



ART BRIEF III
THE (UN)DRAPED WOMAN

LETTER FROM FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL

Welcome to **ART BRIEF III**, Advocartsy's third public initiative.

I founded Advocartsy with the mission to elevate awareness of and engagement with Iranian contemporary art. With Los Angeles growing ever-larger both as a multicultural city and as an important hub of the international art scene, I became aware of a disparity between the sheer size of LA's Iranian community – the largest outside of Iran – and the scope of its engagement with the fine arts. While there was no dearth of interesting, provocative art being produced by Iranian artists here, there appeared to be a shortage of proper venues for those artists to showcase their work and connect with their most natural base of collectors, enthusiasts, and supporters. Advocartsy was created to help alleviate this deficit; to help bring both wider and more focused attention to the Iranian contemporary art community within the vibrant Los Angeles art scene.

The **ART BRIEF** Series is intended to create a concentrated opportunity to learn, view, and engage with the arts within a short-run exhibition presenting a wide selection of art by Iranian artists. These exhibitions aim to introduce the featured artists and their work to the sizable Iranian community, as well as to the wider fine arts community in Los Angeles.

Our first public endeavor, **ART BRIEF: Iranian Contemporary Los Angeles** took place in December 2015 and presented works by twelve L.A. based Iranian artists in a celebratory showcase that felt like a homecoming to many. For **ART BRIEF II: Iranian Contemporary North America**, we extended the show's scope to include Iranian artists based throughout North America, and focused on the theme of separation from homeland. **ART BRIEF II** explored the diverse ways that Iranian artists who have moved far away from Iran express their experience with migration, as well as with concepts of cultural, sociological and religious identity. The exhibition invited viewers to in turn explore and connect with their own personal experiences of transition.

Our current show, **ART BRIEF III: THE (UN)DRAPED WOMAN** speaks to the timely and internationally relevant issues surrounding the representation of women. We hope that with the expansive lense adopted in the curation of this exhibition, we can encourage viewers to go beyond pre-conceived perceptions and help engender a new dialogue regarding the image of women in Iran and beyond. We believe that a fresh conversation on the topic is long overdue, and perhaps best approached through the universal language of art.

Roshi Rahnama
ADVOCARTSY, Founder & Principal

LETTER FROM DR. HOMA MAHMOUDI, PHD

It is very exciting for me to continue to follow the uninterrupted progression of Iranian artists and their superb creative renderings. Their art is appreciated and genuinely admired not only by the Iranian community but continues to receive recognition among audiences throughout the world. As each brushstroke moves across the canvases, Iranian artists open before our eyes powerful images laden with social, political, and cultural themes. **ART BRIEF III: THE (UN)DRAPED WOMAN** is yet another powerful exhibit that portrays the power and influence of Iranian art.

This exhibition represents the works of fourteen artists, each with a unique expression, choice of subject, medium, and style of work. The images of Iranian women in this exhibition provoke a range of reactions. They draw us into new spaces that we have not experienced before. They stir our emotions, connect us with the struggles and triumphs of individuals, and challenge us to examine human despair, struggle and controversy.

ART BRIEF III: THE (UN)DRAPED WOMAN offers a fitting opportunity for our Iranian community to engage in discourse and conversations about the continual development and influence of art on society, especially as an instrument of social change. Likewise as a community, we can take great pleasure in the visual appeal of art that includes all of the other forms of artistic expression and their influence on the human spirit, culture, and society.

For most of my life, I have been an active advocate for women's rights and their full access to education and opportunity. The portrayal of Iranian women in all art forms, their oppression and triumph, has over the years captivated my imagination and continues in breathtaking fashion to hold my undivided interest. In this particular exhibition, images and concepts of women in their various forms of covering may perhaps bring about rich conversations about the worldviews and experiences of these women. Such conversations may allow us to consider possibilities of removing certain myths, taboos and stereotypes regarding women. More importantly, we might be able to create an environment in which we all experience and give expression to our sensitive artistic side. The richness of any culture or person can be measured by their degree of awareness, sensitivity, and connection to various forms of art. By supporting our Iranian artists and their unique art, we become more enlightened and gain a greater understanding of the powerful role that art plays in all of our lives.

