ADVOCARTSY

Ali Dadgar

A Solo Exhibition

Disoriental

Opening April 2nd, 2022 | Closing April 23rd, 2022

ADVOCARTSY West Hollywood | 434 N. La Cienega Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90048
info@advocartsy.com | advocartsy.com | @advocartsy

A Solo Exhibition of Multimedia Works by

Ali Dadgar

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***Join us for the Public Reception*: Saturday, April 2nd, 4 - 7 pm**

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Artist Biography

Born in 1960s Iran, Ali Dadgar immigrated to the U.S. in the late 1970s. He went on to receive his BFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, in 1989 followed by an MFA in Art Practice from the University of California, Berkeley in 2007. He was a lecturer in the Department of Art Practice at the University of California Berkeley between 2006 and 2009 and is the recipient of multiple awards, including the UC Berkeley Outstanding GSI Award in 2007. His work has been placed in prominent private and public collections, including the University of California Berkeley Morrison Library.

Curatorial Statement

Over the past three decades Oakland-based multimedia artist, Ali Dadgar, has explored systems of power and meaning through the reappropriation and reframing of personal and cultural icons. With shrewd wit and self-deprecation, Dadgar feeds on his own Iranian and American experiences and looks beyond to consider censorship, colonization, 'otherness,' and identity in the global context. *Disoriental*, a solo exhibition curated by ADVOCARTSY in Los Angeles, surveys a mad menagerie of complex, layered works from several of Dadgar's ongoing, multimedia series in an effort to navigate the artist's darkly chaotic, yet distinctly authentic philosophical musings.

Through autobiography and self-deprecation, Dadgar's art maintains an undercurrent of dark humor which materializes in his juxtaposition of unexpected materials and sources that recontextualise the written word. Working across multiple mediums and series simultaneously, Dadgar's ideas take shape through performance and 2-dimensional mixed media art. He is deeply familiar with the conventions of printmaking and formal Western approaches to art, which he absorbs and upturns through his practice. Indicative of Dadgar's prior experiences in theater and set design, there is always a performative element in his densely layered narratives – performance of identity troubles as well as cultural contradictions and conflict.

Dadgar often positions text as a key visual component yet he ushers it into a new dimension. If print culture represents the accumulated knowledge of a civilized society, Dadgar contends that its alteration might conjure up new meaning, binding literacy and illiteracy, knowledge and ignorance, artistic freedom and censorship. He overturns traditional narrative structures and opens up questions rather than prescribing answers. Equating destruction with creation, the erasure and reformation of detail from iconic imagery in order to unsettle the viewer's acceptance of reality is central to Dadgar's visual language. Through a highly personal pastiche, Dadgar summons figures of otherness in a place filled with tradition, history, humor, and paradox in order to communicate his interpretation of orientalism, which he regards at best as an exaggeration of difference and at worst as a powerful political instrument of domination.

His solo exhibition *Disoriental* reclaims orientalist stereotypes and repurposes clichés to expose the dark humor Dadgar has unearthed from centuries of academic discourse. As he layers symbols from Western and Persian histories, handwritten notes, photographs, his self–portrait, and found materials from rugs to maps, Dadgar challenges traditional understandings of art. Through dynamic digital and manual manipulation of found materials, the written word, and his own unique figurative style, Dadgar forms a new visual language – one of redaction, remapping, and erasure – to describe the disorienting experience of life in a modern world wrought with contradictory beliefs. Deeply personal yet widely universal, *Disoriental* contends with the crumbling infrastructure found only at the end of an empire and asks us to imagine what could come to be.

The Shame Cabinet, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
60 x 48 in

Re-Oriental
Series Statement

Ali Dadgar's art is consistently created in dialogue with postcolonial discourse and forms an ongoing inquiry into ideologies, identity, cultural hegemonies, and systems of dominance departing from personal experiences in Iran and America. *Re–Oriental*, a multimedia series concerned with confronting stereotypes and customs associated with 'the orient', surveys complex, layered works from more than a decade of experimental art making by the Oakland based printmaker and textile artist.

Upon first glance, Dadgar's aesthetic is joyful and nostalgic, saturated with a bold palette of crimson red, turquoise, and mustard yellow. Yet, his compositions collapse upon closer inspection, devoid of detail or informative content. Dadgar aims to materialize the manner in which orientalist termings gloss over detail through his manipulation of the visibility and quality of his faceless subjects. He sources images that relay oriental tropes – from horseback riders to turban–clad royalty – absorbed from text book pages and the internet. By initiating each piece with a reproduction of an image, Dadgar renders his subjects pixelated and imperfect from the outset.

