

ART BRUSSELS

Booth C35
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Ramin Haerizadeh
Rokni Haerizadeh
Hesam Rahmanian
Mohammed Kazem
Hassan Sharif



Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, Hesam Rahmanian
Live and work in Dubai since 2009

Alongside their individual work, Ramin and Rokni Haerizadeh and Hesam Rahmanian have developed a collective practice that consists of a series of interconnected collections of work that form different parts of an ongoing project. For the trio, a painted canvas is a 'field of negotiation', rather than a 'painting'. It is an opportunity to visually debate a theme between themselves and their wider collaborators, in a space where subjectivity and objectivity are in constant play.

In adding any new item to their project, the artists float freely between their subjective analytical self and the objective automated creatures that they become as part of their working discipline. These creatures arise organically from an assembly of objects that have entered their living space at different times and often have limitations in movement and senses. Unlike the artists, the creatures can only objectively contaminate the space they are in due to their limitations. Later the outcome of the creatures' work is once more challenged by the artists, as they continue its development in a more structured manner. This process continues throughout their work, in a space where subject and object constantly become one another and what remains to be seen is the outcome of a constant dance between the two states of being.

The seeds of their language were sown as early as 1999, back in Iran. Their immersive installation entails the use of both low and high art references, and freely embrace 'what is considered marginal, wasted, wrong, messed up, useless, and taken for granted'. Their individual practices differ stylistically while political and social commentary become inherently subversive in a common reflection. Placing emphasis on the importance of 'reporting on our time', they aim to bring to attention the urgencies of the present moment while opening up questions over a spectrum of subjects such as views on art and culture, gender fluidity and power mechanisms.

Recently, the trio presented *The Maids* at MACBA, Barcelona (2017-18), a multi-room installation entitled *Another Happy Day* at the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (2016-17) and participated in the 9th Liverpool Biennial (2016). In 2015, the trio staged *Slice A Slanted Arc Into Dry Paper Sky* at the Zurich Kunsthalle; *Those Who Love Spiders, and Let Them Sleep in Their Hair* at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art in Copenhagen; participated in the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art at the Queensland Gallery in Brisbane; and presented their first solo museum exhibition in the US at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston. In June 2018, the collaborative will present a solo exhibition at Officine Grandi Riparazioni (OGR), Turin.

Ramin Haerizadeh
Born 1975, Iran. Lives and works in Dubai



Ramin Haerizadeh's practice involves carving into the debris of imagery that surrounds us. Collage remains at the core of Haerizadeh's way of working, but he also incorporates drawing, assemblage and video, and in doing so, he lifts his collages off the two-dimensional canvas. Common across the artist's body of work is his galling laughter, instinct to show that history and meaning are articulated through easily manipulated imagery, and disregard for any assumed hierarchy of images in an age of digital reproduction. Haerizadeh's everyday activities guide the way to his work, and according to the time and situation, he picks up a multiplicity of identities to meet everyone and everything from a different angle. His studio is a theatre of the absurd, a space in motion transformed by the tension between play and acting that are later transformed into collages, diaries, objects, or actions being recorded on films or in photographs. Spanning almost 20 years, Haerizadeh's body of work carries concealed messages about questions around gender roles and identity, religious intolerance, media manipulation, political propaganda and contemporary art, which ultimately aspire to challenge hegemonic ethics in general.

Based in Dubai since 2009, he continues to develop his oeuvre that he started in the mid 1990s using images of post-war Tehran. He also maintains a collaborative practice alongside his brother Rokni Haerizadeh and long-time friend Hesam Rahmanian. Haerizadeh recently presented a solo show at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde in September 2017. He has participated in several institutional exhibitions including the Sharjah Biennial (2011), Museum on the Seam (2010), and *In the Fields of Empty Days* at LACMA, Los Angeles (May 2018). Haerizadeh's works are held in the collection of LACMA, Los Angeles; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi; British Museum, London; Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art, Beijing; and Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, among others.

