



CONTEMPORARY  
MIDDLE  
ART  
EASTERN



*Try something* that makes you uncomfortable. Try something where you start from the very beginning because you have no frame of reference. When you let go of the rope, where do you lead yourself in this life?

A child might look at her mother (let's use me as the example, for I'm certainly guilty) and wonder why she doesn't understand the attraction of a good heart-pumping marathon or the fun of backpacking through a forest. What I've only just started to realize (maturity, anyone?) is that our parents have already surpassed any adventure you or I could ever attempt to have. The immigration of Iranians to the United States has been one of the greatest adventures of all.

It's something we don't often think about, because it's easy to take for granted, having formed the fabric of the lives we so mindlessly live now. Our parents and their friends up and left (whatever their individual reasons) the comforts of their belongings, their social structure, and the protective wall of family (armies and armies of family!). With one passport stamp they abandoned the daily reliance upon the language they dreamt in, to take on the great task of living their lives in a foreign language. I mean, talk about abandoning your comfort zone.

Many then experienced the greatest rites of passage in this foreign tongue, becoming married, or promoted, or parents, or even grandparents. All while working their mouths around the unusual sounds and the nasal echoes of American English.

I wonder how my mother raised us speaking English (our request, not hers), a language she had only learned from books and later in her 20's, living abroad. She had to re-learn childhood games in English so she could teach them to us, and later had to use this alien language to tell her children about their Persian roots. Life advice has been doled out to her three children in English, even though that is not always the language in which she experienced her own life lessons.

What does this mean for the rest of us? Do we need to be exiled from our native lands in order to have such an adventure? Or do we get to coast, as many of us do, believing the hard work has been done?

I don't think we need to go through something as wild or traumatic as our parents and their generation did, but we do owe it to them to realize that adventure lives all around us. In fact, we were born into a wild adventure. And now we each owe it to ourselves to see just how far our own life adventures might take us.

Too many times we complain about what our lives "could have been." Could have been? If you're reading this, you're in luck! Adventure


begins within our own minds, and it begins the moment you let it. For those of us who don't have the luxury of getting up to go to another culture, bring the experience into your home intellectually. (Can't get to the Paris café? Take 2 hours and watch *Amelie*.) And for those of us who don't wish to go over a waterfall in a barrel, we can think of a different way to test our limits and prove ourselves capable of what we didn't think we would be. We won't know unless we try.

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#### TAKE AN ADVENTURE WITH YOUR COMMUNICATION.

We have an opportunity to expand our life experiences simply by how we communicate. The words we choose to use, the languages we allow ourselves to be expressed in, the people with whom we choose to communicate. The person you might not have said hello to on the street may become your next date or the friend who introduces you to a hobby that then becomes your lifelong passion.

