

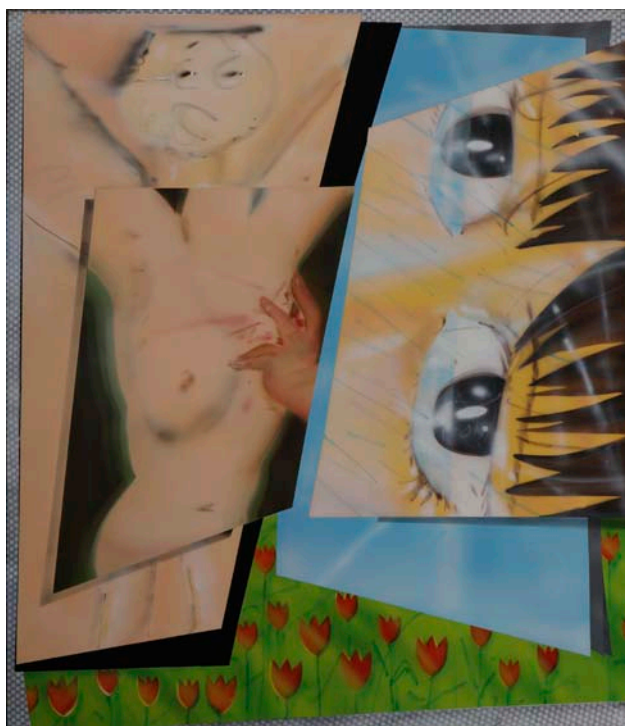
GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

HODA KASHIHA

***Dear st. Agatha I am witness
of your tears In the land of Tulips***

Saturday 30 May - Saturday 11 July, 2020



Hoda Kashiha, *Dear st. Agatha I am witness of your tears In the land of Tulips*, 2020
Acrylic on Canvas, 150 × 120 cm (59 1/16 × 47 1/4 in.)

Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Brussels is pleased to present *Dear st. Agatha I am witness of your tears In the land of Tulips*, the first solo exhibition of Hoda Kashiha in the gallery.

Born in 1986 in Tehran, the Iranian artist reflects in her body of work on culturally sensitive topics such as identity, femininity and gender issues within the complex socio-political climate in her native country. Her daily observations of hostility, opposition and struggle are transformed into humorous and poetic metaphors on canvas resulting in a disrupted, bold imagery that constantly shifts between reality and imagination, figuration and abstraction.

The flux and tension of her subject matter resonate in the visual language of her work. In a group of 15 paintings for this exhibition, Kashiha explores the non-linear narrative by breaking up the traditional pictorial plane into a collage-based layered composition. This approach allows the artist to depict the antagonist emotional feelings of her fictive characters: love/hate, violence/peace, power/defeat and life/death.

The work entitled *Dear st. Agatha I witness of your tears In the land of Tulips* combines Kashiha's interest in collage and animation. Inspired by the legend of the virgin martyr "Saint Agatha"¹ of Christian antiquity, Kashiha creates a highly metaphorical work on the arc of pain, resistance and perseverance experienced by all mankind around the world today. In a comic and multiple fragmented style, the work shows a nude female chest on top of a male body in the background, juxtaposed with a close-up of eyes filled up with tears and surrounded by a clear blue sky and a green lawn filled with red tulips.

The red tulips link it directly to Iran where it is a national symbol to commemorate both martyrs and justice. This work would be banned for display in her country due to the nudity which underlines the importance to have complete freedom and autonomy within the artistic practice.

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The treatment of her subject through sketches is a common practice in her work to ensure a disjointed narrative and the ability to constantly change its storytelling at that stage. While designing these studies, Kashiha experiments with a variety of conventional and media techniques such as paper and digital collages using paper cutouts and digital painting tools. In the works *Rabbiting in the Hunting Ground* and *Rainfall after Smoke* these process elements are clearly apparent such as stencil motifs and cut-out figures. The paintings are never an exact copy of the sketches due to the dynamics of painting and the application of new painting techniques such as airbrush and spray gun directly on the canvas.

Her canvases become a fictional space, a moment in which she explores the optical and physical relationship between the fore and backgrounds of the multi-layered pictorial plane, as seen in the work *Eyes Never Stop Seeing All Things*. The stratification of her work is inspired by the art movement in the 1970s called “Abstract Illusionism”², in which abstract works were shown with a sense of perspective, depth and shadow.



Hoda Kashiha, *Apollo Pursuing Daphne*, 2020
Acrylic on Canvas, 150 × 220 cm (59 1/16 × 86 5/8 in.)

