

2011 "Walking like an Egyptian"

Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv

Merav Sudaey

In the current series Merav Sudaey goes back in time to a long tradition of interaction between East and West, the similar and the opposite; she goes back to relations rife with cultural and ideological contradictions which, in different periods, led to violent struggles over territory and control, to harsh occupations and mass deportations, but also gave rise to artistic, architectural, and scientific enterprises among the most glorious in human history.

Figurative images and abstract calligraphic images are meshed together and infused into a formal and contextual fabric to generate ostensibly anomalous hybrids where different patterns and different discourses are fused into one another. Some of the works surrender layered depth structures and identifiable figurative elements, such as men and women performing ritual acts. The visibility of the images is misleading, however. They emerge and at the same time block, hide or integrate into various Oriental decorations which sometimes function as a camouflage grid.

The East here is geographical—the Fertile Crescent, East Asia, Ancient Egypt, Arabia—but also cultural. Today's Middle East is the Ancient Orient, a central part of the Fertile Crescent. A longed-for region and an object of religious and moral yearning for centuries, it was a nerve center along the commercial routes where goods were transferred from East to West and imperial aspirations grew in the opposite direction.

Eretz-Israel of the olden days and today's Israel, with its Western and Eastern, traditional and modern facets, have always been a part of this constellation; an entity that has attempted to recreate itself each time anew, to integrate into the complex fabric now called the Middle East.

The works allude to the relationship between contemporary Israeli culture, with its diverse manifestations, and its neighboring cultures through the fusion of diverse symbols and elements from various locations and cultures. The result is an ornamental jigsaw puzzle which charges form with content.

The wealth of contrasts, the mesh of languages, and the wide spectrum of cultural elements in the works veil an engagement with the cultural, political, religious, ethnic, and linguistic discourse in Israel and the region. This engagement expresses the desire for an honest, natural association which will bind contemporary Israeliness with its Jewish origins and with Eastern traditionalism, as well as a yearning for a link between Israel and the region in which it thrives and grows.