

Roland Prime



# ON A CARAVAN

IS THE BRAINCHILD OF THE REVD PAUL GORDON CHANDLER AN AMERICAN EPISCOPAL PRIEST WHO HAS BEEN WORKING AND LIVING IN MAADI FOR SIX YEARS NOW. HE HAS PREVIOUSLY LED INITIATIVES SUCH AS THE CAIRO LECTURES, WHICH IS AN ESTABLISHED LECTURESHIP THAT BRINGS TO CAIRO, AN INDIVIDUAL OF ACADEMIC, ARTISTIC, OR LITERARY DISTINCTION TO GIVE A CENTRAL LECTURE/PRESENTATION TO AN INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE TOWARD ENCOURAGING AND DEEPENING THE FAITH OF BOTH CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM AUDIENCES.



Arabesque stained-glass windows were commissioned from the window artists of Al-Azhar Mosque and nine stained-glass windows were designed by the American artist Debra Balchen whose work portrays images that are based on texts related to Egypt found in both the Quran and Bible. The building providing a great source of creative inspiration and it will be interesting to see what diverse artworks will be produced by the artists.

Deadlines were set together as well. In the middle of January the renowned artist Mohamed Abla will run his Interactive Art workshop with all the artists of the group in the grounds of the church for half a day, enabling the artists to see what they can achieve together from this exciting and new approach to art.

Then on the last weekend of January 2009 all 40 artworks will be exhibited within the church for a selling exhibition from the 29th - 31st, where no commission will be charged and artists will set their own prices. It will have a guaranteed audience that comes from those who use the church and then from publicity that the event will generate. It is hoped that magazines such as Art

News, Time and Egypt Today will follow and publish this story and news agencies such as CNN, The New York Times and the BBC will be interested in this unique event.

The artists taking part are from: Mohamed Abla, Dr. Reda Abdel Rahman, Dr. Omar El Fayoumi, Hany Rashid, Dr. Farid Fadel, Maher Ali, Hisham El Zeiny, Mansour Ahmed "ALL FROM EGYPT"

Randa Fakes-LoGerfo "Jordanian/American", Dorian Haqmoun "SWISS", Julie Oxenforth "ENGLAND", Isolde Kadry "Egyptian/German", Maria Maher "USA/Cuban", Roland Prime "ENGLAND", Connie Fiorelli "USA", Lucy Westwood "ENGLAND", Kimberley Odekirk "USA", Anne du Boistesselin "FRANCE"

We hope that this is the beginning of new initiatives to expand the intercultural and interreligious dialogue, toward building bridges of understanding and respect between East and West. Perhaps through this initiative we can learn and pass on these skills to others, so that all can live without division and respect and love the "other."

We look forward to seeing you at the exhibition where you will be able to see the fruits of our labours, so do not forget the 29th January 2009 at 7.00pm for the opening reception, the exhibition will continue until the evening of the 31st.

<http://www.maadichurchstjohn.org/arts.html>

**O**n A Caravan: East and West journeying together through the Arts. Is an artistic new initiative where he has asked twenty artists from both Egypt and the West that are living in Egypt to come together and work on ideas that reflect the title: East and West journeying together through the arts. The initiative seeks to highlight that the Arts serve as one of the most effective mediums to build bridges of friendship and sharing between East and West.

The launch last Monday, held in the grounds of one of Maadi's beautiful old villas, was a great success with all invited artists in attendance and the evening flowed seamlessly. Everyone was asked to circulate and talk to other artists they had not met before. Over dinner all continued to talk to each other, the common ground being Art. We all share a visual language and it was exciting to see artists exchanging ideas and notes on what could be done. After dinner everyone gathered in the large drawing room of the villa and each of artists was asked to share briefly about themselves and their work. As the evening continued it became apparent that we were starting something quite special and that feeling was reflected by the artists talking about their own work, their passion and belief in what they were doing. The group contains a diverse range of artists ranging from one of Egypt's leading contemporary artist to lesser well-known artists

who were being given the opportunity to integrate with the more established artists.

The conditions of the symposium were introduced; each artist is to produce two pieces of work based on a collective theme.

One: The Spiritual--focusing on that which East and West, and even Muslim and Christian, hold in common, with an emphasis on "building bridges" between the two. Musing on the title, On A Caravan: East and West Journeying together, opens up to a huge pool of ideas and it will be exciting to see what the individual artist comes up with.

Two: The Physical--St. Johns Church in Maadi, which was designed by the late well-known architect Sir Herbert Parker, was one of the first buildings to be constructed in Maadi when this area was laid out in the 1920's and the church was consecrated in April 1931. The architect had been building churches throughout Africa, starting in Cape Town and this his the last, some say the simplest in design, here in Maadi, Cairo. The building itself is very humble, three domed spaces with stubbed knaves making a blunt cruciform, reflecting a Byzantine influence. From the outside you would not have thought it had domed ceilings as the roof hides what is underneath and the building sits quietly in its surroundings. The churches' walls are pierced with stained glass windows letting in beautiful liquid colours that flood the interior. Two circular