



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

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An Evening with Maryam Safajoo Is Oct 6 at the Albany Museum of Art

Artist's Upcoming Exhibition Depicts Persecution of Iranian Bahá'í Community

[For Release Sept 23, 2022 – Albany, GA] — Persian-American artist Maryam Safajoo will be featured at an artist's talk at the Albany Museum of Art on **Oct 6, 2022**, when her exhibition *Forsaking All Comfort and Prosperity* opens in the Hodges Gallery.

An Evening with Maryam Safajoo is set to begin at **6 pm**. The event is free and open to the public.

"Maryam is a modern-day fighter for freedom," AMA Director of Curatorial Affairs Katie Dillard said. "She has dedicated herself and her art to the telling of the hard stories. I am looking forward to learning of the impact her paintings have had on bringing light to the persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran and the world."

Now based in the United States, Safajoo in her paintings tells the stories of the Bahá'í community in Iran, which has endured constant persecution since the 1979 revolution in that country. Her work relates stories of oppression that include murder, arrest, detainment, and interrogation. Each painting is inspired by a real event that she has painstakingly researched.

"My paintings narrate these stories which are a result of my conversations with the people who were near these actual events," she said. "Many of the incidents I depict only exist in the memory of those who experienced them and have no pictorial existence. In many cases, if visual records did exist, they have been confiscated by the Iranian authorities in raids of homes."

Her work ensures these events and their impact are not lost to the world.

"My depictions are often the first time these events have taken visual form. I record the details of this history," Safajoo said. "For example, details of the shoes, clothes, artifacts, and environments seen in my paintings are very close to those that were there in the event."

Safajoo also has firsthand knowledge of the persecution her community suffers. She and her immediate and extended family have experienced it.

"I remember the day in the early morning when government security forces burst into my home, ransacked it, and took my father to prison; my younger sister was crying on her way to school," she said. "Later, my sister was denied access to university, and because of her quest to understand why, was then placed in solitary confinement."

In her work, Safajoo said, she shows "the beautiful aspects of those who have been persecuted by highlighting their steadfastness, powerful spirit, and love for humanity."

Safajoo notes that tens of thousands in Iran have been deprived of jobs, pensions, and educational opportunities, including systematic denial of access to higher education. Bahá'í cemeteries, and properties have been confiscated, vandalized, or destroyed, and many Bahá'ís have lost their homes and other property that have been seized or damaged.

Through her work, she said, she is "constantly reflecting on the concept of a humanity free from religious prejudice, including how we can eliminate all prejudice such as racism, sexism, nationalism, and how our prejudices can complicate or obfuscate the development of our community and prevent each other from growing."

Safajoo studied business administration in Iran before moving to the United States, where she earned her MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University in Massachusetts. She has exhibited her work at venues including Harvard University and the Massachusetts State House, and presented at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Her remarks at the AJC Boston Diplomats Seder in 2016 were adapted by the *Boston Herald* into an article. Her work has recently been featured by IranWire, Tavaana, PersianBMS, Radio Farda, Nashraasoo, and the BBC.

AMA EXHIBITIONS

- *Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice* is in The Haley Gallery, Sept 1-Dec 10, 2022. Organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Generous support is provided by Art Bridges.
- *Wayna: Her Dreams of Ethiopia, Works by Tracy Murrell* is in the East Gallery, Sept 1, 2022- Jan 7, 2023.
- *Georgia Artists Guild of Albany, 29th Juried Exhibition* is in the McCormack Gallery, Sept 1, 2022- Jan 7, 2023.

AMA EVENTS

- *AMA ChalkFest*, Nov 19, 2022, 10 am-5 pm, Front Street and Veterans Park Amphitheater. Admission is free. www.amachalkfest.com.

ABOUT THE ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

The Albany Museum of Art is located at 311 Meadowlark Drive in Albany, Ga., adjacent to Albany State University West Campus just off Gillionville Road. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is open to the public 10 am-5 pm Tuesdays through Saturdays. Admission is free.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, www.albanymuseum.com, or call 229.439.8400. Be sure to follow the @AlbanyArtMuseum on Twitter, AlbanyMuseum on Instagram, and AlbanyMuseumOfArt on Facebook.

CAPTION INFORMATION

Artist Maryam Safajoo's *Lovers' Migration*, a 2021 oil on canvas artwork, depicts the forced migration of the village Kata in her home province of Boyer-Ahmad in Iran. In her artwork, Safajoo tells the stories of the Bahá'í community in Iran, which has endured constant persecution since the 1979 revolution in that country. (Image courtesy of the artist)

Maryam Safajoo will discuss her work at *An Evening with Maryam Safajoo*, set for 6 pm on Thursday, Oct 6 at the Albany Museum of Art. Her exhibition *Forsaking All Comfort and Prosperity* opens that day in the Hodges Gallery of the AMA. (Image courtesy of the artist)

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