



REZA ARAMESH

SITE OF THE FALL
STUDY OF THE RENAISSANCE GARDEN

Action 180: At 9:15 am Sunday 28 May 1967
Hand carved, polished Carrara marble
240 x 80 x 55 cm
2016











Action 191: At 6:20 pm Sunday 2 April 2006
Hand carved, polished Carrara marble
220 x 340 cm
2017





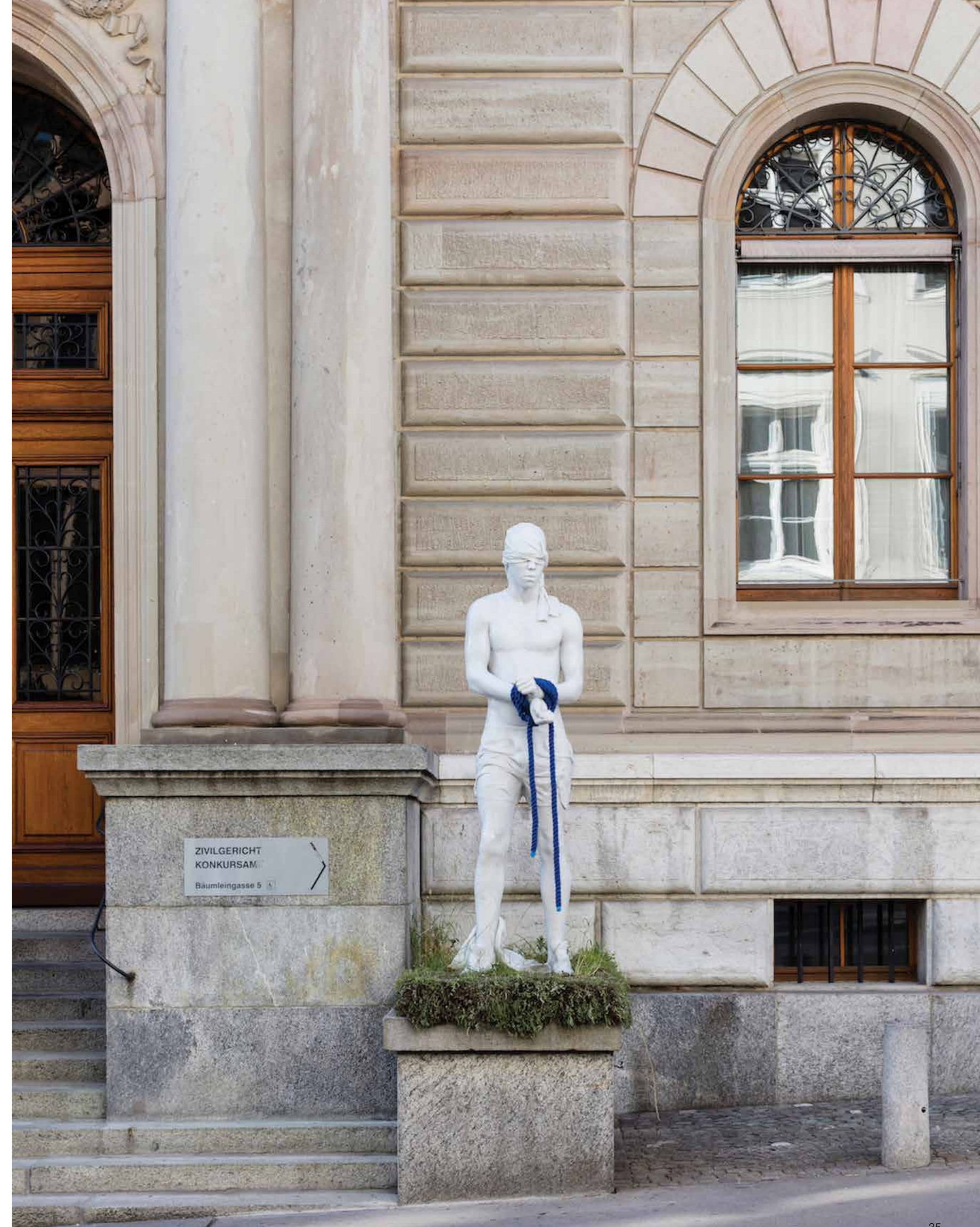




Action 190: At 5:00 am Wednesday 9 July 2014
Hand carved, polished Carrara marble, polypropylene rope
247 cm
2017













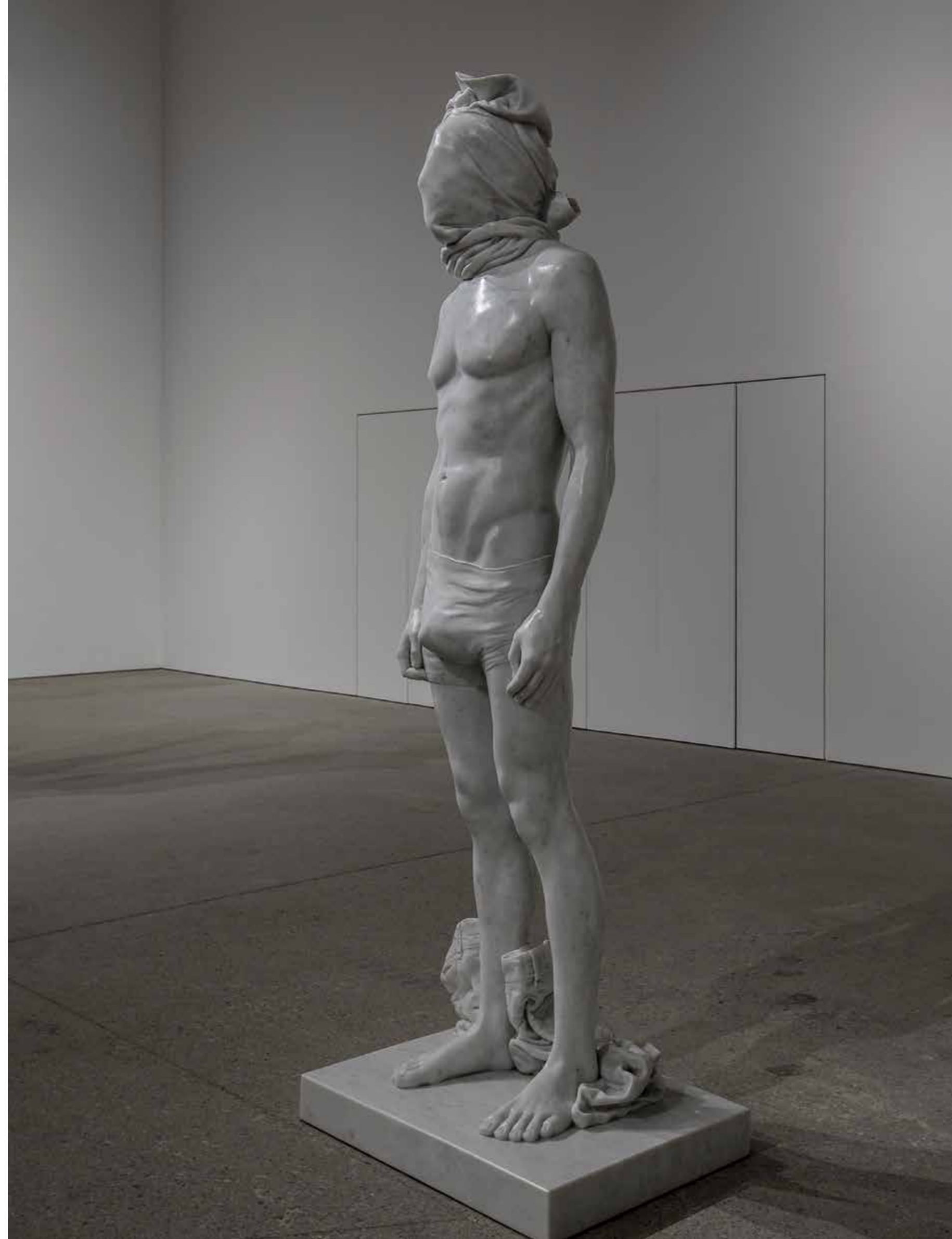
Action 182: At 01:01 pm Saturday 03 Feb 1968
Hand carved, polished Carrara marble
235 x 80 x 60 cm
2017









