

Hybrid

THE
FARJAM
COLLECTION



Hybrid

**A SELECTION OF WORKS BY SHIRIN ALIABADI
FROM THE FARJAM COLLECTION**



THE HYBRID SELF

Writing about Shirin Aliabadi's young oeuvre is a complex undertaking. When one looks at the colour photographs in her most famous series to date, Miss Hybrid (2006-2009), that assertion may at first seem hard to understand for their suggestive pictorial power recalls the superficial aesthetic messages of advertising. Similarly, the snapshots in her series Girls in Cars (2005-2007), which show young middle-class women from Tehran travelling around in party mood, seem on the face of it to convey impromptu situations that are easy to understand. However, the moment one recalls that the second series belongs to the more comprehensive project Censorship is fun, Freedom is boring, one finds oneself caught in a dense web of social, historical and political interrelationships that encompasses Iranian society. A contradictory reality also manifests itself. For how can freedom be equated with the internal emptiness and uneventfulness of boredom, whereas censorship is considered fun and desirable? In a climate of political repression, in which the right to self-determination is permanently denied, this can only be meant satirically.

Or maybe not? Does Aliabadi characterize individual freedom as "boring" because she alludes to an ideal state that can never actually be attained or by which artistic productivity would even be brought to a standstill? Contemporary Iranian art is a front-runner in the international artistic contest, so the minefield lying between the Iranian censors' fervent religious ideology and the relatively value-free movement of cultural globalization would seem to provide fertile soil on which rich sub-cultures thrive.

Aliabadi is one of the Iranian artists who started developing a reputation during the third phase of the post-Revolution, when President Khatami, a moderate, was in power. That phase of liberalization was accompanied by "a period of artistic renewal" during which the reputation of contemporary international art was also promoted. The change of leadership in 2005 resulted in a caesura, bringing a return to xenophobic attitudes towards the West and cultural globalization. Yet the current regime, which preaches the authenticity and supremacy of orthodox Islamic values, cannot prevent a new generation of artists from unideologically writing "new politics for the 21st century". "Many of this generation reject a

fixed, unified identity and instead propose a hybrid, unfixed and negotiable identity. [...] Artists of this generation also enjoy ironic, kitschy interpretations of hybrids between traditional Iranian forms and those of the consumerist and globalized popular culture widespread in Iran. This often humorous language has also become a common method to criticize 'exoticism' and a metaphorical reaction against 'official' values."¹

The very title of Aliabadi's Miss Hybrid series is critical of the assumption of a "fixed, unified identity". Aliabadi pleads for a "hybrid" identity representing a negotiable magnitude that can be redefined according to the situational context or individual needs. Although her colour photographs follow the classic model of studio portraits, she chooses an unconventional title. Her view of womanhood refutes the traditional concept of female identity deriving from metaphysics, religion and politics. Miss Hybrid no longer epitomizes the "true" Iranian woman, who preserves her identity as an ahistorical entity unaffected by social change. Hybrid womanhood instead means something fragmentary and versatile that can assume different identities and roles. When the artist invites young Iranian women to pose before the camera with a frivolous Western look, she therefore not only signals a temporary identity but also simultaneously rejects all normative attributions associated with the traditional concept of self.

Why, moreover, do the women she portrays choose to give themselves a "hybrid" identity by transforming their external appearance? For by having platinum-coloured hair and wearing green or blue contact lenses, they imitate a look that the Iranian authorities defame as "western". Aliabadi further accentuates the "unofficial" look by using accessories like soap bubbles, mobile phones, piercings and lollipops with erotic connotations. The colour of the lollipops matches that of the women's chadors, giving the portraits an almost kitschy artificiality. By being used as a kind of stage prop, the chador is robbed of its religious significance, becoming an interchangeable accessory like any other. And what is the significance of the proudly displayed nose plaster, which seems to point to plastic surgery but which could also be no more than the latest craze?

The Miss Hybrid series may be reminiscent of photographs in glossy magazines but it goes beyond a superficial veneer, with deeper strata being laid bare. Miss Hybrid does not simply adopt a fleeting look but appropriates an ideal of beauty that has been firmly established in the West for centuries rather than having acquired universal validity only in the age of mass culture. A significant constituent of this aesthetic ideal is white skin and in Iran “as in other dark-skinned cultures [that] fairness is an aesthetic ideal.”² Iranian women lighten the colour of their faces with so much makeup that their perfect complexion no longer betrays their origin. However, the western ideal of beauty epitomizes far more than an aesthetic norm. Given the way in which the orthodox Islamic social order dictates what a woman must wear and how she must appear in public, that ideal also stands for political demands for freedom and equality. Aliabadi even declares it to be the model for a “cultural rebellion”. That rebellion, which relies on the insignia of pop culture rather than on militant rhetoric, is inspired by various trends. “There is a bit of goth, metal and hip hop, but still the L.A. lifestyle and mentality are a constant source of imitation.”³

Exchanging official values for the western ideal of beauty is not unproblematic, however. For all that we live in an age of a transcultural media reality, there can be no talk of eliminating the conflicts between “civilisations”. Even a rebellion conducted unideologically with aesthetic weapons still leads us straight into the minefield between West and East. The notions of “West” and “East” do, it is true, now seem to be obsolete common-places, particularly at a time when the capitalistic market order and consumerism have become an almost worldwide system. Yet the political and aesthetic connotations of the western ideal of beauty inevitably evoke the complex historical relationship between the Orient and the Occident. “In the case of the Middle East in particular, there is an added layer of complexity. A regular feature of news coverage in the West, it is already often reduced to a series of misleading stereotypes and, if you follow the influential Orientalist argument first proposed by Edward Said in the 1970s, this form of cultural reductionism is fairly entrenched.”⁴

That “cultural reductionism” not only remains well established today but is also associated with the exoticism that, to quote Hamid Keshmirshakan, is subjected

to “humorous” criticism by the new generation of Iranian artists. Aliabadi’s exploration of the western ideal of beauty has to come to terms with this exoticism. A short historical excursus is therefore in order here. Exoticism bore aesthetic fruit in the 18th and 19th centuries as part of Orientalism, having an impact on art and artists that reached far into the 20th century. What Said describes as reductionism can be seen, in short, as the West’s habit of transferring the unknown and the irrational to “the Other”. The West situated “the Other” in an imaginary Orient that was seen as more than merely different from the West. Within the framework of an imperial doctrine of supremacy, the Orient was also inferiorized and distorted. It was an ideological construction of representations and stereotypes used by the West to project a superior image of itself. The Orient, being “the Other”, was assumed to have no voice of its own. Accordingly, Said analyzes Gustave Flaubert’s literary description of the “typically oriental” dancer and courtesan Kuchuk Hanem as an expression of male white dominance. “[S]he never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke.”⁵

Looking at the painting of leading European artists of the period in the light of that background, it becomes clear that their pictorial repertoire included Oriental bathing, nude and harem scenes. However, the women represented in those scenes were generally painted after western models. In keeping with prevailing conventions, the ideal of Venus was a more determining motif than was the epitome of Oriental beauty. It was not Oriental woman who was portrayed but her transfiguration into a western ideal of beauty. Exoticism accordingly provided an almost boundless surface on which to project men’s voyeuristic desires regarding “the Other”. At the same time, the familiar topos of western woman guaranteed “[that] the Orient is transformed from a very far distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar.”⁶

Aliabadi’s Miss Hybrid series transports us back to this form of exoticism. She reflects its mechanisms in her own artistic practice by declaring the women who pose so confidently before the camera actually to be “blanks”. Their own distinguishing characteristics must first disappear before they can provide a surface onto which the western ideal of beauty can be projected. That ideal was

known to Iranian artists because for centuries they were in close contact with the western artistic tradition, the canon and iconography of which decisively influenced the formation of the collective Iranian pictorial memory. Aliabadi, like the entire new generation of artists, can therefore draw on a pictorial memory that amalgamates Iranian and Western traditions.

The almost unreal perfection with which the women in the Miss Hybrid series are portrayed before a black background nonetheless seems to raise another more fundamental question. Doesn't Aliabadi's work provide us with an exemplary illustration of how the media, history and politics reduce womanhood per se to the status of an image? For the western ideal of beauty goes hand in hand with the representation of woman by means of pictorial icons ranging from Venus and the Virgin Mary to the deified Marilyn Monroe and the megastar Christina Aguilera. These icons are associated with pictorial clichés and stereotypes that not only provide projection surfaces for the male gaze but also serve as role models for women in their day-to-day social activity.

