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If the Olive Tree Knew

Saif Senussi Azzuz

October 15 – November 27, 2021

Reception: Friday, October 15, 6-8p (artist in attendance)

(Denver, CO) RULE Gallery is pleased to present *If the Olive Tree Knew*, a solo exhibition of new work by Saif Senussi Azzuz at our Denver location at 808 Santa Fe Drive. A public reception will be held Friday, October 15, from 6-8pm, and the show will be on view from October 15 – November 27, 2021. Gallery hours are Tues - Friday 12-6p, Sat 12-5p, no appointment necessary.

In her reticent silver-green
Color hesitates to say what it thinks, and to look at what is behind
The portrait, for the olive tree is neither green nor silver.
The olive tree is the color of peace, if peace needed
A color.
--Mahmoud Darwish, *The Second Olive Tree*

If The Olive Tree Knew is Saif Senussi Azzuz's inaugural show at RULE Gallery. For this show, Azzuz has created sculptural works and paintings that explore space, territory, and time through the symbolism of the olive tree. Azzuz's paintings straddle abstraction and surrealism in their sweeping use of color, sensual movement, and evocation of the natural world. The paintings are full and alive, pressing their power up to the very edges of the canvas, resisting their frames. The shapes he makes are like liquid leaves—stretching, reaching, pulling, pushing, almost vibrating with the cycles of the seasons. This is the second show in which Azzuz presents sculptural works. These pieces are hand carved olive tree wood. In them he reveals a complex landscape of knots, knobs, and burls—features of the tree's long life. One can read a tree's wood like a book. We can see whorls that signify drought, wide rings that show rich growth, scars caused by external obstacles or forces. Azzuz's sculptures become portraits of the weather, the landscape, as well as the history of an embattled people.

Azzuz takes inspiration from both his Libyan ancestry and the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish's poem, *The Second Olive Tree*. In this poem the olive tree is seen as an enduring and noble spiritual force, sustaining human life through its gifts of olive oil and wood, even while it is threatened by the violence of modern warfare. The work in this show is in direct conversation with the resilience and rootedness of the olive tree and the Palestinian people's intimate long-standing relationship with them. The work in *If The Olive Tree Knew* shimmers the way a tree's leaves do in wind, when a storm is gathering.

Saif Senussi Azzuz is a Libyan-Yurok artist who resides in Pacifica, CA. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Painting and Drawing from the California College of the Arts in 2013. Azzuz has exhibited widely in the Bay Area, including exhibitions with pt.2 gallery, Adobe Books, Ever Gold [Projects], NIAD, and 1599dt Gallery. He is part of the Clarion Alley Mural Project and a Facebook Artist in Residence program. Azzuz will have solo exhibitions in 2021-22 with Rule Gallery in Denver, Jack Hanley Gallery in New York and Anthony Meier fine arts in San Francisco. Azzuz shares his home and studio in Pacifica on Ramaytush Ohlone land with his wife Lulu and their two children, who provide innumerable inspiration and support for the artist.

RULE Gallery, founded in 1991, has locations in Denver, CO, and Marfa, TX. RULE represents emerging and mid-career contemporary artists and artist estates, with a focus on fostering investigative art practices while developing artists' long-term careers. Outside their robust in-house exhibition schedule, RULE coordinates programming in prominent institutions and non-traditional settings, expanding community engagement with the work. In addition, the gallery actively endeavors to bring greater recognition of the region's historic art movements to a broader audience. For more information, visit <http://www.rulegallery.com/>