



Sherin Guirguis, *Untitled (Maad Wu Gazr)*
triptych, ink and watercolor on hand-cut paper
78 x 48 in (198 x 122 cm) each
2012

MEDIA ALERT:

Sherin Guirguis, *Duwamah*

March 1 – April 28, 2012

Gallery Reception: Thursday, March 1, 5:00 – 8:00

Frey Norris Contemporary & Modern

161 Jessie Street (at New Montgomery), San Francisco, CA 94105

- Debut solo exhibition for Los Angeles-based artist, reflects on recent political upheaval in her native Egypt, particularly events in the epicenter of protests, Tahrir Square.
- Nine new mixed media works on hand-cut paper and one large-scale kinetic sculpture in the form of a Bedouin earring.
- Recent exhibitions in Dubai, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and the California Biennial, with upcoming solo project at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art.
- 20 page catalogue available with essay by famed art and cultural critic Dave Hickey, author of *Air Guitar* and *Invisible Dragon*, and former correspondent for *Rolling Stone*, *ARTnews*, *Art in America*, *Art Forum*, *The Village Voice* and *Vanity Fair*. Hickey was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, the so-called “genius grant.”

SAN FRANCISCO, CA.

Notions of social upheaval have subtly expressed themselves in artist Sherin Guirguis' work for some time. The current exhibition, *Duwamah* (rip current) draws upon current events resulting in the so-called "Arab Spring", but particularly in the artist's native Egypt. Guirguis was born in Luxor, raised in Cairo and immigrated to the United States at the age of fourteen. The protests in Tahrir Square that resulted in the overthrow of the Mubarak regime still continue, and have influenced both the content and the formal iteration of the artist's recent work. This revolution carries with it the potential for both a new democracy or an even more oppressive political regime and it is this threshold moment that she investigates.

Due to restrictions on journalists during the final days of the Mubarak regime, reporting and documentation of the revolution were restricted to a single disseminated aerial shot of the square, sanctioned by the government. Tahrir Square, famed in Cairo for having no central monument, came to resemble a solar system or wheel from a helicopter's aerial vantage point. Protestors have flowed and continue now to flow in and out of the concentric circles of the square; an inner circle of tents, enclosed in a circle of protestors who are in turn encircled by army, police and tanks. This series of concentric circles has, for the artist, become a cipher or vessel for the revolution. Tahrir Square asserts an overarching influence on the art in *Duwamah*, serving as a microcosm of the current global political moment, a permeable global culture fueled by transparency and the interconnectedness fostered by new modes of communication.

Social change is dynamic and unpredictable – in the context of this exhibition, this also relates to the artist's kinetic sculpture, on display at the gallery's entrance, which embodies the nature of unpredictable causal systems. Viewers can push or pull the sculpture, setting in motion a series of surprising movements, just as the protestors in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Wall Street and elsewhere have pushed for political change without any certainty of a favorable outcome.

Guirguis' paintings in her earlier work incorporated organic, explosive processes; they were relatively expressive, pigments pushed by gravity and compressed air, though tightly controlled into specific images (catastrophic clouds and cataclysmic events, explosions, etc.). Cutting the surfaces of these works on paper with Mashrabeya patterns (associated with the division of private and public space) breaks the formal barrier between the painting and the clouds, changing two dimensional art into sculptures, and referencing a transitional space between the public and private. These patterns also reference dualities of fear and desire, with an unseen, but brightly reflected "hazard orange" color visible on the framed works' matting behind the painting itself. The above processes remain consistent in the nine works created for *Duwamah*, but the tightly controlled paintings are no longer remnants of explosions. The centerpiece of the exhibition is an enormous triptych in a fiery assortment of reds and violets, most explicitly related to the shape of Tahrir Square, but also evocative of nebulae or even supernovae. This new imagery is inspired by the above-mentioned protests – abstractly drawing formal correlations between cosmological events and aggregate social behavior. The shapes also suggest the dissolution of barriers, as distinctions are broken down across social hierarchies and cut paper portions transgress the edges of layered painted areas.

Sherin Guirguis' art was featured in the 2010 California Biennial, resulting in an acquisition of her work by the Orange County Museum of Art. In 2011 her sculpture "Mashrabeya" was purchased by the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. The artist has an upcoming solo project in September 2012 at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art. Frey Norris exhibited her work at the 2011 edition of Art Dubai and will present her work there again in 2012. Also in 2011, her work was exhibited at Vox Populi in Philadelphia and LAXART in Los Angeles. Reviews have examined her work in Art Forum, Beautiful/Decay, Flash Art, Los Angeles Times, Artweek and the Huffington Post, among others.

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For additional information and images please contact the gallery (415) 346-7812 or email melissa@freynorris.com.