

For more information

If you have any questions or want to find out more about the exhibition, please ask our friendly Gallery Assistants. They're here to help!

Drop in to our free Spot Tours of the exhibitions every day, Tue – Fri, led by our Gallery Assistants, or join us on Wednesdays at 1pm for a Walkthrough led by guests that offer different routes into the exhibitions.

Please ask at Reception, or visit our website for more information. www.nottinghamcontemporary.org



NOTTINGHAM CONTEMPORARY

Tala Madani

Galleries 1 & 2

Tala Madani's paintings resist straightforward interpretation. Their allure comes from their ambiguities – their formal fluidities, narrative enigmas and their moral grey areas. Madani invites the viewer to reflect on the paradoxes of power dynamics, and to assess our own role in their perpetuation. She makes her viewers voyeurs, complicit in illustrations of power imbalances and degrading activities.

Art historical references abound – the seriousness of Action painting (specifically Jackson Pollock) and Colour Field painting (specifically Morris Louis) is undermined by references to slapstick, chorus lines and the subversive spirit of underground comics and graphic novels. Madani's paintings are informed by her medium's history, but she destabilises its authority by her use of pictorial and narrative devices that have no place in Modernist painting.

Her work is as much performance as painting. Each of her paintings is a theatrical vignette of both human conduct, with all its political and psycho-sexual implications, and the activity of painting.

Painting

“I use paintings as an abstract space for my actions. Though the paintings are done very fast, I can sit with the ideas for years before they actually materialise. When you’re painting you are very much thinking about the material. So the drawings I make before the paintings are quite important. A different kind of thinking happens in the drawings.

I see every mark on the canvas as a kind of character. Not to humanise, say, the drip in relation to a character, but each mark is loaded equally with meaning and play. The interaction between the figures and these signs usually creates the narrative of the painting. Using tropes of American Abstraction or Minimalism for instance, I’m interested in staining their respective mythologies.”



Tala Madani, X Men, 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Pilar Corrias, London



Tala Madani, Popular Toys, 2013.
Courtesy of the artist and Pilar Corrias, London

Peter and Jane series

“The Peter and Jane series started because I wanted to imagine my figures in the same landscape as them. It was interested in imagining the power dynamic that would be created between images of children and grown men, between illustrations and loose gestures. Through the process of making them, the meaning of the work became more complicated as I had hired a painter from China to work on the illustrative elements. The prototype of western culture, Peter and Jane, now had a Made in China sticker on the back and I had to imagine where my men fit within this new structure.”

The Jinn

“What I had understood about Jinns was that they function as intermediaries between humans and god, they have a parallel life that mirrors human life. They are an invisible double, other.

I became interested in locating that otherness within the body. The way I was thinking of the Jinn in relation to my work was about an idea of interiority. The men never became the Jinn in my paintings. I was thinking of this force pulsing from the inside. In a painting like *The Whole*, there was this idea of an interior being excavated. The belly button of the figure becomes an inverted anus.”

The Men

“I was always interested in figuration. When I focused my subject on men, my imagination became very activated. Men as phenomena! To think exclusively about men was much more engaging. I also became interested in the qualities that create stereotypes. I wanted to play with those qualities and introduce a new and perhaps different relationship to them.

In something like *Reading Light* the obvious phallic reference becomes a joke on light and vision. I’ve been playing a lot with the idea of a torch and the figures wanting to see inside their bodies. In the *Rear Projection* paintings they have a torch lit up inside, a play on the idea of becoming brilliant, literally to have the light shine out of you.”



Tala Madani, *Rear Projection: Soft*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Pilar Corrias, London

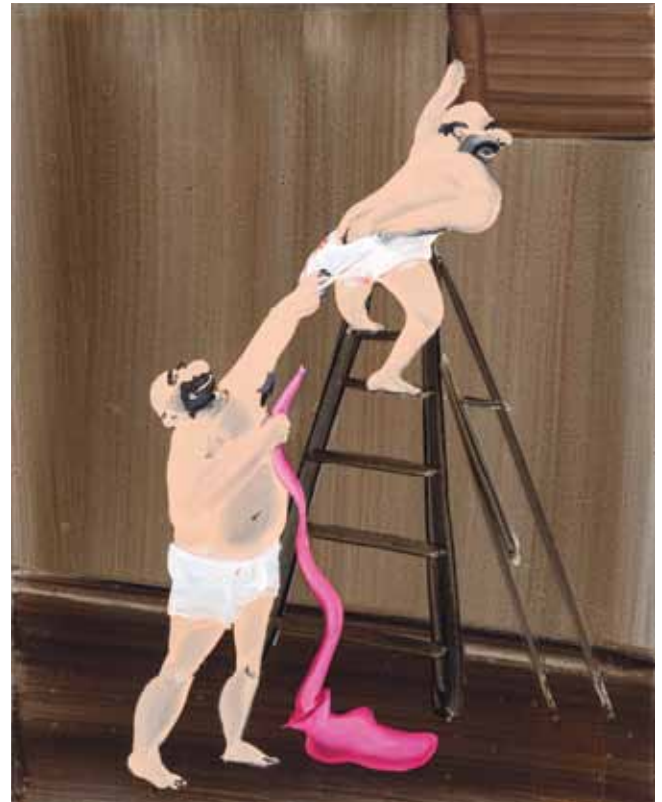
Humour

“The idea of play in relation to painting also became very important for me. Play opened up to slapstick. The manner in which the paintings are done, their looseness, gives space for these interpretations. Of course there is the funny funny and the not so funny funny. Humour and satire are certainly effective forms of approaching difficult subjects. I’m also very interested in the physical sense of release that humour can give us.

Feminism

I’m very interested in the presence of strong female voices. I’m inspired by many female painters, namely Nicole Eisenman. Alice Neel, Nikki De Saint Phalle and Lee Lozano. Their works are both deeply personal and political.

Tala Madani



Tala Madani, Enema up the ladder, 2012. Private Collection, courtesy Jeremy Lewison Ltd.