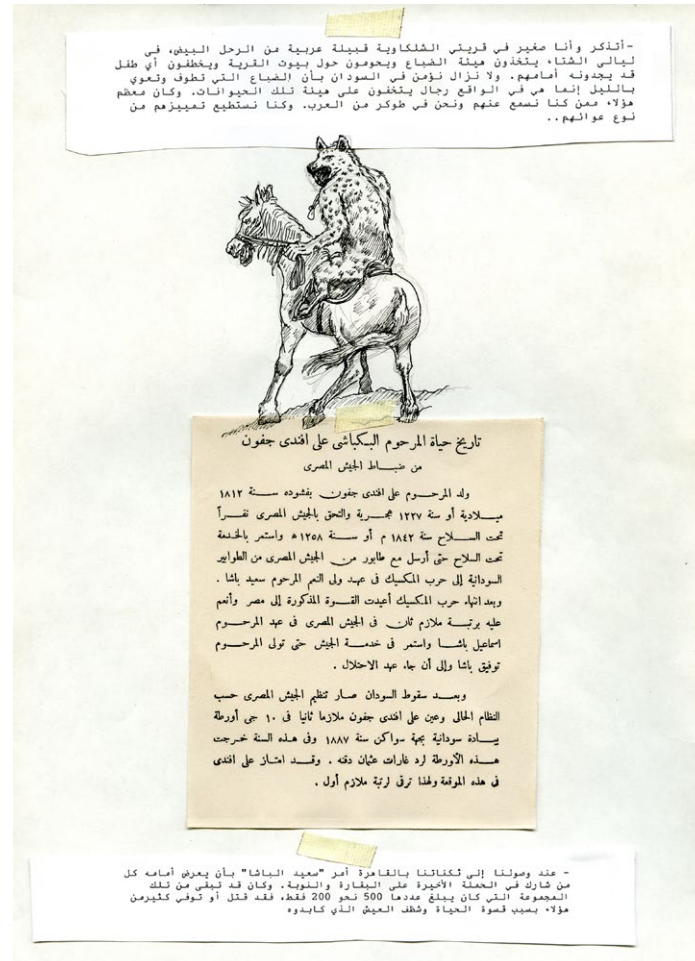
There is Alfadni's 'Askari' project, a powerful initiative that received coverage in Le Figaro during November 2021 when it was exhibited as part of the Also Known as Africa Art (AKAA) Art Fair in Paris, France. This multi-layered project began in 2019 with a series of digital photography that was later developed into a more inclusive representation of the Askari aka the slave soldier. Framing the collective slave soldier as an unknown martyr, Alfadni utilises a collection of patterned-print fabrics, arranged into a photomontage with historical Sudanese and African icons.

This latter work relies firstly on the colonial archives that have preserved the photos and uniforms of the slave soldiers, as well as using the concept of the fabric language that emerged in African culture through the Dutch wax prints.

It has been an endless journey of dignity, revealing the rich roots of the African diaspora and the historical background of the Nubian, Sudanese, Ancient Egyptian, African and as well Arab culture, adding a profound layer to Alfadni's color and the search for belonging as well as the longing, expunging the unnecessary and arresting my attention with his sophisticated simplicity.

*Heba El Moaz
Cairo 2022*

BLACK IVORY



With the beginning of the rainy season, the *Kujur*¹ came running and yelled: "They are coming..."

My mother took me away from the hut and hid me in one of the holes dug by the village men to protect children from the hyenas' attacks... I kept hearing their voices as they pierced the darkness. They repeatedly warned us: "Do not raise your heads or the hyenas will see you..." We were told that they were men who turned into hyenas at night, kidnapping children and taking them to the faraway land of *Geza'n*. Their voices came closer and closer to the hole we were hiding in. The closer the sound of their hooves came, the faster our hearts would beat. There was a girl who would not stop crying. I tried to silence her so that the hyenas wouldn't hear us. One of them caught me and took me between his teeth, then I heard the others screaming. They had found us.

I tried to scream and call out to my mother, but the sound of my screams was lost between the wailing of our women and the songs of the hyenas celebrating a valuable catch. One of them lifted me onto his horse, and joined his companions. By sunrise, we had arrived in a faraway land, and the hyenas had regained their human form. My abductor threw me off the saddle on to the ground that had little grass. They lined us up. We were overcome with panic and exhaustion, but I tried to keep calm. One of them started inspecting our bodies as if inspecting his prey. Traces of blood showed on our faces and bodies. Some of us were crying, others were screaming, while the rest were too exhausted even to stand. The abductors were shorter than my father and lighter-skinned, similar in colour to hyenas. One of them covered his head with a blue turban. I could only see his eyes that were red as burning coals. They tied us with a rope made out of hemp. We walked behind a herd of cows larger than any number of cows I had ever seen. Behind us, a man on a horse would whip us if our pace slowed. Their men rode horses, and away from the men, their women rode silently on the backs of bulls. Women do not turn into hyenas. There wasn't a lot of food or drink, so we ate some *ab'ree*² mixed with water; that was our only meal. We could smell them grilling meat on the fire. It might have been the meat of the gazelles they hunted or the meat of one of us. When it came time to sleep they untied us. I could hear their laughter and singing, as I was trying to sleep. I would close my eyes and stifle my cries so I wouldn't see them turn into hyenas.

