

JAMES HARRIS GALLERY
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PRESS RELEASE



Mary Ann Peters
Continental Drift

March 14 to April 30, 2021

Virtual Online exhibition

Additional images are available upon request

Left: Mary Ann Peters "storyboard 2" 2015, watercolor, gouache on clayboard 18" x 24"

James Harris Gallery is pleased to present our eighth exhibition by Seattle artist Mary Ann Peters titled "Continental Drift." This is our first online exhibition as we shift from our location in Pioneer Square. The gallery will mount virtual exhibitions until the next location of our physical space is announced in the fall of 2021.

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. The artist's focus has been the parallels between diaspora experiences at the turn of the 20th c and those migrations triggered by the recent conflict in the contemporary Arab world. This exhibition brings together a series of work based on photographic records of the catastrophic effects caused by this social upheaval. For this specific body of work begun in 2014, Peters sourced material including images from citizen activists in these conflict zones. Peters, herself, did not experience this turmoil but through her research, she intuitively interpreted these moments experienced by Middle Eastern communities.

"Continental Divide" assembles five years of work; the individual pieces though separated by time share an overlapping and continuous vision. Continental drift; a theory that demonstrates how continents shifted position on the Earth's surface over eons; explains why animal and plant fossils, and similar rock formations, are found on different continents. This group of paintings illustrates the artist's interest migration and its effect on global communities. As an observer from afar, she interprets this drift of information, distilling it into visual poems. The earliest work acted like storyboards often used to develop the narratives in films or theater. The latest pieces became episodic moments tracking an anonymous traveler as he/she migrates by foot across destroyed lands in search of refuge. Intertwining dynamic abstraction and timeless metaphors, these paintings elevate cultural identities fractured by recent events and often tied to conflict zones. 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 recently received a 2020 Fellowship Award from Artist Trust. Artist Trust Fellowships are merit-based awards providing support to practicing professional artists of exceptional talent and ability residing in Washington State. These unrestricted awards are given annually to artists of any discipline in recognition of artistic excellence and dedication to their practice. Previous grants and award are 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.