

DASTAN
GALLERY

**FRIEZE
NEW YORK**

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Frieze New York 2026

Date: May 13 - 17, 2026

Booth No: C3

Location: The Shed, 545 West 30th Street, New York.

Dastan is pleased to announce its presentation at Frieze New York 2026. This is Dastan's 7th participation in this fair. The booth, whose setting will shift throughout the fair, will feature works by Farideh Lashai, Ardeshir Mohassess, Behjat Sadr, Nicky Nodjoumi, Farah Ossouli, Mohammad Hossein Maher, Reza Aramesh, Farrokh Mahdavi, Andisheh Avini, Shahryar Nashat, Kamrooz Aram, Mamali Shafahi, Meghdad Lorpour, Morteza Pourhosseini, Arghavan Khosravi, Hoda Kashiha, Maryam Hoseini, and Sina Ghadaksaz.

Arriving at a moment of profound regional instability, the presentation is a testament to a shared refusal to let the fracturing of borders and the suspension of everyday life silence a vital cultural voice.

For Dastan, participation in the international art world has long involved navigating conditions of interruption. Over recent years, exhibitions, collaborations, and travel plans have repeatedly been disrupted by sanctions, border restrictions, uprisings, and regional conflict. Yet alongside these disruptions has remained a persistent determination to stay active. The artists the gallery works with are no strangers to this reality, and their practices speak to histories of displacement, fragmentation, and resilience within Iranian contemporary art.

During the 1970s, Ardeshir Mohassess was one of the most prominent Iranian artists, with his work regularly featured in exhibitions and publications both in Iran and abroad. Feeling pressure from state intelligence services, he fled Iran to New York, causing his successful career in Tehran to be cut short. Nevertheless, even in his self-imposed exile, he continued to document the turmoil unfolding back home. The two works presented here, "Today's Martyrs Demonstrate in Honor of Tomorrow's Martyrs" and "Bloody Demonstrations in Shiraz", both ink on paper dated 1357 (1978-1979), bear witness to that year of rupture, crowds surging, bodies pressing forward, the air thick with the sense of an irreversible threshold being crossed. After his self-imposed exile right before the Iranian 1979 revolution, Ardeshir Mohassess became something of a nomadic envoy, bridging cultural discourses while being physically displaced.

For Dastan, its international presence has been defined by such an interrupted state, where the logistical reality of the gallery exists in a constant negotiation with the erratic rhythms of conflict. The trajectory leading to Frieze New York has been no exception, marked by a series of forced recalibrations.

Throughout the years, the journey from Tehran to the international scene has not merely been a matter of logistical planning, but a navigation of systemic exclusion and invisible barriers. For an Iranian gallery, the path to international inclusion demands constant maneuvering through complex financial and shipping constraints, and the persistent precarity of artist and staff mobility.

In March 2019, merely days before taking the final steps for participating in a major international art fair, Dastan's plans had to be cancelled due to the US administration's withdrawal from the 2015 Iran deal. The cancellation happened while works by Meghdad Lorpour, one of the most well-known artists of his generation in Iran, were being transferred to the airport for shipping. The two paintings he presents at Frieze New York, "The Red Grove" and "The Verge", were made in 2026, between two wars and amid ongoing social upheaval.

In April 2024, as the gallery was planning to travel to Venice to visit Reza Aramesh's "Number 207", a monumental solo exhibition at Chiesa di San Fantin, curated by Serubiri Moses

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on the occasion of the 60th Venice Biennale and co-organized with the support of Dastan, airstrikes on Iran paralyzed all travel plans. At Frieze New York, Aramesh is represented by "Site of the Fall: Study of the Renaissance Garden Action 732: At 3:00 pm, Saturday 13 August 1977", a hand-carved marble sculpture from 2026 in which a hooded figure, hands bound behind his back, stands with the composed bearing of a classical statue, beauty and subjugation held in the same breath.

By June 2025, during a collaboration with Sylvia Kouvali for Art Basel's Parcours section, Dastan was set to present the works of Shahryar Nashat, and a presentation of Nicky Nodjoumi at Basel Social Club. These plans were overtaken by the Twelve-Day War. One of the gallery's team members was turned back at the airport gate as the first explosions began. At the booth in New York, Shahryar Nashat's "Boyfriend_17.JPG" is presented, a slab of gold onyx, cut into a shape that reads as something caught mid-flight: crumpled, folded, as if the stone had been compressed by forces invisible or digital. The sculpture leans against the wall, like a body might lean, held in place by its own weight. On the front, carved folds, ridges and valleys converge into a focal point that feels where the energy is held, where connection once happened. It turns the slab into something that was maybe once connected to another body. Nashat's work here is animated by a kind of tender confusion. The onyx, a material associated with permanence, is turned almost soft and bodily.

