

PRESS RELEASE

*My Place is the Placeless*

Shahpour Pouyan

Private View Monday, 6 November, 2017 from 6.30 – 9 PM

Exhibition continues until January, 2018

Lawrie Shabibi is pleased to announce the third solo exhibition in Dubai of New York-based Iranian artist Shahpour Pouyan. The exhibition takes its title from a phrase in a poem by Mawlana Rumi, and speaks of Pouyan's rejection of national and ethnic labeling.

Four years ago Pouyan took a genetic ancestry test. The results revealed a DNA ancestry of thirty-three modern countries spread across Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Caucasus Mountains, Northern Europe and the British Isles. Some of the countries were surprising, such as Norway, Ireland and Bhutan, others less so, such as Iraq, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Pouyan spent two years obsessively researching distinctive historic architecture from these thirty-three countries with the aim of unearthing their most significant monuments and 'constructing' his own identity through the language of architecture.

The core of the exhibition revolves around a large-scale cuboid industrial steel construction upon which rest the thirty-three ceramic sculptures – the results of his research. Each sculpture is representative of a dome from a monumental building in the country of the artist's genetic extraction as revealed by the genetic test. Some domes relate to religious buildings or places of worship, others as pure statements of grandiosity and power.

The artist takes a Foucauldian approach to develop a personalized genealogy of the dome, highlighting the human tendency to memorialize legacies of power, just as genetic heritage is often a record of the legacies of conquest. In addition, the organization of the domes implies a Darwinist typology where the basic form of the dome goes through various morphologic transformations as a result of contact and conflict between cultures. However, the cuboid installation questions the narrative of progress by connecting the most sophisticated dome of the series back with the simplest structure, an upside ship.

The cuboid construction upon which the sculptures rest evokes the simplified forms of modernist architects from Le Corbusier to minimalist sculptors such as Donald Judd who were concerned with reducing form to its purest incarnation.

Pouyan's sculptures by contrast deliberately refer to colorful and diverse pre-modern architectural heritage and rooted into archaic past. Each work is made from a different type of clay and glaze so that each piece is distinct; no two works appear the same, creating a sense of diversity and even disarray. By placing these objects within such a structure Pouyan "contaminates" the chaste minimalist structure, destroying its qualities and questioning notions of purity in relation to art, architecture and anthropology.

Alongside the series of ceramic works, Pouyan presents a series of hand painted modified photographs found in imagery from Byzantine, Nordic, Mesopotamian and Persian sources. The figures (such as those seen in coins, manuscripts, miniatures, and sculptures) have been manipulated to subtly incorporate his own features – they are self-portraits of his past and present self. In a reverse violation of these historical artifacts, these doctored images as embodiment of the histories of political aggression.

By performing what he describes as an "archeology of the self" Pouyan critiques such arbitrary classifications of identity. In today's global climate where radical nationalism is on the rise, borders are being probed and migration is one of our greatest contemporary challenges, Pouyan's exhibition is a timely exhibition for uncertain times.

#### **ABOUT SHAHPOUR POUYAN**

Shahpour Pouyan has had numerous solo exhibitions most recently *We Owe This Considerable Land to the Horizon Line*, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France, 2017; *History Travels at Different Speeds*, Copperfield, London, UK, 2015; *PTSD*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE, 2014 and *Full Metal Jacket*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE, 2011. Notable group shows include participations in the 7th Beijing Biennale, 2017; Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India, 2016; Jameel Prize 4 Pera Museum Istanbul, Turkey and Asia Culture Centre, Gwangju, Korea; *Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet: Contemporary Persians*, Museum of Fine Art, Houston and Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, Canada, 2017; *Iranian Voices, Recent Acquisitions of Works on Paper*, British Museum, 2017; *For an Image, Faster Than Light*, Yinchuan Museum of Contemporary Art, Yinchuan, China; *Global/Local 1960-2015: Six Artists From Iran*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 2016; *Memory and Continuity: A Selection from the Huma Kabakci Collection*, Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey, 2016; Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India, 2016; *Young Collectors*, The Elgiz Museum, Istanbul, Turkey, 2014 and the Mykonos Biennale, Greece, 2013.

His work is part of many prominent private and public collections including The Abby Weed Grey Collection of Modern Asian and Middle Eastern Art, New York; The British Museum, London; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Mohammed Afkhami Collection, Dubai, Huma Kabakci Collection, Istanbul; SYZGY, New York; The Farjam collection, Dubai; Zoroastrian Cultural Institute, Paris and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran.

In 2016, Pouyan was shortlisted for the Jameel Prize 4 by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and has been awarded the Civitella Ranieri Fellowship for Visual Arts in Umbria.

#### **ABOUT LAWRIE SHABIBI**

Lawrie Shabibi is a contemporary art gallery housed in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. The gallery supports the long-term development of the careers of young international contemporary artists with a focus on those from the Middle East

and North Africa. The gallery also organizes art historical exhibitions working with an older generation of artists from the region. Liaising with curators, institutions, museums and collectors the gallery has successfully introduced international artists to the region whilst at the same time presented Middle Eastern artists to the international contemporary arts community. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, Lawrie Shabibi has in the space of six years been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai.

For more information on Lawrie Shabibi please visit:

<http://www.lawrieshabibi.com>

#### **PRESS INQUIRIES**

For more information, please contact Asmaa Al-Shabibi

E. [asmaa@lawrieshabibi.com](mailto:asmaa@lawrieshabibi.com)

M. +971 50 467 0272

T. +971 4 346 9906