

PRESSBOOK

Farhad MOSHIRI

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An Exhibition By Iranian Artist Farhad Moshiri Might Be All We Have Left Of Winter In 100 Years

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Guillaume Ziccarelli, Courtesy Perrotin

Farhad MOSHIRI
SNOW FOREST 002A, 2017
Hand embroidered beads on canvas on board

When I saw the canvasses in *Snow Forest*, an exhibition of hand-embroidered canvasses by Fahrad Moshiri at Perrotin New York, I was immediately reminded of the woods that surround my parents' house in Chappaqua. Throughout my childhood, we spent every weekend morning hiking in those woods. Some of my most vivid winter memories are the silence of the snow in that forest, despite the fact that there were eight of us traversing through it — six children, and two parents.

I was surprised to find out that the canvasses were based on photographs Moshiri took on the dirt road right outside of his studio in the city of Lavasan, which is 40 minutes outside of Tehran. All I know of Tehran is from the films of Abbas Kiarostami. Through his lens, Iran looks like a perpetually warm and dry place. An unfamiliar place. And yet, Moshiri's canvasses felt deeply personal.

"It was never my intention to show the differences between Iran and America," he told me over email. "When I got up in the morning and saw everything covered with a layer of fresh snow, I grabbed my camera and went outside. What I was seeing in my viewfinder was a complex composition not unlike Jackson Pollock's splash paintings. That set the tone for the entire photo shoot, which was capturing a powerful composition, void of any cultural symbols, otherwise my photos would start to look like a National Geographic image."

The resulting photographs remained in a box in his studio for a number of years. Recently, he came upon them, and decided to transform them into large-scale canvasses. First, Moshiri drew the images of the snowy forest on canvasses. Then, he sent them out to a group of Iranian women he has been collaborating with for a decade. Each of the women hand embroidered the drawings with beads, creating a textured, glistening surface that closely resembles the initial photograph. The women do the work in the comfort of their own homes, and return them to Moshiri six or seven months after he commissions them.

Moshiri has been producing canvasses out of beads throughout his career. Many such works are currently on display in *Go West* at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, which is Moshiri's first solo museum exhibition in the United States, and is open through January 14, 2018. There, Moshiri's canvasses are a profusion of color, dotted with references to pop culture and Persian tropes. What makes the canvasses in *Snow Forest* unique to his oeuvre is that they are monochromatic.



"Most artists invent an original visual language that they stick to and explore throughout their careers and somehow they manage to pull it off," Moshiri told me. "Collectors also like it since they can recognize the artist right away. I also get extremely excited about a new idea and explore it obsessively but in due course I become extremely finished with that idea or style and feel the need for an extreme departure...I know it doesn't make for a very cohesive body of work but I can't help it. I'm stubborn, childish and self-destructive. It's not all bad though. Something good comes out of it once in a while."

Moshiri was born in Shiraz, Iran, in 1963. There, in the birthplace of the poets Hafez and Saadi, his father owned a number of cinemas. Throughout his childhood, Moshiri watched American films. In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, his family immigrated to Los Angeles, where Moshiri received his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 1984.

He struggled, after graduating, to find his footing as an artist. "I was failing miserably," he told me. He returned to Shiraz in 1991, during a period of relative tranquility. "My father was living in Shiraz and I felt that I desperately needed to get away from what I had become," he said. Today, he splits his time between homes in Iran and Paris.

What sets his work apart from his contemporaries is the collision of Eastern and Western influences. Iconography from both cultures is combined in such a way that it makes distinctions such as "Eastern" and "Western" seem reductive, and even silly. It was silly for me to assume, without knowing, that a forest covered in snow outside of Tehran couldn't look exactly the same as a forest covered in snow in the suburbs of New York.

The canvasses are worth seeing in person for the hush they evoke. But also for the skill they embody. It's incredible that something as tiny and as solid as a bead can be used to create something so ephemeral as the silence of a winter morning. All from the hands of unknown Iranian women.

Snow Forest at Perrotin is open through December 23, 2017. Moshiri will also be speaking on a panel at Art Basel Miami Beach on Sunday, December 10, at 2pm. For more information, [follow the link.](#)