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Original Research Article

Portraits After Portraits: An Investigation of the Ways of "Appropriation" of Renaissance Portraits in the Paintings of Aydin Aghdashlou*

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Abstract

Problem statement: Aydin Aghdashlou He is one of the artists who has always looked at the past and the art of his predecessors to produce and create his artwork. Therefore, the main part of his artistic activities has been redrawing and testing himself on the paintings of previous artists. The subject of a part of Aghdashlou's retrospective artistic activity is the subject of European art, especially the Europe of the Renaissance period. Although the reproduction of Renaissance portraits in Aghdashlou's paintings has always been a subject of discussion, most of which are based on local and traditional views and concepts. This is while the postmodernist concept of "appropriation" provides us with a completely new insight and a suitable perspective so that we can get a new reading of this artist's working method. What are the most important functions of the "appropriation" of Renaissance portraits in Aghdashlou's paintings?

Research objective: This research aims to identify and explain some of the most important semantic aspects hidden in recalling and rereading these classic works while studying the Renaissance portraits of Aydin Aghdashlou and showing the connection between his painting style and the postmodern concept of "appropriation".

Research method: This article employed a descriptive analytical method and used the concept of "appropriation". The data required for the research was collected by the library method and analyzed by the qualitative method.

Conclusion: The results of this research indicate that Aghdashlou's Renaissance portraits can be classified under three main categories based on the applications of the "appropriation" method: 1) Admiration of Renaissance portraits 2) Distortion of Renaissance portraits 3) Destruction and restoration of Renaissance portraits. Under the first category, Aydin Aghdashlou wrote down the predecessors and artists of the Renaissance by simulating and performing religion in the title of the work. In the second part, the manipulation of the Renaissance portraits has been done to change and transform the essence of the work slightly, move away from its reality, and create something more than a pure re-drawing. Under the third function, the works of Aydin Aghdashlou are placed, which have repeatedly reproduced the works of previous Renaissance artists.

Keywords: *Aydin Aghdashlou, contemporary art, Renaissance portraits, appropriation, contemporary Iranian painting.*

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Introduction

Aydin Aghdashlou, a contemporary Iranian painter, paid special attention to the painting style and subjects of Renaissance artists and recreated them as a part of his career. These works, which are made by famous Western artists, are known as the Western works of Aghdashlou. This way of working has been discussed and investigated from many angles, both praise and criticism. Despite this, the postmodernist concept of “Appropriation” provides us with a completely new insight and a suitable perspective so that we can gain a new reading of the meanings and functions of these paintings. Although the use of this post-modernist approach in his works is visible and undeniable, Aghdashlou himself has also admitted that he has noticed the formation of this approach (alteration and appropriation of works) in Western art since the mid-seventies (Aghdashlou, 2002, 45). Therefore, it can be ensured to a large extent that Aydin Aghdashlou, while reproducing European Renaissance paintings in his works, consciously appropriated them. It can be said that Aghdashlou has followed a historical path in his works, first, he admired and praised the glory of Western art, then, like his predecessors, he turned to re-drawing and teaching the art of painting from the works of the greats of art history. Then after feeling mastery, he takes steps beyond and starts interfering in the works and takes them as his own.

Aydin Aghdashlou is one of the most prominent artists of contemporary Iranian art (Goodarzi & Rezazadeh Sareskanroud, 2022, 29). Undoubtedly, Aghdashlou became fascinated with the glory and splendor of the Renaissance and started to repaint these portraits, as at first he was only reproducing and did not interfere with this glory and bravery of the Renaissance. But with the thoughts of death and nothingness and the enlarging of his personal world and overcoming the necessary mastery and familiarity with modern Western approaches, he boldly damaged and scratched the works. In fact, the Renaissance period is a popular thing in the past, which Aghdashlou praises and re-quotes, and

puts himself in front of artists such as Van Eyck, Botticelli, Polaiuolo, and Vanderweyden. This research aims to examine and analyze the eleven scenes of Aydin Aghdashlou's appropriation works of Renaissance portraits based on the methods and functions of the method of deconstruction, and by studying and observing these works, investigate Aghdashlou's approach to using images and works of the past. These works are presented in three parts: 1) Admiration of Renaissance portraits 2) Distortion of Renaissance portraits 3) Destruction and restoration of Renaissance portraits along with the original works. These works are more popular and famous due to the fame of the original works and their artists and Aghdashlou's mastery in performing them.

Theoretical Framework

“Appropriation” is a postmodern concept and means the thoughtful reproduction of other people's works (Irvin, 2005, 126), the seeds of which were formed during the twentieth century, in the works of artists such as Marcel Duchamp, and especially from the sixties onwards in Western art. Although many artists throughout history with specific goals such as teaching and honoring the dignity of their predecessors started painting, rehearsing, or reproducing the works of previous artists (Mix, 2015, 1436), it was mainly during this decade that the use of previous and existing works in the form of images of popular culture, images of magazines, films, everyday objects, and consumer goods gained seriousness appeared (Johannes, 2011, 10) and completely transformed the meaning of painting the works of others and placed it in the heart of issues related to the ontology of art (Hick, 2010, 1047). Many contemporary artists, according to this approach, have turned their previous works into art with new expression, meaning, and message, and made their appropriation look at old works with a new perspective (Butt, 2010, 1061). They consciously return to their previous arts and by combining old images in new texts, they change

their meaning and message (Jensen, 2002, 41). Appropriation artists repeat the previous works in their works with various goals, among which are summoning and recalling old works in the new period (Stokes, 2001, 125), dialogue with prominent artists of art history, and activism and objection of cultural criticism. Political and social (Mix, 2015, 1440) pointed out.

