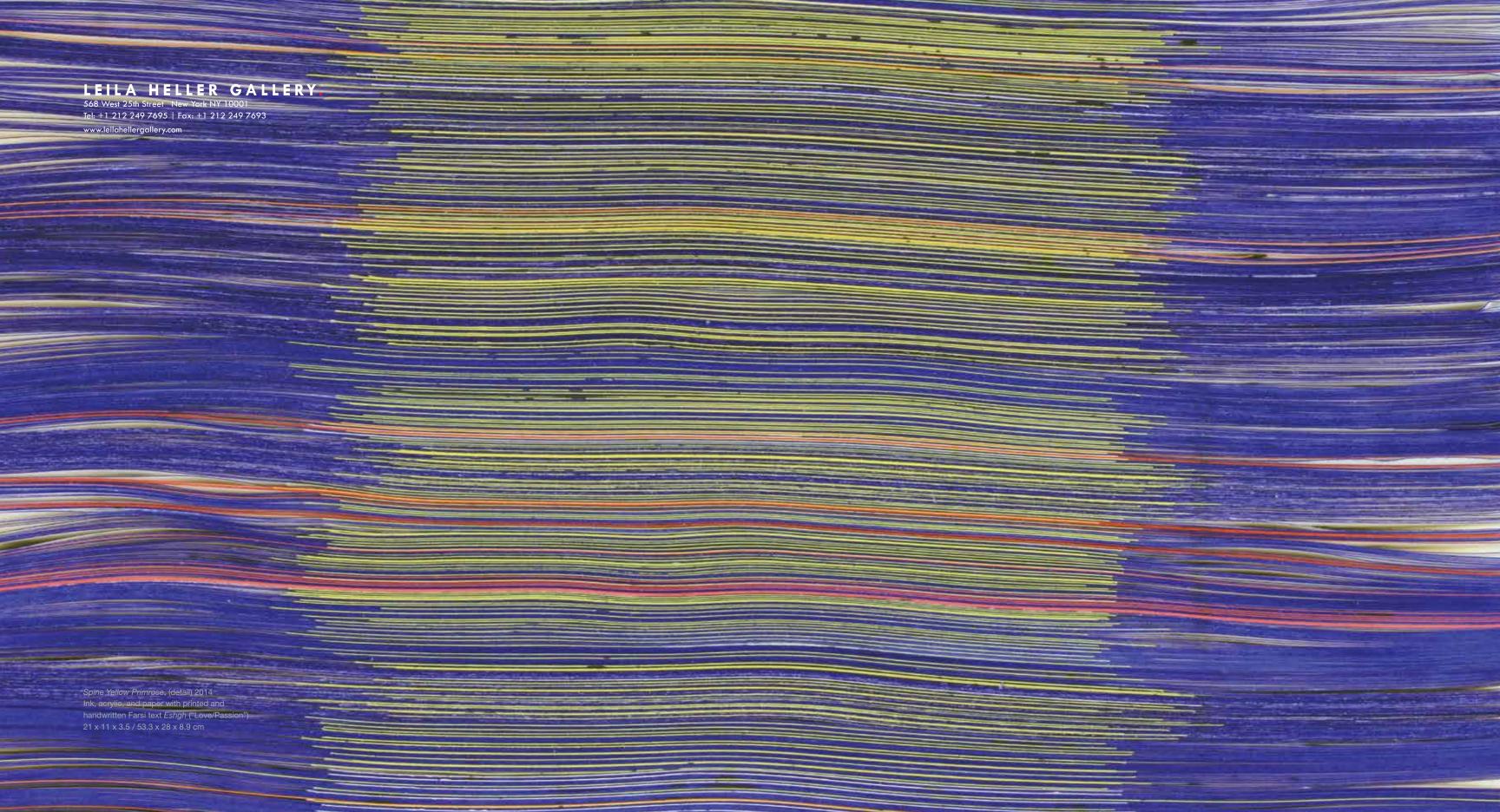




SURFACED HADIEH SHAFIE





Forugh 7, 2014
Ink, acrylic and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text from the poem "Tavalodi Digar" ("Another Birth")
12.5 x 18.75 x 3 in / 31.75 x 47.6 x 7.6 cm

HADIEH SHAFIE: A PAINTER WHOSE HEART IS MADE OF POETRY THYRZA NICHOLS GOODEVE

"Nothing is pure," said Enishte Effendi.

"In the realm of book arts, whenever a masterpiece is made, whenever a splendid picture makes my eyes water out of joy and causes a chill to run down my spine, I can be certain of the following: Two styles heretofore never brought together have come together to create something new and wondrous."

- My Name is Red, Orhan Pamuk¹

The real triumph over tyranny...is not a poem about freedom but a poem about love.

- Leon Wieseltier²

Of all the collaborations in the history of art, the one between the poet and the visual artist is among the most treasured and yet unnatural. For what fundamental opposition divides the arts more than that between the word and the image. In fact, the disciplines of art history and criticism in the West are based on the conceit that language is other to the image, summed up by the word *ekphrasis*: "A verbal description of a visual object." For Hadieh Shafie nothing could be further from her experience for she is a painter whose heart is made of poetry.

There is an alley

which my heart has stolen from the streets of my childhood.

