



Mana Contemporary Presents:
In Between: Contemporary Iranian Art (Part I)
Curated by Shahram Karimi



Tala Madani, *Spill*, 2006. Courtesy of Jane Lombard Gallery, New York.

April 30 – August 26, 2017
5th Floor Gallery

In Between: Contemporary Iranian Art (Part I) is the first part of a two-part exhibition series that illustrates contemporary practices among Iranian artists.

Artists include:
David Abir
Afruz Amighi
Shoja Azari
Reza Derakshani
Fereidoun Ghaffari
Hadi Hazavei
Sarah Issakharian
Y.Z. Kami
Tala Madani
Shirin Neshat
Nicky Nodjoumi
Raha Raissnia
Farshid Shafiey
Manoucher Yektai

Art is the most intense form of individualism that the world has known.

–Oscar Wilde

We have art, so that we may not perish by the truth.

–Friedrich Nietzsche

What Nietzsche means by truth is the mordant logic of everyday life: a banal world of work and suffering. The world of the living, according to Nietzsche, is a world filled with horror and fear. Art, by contrast, is a refuge capable of redeeming life with its beauty. In distinguishing between the truth of living and the art of living, Nietzsche posits the aesthetic or artistic viewpoint as an alternative to logic. In other words, what makes life tolerable—with all its suffering—is the ability to interpret it artistically. Beauty thus conceived remains outside the ken of mere rational faculties.

–Shahram Karimi

During the past decade or so, we have witnessed serious attention toward Iranian artists and their work. Through numerous international exhibitions and shows, Iranian art has established a strong and clear position in the art world. We therefore must begin to ask ourselves which distinctive characteristics contemporary Iranian art presents in relation to Iran's ancient and abundant cultural heritage, and how artists living outside of Iran can contribute. The answer to these questions will lead us toward a descriptive understanding of the new Iranian cultural identity. In order to reach a valid answer we must strive to avoid the familiar clichés, and find a more judicious understanding of the visions of Iranian art.

National artistic identity, even socio-cultural identity, is a product of the sum of individual creativity. Artists combine their roots and heritage with the influences of their particular present-day contexts. The common indicators of traditional culture no longer represent the identity of modern artists. Part of the artist's task is to combine historical symbolism with signs that can be read through a critical lense of the present day. The Iranian artists in this exhibition are selected to represent modern Iranian art and society.

This selection includes work where each artist's personal approach is evident—where the work

illuminates clues to the artist's essence. While varied in form and content, both the ideas of authenticity and unique gestures unite the works. Each artist renders an exceptional sense of spontaneity, freedom, and resolve, which suggest the character of the maker—exploring issues of culture and society within larger historical and contemporary contexts.

Over a two-part series of exhibitions, the first show, *In Between*, includes works by established Iranian artists living in the U.S. who reflect on their host culture. When it comes to art, individuality rises above nationality. The show aims to stimulate conversation, inspire creativity, and foster understanding of contemporary art in the context of today's society between the two countries.

The second exhibition, *Art from Iran*, will expand on *In Between*, and offer a new definition of contemporary Iranian art and society. Particular emphasis will be placed on video art and other works of female Iranian artists who have great difficulty showing their work in present-day Iran.

ABOUT MANA CONTEMPORARY

A leading arts community dedicated to fostering and cultivating creativity.

Our philosophy, rooted in rich histories of the Seven Liberal Arts—where interdisciplinarity was seen as a solution to ending conventional thinking—intends to create a dialogue between the liberal arts, visual arts, and new media. Our purpose is to provide the kindling needed to spark opportunities among individuals and communities for the open exchange of ideas—and ultimately exercise our freedom as autonomous thinkers.

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