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Farah Atassi's Painting as an Act of Resistance

By Talia Elbaz
June 20, 2019



Photograph Courtesy Almine Rech

Farah Atassi's first solo exhibition at Almine Rech opens tonight in New York. On view through July 26, the exhibition includes new paintings featuring seated women, figures at play, and a circus of sorts. Atassi uses bold color, geometric shapes, and enticing patterns to create pictures that are reminiscent of Daniel Buren, Fernand Léger, and even Picasso.

Whitewall sat down with the Belgium-born artist to learn more about her work.

WHITEWALL: Where does your passion for art come from?

FARAH ATASSI: It comes from my childhood, when I discovered masterpieces in museums. I immediately felt I was dialoguing with the painters. This medium appeared to me like a piece of evidence. When I started painting at the age of 13, it felt as natural as breathing.

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WW: What or who are your artistic influences?

FA: Modernism, of course: Picasso, Matisse, Fernand Léger, Malevich, and Jean Brusselmans mainly. Giotto and the Italian pre-Renaissance. Dutch painting in general. I love northern cold light that creates bright contrasted colors and contoured shapes.

WW: How would you characterize your technique?

FA: I use oil and glycol. I would say that it is an extension of classic oil technique painting.

WW: Do you use colors to highlight geometry?

FA: I choose colors intuitively. It comes to me naturally, like notes would appear for a musician. There are high and low colors. Also, the way they are associated and the space they occupy on the surface of the painting are determinant. It's like a game.

WW: What message do you want to deliver through your work?

FA: That painting is an act of resistance, even if it's not a struggle. It's a complex and infinite quest that fills my body and my brain.