



ADVOCARTSY

PORTRAITURE NOW

IRANIAN CONTEMPORARY

Afsoon • Pouya Afshar • Mohammad Barrangi • Kourosh Beigpour • Ali Dadgar • Amir H. Fallah • Roya Farassat • Asad Faulwell • Parastou Forouhar • Mokarrameh Ghanbari • Nahid Hagigat • Marjan Hormozi • Tahmineh Javanbakht • Simin Keramati • Farshid Mesghali • Dana Nehdaran • Nicky Nodjoumi • Mobina Nouri • Zartosht Rahimi • Bahar Sabzevari • Hadi Salehi • Sepideh Salehi • Delbar Shahbaz • Foroozan Shirghani • Alireza Shojaian • Shadi Yousefian

On view through **Feb 18 - April 26, 2025**

Gallery Hours: Wed - Sat 11-5pm or by appointment

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ADVOCARTSY is a collaborative visual arts platform with the mission to elevate awareness and engagement amongst artists, collectors, and museums, with a focus on Iranian contemporary art.

Curatorial Statement

Portraiture is a timeless medium that serves as both a reflection of the self and a record of cultural history and identity. Iran's artistic heritage is rich with figurative representation, from ancient Persian reliefs and manuscripts, to the intricate depictions of Safavid and Qajar portraiture. Historically, portraiture in Iran has served multiple functions— as a tool of political power, a means of spiritual storytelling, and a celebration of aesthetic beauty. Given Iran's complex history - ranging from ancient Persian traditions to the 1979 Islamic Revolution and contemporary global influences- identity in Iranian art is often shaped by personal and collective trauma, beauty and narrative.

PORTRAITURE NOW: Iranian Contemporary brings together works by 26 contemporary Iranian artists as a partial survey of portraiture in contemporary art. Each artist offers a distinct approach to portraiture, spanning styles from hyperrealism to abstraction, from traditional influences to digital creations. The works exhibited are representative of the larger themes of identity as explored in art, including the concepts of cultural and national identity, migration and displacement, feminism and gender, and political and social activism.

In Iranian contemporary art, traditional notions of portraiture are often defied by abstracting, removing or obscuring the central figure. This approach is not merely an aesthetic choice, but a powerful tool to explore identity beyond the physical self, as done in exhibited works by artists including Pouya Afshar, Amir H. Fallah and Hadi Salehi.

Many works exhibited in this exhibition reference historical or cultural symbols and public figures to not only preserve history, but also to have an opportunity to reinterpret or allow new perspectives and commentaries on the past. In this exhibition, Pouya Afshar and Dana Nehdran reference historical photographs as Ali Dadgar, Asad Faulwell, Farshid Mesghali, Mobina Nouri and Zartosht Rahimi reimagine historical figures in their work. Mohammad Barrangi is inspired by Qajar portraiture, whereas Bahar Sabzevari and Kourosh Beigpour are inspired by and incorporate the subversion of Persian motifs and elements in their work.

This exhibition showcases a strong presence of works exploring feminism and gender, an integral, prescient, and overarching theme for many contemporary Iranian artists. Works by Afsoon, Roya Farassat, Parastou Forouhar, Mokarrameh Ghanbari, Nahid Hagigat, Marjan Hormozi, Tahmineh Jahanbakht, Simin Keramati, Mobina Nouri, Bahar Sabzevari, Sepideh Salehi, Delbar Shahbaz, and Foroozan Shirghani, explore the self in relation to otherness and societal pressure. The works by Shadi Yousefian and Alireza Shojaian intend to break down rigid binaries and imposed expectations as they redefine portrayals of gender, masculinity, and femininity.

Human rights and political injustices are examined and emphasized by Nicky Nodjoumi and Parastou Forouhar; these concepts are core to the practice of each of these artists. These artists offer an examination of not just ourselves, but our humanity or lack thereof.

Ultimately, the 26 works exhibited in **PORTRAITURE NOW: Iranian Contemporary** are not just portraits but portals into shared and individual histories, struggles and triumphs, and into the ongoing negotiations of identity in a continuously shifting cultural landscape. These works challenge, celebrate and reimagine Iranian identity in all its complexity, showing that portraiture is more than a reflection of the self: it is a space of resistance, storytelling and transformation.

**Afsoon**

The Ticking of Biological Clock in the Barren Land, 2017-2018

Watercolor and paper collage on Arches paper

14 x 10 in

Artist Bio: A self-taught artist, Afsoon spent her childhood in Iran and youth in California before settling in London in 1988. Working across mediums including watercolor photography, linocut, collage and etching, the artist's dynamic practice lends itself to her gift of storytelling. Afsoon has exhibited internationally, and her works are held in the collections of LACMA, the British Museum, the Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent Collection, and the Farjam Collection amongst others.

Series Statement: Afsoon's practice aims to preserve her cultural past and explore nostalgia through visual storytelling and iconography. Her art reveals the introspective and often difficult nature of being a woman artist in the Iranian diaspora, contending with historical allusions and the artist's own carefully crafted, playful artistic lexicon.

CV

**Pouya Afshar***Ellis II*, 2020

Oil on Canvas

20 x 16 in

Artist Bio: Pouya Afshar is an alumnus of the California Institute of Arts and a graduate of the University of California Los Angeles Graduate Department of Film and Television, focusing on Animation and Digital Media. He has exhibited his work as a visual artist throughout the United States and the Middle East, including the Harold M. Williams Auditorium at the Getty Center, Bovard Auditorium at the University of Southern California, Royce Hall at the University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Santa Monica Art Studios, 18th street Art Center, Craft Contemporary Museum. His works are in the permanent collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Denver Art Museum.

