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Ali Banisadr (b. 1976 in Tehran, Iran. Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY). *These fragments I have shored against my ruins*, 2023. Oil on linen, 86 x 180 in. (218.4 x 457.2 cm). Mohammed Afkhami Foundation. Photography by Genevieve Hanson. © Ali Banisadr

The Katonah Museum of Art Presents *Ali Banisadr: The Alchemist*, Opening March 16, 2025

A Landmark Exhibition Showcasing Two Decades of Ali Banisadr's Dazzling Multi-Disciplinary Practice

Katonah, NY, January 2025 — The Katonah Museum of Art (KMA) is proud to present *Ali Banisadr: The Alchemist*, the first major U.S. museum survey of the Brooklyn-based Iranian born artist Ali Banisadr. Curated by Michelle Yun Mapplethorpe, Director and Chief Curator, Katonah Museum of Art, this landmark exhibition encompasses nearly twenty years of the artist's singular practice, from 2006 to the present, across the mediums of painting, drawing, and printmaking. A group of sculptures, a new direction for the artist, has been created for the KMA and will be presented to the public for the first time. The exhibition will be on view at the KMA from March 16 to June 29, 2025.

Ali Banisadr's biographical history growing up amidst revolution and political unrest in Iran, his emigration to the U.S., and wide-ranging artistic influences exemplify the shifting definition of what it means to be an "American artist" today. The personal and artistic narratives across his oeuvre, distilled through a dazzling mastery of art history, philosophy, and world events, offer a nuanced perspective on human nature. Banisadr is a creator of worlds—intuitively and painstakingly constructed—that exude a vitality at once turbulent and revelatory. These microcosms are the culmination of a careful balancing act between chaos and composure, abstraction and representation. Expansive compositions are rich with figurative allusions, sonic recollection filtered through the artist's synesthesia, invented stories, world history, collective memory, and mythology. The works' syncopated rhythms echo a multitude of references across the history of

art—including Mesopotamian antiquities, alchemical imagery, Persian miniatures, medieval and Renaissance art, Surrealism, German Expressionism, and Abstract Expressionism—as a bellwether of our own tempestuous times. By illuminating the beauty, technical mastery, and cultural acuity of Banisadr’s vision, *Ali Banisadr: The Alchemist* aims to establish the artist’s role as a leading cultural scribe and a resonant voice in contemporary art.

"Ali Banisadr: The Alchemist is a powerful reflection of the KMA's dedication to presenting thought-provoking and transformative art. The KMA is honored to have organized this milestone exhibition championing one of the rising stars of our time," said Director and Chief Curator Michelle Yun Mapplethorpe.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue distributed by Yale University Press and featuring critical essays by leading scholars including Dr. William H. Sherman, Director, The Warburg Institute, University of London; Dr. Gražina Subelytė, Associate Curator, Peggy Guggenheim Collection; and Michelle Yun Mapplethorpe. The publication also includes a plate section annotated by Elizabeth Monti, Associate Curator, Katonah Museum of Art, and a transcribed conversation between Banisadr and noted art historian Robert Storr, offering deeper insight into the artist’s process and philosophy.

Ali Banisadr

Born in Tehran, Iran in 1976, the artist grew up amidst the turmoil of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). In 1988, Banisadr left Iran with his family at the age of twelve, first reaching Turkey and then San Diego, California. While living in San Francisco as a young adult, he became involved with the local graffiti art community while studying psychology. He later moved to New York City where he earned a BFA at the School of Visual Arts (2005) and an MFA at the New York Academy of Art (2007). The artist currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Banisadr has been the subject of international solo museum exhibitions at the Museo Stefano Bardini and Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, (2021); Benaki Museum, Athens, (2020); Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, (2020); Gemäldegalerie, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, (2019); and the Het Noordbrabants Museum, Den Bosch, (2019). His work has also been included in major group exhibitions including the Venice Biennale (2013) and Prague Biennale (2013). Banisadr’s work is included in significant public collections including the Benaki Museum, Athens; British Museum, London; Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Het Noordbrabants Museum, Den Bosch; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, among others.

RELATED PROGRAMMING AT THE KMA

The Artist’s Laboratory

The Pollack Family Learning Center, Open During Museum Hours Through June 29

Complimenting *Ali Banisadr: The Alchemist*, The Pollack Family Learning Center at the KMA presents *The Artist’s Laboratory*. Families are invited to draw, paint, sculpt, and experiment in this interactive space inspired by the magic, science, and wonder in Banisadr’s work.

Artists in Conversation: Ali Banisadr and Michelle Yun Mapplethorpe

March 16, 12:00 - 1:00 PM

Join acclaimed artist Ali Banisadr and KMA’s Director and Chief Curator Michelle Yun Mapplethorpe for an insightful conversation exploring Banisadr’s multidisciplinary influences and creative inspirations.

Educators’ Preview

March 25, 4:30 - 6:00 PM

Educators are invited to preview KMA's spring exhibition *Ali Banisadr: The Alchemist* with a tour led by Associate Curator Elizabeth Monti, followed by a hands-on art activity inspired by the artist’s practice.

Artists in Conversation: Ali Banisadr and Sarah Graff, Curator, Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

April 5, 5:00 - 6:30 PM

Ali Banisadr and curator Sarah Graff will discuss how images and texts from Ancient Mesopotamia inspire Banisadr's exploration of 21st-century themes. Reception to follow.

Artists in Conversation: Ali Banisadr and Alexander Nagel, Craig Hugh Smyth Professor of Fine Arts, The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

May 10, 5:00 - 6:30 PM

Ali Banisadr and art historian Alexander Nagel will discuss how Renaissance-era ideas about art, time, and history inform Banisadr's contemporary artistic practice. Reception to follow.

Family Day: Art and Alchemy

May 4, 12:00 - 3:00 PM

Join us for a day of artful wonder where scientific exploration and artistic creativity collide. Take part in large-scale painting experiments, artist-led demonstrations, mixed-media creature sculptures, a family tour, and more.

Exhibition Sponsorship

The exhibition and publication are made possible with support from the Katherine C. and David E. Moore Exhibition Fund and The Director's Circle of the Katonah Museum of Art: Paul Bird and Amy Parsons, Lisa Lustgarten Byala, Mike Davies, Isabelle Harnoncourt Feigen, Virginia L. Gold, Kirsti Kroener and Nicholas Kronfeld, Linda Nordberg, Yvonne S. Pollack, Rebecca Samberg, and Richard and Audrey Zinman.

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Council on the Arts

The Katonah Museum of Art's programs are made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

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About the Katonah Museum of Art

The Katonah Museum of Art (KMA) is a non-collecting institution recognized for its innovative exhibition and education initiatives that champion art and artists — past and present — across artistic disciplines, geographies, and historical periods. Housed in a modernist building designed by architect Edward Larrabee Barnes, the KMA was established in 1954 with a mission to spotlight exceptional art, while also responding to the most critical issues of our time through a bold and vigorous lens. Located in Katonah, New York, the KMA is the anchoring cultural institution in Westchester County, drawing visitors from throughout the Tri-State region and beyond.

Museum hours: Wednesday – Friday and Sunday 12:00 – 5:00 PM; Saturday 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM; Closed Mondays and Tuesdays. For more information about the Katonah Museum of Art, visit katonahmuseum.org or call (914) 232-9555.