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Radcliffe Institute fellow returns to Brooklyn for new solo show



Brooklyn Heights-based artist Elise Adibi says place of residence inspires her art. Photo by Harry Choi, courtesy of Elise Adibi

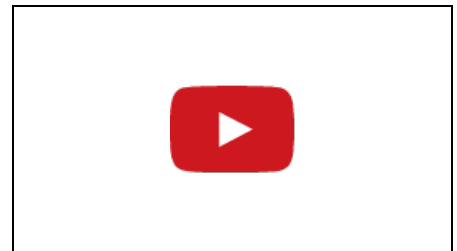
By Megan Cerullo
Special to the Brooklyn Daily Eagle

A visit to Elise Adibi's makeshift art gallery/studio apartment on Monroe Place is a reminder of the flavor and breadth of characters who call Brooklyn Heights home. Adibi is a longtime New York resident — she moved to Midtown in 1994 after graduating from architecture school at the University of Pennsylvania (she also holds degrees in philosophy from Swarthmore College and painting from Columbia University).

A residential stint in a loft above a beer distributor in Bushwick inspired a move to Los Angeles in 2012, from which Adibi drew

inspiration for her latest show at the Louis B. James gallery on the Lower East Side, titled "Substance." The aptly titled installation in the basement of the Orchard Street gallery incorporates essential plant oils and its works are connected through substance and smell.

Though Adibi has roots in New York, she considers herself a nomadic artist — one whose place of residence inspires her work. "Part of the reason that I got so into aromatherapy when I was in LA was because previously I lived in Bushwick where there were no trees and



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no natural smells, only ones made by humans living in an urban environment.” Substance and smell permeate the whole show — Adibi even built a floor with plant oil on it to act as a conduit for viewers — and perhaps also connect horizontal and vertical planes.

The relationship between horizontality and verticality is another tenet of her body of work informed by her educational background in philosophy. The grid composed from horizontal and vertical lines has been a mainstay in her work, but she also shows “poured” paintings in “Substance.” In a painting titled “Desert Painting” that came out of a solo camping trip to the Joshua Tree National Park, Adibi worked on the floor of her studio, mixing plant oil and oil paint poured directly onto the unprimed canvas. In this painting, she used frankincense, cedar wood and bergamot plant oils because of their aridness and airiness.

Though she’s reluctant to identify as an abstract painter, she accepts the categorization because she doesn’t paint landscapes, people or things.

What she resists about the label is that she maintains that her paintings are creations in and of themselves. They are not abstract representations of existing objects or beings, nor does she use appropriation as a strategy.

“I am not making pictures of landscapes or people, and I don’t paint by looking at something and trying to reproduce it somehow, so I have to say I am an abstract painter. But these paintings really are existing things that are just themselves,” she explains. “I see the painting as an object that is created through the viewer’s perception of it. The painting exists not as a fixed object but as the substance between matter and cognition.”

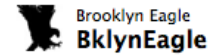
Adibi’s ties to Brooklyn extend beyond maintaining a residence in the Heights. She is an adjunct professor at Brooklyn College, where she recently completed teaching an advanced painting course. This iteration of her living in Brooklyn has been favorable from an artist’s standpoint; by word of mouth neighborhood fans of Adibi’s work have led to a steady stream of visitors, including prominent art critics and gallerists, to her Spartan, sun-filled “studio.” Adibi likens Brooklyn Heights to Cambridge, where she spent the year before her move at Harvard University as a Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Fellow. “I love trees and water and old, beautiful buildings and Brooklyn Heights was more like Cambridge to me than any other neighborhood in New York.” She also highlights features of her apartment that make it attractive for studio visits. “It has great architectural features, including large casement windows and parquet floors. Also, the building was built in 1938 and has not been renovated. It feels like a building in a Woody Allen movie.”

“Substance” is showing at the Louis B. James gallery through Jan. 25.



Elise Adibi’s show “Substance” is now on view at the Louis B. James gallery on the Lower East Side. Photo

by Matt Grubb, courtesy of Elise Adibi



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Elise Adibi's show "Substance" will remain on view at the Louis B. James gallery on the Lower East Side through Jan. 25. Photo by Matt Grubb, courtesy of Elise Adibi

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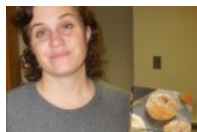
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