

مانیا کبری آزاد و اخلاقی نمبر اعلیٰ جانزادہ نابید آریں بہار بہمانی
فتنہ داد خواہ فی ظمہ امداد یان یا نمبرین اسفندیاری کلنار فتنی
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طابہ صمدی تازی زہرا شہا مست پور
دلبر شہباز مریم سرین لوپو
شیدہ تانی
نیرا وار کاسینی
مریم زندگی

Masques of Shahrazad

Introduction

Masques of Shahrazad – Three Generations of Iranian women artists

"The masque has its origins in a folk tradition where masked players would unexpectedly call on a nobleman in his hall, dancing and bringing gifts on certain nights of the year, or celebrating dynastic occasions. Spectators were invited to join in the dancing. At the end, the players would take off their masks to reveal their identities."

Anon

"[Shahrazad] had perused the books, annals and legends of preceding Kings, and the stories, examples and instances of bygone men and things; indeed it was said that she had collected a thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers. She had perused the works of the poets and knew them by heart; she had studied philosophy and the sciences, arts and accomplishments; and she was pleasant and polite, wise and witty, well read and well bred."

Sir Richard Burton, The Book of One Thousand Nights and A Night (trans.1885)

Shahrazad saved women's lives by telling stories. This exhibition takes its cue from her telling, its inspiration from her style and its masks from the complex dances of its artists.

Opening on International Women's day, thirty years on from the upheavals of the Iranian Revolution, **Masques of Shahrazad** is an opportunity to survey the Iranian artistic landscape of the past three decades. It is a moment to celebrate established artists and to uncover the new names that will bear the standard for women's art in Iran for decades to come.

Irrespective of gender the lives of artists are rarely simple and straightforward and for nearly four decades the lives of artists in Iran have been further disturbed by the turmoil of revolution. Add gender to the mix and the difficult business of being an artist at all becomes well nigh impossible, yet these women, and many others like them, have managed it with courage and panache.

Presented by Candlestar and the Day Art Gallery of Tehran, **Masques of Shahrazad** brings together 28 prominent Iranian women artists. The works included in this show trace the development of Iranian art and artists over the past four decades – an era when the national identity of Iran has been radically reshaped. The work shown in **Masques** offer a glimpse behind the mask and hints at the feints and stratagems that each of these women have had to adopt to evade, beguile and charm and, in so doing, sustain their artistic endeavours.

This is the first time an exhibition has brought together such a range of Iranian women artists on an international stage. But why Iranian women and why now? Our goals are clear. Through the presentation of this diverse, vibrant body of work we are attempting to confound a lazy Western stereotype of Iranian women that sees them as veiled and passive. Furthermore, at a moment when the international art markets are waking up to the huge potential of Iranian art, we seek to attract the attention of the major auction houses, museums and collectors and over time to engineer a small shift in the number of women whose work features regularly in the major international art sales and the major international collections. As one of our collaborators put it, 'The Silk Road is busy again, full once more of life and colour.' This is a unique opportunity to encounter these women and to engage with modern Iranian art and the contemporary issues it raises on both a domestic and global scale. Their varying attitudes and work will challenge perceptions and provide a window onto a rich, but sometimes misunderstood, cultural heritage.

The contrasts between the generations and indeed between the artists themselves relate to their personal experiences and to their relationship with Iran. Out of this comes an interesting dialogue that **Masques of Shahrazad** explores and showcases for the first time outside of Iran.

The '79 Revolution marked a key turning point for Iranian artists. All of a sudden they faced a choice - accept new limitations or live in exile. The artists in this exhibition represent both choices, and the impact of their decisions is reflected in style and subject matter in this show. The exhibition illustrates the varying themes these women have chosen to engage with through their work. The visitor will find unexpected juxtapositions that will surprise even the cognoscenti. All artists strive to express the strength of their ideas through varying content and form; but the sense of an Iranian heritage is a constant and is articulated in many ways. Just like Shahrazad, these three generations of women have constantly manipulated and reinterpreted their vernacular to pursue their artistic ambition and to create a fresh narrative of Iranian identity.

Masques of Shahrazad showcases three generations of remarkable women artists, revealing through their work the vitality and originality of the Iranian art scene. This exhibition is a rare opportunity to see such work and to experience the captivating creativity with which these artists address issues and express ideas that many have shied away from. The result should be a celebration of contemporary Iranian art - but that is not for us to judge.

Fariba Farshad
Ferial Safahshour

Exhibiting Artists

Mania Akbari
Azadeh Akhlaghi
Samira Alikhanzadeh
Nahid Arian
Bahar Behbahani
Fataneh Dadkhah
Fatemeh Emdadian
Yasmine Esfandiary
Golnaz Fathi
Pariyoush Ganji
Shadi Ghadirian
Yassi Golshani
Shahla Habibi
Mansoureh Hosseini
Maryam Javaheri
Shila Kalamian
Delaram Kia
Farideh Lashai
Farah Ossouli
Raziyeh Poursalari
Azadeh Razaghdoost
Tahereh Samadi Tari
Zahra Shahamatpour
Delbar Shahbaz
Maryam Shirinlou
Shideh Tami
Gizella Varga Sinai
Maryam Zandi

Masques of Shahrazad – Three Generations
of Iranian women artists' is an exhibition of
contemporary Iranian painting and photography,
produced by Candlestar in association with
the Day Art Gallery, Tehran
For further information please go to
www.candlestargallery.com



