

**JAMES
HARRIS
GALLERY**
604 SECOND AVE
SEATTLE, WA 98104
206 903 6220
JAMESHARRISGALLERY.COM

PRESS RELEASE



Mary Ann Peters *traveler*

September 14 to October 26, 2019

Reception for the Artist:

Saturday September 14th, 11:30am-1PM

Gallery Hours are:

Wed. - Sat. 11:00am - 5:00pm

Tuesday by appointment

Additional images are available upon request

Left: Mary Ann Peters "traveler" 2019, watercolor, gouache on clayboard 24" x 36"

James Harris Gallery is pleased to present our seventh exhibition by Seattle artist Mary Ann Peters titled "traveler." For nearly a decade Peters, a second generation Lebanese American, has created a diverse body of work including installation, sculpture, painting and drawing to provide a window into a complicated, multilayered cultural landscape. Referencing historical and photographic sources, along with architecture, contemporary records and personal observation, Peters undermines, questions and interrogates the paradox of our knowledge space between truth and fiction aligned with the Middle East. Her work becomes its own archive that loosely uses narrative as its conceptual framework, each piece interpreting a scenario that is constantly in a state of flux and often subject to the interpretative lenses of shifting contexts. Keenly aware of the gallery's architecture, the artist has created three bodies of work to emphasize the hope and struggles of contemporary events connected to historical precedents. As you move through the three exhibition spaces, one sees a shift from referential imagery to abstraction, and lightness to darkness.

On display in the first gallery will be a series of paintings culled from the artist's notes about the experience of migration, both current and historical. Intertwining dynamic abstraction and timeless metaphors, these paintings elevate cultural identities fractured by recent events and often tied to conflict zones. In this way, the works intensify an experience of nostalgia for a fixed past, which remains the same only in memory. These intimate scaled works function like filmic storyboards, becoming episodic stills anchored by the notion of "gilding". Interpreting the definition of gilding as an intentional facade that ornaments, shields, camouflages or distracts from the truth, the paintings document dismissed or ignored moments experienced by a traveler in unknown territory.

Holding its place in the middle gallery is a sculptural work titled "impossible monument (the gatekeeper's shadow)". Since 2015 Peters has consistently made works that reference documented but seemingly incidental events that deserve reverence but by virtue of their ordinariness they would never be given the status of a monument. This work addresses collateral, an age-old tactic used to discourage asylum seekers in current day border crossings. Peters was one of two artists representing our region for the triennial

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“the map is not the territory” at the Portland Art Museum. “impossible monument (the gatekeeper’s shadow)” was her sculptural contribution to the exhibition and is being seen in Seattle for the first time.

In the third or back gallery will be a series of large-scale drawings titled “this trembling turf,” a series begun in 2016 that alludes to the history beneath our feet. Intense white lines on a black clayboard surface, these works imagine an agitated compact earth whose secrets are the missing links to narratives identified with communities on the move. Inspired by the interpretation of sound waves often used in forensic archeology to locate buried information, the drawings place the viewer adjacent to a strata of earth, as if a vista could be had underground. At intervals these earthen drawings pulse, breathing life into overlooked or intentionally hidden histories compromised by an incomplete record. For the artist these works are the unseen story that have allowed fallacies in our understanding of displacement.

By shifting between referential imagery and abstraction, the works in the show engage in an intimate conversation about identity, migration and place which, although rooted in a very real discourse about the world, essentially eschews definition. The pieces suspend inaccessible moments often compromised by subjugating discourses in the news and in history. Each work verifies that one’s sense of place is much bigger than the sum of its parts. Peters purposely aims to reveal those episodes that are under the radar of standard discussions but inevitably inform larger topics. These works are a continuation of her interest in the ambiguities of current dialogues tied to disruptions in the Middle East and beyond.

Mary Ann Peters lives and works in Seattle, WA. Her work was recently acquired by the Frye Art Museum, Seattle and the Portland Art Museum. She has received numerous awards including a 2016 Camargo Foundation residency, a 2015 Stranger Genius Award and 2013 Art Matters Foundation Grant (NYC) that allowed her to travel to Paris, Mexico City and finally Beirut to research a migration out of the Middle East to the Americas at the turn of the 20th c., a grant from The New Foundation, Seattle in 2014 for travel support, a MacDowell Fellowship in 2010, a Jentel residency in 2009, the Northwest Institute of Architecture & Urban Studies in Italy (NIAUSI) residency in 2003 and the Neddy Painting Fellowship from the Behnke Foundation in 2000.