

WHAT: “The Image and the Word” an exhibition of Altered Fragments. Sculpture and paintings by Gwendolyn Fryer

WHERE: Selby gallery, Ringling College of Art and Design,
2700 Nth Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL. 34232-5895

WHEN: Preview Reception, Artist Presentation Nov. 15, 5:30 p.m. Presentation: 7pm
Opening Reception Fri. Nov. 16, 5-7 p.m.
Director’s Tour: Mon., Nov. 19, 11:30 a.m.

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Gwen Fryer *Sees Forever*, an exhibition of sculpture and painting at Selby Gallery,
Nov. 16- Dec.14, 2007.

The daughter of a petroleum geologist, painter and sculptor Gwen Fryer spent most of her formative years in Tripoli, Libya. She and her family were there for Six-Day War in 1967 and the Libyan Revolution following in 1969. Fryer was sixteen when she came to the US.

That Fryer straddles two cultures is the most obvious feature of her work, but to truly appreciate the work requires both close examination and deep commitment--not unlike the requirements for peace, both external and internal.

Delicate Balance, a freestanding sculpture, is an excellent example of this straddling—as well as the intimate scrutiny Fryers’ pieces demand. Standing 20” high, an industrial thermometer is held by wooden piano parts to a square, roughly 6” tall block of wood, which itself rests on a base of ornate molding, paint cracked and peeling from time and the elements. The pieces are connected in such a way that a sense of impending operation pervades. On the front of the block of wood is another raised piece of wood, with what looks like an intricate, carved, Arabic pattern. Between the block of wood and the thermometer a small disc with a tiny line of Arabic writing around the base rests on

gorgeously-aged piano keys. On the top of the disc where the point of the thermometer rests is another intricately worked pattern of Arabic origin. Arabic culture, US history, music, technology--all connected. Given the chance perhaps all operating together.

The show is a mix of sculpture both wall-mounted and freestanding, ranging in scale from the size of two cupped hands to that of the human figure, and large oil paintings. In Fryers' work form follows formation. The paintings are driven by the immediacy and fluidity of the brush stroke, the sculpture by the process of retrieving the past through remnants, and the slow, conscious act of reconstructing them into something that lives in the present.

This expressive fluidity is evident in *The Promise*, a large-scale oil painting. The remnant of a roman frieze is placed mid-center in an indeterminate space, with imagery evoking text in picture plane above and perhaps slightly behind. There is something reminiscent of cave paintings in this piece, in the sense that there is a message being left here, or that something has been recorded for history. While the reference to the remnant could be perceived as a somewhat mournful testimony to things left behind, ultimately the solidity of the painting evokes the resilience of the human spirit.

The work is awash with strong feeling for the historical sweep of Arabic culture, and therein is the real key to Fryers' work. Fryer is a person who has stood in front of Carthage and Leptis Magna —famous Roman historic sites and her understanding of magnificence past comes through. To put it simply: all empires fail and some day ours will too. From that understanding one can either grasp tightly to what will inevitably slip away, or, find peace knowing that 'not-to-be and not-to-have give an immeasurable freedom' (Janwillem Van De Wetering).

Selby Gallery @ Ringling College of Art and Design Nov.15th- Dec. 14th 2007.

Open Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Tues., 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.