

ABSTRACT MATTER

In its new group exhibition, Galeri 77 brings together seven artists who produce almost exclusively abstract works. Witnessing Armen Gevorkian, Hamlet Hovsepien, Mesut Karakış, Armén Rotch, Kirkor Sahakoğlu, Tigran Sahakyan and Arman Vahanyan's different approaches to abstract art, the exhibition takes art lovers on a journey of discovery into the sometimes wild and sometimes tranquil world of abstract art. "Abstract Matter", which will take place at Galeri 77's space in Karaköy between 4 July - 3 August, presents the different approaches that abstract art has reached today, ranging from lively, dynamic and enthusiastic instant gestures to minimal, monochrome and fully planned compositions, while emphasising the importance of production processes and technique alongside this diversity.

A radical break from traditional representation, abstract art emerged in the early 20th century as artists began to look for new ways to express the complexities of the modern world. The origins of abstract art can be traced back to movements such as Expressionism and even Post-Impressionism, where artists focused on sensory and emotional experiences. Wassily Kandinsky, considered one of the pioneers of abstract art, believed in the spiritual and emotional power of colours and shapes. His groundbreaking works of the 1910s, along with contemporaries such as Kazimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian, laid the first foundations of the abstract movements that would later diversify. While Malevich's Suprematism defined geometric abstraction by emphasising the primacy of pure artistic feeling, Mondrian's De Stijl movement advocated a more regular, grid-based approach and aimed for universal harmony through abstraction. In the mid-20th century, artists such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning pushed the boundaries of abstraction and contributed greatly to the development of abstract expressionism, especially in the United States. Pollock's iconic drip paintings and Rothko's emotional colour fields became synonymous with this movement, which emphasised spontaneity, gestures and the subconscious. On the other hand, European movements such as Art Informel and Tachisme explored similar themes, and artists such as Jean Dubuffet and Hans Hartung created works that emphasised texture and the physicality of the medium.

Today, abstract art is constantly reshaping and evolving in parallel with the transformative effects of a rapidly changing world on global, social and individual scales. Thanks to technological possibilities and the power of communication, contemporary abstract artists continue to create works in a wide spectrum from the gestural and spontaneous to the meticulously planned and systematic, drawing from a wide range of influences, techniques and philosophies. On this new plane, where the traditional is questioned, fresh perspectives and different forms of expression meet the diversity of brand-new materials and application techniques, we are now greeted with multi-layered and rich approaches in which the production process is actively involved.

Gestural and Colourful...

Rich in movement and vibrant hues, focusing on the interplay of colour, line and form, these works aim to evoke strong emotion and energy. Drawing on the legacy of abstract expressionism, they invite viewers to experience the immediacy and dynamism of the artist's creative process. These works celebrate the intrinsic qualities of the medium and allow viewers to interact with the artwork on a purely sensory level. Using such techniques as an inspiration for his works, Kirkor Sahakoğlu conveys emotion on canvas by blending

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gestural movements and colour compositions. In contrast, Hamlet Hovsepian, who contrasts his more docile, holistic and peaceful works with the inspiration he takes from nature even in the material he uses, fascinates the viewer with his enthusiastic compositions created with raw brushstrokes, dealing with difficult subjects such as transformation and the transition between organic and inorganic life with great care. Sharp and fragmented lines, layered and more aggressive application of paint, and the accumulation of these expressionist signs support the astonishing revival of the movement.

Kirkor Sahakoğlu, who takes us on incredibly deep visual journeys through the emotions that represent the human soul, the reflections of the outside world within us and some contemporary concepts. He is an artist who questions our relationship with words and the images they contain, especially through his abstract works. His closeness to thinkers such as Foucault, Baudrillard, Adorno and existential philosophy is reflected in all his works; He carries out all his works in an improvisational style, in line with Milan Kundera's saying, "Only chance tells us something..." Based on his own life and feelings, Sahakoğlu invites us to think about what is unseen, not what we see, in his works. For Sahakoğlu, who generally combines different materials in his Abstract Expressionist works, does not hesitate to include various objects that have a memory in his own life from time to time, and underlines that he keeps an equal distance from all colours. The meaning of his paintings is "...What will be seen here are not just surfaces, colours or just some compositions that we encounter at first glance. It is their passionate desire to reveal an 'I' that lies much deeper."