In the meantime, one of the most important critical functions of the phenomenon of “appropriation” was to question the sanctified concepts of art history, such as the authenticity of artworks and the selection of their creators. The theory of the “death of the author” by Roland Barthes, a literary and cultural critic, in 1966, has fueled the tendency of contemporary art to doubt the special position of the creators of works of art and their creations (Rowe, 2011, 3). Two other important texts that have had a significant impact on the formation of the critical function of “appropriation” in contemporary art are the article “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” by Walter Benjamin (1998) and the book *The Originality of Avant-Garde Art and Other Myths of Modernism* by Rosalind Krauss (1986). who question the sacred aura of works of art and their authenticity under the shadow of their reproduction. Even, some researchers have taken the discussion even further, and consider the questioning of the authenticity of works of art in appropriation representations because of the participation of visual artists in philosophical-nihilistic dialogues, and they consider it a reflection of the lack of authenticity in the contemporary way of life (Van Camp, 2007, 247). In this sense, “appropriation” is one of the genres of conceptual art in which the artwork emphasizes the meaning by appropriating the existing images and using them in a present and ready form, instead of relying on creation and originality. Instead of creating a new image, the artist chooses from among the existing images to create a new concept (Sami-Azar, 2012). Instead of developing their artistic expression, the representatives of postmodern art adapt countless

themes, images, and works that exist in the history of art and “make them their own appropriation” (Becola, 2008, 521).

“Appropriation” can include adaptation of culture and visual arts, borrowing from art forms or styles, reproduction and imitation, or appropriation of artistic ideas, symbols, artifacts, images, sounds, objects, art history, popular culture, and human artifacts. In the meantime, and from the point of view of the discussion in this article, cultural appropriation is of special importance. From that, the cultural appropriation includes a process in which a culture uses the belongings of another culture or other cultures, or in other words, “takes over”, even if this takeover is accompanied by interference. Young (2008) defines five types of cultural appropriation: appropriation of objects, appropriation of themes, appropriation of ways and styles, appropriation of motifs, and finally, appropriation of subjects. Since Aydin Aghdashlou, as an Iranian artist, consciously “reproduced” the works of European artists in the production of his works, his work can be defined as cultural appropriation. Also, he considered both European themes and his painting style in these works.

Literature Review

Although the subject of “appropriation” has attracted the attention of many researchers in recent years, none of them have investigated the relationship between this concept and Aghdashlou’s works. Some of these studies, such as the article written by Derakhshani (2019) and Ranjbar Khanhosseini, Mehrangar & Dadkhah (2021), defined and explained the meanings and concepts of appropriation in art, and in some cases, they examined its relationship with the classical concepts of art history, such as authenticity. Some others, such as Shiva, Hosami & Shakri (2020) and Shakri (2021), have paid attention to the legal issues related to the appropriation of other people’s works. In the meantime, it is necessary to mention the writings of some other researchers such as Goudarzi and

Rezazadeh Sareskanroud (2022) who, although they have analyzed the relationship between appropriation and a group of works of contemporary Iranian art, have postponed the study of Aghdashlou's works to another opportunity.

However, among the conducted research, one can find texts in which there are passing references to the content of this discussion. For example, Abdul Majid Hosseini-rad (1994) in an article criticizing Aydin Aghdashlou's works, states how Aghdashlou imitated the works of his predecessors and then seized them to stamp his protest against the appearance of non-values, and Aghdashlou was very successful in this matter. he does not know. He believes that in simulating, the work of the painter is not a deep thought towards the object or subject, but he only wants to make his work similar to the external face. Also, Bahram Baizaei, (2008) in an article, while referring to Aghdashlou and his art, considers this painter to be a master in replicating the works of the greats and testifies that in these re-paintings of Aghdashlou, the praise of the masters is accompanied by a reluctance about the perishability of themselves and their works. Baizai states that this is a work of both the present and the past, and it is a painting within a painting. He considers this trick of Aghdashlou as "the triple act of modernizing the past, finding a background for today, as well as mixing the depiction of the past and today and retesting it" and states that if he considers this method as a painting within a painting that is why Aghdashlou himself did not give it a name. Dariush Shaygan (2011) also mentions in the selected text of Aydin Aghdashlou's works: "These faces are not Italian, even though they are Italian". He considers Aghdashlou's portraits to be calculated reproductions of the faces of Renaissance noblemen with shirts with tight and pleated collars (Shaygan, 2011, 8).

In addition, Behnam Kamrani (2012) in a program about the "School of Contemporary Artists of Iran" mentioned Aydin Aghdashlou's adaptations in different periods of his work. In the meantime, Shibani Rezvani (2014) four of Aghdashlou's Renaissance portraits from the perspective of Derrida's deconstruction during philosophical research. From his point of view,

Aghdashlou has been able to suspend the presence of signifiers and fixed meaning while interfering in the original works, and while combining new elements with traditional methods, he has introduced postmodern features into these Western classic works. Sohrab Nabipour (2016) also discussed Aghdashlou's works in his review and during a description of his many works, he compared two of Aghdashlou's works called Hoyt Wamama with the Western examples of that work, the portrait of a young man with the medal of Casimo Mehter by Sandro Botticelli and the picture of hunters in the snow of Peter Bruegel, who was adapted from them, has compared in detail. Hamid Kashmirshakan (2017, 236-245) has mentioned Aydin Aghdashlou and his works in parts of the book "Iranian Contemporary Art" and considered him an artist with a postmodernist approach, although it is possible that this did not happen consciously. He considers the beginning of this approach from the 1970s with Aghdashlou's adaptation of the faces of the Renaissance masters.

Alireza Sami-Azar (2017) in a chapter of the book "Birth of Modernism" refers to Aydin Aghdashlou and the reproduction of classical works including portraits of art masters in the European Renaissance. He believes that what Aghdashlou paints is neither a portrait of a Renaissance figure nor destruction, but actually, it is the "painting" itself (Sami-Azar, 2017, 154). He points out that Aghdashlou's work confronts us with two mythical fields, the work that is kept in the museum and the second one is a reproduced work that has an existential reality. Sami Azar points out that the fundamental idea of Aghdashlou's art of recreating classical works has resulted in some superficial judgments of Aghdashlou's works, which have been considered mere copying and a kind of illustration, but with the spread of postmodernist approaches and the growing wave of contemporary art, revision In this, he demands judgments (Sami-Azar, 2017, 162).

Admiring Renaissance Portraits in Aghdashlou's Contemporary Portraits

One of the most used functions of appropriation is to pay homage to the art of the past and the elders

of this field. Referring to the past and images and works left behind is an accepted thing in the world of art. This reference and connection to the past have always been helpful. The students who have been working hard under the supervision of their teachers to reach the required level of proficiency may have gone beyond, done better work than the teacher may, and even made important changes in the works. But they have never been far from being humble towards their predecessors and teachers. Contemporary art has not been spared from this and in various ways contemporary artists' works have paid homage to the past and earlier works. Perhaps it can be said that in a way this method of appropriation and honoring and honoring the predecessors is reviving the images of the past or seeing and re-examining the works of lost artists and reading them in a new and modern way. This is done to criticize today and lament the loss of the glory of the past.

The painting "Man with the Medal of Cosimo" by Sandro Botticelli is the most brilliant artist of Florence and one of the students of the Polaiuolo brothers (Stangos, 1994, 55). This painting is a strange pose of a man who is staring at us with the famous Renaissance triface² and with hands that have a strange shape and He has taken on unreality, raised a medal on his chest and shows it to us. Inside the medal is a sign of a royal or aristocratic family (Fig. 1). Behind the man there is a landscape in Renaissance style and perspective. Botticelli 3 seems to have drawn this painting in praise of the glory of the Demmdici family in 1474 AD during the reign of Lorenzo the Artificer. This panel of honor with Cosimo's medal was created at a time when the Demmedici family remained in their nobility and status, because years later in 1492, after the death of Lorenzo and the incompetence of Cosimo's son, the Demmedici family was disbanded and most of their art collections were looted. or it was destroyed (Letts, 2007, 71). This point of loss of glory, over time, has become a reason for Aghdashlou to recreate this painting in a new form. The contrast between the glory and bravery of Botticelli's painting with

the vanished identity and aristocracy and the looted art collections of the Demdichi family becomes a tangible theme for Aghdashlou.

The painting "Identity" from the Annihilation Memories collection in praise of Sandro Botticelli is one of the most famous works of Aghdashlou with the approach of appropriation, which he drew from Botticelli's famous painting called "Man with the Medal of the Elders Cosimo". Aghdashlou makes a close-to-original version of Botticelli's painting, then by changing it, he replaces the man's face with a medal, removes the Demdichi family emblem, and replaces the man's face with nature, a flowing river, and a peakless mountain. What we see in Aghdashlou's painting is a pale blue sky with small cracks on it, which may be a kind of self-reference to paintings left over from the Renaissance period. A man whose face is opened like a gate and nature is visible behind him, a river and a road leading to a mountain, a tree, a flower, a meadow and a house in the distance play in our eyes.

The man is standing in front of the image and scenery with a big awe and a black dress, and he is holding a medal towards us with the same strange expression in which the image of the man clearly stands out. The landscape and the house that we see instead of the man's face is perhaps a wish that has come true now with the loss of the man's identity (Fig. 2).

Aghdashlou creates a strange combination and a complex concept for the work. The face that once stood out in its place has now become a medal in the hand, somewhere between nothingness and the memory of the past existence. The identity and image that you can be proud of or not, but everything that was and it is a reminder of the history that is referred to in the present. Today, man is looking for a reason for his peace to forget the chaos around him. Longing for a glorious and powerful past is a sadness in the heart of today's man who thinks that he is going to the end and destruction and that he has lost everything he had without knowing anything. This is a certain suffering that lies in human nature.



Fig. 1. Portrait of a man with a medal of Cosimo, Sandro Botticelli, 1475-1474, oil on wood, 57.5 x 44 cm, Florence. Source: Wikiart, S.V. "Botticelli".

Both Botticelli and Aghdashlou have portrayed this inner suffering in their own way. Botticelli captures its strength and Aghdashlou shows its loss with all the praise of past glory. He clearly refers to the original work and its artist, and in the title of the work, he honors his art with the phrase "in praise of Botticelli". Another Botticelli work, Portrait of a Young Man, shows a man with a determined and comfortable pose in a window frame, standing with a raised neck and a formal dress, holding a medal toward the audience. The man has a very calm and dignified face, his groomed hair covering his face. The young man simply looks at us with big bright eyes. The medal is not hung on the chest, but a little lower, and on it, there is a portrait of a religious person or a holy person with a halo around the head. The portrait of a man speaks of stable authority and stable dignity. As if the man could stand like this forever and show us the medal and arouse our admiration. Botticelli has depicted with elegance and tenderness all men in a glorious and permanent time and has left a memory for everyone (Fig. 3).

Aydin Aghdashlou made a remake of this work, not very close to the original work, with the name "Survivors" in praise of Sandro Botticelli. In this painting, a pale man with empty eyes stares at us in a confusing yellow and ocher background, which bears little resemblance to the original work. Bandages



Fig. 2. Identity, in praise of Sandro Botticelli, 1975, gouache on cardboard, 75 x 57 cm. Source: Aghdashlou, 2012, 82.

stained with blood and wound ointment are attached to the man's official clothes. There is no mention of a medal in the Aghdashlou painting, and its place is replaced by a bloody hand and a wrapped bandage that squeezes instead of the medal. The man's clothes are dark blue in contrast to the black color of Botticelli's painting, which is very lively in contrast to his listless face (Fig. 4). young man; He is wounded and has lost his medal, everything he had is lost in the unequal struggle and he has nothing but pain to show. From that power and peace, now the man has received an eternal wound and a certain suffering that has no color on his face. He has lost his medal and his heart is wounded by bad times, Maybe he is looking for healing in the tense and tiring air around him, and he is looking for a witness or an observer of the oppression that has happened to him. The portrait of the young man has changed from a powerful and calm man with continuous authority to a helpless, wounded, and anxious man in Aghdashlou's self-made work, and the only thing that remains from the original work is the praise that Aghdashlou gave to Botticelli in the title of the work.