Against this background, let us turn back to the title Miss Hybrid and examine it more closely. The noun "Miss" can, among other things, suggest a beauty contest. The woman elected as the beauty queen would then be the one who comes closest to the western ideal or, in the most extreme case, on whom plastic surgery has achieved the best results (the nose plasters seem to indicate this). The fact that this ideal is nowadays firmly established in the figure of Barbie, "[i]t's like Barbie goes to Iran"⁷, shows once again that it is a social construct. The word "hybrid", on the other hand, refers to the botanical and zoological procedure by which different species and races are crossed with each other. So if young women from Tehran are "crossed" with the western ideal of beauty, the result of this hybridization is white-skinned women wearing chadors. It is as if a new Iranian identity were created with external features like blonde hair and blue or green eyes. Aliabadi therefore views the hybrid as also being "a constant negotiation between Western and Iranian cultures".⁸

Given the dominance of western aesthetics, it cannot be assumed that there is a cultural exchange between two partners of equal status. Yet what Aliabadi's

photographs show with exemplary force is that it is not the western ideal that has transcultural significance. What links the two cultures together despite their differences is the pictorial status to which the female subject is obliged to submit in her quest for an identity. In the past, that status was conditioned by patriarchal discourse, but today women are free to challenge ironically the representation modes for womanhood and to alter them to suit subjective needs. Very importantly, this process is occurring in a similar way in both the Orient and the West. A transcultural critique of pictorial status can be undertaken only within the confines of that status, but women nonetheless engage in it very energetically. Miss Hybrid shows us this particularly impressively by projecting an image that clearly reflects her desire for a new, transformed identity.

Birgid Uccia

1 Keshmirshakan, Hamid in *Different Sames. New Perspectives in Contemporary Iranian Art*, Amirsadeghi, Hossein (ed.), London 2009, p. 37.

2 Cook, Xerxes, "The rest of the world sees green, but Shirin Aliabadi prefers to explore the yellow and blue hues of rebellion", *Tank*, vol. 6/ issue 2, 2010, p. 74.

3 *Ibid.*

4 Sloman, Paul (Ed): *Contemporary Art in the Middle East*, London 2009, p. 7.

5 Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*, New York 1979, p. 6.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

7 See Note 2 above.

8 *Ibid.*

MISS HYBRID

MISS HYBRID 1, 2006
Inkjet print
112 x 149 cm





MISS HYBRID 3, 2008
Lambda Print
120 x 150 cm



MISS HYBRID 4, 2007
Inkjet mounted on aluminium
50 x 120 cm

MISS HYRBID 6
Inkjet on Paper
150 x 114 cm



TWIST IT YOUR WAY

THE CITY GIRLS* BY SHIRIN ALIABADI

An extraordinary, occasionally garish and magnificent coloration suffuses these photographs, whose enticing radiance strikes the viewer's eye. This goes hand in hand with a strange silence and immeasurable emptiness; one might also speak of an indeterminacy that surrounds the bust-length portraits of young women against a black background.

The headscarf in bright green, turquoise, red and yellow, the iridescent blue of the contact lenses, and the partially uncovered platinum blonde wig worn by Miss Hybrid I are further intensified by contrast with the dark background. Her right shoulder, turned slightly backwards, suggests virtual movement in space. Accordingly, her head is turned to the right and her gaze alights on something outside the picture. She is likely looking at something, though we cannot be certain that she is really seeing whatever it is -- looking without seeing.

The title of the Miss Hybrid series doubtlessly hints at the artificial nature of the images, composed of disparate elements. Like classic studio portraits, these recall the photos in glossy magazines. Yet the artist is not satisfied with mere superficial appearances. To reduce her work to the concern with superlatives, common in fashion and advertising, would be shortsighted.

Aliabadi employs enlargement as a stylistic means. Thanks to the oversized format of 150 x 110 cm and the placement of the women on the central axis, their images gain enormously in intensity and presence. Rather than showing any strong expression, the face of Miss Hybrid I possesses a delicate nature. The finely arched lips, the introspective gaze, the clearly contoured eyebrows, the forehead partly covered with hair, the opaque complexion are vitally interrelated and form a unity of expression. In essence, this unity of expression has something flowing, something fleeting about it, so the viewer's eye is unable to fix on any one point for very long and remains in motion. This very expression can be read as the anima side of the sitter, that certain something that leads from the body to the soul. Expression, meant as a revelation of truth, is, as it were, the uncompromising addition to identity, and thus triggers individuality. The expression reveals the subject -- the individual comes to the fore.

** Series Miss Hybrid, 2006-09 and Series City Girl, begun in 2010*

Like all of the other girls portrayed, Miss Hybrid I is a beauty, though she does not conform to conventional standards in this regard. The pictures of young Iranian women from the artist's personal circles, made since 2006, develop into intimate and individual personality studies. The precondition for this is an astonishingly subtle approach on the photographer's part to her subject.

Where does the sense of emptiness, mentioned at the outset, come from? Aliabadi focuses on showing young women who wish to be understood on their own terms, women who are confident of who they are. Any obvious references that would make the sitters representatives of some context of meaning outside the photographs are absent. This results in a sense of independence, thanks to a waiver of any extrinsic meaning; and it is this waiver that the viewer perceives as emptiness. The exclusiveness with which these young women present themselves and thus refer back to themselves resounds with silence. Admittedly, one can find attributes that appear to anchor and define the sitters in a certain outside world. In the context of the Miss Hybrid series, these would be nose plasters, piercings, erotically connotated lolly-pops, mobile telephones, or, in the City Girl series, Starbuck's chocolate, a Hermès foulard, bags by Goyard, or iPods. As long as the accessories do not make the young women into dependent vehicles of meaning, the addition of requisites by no means compromises the primary self-referentiality of the portraits; rather, these permit a further interpretation of the individuals. To this extent, the young women reflect an attitude towards life and the zeitgeist of contemporary Iranian youth.

Aliabadi recurs to a process that characterized Pop Art in the 1960s. Things from modern everyday life were found to be image-worthy, directing our attention towards the aesthetic charm of banal consumer

commodities. The addition of elements from the reality of the young women's everyday lives conveys an impression of their generation's concerns and their reaction to everyday life. A life permeated by the orthodox Islamic social structure, in which the right to self-determination is permanently denied and proscriptions placed on the way women must present themselves in public. Seen in this light, the Girls cheekily take small liberties and create their own private spaces. The subject of these portraits is a reality that can be interpreted as an appeal to the viewer to see the young Iranian generation through different eyes. Aliabadi's visual language contains ciphers of the Pop aesthetic, allowing these young women to assume a universally valid global identity.

The torso of City Girl I is rotated towards the background, and her left arm is cut off by the picture edge. In this case, too, the body is accorded a virtual movement in space, and it is evident that the "possibility" of an act is present, which in turn can be read as a suggestion of the independence of the woman portrayed. Turning her head leftwards, her gaze is directed almost at the viewer. The glittering diadem and the Hermès scarf, in delicate pinks, leave her light-brown tinted hair partially visible. She wears a dark grey blazer made of a slightly shiny material. Her attire stands in a certain contrast to the 1970s-style quartz watch adorning her left wrist. In her left hand City Girl I holds a partially unwrapped Starbucks chocolate. Her lips are slightly open, suggesting a sly smile. The pink of her sensuous lips corresponds to the colors of her headscarf; the brown of the chocolate to the color of her eyes, the emphasized eyebrows, the softly focused forehead, and the light-brown hair. Her delicately tinted complexion underscores this interplay of colors and the unity of expression. If it was the sovereignty of innocence and gentleness that veritably compelled the viewer's eye to linger in Miss Hybrid I, City Girl I, with her smile impudently dominating the space, is

compelling thanks to her self-assured wit and frivolity. Her presence, immediately fascinating to the viewer, is of a metaphysical nature.

True, the sitters play a role assigned to them and embody factors of their environment (indicated not least by the headscarf, though it does less and less justice to its function of concealing the head and hair). At the same time, this occurs in a very individual way. These young women's portraits attest to a playful and sometimes voluptuous use of accessories that are ultimately secondary for them and have no deeper meaning. What remains is the enjoyment of adorning and presenting oneself. They glam themselves up without forfeiting their own identity -- their sovereignty remains unaffected. Aliabadi masterfully holds the borderline whose transgression would result in tipping the sitters' individuality into a submission to external factors.

With her camera Aliabadi has captured the young women in a moment of being at one with themselves and has cast a spell over them, a kind of heightened being in the moment that comprises the charm of their disarming presence. These beautiful photographs, sometimes heightened to a fairy-tale level, sometimes containing a coquettish touch, since it is left open whether the girls are exposing themselves or rather feel caught in the act, attest to the young women's incredible lust for life and "being" which, in the Western hemisphere, seems sometimes to have been lost. They eloquently testify to the state of mind of a large part of the young urban generation in Shirin Aliabadi's homeland, Iran.

Pascale von Planta

Translation from German by John William Gabriel





CITY GIRLS

CITY GIRL 4, 2011
Lambda Print
100 x 150 cm



CITY GIRL 3, 2011
Lambda Print
100 x 150 cm



CITY GIRL 2, 2010
Lambda Print
100 x 150 cm



CITY GIRL 1, 2010
Lambda Print
100 x 150 cm



CITY GIRL 5, 2011
Lambda Print
100 x 150 cm



CITY GIRL 6, 2011
Lambda Print
100 x 150 cm





GIRLS IN CARS



GIRLS IN CARS 1, 2005
Color Photographic paper
70 x 100 cm



GIRLS IN CARS 2, 2005
Color Photographic paper
70 x 100 cm



GIRLS IN CARS 3, 2005
Color Photographic paper
70 x 100 cm



GIRLS IN CARS 4, 2008
Color Photographic paper
100 x 75 cm



EYES ONLY



EYES ONLY, 2009
Pencil on Paper
50 x 70 cm



EYES ONLY 1, 2009
Pencil on Paper
50 x 70 cm



EYES ONLY 3, 2009
Pencil on Paper
50 x 70 cm



EYES ONLY 2, 2009
Pencil on Paper
50 x 70 cm



EYES ONLY 4, 2009
Pencil on Paper
50 x 70 cm

EYE

LOVE

YOU

Eye dream of you.

