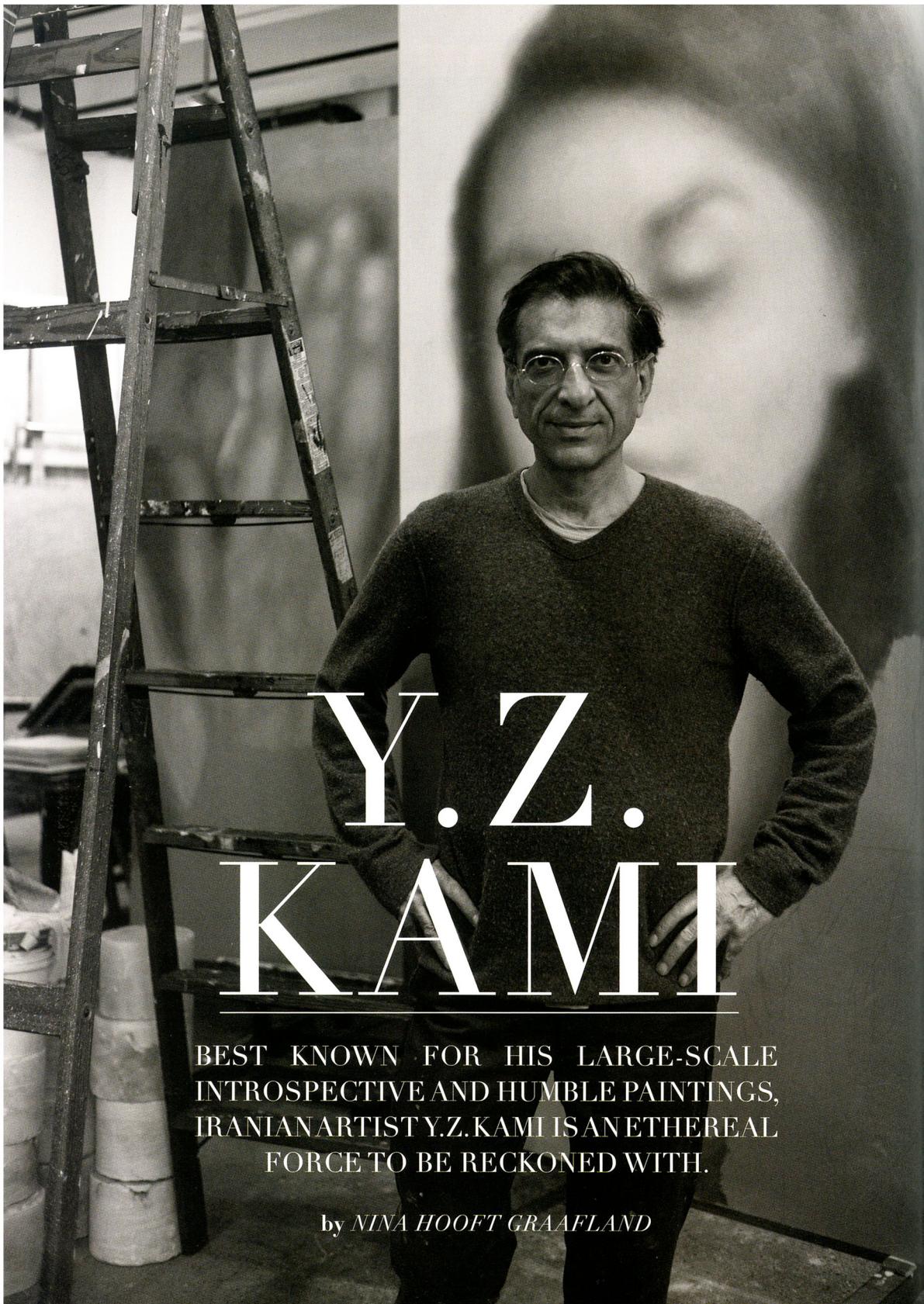


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GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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BEST KNOWN FOR HIS LARGE-SCALE INTROSPECTIVE AND HUMBLE PAINTINGS, IRANIAN ARTIST Y.Z. KAMI IS AN ETHEREAL FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

