

Susan Hefuna Lands at Albion's New York Outpost

by [Ben Davis](#) Wednesday, Jul 9 2008

Big-league London gallery Albion is plotting an expansion into New York. While plans for a [David Adjaye](#)-designed space remain in the future, Albion's New York director, [David Ross](#)—onetime head of the Whitney—has already set up a beachhead in a temporary space in Soho, showcasing an artist well suited for the gallery's globe-spanning ambitions: Egyptian- born, German-trained [Susan Hefuna](#).

It's a savvy choice. Already quite accomplished in Europe, Hefuna studied under Austrian video artist [Peter Weibel](#). Her work is steeped in heady Teutonic conceptualism, roaming freely between media. While the selling point of the work is its Middle Eastern exoticness, Hefuna approaches her own heritage as more or less an image to be inspected, consumed, and commented on. Thus, the central works here are traditional wooden *mashrabiya* screens, which Hefuna has had Egyptian craftsmen fabricate. The twist is that cryptic English phrases are embedded in the dense ornamental latticework. Elsewhere, an installation that uses a street vendor's cart to display various personal items gathered from working-class Egyptian women is intended as a gesture of feminist solidarity—but might just as well represent how alien these women are to Hefuna herself. In other works, though, Hefuna channels a sense of cultural dislocation into more lyrical, less programmatic territory. Two large, distorted photographs of Egyptian landscapes, captured with a pinhole camera, are somehow both eerie and familiar. Most striking of all are two walls of small, abstract India-ink drawings, each featuring several overlapping sheets of transparent velum, their boxy figures alternately resembling floor plans and bacteria slides. These offer an aesthetic approach that's, well, a bit more layered—a good sign for the future of artist and gallery alike.