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# DĒVOILĒS

19 NOVEMBRE — 16 DECEMBRE 2012

GENÈVE, SUISSE

CALLIGRAPHIE CONTEMPORAINE DE L'IRAN

ALIREZA ASTANEH, MOHAMAD BOZORGI, HABIB FARAJABADI,

ABOLFAZI SHAHI, BEHROUZ ZINDASHTI

WORDS UNVEILED | MOTS DÉVOILÉS

ALIREZA ASTANEH, MOHAMAD BOZORGI, HABIB FARAJABADI, ABOLFAZI SHAHI, BEHROUZ ZINDASHTI

November 19 — December 16, 2012

Hours: Tuesday to Saturday — 11:00 to 18.30h (by appointment outside of these hours)

Vernissage: Thursday, November 22, 18-21h

Venue: Grande-Rue 2, Geneva, Switzerland

La calligraphie, considérée comme le plus sublime de tous les genres artistiques, était, traditionnellement, liée à l'expression de la beauté intrinsèque de la Création. Certains lui attribuaient même une origine divine. En outre, tout en permettant des variations infinies et une grande liberté formelle, elle était un art extrêmement codifié, aux règles strictes et difficiles, qu'il fallait maîtriser pour atteindre la perfection, un peu comme la peinture occidentale jusqu'à la grande rupture qu'a constitué la modernité.

L'adoption de l'art moderne de marque occidentale au début du 20ème siècle a conduit, en Iran comme ailleurs, à l'abandon, dans un premier temps, des modes d'expression traditionnels comme la calligraphie. Cependant, depuis les années soixante et le mouvement *sagqa-khaneh* qui prônait la référence aux arts du pays dans des œuvres de conception moderne, celle-ci réapparaît, mais sous des formes nouvelles et renouvelées. En effet, il s'agit moins d'un retour aux styles anciens que d'une réinterprétation, d'une réappropriation résolument contemporaine, qui a retenu toutes les leçons de la modernité, parvenant à créer une esthétique qui répond au goût d'aujourd'hui tout en maintenant un très fort lien avec l'histoire. C'est ce que cette exposition montre sans ambiguïté et de manière fort réussie.

Silvia Naef, Université de Genève



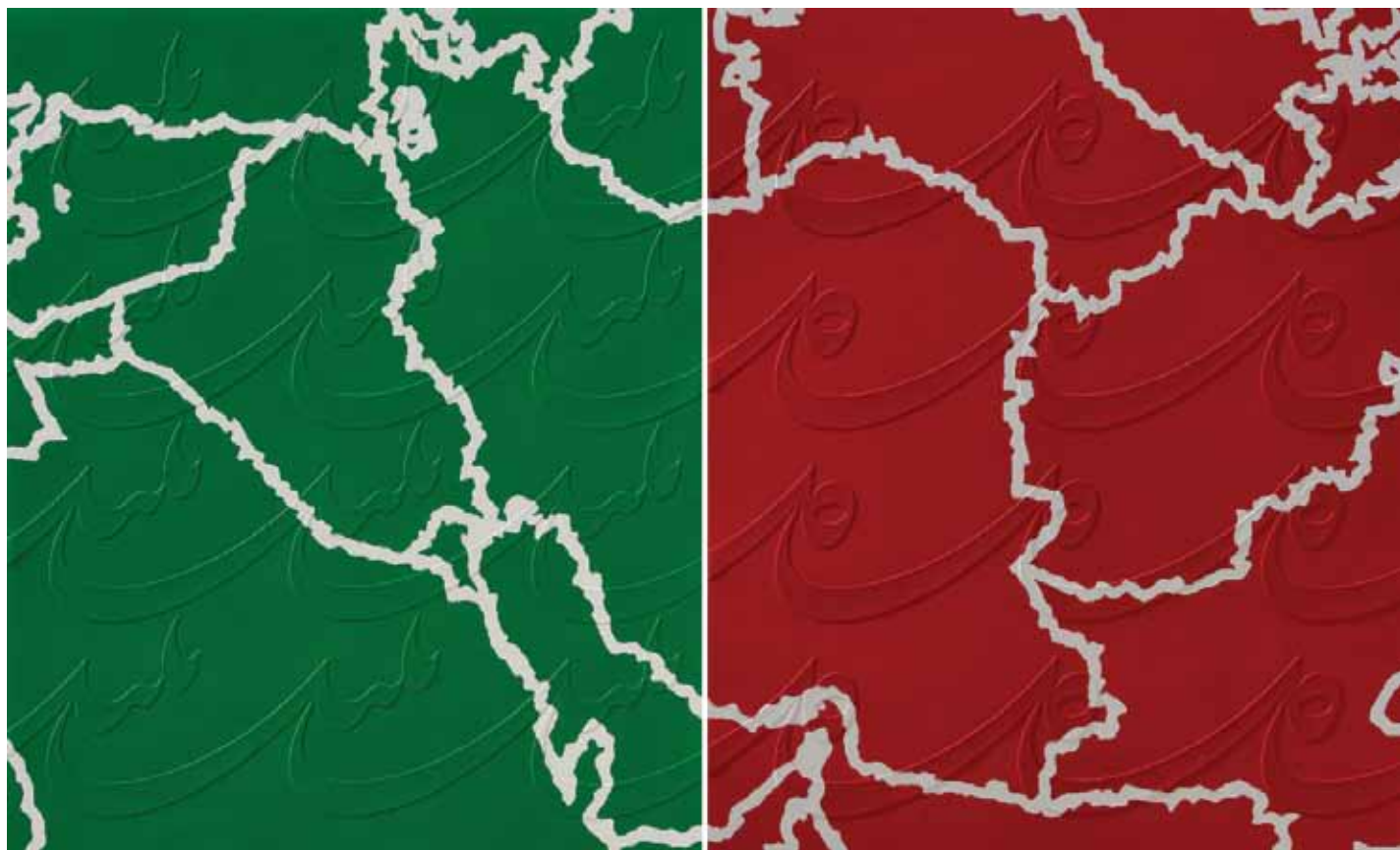
LIGHT | 180 X 150 CM | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS | 2011

