

Planting New Roots

Contemporary Iranian Art in the 21st Century



Farideh Lashai



Mohammad H Emad



Samira Alikhanzadeh



Reza Lavasani

Dar Al-Funoon Gallery Kuwait

January 5 -17, 2008

C u r a t o r ' s N o t e

Planting New Roots: Contemporary Iranian Art in the 21st-Century
Politically and historically, Iran has varying evocations for the world. Culturally and artistically, it usually recalls the floral divans of its poets, and the miniatures, calligraphy and turquoise mosaics of its art and architecture. Contemporary Iranian art, however, has reached beyond these moulds, laying its groundwork in various styles and phenomena such as Abstract Expressionism, Conceptualism, or global themes. The results are uniquely modern works.

This exhibition presents the work of four contemporary Iranian artists. Their influences—although rooted in their indigenous cultures—are universally global concerns. Their work severs ties with its past, and categorically refuses labels of Eastern or Western art.

Farideh Lashai's landscapes, though nostalgic whispers of her native Gilan, are deeply rooted in "the European tradition of romantic landscape painting and the Post-Impressionist emphasis on the solidity of color."

Mohammad Hossein Emad's struggles with the discrepancies of a rapidly modernizing and synthetic era are transferred to his choice of materials: wood and metal represent tradition and modernity, their hollowed-out forms seeking compassion and conciliation with the world.

Samira Alikhanzadeh's conceptual use of found photographs of women and children, printed and overlaid with paint and mirror-work allude to the issues of existence, identity and time.

And Reza Lavasani's study of philosophy and mysticism has led him to his particular understanding of "man and his inner needs." He strives to bring peace and tranquility to humankind, forging universal symbols with the aim of drawing closer to the heart's truth and the mind's reality.

These artists transgress borders at a pace as rapid as the modernity and globalization which affects their works so deeply, and in which they plant their roots. It is my great pleasure to present their work at the Dar Al-Funoon Gallery, and I thank Lucia Topalian for her important role in promoting Middle Eastern art in the region.

Simindokht Dehghani
J Manouchehri Art Exhibitions
January, 2008

Samira Alikhanzadeh

Born 1967, Tehran, Iran

Education:

1998, MFA Painting from Tehran Azad University, Art and Architecture School
Aydin Aghdashlou School of Art

Select Solo Exhibitions:

2005: Golestan Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2003: Golestan Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2001: Golestan Gallery, Tehran, Iran
1999: Golestan Gallery, Tehran, Iran

Select Group Exhibitions:

2007: 32 Oskou, Students of Aydin Aghdashlou, Iranian Artists' Forum, Tehran, Iran
2007: Broken Promises, Forbidden Dreams, Art London, London, UK
2007: Assar Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2007: Wishes and Dreams, Iran's new Generation Emerges, Meridian International Center, Washington D.C, USA
2007: Society of Iranian Painters (SIP), Self Portrait, Iranian Artists Forum, Tehran, Iran
2007: Conceptual Art Exhibition, Bahman Cultural Center, Tehran, Iran
2006: Group Exhibition, Mah Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2005: Society of Iranian Painters (SIP), Khak Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2004: Group Exhibition, Aban Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2004: Trois Regards Persans, Salle Polyvalente de la Mediatheque, Issy-les-Moulineaux, France
2004: SIP, Iranian Artists Forum, Tehran, Iran
2004: SIP, Space Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
2003: Palme e Palmizi, Palazzo Allocca, Naples, Italy



- 2003: "25 Years of Separation: Iranian Art after the Revolution" Articultural Gallery, Santa Monica, USA
- 2003: SIP, Iranian Artists Forum, Tehran, Iran
- 2001: Sip, "New Experiences" Iranian Artists Forum, Tehran, Iran
- 2001: Contemporary Iranian Art Exhibition, Ataturk Cultural Center, Istanbul, ARSICA center, Istanbul; Modern Art Gallery, Ankara, Turkey
- 1999-2001: Contemporary Iranian Drawing, Barg Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2000: Fifth Painting Biennial, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran
- 1999: Contemporary Iranian Drawing, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran
- 1997-2005: Annual Golestan Gallery Exhibition "One Hundred Works by One Hundred Artists", Tehran, Iran
- 1995: Third painting Biennial, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran
- 1990: Watercolor Exhibition, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran

From the Woman and Rose Series, 2007 ▶
 80 x 80 cm
 Digital print, paint, mirrors on wooden board





◀ From the Woman and Rose Series, 2007
120 x 120 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board

From the Self Portrait Series, 2007 ▶
160 x 50 cm
Digital print, paint,
mirrors on wooden board

From the Self Portrait Series, 2007 ▶▶
160 x 50 cm
Digital print, paint,
mirrors on wooden board

I saw Samira Alikhanzadeh's paintings for the first time at the 2000 Tehran Painting Biennale. The most recent works by Iranian artists were hung on the walls at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. I was curious to know what changes and developments had taken place in the visual arts of Iran. Most works were in the abstract style and a few had incorporated calligraphy. Repetitious.

