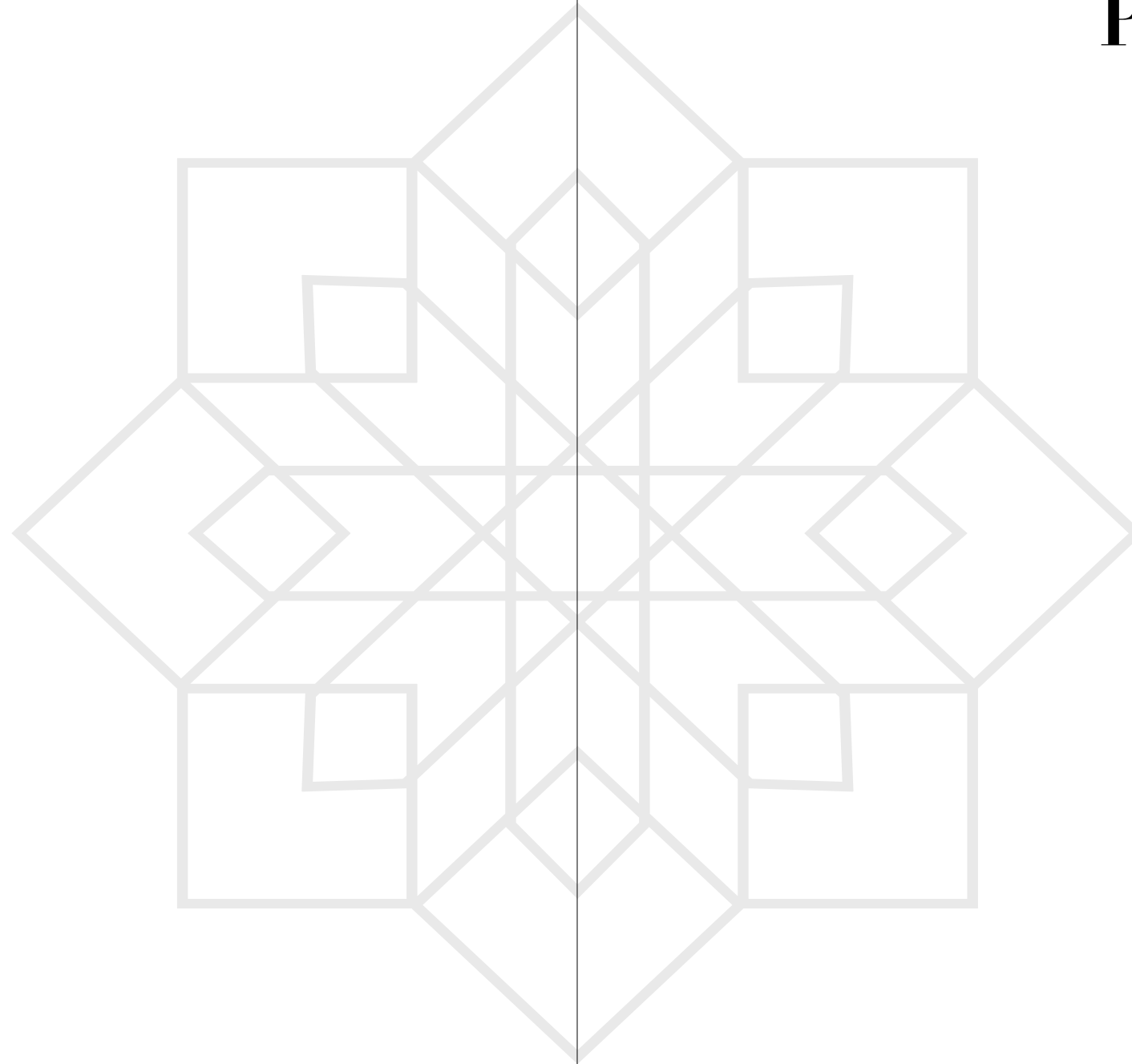


# ARABESQUE

OPERA GALLERY



# PREFACE

Beirut has always been a cradle of culture and history in the Middle East. Fervently creative even through unrest in the region, its inherent contradictions seem to be the impetus for continuous artistic expression.

The artworks in *Arabesque* include those created, inspired or influenced by Arabic touches. This consists of works by Ali Ajali, a living master of calligraphy, to Francesco Coleman, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian painter inspired by the landscapes and people of the Middle East. By showcasing these artworks, we hope to shed light on the traditions and techniques of Arabia illuminated by both local and global artists.

In a way, *Arabesque* is a love letter to the historical beauty of Arab culture – to the foundation for the transference of calligraphy into paintings on canvas; to studies of pomegranates and horsemen; to blurred and fragmented photographs expressing the unspoken pain of an identity forced onto, or stripped from, its makers. Rife with heritage, these works also speak the elements of loss and longing engrained in the psyche of its creators, while celebrating the interminable spirit of the region upon which it is inscribed.

