

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black dress, is sitting on a bed. She is looking down with her hands clasped near her face, appearing to be in a state of distress or contemplation. The room has a window with a white frame and a light-colored curtain. The lighting is soft and warm, creating a somber atmosphere. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the woman.

RE-  
IN-  
CA  
R-  
NA-  
TI  
ON

**Roya Khadjavi Projects** in conjunction with  
Asia Contemporary Art Week  
presents

**THE SAFARANI SISTERS: Reincarnation**

The first NY solo exhibition of video-paintings by the  
twin Iranian visual artists

**Date:** October 18 - October 31, 2018

**Opening Reception:** Thursday, October 18, 5 - 9 PM

**Opening Hours:** 12 to 6 pm or by appointment

**Place:** Elga Wimmer Gallery

526 West 26Th Street, 3 rd floor #310 - New York, NY, 10001

**Contact:** [Roya.khadjavi@gmail.com](mailto:Roya.khadjavi@gmail.com)

[www.royakhadjaviprojects.com](http://www.royakhadjaviprojects.com)

When speaking with the Safarani Sisters, it's nearly impossible to know which of the two of them is talking. The conversation flows effortlessly, as the identical twins, Bahareh and Farzaneh Safarani, finish each other's sentences and connect one another's thoughts. As the conversation progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that distinguishing between the two is in many ways unimportant. The sisters, who work together as an artistic duo, are so intimately familiar with one another's thoughts and intentions that no clarification is truly necessary.

Born in Tehran, Iran in 1990, the Safarani Sisters began painting as children, and were enrolled in a serious art school by the time they were 13. Reflecting on their earliest memories they recall that the only thing they truly liked to do growing up was to paint, a passion that has come to shape their lives. After graduating with their Bachelor's degrees – all the while practicing their art in close proximity to, yet separately from one another – they left Iran for Boston to pursue an MFA. It was there, during their thesis project, that they found that their collaborative works were their most successful ones, a turn of events that revolutionized their artistic practice.

Today, the Safarani Sisters' work, which encompasses painting, video, and performance art, is collaborative in the truest sense of the word. The sisters work together from the conception of an idea through execution, envisioning a composition and ultimately sharing a canvas, continuing until both are satisfied. Their work draws on the classic geometries of the Renaissance painters and the impeccable composition and use of light of the Dutch Old Masters, while at the same time easily appropriating the tools of these art historical legends to create distinctly contemporary works. Like the painters who inspired them, the intention of the figure and the composition is central to the work. And the works are, from first glance, always beautiful, an aspect of their practice that both are quick to point out is essential. The paintings nonetheless reward closer looking, and the inherent beauty of each work simultaneously makes way for a rigorous conceptual underpinning as well.

Reincarnation, the artists' first solo exhibition in New York, features fourteen paintings overlaid with video projections. The title evokes the evolution of the Safarani Sisters' subject matter, which from their earliest work together has centered on a female figure exploring and getting to know her inner self. The two have long been compelled by the interior world of their subjects, and the progression of their artistic practice reveals the female figure – presumably the artist herself – coming into her own.

The women depicted in the Safarani Sisters' paintings are most often pictured in a domestic space. A series of related motifs recur throughout the work, including windows, curtains, and mirrors, often featured in otherwise sparsely decorated spaces. Curtains, in particular, play a seminal role, providing a shield that enables the subject to hide or reveal herself at her will. It is perhaps by tracing the role of the curtain in the artists' work that we see the truest evidence of growth. In their earliest works together, the lone figure on the canvas is most often shown

veiled behind a curtain, at once visible yet notably concealed from the outsider's gaze. In paintings such as *Buffer No2* and *Reveal*, the composition is centered around what we wish to but cannot see – the face of the meditative subject. Lost inside her own world, the subject's inner turmoil is revealed not through her own expression, but rather through the artistic decision to keep her hidden from the outside gaze of the viewer. The curtain becomes a revelatory tool – a sheer fabric that can ensconce the figure while still rendering her visible, or a thick sheet that allows the subject to remain partially hidden. With these newest works, the curtain is no longer a vehicle for hiding; the women on view are positioned in front of the curtains, fully exposed to the viewer's gaze and finally ready to confront reality.

While the paintings exude a feminine ethos, the works themselves nonetheless subvert the traditional construct of the domestic. In the Safarani Sisters' works, the home evolves from a place in which the woman is kept, into a sanctuary. The windows, mirrors, and curtains that populate the works become symbols of empowerment and signs that she has dominion over her space – her body, her self – tools that allow her to choose how much to reveal and who to let in.

