

Azadeh Elmizadeh/Hiram Latorre

*How to Cut a Pomegranate*

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In *How to Cut a Pomegranate*, Hiram Latorre and Azadeh Elmizadeh present nuanced reflections on the intersection of materiality, myth, and the relationship between personal memory and collective history. Drawing from their distinct cultural backgrounds, both artists navigate temporal and geographic shifts, favoring discovery and innovation over fixed narratives. Yet, elements of specific geographic and political contexts shape their choice of subject matter and approach to image-making. The perfume of ripe fruit and flashes of symbolic creatures permeate their work, capturing layered worlds within worlds.

Latorre, originally from Israel and now based in São Paulo, is a graduate of the Escola da Cidade, where he studied Architecture and Urbanism. His paintings reflect an acute awareness of the intersection between social issues and affective imagery—an aspect deeply rooted in Brazilian modernism, particularly in São Paulo, where political activism played a central role in shaping the movement. Latorre suggests the presence of the human figure through still life and domestic interiors. Within these flattened yet dynamic spaces, bananas and pomegranates serve as both subject and decorative motif. The banana, in particular, has been a recurring symbol in Brazilian painting and Latin American art more broadly. One of its earliest significant representations appears in *Bananal* (1927) by Lasar Segall, which depicts a worker peering through the dense foliage of a banana plantation. During the Tropicalismo movement of the 1960s, the banana reemerged as a political symbol amid political upheaval and oppression, as seen in the works of Antônio Henrique Amaral. In Latorre's paintings, ripening, speckled banana skins—splayed out in his compositions—capture both the fruit's physicality and its symbolic weight, nodding to its enduring metaphorical connection to the human form.

The thick, sensual application of paint in Latorre's works renders his subjects almost pungent, heightening their material presence. Beyond their symbolic weight, the domesticated tropical environments in his flattened compositions evoke the decorative sensibilities of Matisse and Les Nabis. Matisse's engagement with Iranian miniature painting led him toward a more contemplative approach, prioritizing sensation as much as formal representation. Similarly, Elmizadeh draws from the tradition of miniature painting but with a different aim: to explore its mythological components while embracing the mutable nature of storytelling traditions. While Latorre's world is inundated with pulpy pigment, Elmizadeh's paintings, by contrast, cling tentatively to the canvas, as if a whisper could blow them away.

Azadeh Elmizadeh has long been drawn to Persian miniature painting, a genre that gained prominence in the 13th century and is distinguished by its multiple viewpoints or “windows” into the picture plane, as well as recurring symbols such as candles and fire—

both signifiers of illumination. While European artists at the turn of the 20th century often appropriated African and Middle Eastern influences in ways that can be read as exoticizing and orientalist, Elmizadeh reclaims these traditions to create something deeply personal. *Wingplay*, for instance, features a mythical creature from Iranian folklore—a hybrid of fish, serpent, and bird—commonly found in water-related stories, a theme of particular significance to desert cultures.

During a recent visit to her home in Iran, she developed a profound connection with nature, particularly the mountains, where walking became a meditative practice and a means of finding focus, peace, and a sense of homecoming. This experience shaped her approach to the paintings on display, where she conceptualizes the sky and landscape as animate forces. Engaging with her surroundings in a tactile way, she washed her canvases in nearby salt lakes and incorporated frottage techniques, using rubbings on the canvas surface as a foundational mark-making process. These pieces encapsulate the convergence of Elmizadeh's inspirations, blending myth, memory, and materiality into evocative dialogue.

Architectural forms shift and expand in both artists' practices. Latorre constructs space through tightly cropped frameworks, often viewed as if across a table in intimate proximity, while Elmizadeh fragments architectural spaces with shifting shapes and lines, evoking fluidity and impermanence. Each artist bends the canvas's surface to their will, distilling historical movements into a concentrated sensory experience—one that engages in a dialogue with both the realities they inhabit and those beyond.

Hiram Latorre (b. 1996, São Paulo, BR) lives and works in São Paulo holds a degree in Architecture and Urbanism from Escola da Cidade. He participated in the group exhibitions *Museum at Instituto Artium*, curated by Alberto Simon (2023); *Equilíbrio dos Barracos* at Museu das Favelas, curated by Carollina Lauriano and Guilherme Teixeira (2023); and *Rosas Brasileiras* at Farol Santander (2023). His work was also added to the collection of Museu Nacional de Belas Artes in Rio de Janeiro (2023).

Azadeh Elmizadeh (b. 1987, Tehran, IR) lives and works in Toronto. She gained her BFA in Visual Communication and Graphic Design from University of Tehran, IR in 2010, her BFA in Drawing and Painting from OCAD University, Toronto, CA in 2016, and her MFA from University of Guelph, CA in 2020. Highlighted solo and two person exhibitions: *Tara Downs*, New York (2025) (forthcoming); *Franz Kaka*, Toronto, CA (2025) (forthcoming); "The Inexpressible is Contained" (w. Charlotte Edey), *Sea View*, Los Angeles, US (2023); "Madame, Madame" (w. Laura Berger), *Tube Culture Hall*, Milan, IT (2023). Recent group exhibitions: "Ishan", *Winnipeg Art Gallery*, Manitoba, Canada (2024); "Humilis", *island*, New York, US (2024); "Thinking About Forever", *Critical Distance Centre for Curators*, Toronto, CA (2024); "Sun Over Swamp", *Nanaimo Art Gallery*, British Columbia, CA (2024). Highlighted fairs: *NADA NY*, presented by Franz Kaka, New York, US (2024); *Plural*, presented by Franz Kaka, Montreal, CA (2024); *Frieze London*, presented by Franz Kaka, London, UK (2023); *The Armory Show*, presented by Franz Kaka, Montreal, QC (2019). Her work is included in the permanent collection of *Rowdy Meadow*, *Collection Majudia*, *RBC Corporate Art Collection*, and *Morgan Stanley Art Collection*.