

in subsequent works. Hussain's play on the metaphor of body as vessel is evident in the terra-cotta pot she uses in *Tower of Babel* and *Earth picture*, both 1993. In the latter, the connotations of the pot are expanded, serving as a symbol for the larger universe, though rupture is inscribed in the shattered shards strewn across both works. "Breaking Skin" served as a testimony to how Hussain, who succumbed to breast cancer at the age of forty-seven in 1999, succeeded in forging an imagery that was deeply personal and yet capable of articulating more universal concerns.

—Meera Menezes

## DUBAI

### Haleh Redjaian

GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE

Like the work of her elders Nasreen Mohamedi and Zarina, Berlin-based Haleh Redjaian's austere but playful abstractions exemplify an alternative Minimalist practice, one that simultaneously engages and troubles the grid, not wholly dismissing its potential for supporting and generating ornament and pattern, and that expresses the weight of memory and affect through the strategic use of reductive nonobjective forms. Including works in pen, graphite, paint, and gold leaf on paper, in thread on handwoven carpet, and spatial installations created using thread, "in-between spaces," Redjaian's solo debut in Dubai, presented a series of challenges to the grid's orthogonal rigidity and absolute dominance as a fundamental structure of abstraction, a tool through which distinctions between figure and ground can be erased.

In many of Redjaian's drawings, the grid provides the appearance of a regular matrix upon which more incidental and intuitive marks are executed, producing compositions that vibrate with the tension between order and disorder. Redjaian's grids are often hand drawn, with some lines emphasized more strongly than others, disrupting their regularity and creating patterns within the overall structure. Even when graph paper is used, this base is often overlaid with other lines or another grid, rotated ninety degrees, its intersecting diagonals producing a field of triangles that can be variously filled in to produce both regular and irregular patterns.

Uniting Redjaian's practice across different media is the artist's abiding interest in the poetics of straight lines, whether as marks on a page or as threads stretched taut across a carpet or through space. The exhibition's eponymous centerpiece, the series "in-between spaces," 2015, is an ethereal thread installation that cleverly abstracts Tehran's iconic Azadi Tower into a minimal spatial gesture through an economy of means. The monument's distinctive torque, as its vaulted center section fans out horizontally toward the ground, is recreated by simply rotating one end of a horizontal rectangular field of

hundreds of parallel blue threads by ninety degrees, creating a curved surface anchored to the wall in a vertical line on one side, and to the floor, in a row aligned with the wall's surface, in front of it on the other. A mirror image of this twisted plane, separated by a couple of feet from the first, completes the effect. Redjaian associates the landmark with memories of family trips to visit her grandmother, and the installation's transparency serves as a somewhat melancholic metaphor for how the past is remembered, its experiential richness reduced to the ghost of an icon.

Thread reappears in a nearby set of abstract drawings (all *Untitled*, 2015) that feature handwoven wool carpets as supports, deploying their interweaving warp and weft as a proxy grid. Custom-made for Redjaian in Kerman, Iran, most of the carpets, which traditionally feature vibrant patterns, are monochromatic, the color of natural wool mimicking that of paper; one displays a brown woven grid. Redjaian has printed polygons, both regular and irregular, onto some of the carpets, the lithographic ink impregnating the wool to different degrees. Finally, simple geometric forms and patterns (varying from two nested rhomboids to an upside-down triangle filling the top half of a printed blue rectangle), made up of fields or rows of parallel threads carefully pulled taut across the carpets' surfaces, float delicately atop their support. Spaced just far enough apart to be individually visible, the threads seem to dissolve the very forms they articulate, rendering them somewhat fugitive, unmoored visually. And the sequential layering of forms gives the final composition just the slightest bit of depth. The cumulative effect of all this is subtle, introducing an almost imperceptible uncertainty into the equivalence of figure and ground that abstraction strives to achieve.

—Murtaza Vali

## MOSCOW

### Evgeniy Antufiev

REGINA GALLERY/MOSCOW MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

It's hard to believe that Evgeniy Antufiev was born only in 1986, given the sense of timelessness typical of his work. His solo show at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, aptly titled "Immortality Forever," was part of the parallel program for the Sixth Moscow Biennale. It attempted to map out "the essence of Russian culture," placing objects linked to Tolstoy, Pushkin, and Anna Pavlova alongside items drawn from the artist's personal history—among them drawings by his ailing grandmother of her childhood memories, and a video of his mother, Nadezhda Antufieva, chief editor of the *Centre of Asia* newspaper in Tuva, dancing at the launch of *People of the Centre of Asia*, an anthology of essays and interviews she publishes periodically and calls "the book of fates."

Antufiev's gallery exhibition "Seven Underground Kings or a Brief Story of the Shadow" shared with the museum show an attempt to examine and express the "essence" of such cultural abstractions as the idea of "Russia." At MMOMA, he did this by isolating certain symbols—the birds and flowers common to embroidered fabrics, the dessert known as pavlova—and turning them into points on a cultural map. But where the museum show presented a personal history, "Seven Underground Kings or a Brief Story of the Shadow" uncovered a more ancient inheritance. This was articulated with impressive precision at the gallery's entrance hall, where three doorways led to different rooms. The main entrance was located in a cement wall constructed to close off the main space. Positioned on each side was an animal guard inspired by Scythian sculpture and carved out of wood. Through the doorway, an arrangement was visible: a photograph printed on cloth

Haleh Redjaian,  
*Untitled*, 2015,  
lithograph and thread  
on handwoven carpet,  
43 3/4 × 27 1/2".