I shall wear a pair of twin cherries as ear- rings and I shall put dahlia petals on my fingernails.³

In Iran poetry is not only a deep and profound tradition but it is "alive." The poetry of Rumi is woven into the architecture and "permeates the understanding of everyday life." Partly this is because, unlike the West where word and image are opposed, the Arabic script in which Persian is written, influenced by Islamic prohibitions against representational images of humans, animals, and Allah, has attained the status of visual art (calligraphy). And yet, Shafie's inspiration, or as she puts it, "permission" to work with the abstracted line of letters as a painterly vocabulary, comes not from Arabic script and calligraphy but from Bryce Marden and Cy Twombly.⁵

Such are the vortices of contradiction from which her work is made — where one culture/genre/medium bleeds into the other. It is not surprising that the celebrated 20th century poet and filmmaker Forugh Farrokhzad's "Another Birth" and poet/painter Sohrab Sepehri's "In the Garden" are inspirations for a number of her new works. In fact, as





Spine Ultramarine Blue, 2014 Ink, acrylic, paper and printed handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion") 21.5 x 11 x 3.5 in / 54.6 x 28 x 8.9 cm

Spine Yellow Primrose, 2014 Ink, acrylic, paper and printed handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion") 21.5 x 11 x 3.5 in / 54.6 x 28 x 8.9 cm

she says, "This new text and the fact that it comes from poems made me think about how the paper and paint I use can be used to create a visual response." As with the works made from the Persian word for passionate love, Eshah, we are confronted with objects that have no precedent in the history of art except perhaps as artist's books. In other words, there is something new and wondrous here which causes a chill to run down my spine and it has everything to do with the fusion and merging of different styles, mediums, traditions such as painting and poetry; pre and post-Revolutionary Iran and Western high Modernism (Color Field Painting, Abstract Expressionism, and Minimalism); and the word as verbal signifier and the word as visual signifier.

In fact echoing There is an alley which my heart has stolen from the streets of my childhood—she has lived as a female body hidden inside a chador under the threat of violence, and, in America, as a rebellious teenage punk hiding her clothes and make-up from her parents. Additionally, while living in post-Revolutionary Iran (her family left when she

was 13), certain books were banned from reading. Like the female body, which had to be covered in head covering and modest clothing, any book, whether an Iranian children's story (such as The Little Black Fish) or epic racist import like Gone With the Wind, bought on the black market, was prohibited. Because of this, not only is Farsi full of physical threat and passionate resonance for her, so is the tactility of the book as a physical object — from ancient scroll to codex made of pages, spine, and cover.

The truth is, whether printed in a book, hand written in a sketchbook, or scrawled across a single page, poetry and the poetic acknowledge and express the limit of language. We turn to the poetic to express the ineffable and impossible. In other words, to speak as a poet is to suggest, evoke, and allude rather than state, know, or represent directly. Similarly, Western abstraction emerged as a foil to the domination of European painting by the figural and representational. And yet, one of the greatest periods of collaboration between poets and visual artists occurred in the 50s and 60s with the New York School of poets and

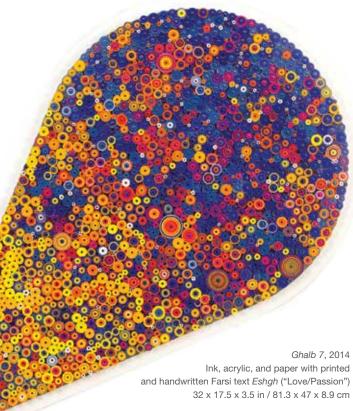
Abstract Expressionist painters such as Frank O'Hara and Larry Rivers. The nonfigurative, purely material sensation of painterly abstraction was suited to the way these poets used language. "That's part of poetry's sensational impact," says poet and art writer Bill Berkson, "where the edges of meaning, words, return to their peculiar physicality (which then provoke undreamed-of connotations)."6 For Shafie, it is precisely these "undreamed-of connotations," such as a pair of twin cherries as ear- rings ... dahlia petals on my fingernails that she activates using the material (8 1/2 x 11" paper). "We read and reread poems to decipher their meaning," she says,

a pursuit in my mind that never really gets to the absolute true meaning or intention of the author because the feeling evoked when we read a poem is so dependent on our own being... existence... life experience ...inner truths. So I was thinking how can I as a visual artist use my mediums of paper, ink and paint, to express poetic meaning using the language, or actual components, of the book. For instance, how can I reflect upon the way the text in a book is embedded, even hidden inside, and when we turn the pages, the words collide and overlap.

Every one of the works in this exhibition, deconstructs and reconstructs simultaneously the vocabulary of modernist painting, the book, and the conflicted status of her own experience with Persian culture. Iran gave heraccess to hermost intimate self, but as something prohibitive and hidden, secret and indirect; a world of translation, coding, and decoding. In Forugh 1, 2014 and Sohrab 1, 2014 sections of the poems are presented simultaneously but in two different formats: on the right, lines of poetry - signifiers of intensity both expressible and not — are painted with a brush and multiple colors in Farsi, transforming this poetic Persian language into painterly abstraction, appearing like waves of water color on the edges of stacked paper. Embedded on the left are her signature "ketabs" (books), tightly

wound bobbins of various size and density. These bobbins are made of cut strips of 8 1/2" x 11" paper upon which lines of poems by Farrokhzad and Sepehri, or the word Eshgh, are printed ("so as to recall the physicality of the book") and then written over in her hand with a brush. When arranged tightly in the exquisite white frames these reels act like molecules in a body. The painted edges push against one another protecting and connecting the gaps of space between. What we are confronted by are hallucinogenic canvases of cacophonous circles that vibrate as both painting and object.

