PHANTOM

new contemporary art scene in Saudi. Malaik’s “Evolution of Man” series, in five stages, is an image of a gas pump in an x-ray frame and a man with a gun to his head. Malaik’s dark-skinned, er-eworthy poster blowups seem old-fashioned. A man in which we learn the Na-zi-helmed North Viet-er was present in Saudi Arabia in 1931 and Captain America showed up during WWII. Munnung at Hulka’s motorcycle chain prayer rug, “Dyanmic,” is bea-iful but not practical for human knees.

Abdulnasser Ghanem’s works are particularly exciting. His “Bouche” is a giant image of a fighter jet that morphs upwards into traditional architectural decoration. His “Bouche” and his photographs of artists working from a man- nequin are the closest thing to plain-old paintings in the show. The actual mannequin is an unlikely star. Its labeled and reassembled bits reveal how it was cut into chunks to be smuggled into Saudi Arabia where mannequins are illegal. Awa Al Naimi’s photos and videos of women in black hijabs driving bumper cars set the bar high for “Phantom Punch.” Women can’t drive in Saudi Arabia. Are these scenes fun? Are scenes of subversion, something else or both? Huda Hewayan’s images from the “Documenting the Undocumented” series were picked up by Hanks for “Dis-plainland.” Hewayan’s images show foreign workers in rather crude documentation-like black and white photo album formats. The figures are covered in colorful blocks and shapes referencing Mickey Mouse. It’s a grants that reach- ing from the very bottom up into the synchronized systems of society.

Neel Alhimiya’s three photographs of a traditionally dressed woman under water somehow find real boundar-ies and yet manage to reach

need to speak her language to understand her message. But a photograph, she will be perpetually held under water.

The water distorts her. Bubbles come from the woman’s mouth. Is she calling out? The response to such an image is physical: we don’t need to learn what

traditional imagery. YouTube, after all, is a battleground for the hearts and minds of young Saudis. ISIS has its own powerful presence. So groups like Teflax are playing a very serious game with folks who what they were willing to do in the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo. And because 60 percent of Saudis are now 30 years or younger, these artists are trying to build a new cultural path forward for an ever younger and more technologically savvy society. Those Saudi artists can engage and learn what they could from our art culture. But “Phantom Punch” also makes the case that we have much to learn from them.

Freelance writer Daniel Katz is a visual historian who lives in Cornwall, Ont. He can be contacted at: daniky@gmail.com


Arwa Al Naimi’s “Never Ever Land IVC,” 2016, photograph, courtesy of the artist and Pharan Studio, Jeddah.

Huda Hewayan’s “Taped and Undocumented 6,” from the “Documenting the Undocumented” series, 2015, photographs, courtesy of the artist.

Bates makes the case for Saudi Arabian art

BY DANIEL KATZ

Bates is always on the edge of his seat. He has worked on films like “Phantom Punch.” The Saudi artist Ahmed Malaik spoke at length about how he led his colleagues to work together in a contemporary art scene in Saudi Arabia. One would imagine that the process is a delicate one and the results are a bit odd.

Bates is making the case for Saudi Arabian art. His “Bouche” is a giant image of a fighter jet that morphs upwards into traditional architectural decoration. His “Bouche” and his photographs of artists working from a mannequin are the closest thing to plain-old paintings in the show. The actual mannequin is an unlikely star. Its labeled and reassembled bits reveal how it was cut into chunks to be smuggled into Saudi Arabia, where mannequins are illegal. Awa Al Naimi’s photos and videos of women in black hijabs driving bumper cars set the bar high for “Phantom Punch.” Women can’t drive in Saudi Arabia. Are these scenes fun? Are scenes of subversion, something else or both? Huda Hewayan’s images from the “Documenting the Undocumented” series were picked up by Hanks for “Dis-plainland.” Hewayan’s images show foreign workers in rather crude documentation-like black and white photo album formats. The figures are covered in colorful blocks and shapes referencing Mickey Mouse. It’s a grants that reach- ing from the very bottom up into the synchronized systems of society.

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