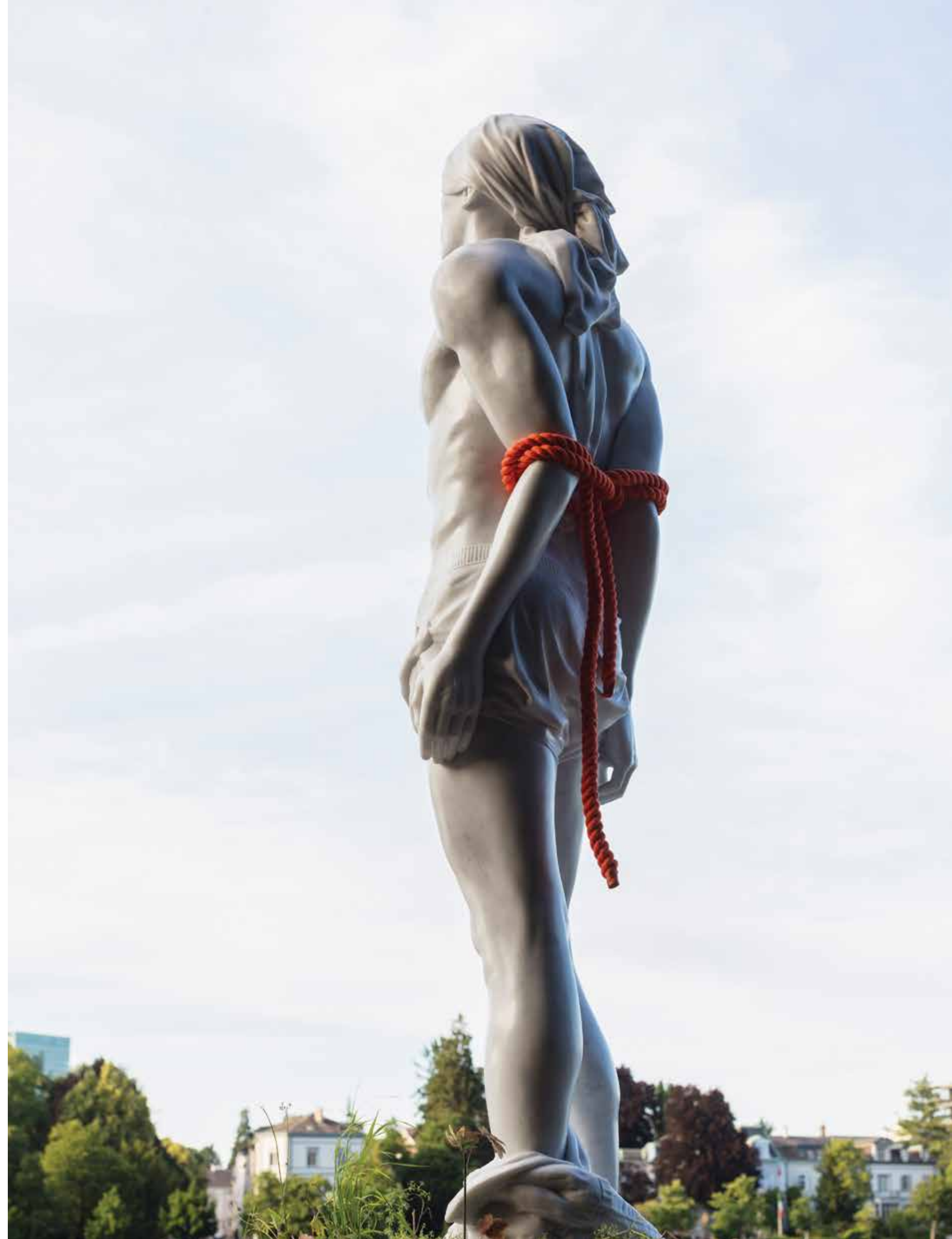


Action 181: At 10:00 pm Sunday 14 April 2013
Hand carved, polished Carrara marble, polypropylene rope
237 x 74 x 58 cm
2017











Action 137: 6:45 pm, 3 May 2012, Ramla
Hand carved, polished Carrara marble
136 x 335 x 35 cm
2014











METAMORPHOSIS
A STUDY IN LIBERATION

Action 183
Bronze
32 x 24 x 18 cm
2016







Action 184
Bronze
10 x 19 x 50 cm
2016







Action 185
Bronze
40 x 18 x 26 cm
2016





Action 186
Bronze
30 x 23 x 20 cm
2016







Action 188
Bronze, Concrete Barrier Block, Polypropylene Rope
164 cm, 150 x 100 cm plinth
2017









STUDY OF THE HEAD AS CULTURAL ARTEFACTS



Action 164
Hand-carved, polished Carrara marble
45 x 25 x 25 cm
2016



Action 165
Hand-carved, polished Carrara marble
45 x 25 x 25 cm
2016







Action 193
Hand-carved Statuario and Carrara marble
29 x 38 x 32 cm
2017





Action 194
Hand-carved Statuario and Carrara marble
24 x 33 x 35 cm
2017





Action 195
Hand-carved Statuario and Carrara marble
36 x 41 x 37 cm
2017





Action 166
Hand printed silver gelatin print mounted on aluminum and archival board, framed
51 x 61 x 4 cm
2016





Action 167
Hand printed silver gelatin print mounted on aluminum and archival board, framed
51 x 61 x 4 cm
2016



Action 168
Hand printed silver gelatin print mounted on aluminum and archival board, framed
51 x 61 x 4 cm
2016

Action 169
Hand printed silver gelatin print mounted on aluminum and archival board, framed
51 x 61 x 4 cm
2016



Action 173
Hand printed silver gelatin print mounted on aluminum and archival board, framed.
51 x 61 x 4 cm
2016





Action 171
 Hand printed silver gelatin print mounted on aluminum and archival board, framed
 51 x 61 x 4 cm
 2016



Action 170
 Hand printed silver gelatin print mounted on aluminum and archival board, framed
 51 x 61 x 4 cm
 2016

SITE OF THE FALL: STUDY OF THE RENAISSANCE GARDEN
SETTING STAGE FOR TRAGIC PLEASURE
BY SAMUEL LEUENBERGER

‘To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering’ Friedrich Nietzsche once observed. He might as well have been talking about himself, for he’s the ambiguous subject par excellence. We know that Nietzsche was fascinated by the topic of tragic pleasure, as exemplified in his first published book ‘The Birth of Tragedy’. Likewise, tragedy informed much of his life and intellectual achievements for he set himself, if unwillingly, apart.

And now the gifted Iranian artist Reza Aramesh has endued himself with the pleasurable tragic nature of the human condition in his *Site of the Fall: Study of the Renaissance Garden*. Three hand-carved and polished marble nudes to the ratio 5:4 of human scale, first shown at Art Basel Parours in June 2017, oscillate between ancient and new. Formally alluding to Greek and Roman sculpture they are made with traditional marble masons in Pietrasanta, Italy that saw the fabrication of Renaissance statuary. Neoclassical in appearance they instantly recall some of the most iconic white Greek marbles with their massive human force, for the Hellenes the body deemed a thing of beauty and a bearer of meaning. Aramesh’s subjects abound with masculinity. They are strong and their super-defined abs and built-up pecs shine as if just returned from the gym. Otherwise naked they are clothed in boxer briefs through which we can only adumbrate the deliberately emphasised semi-hard genitals. The homoerotic notion is somewhat deviating the mind from higher things. Darkly foreboding are the blindfolded heads and rope-tied hands which render these men anonymous and above all powerless.

Despite their superficial beauty, hope is the ingredient woefully lacking in the lives of these three young men. Their physical and psychological

agony seems to indicate the boundary between life and death. Whether they are on the verge of dying or not, they live in unusually close communion with the dead. Similar to Greek tragedy, Aramesh sculpts an unapologetic expression of an inquiry into suffering and pain. The victims in *Site of the Fall: Study of the Renaissance Garden* are drawn from imagery of recent sacrifices of war, terror and oppression. Burdened with inherent rebellious sentiment and grievous agony the artist portrays three violated bodies forced into public scrutiny.

Aramesh’s staging of suffering is as much abusive as pleasurable. It gives thought to the process by which shocking or repulsive imagery simultaneously fascinates the viewer who feels pity and sympathy for the victims. This powerful performative element is comparable to the audience of tragedy that experiences fear, but also compassion when realising that punishment and pain could perfectly well happen them. And of course, contemporary society’s fascination with violence is fuelled and exploited by new media, while the production of terror conversely resembles a theatrical performance. Our pleasure in encountering the artist’s attractive but disturbing sculptures is conveyed through a theatrical premise that encourages conscious and critical observation, perhaps best comparable to Brechtian epic plays. As such, it is at the heart of both tragedy’s function and Aramesh’s sculptures to elicit a response that is emotional and intellectual at the same time. The aestheticisation of suffering evidently works well in an artistic context, yet it would be painful to see these individuals suffer in reality. Aramesh largely avoids clues as to why these men are suffering, an element that is further enhanced by the artist’s continuous restriction to titles of sequentially numbered ‘Actions’.