Take Ghalb 7, 2014, where Eshgh appears packed inside multiple ketabs resting in a tear-drop kite-like frame that floats on the wall. Its color palette is set to a rhythm and



Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed 32 x 17.5 x 3.5 in / 81.3 x 47 x 8.9 cm

pattern of rotating, iterative movement of primary yellow, red, to blue. What we see are circles of color, edges not surface; parts rather than wholes. Similarly one could say Forugh 7 is both a poem and an object, a book and a painting, once again linking the notion of language's limit of representation with abstract painting itself. Instead of placing a brush piled high with wet pigment against the surface of a canvas, she rolls strips of paper into thickbanded circles and spiraling spikes (as in Spike 8, 2014) that are inserted into the space of painting. In this way, language, poetry, and paint, move off of the surface and are turned (literally) into things. Her canvases appear from afar to be paintings, but when you approach them intimately your body pulled in by the work — what is revealed is anything but the flat surface of Greenbergian Modernism. In fact, it is because she resists using the traditional blank canvas of painting, opting instead to fill the empty space inside the frame, that one of the boldest transformations in these works occurs.

"In Sohrab 2, 2014, a fragment from the poem "In the Garden" is painted on the edge of a ream of paper, but only after the stack is shifted into a zig-zag pattern. I then reposition the paper into a neat stack this causes an abstraction and a distortion of the text. Forugh 5, 2014 builds on this practice and takes it one step further. Here I continue to interrupt, displace, and shift the paper until the text from the poem "Another Birth" is abstracted."

Never one to remain tied to any one evocation of writing, in *Grid/Cut 4*, *5*, and *6* she puts Minimalism to work "Using a razor blade" to "carve out an image — one that reveals as much as it obscures." Flatness returns, as does the language of repetition, seriality, and pattern, as *Eshgh* — "I take the word away like skin" — triumphs and endures." "The real triumph over tyranny...is not a poem about freedom but a poem about love." (Leon Wieseltier)

In what is the masterpiece of this series, *Forugh 3*, 2014, Shafie uses a litary of iterations of modernist abstraction, producing one extended 3-dimensional epic. *Forugh 3*, 2014 is at once an abstract mural and bookshelf of quoted

text where Morris Louis, and Bryce Marden jump from the cannons of art history into

... a room as big as loneliness_my heart_which is as big as love_looks at the simple pretexts of its happiness_at the beautiful decay of flowers in the vase_at the sapling you planted in our garden."

Suggesting how

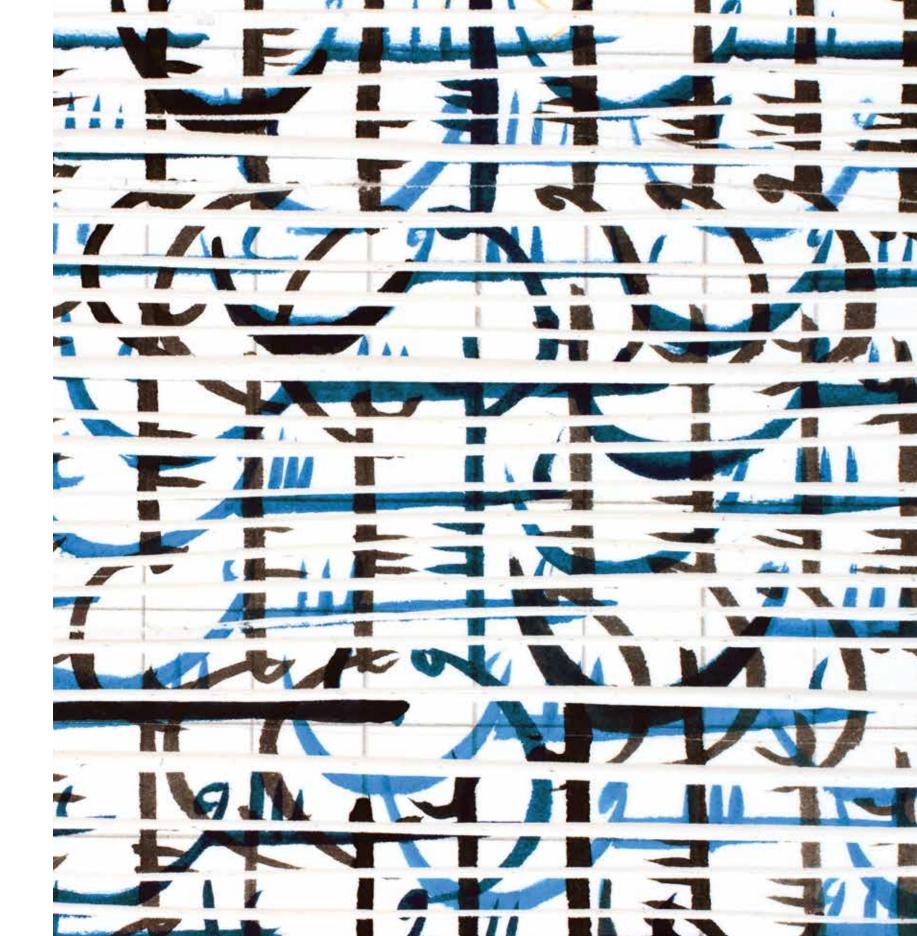
Life

and art

is perhaps that enclosed moment when my gaze destroys itself in the pupil of your eyes and it is in the feeling, which I will put into the Moon's impression and the Night's perception.⁸

[M]y eyes water out of joy as the character in Orhan Pamuk's My Name Is Red 9 states because we are left with a gaze that is not destroyed in the pupil of your eyes but utterly reinvented.

