

Thompson Gallery



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*IMAGES ATTACHED

NEWS RELEASE

EXHIBITION SERIES EXPLORES ARMENIAN ART AND MEMORIALIZATION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE Teaching Gallery Coordinates Five-Part Exhibit

WESTON, MA. - The Thompson Gallery at The Cambridge School of Weston (CSW) announces *Kiss the Ground—A New Armenia (Part 3)*, the final exhibition in the three-part exhibition series that examines and celebrates contemporary Armenian art, organized to overlap the centennial memorialization of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. The series explores Armenian culture from different vantage points and intersect on themes of memory, loss and cultural introspection.

The final show in the series, *Kiss the Ground—A New Armenia*, was itself divided into three segments in two locations. *Kiss The Ground—A New Armenia (Parts 1 & 2)* were on exhibit at the Armenian Museum of America from December 6, 2014 - January 20, 2015 (*Part 1*), and January 25 - March 1, 2015 (*Part 2*) respectively. The first exhibit brings together the work of Gail Boyajian, Adrienne Der Marderosian, Aida Laleian, Talin Megherian, Yefkin Megherian, Kevork Mourad, Marsha Odabashian and Jessica Sperandio. The second show looks at the work of Gagik Aroutiunian, John Avakian, Jackie Kazarian, and Apo Torosyan. For more information, visit www.armenianmuseum.org and www.thompsongallery.csw.org

Kiss the Ground—A New Armenia (Part 3), Thompson Gallery, March 30 to June 13, 2015, is a group exhibition brings together a select group of work in diverse media: John Avakian (social justice print-making), Gail Boyajian (allegorical painting), Adrienne Der Marderosian (works on paper), Jackie Kazarian (icon-based abstract painting), Aida Laleian (digital collage on various materials), Yefkin Megherian (bronze bas-reliefs), Marsha Odabashian (installation art), Kevork Mourad (gestural painting via digital video projection), and Apo Torosyan (film, and assemblage sculpture).

Gallery Director, curator of the series and CSW Visual Arts Teacher Todd Bartel said he assembled the series to “demonstrate the power of memory during this particular hundred-year marker.” “This grouping of artists demonstrates the salient work being made today by second and third generation diaspora Armenians” he said. “While first generation Genocide survivors typically did not make art about their painful experiences, subsequent generations have broken with taciturn remembrance and are making statements to the world at large.

Now is time for us all to listen,” Bartel said. Bartel points to Jessica Sperandio’s “*Blue Smoke*” as an example of the survivor generations’ silent endurance. In Sperandio’s artist’s statement she describes:

“Mardiros Boyajian, a teenage genocide survivor, worked at General Electric after emigrating to the United States, until he suffered a life-altering head injury that left him disabled and unable to work. ‘Mardiros would lie down on the floor and smoke for hours until there was a blue haze covering the apartment,’ his daughter Mary recalled, ‘I would come home from school and wouldn’t be able to see anything but bluish smoke from the waist up.’”

In his accompanying essay for the exhibition, Bartel writes, “Marsha Odabashian’s, installation presents viewers with a physical metaphor about fractured landscape as soon as viewers walk into the room. The artist’s slivers of remaining landscape harken to the reduction of their homeland territory with pockets of foliage and much missing in between,” he said. Artist Odabashian says of her “*Allegorical Landscape*,” “I engage in a characteristic Armenian obsession with loss resulting from the genocide trying to obscure the horror of the genocide with decoration, especially flowers, that could be placed on a tomb with hopes of, at least temporary, solace.”

“Some works incorporate period documents and imagery to raise consciousness” Bartel underscored. Artist John Avakian describes his approach to his powerful monoprints stating, “My intent was to look for historical photos of the Armenian Genocide documenting the frightening brutality.” Bartel further points out that “some artists have developed personal iconographies to address the here and now.” Adrienne Der Marderosian’s lilting poetic collages “question why our lives move in certain directions or paths.” Der Marderosian states in her artist’s statement, that her work “asks viewers to examine the journeys they are travelling and the internal tattoos they may carry.”

“The title of the series comes from the etymological roots of an Armenian word for worship, ‘*yergurbakootyoon*.’ A word that translates literally to mean ‘kissing the ground,’ and implies the idea of ‘effort.’ A poignant word from a people recognized for establishing the first Christian state, *Yergurbakootyoon* also suggests veneration for land, for home, for country, for people, and for a way of living,” added Bartel. To take in the horrors of a hundred years ago vicariously through these artist’s reflections is difficult, but is also rewarding,” notes Bartel. “It takes great ‘effort’ to receive and understand the darker side of humanity, because in so doing you play a part of laying the *groundwork* of future generations.”

