

ARTFORUM

SUMMER 2014 NATIONAL

POINT 'IN MY
LIFE...

I'M
EXACTLY
WHERE I
PLANNED
TO BE, IT'S
AHMEE-
ZING !!

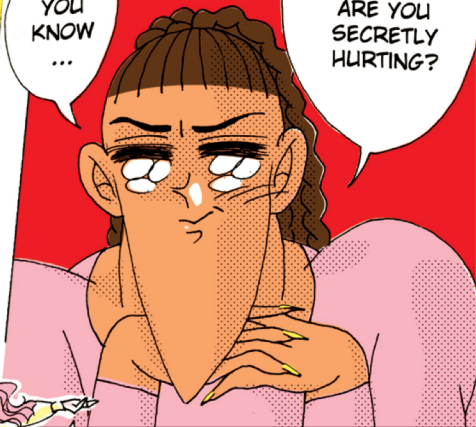
I SEE.



WARHOL'S COMPUTER
AFROFUTURISM
ART AND ANIMATION

BUT
HONEY,
YOU
KNOW
...

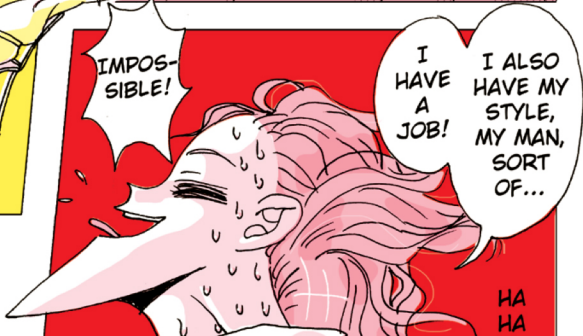
WHEN
NO ONE IS
LOOKING, YOU
HAVE THIS
SAD LOOK ON
YOUR FACE...
ARE YOU
SECRETLY
HURTING?



IMPOSS-
IBLE!

I
HAVE
A
JOB!

I ALSO
HAVE MY
STYLE,
MY MAN,
SORT
OF...



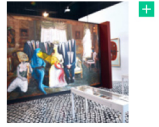
HA
HA



View of "Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian," 2014.

Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian

GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE



View of “Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian,” 2014.

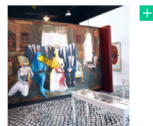
The sensory overload produced by Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian’s exhibition “The Exquisite Corpse Shall Drink the New Wine” was immediate. There was work everywhere, from paintings, collages, and videos to assemblages and sculptures, arranged within a number of partitioned spaces that divided the gallery floor, which was painted with a black-and-white triangular pattern that evolved into colorful floral forms and other more organic-looking motifs as it snaked around the gallery. On this writer’s visit, the sound of Nancy Argenta performing Henry Purcell’s “O Solitude, My Sweetest Choice”—one of many songs that played throughout this exhibition’s duration—added to the melancholic, baroque overtones of what effectively constituted a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that represented a strange and decadent palatial home. This feeling was underscored by Rokni Haerizadeh’s *Royal Goldfish*, 2014—a large portrait, presented at the entrance, showing the British royal family commemorating Prince George’s christening, with George turned into a goldfish and the rest of the party’s heads removed.

Yet beyond such tongue-in-cheek visual references were hidden tensions and anxieties. In a series of illustrations produced by the three artists in collaboration with Iman Raad, representing anecdotes from the *Risala-i-Dilqusha* (Joyous Treatise) written by fourteenth-century Persian poet and satirist Ubayd-i-Zakani, a naked couple illustrates a text recounting a tale of a man with a small penis. Opposite this wall hanging was a group of silk-screened prints of books and journals by R. B. Kitaj—incorporated into the exhibition-as-assemblage as part of the artists’ private collection, along with pieces by Daniel Johnston, Nicole Eisenman, and eighteenth-century English caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson—including *China of Today: The Yellow Peril*, *The Jewish Question*, *Industrial Camouflage Manual*, and *The Caliph’s Design*, all 1969. These surrounded a collection of Rokni Haerizadeh’s ceramic objects, collectively titled “Tourists,” 2010–: jugs and ornaments that lampoon stereotypical tourists with sunburned flesh, too-tight swimsuits, and an I ♥ MOROCCO T-shirt.

The result of such referential groupings was the sense of a grand tour gone meta, a clash of time periods and historical frames that reflected on this exhibition’s context: the United Arab Emirates and its current

Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian

GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE



View of “Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian,” 2014.

2010—: jugs and ornaments that lampoon stereotypical tourists with sunburned flesh, too-tight swimsuits, and an I ♥ MOROCCO T-shirt.

The result of such referential groupings was the sense of a grand tour gone meta, a clash of time periods and historical frames that reflected on this exhibition’s context: the United Arab Emirates and its current incarnation as a global art center and travel destination with a cultural identity not unlike an exquisite corpse, in that the nation itself is composed of seven emirates. Ramin Haerizadeh’s series of seven collages, “Emperor’s New Dress,” 2014—, invokes this cobbled identity through the assemblage of individual components mashing up art-historical references and united in uncanny form: Duchamp’s mustached Mona Lisa was pasted over the body of Joseph Beuys performing *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, 1965. In another work, . . . *But I prefer dogs with uncropped tails*, 2014, portraits ranging from Renaissance paintings to contemporary tabloid photographs were melded together, revealing new faces and figures—a spectacular visual orgy (or epic referential clusterfuck) that recalled Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács’s critique of the modernists as treating history like a giant rummage sale.

It was thus fitting that this exhibition was held concurrently with Art Dubai. Here, another of Lukács’s observations fit: that tradition and history—contentious issues within the UAE’s cultural discourses owing to the nation’s recent and rapid growth since the 1970s—can become eroded by capitalism, a process in which worldviews, cultural aspirations, tastes, and moral judgments grow less certain, giving demagoguery a foothold. Is this why two identical assembled forms were positioned like gatekeepers at the exhibition’s outset? Each was composed of a miniature white Corinthian column over which was placed a cheap blue plastic laundry basket, topped by a Mike Kelley toy multiple, *My Little Friend*, 2007, the words I WATCH YOU printed on the box. But these figures were hardly threatening. Instead, they invoked the origins of the exquisite corpse, pioneered by the Surrealists in the early twentieth century as a method of revolutionary poetry produced from spontaneous and autonomous interactions within a group.

—Stephanie Bailey

scroll text to read more