A z a d e h R a z a g h d o o s t

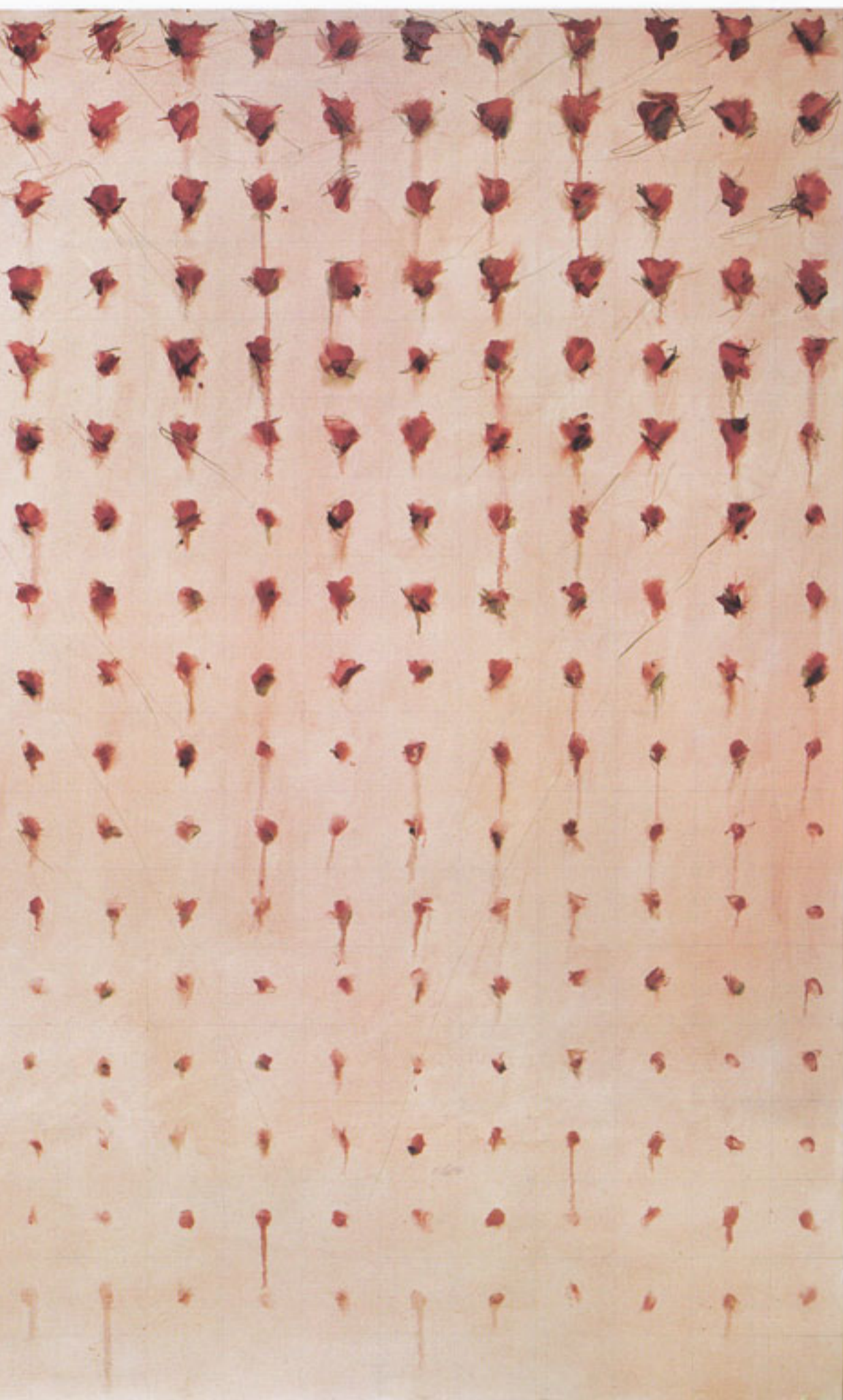
Born 1979, Tehran, Iran

Diploma in Painting, Academy of Fine Art, Tehran, 1997

BA from Art University, Tehran, 2002

Azadeh has always been captivated by the colour red. Blood, love, and passion all convey the visceral reactions she experiences while working and at the moment she is confronted with the finished work. Her hands are her tools, the controlled weapons with which she swiftly wounds the fleshy backgrounds of her canvases, bloodying them with a weeping rose, a beating heart or a uterine form. The one constant element in Azadeh's work is the colour red with all its eroticism, love and remembrance. Red infallibly drew her to the rose and the heart and a series called *Les Fleurs du Mal* after the collection of poetry by Charles Baudelaire, not because it harboured any ideas of controversy but because it demonstrated to viewers, beauty at the moment of its death and deterioration. The surface of the canvas became a scene filled with accidents, impulses and physical reactions creating one of two outcomes; unrecognizable violence or pleasant ornamentation, final testaments to love's and life's suffering and inevitable end. With these thoughts she wounds her canvases further, scratching the words of William Blake "Oh Rose, thou art sick!". She is a member of Badaneh Group, Iranian Society of Painters, and the Visual Arts Society of Iran.

She has exhibited widely in Iran, the UAE and Europe.



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Untitled
Series: Sick Rose
Oil and Pencil on Canvas
180x130 cm
2008