

TABARI

ARTSPACE

Samah Shihadi: *Hungry for Home* with accompanying text by Ranya Tabari Idliby

28th November 2018



Tabari Artspace is delighted to announce a solo exhibition of new works by the Palestinian artist Samah Shihadi.

Hungry for Home is a collection of 18 compelling hyperrealist pencil and charcoal drawings that use traditional Palestinian food as a platform from which to explore deep-rooted cultural codes and memories. The act of eating is a powerful and intimate practice, the textures and flavours we encounter are absorbed into not only the body but also the memory. Food is something that we unite over and which can draw companionship into our lives. Shihadi's powerfully realistic drawings, more closely aligned with photographs, use Palestine's dishes and communal eating practices to communicate the collective experience of lost identity, displacement, and ultimately the artist's aspiration to return home. "For the Palestinians living in the diaspora the table is an anchor point," says Ranya Tabari Idliby, Palestinian author, based in New York, whose excerpts of writings on the same subject are displayed alongside the artworks. "It's where families gather, and community is built. It's where memories of a Palestine lost are shared and where a threatened Palestinian culture lives and thrives."

Themes of nostalgia and displacement unite the women, despite their distinct practices set against the context of continuing geopolitical unrest in Palestine, both Shihadi and Tabari Idliby express a desire shared by many in the Palestinian diaspora to return to one's roots.

Shihadi employs hyperrealist techniques to faithfully recapture the world she encounters. Since moving away from her family, the artist finds comfort in food and cooking, a tangible reminder of her childhood and family; for Shihadi the family table becomes emblematic of one's home, with Palestine's traditions, recipes and stories being reawakened. This shared nostalgia becomes an anchor for the displaced and exiled, to their family past.

With the works in this exhibition, the artist depicts foods that are locally sourced in Palestine, including olives, thyme, grape leaves, legumes, fruit and milk. The indigenous cactus, a motif often used in Palestinian culture to represent a physical and emotional attachment to the land - as well as an emblem of Palestinian dispossession - is widely represented in Shihadi's work.

Tabari Idliby's parents, both born in historic Palestine, were exiled in 1948 following the declaration of independence by Israel. Having grown up in Kuwait, the writer would learn about much of her heritage across the dinner table.

Tabari Idliby's excerpts are also included in the exhibition catalogue.

Tabari Idliby comments:

"My family's meals were often served in the shadow of loss. The table was where they would commiserate, share stories and find solace. My identity, I understood early on, was troublesome - a source of anxiety and insecurity, a problem to the world - even in Kuwait, the place I called home.

Meals are served in "remembrance of time and place lost"; as Proust found his memories in the madeleine. (In Search of Lost Time (also known as Remembrance of Things Past), author Marcel Proust uses madeleines to contrast involuntary memory with voluntary memory.) We find our memories in the yearning for the fruits and harvest of our land.... a yearning for the fecundity of our land. For Palestinians, meals are served in the shadow of loss. Fruits and vegetables do not compare to those of Eden lost - of Palestine."

About Samah Shihadi

b. 1987 Haifa-based.

Samah Shihadi graduated with a BA in art from Oranim College, Israel (2012) and an MFA from Haifa University, Israel (2015). Shihadi began her career as an artist at an early age and, having spent seven years studying art, has become a keen draughtsman. Shihadi's artistic practice employs hyperreal drawing; her pencil and charcoal work is touching and thought-provoking. The artist is profoundly interested in the daily challenges that women face. Shihadi has received numerous prizes and exhibited consistently in the world.

About Ranya Tabari

b. 1965, Kuwait. New York-based.

Ranya Tabari Idliby graduated with a BS in International Relations from Georgetown University, USA (1987), MS in International Relations from London School of Economics, UK (1987) and was a PHD candidate at the *London School of Economics* (1994).

She is the co-author of *The Faith Club* (2006), a New York Times best-seller currently in its twelfth edition. She also wrote *Burqas, Baseball, and Apple Pie: Being Muslim in America* (2014).

ABOUT TABARI ARTSPACE

Founded in 2003 by Maliha Tabari, Tabari Artspace is a gallery based in DIFC, Dubai specialising in modern and contemporary Middle Eastern art. As an internationally-facing, commercial art gallery, Tabari Artspace plays a pivotal role in the advancement and growth of the Middle Eastern art scene supporting artists from Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and beyond.

Tabari Artspace offers both local and international audiences the opportunity to discover artists from this region through participation in international art fairs, and facilitating relationships with significant private collections and museums, including LACMA, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, and Barjeel Art Foundation.

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