

# Craft Contemporary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ***ART IRAN: Falling into Language***

**January 28 – May 5, 2024**

Co-curated by Roshanak Ghezlbash and Hoda Rahbarnik



**Image:** Parastou Forouhar, *The Written Room*. Courtesy of the Artist

“This bad handwriting is my voice,” says Hadieh Shafie.

**Los Angeles** - *ART IRAN: Falling into Language* presents the work of **Golnar Adili; Parastou Forouhar; Taraneh Hemami; Elnaz Javani; Neda Moridpour and Pouya Afshar; Maryam Palizgir; Hadieh Shafie; and Shadi Yousefian**, expatriate Iranian artists exploring the Persian alphabet's diverse forms, handwriting, and fragments in their artistic practice. Despite diverse trajectories worldwide, these artists, in their diaspora, maintain a strong connection with Persian language as a visual and symbolic device. While assimilating into new cultures, they retain elements from their homeland, resulting in a narrative of inherited stories.

The exhibition includes installations, drawings, collages, site-specific art, and an interactive installation. Techniques range from sewing and assembling letter fragments to handwriting on various materials, reflecting daily life objects in Iranian culture. Emotion is embedded in written words, manifesting through changes in manuscript margins or flowers placed in books—a unique approach distinct from other cultures.

***The Written Room*** by Parastou Forouhar is a site-specific installation in a narrow gallery corridor. Forouhar's handwriting covers walls, floors, and ceiling with black ink, creating an immersive experience. Despite her parents' tragic events, her art, including the Persian alphabet, transcends language barriers, conveying universal emotions.

Hadieh Shafie's *Floor and Ceiling Circles* features a hanging paper sculpture, a corresponding circular work on the floor, and three paintings titled *Safar* (travel). The installation revolves around the word "Eshgh" (love), repeated thousands of times on layered paper, forming a cohesive work.



**Image:** Hadieh Shafie, *Floor and Ceiling Circles*, 2019. Paper sculptures with metal string with hooks. Both 60 inches in diameter. Courtesy of the Artist

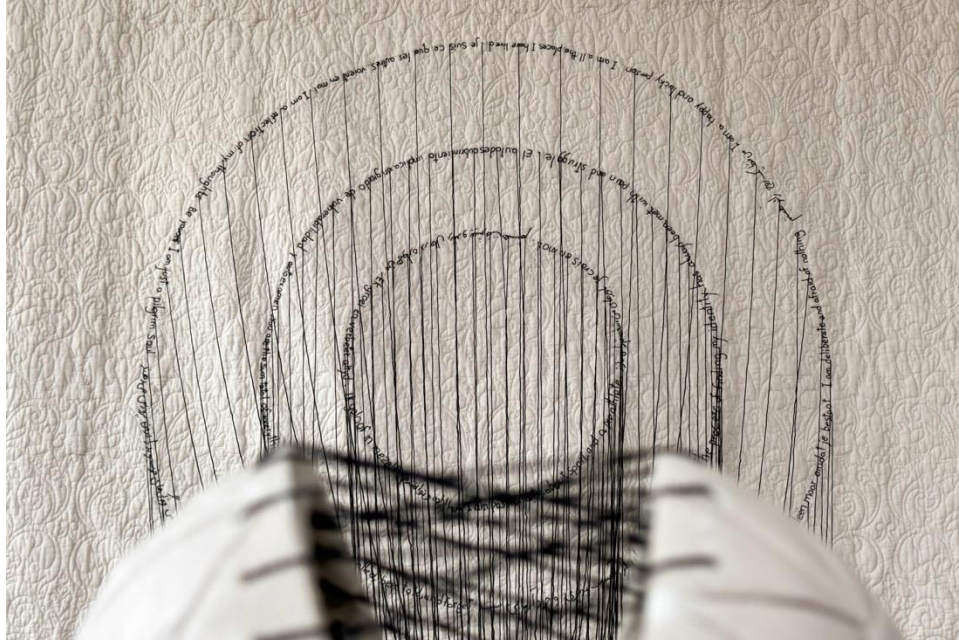
Maryam Palizgar and Elnaz Javani blur craft and contemporary art with black stitching on white fabric. Palizgar's *Treads of Consciousness* features a head-shaped figure connected to a white quilt with Persian-French written words, symbolizing childhood influences. Javani's *My Effigies* presents twelve fabric puppets representing matrilineal heritage through Azari language, emphasizing the impact of childhood stories on shaping one's world.

