

Your Games and, Your Gains

Pedram Baldari

June 12 - July 11, 2021

Soo Visual Arts Center

Satisfaction Not Guaranteed

Nooshin Hakim Javadi

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Artwork Titles

Equalizer Series

Pedram Baldari

Installation (Series of 44), 2020-2021

Plastic Medicine Bottle, Stickers, Alcohol 4%, Corn Syrup, Food Coloring, Berry Flavoring and Water

The Thermal Body Signature Of A Second Class Citizen, Choking On His Own Saliva

Pedram Baldari

Video-Performance (00:03':11"), 2021

Trader-Foes Series

Pedram Baldari

Installation (Series of 42), 2020-2021

Aluminum Spray Bottle, Decal, Alcohol 80%, Essential Oil

When The War Ended, We All Wondered: What Should We Do Now!

Pedram Baldari

Sculpture, 2021

Wood, Steel, Burlap Military Grade Sand Bags, Sand and Pulley

14'X10'x17'

Artwork Titles

An adventure to uncover freedom from oil

Nooshin Hakim Javadi

Sculpture, 2020-2021

Seesaw, engraved Freedom monument in Tehran, engraved oil barrel

Exporting Liberty

Nooshin Hakim Javadi

Installation, 2020-2021

Map of Iran, Statues of liberty stress balls purchased from Amazon, Game didactic, dart set, dart sharpener , safety goggles

4x4

Satisfaction not guaranteed

Nooshin Hakim Javadi

Sculpture, 2021

Organic shea butter soap, dart, wood

This is the Real Shower

Collaboration between Pedram Baldari and Nooshin Hakim

Installation, 2021

Stainless Mirror Steel, Wood, Shelf, "Mental Essences" (Shampoo and Conditioner bottles), Iranian Flag Towel, American Flag Towel, Towel Rack, Shower Head, Shower Faucet, Shower Drain, Fishing Lines (Black), .50 Caliber BMG Bullets, .38 Caliber Automatic Bullets, Pipes

4'x8'x8'

Games Without Frontiers

by Christina Schmid

The white slanted surface dwarves our bodies. It dominates the space in a vaguely ominous way, an impression heightened by the circular glare of bright light emanating from below, projecting crosshairs on the ceiling. Sandbags are piled around the lower end of what resembles a giant cornhole board. The room-filling installation titled *When the War Ended, We All Wondered What We Should Do Now!* (2021) combines wood, steel, and burlap military grade sandbags, and effectively collides cultural reference points and sensibilities.

Cornhole, for those not blessed with midwestern childhoods, is a popular backyard game that involves setting up low, slanted boards and tossing small bags into a hole on the raised side of the board. Opposing teams take turns, and whoever tosses with the best aim and sinks the most bags, wins.

Pedram Baldari, a Kurdish Iranian immigrant to the United States, remembers when he first encountered the game. His associations with the materials were far less pastoral:

“We were in a room, maybe this big” —his gestures circumscribe the small gallery floor in front of the looming sculpture— “sixty kids and a teacher.

No windows, just bodies crammed into the space. The walls were lined, the windows covered, with sandbags. That was my school room until fourth grade. Then the war ended.

And all the teachers were saying, we need to get light in here! We need windows! We need air! All these kids are all eating hardboiled eggs... and you can imagine the smell.”

He laughs. Life under fire: a different childhood normal.

The sculpture not only shifts the scale of the traditional game. The gestures involved in playing cornhole share an uncanny resemblance with how Baldari’s childhood teachers transformed the schoolhouse after the war ended: they invented a game to make the dismantling of the protective sandbag barriers fun. First, they instructed the students to dig a big hole in the schoolyard. Then, in the spirit of friendly contest, the kids threw as many sandbags as they could into the hole. The prize: a juice.

The sculpture does not delve into the autobiographical but quietly lends an air of menace to the game: instead of colorful hand-sized sandbags, a stack of military grade burlap bags. The stark material choices distill into a discomfiting question:

How far apart, how separate, is a wholesome game of cornhole from a sandbag-lined schoolhouse?

How does a global regime of colonial capitalism, an economic system built on at times violent resource extraction far from home, enable one while necessitating the other?

What happens to the ever-complicated notions of innocence, ignorance, and complicity here?

The smooth white slanted surface does not reveal anything, but its massive presence, suspended, looms large, both precarious and intractable.

When The War Ended, We All Wondered: What Should We Do Now!
Sculpture, 2021
Wood, Steel, Burlap Military Grade Sand Bags, Sand and Pulley
14’X10’x17’









Memories of growing up in a warzone come up again when Baldari reflects on the collaboration with Nooshin Hakim Javadi, titled *This is the Real Shower* (2021). A spray of bullets descends from a stainless steel showerhead.

“You have to understand that there was no childcare.
Kids were home alone.

They told us to listen to the radio and when the alarms went off that another air raid was under way, you were supposed to go stand under the shower.”

He pauses, then explains:

“The gas Saddam Hussein used in the chemical attacks was heavier than air, and so it gathered low to the ground.
It also burned the skin—so standing under the shower was supposed to help keep it off.”

The mirrored surface puts our reflections behind the bullets. We are in this mess, part of its symbolic reconfiguration into art.

