

مانیا السری آزادو اخیانی بمهر علیخانزاده ناهید آیین بهار بهستانی  
نشان داد خواهی طمره ادا دیان یاسمین اسفندیاری گلنار فخری  
پرپوش لنجی شادی قدیریان  
کاشی کی شہلا شبلی منصورہ حسینہ پریم جو ابری  
شیدا گلایمان دلارا کیا فریدہ لاشایی فرح اصولی  
راضیہ پورسالاری آزادہ رزاق دوست  
طابره صمدی تازی زہرا شہا مست پور  
دلبر شہباز مریم شیرین لو  
شیدہ تالی  
رزوار کاسینیانی  
مریم زندگی

Masques of Shahrazad

## *Introduction*

Masques of Shahrazad – Three Generations of Iranian women artists

"The masque has its origins in a folk tradition where masked players would unexpectedly call on a nobleman in his hall, dancing and bringing gifts on certain nights of the year, or celebrating dynastic occasions. Spectators were invited to join in the dancing. At the end, the players would take off their masks to reveal their identities."

**Anon**

"[Shahrazad] had perused the books, annals and legends of preceding Kings, and the stories, examples and instances of bygone men and things; indeed it was said that she had collected a thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers. She had perused the works of the poets and knew them by heart; she had studied philosophy and the sciences, arts and accomplishments; and she was pleasant and polite, wise and witty, well read and well bred."

**Sir Richard Burton, The Book of One Thousand Nights and A Night (trans.1885)**

Shahrazad saved women's lives by telling stories. This exhibition takes its cue from her telling, its inspiration from her style and its masks from the complex dances of its artists.

Opening on International Women's day, thirty years on from the upheavals of the Iranian Revolution, **Masques of Shahrazad** is an opportunity to survey the Iranian artistic landscape of the past three decades. It is a moment to celebrate established artists and to uncover the new names that will bear the standard for women's art in Iran for decades to come.

Irrespective of gender the lives of artists are rarely simple and straightforward and for nearly four decades the lives of artists in Iran have been further disturbed by the turmoil of revolution. Add gender to the mix and the difficult business of being an artist at all becomes well nigh impossible, yet these women, and many others like them, have managed it with courage and panache.

Presented by Candlestar and the Day Art Gallery of Tehran, **Masques of Shahrazad** brings together 28 prominent Iranian women artists. The works included in this show trace the development of Iranian art and artists over the past four decades – an era when the national identity of Iran has been radically reshaped. The work shown in Masques offer a glimpse behind the mask and hints at the feints and stratagems that each of these women have had to adopt to evade, beguile and charm and; in so doing, sustain their artistic endeavours.

This is the first time an exhibition has brought together such a range of Iranian women artists on an international stage. But why Iranian women and why now? Our goals are clear. Through the presentation of this diverse, vibrant body of work we are attempting to confound a lazy Western stereotype of Iranian women that sees them as veiled and passive. Furthermore, at a moment when the international art markets are waking up to the huge potential of Iranian art, we seek to attract the attention of the major auction houses, museums and collectors and over time to engineer a small shift in the number of women whose work features regularly in the major international art sales and the major international collections. As one of our collaborators put it, 'The Silk Road is busy again, full once more of life and colour.' This is a unique opportunity to encounter these women and to engage with modern Iranian art and the contemporary issues it raises on both a domestic and global scale. Their varying attitudes and work will challenge perceptions and provide a window onto a rich, but sometimes misunderstood, cultural heritage.

The contrasts between the generations and indeed between the artists themselves relate to their personal experiences and to their relationship with Iran. Out of this comes an interesting dialogue that **Masques of Shahrazad** explores and showcases for the first time outside of Iran.

The '79 Revolution marked a key turning point for Iranian artists. All of a sudden they faced a choice - accept new limitations or live in exile. The artists in this exhibition represent both choices, and the impact of their decisions is reflected in style and subject matter in this show. The exhibition illustrates the varying themes these women have chosen to engage with through their work. The visitor will find unexpected juxtapositions that will surprise even the cognoscenti. All artists strive to express the strength of their ideas through varying content and form; but the sense of an Iranian heritage is a constant and is articulated in many ways. Just like Shahrazad, these three generations of women have constantly manipulated and reinterpreted their vernacular to pursue their artistic ambition and to create a fresh narrative of Iranian identity.

**Masques of Shahrazad** showcases three generations of remarkable women artists, revealing through their work the vitality and originality of the Iranian art scene. This exhibition is a rare opportunity to see such work and to experience the captivating creativity with which these artists address issues and express ideas that many have shied away from. The result should be a celebration of contemporary Iranian art - but that is not for us to judge.

Fariba Farshad

Ferial Salahshour

*Exhibiting Artists*

Mania Akbari  
Azadeh Akhlaghi  
Samira Alikhanzadeh  
Nahid Arian  
Bahar Behbahani  
Fataneh Dadkhah  
Fatemeh Emdadian  
Yasmine Esfandiary  
Golnaz Fathi  
Pariyoush Ganji  
Shadi Ghadirian  
Yassi Golshani  
Shahla Habibi  
Mansoureh Hosseini  
Maryam Javaheri  
Shila Kalamian  
Delaram Kia  
Farideh Lashai  
Farah Ossouli  
Raziyeh Poursalari  
Azadeh Razaghdoost  
Tahereh Samadi Tari  
Zahra Shahamatpour  
Delbar Shahbaz  
Maryam Shirinlou  
Shideh Tami  
Gizella Varga Sinai  
Maryam Zandi

Masques of Shahrazad – Three Generations  
of Iranian women artists' is an exhibition of  
contemporary Iranian painting and photography,  
produced by Candlestar in association with  
the Day Art Gallery, Tehran  
For further information please go to  
[www.candlestargallery.com](http://www.candlestargallery.com)



# Samira Alikhanzadeh

**Born in 1967, Tehran, Iran**  
**MA in Painting from Azad University**

Samira creates works which transcend time and space. She began exhibiting in 1990. Her initial work, featuring images of windows and frames, opened portals onto a familiar yet forgotten era. Later, through the use of found portrait photographs dating to the 30s and 40s, she marked her unmistakable style on the contemporary art scene of Iran. The high aesthetic quality and masterful conceptual presentation of her panels capture the attention of her viewers and evoke memories of their own ancestral heritage. The absence of any narrative heightens the anonymity of her subjects. Their pose and dress reveal nothing more than the era they lived in. Their gaze guards secrets we will never discover yet in silence they patiently wait to confront viewers with the only truth they can offer: that in our not too distant future, we too shall become silent, unidentified images of the past.

She has exhibited extensively both in Tehran and internationally. Recently her work was featured in Art Dubai and in 2003 she took part in 25 Years of Separation: Iranian Art After the Revolution at the Articultural Gallery, Santa Monica, USA.



29/07/1951

Digital print, acrylic paint, mirrors  
on MDF panel  
100x150 cm  
2008

I have been working with old photographs for some time. They are familiar to everyone. We rediscover our mothers and grandmothers transcending time and place. In the absence of their gaze we are reflected in the mirrors and a journey through time begins for the viewer.

The sense of humour and graphic combination of the image and text were novel aspects of these two works and reminiscent of old family photo albums.



**The Orange Racquet Team**

Digital print, acrylic paint, mirrors  
on MDF panel  
100x129 cm  
2008