

# Art in America

October 2002

## Pouran Jinchi at M.Y. Art Prospects

Iranian-born, New York-based Pouran Jinchi manages to maintain an alliance between the three years of calligraphy training she received in Mashad, Iran, and another stint of three years' study at the Art Students League in New York. Her art has a calligraphic flair that, at times, comes close to the gestural effects of Abstract Expressionism. Many of her strokes are derived from Farsi letters and diacritical marks that push away from legibility and direct themselves toward organic abstraction. Formerly, her paintings began with a text, usually a Persian poem; the marks she made reflected both the actual words and thematic interests of the poem she was referring to. More recently, she has minimized literary sources and declared her interest in, of all things, ants. In fact, the title of her exhibition was "Antworks."

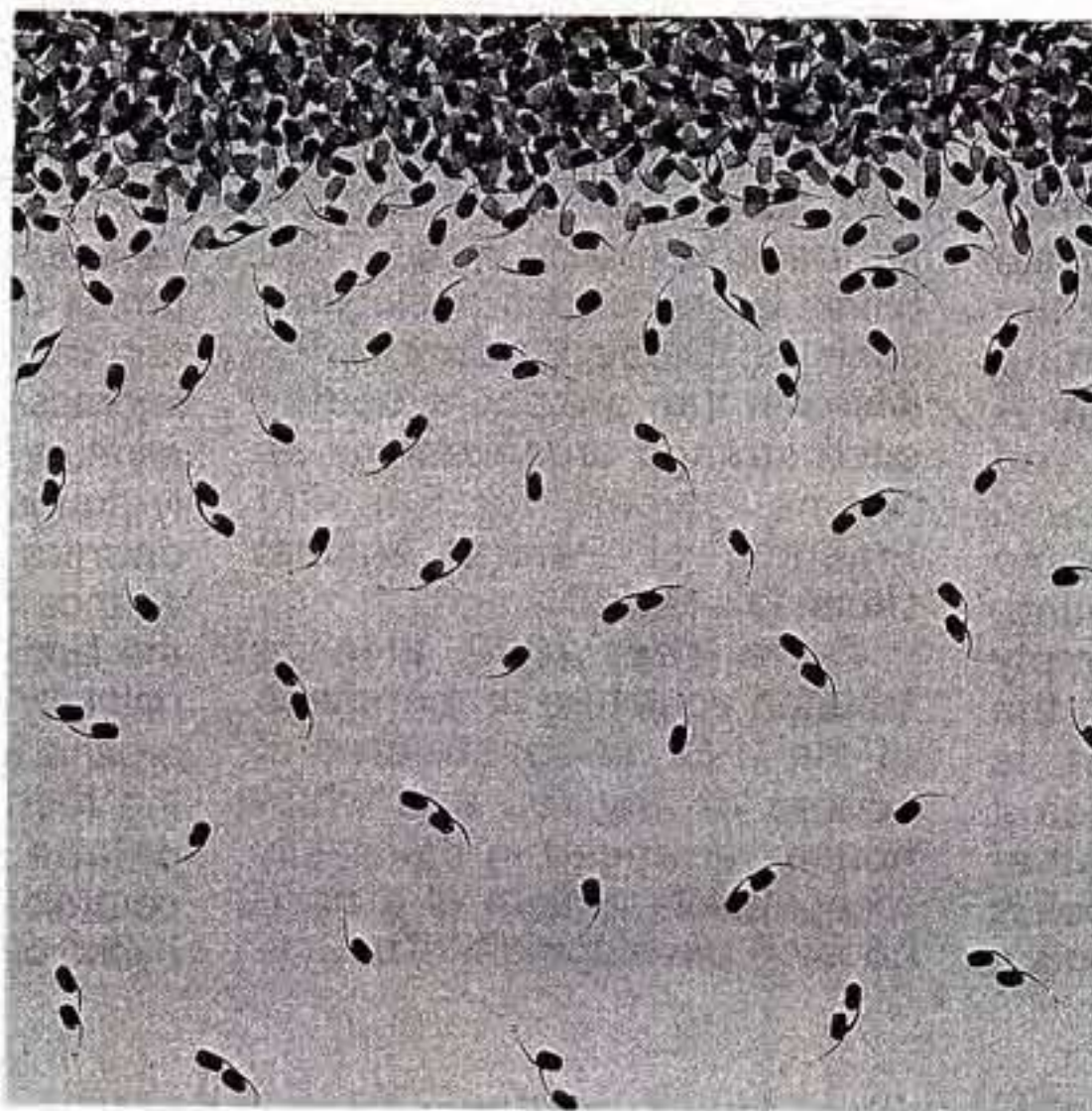
Viewers amused at this change in theme might not recognize in the well-composed canvases a reference to the Farsi word for ants, "moorcheh." Actually, the graphic design of Jinchi's canvases recognizes the ants' capacity for building colonies or walking in waves across the ground. While the general arrangement is purely of her imagining, the ants themselves are painted with a subtle regard for their forms: small eyes, rounded bodies, tapered legs. They are usually tightly massed together into columns that inch their way up or across the canvas. For all the natural history being described here, the ants' patterns make pleasing visual motifs; Jinchi keeps her training in calligraphy close at hand.

In *Deception* (2001), a sizable (48-by-36-inch) canvas, Jinchi uses acrylic and ink to detail two columns of the creatures; they cut across the canvas diagonally, from

lower left to upper right, with the gap between them slowly opening toward the top of the canvas. Their bodies are painted in two colors: deep purple and mauve. Their very thin legs form comma-like shapes. Jinchi's technical skill is evident here; the overall composition is elegant and the details fanciful. In *Annihilation* (2001, 54 inches square), the ants are bunched at the top of the yellowish-ground canvas; the middle and bottom parts are interrupted by single and paired ants equidistant from each other. Jinchi's witty turn on nature is all the more interesting for her sharp eye and light hand.

—Jonathan Goodman

Pouran Jinchi: *Annihilation*, 2001, acrylic and ink on canvas, 54 inches square; at M.Y. Art Prospects.



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