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[Body And Imagination]

August 30 to September 13, 2024

SARAI Gallery is delighted to present its inaugural exhibition under the *Dot. Projects* umbrella. Curated by Payam Khalili, the thought-provoking group show, “Body And Imagination”, showcases a diverse selection of contemporary Iranian artists.

Participating artists include Ali Zakeri (1959), Omid Moshksar (1972), Hadi Arabnarmi (1978), Karim Ghane (1979), Omid Hallaj (1980), Mahdiye Mahmoudi (1984), Moslem Khezri (1984), Rasoul Akbarlou (1985), Mina Bahreini (1986), Farsam Sangini (1988), Hosein Shirahmadi (1988), Mahsa Nouri (1991), and Faezeh Zandieh (1993).

“Body And Imagination” opens at SARAI-Tehran on August 30 and continues through September 13.

The human body is more than just a physical entity; It is a vessel for meaning. Shaped by cultural and social dialogues, the body is influenced by historical and cultural contexts. As Foucault suggested, the body is more of a surface inscribed with the marks of its time than a biological matter. Consequently, our bodies are imbued with overt and covert signs and symbols.

Human consciousness is undeniably shaped by the body and the experiences it gathers. In essence, humans are subjects embodied. Therefore, for many artists, studying the body is a way of exploring the deeper meanings intertwined with its biological essence and uncovering the hidden layers of the human experience through the lens of physicality.

Contemporary Iranians are witnessing a profound transformation in their bodies. Their urbanized bodies have given rise to new ways of living and forms of imagination, including an ideal of a respectable, idealized body. For urban dwellers today, body consciousness is not a choice but a social imperative. Contemporary life, with its emphasis on individualistic values, has provided the opportunity to cultivate more liberated bodies. In response to societal changes and the demands of the modern era, urban individuals seek to free their bodies from the constraints of “ritualized bodies” and the confines of tradition, history, and nature.

This exhibition seeks to narrate these very dialogues around human bodies. From intimate introspection to expansive perspectives, the showcased artists use the human form as their central focus, transforming it into tangible expressions of inner worlds where dreams are forged, desires ignite, and fears manifest. The exhibition invites viewers to witness the birth of imagination within the physical form.

For more information about SARAI Gallery please contact:

Hasti Heydari art@saraigallery.com

And for press inquiries:

Sajjad Emadi contact@saraigallery.com

Instagram handle:

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



SARAI Gallery is a contemporary art gallery specializing in Middle Eastern art. Founded in 2018 by Hassan Saradipour, the gallery champions both emerging and established artists from the region, with a particular focus on Iranian and Pakistani artists. Through a meticulously curated program of exhibitions, collaborations, and publications, SARAI provides its artists with international visibility to garner recognition and appreciation.

SARAI has consistently participated in leading international art fairs, including Art Dubai, The Armory Show, KIAF, Art Busan, Asia Now, Abu Dhabi Art, Untitled Art Miami Beach, Expo Chicago, and Art Brussels. This has positioned SARAI as one of the youngest galleries showcasing emerging talents on such competitive stages. Notably, the gallery was honored with the Presents Booth Prize at The Armory Show in September 2021 and has also been a prominent representative of the Middle East at South Korean-based international art fairs over the past few years.

SARAI Gallery is committed to cultivating a thriving art ecosystem beyond its core exhibition program. The gallery has established several initiatives to support artists and enrich the art community. The *KHOR Art Initiative*, a biennial art prize judged by international experts, and the *Observation Projects*, especially with its exhibitions in *SAR Space*, spotlight emerging talents. *SAR Space* specifically supports artists who do not have previous exhibition experience. Under curatorial projects, *Dot. Projects* showcases contemporary Iranian art, while *Arzhang Projects* offers a lens on works influenced by Iranian miniature painting. *Pasitigris Projects* highlights artists from Southern Iranian cultures, and *KARAVAN Projects* fosters collaborations with regional and global partners to extend the gallery's reach beyond its physical location. Finally, *Hatch Projects* preserves and reinvigorates the Middle East's modern and postmodern art heritage over the past century and introduces it to the new generation.

Reflecting its commitment to global reach and local engagement, SARAI Gallery has adopted a multi-locational presence. In addition to its founding location in Mahshahr, the gallery has expanded with an exhibition space in Tehran, which opened in 2024, and a Los Angeles office dedicated to US and international affairs.