

SARADIPOUR Art Gallery is pleased to present “Persian Carpet”, a series of 12 large-scale acrylic paintings by Dariush Hosseini made in 2016 where he revisits a long-standing artistic heritage with a beautiful yet destructive twist. These hybrid carpet-paintings are being presented to the public for the first time.

Keywords: Persian carpet, Persian garden, locusts, decorative art, contemporary Iranian painting

Persian Carpet: The Beauty of Devastation

Persian gardens and Persian Carpet are two essential components of Iranian art and culture. These interconnected, millennia-old traditions are not just testimony to Persians’ creativity, technical prowess, and love for beauty but also represent the ideals, world views, hopes, and dreams of a nation. One embodies the idea of heaven on earth, while the other is a manifestation of both the artist’s inner and surrounding landscapes. Past or contemporary, it seems that every Iranian artist has been and will be tempted to grow their own garden and weave their own story at some point in their career.

Dariush Hosseini’s journey to the symbolic realm of carpets first began with the idea of Persian gardens. An admirer of the typical ‘bagh-e Irani’ or ‘Persian garden’ both as a place and a significant part of the Iranian philosophy of existence and architecture. They reflect the joy and peace of mind one often finds walking in these paradises on earth, away from the scorching sun. Yet, the artist’s subconscious soon took over and the scenery took an ominous tone: images of songbirds and flowers were soon replaced by demons and birds of prey and, insects began invading the space. There came a point where the garden was no more and the canvas was only populated by pests: a swarm of colorful locusts against a dark background. This powerful, symbolic image of death and destruction became the main element, and the core motif out of which the idea of “Persian carpet” was born. A multitude of overlaying locusts turned into the warps and wefts of these painterly ‘carpets’.

In terms of form and visual development, Hosseini gradually shifted away from his characteristic large, expressive brushstrokes to pick up finer brushes, use a predetermined palette with a dominant color for each work, and limit his forms to one repeated motif to stay true to the structure and formation process of Iranian carpets. The result was a somewhat minimalistic, decorative space with carpet design principles of symmetry and repetition reflected in the repetition of stylized locust figures – all from the side view – and the application of a limited set of colors across the canvas. Subtle traces of Hosseini’s expressive touch is also visible in these works, bringing nervous energy and vibration which sets the whole scene into motion as menacing as that of a sea of greedy locusts. Interestingly, while

the artist never intended to copy any particular traditional carpet color palettes, several of his paintings bring to mind certain signature color combinations from the rugs made in various Iranian regions: “Persian Carpet No. 7” and “8”, for instance, tend to remind us of Kashan and Turkman carpets with their deep blues and reds, while the “Persian Carpet No. 2” and “3” in paler, cooler tints resemble the bright blue, ivory and beige carpets of Kerman and Nain.

Hosseini’s “Persian Carpets” also follow the carpet weaving tradition in the sense that they reflect the artist’s mental and existential state in a metaphoric tone. Taking into consideration modern Iran’s critical political and economic conditions and the country’s environmental challenges all contributing to nationwide cynicism particularly in recent years, these acrylic carpet paintings offer pathological vistas of political, social, and environmental turmoil. A tale of human conditions told via the iconic image of a locust. “Persian Carpets” after all, have always had a geographic aspect to them, mirroring a carpet maker’s landscape, its mountains, trees, flowers, and wildlife woven in their symbolic and emotional colors.

Dariush Hosseini’s “Persian Carpets” are ambiguous yet potent creations. They are built upon seemingly contradictory values: the visual appeal of a swarm of locusts – appearing flat and three-dimensional at the same time – that have devoured a classical symbol of joy and beauty that is the Persian garden; a scene that, in reality, may have generated a sense of unease and repulsion, has become a colorful, yet thought-provoking feast for the eyes. Moreover, “Persian Carpet” poses as a strong case in the essential role of the title both in the formation and interpretation of a contemporary body of works. It is worth noting that the ban on importing Iranian rugs into the US has been brought back by the Trump administration since 2018, yet thanks to the transcending and liberating nature of art and creativity, Dariush Hosseini’s “Persian Carpets” can once again bridge the political gaps and become an ambassador of contemporary Iranian culture and aesthetics.

