



THEARTBLOG

An insider's view of the UAE's art scene

Edited by
Anna Seaman



November 29, 2016 - Azadeh Razaghdoost Through Air Where Roses of Black Gunpowder Burst from 'Letters' series. Courtesy of Sophia Contemporary Gallery and Azadeh Razaghdoost

An interview with Azadeh Razaghdoost, a contemporary Iranian artist

[Anna Seaman](#) | December 3, 2016

Today we catch up with Azadeh Razaghdoost, an Iranian artist whose first solo show in London recently opened at Sophia Contemporary Gallery. She is based in Karaj, Iran and belongs to a new generation of young female artists who are powering a new era of creativity in the region. She paints abstract works and then finds links in them with the work of European Romantic poets.

I got the chance to ask her a few questions:

Q: As an abstract artist, do you feel it is important to explain your inspiration behind your paintings as it might not otherwise be obvious?

Not necessarily. There are concepts that are unconsciously hidden in my works, they are everybody's main life experiences such as sickness, life, death, love and lust and that is why they are so fundamental to me. My works do not intend to express feelings and emotions, they are more like a living organism which is constantly evolving.

Q: Can you explain your technique ?

My technique is to pour and arrange pigments across the canvas. I see this as a spattering of life and emotion. There is no prescribed technique to my works, it is more an outpouring of emotions. The tranquillity of the white of the canvas with a compressed amount of red together allows me to create an intense emotional expression. As a result, the sensitivity and strength captured in my paintings, visually expresses an outpouring of emotions.

I use fine pencil markings, resembling something between letters and musical notes, to create structure on the canvas which I then reinforce with colour or paint over and over again to completely saturate the canvas. Usually I don't go back to work on a piece again. Once it is finished I leave it like that.

Q: Why do you choose European Romantic poets for your inspiration rather than say, Iranian ones?

I don't paint based on poems. Poems are not my initial starting point. I do not read a poem and then start painting. It is the other way round: I start painting what I feel and let my own emotions guide the painting. I use poems in hindsight to name my series because of the affinity between the meaning of these poems and my paintings. I like for example Baudelaire's crucial expression of life and find it resonates with my own attitude towards life. I also read Iranian poets like Nima Yooshij, Ahmad Shamlou and Forouq Farrokhzad. However, there is no reason why Iranian poetry should impress me more than European poetry. An artist is free to be influenced based on their own attitude and ideology independent of their background; one should not be restricted to choosing Iranian poetry and literature just because they are Iranian. It is also important to note that poetry is not directly the subject or substance of my works. Mostly I have been inspired by a poem, which has caused the expansion of a series of works.

Q: Do you also draw on your Iranian heritage - for example in your use of the flower motif?

I live in the Middle East but I see myself as an artist who works against the trends in the region. My works originate mostly from Western origins; however this should not make a difference either way. What is really important is my deeply emotional viewpoint towards my surroundings such as objects and nature as opposed to just my heritage.

Q: Do you feel your work will be received differently in the UK or are you painting for a universal audience?

I do think my works will be received differently. I think this difference comes down to the difference in philosophical taste in each area. The English, due to their Anglosaxon background, seem to have a more positivist viewpoint, which may mean my works will be understood more clearly in the UK. In my opinion, the difference is large among the audiences of my works from this philosophical point of view. However, art is something that transcends borders and does not refer to any specific geography. What is occurring in the art world in the Middle East is just the same as everywhere else contrary to common misconception, as the Middle East is so different to how it was 15 years ago. For European audiences the exhibition of an artist from the Middle East could be more interesting from a sociological point of view.

Azadeh Razaghdoost: Recipe for a Poem runs until February 18 at Sophia Contemporary Gallery, London. www.sophiacontemporary.com





