

ARGHAVAN KHOSRAVI

THE SHAPE OF ABSENCE

KÖNIG GALERIE | CHAPEL
17 JULY – 30 AUGUST 2026

KÖNIG GALERIE is pleased to present THE SHAPE OF ABSENCE by Iranian-born, US-based artist Arghavan Khosravi at St. Agnes in Berlin. The exhibition marks the artist's second presentation with the gallery.

Khosravi's work often departs from lived, cultural, and historical experience, yet it extends beyond a specific geography or moment. Through painting and sculpture, she constructs worlds in which questions of power, agency, visibility, and control unfold through symbolic language. Fragments of bodies, architectural spaces, veils, cages, hands, shadows, and openings frequently reappear in her work. Together, they form visual metaphors that remain open to interpretation rather than declarative.

Above all, Khosravi's works are poetic. They can be read as visual poems: meticulously composed, rhythmic, and layered with meaning. They draw the audience into spaces that feel intimate yet theatrical. Their intensity lies in restraint, in what is withheld, obscured, interrupted, or partially revealed.

Over the course of her practice, Khosravi's paintings have expanded beyond the flat surface into sculptural and architectural form. Her works are composed of painted surfaces, shaped supports, strings, shadows, and symbolic objects arranged across multiple layers and depths. This creates a sense of perspective and spatiality, allowing the images to unfold in a way that is reminiscent of altarpieces or architectural interiors.

This architectural dimension is especially evident in one of the exhibition's central works, THE MUSIC HALL (THE WOUND). Inspired by the Ali Qapu Palace in Isfahan, the work opens up the palace façade to reveal a layered interior. Contrasting features and symbolic images appear throughout the structure. On one side, a hand covered in black evokes oil, guiding the viewer toward the idea of domination and forced political power. At the opposite end, another hand glows. Between them, a fragment of a female figure indicates suspension within the structure, perhaps suggesting the possibility of change.

In the foreground, closest to the observer, an hourglass introduces another concept. It denotes the passage of time, the instability of power, and the hope that circumstances may shift.

The principle of antithesis, together with symbolic language and narrative structure, runs throughout the show. In ECLIPSE, a radiant hand once again confronts a blackened, burnt-looking hand. Between them is a fragment of a woman embracing both. The image does not offer a straightforward resolution; instead, it holds light and darkness, tenderness and coercion together.

In ABSENCE, Khosravi's engagement with duality is expressed through the image of the pomegranate. It appears once in full presence and once inverted, as an empty outline. It is from this work that the exhibition derives its title: THE SHAPE OF ABSENCE. The phrase signals one of the core tensions in Khosravi's work: what is hidden, overlooked, or erased may still carry form, weight, and presence.

The women in Khosravi's paintings rarely perform suffering directly. Their expressions, when visible, remain controlled, neutral, or deliberately withheld. By refusing a visual language of victimization, Khosravi shifts attention toward endurance, ambiguity, and the quiet force of presence. Her figures are often fragmented, veiled, or partially concealed, but they remain crucial to the emotional and symbolic structure of the work.

KÖNIG GALERIE

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OPENING TIMES
Tuesday – Sunday 11 am – 6 pm
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Alongside the wall-based works, the exhibition also features the sculpture THE WHITE FEATHER, first presented in Khosravi's major museum exhibition BLACK RAIN at the Rose Art Museum in 2023. The sculpture shows a female warrior surrounded by intricate ornamentation and translucent elements. Shadows become part of the piece, falling through and around the figure. Like the other works in the exhibition, it holds together opposing forces: struggle and dream, hope and violence, light and darkness, and life and death.

Khosravi's visual universe may be built upon dichotomies and oppositions, yet these oppositions are never fixed. They shift, overlap, and complicate one another. At the center of this world stands the human figure: resilient and unresolved. It reminds viewers that absence itself can become a form of presence.

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