

• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

Maryam Yousif

Mishwar

August 26 - October 8, 2022

Opening Reception: Friday, August 26th, 5 - 8pm

Free and open to the public

David B. Smith Gallery is pleased to present *Mishwar* by San Francisco-based artist Maryam Yousif. For her Denver debut, Yousif will transform the gallery's project room into a desert-toned reliquary for her charismatic hand-built ceramic sculptures inspired by contemporary fashion, ancient Sumerian figurines, Assyrian bas reliefs, and Middle Eastern pop culture.

Mishwar, an Arabic word that translates to journey or short trip, speaks to the journey through time Yousif's work takes as it lovingly reinterprets timeless relics. Charismatic and colorful, Yousif draws upon devotional artifacts of the ancient world which she modernizes with a playful contemporary flare. Her work often features female figures, handbags, and palm trees, each with connections to cultural tradition ranging from 2900 BCE to today. In her seamless blending of exaggerated 80's power shoulder sleeves worn by Middle Eastern pop singers with standing worshiper figurines of Mesopotamia, humor and reverence meld.

Handbags are a strong theme in Yousif's oeuvre, rendered as both stand alone sculptures or as accessories sculpted into figurative works. Inspired by buckets, bags, and baskets held by supernatural beings chiseled into Assyrian stone reliefs, the handbag serves as a modernized carrier of cultural meaning. Palm trees, another recurring motif in Yousif's work, contain symbolic qualities of power and resilience, fertility, and nourishment.

Harkening back to her childhood home of Baghdad, to the ancient deserts of Mesopotamia, to the California coast, and finally to the Rocky Mountains, Maryam Yousif's *Mishwar* captures both the comfort of home and the thrill of adventure.

About Maryam Yousif

Maryam Yousif was born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1985 and lives in San Francisco, California. She received a Master of Fine Art from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2017, and received a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Windsor, Ontario in 2008. Yousif has had solo and two-person exhibitions with Andrew Rafacz, Chicago, IL (2021), Guerrero Gallery, San Francisco, CA (2020, 2019), / slash art, San Francisco, CA (2019) and RSF Projects, San Francisco, CA (2017). Yousif's work has been featured in exhibitions such as Wild Frontiers, The Pit, Los Angeles, California (2021), Dog Days, The Pit, Palm Springs, California (2021), Sleight of Hand, The Center for Craft, Asheville, North Carolina (2020) and The Lands Beyond, Anglim Gilbert Gallery, San Francisco, California (2019). She is a finalist for the Museum of Art and Design's Burke Prize (2021), and just completed an AICAD fellowship at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the Ceramics Department (2019-2021).

About David B. Smith Gallery

David B. Smith Gallery is committed to presenting intelligent and culturally relevant exhibitions in its Denver location, featuring the region's most important emerging talent alongside internationally recognized artists. Through its curatorial program, participation in art fairs, and extensive media coverage in publications such as *Artforum*, *Art in America*, and *ARTnews*, David B. Smith Gallery has cultivated a strong regional, national and international collector audience. *The New York Times* hailed the gallery as offering "an exciting contrast of cutting edge works" and *The Denver Post* declared that it is the "premiere commercial space" in Denver. The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions. David B. Smith Gallery is a member of the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA).



Maryam Yousif, *Habibi Bejeweled*, 2022, glazed stoneware, 15.5 x 12 x 6.5 in. (39.4 x 30.5 x 16.5 cm.)