

Back  
to the Future



Leyly 190

Galerie  
Nicolas  
Flamel



Hessam KHALATBARI & Yassi METGHALCHI  
ont le plaisir de vous convier au vernissage de l'exposition

**Back** \_\_\_\_\_  
*to the* **Future**  
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**Iranian Modern  
& Contemporary Art**

**JEUDI 9 MARS 2023 À PARTIR DE 18H**

216 rue Saint Martin 75003 Paris, France  
T. +33 1 42 71 87 83  
[www.galerienicolasflamel.com](http://www.galerienicolasflamel.com)

**MAZEH**  
LES SAVEURS PERSANES • Depuis 1984

Galerie  
Nicolas  
Flamel



*'Si la mémoire s'oriente vers le passé du sujet,  
ce n'est que pour mieux le guider  
vers un avenir possible.'  
L'art et la culture, espoir pour l'humanité.*



It is a pleasure and a privilege to write these words of introduction to the exhibition Back to the Future. Gathering together iconic works of modern and contemporary Iranian painters and sculptors, drawing on traditional Iranian themes and texts, this selection reaffirms the eternal values of Iranian art and culture. The artists selected display various tendencies in modern and contemporary art: abstraction, landscape, and calligraphy as well as figuration, related to Persian manuscript illustration. A desert landscape, a simple flowering plant, a mirrorwork portrait and skateboard, a vibrant blue calligraphic composition, a dramatic image of a horse and female rider, each evoke in subtle ways the Memory of Iran. The range of materials, from oil on canvas and sculpture to mirrorwork, speaks to the versatility of Iranian art while the variety of modes deployed by the artists points to the continued vitality of Iranian modernism. In these days of fear and courage in our homeland, it is indeed gratifying to turn to the solace of Art, a powerful reminder of the artistic genius and enduring courage of the Iranian people.

**Zan Zendegi Azadi**

**Layla S Diba,**

*PhD. Independent scholar and art advisor*

*February 2023*

# GOLNAZ FATHI

A trained calligrapher, Fathi has the ability to skillfully transform known language into form and composition. Having discovered calligraphy while studying graphic design at Tehran's Azad University, she later left to train at the Calligraphy Association of Iran for six years. As a result Fathi was the first woman to win an award for Ketabat, a distinct genre of calligraphy. She soon got tired of the discipline's rules and regulations and thus created a new form of expression in her paintings: an imaginary language deeply rooted in Persian tradition while simultaneously hinting at a social renaissance. Her paintings carry traces of meaning that have no known coded alphabet. The strength of her work stems from the drive to express emotions that cannot be pinned down into words; Fathi's works succeed where language fails.

She has been the subject of solo shows in New York, Shanghai, London, Beirut, Hong Kong, Singapore, Paris and Dubai amongst others. Some of these include, *Contemplations*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, Singapore (2016) *khat-Line*, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2016), *Dance Me to the End of Night*, October Gallery, London (2014); *Marked: Contemporary Takes on Mark-Making*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York and Hong Kong (2014); *The Living Road*, Pearl Lam Gallery, Shanghai, China (2013). Fathi has been exhibited nearly 80 of worldwide group shows, including 'All happens after sunset', MOCA art pavilion shanghai 2017, *Frontier reimagined*, Museo di Grimani, Venice biennale 2015, *Writing non writing*, Museum of Contemporary Art, CAA Hangzhou, China 2015, *The Other Half of Iran*, Islamic Arts Museum, Malaysia



(2013); *World Stories: Young Voices*, Brighton Museum, UK (2012); *The Art of Writing*, Art Forum of Wiesbaden, Germany (2011); *Iran Inside Out*, Chelsea Museum, New York (2009) and participated in the International Woman Artists' Biennial, South Korea (2009). She was also part of *Word Into Art* exhibition at the British Museum (2006). Fathi received the Young Global Leader Award in 2011.

Her works are housed in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum, New York; Asian Civilization's Museum, Singapore; Brighton & Hove Museum, England; The British Museum, London; Carnegie Mellon University, Doha, Qatar; Museum of Islamic Art, Malaysia; Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, India and The Farjam Foundation Dubai, Pirelli private collection, France.



**I AM IN PEACE, 2021**  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS — 130 X 190 CM

# NASSER ASSAR

Nasser Assar (1928-2011) was a major player in the development of Modernism in Iran in the 1960s and 1970s. He was among the first generation of self-exiled artists when moved from Tehran and to Paris in 1953.

