

REVIEWS

East City Artnote: *Hedieh Javanshir Ilchi: I surrender to you, ashen lands and blue skies* at HEMPHILL Fine Arts

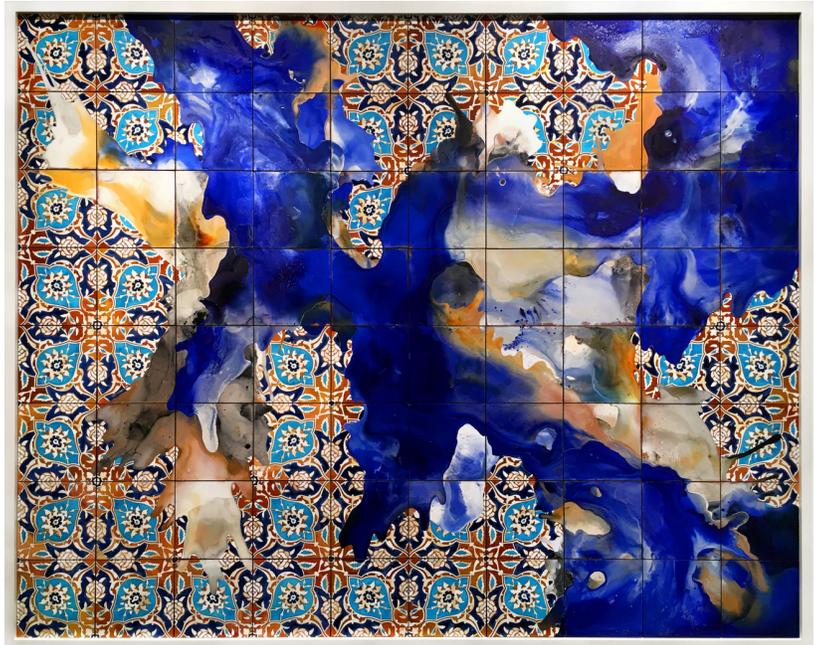


By [Ashley Shah](#) on June 24, 2019

Hedieh Javanshir Ilchi is an Iranian artist who aims to represent the interaction of two cultures when and where they intersect. Her latest exhibition *I Surrender to you, ashen lands and blue skies* is on view at HEMPHILL Fine Arts through June 29, 2019. Rather than dissecting each potential outcome of the junction individually, Ilchi approaches the concept from an aerial point of view. She demonstrates that it is, understandably, quite complex, with multiple layers of interconnectedness and separation.

In the works exhibited at HEMPHILL Fine Arts, Ilchi brings together influences from both Persian and American cultures. Most notable of the Persian imagery are the tazhib patterns. “Tazhib (gilding) is an Arabic word which has been derived from ‘zahab’ meaning ‘gold’.”[1] Alongside the tazhib patterns, she utilizes free-flowing watercolors that are reminiscent of American abstraction. Not only is she combining elements from two distinct art histories, but she also connotes both the past and present. The tazhib artistic pattern is traditional and established, whereas abstractionism is relatively modern. Moreover, Persian imagery and style is rigid and geometric in comparison to gestural Western abstraction.

Of particular importance is the positioning of the tazhib patterns in these works. In some it stands in sharp contrast to the swirls of colors, while in other works it is engulfed and interacting with the paint. In essence, this reflects the often times messy and chaotic amalgamation of ethos. By demonstrating both results, Ilchi allows the viewers to ponder the consequences of her artistic actions, and more broadly, the uncertainty surrounding the enveloping of cultural tensions. Her work also highlights how when two differing forces come together, some elements may be lost in the



Hedieh Javanshir Ilchi, *Of time past and time future*, 2019, acrylic on panel, framed, 49x67”

process. For example, when cultures are combined, there will inevitably be traditions and practices that are forgotten while others will stand the test of time and influence.

Ilchi's bright blues and oranges shine from the paintings' surfaces as they reflect the light in the gallery. The unrestrained expansion of her colors alludes to natural, earthly elements. The shades of blue are reminiscent of bodies of water, including rivers, oceans and streams. They bring a calming and cooling effect to the works, conveying a sense of tranquility and peace.



Hedieh Javanshir Ilchi, *And There, It All Began.*, 2019, acrylic and watercolor on panel, 30x30”

In other works, the vivid clouds of oranges and warmer tones evoke a burning, fiery sensation, generating a feeling of uneasiness. Warm and cool colors intertwined within the gallery walls could represent the calm before the storm, especially as Ilchi refers to cultural tensions that become exacerbated when clashing. Alternatively, the color schema might reference the return of peace after mass chaos and turmoil, once the dust has settled.

Through her combination of color and gesture, the viewer can feel the movement within the art works as an expression of transience; that is the continuously transient nature of time and space. Rather than being focused on a single point in time, the artist underlines the concept of a continual evolution in the encountering of traditions and groups. This notion of mixing cultures is a complex one on a personal level as it relates to an individual's identity, but also on a larger scale within societal structures. The works are objectively beautiful, but they may also conjure a sense of distress. [2].

Ilchi's goal is to provide a bird's eye view of a perceived “cultural war”, a daunting task with multiple challenges. Rather than approaching the topic exclusively with stark contrasts of beginning and ending, or good and bad, Ilchi instead explores the relation of various components on a continuum. Her imagery suggests that each interaction and its degree of conflict is a question of ebb and flow, each aspect moving at its own individual pace while also allowing for both to exist on the same plane.

I surrender to you, ashen lands and blue skies is on view until June 29th. For more information, visit the gallery's website at <http://www.hemphillfinearts.com>. The gallery is located at 1515 14th Street NW #300, Washington DC, 20005. Gallery Hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10am to 5pm, or by appointment.

[1] http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Illumination_A_Unique_Iranian_Art.htm

[2] HEMPHILL Fine Arts' statement to the exhibition