**Gilles Dyan**  
Founder & Chairman  
Opera Gallery Group

**Salwa Chalhoub**  
Director  
Opera Gallery Beirut



**KHALID  
AL HAMAD**

Khalid Al Hamad is a photographer and artist born in 1986 in Kuwait. He graduated from the American University in Kuwait and later spent time volunteering in a Buddhist monastery in Thailand, where the local monks became the subjects of his first series of large-sized portraits. By turning the subject into artwork, Al Hamad strips the figure of its humanity and presents it as an object of indestructible beauty. His work has been exhibited extensively throughout Kuwait, where he lives and works today.

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**Rêve (triptych)**

*Signed (on reverse)*

*Photography, edition of 8*

*50.8 x 101.6 cm – 20 x 40 in.*





**ANDRÉ  
BRASILIER**

André Brasilier was born into an artistic family in Saumur, France in 1929. Possessing a natural inclination for painting at an early age, at 20 he went to Paris to study at the École des Beaux-Arts. In 1952 he received a grant from the Florence Blumenthal Foundation, and in the following year, when he was only 23, won the Premier Grand Prix de Rome, entitling him to study at the Académie de France in Rome. While Brasilier's works reflect the influences of Expressionist artists and Japanese prints, he has retained a personal style of schematized nature and imagery that makes him anomaly in the contemporary Zeitgeist. His subdued works often feature themes and motifs of horses, nature, music and women, provocative in their timelessness and emotional subjectivity. Brasilier had his first retrospective of one hundred artworks (from 1950-1980) at the Château de Chenonceau in 1980 and a retrospective exhibition at the Musée Picasso-Château Grimaldi in Antibes, the French Riviera, in 1988. He has since been honoured with major retrospectives both at Russia's renowned State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg in 2005 and at the Museum Haus Ludwig für Kunstausstellungen Saarlouis in Germany in 2007.

**Fantasia aux cinq chevaux, 2014**  
*Signed 'André Brasilier' (lower right)*  
*Oil on canvas*  
*81 x 60 cm – 31.9 x 23.6 in.*

