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Analysis of the Form and Content of Farah Ossouli's Artwork Preserved in Metropolitan Museum

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ABSTRACT

The most influential painters and artists of the modern age have preserved the fundamentals of painting while occasionally changing the form in order to make their works. Farah Ossouli, a contemporary and progressive painter, has created works using numerous approaches and techniques, particularly painting, throughout his artistic career. His artwork "The Rival" is an example of his work, which was created by changing the principles of painting and adding new methods such as airbrush. This study aimed to evaluate the form, content, and imagery motifs of the painting of "The Rival", which is kept in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in America. The main purpose of the research is to determine which traditional beliefs and rules have been changed, which principles have been created and what kind of visual structures have been obtained in the miniatures of Farah, who is an avant-garde artist. After analyzing the painting, tables were drawn based on the form, content, and imagery motifs of the miniature. In this descriptive and analytical research, data were collected through field-library and interview methods. According to the results, Farah Ossouli, the leading artist in the area of miniature painting, has created artworks that are based on the miniature principles that are slightly changed to better express the concept and goal of the painter. Ossouli has created artworks in a symbolic space and her work is in fact a poetic painting based on the principles and form of Persian miniature and western art practices.

Keywords: Miniature Painting, Farah Ossouli, The Rival

Introduction

Avant-garde artists are free to choose and make decisions depending on their originality, whether they are in quest of their own essence or reinventing art, or in search of self-expression or social criticism, or in search of aesthetic pleasure or an inner and transcendental search. In general, the artist serves as the focal point of this movement (Sahafzadeh, 2009: 28). The avant-garde movement has a revolutionary impact, particularly inasmuch as it has altered and replaced the conventional notion of organic artwork with another one. Farah Ossouli, a leading artist, has created changes in previous paintings by expressing her goal and idea and narrates them in her own language. (Ibid.: 36) she has made a work of art that is distinct from previous miniature paintings by expressing her purpose and idea and has developed changes such as technique, thought, and different idea in it, according to the principles of miniature painting. The goal of the current study is to identify and investigate the modifications that Ossouli made to the fundamentals of miniature painting, as well as the conventional beliefs and rules that she altered. Regarding the necessity of research, it can be acknowledged that although research has been conducted on Farah Ossouli's life and artistic activities in previous studies, no research has been done on her work, "The Rival," which is kept in the Metropolitan Museum.

Literature review

The artistic endeavors of Farah Ossouli have been discussed in a few interviews and articles. They include: Sohrab Farsio's essay "Farah Ossouli, the prominent painter of Sonnat Vala"1, published in Farhang Mardom

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(2003); it features an interview with Farah and a discussion of her artistic life and the process by which the paintings were created. Ahmad Talebinejad and Farah Ossouli in their article "We have learned to negate the past", Art and Architecture, Haft (2003), introducing the Dena Art Group as the first artistic organization of Iranian women artists and at the same time one of the most active Iranian painters in the field of creation and presentation of the work.

Research Method

In the current study, an attempt has been made to provide a succinct overview of the life and works of Farah Ossouli. To do this, the library method, the descriptive-analytical approach, and the interview method have all been used. The final objective can be accomplished in accordance with the cited sources and individual receipts, and following this research and study, tables have been obtained.



Figure 1- The Rival, two panels, 150*75, 2019, source: (www.Farah ossouli.com). Metropolitan Museum of USA.