Untitled, 2018, Collage on canvas, 50 x 40 cm



Playing Music, 2017, Gesso and acrylic on canvas, 42 x 58 cm



Playing Music, 2017, Gesso and acrylic on canvas, 50 x 40 cm

Rokni Haerizadeh
Born 1978, Iran. Lives and works in Dubai

Rokni Haerizadeh became known for his paintings that brought together his observations about social or public gatherings in Iran – particularly weddings, religious festivals, funerals, banquets and picnics – and reveal the hedonistic, ritualised or violent side of human nature that are buried in such spectacles. Since 2009, Haerizadeh has sought new definitions of figurative practice. Primarily working in series for which he carefully selects the themes, Haerizadeh tries to depict the realities of social transformation. The realism of his paintings is distinct and yet surreal, based on careful observation of detail, which he exploits to convey the psychological truth of the observed phenomenon. Haerizadeh rethinks the figures and blurs the boundaries between the realms of objects, humans and animals. They possess the strength of authenticity of everyday observation as well as the universality of existential principle such as in his *Playing Music* series where a moustache-clad man, a teenager, a grand mother are all gazing down at their mobile phones. In these portraits, Rokni suggests that these devices are in fact an integral part of the body, like a new 'organ'.

Life and time engage the artist in a continuous reconsideration of his practice, where images emerge from the performative act of 'painting': the palette, the colours, the brush dictate the result. Conveying an unfinished quality, Haerizadeh keeps transformation a governing principle in his practice.

He has participated in numerous exhibitions such as Carnegie International (2013), *Here and Elsewhere* at the New Museum, New York (2014) and the Sharjah Biennial (2011). His works are held in several public and private collections, including the Guggenheim New York; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburg; British Museum, London; Tate Modern, London; Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi; JP Morgan Chase Art Collection and Rubell Family Collection, among others. Haerizadeh maintains a collaborative practice with his brother Ramin and long-time friend Hesam Rahmanian. In 2014, Koenig Books published *Fictionville*, a monograph focused on his ongoing series of the same name.



Absentminded Geometry, 2017, Collage of detritus of magazine page and acrylic on canvas, 28 x 35.5 cm



Absentminded Geometry, 2015, Collage of leftover acrylic paint, detritus of magazine page and ink on paper 40.5 x 30.5 cm

Hesam Rahmanian

Born 1980, United States of America. Lives and works in Dubai

Hesam Rahmanian's works begin from found fragments – a discarded household object, for example, an innocuous shape in a polaroid or a smear of hardened, leftover paint – that have some glancing resemblance to a body, a face or an animal. From this simple bricolage, Rahmanian searches for ways that he can develop his impressions, either on canvas or as assemblage, with a playfulness and spontaneity that is faithful to his initial glimpse. This first-thought-best-thought way of working has emerged steadily from the artist's early painting series, which were underpinned by metaphor and social commentary.

Rahmanian gives a new chance to detritus; dried-out paint palettes, found fragments of a magazine, old paint brushes, old shoe, bricks, gardening tools. He explores the potential of these materials searching to create visual illusions. Rahmanian typically uses techniques of stripes, cut-outs, folds or placing canvas inside or along a corner furthering his attempts to reveal new dimensions to his subjects.

Rahmanian has held solo exhibitions at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai (2013); Paradise Row, London (2011); and Traffic, Dubai (2010). He also participated in a group show at the Royal College of Art in London as one of the eight finalists for the MOP CAP prize (2011). He maintains a collaborative practice with long-time friends Ramin and Rokni Haerizadeh, and the three artists have attended the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation's residency programme in Captiva, Florida in 2014.



Tongue, 1994, Silver gelatin print, 28 x 39 cm



Soundless, 2017, Pastel on paper, 75.5 x 56 cm

Mohammed Kazem

Born 1969, United Arab Emirates. Lives and works in Dubai

Mohammed Kazem has developed an artistic practice that encompasses video, photography and performance to find new ways of apprehending his environment and experiences. Throughout his practice, Kazem has tried to capture the un-capturable. From his own body and the objects of his quotidian to nature itself, Kazem senses what is un-measurable, sometimes even un-seeable, and transfigures it into a visual work.

Since the mid 1990s, he began scratching paper with the edge of a pair of scissors, where he lifts the surface of the paper creating monochrome braille-like networks of bumps, depressions and relief works on paper that represent sound and which he titles *Sound of Angles*, *Sound of Light*, and *Sound of Objects*. In his recent work *Receiving Light*, Kazem renders the graphic interplay of light, objects and shadow as the sunlight slowly conquers his balcony and a shadow skirts across the floor. In *Soundless*, his newly realised works of graphite and ink, lines follow a trajectory of chance that allows a subterranean light to emanate from the depths of the surface. The works not only relate to nature, but also reflect invisible events through their transparency. His scratchings, paintings, drawings and photographs are at the fulcrum of many senses - sound, sight, touch, movement.

