

HADI SALEHI LAYERS

THE ART OF HADI SALEHI'S PHOTOGRAPHY
A SOLO EXHIBITION



OCTOBER 6TH - NOVEMBER 3RD, 2019

ADVOCARTSY

ADVOCARTSY is pleased to celebrate Hadi Salehi’s work with this solo exhibition and documentary.

Despite being an active and well respected artist and educator in Los Angeles for over 40 years, this is in fact Hadi Salehi’s first solo exhibition in the United States. This exhibition spans nearly 15 years of Hadi’s work and yet merely scratches the surface of his depth of expression and expansive body of work.

As the arts community seeks to diversify the dialogue around art and as the museums seek to diversify their exhibitions and permanent collections, advocacy for over-looked artists is more imperative than ever. Bringing due attention to such exceptional artists falls within the core of ADVOCARTSY’s mission and we are grateful to have this platform to exhibit this work and to expand the dialogue created around art.

— Roshi Rahnama
Founder & Director of ADVOCARTSY*

ADVOCARTSY is an Iranian Contemporary Art Platform.

Hadi Salehi is not a flirtatious artist experimenting with fads. Many photographers have moved on to digital photography, allowing for even the most mundane photograph to be manipulated in post-production to qualify it as a ‘fine art’ image. This is not the case for Hadi, who has remained faithful to his large format camera and film to express his artistry. His images are not only beautiful and poetic, but they have a heartbeat that defies the two dimensionality that restricts the boundary for photography. I have great admiration for his photographs because when looking at them I feel that with each one of them he has generously given us a little part of his soul. He’s the genuine thing.

— Firooz Zahedi

Hadi Salehi is a master of the art of analog photography. Salehi's images capture diverse portraits that are powerful and soft, leaving a haunting quality that lingers in the psyche. Salehi seeks to create a collective awareness as a cultural messenger through his images, revealing quiet truths through his process intensive works. With a career that spans more than 40 years, Salehi has closely documented cultural innovators such as Keith Haring, as well as developed an expansive body of analog, digital, film, and mixed media works. Hadi Salehi is a graduate of Art Center College of Design, Pasadena and currently resides in Los Angeles.

LAYERS: The Art of Hadi Salehi's Photography is an extensive analog photography exhibition showcasing Salehi's most prolific conceptual work of the past 15 years. From a strong body of work which spans over four decades, this long awaited solo exhibition seeks to unearth and explore the rich tapestry of Salehi's image-making career in previously unrealized magnitude. Showing in photographic layers, the selected photographs narrate universal themes of migration, family, resilience, joy, and solitude. LAYERS will open in conjunction with the premiere of a documentary of the same name based on Salehi's work and process, directed by Bita Shafipour and executive produced by SOCIARTS in collaboration with ADVOCARTSY.



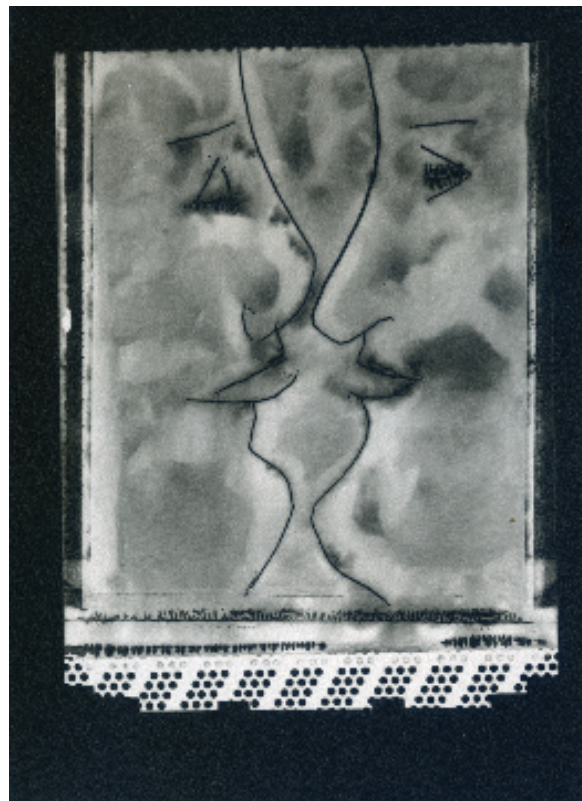
The Meadow, 2008, Layered inkjet print hand calligraphed by the artist, 56 x 42 in



Ava Tan, Edition of 3+IAP, 2008, Layered analog photography on digital inkjet print, 38 x 31.5 in



2I, Edition of 3+IAP, 2008, Layered analog photography on digital inkjet print, 30 x 24 in



My Sweet Polo Series, Editions of 3 each, 2018, Artist Hand Drawings on Polaroid 55, 20 x 16 in each

Top Left: *Togetherness*. Top Right: *Paul Gris*. Bottom Left: *Francis Bacon*. Bottom Right: *Henri Le Fouconnier*.



