

game

Recent work by Julia Mandle





LTMH Gallery, New York

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Images:

Julia Mandle, **My Blindfold (from LLG event) detail**, 2011, Embroidery, fabric, and sugar, 18 x 24 in / 45.7 x 61 cm

Front and back cover: Julia Mandle and Gayle Wells Mandle, **Game**, 2011, C-print, 14 x 14 in / 35.6 x 35.6 cm

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April 27- May 20, 2011

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lamiya's last game

by Julia Mandle

It's almost 2011—I am in a battlefield—surrounded by explosions, grey smoke, and falling ash. It's New Year's Eve—I am on a balcony—the explosions are so close that it is unbelievable. It's New Year's—I am in a new country—the fireworks are equally exciting and frightening, and are ushering us all into the next year with thoughts that are hopeful and fearful about our family's future.

The everywhere fireworks are not at all like those in NYC where only a very few organizations are licensed to use them.

It's New Year's Eve—I am in Amsterdam—reflecting back on my American culture.

Tonight among these explosions, I have been thinking about America's obsession with violence and celebration of destruction. Even more so, I have been thinking about the finger pointing and outrage expressed by Americans about the brutality of Muslim suicide bombers. People ask, "How can they do it? How can they believe that they will be redeemed after death?" Indeed having lived in NYC during September 11th, I witnessed upclose the awful brutality, devastation and traumatic impact on our population.

I stood under the ash that was falling endlessly from our New York sky.

I think that part of the shock comes with an awful surprise as a bomb explodes in an everyday space. Hidden in plain sight: a plane in the sky, a parked car, under the dirt of an intersection, or under clothing.

Everyday objects and people become weapons, fatally charged with immense cruelty and gruesome power over innocent civilians.

Perhaps it's the same concept of the deathly everyday space that captured my attention and remorse when I learned about America's wide use of cluster bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last ten years. Cluster bombs are similar to landmines, which have long been banned in warfare. They are large munitions, which release in mid-air as many as two thousand small submunitions that 'carpet' an enemy area. The submunitions or bomblets often don't explode and remain hidden in the landscape for years, long after the conflict, maintaining their deadly potential.

Most victims are children, who often pick up the shiny bomblets and become maimed or are killed when they explode in the children's curious hands.

America, who repeatedly refused to sign an international treaty banning cluster bombs, produces/owns/and uses the largest stockpile of cluster bombs in the world. Although much of the Iraq war was hidden, I discovered that by 2007 America had already dropped 60,000 pounds of cluster bombs over Iraq. The 'Coalition Forces', according to Human Rights Watch, dropped almost two million cluster submunitions in Iraq in the first two months of the war in 2003. Unexploded bomblets littered the land and turned Iraqi landscapes into mine fields. A report by the campaign group Handicap International said that 98% of cluster bomb victims were civilians and a third of the casualties were children.

Lamiya Ali was one of these casualties.

In fact, almost on the very same day of the *Game*—April 26—eight years ago she was killed by a cluster bomb while she was playing with her four siblings outside their home in Baghdad. This was during the first two months of our invasion of Iraq and the result of just one of almost two million cluster submunitions that were dropped over the country.

Lamiya Ali was six when her life was abruptly ended.

My own life was suspended when I encountered Lamiya's photograph taken by Stephanie Sinclair [of Chicago Tribune] [image 3]. In the photograph, the young girl appears as an angel as she is being washed by a soft veil-like spray of water and prepared for burial. Another photograph (taken by Marco Di Lauro) that I found later in my research, shows Lamiya's limp and lifeless body, covered in a soiled pink cotton dress, carried in the arms of a relative. Next to her is the half naked lifeless body of her brother Hamza. In the photograph, Hamza has only the sleeves of a blue sweatshirt visible on his body. He is also being carried by a relative [image 4].

