

AGENDA

LEBANON

THEATER

'Dry Blood and Fresh Vegetables'
Masrah al-Madina, Saroulla Center, Hamra Street, Hamra, Beirut
November 17, 8:30 p.m.
+961 1 360 251
The Meeting Points 5 arts festival presents "Dry Blood and Fresh Vegetables" by Shiraz's Amir Reza Koohestani. Specially created for the festival, the play delves into the relationship between a mother and her daughter.

MUSIC

Paul van Dyk
Forum de Beyrouth, Karantina, Beirut
November 17, 10 p.m.
+961 1 584 584
Renowned DJ Paul van Dyk returns to Beirut, with DJ John Askew and Amadeus for support.

Ziad Rahbani and Friends
Club Social, Mar Maroum Street, Gemmayzeh, Beirut
November 19, 22 and 26, 9:30 p.m.
+961 1 562 424
Ziad Rahbani presents a series at Club Social with Armen Hyunsunts on tenor sax, Yervand Markaryan on trumpet, Avo Tutunjian on alto sax, Fuad Afra on drums and Khaled Omran on bass.

FILM

'Full Bloom' and 'VHS Kahloucha'
Metropolis Art Cinema, Saroulla Center, Hamra Street, Hamra, Beirut
November 17, 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.
+961 3 793 065
The Meeting Points 5 film program kicks off with Sandra Madi's boxing doc "Full Bloom" and Tunisian director Nejib Belkadi's send up of the B-movie aesthetic in "VHS Kahloucha."

ART

'Unclassified Beirut'
The Crypt, Saint Joseph's Church, off Momot Street, Achrafieh, Beirut
Until November 20
+961 1 360 251
Raed Yassin curates the underground element of Meeting Points 5 with "The Secret of the Peripheral City," featuring works by Hatem Imam, Reine Mahfouz, Roy Samaha, Shawki Youssef, Vartan Avakian, Ziad Halwani and Ali Cherri.

'Coup d'oeil au Feminin'
Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Majdalani Building, Raouche, Beirut
Until November 30
+961 1 868 290
Galerie Janine Rubeiz hangs work by Yvette Achkar, Etel Adnan, Huguette Caland and Laure Ghorayeb.

CONFERENCE

'Public Art and Public Spaces: Weaving their Ways through Fragmentation, Identity and Politics'
Architecture Lecture Hall, American University of Beirut, Bliss Street, Beirut
November 17, 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m.
+961 3 614 355
This conference on public space features talks and debates by Loraine Leeson, Bilal Khbeiz, Vito Acconci, Michele Warde-Fawaz, Calin Dan and more.

Just a thought

I've always wanted to sell out. The problem's been, no one's ever wanted to buy me.

John Waters (1946 -), American filmmaker, icon of transgressive images

INTERVIEW

Meeting Points 5 festival goes underground

Roaming exhibition gets personal with Beirut's art scene to unearth new talent, held suitably in the Crypt of Saint Joseph's Church

Jim Quilty
Daily Star staff

BEIRUT: The hand-painted car-chase scene features three vintage automobiles speeding south along Beirut's coastal road through Raouche, a misshapen Pigeon Rock looming out of the Mediterranean in the background. The title "Thirteen Devils Collective for Youth" is written above the vista; "The Secret of the Peripheral City" is etched below.

This sample of 1980s trash art refers to a multimedia exhibition featuring new work by seven Lebanese artists between the ages of 28 and 34. "The Secret of the Peripheral City" is part of the pan-Arab contemporary arts festival Meeting Points 5, which opened this week in Beirut, and was commissioned specially for this edition's new "Unclassified" project. Amusingly enough, with all those fallen angels in the name, the exhibition is being hosted in the basement of Saint Joseph's Church, a space often used for experimental art and better known as the Crypt.

"With 'Unclassified' we gave a small budget and carte blanche to six local curators around the region," says Maha Maamoun, assistant curator for Meeting Points 5. "These exhibitions are meant for the audience of their cities, not for the traveling exhibition. All the 'Unclassified' curators have looked into their own networks for artists... the object being to go beyond those artists [who] are already known."

