

## **Shirin Neshat On the Works of Shahram Karimi**

'In an era when Globalism has become an integral aspect of the post modern man's experience, the Iranian born artist, Shahram Karimi, living in Germany, truly represents such trans-cultural currents and realities in the context of contemporary art. His aspirations are at once rooted in his personal cultural history such as the traditional Persian Miniature paintings, his subsequent life in exile and exposure to the history of abstract, minimal and conceptual art of the West. Karimi has arrived at a unique form which combines both aspects of seemingly diverse cultures in an artistic language which transcends the boundaries of such localities.

Karimi's paintings follow the same principals as those of classical Persian Miniature paintings, mainly in respect to the absence of perspective. The use of narrative elements and inscription of text over imagery and his minimal abstractions of visual iconography bind him to Western art.

Poetry plays a major role in Karimi's creative vocabulary. He expands on the rich tradition of poetry which has been recognized as the most vital aspect of Iranian culture. As a poet, in an unprecedented way, he incorporates verbal and visual metaphors in parallel forms to provoke and express distinct emotions.

In his exploration into the realm of media, Karimi makes a video which in my view becomes an extension of his paintings and poetry. In this video, shot in Egypt, the artist offers a new experience for the viewer. One senses an obscure travel through Karimi's paintings. The strength lies in the ultra simplicity, raw and casual use of camera to capture the aura of the spaces that he encounters. There is an immediate emotional response to these spaces that suggests the notion of 'absence' of human body and the presence of a 'place' which remains.

Karimi's most recent adventure into installation art is yet another poetic gesture with deeply humanistic and political edge, treated with the same level of abstraction and modesty. Here portraits of 'shoes' become reminiscent of the 'absence' of the physical body. This work suggests a new direction for a 'global' artist who is seeking a delicate balance between Persian aesthetics and Western expression to arrive at an art which becomes truly universal.'

***Shirin Neshat***