

Tala Madani: First Light

For more than a decade, Tehran-born, Los Angeles-based artist Tala Madani has developed a practice centered on playful yet provocative representations of men. Her paintings, drawings, and stop-motion animations combine lyrical and gestural figuration with mature and sometimes disturbing subject matter. These deadpan and often hilarious works satirize conventional notions of masculinity, recasting the male figure in various scenarios that both mock virility and redistribute the dynamics of power. Bright pastel color fields form the ground for group scenes in which balding, rotund, and mustachioed middle-aged men blindly follow each other in circles and perform various humiliating and even tortuous acts. Unflinchingly scatological and abject, Madani's consistent rendering of bodily fluids and human waste encourages a larger consideration of authority, desire, and shame.

Tala Madani: First Light—the artist's first solo exhibition in an American museum—focuses on her engagement with the cinematic, presenting an animation and premiering a new series of paintings. Many of the paintings feature the presence of illumination, for example, from the beam of a car headlight or a flash-light; Madani's subjects interrogate both themselves and each other in search of larger truths. This notion of projection connects her work not only to cinema and its presentation of images through light but also to art history and the tradition of chiaroscuro, or the contrast of light and dark. Madani's paintings contain other art historical allusions as well, particularly to early Christian images of the Crucifixion and the Pietà. Spanning time, mediums, and cultures, this amalgam of references enriches Madani's larger investigation into racial and ethnic visual stereotypes.



First Light, 2015. Oil on linen, 46 × 35 × 1 7/8 inches.
Collection of Ali and Anousheh Razi.



Audio Tour

Visit camstludio.org or ask for an iPod at the front desk to hear directly from the artist and curator on the audio tour.

Tala Madani (b. 1981, Tehran, Iran) lives and works in Los Angeles. Her solo exhibitions include Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, UK (2014), and Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2013). Selected group exhibitions include the 2014 Taipei Biennial; *Made in L.A. 2014*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the 5th Marrakech Biennale, Marrakech (2014); *Greater New York*, PS1, New York (2010); and *The Generational: Younger Than Jesus*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2009).

Tala Madani: First Light is co-organized by Kelly Shindler, Associate Curator, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, and Henriette Huldish, Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center. The accompanying publication is generously supported by the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation; Pilar Corrias, London; and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles.

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Love Doctor, 2015. Oil on linen, 16 × 14 1/4 × 3/4 inches.
Collection of Christina Papadopoulos, Venice, California.



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