

ROSE ISSA PROJECTS

82 GREAT PORTLAND STREET LONDON W1W 7NW T: +44 (0)20 7602 7700 E: INFO@ROSEISSA.COM WWW.ROSEISSA.COM

PRESS RELEASE

Hossein Valamanesh: *Breath*

28 May - 28 June 2013

Tuesday - Friday 12noon - 6pm or by appointment.

Private View: Tuesday 28 May, 6-8.30pm

*'In each breath we take there are two gifts.
The air that fills our lungs prolongs life.
Giving that air back to the world refreshes the soul.
For each one of these Gifts, each time we receive it,
we must give thanks.'*

Extract from Saadi's Gulistan, 1259 AD, Shiraz, Iran

In this beautiful verse Saadi asks us to thank God. However, I think we should thank nature, forests and trees.

Hossein Valamanesh

Hossein Valamanesh's works range from multi-media installations to sculpture, video, painting and drawing. *Breath*, his first solo exhibition in London, will showcase this variety of practice through a selection of bronze sculptural pieces, two installations and several works on paper.

Valamanesh creates his bronze sculptures by casting branches from his garden into various forms. In *Breath*, the branches have become lungs; elsewhere they are transformed into well-known phrases by Sufi poets, *Don't say anything* or *This will also pass*. In doing so, he not only combines nature with culture, but pays homage to these mystical poets, whose ideas on the ephemerality of existence influence his work. Their legacy can also be seen in Valamanesh's *Where Do You Come From?*, which illustrates the effects of globalisation: a map of the world, cut into strips and woven into latticework, its cities and continents displaced as so many people are today, born in one country, studying in another, working in a third and continually moving, so that the question of where we are from no longer makes sense.

In Valamanesh's installations, everyday objects and daily domestic rituals transcend their physicality to display their poetic and metaphysical qualities, either aiding meditation on the transient nature of life – as in *Chai, As Close As I Could Get*, where a small glass of tea floats on a bowl full of water – or initiating a philosophical quest, such as *Seven Steps*, in which a ladder hanging from a mirrored ceiling invites the viewer to project into a higher dimension.

A fourth body of work on display is the series of miniatures, *Swiss Landscapes*. Valamanesh painted these in 2001 during a residency in Switzerland, just a few weeks after the collapse of the Twin Towers and the bankruptcy of Swiss Air. Painted in watercolour on the financial pages of newspaper, the dramatic silhouettes of Swiss mountains are superimposed on the equally dramatic graphs of the stock market of the time, providing an ironic metaphor on the mutability of life.

Born in Iran, where he trained as an actor and a painter of miniatures, Valamanesh emigrated to Australia in the 1970s. He settled in Adelaide, where he lives with his wife, the ceramist Angela Valamanesh, and his son, the video artist and filmmaker Nassiem Valamanesh. Works by Hossein Valamanesh feature in all the prominent national museum collections of Australia, including the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra; and the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.

This exhibition has been assisted by the Government of South Australia through Arts SA.