Following his meteoric rise during the second part of the eighties, Wim Delvoye (Wervik, 1965) has become one of the world’s most leading artists. His oeuvre is regularly mentioned in the same breath as that of Belgian artists such as René Magritte and Marcel Broodthaers, or Surrealism in general. His penchant for irony, jest or parody simultaneously calls for comparisons with the medieval Dutch/German folk hero Till Eulenspiegel while he also stands model for the type of post-modern artist-entrepreneur, the global business man with a wide-branched empire, the stockbroker, media star… in one word: a global communicator. Meanwhile, prominent international exhibitions, daring art projects and new publications have succeeded each other at breath-taking speed. Today, this acclaimed artist is making his debut on the opulent Iranian art scene with a monographic exhibition at the prestigious Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in Laleh Park.

There is no doubt that Iran has one of the most affluent modern and contemporary art landscapes. No need even for historic exaggeration in this case, because — having
remained hidden and under the radar of the international arts world for too long — Iran has been bursting with talent since at least the early fifties.

An invitation to write a text, trying to explore potential links between the oeuvre of Wim Delvoye and the Iranian artistic practice, proved to be both an honour and a challenge. It’s obviously always quite risky to make transcultural and even cross-generational comparisons between artists and their diverse and complex practices. Moreover, foreign analysts must be aware of the danger of fabricating a national identity or essentialism, simply fed by orientalist expectations and perceptions. Therefore this fascinating exploration should start with the following questions: which Iran are we talking about and, more specifically, when exactly does this art become Iranian? What about the diaspora and intermediate positions? Can we refer to specific artistic approaches that are truly endemic in this culture?

Delvoye: The fold and the space in between

Wim Delvoye’s oeuvre has been characterised by several simultaneous and sometimes intertwining developments. From the eighties to the end of the nineties, the artist mainly focused on combining various representations within an artwork, giving the impression of an internal clash. From this initial phase the virtuoso interpreter charmed, surprised or shocked with his mischievous, sometimes scabrous and poetic representations of the global consumer society and its excessive hunger for mass communication and production. This sharp-witted approach persuaded various authors to classify him as a proponent of cynical postmodern art practices. As such Delvoye’s practice was absorbed into the world of Jean Baudrillard, the game of floating signifiers without referent, the famed simulacra.

However, this image of the distant commentator shows fractures and fissures: his oeuvre rises above the cool, sometimes sarcastic postmodern translations that were symptomatic of a large part of the art world since the eighties. Indeed, several of his works display the typical superficiality of mass-produced objects, but alongside a truly genuine admiration for technical craftsmanship; the latter which is so maligned within the safe havens of the contemporary art world. This combination seemed to be quite rare and showed simultaneously how Delvoye deprives the observer of an unequivocal, simplistic interpretation of his work.

In this respect, his practices are often related to the oxymoron, a totality of ostensibly antithetical figurations that are linked to each other, and would thus produce new and unexpected meanings. Delvoye translates this concept into a masterly interplay of
contradictions, resonating in various series of works, and multiple exhibition displays. He not only blends diverse representations, but also their technical execution, choice of materials and appearance of the works. All aspects seem to oppose each other.

More than once, this method has been described using the term ‘emulsion’ — I tend to prefer verbs such as folding and unfolding. During the early stages of his practice, the artist actually folds together a number of representations whilst simultaneously, content-wise, leaving space between the folds, visible to the public. Typical examples of this are on display in the TMoCA exhibition. For example, visitors can feast their eyes on beautiful Delft gas cannisters or the Installation of 5 Delft shovels; sculptures that are emblematic for the artist’s early career. Fascinating in these works is the fact that the artist is combining highly diverse material carriers, and their symbolic representations into a new image, while still managing to maintain a degree of tension, an uncertainty, between the image, techniques and carrier. This enables the spectator to read between the ‘folds’; depending on time and context of the presentation, these intermediate spaces also generate a number of extra questions. For example, by applying Delft blue to the gas cannisters, the artist appears to refer to the role and status of the white/blue porcelain within Flemish and Dutch popular or folk culture. Within this context, Delft porcelain symbolizes domesticity and cosiness, its idyllic scenes also being typical for a longing for a controllable, conflict-free and timeless world. However, applied to a non-artistic, industrially produced carrier such as a gas canister, this enclosed universe appears to be at breaking point. But is this really the case? Delvoye’s admiration for local popular culture is widely known — moreover, these early works already display examples of his interest in craft techniques. Does this imply critical analysis of forms of civil complacency for example, an ironic view of global reification, or was he aiming to introduce these works in order to challenge the conventions and patterns of expectation which were so endemic in the current art scene and its system of objects?

