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B21 will now be known as GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE, and to inaugurate this new name, we present the third solo show by Iranian artist Ramin Haerizadeh.



Private preview: March 14 from 7:30 PM
Exhibition dates: March 15 – April 16, 2010

An exhibition supported by Ruinart

Iranian artist Ramin Haerizadeh tears apart the symbols around us and rearranges them to draw out darker, submerged and subtly humorous truths. Since his solo show in 2008 at GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE (prev. B21), and his appearance in Charles Saatchi's *Unveiled: New Art from the Middle East* and Galerie Thaddeaus Ropac, Ramin has created a raft of new work that delves deeper into the skewed psyche of his country. He emerges sensitive to the theatricality of Iran's modern history and how to subvert that with a cinematographer's eye.

For the artist's latest collages he has gathered imagery from a TV production created for children in Iran, *Shahr-e-Ghesseh* (Farsi for 'City of Tales'), to form a cast of characters that illustrate his ideas about the continuing process of remaking identities in Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Shehr-e-Ghesseh was staged by an avant-garde theatre troupe in papier-mâché masks a decade before the Revolution. At the heart of the story is an elephant that arrives into a town of animals only to fall and break his tusk. The townsfolk, such as the mullah with the head of a fox, the bear who is a fortuneteller, and the parrot who is a poet, decide to 'fix' the broken elephant by placing the tusk on his head and snipping off his trunk. Without the features of an elephant, they decide he is no longer so and take him to register for an ID card – he is remade, given a human name, 'Manouchehr', and as the play continues his personality is lost.

Ramin makes Manouchehr his protagonist to illustrate the parallels he finds between this tale and the revolutionary identity-evolving force that deposed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and created the Islamic Republic. The artist takes cutouts from pre-Revolution society magazines of the Shah in his gleaming medals, or the Shah's wife Farah Pahlavi, laughing in a park. He then inserts, among these,

the imagery of the Shahr-e-Ghesseh. Grainy cutouts of the animal-headed characters begin to appear in strange and unnerving relationships with the other characters, until the Manouchehr-elephant's head, with its misplaced tusk and docked trunk, sits atop the Shah's coronation uniform.

While some of the collages, draped in columns of black and dayglo pink, retain the glossy orderliness of the magazines that he has scoured for his material; the hostile force of Ramin's bearded, screaming face tears through these images. Ramin becomes as an actor in these works, wrapping himself in a chador to represent Iran's fickle masses that, in their turmoil, look nostalgically back to the time of the Shah. Even the blackness of the chador calls to mind the thick black marker of the conservative censor. At times these characters blow kisses to the Shah and Farah Pahlavi, at others they look longingly to the exiled monarchy. His enraged face also raises questions about the assumed modesty-inducing effect of wrapping an entire nation in a black veil. This doesn't quell the inner frustrations of the people, he suggests, nor does it stop their perhaps inherent 'witchness' (hence the brooms).

With this idea of Manouchehr, Ramin explores his own situation as an exile. In an affecting piece, we see a veiled figure holding the severed head of the elephant in a slash of red paint and standing atop the map of Iran, which has been made of cutouts of the cast of the Shahr-e-Ghesseh. We are all Manouchehr, Ramin says, all those who are no longer able to fit into the ever-changing identity that is Iran. Is it Islamic, is it Persian; what do these ideas mean, and how can we fit to that? Ramin points to the sacrifice of being remade at home or remade as an exile in this work.

About GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE (prev. B21)

Located in an industrial area near the centre of Dubai, GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE (prev. B21) opened its doors in 2005 with the founding objective to discover young promising contemporary artists from the Middle-eastern region. Under Isabelle van den Eynde's tutelage, a new generation of artists began to attract the attention of adventurous collectors and curators, as well as prestigious institutions. Providing a platform for Middle-Eastern contemporary art, GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE has showcased an intense and innovative program of exhibitions, publishing of a catalogue for each. Represented artists include: Shahriar Ahmadi, Ahmad Amin Nazar, Reza Aramesh, Fereydoun Ave, Lara Baladi, Bita Fayyazi, Shadi Ghadirian, Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, Nargess Hashemi, Khosrow Hassanzadeh, Nadine Kanso, Afshan Ketabchi, Jeffar Khaldi, Farshid Maleki, Sabah Naim, Leila Pazooki, Hani Rashed, Arnaud Rivieren, Jinoos Taghizadeh, Shantia Zaker Ameli.

For more information, artist bio, interview and/or hi-res images, please contact Tessa de Caters at tessa@ivde.net or + 97 1 (0) 4 340 39 65

