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Exhibition View. The Exquisite Corpse Shall Drink the New Wine.

The Exquisite Corpse Shall Drink the New Wine
Rokni Haerizadeh, Ramin Haerizadeh & Hesam Rahmanian
18th March – 18th May 2014

As visitors enter the gallery and step onto a lavishly painted floor they become part of a production set in motion by artists Rokni and Ramin Haerizadeh and Hesam Rahmanian. Without wall texts or guides it soon becomes apparent that sensation and experience is the overriding intent here and that narrative and representation is of little value or relevance.

After a frenetic three weeks in which this dollhouse environment came together, the trio presented their unique and immersive “ambience” to captive audiences. Centered on spontaneous actions and gestures and coupled with the intentional blurring of standard binary values, this exhibition is the much anticipated response to *I Put it There, You Name It*, held at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde in 2012 which introduced the concept of bridging the divide between the standard gallery environment and the idiosyncrasies of a private, domestic space.

Featuring new collaborative work by the Haerizadeh brothers and Rahmanian, The show folds together these group projects with individual works by the artists as well as art selected from their own collection as “visual quotes”, including works by the Guerilla Girls, Nicole Eisenman and 18th century English caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson.

A fourth element of the show showcases performative works in video made in conjunction with artists, dancers, actors, and friends that the trio engaged as collaborative partners in the past five years.

The space has been divided into smaller spaces or “rooms” which all have their own individual moods determined by the colours of the walls and the works within them.

The first compartment of the gallery is dominated by the imposing and biting *Royal Goldfish*, a larger than life fantastical work based on the portrait released by the Royal family on the occasion of the christening of Prince George. Continuing along similar lines, a screen plays *Reign of Winter*, a stop motion animation made up of twelve thousand individual frames depicting the spectacle of the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton through anthropomorphized forms. The entrance is flanked by two of Mike Kelly's *Little Friends*, quirky replacements of the ubiquitous classical lions that lend the space a regal but surreal ambience.

The next space takes on a studious air with silkscreened prints of books and journals by R. B. Kitaj positioned above a museum style plinth, displaying *Tourists*. Made from souvenir, reproduction, ceramic vessels and sold as 'antiques' to unsuspecting tourists in the region the objects are in turn transformed into a group of the very stereotypical holiday makers that might buy them. The work is riddled with satire, with each figure taking on a farcical persona and all sporting the accouterments of people on vacation, including ice-creams, sunburned skin and ill-fitting swimming costumes.

On the adjacent wall, another old-fashioned display is made up of a series by the trio in collaboration with Iman Raad. This work illustrates humorous and salacious anecdotes taken from the *Risala - i - Dilqusha* or *Joyous Treatise*. Written by the 14th century Persian poet and satirist Ubayd-i Zakani the artists playfully interprets Zakani's 800 year old social commentaries and introduces them to a modern audience. The works reminds us of the universality and continuance of the basic human condition. The artists began their long creative process after a period of research, by documenting themselves reenacting the book's anecdotes in film and photography. As each story was laid out, the work exchanged hands with each artist adding and responding in a dynamic collaboration. Raad would add his Arabic calligraphy while Rahmanian would produce laser cut passé partout that corresponded to the text, while the brothers collaged and painted on top of their original photographs.

To the right, the annex presents the visitor with an altogether more pastoral experience, featuring large scale, collaborative works made in early 2014 on Captiva Island, where the trio were invited as fellows of a multidisciplinary artist residency hosted by The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. Inspired by the lush landscape and raw beauty of their immediate environment, these works on canvas and in video reflect the extraordinary impact of the natural surroundings on the artists.

The other side of the gallery reflects the artist's dynamic use of mixed media, experimental collages reflect their diverse cultural references and tastes. The use of utilitarian objects to make up the works in one room give a grounded earthiness to the space, in complete opposition to the baroque nature of the last room, where nods to classical literature and the iconic image of the Mona Lisa on various mediums are juxtaposed with elements of the work of the 20th century German performance artist Joseph Beuys.

Conceiving of an exhibition of this kind in a city of shopping malls, the trio are at once inspired by and critical of consumerist desire. Through the use of satire and a sometimes irreverent wit, they question such banalities and turn them on their head. In preserving an open process of exhibition making, design and concept, there is no separation between their life and their art.

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