

**JAMES
HARRIS
GALLERY**
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PRESS RELEASE



Mary Ann Peters

slipstream

October 19 – November 22, 2017

Reception for the Artist:

Thursday, October 19th, 6-8PM

Artist Talk:

Saturday, October 21st at 11:30am

Gallery Hours are:

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

Tuesday by appointment

Additional images are available upon request

James Harris Gallery is pleased to present our sixth exhibition by Seattle artist Mary Ann Peters. The show titled "slipstream" expands on themes the artist has been developing over the past couple of years, inspired by her research of contemporary events surrounding migrations out of the Middle East. After a recent residency at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France, Peters created this new body of work that explores how communities in a state of flux navigate through this process of displacement, physically, psychologically and emotionally. Much of the work has a nautical reference and is influenced by communities formed around water, particularly as seen in Marseille, which Peters experienced during her residency in Cassis. In this exhibition, Peters brings to light how a cultural footprint is often buried or destroyed during conflict and movement. Through her own interpretations of current events, Peters puts the viewer into a witnessing perspective and draws these issues to the surface, uncovering untold narratives and probing into uncomfortable territory.

The show's title "slipstream" is a nautical term with a double meaning. Its literal definition as a noun describes the region behind a moving object, and the motion of the displaced water. It also has another connotation when used as a verb, which is to drag or pull someone or something along against their will. In this sense, this phenomena has psychological ramifications when considering the narrative of exodus and the individual experiences of the refugee. One of the works in the show, "slipstream (by the light of the moon)", carries this title and depicts an image of a boat wake in ink on black clayboard. The affect of the large-scale double paneled piece connotes this more ominous interpretation, enveloping the viewer into a space of unknown darkness and tumult. Related to this work, "this trembling turf (the waters)" depicts the texture of rough seas, and similarly confronts the viewer with a psychological reality of these terrifying migrations across waters.

"impossible monument (telltale)" is the latest piece in Peter's *impossible monument* series. The *impossible monument* works are installations and projects that Peters has been developing over the past three years as a result of opportunities provided by her Art Matters Foundation Grant in 2013 followed by her



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Stranger Genius Award in 2015 that allowed her to do research in Paris, Mexico City, and Beirut. These projects are inspired by particular cultural and historical activity that the artist recognizes as deserving of reverence but at the same time, understands that they would never be elevated to the status of a monument. In this piece, Peters has painted decorative motifs from the Middle Eastern architecture onto an actual sail to refer to those lost monuments destroyed by the war in Syria. (Every UNESCO world heritage site in Syria has either been damaged or destroyed) These sites live only in the memory of those in exodus. A “telltale” in nautical terms is a navigational indicator that is on either side of the mainsail. This term also has a more metaphorically profound meaning in the context of this body of work as a whole, as something that is “revealing, indicating or betraying something.”

In another painting titled “medallion,” Peters is interested in the practice of concealment and untruths in relation to the public narrative around migration. In this work, Peters has painted a spiral of words that are inspired by an article by French scholar Marc Bernardot, who Peters met during her residency. This article addressed the metaphors of navigation and liquidity in the discourse around migration, and how the exaggeration of language can skew policy and inform government actions towards fleeing communities. In this piece, Peters has veiled the words through whitewashing and patterning to imply how the words are a camouflage for the facts. Rather than creating a discourse that would move towards addressing this humanitarian crisis, language is instead used to add menace and reactionary tactics.

For this exhibition, Peters also continues the series titled “Storyboard,” which began in 2015. In these pieces, Peters uses contemporary images of abandoned temporary housing structures for refugees. Peters is interested in how displaced communities normalize these temporary settings and what that looks like before and after they are occupied. These architectural forms are quickly created and then abandoned, leaving only traces of these personal experiences and collective histories. In keeping with the theatrical definition of storyboards, these works are snapshots that inform larger narratives.

This exhibition is rooted in contemporary events that deal with a current humanitarian crisis of migration in the Middle East, but Peters’ work captures the unspoken side of this narrative. Through dynamic abstractions and semiotic metaphors, this exhibition offers a new perspective on the events that surround this crisis in order to insight a larger discussion that gets into motion a curiosity about these events and human experiences.

Mary Ann Peters lives and works in Seattle, WA. 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.