

AGENDA

LEBANON

ART

‘Clay and Bronze’
Galerie Tanit, East Village Building, Armenia Street, Mar Mikhael
June 4-July 12
01-374-450

Syrian artist Fadi Yazigi presents his latest series of clay and bronze sculptures that offer a unique take on the male form.

‘Alibi’
The garden behind 392rmeil393, Gouraud Street, Gemmayzeh
June 12 and June 15
01-567-015

This solo exhibition by Syrian artist, Imad Habbab, presents a series of paintings that depict the various homes that he was displaced from.

EXHIBITION

‘Revisiting Dalieh’
AltCity Media, Carré Bldg., Hamra
June 5-12
01-742-582

This open ideas competition exhibits proposal projects from various multidisciplinary professionals, which are concerned with safeguarding Dalieh as a unique natural site and shared open space.

FILM

‘Ai Weiwei: The Fake Case’
Metropolis Cinema, Sofil, Ashrafieh
June 5, 8 p.m.
Andreas Johnsen’s 2011 doc about an activist and conceptual artist named, Ai Weiwei, who is kidnapped and imprisoned by Chinese authorities, will be screening as part of Metropolis’ Danish Feast.

‘The Lark Farm’
AGBU Demirdjian Center, Antelias
June 7, 7 p.m.
04-408-114
In the wake of the Armenian genocide centennial, the center will screen Paolo and Vittorio Taviani’s 2007 drama about an aristocratic family struggling to survive amid the Armenian genocide in post-World War I Turkey.

THEATER

International Theater Festival of Tyre
Istanbuli Theater, Tyre, next to Bank of Lebanon
June 6-10
70-903-846
After opening with a night devoted to playwright Raymond Gebara, the festival will stage a selection of plays and spokenword poetry from Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Tunis, Palestine, Lebanon, Libya and Spain.

MUSIC

‘Mot Jari’
Radio Beirut, An-Nahar Street, Mar Mikhael
June 5, 10 p.m.
01-561-577
Rap and vocalist duo from Hermel, Jaafar al-Touffar and Abo al-Hija, bring their unique style of folk singing and hip-hop to the stage.

JUST A THOUGHT

The notion of directing a film is the invention of critics – the whole eloquence of cinema is achieved in the editing room.

*Orson Welles
(1915-1985)
U.S. actor, director, writer and producer of theater, radio and film*

REVIEW

How to make something else from cinema

By Jim Quilty
The Daily Star

BEIRUT: Film buffs who enjoy thinking about what they watch have good reason to spend an afternoon at the Beirut Art Center these days. When they enter, they may find it useful to follow their ears.

The galleries to the right of the BAC entrance have been turned over to “Film Noir” and “Mariachi 17,” a pair of video works by Madrid-born artist and choreographer La Ribot (b. 1962).

“Film Noir” is a three-part scrutiny of feature filmmaking practice. The artist works with a collection of classic black-and-white and color films – titles including Stanley Kubrick’s epic “Spartacus” and Anthony Mann’s “El Cid.”

In parts “001” and “003” of “Film Noir,” the artist assembles scenes from several movies, with the principal characters, dialogue and soundtrack redacted to highlight the filmmakers’ use of extras – prison-labourers in rock quarry, say.

La Ribot’s French-language voiceover (printed Arabic and English-language translations are available) ruminates upon how the extras are choreographed and how glimmers of individuality express themselves in actors’ body language, despite their marginal place in the frame.

“Film Noir 002” is also comprised of a series of redacted clips. Here the artist allows the viewer to do the thinking, replacing her voiceover with a modernist musical soundtrack of her own selection.

“Mariachi 17,” 2009, betrays many of the same interests (moving images and bodies, mise en scène and soundtrack) with the addition of two extra cinematic fixations – the hand-held camera and the extended single take.

For all the similarities, the manner of these two works is quite different – “Mariachi” appearing as spontaneous and performative as “Film Noir” is deliberate and thoughtful.

Though the video samples several cinematic “classics” during this 30-odd-minute-long single take, these movie excerpts appear on portable screens placed among a varied array of theatrical detritus littering the stage where three dancers – La Ribot and two female collaborators – take turns as dancing camera operators.

The work’s chaotic camera movement shares the language of Mounira Al Solh’s 2006 work “Rawane’s Song.” Like Solh, La Ribot’s lensing is indifferent to whether the camera operator enters the frame, gleefully leveling the barrier conventionally separating performer and audience, performance and cinema.

La Ribot is one of three artists contributing work to the BAC’s summer exhibition “Aftercinema.” The curator, center director Marie Muracciole, has set her work alongside that of Kamal Aljafari (b. 1972) and Jumana Manna (b. 1987), both Palestinian artists based in Berlin.

It’s useful to enter this show through La Ribot’s works because, on one hand, the emotive chords her two pieces strike – from thoughtful scrutiny to playful irreverence – are those of the exhibition as a whole. On the other hand, the artist is disarmingly transparent about what “Film Noir” is up to, which provides a fine primer for addressing the other works, particularly those of Aljafari, which also focus on the filmic margins.

