

FARIDA EL GAZZAR // DREAM CITY

28 April – 26 May, 2015

To celebrate the launch of the gallery's new premises in Garden City, Gypsum is thrilled to present *Dream City*, a solo show by Egyptian-Greek, Athens-based artist Farida El Gazzar. *Dream City* brings together a collection of delicate small-scale drawings and paintings dating back from 2012 to the present day.



A visual memoir of sorts, *Dream City* hinges on the artist's position towards a fabled Egypt, often recalled from a distant place.

Her account is based on El Gazzar's own pool of old family photographs as well as snapshots of Cairo and Alexandria taken on annual summer vacations. She freely mines these personal sources, picking and choosing details to show or omit.

The show is composed of intertwining threads. One group of work activates her family album of photographs through finely crafted renditions of these images in pencil and acrylic drawings. Reminiscent of classic black and white films, the monochromatic figurative drawings depict well-groomed family and friends as they pose for a hidden camera. They project an idealized vision of the past inspired by mythologized family stories. Equally evocative is a series of minute paintings of the flora of Egypt: a row of swaying palm trees in silhouette, a resilient solitary potted Yucca, bunches of red roses in a crystal vase. Portraits are set against a white washed background and plants against shiny solid gold paint.

Dream City is interspersed with harsher and more intensely hued paintings of architectural façades. From modernist and bare red brick to neo-Greek, the styles are representative of an eclectic mix that has come define the urban landscape of contemporary Egypt. All the works in the show are adorned in an assortment of golden frames, minimal and ornate. Gold is key a tone of color that runs through much of El Gazzar's practice to suggest desert, wealth and longevity.

Farida El Gazzar was born in 1975 in Alexandria, Egypt. She graduated from Vakalo School of Art & Design, in Athens, and then moved to London where she earned her Bachelor of Arts Hons degree from Kingston University, and her Master of Arts degree from the Royal College of Art. From 2003 to 2007, she was co-founder of the creative team WARDA. Her ongoing relationship with the Middle East is a result of her early years in Alexandria and Kuwait and has been realized more recently through her residencies and research in Cairo and Manama. El Gazzar is represented by Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessalniki.

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