

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

NASIM HANTEHZADEH

Ray of Light

18 November 2022 – 7 January 2023

Private View: Thursday 17 November 2022, 6-8 pm



Nasim Hantehzadeh, *At the end of the day*, 2022

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present *Ray of Light*, the first UK solo exhibition of Iranian-American artist Nasim Hantehzadeh. Working in oil, pastel and graphite, across both canvas and paper, Hantehzadeh brings together freewheeling figurative elements in vibrant and arresting compositions which allude to a range of references, including Paleolithic cave paintings, indigenous art from Mexico and ancient Persian rug patterns. Hantehzadeh's work often reveals their particular interest in Mayan and pre-Islamic art and artefacts, occasioned by evidence of matriarchal and gender-fluid practices that existed in these cultures prior to European colonisation.

Hantehzadeh creates moving narratives that examine the shifting spaces that coalesce around identity, personhood, sexuality and race. They evoke a world in which categories are deliberately in flux and undefined, eschewing dogmatic binaries in favour of a more nuanced approach to gender that has much in common with the natural world. Embellished orifices and sexual organs are transfigured from the corporeal to the otherworldly in an earthen palette enlivened with phosphorescent pigments, which complement their biomorphic and abstract forms. In *On the night of the full moon, we learned to trust each other*, the artist looks to nature for enlightenment, invoking indigenous wisdom. Ovoid shapes are balanced precariously, jostling against one another in a visual representation of the meaning of trust. Meanwhile a circular form at the height of the drawing acts as a metaphor for the moon – ever present but out of reach. The influence of Hilma af Klint and Agnes Pelton's spiritually inflected abstractions is felt in Hantehzadeh's celestial compositions, which deliberately disorient the viewer with their spiralling architecture.

Hantehzadeh returned to the United States – their country of birth – after being raised in Iran until early adulthood and their deeply personal works reflect this cultural duality in the hybrid forms that

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occupy their paintings and drawings. In dismantling preconceptions of a pre-modern Islamic gender system, the artist fortifies their stance on Iranian feminism and the powerful role it plays in their country's culture wars. Much of Hantehzadeh's recent work reflects on their displacement from Iran: *The gate is open* is a meditation on vulnerability and openness in the face of the country's extreme laws against LGBT people, while *Last year was the 10th year* explores subconscious personal growth, commemorating a decade of Hantehzadeh's life in the US. In *Which way time is moving?* they address the inevitable passage of time and the ways in which it is dilated at different points in history, both personal and collective. Hantehzadeh cites the rapid Westernisation of Iran before the Islamic revolution and the subsequent return to conservative social values, as well as the ongoing rollback of reproductive rights in the US, as examples of the conflation of time and hubris.

Nasim Hantehzadeh lives and works in Los Angeles. They earned a BA from the University of Tehran Center for Art and Architecture in 2007; in 2013 they received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; and an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2018.

Exhibitions include *Where Cloudy Waters Collide ...*, Pippy Houldsworth Gallery (2022); solo booth Frieze LA, The Pit, Los Angeles (2022); *Orgasmic*, Nina Johnson, Miami (2021); among others. Hantehzadeh's work has been published in *Frieze Magazine*, *LA Times*, *Cultured*, *ArtMaze Mag* and *New American Paintings*. They have received the Resnick Grant, the D'Arsy Hayman Grant and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award. Collections include Frederick R Weisman Art Foundation, Los Angeles; Jorge Perez, Miami; Dieresis Collection, Guadalajara, Mexico; GAIA Collection, Mexico; Isabel and Agustín Coppel Collection, Mexico; and Lynda and Stewart Resnick Collection, USA. They have participated in residencies at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Vermont Studio Center and MacDowell.