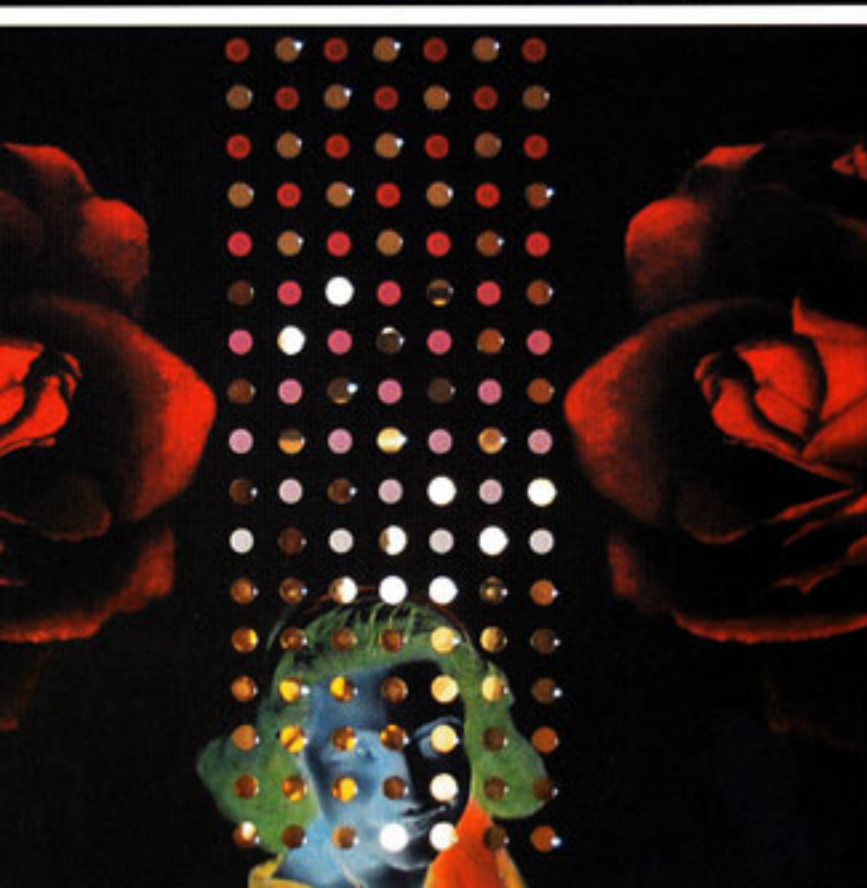
With indifference, I continued through the museum. Among the works I noticed two small collages. The artist had affixed old and tattered photographs of people who had once lived on this earth but now rested beneath it in God knows which cemetery to the surfaces of her canvases. Between the pictures were shards of mirror. These two works were completely different from the rest of the works on display. They spoke of the forgotten world of individuals who had once lived on this earth, had once dreamed and loved. Viewers of these works, not only saw the faces of the unidentified subjects, but also, their own faces reflected in the mirror shards; the philosophy of existence and non-existence. Hidden beyond these images and reflections, was a philosophical point of view. These works were by Samira Alikhanzadeh.





◀ From the Self Portrait Series, 2007
80 x 80 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board

▼ From the Woman and Rose Series, 2007
80 x 80 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board



Samira initially began painting with Aydin Aghdashlou and then studied it formally at the Tehran Azad University where she received her MFA. Unfortunately, most instructors enforce their own methods and styles of work upon their students instead of fostering their ability to think and develop. However, Samira has followed her own unique style and broken free from these intrusive methods of teaching. One can audaciously say that she has achieved in her works a degree of innovation beyond that achieved by those with lengthier careers.

