



Press Release

Mamali Shafahi

Deep Throats: How Deep is your Love?

11 October - 17 December 2022

VITRINE, Fitzrovia

Preview: Thursday 13 October, 6 - 8pm, part of Frieze West End night.

Frieze Week Opening Hours: Tues 11 and Wed 12, 10am-6pm, Thurs 13, 10-8pm, Fri 14, 10am-8pm, and Sat 15, 10am-6pm.

VIP Breakfast with Artist Tour: Thursday 13 October, 8:30am-10am.

'Deep Throats: How Deep is your Love?' is Iranian artist and filmmaker Mamali Shafahi's first solo show in the UK opening during Frieze week 2022. The exhibition brings together a series of flocked epoxy sculptures that recall ancient pictorial and storytelling traditions to highlight the impact of technology on younger generations' ancestral memory.

Working between film, installation, sculpture and VR, Shafahi's practice often reflects his deep fascination with the impact of emerging technologies on life and art. He is concerned about the consequence of focusing on these new technologies, specifically for younger generations who might lose connections to their own magical past and traditional cultures, including its myths and legends. Because of this, Shafahi has sought ways for building bridges between high-tech visions of the future and the richness of ancient cultures.

In recent work, the artist has been expanding his father's enigmatic imagery into reliefs and sculptures presented as part of immersive installations. This transgenerational dialogue, where the father's aesthetics are reimagined in the son's media and idiom, has resulted in hybrid works featuring fantastical creatures both human and animal. This expresses a tension between historical Iranian aesthetics – drawn from poetry, legend and the 'miniature' painting they continue to inspire – and global contemporary sensibilities in a way that's both playful and menacing.

Within 'Deep Throats: How Deep is your Love?', Shafahi pursues these developments by presenting a set of works recalling ancient pictorial and storytelling traditions. He seeks to highlight the global universality of animal fables including that of Aesop and La Fontaine, Kalila and Dimna, One Thousand and One Nights, or Attar of Nishapur's Conference of the Birds. His new series of sculptures in the ground floor gallery features creatures that he sees as especially iconic, raising similar reactions and resonances, whoever and wherever the audience. The gorillas, snakes and scorpions create a situation

that is at once puzzling, scary, and violent yet also playful in a way that recalls the cartoon violence we all enjoyed in our childhood. Narrative and anthropomorphism are suggested but not explicit. We can each construct our own story, mobilising our own background, culture and traditions, whether ancient or more recent such as La Fontaine, The Jungle Book or Happy Tree Friends. And in Shafahi's tales, there is no clear-cut conclusion, no moral at the end. That, too, is up to the viewer. The key, for Shafahi, is to bring back some of the ancient magic that, scrolling through our smartphones, we've lost.

Shafahi's flocked epoxy sculptures are striking, brightly coloured, monochrome reliefs produced from digital renderings. Choosing to work with flocking – as opposed to luxury materials such as velvet – he creates a dichotomy that favours kitsch and ambiguous materiality. The artist transforms and encloses the ground floor gallery using built additions to the space and UV, coloured lighting. The flocked sculptures become almost immaterial, like holograms or images on phones to reflect the notion that technology has increasingly blurred the lines between past and present.

Alongside this, a selection of the artist's iconic 'Heirloom Velvet' sculptures are exhibited in the lower ground floor gallery.

The exhibition coincides with VITRINE's announcement of representation of Shafahi and the gallery's participation in Frieze Focus with Tarek Lakhrissi and Frieze Sculpture with Tim Etchells.

Mamali Shafahi (b.1982, Tehran, IR) lives and works between Amsterdam, Paris and Tehran. He holds a BA in Photography from Tehran University of Art, IR (2004) and went on to study at ENSAPC: École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts Paris, FR (2008). He has been a finalist for the MOPCAP Contemporary Art Prize (2015), a Nominee for the Magic of Persia Contemporary Art Prize (2011 and 2009) and a winner of the UNESCO-Aschberg Bursaries for Artists (2008 and 2009).

He has exhibited internationally in galleries, institutes and biennials including: Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR; Dastan's Basement, Tehran, IR; Everyday Gallery, Antwerp, BE; Frieze Cork Street, London, UK; Parallel Circuit, Tehran, IR; 9th Biennial of Photography of Tehran, IR; Athens Biennial, GR; Shulamit Gallery, Los Angeles, USA; Clubrhubarb, New York, USA; Cité International des Arts, Paris, FR; The Third Line, Dubai, UAE; Mosaic Rooms, London, UK; Mohsen Gallery, Tehran, IR; Galerie Nicolas Silin, Paris, FR; SMART Project Space, Amsterdam, NL; Aaran Gallery, Tehran, IR; Tarahan Azad Gallery, Tehran, IR; Wochdom Gallery, Paris, FR; Tehran Gallery, IR.

Residencies include Delfina Foundation, London, UK (2018).

His project *nerd_funk* has been presented at 2019 Vancouver Biennale, CA; Het nieuwe instituut, Rotterdam, NL; IDFA film festival, Amsterdam, NL; CPH DOX, Copenhagen, DE; Netherlands Film Festival, Utrecht, NL; Impossible Bodies, Hertogenbosch, NL.

**For press enquiries, image requests and private view accreditation please contact:
Sofia Lyall, press@vitrinegallery.com**

Notes to Editor

1. Installation views of the show will be released on Friday 7 October 2022. Images of artworks in 'Deep Throats: How Deep is your Love?' available in September on request. Images accompanying this release are examples of past works.

2. The exhibition coincides with VITRINE's participation in Frieze Focus with Tarek Lakhrissi and Frieze Sculpture with Tim Etchells. The VIP Breakfast and Artist Talk on Thursday 13 October, will be followed by a tour and artist introduction with Tim Etchells at Frieze Sculpture (10:30am) and Tarek Lakhrissi at Frieze Focus (11:15am).

RSVP essential: info@vitrinegallery.com

3. VITRINE is focused on artistic experimentation and emerging interdisciplinary practices. The gallery was founded in Bermondsey, London in 2010, with a second space in Basel opened in 2016, a digital space launched in 2020 and a third space in London's Fitzrovia opened in spring 2022. Over this last decade, we have established a reputation as a selector and nurturer of new talent, supporting artists' careers and the development of their ideas.