Grid/Cut 4 (detail), 2015 Ink, acrylic on mat board 44 x 32 in / 111.8 x 81.3 cm



¹ My Name is Red, Orhan Pamuk (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001) 160. Turkish version published in 1998.

http://theweek.com/articles/441724/leon-wieseltier-last-new-york-intellectuals. Accessed January 20, 2015.

http://www.forughfarrokhzad.org/selectedworks/selectedworks1.asp
 "Where poetry Lives in Iran," by Madelon Sprengnether, StarTribune Commentaries, July 3, 2014.

⁵ All quoted material comes from a conversation with the artist in January of 2015.

⁶ Bill Berkson, "Divine Conversation: Art, Poetry and the Death of the Addressee" in For The Ordinary Artist: Short Reviews, Occasional Pieces, and More (New York: BlazeVOX Books, 2010), 21.

^{7 &}quot;I became interested in the idea of negating rather than adding. The surfaces of these drawings introduce a layer of mark making by removing material. Using a razor blade I carve out an image — one that reveals as much as it obscures. It comes out of my experience with linotype but I like that it is the opposite of collage — visually subtractive instead of adding layers. I take the word away like skin." Hadieh Shafie.

⁸ "Another Birth" by Forugh Farrokhzad.

⁹ There is an essay to be written exploring Shafie's work as a kind of visual corallary to Pamuk's novel.





Transition 4, 2014
Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion")
60 x 3.5 in / 152.4 x 8.9 cm

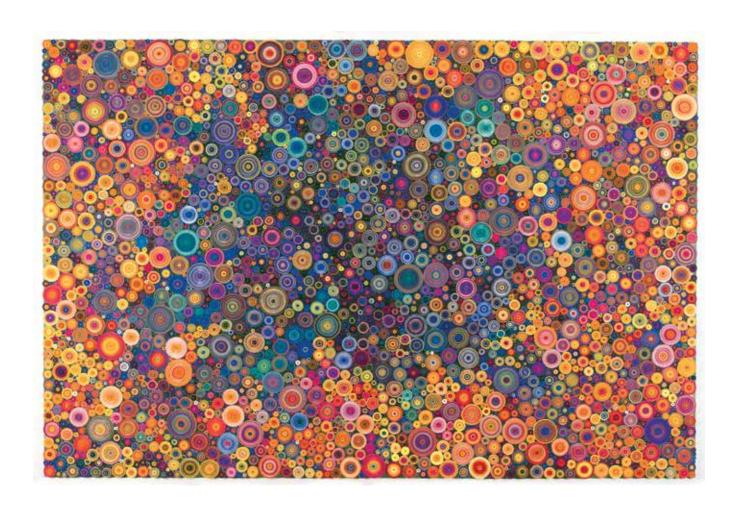
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Transition 4, (detail) 2014

Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion") 60 x 3.5 in / 152.4 x 8.9 cm

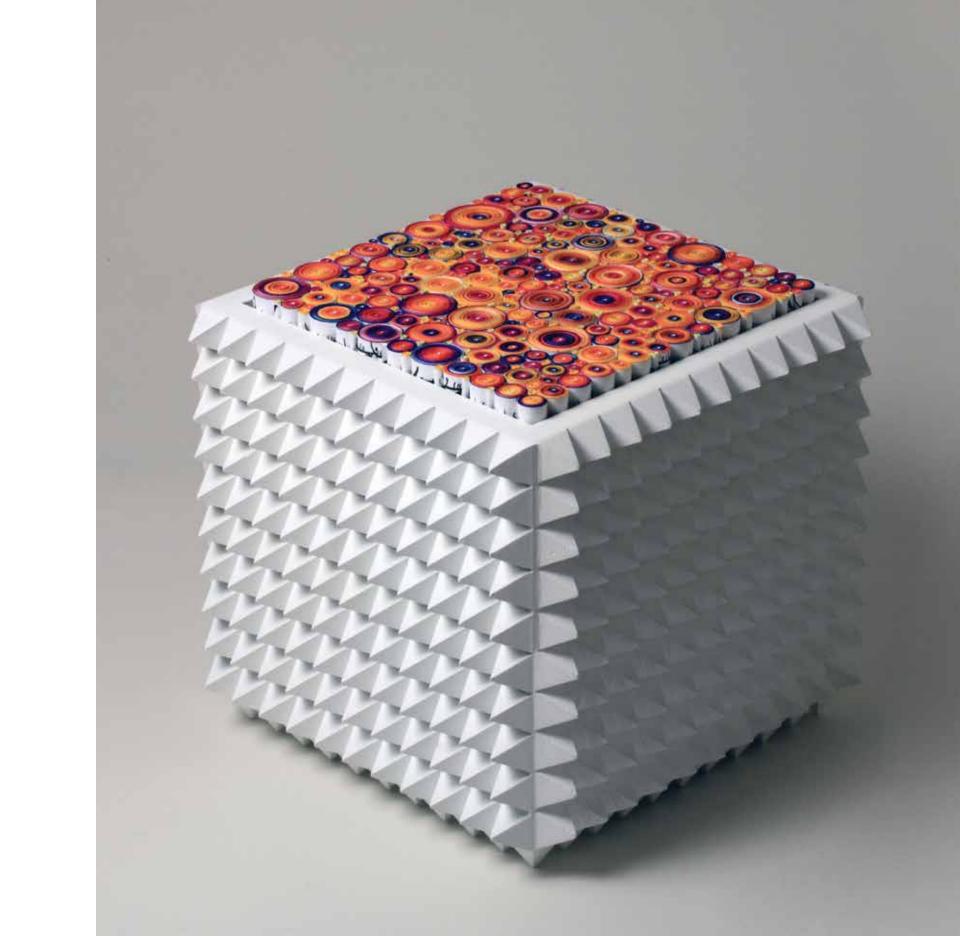






9 Colors (Ketab Series), 2015 Ink, acrylic and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion") 40 x 60 x 6 in / 101.6 x 152.4 x 15.2 cm