Throughout his practice, Dadgar upturns traditional printing approaches in order to expose the fragility in our systems of meaning making. For *Re–Oriental*, the artist continues this approach by employing silk screen printing and stenciling techniques to base materials spanning velvet, wood, paper, and canvas. The deconstruction and erasure of detail from iconic imagery in order to unsettle the viewer's acceptance of reality is central to Dadgar's interpretation of orientalism. Dadgar understands that images operate as systems of knowledge and form a visual vocabulary that has been assigned, for various social and political agendas, to the people, places, and cultures subsumed within what has been termed 'the orient'. Dadgar problematizes these icons, contending that they impose limitations and inaccurate framings upon their subjects.

Angel Lamassu, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
60 x 48 in

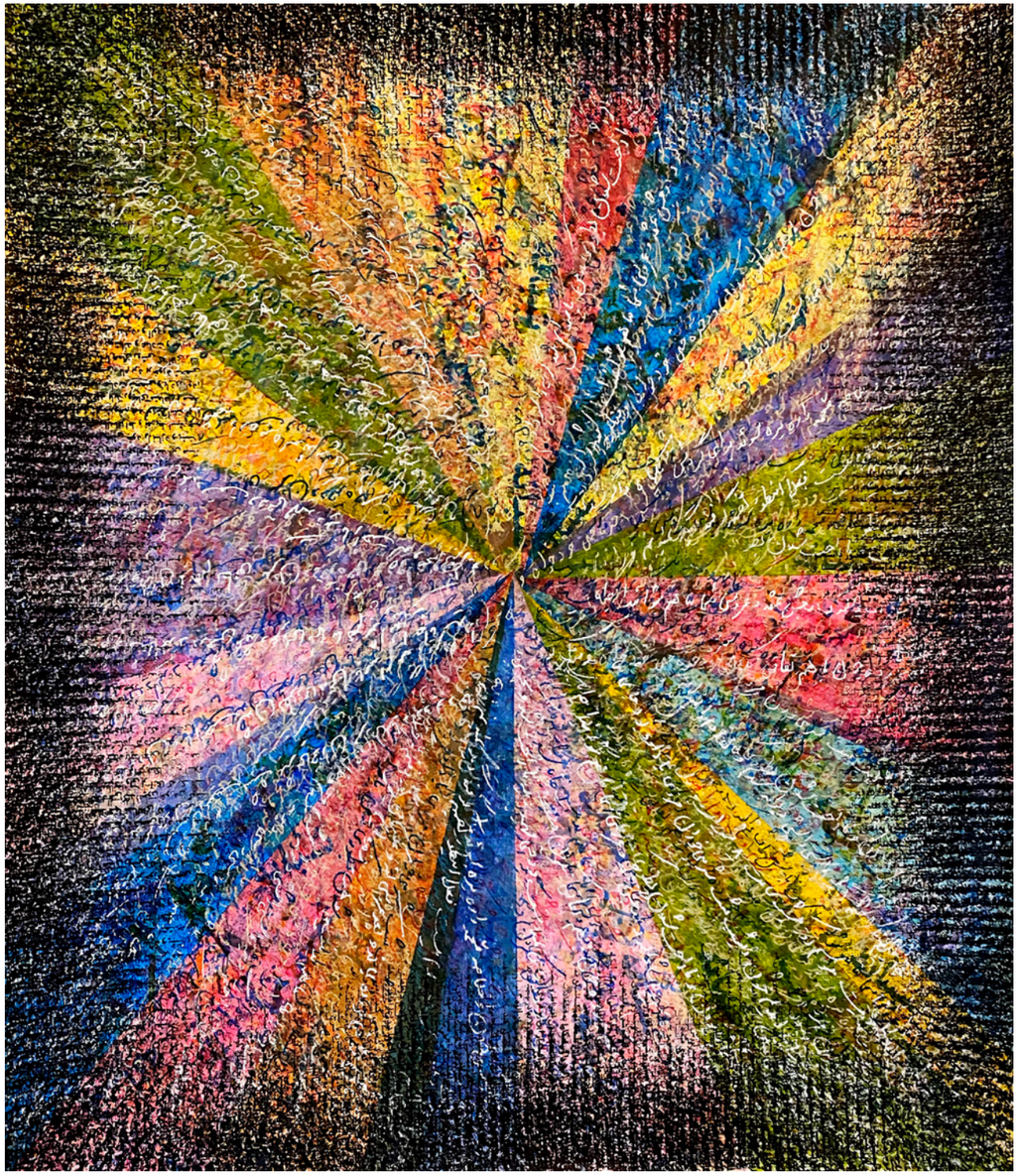
The Divine, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
48 x 36 in