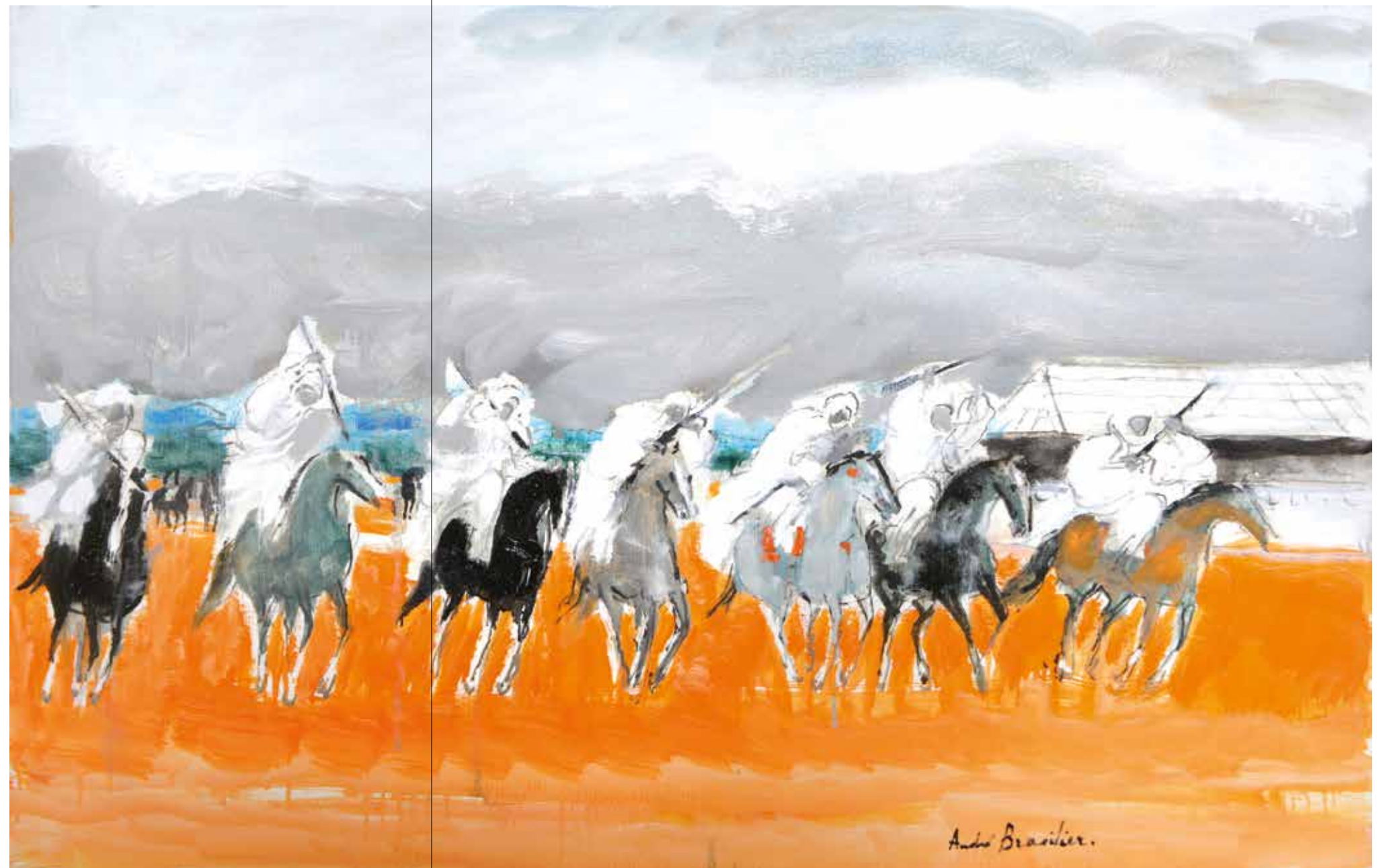






**ANDRÉ  
BRASILIER**

**Fantasia aux sept cavaliers, 2014**  
*Signed 'André Brasilier' (lower right)*  
Oil on canvas  
65 x 92 cm – 25.6 x 36.2 in.







**SALAR  
AHMADIAN**

Salar Ahmadian is an Iranian artist born in 1957. Painting primarily in a calligraphic, gestural style, Ahmadian's works weave together text, colour, tradition and modernity. His works draw inspiration from both his Persian heritage and techniques of contemporary art in the west, referencing the symbolism of Pop Art and the charged freedom of Abstract Expressionism. Devoid of any textual meaning, his boldly coloured lines strikingly bridge Arab calligraphy with Western abstraction. Ahmadian has exhibited extensively in Iran, North America, Europe, and the Persian Gulf region.

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**Untitled, 2014**

*Oil on canvas*

*195 x 151 cm – 76.8 x 59.4 in.*







ALI  
AJALI

Born in 1939 in Iran, Ali Ajali is considered one of the few living masters of Iranian calligraphic painting. He studied interior architecture at Tehran's College of Design and shortly after founded the 'Gol Gasht' School of Calligraphy, characterized by a dense interlocking play of Arabic script. In 1974 he began working as a university lecturer on fine arts, and has since become a Master of Calligraphy at numerous prestigious institutions in Iran. His work has been exhibited at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and the Niavaran Palace Institute. His private nature has prevented wide dissemination of his works, and they remain primarily within the collections of private and public institutions.

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**Untitled, 2012**

*Signed in arabic (lower left)*

*Mixed media on canvas*

*200 x 150 cm – 78.7 x 59.1 in.*







**FRANCESCO  
COLEMAN**

Francesco Coleman was an Italian painter born in 1851, one of eight children to English painter Charles Coleman and brother of painter Enrico Coleman. He was known for his oil and watercolor renderings of the landscapes and people of the pastoral beauty of Campagna Romana, as well as for his Oriental depictions of Arabic people and landscapes.

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**Arab Horsemen**

*Signed 'Coleman Francesco' (lower right)*

*Oil on canvas*

*67 x 47 cm – 26.4 x 18.5 in.*







**REZA  
DERAKSHANI**

Reza Derakshani is a painter, musician and performance artist born in 1952 in Sangsar, a small village in the northeast of Iran. Raised in a nomadic family in the mountains, Derakshani's diverse creative energies were deeply influenced by the changing seasons and landscapes he grew up amongst. Harnessing the wonders of creation in multiple avenues of artistic expression, his admiration for natural beauty is enormously present in his work. Derakshani's career includes collaborations with renowned artists, musicians and poets including Deepak Chopra, Madonna, Dawn Avery and Simone Haggiag, among many others. He currently lives and works between Tehran, the US and Europe and is considered one of Iran's most important contemporary artists.

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**Madonna, 2009**

*Signed (on the reverse)*

*Mixed media on canvas*

*250 x 90 cm – 98.4 x 35.4 in.*







**REZA**  
**DERAKSHANI**

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**Pomegranate Studies, 2011**

*Signed (on the reverse)*

*Oil on canvas*

*100 x 100 cm – 39.4 x 39.4 in.*







**TIMUR  
D'VATZ**

Timur D'Vatz is a figurative painter born in 1968 in Moscow. He studied at the Republic College of Art in Uzbekistan and later in the Royal Academy of Art in London. His work has won him several awards, including the A.T. Kearney Prize and the B.P. Portrait award from the London National Portrait Gallery in 2002. Depicting ancient symbols and legends in a striking, primarily earth tone palette, D'Vatz's paintings convey a medieval history made relevant through a contemporary vibrancy of colour.

