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## ARTIST TURNS THIRD REICH HELMETS INTO PRO DIVERSITY MESSAGE

*In the immediate wake of far-right populists entering German parliament for the first time in 60 years, Manou, dubbed the Banksy of Persia by Le Monde, is in his studio in the south of France getting ready for the London launch of his uncannily-timed exhibition, featuring his **Diversity Not Fascism** German helmet installation.*

For the upcoming exhibition in November, Manou transforms a collection of 18 authentic Third Reich WWII helmets with a bright primary palette, anti-fascist notations, and animated caricatures in a declaration against Fascism's subjugation of diversity.

In a powerful and poignant statement in favor of diversity, the artist throws every colour of the rainbow at the helmets, freely mixing genres and styles that include elements of Pop, Street, and Graffiti art. The bright paint is applied in thick oozing layers that are in some cases interwoven with anti-fascist statements and graffiti.

The artist is very matter-of-fact when it comes to his view of diversity, simply stating, "We need to recognise that the world has moved on. Diversity is inevitable" -- a spot-on statement seeing as the backlash following the announcement of Andrea Merkel's humanitarian refugee policy was the trigger that helped the AfD enter German parliament.

"The aim was never to erase or distract from the historical context that is attached to these helmets. It was to reinforce the message that the dangers of fascism still exist. And that these dangers can be overcome through tolerance, compassion and acceptance. Each one of these helmets has been reborn. Morphing from dark symbols of hate to colourful objects of art reflecting the world we live in today" Manou adds.

"These eighteen helmets emit a heavy vibe. When you put them in a group – it is even more intense. You still feel the historical context but you also feel that time has moved on, that diversity is inevitable" comments Manou. "History has a tendency to repeat itself. How we, as people, react to this tendency is solely based on what, if anything, we have learnt from history" he concludes.

Like Banksy, Manou has a keen eye for the absurd and is able to present it in a way that is equally delightful and provocative. The combination works to draw people together in lively conversation and creates an atmosphere befitting of the artist's personality. In an interview with PBS, (America's Broadcasting Service), the commentator introduced Manou as a character so large, so generous, and so vibrant that people find themselves happy in his company. His enthusiasm is contagious.'

Manou's art has gained global attention in the past five years and he is deemed as one of Iran's leading European based contemporary artists. Recent press has called his work, "a whirlwind of chaotic energy" (Al Arte Magazine, 2015), and "engaging and intriguing, never too sad or too serious" (Huffington Post, 2014).

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Beyond the political timing of *Diversity Not Fascism*, the London launch of this poignant collection follows on the heels of a stunning auction season that saw Iranian modern art peak at Sotheby's, Christies, and Bonham's. Today more than ever, emerging artists from Iran are on every collector's radar.

The most exciting time for the artist's career came in 2013. After several years exhibiting in major cities across Europe, the artist came to the attention of art dealer Nicolas Flamel. He was invited to exhibit at the dealer's Paris gallery, an establishment widely recognized for introducing the region's most exciting emerging talent to a wider audience. Showcasing his work alongside some of Iran's most prominent artists and emerging talent, Manou's collection sold out to great acclaim and the press followed.

From all angles, a solo-exhibition by one of Iran's most exciting emerging talents could not have come at a better time.

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**Diversity Not Fascism premiers in London for 2 days only, 16-17 November 2017:  
GALLERY DIFFERENT, 14 PERCY STREET, FITZROVIA, LONDON W1T 1DR**

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**Viewers will also have an opportunity to see the latest pieces from the artists' sell-out series: 'Persian Pop' & 'Ping Pop'**

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