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PRESS RELEASE

Timo Nasseri:

All Borrow Their Light

28 February - 28 April 2023

Lawrie Shabibi is pleased to present *All Borrow Their Light*, the first solo exhibition of Berlin-based Timo Nasseri at the gallery. Offering a comprehensive glimpse into Nasseri's oeuvre, the exhibition comprises a carefully curated selection of paintings and sculptures from various stages of the artist's practice that contemplate concepts of mathematical and geometric thought models.

The exhibition's focus is on a new large-scale painting entitled *Atlas* (2023) which extends to 4 metres in length and develops his earlier series entitled *I Am a Sky Where Spirits Live* (2022-2023). In these paintings Nasseri applies forms inspired by the 'Razzle Dazzle' camouflage used by the British and US Navy in World War I and II as a tactic to avoid detection. The vibrantly coloured recurring forms on the canvas are reminiscent of geometric patterns in a gigantic kaleidoscope and incorporate elements of camouflage from the animal kingdom, fractals, indigenous traditions, and Cubist paintings based on human perceptual mechanisms.

Nasseri's fascination with geometry traces itself back to his interest in Islamic architecture and his study of *Muqarnas* ornamentation - a honeycomb geometric design in Islamic architecture that originated in the 10th or 11th century, typically built into the underside of domes and arches and decorative in nature. By breaking down its core elements and analysing its rhythm and structure, Nasseri explores the Muqarnas's ideological, mathematical and geometric relationship to logic and the creation of the universe. In *All Borrow Their Light*, Nasseri presents two works from an ongoing series examining the *Muqarnas*: his *Epistrophy* sculptures (2007- present) and his *One and One* drawings (2008 to present).

Epistrophy #8, 2017 is a large-scale polished steel geometric sculpture which derives its shape from the internal structure of a typical *Muqarnas*. By embedding it in the wall, the viewer sees the shape head-on so that the polished mirrored surface appears boundless and reflects the surroundings in multiple ways. This fragmentation of the reflection of the space becomes part of the artwork recreating the geometric structure of the *Muqarnas*, which at the time was portrayed as an entire universe of possible forms.

One and One #49 (2023) is part of Nasseri's ongoing series of detailed geometric drawings made with white ink on black paper. Using only a ruler and compass, these drawings feature a repeating pattern that expands from the centre using triangles arranged in a particular rhythm to create repeating geometric patterns. Appearing to extend outwards infinitely, these drawings are like blueprints of his stainless-steel sculptures, delving into the mathematical beauty of Islamic architecture, geometry, and mathematics.

Storytelling and narrative play a role in the exhibition, blending the fantastical with the real and possible, as revealed in the series entitled *Teardrop Vessels* and series entitled *Unknown Letters*.

Teardrop Vessels is a series of clay sculptures made by the artist in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The exhibition features 80 of these clay works in varying forms, sizes and shades of charcoal grey: arranged in clusters, their shapes and vast quantities suggest the ritualist daily meditative practice these "tear-catchers" embody. Some of the shapes have a primordial quality about them, whilst others evoke the functional and minimal design style of the German modernist Bauhaus school, although their functionality is invented.

In his *Unknown Letters* series Nasseri created four sculptures (one of which is presented) each carved out of walnut in the shape of an imagined Arabic letter. These sculptures were inspired by the life of the calligrapher Ibn Muqla (885-940, Baghdad), who attempted to add four letters to the Arabic alphabet in 935 – none of which were added. Nasseri began in-depth research of the Arabic script and alphabet, paying particular attention to its forms and aesthetics. 'While searching for the letters, it occurred to me that Ibn Muqla might have seen missing letters in the stars.' He created his own letters based on the shapes of constellations in the stars that existed during the time of Ibn Muqla – none of which attach to any specific sound.

"Nasseri's practice involves alternating between ancient techniques derived from Islamic and Persian art and architecture, exploring modern and contemporary Euro-American art historical and philosophical concepts. By doing so, he creates a visual representation of the intersection of abstraction and symbolism through complex codes and patterns of 'consciousness' that he embeds into his art" (Timo Nasseri: The Pursuit of Truth' original essay by Sara Raza, 2023).