Distortion of Renaissance portraits in contemporary portraits of Aghdashlou

No artist in the history of art has been far from following in the footsteps of his predecessors. In all



Fig. 3. Portrait of a Young Man, Sandro Botticelli, 1445-1444, 38 x 58 cm, England. Source: Artheu "Botticelli".



Fig. 4. Survivors painting, in praise of Sandro Botticelli, 1979, gouache on cardboard, 57 x 75 cm. Source: Aghdashlou, 2012, 89.

ages, students have worked on the hands of teachers to become better, and teachers have worked on the work of students to improve the work. This redrawing and manipulation of works has been an acceptable and popular way for all artists. Contemporary art also follows the path of the past but in its own ways. The manipulations of the predecessors have been done to improve the artistic work, but in contemporary art and the eyes of the contemporary artist, these manipulations are sometimes done in the previous meaning of the works, thus distorting their message. Today's artist considers himself independent in using the images and art of his predecessors and considers any kind of interference and distortion of the work as permissible. Aydin Aghdashlou relies on knowledge and skills in his work to confront the works of famous and expert artists, shows how much work can be manipulated and presented, and have a new reading every time. In this section, Aydin Aghdashlou redraws Van Eyck's works and also prepares a "printed version" so that his hand is open for further intervention.

Jan van Eyck created a painting of a man with a red cap, or a man with a red handkerchief (1433 AD). This striking three-faced image shows a man, presumably of the middle class, looking

nonchalantly at us, staring straight into our eyes (Fig. 5), a man with a red handkerchief covering his face. The red color of the hand is a symbol of the European clergy class, and Van Eyck, while using this color, placed himself in that position (Meiss, 1952, 141). A man's face with detailed facial features and a personal expression with a lot of details and precision and a warm and bright light that shines on his face, which is visible in the middle of a dark dress and a dark background. The man's gaze is so staring that it is impossible not to look at it. It is said that "since ancient times, this is the first known face whose owner looks at the viewer" (Hart, 2003, 648). This way of looking can be from looking at us or looking in the mirror, this three-faced composition of a man with his gaze so elaborately designed, the audience who looks at it from any angle and any direction will encounter the staring eyes of the portrait. According to Nicholas Kozai⁴, this feature of the all-seeing face, which seems to surround the entire environment, is "a god-like image" (Gardner, 2002, 470).

On the frame of this painting, Jan van Eyck wrote a phrase in Flemish language "ALS ICH KAN" (Landi, 2001, 74) meaning "as I can", "as I can" or "as best, I can". This slogan is also written in other



Fig. 5. A man with a red cap (self-portrait of the artist?), Jan van Eyck, 1433, oil on canvas, 25x33cm, National Gallery, London. Source: Davis, Hafricher & Roberts, 1388, 479.



Fig. 6. Memories of Destruction 5, Aydin Aghdashlou, 2006, gouache on cardboard, 57 x 75 cm. Source: Aghdashlou, 2012, 93.

works of Jan van Eyck (Jensen & Jensen 2015, 479). This phrase shows the artist's awareness of the incomparability of his work and the demand for comparison. Aydin Aghdashlou responded to this call of Jan van Eyck centuries later and made a new one from this single face, as close as possible to its original, a man with the same red hand (Fig.6). In this painting, the man is staring, his pinky is cracked and his mouth is torn and sliced, which is turned from his mouth to the other side and a red color is visible. The man is wearing a dark suit with elongated collars, and sharp red lines are drawn on his clothes. Above the picture is written in Latin letters "Memories of Destruction" and below it is the year and a number hidden under the red banner. The background of the work is also dark like its original. In this work, the man is drawn thinner and simpler and does not have that mysterious feeling visible on his face. The man's eyes no longer have complete

control over all sides, and somewhere in the middle of the movement from one side of the painting to the other, he stops and no longer follows us. The man has changed his face from a god-like state in the original work to an unlucky human being.

What we see in this distorted work by Aghdashlou is a man whose mouth has been taken away from him and he is unable to speak, and this speechlessness has disturbed the focus of his gaze. The lines on the man's chest and clothes show the violence that happened to him. A man with a wound on his body and a cut mouth in timelessness, his eyes no longer tell of the glory and mystery of Van Eyck's portraits, but of silence and violence that has been inflicted on the human being that cannot be imagined to end. The only time that has passed on this painting is the time that has passed on the man's face and he is cracked like a thirsty desert, as if he has been suffering from much in his youth and has been condemned to an

excruciating silence in the golden age of his life. Perhaps it can be said that Aghdashlou has been able to simulate and reproduce Van Eyck's painting "A Man with a Red Hand" as much as possible, although he has not been able to enter the spirit of Van Eyck's work.

Aghdashlou also prepared a printed version of his work and painted and manipulated it again (Fig. 7). What we see more than the previous work in this image is a large yellow medal that stands out on the man's chest. The pattern on the medal shows the profile. In this work, the man's head is placed in a square frame with a red line. The dark and cracked background of the work is in contradiction with the smooth and clean square lines of the face frame and the highly expressive lines on the clothes. With the red frame around the man's head, did the painter want to separate him from his time or distance him from the ravages of old age and erosion that can be seen in the whole background? The calmness of the passage of time, next to a logical and closed form, is helpless in the face of the angry, emotional, or calculated lines of the painter, and maybe it is a barrier between the male and female profile in the medal. Aghdashlou, in the representation of the portrait of a man with a red turban by Van Eyck, has redrawn the work part by part with a unique technique and skill, and then by applying changes and handling the work, he distinguishes it from the original work. In this way, the audience learns that the artist can recreate the work of an artist like Van Eyck and can implement his mental concerns with the ability to interfere and manipulate the work.