Eye miss you.

Eye need you.

Eye die for you.

Eye cannot imagine life without you.

Eye want to marry you.

Eye don't want to get married.

Eye want to be famous.

Eye want to be a star.

Eye want a diamond.

Eye want a new car.

Eye want everything.

Eye want to forget you.

Eye want to forget.

Eye love shoes.

Eye love colour.

Eye love black.

Eye want to dance.

Eye want to dream.

Eye want to be happy.

Eye want to fly.

Eye want to matter.

Eye want to give.

Eye am a bird.
Eye am a flower.
Eye am a butterfly.
Eye am a burning candle.
Eye am a teardrop.
Eye am the ocean.
Eye want to cry.
Eye wish I was beautiful.

Eye hate school.
Eye hate everyone.
Eye hate you.
Eye am lost.
Eye just want to scream.
Eye am special.

Eye am bored.
Eye don't want to be here.
Eye want to go home.
Eye want ice cream.
Eye don't want to lose you.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EYE HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED AND UTILIZED IN ART.

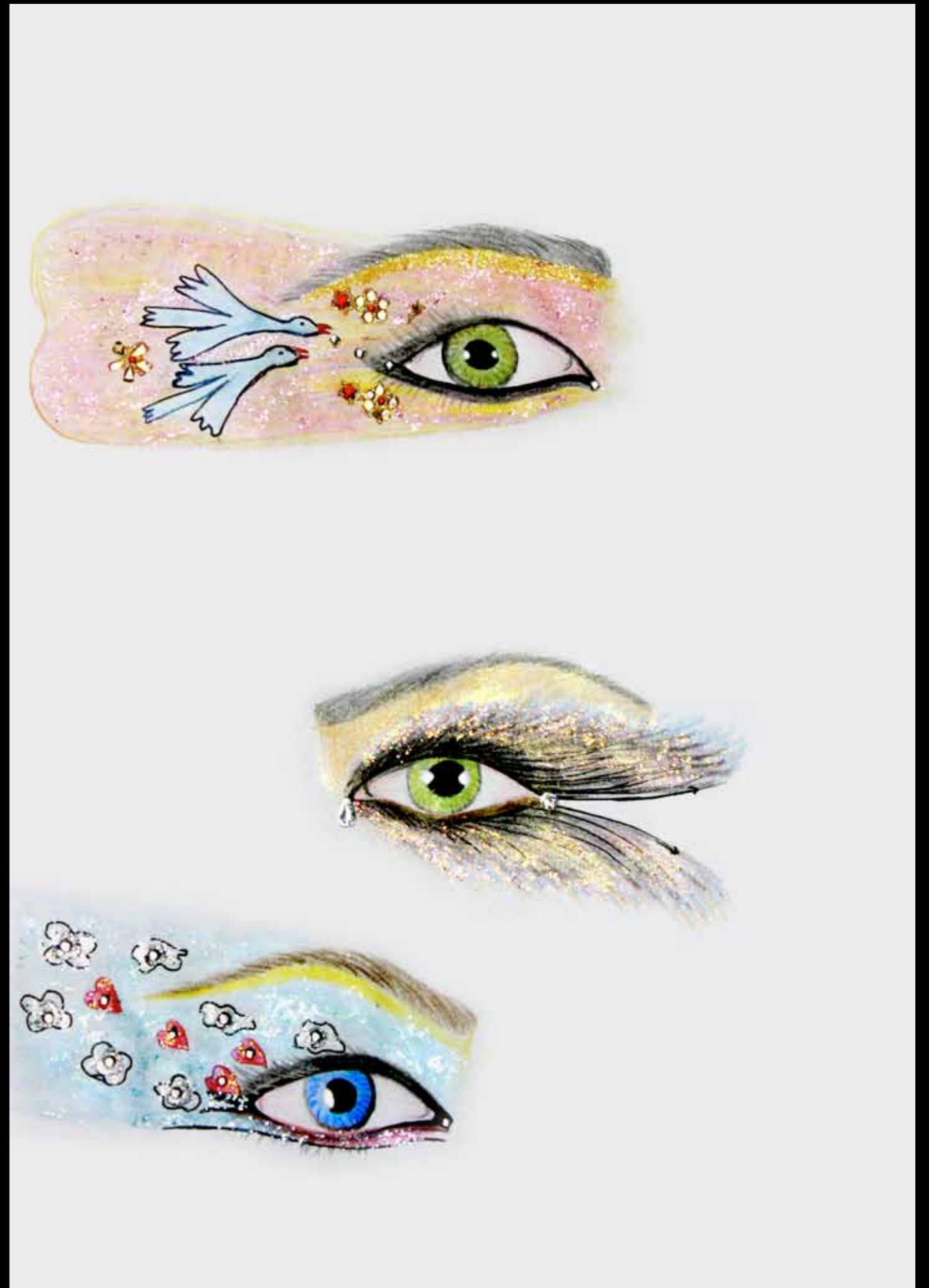
As amulets symbolizing not only royal power, but health as well as shielding the holder from malicious injury and intention of others, these lone eyes are depicted throughout history and transgress cultures. Examples abound such as the Eye of Horus in Ancient Egypt, the Attic eye cups of the symposiums of Ancient Greece, the cobalt disc shapes hanging from trees in Cappadocia, and the present day examples worn as bracelets, held as key chains and hung in doorways, though primarily prevalent in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern region are also found as widespread as South America and the Philippines.

Shirin Aliabadi's 2009 series, 'Eye Love You', employs single eyes in vertical stacks of three, though the ambition of this series is not aligned with the classical interpretations one might expect. Though almost talismanic in appearance, Aliabadi's eyes do not serve an apotropaic purpose. In fact, they could be said to portray the opposite, those eyes from which the gaze of envy is cast, due to the portrayal of various desires stemming from the eye and their poetically yearning titles. However, Shirin Aliabadi did not have this intention in mind when she set out to create these artworks, though she recognizes and does not impede upon their initial understanding for her viewers.

In 'Eye Love You', Aliabadi focused once more on a phenomenon that occurs in modern day Tehran. Namely, the fanciful eye makeup worn by women attending weddings. Aliabadi first came across this unique trend whilst working on her series entitled 'Miss Hybrid'. When visiting a beauty salon in Tehran, she saw examples of this elaborate maquillage and decided to collaborate with the make up artists to create drawings based upon them. Aliabadi envisioned a young girl sitting in a classroom quite distracted from the lesson, doodling away in the margins of her notebooks. The resulting images are brightly coloured, highly energetic eyes, which pierce the viewer with their direct stare. Coupled with their poetical titles such as 'Eye am a burning candle', 'Eye die for you', 'Eye am the endless ocean' and 'Eye am a bird', the works betray hidden facets of naivety, uncertainty, hope and even disillusionment of the youth in today's Iran.