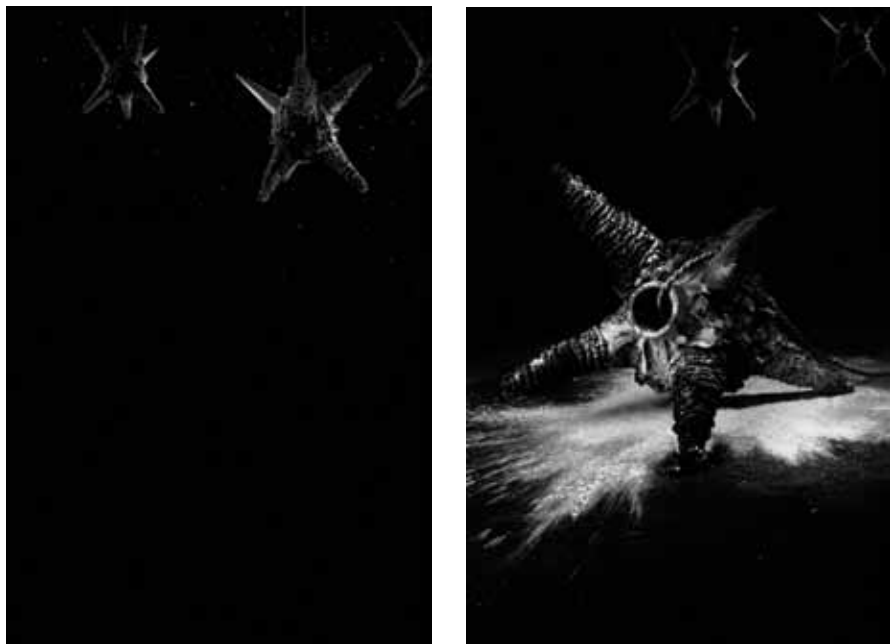


Image 1: "Stars" (LLG photograph from event), 2011, Ultrachrome Print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Paper, 16 x 24 in / 40.6 x 61 cm, Edition of 10

Image 2: "Fallen Star" (LLG photograph from event), 2011, Ultrachrome Print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Paper, 16 x 24 in / 40.6 x 61 cm, Edition of 10

Image 3: Lamiya Ali is Prepared for Burial by Stephanie Sinclair, 26 April 2003



Image 4: Photograph by Marco Di Lauro, 26 April 2003
Image 5: "Lamiya Falls" (from LLG), 2011, Embroidery, fabric, and graphite, 27 x 27 in / 68.6 x 68.6 cm
Image 6: "Hamza Falls" (from LLG), 2011, Embroidery, fabric, and powder, 27 x 27 in / 68.6 x 68.6 cm

He was playing with Lamiya and was also six. These images are so absolutely arresting to me that after I saw them, I committed myself to making a creative response [image 5, 6]. This is a similar beginning with which most of my work is initiated. I begin with an arresting encounter and I work to create an experience for the public to mark this moment.

My project is called "Lamiya's Last Game."

I began thinking about the connections to my own life: Lamiya is six, the age of my own daughter. My emotions rolled along with so many unrealistic wishes and questions: Who is responsible for the loss of this young girl's life? I want to bring her back from the dead, I want to reverse history, stop the war game, block the invasion of the country, the brutalization of a generation of Iraqi children. And many people might respond, 'The Iraq War is over, forget about it. There's nothing you can do.' But is that right? Do we allow these atrocities to be forgotten?

Don't we have a responsibility to face up to the devastating invasion of Iraq?

In an article called "Iraq: The Unseen War", Gary Kamiya seemed to answer my question and even included Sinclair's photograph to prove his point: "A picture of a dead child only represents a fragment of the truth about Iraq—but it is one that we do not have the right to ignore. We believe we have an ethical responsibility to those who have been killed or wounded, whether Iraqis, Americans or those of other nationalities, not to simply pretend that their fate never happened. To face the bitter truth of war is painful. But it is better than hiding one's eyes." [Published by Salon.com, December 2008].

Two months ago, we celebrated my daughter's sixth birthday.

We discussed making a piñata for her birthday party. She wanted me to make a piñata of a dog, fill it with candy and bring it in to school for a ceremonial game with a blindfold and stick. The idea is to blindfold and disorient each child by spinning them and sending them with a stick toward the piñata to try and smash it until the candy comes spilling out. It's violent. It's fun. The children rush in like wild animals to grab as much of the candy as they can.

What my daughter doesn't know about the piñata is the fascinating history. The piñata traditionally was made for the purpose of redeeming sinners. Piñatas were traditionally made as seven-pointed stars, for seven sins, and at New Year's time (and even before that during Lent) people would play the same game of smashing the piñata, or their sins. The promise of redemption -in the sweet here after of the future- was represented by the reward inside the piñata. The seven-pointed star was also known in Mexico to represent the devil and hitting the shape would make the devil let go of the good things he had taken hold of...allowing the winner to have hope for a new beginning.

