

AGENDA

LEBANON

FILM

'Fraktus'

Metropolis Cinema-Sofil, Ashrafiah
Sept. 26, 8 p.m.
01-204-080

Lars Jessen's 2012 mockumentary is a hilarious exploration of what happens when, 25 years after their split, seminal electro-pop trio "Fraktus" return to the recording studio determined to make a comeback. Screened as part of the German Film Week.

'Omar'

Metropolis Cinema-Sofil, Ashrafiah
Sept. 27, 8 p.m.
01-204-080

This special event will see Palestinian drama 'Omar' screen as part of the German Film Week. The film chronicles the dilemma faced by a Palestinian baker who routinely climbs the separation wall to see his girlfriend. When he is arrested by Israeli forces he agrees to work as an informant.

ART

'Mental Landscapes'

SV Gallery, Aris Kafafani St., Saifi Village
Through Sept. 29
01-975-655

The works in this exhibition by Etienne Bastormagi are connected to the relationship between the collective memory and the city.

'Bacchanalia'

IXSIR Winery, Kfifan-Madfoom Exit
Through Sept. 28
70-135-423

Curated by Iris Kritikou, this show features work by Lebanese artists Laudi Abilama, Yazan Halwani, Leila Kubba Kawash and Bassam Kyrillos.

'LOL'

Ayyam Gallery Beirut, Beirut Tower, Ground Floor, Zeitouneh Street
Through Oct. 24
01-374-450

Thematically speaking, the new paintings by Syrian artist Khaled Takreti seek to employ a postmodern aesthetic to evoke today's desensitized, image-saturated age.

'Breath Is a Sculpture'

Beirut Art Center, Jisr al-Wati
Through Nov. 29
01-397-018

This exhibition of works by Giuseppe Penone combines installations, performances and their photographic documentation. These works make the body (the artist's and the spectator's) at once the theme and subject of the work.

MUSIC

'Maryam Saleh and Zeid Hamdan'

Metro al-Madina, Saroulla Building, -2, Hamra Street
Oct. 1, 9:30 p.m.
http://inetromadina.com

This experimental partnership between Egyptian singer and songwriter Maryam Saleh and Lebanese underground legend Zeid Hamdan includes original music by both musicians, as well as covers of classic Arabic numbers by Sheikh Imam and others.

JUST A THOUGHT

A story should have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order.

Jean-Luc Godard
(1930-)
French-Swiss film director,
screenwriter and critic

REVIEW

Silent revolt of an ad exec-turned artist

By India Stoughton
The Daily Star

BEIRUT: The facade of a 12-story building lurches drunkenly forward into the street. The interior supporting walls have collapsed as a result of sustained shelling, causing the front of the building to cave in on itself as though made of playing cards. The streets below are eerily empty, aside from a scattering of rubble. A haze of dust hangs in the air.

On the ground floor of the shattered building is a single shop, the warm glow of electric lighting still miraculously shining from the interior. In sharp focus, the pristine white walls and elegant signage of a Chanel boutique advertise their luxury bounty amid the carnage.

This image, a photoshopped creation by Egypt-born artist Yves Hayat, is part of the series "Business Must Go On." Images of war-torn Syrian cities become the setting for designer stores, waiting patiently in the deserted streets for the people to return and commerce to resume. Swatch, Ikea, Louis Vuitton, Nike, Apple, MacDonalds – Hayat's images are silent reproaches, anti-advertising posters by an ad exec-turned-artist.

Born in Egypt to a Lebanese father and an Eastern European mother, Hayat moved to France as a child after his parents fled Egypt during the 1956 war. After studying at the National School of Arts in Nice, he set up an advertising agency, where he worked for close to 20 years. It was only in 1990 that he returned to his initial passion, not – he admits with endearing frankness – due to any ideological shift, but because he was bored.

Today, Hayat makes his living solely as an artist, but the skills he learned during his two decades creating visuals designed to sell are evident throughout his body of work. A selection of pieces produced over the past five years are currently on show at Mark Hachem Gallery in Downtown, in a solo exhibition



General Aoun / Haniyeh / You / Faruz / Samir Geagea / Bachir Gemayel
Sayed H. Nasrallah / Miss USA / Walid Jumblatt / Nabil Berni / Amin Maalouf / Khairi Ghorar

© HAYAT / MARK HACHEM GALLERY

"The Icons Are Tired," inkjet prints on burnt transparent film in plexiglass boxes, each 15 x 20 x 6cm, 2014.

entitled "Mystifications."