My Sweet Polo Series, Editions of 3 each, 2018, Artist Hand Drawings on Polaroid 55, 20 x 16 in each

Top Left: *George Braque*. Top Right: *Frida Kahlo*. Bottom Left: *Paul Klee*. Bottom Right: *Fernard Leger*.

CURATING | LAYERS

Hadi Salehi's image-making career spans over four decades. At the age of 16, the moment he saw his first 'magic box'—a Russian Lubitel camera—he knew he had discovered his medium for storytelling. He began his craft capturing the stories of people in his home-town of Shahsavari in Northern Iran, documenting family members and the quiet and lush rural scenery by the Caspian Sea. He then took his camera to the bustling streets of Tehran, and covered the vast landscape and people of this rising, modern metropolis. Circumstances presented him with the exceptional opportunity to come to California, to explore the colorful chaos of cultures of Los Angeles, of course; but also to try to survive a world that was not exactly kind towards men of his background during the Reagan administration. Bonding with fellow outsiders not only gave him a community, it also provided him with fertile grounds for his art.

Hadi loves to photograph people and tell stories, or as he prefers to say it, "to show stories". He believes that he cannot simply tell a story in two dimensions. Rather he presents us with the story arranged in layers and calls for us to let our own imaginations become the third dimension.

He invites us to give meaning to the picture: to connect with the feelings that are being exposed, to sense the poetry, smell the spice, hear the melody and sing the song.

His creative energies were greatly shaped by the contemporary poets of Iran in the 60s and 70s, when leftist ideologies were blooming and hope for a better, freer, more democratic future for Iran was at its peak. He admits he always wanted to be a poet, inspired by his older contemporaries Ahmad Shamlou (1925-2000) and Forough Farrokhzad (1934-1967). Since he wasn't good at expressing himself in words, however, he was drawn to the visual medium of photography as a means for expressing his take on the truth. And while he might not

describe himself in those terms, Hadi is indeed a poet himself, but one who writes poems with his images.

A graduate, as well as a retired professor of analog color photography at the ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, Hadi always shoots on analog, and processes every single picture by hand in his darkroom. Sometimes he writes on the negatives or positives while at other times he lets chemistry destroy his negatives and from the result creates something new and more profound. He loves the accidents of the process; they are the most vigorous stimulus for his imagination. Whenever an image is accidentally spoilt, rather than lamenting it, he welcomes the challenge it offers of making an image that is different from anything he has envisaged before.

He "feels the light": creates a picture, then overlays the negative with another in order to show his story. Layers are crucial for him in expressing his world. They are not made for each other, but they share the same theme, or sometimes have opposing themes as compliments to one another, displays of duality, the true nature of life itself, 'the layers of consciousness' as he refers to them.

Hadi's pictures are about feelings. "Who feels it more, knows it more," he says. If he doesn't "feel it", he won't shoot it, he won't layer it, he won't give it his undivided attention. His art happens in the moments that unfold as the viewers take up the invitation to dwell in the image and discover the story that lies between the layers. Time and contemplation are required; the picture invites viewers to pause.

What is the meaning of each image, each layer, each poetic verse? "Sometimes I don't know, soul, to tell you the truth. I don't look to find a meaning for my images. I am an image-maker. I cannot be part of the image, but a lot of them is probably me".



