



assemblages, which critically incorporate traces of her predecessors into her own painterly language, resulting in a world that is vibrantly alive, aching with heavy corporeality. Yet on closer inspection, these strange bodies are also brutally flattened, reduced to their thin layer of skin, to paint.

—Kathy Noble

## Monira Al Qadiri

GASWORKS

Monira Al Qadiri's playful and engaging show "The Craft" was packed to the brim with conspiracy theory-like clues and references. The first of two rooms was almost completely dark; in the gloom, one made out only a replica of a hamburger spinning over a tall plinth—a piece titled *The End* (all works 2017). But there was a soundtrack: a male voice reciting a passage about an unspecified genre of architecture that, although supposedly attempting to respond to its terrain and atmospheric conditions, failed to blend into its context. This architecture's innovative forms made it look like something from outer space.

This narrative, juxtaposed with the rotating burger, was somewhat baffling until one reached the next room, which had been styled as a typical American diner, complete with black-and-white tiled floors, a gum-ball machine, and booths with green seats. Salt and pepper shakers, ketchup and mustard bottles, and napkin and straw dispensers were carefully placed on each table. At one end of this seamlessly constructed simulation stood high green barstools, above which shone a neon sign reading THE CRAFT (but titled, rather, *Omen*). At the other end of the room, a flat screen displayed a looping video, titled *The Craft*, that had been collaged from vintage VHS tapes.



View of "Monira Al Qadiri," 2017. Photo: Andy Keate.

*The Craft* tied all these elements together. It showed vintage recordings of an affluent neighborhood in Dakar, Senegal, where Al Qadiri, a Kuwaiti, was born, including views of the facade of the Kuwait embassy, her parents' workplace. The modernist exterior of that building, with distinctive window frames seemingly adapted to the sunny climate yet also somehow alien-looking, reminded me of the words I heard back in the first room of the show—according to the press release, the narration was an excerpt from the book *The Kuwait Urbanization* (1964) by Saba George Shiber. In *The Craft*, however, it is Al Qadiri herself speaking: She describes how all embassy buildings are like spaceships, and launches into the story of a UFO sighting she

Tyson's recent exhibition "A Tendency to Flock" paintings in a rich palette of dark red, burnt orange, blue (turquoise, baby, sky) and (green forest) browns, pinks, and yellows, invoking qualities of not necessarily human. For example, *Outside 1* depicts an entity that is animalistic in its rounded body, plantlike via its bark-brown branches; and *Outside 2* is all animal: a body with a head moving across the ground horizontally on at

do not mirror the world that we see with our eyes. a kind of dreamscape; the forms are familiar, we cannot quite place how we know them, or why we are seeing them again now. Our experience much a cognitive knowing as a corporeal recognition—reach out and grab the pathetic floppy teats hanging from a guinea pig.

the gallery's approach to figurative abstraction the gallery's Austrian painter Maria Lassnig's use of the terms "body sensation," and *Körperbewusstsein*, Tyson's art does indeed conjure the experiential as a sentient body. But with its bold psychosexual framing critical work that is more complex than it seems. *Square Self-Portrait* depicts something that is rounded by swaths of brown hair, with horizontal, hanging out of the shoulders and head—like an armadillo's head upright. The face has a flat, masklike quality with brown, pink, and green holes that could be windows to nowhere. If you didn't look too hard, you could mistake it for a Francis Bacon/Pablo Picasso mash-up. As it is published *Dead Letter Men*, a book of missives from male artists, including these two. The letter to a feminist recently asked me if as a female figurative painter I'd been influenced by it was a bit like asking if my diet had been influenced by Unavoidable." Tyson goes on to dissect Picasso's 20th-century primitivism and to decry his art-historical book is a kind of diaristic account of Tyson's array of male modernist artists, positioned as a gendered version of art history. Critical as she is, the fractured bodies owe to Bacon's deconstructions of the psyche what Bacon—an artist with whom Tyson has had an s/m relationship—owes to Picasso's son's biomorphic entities are carefully constructed

experienced as a girl. Her mother and sister entered the spaceship, which the sister later described as looking just like an American-style diner. From that moment, the artist came to believe her parents were complicit with aliens plotting to take over the world.

Did the plot succeed? Perhaps not. As the video continues, the artist goes on to describe two more alien encounters—first, during the Gulf War, which aliens “tried desperately to make look like a human conflict,” and then, twenty years later, in Beirut, where she saw an abandoned spaceship and a single human-looking alien sitting inside and smoking *shisha*. “The plan failed, go away,” he told her.

