



Days of Democracy

An Egyptian Documentary by Ateyat El-Abnoudy

Produced in 1996

Research and writing by Rasha Azab

This study was carried out in cooperation with



In partnership with



With the support of



More about Ateyat El-Abnoudy

History of the Egyptian documentary Film

“I seek to influence the patriarchal perspective and change outdated ideas, values, and inherited customs that undermine women's rights and freedom, and that is what my films aim at.”



We had a clear plan that the training curriculum would include a case study of one of the films by the Egyptian documentary filmmaker Ateyat El-Abnoudy. Not just because of its artistic and social value but also for the unique journey she spent building an independent and progressive documentary film bearing the characteristics of its time. El-Abnoudi was one of the most prominent makers of Egyptian documentary films for fifty years. We were under the impression that she was a lucky documentarian until we came across one of her short films, 'Rawiya', produced in 1995, only to discover very little material available about the film. In turn, we reviewed the newspapers, the materials available online, and the live testimonies of the filmmakers, and we contacted the alternative cinema center Cinematheque, where Ateyat had deposited the originals of her films from the first film in 1971, in vain.

We tried to focus on creating a primary database of live sources and people who witnessed the film's shooting, but the information was also scarce. We realized the shocking fact that we do not have a database for the Egyptian documentary film. It was like collecting colored stones in an open yellow desert. While trying to absorb the frustration, we stumbled upon another movie by Ateyat El-Abnoudy, Days of Democracy.

The project was remarkable, the first cinematic document about the attempt of women to participate effectively in parliamentary elections. Watching the film, we realized the importance of this document and the journey of its completion, so we changed the research direction again. We faced the same problems of information scarcity. Still, the late director left us a surprise, a book she had published at her own expense, in which she recounts the experience of producing this film. It was of great help, but we were regretful to see that it wasn't present in any specialized or governmental libraries, despite the importance of the reference. Dr. Asma Yahya, the filmmaker's daughter, helped us procure the book and told us about the lack of database and how archiving documentaries has become a personal effort.

She said that she tries to make Ateyat El-Abnoudy's great experience available to all researchers and new generations of filmmakers. Still, she does not know the fate of these materials and documents. An organized and open-source archive must be compiled. The history of Egyptian documentary cinema, which extends since the beginning of the industry, is disappearing, and finding the journey of films and their makers is something that needs research and human resources to reconstruct the missing scene.

About the film

- An Egyptian documentary film produced in 1996.
- It is the first visual document on women's participation in parliamentary elections.
- The film was implemented through a comprehensive geographical survey of Cairo and the governorates. From Northern Alexandria to Southern Aswan, and from western Sinai to the canal line and the middle of the delta.
- Ateyat El-Abnoudy presented this film in cooperation with various international entities to reach the truth about the situation of women in elections. The ruling authorities had called on women for the first time to participate actively.
- It is an exceptional film because it presents interactions under the surface of the events of women's participation, including dilemmas and crises, as well as the strength, resistance, and determination of the participating women.
- Filming lasted twenty successive days, three weeks by cinematographic standards.
- The team working with the director traveled about ten thousand kilometers from Cairo to the various filming locations in villages and remote centers.
- 26 Betacam tapes of 35 minutes length were used.
- Thirty hours were recorded on tapes.
- 21 of 53 female candidates' election journeys were documented.
- Days of Democracy presents a complete research work that includes a film and a book, which the director released at her expense because she felt that the months of research and the numerous meetings across the governorates exceeded the capacity of a 70-minute film.



د . علي الراعي

قدمت المخرجة السينمائية المتميزة، عاشقة الفيلم التسجيلي، وصاحبة أعمال رائعة في مجاله. عطيات الابنودي لكتابها فقالت: «مثل اجدادى المصريين الفراعنة، أو من بالتوثيق، فهم أول من وثقوا تفاصيل حياتهم اليومية على جدران المعابد والبيوت والمقابر، بأدوات عصرهم: الهندسة والنحت والحفر على الجدران والكتابة على أوراق البردي، لقد تركوا لنا تراثا غنيا يمد الجسور بين الاجداد العظام والاحفاد. من هذا المنطلق، اخترت الفيلم التسجيلي بوصفه وسيلة للتعبير عن نفسى وعن تاريخ امتى التى انتمى اليها: مصر».

