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Kamrooz Aram, "Of Flame and Splendour"



Perry Rubenstein Gallery, through
Apr 9 (see Chelsea)

Kamrooz Aram's new paintings and drawings constitute an orientalist fantasia. The large canvas *Everything Scatter*, for example, depicts an expanse of greenish sky framed by two gooey dung heaps. Odd red flowers, seemingly taken from the margins of Persian miniatures, sprout from these hills, while a pair of claws hangs in the air overhead, surrounded by bursts of golden yellow as if an eagle had just erupted into pencil shavings. The painting manages to be luscious, crude and exquisitely refined all at the same time, its imagery suggesting allegories of power and

violence, abjection and beauty.

The New Vortex Plunges Into the Heart of the Present includes stylized spiral clouds, exploding crimson flowers, stars glowing in an indigo firmament, a glistening emerald pennant, a falcon and an angelic entity, all in an indeterminate space of broad, slashing brushstrokes with an overlay of calligraphic drips in glossy black. Here, Islamic-tinted representation collides with exuberant Abstract Expressionism in a riotous, nearly psychedelic vision.

Four ink drawings feature the heads of dour, bearded men, like so many glowering ayatollahs. One sports a crazily enormous turban; another, a mane of hair that fills the paper. A third atomizes in a hallucinatory pointillism of blue, green and red. Two heads in profile in the fourth share a turban, like playing-card royalty; feathery tongues of colorful arabesques emanate from their mouths like mystic wisdom. Aram mashes up East and West to envision ecstatic complexities of the sort that today's political reality could never imagine.—Joseph R. Wolin

*The Pinnacle of Pride
and Inherited Glory*

