

# News Highlights



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## Performance Art at AUB: a Rebirth

Breaking the silence of a gray late afternoon in January outside Nicely Hall was the echoing crow of a rooster. No ordinary rooster--the sound came from a Fine Arts and Art History student in yet another performance in the continuing stream of performance art pieces that began a year ago with the arrival of Visiting Whittlesey Assistant Professor Cornelia Krafft.



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The performance and design exhibitions, which took place on January 19, 2011, represented the final student projects in two courses taught by Professor Krafft: FAAH 274, Design in the Theater and FAAH 286, Performance Art.

In the presentation entitled Cloud Cuckoo Land, the performers, transcending the vital spirit of the bird, presented, in a dynamic setting, the conceptualization of rebirth, balance, and recreation.



A man as a rooster and a flock of chicks had curious students gathering around, captivated by a crowing rooster in place of a rising curtain; the few observers quickly multiplied. A balancing act over an aluminum ladder, a giant paper egg hatching a derailed bird/woman, words of precision claiming life but a question of balance--all reflected Krafft's contemporary style.

The captivated audience followed the



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moving performance to West Hall where a series of seven presentations began. An enraged caged woman in the first performance entitled "Sometimes a Parrot Talks" led into a crescendo of psychosis, metamorphoses, and a final breakthrough and rebirth in the following sequences.

The final presentation included installations, stage design, and film projections. In keeping with the underlying "bird" theme, the installations included "Stage Adaptations of Alfred Hitchcock's *Birds*," "Stage design for Igor Stravinsky's 'Firebird' ballet," and "Costume Design for a Lebanese Phoenix" by Tamara Suleiman.

Throughout the performances the daring and innovative costumes struck the observers: chicks dressed in black, stuffed brassieres on their backs, white plastic bowls on their heads, and rubber gloves on their feet; a man covered in thumbtacks, a woman in swirling white bridal tulle. Movement was equally inventive and captivating as young women "flew" off ladders, struggled up the main West Hall stair case, and danced from an amazing crouched position.

Most notable was the mourning for Hamra's Piccadilly Theater, which burned in 2000-- "Beirut's Phoenix." The theater was one of Beirut's grandest before it closed down, leaving behind a "titanic" loss. A book was available to the public for commentary about possible reconstruction. In their own way, Krafft and her students recreated Piccadilly in their installations, resonating the message of hope and rebirth.



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