



**Kamrooz Aram, *Untitled (Arabesque Composition)*, 2021**, oil, wax crayon, and pencil on linen, 54 × 48".

PARIS

## Kamrooz Aram

GALERIE MITTERRAND  
79, rue du Temple  
September 10–October 30, 2021

*“Un objet, un geste”* (An object, a gesture,)

Kamrooz Aram’s first solo exhibition in France, calls into question critical hierarchies perpetuated by qualifiers like *decorative* and *non-Western*. In the largest painting on view, *Untitled (Arabesque Composition in Lapis Lazuli)*, 2019, curvaceous forms in contrasting shades of brilliant blue are surrounded by a border of untouched linen support. As in other paintings from the Iranian-born artist’s

“Arabesque” series (2018–), Aram here recasts so-called ornamental flourishes as the main event while creating a frame—typically, a marker of value that is itself ornate—whose blankness seems anything but neutral. Throughout the exhibition and across various media (see, for example, the play between flat planes and sculptural elements in the installation *Composition with lapis lazuli, cobalt and ceramic bottle*, 2021), Aram underscores how motifs and materials outside the Euro-American canon have historically been devalued and exploited.

If Aram’s crisp interleaving curves, which also appear in the painting *Untitled (Arabesque Composition)*, 2021, are suggestive of Frank Stella’s “Protractor” paintings (1967–71), this is surely a reminder that Stella’s vaunted abstractions were themselves inspired by Islamic art and architecture seen during the artist’s 1963 trip to Iran. Complicating this chain of influence with a nod to Abstract Expressionism, Aram’s petaloid forms vie for prominence with visible brushstrokes and occasional drips. Clyfford Still, for whom deep blue was also a signature color, comes to mind. Aram’s chosen blue—lapis, a rare metamorphic rock mined primarily in Afghanistan—was used by European Renaissance painters to glorify the most important elements of their compositions. By spreading this precious material across his supports, Aram rids his work of internal hierarchy as well.

— Mara Hoberman