

Ayan Farah

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Between Two Lands

16.3.–27.4.2019

Farah combines aspects of Western Abstract Art and Land Art with techniques of African Arts and Craft. Her “paintings” are never painted on canvas with brushes or produced with the usual work materials, but consist of historical textiles of the past centuries “treated” with the minerals and earths of the most various geographical locations, which Farah collects herself on site during her travels. Travels to places like Abu Dhabi, China, Somalia, or Mexico are essential parts of Farah’s work.

These locations are specifically chosen for their relevance in terms of social-cultural concepts and geological properties. This aspect of “mobility” as part of the production process derives from Farah’s own biography. Born in the United Arab Emirates as the daughter of Somali parents, she grew up in Sweden and currently lives in London, where she studied art at the Royal College of Art, her biography brings together the most various cultural perspectives.



Untitled (Beachy Head), 2019

clay, chalk, rust and indigo on linen, silk and hemp  
60×50 cm

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Her most recent works were created in an interdisciplinary performance between painting and photography that took place over a course of two years. The pieces function as a kind of diary combining the most various times and places and simultaneously preserving the “stories” that occurred. For example, the yellow pigment Ayan Farah has used is from the marigolds that she has planted in a field behind the house of her parents, while the indigo pigments, the chalk dust and mineral clay were planted and produced by her at her current home in southeast England. This area is the most sunny part of the country. Its special geographical features have become part of Farah’s newest works in manifold ways. Especially with the work The shape of a partiall eclipsed moon. The gaps between leaves of a plane tree whose 84 textile elements form an index of the weather over 84 days. The textile elements treated with indigo were exposed to a 24-hour photographic process with a camera obscura constructed by Farah. The textile shreds had the exact size of the camera obscura; high solar radiation made the individual elements darker, or they remained light. The textiles treated in these different and complex ways are sewn together by the artist to strict, geometrical patterns and linear compositions. Her paintings thus become part of the history of abstract



Linnea, 2018

marigold, carob and embroidery on linen  
140×190 cm

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painting, while at the same time poetically reflecting sociopolitical reality, in which worldviews merge, repel each other, coexist, but no longer follow a linear logic in time and space.

In this regard, one could pass by Ayan Farah's works and see "nothing," or one could linger and see "the entire world."

Biographical note

Ayan Farah was born in United Arab Emirates to Somali parents, grew up there and in Sweden. She studied painting at the Royal College of Art London until 2012. Her works are part of institutional collections such as the Art Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany or David Roberts Art Foundation London and were shown in international exhibitions like recently in 2018 at Collection Klein Germany, "London Open" at Whitechapel Gallery London, "In the Eyes of the Beholder" at Tarble Arts Center Charleston or "Textile Abstraction" at Casas Riegner, curated by Jens Hoffmann.

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