



FEMININITY BEYOND IDENTITY
CONTEMPORARY ISTANBUL 2026
SHIVA ZAHED GALLERY
22 SEPTEMBER – 27 NOVEMBER 2026

Femininity Beyond Identity

Shiva Zahed Gallery participation in Ci 2026, Featuring Fereydoun Ave, Mahsa Karimizadeh & Maryam Ashkanian

PRESS RELEASE

For the upcoming edition of Contemporary Istanbul, Shiva Zahed Gallery, in its inaugural presentation at the fair, brings together works by **Maryam Ashkanian** (b. 1988, Bandar-e Anzali), **Fereydoun Ave** (b. 1945, Tehran), and **Mahsa Karimizadeh** (b. 1980, Shiraz).

Bringing the practices of these three artists into dialogue, the presentation considers femininity as a language of form, material, and bodily association rather than as a fixed identity. Across textile and sculpture, fabric, foam, blanket fragments, and copper are stitched, pinched, layered, and accumulated into forms that repeatedly evoke the body.

In the works of Ashkanian and Karimizadeh, this bodily vocabulary is more direct. Ashkanian's sewn forms gather, multiply, and expand around central openings, suggesting flesh, hair, and interior anatomies. Karimizadeh's pinched surfaces transform foam and copper into taut, skin-like structures shaped by pressure and restraint. In both practices, the body is simultaneously present and withheld, transformed through repetition and abstraction. These gestures resonate with feminist strategies that reclaim the body from its conventional position as an object of representation, allowing it instead to become a source from which form itself is generated.

Fereydoun Ave's textile works introduce a different relationship to femininity. Assembled from blankets and fragments of fabric, they do not directly evoke sexual anatomy. Yet their softness, stitching, layering, and worn surfaces retain associations with the body, intimacy, domesticity, and care. Their quilt-like structures draw on techniques and materials historically associated with women's labour while resisting conventional expectations of sculptural weight and permanence.

Across the presentation, femininity moves beyond biological sex and emerges instead as a field of material and formal possibilities—articulated through softness and pressure, concealment and exposure, interior and exterior, attraction and unease. Rather than assigning a single feminist position to the three artists, the presentation asks how forms, materials, and modes of making culturally associated with the feminine can be inhabited, displaced, and reconstructed from different positions.



Maryam Ashkanian

Maryam Ashkanian (b. 1988, Bandar Anzali, Iran) is an Iranian painter and sculptor whose multidisciplinary practice explores the intersection of painting, sculpture, and textile. Working primarily with fabric, she investigates the body, memory, and dreams through sculptural forms that bring together textile techniques and three-dimensional composition.

Ashkanian's practice moves between the pictorial and the sculptural, using the material qualities of fabric to explore the relationship between physical form and psychological experience. Her works engage with the body not only as a subject of representation but also as a site through which memory and dreams take shape.

Her work has been exhibited internationally, including at the *Rijswijk Textile Biennial* in the Netherlands, the *Biennial of the Frontiers* at the Tamaulipas Museum of Contemporary Art in Mexico, and *Expanding Worlds* at *Bâtiment d'Art Contemporain* (BAC) in Geneva, Switzerland. She has also participated in exhibitions in London, Paris, Dubai, and Belgium.

In 2020, Ashkanian founded *Choom Art Gallery* in Bandar Anzali, Iran, supporting emerging artists and developing independent curatorial initiatives that connect contemporary art with everyday life.

