

More likely it's because he was a drug addict, with a fetish—and a flair—for predicting and tempting his own ruin. Snow's mixed-media assemblages and Super 8 footage function seamlessly as shrines (particularly the bell jar *Secret Conception*, 2006–2007, and his last known artwork, a grainy, eery ode to his partner and daughter walking up a hill alone, *Sisyphus, Sissy Fuss, Silly Puss*, 2009); the titles of his collages as portents or death wishes (like *Untitled* ["Tell Them I'll See Them on the Other Side"], 2006–2007); and his often poignant, voyeuristically satisfying Polaroids (150 of 9,000 photographs) as an index of how much time he spent partying in the present. And perhaps that's what's sad about this show, but in no way confusing—that now the signals all point in the same direction, and cannot be misinterpreted. We can't slip into the verisimilitude of these lives; we know he's going to die.

—Kaitlin Phillips

BOSTON

Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian's project might be described as one of ecstatic accumulation. The Iranian-born, Dubai-based artists (two brothers and their childhood friend) live and work together in a shared home, the trappings of which rival the rococo extremes of Diana Vreeland's Park Avenue apartment. At the ICA, the artists translated the logic of their living situation—both its aesthetic and its participatory ethos—into an immersive installation. Collages, assemblages, and videos produced collectively (many on-site) and individually evoke, by turns, the abject commodity-detritus of Isa Genzken, the fecund pictorial spaces of Persian miniatures, and the proprietary Conceptualism of Edward Krasinski (whose territorial blue-tape horizons they repurposed for this show). Strewn among the artworks are tchotchke readymades (piggy banks, baby dolls, a toy E.T. finger),



View of "Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian," 2015–16. Photo: Charles Mayer.

and abutting them are works by other artists from the collaborators' collections and that of the museum. We see the barbed lyricism of Jimmy DeSana (*Marker Cones*, 1982), the grotesque figuration of Bahman Mohasses (*Fifi Howls with Joy*, 1964), a seething chromogenic color print by Martha Rosler (*Barefoot #1*, 1981/1996), and one of the

most romantic Allan Kaprow scores I've seen (*Taking a Shoe for a Walk*, 1989). A floor painting undergirds all of this, its arabesques of irregular blue triangles imbricated like fish scales. This undulating pattern creeps up the walls, its undiagrammed messiness emphasizing the artists' unrestrained improvisation and spontaneity.

What can be made of this baroque hodgepodge, aside from the fact that it is a seductive case of art for art's sake? The artists deploy clever self-reflexive curatorial strategies: In a Duchampian somersault, they installed Ramin Haerizadeh's *Rose Sélavy*, 2014—a rack festooned with handcrafted postcards he produced, each featuring Duchamp as Sélavy—in front of Susan Hiller's *Addenda V. Section 8: Hastening*, 1982, an assisted-readymade postcard work. But ultimately, each appropriated artwork loses some of its conceptual valence in this excess, serving as a footnote to a vaguely framed discussion of, maybe, the body and consumerism?

The only legend for navigating the *mise en scène* is the exhibition's title, "The Birthday Party," taken from Harold Pinter's eponymous 1958 boarding-house drama. Strangely, the exhibition text describes the play (the show's jumping off point) as, simply, a "surreal comedy about a party organized as a ploy to get a character to sit down." While Pinter's work is famously inscrutable, the artists' description appears to be an intentionally flippant misrepresentation of it. Much more than a surreal comedy, Pinter's seminal play is an indictment of subjugation, the curtailment of personal freedoms, and governing by instilling fear. The artists seem to be nodding to Pinter's politics, his denouncement of repression and censorship, but their almost lighthearted reinterpretation of his work in their didactics—and, moreover, in the exuberance of their exhibition—is curious given the lurking threat so central to Pinter's work.

Projected on the wall by the gallery exit was *Big Rock Candy Mountain*, 2015, a four-minute video animation of one thousand stills taken from footage of ISIS militants toppling statues and wrecking artifacts in Syria and Iraq. The stills have been painted, drawn over, or collaged so that the felled works become reanimated: An Assyrian statue housed at Mosul's central museum morphs into a cross-hatched breaching mermaid; another gains a polka-dot skin; yet another crashes to the ground enveloped in writhing pink roses. These whimsically patterned phoenixes, emerging from the ruins of sacred artifacts, provide a determinedly dreamy rejoinder to unimaginably destructive acts of censorship and constitute a celebration in their own right. *Big Rock Candy Mountain* brings the more diffuse, scattered work into focus. This crowded fête of an exhibition is the Haerizadehs and Rahmanian's toast to pluralism and abundance. As Pinter adjured, "Don't let them tell you what to do."

—Annie Godfrey Larmon

CHICAGO

Paul McCarthy

RENAISSANCE SOCIETY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

White Snow Placemat Drawings, WS, 2013–14, a set of six scalloped paper placemats, each depicting an assortment of quickly drawn, naked, dripping, hairy figures engaged in various acts of dominance or submission, set the tone for this simultaneously abject and exuberant show. The coffee and grease stains absorbed into the paper fibers of the placemats evoke bodily fluids discharged by the penciled figures inhabiting the indeterminate pictorial spaces that crowd the savaged found supports. These works were among the fifty-seven included in what was—somewhat unbelievably—Paul McCarthy's first solo show in Chicago, staged as part of a four-month program of exhibitions and