

[INTERVIEW] ANAHITA RAZMI Automatic Assembly Actions | PAS UN AUTRE

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Anahita Razmi is one of those artists that are tough to define, but all the same make shock waves that force us to take a deeper look inside ourselves. Ramzi, a video and performance artist based in Stuttgart, makes work that deals with issues concerning identity and gender by employing objects with a national and cultural significance; sometimes borrowing and citing the work of other high-profile artists. Working within the tradition of appropriation and re-enactment, Razmi detaches cultural symbols from their established meanings by employing them in unexpected situations and contexts. Her works, like the tongue-in-cheek *Burquini* which was designed for the swimming activities of Muslim women and the more serious *Roof Piece Tehran*, where she had 12 dancers dancing on the rooftops of different building in Tehran in a country where dance is illegal and artistic performance is forbidden. Ramzi, whose father is Iranian – her mother German – has a special connection with Iran and it's panoply of struggles. On view now at Carbon 12 Gallery in Dubai, Ramzi's solo exhibition *Auto-*

matic Assembly Action, which opened with a performance *RE / CUT PIECE*, a modified appropriation of Yoko Ono's 1964 performance *Cut Piece*, will be open until March 14. Pas Un Autre got a chance to ask Razmi a few questions about her artistic practice, her current show at **Carbon 12** and what she has planned for the future. See *interview after the jump*.

PAS UN AUTRE: When was the first time you realized you wanted to be an artist?

ANAHITA RAZMI: For me there was no decision of becoming an artist, it was more a progress within time. I studied media arts before continuing in fine arts, but never became passionate about just editing or designing stuff. For me being an artist means dealing with a lot of risk, but also with an incredibly multifaceted field of themes and references. I don't think one can become tired of it.

AUTRE: What does it mean to be a female artist in the 21st century?

RAZMI: I wouldn't choose to speak generally, but at least for me I feel and hope that categories like male – female at least for artists working conditions become more and more irrelevant these days. My work still often deals with these categories in a broader sense, but I am trying to question stereotypes and preassigned images, rather than determining them.



AUTRE: Can you name some other female artists who inspire you and why?

RAZMI: My work is often referencing other female artists work, – for example I recently quoted Tracey Emin and Cindy Sherman. Anyhow, I am quite amenable for inspiration, I never choose to sit in my studio and work from a blank sheet of paper.

AUTRE: What do you think is the biggest spiritual quagmire for people in today's times?

RAZMI: Dependency on questionable values and rules. That deserves a bigger discussion however.

AUTRE: Is art important in politics....how can art spark political discourse?

RAZMI: I don't think art should at all be considered as something with a function. Anyhow, I still feel that it can be an independent factor questioning political situations and conditions within a society by activating discussions, thoughts and possible reconsiderations.

AUTRE: Some of your work has dealt with the politics and restrictions imposed on people living in Iran....is religion a problem or is it how people use it?

RAZMI: A lot of my work is making reference to the current situation in Iran. Anyhow I am never choosing to explain about the country, – I am more making reconciliations between existing images that are shifting between the Middle East and the West.



AUTRE: Your work is extremely multifaceted and people seem to have a plethora of ways to describe it – how would you describe your work?

RAZMI: I am happy to hear that, as I don't like my work to be pigeonholed. I am using different kinds of media and am not sticking to one method of producing my work. Still I think, one can find repeating conceptual strategies within my practice: appropriation of existing works and images, certain themes (like contemporary Iran) that repeatedly are dealt with.

AUTRE: Can you talk about what we can expect at your upcoming show at Carbon 12?

RAZMI: The show is my first solo exhibition at Carbon12 Dubai, so I am quite excited. It is titled *Automatic Assembly Actions* and features two new video installations, one photoseries and a textile work. I also did a performance during the opening, which involved the audience.

AUTRE: What's next?

RAZMI: My show *Swing State* will open mid february at Kunstverein Hanover, which

will be accompanied by a publication. From april on I will be in residency in Los Angeles for 6 months working on a new project – really looking forward to that.

*Text by Oliver Maxwell Kupper. Anahita Razmi Automatic Assembly Actions will be on view at **Carbon 12** Gallery until March 14, 2013, Warehouse D37, Alserkal Avenue, Street 8, Al Quoz 1*