1 Shaman.

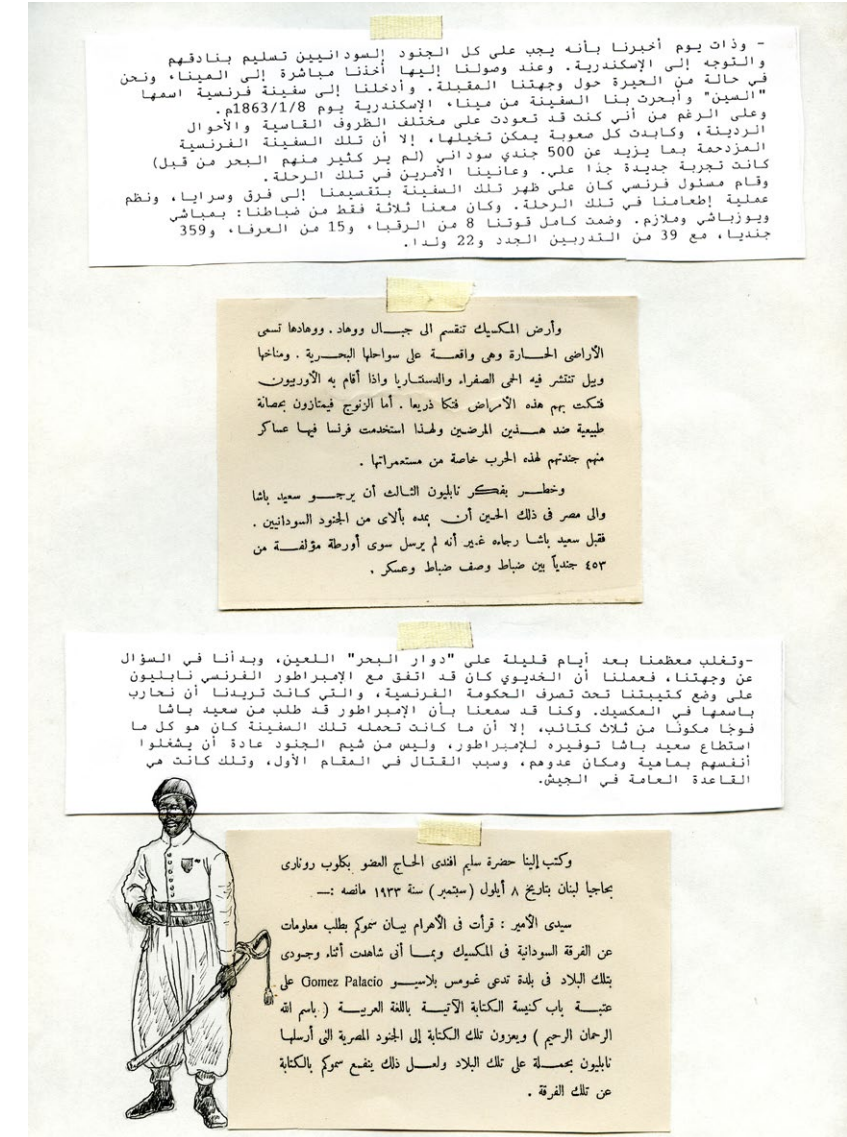
2 Sudanese dry flatbread.

We walked for a few days until we arrived at a large wooden pen. The road there had a market full of fruits, hunting tools, captured animals, cloth and ivory. There were many black men and some pale-skinned men wearing strange clothes who inspected the merchandise. I understood later that they were Egyptian soldiers. Some women brought herbs and put them on the wounds of the abducted. They gave us *asida*³ and we drank from baobabs. At night we rested in the pen. That was the first night I slept far from the fangs of the hyenas. In the morning the women returned, they washed away the scent of our fear and took us to the market. They lined us up next to the ivory and some Ja'laba⁴ arrived in their white clothes, one of them negotiated with our abductors. He looked at me the whole time, then he pointed at me and the boys with me. After long negotiations, the deal was struck and the Ja'laba gave the abductors some silver. Seven of us from my village left with the strange men along with another thirty or forty children.

Next we went to a yellow land unlike any I had ever seen. The sky was blue and wide, the land was barren without trees or animals. Perhaps it was the land of *Geza'n* that my mother had warned me about. The sun was hot and we hid under the shade of the tusks we carried on our heads. The poor elephants that were killed for all this ivory. The rope tying us jerked every time one of us collapsed from illness or fatigue. Then one of the Ja'laba would get off his horse, check the sick person, untie him, take the ivory he was carrying and place it on his horse in annoyance. They left the sick to die and kept going. Those Ja'laba were worse than hyenas. Occasionally along the way we would see the skulls and skeletons of people and animals. Maybe they were the bones of my uncle. My mother had said: "The hyenas took him when he was young."

3 A kind of porridge.

4 The Ja'laba are Arab nomads who herd their cattle to the south. Historically, they returned bringing back slaves.

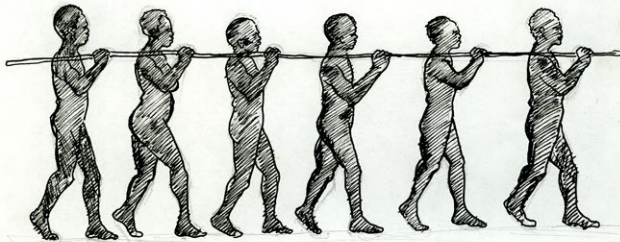


- ولم تقم الحكومة بترحيل زوجات وعائلات الجنود عند نقلهم لمناطق أخرى، لذا كان من العادة أن يأخذ أفراد الكتيبة التي تحل محل أفراد الكتيبة المنقولة زوجات هؤلاء المنقولين. . وكان من العادة عند وفاة أحد الجنود أن تزول عائلته لجندي آخر.

أما الضباط والمساکر الذين توفوا وتركوا عائلات وأولادا يتألم هنا فيصير ترتيب معاش لهم طبقاً للقوانين والأصول المرعية كما اقتضت إرادتنا ذلك للاسراع بتنقيته . والأوراق التي أرسلتها منار إعادتها لكم ثانية وقد صدر أمرنا هذا وكتب لكم لاجراء مايلزم . .

- بعد الانتهاء من معركتنا مع النوبة عدنا إلى الأبيض بعد أن غنمنا عدداً كبيراً من الرقيق والإماء . وقمنا بتعيين من يصلح للجنودية منهم في كتبتنا، وتعيين الإماء للعمل كخادصات و زوجات في الثكنات العسكرية، وعرضنا البقية للبيع في المزاد، حيث بلغ سعر الرجل أو المرأة نحو 150 دولاراً، وسعر الطفل عشرين إلى ثلاثين دولاراً.

سافر بعد عودته من المكسيك إلى خط الاستواء مع السير سمويل بيكر سنة ١٨٦٩ لمنع تجارة الرقيق . وكان ضمن فرقته المخصوصة ، الصوص الأريسون ، وقد دعاهم بهذا الاسم لضروب الشجاعة التي أبدوها في الانسلاخ ومباغنة الأعداء . وكان يعبد إليه بالمهات السرية . وله الفضل في الاتصال بإسماعيل باشا أيوب حاكم السودان للقبض على أبي السعود أحمد أفراد شركة عقاد اخوان لتجارة الرقيق .