Exposed to the finest exhibits in the city of Paris, he was deeply struck by Chinese painting which then shifted his artistic practice into an exploration of Asian motifs which his works, later referred to as prose paintings due to his inspiration from Japanese philosophies of Taoist Liou Kia-hway. Assar's prose-paintings intimately associates his work with fellow artist Sohrab Sepehri, who also explored the notions of Zen within his Tree series.

Another defining source of inspiration in Assar's career was oriental philosophy and poetry in which he was immersed early on through his father. His in-depth influence of Sufi mysticism creates non-figurative compositions within his oeuvre. In this way, the interplay between Iran's rich cultural heritage and modernism is remarkably accomplished through Assar's new combining approach.



Assar has been largely exhibited in major European cities and in the United States since the 1950s and 1980s.



**UNTITLED, 1962**  
OIL ON CANVAS — 80 X 60 CM

# LEYLY MATINE DAFTARY

A significant figure in the artistic history of the Middle East, Leyly Matine-Daftary was amongst the few artists who changed the historically stolid dictates of traditionalism prevalent in the region. In addition to establishing a personal style of modernism, she helped promulgate the movement, now so firmly evident in Iran and in the Arab world, which produced a great number of exceptional and internationally renowned female artists.

Leyly Matine-Daftary was born in Tehran, Iran in 1937. Her father, Ahmad Matine-Daftary, was Prime Minister of Iran. After completing her elementary education in Tehran, she attended Cheltenham Ladies College and continued her education at the Slade School of Fine Arts in London, from which she received a degree in Fine Arts. She returned to Tehran in the late 1950s and began a career as a professional artist and also as an educator, becoming a lecturer on sculpture and sculpting at the Fine Arts Faculty of Tehran University. In 1961 she married Kaveh Farman-Farmanian with whom she had two children, Kamran and Mansureh.



Matine-Daftary was at the forefront of the arts in the Middle East, with great involvement in the Tehran Biennials - the genesis of the current direction of contemporary arts in the region - and in the Shiraz Arts Festival, for which Matine-Daftary created the public aesthetic through her iconic design of posters, costumes and various attendant identifying material.

Leyly Matine-Daftary passed away in Paris in 2007.

Her legacy of modernism and minimalism will continue to be one of the most significant influences in the development of the contemporary arts in the Middle East.



**UNTITLED, 1990**  
OIL ON CANVAS — 65 X 55 CM

# LEILA NAZARIAN

Leila Nazarian is an Iranian-American artist currently living between Iran and the United States. She received both her Bachelor of Arts in International and Comparative Politics, with a minor in Fine Arts, and Master of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies, in Paris. She received her second Masters in Public Diplomacy from the University of Southern California. Her passion for travel, cultural diplomacy, and the beach, all influence the brand; a mix of East and West, old and new, flord yet laid back.

Nazarian is also the founder of Eclectic Decks, a contemporary art and lifestyle brand that fuses traditional art-forms from around the world with a modern-day platform.

For her latest series of work, Nazarian merges the traditional crafts of Iran, such as Khatamkari (Persian marquetry), Ayneh Kari (mirror work), and Ghalamzani (metal embossing), with the signature object from Los Angeles, the skateboard, in a quest to explore her identity and cultural heritage while also discovering the long histories associated with these crafts. The final result is a harmonious and unique cross-cultural exchange



that takes the viewer on a surreal journey, highlighting the possibilities of experimentation and the importance of jolting ourselves into new ways of seeing. The interplay between the traditional and the contemporary serves to regenerate attraction towards prosaic objects that are often overlooked.



UNTITLED FROM THE ECLECTIC DECKS SERIES, 2022  
MIRRORWORK (AYNEH KARI) ON SKATE DECK — 82 X 20 CM — UNIQUE EDITION

# PARVIZ KALANTARI

Parviz Kalantari is a painter born in 1931 in Zanjan, Iran and died in 2016. He was most famous for his illustrations in school texts.

The young artist who had begun with illustrations, continued to focus on nomadic life in his paintings, making urban dwellers more familiar with those that move to and fro with the change of seasons.

He was from a generation whose main concern was making a bridge between modern paintings and the venerable cultural heritage, which is tradition.

He had made efforts to create new works with today's international language of painting. He believed that tradition was yesterday's language while modernism is the language of today, and that tradition should be expressed in the language of today.



His art had also been exhibited in other countries such as France, the UK and the USA and were very well received in every case. His artwork entitled "Iranian City" was put on display at the UN office in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2005.