EYE AM A BIRD, 2009

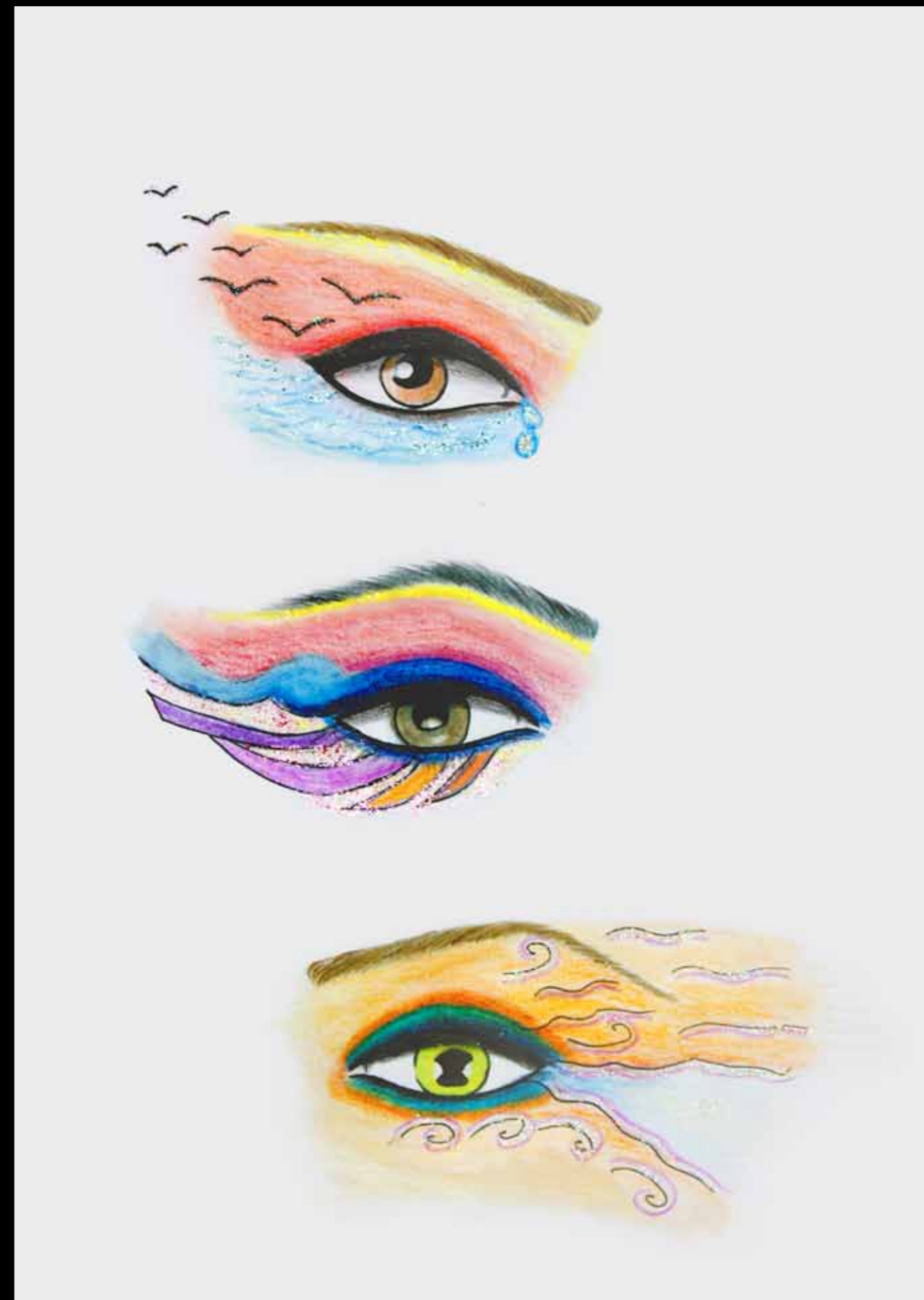
Mixed media drawing on paper
30 x 21 cm



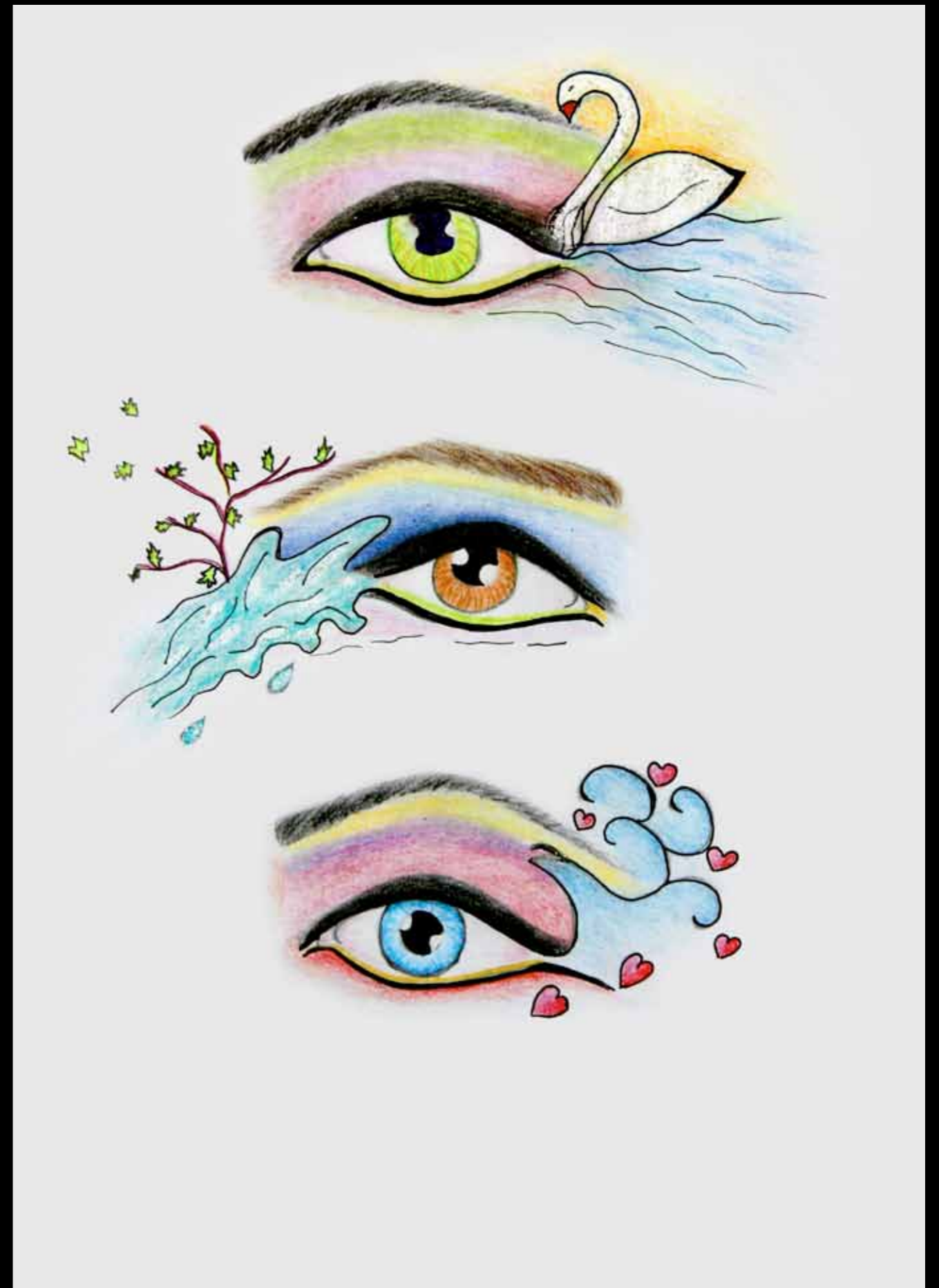
EYE WANT TO FLY, 2009
Mixed media drawing on paper
240 x 190 cm



EYE AM A TEARDROP, 2009
Mixed media drawing on paper
30 x 21 cm



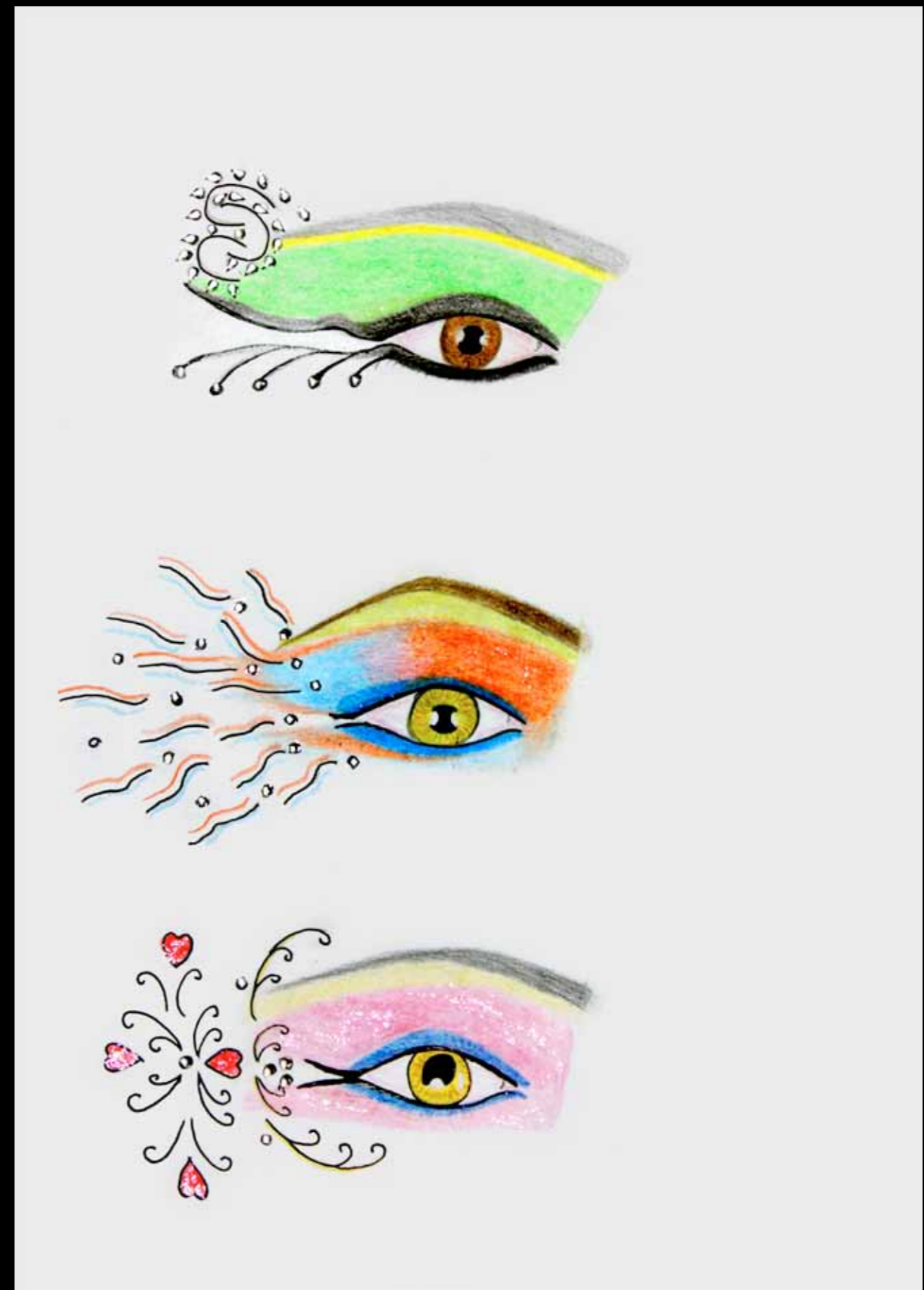
EYE AM THE ENDLESS
Mixed media drawing on paper
30 x 21 cm



