

ARTS & CULTURE · ART

A Fall Crop of Iranian Art Shows in New York City

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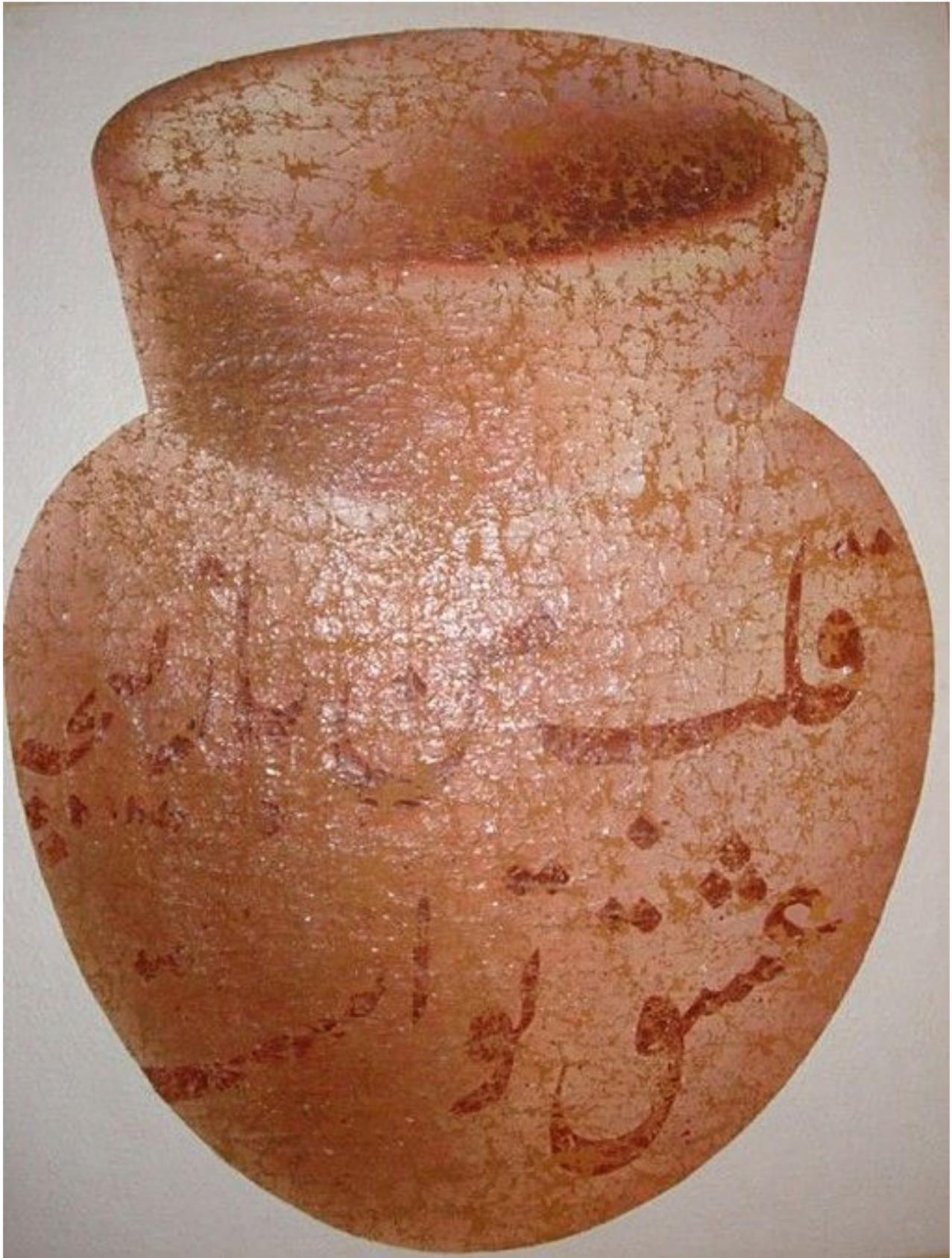
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Farhard Moshiri, the father of Iranian Pop Art, is one of dozens of Modern and contemporary artists featured in no less than five autumn New York exhibits of Iranian art. This untitled oil on canvas (the calligraphy reads "My Heart is Your Love's Play Toy") is on display at the Calligraffiti 1984-2013 show at the Leila Heller Gallery.