Farrah Ossouli and the Approach of her Work

Farah Ossouli was born in 1953 in a family of artists in Zanjan, and since childhood he has been interested in painting and creating puppet characters with cardboard. Besides painting, he studied literature and story writing. He migrated from Zanjan to Tehran in 1961, and in Tehran from 1978 onwards, she seriously and professionally painted and created works. Farah Ossouli is a leading artist who, before other contemporary artists such as Shahiza Sikander (Pakistan), Gizella Varga-Sinai, Claudia Parmalucci (Italy), Hiba Schahbaz (Pakistan), and Murat Palta (Turkey), introduced contemporary materials and contents into the world of painting. Her works have become global due to her utilization of rich visual cultures as well as traditional and contemporary methods. Ossouli's artistic approach developed over the three decades following the revolution of 1978 as he looked for a meaningful way to convey her ideas and beliefs. She discovered this way in Iran's rich tradition and delicate beauty found in its paintings, architecture, and decorative arts. She found that the catchy posture of Iranian art figures is appropriate for both male and female characters in works with worldwide themes. Farah began with graphics and progressed to a surreal (symbolic) style of painting using a combination of printing, colored pencils, and crayons. Over time, she gave up printing and just used crayons and colored pencils while taking a critical look at her surroundings. She eventually chose miniature painting because she had studied this technique in the conservatory under Master Farshchian. Farah initially concentrated on the Safavid era, particularly Reza Abbasi's paintings and the Isfahan frescoes, and a short while later, she developed an interest in the Timurid era, which led to the expansion of her work. She continued to study geography, history, and other subjects while concentrating briefly on Japanese art. Then, she noticed Japanese flower arrangements, architecture, etc., and she understood that they are all connected in some way. Focusing on Iranian painting, he recognizes that this issue also pertains to Iranian painting and comes to the conclusion that art is inextricably linked to a nation's location, history, and culture. Generally, she borrowed ideas from art and used them to her creative works. like fresh poems, old stories, and everyday occurrences. (Madadi, 2013: 26-27)

"The Rival" miniature painting

The Metropolitan Museum is one of the most prestigious museums in the world, which has purchased six works by Iranian artists such as: Parviz Tanavoli, Munira Shahroudi, Farman Fermaian, etc., and such an

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event is definitely considered a great opportunity for any artist. Farah Ossouli is given an email since her Hafez collection was accepted and she is asked to provide a sample of her collection. They requested the original work, which was refused because it was created in Iran and Iran was sanctioned. Farah brings up this issue with an American collector by the name of "Taimur Grahane" who had previously purchased one of his paintings from the blazing wings collection titled "The Rival" (figure 1). Timur offers to give the "The Rival" piece he purchased and now owns to the Metropolitan Museum in exchange for receiving another piece from Farah Ossouli because he thinks this is a significant occasion for an artist. and despite his intense interest in this piece of art, he gave it to the museum. Ossouli accepted this offer and sold her work to the museum. To create this work, she first drew it on parchment paper, then copied it on cardboard and then started painting it with paint (gouache) and airbrush. In her work, she cannot do anything improvisationally, and she only does this in choosing colors and motifs, and it is color that rules her. For example, in some parts of the picture, the sky is purple at night, but it makes two purples, as in the mentioned picture, it is in two parts of the night, while the color of the night is different from each other in each part. The arrangement and placement of purple is not by her will, but the color tells her where to place me on the page. As in the case of the subject, which is placed on the page without will and spontaneously. She says about western painting and art and how to combine the two: "In old painting, the space of the frame is always full of motifs and figures, and people of the past believed that empty spaces are filled by demons, so more the spaces of the painting were illustrated. But in western works, empty spaces play a big role and are very important. As he has painted in a western style, he has learned to have those empty spaces in his work. Then she was drawn to miniature painting and he was able to bring empty and crowded space wherever he wanted and work with airbrush. The paintings are small in size, but tend to be large and are definitely influenced by Western painting. In western painting, first of all, the audience sees the whole and then goes into the details. But sometimes Iranian painters painted from part to whole.

Based on the idea, she first determines the composition, and then enters her figures into the frame. For example, she uses an airbrush, and painters believe she did so to make her work easier, whereas utilizing an airbrush makes her work more difficult. She studied graphics, which has affected some of Farah Ossouli's work and allowed her to use various tools and analyze graphic components like lines. Graphic artists use traditions to modernize their work, although their work has personality and is entirely Iranian, modern, and contemporary. Graphics, in her opinion, are the essence of miniature painting and even calligraphy, and as a result, these two will soon become intimately connected and reunited. In any case, a large part of the ancient paintings served as books, literature, and poetry. Today's graphic artists use it wisely and creatively in most cases. (Interview with Farah Ossouli, Tehran, April 2016). There are women in traditional painting, but he puts them in different situations. In fact, Farah tries to create a kind of defamiliarization for the audience. In order to find serenity, she employed the parallel universe, the timeless, everlasting world of painting.

