

Spheris Gallery exhibit uses mixed media to explore time
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Shuli Sade's piece "Thinking in Time" mixes video and sound in its examination of the artist's thematic focus, the passage of time.

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In her current exhibition at Hanover's Spheris Gallery, Shuli Sade uses mixed media — including video, sound and photography — to create pieces that delve into the unstoppable force of time and its undeniable role in our lives.

"My main theme is kind of investigating time," Sade said. "It's understanding time in a sense like a visual experience, and trying to understand time visually."

In her piece “Thinking in Time,” Sade uses different colors to represent the past, present and future. The piece consists of seven video screens that each play the same scene of a tower shot from the same window of the same building on different nights over the duration of a year.

Each screen is color-coded, with sepia indicating the past, blue the present and green the future.

“Thinking in Time” serves as an example of Sade’s ability to mix media seamlessly. While watching the images play on the screens, the viewer hears a faint humming sound coming from a soundtrack that accompanies the work.

Even though viewers at first detect the sound only as a distant droning, it serves a vital purpose in enhancing the experience of the piece as a whole.

“What’s interesting to me is not the subject matter [of the videos], but it’s the knowledge of sound,” Sade explained. “Even though I’m very engaged in working with architectural elements, it’s really important for me that the viewer would kind of move along from left to right with each DVD player, and the sound will drive them to the next screen. And the time that you sense between two screens is subscribed in the mind of the viewer.”

Even Sade’s photography conveys a sense of movement.

“The unusual aspect of [Sade’s] work is that she maintains that sense of dynamic movement, even in the still shots that she creates from videos,” Spheris gallery director Cynthia Reeves said.

Sade’s piece “Vital Force,” for example, is composed of oversized images of green, leafy stalks superimposed over video stills of other blurred scenes of nature. The blurred background creates the illusion that the stalks are bending in a nighttime breeze.

The video stills intrigue the viewer by giving a sense of movement to a stagnant image.

“I like combining media,” Sade said. “I’m mixing media that is not usually combined, so what I do here is a combination of shooting video, slowing it down to a still — like a photograph — and of course the final result is a photograph in most of my work.”

Sade’s unusual method of mixed media highlights her thematic focus — the passage of time — rather than serving as a distraction.

“[The work] really shows how beautifully she has a sense of the rhythmic structure of progression and imagery both in terms of coloration and the geometric qualities of the subject matter,” Reeves said.

The pieces Reeves chose for the gallery highlight Sade’s strengths in utilizing basic artistic elements — color, for example — to create powerful images. As Sade explained, she hopes viewers appreciate her method, but also sense her message of the unstoppable passage of time.

“Usually the viewer does whatever the viewer does with the images,” Sade said. “Of course, I am hopeful that it’s inspirational, that the art inspires the viewer to at least start the process of thinking. If they come to an understanding of time in the visual aspect of it, it’s even better.”

Sade inspires viewers with her application of unusual methods to an oft-addressed subject.

The exhibit will remain at the Spheris Gallery for only two more days as the gallery prepares for its next exhibit, which features children’s book illustrations and opens Saturday, April 4. The gallery will exhibit a collection of prints and marble sculptures beginning in May.