

secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien
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Press release

Nairy Baghramian

Breath Holding Spell

November 20, 2021 – January 23, 2022

Hauptraum

Preview for the press: Friday, November 19, 2021, 11 a.m.

Opening: Friday, November 19, 2021, 7 p.m.

Solo exhibitions at prestigious institutions all over the world and acquisitions of her works by numerous public and private collections have established Nairy Baghramian as one of the foremost sculptors of her generation. In works that typically takes the (fragmented) human body as its point of departure, she grapples with the fundamental questions of art-making: with the interrelations between production and reception, between picture and frame, between object and pedestal, for example, but also with the use of materials and how the work interacts with the everyday. In site-responsive installations, sculptures that appear fragile, obviously in need of support, drawings, and photographic works, she takes a stand against the conventional pose of self-confidence, the dominant creative gesture, and its claim to perpetual validity. Her formal idiom, choice of materials, and approach have as much in common with post-minimalism as with conceptual art; the artist harnesses the potential of abstraction to address complex sets of questions and frame a suitable response in terms of aesthetic form, forging what she herself has described as “ambivalent abstraction.” Baghramian’s interventions and sculptures always grow out of an engagement with the architecture, history, social, and institutional context of the exhibition site, though without becoming dependent on it. Gingerly advancing from the periphery, from passages or corridors, toward the center, her works characteristically inscribe themselves in their environment or mark a particular point in it rather than dominating the space.

Her creations for interior as well as exterior settings often consist of multiple elements and disparate materials such as aluminum, glass, pigmented wax, marble, porcelain, cork, polyurethane, and epoxy resin. Organic shapes that are densely packed or imbricated, that buttress, support, or lean on one another, subtly yet unmistakably evince their reliance on one another. Props and clamps resembling prostheses further underscore the objects’ correlation or interdependence; no effort is made to camouflage ostensible defects in the works: “My sculptures are supposed to help articulate the doubt concerning their viability.” This stance

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lays her works open to challenge and assault, while the auxiliary constructions also suggest their conceptual temporariness and alterability.

Sculptures by Nairy Baghramian were on view in the Secession's main hall as recently as 2018: two works from her series *Scruff of the Neck* (2016), which invite associations with dentures, were prominently featured by the entrance as part of the visiting curator Anthony Huberman's group exhibition *Other Mechanisms*. In her solo exhibition in the same space, the artist now presents an installation that responds to the specific qualities of the setting, combining sculptures from her series *Dwindlers* and *Breath Holding Spells*, from which the exhibition also takes its title. As though in a drawing in the space, the arrangement of the sculptures echoes the shape of the room and emphasizes its axes; at the same time, the composition strikes one as a circulatory system that would ordinarily be at work behind the scenes, its pipes now exposed, though only in selected spots. The conduits have begun to sprung leaks, and are manifestly dysfunctional; here and there, agglutinations threaten to obstruct the flow. Running parallel to the floor at knee-height and mounted both vertically and horizontally on the walls, the *Dwindlers* might be aging and porous veins, gutter pipes, or ventilation ducts. Their fragility and the materials chosen for the sculptures as well as the title convey an impression of utter vulnerability. The tubular hollow bodies of unevenly tinted glass and the zinc-plated metal braces holding them together are indeed marked by *Dwindling*—shrinking, depletion, evanescence. Meanwhile, the *Breath Holding Spells* in the title of the other series of sculptures, whose shapes resemble those of relief valves, could be precipitated by a tantrum, a sudden rage, or a seizure: someone needs to let off some steam. All in all, we are confronted with a system that is evidently in precarious condition.

Deep Furrow, a new multipart wall work made of aluminum and wax held by chromed steel tubes, is no less equivocal and enigmatic than the *Dwindlers*. It, too, might refer to the institutional infrastructure. At the same time, it constitutes what appears to be an abstract sculptural counterweight to *Tight Sluice*, a photographic work that shows a partial view of a group of bodies jammed together. Variations on this motif also serve as the material for the artist's book published in conjunction with the exhibition.