Hamlet Hovsepian's art is inspired by the land and nature surrounding his home. Using various metals such as aluminium, gold and bronze in combination with oil paint, he reflects his belief in the importance of nature, as "the richness of Mother Earth" consists of metals and minerals buried deep within. The artist explores the alphabet of formal abstraction, using oil paint mixed with powdered aluminium or bronze and occasionally texturally enhancing the work with painted moss glued onto the canvas. In both his gestural and carefully constructed works, he also examines the process of the transformation of living creatures into inorganic remains and vice versa, the transformation of inorganic remains into organic life. Through the performative methods of the Abstract Expressionists, Hamlet Hovsepian creates purely formal compositions with raw brushstrokes, thus captivating the viewer with the impulse of seemingly impossible narratives. However, one narrative that these paintings forcefully reveal is Action Painting. Willem de Kooning's smudges, Franz Kline's doodles, Jackson Pollock's drip-drip lines and Cy Twombly's graffiti marks all come to life again in Hovsepian's highly gestural paintings. Hovsepian's works not only reveal their connection to all these precedents, but also affirm the inexhaustible source of modernist aesthetic perception. The "pure automatism" of the paintings is demonstrated in a myriad of applications, from various grips of the brush, to tense wrist twists or energetic brushstrokes. At times, Hovsepian's compositions combine a continuous spatial expanse with free gestural brush movements involving paint drips; at other times, the entire picture space merges with Dadaist, ready-made object fragments. He thus connects the mental ethos of Duchamp and Rauschenberg with the inner life of expressionist and indexical signs. The accumulation of all these expressionist signs in Hovsepian's paintings supports the astonishing revival of Abstract Expressionism.

Monochromatic and Orderly...

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Contrasting with gestural works, these works embrace minimalism and precision. Through careful composition and restrained palettes, they offer both a meditative and illusionistic experience that encourages reflection on form and structure. In the works of Armén Rotch and Mesut Karakış, this geometric order and precision are even more prominent. By building the selected colours and compositions layer by layer with architectural meticulousness, these artists aim for maximum visual pleasure and can be considered the cornerstone of order and planning techniques.

Simplification and at the same time the necessity to simplify all other elements of his painting, apart from its essence, form the basis of **Armén Rotch's** work. For the artist, life is an endless repetition and movement itself must be included in this repetition in his works. He offers the viewer the opportunity to examine ordinary and simple things in a different way with his planned compositions in which he brings together these regular line clusters formed by repetitive movements that are both always the alike but also never the same, representing the repetitive structure of everyday life. For Rotch, it is important to maintain the depth and vigour of perspective, because only by looking and choosing to see from different perspectives can we realise the realities of the world.

The process of **Mesut Karakış's** artworks is a very delicate, fully planned and arduous process in which the artist rejects conventional painting techniques and engages in a battle of control with the canvas surface, acrylic paint and water. This sophisticated and original new technique, which the artist developed on his own without using a brush, oscillates between constructiveness and destructiveness, consisting of two basic stages: The first stage (construction), which involves plastering 70-80 layers of acrylic paint of different colours on the surface of the canvas, one new layer per day, in the correct sequence, according to a predetermined colour palette; and the second stage (destruction), in which the canvas surface, saturated with layers of colours according to the composition he has designed, is scraped with water and sandpaper, gradually revealing the lower layers and giving a brand new look and impression by transferring the different colours to the surface. The depth and textural values observed from a distance, combined with the flat and smooth surface of the canvas in tactile proximity, creates a complete illusion effect on the viewer. During the painting process, the artist has to calculate time, ambient temperature and humidity, and many environmental influences on the painting, just like a colour scientist, and it takes an average of 3-4 months to complete a painting. For Karakış, who is highly influenced by the great order, integrity and absolute harmony that repeats in nature, the important artistic elements are forms and colours. Focusing on the inner structure of the painting while planning the composition and aiming to create a maximum aesthetic and visual effect that involves the viewer. The artist's paintings are characterised by natural patterns, organic distortions, lyrical expressions, geometric grids and dynamic matrices of lines, complex textures and vibrant colours. These are paintings in which the pictorial style is more dominant, and the psycho-visual effect is concentrated on colour.

In the works of **Tigran Sahakyan**, who adopts a monochromatic approach in almost all of his paintings, the canvas surface turns into a conversation and a unique experiment/playground for the artist. The "paint" and "brush" we are accustomed to from traditional/classical painting are out of circulation. The material undergoes a change; metal, fabric, mortar, sometimes found materials enter into the work and careful manual interventions change the entire content of the work. These unconventional works that emphasise the material are very open to randomness. Even if the artist has a preliminary idea of the composition, the final form of the image takes shape only at the end of this

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production process. Even though the artist seems to have finished the work, as the different materials on the canvas surface fuse over time and the material dries, the work continues to change and transform, new colours emerge, and cracks appear in places. This is exactly what the artist desires. The materials used emphasise their former unprocessed material state, and this process gradually spreads to the surface as well as to the structure of the painting's exterior and content. The works appear as target-images in which the dominant component fills the centre of the picture. The colour scale ranges from rich and sharp tones to monochrome. The outline of Sahakian's art is gradually taking shape, as the vibrancy it exudes can attest. Although Tigran Sahakyan's art seems to have turned its back on the contemporary viewer, his works have gained a recognisable character thanks to the formal and pictorial transformations he has created. These structures of colour and form create an open aesthetic perspective that is not subject to the constraints of simple formulas.

