

EN

Nairy
Baghramian
nameless



25.10.2025
—01.03.2026

Nairy Baghramian is considered one of today's most influential sculptors. Through complex forms with sensitively treated surfaces, she reflects on the relationships between the human body, objects and architectural environments, as well as on the social conditions of making and production today.

She has a rare capacity to imagine and integrate unfamiliar dimensions of texture, surface, territory and disciplines – combining a broad range of forms and materials that affirm both the independence of aesthetic experience and the autonomy of art. Baghramian's work is no longer tied to the logic of the consumption of commodities, as in Pop Art or Appropriation. Instead, she draws on techniques and forms from diverse fields – design, architecture, fashion, boating, dentistry, prosthetics or Japanese packaging. The unpredictable, the subconscious and the somatic coincide with the forces that define specific forms, which she often bends, fluidifies or leaves deliberately unbalanced.

nameless

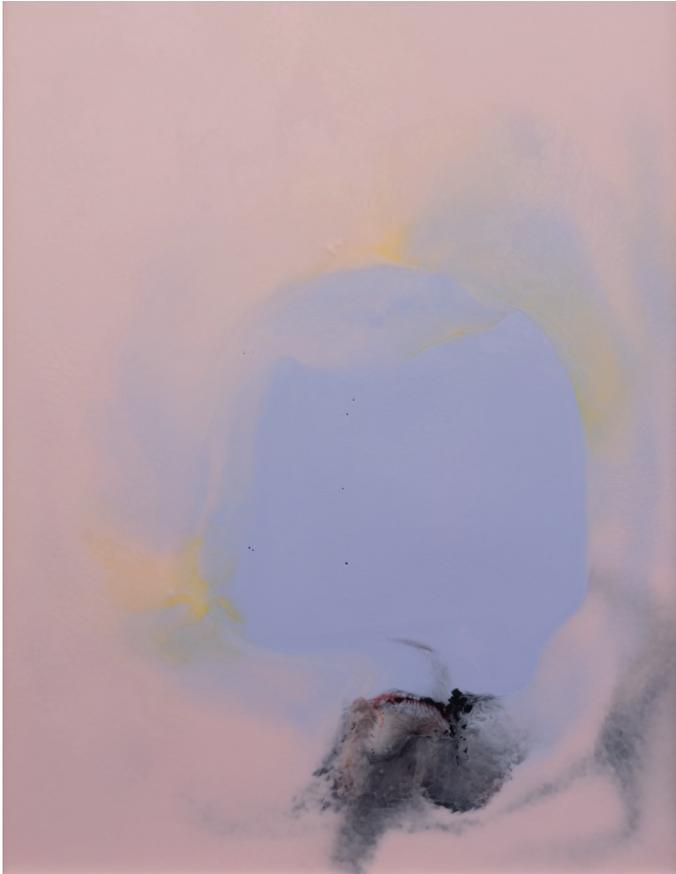
The door next to this landing opens onto a historical silo, where a large lit neon sign displays the title Baghramian gave to a new body of work and to this exhibition: *nameless*.

The word comprises individual characters – deformed and undulating – signalling a condition that precedes and escapes the space of names, where things are undefined or perpetually nameless, hovering in the indeterminate tension between emergence and erasure. This is the realm of the sensitive, of the emphatic: a space claimed by the visual arts, poetry, dance, rhythm and music. It is a space that resists, escapes the logos, the rational definition and the overdetermination of language, as well as categorisation.

Inside the gallery, Baghramian creates an open spatial environment for deambulation – aimless wandering among leaning, unstable display walls. On the reverse sides of these walls, delicate glass sculptures are attached, reminiscent of the intrusive visuality of the neon signs that once lit commercial urban spaces. Unlit, these neon forms are stripped of the mystic radiance that appealed to many Pop and Minimalist sculptors. Baghramian turns their halo inward by colouring the insides of the tubes with pigments.

With these sculptural signs, Baghramian departs from conventional forms of writing, transforming them into a language of ambivalent abstraction. The shapes do not form words but become intricate, liberated glyphs – inspired by neon signs that once conveyed optimism and energy, now muted, introverted and unobtrusive.

The domain of the nameless differs from that of the 'unsayable' – the philosophic or pathological state in which language and speech no longer hold together, marked by a gap between meaning and signs, often explored in modern art and the poetics of the nonsensical.



selves, 2025.
Courtesy the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery,
Hauser & Wirth and kurimanzutto

With *nameless*, Baghramian investigates a supplementary space entirely outside language, in rupture with the *rationale* constructed by language and its defining capacity. It is a space where one can only observe, sense, touch, dance or taste – the realm of that which has no name, or where the name has been revoked, refused or stripped.

selves

The loss of definition and cohesion is made tangible in the wax and paraffin reliefs titled *selves*. These works resemble blurred portrait photographs in development, before a precise appearance or a later loss. The individual search for and definition of the self – the question of how to define apart from identitarian or communal categories – hovers beneath the wax surfaces.

oreiller

The lightness and elegance of the *oreiller* works, on the other hand, seem to articulate an opposing argument to the identitarian definition – that of an essential core: interiority. Two semi-transparent shells, held together by prosthetic clips, surround a void, an intricate, attractive interiority, suggestive of the human body's need for rest and recovery.