Series Statement: "The Charm of the Unfamiliar" is a fictional improvisation on the story of the displaced. In this series, Pouya Afshar tells the story of displacement, migration and resiliency. The displaced in this narrative are hybrid personas – human and animal, some real, some mythical – each physically transformed by their experiences of migration. These hybrid beings embody the toll of displacement and the adaptation and strength migration require and reflect the dehumanization and exoticizing of immigrants and refugees that continues to this day in the United States. Through this work, Afshar aims to open up dialogue about global refugee crises, U.S. immigration policy, and the realities immigrants face when they do make it to the land of the so-called "American Dream." Within this series, Afshar created the Ellis Portraits- oil paintings of characters based on actual Ellis Island immigrants as they arrived in Ellis Island.

CV



Mohammad Barrangi

Thousand and One Nights 2, 2024

Reverse transfer printmaking on handmade paper

35 x 24 in

Artist Bio: Mohammad Barrangi was born in Rasht, Iran, in 1988. Now based in the UK, he is both a globally recognized artist and a medal-winning athlete who has represented Iran internationally in the 100m sprint. Born without full mobility in his left arm, Barrangi has developed a unique artistic practice that utilizes his right hand and both feet to create his distinctive works. Blending traditional calligraphy with experimental mark-making techniques, Barrangi combines elements of Persian calligraphy, storytelling, text, and touches of humor to create intimate works on handmade paper that are selectively expanded into large-scale murals.

Barrangi holds a degree in graphic design from the Islamic Azad University of Tonekabon and recently graduated from the Royal Drawing School in London. Barrangi has extensively exhibited his work around the world, winning numerous awards and recognition that has led to the prolific publication of his illustrations in a variety of books. His works have been acquired by the permanent collections of the British Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Royal Family Collection, the National Government Collection in the UK, the San Diego Museum of Art in the USA, the Cluj-Napoka Art Museum, Romania as well as Leeds Art Gallery, UK.

Series Statement: Mohammad Barrangi's *Thousand and One Nights, II* expands his fantasy and dream sequences as he references iconic Qajar portraits from the 18th and 19th centuries. Barrangi is a visual storyteller, inspired by the canonical tales of Persian folklore and his personal history as an Iranian immigrant. In his work, he uses the likeness of women who inspire him to create fantastical scenes of their strength and perseverance situated in a historical context. This portrait uses the playful language of Qajar court paintings to underscore Barrangi's importance of creating a historically situated, strangely familiar dreamscape.

CV



Kourosh Beigpour

Morakab-e Mobin | Fire, 2024

acrylic on canvas

48 x 48 in

Bio: Kourosh Beigpour is an LA-based, award-winning artist and type designer. He received his BFA in 2003 from the Tehran University of Art and an MFA in International Contemporary Art and Design from Limkokwing University in 2011. Beigpour also completed a postgraduate in Type Design at TypeWest in San Francisco. His use of typography and graphic design has been published in more than twenty countries around the globe. Beigpour has designed for a wide range of clientele, including Google, The Broad, The J. Paul Getty Museum, University of California Irvine, University of California Los Angeles, Northeastern Illinois University, Oklahoma State University, Canada Type, Powerhouse Museum, DoppelHouse Press, and The Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture. Six works from Beigpour's Mandal series were acquired by LACMA for their permanent collection in 2023 and exhibited in San Diego Museum of Art's exhibition *Wonders of Creation*, curated by Ladan Akbarnia, in 2024.

Series Statement: Since the beginning of its formation, calligraphy has had the desire to express the manifestation of existence. Therefore, the shape of letters and their numeric value convey not only the narrative of the script but also an expression of a sacred meaning beyond—an attempt to establish a pathway between the inside and the outside world of words. A link that forms meaning and informs human mentality. Symbolic and sacred signs can be found not only in the content of the writing but also in shapes and their values. Calligraphy evokes a world of mysticism, where man is the embodiment of God as well as the collection of His names and attributes. Calligraphic letterforms embody the mystic and psychedelic realities of existence, illustrating a way to understand the sublime. Since the power of the word is the power of the creator, and the sublime inhabits the form of the letters, it is only natural that the embellished illustrations of human faces and forms crystallize within them the voice of transcendence.

In Iranian mysticism, light is seen as the source of knowledge and truth. However, as the light reaches its highest intensity, it transforms into darkness, the final veil that conceals the divine essence. This "black light" symbolizes the seeker's journey toward unity, transcending both human and divine distinctions. The illuminated yet darkened state of the letters and forms in these artworks represents this journey, where the divine essence is veiled in darkness, guiding the seeker toward the sublime and the unknown.

CV

**Ali Dadgar**

The Crown Series, 2024

Serigraph over watercolor on artisan paper

24 x 18 in

Artist Bio: Over several decades, Iranian born, Oakland-based multimedia artist Ali Dadgar has explored universal themes of censorship, colonization, 'otherness', and identity filtered through his own Iranian and American experiences. Working across multiple mediums and series simultaneously, Dadgar's ideas take shape through performance and 2-dimensional mixed media art. Dadgar (b. 1962) received 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. His work has been placed in prominent private and public collections, including the University of California Berkeley Morrison Library.

Series Statement: Through a highly personal pastiche, Dadgar attempts to summon figures of otherness in a place filled with tradition, history, humor, and paradox. He continually challenges traditional understandings of art, as he layers symbols from Western and Persian histories, handwritten notes, photographs, his self-portrait, and found materials from rugs to maps. These elements are manipulated either digitally or manually, through painting or drawing, and form a new visual language – one of redaction, remapping, and erasure. Through autobiography and self-deprecation, Dadgar summons figures of otherness in a place filled with tradition, history, humor, and paradox.

