

THE ATMOSPHERE OF PAINTED SPACES: SARAH AWAD AND STORM THARP

by New American Paintings

September 9, 2011, 9:30 am

Filed under: Review, Seattle | Tags: Awad, Erin Langner, James Harris Gallery, painting, Review, Sarah Awad, Seattle, Storm Tharp, Tharp

Playful demystification inhabits the center of Los Angeles artist Sarah Awad's Instruments of Culture at Seattle's James Harris Gallery, a series of large, densely painted canvases depicting the statuary and halls of London's Victoria and Albert Museum. Layered with oil to the point that marble sculptures become ghostlike and courtyards become abstracted spaces of color blocks and sketched lines, this series of work accentuates the absurdities of the object display that represents standard practice in museums. The lifeless, gray masses dominating *Fallenheads* highlights the way severed heads of Roman statuary line the walls of myriad European galleries, while simultaneously referencing the grotesque implications typically associated with classical paintings of severed limbs. – Erin Langner, Seattle Contributor



Sarah Awad | *Fallenheads*, 2011, oil on canvas, 24" x 30." Image courtesy of James Harris Gallery.

The heavy brushstrokes and rainbow array of pastel colors consistent across the works in *Instruments of Culture* expose the meaning of art objects in the museum context as being as abstracted, following the artist's own approach to the subject. The ironically titled *Power of Aphrodesia* reveals the absence of sexuality among an erotic sculpture placed in a grand hall of unrelated imagery, objectified into a work of art for art's sake and effectively losing its emotional resonance. Although this theme of institutional spaces and objects becomes somewhat redundant in a gallery of paintings dedicated entirely to the subject, Awad's balance of light commentary and subtle questioning meditates effectively on the impact of space on artistic objects through a fresh and inquisitive lens.



Sarah Awad | Courtyard, 2011, oil on canvas, 54'' x 72''. Image courtesy of James Harris Gallery.



Sarah Awad | Power of Aphrodesia, 2011, oil on canvas, 60'' x 67''. Image courtesy of James Harris Gallery.
45 NORTH VENICE BOULEVARD VENICE, CA 90291 TEL 310 822 4955 FAX 310 821 7529 WEB WWW.LALOUEVER.COM

—

Sarah Awad's Instruments of Culture and Storm Tharp's Prints and Works on Paper will be on exhibit at the James Harris Gallery until October 8th. For more information, please contact the gallery.

Erin Langner is a writer based in Seattle and is Adult Public Programs Coordinator at the Seattle Art Museum (SAM).

<http://newamericanpaintings.wordpress.com/2011/09/09/the-atmosphere-of-painted-spaces-sarah-awad-and-storm-tharp/>