

## A lighthearted, powerful exploration of gender issues



An obelisk with a decoupage of biceps by Huda Lutfi.

By **Mariam Hamdy** / Special to Daily News Egypt **March 12, 2010, 2:00 am**

Occasional imaginative and probing works aside, most critics have grown weary of exhibitions that stick closely to standard gender problems. The reason could perhaps be attributed to the violent attitude some artists display against the opposite sex which, in many cases, reaches intolerable extremes. The title of Huda Lutfi's current exhibition at the Townhouse Gallery, "Making a Man out of Him, initially elicits a similar reaction.

Yet she manages to prove otherwise. Lutfi has always been concerned with gender issues throughout her career; her work though has never felt too tetchy or as affected as the works of many women artists whose work hinges on their gender. The general theme of Lutfi's new exhibit is the use of locally found items in compositions that are both as amusing and ironic as they are deeply meaningful.

As is always the case with Lutfi's work, her pieces inspire a smile. Upon entering the exhibit space, the first piece that meets the eye is an obelisk with a decoupage of biceps carefully covering it. The use of an obelisk, both as a typically Egyptian monument and unmistakable phallic symbol, is key to the contrast of the superficial image of the oiled sets of biceps. There's a male peacock effect to the piece; an underlying connotation many of the pieces in the show share.

Two personal favorites have Batman figurines as their main element. The first, titled "Imagined in America, Made in China, Marketed in Egypt is a framed, rectangular support made up of seven rows of Batman figurines neatly placed on top of each other. Both the title of the piece as well as the repetition of the superhero, pinpoint Lutfi's thoughts about the Egyptian man's perception of manhood and how to act upon it.

In another piece, aptly titled "Don't Believe Her, figurines of Batgirl in a combat position surround a slightly larger, seemingly objecting figurine of Batman. Lutfi's presentation of the Egyptian man's inability to accept the notion of equality to an Egyptian woman is as light-hearted as it is poignant.

A factor of Lutfi's work that must be commended is her versatility in the use of medium; from randomly found objects, to excellent collage on mannequins to ultra violet light and neon. The latter presents a piece that stands out the most in the exhibition. In a dimly lit room is the buzzing sound of a neon board that reads "No one is a winner, which is true in the basic context of the vacuum it occupies as well as in the metaphorical subtext: the constant disputes between genders. The simplicity with which Lutfi represents this sad and inescapable truth hits the viewer like a wake-up call - unwelcome but crucial.

Gender issues have always been an intriguing subject matter for artists, particularly for female artists. Today, in spite of the considerable progress women have made in art among other fields, there are still many issues hampering equality between men and women.

The success of "Making a Man out of Him lies in the seamless combination of artwork and labels all the pieces enjoy, allowing the commentaries not only to clarify the artist's statements but to compliment the content of the work. Lutfi's exhibitions have always boasted this impeccable level of quality satire, and this show is no exception.

Townhouse Gallery: 10 El Nabarawy St., Downtown, Cairo. Tel: (02) 2576 8086. Daily from 10 am - 2 pm, 6 pm -9 pm except



Related Stories

There is no related article

**Most Read** **Commented** **Emailed**

**24 hours** **3 days** **Week**

Daily News Egypt: Final words

No to a bloody future for Egypt

Thursdays



[What's This ?](#)

 [Add Comment...](#)

[About Daily News Egypt / International Herald Tribune](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertising Guide](#) | [Subscribe to the International Herald Tribune / Daily News Egypt](#) | [Subscribe to DNE e-paper](#) | [E-paper](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Sitemap](#) | [Archive](#)

[Cartoon](#) | [Blogs](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Events](#)

© Daily News Egypt 2008, All Rights Reserved.

Technology Managed by El Motaheda Web Designs 