Figurative Abstractions...

Some of the works in the exhibition blur the line between abstraction and representation, alluding to human figures or landscapes, forcing the viewer to discern familiar shapes within the abstract, creating a powerful dialogue between reality and imagination. **Armen Gevorkian's** series "Memories from a Tailor's Diary" addresses this very point. An abstraction inspired by his father's tailor's shop, where the artist spent his happy childhood years, these works resemble an abstract family painting made up of cut pieces of fabric and textiles, held together with threads. Familiar with the artist's surreal figurative compositions created with his signature technique and distinctive homogeneous characters, this new out-of-the-line series of the artist draws attention as collage-like, calm and thoughtful works with a measured use of colour and light and an originality that is impossible to achieve.

When we look at **Arman Vahanyan's** works, we encounter abstracted, primitive and serene compositions in which the images, although seemingly randomly scattered, are in fact completely controlled and consciously brought together. This inner serenity, which is characteristic of his works, is in fact only modesty. Vahanyan is an artist who deeply feels, observes and assimilates concepts and impressions rather than instantly visualising them. He does not get carried away by sudden emotional states, but tries to find this feeling through a filter of logical analysis. In Vahanyan's art, consciousness and subconscious are in balance. This balance, which requires absolute colour and shade harmony for each part of the surface, gives his works an inner tension and expression. The artist is inspired by Kandinsky's attempts and experiments to transform nature into curves, lines, dots and geometric forms, creating a series of paintings that attempt to render the image in dominant-tonal colours. The depicted forms actually belong to the marginal space of reality and dream imagery. This space is the intersection of the artist's free creativity and deep experiences. Motifs arising from the artist's dreams, sensory and visual experiences are reflected on the surface of the work without further elaboration. It has always been very interesting for the viewer to follow Vahanyan's multi-layered, comprehensive art that requires contemplation and imagination.

When looking to the future, abstract art remains a dynamic and constantly evolving field. As developments in technology, materials and global connections continue to inspire new approaches and interpretations, today's artists are influenced not only by their predecessors but also by a wider range of cultural and personal experiences, ensuring that abstract art remains a vibrant and contemporary form of expression.

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We invite you to immerse yourself in the exhibition titled “Abstract Matter”, where the idea and emotion are embodied through the transfer of thought and emotion onto the surface of the canvas, and to discover the rich history and diverse present of abstract art. Let each work speak to you, provoke thought and evoke emotion as you journey through the limitless possibilities of abstraction.

Online Catalogue:

https://www.galeri77.com/dosyalar/galeri77_abstract_matter_catalogue.pdf

For further info;

Bugra Uzuncelebi / Galeri 77

+90 533 315 2735

istanbulbuzz@gmail.com

www.galeri77.com

ABSTRACT MATTER

Armen Gevorkian, Hamlet Hovsepien, Mesut Karakış, Armén Rotch, Kirkor Sahakoğlu, Tigran Sahakyan, Arman Vahanyan

July 4 – August 3, 2024

Visiting Hours: Monday to Saturday, 10.00-18.00

GALERİ 77

Hacımimi Mah. Necatibey Cad. Sakızcılar Sok. No:1/E

Karaköy 34425 Beyoğlu, İstanbul, Turkey

T: +90 212 251 27 54

www.galeri77.com | info@galeri77.com

ARTWORK VISUALS LIST:

- 1- Armen Gevorkian, *Memories from a Tailor's Diary N1*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 114x146 cm
- 2- Armen Gevorkian, *Memories from a Tailor's Diary N2*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 114x146 cm
- 3- Hamlet Hovsepien, *HH-66*, 2011, Mixed media (oil, aluminium, bronze) on canvas, 90x90 cm
- 4- Hamlet Hovsepien, *TO-25*, 2013, Mixed media (oil, aluminium, bronze) on canvas, 105x107 cm
- 5- Mesut Karakış, *Untitled*, 2023, Acrylic on canvas, 120x170 cm
- 6- Mesut Karakış, *Untitled*, 2024, Acrylic on canvas, 110x140 cm
- 7- Armén Rotch, *Untitled*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 150x150 cm
- 8- Armén Rotch, *Untitled*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 150x150 cm
- 9- Kirkor Sahakoğlu, *Untitled*, 2024, Mixed media on canvas, 146x146 cm
- 10- Kirkor Sahakoğlu, *Untitled*, 2022, Mixed media on canvas, 150x150 cm
- 11- Tigran Sahakyan, *Untitled*, 2013, Mixed media on canvas, 80x100 cm
- 12- Tigran Sahakyan, *Untitled*, 2011, Mixed media on canvas, 80x100 cm
- 13- Arman Vahanyan, *Untitled*, 2016, Oil on canvas, 110x150 cm
- 14- Arman Vahanyan, *Untitled*, 2016, Oil on canvas, 110x150 cm