*'As hard as I tried, I could not feel any emotional link to the Swiss landscape they asked me to paint. All that beautiful landscape was just a colour postcard to me. The truth is, I can only paint the earthy landscapes of this land which is my own. I'm in love with this earth, this dust which I got to know on my trips to the desert!'*  
**Parviz Kalantari, 2008**



**UNTITLED, 1984**  
OIL ON CANVAS — 110 X 70 CM



# BEHRUZ HESCHMAT

Behruz Heschmat tree houses sculptures are homes of metaphors between his Memories and Dreams of belonging. They are a symbol of Home and Family, of Security and most importantly of Identity.

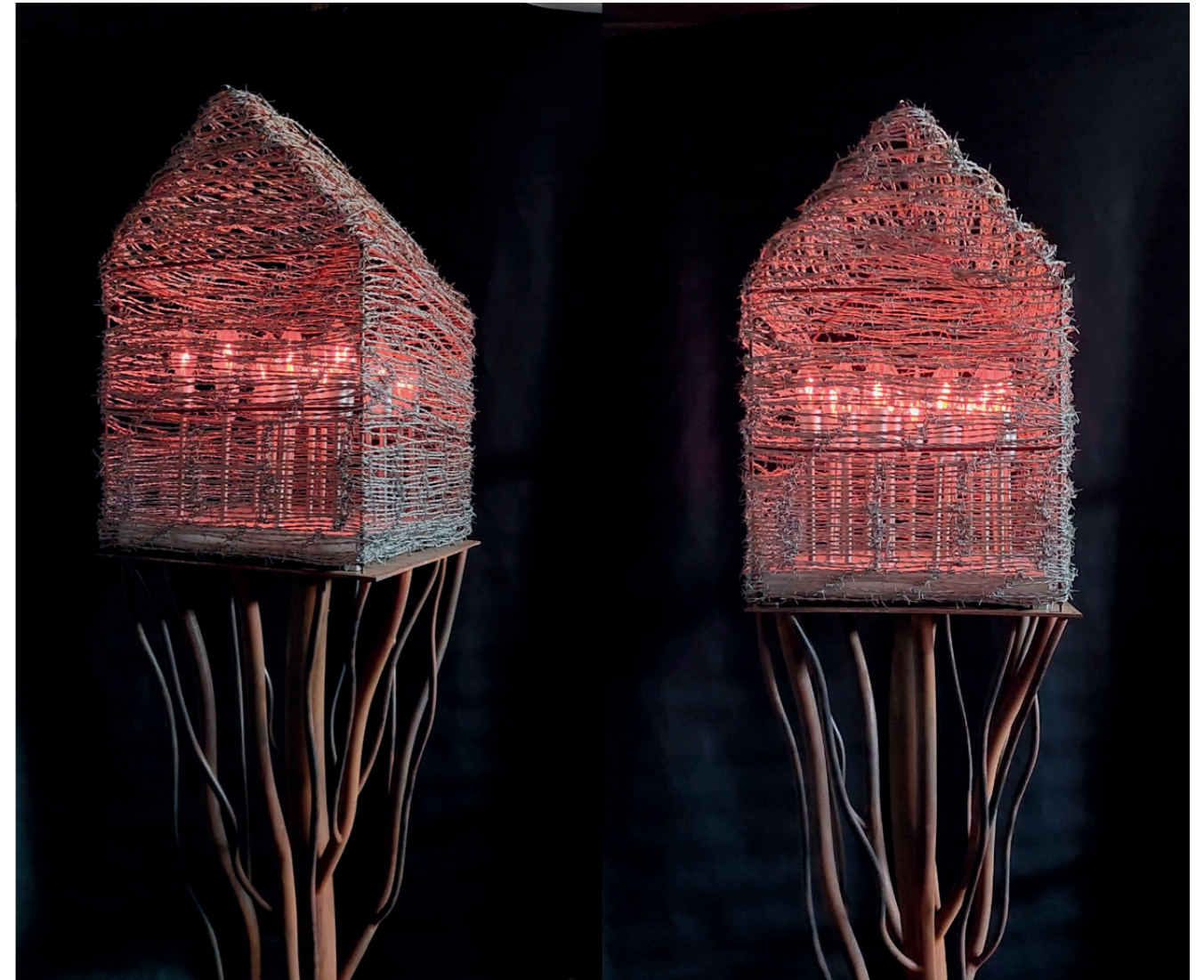
They reflect a different state of mind, and often a nostalgia for his Homeland, Iran and the steel branches of the tree could also be the roots.

As an Iranian who moved to Austria in the 1970s, Heschmat's treehouses are an exiled artist's imaginative interpretation of Home. To Heschmat, the house is central to Human Existence, and emphasize the instability and fragility of our notion of Home. His treehouses mutate: their materials, colors and contents continually change and convey a great sense of energy, sense of balance, for the laws of gravity with the position of the house.



