

DAMN° 61



Exhibition view of Shahpour Pouyan We Owe this Considerable Land to the Horizon Line Photo credit: Tutti Image / Bertrand Huet Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

SHAHPOUR POUYAN: WE OWE THIS CONSIDERABLE LAND TO THE HORIZON LINE

*AT GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA, PARIS, UNTIL 6
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For his first exhibition at [Galerie Nathalie Obadia](#), **Shahpour Pouyan** has created a futuristic landscape of abandoned architecture formed of sculptures that articulate criticism against symbols of political and religious power. The austere, imposing nature of the 28 terracotta sculptures – ranging from domes, towers, mausoleums and monumental buildings – presents a foreboding vision.

<http://www.damnmagazine.net/2017/05/02/shahpour-pouyan-owe-considerable-land-horizon-line/>

References can be found to archetypal typologies of Islamic, Brutalist and Fascist architecture as well as 20th-century military edifices. The barbed wire and staples on some of the pieces enforces the sense of impenetrability and entrapment, as does the conspicuous absence of doors in many of the works, all made in the colour of dark sand.



After 'Mohammed and the multi-headed angel' 2017 Miniature 53x47 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Born in Iran in 1979, the year of the country's Islamic Revolution, Pouyan's upbringing in Tehran was marked by the Iran-Iraq War. Now based between New York and Tehran, the artist's distrust of architecture for the purpose of nation-building projects of domination and intimidation is plain to see.

Evidently, Pouyan's imaginary, uninhabited cityscape is designed to unsettle the visitor in a slightly threatening way. The uneven tones caused by the high-firing process lend the impression that the landscape, like past empires, is impermanent and could eventually be destroyed. Indeed, Pouyan drew inspiration from Ibn Shakir, the 13th century miniaturist who observed the fall of Baghdad by a Mogul army from the top of a minaret and from the Biblical tale of the Tower of Babel.



Untitled 2017 High fired ceramic 45x24x23 cm 100x40x39 cm – pedestal Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Also on show is a series of 12 miniatures. Originally, they would have depicted scenes relating to the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad. Yet by painting over the figures, Pouyan has abstracted the miniatures and blocked out their religious nature through the process of appropriation.

Overall, the assemblage of works comes across as an analogy for the rise of nationalism in some countries today. Pouyan's exhibition is thus a stark warning for our uncertain times.

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Untitled 2017 High fired ceramic 40,5x20x20 cm 100x36x36 cm - pedestal Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels



The Semitic system 2017 High fired ceramic 39,5x32,5x32,5 cm 100x48,5x48,5 cm - pedestal Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels



Untitled 2017 High fired ceramic 34x29,5x29,5 cm 110x45,5x45,5 cm - pedestal Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels