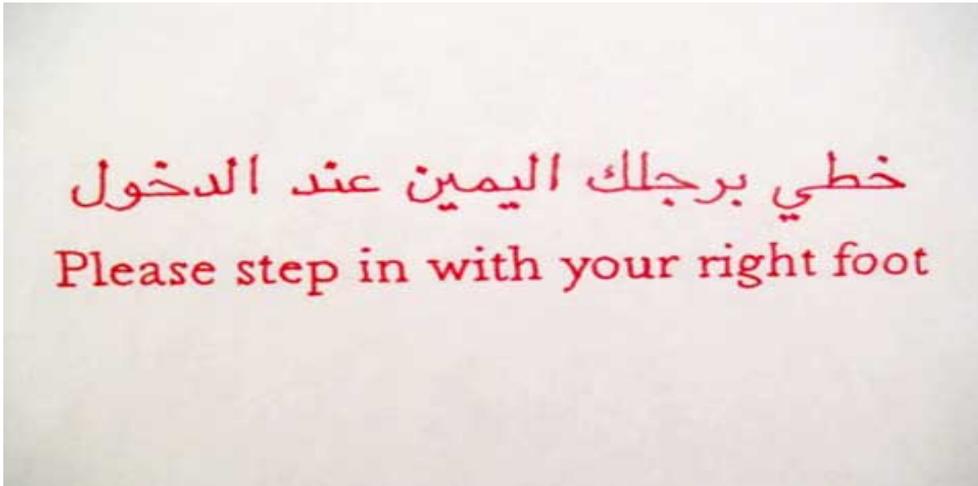


Homage to the least known famous artist



Dina Danish's designs involve quirky cultural commentary.

By **Mariam Hamdy** May 7, 2009, 2:00 am

Twelve international artists have been invited to re-interpret the work of Allan Kaprow at the Cairo Image Collective this month. Titled "A fantasy for Allan Kaprow, the show pays homage to the least known of the famous artists of our time.

Allan Kaprow (1927-2006) is an American painter and a pioneer of performance art. Better known for being the artist who coined the term "happening in the 60s, Kaprow believed that the exhibition process is an art form in itself.

He stated that "the line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible. At the end of his life, Kaprow gave permission for the re-interpretation of his work by other artists.

The exhibition consists of a set of drawings, videos, a sound installation, a model sculpture and a cat mummy. Judging from the exhibited work, it's easy to fathom how Kaprow has affected the artists involved, yet this influence was evident in some pieces more than others.

Hanging in the staircase leading to the exhibition space is the model sculpture by Mariana Castillo Deball. The piece was inspired by the architecture of Cairo's Nilometer - an endless series of stairs spiraling around a long column - and a month of listening to Om Kalthoum. The structure is a marine blue set of what seems to be folded cards hung from the sky light ceiling of the building. Moving in response to the movement in its surrounding - very much in Kaprow's art-making tradition - the model sculpture's effect is charming and whimsical, yet flimsy in physical foundation.

Upon entering the exhibition space, you re met with a poster that instructs: "Enter the space with your right foot designed by Dina Danish, a young Egyptian artist whose work almost always involves quirky cultural commentary. On the opposite wall, seen near the gallery's exit, Danish has another poster stating: "Leave the space with your left foot. The latter poster trivializes what otherwise is a superstitiously logical statement in a culture that places importance on which foot is used to enter any place.

This instructive approach is reminiscent of Kaprow's 70s' happenings which incorporated a small number of participants in a form of action. Not only is Kaprow's influence in Danish's simple installation clear, but so is her personal and distinctly Egyptian signature in the piece.

Another particularly intriguing piece is that of Irene Kopleman. Taking a stone from the White Desert, Kopleman drew it from several angles every day for one month. The detail with which the 30 drawings are created is intricate with minute differences. The set of drawings are a joy to look at, leading you to think further about this private endeavor and its commentary on both the infinite boundaries of landscape as well as the numbing experience of learning through repetition.

The most interesting piece in the show is Raphael Juillard's cat mummy; a sculpture of sorts based on an experiment called "Schrodinger's cat.

Developed by Edwin Schrodinger, the idea here is based on quantum mechanics, which designates that as long as the result of an experiment is not looked up or measured then it would remain in a superimposed state.

This essentially means that in such context, a cat can be simultaneously dead or alive so long as the observer doesn't try to find out what happened to it.



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Here the observer is given the task of an actor, a basic concept behind Kaprow's work. Juillard's use of the mummification process guarantees life after death for the unfortunate cat, allowing for another conceptual layer to the piece. The mummy looks entertainingly animated and genuinely amusing.

The common factor in all the pieces in this exhibition is how perfectly placed the pieces are within the gallery space, a sign of skillful curation. The show is an intellectual and wholesome homage to an artist who demands the active participation of his viewers in understanding as well as completing his work and ultimate vision.

"A fantasy for Allan Kaprow equally demands just that.

"A fantasy for Allan Kaprow is currently showing at the Contemporary Image Collective until June 6. Tel: (02) 2794 1686.



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