



Entry to New York, 2016, (detail), oil on canvas, 200 x 470 cm

AFSHIN PIRHASHEMI *HOUSE OF CARDS*

13 March – 25 May 2017

Opening reception & DIFC Art Nights: Monday, 13 March from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (DIFC) is pleased to present *House of Cards*, the solo exhibition of Tehran-based painter Afshin Pirhashemi.

About the Show

House of Cards features new large-scale works that describe how the dominant role of media in everyday life increasingly shapes worldviews. Pirhashemi's latest series shows the artist continuing his exploration of monumental imagery as he relies on allegory and the implied theatrics of black and white scenes to emphasise the underlying message of his works.

In recent years, Pirhashemi has incorporated references to popular culture in his paintings. By including Marlon Brando's character from *The Godfather* in *Entry to New York* (2016), for example, the artist offers an analogy of how power and ruthlessness are normalised (and glamorised) through mass media, while compassion and empathy are less valued.

Other compositions show Pirhashemi's iconic female protagonists as femme fatale characters that determine the power dynamics of dramatic scenes, subverting traditional gender norms in the process.



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Architectural monuments like the White House and the Statue of Liberty invoke the current state of international politics in a pair of works. Pirhashemi's reference to the U.S. election depicts the absurd nature of a world informed by television and celebrity culture, where fiction is blurred with reality through scripted scenes and social media have formed a realm where real life plays out. In contrast to this widespread dependency on mediated reality, Pirhashemi reminds viewers of what lies beyond their screens by alluding to the growing, war induced crises that are becoming impossible to ignore.

Images of mass exodus and violence refer to the plight of millions of migrants who are currently seeking asylum in Europe. In several paintings, the displaced are followed by a menacing pack of wolves and appear in transit, surrounded by desolate terrain and papyrus plants that indicate large bodies of water. A horseback army of armored knights is shown in the background, indicating the threat of violence that always looms in the distance.



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About the Artist

Afshin Pirhashemi examines the complexities of life in modern day Iran through photorealist portraits that often bleed at their edges into expressionist compositions, becoming dramatic tableaux. Pirhashemi is fascinated by the role of women in contemporary Iranian society and their relationships to the world around them. Tapping into the psychosocial dimensions of contemporary Iran, Pirhashemi explores manifestations of power as they appear or are negotiated through gendered bodies and spaces.

Born in 1974 in Urmia, Afshin Pirhashemi now lives and works in Tehran. Pirhashemi studied at the Rome Art Academy and completed his artistic training at Iran's Azad University. His works are housed in public and private collections throughout the Middle East and Europe, and he is the recipient of awards from the 2003 Tehran 6th International Art Biennial, and the 2004 Beijing Art Biennial Award. Solo exhibitions include Ayyam Gallery, London (2014); Ayyam Gallery, Dubai (2015, 2013); Homa

art Gallery, Tehran (2009); Seyhoun Art Gallery, Tehran (2005); and Barg Gallery, Tehran (2005). Collective exhibitions include Ayyam Gallery, Beirut (2017); In & Out, Milan (2009); Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran (2006); Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran (2004, 2003).

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut and Dubai, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts programme have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also contributed to recent efforts that document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 13 March - 25 May 2017

Opening Reception: Monday, 13 March from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Regular Hours: Sun – Thurs: 10.00 am to 10.00 pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery, Gate Village 3, DIFC, Dubai

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