فنانة تناضل بالصوت والصورة والكلمة:

عطيات الابنودي فى «ايام الديمقراطية»

ومضت الفنانة المتميزة تقول: «ومنذ وعيى المبكر، وأنا احلم بان انتج كتابا تحت اسم: «وصف مصر بعيون المصريين». وعندما استكملت ادواتى بتعلم مكونات اللغة الحديثة: الصورة والصوت واللون - اخترت ان اصنع افلاما «اكتب» فيها عن الناس البسطاء وعن حياتهم اليومية. ولأن هذا المشروع اكبر من امكانياتي الفردية، فقد ألحيت على نفسى انه عندما تتاح لى فرصة أنتاج فيلم تسجيلي ان يكون هذا الفيلم مما أستطيع ان اضيفه الى كتاب يطلق عليه فيما بعد «وصف مصر بعيون المصريين»، وأن يكون هذا موازيا لكتاب «وصف مصر» الذى يمر الآن مايقرب من ٢٠٠ سنة على اصداره بعيون علماء الحملة الفرنسية بقيادة «نابليون بونابرت».

“In Days of Democracy, she goes beyond the scope of women's personal status to a broader topic: Women and the nation's concerns at a moment when society expresses an overwhelming desire for change. El-Abnoudy identifies the extent of the endeavor she took upon herself to document with pictures and words, its breadth and depth. She says: "Seventy independent candidates and nineteen partisans, each one coming out of her home with minimal financial means, demanding her right to participate in the management of society and a place at the highest political levels of responsibility, the People's Assembly.”

«هيلارى ارمسترونج، عضو مجلس العموم البريطاني عن حزب العمال. وتبين من هذا العرض ان الفيلم - اضافة الى قيمته التاريخية والفنية - سيكون اداة فعالة فى

Cast and Crew

Directed by:
Ateyat El-Abnoudy

Cinematography:
Muhammad Shafiq

Editing:
Tamer Ezzat

Sound recording on filming sites:
Jasser Khurshid, Alaa Abdel Hamid

Executive Producer:
Ateyat El-Abnoudy

Assistant director, editing, and Cinematography:
Noureddine Mahmoud, Dina Kamel, Samah Ghoneim,
Nafisa Hassan, Asmaa Al-Taher Abdullah, Ayman
Abul-Oula, Muhammad Al-Rubi, Jamal Rabih

Music Arrangement:
Shams Ibrahim Ragab

Vocals:
Ibrahim Ragab

Sound Effects:
Ali Shaath

Budget

Production:
Abnod Film

Funded by:
The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Cairo / The Canadian
International Development Agency (CIDA) / The
Danish International Development Agency, DANIDA /
Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies in Cairo

Several entities funded 'Days of Democracy'. The project was extensive and required an exhaustive team. Each of the four international organizations that participated in the production became a funder and an expected screening location in development projects sites in the governorates and global women's forums. The film became material that women presented to other women during workshops and training.

“A similar film must be made every twenty years to monitor events in the history of Egypt. The documented image, meaning the documentary film is the best guide for future generations to learn about the development and progress of their country.”

1

Historical Context

- Women's official political participation began in 1956. However, women's involvement was limited, and women's representation in parliaments remained weak.
- In 1979, Sadat approved the mandatory quota of women's representation in councils, which is 30 seats, and the 84 elections witnessed the most significant representation of women, with 37 female parliamentarians.
- In 1986, the Supreme Constitutional Court abolished Law No. 21 of 79 for gender-based discrimination, completely disregarding civil and personal status laws that benefit men over women. Then the attempts collapsed, and the battle faced considerable setbacks.
- Women's representation remained minimal. Even progressive and liberal opposition parties included three female members in their higher committees, whereas the number of male members reached sixty.
- Despite the issuance of laws after all these years, there was no governmental or private research on the reasons behind the low rate of women's participation in the electoral process. There was no effort to discover what went wrong. The only action the government and the opposition took was calling upon women on media platforms.