I still recall two of her works on display at Golestan Gallery; one was from the "Bride and Groom Series" and the other, **in Memory of Bam**. The simultaneous use of intellect and emotion in her creations and honesty in conveying artistic thoughts are among Samira's characteristics and distinguishes her art from that which is being offered as modern art in our country. She walks in a realm between visual representation and abstract art; that which is seen of visual representation in her works, bears no resemblance to the accepted notions of nature but is in fact a seed - enveloped with Samira's own kind of logic and emotions - growing in the landscape of her thoughts. The result is the birth of something far from the visual aspects of nature.

From the Woman and Rose Series, 2007 ▶
140 x 80 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board

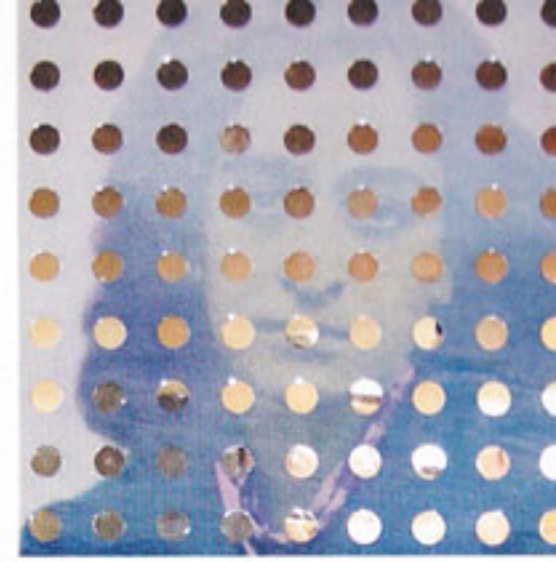




◀ From the Memento Series, 2007
120 x 120 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board

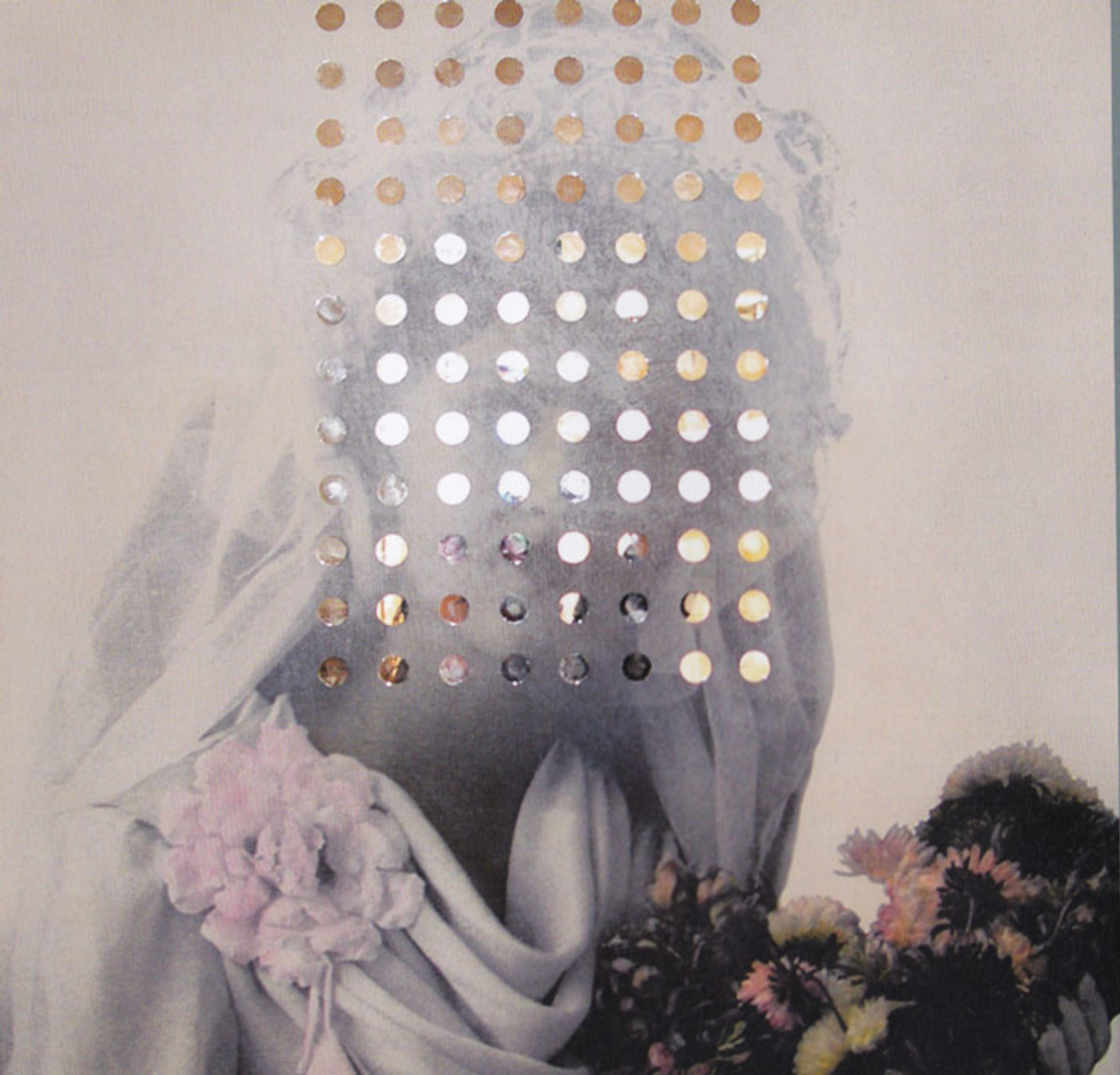
From the Memento Series, 2007 ▶▶
Triptych
120 x 40 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board