In this exhibition, I have made two types of piñatas: a seven-pointed star and a dog shape.

The stars I made in ceramic are covered with the hand-cut and embroidered fabrics of traditional Muslim abaya. I tried to approximate the same abaya worn by Lamiya's mourning relatives from Marco Di Lauro's photographs. My embroidery of two popular Iraqi children's songs is in Arabic: Happy Birthday and the other is 'Koko's Song' about a little girl who is lost. Each of my star piñatas is filled with powdered sugar. Plus each piñata contains a type of date seed: one has a set of bronze cast seeds, one of gold seeds, one of real seeds. Each represent different stages of potential of life: which is more valuable?

My daughter and I played this piñata game together.

Seen documented in the exhibit photographs, as we each took turns striking the shapes, striking into the darkness with our blindness, we were each looking for something different [image 1, 2]. I was filled with joy but also violence and anguish. I wanted to break all of those piñatas and believe that I would be redeemed. And what if with all of my strength I could strike the piñata and redeem the loss of this little girl? I try to imagine the things she would have contributed to the world if she were still alive today. What would she have created? What might she and her family be celebrating today?

Why was she denied a chance to celebrate a new year?

In this horrible war in Iraq, what else could I wish for? Could I strike the piñata and magically make Americans understand the toll of war so that they never would allow the government to enter into another bloody conflict? Could I strike the piñata to redeem the 650,000 estimated Iraqis killed as the result of our invasion, that's the same number as the entire population of Boston? What of the 4,500 US military casualties? The wounded? The tortured? I would wish to strike the piñata and even redeem the miles of destroyed ancient date tree orchards.

I know it's only a game, but if I would give you a stick, what would you wish for?



I Play/I Strike (LLG photograph from event), 2011
 Ultrachrome Print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Paper
 24 x 16 in / 61 x 40.6 cm, Edition of 10



Lulu Plays (LLG photograph from event), 2011
 Ultrachrome Print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Paper
 24 x 16 in / 61 x 40.6 cm, Edition of 10



Fallen Stars (LLG photograph from event), 2011
 Ultrachrome Print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Paper
 16 x 24 in / 40.6 x 61 cm, Edition of 10



Sleeping Dog in Baghdad (from LLG), 2011
 Ultrachrome Print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Paper
 16 x 24 in / 40.6 x 61 cm, Edition of 10



Dog in Baghdad (from LLG), 2011
 Ultrachrome Print on Hahnemühle Fine Art Paper
 16 x 24 in / 40.6 x 61 cm, Edition of 10



Birthday Piñata (LLG photograph from event), 2011
 Embroidery, fabric, ceramic, sugar and graphite
 22 x 22 x 19 in / 55.9 x 55.9 x 48.3cm, Edition of 3



Fallen Star Piñata (from LLG), 2011
 Ceramic, sugar and graphite
 22 x 22 x 19 in / 55.9 x 55.9 x 48.3cm, Edition of 3



My Blindfold (from LLG event), 2011
 Embroidery, fabric, and sugar
 18 x 24 in / 45.7 x 61 cm



Cluster Bomblet (from LLG), 2011
 Sugar, Set of 3
 2 x 2 in / 5.1 x 5.1 cm, Edition of 10



Date Seeds (from LLG), 2011
 Bronze, Set of 7 different seeds
 1.25 x .25 in / 3.2 x .6 cm, Edition of 10

EDUCATION

1992 BFA with Honors, Williams College, MA
2001 MA, Gallatin School of New York University, NY
Artist Residency Programs: Yaddo, Weir Farm Trust, Guapamatacaro Mexico, and Baryshnikov Arts Center.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2009 Cabinet Gallery, *Fabrication Of Blindness*, Brooklyn, NY
 Transformer Gallery, *Fabrication Of Blindness*, Washington, DC
2008 Leo Kesting Gallery, *Chalk Shoes To The High Line*, New York, NY
2007 Art Directors Club, *Come & Have A Chicky Meal, Cuz You’re Gonna Love This Deal*, New York, NY
 Baryshnikov Arts Center, *Fabrication Of Blindness*, New York, NY
2004 Van Alen Institute: *Projects in Public Architecture*, Variable City: Fox Square, New York, NY
1999 Storefront for Art & Architecture, *Six Square*, New York, NY

