It's been an interesting couple of years for Ali Banisadr. It marks a period that has witnessed a remarkable evolution in his work and one that has sparked much interest and scrutiny. Banisadr's art is known for its Hieronymus Bosch-like scenes of madness, chaotic movement—shift to something almost (almost) calm.

Banisadr's sharp, densely packed canvases are no place for the uninitiated. His paintings are nothing short of enigmas—objects that are hard to pin down and define. The more one tries to focus on any one feature, the less one is able to define it. Come too close, try too hard to get something down and define it, and the lines blur and dissolve before your very eyes, disintegrating into myriad other shapes and forms. “When I paint, I hear a language—and I didn't feel like I could use language as my main tool,” he says. “Instead, I'm finding a certain understanding through visual tools that I could never achieve through words.” Not that words are needed when it comes to reading the political undertones here. Banisadr may not be a ‘political artist’ per se, but his work is of course rooted in the everyday events that surround him. This is where the influence of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin is felt in Banisadr's characters. Inverting social norms, they are freewheeling agents of chaos and dissent, puppets and jokers, theatre players in costume and paint talking to us about the chaos around us.

In these new works, what is most striking is a tension between past and present, discovered Anna Wallace-Thompson

A STAGE

New York-based Iranian artist Ali Banisadr’s first exhibition in Germany, The World Upside Down, at Blain Southern Berlin, marks a maturing and complexity of technique, as well as a sharpened focus on the interplay between macro and micro, body and space, and the links between past and present, discovers Anna Wallace-Thompson

All the World’s a Stage

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