CV



Amir H. Fallah

Kitty, 2024

mixed media on paper

10.75 x 7.50 in

Artist Bio: Amir H. Fallah, born in 1979 in Tehran, received his BFA in Fine Art & Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art and his MFA in painting at the University of California, Los Angeles. He has exhibited extensively in solo and group exhibitions across the United States and abroad. Selected solo exhibitions include the Fowler Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art in Tucson, AZ; South Dakota Art Museum, Brookings SD; Schneider Museum of Art, Ashland OR; San Diego ICA; and the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland KS. Fallah was the founder and creative director of art & design publication *Beautiful/Decay* from 1996-2013. In 2009, he was chosen to participate in the 9th Sharjah Biennial. In 2015, Fallah received the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant. In 2019, Fallah's painting *Calling On The Past* received the Northern Trust Purchase Prize at EXPO Chicago. In 2020, he was awarded the COLA Individual Artist Fellowship and the Artadia grant. In addition, the artist had a solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson, accompanied by a catalogue, and a year-long installation at the ICA San Jose. The artist is in the permanent collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; de Young Museum, San Francisco; Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama; Jorge M. Pérez Collection, Miami; Deste Foundation For Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece; McEvoy Foundation For The Arts, San Francisco; Nerman Museum, Kansas City; SMART Museum of Art at the University of Chicago; Davis Museum, Massachusetts; The Microsoft Collection, Washington; Plattsburg State Art Museum, New York; Cerritos College Public Art Collection, California; Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture; Schneider Museum of Art, Oregon; Crocker Art Museum, California; Pitzer College Permanent Collection, California; Lonsford Collection at Purdue University, Indiana; Van Every/Smith Galleries at Davidson College, North Carolina; Miguel Angel Capriles Collection, Caracas, Venezuela; Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, Florida; and Salsali Private Museum, Dubai, UAE. The artist lives and works in Los Angeles.

Series Statement: Amir H. Fallah creates paintings, murals, sculptures, and installations that explore systems of representation embedded in the history of Western art. His ornate environments combine visual vocabularies of painting and collage to deconstruct traditional notions of identity formation, while simultaneously defying expectations of the genre for portraiture by removing or obscuring the central figure. In many of Fallah's works, the absence of the sitter's likeness is substituted with a wider representation of their personhood—one that spans time and cultures and is articulated through a network of symbols and imagery. Fallah's work questions not only the historical role of portraiture, but the cultural systems that are used to identify one person from another. When autobiographical, Fallah's work employs a lexicon of symbols that amalgamate personal narratives with historical and contemporary parables. The pieces serve as a diary of lessons, warnings, and ideals providing coded insight into the formation of an identity, while investigating cultural values often passed between generations. Although the stories that surround his subjects are deeply personal and are told through the intimate possessions they hold most dear, this work addresses generational immigrant experiences of movement, trauma, and celebration. Neither of this world or the next, Fallah's works reside in the liminal space of being Othered. They utilize personal history as an entry point to discuss race, representation, and the memories of cultures and countries left behind. Through this process, the artist's works employ nuanced and emotive narratives that evoke an inquiry about identity, the immigrant experience, and the history of portraiture.

CV

**Roya Farassat**

Darling Divas, 2023

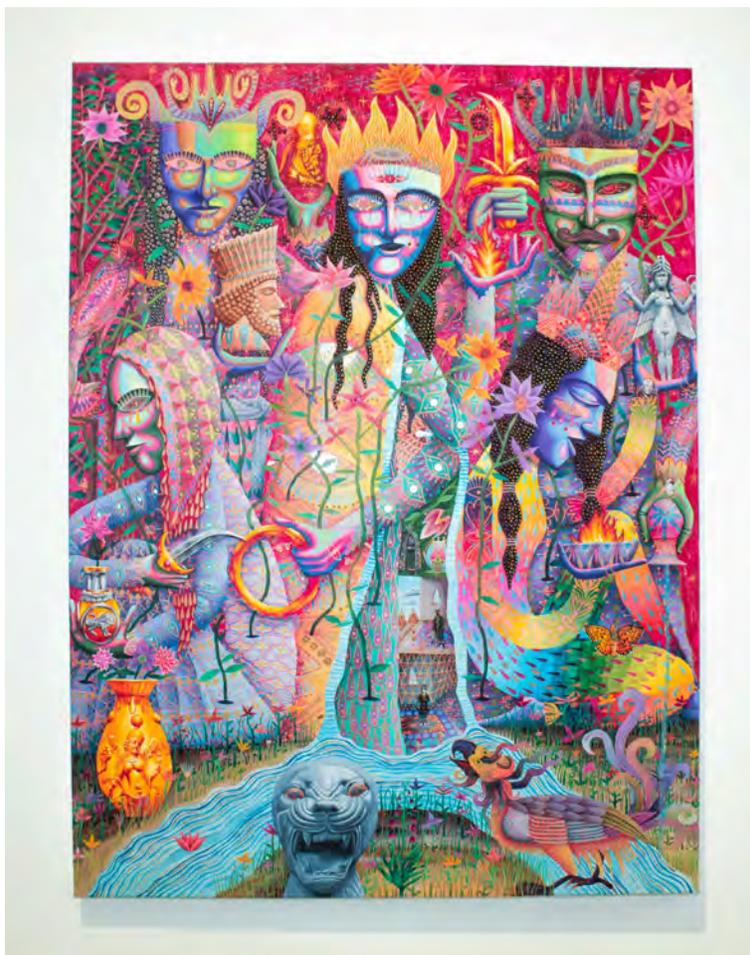
charcoal and colored pencil on paper

23.50 x 23.50 in

Artist Bio: Roya Farassat is an Iranian American visual artist living in New York. Her abstract and figurative work includes drawings, paintings, and sculptures. She received her BFA from Parsons School of Design and has been widely exhibited at galleries and museums in the United States and abroad. Farassat was nominated for The Victoria and Albert Jameel Prize, The MOP Foundation Contemporary Art Prize and awarded residencies from Henry Street Settlement and The Makor/Steinhardt Center. Her work has been reviewed by The New York Times, The Financial Times, The Brooklyn Rail, The Boston Globe, Art Critical, Art Radar, Hyperallergic, W Magazine, and Flaunt Magazine

Series Statement: Farassat's artistic approach to the drawing, "Darling Divas" is deeply psychological and playful, weaving reality with imagination. Through a satirical sense of humor, the artist depicts a solitary moment that explores the tender relationship between a mother and her daughters.

