

## Into the world of Nazgol Ansarinia

By Daniela da Prato



**Non-flammable**, Non-stick, Non-stain, 2010, Cast Silicon and Cardboard, 63 x 100 cm - Courtesy of Daniela Da Prato gallery.

Born in 1979, the Tehran-based artist graduated from the London College of Communication in 2001 before taking a Master in Fine Arts at the California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco in 2003. A few years later, she took part in two artist residency programs, Cittadellarte Fondazione Pistoletto in Italy (2006) and Nordic Artists' Centre Dalsasen in Norway (2007), where she experienced distinctive approaches to artistic practice. While in Italy she was able to work in the context of multiple exchanges with other artists. The more individualistic approach of the Norwegian program enabled her to focus on her own projects and set the basis for her Patterns series, as she was reflecting on social and economic issues in a city like Tehran. Ansarinia's art has gained international recognition at an early stage of her career: a winner of the inaugural

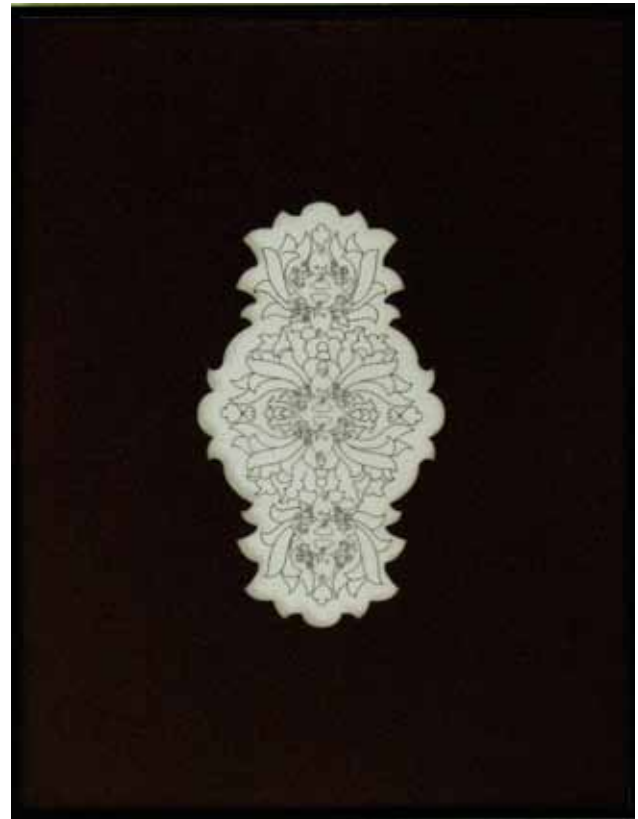
Abraaj Capital Art Prize (2009), she was also a finalist in the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative (2008). An acute observer of cultural differences and similarities, the artist has a keen sense of "how local iterations of a culture might act as a site for the hopes and fears of those living in a (faltering) globalised world". Ansarinia recognizes the importance and effects of her travels on her works which focus on issues from her immediate environment. Interested in everyday experiences, the routinized and the banal, inspired by everyday objects and events, she visually investigates various social structures and closely examines all these interactions before making them her own through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction. Being part of a culture in which there is a complex side to the most simple matters of life, her work intends to reveal some



**Patterns**, 2009, Digital Drawings and Ink on Paper 43x32cm - Courtesy of Daniela Da Prato gallery.

of the intricacies and hidden relationships behind seemingly banal aspects of daily life. Her concepts and the works based on them are elaborations on the familiar and extensions of everyday reality. The starting point can be the occurrence of an event, the experiencing of a daily routine, or the noticing of an object or image; once she consciously looks for the re-occurrence of any of these particular events, her concepts gradually take physical form. Deconstructing the various elements, reordering them and finally reassembling them in a way that reveals something hidden, forgotten or even new about an already familiar subject, is the outcome of the processes she undertakes. Although these reconstructions sometimes include bringing together things usually not seen or associated together, they most often involve the rearrangement of elements taken from a single subject.

