

## Camille Fox Artist Statement

I was born in Alexandria. During the Suez Crisis, at the age of six, I left Egypt with my family for Israel. Six years later we migrated to Australia. Life in Sydney was wonderful and as a teenager I quickly adapted to the Australian way of life.

After finishing high school I studied painting and illustrating at East Sydney Technical College and went on to work in advertising as a commercial artist for many years.

Marriage. Children. And meanwhile Egypt was buried in the deepest recesses of my mind. We spoke French at home and it seemed natural to say I was of French origin.

In 2000, encouraged by my English husband Tony, we crossed the Sinai by coach from Jerusalem into my country of birth.

The sights, the smells, the sounds of my childhood all came back to me.

In Alexandria I found our house on Rue Bolbitine in the suburb of Camp de Cesar, my grandfather's initials forged in the wrought iron gate and Mohammad our bawab, still there forty five years on – we stood on the footpath looking at one another choked with emotion trying to communicate with my smattering of Arabic; he caressed the gate and said "Khalena kollo zay ma kan" – we left everything as it was.

On our return to Sydney, for the first time in my life I asked my parents to tell me about our life in Egypt. I poured over family photographs, letters, books. I went to talks about Egypt, joined a group called 'Sons and Daughters of Egypt'. Then I began to draw and paint Egypt. I went back to art school, this time to The Julian Ashton School of Art to fine-tune my oil painting skills, and began my journey.

This series, 'A Memoir in Colour', depicts the Egypt of yesteryear, the vibrant communities that no longer exist. The elegant dowagers who went shopping in Paris and returned to their villas in Garden City overlooking the Nile. The short walk to school with Mohammed on rainy mornings in Alexandria. The proprietors of L'Hotel du Nil. The Flower show held at the San Stefano Casino every April. The Boudoir with the original bottle of Mitsouko de Guerlain and powder puff by Schiaparelli on the dressing table. The tram to the Pyramids on a hot sunny day. The exotic tea rooms. The Ballet Russe. The music recital at the villa by the lake. The dining car with the elegant diners always ready for gossip and intrigue. The affairs, the scandals, fragments from an era long gone. Memories of another world.