Narratives of beauty versus suffering have inspired several of Aramesh’s works, notably *Study of the Head as a Cultural Artifact* (2016) and its companion *Study of Fragmented Bodies* (2016). In *Site of the Fall: Study of the Renaissance Garden*, human agony is traversed with short-lived delight. The nudes stand on concrete beds or platforms filled with lesser-known plants and weeds. Confusing order and beauty of the Renaissance garden with disorder and wilderness of the contemporary setting, Aramesh furthermore dramatises the emergence of impulsive forces that can be seen as metaphors for political opposition.

The scenes in which the suffering occurs is no less important. *Action 191: At 6:20pm Sunday 2 April 2006* (2017) visually conforms among the ancient masterpieces of the Basel Antikenmuseum. The viewer is decidedly puzzled by presentations of old and new. *Action 190: At 5:00am Wednesday 9 July 2014* (2017) exposed at the entry to the Basel civic courthouse immediately calls to mind the Roman goddess of justice, Justitia, who frequently appears blindfolded and represents impartiality towards the law. And upon the banks of the River Rhine stands *Action 181: At 10:00pm Sunday 14 April 2013* (2017), as if awaiting the fierce brightness of Charon, the ferryman of Hades, who carries the deceased souls across rivers that divide the living and the dead. Spread out as a trilogy around Basel, these Actions are presented in parallel rather than in a single sequence, thus retaining autonomous agency.

To return to Nietzsche, the posing question is how to find meaning in the suffering of Aramesh’s men. In a mediated world of chronic crises we are all too familiar with encounters of suffering through the faces of the sufferer. In 2015 migration suddenly jumped to the top of the news agenda

with television screens and newspapers led with stories and images about the atrocious loss of life and suffering of thousands of people escaping war in the Middle East or oppression and poverty in Africa and elsewhere. Despite its enormous power, media coverage is often politically charged leaving many more humanitarian crises beyond its radar. Reza Aramesh’s *Site of the Fall: Study of the Renaissance Garden* responds by way of seducing through veiled eroticism and exposed suffering. He reinvents ancient beauty that transcends cultural boundaries and encourages the viewer to forge action and critical engagement. His work reveals but does not heal. For perhaps this is the true meaning we find in Aramesh’s staging of suffering.

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REZA ARAMESH: CRUDE HUMANITY
BY SARAH RAZA

*Set in a kind of irresolution, such men persuade themselves fairly easily that everything is going to be decided elsewhere, for everybody at the same time.*1*

Iranian-born artist Reza Aramesh is as a spectator of a fragmented world, which he poetically dissects to un-veil a discourse of ‘pure force.’ Consciously, choosing to unravel lines of control he creates visually powerful tableaux of physical and psychological trauma, as they unfold upon a metaphorical stage of absolute violence. By utilising performance, photography and sculpture Aramesh has created a unique practice that reveals an apartheid of human suffering with his art serving to demarcate man-made boundaries of ‘social order.’ By probing this very order, which is defined according to the rhetoric of ‘them’ and ‘us’, the ‘oppressed’ and the ‘oppressor,’ Aramesh’s art makes explicit that these two strange bed fellows co-exist in mutual exclusivity, and provide both legitimate and illegitimate ‘value’ to one another.

Within his dynamic practice Aramesh has deliberately reduced the proximity that exists between these two entities by soliciting an elevated dialogue based on non-verbal communication. Subsequently, this conversation is part of a larger understanding of ‘crude humanity’ and establishes the following discussion on Aramesh’s recent major solo exhibition in Dubai *The Whistle of the Souls, A Play That Never Starts*, which was inspired by late Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannous’s acclaimed play *An Entertainment Evening for June 5th* (1967–68), which premiered at the Damascus State Theatre in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli War, or the Six-Day War, in 1967.

^{1*} Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (Penguin Books, 1961, pg. 64)

Extracting the heart of Wannous’s dramatic work, Aramesh makes apparent that this is a play within a play by probing the dense and politically charged question of ‘whose suffering is it anyway?’ And the struggle between both ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ protagonists, which takes place within an unmarked and derelict warehouse on the borders of the al-Quoz gallery district. The specificity of the site of Dubai is an important location for this project as it highlights the aspirations of a city on the move, still undergoing the process of industrialisation, which is evident by its labor economy and mass scale vertical and horizontal expansion. Consequently, the exhibition venue, was always already permeated with social consciousness and deliberately chosen by the artist to construct and entice a process of self-reflection, where the sliding signifiers of commercialism and migrancy cross one another. Thus, upon entering the large warehouse space, which was painted black, one is already troubled by the strong sense of foreboding, which is apparent after being confronted by *Action 137: 6:45 pm, 3 May 2012, Ramla* (2014), a small marble sculpture, fixed atop a large concrete block plinth. The figure is beautifully carved and portrays a man whose shirt has been forced over his head, obscuring his face, muscular torso exposed, and his trousers dropped around his ankles. The sculpture’s real identity remains unknown apart from the title caption that Aramesh has provided in keeping with his regular methodology of working with mass syndicated images that appear in newspapers and float online, and are accompanied by vague captions. This figure although unidentifiable is someone’s son, brother, husband or lover, but here he represents a man who has clearly been subjected to a form of inhumane exploitation and humiliation. Ironically, however, the sculpture’s physicality

commands attention, and this is captured within its suspended muscular tension, which if released could well be capable of mobilising.

Aramesh is seen to create a scenario whereby sculpture becomes a metaphor for false eminence and a mouthpiece for the silent majority, who have been conditioned into being publicly paraded as subhuman mute beings, but are at the same time acutely aware of themselves and their intellectual faculty. As Aramesh highlights, these individuals might be depicted as physically immobilised by their oppressors, however, they do retain their dignity, commanding respect rather than pity, their silence instead serves instead to communicate the failures of humanity.

By contrast, the parallel work *Action 136: ‘Put this in your record: I’m present!’* (2014), takes the form of glass room akin to a voyeuristic peep show booth or a refashioned fetishised modern day cabinet of curiosities. Inside the glass room there are three slide projections presenting a repeated slide image of a semi clothed male, blindfolded and kneeling inside what appears to be a confined concrete space next to a military checkpoint. The slide image is taken somewhere, presumably, in the Middle East, at a manmade ‘frontier’ within a police state, which prohibits the free movement of people and ideas. Within this heavily controlled space and its custodians exercise the compulsive need for all inclusive violence, which is deemed as normal, standardised and part of the practice of the everyday. Accompanying the slides, three free standing cameras point at them similar to pseudo guns, similar to the ones that can be encountered at an arcade game. Here the cameras can be seen to function as ‘tools’ within a horrific game of castigation where humanity and civil liberties are grossly challenged within the frame of providing

popular entertainment and cheap thrills for those who exercise and patron an unhealthy interest in human ‘target practice.’ It is important to point out that both works within this particular project equally highlight the fetishistic fine lines that exists between eroticism and violence, which are regularly probed in Aramesh’s practice to tease out deeper socio-psychological layers of dominance and brutality.

By creating both powerful and highly allegorical artworks Aramesh is seen to construct a world that is at once complex as it is tainted with equal measure of beauty and violence. In this world the artist invites his audiences to participate in a dialogue on power and violence and become part of the crucial performative experience. This open ended conversation forms part of Aramesh’s long term artistic practice, which is intent on exploring dense and contorted liminal spaces that exist within the very core of humanity. As an artist, he makes apparent through his artworks that these ‘spaces’ have the ability to both trap and free humanity from its own limitations.

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MATERIALITY AND HETEROTOPIA
BY VASSILIS OIKONOMOPOULOS

Aramesh uses diverse and extensive sources, often drawn to images for the non-visible details that are more crucial in defining their meaning than the visual cues. He describes this as an exploration into the ‘dialogue between what could be seen and not seen.’¹ Noting that often, a residue of ‘Christian iconography or Renaissance painting’ can be present in his mind while researching his material, Aramesh said that what actually appeals to him most is ‘an aesthetic of violence’. He goes on to explain that the idea is ‘not so much of violent imagery’ per se, but the gestural description of a violent act. The performance and action of movements and gestures that ‘imply psychological and not just physical violence.’² As revelatory about the artist’s process as this might be, it is not the most enthralling part of the discussion though. Confronting not only suffering and violence but also the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed.

