

# AFTER NYNE



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## The Work of Azadeh Razaghdoost

# The Poetry of Creation

WORDS · BENJAMIN MURPHY

— **Azadeh** Razaghdoost is an Iranian painter who creates vivid, visceral works that are as poetic as they are dexterous.

Taking her inspiration from romantic poetry, she transcribes language into visual imagery through the prism of expressionism. Her paintings often feature flowers and petals, combined with simply written text and abstract backgrounds. Her new show *Recipe For A Poem* will contain 15 paintings, and will be her first UK solo show. It opened at Sophia Contemporary Gallery in London, on the 28th of September.



**Your new show contains works from multiple series; should the viewer approach this show as if it were one coherent artwork, or should they view each painting as if it were autonomous?**

The visual evolution of my works differs from one series to another; however, the idea and the concept are similar. Although each piece has its own specific details and features, it's nice that this exhibition will give the audience a more accurate impression of the body of my work by confronting several different series.

**A lot of your inspiration comes from poetry and classic literature, are you giving form to the literary arts or are they giving your work substance?**

No. The titles of some series, which are mainly poems, have been chosen as they have an affinity with the emotional direction of the paintings. Poetry is not the subject or substance of my works. Sometimes being inspired by a poem has caused the expansion of some series. Moreover, the more expansive the series' become, the more distant I get from the inspiration.

**The majority of the writers you are influenced by are European (Proust, Baudelaire, Blake etc); how does this chime with your Iranian heritage, and are there any Iranian poets who influence your painting?**

My works are closer to romantic poetry and literature and love poems in visual expression and formalistic view; the titles I've chosen have been taken from the poems which have had the most influence on me. More specifically, I adore Baudelaire's perspective and expression which I find closest to my own attitude toward life.

The reason for choosing these titles is that their themes have echoed the themes of my paintings. I also read Iranian poets like Nima, Shamloo, and Forouq Farroqzad a lot. My works have even been influenced by Forouq's poems in the past as well. Your question about why Persian literature and the rich Iranian cultural heritage is less explored in my works is a question from a touristic and an exotic point of view. An artist is free to be influenced and inspired based on their own attitude and ideology; they aren't restricted to choosing Iranian poetry and literature just because they are Iranian.

**Flowers are traditionally (if not incorrectly) thought of as being feminine motifs; does your work challenge or confirm this prescribed femininity?**

The roses in "The Sick Rose" series substitute the triangular shape of the hearts in the "Les Fleurs du Mal" series. Disjointed forms resemble a feminine figure, and represent concerns regarding the expression of concepts

of love and a sacredness that has been crucified like Jesus' body. The blood element which always challenges this sacred aspect of suffering in my paintings resembles the blood in a woman's womb as well. In terms of symbolism, the triangular shape resembles the wine glass, and the sacred glass resembles a woman's womb.

**Your brushstrokes are redolent of abstract expressionism in many ways, would you say that you approach painting in a similar way to the unbridled outpouring of emotion expressed by action painting?**

AR: Well, it's outpouring, but not abstract and not action painting; it's more of a controlled conceptual framework. The width and visual space of my paintings are quiet and vacant, and in this tranquility and whiteness of the canvas, a compressed amount of red together with an intense emotional expression appear with a lot of sensitivity and strength, visually expressing an outpouring of emotions. This quality formed by brushstrokes on the canvas is not unbridled at all, plus it is much further from being unraveled and unkempt as in action painting.

**The colours and forms in your paintings are very visceral. Are you using the flower as a visual metaphor for the human body?**

Your interpretation of my work being visceral is so right; being very visceral has been the main feature of my works at all times. What is more important and visible is blood itself as a visual metaphor which is displayed on the canvas. Blood in the paintings has been expressed as a sick rose, a deep wound, a shape of a beating heart, or a feminine figure. All the same, the concept of blood is a very emotional and passionate expression that challenges a love experience or an erotic act.

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AZADEH RAZAGHDOOST: RECIPE FOR A POEM  
IS AT SOPHIA CONTEMPORARY GALLERY,  
24 NOVEMBER 2016 - 18 FEBRUARY 2017  
SOPHIACONTEMPORARY.COM  
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PREVIOUS SPREAD:  
Azadeh Razaghdooost, Untitled, 2011, oil and pencil  
on canvas, 180x130 cm, courtesy of the artist and  
Sophia Contemporary Gallery

THIS PAGE TOP LEFT:  
Azadeh Razaghdooost, Through Air Where Roses of Black  
Gunpowder Burst, 2011, oil and pencil on canvas,  
180 x 130 cm, courtesy of the artist and Sophia  
Contemporary Gallery

THIS PAGE TOP RIGHT:  
Azadeh Razaghdooost, Untitled, 2008, oil and pencil on  
canvas, 120 x 80 cm, courtesy of the artist and Sophia  
Contemporary Gallery

THIS PAGE BOTTOM:  
Azadeh Razaghdooost, My Winey Paper, 2009, oil on  
pencil on canvas, 180 x 130 cm, courtesy of the artist  
and Sophia Contemporary Gallery