

Keren Anavy

Covered

May 22 - June 26, 2008

Solo Gallery is pleased to present the works of Keren Anavy (b.1974), a recent graduate of the Haifa University M.F.A. program. The works shown in this exhibition are based on imagery that Anavy has dealt with in the past - the patterns of the kaffiyah and the tiger skin. Her process began with oil paintings dealing with political images using the kaffiyah's pattern. Later, she added the tiger's skin and combined the two patterns together to create an innovative visual connection into one clear, and even cruel, bond. The kaffiyah is charged with social and political meanings: it embodies a both a mystery and well-known Middle Eastern aesthetic. Today the kaffiyah is transformed through media imagery in many ways, mostly into a symbol identified with evil, threat and terrorist activity. Furthermore, the tiger, a stunning animal in appearance and movement, is also perceived as threatening and physically unapproachable. This contradiction between beauty and threat and the tension that exists in this combination of these two images are basic points of reference in the works.

The formal connection of the kaffiyah and the tiger is evident in the camouflage effect that exists in both. The pattern of the tiger's skin allows the animal to move undetected and free in its habitat, while the kaffiyah, commonly worn by terrorist warriors, is used as combat camouflage - a symbol of an unreachable, threatening presence. The allusive boundaries between the political and artistic, the visible and concealed, or the covered and revealed, are reflected in Anavy's paintings as an investigation as well as purification of the imagery. Is it possible to look upon these markings without interpretation and prejudice? The tiger only is seen here as a minimalist form and in some works the edges begin to dissolve, implying the liquidity and movement of the animal itself. This characteristic of melting shapes is seen clearly in the two laser cut works - a new technique that the artist experiments with for the first time. What is striking about these works in particular is how through the new hybrid pattern created by Anavy, the actual tiger's color and movement emerge to the eye, almost as if the visuals are shooting right off the works towards the viewer

Anavy's exhibition in Solo Gallery falls into a series of shows which are designed to mark the gallery as a kind of "natural habitat" of Tel Aviv. The physical entrance to the Promarket building is nestled into the neighborhood of Tel Aviv's old central bus station. That urban "natural habitat" gains a more substantial meaning in relation to the monumental images that now wrap the inside of the Gallery space - the stunning and threatening tiger skin, the stealthy kaffiyah, the rhythm of the city outside. This is the first time such large works are on view at the Solo Gallery - typically work that Anavy herself installs in larger exhibition environments which allow a more comfortable viewing perspective vis-à-vis such powerful images. In this case at the Solo Gallery the monumental and monochromatic work are intertwined, thus creating a total, almost concentrated, and at the same time, sensual environment.

Danna Taggar

Curator