Next to the shower, towels printed with the US and Iranian flag hang neatly folded, as if to suggest that, after you survived the rain of bullets, you ought to wrap yourself in the soft terrycloth of patriotic colors, and surely, everything will be alright. And if not alright, then at least justifiable in the grand scheme of things, a scheme which requires a constant effort to keep cognitive dissonance at bay. To do that effectively, two shampoo and conditioner bottles, part of Baldari’s Mental Essences series, advertise “ANTIRACISTDANT” which

“helps to be a woke consumer and... masks dissonance allowing you to enjoy colonial capitalism.”

Wash your scalp, clean your brain and the world can look shiny and new, along with you.

The tone and sensibility of the work goes far beyond political satire. Baldari appropriates the language of wellness culture to indict marketing meant to alleviate any feelings of guilt and complicity with promises of social justice, equality, and antiracist advocacy. Allyship and solidarity become performative, expensive tokens of a woke lifestyle available for politically

conscious consumers with means who abide by capitalism’s prime directive: to shop.

Is this what compromise looks like in the era when colonial capitalism has gone global?

Is this selling out?

Complicity?

This is the Real Shower

Collaboration between Pedram Baldari and Nooshin Hakim

Installation, 2021

Stainless Mirror Steel, Wood, Shelf, “Mental Essences” (Shampoo and Conditioner bottles), Iranian Flag Towel, American Flag Towel, Towel Rack, Shower Head, Shower Faucet, Shower Drain, Fishing Lines (Black), .50 Caliber BMG Bullets, .38 Caliber Automatic Bullets, Pipes
4’x8’x8’







The biting critique of consumer culture continues in the *Trader Foes Series* (2020-2021) and *Equalizer Series* (2020-2021). Prominent pandemic products emphasize the unequal access to the products that were in high demand to keep Covid-19 at bay:

hand sanitizer bottles promise “nationalism, fascism, & war virus removal,”
and

“to wash your hands off hundreds of thousands Syrian & Kurdish deaths & millions displaced since 2011,” while the labels of cough syrup offer “fear and bias relief.”

Meanwhile, on a screen mounted between the shelves of colorful bottles, the video performance *The Thermal Body Signature of a Second-Class Citizen Choking On His Own Saliva* (2021) loops:

accompanied by a funereal sounding, slowed down auditory overlay of the US and Iranian national anthems, Baldari’s torso convulses in self-induced coughing fits.



Equalizer Series

Installation (Series of 44), 2020-2021

Plastic Medicine Bottle, Stickers, Alcohol 4%, Corn Syrup, Food Coloring, Berry Flavoring and Water

The Thermal Body Signature Of A Second Class Citizen, Choking On His Own Saliva

Video-Performance (00:03:11"), 2021

Trader-Foes Series

Installation (Series of 42), 2020-2021

Aluminum Spray Bottle, Decal, Alcohol 80%, Essential Oil



Reduced to its heat signature, the body acts as a potent metaphor for what remains when identities, nationalities and ethnicities are stripped away. Nothing but a human form remains: a body in distress, in need of care. And still, as the video's title points out, not all bodies in sickness or health have access to care or are tended to with the same dedication and diligence.

Trader-Foes Series

Installation (Series of 42), 2020-2021

Aluminum Spray Bottle, Decal, Alcohol 80%, Essential Oil



Equalizer Series

Installation (Series of 44), 2020-2021

Plastic Medicine Bottle, Stickers, Alcohol 4%, Corn Syrup, Food Coloring, Berry Flavoring and Water



Baldari's interest in systemic structures of colonial dispossession, inequality, and consumerist complicity, embodied in seemingly playful objects and performances, carries over to Nooshin Hakim Javadi's exhibition, *Satisfaction Not Guaranteed*. Like Baldari, she turns to a game, throwing darts, to broach deeply political questions of international scope:

what if the popular rhetoric of spreading freedom and democracy around the world ultimately serves profit-driven ends?

Satisfaction not guaranteed

Nooshin Hakim Javadi

Sculpture, 2021

Organic shea butter soap, dart, wood

In *Exporting Liberty* (2020-2021), she invites spectators to play with stress balls in the shape of the statue of liberty that have been transformed into darts. A cork map of Iran serves as the dartboard, complete with icons that represent natural resources and nuclear power plants. The invitation to interact holds the potential to transform spectators into participants, bystanders into symbolic accomplices, in this game without frontiers.

The eponymous set of four wall-mounted displays with white shea-butter casts of the statue of liberty turned dart taps into a different material history. Victorian soap ads by Pears invoked

the “white man’s burden” to spread civilization
and what Anne McClintock calls
“imperial domesticity” around the globe in a self-imposed mission to rinse and lather color/culture from indigenous populations
in a symbolic whitening rife with colonial and Orientalist connotations.