True to form, Unclassified Beirut's seven contributing artists were all born between 1973 and 1979. Photographer Reine Mahfouz has prepared an exhibition called "Beirut: A Vanishing City." Video artist Roy Samaha will contribute a video performance entitled

"How to be a Good Citizen." "The Suspended Dinner," by artist Ziad Halwani, is a food installation based on a dinner planned for April 13, 1975. (Halwani is also a certified chef.) The sound sculpture "Jabal Naar," by artist, designer and actor Hatem Imam, is inspired by Lebanon's passion for pyrotechnics.

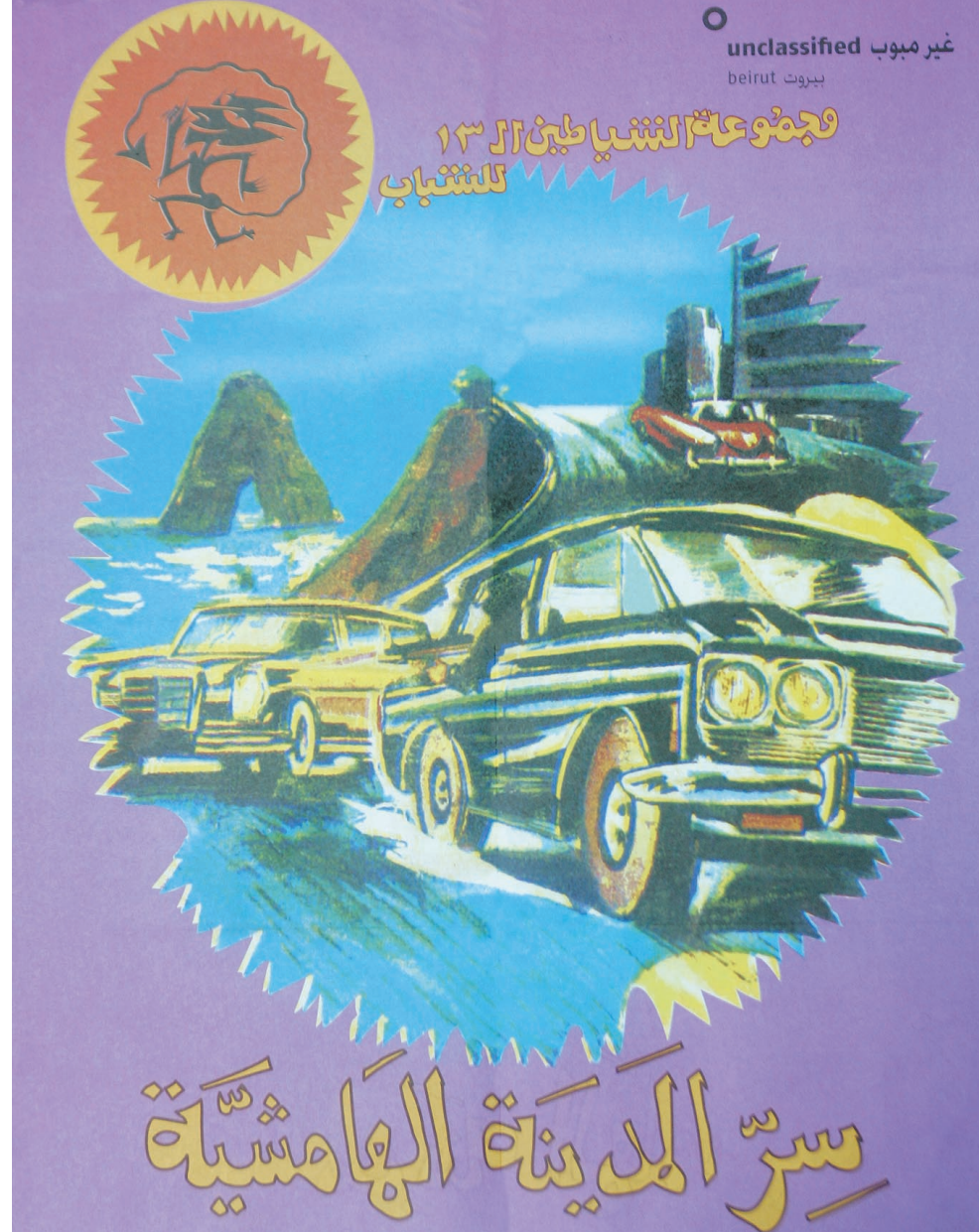
Video artist Ali Cherri has contributed a video installation "Once in a Shiny Morning Puddle," which takes its references from classical mythology and French playwright, poet and novelist Jean Cocteau.