Farah Ossouli made the painting "The Rival" from the collection "Burning Wings" in 2011, in two panels, 75x75 (150x75) with gouache technique on thick cardboard. Two panels that are completely similar to each other. In the left panel, she has depicted a garden at night, where a man and a woman (an angel) are sitting next to each other and has painted a romantic scene. A garden with a gorgeous river next to trees like cypress, flower, and wheat that generates a heavenly feeling. In the sky, a crescent moon shine. The space above and below the frame is peaceful, but the middle of the frame, where the focus of the story lies, is congested. Men and women are intertwined with pressure. A bowl of fruit, two cups of wine, and a basket in a woman's hand are signs of love. The man leans back and is immersed in his own world, and with ease, he has put his hand towards the apple that the woman offered to him.

The red apple in the woman's hand may refer to Eve's red apple, and the woman lovingly looks at her man and burns in the fire of his love. The angel's burning wings are a symbol of his unquenchable love for a man, a love that has no other option except to burn and be captured. The use of rich, cold, and warm colors together creates a relaxing atmosphere, and the use of motifs in clothing and carpets is well done.

Above the semi-circular frame, it refers to the dome and being heavenly. In the right panel, the frame is relatively quiet and is placed on top of the image of the wheat tree, which fills most of the frame. Clouds and birds that are freely moving and intoxicated. A woman is seated on a carpet in the lower portion of the frame, lost in her own world, and a fire is burning beneath her, alluding to the woman's envy of the angel and burning in that fire.

Without considering the cost this angel paid for this love and the fact that he had to give up his wings for this relationship and its romantic ambiance, the woman wishes she were an angel like her.

"In mythological painting works, two main examples of trees are generally studied and paid attention to: evergreen trees such as cypress, which refer to immortality, and trees that are a sign of rejuvenation and renewal in spring, such as sycamore and blooming trees. (Qasemiyeh 2015: 79) "The cypress tree, which is frequently depicted in Iranian paintings, is a symbol of the secret of immortality; it is known as the tree of life by many tribes because of its evergreen nature, and it has a powerful mythological aspect among trees. The

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cypress tree is a manifestation of the positive and joyful side of the soul and religious life, and because it grows straight, it is far from the shackles of crookedness and unrighteousness, and it is free from joining the foliage of other trees. That's why they call it free" (Al Ibrahim Dehkordi, 2016: 107).

Another example of a tree is the "blossom tree," which represents rebirth, new life, a new beginning, and the victory of good over evil. A tree and a wheat ear, which are symbols of fertility, and "water and river" are basic components of existence and are symbols of life, death, resurrection, the secret of creation, purity and salvation, fertility and growth, renewal, and transformation.

Water represents compassion, inner knowledge, and purification in Islamic thought. Another feature of water is its association with wisdom and knowledge, which revitalizes the human soul and is a symbol of the kingdom's realm, and it is an element that created the interaction between man and nature. The bird represents flight and freedom. Fire is a symbol of burning emotions, passions, and sensuality, as well as the soul, intuitive knowledge, and spiritual desires. It is also a means of cleansing and purifying a person from sins, which in the miniature paintings usually allude to fiery emotions and sensuality. Farah Ossouli's painting, like Iranian painting, divides the visual space into regular pieces. Each slat is thus divided into three equal sections and constructed symmetrically. In general, the form qualities of Farah "The Rival" work can be stated in a table, which is mentioned below.

Conclusion

Farah Ossouli, a famous artist in the field of painting, has developed works based on painting principles by expressing his purpose and idea, but he has made alterations to be able to portray her notion. Her work is, in fact, a painting built on the ideas and foundations of Iranian painting morphology. She has made use of signs. Her work lacks reality and posture, and the features are neutral. She employed both the line and the color and applied painting principles, but with a new method, technique, concept, and idea, which means Farah Ossouli creates works with diverse pictures, colored (flat colors), but without sensation or thrill. She has used lines (Ghalamgiri) in her work. Using color instead of light shade, brilliant and flat colors, two-dimensional and flat surfaces while avoiding perspective, concentrated composition, integration of extratextual and intertextual space, regular geometry, figures without expression His work demonstrates unity, symmetry, partiality, universalism, and so forth. Her art, on the other hand, has visual parallels with modern paintings and should be regarded as a form of this new movement. She based her figures on Iranian painting, and her painting is something new while being Iranian, which may be considered an innovation and a new occurrence.

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