



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

Supports this exhibition

For further information on the gallery programme,
please contact **Esen Kaya**, gallery curator on
email: enquiries.agakhancentre.org.uk

Aga Khan Centre Gallery

10 Handyside St, Kings Cross, London N1C 4DN

The gallery is open everyday
from 10am–6pm • **Free Entry**



**AGA KHAN CENTRE
GALLERY**



Talk & Workshop in partnership with



Detail of Velvet series 2019–20
© Bitu Ghezelayagh

Aga Khan Centre Gallery presents an exhibition by internationally renowned Iranian textile artist Bita Ghezelayagh. Somewhere between an artisan and a conceptual artist, Bita uses her individualistic style to add a distinctively modern character to textiles of the past. Her work evokes grand themes of courtship and kingship while simultaneously celebrating the humblest units of artistic creation: the stitch, knot and rivet.

The exhibition begins with an invitation into a darkened space. Tiled-sized mirror works that echo the elaborate muqarnas of Islamic architecture in the far corner, attract the viewer to take a closer look. Her other works, bathed in light, catch the viewers eye with the flashes of bright velvety colours and an array of textures and tones.

The exhibition reveals Bita's masterful and inventive use of her trademark materials, velvet, silk, felt and carpet fragments. Each piece is a showcase for her own probing creativity and the skill of the original masters who created the old textile pieces she uses.

Bitá's pieces are the story of cutters, weavers, embroiderers, and printers. Using their artefacts, Bitá develops her own artistic expressions that elevate items such as threadbare rugs to make a statement about our age of casual disposal. Her triptychs make use of discarded materials such as traditional scrubbing gloves. While her diptych, with its shimmering velvet woven over several months on a traditional loom, are decorated with the shapes of cypress trees. These are fashioned from scraps of carpets from the four corners of Iran, each one representative of a different artistic tradition but meeting here as an expression of a bigger cultural whole.

The human body has been a point of departure for Bitá for much of her artistic life. Her work includes shepherds' cloaks, carpet tunics and metal breastplates. The conundrum of human communication, represented by pen nib motifs, is also a preoccupation. Bitá also uses mirror shapes to form compositions reminiscent of Islamic geometric patterns found throughout Iran that allude to her cultural heritage.

Bitá is an artist whose fascination with historical textile materials and contemporary objects inspires the need to rethread, retrace, renew and reinvent her collection of archival materials she has collected for most of her life and which she continues to do so. Her practice is about making something extraordinary out of the ordinary and giving a new sense of purpose by shifting a material's identity.

Bitá Ghezelayagh was born in Florence, Italy and lives in London. She has an MA in Architecture from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris La Villette. She worked for the Association of Iranian Calligraphers in Tehran and was art director of three notable Iranian films, including *The Pear Tree* by Dariush Mehrjui.

In 2003 she studied felt-making in Iran and had her first solo exhibition at the House of Artists *Khane Honarmandan* in Tehran in 2008. She has had numerous solo exhibitions both in the UK and internationally, including Rose Issa Projects, *The Letter that never arrived* and *Felt Memories*. Her touring exhibition *Namad: A Persian Journey in Felt* at The Collins Gallery, University of Strathclyde also travelled to the Quilt Museum and Hawick Museum. She has had solo exhibitions also at Albahreh Gallery and Golestan Gallery, Tehran.

Her work has been exhibited in group exhibitions across the world including Lajevardi Foundation, Shirin Gallery, Aaran Projects Gallery in Tehran. She has taken part in major art festivals and exhibitions at Sharjah Museum of Contemporary Art, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, the Jameel Prize at Victoria & Albert Museum, Institute du Monde Arab, Casa Arabe, Cantor Arts Centre, San Antonio Museum of Art, Centro Cultural Banco do Brazil, Beirut Exhibition Centre and Art Dubai.

Her work is within both public and private collections including the British Museum, the Farjam Foundation, Devi Art Foundation, Jameel Foundation and most recently within the Islamic Middle East Collection at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Exhibition Events

Join us for a series of talks and workshop exploring themes inspired by Bitá Ghezelayagh's work.

Talks

Artist Talks by Bitá Ghezelayagh

Saturdays 7 March & 25 April 10am FREE
Aga Khan Centre Gallery

Join Bitá for a talk about her exhibition, her new works and the Iranian cultural heritage that influences it. This will be followed by a Q&A. Light refreshments will be provided.

To book your place please visit:
<https://bitatalks.eventbrite.co.uk>

Universal Language of Stitch by Dr Susan Kay-Williams

Thursday 23 April at 6pm FREE
Atrium Conference Room, Aga Khan Centre

Dr Susan Kay-Williams, CEO of the Royal School of Needlework will explore the concept of stitch as a universal language in relation to both Bitá Ghezelayagh's exhibition as well as their *Stitch International* exhibition opening in April at RSN, London. She will also introduce their exciting new project *Stitch Bank* which aims to collect all stitches from around the world as an online resource. There will be an opportunity to view examples of stitched work from the RSN Collection and take part in a Q&A.

To book your place please visit:
<https://rethreading.eventbrite.co.uk>

Workshops

Hand Embroidery Workshop with the Royal School of Needlework and Bitá Ghezelayagh

Saturday 18 April 10am-4pm £60
Room 110, Aga Khan Centre

Taking inspiration from Bitá's exhibition and work, participants will learn a variety of hand embroidery stitches and embroider onto textured fabric or felt to create a unique textile piece. Participants will also enjoy a private view of the exhibition with the artist. All materials and equipment will be provided. Suitable for beginners but also those who already embroider but wish to learn some new techniques.

To book your place please visit:
<https://royal-needlework.org.uk/courses/day-classes/>

Rethreading & Retracing

Textiles and Techniques by Bitá Ghezelayagh

27 February – 3 May 2020