



## Pouran Jinchi's "Black & Blue"

Literature and fine art are conjoined in Iran born New York based artist Pouran Jinchi's current solo exhibition *Black & Blue* on view at the Leila Heller Gallery from September 17 – October 24, 2015. Calligraphy is crucial to Jinchi's process of eliminating objects and images in order to focus on meaning conveyed through abstraction. Inspired by Farsi text from the Iranian author Sadegh Hedayat's surreal novel *The Blind Owl* (1937), her paintings and sculpture interweave issues of violence during the Shah's oppressive rule through the repeated appearance of fragments from the novel.

As heavy-handed as the sub-text might seem, Jinchi's paintings take on the themes of violence and pain with much dexterity. Without portraying either condition directly, her abstract forms extrapolate the essence of one's state of mind from having endured force and suffering. In the *Wound* series, Jinchi walks a fine line between abstraction and calligraphy by presenting memories and the residue of abuse as gradually accumulating debris. In *Wound 1*, 2015, calligraphic renderings of the Farsi script in shades of fuchsia, maroon, and pink ink are repeatedly overlaid to obscure the text. Starkly contrasted against the raw linen background, the curvaceous forms settled at the bottom of the canvas resemble piles of indelible marks—like sediments that will eventually accumulate over time.

Dots and lines used in Perso-Arabic scripts like Farsi to represent non-Arabic sounds are recurring leitmotifs in Jinchi's works. Here small square shapes that replace the dot are critical to understanding Jinchi's visual rhetoric on abstraction. For example, In *Stitched* 2014, Persian blue curves, dashes, commas, and calligraphic forms, that deconstruct Hedayat's text, are painted onto white square shapes sewn together with copper thread to form a large grid.



Like the modernists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jinchi uses the grid to distill the idea of violence and pain in her non-objective paintings. Even though the Farsi text inscribed on the grid cannot be understood, the artist's intention and the visual impact of these hieroglyphic forms on a sequence of squares makes the grid an essential feature of the works' composition. In *Pierced*, 2014, and *Inked Series*, 2014, calligraphic patterns and squares within squares are decorated with Islamic designs, art deco, and Indian motifs to convey the universality of her themes and its emotive aspects. Spread out over the length of a wall, Jinchi's grids become infinitely extensible and can be continued beyond the borders of the painted structure in the viewer's imagination.

Yet the grand irony of Jinchi's art lies in the beauty of her abstractions. The meticulous geometry of the calligraphic forms combined with her vibrant color palette makes for highly aesthetic and meditative works. For instance in her sculpture called *Hanged Series*, 2015, glistening copper cut to look like various Farsi alphabets and shapes are strung together to resemble a luminous garland. Nonetheless, the underlying tension between the beauty of the piece and its content, between its disturbing subject matter and its reflective appeal is what pushes the work forward. At the end, it is only through Jinchi's abstract shapes that we must comprehend the impenetrability of pain and the inscrutable agendas of violence that are deeply embedded in the victims' psyche.

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