NOTE: The exhibition text includes quotes and adapted text from the original essay titled 'Timo Nasseri: The Pursuit of Truth' by award winning global contemporary art curator and writer Sara Raza. To quote Raza, please refer to the full text enclosed in the Press Kit or kindly contact Lawrie Shabibi.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Timo Nasseri was born in Berlin in 1972 to a German mother and an Iranian father. He received his diploma in photography from the Lette-Verein, Berlin in 1997. Nasseri began his artistic career as a photographer before making the transition to sculptor in 2004. After travelling to Iran with his father he started to explore the relationship of geometry and Islamic architecture. Combining Islamic and Western cultural heritages, his work is inspired as much by specific memories and religious references as by universal archetypes described by mathematics and language, and the inner truths of form and rhythm.

He has held numerous solo and group exhibitions, including at Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai (2023); Sabrina Amrani Gallery, Madrid (2023); Mercedes-Benz Contemporary, Berlin (2022); Taubert Contemporary, Berlin (2022); Kunstmuseum Heidenheim, Heidenheim an der Brenz (2022); Museum Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt (2022); The British Museum, London (2021); The Victoria & Dert Museum, London (2021); Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2022, 2019); ZKM, Karlsruhe (2019); Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut / Hamburg (2009,12,15,19); CCA Andratx, Islas Baleares (2019); Stichting Kunstfort bij Vijfhuizen (2018); The Aga Khan Museum, Toronto (2017); The Melbourne Triennale (2017); Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2017); Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt (2016); AK Vienna (2016);

KW-Kunstwerke, Berlin (2015); and The Drawing Room Biennial, London (2021, 2019, 2015), among others.

Nasseri is a winner of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize in 2011 and was awarded the Saar Ferngas Förderpreis Junge Kunst in 2006.

His work is in the public collections of: Sammlung Daimler Chrysler, Berlin, Germany; British Museum, London, UK; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia; Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland; Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas, USA; and David Roberts Collection, London, UK; Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, India; Barjeel Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; The Farjam Foundation, Dubai, UAE; The Mohammed Afkhami Collection, Dubai, UAE; Kamel Lazaar Foundation, Tunis, Tunisia; Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium; Art Jameel Collection, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Highness Sheikha Salama Bint Hamdan Nahyan Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE; Cohen Collection, Florida, USA; Sohst-Brennenstuhl Collection, Hamburg, Germany; Museum Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt, Germany.

Timo Nasseri lives and works in Berlin.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Lawrie Shabibi is a contemporary art gallery housed in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. The gallery supports the long-term development of the careers of young international contemporary artists with a focus on those from the Middle East and North Africa. The gallery also organises art historical exhibitions working with an older generation of artists from the region. Liaising with curators, institutions, museums and collectors the gallery has successfully introduced international artists to the region whilst at the same time presenting Middle Eastern artists to the international contemporary art community. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, Lawrie Shabibi has been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai.

FOR GALLERY INFORMATION

lawrieshabibi.com

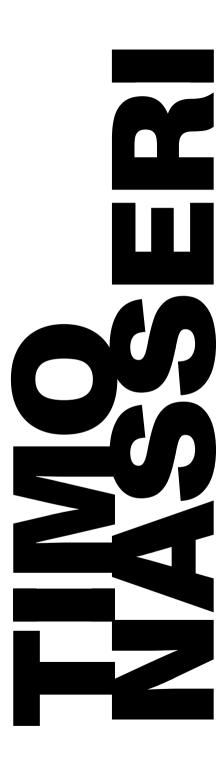
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ALL BORROW THEIR LIGHT