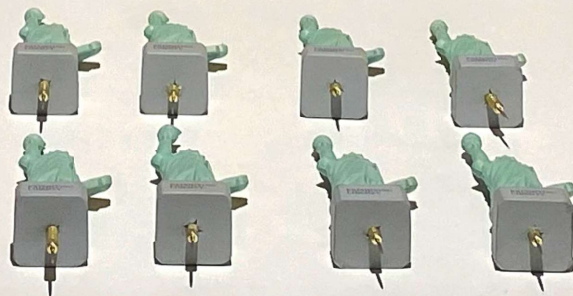
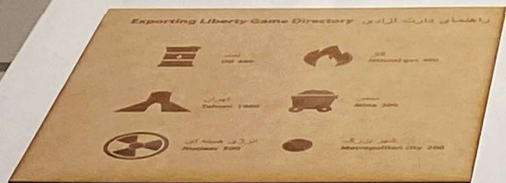
Hakim Javadi’s white soap darts do not “guarantee satisfaction” but racialize the project of exporting liberty.

Exporting Liberty

Installation, 2020-2021

Map of Iran, Statues of liberty stress balls purchased from Amazon, Game didactic, dart set, dart sharpener, safety goggles

4x4





DOWN

GOES

OTHER

THE

UP

GOES

AS ONE

In *An Adventure to Uncover Freedom from Oil* (2020-2021) Hakim Javadi re-purposes another structure designed for play. On a yellow teeter-totter, black letters spell out the phrase

“as one goes up, the other goes down.”

Bodies activating the work either sit on an icon of a barrel of oil or, on the opposing side, the striking architectural lines of Tehran’s Freedom Monument. Freedom and oil, caught in a competitive back-and-forth, act as placeholders for political and economic forces whose entanglement seems as inevitable as the seesaw’s up and down. The structure’s inherent playfulness invites participation which quickly turns to implication:

how is the West’s demand for fossil fuel related to the relative freedom, peace, and prosperity in other parts of the world?

Is it even possible to live in the United States and not already sit on some version of the teeter-totter?

An adventure to uncover freedom from oil

Nooshin Hakim Javadi

Sculpture, 2020-2021

Seesaw, engraved Freedom monument in Tehran, engraved oil barrel

Both exhibitions take on the politics of colonial capitalism and power. Baldari and Hakim Javadi negotiate the limitations of individual choice, which is always already embedded in economic systems that engulf entire nations. Their works entwine the proverbial innocence of childhood, suggested by backyard games and teeter-totters, with trauma, violence—and very dark humor. The turn to satire and the gamification of trauma reveal the shortfalls of even the best intentions of conscious consumers and well-meaning wannabe allies. The resulting sensibility is unapologetically political but not preachy, too layered to risk veering into the propagandist. Clashing cultural signifiers do not produce neatly packaged solutions and standpoints but produce a lingering affect of unease, reminiscent of Wafaa Bilal's *Domestic Tension* (2007) or David Bradley's *Museum Currency* (2006):

artists, audiences and what passes as “the artworld” all participate in the pervasive structures the exhibitions seek to make visible.

There are no bystanders here. Indeed, there may well be no outside to these games without frontiers. But how we choose to inhabit the belly of this proverbial beast, to which degrees we buy in, opt out, and strive to imagine otherwise—that is still a question worth pondering even if viable answers remain elusive.

Satisfaction not guaranteed
Nooshin Hakim Javadi
Sculpture, 2021
Organic shea butter soap, dart, wood



EXPORTING
LIBERTY



Formerly Known as Eisenhower Avenue

by Andy Sturdevant

Humor, for something that's so light and immaterial, has a surprisingly visceral vocabulary in English: jokes kill or slay, sides are split, knees are weakened, bones are tickled, audiences are in stitches. This is true in Persian, as well: a comedian having a good night can roodeh bor an audience, which literally means *cuts their intestines*. *Az khandeh roodeh bor shodeem*: their intestines are cut from laughter. *Shookhee kharakee* refers to a type of gag or practical joke where one is said to be acting like a donkey:

the donkey kicks for fun, but it hurts.

Humor *can* hurt.

Nooshin Hakim Javadi and Pedram Baldari are not comedians, but they do appreciate a well-timed joke, and especially one that does slay or split, or at least stings a little. Humor can make a heavy topic more accessible and easily digestible, sure, but that's not really what they're up to. Humor can also twist the knife with a little more vigor, make something painful seem a little more so -- or, even better, double down on something that's already absurd. The 11th Century Iranian philosopher and mystic Imam Muhammad-i Ghazali, known in the West as Al Ghazali, relates a humorous parable in one of his 70 books. In the story, he is robbed by bandits while transporting his notes and books on the back of his donkey, and ends with a twist that's humorous on its face, but has a barb embedded in it.

“All of your knowledge fits on the back of a donkey?”

sneered the leader of the bandits, disgusted by the fact that this robbery won't net him jewels or gold or anything of value in the marketplace.