Rogier Vander weyden (1464-1400 AD) is another artist that Aghdashlou paid attention to. He was still influenced by Van Eyck, but he also applied his methods. One of the topics related to Rokhair was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and impressing the viewer by seeing the sufferings of Jesus. Rogier Vander weyden emphasis has always been on human action and drama (Gardner, 2002, 473). In Rogiers painting, we see a man in a black dress on a dark blue background and a special red hat. An arrow is drawn



Fig. 7. Painting on printed work, Aydin Aghdashlou. Source: Aghdashlo website, "Printed Works I".

from the left side of the painting to the right side and the man is holding it in front of his chest. The man has a big and bulging face and his eyes look out of the painting, and he has a sign on his clothes and collar that may indicate a religious or government job. The man looks quite determined and serious, as if he is taking an oath, and has raised the arrow to his chest to firmly infer his oath (Fig. 8).

Aghdashlou made a new masterpiece based on this work by Rogier Vander weyden with the title Anno Apocalypse 09. As in the original work, a man in a black dress is placed on a dark background and has an insignia hanging on his shoulder and neck, and he wears the same red hat and an arrow. It is drawn from the left side of the panel to the right side. The young man's face in Aghdashlou's painting is tense and gloomy. Above the image is written in Latin the year of the end of the world and a red line is drawn on it. In Aghdashlou's work, we no longer see the



Fig. 8. Portrait of Antonio Bastard of Burgundy, Rogier Vander Weeden, 1460, oil on board, 39 x 28 cm. Source: Fine Art Museum "Antonio Bastard".

continuation of the arrow under the man's hands, and the end of the arrow has turned red. It is as if an arrow has hit the man's heart and the hidden half of it has sunk into the man's chest, and the young man has pulled the arrow out a little with strength. But the man is still slowly holding the arrow between his fingers. The entire panel is covered with small cracks as if it had been created a long time ago and dried the man in such a hard state like a statue. A man with a sad and eternal look in the distance with a wound on his heart and an arrow and a sign that, despite the injury, has not yet been taken out, as if he is going to stay there (Fig. 9). Aghdashlou has distorted the image's authority and loyalty in redrawing this work.

Aghdashlou has tested himself again in this image and this time he has applied more changes. In this work, the man's red hat has completely changed in terms of shape and color and has become gray, and this has fundamentally changed the man's condition. In this picture, the tracks are more artificially visible on the man's clothes. On the top of the picture, the same inscription of Apocalypse 09 can be seen. On the man's hand, where it came into contact with the arrow, there

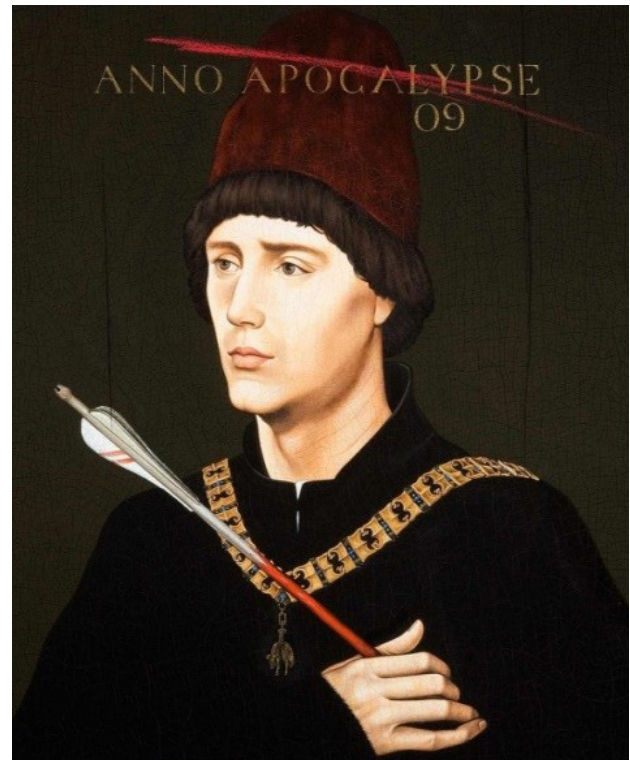


Fig. 9. Anno Apocalypse 09 Year 9 painting, Aydin Aghdashlou, 2008, gouache on cardboard, 57 x 75 cm. Source: Aghdashlou, 2012, 103.

is a red color, as if the blood has splashed between the hand and the arrow. A strange combination of a man with an arrow through his heart and a cowardly arrow shot from behind, but his identity is covered with a delicate, feminine lace (Fig. 10). It seems that Aghdashlou wanted to bring him out in a ridiculous manner despite all the misfortunes that befell the man. Aghdashlou has a lot to do with time and playing with it so that the traces of time can be seen mysteriously in all his works, but they cannot be identified or returned in any way. He uses different tricks to express this category, such as drawing many tracks on the works and showing the passage of time or their old and worn-out or rotting, and another one that is also used in this picture is hiding half of the figures that show the year does not show correctly, in this way, time sinks into a strange ambiguity.

Destruction and restoration of Renaissance portraits in contemporary portraits of Aghdashlou

The contemporary artist sees the previous images as consumable and used to create his art. Spending



Fig. 10. Painting on printed work, Aydin Aghdashlou, 2010, 57 x 75 cm, gouache. Source: Aghdashlo, 2012, 158.

and spending the previous image in the creation of today's work to recreate a new concept is beneficial, and this benefit is not only aimed at the artist but also the audience. Because the use of previously familiar images provides the context for the audience to enter into a dialogue with the artwork (Butt, 2010, 1061). Aydin Aghdashlou is an expert artist in this work who has spent many portraits and pictures from the past. The portraits have been used many times to achieve his desires and he has not let go of the temptation to try again. In these reconstructions, sometimes destruction is intended to destroy the identity of the past and sometimes restoration of what has been distorted and lost. Here are those portraits subject to the function of destruction and restoration, in which the explicit intervention of vandalism or restoration in the main screen of the painting was evident. In this attitude, Aghdashlou puts another concept of the previous image in front of the audience. Contrary to the opinion of Hosseinirad, who in Aghdashlou's criticism considers the portrait as a disposable

container that cannot be used again even if it is interfered with (Hosseinirad, 1994, 4), Aghdashlou with his style of work firmly believes that a portrait is not a one-time thing but can represent several times and it is re-drawn and you can give it a new perspective every time. It can be said that Hosseinirad's words may be true with classical teachings, but with the approaches of contemporary art, another artist can represent and consume a portrait in different ways and without any rules.

