

**JAMES
HARRIS
GALLERY**
312 SECOND AVENUE SOUTH
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98104
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JAMESHARRISGALLERY.COM

PRESS RELEASE



Mary Ann Peters:

from a history of ruin

October 4th to 27th, 2012

Opening Reception:

Thursday, October 4, 6 – 8pm

Artist Talk:

Saturday, October 6, 11am at James
Harris Gallery

Gallery Hours are:

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

Tuesday & Wednesday by appointment

Additional images are available upon
request

Left: *painting the river red*, 2012
Watercolor on clayboard, 60" x 84"

James Harris Gallery is pleased to present *from a history of ruin*, an exhibition of new paintings, drawings, and prints by Mary Ann Peters. With her current body of work, the artist endeavors to “illuminate a familial and historical record by combining memory and nostalgia with current events.” In 2010, just prior to the events of the Arab Spring, Peters traveled in Lebanon and to Damascus. A second-generation Lebanese American, her observations and reflections from this journey provide the different narratives that inform her new work. *from a history of ruin* is a juncture of place, memory, and artist-as-translator, conjuring multiple storylines that in combination mesh to provide a window into a complicated, and diverse cultural landscape.

These new works are timeless in both their beauty and their subject matter. Peters’ explorative process involves searching for pivotal points in imagery and rendering their residual impressions into her paintings. The result is a body of work that incorporates powerful iconic forms. In the painting “my father’s father,” for example, undulating ribbony bands burst forth from a highly-charged foreground, recalling the spirit of historical paintings like Delacroix’s “Liberty Leading the People,” and exemplifying Peters’ keen eye for archetypal forms and their compelling placement within her compositions.

Peters’ large-scale work, “painting the river red,” draws inspiration from massive wooden water wheels, called *norias*, built along the Orontes River in Hama, Syria. The artist shows these ancient structures breaking into pieces as they tumble into the surging river. A smear of red pigment pours steadily into the water, mixing with the deep turquoise and dark blue waves. Metaphors based on historical events abound in this exhibition, opening an endless stream of associations that ignite the imagination. Peters’ dynamic landscapes engage in an intimate conversation about identity and place which, although rooted in a very real discourse about the world, essentially eschews definition. The subtle spatial and narrative ambiguities present in this body of work speak to the

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critical areas of unclaimed landscapes, emphasizing the fluctuating nature of identity and the notion that one's sense of place is often much bigger than the sum of its parts.