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### **Caricature with a difference** (by MARILEN ESTACIO)

If your idea of caricature is highly-humorous satire or amusement meant to ridicule, then the works of Davoud Shahidi, currently on exhibition at the Litho Gallery (Aban St. off Hafez), might look too cumbersome if not on the eye, on the spirit. For the young caricaturist is among a breed of local artists who subscribe to that trend or '-ism' in caricature which calls for a deeper meaning or philosophy in the art. Thus, one sees in Shahidi's ink drawings and caricatures a lot of symbolism and a subtle treatment of society and human tragedies. Each illustration is brilliantly conceived and carefully worked out; consequently, it hardly fails to put across the intended message.

There is poetry to a certain degree, as in those works expressing human frailty, solitude and grief.

Animals play an important role in Shahidi's symbolisms. There is a work showing a man reading a newspaper tattered and almost completely disfigured by art... censorship? And another drawing of a sick man being treated by a doctor with a vulture's heart.

Man is still the same frail, vulnerable creature in spite of his learning and magnificent inventions. Thus, we see a man of learning unaware of imminent danger that could put an end to his study table.

Even the pains of childbirth and various situations man finds himself in...dilemma, isolation, poverty and his inability to escape from it...are vividly captured in Shahidi's works. Man's gullibility, the tendency to deceive and be deceived, finds expression in a work showing five blindfolded men queued up for a hand that 'restores' their eyes by sketching them on the blindfold. The men who have regained their eyes...not their sight, for the blindfold is still on...are apparently satisfied....or they are just made to feel so personally, I find this work one of Shahidi's best and reminds me of those who go for horribly expensive rejuvenating gimmicks.

Death, the cruel hand of time, and society's ills including drug addiction, are among the most dominant themes of Davoud Shahidi. His fine drawings, often reminiscent of Honore Daumier, present a probe in to society and human nature. At the same time we get an insight in to the artist's sensitive and creative mind.

Shahidi, who took up architecture in the University of Tehran, does cartoons and caricatures as a 'serious hobby' he has ten years experience in commercial art which includes years spent with Ettela'at and Kayhan publications. Early this year, his works were among those shown in an exhibition of caricatures by artists all over the world held in Montreal, Canada. This is Shahidi's first one-man show and the exhibition goes until March 15. His prices range from RIs.8/000 to 20/000