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SITTING IN ART: TWO CURRENT EXHIBITIONS AT YARAT CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

BLOG

Feb 07, 2019

BY DAVID MAXIMOVICH

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YARAT is an Azerbaijan-based non-profit that seeks to grow appreciation for and participation in contemporary art in Central Asia and the Caucasus. One way they do this is through hosting local and international exhibits at the YARAT Contemporary Art Space near Bayraq Maydan (Flag Square). It is currently housing two unique, experiential art exhibits, Pedro Gómez-Egaña's "Sleipnir," which continues until 19 February, and Vajiko Chachakhaiani's exhibit "Flies Bite, It's Going to Rain," which runs until 14 April. Visions checked them out and gives you the scoop below.

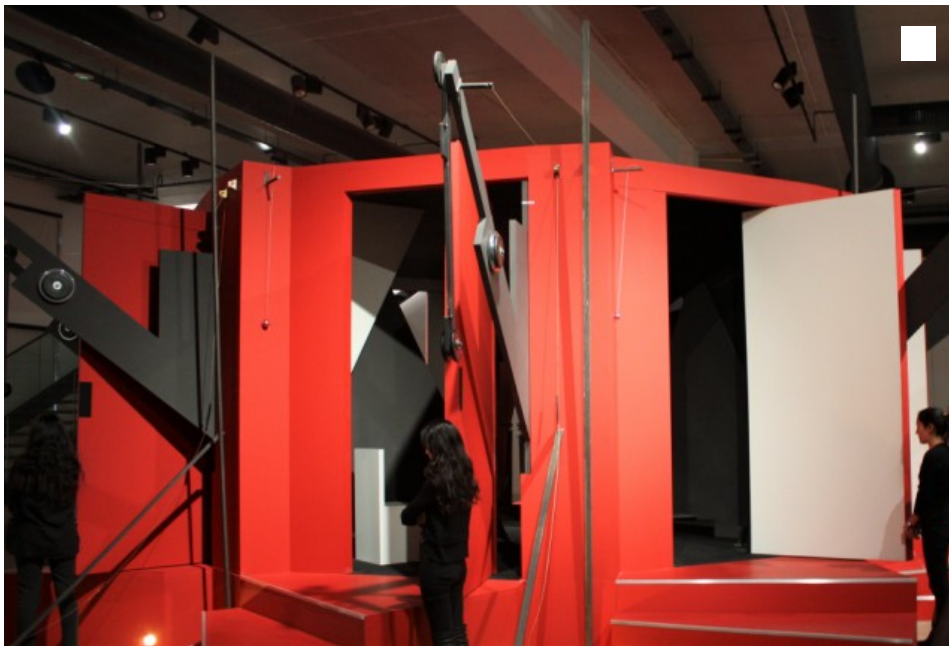


MAGAZINE

YARAT Contemporary Art Space

YARAT Contemporary Art Space is housed in a long, two story building on the seafront just southwest of downtown Baku. I arrived there just as they were opening at noon, along with a number of other art enthusiasts. The building was staffed by young volunteers, showing off their creative spirit with sombre expressions and tight fitting black clothes. I and the other guests were ushered into the first exhibit, Pedro Gómez-Egaña's *Sleipnir*, which takes its name from the mythological eight-legged horse of the Norse god Odin. In the centre of the room stood a large red pavilion with black movable arms that looked ominously like a giant spider. This contraption was inspired by Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl, who hypothesized that Norwegians originated in Azerbaijan based on similarities found in the two nations' ancient cave art.

Our group was ushered into the bowels of the beast through a series of doors that divided its innards into sections. We took seats inside our respective pods, the doors creaked shut, and we entered a strange, dream-like performance. A slow, deep male voice began reciting eclectic verses about transcendence while the walls around us began shifting slowly up and down. Metal balls tapped rhythmically against each pod's side in a semblance of slow, deliberate hoof beats, while lights from outside moved systematically from crack to crack in the structure. The result was a sense of dizzy disorientation, which grew increasingly uncomfortable as the poet told of being trapped in a bed in a dark room filled with uncountable scorpions. The transcendence gave way to a sense of imminence, and it was quite relieving when the doors were opened and we reemerged from Odin's steed.

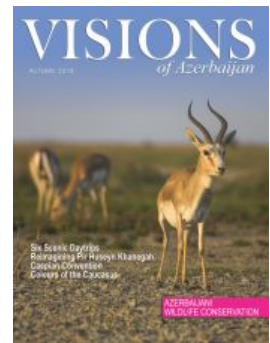


Pedro Gómez-Egaña's "Sleipnir"

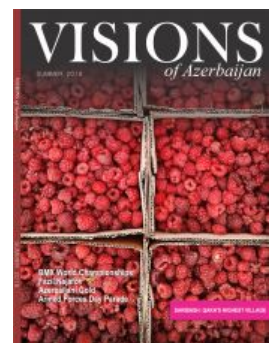
Next, we were led upstairs to Georgian artist Vajiko Chachakhaiani's exhibit *Flies Bite, It's Going to Rain*. It was made up of three barn-like structures placed around the edge of a small yet dense forest of dead branches. Hiding among the trees were numerous broken or incomplete relics of Georgian culture meant to symbolize the broken and twisted narrative of Georgia's mythical past and the trauma of more recent events in the country.



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COLD HANDS, WARM HEART

BY ELDAR FARZALIYEV



The impenetrable forest in Vajiko Chachakhaiani's exhibit "Flies Bite, It's Going to Rain"

The culmination of this exhibit was a short film being shown in one of the small barns. It gave a modern retelling of a Georgian fairy tale in which a son sacrifices his mother's heart for an impossible love. A sign outside the barn gave a 13+ rating to the film, but given its dark nature and instances of sensuality and extreme graphic violence, a 16+ rating would not be an understatement. When seen as a metaphor, it would seem that the Georgian man's desire to please his blonde lover through committing the most unspeakable act of familial betrayal captures the spirit of struggle in Soviet and post-Soviet Georgia. What is done cannot be undone, and how can one return to a lover who inspired such monstrosity? But as with any piece of art, its interpretation lies in the eye of the beholder, and the creator's true intent is always somewhat elusive.

If you are a lover of legends, suspense and tragedy, you can experience these exhibits yourself at the YARAT Contemporary Art Space daily from noon to 8pm. New exhibits are in the works, and you can stay in the loop by following their facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/YARATContemporaryArtSpace/>

Tags: *Baku* / *art*



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