

Kamrooz Aram

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March 2010



View of “Kamrooz Aram,” 2010.

Kamrooz Aram
LAXART
2640 S. La Cienega
January 30–March 20

In Kamrooz Aram’s latest exhibition, “Generation After Generation; Revolution After Revelation,” the deft control of the cosmically inflected paintings for which he is known gives way to an explosive, nearly violent abstraction. From the endlessly entertaining configurations of Persian imagery that populate Aram’s vibrant earlier works, only simple decorative motifs are retained here—and these are alternately veiled by layers of monochromatic pigment and disrupted by energetic gestural marks.

Propped on curious wooden blocks, the ten canvases that compose the series are arranged five on a wall and face one another in a narrow room in what could be seen as either confrontation or communion. Viewers find themselves engulfed by Aram’s opposing aesthetic tendencies: to gently work over a floral motif with white paint that comes to resemble frosted glass or heavy snow or to attack the motif before it’s dry, obliterating its perfect contours and spreading its very material every which way. Whether subdued or volatile in affect, all of the panels share a double indexical quality, bearing the traces of two seemingly separable events that the title of the show so evocatively identifies.

Aram’s dominant palette—crimson reds, deep purples, and rich blues—points obliquely to the corporeal, exacerbating the aggression of his brushstrokes. Bursts of paint that look like fireworks appear on several panels, simultaneously redolent of state-sanctioned celebration and, as Aram has indicated, blood spatters from gunshot wounds. In the context of his larger body of work, the tensions in these paintings are as politically charged as they are formally sophisticated—and, one must admit, unnervingly beautiful.