

Farah Atassi

July 7 - August 12, 2017

Ghebaly Gallery is pleased to present French-Syrian painter Farah Atassi's first exhibition in the United States, debuting a series of eight new paintings.

Atassi's canvases contain deeply considered anachronistic montages, allowing for a range of art-historical references—from designers such as the Memphis School to older movements within painting such as the constructivists and cubists—to commingle on the surfaces and beyond. Throughout her bold and expansive pictorial worlds, Atassi's geometry and icons function as meta-languages.

In fact, Atassi describes her work as "space and object" painting, as the rectangles are literally anchored on the walls while the accumulation of lines and forms sprawl out into any particular space in which they are displayed. She conceives them as an act of staging—the figures dance a notated choreography; the objects dangle in suspense. The action, or potential for action, contained within each picture is a recollection of previous moments in time—lasting snapshots of creative progress relayed in order to rattle the natural cyclical static state of art-making. By willfully and playfully acknowledging these antecedents, she also wisely and powerfully acknowledges her own complicity in the chain.

While Atassi's work is rooted in figuration, she utilizes the geometry of mid-century abstraction to create complicated worlds for figures and forms to coexist. She builds figures out of the structured shapes and straight lines similar to how she treats the objects that surround them. The measured reflexivity and ambiguity between people, places, and things, in the foreground and the background, allow for a constant and fluid shift between place and identity. Like Fernand Léger before her, she eliminates a hierarchy among her subjects. This is no more evident than in *Still Life With Guitar*, in which she riffs on her predecessor's compositional style and winks at the rapidity of recent social evolution through the pointed placement of a phone containing now such antiquated technology.

In *Psychedelic Setting 3*, the Oskar Schlemmer Triadic Ballet becomes a dreamscape—anthropomorphism coming to life in costume. *Blue Guitar* is a hallucinatory yoga class with elastic figures stretching and resting in a frenetic citrus-soaked architectural space. A Picasso-played guitar resonates as a painterly *mise-en-abîme* and a clock baselines as an existential questioning of time. Each element is meticulously arranged to recall the body alphabet of Karel Teige (in striped sportswear), allowing for fun and fashion to also be taken seriously alongside craft and conceptualism. Her array of arrangements on display here are striking examples of Atassi's innate ability to further modernize modernism.

Farah Atassi (b. 1981, Brussels, Belgium) lives and works in Paris where she completed her studies at the Ecole Nationale supérieure des Beaux Arts in 2005. Recent solo exhibitions include Xippas Gallery, Paris and Geneva; Extra City Kunстал, Antwerp, Belgium; Galerie Michel Rein, Brussels, Belgium; Le Grand Café, Saint Nazaire Art Center, France; and Le Portique, Contemporary Art Center, Le Havre, France. Select institutional exhibitions include Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Strasbourg, France; Biennale of Painting, Roger Raveel Museum, Machelen-Zulte, Belgium; MAC/VAL, Val-de-Marne, France; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Musée Régional d'Art Contemporain Languedoc-Roussillon, Sérignan, France; Musée des Beaux-arts de Libourne, France; Palais d'Iéna, Paris, France; Biennale de Curitiba, Brazil; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France. In 2013, Atassi was nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp, and in 2012, she was named the winner of the Jean-François Prat Prize in France. Her work has been featured in Artforum, Frieze Magazine, and ArtPress, among other publications, and her first bilingual monograph was published by Les Presses du Réel in 2015.

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