

SITE131's Summer Abroad

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Arash Ghahari Kermani

Dallas' SITE131 celebrates a decade of dynamic exhibitions by opening its summer season on Saturday, June 22, 2024, with Foreign Affairs, a compelling new show curated by esteemed artist and University of Texas at Dallas professor John Pomara. This exhibition, running through August 3, 2024, features the work of thirteen graduate students, all immigrants studying at UTD. The artists hail from Brazil, China, Ecuador, Israel, the Philippines, Vietnam, and predominantly Iran. The age range of the artists, from their early twenties to a notable seventy-year-old graduate, underscores the timeless nature of creative expression. Their work encapsulates personal struggles and aspirations shaped by their experiences in their native countries and their journeys to a new life in America.

“John Pomara is an experienced educator, highly respected in his field. We’re friends & meet over coffee, chatting about what we’ve seen & are thinking about.

This exhibition followed an earlier idea of a smaller exhibition.”

Joan Davidow, Co-Founder and President of SITE131, continues, “these are all graduate & post graduate students who also happen to be immigrants from seven different countries, which few of us encounter in our daily lives. This will be a new experience for visitors...& curators as well, to see a new response to a new world by hard-working, mature students.”

Hadi Asgharpour from Iran brings his homeland to life through kinetic sculptures, creating an intimate connection between motion and memory. Fatemeh Baigmoradi, also from Iran,



Fatemeh Baigmoradi



Jen De Leon

addresses themes of identity and protection with small family photographs, some burned or obscured by buckets, reflecting social practices to safeguard her family. Jennifer de Leon from the Philippines uses digital media to transform broken headshots and portraits into moving pieces that reveal hidden emotions, pushing the boundaries of traditional portraiture. Israeli artist Rachel Finkelstein explores gender politics with conceptual video installations, offering a powerful commentary on societal issues. Zahra Jafarpour from Iran crafts daily portraits using plates, providing a personal portrayal of womanhood. Arash Ghahari Kermani, another Iranian artist, suspends figures in steel and resin, capturing the delicate balance between strength and

fragility. Zack Nguyen from Vietnam shares traumatic life events through his art, navigating the intersections of pop culture and globalism as a teacher and artist. Brazilian Raquel Piantino creates mixed media photos with cutout masks, addressing female identity in a whimsical and poetic manner. Iranian Ashouri Shaghayegh reveals hidden anxiety through wrapped sculptures, embodying the internal struggles of the artist. Haoyi Song from China mesmerizes viewers with lyrical, dreamlike poetry, evoking a deep, soulful response. Maryam Takaloubighash from Iran produces mysterious figures using grass and quilted artworks, adding layers of meaning to her creations. Ecuadorian Brenda Vega innovates portraiture with stacks of headshots, utilizing new media forms to explore identity. Iranian Vajihe Zamaniderkani combines masses of small potted plants with her paintings, adding a social dimension by sharing the plants with her audience.

Foreign Affairs offers a poignant reflection on the artists' painful cultural histories and the stark contrast of their current experiences in America. This exhibition not only highlights their personal journeys but also fosters a unique learning environment where they gain insights from each other's diverse perspectives. This summer is your chance to experience a world of art and culture in one place from June 22–August 3 at Site131.