

PRESS RELEASE

SABAH NAIM

Opening: Tuesday, May 4th 2004, at 7:00 pm, Galleria Lia Rumma, Milan, Via Solferino 44
Tel. +39 02 29000101 Fax +39 02 29003805 e-mail liarumma@tin.it web www.gallerialiarumma.it
Gallery hours: from Tuesday through Saturday - 11:00 am to 1:00 pm / 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm
The show will run through June 26th, 2004

The Galleria Lia Rumma is pleased to present the latest work by the Egyptian artist Sabah Naim. The opening will be on May 4th, 2004, and the artist will be present.

Born in Cairo in 1967, Sabah Naim first introduced her work to the Italian public in 1999, in occasion of the Biennale for Young Mediterranean Artists in Rome. In these paintings, the surface of the canvas was overwhelmed by the accumulation of newspapers, recycled and crumpled up, as if the disorder of the "trash" were made logical by the order imposed by the painting.

In the next phase of her work, the artist turned to the past and the present of her country, with a poetic and melancholic gaze. The object of her investigation became a family portrait of the artist and her brother, in their childhood years, taken in their parent's house. This old and faded photograph acquired warmth and credibility with Naim's additions of repetitive and obsessive decorations. This family photograph was the basis for a great number of works. At the same time, Naim began a series of works investigating Cairo's everyday life through images appropriated either from newspapers or from photographs made by the artist herself throughout the streets of her city. These images were then printed on paper and enriched with symbols pertaining to the culture and decorative arts of the Middle East, urban architecture, the labyrinth of the casbahs, and the arabesques of the moldings which decorate the mosques.

Naim then further refined her technique and opened the doors to a more complex series of work, which she presented at the Venice Biennial 2003 in the section Fault Lines. Together with the video People of the City, in which the artist documented scenes from everyday life in Cairo with the same style and elegance of her previous works on paper, five large works on canvas were also presented. This series was certainly innovative. One half of the canvas is covered by the mute iconography of newspapers, while the other half narrates fragments of everyday life captured on canvas by decorations and arabesques with an almost hypnotic quality, given the large scale and depth of the image which these drawings are superimposed on.

In her last series of work, presented at the Galleria Lia Rumma with this show, the theme of a double iconography is confirmed and further explored. In these new paintings, the object of investigation is undoubtedly the alternation between silence and dialogue, the exchange between narrated image and effaced image. Naim manages to capture significant moments of the stream of life around her by focusing on the sacred quality of a moment stolen from consciousness and underlines how valuable this moment is through the juxtaposition of the image with its negative counterpart.

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