Against a backdrop of political tension between the U.S. and Iran, exhibitions of Iranian art open this week at five New York galleries.

Against a backdrop of US–Iran tension over uranium enrichment, economic sanctions, and Syria, a season of cultural dialogue has opened in New York City, where no less than five exhibitions of modern and contemporary Iranian art open this week.

Today, [The Asia Society](#) launches "Iran Modern," the first major show of modern Iranian art on US soil. The 100 paintings, photos, and sculptures by 26 artists, on loan from public and private collections across the United States, Europe, and the Middle East, were created in the three decades leading up to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, an era when Tehran was an open, cosmopolitan capital with its own Biennial, and Iranian artists exhibited widely and contributed to the development of global modernism. "Against the backdrop of the current global political climate, exhibitions like 'Iran Modern' are essential to fostering a better understanding of Iran's history," says Melissa Chiu, the Asia Society Museum Director. The show traces the influence of classical Iranian art, folk tales, crafts, and politics in modern work and include artists such as [Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian](#), a still-practicing octogenarian known for intricate mirror mosaics. Performances and symposia by contemporary curators and artists, including underground Tehran rock musicians, will take place during the exhibition run.

Art flourished in Iran in the 1970s under the patronage of empress Farah Diba and amid growing wealth from the oil boom. In the wake of the revolution that ousted the pro-western Shah, many art spaces closed, and some artists chose exile while others stayed to confront restrictions on social freedom and individual expression imposed by the rule of Iran's mullahs. Post-revolution films by Iranian directors have found a broad international audience, but the plastic and visual arts are lesser known in the U.S. To introduce Americans to post-revolution Iranian art and the modern and contemporary art of the Middle East, [Tehran's Shirin Gallery](#) is launching a New York outpost in Chelsea (511 W. 25th St.) Opening today, the debut show is "My Name is Not Rouge," a group exhibit featuring modern interpretations of the art of the Persian miniature. The 15 artists include established Iranian stars such as [Fereydoun Ave](#), who divides his time between Tehran, Paris, and Dubai, as well as emerging talents.

Nicky Nodjoumi, a Kermanshah-born artist, whose Pre-Revolution paintings are part of the Art Asia exhibit, will also have a solo show of current work at the newly opened [Taymour Grahne Gallery](#) (157 Hudson Street). In "Chasing the Butterfly and Other Recent Paintings," Nodjoumi, who was in his 30s during the revolution and has been based in New York since 1981, often depicts human figures engaged with bizarrely counter-poised animals as a way to explore his personal experience of alienation and dislocation while interjecting sharp political commentary.

From September 7–October 26, the [Thomas Erben Gallery](#) (526 W. 26th St.) will feature "Curriculum Mortis," a one-man show by Tehran-based [Barbad Golshiri](#). Born three years after the revolution, the multimedia artist explores the boundaries between politics, national duty, and repression in a sculptural installation of a cemetery.

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Finally, among the international artists grouped into the Calligraffiti show at the [Leila Heller Gallery](#) (568 W. 25th St.) are Farhad Moshiri, the Los Angeles-based father of Iranian pop art; Pouran Jinchi, who deconstructs the Persian alphabet and traditional text in sculpture, glasswork, and prints; and Sherin Neshat, a filmmaker and photographer who superimposes calligraphy on the human figure. All three Iranian-born artists have spent much of their careers living and working in the U.S; their works are represented in international museum collections and are particularly sought by expat Iranian collectors living in Dubai.

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Photo: Courtesy Leila Heller Gallery