



[Claustrophobia] Mohammad Khalili

February 24 - March 10, 2023

SARAI Gallery (SARADIPOUR) is pleased to present *Claustrophobia*, Iranian painter Mohammad Khalili's latest series of paintings and monoprint drawings at SARAI Gallery. Marking Mohammad Khalili's (b. 1971, Iran) first solo exhibition at SARAI Gallery, *Claustrophobia* opens on February 24 and it will continue to run until March 10, 2023.

Mohammad Khalili has been known for his deeply meditative and quiet landscapes depicting decaying man-made structures in dreamlike and timeless places. Human presence – if any – are few, isolated and minuscule, arousing a cocktail of senses including loss, wonder, loneliness, and vulnerability against the vast openness sometimes mixed with a strange feeling of dread. The passage of time and the evolution of matter is also something that has always been reflected in Khalili's work. Large monolithic surfaces bear signs of weathering or rusting created by the artist not by realistic representation but through replicating reductive effects of time and nature on his working material, i.e. paints, using techniques such as thinning paint or scratching the surface. The artist believes that besides technical aspects, his brushes tend to pick up the ethereal qualities of time, memory, and introspection in 'constructing' his visually captivating, forgotten monuments.

The present series consists of a selection of large paintings and monoprints that the artist began to create in 2019 after being attracted to a set of derelict, roadside structures on a trip to northern Iran. Mohammad Khalili was particularly captivated by the sturdy, heavy geometric units stacked upon each other without any mortar or other binding elements, making the resultant form ironically rather unstable and fragile to the external forces of nature. As the title would suggest, the *Claustrophobia* series offers Khalili's (1971) closest, tightest encounter with his favorite subjects: worn-out structural blocks so close that the sky and any other source of light are reduced in the composition in favor of menacingly enclosing cement blocks, cylinders and jersey barriers. Another significant element present



art@saraigallery.com



www.saraigallery.com



saradipour.art



in these works is water and how it penetrates these rigid and richly textured landscapes through its soft persistence. Here, the visual and sensual contrast between water and monolithic blocks is heightened thanks to the intimacy of elements in these tight spaces. The water through its light reflections brings a welcome counterbalance to each otherwise suffocating scene. Interestingly enough, while figures are rare, one can sense a more private kind of presence in these locations, one's own! It is as if the viewer has dream-walked into any of these otherworldly enclosures. *Claustrophobia's* landscapes ultimately inspire a sense of initial calm followed by anxiety, as the viewers gaze upon aging structures at the mercy of an 'unpredictable future'.

For more information about SARAI Gallery please contact:

Hasti Heydari art@saraigallery.com

And for press inquiries:

Sajjad Emadi contact@saraigallery.com

Instagram handles:

[@saradipour.art](https://www.instagram.com/saradipour.art)

[@m.khalili.50](https://www.instagram.com/m.khalili.50)



