

SOODY SHARIFI



Fashion Week, 152 x 101 cm, archival inkjet print, 2010

Artist Statement

The *Maxiature* series intervene and interject issues from contemporary culture into a traditional art form by way of photography. Highly sophisticated pieces of visual language, Persian miniatures often explore the tension between public and private spaces. They also offer the viewer idealized vignettes from daily life behind the walls of aristocratic court culture. The *Maxiature* series expands on this premise of opening up the private spaces of homes to give the audience a privileged view of contemporary Islamic culture. This rupture occurs on two levels: that of the medium, whereby photography intervenes in the tradition of painted miniatures, as well as on the level of the narrative itself, with incongruous and at times humorous results.

Persian miniatures traditionally depict court spectacles, scenes of the hunt and battle, grand receptions and amorous encounters between persons who are more typologies than individuals. The figures in *Maxiatures*, though, are sourced from both staged and documentary images. By blurring the line between reality and fiction, the *Maxiatures* hint at a tension between traditional Islamic society and imported, Western influences. A region too often depicted in black and white is revealed as colorful, complex and carnivalesque as any, where old and new values, East and West can collide in dialogue. Via the mash-up of contemporary culture and historical fiction, the challenges facing Islam and modernity are played out in the composition and the very medium of the miniature.

My work aims to add further layers of complexity and interpretation to subject matter—be it Islam, modernity, or youth culture—often depicted in a monolithic manner. The Islamic arts, from their preference for decoration over figuration, to the production of the art itself, challenge the very understanding we have in the West of both art and the artist. The tradition of miniatures are exemplary of this. Essentially secular compositions, they are rare examples of figurative work aimed for an exclusively courtly audience. The *Maxiatures* highlight this paradox by demystifying contemporary life in the Islamic Republic of Iran: not only bringing the intimacy of the private sphere out into the public but translating them to an international audience via the collective experience of globalization.

By adding further layers to the existing fabric of the original miniature, I intend to draw a line of continuity between the content and crafts of the 15th century through to the 21st century. Miniatures were made by a workshop of artisans of cosmopolitan influences: from Mughal to Persian to Arab. Via the *Maxiatures*, I hope to contribute to the collaborative nature of these pieces, bringing a further, creolized understanding of Western and Middle Eastern identity to the sophisticated nature of these originals.

GALERIE KASHYA HILDEBRAND

Talstrasse 58 8001 Zurich Switzerland +41 44 210 02 02

info@kashyahildebrand.org

www.kashyahildebrand.org

SOODY SHARIFI

Born in Tehran, Iran in 1955

Lives and works in Houston, Texas

EDUCATION

- 2004 Master of Fine Arts in Studio Photography, University of Houston, TX, USA
1982 Bachelor of Science, Industrial Engineering, University of Houston, TX, USA

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *Assumption of others*, Gallery F15, Oslo, Norway
2007 *Garden of Persian Delight*, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston
2006 *Maxiature*, Photographic Center Valokuvia Peri, Kuopio, Finland
Teenagers and Maxiatures, Northern photographic Center, Helsinki, Finland
2005 *Proud and Sad / Wrong and Strong, Women and Their Work*, Austin, Texas
Moslem Teenagers, Blue Sky Gallery, Portland, Oregon
2004 *Moslem Teenagers*, Dom Fotografie, Poprad, Slovakia
Simply Girls, Center for Photography, Woodstock, NY
Veiled / Unveiled, with Saida Fagala, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas
2002 *Women of Cover*, FotoFest, Houston, Texas

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 *Jameel Prize tour*, Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA, USA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, USA; *Jameel Prize tour*, Casa Arabe, Madrid, Spain
2011 *Jameel Prize tour*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK
2009 Baku Biennale, December 15, Baku, Russia
Emancipated, Haggerty Gallery Dallas, TX, USA
2008 *We The People...*, Art League Houston, TX, USA
Mechanical perception, FotoFest, Houston, TX, USA
Puberty, Haugar Art Museum, Tonsburg, Norway
2007 *Mix! Diverse Artists' Approaches*, Dallas Contemporary Museum, Dallas, TX, USA
Continuity and Change: Islamic Tradition in Contemporary Art, Williamsburg Art & Historical Center, Brooklyn, NY, USA
2006 *4 Artists 4 Stories*, Contemporary Museum of Art Houston, TX, USA
Ground, The Cultural Arts Council of Houston Fellowship Series, Houston, TX, USA
Spell of Childhood, Backlight05: The 7th International Photography Triennial, Art Museum, Tampere, Finland
REALITÄTEN II: Gesellschaftswerte, Fotogalerie Wien, Vienna, Austria
2005 *Co-existence*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX, USA
2004 Pingyao International Photography Exhibition, Pingyao, China
Sharpening The Point, Blaffer Gallery, Houston, TX, USA
Layered Evidence, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX, USA
2003 Houston Center of Photography Fellowship Exhibition, Houston, TX, USA
Open Exhibition, Visual Art Alliance, Houston, TX, USA
2002 Northlight Southwest 2002, Northlight Gallery, ASU, Tucson, Arizona, USA
Membership Exhibition, Houston Center of Photography, Houston, TX, USA
2001 Membership Exhibition, Houston Center of Photography, Houston, TX, USA
Graduate Student Exhibition, Blaffer Gallery, Houston, TX, USA
2000 Fresh Mix, Video Installation, Community Artist's Collective, Houston, TX, USA

GALERIE KASHYA HILDEBRAND

Talstrasse 58 8001 Zurich Switzerland +41 44 210 02 02

info@kashyahildebrand.org

www.kashyahildebrand.org