

BIOGRAPHY



Since rising to prominence as a sculptor in the 1980s, Shirazeh Houshiary's practice has swelled to encompass painting, installation, architectural projects and film. "I set out to capture my breath," she said in 2000, to "find the essence of my own existence, transcending name, nationality, cultures." Veils, membranes and mists are leitmotifs in work that tries to visualise modes of perception, spanning the scientific and the cosmic while drawing on sources as wide-ranging as Sufism, Renaissance painting, contemporary physics and poetry. Houshiary finds succour in the transformation of material: Arabic words, one an affirmation the other a denial, are pencil-stroked onto canvas so lightly, and clouded over by finely wrought skeins of pigment, that they morph in front of the naked eye and defy reproduction. So too, aluminium armatures and elliptical brick towers, charged with dynamic tension, appear different from every angle, as if negating their own presence; her commission for the East window of St Martin in the Fields, London, presents a cross, warped and spanning from a circular motif, as if reflected in water. "The universe is in a process of disintegration," she says, "everything is in a state of erosion, and yet we try to stabilise it. This tension fascinates me and it's at the core of my work" (2013).

Shirazeh Houshiary was born in Shiraz, Iran in 1955, where she attended university before moving to London, UK in 1974. She has a BA from Chelsea School of Art (1979) and lives and works in London, UK. She has had solo exhibitions at Long Museum, Shanghai, China (2023); Lisson Gallery, London (2021), Shanghai (2020), and New York (2017); Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore (2016); The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland (2007); Tate Liverpool, UK (2003); Islamic

Gallery, British Museum, London, UK (1997); Magasin- Centre national d'art contemporain, Grenoble, France (1995); University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, USA (1994); Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (1993); Musée Rath, Geneva, Switzerland (1988); and in 2013, her exhibition 'Breath' was a celebrated Collateral Event of the 55th Venice Biennale in Italy.

Recent group exhibitions include: 'Artists and the Rothko Chapel: 50 Years of Inspiration', Moody Center for the Arts, Rice University, Houston, Texas, USA (2021); 'Abstraction and Calligraphy – Towards a Universal Language', Louvre Abu Dhabi in collaboration with Centre Pompidou, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2021); 'Spirit and Endeavour', Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury, UK (2020); Jesus College, Cambridge, UK (2017); Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini, Collezione Burri, Citta di Castello, Perugia, Italy (2016); University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI, USA (2014). Her work has been included in major group exhibitions since the 1980s including: Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, OH, USA (2011); Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA (2007); Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy (2002); Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, Netherlands (1990); Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (1989); Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek, Denmark (1986). She has also participated in numerous biennials including Cartagena delIndias, Colombia (2014); Kiev Biennale, Ukraine (2012); the 17th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2010); and the 40th Venice Biennale, Italy (1982). Shirazeh Houshiary became a Royal Academician in 2022, and was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1994.