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The Storyteller Curated by Behrang Samadzadegan

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Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai is hosting The Storyteller, a group exhibition featuring 21 contemporary artists: Wim Delvoye, Azza Al Qubaisi, Zeinab Alhashemi, Melis Buyruk, Par Eleish Gharagozlou, Nathaniel Aric Galka, Robert Wilson, Lorenzo Quinn, Lin Jingjing, Ran Hwang, Naeemeh Kazemi, Arash Nazari, Marwan Sahmarani, Alaattin Efe, Farideh Lashai, Gnada

Amer, Shirin Neshat, Marcos Grigorian, Ana D' Castro, Reza Aramesh, and Sudarshan Shetty. Behrang Samadzadegan, the exhibition's curator, is also among the participants. The show will end on September 1, 2023.

Although contemporary art often seems challenging and even perplexing, in most cases there is a powerful narrative or story in its core. Artists working with narratives utilise different mediums. Some of them use narrative to tell stories about themselves or their personal experiences. Others use it to explore social and political issues, while some use it to create fictional worlds or alternate realities. In all of these cases, the artist is a storyteller. Using his/her chosen medium, he/she creates a narrative which invites the spectator to consider complex issues and ideas.



The Storyteller (installation view). Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, 2023.

The artists featured in this show aim to convey the power of storytelling through a focus on contextual and situational realities. They seek to intensify the empathic perception of intimacy, fragility, and micro-history. The singularity and authenticity of each situation and contextual meaning are key elements in their approach to storytelling.

The exhibition's title is inspired by Walter Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov", in which he reflects on the loss of the art of storytelling. The title suggests that this art, although still present today, is in danger. It highlights the importance of retaining and preserving stories as a means of keeping alive our cultural heritage.

About the artists



Wim Delvoye (b. 1965, Wervik, West Flanders) is a Belgian neo-conceptual artist who lives and works in Brighton, the UK. Among his famous controversial projects are tattooing pigs, inventing a machine which works completely like a human digestive system, and others. He is interested in many themes: from bodily function to the function of art in the current market economy.

Azza Al Qubaisi (b. 1978, Abu Dhabi, the UAE) is an Emirati jewellery artist, product designer, and sculptor famous for exploring and experimenting with metal and natural materials. Inspired by her heritage, she creates her art pieces using gold, silver, wood, rubber tyres, palm trees, and oud incense.



Azza Al Qubaisi, *Between The Dunes (Dunes with dates)*, 2022. Mild Steel with Dates leaves. 61 2/5 × 114 1/5 × 49 3/5 in | 156 × 290 × 126 cm.

Zeinab Alhashemi (b.1986, Dubai) is a conceptual artist based in Dubai. She focuses on visual storytelling and specialises in large-scale site-specific installations. Alhashemi explores the line between the natural and constructed, drawing inspiration from Dubai's natural geography.

Melis Buyruk (b. 1984, Gölcük, Turkey) is a ceramic artist who resides in Istanbul, Turkey. Using porcelain, she creates detailed monochromatic art pieces, in which she blends realistic plants, animals, birds, insects, and human body parts into one. One of the main themes she explores in her art is the man-nature relationship.

Parinaz Eleish Gharagozlou (born in Tehran, Iran) is a painter, jeweller, and poet living and working between Boston and Tehran. Her childhood spent in gardens is the source of her inspiration; in her paintings the artist tries to convey the feelings evoked by her memories.





Parinaz Eleish Gharagozlou, All For Sale, 2022. Mixed media and collage on canvas. 122 x 92 cm.

Nathaniel Aric Galka (b. 1975) is an American artist residing in New York, the USA. His work is a love for history, art history, and nature. Galka's art is influenced by the cultural aesthetics of numerous different centuries. Recently, he has focused on the Buddhist arts from the 13th-17th centuries.

Robert Wilson (b. 1941) is a renowned experimental theatre stage director, stage architect, designer, choreographer, curator, and artist. Since the 1960s, his productions have shaped the contemporary aesthetics of theatre and opera. Wilson's graphic artworks are often linked to his work for the stage. They range from abstraction to specific sketches of what Wilson envisioned for an act, scene or interlude.

Lorenzo Quinn (b. 1966, Rome, Italy) is an Italian sculptor and former actor. He is noted for his use of hands to convey authentic emotion and abstract concepts such as love and faith. Quinn is inspired by Michelangelo, Bernini, and Rodin.

Lin Jingjing (b. 1970, Shanghai, China) is a multidisciplinary artist who resides in New York, the USA, and whose artistic practice includes painting, drawing, performance, installation, photography, and video. In her work, she explores social and personal identity in the context of modern society.

Ran Hwang (b. 1960, Busan, South Korea) is an artist who lives and works between Seoul, New York, the USA. Her artworks are made of everyday materials: pins, threads, buttons, beads,



and crystals. In her art, she contemplates life, death, and rebirth and reflects on causes of terror and the effects of violence on individuals.



Ran Hwang, *After Ago_PWL*, 2021. Buttons, beads, pins on DIASEC. 33 2/5 × 45 1/5 × 1 9/10 in. | 84.8 × 114.8 × 4.8 cm.

