

Annabel Daou

AMERICA

September 7 – October 14, 2006
Opening: Thursday September 7, from 6 to 8 PM

Josee Bienvenu Gallery is pleased to present *AMERICA*, Annabel Daou's first solo exhibition in New York. *America* is 20 sheets of paper assembled to create a 7-foot by 13-foot (88 x 150 inches) composition. Text in its many forms – sound, substance, symbol, and texture – fills the paper. The words are drawn from numerous sources, each in some way involved with America and the American experience: literature, history, poetry, politics, music, popular culture, and sociology (Hannah Arendt, Cioran, William Faulkner, Aldous Huxley, Thomas Jefferson, Allen Ginsberg, George Oppen Arthur Miller, Bernadette Mayer, Ramones, Bob Dylan, George Washington, George Bush). Each was transcribed in pencil as it was read, in the manner of *Bartleby*. Together the texts form lines that crisscross each other to create geological, cultural, and metaphysical structures. From a distance, *America* reads as landscape, a war painting, a map, and a document. Up close, it is legible only in fragments, though the texts have been transcribed verbatim.

It is impossible to read *America* as a whole, or all at once. The accumulation of words forms a sense of place, creates meaning, and eradicates meaning. The composition is erased as it is defined (a work of art, a country), since any one definition eclipses the others. The act of reading is a performance of this occlusion. *America* is an exploration of limits and limitlessness across time and between people, composed of the words that bind and divide us. The documents that make up *America* were selected unsystematically. They represent the individual experiences and discoveries of its creators.

The accumulation of documents begins to convey a sense of the monumental weight of American ideas. In counterpoint to this convergence are 13 small-scale drawings of: the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, the bibliography of the America project and others. The pocket-sized format of the drawings renders these seminal texts cryptic, fragmentary, and ephemeral representations of themselves.

Accompanying the works in the exhibition, *National Reality*, a leaflet by New York based poet and sound artist Greta Byrum, excavates the structure of *America* and documents its findings. It is a catalog of the elements of the project, a poem, an interpretation, an explication, and a diagrammatic guide to the personal and archaeological connections between the writers and readers of *America*.

Annabel Daou was born and raised in Beirut, during the Lebanese Civil War. She moved to New York at age 18 to attend Barnard College at Columbia University. Her most recent work has dealt with translation and transliteration, using English text phonetically transliterated into Arabic.