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Beauty Ensnared

by Michelle Levy

Cages

Nicelle Beauchene Gallery

21 Orchard Street, New York, NY 10002

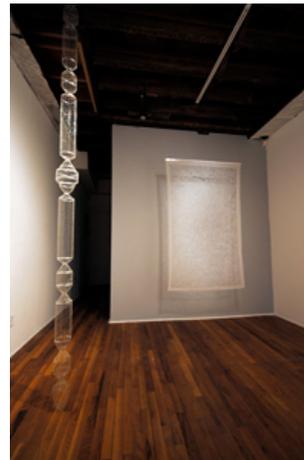
January 21, 2010 - February 28, 2010



There is something of a revelation in Afruz Amighi's (born Tehran, Iran 1974) debut New York solo show at Nicelle Beauchene gallery. First of all, the exhibition is stunning, there is absolutely no question about that. Second, it is transcendent: alternating between splendor and dramatic cast shadow, the installation transports you from the white cube of a gallery into the exotic world of this artist's creation.

Cages, the most predominant spectacle in the room, is an installation of multiple and varied chandelier-like objects, intricate and ornately threaded together with silvery thin chains, as if a population of ornamental jewelry—bracelets, necklaces, anklets—had multiplied and morphed into grander, complicated and restrictive cage-like structures.

When experiencing these objects, walking around and in between them, their structure and elegant design insinuate Amighi's middle-eastern heritage. Also, the work is undeniably feminine, suggesting a self-reflective component to the artist's practice. There is a sharp expression of irony, almost cunning, in the slender, elongated bottomless cages that are alluring and dubious—a female commentary on masculine power. For those unfamiliar with the artist's work, the exhibition's press release positions that the "cages" are hung in fighting formation, the numerical design correlating to the number of test missiles launched by the Islamic Republic of Iran in the past two years. Given this insight, the work assumes a less subtle mocking tone and yet, considering a subject matter so rife with social, political, and emotional conflict, it is never heavy-handed.



Across from *Cages* is an expansive object/installation entitled *Mesh*.

Similarly composed of metal chain, it is cascaded in a giant net-like formation across the wall, conjuring a more abstract, imperfect chandelier, or an alternative method of entrapment. On the far wall of the gallery is a gauzy, ephemeral shadow installation, *Lost*. A large stencil of an intricately decorative maze-like pattern hangs away from the wall. When the light is shown directly through it, it casts a white, or positive shadow that ghostly sways as the stencil (made from a mono-filament) responds to the airflow in the room.

The shadows cast from all the pieces perform the most striking element of the exhibition; a trope reinforcing that great beauty, although moving, is a device not to be confused with virtue. It is complicated, bound to mystery, and in this case, most certainly coexists with a dark side.

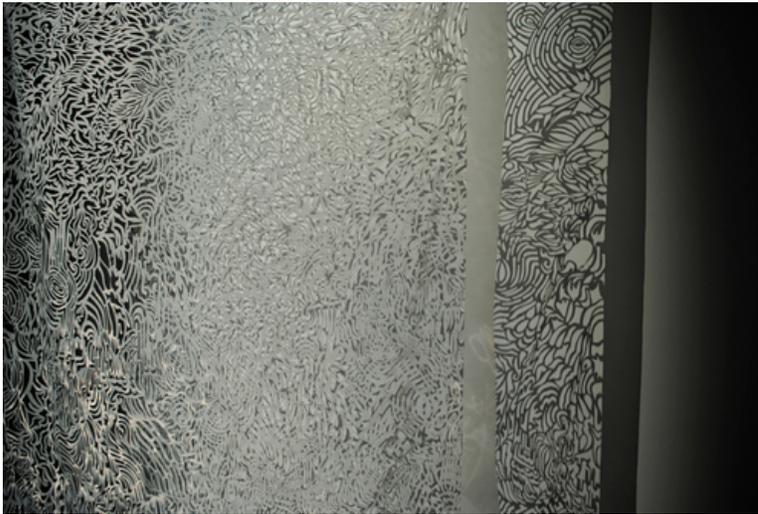
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Images: *Cages* (2010), aluminum, stainless steel chain and wire, dimensions variable; Installation view, *Totem* and *Lost* (both 2010), stainless steel chain, pe-cap, plexiglass, hardware; Detail, *Lost* (2010), pe-cap, plexiglass, hardware. Courtesy Nicelle Beauchene Gallery.

Posted by [Michelle Levy](#) on 1/31 | tags: [sculpture](#)

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Fantastic Show

Dear Afruz, I loved your innovative and imaginative works, I am very excited to see your art being exposed in New York and I see a very bright future for you. I enjoyed your style of work and creativity you bring to the art world. I wish you the best of luck and I hope to see more of your art work in the near future. I especially enjoyed the *Cages* piece due to this design and material being used. Your Friend, Lio Faridani

Comment by: Lio Faridani on Thursday 02/04/10 at 09:21 AM

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