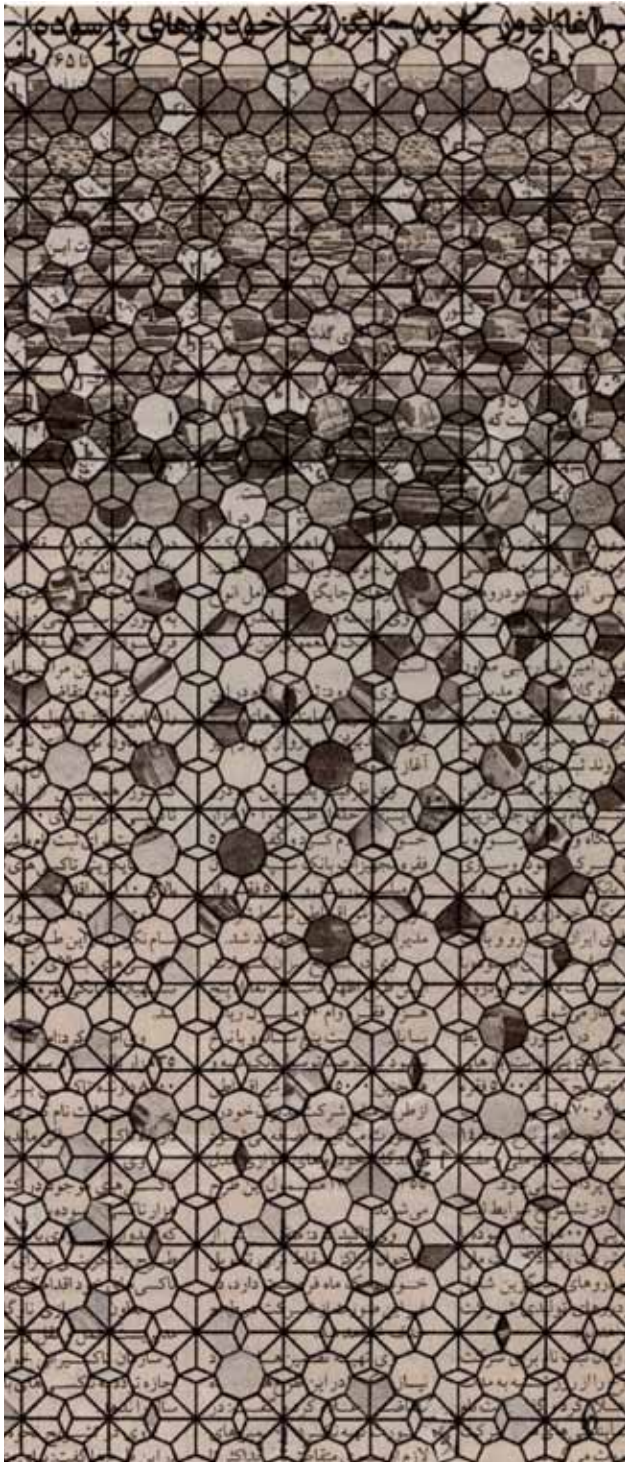
Ansarinia uses systems or imposed structures to rearrange the elements she takes apart, this process often creates a sense of “abstraction” in her works.



**Patterns**, 2008, Digital Drawings and Ink on Paper, 43x32cm - Courtesy of Daniela Da Prato gallery.

For example, in the National Security Book Series, an extension of a visual linguistic exercise she started in 2001, she alphabetized the contents of documents related to new US policies after 9/11 and listed all of the words including any redundant entries. It was through breaking the syntactical relationships between the words and putting them in alphabetical order that she revealed the emphasis on certain words in the documents.

Another key feature of her different bodies of works since 2006 is inserting information and meaning into familiar and traditional abstract forms, namely patterns. A collection of drawings, the Patterns series display and discuss the complexities of social existence in Iran. She created an image which encompasses the disparate yet interconnected fragments of everyday life and adapted “The Persian Carpet” as an ordinary object of Iranian life, using it for its intricacy, complexity and the symbolic value of its images. While the main subjects are contemporary, the drawings retain the original designs and structure of the Persian carpet.