by NINA HOOFT GRAAFLAND

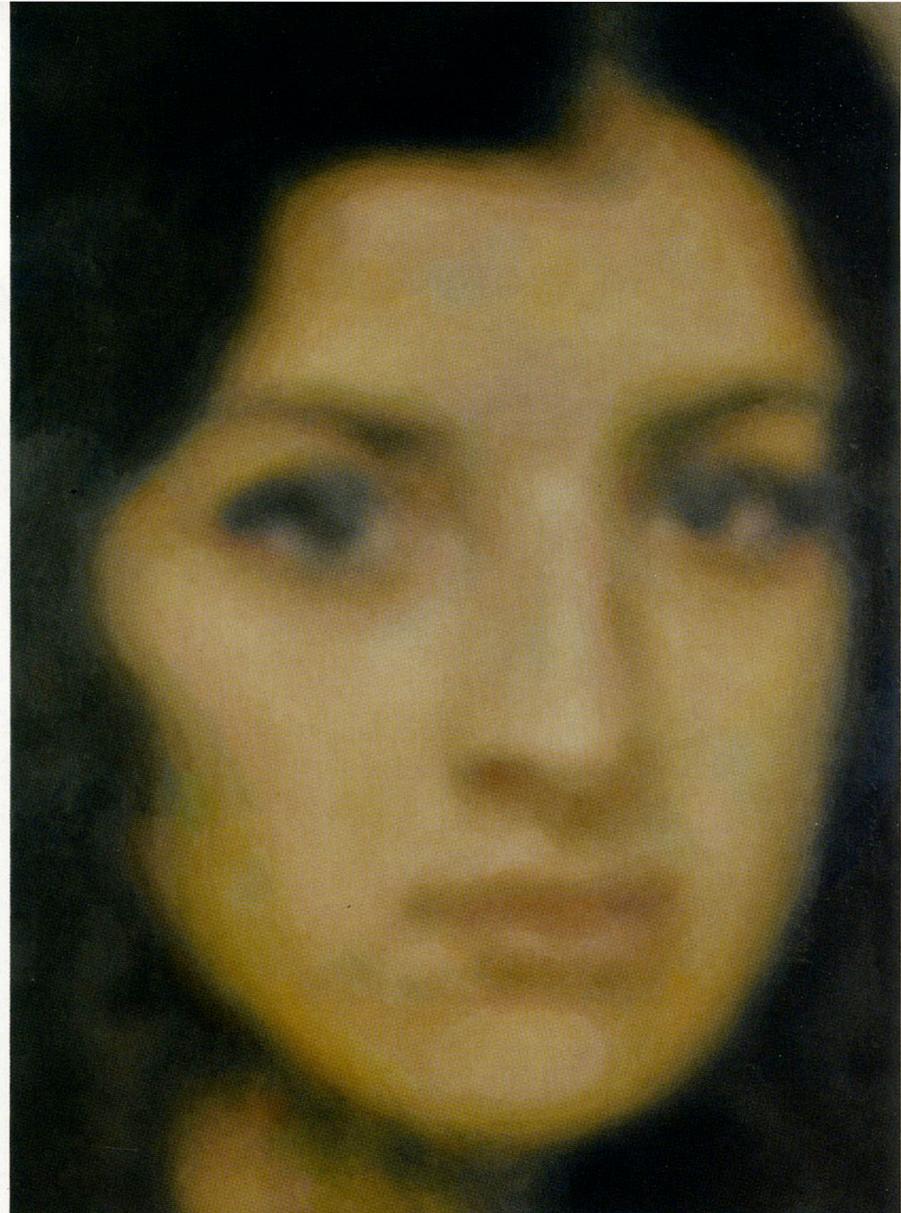
Represented by The Gagosian Gallery, Y.Z. Kami has gained significant attention internationally for his meditative and spiritual works. Born in 1956, Kami currently lives and works in New York. His works have been shown in a number of prestigious institutions, in particular New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, MoMA, Whitney and the Guggenheim, all of which also possess works of his in their permanent collections.

