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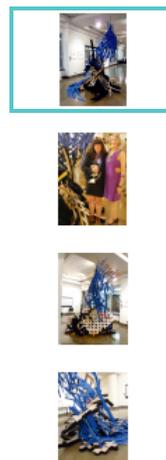
« Best in Show: Mia Feuer!



By Lisa Ager on Sep 17, 2011 | [Add a Comment \(0\)](#)



The Cairo Tower Collapses/A Fishing Boat in Alexandria is Constructed



I had the opportunity to interview Mia Feuer, this year's Trawick Prize winner for Best in Show! Mia creates monumental sculptures that quite simply command the space in which they occupy, she has true vision and a real talent for working with a variety of materials. The sculpture which won Mia the Trawick prize is on display at the Artery Plaza Gallery:

The Cairo Tower Collapses/A Fishing Boat in Alexandria is Constructed 2011

materials: styrofoam, FGR, fiberglass, latex paint, spray paint, shellac, polyurethane, powdered tire rubber, Indigo powder bought from a market in Cairo, Water from The Nile River

Interview with Mia Feuer:

What are the challenges and opportunities that come with using these materials?

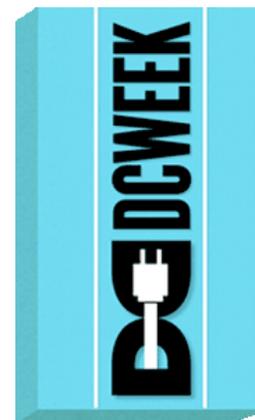
I use a variety of materials from steel, to paper mache, to fiberglass reinforced plaster to different types of foam to name a few. Each material comes with advantages and disadvantages. Obviously steel is very strong, and is great for structural support, but then is expensive, heavy and makes installation and transportation difficult. Materials like Styrofoam are wonderfully malleable and light weight.

How long did it take you to complete this sculpture?

This sculpture was created this summer while I was an artist in residence at The Bemis Center for Contemporary Art in Omaha NE (amazing residency!!). When I found out I was a Trawick finalist in mid July, I began building the work.

What inspired this specific piece? And what first inspired you to create large-scale sculptures?

When I was an undergrad at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, I had incredible instruction from a professor named Gordon Reeve. He is still currently the chair of the sculpture department there. He encouraged me to create very ambitious work at a large scale very early on. In my first year of taking a sculpture class, I fell in love with the process and the challenge of creating works that invade and respond to the spaces they are installed in.



My Trawick piece is inspired by time I spent in post-Mubarak Egypt this past spring. There were two structures in particular that drove this piece. One is my imagined collapse of the giant concrete Cairo Tower, and the second was the construction of a wooden fishing boat. Completed in 1961, the Cairo Tower was funded by US aid given to the Egyptian president Gamal Nasser. 2011 marks not only the tower's 50th anniversary, but it also heralds a new era in Egypt: the Egyptian people joining together and ousting their president, Hosni Mubarak. I visited Egypt shortly after Mubarak was forced to resign and the Egyptian army took control. This piece responds to my post-revolution explorations throughout Cairo and Alexandria. I found myself imagining the collapse of the iconic Cairo Tower, and I was deeply moved by the construction of a fishing boat in Alexandria near the Mediterranean Sea. I was struck by the formal similarities between the two structures, but I was aware that they represented two very different Egypts: one artificially constructed, and one arising from its people.

What has been the most memorable audience reaction to one of your sculptures?

Well, in recent memory, an Egyptian exchange student was on the Bethesda Arts Walk and heard me speak about the piece. She was deeply moved and invited me to stay with her family in Egypt the next time I go, and the best part is that she is making me this delicious Egyptian lentil soup that I love.

Tell us what role recognition and awards, such as the Trawick prize, have on your career.

Exhibitions, grants, residencies, awards and reviews all serve different purposes. The Trawick prize specifically will give me the financial freedom to experiment with new materials, continue my research abroad (I am planning to return to Palestine and explore the city of Jericho in the future) as well as afford a larger studio. But this award will also allow me to visit the dentist, buy new studio boots, and replace a leaky tire on my car. All of these things combined contribute to a higher quality of living as well as enhance my studio practice.

What has been your favorite project to date in your career and why?

There has been so many wonderful experiences I've had with different art centers and galleries like Conner Contemporary, The Atlanta Contemporary and The Firehouse Gallery in Burlington Vermont to name a few; but one of my favorite projects to date was the construction of a puppet theater with a bunch of Palestinian kids out of garbage found the market (fruit boxes etc) in Hebron. Hebron is a city located in The West Bank. Because of all the settlements popping up all over the place, the Palestinian neighborhood is now littered with Israeli checkpoints. I remember myself, and about thirty kids having to move about 50 soggy fruit boxes through the checkpoint before we were able to begin construction.

Mia will also have new work at the (e)mmerge art fair in the Conner Contemporary Room of the Capitol Skyline Hotel, September 22 - 25, 2011. And she will be participating in a 4- person group show titled: Site Aperture opening at the Flashpoint Gallery on September 30th, curated by Danielle Osteen.

The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards is a visual art prize produced by the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District that honors artists from Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Virginia.

The 2011 Trawick Prize exhibition will be held September 1-30, 2011 at the Artery Plaza Gallery, 7200 Wisconsin Avenue.

2011 Award Winners

- Best in Show, \$10,000 - Mia Feuer, Washington, D.C.
- 2nd Place, \$2,000 - Caryl Burtner, Richmond, VA
- 3rd Place, \$1,000 - Ryan Browning, Frederick, MD
- Young Artist Award, \$1,000 - Lu Zhang, Baltimore, MD.

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