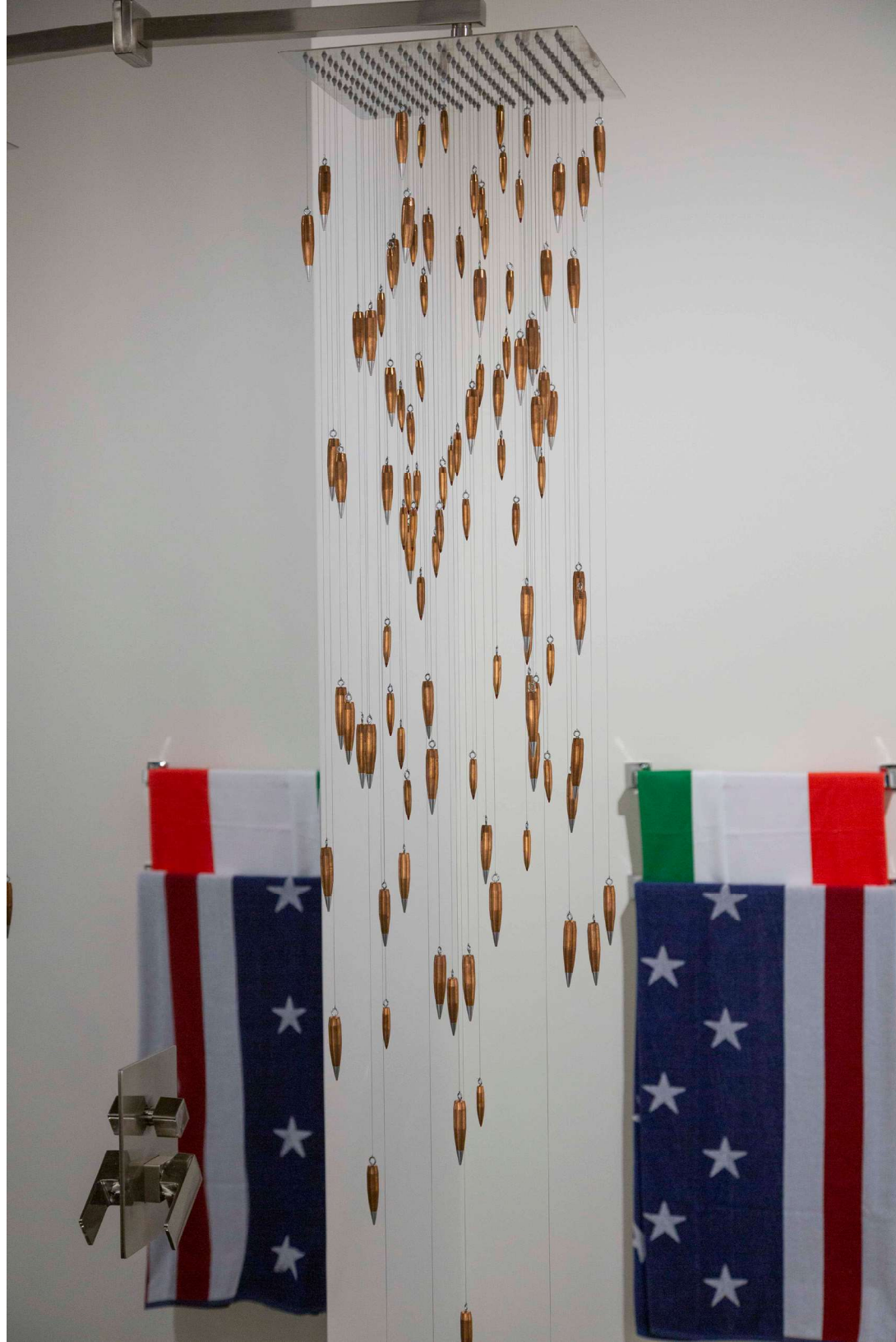
“What's the difference between you and the donkey, then?

You're just carrying this stuff around with nothing in your head.

Maybe you should consider pursuing a different kind of knowledge.”

The nine works in this show -- three by Nooshin, four by Pedram, and a collaboration between them -- each suggest the broad outline joke without hammering home a punchline. They're funny, some of them, but like any humorous story, reframes the world and the terms with which you engage it in a way that bends reality a little bit. They can be like seeing an optical illusion, like the famous one of the animal head with what seems to be a duck's bill, then resembles a rabbit's ears, and having that flash when you see both the duck and the rabbit. Some of the pieces are confrontational, some are collaborative, and some manage to be both.





The centerpiece of the exhibition is the collaboration, *This is the Real Shower*. Like many of these pieces, it references the body in space, and how the body can be physically and psychologically displaced between two realities. In this case, it comes from a body memory of Pedram's from childhood, growing up on the border of Iraq and Iran during the protracted war and the genocidal campaign waged on the Kurdish people by the Iraqi Baath Party, and the military conflicts between exiled Kurds in Iraq and the Iranian government that bookended the Iran-Iraq 8 years of War. During intense periods of the conflict, when chemical attacks on civilians were common, an alarm would come over the radio, and people were instructed to duck into showers, crouch down and turn on the water. The water would repel the gas, or at least dampen it.

It was a little protective bubble, a domestic place of safety and relaxation marshalled into service as a hallucinatory chamber of potential horrors.

That shower is recreated, with a stream of .50 and .338 caliber bullets raining down from the showerhead, suspended by fishing wire into an endless hall of mirrors below you. The mirror work itself references an ancient Iranian mosaic technique using cut glass to create complex, refractive surfaces. It's from that perspective that the wire disappears and you're thrown into a bottomless abyss, the bullets rushing toward you, and the strings that tether those bullets -- literally tethers them! -- to a sense of artifice vanishes from below, subsumed into an image from a dream. It is a dreamlike environment, or a nightmare, one which emphasizes the subliminal effects of violence, which can creep through a society like a colorless, odorless gas. You can only find so many ways to shield yourself, and many of those recommended methods have a whiff of the absurd to them. The name of the piece itself, offered either as a statement of fact or a sort of gaslighting, suggests a difficulty separating fact and fiction.

