

WarCraft

Nevet Yitzhak 2014



2 single channels audio video Installation, (08:00 min loop)

Installation view at TSR (The Screening Room) for Basel week, Miami 2014

Curated by: Tami Katz-Freiman

WarCraft is an installation that consists of two single-channel video animations based on Afghan war rugs.

This project raises questions about the representation and visibility of violence through artistic means, with an emphasis on the paradox inherent in the juxtaposition of violence and decoration.

The story of Afghan war rugs began with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and has evolved further since the Allied invasion in 2001. A decade of Soviet occupation, civil war, and modern industrialization nearly destroyed the local carpet industry, which had previously supported some 20% of the Afghan population. It remains unknown exactly how the creation of war rugs began – was it an authentic expression of a changing reality, a need to inform the world about the horrors of war and occupation, or simply a business venture created as a means for survival which subsequently commercialized into a tourist souvenir industry? One way or another, weavers in the rural areas of Afghanistan, most of whom were women, began to transform traditional rug patterns by introducing images associated with the reality of conflict: ornamental geometric and vegetal patterns were replaced by the iconography and imagery of war – guns, tanks and airplanes, geographical maps, portraits of warriors and leaders. Skillfully assimilated into symmetrical, ornamental compositions characterized by a traditional palette, killing machines were thus assimilated into a decorative weave. The changes wrought by the occupation and the ensuing political developments brought with them a new clientele intrigued by these rugs, which were obviously sold by men. In no time, these rugs became sought-after collectors' items in the West, and have recently become the subject of numerous studies and exhibitions. Nevet Yitzhak's strategy of manipulation underscores the seductive nature of the original rugs, while introducing aesthetic elements borrowed from the digital world. Engaging in a meticulous process that is no less arduous than the process of weaving the rugs, she uses animation software to convert the stylized images of the original weapons into 3D models of modern weapons inspired by computer games. The silent carpets seem to come to life as their decorative elements are mobilized – the tanks storm ahead in convoys, helicopters hover over one carpet and invade the space of another, guns fire, exploding shells spill over from one carpet to the other, as they wreak havoc on the surface of the fabric. The sound (of gunfire and explosives), also borrowed from a digital battlefield, enhances the illusory effect of the animated images. Thus, a war of sorts is waged between carpets, attacking and destroying each other, while materiality is replaced by a projection of light. The discourse concerning this unique and fascinating phenomenon of Afghan war rugs touches upon concepts related to gender stereotypes, authenticity, post-colonialism, conservatism, tradition and progress, East versus West, cultural hegemony and ethnic traditions, art and craft, local and global, survival, protest and commercialization. These concepts and ideas are all reincarnated in the work of Nevet Yitzhak, where they are now woven into a new interpretive framework.