After a few days of walking we reached a place thick with trees. In the middle of this endless land, we found freshwater that welled from the barren ground. We drank from the water and ate from the fruits of the trees, then continued our march... On the way, I saw ruins of buildings that were once towering. Among the ruins were pillars that had strange markings. One of the Ja'laba told us that the ancients built them. I wondered how tall those ancient people were. The Ja'laba who told us about the ancient people understood our language, and he looked like us even though I couldn't see all of his features because of the turban covering his face. We continued our march under the midday sun and under the weight of ivory. Our whimpering broke the silence we walked through. At night the silence was uninterrupted except for the slave traders singing around the fire while they drunk arak. Even the camels started to get ill from the cruelty of this cursed land. When a camel died the Ja'laba would bury the merchandise it carried in the ground until they returned.

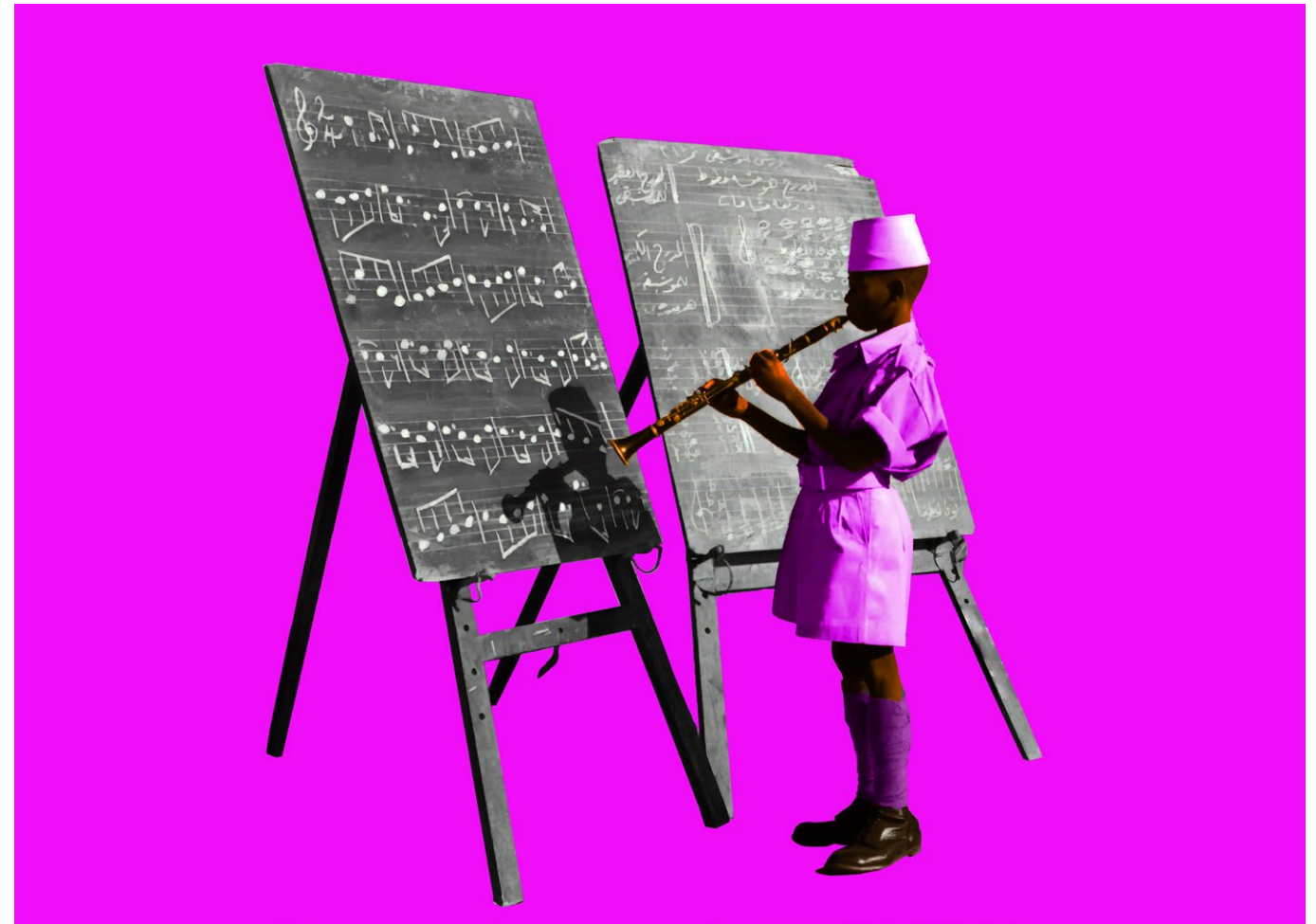
When we came close to the Nile, we could smell it. The trees on the banks were irregular and dispersed. The Ja'laba told us that we had arrived at the city of Assiut. Its people were similar in colour to the desert and they spoke a different dialect from the slave traders. In the beginning, I could not understand them. The women wore black clothes that covered their faces. We lowered our loads of ivory. I missed the ivory I had been carrying. It had listened to me throughout the journey. They made us stand in a line. Only half of us, or a little more, completed the journey. Some men arrived all dressed the same and wearing red tarbooshes. They carried rifles. That was the first time I saw that strange killing tool. An older and more important man got off his horse and negotiated with the Ja'laba. He was not interested in the ivory and gold that the Ja'laba offered. He looked and us and inspected us with his aging eyes. The discussion continued for a long time and anger was evident on the Ja'laba, perhaps it was a losing transaction. The guards approached and untied us and took us to a camp with high walls. Many of them wore that complicated uniform. They gave us clothes similar to their own whose colours were pale. A man was sitting at a desk outside was looking at me and kept repeating "Ali..." Maybe that was my new name. They gave us the evening meal and we swallowed it down quickly. Hunger is stronger than fear. In the morning they gave each of us a sack to carry, but I could not tell what was inside. Maybe new merchandise.