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**Hunters with Hounds,**  
*Signed (lower right)*  
*Countersigned (on the reverse)*  
*Oil on canvas*  
*125 x 160 cm – 49.2 x 63 in*





TIMUR  
D'VATZ

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**Procession with Peacocks, 2008**

*Signed (lower right)*

*Countersigned (on the reverse)*

*Oil on canvas*

*125 x 160 cm – 49.2 x 63 in.*







TIMUR  
D'VATZ

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**Byzantine Spring, 2014**  
*Signed (lower right)*  
*Countersigned (on the reverse)*  
*Oil on canvas*  
*110 x 90 cm – 43.3 x 35. 4 in.*







**ALI**  
**ESMAEILIPOUR**

Ali Esmailipour was born in 1962 in Khomein, Iran. He studied painting from 1988 to 1991 at the Zangar Art College, a well known private school. In 1992, he held his first solo exhibition and participated in more than 40 group exhibitions across the country from 1991 to 1998. He also participated in many solo and group exhibitions in countries including Singapore, Hong Kong, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, New York and Miami. His works have also been shown and collected by institutions such as the Singapore Art Museum, the Contemporary Art Museum of Tehran, the Cultural Heritage Museum of Iran and the International Olympics Women's and Sports Commission. Ali Esmailipour's paintings are inspired by the everyday life around him; he depicts many ordinary scenes such as an opened or closed window or door, or the sun shining into a room. He currently lives in Singapore with his family, having moved there in 1998.

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**Water Lilies**

*Acrylic on linen and wood*  
150 x 136 cm – 59.1 x 53.5 in.







ALI  
ESMAEILIPOUR

To Be in the Moment, 2012

Signed (lower left)

Acrylic on linen and wood

90 x 120 cm – 35.4 x 47.2 in.





**GOLNAZ  
FATHI**

Golnaz Fathi was born in Tehran in 1972. She graduated with a B.A. degree in graphic design from the Azad Art University in Tehran and went on to obtain a degree in calligraphy from the Calligraphy Association in Tehran in 1995. That same year she was awarded a prize for Best Female Calligrapher. Fathi spent three months at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, and has participated in many exhibitions including at the Queen Library Gallery in New York in 2002, the Central Public Library in Los Angeles in 2002, the Art Museum of Southeast Texas in Beaumont in 2003, the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Florida in 2003, the Meridian International Center in Washington DC in 2007 and *Word into Art* at the British Museum in 2008.

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**Untitled, 2007**

*Signed and dated 'Golnaz Fathi 2007' (centre left)*

*Acrylic on canvas*

*90 x 120 cm – 35.4 x 47.2 in*







**MOHAMMAD  
KHODASHENAS**

Mohammad Khodashenas was born in 1975 in Rasht, Iran. He is a painter and graphic designer who lives and works in Lahijan. Khodashenas began exhibiting in Iran shortly after graduating from Tehran's Art University with a B.A. degree in graphic design. He has also participated in a Street Art Festival in Istanbul (2012). On his canvases, the artist likes to mix bright colours and slogans with familiar figurative imagery to depict an environment brimming with revolutionary slogans and influences.

**Caged, 2012**

*Acrylic on canvas*  
180 x 180 cm – 70.9 x 70.9 in.







**DAVID  
MACH**

Born in 1956, David Mach is a Scottish sculptor and installation artist known for his large-scale assemblages of mass-produced objects. He studied at the University of Dundee and the Royal College of Art, London. In 1982 he held his first solo exhibition at Lisson Gallery. Mach was nominated for a Turner Prize in 1988 and in 2000 joined the Royal Academy of Art as a Professor of Sculpture, where he continues to lecture as one of the leading artists of the New English Sculpture movement. Highly regarded for both his smaller-scale collage works and large scale public installations, Mach has exhibited in several of the world's foremost museums, including the Tate Britain and the National Portrait Gallery, London; the City Art Centre of Edinburgh; and the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, CA, USA.

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**Magic Carpet, with Arabic Learning Cards, 2009**

*Mixed media postcards on wood*

*183 x 183 cm – 72 x 72 in.*







**MEHDI  
NABAVI**

Mehdi Nabavi was born in 1978 in Iran. He has participated in many group exhibitions since 1997 at the Azad Art Gallery in Tehran, as well as in galleries in Turkey and Paris. He has held numerous solo exhibitions in Tehran and Tabriz. He participated in art fairs in Abu Dhabi and Beirut in 2012. Since May 2012, his artworks have been presented in famous auction houses in Dubai, such as the Ayyam Auction House and Christie's.

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**Untitled II, 2014**

*Glass marbles on wood*  
100 x 100 cm – 39.4 x 39.4 in.