Shawki Youssef's "[Skin Side]" promises to be an interactive video installation, while Vartan Avakian exercises his interest in obsolete machinery with a pinball machine tailored for Lebanon called "The Age of Heroes."

The curator of "Unclassified Beirut" is 28-year-old Raed Yassin, for whom the show is something like a farewell. One of the founding fathers of Beirut's free-improv music scene, who's also worked in video, film, installation and dance, Yassin will be leaving for Amsterdam at the end of 2007 for a two-year residency at De Ateliers, an independent artists' institute.

"I wanted to bring together artists who see things very differently than the older generation of artists," Yassin says of "Peripheral City." "The only artists the outside world knows from the Lebanese arts scene" is five or 10 people.

"This generation grew up and became artists during the war, while ours was still consuming the trash culture of pop songs and comic books and bad movies of the war period. The artists of the older generation were developing critical perspectives on the war when we were still living it. They're much more established as artists than we are... Everyone [here] is ex-



"A small budget and carte blanche to six local curators:" The poster for "Unclassified."

hibiting a lot but not as a collective," Yassin says.

In choosing a theme for the show, Yassin says he drew upon the notion that Beirut is the

suburb of an imaginary city, an idea he's used in his own work. "A lot of theorists and artists have talked about 'the periphery,'" he continues, "but I won-

der whether they all actually experienced it.

"For me, Beirut has never been a city - no collective experience, collective memory

and so on. It was built around the ideal of a city. I never experienced the Beirut of the 1960s, but I doubt it was ever really the center of arts and culture that that generation claimed it was. I'm skeptical because we're dealing with the same issues now that we were then.

"So I asked these artists to make work that's on the edge of their disciplines."

Though the "Peripheral City" concept is his own, Yassin says his main "creative" contribution is the show's program. He lifted the title "Thirteen Devils Collective for Youth" from a comic book series of that name published in Beirut and Cairo in the 1980s.

"I'm a big fan of these trashy comics," he says, gazing at the car-crash image. "The comics had 13 girls and boys, one from each Arab country. They have a mysterious commander called Number Zero, who had them trained in martial arts and languages at the Secret Cave."

"In each issue, some of the 13 devils confront conspiracies against the Arab world - plots to blow up oil pipelines or destroy the central bank and so on." He flips the program over. "These," he gestures to the cartoon headshots accompanying the exhibition synopses and artists' biographies, "were all characters in the comic."

"The comics were interesting because they reflected the Arab world's view of Lebanon. They were written during the 1980s but they never mentioned the Civil War during the Lebanese adventures. If there's a pimp in the Arab world, he has to be Lebanese and in the comics the girl characters all come from Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco - countries that have a reputation for exporting their hookers."

"Since we're living collectively in Beirut, since the individual ego is so strong here, I

thought I'd use the Thirteen Devils Collective for Youth to reflect ironically upon this idea of the collective identity," Yassin says.

Yassin confesses to being a trash culture addict himself and his work has made several forays into the genre. Praed - his first improv duo with Swiss guitarist Paed Conca - has been working on a series of projects using clips from Egyptian cinema.

"The 1980s was really a bad time for Arabic cinema," he continues. "I wanted to take samples from these trash films and manipulate them, try to make art from them. Praed is a multilayered approach - many different instruments and sound sources are at work simultaneously. We want to entertain ourselves first, then the audience." He smiles. "We hope that succeeding in one will lead to the other."

