



For Frieze Art Fair New York 2019, at Booth S5 (Spotlight Section), Dastan's Basement presents a series of portraits by renown Iranian artist, architect and artistic director Bijan Saffari (1933–2019). The presentation brings together more than fifty portraits created over the years by Saffari's masterful hand.

Born in Tehran in 1933, Bijan Saffari left Iran for higher education studies in Switzerland and France, notably at the Beaux–Arts and École Spéciale d'Architecture (ESA). He returned to Tehran in 1959, initially working as an artist and architect. Mr. Saffari was one of the foremost university instructors in interior design and architecture in Iran. He co–founded and taught at the Faculty of Decorative Arts (now part of Tehran University of Art). During the time when he lived in Iran, he also founded his own architecture and design firm.

Mr. Saffari gradually became involved in larger programs. As a major influencer while living in Iran, he played a major role in the cultural scene. He was soon appointed as the director of Kargah–e Namayesh, the first Iranian experimental theatre company. He also worked as a board member at Farah Pahlavi Foundation, and a board member and the director of the theater program at Shiraz Festival of Arts.

Like many artists who lived through 1979, Mr. Saffari's life and work can be split to two parts: As prolific as he was before the Iranian revolution of 1979, he became reclusive and lived a quiet life since then in Paris, until he passed away in 2019. After 1979, all of the cultural programs led by him suddenly ceased to exist.

While his larger endeavors came to a halt after the revolution, Mr. Saffari who was most essentially a masterful drawing artist and sculptor, never stopped making art. Nonchalant and making out to be oblivious to the presence of any observers, his works were based on people and objects close to him. They work like Proust's review of memories and potentials, playing around involuntary memory when cues encountered in everyday life evoke recollections of the past without conscious effort.

The portraits on display at the booth of Dastan's Basement at Frieze Art Fair New York 2019 depict some of the people close to Mr. Saffari through the years. Since the early days of his work as an artist Mr. Saffari developed the habit to gift such portraits to the people he used as models. The current works on display are some of such pieces gathered from a number of distinct collections.

The booth has been designed by Iranian artist, designer, curator, and artistic director Fereydoun Ave whose friendship with Mr. Saffari dates back to 1960s when he joined the team at Kargah–e Namayesh to work as a designer.