

secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien
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Press release

Tala Madani

Shit Moms

November 23, 2019 – February 9, 2020

Hauptraum

Press conference: Friday, November 22, 2019, 11 a.m.

Exhibition talk: Friday, November 22, 6 p.m.

Tala Madani in conversation with Mark Leckey

Opening: Friday, November 22, 7 p.m.

in cooperation with Vienna Art Week

Shit Moms is the title both of Tala Madani's exhibition at Secession, her first solo show in Austria, and a new body of work. She deals here with concepts of domestic life and, more specifically, the idea(l)s and (corpo)realities of motherhood. While the title refers to the colloquial term for women who in some way fail their job or role as a mother, it also literally designates her approach to the theme: smeared, somewhat shapeless female bodies appear as mother figures made of excrement.

The shit mothers, shown in tender mother-and-child intimacy (*At My Toilette #1, #2, #3*) – drawing on the Western iconography of the Virgin Madonna and Child (the paradox of virgin maternity being a subject that has attracted Madani's interest for a long time) – or surrounded, crawled over and jumped on by triples, quads and even larger tribes of infants, inhabit modernist apartments, appear in spot-lit disco halls, and peek at babies playing in abandoned houses. Picturing moments both of togetherness and isolation, they exude a sense of intimacy and human vulnerability:

Pictures of kids patting their shit-covered hands all over the place, coating whole interiors and staining sheets or curtains in careless agility and joyful activity, point to the origins of painting in prehistoric hand prints discovered in caves in Northern Spain, for instance. These are among the earliest examples of humankind's creative drive, and demonstrate the urge to create, shape, leave traces, and communicate.

With regard to Madani's focus on domestic life, the motif of the cave seems to be interesting due to its ambiguous associations: the thin line between being perceived as a shelter (a natural, primordial home), a template for exploring and discovering, while being an eerie, dark and uncertain site. The ever-present danger of being trapped can be extended to representations of contrasting domestic realities exemplified in paintings like *Shit Mom (A Living Room #2)* and *Shit Mom (Broken Window)*.

The cave is also literally a point of reference: In the shadows of *Cave Interior (Ancestors)*, one can see two silhouettes illuminating the wall, throwing light on a huge drawing of a dynamic crowd of people that

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lurks above them. It's not quite clear what's going on: Are they fleeing, worshipping something, or are they part of a collective, ecstatic dance move (a rave?). A variation of this crowd reappears in one of three large-scale diptychs, *Corner Projection (Panic)*. Each diptych is composed of a painting of a projector on one side that seemingly throws its light and projected image onto the adjacent painting. Hung in the corners, these works act as hinges that frame and link the works on show (39 small and intimate to large-scale paintings and 8 animation films), and prominently feature a recurrent painterly topic in Tala Madani's oeuvre: light and projection.

Some motifs appear in several paintings and constitute a sort of subgroup. They are freely distributed around the space, sometimes next to, sometimes opposite each other, spanning virtual imaginary bridges: Paintings of phantasmagoric, ghostly figures manifest the paradox of concurrent presence and absence, as well as transparency and opacity (*Ghost Sitters*), while *Cum Shot #1, #2* and *#3* each shows a man with a rifle in his hands, lying in his cum stain, or pointing the phallic weapon at the ejaculate. Unlike earlier works that predominantly portrayed the male figure (in his modern crisis), here, these are the only paintings that deal with the male and radiate a rather gloomy, auto-aggressive and despaired atmosphere.

Alongside the paintings, a number of recent animation films are presented on monitors (also lending bodies to these digital moving images). Often, the narrative initially unfolds in a casual and matter-of-factly manner only to take an unexpected turn, leading to the dissolution of bodily or sexual integrity and physical de(con)struction, for instance in *Manual Man* or *Time*. In a disturbing but ferociously funny manner, the animations' protagonists seem to be trapped in loops of destructive, violent behaviour.

Both her paintings and her animated films operate with a visual language that is often grotesquely exaggerated, drastic and tender, obscene and funny alike. Madani's oeuvre posits a world in which primal desires are unrestrained by conventions and social norms, while her works are suffused by light that points both in and outward—at human instinct and upended social ritual.

Tala Madani was born in Tehran in 1981 and studied art and political science in the United States. She lives and works in Los Angeles.

The exhibition program is conceived by the board of the Secession.
Curator: Jeanette Pacher

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Artist's book

Tala Madani. *Shit Moms*

Format: 19,5 x 27 cm

Details: Swiss broschur, Hardcover, - 120 pages

Concept: Tala Madani

Text (english): John C. Welchman

Secession 2019

Distribution: Revolver Publishing

EUR 33,-

Clearly “shit mom” can be taken in several ways. Most obviously, it would seem, the title adopted by Tala Madani for her latest series of paintings (and for her book) refers to a mother who is bad, or “shitty,” at her job—or her task, or obligation, or profession—or, more simply, has failed in some aspect of the maternal circumstances to which she is party. In this sense it is a colloquial exhalation of guilt, frustration or confessional frankness (if uttered by a mother herself); or an accusation or put-down (if leveled by someone who is not the mother in question). Not just any old guilt, of course, but perhaps a form of primal failing; for what could be worse than the implications of this particular shortcoming: screwing up a life that you have cocreated, or at least committed to nurturing for the best part of two decades. Doesn't the shit mother thus give on to nothing less than the moral bankruptcy of biological destiny?

