



Shoja Azari & Shahram Karimi, *What Remains*, from the *Oil Paintings Series* 2009
Acrylic on canvas and video projection installation
50 x 89 / 127 x 226 cm, Edition of 3
Image courtesy of Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery, New York and East Central Gallery, London

Blazing Grace East Central London

By *Aida Eltorie*

Entering through a cubiform glass facade to a newly founded gallery in East Central London, visitors are met with an imprint on the wall beside a staircase that reads:

“Painters have always wanted to bring real light into play... to find ways to connect light to pigment.”

Noted by artists Shoja Azari in collaboration with Shahram Karimi, the words leave an inquisitive presence to what lies beneath that ground floor. Descending the gallery steps, departing from the natural light shining through the bare glass windows into a darker capacity below, the visitor's sight is only temporarily distorted until adjusted by an unexpected visual of silent walls inflamed with masses of abandoned fields.

Blazons of tanks, buildings and lands left dissipated, is overcome by sounds of political and media-driven hegemony coming from the next darkened room holding a blank canvas illustrated by a site specific video projection of traditional coffee house paintings known to popular Persian culture as narratives to messengers of light and impossible dreams. *Blazing Grace* is laid down within the quiet confinements of this modest floor plan, and East Central Gallery acts as the conciliator between fine arts and paintings-in-motion. Curated by



Shoja Azari & Shahram Karimi, *Burning Moon*, from the *Oil Paintings Series* 2009
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London-based art consultant, Nour Wali, she introduces a selection of works by Azari and Karimi, who are well represented by Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery (New York), in every international art fair they partake with in New York, Dubai, and Basel. But to those I had personally attended, the works were not experienced under the same conditions as to those offered by Wali. Granting the artists a greater scheme of visibility by honoring East Central Gallery's second inauguration in January 2010, Wali provokes the idea of an American national anthem to a well-prosecuted plan of action by both artists' teaming efforts in depicting Gulf oil fields left aflame after an act of conflict and abandonment.

With swift sketches of Persian poetry blended onto the brushstrokes that conjured visual distances taken out of a still from a movie scene, Azari and Karimi bring the still image back to life by emblazoning remnants of fire under a moon lit sky with a video projection of that same still modified to fit 'your' screen. Romanticism immediately dominates the nostalgic silence found within each image, and the honorable silence of acrylics-in-motion are concluded by Azari's uproar to the *Final Judgement* showdown between heaven and hell.

Image for the "Final Judgement" can be seen on Page 110: Review on Iran Inside Out, Chelsea Museum, New York (2009)