Golnar Adili and Shadi Yousefian use letters as artistic inspiration, cutting and rearranging them to convey heartfelt messages. Adili's *Language Landscape* comprises woven "ye" letter shapes from her father's exile love letters. Yousefian's *Letters Series* features assemblage collage works, questioning identity in a foreign land or finding comfort in letters.

Neda Moridpour and Pouya Afshar's mural, *Seven Conquests of Story*, features handwritten Persian text on over 200 tiles derived from an Iranian historical poem. The interactive artwork allows the audience to rearrange tiles, creating a new poem responding to contemporary political and historical moments.

Taraneh Hemami's *Silent Tears* combines three ceramic tears with handwritten words. The tears, layered with unrelated alphabets, symbolize pain and alienation, reflecting Hemami's struggle with censorship, identity, and migration.

The artists in *Falling into Language* share a commonality—the text in their works isn't necessarily meant to be read but seen. This inability to read captures the artists' in-between state, no longer belonging in their homeland or new home. Opting for handwriting over calligraphy, the artists express themselves to gain a sense of belonging. They remain foreigners to some degree, embodying a cosmopolitanism that belongs to nowhere yet is at home everywhere.



**Upper:** Maryam Palizgir, *Threads of Consciousness*, 2023. Installation, cotton blanket, thread, embroidery, ceramic. Both 60 inches in diameter. Courtesy of the Artist

**Lower:** Elnaz Javani, *My Effigies*, 2020. Stuffed objects made of white muslin fabric, hand sewn with black thread, covering the external layer with stories in Farsi & Azari calligraphy. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the Artist

## RELATED PROGRAMS:

For a complete list of exhibition programs, visit <https://www.craftcontemporary.org/programs/>

### Exhibition Opening Reception

Sat, Jan 27 | 6 - 9 pm

Museum admission | members free

Join us for the opening celebration of our two exhibitions kickstarting the new year: *ART IRAN: Falling Into Language*, co-curated by Roshanak Ghezlbash and Hoda Rahbarnik, in collaboration with Farhang Foundation and *Power in Every Thread: Maria A. Guzmán and Minga Opazo* curated by Alma Ruiz. Guests enjoy first access to the galleries, complimentary beverages, and live DJ music.

### Gallery Conversation:

#### Shaping the Idea of Falling Into Language

Sun, Jan 28 | 12 pm | *free*

Join us for an inaugural gallery conversation with the various and crucial voices in the making of *ART IRAN: Falling into Language*. Learn from the artists, curators, and writers about poignant themes, topics, and works in this groundbreaking exhibition and accompanying publication.

### Maker Night: Clay and Language

#### A Workshop with POT

Thu, Feb 1 | 6–8 pm

*\$12 / members free | includes materials and drinks*

Join POT, a local community ceramic studio that empowers people of color and LGBTQ+ communities, for a special evening exploring the power of clay and language. Participants will learn basic hand building and underglazing techniques to create a small plate set with written messages.

### Craft Lab Family Workshop:

#### Persian Cyanotypes with Sepideh Badakhshanian

Sun, Feb 11 | 1:30–3:30 pm

*\$10 / free for members*

Join artist Sepideh Badakhshanian to explore the beauty of the Persian language by creating cyanotype light prints. Participants will use the power of the sun and letter stencils to print images of the elegant forms in Persian letters, words, and proverbs.

### Gallery Conversation:



## **Queer Identities and Feminism in the Diaspora**

Sun, Feb 25 | 11:30 am | *free*

Join us for a gallery conversation that celebrates the queer and feminist voices represented in our current exhibition *ART IRAN: Falling into Language*. Learn about the experiences of expatriate Iranian artists and how their gender identity and feminist ideologies have influenced their work and social engagement.

