



Jordan Nassar, *Brick Walls and Closed Windows*, 2022, hand-embroidered cotton on cotton, 93 x 86 x 1 in. (236.2 x 218.4 x 2.5 cm).

48 WALKER ST | APR 2 – MAY 7, 2022

Jordan Nassar

To Light The Sky

James Cohan is pleased to present *To Light The Sky*, an exhibition of new work by Jordan Nassar, on view from April 2 through May 7 at 48 Walker Street. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an afternoon opening reception with the artist on Saturday, April 2 from 3-6PM.

Jordan Nassar's multivalent art practice engages with a variety of crafts to explore ideas centered on heritage and homeland. *To Light The Sky* showcases six new hand-embroidered multipanel works and five wall-hanging glass sculptures, each examining issues of identity, diaspora and cultural participation. Nassar employs "the landscape" as a thread throughout these two mediums, carefully mapping out patterns and often interrupting them, using fields of color to define rolling hills and expansive skies.

In his recent monumental embroideries, Nassar has extended their scale upwards, connecting multiple richly patterned panels and interspersed landscapes to create a complete image. The composition *Beyond the Boundaries*, 2022, is activated at its center. Twinned central panels are each framed by negative space, leading into panels of more highly abstracted decorative motifs that recall diamonds and florals, flanked by cyprus tree patterning in alternating light and dark blue. Nassar approaches each embroidery as if he was piecing together panels in a puzzle, fitting them together harmoniously to create a unified composition from disparate parts.

Nassar brings into play both the interior and exterior in these collaborative works, creating fictive spaces upon which our imaginations can be projected. In *Brick Walls and Closed Windows*, 2022, there is a direct interplay between what is obscured and revealed; stacked, densely detailed red-hued panels create an expansive sense of domestic architectural space, and a window offers a glimpse of the mountainscape beyond it. Color is the building block for Nassar's own hand-embroidered rolling hills, in addition to that of his long-time collaborators; craftswomen living and working in Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Hebron in the West Bank.

The five hand-flamed glass bead sculptural works in the exhibition represent a deepening of Nassar's engagement with the medium. While Nassar's early glass works drew upon the specific forms of traditional decorative items from Hebron, these new works are freer and more experimental. Nassar relies on intuition to give form to the patterns and plays of color that he builds; working not within the grid structure of the stitch, but rather a honeycomb of wired beads woven around a steel frame. This difference allows him to explore the possibilities of building an invented cannon of decorative motifs.

Abstraction and representation are condensed in the singular composition of *The Serene Land*, 2022, in which scrimms of blue and yellow glass beads are arranged in a vertical diamond pattern bookending an undulating landscape of blue-hued mountains. Other works are hinged into multipanel diptychs and triptychs, the steel joinery connecting them are modeled on gate hinges seen around New York City. For Nassar, this specificity allows him to locate the sculptures where he lives and works, as well as in the diasporic Palestine of his imagination.

Language continues to serve as a generative source for Nassar, who turned to the work of Lebanese-American poets Etel Adnan and Khalil Gibran to title his artworks. The exhibition's title is drawn from Adnan's line: "*Prometheus gave us fire not for burning everything that's alive, but to light the sky...*" Much like Adnan, Nassar projects his personal ruminations outwards, bringing them into dialogue with larger ideas about diaspora and global uncertainty.

Jordan Nassar (b.1985, New York, NY) earned his BA at Middlebury College in 2007. His work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions globally at institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Asia Society, New York, NY; Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY; Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, NY; KMAC Museum, Louisville, KY; Center for Contemporary Art (CCA) Tel Aviv; Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles, CA; James Cohan, New York and The Third Line, Dubai, UAE. Jordan Nassar is the recipient of the 2021 Unbound United States Artists Fellowship in craft, and will be the subject of an upcoming solo exhibition at the ICA Boston opening August 11, 2022.

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