Brought up in Iran, his upbringing has certainly had a significant influence on his career. From an early age Kami started to paint in his mother's studio, and at the age of 17 he moved to Paris to study. It was here that he began to develop the direction of his work.

Manipulated by a wide and varied number of factors, drawing on both Eastern and Western mythical traditions, Kami's influences are presented in clarity, ranging from Islamic architecture and Sufi poetry, to portraiture, photography and sacred texts. These authorities are all evident in his work, as well as the Christian icons that he reflected on whilst studying in Paris.

Working predominately using oil paint on linen, Kami has developed a distinct and unique artistic style. His art mostly explores the meditative and spiritual introspection of the human psyche, drawing the audience in closer and closer to engage. Arguably his most striking works, portraits from the series Endless Prayer, sees Kami striving to tap into the mysterious nature of physiology. Cropped and close-up in composition and monumental in size, the paintings allow the viewer to fully comprehend the sitter.

Despite the intimacy of his compositions, Kami's portraits are untraditional in representation. Rather than seeking to represent the

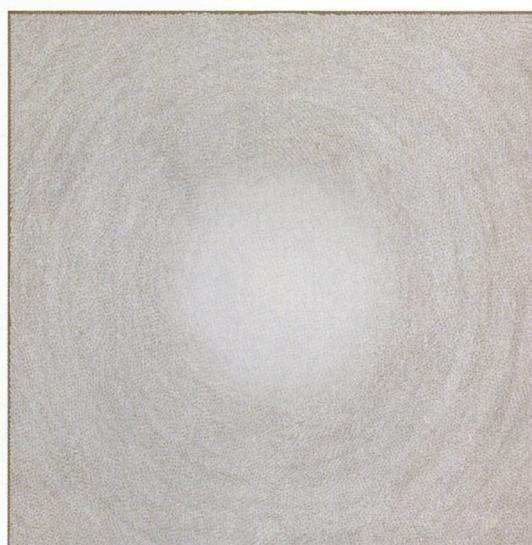


likeness of the sitter, the figures are detached and appear alienated from their surroundings. Kami essentially uses the face as a vessel in which to study their inner-psyché rather than as a means of depicting their physical likeness. Shown mostly with their eyes closed, the sitters appear to be deep in thought and contemplation, their gaze inwards. In the rare occasions that Kami shows the sitter with their eyes open, they actively deny any engagement with the viewer, rather their eyes are fixed upon a spot in the distance, avoiding any direct contact or communication.

There are no particular distinguishing features about the people Kami paints, rather he chooses a dichotomy of close friends and family, as

Above: Untitled, 2010. Oil on linen, 99 x 68 inches

Below: White Dome V, 2010 - 2011
Acrylic on linen, 112 x 121 inches



well as complete strangers. Strikingly ordinary, the figures are depicted wearing non-descript clothing so as to not detract from their spiritual being. Kami is interested in the human face as a means through which to convey a sacred and universal atmosphere or reflection and a spiritual presence.

