

**PRESS RELEASE**

Ayyam Gallery  
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**Afshin Pirhashemi: *Seduction***

10 April - 24 May 2014

Opening reception: Thursday, 10 April, from 6-8pm

Ayyam Gallery London is pleased to announce *Seduction*, Iranian artist Afshin Pirhashemi's first UK solo exhibition, to be held from 10 April until 24 May. This exhibition features Pirhashemi's signature black and white paintings depicting thickly tressed women in the guise of temptress, seductress, repentant, as well as those ultimately beyond redemption. In a departure from his monochromatic canvases of late, the artist also presents two striking large-scale works in colour.

Pirhashemi's works need little introduction for who can forget being in the presence of a beauty clad in all black, cleavage bearing, she points a loaded gun at the viewer, making us witness and target to her violent gesture. Ever powerful, the women Pirhashemi chooses to depict in painting are ones who have been wronged, and often those who have done wrong depending on the vantage point taken. In this series, the women are partially veiled or wrapped in chadors, while at other times they announce their love for the United States, signalling the dichotomy of identity that modern day Iranian women confront on a daily basis. These women long to align with the West, yet at the core are also linked to local identity in dress and social expectation in the domestic sphere.

Pirhashemi's highly detailed canvases incorporate historical references. In one of the impactful new works, the artist attempts to encapsulate both history and geography with the inclusion of an Islamic astrolabe, references to Western psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and mystic poet of the East, Jalalu'ddin Rumi. In a highly orchestrated scene, the painter places his audience face to face with a band of women who come together to produce a new world order, some obscuring identity by wearing "Scream" masks and carnival masks while others wield sabres. Clustered, the power of the women is exponential as wolves roam in the distant background. The masked women suggest all is not as it seems and that something is askew in the order of things.

The intensity reached in these new canvases surpasses the already heightened feelings created by Pirhashemi's previous monochromatic works. Further, the insertion of colour such as chestnut and copper into the hair of his deadly heroines and the symbolic eagle as violent bird of prey imbue the works with a ferocity, blood, lust and vigour that is contrasted with the morbidity and doom of black in which the women are usually cloaked.

## **Notes to Editors**

### **About the Artist**

The work of Iranian painter Afshin Pirhashemi examines the complexities of life in modern day Iran. On sparse or empty backgrounds, his largely monochromatic, photo-realistic depictions of women nod to gothic fantasy in an exploration of issues of contemporary social and political identity.

Born in 1974 in Urmia, Afshin Pirhashemi now lives and works in Tehran. 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, Dubai (2013); Homa art Gallery, Tehran (2009); Seyhoun Art Gallery, Tehran (2005); and Barg Gallery, Tehran (2005). Group exhibitions include In & Out, Milan (2009); Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran (2006); Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran (2004, 2003).

### **About Ayyam Gallery**

Founded in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is recognised as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Middle Eastern artists with an international profile and museum presence. Spaces in Beirut, Dubai, Jeddah, and London have further succeeded in showcasing the work of Middle Eastern artists with the aim of educating a wider audience about the art of this significant region.

### **Exhibition Facts**

Exhibition Dates: 10 April - 24 May, 2014

Preview Reception: Thursday, 10 April from 6-8pm

Location: 143 New Bond Street

1st Floor

W1S 2TP, London

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