

# Khairallah Sketches (2016-2022)

The project began as I was commissioned to make a mural in a tunnel in Khairallah district, one of the most dense informal areas in Cairo.

The mural was a part of a renovation process of the tunnel, supported by the Swiss Embassy.

The work tries to capture the complexity of the urban clusters of the district, which remains unique in their composition and layout.

Omar Ibn Alkhattab Tunnel, Ezbet Khairallah district, Cairo, Egypt  
Renovated by: Takween for integrated community development.



# Khairallah raw sketch (2016)



Khairallah raw sketch panorama, pen on paper roll, 9x0.45m, 2016

This work pays tribute to shadows, phantom presences and memories, that are embedded within the fabric of the city, even if the process of how the city evolves is rooted in acts of constant erasure and refabrication. The work then becomes more than just memorialization, but an artistic engagement with the lived and continued interactions with the city, that continues to challenge us in trying and unexpected ways.

The sketch was part of the official Egyptian pavilion, architectural Venice Biennale, 2018  
It was also shown in Dakar Biennale 2018

Detail of Khairallah raw sketch panorama, pen on paper roll  
Detail size: 3x0.45m, 2016



Khairallah Sketches  
**Khairallah Mural (2016)**

Khairallah mural, oil based paints on wall, 45x2.5m, 2016

Ezbet Khairallah's massive informality and continued struggle to exist, as more ambitious plans to modernize the city take place, raises questions how are cities built and how do communities come and live together. The density of historical layers and the shadows of former cities (ruins, monuments, traces,..etc) constantly confront any attempt to deal with the city as a modern tabula rasa. Cairo is never just a flat, empty plane, and herein lies the challenge

Detail of Khairallah mural, oil based paints on wall, Detail size:3.5x2.5m, 2016



Khairallah Sketches  
Khairallah sketches (2018)



Khairallah sketches 01-02, Pen & ink on paper, 140x50m, 2018



Khairallah sketches 03-04, Pen & ink on paper, 140x50m, 2018

## Formal Informals (2018)

Formal Informals panorama, pen & ink on paper, 594x76 cm, 2018



Formal Informals, pen & ink on paper, 594x76 cm, 2018

The work tries to ask questions about what is traditional, formal/ informal, what is allowed or accepted within urban clusters

The tenor of the conflict between "informal residents" and the central mode of planning escalated as plans to extend a main road through the settlement, splitting the dense urban quarter in two. Contesting the state's label of informality and desire to "legalize" the status of ownership for the residents, has been an ongoing battle over the past three decades.

Khairallah Sketches  
**Formal Informals**

The series of sketches try to look at the urban reality of the residents of the settlement as they tried to construct an organic urban fabric that could support them and support their livelihoods, even when the state refused to provide that kind of support.

Detail of Formal Informals , pen & ink on paper  
Detail size: 199x76 cm, 2018



Khairallah Sketches  
**Formal Informals**

The tension between the informality that was organically constructed over decades and the sudden interest of the state, in forcing a top-down formality, even at the expense of destroying this urban fabric and the community it supports, becomes clearly evident as one looks at the settlement and its relationship to its surrounding

Detail of Formal Informals , pen & ink on paper  
Detail size: 195x76 cm, 2018



Khairallah Sketches  
**Formal Informals**

One of the main challenges facing the city of Cairo is how to integrate this “informality” into the larger, “civilised” urban planning imagined by various bureaucratic bodies. A position that understands the complexity of informal urban sprawl is absent from this more centralised planning perspective. Such position fails to see possibilities of integration, but rather a necessity to excise and remove

Detail of Formal Informals , pen & ink on paper  
Detail size: 200x76 cm, 2018





# Khairallah sketches (2020)



Khairallah sketches 05  
Pen & ink on paper, 30x42m, 2020



Khairallah sketches 02  
Pen & ink on paper, 30x42m, 2020



Khairallah sketches 04  
Pen & ink on paper, 30x42m, 2020



Khairallah sketches 01, Pen & ink on paper, 30x42m, 2020

Khairallah Sketches

# Unfinished work

Unfinished work from Khairallah sketches project, pen on paper, 130x67 cm, 2019



# CUT



Khairallah district during the widening of the ring road construction  
mobie photos, taken by Azza Ezzat, 2022