ALL BORROW THEIR LIGHT

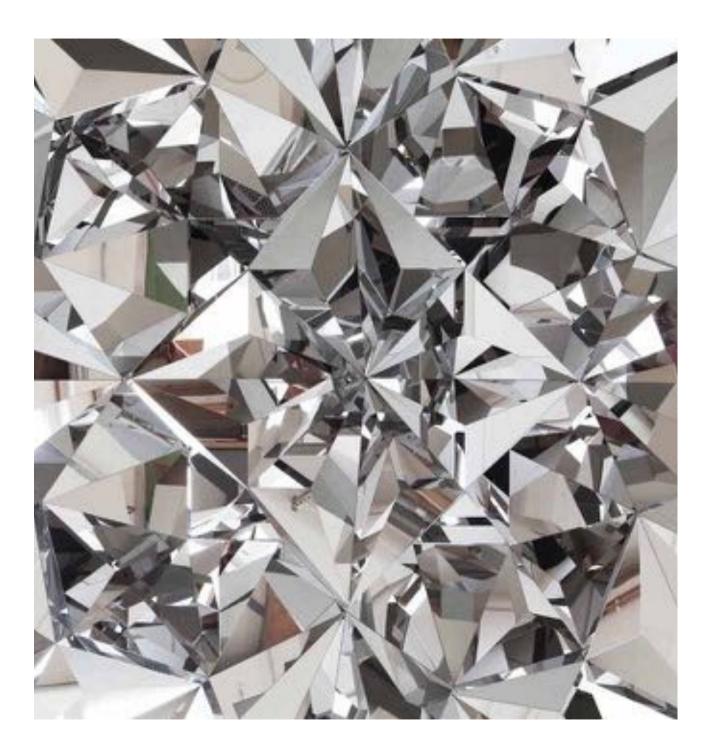
28 February - 28 April 2023

Cover image:

Teardrop Vessel #106, 2020

Black clay, glaze

14 × 8.5 × 8.5 cm



Timo Nasseri: The Pursuit of Truth

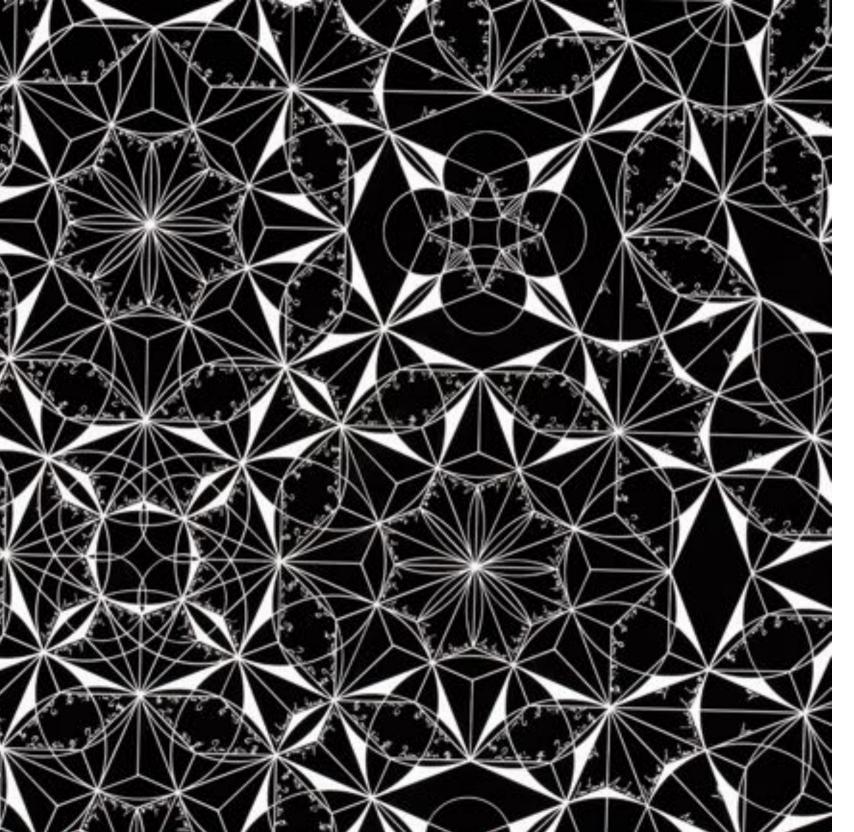
By Sara Raza

The pursuit of 'truth' plays an important role in the studio practice of artist Timo Nasseri, who has created a conceptually driven project that is anchored in the study of multifaceted systems of geometric thought. Belonging to a branch of the mathematical thinking sciences, geometries have afforded the artist with the conceptual knowledge and tools to measure, record and relay art that traverse between different cultural, historical, and intellectual points of reference. Moving back and forth between ancient techniques that are rooted in Islamic and Persian art and architecture, and coupled with research into modern and contemporary Euro American art historical and philosophic tropes, Nasseri's practice maps the confluence of abstraction and symbolism as it relates to complex codes and patterns of 'consciousness' which he encodes within his art. With geometry operating a central interlocutor, this essay and the three bodies of art, sculpture, ceramics and paintings, that it references from the exhibition *All Borrow Their Light* at Lawrie Shabibi, all explore geometry as a 'method' for investigating complex interconnected realities.