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2011 LTMH Gallery, *Game*, New York, NY
2009 LTMH Gallery, *In Stitches*, New York, NY
2008 Oude Kerk, *Slow Loket*, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
 Julia Street Gallery, *Arte Projects at Prospect 1*, New Orleans, LA
2005 White Columns, *Odd Lots*, New York, NY
1999 New Museum of Contemporary Art, *Time Of Our Lives*, New York, NY
1996 Apex Art Gallery, *Soho Arts Festival*, New York, NY
1994 Rubenstein Gallery, *Body And Spirit: Spirit And Body*, Washington, DC
1993 District of Columbia Art Space (DCAC), *Dress Forms: The Power Of Clothing*, Washington, DC

SELECTED PERFORMANCES

2009 Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild, *Paths To The Park*, Pittsburgh, PA
2008 Arte Projects for Prospect One, *Hopscotch (For New Orleans)*, New Orleans, LA
 Drawing Center Big Draw at WFC, *Hopscotch (For WTC)*, New York, NY
 Friends of the Highline, *Chalk Shoes To The Highline*, New York, NY
2007 Art Directors Club, *Come & Have A Chicky Meal, Cuz You’re Gonna Love This Deal*, New York, NY
2006 Kasser Theater, *Come & Have A Chicky Meal, Cuz You’re Gonna Love This Deal*, Montclair, NJ
2005 Queens Museum of Art, *White Columns*, Cabinet Magazine, Hustle, New York, NY
2003 Fox Square, *Variable City: Fox Square* [with urban designer Ariel Krasnow, choreographer Mark Jarecke], Brooklyn, NY
 Stable, *Feast* [with choreographer Beppie Blankert, presented with Danspace Project’s Out of Space Series], Brooklyn, NY
2001 Gale Gates et al., *Return*, Brooklyn, NY
2000 Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, *Erika*, New York, NY
1999 Storefront for Art & Architecture, *Six Square*, New York, NY
 New Museum of Contemporary Art (Broadway Window), *When*, New York, NY
1998 Lower Manhattan, *Kalch*, New York, NY

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2010 Donoghue, Katy, “The Catalyst: Julia Mandle”, Whitewall Magazine, Summer ‘Performance’ Edition
 Kastner, Jeffrey, “Julia Mandle: Identify”, Julia Mandle, catalog
2009 Ramanathan, Lavanya, “Grim Intersection of Life and Art”, Washington Post, March 21
 Adolphe, Jean-Marc, “Crossing the Line isn’t blind yet”, Mouvement, September 22
2008 Moreno, Shonquis, “Performance Uses City as Stage”, ID Magazine, October 20
 Graeber, Laurel, “Spare Times: For Children”, The New York Times, September 5
 “Leo Kesting Gallery Presents Julia Mandle”, Art Daily, May 15
 Gersh, Brittany, “Walking & Chalking”, Metropolis Magazine, April 24
 Moreno, Shonquis, “Julia Mandle: Press Pause”, Contemporary Magazine, Winter
 Ferring, Anya, “Get Dirty”, Swoon Magazine, Winter
2007 La Rocco, Claudia, “Come and Have a Chicky Meal, Cuz You’re Gonna Love This Deal”, The New York Times, October 12
 Mandle, Julia, “What Did We Bargain For?”, The Huffington Post, October 12
 Laster, Paul, “Interview: Julia Mandle”, Art Krush, September
2005 Kimmleman, Michael, “The Highs and Lows”, The New York Times, December 25

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CONTRIBUTORS 132
ARTISTS PROFILED 146
FEMALE READERS 54%
MALE READERS 46%
MONTHLY WEBSITE HITS 400,000
1 CANVAS MAGAZINE

CANVAS IN NUMBERS

EDUCATION

1995- 1997	MFA Degree, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI
1989- 1992	Corcoran School of Art, Washington, DC
1959- 1963	BS Degree, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY

Artist Residency Programs: Vermont Studio Center, Anderson Ranch

RECENT EXHIBITIONS

2011 Two-Person Show, *Game*, LTMH Gallery, New York, NY

Group Show @ Art Dubai, LTMH Gallery, New York, NY

Group Show, Shattuck Gallery, Westport, MA

Group Show, Curator for Beyond The Var, LTMH Gallery, New York, NY

Group Show, *21st Century Leaders*, Doha, Qatar

Solo Show, *Benefit on Benefit*, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence,RI

Group Show, RISD Museum, Providence, RI

Group Show, Slater Mill, Pawtucket, RI

Group Show, French-American School, Providence, RI

Group Show, City Year, Providence, RI

Solo Show, TwoTon Inc, Pawtucket, RI

Group Show, Community Prep, Providence, RI

Group Show, Plum Gallery, Williamstown, MA

Two-Person Show, Providence Art Club, Providence, RI

Group Show, Trudy Label Fine Art, Naples, FLA

Two-Person Show, Gallery V, Columbus, Ohio

Group Show, Trudy Label Fine Art, Naples, FLA

Group Show, Virginia Lynch, Tiverton, RI

Two-Person Show, TwoTon Inc, Pawtucket, RI

Group Show, Plum Gallery, Williamstown, MA

Solo Show, The Stable, Brooklyn, NY

Solo Show, Pittman Gallery @ Bank RI, Providence, RI

Solo Show, Turks Head Gallery @ Bank RI, Providence, RI

Group Show, Virginia Lynch Gallery, Tiverton, RI

Fidelity Juried Group Show, Providence, RI

New Members Group Show, Providence Art Club, Providence, RI

Group Shows, Maizenza Wilson Gallery, Santa Barbara, CA

Group Show, Providence Art Club, Providence, RI

Group Show, Virginia Lynch Gallery, Tiverton, RI

Group Show, RISD Museum, Providence, RI

Group Show, Sara Doyle Gallery @ Brown University, Providence, RI

Group Show, RI Foundation, Providence, RI

PUBLICATIONS

2010 Catalogue, *Beyond The War* Exhibition, LTMH Gallery, New York, NY

2009 Catalogue, *Twenty First Century Leaders* Exhibition and Benefit, Doha, Qatar

2008 "Believing in Providence", National Geographic Traveler, November/December Issue

2006 "Modern Masterworks", Gulfshore Life, March Issue

2002 "A Global Outlook", Architectural Digest, April Issue

2001 "Harmony of Color", Coastal Living, March/April Issue

2001 Anna Kasabian Article, The Boston Globe

2001 "Virginia Lynch: A Curatorial Retrospective", American Craft, February/March Issue

2000 "A Stellar Collection", Providence Phoenix, October Issue

2000 "Virginia Lynch Tribute", Providence Journal, December Issue

1999 "Interior Designs at Curtis Gallery", Canaan Advertiser, July Issue

1998 "Local Galleries Turn on the Color for Fall", Providence Journal, October 2 Issue

1996 "Frick Exhibits an Elegant Mix of Collages, Assemblages", Maine Sunday Telegram, August 13 Issue

1994 "Fantasy, Flowers, and Marine Motifs", Providence Journal, April 29 Issue

"HYPERMARKET" IMAGES LEFT TO RIGHT:

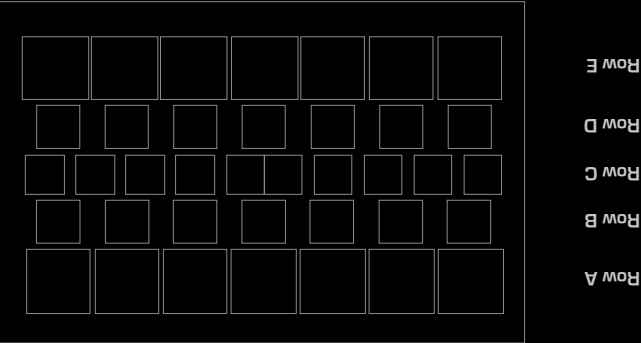
Row A: **A1** "Onyx Roundabout", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **A2** "Song Trappings", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **A3** "Big Cheese", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **A4** "It's Not About Oil", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **A5** "Playing House", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **A6** "Seek and Hide", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **A7** "Chicken", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2010

