



DEVI ART
FOUNDATION

THE ELEPHANT IN THE DARK

Curated by Amirali Ghasemi

January 25-May 30, 2012

Devi Art Foundation presents *The Elephant in the Dark* curated by Amirali Ghasemi from 25th January to 30th May 2012, which brings together works of fifty-two contemporary Iranian artists from the Lekha and Anupam Poddar Collection.

“An elephant was put in a dark house for display. Crowds of people were asked to identify the object in the dark place by inspection. Each visitor felt with his palm a different part of the animal’s body, and thus described the animal’s physical reality differently.

The palm of one fell on the trunk.

‘This creature is like a water-spout,’ he said.

The hand of another lighted on the elephant’s ear.

To him the beat was evidently like a fan.

Another rubbed against its leg.

‘I found the elephant’s shape is like a pillar,’ he said.

Another laid his hand on its back.

‘Certainly this elephant was like a throne,’ he said.

The sensual eye is just like the palm of the hand.

The palm has not the means of covering the whole of the truth.”

The exhibition borrows its title from a poem by Rumi, which was inspired by an ancient story of *The Elephant and the Blind*. The poet cleverly changes the dramatic state of blindness into darkness which has a cure, while the poem illustrates how complex it is to evaluate an event, situation or an object by seeing it from a particular angle and not as a whole. It underlines the incapability of human beings to understand various realities (physical and metaphysical), without using all senses and various means of understanding.

Taking Rumi’s poetic tale as a point of departure, the exhibition attempts to display both formal and conceptual practices that Iranian artists have adopted over the past decade, both inside and outside the country, to express their concerns. The vast selection of works in the collection provides a unique opportunity to present a comprehensive narrative of the social and artistic developments that are taking shape among the artists.

This diverse and vibrant collection is explored through two parallel streams, which displays the works of internationally known artists and a selection of upcoming young artists. The exhibition is divided into three sections: in “Departure from Form”, the traditional form is re-contextualized and used for contemporary critical expressions. “Reflection of a Complex Society” questions social issues such as gender representation, a recurring trend in contemporary Iranian art. Finally, “The Politicized Scenery” showcases works that touch upon various conflicts ranging from the battle for oil in the Middle East to moments in Iranian political history with a keen eye on the current events in the last three years. *The Elephant in the Dark* is an effort to investigate different contours of Iranian polity and society through contemporary modes of artistic enquires.

The exhibition includes works by Samira Abbassy, Iman Afsarian, Aksbazi, Shirin Aliabadi, Samira Alikhanzadeh, Afruz Amighi, Mojtaba Amini, Nazgol Ansarinia, Kamrooz Aram, Reza Aramesh, Mehraneh Atashi, Shoja Azari, Mahmoud Bakhshi, Gohar Dashti, Alireza Dayani, Ala Ebtekar, Shirin

Fakhim, Golnaz Fathi, Parastou Forouhar, Shadi Ghadirian, Amirali Ghasemi, Bita Ghezelayagh, Barbad Golshiri, Amirali Golriz, Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, Elham Doost Haghighi, Khosrow Hassanzadeh, Ghazaleh Hedayat, Peyman Hooshmandzadeh, Shirazeh Houshiary, Katayoun Karami, Shahram Karimi, Simin Keramati, Abbas Kowsari, Farideh Lashai, Amir Mobed, Masoumeh Mozaffari, Pendar Nabipour, Timo Nasserri, Farah Ossouli, Leila Pazooki, Sara Rahbar, Mohsen Rastani, Shirin Sabahi, Hamed Sahihi, Zeinab Shahidi, Behnoosh Sharifi, Jinoos Taghizadeh, Newsha Tavakolian, Sadegh Tirafkan and Ali Zanjani.

The Elephant in the Dark is accompanied by a contemporary Iranian poster exhibition called *Persianissimo*. These thirty-two posters are works of different graphic designers and are selected by Majid Abbasi, member of the Iranian Graphic Designers Society and founder of *Neshan*, an Iranian Graphic Design Magazine. *Persianissimo* was first displayed at Colorado State University in 2009, during the 16th Colorado International Invitational Poster Exhibition. Ever since, the exhibition has been traveling and has grown in terms of content.

Devi Art Foundation
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Closest metro station: Huda City Centre
Visiting Hours: 11am to 7pm, Tuesday to Sunday
Closed on Mondays and all public holidays

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Curator's Biography

Amirali Ghasemi (b.1980, Iran) is a curator, media artist and a graphic designer. He graduated in 2004 with a BA in graphic design from Central Tehran Azad University, with an emphasis on research in digital art history. In 1998, Ghasemi founded *Parkingallery*, an independent project space in Tehran and in 2002 he set up Parkingallery.com, an online platform for young Iranian artists.

Ghasemi has shown his photographs, videos, design works in various festivals and exhibitions internationally. As a curator he has been directing many exhibitions, workshops, and talks for *Parkingallery* projects, such as *Deep Depression* (2004-06), *Sideways* (2008). He has co-curated *The Urban Jealousy*, *1st International Roaming Biennial of Tehran* (2008-09) and three editions of *Limited Access Festival for Video and Performance* (2007-11), followed by his involvement in a variety of projects for institutions, project spaces and universities in Germany, Netherlands, Serbia, UK, Egypt, Turkey, United States, Brazil and India.

He is currently working with photography, video, installation and interactive projects, besides writing on the Tehran arts scene and contemporary Iranian art for various magazines and on his own art-log. *IRAN&CO* is his latest curatorial project, an ongoing exhibition and archive of Iranian art representation beyond its border.