

## Art



Jasmina Reljic: His Favourite Jeans



Enrique Tabone: A Dazzle Escape

# 'Cos Shakespeare said it best

Lisa Gwen Baldacchino

...Six women: one mission. That of giving face and form to the monster which haunts and taunts most of us at some point or other during our lives... that monster known as deception.

This is the sole theme under scrutiny in a collective exhibition currently showing at 43, Lascaris Wharf, Valletta Waterfront, where six women have joined forces during the month of masks, costumes, artificially-scented flowers' aromas wafting in the air and anything red, pink or heart-shaped.

On entering the tenebrous arched space, the Cell Block Tango from the musical Chicago began resounding in my head; especially when in the vicinity of, or while passing under, Elisa Von Brockdorff's *To Squeeze Or Not To Squeeze*, which is the first piece to hit you when entering the exhibition hall. There is nothing quite like a bitter heart.

I found Ms Von Brockdorff's installation simple yet very effective; dozens of suspended rubber gloves filled with water menacingly threatening to plummet on viewers - this creates the same sense of apprehension which Pierre Portelli's *Paradox On A Knife's Edge* instilled in the *Caravaggio: Una Mostra Impossibile* show in 2004.

Ms Von Brockdorff's work largely dominates the space, which, although modest, accommodates the artists' works quite well. Save for the work of Romina Delia titled *Breathe* that is, I felt that her projected slide show of photographs (the screen of which was too high to afford a comfortable "reading") needed a secluded area in which to be shown. This is not to say that video installations and projections cannot stand alongside other exhibits, far from it, rather because this particular projection couldn't be well-appreciated due to light interference coming from surrounding works.



Elisa Von Brockdorff: To Squeeze Or No To Squeeze

Details, tones and textures were thus all sacrificed.

This was quite a pity really, because her work derives from a series of photographs taken while abroad, featuring a performer immersed in water whose garb inevitably veered afloat, only to reveal her naked body beneath. Ms Delia's stills, featuring details of limbs and body parts are, in my eyes, immediately reminiscent, or even a direct reference to Gustave Courbet's *The Origin of the World*, one of the most erotically-charged paintings dating to the 19th century. The dark set background and warm colours of Ms Delia's work almost hark back to the internally illuminated candle-lit scenes by Georges de La Tour, another reference to French realist painting. I do

hope that Ms Delia will find another opportunity to exhibit these stills, perhaps as a narrative of images rather than in slide-show form.

Christine X, who is also the show's organiser, is still in her experimental phase, and has opted for a mixed media/light installation titled *Dollar Bill Y All*, which points highly towards pop culture and immediately brings to mind Andy Warhol's 1962 painting *200 One Dollar Bills*, which sold at Sotheby's just months ago. Christine X's comment is rather an apparent co-existence of contradictions rather than outward deception. After all, God and Satan are opposing "forces" - two sides of the same coin if you like. And Masonic orders still believe in a god, generically described as a

Supreme Being, allowing members to adhere to whichever deity or concept held appropriate to themselves.

I was happy to see that Teresa Sciberras was included in the list of exhibitors' names. This time round, she is showing a series of five small paintings, collectively titled *Simulacra*. Although made with gouache on paper, the paintings almost look like collages, carefully pieced together, layer upon layer - hiding, changing, transforming what was once; forever altering the original premise that she departed from, and how she has consequently managed to transform and camouflage it into an abstracted miniature which seems to metamorphose before the viewer's eyes.

Jasmina Reljic's contribution is a series of eight outfits, chiefly comprising *bustiers* titled *His Favourite Jeans*, although admittedly there is only a single piece which has been fabricated using denim. Rifles, flowers and leathers dominate the island of headless and armless mannequins who stand testimony to the cleansing exorcism performed, all in the name of vindicating love's memory and getting that step closer to achieving much-desired closure.

*A Dazzle Effect* is the title of Enrique Tabone's piece. She has created a hauntingly alluring figure in white who has seemingly shed her skin and has been reborn. Although well-illuminated, this piece could have afforded being suspended in a more strategic position within the exhibition space, although hanging limitations could have been the order of the day. The cloaked figure almost looks like a spectre which should be roaming the Sahara Desert in search of some long-lost love. Her comment, I believe, speaks of man's tendency towards escapism resulting from the need of distraction from the truth. The shedding of skin is therefore the uncovering of truth.

Supposedly, the aim of the exhibition was precisely "uncovering the truth", yet truth partakes countless definitions which are subjective at best. So has the viewer been deceived into thinking this was the portrayal of truth with a capital T? After all, when we fool others, we only fool ourselves.

I guess it was the great William Shakespeare who said it best:

"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women  
merely players:

They have their exits and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts..."

(from *As You Like It*)

■ *Deception* runs till Sunday. Open daily between 4 and 8 p.m.