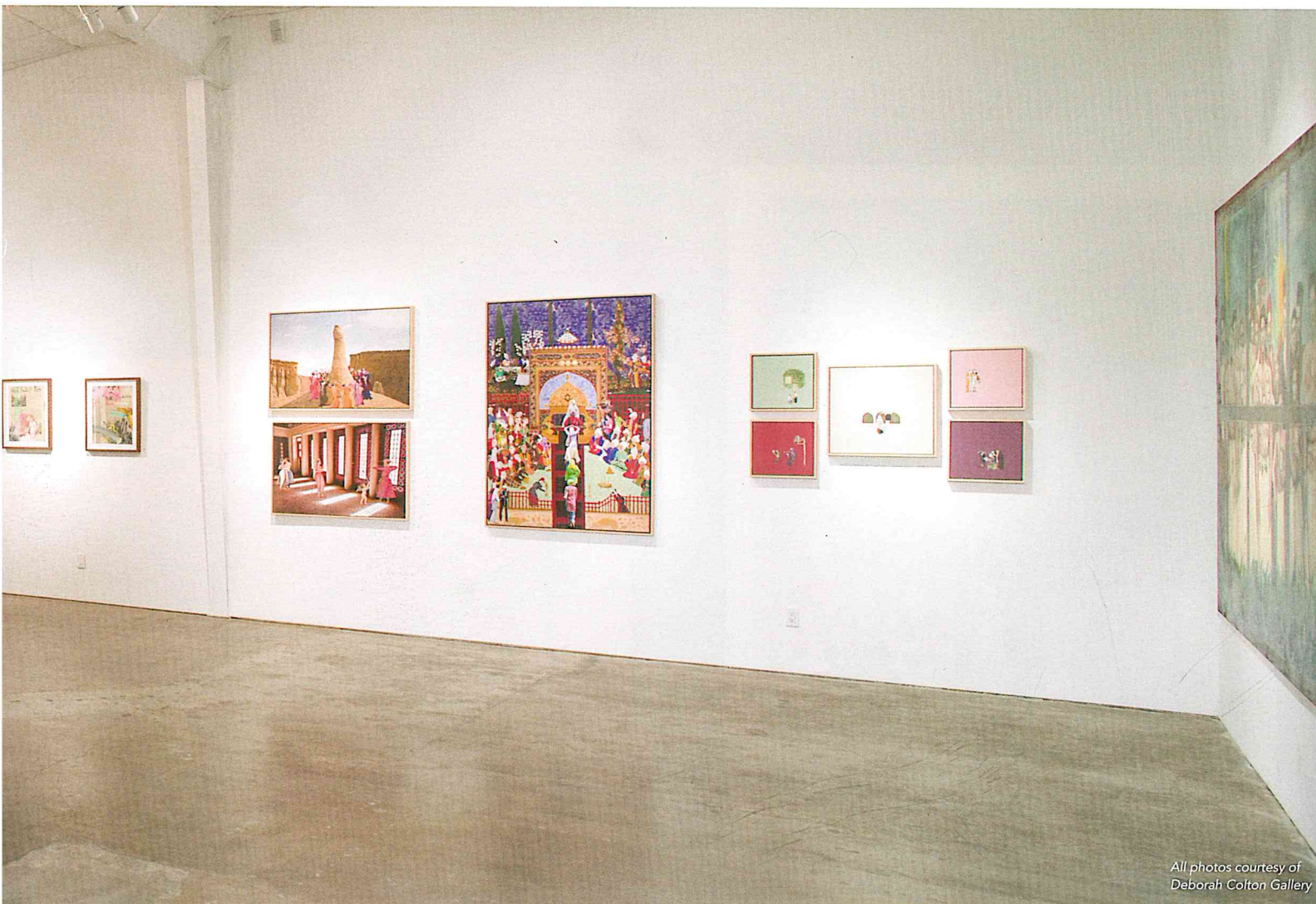
For many of us, it may even be simpler. Adventure may actually be about learning a language, just as it was for our ancestors. Recently I was asked to read a Farrokhzad poem at a dear friend's wedding. I couldn't let her down, which meant I had to quickly overcome both my painful shyness about speaking Persian and my complete ignorance of how to read Persian poetry to an audience. I practiced day and night in my room until I could do it just right. And in that, I realized that some things have come full circle. My mom set aside her primary language when she raised us because it was part of her adventure to be required to do so, but at the right time and place, I picked it up again thirtysome years later in the course of my own adventure.

*"...Adventures don't come calling like unexpected cousins calling from out of town. You have to go looking for them." — unknown* 

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All photos courtesy of Deborah Colton Gallery



