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GALLERIES

The Maximalist World of a Collective Art Dream

by Nazli Ghassemi on May 29, 2015



Installation view of Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, Hesam Rahmanian's "*I won't wait for grey hairs and worldly cares to soften my views*" (2015) (all images courtesy Callicoon Fine Arts unless otherwise noted)

Stepping into the fantastical world of [*I won't wait for grey hairs and worldly cares to soften my views*](#) is like going through a portal, entering a delirious space of a collective dream. A non-place where familiar objects, people, and world events take on new forms, meaning and function. A parallel universe where the assemblages, collages, figurative paintings, theatrical performance photos, videos, and sculptures charm the viewer into letting go of his banal, colorless perception of reality to contemplate an alternate playful world. This subverted, converted, and more often than not, diverted universe has been concocted by Dubai-based artists, brothers Ramin and Rokni Haerizadeh, and their childhood friend Hesam Rahmanian in their first US collaborative at [Callicoon Fine Arts](#) gallery in Manhattan's Lower East Side.

The spectacle is a collaborative installation, interspersed by the trio's individual pieces and works of other artists from their private collection. Upon entering the gallery, you are spellbound and immediately transported into the trio's *tricksterland*. As if whipping a magical wand, they have transformed the gallery space inside out, floor to ceiling and all around — budding with giant long-stemmed amaryllises and splatters of yellow across — the viewer steps into a landscape unified by black and white triangular patterns snaking along the floor, around the walls and up the columns,



Ramin Haerizadeh, "First Rain's Always a Surprise" (2014), paper and found oil painting collage, acrylic, ink, color pencil and lipstick on paper 39.37 x 27.56 inches

There is no time to figure that out today in this visual cacophony as your gaze is drawn to a contraption stand with a huge plastic ear and chattering teeth roped to its sides. This hilarious assemblage is titled "Break Free" (2015). The assemblage of readymades is a tall cat scratcher that serves as a multipurpose, all-in-one entertainment pit stop for today's contemporary man and woman. A place where you can fulfill your basic needs to recharge electronic devices, retouch make up, and re-accessorize, while catching up on the latest posted videos at the iPhone/iPad station section. The iPad is playing a performance by the trio, again wearing masks, engaged in some kind of ritual ceremony. Apparently this performance is in response to the musical message sent to them by their musician friend, Yasmine Hamdan. Her music video message is playing on an iPod Touch wedged in an empty toilet paper roll with two paper cups attached to its sides emulating an iPhone speaker — the sculpture is also equipped with a vacuum cleaner. The three artists grew up in Tehran and have been practicing art throughout

setting a visual path drawing your gaze from one art piece to the next. The black and white triangular patterns, which started emerging more prominently in the artists' collaborative works during their residency at the Rauschenberg Foundation on Captiva Island (January 2014), have become one of the recurring motifs in their individual and collective works. Also conceived during this residency is the video "O, You People!" which is playing on three screens at the gallery entrance. The piece, which was inspired by Nima Yushij's poem of the same title, is an improvised performance piece in which the artists, wearing plastic animal masks, interact with Rauschenberg's fish house at the end of a long pier, day in and day out for two weeks. While watching the masked trio engage in an intimate, excited exploration of their surrounding as they sniff, crawl, kiss, lick, touch, and caress the wooden panels around the fish house, you can't help but wonder many things, including What are they doing? and Why are they doing what they are doing?



Hesam Rahmani, "Rearview Portrait" (2012), acrylic on canvas,



Rokni Haerizadeh, "But a storm is blowing from paradise" (2014–2015) from his Fictionville project, gesso, water color and ink on printed paper, 11 5/8 x 16 1/2 inches (29.5 x 41.9 cm)

their lives. Ramin and Rokni Haerizadeh moved to Dubai in 2009 to freely create, away from the limitations of a conservative Islamic regime back in Iran. Hesam Rahmanian moved to Dubai at the same time, shortly after finishing his studies in the United States. Their home in Dubai is a living, breathing, creative sanctuary — an environment indistinguishable from their collaborative exhibitions. A place where its inhabitants, visitors and all that surrounds them become both the creators and the creations, taking part in an ongoing ritual of existence.

Interspersed among the collaborative pieces are each artist's individual works, which differ stylistically. A dark yet crisp mood runs through Hesam Rahmanian's works of somber-colored, thickly painted images of scenes and figures. A windblown broken umbrella in "Defeat," (2012) and the "Rearview Portrait" (2012) series displaying the back of politicians' heads, convey the gloomy moments of when it feels like the world has turned its back on you.

Ramin Haerizadeh's collages and assemblages are like some sort of spontaneous combustion of his playful imagination as the photo images and found objects reconfigure and reassociate in the process. In "First Rain's Always a Surprise" (2014) old family photos in the background set a landscape over which images of fruits, a car, a cherub, pipes, bowls, and other figures and objects interact and coexist — sealed with a tiny red lipstick kiss mark at the bottom of each piece. Haerizadeh's work titles such as "Carrot Cake, Carrot Cake, Do You Have Any Nuts" should not be missed as they may point to one of the various elements inspiring the works — in this case the title brings to mind



A view of the exhibition and its many fantastical objects.

an episode of the British television series, *Little Britain*.

Rokni Haerizadeh's "Letter" video and paintings are part of a series of an ongoing project called "Fictionville" in which he investigates the function of media in their representation of the iconic events of our times, through his humorous and satirical approach to politics, violence, and cultural rituals. In his video the events unfold before your eyes showing a familiar yet alternate world inhabited by human-beast creatures. In this delirious world images slowly transform and morph into other identifiable shapes telling a new story. Here is a world where the British royal wedding and the Femen protests are represented as if a hallucinatory dream by Haerizadeh. His *Subversive Salami in a Ragged Briefcase* painting series, also exhibited in his US museum premiere at the *2013 Carnegie International*, are allegories of the current state of our times. The viewer can sit and watch the videos from the comfort of the gallery office chairs transfigured into odd-shaped creatural sculptures wrapped in blue masking tape. One can not help but wonder if Haerizadeh's joke is also on the visitor by inviting him to take a seat and become part of his fantastical world.

It is hard to leave this mirage, where every corner offers an oasis of overpowering spectacle that nourishes your imagination. A poetic contemplation of a piece is a fleeting moment as is the sting of its underlying reality that bites with sharp insightfulness. This is a place where everything and everyone global and local across cultures, genders, genres, identities, politics, and all that constitutes our contemporary consumer world can coexist — in twisted harmony — in reality and fantasy. There is no doubt that the *worldly cares* of this collaboration cannot *soften their views*, but it is an altering experience for the viewer, as one leaves *tricksterland* feeling giddy, disoriented, and amused — wondering What just happened? and wanting to go back for more.

[I won't wait for grey hairs and worldly cares to soften my views](#) continues by Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian continues at Callicoon Fine Arts (49 Delancey Street, Lower East Side, Manhattan) until June 7.