



Soon, at XVA Gallery – “Paper mythologies in grey gardens” by Sarvenaz Farsian and Alikhaan Abdollahi

Join us from October 18th to November 13th, 2025, as we reunite to observe how in *Paper Mythologies, Grey gardens* meaning can be crafted from absence and disorder.

Curatorial Statement

Paper mythologies in grey gardens

This exhibition takes us into a world that at first appears fragmented and unrelated — a place where myths have turned into fragile paper remnants, and gardens have become grey, silent spaces that archive absence. What may initially seem meaningless is, in fact, a structure where form has replaced meaning.

Here, meaning is neither discovered nor proven; it is constructed through gaps, silences, and absences. Narratives are not created to resolve problems, but to live with them. Each fragment and each pause offers a chance to re-read meaning — a meaning that emerges and evolves throughout the course of the exhibition.

The viewer is not a mere interpreter, but rather caught in the interplay between meaning and meaninglessness. Not understanding becomes the beginning of understanding. This exhibition reveals how meaning takes shape within disorder and dissonance — where the absence of structure becomes the very condition for its creation.

Paper Myths, Grey Gardens suggests that meaning is neither found nor fixed, but made — from the same apparent meaninglessness that, over time, becomes part of reality itself.

Morteza Zahedi

August 29, 2025

About the Artists

Sarvenaz Farsian

Born in 1984 in Tehran, Sarvenaz Farsian is the heir to a precious legacy from a distinguished lineage of Iranian jewelers—an artistic heritage reaching back over three thousand years, flourishing in the Achaemenid and Sasanian eras, revived with new spirit in the Islamic period, and renewed again in the Safavid and Qajar dynasties. This legacy—an interplay of exquisite refinement and creativity—resonates deeply in Sarvenaz’s paintings, where motifs and patterns of jewelry emerge in living lines and colors, telling a silent story of continuity, unity, and beauty.

The decorative motifs of Iranian art embody unmatched precision and elegance, transcending visual beauty to carry profound philosophical meaning—reflecting the Iranian worldview and the seamless dialogue between art and nature. Sarvenaz’s works echo this potent tradition, blending heritage and innovation into a timeless narrative of aesthetic endurance.

A self-taught artist, Sarvenaz regards painting as more than image-making; it is a profound, unconscious act—a meditative ritual that dispels daily cacophony and heals unseen wounds of the psyche. Every stroke is a message from within—a search for self-understanding and a reimagining of continuity upon the receptive canvas. Her work stands between the unconscious and conscious mind, a philosophical journey toward inner freedom and renaissance.

When her brush meets paper, she is submerged in the boundless realm of creation. This process goes beyond producing art—it is liberation from the constraints of time and self. In these moments, her canvas becomes a sacred temple where the subconscious communes with the soul, receiving a peace that transcends ordinary existence.

Her paintings are entirely intuitive and instinctual—she never knows what she will draw or how the work will conclude. For years, she has relied solely on a single pen, drawing continuous lines that pulse like the very heartbeat of thought and feeling.

Like the Zen masters, Sarvenaz views art as meditation rooted in the present moment. Her practice isn’t about perfecting the image, but allowing the mind and spirit to flow unmediated through the brush. Each line resonates with harmony, liberation, and a clarity that emerges only from purity and inner truth.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, her remarkable precision stems from a deep psychological need for control over the creative process—a trait likely originating in childhood through meticulous, time-consuming tasks that offered stability. Though such tendencies may sometimes feel burdensome, here they transform into tools of artistry, engendering psychological equilibrium.

Ultimately, Sarvenaz Farsian’s art transcends mere visual beauty; it narrates a profound inner

journey. Her painting is a meditative act, and the pen—silent yet eloquent—guides her to the depths of being, weaving a seamless bridge between tradition and innovation, sophistication and purity, art and life.

Alikhaan Abdollahi

Originally from Afghanistan, Alikhaan Abdollahi moved to Iran twenty seven years ago and he is now fifty five years old. Alikhaan knows how to read and write on a very basic level – he only started learning both when he was thirty-five. Thirteen years ago, he took the position of caretaker for a ministerial building in Tehran. Alikhaan, his wife and his three children live in this building.

Getting to know the self-taught artist Hasan Hazer Moshaar was an occurrence that sparked a significant change in Alikhaan's life. When Alikhaan would go out to water the trees in front of the building, he would see the eighty year old man set up his painting and sculpting equipment and get busy working. He was drawn to Moshaar and would sometimes pour tea for him, and got to know him little by little. It is Hazer Moshaar who Alikhaan credits with answering his deep-rooted concern for sculpture which he had dreamed about since his childhood, a dream he had not been able to follow because of certain circumstances and difficulties in his life. Finally he felt motivated to start sculpting. After seven years of effort and experimentation with various materials, Alikhaan found the main paste for his sculptures, this was without any consultation or guidance and he was not influenced by anyone in any way, it was only the result of his own creativity. Alikhaan realized that he could use recycled egg boxes and library paste, a natural kind of glue and a better choice than glue made from oil compounds, to make his sculptures. In fact, for Alikhaan, discovering this material was equal to discovering a gold mine.

The powerhouse functions as his workshop during the winter, and the rooftop of the building serves the same purpose during the summer. The heat of the powerhouse during winter and the radiation of the sun during summer help the sculptures dry quicker. Alikhaan makes his sculptures depending on his own imagination, none of the works start or end with a specific design and plan. The frame is made with wood and then the paste is added to it. His works are combinations of legendary, mythical and metaphysical creatures. After thirteen years of continuous work and effort, sculpting does not only serve as a means of expression, but has also become the source of his livelihood.

About XVA Gallery

XVA Gallery is one of the leading galleries in the Middle East that specializes in contemporary art from the Arab world, Iran, and the Subcontinent. Exhibitions focus on works by the region's foremost artists as well as those emerging onto the scene. The gallery's artists express their different cultural identities and perspectives while challenging the viewer to drop prejudices and borders. XVA Gallery and XVA Art Hotel are located in Dubai's heritage district, now called Al Fahidi Historical Neighborhood. XVA founded and organized the Bastakiya Art Fair from 2007–2010 as part of its commitment to raising the profile of contemporary art practice in Dubai. ***

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