CV



Asad Faulwell

Communion, 2024

Acrylic and mixed media on canvas

40 x 30 in

Artist Bio: Asad Faulwell is a California based artist whose work has been shown at The Nelson-Atkins Museum, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, OCMA and LACMA among others. His work is included in numerous private collections as well as the permanent collections of The Long Museum, The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, OCMA, The Columbus Museum of Art, The Nelson-Atkins Museum, The Wellin Museum of Art and LACMA.

Series Statement: Asad Faulwell's work explores Iranian history and mythology through the depiction of humans, animals and landscapes both real and imagined. The figures in the paintings serve as architectural structures propping up narratives of identity, nationality and culture. Woven into the paintings are a deep connection with nature and mysticism rooted in Iran's pre-Islamic culture.

Featuring figures loosely based on historical archetypes of kings, queens and magi, masked, anonymous and often hollow, each painting is a vignette that relates to specific, ancient and recent historic events in Iran, including the constitutional revolution of 1951 and the CIA backed coup of 1953.

CV

**Mokarrameh Ghanbari**

Untitled, 2001

Mixed media on paper

16 x 11 in

Artist Bio: Born in Iran in 1928, Mokarrameh Ghanbari was a self-taught artist who began painting at the age of 61. She quickly produced a prolific body of work with a distinct visual language, even painting on the walls of her home when she ran out of paper. Mokarrameh became a defining artist of the Folk Art movement in Iran, and had her first exhibition at Seyhon Gallery, Tehran in 1995. Before her passing in 2005, the artist participated in ten other exhibitions and was awarded the jury prize at the Roshd Film Festival. In 2001, she was awarded "Woman of the Year" at the 12th International Conference of Iranian Women's Studies Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden. In addition, she was named the "Female Painter of 2001" by the Swedish National Museum.



Parastou Forouhar

Portrait, 2014

Digital drawing, digital print on Turner paper

47 x 34 in

Artist Bio: Living and working in German exile since the 1990s, themes like the violation of Human Rights and the oppression of women are of major concern for the artist and activist Parastou Forouhar, who employs a powerful feminist language in her art. Her work blurs the boundaries between form and concept, biography and artistry. With artistic techniques such as installation, graphic print or performative photography, Forouhar engages with the positionality of the female body, and how diversity and ambivalence shape the meaning and ownership of the space in relation to gender, ethnicity and migration. Her work has been widely exhibited around the world and is included in prestigious permanent collections, including The Queensland Art Museum, the British Museum, Belvedere in Vienna, the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt, the Deutsche Bank Art Collection and the Walker Art Center.

Series Statement: In this series, Parastou Forouhar uses her signature visual language of pattern and ornament to critique society and its relations. Forouhar's compositions are structurally complex, building detailed elements of ornament to create a larger, and often more sinister, human form. Notably, the artist employs the classical use of the grotesque in her image to inspire a haunting yet beautiful contemplation of the human form and condition- two sides of the same coin which cannot be separated. The viewer cannot escape the duality of Forouhar's work, seeing the repetition of beauty and horror in equal measure.

CV



Nahid Hagigat
Red Tulip, 2024
 acrylic on canvas
 24 x 18 in

Artist Bio: Born in Tehran, Iran in 1943, and now based in New York, Nahid Hagigat is a pioneering artist whose work bridges Iranian and Western art. After graduating in Fine Arts from Tehran University, Hagigat pursued a Ph. D. from New York University in the early 1970s. Still, she often exhibited her etchings and photo etchings in Tehran and was instrumental in introducing printmaking to the Iranian art scene. In 2013, Hagigat was included in the seminal show *Iran Modern* at the Asia Society in New York and recently in LACMA's *Women Defining Women In Contemporary Art of the Middle East and Beyond*, in 2023. Her work is in numerous permanent collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The British Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, JP Morgan-Chase, New York University, and World Bank in Washington, D.C. Her solo exhibition, *Etched in Time*, is currently on view at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, in San Francisco thru March 23, 2025.

Series Statement: Nahid Hagigat's extensive body of work is a seminal point of focus on emphasizing women's lives in a patriarchal culture. Hagigat focuses on the female figure in many of her works- but her goal is not to depict a victim, but rather a woman for whom strength and passion for life surpasses her entanglement with oppression. Hagigat's women embrace aliveness and a willingness to thrive as they achieve their next level of greatness. Flowers are powerful symbols of resistance and beauty- innocence, power, purity, peace, fertility, divinity, eternity, and love. Some are delicate, some are rough, some are short-lived, some are long, but all in their unique ways radiate an irreplaceable energy. As with Hagigat's women, they each have their own story to tell.

CV



Marjan Hormozi

Reflection, 2010

Oil on canvas

23.50 x 15.50 in

Artist Bio: Marjan Hormozi was born to an Iranian family in Tehran. Her father and uncle were in the advertising industry and in her early life she grew up in a very busy household that was like an around-the-clock ad agency. This very free and creative environment gave Marjan her initial love and passion for making art and storytelling. Marjan received her MFA from Slade School of Fine Arts, London. Her solo and group shows include, PØST, Track 16 gallery, Los Angeles, Crucial Gallery, London, the Royal Academy of Art, London, Torrance Museum of Art and LACE, Los Angeles. She is the recipient of several awards and fellowships including the Cheltenham fellowship (UK), Artist in Residence at the Stroud Museum (UK) and Artist in Residence at the University of North London (UK). Her work has appeared in various print and broadcast media including L.A. Weekly, KCRW, Ritz magazine UK, Studio International UK, BBC UK and is included in international private collections. Marjan Hormozi is the Area Head for Drawing Studio at Otis College of Art And Design and teaches Drawing and Painting at CalArts.