Delvoye: From fusion to torsion

Since the early 2000s the artist starts to develop works that highlight the formal and conceptual integration of the various constituent parts. Delvoye aims for fusion and appears to be less interested in internal confrontation. In these works, the conflictual dimension is situated outside the image. The acclaimed series of sculptures entitled Cloaca is a typical example in this respect, and this new trend is also apparent in the Marble Floor series (2000). The fact that these baroque floors were assembled out of various types of meat appears to be of secondary importance to achieving a highly tactile and olfactory representation. Delvoye manages to achieve another high point of this syncretic flair in his Gothic or hyper-gothic sculptures. His fascination for swirling, decorative struc-
tures almost automatically directed him to the Gothic and neo-Gothic. Visitors to the TMoCA can see beautiful examples of this, including the *Nautilus* (2010) or *Dump Truck* (2011). Almost resembling a mature, contemporary Viollet-le Duc, Wim Delvoye developed an individual hyper-gothic idiom, which he uses to introduce small objects or large, awe-inspiring sculptures to the world. His love of fine detail and decoration is developed more specifically in artworks with Eastern, mainly Persian or Iranian, motifs such as the *Rimowa Classic Flight Multiwheel* travel case sculptures, or in the intriguing upholstery of an Italian *Maserati 450S* (2015) sports car.

But Delvoye wouldn’t be Delvoye if he didn’t also put this development into perspective, queries or expands upon it. In recent years, there has been an increasing preference for more elongated and rotating, almost floating, sculptures. Is this erudite artist referring to the work of El Greco or the exponents of the Italian ‘Maniera’? Personally, I also perceive a connection with the world of the anamorphoses, an interplay and quest for various forms of perspective, in which the original representations disappear to be reborn and float as new entities in thin air. A state which Delvoye actually manages to achieve wonderfully well, i.e. by moulding well-known images originating from the history of art, his own hyper-gothic oeuvre or consumer goods into new animated images. The deformations in *Slanted Dump Truck* (2012), *Twisted Dump Truck* (2011), or smaller bronzes such as *La Ramasseuse des Moules* (2014) or the *Dunlop Geomax* (2015) twisted tyre sculptures show this once again: Delvoye is intervening himself in the interpretation of the work. And, typical for the most recent phase of his oeuvre, he translates this ‘twist’ of the image into a plastic dimension.

**Iran: A country in eternal Renaissance.**

Trying to make connections between Wim Delvoye and more than 60 years of Iranian art is not an easy task, which is why we could venture upon it as like we were creating a group exhibition. So, instinctively, I asked myself which Iranian artists or works of art would spontaneously relate or resonate to that of Delvoye. Unintentionally one violates Iran’s rich and varied history, but through this choice we do not aspire to achieve any historic completeness or accuracy — instead, one can look for specific guidelines that are also recognisable in Delvoye’s approach, scan for like-minded souls as well as opposites, for resilience and opposition, doubt and contradiction, with the aim to mutually enhance the various works. For example: trying to identify artists who combine representations or objects from the media or art world into a new but twisted image. Or, alternatively, considering practices focused on far-reaching aesthetic fusion or unity in combination with an eye for detail and craftsmanship, whilst simultaneously rising above these two aspects.
Influenced by diverse socio-political or cultural backgrounds, an interplay with false bottoms, hidden or ambiguous meanings, is inherent in some of Iran’s contemporary art, quite apart from or alongside a potential postmodern reflex. Frequently employed as an aesthetic tool for a critical, sometimes ironic or cynical analysis of social and/or artistic themes, the oxymoron can, at a methodological level, be an interface between Delvoye and Iran, albeit on the basis of a very different context. Overall, I see connections in this respect between Delvoye and some Iranian post-revolutionary art practices or isolated works of art, both in the country itself and in the diaspora. I am referring to artists born in the sixties and seventies, some of whom participated, for example, in significant Conceptual Art exhibitions at the TMoCA. I would like to differentiate here between the specific conditions affecting local artists in Iran and those who operate from within the international diaspora. From the second half of the nineties to the new millennium, the focus in Iran tended to be on themes such as national identity and personal biography combined with experimentation with new media and plastic forms. During that period, the playful, critical use of elements derived from popular culture and consumer goods was more specifically applied by a few artists from the Diaspora or, more recently, in Iran.

