

MEDIA RELEASE

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Deborah Colton Gallery
FotoFest 2014: Soody Sharifi: The Space Within

March 14, 2014 – April 26, 2014
Opening Reception: Friday, March 14, 2014, 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Deborah Colton Gallery, a participating space in the FOTOFEST 2014 Biennale, is pleased to present *The Space Within*, an exhibition of artworks from Iranian-American artist Soody Sharifi. *The Space Within* is a photographic exploration of the expansive and contradictory territory that lies between public identity and private self. This exhibition opens on Friday, March 16th with a public reception from 6:00 to 9:00 pm.

The Space Within addresses an internal conflict, the condition of being at once a part of and apart from one's culture. Through a series of self-conscious portraits and fantastic desert tableaus, this exhibition explores the conceptual space where private and public impinge upon one another.

Focusing on personal side of things, the portraits develop the theme of public and private as one of internal negotiation. Haunted faces hint at vast inner landscapes, where conflicted men and women struggle to separate who they really are from what they feel compelled to be. Traditional gender expectations loom large, but introspective poses and dreamy gazes clue the viewer not to take the conflation of self-identity and public persona at face value.

While a group of oversized photographic collages shifts the perspective from the personal to the political. In these surreal desert landscapes, populated by figures plucked from the medieval miniature tradition, the encounter between private and public reads more as clash than collaboration. Playfully exploding the viewer's sense of time and place, these works cast their hapless characters into an imaginative arena, where, in a series of encounters both humorous and violent, they are condemned to play out the perennial conflicts between the individual and society. Both genders battle with the forces of authority and tradition, enacting scenes that are both timeless and timely.

Soody Sharifi is an Iranian/American artist based in Houston. Her work primarily deals with the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in living between cultures---cultures being broadly and variously conceived. In many of her series, she has explored the notion of identity and what it means to participate in a particular culture from both an outsider's and an insider's perspective. She has investigated this concept as it applies to Moslem youth in Iran and the USA, and as it applies to women as archetypal insider- outsiders within their respective cultures.

Sharifi, a 2011 Jameel Prize nominee, has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including at the Baku Biennial of Contemporary Art, Azerbaijan, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston and in museum group exhibitions in Norway and Finland. Her work has been collected by major patrons worldwide and is included in the collections of such institutions as the Portland Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Art Houston, among others.

Deborah Colton Gallery is founded on being an innovative showcase for ongoing presentation and promotion of strong historical and visionary contemporary artists world-wide, whose diverse practices include painting, works on paper, sculpture, video, photography, performance, conceptual future media and public space installations. The Gallery aspires to provide a forum through connecting Texas, national and international artists to make positive change.