

PRESS RELEASE

Ayyam Gallery
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Ramin Shirdel: *Whispers of Love*

Ayyam Gallery, Dubai (DIFC)

5 May - 5 June

Opening reception: Monday, 5 May from 7:00 - 9:00pm

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (DIFC) is pleased to announce *Whispers of Love*, the solo exhibition of Tehran-based artist and architect Ramin Shirdel, to be held from 5 May until 5 June 2014.

Whispers of Love will feature ten recent large-scale assemblage works by the artist. Each work is created using an accumulative process in which an average of fifteen hundred painted pieces come together to form layers that further come together to spell out either words or individual letters in Farsi-Arabic script. At first glance the assemblage of script in red, yellow, purple, blue, and green evoke the conceptualism of nineteen-sixties era American art. However, Shirdel's artistic influences are much closer to home and may be traced back centuries, an immediate source being the pictorial transformations of text found in calligraphic examples of Islamic art. In Shirdel's compositions, words built upon the surface of artworks are inspired by the theme of love and may be understood as an *ashegh* (lover) narrating or bestowing praise upon his beloved. The poetic tradition in Classical Persian texts addresses both worldly love and spiritual love. Worldly love in the Persian tradition finds its roots in the love stories of Shirin-Khosrow and Layla-Majnun, whereas desire for union with the divine is found in the writings of Sufi poets, Mevlana Jalal ud Din Rumi and Khwaja Shams ud Din Muhammad Hafez e Shirazi.

Works within the exhibition entitled *Moj* (Wave) and *Tohfe* (Masterpiece) may not seem directly related to passionate whispers of *Mahboob* (Beloved) or *Aghoosh* (Embrace) but in the artist's conception the collective titles may be read as an extended story of love, in which dramatic events occur over the course of larger narrative. On its own, each explored word offers viewers a chance to create a subjective connection to the work, while also reflecting upon the larger meaning of the text as signifier as it exists within the linguistic structure of Farsi.

In the 1967 artistic treatise, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" artist Sol Lewitt remarked, "once [an art work] is out of his hand the artist has no control over the way a viewer will perceive the work. Different people will understand the same thing in a different way." Such a varied understanding of the universal concept of love is exactly what Shirdel is after. As a result, each work in the exhibition engages not only on emotional and intellectual levels but further draws viewers in through a change in visual effect, which is produced as a result of one's physical shifting position. In standing before the work, the viewer becomes engaged in a play of hide and seek when attempting to reach the elusive place from which the word may be seen in its entirety, such that he/she may come to comprehend the script of love the artist has masterfully constructed.

Notes to Editors

About the Artist

Born in Tehran in 1981, the artist continues to live and work in the Iranian capital. Shirdel received a Master of Architecture from Tehran University of Art and is an award-winning architect who has designed local and international projects. Although Shirdel chose architecture as his vocation, art, specifically painting, has been with him since childhood. Of his work the artist states that, “an image, a poem, a lyric, a landscape or a dialogue” in everyday life can spark his imagination. Such inspirations, combined with formal considerations of space, merge into an individualised style that takes into account the simultaneity of lived experiences that the artist renders through his mixed media art works. Working in assemblage creates a sense of dimensionality that alludes to built forms while allowing signifiers of language to come alive as tangible signs.

Shirdel has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at Elahe Gallery, Tehran (2011); the sixth Biennale of Sculpture at Niavaran Cultural Center, Tehran (2011); and the Haft Negah Group Exhibition at Niavaran Cultural Center (2012). His works are housed in private collections throughout the Middle East and the United States.

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is recognised as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Middle Eastern artists with an international profile and museum presence. Spaces in Beirut, Dubai, Jeddah, and London have further succeeded in showcasing the work of Middle Eastern artists with the aim of educating a wider audience about the art of this significant region.

Exhibition Facts

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (DIFC)

Exhibition Dates: 5 May - 5 June

Location: Gate Village Building 3, DIFC, Dubai

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