Row B: **B1** "Tic, Tac, Toe", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **B2** "Cover-Up", 16x16 in Mixed Media, 2011; **B3** "Nothing up the Sleeve", 16x16 in Mixed Media, 2011; **B4** "Boys vs. Girls", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **B5** "Filling", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **B6** "Pawn Endgames", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **B7** "Ocean View", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2010

Row C: **C1** "Bait and Switch", 12x12 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **C2** "Luck of the Draw", 12x12 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **C3** "Camouflage", 12x12 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **C4** "Slight of Hand", 12x12 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **C5, C6** "Win-Vin", 24x12 in Dipyoch, Mixed Media, 2011; **C7** "No Problem", 12x12 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **C8** "Oasis", 12x12 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **C9** "This Little Piggy Went to Market", 12x12 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **C10** "Bumper Cars", 12x12 in, Mixed Media, 2011

Row D: **D1** "Hidden Treasures", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **D2** "Good Sport", 16x16 in Mixed Media, 2010; **D3** "Big Fish, Little Pond", 16x16 in Mixed Media, 2010; **D4** "Clan Destiny", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **D5** "Brain Wash", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **D6** "Play Money", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **D7** "Stacking Odds", 16x16 in, Mixed Media, 2011

Row E: **E1** "Lottery", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **E2** "Keeping Score", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **E3** "Silver Lining", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **E4** "The Grass is Greener", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2011; **E5** "Zero Visibility", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **E6** "Foot Race", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2010; **E7** "Souvenir", 20x20 in, Mixed Media, 2010







Ready, Get Set, Go, 2011
Mixed Media
50 x 40 in / 19.7 x 15.7 cm



Pin the Tale, 2011
Mixed Media
47 x 39 in / 18.5 x 15.4 cm



Home Free Home, 2011
Mixed Media
63 x 31.5 in / 28.4 x 12.4 cm



In Flight Movie, 2011
Mixed Media
47 x 39 in / 18.5 x 15.4 cm



Inside/Out, 2011
Mixed Media
47 x 47 in / 18.5 x 18.5 cm



Hypermarket, 2011
Mixed Media
47 x 47 in / 18.5 x 18.5 cm



image 3: **Brain Wash**, 2010, 16 x 16 in / 40.6 x 40.6 cm, Mixed Media



image 4: **Zero Visibility**, 2010, 20 x 20 in / 50.8 x 50.8 cm, Mixed Media

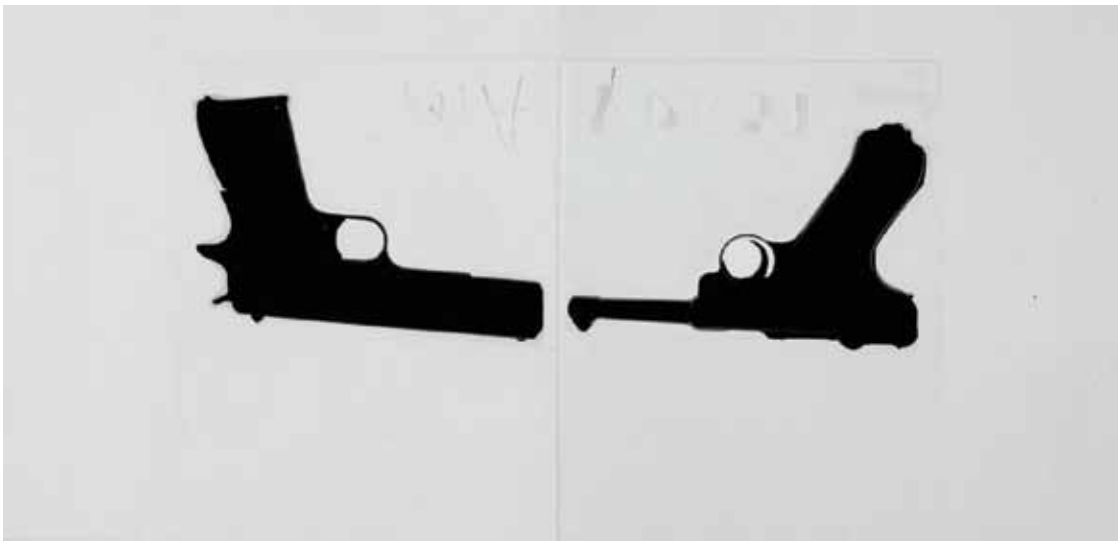
The building boom is happening so fast in the Gulf that I can't help but wonder about the longevity of these giant skyscrapers and whether they are adequately inspected. Much of the workforce appears to be unskilled and labors under excruciating environmental circumstances. Green technology is only barely being implemented here and Qatar has one of the largest carbon footprints on the planet. Appalled at the rush to lure wealthy new executives to snap up fancy penthouse apartments, I created the small painting "Ocean View" and the larger "Boom Town." The latter references the flimsy straw houses that were so easily destroyed by the big bad wolf in the children's fairytale *The Three Little Pigs*.