HABIB FARAJABADI

Calligraphy, considered as the most beautiful of artistic expressions, was traditionally related to the depiction of beauty intrinsic to Creation. Some even attributed it to a divine origin. Moreover, in spite of the fact that it allowed a large freedom of form and infinite variations, it was an extremely codified art with strict and complicated rules, which needed to be mastered to achieve perfection, to some extent much like Western painting until the great rupture leading to modern art.

The adoption of western-style modern art at the beginning of the 20th century led, in Iran as well as elsewhere, to an initial abandonment of traditional modes of expression such as calligraphy. However, beginning in the sixties and since the development of the *saqqa-khaneh* movement which promoted reference to the modern art movements of other countries, this art has been resurrected in new forms. In fact, it is less the return to old styles than a contemporary re-interpretation and re-appropriation. It aims to create an aesthetic which speaks to modern tastes yet is still firmly anchored in history. This exhibition successfully demonstrates this evolution without ambiguity.

Silvia Naef, University of Geneva



HOLY LANDS | 170 X 140 CM, DYPTIQUE | MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS | 2012

The first time I met Ali Reza Astaneh, he presented a sample of his work which I could not believe to be the work of a youth of his age.

*Nakhoni* (fingernail) script must be an Iranian invention, yet I still have not seen an example dating back more than three centuries. This amazing art/craft testifies to the skill and creativity of artists who constantly expanded and searched for new grounds for the structured and exquisite art of their time. While relying upon and deeply connected to common traditions, they were also looking for new innovations.

*Nakhoni* script is a method in which the artist embosses and makes writing apparent only through a slight pressure of his fingernails on the back of a delicate piece of paper. Other historical examples portray flowers, birds, lovers, buildings or landscapes. The work is not clearly visible at first glance unless lit from a particular angle and it is then that the text or image becomes visible.

The tradition was abandoned completely for about a century. Only recently have contemporary artists rediscovered it and are giving it a new life.

Alireza Astaneh, a skillful calligrapher, belongs to this small group. If he is interested in *Nakhoni* script it is not only to demonstrate his skill and extraordinary technical ability, but because he is attracted to very different and novel compositions that parallel *Nasta'liq* script. He also combines different scripts creating exquisite and complicated combinations. One can point to compositions inspired by *Siyahmashq* and particularly to *Shekasteh Nasta'liq* script which is delicate, powerful and fluid.

The continuation of traditional arts is achieved by an enthusiastic, hardworking and talented young generation and it is a pleasure to see how they add to the methods of the past by opening up new perspectives.