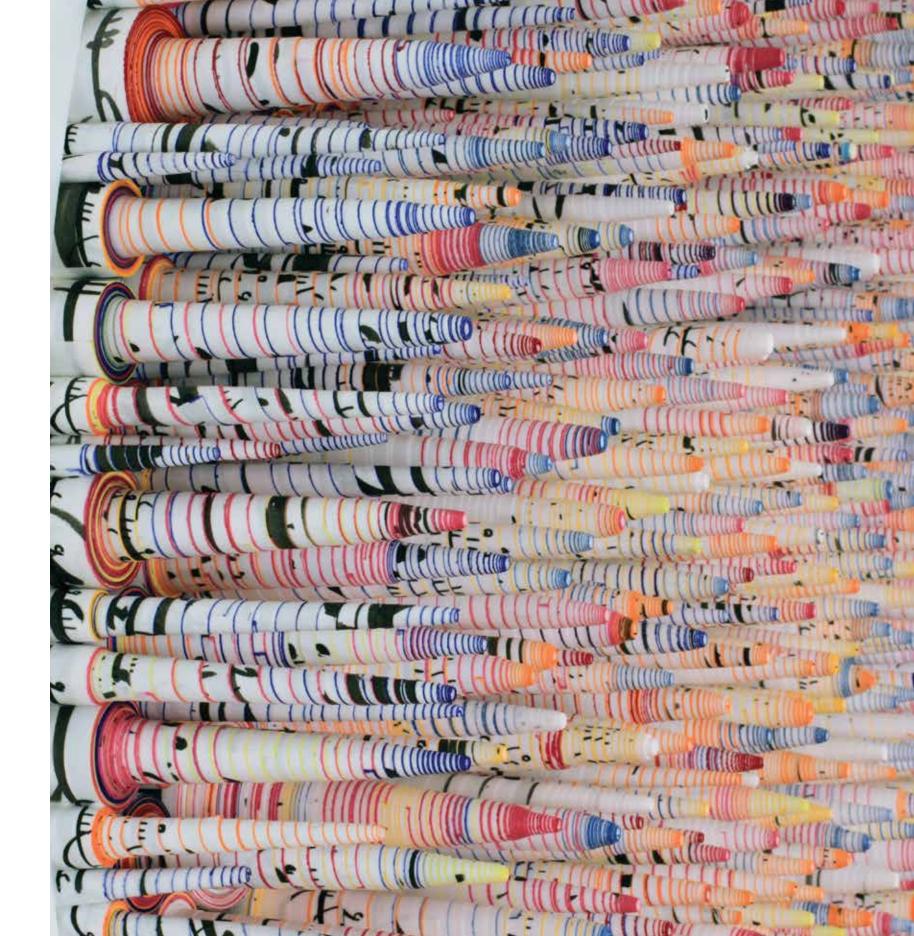




Block, 2014
Wood, ink, acrylic, and paper with printed
and handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion")
13.5 x 13.5 x 13.5 in / 34.3 x 34.3 x 34.3 cm



Spike 8 (Telesm Series), 2015 Ink, acrylic, paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion") 36 x 7.5 in / 91.4 x 19 cm





Block 3, 2015

Wood, ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text *Eshgh* ("Love/Passion") 30 x 30 x 5.5 in / 76.2 x 76.2 x 14 cm

Block 3, (detail) 2015

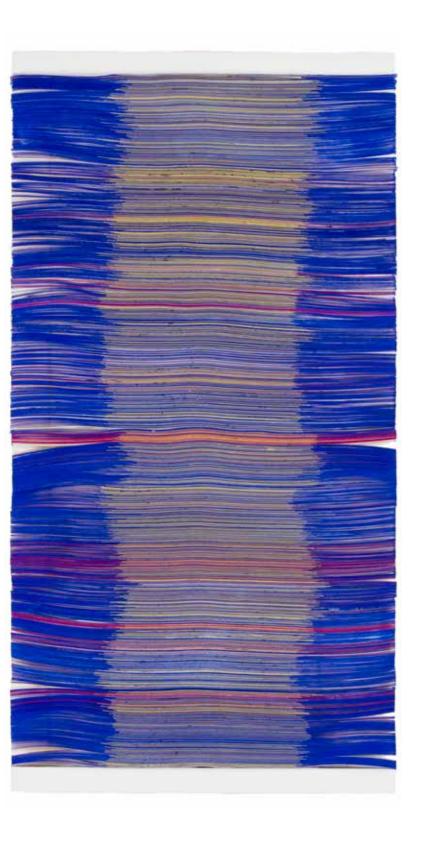
Wood, ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text *Eshgh* ("Love/Passion") $30 \times 30 \times 5.5$ in / $76.2 \times 76.2 \times 14$ cm

24





Spine Ultramarine Blue, 2014
Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion")
21.5 x 11 x 3.5 in / 54.6 x 28 x 8.9 cm



Spine Yellow Primrose, 2014
Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and
handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion")
21.5 x 11 x 3.5 in / 54.6 x 28 x 8.9 cm



Stripe 2, 2014
Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text Eshgh ("Love/Passion")
12.25 x 96 x 4.5 in / 31 x 243.8 x 11.4 cm



