**Interview with Heba Helmi**

**2013**

TAPE 1

*Nicola Pratt (later NP.)*: Can I first ask when and where you were born?

*Heba Helmi (later HH.)*: I was born in Cairo in 1969.

*NP.* Did you also grow up in Cairo?

*HH.* Yes, I grew up in Cairo. My father is from Cairo, but my mother is from the Delta.

*NP.* What were their professions?

*HH.* They were both doctors. She was an anesthesiologist and he was a surgeon. They met at university.

*NP.* Do you have any childhood memories about any political or national events?

*HH.* Like 1977, for example? Do you mean political event or what events do you mean?

*NP.* Political or national events.

*HH.* The war. I was very young in 1973 and my uncle had gone off to war. The war was during Ramadan in 1973 and I remember that I was watching television and my uncle and his wife and my other uncle – I have four – came over to our house and I remember hearing the sirens sounding to indicate and air strike. This is one of my earliest memories. Everybody was worried because my uncle was fighting in the war and I remember them crying whenever they would announce that somebody had been killed. That was the atmosphere during the war of 1973. Of course, the Israelis were the enemy. Then we moved to Saudi Arabia where my parents worked for two years and we went on pilgrimage. Then Sadat went to Jerusalem and the Knesset and I remember my parents stopped doing their pilgrimage and were just listening to radio all the time. Everyone was. ‘It was very touching’, for them at that moment it was a catastrophe, but after that, they were supportive of the idea of peace. My uncles and especially my uncle who had fought in the war of course weren’t all at. However, I remember that throughout my childhood this was a hot ‘debate’ that my family had all the time about being for or against peace with Israel. You’d be sitting with the family and some people would be saying that it’s a must and that we’ve had enough of war. That was always in the ‘background’ when I was growing up. Although, I wasn’t in Egypt in 1977, but there was a young girl working for us in Egypt and she had come to Saudi Arabia to work for us there. We went to the airport to pick her up and she never showed up, because the airport had been closed due to the event of the revolution on the 18th and 19th of January. This was also something… We were sitting by the radio, not knowing what was going on. Sadat had called it the thieves’ riots, if you recall. So, there was a lot of confusion at the time. But there was always this political charged atmosphere, it later calmed down in the eighties, but ‘during my childhood’ it was like that all the time at home. My family is a very normal family and have nothing to do with politics and ‘they are not activists. They’re very ordinary people.’ But, politics was very important for Egyptian families during that time. The way it is nowadays.

*NP.* What did you study?

*HH.* I majored in ‘Fine Arts’. Before that, I did three years of engineering. While I was attending the school of engineering, I thought that people were only attending university to go out in demonstrations, because of my youngest uncle, who was in university in 1971 or 1972, whom I was very close to and had a great influence on me. Then, when I enrolled in university, there was nothing. I enrolled in 1986 and the situation was ‘apolitical’. There was nothing at all. It was strange to me, because the year before I enrolled there had been the big demonstrations because of Suleiman Khater, if you remember. He was an Egyptian soldier who had killed an Israeli at the border, so he was put in prison and after that said he had committed suicide, which caused large protests at the university in 1985. So, I thought I was going to university to go out in demonstrations, but there weren’t any.

*NP.* Did that bother you?

*HH.* It didn’t bother me, but I felt that politics was part of university life. Why this was appealing to me, I don’t know. Maybe it was the ‘background’ I was telling you about just now. Another thing that might have had an effect on me as a child, was that while we were in Saudi Arabia and after that, my father had cassette tapes by Sheikh Imam, whom he was ‘very fond of’ and would listen to all the time. My father was very right wing, but he still loved his music. So, I think maybe listening to the words of his songs might have had an effect.

*NP.* Weren’t there any student groups when you were at university?

*HH.* When I first enrolled, there was something called the socialist ideology club, which had only one member. The rest had graduated the year before and only one person was left. There were also Nasserites, whom I also got close with during that time, but it didn’t last long. I didn’t them ‘attractive’ at all. After that, a friend if my mother’s husband told me that she wanted to introduce me to the daughter of a friend of hers. They were part of the leftist circles. So, this girl was a year older than I was and when we were introduced to each other it was as if we were in a kind of arranged marriage situation, and the woman wanted to introduce us because I was very bored. I used to read a lot at that time and I was interested in philosophy, politics, and ‘the big question’ about God. Just the questions that any eighteen or nineteen year old asks. So, I got to know this girl, who was from a family of leftists, and I started to get to know this sort of atmosphere. But even at that time, which was around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, there wasn’t anything. All the ex-leftists were collapsing and at the same time there was a new group forming. The Trotskyists, some of which were students of the AUC and the other… Hisham Mubarak, may he rest in peace, was part of this group and I became a part of it. We started reading and started a ‘very very tiny’ movement, but it was the beginning of what is now the Revolutionary Socialists.

