

ART AND CAKE

A Contemporary Art Magazine with a Focus on the Los Angeles Art Scene

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Asad Faulwell and Katy Ann Gilmore at Denk

Author / 4 hours ago



Katy Ann Gilmore, Fold #14 at DENK Gallery. Photo courtesy of the gallery

Asad Faulwell, *Phantom* and Katy Ann Gilmore, *Visual Field*

at Denk Gallery

Through July 7th

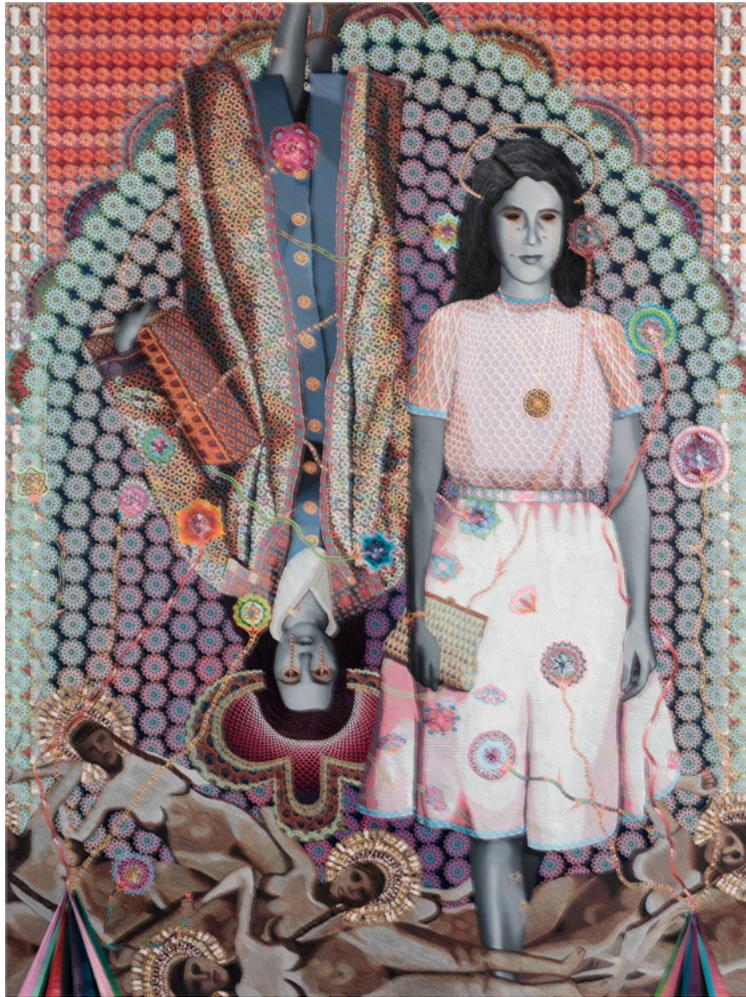
By Lorraine Heitzman

Asad Faulwell and Katy Ann Gilmore take over separate spaces at Denk Gallery in two shows that fully exploit their contrasting styles. These imaginatively paired exhibitions complement each other's work to create a perfect symmetrical synergy between

the decorative and the minimal. The distance between their subjects and methods is great, but their propensity towards obsessive, delicate and nuanced work draws comparisons.

In *Phantom*, the richly colored and densely patterned portraits by American-Iranian artist, Asad Faulwell, reference the visual language of many cultures and religions. His textile-like paintings, exacting and complex, invite comparisons to Islamic art, Christian icons, Persian miniatures and illuminated manuscripts. Imagine Tibetan monks painstakingly creating sand mandalas and you will get an idea of what his process must be like.

