

thedailynewsegypt.com

beta

[Home](#) | [Politics](#) | [Business](#) | [Society](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Lifestyle](#) | [Culture](#) | [Sport](#) | [Multimedia](#) 

[Culture](#)  [Art](#) | [Film](#) | [Music](#) | [Theater](#) | [Opera](#) | [Dance](#) | [Radio&TV](#) | [Archaeology](#) | [Books](#) | [Movie Listings](#) | [Museums](#) | [Art Galleries](#)
Cultural Centers

Voyeurism, organized mayhem and savage beauty in Cairo



Abdel Salam's sculpture is aesthetically complex

By **Mariam Hamdy** December 30, 2007, 2:00 am

The Palace of Arts at the Cairo Opera House is currently hosting a group exhibition cleverly titled "What's Happening now? It displays the contemporary views of 25 Cairo artists, in a compilation that includes what can be described as truly unique artwork.

One of the highlights of the show was the brilliant installation by Medhat Shafik. The setting is a dimly-lit room with white sand on the floor and broken, wooden furniture carefully placed throughout the open space; some hanging from the ceiling and others scattered around the room.

Despite the eerie lighting, the dusty, broken armchairs and the overall feeling of abandonment, there was something beautiful and fantastical about the space. The key in grasping Shafik's wild beauty lies in the texture and depth of his work. It was one of the pieces that didn't need a statement or an explanation; it was simply a pleasant and tactile experience to be a part of.

Another equally gripping piece was Naglaa Samir's installation. A circular room with six compartments blocked off by panels of wood, fit together so that one could peek through slits in the panels. On each of the compartments lay a piece of paper with random writings on it, such as "he was a quiet lad and "I love, I obey my father.

Perhaps it was these little sentences that tempted the viewer to peep through the panels. On doing so, black and white photographs appeared from behind, some illustrating the phrases while others could hardly relate to them.

The beauty of this work can be traced to its complex simplicity.

"Due to the arousing hustle, some preferred to seek shelter behind walls and keep quiet, said Samir. By employing simple elements, the artist transformed the viewer into a voyeur, tempting him/her to spy on someone else's private thoughts.

Two other works spoke volumes also through their simple design.

The first of these is the sculpture by Abdel Salam Eid. Nothing about this sculpture - a two-meter cube structure made primarily of broken pieces of chairs and table legs - initially leaves a memorable impression. The structure is lit from within and, aesthetically, is complex.

Like an impressionist painting, from afar, it appears like an easy, messy medley of brushstrokes, but on a closer look, the piece unravels as an organized chaos of agonizing, perfectly structured details.

The second piece is Huda Lutfi's little installation. A small, dark room with a female mannequin bust - with tiny writings that reads "What's happening in Cairo now? - suspended at the end of it, lit with ultraviolet light. Despite the near absolute darkness, visitors were drawn to the bust by virtue of the mesmerizing lighting and sheer curiosity to read what's inscribed.

The experience is short but proves to be both engaging and exhausting. Once again the viewer is turned into voyeur by the employment of simple elements crafted by the artist.

Having stated the highlights, there was a disappointing element evident in many pieces of the show: The ineffective



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

...making sense and highlighting, there was a disappoing element present in many pieces of the show: the incessant, incessant employment of video as a medium, which was ultimately rendered distracting and irritating.

The most painful example of this was the wonderful piece by Wael Darwish "Purging from Shadow. His installation features upholstered frames holding plastic bags filled with water and hair, a sink with hair blocking its drain and a bed with an inverted, oversized shadow of a man figure made of hair as well.

The elements of the installation were disturbing, particularly since the entire space was painted a dark grey. Still, it was just perfect, strong and precise. The intruding video placed in there monotonously showed hair being cut with some kind of surgical procedure carried out by tools composed of hair and a thread of a flower.

Darwish might have presumed that such a technique could drive his concept through, and it could have indeed worked in some outlandish way. But he didn't know when to stop, which is a saddening drawback to what was otherwise a wonderful piece.

Amal Kenawy and Lara Balady were the only two artists in the show who knew how to employ video as a natural tool instead of an easy replacement for a concept (as in the case of Hassan Khan) or a substitute of an artistic statement (as in the case of Ayman El Semary).

Balady integrated a video, which was well edited visually and musically, into her colorful installation of backlit images, allowing the video to become a cohesive element of the entire installation.

Kenway displayed a powerful and slightly disturbing video. Thus, her decision to steer her viewers into a rectangular space - almost like a wide corridor painted entirely black with the video literally representing the light at the end of the tunnel - came as the most natural and convenient of choices. The setting made the work impossible to forget, and no other medium would have created the same effect as video.

Overall the works displayed at the exhibition were quite memorable. The most noticeable aspect of the entire exhibition is that all the artists, save a few that will undoubtedly stand out, have palpably presented their best works yet. Without a doubt, this is one exhibition worth visiting.



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 