**AHMET  
NEJAT**

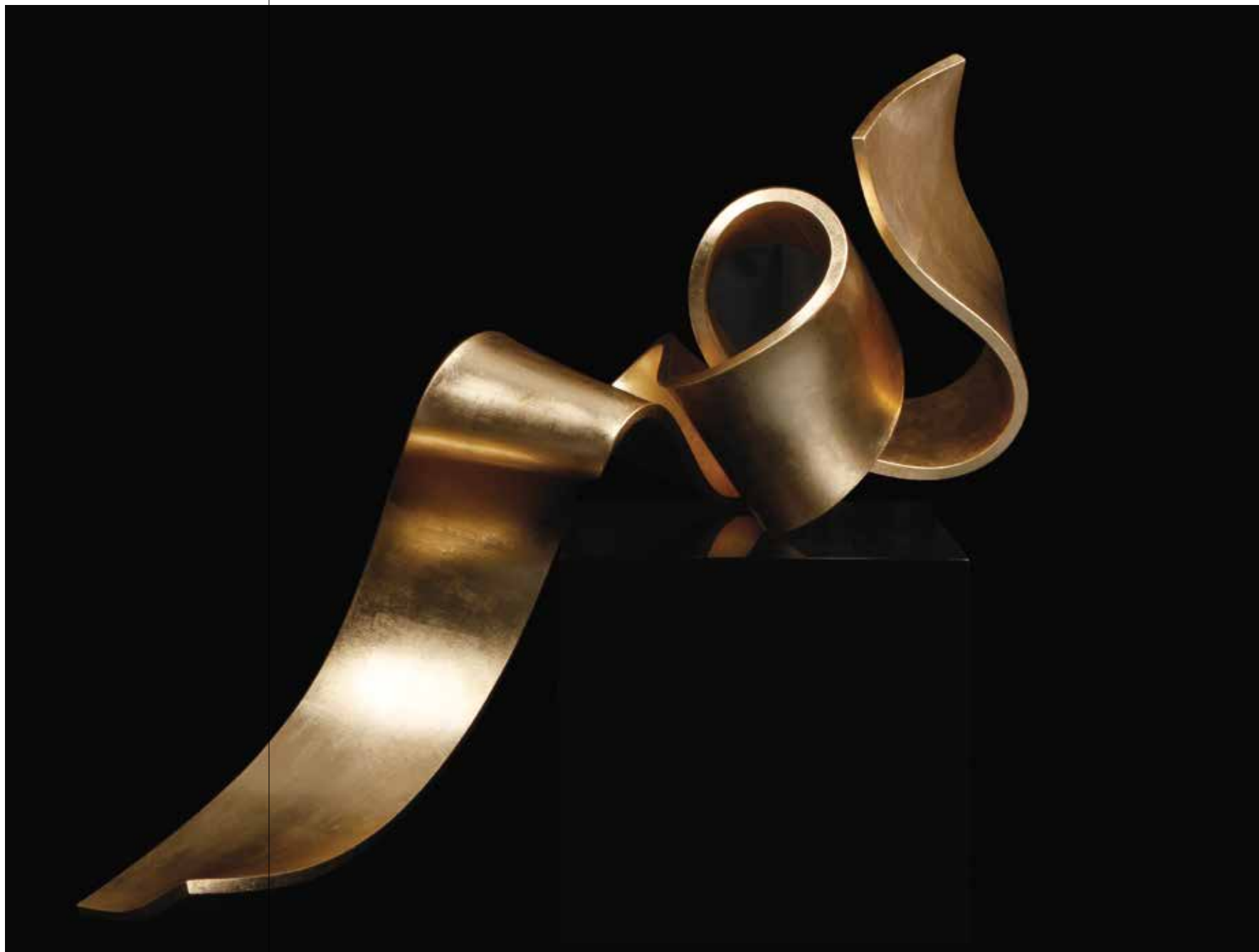
Ahmet Nejat was born in Iran in 1956. He began his studies in 1984 at Mimar Sinan University's Graphic Design Department and obtained his Master's degree in Painting from the Özdemir Altan Atelier in 1992. During his studies, he worked in his own studio and took part in many solo and group exhibitions worldwide. His works are represented in numerous private and public collections.

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**Hic I**

*Gold foiled plexiglass*

*44 x 125 x 42 cm - 17.3 x 49.2 x 16.5 in.*







AHMET  
NEJAT

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**Hic III**

*Gold foiled plexiglass*

*51 x 49 x 70 cm - 20 x 19.3 x 27.6 in.*







**ZAKARIA  
RAMHANI**

Zakaria Ramhani was born in 1983 in Tangier, Morocco. His father was a portraitist and painter of typically Moroccan scenes. Ramhani was a member of the artistic residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris; the youngest Moroccan artist to receive such an award. Ramhani has exhibited his work at the Cité Internationale des Arts Gallery, Paris in 2006, Artspace Gallery, Dubai in 2008 and at Atelier 21 Gallery, Casablanca. He has presented his works and represented his country through his participation in international exhibitions at the British Museum in 2008, Art Dubai in 2012, the DIFC, Dubai, The Barbican Gallery, London in 2012 and at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris in 2012 and 2013.