Each Gulf state – from the Emirates to Bahrain – is playing a game of catch-up with 21st-century Western technology and lifestyles. It feels like a race to be the first, the biggest and the best. Only a few generations ago Qataris lived in tents in the desert and traveled by camel, as I allude to in "Foot Race," "Keeping Score" and "Zero Visibility" [image 4]. "Today the population is luxuriating in abundant and valuable natural resources – gas and oil. However, Qatar appears to be taking a different approach from its Gulf neighbors. While Arab Emirate cities such as Abu Dhabi and Dubai have emulated European and American culture – importing big names and brands from the West – Qatar is attempting to build cultural institutions that reflect its own heritage.

As a Westerner, artist and political junkie, I embraced the joy in the Arab world when Barack Obama was elected president of the U.S. However, I also watched with disbelief as conservative Republicans and Tea Party enthusiasts played their insidious "blame game" last fall and convinced a gullible electorate that liberal Democrats were responsible for the recession. Most of the paintings I made during the Bush years had been an agltprop of my own design. In "Pin the Tale," I comment on the latest political games by depicting donkeys bearing the load.

For too long, too many Middle Eastern regimes have been controlled by dictators who hide behind propaganda, suppress human rights and prevent their people from enjoying freedom and prosperity. I am heartened by the peaceful marches and calls for change that have been erupting in the Middle East these past few months. While the citizens of each country have their own reasons for saying "*enough*," the example of Egypt, in particular, provides hope for a totally new era in this region of the world.

image 5: **Win-Win**, 2011, 24 x 12 in / 61 x 30.5 cm dipych, Mixed Media



"Win-Win" [image 5], a small dipych in the center of *HyperMarket Installation*, depicts two revolvers pointed at each other. I might have called it "Lose-Lose," but I am an optimist. I believe that the world is becoming one mega civilization and that the biggest game will always be about human rights. Despite differences of gender, age, race, politics, religion and culture, we are all human beings, with the same basic needs and the desire for freedom. We have the ability to communicate with each other – instantly, all over the world, at this very moment. But the question remains: Can we ever create a fair balance between the haves and the have-nots? It remains to be seen whether history will ever record a new equilibrium for mankind.

Since moving to Doha, Qatar in 2008, my husband and I have become immersed in its culture. One of the first events we attended was the now-famous *Doha Debates*, which are broadcast by the BBC. These debates – or talking games – are quite serious, tackling hot topics and inviting analysis and criticism of the government. When this particular debate posed the question of whether governments in the Gulf region value profit over people, the audience overwhelmingly affirmed that they do. They cited many examples of human rights abuses of immigrant workers, equating 21st-century construction in the region to slaves building the ancient pyramids. "Slight of Hand," a small canvas in HyperMarket Installation, presents a response to this debate and my own ongoing concern about the divide between the haves and the have-nots. Like the debates, my paintings explore questions and present collections of evidence that I have gathered over the past three years.

Since the shopping mall (or "HyperMarket," as it is called in Qatar) is the main social or public meeting space in Doha, it is also the primary focus of *HyperMarket Installation*, which represents thirty-eight paintings – my largest body of work. Covering an entire gallery wall floor-to-ceiling, the paintings literally capture the dense convergence of societal games and issues in Qatari culture. Through this installation, I hope to recreate the visual traffic jam of imagery, color and texture typical of these enormous public spaces. Individual paintings such as "Pawn Endgames," "Chicken," "Lottery," "Bait and Switch [image 1]" and "This Little Piggy Goes to Market" refer to the socio-political games being played, including many that promote or prohibit certain activities in Arab culture.



