

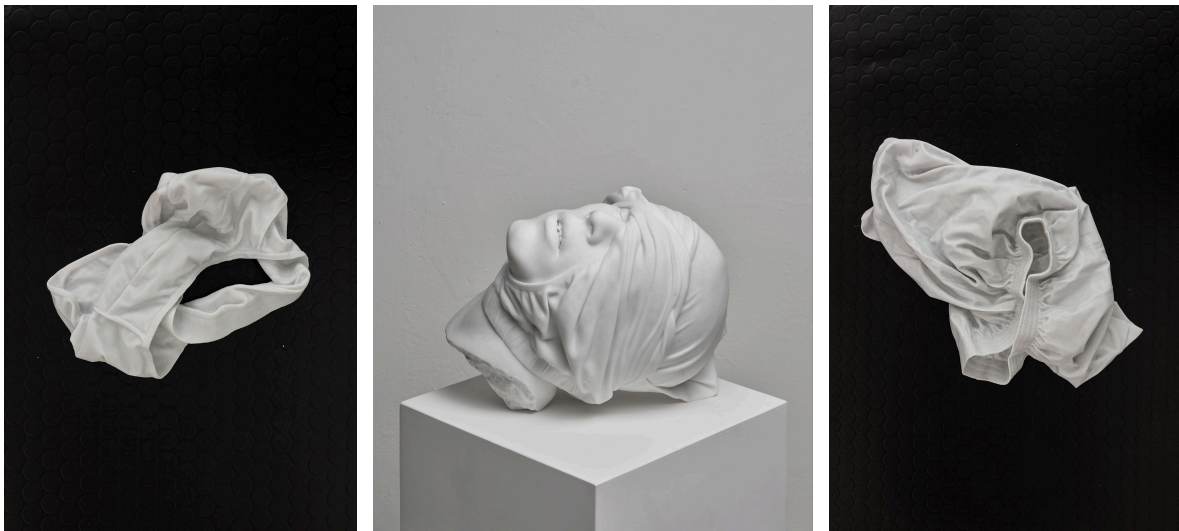
MUNTREF

MUSEO DE LA
UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
DE TRES DE FEBRERO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reza Aramesh: *NUMBER 207*

Curated by Serubiri Moses on the occasion of the 60th Venice Biennale, the work of Reza Aramesh exposes the use of power and brutality in a crucial reckoning with European art history and the human condition.



From left to right: Reza Aramesh, “Action 347: PNP Custodial Center, 16 January 1999, Progression #100” 2023.¹ “Action 241: Study of the Head as Cultural Artefacts” 2023.² “Action 364: Yarze Prison, 27 March 2005, Progression #117” 2023.³ All images courtesy of Reza Aramesh Studio. See endnotes for full image details.

March 25, 2024 (Venice, Italy) - MUNTREF, Buenos Aires announces the solo exhibition ***NUMBER 207*** by **Reza Aramesh** at Chiesa di San Fantin, presented with support from the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (ICA Miami). The New York-based curator **Serubiri Moses** will present the works of Iranian-born, British artist Aramesh in his first solo presentation in Venice. Aramesh was previously included in the Iranian pavilion of the 56th Venice Biennale. Coinciding with the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia curated by Adriano Pedrosa, *Foreigners Everywhere*, this exhibition was made possible in collaboration with the Diocese Patriarcato di Venezia, Dastan Art Gallery, and Stjarna.art. *NUMBER 207* will be on view from April 16 – October 2, 2024, with a Press Preview held on April 16th at 2pm. For more information, please visit www.number207venice.com.

NUMBER 207 will present three groups of ongoing sculptural series created specifically in conversation with the architectural setting of Chiesa di San Fantin. The focal point of the installation, titled *Study of Sweatcloth*, contains 207 life-sized, discarded men's underwear carved from Carrara marble and dispersed in formation across the floor of the church. Stripped of the body, the humble undergarment represents the prisoner's last material shred of dignity and bodily autonomy as a testament to their personhood and as a signifier of its subsequent loss. In highlighting the gradual absence of the body, the discarded underwear effectively draw attention to the body as a political site for acts of violence and subjugation. Carving them in marble – a medium typically reserved for subjects of veneration or power – Aramesh imparts a sense of material permanence and integrity upon invisible lives lost to modern acts of war and terror, transforming the appearance of these historical subjects into sculptural forms based on European art history and its hegemony of beauty in the service of power.