– Attention to the issue of women's representation in the political process reached a point of wide international attention. Egypt emerged as the weakest Middle Eastern country in women's representation.

– The annual National Conference of Egyptian Women was held in Cairo in 1994 and the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

– The Faculty of Economics and Political Science held a symposium in Alexandria in cooperation with the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation from 27 to 30 September 1995 under the title "Women and Parliamentary Elections."

– Women participants included members of the People's Assembly, the Shura Council, local councils, union members, and civil society members.

– Days of Democracy presents broad and revealing content tackling the basis of the problem, explaining at length the reasons for the siege of women in the electoral process and presenting without frills the stories of women's struggle in remote villages who tried with well-deserved efforts to reach Parliament. Still, the social and political system prevented that from happening.

Dr. Awatef Abdel Rahman, a prominent media expert, says in the Preamble of the book Days of Democracy by Ateyat El-Abnouy: This work is about the conditions of Egyptian society at the moment of the practical application of democracy claims. A live, visual, and written document on the reality of Egyptian women.

The Film as an Impact Tool

— The film's journey coincided with the parliamentary elections campaign in Egypt in 1995. Elections, the subject of the film, invaded the Media.

— At the same time, the filmmaker and her crew were documenting the experience and transmitting live moments before the live online broadcast. The film monitored these interactions, immortalizing the moment.

— The film, and the book, were considered academic research material.

— Dr. Awatef Abdel Rahman, Head of the Journalism Department at the Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University, was one of the official sponsors for converting the film into a book, in addition to her close follow-up to the days of filming and the research effort expended in publishing the book. Through Dr. Awatef, the film found support and screening in several Egyptian universities, such as Cairo University, Alexandria University, and Assiut University.

— Ateyat El-Abnoudy cultivated a vast network of relationships with documentary filmmakers and festival directors worldwide. Over thirty years in the film industry, Ateyat remained a prominent female figure when talking about Egyptian documentaries. Ateyat also developed a local network with the women within the community.

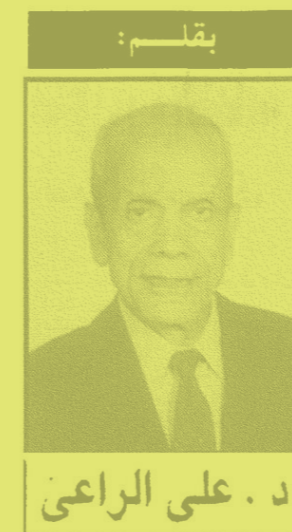
— The film toured dozens of regions, spreading and gathering stories.

— The elections came to an end, leaving Egyptian women with great disappointment. Women won only five seats out of 89 female candidates and 444 elected members.

— Ateyat El-Abnoudy was finishing editing her film, and she revealed why women had lost these elections.

— Testimonies were documented and showed great pain. Social and political systems practices siege women. It was clear that there was no real political will to support women. The ruling party's exclusion of its female members was proof enough.

— Political influence, lobbying, and religious propaganda had triumphed.