"I like to work with fakeness. Video is the perfect medium for projecting the anti-hero and mocking the idea of Arab masculinity. I was born into this stuff. I didn't want it but it's there. In the Arab world, the word 'choice' isn't in the dictionary. So I want to take this stuff and f*** with it rather than just live with it."

Yassin looks up at the Crypt's interior stone walls, still empty but for the burlap backing being installed on them. "These seven works are new," he says. "I worked with the artists to develop them but respected their propensities as artists. They're new, so they're sometimes unsure of themselves but that's good, I think. Having the artists working on the periphery of their disciplines means the language of the art is blurred. It reflects the blurred realities of Beirut."

"Unclassified Beirut" is on view through November 20 at the Crypt of Saint Joseph's Church in Achrafieh. For more information, please call +961 1 360 251

REVIEW

Cry 'Aita' and let slip a dance of pseudo-sexual awakenings

Kaelen Wilson-Goldie
Daily Star staff

BEIRUT: The line-up of dance performances for Meeting Points 5 is arguably the strongest of the festival's multidisciplinary programs due to its fiercely international flavor. This is the first edition of the festival to reach beyond its main geographic region of concern - the Middle East - to enlist talents from Europe, Asia and South America.

Five dances have been scheduled for the Beirut iteration of Meeting Points 5, from Tokyo's Hiroaki Umeda - who electrified spectators at Masrah al-Madina on Tuesday, opening night, with his sparse yet richly sensorial performance of "While Going to a Condition Accumulated Layout" - to Rio de Janeiro's Bruno Beltrao, who added raucous rhymes to the affair with Wednesday night's celebration of hip hop.

On Thursday, Moroccan dancer and choreographer Bouchra Ouizguen debuted a piece entitled "Aita" at Masrah al-Madina, one of seven new and original works commissioned for Meeting Points 5.

Ouizguen's dance is both inspired by and devoted to the *aita*

- "the cry" - a musical form that developed on Morocco's coastal plains in the 19th-century and is thought to have roots in Bedouin and Berber culture as well as in Andalusian Spain. "Aita" is more a tribute to the *aitas* - "criers" or "shouters" - the typically female singers who still perform wails and incantations for weddings, feasts and other occasions and rituals. Perhaps due to the sheer, unbridled intensity of their art, *aitas* are subject to a range of public reactions, from admiration and eerie fetish to rejection and scorn.

Thursday's performance began in pitch blackness and a silence that demans what has been total had there not been a smattering of gooball adolescents in the crowd. Then Naima Sahnoud's voice pierced the darkness. Soon five beams of light striated the stage to reveal her body, draped in white cloth, rolling slowly across the stage and stopping perilously close to the edge before tacking left.

Sahnoud continued rolling and waiting for what seemed like ages until Ouizguen quietly joined her on stage. The two women then laid down the performance's main actions, which, in emotional charge, veered more

toward theater than dance per se.

They rose with seeming difficulty from the floor, acknowledged each other warily and then warmed to one another fully. An experiment in passionate extremes, "Aita" charts numerous struggles, rights of passage and pseudo-sexual awakenings. At one point Ouizguen rushed Sahnoud, jumped on her back and wrapped her

Performance conveys complex meaning and intense emotion

hands over the elder woman's eyes like a child. Then she rolled off Sahnoud's back and teetered to stand. Sahnoud's assistance morphed into resistance as Ouizguen fought hard against the weight of her body.

The three major movements consisted first, of Ouizguen and Sahnoud kissing each other ever more fervently as they energetically rounded the stage; second, of Ouizguen and Sahnoud each pulling a gun on the other and screaming hysterically; and third, of the two shimmying, sashaying and bawdily rocking their curves,

in ever-escalating sexual provocation, to Otis Redding's "I've Got Dreams to Remember."

At times awkward, at others spastic, "Aita" didn't celebrate the precision, beauty or athleticism of dance. But it did convey complex meaning and intense emotion through rhythms that both hypnotized viewers and shocked them with violence, humor and intriguing innuendo.

