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Sculptor Al Farrow builds mosques, synagogues and churches with live ammunition casings

JOSE ANGEL GONZÁLEZ | NEWS 04/12/2015 - 09:08H



The American artist creates 'temples of death' emulating sacred places that he cements with bullets, cartridges and other war supplies

In 'Wrath and Reverence' he has duplicated in detail famous shrines of the three monotheistic faiths using the 'material we use for killing'.

He wants to show the intimate relationship between religion and violence.

ARTS



A Jewish menorah by Al Farrow, which used barbed wire and casings from various calibers of ammunition / © Al Farrow, Courtesy of Forum Gallery, New York

American artist Al Farrow's *Bombed Mosque* (1943) is assembled from **50,000 high-caliber live ammunition bullet casings**. It only differentiates them from those used by armies, regular, irregular or the thousands of paramilitary groups that populate the world, which do not have explosive material. It could be a metaphor for the sculptor's opinion about religious temples: people do not kill inside there, but sometimes they are invited to do so.

Mosques, synagogues and churches, the sacred places of the three great monotheistic faiths, are emulated by Farrow in the exhibition *Wrath & Reverence*, until May 2 at the [Forum Gallery](#) in New York. Each sculpture, based in detail on a famous royal sanctuary, is made with bullets, cartridges and other war supplies, because the artist wishes to present them as "temples of death."

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'Brutal beauty'

The work of Farrow, a veteran creator with four decades of experience, underwent a transformation when fifteen years ago he was confronted in an Italian church with the **reliquary containing the mummified remains of a saint** . That encounter "enlightened" the artist and led him to explore the "brutal beauty" of the mixture, often contained in the same doctrine, of "religion and violence."

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Since then he has dedicated himself to the methodical construction of Jewish, Catholic and Islamic temples with an imitative character but using as the only elements the war material that he sometimes buys, finds or obtains **by disassembling the parts, for example, of pistols, revolvers or assault rifles** . The process is meticulous and slow, because you have to adapt, assemble, glue and finally polish the whole. The *Bombed Mosque* took, for example, a year to complete .

'Seductive and confusing'

"Visually impressive" and "emotionally disturbing", as the New York gallery says, Farrow's sculptures "are both seductive and confusing", because they are buildings "faithful to reality" from an architectural and functional point of view. proportions, with **the same golden or silver tones used as a sign of respect and honor to God** , but assembled from instruments of destruction.

In addition to several churches, a copy of the [Nigerian National Mosque](#) and another of the [Brussels Synagogue](#) , another group of works is interested in religious symbols: **a Jewish menorah made from barbed wire** and machine gun casings; a chest-reliquary that contains the [Personal Vibrator of the Holy Warrior](#) built from a very pointed can of

'Nationalism, revenge and death'

Farrow's "disturbing art," writes [Chris Hedges in the foreword](#) to the exhibition catalog, "exposes a powerful but often hidden truth" that **"religious institutions sanctify the barbarity of war ."** This "perversion of faith," away from the sacred and the preservation of life, "directs believers, as Farrow makes clear, toward the unholy deities of nationalism, violence, revenge, and death."

The "fierce apostles of death **use bomb vests and swords to murder their captives** , our Israeli allies in the Middle East use militarized drones, attack aircraft, missiles and heavy artillery," adds Hedges. "Everything ends, morally, in the same place. And Farrow shows us the place: our collective temples of death."

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