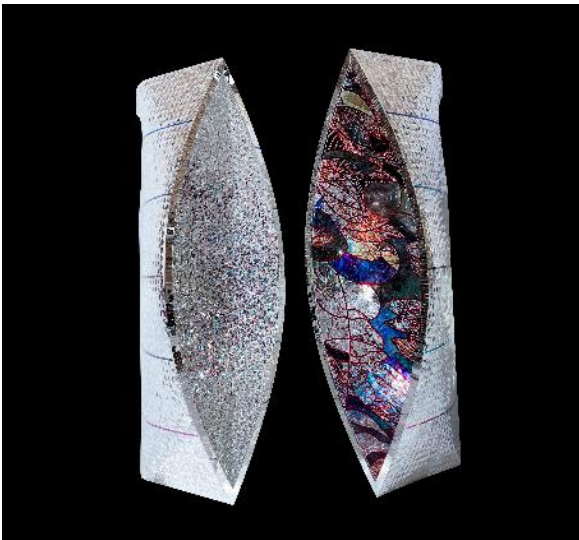


Pooya Aryanpour: Under the Shell

10 June – 21 July 2016



Left: Pooya Aryanpour, *Temptation*, 2015, Mirror-Painting Glass, Plaster on Wood, 203x140x73cm

Right: Pooya Aryanpour, *Drifted*, 2016, Acrylic on Canvas, 170 x 170 cm,

Courtesy of the artist and Sophia Contemporary Gallery

Sophia Contemporary is pleased to present the first solo exhibition in the UK by renowned Iranian sculptor and painter Pooya Aryanpour. The artist will exhibit a range of his celebrated mirror sculptures alongside new paintings from his Under the Shell series (2016). Rooted in his personal heritage, Aryanpour's works bring a thoroughly contemporary expression to the Iranian visual tradition – from its artistic techniques to cultural symbolisms - while referencing and exploring the Western tradition of abstract art.

Aryanpour's practice is preoccupied with the exploration of painterly and sculptural abstraction and the relationship between humans and their natural environment. As he explains "I have always tried to find the romance and poetry in shapes and colours and explore their properties." The artist takes as his point of reference transient symbols such as flowers, letters, architectural constructions and maps which he then abstracts in order to capture the essence of the ephemeral physical world.

In *Beautiful Virgin* (2015) and *Temptation* (2015) the artist has used mirrored sculptures to explore this sense of fluidity and instability. The tradition of mirror works (*ayeneh-kari*) in Iran

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takes its roots in the ceilings of Iranian mosques, which are often covered in highly elaborate mirror mosaics, representing the heavens and the worship of God. While the artist also uses the traditional craftsmanship of ayeneh-kari to create his contemporary art works, he is the first Iranian artist who has chosen to use the medium to depict non-religious concepts. By replacing the sacred with the profane, for example through his use of the human body as a subject matter, Aryanpour's sculptures contradict and subvert the original notion of ayeneh-kari.

The use of ayeneh-kari allows the artist to create sculptures which he perceives as ever-evolving. The diffraction of light created by the mirrors blurs the viewer's perception of form and concept and the works are constantly changing depending on how you look at them, how the light is projected and where you stand in relation to them.

By playing with the mirror's elusiveness, the artist creates a sense of mystery and beauty within his sculptures, a concept he calls the 'secret idea'. The suggestion of femininity and the mystery of the female body also runs throughout these works.

In his abstraction of the female form Aryanpour aims to imbue the works with meanings, which are explicit yet elusive. The works in his painting series Under the Shell (2016) further exemplify the artist's fascination with the mystery of the surface and its power to cloak or reveal contents. The paintings are materialised in richly textured surfaces created with acrylic on canvas, their abstract shapes and vivid colours morphing harmoniously to create a mysterious whole infused with mysticism and suspense.

About Pooya Aryanpour

Born in Tehran, Iran in 1971, Pooya Aryanpour obtained a BA and MA in Painting at the School of Plastic Arts and at the Azad University, Tehran, Iran. He currently lives and works in Tehran and teaches Painting, Drawing and Art History at Azad University, Tehran. His work has been widely exhibited in Iran and internationally.

Aryanpour grew up as part of an academic family and was home schooled from childhood. His father is an emblematic figure in Iran's intellectual heritage and was a pioneer in adapting modern social sciences to the Iranian context in the 1960s. The artist's upbringing is reflected in his philosophical vision and artistic practice which is influenced by Jacques Derrida's theory of 'Deconstructivism', a concept his father helped introduce into Iranian academia.

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About Sophia Contemporary Gallery

Sophia Contemporary Gallery is a new art gallery based in Mayfair, London showcasing contemporary art of the Middle East and Iran alongside contemporary Western art.

The gallery represents some of the most established contemporary artists from the Middle East and Iran working in a variety of media, including drawings, paintings, sculpture, video and photography among others. In addition, the gallery is pioneering a new generation of emerging artists from the region with a view to provide them with a platform on the international stage. The gallery roster also includes emerging and established artists from Europe and the USA, promoting a creative dialogue between the art of the Middle East and Western art.

Sophia Contemporary is committed to conducting research and educating the public through events and talks, and is working with museums and institutions worldwide in order to place the gallery's artists in major public and private collections.

Exhibition Details

Title:	Pooya Aryanpour
Address:	Sophia Contemporary Gallery, 11 Grosvenor Street, London, W1K 4QB, UK
Website:	www.sophiacontemporary.com
Dates:	10 June – 21 July 2016
Private View:	6 – 9 pm, 9 June 2016
Opening Hours:	Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm, Saturday 11am to 5pm
Admission:	Free
Travel:	Green Park, Bond Street or Oxford Circus Tube Station
Twitter:	@SophiaCGallery
Facebook:	SophiaContemporaryGallery
Instagram:	SophiaContemporaryGallery