The initial impression of Faulwell's paintings of intensely ornamented floral and geometric patterns soon gives way to his secondary imagery and his subject. Deeply embedded within the ornate surfaces are many small photographs of women who allude to the "phantom" of the show's title. These photographs run through both the portraits and the abstractions and honor the contributions of the largely unknown women who participated in the Algerian War of Independence. The subjects of Faulwell's commemorative portraits were mistreated in their lifetimes and their stories largely forgotten. In creating this body of work, Faulwell acknowledges their sacrifices and in doing so, indulges in what is perhaps his greatest interest, his compulsion to embellish. His obsessively decorative paintings deify his heroines as he enshrines them in halos and tiaras, sanctifying their otherwise mundane appearances with the passive expressions of martyrs and saints. But this contradiction is only one of many that Faulwell highlights. He is addressing cultural appropriation by immersing himself in other cultures while he presents a pleasing façade to a dark moment in history. Faulwell dazzles the viewer by his command of technique much in the same way that artists and artisans for millennium have sought to enrapture those entering a place of worship, and just like that, you surrender to the spectacle.



Asad Faulwell, *Les Femmes d'Alger #II* at DENK Gallery. Photo courtesy of the gallery

Katy Ann Gilmore's work is neither decorative nor figurative. With a background in mathematics and art, her stringent abstractions adhere to a different kind of religion, more aligned with asceticism and science than pageantry. Her hand drawn works rely on mathematical systems and graphs and although the illusions of conjured spaces are quite convincing, the contrivance is only half the pleasure.

Gilmore's *Visual Field* is an optical funhouse filled with snippets of incongruous topographical maps. The implied spaces of her diagrammatic drawings tease with their impossibilities but reward with delicate line renderings that are as sensuous as they are meticulous. The illusions float weightlessly against the white gallery walls, two dimensional puzzle pieces that play with the idea of space. Experiencing the works in situ greatly enhances the work as their unique shapes and suggested forms are heightened in relationship to one another. They are curious things, but Gilmore achieves a unique balance between an intellectual exercise and object making. She succeeds in artfully bridging not only two and three-dimensional worlds, but also the disciplines of art and mathematics. *Visual Field* is her first solo show at Denk.

