

ROSE ISSA PROJECTS

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BITA GHEZELAYAGH: “THE LETTER THAT NEVER ARRIVED”

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Private View: 25th April 2013

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82 Great Portland Street, London W1

This is Bita Ghezelayagh's second solo show at Rose Issa Projects, featuring a new body of work that explore the aesthetic and poetic qualities of traditional Middle Eastern and Persian carpets.

Bita Ghezelayagh started her career as an architect with a specialism in the restoration of historic buildings, and has always been motivated to preserve traditions threatened by mass production and contemporary taste. Her previous works were realised in felt, employing ancient techniques in unexpected ways.

“The Letter That Never Arrived” or *Nameh-i ke hargez naresid* in Persian, evokes an interrupted correspondence - personal, cultural and political. “The history of Iran is full of letters from outspoken citizens warning their leaders of the consequences of their actions,” she explains. “So, too, the lives of many ordinary Iranians, myself included, are disjointed but also enriched through distance and displacement.”

Ghezelayagh rescues unwanted, often threadbare carpets from homes in the West, and remodels them as shepherd's cloaks derived from their Middle Eastern origins. She washes, deconstructs, disfigures and re-conceives these textiles, giving them a new life and dignity by placing them on a stand, transforming a floor covering into a sculpture. “The carpets are themselves hybrids, composed of more than one decorative tradition,” she says. “I make them more so. My pieces may include fragments of different carpets of varying styles and provenances, sewn together.”

She then animates the works, building meaning through layering the cloaks with metal charms and embroidery and giving them a “breastplate” made from her personal collection of pen nibs. These are sewn on the carpet and the name of the series is embroidered in silver thread.

The process is at once manual and conceptual, giving the carpets a new identity: combining personal and shared history, they pay homage to a tradition, suggesting the possibility for craft and modernity to meet on common ground.

Bita Ghezelayagh was born in Italy, grew up in Iran and studied architecture in Paris before returning to Iran where she worked as architect and art director for several Iranian films. She divides her time between London and Tehran and has exhibited internationally. One of her “Felt Memory” artworks was shortlisted for the Jameel Prize 2011, which is touring worldwide. Her work can be found in the public collection of the British Museum, London; the Devi Art Foundation, Delhi; and Farjam Foundation, Dubai as well as several private collections around the world.