

Art Review: Larissa Sansour - In The Future They Ate From The Finest Porcelain


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image: New Art Exchange

Visiting this exhibition is an experience to behold.

You are immediately drawn into a deep hum of dark silence within a room of black walls and floor, interrupted only by pictures of sci-fi looking scenes, a moving image in outer space and a display unit encasing the all-important, as later discovered, porcelain plates.

The photographs on the wall glisten with not only the small amount of light available in the room, but also with a unique and ominous quality. Upon the wall are images showing scenes of what can only be described as an apocalyptic desert land; some showered in the same porcelain plates shown in the display case, some haunted by figures of the past, presented to us in the future. They make an immediate impact and inevitably leave any viewer curious of what they see before them.

The centre of the space bares the case which presents the black and white chequered porcelain plates. It is fascinating to spot them in physical form in the middle of the room after their frequent appearance in the photographs, film and title. The placement of them echoes their significance; it is although the title is spelled out in

the middle of the room, and explained throughout the rest. The innovative and physicality of the plates makes the fictional world of Sansour's feel a lot more real and accessible.

The most engulfing pieces within the show are undoubtedly the films. In the central room, Sansour's *A Space Exodus* is shown on a television screen and the viewer is supplied with headphones, which block out all surrounding sound; this allows you to stand, watch, and become completely absorbed by the mesmerising film. It equates of music echoing *Space Odyssey* and is a direct response to the moon landing of Neil Armstrong in 1969. Elements of relatable qualities include the original quote of "One step for man, one giant leap for man kind", however with Sansour replacing "man kind" for a "Palestinian", bringing hope to her corrupt native land.

The USA flag is not to be seen in this film, but it is the Palestinian flag which ends up upon the moon, which conjures thoughts surrounding Palestine's problems, and perhaps inability to be able to strive for such greatness that they may think the USA holds. Above the television are small, cartoon-like (but 3D) astronauts baring the Palestinian flag on their front. Against the black wall and dotted upon it, they remind one of stars above, yet again bringing an element of space into the show.

After the exploration of the central space, you're drawn to a second room to the right. The wall opposite the entrance displays a massive screen, playing Sansour's film, a significant feature in the project: *In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain*. It details a fictional empire of people resisting against the norms of their native land, and their objective is to bury porcelain plates for future generations to discover as archaeology.

Two women speak over the film, narrating their views, plans and lives. One being a leader (voiced by Sansour) and one being a psychiatrist. The subtitles translating the foreign voices introduce another level of an otherworldly experience, and tells the story of the leader losing her sister and the impacts this has on her life. The narrative is scatty, but it successfully mirrors the condition of the land they are inhabiting. This is a visually and audibly captivating experience, which, although told through a fictional medium of work, touches upon very-realistic and political issues today.

The show as a whole, although set elsewhere, brings to Earth possible apocalyptic circumstances and the realisation of what such disasters and how the tearing of society could destroy families, people and the whole population's beliefs and persons. It truly brings to light the existence of the rest of the world, and even in the universe, which we, most of the time, forget to even remember exists.

Larissa Sansour's In The Future They Ate From The Finest Porcelain will be exhibited at New Art Exchange until Sunday 13 March

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