

ADVOCARTSY presents *A Return to the Flesh*, a solo exhibition by Pouya Afshar

Opening Thursday, June 23rd, with a public reception from 6-9 pm

434 North La Cienega Blvd, West Hollywood, CA 90048



Bared #1, 2022, Oil on Board, 10 x 10 in each, 21 x 32 in installed

(West Hollywood, CA — June 1, 2022) Los Angeles-based Iranian contemporary art platform ADVOCARTSY presents *A Return to the Flesh*, a solo exhibition by Pouya Afshar. Aptly titled, the exhibition explores themes of racial inequality and injustice through a series of new, old, recycled, and repurposed pieces that, while predominantly abstract, contain unexpected remnants of the body. Marking Afshar's third solo exhibition with ADVOCARTSY since its launch in 2017, this diverse presentation consists of an assortment of oil paintings large and small, pastel drawings, and ink illustrations that demonstrate the artist's deftness in a wide range of media. Approaching the issue of societal constructions of race from personal experience and extensive research, Afshar depicts physical and mental manifestations of racially charged emotion and explores how such experiences cause individuals to metamorphose internally and externally. Hauntingly beautiful yet bewitchingly terrifying, *A Return to the Flesh* depicts a richly complex interior realm, the psychic reality of which is ruled by an unquantifiable economy of emotional gains and losses.

A Return to the Flesh opens at ADVOCARTSY's West Hollywood gallery on Thursday, June 23rd with a public reception from 6-9 pm. Both the artist and ADVOCARTSY founder and director, Roshi Rahnama, will be present. Stay tuned for forthcoming announcements about additional programming.

Pouya Afshar will also be signing copies of his limited edition monograph, *In Character*, at the June 23rd opening reception. Limited number of copies will be available for purchases at the gallery and online at ADVOCARTSY.com.

About the Exhibition + the Artist

For Afshar, the process is just as important as the product, if not more so. Concerned with transformation, the works in *A Return to the Flesh* are constantly in flux, their perspectives oscillating rapidly amongst simultaneous depictions of human anatomy, animals, landscapes, and abstract forms. Drawing from the tradition of Persian miniatures in more ways than one, the works in this collection are free of any denotations that indicate a particular space or time, endowing them with a transcendental quality that allows viewers to focus on the aesthetic, societal, and existential concepts put forth by Afshar.

Like the artist's previous exhibitions, *A Return to the Flesh* explores memory as well as the disintegration thereof, and similarly the ever changing nature of history itself. Comparing and intertwining beliefs of those before him, his statement references Wisława Szymborska's poem *The Onion* and Lucille Clifton's poem *1994*. To Afshar, artists are the record keepers of history, and these quotes serve as a small testament to that respect.

A Return to the Flesh examines the duality of body and mind, order and chaos— the cyclical, responsive relationship between motion and emotion. A key tenet of his animated work, the incessant presence of movement throughout his paintings and illustrations is representative of the reactive nature of the value systems produced by racially discriminatory structures.



Bared #2, 2022, Pastel on Paper, 25.5 x 39 in

Artist Statement:

you know how dangerous it is / to wear dark skin
—Lucille Clifton

*Our skin is just a cover-up / For the land where none dare go,
an internal inferno, / The anathema of anatomy.*
—Wisława Szymborska

This exhibition includes new, old, recycled, and repurposed pieces that in some way contain flesh, skin, intestines, and other body parts. While making these pieces my mind was occupied with matters of race, specifically how the social construction of racial difference shapes emotion and cognition, marking and molding the body.

In "Letter From A Region In My Mind," James Baldwin writes, "Long before the Negro child perceives this difference, and even longer before he understands it, he has begun to react to it, he has begun to be controlled by it." The difference with which Baldwin is concerned is the distinction between white and black, a spurious pseudoscientific division at the rotten core of white supremacy, whose foremost tenet is white is might and right.

We may not be able to gauge emotional rewards and losses in the same way that we contest the value systems produced by racially discriminatory structures, but they are at work in the psychic realities of racial economies.

What I am exploring in these pieces is racialized emotion and how it manifests physically, within our flesh and skin, when we go through racially charged situations. How we metamorphose internally but also externally. How we circulate, assess, and express emotions in physical form. How we process collective guilt, pleasure, shame, or other emotional gains and losses. How the body transforms when we struggle for inclusion and how it reshapes itself when in need of racial contestation.

Artist Biography:

Pouya Afshar is an alumnus from the California Institute of Arts Character Animation department and is a graduate of University of California Los Angeles Graduate Department of Film and Television, focusing in Animation and Digital Media. He has exhibited his work as a visual artist throughout the United States and Middle East, including Harold M. Williams Auditorium at the Getty Center, Bovard Auditorium at the University of Southern California, Royce Hall at the University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Santa Monica Art studios, 18th street Art Center, Craft Contemporary Museum, and numerous galleries and art fairs around the world. He is the creator, character designer, and producer of the animated series 'Rostam in Wonderland,' the co-creator of '1PA2PA' comics, and the author and illustrator of the graphic novel 'TEHRAN.' He is currently an associate professor of art at University of Massachusetts, Lowell.

General Information:

Exhibition Dates: June 23rd - July 16th, 2022

Public Opening Reception: Thursday, June 23rd, 6-9 pm

Gallery hours: Wednesday - Saturday 11-5 pm or by appointment.

For more information or to request a preview catalogue, email info@advocartsy.com.

About ADVOCARTSY:

Launched in 2015, ADVOCARTSY is a leading contemporary art platform specializing in Iranian contemporary art. In 2021, ADVOCARTSY expanded its exhibition space to West Hollywood. Founded by lawyer-turned-art advocate Roshni Rahnama, ADVOCARTSY acts as an incubator for emerging and established Iranian artists based in Los Angeles as well as the larger diaspora. ADVOCARTSY aims to transcend borders and connect Iranian artists to the network of arts organizations, museums, foundations, and collectors in the US and beyond.