Sohrab 1, 2014
Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed
and handwritten Farsi text from the poem
"Dar Golestaneh" ("In the Garden")
12.5 x 18.75 x 3 in / 31.75 x 47.6 x 7.6 cm







Forugh 5, 2015 Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text from the poem "Tavalodi Digar" ("Another Birth") 25.5 x 11 x 3.5 in / 64.8 x 27.9 x 8.9 cm

Sohrab 3, 2015

Farsi text from the poem

"Dar Golestaneh" ("In the Garden")



Forugh 3, 2014
Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text from the poem "Tavalodi Digar" ("Another Birth") 11 x 88 x 4.5 in / 31 x 223.5 x 11.4 cm

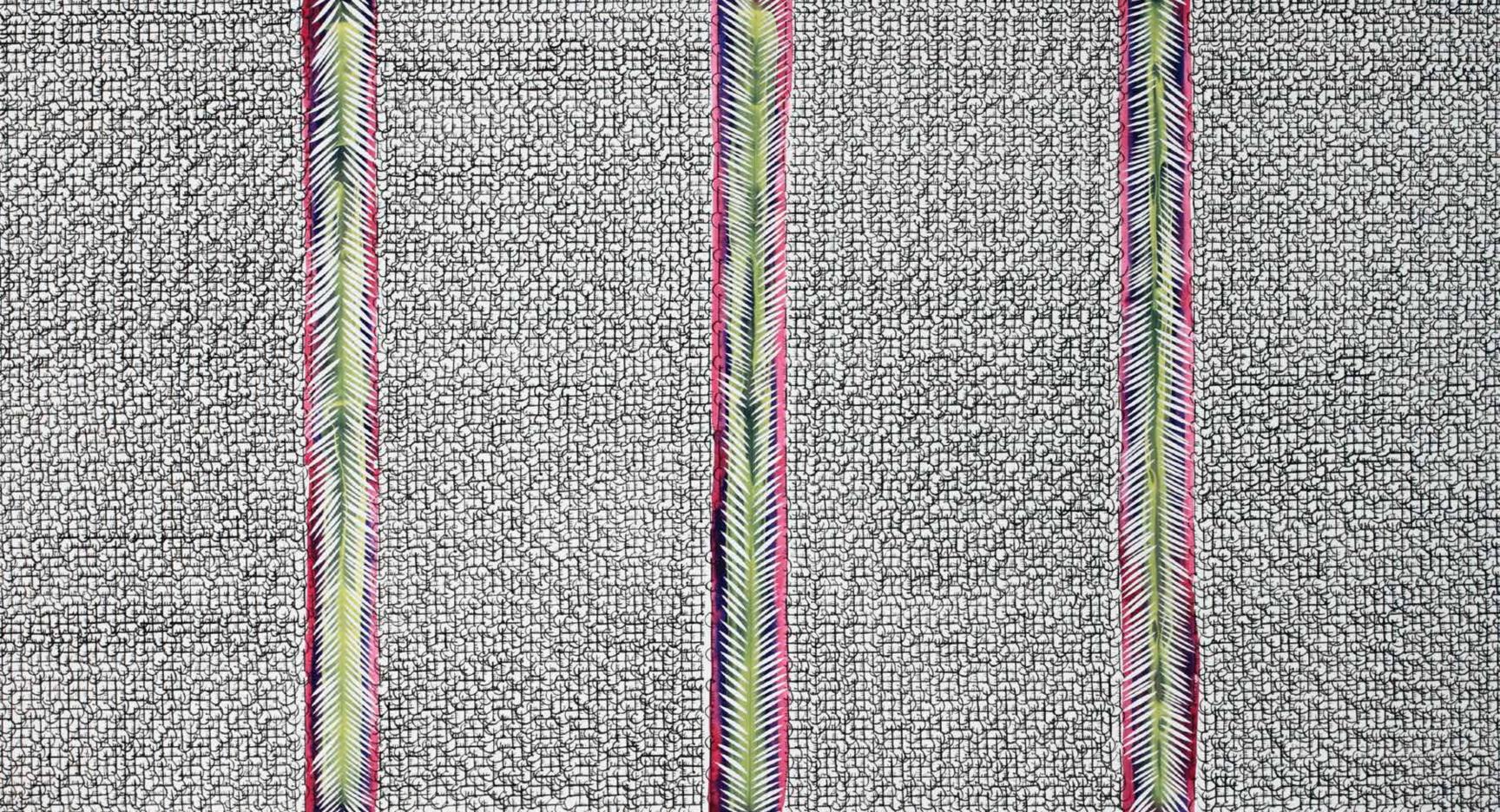


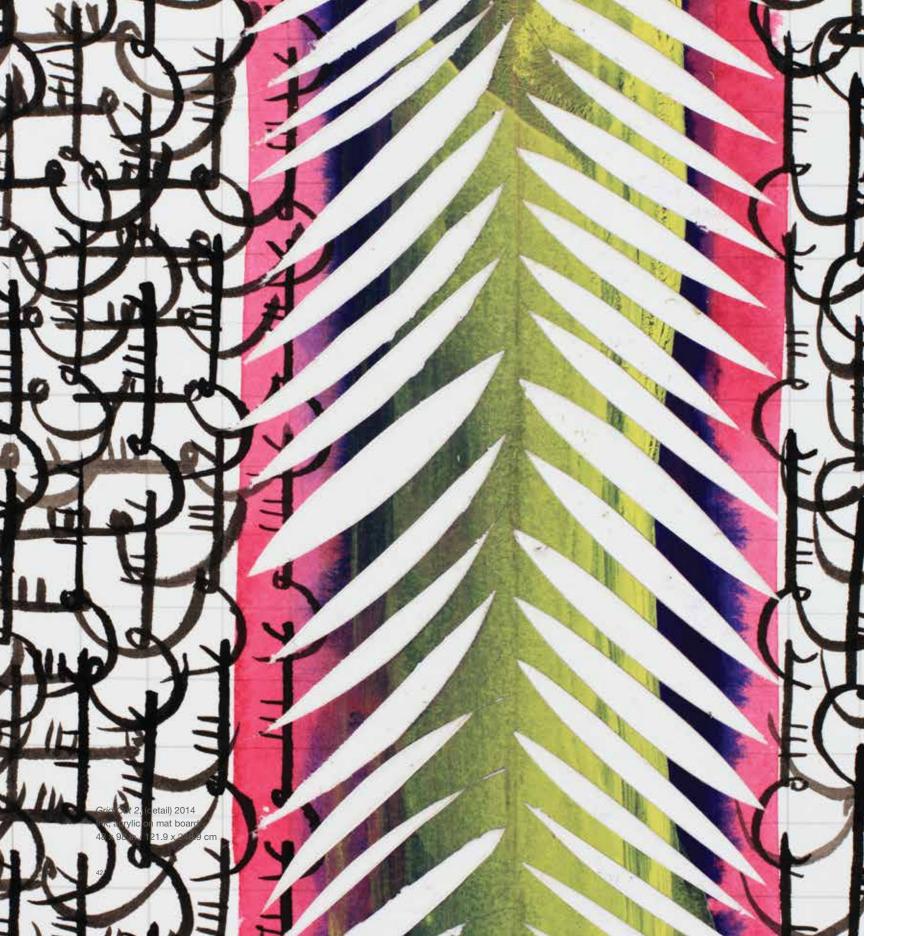
Grid/Cut 4, 2015 Ink, acrylic on mat board 44 x 32 in / 111.8 x 81.3 cm



Grid/Cut 5, 2015 Ink, acrylic on mat board 44 x 32 in / 111.8 x 81.3 cm

Following page: Grid/Cut 2, 2014 Ink, acrylic on mat board 48 x 98 in / 121.9 x 248.9 cm





HADIEH SHAFIE

B. 1969, Iran Lives and works in Silver Spring, MD

EDUCATION

2004 Master of Fine Arts, Imaging and Digital Art, University of Maryland Baltimore County, MD

Master of Fine Arts, Painting, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Painting, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

SELECTED SOLO EXHBITIONS

2015 Solo Exhibition, NYU Abu Dhabi Center, New York, NY (forthcoming)

Surfaced, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY

2011 Ketabeh Eshghe (Book of Love), Pentimenti Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

Ketab (Book), XVA Gallery, Dubai, UAE

Sweet Turning of the Page, Morton Fine Art, Washington DC

2009 Paper Pattern Color Culture, Pentimenti Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

2004 The Little Black Fishes, School 33 Art Center, Baltimore, MD

Spin, MFA Exhibition, CVAC, UMBC, Baltimore, MD

SELECTED GROUP EXHBITIONS

2014 Dialogues: Recent Acquisitions of the Sheldon Museum of Art, Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE

Look At Me, Curated by Beth Rudin DeWoody and Paul Morris, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY

The Franz and Virginia Bader Fund: Second Act, American University Museum, Katzen Arts Center, Washington, DC

Paper Please!, Pentimenti Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

Artist in Exile: Creativity, Activism and the Diasporic Experience, Yeh Art Gallery, St. John's University, New York, NY

Persepolis: Word and Image, William Benton Museum of Art at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT

2013 Spectra, San Diego State University Downtown Gallery, San Diego, CA

Calligraffiti, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY

Summer Selects, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY

