

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: Afshin Pirhashemi,

The Wrong Women

Location: Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai

Preview: 11 March 2013, 7pm

Dates: 11 March – 25 April 2013



Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai, is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of Iranian artist Afshin Pirhashemi, who will present *The Wrong Women*, a series of 12 new paintings.

Pirhashemi is fascinated by the role of women in contemporary Iranian society, and their relationships with the world around them. His monochrome paintings are dominated by female figures swathed in black, veiled and glamorously-attired. The women he depicts are far from submissive; they are independent, confident, and sexually aware, seemingly defying the conservative dress and values of Iranian society. With bold and often almost contemptuous gazes, they take ownership of their own bodies.

These 'wrong' women also share assertive gestures. In *Revenge*, a woman aims a gun directly at the viewer. This woman is in control and will not allow herself to be perceived as a sexual object. Pirhashemi's paintings serve as an antithesis to the idea of women as objects, an idea further reinforced by Pirhashemi's inclusion of guns, cigarettes, and alcohol within his paintings – all symbols of an impure life for a woman in Iranian society, though things that men could partake in without reprimand or controversy.

In *I Love NY* (2012), though the subject's head is covered by a traditional veil, she declares a connection to the wider world through the iconic American symbol floating at her side. Pirhashemi has much to say about the influence of America on the world, particularly the conflict it has brought to the Middle East. Though the country stated that its presence was an act of political salvation for Iraq and Afghanistan, Pirhashemi considers the intervention a 'disaster' and believes the damage is still in progress.

Pirhashemi often produces sequential studies of the same woman. This repetition of figures emphasises his fascination with how women present themselves to the world and the varying perceptions of social codes. In *Married*, Pirhashemi depicts a sequential series of a woman engaged in a private ritual of arranging her hair. In the final pose she is seen fixing her veil to assume her role as wife. Pirhashemi asserts that this is not a negative portrayal of marriage as 'the end of liberty' but instead a woman choosing a life of commitment, a decision she makes for herself.

Born in 1974 in Urmia, Afshin Pirhashemi lives and works in Tehran. His works are housed in public and private collections throughout the Middle East and Europe and he is the recipient of awards from the 2003 Tehran 6th International Art Biennial, and the 2004 Beijing Art Biennial Award. Solo exhibitions include Homa art Gallery, Tehran (2009); Seyhoun Art Gallery, Tehran (2005); and Barg Gallery, Tehran (2005). Group exhibitions include *In & Out*, Milan (2009); Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran (2006); Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran (2004, 2003).

#### Notes to Editors

#### About Ayyam Gallery

Founded by collectors and cousins Khaled and Hisham Samawi in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery sought to nurture Syria's burgeoning and dynamic contemporary art scene through landmark non-profit initiatives such as the Shabab Ayyam Project, an incubator for emerging artists. Expansion into Beirut and Dubai enabled Ayyam Gallery to broaden its scope from the promotion of work by Syrian artists to those from the wider Middle East region. In doing so, Ayyam Gallery has established itself as one of the foremost exponents of Middle Eastern contemporary art to the international community.

Today, Ayyam Gallery is recognised as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Arab and Iranian artists with an international profile and museum presence, such as Nadim Karam, Safwan Dahoul, Samia Halaby, Sadik Alfraji, Afshin Pirhashemi and Khaled Takreti. A number of non-commercial exhibitions, as well as the launch of Ayyam Publishing, Ayyam Editions, and The Young Collectors Auction, 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. Ayyam Gallery Damascus currently functions as a studio



and creative haven for artists who remain in the war-torn city. In January 2013, Ayyam Gallery launched a new space in London, with a second to open in Jeddah in late-February.

#### Exhibition Facts

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Exhibition Dates: 11 March – 25 April 2013

Location: Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Gate Village, Building 3, Dubai

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