

## Chloe West and Naomi Safran-Hon: Home on the Range and Beyond

Surreal paintings of the American West at Harper's and meditative images of abandoned structures in Haifa, Israel, at SLAG&RX reveal artists with keen sensitivities to place.

*By Brian P. Kelly*

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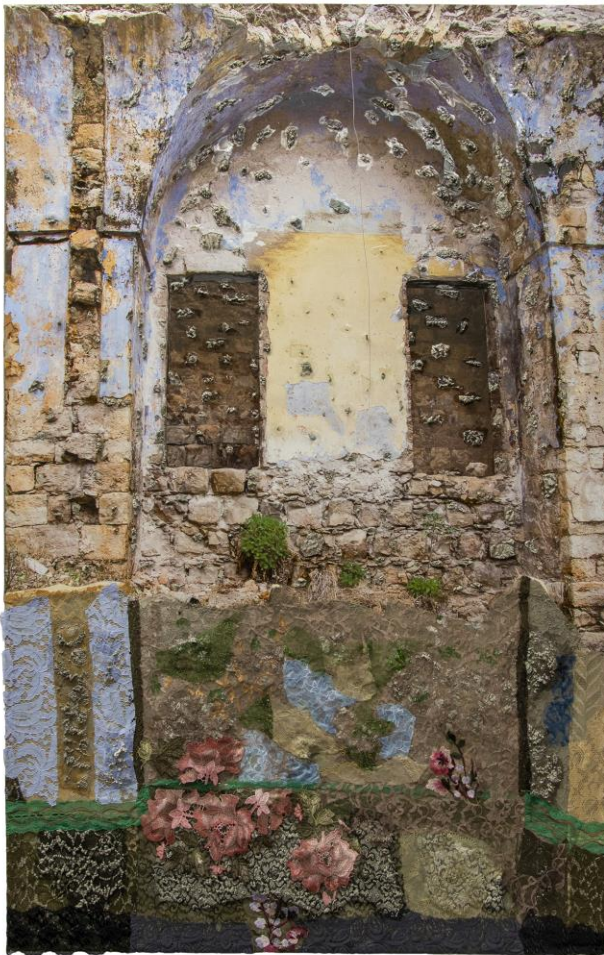


Naomi Safran-Hon's 'Bends of Wood Grid (Turquoise Room)' (2023) PHOTO: SLAG&RX



A few blocks down on W. 19th Street, at SLAG&RX, Naomi Safran-Hon continues her long-running engagement with the city of Haifa, Israel, where she was raised. Exploring notions of home, displacement, dilapidation and rebirth, she uses a unique process to create her sculptural canvases, photographing the interiors of abandoned buildings and enlarging the pictures, puncturing and altering their surfaces, overlaying them with lace and other fabrics, and pushing cement through the images.

The results of all this are riveting works of contrast, the hardness of the stalactite-like cement protrusions cohabiting with delicate bands of lace; the richly hued, brightly lighted spaces initially appear inviting, but as the details of their disuse slowly emerge they take on a more sorrowful timbre. These can be read as carefully composed, formalist works—the slanting checkerboard of what appears to be a collapsed ceiling in “Bends of Wood Grid (Turquoise Room)” (2023) pops off the canvas, as the negative space created by an adjacent doorway draws us in. But Ms. Safran-Hon’s greatest strength is her ability to softly probe the fragile histories of Haifa.



While some artists have rushed to stake out positions on the most recent conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, Ms. Safran-Hon has been creating her images for over a decade, and this lengthy dedication to the subject comes through in thoughtful works of art that avoid polemics, focusing on humanity and not headlines. Certainly a fluency in the region’s history, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the current situation in the Middle East brings gravity to her creations. But even absent that, one feels a deep respect for the places she depicts, a reverence for people made more potent by their absence.

Naomi Safran-Hon’s ‘Flower Under The House’  
(2024). PHOTO: SLAG&RX

The doorways in “Two Exits” (2023) are both inviting, one leading to a sunny space, the other to a warm mustard-colored room. Amid the dilapidation, they offer hopeful promises for the future, and a reminder of our agency in choosing a path forward. Flowers sprout from the base of a crumbling wall in another image. It’s a sign of perseverance and beauty in the face of hardship, a sanguine message that transcends any specific place or time.

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**Naomi Safran-Hon: Twice Broken Heart**

*SLAG&RX, 522 W. 19th Street, through May 17*

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