EYE AM THE ENDLESS OCEAN, 2009
Mixed media drawing on paper
240 x 190 cm



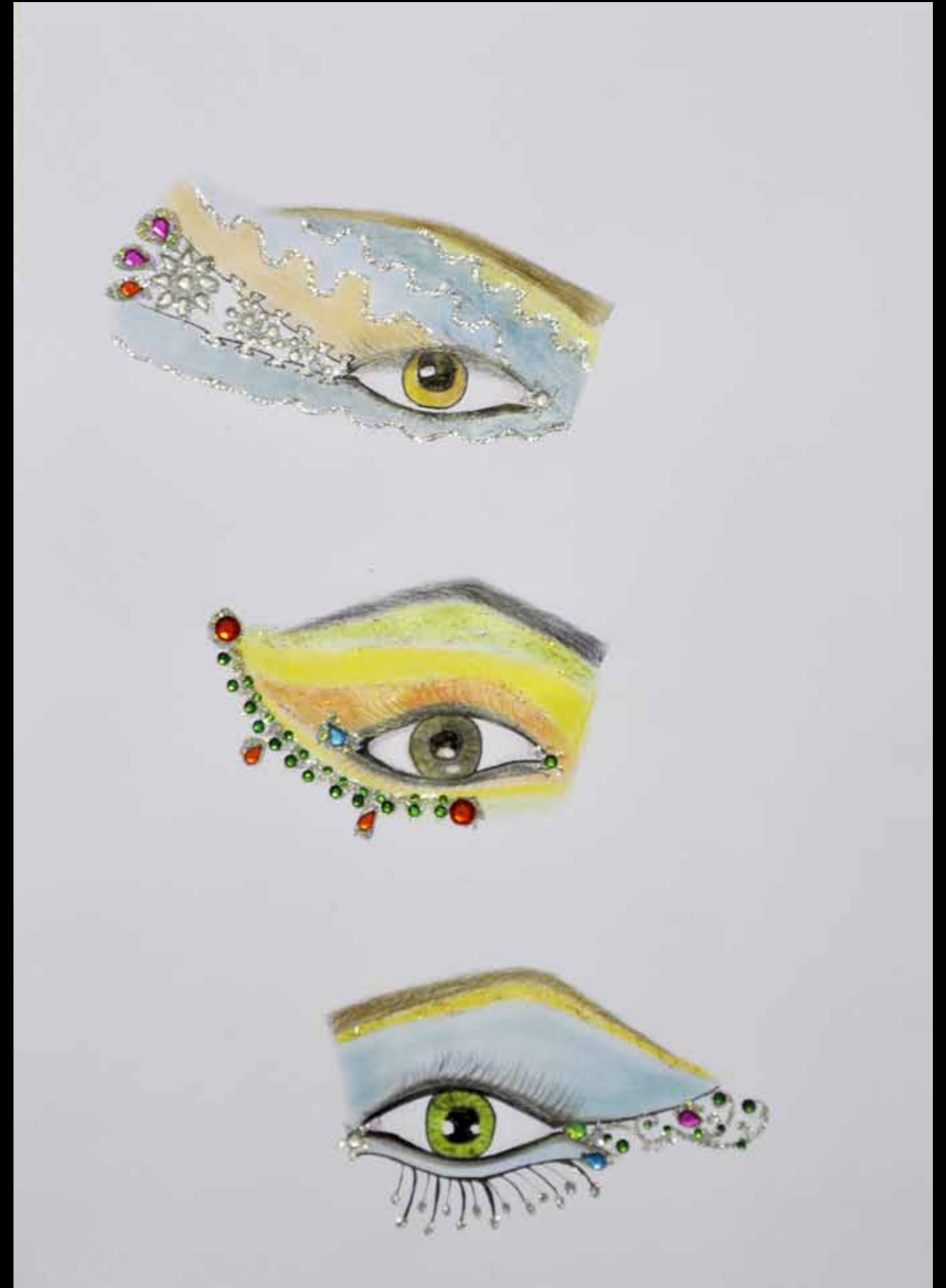
EYE DREAM OF YOU, 2009
Mixed media drawing on paper
30 x 21 cm



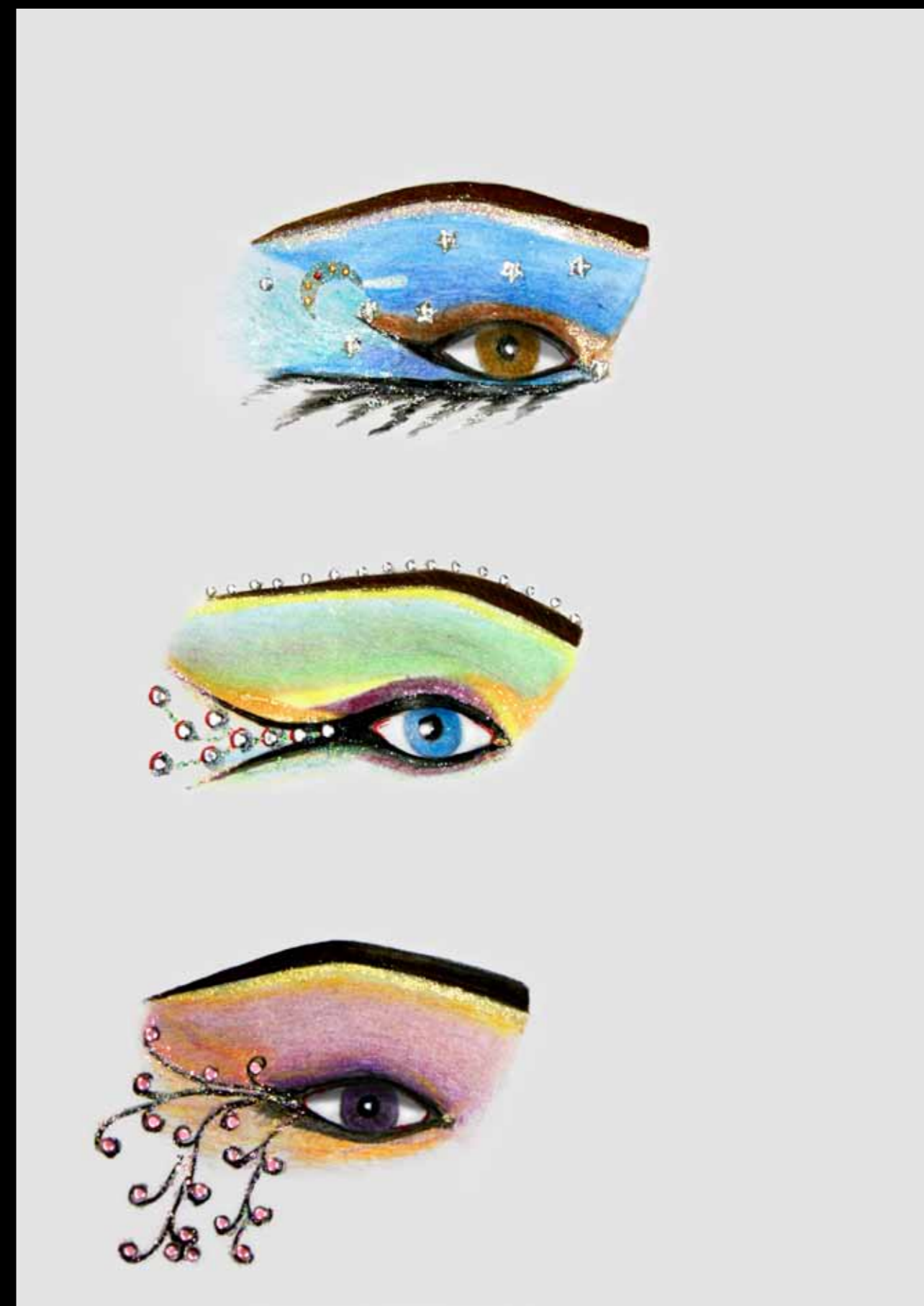
EYE LOVE BLACK, 2009
Mixed media drawing on paper
30 x 21 cm