Aidin Aghdashloo

## ALIREZA ASTANEH – 1982

### EDUCATION

- 2008 Bachelors of Art in Graphic Design, Belford University, Texas
- 2008 Iranian Calligraphy, Tehran Contemporary Museum of Art
- 1997 Diploma in Calligraphy from the Calligraphy Association of Iran

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 Tehran Taxi Series, Homa Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2011 Castelli Series, Homa Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

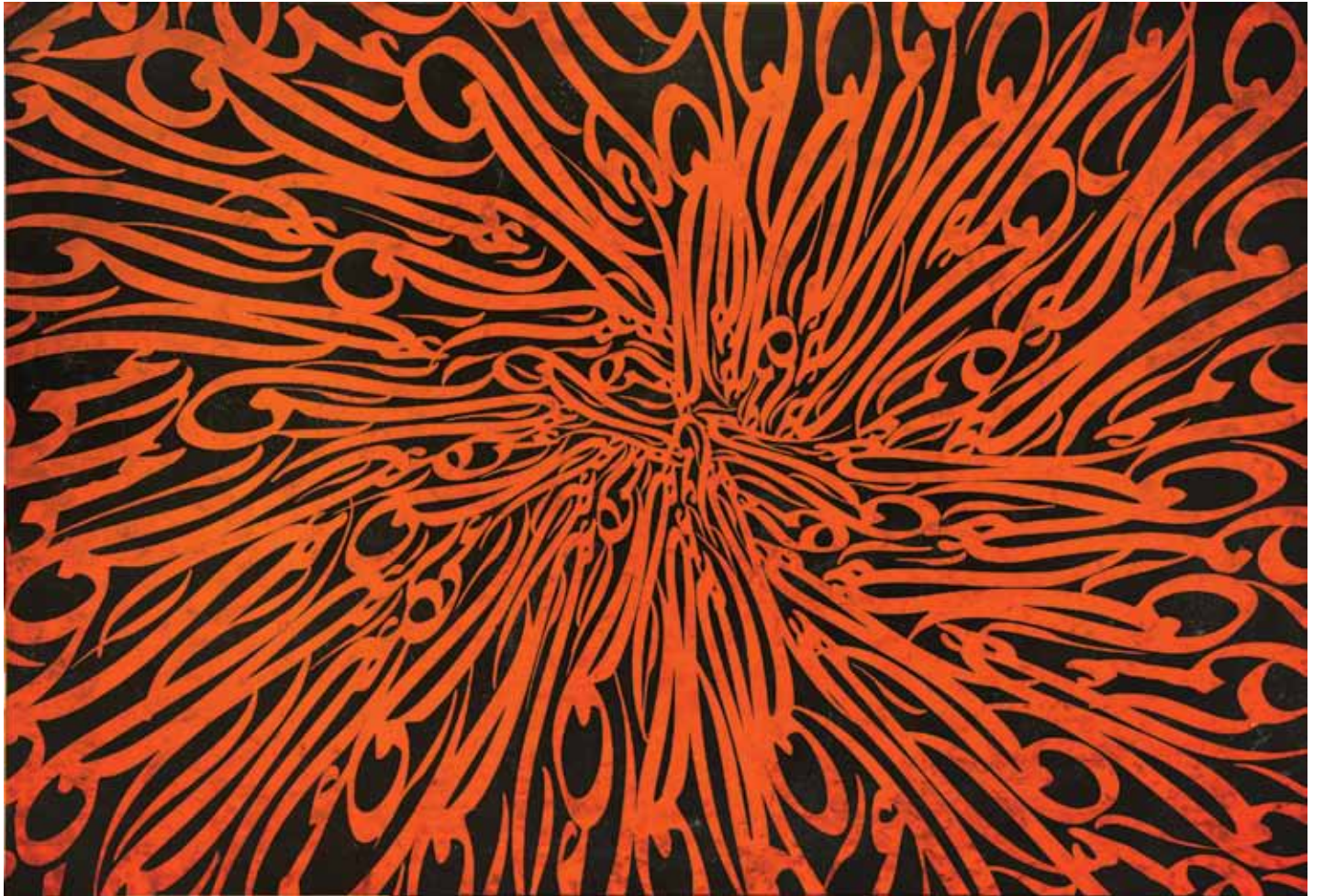
- 2012 Words Unveiled, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2012 Alternative Calligraphy 2, Vienna Fair, Vienna, Austria
- 2012 Dubai Art Fair, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2012 Alternativ calligraphy, Homa Art Gallery, Teheran, Iran
- 2011 Art Miami, Miami, U.S.A.
- 2011 De l'orient à l'art contemporain, Paris, France