One of the notable artists is Aghdashlou Antonio Pollaiuolo (1498-1431), a painter, great carver, goldsmith, metalworker, sculptor, and engraver in the Renaissance period and one of the students of Lorenzo Ghiberti (Gowing, 2005, 541). Pollaiuolo created a portrait of a young woman or "unknown woman" (in 1465 AD) at a time when Renaissance portraits were very popular with all kinds of faces, with many decorations in clothes or hairdos, with a profile and sometimes a three-faced pose of the subject. There were many artists. Many of these portraits are similar in terms of form and mood as if there was a specific criterion for creating them all. However, the portrait of the unknown woman by Pollaiuolo has an important difference from the rest of the portraits of this period, which makes it stand out. Pollaiuolo pays special attention to movement in figures and especially human anatomy (Chilvers, 1996, 412). He dissected humans to understand the body (Stangos, 1994, 285). The distinctive feature of this portrait is its special curvature from under the chest, neck, and shoulders, which is seen in very few Renaissance portraits, which mostly show dry and formal people.

In this beautiful painting by Pollaiuolo, we see a woman with a calm and simple profile who is looking out of the painting with a penetrating look. With well-groomed hair and a dress that has a lot of decorations and shows her social class, the portrait is somehow placed in the frame of the painting and bent as if the painter has hardly placed her in it. We can see the background of the work in blue color with scattered clouds and an incomprehensible



Fig. 11. Portrait of a Young Woman, Antonio Pollaiuolo, 1465, oil on canvas, 52. 2 x 36. 2 cm, Berlin. Source: Wikipedia, S.V. "Pollaiuolo".

and distant landscape at the bottom of the portrait (Fig.11). As we know, Renaissance portraits were often commissioned and to the extent of showing the face of an individual from a certain class, they appeared in artists' workshops (Hart, 2003, 563) and the clients did not interfere in the artists' work and were content with giving money and at least an opinion (Letts, 2007, 53). The reason why Aghdashlou chose this portrait for redrawing is perhaps the same desire to redraw and test himself by using this image several times and to show the property of representing thousands of previous images, or to destroy the beauty of a work from the past.

Aghdashlou has painted a portrait close to the original from this work. A woman crouching in a picture frame, wearing a luxurious dress on a blue background with no scenery. In terms of similarity, Aghdashlou's portrait is very similar to the original work, only slightly different in the shape of the body

and the background that was deliberately removed. By removing the background, the portrait is placed on a new, flat bed. The woman's perspective and penetrating gaze are taken away and what remains is a frozen portrait against a solid blue background. Aghdashlou skillfully covered all the details of the portrait and did not forget the woman's hair and the details of her dress. He carefully spent everything drawn by Pollaiuolo and put the title Memories of Destruction in Latin letters and finally signed it and made the portrait of the unknown woman by Pollaiuolo from it (Fig. 12).

But what we see more than this are some lines and grooves that stand out on the painting, face, and neck of the portrait. After finishing the work, Aghdashlou puts a line on its face with full precision and elegance and shows a distorted and scarred portrait. That Aghdashlou intended to distort the face of the woman and her beauty and regretted it in the middle of the way, or that he came close to the original work and showed his mastery, it was considered a worthless and spent achievement for him and then he considered it defective. It has covered us. Like a peak that has been conquered and has lost its charm and glory, and now it is scratched with a little cruelty in such a way that the effect is not changed much, as if the scratching was done with complete caution. Aghdashlou has repainted the woman's portrait in another view of Pollaiuolo's work and placed it in a darker background than the original work. The woman's dress is painted in full detail, much warmer and more colorful. The bottom of the work fluctuates between gray, white, and a little blue on a light-colored background and conveys the feeling of the horizon line in the lowest part of the painting to the audience. The female figure is out of proportion with the background and frame of the painting. In contrast to her dress, the woman's head and neck are drawn very faintly, as if they were less important than the rest of the painting. It is as if the woman has been in death for a long time. Aghdashlou drew deep cracks on the woman's head and neck, which continued from the top of the head to the neck. The

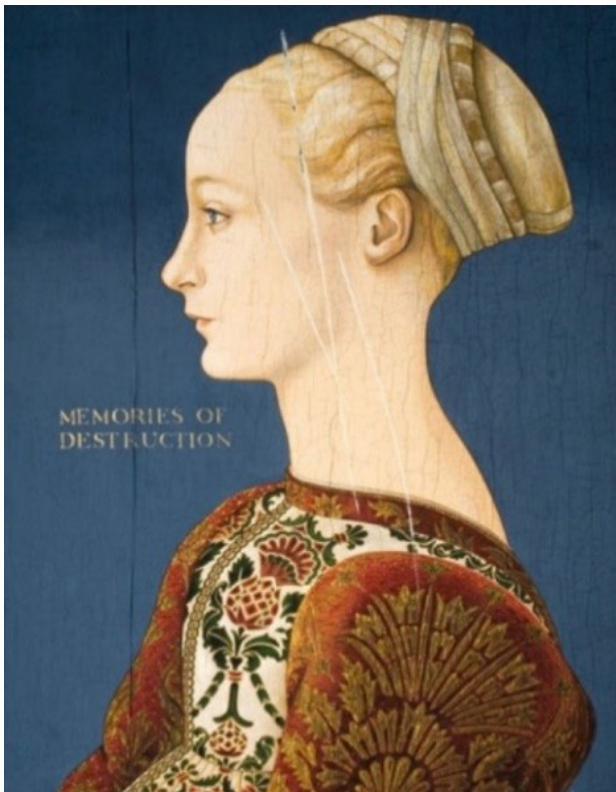


Fig. 12. Memories of Destruction, Aydin Aghdashlou, 2007, gouache on cardboard, 57 x 75 cm. Source: Aghdashlou, 2012.

woman's head has taken a sculptural form of plaster or clay, which is damaged and may crumble and fall apart. These cracks cannot have been caused by the passage of time because the woman's dress is new and fresh, and it is in great contrast with the cracks left on the head. Maybe the woman got into this situation due to an accident. Therefore, whatever happened to a woman's face, Aghdashlou is trying to restore it.