Throughout the development of the Safarani Sisters' practice, we see women who are ever more awake. While earlier works featured sleeping figures or women navigating a world with eyes closed and arms cross, in *Reincarnation* – as the title suggests – we encounter subjects whose eyes have opened, who have navigated their interior world and have experienced a rebirth, a knowing assertion of their place. Here the female figure confronts the viewer, waking up to find herself in a gallery, surrounded by people. Rather than hide or retreat into herself, she moves towards the window, she opens the door; little by little she invites the outside world in. The intention of the figure shifts, from a passive subject, caught on a canvas, to an active participant in the composition itself.

In "My sister's picture," perhaps the most revealing work in the exhibition, the sisters not only invite us to engage directly with them, but invite us into their process as well. The work features both sisters, one posing in a mirror and the other photographing her. The two sisters gaze directly at the viewers, commanding the frame, while also inviting the outsiders into the inner workings of their practice. The subject's growing confidence is further reflected in the color palette of the works as well. The paintings on view in *Reincarnation* feature a palette that teems with life – warm browns, yellows, gold, earthy greens, and blues, reflecting a time of rebirth, a subject coming into her own sense of self, imbued with a confidence, willingness, and desire to confront the outside world.

Using one another as a mirror, the Safarani Sisters have painted themselves into existence, getting to know themselves through their meticulous artistic depiction and consideration of one another. With *Reincarnation* we see the Safarani Sisters asserting themselves. Like the works on view, which reflect greater artistic confidence and style, the subjects too assert themselves, moving in front of the curtain, and transitioning from isolated and uncertain beings into women who have come to know themselves and thus have come to see their place in the world.

She is always there - either as literal depiction or as an aura, on a journey of remembrance. She is as a house with windows to the outside, and yet she keeps the curtains shut. Hesitant to open her eyes and look at the viewer, as if afraid that her eyes will be too revealing. She buries herself behind those curtains and treads careful against the outsiders' gaze. Her work remains unknown to the outside, for she believes that no one can understand her unless they live in her stead.

The upcoming exhibition by Bahareh and Farzaneh Safarani titled "REINCARNATION" includes representational figurative paintings that explore classical aesthetics via a contemporary integrated approach. By projecting video works onto their paintings, they succeed in bringing subtle and glamorous movements to their pieces. The video movements stand in as a metaphor for the dual presence of the subject it depicts. The implication - that although artists, such as the subject herself, are narrating their own stories, they can be hurt by the pre-judgments of others.

**“The Safaranis are producing landmark work in its melding of meticulous realistic painting, extraordinary performative discipline and the most exquisitely subtle use of video. The combination of the practices together in a single work produces in their hands, the most breathtaking and astonishing results.”**

**Trevor Smith Curator Peabody Essex Museum**



● Awake, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 120x72 inches, 2018  
[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



● Twilight reincarnation, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 108x72 inches, 2018  
[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



● Ater 12 PM, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 72x48 inches, 2018  
[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



● Blue Curtain, Oil painting on wood panel overlaid with video projection, 72x48 inches, 2017  
[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



● 10 AM Beats, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 72x48 inches, 2018  
[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



8 .

● Reveal, Oil painting on wood panel overlaid with video projection, 60x48 inches, 2017  
[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



● Late Afternoon Gaze 1, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 60x36 inches, 2018



● Late Afternoon Gaze 2, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 60x36 inches, 2018

