

Anglim Gilbert Gallery



Untitled (Manuscript), 2017, manuscript page, 9 x 7 in.

Ala Ebtekar

au(ro)ra

June 15, 2017 - July 23, 2017

Reception: Saturday June 17, 4 - 7 pm

Anglim Gilbert Gallery at Minnesota Street Project
1275 Minnesota Street, San Francisco CA 94107
Tel: 415.433.2710 | Gallery Hours: Tues-Sat 11-6
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“The words were wholly incomprehensible to him; but, like the aurora which guides the navigator in northern latitudes, opened new vistas to the inquiring mind of the listener, and gave fantastic glimpses of new horizons.”

Alexandre Dumas

Anglim Gilbert Gallery is pleased to present *au(ro)ra*, an exhibition of new works by Ala Ebtekar.

In this presentation of new works, Ebtekar puts before his audience contrasting kinds of enigmatic experience: one intimate, relating to the mystical experience of the book page and the written word; the other macroscopic, involving the open gaze at the universe, the firmament of stars as they might be taken in by anyone (or anything). In an exposition that encourages comparisons of the physical reality of the cosmos to the reality constructed by man's perception and intellect, Ebtekar also calls to task the creative process: are creative acts man-made or guided by an aura into 'new horizons'?

Evoking a sense of the cosmic, Ebtekar will show four large panel works on canvas of space as seen by the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope, formed by sunlight activating the photochemical surface of the "painting." In this way, as true 'representations' of the universe, these images have little intervention or manipulation by hand. On a conversely small scale, he will present a group of cut manuscript pages where the words are cut away. The patterns of negative space define openings, clouds, or, as he suggests, guiding auroras.

The dynamic created by the difference in scale of the works will be enhanced by another work installed in front of a window in the gallery space. The work on the floor, mimicking time and space folding back onto itself, is a stack of four negatives of one of the photogram paintings. In this way Ebtekar addresses the reproductive aspect of the artist's craft, sharing the process and 'instruments behind the magic.'

One large work will be installed in the atrium of the Minnesota Street Project building: a wooden heptagonal bench whose geometric form evokes a star. The bench creates a space for shared conversation, a sculpture that is also a social environment.

This will be the artist's 6th exhibition at the gallery. Ala Ebtekar was born in Berkeley, California to Iranian activist parents and studied at the San Francisco Art Institute and Stanford University, where he now teaches. From an early age, Ebtekar acquired a deep cosmic sense of identity and developed a sensitivity towards in-between-ness, which led him to explore the spaces both shared and separated between the two cultures. He has traveled widely, studying Iranian popular culture and poetry, contrasting its imagery, symbols and metaphors with those surrounding him in his upbringing in the U.S. Coffee house painting and culture, and the celebrated 14th Century Persian poet Hafez are important influences. Ebtekar's explorations engage different forms of abstracted thought, both spiritual and artistic, that involve an idealized other-worldly realm beyond the temporal human condition as well as disquieting dominant notions of identity and complicating cultural difference.

At Stanford University in 2016 Ebtekar helped organize the symposium *Art, Social Space and Public Discourse in Iran*, programming on Iranian art that investigates the multiple contexts of Iranian public space.

The exhibition will take place at Anglim Gilbert Gallery's space at Minnesota Street Project in the Dogpatch arts district of San Francisco.