

Title: Osho, (Osho was a mystic from India who advocated for meditation. He died in 1990.)

Artist: Faig Ahmed, born in 1982, Baku, Azerbaijani

Owned: Pending Museum purchase with funds provided by Donna MacMillan

Medium: Hand woven wool pile carpet, textile sculpture, size 142x118 in.

Made: 2015, in Baku, Azerbaijani.

This contemporary piece is made in the traditional hand woven method of cut pile wool rugs. This is one in a series titled "Carpets" wherein rectangular rugs, are hung on walls as if they were paintings. The standard size is approx. 3'x5' although many are larger. The carpets frequently flow down the wall and onto the floor wherein they become sculpture. The carpets are based on the traditional style of Azerbaijani rugs however Ahmed modifies a portion of the original pattern into digitally altered images. On this piece the lower portion of the carpet flows down the wall and drips onto the floor while the traditional patterns dissolve into abstract flows of colors. The hem of the carpet is uneven, swelling and shrinking as dictated by the distorted surface design. The entire rug is made with traditional rug weaving technique.

It's important to know the history of this style of rugs which have been made in Azerbaijani and surrounding area (including Armenia, Turkey, Iran, Georgia, and Russia) since at least the 16th Century. The geometric patterns are Middle Eastern and Islamic. These ubiquitous rugs are popular throughout the world and are known as Azerbaijani or oriental rugs. Known for a feeling of cozyness, they are still used today in modern buildings. This artist appreciates the ancient values, and stability inherent in the carpets. Ahmed works closely with the traditional weavers in a nearby village where they produce his rugs from the computer-generated designs that he creates. Ahmed's rugs are woven by hand on the same old fashioned traditional looms that are also used to weave the traditional rugs even now.

Ahmed is concerned with the globalization of the art world's taste which tends to homogenize art throughout the world. Azerbaijani is in an area of the world which is a crossroads for geographic, cultural and religious influences of both the East and West. Ahmed's rugs appear to meld the traditional alongside the digitized images generated by today's computers and printers.

I particularly like this piece because it begins as a traditional and beautiful rug hung on the wall as if it were a painting. However, the rug becomes 3 dimensional as it flows down the wall and drips onto the floor while the patterns dissolve into abstract flows of colors. The colors swirl similar to how oil makes wavy patterns when poured onto water. Some think this wavy pattern is a reference to the wealth of oil from the Caspian Sea which supports Azerbaijani. Sydney Williams suggested that the traditional pattern on the upper part may appear to dissolve into blood pouring down the wall and onto the floor. This blood-letting could be referring to the war-like conditions which this nation has suffered over the years. Azerbaijani was a Russian republic and is still a highly censored nation. This piece may be a statement against the horror of war which has gone on for centuries in this area. This political notion would necessarily be camouflaged to avoid censorship.

Ahmed graduated from the sculpture department of the Azerbaijan State Academy of Fine Art in 2004. As a former Russian republic, this school was restricted to the Russian school of social realism painting for many years. Faig's work is obviously a complete departure from that school's limitations. Since graduation his work also includes installations, painting and video. Ahmed is influenced by the artistic genres of Installations which are three dimensional, and site specific works. His work is also Conceptual, generating ideas about certain issues. Another art movement that has influenced his work is a high regard and respect for craft traditions, which are referred to with current influences.

Faig Ahmed's work was exhibited at his nation's inaugural pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2007, which was a major career boost for this young artist. He has continued to exhibit internationally. He was represented by Nature Morte Art Ltd, New Delhi, India. This piece was purchased at Frieze NY Art Fair, May 2016.

Recently the image of one of Ahmed's rugs was printed on Globe Tee shirts sold by Topman. The artist is considering suing.

Sources: (1.) Rethinking Tradition, Surface Design Journal, Jessica Hemmings, Spring 2015. Faig Ahmed: Points of perception. From anti-utopias, no author, published by MACRO Testaccio, Rome, Italy. 2016. "About" www.FaigAhmed.com/about/info/. New York Times Style Magazine, A Rebellious Artist's Psychedelic Rugs, Gisela Williams, May 10, 2016. This Artist Makes Traditional Carpets That Look Like They Were hit by a Software Bug, Smithsonian.com, Danny Lewis, November 19, 2015. Faig Ahmed, Leila Heller Gallery. ArtForum Magazine, Caroline Busta, October 2013. www.itsnicethat/articles/faig-ahmed, 8/23/12. Masie Skidmore, January 21, 2015 report, publisher unknown. www.leilahellergallery.com/exhibitions/faig-ahmed-east-in-twist, 6/2013. Wikipedia. yarat.az/en/discover/exhibitions/overview, 2016. facebook.com/Faig-Ahmed-Artist-229688570375040/, November, 2016. The Art Newspaper, Victoria Stapley-Brown, 8/18/16.