Maryam Ashkanian

*Untitled, from the **Purge** series, 2023*

Textile, Sewing on fabric

150 × 150 × 5 cm







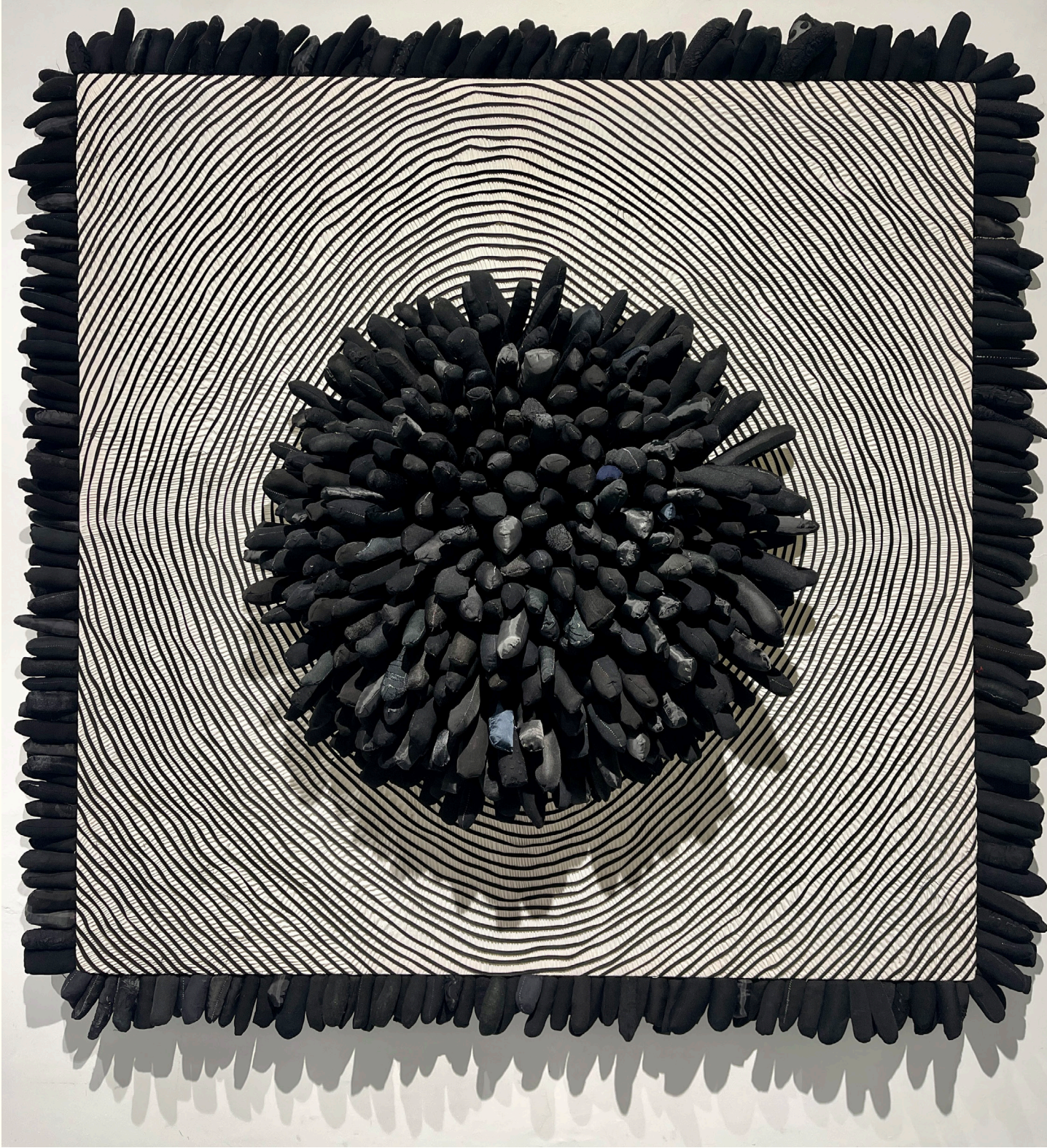
Maryam Ashkanian

Untitled, from the *Purge* series, 2025

Textile, Sewing on fabric

135 × 135 × 25 cm



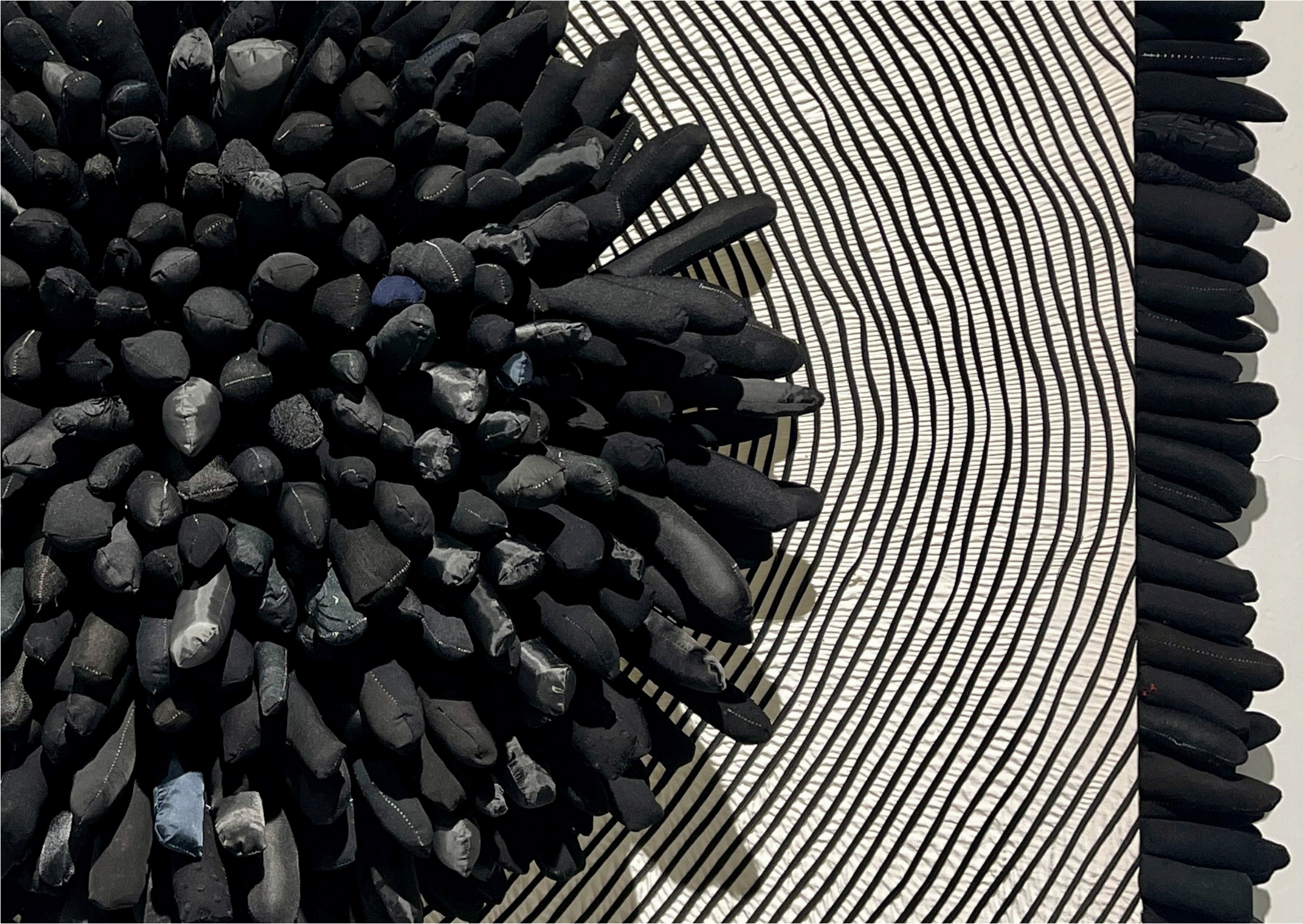


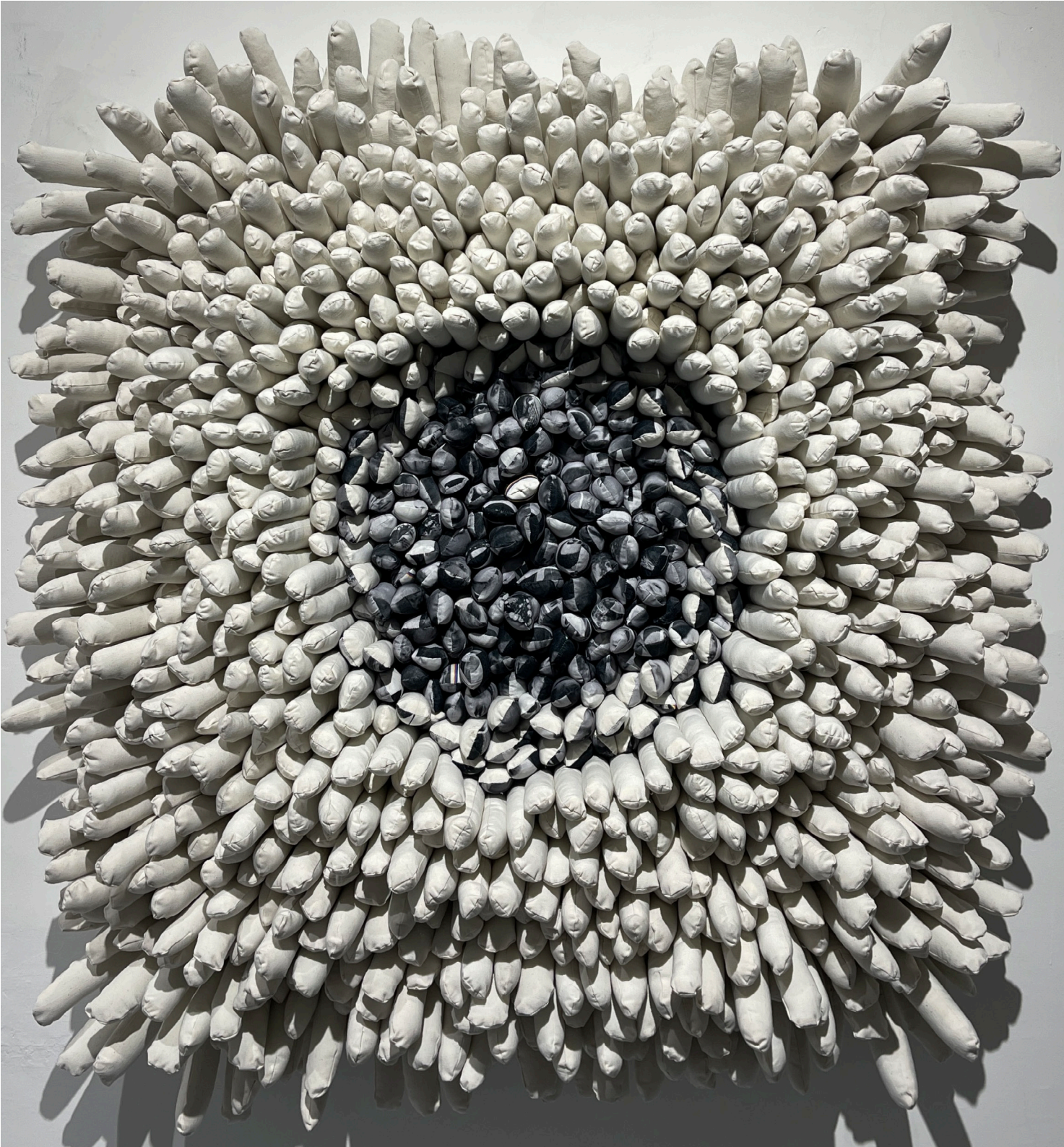
