

ARTISTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Three months before the October 5 opening of the 2013 *Carnegie International*, *CARNEGIE* magazine spoke with three of the show's contributors—Iranian painter and animator Rokni Haerizadeh, Colombian artist Gabriel Sierra, and British sculptor Phyllida Barlow—about the unique points of view they'll be bringing to Pittsburgh. Haerizadeh, all too familiar with the often brutal constraints of cultural ritual, uses caricature as his voice. Sierra likes to challenge the ways in which we think about architecture, and how we interact with it, by making physical changes to recognizable spaces. And Barlow, known for her physically massive creations, balks at the very notion she's creating anything monumental; her art, she says, is about the everyday. They are among the 35 artists from 19 countries whose works shape the exhibition. BY JENELLE PIFER AND JULIE HANNON



PHOTO: MAZIAR SADR

ROKNI HAERIZADEH speaks to the moment.

Iranian artist Rokni Haerizadeh works in paint and video animation to create art that investigates world cultures while often adopting a satirical tone, depicting ritual in caricature. Haerizadeh and his artist brother, Ramin, chose not to return home to Tehran after a 2009 trip to Paris, fearing imprisonment after governmental officials seized their works from a collector's home. The brothers now live and operate a studio in Dubai. The 2013 *Carnegie International* is the U.S. museum premiere of Haerizadeh's work.

How have you seen your work change since leaving Tehran?

I have always been intrigued by social gatherings and rituals, violence, and decadence. Now the element of time has become important to me and it has taken my paintings in a new direction. A painting is usually received by the viewer and by the critic as a fixed and static object, with the entire process of generating the work far removed from the final piece.

It's important for me to add this element of "time," to slow down the process and to make that process visible. In this way, the painting unfolds before your eyes and transforms gradually. In time-based works like *Reign of Winter* (an animated film that will be screened at the *International*), I paint each image frame by frame, creating a "pulse." Figures literally vibrate and transform as the work progresses. In this way it exceeds the two-dimensional boundaries of works on canvas and erupts out of that paradigm into something grotesque and new.

"Being" is also becoming important to me. Through movement, transmitting a pulse of our times is important. I feel the presence of pulse, and it is important that my paintings pulsate with the presence of a being.

Your work often comments on the cultural and political traditions of Iran, yet *Reign of Winter* takes on the subject of British royal weddings. What piqued this interest?

I don't intend to comment on any specific cultural and political traditions. I declare

the iconic moments of our times, whether they're in Iran or elsewhere.

I am interested in how media functions to influence our perception of our world. There are weddings, wars, and protests everywhere—in all cases I'm interested in their representation and not simply their content. The royal wedding, per say, is not what's important. It's the representation of the royal wedding by the media that's important to me.

You can also think of this work as my self-invitation to the wedding.

How is visual art an effective way to create commentary—either on a particular subject or on culture more broadly?

I think an artist should discover and express the essence of his times. He should be able to observe his surrounding with a keen eye and suck the marrow out of what he observes. If he can do this well, then his work becomes more than just a critical view—it becomes a sort of prophecy, an anticipation of what's to come.

The process of getting to this point takes place in the mind—a series of things happens simultaneously during this process: from observing, to assessing, wondering, and pondering. The creative process brings all these factors together to finally reach a state that is beyond simple criticism.

It is in the nature of art to depict reality and that, by itself, is critical. ■