Naeemeh Kazemi (b.1981, Tehran, Iran) is a visual artist living in Iran. Being a sculptor, she began painting in 2020 when the lockdown started. Such themes as environmental and virus anxiety, feminism, and humanity are disguised in her magical paintings through elements of the natural world, classical paintings, and everyday objects.

Arash Nazari (b. 1980) is an Iranian artist heavily influenced by Iranian culture. His latest artworks are inspired by Negārgari, Persian Miniature Art. In his paintings, classical art of miniature is blended with colour tones from contemporary minimalist art.

Marwan Sahmarani (b. 1970, Beirut, Lebanon) is a painter who lives and works in Beirut. In his art characterised by strong brushstrokes and bright colours he confronts political and historical subjects.





Marwan Sahmarani, Neighborhood 2, 2022. Oil on Canvas. 70 x 90 cm.

Alaattin Efe (b. 1989, Konya, Turkey) is a Turkish artist. To create his surrealistic drawings, he mostly uses charcoal. Inspired by philosophy, psychology, mythology, and literature, in his work Efe explores the complex world of subconscious.

Farideh Lashai (born in 1944, Rasht, Iran; died in 2013) was an Iranian painter, writer, and translator. In her abstract contemporary paintings, traditional and contemporary views of nature are combined.

Ghada Amer (b. 1963, Cairo, Egypt) is a multimedia artist residing in New York. Her art practice features abstract paintings, in which painting is combined with embroidery; sculptures, ceramics, prints, installations, and videos. In her work, Amer addresses issues of femininity, postcolonial identities, and Islamic culture.



Ghada Amer, *Golden Stripes*, 2005. Acrylic and thread on canvas. 59 × 70 in. | 149.9 × 177.8 cm.

Shirin Neshat (b. 1957, Qazvin, Imperial State of Iran) is an Iranian visual artist residing in New York; she works in film, video installations, and photography. Neshat explores the relationship between women and the religious and cultural value systems of Islam.

Marcos Grigorian (born in 1925, Russia; died in 2007) was an Iranian-Armenian and American artist and gallery owner. A pioneer of Iranian modern art, in his early artworks, including the Auschwitz murals, Grigorian depicted anxiety and despair, reminding the viewer of the cruelty of war and inevitability of death. He also experimented with various mediums: clay, sand, earth, straw, and other materials.

Ana D'Castro (b. 1984, Portugal) is a multidisciplinary Portuguese artist, architect, and interior designer based in Dubai. Her works, which are mostly abstract, are influenced by a mathematical base set in the foundations of proportion, scale, volume, and colour. She describes her work as "ARTchitecture", the symbiosis between Art and Architecture.





Ana D'Castro, Momentum series: "... na passagem...", 2021. "...passage...". Triptych. Oil on canvas. 600 X 200 cm.

Reza Aramesh (b. 1970, Teheran, Iran) is a visual artist who lives in London, the UK; he works in photography, sculpture, video, and performance. In his art pieces, he studies how conflicts and violence are reflected in the mass media around the world and reconstructs the related scenes.

Sudarshan Shetty (b. 1961, Mangalore, India) is a visual artist who resides in Mumbai. He is mostly known for his large sculptural installations and multi-media art pieces. Experimenting with numerous materials and mediums, Shetty uses everyday objects in his artworks to open up new possibilities of meaning.



Sudarshan Shetty, Untitled, 2017. Recycled teak wood. 72 x 72 x 90 in. 80 x 40 x 12 in.



Behrang Samadzadegan (b. 1979 Tehran, Iran) is an artist, critic, and curator residing in Iran; his art practice involves drawing, painting, and creating installations. In his work he questions the legitimacy of normative values and systems of authority and attacks the sanctity of cultural attitudes toward politics, religion, art history, and education. He also examines cultural and social identity in his art pieces through found sources (literature, toys, photos, commercial illustrations).

To learn more about The Storyteller, please visit [the show's official web page](#).

You might be interested in visiting [Roots and Reflections: A Journey through Time and Nature](#).



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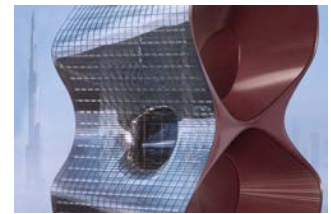
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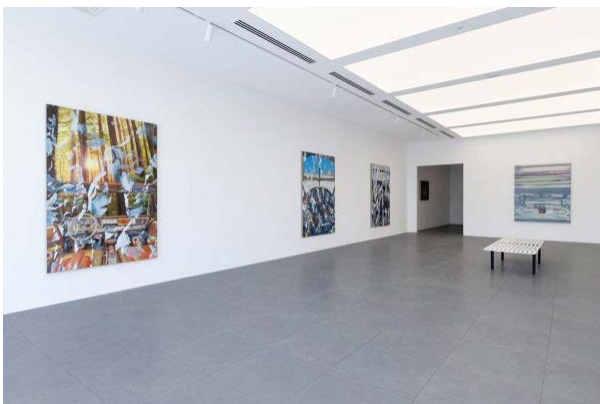
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