The first artist to spring to mind in this respect was Farhad Moshiri (Shiraz, 1963). This contemporary of Delvoye is one of the leading exponents and analysts of hypermodernity. Taking on the role of a talented observer, Moshiri operates from the cross-over point between his positions in both the West and Iran. Like a driven archaeologist, he navigates the complex area of tension between the rejection of an essentially externally imposed modernity, on the one hand, and a longing for products of ‘Western’ consumer model origin, on the other — whilst at the same time being guided by an admiration for Persian and Iranian culture. With his reflexive critical position, his skilful interweaving of high and low cultural elements, his love of materiality and preference for the dazzling and the confrontational, his oeuvre has many similarities with that of Delvoye. Moshiri doesn’t shy away from controversy and intersperses aspects of danger and aggression in his work.

The enchanting wall and wallpaper motifs of Parastou Forouhar (Teheran, 1962), that have fascinated me for years seems to be in approach and content quite different from Delvoye’s oeuvre. Her work is dominated by personal torment, linked to an in-depth analysis of the socio-political context. Her decorative patterns barely disguise a distinct threat to the personal; a physical closeness which Delvoye tends to avoid. Her systematic use of critical messages hidden within enticing motifs, her sense of detail and the fact that, similar to Delvoye, she has set up her own production line of functional objects
and signs seems however to represent an interesting meeting point. Talking about the motif of the production line and the global commercial aesthetization process, the work of Chohreh Feyzdjou (Teheran, 1955 – Paris, 1996) also deserves a prominent place. Similar to Forouhar, Feyzdjou’s oeuvre is closely linked to a personal, biographical script. Feyzdjou transformed her entire art practice and its associated objects into an archive dimmed with black pigment; she made an inventory of each object and attached a sticker ‘Product of …’. Even though she sometimes brought these objects and art works together in a major installation entitled *Boutique*, with corresponding price list and commercial look, Feyzdjou shows a damming indictment of the attrition and commercialisation of the personal life, rather than a cheerful ironic veneration of the consumer flow.

Mahmoud Bakhshi Moakhar (Teheran, 1977) is one of the sharpest critics of his generation. His cloud sculptures and flag installations could easily counterbalance some of Delvoye’s earliest pieces. A particular confrontation between Bakhshi’s eight-panel Iranian map installation *My Land, Meridian …° — …°, orbit …° — …°, a reference to Yasna, Hat 46* (2004) and Delvoye’s *Atlas* (2004) can even be distinguished: in both cases, we could pose the ‘Deleuzian’ question with respect to the distance between the maps as a concept and representation and the country itself, but Bakhshi describes his homeland through the battles and conflicts which shaped current day Iran, whereas Delvoye creates his own world. Delvoye departs from the generic, global concepts of mapping and translates it onto a personal imaginary level, Bakhshi on the other hand starts from the private and redraws through quotes from Zarathustra a number of existing physical borders of his country. The confrontations between the escalation of consumerism and traditional popular culture is a theme adopted by several artists in the local Iranian artistic community, such as graphic artists Siamak Filizadeh (Teheran, 1970) or some objects by Behdad Lahooti (Teheran, 1976), the eloquent installations and sculptures of Mojtaba Amini (Sabsevar, 1979), or the rocket sculptures of Shahpour Pouyan (Isfahan, 1979).

If we think of fusion, unity, spiritual and formal embodiment, a multitude of pre-revolution masters come to mind, including Charles Hossein Zenderoudi (Teheran, 1937) or Parviz Tanavoli (Teheran, 1937). Both are founders of the famed Saqqa-khaneh movement. Their contemporary reiteration of local popular motifs and attention to detail generated a neo-traditional movement of international acclaim. In that respect, who would not like to have seen a confrontation between certain hyper-gothic works by Delvoye and, for example, the Wall sculptures of Tanavoli? Or favour an extended meeting or dialogue between Delvoye’s latest phase and the oeuvre of Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian (Qazvin, 1924)? Farmanfarmaian’s accomplished mirror and painted glassware are an outstanding combination of 16th-century Safavid mosaic mirror art.
and contemporary abstract trends. Similar to Delvoye, her fascination with local crafts and tradition is not a nostalgic looking back at the past, but the infusion and continuation of a formal and conceptual potential. Farmanfarmaian’s work is based on a series of geometric figures, which she continues to repeat in infinite, dazzling variations. Amongst more recent artists, I notice in particular Sahand Hesamiyan (Teheran, 1977), who in some way continues her fascination for geometric motifs and Sufi mysticism.

