

Essay by Rolf Achilles , Art Historian, Teacher School of Art Institute, Chicago. For Rezac Gallery exhibit.

Since ancient times weaving has been a medium of expression that without losing its function of being useful and communal could be personal and sensual. For some it is a craft dominated by the language of function, for others, it speaks in lyrical phrases, if you will, poetry.

Though their individual functions may be that of a bedspread, day blanket, pillow cover, wall hanging or shawl, the weavings of Ani Afshar are created in series whose links are flight of fancy or statements of personal experiences interpreted publicly. What might appear to be a bouquet of flowers, or a dark faint archway looming against a burnt orange ground, or a chrome yellow triangle pierced with crimson cutting through a jet black field, or a mid-continent sunset with its combat of colors rising from an unrealized hill or valley and interrupted only by an isolated tree or group of shrubs is, for Ani Afshar, really a lyrical landscape of mind made visual.

Ever since Penelope set about weaving Laerte's shroud, weaving has been a language heavy with meaning. The weavings of Afshar are no exception. Each piece is a dialogue between the creator and the created; between artist and subject. Having lived in a casual assortment of distinctly different cultures, and traveled to yet others, Afshar has found many experiences to reflect on and incorporate in her weavings.

For example, she uses only wool or silk and never cuts a thread length after it has been introduced to the work, thus retaining its integrity and allowing the length to become an integral guide for weaving. The threads beginning and end dangles freely, as if it were from within the weaving, from its soul, and like a lure, focuses our attention to a playful school of small objects, most notably faceted glass beads or shaped metal pieces, such as a fish, from some exotic far away bazaar. Unlike Penelope who undid her day's work every night, Ani Afshar never undoes her work. Once woven, no correction is undertaken.

Seen together the symbols and working process speaks an immortal language understood by all who are interested.

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