These comments tell a surprising amount about Aramesh’s thinking. Most crucially, Aramesh’s approach shows that he thinks through analogies and binaries, but also his sensing of things and the historical, iconographic and philosophical layers that find themselves enmeshed and entwined in his conceptual process indicate a curious approach to the systems of meaning and signification that surround us. They also reveal the complex duality and maybe even a poignant reality of violence, vulnerability and their interchangeable characteristics. For Aramesh, the reality of violence and its outcomes become his material, but it is a materiality that becomes a body of work, which eventually becomes a

¹(Restaging the (Objective) Violence of Images - Reza Aramesh in conversation with Anthony Downey; <http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/5>, accessed 15 July 2017)

²Ibid

physical manifestation. He has said elsewhere: ‘I’m questioning what reality means. When we look at images of conflict zones, what are we seeing exactly? How is reality defined within that context? Whose reality are we looking at?’³

MATERIALITY

From my first experiences of Aramesh’s sculptural and photographic installations to our very recent meetings in his studio and the latest viewings of his exhibitions, I always associate my experience with the plurality and the power of the material he is using. His sculptural forms are crafted almost to perfection, but such quality is deceiving here. From the wooden bodies of *Action 131* to the photographic, black and white stillness of *Action 168*, his materials - each one of them bearing their own history - become reluctant witnesses to the vulnerability of the human condition. In fact, the majority of the works show the continued hardship and the dramatic results of conflict in the wider Middle East. The photographic series comprising among other of *Actions 166-170* depict images of abstract looking shapes on what seems to be a soft, sandy ground. The bleakness and greyish tones of the compositions are striking. In fact, the photographs show fragments of sculpted bodies, more precisely human heads, blindfolded and separated from the rest of their body. History and materiality are palpable here and when made visible these images reveal both a reflection of time and of culture in their conceptual make-up. The idea of materiality here brings forward the question of vulnerability and is strongly and radically connected and commenting on the history of photography as well as the history of

³ (Action Piece - Reza Aramesh in conversation with Lara Atallah; <http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/170>, accessed 15 July 2017)

colonialism and the complexities of colonialist ideas and instruments. It is necessary to approach the specific elements of these compositions carefully.

It seems that the work of modernist photographer Man Ray can be a useful point of reference here. In 1926, almost 100 years ago, Man Ray developed a series of photographs entitled *Noire et Blanche*. The series, which have become some sort of leading icons of early twentieth-century photography depicts the image of a woman holding an African mask. In more recent decades, this body of work has gained extensive attention and critical interest within the contexts of postmodernism and post-colonialism. The images of both the female subject and the mask, have been problematised extensively and have defined the theoretical and critical field for themes such as gender, colonialism, commodification, stylisation, but also eroticism and objectification of the body.

It seems to me that Aramesh, aware of the complex issues surrounding *Noire et Blanche* and their contemporary extensions, is seeking to expand somehow their current relevance. Aramesh is inevitably linking photographic history with his own conceptual framework around ideas of vulnerability and destruction. His own photographs where he captures decapitated heads in a form and style as if they were precious objects, manages to stir things up with its severe criticism of our relation to individual histories and our responsibility towards them. Decontextualised, separated from any other elements and isolated, these images are not stylistic studies of textures and colours, but remind us the of the ongoing violence and process of human animosity that is ongoing and

stigmatises the present moment in contemporary society and the world we live in.

These images are in their nature, sculptural and further suggest a certain level of intimacy, a proximity and closeness that cannot be neglected. They stand-in for cruelty. However, they can also be seen to represent a materiality of pathos, the intensity of life and a certain feeling of transgressing the alienation of the hostile act. Therefore, the sculptural materiality of this photographic body extends the narrative of post-colonialist criticality into the domain of a present tense. In other words, this is a method of furthering or going beyond the critical point of history to envision the possibilities for the reconstruction of questions on a different basis. Taking this concept one step further, Aramesh is seeking ways to potentially relocate and restate such systems of reference, production of meaning, cultural codes and social response. This being the case, he ventures methodologically into a territory very familiar to him; a process during which more productions of other forms emerge.

To further consider what links Aramesh’s nature of his materials with ideas of vulnerability and criticality, it is important to include to the discussion the marble sculptures, such as figures of heads *Action 163-165* as well as *Action 193-195*. These three-dimensional manifestations remind us of torture, the violent side of human nature, incarceration and the inevitable process of ethical, moral and physical devastation or death. This attempt to extract the impermanence of security and ethos of contemporary systems of beliefs is visible. The display included some almost perfectly produced wooden vitrines to be shown in a dimly lit space. The meditative qualities of this display added to the dramatic quietness

of the piece, injecting to the experience of the installation an almost ritualistic element.

The environment is imposing, demanding a closer look at the details of the glistening marble under the light source. The process is reversing the photographic procedure. Whereas the camera absorbs the light in order to reveal the form, here Aramesh exposes the form to the light, which in turn manifests its three-dimensionality. Aramesh's presentation of sculpture within the rectangular wooden vitrine, reminds of the minimalist aesthetics of artist such as Donald Judd or Sol LeWitt, albeit more rough around the edges. There is also an inclination to approach them based on a certain proximity to the work of sculptor Richard Serra. However, what they also remind us, is the fact that such practices have also defined the museological context of contemporary practices and the type of display devices we might sometimes demand from our experience with an artwork. The question then becomes the following: Is Aramesh here questioning the traditions of minimalist presentation at the same time as commenting on the museological, almost clinical response of indifference to suffering, conflict and violence? Although I am not arguing that these are conscious decisions, the complexities and interconnected threads seem to be not only powerful but also extensively intriguing. Both in terms of expository capacities and conceptual qualities, the display reminds the claustrophobic conditions of a cell and the fundamentally uncanny experience of confinement. The plurality of ideas that is being reflected in this work can be argued, that it elevates the sense of human vulnerability and the artwork itself to a level of openness, creating the conditions for the work to be continuously reinterpreted and viewed from a

variety of perspectives. Beginning with something very specific but speaking to a wider human condition it offers in some ways the possibility of hope in the face of desperation.

In *Action 180: At 9:15 am Sunday 28 May 1967* (2016) Aramesh developed this approach further. The dynamics of violence, suffering, control and power that define his sculptural corpus appeared in an installation that progressed his thinking to different dimensions. Here the sculptural figure has been monumentalised, reaching larger than human scale. This magnifying version of a figure was positioned on top of the earth, a low terrain, a plinth defined by geometric perfection but literally made out of the ground.

Aramesh blends classical aesthetics with anonymous figures from the contemporary moment, thereby bringing to the fore the victims who have been rendered invisible, yet at the same time questioning the traditional representation of suffering throughout the Western art historical canon⁴. The artist is clearly interested in the idea of magnifying the sense of human scale, something that somehow heightens the psychological impact of the sculptural form and its presence in the space of the gallery but also in relation to the viewer. This discernibly renewed confidence in his concepts is an evolution of his language. The body, but also the confinement and the act of torture cannot be ignored. These images now deliberately interfere with the psychological and physical space of the viewer, far more exposed and far more prevalent than ever before in Aramesh's installations.

In *Metamorphosis - a study in liberation* a white rectilinear construction consisting of walls and

⁴ (<http://www.leilahellergallery.com/exhibitions/reza-aramesh>, accessed 15 July 2017).

shelves, is setting the display for a series of smaller in scale, black bronze sculptures. The display is more performative, with Aramesh now creating figures that are hybrid in form, with human bodies and animal faces. Rams, bulls, unicorns, mythical creatures occupy this kind of theatrical stage. The series touches upon the interplay of actions and practices. Following the trajectory of a well-known methodology to Aramesh, images sourced through various media outlets documenting war zones are expertly manipulated into three-dimensional studies of forms. They are deliberately augmented and transformed, their faces transformed into animals.

The obliteration of the face; this form of defacement is crucial here and links different bodies of work together. Aramesh gives us no visual clues as to the person's identity. Identity disappears, and within this perishing, the idealised bodily form occupies an absolutely secondary role. However, the concealed face turns into a mirror, a way of looking outwards and inwards at the same time, an open view towards oneself. My desire to decode and extract meaning out of this work leads me to think of Foucault's theoretical explorations in his seminal text *Of Other Spaces*. I turn to Foucault here, although Aramesh himself would probably consider more fitting the works of other theoreticians such as Nietzsche or Agamben. However, I am particularly inclined to view this from the angle of heterotopia, as this was conceived in Foucault's work. In this piece, Foucault explains how one aspect of heterotopias is the capacity for forms of virtual spaces, or parallel spaces to contain the undesirable, the abject or the atrocious. What he calls heterotopias of crisis, or 'heterotopias of deviation: those in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required

mean or norm are placed.'⁵ Repugnant bodies that it includes, it makes the reality of utopia possible. The dichotomy of binary positions is reinforced by the repulsion of otherness, in which cases heterotopias necessarily expand and become much more and more pronounced.