### PUBLICATIONS

- 2012 Tehran Art, Contemporary Publications, Singapore



ALIREZA ASTANEH



FASCINATION | 150 X 220 CM | MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS | 2012



Mohamad Bozorgi trained with the Society of Iranian calligraphers for 15 years and achieved the Excellent level. He left his training, however, because he found that the Society's practices were too restrictive and did not allow for innovation. Nevertheless, his regular practice of repetition, or Siah Mashg, helped him develop the skills he demonstrates in his new body of work. In his current practice, he uses elegant dancing curves to create beautiful repetitions – a style that has been recognized as an independent calligraphy form in its own right.

In order to arrive at this practice, he studied 18 classical calligraphy forms, including *divani-kufi-nastalique-sols-broken*, *nastaliq-Mohaggegh*, and *ghobare-laghe*. In recent years, he has used the age-old practices of classical calligraphy as a starting point for exploring his own constructions and creating his own unique language in a contemporary format. Although the form that he has invented has Arab and Persian roots, his main focus is on developing a more architectural approach to calligraphic forms, an approach that can be seen in the mathematical structure and symmetry of the letters in his “crying” series.

His use of mathematics to explore the expressive potentials of calligraphy reflects his interest in both the arts and sciences as a calligrapher and an engineer. Like an engineer designing a dome, he makes quantitative calculations to help him build his works, using geometry to create illusions of movement and space and to develop a pure but abstract technique; at the same time, he draws on the angles and repetitions of classical calligraphy to create forms in oil, ink, and acrylic that become metaphors for dance and spiritual liberation. His desire is to create a new language, one that is based in traditional Iranian forms but communicates through abstraction.

Bozorgi painstakingly writes by hand, rejecting contemporary technological mediations and perceiving the process as a spiritual journey. Through his own two hands, then, he has taken all he has learned from the past and shaped his own artistic practice.

## MOHAMAD BOZORGI – 1978

### EDUCATION

2002 Homa Gallery, Tehran

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2011 Masters in Medical Engineering, Islamic Independent University Tehran, Iran  
2009 Society of Iranian Calligraphers, Excellent Level, Tehran, Iran

### SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2012 The Next Generation: Contemporary Iranian Calligraphy, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, Switzerland  
2012 Alternative Calligraphy, Gallery Homa, Tehran, Iran  
2011 Tehran Art Centre, Tehran, Iran  
2004 Iran Country of Prayers, Munich, Germany

### COLLECTIONS

Islamic Museum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



MOHAMAD BOZORGI



UNTITLED | 180 X 150 CM | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS | 2012

Farajabadi heralds the dawn of a new generation of Middle Eastern abstraction. He is developing a unique personal vocabulary, finding inspiration in elements of postmodern western practices and merging them with Middle Eastern ones: in his work, De Kooning dances with calligraphy and Tehran graffiti mingles with Basquiat. A bohemian philosophy guides his practice, and he has found that borrowing styles and images from, for example, the Italian Arte Povera or the American Pattern and Decoration movement has been profoundly liberating.

## **HABIB FARAJABADI – 1982**

### **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

- 2011 Homa Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2010 1390, Gallery Rotor2, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden
- 2007 Drawing Exhibition Iranian Artist Forum - Mirmiran Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2004 Afrinsh Gallery, Shahrood, Iran
- 2000 Aftab Gallery, Shahrood, Iran

### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2012 The Next Generation: Contemporary Iranian Calligraphy, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2012 Alternative Calligraphy, Gallery Homa, Tehran, Iran
- 2011 Summer Collection, Gallery Homa, Tehran, Iran
- 2010 The Fifth Annual New Generation Painters, Homa Art Gallery in Pardis mellat, Tehran, Iran
- 2009 Group traveling show of Good 50×70 posters design, Triennale, Norrbottens Museum, Sweden
- 2009 Dr. Sandouzi Imam Ali Museum, Tehran, Iran
- 2007 Kanoon Parvaresh Koodakan Va nojavanan, Tehran, Iran
- 2006 The Visual Art Festival, Niyavaran Artistic Creations Foundation, Tehran, Iran
- 2004 Baanoo Artistic Creation Foundation, Tehran, Iran