The mesmerizing monographic exhibition can now start and we are awaiting the reactions and sequel in conjunction with the Iranian artists with bated breath.

Notes

1 Quite accidentally, I almost simultaneously became familiar with the up-and-coming oeuvre of Delvoye and the work of a number of prominent Iranian artists. In 1988, I came across some of Delvoye’s earliest productions at the Ghent Museum of Contemporary Art. Thanks to the input of several Iranian families in Brussels, I simultaneously gained an initial insight into the work of leading names of the Saqqa-khaneh school, the Naqqashi-khatt, or the work of a maverick such as Monir Farmanfarmaian.


6 Issa, Rose, Mosaics of Mirrors, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Nazar Research and Cultural Institute, Tehran, 2006, p. 16–21.

بازدیدی از آثار اولیه دلووی در 1988 - من کاملاً اتفاقی و تقریباً همزمان با آثار جدید دلووی و برخی از هنرمندان معروف ایرانی آشنا شدم. در سال 1 مکتب "موزه هنرهای معاصر خنت داشتم و به واسطه اطلاعاتی که از چند خانواده ایرانی در بروکسل دریافت کردم و تا حدودی با آثار هنرمندان معروف "کوبک سفاهتنامه" و نیز مسائل کتاب "دلووی" (۱۹۸۷) از زبان فرانسوی و تجربه سایر زندگی شناختی بزرگ شدم.

5. Issa, Rose, Borrowed Ware, in Iranian Contemporary Art, Booth-Clibborn Editions, London, 2001, 17-20
ایران کشور رسانه‌ساز

تالش در جهت یافتن رابطه بین ویم دلووی و به شیوه‌ی مشابه کامیون کمپرسی پیچ خورده، گویا در حال توصیف یک نمایشگاه تایرهای گروهی هستیم، بنابراین با طوری غیرطبیعی از ریش برای دسترسی به اثرات ماده‌ای می‌تواند بر زبان رابطه ای با آثار دلووی اشاره‌ی بیشتری باشد و یا چنانکه آن باشد، برای پایه‌ی یک نمایشگاه کاریکاتوریزه‌ی اثرات تاریخی و اجتماعی ایران نامیده رفته‌ی پیچ خورده، باز هم، انگیزه به دقت تاریخی دست به پیوسته‌ی کوچک و با هدف یافتن مدل‌های جدید و پیچیده‌ی باکل‌ها و دیگر دلایل موجب می‌شود که نسبت به آثار ویم دلووی جدید و پیچیده‌ی ساخته می‌شود.

است که در رونق ویژه‌ی مصرفی‌گری قابل شناسایی می‌باشد. همچنین نسبت به خوشنویسی در رویکرد دلووی نیز قابل مرحله‌ی جستجویی و ماهیت مصالح ایجاد می‌کند. این به اعتقاد و معتقدات اثرات متغیر را ارائه می‌دهد و به معنی شناسایی هنرمندانی است که بتوانند نماد و یا اشیاء رایج در دنیای رسانه و یا هنر را با هم ترکیب و در قالب تصویری جدید و پیچیده‌ی ارائه دهند. در غیر این صورت باید به نحوی به این موضوع پرداخت که گویی در حال توصیف یک نمایشگاه گروهی هستیم. بنابراین به‌طور غریضی از خود پرسیدم کدام هنرمند و یا اثر ایرانی می‌تواند بی‌درنگ رابطه‌ای با آثار دلووی داشته باشد و یا بازتاب آن باشد؟ برای پاسخ به این پرسیدنی‌ها از دست نمی‌خورد.