**THE 4 HOUSES: WATER, TREE, HOME**  
STEEL TOTAL HEIGHT APPROX. 68 CM & HOUSE 18 X 16 CM

*"In my work, there is always an inherent conceptual link between form and space, sculpture and architecture."*



**THE LIGHTS OF FREEDOM FROM A DARK CAGE, 2017**  
STAND 2,32 M & HOUSE 40 X 50 CM

# MEHDI NABAVI

Mehdi Nabavi is an Iranian contemporary artist born in 1978 who is mostly famous for his artworks composed of broken mirrors and glass shards on wood, which reflect back the world in fragmented pieces that shifts and flickers into a thousand moving images of light and shadows. He also uses other elements in his works as well as painting and installations. His first serious achievement as a professional artist was at the age of 19 when he was represented at the 4th Iranian contemporary painting biennial in Tehran Contemporary Art Museum (TMOCA).



He has participated in several group and solo exhibitions in art galleries, art fairs and auctions in Iran, in the UAE, Turkey, France, Switzerland, Lebanon, Kuwait, Italy, USA, Portugal, Netherlands and Canada and his artworks have also been exhibited at museums such as Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in 2014, Kunst Haus Rapperswil Museum in Zurich 2015, Salsali private Museum in the UAE in 2017, and Rijks Museum in Amsterdam 2019.



**SHAHBANOU, 2017**  
CUT MIRROR ON WOOD — 76 X 76 CM — UNIQUE EDITION

# GOLNAZ PAYANI

Golnâz Payani est née à Téhéran en 1986. Après une Licence de Peinture obtenue à la Faculté d'Art et d'Architecture de Téhéran, elle poursuit un cursus complet à l'Ecole d'art de Clermont-Ferrand où elle obtient le Diplôme National Supérieur d'Expression Plastique (master) en 2013. Elle expose en solo ou dans des expositions collectives depuis 2011, en France (Paris, Clermont-Ferrand, Thiers, Toulouse etc) et à l'Étranger (Los Angeles, Londres, New York, Turin, Berlin etc).



Elle développe une pratique ouverte où des médiums variés sont sollicités : travaux sur tissus, installation, film, vidéo, poésie.

Son travail est représentée par la galerie Praz-Delavallade, Paris/Los Angeles.

*« Pour ce travail j'ai déteint une zone spécifique sur un tissu iranien appelé «boté jeghé». La forme ovale surgit donc suite à un travail d'extraction, elle montre ce qu'il reste du tissu d'origine. L'ovale argenté devient ainsi une trace, celle qui témoigne de l'apparition d'une nouvelle forme suite à un travail de défaire, le passage du temps et la perturbation infligée à la surface lisse du tissu.*

*De manière générale je m'intéresse à la mince frontière entre le visible et l'invisible, à l'objet qui suggère la chose aujourd'hui disparue. A la recherche de « moi » après avoir quitté mon pays, une question m'obsède : dans quelle mesure la trace conserve-t-elle la mémoire de l'objet originel ? »*



**OVALE ARGENTÉE, 2022**  
FABRIC AND WOOD — 90 X 70 CM

# NASSER OVISSI

Born in Tehran, Iran in 1934, Nasser Ovissi studied Law and Political Sciences at the University of Tehran before studying fine art at Beaux Fine Art in Rome. Ovissi's work is characterized by stylized figures of Persian women and horses, set amidst geometric patterns and decorative elements; his figures seem to merge into and out of space. The artist has received numerous awards and honors, including being exhibited at the 1959 Paris Biennale and a Grand Prize at the 1962 Biennale of Fine Arts of Tehran. His works are included in the collections of the Contemporary Art Museum in Madrid and the National Art Gallery of Greece in Athens.



*“My work is dedicated to the beauty of life and I hope those who experience my work will walk away with an experience of beauty.”*