This exhibition includes two diptych works, which emphasize the versatility of her visual and conceptual narrative. The diptych composition of the work *Apollo Pursuing Daphne*³ highlights the female gender as the main subject. Within her artistic practice, Kashiha investigates how format and form can accentuate the classical theme of the Greek myth. The use of geometric abstraction of the pictorial space and the body in a clear cubist style, the bold use of color, the multiple timelines and the integration of animation and digital media techniques creates a dynamic visual language. The work displays the delicate balance between men and women, a universal story of all time.

Humor is an important aspect in Hoda’s narrative to temper bitter subjects. It is a common mechanism for Iranians to cope and survive current social and political situations. Femininity and female empowerment in the smallest detail are playfully illustrated in her work *Untitled* where a proud and free woman shows her armpit hair to a man who pinches his nose. Such light-hearted, imaginative presentations can encourage openness about many difficult concepts.

Considered as one of the emerging artists in the vibrant Iranian contemporary art scene, Hoda Kashiha’s work is a constant reflection on existence and non-existence, visibility and concealment of the paradoxes of human conditions created by politics and society in her native country. While reflecting on sensitive subjects to emphasize the feminine power as opposed to the traditional male domination, she creates bold colorful paintings with an open, free and hopeful spirit. The title of one work captures the artist’s mindset in a very poetic way *All beautiful lives start floating when dark falls, maybe I am somewhere else above skies*.

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Hoda Kashiha, *Untitled*, 2019
Acrylic on canvas, 100 × 120 cm (39 3/8 × 47 1/4 in.)

1. Saint Agatha: St. Agatha, also known as Agatha of Sicily (c. 231- 251 AD), is one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of the Catholic Church. St. Agatha is the patron saint of Sicily, bell-founders, breast cancer patients, Palermo, rape victims, and wet nurses. She is commonly featured in religious art with shears, tongs, or breasts on a plate.

2. Abstract Illusionism: In the mid-1970s, the American art historian and art critic Barbara Rose (born 1938) identified a trend in painting in which abstract works were rendered with a sense of perspective, depth, and shadow. Rose named this development "Abstract Illusionism", calling attention to the fact that painting, still abstract, was returning to its long history of depicting space. Many artists since have incorporated tropes of "Abstract Illusionism", producing works with an array of abstract marks and shapes that appear to exist within three-dimensional space.

3. *Apollo Pursuing Daphne*: made in c. 1755/1760 by the 18th century Italian baroque artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, painted an oil based on the Greek myth depicting Daphne halfway through metamorphosis with Apollo in pursuit. It now hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (United States).

Born in Tehran (Iran) in 1986. She lives and works in Tehran.

Hoda Kashiha studied painting at the University of Tehran in 2009 and Boston University in the United States in 2014, which led to several fellowships in America until 2016. Her fellowships earned her many awards, amongst others the MacDowell Colony Fellowship in Peterborough (United States) and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant by the Vermont Studio Center (United States) in 2015, and the Esther B. and Albert S. Kahn Career Entry Award by Boston University College of Fine Arts (United States) in 2014. During these fellowships, her artistic figurative practice shifted to a more conceptual and abstract approach by developing a disrupted narrative.

Kashiha's work has been widely exhibited in Iran, the United States and Europe, in significant group shows as *City Prince/sses*, *Dhaka, Lagos, Manila, Mexico City and Tehran* at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (France, 2019) and *Human Condition* at the former Los Angeles Metropolitan Medical Center in Los Angeles (United States, 2016). In 2012, her work was presented in Belgium, for the first time, in *Unexposed* at Tour & Taxis in Brussels, a prestigious group show that highlighted the new generation of 40 young female artists from Iran, where cultural life is increasingly witnessing the presence and influence of women in social, cultural and artistic fields.

Her work is included in the collections of Commonwealth Hotel in Boston (United States) and the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center in Boston (United States).

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Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Brussels

Hoda Kashiha
*Dear st. Agatha I am witness
of your tears In the land of Tulips*
30 May - 11 July, 2020

Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Paris
Cloître Saint-Merri

Valérie Belin
Reflection
6 February - May, 2020

Evolving exhibition
21 May - 31 July, 2020

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Paris Cloître Saint-Merri II

Jérôme Zonder
6 June - 31 July, 2020

Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Paris
Bourg-Tibourg

Evolving exhibition
Dear Hong Kong...
18 March - 15 July, 2020