Modernist embassies, American-type eateries, even that now-ubiquitous disk of ground meat known as the hamburger—all these certainly might have seemed like emissaries from another planet in the Africa of the 1950s and 1960s. Al Qadiri concludes the video with the humorous suggestion that the omnipresence today of such phenomena is proof of a long and lasting relationship between humans and aliens.

—Sylvia Serafinowicz

## LEEDS, UK

### Jiro Takamatsu

HENRY MOORE INSTITUTE

“The Temperature of Sculpture” was an ambitious first survey of Jiro Takamatsu (1936–1998) outside his home country of Japan, significant not only because Takamatsu is a seminal postwar avant-gardist, but because the show was designed around key moments from his exhibition history. The seventy-two items on display included objects, photographic documents of actions and installations, sketches, and diagrams. Focusing on the period between 1961, when Takamatsu turned from painting to sculpture, and 1977, the year of his inclusion in Documenta 6, the show was divided into sections based on key ideas such as “string,” “point,” “slack,” and “perspective.”

Though loosely categorized as sculpture, some of these works were not so much art objects as intellectual propositions to see and know. For instance, “string,” according to Takamatsu, “is an immaterial, abstract, and conceptual object that is length.” He would stuff wire into soda bottles or coat it in black lacquer and mass it in bush-like forms on the wall. But the performance that best illuminates the artist’s thought is *The Yamanote Line Incident*, 1962. Working with Natsuyuki Nakanishi, who would soon join with him and Genpei Akasegawa to form the short-lived but vastly influential group Hi Red



Jiro Takamatsu,  
*Oneness of Brick*,  
1971, paint on brick,  
2 3/8 × 8 1/2 × 4".

Center, Takamatsu dropped more than two miles of rope onto Tokyo’s commuter rail lines.

At the 1970 Tokyo Biennale, artists were invited to create *in situ*; Takamatsu chose to install a group of carved logs standing in a gallery, titling the work *36 pieces of Oneness*, 1970. *Oneness of Cedar*, from the same year and on view here, he carved a small volume at the top of a log. The raw, untouched lower half of the log serves as a plinth for the small, smooth, cubic volume on top. The interior of the log within a tree one could find a piece of lumber like a pillar of perfect form. Here, he drew attention to wood as simultaneously natural and a material subject to human intercession. Bronze and rusty metal all come under similar consideration as materials for objects in the “Oneness” series, 1969–72. Works such as *Oneness* illustrate Takamatsu’s affinities with the Mono-ha movement, whose members had been his students and were influenced by his ideas of materiality.

In other works, Takamatsu drew on his training as a painter, painting the shadows of objects and figures. In *Shadow No. 1*, a metal hook sticks out of a panel, but the artist painted shadows on the cream-colored ground that instead suggest the shape of the hook. The painted elements of *Shadows on the Door*, 1970, include human silhouettes on a pair of off-white doors that open onto a canvas depicting blue doors inside and another pair of doors outside. Takamatsu catching different moments in time? Or views of the same door and outside? He seems to be trying to give something ephemeral a solidity. But either consciously or unconsciously, these shadows also evoke a memory: that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where people were left behind by people killed in the nuclear attack. Painted on billboards, canvas, or doors, these haunting shadows suggest human absence. Despite the diverse range of ideas, from anarchic actions of Hi Red Center to the Zen-like “Oneness,” Takamatsu’s approach is always to find the core of his subject in material or immaterial.

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## PARIS

### Massinissa Selmani

GALERIE ANNE-SARAH BÉNICHOU

For his exhibition “*Les choses que vous faites m’entourer*” (Things You Do Surround Me), Massinissa Selmani presents works from four series created over the past three years. A sense of disorientation hovers over these works. Clearly, they have learned the Surrealists’ lessons about the hidden subversiveness of the most ordinary things, and about art’s potential to break through the toughest outer skin of reality. One strategy, which Selmani uses in the “*Promesses*” (Promises) series, 2017, is juxtaposition: the artist combines two everyday scenes in order to create what seems possible, if not plausible, yet at the same time touches on the verge of sliding into nonsense.

Selmani’s tiny figures, drawn with delicate strokes that do not have any gestural quality, are rendered with great realism, although they rarely cast shadows, except when they encounter an architrave or pier. They make no contact with the ground and seem out of place among the few architectural elements in their proximity, for instance, in the series “*Entre le ciel et moi*” (Between the Sky and Me). In *Billboards*, fence posts, enclosures, control towers, facades under construction, transparent walls and structures whose purpose is to organize the white space of the sheet of paper—in Selmani’s hands these bring to mind theater sets.