

## Mahtab Haghghi

Mahtab Haghghi (b. 1971) received her B.F.A. from Azad University, Tehran in 1994. She started teaching painting to children and adults from 1993 until present. Now, she teaches at Noor High School in Tehran. Also, her private classes welcome both adults and children. To integrate research into her teaching, Mahtab decided to write her B.F.A. thesis about children's painting. She visited some preschools and childcare centers in Tehran, where she met a couple of orphans who lost their mothers. Mahtab gave three assignments to children: paintings with such subject as mother, teacher, and friend. The consequences of loss: lack of the unconditional love of a mother, protection and support, nurturance and happiness were so evident in the orphans' paintings and deeply impressed Mahtab. She not only wrote her thesis on the paintings of orphan children who lost their mothers but also painted a series of canvases based on this subject matter titled *My Only Wish, but ...* .

Mahtab's insight into a deep understanding of orphans' feelings is apparent in her works, in which those children's actual paintings appear as collage. The artist uses symbolic elements adapted either from the Iranian iconography or the studies of children's paintings in the modern day. According to Mahtab Haqiqi: "In Iranian traditional visual art, pomegranate and pomegranate blossom symbolize mother, so do gold fish, water lily, half-moon and spirals. In one of the paintings, a young girl is trying to reach the Sun while holding a pomegranate in her hand. Her long arm symbolizes her never lasting cry for her mother. Seven other pomegranates are seen in the foreground. Mahtab explains: "Seven is a holly number for Iranians, and, in the past mothers often attached pomegranate blossom to their hairpins for beauty." A house painted in the heart of the girl is disappearing behind blue fog representing sadness. Some parts of orphan children's drawings are seen in the background.

In *My Only Wish, But ...*, the artist applies children's favorite colors such as pink, blue, and red. Also, some other symbolic elements found in children's paintings such as the Sun symbolizing father, a house with no window or door symbolizing a disturbed family, and an empty birdcage symbolizing loss are also seen in these canvases.

Mahtab won a prize in the Third Biennale for Visual Arts in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts in 1995 for one of the canvases of this series in which an orphan child is resting her head on the lap of her imaginary mother seeking comfort and love. The pomegranate blossoms are flying away from the child who is lost in her thoughts as she looks directly at the viewer.

Later in 1995, the artist became interested in studying the life of people who work in the ports in the southern region of Iran, and the Ghashghaii tribe. She started another series of oil painting and collage titled *Women of Port* based on workingwomen of Bandar Abbas; the

main theme is genuine passion for life and work: fishing, weaving textile, household chores and raising children. In these paintings, figures of women in their traditional colorful cloths are shown while working with their husbands. The artist applies objects such as boats, rugs, palm trees, clay vases and fishnets as essential entities in their life. In one painting, Mahtab glues an actual Jajim, a kind of Persian rug, in the background that works perfectly with the theme and the woman's clothing while giving a sense of depth to the canvas.

In canvases of Ghashghaii's life and work, women are shown unaccompanied with men as according to Mahtab: "Their work duties are different from men, therefore, women usually work alone or as a group while carrying their infants. Women are in charge of weaving, organizing tents, milking goats, cooking, and arranging moving from one place to another."

Mahtab Haghghi's works remind the viewer of the people whose life is unknown to most of us as well as the essence of the artist's thoughts and personality. Her paintings have touched many souls. She invites her audience to expand their vision and consider art as a tool to better understand the life and feelings of others.

## Mahtab Haghighi

- EDUCATION**      **B.F.A in Painting**, 1990-1994, Azad University, Tehran, Iran, Thesis and Project: *My Only Wish, But ...*  
**Certificate in Interior Design**, 2005-2006, Pardis College, Tehran University, Tehran
- EXHIBITIONS**    **Solo**      Zarabi Gallery, Tehran, 1995
- Group**    Khorshid Gallery, Tehran, 1998  
                         Niyavaran Art Center, Tajali-e Ehsas Exhibition, Tehran, 1997  
                         Golrizaan Exhibition, Fundraising event for Hemophilic Patients, Tehran, 1996  
                         Niyavaran Art Center, Tajali-e Ehsas Exhibition, Tehran, 1996  
                         Niyavaran Art Center, Tajali-e Ehsas Exhibition, Tehran, 1995  
                         Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts, The third Biennale for Visual Arts, Tehran, 1995  
                         Niyavaran Art Center, Tajali-e Ehsas Exhibition, Tehran, 1994  
                         Barg Gallery, Tehran, 1994  
                         Azad University Art Exhibition, Tehran, 1993
- AWARDS**            **Certificate of honor**, Golrizaan Exhibition, Fundraising event for Hemophilic Patients, Tehran, 1996
- Certificate of honor**, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts, The third Biennale for Visual Arts, Tehran, 1995
- INTERVIEWS**      Interviewed by Sahar Program, Jame-e Jam Channel, 1998  
                         Interviewed by Channel Two, 1998  
                         Interviewed by Etela'at Newspaper, 1995  
                         Interviewed by Zanaan Magazine, 1995
- WORK EXPERIENCE**    Teaching painting, Noor High School, Tehran, 2006-Present  
                         Teaching painting and drawing, private classes, Tehran, 1993-Present  
                         Teaching painting and drawing, Fadak Art Center, Tehran, 2001-2003  
                         Teaching painting and drawing, Khanevadeh Art Center, Tehran, 2001-2003  
                         Teaching drawing, Hafez Art Center, 2000-2002  
                         Director of Khorshid Art Gallery, Tehran, 1998-2001  
                         Juror, Niyavaran Art Center, an art exhibitions for all art galleries in Tehran, Tehran, 2000
- ART ACTIVITIES**      Attending Noor High School classes to learn painting on clay, 2006  
                         Attending Farnoosh Janati's Private classes to learn fruits and flower arrangement, 2005  
                         Attending Sculpture classes at Kargah Honar, 1992-1993  
                         Attending Iraj Shafei's classes to learn pastel, 1990  
                         Attending Aydin Aghdashloo's classes to learn color pencil, water color, oil, and gouache, 1988-1990  
                         Attending Alijanpour's classes to learn Persian Miniature Painting, 1986-1988

