

Intro

Saradipour Gallery hosts "Beyond Alienation," the new series by figurative artist and art educator Abbas Nasl Shamloo (b. 1981). The present series began nearly a year after the artist's move to the lush, ever-changing nature of northern Iran and keen observation of his surrounding landscapes, with improvised, sketchbook drawings of darkly framed scenery followed by larger-scale paintings of vast landscapes rendered in a restrained palette.

Abbas Nasl Shamloo has been known for his particular view of the longstanding genre of landscape art. His quiet playgrounds and somber scenery often depict minuscule solitary figures and wandering animals predestined to fail in finding any solace or shelter either in their built or natural environments. In these melancholic vistas, natural elements appear to be the only truly dynamic characters; trees and grasses dancing in the wind in liberal brushstrokes and various greens break the prevailing silence and appear in clear contrast with greyish, plain man-made structures.

Shamloo's latest series is a continuation of his explorations deep into the heart of nature. He has for years been preoccupied with the reality of humans' loss of touch with their inner and outer nature and the forms we see in this series continue to appear representational and true to our objective reality; however, what sets Abbas Shamloo's *post-alienation* vistas apart from the works of a majority of realistic landscape artists and even from the artist's own earlier works is his distinctly different process of creation in this series. The origin of this cold and impenetrable nature is not to be found in naturalistic studies or photographs taken from the environment but rather in the artist's mind. The painterly expedition which has led to the formation of these familiar-looking shores, structures and trees ironically began by making free abstract marks and lines on the surface, developing further through a multitude of constructive and destructive acts without knowing in advance what the end result would look like and was finally completed once the artist had gradually removed all elements deemed *excessive*; a process which, borrowing from the sculptural technique of the same name, the artist prefers to call "reductive". What we see is a final visual narrative sitting on a throne of layers over layers of earlier unfinished ones; a quality which not only lends deeper sense to these works but also brings special aesthetic robustness and believability to the images. Thus, through the chemistry of painting, the artist's inner realm is materialized in the form of seemingly objective external landscapes.

Although the works of the present series appear devoid of those human figures of Shamloo's previous works, the intimate viewpoints of the drawings and the abandoned, temporary or dilapidated structures of the paintings serve to indicate some aspects of human presence in one way or another.

In terms of technique and painterly approach, we may discern a change of palette from more vibrant colors to restricted tones and a limited, more selective use of the impasto technique. These choices together with a rather horizontal order dominating most of the painting compositions bring a kind of quieting, static minimalism to the vistas which, in spite of overall compliance with rules of perspective and the depth created by many overlapping layers, results in quasi-flatness; a modern quality which underscores the enigmatic impenetrability of these beautiful yet ethereal landscapes.

The title of the series contains a critical question: will this alienation ever end in reconciliation?