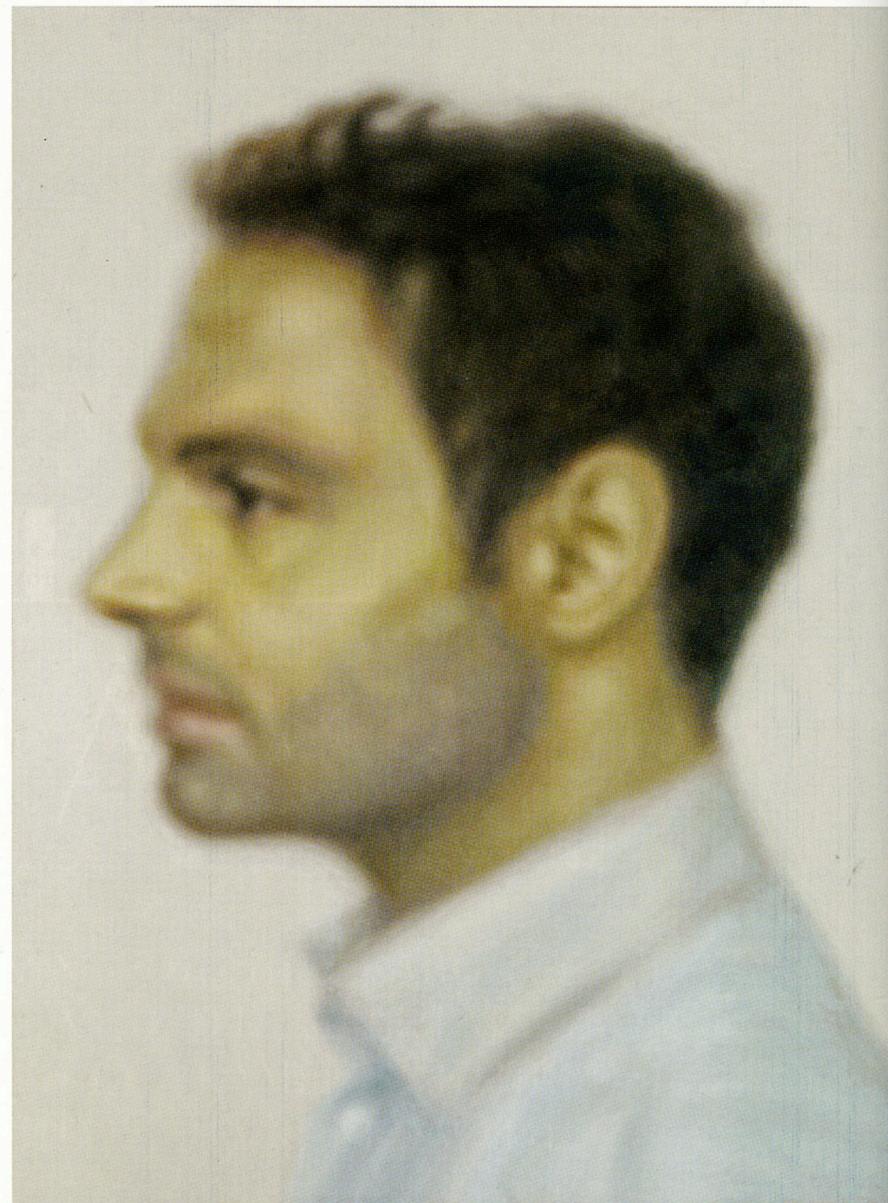
Denying any particular time or specific place, an infinite energy flows through each image – the works are in turn timeless and exist as an entity in themselves. Kami uses a uniformed sfumato (blurring of forms) to attribute his portraits with a mystical and magical aura. Frustratingly impossible to focus, the final affect is that the subject seems to be shrouded in a soft and spiritual energy, veiled under an ethereal light. Portraying the angst of alienation and loneliness that is experienced by many in an increasingly global society, the subjects appear to retreat within themselves, unsure of the world around them.

Accompanying this body of works are paintings depicting hands in prayer, as well as a series of White Dome paintings. These works continue in the same vein, focusing on the theme of universal spirituality as the domes shimmer with a white light. Inspiring contemplation and meditation, his works are connected, suggesting that everyone from all over the world is able to experience the same feelings regardless of their origins, religions and race, working with concepts of a universal memory.

