

Al Serkal Avenue, unit 21, Al Quoz
PO Box 123901 Dubai, UAE
T +971 (0)4 346 9906
F +971 (0)4 346 9902
www.lawrieshabibi.com

shabibi@lawrie.org

PRESS RELEASE

Lawrie Shabibi at Abu Dhabi Art

On View | 16-20 November 2022

Farhad Ahrarnia | Booth AS3

Manarat Al Saadiyat | Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Lawrie Shabibi is pleased to return to the 2022 edition of Abu Dhabi Art with a solo presentation of works by Farhad Ahrarnia (b. 1971, Shiraz, Iran). The presentation includes new works drawn from the artist's engagement with a diverse range of media—the internet, printed or painted material, art videos and photography-based objects. With a focus on craft and the visual potentialities of archival images, this body of work is composed of embroideries and engraved wall sculptures, giving new insight into the artist's intriguing explorations of history and modernity.

In his series *The Delirium of Becoming, a Moment Caught Between Myth and History*, large embroidered works on Aida cloth show how we can use a chosen subject or person as a container or a metaphor for various tensions. By incorporating geometric forms and spontaneous colour into imagery the notion of movement is achieved, suggesting progress, as well as alternative ways of being, relating and expressing. Through these expressions Farhad Ahrarnia delves into the realm of the personal, verging on the autobiographical. By being aware of the conceptual potential of appropriation and touching upon complex themes, from modern dance to archeology, espionage to Egyptomania and fluid values of orientalism, Ahrarnia uses replication to give way to new visual potential. Instead of creating precise replicas, Ahrarnia deconstructs and rearranges well known images of people or archival media. By embellishing cross-stitched archival photographs from the 1920s onwards, he explores the policy-making of images and alternative modernities.

Farhad Ahrarnia's *Desert Flower/Desert Snow, After Matisse* is a series of embroidered flower and leaf motifs on various camouflage textiles. By moving away from the representations of orientalism and exploring how cultures and events in history influence each other in very covert ways, he delves further into his exploration of the principles of Modernism and how they become articulated. Ahrarnia's observations of the shapes depicted in camouflage patterns reminded him of those in Henri Matisse's cut-outs. Ahrarnia, however, appreciates the interaction between method and background: while Matisse "carved into colour" with his cut-outs, in this instance Ahrarnia creates reliefs by embossing the patterned military fabric with brightly colored stitching. Similarly though, he aims to transform the language of conflict into the language of peace and playfulness.

Al Serkal Avenue, unit 21, Al Quoz
PO Box 123901 Dubai, UAE
T +971 (0)4 346 9906
F +971 (0)4 346 9902
www.lawrieshabibi.com

lawrieshabibi

Ahrarnia's interest in embroidery can be traced back to his early teens and the Iran–Iraq war in 1980. His mother and aunt would busy themselves with embroidery by the radio and he would be mesmerised by the way in which the needle and thread would move through the fabric. Captivated by the notions of both violence and tenderness of the fabric being impacted, and the focused and laborious way in which embroidery can contain emotion and frustration, he began applying these ideas to photographs printed on cotton aida as a way of reacting and adding his own agency to the media he is exposed to. "It is very liberating to play with images and to reconstruct them and bring something new to the process."

The concern for the perishable and the discardable is a theme introduced in Ahrarnia's smaller sculptural works. The silver coated copper shovels from his *The Dig* series are engraved and embossed with motifs which refer to legacy, complexity and richness of various objects and excavated relics particularly relating to Egyptian civilization. Ahrarnia is curious about the institutional handling of these excavated objects of heritage and the ramifications of the widespread, growing fascination about ancient Egyptian art forms in the recent decades. Although to us the shovel is a new object, there is the possibility of it being relinquished and rediscovered centuries in the future. Ahrarnia dwells on this cyclical notion of losing and finding and how that affects the writing of our history.

FARHAD AHRARNIA

Farhad Ahrarnia (b. 1971, Shiraz, Iran) holds a degree in Experimental and Documentary Film Theory and Practice from the Northern Media School, Sheffield Hallam University, UK.

Select solo shows include *Twisting The Modern*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2019; *Art in Another Language*, Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut, 2019; *Something for the Touts, the Nuns, the Grocery Clerks and You*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2017; *Manouchehri Merchant House*, Kashan, 2016; *A Dish Fit for the Gods*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2015; *Stage on Fire*, Rose Issa Projects, London, 2014; *Canary in a Coal Mine*, Rose Issa Projects, London, 2014 and *Stitched*, Leighton House Museum in collaboration with Rose Issa Projects, London, 2008.

Ahrarnia has participated in several group shows including: Art Dubai with Lawrie Shabibi, 2022; *The Human Image: Art, Identities and Symbolism*, CaixaForum, Seville, Spain, 2022; *Punk Orientalism*, Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, 2019; *MATERIALIZE*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2019; *Artissima*, Dialogue sector, with Lawrie Shabibi, Torino, Italy, 2018; *Each Day an Artist*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2018; *Scripted Reality*, Lawrie Shabibi, 10 Hanover, London, 2018; *Works on Paper, Editions and Multiples Spring 2018*, Aaran Gallery, Tehran, 2018; Shirin Gallery, Tehran, 2016; Abu Dhabi Art, with Lawrie Shabibi, 2016; *Recentring Modernism*, Insights Sector, Art Basel Hong Kong with Lawrie Shabibi, 2016; *Serpentiform*, Museo di Roma, 2016; *Open Your Eyes*, Rose Issa Projects, London, 2014; *Embroideremania*, Hinterland Kunzt Art for Vienna Art Week, 2013; *Bringing the War Home*, Winchester School of Art, 2013; *The Beginning of Thinking is Geometric*, Maraya Art Centre and the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, 2013;

Al Serkal Avenue, unit 21, Al Quoz
PO Box 123901 Dubai, UAE
T +971 (0)4 346 9906
F +971 (0)4 346 9902
www.lawrieshabibi.com

#COMETOGETHER, Edge of Arabia, London, 2012 and *Migrasophia*, Maraya Contemporary Art Centre, Sharjah, 2012.

He has previously participated in *The Great Game*, Iranian Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennale, Venice, 2015; the 6th Tashkent Biennale of Contemporary Art, 2011; the Sheffield Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale, 2007 and Documenta XII, Kassel, Germany, 2007.

His work is in several collections including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, (LACMA); Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; the British Museum, London; Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford; Harewood House, Leeds; The Mohammed Afkami Collection, Dubai and the Huma Kabakci Collection, Istanbul; The Farjam Foundation, Dubai, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Ahrarnia lives and works between Shiraz and Sheffield.

LAWRIE SHABIBI

Lawrie Shabibi is a contemporary art gallery housed in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. The gallery supports the long-term development of the careers of young international contemporary artists with a focus on those from the Middle East and North Africa. The gallery also organises art historical exhibitions working with an older generation of artists from the region. Liaising with curators, institutions, museums and collectors the gallery has successfully introduced international artists to the region whilst at the same time presenting Middle Eastern artists to the international contemporary art community. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, Lawrie Shabibi has been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai.

For more information on Lawrie Shabibi please visit: www.lawrieshabibi.com

PRESS INQUIRIES

For press inquiries please contact Margarita Poroshina:

E. margarita@lawrieshabibi.com

M. +971 56 6066087

T. +971 4 346 9906