

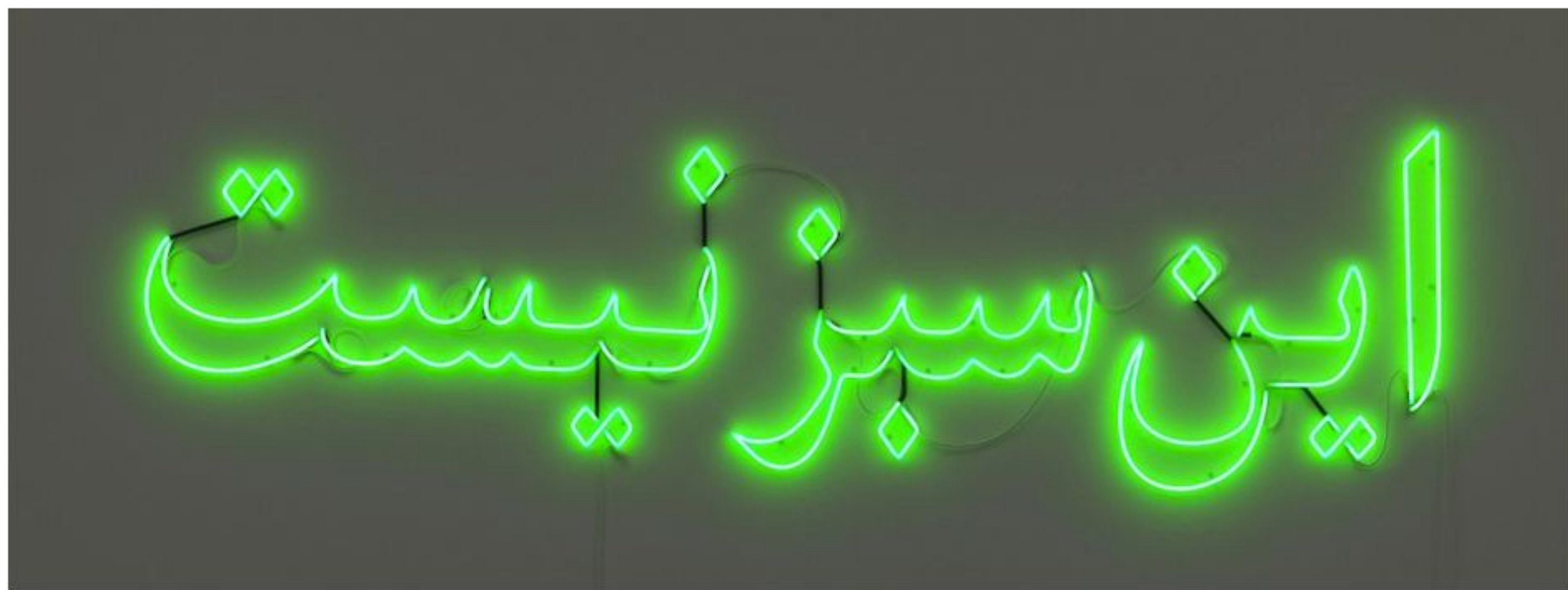
CULTURE

Iran takes NYC

by [Negin Baradari](#) | Posted September 30, 2013

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Leila Pazooki, "This Is Not Green", 2009. Source: Leila Heller Gallery

While the heads of States, President Barack Obama and the newly elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani converse on lifting the veil to discover Iran's 'true face' (no pun intended), let us focus on Iranian art's poignant ubiquity in New York City this season.

The epoch before the Islamic Revolution in Iran epitomized a cosmopolitan platform for the arts under the Pahlavi reign. Tehran and Shiraz held key roles for artists' exposure. The empress Farah Diba and her artistic background formed a supportive pillar for the Iranian society to invest into their creative endeavours.

Iran Modern at the Asia Society has recreated the aura of the flourishing artistic period by assembling 100 works by 26 Iranian artists. The pioneering exhibition encompasses loans from public as well as private collections from the US, Europe and the Middle East. U.S. sanctions, however, have been preventing the borrowing of art directly emanating from Iran. The stagnating logistics in the organisation of such a retrospective have not stopped the Asia Society to establish a culturally enriching experience for its international audience. The varying themes of the artists range from political criticism to cultural appreciations and a modern appropriation of the latter. Mixed media, including photography, sculptures and paintings, demonstrate the pluralism and unique interpretation of modernism of Iran's art community of the '50, '60s and '70s.

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian is one of the artists at *Iran Modern*, whose cut-glass wall sculptures demonstrate a modern approach to Shiraz' Shah Cheragh mosque, bridging cultural heritage with the modernism movement. The



Farmanfarmaian's passion for geometric patterns portrayed in a palette of warm and cold shades.

Source: [asiasociety.org](#)

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political complexities depicted in the works are furthermore mirrored by the issues faced organising an 'iranophile' art exhibition. License applications to the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) obstruct the flow of channels for economic activities between both nations, demonstrating the burden to organise shows heavily focused on Iran.

The current exhibitions translate the same deep emotional endowment Iranians are used to experience in Iranian poetry (see, Hafez, Ferdowzi & co.). The Taymour Grahne Gallery's recent opening in Chelsea was launched by the inaugural exhibition *Chasing the Butterfly & other recent paintings*. This one-man show by Nicky Nodjoumi portrays a satirical perspective upon patriarchal regimes around the world. Powerful contemporary characters such as Western businessmen and Iranian clerics depict Nodjoumi's socio-political stance. The critical parallelism between the U.S. and Iran transcends through to Nodjoumi's art with welcoming humour.



Nodjoumi's counter-position between human figures and animals illustrated in oil on canvas

Source: taymourgrahne.com

The assortment of Iranian exhibitions portrays artists with the same cultural heritage yet showcases varied techniques to present the artists' opinions. Traditional craftsmanship is incorporated by the idiosyncratic Iranian miniature style at the *My Name is Not Rouge* exhibition at the Shirin Gallery NY. An avant-garde artistic approach is represented at the Thomas Erben Gallery by Barbad Golshiri's one-man show, *Curriculum Mortis*, exploring the frontiers between politics and repression through sculptural installations of cemeteries.

The *Calligraffiti 1984-2013* show at the Leila Heller Gallery in Chelsea is exhibiting the filmmaker and photographer Shirin Neshat, the deconstructions of the Persian alphabet and traditional texts in sculptures by Pouran Jinchi and glassworks and prints by Farhard Moshiri. Moshiri's bold and pop

art stream of creativity is portrayed by blending traditional calligraphy with the street art component of graffiti. Its bespoke composition respects Iranian heritage while keeping it alive and innovative.

The Iranian artistic community has successfully combined distinctive eras of socio-political messages into the exhibitions, creating an enthusiastic platform in tackling resilient issues regarding international relations with the West.

Galleries & Exhibitions

Thomas Erben Gallery (526 W. 26th St.).

Leila Heller Gallery (568 W. 25th St.).

Shirin Gallery NYC (511 W. 25th St.).

Taymour Grahne's Gallery (157 Hudson St.).

Asia Society (725 Park Avenue).