In the past year, Aramesh presented a new body of work in Basel. His project, part of Art Basel's Parours, was realised in partnership with the city's Antikenmuseum. Aramesh used three distinct locations in the city of Basel to position a number of his large-scale marble sculptures. In one of the Antikenmuseum's galleries, the beautiful arrangement of Hellenistic and Roman sculptures and busts is disrupted by *Action 191: At 6:20 pm Sunday 2 April 2006*, 2017, a naked blindfolded figure of a young man. The perfection of his body is juxtaposed to the archetypal bodies of the kouroi -- sculptures of young men that have come to define idealised form and beauty. Among the audience, busts of philosophers and ancient gods create a rather dynamic, performative context. The sculpture becomes a sort of display of displays, where the artist's contemporary work becomes the spectacle and the curiosity, the uninvited guest and the mysterious specimen. The blindfolded figure, covering the eyes with its shirt, while a piece of garment drapes its legs, stands on what seems to be a grass verge, which surrounds it. Aramesh uses species of grass and weed that usually grow between paving stones and cracks on the surface of pavements and on streets. Those weeds can be seen as somewhat offensive, disruptive to a perceived idea of order and an out of control impairment to accepted appearances. Making the association between

⁵ Foucault, Michel, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, in *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, October 1984; *Des Espaces Autres*, March 1967, translated from the French by Jay Miskowicz, p. 5

the presence of his sculpture in the context of the museum of antiquities - a container of civilisation and history - and the pervasive idea of disruption of order, Aramesh produces a powerful commentary. His intention is clearly to upset the accepted order and question at the same time the idea of civilisation as we witness it. At a moment in time, when global discourse escalates to the point where humanity has been subsumed under a rhetoric of hatred and fear for the other, Aramesh addresses fundamental questions about presence, perseverance, inclusion, alongside concerns such as the right to be and the right to live independently of fear. In effect, the inclusion of his sculpture in this specific context creates a wave of tension, a crack in the set order of things a collapse of the normative. His concern is to open up the possibilities for dialogue and to form relationships that will eventually lead to a discussion around the current geopolitical situation of war and conflict and the social repercussions on the lives of people globally. Who are the anonymous refugees that have to become illegal aliens? How does warfare create the diversionary logic between those that have the right to live and those whose lives are destroyed? How does the so-called civilised world, the idea of an ordered society can continue to evolve when a global system of suppression directed from forces of annihilation is taking over?

These crucial questions mark also the other two interventions that are part of the same body of work. On the banks of the river Rhine, the figure of another man, *Action 181: At 10:00 pm Sunday 14 April 2013* blindfolded and tied up is posing similar questions to the passing-by audience. Standing on a concrete plinth, alone by the water, the sculpture creates a strong analogy with the innumerable and deathly Mediterranean sea

crossings. Poignantly positioned on a bridge, the association with disconnections and borders is powerful. The inability to move and captivation create an unsettling vision. In a similar manner, the last sculpture of the trilogy is installed outside Basel's Hall of Justice. The figure, as if in the process of being judged, automatically relates to the idea of criminality. The law of society is at stake here and this figure stands a witness to humiliation and incarceration. The selection of locations is important. Aramesh is creating an invisible triangle between a cultural institution, an element of infrastructure and a judicial institution. All connected by a dark story, a story of submission and suppression. At a moment in time when the future of humanity is extremely precarious, living conditions around the world more unstable than ever, war and conflict the ultimate denominator and controller of our excessively hailed global nomads, these works become evident connections to a discourse that must not be suppressed.

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STAGE AND SURFACE IN THE WORK OF REZA ARAMESH
BY FARHAD MANOUCHEHRI

The concept of metamorphosis has always carried a sense of becoming — cycles of rebirth, burgeoning regeneration or mutation, and transcendence amongst other inflective interpretations. Notably, using the narrative to thread this theme of metamorphosis is commonly found through all of them. For instance, in Franz Kafka's story *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa is transformed into a grotesque creature.¹ A central theme of the narrative hinges on the travelling salesman coping with occupying his own body. In the story, his corporeal form moves through constant states of inexplicable mutation beyond his control. Elsewhere, one can point to the collection of myths poetry by Roman poet Ovid in particular his chef-d'œuvre, *Metamorphoses*.² In both cases narrative is key to relaying this theme and is deftly and mischievously fictional; the symbiosis between reality and myth steers us along a slippery threshold between the two states. In other words, the fictional realm becomes a time-frame through which we swing in and out of reality. But what happens when this chain of meaning becomes obscured through evacuation of story?

In Kafka's *Gregor Samsa* and in the many subversive transformations which characterise Ovid's myths, we come face-to-face with human-animal hybrids. Reza Aramesh's installation *Metamorphosis - a study in liberation* (2016) is populated with figurines which similarly recall theriocephalic qualities frequently attributed to Egyptian or Indian mythologies. Grouped under a common title, the artist presents us with a series of sculptures staged around a central white plinth with planar surfaces. *Action(s) 183, 184, 185,*

and 186 are animal-head bronzes devoid of all humanistic expressions and emotions that one might otherwise ascribe to an aggregate human figure. The sculptures are neither in evolutionary states of one another, nor are they lone tell-tale motifs of independent stories. The figurines vary not only in terms of composition but also in bodily attributes. The unique stance of each figure drawn out by a dedicated and equally different frame forces us to search for a commonality elsewhere. Herein lies an element of the uncanny that transcends the mythological narrative.

The four sculptures, and their enveloping scaffold, do not offer up a single narrative; fictional, religious, or otherwise. Instead, the piece functions as a melodic play and meditation on performance. The different heights at which the sculptures are placed mimic a rhythmic black and white pattern of piano keys in motion. There are obvious signs such as the number four that quantifies the figures and perhaps points to an operatic character, not in terms of a narrative but rather riffing on roles. The four-act set-up is evacuated of any discernible preconceptions. Here the story is not fictional but rather rooted in reality. The titles of Aramesh's works allude to historical moments during wars or insurgencies. The artist deliberately divorces the composition of the figures from their genesis — typically obtained from a churning pool of hoarded mass-media and war imagery. Add to that the artist's sequential method of referring to his body of works, to which an incremental number gets added to a common title, and this binds each Act(ion) to its appropriate circumstance and forgoes broad classifications.

The protagonists of these photojournalistic spreads are often captured in a state of surrender.

Yet there is something innately powerful and heroic about such figures. These men and women at times become symbols of resistance and bravery. However, the image as source material, from which the compositions of the sculptures are culled, at best does little to testify to the powerful moment of civil disobedience, and at worst is lost in and neutralised by the hoarding of mass-media dissemination. In this work, the masking of the figures with mythical motifs celebrates the heroic moment of civil disobedience instead of perpetuating victimhood.

Other signs are more subtle and respond to the affective qualities of the frame on which the sculptures are mounted. For instance, the play on the notion of time-space becomes further evident as one considers the architectonic quality of the supporting structure. In lieu of the customary cubic white plinth, we are faced with a cascade of spatial elevations that, presented together conjure up the theatrical stage. What formally bars the viewer's gaze into the elevated space of these mythological figures is perhaps the basic concept of colour. The blackness of the bronze statuettes contrasts sharply against the pure whiteness of the planar plinth on which they are mounted. A peculiar yin and yang knots a complex web of solids and voids, curves and lines. This contrast, or perhaps demarcation, pushes against the very space from which the subject, us as spectators, might emerge to fantasise about and interpret the sculptures. In effect, this contrast of colour marks a boundary and thus shields the heroic figures from the contaminating fantasies of the viewer. A theatrical proscenium wall ushers in a fourth dimension and holds us back.

The voyeuristic set-up encourages covert spectatorship, snatched glances and fantasies

of that which might be obscured. An indolent pirouette around the group of sculptures does little to satisfy one's desire to be subsumed by the trappings of the unusual time-space that here Aramesh so carefully choreographs. The masking of the figures relays self-identification and thus delays any resolution for the human desire emotionally to react, reduce, and understand. It is as if one is obliged to find a way to commune with and attach through other means, ways that occlude human facial recognition and bodily language. They become objects before us and we refrain from hesitation. Time stops, and with it, so do we. In Aramesh's sculptures, one does not find depth by searching for a rapid emotive response. Instead, the vastness of implicit depth yawns open gradually as the spectator passes time with the piece. This prolonged suspension of perverse mesmerisation and focused engagement encourages a rapturous submission to a myriad of sensations.

Critical reception of the artist's oeuvre can often become entangled in banal references when juxtaposed with art historical icons. While certain canonical analogies are apt, and furthermore aid in better contextualising the artworks, the entire scope of them are, however, not entirely bound to this effect. For instance, the male figures in Aramesh's photographic series — and to a certain extent in this installation — at times refer to conspicuous narratives such as the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian. Comparisons like this stem from discourses which favour the post-modernist moment as destabilising force by way of othering and deconstructing more classicising references in broad narratives of historical art movements. As art historian, Alex Potts, contends in his cross-century analysis of sculpture, the medium only gained its independence as a true form of art

¹ Kafka, Franz. *Metamorphosis*. Adapted by David Farr and Gisli Örn Gardarsson, Oberon Books, 2006.

