



3Y19D | 150 x 150 CM | OIL ON CANVAS | 2006

Solo Exhibitions

- 2006** *Threshold of Hap*, Extraspazio, Rome
Albareh Gallery, Bahrain
Operation Supermarket, with Shirin Aliabadi,
The Counter Gallery, London
Operation Supermarket, with Shirin Aliabadi,
Kolding Design School, Copenhagen
The Third Line Gallery, Dubai
- 2004** Extraspazio, Rome Art Space Gallery, curated by
Isabelle Van Den Eynde De Rivieren, Dubai
Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, New York
- 2003** Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, Geneva
Leighton House Museum, curated by Rose Issa, London

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2006** *Iran.com*, Museum of New Art, Freiburg
Images of the Middle East, Copenhagen
Art without Borders, Armenian Centre for
Contemporary Experimental Art, Yerevan
V-Day, Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, New York
Word into Art. Artists of the Modern Middle East,
curated by Venetia Porter, British Museum, London
Ethnic Marketing, 13 Vanak Street Gallery, Tehran
- 2005** *After the Revolution*, curated by Octavio Zaya, KM
Kulturunea Erakustaretoa, San Sebastian

quasi niente / almost nothing, Extraspazio, Rome
Welcome, curated by Farhad Moshiri, Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, New York
It's Hard to Touch the Real, Kunstverein, Munich — Tallinn Kunsthalle, Tallinn — Unge Kunstnerers Samfund UKS (The Association of Young Artists), Oslo — Yeans (artist-run-space), Gothenburg — Bildmuseet Umeå, University College of Fine Arts, Umeå, Sweden

- 2004** *Entfernte Nähe*, curated by Rose Issa, House of World Cultures, Berlin
Iran under the Skin, curated by Firouz Firouz, CCCB, Barcelona
Ethnic Marketing, curated by Martine Anderfuhren & Tirdad Zolghadr, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva
Turning Points, curated by Media Farzin, LeRoy Neiman Gallery, Columbia University, New York
- 2003** *Iranian Pool*, curated by Maria Chus Martinez, Casa Asia/ARCO, Madrid
Casa Asia, curated by Maria Chus Martinez, Barcelona
Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmo, Sweden
Continuous Stroke of a Breath, curated by Afsaneh Firouz, Harvard University, Boston
Haft, curated by Michket Krifa, l'Espace Landowski, Ville de Boulogne — Billancourt, France

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MY LOVING HEART BEATS ONLY FOR YOU | 145 X 112 CM | OIL ON CANVAS | 2005

FARHAD MOSHIRI



8F4 | 165 X 170 CM | GOLD LEAF AND OIL ON CANVAS | 2005

Farhad Moshiri's monumental jars painted on canvas are impressive vessels, containers of desire and memory and eulogies on the simple pleasures of life. His paintings — variations on the theme of a single vessel form — that have mostly one colour that he associates with a word, sentence or childhood memory: favourite juices (Ab Anar Tazeh — fresh pomegranate juice). Fruits (Miveh va Tareh bar — sweet Isfahani melons or the grapes of Shahroud) and traditional dishes (Kaleh Pache). Sometimes he employs lines of juxtaposed texts, extracts of poems or vernacular words used in daily life in Tehran.

Moshiri studied Fine Arts at CALARTS in California. In America he first started experimenting with installations, video art and painting before coming back to Tehran in 1991. He loves collecting old pottery, and seeks to render the age-old relationship between ceramic form and function by focusing on paint as an expressive visual media. His painted jars look like three-dimensional objects, bursting with the popular foods, drinks and desserts that evoke the street vendors that sell them. Elegant popular scripts, recognisable, distinctive reflections of bygone local culture, are written on the body of the large painted jars, like an epigraph that can be read as a prayer or a wish.

The strikingly elegant shape of the vessels, with their thick bodies, simple contours and unobtrusive coloured surfaces, are inspired by the antique goblets, jars and bottles discovered on the 6000-year old site of Susa, Sassanid pots and the work of 13th-century Iranian potters. Moshiri's massive undecorated sand-glazed jars, of simple primal forms, resemble the utilitarian stoneware jars used for preserving and storing grain, rice and tea leaves, and for cooling water or housing offerings.

The texture of the paintings resembles the crackled ice glaze, reflecting the artist's appreciation of unglazed or naturally glazed stoneware vessels; a texture reminiscent of thick coils or unworked clay and the colours of old pieces in the monochrome ceramic tradition that flourished in ancient Iran. The use of layers of different tones of the same colour, plain bold colours, the sheer simplicity of the form and the modesty of the words chosen, all reflect Moshiri's love of Zen philosophy and aesthetics.

Rose Issa, Curator

As a museum curator, I generally follow an artist's career for years before recommending a purchase. I tracked one artist since 1985 before recently selecting a painting for our collection. But I responded immediately to Moshiri's work—not just the combination of monumental calligraphy, weathered surface, and colorful underpainting, but also the subtle melding of Eastern and Western concepts.

Moshiri was born and raised in Tehran where he lives and plays an active part in Iran's contemporary art scene. He has exhibited internationally, including solo shows in Rome, London, and Berlin.

The painting I acquired, S4M53, derives its unusual title from a coded numeric writing system (like a religious shorthand) used in Islamic cultures to inscribe Koranic or other religious verse on a miniature scale. The painting reproduces a small section of coded text—just the five letters and number of the work's title written in Farsi calligraphy—in greatly enlarged size and multiple orientations. Part of a series of works begun in 2003, it is a deliberate hybrid: Moshiri transforms a script associated with Eastern religion into an aesthetic statement resembling Western abstraction, such as a 1940s de Kooning painting or a 1950s Franz Kline. Moshiri built up the painting in many layers, finally folding and crushing the canvas after it was completed to form an overall crackling with severe paint loss (he seals the painting with transparent water-based glue to prevent future losses). By heavily distressing the surface, the sublayers peek through, including surprising spots of bright color. The fragile network of crackled lines conveys the sense of time's ravages on an ancient material. It evokes mosque tiles (an impression strengthened by the gridded creases) or old weathered shop signs.

An artist working in Iran today is not free to make direct political, social, or religious critiques without risking outright censorship. For this reason, Moshiri, like many of his peers, values allusion, ambiguity, and subtlety—an under-the-radar approach. Here he brings the past and the present together in an uneasy union, as if commenting obliquely on the tensions between tradition and modernity in post-revolutionary Iran.

In addition, Moshiri's painting relates to traditional East Asian calligraphy. Most importantly, these kinds of global contemporary works give a more accurate picture of the nature of contemporary art, where important work is as likely made in Beijing, New Delhi, and Tehran as in New York, London, and Berlin.

John Ravenal, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



BREAKING HEART | 112 X 145 CM | OIL AND ACRYLIC ON CANVAS | 2005