



In-Between Spaces, the central installation from Haleh Redjaian's exhibition of the same name. Courtesy Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde

Iranian artist Haleh Redjaian's exhibition, In-Between Spaces, now showing in Dubai

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There is a palpable current of energy running through Haleh Redjaian's solo show at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde.

It is particularly evident in the Iranian artist's central installation, *In-Between Spaces*, which is also the title of her first exhibition at the Dubai space.

A wonderful sense of serenity notwithstanding, Redjaian cleverly – and literally – weaves, through hand-woven carpets, thread installations and works on paper, tales about being neither here nor there, of occupying an in-between space, a grey area of possibility.

Redjaian's fragile pillars of thread are based on Azadi Tower in Iran. The structure, originally called Shayad Tower (which translates as King's Memorial Tower), was commissioned in 1971 by the Shah to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of Cyrus the Great's founding of the Persian Empire.

When the Islamic Revolution swept the nation in 1979, the building was renamed Azadi Tower, meaning "freedom" in Farsi.

Redjaian knows precisely what she was doing when rendering this historical structure in thread. She pokes at the capriciousness of both regimes and underlines the fact that freedom "is something individual. It's not concrete and it's not a building. It's a feeling and it's something very fragile".

Indeed, it is a delicate thing – as is her installation, which suffered some accidental damage at the show's preview. Redjaian didn't flinch – she almost expected it would happen. "From one day to another, they can take freedom away from you," she says, echoing her installation's (fortunately repairable) problems.

The work is poignant when considered in the context of Redjaian's childhood memories. In the same way that it is the exhibition's point of arrival and departure, so, too, was Shahyad/Azadi Tower during colourful, unforgettable family trips to Tehran from Frankfurt.

"The tower is the building that is the most important in my memory of Iran," she says. "It was the first place we passed when we came from the airport. Architecture has a strong influence on our memories." It is a profession that Redjaian has long admired. She is an aficionado of geometry (her father was an accountant) and space – "I like to influence the she says. architecture of spaces myself,"

The aforementioned energy runs through carpets from the Iranian city of Kerman, which can be mistaken for works on paper due to their grid-like tight weave and clarity.

Taken as a whole, the show packs a comfortable balance between German precision and Iranian craftsmanship. It quietly and easily recalls Redjaian's "sober, quiet life" in Frankfurt, along with the hustle and bustle of those rich trips to her motherland.

Across the board, there is a tangible sense of absence that punctuates all of the works. This is an allegory for identity.

"I don't look for in-between space – it's already there," Redjaian says. "In my generation, we go to places, we're not from there. In-between space is a place where a lot of people are in – you live somewhere, your parents are from somewhere else." That sounds like a mirror of the UAE and is precisely why Redjaian chose this topic for the show.

The exhibition suffers, however, in the use of the gallery's smaller room to exhibit some of the works, which doesn't beat to the same drum as the "main" show. There is no synergy between the two spaces – not in theme, colour or context.

Redjaian acknowledges this and the "difficulty of that room's architecture". Thankfully, it can be politely ignored.

The real buzz lies in the purgatorial in-between space.

• **In-Between Spaces by Haleh Redjaian is at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde until November 5. Open from Saturday to Thursday, 10am to 7pm. Al Quoz 1, Street 8, Alserkal Avenue, Unit 17. Email info@ivde.net or visit www.ivde.net for more details**

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