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DEMONS AND D-ARTBOARDS - MALEKEH NAYINY AND FEREYDOUN AVE
Rossi & Rossi in association with Janet Rady present the work of two Iranian artists

Demons and D-Artboards features the work of two contemporary Iranian artists, **Malekeh Nayiny** and **Fereydoun Ave**. The exhibition, showing at Rossi & Rossi in association with Janet Rady Fine Art at 16 Clifford Street, London W1, from **Wednesday 1 to Saturday 25 April 2009**, comprises a series of nine digitally manipulated photographs of Persian demons, humorously depicted by **Nayiny**, and nine dartboards complete with darts, transformed by **Ave** into Tibetan prayer wheels.

Whilst both artists have previously participated in major exhibitions in London – Nayiny at the British Museum's *Word into Art*, 2006, and Ave in the Barbican Gallery's *Iranian Contemporary Art*, 2001 – this joint show is the first time the two have appeared together in a commercial gallery in the capital. Living respectively in Paris and Tehran/Paris, Nayiny and Ave have well established careers and have shown extensively internationally. This exhibition at Rossi & Rossi is particularly apposite given the growing interest in contemporary Middle Eastern art, as witnessed by the current Saatchi Gallery exhibition *Unveiled: New Art from the Middle East* on view until 9 May.

Malekeh Nayiny was born in Tehran in 1955 and, having left Iran in the early 1970s, obtained a BA in Fine Arts and Photography from Syracuse University in 1978, followed by Advanced Photography at the International Center of Photography in New York, 1980-82. Nayiny has taken part in touring exhibitions, including *La Photographie entre Histoire et Poésie – photographie de la collection FNAC*, in France, Italy and Spain, 2004-5; and *Détournements de l'Intime* in France, Spain, Portugal and Russia, 2001-5. More recently, her current work appeared in 2008 in l'Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton's Paris exhibition *Orients Sans Frontières* and is due to be published later this year by Rizzoli in *Louis Vuitton: Art, Architecture and Fashion*. Nayiny's last show was at the XVA Gallery in February 2009 in Dubai where she presented her *S.O.S. Gandhiji* work.

Fereydoun Ave was born in Tehran in 1945 and completed his primary and secondary education in England. With a career grounded in the theatre and film world, he gained a BA in Theatre Arts from Arizona State University in 1969 and studied film at New York University in 1969-70. Prior to the Iranian Revolution, he worked as a stage and graphic designer at the Iran American Society, Tehran; was Resident designer for the National Theatre, Tehran, and advisor to the National Iranian Television and the Shiraz Arts Festival. In 1974-79 he was acting artistic director of the Zand Gallery in Tehran and after the Revolution in the 1980s, he opened his own gallery space, Ave Gallery in North Tehran, which he continues to run to this day. Ave's work is represented in various collections in the USA including that of his friend and mentor, the Cy Twombly Foundation; the Contemporary Art Museum, Tehran; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and Lloyds Bank, Geneva.

Linking the work of the two artists is the theme of one's inner and outer demons and man's need to come to terms with or to repel them, by way of re-connecting with his spirituality. Inspired by illustrations of harmless spotted *divs* from the Persian poet Ferdowsi's epic *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), **Nayiny's** demons are depicted as rather ordinary men and

women in a number of imaginary domestic settings or superimposed on advertising hoardings. These are at the same time kind but sinister figures, sporting large pink or black papier mâché heads with large horns, bulging eyes, exaggerated eyebrows, black moustaches and red protruding tongues. Some wear clothes covered with motifs of human organs, suggesting the demon originates in our genes, our cultures and customs, thus leaving no room for escape.

Nayiny's playfully vivid imagery evokes the role demons assume in the imagination of a child whilst signalling their transformation in adult life, where they continue to accompany us both internally and externally in a world dominated by superficiality, disillusionment and fear. Nayiny asks 'what next? And you begin to paint and draw, and one by one they appear on the cat-walk in all their finery. Next time you walk in the park, you take one with you'. These are the internal demons which we must learn to live with and it is only by reference to ancient mythology that we can begin to understand them.

Continuing this theme of internal and external demons, but in a Tibetan context, **Ave** has converted each of the nine dartboards into a vibrant Wheel of Life, replete with darts and feathers painted in the colours of Tibetan prayer flags. Wheels of Life are traditionally found at the entrances of Buddhist temples and monasteries, where they are held up to us as a mirror by Yama, the god of death, who sends to human beings the messengers of approaching old-age, sickness and death. Prayer flags are colourful panels or rectangular cloths often found strung along mountain ridges and peaks high in the Himalayas to bless the surrounding countryside and to promote peace, compassion, strength, and wisdom.

However, by the subtle inclusion into the central bullseye of the dartboard of the image of a Chinese dictator, **Ave** has created a tension release game/meditation that takes into consideration the delicacies and spiritual sensitivities of the Tibetans. As Ave notes 'Since aggression is not permitted in Buddhism and only sets up bad Karma but release through prayer is permitted', he has provided a means, through his paradoxical imagery, for players/viewers to release their aggression and tension at the same time as spreading blessings in order to create good Karma.

Exhibition title: *Demons and D-Artboards - Malekeh Nayiny and Fereydoun Ave*
Dates: 1 to 25 April 2009
Venue: Rossi & Rossi Ltd, 16 Clifford Street, London W1S 3RG, UK
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Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 10 am to 5.30 pm, Saturday, 11 am to 4 pm
Price range: 9,000 to 12,000 euros

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