

AGENDA

LEBANON

PERFORMANCE

'A cabaret for three years'
Metro al-Madina, Saroulla Building -2, Hamra Street
 Jan. 3, doors open 8:30 p.m.
 76-309-363

To mark its third year, Metro al-Madina has assembled a lineup of performers from its past events, including Emcee Roberto Kobrosli, Donna Khalife, El Rass, belly dance with Naima and Chacho, The Great Departed, Abdel Karim al-Shaar, El Wad Na3Na3 and tunes from 'Hishik Bishik.'

THEATER

'He who saw everything'
Theatre Monnot, Monnot
 Jan. 5-8, 8:30 p.m.
<http://zoukak.org/contact>
 Directed by Omar Abi Azar and Maya Zbib, this theatrical investigation of death and new ways to seek immortality is based on "The Epic of Gilgamesh" and draws upon the works of Antonin Artaud, Howard Barker, Mahmoud Darwiche, Marguerite Duras, Christa Wolf and Firas Sawwah, among others.

ART

'The Undoing' and 'Faire, defaire, refaire'
Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Raouche
 Through Jan. 10
 01-868-290
 This show features artwork by Leila Jabre Jureidini on the theme of regret, as well as jewelry by Virginie Corm.

'Trans-Oriental Monochrome: John Carswell'
AUBBAG, AUB Campus and AUBRSS Museum, Sidani Street
 Through Feb. 25
 01-759-685
 Consisting of often large, white, geometrical objects variously described as "sculptures," "minimalist" or "impossible four-dimensional" objects, this two-gallery exhibition includes work produced while the U.K. artist, art historian, teacher, explorer, curator and scholar was at AUB in the 1960s.

'Pistoletto in Beirut'
Beirut Exhibition Center, Beirut Waterfront
 Through Jan. 11, 2015
 01-980-650, ext. 2883
 BEC hosts an exhibition of 38 works by Italian painter, action and object artist, theorist and Arte Povera scion Michelangelo Pistoletto.

'Abdel Karim Majdal al-Beik'
Ayyam Projects, Beirut Tower, Zeitouneh Street, BCD
 Through Jan. 10
 01-374-450
 The inaugural exhibition at Ayyam's new sister space features work by Syrian multimedia artist Abdel Karim Majdal al-Beik.

'Taysir Batniji' 'Anna Boghiguan'
Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Tannous Building, Karantina
 Through March 7, 2015
 01-566-550
 This double-bill of solo shows features recent work by painter and illustrator Anna Boghiguan, who is based between Egypt, India and Europe, and Gaza-born multimedia artist Taysir Batniji.

JUST A THOUGHT

It is still an open question, however, as to what extent exposure really injures a performer.

Harry Houdini (1874-1926)
 Hungarian-American illusionist and escape artist

REVIEW



MIRNA BAMIEH, "A MANUAL: HOW TO PRESERVE MEMORY," MULTIMEDIA INSTALLATION, 2014.

Exposing what it means to build

By India Stoughton
 The Daily Star

BEIRUT: Sixty-eight-year-old Marie S. never married. She shared a house with her sister, up until her sibling's death. People sometimes made judgments about her. They would have done that whether she was married or not, she says philosophically.

Divorced 36-year-old Nada L. is happier leading an independent life and has no plans to remarry, though she says her choices sometimes make others uncomfortable. There is a stigma that comes with choosing to remain single and childless. For some, a woman is only complete once she becomes a mother.

Marie and Nada are two of the five women whose thoughts about life as an over-30 single woman make up the substance of "Something Borrowed," a photography and sound installation by Tanya Traboulsi.

The work is currently on the show at the Beirut Art Center as part of the sixth edition of "Exposure," the space's annual exhibition of Lebanon-based emerging artists. This year's show features work by nine artists. As usual, the participants were selected by a jury after submitting a proposal for a new work.

This edition does mark two major departures from past practice, spearheaded by the center's new director, Marie Muracciole. For the first time, the work on show has been curated, by Muracciole, under the theme "Under Construction," making for a more cohesive whole.

Although the theme helps ensure links among the pieces, as in previous years the artists have each chosen to work in their own preferred media and style. Video and multimedia installations, photography, paintings and drawings fill the BAC's echoing concrete shell with reflections on growth, building, stagnation and development, and the artists' own evolving practices and "self-construction."

Traboulsi's work combines an element integral to her practice – a series of self-portraits – with five audio recordings of interviews with unmarried women. Cocooned in a small, blood-red room toward the back of the space, "Something Borrowed" is elevated from documentation to art by the images and objects Traboulsi has chosen to accompany each recording.

