

CARBON 12, DUBAI

# REVIEW: CLOSER ENCOUNTERS

This 'summer accrochage' (June 15 – August 8) is devoted to works by the gallery's artists that had 'short playing time over the season.' New images by Iranian painter Farzan Sadjadi caught Christopher Lord's eye

When we think of Farzan Sadjadi, a firm fixture on Carbon 12's stable, and the world he conjures through his canvases, the mood is one of absolute heaviness. Under caustic electric lights, Sadjadi has previously painted muddy battlefields ornamented by carcasses, bloated donkeys and gladiatorial golems locked in a semi-absurd battle. His works seethed in detail, with the canvas weighted down by household paint and big, heavy brushstrokes.

Yet in a number of gnomic new drawings by the artist, part of the gallery's summer show, we see a quieter, more nimble hand at work. Light whips of ink form rugged black landscapes against an unlikely-white background. Rocky outcrops are composed of the loosest evocation of devolving skulls, as if the landscape itself is a fragile mound of bone pitted with cone-shaped trees.

*Closer Encounters* brings together works by Carbon 12's principal artists (save for Sara Rahbar). There's a transitional piece by Bernhard Buhmann showing the artist's progression away from Commedia dell'arte characters towards an intricate and seemingly zoomed-out perspective. Or a pair of works by the Portuguese artist Gil-Heitor Cortesao that show one of the paintings-on-Perspex he's famous for (depicting modernist interiors slowly corrupting) alongside an external drawing of a washed-out swimming pool seen

as if through an encroaching haze.

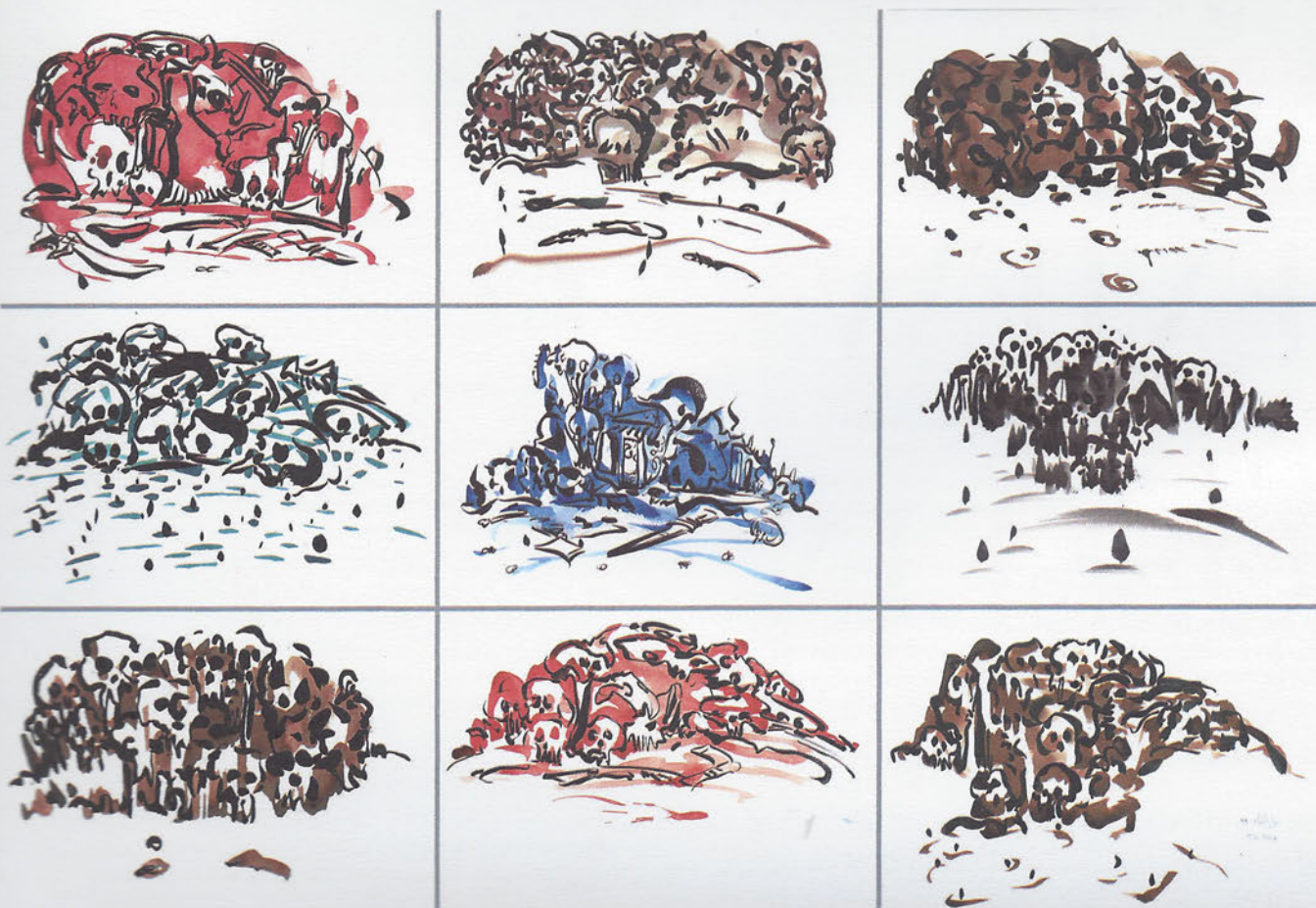
Yet it is Sadjadi and the new levity that he's now confident to exhibit that caught our eye. We're told that these new works have emerged from a prolonged period of artistic absence. They're pleasant for their simplicity, as if the artist has looked for a more acute visual manner than the barrage of paint that characterised earlier bodies of work.

Sadjadi's nine cave-like constructs are festooned with the lightest flourishes of watery, colourful ink, which bind the forms together and yet heighten their transitory feeling – like a misty, deathly vision glimpsed momentarily before it vanishes into the landscape.

Accompanying these is a quadriptych that is a little more familiar in tone for the artist: A lumbering figure smashes bones and skulls on a sandy hill. Yet, again, things are muted and clearer here. The lines are simpler and the image appears somehow less laboured as a result. Sadjadi's landscapes are stronger but, still, it's good to see him turning this fresh, stripped-down perspective to older themes and demonstrating the extent of change since he last exhibited.

These works feel like the beginning of a series that's still in formation, but we're looking forward to seeing what this still-young, still-working and still-intriguing artist has up his sleeve.

Until August 8. [carbon12dubai.com](http://carbon12dubai.com)



'Untitled', 2014, by Farzan Sadjadi. Courtesy of the artist and Carbon 12