Geometries and Origins

Taking his inspiration from traditional Islamic muqarnas (squinch) geometric designs, situated within the inner part of a dome structure, and indigenous to Persian and vernacular Islamic architecture, Nasseri's sculptures explore muqarnas's ideological, mathematical and geometric relationship to logic and the creation of the universe. Thus, the concept of universality resides at the core of sculptural artworks that the artist has been producing since 2004 which consist of these highly polished steel forms that focus on philosophical dimensions. These objects are primarily concerned with human-centric values which embrace a 'common' set of principles adhering to intellectual and spiritual ideas pertaining to Islam and its connection to absolute reality.

Striving to locate ways of being that have an affiliation with the notion of higher forms of self-discovery, for Nasseri geometries act as a bridge for ideas that metaphorically address 'crisis in consciousness' and function as conceptual tools for tackling polarized truths and one -dimensional forms of thinking in art and society. The three-dimensional sculptural geometric forms that Nasseri creates such as *Epistrophy #8* (2017) and *Radiance* (2022) which are made from highly polished steel their reflective surfaces



mirror fractured realities. These works derive from Nasseri's detailed pattern drawings which can be visually understood as allegorical blueprints for human and spatial interaction, where two dimensional shapes eventually transform into a three-dimensional artistic visual vocabulary. To illustrate the poetic range of Nasseri's visual language, I borrow from artist and philosopher Zeigam Azizov's deconstruction of geometric culture and language which he lists as an index within his site-specific work *The Origin of Geometry* (2013). In this work Azizov presents twenty-six vinyl cut geometric terms that correspond with the twenty-six letters of the Latin alphabet and provide a parallel reading of Nasseri's geometric oeuvre.

Acute angle

Base

Circularity

Discrete line

Empty set (a null set)

Face (a polygonal region of a surface)

Grid

Hyperbola

Identity reflection

Limit

Mapping (thinking, meaning, making space)

Network

Obtuse angle

Parallel lines (Lobachevsky, pan geometry)

Quadrilateral

Reduction (Husserl, E.,The Origin of Geometry)

Surface (supplement, Derrida, J.)

Transversal

Universe (everything outside the sets)

Vanishing point

Wedge (part of a circle)

Zero-dimensionah

Another Alphabet

Breaking down the critical syntax that exists within Nasseri's glazed ceramic *Teardrop Vessels* (2020) reveals his study of topology as a mathematical analysis into shapes, space, connections and boundaries. These works formally and visually evoke the

¹ Zeigam Azizov The Origin of Geometry (2013), site specific installation (dimensions variable).



clean and simple architectural design aesthetics that are associated with the German Modernist Bauhaus school's functional ideology which was impactful across art, design and typography. Conceived during Covid-19's lockdown period of isolation, this body of work can be framed as a daily visual diary or mantra that was undertaken by the artist as a means of attempting to comprehend collective grief and grievance and to reconcile with the magnitude of the disorientating economic, social and political effects brought on by the mass scale devastation caused by the global pandemic. As such these works are imbued with a quiet form of resistance and rebellion in response to the various social disparities such as class, disability, gender and race, that were compounded by the pandemic. The more tactile and fluid practice of working with the material of clay and the methodical and serene gestures created by working by hand becomes an act of repair and is reminiscent of the kind of work that was carried out by the post-war Modernist Arte Povera (poor art) avant-garde movement in Italy in the 1960s and 70s where artists were utilizing 'poor' materials such as earth, rope, straw, clothing and so on as a critique of capitalist forms of hyper industrialization and mechanization. In the context of the recent pandemic, Nasseri's subversive ceramics pose questions concerning disproportionate value systems and the scarcity of financial wealth and resources which have reached a crucial tipping point and require an urgent reassessment of a flawed economic model that clearly demonstrates that the mathematics simply do not add up fairly.

