

FLASH ART review (to be published)

Raha Raissnia *Stele*
Miguel Abreu Gallery

“There exists a place, a rhythm of the image in which the image seeks something like its own collapse, then we are before the image as before a gaping limit, a disintegrating place.”

Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain Art History*

Resistance and seduction, the works of Raha Raissnia, dense black and white graphite drawings and equally intense paintings reduced to the same tonal range- same freighted density of tenebrity- how they tempt with their refinement whilst ultimately refusing to yield! The picture plane, push and pull of foreground and perspective, leads one further and further into the tangle, the mechanics, bowels, looking for a way through, irresistibly led to some potential space that lies way back at the other side. Surely it might be possible to navigate the topography of these marks, the *mapa mundi* of such jagged terrain, to embark on something like a narrative, a journey, traversing the ambiguities, deserts and oasis, the final ranges of these limitless plots? Yet the actual surfaces of Raha’s works refute the lure, the drawings are so packed, so thick, their shiny skein becomes almost reflective and the paintings have been sanded to an absolute smoothness, a silky finish at odds with the angularity of content. We are not allowed to enter, only admitted so far, the artists defiance offering us an object, a perfect, polished object that is also a life, a whole world. There is something metaphysical to the gravity of these compositions, a beautiful sincerity we could only refuse out of embarrassment at the richness of the gift. If so, one might say they echo certain postwar European abstraction, Soulages or even André Marfaing. But as gallerist Abreu puts it so pertinently; “By analogy, the effect of her practice is reminiscent of the moment when the miraculous films of her countryman Abbas Kiarostami first stunned Western audiences, at the very time modern cinema was declared a thing of the past.” For the artists Iranian heritage, her gender indeed, cannot be entirely dismissed, terms such as “Islamic Science-Fiction” or “Coded Calligraphy” have been applied, but ultimately the numinous potency of these works shifts us from banal biographical to utter universal.