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A common thread at the Courtyard show

Stitches and embroideries take on different meanings in the hands of four artists — from emotions and relationships to identity and passage of time

Published: April 10, 2014 21:30

By **Jyoti Kalsi** Special to Weekend Review



A fantasy world A Soodeh Bagheri installation

Image Credit: Supplied

The artworks in Maryam Ashkanian, Soodeh Bagheri, Cecilia Monero-Yaghoubi and Mansour Rafie's joint exhibition, "The Thread", are connected literally and metaphorically by the thread. Each of the artists has used this humble, yet versatile material in their work in the form of stitching or embroidery.

Iranian artist Ashkanian has used elastic string to create a series of fabric and lace artworks, titled "Epitome". "The changeable properties of the material are a metaphor for my own ever-changing physical and emotional state, and my changing relationship with the world around me," she says. Ashkanian's artworks have an organic quality reminiscent of skin, and they look like pelts when stretched out on the walls of the gallery. Through these works the artist comments on issues of female identity, socio-cultural attitudes towards women, and the yearning for change.

Colombian Moreno-Yaghoubi explores issues of gender, identity and human relationships in her work through vintage garments and found objects. The artist has a large collection of vintage women and children's clothing, which become metaphors for the human body and human emotions in her thought-provoking installations. Old, faded photographs juxtaposed with the garments allude to the people who might have worn them, as well as to the artist's own search for identity. And long threads reaching down from the dresses to the floor connect the past with the present, commenting on the situation of women through the ages.

Tehran-based Bagheri is a painter and has experimented with thread for the first time. “My present studio is too small for painting, so I decided to work with sewing and embroidery. But there is a thread of continuity between my earlier work and these pieces because I have used dried paint scraped off from my palette and recycled old fabrics to create this series,” she says. By combining figures shaped from dried paint with sewing and embroidery, the artist has created a fantasy world filled with characters that have interesting stories. Some of her artworks are presented on circular embroidery frames, with parts of the embroidery hidden behind a layer of old, torn fabric. Others are suspended with threads as part of an installation, setting up a dialogue with the other works in the show. The humorous pieces with quirky titles portray fun moments, but they also reflect the bitter reality of the inevitable deterioration of all things with the passage of time.

Mansour Rafie has a deep connection with fabric and thread because his father is a tailor. The artist has used discarded threads and pieces of fabric and sewing to create a series of abstract artworks on canvas.

Jyoti Kalsi is an arts enthusiast based in Dubai.

“The Thread” will run at Total Arts at the Courtyard until April 25.



Simurgh II This installation by Nastaran Safaei represents superficiality. The brass plates suggest the need to reflect on one’s goals and aspirations as well as the consequences of not aspiring for greater development

Image Credit: Supplied

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