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Shahnaz Aghayeva

b. 1984, Sumgait, Azerbaijan

"I want my art to question and disrupt the limited perception of women's lives and identities, revealing the hidden dimensions of femininity that are rarely seen or understood".

Shahnaz Aghayeva is an artist who divides her time between Baku and Bodrum, and her work pulses with an intense, visceral energy that defies easy categorization. Self-taught and fearless in her approach, Shahnaz explores complex themes surrounding female identity through a range of mediums - metal, linoleum, wood, glass, and cardboard - always challenging herself to find new forms and processes. Her art is grounded in a raw, subterranean power, a reflection of her commitment to revealing the often-unspoken realities of women's experiences.

Shahnaz's work is deeply personal and politically charged, questioning the depiction of women in societies where perception is often dominated by the male gaze. For Shahnaz, being a woman artist means confronting the constraints placed on women's identities, especially in Eastern cultures. She believes that the reality of women's lives - their shared influences, inherited wounds, and complex relationships - is largely unseen and misunderstood by men. Through her art, she aims to give voice to these hidden narratives, addressing the aspects of female identity that only women recognize and challenging societal expectations.

Her pieces often depict women exclusively, utilizing recurring symbols such as long hair, representing the intimate care women use to organize and protect their lives. Shahnaz's work also draws inspiration from figures like Louise Bourgeois, with stylized forms that balance sensuality and defiance. Between abstraction and figuration, her images of nude female figures manipulate scale and perspective, reflecting a dynamic interplay between women's changing roles, identity, and sexual freedom as society's view of gender evolves.

In challenging conventional perspectives, Shahnaz's work seeks to redefine femininity, inviting viewers to engage with the deeper complexities of gender and female empowerment.

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Through her art, she hopes to influence how future generations perceive women, pushing beyond traditional aesthetics to create a space where women's voices and experiences shape the narrative.

Shahnaz Aghayeva's works have been showcased in several prominent museum exhibitions. In 2018, her art was featured at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts. The following year, in 2019, her work was part of the "From Waste to Art" exhibition at the Gala Museum Complex in Azerbaijan. In 2022, Shahnaz exhibited at both the Istanbul Museum of Graphic Arts (IMOGA) and the İBB Museum of Graphic Arts, further solidifying her presence in the international art scene.

EDUCATION

- 2023 - *ongoing* MA degree at Mugla Sitki Kocman University
- 2017 - 2018 Studio Practices at YARAT Contemporary Art Space
- 2008 - 2010 MA degree at Azerbaijan State Art Academy
- 2002 - 2006 BA degree at Azerbaijan State Art Academy

Solo Exhibitions

- 2023 "Pink Venus" / Barza Collection, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2022 "Sublimation" / Gallery Kambur, Istanbul, Turkiye
- 2018 "Essence" / ROOM, Baku, Azerbaijan

Group Exhibitions

- 2024 "Different and together" / Osmanli Tersanesi, Bodrum, Turkiye
- 2024 BAB, İnspera, Bodrum, Turkiye
- 2023 Struga International Art Exhibition, Struga, Macedonia

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- 2023 "Pink-Black" / "20th-21st Century Painting" Museum, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2022 "Haller Hayaller" / Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkiye
- 2022 "LUSTRUM" / Kun Art Space, Adana, Turkiye
- 2022 "Make Yourself at Home" / Ta(r)dino 6 Gallery, Baku Azerbaijan
- 2022 "O" / UN x Norway organized Gender Equality Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2022 "The Assembly of Friendship" / SALOON Dresden x Məclisi-Üns. Residency exhibition in Objektleina, Dresden, Germany
- 2022 NOT HUMAN ART WEEK, Queer Runaways, Yugen Collective, Aachen, Germany
- 2022 Sebök Margit Gallery, Berekfürdő, Hungary
- 2022 "Edition No.1 " / Gallery 11.17, International printmaking group exhibition, Istanbul, Turkiye, Exhibit with Damien Hirst and Salvador Dali
- 2021 "Open the Floodgates" / McArtist & Kiraathane Project, Ayvalik, Kuchukkoy, Turkiye
- 2021 "Changing World, Changing People" / Rotary Young Artists Selection, Izmir, Turkiye
- 2020 "Stores from isolation" / Sapar Contemporary Art Space and Ta(r)dino 6, New York, USA
- 2019 "Chants d'amour" / Galerie Dix9 Hélène Lacharmoise, Paris, France
- 2019 "Child of Magohalmi and the Echoes of Creation" / Collaboration with Zadié Xa's solo exhibition , YARAT, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2019 Artisterium 12, Kutaisi, Tbilisi, Georgia
- 2018 VR Project with PHOBIA VR and YARAT, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2018 "Think That Everything That Exists, Does Not Exist" / Yay Gallery Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2018 "Graduation Show" / ARTIM, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2017 "ZERO" / ARTIM, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2017 "Imaginary foreigner" / ARTIM, Baku, Azerbaijan

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- 2017 "Who cares what" / ARTIM, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2017 "100% MADE in Azerbaijan" / ARTIM, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2016 "The color of the sounds" / Natavan gallery and Music Art Port, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2013 Created ArtClub Masterkids, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2010 The Museum Center, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2005 XIDIR ELLER Art Festival, Malatya, Turkiye

Art Fairs, Biennales and Festivals

- 2024 Affordable Art Fair, Oprys Gallery, Amsterdam, NL
- 2024 Art Week Akaretler, Kun Art Space, Istanbul, Turkiye
- 2024 International Print Biennial, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan
- 2023 8th International Art symposium Struga'23, Macedonia
- 2022 Vernissage "Le Boudoir" Galerie Dix9 Hélène Lacharmoise, Paris, France
- 2022 Contemporary Istanbul, Galerie Dix9 Hélène Lacharmoise, Tersane-Istanbul, Turkiye
- 2021 International Bilkent Sanat Festival, Ankara, Turkiye
- 2021 Art contact Istanbul International Art Fair, Istanbul Turkiye
- 2020 International Virtual Engravist Printmaking Biennale, Istanbul, Turkiye
- 2019 Baku International Contemporary Art Biennale, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2019 "From Waste to Art" International Art Festival, Gala Museum Complex, Gala, Azerbaijan
- 2019 The 7th International Print Biennial China, China Printmaking Museum, Guanlan
- 2019 LlifeNstle International Print Festival, MoMa Tbilisi, Georgia
- 2018 Osten Biennale, Skopje, Macedonia

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2018 LIfeNstIle International Print Festival, Batumi Contemporary Art Space, Kirmeleshvili, Georgia

2018 International Print Biennial, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan

Artist-in-residency Programs

2023 Art Quarter, Budapest, Hungary

2022 Bereksurdo Artist Colony, Hungary

2022 Kultur aktiv e. V. X Saloon Dresden & Ta(r)dino 6. group Məclisi Üns. Dresden, Germany

2018 AqTusheti Art Residency, Megalo, Georgia

Selected Projects

2022 Bodrum open atelier days, printmaking workshop, Bodrum, Türkiye

2019 "Unlimited Development", YARAT x Caspian Oil & Gas, Baku, Azerbaijan

2019 Social project, Baku, Azerbaijan

2018 Workshop, LIfeNstIle International Print Festival, Georgia

2017 - 2018 Art therapy project, MEDENI NIYYET, Baku, Azerbaijan

2017 Workshop with curator Sheila Zago, YARAT, Baku, Azerbaijan

Museums and Collections

Housed within private collections and showcased in museums, including:

National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Gala Museum Complex, Istanbul
Museum of Graphic Arts (IMOGA), IBB Museum of Graphic Arts