

A mixed showcase for young Egyptian artists at Tache



Artwork by Mohamed Mofteh.

By **Mariam Hamdy** /Special to Daily News Egypt **November 1, 2011, 7:04 pm**

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Tache Art Gallery in Designopolis is currently hosting an exhibition titled "Pulse," featuring the works of 47 emerging artists. The show sounds like an extraordinary feat, as putting an exhibit with as many young artists can prove to be quite the production.

The exhibition presents work encompassing a myriad of styles, approaches and mediums. Sadly, it also presented a range of abilities and talent. The work is roughly divided between pieces by artists that can be labelled 'ones to watch' on the bottom floor, and those who 'may have potential but whose works are not quite ready for exhibition' on the top floor.

It needs to be understood by those who are not in tune with the art of finding young artists that it's a tough job. What Tache has decided to do with this show is noble as it is much needed. Of course, it would ideally benefit Tache if even just two of these artists would grow under their watchful eye, and, aided by the gallery's experience, become one of its representatives. This would grow into a long-lasting relationship that would benefit both parties, particularly the artist.

For a gallery that is hunting down young artists that are yet to be represented, it makes sense to look for artists with potential and not necessarily remarkable artwork to date is. This allows for critique and guidance from the gallery, as artists who believe themselves established will be less inclined towards change, or ideally, would already be associated with another gallery.

'Pulse' represents a handful of 'ones to watch,' starting with the very painterly Mohamed Mofteh. Having seen several of his paintings before, it's a genuine wonder to me how this young man has not had his own solo show yet. He has an excellent approach to portraiture, with enough realism to draw you in, yet tinged with a morbid ambiance that makes them somewhat ethereal. His painting here is no exception — a beautiful pseudo portrait of a woman silenced with a fish. His color choices are beautifully coordinated, and his brushstrokes clear and aggressive.

Clarity is what's missing from two strong contenders in this show — and that is actually a good thing. The works of Noura Seif and Azza Ezzat are intriguingly compelling in very different ways. Seif created a series titled "Icona Balady" (Local/colloquial Icons) which represents four small drawings on A5 size paper of what looks like recreations of Christian iconography. She employs the manner by which history books tend to illustrate the complete images of old broken artefacts, and the results are exquisite little studies in line and culture, drenched in wit. Her drawings are modern, funny and relevant. I have never heard of or seen Seif's work before, but with this quality of creation, I'm quite certain that this show will be just the start of many to come.

Ezzat's pieces are equally interesting. Having seen her work at a Townhouse exhibition last year, she was instantly recognizable. Her pieces are Escher-inspired works of dizzying compositions. Only in black and white, the work is full of detail and is unbelievably complicated. It is a piece that demands minute-long attention versus the usual seconds given to the other works.

Equally gripping are the pieces by Raquela Manuela Colon, who was possibly the only one whose work displayed the feel of an established artist. Beautifully delicate and with thread woven right through it, her pieces are organic as they are



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unnerving. It appears as though one is looking through a layer of thin skin to watch quivering veins and vessels.

Also present are artists that have received plenty of press attention lately: Dalia Sabet and Hassan Hassan. Sabet's paintings are nothing new — they are exactly the same pieces she has presented before. They are attractive, and follow the same successful formula she had used in her earlier works. But in order to develop and become a more established name in the art scene she'll need to shake things up a little. Repeatedly treading the same tested and tried path will render her forgettable, and she has more potential to make her avoid that fate.

Hassan on the other hand seems to have finally honed his drawing skills, reaching the perfect size of drawing unto which he can display his work. His earlier pieces, shown at various concept stores in the city, were larger and took a stab at painting, the result of which was what looked like failed Liechtenstein's. In the pieces currently shown at Tache however, the drawings seem to have found their perfect illustrative complement: A4 sized support and a simple black frame. One can actually focus on the details and the fashion magazine quality of illustration, rather than deal with it as a painting.

An artist who should've been on the forefront of the gallery entrance is the excellent Akram Fadl. Despite the paintings being decidedly morbid and perhaps a little scary, the brushstrokes, blending of colors and overall composition is flawless. The work boasts a skilled approach to abstraction as well as the skills of a trained painter.

The top floor is significantly less enticing, with only just a few memorable pieces by Malak El Shazly, Tasneem El Meshad and only one of two pieces by Ayal El Fallah (Jambes d'ecole). The rest are not strong enough, and that may perhaps be due to the crowded curation of the works. The paintings are hung almost on top of each other, with not enough space between one piece and the other to allow for some digestion of color or content.

However, this excuse can only be granted for a handful of the pieces; there are many that are not supposed to be in this show. A good portion of the paintings, photographs and mixed media displayed on the top floor are works in progress, and their creators are yet to mature before exhibiting their work.

Despite the lofty objective of the show of discovering and introducing new artists, 47 is perhaps too big of a number. The gallery space isn't that large to accommodate all these works, and some are not compelling enough to push for that tight squeeze of curation. One would've loved to see more work by the more memorable names in the show. Regardless, this is an exhibition worth a drive to Designopolis for, if only to buy a piece or two because soon, you may not be able to afford them.

"Pulse" is currently showing at Tache Gallery. The show closes on Nov. 14.



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