

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery

04 August 2016

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present a solo exhibition of new paintings, *Maps*, by London-based artist Ayan Farah from 10 June to 10 September 2016. Farah's work records the physical and ephemeral traces of particular geographical locations. The artist treats swatches of fabric with minerals and natural pigments sourced from around the world before stitching them together and stretching them as one, multi-faceted piece.

For the exhibition, the artist has made a series of paintings in which she has re-purposed domestic linen and jute from nineteenth and twentieth century homes, dyeing the materials using clay mixed with marigold and indigo. Built intuitively, each of the works incorporates scraps of excess fabric salvaged from the production of older paintings, bringing together materials that span both time and place. This mode of working also reflects the sustainable nature of Farah's practice, actively sourcing organic materials and engaging with natural processes in order to make her paintings. The resultant patchworks create a topographical effect similar to the aerial views captured in the paintings of Peter Lanyon and Richard Diebenkorn.

This series is particularly inspired by the iconic *Earthworks* show at Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, in 1968, which featured artists such as Robert Smithson, Walter de Maria and Michael Heizer. Lauded as ushering in land art, the exhibition included a selection of Smithson's 'non-sites', works that highlighted the geographical source of the natural materials from which they were made, and also their repositioning in the removed context of the gallery or museum where they became legible as art. In the same vein, Farah establishes a continuum between the outside world and the gallery space by encompassing raw materials collected from far-flung locations, using mud from the Dead Sea, terracotta from Mexico and clay from Sweden. Even though they hang flat on the wall, she seeks to emphasise the three-dimensionality of the works and their relationship to the space and the body of the viewer.

Farah also draws upon historic modes of fabric production from Africa such as Ashanti strip weaving and Bogolanfini mud-cloth making. Naming each of the paintings after Somali women, the work also reveals the underlying significance of the Somali diaspora within Farah's family history and how travelling has become a way of life for the artist.

Farah was born in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates in 1978 to Somali parents and grew up in Stockholm, Sweden. She lives and works in London, UK. She received a BA in Fashion Design from Middlesex University (2003), a Postgraduate Degree from Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design (2006), followed by an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London (2012). Her work can be found in the permanent collections of the David Roberts Art Foundation, London and Saatchi Gallery, London.

Recent exhibitions include *Notes on Running Water*, Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels (2014); *Le musée d'une nuit* (script for leaving traces), David Roberts Art Foundation, Fondation Hippocrène, Paris (2014); *PROXIMA*, Museo Británico Americano, Mexico City (2014); *The Figure in the Carpet*, Bugada & Cargnel, Paris (2014); *Xtraction*, The Hole, New York (2013); *Alchemy*, The Arts Club, London (2013); *Wanderlust*, Contemporary Art Society, London (2013) and *Girlfriend material*, The Standard, Los Angeles (2013). In 2013, she was awarded the Eilean

Shona Residency in Scotland, and in 2012-2013 was artist in residence at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm. Following Farah's upcoming solo exhibition in London, she will also have a solo exhibition at Kadel Willborn, Düsseldorf, later in the year.

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