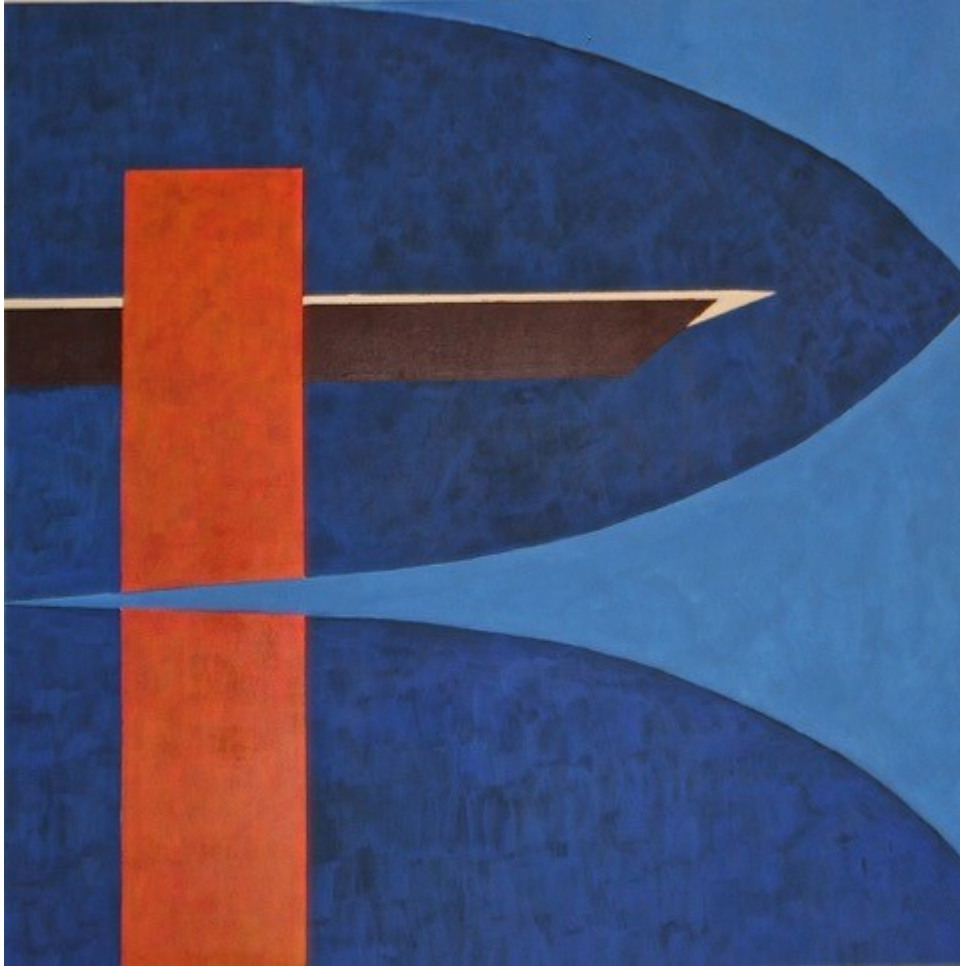




THE ARTS CLUB

Wassef Boutros-Ghali



Wassef Boutros-Ghali, *Untitled*, 2012, Acrylic on Canvas, 46 x 46 ". Courtesy of the artist

This February, The Arts Club presents the first UK solo show from 99-year-old Egyptian painter Wassef Boutros-Ghali. With an artistic career spanning several decades, Boutros-Ghali's work is defined by dazzling abstract compositions inspired by the colours of unrelenting sunlight. Architectural forms emerge, collide and reengineer themselves without narrative, conjured by subjects based on mythology, on nuanced observations of daily life and imagined vistas that relate to but could never work in real life. The exhibition presents works from 2000-2012: a reflective period for the artist by which time he had absorbed numerous architectural and modernist movements - notably colour field painting and geometric abstraction – alongside numerous socio-political events that had impacted his life to date.