د. علي الراعي

About 1995 Egypt

وأنتجت الفنانة المتميزة تقول: «ومنذ وعيى المبكر، وأنا أحلم بأن أنتج كتابا تحت اسم: «وصف مصر يعيون المصريين». وعندما استكملت ادواتي بتعلم مكونات اللغة الحديثة: الصورة والصوت واللون - اخترت ان اصنع افلاما «اكتب» فيها عن الناس البسطاء وعن حياتهم اليومية. ولأن هذا المشروع اكبر من امكانياتي الفردية، فقد لبت على نفسي انه عندما تتاح لي فرصة أنتاج فيلم تسجيلي ان يكون هذا الفيلم مما أستطيع ان اضيفه الي كتاب يطلق عليه فيما بعد «وصف مصر يعيون المصريين»، وان يكون هذا موازيا لكتاب «وصف مصر» الذي يمر الآن صانقرب من

القرارات في حياتها. ولكنها في «أيام الديمقراطية» تخرج من نطاق الأحوال الشخصية للمرأة الى موضوع اشمل، وهو المرأة وهموم الوطن في لحظة المجتمع فيها عن رغبة عارمة في وتحصد عطيات الأبنودي مدى التي اخذت على عاتقها ان تسجلها بالصورة والكلمة - مداها اتساعا وعمقا - فتقول: خرجت حوالي ٧٠ مرشحة مستقلة و١٩ سيدة حزبية، كل واحدة من بيتها بقرورتها القليلة، تطالب بحقوقها في المشاركة في تسيير دفة المجتمع وتطالب بمكان في ارفع المستويات السياسية مسئولة، وهو مجلس الشعب.

«With this in-depth look at the problem, Ateyat El-Abnoudy has unified the whole of Egypt. And when journalists asked her: What's the difference between making a film about men or women? The only difference is that I wouldn't ask a man if he could handle the electoral battle and the responsibilities at home and the children. A question I did ask almost all the women candidates. They all tried to prove they were good mothers and had their husbands' support. They expressed that participation in political life would not prevent them from performing their family duties.»

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وكن جميعا يحاولون ان يثبتن لها انهن امهات مثاليات وازواجهن راضون عنهن ويقفون بجوارهن، وان محاولة المشاركة في الحياة السياسية لن تحول بينهن وبين

تصف الدكتورة عواطف عبدالرحمن، ذات

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Impact Distribution

- The film premiere was held on May 29, 1996, in Cairo, at the British Council, in the presence of Hilary Armstrong, a member of the British House of Commons of the Labor Party, and the film's participants.
- In June 1996, it screened for the first time outside Egypt, in New York for the International Festival for Human Rights.
- The film participated in the Arab Film Festival in Toronto, Canada, in September 1996.
- It made its European premiere at the London Film Festival in November 1996, which was an exception because it was a fiction film festival. The film was so popular that tickets sold out a week in advance.
- Screening at the African Film Festival in Milan, March 1997.
- It was screened in several governorates inside Egypt, including Assiut, in April 1997 during the launching of the Arab Women's League.
- Screening within the "A Look at Ateyat El-Abnoudy Films" program at the Alternative Cinema Center in Cairo in December 2020.
- The film is available on the filmmaker's YouTube channel.

“This work sheds light on Egyptian society at a crucial stage when its democracy was at stake. The film and book Days of Democracy are considered the first living documents, visual and written about the reality of Egyptian women.”

**About the film 'Days of Democracy',
Ateyat El-Abnoudy says:**

“After I finished the film, I realized that the visual document is not enough. We cannot display everything the camera captures, especially since the audiovisual narration technique is completely different from the written one, even though they both bear artistic components. Therefore, I resorted to writing to document the experience of Egyptian women candidates in the legislative elections. In my opinion, the written document was more comprehensive than the film in terms of details and characters with all the ideas, perceptions, and fantasies it reveals.”

“Those candidacies are the beginning of the action in political participation. The experience of making this film taught me that the issue of women's success or failure in the elections is a comprehensive social issue that changes the perspective of men's mindset toward the role of women in their lives and their societies. It also changes the perspective of women regarding their role in men's lives, and vice versa, and their role in society.”²

“That is a false statement, mainly since my films target men as much as women. I would never label myself as a filmmaker who makes films for women only. I strive to influence the male perspective and change the outdated ideas, values , and inherited habits that diminish women's rights and freedom. As a woman, I have suffered in my life from oppression, and I fully believe in gender equality, so I made six films that dealt with various kinds of urgent and necessary issues for women: Girls Still Dream, The Narrator, Days of Democracy, Made in Egypt, and Responsible Women.”



