

TGM

Amel Bennys

Selma Feriani Gallery is delighted to introduce Amel Bennys exhibition in Tunis entitled ‘TGM’. For this exhibition, Bennys presents an array of her most recent paintings, a selection of her “*cahiers d’esquisses*” (sketch books), and one installation which will offer a visual trajectory of her expansive process and métier. For Bennys, color is as equally a structure as a three-dimensional object in space and so layered textures and pigments define much of her work. This exploration of texture and material gives way to the visual knowledge of form through coloration. For the artist, color becomes a point of departure in exploring the depths of architectural form. In her paintings one can note the manner in which color acts as a constructive tool: the purity of pigment stands flat on the canvas and thus become a structure in and of itself. In works such as *Roses* (2013), strips of oil pastel reveal the confluent seams of lumped paint or with *Facebook* (2013), the lead sheet covering part of the work highlights unseen forms in layers.

With a similar array of colours, Bennys’s *cahiers esquisses* offer a window into the artistic process of her large-scale works that are noteworthy of Bennys’s practice. The artist and their sketchbook have been a faithful pair in history, evoking the classical image of the Artist as genius, knowing that the sketchbook is the vessel where visions and method are married. Here, Bennys exposes her sketchbooks to provide an inkling of the breadth of her practice, informing the viewer of the symbiotic relationship between her sculptures (though only pictured in her sketches) and her paintings.

Remarkably reminiscent of artist Phyllida Barlow’s monumental sculptures, Bennys’s sculptures are anthropomorphically crude in structure, evoking the human form that teeters between assertive and vulnerable. She speaks about the point of equilibrium with which her works must reconcile, namely her sculptures in their completed nature. Top heavy and staggering, yet paradoxically sturdy and assured, Bennys’s sculptures become the physical form of the equilibrium struck between these dualities. Her new sculptural work *Passage* (2013) – installed in the patio area of the gallery – we are presented with a light box showing a blurred image of TGM through the fields around Carthage. Strips of lead fixed to the light box cut the image in section, leaving only a fragment of the TGM image. Bennys is here experimenting imagery and three-dimensional structures to announce her new body of work.

Bennys’ paintings are similarly lyrical and exist as a natural and fluid extension of sculptural figuration. Instead of canvas, the majority of Bennys’ small paintings are made on the same lead that she includes in her sculptures. The congruency of material in each praxis, painting and sculpture, forms an exquisite rapport between the differing works. The viewer comprehends that reconciling the construction of pigments, textures, structures and hue is consistent to the handling of raw materials in an architectural manner. The exploration of material in this manner was propagated by the Cubists during the early Twentieth Century. Artists such as Picasso and Braque treated paint as a supplemental surface upon which a structure could be built. Bennys’ practice exists within the same realm: in the incessant layering of deliberately flat pigments, the tableau becomes the art object as a three-dimensional structure.

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