

Nabil Nahas at Sperone Westwater



Nabil Nahas Studio (2013) photo provided by Sperone Westwater

NABIL NAHAS

5 April – 4 May 2013

New York, NY: Sperone Westwater is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Nabil Nahas. The artist employs thick layers of acrylic paint and pumice to create colorful, spatially complex paintings with a distinctive tactile quality. According to Nahas, he is exploring the notions of “process and perception” as well as materiality in painting. This is the artist’s fourth solo exhibition at the gallery.

Over the last two decades, Nahas has continuously expanded his methods and materials. In these new paintings, such as *Kwak* (2013), Nahas creates gestural motifs of vivid colors and geometric shapes that cover the three-dimensional surface. The highly textured lines and curves seem to extend beyond the edges of the canvas – suggestive of an expansion of space, of a cosmic universe or macrocosm as well as a microcosm of organic forms. The large-scale deep blue canvas *Sapphire* (2013) is composed of small biomorphic shapes protruding off the surface with optically charged bright blue edges. As Carter Radcliff has noted in 2010, “Between these

closely clustered forms are narrow crevices, some of them so deep and intricate that it is impossible to see all the way into them." Radcliff continues, "Only when we see these works up close do they look three-dimensional. From even a short distance, color takes over and they become thoroughly pictorial: all-over fields of pulsating energy."

More identifiable imagery appears in the "Tree Paintings" series, inspired by the landscapes in Lebanon. Since 2007, Nahas has painted various partial and close-up views of cedar and olive trees dating back to Roman times, referencing the biblical history and geography of the region. Using thick brushstrokes, he conveys their volumetric aspect, their powerful vitality, and their ascending motion. Art critic Joseph Tarrab has stated, "With the sea stars Nahas gave his paintings a cerebral elegance backed by a dense tactility and saturated chromatism, whereas the trees deeply rooted in his soul, with so many ramifications in his heart, make an astonishingly beautiful and powerful statement."

Born in Beirut in 1949, Nahas earned his M.F.A. at Yale University in 1973, and divides his time between New York and Beirut. His most recent solo museum exhibition was "Perpetual Energy" at the Beirut Exhibition Center in Beirut, Lebanon (2010). Nahas represented Lebanon in the 25th Bienal de São Paulo in Brazil (2002), and his work was included in "Glasstress 2011," a Collateral Event of the 54th Venice Biennial, and in "Glasstress: New York" at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York (2012). Nahas's work is in museum collections, including that of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar; Flint Institute of Arts, Flint; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; and the Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick.

Sperone Westwater

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Hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 6pm, Monday by appointment

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