No Redemption, 2020
Mixed Media Silk Screen and Acrylic Paint on Canvas
75 x 55 in

Dark Humor
Series Statement

Autobiography and self–depreciation are devices regularly employed by Ali Dadgar in order to navigate his subjective experiences in Iran and America. In his *Dark Humor* series, Dadgar has produced several works using digital and manual printing techniques to expose the comedy and fallacy in the stereotypes associated with the Middle East. Contributed to over several decades, the artist has packed *Dark Humor* with multiple layers of symbolism in order to unravel the ideologies and deep–seated fears – from terrorism to gender repression – that have come to frame his native Iran and beyond.

To Dadgar, humor remains one of the most powerful tools to dismantle dominant ideologies and expose the fragility of systems that might have previously felt fixed. As an Iranian residing in the US, Dadgar understands 9/11 as a pivotal incident in his life which he has approached at regular intervals throughout his practice. Cynicism and wit form an undercurrent throughout Dadgar's work, which becomes apparent by his repeated centering of pop culture icons within degenerated, dystopian environments. Dadgar's smoky, scratchy textures, imprinted in paint through his signature rough application, embodies the lasting imprint that 9/11 has had upon his existence, reshaping his social and political encounters ever since. Through his black comedy and the connecting of the political with performative and constructed social practices from gaming to cartoons and tourism, Dadgar's *Dark Humor* seeks to disrupt the ideologies perpetuated by both the American and Middle Eastern contexts.



Rainbow Letters, 2021
Mixed Media Silk Screen and
Acrylic Paint on Paper
50 x 48 in

Textual
Series Statement

In this body of work, Ali Dadgar considers the aesthetics of the printed page; text, verse, charts, columns, and grids—the structures that make newspapers, photographs, dictionaries, and maps comprehensible. The written word as a visual component and carrier of discourse holds much significance for the artist whose Persian culture orbited around poetry, literature, and calligraphy. Migration to America later exposed Dadgar to its print media, which took on new meaning for him, observed through the lens of Foucault's knowledge/power couplet. For Dadgar, print media is a mode of indexing information, our ultimate commodity, and establishing or rejecting particular value systems.

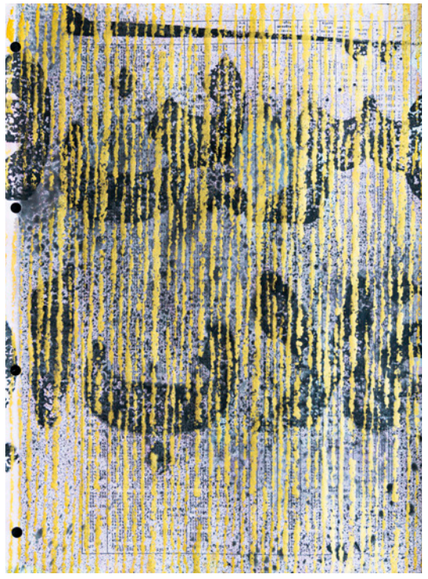
Produced over several decades, Dadgar's *Textual* series continues the artist's exploration of the written word from the overt to the obscure. His methods and processes – which involve obsessive collecting of visual information, hours of meditative carving, extracting, and reconfiguring found material – resonate because this labor is an elementary form of interaction; most people, after all, have collected clippings, torn stuff up, used scissors and glue and pinned things on a board or wall. Dadgar's modest approach involves engaging with the representational surfaces of 'the given.'

Oscillating between the obvious and the abstract, Dadgar's *Textual* series continues to probe the social value of our words from protest to the prescribing of values. Intervening within these displays and arrangements of information, Dadgar strips content of its context and meaning, forcing viewers to refocus their attention to the surface of the page, and beyond that: the roles of creation and perception in our society. If print culture represents the accumulated knowledge of a civilized society, its alteration conjures new meaning, linking literacy and illiteracy, knowledge and ignorance, artistic freedom and censorship. Through twists and turns, layer upon layer, the words become illegible when removed from the confines of tradition and conventional linguistic structures, a literal exercise in reading between the lines.