*NP.* After university, did you stay active within these circles?

*HH.* Are you asking what we were doing? Is that the question? There was an important event that happened when I was in university, which was the Gulf War. This was a catastrophe. All of a sudden the Egyptian army is fighting with Americans against Iraq and that was ‘very confusing’ and difficult. So, we started to form a movement. There was a part of Tagammu that was called the Committee for the Defense of National Culture. Everybody got together and we started thinking of what we were going to do. The committee was publishing a newsletter called Al-Muwagha and we used to help with distributing it and things like that, but there weren’t any demonstrations at that time at all. Finally they decided to hold a demonstration and then there were demonstrations at Cairo University. I couldn’t take part in the Cairo university demonstrations, because I wasn’t a student there. As I said, I was studying Fine Arts and was at a different university. But, we were trying to organize a demonstration downtown with the help of the people from the Committee for the Defense of National Culture and then on the day we said we were going to meet up, we went down to the Tagammu building and found that it had been locked with metal chains. Apparently, Refaat Al-Saeed had given the order to lock it up. Some people from the Committee for the Defense of National Culture were arrested. Yes, yes, ‘he did’. So, the atmosphere was very suffocating. But, in our everyday lives, first we had a group first in Dokki. There was a Tagammu branch in Dokki where we would work and make videos, try to get people from the neighborhood to come in to watch some videos and we’d hold discussions. It was like carving in rock. We were doing things on a very small scale and the afterwards we founded the Center for Socialist Studies, which was in Bulaq, and it was the first thing. Three girls, Kamal Khalil and I were in charge of the center. This was a nice time. It was a very big deal for us if only twenty people come in to the center. It was very slow, but we were growing all the time. The turning point, for me, was the Palestinian Intifada in 2000. Student movements at the universities were intensifying and we had people at the universities. I wasn’t involved with the universities. The AUC was the first to move during the intifada, then Cairo University and so on. We started having a larger base at the universities. After that it kept growing slowly until 2003-2004-2005 and the time of Kefaya. We were also part of founding Kefaya. ‘Through’ this time, I was working at the organization’s newspaper and the magazine, doing the mise-en-page and the covers and so on, in addition to public work, like talking to people and distributing stuff. We would also plan trips to Rafah – of course we knew we would be stopped, but that was the idea- and so we would be stopped by security forces and the police at Al-Arish and there would be pursuits and that sort of thing. So, a big part of the work, for me as a graphic designer, was to produce the promotional material.

*NP.* Weren’t you scared because of the political situation?

*HH.* I was scared, of course. I was called in for questioning twice by the State Security, but I didn’t go. People told me that if they wanted me, they would come get me, but I was never arrested. But of course, the threat was always there. Personally, I think they were concentrating on the Islamists at that time. That was the bigger issue and they were being heavily persecuted. So, they weren’t paying that much attention to us. There were some people I knew who got arrested and were electrocuted and what not, but no one was locked up for a longer periods of time. People would be held for a while and then released. Of course, I was scared, but my anger surpassed my fear. I had this constant feeling that I wanted the world to change and be a better place. The threats didn’t really make a difference.

*NP.* Was there a difference between the old left and the new left?

*HH.* Of course. One of the basis of our movement was that we didn’t think that the Soviet Union was a model of socialism. For us, the system had failed in the late twenties and that Stalin was leading a fascist system. That’s why the collapse of the Soviet Union had no effect on us, but old leftist had a ‘theoretical’ problem that made many of them depressed and made them lock themselves away. Many others joined civil society groups. But some members of the old left wing groups, especially the younger generation, joined us. We brought in all the people that we felt still had potential and strength to work. In ‘retrospect’, I think we did a good thing, in the sense that a gap wasn’t created. For us, we felt that there was a huge gap between us and the previous generation, but we were a sort of like between the generation before us and the one after us, but of course there were and still problems between the different leftist groups.