Series Statement: Marjan Hormozi works with satirical themes within a historical precedent: filtering them through contemporary actors and staging them in theater-like settings suggesting Southern California locations. The social concerns addressed in her work are not portrayed as dogmatic, pedagogical, nor do they offer tidy solutions. For Hormozi, the creative driving force is the narrative that presents itself to be reinterpreted. Her work could be considered a modern take on a Shakespearean tragedy; the compositions are lyrical and robust with complex characters in elaborate costumes interacting in an unconventional environment. Without the hand of a highly skilled draftsman, these epic interpretations of societal and personal concerns could be clumsy or ill conceived, however, she directs the stage with a deft touch and keen insight.

CV



Tahmineh Javanbakht

Pomegranate & screen triptych, 2024

Stainless steel Mirror

11 x 26 x 1 in

Artist Bio: Born in Iran and growing up in Isfahan until age 16, Tahmineh Javanbakht is a Los Angeles based multi-disciplinary artist who dedicates her art to the exploration of identity, memory, and cultural heritage. Javanbakht is the co-founder of Artecnic, a Los Angeles-based design firm whose designs have been included in collections at the Museum of Modern Art NY, LACMA, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Javanbakht has taught experimental painting at her alma mater, the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California.

Series Statement: Javanbakht has always been captivated by feminine symbology, which manifests in her work through fertile natural landscapes, feminine silhouettes, sensuous shadows, her mother's rose garden, her pearls and the culture of believing in good and bad omens. Her mirror works also signify her desire for a renewed future and the hopes and dreams of Iranian women for a society where they can live freely and fully express themselves. By incorporating traditional elements into her collages, she honors the cultural heritage that shapes these women's identities, while also alluding to the aspects of tradition and universal symbolisms.

CV

**Simin Keramati**

The Twin Wanderers, 2020

Colored pencil on paper

24 x 18 in

Artist Biography: Simin Keramati is an Iranian-Canadian multidisciplinary artist based in Canada. Her practice spans photography, film, mixed media, drawing, and painting, often exploring themes of identity, the diasporic experience, women's rights, and gender equality. Keramati resists the conventional frameworks imposed by curators and gallerists, challenging boundaries in her work. She received the Grand Prize at the Dhaka International Biennial in 2003, was shortlisted for the MOPCAP Prize in 2009, and has been awarded multiple grants from the Canada Council for the Arts.

Artist Statement: Keramati started this series of works during the pandemic, a new isolated lifestyle that caused a load of uncertainty in everybody's life. Thinking of another world, where one can touch or feel something new or even unreal, was the artist's first inspiration for doing this series. Keramati was inspired by Shahrzad, the storyteller from the One Thousand and One Nights, who said something like this: "close your eyes now, and dream as far as you can." Here are the twins blindfolded, wandering in their dreams.

CV



Farshid Mesghali

Ghamar, 2024

Mixed media on paper

39 x 31.50 in

Artist Bio: Hailing from the artistic heart of Iran, Mesghali- born in Isfahan in 1943- embarked on a journey through the spectrum of artistry. After studying painting at Tehran University, he ventured into graphic design and illustration in 1964.

In 1968, Mesghali's path led him to the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Tehran, where his creative prowess flourished. The 1970s saw him crafting award-winning animated films, evocative film posters, and enchanting children's book illustrations. His indelible mark on children's literature earned him the Hans Christian Andersen Medal in 1974.

A new chapter unfolded in 1979 when he moved to Paris, creating an array of captivating paintings and sculptures showcased at the Sammy King Gallery. In 1986, he set up his graphic design studio, Desktop Studio, in Southern California, USA. From 1990 to 1994, Mesghali's digital artworks, born from snapshot photos, graced galleries and the L.A. County Museum of Modern Arts.

Today, this esteemed artist continues to breathe life into paintings, sculptures, and immersive installations from his studio, carrying forward a legacy of creativity and vision. He is based in Iran.

Series Statement: Mesghali's portraits bring a colorful lightness to his otherwise serious subjects. In this portrait, Mesghali paints Ghamar, the iconic Iranian singer who was the first woman to perform without a veil. Ghamar was a pioneer and champion of women's rights, which earned her the title of the Queen of Persian Music. Mesghali's portrait evokes the brilliance and lyricism of Ghamar's life and work, and her lasting legacy in Iranian history.

CV



Dana Nehdaran

Ready For My Portrait, 2020

Oil on canvas

72 x 60 in

Artist Bio: Born in 1982, Dana Nehdaran studied painting at Soureh Art University in Shiraz, Iran, after having studied carpet design in Isfahan, the rug capital of the world. *Esther's Children*, his exhibition of paintings based on late-nineteenth-century images of Iranian Jews, was shown in 2011 at Shirin Art Gallery in Tehran and in 2013 at Rira Gallery in Dubai. A reflection on the photographs of E.J. Bellocq's Storyville portraits, *A Preservation of Light*, was exhibited at Spillman/Blackwell Fine Art in New Orleans in 2023. Nehdaran's work has also been included in exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Paris, Monaco, and Toronto, and featured in *Artes Magazine*, *Whitehot Magazine of Contemporary Art*, *The Huffington Post*, *LA Weekly*, *The New York Times*, and *ArtDaily*. A member of the Iranian Painter Association since 2007, he lives and works in New York.

Series Statement:

In this series, *A Preservation of Light*, Dana Nehdaran continues his exploration of historical photographs, taking inspiration from Ernst J. Bellocq's glass plate negatives documenting the red light district of Storyville, New Orleans in the early 20th century. In Nehdaran's previous series, *Esther's Children*, his paintings were based on photographs of early 20th century Jews in Iran- his ancestors. The artist found a similar familiarity with the anonymous women photographed by Bellocq, drawn in by the gaze of his ghostly muses. In these paintings, Nehdaran reenvisioned the spirit of these muses, capturing their stories and emotions that have been shrouded in mystery for over a century. In a sense, the artist is continuing Bellocq's series of glass plate negatives by bringing them to life on canvas. In addition to using acrylic and oil paints, Nehdaran used materials like copper and the soot of beeswax candles on canvas to recreate the same elusive effects of light that appear in Bellocq's negatives. The connection Nehdaran feels with his subjects is translated to their relationship with the viewer- we feel their connection through Nehdaran and consequently ourselves.