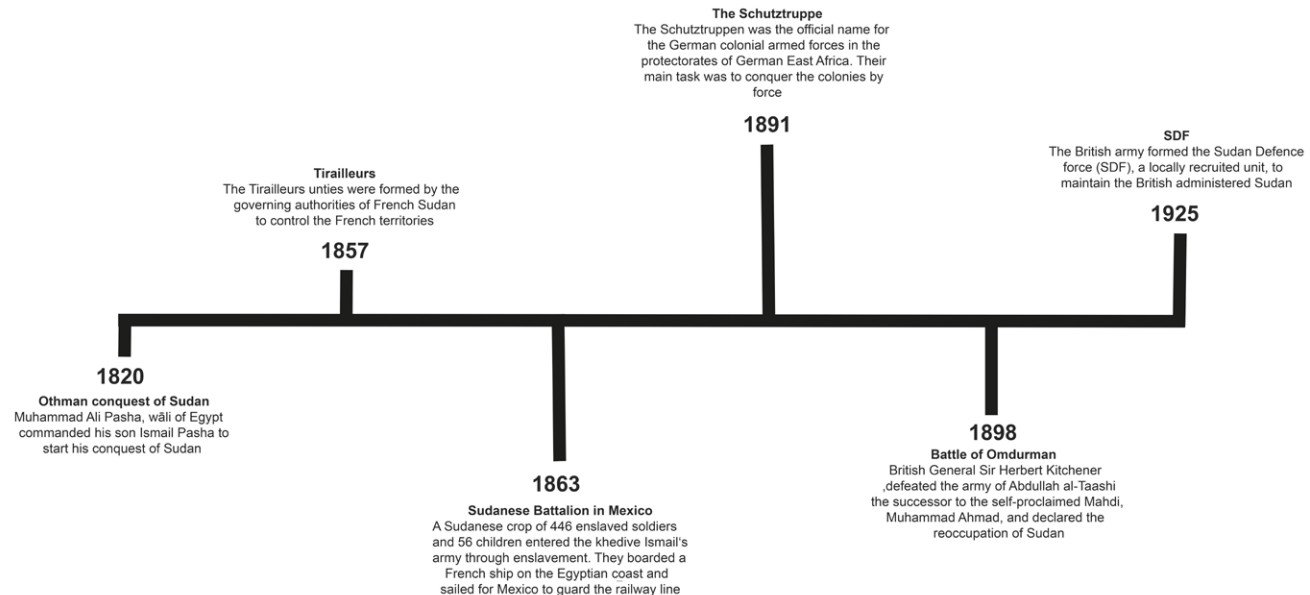
They walked with us to the river again and put us on a steamship. There were so many of us, all from the same land, boys and men from the Nile tribes. I did not see anyone from my clan. All of these people, ones that attacked us and ones we attacked, all of us were at the bottom of this ship. There was no light except through the small opening that some ran to look through. At the time I could not stand, I could not even eat the little food they served us through the opening at the top of the room. Fever overcame me. I gave in to a deep sleep until we arrived in Boulaq and they ordered us out. Everyone ran to escape the confines of the room. I was unable to get up, so a guard came in and dragged me outside. Then he spoke to the important man. They placed me in a room and I felt the air for the first time in days. A man came and gave me some warm herbs and medicine. They didn't want me dead, no one wants damaged goods. A day later they took me back to the camp and I saw many of the people of the Nile. They wore white clothes and red tarbooshes and carried rifles. Their numbers were large, more than the cows we had walked behind. They put us in carts that were pulled by horses and took us to the station. They put us in the train wagons and we were silent. No one knew our next stop. We were about twenty-five boys, some had been with me since the journey through the barren land. When we got off the train there were many Egyptian soldiers and some Europeans. They looked at us with joy, like those who had gotten what they wished for. We arrived at a camp then went to a harbour. When I saw the sea for the first time, it was calm and frightening. We boarded *La Seine* and a new journey began.

Narrative by Amado Alfadni
 Edited by Raphael Cohen
 Cairo 2016

THE ASKARI PROJECT



Amado Alfadni | Reimage Restore 1 | 2021 | digital art on paper | 50x70cm



The 'Askari Soldiers' series is one of Amado Alfadni's socio-political art projects that started in 2019 with a series of digital photography, and later developed into a more round, four-dimensional, and inclusive representation of the *Askari*.

The installation represents Alfadni's research-based study into the history of the 'Askari' - which from the Swahili and Arabic means a military soldier - and how that evolved into various creative elements. In particular, the *Askari* refers to the enslaved Sudanese soldier (from the region of Sudan in east, central and west Africa) who served in the armies of the European colonial powers in Africa during the 19th and 20th Centuries.

In fact during both World Wars, the *Askari* units served outside their colonies of origin, in different parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia as directed by the Europeans. In South Africa, the term also refers to former members of the liberation movements who defected to the Apartheid government's security forces.