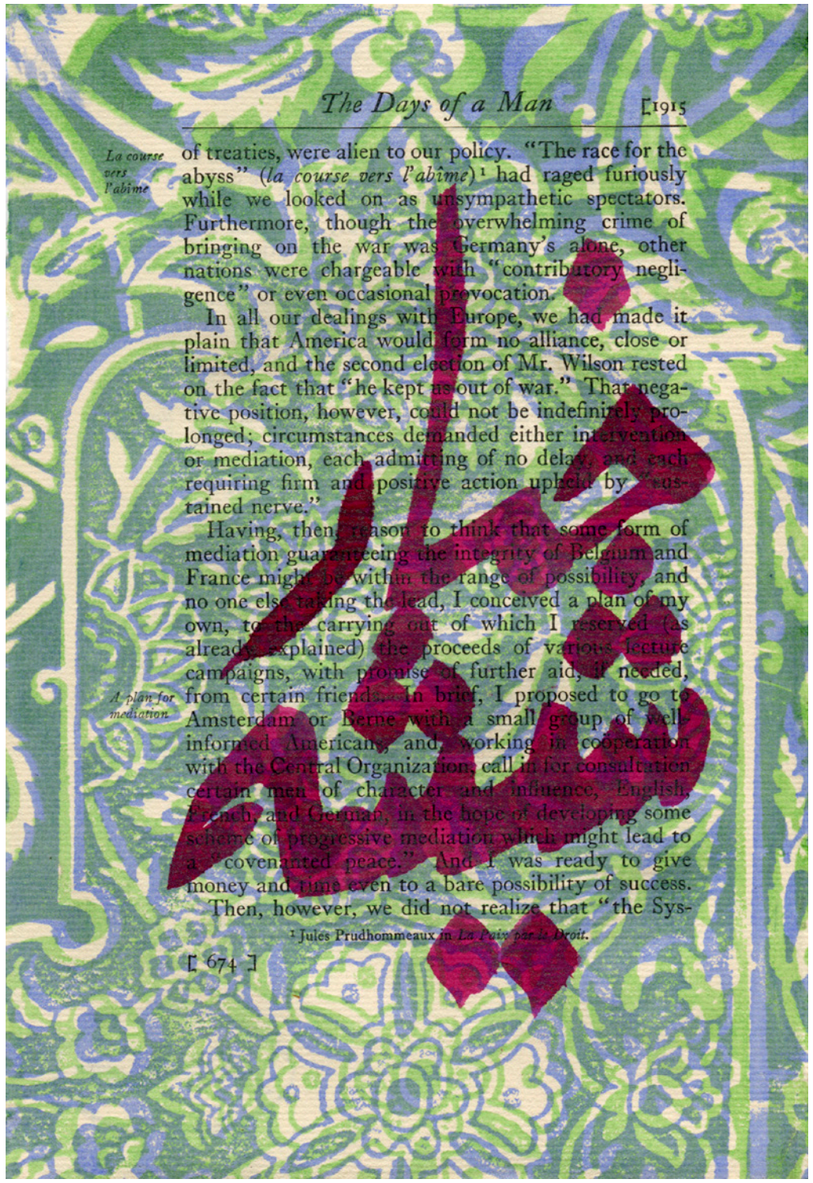
Textual History – Untitled 1-20, 2022
Left: Full Set. Right: Detail.
Mixed media on paper
6 x 9.25 in each
*Available for purchase as a whole or individually.

Left:
Glow I, 2021
Acrylic on Wood
48 x 30 in

Right:
Glow II, 2021
Acrylic on Wood
42 x 31 in



Textual Headlines - Untitled 1-8, 2022
Mixed media on paper
11 x 15 in each
**Available for purchase as a whole or individually.*



The Days of a Man [1915

La course vers l'abime

of treaties, were alien to our policy. "The race for the abyss" (*la course vers l'abime*)[1] had raged furiously while we looked on as unsympathetic spectators. Furthermore, though the overwhelming crime of bringing on the war was Germany's alone, other nations were chargeable with "contributory negligence" or even occasional provocation.

In all our dealings with Europe, we had made it plain that America would form no alliance, close or limited, and the second election of Mr. Wilson rested on the fact that "he kept us out of war." That negative position, however, could not be indefinitely prolonged; circumstances demanded either intervention or mediation, each admitting of no delay, and each requiring firm and positive action upheld by "sustained nerve."

