



The cultural paradoxes in Hassan Al Meer's "Ambiguity"

06/10/2019 Yeru Ebu

Hassan al Meer's "Ambiguity" is a video installation that needs to be dissected in order to understand the artist's layered message. While it may look straightforward, curators understood that its simplicity clearly manifested cultural paradoxes and perhaps it is for this reason and more that 14th Curitiba International Biennial of Contemporary Art 2019 "Territoria visual (Visual territory)" curator Massimo Scaringella decided to include it amongst the 24 international works to be part of the exhibition.



Opened on September 21, the 14th edition of the International Biennial in Curitiba (Brazil) will run until March 1, 2020 and works around the topic "Fronteiras em Aberto (Open Borders)." Covering over 100 venues in the city of Curitiba, including the prestigious Oscar Niemeyer Museum and the historic Paranaense Museum, the Biennial is renowned as one of the greatest events of contemporary art in South America and a major event in the artistic circuit worldwide. In this edition, more than 300 artists from 35 countries participated. For the first time, Hassan Al Meer and Muzna Al Musafir, both established artists in Oman, were invited to showcase their work. Hassan is not new in having his work presented abroad. Holding a master's degree in Art from Savannah College of Art and Design from Georgia, USA, he undertook a residency programme at the Delfina Foundation in London from September to October 2012. His exhibitions include the 8th Sharjah International Biennale, UAE (2013); Arab Express, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012); Work Marry Remember, AB Gallery, Zurich (2012); Reflections, Stal Gallery (2013); Fotofest Biennial, Houston, Texas (2014) and All Silent for the buzzing Royal College of Art Galleries, Kensington, London (2014), Christie's (2019).

Hassan's artworks had grace walls of public and private collectors not only in Oman but also abroad and to date, he continues to get inspiration from the changes in culture identity. He also studies individual identity in relation to a collective experience through his installation works.

Resonating issues of cultural paradoxes

Omani art curator Aisha stoby shared that Hassan's installation "Ambiguity" "features two characters portrayed by the artist, with one wearing a dishdasha and the other attired in Western dress."

"Projected onto a large screen, the characters converse in front of an actual art installation comprising a table and chairs. Although the piece mirrors similar themes to those in "New Identity", it goes further by resonating with issues signifying cultural paradoxes that force the individual to divide, conceal and "re-represent" various aspects of his identity based on his receiving audience and the space or domain in which he/she is present," Aisha shared.

She added, "On a metaphysical level, Meer perceives this paradox as a state of confusion between desire and action, based on possessing the tools of happiness whilst being uninterested, or unable, to employ them. He foresees these desires diminishing to an extent that exhausts the soul and the body while the tools of "desire/happiness" in life vanish."

Between truth and beauty

The curatorial team of the 14th Curitiba Biennial shared, "The "Ambiguity" of Hassan Meer reflects the concept "Open Borders", contributing with new thoughts on the contemporary art and dialog between subjects and spaces.

"When we watch a video we do not wonder how it will end or about the storytelling that puts together the narration portrayed. We observe, rather, with a willingness to be carried away by specific energies and emotions, that is, with the desire to live that given experience to the full. The

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artist aims in these cases not only to search for the meaning of the coded representation of the territory, but also to show its complex, unexpressed issues, eventually describing, on this occasion, the ultimate condition of the lost relationship with the place, sometimes becoming totally detached from that which is told," the team shared.

It added, "The work of art suggests the various conditions characterizing contemporaneity, that is, the loss of an actual relationship with the place that surrounds us. Video art seeks with its languages a relationship between vision and words, between the passage of time and the cessation of our unconscious, where it is still possible to make a "poetic" revelation and to bring out effective surprise mechanisms."

"The linguistic mode is a mental suggestion or a process of images and themes, revealing or suggesting the movement in the flight from the real, where the management of narrative time is, therefore, a key element for understanding the distinction between these methodologies, in which the work is now the place of conflict between reality and appearance, between truth and beauty, where the horizon is exalted. Reflections on these videos, on art as a whole, and on the mechanisms connecting the historical and social reality with the private reality are the focus of these works," it added.

For Hassan, he said that his concept explores "the Paradox we live."

He said that this paradox "forces us to divide to many personalities inside the same character.. when we have the tools of happiness and have no desire to handle them, then we are stuck in a state of confusion between the desire and action."

He added, "Our desires diminish to an extent that exhausts the soul and the body while the tools of desire in life vanish.. When we wake up to face ourselves, we feel that we face some other person.. in another case as if two different cultures meet across on table, with nothing binding them except the case of action, "Confusion" discloses the paradox and the state of hesitation human can live up to with himself and the on-going quest to look for a source of spiritual satisfaction."

Hassan al Meer has an international contemporary art presence through the variety of Global Biennale Programmes, such as: Sharjah international Biennale 8th, UAE (2007), "Roaming Images" Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Biennale Thessaloniki, Greece (2011), "View From Inside" Contemporary Arab Video, Photography and Mixed Media Art Fotofest, Biennial March 15 - April 27, 2014 , Houston, Texas, U.S.A (2014), and more.

(With reports from Bienal de Curitiba)



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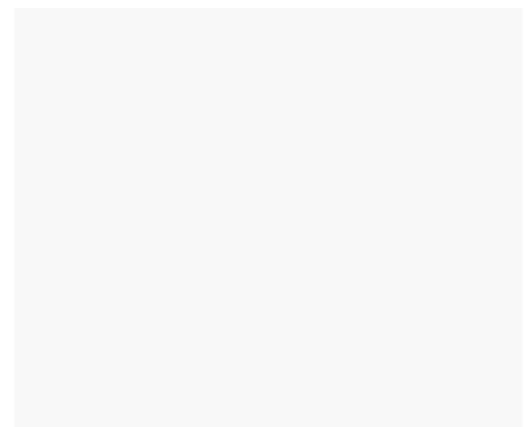
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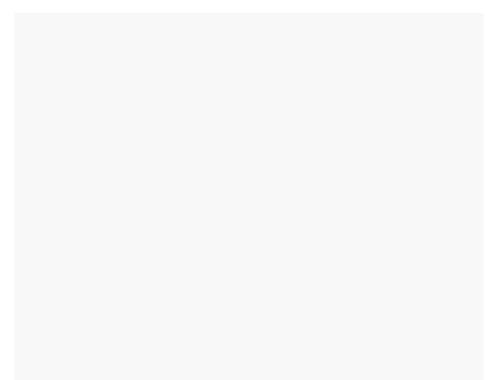


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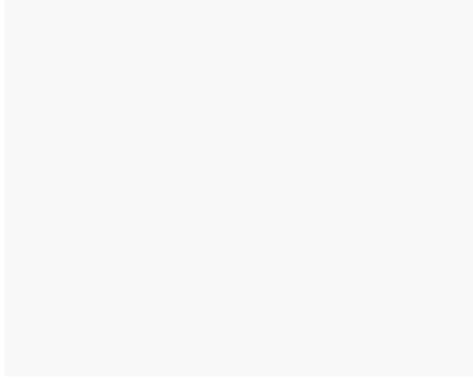
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