

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

REZA ARAMESH

12 MIDNIGHT

A Multivenue Installation

On view in New York City



Action 131: Dying Iranian Soldier, 1987, 2013



Action 133: Baghdad, Iraq, Tuesday November 9, 2005. Dying American Soldier, 2013



Action 132: Dying South Vietnamese Marine, Duc Hoa, Saigon, August 5 1963, 2013

May 8 – June 5, 2013

New York, NY (April 25, 2013) Leila Heller is pleased to present *12 MIDNIGHT*, the first US exhibition by London-based artist Reza Aramesh. Coinciding with Frieze Art Fair, *12 MIDNIGHT*, is a multivenue sculpture installation, on view from May 8 to June 5, 2013 inside 5 of New York City's most celebrated nightclubs.

Reza Aramesh's interdisciplinary practice begins as an investigation into relationships and mechanisms of power and violence, whilst examining the constructed meanings and values associated with them. Through the mediums of photography and sculpture, Aramesh combines emotive and haunting figures seemingly disconnected and alienated from their surroundings. He takes his viewers through a psychoanalytical journey to reevaluate history and to reexamine the human condition as entrapped within preconceived notions and cultural values. Aramesh's photographs combine scenes from violent journalistic war photos and Baroque master paintings from the likes of Caravaggio and Velasquez, which are then re-staged using non-professional models. He carefully recreates these scenes in opulent, architecturally significant environments such as the Rodin Museum or the Palace of Versailles in France.

For *12 MIDNIGHT*, Aramesh has created five installations in collaboration with five nightclubs in NYC: Marquee, in Chelsea; No. 8, in the Meatpacking District; Santos Party House, in Tribeca; Sugarland, in Williamsburg; and Bossa Nova Civic Club, in Bushwick. These venues have been strategically chosen to host the artworks.

Each installation consists of a sculpture or a bust, each painstakingly handcrafted in lime-wood and painted with polychrome, then displayed on a plinth covered in graffiti by New York-based graffiti artist Jason Castro and finally placed in a box with holes from which the work can be viewed. The

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sculptures are made with reference to 17th century Spanish polychromes and the 18th century German Baroque sculptor Andrea Schluter's body of work entitled *Dying Warriors*. Dr. Geraldine A. Johnson, a Professor of Art History at Oxford University, elaborates, "The plinths upon which Aramesh's sculpted figures are presented are often inspired by very different and unexpected sources, such as the design of an iron gate encountered during a walk by the artist through the streets of Verona, Italy. As was the case for the sculptor and photographer Constantin Brancusi, who radically rethought the relationship between sculpture and base by constantly experimenting with different combinations of top and bottom in his assemblages, for Aramesh the plinth is likewise a bearer not just of weight, but also of meaning, both aesthetic and iconographic."

By placing the sculptures in the boxes to be viewed, Aramesh draws reference to peep shows, which originated in 16th century Europe and were traditionally a source of public entertainment. They later became a space where erotic or pornographic shows were viewed through a coin-operated booth. Through the context of these peepshows, Aramesh challenges his viewers to question whether the rampant images of war rendered fetishized by mass media outlets have made us contemporary voyeurs of images of the violence.

By his Brechtian *Verfremdung*, creating an installation and placing the sculptures in a nightclub environment, Aramesh further decontextualizes ideas and meanings of the sacred.

12 MIDNIGHT INSTALLATION VENUES

Bossa Nova Civic Club

1271 Myrtle Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11221
<http://bossanovacivicclub.com/>

Marquee

289 10th Ave, New York, NY 10001
<http://marqueeny.com/index.cfm>

No. 8

357 W 16th Street, New York, NY 10011
<http://no8ny.com/>

Santos Party House

96 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10013
<http://www.santospartyhouse.com/>

Sugarland

221 N 9th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11211
<http://www.sugarlandnightclub.com/>

About Reza Aramesh

Reza Aramesh was born in Iran in 1970. He completed a Master's in Fine Art at the Goldsmith College in 1997. He currently lives and works in London. Reza Aramesh's photographic, sculptural, video and performance works have received international attention. He has exhibited in many public and private spaces including; Tate Britain, London, the Haifa Museum of Art, Israel, and the Palais des Arts et du Festival, France. The recipient of numerous awards, he has also participated in art fairs and showed with galleries worldwide, and his works are in the permanent collections of the Devi Art Foundation, India and the Nadour Collection, Germany.

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