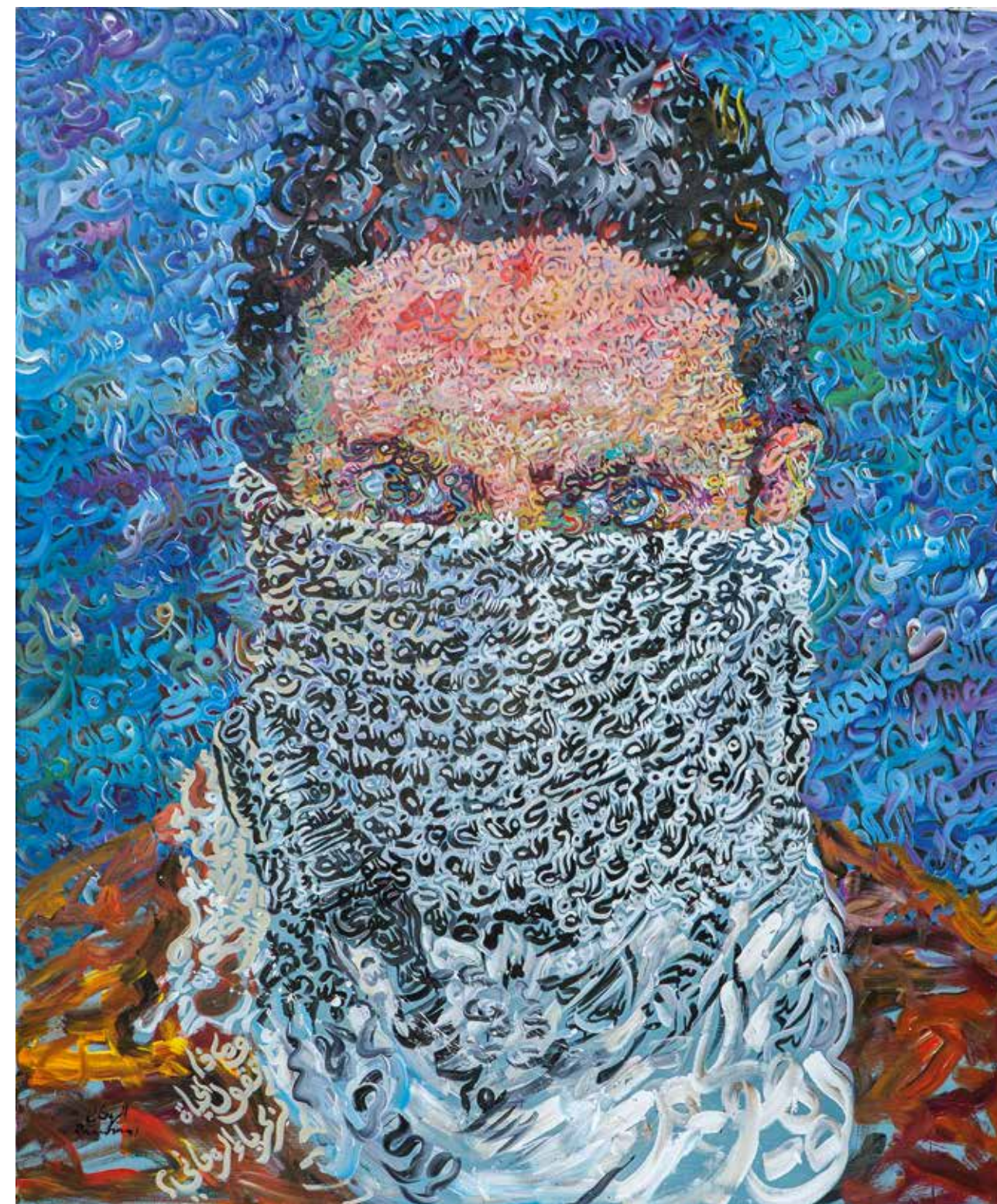
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**Faces of Your Other-50**

*Signed 'Ramhani' (lower left)*

*Acrylic on canvas*

*240 x 200 cm – 94.5 x 78.7 in.*





**BASEEM  
RAYYES**

Baseem Rayyes was born in 1970 in the city of Damascus, Syria. He started drawing at the age of 6 after his father left his family; it was at this time that Rayyes started using a box of charcoal and coloured sticks that his father had given him. The artist started to paint before graduating from the Agricultural Engineering School at Damascus University. He is a member of the Emirates Society of Fine Arts in Al-Sharja and of the Fine Arts Society in Damascus. He has held many solo and group exhibitions in Syria, the United States, Turkey and France. He was awarded the Al-Sharja Arab Creativity Short Story Prize for his collection *Tomorrow, I Will Sew My Mouth* and the Honorary Prize in Ghanem Ghabash for his short story *The Man with a Wheelchair*. He also wrote and directed a short, 11-minute film entitled *The Boundaries of the Grey*.

