

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

THE BRUCE HIGH QUALITY FOUNDATION *THE SECOND COMING*

April 22 – June 4, 2017



'Surely the Second Coming is at hand.'
W.B. Yeats

'Art is not made to decorate rooms. It is an offensive
weapon in the defense against the enemy.'
Pablo Picasso, quoted by BHQF

Leila Heller Gallery is proud to present *The Second Coming*, the first middle eastern solo exhibition by the New York-based artistic collective Bruce High Quality Foundation, established in 2001. Displacing sophisticated social critique beneath a liberating, distancing, and often ironic veneer of the absurd, the work of the Bruce High Quality Foundation (BHQF) retains the explosive gesture of the avant-garde as rarely observed within the current domesticated experience of international contemporary art. The work of BHQF recuperates for both artist and audience the value of the absurd as such: to expose, in a manner that can at turns appear juvenile or professorial, the fundamental hypocrisies at work within the structures and ideologies of contemporary global culture and thus to claim this gesture as (once again) the writ and responsibility of art.

Known for embodying the radical power of art not only in the grandest of gestures but also in the most misshapen, haphazard, collective, bric-a-brac of even the smallest of chance statements, BHQF rose to national and international prominence with recognition of the Brucennial. This anti-institutional gauntlet organized by the Bruces, as they are collectively known, challenging the cultural authority ascribed to the Whitney Biennale has been best described by sculptor, professor, and director of the Granoff Center at Brown University Richard Fishman as "the expansive, 400-plus artist, quasi invitational, slightly guerilla exhibition that seemed to offer an antidote to the walls and silos of the art world." He goes on, addressing the collective directly, "Bruce, on the one hand you seem to bite the hand that feeds you. On the other, you seem intent on challenging assumptions of the good, the bad, and the ugly. Deep down you also believe in the transformative power of art."

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The present exhibition, *The Second Coming*, is no exception; dependent on alternating artistic operations of appropriation, illustration, installation, sound elements, combines, juxtapositions, and the very tradition of the monument, the exhibition features a central sculpture—a gold leaf enrobed citation of the iconic *Joan of Arc* statue from the Place des Pyramides in Paris with her head replaced by a domestic fan—as surrounded by a collection of eleven tonal grey-on-grey compositions of fowl, specifically common pigeons (which are known to infest the streets of the French capital) and peregrine falcons, birds of prey and regal bidding. The paintings, composed by hand by the Bruces (rather than their habitual manner of pop-inspired appropriation by silkscreen) make reference to the poem from which the exhibition takes its name: *The Second Coming* by William Butler Yeats. Its first stanza reads: “Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear the falconer;/ Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/ The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere.” Recited in its entirety by the sculpture through a speaker system emitting from both its head and behind, the poem, and the title of the exhibition, do not retain any specific religious significance; rather, for the Bruces, “it is about immigration.” Portraying the dystopic nature of the contemporary disintegration of the nation-state crossed with occidental failures to recognize the ongoing effects of the colonial and imperial within current geo-politics, here the immigrant, as bird (unfettered by borders), is portrayed, as per the logic of the symbolic European (or perhaps Western) state, as either pest or predator, looming over the altered image of one of the founding saints of French mythology. Here, a finger is pointed: *The Second Coming*, the day of judgment, is upon us, but contrary to xenophobic want, it may be the very cipher of nationalist, religious purity which may spell—or recite—our (collective) doom.

About the Artist(s):

The Bruce High Quality Foundation, the official arbiter of the estate of Bruce High Quality, is dedicated to the preservation of the legacy of the late social sculptor, Bruce High Quality. In the spirit of the life and work of Bruce High Quality, BHQF aspires to invest the experience of public space with wonder, to resurrect art history from the bowels of despair, and to impregnate the institutions of art with the joy of man’s desiring. Their motto: *Professional Challenges. Amateur Solutions.*

The Bruce High Quality Foundation creates installations, videos, paintings, sculptures, performances, and institutions that reveal their collective creative agency within the seemingly monolithic forces of art and social history. BHQF’s work has been presented at McClain Gallery, Houston; Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels; Vito Schnabel, New York; Mark Fletcher, New York; The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn; Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin; Galerie Bruno Bischofberger, Zürich and St. Moritz; Lever House Art Collection, New York; Susan Inglett Gallery, New York; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; and Exit Art, New York. BHQF was included in the Whitney Biennial and Greater New York in 2010, and in the Lyon Biennale in 2013.

About the Gallery:

Since its establishment over three decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai’s Alserkal Avenue. At 14,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East for the first time, the gallery is dedicated to supporting the evolving practice of established artists.

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