



“On Negotiating Space and Memory” *Artscoops*, September 2016

On Negotiating Space and Memory

Describing her work as “an abstracted attempt at reflecting on experiences and quests”, Hiba Kalache talks mapping the environment with Artscoops.

You have said that your art is a response to your environment and a way of trying to make sense of it. How did you come to make this your starting point?

I continuously explore notions of time, space and memory, with their many folds and layers. My art being a response to the physical space I inhabit is a natural reaction to events I witness and question, as an individual part of a larger whole. I attempt to foster dialogue between site and artwork, as well as audience or participator. But what drives my process most is a search for an imaginary art narrative that can reflect on everyday experience and environment.

Your fascination with the way people deal with tragedy and their capacity for hope is well documented. How do you take these emotions and channel them into your work?

I am usually drawn to specific local (political) events as physical, social and mental constructs, and how they shape identity. I have always been intrigued by the way people process pain and trauma. In the past, I used to refer to images from daily newspapers and I examined Beirut city (security) maps. I am currently conducting conversations with people in Beirut city, around a specific subject matter (‘colour’), and, in parallel painting, drawing and playing with paper sculptural shapes, being driven by the formal aspects of artmaking. It is a new way of mapping my environment. The emotions are abstracted, and I prefer to keep an open-endedness regarding the reading of the work.

ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

tel: 415.576.9300 / fax: 415.373.4471

www.altmansiegel.com



*Kiss me before you go II, 2012, ink, watercolor, acrylics on archival paper
120x240 cm each panel unframed
(246x126 cm each framed)
(246x630 cm 5 panels framed)*

What have you learnt about the way people process and filtrate memory in your work?

The way we negotiate space and memory is very subjective to each of us, and is usually based on selectiveness and omission in our everyday lives. What does it mean to engage with a physical space/place and ask it to shape a language (visual or not), define a self, or even a population? Do any two people feel the same way about a specific locality?

Do you have a fear that memories won't be accurate or representative? Does it matter if they're not?

My work is an abstracted attempt at reflecting on experiences and quests. My only fear is to fall out of the momentum, or of the work process, which is the main drive behind the progress of my investigations.

Your art is known to be multi-layered and includes technical intricacies. Tell us something about the processes involved.

The composition of a 2D work begins in an orderly manner with a division of spaces. Hand-drawn/painted intricate details are gradually added until structures and hybrids take form. Movements and rhythms then come into play to (inter)connect the whole and break down the original order. The interaction that takes place between the various visual elements is of great interest to me. This interplay seems to embody relationships between smaller parts and a larger whole, such as between an individual and a partner, or a larger community/society and it reminds me of the interdependence of systems. The resulting work becomes a visual plane for the viewer to decipher, as well as a dialogue between the viewer and me. There is almost always clearly an event taking place, or many smaller ones, but what is not necessarily clear is the cause or the outcome of the event.



*I Love You Because..., 2012, ink, aquarelle & acrylic on paper,
240 x 120 cm (5 drawings)*

As a multi-media artist, how do you choose your medium for a particular work?

I like to express conceptual layers with the physical gestures/manipulations the hand directly executes on a material, or through interventions, and direct interactions with the public audience.

What are you currently working on?

My connection and intimate relationship with Beirut city continues to be in translation through the work. I have started in March a new project that is taking its own course in developing. The same way I like to keep an open-ended interpretation to my work, I am aiming at having a more open-ended process through the construction of a project. The present work consists of two separate folds: one that involves conversations, as I explained earlier, with local artists, gallerists, curators, designers and pizza delivery guys... about life, magic and specifically 'colour'. And the second includes the artworks, which represent an abstracted expansion of these conversations.