Twins—Letters
2019,
Layered Analog C-Print,
40 x 30 in



Twins—Red,
Unique Editions of 3,
2007,
Layered Analog C-Print,
40 x 30 in

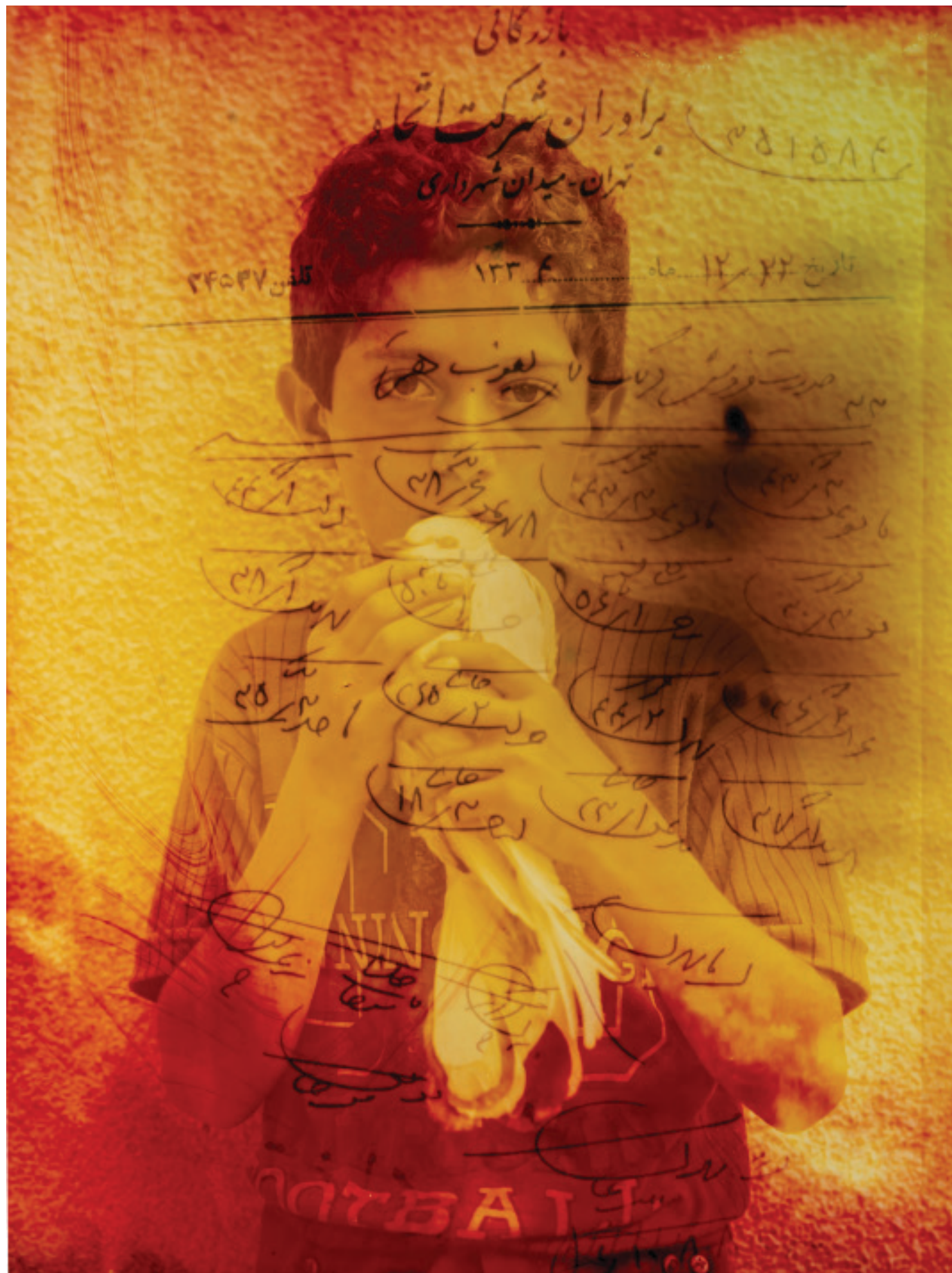
At the age of 59, Hadi left ArtCenter and dedicated his life fully to making images. *LAYERS* the exhibition brings together some of Hadi's most prolific works of the past 15 years, the era where the veteran artist had to reinvent himself and this time, dive deeper into his own layers of consciousness in order to create the showcased conceptual photographs.

As an artist and storyteller, I have had the pleasure of immersing myself in Hadi's world through his photographs, archival film footage and hours of conversations and interviews for a film that will introduce him to those who seek beauty, poetry and meaning in art. Shot primarily on 16mm film, I'd like to pay tribute to Hadi's art of analog photography as well as analog cinema.

