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Exhibition of the Month



Trans4m Orchestra

By Margo Sabella

Trans4m Orchestra, an art exhibition that highlights the environmental woes that afflict Palestine, made a stop at Al Hoash Gallery in Jerusalem earlier last month before travelling to Germany.



A group of Palestinian and international artists use various mediums to illustrate what impact the occupation has had on the environment and the fact that society is indifferent to keeping its surroundings clean. A film that plays at the centre of the exhibition shows clips of various areas in the West Bank dotted with a plethora of discarded items. Most of the other displays have MP3 players attached to them, which explain the rationale behind each installation.

There is something uneasy about this exhibition where the artists seem to be making a critique of Palestinian life, which is a mess of broken pieces of our own making sometimes. Garbage should not be the first thing that comes to mind when we try to explore who we are as a people; but there is a certain insight gained by using discarded items to make a point that material things are insignificant, or maybe that our lives are disposable and hold no meaning once they expire.

Reconstructing the past or holding onto the present should not be as broken up as the dinner table made up of a wooden crate set with broken plates and bent cutlery seem to be. Shoes mark the place where each member of the family is supposed to sit, and there is an eerie feeling that the spirits of the persons who once filled those shoes are hovering over it.

A man hangs upside down in the middle of the gallery, trying to reach a deck of cards on the floor, perhaps attempting to read his fortune. Though he is called The Hanging Man, he seems more like a woman with his fur-lined gloves and turquoise-adorned belt. Another person sits in a broken-up wicker chair, desolate in the corner with a deflated football for a head and a pile of tattered old shoes in front of him. The shoes seem to represent the exhausting life journey that he may have had by the looks of those worn-out soles that appear to have collected dust from each place they visited.

Shoes seem to be a recurring theme; another artist uses them to allude to the many people who pass through checkpoints every day. A short path on the ground in another corner of the gallery stands amid a lost ID card and red dirt mixed with dust and cigarette butts. Sounds of footsteps, chirping birds, and soldiers calling play on the MP3 player.

As one leaves the exhibit, a chandelier of empty, upside-down Jericho mineral-water bottles hangs in the corridor, outside the main exhibition area. The chandelier is blowing in the wind. Apart from the obvious commentary on the fact that Palestinian society does not recycle, it may be an observation on how little control we have over our destiny - barely

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hanging on by a thread.