Dr. Homa Mahmoudi, PhD, is a clinical psychologist and served as the Chief Psychologist at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center Department of Psychiatry for 14 years until May 1998. Dr. Mahmoudi is the founder and Director of Transcultural Communications Center, a consulting and training institute specializing in cultural diversity and former professor at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Medicine.

ART BRIEF III: THE (UN)DRAPED WOMAN

CURATORIAL STATEMENT BY SANDRA WILLIAMS

In the self-portrait triptych by Iranian-born, San Francisco-based artist Shadi Yousefian, we are presented with three representations of the artist. On the left she is dressed as a quintessential “Cali” girl – tank top, strappy sandals and a flower in her hair. On the right, she wears the baggy pants, manteaux, and head scarf typical of a young woman in Iran. Poised between them is her nude depiction, an undraped woman.

The act of undraping carries with it an expectation that once exposed, some truth will be laid bare. Yet here, Yousefian flouts that expectation. Nearly every element of her exposed body is altered: her torso and limbs are replaced with that of a hyper-perfect plastic doll body, her lips and eyes are embellished with black marks, and her brunette hair is painted over with a wan yellow. At her most exposed, Yousefian is also at her most contrived, a state that applies equally to the other two self-portraits. Each version of Yousefian reflects the conventions that societies impose on the female form. Taken together, they call into question the very act of representing women.

The work of Yousefian and the thirteen other artists in this exhibition, who are all of Iranian origin, depict women in various states of cover. Yet as all their works show, external appearances, whether fully exposed or not, are rarely a gateway to comprehending female identity. Instead these artists seek to capture a deeper truth: that identity is ever changing and what is publicly presented is only a partial expression, if that, of each woman (or man’s) true sense of self.

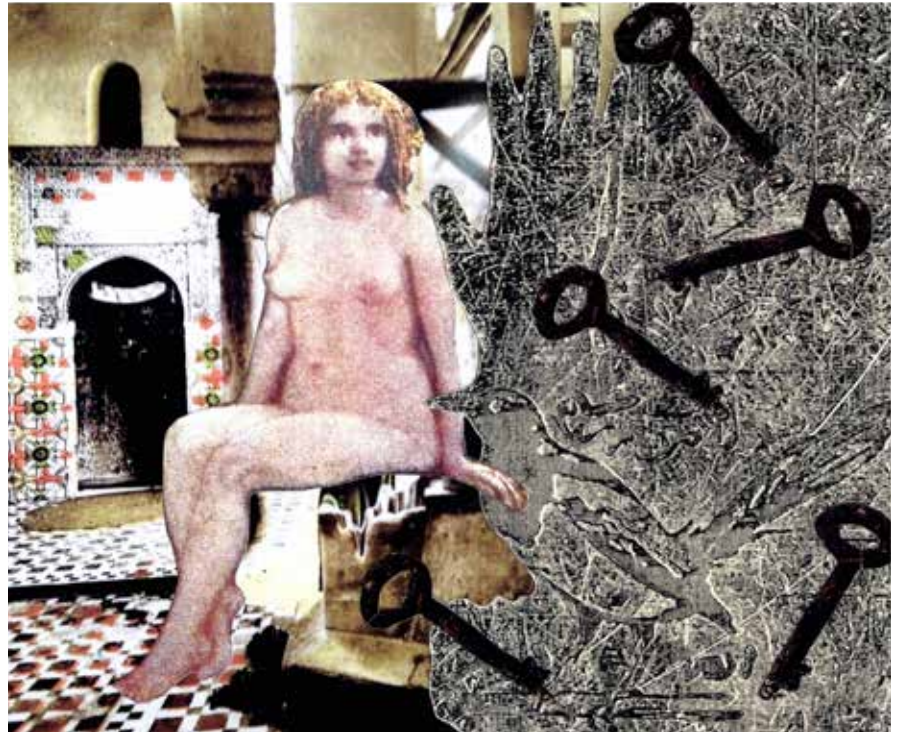
In many of the works, obfuscation becomes a metaphor for this message. In Shadi Ghadirian’s “Be Colorful” series we catch