**Cat in the Head N556**

*Signed (lower center)*

*Mixed media on canvas*

*120 x 150 cm – 47.2 x 59.1 in.*







**BASEEM**  
**RAYYES**

**Journey to India**  
*Signed (lower left)*  
*Mixed media on canvas*  
*120 x 160 cm – 47.2 x 63 in.*





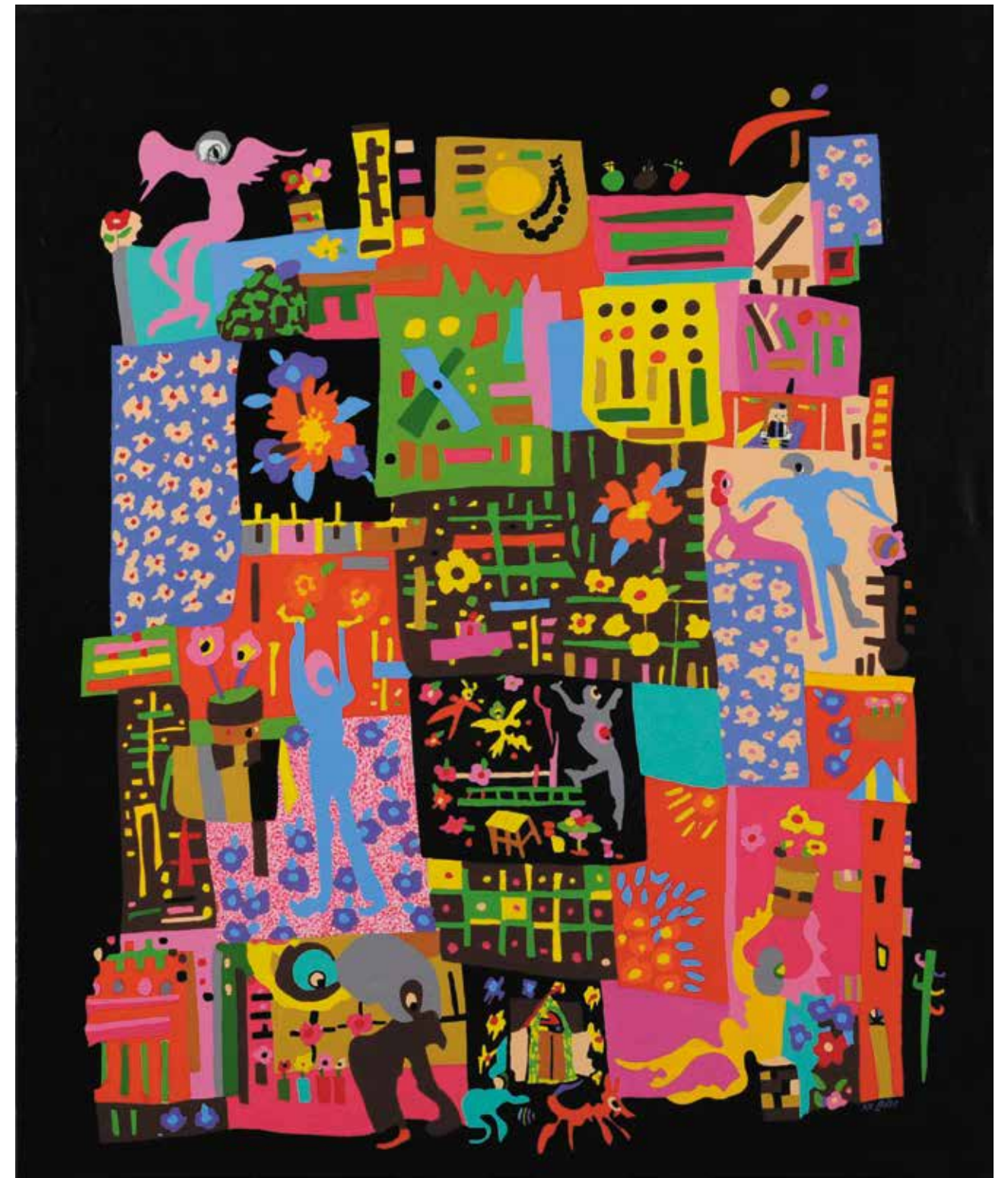


**PARVIS  
ROOZBEH**

Parvis Roozbeh is an Iranian artist born in Iran in 1957. He is a professor of art in the University of Art in Tehran and a lifetime member of the Iranian painters' guild. His work is characterized by its checkered, quilted patterns and compositions, blending geometric abstraction and naïve primitivism to create detailed designs.

**Cité des Anges**

*Mixed media on canvas*  
120 x 100 cm – 47.2 x 39.4 in.



