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3 July 2013

HUFFPOST CULTURE

UNITED KINGDOM 

The Wall in Bond Street

Posted: 02/07/2013 13:36

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The Wall that separates Israel and the West Bank generates strong arguments - for and against. The Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar has, very cleverly, recreated the Wall with a hole in it as the only entrance to see the rest of the show. Through imposing the audience to clamber through, in this participatory performance, Jarrar allows the viewer to feel what it is like to be in a conflict zone. And to reach their own conclusion about such a dividing issue. The fact that the installation is in the Ayyam Gallery, in the top-end luxury goods Bond Street, generates thought-provoking discussions about priorities in life: shopping or activism.

The Wall by Khaled Jarrar

Whole in the Wall, as the exhibition is titled, will be on display at the Ayyam Gallery until the 3rd of August. Inspired by everyday events and experiences, Jarrar's practice incorporates performance, video, photography and sculpture to document his observations on life in Palestine. Alongside this installation, Jarrar will show a series of video works and new and recent concrete sculptures based on sporting paraphernalia: footballs, volleyballs, basketballs and ping pong rackets - which again are formed from concrete removed from the separation wall. By making reference to the football marks left by the wall by children who use the area as a site for their games, and by repurposing this found material, Jarrar seeks to provoke a dialogue about possession and reclamation.

Installation by Khaled Jarrar

When I asked Joy Asfar, the Gallery Manager, what she would like the audience to take away home once seen the show, she says:

"the show by Khaled Jarrar looks at the wall that separates the Palestinian Territories from Israel from many different angles and through various manifestations. I would like audiences visiting the show to come away with a deeper understanding of this very specific and ongoing issue, but at the same time, for them to experience the social aspect side of this conflict, which Jarrar explores in an intelligent and sensitive way through the works on show; he shares the deeply personal stories of people who live with this wall as part of daily life."

Then, when I enquired Asfar about her favourite work in the show, and why, she tells me:

"I think in the case of this particular exhibition, there's a narrative that builds through each piece on show so it works well when taken as a complete experience. However if I had to choose a specific piece, I find *The Olive Tree Stump* to be a very moving work which is powerful in its simplicity. This hybrid sculpture comprises half of a hundred year old olive tree and a cast of the other half of this tree using concrete taken from the Israeli separation wall. Many of these trees were destroyed when the wall was built and after Jarrar found a remaining tree which was dying, he decided to use it in his work. It is a very beautiful work, the concrete and the wood work surprisingly well together and it has a real sensuality. There is also an incredibly poignant video work included which shows a mother and daughter separated by the wall and forced to touch each others hands in a small gap underneath as a way of connecting. This video is actually an extract of a longer film by Jarrar that follows the efforts by various Palestinians to cross the wall, *The Infiltrators*, which has just had its European premiere this week at the Edinburgh Film Festival."

Such an ambitious project has been made possible by the collectors and cousins Khaled and Hisham Samawi, who founded



the Ayyam Gallery in Damascus in 2006. Expansion into Beirut, Dubai and London enabled the gallery to broaden its scope in promoting the work by artists from the Middle East region and to establish itself as one of the foremost exponents of Middle Eastern contemporary art to the international community.

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