

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Seaman, Anna. "The Second Coming is the first solo exhibition in the Middle East" The National (May 2, 2017).

TheNational



Sculpture of a horse, plated in gold-leaf, and a headless rider, based on the statue of Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc) in Paris - part of The Bruce High Quality Foundation's The Second Coming exhibition. Courtesy Leila Heller Gallery.

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The Second Coming is the first solo exhibition in the Middle East by a New York-based artistic collective called the Bruce High Quality Foundation. Known for anti-establishment and absurd artworks, the group's work is stylistically a departure from Sahmarani's oil paintings, but also has its roots in protest.

The exhibition features a central sculpture of a horse, plated in gold-leaf and with a headless rider. It is based on the statue of Joan of Arc in Paris but with her head replaced by a domestic fan. She is a warrior, yet powerless.

It is no coincidence that this exhibition is happening at the same time as heated electoral debates in France – and the Jeanne d'Arc statue is the site of right-wing Front National marches in the French capital.

These artists, therefore, are reclaiming the statue, while questioning the rise of what they see as totalitarian tendencies across the world.

The horse is fitted with speakers, through which a recitation of the poem *The Second Coming* by William Yeats is played. It speaks of anarchy "loosed upon the world" and innocence being drowned, and is central to the understanding of this piece of art, which also warns of an ominous future.

The sculpture is surrounded by paintings of falcons and pigeons, which are characters in the poem but, unlike people living under totalitarian regimes, are free and able to fly across borders unhindered.

The references are clear and the talking points boundless.