



Christine Khondji

Djinns

Shamanic Self-Portraits

the october gallery

invites you to the **Private View**
on **Wednesday 25th February**
6:00-8:30pm

The exhibition continues to 21 March 1998
Tuesday - Saturday: 12:30 pm - 5:30pm



the october gallery

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Shamanic Self-Portraits

Born in France into a mixed French-Iranian family, Khondji unleashes in her shamanic self-portraits the powerful demons or *djinns* of Mohammedan mythology that inhabit the worlds around and inside us. Here, they are exorcised, staged and bravely exposed.

Her phantasmagoric painted images of *djinns*, in and around the body, contrast with the calm and peaceful character of the artist herself, whose work displays an extensive knowledge of the human physiology, plants, animals, religions and rituals. They show the influence of sources as diverse as Siyah Qalam or Munch.

After spending most of her childhood in Iran, Khondji studied Islamic Art and Oriental Archaeology in Paris and Photography in London. She travelled widely, living for long periods in various countries before establishing herself as a writer and painter.

Khondji's paintings on paper, mostly life-size, present recognisable metaphoric figures and images of spirits, unleashed by mysterious forces.

They may seem chaotic, with faces screaming in pain, naked dancing bodies, shapes of elephants, wolves, dogs, snakes and monkeys which bear a strange resemblance to Ganesh, Hanuman or Kali. However they are not hostile creatures, but mysterious and somehow familiar beings, the remnants of a pagan and mythical past.

Each painting is a crucible in which Khondji's own shape and colour undergo radical transformations through contact with powerful forces, revealing in the process the essential qualities of the self. Sometimes, the word *man* (self), written in Persian, emerges from within or around the drawings. In these evocative canvases the images of Khondji's inner world, a world of the unseen, of unperceived objects of fear and fantasy, are incorporated into single composite figures, in the manner of Indian Sufi drawings.

This is Christine Khondji's first exhibition in London.

Rose Issa, London, 1998

My drawings flow
from my fingers,
craving to dance
on paper.

They take me
by surprise,
make me burst
into laughter.
They are the *Djinns*,
the *Deevs*,
nomadic spirits
of my childhood in Iran.

I used to catch
glances of them
on the mountain sides,
dancing in the shadows,
under the blinding light.

They are now in me.
They inhabit my body,
the marrow of my bones,
the fibre of my tendons.

They nest in the hollow
of my shoulders, hurting me,
desperate to get out,
to spurt out of my brushes.

I draw them.
I call them Shamanic Self-Portraits,
for they have invaded everything,
and what I thought to be me
has been erased, covered with paint.
Oil on paper.
Self-Portraits.

Christine Khondji

This exhibition is organised in collaboration with Rose Issa and the support of Institut Français du Royaume-Uni, London.