

GYPSUM

Huda Luffi

Our Black Thread

9 April – 9 May 2021

Gypsum is pleased to present Huda Luffi's second solo show at the gallery, "Our Black Thread". In this exhibition, Luffi presents a new body of work comprised of minimalist compositions embroidered and sewn by hand. The artist started improvising with thread on used organza teabags in a quiet domestic exercise that eventually took on a much larger scale and sense of urgency. She creates compositions out of the smaller elements and uses a gentle palette of black, white, grey and off-white. The delicacy of her materials results in silent notes of movement and lines, and the geometric shapes that seem deliberate are part of a meditative trajectory of chance.

Luffi traditionally incorporated strong elements of popular culture, political insignia, and a play on slogans and language. The human figure has been an essential part of her language; it came in the form of deconstructed Cairo mannequins, in repetition and as reflections of excess, waste, and the value of bodies in the urban context that engulfs her oeuvre. Her use of pop icons has been confrontational and direct while also abstracted to create sharp statements on social and political conditions. Her work took a more self-reflexive and inward turn in the recent years. While some of the work remained figurative, it would be set in surrealist domestic scenes, exploring silence and other metaphors for death, reflecting on personal questions and familial concerns, while later work examined historical notions of healing in times of political crisis.

In this series, Luffi's reactions to her environment takes on an even quieter discourse from her previous work. She invokes feminine traditions of craftsmanship and dedicates days of labor to create hundreds of miniature embroideries, a practice that moves between her own home and her studio. The labor also explores a physicality that is much more demanding and persistent, a mode of work that can only be transcended by economic privilege, paying homage to the meticulous feminine labor that hardens the skin and pains the back. Luffi however reverts to solitariness as opposed to the communal spirit that is traditional of these older practices, as they take on a different meaning within her own context and exercise of reflection.

In "Our Black Thread," Luffi's practice is distilled through a different voice. Her artistic concerns are channeled through labor, and she asks what form of intentionality separates craft from art. She takes note of generations of silent hands and continues to use repetition as a formal statement on endurance and resistance.

Biography

Huda's solo shows include: *When Dreams Call for Silence*, The American University in Cairo, Tahrir Cultural Center, Cairo, Egypt (2019); *Still, The Third Line*, Dubai, UAE (2018); *Magnetic Bodies, Imaging the Urban*, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2016); *Magnetic Bodies*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt (2015); *Cut and Paste*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt (2013); *Huda Luffi: Twenty Years of Art*, Tache Art, Cairo, Egypt (2011); *Making a Man out of Him*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt (2010); *Zan'it al-Sittat*, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2008); *From Egypt with Love*, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2008). Her group shows include: *The Turn: Art Practices in Post-Spring Societies*, Kunstraum Niederoesterreich, Vienna (2016); *La Bienal del Sur*, Caracas, Venezuela (2015); *Fotofest: View from Inside Contemporary Arab Photography*, Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2015); *Homage to Moustapha Hasnaoui*, Frederic Moison Gallery, Paris, France (2013); *I am not there*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt (2012); *Dak'Art-African Contemporary Art Biennale*, Dakar, Senegal (2010); *Icons Reloaded*, Elysee Arts Gallery, Liege, Belgium (2009).

Her work is part of major collections including: Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, USA; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan; Museum of Modern Art, Hague, Netherlands; The American University in Cairo; Egypt and The British Museum, London, UK.