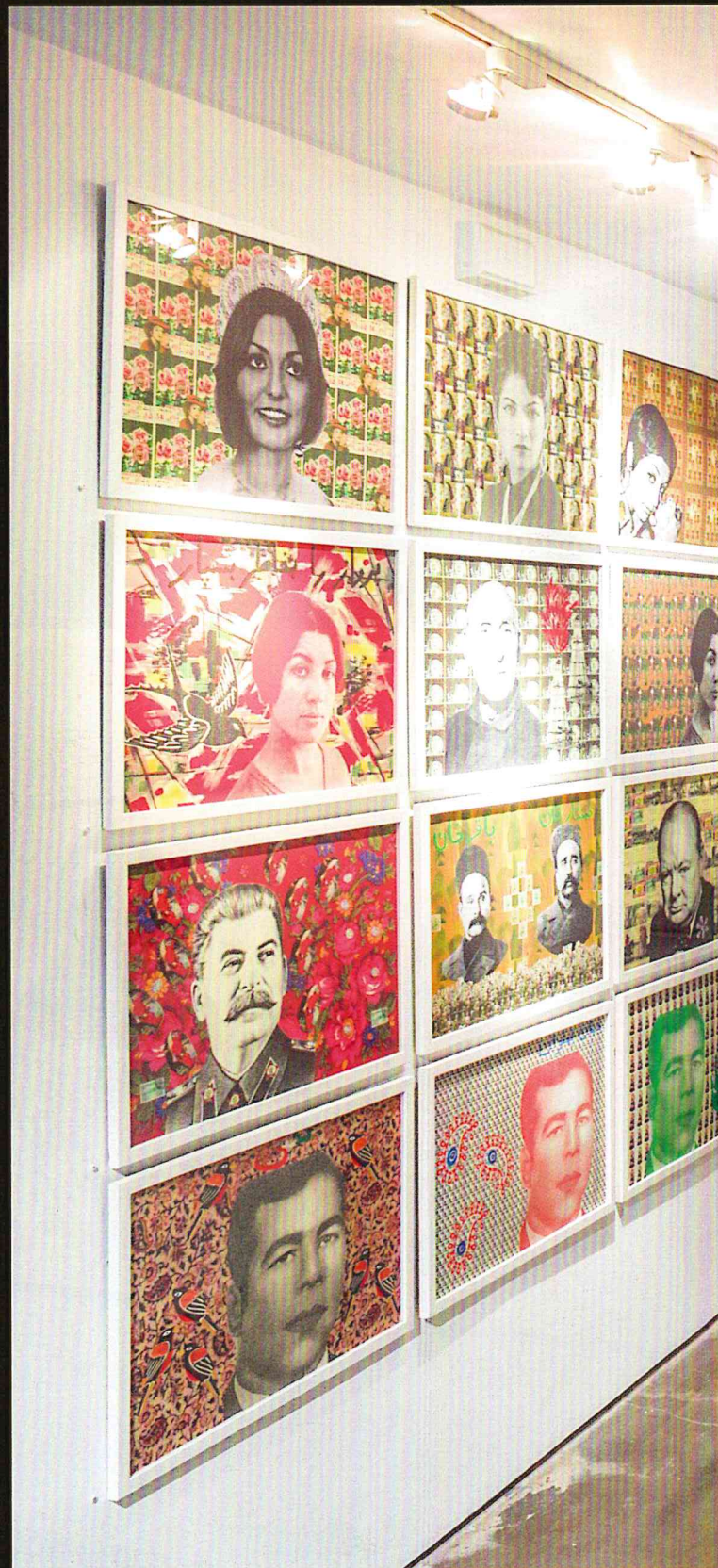




All photos courtesy of Deborah Colton Gallery

**T**HE DEBORAH COLTON GALLERY, in conjunction with New York based Leila Heller Gallery, recently presented The Rule and its Exception exhibition—a series of varied practices were showcased in this group exhibition, all speaking in some form of the contemporary realities of the respective artists who all have some roots in the Middle East.