— Bita Shafipour
Co-Curator & Filmmaker



Twins— Calligraphed, 2006, Layered Ink Jet Print with Artist's Calligraphy, 40 x 30 in



Dove, Unique Editions of 3, 2004, Layered Analog C-Print, 40 x 30 in



East, 2008, Layered Analog C-Print, 40 x 30 in



I'm Still Waiting, Edition of 3, 2018, Layered Analog Negative Silver Print, 24 x 60 in



Nehgar Edition of 3+ IAP, 2011 , Layered Analog Photography on Digital Inkjet Print, 40 x 30 in



Lust, Edition of 3+IAP, 2008, Layered Analog Photography on Digital Inkjet Print, 40 x 28.5 in



Rear Window, Edition of 3+IAP, 2009, Polaroid 55, 40 x 30 in



Shab, Edition of 3+ IAP, 2018, Layered Analog Negative Silver Print, 24 x 20 in



Talking Head, Unique Edition of 2, 2017, Layered Analog Negatives on Silver Print with Artist's Calligraphy on Negative, 24 x 20 in

THE PROCESS | LAYERS

When Hadi Salehi makes a photograph, it is only the beginning of an amazing creative process. Whether recording an image on negative film or a Polaroid, he transforms those initial creations into pieces of art that test the limits of both the medium and his imagination.

Salehi has elevated photography beyond its role as a means of documentation. Instead, he uses diversified methods of photographic manipulation including the layering of film emulsions, distressing the negative and the

photographic print, and including hand-written text to make work that demands attention.

Even when creating his photographs of people, he is already subverting the common expectations of what a photographic portrait should be. By using slow shutter speeds, he creates a portrait that is as much about the passage of time as it the rendering of a subject's appearance. He takes the expression of that subject even further

as he sandwiches negative emulsions together or physically manipulates and distorts the Polaroid or print. These methods move the photograph beyond it being a repeatable process with consistent results. In the hands of Salehi, it becomes an opportunity for exploration and discovery.

Inspired by the works of authors and poets of his homeland of Iran, Salehi pursues his form of poetry and narrative using a two-dimensional medium. It is not just an exercise of the mind and heart, but also a very physical one. He works virtually daily in his darkroom moving large sheets of photographic paper through trays of developer, fixer and stop bath. On other days, he hunkers for hours over his work table writing words in his native language, Persian on his prints. Each piece reflects his desire to create and to make new and unexpected discoveries.



Haparoot,
Edition of 3,
2009,
Layered Analog C-Print,
30 x 43 in

Though initially inspired by photographers of the documentary tradition, Salehi became known for testing the limits of photographic materials which helped him earn the nickname of “the chemist”. He frequently ignored the standard recommendations of film and paper manufacturers to experiment with different developing processes. The unexpected and unpredictable results were not seen by him as failures, but as unique opportunities to channel his singular vision. He embraces mistakes and accidents because it is where he finds a sincere and honest beauty.

The diversity and range of his body of work can be appreciated all the more by understanding that it is rarely derived from a concept or idea. Much like a jazz artist, he thrives on improvisation. He is triggered by those small, almost unexpected flourishes, that lead him in directions he never could have anticipated. But instead of brass and air, he uses film, paper and ink to produce work that can touch just as deeply.

Salehi's photo-based creations serve as an invitation between the artist and the viewer. Rather than being a physical object that one looks upon in passing, his work calls on the viewer to linger and explore. It becomes an opportunity to make the kinds of surprising emotional discoveries that Salehi himself experienced when creating his work. It is only then that he feels his work feels complete and whole.

— Ibarionex Perello
Photographer, writer, and podcast producer at
www.thecandidframe.com



Carnival — Green Eyes,
2016,
Layered Analog C-Print,
30 x 43 in



Surrender, Edition of 3+ IAP, 2008, Digital Inkjet Print, 30 x 24 in



Boocheh, Edition of 3+ IAP, 2008, Layered Analog C-Print, 40 x 30 in



Shiva Loka, Edition of 3+2AP, 2019, Layered Analog Negatives on Silver Print, 40 x 38 in



On the Dewy Road, Edition of 3+ 1AP, 2018, Layered Analog Negative Silver Print with Artist's Calligraphy, 24 x 20 in



Eva In Mist, Edition of 3+1AP, 2010, Type C Analog Light Jet, 38 x 30 in



In Between Days, Edition of 3+1AP, 2008, Layered Analog C-Print, 40 x 30 in



Abrisham Series— 2, 1, & 3, 2018, Digital Inkjet Print, 54 x 42.5 in each



Sokoot, 2017, Type C Analog Light Jet, 39 x 30 in each



Onward, 1995, Type C Ink Jet Print with Artist's Calligraphy, 52 x 44 in



Mother and Nehgar, 2008, Layered Inkjet Print with Artist's Calligraphy, 60 x 44 in