Not so fast. For Madani is a fabled practitioner of the dark arts of the improperly circumstantial...
(John C. Welchman)

Curators' guided tour

Thursday, January 16, 2020, 4:30 p.m.

Curators Jeanette Pacher, Bettina Spörr and Annette Südbeck give a tour through the exhibitions by Tala Madani, Ron Nagle and Lisa Holzer.

Press contact

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Press images

Installation views are available for download at www.secession.at/en/presstype/aktuell

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Biografie / Biography Tala Madani

Tala Madani, 1981 geboren / born in Teheran, Iran, aufgewachsen in den USA / grew up in the United States, lebt und arbeitet / lives and works in Los Angeles.

Einzelausstellungen (Auswahl) / Solo exhibitions (selection)

- 2019 *Shit Moms*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles
Oven Light, Portikus, Frankfurt
- 2018 *Corner Projections*, 303 Gallery, New York
- 2017 *Tala Madani*, La Panacée – Centre de Culture Contemporaine, Montpellier
- 2016 *Shitty Disco*, Pilar Corrias, London, England
First Light, Contemporary Art Museum, St.Louis, MO; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA
- 2014 *Rear Projection*, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla / Seville
Tala Madani, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, England
- 2013 *Tala Madani: Rip Image*, Moderna Museet, Malmö; Moderna Museet, Stockholm
Tala Madani, Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Salt Lake City
- 2011 *Tala Madani: The Jinn*, Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam

Gruppenausstellungen (Auswahl) / Group exhibitions (selection)

- 2019 *The Seventh Continent*, 16th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul
The Ural Industrial Biennial, Ekaterinburg, Russland / Russia
On Vulnerability and Doubt, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne
- 2018 *First Person Plural: Empathy, Intimacy, Irony and Anger*, BAK, Utrecht
Remote Castration, Laxart, Los Angeles
- 2017 *Desire: A show about sex, love and lust*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Medellín, Kolumbien / Colombia
Prospect 2017, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego
Whitney Biennial 2017, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 2016 *Los Angeles – A Fiction*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Musée d'art Contemporain de Lyon, Lyon
Malerei als Film, Kunsthalle Darmstadt
- 2015 *America is Hard to See*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 2014 *The Great Acceleration: Art in the Anthropocene*, Taipei Biennial, Taipei, Taiwan
Made in L.A. 2014, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles
Where are we Now?, 5th Marrakech Biennale, Marrakesch, Marokko / Morocco
In the Near Future, The Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland
- 2013 *Future Generation Prize*, Pinchuck Art Prize, Venedig / Venice
- 2011 *Speech Matters*, Dänischer Pavillon der 54. Venedig Biennale / Danish Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale, Venedig / Venice
Open House, Singapore Biennale, Singapur / Singapore
- 2010 *Greater New York*, MoMA P.S. 1, New York
Touched, The 6th Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool
- 2009 *The Generational: Younger Than Jesus*, The New Museum, New York

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List of works Tala Madani. *Shit Moms*

Left: front and side wing (clockwise)

Cave Interior #1, 2019

Oil and mixed media on linen, 140 x 112 x 3 cm

Courtesy of the Mohn Family Trust

Baby Landscape, 2019

Oil on linen, 54 x 43.5 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of Jorge Obieta, New York City

A Solo, 2019

Oil on linen, 51 x 43 x 2 cm

Courtesy of Matteo Novarese, Bologna, Italy

Corner Projection (Panic), 2019

Oil on linen, two parts; each: 183 x 366 x 4 cm

Courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation

Curtains #1, 2019

Oil on linen, 46 x 61 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

Shit Mom (Tribe), 2019

Oil on linen, 51 x 61 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of Maria Seferian, Los Angeles

Shit Mom (A Living Room #2), 2019

Oil on linen, 43 x 51 x 2.5 cm

Private Collection, New York

Shitty de Milo, 2019

Oil on linen, 43 x 54 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of Allison and Larry Berg

Clean Sheet, 2019

Oil on linen, 41 x 36 x 2 cm

Collection of Nicholas Tan, Jakarta, Indonesia

Shit Mom (Broken Window), 2019

Oil on linen, 96.5 x 76 x 3 cm

De Iorio Collection

Shit Mom (The Nursery), 2019

Oil on linen, 61 x 46 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of Bradley D. Jacob