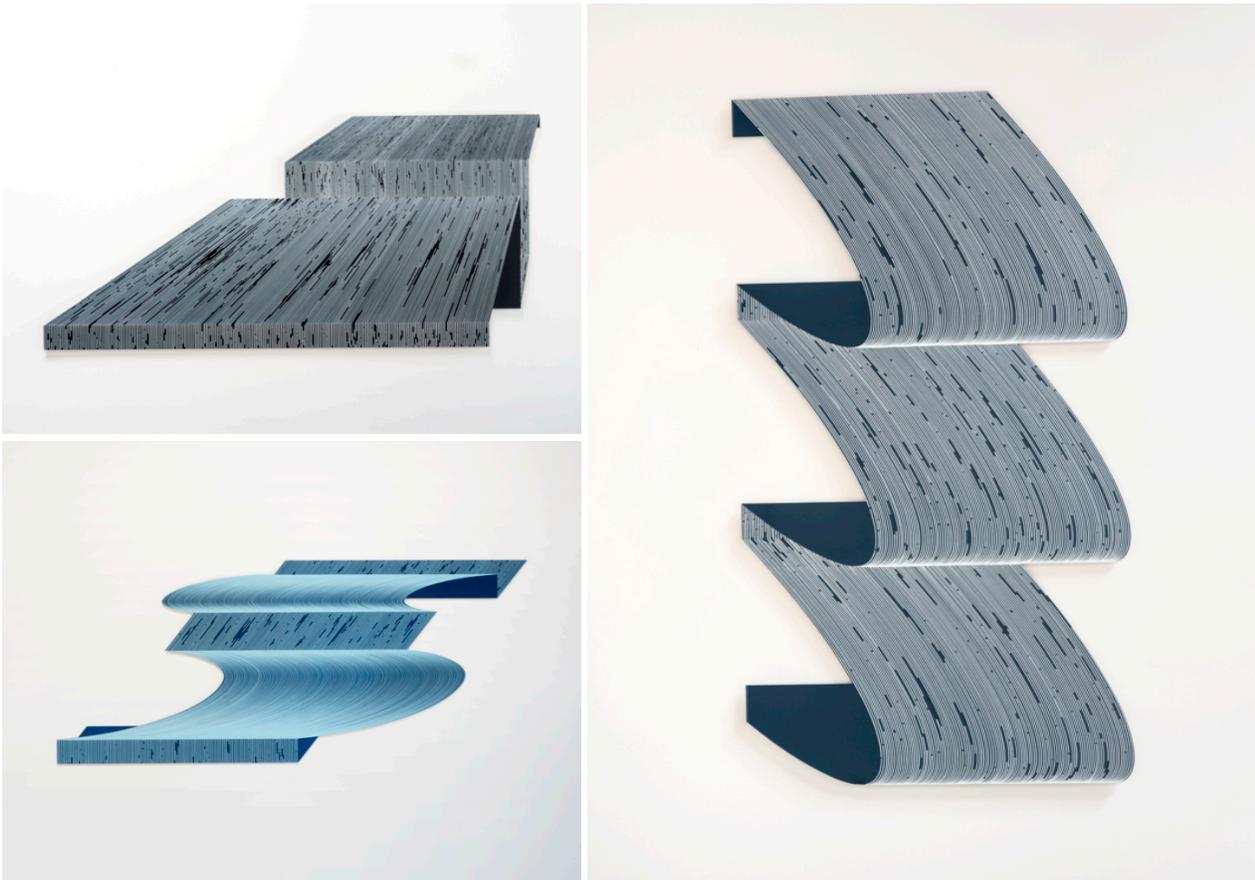
Denk Gallery

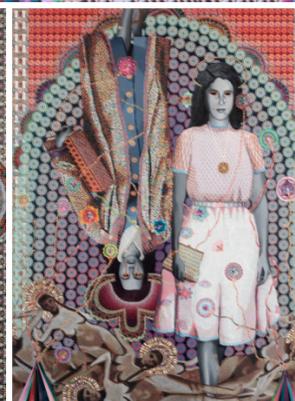
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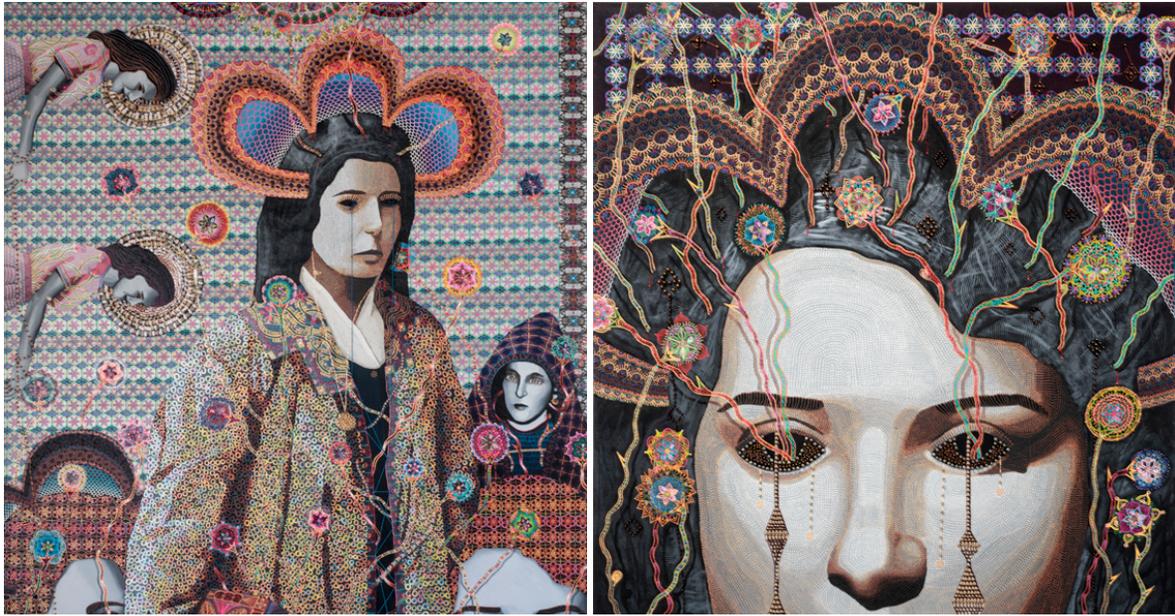
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