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“Being Human: A New Exhibition at Yarat in Baku Explores the Human Condition.” *Baku*. (January 2018)

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BEING HUMAN: A NEW EXHIBITION AT YARAT IN BAKU EXPLORES THE HUMAN CONDITION

The group exhibition ‘Crumbling Down, Up and Up We Climb’ brings together the works of five artists at Baku’s YARAT Contemporary Art Space to explore notions of cultural histories and the human condition

With a diverse array of artistic practices and influences, the five artists whose works comprise **‘Crumbling Down, Up and Up We Climb’** (on until 18 February) each present a different take on aspects of rebirth, creativity and local and global histories. Curators Suad Garayeva-Maleki and Björn Geldhof have selected both old and new works by artists Reza Aramesh, Vajiko Chachkhiani, Jan Fabre, Goshka Macuga and Stephen G. Rhodes to explore these themes, and what they refer to as “attitudes towards cultural histories and monumentality as well as the constant human condition of entropy and re-awakening,” as well as “the ambivalent ambition to move forward while continuously struggling with loss and forgetfulness.”

As such, the works on display comprise sculpture, robotic drawings, video and installation, juxtaposing the artists’ practices to present “different proposals for a way forward.” For Iranian artist Aramesh, this also marked his first time in Azerbaijan, and his

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large-scale marble sculptures, *Site of the Fall- study of the renaissance garden* (2014 – 2017) embody his interest in human figures that are either smaller than, or larger than life. The use of marble, also, harks to his fascination with what the medium can represent – the epitome of Western art history and heroicism, as used in classical Greek and Roman sculpture, while his own subject matter often centres on a response to “media images of violence”, in particular that of war, and the “violated body,” he explains.

“I am fascinated by the language with which Renaissance artists managed to communicate the most difficult concepts,” Aramesh continues. “They used the most simple and effective aesthetics, which appealed to audiences from widely varying social backgrounds. Marble was also traditionally used to carve people with social status – and in particular, those who were white-skinned – while the figures in my work are mostly darker, of non-European origins. In this particular work I am looking towards the idea of how subjective our concept of the hero is.”

Photography courtesy of Yarat Contemporary Art Space