

Raha Raissnia

Canto

January 11 – February 22, 2018

The title of Raha Raissnia's new exhibition at Galería Marta Cervera, *Canto*, refers to a series of drawings by the same title on view at the artist's current exhibition at *The Drawing Center* in New York. A set of seven drawings here comprise its second part, *Canto II*. Another shared aspect between the two exhibitions is that both contain works made based on a series of found slides depicting a mosque from the Sultanate period in India, currently in ruins. In this way, the two exhibitions maintain more of a dialogue than a continuity, informing each other like the different sections of a canto in a long poem.

On view here is an installation of 80 hand painted slides titled *Throwback*, which are projected onto a unique screen box built by the artist. This screen has two layers: the outer layer uses a sheer fabric that the artist has painted faintly with gesso, which both reflects the light and allows it to penetrate through; the light then also hits the back layer—itsself a painting made with resin and black paint on gesso. The space between the two layers creates a three-dimensional optical effect, rich in tone and with much depth and texture. As the slide images are projected into the tridimensional artefact, they gain materiality, taking the form of physical objects with a strong presence in the exhibition space. This process of turning the photographic image into something physical that acquires weight and materiality is essential in Raissnia's work, and is also apparent in the paintings and drawings shown in this exhibition.

Raissnia transforms the photographic images that she works with (whether they are found or taken by her) incessantly by modifying them, re-photographing them, and not just representing them, but almost building these images anew layer by layer through her drawing and painting practice. In this manner both the semantic content and the texture of her works' surfaces reflect the labor that goes into them, and it is this manual process that inherently changes the original images by allowing her to appropriate them while materializing them. The images become real not just in a literal sense, but also in a metaphorical one: Raissnia's artistic process provides them with their own material history. Each trace humanizes them as they begin to form part of our physical reality, which is more ambiguous and less unilateral than the one narrated by documentary images. As a result, Raissnia's works make room for poetic interpretation, since emotions such as vulnerability, integrity, innocence or beauty infiltrate the representation as the image is reconstructed through the hand and conscience of the artist.

The temporal element of Raissnia's artistic process is consequently crucial, since it doesn't only enable the building of a kind of material history, but also a dialogue between all her works that is permanently in flux. In this way, the different components of her work (drawing, painting, film installation and performance) inform each other by crossing over from painting to film and vice versa in installations and performances—turning her body of work into its own history, which continuously re-examines and re-interprets itself. One could say, then, that the title of this exhibition, *Canto*, not only refers to a series of works, but also to Raissnia's unique form of creating.

Raha Raissnia (1968, Tehran, Iran) received her BFA from the School of the Art institute of Chicago in 1992 and her MFA from Pratt Institute in 2002. In the interim, her interest in avant-garde filmmaking led her to work at Anthology Film Archives (1995– 1999), where she has also exhibited. Raissnia currently has a solo exhibition at the Drawing Center (New York). In 2016, her work was the subject of a solo presentation at the Museum of Modern Art (New York). In 2015, Raissnia's work was included in *All the World's Futures*, 56th International Art Exhibition, curated by Okwui Enwezor, Venice Biennale. Previously, her work has been featured in exhibitions at White Columns (New York), Access Gallery (Vancouver), the Museum of Contemporary Art St. Louis, Khastoo Gallery (Los Angeles), Thomas Dane Gallery (London) and The Kitchen (New York), among others. Recent solo shows were held at Ab/Anbar Gallery (Tehran), Galería Marta Cervera (Madrid), Galerie Xippas (Paris), and the Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art (Isfahan, Iran). Raissnia's projection-performances, often undertaken in collaboration with Aki Onda and Panagiotis Mavridis, have been held at the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), Arnolfini – Center for Contemporary Arts (Bristol, UK), the Drawing Center (New York), Issue Project Room (New York), and Emily Harvey Foundation (New York), among others. Raissnia's fifth one-person exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery took place in November 2015.

C/Valencia 28

28012 Madrid

tel. +34913105036

info@galeriamartacervera.com

www.galeriamartacervera.com