

GAZELLI ART HOUSE



© Simphiwe Ndzube, *Untitled Portrait #2*, 2019. Courtesy of the Artist and Nicodim Gallery.

Simphiwe Ndzube, Navid Nuur and Sara Rahbar

Private View: Saturday 23rd November, 6pm - 8pm

Exhibition: 24th November, 2019 – 29th February, 2020

Gazelli Art House's latest show in Baku is a mixed hang of contemporary artists on show in Azerbaijan for the first time: Sara Rahbar, Navid Nuur and Simphiwe Ndzube. The show coincides with Yarat's 'Fragile Frontiers' exhibition featuring works from Sarah Rahbar and Navid Nuur, alongside 15 other artists. The 'fragile frontiers' referred to by the Contemporary Art Centre calls attention to the geographical, psychological and conceptual boundaries that each artist contends with in their work. While Rahbar and Simphiwe Ndzube's works both draw intensely on their cultural heritage and experience of diasporic identity formation, Navid Nuur works more abstractly with the process-oriented conceptual production of an artwork. His practice questions the positioning of artist in relation to his tools, medium and audience, eliminating the need for inquiry into the identity/subject position of the artist.

Sara Rahbar (born 1976 in Iran, lives and works in NYC) explores concepts of nationalism and belonging. Her overall artistic practise stems from her personal experience and is largely autobiographical - driven by central ideas of pain, violence and the complexity of the human condition. Themes of separation and unity drive the narrative of her work as well as the process of material attachment and the sculptural construction of works. The artist's conviction that we are not distinct according to national boundaries, race or religion invites the potential for a belief in a kind of non-hierarchical animism, pointing to the violence done by category, regimes of control and definition. By tenderly and carefully drawing together disconnected materials Rahbar gives form to the message that identity is fluid and assembled, creating a disquieting and imperfect harmony. The sculptural limbs on show are symbols of vulnerability, encroachment and anxiety – the physical traces of social claustrophobia and attempts to 'hold it together' cast in metals as heavy as ideology.

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The work of Simphiwe Ndzube (born 1990 in South Africa, lives and works in Los Angeles, CA and Cape Town) is often a dynamic interplay of colour, motion and figures. The pieces shift between 2 dimensionality and sculptural elements to present an eccentric magical realist expression of the black experience in post apartheid South Africa. Magical realism involves a transgression of boundaries, something Ndzube literalises by allowing his paintings to sprout sculptural appendages as extensions of the surrealist dreamscapes he conjures. Like the fantastical imagery of Heironymous Bosch Ndzube offers absurdity as a response to a history of violence and brutality, in works that make way for an exuberant collective relief. There is a sense of mythological storytelling featuring characters / bodies that are disjointed, disfigured, displaced but revived through reference to the defiant attitude of the Swenkas (the working class Zulu men who stage choreographed displays of sartorial theatrics). The works unleash an almost psychedelic energy of purging, pointing towards a more joyful and playful future.

Navid Nuur's (born 1976 in Iran, lives and works in the Netherlands) works pay devotional attention to materials, in order to interrogate the relationship between concept and form. His relationship between materials often involves a mediation, for example the use of vitamin D powder in past works imply light and invisible action on the body while presenting as a pigment and abstraction. In his marbled works on show, he adopts ancestral techniques to engage in ritual and the reinvigoration of certain materials. The energy and mood of the marbling before it becomes a fixed image gives a breath and nuance to the strokes of pigment as subtle as smoke. His work often plays with the performative presence of the viewer as involved in a co-production of the work as artwork, and refers to neutral 'in-between' states. These include the literal and physical space between artist, artwork and viewer, as well as the conceptual space between artist, object and audience. Nuur invites deep engagement with the processes within his work, which promotes a sense of covert intimacy with the viewer.

#sararahbar #simphiwendzube #navidnuur

Notes to editors

Sara Rahbar is represented by Carbon.12 and has shown internationally in both solo and group exhibitions. She was part of the Iranian pavilion at 2015's Venice Biennale and is currently showing work at The Ford Foundation (New York), Museum of Art and Design (New York) and in Yarat Contemporary Art Space (Baku).

Simphiwe Ndzube is represented by Stevenson Gallery, and has been part of major exhibitions around the world. Most recently he has shown at Frieze London, 2019 and the 15th Edition of the Lyon Biennale titled *Là où les eaux se mêlent* (where water comes together with other water).

Navid Nuur is represented by Galerie Max Hetzler. His prolific output has brought him to international attention. Currently exhibiting work at Toby Ziegler (Paris), Karel Appel (Berlin), Glenn Brown (Paris), and Yarat Contemporary Art Space (Baku).

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