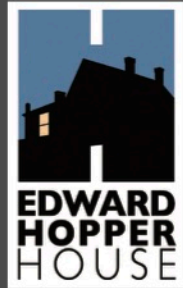


WHERE WE ARE STANDING

CONTEMPORARY WOMEN ARTISTS FROM IRAN



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This exhibition is made possible with support from
Manhattan Cardiology and Medical Offices of Manhattan



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EDWARD HOPPER HOUSE ART CENTER

February 20 – April 24, 2016

WHERE WE ARE STANDING

CONTEMPORARY WOMEN ARTISTS FROM IRAN

Golnar Adili
Roya Farassat
Shabnam K. Ghazi



Golnar Adili, *The King-Seat of My Eye Is The Place of Repose For The Thought of You*, 2010. Two photographs hand-cut and interlaced.

As issues of social justice in the Middle East have been receiving more and more attention in recent years, so too have contemporary women artists from the region whose work brings many of those issues to the forefront.

This exhibition gives voice to three artists—Golnar Adili, Roya Farassat, and Shabnam K. Ghazi—all of whom grew up in Iran and later moved to North America (two to the United States and one to Canada). As artists, they may not be defined by their place of origin, but their place of origin clearly shapes their visions.

The title of this exhibition is taken from a poem by the 14th century Persian poet, Hafez, which reads in part:

“Art is, at last, the knowledge of
Where we are standing –
Where we are standing
In this Wonderland
When we rip off all our clothes
And this blind man’s patch, veil,
That got tied across our brow...”

Adili, Farassat, and Ghazi are all driven by different creative impulses and the results vary widely, but what they share are cultural identities rooted in two worlds and through their art, they show how they stand in both.

Golnar Adili’s (b. 1976, Falls Church, VA) work is a personal digest of her memories of growing up between two places imbued with diasporic longing. She moved to Tehran with her family in 1979, when she was four years old. Not long after, her father was forced to return to the United States for political reasons. Often referencing airplanes, family letters, Persian poetry, or her own body, Adili’s themes embrace a sense of yearning coupled with attempts at examining her identity.

The meticulous, repetitive, and painstaking process of cutting and reconstructing images is an important part of her work. In *Twelve Seconds*, Adili arranges 1 x 1 cm. hand-cut fragments of four consecutively-taken photographs from the airplane window and abstracts the image as she rebuilds it piece by piece onto a uniform grid.

She is also inspired by Persian poetry, placing poignant lines of the texts in her compositions or using the title as a starting point in purely visual pieces. In *The King-Seat of My Eye is the Place of Repose For the Thought of You*, Adili refers to the imagery evoked in a poem by Hafez, using a photo she took on her travels in Iran from a “king-seat”— an architectural term describing the most desirable place within the courtyard of the traditional Persian home. She then places herself in the poem by interweaving that photograph with an image of her own eye.

For her series, “A Mirror Has Two Faces”, **Roya Farassat** (b. 1964, Tehran) paints ghostly “portraits” of women, often veiled and confined in an oval shape suggestive of a hanging wall mirror. As a girl growing up in Tehran, Farassat felt that women were always under the scrutiny of an unwelcome gaze.

In these portraits, there is a boldness and defiance as the subjects seek to free their suppressed identities. The prevalence of the chador (or veil) in the paintings signifies, for the artist, a “barricade,” separating society from personal identity. She responds to the repressive social conditions of her homeland by contrasting the private interior with the exterior.

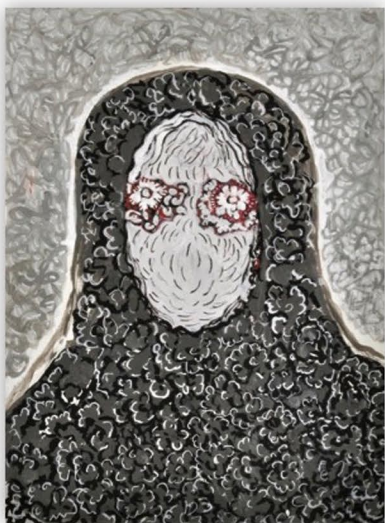
In *Goddess of Freedom*, Lady Liberty’s independence is called into question, while the muted and censored subject in *Scream 1* ultimately breaks free from control in the later version, entitled *Scream 2*.

Roya Farassat
Goddess of Freedom, 2013.
Acrylic, ink, watercolor and
marker on paper.

Scream 1, 2011.
Acrylic, ink, and marker
on paper.

Scream 2, 2013.
Acrylic, ink, and marker
on paper.

(all from “A Mirror Has
Two Faces” series)



Shabnam K. Ghazi’s (b. 1971, Tehran) video and still photographs from *The Astonishing Story of Us in a Scarcity of Time* are an investigation of the patterns that our mundane daily chores fall into and the inherent disassociation experienced as a result of the continuous repetition of our actions.

In the video, human figures blur with ants as they rapidly scurry across the screen and out of sight. As Ghazi explains it, “Occasionally, our paths intersect, causing us to pause and perhaps remind us, within a frail moment of contact, that we are not alone. *The Astonishing Story of Us in a Scarcity of Time* depicts individuals with subliminal contacts, resembling the ant colonies, and their collective existence. It is this sublime comparative narrative and the work’s mesmerizing visual minimalism that result in its visual beauty.”

This project is the result of over four hours of footage and 800 still shots taken in various places, such as south of Tehran, the financial district in Toronto, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Carole Perry
Artistic Director and Curator



Shabnam K. Ghazi
Stills from *The Astonishing Story of Us
in a Scarcity of Time*, 2008-2015.