Kamal Aljafari is well-known in this region’s film circles for his early documentary work. His hourlong 2006 doc “The Roof” (a version of which was broadcast in Europe as “Innenleben”) is about his family’s relationship to “home” under Israeli rule. Set in Jaffa, Aljafari’s 2010 feature “Port of Memory” takes up contemporary life in the Palestinian port

town, which has been largely devoured by Israeli settler-colonial policies. These include renting out swaths of the old town – among other ’48 Palestinian centers – to Israeli and international film crews, who are given carte blanche to destroy historic Palestinian architecture in the service of mindless action thrillers.

Schlock flicks like the Chuck Norris vehicle “The Delta Force” have proven ironic treasure troves of vistas from Aljafari’s ever-more depleted home. The filmmaker-artist has collected these and prised authentic, personally meaningful locations and individuals from the foreign fictions.

Aljafari’s assembled these into two pieces on show in Aftercinema. “The postcards” is comprised of images abstracted from Israeli and U.S. feature films shot in Jaffa from 1960s until now. A selection of a few dozen of these is on display in two freestanding exhibits. Several more images have been printed in medium format and hung.

Printing these images as commercial tourist trinkets doubles the irony of “The postcards.” Not only do (Israeli) state authorities have no interest in luring tourists to these locations – many of which are long since razed – the photos’ image quality is markedly inferior to those of

commercial postcards.

The BAC auditorium is also projecting “Untitled,” 2015, Aljafari’s 75-minute silent film. This work takes the footage that produced “The postcards” and forms it into a sort of filmic history of the marginal.

“Untitled” is an interesting hybrid, conflating a filmmaker’s sensibility with artistic practice. As in his documentary work, Aljafari’s method is circumspect, so viewers will benefit from an active viewing of the work.

The work begins with the prow of a boat moving shoreward. Following this “establishing shot,” Aljafari presents a montage of seaside struc-

tures, vistas from Jaffa’s old town.

Stationary camera shots linger over details of interior floor and wall tiles and (often derelict or partially destroyed) exteriors of the Ottoman-era architecture that some Israeli settlers prize as “Arab houses.” Occasionally Aljafari’s acquaintances and relatives walk through the film’s exterior locations.

As in “The postcards,” the irony of “Untitled” lies in the fact that – because they were employed as incidental background and location detail – the people and places at the centre of Aljafari’s frame tend to be of poor quality – fragmentary, blurred, excluded from now-absent fictional narratives.

Jumana Manna’s contribution to Aftercinema is also bent on using film as a quarry from which to pull material for new work. Rather than drawing upon an assortment of found commercial movies, she’s used a past work of her own. Clustered under the title “Walk Like a Vase,” Manna’s new work is unlike that of her colleagues in that she’s jettisoned video in favor of sculpture.

“Blessed Blessed Oblivion,” 2010, is an amusing work of 20-odd minutes that samples one subculture of male youth in East Jerusalem. With the Israeli occupation as the elephant in the room, the vid’s posturing, performance and conversation is preoccupied with drugs and bodywork.

Manna’s sculptures are inspired by the preoccupation with the cleaning and maintenance of muscle cars – and the appearance of the young men who (when they’re not pressing iron, being shaved and so forth) drive them.

These works are utterly figurative – albeit exaggerated in scale and segmented from the body as a whole – yet they are likely to be baffling to anyone who hasn’t first spent some time with “Blessed.”

Once primed by her video, the works betray an uncanny, and hilarious intelligence.

“Blessed Blessed Oblivion” is being looped on a small a television monitor in the BAC’s upstairs gallery. Dwarfing the monitor is the piece that names the sculpture series.

“Walk Like a Vase,” 2015, is an elongated mixed-media form big enough to walk into, with a large opening at one end and a small one at the other.

Manna’s leviathan is stranded in splendid isolation from the rest of Aftercinema. Complementing it is a menagerie of sculpted, welded and stitched forms arrayed in a downstairs gallery, wedged between Aljafari and La Ribot’s work.

Some of these objects – tapestry-like hangings stitched from seatbelts, buckles and all, for instance – represent an amusing effort to reconcile older artistic forms with the subculture of East Jerusalem.

More eye-catching are the plaster pieces, all mounted on surfaces that elevate them off the ground. Their smoothly lacquered surfaces are reminiscent of fiberglass improvisations on muscle cars, but onlookers must conflate the two uses of “body work” to find the models for these works in the bodies of Manna’s East Jerusalem subjects – their internal organs, fragmented from one another like the Palestinian body politic itself.

Peering in through the narrow end of “Walk Like a Vase,” you might see the open maw of a whale, the egg cartons lining the interior walls representing its taste buds – were it not for the want of like detail on the outside of the sculpture.

Coming to the leviathan after viewing the finger- and heart-shaped objects downstairs, viewers may be left with the impression that they’ve been staring into a grossly distended organ. But which one?

Aftercinema continues at the Beirut Art Center through Aug. 21. For more, see <http://www.beirutartcenter.org/exhibitions>.



La Ribot, “Film Noir 001,” 2014. Video still.



Jumana Manna. “Walk Like a Vase,” 2015. Plaster, metal, burlap, pigment, lacquer.



La Ribot, “Mariachi 17,” 2009, video.



Kamal Aljafari, “The Taxi of Ahmad Farraj,” 2015, postcard.

Photos courtesy of BAC