CV



Nicky Nodjourni

New York Times Sketchbooks (1996–1999), 1996-1999

Mixed media on newspaper

27 x 22 in

Artist Bio: Brooklyn-based artist Nicky Nodjourni was born in Kermanshah, Iran in 1942 and holds a Bachelor's degree in Art from Tehran University of Fine Arts. Nodjourni relocated to the United States in the late 1960s, where he received his Master's degree in Fine Arts from The City College of New York in 1974. Returning to Tehran to join the faculty of his alma mater, Nodjourni continued the journey of political engagement that has been foundational to his work across decades. Nodjourni's works are in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the British Museum in London, Guggenheim Museum in Abu Dhabi, the DePaul Art Museum in Chicago, and the National Museum of Cuba. Nicky Nodjourni's solo exhibition, *Nicky Nodjourni: The Personal is Political* is currently on exhibition at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center (YBCA) through March 23 2025. Nodjourni lives and works in Brooklyn.

Series Statement: From 1996 to 1999, Nodjourni painted on the front page of the Times every day, developing a diaristic practice that was equally a forum for aesthetic experimentation, an exploration of his inner life, and a meditation on world-historical events in real time. Throughout his career, Nodjourni has drawn on contemporary political events and news media photos for the characters that populate his painted tableaus. Here his relationship to his source material is inverted; headlines and news photos constitute the ghostly ground of these works, inflecting and amplifying their painted imagery in uncanny and unexpected ways. A single, languid flower on the day after Princess Diana died; a tender portrait of his daughter on the day Netanyahu and Arafat meet; a ghostly Qajar warrior pursues a fleeing woman across reports of a moderate candidate's victory in a presidential election in Iran. This body of work offers a powerful and sometimes painfully acute reaffirmation of an urgent cry from Nodjourni's student days: then as now, the personal is political.

CV



Zartosht Rahimi

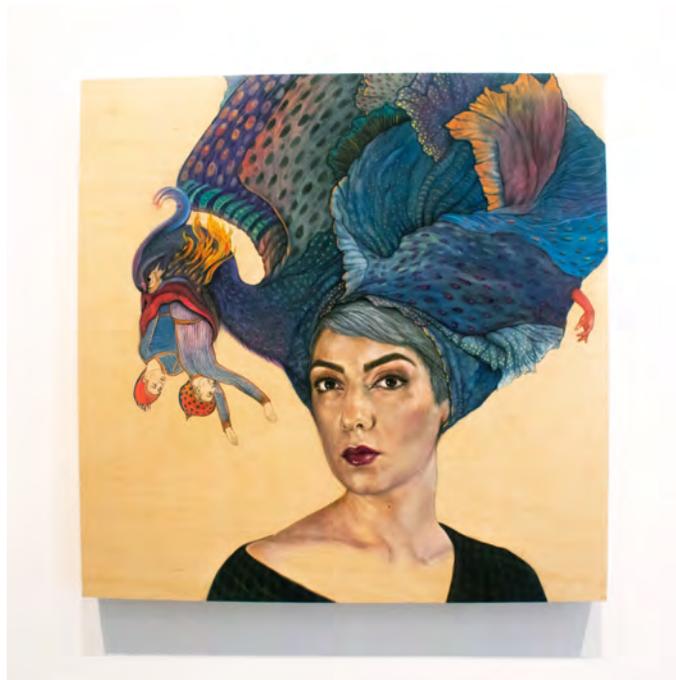
Dr. Mossadegh, 2020

acrylic on canvas
27.5 x 20 in

Artist Bio: Zartosht Rahimi, born in 1989 in Esfahan, Iran, holds a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design and a Master of Painting From Soureh Art University. He has begun his professional career with Tarrahan Azad Gallery and presented his artworks at various solo and group exhibitions so far. Having the experience of working with different media such as graphics, illustration, painting, video and installation, he has tried to extend and connect the features of these media for creating artworks which often focus on social issues, politics, folk culture and art. He has also organized and held numerous exhibitions as a curator. His efforts in this context have focused on introducing young and emerging artists, as well as raising political and social issues by using a variety of media. Zartosht Rahimi has exhibited his works in over thirty solo and group exhibitions in Canada, Germany, France, the United States and Norway and Iran. Currently, he lives and works in Tehran, Iran.

Series Statement: Portrait, as one of the forms of painting, appears in an iconic way in Rahimi's artworks. It means that he chooses specific characters, draws extra attention to their role, and clarifies his focus on key people by drawing their portraits. Characters such as clerics, prominent political figures, writers, artists and pop singers can be identified among them. This interest in both elite culturists and prominent intellectuals, as well as influential artists and popular figures, evokes a kind of class journey in the mind which reveals the artist's attempt for deeper search on social and cultural issues.

CV



Bahar Sabzevari

Crown Series, 2020

Oil on wood panel

30 x 30 in

Artist Bio: Bahar Sabzevari (b. 1980, Iran) is a Brooklyn-based visual artist whose work reflects a deep exploration of identity, freedom, and belonging. Through her paintings, Sabzevari creates richly layered narratives that examine the human condition, weaving personal experiences with universal themes.

Her art draws inspiration from mythology, Persian miniatures, natural history, and cultural symbolism, blending these elements with contemporary ideas. Each piece reflects her fascination with storytelling, combining humor, critique, and introspection to address societal and environmental concerns.

She has exhibited her work internationally, earning recognition through awards from the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation and residencies at Civitella Ranieri in Italy and The Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing.

Series Statement: My self-portraits delve into themes of identity, belonging, and the intricate dialogue between the self and the world. These works serve as visual diaries, capturing personal and cultural transitions while offering a deeply introspective exploration of my lived experiences.

The “Crown Series” is a pivotal part of this journey, rooted in the belief that every woman is a queen. The crowns symbolize power, victory, and glory, drawing from historical and cultural narratives. Playful elements surrounding the crowns, combined with vibrant colors, animals, and Persian motifs, transform these self-portraits into layered narratives. These works capture my emotions, beliefs, and values as an Iranian woman while encouraging viewers to explore their own perceptions of identity and self-worth.

