

Center of Gravity / Lihi Turjeman

8 September 2016 – 22 October 2016

In her first solo show at Sommer Contemporary Art (following a show at S2 project space), Israeli artist Lihi Turjeman exhibits mainly large-scale paintings, all made in the last two years. The show continues the painter's interest in scraping historical layers of specific locations, as seen in her Brenner 17A project.

Most of the works revolve around locations that hold great importance to the national and religious narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian land. *Palestine Railways* (2016), a large scale monochromatic painting, depicts Rosh Hanikra grottoes, where Ha'Palmach exploded the historical Palestine Railways in 1948. *Welcome Back Traitor* (2016) offers the view from Mount Nebo in Jordan, where, according to the Bible, Moses first saw the Promised Land. The work is composed of two parts – the yellowish landscape seen from the mountain, which is turned into an abstract panoramic painting, and a flat sculpture, based on the plaque fixed in Mount Nebo view point, showing the distances from the mountain to various locations. The artist deleted the names of the locations: Hebron, Ramallah, Jericho, Dead Sea – and left the map as a kind of naive, prehistoric stone-drawing of a radiating sun.

Many of these large works are made on the floor, while the artist uses her entire body to reach their scope. Thus, Turjeman's practice can be seen in relation to action painting. She rubs various mixtures made of pigments, glue and tiny gravel into the fabric, using rollers, sponges and squeegees, and often her own body weight. As a result, the canvas is processed and hardened, until its folds and fibres become part of the image itself. However, her practice also differs from the mainly masculine tradition of action painting. Despite the scale of her works, Turjeman pays close attention to details and performs minor nuances. In a similar manner to her work process, which includes moving closer to and away from the image, the viewer too may experience the work differently from various distances. In this sense, the painting itself becomes a landscape. In *Blue Marble* (2016), an abstract painting titled after the famous photograph of Earth taken from Apollo in 1976, a cross is fixed in the center of the image – a focal datum-point in a sea of abstraction.

The works center on a massive floor piece, which grants the show its title (*Center of Gravity*, 2016). It is based on the floor plan of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The octagonal sacred structure, located in Temple Mount, is believed to hold the Earth's center – it is built around the Foundation Stone, where Muhammad ascended to heaven (according to Islam), where the ruins of the Second Temple lie and where the Binding of Isaac took place (according to Judaism). But it may also be just a rock, as the same tiny rocks used by Turjeman to create her images. She flattens the majestic dome into a two-dimensional carpet, an icon. A different icon is seen in *One* (2016), a hyperrealist charcoal drawing of a one Palestine pound note (the currency that was used in the area prior to the Israeli Declaration of Independence), where the image of the Tower of David is imprinted. A different well-known image is the writing 'PASSPORT', engraved on a small metal plaque (*Passport*, 2015). Turjeman turned the bureaucratic border-control document, much like the note, into a still remnant, fixed in time.

Another masculine tradition that Turjeman may be identified with is Minimalist painting. Her works always begin with a systematic layout; she divides the canvas into grids, and draws from architectural plans. But the image itself is always present in Turjeman's works, which refuses to surrender to the minimalist's rigid abstract formality. This minimal image-based approach is most present in *Apex* (2016), where a swing is seen in profile, distilled into the essence of triangle outlines. It is still, performing a perfect spatial and temporal balance.



The sites present in this show are delivered under a kind of nostalgic, mythical air. However, the artist does not yearn for any piece of land, but rather indicates the lack inherent in these localities. The images of Rosh Hanikra grottoes, the Dome of the Rock and Mount Nebo, all framed by the macro view of Earth itself, signal the arbitrary fuelling of these locations with political meanings, the absurdity in trying to pollicise abstract spaces with national borders and religious narratives.

The show is accompanied by a text by Noam Segal.

Text written by Keren Goldberg

*Lihi Turjeman (b. 1985) lives and works in Tel-Aviv. She owns a BFA and MFA from Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem, Israel. In 2008-9 she studies at the École National Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France. She exhibited solo shows and participated in group exhibitions in major Israeli and international venues, among which: Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa, Israel (2016); Petach Tikva Museum of Art, Petach Tikva, Israel (2016); Le Corridor, Cité International des Arts, Site du Marais, Paris, France (2015); Minotaur Gallery, Paris, France, (2015); The Jerusalem Artists House, Jerusalem, Israel (2014); and the Drawing Biennial, Jerusalem, Israel (2013). Previous residencies include the 'Cite international des-Art', Paris, France (2015). Turjeman is currently a resident at Artport TLV, and exhibiting a solo show at Wilfrid Israel Museum, Kibbutz Hazorea, Israel.*