Obfuscation

Rethinking geometry's application as a visual code for privacy is explored in Nasseri's ongoing series of paintings *I am a Sky Where Spirits Live* (2022) that investigate the British Royal Navy and the United States Navy's implementation of 'dazzle' camouflage as a strategy to obfuscate detection during WW1 and WW2. Designed to disguise sea vessels in 'plain sight', the exteriors of ships and boats were painted in irregular brightly coloured geometric shapes, zigzags and stripes which created the illusion of sea currents and waves, throwing off German submarine rangefinder's signals. The practice of 'dazzle' as an act of obfuscation can be described in New York University Media, Culture and Communication's professors Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum's text *Obfuscation: A User's Guide for Privacy and Protest* (2016) in which they argue:

Obfuscation is contingent, shaped by the problems we seek to address and the adversaries we hope to foil or delay, but it is characterized by simple underlying circumstance; unable to refuse or deny observation, we create many plausible, ambiguous, and misleading signals within which the information we want to conceal can be lost.²

² Brunton, Finn, and Helen Nissenbaum, Obfuscation: A User's Guide for Privacy and Protest, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2016, p 7.



From a contemporary standpoint, Nasseri's use of dazzle's visual lexicon can also be read as a subversive commentary and critique on the hyper surveillance and data collection. These intrusive practices are often enacted without the consent of the general public or by deliberately misleading or obscuring information with language that is unaccessible. By employing geometric designs that are intended to deliberately confuse and deflect, Nasseri's works offer a radical approach that explores the themes of confusion and intentional interference of surveillance systems that trespass citizens' right to digital privacy and protection. Embedded within Nasseri's artworks are important ethical questions that revert back to geometry's role in facilitating the 'truth' in a highly extractive and post-factual world.

As an artist working at the intersection of contemporary art, design and thought Timo Nasseri's practice relies on the disentanglement of several complex paradoxical social conditions. His multifaceted artworks reveal the analogous relationship between the non-didactic language of contemporary art and abstract geometric thinking as a methodology for revealing fractured and experimental poetic forms.