Such photographs integrated into the work are a signature feature of Baghramian's art. Like the artist's book, the installation includes one: *The Pincher*, a picture of an abstracted tool that is formed by loosely arranged, dark glossy plastic parts, like an archaeological find. This depiction—or intimation—of a pair of pliers that might be used to avert an imminent disaster with a deft cut might well be an indication that we ought to question the functionality of an extant (decrepit?) system and subject its mechanisms to critical scrutiny.

Nairy Baghramian was born in Isfahan in 1971 and lives and works in Berlin.

Curator: Jeanette Pacher

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Artist's book***Nairy Baghramian. Breath Holding Spell***

Format: 30.4 x 30.4 cm

Details: softcover, 16 pages

Concept and visuals: Nairy Baghramian

Secession 2021

Distribution: Revolver Publishing

EUR 30,00

Each copy is signed.

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Exhibitions

Hauptraum

Nairy Baghramian: *Breath Holding Spell*

November 20, 2021 – January 23, 2022

Galerie

Sarah Rapson: *Ode To Psyche*

November 20, 2021 – January 23, 2022

Grafisches Kabinett

Nora Turato: *ri-mEm-buhr THuh mUHn-ee*

November 20, 2021 – January 23, 2022

Artists' books

Nairy Baghramian. Breath Holding Spell, softcover, 16 pages,
each copy is signed, € 30,00

Sarah Rapson, matchbook, 3 different motifs,
edition of 2.500 each, € 4,50

Nora Turato. Fetch Games, poster, format A0, silkscreen print, edition of 150,
numbered and signed, € 150,00

Permanent presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

Beethoven – Painting and Music in cooperation with
Wiener Symphoniker

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Admission

Adults € 9,50; Pupils, students and senior citizens € 6,-

Press contact Secession

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Press images

download at <https://www.secession.at/en/presstype/aktuell/>

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Biografie / Biography Nairy Baghramian

Nairy Baghramian geboren / born 1971 in Iran ist eine bildende Künstlerin / is a visual artist, lebt und arbeitet / living and working in Berlin seit / since 1984.

Einzelausstellungen (Auswahl) / Solo exhibitions (selection)

GAM, Galleria d'arte Moderne, Milan (2021), MUDAM, Luxembourg (2019); Festival d'Automne á Paris at École des Beaux-Arts (2018); Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid (2018); SMK, Copenhagen (2017); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2016); S.M.A.K, Ghent (2016); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2015); Museo Serralves, Porto (2014); the Art Institute of Chicago (2014); Serpentine Gallery with Phyllida Barlow (2010); Studio Voltaire London (2009); Kunsthalle Basel (2006). Baghramian also participated at Venice Biennale (2019 and 2011); Yorkshire Sculpture International (2019); Documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens (2017), Skulptur Project Muenster (2017 and 2007); Lyon Biennale (2017); Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art, Scotland (2012); and the Berlin Biennale, Germany (2014 and 2008).

Kommende Einzelausstellungen / Upcoming solo exhibitions of Nairy Baghramian include Secession, Vienna AT, 2021, Carré d'Art, Nîmes, France, April 2022; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, US, 2022.

Preise und Auszeichnungen (Auswahl) / Prizes and awards (selection)

