

Shoe frenzy takes over Egyptian art in new exhibition



Rasha Ragab's show sculpture.

By **Mariam Hamdy** January 19, 2009, 2:00 am

In the current global shoe-throwing frenzy ushered by Muntazar Al-Zaidi, an art exhibition that poses its central subject matter and title as "Shoes is, most definitely, an event that demands attention by the mere merit of its title. Held at Ibdaa Gallery in Mohandiseen, the show hosts works, of variable quality, from a number of artists, all depicting shoes in one form or another.

Spacious like a garage, Ibdaa Gallery ranks among one of the best set of exhibition walls at the center of the city. Yet the choice of shows like this one and their consequent marketing, or lack thereof, does not allow for this inherent characteristic of the space to shine.

On entering the show, one is met by a large orange and fuchsia sculpture of a shoe by Rasha Ragab. The structure is a large, papier mache stiletto, the inside of which has what appears to be bundles of rolled socks, and on a closer look, small, Spider-Man toys in various colors. The sculpture is scarring in its choice of colors, brief in its production technique and finishing, and generally amateurish. It feels as though there might have been a logical concept there that was lost in execution.

The following pieces are milder but unmemorable. A large triangular support where various types of cheap, predominantly plastic footwear have been glued on by Esmat Dawestashy, is hard to ignore. As a 3D painting, the piece is well executed, yet it looks aesthetically unappealing, particularly in terms of composition. I wonder if the uneasy sentiment the piece inflicts the viewer with is intentional.

Nearby was Moataz Nasr's set of shoes photos. The photographs feel like stills from a video. Once again, the pieces are dull; presenting mediocre subject matter in a forgettable fashion.

The problem is in fact not the subject matter itself. Shoes have always had a place in art history and were a cause of much uproar in the past. A great example would be Vincent Van Gogh's "A Pair of Shoes; a self-portrait reviled by his peers that was, nevertheless, the source of inspiration for Martin Heidegger's essay "L'Origine de L'art (The Origin of Art).

The main problem with some of these pieces is the weight of the concepts employed. Many of the artists felt adamant on attaching the Bush shoe-throwing incident to their work. Some have managed to do so successfully, but only just.

Hany Rashed's painting of a large shoe featuring Al-Zaidi's name along with a caricature of Bush's ninja-like duck and the phrase: "Please leave your shoes at the door of all press conferences, and thank you was quite comical.

On a more serious note, a video piece by Ayman El Semary had a more mature commentary on the current state of affairs than most of the works in the show. The video depicted the feet of a man wearing boots, wiping away words from under his feet. The words - including "Human rights and "Globalization among others - are almost refusing to be easily wiped away. There's a meditative element to the steady movement of the feet and the stubbornness of the words, resulting in simple and solid imagery.

Meanwhile, Huda Lutfi suffered a backlash for her installation of shoe moulds that had Arabic calligraphy painted on them,



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

due to contrasting cultural significance of both Arabic calligraphy and shoes. Despite that, however, the work managed to overcome criticism, proving to be enduringly beautiful and thought-provoking.

Other artists have created pieces that were decidedly different from the rest. A prime example is the portrait by Mohsen Shalaan of a woman with a shoe hanging to her right. The piece is both comical and dramatic, classically approached in terms of technique yet modernized by the choice of composition and color. The painting showcases the artist's dexterity as well as his sense of humor.

Equally intriguing are the larger-than-life watercolor and pencil pieces of Amr Kafrawy. Between large full body portrait of two men and two women, each in a separate frame, is a large shoe standing vertically on its heel with the same air of indignation of the people depicted around it. Kafrawy is emphasizing the power of that shoe: it has clearly accomplished what people could not.

A significant disappointing factor of the exhibition is the promotional material; both poster and invitation named Mohamed Abla and a few others among the featured artists whose work is, in fact, nowhere to be found in the exhibition. Had this been a mistake, one would have expected the invitation and the posters be withdrawn in order not to mislead the audience. Yet that has not happened; both the poster and the invitation are still in circulation.

"Shoes in its entirety is not a memorable show, despite the few mildly interesting pieces on display. One should be grateful that shoe-throwing is not an avid practice in the art world.

Ibdaa Art Gallery: 17 Aswan Sq., Mohandiseen, GizaTel: (02) 3345 2263



[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 