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PRESS RELEASE

Green Art Gallery Dubai presents “Brute Ornament” featuring the works of Kamrooz Aram and Seher Shah and curated by Murtaza Vali

Opening Reception: 19th March 2012, 7 - 9 pm

Exhibition Dates: 19/03/2012 - 05/05/2012

For immediate release: Green Art Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of “Brute Ornament”, a two-person exhibition featuring the works of New York based artists Kamrooz Aram and Seher Shah, curated by Murtaza Vali. The exhibition will be accompanied with a comprehensive publication edited by Murtaza Vali and with contributions by Shumon Basar, Media Farzin and Alan Gilbert.

Through the works of these two artists, the exhibition explores the conflicted relationship between the decorative tradition of ornament and Western modernism, revealing the constitutive role that ornament played in the development of modern art in the West, specifically in the move towards pure abstraction that was modernism’s endgame.

Both Aram and Shah knowingly deploy their culturally specific subject matter against a background interest in Western modernism, reflecting a broader generational curiosity in and nostalgia for its tremendous Utopian aspirations and the theories, forms and structures it inspired. Over the years, Aram has developed a personal vocabulary of highly stylized motifs—falcons, star bursts, patterns from Persian carpets, angelic figures and spiral clouds from Persian miniatures—that he repeatedly reconfigures into painterly meditations on mysticism and exoticism that teeter between the sublime and the kitsch. And in her large graphite drawings Shah, a trained architect, has described a series of turbulent and fantastic landscapes, courtyards studded with cenotaphs, columns and monuments and plastered with patches of vegetal ornament, immersed in maelstroms of vector lines, smoky trails and swirling arabesques.

In their recent work ornament comes to function less as an overt marker of cultural difference than the specific terrain on or through which a sophisticated dialogue between the iconography of traditional Islamic forms and the history, theory and ideology of modernism unfolds. This recent work also exhibits hints of ambivalence towards ornament, playing out distinctly in their

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respective oeuvres. In Shah's most recent drawings, while form and space verge on pure abstraction, the black monoliths that dominate the compositions are juxtaposed against dispersals of smaller geometric shapes whose complex patterns fold and unfold, expand and contract, asserting their presence. And in Aram's most recent paintings, while pattern and geometry both struggle to dominate the final image, expressive and gestural painterly marks challenge their visual integrity. Ornament appears both brutal and brutalized.

Born in Shiraz, Iran in 1978, **Kamrooz Aram** received his MFA from Columbia University in 2003 and his BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore in 2001. Solo shows include *Negotiations* at Perry Rubenstein Gallery, NY, *Generation After Generation, Revolution after Revelation* at LAXART, Los Angeles, CA and *Kamrooz Aram: Realms and Reveries* at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, Massachusetts. He has shown in several important groups shows including roundabout (2010), the Busan Biennale (2006), P.S.1/MoMA's Greater New York 2005, and the Prague Biennale I (2003). His work has been featured and reviewed in the New York Times, Art in America, Artforum.com and Bidoun among others. He lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Born in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1975, **Seher Shah** received her Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Architecture from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1998. Solo shows include *Paper to Monument* at Nature Morte, New Delhi, India, *Jihad Pop* at Bose Pacia, NY and most recently *Object Anxiety* at Scaramouche, NY. Her work has appeared in several international exhibitions ranging from *Zeichnungen: Conceptual and concrete drawings* at Gisele Linder, Basel, *Generation 1.5*; and *Eccentric Architecture* at the Queens Museum of Art, *21: Twenty-first Century artists* at the Brooklyn Museum, *Empire and its Discontents* at Tufts University, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, *Drawing Space* at Green Cardamom, London, *Lines of Control* at Green Cardamom and the Third Line, Dubai, *New York to Los Angeles* at GBK, Sydney, and *Uber Wut/On Rage* at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. She has had reviews in the New York Times, Art Asia Pacific, Art India, Bidoun, Art Papers, New York Magazine, Time Out New York, Newsweek and Frieze Magazine amongst others. She lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Murtaza Vali is a writer, art historian and curator. He received an M.A. in Art History and Archaeology in 2004 from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. An independent critic since 2005, his reviews, essays, profiles and

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interviews regularly appear in Artforum.com, ArtReview, Art India, Bidoun, Harper's Bazaar Arabia Art, Modern Painters and ArtAsiaPacific, where he is contributing editor and was co-editor of their 2007 and 2008 Almanac. He has penned monographic essays on Siah Armajani, Shilpa Gupta, Emily Jacir, Reena Saini Kallat, Laleh Khorramian and Naeem Mohaiemen and recently edited *Manual for Treason*, a multilingual publication commissioned by Sharjah Biennial X (2011). As winner of the Winter 2010 Lori Ledis Curatorial Fellowship, Vali curated "Accented" at Brooklyn's BRIC Rotunda Gallery (2010), and received a 2011 Creative Capital | Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant for Short-Form Writing. He lives between Sharjah, U.A.E. and Brooklyn, NY.

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