Hayat works in a broad variety of media but photography is central to his practice. Whether he's shooting models himself and then working on the images digitally, or taking photos from the media and online and reworking them to create his own composites, the sharp, aesthetically pleasing visuals of the advertising world are everywhere.

Unlike the unrelentingly cheerful

world of commercials, however, Hayat's works show the ugly side of consumerism. Many are focused on regional conflict, something the artist attributes to childhood memories of life in Egypt during the war. He recalls tanks in the streets, blacked out windows and air raid sirens, he says, images that have fed into his cynical, satirical artistic view of the world.

In some ways his work resembles that of a number of young contemporary artists, among them Syrian rising star Tammam Salam and Palestinian artist Mohammad al-Hawajri (also represented by Mark Hachem), who create photoshopped images blending war photographs with classic works of art to produce silent commentaries on contemporary conflict.

Hayat's work, however, is more polished – sleek, shiny and as sexy as a sports car commercial. He quotes radical New Wave filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard on the uneasy marriage between politics and art. "The problem," Godard once said, "is not to make political films, but to make films politically." In other words, art should not simply assert a political position, but simultaneously question it.

Unlike many of the young Syrian artists working on pieces related to the war, and whose work becomes activist through its single-sided agenda, Hayat says he's not interested in selling others on his view. Instead, he wants viewers to ask their own questions and make up their own minds.

Whatever the intention, many of Hayat's own views certainly shine through in "Mystifications." His pre-



"The Icons Are Tired," inkjet prints on burnt transparent film in plexiglass boxes.

occupation with themes of war, death, religion, fame and consumerism come together in series like the satirical "The Icons Are Tired."

Three installations tackle the culture of celebrity worship, addressing the shift worldwide from religious belief to the treatment of rock stars, actors and even politicians as contemporary idols. For this series, Hayat takes black-and-white photographs of famous figures and Photoshops each portrait to make it appear as though the subject's eyes are closed. Thus transported into a state of repose or denial, Woody Allen, Jim Morrison and Lady Di share one wall with six other beloved celebrity figures.

Hayat prints the portraits on transparent film. He then lightly burns the plastic, causing it to wrinkle. He places the singed sheets into plexiglass boxes, shutting each figure off from those around it in a neatly sealed capsule.

In a work created especially for the Beirut exhibition, two rows of famous Lebanese figures flank a green cedar tree to replicate the national flag. From beloved diva Fairouz to Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah to assassinated former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, each portrait captures the subject in a moment of eyes-closed vulnerability.

A small mirror placed in the bottom row allows visitors to the gallery to make themselves part of the work.

An interesting tension is created by the fact that in order to fully immerse themselves in the aesthetic of the piece viewers must close their eyes, but in so doing they render themselves unable to appreciate the effect.

Using a similar technique, the artist addresses the ubiquitous topic of the Arab Spring and its global repercussions in a series entitled "Perfume of Revolt." Taking the iconic image of the Chanel No. 5 perfume bottle, unchanged since 1924, Hayat plays with the words on the label to create a powerful message about colonial legacies and hunger for change.

Each label is adorned with a different number and the name of a city caught up in the mass demonstrations that swept the globe in the wake of the global financial crisis: "No. 13, Sana'a, Yemen," reads one. "No. 18, Tiananmen, China," says another, while a third is labeled "No. 1, New York, U.S.A."

While gallerist Mark Hachem describes the series as "sinister," drawing attention to Western military intervention overseas and the global imposition of a capitalist system, others might view the work as optimistic, serving as testament to a growing global desire for change. Viewers will have to make up their own minds on that score. Hayat isn't telling.

Yves Hayat's "Mystifications" is up at Mark Hachem Gallery in Downtown until Oct. 31. For more information, please call 01-999-333.



"Beirut," from the "Perfume of Revolt" series, inkjet print on burnt transparent film.



"Love Your Neighbor As Yourself," inkjet print on transparent plexiglass, 200 x 150cm, 2014.



From the "Mythification" series, C-type photo print mounted on Dibond.