



Invitation

Venue

Kunstraum Kreuzberg /
Bethanien
Mariannenplatz 2

10997 Berlin

Date

Thursday,
18. September 2008
at 8 pm

'Cairoscape - Images, Imagination and Imaginary of a Contemporary Mega City'

An exhibition from 30/08/2008 until 12/10/2008
at the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien

"Going to Cairo Changed my Life," or The Province, the Capital of Cairo

Lecture by Samuli Schielke

The city of Cairo is about to advance from an exotic city into a cool one, with a fashionable mix of Orientalism, colonial architecture, mega-city, arts and culture, and low cost of living. More and more foreigners live in the city, and a globally oriented market of arts and culture emerges along with a globally oriented upper middle class. But the Cairo they represent is, paradoxically, perhaps the most provincial of the many faces the city has to offer, a far cry of the class and sophistication of cities like New York, Paris, and meanwhile also Istanbul.

But from a different perspective, Cairo does appear as a truly metropolitan city, however in ways very different from those celebrated by the new global class of the cosmopolitan. Cairo, like all third world metropolises, is primarily a city of migrants from the countryside, and for them it shows a very different face of modernity, anonymity, great opportunities and new horizons, but also alienation and a prohibitively high cost of living. Going to Cairo, even if for a visit, can be an eye-opener to entirely new horizons for young people from the provinces. At the same time, Cairo is a centralistic obstacle to the development of the provinces, and especially in the field of arts and culture, going there is often the only way of advancement. In his lecture, Samuli Schielke sketches this ambiguity of Cairo from the perspective of small towns and countryside in order to show some of the faces of the city that often remain unseen by the foreign visitor and even many urban Egyptians.

Samuli Schielke is currently post-doctoral researcher at the University of Joensuu (Finland) and at the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) in Leiden (Niederlande) in the project "What makes a good Muslims: Contested notions of religious subjectivity in the age of Global Islam" funded by the Academy of Finland. He will start as a researcher at ZMO in 2009.

Cairoscape – Images, Imagination and Imaginary of a Contemporary Mega City introduces the dynamic situation of contemporary art and culture in Egypt to the Berlin public.

Taking the Arab-African megalopolis of Cairo as a starting point, Cairoscape proposes a different way of looking at the modern city and at the phenomenon of contemporary urbanization. In the project Cairo is held up as an emblematic place, catalyst and generator of new narrative series that ultimately transcend local context: Cairo as translocal place, simultaneously recipient and origin of a set of cultural influences and ideas floating in the region, and privileged observation point that as such may disclose unexpected yet familiar scenarios.

www.cairoscape.org

