Aadil's Pageant of Scintillating Pharaohs

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Aadil Hoque, a young artist who has charmed us several times with his solo painting exhibitions on Egypt, and who has a gold medal to his credit, has yet another ongoing display at Drik . "For the love of Egypt" is an exhibition that presents photographs of the life along with artwork by the painter. Aadil is now 19 and from the age of six, when his mother first discovered images of Egypt in a history atlas, he became enthusiastic with this ancient culture -- despite his autism. At that time Aadil was not communicative, he could not read or write, and was virtually locked in his own world.



"Yet the image of Tutenkhamen that he found in his book was the trigger behind his development in the field of communication -- reading, writing, drawing and painting" says his mother Dr. Leedy Hoque. "The exhibition also brings out his childhood dream of visiting the historical places in Egypt -- sights, museums and meeting his hero, Dr Zahi Awass, Director General of the Supreme Council of Antiquity, in-charge of the care of all the monuments in Egypt."

It took his mother nearly six months to prepare Aadil for this journey, going through numerous guide books. Through his paintings he has built up a world of characters he loves so much, like Rameses with an ornate ceremonial headdress, a bejeweled gold and precious stone collar, and a striped white and black flowing robe, dating back to 2002. Here the king is seen paying his respects to the god Osiris. "It was so wonderful that we could take him to the temple of Rameses, so he could see the beautiful images for himself, which he had seen at the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford as a young child," says Dr Leedy Hoque.

There is another canvas where Ramases is dressed in red, with Ises pouring holy water over him in preparation of the "opdt" festival. Another such painting shows the same god with his hand resting on a tree, with a serving woman beside him. Cartouches at the back present hieroglyphics. The Temple of Luxor is seen in its reality in yet another painting, as it stands now, different from the ones of Aadil's imagination (which he painted as a younger child), with an avenue of sphinxes leading to the front and a palm garden.

More paintings show us Tutenkhamun and his consort, Ankhesenamun. The king is seen seated, while his wife is presenting him a gift of lotus and papyrus. Again, Nefertite (whose famous bust rests in Berlin) and Akhenaton are seen worshipping the sun. Akhenaton is famous for introducing monotheism. The "opdt" festival depiction is Aadil's portrayal at one go of ancient Egypt. The reigning pharaoh leads a procession of priests carrying the solid gold statue of the god Amun , his wife and their son. They travel from Karnak, the largest temple in Egypt, going down the Nile by boat, to the temple of Luxor. On the lower level of the canvas is Aadil's vision of everyday ancient Egypt. There is the farmer and his wife, sowing seeds, along with other panels depicting fishermen at work, and a vineyard. Birds, fish and crocodile are also included in the composition. Cleopatra too has been depicted several times, with different costumes and backdrops.

The photographs of Aadil's tour of Egypt focus on the places and events-- that he has written about in his story -- are also on display. The travelogue begins with the Delta Pyramid Hotel in Giza, and next we see Sphinx Square, where he met an Ethiopian family, which had a big impact on him. With Aadil's guide Morsi, one sees the pyramids and the sphinx. We are taken through the tour of Karnak, on to Luxor. What we see next are the temple of Horus and Edfu, and the temple of Horus (falcon-headed god , which is a positive force) and Sobek (a crocodile god), built by Cleopatra's father, and where Cleopatra too worshipped.

The photos also, bring in Aswan and the temple of Abu Simbel (temple of Ramases). The tour ends in the Egyptian Museum at Cairo. Vivid sketches in black and white by Aadil accompany the photographs.