

MARWAN SAHMARANI
Black Moon

10 January – 23 February 2014

Marwan Sahmarani, *Untitled*, 2013, Oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm

Kashya Hildebrand is pleased to present new works by Lebanese artist Marwan Sahmarani in his second solo exhibition with the gallery and his second show in the British capital.

In *Black Moon*, Sahmarani alludes to the appearance of a new moon twice in one month to highlight the connection between his two seemingly unrelated series. The landscapes of Spain are brought into dialogue with the political climate of Lebanon through canvas and oil paint. What also unites these two bodies of work is an expressive and twofold exploration of violence: the violence of nature and its man-made counterpart.

In small landscape paintings created in the mountain village of Tarbena, Spain, looser brush strokes dissolve into symphonies of colour to capture the exuberance of Sahmarani's new part-time home by the Mediterranean Sea. An impression of the vitality and force of nature is produced in these expressive abstract landscapes by thick lines of paint and bold colours. Sahmarani unveils the beauty and emotion of the violent, primal energy of the elements – the movement of a brewing storm with its rising wind and crashing waves against the shore.

The strong brushstrokes and vivid colours of the Spanish landscapes are also employed in the works Sahmarani created in Lebanon, which include both drawings and paintings with a subject matter more familiar to his oeuvre. However, this second series of *Black Moon* reflects his experience with the increasing political turmoil in his native country of Lebanon and its surrounding regions. The magnificent awesome yet destructive power of nature in the Tarbena works is strikingly contrasted with the disturbing power of human beings, as Sahmarani shifts his focus to horrific man-made violence.

In *Untitled*, an oil painting reminiscent of Picasso's *Guernica*, fragments of bodies litter the canvas to call attention to the corruption of authority and the violence it engineers. Figures intertwine to become unrecognizable, and the human as an individual fades away, offering a comment on war and more generally on the human condition.

In *Blue Soldier*, Sahmarani returns to the medium of watercolour to delineate close-ups of human faces. Despite using few brush strokes and little detail, the artist manages to convey extreme yet moving expressions, eliciting a compassionate response toward these anonymous soldiers. Set on white backgrounds, these tortured faces are amplified by the soberness of their simple colour palette.

Oil painting on canvas is something of a newfound medium for Sahmarani who claims that he started "painting" just two years ago. While this is somewhat of a modest embellishment as he has used paint in his practice since the beginning, it is only in recent years that he feels he has been fully focused on exploring its potential on canvas. Indeed, the current body of work includes both paintings on canvas and on paper. Sahmarani's works on paper tend to use colour as an accent, with the black and white creating the visual narrative and imagery. They have more defined shapes and figures with smooth flat surfaces. On the other hand, the canvases on oil depict freer forms and use thick impasto amassing textures, which reveal abstract images and patterns through the application of heavier brush strokes and bolder and more integrated colours.

Black Moon reflects on violence both in its natural environment and in its socio-political context, exploring vitality and beauty as well as tragedy and barbarity.

Notes to Editors:

Marwan Sahmarani

Marwan Sahmarani was born in Beirut in 1970 and graduated from the Atelier Met de Penninghen in Paris, France in 1989. Sahmarani has participated in a variety of solo exhibitions in the UK, UAE, Canada and Lebanon as well as group exhibitions in Germany, the USA and Mexico. His most recent group museum exhibitions include Told/Untold/Retold at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar in 2010 and The Feast of the Damned at the Museum of Art & Design, New York, USA in 2010. Sahmarani was also one of three recipients of the prestigious Abraaj Capital Art Prize in 2010.

MORE INFORMATION

Exhibition: Marwan Sahmarani: Black Moon

Location: Kashya Hildebrand, 22 Eastcastle Street London W1W 8DE, UK

Telephone: +44 (0)20 3588 1195

Dates: 10 January – 23 February 2014 at Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, London, UK

Private Preview in the presence of the artist: Thursday, 9 January 2014 6-8pm

Hours: Monday – Friday 11am – 6pm, Saturday 12 – 6 pm

Admission is free

www.kashyahildebrand.org

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