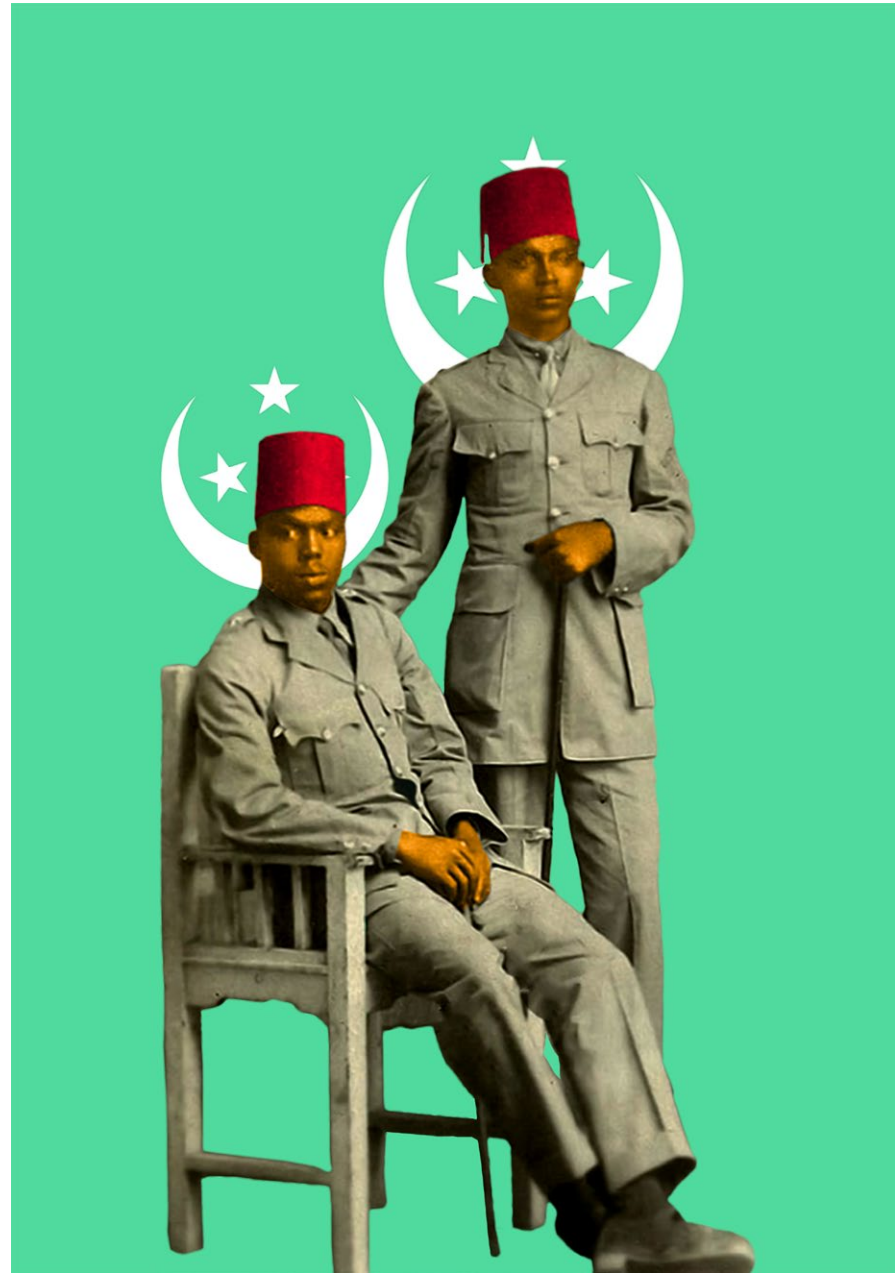
Through this body of work, Alfadni deplors the idea of the enslaved Sudanese soldier and condemns the perpetuation of such negative stereotyping, by recreating a visual record of Sudanese soldiers from the colonial period and into modern history, dating from 1890 to 2019. His work comprises a series of digital photography and a collection of patterned-print fabrics, arranged into a photomontage with historical Sudanese and African icons, framing the soldiers as unknown martyrs.

The concept of work was essentially based on two elements: archived *Askari* colonial photos and uniforms that were worn by the soldiers and playing with the patterned fabric language that emerged in Africa through the Dutch wax printing method. The fabrics had become significant tools of expression for local African women who used them in their apparel, as a method of communication by integrating special colors, shapes, and visual elements that carried widely understood messages.

Following the same tradition, the artist has created his own Dutch prints and is using them as a medium to relay his ideas. Alfadni thus revives long forgotten voices through his ciphered patterns, revealing the never-ending exploitation of the Sudanese people from the earliest times to the present day.



Amado Alfadni | Askari 1 | 2019 | photomontage digital print | 20x30cm



Amado Alfadni | Askari 2 | 2019 | photomontage digital print | 20x30cm



Amado Alfadni | Postcard of the Sudan - ASDF Unit Affiliate 1943 Tripoli
2020 | digital art on paper



Amado Alfadni | Askari Soldiers of the King's Africa Rifles 2, East Africa 1902
2020 | digital art on paper



Amado Alfadni | Nubian Ompasha 1, Cairo 1950
2020 | digital art on paper



Amado Alfadni | Nubian Ompasha 2, Cairo 1950
2020 | digital art on paper



Amado Alfadni | Askari Soldiers of the King's African Rifles 1, East Africa 1902
2020 | digital art on paper



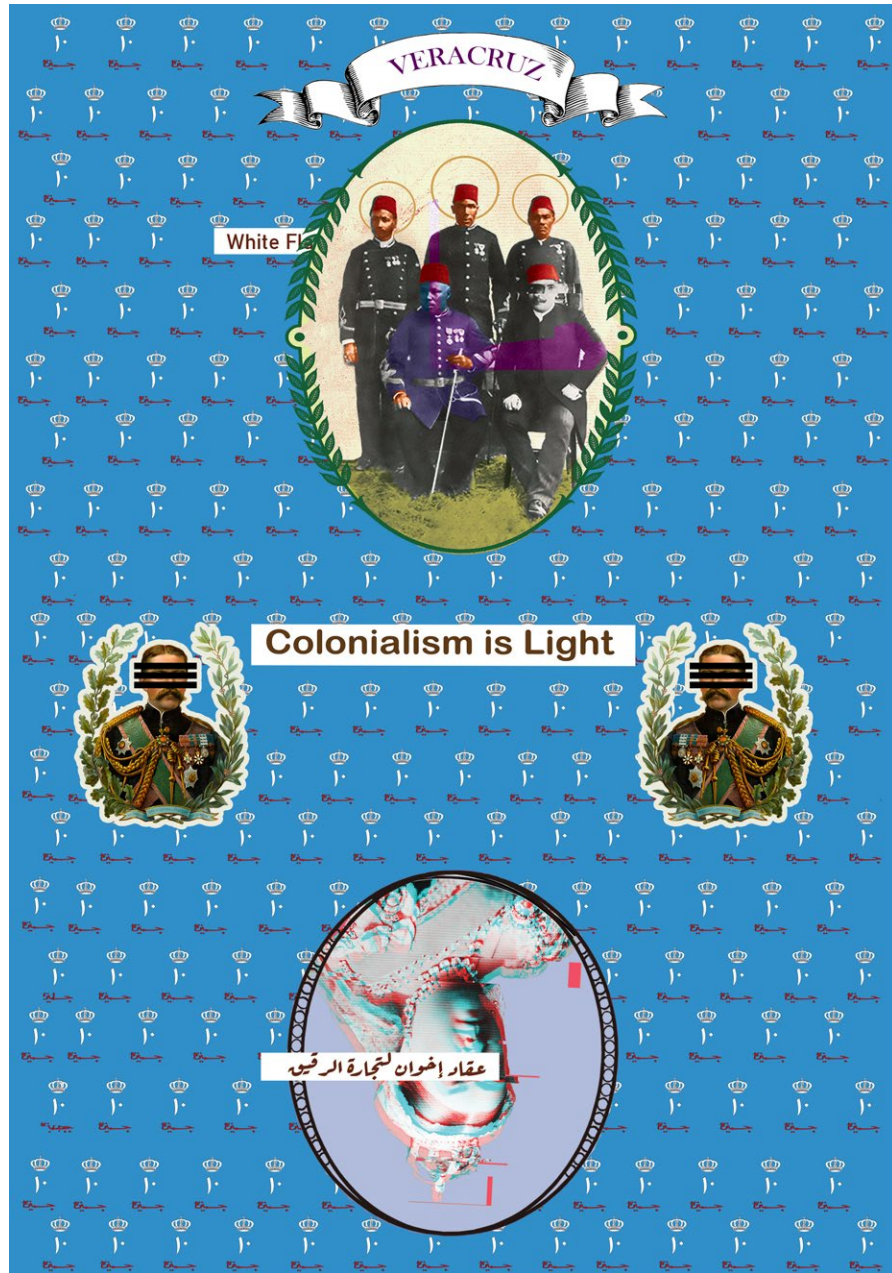
Amado Alfadni | Egyptian Sudanese Battalion Soldiers, Mexico City, 1864
2020 | digital art on paper



