

Janan Abdelmuti

Artist Statement

My works are autobiographical. In them I explore the unconscious and conscious aspects of my life as a heterosexual cis female. My works function as a form of journaling. The repetition of lines, stitches, and patterns stand in for the repetition of different tasks. I try to submerge the onlooker into my emotional experiences through the use of pop culture references and familiar materials and objects. The inadequacy of life and lack of fulfillment has led to the creation of chromatic spaces. Pieces are void and then filled with silent moments. The quiet restlessness of inner turmoils combined with the pressures of external forces and conflict leads me to question my existence. While working through these ideas I am working through the painting at the same time.

Many of my works are done on a two-dimensional plane. On these surfaces the materials that are used can range from fabric, photographs, loose thread, drawn images, and fragmented phrases. The items that are collected are both found and bought. The found items are gathered by collecting insignificant things from a specific time. This can include a gum wrapper, movie or parking ticket, hair clip, earring, or buttons. Much of the work features drawings and crocheted applications as well.

Most of my works are stretched, except for the garment pieces, hung blankets and rugs. These works show vast spaces of color with items that encompass moments in that space. Negative space in the paintings acts as a character just as the drawings and objects do. These negative spaces are a physical representation of the silent moments.

I often use cotton duck canvas; at other times, I buy fabric in bulk or use recycled material such as bedsheets. Fabrics are often treated with bleach to redact the colors. The intention behind this is a formal choice to change the character of the negative space. These works indicate a moment that I, like the viewer, am trying to understand. No piece is planned in advance; instead, it is an act of self-reflection relating to the idea that I also do not understand the thoughts and situations laid out in front of me. I will start out with a basic layout, which is the dimensions I am working with.

I use materials in a multitude of ways. First, I collect objects and mementos that have some kind of significance to the story that is being told such as a bread tab. As for the yarn, after I choose the type and color, I then decide on the stitch I am going to use. More often than not it is a single stitch or a double stitch. Once that fabric appliqué is finished, I determine the size of the canvas. I assemble the stretcher. Sometimes I stretch the fabrics, forming a singular panel. Other times I stitch together multiple scraps of fabrics. From there I add more layers, sometimes leaving openings that function as peepholes that expose the wall, cross bar, photo or drawing. Lastly, I add the crocheted pieces along with found objects and phrases from pop culture or conversations that were had in the past. These elements could be sewn on, stamped on, glued or hand-written. The phrases from pop culture are almost always song lyrics from varying genres. These lyrics are more often than not pulled out of context to fit within the specific work.

The photos that appear in my works have all been taken by me with a Polaroid camera. They come from a library of photos that I have accumulated for future use.

They include images of my own body, cats, and tones. I use Polaroids because they develop instantly and maintain the same dimensions. The Polaroid allows me to compress the subject into the frame while also allowing for the fragmentation to continue. The photographs encourage viewers to step closer to the work.

The drawn images convey ideas that fascinate me, including social majority vs. minority. Typically, these issues involve different social, cultural, religious, or racial groups' power over another. In my work, I have used the idea to focus on individuals' voices in my life. By including these fragmented phrases, pictures, and disjointed images, I create a segmented composition. Recently Islamic motifs have made their way into the paintings. By drawing in this pattern I am able to further hide the appropriated phrases. These drawings mimic the tile working and rug patterns that are found in the mosques. Also implemented is the traditional embroidery style that can be found on garments called thobes. This style comes from the arab region. The embroidery style called Manajal is used to stitch two pieces of fabric.

Culture plays a role in how I view my autonomy. Religion and culture are often spoken about as being one in the same. Islam through the text is an individualized practice that could be done by yourself. By recognizing this disconnect between the larger culture and the individualized practice I attempt to mimic this through the work by the use of western and eastern styles. Not only am I speaking about the past and present in my life I am also blending the past and present of art practices with color fielding and Islamic motifs.



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Opening Reception and Artist Talk

November 9, 3-5PM

Dates

November 8-12