Teardrop Vessel #23, 2020 Black clay, glaze 13 × 16.5 × 5.5 cm





Teardrop Vessel #29, 2020 Black clay, glaze 15.5 × 14.5 × 7 cm





Teardrop Vessel #44, 2020 Black clay, glaze 12.5 × 19 × 9 cm





Teardrop Vessel #58, 2020 Black clay, glaze 11 x 15.5 x 6.5 cm





Teardrop Vessel #67, 2020 Black clay, glaze 14.5 × 13.5 × 5 cm





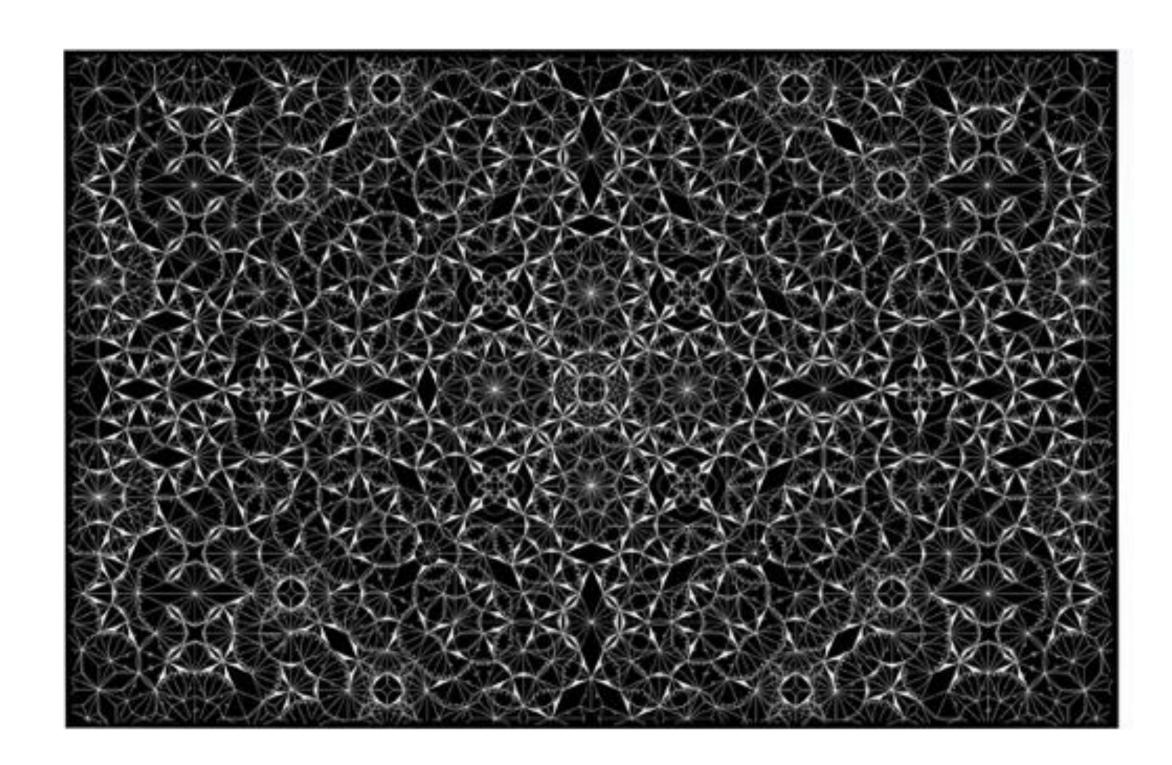
Teardrop Vessel #105, 2020 Black clay, glaze **14.5** × **13** × **5.5** cm







Teardrop Vessel #122, 2020 Black clay, glaze 8.5 × 14 × 6 cm





















Timo Nasseri

*1972, in Berlin

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

	GCEG EXTERITIONS
<u>2023</u>	"All borrow their light", Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai (UAE) "Perihel", Sabrina Amrani Gallery, Madrid (ES)
2022	"I am a sky where spirits live", Taubert Contemporary, Berlin (DE)
2019	"Constellations and Trajectories", with Franziska Furter, CCA Andratx (ES) "A Universal Alphabet", Galerie Sfeir-Semler Beirut (LB)
<u>2018</u>	"Uncertain Phases", Kunstfort bij Vijfhuizen (NL)
2017	"All the letters in all the stars", Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (UAE) "I saw a broken labyrinth", Ab/Anbar Gallery, Teheran (IR)
<u>2016</u>	"Florenz - Bagdad", AK Wien, Wien (AUT)
<u>2015</u>	"The more beneath my feet the skies I see", Sfeir- Semler Gallery, Hamburg (DE) "Nine Firmaments", Schleicher/Lange, Berlin (DE)
<u>2013</u>	"Core", Schleicher/Lange, Berlin, Germany (DE)
<u>2012</u>	"O Time Thy Pyramids", Galerie Sfeir-Semler Hamburg (DE)
<u>2010</u>	"Nasseri/Englund", Schleicher+Lange, Paris (FR)
2009	"Ghazal", Galerie Sfeir-Semler Hamburg "ONE OF SIX", Kunstverein Arnsberg (DE)
	SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2022	"History in Fragments", Sabrina Amrani Gallery, Madrid (ES)
	"Spieglein, Spieglein", Kunstmuseum Heidenheim (DE)
	"Reflections", Museum Konkrete Kunst Ingolstadt (DE)
	"Geometric Opulenz", Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich (CH)

"Drawing Biennale 2021", Drawing Room, London (GB)

"Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet", Asia Society Museum, New York (USA)

"Epic Iran", Victoria and Albert Museum, London (GB)

"Reclections", The British Museum, London (GB)

"Balassanian, Fathizadeh, Nasseri, Moghaddam", Cromwell Place, London (GB)

"Franziska Furter - Landscape with Landscape", Lullin + Ferrari, Zürich (CH)

