

MADE IN IRAN II

Nastaran Safaei, Hamed Rashtian, Samira Alikhanzadeh, Ashkan Sanei & Babak Kazemi

The Iranian group exhibition "Made in Iran II" at the AB Gallery Lucerne starts the season with brand new art pieces from Tehran. In addition to latest creations by already well-established names of the contemporary art market, works by AB Gallery's recent discoveries are going to be exhibited for the first time in Switzerland. Linked to the previous exhibition of the series "Made in Iran", this show enables the visitor to deepen his insight into the current happenings of the Iranian art market and discover a fascinating culture.

Nastaran Safaei was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1984. She studied Graphic Design at the Sooreh University (2004) and the Naghshe Kawsar Art School (2001) before she specialized in sculpture and installation. Body parts and personal (female) emotions are reoccurring elements in her oeuvre. Nastaran Safaei's exceptional "Connection" series, for instance, shows buoyant figures printed with parts of her own body. In addition to that, delicate, dotted lines represent the (failing) links between a person and his or her surroundings. Consequently, these art pieces deal with the engagement of an individual with its environment, resp. society in a highly personal way. Nastaran Safaei exhibits extensively already since 2002, for example in Switzerland, Great Britain and Germany. Today she is a member of the Iranian sculptors' association.

The lion as a topic is a fascinating issue to the young sculptor **Hamed Rashtian** (*1984, Tehran) in many ways. On the one hand the old tradition of the lion as a tombstone or stone sculpture in Persian culture captures him for many years now. Among others, his former tutor Parviz Tanavoli, one of the most influential, contemporary sculptors in Iran, inspired him to work on this theme. On the other hand the lion appears as a hugely important symbol for the artist's own personality. Consequently very own experiences are reflected in his art pieces, too. For over ten years now, Hamed Rashtian creates sculptures made of bronze or fiberglass. Since 2006 he exhibits them internationally, for example in the UK, Germany or the UAE.

Born in 1967 in Tehran, **Samira Alikhanzadeh** started painting in 1987 under the supervision of the Iranian Master Aydin Aghdashloo. Two years later, she attended Tehran's Azad University where she continued to complete her MA in painting. Frequently, mirrors and old photographs can be found in the oeuvre of the artist. By using old portraits from the 30s, 40s and 50s she intends to transport a melancholic truth of her culture's past and also the humor that comes along with it. Especially while looking at old-fashioned and sometimes even obscure appearances a certain humorous effect can be achieved. Since 1995 Samira Alikhanzadeh exhibits extensively in North America, Europe and the Middle East. Just recently, her artwork was on display in the Iranian Pavilion at the 56th Venice biennale.

To simply classify **Ashkan Sanei's** (*1984, Urumieh) paper works as *drawings* would not meet their wide range. Examining his art pieces closer, clear work marks can be spotted, which structure the surface remarkably. For example, Ashkan Sanei uses sandpaper in order to give life to the material. Additionally, he even tears the paper apart or puts holes in it. In doing so his pieces gain a quite haptic appearance and the actual working progress moves to the focus. In 2011 the artist gained a MA in painting from the Tehran Azad University. Since 2004 his works can be seen regularly in different exhibitions.

In his photo series "Khoramshahr Number by Number" **Babak Kazemi** (*1983, Ahvaz) deals with the war-torn city Khoramshahr. Over two years he collected impressions of the effects of the Iraq-Iran-war and finally combined these with portraits of local individuals. Quite obviously a clear reference to the consequences of a war can be figured out, such as the forced displacement of humans. Babak Kazemi started his artistic career as autodidact in 1996. Since then he collected various prizes and awards and exhibits in solo and group shows. During the Venice Biennale 2015 an installation by him was exhibited at the Iranian Pavilion.

The exhibition "Made in Iran II" at the AB Gallery Lucerne runs from February 21 – April 2, 2016.

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