Around the same time as the Basel programs, Farah Ossouli's solo exhibition "Remember the Flight, the Bird Will Die" was opening at the Max Ernst Museum in Brühl, Germany. Unable to fly, she made it there by crossing through a land border. Back in Tehran, Dastan had organized a presentation of her work that opened during those same days, only to be taken down after a single day to secure the works. At Frieze New York, Ossouli is represented by three paintings and a video from that same series.

In late January 2026, Hoda Kashiha was opening her most recent solo exhibition, "The Tale of a Pot's Voyage That Longed to Become Human", at Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Paris. While planning to visit the exhibition before its closing, Dastan was setting up Andisheh Avini's second solo exhibition in Tehran at +2 Gallery. The preparations coincided with the nationwide uprisings, followed by the ongoing war. At the booth in New York, two recent paintings by Hoda Kashiha, from her new ongoing series. This body of work explores grief, separation, reflection and longing. Tears fall like pearl earrings, while traces carved into the cheeks become marks of sorrow and distance. Yet within the pain remains the dream of reunion. a quiet hope that persists through loss.

Works from Andisheh's most recent spine sculpture series, some of which were part of the exhibition in Tehran, "Everyone Together" along with a painting from his "Disintegration" series are also presented at Frieze New York. Acting as both structure and metaphor, the spine supports the body, connecting mind to movement while evoking resilience and hope as part of a fundamentally human core. Across distance, circumstance, and political conditions, the spines and the intricate marquetry adorning their respective surfaces become a figure for something enduring and inescapable within the human form. The spines are further entwined with glass organs, which cast a luminous glow alongside the spines' shadows.

In February 2026, a military action against Iran started while Dastan was exhibiting at Frieze Los Angeles. Under the bombings, the gallery's Tehran program has been brought to a halt, and the future looks more uncertain than ever. The entire region of the Middle East is currently

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in turmoil, and the end of this conflict and its outcomes remain unknown. Art Dubai, one of the region's most active and important programs, and a fair Dastan has participated in every year since 2014, has had to postpone its annual edition to this very week. With travel from Iran to Dubai still suspended, the gallery finds itself unable to be present there either, a painful absence after more than a decade of continuous participation. Several of the artists present at Frieze New York, among them Farrokh Mahdavi, Morteza Pourhosseini, and Sina Ghadaksaz, were to be exhibited at international exhibitions and programs. The conflict made it impossible for their works to be shipped at the time, but their works now finding their place here instead. Navigating through such an impossibly difficult time, Dastan presses on. Drawing from its own experiences and those of others, from opportunities fulfilled and opportunities lost, the presentation at Frieze New York becomes an assembly of voices, a collective "holding together" and a refusal to allow the narrative of Iranian contemporary art to be dictated solely by its proximity to violence.

For Dastan, establishing a presence has been an act of persistent cultural translation, an effort to bridge a vibrant discourse with the institutions and collectors that make up the international art world, and to which access is so rarely granted. This process demands a unique form of endurance: a gallery must act simultaneously as an archive, a sanctuary, and a nomadic envoy, proving its cultural weight while the very infrastructure of global exchange is frequently denied to it, not by any of the parties involved, but rather by forces outside of their control.

While making its best efforts to maintain its international presence, the gallery has been working on ways to revive some level of activity in its hometown. The 1980s in Tehran, a decade defined by the harrowing duration of the Iran-Iraq War and the restrictive cultural climate following the Revolution, saw the art scene retreat into a more private sphere. With the closure of most commercial galleries, artists like Farideh Lashai and Farah Ossouli, among many others, were instrumental in sustaining a creative dialogue through private exhibitions and open studios in Tehran. Behjat Sadr, by then in exile in Paris, continued working from a distance, producing intimate collages that wove together memories of Iran's landscapes with fragments of her new life abroad. This period was documented years later by filmmaker Mani Haghighi in his rare documentary "To Stay", filmed in the late 1990s but unseen for nearly three decades, in which prominent Iranian painters reflect on what it meant to keep making work under bombardment. The works by Lashai presented at Frieze New York were painted in the shadow of the Hafez verse, "We are the shipwrecked. Rise, O favorable wind; may we find our way back to the Friend's embrace". Along with the works by Sadr, in the solitude of her Parisian exile, both carry the weight of that era.

In the shadow of the current regional conflicts and instability, Dastan finds itself returning to the same quiet modes of operation that sustained Iranian art through the 1980s, planning a series of exhibitions in Tehran to keep the creative pulse of the city alive. Simultaneously, the gallery has been extending its reach outward: launching a series of exhibitions in Los Angeles in collaboration with local galleries, and maintaining active partnerships with galleries in Paris and New York. And here, at Frieze, the gallery brings together an intergenerational assembly of artists whose work, made across decades and across distances, stands as proof that the impulse to make and to show cannot be extinguished.