

KHOSRO BERAHMANDI
Nebulous
Rings

By Dorota Kozinska



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NEBULOUS RINGS

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It is impossible to speak of the art of Khosro Berahmandi without telling the artist's story. Born in Iran, in the late fifties, he was raised in Tehran during the reign of the Shah. The great political turmoil that followed swept him along with other students, but dreams of a better life were soon shattered, and Berahmandi sought refuge in Rome, crossing two countries on foot.

In his early twenties, he found exile difficult, seeking comfort in painting, which soon turned from a hobby to a vocation. After studying Fine Arts at the University of Western Ontario with Paterson Ewen among other famous painters, followed by courses at Montreal's Concordia University, Berahmandi continued his academic formation at the University of Paris VIII, returning to Montreal in 1995, where he now lives and works, giving art courses, and pursuing an active involvement with the Festival Accès Asie.

Berahmandi's work has been shown in over 30 exhibitions throughout Canada, the United States and Europe.

Very little is known about contemporary Iranian art. A recent exhibition at Arario New York, in collaboration with Galerie Hilger in Vienna, titled *The Promise of Loss: A Contemporary Index of Iran*, was perhaps one of the first of its kind. Curated by Shaheen Merali, it offered a glimpse into the contemporary art world and culture of Iran, uniting internationally established artists with new and emerging talents, creating a dialogue through works of over a dozen artists living in and out of Iran.

In that context, the art of Berahmandi, takes on a very different dimension, impossible, as it is to excise it from the larger historical, political, and personal background.

Berahmandi remained faithful to the traditional Persian style of painting, its incredible attention to detail, its lyrical vision. The tradition of Persian miniatures echoes in his works, seeped as it has into his veins. His paintings, like most of Persian art, are permeated with poetry and music, offering a form of expression that is uniquely exotic to our western eyes. And yet they are undeniably modern.

Berahmandi's latest exhibition continues his visual explorations, intricate images imbued with a deeper meaning not immediately decipherable. Painted, or rather drawn with colourful oil pens on board, these are scenes from an unknown mythology, populated with golden birds and turquoise horses. They make the eye dance instantly with an accumulation of enticing details, resembling cascading jewellery or shimmering peacock feathers. Persian tapestry appears in many of the works, incorporated seamlessly into the composition, harking at the artist's home without disturbing the contemporary feel of the pieces.

Berahmandi is a marvellous colourist, audacious and sensitive at once, he juggles the many bright colours with great virtuosity. Persian blue, gold and silver, warm red and gem-like turquoise...each colour patch, each design placed just so, never disturbing the composition, or usurping too much of the viewer's attention.

Mostly set against an inky black background, the images seem encrusted in this velvety darkness, shimmering as if lit by an unknown source, almost three-dimensional.

The shapes are at once animal and human, mythical horned beings enacting silent passages, next to abstract shapes and forms, designs of great intricacy and precision.

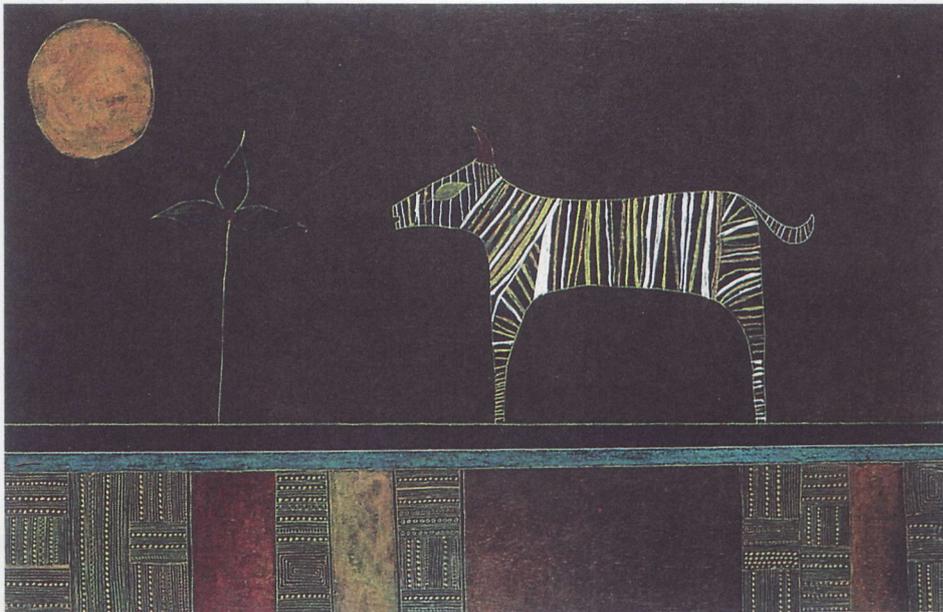
Berahmandi's mixed media on wood are more than painting; they become *objets d'art*; the board often cut in an arc or a triangle, with the image continuing on the sides of the panel.

A series of works stands out by its very title: *Tribute to Neda*. It has been a year since the image of a young woman dying during the street protests in Tehran was seen by the entire world. For Berahmandi, this tragedy was unbearably close to home.

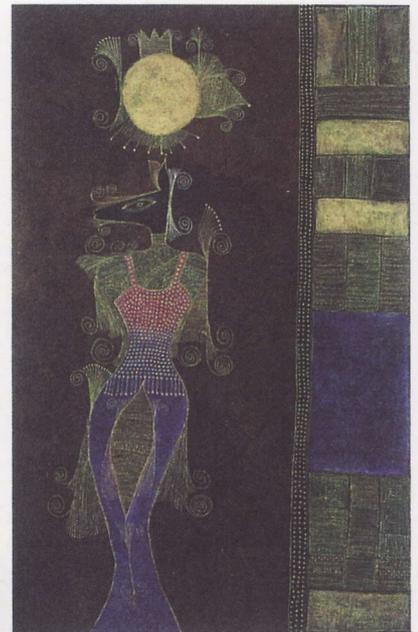
In response, he created works of painful beauty, mournful visual incantations that transform despair into hope, but one of a metaphysical kind.

Four panels compose the series; in two Neda is represented but by an ethereal dress, with sleeves resembling wings. In the first, the palette is reduced to old gold and red, austere and sombre, a golden double crescent rising above. The second image is a transformation, the dress changes into blood red, a glowing gem appearing, pulsating like a star where the head should be...The pathos is contained in the emptiness of the garment, the epiphany in the rising, shimmering spirit.

The exhibition is accompanied by a 70-page bilingual book-catalogue of Berahmandi's work, titled *Oblivion and Silence*, with the text written by poet Bahman Sedighi. ●



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1- *Life of the Moon-Polyptych-Tribute to Neda*, 2009

Mixed media on wood
60 x 120 cm

2- *Ami de fleur*, 2007

56 x 35 cm

3- *Chaleur de l'absolue*, 2007

56 x 35 cm