[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



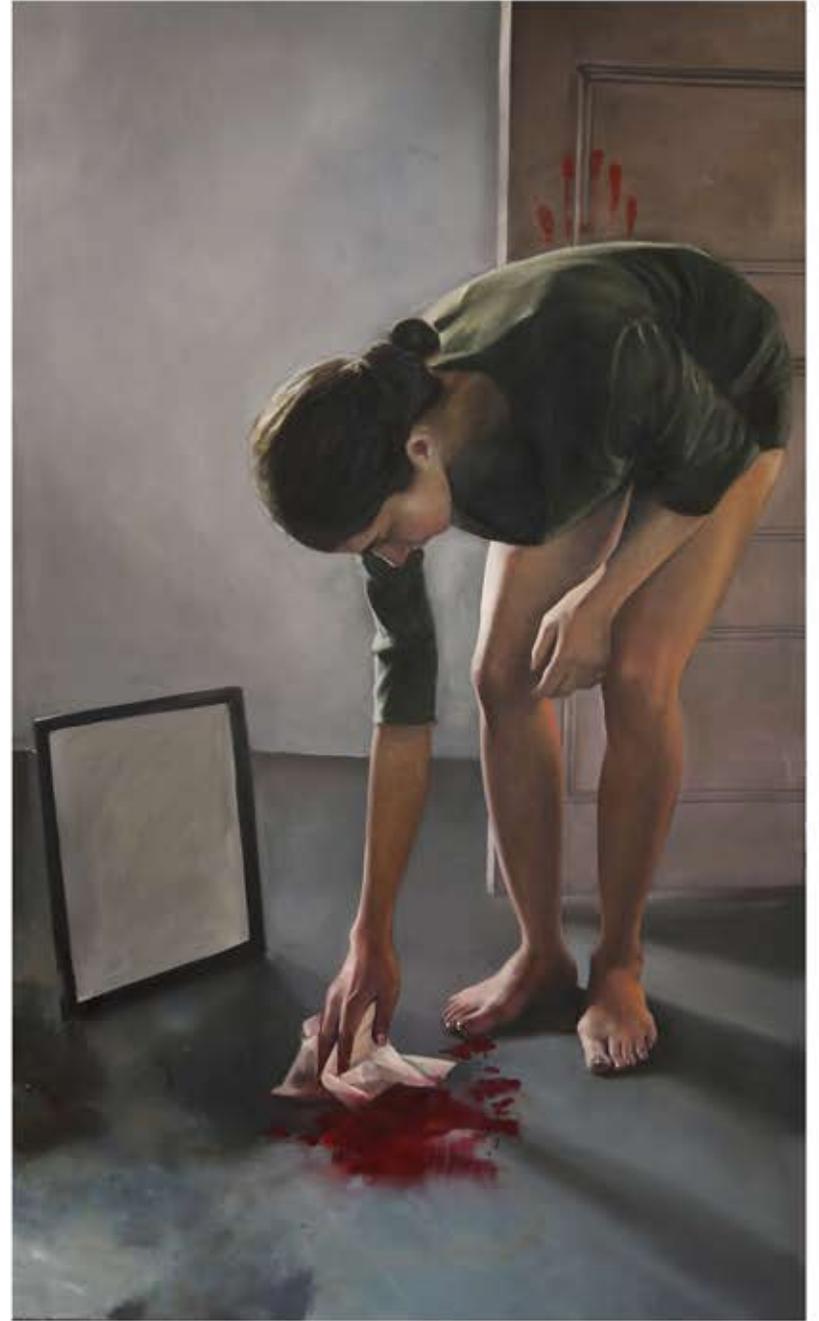
● My Sister's Picture, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 40x30 inches, 2018



● 8 a.m. Kitchen View, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 40x30 inches, 2018  
[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



● Her 5 a.m. View, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 60x36 inches, 2018  
[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



● 5:30 a.m. In the Basement, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 60x36 inches, 2018  
[Link to the Video-Painting](#)



● The Stormy Afternoon 1, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 30x24 inches, 2018

● The Stormy Afternoon 2, Oil paintings on canvas overlaid with video projection, 30x24 inches, 2018

[Link to the Video-Painting](#)

**Bahareh and Farzaneh Safarani** were born in (1990) and raised in Iran. They are identical twin sisters who have been painting together since they were thirteen years old, and continue to work inseparably. After training under Farimah Farhatnia, the sisters studied painting, performance, video installation and conceptual art at the University of Tehran where they received their BFA in Painting from the college of fine Arts, School of Visual Arts, Department of painting and sculpture in 2013. In 2016 the sisters received their Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art from Northeastern University, College of Media and Design in collaboration with the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA.

They have shown their work extensively in solo and group exhibitions in the United States and Internationally in London, Beijing and Tehran. They are best known for their innovative and captivating video-paintings and for their breathtaking performances.



### Educations:

- . Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art, Northeastern University, College of Art-Media and Design in collaboration with School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, 2014-16
- . BFA Degree in Painting, University of Tehran, College of Fine Arts, School of Visual Arts, Department of Painting and Sculpture, Tehran, Iran. 2009-13
- . Thesis: "A study of The Aesthetics values of two versions of The Virgin of The Rocks; artworks by Leonardo Da Vinci in 2013"