Having, then, reason to think that some form of mediation guaranteeing the integrity of Belgium and France might be within the range of possibility, and no one else taking the lead, I conceived a plan of my own, to the carrying out of which I reserved (as already explained) the proceeds of various lecture campaigns, with promise of further aid, if needed, from certain friends. In brief, I proposed to go to Amsterdam or Berne with a small group of well-informed Americans, and, working in cooperation with the Central Organization, call in for consultation certain men of character and influence, English, French, and German, in the hope of developing some scheme of progressive mediation which might lead to a "covenanted peace." And I was ready to give money and time even to a bare possibility of success.

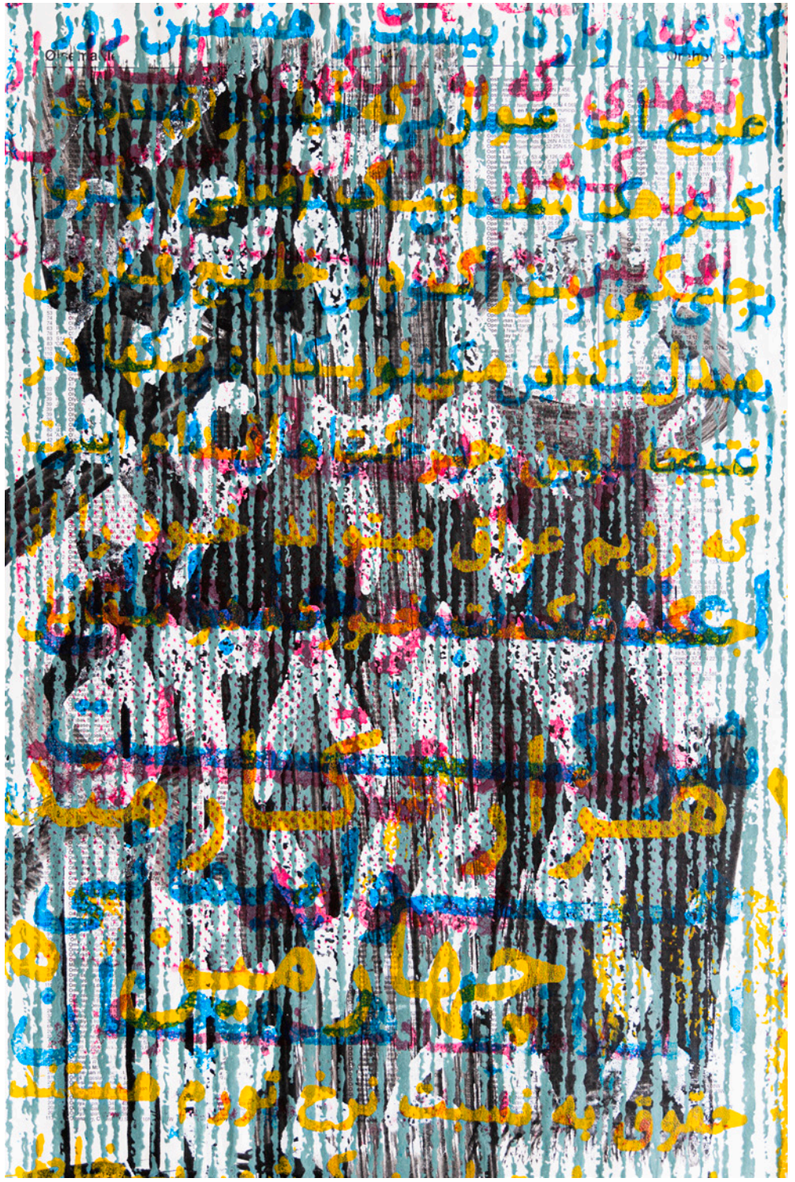
A plan for mediation

Then, however, we did not realize that "the Sys-

[1] Jules Prudhommeaux in *La Paix par le Droit*.

[674]

Textual Fiction – Untitled 1-30, 2022
Left: Detail. Right: Full Set.
Mixed media on paper
6.5 x 9.25 in each
*Available for purchase as a whole or individually.