There is an evident sensual correspondence in Kazem's early performance *Tongue* (1994), a set of 45 black and white photographs that depict him sticking his tongue into textured household objects such as the mouth of a teapot, a keyhole, and a pair of scissors, among other things. The main element in Kazem's autobiographical works, such as this one, is his power to magnify trivial incidents in a way that provokes the viewer. The stimulating gesture in *Tongue* is not only a representation of sexualised behaviour, but is telling of the artist's encounter with his surroundings. Whether it is a tense reaction to his tongue touching sharp metal objects, or an undeniable erotic nuance, one thing that these works successfully communicate is a fleeting sense of uneasiness.

In recent years, he has participated in several group shows at the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (2017), Guggenheim New York (2016), the Yinchuan Biennale (2016), Sharjah Biennial (2015), Gwangju Museum of Art (2014), Fotofest Biennial in Houston (2014), Boghossian Foundation (2013), and Mori Art Museum (2012), amongst others. He has exhibited at the Venice Biennale three times: in 2009 as part of a group exhibition curated by Catherine David; in 2013, he represented the UAE with an immersive video installation entitled *Walking on Water*, curated by Reem Fadda, and in 2015, he showcased works from the *Tongue* series at *1980 - Today: Exhibitions in the UAE*, curated by Hoor Al Qasimi. Kazem is a founding member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society (founded in 1980). His works are held in the collections of the British Museum, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and New York, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art, Sharjah Art Foundation, Barjeel Art Foundation, and Vehbi Koç Foundation, among others.



Canvas, 2016, Canvas and cotton rope, 230 x 210 x 25 cm

Hassan Sharif
1951 - 2016, Lived and worked in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Recognised as a pioneer of conceptual art and experimental practice in the Middle East, Hassan Sharif's artworks surpass the limits of discipline or singular approach, encompassing performance, installation, drawing, painting, and assemblage. Since the late 1970s, he maintained a practice as a cultural producer and facilitator, moving between roles as artist, educator, critic, activist, and mentor to contemporary artists in the UAE.

After familiarising himself with the ideas of Dada and Fluxus art during his studies in the early 1980s at Byam Shaw School of Art in London (now Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design), Sharif created performance-based works that engaged with repetition, landscape, and the body, themes that he continued to explore throughout his practice. Sharif first incorporated weaving into his art making process as a part of his *Objects* series (1982–2016) as a means of critically exploring the increasing modernisation and industrialisation occurring in the UAE.

An acute awareness of his environment led Sharif to embrace constant experimentation and a variety of materials. In his body of work, he focused on *Experiments* and *Semi-Systems*, he utilised the grid to draft constructivist structures. Sharif aimed to create art that was linked to society and speaks to universal aspects of daily life. He manifested this interest through his use of ordinary materials and incorporated cotton, textile, metal, chord, plastic, and everyday objects to create a variety of works that reflect contemporary concerns such as consumerism, manufacturing, and commercialisation of handicrafts. According to the artist, his *Objects* are the vernacular aesthetics of everything that is 'useless, meaningless and artificial' and illustrate an important truth about the world we live in.

Hassan Sharif was a founding member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society and of the Art Atelier in the Youth Theater and Arts, Dubai. In 2007, he was one of four artists to establish The Flying House, a Dubai institution for promoting contemporary Emirati artists. The first Emirati to have his work shown in the Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, Qatar, Sharif was also among the selected artists to represent the UAE during its first national pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2009. In 2017, Sharif was the subject of a seminal retrospective exhibition, *Hassan Sharif: I Am The Single Work Artist*, curated by Hoor Al Qasimi at the Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE. The retrospective will travel to Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art in Autumn 2019 and KW Institute for Contemporary Art in February 2020. A previous survey of Sharif's work was curated by Catherine David and Mohammed Kazem and presented by the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture & Heritage, UAE (2011). His work has recently been shown in exhibitions such as the 57th Venice Biennale (2017), Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha (2016); the Sharjah Biennial (2015); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2015); New Museum, New York (2014); Fundação Casa França-Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2014). Sharif's works are housed in the collections of the Tate Modern, London; MAMCO, Geneva; Centre Pompidou, Paris; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar; Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; Sittard Art Centre, The Netherlands; and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim, New York, among others.

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