

- Pick one installation and write 2-3 paragraphs of response in

Brightspace Discussions:

- What draws you to this particular installation?
- How does the piece incorporate the desert context?
- How does placing the piece in the desert change the meaning of the work?

Rashed AlShashai

A Concise Passage

The art installation of “A Concise Passage” by Rashed AlShashai resonated the most with me. The magnificent structure standing in AIUIa is symbolic of so many things that it is difficult not to be drawn by it. At first glance, the beauty of the structure is spell-binding with the colors being accentuated in the backdrop of the desert. As we analyze the structure further, we realize the confluence of distinctive elements that the artist has used to create by combining symbols of “civilization” and “commerce” bringing in together the best of both the ancient and modern worlds. The symbolism of making the pyramid of plastic pallets, which are typically used for shipping goods, is also very intriguing. Needless to say the parallelism of comparing the advanced architecture of the pyramids and the modernity of trade and commerce to signify the fact that AIUIa has emerged as a center for the exchange of ideas is rather commendable.

But beyond what has already been said, I observed certain nuances in the installation that drew me in even further and helped me understand how the installation incorporated in this particular desert’s context. To begin with, the passage in the middle symbolizes the small routes through natural rock formations that the trading caravans found refuge in from the various obstacles they encountered along the route. These obstacles can be symbolized further by the plastic pallets that seem to be stopped by the red walls in the middle conveying a sense of protection as the travelers moved through the “Concise Passage” of AIUIa. This is particularly fascinating by thinking about it in relation to the history of AIUIa thereby making the installation a very important piece in the desert.

Finally, I feel placing the installation in the desert has enhanced its value multi-fold. It sure has a historically symbolic meaning and as the description says, “the blue pallets and colored passage stand out in contrast to the calm tones of the landscape” reflecting a cheerful monument, but I believe putting the installation in the desert does amplify its meaning in even more ways. During the day, as the sunlight glistens over the blue pallets, the pyramid is seen standing in the middle of the desert in all its might symbolizing the several years of history the desert holds.

But as the night falls, the blue pallets camouflage in the darkness of the desert causing the red path in the middle to stand out, illuminated, in the vastness of the dark desert, symbolizing even the fact that the path through AIUIa was always visible to those who have needed it.

- Swostik Pati

References:

<https://desertx.org/dx/desert-x-alula-2020/rashed-alshashai>