

GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE  
NARGESS HASHEMI - NEW WORKS  
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Beyond aesthetic kitsch, the works of Nargess Hashemi offer a vision of acynical part of Iranian society, mired in the comfort of tradition.

On large rectangular panels covered with lavishly fabric – richly embroidered or sewn sequins, Nargess Hashemi has set a transparent plastic sheet on which appears an interior scene drawn in black marker. Both layers would contrast and compliment each other at the same time: the monochrome tracing, close to the cartoon, overly detailed and decorative plays over the kitch and colourful background. The images recreate scenes from engagement parties, wedding photographs or impromptu gatherings. created from photographs taken by the artist in her own family. These events took place in the summer of 2009, when riots broke out in the streets of Iran.

Away from the chaos, the party scenes transcribed by the artist seem deaf to the reality of the country.

In a first stage, the couple dressed Western-style sit on a sofa, according to the Iranian tradition with a curtain rolled over them by the guests and the Koran placed on a side table. In a second, the couple seats on the left facing a buffet luxuriously decorated with a starry cloth, floral composition and fruit baskets while jars and decorated chests are garnishing the ground. At left is the family. No smile. The characters are struck dumb. The lifeless atmosphere is far from the apparent joy that would evoke the scenery. Something sounds wrong. Or hollow. Metallic luster and glitter, paradoxically, only reinforces this coldness.

Even smiling, the characters are inconsistent, with no real depth or expressiveness. As if the artist had put to a distance a sealed life, isolated in the illusion of happiness. In these images, made suffocating by the overbearing smiles and abundant kitsch, we glimpse a comfort zone – accessible to all who are willing to live amid store-bought sentimentalism and pseudo-romantic wrapping paper.

#### About Nargess Hashmi

Nargess Hashemi was born in Iran in 1978. After studying Fine Art at the University of Tehran, she has since had several solo shows in Tehran including at Mah Art Gallery and Aaran Gallery. She has also exhibited in France with 'Iranian Spring' (2004), an exhibition of six artists who are inspired by the art of Persian miniature painting and poetry selected by the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, and in the US, a touring group show entitled 'Wishes and Dreams: Iran's New Generation Emerges' (2007). *Wrap Me Up In You* was her second solo show in Dubai. *Stories From The Boudoir*, her previous exhibition with Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, explored scenes and moments from her past in meticulously painted compositions of millions of tiny lines. The works, like their emotive subject matter, seem to bristle before the viewer's eyes.

She was exhibited last year in Paris, at La B.A.N.K Gallery.