

Obscured: Untold Stories | طيات الخفاء

Arda Aslanian | Solo Exhibition

26 October – 30 November 2024

*Hidden within the folds of fabric
are the stories we often leave untold,
the memories woven into the spaces
between what is seen and what is felt.*

- Arda Aslanian

Fann À Porter is delighted to present our first solo exhibition with Armenian Jordanian artist, Arda Aslanian, *Obscured: Untold Stories | طيات الخفاء*. The self-taught artist uses her meticulous works to explore the intricacies between visibility and concealment, using drapery as a metaphor for the complexities of human experience. This series of works delves into the delicate boundaries that define our personal narratives that are often left untold.

While some works focus on the figure through its absence, depicting only the layers of clothing that emphasize these boundaries, others present drapes in their purest form, as hidden phantoms or backdrops, evoking thresholds that both separate and connect the inner self to the outer world, veiling the mystery. Aslanian's use of a single-color gradation technique increases the viewer's confusion regarding the symbolism of the scene and imposes silence on us. Perhaps this is what she seeks: silence in a world full of noise.

Renaissance, Baroque, and Impressionist masters have clearly influenced Aslanian's approach to light, shadow, and dimension. While her work leans toward hyperrealism, the artist focuses on painting emotions rather than clear figures, allowing her to deeply explore and convey those emotions. Even when a figure appears, it is often fragmented, with the boundaries of bodies suggested through cloth and drapery. This narrative effect invites viewers to engage with the underlying sentiment in each piece.

Although her works span a spectrum of colors, most exhibit a monochromatic and minimalist quality. Each piece embodies a distinct identity, conveying emotions such as serenity, melancholy, solitude, transcendence, and phantasm. Through this approach, Aslanian encourages personal reflection, evoking a deep emotional response as viewers interpret the narrative within each still-frame.

In her journey of being a self-taught artist, Aslanian used photography and her background in architecture as tools to create her works. Though her process – dreaded by most – requires patience upon patience, it has taught her about anatomy and technique, as well as the strength of using lines to cement the solidarity of the composition, and creating a dialogue with the body, carefully depicted with precise proportions, as the main element in each work.

While creating these works, memories of the artist's childhood surface — memories of watching her mother sew clothes, creating patterns with different textures and colors for their family. These intimate memories, often taken for granted, reemerge throughout her practice and serve as a reminder of the deep connections between our past and our creative endeavors.

Laden with symbolism, motif, and form, the works present in this exhibition provide a new perspective and framing of ideas revisited throughout Aslanian's practice. There is a certain curiosity that possesses the artist, and which is in return transmitted to viewers, raising questions and confusion: Who is wearing those dresses, and what do those draped fabrics conceal? Does this dress belong to a flesh-and-blood woman, or is it a dress on a mannequin in a fashion store window, or is it the dress of the performers of some play set in a distant past? Is she using these drapes to conceal the identity of a person connected to her childhood memories, where a single garment was often shared among multiple people in her household, after it sometimes passed under the hand of her mother, who was an artist and craftsman like most Armenians in our region?