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Haines Gallery at The Armory Show 2017

Booth 524

March 2 - 5, 2017

**Ai Weiwei, Tammam Azzam, Yashar Azar Emdadian, Monir Farmanfarmaian, Sherin Guirguis,
Taha Heydari, Shahpour Pouyan**



Tammam Azzam, *Untitled* (from the *Paper* series), 2016
paper collage on canvas
39.5 x 79 inches

Haines Gallery's presentation at The Armory Show 2017 proudly assembles a group of contemporary artists from Iran, Egypt, Syria, and China, spanning generations and continents to reflect sociopolitical histories and contemporary realities in the MENA (Middle East / North Africa) region and beyond. Showcasing the talents of both emerging and established artists working in a variety of media, the exhibition highlights practices that combine culturally specific forms, materials, and narratives in new and inventive ways, offering a window into the rich, vital creativity that has long been a defining characteristic of these artists' aesthetic heritage.

Conceived before the recent US Presidential election, the exhibition takes on a newfound resonance in light of the current administration's xenophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric, now made manifest in attempts to implement the so-called "Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," which targets travelers and refugees from several of these artists' countries of origin. While refusing the expectation that artists must represent a particular agenda, this exhibition reflects the hope that the arts can serve as a bridge toward a greater understanding between peoples of all ethnicities and cultures.

Tammam Azzam (b. 1980, Damascus, Syria; lives and works in Germany) creates expressionist compositions of destroyed cityscapes that communicate the magnitude of devastation experienced across his native Syria. The outbreak of violence in 2011 saw the artist relocate first to Dubai, and then to Germany in 2015. Azzam's monumental paper collages are dominated by startling imagery of war-torn

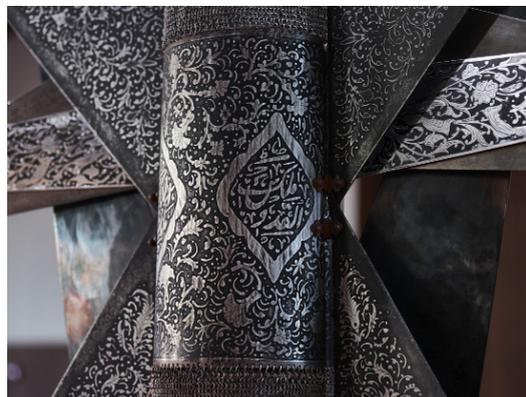
buildings reduced to rubble and displaced figures against a barren background; in chronicling the current state of his homeland, the exiled artist delves into a cathartic exercise of destruction and reconstruction.

Shahpour Pouyan (b. 1979, Ishafan, Iran; lives and works in New York, NY) grew up in Iran during the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, and his work comments on power, possession, and the ways in which culture is appropriated for and conflated with nationalism and domination. His *Projectiles* sculptures are created from intricately filigreed military armor and helmets from high Persian culture that are still used as costumes in passion plays and religious rituals today, the implied violence of these objects made startlingly explicit as they are transformed into shapes reminiscent of modern military missiles. Suspended upright in mid-air, these large-scale sculptures possess an unsettling tension, underscoring the potential for violence in men, materials, and their engagements that threads the past to the present.

Leading Iranian artist **Monir Farmanfarmaian** (b. 1924, Qazvin, Iran; lives and works in Tehran) has spent the last half-century articulating her singular vision through mirrored mosaics, reverse-glass painting, and works on paper that recall both Qajar-era Persian interior decoration and the reductive abstraction of the 20th century. Her artistic evolution has been shaped at once by geopolitical upheavals, ancient Persian traditions, and the New York art scene of the 1950s. The arc of Farmanfarmaian's creative developments is one of the great stories of contemporary art.

Sherin Guirguis (b. 1974, Luxor, Egypt; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA) similarly combines the traditional and modern in her work, which reinterprets Middle Eastern ornamentation to examine social structures and women's agency. Standing at nine feet tall, her mixed-media works feature hand-cut patterns, sometimes edged with gold foil, that are designed after latticed arches, windows and doorways from traditional Arabic architecture. *Untitled (Bab Huda)* and *Untitled (bab el hadeed)*, both 2013, make reference to one of Egypt's last functional harems where early feminist activist Huda Shaarawi resided, and Cairo's Bab El-Hadid train station, where in 1923, Shaarawi removed her veil in public. In the place of traditional stained glass, Guirguis frames these openings—important sites in Egypt's nascent women's rights movement, signifiers of oppression and freedom respectively—with fiery tendrils of fluorescent paint, suggesting a radical dissolution of barriers and hierarchies.

