

PROFILE: Bassiouny – Unsung Egyptian hero

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Kent Mensah, AfricaNews editor in Accra, Ghana

Several families and love ones are counting their losses following the revolt that swept through northern African country of Egypt recently. It led to the resignation of the antagonist president Hosni Mubarak [the main objective of the uprising]. One of those unsung heroes is Ahmed Bassiouny who died on January 28.



Bassiouny was a sound, visual artist and musician, teacher assistant at the Faculty of Art Education, Painting and Drawing Department, Helwan University.

As a true believer in the Egyptian uprising, the father of two bought a mask to protect himself and hit the street with his camera on January 27 to chronicle the event at the Tahrir Square. He was full of smiles but little did he know he would return with a frown and groans. That very afternoon at about 12:09pm he wrote on his facebook status: “The national security forces have beaten me severely in (es3af) area today. this will not stop me from going down again tomorrow to protest, they wanted it to turn in to war, we wanted to keep it peaceful, trying to win back any of our dignity. I’m still holding strong to expressing myself politely.”

Indeed, Bassiouny returned to the street the next day but that happened to be his last performance on the mortal stage. He disappeared. Five days later the inept motionless remains of the 32-year-old father was found at a remote hospital, choked with gas and with rubber bullet wounds with fractures all over.

“He lost his life because of his ideas. He died on the way to freedom,” his close friend Mohamed El Masry, a fine artist and photographer from Cairo told Africanews.com.



Ahmed wearing his newly bought mask at the Tahrir Square

Kindest gentleman

Bassiouny would be fondly missed by his family – wife and two children [Adam 6 years old and Salma 1 year Old. Shady El Noshokaty, an exhibition organizing partner, described him as the “kindest gentleman.”



Ahmed with his beautiful wife and son Adam,6

"No one would argue how uniquely talented an artist, a teacher, a musician, and a revolutionary Bassiouny was. His talent propagated relentlessly in all directions. He was one of the most dedicated people to his gift and to his students. And on a personal level he was one of the kindest gentle and endearing people I have ever known. You might not be with us in person today but you will live in our hearts and minds forever. Rest in peace our beloved brother," El Noshokaty noted in a tribute.

According to El Masry, his friend was one of the most important artists of the new generation of young contemporary Egyptian artists. “His practice varied greatly and evolved rapidly in a

short amount of time in the past 10 years. His early large scale expressionistic paintings won him the first prize in painting in the 2001 Salon of Youth. Then his work took a turn towards a more experimental direction involving new media and multimedia installations between the years of 2001 and 2005.”



Ahmed and colleagues in the newsroom

Bassiouny grew more interested in the study of digital interactive media and by that he became one of the very few people in the contemporary Egyptian art movement working in that field and this is due to the lack of any academic programs that teach this specific field of art in addition to the vast amount of mandatory software and hardware knowledge that accompanies the practice of interactive art.

He participated in the first Egyptian/Spanish interactive art workshop, then in the "Egypt Lab" workshops in cooperation with Medrar Contemporary Art Foundation in Egypt and the "Hangar foundation" for technological production in Barcelona 2008-2009. These workshops focused on multimedia interactivity through open source programs like pure data and the integration of external hardware circuitry like the Arduino electronic platform.



Bassiouny's last project was an interactive piece titled " ASCII doesn't speak Arabic" exhibited in the "Cairo Documenta" which is a big independent art show organized by a large group of young Egyptian contemporary artists in December 2010 for two weeks in one of the old hotels downtown.

As a creative musician, it was planned for him to perform in July 2011 in one of the most prestigious digital music festivals in the world "SONIC" in Barcelona and this month has been dedicated completely to his music on 100radiostation.com commemorating his death and accrediting his unique talent.

Bassiouny may be no more but generations to come he would be remembered as one of the martyr that laid down their lives in continues 18-day of protest to end close to three decades of dictatorial rule in Egypt.