



THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MOCA PRESENTS *TALA MADANI: BISCUITS*

September 10, 2022–February 19, 2023

The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA

ADMISSION IS FREE



LOS ANGELES—The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), is pleased to present *Tala Madani: Biscuits*, the first North American survey of Iranian-born, Los Angeles-based artist Tala Madani's (b. 1981, Tehran, Iran) paintings and animations. This exhibition is organized by MOCA Associate Curator Rebecca Lowery and MOCA Ahmanson Curatorial Fellowship Guest Curator, Ali Subotnick, bringing together nearly twenty years of the artist's incisive work, tracing an arc of iterative series through which Madani has highlighted absurd, and often disturbing, social dynamics and the potent and combustible relationship between art history and contemporary geopolitics. Taken as a whole, Madani's paintings and animations, with their rich narratives and heavy dose of irony, offer a powerful meditation on the potential for art to reflect deeply-seated cultural fears, conflicts, and desires, eliciting curiosity, fantasy, hilarity, and repulsion—often all in one fell swoop.

"Being able to present Tala Madani's first North American survey here in Los Angeles, the artist's adopted hometown, adds so much to the significance of this moment," said Lowery. "Madani's perspective as an artist is cross-cultural, anti-authoritarian, foundationally impertinent, and profoundly empathetic. Her work is a timely emulsion of peaceable but unflinching skepticism about received wisdom, delight in absurdity, and care for our shared and complex humanity."

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“For better or for worse, Tala Madani’s work has become more culturally and politically relevant over the last several years,” said Subotnick. “Her sensibility and disarming provocations make us laugh, grimace, and occasionally want to tear our hair out. She doesn’t shy away from the grotesque and allows us to see a different perspective in the mirror. I couldn’t be more excited to share her distinct voice with L.A.”

Madani’s work is a form of cultural criticism that is intentionally literal, legible, and accessible to multiple audiences. Her paintings and animations include cadres of middle-aged male figures engaging in darkly comic, sometimes violent acts; illustrations of white middle-class children’s exploits punctuated by bodily fluids and miniature men; and literal reflections on motherhood interpreted as a humanoid, brown sludge “Shit Mom” figure, surrounded by cherubic children. The exhibition includes series from 2020-22 that were made during the ongoing pandemic; these recent works include a group of paintings and animations that use the image of a fan to consider the circulation of air and breath, as well as paintings that continue Madani’s ongoing commentary on early childhood education and its relationship to authority.

“Los Angeles was a kind of mythic place for me in my childhood. I experienced it through the music videos of Iranian pop stars that migrated here in the early 80’s,” said Madani. “Living in Los Angeles for the last decade and meeting artists like Paul McCarthy, Simone Forti, Barbara T. Smith, and Raymond Pettibon, entering this creative psychic space has been transformative. I’m thrilled to share the work with the city now.”

Madani is making a new body of work for the show collectively titled “Cloud Mommies.” These paintings are monumental in scale and will be assembled salon-style to form the crescendo of the exhibition. The paintings continue Madani’s exploration of motherhood and all of its facets with an underlying philosophical, even existential tone. They move away from the frustration and humor of the “Shit Mom” series to something wistful, even elegiac or platonically romantic—the sense of mom’s ubiquity, mom always being with you in some way, and mom being a different entity for everyone, the way one might see a dragon in a cloud while another may see the same cloud as a mountain range.

Tala Madani: Biscuits will be accompanied by a substantial full-color exhibition catalogue published by MACK, the most comprehensive publication to date on the artist. Works dating from 2005 to the present day will be featured, along with images of Madani’s heretofore unpublished sketchbook drawings, which offer a rare look at the rich process by which the artist develops her ribald menagerie of characters. Essays in the book by Rebecca Lowery; acclaimed Los Angeles-based writer Maggie Nelson; and Associate Professor at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Evan Calder Williams, cover a range of topics from personal to critical, encompassing contemplations on motherhood and sexual politics, as well as contextualizing Madani’s work in art history. The book will also feature a discussion between the artist and Ali Subotnick.

Tala Madani: Biscuits is organized by Rebecca Lowery, Associate Curator, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Ali Subotnick, Guest Curator through the MOCA Ahmanson Curatorial Fellowship, with Paula Kroll, Curatorial Assistant, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Admission to *Tala Madani: Biscuits* is free courtesy of Carolyn Clark Powers.

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Catalogue support is provided by 303 Gallery, New York; Pilar Corrias; David Kordansky Gallery; The Katherine S. Marmor Award; and The Dorothea and Leo Rabkin Foundation.

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The Cultural Partner for this exhibition is



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Image caption: Tala Madani, *Blackboard (Further Education)*, 2021, Oil on linen, 60 × 120 in. (152.4 × 304.8 cm).
Courtesy YDC.

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About MOCA: Founded in 1979, MOCA is the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short period of time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth; a world-class permanent collection of more than 7,500 objects, international in scope and among the finest in the world; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with modes of new media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

More Information: For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.

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