

MATERIALIZE

Farhad Ahrarnia /Maliheh Afnan /Shaikha Al Mazrou / Asad Faulwell / Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim
Nadia Kaabi-Linke / Driss Ouadahi /Shahpour Pouyan /Mona Saudi

18 March – 7 April, 2019

Warehouse 13 Alserkal Avenue

Opening 18 March in Warehouse 13, a large space just across from its gallery within Alserkal Avenue, Lawrie Shabibi presents a major group exhibition to coincide with the 12th edition of Art Dubai.

In 1996 the Nigerian writer and Booker Prize winner Ben Okri published *Dangerous Love*, a novel he had written and published earlier in 1978 (at the time titled *The Landscapes Within*). Having felt that he never realised the full potential of the first novel, the second execution was written over a period of years and at a much slower and calmer rate. In the introduction to *Dangerous Love* he writes, “I have always thought it is not enough for the artist to show the world as it is; they also have to show the consciousness that experiences it. Only then can they reveal the truth whatever that is.”

Materialize stages two solo exhibitions (Asad Faulwell and Farhad Ahrarnia), alongside a group exhibition of artists whose practice goes beyond pure representation. Presenting an eclectic and wide- ranging group of works by international artists, *Materialize* includes painting, sculpture and drawing from the 1980's to the present day.

Los Angeles-based Asad Faulwell presents his solo *Climbing a Disappearing Ladder*, comprising an on-going series dedicated to female combatants in the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). Several of these new works have taken on a new and exciting direction, moving from portraits to more abstracted, larger scale works. Faulwell's mixed-media paintings reference several visual traditions of religious iconography and cultural ornamentation, incorporating decorative motifs based on Islamic textile, varied architectures, mosaics, illuminated manuscripts, and art history.

Twisting The Modern by Farhad Ahrarnia comprises three bodies of work that question national identity and intercultural exchange, relating to Soviet cultural and artistic influences in Iran in the 20th Century. He presents two photographic images printed onto large panels of canvas and overlaid with patterns of embroidery, threads and needles that draw upon the culture and legacy of Russian ballet in Uzbekistan, alongside new Khatam (Persian micro-mosaic) panels that juxtapose Suprematist and Constructivist compositions with traditional Iranian craftsmanship, and two first works from his new series of hand-knotted carpets, which show the backside of naturalistic botanical images taken from the internet, resembling the pixelated effects of low resolution web-based images.

Shaikha Al Mazrou and Mona Saudi, artists of different generations, working in different media, explore modernist forms within sculpture. Saudi works mainly in stone. Her forms are full of vitality, beauty and a clear sense of equilibrium, returning frequently to notions of fertility and growth. Saudi starts with basic shapes, the square, circle, cylinder, rectangle, lending them movement and a life of

their own, either repeating their forms, varying their depths or heights or cutting them across one another to create new, graceful compositions. Al Mazrou works in a variety of materials to research the meaning of sculpture, material and its representational function. In *Scales*, a monumental public work, she traces the essence of sculpture through its history of materiality. Alongside this, she exhibits new wet-coated metal sculptures, from a series also on view at Art Dubai. Her irreverent use of material and its apparent contradictions, using durable materials that are made to resemble something soft, pliable or ephemeral, define these works.

The works of the late Maliheh Afnan and Nadia Kaabi-Linke will be shown in dialogue for the first time. Both concentrate on surfaces, making works that bears the imprint of another space, place and time. Afnan, currently the subject of a retrospective at Museo Mann in Sardinia, works with paper on an intimate scale to create works of refined beauty. Inspired by archeology and script, her works allude to ancient scrolls and tablets, figures or relics that have been excavated from a long-forgotten site. Kaabi-Linke presents *Carthage Presidency* (2009), an early large-scale diptych from her series of wall imprints, that bears the physical imprint of a wall in Carthage. Alongside this she presents three pieces – first an abstract painting from her *Kula* series, second “*Negative of Black Hair on White Background*” a painting depicting the outlines of hundreds of hair strands on paper and finally *Jins Al-Latif*, a wall mounted sculpture made from women’s grooming instruments in the form of Arabic calligraphic text.

Driss Ouadahi and Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim are two artists whose concerns are for their surroundings and environment. Based in Dusseldorf, Ouadahi historically painted fragments of inner-city landscapes that depict the desolation and separation that new and expanding metropolises evoke, as well as the dramatic visual effects from the light, colours, glass and metal surfaces. For ‘*Materialize*’ Ouadahi debuts two new paintings ahead of his solo show in May that mark a distinct departure from his earlier works, where instead the subject becomes the act of painting itself, and the meditative qualities of the painting and the space it evokes.

Ibrahim’s practice by contrast is inspired by his connection to the natural environment of Khorfakkan, his place of birth and a town that is flanked by the rugged Hajar Mountains and sea. A self-proclaimed land artist this connection to the land is the root to his studio practice: his hand made objects are shaped like primitive tools, bones or parts of trees and appear to have been unearthed from some ancient den whilst his works on paper reveal his own form of language that are reminiscent of ancient cave drawings. His presentation in ‘*Materialize*’ is a series of papier-mâché floor sculptures sprawled across the floor like boulders together with some drawings. His solo exhibition *Between the Eyelid and the Eyeball* is concurrently on show at the gallery’s permanent space at 21 Alserkal Avenue.

Finally, Shahpour Pouyan will present a series ceramic sculptures that replicate the roofs and domes of buildings across the world.. Having carried out a test for his own DNA make-up the artist discovered that he had ancestral roots to over thirty different countries. Inspired by this he produced miniature replicas of domes and roofs that exist in the countries from which his personal appears to

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have been drawn. This series recreates his supposed ancestry through the use of architecturally significant sites, constructed as symbols of power and wealth.

Materialize brings together many of the artist Lawrie Shabibi has been working with for many years, exposing several threads that run through its programme. If art is to be more than just a mirror of our living moments, it can also be about an artist's ability to transform that reflection into something profound, transporting the ordinary into the extraordinary. It can be a specific event, moment or an observation, expressing, as Okri put it, the "history, culture and mysteries of humanity".

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