Each work by Aramesh references archival, war reportage imagery from the mid-20th century to the present; the exhibition's curation and installation respond to the history of the site itself as the home of the Order of San Fantin, a post-medieval ecclesiastical order that housed and ministered to the condemned as they awaited execution. The specificity of the artist's modern source imagery is rendered universal by the overwhelming reality of war and conflict as an enduring facet of the human condition. In *NUMBER 207*, Chiesa di San Fantin's own centuries-long historical context of punishment and reformation meets Aramesh's imagery of present-day captives and their torture in a compelling appeal to humanity and its precarious balance between empathy and cruelty.



Left: Artist Reza Aramesh, photographed by Thierry Bal.
Right: Curator Serubiri Moses, photographed by Marissa Alper.

Says **curator Serubiri Moses**: *We are looking forward to presenting the works of Reza Aramesh, whose exhibition NUMBER 207 positions the artist's new body of marble sculptures – based on the accumulation of "Actions" – in a dialogue with the exhibition site, the Chiesa di San Fantin in San Marco founded in the 10th century with building renovations in the 15th*

century, and its medieval ecclesiastical architecture. We are also interested in the fact that the Order of San Fantin comforted the condemned before their execution, which has a contemporary relevance to Aramesh's body of sculptures and previous photographic works.

Says **artist Reza Aramesh**: *The works presented at the Chiesa di San Fantin are from several ongoing series that I have chosen to call "Actions", since 2002. My aim for this exhibition is to invite a conversation between the existing structure of the church and what it represents, to reveal new and unexpected pairings with my work. Since the beginning of my practice over twenty years ago, I have focused on reportage imagery, mostly drawn from conflicts around the world and to transform them into sculptural shapes depicted through Western European art history. The figures that I conjure speak of powerlessness, and I am interested in how an audience may reflect on this condition when they have a choice to decide if their views could be cruel or empathetic.*

The Order of San Fantin operated within Chiesa di San Fantin in the post-medieval period. As was commonly practiced during that time, executions were carried out in the Christian and colonial societies. Prior to taking the condemned to their execution, which historians inform us existed at several points in Venice, the Order of San Fantin comforted the condemned and housed them within the church. From post-medieval accounts, the Order wore black robes and their appearance was somber. This historical context provides much relevance and resonance with Reza Aramesh's sculptures which deal with the brutality of the human condition.

NUMBER 207 will be accompanied by two publications – an exhibition catalogue and curatorial essay by Serubiri Moses, and a catalogue raisonné entitled "ACTION: BY NUMBER", published by SKIRA Editore, and edited by Serubiri Moses with contributions from Mitra Abbaspour, Geraldine A. Johnson, Julia Friedman, and Storm Janse van Rensburg. "ACTION: BY NUMBER" will be distributed in the United States, Canada, Central and South America by ARTBOOK | D.A.P. and distributed elsewhere in the world by Thames and Hudson Ltd.

About Reza Aramesh

Reza Aramesh was born in Iran and is based in London and New York. He holds a Masters degree in Fine Arts from Goldsmiths University, London. His work has been exhibited in both solo and group exhibitions such as the 14 Bienal de la Habana, Asia Society Museum, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Breuer, New York, SCAD Museum, Atlanta, Georgia, Akademie der Kunste Berlin, the 56th Venice Biennale, Art Basel Parcours, Frieze Sculpture Park, London, Sculpture in the City, London, Armory Show Off-Site at Collect Pond Park, New York and at Maxxi Museum, Rome, among others. Aramesh has orchestrated a number of performances and situations in such spaces as The Barbican Centre, Tate Britain, and ICA, London. His works have entered public and private collections worldwide including Argentina, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, USA, Belgium, Israel, France, Iran, Lebanon, Italy, and the U.K.