Amado Alfadni | Reimage Restore 2 | 2021 | digital art on paper | 50x70cm



Amado Alfadni | Reimage Restore 3 | 2021 | digital art on paper | 50x70cm



Amado Alfadni | Colonialism is Light - fabric pattern 1
2022 | digital print on cotton twill | 70x300cm



Amado Alfadni | King Farouk Sudan - fabric pattern 2
2022 | digital print on cotton twill | 70x300cm



Amado Alfadni | Imperial British East Africa Company - fabric pattern 3
2022 | digital print on cotton twill | 70x300cm



Amado Alfadni | Fashoda Syndrome - fabric pattern 4
2022 | digital print on cotton twill | 70x300cm



Amado Alfadni | Askari Costume 1 | 2021
Inspired by the Ottoman period circa 1864



Costume 1 | Nine Sudanese Dinar detail | 2021



Costume 1 | Queen Victoria detail | 2021

Based on the uniform of the Sudanese Battalion that served in the French army in Mexico during the French second intervention in Mexico 1861-1867. The patterns include images of the officers from the Sudanese Battalion in Mexico and of Queen Victoria. The text reads 'Akaad Brothers for Slave Trade' by a Sudanese company circa Sudan 19th Century.



Amado Alfadni | Askari Costume 2 | 2021
 Inspired by the period of the Anglo - Egyptian Army circa 1920



Askari Costume 2 | Side profile | 2021



Askari Costume 2 | King Farouk detail | 2021

Based on the Anglo Egyptian Askari's uniform 1899-1956. The patterns are of King Farouk's signature and flag of the Kingdom of Egypt and the Sudan.



Amado Alfadni | Askari Costume 3 | 2021
 Inspired by the period of the German East African Army 1910



Askari Costume 3 | detail of shorts | 2021



Askari Costume 3 | Front detail | 2021

Based on the Schutztruppe (official name of the colonial troops in the African territories of the German colonial empire) uniform circa 1855-1918. The patterns are of the Imperial British East Africa Company stamp with an image of Sudanese former dictator Jaafar Nimeiry as well as an image of the modern African Saint Josephine Bakhita versus KKK members.



Amado Alfadni | Askari Costume 4 | 2021
 Inspired by the period of French Sudan Army circa 1910



Askari Costume 4 | Sleeve detail | 2021



Askari Costume 4 | back detail | 2021

Based on the Senegalese Tirailleurs French Sudan between 1870–1914. The patterns include the signature of Charles Gordon Pasha (governor of Sudan), image of Putin, image of Xi Jinping and image of the logo of the Sudan Defense Force (SDF). The SDF was a locally recruited British-led force formed in 1925 to assist the police in the event of civil unrest, and to maintain the borders of British administered Sudan. During the Second World War, it also served beyond the Sudan in the East African Campaign and in the Western Desert Campaign.



BINT EL SUDAN

The popular Sudanese perfume 'Bint el Sudan' (Daughter of Sudan) was first concocted in the 1920s when, according to legend, fourteen leaders of the Arab tribes approached British traveller and adventurer, Eric Ernest Burgess, in Khartoum and asked him to create a special fragrance. The perfume was developed within six months in a lab at W J Bush & Company in London, where Burgess was employed.

Burgess was also the one who photographed the Sudanese princess who first appeared on the label. The girl was topless and only wearing a traditional elephant-hair red skirt, with bracelets on her ankles and wrists as well as dowry and purse around her neck. This image appeared on all the original posters used to market the perfume throughout the region in what was the first advertising campaign for a fragrance at the time.

It was also sold in the open markets rather than in stores and for a time was even used as barter. The Sudanese merchants who travelled by camel caravans took the bottled fragrance with them from Khartoum to far and distant places, including other countries and places in Africa (Nigeria, Ethiopia, present-day Zimbabwe) to North Africa and the Middle East. As it was sold at busy trading hubs at affordable prices that poorer people could manage, it became a currency, so many bottles for so many camels!

The BES had other uses too, some shrouded in the mysteries of religion, cleansing rituals and Sudanese custom. From the beginning it was believed to enhance the personal beauty and sex appeal of the local women, becoming an essential prized possession for them. It also acquired a reputation as an aphrodisiac, liberally sprayed on beds for the first special night for newly wedded couples, a gift for both bride and groom.

BES was also used at circumcision ceremonies and during other rites of passage, where entire families would heavily cover themselves with it. In the more primitive areas, people were convinced that the perfume had the power of driving out the 'bad man', thus acquiring magical properties. Africans, who by tradition spend a high proportion of their income on potions and oils, embraced BES that it is now the unmistakable smell of the region.



