

BAZAAR ART BOOK



Exhibition 003

MIAMI

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Floating On Silence

For the last two years, the French-Iranian abstract artist has wrestled with new energy, feverishly painting inside his Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat studio to produce a compelling body of work

words **LAURA CHERRIE BEANE**

In December 2022, Setareh in Berlin unveiled a series of monumental works on canvas by bad-boy turned contemporary master, Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar. The painter's current reality, a peaceful existence on the Côte d'Azur, could not be further from his past marked by intergenerational trauma, imprisonment and torture in one of Iran's most notorious prisons. His bold and densely layered compositions charter these varied experiences; they capture simultaneous sentiments of force and freedom and challenge the audience to consider a surrender to silence. "We typically communicate with words, however there is another, more powerful method, taking place in our deep consciousness. Surrendering to silence occasionally will unearth extraordinary feelings," suggests Sassan.

The artist turned to abstraction to negotiate his inner realm. The works created for *Floating on Silence* embody his perception of the power of silence while pieces such as *Floating on Iran* and *Floating on Freedom* speak of the contemporary Iranian condition. "If one can transform the mind to become like still water, others will gather around it to see their own image, and during that instance, they might exist with clarity. By being in the present we become a reflecting pool for others."

The artist's process is at once painstaking and meditative. "It's work that reminds its audience of the ongoing evolution of the human race; of hope, power, and connection to oneself," observes patron, Ali Jassim. "The

last decade has witnessed the artist raise a collective understanding of human nature and our shared power." Layers of paint, sometimes hundreds or even thousands, are applied, stripped back and manipulated with the sharpness of a metal scraper. Emily Collardi, a collector of his work suggests that his philosophical approach sparks feelings of transcendence within her: "Each time I look at his art, I see something new," notes Emily. "Whether it's certain colours that stand out in the morning sun, or a different mood stimulated by a soft sunset. To me, his pieces are calming, like meditation, where you can rest your eyes and reflect on your innermost thoughts."

Sassan, reflecting upon his relationship with others, implies that silence rather than dialogue forms a uniting force. "Many people use words to fill up a void," he notes. "They are uncomfortable with silence, so they speak more than necessary while hoping to connect to others. Instead, they fail to create any real communication. They sense that they are not experiencing the connection that they have been looking for and increase the frequency of their words, departing upon irrelevant tangents in the hope that more words will somehow convey their feelings. On the other hand, when two minds are in silence, a sublime connection occurs." ■

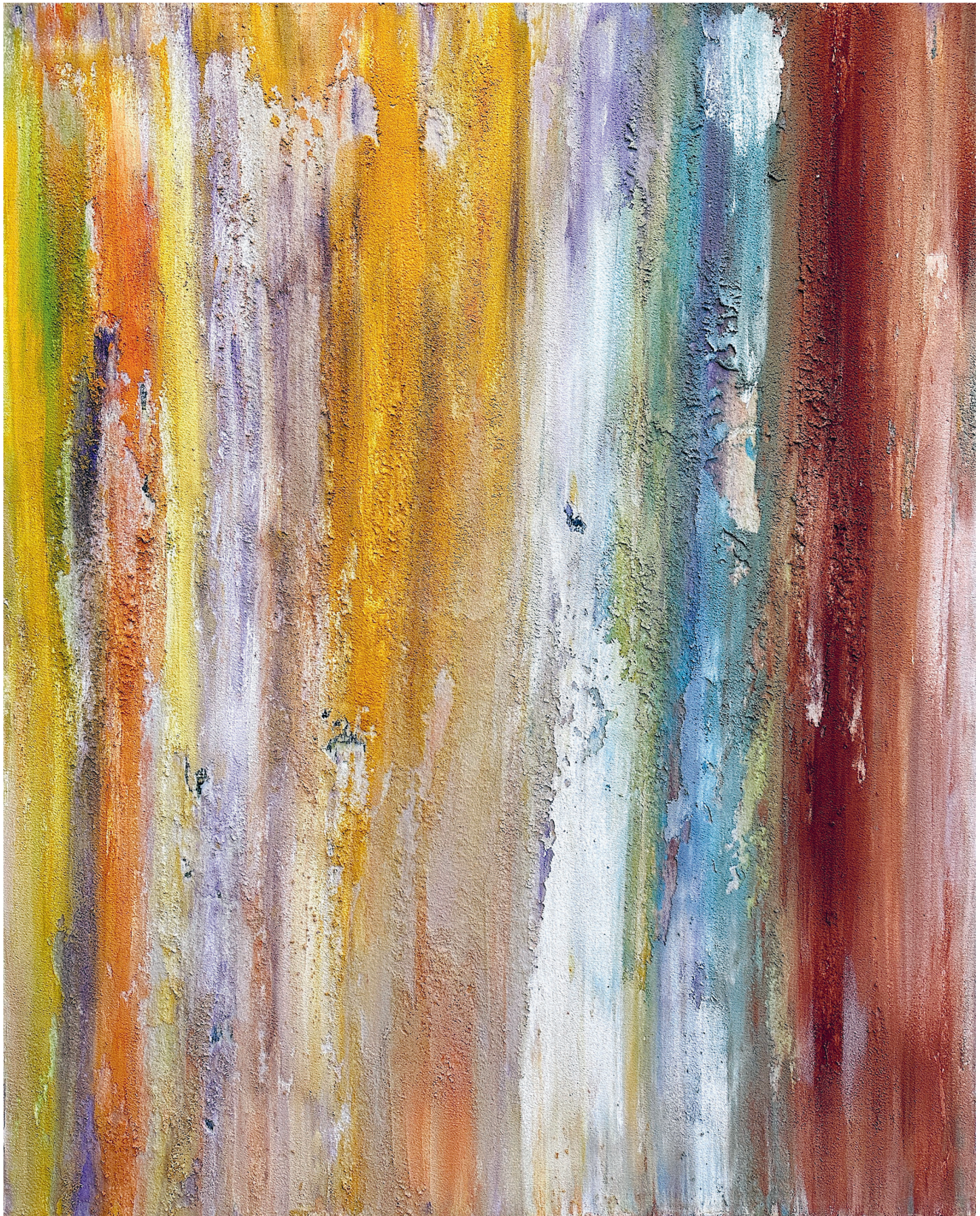
Floating on Silence is on view until 28 January 2023 at Setareh, Berlin followed by a solo exhibition at Phillips, London opening on 16 March 2023







An installation view of *Floating on Silence*, Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar's latest solo exhibition at Setareh, Berlin



SASSAN BEHNAM-BAKHTIAR. *Untitled*. Oil and acrylic on linen. 162x130cm



SASSAN BEHNAM-BAKHTIAR. *Untitled.* 2022. Oil and acrylic on canvas. 130x195cm



SASSAN BEHNAM-BAKHTIAR. *Untitled.* 2022. Oil and acrylic on canvas. 130x195cm