Image 1: **Bait and Switch**, 2010, 12 x 12 in / 30.5 x 30.5, Mixed Media
Image 2: **Brain Wash**, 2010, 16 x 16 in / 40.6 x 40.6 cm, Mixed Media

One of these is the practice of prohibiting men from going to shopping malls *without* their wives or families on Fridays – the workers' only free day to relax or shop. In my large painting "HyperMarket," I question this unfair treatment of expatriate working men, who are stereotyped as potential predators of Qatari women. Since their families live too far away to accompany them, these men are automatically barred from shopping at the HyperMarkets on Fridays – a day the malls have ironically designated as "Family Day."

As people from all over the world flock to the Gulf region, they are confirming the notion that it's human nature to follow the money. Several paintings in *HyperMarket Installation* – including "It's Not About Oil" (a phrase repeated so often during the Bush years) and "Play Money" – probe the concept of ulterior motives



for coming to this area. Does it stem from an inherent interest in this part of the world or simply an opportunistic grab for gold? I am able to observe both sides of the equation in the *HyperMarket Installation* painting "The Grass is Greener."

Game Exhibition represents my observations about the role of the immigrant living in a rapidly developing region. The expat community is desperately needed in Qatar – to supply everything from raw manpower to the technical skills and intellectual knowledge needed to facilitate the expansion of this young country. "Brain Wash [image 2]," "Hidden Treasures" and "No Problem" reflect on the necessity of intellectual capital and infrastructure to help Qatar succeed in the 21st century. Although invaluable to this process, expats will never be fully accepted by the native population. Foreigners and their children born in Qatar cannot become citizens (though outside investors may purchase property in certain designated areas) and ultimately, most Qataris simply hope that all foreigners will leave.

A series of paintings called "Inside/Out" probes ideas of integration and separation that I have observed in Doha. Everywhere you look walls have been constructed for residential compounds or construction sites. I am particularly drawn to the variety of concrete walls, metal fencing and even clothing used to delineate private property and frequently incorporate fencing imagery in my work as a metaphor for inclusion/exclusion.

"Ready, Get Set, Go" depicts birds escaping from the dust and metal barriers of a construction site, heading for blue skies. To me birds represent our own move (or flight) from living in a skyscraper in the downtown older, traditional neighborhood compound. The diplych "Home Free Home" and the *HyperMarket Installation* canvas "Playing House" both highlight the importance of seeking a sense of place and making a nest or home, whether temporary or permanent.

In our new neighborhood, we had hopes of getting to know our Qatari neighbors. However, we quickly discovered that even though our compound houses a mix of nationalities, the Qatari families who live here don't interact socially with expats. In fact, the level of Qatari interaction has reportedly decreased proportionally with the increase in the number of foreigners. And with the influx of so many expatriate workers, female Qataris have returned to the practice of covering their faces with veils.

My *HyperMarket Installation* paintings "Clan Destiny" and "Cover-Up" address the mystery of the veil – a game of hide-and-seek that actually attracts more attention and curiosity from viewers. Often Qatari women are hiding expensive designer jewelry, handbags and shoes beneath their abayas, as portrayed in "Seek and Hide" and "Souq Trappings."

With the notion of male superiority alive and well in the Middle East, "Big Cheese", "Good Sport" and "Boys vs. Girls [image 3]" focus on the practice of polygamy in Arab culture. Qatar is steeped in tradition and the effort to perpetuate its own species. Men often have multiple wives and many children, and marriages still take place between first cousins, often arranged by parents. "Luck of the Draw" refers to male power passed down through generations of the Al Thani tribe, whereas "Big Fish, Little Pond" acknowledges that Qatar, the smallest of the Gulf states, is nonetheless the most globally engaged and often the largest donor to world causes.

In contrast to the native Qatari population, construction workers from outside the country produce skyscrapers practically overnight. I used to see these men crowding on to TATA buses day and night to work 12-hour shifts and I worried about their living conditions and lengthy separation from their homes and families. Both "Stacking Odds" and "Silver Lining" question the enormous gap that exists in Doha between rich and poor.



Gayle Wells Mandle, *Seek and Hide, detail*, 2011, Mixed Media, 20 x 20 in / 7.9 x 7.9 cm

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