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Silence

Video Paintings by Shoja Azari and Shahram Karimi

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Castelli Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of five new video paintings by Shoja Azari and Shahram Karimi. Friends since childhood, Azari a filmmaker, and Karimi a painter, have pursued separate careers in their respective mediums. In 2006, they collaborated for the first time on the *Stalker Series*. In doing so, they created what they call 'video paintings'.

Using the Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky's 1979 movie *Stalker* as the basis for their work, images from the film were technically altered by capturing, slowing, reframing them and then projecting them onto the canvas. These captured images were later painted in a precise, hyper-realistic manner. The result was a painted image in exact color, composition and proportion to the captured film image. The mirrored video image which was a 20 second looped clip of the film was then projected onto the painted canvas infusing the surface with movement, life, and an element of time.

In this new body of work, the same process they formed while creating the *Stalker Series* is followed and the unique technique formed by Azari and Karimi is further explored. Carefully filmed abstract images of natural landscapes have been selected and painted. When the film is superimposed on the canvases the subtle movements of wind and water suddenly bring the flat surfaces alive and impart an element of real time onto an otherwise frozen moment.

Many of the works of master filmmakers such as Hitchcock and Kurosawa have been informed by paintings. Similarly, Tarkovsky was fascinated by Italian Renaissance painting as well as Russian Icon paintings from the same period. He worked with the intention of rendering each frame of his films as a painter would approach a canvas. Shoja Azari and Shahram Karimi take this idea a step in their 'video paintings' in which painting and the moving image are brought together in a way in which they truly inform one another. The physical result is unexpected. The viewer gets the distinct impression that these surfaces have been infused with poetry and life.

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