

Catalog text of the exhibition “what lies beneath...”

Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde - Dubai

Mona Hakimi (b. Tehran, 1977, lives in Berlin, Germany) studied applied physics in Tehran and art education and linguistics in Osnabrück, Germany. Specializing in painting, drawing and installation, Hakimi's work is heavily informed by the artist's own experiences and memories, engaging in an ongoing process of reconciling her memories and dreams of past with the reality of her country's recent history and her own position in relation to it. Utilising traditional symbolism and imagery in a variety of settings and situations, Hakimi presents a dream-world in which perception, thought and nostalgia are repeatedly celebrated and questioned.

What is your inspiration?

As an Iranian woman, Iran poses the major topics I'm dealing with in my works. My inspiration comes from, on one hand, my personal life and on the other, from the materials I find in different sources, from newspaper, magazines, films to life in the streets, or in the bazaar.

What are you trying to express?

For each new project, I try to find an appropriate visual language and the medium that can best express it, as each project is a new and separate world which has its own rules, language and technique. In “memory trace” I was dealing with the pictures I've kept in my mind over the years. The series begins with certain memories of my childhood, presented in a non-chronological order. Memory has no sequential continuity, but rather simultaneity, in which all its images coexist. So, similarly, linear storytelling is not the point in this project. To a certain extent the viewer is free to choose his own way through the pictures of the series. “Helden-taten” is a project inspired by the events following the 2009 presidential election in Iran. This work was a way for me to process these tragic events, but I didn't want to make overtly direct references. I was concerned with the popular heroes that were created during this time, and that they were now dead. “Helden-taten” means “heroes-acted” or “heroic-deeds” and I wanted to portray this symbolically. The lion can evoke different interpretations. Whilst all cultures see it as the symbol of power, for about 500 years it was depicted, together with the sun on the national flag of Iran, before being replaced by Arabic word “ALLAH”. In the long Iranian history the lion has had many different meaning and embodies in the installation the spirit and attitude of the Iranian nation.

How does your work reflect your ideas?

I have the ideas (or concept) and I try to find a visual language for it. It's up to the viewer to find meaning and interpret the work, according to his or her own sensibilities and perceptions, as well as knowledge about and interest in the subject matter.

What does your work represent for you?

I can say that my art has developed as a way to confront and cope with my personal experiences, anxieties and hopes. So my work represents for me the Struggle, or desire, to understand myself and the world around me.

Who are the artists you admire?

They are so many, from old masters to contemporary artists. Just to give some examples: I admire Jan Vermeer for his extraordinary compositions and his unique colour application. I appreciate the work of Ramin and Rokni Haerizadeh a lot. The way they deal with Taboos in Iranian society, the braveness in their work I admire. There are also some art works that have influenced me a lot, such as Shirin Neshat's “Turbulent”, a video-installation with a deep meaning, using a universal language that communicates across cultural borders.

Interview by

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art journalist