



Crafting in a Time of Crisis

WORDS – ANEESHA RAI

Photography courtesy to Carbon 12 Gallery

Left page – A Man, Burning #2, Oil on canvas (2023); **This page** – Head of Div #11, patinated bronze and wood (2024); Figure of Div #5, Oil on canvas (2024)



Amir Khojasteh's work strikes a chord, with a raw and emotional take manifested at his latest exhibition

During the tumultuous times of an Iranian uprising, artist Amir Khojasteh retreated to his studio, seeking refuge and understanding. "Something had been unveiled," he reflects. In this time of chaos, Khojasteh persisted, meticulously crafting sculptures of *divs* – powerful and malevolent entities of Persian mythology that possess various magical abilities. Through their creation, he conquers both physical and metaphorical demons, immortalising his victory and showcasing his deep commitment to craftsmanship. The bronze used in the pieces lends a lustrous surface that interacts dynamically with light, creating a mesmerising visual dance.

Khojasteh's paintings resonate with the spontaneity and texture of monotype prints. Intricate white lines, slots or scars infuse the compositions with added vitality. Drawing from art history, life-sized mythical creatures emerge from these curved canvases. The dome form, reminiscent of Qajar-era paintings, accentuates the primal essence and vibrant presence of these *divs*.

"Living in a burning house" becomes an enduring metaphor. Each painting can be interpreted as a self-portrait or commentary on surreal circumstances. Amidst the haze of ongoing chaos, Khojasteh finds humour in his work, leaving the observer with a paradox of feelings. *Running until 28 May at Carbon 12 Gallery*