art@saraigallery.com

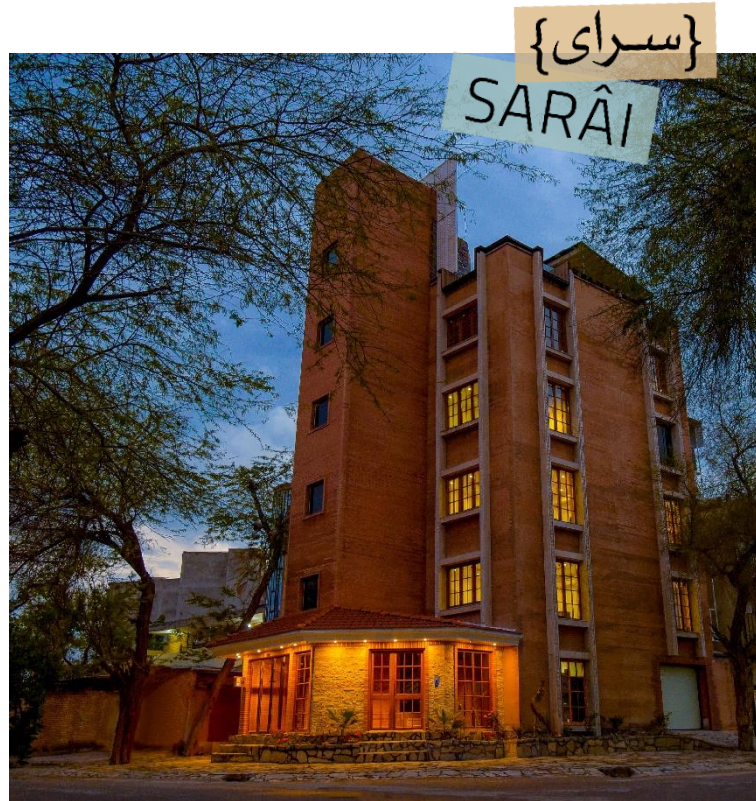


www.saraigallery.com



[saradipour.art](https://www.instagram.com/saradipour.art)

SARÂI سرای



SARAI Gallery (SARADIPOUR) is a contemporary gallery specializing in Middle Eastern art. Founded by Hassan Saradipour in 2018, SARAI serves as a platform to showcase emerging and young regional talents including Iranian and Pakistani artists internationally by organizing exhibitions and

joint events, and publishing works by artists. Moreover, since 2020, our gallery has introduced Khor Art Initiative, an annual art prize for local artists, reviewed by a high-profile international jury. SARAI Gallery has been participating in top art fairs around the world including Art Dubai 2020-21 and 2023 (Announced), The Armory Show 2021-22 (winning the Presents Booth Prize in 2021), KIAF 2021-22, Abu Dhabi Art 2022, Untitled Art Miami Beach 2022, Expo Chicago 2023 (Announced), and Art Brussels 2023 (Announced) among others, making it one of the youngest galleries to appear on such competitive platforms. SARAI Gallery's main exhibition space is located in Mahshahr, Iran, where we host shows throughout the year, while under Karavan Projects, SARAI organizes collaborative shows with selected galleries and institutions at home, particularly in Tehran, as well as in major art capitals across the globe including Cromwell Place, London. Our LA-based office handles US and international affairs.

Visit us at saraigallery.com



art@saraigallery.com



www.saraigallery.com



saradipour.art

SARÂÎ

سرای

Mohammad Khalili (b. 1971, Iran) received his BA from Tehran University and his MA from Shahed University, Tehran. His first solo exhibition was at Farokh Gallery in Mashhad (2005), and he has since held many solo and group exhibitions both at home and abroad. He has also taught at Tehran University College of Fine Arts, Tehran University of Art, Practical Art, and College of Fine Arts at Semnan University. Khalili's paintings demonstrate the dull stillness of objects, places, and landscapes that have changed over time and have layers upon layers of a forgotten life on them. The artist induces a feeling of isolation and loneliness by spotlighting things that we may normally pass by. "I look at the subject from a certain perspective as if I'm rediscovering the truth. I like to have the audience with me in this discovery." By focusing on natural or artificial subjects that have been abandoned, Khalili does not merely attempt to conduct a descriptive study of these subjects or to represent them, but he rather aims to make the audience think critically about the prevalence of technology and our inconsiderate behavior towards nature. In the "Behavior of Silence" series (2010), using more simplicity, Khalili depicted delirious views of the roadside scenery from a traveler's perspective. His latest works show stranger, colder, and more distant landscapes: watch towers, masts, barbed wires, cement walls, and metal structures sometimes accompanied by human figures. His landscapes look more like an abandoned military-industrial area; a remote, prohibited area that might evoke images of a wasteland "after the end". His other series include "You Must Have Been Drowned by Now," (2011) "Nowhere," (2015), and "The Silent Side" (2018).



Mohammad Khalili



art@saraigallery.com



www.saraigallery.com



saradipour.art