*Bint El Sudan
Installation view
Madrid 2019*

Here's an extract from the book 'Pagans and Politicians' by Michael Crowder, published by Hutchinson, London in 1959: "*The theatre was packed. I was sitting next to an ample Jollof matron, a small child strapped to her back. A strong scent of Bint el Sudan manufactured in East London perfumed the room as the curtains rose to the first dance.*"

Today BES is packaged and distributed through licence holders in a number of countries: Nigeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, South Africa, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Saudi Arabia (for the Middle Eastern market).

BES Perfume: Installation

Aware of the precious value of the BES perfume for the Sudanese, Amado Alfadni has created an installation that chronicles the changes to the iconic image of the cover-girl over time, outlining her fate as a woman, in parallel to the social, political and religious movements in the country that have impacted on how she is portrayed. From the original photo of the topless woman to today's more conservative model, the artwork functions as a revolutionary message for freedom and liberty.

Bringing the work to the more recent historical developments in Sudan and current landscape, Amado also uses the famous picture of the young Sudanese activist Alaa Salah that went viral online when it was taken by Lana Haroun. Dubbed as the 'Woman in White' or 'Lady of Liberty' of Sudan, Salah was seen chanting poems and slogans during a sit-in near the Presidential Palace, calling for female liberty during the 2018/2019 Revolution.

He explains: "*Bint El Sudan was my mother's perfume and so was a part of the identity I made for myself as a Sudanese person.*"

It is of note that Omar al-Bashir ruled Sudan for thirty years (1989-2019) and had introduced penal code reforms, based on strict interpretations of Islamic Sharia Law in 1991. His so-called 'reforms' had relegated women to the status of legal minors and restricted their freedom of movement by enforcing rigid 'morality' regulation and gender segregation in public spaces. Sudanese women have faced flogging and death by stoning for violating these laws.

Ironically not much has changed about BES's actual fragrance or ingredients formula in its 100 year history. Instead all of the detail has been in the clothing of the model fronting the bottle which has transformed over the years, reflecting the enduring intense debate about women's modesty in that part of the world.

When Salah's image brought international attention to the country's struggle for regime change and inspired artists, like Alfadni and others, to exalt her as a revolutionary symbol, feminists warned against the dangers of any single person carrying the whole burden of a revolution, noting that many unnamed women have come before her and many will come after her. Salah received death threats.

Still Alfadni's decision to use her image as a cover label for the BES bottle is for him to challenge notions of the Sudanese identity. He said: "*I am trying to represent the image of Sudan away from anger and extremism.*"

As part of the installation Alfadni has created a timeline representing the perfume's evolution, with a shelf lined with replica bottles on display. The effect is that these small scented vials come to symbolise Sudan's ever-changing national landscape and how that forms part of the wider African narrative. The iconic shifting image of BES also opens up a discourse on how a local brand became a global phenomena.



Amado Alfadni | Bint El Sudan - Made in England Label | 2019



Amado Alfadni | Bint El Sudan - Made in Kenya Label | 2019



Amado Alfadni | Bint El Sudan - Saudi Label | 2019



Amado Alfadni | Bint El Sudan - Revolution Label | 2019

ACE OF SPADES



Amado Alfadni | Ace of Spades - The Unlucky No. 2701
2017 | photo transfer monoprint | 42x30cm



Amado Alfadni | Ace of Spades - The Unlucky No. 9381
2017 | photo transfer monoprint | 30x42cm



Amado Alfadni | Ace of Spades - The Unlucky No. 9382
2017 | photo transfer monoprint | 30x42cm



Amado Alfadni | Ace of Spades - The Unlucky No. 9387
2017 | photo transfer monoprint | 30x42cm



Amado Alfadni | Ace of Spades - The Unlucky No. 9761
2017 | photo transfer monoprint | 30x42cm



Amado Alfadni | Ace of Spades - Untitled I
2021 | photo transfer monoprint | 30x42cm



Amado Alfadni | Ace of Spades - Untitled II
2021 | photo transfer monoprint | 30x42cm

KANDAKAS



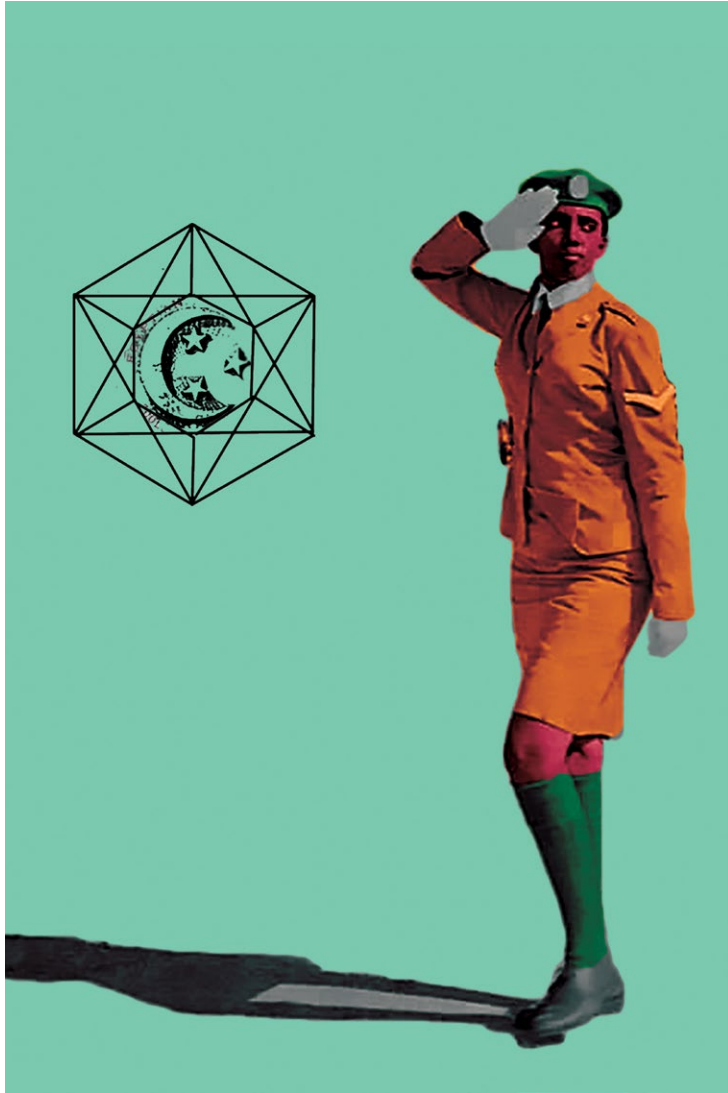
Amado Alfadni | Kandaka 1 | 2019 | digital art on paper | 20x30cm



