

The background of the entire page is a large, expressive painting. It depicts a powerful waterfall cascading down a dark, craggy cliff. The water is rendered in a mix of white, yellow, and green, with thick, visible brushstrokes. At the base of the waterfall, a large, dark rock sits in a pool of water. Three small, stylized figures are on the rock: one is crouching, another is standing and looking towards the waterfall, and a third is sitting. The water in the foreground is a deep, vibrant blue, reflecting the colors of the waterfall and the cliff. The overall style is painterly and somewhat surreal, with a focus on bold colors and dramatic lighting.

MEHDI FARHADIAN

A Miracle for the Whole World
29 April - 6 June 2013

Mehdi Farhadian

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shabibieriqus



Miracle of Winter, 2013
Acrylic on Canvas
200 x 150 cm
78 3/4 x 59 1/8 in



Forest Exploration, 2013
Acrylic on Canvas
180 x 240 cm
70 7/8 x 94 1/2 in





Dead Sun, 2013
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 200 cm
59 1/8 x 78 3/4 in





Forgiveness, 2013
Mixed Media on Canvas
190 x 150 cm
74 3/4 x 59 1/8 in



Sudden Miracle, 2012
Mixed Media on Canvas
250 x 200 cm
98 3/8 x 59 1/8 in

A Miracle for the Whole World

The artist tells me that *Volcanic Montaigne* constituted a painting between other, more prominent, works in Mehdi Farhadian's last exhibition. This painting of in-between paintings became the inspiration for the launch of a new series that we see in this present exhibition. A marginality that now occupies the center. The process of the marginal altering centers, changing minds, and shaping futures are operational here. Here too is operational Farhadian's deep philosophical thinking in moving forward with a completely new theme and power.

Farhadian's current series moves beyond the human categories of architecture and history. On his painterly surfaces these have been pushed to the back to reveal to the onlooker the most powerful, the most awesome of the forces: Mother Nature. Here, the artist uses the flitting notion of nature and its relationship to humans to create a visually stunning set of works that evoke a variety of emotions and experiences. As in his earlier work, there is a remote feeling of pain, a sense of uneasy anticipation. But here too a promise is forthcoming, becoming. Farhadian never tell us the entire story; he never ends his sentences. The power in his paintings lies in this feeling of 'there is always more to come...' Yet one is arrested by the finite visual force of the paintings themselves.

In the present series, figures have been systematically pushed to the epicenter of the canvas. Rendered small and apparently insignificant, they are present in order to unveil the awesomeness of nature. A visual strategy of center-periphery as well as one of juxtaposition is used so effectively and thoughtfully by Farhadian. Birds, lions, bees, women, and men are mere witness to the force of nature, of the miracle that is nature. They are not the event. They stand at the center of the event around them as if a potential sacrifice, as if a latent eyewitness, as if potentialities themselves about which Farhadian will never tell us. We will simply never know what will happen to these figures. From close reading of spiritual and textual sources, Farhadian has transformed the philosophy of spirituality and the history of the sublime onto a persuasive visual surface. Nature here is grand, ominous, vibrant, and sublime. It takes over and overwhelms our body and imagination.

In the works, the characters of the artist's imagination are stuck in the in-between of change, reflected through nature. Figures are on a rock in the middle of an ocean, on a high mountain, or lying in solitude by the river. Whether alone, or with each

other, their surrounding natural condition comes to define them and their sense of being. The human sense of miracle is fostered by its discovery of the vastness of its surroundings and its ability to place itself within it. Figures borrow notions of the self and hopes for the future by an unintentional engagement with the natural force of the event.

We are thus struck by the overwhelming presence of nature, a force that we often overlook in our cosmopolitan overloaded lives. Unsure of its positive or negative impact, the artist plays with the ambiguity for our lack of knowledge about nature. *The Dead Sun*, *Requiem*, and *Unusual Miracle* are dark and unhopeful. Death, disaster, and the ephemerality of life seem to be juxtaposed to the immortality of the nature. The figure lies defeated, overpowered by a sublime context. Is religious visual imagery deployed to denote apocalyptic future, such as those surrounding Judgment Day, in the form of thunder and lightning? Have these figures surrendered themselves to a sense of a lack of control of the self? Surely, Farhadian will not answer.

Through a vibrant use of colors, imagery, imagination, and emotions, the artist comes to represent our own relationship to ourselves and to our world. Our hopes and fears of futures, rooted in our past are made apparent. The viewer then, as in Farhadian's previous works, is introduced to a specific surrounding, only to lose one in the ephemeral nature of time, of the sublime of nature. *Sudden Miracle* is stunning, deeply telling. An afternoon swim in the nearby river. An outing of friends, family. The ordinary that has turned into a miracle. A trace of Farhadian's earlier works is apparent here: the man in his typically 1970s swimming suit are joined by two companions and two birds to witness the sudden opening in the river. An ordinary afternoon that will never be the same. Stunned spectators are at the merci of the force of nature. They are a mere witness to what is to come. As audience to the artist's work, we are made an observer to the sublime of that which will come to them.