اعتقد ان هذا التقدم للترشيح هو بداية الفعل في المشاركة السياسية، فقد علمتني تجربة هذا الفيلم ان مسألة نجاح المرأة او اخفاقها في الانتخابات لن تحل بقرارات التعيين السيادية، ولكنها مسألة تطور اجتماعي شامل، يغير النظرة الاساسية في عقلية الرجال لدور المرأة في حياتهم وفي مجتمعاتهم، ويغير ايضا النظرة الاساسية في عقلية المرأة عن دورها في حياة الرجل او دوره في حياتها ودورها هي في حياة مجتمعها.
بهذه النظرة الواعية المتعمقة للمشكلة، جابت عطيات الابنودي مصر كلها: ضعيدها ودلتاها، وضمت الى هذين سيناء ومرسى مطروح. وحين كان الصحفيون



Impact Dynamics

Community Building

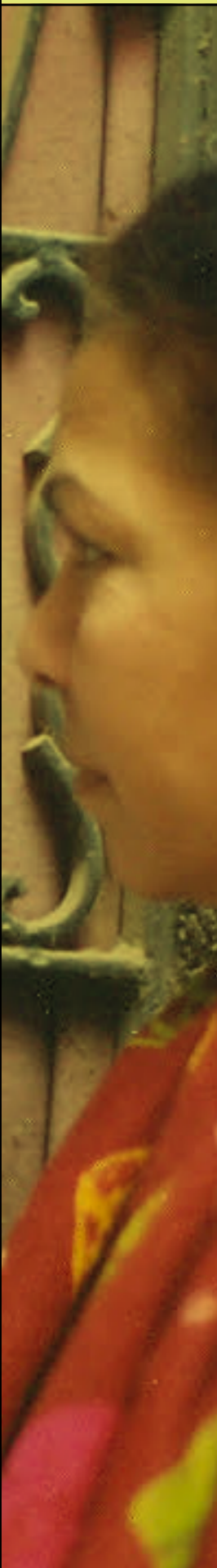
- The film and the book presented 21 female Egyptian figures. The crew often had to drive to remote areas to film them in their surroundings.
- These women led the most effective campaign for the film after its release. They worked on screening it in their regions and among their acquaintances.
- The Faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University held a symposium and a screening in January 1996. The faculty invited several female election candidates to attend.
- In April 1997, Assiut University invited the director to speak at a "Women's Rights and Political Action Symposium."

“I embraced my mission to show the positive in society. I believe in the energy of the Egyptian people. Since the beginning of the last century, Egyptians have taken upon themselves the task of pushing forward society in all its details, and indeed they led it to modernization. The ball is now in the leaders' court.”

Budget

Change of Structure

- After the New York screening, the filmmaker received a letter from Jonathan Gerdash, a member of the American Democratic Party. He proposed to conduct an election program for Nafisa, one of the women in the film, expressing his will to collect a donation for her benefit for the next election campaign in 2000, upon her consent.
- Behavior Change
- The extensive research material collected by Ateyat El-Abnoudy and her crew has become an academic asset for professors in economics, political science, and media faculties.
- Dr. Nevin Massad from the Faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University contacted the filmmaker for a research paper on Egyptian women in elections during the 1990s. The research became part of the curricula of the Faculty of Information.



Chronological Context

1919

Thousands of women participants in the 1919 revolution took to the streets and defended the country's freedom.

1923

Women's demands for their right to vote and be elected became eminent as the first constitution in 1923 was declared. The authority of the Pashas denied women's demands, so they established their entities autonomously, and the Egyptian Women's Union was founded. But the issue of women's political representation remained a constant struggle after Huda Shaarawy and her generation in the twenties.