Maryam Ashkanian

Untitled, from the Purge series, 2024

Textile, Sewing on fabric

160 × 160 × 30 cm





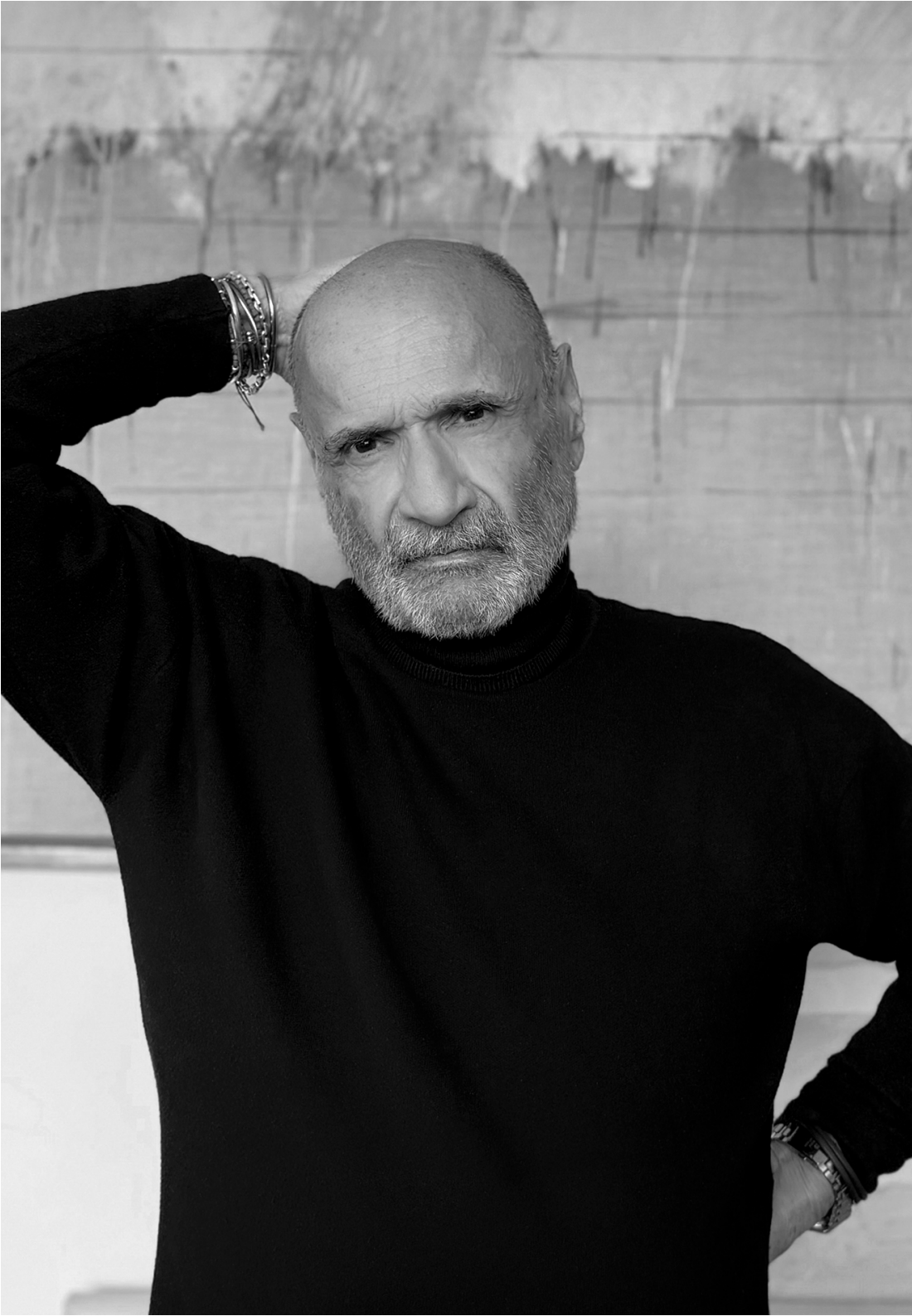
Maryam Ashkanian

Untitled, from the Purge series, 2024

Textile, Sewing on fabric

120 × 120 × 20 cm





Fereydoun Ave

Fereydoun Ave (b. 1945, Tehran) is one of the most influential figures in Iranian contemporary art. Over more than five decades of artistic practice, he has moved fluidly between painting, collage, design, assemblage, and curatorial work, developing a visual language shaped by memory, cultural inheritance, and a deeply personal engagement with image-making.

Ave studied in the United States and returned to Iran, where he became an active presence in the formation of the country's contemporary art scene. His practice draws from a wide range of references, including Persian mythology, poetry, popular visual culture, art history, and personal archives. Rather than treating these references as fixed symbols, Ave reactivates them through layering, repetition, fragmentation, and gesture.