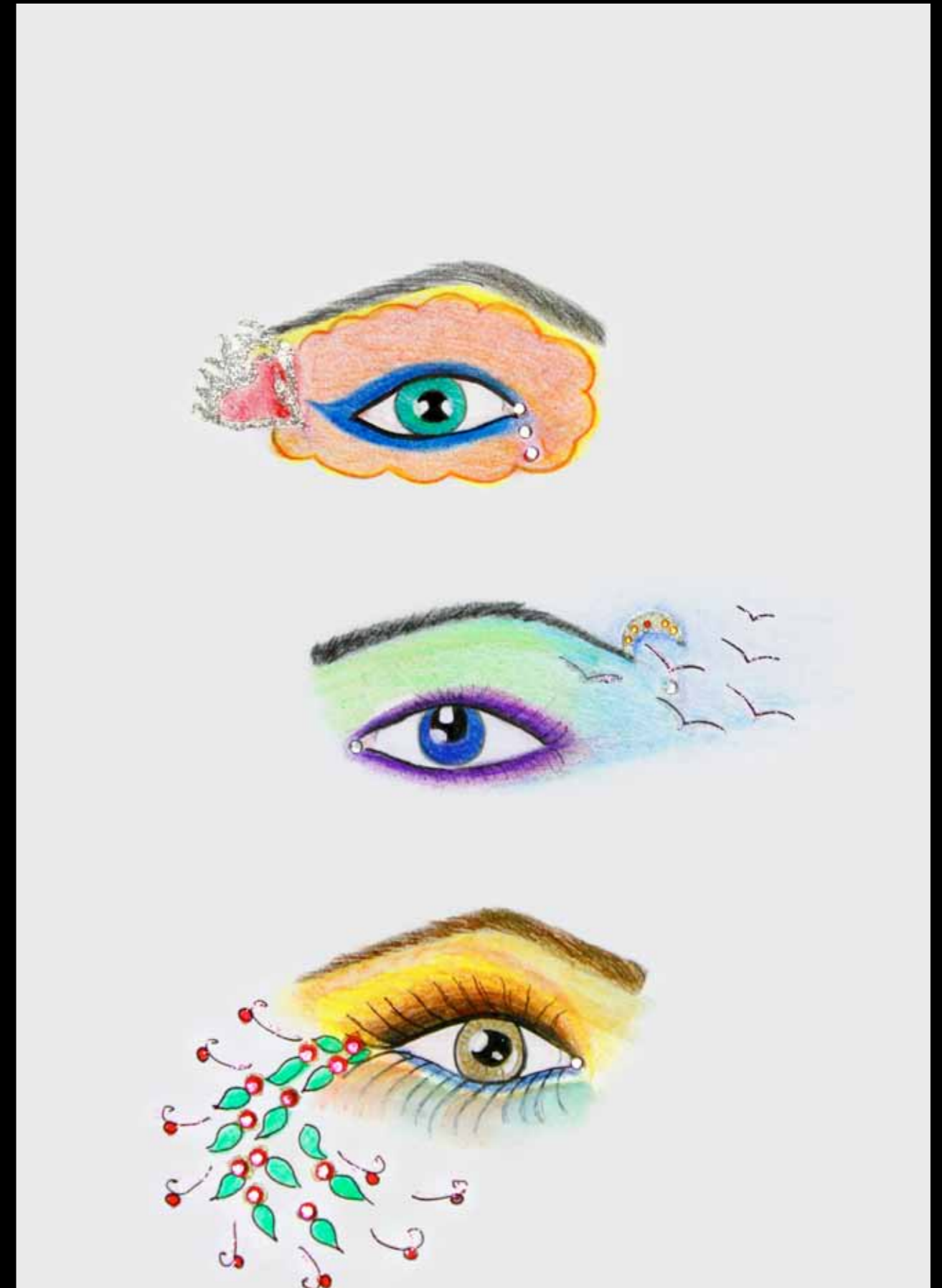
EYE WANT A DIAMOND, 2009
Mixed media drawing on paper
30 x 21 cm

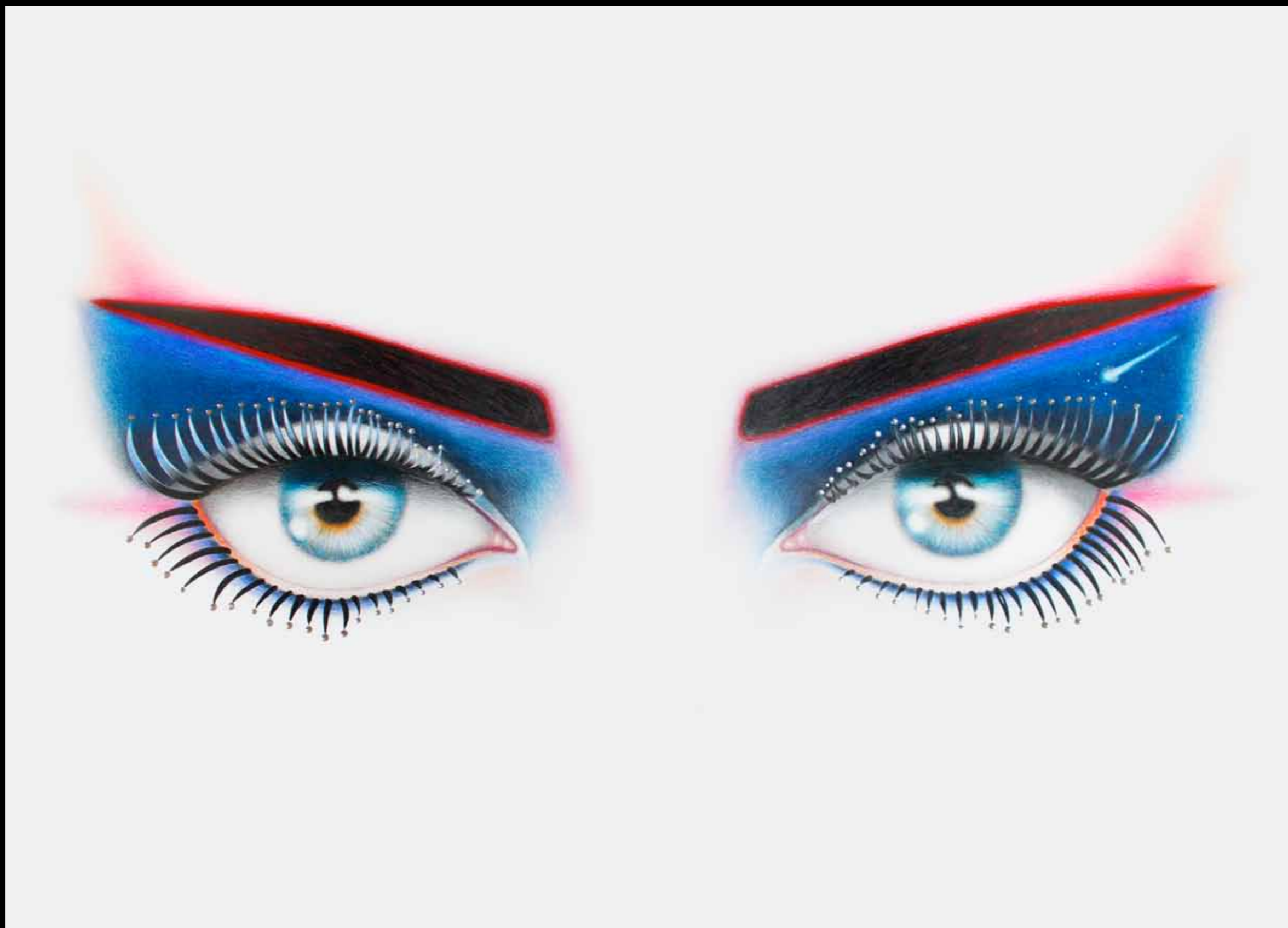


EYE WANT TO BE A STAR, 2009
Mixed media drawing on paper
30 x 21 cm



EYE WANT TO FLY, 2009
Mixed media drawing on paper
30 x 21 cm





EYE WANT TO FLY, 2009
Mixed media drawing on paper
30 x 21 cm

GLAMOUR GIRLS

Glamour Girls is a new series of previously unseen works by Shirin Aliabadi. Expanding on her photographic series, Girls in Cars, City Girls and Hybrid Girls, Glamour Girls is a collection of mixed media drawings relying on her trademark theme of engaging the viewer with the private, feminine side of life in Tehran. Aliabadi gathered several models to her studio for her studies of portraiture. She requested that they only come dressed as they would if they were to attend an evening wedding. The variety and flamboyancy of dress and maquillage varies with each portrait, presenting each subject and personality distinctly from the next. Where once the viewer witnessed chador-clad and veiled women expressing their individuality through cosmetic enhancement or accessories, Glamour Girls, presents the modern Iranian woman in full form. Unveiled, these women stand before the viewer with clear influences of Western fashion. Distinctively though, the eyes and heavily applied makeup create a hybridity present in all of Aliabadi's portraits. As seen from her series, Eye Love You and Eyes Only, the fanciful eye makeup is present on several models. The freedom of self-expression is removed from its confines of the veil and chador and is playfully executed in each woman's personal style. What may seem flamboyant and outrageous to a Western eye is merely a statement of individuality in a conservative society where single events allow these women to take the stage and display their fantasies and whimsy through their costume.

