

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHY

Ramin Haerizadeh (b. 1975, Tehran), Rokni Haerizadeh (b. 1978, Tehran) and Hesam Rahmani (b. 1980, Knoxville) have lived and worked together in Dubai since 2009.

The trio's first collaborative exhibition *I Put It There You Name It* (2012) recreated the delirious atmosphere of their Dubai home in a gallery context through painted floors, assemblage, and unique collaboratively created objects. In 2014, the collective was invited to participate in the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation's residency programme in Captiva, Florida. The works created as part of the residency were exhibited at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde in March 2014 in an exhibition entitled, *The Exquisite Corpse Shall Drink The New Wine*, which took the visual direction of their first collaborative exhibition and used a similar stance to outline a vision of how collaboration can be a polymorphous and unfixed process. In 2015, the trio staged *Slice A Slanted Arc Into Dry Paper Sky* at the Kunsthalle Zurich in February and *I Won't Wait For Grey Hairs And Worldly Cares To Soften My Views* at the Callicoon Fine Arts, New York in April. The following month, Barcelona-based Han Nefkens/MACBA Award announced them as the winner of the second edition of the prize. In November, the trio presented *Those Who Love Spiders, and Let Them Sleep in Their Hair* at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art in Copenhagen and participated in the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane with an installation *All The Rivers Run Into The Sea. Over. / Copy. Yet, The Sea Is Not Full. Over.* In December, they presented their first solo museum show in the US at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Boston. A monograph of their work, *Ramin Haerizadeh Rokni Haerizadeh Hesam Rahmani*, edited by Tina Kukielski, was published in 2015 by Mousse Publishing. In July 2016, the trio will participate in the 9th Liverpool Biennial.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

After establishing B21 Gallery in 2006, one of the first contemporary art spaces in the UAE, Isabelle van den Eynde launched her eponymous space in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue in 2010, representing a pluralistic roster of artists from the Middle East.

Though strongly affiliated with the region, the gallery also works with artists from Europe, Latin America and Africa. Through exhibitions, book publishing and international fair participation, the gallery prides itself on closely collaborating with its artists to create insightful, and often provocative presentations that challenge the conventions of a commercial art gallery.

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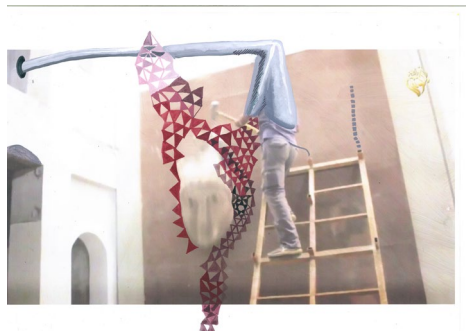
Big Rock Candy Mountain

Ramin Haerizadeh
Rokni Haerizadeh
Hesam Rahmani

ARCOMadrid

24–28 February
Booth 7D12

Big Rock Candy Mountain
2016
Watercolour, ink and acrylic on paper
29.7 x 42 cm each



Much of the artists' work involves the appropriation of images and objects from magazines, markets, the Internet, and mass media. In preparation for *Big Rock Candy Mountain*, they printed 1000 stills from news footage, painted on each of the printed images, photographed the results, and stitched them together to form the 3 minute 52 second video. The source imagery depicts the destruction of cultural artefacts in war-torn countries like Syria and Iraq by individuals affiliated with the Islamic State (ISIS). By slowing down the imagery, the artists discover obscure details, relationship, and editing techniques that they intensify through their own manipulations, including doubling, collage, and figurative drawing. Inspired by the philosopher Judith Butler's idea that rage and destruction are born of intense grief, the artists create an engrossing and elegiac moving-image work that engages with the complex realities of our present moment. The video is accompanied by a series of collage aesthetic works on paper and a three-dimensional wall relief accumulation created using found objects.

Maria Mumtaz: What is *Big Rock Candy Mountain* about and where does the title come from?

Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, Hesam Rahmanian: Most of our work is a documentation of our everyday lives and *Big Rock Candy Mountain* deals with how the destruction of the Iraqi museum by ISIS was part of our journey as we were preparing for our show at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston in December 2015. The title is borrowed from a 1928 folk music song by Harry McClintock about a hobo's idea of paradise, which is a modern version of the medieval concept of the Land of Cockaigne (a fantastical land of plenty).

MM: What is the process like?

RRH: Usually we print out the footage as single images and then each of us distributes that one single image amongst each other to work on it at the same time. Throughout this process, we notice details or configure obscurities, which we then manipulate through collages or painting. We build on top of the actual sequence of events in the video and interrupt the sequentially by each individual frame. The original narrative changes as we build our own. In doing so, we create an obstacle between the spectator and the image. The audience see a shaky image in front of them, which obstructs their pleasure of viewing. Moreover, the presence of the characters is intensified to redefine time and the audience becomes conscious of the multiple things that are all happening at the same time.

MM: What were the obscurities that you noticed whilst working on the video?

RRH: Most of the things that we see on

TV are edited, where two or more footages are superimposed to become one. So the destruction of the Iraqi museum is not the actual action but rather what the media portrays. In the middle of the video there is a sequence about ISIS destroying Shia shrines. At first look, it seems that they have used some sort of an explosive to blow up the shrine, but actually these are two images, where one dissolves to another. There is a stereotypical image associated with members of the ISIS: a bearded man with sandals and a long robe. However, by slowing down the video, we noticed a guy in a Lacoste t-shirt who was behind all the destruction. In some instances they are also laughing or talking to each other and taking photos with their phones. However, when seen on TV, we take in all the horrible things because they are presented to us as the truth. In this day and age we completely trust the media, which is making us semi-blind to the actual reality.

MM: There is a reference to Judith Butler's idea of rage and grief.

RRH: While we were working on this video, there was constantly this question about destruction and to be destructive. Why are we being destructive? Is this because of an unbearable grief? When you are sad and you don't know how to bear it, you become destructive. The question is: how do you channel this grief when you can't bear it? You then push it to other people instead of dealing with it. Judith Butler argues that we are not a centre of ourselves and in fact are decentred by others. So when we look at the destruction by ISIS, we are also looking at ourselves. In the video, we morph the characters on to each other and ultimately destroy themselves. Therefore, there is nothing for ISIS to destroy but themselves.