

canvas

ART AND CULTURE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND ARAB WORLD

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EXCLUSIVE
YOUSSEF NABIL

ALSO INSIDE ABU DHABI ART
ARTISTS MAKING MOVIES & THE PALESTINIAN MUSEUM



Farideh Lashai.
*I come from the
land of ideology.*
2010. Painting
with projected
animation, sound
oil, acrylic and
graphite on canvas.
185 x 185.5 cm.

Image courtesy
Farideh Lashai
Foundation.


TOWARDS *THE INEFFABLE*

Farideh Lashai's new exhibition opens at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art on 20 November, signalling the start of a new era of openness to cultural dialogue in Iran following this year's international agreement for lifting the sanctions that have isolated the country and its people for almost 40 years. **Mahnaz Fancy** previews.

Organised in collaboration with the Farideh Lashai Foundation (led by Lashai's daughter Maneli Keykavoussi), *Farideh Lashai: Towards the Ineffable* marks the first time a prominent non-Iranian curator (in this case, Germano Celant, director of the Prada Foundation and formerly of the Guggenheim Museum) has worked on an exhibition at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA) since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. However, what makes this a truly unprecedented show is that Celant and his co-curator Faryar Javaherian have assembled a major museum display of one of Iran's most important artists, Farideh Lashai (1944–2013), alongside a selection of great works from the world-renowned but rarely seen museum's collection – thereby inserting Iranian art into the international narrative of Modern and Contemporary art.

TMOCA opened in 1977 under the leadership of Her Majesty Farah Pahlavi, the former empress of Iran, and with funds from the 1970s oil boom. Founding curators David Galloway and Donna Stein amassed a collection of Impressionist, Modern and Contemporary art that is considered one of the most valuable outside the USA and Europe. Boasting prized works by European and American artists from Dalí, Matisse, Picasso and Van Gogh to Bacon, Hockney, Lichtenstein, Moore, Pollock and Warhol, the collection has been locked away in vaults for much of the last 40 years because it was seen as a sign of the 'Western decadence' of the Shah's era and considered offensive to the conservative values dictated by a theocratic rule.

The rapid rise of the Middle Eastern art market over the last 15 years has garnered recognition for artists like Lashai, Shirin Neshat, Farhad Moshiri, Nicky Nodjoumi, Parviz Tanavoli and Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian outside of Iran due in part to the fact that their works have offered important insight into what had become an isolated Iranian culture. Behind this public art market, curators such as Fereshteh Daftari, Layla Diba, Linda Komaroff and Venetia Porter, along with gallerists Rose Issa, Leila Heller, Isabelle van den Eynde, Taymour Grahne and Janet Rady have quietly played a key role in bringing Modern and Contemporary Iranian art to wider audiences and into important public and private collections around the world. This exhibition represents a culmination of these various efforts.

Lashai has a unique place in this recent history of Contemporary Iranian art. A wildly prolific artist, she worked in media ranging from crystal to abstract painting and stop motion video animations projected onto landscape paintings over a 50-year career. Her body of work speaks to an acutely intelligent and agile mind and political commitment. Referencing film, literature, and art history with equal ease, Lashai's art was produced against the backdrop of a dramatic history of revolution and violence. 

Farideh Lashai: Towards the Ineffable runs 20 November–26 February at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. For more information, visit www.tmoqa.com