Shit Mom (Quads), 2019

Oil on linen, 183 x 183 x 3 cm

Courtesy of the Defares Collection, Amsterdam

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Rear, left (clockwise)

Cave Interior (Ancestors), 2019
Oil and mixed media on linen, 140 x 112 x 3 cm
Courtesy of Art Gallery of New South Wales

At My Toilette #2, 2019
Oil on linen, 38 x 30.5 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of David Kordansky and Mindy Shapero, Los Angeles

Shit Mom (Dream Riders), 2019
Oil on linen, 196 x 203 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of Bill Block, Los Angeles

Shit Mother I, 2019
Oil on linen, 203 x 203 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of Wendi Murdoch

Shit Mom (Sandcastles), 2019
Oil on linen, 58 x 40 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of Seiya Nakamura, Tokyo

Rear, right (clockwise)

Ghost Sitter #1, 2019
Oil on linen, 53 x 43.5 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of David Kordansky and Mindy Shapero, Los Angeles

Cum Shot #3, 2019
Oil on linen, 51 x 43.5 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of Adam Green Art Advisory, NYC

Cum Shot #2, 2019
Oil on linen, 53 x 43.5 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of Helya Hashemian and Siamak Taghaddos

Crawling Morning (Window), 2019
Oil on linen, 61 x 46 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of The Rachofsky Collection

Corner Projection (Dog), 2019
Oil on linen, two parts;
part one: 183 x 366 x 3 cm, part two: 183 x 183 x 3 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Pilar Corrias, London

Passage #2, 2019
Oil on linen, 58 x 40 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of Karen and Leon Amitai

Disco Baby, 2019
Oil on linen, 140 x 112 x 3 cm
Courtesy of Stefanie and Evan Reed

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Right: side wing and front (clockwise)*Shit Mom (Brown Interior)*, 2019

Oil on linen, 41 x 36 x 2 cm

Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

Corner Projection (Time), 2019

Oil on linen, two parts; each 183 x 366 x 4 cm

Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

Ghost Sitter #2, 2019

Oil on linen, 51 x 43.5 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of The Rachofsky Collection

First Supper, 2019

Oil on linen, 43 x 54 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of Kei Iwasaki, Tokyo

Cum Shot #1, 2019

Oil on linen, 54 x 43.5 x 2.5 cm

Collection of Nicholas Tan, Jakarta, Indonesia

Shit Mom (Vacation), 2019

Oil on linen, 51 x 61 x 2.5 cm

Collection Pinto Teixeira, Portugal

Figure in Rainbows, 2019

Oil on linen, 61 x 51 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of the Collection of Gary and Anne Borman

Earth Work (Green Light), 2019

Oil on linen, 51 x 61 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of Kei Iwasaki, Tokyo

Wet Hexagon #1, 2019

Oil on linen, 140 x 112 x 3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

At My Toilette #3, 2019

Oil on linen, 38 x 30.5 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

Shit Mom (Disco Babies), 2019

Oil on linen, 183 x 183 x 3 cm

Courtesy of David Chau, Cc Foundation & Cc Art Center

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Animation films

Cluster A (clockwise)

The Crowd, 2018

Single channel colour animation, sound
1 min.

Plane Chaser, 2018

Single channel colour animation, sound
42 sec.

Sex Ed by God, 2017

Digital video and stop motion animation, colour, sound
2:11 min.

Manual Man, 2019

Single channel colour animation, sound
9:50 min.

Cluster B (clockwise)

The Womb, 2019

Single channel colour animation
3:26 min.

Overhead Projection (Dig), 2018

Single channel colour animation, sound
1:02 min.

Mr. Time, 2018

Single channel colour animation, sound
7:04 min.

Overhead Projection (Crowd), 2018

Single channel colour animation, sound
1:36 min.

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Association of Visual Artists Vienna Secession
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Exhibitions

Hauptraum
Galerie
Grafisches Kabinett

Tala Madani. *Shit Moms*
Ron Nagle. *Nocturn Around*
Lisa Holzer. *Was trägt Sie?*

Exhibition dates

November 23, 2019 – February 9, 2020

Artist's books

Tala Madani. *Shit Moms*, 120 pages, € 33,-
Ron Nagle. *Sub Rosa*, 120 pages, € 33,-
Lisa Holzer. *Was trägt Sie? / What carries you?*, 108 pages, € 26,40

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Permanent Presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

Admission

Adults € 9,50 / Pupils, students and senior citizens € 6,-

Curator's guided tour

Thursday, January 16, 2020, 4:30 p.m.

Special Event *What carries you?* Thursday, February 6, 2020, 7 p.m.

Dialogue tour Lisa Holzer

Friday, February 7, 2020, 5 p.m. in cooperation with Collectors Agenda

Guided tours

Every Saturday at 11 a.m. in English and 2 p.m. in German
€ 3,- per person plus admission (without registration)

Art Information

Every Saturday, 1 – 2 p.m., free of charge

Press contact

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Press images

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