Working across abstraction and figuration, Ave approaches the image as a field of shifting associations. Motifs such as the pomegranate, the fig leaf, the heroic body, and the fragmented sign recur throughout his work, appearing as carriers of memory, desire, vulnerability, and cultural resonance. His compositions often resist singular interpretation, allowing symbols to emerge, dissolve, and reappear within complex visual structures.

Alongside his artistic practice, Ave has played a significant role as a curator, collector, and mentor, supporting generations of artists and contributing to the visibility of Iranian contemporary art both within Iran and internationally. His work continues to occupy a singular position between artistic production, cultural memory, and the shaping of contemporary artistic discourse.



Fereydoun Ave

Lahaf 17, from the *Shah Abbas and his page boy* series, 2017

Textile, Mixed media on pathworks of various fabrics

160 × 292 cm



Fry's

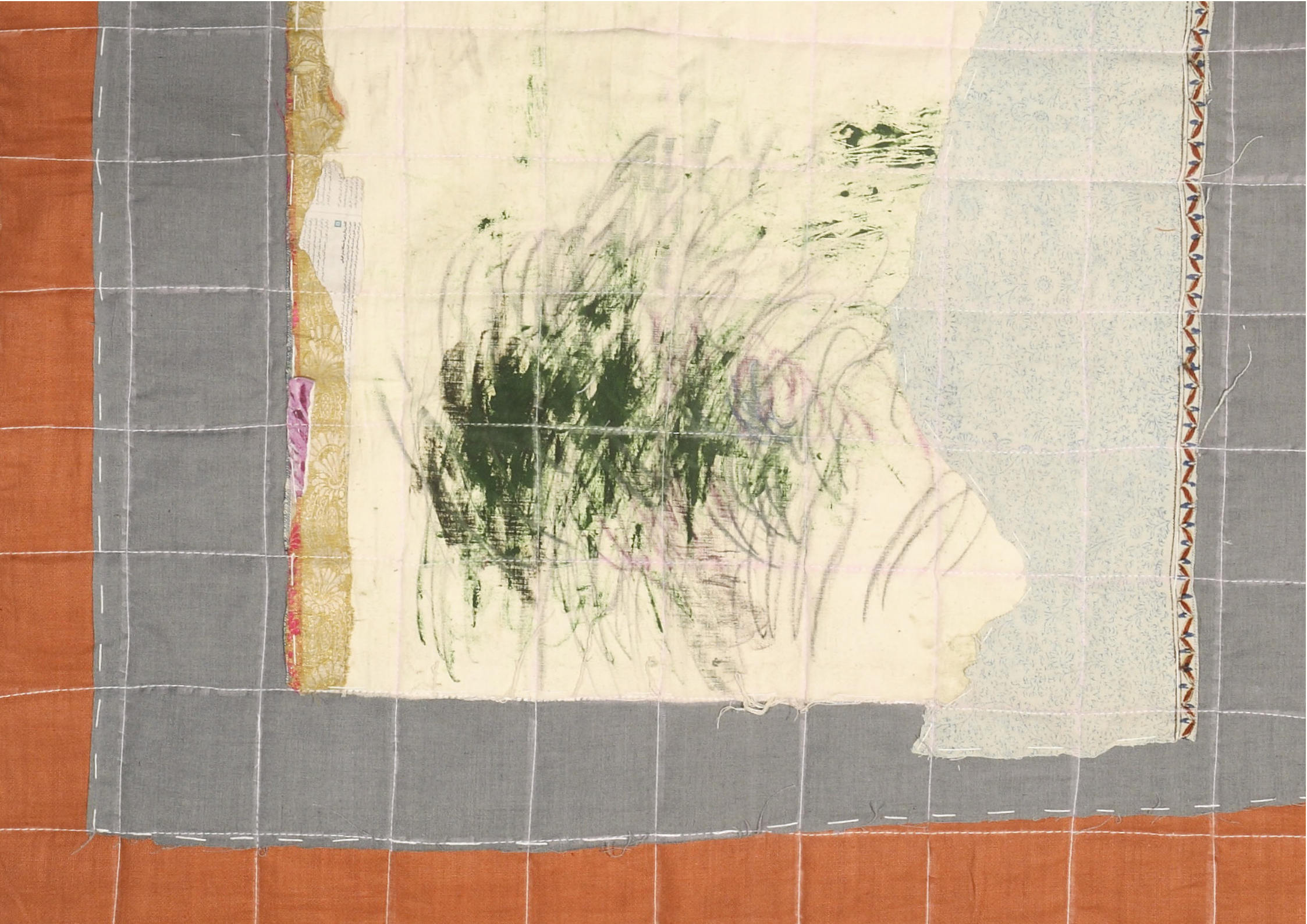
Fereydoun Ave

Lahaf 5, from the Shah Abbas and his page boy series, 2015

Textile, Mixed media on pathworks of various fabrics

192 × 127 cm







Mahsa Karimizadeh