Two public events are planned for *Kiss the Ground—A New Armenia (Part 3)*. A reception for the artists is planned for Thursday, April 2, from 4:00 – 7:00p.m. A gallery talk and film screening of Apo Torosyan’s *The Morgenthau Story* are scheduled for Saturday, April 25, 1:00 to 3:30p.m. All five exhibitions have accompanying catalogs, which are available at Lulu.com, keywords: Thompson Gallery.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

- Kiss the Ground—A New Armenia (Part 3):
Marsha Odabashian
Allegorical Landscape, 2009
gesso, acrylic, wood
72 x 72 x 10.5 inches
- Kiss the Ground—A New Armenia (Part 3):
Marsha Odabashian
Allegorical Landscape (details), 2009
gesso, acrylic, wood

72 x 72 x 10.5 inches

- Kiss the Ground—A New Armenia (Part 3):
John Avakian
Genocide for Public Display, 2003
monoprint, multiple paper litho-transfers, on BFK
14.75 x 42 inches
- Kiss the Ground—A New Armenia (Part 3):
Adrienne Der Marderosian
Passage, 2010
map, glassine, thread, graphite on paper
6.9375 x 3.625 inches
- Kiss the Ground—A New Armenia (Part 3):
Jessica Sperandio
Blue Smoke, 2014
acrylic
84 x 78 x 4 inches

ABOUT THE THOMPSON GALLERY

The Thompson Gallery is a teaching gallery at CSW dedicated to thematic inquiry, offering three differing vantages of the selected topic, throughout the school year. As social justice is integral to the values and mission of the school, CSW looks to provide imaginative ways to spark discussion through mediums including gallery exhibits coupled with a curriculum that boasts a variety of courses to reflect the diversity of society and the world. Named in honor of a school trustee John Thompson and family, the Gallery promotes opportunities to experience contemporary art by local, national and international artists and periodically showcases the art of faculty, staff and alumni. The Gallery is located within the Garthwaite Center for Science and Art, The Cambridge School of Weston, 45 Georgian Road Weston, MA 02493. Visit Thompsongallery.csw.org to view exhibit art.

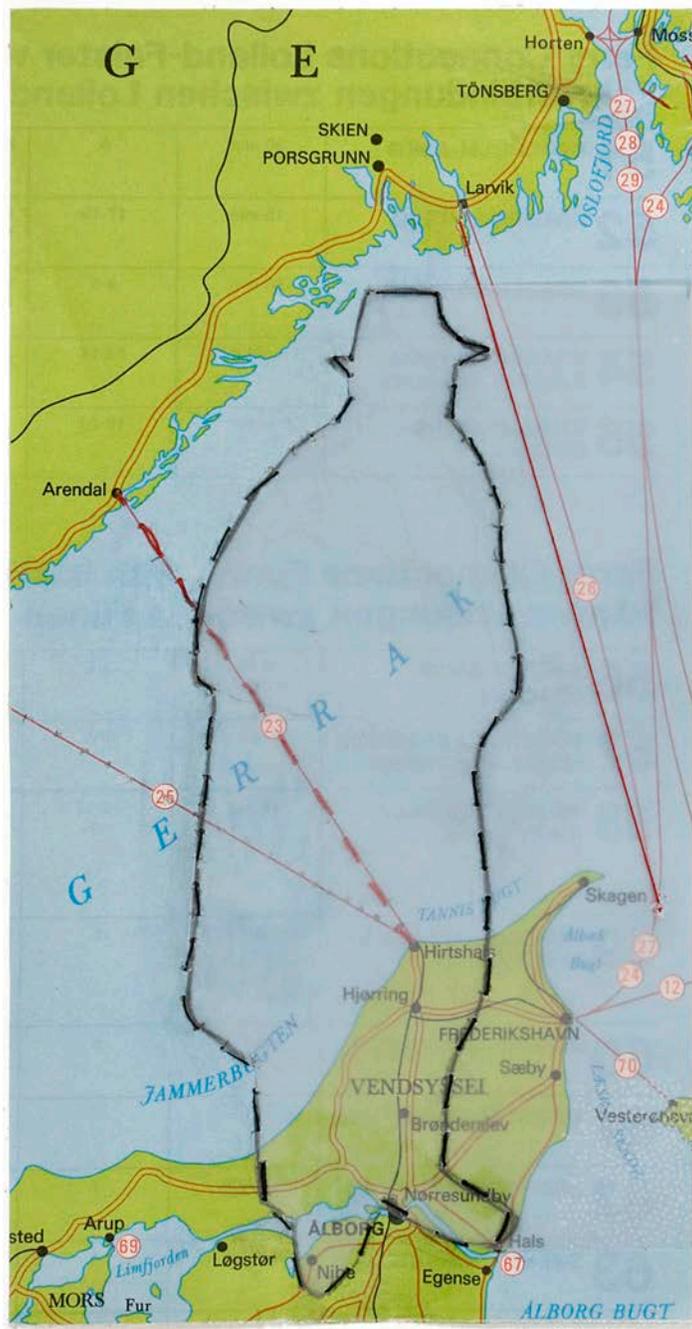
ABOUT THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL OF WESTON

The Cambridge School of Weston is a progressive, coeducational day and boarding school for grades 9-12. Established in 1886, CSW is dedicated to fostering individual strengths and deep relationships through a wide range of challenging courses. www.csw.org

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Marsha Odabashian, *Allegorical Landscape*, 2009, gesso, acrylic, wood, 72 x 72 x 10.5 inches



Adrienne Der Marderosian, *Passage*, 2010, map, glassine, thread, graphite on paper, 6.9375 x 3.625 inches



Jessica Sperandio, *Blue Smoke*, 2014, acrylic, 84 x 78 x 4 inches