only glimpses of women in colorful chadors through a dirtied window that divides their private world from our public space. Sepideh Salehi’s “Mohr Portrait” series depicts women turning away and obscuring their faces behind a screen of rubbings from a mohr (a small clay disk used in prayer by Shi’a Muslims). Amir Fallah drapes his subjects in fabric, allowing objects and animals to serve as stand-ins for their identity. Whatever the form, in each case a barrier bars us from seeing the person beneath.

In the video work *Strappa* by Salehi and Kamran Taherimoghaddam, however, we are presented with the destruction of such barriers. In it a group of male musicians is accompanied by several women who add to the melody by shredding long strips of black fabric. While the context is specifically Iranian – the men play tombaks and the cloth is reminiscent of the chador – in the harmonious melody between the drum-playing men and cloth-shredding women we find a more universal message about the possibilities for creating dialogue across external divides.

The work in this exhibition compels us to rethink not only conventions of female identity, but reflect more broadly on what can be effectively gathered from surface appearances. In doing so we might find a deeper means for knowing others.

Sandra Williams is Assistant Curator in the Art of the Middle East Department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. She completed her MA in art history at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, where she worked on nineteenth-century Iranian photography.



AFSOON

works with her own collection of vintage images to create illustrious collages. Through a combination of techniques, Afsoon's rich, and often playful, works reflect the merging of East and West, allowing the audience to find the familiar and foreign.

Left:

Afsoon

From the series Persian Magic, *Jinn - Nails*, 2013
archival print of mixed media collage
on Somerset artist paper, 23.6"x16.5"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY

Right:

Afsoon

From the series Persian Magic, *Jinn - Keys*, 2013
archival print of mixed media collage
on Somerset artist paper, 16.5"x23.6".
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Afsoon

From the series Persian Expressions,
Cats, 2011-2013
 archival print on artist paper, 16.5"x11.8"
 Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Afsoon

From the series Persian Expressions,
Electricity or Oil, 2011-2013
 archival print on artist paper, 16.5"x11.8".
 Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Afsoon

From the series Persian Expressions,
Pomegranate and Quince, 2011-2013
 archival print on artist paper, 16.5"x11.8".
 Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Afsoon

From the series Persian Expressions,
Chador, 2011-2013
 archival print on artist paper, 11.8"x16.5"
 Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



GOHAR DASHTI

mainly addresses social issues with particular references to history and culture through her photographs. Her practice continuously develops from life events and the connection between the personal and the universal, the political and the fantasized.



Gohar Dashti

From the series *Iran, Untitled, Women at Funeral (Portfolio Print)*, 2013
archival digital pigment print, 8.5 x 11.625 inches.
Courtesy of the Artist, Robert Klein Gallery and Azita Bina

Gohar Dashti

From the series *Stateless, Odalisque (Portfolio Print)*
2014 - 2015
archival digital pigment print, 16 x 22.5 inches
Courtesy of the Artist, Robert Klein Gallery and Azita Bina



AMIR H. FALLAH

approaches his paintings as an investigative, analytical historian. He is interested in truthfulness and limitations, and his work grapples with those issues in a way that almost seems backwards: by taking the mistakenly truthful photograph and converting it back into the incontestably subjective medium of painting.

