

# Melanie Daniel

## ECHO SHIELD

September 6 - October 20, 2012

In Melanie Daniel's recent series "Echo Shield", elements of military modernity become abstractions, unmoored in a sea of painterly chaos. Joyous expressive indulgence is undercut with sly sharp half-buried chunks of concrete or steel. Avoiding any clarity or one-sided accusations, Daniel nonetheless uses very specific symbols, some invented, that evoke fortification, surveillance, ancient architecture, and varied cultural allegiances. Manic marks dislodge the viewer, paralleling the omnipresent threat felt by residents of a land in constant upheaval. Always, Daniel's restless painting leads the way, with marks that evoke calligraphy, Islamic decoration, Hebrew letters, fingerprints, and foliage run amok. Harmonious color lapses into suffocating density and suspicion. Bits of pattern may suggest camouflage or barbed wire, while conversely interweaving abstract lines go haywire. Daniel's landscape is littered with shrapnel, roadblocks, and surveillance towers, underlining the anxiety of both the controlled and the controller.

Echoes of Vuillard and Fauvism animate the overlapping layers of small interlacing lines and dense multicolored patterns. Each painting insists on the primacy of marks over subsumed symbols, and yet it is the painting's surface that suggests the very depth of stress, confusion, and historical and political tumult in the Middle East. Arches, crescents and domes, mixed with parabolic satellite dishes, cylindrical towers, and minarets, all make a bouncing geometry of hard edges and rounded shapes. Daniel uses these forms as a visual and symbolic anchor within in each painting. Corrupt fragments turn into ominous and disembodied motifs such as barbed wire or pieces of chain-link fencing. Detritus suggests apocalyptic fallout, or nature overtaking barriers and concrete bunkers.

Daniel's perspective as a well-traveled Canadian-Israeli forms the basis for these paintings. Her works in "Echo Shield" create a topography that is chaotic and unsettled, without clear distinct borders. The paintings question how political demarcations drive historical causality. Her hypercharged surfaces evoke a constant state of turmoil linking the past to the present; even the skies are laced with chthonic patches of darkness. Still, Daniel's exuberant works offer a painterly solace, through their insistence on survival and multiplicity.

*Melanie Daniel was born in Victoria, Canada, and after studies in Canada completed her BFA and MFA at Bezalel Academy. With numerous exhibitions in Israel and abroad, Daniel received the 2009 Rappoport Prize for a Young Israeli Painter, with a solo exhibition "Evergreen" at the Tel Aviv Museum in 2010. Her 2012 video piece, "Busted", shown at Kelowna Art Gallery in British Columbia, received extensive press in CBC/Radio Canada, The Daily Courier, Radio AM 1150, and Kelowna Castanet. Daniel was a 2010 Creative Capital Grant Recipient, and most recently, a 2012 recipient of the NARS Foundation Residency in New York City. This is her second solo exhibition at Asya Geisberg Gallery.*