*NP.* Were you part of any other movements or initiatives before the January 25th revolution?

*HH.* Before the revolution, I worked with Kefaya for a while and we became part of a front. We weren’t alone anymore, because people were coming together. Many initiatives came up during that time and we worked with other people too. The biggest experiment was Kefaya and, personally, I think Kefaya achieved a great feat, which is getting people to go down to the streets. We finally broke the silence. People had already been going out into the street before Kefaya, but Kefaya was able to organize the people in larger numbers. I remember the first protest Kefaya organized; it was at the Mogamma. You would have a circle of policemen around the group and you’d squeeze your inside, shout out some slogans and leave. The situation stayed this way for a long time, but the numbers did increase due to Kefaya. In 2005, I took part in the first demonstration that was moving, people were drumming and wearing masks; things I seeing for the first time. I was going to university at the time and working with people from the university, but as I said, the main thing was the promotional material. The socialist flyers are being published until today. I think I probably worked on 80% of all the ones that were published in last twenty years. Something I remember from 2003… There’s always people from inside Kefaya that talk to the security forces and get letters and things like that. So, the message was, “do whatever you want, just don’t talk about the man and his son” and they meant Mubarak and Gamal Mubarak. So, we were one of the first people to break that taboo. We published a magazine, with a cover that - I’ll show it you on the computer now – showed the king playing card with portraits of Mubarak and his son on either side. I was surprised that the magazine was sold out after a short while. ‘It was an indicator’ that the ‘mood’ of the people was ahead of the political forces. This was in 2003. The year after in 2004, my daughter was born, so I would only go in ‘occasionally’, but a baby’s first year is a difficult one. After that I went back and that’s it.

*NP.* Did you take part in the demonstrations on January 25th?

*HH.* Yes, I did. The major event before January 25th was the protest at El-Mahalla in 2008. This was a big event. I didn’t take part, because it was in El-Mahalla and the city was surrounded. Do you think I can mention something before this, Nicola?

*NP.* Yes, of course. No problem.

*HH.* I had forgotten to mention this. During the Second Gulf War, when the Americans entered Iraq, I was teaching Fine Arts at the university. We had started circulating an invitation amongst people and online, that if the Americans invade on the 20th of March – and we know this because Bush had announced it – there would be a demonstration at Tahrir Square. This was the first time in my life that I saw Tahrir square full of people. Not as much as it as on January 25th, but there were at least forty thousand people there. I had distributed the invitation at the faculty and to the students and I got in trouble for that. They were going to fire me from the university and I was being investigated and so on. The nice thing was is that we went to the demonstration and there were a lot of people and so we thought we’d come back the next day. The events of March the 21st were nasty. It was a street war at… People were being arrested. Anybody who would come to Tahrir square would get arrested. Even people who would take the metro to Tahrir square would get arrested. It was awful. But that day the picture of Mubarak at Abdel-Monem Riad Square was ripped up and the same scenes that we saw there were similar to the ones that had happened in El-Mahllah in 2008. But it was the first time something like this happens. As for January 25th… On New Year’s Eve the bombing at the Coptic Church in Alexandria took place. I wasn’t in Cairo. We were at Dakhla and on January 25th I decided to go to the demonstrations from Shobra, because I wasn’t there when the massacre at the Coptic Church happened and I wanted to be in an area where there was a bigger ‘bulk’ of Christians. People who went early that day got arrested. We got off the metro and at that Kamal Khalil and other joined hand to make the circle around the 30 or 40 people and were arrested. We went at the specified time and there was a lot of attack and retreat. I was with a friend of mine and finally the demonstration started moving. It led us into a narrow street and ‘my first reaction’ was to think that a security officer was leading the march and had led us in here on purpose so they can surround us. I got very worried. It turned out that the people that had led us into the streets were the residents of Shobra and we went through the windy streets until we found ourselves at the big tunnel and went on from there. It was a massive demonstration that just kept growing constantly. There were even cars following the demonstration. We thought it was the biggest demonstration until we got to Tahrir Square, were we realized we were just a ‘minority’ and Tahrir Square was ‘packed’. It was an overwhelming feeling. It was then that we realized the magnitude of what was going on and that is as a revolution. It wasn’t like the previous times when we just went for a while and left.

*NP.* During those eighteen days, did you stay…?