**HABIB FARAJABADI**



DON'T SLEEP NAKED ON ME — IT IS NOT GOOD | 220 X 120 CM | COTTON AND NATURAL DYE | 2012

Though fully trained as a calligrapher, Abolfazl Shahi has turned to creating carpets that make important statements about Iranian culture. In fact, according to the art critic Shahrouz Nazari, Shahi's carpets are the most fascinating carpets woven in central Iran in the past 50 years. Born in Kashan, a city with a rich but vanishing tradition of carpet making, Shahi has turned to weaving in order to preserve the art of his homeland – the carpets of Kashan have all but disappeared over the last 30 years. In particular, Shahi seeks to preserve the memory of the women carpet weavers of Kashan by weaving into his carpets lyrics from the songs these women whispered as they worked. His carpets, then, serve as mute memorials, ensuring that the weaving songs will not be forgotten.

Literature, calligraphy, and carpet making have long been a vibrant part of Persian heritage, and Shahi's carpets bring all these art forms together. However, his practice is somewhat unorthodox: while words are ever present in Persian culture – texts rendered in beautiful calligraphy adorn mosques and public spaces – it is not common to find them woven into carpets, especially because it is considered disrespectful to walk upon words. Although Shahi's carpets are meant to be shown on the floor, it is not his intention for them to be walked on; instead, they are meant as conceptual art. In fact, placing the work on the floor creates a conceptual tension: the work is meant to preserve two vanishing art forms (weaving songs and carpet weaving) using woven calligraphy, but it is placed where viewers might trample on it. With his carpets, Shahi makes viewers reflect on their power to remember and preserve as well as to forget.

## **ABOLFAZI SHAHI – 1974**

### **EDUCATION**

- 2000 B.A. Graphic Design, Tehran Azad University, Tehran, Iran
- 2010 Studied Theology and Sufism at University of Human Science, Tehran, Iran

### **SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2012 The Next Generation: Contemporary Iranian Calligraphy, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2012 Alternative Calligraphy, Gallery Homa, Tehran, Iran
- 2005 The 4th Tehran Sculpture Biennial, Tehran, Iran
- 2005 Herbs and Happy Couples, Homa Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2005 Wall Angels, Eye gallery, Dubai
- 2004 Negative & Positive, Barg Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 2004 Urban Sculpture, Dubai Festival, Dubai, UAE
- 2003 Contemporary Calligraphers, Saba Art Hall, Tehran, Iran
- 2002 Dancing with Closed Eyes, Saadabad Gallery, Tehran
- 2001 Self-portrait Atbin Gallery, Tehran, Iran

### **PUBLICATIONS**

- 2002 Asking the Way (Poems), Mahiz Publication
- 2007 Use Low Gear (Poems), Mahiz Publication



**ABOLFAZI SHAHI**



PRAYERS FOR A PROSPEROUS LIFE 4 | 150 X 150 CM | INK ON SILVER LEAF | 2011

Zindashti is influenced by an architectural principle that draws a correlation between architecture and ethics. He believes that his works function as alternative spaces for prayer, repeating the text of the Prayers for Prosperity in abstracted and improvisational Seljukain and Talisman scripts. His works express humbleness and spiritual devotion, but they also attempt to revive a forgotten art ethics, where repetitions of texts become prayers in their own right. Unlike traditional calligraphy that illustrates specific Koranic texts or poetry, Zindashti creates spiritual works with no direct references.

According to the art critic Shahrouz Nazari, "contemporary Art Calligraphy in Iran can be praised because it has freed itself from its religious art origins; in appreciating it, we are freed from nostalgic memories of the mosque or church." Although Zindashti's works look traditional – like they could be from a mosque in Tabriz, a palace in Bokhara, a bazaar in Damascus, or a hammam in Casablanca – they are far from it. His geometric calligraphy style owes more to the geometric abstractionism of the second half of the 20th century than to mosque inscriptions. By stripping away its traditional cultural, linguistic, and religious references, Zindashti's calligraphy cuts through religious nostalgia and aims at direct spiritual experience. For Zindashti, the ecstasy of abstract art gives us insight into the heart of religion.

