

# LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

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## From All Angles: Leila Heller Gallery Explores the Multifaceted Middle East at Istanbul's ArtInternational

This month, New York's Leila Heller gallery heads to Turkey with an understated presentation at Istanbul's ArtInternational fair with a selection of largely black-and-white works—a mix of painting, sculpture, and photography—that speak to the artistic history and contemporary cultural climate of the Middle East.

The subjects of the works on display range from the political to more straightforward aesthetic concerns. Two Iranian artists, for example, each present photographs that deal with issues of identity and the impact of politics on the individual: [Shirin Neshat](#), whose "Women of Allah" series combines intimate portraits with Arabic calligraphy, and [Reza Aramesh](#), whose images document Palestinians attempting to flee Gaza into to Egypt.

In contrast, Iranian-born American artist [Steven Naifeh](#) addresses the Arab world through its artistic heritage, making a range of paintings, wall sculptures, and floor sculptures that reference the patterns and geometry of Islamic art with the sleekness of [Minimalism](#), [Geometric Abstraction](#) and [Op Art](#). Growing up throughout the Middle East, the son of American diplomats, Naifeh seamlessly blends the artistic impulses of two often-conflicting cultures in his work. Taking the complex abstract and mathematically rigorous patterns and forms found in the textiles, marquetry, and architecture of the Middle East for millennia and executing them in the crisp visual language of 20th-century Western

art, Naifeh creates a cross-cultural dialogue that transcends both cultures. (His fluency in art history is hardly surprising—the artist studied the subject at Harvard and Princeton and has written award-winning biographies of artists [Jackson Pollock](#) and [Vincent van Gogh](#).) These works revel in their materials—from large-scale modular sculptures in lustrous white limestone or lacquered black canvas to complex paintings in acrylic on canvas.

—[Heather Corcoran](#)