

EMAN BARAKAT: DECADE

CAIRO, EGYPT

22 NOVEMBER – 24 DECEMBER 2025

Barra inaugurates its Cairo programme with a solo exhibition by Egyptian sculptor Eman Barakat (b. 1988, Giza), tracing her sculptural practice from 2015 to 2025.

Rather than unfolding chronologically, *Decade* suspends narrative order to foreground the states of creation and intuition that guide Barakat's practice. Her work across bronze and stone—including granite, marble, and basalt—emerges from a decade-long, evolving engagement with form and material.

Barakat's sculptures begin with fleeting sketches, drawn from observation and memory. These quickly move into three-dimensional studies—maquettes carved not in clay, which is commonplace, but from solid blocks of pumice, foam, or gypsum. These materials can withstand the subtractive force of her tools. Unlike most sculptors, who build up form, Barakat works through the process of removal. This aligns her within a lineage of Egyptian sculptural history grounded in direct carving, from the pharaonic era to the modernist tradition pioneered by the late Egyptian artist Adam Henein. As the maquette's form begins to reveal itself, Barakat starts imagining the material of the final work.

Barakat sources her stone from Shaq El-Tho'ban, Cairo's industrial zone for marble and granite. She works with Aswan granite as well as internationally sourced marble, such as that used in *Guard Birds* (2023), imported from Turkey and India. Her tools shift with the demands of the material, ranging from small chisels and rasps to diamond-blade angle grinders for more demanding stones such as granite. Although the grinder is both complex (and dangerous), Barakat describes it as an extension of her own body. This proximity to her tools and sensitivity to the particularity of each stone are evident in her work, where a deliberate balance of geometry, line, and volume animates her abstract forms.

Throughout the decade, Barakat's sculptural language has evolved through sustained encounters with material. Each work reflects a state of being embedded in the stone itself. *Woman* (2018), first conceived in salt stone before being cast in bronze, marks an early moment where material fragility redirected the form's evolution. Barakat's work often begins from a geometric premise that she deconstructs while sustaining a dialogue between constituent elements. The basalt passageways (2018) trace her exploration of how complexity can both articulate and simplify the sensation of crossing a threshold. In *Lotus Men* (2023—24), the lotus becomes a generative node for abstraction, where geometry, line, and volume reconfigure the form into a state of becoming. Across these works, form operates as a vehicle for expressing states of being.

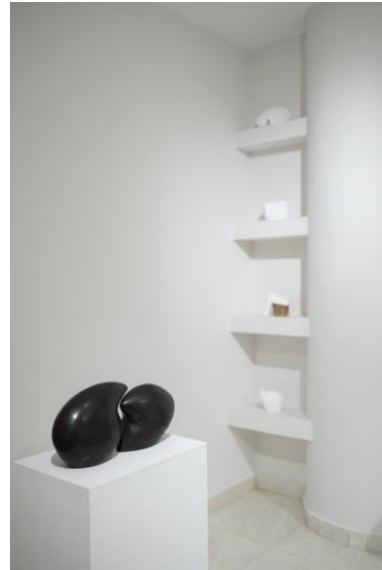
Alongside her sculptural practice, Barakat is currently pursuing a PhD in the Faculty of Art Education on cultural movements and their influence on contemporary Egyptian Sculpture (المتغيرات الثقافية و تأثيرها على النحت المصري المعاصر). Her research examines how shifts in Egypt's cultural infrastructure, such as the growth of galleries and non-profit institutions, shape the stylistic evolution of contemporary sculpture and its reception and visibility in both public and private spheres.

This exhibition also examines how space influences the reception of Barakat's work. Installed in a partially repurposed clinic, the site allows her sculptures to cohabit in the contexts of a typical gallery, domestic interior, and clinical environment. Their juxtaposition with imitation marble surfaces prompts questions on materiality, material integrity, and the social hierarchies encoded in material.

Eman Barakat (b. 1988, Giza, Egypt) is a sculptor based in Giza. She received her BA (2011) and MA (2018) in Sculpture from Cairo University, where she is currently pursuing a PhD. Her group exhibitions include the Aswan International Sculpture Symposium, Cairo Art Fair, Venice International Art Fair, and Kyiv Sculpture Symposium. She has received numerous awards, including the First Prize Adam Henin Sculpture Award (2023) and the Hassan Heshmat Award, as well as several scholarships from Egypt's Ministry of Culture. Barakat's major commissions include Diamond (2015) and Harmony (2020), both of which are permanently installed at the Aswan Open-Air Museum. Her works are held in public and private collections across Egypt, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States.



Eman Barakat, Installation view of 'Eman Barakat: Decade' at the clinic space, Cairo, 2025. Photo: Marc Onsi.



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