

Annabel Daou

you say i want a revolution

March 1 – April 21, 2012

Opening reception: Thursday March 1, from 6 to 8pm

In her second solo-exhibition at Josée Bienvenu Gallery, Annabel Daou continues an ongoing investigation into the intersections of language, politics, and desire. Using materials generally associated with preparatory or preliminary processes (mat-board, gesso, archival adhesive tape), Daou has created a series of twelve works arranged, like an archeological reconstruction, into a wall-length assemblage. Evoking the pockmarked surfaces of war-torn cities like Daou's native Beirut as well as such geopolitical fortifications (and ad-hoc canvasses) as the Berlin Wall or the West Bank Barrier, the works collectively explore 'the wall' as a site of political and artistic engagement and cultural-historical residue.

As in previous work, Daou uses English transcribed phonetically into Arabic to formalize not only her own cultural indeterminacy, but also the gap, so frequently embodied by political rhetoric, between utterance and understanding. Various layered, cut-out, and gessoed over, the repeated mantra of the show's title ('yū 'sā 't 'wōnt 'ā 're-və-'lū-shən) is many things: the refrain from a popular song misquoted in the manner of a foreigner who has heard, but perhaps not fully understood, the lyrics; an imperative to pronounce a phrase that is then parroted incessantly in different fragmented forms (you say: "I want a revolution"); a declarative statement registering the exterior attribution of desire to a person or people, as, for instance, in the phrase, "such and such people desire to live freely" (YOU say I want a revolution [but who are you to say that?]).

In their manifest ruination, the works may be taken as indicators—"writing on the wall"—that the current geopolitical order has *hit a wall* or *run its course*. Yet no attempt has been made to put forward a singular mandate. The works are as much a call to engagement as they are a sounding board for the fervent but also often confused or misappropriated rhetoric of incitement. Just as political struggles frequently oscillate between the desire to demolish the existing order and the effort to adapt its foundations to shifting exigencies, Daou's work embodies a constant interplay between destruction and preservation, erasure and re-inscription.

Accompanying the *wall* series are two works inspired by *mashrabiya*, a type of window whose latticework protects the privacy of interior inhabitants while allowing a view of the outside world, along with a video/sound piece (incorporating the screen from a confessional box) in which the artist confronted passersby with the question, "which side are you on?" These works further develop Daou's inquiry into the shifting dichotomies central to her work: the you and I of interpersonal and spectatorial encounter, the left and right of textual and political orientation, the East and West of cultural identity, the opposing sides of walls literal and metaphorical.

Born and raised in Beirut in the 70's during the Lebanese civil war, Annabel Daou moved to New York in 1999, where she lives and works today. Her work reflects the experience of being intrinsically bicultural, both Arab and American. Last year, Daou represented the US in the 12th Edition of the International Cairo Biennale, where she was awarded a Biennial Prize. Recent exhibitions include: *On the Mark: Contemporary Works on Paper*, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore (2010); *Close Encounters 2*, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, New York (2010); *Political / Minimal*, Kunstwerke, Berlin/Muzeum Sztuki w Lodzi, Lodz, Poland (2008/2009); *knot*, David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University, Providence; *New York New Drawings 1946-2007*, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Esteban Vicente, Segovia, Spain (2009); *Democracy in America*, The Park Avenue Armory, New York (2008).