



# Maryam Hoseini: Painting as resistance

The Iran-born, New York-based artist embraces desire as an act of liberation

By Duncan Baallantyne-Way | Sep 26, 2024 | 4 min read



When **Maryam Hoseini** was a student in Tehran, security guards frequently stopped them, insisting they cover their bleached, curly hair with a hijab. Each time, the artist signed a commitment letter, promising to comply but continued to ignore the official demand. 'From the very moment you come of age, you are dealing with patriarchal oppression and censorship,' Hoseini reflects. This daily act of resistance sheds light on the work of the now New York-based artist, whose vibrant, fractured, and deeply layered paintings challenge conventional ideas of gender and sexuality to uncover new hybridized, figurative forms.



Maryam Hoseini, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

Hoseini moved to the United States in 2014 to study at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Bard College simultaneously, and they now co-chair an MFA painting program at the latter. Three years after their arrival, in 2017, former US president Donald Trump introduced a travel ban targeting migrants and refugees from six countries, including Iran. The executive order effectively trapped the artist in the US, cutting Hoseini off from their family: 'For years I couldn't travel; it felt captive.' The experience of 'living in a place that is and is not your home' is reflected in the liminality of Hoseini's paintings, which open a space where 'new meanings and forms of representation' can be negotiated. 'I'm fascinated by ideas of where we belong. My paintings have a groundlessness, a collapse of time and space, where there's tension between abstraction and representation, shifting perspectives and layers.'



Maryam Hoseini, *Flesh and Sun*, 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Green Art Gallery.



Maryam Hoseini, *Arc of Drama (Hidden Lies)*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and High Art Gallery.

In the Nova sector of the upcoming edition of Art Basel Miami Beach, Hoseini will show a new painting *Flesh and Sun III* (2024) in a presentation by the Iran-based ***Dastan Gallery***. This work has emerged from one of the artist's ongoing series, whose flattened nude figures and muted pastel palettes delve into queer histories and seek to look beyond fixed or binary perspectives. Central to this exploration is an embrace of desire, where the pursuit of touch and pleasure becomes an act of liberation against rigid structural and architectural forms. A recurring theme in Hoseini's work is the extension of elements beyond the confines of the frame, symbolically breaking free from institutional and metaphorical boundaries. 'I think my work is partly about strategies of resistance,' says Hoseini. 'How can it interrupt cycles of violence and create new possibilities, new offers for forms and figures, bodies and spaces?'



Maryam Hoseini, Cruel Alphabet (R-R), 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Deborah Schamoni.

### Credits and Captions

Maryam Hoseini is represented by ***Green Art Gallery*** (Dubai), ***High Art*** (Paris and Arles); and ***Deborah Schamoni*** (Munich).

Hoseini's work will be presented at Art Basel Miami Beach's Nova sector by Dastan Gallery, Tehran.

Duncan Ballantyne-Way is a writer, editor, and art critic based in Berlin.

Caption for top image: Maryam Hoseini, *Cruel Alphabet* (detail), 2023. Courtesy of the artist.

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