Textual News - Untitled 1-7, 2022
Mixed media on paper
12 x 16 in each
**Available for purchase as a whole or individually.*

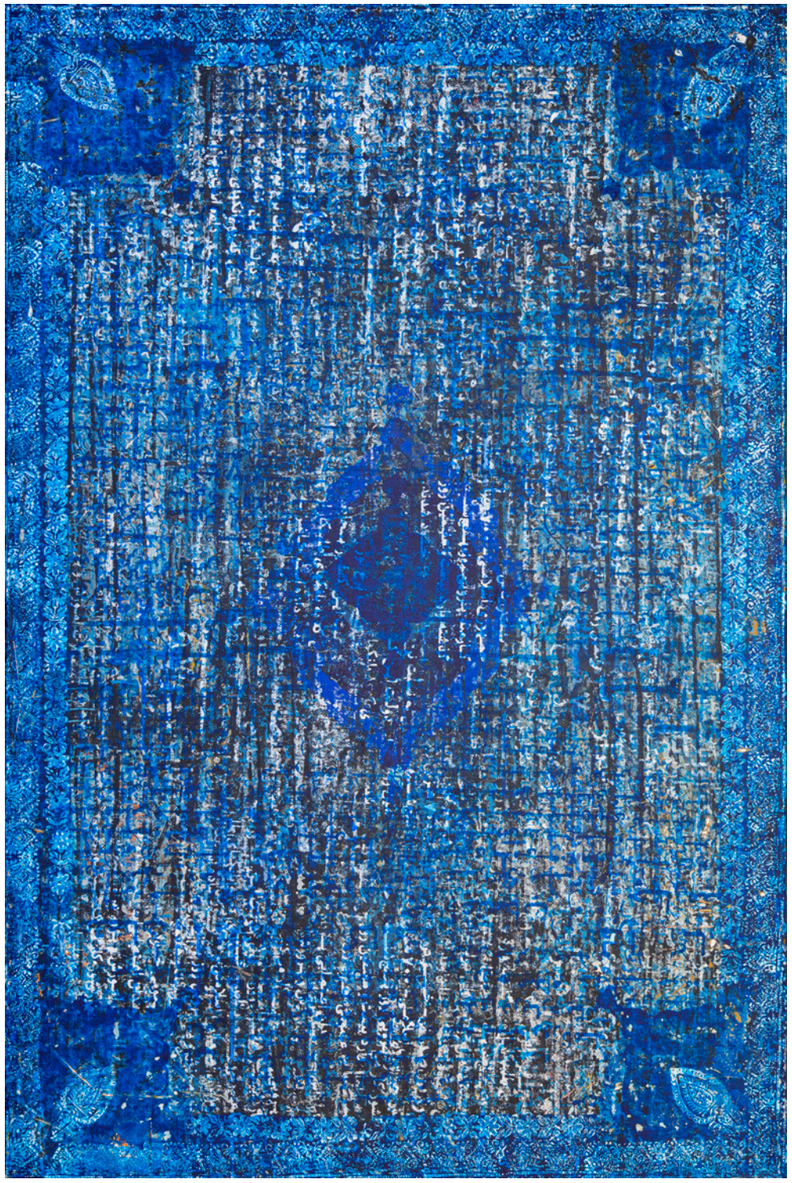
Detached, 2019
Mixed Media Silk Screen and
Acrylic Paint on Woven Rug
60 x 39 in

Rugs

Series Statement

Ali Dadgar's *Rugs* series is an ongoing body of work produced over more than a decade. This series continues Dadgar's exploration of cultural hegemonies, representation, and human relationships to systems of meaning approached through his Iranian and American experiences. His point of departure is the Persian rug, which he problematizes, observing it as a vehicle of memory intimately linked to his childhood yet also as an international symbol of political unrest and bourgeois society tainted with associations to child labour.

Long inspired by Iranian weaving traditions, Dadgar emancipates the Persian Rug from its decorative and functional purposes by way of dematerialization and recontextualization. Consistent with past works, Dadgar interferes with the surfaces of his symbolically charged materials – from the dictionary page to maps and rugs. Through a process of silk screen printing and stenciling, he reconfigures them, heightening the fragility of their fixed meaning. As a metaphor for the patterns in our lives, Dadgar's purposeful erasure of the patterns on the rug disrupts the logical order, pointing to the instability of the value systems that shape our routines. As their design and traditional motifs transform beneath layers of thick paint and encrusted inks, the artist seeks to challenge dominant systems of meaning and in the context of the Persian rug he interrogates the cultural value attributed to it.



