

C Ø P P E R F I E L D

**Shahpour Pouyan : W ū s h u ĩ**

31 October - 15 December

Exhibition opens Tuesday 30 October, 6 - 9pm

## Shahpour Pouyan

Shahpour Pouyan (b.1979 Isfahan) explores expressions of power, domination and possession through the force of culture using sculpture and installation. He is based between New York and Tehran.

While his work refers naturally to his homeland in part, it is distinctly global and conceptual in outlook. Frequently drawing together references from across the globe in a single work, he explores the role of culture in supporting power. From architecture to munitions to armour, his early work is bound together by explorations of the unique properties and uses of the dome. More recent performance, video, sculpture and installation draws variously on theology, propaganda, global calendars, bombing, archaeology and war time rescue efforts, from France to Vietnam, from Baghdad to New York.

Pouyan's solo exhibitions include *Wūshuǐ*, Copperfield, London (2018); *The Incarnation of the Body Politic*, The Armory Show, New York City (2018); *My Place is the Placeless*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE (2017); *We Owe This Considerable Land to The Horizon Line*, Nathalie Obadia Gallery, Paris (2017); *History Travels at Different Speeds*, Copperfield, London (2015); *PTSD*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2014); *Full Metal Jacket*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2011); *The Hooves*, Sixty Six Art Gallery, Tehran (2010); *Bana Bar In*, Nar Gallery, Tehran (2009); *XVA Gallery*, Dubai (2009) and *Towers*, Ave Gallery, Tehran (2008).

Group exhibitions include *Punk Orientalism*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Canada (2018); *White Anxieties*, WhiteBox, New York City (2018); *Only the Morning Bird Treasures the Flower Garden*, REDCAT, Los Angeles (2018); *In the Field of Empty Days: the intersection of past and present in Iranian art*, LACMA, Los Angeles (2018); *The New Minimalists*, Abrons Art Center, New York (2018); *Art Dubai Contemporary*, with Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2018); *Focus*, The Armory Show, with Jameel Shabibi, New York (2018); *Past meets Present*, Anna Laudel Contemporary, Istanbul (2017); *Jameel Prize 4 Inspiration from Islamic Tradition*, Asia Culture Center, Korea (2017); *7th Beijing Biennale*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China (2017); *Iranian Voice*, British Museum, London (2017); *Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet: Contemporary Persians*, Aga Khan Museum, Toronto (2017); *Insights*, Art Basel Hong Kong, with Lawrie Shabibi, Hong Kong (2017); *Iranian Voices*, Recent Acquisitions of Works on Paper, British Museum, London (2017); *Home Land Security*, Fort Winfield Scott, San Francisco (2016); *Jameel Prize*, Pera Museum, Istanbul (2016); *Memory and Continuity*, Pera Museum, Istanbul (2016); *Recentering Modernism*, Art Basel, Hong Kong (2016); *But Still Tomorrow Builds Into My Face*, Lawrieshabibi, Dubai (2016); *Memory and Continuity*, Pera Museum, Istanbul (2016); *Global/Local*, The Grey Art Gallery, New York University (2016); *Jacob's Ladder*, Untitled Art Fair, Mimai Beach (2015); *Kochi-Muziris Biennale*, India (2014); *Young Collectors*, Elgiz Museum, Istanbul (2014); *The Tower of Babel Project*, Deuxpiece, Basel (2014); *Traces*, Lawrieshabibi, Dubai (2013); *For Which it stands*, The Lodge Gallery, NY (2013); *Chambres à Part VII: Dark to Light*, Tower of London (2013); *ArtCycle Discovers: MFA Prize*, Gallery Brooklyn, NY (2013); *Nearly Neutral*, Barbara Walters Gallery, NY (2013); *The Mykonos Biennale*, Greece (2013); *Dialogue:Shahpour Pouyan + Marwan Sahmarani*, Art Basel, Volta8, Basel (2012). His work is held in public and private collections internationally including the permanent collection of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, the British Museum, London and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. He has participated in several international residencies including International Cite Des Arts, Paris, the Pegasus Art Foundation, Hyderabad, India, and the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York, in March 2014.

# Wūshuǐ

Copperfield, London is pleased to present the second solo exhibition of New York based, Iranian artist Shahpour Pouyan.

Titled, Wūshuǐ, the exhibition makes the unlikely connection between political ideologies and representations of the landscape. Across cultures and history, the landscape has been represented in painting, drawing and photography but is by its nature nearly always considered innocuous. When a landscape is painted by Winston Churchill, used as a symbol of national pride or mislabelled however it can become more divisive. The exhibition title Wūshuǐ – meaning polluted water – is a bastardization of the Chinese phrase Shan Shui or ‘mountain water,’ a style of landscape painting in Taoist painting tradition that refers to ideas of purity. Through this lens Pouyan draws connections across history and cultures to create a series of works that stand as laden metaphors.

Part painting, part installation, Damavand was inspired by an imposing billboard outside Tehran airport which welcomes travellers to Iran with patriotic slogans. At first glance, the background of the billboard design appeared to be Mount Damavand, the highest peak in Iran. Upon closer inspection, however, Pouyan discovered the billboard designer had used an image of Mount Fuji, Japan’s highest mountain, by mistake. As the tallest mountain in the Middle East, Mount Damavand is an important setting for Persian mythology and folklore as well as an important national symbol. The confusion and conflation of Persian and Japanese icons served as inspiration for Shahpour’s work, which depicts the “mistaken” mountain from the billboard in a western style akin to Gerhard Richter. Pouyan paints the mountain upside down, staging it as a valley, with all the metaphorical potency of that gesture. In a final nod to the slipperiness of meaning and images in the hands of ideology, Pouyan rips open his finished painting allowing the mountain to become a peak once more.