Amir H. Fallah

The Earth Is But One Country (Eastern Bred, Southern Fed), 2013
acrylic, ink, collage, colored pencil and oil on paper mounted on canvas, 48"x72"
Courtesy of the Artist and Shulamit Nazarian Gallery



Firouz Farman-Farmaian

A Woman with Veil in Purple (Study IV), 2016

amazonite pigment, acrylic, digital art layered on archival canvas print, 15"x14"

Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY

FIROUZ FARMAN-FARMAIAN

divides his time between France and Spain. His compositions seek to engage in a dialogue with the past, while possessing a deeply symbolic quality that speaks to a multiplicity of currents in politics, art and philosophy.

SHADI GHADIRIAN

is a photographer residing in Tehran. Ghadirian's work comments and portrays the contradictions between tradition and modernity for women living in Iran and dichotomies present in daily life.



Shadi Ghadirian

Be Colorful, 2002

archival digital pigment print, 35.5 x 23.625 inches

Courtesy of the Artist, Robert Klein Gallery and Azita Bina.



Shadi Ghadirian

Be Colorful, 2002

archival digital pigment print, 35.5 x 23.625 inches

Courtesy of the Artist, Robert Klein Gallery and Azita Bina.

SIMIN KERAMATI

is currently based in Toronto. Keramati is a multidisciplinary artist whose paintings often address themes of identity, diasporic experience and social issues.



Simin Keramati
Sun Glasses, 2009
acrylic on canvas, 59"x59"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY.

Simin Keramati
Hush, 2008
acrylic on canvas, 59"x59"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



FARZAD KOHAN

is a self-taught sculptor and painter. His works explore themes such as love, migration, and identity, and often incorporate appropriated media and found objects through diverse, sometimes opposing, elements.



Farzad Kohan
Untitled, 2016
ink on watercolor paper, 24"x18"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Farzad Kohan
Untitled, 2016
ink on watercolor paper, 24"x18"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Farzad Kohan
Untitled, 2016
ink on watercolor paper, 24"x18"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



TAHMINEH MONZAVI

is a documentary photographer and filmmaker. Her body of work concentrates on social conflicts, contradictions and the young generation of Iran.

Tahmineh Monzavi

Tina, 2010 - 2012

archival digital pigment print, 17.25x25"

Courtesy of the Artist, Robert Klein Gallery and Azita Bina

Tahmineh Monzavi

Tina, 2010 - 2012

archival digital pigment print, 17.25x25"

Courtesy of the Artist, Robert Klein Gallery and Azita Bina



DANA NEHDARAN

studied painting in Iran and recently migrated to New York. Nehdaran's portraits captivatingly capture the nostalgia and historical past, seamlessly connecting the past to contemporary culture.

Dana Nehdaran

A Group of Women During Reza Shah Era, 2017

Iron powder and oil on canvas, 40"x60"

Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Dana Nehdaran
Princess During Qajar Era I, 2017
Iron powder and oil on canvas, 20"x16"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Dana Nehdaran
Princess During Qajar Era II, 2017
Iron powder and oil on canvas, 20"x16"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY

HADI SALEHI

is a master of analog photography who resides in Los Angeles. Salehi's images capture diverse portraits that are nostalgic, powerful and soft, leaving a haunting quality that lingers in the psyche.

Hadi Salehi

East, 2008

layered analog film print, 40"x30"

Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY





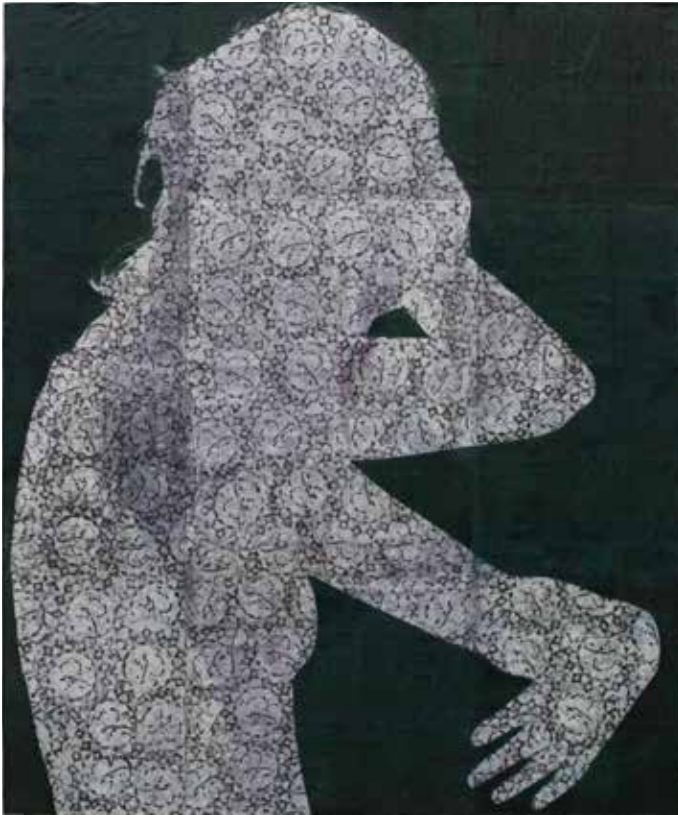
Hadi Salehi
Surrender, 2015
ink jet digital print, 38"x31.5"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Hadi Salehi
Ava Tan, 2008
ink jet digital print, 38"x31.5"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY

SEPIDEH SALEHI

is based in New York City and works in collages, paintings, printing, photography, and video animation. Her works revolve around the poetics of the veil as well as stories from her country of origin.



Sepideh Salehi

Mohr Portrait, 2015

photograph on wood panel with frottage on Japanese paper, 24"x20"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY.



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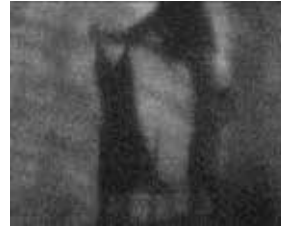
Sepideh Salehi

Mohr Portrait, 2016

photograph on wood panel with
frottage on Japanese paper, 24"x20"
Courtesy of the Artist
and ADVOCARTSY.



Sepideh Salehi, and Kamran Taherimoghaddam
Strappa, 2016
video installation, duration 3' 22"
Courtesy of the Artists and ADVOCARTSY



Sepideh Salehi
Chador, 2005
video installation, duration 4' 12"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



SHILLA SHAKOORI

is a painter whose diverse artistic output springs from an exploration of the synthesis between native and adopted cultures. Shakoori's works are strongly influenced by Iranian philosophy and myth, with strong influences by Rumi.

Shilla Shakoori

Becoming, 2016

mixed media on paper, 31"x54"

Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Shilla Shakoori
The Wings Within, 2016
acrylic on canvas, 24"x18" each panel
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Shilla Shakoori
On the Bench of Memories, 2016
ink and watercolor on paper, 16"x12"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY

KAMRAN TAHERIMOGHADDAM

moved to the United States in 2008. His artistic practice crosses multiple mediums, ranging from painting, drawing, installation and video art, often exploring social and political themes.



Kamran Taherimoghaddam
Makeup Faceless, 2015
oil and acrylic on canvas, 60"x52"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



Kamran Taherimoghaddam
La Statua Perduta, 2013
acrylic on canvas, 20"x16"
Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY



SHADI YOUSEFIAN

is currently based in San Francisco. Yousefian's mixed media work reflects and addresses issues that touch on universal themes such as loss, dislocation, alienation, and reinvention.

Shadi Yousefian

Social Identity, 2003

three photographic prints, hand printed by artist, mounted on wood panels. Each individual piece measures 66"x22"

Courtesy of the Artist and ADVOCARTSY

ADVOCARTSY

A COLLABORATIVE VISUAL ARTS PLATFORM
by Roshi Rahnama