

## COLLABORATIVE VOICES IN IRANIAN ART THE PEJMAN ART FOUNDATION FEATURE

*The Pejman Foundation isn't just about one voice. We listen and consider alternative models to exhibition programming, talks and events which we incorporate into the way we approach what we do here. It's a collaborative team approach, not just our founders voice or a central figure who dictates what we do' - Hamidreza Pejman, February 2016*



The Pejman Art Foundation's ethos centers on multiple voices coming together to create a dialogue between the local and global, through an emphasis on research, education, collaborative processes and shifting perspectives on art-making in Iran today. Founded in 2015 by Hamid Reza Pejman as a 'pioneering and forward-thinking' art's organization, its outlook points towards investing and facilitating a critical dialogue for exchanges between artists in Iran and the international art world. The establishment of The Pejman Art Foundation, a first of its kind in Tehran, arose due to the critical and urgent need for bridging the gap between commercial galleries, collectors, institutions, artists, critics, collectors and educators. Private non-governmental organizations take on the role of readdressing the lack institutional government support, with the intention of advancing and supporting artistic development. The foundation's vision for the foundation is firmly grounded in his extensive experience and love for art that began over a decade ago as a Theatre student at the University of Art. During this time, an openness to the exchange of ideas between peers across different disciplines led him to build a staggering personal art collection beginning in 2000, and which today forms an important educational and intellectual resource for the foundation.

A central part of the foundation's initiatives is its international artists residencies that are at the core of its artistic program. Here, established international artists are encouraged to familiarize themselves during their time in Iran with current trends and ideas in the country. Through an immersive program touring the country in order to introduce them to Iranian history and culture, residency artists are able to realize works through collaborations with local artists that manifests as a public exhibition. This engagement is at the core of how The Foundation operates, emphasizing the need to recontextualize and reconsider what it means to create work in Iran today alongside an international perspective that is not limited to geographical or regional borders. This initiative serves to position Iranian art as part of the region, but also as one that is dialogue with the developments in global contemporary art.

The Foundation's initiatives are implemented through multiple voices by way of an advisory board constituting of curators, art consultants and art professionals, who meet regularly to discuss program initiatives, alongside considering artist's proposals, which if aligned with foundations ethos are invited to collaborate and realize projects. Through facilitating exchanges with artists that might manifest as exhibitions, workshops, publications, talks, art commissions, local and global artists are brought together to encourage simultaneous shifts in perspectives on how artists develop work and manage their professional careers.

A milestone project in 2015 was the widely lauded retrospective,

*Towards the Ineffable: Farideh Lashai*, curated by Faryar Javaherian and Germano Celant at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. This seminal retrospective of Lashai's oeuvre brought together her paintings with masterpieces including Pollock, Giacometti, Mark Rothko, Lichtenstein, Francis Bacon, Manoucher Yekta, Sohrab Sepehri, and Nasser Assa, further demonstrating her inspiration drawn from both Persian and Modern Western art. Alongside the show was the introduction of Cafe Musee, an annual of site-specific sculpture commission where artists are invited to realise artworks for the cafe's outdoor terraces. The first commission for 2016 Cafe Musee will see a new and ambitious installation realized by Sahand Hesamiyan.

The Foundation also increased its reach through international projects, a standout being Iranian artist Neda Razavipour's site-specific project commissioned by the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, for the exhibition *Dust*, curated by Anna Plak. This project consisted of newly realized installations and six-day performances during her residency. Previous solo exhibitions include a tribute to Ardeshir Mohasses which included a seminal publication project in collaboration with Dastan's Basement Gallery, Ferdoun Ave and Neda Razavipour.

Heading into 2016, and as Iran moves toward re-engaging with the world after the end of years of sanctions, The Pejman Art Foundation will continue to facilitate exchange between local and international art networks including foundations, galleries and museums. This will take the form of developing Iranian expiations internationally as a move away cliched views to considering Iranian art and to position artists in different framework beyond geographical categorizations. The first exhibition of 2016 brings French-Algerian artist Neil Beloufa. Other future project includes a research project on documentation and collection, a curated collection exhibition, where an invited curators will be given full access to interpreting and presenting works in the collection for an exhibition and an open-call project connecting traditional crafts and culture coinciding with national events and celebrations. Beyond its immediate artistic and commissioning program, the foundation operates across various locations in Tehran regularly hosting lectures, talks readings, film screenings and workshops conducted by artists, curators and. In so doing, the foundation hopes to fulfill its aim of becoming an arena for the exchange of ideas between artists and the wider public/ The foundation is working towards opening a dedicated art center in 2017, firmly placing Tehran on the map. This innovative center will have an extensive program of international exhibitions, continue its residency program, as well as showcase its remarkable permanent collection, further solidifying that The Pejman Art Foundation is championing Tehran's blossoming art scene.