Aghdashlou covered the woman's face and neck with many bandages and a little net that he collaged only on the eyes. He has shown his effort not to disintegrate the woman, who we no longer know who she is, with visible adhesive tapes on the work (Fig. 13). Although the woman's head and neck are cracked in places and outside of the adhesives, we are certain that there is no hope for the woman's condition to improve, and soon the adhesives will come off and everything will be lost. The eyes are covered in such a way that the woman will never be aware of her condition and will fall asleep in eternal



Fig. 13. Years of Fire and Snow 2, Aydin Aghdashlou, 1979, gouache on cardboard, 57 x 75 cm. Source: Aghdashlou, 2012, 86.

silence and only the glitter of her dress will remain. A pathetic situation of a luxurious and magnificent woman in the not so distant past. Aghdashlou has undoubtedly portrayed the tragic mortality and indestructibility that no restoration will work on. Definitely, this work cannot be a painting of a young woman from Pollaiuolo, but a work of a dying woman from Aghdashlou.

In another work that Aghdashlou made from the same portrait of an unknown woman by Pollaiuolo, the female figure is drawn in almost the same way, a little simpler and thinner with less detail and with more space to include the portrait in the frame against a brighter and warmer background than the original. Effect. Aghdashlou buried the whole painting in the same crevice and wrote "Memories of Destruction" on top of it in Latin. The whole work is surrounded by many cracks like a thirsty desert, and it seems as if the woman has a sad and downward look, and maybe it will not be more for a few more moments. The cracks that tell of the passage of time and the

deep groove on the left side of the picture, which is painted like a cracked wood, all tell of decay and erosion, but the woman can still be recognized as the beauty of the past, and the mysterious curvature of the original work, although in Here, it has become a little smoother, but it still has the strength of the “Unknown Woman” painting by Pollaiuolo (Fig. 14).

Repeatedly touching a single image 5 is very visible in Aydin Aghdashlou's works. The portrait of “Margaret” by Jan van Eyck (1390-1441AD) is one of these works that has been repeated, manipulated, and destroyed by Aghdashlou. In Van Eyck's work, we see a woman wearing a special dress of her time, a red shirt with a fur collar and sleeves, which may indicate Margaret's nobility. A white headscarf that reaches up to his shoulders and a black belt that is tightly tied under his chest and his clothes are wrinkled. Margaret has her hands crossed (Fig. 15). The proportion of the portrait seems unrealistic and unlikely, as if the head is much bigger than the body and hands, and the body is in a disproportionate position. Shortened upper body and hands, and high forehead, created a strange situation in the woman so that we do not see any sign of sadness or happiness in her. In this woman's face, we see the same mysterious and all-seeing eyes of a man wearing a turban and a meaningful Renaissance man. The penetrating strange and hard gaze of the woman; is the most important part of the painting, which Aghdashlou ruthlessly removed from the painting.

Aydin Aghdashlou has painted this work with elegance and details like the original work. The woman in the same red dress is placed against a dark background, carefully drawing out all the decorations on Margaret headband and fur-like collar. Marguerite's hands are better proportioned by Aghdashlou and the head is relatively smaller, and this has created a difference in the awe and character of the woman. Margaret whole face and half body have many cracks which are visible everywhere in the painting, especially on the white fabric of

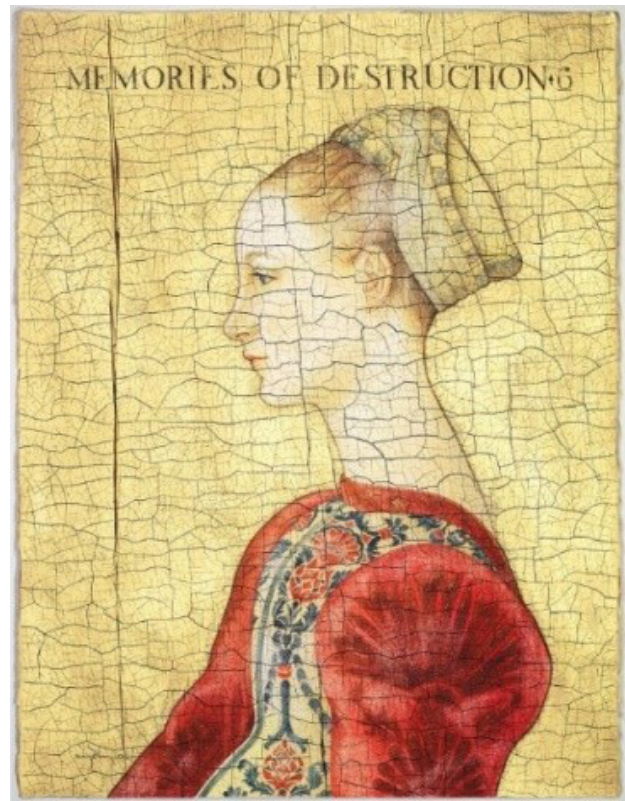


Fig. 14. Memories of Destruction 6, Aydin Aghdashlou, 2006, gouache on cardboard, 57 x 75 cm. Source: Aghdashlou, 2012, 2014.