Last year, Ouizguen and fellow choreographer Taoufiq Izeddiodi opened the prestigious Montpellier Danse Festival with a performance of "Deserts/Desirs," a dance that demands the audience segregate by sex - men on one side, women on the other. With a white sheet between them, Izeddiodi performs for the men while Ouizguen performs for the women. Naturally, the greatest points of tension arise from those moments when the two dancers press against one another from either side of the flimsy barrier.

Clearly, Ouizguen's strength lies in the heavy symbolism she achieves through the movements of her body on stage. Yet as evidenced by Wednesday's performance, she also wholly trumps expectations and offers a nice kick to cliches.



Sahnoud looms over Ouizguen during their performance of "Aita" at Masrah al-Madina.

SI

Sudoku is neither a mathematical nor arithmetical puzzle. It is a logic puzzle. Each sudoku puzzle consists of a 9 x 9 grid that has been subdivided into 9 smaller grids of 3 x 3 squares. To solve the puzzle, fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3 x 3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9. In each row, column and box the numbers 1-9 can only appear once. To make a start, look at each of the boxes and see which squares are empty, at the same time checking that square's column and row for a missing number. Every sudoku has a logical and unique solution.

		8						4
	4			6				5
				1	3			2
	1		5	9				
		7				4		
				4	8			1
7			3	5				
5				8				6
	2					9		

Solution to Friday's puzzle

5	2	9	8	3	1	4	7	6
7	3	6	4	5	2	8	1	9
1	8	4	6	9	7	2	5	3
6	4	3	5	7	8	1	9	2
8	7	1	3	2	9	5	6	4
9	5	2	1	4	6	3	8	7
4	6	7	2	8	5	9	3	1
3	9	5	7	1	4	6	2	8
2	1	8	9	6	3	7	4	5

HOROSCOPE

Aries (Mar. 21 - April 19) Your personal life will get bent out of shape if you claim to be too busy for loved ones. If you've been worrying about older members of the family, it's time to come to terms with the facts.	Taurus (April 20 - May 20) Tie up any loose ends today and prepare a plan of action. Make time to enjoy the company of those who share your interests. You can learn lots if you listen rather than rant and rave.	Gemini (May 21 - June 21) Opportunities to show your worth will enhance your reputation and bring possible career advancement. Problems with institutions are apparent. Visit friends or relatives you don't see often.
Cancer (June 22 - July 22) Someone is trying to damage your reputation in the pettiest of ways. Ignore this and your image will stay intact. Close a deal that has been up in the air and move on to what comes next.	Leo (July 23 - Aug. 22) Satisfy your need for adventure. Consider travels that will take you both near and far. Concentrate more on your business ventures than on relationships today. Major changes are afoot.	Virgo (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22) Mix business with pleasure but only up to a point. Relatives may be less than convinced of your plans. Those closest to you may be incredibly difficult to reason with. That's what draws you to them, after all.
Libra (Sept. 23 - Oct. 22) Avoid friends or acquaintances who are showing signs of serious malaise. You can't deal with that right now. You are best not to retaliate if a family member tries to pick a fight with you today.	Scorpio (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21) Tend to your health before it deteriorates. Stress will do you no good at all. Relax with old friends who know you well. Finish any overdue paperwork and catch up on your reading today.	Sagittarius (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21) Tone down the rhetoric and take a logical assessment of your situation. Put some of your hard earned cash into a safe, long-term investment. Put your work to rest and enjoy a few social events.
Capricorn (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19) Financial gains can be made through shrewd calculations. Your determination to do your own thing will work out in the end, but it's going to be a hard slog in the meantime.	Aquarius (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18) Watch your tendency to live for the day and to spend too much on ephemeral entertainment of little use. When it comes to emotional issues, you won't see things clearly today.	Pisces (Feb. 19 - Mar. 20) Opportunities for love will arise through travel. Arguments could flare up at home today. Try not to fuel them. Your energy, ideas and memory will help you to make great achievements.