



ABOVE: *Mother and Child I*, 2010, acrylic on canvas.
BELOW: *Forbidden Fruit*, 2010, acrylic on canvas.
OPPOSITE PAGE: *Even Match* (detail), 2010, acrylic on canvas, diptych.

TRACING THE LIVING JOURNEY

Kevork Mourad: Paintings

Gallery Z
259 Atwells Avenue
Providence, Rhode Island

Through May 29

ARTIST KEVORK MOURAD RETURNS TO GALLERY Z THIS SPRING FOR HIS FIRST SOLO SHOW IN PROVIDENCE IN MORE THAN TWO YEARS. COMPRISED OF NEW PAINTINGS AND WORKS ON PAPER, ALL WORKS ON EXHIBIT WERE COMPLETED IN 2010, SUGGESTING THE PROLIFIC EXUBERANCE OF THE ARTIST, WHO IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS “LIVE VISUALS”: ESSENTIALLY, SPONTANEOUS PAINTING PERFORMANCES IN CONCERT SETTINGS.

In 2005, Mourad joined the diverse talent of Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Ensemble, and has since performed nationwide and internationally as a visual instrument in their concerts and workshops. He has also collaborated with numerous other musicians and groups, including Brooklyn Rider, Ken Ueno and Kinan Azmeh.

Mourad, an artist of Armenian heritage now based in New York City, has topped Gallery Z’s roster since it was founded in 2001. Sharing that heritage, Gallery Z founder and director Bérge Ara Zobian regularly exposes his audience to the work of artists of Armenian descent through the gallery and special curatorial projects. Running concurrent with Mourad’s solo show, Zobian also curated “The Armenian Genocide — 95 Years Later, In Remembrance” to mark the 95th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. The show, which ran through April 30 at the URI Feinstein Providence Campus Gallery, fell on the heels of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee’s non-binding March 2010 resolution to recognize the Armenian genocide after almost a century of silence.

Mourad grew up in Syria as a descendant of the Armenian diaspora, living in a place characterized by its strong, tight-knit community. After receiving his MFA from Armenia’s Yerevan Institute of Fine Arts in 1996, Mourad shifted his home base to the United States. Drawing on his own personal history and heritage, themes in Mourad’s work tease out concepts of migration, history and building new lives in new places.

In a series of three, two-foot square canvases titled “From the Departure Series (I, II and III),” female figures rendered in Mourad’s swift black acrylic markings over swaths of jewel-toned pigment form a caravan, all soft curves and swirling veils. A steed joins the figures in the center panel, while in the third, the shape





of a child leans in with the others to huddle over a reclined form. Does the departure referred to in the title indicate a journey that includes death?

In "Forbidden Fruit," fantastic, erotic impressions create patterns over the canvas. Male and female forms twist and loll, superimposed upon one another and over a flickering, cool chartreuse and turquoise background flecked with swollen, budlike highlights of cadmium and apricot. The painting's overall depth and feel is of a bacchanalian ride, but Mourad's patterning feels trite in a few tight areas where the ochre has been laid in too purposefully.

This canvas is a matched pair with "Being There," whose cool symmetry unfolds out of an ornamental knotwork, almost Celtic in its detail. In fact, there are plenty of instances in this show where the artist's loose abstraction bumps up against tight, ornamental treatments.

This is true of "Even Match," a diptych that is by far the most representational work in the show. A heavy and illustrative black background frames precisely poised, matched figures frozen in time. There is a strong hint of folk culture and Chagall's color palette in this piece. While it is clear that Mourad enjoys figurative work for the sheer pleasure of the forms, the narrative threads of the perpetual human diaspora battle for dominance.

With that, it's refreshing to observe in counterpoint "Chaos" and "The Sowing," two of the more abstract paintings in the show. Brooding, thick and palette driven, these works prove that Mourad still takes pleasure in the journey.

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