## **BEHROUZ ZINDASHTI – 1979**

### **EDUCATION**

- 2007 University of Kashan, Iran, Art of Handicraft
- 2009 University of Tehran, Iran, Arts of Handicraft

Currently Teaching Member at University of Islamic Arts in Tabriz Distinguished Member of the Calligraphy Society of Iran

### **SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

- 2004 University of Kashan, Iran
- 2004 Exhibition at Ministry of Culture in Salams, Iran
- 2004 Exhibition at University of Kashan, Iran

### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2012 The Next Generation: Contemporary Iranian Calligraphy, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2012 Alternative Calligraphy, Gallery Homa, Tehran, Iran

### **PUBLICATIONS**

- 2005 Specialized edition of Art Monthly "Art Calligraphy: A New Chapter of Iranian Contemporary Art."
- 2007 Specialized edition of Art Monthly "New Visions of Nastaligh technique."



**BEHROUZ ZINDASHTI**



UNTITLED | 150 X 150 CM | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS | 2012

UNTITLED | 150 X 150 CM | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS | 2012



**MARYAM GHANBARIAM – 1987**

### **ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 2012 M.A. in Graphics (first-grade), Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Tehran, Iran
- 2012 M.A. thesis on “The Variations of *khate kufie banaei* as a Traditional Character Type” under the supervision of Dr. Sedaghat Jabbari

Author of an article entitled “The Variations of *khate kufie banaei* as a Traditional Character Type”

Creator of fifty new characters inspired by *khate kufie banaei* and an innovative set of Farsi typescripts

Holder of a calligraphy and character design certificate under the instruction and supervision of Dr. Sedaghat Jabbari

### **AWARDS AND ACTIVITIES**

- 2012 Winner of the poster award at the first international visual arts festival of ECO (global celebrations of Norooz)
- 2011 Participant in the third international Fajr Festival of Visual Arts
- 2009 Participant in the tenth Islamic World Poster biennial  
2009 Award winner at the fourteenth international youth visual arts festival, poster section
- 2008 Participant and winner of the special award for designing the logotype at the fifth international festival of Bismillah
- 2008 Winner of the Best award of the fifteenth international youth visual arts festival, poster section
- 2006 Winner of design competitions at the national Kharazmi festival



**MARYAM GHANBARIAN**

Mojgan Endjavi-Barbé est née en Iran. Après sa scolarité, elle a quitté l'Iran pour étudier les sciences politiques et la sociologie à l'Université de l'Alabama à Huntsville, aux Etats-Unis. Elle a vécu 4 ans à Paris, ensuite 3 ans à Tokyo et 10 ans à Londres. Elle vit à Genève depuis août 2000.

Elle a travaillé avec de nombreux artistes internationaux depuis 1989. Ses voyages en Iran lui ont fait prendre conscience à quel point les artistes iraniens travaillent dur et dans quelle mesure ils ont progressé en exprimant leurs compétences et leur langage artistique. Il a fallu leur fournir une "plateforme" pour les rendre plus visibles et audibles à l'extérieur de l'Iran, d'où la création de ILLA (2005) à Genève, suivi par le projet de jardin persan de Genève en 2006.

Les artistes iraniens jouent un rôle de plus en plus important dans le monde artistique du Moyen-Orient et dans d'autres régions. Leurs oeuvres sont présentées aux biennales (réalisant d'impressionnants résultats aux ventes aux enchères), dans les foires d'arts internationales ainsi que dans les galeries et les musées mondialement renommés.

La jeunesse représente 60 % de la population Iranienne, qui comprend 74 millions d'habitants. Nous avons l'intention de représenter certains de ces artistes émergents. Leur énergie et leur talent nous ont motivés pour poursuivre cette mission.

## **NOTRE OBJECTIF**

Il n'y a actuellement aucune représentation des oeuvres de ces jeunes artistes à l'extérieur de l'Iran. Nous voulons combler ce vide et présenter leur travail ici à Genève du 19 novembre au 16 décembre 2012.

## **RÉSIDENCES D'ART**

Actuellement, nous cherchons activement des possibilités pour les jeunes artistes iraniens de participer à des programmes de résidence à l'extérieur de l'Iran .

## **ART CONSULTANCY**

Nous offrons des services de consultation aux clients qui cherchent des conseils dans la navigation de la scène artistique contemporaine en Iran et ceux qui cherchent à construire des ponts culturels entre l'Iran et la communauté artistique internationale.



## **REMERCIEMENTS**

Mme. Soussan Abolhassani, Neuchâtel

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Gallery Homa, Tehran

Mme. Mina Gassmann, Geneve

Professeur Silvia Naef, Université de Genève

M. Shahrouz Nazari, Iran

Mandana & Frank Pages, Genève

Steiner Graphics, Genève

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