There is a little bit of a meta-joke here, as well, imagining the Twin Cities sporting goods superstore where Pedram and a colleague purchased all these rounds of automatic weapon ammunition

-- a man of Middle Eastern origin in the white, suburban citadel of heartland Second Amendment good-time arms dealing,
buying a bunch of bullets for unclear reasons, and on a St. Olaf purchasing card, to boot.

This is the Real Shower

Collaboration between Pedram Baldari and Nooshin Hakim

Installation, 2021

Stainless Mirror Steel, Wood, Shelf, "Mental Essences" (Shampoo and Conditioner bottles), Iranian Flag Towel, American Flag

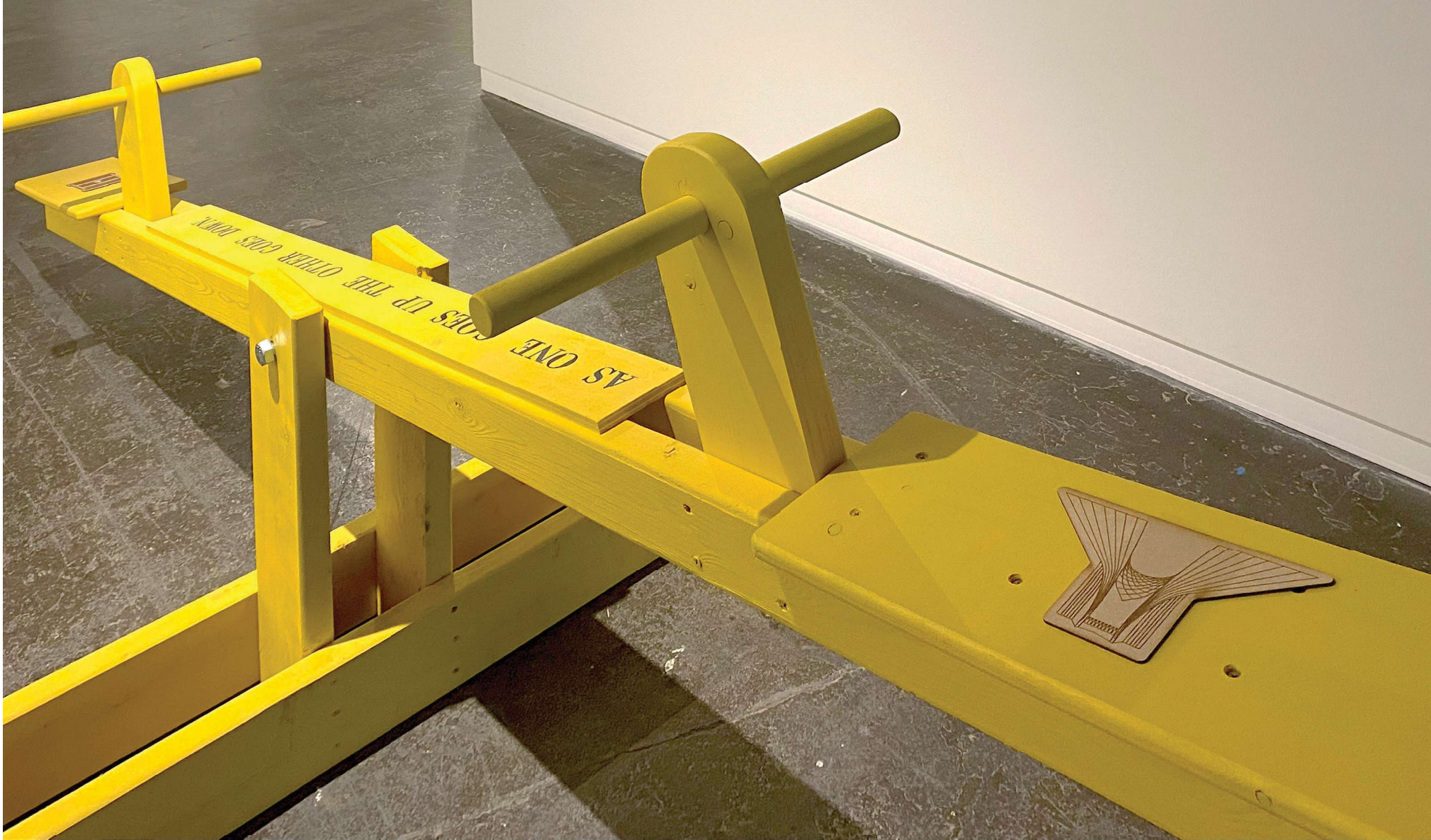
Towel, Towel Rack, Shower Head, Shower Faucet,

Shower Drain, Fishing Lines (Black), .50 Caliber BMG Bullets, .38 Caliber Automatic Bullets, Pipes

4'x8'x8'

“Freedom” is a word in English that, depending on who’s using it, can mean any number of things, and the same is true of azadi, the Persian word for the same. *Azadi* can carry a number of connotations for types of freedom, from the personal to the political. Here, it refers to the Freedom Tower, the gateway to Tehran commissioned by the Shah of Iran on the occasion of 2,500th anniversary of the foundation of the Iranian state, and subsidized by five-hundred tycoons, oil men and captains of industry, all of whom had been made fabulously wealthy under the Shah’s regime. That’s an icon of it on the end of the seesaw that makes up Nooshin’s *An Adventure to Uncover Freedom from Oil*.