*HH.* In those eighteen days, I couldn’t stay at Tahrir Square overnight because of my little children, but I went every day. I would go in the morning and make the rounds, giving out sandwiches, checking up on people and seeing what there was to do, and then at around 4pm, I would go home. The only day I stayed at Tahrir overnight was the day the Mubarak supports rode into Tahrir Square on camelback and attacked the protestors. It was possible for me to leave, but I just couldn’t. It was very strong night, because it was ‘very long’ with endless battles. They were attacking Tahrir Square from all sides, not just from Abdel-Monem Riad Square, which was the biggest battle, but also from other directions and all night long. That morning on my way there someone cured at me and another tore up my sign, so the attack had already begun from early on. I used to get there between 9 and 10am and this sort of thing had already started. The only good memory, if any on that awful night, was that all the people that I’ve known throughout my long journey of 20 years were there, so I didn’t feel that I was alone. They attacked Tahrir at about 3pm and we marching around Tahrir in a small demonstration and all of a sudden we saw a stampede of people coming from the direction of Abdel-Monem Riad Square. I didn’t know what was going on. I first thought it was a demonstration coming to Tahrir Square. It took me a while to realize that they weren’t on our side and saw that they were carrying Mubarak’s pictures. Everybody with me had already retreated and I was left alone in the front, because it took me too long to process what was happening. Then a young man that I don’t know started telling me to get back and pulled me away. But it was an incredible time; we would go up to friends’ apartments near Tahrir and get food and drink. It was a small community, almost like a tiny country on Tahrir Square, like [30:26:03]. You had a Ministry of Media and a field hospital. It was a ‘sort of utopia’. Till now, I can’t see it otherwise. Of course, there were bad things happening, but we couldn’t see them. It was an incredible atmosphere. The battles went on all night…

TAPE 2

*HH.* …all night long. Afterwards at 6am, my cousins came to Tahrir Square so we could leave, so that there would always be someone at the Square. And so, I left early in the morning. This was on February 2nd, I think. It was a Wednesday.

*NP.* How did you feel when you heard that Mubarak was stepping down?

*HH.* I knew he was going to step down. After the Battle of the Camels, I felt ‘it was time’. But, the more time passed, the more the tension heightened and the more the crowds at Tahrir Square swelled. Of course, it was a feeling of great happiness and we were jumping around in joy. He had to step down, because the people were only 100 meter away from the presidential palace. There were thousands of people that could’ve just taken him out of the palace by force. We knew they were getting close through some friends calling us to keep us abreast with the developments. We were happy, of course, but we were worried at the same time. I couldn’t be a ‘hundred per cent’ relaxed. My husband and I were there at Tahrir Square on the first big day after the Battle of the Camels. My husband, who’s French, made a banner that read “casse-toi pauvre con” in reference to the incident a year ago when Sarkozy insulted a man who refused to shake hands with him at an event, which translates into “sod off, loser”. So, my husband decided to write this banner, because he thought it was perfect for Sarkozy and Mubarak. By chance, we met a French television reporter, who then interviewed my husband. Later, when we got home, he received a phone call from the embassy and the person told him, *Monsieur* *Raphael*, you were at Tahrir Square today and you were doing this and that and that and so on. A day and a half later, they sent him back to France. The French not the Egyptians. They said it was just a matter of security. All of a sudden, I was on my own at Tahrir Square with two small children waiting for me at home. I didn’t know what to do, but I was still going down to Tahrir Square. The day Mubarak stepped down, I thought to myself: “Raphael is gone and now Mubarak is gone. What am I still doing here?” So, I packed my things and went to France. Two weeks after that, the French foreign minister was coming to Tahrir Square, so they let Raphael come back to Egypt. But, whenever I told anyone about Raphael being forced to leave Egypt, they always assume the Egyptians made him and I have to explain that it was actually the French that told him to leave. It was a surprise. We were worried, though. We were among the first people who weren’t comfortable with the idea of the army taking control. We were getting cursed at. Personally, I got cursed at a lot because I was against the army taking control. They were trying to convince me that it was a good thing that the “national army” was doing this. The same things they are saying today. ‘It took the people one year’ to realize that we haven’t done anything. I wonder how long it’ll take this time.

*NP.* Were you with the Revolutionary Socialists from the time Mubarak stepped down until now?

