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Hieroglyphics That Won't Be Silenced

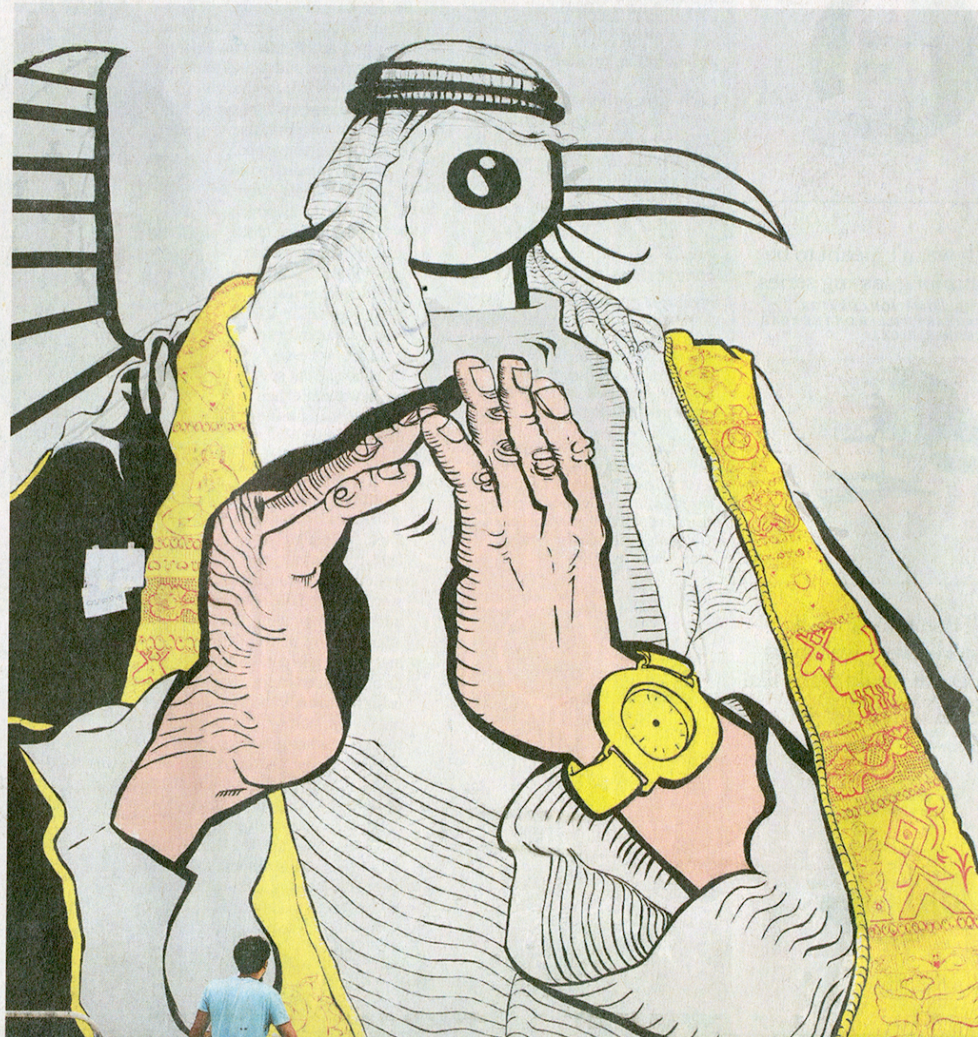
The graffiti artist and muralist who calls himself Ganzeer takes his protest art beyond Egypt — for now.

By BARBARA POLLACK

When the people of Cairo took to Tahrir Square in January 2011 to oust Egypt's longtime ruler, Hosni Mubarak, the streets exploded with murals and graffiti that both mirrored the revolutionary spirit of the movement and propelled it forward.

A young graphic designer joined the fray, working under the pseudonym Ganzeer, or "bicycle chain." He distributed questionnaires, stickers, posters and, most notably, one mural of a massive tank gunning down a lone bicyclist. He called it his "alternative media campaign" to counteract propaganda from official news outlets.

Over the past three years, Ganzeer, 32, emerged as a star of the anarchic movement, finding fresh targets as leadership in Egypt repeatedly changed hands. But now, his participation in the revolution will have to proceed at a distance. On May 9, he was denounced by a television broadcaster, Osama Kamal, on the program "Al-Raees Wel Nas" ("The President and the People"). He singled out Ganzeer by his real name — Mohamed Fahmy — accompanied by his photograph, making him easily



Film

A Dash of Whimsy, With Leftover Stars

How a warehouse's waste became a filmmaker's windfall.

