

DARB 1718: CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE CENTER IN OLD CAIRO

by REEM HATEM*

In the midst of historic Old Cairo emerges a beating heart for contemporary art and culture in Egypt. *Darb 1718* is an Egyptian non-profit organization founded in 2008. Its premises includes a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces that host different art mediums and cultural events.

Darb 1718 houses two art exhibition spaces, theater, dance and concert stages, outdoor cinema for independent film screenings, gardens and rooftops in addition to an artist residency to accommodate international artists and curators. The center provides workshops, programs and initiatives to educate and mentor emerging artists and offers them a space to exhibit their work alongside established artists.

It is a hub connecting Egyptian artists from several walks of life with the local and international art and culture scene. *Darb 1718* is an art center and gathering point for all art events in Egypt. A wide stage for Cairo's Contemporary Art Scene.

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1. Story

Darb 1718 has a history inextricable from the rich history of Cairo itself. The narrative really begins in the seventh century when Fustat was chosen as the capital for a newly empowered nation. The city bourgeoned into the center of art and culture in the Middle East and Africa. This early success was met by a turbulent millennium and a half of war and peace; yet, the artists and craftsmen persevered through all hardships keeping the rich artistic heritage of the area alive. It is on this tradition that *Darb 1718* aims to once again build an African/Arab cultural icon renowned the world over.

Darb 1718 was the brainchild of Egyptian visual artist and cultural activist Moataz Nasr. Moataz was an active participant in the 1977 Egy-

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