

Infinite Shells

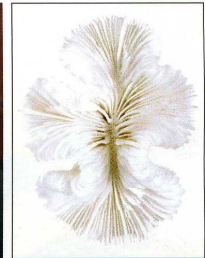
By Lázaro Pérez-Moré



Above: *Endless Love*
Below: *White Mischief*



Photographer Iran Issa-Khan



The nautilus shell is one of nature's perfect shapes. The whimsical cephalopod has survived unchanged for millions of years, and some even consider it a living fossil. It has served as muse for artists and architects and as a point of reference for scientists. In this case, it works as a lief motif for Iran Issa-Khan's newest exhibition at the Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery in New York City: *Infinity*.

Throughout the 80s and 90s Issa-Khan received recognition and acclaim as a renowned fashion and portrait photographer. Supermodels, international celebrities and even former first lady Nancy Reagan posed for her acute lens. In more recent years, she has turned her attention from photographing fascinating people to capturing the beauty of nature that displays itself effortlessly around us.

Living and working in South Florida, she found inspiration from the idyllic environment of the area through single organic forms found in nature. Individual shells, corals and flowers, in subtle variations of white, are rendered in larger than life photographic prints that illuminate the gallery walls. Her masterful use of light and skillful composition are the elements that channel the poetry of nature into film, turning our attention to the individual power and poetry of the objects. Through the use of these ancient forms, she reminds us that everything around us has life, which existed

on Earth millions of years before us and will continue to exist long after we have passed. Shells, flowers and corals are the perfect metaphors to express this message.

This organic, eco-friendly exhibition does not abuse the environmental theme as a political statement. Instead, it allows beauty to speak for itself. With titles like *Forbidden Love*, *Purity*, *Rouge* and *Ballet Oceanique*, the artist establishes a connection between nature/art objects and the individual, leading us to dream, personalizing the experience and bringing our attention to the everyday, what can be called the mundane beautiful. The seemingly simple photographs contain hidden narratives that apply to all of us. As the nautilus shell, our stories are complex and take a long time to develop until we achieve perfection, or the illusion of perfection. Photography as a medium is a powerful tool to recreate an ephemeral moment, which through the lens of Issa-Khan marks time and history embedded in elegance and utter beauty.

Profound and philosophical, these representations of nature are indelible lessons in the appreciation of beauty. Like Hermann Hesse's river in his masterful work *Siddhartha*, life is a journey, but there are certain constants; one of which is the interactive contemplation of our environment and the amazing, capricious and miraculous forms we find in it. **SA**