

Sabrina Amrani presents *A rhythm for falling*, Alexandra Karakashian's first solo show in Spain.



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Since 2009, Alexandra Karakashian's work has been based on an almost scenic technique that involves displaying her used engine oil and salt paintings vertically on isolated canvases or emerging from vats of oil. The overwhelming beauty of her paintings results from how the oil randomly spreads over the canvas. An atmosphere of anticipation and solemnity is created by the use of black on a white background. The black and white blend together, defying gravity through capillary action, and the salt struggles in the face of the quickly advancing oil. The smell of oil permeates her works and fills the surrounding space.

There is something fundamental in Karakashian's paintings, like a refined gesture that emerges from the artist's body language. With a past connected to dance, this body language emerges naturally and eventually transcends the idea of figuration that her paintings negate; the dimensions of the paint strokes are, for the most part, in keeping with the dimensions of her body. And like the materials that the artist uses, her personal history is full of wealth and rebuff. Her work creates metaphors for intimate feelings of constriction, but also for the anticipation of becoming collectively unhomed (eco: oikos).

The work of Alexandra Karakashian, from up close and from afar, conveys a series of refined sensations that are both powerful and subtle. The initial perception is that the media and technique come together in pictorial works exhibiting great aesthetic purification, emerging from a reworked view of American abstract expressionism. However, the materials used by the artist (used engine oil and salt) have a meaning that goes beyond the simple contradiction between poor materials and noble materials so common in the history of painting. Their value is symbolic and deeply rooted in the current problems between North and South, such as environmental degradation, commoditisation and the essential elements for life. Both materials have been a source of conflict throughout history.

Painting is a tool that has the ability to nurture an intuitive relationship between the viewer and the work. This ability is especially evident here. Karakashian's works are a journey exploring concepts like reminiscence, exile and exodus.

In 1915, her grandfather, still a baby at the time, had to flee with his family from the Armenian Genocide and migrate. The family initially relocated in Romania and later headed south, first living in Egypt, before finally settling in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Her family's history arises as an essential note in her biography, explaining the extent to which the personal is political. Homi K. Bhabha's notion of unhomed allows us to understand this concept as the sense of compulsive displacement from historic roots.¹ The desire to examine intersections between ecology, transcendence, commoditisation and exile come from her personal history.

OPENING A RHYTHM FOR FALLING

17th April 2019, 7.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.

Runs through 27th July 2019

Sabrina Amrani (Madera)

Calle Madera, 23

Metro: Line 5, Callao Station

Request high resolution images: jal@sabrinaamrani.com

¹Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 1994