² Brown, Sarah Annes. *Ovid: Myth and Metamorphosis*. Bristol Classical Press, 2005.

with the advent of neo-classicism.³ This shift in interdependency of sculpture and architecture — as opposed to sculpture as mere decorative schema — coincided with, Neoclassical sculptor, Antonio Canova's practice who produced some of today's readily recognisable statues like the *Victoria & Albert Theseus* and the *Minotaur* made in 1782. In Canova's sculptures, one can observe an obsession with materiality and surface; the varying texture and attention to detail, coupled with the introduction of the custom-made plinth, inspired the viewer dynamically to analyse the object presented to them as opposed to accepting a passively didactic viewing.⁴ A new awareness encouraged active looking and circulation around the object. Interestingly, the emergence of this new form of independent sensibility, obsessed with the surface and one's own skin, was in parallel with foundations of the nineteenth-century nationhood.

Aramesh demonstrates with his sculptural work a preoccupation with subjectivity defined less by implied narrative than by surface. This is particularly evident in the *Metamorphosis - a study in liberation* grouping. Here too, we witness a sensibility attached to materiality and tactility. This becomes especially evident when one considers the small scale of the bronze figurines which invite the engagement of the senses in and around the theatrical mise-en-scène. The smooth transition between surfaces, both on the bronzes and against the flat and polished structure within which they are framed, elicits an intense absorption in the viewer. The artist directs our attention away from the affective quality of facial expressions —now forgone by virtue of masking the figures — towards a fixation on the shared

and communal qualities of surface and material, in this case bronze. We become entrapped in the political underpinnings of the artist's work, not by way of shock value or obvious juxtapositions but rather by becoming invested in the surface and materiality. A sense so basic to human nature that, at a time of rising nationalisms, signals a need for collective 'jouissance'.

Farhad Manouchehri is an advisor and independent writer based between London and Toronto. He read his MA, focusing on the male body in European Art, at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

³ Potts, Alex. *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*. Yale University Press, 2009.

⁴ Ibid, 42-3.

WORK IN PROCESS



SOURCE MATERIAL



REFERENCE IMAGES



APRX
400 mm



APRX 300 mm

PAINTED BRONZE WITH UNFIRED CLAY EFFECT



Central Africa Republic Feb 6. 2014 to now



APRX
500 mm



APRX 250 mm

SOURCE MATERIAL

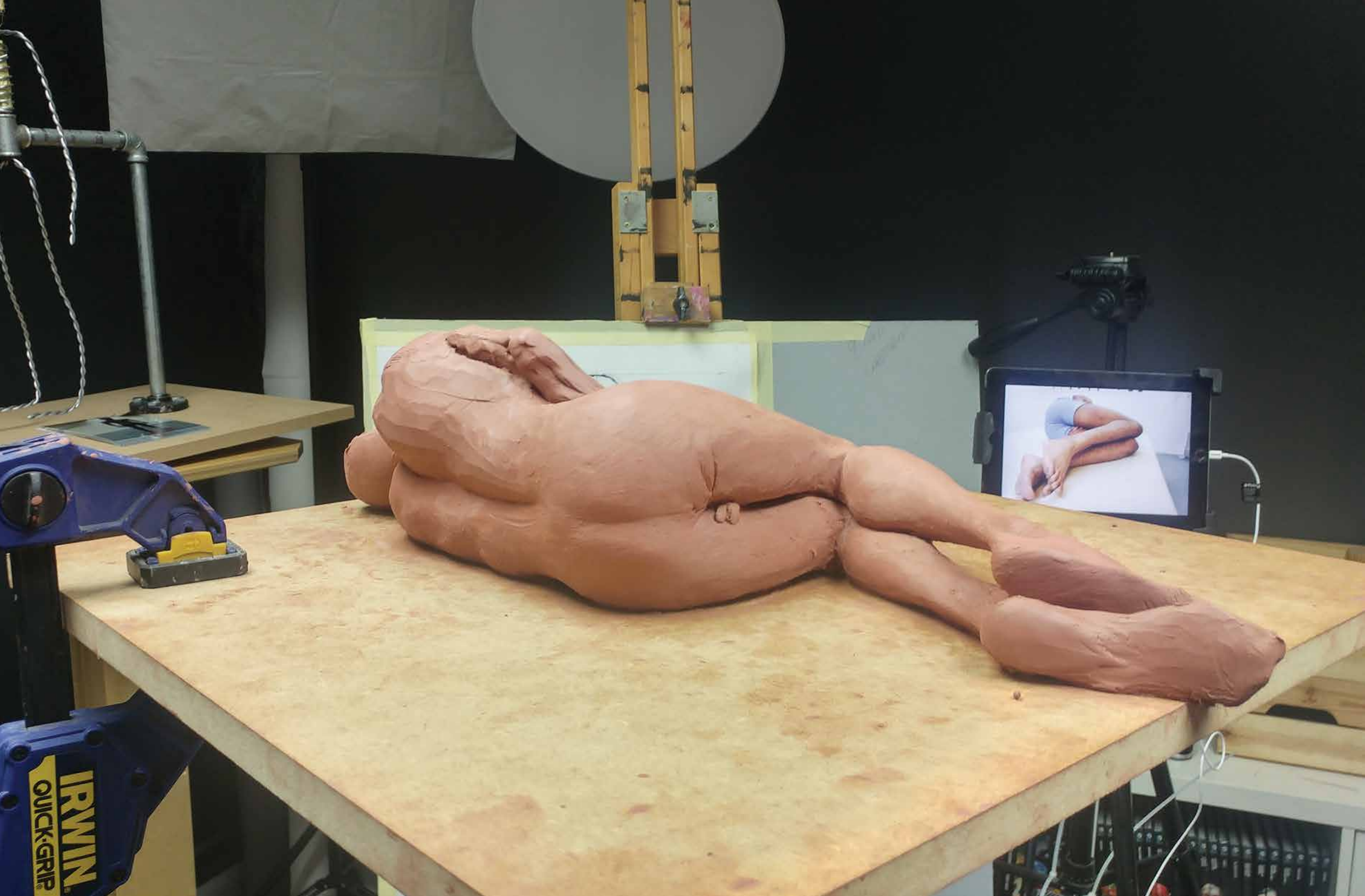


APRX
400 mm

APRX 400 mm





















ON PRACTICE AND PROCESS:
A CONVERSATION BETWEEN REZA ARAMESH AND LEYLA FAKHR

LF: Your works make strong art historical statements. Would you say that the way you present your marble sculptures is a result of your continuous interest in the representation of history?

RA: I like to look at history as a fluent and ongoing process. Most of us have been taught to see history as one single entity belonging to the past, as though shelved and protected with no relevance to the present. But to answer your question, I am interested in the creation of art, period. Whether an artwork was created thousands of years ago or yesterday.

It's good to remember that there are many histories of art, not only the predominant Western art history that we know, but, in fact, several histories of the same event—it's not fixed or frozen in time. I intend to open up an unending dialogue between the present and past.

I also hope that the viewer picks up the element of humour that I'm employing within this dialogue. We tend to take history as a serious set of events that exists only in the past. By depicting a non-white rebellious citizen who is not a biblical hero like David, also hand-carved in white Carrara marble, this will hopefully challenge the fixative notion of history.

LF: You explain history as a fluid entity, however, most of your works are titled with specific times, dates and days of the weeks. This seems paradoxical?

RA: When we look at an artwork, it is helpful to have an anchor or rather a starting point, from where we can begin constructing a narrative. The time and date included in the titles are the first

piece of the puzzle, to guide the viewer into a better understanding of the work's context.

My intention is not to monumentalise history, but rather to highlight the act of violence that took place within that specific time and date. It is not the time that is important, but more the act; similar acts of violence have continuously reoccurred throughout the history of mankind and will continue to do so.

LF: I would like to ask you about the aesthetic and material difference of your recent sculptures opposed to your earlier works such as *Action 103* dating 2011 where you worked with polychrome, a material that gives your sculptures a similar quality to church statues. What made you shift to more precious materials, such as marble and bronze?

RA: I am often shifting between mediums. The subjects or the studies that I undertake have hierarchies over the medium. While the subject in the work remains continuous, the material may vary depending on what medium serves best in communicating my point.

In *Action 103*, I was engaging in a conversation with the polychrome sculptures created in Spain during the 17th Century. They depicted the idea of sainthood and martyrdom.

This is not too different to the marble sculptures, where I am portraying figures from the war in Vietnam as well as the Middle Eastern conflict zones. The intention with those works was to give them the notion of a 'saint', by meticulously carving the figures from lime wood and applying many layers in the delicate process of gesso and

oil painting (the method of polychroming), the piece playfully examines the notion of heroism and status.

LF: Can you expand on your subjects and how your works often manifest in the human figure?

RA: In general, when an artist deals with the representation of the figure, inevitably notions of identity and self will surface. Throughout history the body had always been the subject of debate, since or prior to, classical Greek era until present. The body as an entity, has been problematised; politically and morally speaking. This makes it as a source material absolutely fascinating for me.

