

PRESS RELEASE

La Biennale di Venezia – 50th INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION

Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer

Preview: 12 (Press)-13-14 June, 2003 – Open hours 10.00-20.00

15 June - 2 November- Open hours 10.00-18.00, Closed on Mondays (except 16 June)



Existance, Dream, Liberty

INAUGURAZIONE 13 Giugno, ore 16.30
Palazzo Malipiero S. Marco 3198, Venezia

(S. Samuele station, Boat n. 82 + 3, Palazzo Grassi)

Patronized by the Ministry of Culture of Iran

Artists: Behrooz Daresh, Hossein Khosrojerdi, Ahmad Nadalian

Commissioner: Majid Karshenas

Deputy Commissioner: Ali Reza Sami-Azar

Organization: Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Cultural Institute of Iran in Rome

Co-organization: Paolo De Grandis, Arte Communications Venezia

In Iranian contemporary art, it is not so much “dreams *and* conflicts”, as it is “dreams *thanks to* conflicts” and “conflicts as the *dynamics* that lead to the realisation of dreams”: dynamics within the Iranian social context, dynamics of the spirit of relations between Iran and the rest of the world, dynamics of evolution and in the uninterrupted research of one single artist. It is a dynamics whose strength is such that it renders the “dictatorship of the spectator” and any other possible market exigency all but irrelevant.

It has been almost forty years that Iran has been absent from the art scene of the Biennale of Venice. It is not by accident that its presence today, in a historical period in which, with greater force and fertility – and all fields in which the personality of man and of the citizen are expressed- the quest and the pursuit of the Iranian proposal constitutes one of the most interesting examples of the attempt to oppose uniformity and adaptation while taking the mentality, styles and trends of the “other” into consideration.

Iranian society is young with the latest generations being highly educated, trained in the use of modern technology, and watchful of the flow of external stimuli in a context that is already rich with historical heritage and their own cultural traditions. Each artist conducts his own uninterrupted search, above all, of the new in himself. He explores, in his own psyche, the contradiction between taking roots and moving forward.

Commissioner, Prof. Majid Karshenas, doctor in social science with diverse specialisations obtained in Texas and Strasburg, holds the position of Director of the Cultural Institute of Iran in Italy since 1999. Even in such a capacity he conducts his own research, recapitulated in numerous publications, on new social issues and the new forms of democracy and dialogue in his country. The assistant Commissioner, Ali Reza Sami Azar, Director of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art since 1988, holds positions of prestige in diverse government institutions of culture and of contemporary art in Iran.

Each one of the artists, Behrooz Daresh, Hossein Khosrojerdi and Ahmad Nadalian, presented by T.M.C.A. in this event, gets fully involved in this thriving course of research developed by the Iranian culture in art.

In his recent installations, Behrooz Daresh, painter, sculptor and musician, uses hundreds of minimalist aluminium elements suspended in an allegorical conflict between fantasy and reality. It commits the viewer to a flux of emotions that are also stimulated by the blue and crimson red lighting: the aesthetic idea is above all focused on the concept of the non-existence and of nothingness.



The work of Hossein Khosrojerdi, eclectic and prolific painter, draftsman, designer and cartoonist, is a combination between digital art and performance: wrapped like a mummy, neither man nor woman, neither western nor eastern, he becomes universal and immortal. Ahmad Nadalian, versatile and internationally known artist, uses every technique and material to express abstract concepts. Sculpting fish like ancient fossils in a river bed deprived of every form of life, he searches for his own idea of Paradise Lost: the fish re-populates an imaginary and timeless paradise divulged like a virtual stream on the web.

The birth of contemporary art in Iran goes back to the start of the forties, when the foundation of the first Institute of Art in Tehran marked the beginning of a serious and systematic approach to the new discoveries of western art. The controversy that opposes the new tradition immediately enters a significant phase: for fifteen years a path is followed, exploring, more than a century of western art. Works bear the obvious imprint of different foreign influences. The beginning of the sixties registers the birth of a more pronounced “modern” approach; the Iranian artists undertake a dynamic interpretation of impressionism, cubism, expressionism, surrealism, abstractionism, pop art and conceptual art, while at the same time not abandoning traditional heritage in a definite way.

During the third Biennial of Tehran (1970) some modern artists show their interest in the roots of Iranian art of the past. They attempt to use traditional calligraphic, illustrative and visual elements in their work. The talent of these young artists and the need of the public to find its own identity and to protect all that which is most valid in national and religious tradition (also as a profound reaction to the straining of western thought), consent to such a tendency to acquire utmost importance during the course of the seventies. In the meantime, other artists are inspired, with greater intensity and independence, by the elements of Persian visual arts of the remote and recent past, and put forward proposals that are quite distinguishable from other western modern art. Other minor currents; the full return of the classical naturalistic approach, the re-evaluation of traditional painting (miniatures), and the rediscovery of popular painting (the “paintings of the Tea House”), are more intermittent.

After the Revolution in 1979, art founded on popular traditions and religion acquires enormous popularity: the narration of a story, the transmission of a message, and often religious and social devotion, emerge as the principle characteristics of the works of the period. The public accepts these more readily thanks to their immediacy and simplicity.

Later, however, many were dedicated to finding ways of expression that were less realistic and more refined yet just as effective in communicating content and values of the nation. That which one considers the particular style of middle eastern art was able to re-emerge, and is therefore also present in the roots of Iranian art : its distancing from “realism” and “narrativism”, and its proximity to the world of thought, of mental and emotional elaboration and to that of the imagination. Such a character delves into one’s own origins in a special way, typical of the Iranian artist, to look at the world and existence, with a vision that is just as global as it is attentive to the intimacy that constitutes the fundamental character of Iranian humanism.

Today’s Iranian artist knows all too well that, stagnation, reiteration, and looking to the past, do not constitute true points of departure. Instead the artist knows that movement, change, research of the new, and progress are principle and fundamental inescapable aspects of life itself in today’s world: but neither development nor the tendency towards the new can take place with the total detachment of the cultural and artistic heritage of the society to which they belong. The past is the root of the individual and collective contemporary personality. The rich heritage of the culture and art of Iran is therefore still evident in the works presented at this Biennale, even if they all belong to new artistic exponents of Iran. Each one, in its own measure and via its own specific language presents or symbolises the experiences and the commitment of the contemporary generation of artists that are resolved to offer, thanks to their own personal and national identity, a personal contribution to the dialogue between civilizations in these first years of the third millennium.

Organization



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