## **Curator Walkthrough:**

### ***ART IRAN: Falling into Language***

Sun, Apr 21 | 11:30 am | *free*

Co-curators Roshanak Ghezlbash and Hoda Rahbarnik will guide a public walkthrough of the group exhibition *ART IRAN: Falling into Language*. Learn about the nine diaspora Iranian artists in this exhibition and their explorations of the Persian alphabet's diverse forms and power as a symbolic device.

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## **GUEST CURATORS:**

### **Roshanak Ghezlbash**

Roshanak is an architect and curator who lives in Los Angeles. She obtained her second master's degree in Design, Theory, and Pedagogy from the Southern California Institute of Architecture [SCI-Arc EDGE]. Her thesis explored how curating an exhibition could be a novel mode of education where the audience is not restricted to students within an academic institution but the general public. She envisioned a diverse audience for this curatorial endeavor, ranging from scholars to the general public. She graduated from the sculpture faculty of Fine art at Tehran University in Tehran. She held some exhibitions in Tehran and Istanbul. Throughout her journey to the USA, she is particularly fascinated by how immigration can significantly impact one's way of life and identity.

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### **Hoda Rahbarnik**

*"A woman from the East lives in the West, out of place everywhere and seeking the meaning of home," says Hoda Rahbarnik.*

Hoda Rahbarnik is an independent researcher and art curator. She was born in Tehran and, behind experiencing living and working in Iran, moved to Toronto, Canada. Her background

combines a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design from Tehran Art & Architectural University, Art history, and Art criticism. Her art curatorial practice encompasses a variety of research that seeks to explore the themes related to curating contemporary art and culture in a social context.

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#### **CREDITS:**

This group exhibition is co-curated for the Craft Contemporary Museum of Art by Roshanak Ghezelbash and Hoda Rahbarnik. The artists in the exhibition are Golnar Adili, Parastou Forouhar, Taraneh Hemami, Elnaz Javani, Neda Moridpour and Pouya Afshar, Maryam Palizgir, Hadieh Shafie, and Shadi Yousefian.

This exhibition is made possible by the generous support and collaboration between **Farhang Foundation** and **Craft Contemporary**.

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#### **ABOUT Craft Contemporary**

Craft Contemporary, located on Los Angeles' historic Miracle Mile, resides in a three-story neo-Georgian building designed in 1930 by Gilbert Stanley Underwood. Once housing Frieda Schroeder Cakes, it was transformed into a restaurant and gallery by painter Edith Robinson Wyle in 1965, gaining non-profit status as the Craft and Folk Art Museum in 1973. Today, its façade, adorned with a vibrant geometric design by Los Angeles artist Brent Spears (Shrine), showcases the museum's dynamic spirit. In 2018, the institution transitioned to Craft Contemporary, aligning its name with a mission that celebrates both the process and outcome of making. Craft Contemporary is a vibrant hub for creativity and cultural enrichment in Los Angeles, embracing diverse audiences. The museum remains committed to Wyle's legacy, curating exhibitions featuring established and emerging artists exploring craft media often overlooked in larger institutions. Wyle's belief in the transformative power of hand-crafted objects echoes through the museum's commitment to representing handmade art, cultural identity, and immersive experiences. The institution continues to evolve, offering educational programs and hands-on multigenerational workshops, creating a space where Los Angeles residents can deepen their connection to art, creativity, and community. For more information, visit [CraftContemporary.org](http://CraftContemporary.org).

**LOCATION:** 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

**ADMISSION:** FREE every Sunday

**REGULARLY:** \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, and seniors; Free for Craft Contemporary members

**HOURS:** Tuesday - Sunday, 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM

**ABOUT Farhang Foundation** is a member supported nonpolitical, nonreligious, and not-for-profit organization dedicated to celebrating and promoting the richness of Iranian art and culture for the betterment of society as a whole. With a singular mission at its core, the Foundation strives to preserve, nurture, and share the diverse heritage of Iran with the global community. Through steadfast commitment, the Foundation supports a wide array of academic, artistic, and cultural programs and initiatives, fostering collaborative partnerships with esteemed universities, renowned museums, and the vibrant world of performing arts. These partnerships enable the Foundation to cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation of the multifaceted aspects of Iranian culture and promote cross-cultural dialogue. For more information, visit [Farhang.org](http://Farhang.org)