For the last few years, I have been looking at the iconographies and physical representation of the body in the state of suffering. This includes the intellectual relationship of a mind to its subjected body. The Cartesian idea that the body and mind are exclusive does not make sense to me. Unfortunately, within the last two centuries, it seems many artists have fallen within the Cartesian's argument: 'mind-body dualism'. Where, according to Descartes, the nature of the mind (that is, a thinking, non-extended entity) is completely different from that of the body (that is, an extended, non-thinking entity). By bringing in the figure and merging it with the element of the intellect, the work no longer depicts one without the other.

LF: Your sculptures are almost stripped bare, but their identities are covered. Why do you conceal their faces?

RA: Most of the sculptures' compositions derive from the actual source material. That's one aspect of it, the other is that when the face is covered, the

viewer becomes more engaged in the gestures and the language of the body. The reading of the sculpture becomes less personalised towards a specific human, and it opens up the relationship between the art object and the viewer. I use the body as a medium to express my personal response to reportage images of war and conflict.

LF: What prompted *Site of the Fall: Study of the Renaissance Garden*?

RA: There are a couple of elements that I would combine in response to your question. To begin with, I saw an exhibition entitled Renaissance Garden at the V&A in London, which showed a number of sculptures from the Renaissance era. After seeing the exhibition, I tried to imagine how these sculptures were originally displayed and what the experience of walking through the Renaissance garden would have felt like. Most of the sculptures during the Renaissance era were celebratory sculptures of heroes or idealised members of society. I wanted to expand on this idea of a garden and relate it to my present moment.

Another important element in creating the work was my engagement with images of reportage sources. These are materials that I work with, and are of people who I consider incredibly brave. In all of my works, there is always this urgency to represent this aspect of life. So I would say, *Site of the Fall: Study of the Renaissance Garden*, is a series that looks at the idyllic notion of the garden and its collapse. I also take into consideration how it resonates to me in relationship to my personal experiences of daily life, living in an urban environment that is heavily built up.

LF: What was the idea behind calling it a 'Study'?

RA: To include the word 'Study' in a title is a strategic decision so that I give myself the freedom to come back to the subject. The word 'Study' also suggests an openness and a space where the viewer becomes an active agent. The work no longer becomes static or factual.

LF: How about the base of your sculptures in *Action 191* for example, where the base of your sculpture is often changed according to the context it is shown. Can you tell me how you make these decisions?

RA: Yes, the decision was to create a base that would de-monumentalize the sculpture, at the same time it suggests an idea of a piece of land, garden, or desert. There are various factors in deciding how to exhibit the marble sculptures; the nature of the space where they are being installed, the overall context of an exhibition and also, taking into consideration the colours that contrast the white of marble.

Since *Action 191* is in dialogue with the idea of the Renaissance garden, when exhibited at the Antkenmuseum in Basel, Switzerland, I wanted to use wild flowers and weeds that grow between rocks, concrete and the cracks of pavements in urban spaces. This was very important, as it acted as a metaphor to symbolize strength and resilience. Often these weeds are associated with disturbance and lack of beauty, very much opposite to a well trimmed and kept renaissance garden.

LF: Most of your source images for your sculptures come from news images. Why?

RA: As I am responding to the news images of war and conflict, therefore, naturally the source

material is an important component of the work. I mean I could make them fictitious, but that would defeat the purpose. For me, they must have a social relevance. I am not interested in making only figurative sculptures of the body per se. The sculptures only become relevant in the context of the idea being communicated; which is looking at the physical representation of the subjected body in dialogue with other artists who have also dealt with this subject throughout history.

LF: Is there a reason why you number your works, rather than giving them names or titles?

RA: Numbering the titles in each artwork emphasises the source material itself, where no individual name or identity is given by the reported news. These people become anonymous subjects.

LF: And what is the significance of marble as a material in your sculptures?

RA: I chose marble specifically because it was a material, which was often used in 16th Century Europe. The choice of marble then was often used to represent white skin where the reflection of light would give it an added glow. Bearing in mind that the figures I am working with are mostly from non-white origins, I like that juxtaposition.

LF: Given the contrast between your subject and the notion of marble representing the purity of skin, where does the material and dark colour of the *Metamorphosis - a study in liberation* come in?

RA: These sculptures are all in bronze. The initial process of making the bronze sculptures is the same as the marble ones. I look for the right

person, we photograph them and then create a clay model. Here, however, the clay model is then cast in bronze. I decided to use bronze as a material for two reasons, first, on a practical level, the animal heads involve pointed horns and elongated body gestures. Carving them in marble would have been too fragile. Second, and even more than that, I am interested in how bronze was and is still often is used to celebrate significant figures in various societies. At some point, bronze was more widely available and less precious than marble. For instance, a statue of a leader could be placed in many more different places as they could cast multiples of the same figure.

I spend lots of time researching and testing out materials, and, when I looked at different patina, it was important that the finish doesn't give off a rusty, decay-like look. We tried different finishes, but the pure black is slick and beautiful. I like it when there is a tension created by the material, the subject and the aesthetic of the work.

LF: Your process of making these figurative sculptures is fascinating as you physically go and look for a person that relates to an image you have come across. Can you tell me more about that?

RA: It's very exciting to make connections between events, people and moments from different histories and embody them all in an artwork. I see an image and it triggers something, and then I try to find or meet someone that resonates in someway with the image that I have seen. The people I often approach to take part in the work are not models, but they have a very strong affinity with the subject matter, which excites them to be involved in an art project. This process also takes us back to my previous

point about history being fluid and non-linear, and in my work I often merge a few keys points that I picked up from history. For instance, a figure from the Vietnam war, a person that I might meet in my daily life and my conversations with an artwork dating back to the renaissance period are all manifested within one piece. All of which I am either consciously or subconsciously making connections between.

LF: Why is it important for you to find this person rather than hire a model? Is the search part of the process?

RA: Art for me has to be about life, or at least about how I see the world and experience it. It's not only about the end product and just making an artefact, but hopefully it can communicate something more than a mere object. Therefore, it has to be a connection between the source, the person who takes part, and myself.

LF: It is interesting that you are not a sculptor, but many of your works are translated into sculpture. What is your relationship with the medium? How would you define your relationship with this process of sculpture?

RA: My relationship is with the process rather than the medium. I was actually trained as a painter but soon realised that what I wanted to communicate didn't really translate well into the medium of painting. I continually like to discover a medium that I have no previous experience or much knowledge of, a medium that can take me through a journey, which I have not experienced yet.

I think as long as I am discovering and feeling excited about a project, this somehow translates

itself in the artwork, and the audience also sense the freshness too.

LF: How did *Study of the Head as Cultural Artefacts* come together?

RA: The idea was seeded in 2015, when I witnessed an immense amount of footage being posted live on YouTube filming the decapitation of heads. While discussing this with a friend, he recommended a book entitled *The Severed Head: Capital Visions* written by theorist and philosopher Julia Kristeva, in 1998.

Prior to writing the book, she [Kristeva] was invited to curate an exhibition at the Louvre in Paris that brought together a collection of severed heads. The show questioned the idea of why, as human beings, we are appalled yet simultaneously attracted to the act of severing heads.

She employs the works of key figures, such as Freud and Bataille whilst making references to the maternal body (a reoccurring subject within her work). In the book, she produces a witty analysis of Western culture’s persistent privileging of disembodied masculine rationality; ‘the head, ironically phallic, ironically and yet necessarily severed; the maternal body continually arousing a “jubilant anxiety” expressed through violence.’

The series materialised in response to what was constantly being witnessed in social media, as well its relevance to Kristeva’s theories.

LF: So again you are connecting the past to the present, or perhaps seeing the past through the present?

RA: Working on a project at the Rodin museum a

few years ago, I was researching war images taken during the French occupation in Algeria, 1960’s. I came across a number of photographs of French soldiers posing for the camera and holding decapitated heads of Algerians. Obviously it was the time of early war photojournalism, when an image did not have many repercussions like it does on social media today. The soldiers knew the pictures would be printed in newspapers, they would still stand proudly be holding their catch.

So this is not an act that exclusively occurs in only one culture, history or place. The same ideas mentioned in the previous question are similarly applied to the photographs taken of the French occupation in Algeria.

LF: You also made a series of photographs of cast heads in addition to your marble sculptures of heads. What came first?

RA: They both happened at the same time. The process of making marble heads remains the same as the large figure marble sculptures. As for the photographs, I wanted to produce a photographic body of work, which depicted decapitated heads without them carrying an exaggerated emotional undertone. I started to re-look at the work of Henry Wessel and Hans Bellmer. I strongly resonate with their photographs, as the subtlety of the tonal contrasts sifts the drama from the photo. This somehow leaves a poetic sense of melancholia.

The heads in the photographs are plaster casts. They are cast of people I know who were happy to be part of an artwork. Once we had the casts ready, they were placed on sand and photographed by a large format black and white camera at around early afternoon with solely natural light.