*HH.* Yes. I’m still with them. I’m doing the same work, but now most of the promotions are online, which is easier. It used to be so much work before with printing and distributing. We do, of course, still distribute and sell the magazine at Tahrir Square. Not in the time being, though, because it’s currently problematic. So, I still work on the promotional material and at the Center for Socialist Studies in Giza, where we hold forums and make videos from time to time. We invite a variety of people to speak. We even worked with Tamarud, which was a big disappointment, but we still worked with them and opened up our offices to them. We’re still working, but currently we’re under attack. Some of our colleagues in Alexandria have been arrested and there’s always martyrs from the movement. But, the youth give us hope. The thing that impressed me the most after the revolution was that I would go to the center and find people that I didn’t know. It was exciting to see new, young faces that are ‘full of energy’ all the time. It makes you feel that life goes on. Of course, it’s an extremely difficult situation that we are in right now and personally, I don’t see that anything is going to change in the foreseeable future; they’re going to pass the new constitution and things will carry on. But, think we’re going to have two or three quiet years. Maybe after that it’ll start up again, because the problems of the people have not been solved. On the contrary, the prices went up last January 1st. We’re only entering a bigger ‘crisis’.

*NP.* How do you know the Women and Memory Forum?

*HH.* It was more of a coincidence. I taught History of Art at the College of Fine Arts for a while and then I resigned to do my master’s degree. I was writing my thesis about the portrayal of women in paintings from the second half of the 19th century in Europe. During my work, I needed someone to translate something for me. I’m alright in translating from English, but I was pressed for time and I needed someone to help me with it, so a friend of mine introduced me to Hala Kamal. Hala found the topic ‘interesting’ because they were interested in women’s issues at the forum. I had only known them from afar before, through attending come of the conferences they organized. She later asked me to give a presentation on the subject after I was done with my thesis. That’s how we got know each other. In our organization, we always try to do things that are geared towards women and Hala worked with us on that. Our way of thinking and our organizations had many ‘intersection’ points. I also worked with them on some of their books and publications. I really like them, they’re very nice and we see eye to eye on women’s issues.

*NP.* Did you work with any other organization that deals with women’s issues and women’s rights?

*HH.* I did some work for the NWF at the time there was a… I forgot what they were called. It wasn’t a very close relationship. At the Revolutionary Socialists, we try to work on women’s issues, because they’re a part of the social problems. In Egypt, we have to convince people that these problems women suffer from will not just go away if there socialism – that’s nonsense. That it has to start by people looking differently at their female colleagues and understand that this is integral to the struggle. Some feel that the workers will be capable of creating this new society, but of course women must have a role too and you can’t discriminate between the men and the women. What I mean is, that it was important to make people understand this and they helped us in this when we needed them. These are major problems that the revolution made even clearer, whether the problems of Christians, minorities or others. Maspero really was a sobering event. It’s not just about being supporting of the Christians because we’re nice people, but it has to be because we feel that this is an essential problem. If we ourselves don’t see Christian and Muslim men and women as equal then it will be very easy for the people on top to create divisions between us. That was the first thing that [12:53:09] did, when they ran over people with tanks. It took us two weeks, but on the first conference at the center we held about Maspero only five people came. When I was on my way to the center, the streets were empty because everyone was watching the football game between Zamalek and I don’t who. I walked into the center and found only five people. It killed me. I couldn’t believe it. It took time until people believed what happened. At the beginning they would deny it being true when you’ talk to them about it, but with time they’ll believe it, that the tanks squished people in Maspero. This is something we’ve learned in the past three years; that people turn a blind eye. It was unfortunate that that revolution started at a time when there was no real and large revolutionary organization that could take the movement and point it into the right direction. People are learning, but they’re worn out. I know that they will break their silence. Maybe not tomorrow and maybe not next year, but it’ll happen. And this is not just blind faith; I have real information that tell me that they will move. The youth are completely different generation. ‘This is what I hope and I believe in, but’ we’ll see what happens.

*NP.* How are the youth so different?

