

THE COURAGE OF EVE



Shiva Ahmadi, *Eve's promise*, 2022, watercolour & screen print on paper, 152x210cm

*Shiva Ahmadi - The Courage of Eve*

22 February – 1 April 2023

PV 21 February 6:30 - 8:30

Gallery rosenfeld is proud to announce the first UK solo exhibition of the Iranian artist Shiva Ahmadi. Currently based in the Bay Area in California, Ahmadi's works are inspired by the world of Persian miniatures and uphold a strong critique of the current political situation in her homeland.

Her paintings denounce violence and abuses in general but more precisely those that have been taking place in Iran for decades. When she was only 5 years old she witnessed first-hand the terrors of the Iranian Cultural Revolution. When the family returned home after a period living in Berlin, all signs of their intellectual lives had suddenly to disappear without trace. Her parents had no choice but to destroy their collection of records and cultural artefacts that were in their home. The artist also experienced the war between Iran and Iraq, as her mother was a doctor, she was deeply touched by observing the wounded soldiers returning from war.

Not surprisingly Ahmadi's works are full of blood expressed through the red watercolour which covers a part of the works. At first glance however, the beauty of Ahmadi's images hides the fact of what is actually taking place.

Working predominantly on paper, her highly refined technique and exquisite use of colour enables her to reinvent this ancient and highly refined art form without palling against the originals, although the large sizes of many of the works already creates a divide from the original pieces which would have been part of a book as opposed to an individual art piece hanging on the wall.

The artist's new body of work signals a departure from her previous output in that it focuses on the plight of women caught up in the violence in the world. Inspired by the horrendous situation in Iran where young women have been killed for merely refusing to wear a hijab, these paintings have a far wider relevance. One is immediately seduced by the richness of the colour and the distinguished compositions in which the figure of a woman is always the protagonist. When one begins to look more deeply into these compositions, it becomes apparent that all the women are missing at least one limb and that beneath the rich web of colour, black and white images of bombed out buildings appear.



Shiva Ahmadi, Mermaid, 2022, watercolour & screen print on paper, 76x105cm

Rather than just creating a one-dimensional political work, Ahmadi has made very complex and ravishingly beautiful images which, at first, seduce and pull us in, before revealing their real significance. The cathartic reaction the viewer receives is made all the more powerful when they realise what is actually taking place.

The exhibition will also feature one of the artist's heavily engraved golden oil barrels, which was featured in the exhibition Epic Iran at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2021, once again showing her ability in making a profound political statement in a highly subtle way.

Finally, we shall be showing both Ahmadi's animations, which have already been seen in many North American museums. These films are a real labour of love; the result of many hundreds of hours making an inordinate number of individual paintings. Working on her own, they are a moving testimony to the artist's total dedication to her art but also very rich and moving pieces of film animation.

Artists inspired by an art historical tradition to create contemporary art works is one of the bedrocks of the gallery programme and Shiva Ahmadi with her beautiful, powerful and highly profound art works, is a wonderful addition to this group.

Notes to editors:

Shiva Ahmadi was born in 1975 in Tehran. She now lives and works in the Bay Area in California. Her works are included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Morgan Library and Museum, New York, Asia Society Museum, San Francisco, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, The Detroit Institute of Arts, DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, the Farjam Collection and the TDIC Corporate Collection, Abu Dhabi. She was awarded the *Anonymous Was A Woman Award* and a *Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant*. A new monograph of her work was published by Skira. Her artworks were presented in the Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, at the University of California, Davis in 2022.

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