From the Memento Series, 2007 ▶
Triptych
120 x 40 cm
Digital print, paint on
wooden board

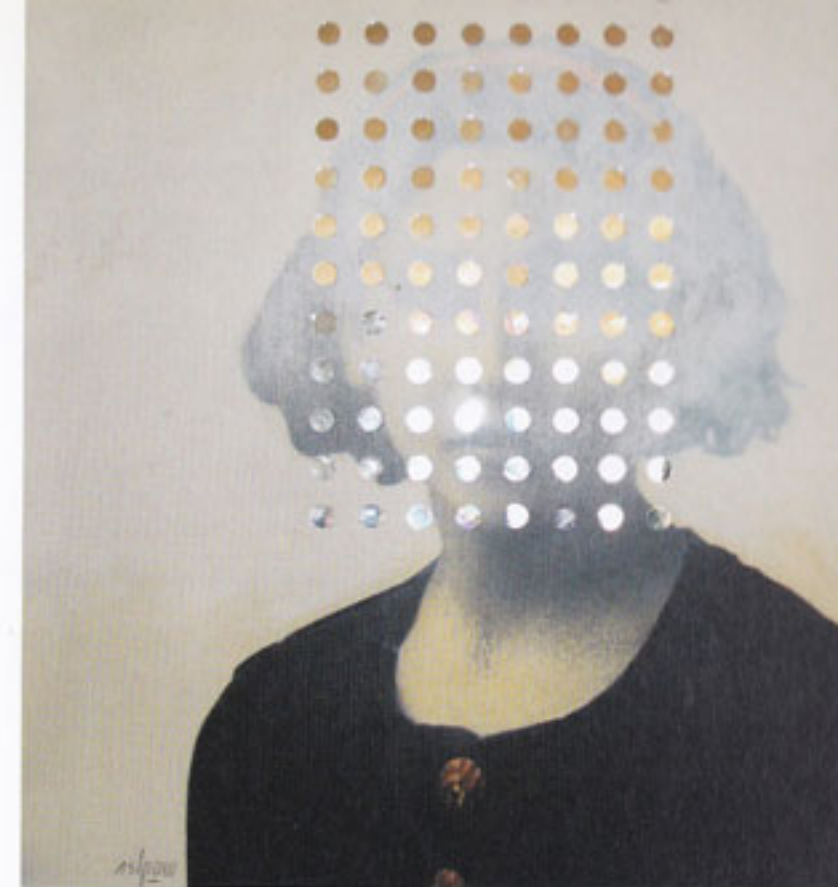


Samira continues to use mirrors in her works and invites viewers to "look at yourselves through me, perhaps you will come to know my secret world of emotions." I consider Samira Alikhnazadeh to be among the true artists who far from the commotion of achieving fame create works for the sole purpose of their love for art and life.

- **Mohsen Vaziri Moghadam**
Artist, Sculptor, University Professor
2007



◀ From the Self Portrait Series, 2007
80 x 80 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board



From the Self Portrait Series, 2007 ▲
80 x 80 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board

From the Self Portrait Series, 2007 ▲
80 x 80 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board

From the Self Portrait Series, 2007 ▶
80 x 80 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board

From the Self Portrait Series, 2007 ▶▶
80 x 80 cm
Digital print, paint, mirrors on
wooden board





◀ Untitled, 2007
140 x 80 cm
Mixed Media on Canvas