*HH.* First of all, in term of numbers, there’s a lot of them. The State that ‘imposed on us now’ is a State of old people. They’re old fashioned thinking can’t see that the youth have different needs. Secondly, they have nothing to lose. They can’t find work, get married or buy a house. All of this is not available to them and there’s not potential that it will become available. There was a huge number of factories and workshops that shut down in the past few years, unemployment soared and prices went up. That’s why the revolution started. The revolution wasn’t just about freedom. Freedom was a demand that was given the main importance by the middle class media people, but that’s not what it was about. For years before the revolution, there have been worker riots, street riots and riots against the police and the oppressive system. There were a million signs before the revolution that signaled that a revolution was coming. For five years before the revolution, I’ve been saying that there was going to be an explosion. I didn’t know what form it was going to take; I’m not psychic, but we all knew something was going to happen. Things couldn’t go on the way they were. So, the youth have all these basic human needs and at the same time have nothing to lose. They watched their friends die. Every day there were martyrs. Almost on every wall in every neighborhood in Egypt there is a picture of a martyr. I think this will be very hard for people to forget. All of a sudden, everybody is talking about politics. What I told you about university students in 1986 was nothing compared to this. The youth now are a different generation with a different way of thinking and different needs.

*NP.* Is there anything that I haven’t asked you about that you would like add?

*HH.* I can’t think of anything at the moment. Oh yes, I wanted to tell you about the graffiti art. Can we just stop the recording so I can get you the book?

*NP.* Okay.

*HH.* This is how I first got the idea of doing this book. One of the things that I felt was important during the revolution was the graffiti and it started from the very beginning. Of course, there was graffiti before the revolution, but after the revolution the walls belonged to the people, so they could draw on them without being approached my informants. The graffiti was functioning as the advertisement tool of the revolution and it kept evolving. You had media that was changing the truth and the television was spreading lies but the graffiti had a fixed purpose. There were fixed routes for the demonstration in Giza on Mustapha Mahmoud Street, Shobra and [20:08:01] and when you walked down these streets you would see the stencils being sprayed on the wall for every new event or opinion regarding the revolution. After six months after the revolution, I was interested in this and my husband and I used to take pictures of the graffiti and so did other members of the organization. Some images would even be posted online. We weren’t just taking pictures on Mohammad Mahmoud Street, which the media concentrated on, we were taking them in all the other streets as well. It was very ‘urban’ movement that took place in Cairo, but also in Alexandria, Mansourah and other smaller cities. Slowly, I started to feel that I had to collect these images. I hadn’t even thought of publishing a book at that time, until a friend of mine wanted me to do a presentation and Hala Kamal had asked me to do one as well, and then that friend suggested that I publish the pictures in a book. I thought it was a good idea, because these were things that could disappear. There’s always a battle. So, that’s how I got the idea for the book. It’s about the first year of the revolution and I’ve arranged it chronologically, because I wanted the reader to be able to put the images in the context of events. The whole book is a witness of the events, which the images take you through the events and then they’re also categorized in themes. So, you have the ones in orange are the themes and these are the ones arranged chronologically. These are from the first eighteen days, when the people found out about the military trials on the 26th of February 2011, which was only a couple of days after Mubarak stepped down. On March 9th the military violently dispersed up protestors at Tahrir Square and the incident with Samira Ibrahim and the other girls who were taken and subjected to virginity tests, if you recall. After Samira, there was Noun Al-Niswa, which was the movement by the female visual artists. Then you have June until September and then the themes… Let’s just go through it together. There’s a small ‘theoretical’ part about the art of graffiti, which is in the beginning. “Be with revolution” was on all the t-shirts on Tahrir Square and it was designed in 2008 when El-Mahalla riots happened three years ago. This is by Khaled Saeed [25:35:01] the eighteen days. “Game over, Mubarak”. I’m talking about that… You have got three things, either a sentence that someone writes, a stencil or a mural. These are the martyrs, when they first started appearing on the walls. These are the ‘optimistic galleries’ talking about a beautiful life and so on, before…

*NP.* I saw these in Zamalek.

*HH.* Yes, they’re from Zamalek.

*NP.* But they’re gone now

*HH.* Yes, it’s all gone. Everything in this book is gone. Nothing is left

*NP.* Really? Why?

*HH.* That’s the way it is. Because the state is fighting graffiti, ‘plus’ a group called the Honest Citizens, which work with the state and they go around sabotaging the graffiti. Another thing is that it is an art form that constantly changes; four galleries changed on Mohammad Mahmoud Street. This is when they found out that civilian were being trialed in military courts. Do you read Arabic?

