

ULTERIOR

Maryam Amiryani

Mashaheer

May 13 – June 11, 2017



Clint Eastwood, 2017

Oil on linen, 8 ¾ x 11 ¾ x ½ inches

Ulterior is pleased to present *Mashaheer*, an exhibition of new paintings by Maryam Amiryani. The exhibition opens on Saturday, May 13 with a reception from 6 to 8 pm. The artist will be present at the opening.

Mashaheer refers to a rare type of Persian carpet that depicts notable people. The word itself means "famous ones." Amiryani grew up looking at a Mashaheer carpet woven in the 1800s. Amiryani explains, "The carpet hung by a staircase, French tapestry style, and was a source of childhood wonder at the unfamiliar portraits.... Jefferson? Spinoza? Louis XIV? Napoleon?..." Years later, following the Iranian Revolution of 1979, this family heirloom was the only item saved from Amiryani's childhood home in Tehran. With her family relocated in the West, the Mashaheer carpet became a mental talisman for Amiryani, eventually inspiring several series of paintings in which she depicts an idiosyncratic selection of Western celebrities including movie stars, musicians, artists, and writers.



Amiryani's grandmother, Touri, with the Mashaheer carpet in 1934.

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Amiryani bases these portraits on photographs and film stills that she reinterprets through the medium of oil paint, delineating her subjects with an approach that is at once respectful and wry. These famous folk, embalmed in their iconic images, are scrutinized with a mix of reserve and intimacy, humor and slight befuddlement. The gaze is bifocal, as though the artist regards her subjects with one eye on (or in) Western culture and the other in (or on) the culture of the East.

The portraits, all modestly sized, are arranged in clusters, leading to interesting juxtapositions and a certain leveling quality, so that the noted Wookiee Chewbacca occupies the same plane of existence as the late artist Donald Judd. There is an autobiographical strain to the portraits—these are the cultural figures Amiryani encountered when as an adolescent she moved to the West—as well as a subtle sense of estrangement. The paintings are faithful to their photographic sources yet freely recreated, the artist’s meticulous technique introducing an aura of individualized craftsmanship into images that in most cases are as deeply familiar and as widely circulated as memes.

The eighteen paintings on view comprise the third installment in Amiryani’s ongoing series of Mashaheer-themed paintings, which began to develop in 2012. The first two versions are in a private collection in Hangzhou, China.

Maryam Amiryani was born in Shiraz, Iran in 1967. Following the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Amiryani and her family relocated to Paris, France. Several years later, she moved to the United States, where she completed her education, obtaining a MFA in painting from the New York Academy of Art, New York, NY in 1995. She also holds a BFA in Graphic Design from the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA, and a BS in Asian History from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Amiryani participated in Ulterior Gallery’s first exhibition, *May We Meet Again*. This is her first solo exhibition with the gallery. Amiryani lives and works in Marfa, Texas.

For further inquiries, please contact Director Takako Tanabe: takako@ulteriorgallery.com or 917-472-7784.