



Let there be Noor: The Poetry of Half-Lit Visions

Abbas Nasle Shamloo and Moslem Khezri

4 Cromwell Place
Gallery 7
28 June – 3 July

SARAI Gallery is pleased to present *Let There be Noor: The Poetry of Half-Lit Visions* as part of our Karavan Projects; a dual exhibition of paintings and drawings by Iranian artists Moslem Khezri and Abbas Nasle Shamloo, featuring a selection of figurative works by Khezri's and faux-representational landscapes by Nasle Shamloo.

Both artists belong to the same generation of Iranian painters and their art shares several traits. Both Nasle Shamloo and Khezri are keen observers of their immediate environments from which each artist draws inspiration, using a great deal of sensitivity and virtuosity to turn them into formal containers for deeper, underlying themes. They also share a preference for restrained color palettes and a sense of compositional focus and order reminiscent of great Iranian filmmakers. Most interestingly, while the subjects might differ, muted natural light and the way its presence is reflected in each artist's form and concept, play a dominant role in defining the space quality and overall mood of the paintings. This is the kind of sensitivity that one can hardly encounter in contemporary painting today.

Figurative southern artist Moslem Khezri is represented with his large series of works focusing on schoolboys and the educational environment called *We Keep reviewing*; a series of paintings and drawings that depict various empty and populated scenes of an all-boys school in Tehran, each sensitively staged with narrow, autumnal sunlight that highlights the tenderness of youth and evanescence of memory. Thanks to his first-hand experience with the educational environment, these images ultimately transcend time and location to become visual playfields for schoolboys' figures to interact with and transform their spaces. Nasle Shamloo, on the other hand, addresses our modern alienation from nature. His green, cloudy, and mysterious landscapes are characterized by a significant dual absence: human figures and sunlight; a fact that quiets the scenes and lends a timeless aspect to them. Nasle Shamloo's seemingly representational scenes are in fact imagined nature conjured out of rich visual memory – thanks to his keen and close observation of his environment – and many layers of creation and destruction: beautiful, elegant landscapes with an undertone of absence and yearning.

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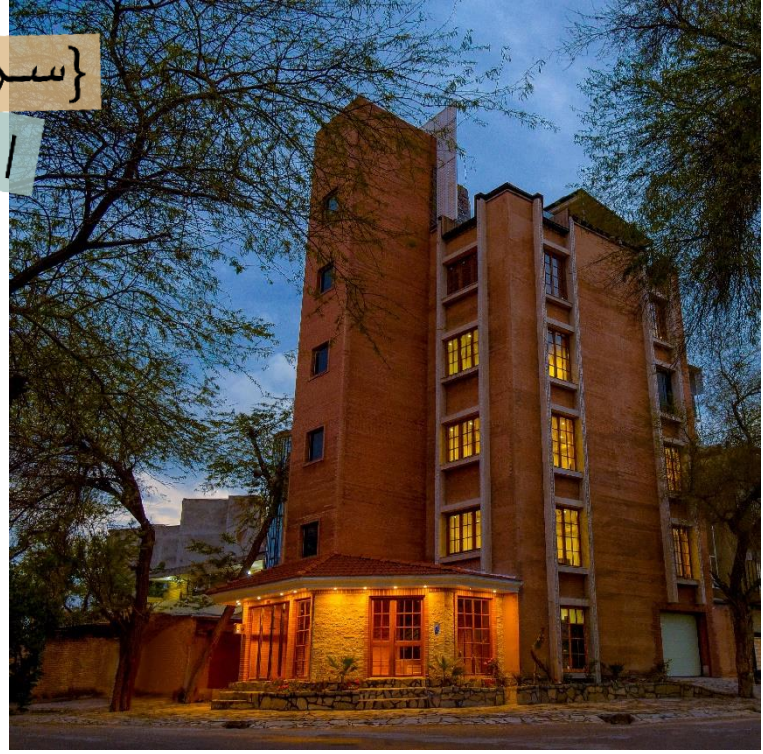


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SARAI Gallery (SARADIPOUR) is a contemporary gallery specializing in Middle Eastern art. Founded in 2018, our gallery serves as a platform showcasing emerging and established local artists internationally by organizing exhibitions and joint events, and publishing works by artists. Since 2020, our gallery



has introduced “Khor Art Initiative”, an annual art prize juried by highly established international and regional art figures such as Kenny Schachter, Janet Rady, Christian Viveros-Faune, Linda Komaroff, and Roxane Zand, to discover exceptional local talents and introduce them beyond the borders. SARAI also has defined “Pasitigris Projects” which is a program specifically focusing on artists coming from the southern cultures in the region. SARAI Gallery has been listed on Art Dubai 2020-21, The Armory Show 2021 (receiving the Presents Booth Prize), and KIAF 2021, making us one of the youngest galleries to appear on such competitive platforms. As for our 2022 international presence outlook, SARAI’s participation at the upcoming KIAF Seoul, and The Armory Show have so far been confirmed. SARAI’s main gallery is located in Mahshahr, an ancient port in southern Iran, while we have collaborative shows under “Karavan Projects” in Tehran and other metropolitan cities including London and New York City. SARAI’s LA-based office handles the US and international affairs.