**Reflections/Refractions**, 2011 New Phase for the Replacement of Old Cars Begins/ Commencement of the Replacement Plan of 30,000 Old Cars Newspaper Collage, 23.5x11.5cm - Courtesy of Daniela Da Prato gallery.

A multi-disciplinary artist, Ansarinia's forms of expression range from video, print, drawing and installations. Throughout her practice, she has been changing her medium from project to project; she developed a method of work that is project and process based on a strong emphasis on research and collecting formal and textual material. She collects images, information and theoretical views, on and around each subject. Once this initial phase of the process is completed, she pursues her project by studying the material and experimenting formally with the visual aspects of the subject. She then selects a medium fitting for the representation of her concepts and finally refines the techniques of production.

The most striking example of this process is when she started working on the Non-flammable, Non-stain, Non-stick series, a comment on the myriad small transactions made by peddlers of cheap goods in Iran. A popular item sold by street vendors in Tehran, in its literal sense *sofreh* (a traditional floral-patterned tablecloth) is a metaphor for socio- economic means and status in Iran. Suggesting a parallel tension between the private and the public, Ansarinia investigated some aspects of the situation in Iran by visually manipulating the original decorative patterns of the plastic tablecloths and “translated numerical values into a system based on fractal geometry to blend statistics into the visuals of an everyday object.” She began working on this project with photographs and short videos on instances of selling small goods in public spaces: she then moved to collecting a variety of these objects, including tablecloths. When she decided to make her own versions of *sofreh*, she started to develop visual solutions for translating data into visual forms that resembled the examples she had bought, while experimenting with printing techniques, melting and ironing soft plastic as well as contacting factories to look into industrial production. However, it was through an experiment she did herself with casting glue in a metal mold that she finally found the technique of casting delicate designs with silicon in molds of etched plexi-glass.

Exploring further the visual and formal qualities of everyday objects in the representation of other subjects, she worked with a series of pieces of furniture to reflect on an emotional state caused by having to adapt to new



**Reflections/Refractions**, 2011 Spain's Super Cup to go in Real's or Barca's Collection of Victories/ The White Half of EL Clasico, 2011, Newspaper Collage, 19x7.5cm - Courtesy of Daniela Da Prato gallery.

circumstances. In *Mendings* 2010, she took a section from the middle of a chair, a carpet, a mirror and a mattress and re-attached the remaining two sections back together. While the mended objects maintained their symmetry and functionality, their new form and the seam where they had been attached created an inconvenience and an interruption in daily life.

Ansarinia's most recent work, *Reflections/Refractions*, 2011, is a visual exploration related to the complexities of reflecting on everyday reality with a focus on newspapers as one of the spaces where such reflections appear. The newspaper *Ettelaat* (Information), the oldest newspaper published in Iran, is the basis for this work series: each piece uses a geometric grid resembling that used in mirror-mosaics to both dissect and weave together fragments from one news item belonging to two different printed sources from the same date. With no intention of staying true to their subject, multiplying parts whilst obscuring others, the reflection in these mirrors follow a complex scheme that makes this familiar element of Iranian visual culture a metaphor for the difficulties of reflecting on everyday reality.

*Ansarinia has exhibited internationally, most recently at the 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011). Major public shows include: Iran Inside-Out, Chelsea Art Museum, New York (2010), Tarjama/ Translation, Queens Museum of Art, New York (2009), Abraaj Capital Art Prize, Museum of Art and Design, New York (2009), and Al Maraya Centre, Sharjah (2010), Retracing Territories, Fri-Art Centre d'Art Contemporain, Fribourg (2007).*

*Her works can be found in numerous international collections in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, including the Tate Modern, UK, the Abraaj Capital Collection, Dubai and Devi Art Foundation, India.*

*We would like to thank Daniela da Prato Gallery (Paris, France) for their kind support providing the material needed for this article.*