The opening reception was co-sponsored by the Society of Iranian-American Women for Education (SIAWE), a nonprofit charitable and non political organization dedicated to providing educational support through scholarships and the promotion of the Iranian culture.➔



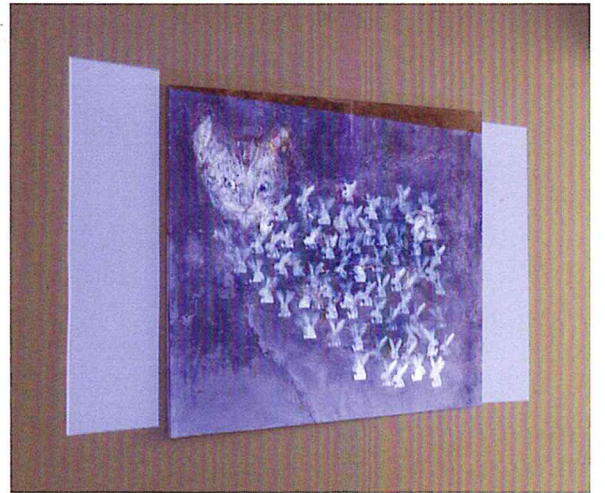
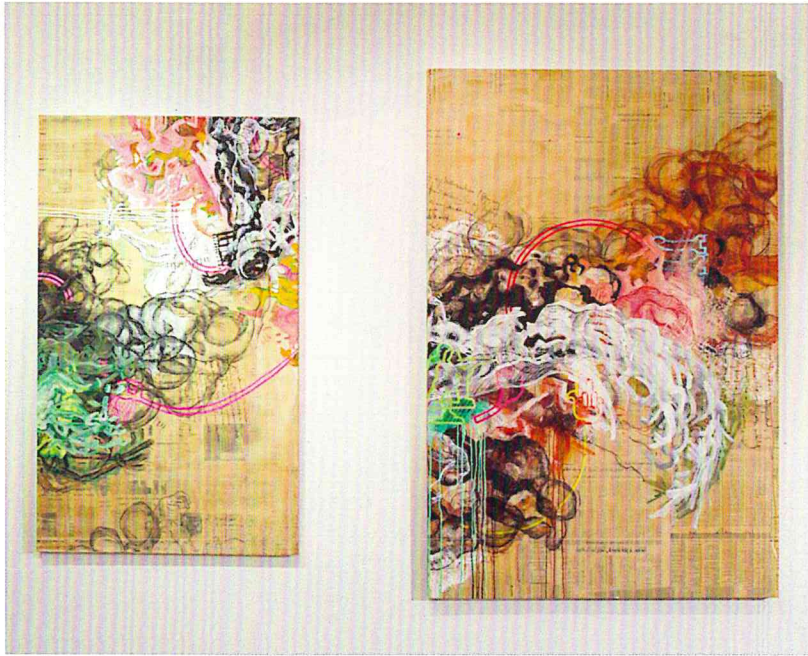


## THE RULE AND ITS EXCEPTION

SHIVA AHMADI / SOODY SHARIFI / ROYA AKHAVAN / KHOSROW HASSANZADEH / AYAD ALKADHI  
REZA DERAKSHANI / KEZBAN ARCA BATIBEKI / POURAN JUNCHI / NEGAR AHKAMI / GHASEM HAJIZADEH  
AFSOON / FARIDEH LASHAI / SHOJA AZARI / SHAHRAM KARIMI / FIROOZ ZAHEDI







All photos courtesy of Deborah Colton Gallery



Deborah Colton explains that her gallery, based in Houston, is founded on being an innovative showcase for ongoing presentation and promotion of strong historical and visionary contemporary artists world-wide. In conjunction, New York based Leila Heller Gallery has established a worldwide reputation in both the primary and secondary art markets, with a specialization in artists from the Middle East.

The works presented are complex, crossing over borders and transcending centuries of tradition, to come to

us with a reality that touches on the contemporary vision of today's world—new, haunting, healing, and pushing us to see ourselves more clearly.

Deborah Colton explains that her gallery aspires to provide a forum to connect both national and international artists to create awareness and to make positive social change. The Rule and its Exception is one such exhibition bringing art and art lovers together, and connecting us to works that combine our complexities by bringing them to life, and bringing about positive change. 🌍