By NICOLAS RAPOLD

The experimental filmmaker Jodie Mack grew up around the family business of posters and merch. From a Florida warehouse her parents supplied music retailers and others with the cultural wallpaper that decorated countless bedrooms in the 1990s — from the bands and celebrities du jour to the dorm-room patron saints Belushi, Marley and Guevara.

With the rise of the Internet came a downturn in sales, leaving thousands of Leonardo DiCaprios and Winona Ryders to languish in the cubbyholes of the warehouse. Ms. Mack's mother, who by then ran the company on her own, talked about closing up shop. But the bust in sales was a bonanza for Ms. Mack, an animator for whom paper materials are both a favored medium and a ripe subject for cultural history.

"There were so many things in there that were available in multiples, so I thought it would be very interesting to go down and shoot and make animations of all of it," Ms. Mack, 31, recalled by phone while on a trip to Ukraine. "The stuff that I had to work with was the stuff that was left behind, the stuff that didn't sell out."

Initially, she planned to shoot some sort of documentary, but the musical stop-motion show she wound up creating is harder to classify. Titled "Dusty Stacks of Mom: The Poster Project" — and featuring Ms. Mack's mother, Sharon Marney — it's a kinetic, handmade cornucopia of movie and music stars' imagery and shots of the poster-filled warehouse. The infectiously obsessive 40-odd minutes are timed to the Pink Floyd album "The Dark Side of the Moon."

At screenings, Ms. Mack supplies live vocals, accompanied by a soundtrack composed by nine people. Singing over instrumental renditions of the classic album, she enunciates wittily precise lyrics in playful harmonies: "Sometimes there isn't much to do/about depreciating revenue."

On Wednesday, Ms. Mack will perform "Dusty Stacks of Mom" at the JCC in Manhattan as part of the Rooftop Films series. The short has already played at the New

DC concerts back in Britain with her husband at the time. (Laser light shows get a special tribute in "Dusty Stacks.") Ms. Marney eventually did close down the poster business (where Ms. Mack herself worked doing data entry as a teenager). She was doubly appreciative of her mother, and not just for the sacrifice of weeks of stop-motion shoots.

Rather than a mere ironic goof on pop-culture detritus, there's heart in her film's meticulous craft of reappropriation.

"I wanted to make the film with her in it as a way of acknowledging that I had inherited her work ethic," Ms. Mack said, "because she is a very tough lady that works really hard."



JODIE MACK

A still from "Dusty Stacks of Mom: The Poster Project." The musical stop-motion film is timed to the Pink Floyd album "Dark Side of the Moon."

'The stuff that I had to work with was the stuff that was left behind.'

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York Film Festival, the International Film Festival Rotterdam and the True/False Film Fest in Columbia, Mo. The piece tends to bring down the house, not least for its kazoo solos, embarrassingly recognizable posters and a rap breakdown urging Mommy not to stress.

"As an artist and personality, Jodie Mack is a prismatic burst of exuberance and erudition bringing back a vibrant throb of energy and play into the contemporary avant-garde," Mark McElhatten, who programmed her work in the Views From the Avant-Garde section of the New York Film Festival, wrote in an email.

"Dusty Stacks of Mom" cycles through catchy songs, shifting visuals between Ms. Marney's posed antics in the warehouse and recursive floods of photographic materials. There's more than a dash of whimsy, with Ms. Marney jamming on cardboard star-shaped guitars and peering out of a cutout that references the Pink Floyd album and Georges Méliès's 1902 silent fantasy "A Trip to the Moon."

Ms. Mack also shoots more abstract shorts, delving into the history of design and the material worlds of fabric, stationery and wallpaper.

"I became really interested in the way the general public can experience abstraction and what sort of stigma attaches to the medium," said Ms. Mack, who trained at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and teaches at Dartmouth. "Often, when people see animation, they'll just blow it off as being screen-saver-like or trippy, when, really, it has roots way before those sorts of historical traditions."

Her own work is part of a well-established tradition in experimental animation with music that includes the coolly radiant geometric patterns of the abstract pioneer Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye's jazzy jigs of shapes and figures, Mary Ellen Bute's balletic auralike "Synchromy" films and the myth-spinning collages of Harry Smith. But in some ways, Ms. Mack's most formative influence is right there in the title.

"What's really exciting to me, especially with 'Dusty Stacks,' is the way her autobiography as an artist is embedded inside the work itself," the collage filmmaker Lewis Klahr, an influence on Ms. Mack, said in a phone interview. "Here, she is dealing with her inheritance, quite literally, and the inheritance that lets her become the kind of collage filmmaker she is."

A London native, Ms. Mack's mother printed programs for Pink Floyd and AC/

Above, the experimental filmmaker Jodie Mack, right, in Chicago in 2008 with her mother, Sharon Marney, who is featured in the film.

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