

SHIRANA SHAHBAZI

(3th floor)

2 March - 29 May 2005

Private View: 1 March at 6 pm

The exhibition will be touring in January 2006 at the Milton Keynes Gallery (UK)

The Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève is proud to present the first institutional major solo exhibition in Switzerland of artist Shirana Shahbazi. The exhibition will consist of recent and new works, including the artist's latest photographs shot in China and in the USA, as well as a series of new wall carpets and a poster installation.

Shirana Shahbazi takes a conceptual approach in the way she handles the genre of photography. Her photographs simultaneously portray the figure and the landscape from Oriental and Western situations in an attempt to problematise the exotic cliché so often found in representations of the Other. Shahbazi addresses the representational medium of photography as a tool used by different cultures to create images of reality which, as constructs, have the capacity to replace real life.

Her images exist in varying formats and media, from the tiniest photographs to the positively monumental, and large format paintings (made by Iranian painters employed in the advertising industry), which are copies of photographs by the artist. Shahbazi shoots her photographs in different locations and combines them in varying arrangements each time she exhibits, in a way that is close to the technique of 'montage'. In this way her images take on different meanings depending on which photographs are hung next to each other. Her images address both the traditional field of photography and the imagery of advertising or media. This duality is particularly notable in her poster installations, which take a step further the operation of displacement and reinvestment characteristic of the artist's practice. Most recently Shahbazi has produced small carpets woven with images derived from her photographs. These carpets are hung on the wall and reference both the nature of image making as well as their domestic and decorative status.

One of Shahbazi's most well known series, featured in this exhibition, *Goftare Nik/Good Words* (2000-2001) takes its title from the Zoroastrian maxim 'good thoughts, good words, good deeds'. This series was shot in and around Tehran and is a compendium of social role models and phenomena. It is a reflection on Iran, on myth laden Persia, and its portrayal and self-portrayal. It explores myth and reality, fiction and simulation. In *Good Words* Shahbazi is simultaneously inspired by the ubiquitous street murals of the Iraq-Iran war martyrs and of Ayatollah Khomeini, by miniature mosaics, carpet design, Persian poetry and its engagement with nature, as well as by the banality of everyday life.

In this series, as well as in the more recent series taken in China and in the USA, the artist photographs landscapes, portraits, urban scenes, seeking the foreign in the familiarity of the images. Shahbazi's images do not per se offer a fixed opinion or conclusion, but they do however open up a hybrid space for the development of identity within open-ended and continuously changing categories.

In addition to the exhibition, an important catalogue will be published by the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, as well as a limited edition of photographs by the artist.

Shirana Shahbazi was born in Teheran, brought up in Germany and currently is living in Zurich. She won the City Bank Prize in 2002 and the Prix Federal in 2004. Monographic exhibitions include the Kunstverein Bonn 2002. She has also participated in various group exhibitions in the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 2001, the The Photographers Gallery, London, 2002, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, 2003, and the Biennial of Venice, 2003.

For further press information and images, please contact Aurélien Gamboni on +41 22 329 18 42, e-mail: presse@centre.ch

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Next exhibition : Valentin Carron / Mai-Thu Perret, 20 May - 14 August 2005, Private View 19 May 2005 at 6 pm.