Jameel Prize Exhibition (touring exhibition), San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX

The Space Between: Contemporary perspectives on tradition and society, Middle East Center for the Arts (MECA), Jersey City, NJ

Jameel Prize Exhibition (touring exhibition), Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Stanford, CA

2012 Rock, Paper, Scissors, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY

Jameel Prize Exhibition (touring exhibition), Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France

Invitational Art Exhibition, Conley Art Gallery USC Fresno, California

Jameel Prize Exhibition (touring exhibition), Casa Arabe, Madrid, Spain

2011 SHOW OFF! SPM Private Museum, Dubai UAE

Jameel Prize Exhibition (touring exhibition), Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK

Select: Washington Project for the Arts, Washington DC

2010	Ritual: Form, Script and Gesture, A Pop Up Project, Morton Fine Art, Washington DC
	More of the best is yet to come, Pentimenti Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
	Sondheim Prize, Semi-Finalist Exhibition, MICA, Baltimore, MD
2009	Hidden Wounds, Paper Bullets: Iranian Contemporary Art, Grant Arts Central, Fullerton, CA
	Protocol: Syntax / Semantics, Gallery 4, Baltimore, MD
	Baker Artist Awards Exhibition, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD
	Women's Work, Civilian Art Place, Washington DC
2008	Hidden and Revealed, Maryland Art Place, Baltimore, MD
	Full Circle, Rosenberg Gallery, Goucher College, Baltimore, MD
2007	Changing Climate Changing Colors, Abrons Art Center, New York, NY
2006	Displacement, Pyramid Atlantic, Silver Spring, MD

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2012	The Space Program, The Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation, Brooklyn, N
2011	Jameel Prize, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK (Shortlisted)
	Franz and Virginia Bader Fund, Washington DC
2010	Individual Artist Grant, Maryland State Arts Council
2009	Mary Sawyers Baker Award, William G. Baker Jr. Memorial Fund
2008	Individual Artist Grant, Maryland State Arts Council
2003	RTKL Grant in Visual Arts

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

The British Museum, London, UK

Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK

Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA

Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE

The Alfond Collection at Rollins College, Winter Park, FL

Salsali Private Museum, Dubai, UAE

The Farjam Collection, Dubai, UAE

Bank of America, Corporate Collection, NC

Art in Embassies, Public Collection, Dubai, UAE

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Noelle Bodick, "Fun With Food, Blank Paintings, & Other Trends at the Armory Show," Artspace (March 8, 2014).