پیچش نشانه مراحل اخیر آثار وی ترجمه‌ی این ایران کشور رنسانس دائم سال هنر معاصر در ایران کار ساده‌ای نیست و به همین تلاش در جهت یافتن رابطه بین ویم دلووی و بیش از ۶۰ دلیل باید به نحوی به این موضوع پرداخت که گویی در حال توصیف یک نمایشگاه گروهی هستیم. بنابراین به‌طور غریضی از خود پرسیدم کدام هنرمند و یا اثر ایرانی می‌تواند بی‌درنگ رابطه‌ای با آثار دلووی داشته باشد و یا بازتاب آن باشد؟ برای پاسخ به این پرسیدنی‌ها از دست نمی‌خورد.

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می‌تواند بیننده را از تفسیر روشن و ساده آثار خود محروم سازد.

در این خصوص، شیوه عمل وی در اغلب موارد دارای تضاد است. علت این بوده که به یکدیگر بی‌باور خوردند تفاوت‌های جدید و غیرمنتظره‌ای را در قالب جالب ماهورانه تجاوز کرده که در مجموعه آثارش متنوع و چندین نمایشگاه از آن خواننده‌ها و یا اندیش در شده است.

وی نهنده‌ی بی‌پایان گوناگون را به هم در می‌آورد، بلکه ضمن اجرای نمایشگاه‌های متعدد، در هر آن طراحی نمایشگاه‌های گوناگون در این مجموعه با توجه به بارکردن و از گرایش تطبیقی تازه‌ای بازگرایی می‌کند.

در مراحل نخست این شیوه، هنرمند تعدادی نماد را با آن به لایه بی‌پایان قرار داده و در کنار بازکردن، ضمن اینکه ایجاد فاصله می‌کرد.

می‌تواند آثار خود را با عبارت "امولسیون" توصیف نماید. ولی می‌توان به یکدیگر می‌گوید ماهرانه ای به آن دست یافته است.

در کنار قابل توجهی این رویکرد در قالب چالش ماهرانه ترجمه گردیده که در مجموعه آثارش در زمینه‌های متعددی از آن عبارت نیز پدید آورده است.

در این رویکرد، وی نه تنها نمادهای گوناگون را با هم در می‌آورد، بلکه ضمن اجرای نمایشگاه‌های متعدد، در هر آن طراحی نمایشگاه‌های گوناگون در این مجموعه با توجه به بارکردن و از گرایش تطبیقی تازه‌ای بازگرایی می‌کند.

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ویم دلودو در
موزه هنرهای معاصر تهران
در رابطه با توازن، اتصال و پیچش مداوم

میشل دیوایلد

۱۵۷۵ است. او بس از موفقیت جشنگیر در نیمه دوم دهه هشتاد میلادی، به یکی از هنرمندان برتری از هنرمندان معاصر معرف پیشین در تاریخ هنر گردید. او با جذابیت و به کتابه، شوخی و با تمسخر، او به همراه انلاین، برای اثرین، انرژی، هنرمندان در هنر معاصر تهران در رابطه با توازن، اتصال و پیچش مداوم است. او پس از موفقیت چشمگیر در نیمه دوم دهه هشتاد میلادی، به یکی از هنرمندان برجسته دنیا تبدیل شده و آثارش در زمینه هنر معاصر و هنر مدرن مورد توجه قرار گرفته است. با توجه به گرافیت، چپخو و با تمسخر، او به همراه انلاین، برای اثرین، انرژی، هنرمندان در هنر معاصر تهران در رابطه با توازن، اتصال و پیچش مداوم است. او پس از موفقیت چشمگیر در نیمه دوم دهه هشتاد میلادی، به یکی از هنرمندان برجسته دنیا تبدیل شده و آثارش در زمینه هنر معاصر و هنر مدرن مورد توجه قرار گرفته است. با توجه به گرافیت، چپخو و با تمسخر، او به همراه انلاین، برای اثرین، انرژی، هنرمندان در هنر معاصر تهران در رابطه با توازن، اتصال و پیچش مداوم است. او پس از موفقیت چشمگیر در نیمه دوم دهه هشتاد میلادی، به یکی از هنرمندان برجسته دنیا تبدیل شده و آثارش در زمینه هنر معاصر و هنر مدرن مورد توجه قرار گرفته است. با توجه به گرافیت، چپخو و با تمسخر، او به همراه انلاین، برای اثرین، انرژی، هنرمندان در هنر معاصر تهران در رابطه با توازن، اتصال و پیچش مداوم است.