

# SELECTIONS

ARTS / STYLE / CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND

Stoughton, India, "The fine art of construction: Emerging artists in Lebanon were showcased by the Beirut Art Center in 'Exposure,'" *Selections*, February 2015

REVIEW

selections art paper #05

## BEIRUT

### The fine art of construction

Emerging artists based in Lebanon were showcased by the Beirut Art Center in 'Exposure'

by India Stoughton

Stuck to the wall of Nour Bishouty's studio is a collection of photographs of a woman the artist has never met. Dark haired and slender, she is captured at dinner with friends, alone at a table, visiting an archaeological site and seated on a surfboard in the middle of a calm sea. The mystery woman and her unknown story were the inspiration behind the work Bishouty created for part of the Exposure exhibition at the Beirut Art Center this winter. Dealing with memory, narratives and material traces, Bishouty's work fitted neatly with the theme of the exhibition, 'Under Construction.'

Using the physical traces left by a departed person, she constructed a series of works based around the idea of materiality and absence. Bishouty used the sticky paper from lint roller to pick up the hair and loose thread left on a coat each day for a month, cutting it into segments to create a calendar charting the overlooked traces of day-to-day activity. A second work consisted of a sheet of paper that from a distance appeared blank, but was in fact perforated by a series of tiny holes: the punctures created by a sewing machine without thread. A thought-provoking and strangely visceral project, her work tied together several of the sub-themes that emerged during the sixth edition of the annual show.

Designed to showcase work by emerging artists based in Lebanon, 'Exposure 6' was curated by the BAC's new director, Marie Muracciole. A four-person jury selected the nine proposals that resulted in the works on display.



Like Bishouty, Palestinian artist Mirna Bamieh chose to deal with construction as it relates to the intangible. Her installation piece, entitled 'A Manual: How to Preserve Memory', was a bleakly humorous, mock guide to remembering. Three video screens played rotating film clips, purporting to share step-by-step instructions for how to memorise everything from a dead person to the meaning of life. Shelves of objects, mislabelled with the text or titles of books, enabled viewers to "practice" their newfound skills, while highlighting the absurdity of political rhetoric based on a fabricated or misremembered past.

A film by Roy Dib explored the construction and perforation of borders as they appear in romantic relationships and between enemy states. Photographer Tanya Traboulsi likewise interpreted the theme as it relates to love and war, creating an installation piece centred on audio interviews with single women over 30, focusing on their perceptions of marriage.

above: Tanya Traboulsi, *Something Borrowed*, Ghida V, 44, 2014

opposite page top: Mirna Bamieh, *A Manual: How to Preserve Memory*, 2014

above: Nour Bishouty, *Process: Inventing and distancing*, 2014





Jessika Khazrik chose to focus on reconstruction, uncovering the history of a mountain village that became a storage point for thousands of barrels of imported waste, using archival materials to create a large-scale installation. British artist Arjuna Neuman also focused

on the environment, constructing a large concrete platform dotted with neon lightbulbs in the shape of flowers, which encouraged reflection on physical and mental horizons.

Hiba Kalache, meanwhile, focused on physical constructs and the barriers they pose to movement. Enormous, intricately detailed paintings explored the fabric of Beirut, mapping roadblocks and charting their influence on urban circulation to create stunning abstract patterns. Georgette Power, the pseudonym of Lebanese-French artist Benjamin Moukartzel, created a video work relating to identity, movement and language, while Tala Worrell also explored two constructs we live by as though they were immutable: time and language.

Although a little rough about the edges, 'Exposure' served to highlight work by some of the region's more promising young artists. Several of the projects—Dib's film, Bamieh's video installation and Traboulsi's audio installation among them—held their own as finished works. Others hinted at good things to come from artists who are still cementing their practice. ♦