"Matters of the Heart," Canvas Volume 10, No. 1 (January/February 2014): 80-81.

Maryam Ekhtiar, "Hidden Words: Hadieh Shafie," Catalogue (2013).

Thyrza Nichols Goodeve, "'Eshgh' A Word So Full Of Color It Makes Us Spin" Catalogue (2013).

Sarah Parrish, "Hadieh Shafie," Art for Rollins: The Alfond Collection of Contemporary Art Volume 1 (2013): 110 -111.

Madeline Yale Preston, "Spinning Love," Canvas Magazine, Volue 9, Issue 4 (July/August 2013). 118-119.

Rob Sharp, "Masterpiece Closes as it Begins: Contemporary and Antiquities Both Sell Well," Blouinartinfo.com, July 3, 2013.

Elda Silva, "Isalmic Tradition Meets Modern World in Exhibit," The Houston Chronicle, June 18, 2013.

"Leila Heller Gallery. The Armory Show 2013," GalleryIntell.com, March 2013.

"Within the Grey," Asian Art News 23, no. 2 (March/April 2013).

"Top Recommendations: The Armory Show, ADAA: The Art Show," GalleryIntell.com, March 2013.

Sabine B. Vogel, "Messen: Art Dubai," Weltkunst, no. 20 (March 2013). 102.

Robin Pogrebin, "No Longer a Man's World: Women are Bringing About the Biggest Change in the Growing Middle Eastern Art Market," *Art Basel Magazine-Miami Beach*, December 2012. 132.

"5 Minutes with Hadieh Shafie," Canvas Daily, Abu Dhabi Art Edition, no. 4 (November 9-10 2012).

"The Art of Script: Myriad Artworks Which Draw Inspiration from the Age-Old Practice of Calligraphy Reveal Contemporary Twists," *Canvas Daily, Abu Dhabi Art Edition*, no. 4 (November 9-10 2012).

Ben Mirza, "Is Modern Art Really Rotten to the Core?" HuffPost Culture UK, October 23 2012.

Esteban Cortez, "Four Nationally renowned Artists featured at Conley Art Gallery," The Collegian, January 27, 2012.

Eric Loret, "Jameel et une nuits," Liberation, Paris, January 7, 2012.

"EyeCatchers," Canvas Daily, Abu Dhabi Art Edition, no. 2 (November 16, 2011): 11.

"Best Photo of the Day," Art Daily, September 27, 2011.

"Sotheby's Annual Modern and Contemporary Arab and Iranian Art Sale" Art Daily, September 2, 2011.

Tiffany Jow, "All Wound Up", DC Magazine, July/August 2011. 51.

Christopher Lord, "Jameel Prize 2011 Shortlist Develops Art from Craftwork," The National, July 14, 2011.

Bruce Helander, "Artist To Watch", The Art Economist 1, no. 5 (2011): 72.

Tara Heuser, "The Sweet Turning of the Page", Pink Line Project, June 1, 2011.

"Splashes of Color and Love," The National, 2011. 7.

"Get your Fix," Aquarius, May 2011. 15.

F. Lennox Campello, "Letter from Washington, DC," American Contemporary Art Magazine, March 2011. 28-29.

Michael O'Sullivan, "Hadieh Shafie at Morton Fine Art," The Washington Post, Thursday, May 19, 2011.

John Anderson, "Hadieh Shafie at Morton Fine Art, Reviewed," Washington City Paper, May 9, 2011.

"Through 30 pieces in a group exhibition: 'Eshgh' and 'Love in a Time of Conflict' present a beautiful vision of life," Al Ittihad, April 23, 2011.

Bruce Helander, "Top Ten Artists To Watch," Huffington Post, April 2011.

Joseph Lanner, "Old Traditions, New Ideas," Esquire Middle East, April 2011. 48.

"The Victoria & Albert Museum Announces the Shortlist for the Jameel Prize 2011," www.artdaily.org, March 2011.

Barbara O'Brien, Juror's Comments, New American Paintings #88, The Open Studio Press, Boston, MA, 2010.

Emily Warner, "paperpatterncolorculture," The Brooklyn Rail, November 2009.

Dave Barton, "Mythologizing the Martyrs of Iran at Grand Central Art Center," Orange County Weekly, December 3, 2009.

Michael O'Sullivan, "In Baltimore, Artists Win a Vote of Confidence" The Washington Post, May 22, 2009.

Bret McCabe, "Moving Pictures Exhibition Exploring Transforming Images Also Recasts Their Emotive Potential," *Baltimore City Paper*, February 25, 2009.

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CONTINUOUS EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR COVER Forugh 3, 2014
Ink, acrylic, and paper with printed and handwritten Farsi text from the poem "Tavalodi Digar" ("Another Birth")
11 x 88 x 4.5 in / 31 x 223.5 x 11.4 cm

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Photography by Jason Fagan Catalogue design by Demetra Georgio All images courtesy of the artist © 2015 LEILA HELLER GALLERY, New Yo

