

GAVLAK

Taha Heydari *Loom*

February 9 - March 5, 2023
GAVLAK, Palm Beach FL

GAVLAK Palm Beach is pleased to announce *Loom*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Taha Heydari. *Loom* represents the culmination of Heydari's engagement with Persian rugs as a paradoxical embodiment of transcendental authority and quotidian materiality. Displaced from their conventional settings, Heydari's ornately painted rugs appear suspended in a dystopian twilight in which they unravel, revealing narratives which had been lost between the fibers. A conversation with Taha Heydari and Asma Naeem, the Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director at the Baltimore Museum of Art will take place on Saturday, February 18th at 4 pm, coinciding with the opening reception for the exhibition from 4 to 6 pm. *Loom* will be on view from February 9 – March 5, 2023 at GAVLAK's Palm Beach location.

With the Persian rug, Heydari returns to the site where he spent much of his life as a child and young adult living in Iran. The rug literally grounds the lives of individuals, families, and Iran itself, embedding and sealing these memories within its warps and wefts. It is mundane in its ubiquity across all spaces of Iranian life, yet mystified in its status as a historically loaded and culturally revered object. As Heydari learned as a young student of classical Persian miniature painting, traditional crafts are performed under highly structured processes. These objects transcend their own materiality and become sacred and impenetrable. Heydari understands this transcendence as a product of ideology, which conceals its own construction in the overlooked details of the everyday.

In *Loom*, interwoven threads of meticulously painted rugs emulate the texture of the canvas itself, insisting on the rugs' fragile materiality in spite of their storied cultural history and enduring presence in Iran. But the detailed quality of these surfaces also evokes the immaterial. Aligning weaving with coding, their geometric patterns and grids—typical of traditional *gabbeh* textiles—recall eight-bit video game graphics. Warps and wefts operate like zeroes and ones. Still, in keeping with the “glitched” imagery that is the consistent hallmark of Heydari's painting practice, these codes seem to break down, producing tatters and loose threads which take on an uncanny bodiliness.

By performing an “autopsy” on the Persian rug, Heydari reveals its internal structure and breaks the illusion of wholeness which similarly enshrines ideology. In his paintings, some rugs appear partially intact while others have been reduced to shreds. Bodies begin to emerge from behind these fragments, in some instances becoming entangled in their sinewy fibers. The flatness of the painted rugs interrupts the nebulous depth which envelopes the figures and drags them downward. These scenes seem to pour out from the splintering threads, much like dust and detritus beaten out from rugs that have been strung up for cleaning. The obscured yet recurring motif of crawling infants signals a new, constantly unfolding present and a critical shift in perspective. Under the looming weight of time, Heydari's painted rugs crumble and unravel.

Written by Maura Callahan

GAVLAK

TAHA HEYDARI

Born to a religious family in Tehran, Iran during a time of war and upheaval, Taha Heydari makes paintings that engage with the ways in which ideology manifests in lived experience. A member of the generation that emerged following the 1978 Islamic Revolution, Heydari deploys various modes of mark-making as a way to reveal and deconstruct the binaries which shaped his identity: East and West, body and soul, past and future. Troubling the stability of the systems which produce and uphold these oppositions, his large-scale paintings are composed of a chaotic dance between machine-like grids and bodily gestures. Drawing from Iranian history and modern pop culture, his extensive digital archive serves as a point of departure for Heydari's imaginative environments in which contradictory forces collide.

After spending the first twenty-eight years of his life in Iran and then moving to the United States, Heydari has closely observed the correlation of everyday mundanities and more palpably oppressive forces in the omnipresence of ideological order on both sides of the globe. As a way to perform a kind of autopsy on his own place within those systems, and on the larger social fabric itself, Heydari engages with the representation of rupture and conflict.

Taha Heydari received a BFA in Painting from the Art University of Tehran in 2010 and a diploma in painting from the School of Visual Arts in Tehran, Iran. He then received an MFA from LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2016. Heydari has participated in international solo exhibitions at Haines Gallery in San Francisco, CA; Ethan Cohen Fine Arts in New York, NY; and Ab-Anbar Gallery in Tehran, Iran. He received his first solo museum show at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. His work has also been featured in several group exhibitions including The Armory Show and New York shows at Patrick Parrish Gallery and Kravets Wehby Gallery, and at Ab-Anbar Gallery in London. His work is currently on view in the permanent collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art. Heydari's work will be presented at Art Basel Miami Beach 2022, and he will have a solo exhibition at GAVLAK Palm Beach in January 2023.

ASMA NAEEM

Asma Naeem (she/her) is the Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director at the Baltimore Museum of Art. She previously served as the Museum's Eddie C. and C. Sylvia Brown Chief Curator at the BMA, and has organized exhibitions on the work of such artists as Candice Breitz, Isaac Julien, Salman Toor, and Valerie Maynard. Prior to the BMA, she was at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, where she presented, among other shows, an early career retrospective of the work of Titus Kaphar, and an historical and contemporary exploration of the silhouette through the lens of gender, race, and technology. She has written widely on American art, contemporary art, the South Asian diaspora, and museum studies. Her book, *Out of Earshot: Sound, Technology, and Power in American Art, 1847-1897*, was published by University of California Press in 2020.

Her upcoming exhibition, *The Culture: Hip Hop and Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*, a sweeping social and art history of the hip hop movement both as an American and global phenomenon, will be on view at the BMA from April 5, 2023 - July 2023. Co-organized with Saint Louis Art Museum (SLAM), *The Culture* is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue with over 50 acclaimed contributors. Naeem holds a BA in art history and political science from the Johns Hopkins University, and a PhD in art history from the University of Maryland.