

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Sara Issakharian
'THE MOON STAMPS HER IMAGE'

22 November – 16 December 2023
Preview: 19 November, 3 – 5pm

Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles is pleased to announce 'The moon stamps her image', a solo exhibition by Sara Issakharian. Presenting new works by the artist, the exhibition furthers her meditations on the psychic life of trauma that ripples across Middle Eastern communities left in the wake of religious violence.

Drawing upon imagery from a range of sources, including mythology, folklore, and mass media, Issakharian's world unfolds like a series of chaotic battle scenes from an epic poem that she describes with an almost childlike sensibility. In her work, chimerical creatures, contorted bodies, and heaps of wreckage coalesce into undifferentiated masses to explore dark themes of sexual predation, fanaticism and terror.

By drawing together hordes of indistinct figures, these tableaux call to mind the entanglement of bodies often depicted in late Renaissance frescoes. Like Issakharian's historical predecessors, her emphasis on the painting's sheer number of subjects and grandeur suggests a larger discussion about representation's attempt to capture the ineffability of religious experience. Not only does her work conjure this theme but it also injects into it a subtler commentary on the legacy of Western influence in the Middle East in the guise of well-known Disney characters.

Issakharian develops her paintings by building up a ground through an intuitive process of adding and subtracting marks that eventually coalesce into regions of what she describes as transitions from light to dark. She then allows these transitional moments to dictate the direction the painting takes. In this way, her work is highly associative and does not depart from a preconceived notion of what the final product will be.

Standing at the crossroads of psychology and religion, Issakharian's work echoes the influential theory of mythopoeic thought, namely the hypothesis that ancient people personalised the world in a manner wholly unfamiliar to society in the present. Rather than see their environment shaped by impersonal forces, ancients saw themselves within a world teeming with life where anything from a sudden cool breeze, an unexpected clearing in a forest, or an eerie silence was unmistakably an act of will by a divine agent.

The mythopoeic mind saw the supernatural as imminent to the phenomenal world, and thus life was always a conversation between people and their environment. In turn, Issakharian's paintings aim to recapture this world-view. Working as if like a reporter, her work describes first-hand accounts of people, places and events that draws no distinction between willed and circumstantial phenomenon. Her work thus tries to articulate a world where, despite the senselessness of its horrors, everything happens for a reason.

Sara Issakharian (born in 1983 in Tehran, Iran) lives and works in Los Angeles. Issakharian studied philosophy and sociology at UCLA before completing a master's degree at the New York Academy of Art in 2015.

She was the recipient of the first round of awards for the Art Olympia Prize in Japan in 2015. In 2020, Issakharian was the subject of a solo exhibition, titled 'Open Window', at the prestigious Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin. She has recently been included in group exhibitions at Site131 in Dallas, Texas; Andrew Kreps Gallery in New York; 'Think Pinker' (curated by Beth Rudin DeWoody) at Gavlak, Los Angeles; and 'Coming Across: Expression and Empowerment' at Analog Diary, New York. She was featured at the Walker Art Center's premier Avant Garden Benefit Auction in 2022.

Tanya Leighton presented Issakharian's first solo exhibition, 'There's a whole life in that, in knowing that the sun is there', in Los Angeles in 2021 and 'Behold mother, I make all things new' at Tanya Leighton, Berlin in 2022. Her work was recently on view in 'Elsewheres' (curated by Zuzanna Ciolek) at UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles. A new large-scale installation of her work is forthcoming at the Jewish Museum, New York opening in March 2024.

Issakharian's work is held at the Art Collection of the University of Chicago Booth School of Business; the Nasher Collection, Texas; and numerous significant private collections internationally.

For more information please contact info@tanyaleighton.com or telephone +49(0)30221607770.

The gallery is open Wednesday–Saturday, 11am-5pm and by appointment.