*NP.* Yes, a little bit

*HH.* Okay. This Amr Al-Beheri and he was the first person that Muna Saif and the others found out was being trailed at a military court, so they made the graffiti that read “I’m in military prison, because I took part in the revolution”. This is the ‘logo’ for the military trials, which was a ‘stencil’. Then I talk about the graffiti ‘campaigns’, for example the campaign against the military court trials. Then there was the “Liars” campaign. The was also something called the Mad Graffiti week or something like that and it was in preparation for January 25th 2012 so they could get people to go down to the streets once more. This was when the incident with the girl and Samira happened.

*NP.* Yes, I remember that.

*HH.* This is the officer doing the thing to her. That’s him and her and it says “You won’t break me”. This is Anan and then this is about women in the revolution, which was Noun Al-Niswa, which read “Fear us, Government!” Then this Widad Dimerdash, who is one of the leaders of the El-Mahallah Textile Factory. “A girl is the same as a boy”. “Give me liberty and free my hands”. This was what was being sent on twitter, then you would cut it out and then you’d have your stencil. This is what it looks like after its cut, then they put it against a wall and spray. This was a collection about women [27:18:06] and this was done by a girl called Hana’ [27:22:00], about the shortage in gas cylinders.

*NP.* Did you do any graffiti?

*HH.* I did. There are two stencils that I made, but I didn’t do the graffiti. One I saw later on the street, which was about Samira Ibrahim and the other one wasn’t published. But the strange thing is – and I’ve heard this from several graffiti artists – that you make a design, send it out and then there’s a sort of a selection process that people do. There’s a guy called Eviano who made a booklet about graffiti and then uploaded it online, and people just took it and sprayed it. He found the images in Mansourah and other governorates. So, it’s a network. This was at the Ministry of Interior. It was a year after Khaled Said and they took his graffiti designs and sprayed then at the top of the Ministry of Interior. Let’s just got through it quickly. This is from the sit-in on July 8th; Mubarak was still in Sharm El-Sheikh. “Execute him!” This is when the events at the Israeli Embassy happened, they made a wall between the embassy and the bridge, and wrote “Egypt above all!” all over it and the people came and wrote “The liberation of Palestine starts with the liberation of Egypt”. After that I did a comparison between that wall and the Israeli Separation Wall. This the one is Egypt and you can see Nagi Al-Ali on it. The phrase “Egypt above all” became “The Army above all. [29:31:03]

*NP.* [29:36:06]

*HH.* [29:39:04] for Maspero. Let me show you something here. This is by Amina Daniel. This was in Zamalek under the Bridge. After Maspero, other artists came and painted the blood under the tanks. See, it was always evolving, with people adding to exiting work all the time. This is against the media coverage on Maspero. Here you see it “Maspero Brainwashing” and Pinocchio as a symbol of the media’s lies. [30:33:04] these were the people that were for the revolution. This is “Occupy Maspero”. This is from the sit-in at the state council. This one is unbelievable, it was completely made with bullet shells and it was on Mohammad Mahmoud Street in November. It was also during a sit-in. whenever there was a sit-in, there was color. We’d be sitting and coloring…

TAPE 3

*HH.* … this is all from the Mogamma. This was the first Mural at Mohammad Mahmoud Street. This is the lion at the Qasr-El-Nil Bridge. Someone climbed up there and put a ‘bandage’ and then it was drawn. Let me just go through this quickly so I can show you the big murals that had gone up in Mohammad Mahmoud, when they closed off the streets with walls and they made them a perspective and opened the way [00:30:09]. Look at this one, it’s a Kleenex roll they’re using to fix the perspective. Then we have some by Ala’a Awad. Did you see how beautiful this is? This is on the library wall of the AUC. Then we have the second wave of martyrs’ pictures. Look at the street. Did you see this? Were you in Egypt at all during that time?

*NP.* No, I wasn’t. I didn’t see this graffiti at the AUC. Now, there’s something else there.

*HH.* Yes, that’s right. This is at the Lycee school and it’s a collage of 15 different picture. After they did this, they did another one over it, which depicted the mothers of the martyrs. So they’d do something and then it would be erased. That’s it.

*NP.* Bravo. Congratulations.

*HH.* Thank you. Hopefully the revolution with succeed.

*NP.* *Inshallah*

*HH.* *Inshallah*. If you need anything let me know

*NP.* Thank you very much

*HH.* For what?