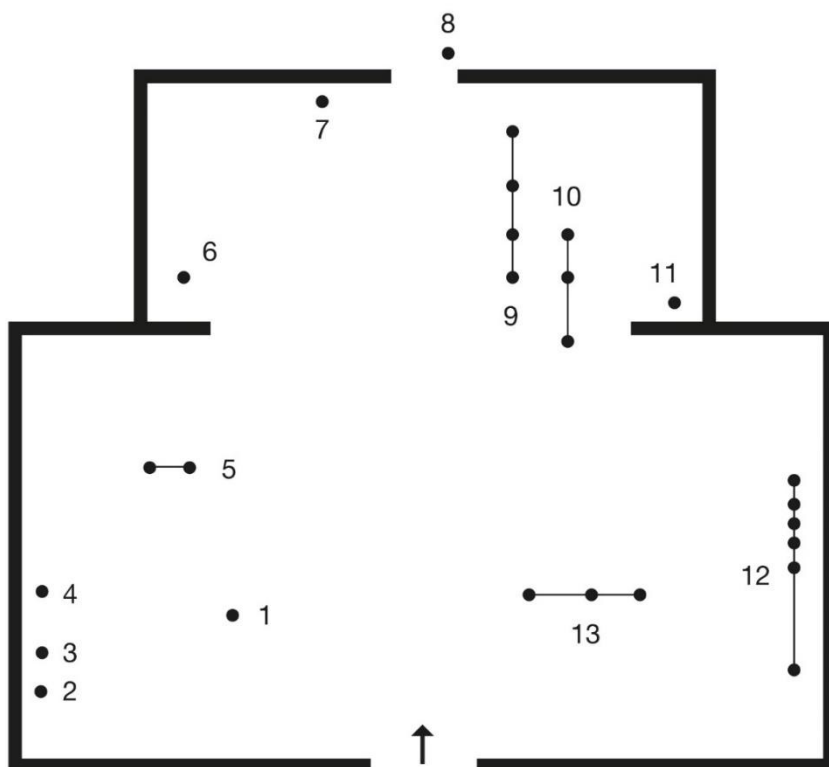
Baghramian wurde für den Hugo-Boss-Preis nominiert / Baghramian was a nominee of the Hugo Boss Prize 2020 und wurde zusammen mit Maria Hassabi mit dem Malcolm-McLaren-Award ausgezeichnet (2019), / and has been the recipient of the Malcolm-McLaren-Award with Maria Hassabi (2019), the Zurich Art Prize (2016); the Arnold-Bode Prize, Kassel (2014); the Hector Prize, Kunsthalle Mannheim (2012); and the Ernst Schering Foundation Award (2007).

Öffentliche Sammlungen (Auswahl) / Public collections (selection)

Museum of Modern Art, NY; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Solomon Guggenheim Collection, NY; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Tate Modern, London; MUDAM Luxembourg; Tamayo Museum Mexico City; Jumex Museum Mexico City; Nasher Art Center, Dallas; Art Institute Chicago.

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|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | <i>Breath Holding Spell</i> , 2018
Pulverbeschichteter Aluminiumguß /
Cast and powder coated aluminium | 8 | <i>Breathing Spell</i> , 2017
Pulverbeschichteter Aluminiumguß /
Cast and powder coated aluminium |
| 2 | <i>Dwindler_Pallor</i> , 2018 | 9 | <i>Dwindler_Prone_curve</i> , 2018
<i>Dwindler_Prone_down</i> , 2018
<i>Dwindler_Prone_up</i> , 2018 |
| 3 | <i>Dwindler_Rear tilt_down</i> , 2018 (oben / top)
<i>Dwindler_Rear tilt_up</i> , 2018 (unten / below) | 10 | <i>Dwindler_Verge</i> , 2018
<i>Dwindler</i> , 2018 |
| 4 | <i>Dwindler_Gust</i> , 2018 | 11 | <i>Dwindler_Overflow</i> , 2018 |
| 5 | <i>Dwindler_Languor</i> , 2018 (oben / top)
<i>Dwindler_Gush out</i> , 2018 (unten / below) | 12 | <i>Deep Furrow</i> , 2021
Aluminiumguß, Wachs, Stahl verchromt /
Casted aluminium, wax, chromed steel |
| 6 | <i>Dwindler_Drizzle</i> , 2021 | 13 | <i>Dwindler_Downdraft_down</i> , 2018 (oben / top)
<i>Dwindler_Downdraft_floor</i> , 2018 (unten / below) |
| 7 | <i>The Pincher</i> , 2017
C-Print, von der Künstlerin gerahmt /
C-print in artist frame | | |

Alle *Dwindlers*: Glas, verzinktes Metall, gefärbter Epoxyharz /
glass, zinc coated metal, coloured epoxy resin

Alle Arbeiten Courtesy der Künstlerin und / All works Courtesy the artist and
Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris, London; kurimanzutto, Mexico City, New York