



## In memory of Farideh Lashai

Anna Seaman

May 5, 2013

 Save this article

In a touching tribute to one of the seminal artists in Iranian contemporary art, the Farjam Foundation is now showing *In Memory of Farideh Lashai (1944-2013)*. Lashai died in February after a decade-long battle with cancer and the gallery, an exhibition space for the private collection of Dr Farhad Farjam, changed its schedule to dedicate a three-month slot to her.

At the opening, the gallery also announced it had changed its name and sharpened its purpose. Formerly the Farjam Collection, the organisation is now a foundation and will be dedicated to more philanthropic and community projects.

"Our main goal is education," says

### Related

- Wild and wonderful pieces from Iranian collector Ramin Salsali
- Rabbit in Wonderland: an Iranian artist's view

Topic Art

Marjan Farjam, the gallery director. "We want to use the comprehensive collection of Dr Farjam to make a difference to society and to collaborate with other foundations to bring the art to a wider - audience."

### Who is Dr Farjam?

A prominent Iranian collector based in Dubai, Dr Farjam has a large collection that is displayed in rotating exhibitions in the Dubai International Financial Centre gallery. Marjan is Dr Farjam's niece and says she takes great

pleasure in sharing the works with the public. The current exhibition, she says, is particularly poignant to her. "I have looked up to Farideh since I was a child," she recalls. "When I was 10 or 11, whoever wanted to study painting, we would all look to her as an example. It means a lot to us to take the time to cherish her memory." Dr Farjam was also a big fan of Lashai and owns many of her lyrical and abstract works.

### The magic of orange trees

Lashai once famously said: "I became inflicted with the magic of orange trees and never overcame it. The trees took hold of me and never let me go, with thousands of hands, thousands of embraces." Almost all her work features trees, givers of life and symbols of eternity. In her last completed piece *I don't want to be a tree, I want to be its meaning*, video projections float over three canvases telling a story rich with cultural references. On one, *Layla and Majnun*, the Middle Eastern *Romeo and Juliet*, lie in each other's arms; and in another Edouard Manet's impressionist figures are invoked. Across all three, a dog passes as a symbol of passing time. Lashai's stories are hushed and perhaps not immediately engaging but give them some time and they quietly unfold themselves, revealing a very spiritual soul.

### Political threads

Although Lashai's references are usually rooted in nature, she is not averse to strong political messages. In *El Amal* (Hope), Charlie Chaplin dressed as Adolf Hitler juggles a white ball, symbolising the globe and Umm Kulthum sings down from the top of the canvas. In the video projection, the ball eventually bursts and Umm Kulthum's haunting tones play on in what becomes an ironic, despairing piece, distinctly lacking hope. "This was made at the time of the Egyptian revolution," explains Austin Hamilton, the assistant director. "It has a powerful political sentiment." A portrait in earthy tones of Mohammad Mosaddegh, the prime minister of Iran who



The RealReal™  
LUXURY  
CONSIGNMENT  
at up to  
90% OFF  
Shop Now  
www.TheRealReal.com

The advertisement is a rectangular box with a white background. On the left side, there is text in various fonts and colors: 'The' in red, 'RealReal' in black with a trademark symbol, 'LUXURY' in small black letters, 'CONSIGNMENT' in larger black letters, 'at up to' in a smaller black font, '90% OFF' in a larger, bold black font, 'Shop Now' in a black script font, and 'www.TheRealReal.com' in a small black font at the bottom. On the right side, there is a high-quality image of a brown Louis Vuitton handbag with the gold-tone monogram pattern and a top handle. In the top right corner of the advertisement box, there are small blue and grey icons for play and close.

was deposed in a coup in 1953, hangs alongside another painting where we see him from the back and partially erased. "She was a vocal supporter," points out Marjan.

### **Foundation work**

Alongside the educational programmes that the gallery already runs – an annual summer camp for children and guided tours once a month – it hopes to take exhibitions to international venues. Hamilton, an American, says she hopes to make Middle Eastern art more accessible in the West and Marjan says she wants to expand the reach of new artists. "Personally, I hope that we can have a platform for Iranian talents to grow through the foundation."

**• *In Memory of Farideh Lashai (1944-2013)* runs at the Farjam Foundation, Gate Village, DIFC until June 18**