Blending Persian visual elements such as patterns, mythology, and animals with contemporary themes, my art critiques societal constraints while celebrating individuality. Each self-portrait evolves with my life’s phases, inviting viewers to reflect on their own narratives, bridging the personal and the universal through layers of symbolism and meaning.

CV



Hadi Salehi

Reconfigured 17, 2021

Unique Layered C-Print Collage with Artist's Calligraphy

24 x 20 in

Artist Bio: 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. Hadi's work is in the permanent collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Arts (LACMA) and exhibited in USC Fischer Museum of Art in *Art And Hope at The End of The Tunnel*, in 2021, curated by Edward Goldman.

Series Statement: In his Reconfigured Series, Hadi Salehi rediscovered his earlier works during the pandemic lockdowns. Early on in the pandemic, the then 70 year old LA based analogue photographer began combing through his extensive archive of prints and film, eventually coming across a series of never before used photos from 2015. First, the artist developed each image by hand using the gelatin silver print process on Milford warm tone double weight fiber based paper, then Salehi began experimenting with combining the images through layering and collage. Throughout this cathartic process, Salehi contemplates the past, reflecting on the shifting nature of memory. Remembering the joys and sorrows of his life, Salehi realized that his feelings toward certain memories had changed as time went on, his present self retouching and at times reconstructing the past altogether. Salehi works to embody this complex feeling in the Reconfigured series, where images are cut, broken, and disintegrated, only to take on new life once combined with other prints.

CV



Sepideh Salehi

Mohr Portrait 8, 2016

Photograph on wood with frottage on Japanese paper

24 x 20 in

Artist Bio:

Sepideh Salehi is a multidisciplinary artist born in Tehran. She left Iran to attend Accademia di belle Arti in Florence Italy where she received her MFA in Visual Art and Multimedia. She works in various media and utilizes different processes ranging from painting and drawing to printmaking, photography, video art, and painting in motion. By incorporating aspects of storytelling and letter writing, Salehi recollects the experiences she had growing up in post-1979 Tehran. She weaves personal narrative and cultural history into her work, reflecting on the ways in which she, and other women, navigated the shifting social and political landscapes. Her work has been exhibited internationally, including at, Zona Maco, Mexico City, Southampton Art fair, New York, MIA photo Fair Milan, Intrecci, Galleria Anna Mara in Rome, an exhibition of Iranian women artists titled *A Bridge Between You and Everything* curated by Shirin Neshat at High Line Nine, NYC, Photo London, Somerset House London, *Mirrored Re-Collection* at the University of Maryland, *REVEAL* at The Space by Advocartsy LA, *Patterning* curated by Samantha Friedman at Kentler International Drawing Space, Brooklyn, NY, *STRAPPA* Rogue Space Chelsea NY, *Craft*, and Folk Art Museum LA, Tribeca Video Art NY, Centre for Contemporary Art Luigi Pecci, Virgiliano Museum and International Bologna Art Fair Italy. Salehi has been on a panel discussion with Shirin Neshat, Middle East Institute, and had talks at the University of Maryland, Loyola University, Pyramid Atlantic Center, and others. She currently lives and works between Washington DC and New York.

Series Statement: This artwork features a portrait of a woman who turns her face away from the viewer. She is dressed in a black gown, and a delicate pattern overlays the image. For this piece, I photographed Iranian women I know personally and asked them to pose in ways that covered or obscured their faces. I then transformed the work through deconstruction to create a sense of complex ambiguity. In this artwork, I explore the relationship between the inner self and the outside world, critiquing and protesting how women have been represented in society. These courageous women say no; they turn their faces against injustice and violence. This piece manifests the feminine voice based on my experiences, shaped and influenced by my environment. It represents not a victim, but someone who seeks to control their narrative and assert their voice.

Through my art, I reimagine realities to connect with the past. I mix intuitive painting and collage processes with a conceptual practice rooted in emotions and memories related to separation from home and family. My desire to explore the unknown fuels my interest in transformation. Embedded in my experience as an Iranian woman, concepts of covering up, hiding, and privacy manifest as layered collages, and frame-by-frame animations. To visualize ideas and cultural history I experiment with new and old mediums. My process is iterative—each body of work builds on the other. My drawings emerge from a union between the immediacy of line and the literal properties of writing. I also use traditional Iranian motifs to create patterns through rubbings and printmaking. Pictures and videos I either take myself or source online, document events I process by the reworking source material. Ongoing investigations of longing, memory, and misuse of power lead to new ideas. The resulting body of knowledge grows with my practice—a benefit that is its own reward.