Mahsa Karimizadeh (b. 1980, Shiraz, Iran) is an Iranian sculptor and installation artist living and working in Tehran. She holds a degree in Sculpture from the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran. Her multidisciplinary practice encompasses sculpture, installation, painting, and site-specific work.

Since 2006, Karimizadeh has presented more than ten solo exhibitions, including exhibitions at *Khak Gallery*, *Iranshahr Gallery*, *Aun Gallery*, and the *Lajevardi Foundation*. In 2008, she received Second Prize at the *5th Tehran Sculpture Biennial* at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. The award was followed by an artist residency at the *Cité Internationale des Arts* in Paris.

From 2015 to 2016, Karimizadeh participated in a one-year residency at the *Lepsien Art Foundation* in Düsseldorf, Germany. She was subsequently invited by the *ZERO Foundation* to participate in the *Socle du Monde Biennale* in 2017 and 2021 at *HEART - Herning Museum of Contemporary Art* in Denmark. One of her works is held in the museum's collection.

Karimizadeh has exhibited internationally in Denmark, Germany, France, Monaco, Mexico, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran. Her work is held in institutional and private collections, including *HEART - Herning Museum of Contemporary Art*, the *Fereydoun Ave Collection*, *DD Center Museum*, and the private collection of Olivier Lafayette in Paris.