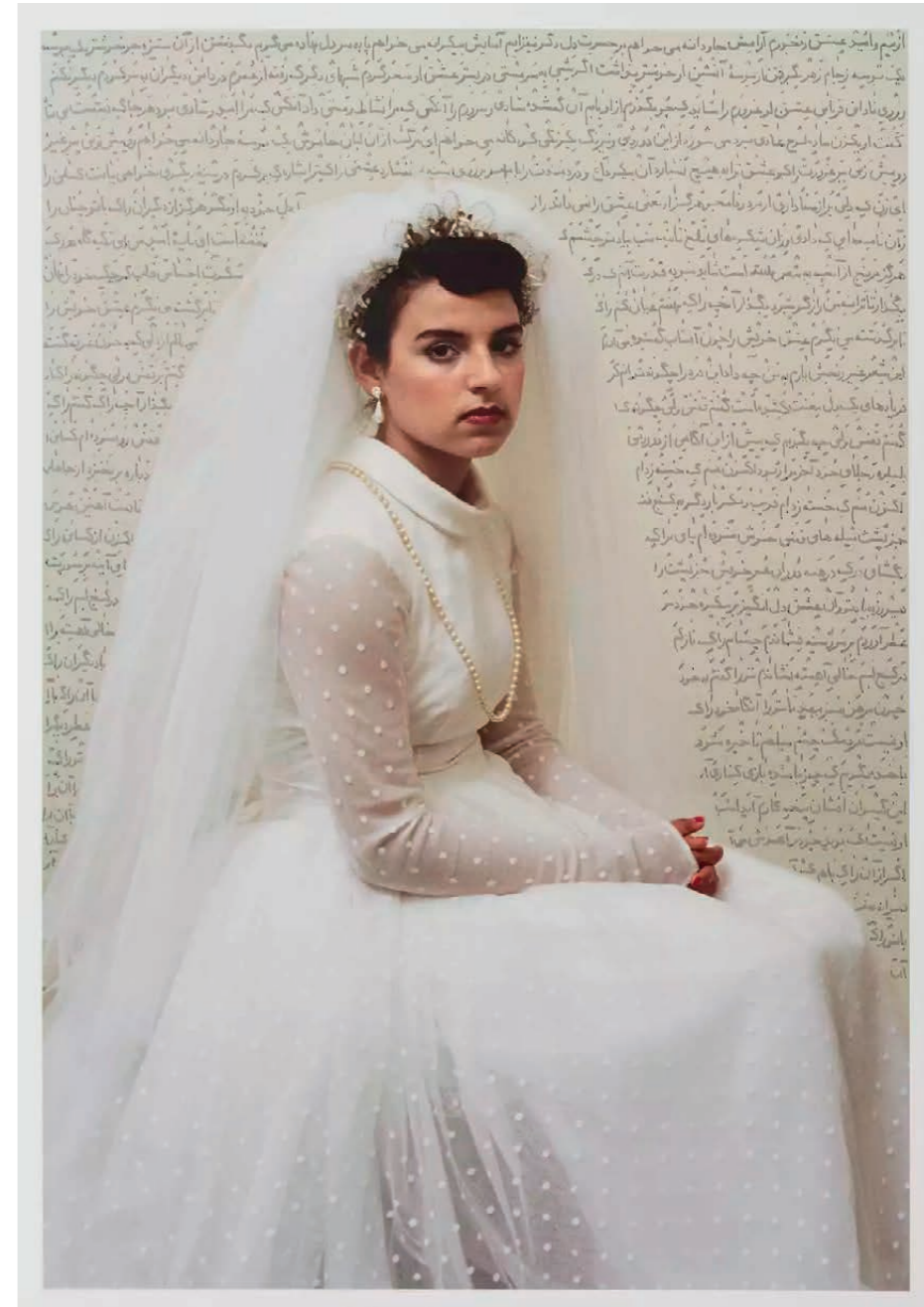
**NASSER OVISSI**  
MIXED MEDIA ON CARDBOARD — 95 X 80 CM

# SHIRIN NESHAT

Shirin Neshat uses photography, film, and video to delve into issues of femininity, religion, identity, exile, and cultural history. She's particularly interested in the effects of Islamic fundamentalism and militancy, and in the relationship between the personal and the political. Her film *Women Without Men* (2009), which won the Silver Lion award at the Venice Film Festival in 2009, follows the lives of four women in 1950s Iran.



Her work has been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, the Istanbul and Johannesburg Biennials, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and the Tate Gallery in London, among other institutions. Neshat currently lives and works in New York.



**PARI (FROM THE WOMEN WITHOUT MEN SERIES), 2008**  
GELATIN SILVER PRINT WITH INK — 35,5 X 43,2 CM — AP

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## EXPOSITION

du 9 au 16 mars 2023

# Back to the Future

Iranian Modern  
& Contemporary Art

### CURATEURS

Hessam KHALATBARI

Yassi METGHALCHI

### CHEF DE PROJET

Lila METGHALCHI

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Nicolas IMBERT

### GALERIE NICOLAS FLAMEL

216 rue Saint Martin

75003 Paris, France

+33 1 42 71 87 83

[www.galerienicolasflamel.com](http://www.galerienicolasflamel.com)

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