



NOA CHARUVI – ARABESQUES

Curated and text by Naomi Lev

The Shirey

May 3 – May 17, 2014

New paintings decorate the walls of “The Shirey” in Bushwick. Here, Noa Charuvi presents her debut solo exhibition in New York inspired by Islamic ornaments which convey Charuvi’s practice and experiences in oil on canvas.

Bright colors of exotic geometric forms illustrate the canvases and create a wall installation that brings forth the mysticism of the Middle East. Charuvi’s new series of works is based on tiles from mausoleums in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, where they decorate the outsides of religious structures. The mausoleum, considered as a type of tomb, strongly relates to the artist’s previous series of works where she created paintings of demolished buildings in Palestine and from the occupied territories. The original photographs derived from news-stills and image-banks associated with the conflicted region. The artist’s paintings of the ruined structures, presented in bright oils, create a sense of liquidity and 3D-effect, as if the scene is moving and transforming.

As she resided in Israel for most of her childhood and adult life, Charuvi constantly reflects on the complex situation in the area and the choices we make as nations and as individuals, with this of course her own moral obligations. Dealing with images from news and documents where there is an attempt to create an objective standpoint, Charuvi shares her subjective stance by creating personal and empathetic brushstrokes and a deliberate emphasis on a seductive color scheme. The ambivalence in the perspective of the Israeli is interesting here: on the one hand by living in Israel she is a part of this reality, and on the other hand she is foreign to it as she does not experience the destruction first hand as the Palestinians do (and whose homes she paints).

The Islamic tile ornaments reproduced in this exhibition are familiar to Charuvi from childhood – growing up in Jerusalem these decorative elements were part of her home. The patterns which are an integral part of the Islamic culture are currently weaved into the Israeli experience; not only because of the many Muslims living in Jerusalem and across Israel, but also because of the many Arab-Jews who migrated to Israel since its establishment and brought local decorative traditions along. What used to be, for example mausoleum decorations, now decorates the interiors of many Jewish and Israeli interiors.

From the outset these geometric forms symbolize transformation. The designs, being free of any figurative meaning convey beauty which by repetition, offers transcendence. Symmetry, proportion, and spacing reflect the ideal notions of balance in the Qu’ran as in nature: “The sun and the moon to a reckoning, and the stars and the trees bow themselves; and Heaven – He raised it up and set the balance” (Qur’an 55:5).

Drawing these ancient forms on the façade of contemporary architecture is a new phase. Where do the two converge? This enigma is part of the adaptation process which brings together places, traditions, and cultures that can encompass the complexity of time.

NOA CHARUVI was born in Jerusalem, Israel. She holds an MFA Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts and a BFA Fine Arts from the Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem. She has been awarded participation in Art Omi International Artists Residency, the AIM program at the Bronx museum, Yaddo artist colony at Saratoga Springs, Triangle Arts Workshop in Brooklyn and AAI Rotating Studio Program in Manhattan. Her work was featured in many group shows in New York City and in Israel in venues such as Wave Hill Center, the Bronx Museum, Lombard Freid Projects, Launchpad Brooklyn, Court Square Project Space, Cuchifrittos Project Space and Parker's Box. Noa is currently part of the studio program at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.

Naomi Lev is a curator and critic who lives and works in New York and Tel Aviv. She specializes in collaborative art events that connect artists, curators, scholars, and architects from around the globe. In January 2013, she initiated and curated a conversation and performance with artist Jonathan Meese at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, hosted by the Bezalel Academy MFA program in Tel Aviv. In 2011, she initiated and artistically directed the arrival of Vito Acconci to Israel for a series of talks and panel discussions about art and architecture. Lev was also an Assistant Curator, locum for the Executive Curator, at MoBY-Museums of Bat Yam, a socially engaged institution. There she concentrated on research and development of future exhibitions and public programs. From 2008 to 2011, Lev managed Florentin 45 Contemporary Art space in Tel Aviv, Where she curated and produced exhibitions that focused on Israeli contemporary art. Her writings appear regularly in major art publications such as ARTFORUM, Art in America, and BOMB site. She has also written exhibition texts for artists Tamar Ettun, Dov Talpaz, and Dror Karta for their solo gallery shows in Tel Aviv and in New York. Lev is currently working on a series of curatorial projects that will be showcased in the U.S. during 2014 and 2015, and is a host of a series of talks with contemporary artists at ICI, Independent Curators International. She holds a BFA in Fine Arts from the Bezalel Academy of Art & Design in Jerusalem, and an MFA in Art Criticism and Writing from the School of Visual Arts in NYC.

To view this exhibition contact Noa Charuvi:
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The Shirey is located at 47 Thames Street, Suite 105, Brooklyn, NY 11237,
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