

Nadira Husain

TEMPO RUBATO

Sgula 9

March 10, 2016–April 28, 2016

There is something very quiet, almost subdued about Nadira Husain's exhibition in this small gallery situated at the intersection of the Jewish and Arab parts of the city. First impressions are misleading—what initially looks like cheaply dyed cottons with painted anachronistically futuristic fonts or old ceramic tiles featuring images of nuts and bolts, molecules, or cell phones are, in fact, richly decorated and ornate objects, with the fabric works based on intensively planned patterns made by hand using traditional *Kalamkari* textile techniques from India. Husain borrows freely from both the western world where she was raised and her ancestral origins as a Muslim Indian—cartoons and early computer game graphics are coupled with calligraphic texts and vegetable dye to produce intricate artworks telling stories of movement, dislocation, and migration. In *Ici, Riace*, 2015, for instance, spinning cogwheels seem to crank out the words *Riace*, a village in southern Italy repopulated by immigrants, and *Citta Futura*, the name of a nonprofit that sets up craft workshops for refugees. A dotted cat-woman figure intervenes in the composition, as if drifting between places and cultures.

It is rare to find such a mix of the crafted and the socially engaged, especially in Israel, where artists either flee from the political or are completely immersed in it, and where it's hard to discover new ways to approach topical issues without falling into ready-made clichés. It takes time, and perhaps a second visit, to let this light and sophisticated installation work on you.

— Roy Brand



Nadira Husain, *Ici, Riace*, 2015, hand-painted vegetable dyes on cotton, 41 x 31 1/2".