The photographer's work could be characterized as a deconstruction of the institution of marriage and its impact on the way women are perceived. It also builds on the artist's ongoing interest in representations of the self and the other, the artist's form at once embodying her unmarried self and standing in for her faceless, everywoman interviewees.



TANYA TRABOULSI, "SOMETHING BORROWED," PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOUND, 2014.

A second cocoon-like space, painted in a bright shade of acid green, houses an ambitious multimedia installation by Mirna Bamieh. One of several works still being pulled together a few hours before the show's opening night, Bamieh's "A Manual: How to Preserve Memory" is one of the most cogent and effective.

Continuing in the vein of the artist's exploration of "catastrophe discourse" and her own Palestinian heritage, the installation consists of 12 nonsensical how-to videos and a display of seemingly random, mislabeled objects on a series of small shelves.

One video, entitled "How to Preserve the Memory of a Dead Person," recommends that viewers spend 40 days speaking to an ornamental animal that reminds them of the deceased before burying it in the ground.

Another, "How to Preserve a Memory of the Meaning of Life," instructs viewers to "Choose a meaningless/meaningful shape. Get it tattooed on your body."

The display of objects, each carefully tagged, is supposed to enable viewers to practice their newfound memory construction skills.

Old SIM cards, a single wheel from a rolling table or trolley, a heap of dirt, a grape stem shorn of its fruit, a gilded model of a frog – each item is accompanied by a tag which bears a seemingly unrelated caption, a book title or snippet of text.

Bamieh's installation is a humorous and engaging exploration of the language of memory, nostalgia and loss and the social rituals that surround death, aging and identity.

Hidden behind a labyrinthine series of black curtains in the BAC's auditorium is a courageous and moving work by Roy Dib. Due to the video's controversial content, which tackles the relationship between enemy states through the lens of an argument between lovers, the film is viewable only upon request.

Projected on three separate screens, it plays to an audience of no more than three people at a time, making for an intimate and powerful experience. Entitled "A Spectacle of Privacy," the 9-minute video reprises themes from earlier films, such as the 2010 "Mondial," which likewise explores Lebanon's relationship with neighboring states and forbidden homosexual love.

An exploration of building and razing walls, whether personal or political, the film is an engaging and understated reflection on boundaries, love, belonging and otherness.

Addressing the theme more literally, Hiba Kalache has pushed herself to new levels in a series of paintings exploring the physical layout of Beirut and the blockages and checkpoints that render its streets permanently gridlocked.

By studying city maps and pin-pointing the landmarks that come hand-in-hand with concrete road-blocks, barriers and armed security – government buildings, politicians' residences, embassies – Kalache mapped a series of rivers, tributaries

and dams, through which traffic flows and stagnates.

The resulting paintings – swirling hair-like lines and explosive starbursts of blocky obstructions – hang on the walls alongside her studies. A collage resembling a deconstructed sketchbook covers one enormous wall of the hall with sketchy maps, color studies and cryptic dotted patterns, the bones that together form the skeleton of the final work.

British artist Arjuna Neuman, based between Beirut and Los Angeles, and Lebanese artist Jessica Khazrik have both chosen to create large-scale installations connected with the environment. Neuman's bare concrete platform, ornamented with flower-shaped neon lightbulbs, encourages reflection on the horizons we draw for ourselves.

Khazrik's ongoing project "Introduction to the Blue Barrel Grove" fills a cavernous space on the far right of the venue. An archival work based on uncovering, reconstructing and interrogating an overlooked aspect of Lebanon's history, it is centered on an area of the mountains near the village in which the artist grew up, where barrels of waste imported from overseas were stored.

Georgette Power and Benjamin Moukarzel's installation, "Vacance," transports viewers to a seaside made of green zip ties, where a seemingly still image is periodically disturbed by the fleeting silhouette of a figure.

Tala Worrell's paintings and drawings explore the constructs that enable us to decode and digest the world around us – language, time, borders.

Finally, a visceral, complex and nicely conceived set of works by Nour Bishouty uses discarded traces – strands of hair clinging to a coat, stitches left in a sheet of paper by a sewing machine without thread – conjures up absence.

Through what is left behind, she evokes what is missing, creating a sort of anti-portrait, the hole left by a woman who is perpetually present, but perpetually unseen.

"Exposure 2014: Under Construction" continues at the Beirut Art Center, Jisr al-Wati, until Feb. 7. For more information, please call 01-397-018.



HIBA KALACHE, "CONTESTED SPACES," ACRYLICS-ON-PAPER, 240 X 120CM, 2014.

Photos courtesy of BAC