

Ayan Farah

Kasbah

19.3. – 23.4.22

“Land is the medium to me and also the subject.”

(Ayan Farah)

Ayan Farah's paintings are produced within a cycle of material production and reclamation. Informed by the history of landscape and land art in formal and material sense respectively, these works are formed by the place the pigments are sourced and its geology. Often reflecting on personal history, the geographical location of the source material and the place of production are key. Socio-cultural concepts and geological properties as well as the aspect of mobility as part of the production process drives from Farah's own biography. Travels to places like Abu Dhabi, China, Somalia, or Mexico are essential parts of Farah's work. Her "paintings" are never painted on canvas with brushes or produced with the usual work materials, but consist of historical textiles of the past centuries "treated" with the minerals and earths of the most various geographical locations, which Farah collects herself on site during her travels. Ayan Farah's paintings are soaked, painted or dyed with natural pigments, mud, ash, clays and plant dyes found in different countries. Made of antique linen and jute, these works start as one large solid work, the off-cuts later becoming the patchworked pieces of Farah's future paintings. Sometimes these historic fabrics have endured so much wear and tear due to their nature as domestic linen, their only use is as part of a patchwork painting. All materials in her studio are reclaimed and saved for later, often re-dyed, re-stitched to form new works.

Ayan Farah's current show is entitled Kasbah, the Arabic word for "fortress". It is an associative play with the architectural structure of historical clay elements that feature in the geometrical compositions of Ayan Farah's works. At the same time, "Kasbah" means "separated from the city" or "remotely located". This original meaning is given a new twist with Ayan Farah, because her new pieces connect the factually separated hemispheres of Africa and Europe.



Alkali, 2022

rust, india ink, indigo, carob on linen and hemp  
200 × 150 cm

Kadel Willborn

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Her new works of the Saline Series are based on a combination of terracotta soil from Western Sahara and Somalia with rust particles of objects found at the actually strictly closed-off winter bay in Sweden (Vinterviken) which in the 19th century served as an area for Alfred Nobel's experiments with explosives. Or the diptych of Maps compositions reminiscent of cartography, that combine carob from Morocco with pigments gained from indigo that is cultivated in the southwest of England or with yellow pigments gained from marigold cultivated in Sweden.

Ayan Farah sewed the different textiles processed in this complex way together to form strict geometric patterns and linear compositions. Her paintings become part of the history of abstract painting and are simultaneously poetic reflections of the sociopolitical reality in which world-views merge, repel each other, coexist, but no longer follow a linear logic in time and space. In this respect, one can pass by Ayan Farah's works and see "nothing", or one can stop and see "the entire world".

Biographical note:

Born in 1978 in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, to Somali parents, Ayan Farah grew up in Sweden and lived for a long time in London, where she studied painting at the Royal College of Art. Today she lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden. Ayan Farah's works are in institutional collections such as the Art Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Klein Collection, the David Roberts Art Foundation, London, Public Art Agency Sweden and the Kadist Foundation. Recently she has exhibited at the Klein Collection in Germany, „The London open“ at the Whitechapel Gallery, „In the Eyes of the Beholder“ at the Tarble Arts Centre, Charleston, USA and „Textile Abstraction“ Casas Riegner, curated by Jens Hoffman. Currently her works are on view at the Hunterian Art Gallery in the exhibition „Flesh Arranges Itself Differently“ in Glasgow, Scotland.



Imma, 2022

marigold, carob on hemp and linen  
90 × 70 cm

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