GLAMOUR GIRL 1, 2010-2011
Mixed media drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm





GLAMOUR GIRL 3, 2010-2011
Mixed media drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm



GLAMOUR GIRL 2, 2010-2011
Mixed media drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm



GLAMOUR GIRL 3, 2010-2011
Mixed media drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm



**GLAMOUR GIRL 6,
2010-2011**
Mixed media
drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm



**GLAMOUR GIRL 5,
2010-2011**
Mixed media
drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm



**GLAMOUR GIRL 7,
2010-2011**
Mixed media
drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm

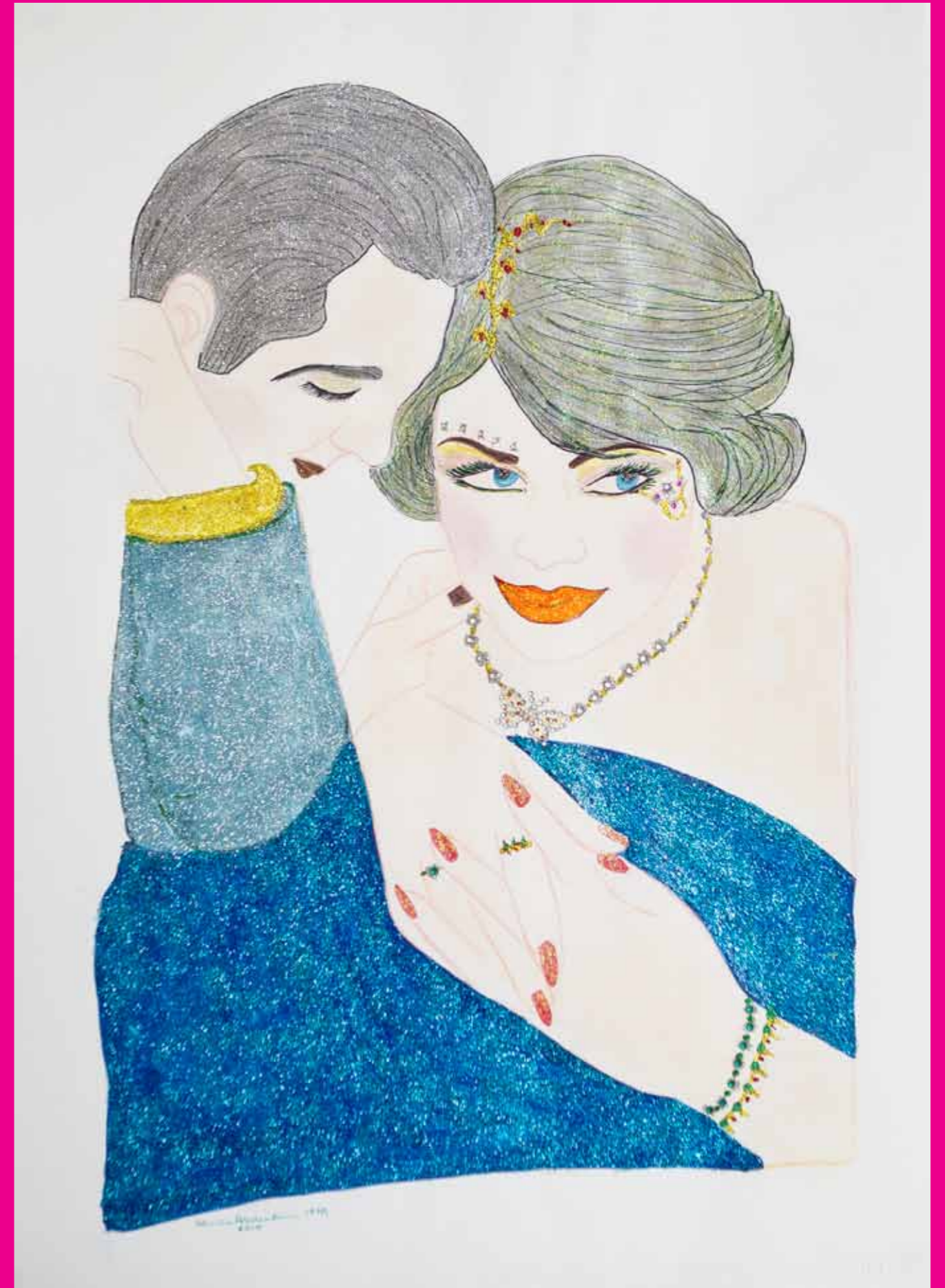


**GLAMOUR GIRL 8,
2010-2011**
Mixed media
drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm

LOVE TRIANGLE

Drawing inspiration from illustrated magazines prevalent in 1960's Iran, Shirin Aliabadi's new body of mixed media work, Love Triangle, captures the essence and turmoil of a romantic struggle. Ladies' literary magazines published during that decade told intriguing tales of romantic interludes, deception, longing and obsession, and proved the course to true love never did run smooth. Since banned, these illustrations elude to a time when love and courtship was publicly acknowledged and freely expressed. Decisions pending, the inner bewilderment and subsequent consequences of choice led some involved towards a path of happiness and others down the harrowing road of heartbreak. With strong female subjects as the focal point of each frame, the story unfolds with the woman in the empowered yet challenging role of decision maker. It is she who decides the fate of her two enamored suitors. A modern day, albeit mod version of Aphrodite, Aliabadi's female subjects maintain the fanciful depiction of eye make up present in her earlier series and her trademark vivid coloring and glittery embellishments.

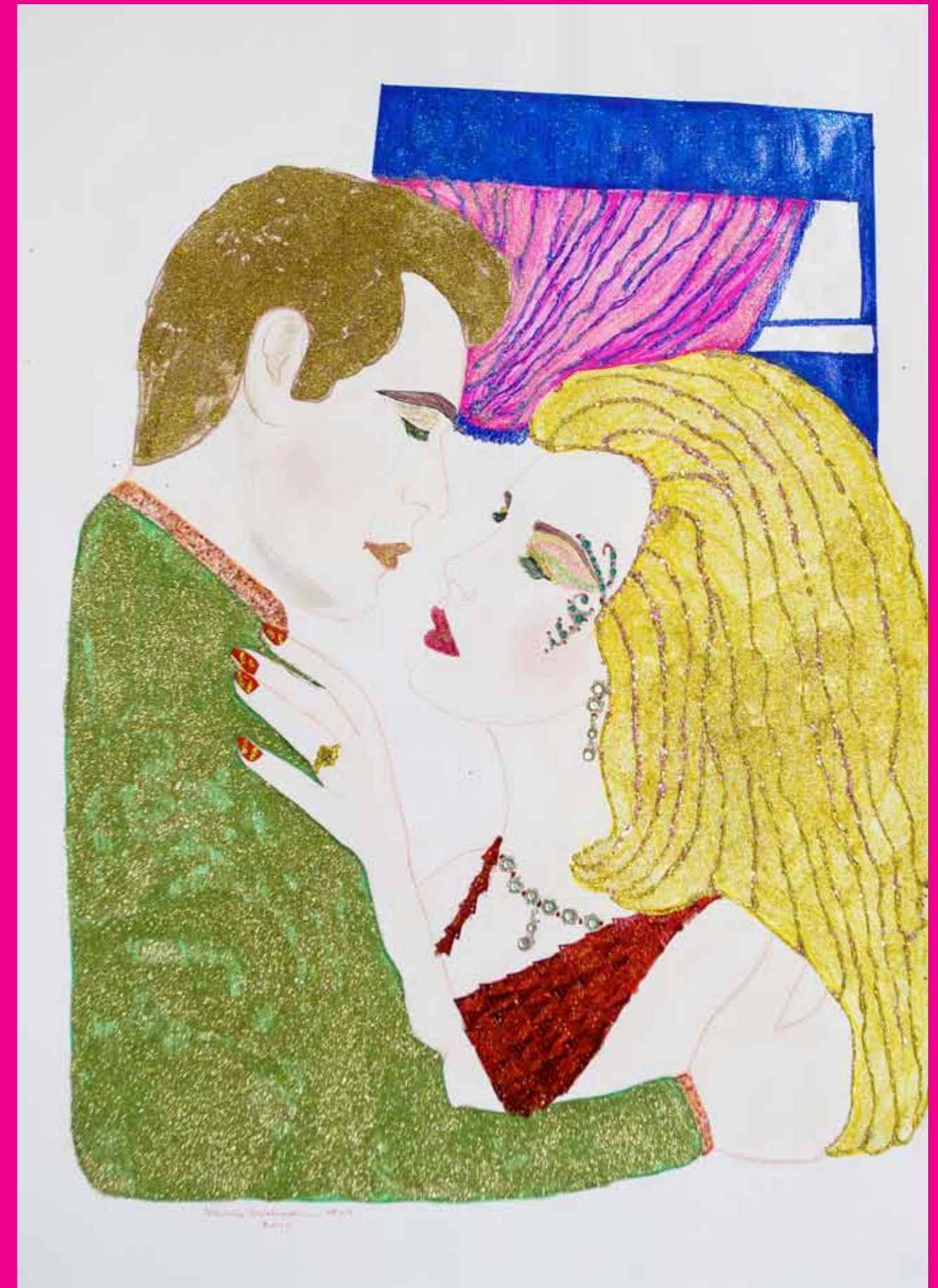
LOVE TRIANGLE 1,
2010-2011
Mixed media
drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm



LOVE TRIANGLE 3,
2010-2011
Mixed media
drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm

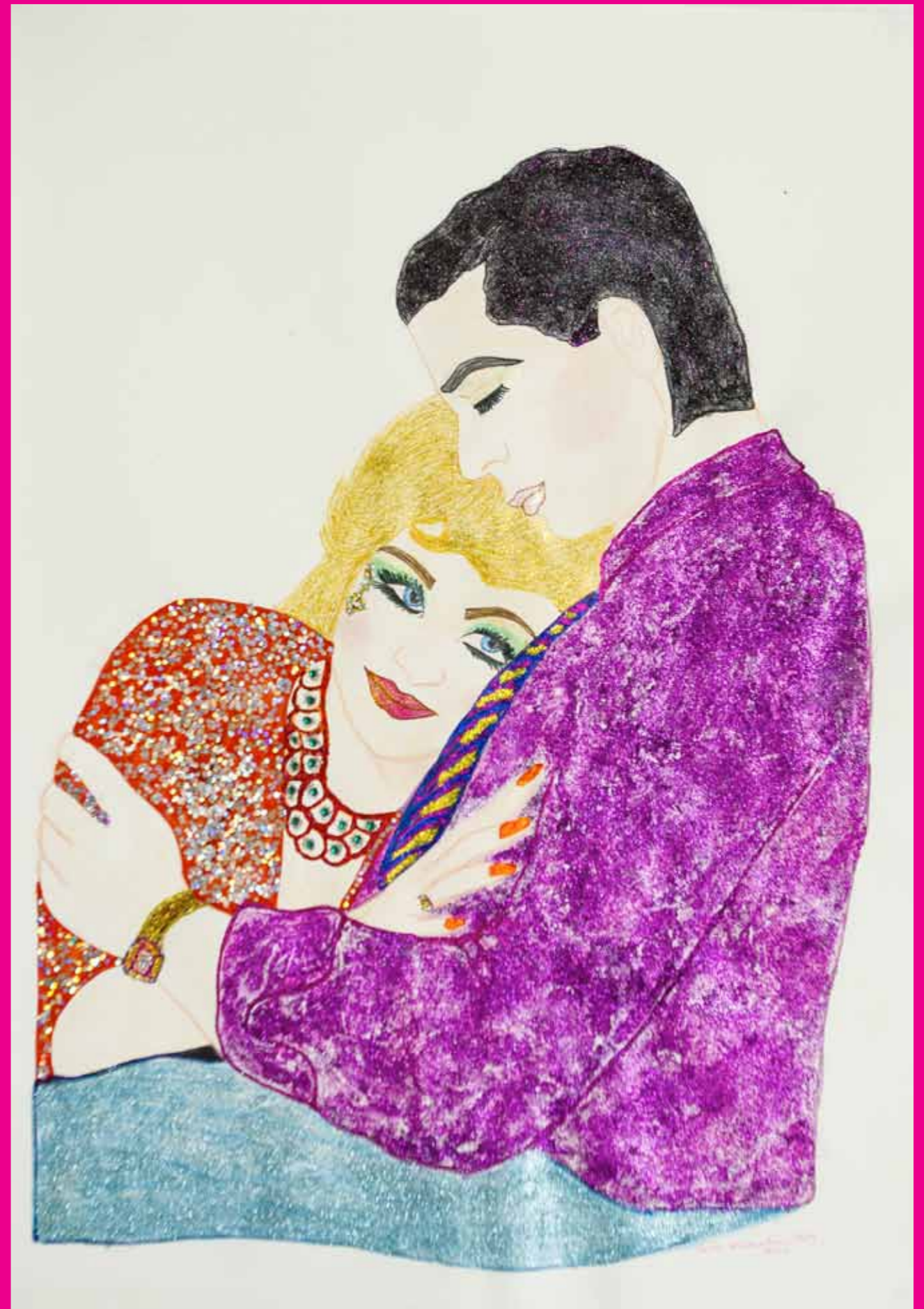


LOVE TRIANGLE 4,
2010-2011
Mixed media
drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm



LOVE TRIANGLE 2, 2010-2011
Mixed media drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm

LOVE TRIANGLE 5,
2010-2011
Mixed media
drawing on paper
50 x 70 cm



Biography Shirin Aliabadi

Iranian, born 1973 in Tehran
Art History and Art, Université de Paris, France
Lives and works in Iran

Selected Solo Exhibitions

Shirin Aliabadi – City Girls, Photography and Video, Chesa Planta, Zuoz, on the occasion of St. Moritz Art Masters, August/September 2011, Pascale von Planta, Girls in Cars 1 – 4 reproduced in colour, Miss Hybrid 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 reproduced in colour, City Girl 1 – 6 reproduced in colour
Shirin Aliabadi - Miss Hybrid, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, 2011
Eye Love you, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE, 2010
Operation Supermarket, Kolding Design School, a part of Images of the Middle East, collaboration with Farhad Moshiri, Copenhagen, 2006
Operation Supermarket, The Counter Gallery, collaboration with Farhad Moshiri, London, 2006

Selected Group Exhibitions

Opening of the Shirin Aliabadi Floor, Girls in Cars, Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt, 2010, permanent display open to the public
Made in Iran, Asia House, curated by Arianne Levene and Eglantine de Ganay, London, 2009
Iran Inside Out, Chelsea Art Museum, New York, N.Y., 2009
Raad O Bargh, 17 Iranian Artists, Kunstraum Deutsche Bank, Salzburg, and Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, 2009
East West Dialogues, Mysticism, Satire and the Legendary Past, curated by Layla S. Diba, Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery, New York, N.Y., 2008
Art Dubai, part of The Third Line booth, Dubai, UAE, 2008
Dreamscapes, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, 2007
Iran.Com, Museum für Neue Kunst, Freiburg, Germany, 2006 / 07
Operation Supermarket, collaboration with Farhad Moshiri, The Counter Gallery, London, 2006
Welcome, curated by Farhad Moshiri, Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, New York, N.Y., 2005
Beyond Black, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE, 2005
It is hard to touch the Real, Kunstverein München, Munich, Germany, 2004, (travelling exhibition, Germany, Norway, Sweden), 2004/05
Ethnic Marketing, curated by Martine Anderfuhren and Tirdad Zolghadr, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland, 2004
Far Near Distance, curated by Rose Issa, House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany, 2004

Selected Bibliography

Kunstbulletin, 9/2011, p. 98, Girls in Cars 2 reproduced

Die Louis Vuitton-Revolutionärinnen: Porträts junger iranischer Frauen in Teheran, in: Das Magazin, no. 38, September 2011, pp 22 – 31, City Girl 1 reproduced in colour on the cover, Girls in Cars 3 reproduced in colour, Miss Hybrid 1, 3, 5, City Girl 3, 5 reproduced in colour full page

Christian von Faber-Castell: Auf hohem Niveau, Kultur im Hochgebirge, St. Moritz Art Masters, in: Weltkunst, no. 8, 2011, p. 86, Miss Hybrid reproduced in colour

Der grosse Knall, Vom 11. September bis zum Arabischen Frühling. Die muslimische Welt gibt ihre eigene Antwort auf die Katastrophe, in: der Freitag, partner of The Guardian, September 8, 2011, Miss Hybrid 3 reproduced on the cover full page, Miss Hybrid 1 and 4 reproduced in colour p. 5

Cook, Xerxes: Blonde Faith - The rest of the world sees green, but Shirin Aliabadi prefers to explore the yellow and blue hues of rebellion, in: Tank, vol. 6/issue 2, 2010, p. 74ff., Series Miss Hybrid illustrated in colour

Esman, Abigail R.: Focusing on Iran - Iran calling, a new Generation tastes Success, in: Art and Auction, February 2010, Miss Hybrid 6 illustrated in colour on the cover

Sloman, Paul (Ed): Contemporary Art in the Middle East, London, 2009, p. 60f., Miss Hybrid 1 and Miss Hybrid 3 illustrated in colour

Art Collection + Design, Hong Kong, in: Art Market, May 2009, p. 16ff.

Iqbal, Nosheen: Made in Iran unveiled at London Gallery, in: The Guardian, June 26, 2009

Butler, Katherine: Iran's Hybrids Unveiled, in: The Independent, June 27, 2009, p. 40

Der Iran hat die Kunstbombe“, in: Monopol, Magazin für Kunst und Leben, Berlin, Nr. 4/April 2007, p. 47, Miss Hybrid 3 illustrated in colour on the cover

Cotter, Holland, review, in: New York Times, April 8, 2005

Le Centre d'Art Contemporain fait son marche ethnique“, in : Tribune de Genève, November 15, 2004



THE
FARJAM
COLLECTION

