

DASTAN

**FRIEZE
LONDON**

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Frieze London 2025

Date: 15 - 19 October 2025

Booth No: A05

Location: London's Regent's Park

At Booth A5 in Frieze London 2025, Dastan presents works by Farah Ossouli (b. 1953, Zanzan, Iran), Soheila Sokhanvari (b. 1964, Shiraz, Iran), Reza Aramesh (b. 1970, Ahvaz, Iran), Maryam Ayeen & Abbas Shahsavar (b. 1985, Bojnord, Khorasan, Iran; b. 1983, Kermanshah, Iran), Shahryar Hatami (b. 1983, Tehran, Iran), and Morteza Pourhosseini (b. 1985, Ahvaz, Iran). This is Dastan's fourth participation at Frieze London. The presentation is centered on artists whose practices foreground the human body and who engage in narrative forms of figuration, demonstrating how storytelling permeates across painting, sculpture, and mixed media.

In the series Iranian Crude Oil, Soheila Sokhanvari turns to her most enduring medium: oil. As she has often remarked, oil is at once vilified as a fossil fuel and revered as "black gold," a paradox she renders palpable through monochromatic portraits highlighted with gold leaf. In *Someone Like You* (2025), she depicts her mother in the late 1950s, overlaying the figure with a bird-foot necklace that recalls the mythologies of the Simurgh and Huma, emblems of fortune, transcendence, and fragility in a politically shifting era. By contrast, *Must Be Some Kind of Superstar (Portrait of Jamileh)* (2025) captures the famed dancer Jamileh in pre-revolutionary Iran, caught between glamour and burden, while *Boogie Woogie Buggle Boy* (2025) revisits her father's recollections of a fellow soldier in World War II, tenderly dignifying his cleft lip.

Maryam Ayeen & Abbas Shahsavar, working as a pair, situate their practice in the long tradition of illustrated manuscripts. Their paintings recall folios from Persian miniature books, where text and image coexisted in layered narratives, they employ this format into works that can be read visually, page by page, detail by detail. In their paintings, each branch and leaf curls into the next, creating a field where allegorical and everyday scenes unfold simultaneously. One does not only look at their works; one reads them, dives into their intricacies, and uncovers sequences of stories, both visible and implied.

Farah Ossouli, one of the most celebrated contemporary artists working along Persian miniature tradition, focuses on archetypal stories of faith and resistance. Her work recalls the tale of *The Seven Sleepers* (known in Islam as *Aāb al-Kahf* and in Christianity as the *Sleepers of Ephesus*), a legend of young men who, persecuted for their beliefs, fall asleep in a cave and awaken centuries later to a transformed world. Ossouli's

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paintings are richly layered with light colors and miniature conventions, but they simultaneously pose questions about exile, time, and survival, reminding us how mythic stories can carry urgent resonance across eras.

Reza Aramesh approaches narrative through documentary, translating found images of prisoners and conflict into sculptural form. Often sourcing low-quality press images, he meticulously reconstitutes bodies into exacting sculptural detail, highlighting how stories of suffering and resilience survive even when their documentation is fragmentary. His works are charged with both vulnerability and monumentality, calling attention to the act of witnessing and the ethics of looking. By giving sculptural permanence to what was once blurred or fleeting, Aramesh renders visible the dignity of those consigned to the margins of history.

Shahryar Hatami reimagines an episode from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, the tragic tale of Bahram and Azadeh. In one version of the story, Azadeh, a renowned bow harp player of Roman origin, provokes Bahram during a hunt, urging him to prove his skill by shooting a deer's ear. Bahram, prideful and relentless, sends an arrow through the ear, and with a second arrow sews the ear to the animal's head, killing it. Horrified by this act, Azadeh denounces his cruelty, calling it demonic rather than heroic. Enraged, Bahram casts her from the camel, and she dies beneath its hooves. The artist alters this sequence with a decisive shift: in his retelling, the camel bolts before Bahram can release the second arrow. In Persian literature, the camel often symbolizes both death and patience, and here it becomes the agent of fate. Bahram still holds an arrow in his hand, the deer survives, yet Bahram and Azadeh perish beneath the animal. By revising the ending, Hatami unsettles the hierarchy of power within the myth, transforming it into a meditation on mortality and the fragile balance between violence, desire, and destiny.

Morteza Pourhosseini, meanwhile, engages with biblical references in his allegorical canvases. His scenes of the Garden of Eden depict nude figures with their backs turned, wandering as if estranged from their origins. The figures are not heroic nor even centrally placed; rather, they appear lost, their gestures subdued, their postures hesitant. This subtle decentering transforms a canonical story into a meditation on vulnerability, exile, and the fragile search for belonging. Pourhosseini's Eden is less a paradise than a mirror for human bewilderment.