



Warrior Riding, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 220 x 200 cm

ROSHANAK AMINELAHI GORDAFRAID

13 September – 26 October 2017

Opening reception: Wednesday, 13 September from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (12 Alserkal Avenue) is pleased to announce *Gordafraid*, the solo exhibition of Dubai-based painter Roshanak Aminela.

About the Show

In her debut exhibition with Ayyam Gallery, Aminela will present a new series of mixed media paintings that are inspired by ancient mythology, such as the *Shahnameh*, an epic poem written in 1000 A.D. Included in the exhibition are monumental portraits of Persian warriors alongside the objects that represent specific stories. For the artist, these captivating figures not only speak of her Iranian heritage and the rich culture in which she was raised, but also reflect the diversity of Dubai, where she has lived and worked for more than a decade. Although the new series was composed with the 'filter' of Persian culture, her latest paintings reflect universal subjects like war, love, and heroism—poetic themes that are shared among the many cultures of this cosmopolitan city.

The show's title is adapted from an included work that depicts the heroine *Gordafarid*, the powerful, defiant daughter of a celebrated warrior who is said to have protected Persia from an invading army after the defense's leader was captured. Joining the battle, she disguised herself as a male soldier delayed the approaching army by boldly charging at them. In a recent interview, the artist remarked that when she heard the story of Kurdish women taking up arms to protect their villages in Northern Syria, she was immediately reminded of the story of Gordafarid.

As the centrepiece of the exhibition, Aminelahi's *Gordafarid* (2017) is the largest featured work, anchoring the series with its towering imagery. In addition to her larger-than-life persona, Gordafarid is portrayed with raised brush marks that are applied using a distinct approach of mixing and layering media. The resulting textures give the illusion of movement, as though her characters are shown in mid scene. Aminelahi describes this technique as a way of 'creating a certain kind of pixel with paint,' following in the tradition of the Impressionists, who explored colour relationships with pointillist brushstrokes. In this way, Aminelahi reactivates regional aesthetics, drawing from a variety of sources, while building on the broader history of painting.

About the Artist

Roshanak Aminelahi is an Iranian artist who primarily works in painting and drawing. Aminelahi initially trained in graphic design at Alzahra University (1995) and Azad University (2000) in Tehran, and is currently pursuing a second graduate degree in illustration from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, California. In Iran, she studied under influential artists such as Hannibal Alkhas and Bahram Kalthornia. In 2013, she began working closely with Reza Derakshani in Dubai. Aminelahi was an Associate Professor at Azad University in Tehran and currently teaches at its UAE branch. Additionally, she has lectured and taught classes on graphic design and advertising at various colleges.

Aminelahi's expressionist paintings range from abstraction to figuration, and often use allegory and symbolism to address urgent themes, such as the subject of war or social conflict. Ancient mythology and poetry, particularly the *Shahnameh*, have been central to her recent works, which are executed with heavy layers of paint and thick brush marks that create textured, multidimensional imagery. Aminelahi's tactile surfaces recall the sculptural approach to painting that was pioneered by twentieth-century San Francisco Bay Area painters like Jay DeFeo, while her pointillist works on paper are reminiscent of the mosaic tile work that can be found throughout the Islamic architecture of Iran.

Aminelahi has widely exhibited at art spaces and institutions in Iran, including Azad Art Gallery and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts. In addition to her career as an artist and academic, she has worked as a graphic designer and art director for over two decades. Recent solo exhibitions for the artist include Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2017) and Etemad Gallery, Tehran (2015). Aminelahi's work was also highlighted in a collective exhibition at the Salsali Private Museum in 2016.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 13 September - 26 October 2017

Opening Reception: Wednesday, 13 September from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Regular Hours: Sun – Thurs: 10.00 am to 6.00 pm, Saturdays 12.00 to 6.00 pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery Dubai (12 Alserkal Avenue), Al Quoz 1, Dubai

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