

**BAKTASH SARANG** “Sensory Deprivation Series” invited by Michel Dewilde

13 January – 03 March 2018

Baktash Sarang often uses the human figure as a theme in his relationship to diverse spatial dimensions. He evokes intriguing worlds in his fascinating, often pitch-black, virtuous drawings. We notice references to the Tower of Babel, diverse paintings from the Renaissance, mysterious architecture or images from recent political history. But the ultimate interpretation of these scenes remains forthcoming upon the first reading. It seems to slip by.

The characters are at a standstill in these swirling compositions; they are waiting for what will come. Sarang imprisons his figures on the image plane. He accentuates this imprisonment even further by using certain or unreal structures. Finally, his figures are often blindfolded or their face or mouth is muzzled with strange face masks. Sometimes the head is omitted.

Sarang tells the story of mankind in custody. We appear trapped in the physical, architectural and symbolic space of every ideology. In a series of drawings we see an individual who is disguised by the Tower of Babel, a symbol of our desire for the unity of language or culture and place. In other works his figures stare vacantly alongside flags, symbols of the nation state, the populace, the army. He recently started an investigation into the architecture of prisons and the role of Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon.

He translated this into numerous models and large sculptures in which he exceeded the purely political references. Sarang chose a graphic intervention called Sensory Deprivation Series for the Window Project at Hopstreet Gallery. In this intervention the observer's senses are taken away or neutralised. A successful example of window dressing.

Baktash Sarang belongs to the third generation of Iranian contemporary artists after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. These politically-conscious and critical artists started their careers in the period 1997-2005. In Iran they were classified under ‘New Art’ or ‘Conceptual Art’. Several of them went abroad and developed an oeuvre that explores the relationship between a local interpretation of contemporary art and international expectations.

**Baktash Sarang** (Tehran, 1981) lives and works in Paris and Iran. After receiving a diploma from the Azad University in Tehran he rounded out his studies at the École Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Strasbourg. He obtained his Master's degree from the Université de Paris I – Panthéon-Sorbonne in 2015.

**Michel Dewilde** is an art historian and curator based in Ghent. He is co-curator of the Triennial for Contemporary Art and Architecture in Bruges (2015-2018), curator at the Cultuurcentrum and collaborates with the City Museums of Bruges.