1953—1956

The efforts of Saiza Nabarawy, Nabawia Musa, and Angie Aflatoun went on. Dr. Doria Shafik, the founder of the Bent El-Nile Union, led the first sit-in and hunger strike in the Journalists Syndicate. Strikers demanded the right of Egyptian women to vote and to run for office in March 1953 after the establishment of the July Officers' Movement, until the 1956 constitution recognized women's right to electoral participation.

1979 — 1984

In 1979, Sadat approved the mandatory quota of women's representation in councils, which is 30 seats, and the 84 elections witnessed the most significant representation of women, with 37 female parliamentarians.

Chronological Context

1986

The Supreme Constitutional Court abolished Law No. 21 of 79 for gender-based discrimination, completely disregarding civil and personal status laws that benefit men over women. Then the attempts collapsed, and the battle faced considerable setbacks

1994–1995

The annual National Conference of Egyptian Women was held in Cairo in 1994 and the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Faculty of Economics and Political Science held a symposium in Alexandria in cooperation with the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation from 27 to 30 September, 1995 under the title "Women and Parliamentary Elections." Women participants included members of the People's Assembly, the Shura Council, local councils, union members, and civil society members.

1995

Campaigning for the parliamentary elections in Egypt begins. Egyptian women candidates entered the elections and were disappointed with the results.

1996

The filmmaker released the book 'Days of Democracy'.

Filmmaker Ateyat El-Abnoudy started the journey to document the experience of women's candidacy for the

The premiere of the film at the British Council in Egypt
Screening of the film in New York at the International Human Rights Festival
Screening of the film in Toronto at the Arab Film Festival
Screening of the film in London at the London Film Festival,
Tickets sell out one week before the movie premieres

Chronological Context

1997

Screening in Egyptian governorates
Assiut University invited the director to speak at a Women's Rights and Political Action Symposium.
The film was screened during the opening of the Arab Women's Association.
The extensive research material collected by Ateyat El-Abnoudy and her crew has become an academic asset for professors in economics, political science, and media faculties.

2000

After the New York screening, the filmmaker received a letter from a member of the American Democratic Party proposing to conduct an election program for one of the film's participants.

Screening of the film was shown at the African Film Festival in Milan.

Research and writing **Rasha Azab**

Research Assistant **Nihal Al-Mirghani**

Proofreading **Jennifer Romanos**

Graphic Design **Abraham Zeitoun**

Special thanks:

Beadie Finzi / Sandra Sayej / Mustafa Youssef

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Get in touch at

hello@aflamuna.org

Ateyat el-Abnoudy

Ateyat al-Abnoudy emerged in a time saturated with national difficulty, a heavy defeat, and widespread occupation of Palestine, Sinai, and the Golan. She is part of a generation whose dreams of building a new homeland were defeated. With a group of other pioneers, she brings about a vibrant and vivid documentary film about the reality of life in Egypt.

She moves from documentary closer to political propaganda to focusing on people, their pain, and their joys. She tackles individual difficulties as an integral part of public issues. Her first film, 'Horse of Mud' (1971), came as a sign of a renewal of documentary cinema, which we see through a woman's eyes for the first time, as Ateyat Al-Abnoudy breaks the monopoly of male filmmakers in this profession. She writes, edits, directs and produces about 25 documentaries, and opens the door to other female filmmakers who follow the same path.

Ateyat al-Abnoudy was born in El Senbellawein in 1934. She graduated from high school and moved to the capital. She obtained a Bachelor of Laws at Cairo University in 1963, then joined the Film Institute to study filmmaking in 197. She joined the International School of Film and Television in England. She obtained a fellowship there in 1976 after completing her film Kanto Market, about a second-hand clothing market in London.

Her first film, 'Horse of Mud', came as the first cinematic experience for the young student. The student team did not agree to travel to Desouq to shoot the film until the film historian and filmmaker Ahmed Al-Hadari, Dean of the Film Institute at the time, was convinced to travel with his student and shoot the film himself. The film won 33 awards while she was still a student. Projects followed the same path.