Woven Blue, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
72 x 48 in

My Universe, 2021
Mixed Media Silk Screen and Acrylic Paint on Canvas
77 x 38.50 in

From left to right:

The Prince, 2019
Acrylic on Rug
23 x 16 in

Him, 2019
Acrylic on Rug
23 x 16 in

His Letter, 2019
Acrylic on Rug
23 x 15 in

Ali Dadgar
Curriculum Vitae

Education

2007 MFA, University of California, Berkeley, CA
1989 BFA, California College of Arts & Crafts, Oakland, CA

Awards

2007 J . Ruth Kelsey Traveling Fellowship
2007 UC Berkeley Outstanding GSI Award
2005 Marian Hahn Simpson Fellowship in Art
2005 Susan B. Irwin Scholarship in the Visual Arts
2005 Individual Artist Grant, City of Oakland Cultural Arts Department.
2004 Residency & Publication Award, Darvag Art Foundation.
1988 Charles Hank Hine Award.

Teaching

2006 – 2009 Lecturer, Department of Art Practice, University of California Berkeley, CA
2002 – 2003 Painting & Drama Workshop. Albany Farsi School, Albany & Oakland, CA
2001 – 2002 Youth Outreach Program; Banners & signs, Darvag Art Foundation, Berkeley & Oakland, CA
1997 – 2001 Printmaking Workshops. Darvag Art Foundation, Oakland & Berkeley, CA
1993 – 1996 Mural & Drawing Workshops. City of Oakland Youth Outreach program, Oakland, CA
1994 - 1995 Silk- screening Workshops. California College of Arts & Crafts, Oakland, CA

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2019-20 Additions / Redactions, Desai Matta Gallery, CIIS, San Francisco, CA
2012 Radiant States: Reflections on Solidarity, CIIS, San Francisco, CA
2011 Unbelievablybelievable, Martina Johnston Gallery, Berkeley, CA
2007 Disappearing, Townsend Center for the Humanities, Berkeley CA
2005 Effacements, Joyce Gordon Gallery, Oakland, CA
2005 Found Faces, Artship windows project, Oakland, CA
2004 Recent Antiquities, Articultural Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2000 New Works, Darvag Art Foundation Gallery, Berkeley, CA
1997 Ali Dadgar, the Warehouse Gallery, Long Beach, CA
1989 My Horses, Ronald J. Gallery, Oakland, CA