Amado Alfadni | Kandaka 2 | 2019 | digital art on paper | 20x30cm



Amado Alfadni | Kandaka 3 | 2019 | digital art on paper | 20x30cm



Amado Alfadni | Kandaka 4 | 2019 | digital art on paper | 20x30cm



Amado Alfadni | Kandaka 5 | 2020 | digital art on paper | 30x40cm



Amado Alfadni | Kandaka 6 | 2020 | digital art on paper | 30x40cm



Amado Alfadni | Kandaka 7 | 2020 | digital art on paper | 30x40cm



SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 *Mahungu*, SOMA art Gallery, Cairo, Egypt.
- 2017 *Ace of Spades*, SOMA art gallery, Cairo, Egypt.
- 2016 no1: *Black ivory*, Contemporary Image Collective (CIC), Cairo, Egypt.
- 2015 *Typology*, Ahmed Shawky museum, Cairo, Egypt.
- 2014 *Black Holocaust Museum*, Contemporary Image Collective (CIC), Cairo
- 2012 *Leaving*, Awan Gallery, Cairo, Egypt.
- 2012 *The President*, Gudraan gallery, Alexandria, Egypt.
- 2012 *If I Were President*, Artellewa Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
- 2008-10mm, Artellewa, Cairo, Egypt.
- 2007 *Africa 6 letters*, Goethe Institute, Cairo, Egypt.
- 2007 *The Color of the summer*, New Cairo Atelier, Cairo, Egypt.
- 2003 *Black and Yellow*, Michelangelo Gallery, Cairo, Egypt.
- 2001 *Why Not*, Cairo Atelier, Cairo, Egypt.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Saturation*, Cairo photo week, Egypt
- 2020 *Amwaj* virtual exhibition, Sulger Buel Gallery U.K
- 2019 *After the Canal There was only "OUR" world*, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Pop Art form North Africa, Madrid
- 2016 *Storm*, Künstlerforum, Bonn, Germany.
- 2014 *Photophilia*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo. Egypt.
- 2013 *UAMO Art Festival*, Munich, Germany
- 2013 *Super Market Art Fair*, Stockholm, Sweden
- 2012 *Passport Agency*, Mattress Factory Museum- Pittsburgh, U.S.A
- 2011 *No Glory*, Form + Content Gallery, U.S.A.
- 2011 *The Popular Show*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo. Egypt.
- 2011 *Express Yourself*, Darb1718,Cairo. Egypt.
- 2009 *The Creativity of the Other*, AinHelwan Culture Palace, Cairo.
- 2008 *Annual Graffiti Festival*, Mahmoud Mokhtar Gallery, Cairo Egypt.
- 2007 *IntaFeen*, Swiss Residency Studio, Cairo.
- 2006 *Different Complete*, Townhouse Gallery On-Site, Cairo Egypt.
- 2005 *Small Pieces Salon*, Portrait Gallery, Cairo.
- 2004 *Ministry of Culture Youth Salon*, Cairo Opera House Cairo.
- 2003 *Day of Africa*, Sawy Culture Wheel, Egypt.
- 2002 *RatebSeddik Competition*, Guest Artist, Cairo Atelier, Egypt.
- 2002 *Small Pieces Salon*, Palace of Arts, Egypt.
- 2000 *Nissan Art Salon*, Khartoum, Sudan.

RESIDENCIES

- 2017 *Beyond Qafila Thania* , Morocco.
- 2016-17 *Artist in residency* Jivar, Barcelona-Spain.
- 2016 *Artist in residency* Künstlerforum, Bonn- Germany.
- 2012 *Artist resident* at Mattress Factory Art Museum- Pittsburgh- U.S.A.
- 2012 *Visiting Artist* Carnegie Mellon University- U.S.A.
- 2011 *Visiting Artist* Hood University- U.S.A.

CURATORIAL PROJECTS

- 2015 *Detour. Vedionale* (Bonn), Nabta Art center (Cairo).
- 2012 *Arab Collaboration Project*, Artellewa Space, Cairo.
- 2012 *Kamala art salon "African artists in Cairo"*, Nabta Art center, Cairo.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Najlaa El-Ageli is an architect with over twenty years of experience in the profession. Passionate about the arts, she founded Noon Arts Projects in 2012, a small private arts foundation, to promote contemporary Libyan art and expose it to the world stage. Collaborating with cultural foundations and galleries, she has curated over 16 projects and successfully shed light on the current Libyan artistic scene. For example, El-Ageli collaborated with London-based Shubbak Festival (2015) and Nour Festival (2015) when she curated a solo retrospective for the late Libyan/Canadian artist Arwa Abouon, as well as working with The Benetton Foundation Italy (2016) for the Imago Mundi Libya project. She also curated two group exhibitions with Casa Arabe in Spain between 2018 and 2020: the 'Pop Art from North Africa', which was a collective of 19 artists from the Magrheb exploring local Pop Art, and 'Retracing A Disappearing Landscape' which featured 18 artists with a link to Libya, addressing collective memory and personal histories. From 2020 until recently Najlaa has been collaborating with Sulger Buel Gallery in London as an independent curator. With the Gallery, she has curated 'Waves', a collective of five emerging North African artists, 'Soul Taming' for renowned and established Egyptian/Nubian artist Fathi Hassan and 'Darna', an installation exhibition for French Moroccan street artist COMBO.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Sulger-Buel Gallery is an art gallery specialising in the contemporary art of Africa and its Diaspora. Founded in 2014 by Christian Sulger-Buel the gallery provides a focus for those wanting to explore one of the fastest developing, ground breaking and important areas in contemporary practices - Modern Contemporary African Art. We do this while addressing a variety of artistic mediums including drawing, painting, sculpture and photography.

Led by a diverse and international team of specialists, Sulger-Buel presents a dynamic exhibition program, produces innovative publications and offers consultancy services; visitors, curators and collectors alike can experience its cutting-edge shows at the London space a stone's throw away from the Tate Modern as well as at international art fairs across the globe.

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SULGER-BUEL GALLERY