An adventure to uncover freedom from oil
Sculpture, 2020-2021
Seesaw, engraved Freedom monument in Tehran , engraved oil barrel





Of course, the Freed Tower was first referred to as the Shah's Memorial, a name change taking place only after the 1979 revolution that deposed him. Indeed the tower is connected to Revolution Square by Azadi Avenue, *Freedom Avenue*, symbolically linking the Islamic Revolution to the abstract concept of freedom represented by the renamed landmark. Azadi Avenue itself, incredibly, had previously been known as Eisenhower Avenue, the U.S. president whose CIA operatives put the Shah in power.

So nomenclaturally, there's been a serious game of seesaw in the heart of Tehran with these meanings of freedom that Nooshin's piece reflects. Here, the Freedom Tower connects to a barrel of oil, which the Shah and then Ayatollah Khomeini after him linked to economic freedom for the Iranian people. Iranian oil would support and subsidize that freedom, flowing from a state-controlled spigot that would keep the West reliant on them for generations. Here, you and a partner sit on opposite sides of that promise, up and down, up and down, like an oil rig -- the fortunes of oil and its whiplash effects on the politics and statecraft of the region, locked into an eternal struggle to keep one side up and the other down. Between the two of you, a road once named for a general known as the Liberator, seems to be promising a type of freedom that looks queasily like codependence when you lock eyes with your opposite number on the other side.

An adventure to uncover freedom from oil
Sculpture, 2020-2021

Seesaw, engraved Freedom monument in Tehran , engraved oil barrel



Nooshin's excursions take the concept of games into similar geopolitical directions with *Exporting Liberty*. Statue of Liberty foam stress toys, the type of thing you might find in a New York City tourist trap, here are repurposed as darts. A cork silhouette of Iran acts as the target, with Tehran at the center of its bull's eye. You put on some safety goggles, the kind that look suspiciously like what you'd seen on a nuclear or oil technician, and toss away.

Maybe you'll land a bullseye on Tehran, or one of the targets that stand in for the country's energy economy: oil, natural gas, mining, and nuclear reactors. Lady Liberty doesn't fly a straight and true course, though. She's oddly weighted, unbalanced, and no matter your skill -- or, more on the nose, your intentions, however noble, confident and well-researched they may be -- you'll make a mess of things. "Stuff happens," as Secretary Rumsfeld once quipped about another attempt to export liberty in the region.

An adventure to uncover freedom from oil

Sculpture, 2020-2021

Seesaw, engraved Freedom monument in Tehran , engraved oil barrel

Lady Liberty turns up again in *Satisfaction Not Guaranteed*, placed again on the head of a dart, and this time cast in soap. Making a big mess is one of the imperatives of what our old friend President Eisenhower, who we last encountered in central Tehran, famously termed the *military-industrial complex*. That's why Stanley Kubrick's original ending to his 1963 nuclear apocalypse farce *Dr. Strangelove* was an epic pie fight in the war room, all of the generals and politicians tossing pies at one another until they were all covered in banana cream. Nooshin suggests a similar wobbly trajectory here, an implement for making messes that can then be pressed into service cleaning itself up, a neat justification for solving the problems it created. Particularly when you are living between nations and cultural spheres, and comparing your experience in once place to another, there can be something truly random-seeming in how violence circles the globe, and touches down in particular places with little warning, whether that's in the form of military conflict, civil unrest or massacres carried out by lone individuals.

Satisfaction not guaranteed
Sculpture, 2021
Organic shea butter soap, dart, wood





There is an ambient stress is not knowing where that dart is going to come down, and if you're the one this time who'll be caught in its flight path this time. It can keep a person in a state of tension, and unlike Kubrick's banana cream pies,, a dart can draw blood. Nooshin cuts this bitter reality with another little joke here: at least when the dart breaks skin and punctures a vein, you'll have the soap right on hand to begin the slow process of disinfecting the wound. Seeing the piece onsite at SooVAC, reflected in the mirrors of the shower in front of it as you walk between the two otherwise unrelated works, emphasizes the overlapping nature of these crises, how one bleeds into another, just outside your field of vision.

Satisfaction not guaranteed

Sculpture, 2021

Organic shea butter soap, dart, wood

Pedram's *When the War Ended, We All Wondered, What Should We Do Now?* draws on another childhood memory of the war of the 1980s, and this time connects it to another icon of Midwestern leisure, the cornhole board. In the militarized atmosphere of Kurdish schools at the time, the structures were lined with sandbags against the walls and even up in the rafters. When the war of the title of the piece had indeed ended, the children were gathered for a type of celebration -- though the type of celebration endemic to childhood where you're halfway through it before you realized it was just an excuse to have adults make you do stuff. In this case, the teachers made a game of taking down the sandbags and tossing them into a pile. The kid that tossed those most would receive juice and cucumbers. When Pedram arrived in the Midwest, he was at one of those backyard parties that go on late into the summer. When he encountered cornhole, a common feature of these parties, he flashed back to tossing those sandbags. Cornhole is a fairly recent innovation, having been created at some point in the '70s or '80s and spreading out through the country from the middle. Despite the vaguely risqué name, it's a generally wholesome diversion, marked by an innocent, childlike joy in aiming and throwing. Like the shower, though, objects of diversion and innocence can take on a darker hue when viewed through the lens of violence and conflict. That doesn't negate the innocence, but it does reframe it. Mandatory though it may have been, there likely was a joy in tossing out the trappings of war as part of a game back in Iran in 1988.