Ateyat el-Abnoudy

In 1975, she produced her second film, 'Sad Song of Touha'. It was a graduation project film and won the French Critics' Prize at the Grenoble Film Festival.

'The Sandwich' was the third film that received nominations and a great turnout in international festivals. The film was shot in the village of Abnod in Upper Egypt.

In the eighties, she presented a series of touring films between Upper Egypt and the coasts of Egypt, such as 'To Move into Depth' and 'Seas of Thirst'.

In 1983, 'Possible Dreams' was a biography of a family in the countryside of Suez, an Egyptian-German co-production, on Berlin TV, Channel 4, Greek TV, and throughout the Scandinavian countries as well as in the Arab world.

In 1985 she produced the movie 'Rolla Tree', and in 1988, 'Rhythm of Life', the second film of the Egyptian-German co-production, played on Channel 4 and ZDS, the German Channel 2.

In the early nineties, she made 'THE TALK OF ROOM NUMBER 8', she won the Best Co-Production Award from the Valencia Film Festival in Spain for Rhythm of Life.

In 1992, she released 'Who Sold and Whom I Buy' and won the Egyptian Film Critics Award at the Ismailia International Festival for Documentary and Short Films. In the same year, she became a member of the Cinema Committee of the Supreme Council of Culture.

Ateyat el-Abnoudy

In 1993 she produced 'Diary in Exile' and 1994 'Responsible Women'. In 1995 she directed 'Rawiya', a picture of a struggling peasant artist who monitored her life and its transformations.

In 1996, her first book was entitled 'Days of Democracy', where she tracked the role of women in the 1995 Egyptian parliamentary elections. She also directed a film with the same title.

In 1999, she released her second book, 'Days Not With Him', a memoir in which she relates her previous marriage experience to the poet Abdul Rahman Al-Abnoudy.

In 2000 she directed 'Cairo 1000' and 'Cairo 2000'. In 2002 she directed and produced the film 'The Nubia Train', and in 2004 'Ethiopia through Egyptian Eyes'.

In 2006, she released 'Made in Egypt', which was her last film.

About Attiyat Al-Abnoudi's independent documentary cinema

— Egyptian documentary cinema began with independent production, separating from the state and institutions in general. The projects were individual endeavors by locals or foreigners.

— The Egyptian documentary film production entities were divided between Studio Egypt, the General Film Organization, the National Film Center and the Information Service, all of which are governmental bodies, in addition to some films produced by the Film Association.

Ateyat el-Abnoudy

— At the beginning of the eighties, Egyptian cinema in general suffered some setbacks and there was lesser demand for documentary film production. From that moment, Atiyat Al-Abnoudi thought of the third, untouched line to break the market's siege of this type of cinema.

— Attiyat Al-Abnoudi was invited to the first International Women's Conference for Women in Nairobi in 1985, She was chosen from among six international female directors to direct a film about Egyptian society. The conference funded the 1982 film 'Possible Dreams', as well as five films directed by women from other countries.

— Al-Abnoudi was able to impress international festivals and foreign television, and walked on the path that enabled Youssef Chahine to present his feature films, rejected by the local film market but are currently considered among the pillars of Egyptian cinema.

— Attiyat Al-Abnoudi faced accusations of treason, and fraud, and the defamation of Egypt because of her film 'Possible Dreams', but this did not prevent her from continuing to present her work and cooperating with German and Spanish televisions, the Upper Egypt Association and other media and civil institutions.

— Attiyat Al-Abnoudi established her company "Abnod Film" to be able to produce her films and insisted on retaining the rights of ownership and screening, and before she left, she donated the assets of her films to the Alternative Cinema Center. A large number of her films were released by her daughter on her YouTube page, keeping the films of Attiyat Al-Abnoudi available for future generations, while the listing of state television and other government institutions kept hundreds of important documentaries in the dark.