Born 1924 in Cairo, Boutros-Ghali's life and work have been shaped by political upheaval and military conflict, as well as his successful career as an architect. He comes from a political dynasty: his grandfather Boutros Ghali Pasha was Prime Minister of Egypt from 1908-1910, and his brother Boutros was General Secretary of the United Nations. As a young man, Boutros-Ghali's first love was painting, but he was fervently discouraged by his parents from pursuing his passion, thus training as an architect at Cairo University, graduating first in his class. A self-proclaimed disciple of Le Corbusier, after WWII Boutros-Ghali spent time visiting Europe's many Bauhaus and modernist buildings. At the age of 26, his first architectural project on the banks of the river Nile summoned an



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international modernist style – an exception for Egypt at the time. Amidst ongoing political strife in Egypt, he went on to expand his architectural practice in the region, also working as a technical consultant for UNESCO, meanwhile returning to his beloved painting in his spare time.

Following the Sudanese coup in 1969, Boutros-Ghali moved to New York, where he was immersed in the movements of colour field painting and geometric abstraction which dominated the city in the 1970s. Developing his own skills as a colourist, he honed a singular painterly language that drew on his many artistic and architectural influences but can be seen as uniquely his own. Eventually returning to Cairo in 1985, Boutros-Ghali's eye for precision translates into vibrant flat forms which blend influences of Le Corbusier, Rothko, and Reinhardt. The artist explains: *"My goal is simply to achieve an aesthetic visual equilibrium of geometric shapes and colours"*.

At The Arts Club, six richly coloured paintings adorn the Ante Room. With an aversion to figuration – a lasting reaction to the cataclysmic years of upheaval and death during WWII – these works are characterised by a collision of primary and complimentary colours, with compositions reminiscent of distant landscapes. Boutros-Ghali's artwork speaks to the pure and unrestricted physicality of painting. With minimalist tendencies, his paintings strive to say something with as little as possible; refusing to reference overtly recognisable forms and shapes. Harnessing colour to articulate motion and energy within the canvas, the artist's nuanced geometric forms translate into dreamscapes which speak to an 'alternative Modern' that has defined his lifetime.

The exhibition is curated by Amelie von Wedel and Pernilla Holmes of Wedel Art, with special thanks to Leonie Mir and Lesley and Teymour Boutros-Ghali.

About The Arts Club

The Arts Club was founded in 1863 to provide a sanctuary for those with a professional or amateur relationship with the Arts, Literature or Sciences. Since then, it has garnered international recognition as an exciting space for creatives, thought leaders and discerning thinkers to come together in the heart of London.

At the core of the club is an extensive contemporary art collection which honours emerging and established international artists. A rotating exhibition, talks and events programme builds upon this diverse line-up, offering a reflection of the art world's continually evolving landscape. Curated by Wedel Art, the exhibitions focus on trailblazing artists of the 21st century; for example, the club's first exhibition in 2011 presented ground-breaking American artist Theaster Gates, who has gone on to worldwide renown in museums, biennales and more.

The progressive attitude of the founding members – which include such luminaries as Charles Dickens, John Everett Millais, Auguste Rodin and James McNeill Whistler – remains integral to the club's values and commitment to creating an inspiring art programme which celebrates artistic discovery.

About Wedel Art

Wedel Art works with private and corporate clients on their collections, exhibition programmes, special projects and philanthropy, as well as curating numerous exhibitions and artist projects internationally.

Credit lines:

Wassef Boutros-Ghali at The Arts Club, London, 22 February – 7 May 2023, theartsclub.co.uk
Sarah Buckner at The Arts Club, London, 22 February – 7 May 2023, theartsclub.co.uk

Title: Sarah Buckner



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Wassef Boutros-Ghali

Address: The Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, Mayfair, London, W1S 4NP
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7499 8581
Website: www.theartsclub.co.uk
Dates: 22 February – 7 May 2023

Opening Hours: For members:
Mon-Tues: 7:30am-1:00am
Wed-Fri: 7:30am-3:00am
Saturday: 08:00am-3:00am
Sunday: 08:00am-Midnight

For the public, by appointment only:

Wed: 10:00am-Midday
Sat: 10:00am-Midday

For non-members, please email reservations@theartsclub.co.uk for appointments to view the exhibition within these times.

Travel: Piccadilly, Green Park or Bond Street Tube Station

For press information and images please contact:

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