Delbar Shahbaz

Song of Radiance, 2024

Mixed media on paper

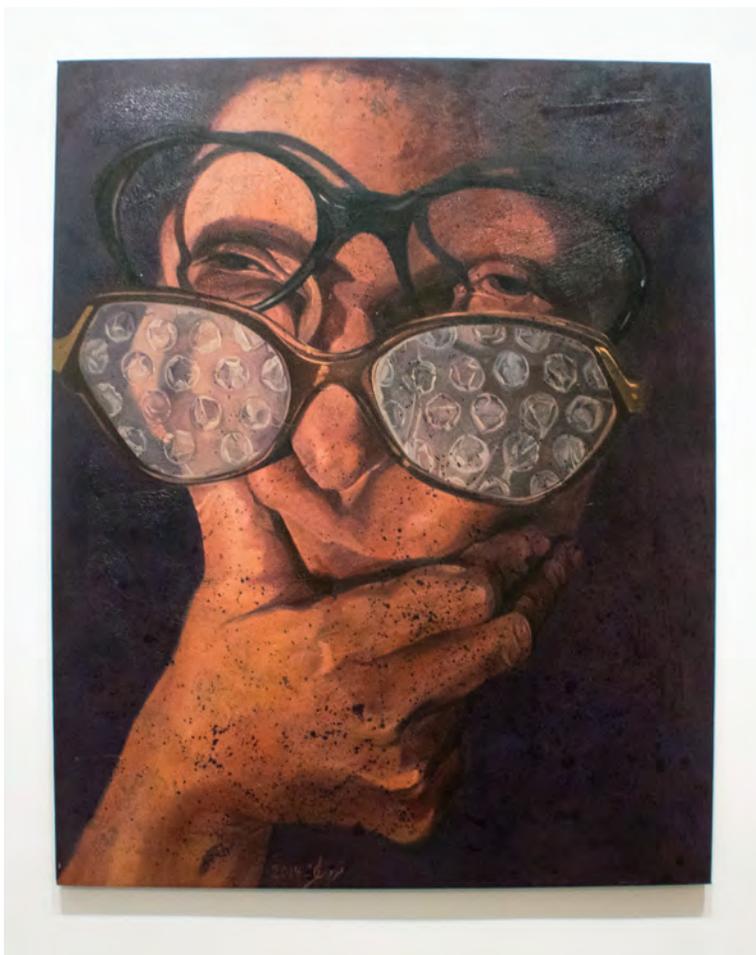
23 x 18 in

Artist Bio: Delbar Shahbaz received her MFA from Art University in Tehran, Iran in 2008. She went on to pursue a career as a professional artist and educator before migrating to the USA in 2013, where she earned her second MFA from the Art Center College of Design. Of central concern to her practice is the negotiation of gender identity, transformation, and emancipation as well as human connection to the natural realm. Shahbaz engages with self-identity as fluid, socially constructed, and multifaceted. She responds to her own experiences as a female migrant yet connects her subjectivity to the universal subject matter.

Shahbaz has worked as a part-time faculty member at Art Center College of Design since 2016, and her works have been exhibited as a solo artist and in group shows internationally.

Series Statement: In *Song of Radiance*, Delbar Shahbaz continues her characteristic style of light versus darkness and the resilience it demands. In her vibrant use of color, light, and movement, Shahbaz consequently explores shadows and darkness. But here, the figure has her head turned to the light through the shadows. In a pose of power, Shahbaz's women are painted as figures of radiance and strength, looking towards a better horizon.

CV



Foroozan Shirghani

Gaze Series, 2015

Acrylic and oil on canvas

59 x 47 in

Artist Bio: Foroozan Shirghani (b. Iran, 1981), is a multidisciplinary artist who received her BFA from Tehran Azad Art University in 2004 and her MFA from Alzahra University in 2008. She served as a lecturer and art instructor at the Share Rey Azad university and Shariati University in Tehran between 2008 to 2015. Foroozan Shirghani's work usually stems from her personal experiences and mainly focuses on psychological and socio-political issues, especially identity boundaries in today's individual and social life. During her creative process, she explores universal themes of displacement, alienation, fragility, vulnerability, loss, suffering, and pressure exerted on the human body by these forces. Shirghani works across mediums, including painting, drawing, ceramic sculptures, abstract video, and textiles. Her work has been featured in over sixty exhibitions worldwide and featured in numerous publications.

Series Statement: Foroozan Shirghani's work is generally figurative and stems from her personal experiences. Her work mainly focuses on psychological and socio-political issues, especially identity challenges in today's individual and social life. The objects have a symbolic nature in her works and imply social behaviors. One of her projects entitled "Gaze" deals with the subject of glasses. Her portraits stare from behind multi-purpose glasses with a hesitant look elsewhere. These differing glasses, when overlapped, present a vision beyond vision.

CV

**Alireza Shojaian**

Lie With Me, 2024

Acrylic and colored pencil on wood

23.50 x 31.50 in

Artist Bio: Alireza Shojaian is an Iranian artist, born in Tehran in 1988. He began his career in Tehran and Beirut and has been based in Paris since 2019. His work aims to challenge societal prejudices against non-heteronormative masculine identities.

Series Statement: Shojaian aims to redefine the portrayal of masculinity by capturing intimate moments that emphasise vulnerability and tenderness. In his work, the male figure is not confined to the historically imposed narrative of stoic strength or suffering often seen throughout art history. Instead, he reshapes these depictions by embracing softness, inviting viewers to witness the fragile and emotional aspects of his subjects.

CV



Shadi Yousefian

Abstract Identity #1 and #2, 2025

Archival print on canvas with acrylic

84 x 76 in

Artist Bio: Shadi Yousefian is an artist whose mixed media work reflects and addresses issues that touch on universal themes such as loss, dislocation, alienation, and reinvention. She received both her Bachelor's (2003) and Master's (2006) of Fine Arts in photography from San Francisco State University. Her work engages personal and social issues of contemporary life, particularly cultural identity and the immigrant experience. Shadi has been the recipient of several awards including the Best of Photography Award at the 13th Annual Stillwell Show, The International Photo Awards (IPA 2004 and 2005), The Murphy & Cadogan Fellowship in the Fine Arts, and the International Photography Competition (Latitude Life). Her work has also been acquired by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the San Diego Museum of Art.

Series Statement: The concept of Identity has consistently been the principal subject matter of Shadi Yousefian's work. In her early *Self-Portraits* series, Yousefian explores her own "double identity" as an immigrant, and later she expanded upon that idea in her succeeding *Universal Identity* series. Through her work, Yousefian draws the conclusion that there are more nuanced factors that shape an identity than merely the place or culture that one comes from- and that in daily interactions with other people, universal factors such as age, gender, race and the characteristics of others will influence and form one's own identity.

In this series, Yousefian touches upon the idea that identity is too abstract to be objectively understood or explained. It is masked and obscured by our subjective presumptions and interpretations of ourselves and others.

In *Abstract Identity*, she adds even more layers of color and texture to the composite portraits made from collaged negatives printed on canvas. Yousefian is attempting to show the viewer that it is impossible to define or understand the true identity of a person with all of its complexity and fluidity.

CV