### Exhibitions:

- . "If so, what?" Art Fair, Roya Khadjavi Project, San Francisco, California 2018
- . Solo Video- Painting Exhibition at Amalgam 2017-18
- . New Member Show at Copley Society of Arts, Boston MA 2018
- . "The Salon" A Group Exhibition of Women Artists in collaboration with the Peabody Essex Museum, Boston, MA 2017
- . Museum of Fine Arts Silent Auction, 2017
- . "Parallax Art Fair" London, UK 2017
- . "Work by Pairs" a Group Exhibition in Distillery Gallery, Boston, MA 2017
- . Solo Painting Exhibition in Adelson Gallery, Boston, MA 2016
- . Solo Painting and Video Exhibition in Gallery 360 Northeastern University, Boston, MA 2016
- . Boston Biennial 4, Prize winner, Atlantic Works Gallery, Boston, MA, 2016
- . New England Graduate Media Symposium, Panelist in Paramount Mainstage, Boston, MA 2016
- . "Dualism" a Group Exhibition in Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, Boston, MA 2016
- . " Neither Here Nor There" Group exhibition, Yuan Art Museum, Beijing, China, 2016
- . Artcetera Auction, Boston, MA 2015
- . SMFA Graduate International Students and Allies Exhibition in 360 Gallery at Northeastern University, Boston, MA 2015
- . Group New Art exhibition in Piano Craft Gallery in Boston, MA 2015
- . Group Painting Exhibition in The Massachusetts State House in Boston, MA 2014

- . Solo Painting Exhibition in Golestan Gallery in Iran-2013
- . Group Painting Exhibition in Golestan Gallery in Iran-2013
- . Solo Painting Exhibition and Performance in The art And Culture Center of German Embassy in Iran-2012
- . Solo Painting Exhibition in The art and culture center of German embassy in Iran-2011
- . Group Painting Exhibition in Golestan Gallery in Iran-2011
- . Group Painting Exhibition in Tehran Gallery in Iran-2011
- . Group Painting Exhibition in Golestan Gallery in Iran-2010
- . Solo Painting Exhibition and Installations in Mehrin Gallery in Iran-2010
- . Group Painting Exhibition in Tehran Gallery in Iran-2009
- . Group Painting Exhibition at The First Fajr Visual Festival in Iran-2009

### Performances:

- . Performance Art at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston MA 2018.
- . Performance Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA 2018.
- . Performance Art at "Boston Calling Music Festival", Cambridge, MA 2017.
- . " The Extent" Video Performance, MMAC Theatre, Manhattan, New York 2017
- . "The Journey" Performance-Contemporary Opera, Distillery Gallery, Boston MA 2017
- . "Yearning" Performance, Yve Yang Gallery, Boston, MA 2016
- . Collaborators on "The lost empire" a performance by Arevik Tserunyan, Museum of America, Watertown, MA 2016
- . Performers in "Hello Folly" a Performance by Pat Oleszko, The Floes and Cons of Arctic Drilling, ICA, 100 Northern Ave, Boston, MA 2015
- . "Cocoon" Video-Performance, Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA 2015
- . "Naser Palangi" Performance, Middle East Gallery in Iran-2012

**Abby Margulies** is a freelance arts writer and a communications specialist. She was the arts editor at Guernica Magazine, and is a contributor to several arts publications, including Hyperallergic, The Art Newspaper, and Tablet. She has also worked with a number of arts publications and organizations to create content and to provide editorial services, including Art Space, the American Alliance of Museums, and the American Academy in Rome, among others.



**Roya Khadjavi** is an independent curator and cultural producer based in New York. She has largely focused on the work of young Iranian artists working both in Iran and beyond its borders, seeking not only to support their artistic endeavors but to facilitate awareness and cultural dialogue between artistic communities. She most recently curated Dariush Nehdaran: Amphibology (2018), an anthology of photographs by the Iranian photographer. She curated For Your Eyes Solely (2017), a solo exhibition of sculptures by Ali Kourehchian followed by Red Room 2: Migratory Birds (2017), showcasing painting and sculpture by the Ghasemi Brothers. Other exhibitions include the group exhibition States of Being in Abstract (2016); Iran x Cuba: Beyond the Headline (2016), which brought 18 Cuban and Iranian artists together for the first time in New York; and the warmly received Strappa: Dialogue and Performance (2016). Khadjavi co-curated Prestige (2017), the first solo exhibition for the Afghan/Iranian artist Shamsia Hassani; the group exhibitions Between Invitation and Intrusion: A Conversation in Form (2015) and Portraits: Reflections by Emerging Iranian Artists (2014). Since 2008, she has actively led exhibition committee efforts around the art of the middle east in particular for major New York institutions including the Guggenheim Museum and the Asia Society, where she most recently sat on the steering committee of the critically acclaimed exhibit Iran Modern (2013). Khadjavi co-founded the Institute of International Education's Iran Opportunities Fund and currently serves as President of the Board of the New York-based non-profit Art in General. 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.





Roya Khadjavi-Heidari  
RK Art & Design , LLC  
[roya.khadjavi@gmail.com](mailto:roya.khadjavi@gmail.com)  
[www.royakhadjaviprojects.com](http://www.royakhadjaviprojects.com)

Design by  
[www.NehdaraN.com](http://www.NehdaraN.com)