

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Shit Moms, an exhibition of new paintings and animated videos by Tala Madani. The show opens on September 7 and will remain on view through October 19, 2019. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, September 7 from 6:00pm until 8:00pm. Shit Moms is Madani's second show at the gallery and will take place in all three of its exhibition spaces, making it one of her largest and most varied exhibitions to date.

Tala Madani creates images that touch upon the complexity and contradiction of contemporary life. Her paintings depict human figures at their most vulnerable, violent, and perplexed, and are full of both ribald humor and dead-serious critical insight: packs of naked middle-aged men engaged in often self-destructive rituals, babies with a knack for remaking the world with their own bodily fluids, and other archetypal figures ripped from the metaphorical headlines.

Madani's work can be read in association with a personal pantheon of image-makers whose breadth is as notable as its diversity; everything from Renaissance paintings to the Watchmen series of graphic novels becomes grist for the mill. The distinct interpersonal narratives that appear in her paintings are rendered with attendant sensitivity to the behavior and qualities of light, not to mention paint itself, so that they also function as embodied analyses of the very materials from which they are made.

As its title suggests, Shit Moms is filled with mother figures and meditations on motherhood. Madani takes a literal approach to this colloquial phrase used to describe mothers who fail their children, painting pictures of female bodies formed from a brown, sludgy substance that immediately evokes excrement. In many cases these mothers are seen in the process of being sculpted by small, cherubic children—they are mothers formed according to the libidinal wills of their offspring; in others, a caress or embrace from the mother leaves the otherwise oblivious child stained with filth. In the absence of a pristine mother or an angelic one, the shit mom will have to do, and the actions of the children in the paintings suggest that a shit mom is better than none at all.

These characters, as well as the detailed, filmic spaces and architectures they inhabit give the

haunting sense that these are pictures dredged from the unconscious world of dreams and fantasies. Tableaux occur in modernist apartment buildings, abandoned houses, darkened disco halls, and on sunlit beaches where the ocean beckons as a place for baptism or dissolution.

Taking into account the entire spectrum between extremes of materiality and immateriality, Shit Moms also includes new paintings that feature images of ghostly, half-present characters who occupy furniture and haunt darkened spaces. In others, men take a laughably phallic approach to checking the expression of their masculinity, wielding guns in attempts to shoot down their own ejaculate.

Another group takes illumination as a central theme: of particular note is an ambitious series of diptychs that hang in the gallery's corners, and that establish links to film through their use of horizontal formats and their subject matter alike. In several of these works, for instance, one side of the diptych is devoted to an oversized image of a projector and its throw of light, which "lands" on the adjacent canvas, where swarms of naked men scramble to avoid its all-powerful force; some stop to make shadow puppets, playing up the formal intricacies of the relationship between the two perpendicular canvases.

Moving images have long played an important role in Madani's project. Her video animations constitute a primary laboratory for experiments in narrative, drawing, and painting. The videos on view in Shit Moms are displayed in various ways and at different scales, as befits the variation in their subject matter and the scope of their formal inventiveness. In keeping with the themes on view throughout the rest of the show, one far-reaching work depicts a fetus in the womb. As the baby grows, a film reel presents key scenes from world history in chronological order, establishing a nuanced, sad, frightening, and hilarious visual metaphor for the ways in which cultural knowledge is passed along from one generation to the next.

In 2020, Tala Madani (b. 1981, Tehran; lives and works in Los Angeles) will be the subject of a major mid-career survey exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Other upcoming and recent solo exhibitions include shows at Secession, Vienna (November 2019);

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Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (November 2019); Portikus, Frankfurt (2019); La Panacée—Centre de Culture Contemporaine, Montpellier, France (2017); MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts and Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (2016); Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville, Spain (2015); and Nottingham Contemporary, England (2015). Forthcoming and recent group exhibitions include The Seventh Continent, 16th Istanbul Biennial (September 2019); Dirty Protest: Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Collection, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2019); On Vulnerability and Doubt, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne (2019); ARKIPEL Homoludens, 6th Jakarta International Documentary and Experimental Film Festival (2018); Whitney Biennial 2017, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2017); Los Angeles - A Fiction, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2016), traveled to Musée d'art Contemporain de Lyon, France (2017); and Invisible Adversaries, Marieluise Hessel Collection, Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2016).