Working in sculpture, drawing, embroidery, ceramics, video, and performance in a succession of 'Actions', Reza Aramesh draws inspiration from media coverage of international conflicts dating from the mid-20th century until present day. This coverage is then transformed into sculptural volumes in collaboration with non-professional models, who help him reenact his chosen source materials. No direct signs of war remain in the physical end results and the characters seem driven out of their initial contexts. The opposition between beauty and brutality allows the artist to unveil the absurdity and the futility of these actions. Aramesh de-contextualizes these scenes of violence from their origins, exploring the narratives of representation and iconography of the subjected male body in the context of race, class, and sexuality, in order to create a critical conversation with the Western art historical canon.

About Serubiri Moses

Serubiri Moses is an author and curator based in New York City. He is the author of several book chapters translated into five languages, and is the editor of *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World* (Valiz, 2021). He currently serves as faculty in Art History at Hunter College, CUNY. He previously held teaching positions at New York University, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, and the New Centre for Research and Practice, Dark Study, and Digital Earth Fellowship. As a curator, he has organized exhibitions at museums including MoMA PS1, Long Island City; Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; and the Hessel Museum, Bard College, NY. He serves on the editorial team of e-flux journal.

About MUNTREF

The MUNTREF opened its doors to the public in 2002 with the aim of building an open space for the arts and community service. Arte para Todos, Art for All, is the motto from which a vast program of activities aimed at different audiences is displayed, with particular attention to the educational program for schools.

The museum is a bridge ensuring the flow of social information related to research on art and artists from Argentina, Latin America and also those referring to the modern and contemporary international movement. For this reason, it also functions as a meeting, development and experimentation space to different areas of the university: Art and Culture Management, Electronic Arts, Sound Engineering, History and the Master in Visual Arts Curatorship, among others.

In addition to the great masters of modern Argentine and international art exhibitions which MUNTREF has been offering for years at its original headquarters of Caseros, a complex web of support and diversity of expressions of the most representative of contemporary art is added from its five venues: MUNTREF Museum of Visual Arts, Center for Contemporary Art, Museum of Immigration, MUNTREF Center for Art and Science and MUNTREF Center for Art and Nature.

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For Editors

Exhibition Title: *NUMBER 207*

Artist: Reza Aramesh

Curator: Serubiri Moses

Presenting Institution: MUNTREF, Buenos Aires

Supporting Institution: ICA Miami

Supporting Curator: Donna Honarpisheh, ICA Miami Associate Curator, Knight Foundation Art + Research Center

Location: Chiesa di San Fantin, San Marco 3090, Calle dei Orbi, 30124, Venice, Italy

Exhibition Dates: April 16 – October 2, 2024

Exhibition Opening Hours: Mon – 10 am - 6 pm, Tue – Closed, Wed-Sun – 10 am - 6 pm

Press Preview: April 16, 2024, 2 pm - 7 pm

Publication: *NUMBER 207* will be accompanied by two publications:

- “NUMBER 207”, a 52-page exhibition catalogue and curatorial essay by Serubiri Moses, with a full illustrated checklist.
- “ACTION: BY NUMBER”, a 256-page definitive monograph of the artist’s practice containing his catalogue raisonné, published by SKIRA Editore, and edited by Serubiri Moses with contributions from Mitra Abbaspour, Geraldine A. Johnson, Julia Friedman, and Storm Janse van Rensburg. “ACTION: BY NUMBER” (ISBN: 978-88-572-5256-8) will be distributed in the United States, Canada, Central and South America by ARTBOOK | D.A.P. and distributed elsewhere in the world by Thames and Hudson Ltd.

Image Details:

¹ Reza Aramesh, “Action 347: PNP Custodial Center, 16 January 1999, Progression #100” 2023. Hand carved and polished Bianco Michelangelo marble, 31 x 22 x 8 cm. Photograph by Manuel Carreon Lopez.

² Reza Aramesh, “Action 241: Study of the Head as Cultural Artefacts” 2023. Hand carved and polished Bianco Michelangelo marble, 32 x 40.8 x 31.2 cm. Edition 1 of 3 + AP. Photograph by Laura Veschi.

³ Reza Aramesh, “Action 364: Yarze Prison, 27 March 2005, Progression #117” 2023. Hand carved and polished Bianco Michelangelo marble, 50 x 35 x 8 cm. Photograph by Manuel Carreon Lopez.