The artist therefore is able to utilize multiple experiences, events, and feelings to create a visually rich set of works that touch upon these questions. They create a new powerful series. While nature comes to dominate the works, it is its relationship to the human self that gives it depth. The changing character of the nature, informs his work, and with uncanny talent he can dig deep into our notions of past, present and future, allowing the viewer to viscerally connect and respond to the work, mak-

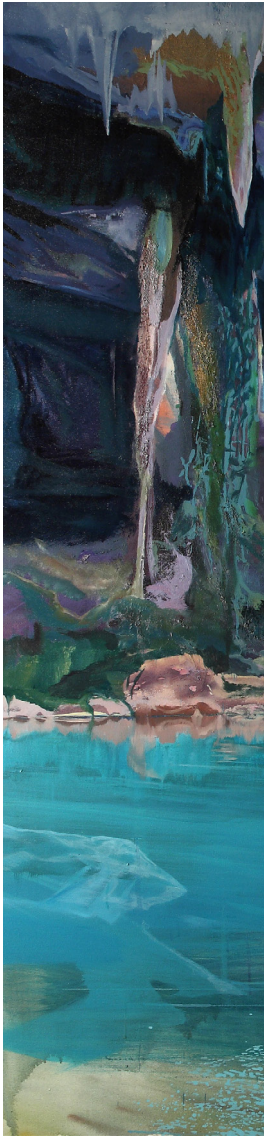
ing it his/her uniquely own. As in most Farhadian's works, the meaning of the paintings must be read collectively. There is here an accumulative meaning. One painting render the rest more powerful, meaningful.

Farhadian's masterful hand turns singular elements – a volcano, a terrible thunder, a large beehive, a big cloud, a gushing waterway, or a lush forest – into miraculous natural phenomenon. In this turn lies Farhadian's depth in thinking. He is not just a painter, but rather a thinker with a (magical) painterly hand. Therein lies the power of these works. We see his thinking process, of feeling that which he has witnessed in his imagination, in his thoughts, in his eyes. We see the miracle that would have been. Through these singular elements turn into the force of nature, Farhadian reveals to us the entanglement of humans to their own nature, to the human nature, and to the nature world that they are eternally tied to. Again, as in the past, we are invited to experience a thing that is elsewhere – an uncanny feeling of familiarity, a time bygone, a nature too awesome to know. Yet a thing that is universal, humane, and ever-present. Everyone knows nature. Everyone knows spirituality. Everyone knows history. Yet so few truly feel the universal miracle of nature, of spirituality, of history.

Talinn Grigor, Ph.D.
Professor of Art History
Brandeis University, Greater Boston



Usual Miracle, 2013
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 150 cm
59 1/8 x 59 1/8 in





Glorious Silence, 2013
Mixed Media on Canvas
180 x 220 cm
70 7/8 x 86 5/8 in



Rain Prayer, 2013
Mixed Media on Canvas
200 x 250 cm
78 3/4 x 98 3/8 in





Meeting the Queen, 2013
Acrylic on Canvas
190 x 220 cm
74 3/4 x 86 5/8 in



They Startle Me Still, 2013
Acrylic on Canvas
200 x 230 cm
78 3/4 x 90 1/2 in



Requiem, 2013
Acrylic on Canvas
150 x 190 cm
59 1/8 x 78 3/4 in





Lightning Kiss, 2013
Mixed Media on Canvas
180 x 200 cm
70 7/8 x 78 3/4 in



Born in 1980 in Tehran, Iran
Lives and works in Tehran

EDUCATION

MA Painting from Faculty of Fine Arts Tehran University, Tehran, Iran

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 *BAHARESTAN*, Mah Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2009 *Untitled*, Mah Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 *The Sea*, XVA Gallery, UAE
- 2011 MOPCAP Finalist Artist Exhibition, Royal College Of Arts, UK
- 2011 MOPCAP Exhibition, Traffic Gallery, Dubai, UAE
- 2010 *Landscape*, Aaran Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2010 *To Paint Cinema*, Mohsen Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2009 *In the Mood for Paper*, F2 Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2009 *Iran Inside Out*, Chelsea Museum, New York, USA
- 2009 *Iran on Paper the Last 10 Years*, Aaran Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2009 *Iran /Painting/Now*, Silk road Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2009 *Iran Without Border*, Galerie Almine Rech, Paris, France
- 2009 *Movers & Shakers in Contemporary Iranian Art*, LTMH Gallery, New York, USA
- 2007 *Radical Drawing 1*, Tarahan Azad Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2007 *Radical Drawing 2*, Tehran Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2007 *Four Yong Artists*, Mah Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2007 *Song of Bulbuls (Nightingales) of Oil Rich Regions*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Isfahan, Iran
- 2005 *Selected Contemporary Iranian Realism & Hyper Realism Art Exhibition*, Niavaran Cultural Center-Tehran-Iran

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2010 – 2012 Painting and Drawing Instructor at Science & Culture University, Tehran, Iran
- 2010 – 2012 Painting Instructor at Soore University, Tehran, Iran
- 2005 – 2010 Drawing and Painting Instructor at Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran, Public Classes, Tehran, Iran

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