

CONNER CONTEMPORARY ART

AVISH KHEBREHZADEH

May 5 – June 17, 2006

Conner Contemporary Art is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings and video animation by Avish Khebrehzadeh. The poetic sensibilities of this accomplished Washington, D.C.-based artist stem from her childhood memories of the underground art movement in post-Revolution Tehran. Seeking to experience a different cultural approach to art, Khebrehzadeh later studied in Rome, where she absorbed the essential simplicity of Giotto's paintings and cultivated an appreciation for the reductive visual language of the Arte Povera movement.

In her new video animation, *A Swim*, she draws inspiration from a figure removing his robe in the background of Piero della Francesca's 15th c. *Baptism of Christ*. This gesture unfolding in the context of water encapsulates what the Khebrehzadeh describes as the depth and fluidity of a moment frozen in time. Through her drawings for the animation she captures the universality of this concept by setting an isolated figure in motion through an expansive body of water, a recurring motive in her work. The artist projects the swimmer's symbolic journey through life onto Theatre a large-scale painting of a romantic theater interior, thereby imparting historical warmth as well as a collective frame of reference.

For this exhibition, Khebrehzadeh further amplifies the life-narrative for her audience in a series of small-scale oil paintings on canvas and wood panel. She probes the essence of identity with iconic animal imagery and scenes of human figures performing simple activities. These images thematize the duality between human and animal existence that, in her conception, stimulates us to see our own characteristics in animals in reduced or exaggerated capacities.

The artist's command of form and stylistic restraint instills the works with an emotionally direct quality that is free of contemporary irony. She explains, "I like to be frugal in giving the visual information to viewers. I want each viewer to participate and finish the story with his or her own imagination." She intensifies the imaginative potential of these paintings with contemplative tones of rich blue and deep shadows, which signal a momentous departure from the soft amber hues of her works in olive oil on paper.

Khebrehzadeh has a distinguished record of international achievements. Her work was recently featured at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum (2006); in *Persian Gardens* at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran/Iran (2004); in *Contemporary Art in the Mediterranean Area* at the Museum of the Contemporary Art, Rome, Italy (2004); at the *Kunst Film Biennial* at the Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany (2003); in the *The Hidden Half: Iranian Women Directors* at the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. (2003) as well as garnering *Young Italian Art Award*, Lion D'or, at the 50th Venice Biennale (2003).

There will be opening night reception at Conner Contemporary Art on Friday, May 5th from 6-8pm. The artist will be in attendance.

Conner Contemporary Art is also happy to announce the second in a series of artist's talks, *Discuss*. Going beyond the typical artist talk format, these events will pair two gallery artists in conversation about the current gallery exhibition and their modes of practice.

Saturday, May 6 @ 2pm: Avish Khebrehzadeh and Erik Sandberg will discuss figural imagery & narrative in painting.

Saturday, June 24 @ 2pm: McCallum & Tarry and Mary Coble will discuss social viewpoint in contemporary art.

Attendance is limited to 35 guests; however, a podcast of each 'conversation' will be available for download on the gallery website or @ <http://www.itunes.com>

Conner Contemporary Art is located in Dupont Circle @ 1730 Connecticut Avenue, NW – 2nd Floor, Washington, DC, 20009. For further information and/or visuals, please contact Leigh Conner or Karyn Miller @ 202-588-8750 or info@connercontemporary.com.