

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Ayad, Myrna. "Y.Z. Kami." *Artforum*. (March 16, 2016).

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

Dubai

Y. Z. Kami

LEILA HELLER GALLERY | DUBAI
Alserkal Avenue, Al Quoz 1
March 9–April 25

If there were a sound track to this show, it would oscillate between a soothing Muslim call to prayer, a hypnotizing Sufi chant, an emotional church choir, and instrumental Jewish klezmer. This exhibition is a prayer for the soul.

Y. Z. Kami's large square canvases that envelop visitors in their cyclical rotations are mesmerizing—each little dab within contributes to a whole, an endless pattern. Indeed, the adage holds true: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Are we looking up at a dome or are we being pulled into a portal to another life? There seems to be one of the latter in *White Dome I*, 2011–13, where hundreds of rotating minute white squares almost disappear in the haze of a form resembling a door. But this is the only gateway here, as visitors stand surrounded by prayers from another faith or another reality.

Figures punctuate the exhibition. Some look biblical, as in the untitled painting from 2011–12, where a woman with a tilting head is blurred in a Byzantine mist. Eyes closed, she could have just read a prayer in silence, as the person whose clasped, grateful hands are pictured in the misty *Untitled (Hands) III*, 2013, might have. A little gallery in the center of the exhibition feels purgatorial: The depth and darkness of the painting *Black Dome*, 2015, is offset by the soapstone floor installation of Rumi poetry, *Rumi, the Book of Shams e Tabrizi (In Memory of Mahin Tajadod)*, 2005. In its center is literally the salt of the earth. How pure. And beside it hangs the epiphany of *Gold Dome I*, 2015. Are we transcendent yet? Almost.



Y. Z. Kami, *Rumi, the Book of Shams e Tabrizi (In Memory of Mahin Tajadod)*, 2005, soapstone, salt, lithography ink, dimensions variable.

— Myrna Ayad