LF: Photography has been such a big part of

your practice, however, it seems that in your recent works you focus less on it?

RA: Not more than any other medium. I have done a number of performance works in the past, too. In fact, the decision as to which material/medium suits a body of work is decided by the subject. I think of how that specific medium can communicate my idea best, and it depends on the source material, too. There is no hierarchy in my choice of material.

LF: We learnt about your visual inspirations, but is there any particular kind of literature that feeds into your work?

RA: The source of my work comes from news, and obviously I read as much as I can. In terms of inspiration for making art, I am not sure if I need to be inspired to make art. I think making art is a kind of urgency and a need for communicating an idea, or formulating your thoughts on matters that have meaning to you. I find inspiration in lots of things, a good movie, a book, hearing people who are great in their fields speak, or seeing an image of a teenager brave enough to stand up for what he believes in. I am currently reading ‘The Poetics Of Relation’ by Édouard Glissant, which I am enjoying immensely.

However, Albert Camus is a constant figure somewhere in my head since I discovered his writings as a teenager. Camus appeals to me because he was an outsider; he was looking at the world almost like a screen. He had this fantastic sensibility of detaching himself from the world around him yet speaking about it with such tenderness and passion. Also the the fact that he was a French Algerian - that cultural complexity I relate to.

This conversation took place at the artist’s studio in London, UK on 6 February 2018 between 11am-12.30pm.

Leyla Fakhr is an independent curator and producer. She is the founder of The Collectors’ Editions.

REZA
ARAMESH

B. 1970
Lives and works in London, UK

EDUCATION

1997 Graduated from MA Fine Art, Goldsmiths College, London
Bsc in Science and Philosophy at University College London

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

2016 At 9:15 am Sunday 28 May 1967, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai
At 11:57 am Wednesday 23 October 2013, Ab-Anbar, Tehran

2015 Spring of Recession, Centrefold Project, Sazmanab, Tehran
Friday April 25, 2003 at 07:55, Leila Heller Gallery, New York

2014 At 11:08 March 14th, 2006, Ab-Anbar, Tehran, Iran
The Whistle of the Souls, a play that never starts, Proposal for a Public Sculpture, Al Quoz Industrial 3, Dubai

2013 12MIDNIGHT, multi-venue exhibition in five nightclubs, New York

2011 Walking in the Darkness of a Promised Light, Isabelle Van Den Eynde Gallery, Dubai, UAE (cat.)

2010 Between the Eye and the Object falls the Shadow, Isabelle Van Den Eynde Gallery, Dubai, UAE (cat.)
Satement, Paris Photo 2009, curated by Catherine Davide, France (cat.)

2009 Live Action 71, curated by The Diogenes Club, Late at Tate Britain, London, UK

2008 Live Action 60, commissioned for Zoo Art Fair and CollectingLiveArt, London, UK
Best of Discoveries, Shcontemporary, Shanghai, China (cat.)

2007 You Were the Dead, Their’s Was the Future, seduced, Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK
Who is the Third that Walks Beside You?, Matthew Bown gallery, London, UK
Reza Aramesh, Watermans Centre, London, UK
We’ve Lost the Hearts and Minds..., E: vent gallery, London, UK (cat.)
Who is the third that walks beside you? Matthew Bown gallery, London, U.K

2006 Live Action: I am a Believer,↯ commissioned by ICA, Trafalgar Square, London, UK

2005 Live Action: The Key of Dreams, Gasworks Gallery, London, UK
Live Action: Of this Men Shall Know Nothing, Thomas Goode Shop, London, UK

2004 The eternal spring, Lawrence O’Hana gallery. London. U.K

2003 Picture This, Platform Gallery, London, UK

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2018 Like Life: Sculpture, Color and the Body (1300 - Now), The MET Breuer, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

2017 WAR, Curated by Marko Košan. Koroška Art Museum, Slovenia.
Crumbling Down, Up and Up we Climb, Curated by Bjorn Geldhof and Suad Garayeva-
Maleki, Yarat Contemporary Art Space, Baku, Azerbaijan
Bilder Fragen. Curated by Thomas Elsen. Kunstsammlungen und Museen Ausburg, Germany
Art Basel Parcours, Curated by Samuel Leuenberger. Basel, Switzerland.
Frieze Sculpture Park, Curated by Clare Lilley. London, U.K.

2016 L’arte differente:MOCAK al MAXXI. Curated by Maria Anna Potocka, MAXXI, Rome
Uncertain States - Artistic Strategies in States of Emergency, Berlin
RTL: LTR, curated by Tarlan Rafiee and Yashar Samimi Esfahan Museum of Contemporary Art, Esfahan
Poetics of Absence, Curated by Cristiana de Marchi, 1x1 Art Gallery, Dubai
Permanent Collection display, Art Centre Hugo Voeten, Herentals, Belgium

2015 Migrants, Muntref-Museum, curated by Diana Wechsler, Buenos Aires
Venice biannual Edition 56, Iran Pavilion The Great Game
Armory Show, New York, U.S.A

2014 Frieze Sculpture Park 2014 Curated by Clare Lilley. London, U.K.
Armory Show, New York, U.S.A

2013 Cultural Freedom in Europe, Goethe Institute Brussel, Brussels

2012 Lost in Paradise, Curated by Arianne Levene and Eglantine de Ganay, Loft Sevigne, Paris.
Without Hope, Without Fear, Al Joud Center, Dubai, UAE
The Elephant in the Dark, curated by Amirali Ghasemi, Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon
Migrasophia – (Migration + Philosophy), curated Sara Raza, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah
ADVANCE/...NOTICE, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg

2011 Light – Part I, curated by Gabriel Rolt and Nick Hackworth, Paradise Row, London.
Eat Me, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town

2010 Hope!: l’espoir, de Giacometti a Murakami, curated by Ashok Adiceam, Palais des
Arts et du Festival, Dinard, France. (cat.)

2009 Relaunch, Sunbury House, London, UK

2008 Los Vinilos, Zoo Art Fair, London, UK
A World without Borders, Event Horizon, GSK Contemporary, Royal Academy of Art, London, UK
The Apartment, curated by Brian Chalkley and Lewis Amar, Royal London House, London.

2007 Space Invasion, an International Offspace Project, various venues, Vienna, Austria (cat.)
Los Vinilos, Buenos Aires, Argentina
The Politics of Fear, Albion Gallery, London, UK
Temporary Measures, curated by Hut Projects, Associates Gallery, London, UK
Into Position, curated by Anthony Gross, Bauernmarkt 1 and 9, 1010 Vienna
The Lucifer Effect, curated by Gordon Cheung, Gallery Primo Alonso, London

2006 Making a Scene, curated by Tal Yahas Haifa Museum of Art, Israel (cat.)
Metropolis Rise: New Art from London, CQL Design Centre, Shanghai and 798 Art District, Beijing, China (cat.)
Culture Bound, East Wing Collection VII, Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, London, UK

2006 Art Car Boot Fair, Brick Lane, London. Curated by Karen Ashton and Helen Hayward

2005 Defense, University of California, Sweeney Art Gallery, USA
We Have Met The Enemy and He is Us, curated by Shezad Dawood, Redux Project Space, London, UK
Pencil (a drawing show), Carter presents, London
Contemporary Drawings, Parnassos Literary Society, Athens, Greece. Curated by Synthesis

2004 So You’re Afraid of What?, curated by Centrefold, Redux Project Space, London, UK
Copy-art.net, curated by Irini Papadimitriou, ICA, London, UK
Gewalt, curated by Suhall Malik, Laushy Art, Tel Aviv, Israel (cat.)
Sir ® Eel: The Suit since ’68: The Politics of Revulsion, curated by Peter Lewis, Redux Project Space, London, UK
Pilot1, Lime House Town hall, Lime House, London.
Art Car Boot Fair, Truman Brewery, London, curated by Karen and Helen Asthon
Flea market, TemporaryContemporary, London

2003 Flaca, Flaca Gallery, London, Book Launch

2001 What if I Told the Truth?, curated by Reza Aramesh, Cell Projects, London, UK
Trick Peaser, curated by Luke Oxley, Mandarin Duck, London, UK
Teeth and Trousers, curated by Richard Priestly, Cell Projects, London, UK
Forever Yours, curated by Reza Aramesh, Victoria House, London, UK
Heart of Glass, curated by Esther Windsor, London College of Printing, London, UK
Desert Rose, Victoria House, London, curated by Reza Aramesh

2000 Include Me Out, London. Curated by John Chilver.
Wooden Heart, Avco, London. Curated by Reza Aramesh and Tina Spear

ISBN 978-0-9861165-8-2

REZA ARAMESH

Images courtesy of the artist
Book design by Nadine Nour el Din
Edited by Leyla Fakhr



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