

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Leila Heller Gallery x Roya Khadjavi Projects: Playful Oblivion

New York, NY – Leila Heller Gallery and Roya Khadjavi Projects are delighted to announce the group exhibition “Playful Oblivion,” opening on 22nd January 2026.

The exhibition brings together artists of Iranian heritage working in the diaspora to explore identity and belonging. Spanning painting, sculpture, photography, mixed media, and installation, “Playful Oblivion” examines how memory, architecture, the body, myth, and personal narrative evolve across borders and generations. Rather than positioning past and present in opposition, the artists inhabit the space between them. Tradition and experimentation coexist, and fragility becomes a source of resilience. Together, these voices form a powerful collective meditation on endurance, belonging, and the creative possibilities that emerge when cultures evolve through time and space.

ARTISTS

Aida Izadpanah | Aref Montazeri | Arash Nazari | Atieh Sohrabi | Azadieh Nia | Bahar Behbahani | Bahar Sabzevari | Baran Shafiey | Behrang Samadzadegan | Dana Nehdaran | Darvish | Farideh Lashai | Farshid Shafiey | Farsad Labbauf | Firooz Zahedi | Leyla Khosrowshahi | Maryam Khosrovani | Maryam Lamei | Maryam Palizgir | Mehdi Farhadian | Morteza Khazaie | Morteza Khosravi | Naeemeh Kazemi | Navid Azimi Sajadi | Parastoo Ahovan | Parinaz Eleish Gharagozlou | Reza Derakshani | Roham Shamekh | Roya Akhavan | Soraya Sharghi | The Safarani Sisters | Tooraj Khamenehzadeh | Zahra Nazari

ABOUT THE GALLERIES

Leila Heller Gallery

Since its establishment in New York City in 1982, Leila Heller Gallery has gained international recognition in fostering creative dialogue between Western and Middle Eastern, Central Asian, and Southeast Asian artists, and specializing in modern and contemporary masters. In 2015, the gallery expanded to Dubai, opening a 17,500 square foot space, the largest gallery in the Middle East. The gallery presents dynamic exhibition schedules in collaboration with world-renowned curators, often hosting panels and film screenings, as well as producing catalogues and books for each exhibition. Each year the gallery participates in major international art fairs and stages off-site projects. Gallery artists have consistently participated in international museum exhibitions and biennials, and are included in institutional collections such as The Metropolitan Museum, The Tate Museum, the Guggenheim Museum, Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Brooklyn Museum, LACMA, MOCA LA, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, the British Museum, Centre Pompidou, S.M.A.K. in Ghent, and the Sharjah Art Museum, among many others.

Roya Khadjavi Projects

Roya has been a collector and a patron of the arts for over 20 years. Since 2008, she has actively led exhibition committee efforts around the art of the Middle East for institutions including the Guggenheim

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Museum and the Asia Society, where she sat on the steering committee of the critically acclaimed exhibit Iran Modern in 2013. Khadjavi co-founded the Institute of International Education's Iran Opportunities Fund in 2009 where she has been active ever since fundraising for the cause as a committee member and as a donor herself. She served as a trustee and later president of the board of the acclaimed New York based non-profit Art in General from 2012-2020. Roya also served as a trustee at the prestigious School, The Lycée Français de New York as Chair of the development committee and co-chair of the Strategic plan committee from 2002 to 2011.

Prior to her support and promotion of Iranian art, Roya had a 20-year career in the Fashion Industry. The latest positions she held in that Industry were as the Vice President of Sales and marketing North America for the prestigious Fashion company Yves Saint Laurent from 1994-2000 and as Vice President Divisional Merchandise Manager of Women's Designer, Eveningwear and Bridge collection at the Department Store Lord and Taylor from 1990-1994.

For her pioneering efforts to advance, support, and promote international education, she has been honored with the Women's Global Leadership Award by the Institute of International Education and an Order of Academic Palms (Chevalier dans L'Ordre des Palmes Académiques) by the French Minister of Education.