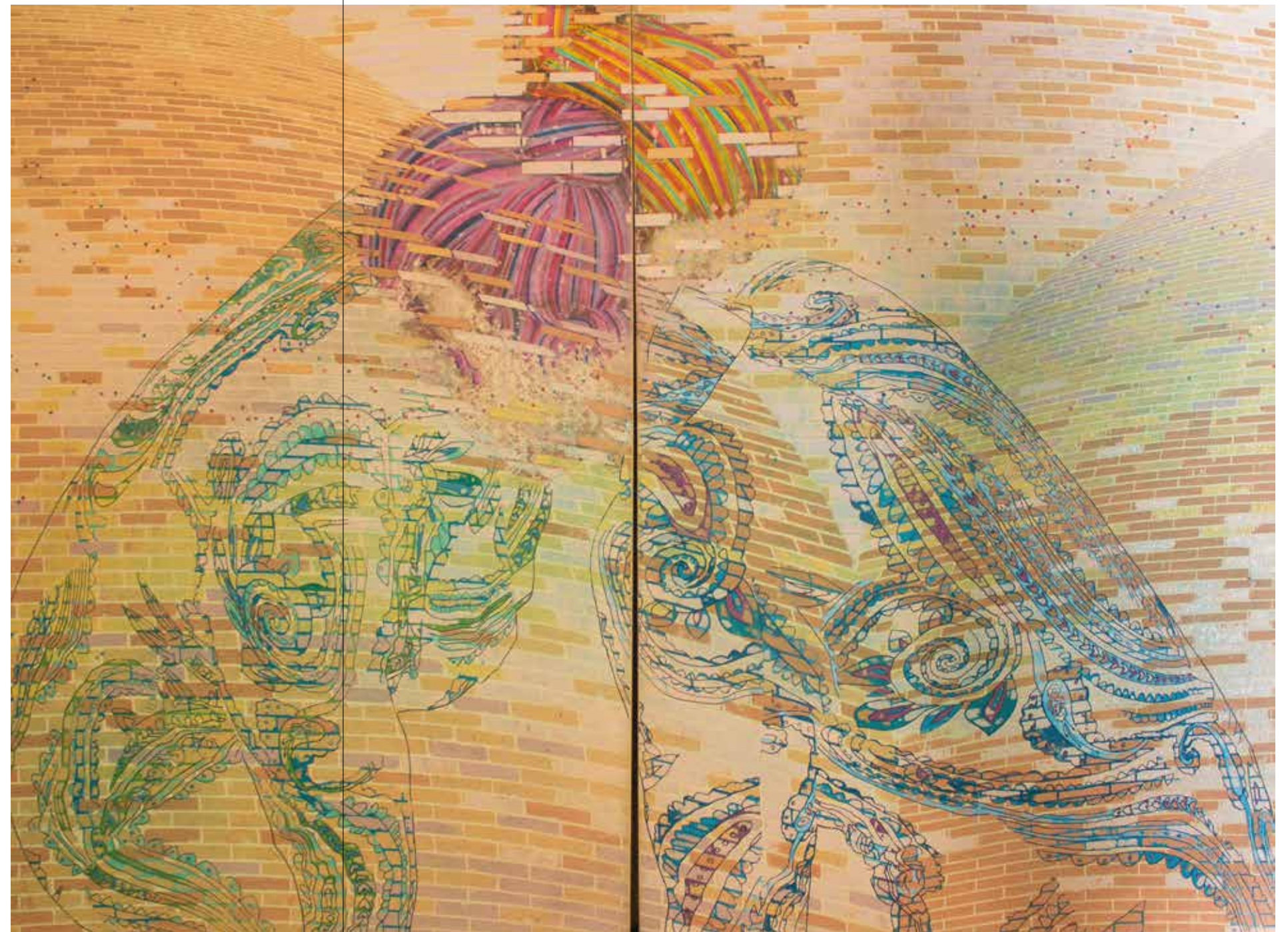




**SHIVA  
HIRESH**

**Dptych IV, 2010**  
*Acrylic on canvas*  
150 x 200 cm – 59.1 x 78.7 in.

Shiva Hiresch was born in Kurdistan, Iran in 1980. He began his studies in Fine Art in Uromieh, Iran, and received his BFA from Tehran University of Art in 2008. Shiva's work incorporates a common theme of brick walls that appear malleable, giving form to graceful, figurative elements. Inscribing subtle elements of calligraphy, construction and distorted dimensions, Shiva's work balances the strength and fragility of identity and the turmoil of the anonymous.







**MOHAMMAD  
YAGHOUBIAN**

Mohammad Yaghoubian is an Iranian artist born in 1974. He is known for his paintings of interwoven calligraphy of the original Persian alphabet. Drawing from the principles of *Naghashi Khat*, a contemporary practice of painting-calligraphy, Yaghoubian's work expresses an appreciation for Farsi literature and the state of mind that applies colour and painting to poetry.

**Varabboka Fakaber, 2009**  
*Signed (bottom left)*  
*Acrylic on canvas*  
*120 x 200 cm – 47.2 x 78.7 in.*







**BAHMAN  
ZAHEDI**

Bahman Zahedi is a calligraphic artist and painter born in Tehran in 1970. He obtained his Masters in calligraphy in Iran before going on to study Persian painting. Combining his academic foundations in calligraphy with his passion for painting, Zahedi communicates through an expression medium incorporated script, text and image. In this piece, Zahedi collaborated with artists Elaheh Sepehri and Fariba Fouladian Pour.

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**Show Me Your Face**

*Oil and tar on canvas*

*140 x 140 cm – 55.1 x 55.1 in.*







**BAHMAN  
ZAHEDI**

**Through Cielo**  
*Oil on canvas*  
140 x 140 cm – 55.1 x 55.1 in.







**LAURENCE  
JENKELL**

Born in Bourges, France, in 1965, Laurence Jenkell is renowned internationally for her candy sculptures. She studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Cannes, painting composites, landscapes and portraits. Later, she found inspiration in fashion and industrial design, successfully integrating contemporary consumerism and industrial images and patterns into her work. Her candy sculptures are named *Bonbon wrapping* after the distortion the medium undergoes in her hands. As a result of her studying of colour for so many years, Jenkell now masters a large range of bright, splendid and acidulous shades.

**Le grand bonbon Liban, 2009**

*Signed and numbered 'Jenkell' (on the bottom)*

*Plexiglass, edition of 8 + 4AP*

*200 x 75 x 75 cm – 78.7 x 29.5 x 29.5 in.*





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