French-Iranian artist **Yashar Azar Emdadian** (b. 1981, Paris, France; lives and works in Tehran, Iran) draws on the tension between the cultures of his two homelands, exploring themes of identity, immigration, and paranoia. In the video *Disintegration* (2012), the artist stands on a Persian carpet—a family heirloom—in the garden of Paris' Tuileries Palace while shaving his body hair. Two world views clash in this transgressively intimate act performed in a public space, Emdadian's body becomes the boundary between a migrant's molting of his personal identity and his integration into another culture. A subtext may read differently depending on perspective: the removal of body hair suggests a process of Westernization, but it may



Shahpour Pouyan, *Untitled (Projectile)*, detail, 2016
steel, iron and ink
98.5 x 71 x 9.5 inches



Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Triangle and Square*, 2009
Mirror, reverse-glass painting, and plaster on wood
39.5 x 63 x 3.5 inches



Sherin Guirguis, *Untitled (bab el hadeed)*, 2013
mixed media on hand-cut paper
108 x 72 inches

also refer to a Muslim rite of purification before pilgrimage.

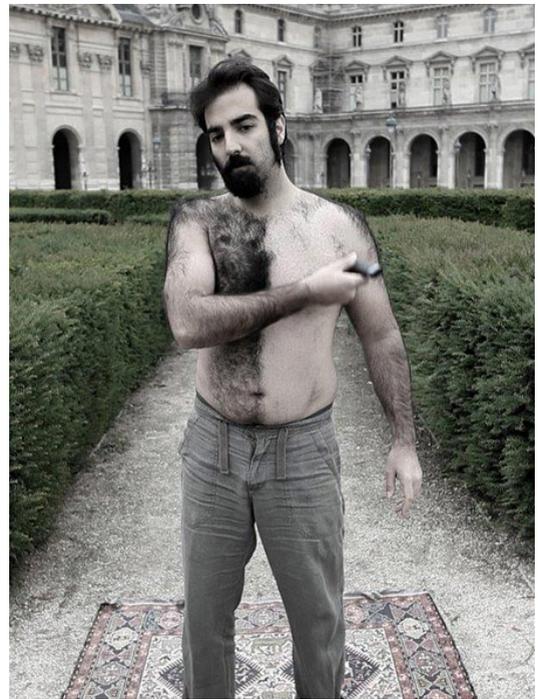
Taha Heydari (b. 1986, Tehran, Iran; lives and works in Baltimore, MD) examines the use of media imagery to shape perceptions and outcomes. In *Page 39* (2016), Heydari paints, obscures and distorts lines from Iran's constitution that restrict freedom of speech and media. His work can be read as an act of defiance, created with persecuted and imprisoned Iranian artists and journalists in mind. By referencing specific historical and current events and highlighting the complex relationships between artwork and audience, his striking canvases reflect an ongoing interest in the power of images and the role of the spectator in the stagecraft of both politics and terror.

One of the most politically outspoken artists of his generation, **Ai Weiwei** (b. 1957; lives and works in Beijing, China and Berlin, Germany) repurposes traditional Chinese forms and materials to address today's most pressing social concerns. His arrest in April 2011 by the Chinese government, months-long detention, and the subsequent confiscation of his passport for more than four years, occurred (not by coincidence) after the artist tweeted supportive comments about Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution. In 2012, the artist began the everyday practice of placing a bouquet in a bicycle basket outside his Beijing studio to protest the loss of his passport. *Bicycle Basket with Flowers in Porcelain* (2014) is a delicate, remarkably precise sculpture created in the imperial kilns of Jingdezhen, commemorates this daily act of resistance.

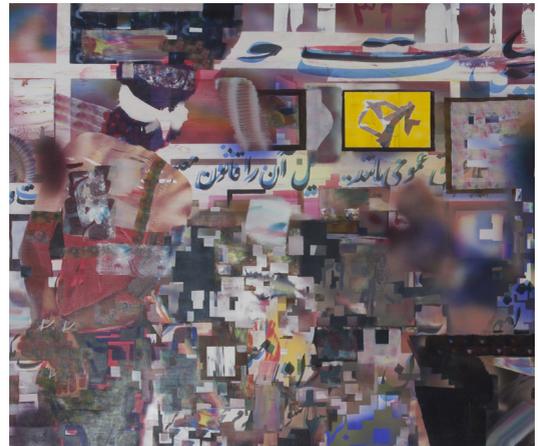
Inspired Urgencies will be presented at **Booth 524** of The Armory Show from **March 2 - 5, 2017**. For more information about the fair, visit www.thearmoryshow.com

About Haines Gallery

Established in San Francisco in 1987, Haines Gallery maintains a dynamic position within the ever-evolving world of contemporary art. Providing a platform for both emerging and internationally established artists, the gallery encourages diverse practices with a highly individualistic curatorial stance and a predisposition for work that is conceptually rigorous and visually compelling.



Yashar Azar Emdadian, *Disintegration* (detail) 2012
single-channel video with rug
dimensions variable



Taha Heydari, *Page 39* (detail), 2016
acrylic on canvas
78 x 93 inches



Ai Weiwei, *Bicycle Basket with Flowers in Porcelain*, 2014
porcelain
11 x 14.5 x 13.25 inches