

In the styx



A new show at Carbon 12 showcases the desolate Iranian homeland of artist **Farzan Sadjadi**

Farzan Sadjadi has something of Kafka about him. Quiet, slightly nervous and with a vision of life that at once hums with desolation and a sort of shrugging futility. Last time he exhibited with Carbon 12, as part of Seven Positions, the artist's style had gone beyond the sand-blasted, whipping fury of his Parody Of War pieces and moved into more viscous, elemental scenes of horsemen. The young Iranian artist gets his first solo show this week – we caught up with him to decipher some of the ideas going on in the work.

These are quite different from the first works you exhibited at Carbon 12. The colours are heavier, darker. How has your style changed in the past year?

It hasn't changed much, but these latest works have been inspired by the area where I live, in a suburb of Tehran. Mostly the people are immigrants coming from other places in Iran – when people want to live in Tehran but can't afford it, they move there. It's a very dangerous place and has the highest rate of crime in Tehran. When you don't know the place it might sound or look scary, and I didn't want to go outside, but it's a bit like the dogs you see in the

paintings [below right]. This was painted after the first snow that happened last winter, and there are a lot of stray dogs where I live. I saw they started fooling around and that's where it came from. At first I heard the dogs, but then I saw them and it wasn't frightening any more.

There's a motif of telephone poles without wires running through this series (above). Where did this theme come from?

It's from something that happened while I was doing military service. I had to report missing soldiers at the time. Once I received a letter from officials in the city saying that a soldier had gone missing, then it turned out he had been caught stealing telephone cables. Suddenly I had this vision of an empty landscape, filled only with pointy mountains and empty telephone poles.

'I had this vision of a boiling earth and clapping heavens'

I think he was stealing them because he was poor – this is something that happens a lot. As I painted this, I read in the newspaper that someone had stolen the cables near where I live, so it reminded me of that instance and I painted it then.

Why did you choose to paint this empty, bleak scene?

Well, the painting started with five empty poles, then I actually painted

a guy with all the cables on his back. But I took him out because I fell in love with the moonlight.

It suggests the idea of lack of communication in this lonely desolation...

It's a general feeling I have; not about Iran, but about myself. Having no one to communicate with, no one to talk to who really understands you. It's like when you have a lot of people around you – it's good, but you find it's better to be alone.

Why are you living in this suburb if it's so desolate?

I didn't choose to live there; the rising rents have just pushed us out from the centre. When I returned from military service they had just risen too high. I'm not thinking of leaving Iran, though, I just want to get further away from Tehran. Somewhere in a village – a house with a yard. One of

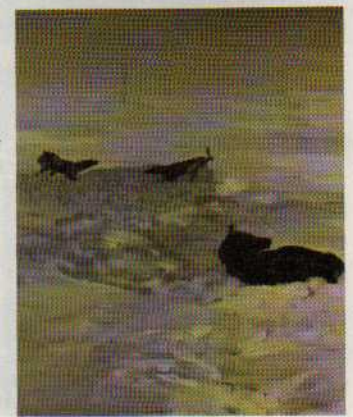
the whole colour. It has this heavy effect – I really like Francisco Goya's black paintings, that colour of flesh coming out of the blackness that he could achieve.

When you selected these paintings, what idea were you trying to create?

I didn't have a chance to select them – I was working right up until the last minute. I even projected light onto them to make the works dry faster. I change things every chance I get. Like the 'Rattling Roof' piece, that changed three times. First there were a lot of pigeons, then I put snow in there, then the lighting changed – I see a nice cloud in the sky, oh, let's paint that. It's not spontaneous, I'm just confused. I can't make up my mind.

Chris Lord

Between A Rock And A Hard Place, Carbon 12 gallery, until February 20



the paintings here is of some of the fields around where I'm living – it started off with a lot of birds in the sky, and a farmer. But then I removed everything. I had this vision of a boiling earth and clapping heavens.

We hear you use household paint in your work.

I was already painting in oil, but household paint allows you to paint a whole surface easier. It also changes



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