

This is Not A Landscape: Open Studio (2025)

An open studio by: Ismail Fayed & Azza Ezzat

This is Not A Landscape (2018-2025) is an artistic project initiated by artist Azza Ezzat and curated by Ismail Fayed, in an attempt to understand the urban acceleration of Cairo with the massive expansion of existing road systems in heavily populated residential areas. The impact of expanding existing road systems and the transformation of inner-city road networks into a quasi-highway style road network had a tremendous impact on urban flow and traffic in primarily residential areas. The re-routing of most street flows in residential districts, has caused overextended detours and labyrinth-like traffic flows that always existed in the modern city, but now is expanded to a scale that is truly vertiginous.

In this iteration of the project Azza and Ismail invited other artists and practitioners in an open studio setting, in partnership with Medrar, to think about the ways in which this urban experience can be understood but also processed visually and artistically through different practices and mediums. Through a collaborative process of sharing practice and experience Azza together with invited artists and collaborators will engage in three intensive, day long sessions tackling themes of:

- Human and non-human experience in the urban environment
- Everyday experiences of the web interactions that take place in the urban surroundings (with structural and non-structural elements)
- Spatial strategies that are used to navigate this urban space and reality

Each session was followed by an open studio where artists and participants shared with the public a moment of reflection and experimentation.

The workshop is free and self funded, so each artist should provide his own materials. Medrar will contribute with some available utilities such as (sound equipment, projector, ...etc.)



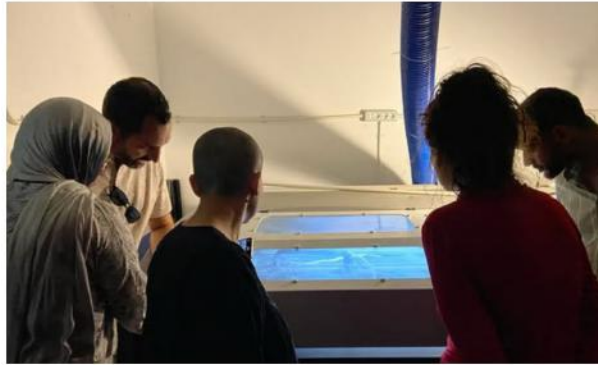
Human and non-human experience in the urban environment

The 1st session looked at biological agents (such as plants, animals, microorganisms, etc) that inhabit the public space and has a particular relationship on how we experience the public space. Helena Abdel Nasser talked about using bio-materials and their possible relation to biological elements and processes



Everyday experiences of the web interactions (structural and non-structural elements)

The 2nd session looked at the built environment with its many structural elements (markets, pavements, fenced gardens, street lights,...etc) and the way those elements impede or shape our experience. In the context of Cairo, the actual individual experience of the citizens is rarely recognized or considered, making the built environment in general a "challenging experience". Islam Aly talked about possibilities of 3D printing and how different elements can be rendered as a 3D model and how we can think of object making as a possible translation of an idea or concept



Spatial strategies that are used to navigate this urban space and reality

The 3rd session will be divided into two parts. 1st part will look at the everyday spatial strategies that we use to navigate the urban space and how mapping those experiences can influence our understanding of our surrounding reality. Ahmed Borham to work with participants on thinking about mapping their built environment and understanding what we mean by urban flow or circulation. 2nd part will look at non-biological natural actors, such as dust, wind, solar light,...etc and the direct impact they have on the built environment (whether through adaptation, disruption, accommodation,..etc). Yasmine El Meleegy to facilitate and talk about using a variety of materials and the practical and artistic considerations in those different choices



The final open studio

Tuesday, 22nd of July 2025

Through a program of invited guests and facilitators, including artists Helena Abdel Nasser, Yasmine El Meleegy, urban researcher Ahmed Borham, digital fabricator Eslam Ali and with support from ADEF, the artists got to experiment with different approaches and methodologies in exploring space and materials and expanding a vocabulary of research and framing but also methods of practice that helped the artists expand possibilities of production beyond their own medium and form.

This was accompanied by public moments where the audience was invited to join throughout the program, giving feedback, and reflecting with the artists on their different propositions and experiments.

For the showcase the artists chose different iterations of the work, to share with the public, but also are inviting the public to extend this dialogue and think together, in a moment fraught with great uncertainty and catastrophic change, what kind of landscape can we imagine? And how can we inhabit it