Side Leaps. Courtesy of the artist

On the second plateau, the space equally invites wandering. Drawings, photographs and sculptural objects come together in Baghramian's characteristic display arrangements, emphasising the performative, processual state of a group of works rarely seen in public presentations.

Side Leaps

Framed assemblies share the title *Side Leaps* with the drawings, which offer insight into the artist's regular drawing practice, informed by the Surrealist technique of automatic drawing.

In her photographic practice, Baghramian creates symbolic contexts for specific exhibition projects, where the photographs function as metaphorical images suggesting material and economical contexts of production – referencing dental prosthetics, cuisine, smoke, a walker and animal skins.

Both drawings, photographs and maquettes are assembled and arranged on specially designed display cases and on large, transparent plexiglass walls. Titled *Spatial Compositions*, these arrangements directly reference Katarzyna Kobro, the Polish avant-garde artist who expanded pictorial space into plastic sculptural architectural reliefs. Rather than simply referencing or appropriating, Baghramian's practice is informed by collaborations with other artists, craftspeople and designers, taking many forms.

Baghramian draws inspiration from decades of observation and encounters with works produced by avant-garde artists – including, among many others, Katarzyna Kobro, Kurt Schwitters, Jean/Hans Arp, Isamu Noguchi, Max Ernst, Wols, Toyen and Mira Schendel – who, because of their uncompromising attitude, were exiled from autocratic regimes in 1930s Europe. While displaced, disoriented and deprived of ateliers, tools, familiar languages or stable living conditions, they persisted, working under immense



nameless (detail), 2025.
Courtesy of the artist

constraints. Their provisional and precarious creations – often made for basic survival – resonate with the instability, precarity, impermanence, fragmentation, reduction and displacement that lie at the centre of Baghramian’s artistic practice.

All the works participate in Baghramian’s ongoing investigation of the proto-rational, continuing her thought on the *informe* and the *object* – notions triggered by the extreme violence of the First World War, which led to Dada and Surrealist disruptions of syntax, borders and limits. These disruptions of form, function and sense, as subjective, restorative devices, allow freedom of associations and relations beyond fixed categories.

The trauma of the Second World War, however, further intensified this dissolution, deepening the inquiry into fragility, displacement and the instability of form. Echoing the biomorphic, the organic and the mineral, Baghramian also revisits contemporary design features and industrial forms, fashion and medical prosthetics. Each form, executed in precise fabrication methods, often recalls organs, skeletons or skin.

Presented in a state of dismemberment and disintegration, these sculptural constructions combine playfulness, humour and acute articulation. The resulting works assert a remedial effect on the impermanence and transience of the institutional frame — an expression of the object’s own willingness to survive and continue to exist beyond imposed categories.

Curator: Dirk Snauwaert

About the artist

Nairy Baghramian's sculptural and installation work explores the intersections of architecture, the human body and social space. With what she calls site responsiveness, she reflects on the site and the context whilst she engages themes of displacement, temporality, language, living conditions and realities.

Baghramian is a German artist, born in Isfahan, Iran, to an Armenian family in 1971.

Her notable recent projects include the solo exhibition Nairy Baghramian: *Jumbled Alphabet*, South London Gallery, London (2024), the façade commission *Scratching the Back* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2023), the exhibition *YOU ARE HERE** *Contemporary Art in the Garden*, MoMA, New York (2023) and *Modèle vivant* at the Sculpture Center, Dallas (2022). Her work has also been on view at the Aspen Art Museum (2023); Carré d'art Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes (2022); Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan (2021); Secession, Wien (2021); Palacio de Cristal, Madrid (2018); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2017); and S.M.A.K., Ghent (2016); Documenta 14, Athens and Kassel (2017); Skulptur Projekte Münster (2017, 2007); the Venice Biennale (2019, 2011) among many others.

Among other award she was the recipient of the Aspen Award of Art (2023), Nasher Sculpture Prize (2021) and the Arnold-Bode-Award of the documenta (2014).

Public Programme

23/11 15:00–16:00

Lecture by Kate Nesin ^(EN)

26/11 19:00–20:00

Conversation with Nairy Baghramian & Dirk Snauwaert ^(EN)

15/01 19:00–20:00

Conversation with Nairy Baghramian & Elena Filipovic ^(EN)

04/02 19:00–20:00

Look Who's Talking with Dirk Snauwaert

26/02 19:00–20:00

Lecture by André Rottmann

05/11, 03/12, 07/01 & 04/02

18:00–21:00

Nocturnes with guided tours, talks and workshops

Dates to be confirmed: a lecture by Adam Szymczyk, a guided visit with Shervin/e Sheikh Rezaei, and a choreography by Marie Goudot.

Stay updated on the public programme or book your guided tour via [wiels.org](https://www.wiels.org).

Credits

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