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3 inventive exhibits at Wexner Center reflect artists' cultures

The three artists whose works ma PARKER GALLERY at the Wexner Center for the Arts all explore in depth issues of heritage and culture, be they Mexican, South American or Middle Eastern. At the same time, these artists consistently inject invention and even quirkiness into their works.

And don't miss the pieces of food that each has incorporated into at least one of their pieces.

All three exhibits reflect the artists' origins and family: the Palestinian-born Jumana Manna; Sahar Khoury, an America-born artist and anthropologist who is half Arab, half Iranian; and the Chicago-born Harold Mendez, a first-generation American of Mexican and Colombian descent.

Sahar Khoury: 'Umm'

Almost all of Khoury's sculptures in this exhibit were created for the Wexner Center, but the standout is "Untitled (radio tower accessories)," a 20-foot-tall structure inspired by the Egyptian radio station that broadcasts concerts by popular Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum.

This quirky tower is decorated with beads, bells, ceramic letters and pita breads. A huge bell is found at the base, but it doesn't issue sound. That task is left to a cage of boom boxes that broadcast the singing of the artists' family members at break time for Wexner Center installation workers. And on the first Thursday of every month, a soundscape of the songs of Kulthum can be heard.

Khoury's portion of the exhibit is filled with many more intriguing installations: an untitled sculpture with large steel numbers that refer to prominent dates in Arabic history; the untitled sculpture ("Palestinian Olive Oil Nightlight") to which Ohio State University art students contributed blown glass vessels; a window with green curtains and



Part of the 20-foot piece "Untitled (radio tower accessories)" being shown in Sahar Khoury's exhibit "Umm," at the Wexner Center for the Arts. Robert Divers Herrick

sunglasses that doubles as a portrait of Kulthum; and even a small bronze and glazed ceramic sculpture of the artist's cat, Lola.

Khoury's work — like that of Mendez and Manna — is rich with inventive materials, eye-catching presence and layered meanings. There is a gracefulness coupled with aggressive presentation that makes these works almost impossible not to investigate.