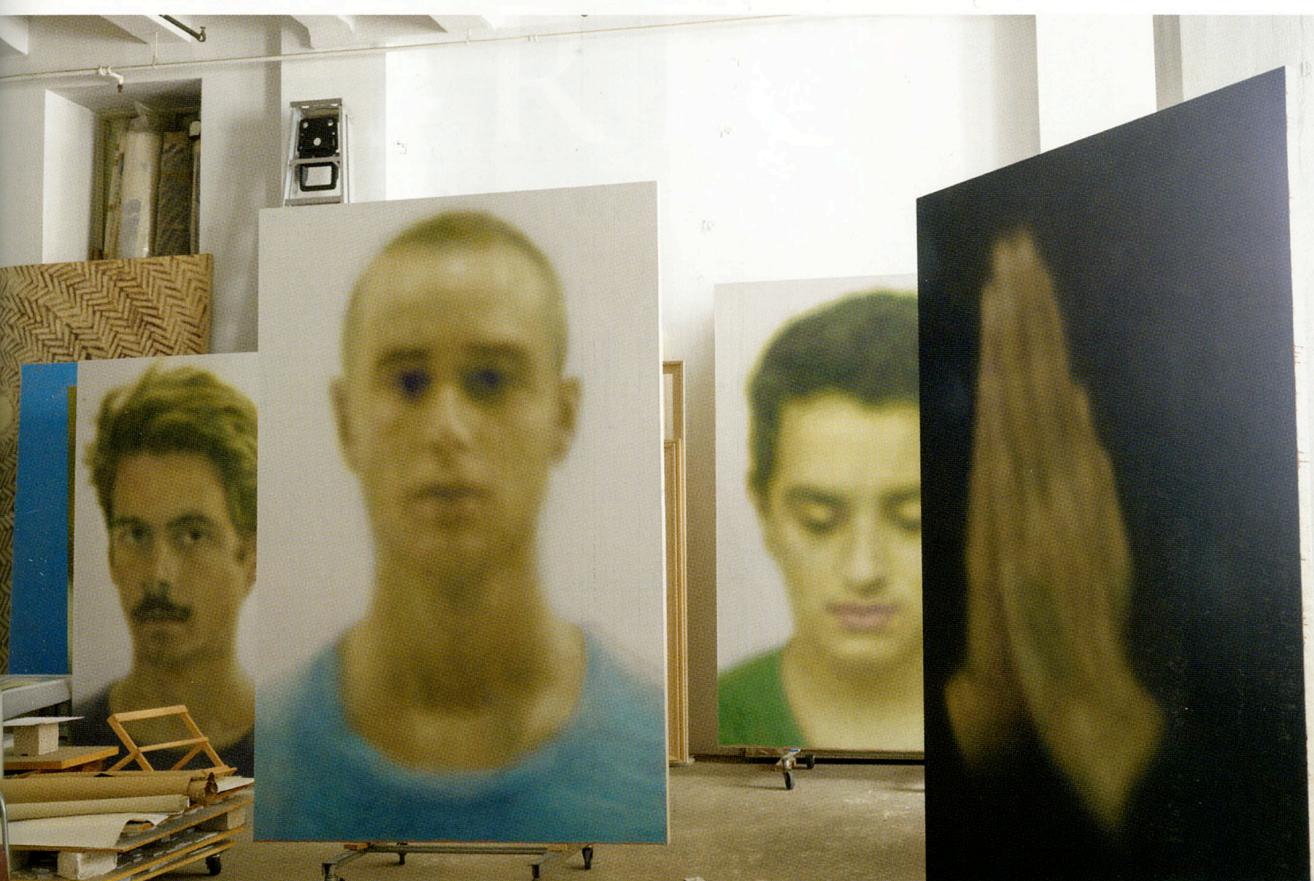
Excitingly, Gagosian Gallery are presenting a solo show of Kami's works in London this spring. Similarly to his previous works, the exhibition will consist of a combination of monumental portraits, as well as a number of his White Dome paintings.

Hugely talented and immensely inspiring, Y.Z. Kami continues to explore human emotion in his works. His unique ability to tap into the mystical and spiritual worlds that are inherent regardless of race, gender and age has positioned him as a leader in his field. Unassuming and modest, Kami's work delivers an intense and emotional impact on the viewer.

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*DENYING ANY
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SPECIFIC PLACE, AN
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EACH IMAGE*
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Daya in profile, 2014. Oil on linen,
118 x 80 inches



© Y.Z. Kami. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery.
Photography by Robert McKeever.

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*KAMI'S WORK
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Black Dome I, 2010 - 2011. Acrylic on linen,
80 x 88 inches