

# CARBON.12

## PRESS RELEASE

### 'LIVING IN A BURNING HOUSE'

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-- AMIR KHOJASTEH

On a wall covered with a group of paintings, a blacked-out (veiled) canvas stands out. The adjacent canvases depict heads in various states of comic pressure (unveiled), some even bordering on gruesome. The transition from the black square to the frail heads symbolizes the shift from tragedy to comedy – from a tragic hero to the village fool.

Amidst the unsettled times of an uprising in Iran, grappling with uncertainties, sadness, and paradoxes, artist Amir Khojasteh sought solace in his studio and tried to make sense of what was happening. "Something had been unveiled," the artist says. Behind those seemingly impenetrable walls that stretched endlessly lay a dying creature, weathered by time and hidden in isolation – a figure akin to a div\*, that later appear in his work. Following the unveiling, one is confronted not with the terrifyingly traumatic but rather with the absurdity and vacuity of that which is unveiled.

In this topsy-turvy world, the artist persisted in painting and crafting head sculptures of the divs, as if triumphing over them in a parallel timeline. They embody a longing for simultaneous processes of failure and success. Crafting these sculptures symbolizes conquering the divs, aiding the artist in immortalizing victory by capturing the demons in their defeated state, this signifying Amir's deep immersion in the material aspect of his craft. The bronze material used, lends a glossy surface that interacts dynamically with its surroundings, responding to the interplay of light.

Khojasteh's paintings echo monotype print accidents and textures on canvas. The newly added white lines, slots, or scars inject more visual energy into the compositions. Deeply infused with references from art history, within these curved canvases, one is confronted by life size mythical creatures. The form of the dome on canvas, borrowed from the Qajar era (1789-1925) paintings, is meant to "accentuate the primal character and the vivid presence of these divs." The smudging effect is achieved without actual smudging, as the moment the surface touches the glass with paint during the process of a monotype is omitted.

"Living in a burning house" is a perpetual state. Every painting can be read as a self-portrait or a commentary on a bizarre situation. Dazed by the smoke of the on-going fire, one will need to find ways to make that situation more apprehensible. Khojasteh laughs at what he witnessed, and through this laughter, he exposes its contingency, its ephemerality, and irreality.

-Yasaman Nozari

\*In Persian mythology, "div" (or دیو) refers to a supernatural creature or demon. Divs are often depicted as powerful and malevolent entities, possessing various magical abilities and often causing mischief and harm to humans.