

daily **Cadivads**

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ONE ON ONE WITH KEZBAN ARCA BATIBEKI

She began her career as a graphic designer, and while women have remained at the core of her inspiration, Turkish-born Kezban Arca Batibeki likes to keep “the same feel” in her multimedia body of work.



Left: Kezban Arca Batibeki. Right (detail): *Reflection II*. 2011. Acrylic based mixed media embroidery with sequins, beads and collage on canvas. Diptych. 100 x 150 cm. Both images courtesy the artist.

For Abu Dhabi Art, you and [gallerist] Leila Heller (B02/D02) decided on showing a diptych from your latest works.

Leila and I decide on artworks together and while all my pieces are about women, this particular one has the women looking at themselves instead of at each other as in my previous works.

How did you arrive at this?

I live in Istanbul. It's a big, cosmopolitan city with a lot of educated, working women, but in its suburbs and in Anatolia, the women are totally different. I also look at other Muslim countries and I see that it is a man's world. I'm also struck by how women repress other women – they keep their sons powerful but their daughters powerless, through education, opportunities and so on.

Why is this subject interesting to you?

I think it's why I started to paint! When I was working as a graphic designer, I became inspired by these women – they're on TV, on the street, they work for you and you really can't miss them. I think my earliest interaction with this topic was during my university years because I read a lot and it was a time of conflict with lots of demonstrations, bomb threats and explosions etc. I've met all kinds of people, from the richest to the poorest, from the educated to the illiterate, and I compare their lifestyles. I've found that people

are all the same, deep down; they just live differently. They're all looking for love and security and they also just want to be themselves.

Are there women role models in your family who have impacted you?

My mother, who is a powerful woman and now 81, attended university which was very unusual during her day. She graduated from the Istanbul Academy of Fine Art and then became an actress, which was even more unusual! She became one of the best Turkish female actresses despite initially facing a lot of negativity from her family and friends and divorced my father 10 years into their marriage at a time when no one would dare to seek divorce for fear of scandal and gossip.


Your work, *Duel I-II* (from the *Pulp Fiction: The Sequel* series), was on the cover of the Dubai April 2011 Christie's catalogue and was also sold for \$56,250. How did that feel?

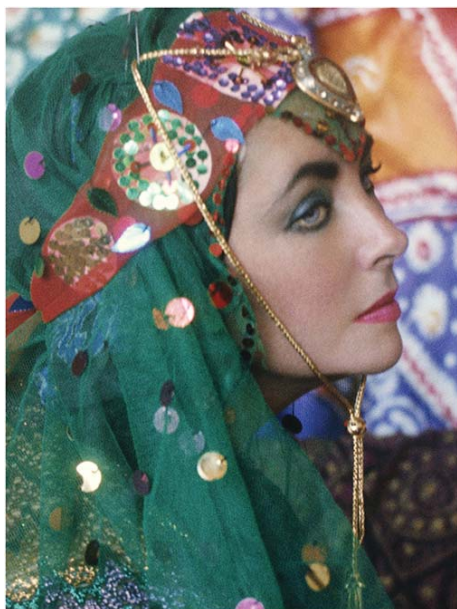
I was surprised and I loved it! I am one of the pioneering figures in the Turkish Pop art scene and it was interesting to see that artwork on a Christie's Dubai auction catalogue. I appreciate being in international auctions for sake of exposure. I left graphic design because I got bored with always doing something for somebody, seeking everyone's approval, designing movie posters and book covers, so I decided to be myself and that's why I started painting in 1983. My initial work was a combination of design and painting but ever since I started, it was always about women.

You've recently incorporated beads and crystals in your work. How come?

I started this about two years ago and with me, everything happens suddenly; that's how my photography and installations happened too. I've noticed that in Muslim countries, women like shiny things; it seems to be very fashionable. While I have assistants who do the beading for me, I sit with them and 'art direct' the whole process.

Your photography is very similar to your paintings. Is it necessary for you to maintain the style?

Absolutely. My photographs, although manipulated, are almost a continuation to my paintings. The compositions are similar and I like to keep the same feel in all of the media I work with; it makes understanding me clearer. I like to be the same person in all of my works and like it when people can identify my work. 



Firooz Zahedi, *Elizabeth Taylor Dressed as an Odalisque II* 1976
Ed of 5, 122 x 91.5 cm

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