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Moslem Khezri



Moslem Khezri (b. 1984, Iran) holds an MA in painting from Tarbiat Modares University Tehran. He has had several solo and group shows at home and abroad and his works have been the subject of growing attention beyond his home country. Moslem's work has so far been presented by SARAI Gallery (SARADIPOUR) at ArtDubai 2020-21, The Armory Show 2021, NY (where the gallery won the Presents Booth Prize of the year), Asia Now 2021, Paris, and ART BUSAN 2022, Busan, South Korea. Moslem Khezri's work is now part of the Dubai Collection.

Moslem Khezri is a southern figurative artist who often explores the interaction between the human body and space. His recent series, "We keep reviewing" is the outcome of his painterly explorations since 2016 of the Iranian all-boys educational environment, with pale, winter light playing a key role almost like a central character in each scene. Beyond mere perfection in mimesis, Moslem aims to encapsulate the inner truth hidden within otherwise mundane moments, and his images ultimately transcend time and location to become visual playfields for figures to interact with and transform their spaces. Khezri is currently focusing on immigration and immigrants, a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly common both in his home country and around the world.



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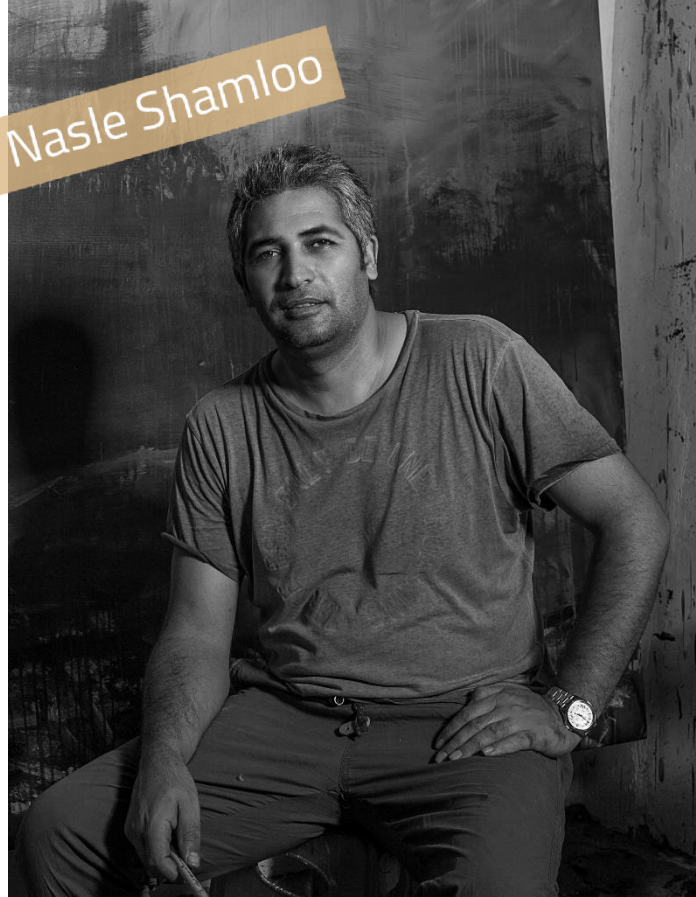
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Abbas Nasle Shamloo

Abbas Nasle Shamloo (b. 1981, Iran) is a painter and art educator who holds an MA in painting from Tehran University. He was the selected artist at the 4th Contemporary Iranian Drawing Festival, 2010, and Baharestan Annual Urban Arts Festival, 2018 and 2019. Nasle Shamloo's work has been presented by SARAI Gallery (SARADIPOUR) at two international art fairs in the European art capitals of Paris and Basel in 2021, during which he was praised for his beautiful, enigmatic landscapes.



Abbas Nasle Shamloo's nature evokes a perpetual sense of loss, loneliness, and alienation. His urban landscapes, quiet playgrounds, and somber scenery often depict minuscule solitary figures and wandering animals predestined to fail in finding any solace or shelter either in their built or natural environments. In these melancholic vistas, natural elements appear to be the only truly dynamic characters; trees and grasses dancing in the wind in liberal brushstrokes and various greens are in clear contrast with greyish, plain man-made structures. Shamloo's visions are nurtured by long observations and sometimes photography, yet he ultimately prefers to work from memory. His use of acrylics and ink among other media provides him with the immediacy and versatility required for his imagination to pour out freely onto papers and canvases.



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