Fig. 15. Portrait of Margaret, Jan van Eyck, 1439 AD, paint and oil. Source: WikiArt, S.V. "Jan van Eyck".

the headscarf, the cracks are painted so many and impressive that it seems that the headscarf has changed its gender from fabric to a plaster wall. The gouache technique has helped a lot in enriching the effect and the colors are rare and elaborately used (Fig. 16).

The most difficult and rare parts of Van Eyck's portraits and paintings are the faces of his subjects, which are created with indescribable skill, and the eyes with a godlike look that could only come from Van Eyck's hands. Therefore, Aghdashlou cleverly destroyed Margaret entire face under the title *Memories of Destruction and Concern for Identity*. He has hidden the woman's face with many lines, and instead of those pale eyes, eyebrows, and lips, we see only mixed-colored lines that have distorted the woman's identity. But it could still be Van Eyck's Margaret as if disguised with just a bit of mischief and calculated destruction.

Aghdashlou shows with another painting of Margaret that he did not let go of the manipulation of Margaret portrait again. This time, he is working on the printed versions of the work he painted himself. In the first printed version, the woman's face is lined as in the previous work, but this time he has used more diverse colors, like a child who wants to draw with all his pencils. The lines seem to be completely calculated because none of them are out of the frame of the face and their only mission is to cover the woman's face and not to show the painter's anger and excitement at the moment of drawing them. The background of the above image is black and the bottom of the image is red and the border between the two colors creates the horizon line. Aghdashlou has added three trees to this work, one of them is black and the other two are red and yellow on the left and right sides of the painting on the woman's arms. Dry and leafless trees, as we see in winter. We see many examples of these trees in the landscapes of Pieterbrogel, which Aghdashlou always paid attention to (Fig. 17).

In the second printed version, which was taken in a slightly poorer quality, he flipped the portrait



Fig. 16. *Memories of destruction*, Aydin Aghdashlou, 1977, 75x57 cm, gouache on cardboard. Source: Aghdashlou, 2012, 83.

of Marguerite and then touched it again. On Marguerite's face, he painted crumpled cloth or paper. It is as if the wind blew and threw a crumpled piece of paper on the woman's face, and her identity is no longer recognizable. The color of the paper is bright red and the year 2010 is written on it in Latin letters in a dumb pink. The woman has lost her identity over time and our address for her is 2010 (Fig. 18). Aydin Aghdashlou, with his self-made works of Van Eyck, was an admirer of him and the lost past. Sadness over the passing or not reaching Van Eyck and the Renaissance era by touching a portrait several times and testing the image in different ways is a sign of making Van Eyck more accessible and removing the aura of holiness from his works. Perhaps it can be said that Aghdashlou is in a contradiction between being an admirer in all these works. And it goes between admiration and destruction.

Conclusion

According to the examination and analysis of Aydin



Fig. 17. Painting on printed work, Aydin Aghdashlou. Source: Aghdashlou website "Printed Works 2".



Fig. 18. Painting on printed work, Aydin Aghdashlou. Source: Aghdashlou website "Printed works 3".

Aghdashlou's works in this research, the range of appropriation renaissance portraits in his works is very evident. As an alchemist, Aghdashlo has used the existing images from Renaissance artists in his art and has continuously interfered with them to achieve his desired alchemy. He has had three important elements for this work, including unique works of great artists and a glorious era, and then a lot of hard work and a tireless spirit, and finally, he dared to do something like this. Using a printed copy instead of the original work and presenting it as art, although it is not very accepted among art people, Aghdashlou cleverly tackled this to come up with another way to use and reproduce works. He reminds us that there is no sanctity involved and that a work can be repainted and reproduced many times and presented several times. History has shown that such works take a different path from the original work and take their own path.

In response to the main question of this research,

it should be said that the most important functions of " appropriation " of Renaissance portraits in Aghdashlou's paintings are: 1) Admiring Renaissance portraits in Aghdashlou's contemporary portraits 2) Distorting Renaissance portraits in Aghdashlou's contemporary portraits 3) Destruction and restoration of Renaissance portraits in contemporary portraits of Aghdashlou. As it was determined in this research, Aghdashlou's Renaissance portraits try to create another concept far away from the previous work by using methods of appropriation. How successful they have been and how far they have opened the way forward is not much discussed in this research, but the way of creating these works has been considered. Aydin Aghdashlou has called on the splendor and bravery of Renaissance portraits and the mastery of famous artists of the Renaissance era to express his own point of view and time in them. This act is done by praising and praising the past and condemning

the present. In these works, distorting the face and greatness of the past has been realized in today's frame in the context of contemporary art. Aydin Aghdashlou has made optimal use of Renaissance portraits to create his works and has invited them to the world today to be seen again with admiration, distortion, and destruction. In an age where no idea is new anymore.

Endnotes

1. The Renaissance was a "rebirth" of discovery, not only from the physical dimension but intellectual revelations (Stockstad & Katern, 2018, 298).
2. In general, from 1470 onwards in Florence, the display of three-quarter and full-face modes became very popular and took the place of the profile mode, which was the only mode that prospered until then. In this case, the eyes of the portrait engage with the eyes of the viewer as if a word is being exchanged between them.
3. The mature artist of Demdichi circle influenced by neo-platonic ideas, literature, and mythology, had an emotional and poetic style and saw beauty in the spiritual aspects of figures and paid special attention to color and play of bright shadows (Jensen & Jensen 2015, 509-510). To read more about Sandro Botticelli, see: (Turner, 1996, 493-504).
4. Kozai's theory is the control of God's gaze over everything and everyone. The Flemish painter thinks that God looks at all things from small and large and current existence in everything that exists, and no point is left out of his gaze, therefore, the power of vision for the Renaissance painter is a rule in the revelation of the world (Gardner, 2002, 470).
5. Andy Warhol, the famous pop artist, reproduced and repeated the face of Mona Lisa in 6 horizontal columns and 5 vertical columns (Fenzel, 2007, 552).

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