

# Nowruz

## Images, Sounds and Voices from Contemporary Iran

Chapter I – 20 March 2026

Bea Vita, Venice

20 March – 22 November 2026

This exhibition project was born from the encounter between **Yasra Pouyeshman** and **Mara Sartore**, developed through a dialogue around a show dedicated to contemporary Iranian artists, originally conceived for the space of KOOCH in Venice.

With the worsening political and social situation in Iran and the outbreak of uprisings, the realisation of the exhibition gradually became impossible, risking cancellation or indefinite postponement. Faced with this forced suspension, Mara Sartore invited Yasra Pouyeshman to merge the project into the exhibition program of Bea Vita, transforming interruption into an opportunity for continuity.

Bea Vita thus hosts the first chapter of a project conceived as an open, evolving organism, capable of adapting to an unstable and fragmented temporality. An initial selection of works – necessarily limited to those already stored in KOOCH's warehouse, as communications with Iran are currently interrupted and artists are unable to ship new works – initiates a path that will unfold over time through subsequent chapters.

The decision to proceed in chapters responds not only to practical necessity but defines a precise curatorial position. The exhibition embraces partiality, incompleteness, and suspension as conditions of the present, transforming them into an open narrative structure capable of welcoming new artists and new works as political, logistical, and relational conditions allow. Through its own narrative, the project also acknowledges those artists and works that cannot be physically present. Absence thus becomes presence.

The first chapter brings together works by **Reihane Raei**, **Siroo**, **Afsoongar**, **Mahboobeh Yazdani**, **Ehsan Shayegh**, **Farnaz Aboutalebi**, and **Aynaz** – artists who, despite the diversity of their languages, share a common tension between memory, identity, and transformation.

Drawing on traditional Persian miniature and the symbolic imagery of Persian gardens, Reihane Raei's works intertwine myth, nature, and transformation in intimate, archetypal narratives. Siroo, trained in philosophy in Tehran, develops her practice through weaving and patchwork born from dreams and visions rooted in the subconscious: stratified surfaces in which lived experience and intuition intertwine in a fragile yet resilient fabric. Taking inspiration from ancient mythological creatures and traditional visual traditions, Afsoongar presents glimpses of a femme fatale as an alter-ego, creating a counter-narrative that challenges conventional belief systems and provokes taboo-breaking ideas. Mahboobeh Yazdani – painter, illustrator, and sculptor – explores with her practice territories that intertwine body, symbol, and existential condition, shaping images suspended between intimacy and collective tension. Ehsan Shayegh presents the series *Ceramic Fish*, in which material fixes into solid form a primordial and mobile image, transforming fluidity into permanence. Farnaz Aboutalebi exhibits the photographic collection *The Hands*, a reflection on gesture as a site of memory, labor, and care. Aynaz reinterprets the tradition of Persian miniature, translating it into a contemporary sensibility while preserving its contemplative and narrative dimension.

The project thus brings together two parallel realities: Iranian artists living in isolation within the country and Iranian artists in exile across the diaspora.

The first chapter opens on 20 March, the day of the spring equinox and Nowruz (Nawrūz), the Persian New Year, literally meaning “new day.” Nowruz marks a time of renewal and transition, a symbolic moment celebrating continuity of life despite fractures. The opening will be accompanied by a dinner featuring Iranian dishes and live music, transforming the inauguration into a convivial and ritual gesture in which art, sound, and food create a first threshold of encounter.

The project’s visual identity and exhibition poster are designed by **Babak Safari**, graphic designer and art director with extensive international experience, whose research bridges traditional Iranian art and contemporary design, transforming the graphic device into a space of cultural resonance.

The urgency of this project is social and profoundly political. Opening on 20 March, the exhibition is conceived to run until the end of November, spanning the months during which Venice becomes the center of the international art system for the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia and positioning itself as a space of symbolic and concrete presence — a necessary platform for sustaining attention on Iran and its contemporary artistic and cultural scene.

Nowruz thus becomes not only an inaugural moment but an active device: a point of encounter and reactivation extending over time. In the coming months, the exhibition will expand through musical events, literary encounters, performances, and the progressive invitation of Iranian artists from the diaspora, broadening its scope, complexity, and relational possibilities.

In a city that, during the Biennale, welcomes artists, curators, and visitors from around the world, Bea Vita proposes itself as an informal yet essential space — capable of offering proximity, listening, and continuity. This project does not aim to provide an exhaustive representation or a unified narrative of contemporary Iran, but rather to create the conditions for a presence: fragile, partial, open — and precisely for this reason, necessary.

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