About the Artist

Iranian painter Dariush Hosseini (b. 1970, Tehran, Iran) lives and works in Tehran. He holds a BA in painting and an MA in illustration from the University of Tehran where he was a lecturer and a member of the Faculty of Fine Arts until 2011. He is also an associate at Iran Painters Association. Hosseini has held 11 solo drawing and painting exhibitions in Iran and more than 50 group and annual exhibitions in Iran, Turkey, France, and the United Arab Emirates. His most recent solo shows include “The Notes” at Emkan Art Gallery, Tehran (Tehran, 2018), “Wide Shut” at O Gallery, (Tehran, 2019), and “Infantry”, SARADIPOUR Art Gallery (Mahshahr, 2019). Hosseini has been a jury member in numerous visual arts festivals and has held many drawing and painting workshops, lectures and artist talks in Iran. He has also written several articles and reviews for Iranian visual arts magazines. In spring 2016, an episode called “The Blues of the Painter from Kargar Street”, from a TV documentary series named “Wage”,

focused on Dariush Hosseini's life where director Babak Behdad's camera followed the artist for a couple of days as he made life drawings of subjects on the streets and then continued to work in his studio. The episode was aired in June 2016 on Iranian public television.

Dariush Hosseini's body of paintings and drawings consists of oscillations between figuration and abstraction, while rarely adhering to a pure end of this spectrum. Hosseini's works show his strong sense of structure and composition, yet they are often executed liberally through direct painterly actions, highlighting the process of coming about rather than being the product of predefined studies. On a quest for an iconic image, each time Hosseini invents a specific visual language that would suit his theme, whether it is the human tragedy, a political perspective, or socio-cultural commentary, and has thus been constantly expanding his formal and spatial horizons. Like most fellow Iranian artists, Hosseini's training was based on Western pictorial values, yet flatness and widespread use of motifs – qualities associated with Persian painting traditions – are increasingly evident in his work.

EDUCATION

1995 BA in painting, University of Tehran, Tehran

2000 MA in illustration, University of Tehran, Tehran

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019 *Infantry*, SARADIPOUR Art Gallery, Mahshahr, Iran

2019 *Wide Shut*, O Gallery, Tehran

2018 *The Notes*, Emkan Art Gallery, Tehran

2014 *Free Zone*, Azad Art Gallery, Tehran

2011 *Infantry*, Azad Art Gallery, Tehran

2006, Drawing Exhibition, Azad Art Gallery, Tehran

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019 *Instant*, Emkan Art Gallery, Tehran

2019 *Still Life*, Vartan Gallery, Tehran

2018 *Human Geography*, Vista Art Gallery, Tehran

2008 *1st international Fajr Visual Arts Festival*, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

2008 *7th Iran Painting Biennial*, Saba Art Gallery, Tehran

1999 *Iran's Third Contemporary Drawing Festival*, Imam Ali Museum, Tehran

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About SARADIPOUR Art Gallery

SARADIPOUR Art Gallery is a contemporary gallery dedicated first and foremost to introducing Middle Eastern visual arts. Founded by Hassan Saradipour in 2018, our gallery serves as a platform to showcase both emerging and established artists internationally by organizing exhibitions, defining regional and international competitions and joint events, and publishing bodies of works by artists.

As the cradle of civilizations, we believe that the historically, culturally and geopolitically significant region of the Middle East and North Africa is still suffering from the lack of a robust, dedicated platform to represent its creative forces, and all that has been done so far has come from a rather external viewpoint. Our mission is to be the voice that comes from the inside out. With our passionate, relatively young team of various creative backgrounds, our vision is to expand our represented area from Iran to its neighboring countries and towards other countries in the rest of ME, North Africa and beyond, following traces of fresh potentials, cultural affinities and a mutual desire to express and grow.

As a step in this direction and a creative response to COVID19 challenges, we launched Khor Art Initiative in march 2020; a nation-wide open call with the objectives of bringing financial and creative vitality back to the art community by creating a competitive event and promoting the winners via organizing multi-platform online shows and introducing the artists on social media. The project proved successful. A high profile regional and international jury of gallerists, curators, critics, and artists including Christian Viveros-Fauné, Gorka Garcia Herrera, Iva Gueorguieva, Janet Rady, Karim Nasr, Katie Grinnan, Kenny Schacter, Nancy Adajania, and Nicola Samori graciously accepted to review the submissions. This resulted in the selection of 55 mostly little-known, young painters of great quality and dedication. Online Exhibition is currently ongoing until the end of August. Due to the pandemic and to further support the

artists, the gallery has waived its commission from sales in this event. Our next step is to turn 'Khor' into an annual art prize whose scope will expand each year to include other countries in the Middle Eastern and North African region. Moreover, our long-term plan is to develop Khor into a magazine of international standards dedicated to visual arts developments of the region.