

# “Maktoub” مكتوب

## Painting Installation

### Lihl Turjeman

Turjeman presents a painting installation formed out of the body of work created in the past months, during her residency in the C'ite International des Arts in Paris. A material and contextual coherence, evolved from her past work and exhibitions in Tel-Aviv.

In order to understand the mental and emotional spaces, the entanglement of matter and spirit in the core of the “Maktoub” painting installation - it is important to address the name of the installation.

‘Maktoub’ (originally in Arabic) means “Written”. ‘Maktoub’ generally cultivates a fatal, nearly religious perspective, motivated by fate, with the conviction of everything being written (pre-determined) from above. In its pronunciation and inscribing, ‘Maktoub’ resembles the root word ‘Ktab’ (in Hebrew) which is also the primary lexical unit of the word ‘Ktuba’ – A Jewish legal document signed during the sanctification of marriage, and specifying the husband’s duties to his wife.

The ‘Maktoub’, the ‘Ktuba’ and the ‘Ktab’ root are fragments in the decryption process of the façade narrative. Before the viewer are large canvas paintings, imitating gigantic stone walls, and containing figures that at times seem to separate and sharpen through the canvas (or the stone), and at times seem stagnant and attached. The emerging composition is tragic-pathetic, on the brink of heroism and religion.

**The Lovers:** Sculpted characters of a man and a woman grasping each other. At their feet is the figure of **The Bride:** for Lihl Turjeman, The Bride also represents the biblical Lot’s wife – A woman who dared to look back at the sinful city of Sodom. This act rendered her into a pillar of salt, eternally frozen in stone/canvas, while ‘moving’ in an almost ‘Rodinesque’ attempt. These are contexts that also enable a feminine-political reading of the installation.

**The Bound and Tied:** A man and a woman bound in different modes, but they share the result of a violent act, brought upon by eminent helplessness.

**The weeping woman:** A tragic symbol from a collective memory, as well as a personal one. A mournful woman is a fresh reference to ceaseless political cycles that take place in our times, but also a memory of known artistic images from western culture.

**The Tombstone:** Supports an open book – a reminder of Judgment Day, and the terror of eternity. On top of the tombstone is **The Body of a Woman** – emptying itself downwards.

**The Fragment System** is built on an axis between ghosts and statues, what is clear and what is petrified, canvas and stone, left and right, balance and redemption, history and contemporary. The four canvases refer to time, but unlike classic paintings, they are not time-paintings manifested in a metaphorical cycle of the four seasons. For Lihi Turjeman time is captured only at its final characteristics. The created reality is of stone, rather than flesh - exempt from the path of the flesh from life to death, and the painting moves in an almost 'postmortem' territory, nearly beyond time. We reveal the 'Maktoub' – What is written before being, the necessary finiteness. However, life is what gives the finite reality its meaning, and they start at the beginning – not from the flesh, but from human qualities, a place where a couple's love, pain, compassion and lamentation are born. These human qualities are markers of life, and hold the possibility of prophetic hope of existence and continuation, from the clear knowledge of necessary finiteness.

Another part of the gallery contains a large round floor-work, which the viewer has no choice but treading on. In that way, the viewer is forced to a different viewpoint, seeing a flat worldview with a Zero-Point center that extends into eight branches. The center-point resembles the spot from which distances were measured in Paris. The 'Center of the World' fantasy wraps the installation with historical and cultural layers, forcibly including the viewers by their physical movement, and pointing to the contemporary. If a center does exist, it is an imagined center, in constant movement. The green and red colors are mixed to create a live, veiny, bloody and organic feeling of tunnels of existence.

The technique used on the canvas is unique – it is missing the classic color palette and brush strokes, and instead treats the canvas as a wall. Hurling, mixing and splashing are physical actions that link with construction. The result is deceiving, as if the viewer is standing before stone walls and observing statues. The need to touch arises, to wonder about the material vessel, a move from or to the figurative, from or to the 3D, from the canvas to the stone. The view deceives and throws the viewer into realms of sensuality and passion.

Whether scraping the layered years off the wall and sticking them back up, or allegedly creating walls and statues, the painting installation is an indicator to another convoluted symbolist process, devoid of a specific context and made out of redeemed icons – up to the point where it seems that Lihi Turjeman's installations move from the particular to the globular.

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