<u>2020</u>	"Wo die Zitronen blühen", Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg (DE) "Garten der Gegenward", Hamburg (DE)
<u>2019</u>	"Konkrete Gegenwart", Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich (CH) "Negativer Raum", ZKM Karlsruhe (DE) "Fragile Frontiers-visions on Iran's in/visible borders", Yarat ContemporaryArt Space, Baku (AZ) "La Nuit", Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Paris (FR) "Lesage, Simon, Crépin", LaM – Lille Métropole, musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, Lille (FR) "Drawing Biennial 2019", The Drawing Room, London (GB)
<u>2018</u>	"Through The Spectrum", Athr Gallery, Jeddah (SA) "DOME", Zeiss Grossplanetarium, Berlin (DE) "L'horreur du Plein", Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis (TUN)
<u>2017</u>	"NGV Triennial", National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (AUS) "L'horreur du Plein", Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis (TU)) "Drawing Biennial 2017", The Drawing Room, London (GB) "Artists against AIDS", Museum Ludwig, Köln (DE)
<u>2016</u>	"A World View: The Tim Fairfax Gift", Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (AUS) "Temporal Turn: Art and Speculation in Contemporary Asia", Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas (USA) "Unter Waffen. Fire and Forget 2", MAK, Frankfurt (DE) "In Correspondence with the drawing", Michael Fuchs Galerie, Berlin (DE) "Wendezeiten", CCA Andratx, Andratx (ES) "MASS INDIVIDUALISM", Ab/Anbar Gallery, Teheran (IR)
<u>2015</u>	"Triplicity", Athr Gallery, Jeddah (SA) "Fire and Forget", KW-Kunstwerke, Berlin (DE) "Drawing Room Biennial", Drawing Room, London (GB)
<u>2014</u>	"WIR 2 - Der Sinn von Politik ist Freiheit", Klinger Forum, Leipzig (DE) "Nullpunkt aller Orte", Sammlung Dominic und Cordula Sohst-Brennenstuhl, Weserburg, Bremen (DE) "The Language of Human Consciousness", Athr Gallery, Jeddah (SA) "Weights and measures", Galerie Lahumiere, Paris (FR)
2013	"Fellbach Kleinplastik Triennale", Fellbach (DE) "Schönheit der Mathematik", Schloss Agathenburg, Agathenburg (DE) "Modification", ZKU, Berlin (DE)

"Sculpture is Everything", Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (AUS) 2012 "SUPERCLUSTER", CAN (Centre d'art, Neuchâtel), Neuchâtel (CH) "CHKOUN AHNA-ON THE TRACK OF HISTORY", Le musée national de Carthage, Tunisie (TUN) "The Elephant in The Dark", Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi (IN) "Ever Living ORNAMENT", Micro Onde, centre d'art de l'Onde, Vélizy-Villacoublay, Paris (FR) "WUNDER", Kunsthalle Krems, Krems (AU) "In Other Words, Black Market of Translation - Negotiating Contemporary Cultures", NGBK, Berlin (DE) 2011 "WUNDER", Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Hamburg (DE) "ABRAAJ CAPITAL ART PRIZE", Art Dubai, Dubai (UAE) "Taaffe-Streuli-Nasseri", Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Beirut (LB) 2010 "En Miroir". CRAC Alsace (FR) "TASWIR - PICTORIAL MAPPINGS OF ISLAM AND MODERNITY", Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin (D) 2009 "Animated", Centre d'Art Bastille, Grenoble (FR) 2008 "Phoenix vs Babylone", Espace Paul Ricard, Paris (FR)

"Democracy In the Age of Branding", The Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School, New York (USA)

COLLECTIONS

DaimlerChrysler Collection, Berlin, DE. British Museum. London, UK. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia. Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, CH. Spenser Museum of Art, Kansas, USA. David Roberts Collection, London, UK. Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, IN. Barjeel Foundation, Sharjah, AE. The Farjam Foundation, Dubai, AE The Mohammed Afkhami Collection, Dubai, AE Kamel Lazaar Foundation, Tunis, TU. Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, BE. Art Jameel Collection, SA. Heigness Sheikha Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, Abu Dhabi, AE Cohen Collection, Florida, USA Sohst-Brennenstuhl Collection, Hamburg, DE Museum Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt, DE

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