Selected Group Exhibitions

2020 Invincible California, Worth Ryder Gallery, Berkeley, CA
2019 Art Bash, The Space by ADVOCARTSY, Los Angeles, CA
2018 Art Brief IV, ADVOCARTSY, Somarts Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2014 Fabrication, Southern Exposure, San Francisco, CA
2013 Resistance, Luggage Store Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2012 DocumentO, an unofficial satellite of Documenta13, Krowswork, Oakland, CA
2012 MENA Experimental, collaboration with Azin Seraj, ATA, SF, CA
2012 In The Currents: Bay Area Iranian-American Art Today, KSW, Asian Resource Center Gallery, Oakland, CA
2012 The Big Return Project, for Heather Sparks part of Disrupture, Ictus Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2009 Deadpan Exchange IV, K2 Gallery, Izmir, Turkey
2009 Strange Hope, Galeria de la Raza, San Francisco, CA
2009 Faculty Show 2009, Department of Art Practice Faculty Show, Worth Ryder Gallery, University of California, Berkeley, CA
2008 Freedom of Expression, Art in an Age of Uncertainty, University Art Gallery, Sonoma State University, CA
2008 Apature 10, KSW, San Francisco, CA
2008 International Roaming Biennial of Tehran, Hafriyat Karakoy, Istanbul, Turkey; Berlin, Germany; Belgrade, Serbia.
2008 PaperWorks, Marin Museum of Contemporary Art, Novato, CA
2008 East of the West, SOMARTS Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2008 Theory of Survival, In collaboration with Taraneh Hemami, The Lab, San Francisco, CA
2008 Make the Art You Need, Dept. of Art Practice Faculty Show, Worth Ryder Gallery, University of California, Berkeley, CA
2008 Artists Insight phase II, The Big Idea Project, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA
2008 Points of Convergence, the Gallery at UTA, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX
2008 Selections, di Rosa Perserve: Art & Nature, Napa, CA
2007 Before & After, in Collaboration with Kristin Lucas, Postmasters Gallery, New York, NY
2007 Apature 9, KSW, San Francisco, CA
2007 Paper Cuts 3, Fetterly Gallery, Vallejo, CA
2007 Artists Insight Phase I, The Big Idea Project, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA
2007 The Most Curatorial Biennial of the Universe, Apexart, NYC, NY
2007 Next New, ICA, San Jose, CA
2007 Fermata, MFA Exhibition, UC Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley CA
2006 Write, Read: Contemporary Iranian-American Calligraphy Art, City college of San Francisco Library, San Francisco, CA
2006 Dirty Light, Worth Rider Gallery, University of California, Berkeley CA
2006 The Paper Nest Project, The Luggage Store gallery Annex, San Francisco, CA
2006 Virus, Lobot Gallery, Oakland, CA
2006 State of the Nation, Intersection for the Arts Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2005 RePresent, Cross Connections, Oliver Art Center, Oakland, CA
2005 Cross Connections, Intersection for the Arts Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2005 Shared Passions, Euphrat Museum of Art, Cupertino, CA
2004 Pachanga 2004, Galeria de la Raza, San Francisco, CA
2004 The Bellarmine Forum, Loyola Marymount University, LA, CA
2004 Angels & Demons, Peninsula Museum of Art, Belmont, CA
2004 Chico-Iranian Project, Galeria de la Raza, San Francisco, CA
2004 Day of the Dead, SOMARTS Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2004 Somewhere-Elsewhere, Worth Ryder Gallery, Berkeley, CA
2004 Windows & Chairs, Oakland Art Gallery, Oakland, CA
2004 On paper, Joyce Gordon Gallery, Oakland, CA
2003 Bringing Light to the Darkness, Day of the Dead Exhibit, SOMARTS Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2003 Go Figure, Articultural Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2003 Benefit Exhibition & Auction, Persian Center, Berkeley, CA
2003 Three individual Artists, Joyce Gordon Gallery, Oakland, CA
2003 The Quilt of Many Colors Project, Richmond Health Center, Richmond, CA
2003 Celebration of Art & the Art of Celebration, Oakland Art Gallery, Oakland, CA
2003 17 Bay Area Artists, Joyce Gordon Gallery, Oakland, CA
2003 Three's A Charm, Frank Bette Center for the Art, Alameda, CA
2003 Bay Area Currents, Oakland Art Gallery, Oakland, CA
2003 Printmaking, Danville Fine Art Gallery, Danville, CA
2003 Artists Working, SOMARTS Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2003 Defiance, Prop Gallery, New York, NY
2003 Extreme Art, Chartreuse Muse Gallery, Modesto, CA
2002 Oakland Portraits: Then & Now, 1852-2002, Oakland Art Gallery, Oakland, CA
2002 New Visions, Pro Arts Gallery, Oakland, CA
2002 R X D, Intersection for the Arts Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2001 Ruminations, Cell Space, San Francisco, CA
1999 Group show, Wier Gallery, Berkeley, CA
1997 The Group Show, Mission Cultural Center, San Francisco, CA
1994 NOAPS Exhibit '94, NOAPS Gallery, Osage Beach, MO
1994 Labyrinth of Exile, UCLA Fowler Museum, J. Paul Getty Trust Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
1994 The Nude, Wier Gallery, Berkeley, CA
1993 Iranian Artists In Bay Area, Iranian Community Center Gallery, San Jose, CA
1993 Generation Images, Linda Bermerman Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
1992 Black & White, The Warehouse Gallery, Long Beach, CA
1992 The Vision, Mission Cultural Center, San Francisco, CA
1991 20 Artists of Bay Area, Kaiser Center Art Gallery, Oakland, CA
1991 New Works, ACCI Gallery, Berkeley, CA
1990 Small Works, California Museum of Art at the Luther Burbank Center, Santa Rosa, CA
1990 Iranian Artists, Hourian Fine Art Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1990 The Printed Page, Village Theatre Gallery, Danville, CA
1990 The Image of The Horse, Redding Museum & Art Gallery, Redding, CA
1989 Animals & Urban Environment, ACCI Gallery, Berkeley, CA
1989 The Project: Group show, CCAC Gallery, Oakland, CA
1988 Iranian Collective Artists, Ackerman Hall Gallery UCLA, Los Angeles, CA
1988 San Francisco Mission Project, Back to the picture Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1988 Iranian Collective Artists, Ackerman Hall Gallery UCLA, Los Angeles, CA
1988 San Francisco Mission Project, Back to the picture Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1987 Madam Chevaux, Isabel Percy West Gallery at CCAC, Oakland, CA
1986 Iranian Artists in California, Koan Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
1984 Portraits, Fran Miller Gallery, San Francisco, CA

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