

# *Foreign Affairs* at SITE131

June 22 – August 17, 2024

William Sarradet | August 2, 2024

Site 131's exhibition, *Foreign Affairs*, showcases the works of doctoral and graduate students from the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), bringing together a selection of graphic works, interactive installations, and multimedia pieces. The diverse roster of artists come from countries including Brazil, China, Ecuador, Israel, Philippines, and Vietnam, with seven from Iran. The Iranian artists included here offer an exploration of themes of representation and dissent.



Vajihe Zamaniderkani, "*Unrooted*," 2024, oil on canvas & plants

Fatemah Baigmoradi's manipulated photographs stand out, as she physically burns them to conceal or reveal the personas within her images, evincing a strain on their bodies. Maryam Takalou's piece features what appears to be a magnifying lens for dentists draped in sheer white fabric painted with birds in flight among the words "Body" and "Home," reflecting on the interplay between physical presence and personal space. Zahra Jafarpour's installation presents a table with its front legs modified into a kneeling position, with plates painted to show dead birds she encountered on the street during her studies in Italy. In each of these pieces, there is a sense of compromised material. This manipulation adds layers of meaning, emphasizing themes like physical strain, the intersection of body and home, and the presence of death in everyday life.

Vajihe Zamaniderkani's dual abstractions offer a different contrast: on the wall, canvases show fragmented portraits reduced to jagged lines, alongside similar paintings of broken planes of color. Below these works, a collection of sprouting plants in jars of water adds an organic element, emphasizing the elemental separations of form, color, and life.

Hadi Asgharpour's *Echoes of Dried Waters* is a particularly evocative installation. This piece features a canoe made of clear plastic, flanked by two oars. Sensors at the bow of the canoe detect the viewer's proximity, causing the oars to turn and change speed accordingly. When the viewer steps away, the object jolts the oars back into their original position, creating a visceral, sensorial alarm. The plastic boat, in its fragility and unstable seams, expresses obsolescence, as if it was made to fail.

*Foreign Affairs* is an exhibition that offers a weighty exploration of identity, political systems, and personal experiences. The works here not only speak to the individual perspectives of artists who have come to Dallas to pursue an education in the arts, but also reflect their navigation to their studies. This collective narrative brings to light shared experiences, qualms, and fears, offering larger lessons about cultural integration and the global exchange of artistic ideas.



Zahra Jafarpour, "Sky Eaters," 2024, acrylic on plates, table, & mixed media