Mahsa Karimizadeh

Untitled, from the Pinched series, 2020

Foam, Copper electroforming

50 × 35 × 10 cm







Mahsa Karimizadeh

Untitled, from the Pinched series, 2020

Foam, Copper electroforming

41 × 30 × 11 cm





Mahsa Karimizadeh

Untitled, from the Pinched series, 2020

Foam, Copper electroforming

35 × 30 × 37 cm





Mahsa Karimizadeh

Untitled, from the Pinched series, 2022

Foam

58 × 48 × 8 cm

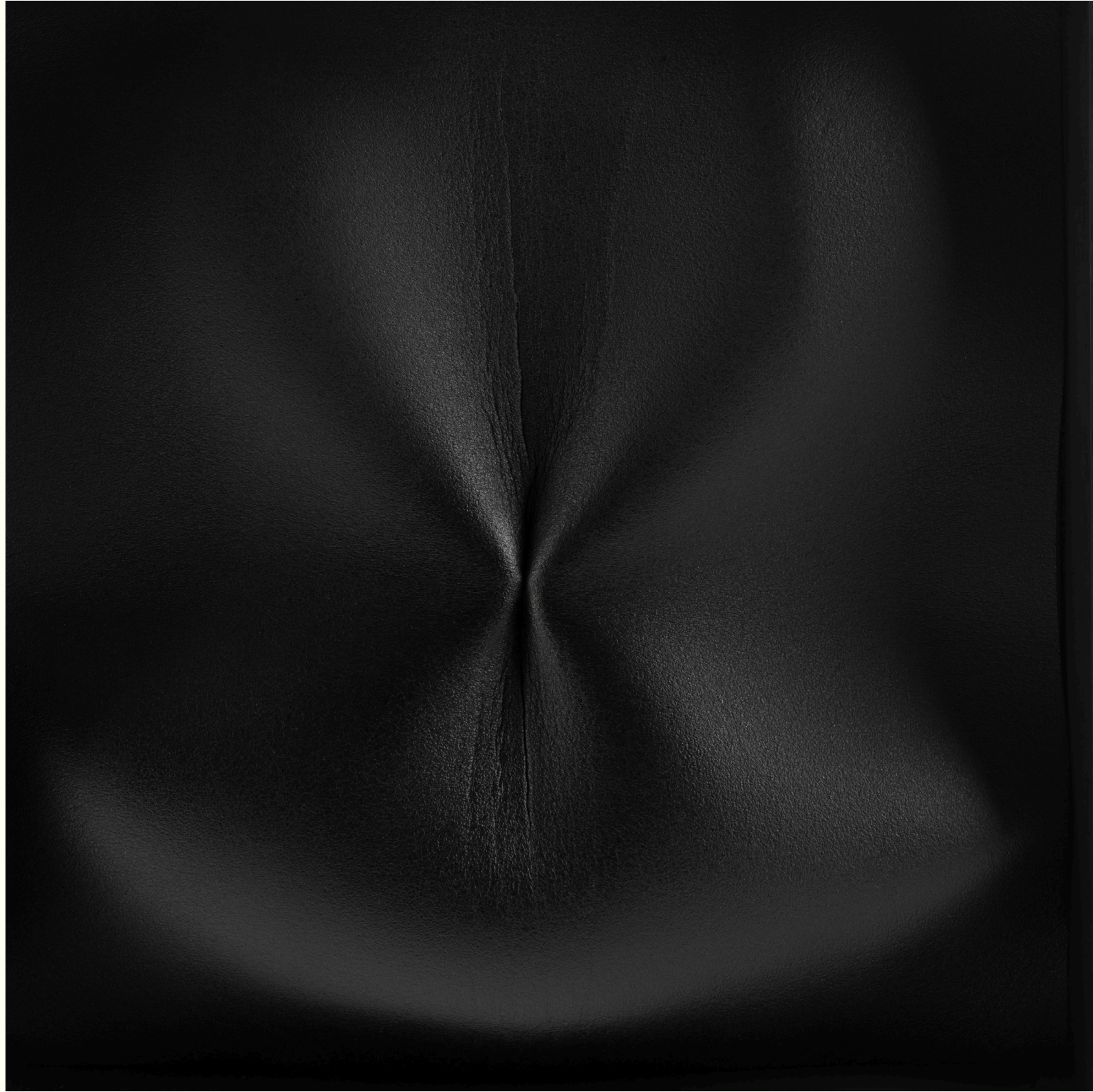


Mahsa Karimizadeh

Untitled, from the Pinched series, 2022

Foam

48 × 48 × 8 cm









Mahsa Karimizadeh

Untitled, from the Pinched series, 2025

Foam

42 × 48 × 8 cm

ARTWORKS

- Maryam Ashkanian

4 Works

Untitled, from the *Purge* series

Textile, Sewing on fabrics

2023 (1 work) 150 × 150 × 5 cm

2024 (1 work) 120 × 120 × 20 cm

(1 work) 160 × 160 × 30 cm

2025 (1 work) 135 × 135 × 25 cm

- Fereydoun Ave

2 Works

Lahaf 5 & 17, from *Shah Abbas and his page boy* series

Textile, Mixed media on pathworks of various fabrics

2015 (1 work), *Lahaf 5*, 192 × 127 cm

2017 (1 work), *Lahaf 17*, 160 × 292 cm

- Mahsa Karimizadeh

6 Works

Untitled, from the *Pinched* series

Foam, Copper electroforming

2020 (1 work) 41 × 30 × 11 cm

(1 work) 50 × 35 × 10 cm

(1 work) 30 × 30 × 37 cm

2022 (1 work) 58 × 48 × 8 cm

(1 work) 48 × 48 × 8 cm

2025 (1 work) 42 × 48 × 8 cm

FEMININITY BEYOND IDENTITY

Artists

Maryam Ashkanian
Fereydoun Ave
Mahsa Karimizadeh

Curator

Shiva Zahed

Design & Visuals

Ali Nazari

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