Lori Esposito

Nasreen Mohamedi

The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s building, “The Met Breuer” has opened in 2016 and has begun with exciting exhibitions and pieces. There, I saw a retrospective exhibit of Nasreen Mohamedi’s life work. Her preferred medium was ink and paper, and she worked with lines and focusing space, texture, rhythm, and movement.

Her abstract work was created to counterpoint Indian modernism. She was inspired by western artists, Paul Klee,and Kazimir Malevich, making her work minimalist and leaving the interpretation of it to the viewer's imagination. The work is dense in it’s use of darks, the imagery gives a sense of hurriedness, this is due to the fact that many of the pieces are blurred but there is solid blocks of color within the imager, in some pieces the shapes can have meaning interpreted on to them. In one piece there is a long stick with multiple sticks appearing at the top of it, this could be seen as a tree to a viewer. In other pieces there are less sense to be made of the imagery, some shapes are jagged blotches, for the most part there is use of line, curved, thin, and cross hatching.

I could see relation to Paul Klee’s work in its minimalist style. The use of thin disjointed lines, and the confidence in blurring them, reminded me of Klee’s drawings,such as, his piece “Nordafrikanisch.” Klee’s work is more controlled, Nasreen Mohamedi’s work shows control, then begins to collapse, and the art becomes blurred and the abstraction of the work becomes makes it difficult to determine its meaning. This made me think about the disease she was diagnosed with “Huntington’s” she was diagnosed with in the last decade of her life. Her motor skills steadily eroded as she aged, and in the art you can see the lack of stability as the recognizable figures also erode away. It is clear in the pieces the steady progression of how her disease affected her art, but it is admirable that she did not stop her art regardless.

I relate to the experience of disease affecting art. I once had severe anemia. my energy level was exceptionally low. My art became affected much like Mohammedi’s, however, her art was affected due to motor skills. My work went from happier content, with expressive colors, to darker art, in color and in content.

My experience when viewing these pieces were feelings of sombreness. Using black, white,and grey shades for her art. Appears to have a similar result to the art i create when i like experiment with wet watercolor, and ink. Her work was less representational than my own. I interpreted and found imagery in Mohammedi’s work,which likely did not necessarily exist, for the artist, such as, seeing plants and land-scapes.

I would not wish to own or display this work in my home because it gives the impression of personal tragedy, and I believe that it is a harsh reminder of tragedy. I believe her work should be used to aid fundraising for Huntington's,such as, an exhibit showing how the disease affects people of different backgrounds, their jobs, their hobbies, and personal relations, so that others can better relate to the struggle.

Mohammedi developed tremendous imagery that expressed her identity, to the viewer with the 130 images on display at the MET Breuer. Like Judy Chicago’s “Dinner Party,” Mohammedi’s aim was to send a message through art to the viewer. The passage of time and the progression of her Huntington’s can be seen as the techniques change in the pieces.The viewer can see in her earlier art that it was less abstract and the imagery was more literal, such as in, “Images of Plant Life Portrayed,” which was much more technical and required the skills that Mohammedi was losing.

I believe this retrospective on Mohammedi was moving and thought-provoking. There might have been some greater level of impact had the pieces been arranged chronologically by the time of creation to show better how her life and disease impacted her. Regardless. I felt as if I have looked into the first emotional productions about geometry from an artificially intelligent robot; and Mohammedi’s distinct style of portraying geometric shapes and lines will remain in my consciousness for a long time.