Joy and horror can exist simultaneously.

When The War Ended, We All Wondered: What Should We Do Now!
Sculpture, 2021
Wood, Steel, Burlap Military Grade Sand Bags, Sand and Pulley
14'X10'x17'



In *The Thermal Body Signature of a Second Class Citizen, Choking on His Own Saliva*, Pedram does just that. Pedram is able to force his saliva down his windpipe in a way that's terrifyingly unfaked, and here he attempts to cough it back up, globule by globule, under the watchful eye of an infrared camera. You can see his body heating up, stress radiating off of him as he convulses. So much of the work here is about how the body can be suspended in physical space, between two places, not at home in either.

This is the second class citizenship Pedram alludes to in the title -- not quite Iranian, not quite American. As he hacks away, the National Anthem of the Islamic Republic of Iran plays, Pedram's physiological unease making a mockery of the lyrics' promise:

Your message, O Imam, of independence, freedom, is imprinted on our souls.

He sounds instead like his soul is trying to leave his body. The anthem cross-fades into a bad-trip version of the Star Spangled-Banner, playing more and more slowly. Pedram tries to drink a glass of water, but it offers no relief. His convulsions mock those lyrics, too, the anthem's noble-minded paeans to gallantry and gleaming -- there's nothing gallant or gleaming here. He's watched, studied and under surveillance by at least two states, choking on his own essence. The anthems are different, but his choked, anxious response is the same.

The Thermal Body Signature Of A Second Class Citizen, Choking On His Own Saliva
Video-Performance (00:03:11"), 2021





“This is not a commodity,”

warns one of the labels that make up the bogus consumer products of the *Trader Foe*, *Mental Essences* and *Equalizer* series.

“Keep in an art-friendly environment.”

Trader-Foes Series

Installation (Series of 42), 2020-2021

Aluminum Spray Bottle, Decal, Alcohol 80%, Essential Oil



Pedram's sense for the bullshit language of earnest, optimistic salesmanship that covers nearly every printable surface in the United States is in full bloom here, each label of these manufactured products an exercise in corporate *horror vacui*. The language is itself sometimes earnest, sometimes lacerating, The body is the battleground, as in many of these pieces, and it's played out in three products that facilitate some kind of intimacy: hand sanitizer, cold and flu medicine, shampoo and conditioner.

The Equalizers, which mimic the conventions of daytime and nighttime medication, are particularly intimate in the way these medications actually are -- engaging orange for the workday, when you go out and try to get through it, and drowsy blue for the privacy of your bedroom, where you hope you just sleep through. In the streets or in the sheets, in other words, you're covered.

I know, *streets and sheets, come on, gross.*

But there is a bogus intimacy that products use to talk to us, the consumers, which Pedram echoes here. The active ingredient in the nighttime formulation, which Pedram dubs Foxylamine succinate, inhibits the binding of cable news absorbed through the eyes and ears to certain receptors -- your parents, perhaps. This calls to mind the blue glow of a television set in a suburban home, cloistered away from the world, the most private of settings, transmitting fear and paranoia. The small text asks you to draw closer and examine.

Equalizer Series

Installation (Series of 44), 2020-2021

Plastic Medicine Bottle, Stickers, Alcohol 4%, Corn Syrup, Food Coloring, Berry Flavoring and Water

In *Trader/Foes* -- please note the slash in the title that makes the trader and the foe the same person! -- the ubiquitous pandemic accessory, made up in Trader Joe's Helvetica dead-pan style, embodies the "one hand washes the other" mentality that drives militarized consumer exchange.

"Spreads like a virus," he notes on the U.S.-Saudi scent.

Equalizer Series

Installation (Series of 44), 2020-2021

Plastic Medicine Bottle, Stickers, Alcohol 4%, Corn Syrup, Food Coloring, Berry Flavoring and Water

compare to
Unequalize
active ingredients*

EQUALIZE®

daytime fear & bias relief

antiracismophen
(pigment fear reliever/normalizes behavior)
d xenophobiaphan for inside the U.S only
(helps with fear of others)
islamophobiaphrine HCl
(brain decongestant, removes bias)

powerful non-discriminatory relief

multi-symptom
relieves:

- racism, baseless fear, & bias
- brainwash
- self soffocation due to suppressing the others

SEE NEW WARNINGS

original flavor
INSTITUTIONAL B.S FREE 12 FL OZ(355ml)
ANTISEMITIC FREE

Drug Facts (continued)

- brain congestion continues or becomes severe
- bias increases and you feel racism fever has reached 102 f
- you are no longer in control of your thoughts but your fears are

■ if pregnant think about a better world for your child, think about clear air, equality and solidarity, think about what should you do to make future better