Right:  
Shahpour Pouyan  
Damavand, 2018  
Oil on canvas and wood stretcher  
4 x 53 x 178 cm





Shahpour Pouyan  
Damavand, 2018  
Oil on canvas and wood  
stretcher 4 x 53 x 178 cm  
(detail)





After: "Portrait of Fath Ali Shah Qajar", 2018, is an appropriation of a Persian painting from the 19th century. Historically, Persian painting was done only in the service of narrative and landscape did not exist as a genre. Here Pouyan explores the politicised use of Persian miniatures and continues his on going interest in imagining what a Persian landscape genre might have looked like. The original miniature shows a flattened depiction of the Shah in the usual style but placed within the western style depth of a spatially defined landscape that extends around him. This mixed presentation of influence on power – or even power under duress – is highlighted by Pouyan in the removal of the Shah in a painstaking reworking of the original; as if the English Empire's presence in 19th century Iran had somehow swallowed him.

Left:  
Shahpour Pouyan  
After: "Portrait of Fath Ali Shah Qajar", 2018  
Pigment, gold leaf & mixed  
media on Japanese rice paper  
46.5 x 31.8cm



While it is widely known that Churchill was an ardent British nationalist, it is a lesser known fact that he was an avid landscape painter in his free time, beginning in 1915 with what is believed to be his earliest work depicting Hoe Farm, his home in Surrey. Researching and locating this view once more, Pouyan subverts Churchill's vision in Sunday Painting by depicting this loaded British landscape in the structure of the Persian Miniaturists. Just as stylised trees overlap their ornately painted Persian frames, here the edge of Churchill's early home breaks the boundaries of the picture plane.

Left:

Shahpour Pouyan

After "Ruhham carries away the severed arm of the Turanian sorcerer", 2018 Mixed media on German cotton paper

20.5 x 32.3 cm

Right:

Shahpour Pouyan

Sunday Painting, 2018

(After Winston Churchill's Hoe Farm, 1915)

Oil on canvas

51 x 61 cm





Above:  
Shahpour Pouyan  
Authentic, 2018  
Mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
(Installation view at  
Copperfield, London)

Authentic is a careful cataloguing, a record of process, that documents Pouyan's participation in the international Beijing Biennial. As a recognized Iranian artist included in collections at the British Museum and the Met Museum, he was recommended by the government in Tehran to submit a painting for the Beijing Biennial. The artist felt that his participation in the Biennial had as much to do with highlighting and validating state agendas as it did with his art so he put forward a painting that he never touched, chosen from an internet search based on the Biennial's official brief, and painted by a Chinese company. Allowing the outsourced landscape painting to be authenticated by the Biennial, the artist makes transparent the entire process and paraphernalia, re-presenting all in London under similar museological conditions as a form of anthropology; a label for the crated painting, a label for the catalogue, a label for the label. The landscape scene serves then as a metaphor and caricature for the bureaucracy and political agendas that continue to manipulate art today.



Shahpour Pouyan  
Authentic, 2018  
Mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
(detail)





Shahpour Pouyan  
After "Rustam Slaying the Dragon", 2018  
Mixed media on German cotton paper  
35.5 x 21.9 cm



پرسی رخ بدو کنت کای شیر مرد  
 بگفت از سلمان شود تا جو  
 نیز دیک بوالمجن آمد و بسر  
 بند سواری و مرد نبرد  
 جو بشنید بوالمجن آواز داد  
 جودانی که با من نه نتم بسر  
 شنشاه نیزه بروراست کرد  
 جو بادی که بر باید از دستنگاه

که بگدشت کار از شمار بسر  
 ببندیم فرمان اورا کمر  
 یکی با دپای نکا و ریز بر  
 بجنان عنان و سخن در نوز  
 جوانی پسندین تر باز داد  
 چه کوپه تو بر خیره پولاد سرد  
 ز اسپش نیزه جدا خواست کرد  
 نی نیزه بر بود از دست شاه

میان شما با چپسین رزم سخت  
 بر آشتت سالار پر خور سخت  
 بدو کنت کای مرد سپکا جوی  
 بیاتنا بکردیم مرد و سوار  
 بدو کنت کای مرد جنگ آری  
 مسلمان شوای شاه سپشور  
 سوار اندر آمد جو آذر کشب  
 بیفکنند نیزه همانکه زد دست

چگونه است با شاه سپر و سخت  
 پس آمد بمیدان بغیر سخت  
 زبان کرده بر خیره سپارگی  
 که تا بر چه کرد همی روز کار  
 عنان را ز میدان من بر گری  
 که فرخند کردد بنو تاج و تخت  
 سر نیزه بگرفت و بر کاشت آب  
 بشاه اندر آمد بگردار مست  
 کمر بند بگرفت و اورا از زمین  
 جدا کرد و آسان نزد بر زمین



بره ملک آوردش از زنگاه  
 بیست از پس پشت بازوی شاه  
 سپاه اندر آمد همانکه ز جای

سواران سوی رزم کردند راه  
 پرسی دخت بگرفت پس سپاه

سپه را آنکه داشت بر جایگاه

Shahpour Pouyan  
 After "Malik lifts Abu'l Mihjan from the Saddle.", 2018  
 Mixed media on German cotton paper  
 22.8 x 30.4 cm