— Egyptian television refused to show Attiyat Al-Abnoudi's films, despite them being shown on world televisions. She won several international prizes but her works were kept in the dark for decades, but eventually, her films stood as achievements, presenting images from Egypt, a real image that does not belong to the prevailing propaganda.

About the History of the Egyptian documentary Film

Egypt has known documentary films since the dawn of cinema in the world. Foreigners began documenting Egyptian life at the beginning of the last century. The first Egyptian attempts came in the twenties with the founder's experience, Mohamed Bayoumi, in the first illustrated magazine Amon Cinematographic Magazine, which published short films like The Return of Saad Zaghloul from Exile in 1923..

Individual attempts continued until Studio Egypt's opening as the first visual arts university. The newspaper Egypt Cinema was created, featuring the first generation of pioneers such as Hassan Murad, Salah El-Tohamy, and Hassan Al-Telmisani, who made dozens of documentaries on Egyptian life at this time.

The 1952 regime established the State Information Service, which produced documentaries to promote the regime's achievements for educational and touristic purposes. The regime nationalized cinema institutions in Egypt. The state monopolized most of the fictional and documentary film productions, and the pioneers of Studio Masr had to work in these conditions but presented a modernist template for the documentary film.

Shadi Abdel Salam was in charge of the Experimental Film Center at the Cinema Foundation, which has become a nucleus for graduating filmmakers who are promising a new cinema with themes inspired by history and the present.

With the defeat of June 67 and the rise of youth liberation movements worldwide, a generation that rejected the status-quo and its propaganda cinema emerged in Egypt. Hashem al-Nahhas made Daily Bread on the Nile and Atiyat al-Abnoudy The Horse of Mud. The two films become the beginning of this nascent line, freed from the grip of propaganda and heading toward truth in cinema.

Historical Context

— Shafiqah Bint Muhammad did not demand her political rights from the occupying or Egyptian authorities. Shafiqah and thousands of women participants in the 1919 revolution took to the streets and defended the country's freedom. Shafiqah became the first Egyptian revolution martyr. After that, women's demands for their right to vote and be elected became eminent as the first constitution in 1923 was declared.

— The authority of the Pashas denied women's demands, so they established their entities autonomously, and the Egyptian Women's Union was founded. But the issue of women's political representation remained a constant struggle after Huda Shaarawy and her generation in the twenties.

— The efforts of Saiza Nabarawy, Nabawia Musa, and Angie Aflatoun went on. Dr. Doria Shafik, the founder of the Bent El-Nile Union, led the first sit-in and hunger strike in the Journalists Syndicate. Strikers demanded the right of Egyptian women to vote and to run for office in March 1953 after the establishment of the July Officers' Movement, until the 1956 constitution recognized women's right to electoral participation.

About 1995 Egypt

Egyptian soldiers returned from war fronts as Iraq invaded Kuwait. The newspaper talk was about a promised democracy in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Political leaders and religious figures invited voters out of their bubbles to practice their democratic duty. The head of state had promised the voters that the upcoming elections would be democratic and transparent.

In the early and mid-nineties, Cairo witnessed violent confrontations, the assassination of thinkers and writers, the killing of Farag Fouda outside his house, an attempt to murder Naguib Mahfouz in the streets of Cairo, and Hesba Cases (an Islamic Sharia law allowing any Muslim the right to file lawsuits in cases where a divine right of God is violated, even if this does not directly harm them) began taking the courts.

With Al-Shaarawy's presence in the media and the emergence of Islamic banks, mosques took control of the impoverished areas in Egypt, creating extremist thinking. The government declared its war on terrorism and opened all its media platforms to serve the discourse of the sheiks. They wanted to Islamize the economy, atone for art and confiscate films, as happened with the 1994 film, *The Emigrant*.

Amid this situation, an election battle was upcoming. At the same time, the ruling National Party refused to nominate any Copt on its lists, and parties nominated only nineteen women between them, while seventy ran as independents.