Directions

- take as much as you need, no one is judging you
- use it by cup or spoon or drink from the bottle or by drops or smell it

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Adults and Children 12yrs and over | minimum 1 table spoon every 8 hrs |
| Children 6 - under 12yrs | minimum 1/2 table spoon every 8 hrs |
| Children 4-6 yrs | parents should take a deep look at their parenting |
| Children under 4 yrs | This is not meant for them |

Other information

- This is not a commodity, keep in art friendly environment.
- For real, keep out of reach of children, this is mainly sugar

inactive ingredients love for humanity, compassion for others, sugar, water, hope, wishful thinking, justice for BIPOC, Anti Police brutality, Anti Brutal Capitalism, equality

Questions or Comments: pedram.baldari@gmail.com


Distributed by "using art as a platform and not a goal in times of crisis or anytime"
Gluten Free lhahaha! Your satisfaction is not this artwork's concern nor its purpose

This is not a product and it is not produced by Equaline nor by Procter & Gamble Co. owner of the registered trademarks Vicks and DayQuil This Drug can kill fascists, keep away if you are one!

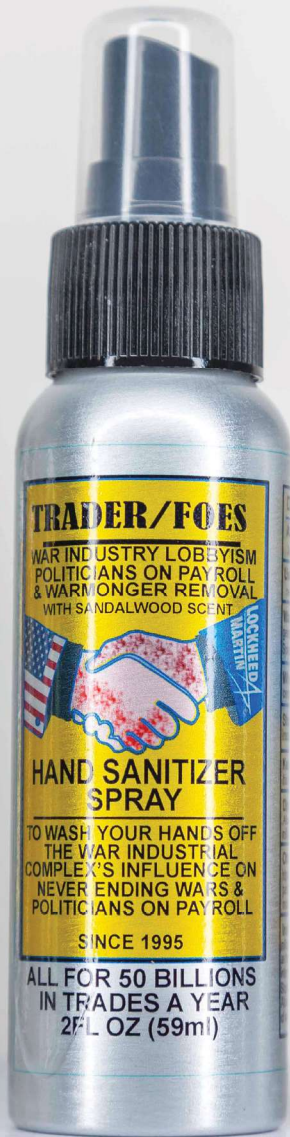
This artwork is a free take of the visual elements of Equaline product and is not a critique of that company. This object only has artistic means

PARENTS:

Learn about teen medicine abuse
www.StopMedicineAbuse.org



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DRUG FACTS

Active ingredient Anti-politicians on war industry's payroll.

Uses .For washing hands off the decades of combat never ending wars as a result of war industry's power.

Warnings: Flammable, brutal capitalism has been a generational trauma globally and domestically violence spreads like a virus. It comes back to you directly or indirectly.

When using this product Avoid thinking you are the center of the universe for a second.

Stop use and contact a doctor if You are in a troubled cause you may suffer from severe lack of empathy.

Keep out of reach of Children They should not see this highly immoral U.S conduct as the norm.

Directions .Wet hands thoroughly with this product. Allow yourself to see the world through the eyes of millions of victims of U.S domestic and global conduct.

Other information read about Lockheed Martin at <https://www.opensecrets.org>. 5 millions contributions to political parties, 16 millions in lobbying. The list of politicians who have received money from these companies is too long and shocking.

Inactive ingredient Stopping the business of war, military expansionism, portraying those who oppose the war as traitors and discredit them by questioning their patriotism. Stopping the complicity of those who have never been in uniform. Allowing conversation nationally to address declassification of wrongdoings, malpractice and destruction around the world.

Mental Essences, which augments the shower collaboration, goes a step further. It coopts the language of self-care and the body in a way that feels familiar to anyone who's watched a product try to glom onto a social justice movement through a 30-second ad on YouTube or Hulu.

"Sea crap," antiracist training, GMO plants, pretty lies, body image -- it all gets churned into the nice-smelling concoction you're being peddled.

Trader-Foes Series

Installation (Series of 42), 2020-2021

Aluminum Spray Bottle, Decal, Alcohol 80%, Essential Oil

There is always a risk in coopting corporate imagery for satirical ends.

Can you design it to have the right look, and even if you can, to what end?

You may know the Audre Lord quote about the inadequacy of dismantling the master's house with the master's tools. However, there is also a type of joyful glee in it that a good joke can also get to. There's a reason why generations of American (and beyond) kids spent so time with *MAD* magazine in the past fifty years. It taught a type of consumer critique that heightened one's awareness of the absurdities of the systems that surround us, and often bind us. Pedram and Nooshin's work point those absurdities and incongruities to us. A laugh is the right response, but when you're done laughing, you're left with a great deal more to consider. *After laughter comes tears*, goes the old R&B song. Tears are one reaction, but ultimately, whatever we feel will have to be reflected in how we engage the world. You can't make a foam Statue of Liberty dart fly straight, but you can begin to ask why you're throwing it in the first place.

An adventure to uncover freedom from oil
Sculpture, 2020-2021
Seesaw, engraved Freedom monument in Tehran , engraved oil barrel



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We also want to thank all the friends and fellow artists who have assisted us during the installation process of our solo shows at the Soovac.

Exhibition on view June 12 - July 11, 2021

Photography by Christopher Selleck
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