



HARLAN LEVEY PROJECTS

Sheida Soleimani

Flyways

Harlan Levey Projects

65 Rue Isidoor Teirlinckstraat, 1080 Brussels, Belgium

Opening: Saturday, April 18, 2026, from 12:00 - 18:00

April 18 - June 27, 2026

Scorpions guard a rearview mirror to the past; an empty snakeskin talks strategy; a giant chess board hovers over the Zagros mountains. In *Flyways*, Sheida Soleimani weaves the different strands of her life into elaborate reflections on migration and exile. One strand is her family history: Soleimani presents a selection from her *Ghostwriter* series, which recounts her parents' perilous flight from Iran after the 1979 revolution. The resulting photomontages are collaborative, including elements from each member of the family. The artist's mother creates drawings, outlines of specific memories and distant landscapes. Her father provides revolutionary graphics and slogans, critical of both the Ayatollah and the Shah, the political stance for which he was forced to flee. Soleimani composes with these fragments, constructing unique tableaux in the dreamlike language of magical realism.

Another strand is wildlife rehabilitation: upon arriving in the United States, Soleimani's mother (a nurse in Iran) began caring for animals, a practice which she passed down to her daughter. Now, the artist runs the Congress of the Birds, a federally licensed clinic in Rhode Island which releases more than 1,000 avians per year. Throughout *Flyways*, injured birds in her care enter the frame, subjects carrying their own stories of crises and displacement.

In her new video, *Wave*, one can grasp the effortless harmony between the artist's twin practices. The Soleimanis take turns filming a desertic landscape, switching between Persian and English, interacting with each other and with the surrounding wildlife. As they perform their duties – releasing an insect into the brush, consoling a wounded deer – they also rehearse a saying:

We are alive because we refuse to rest; / ما زنده به آنیم که آرام نگیریم

We are waves – our calm would be our annihilation. / موجیم که آسودگی ما عدم ماست

In this phrase, one can feel the force of their survival, an energy which is carried on in Soleimani's work: a commitment to life and to storytelling, nurturing the next generation of resistants.



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The *Ghostwriter* series has been shown at institutions including the International Center of Photography (New York, US), Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati, US), the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (Philadelphia, US), the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, US), and the Institute for the Humanities at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, US). Works from this series have been acquired by major public and private collections, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Art Vontobel Collection (Zurich), the ING Collection (Amsterdam), KADIST (Paris), the Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago), Cranbrook Art Museum (Detroit), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), the National Museum of Women in the Arts (Washington D.C.), and the CA2M Museum (Madrid). Printed Matter will publish a book dedicated to the project later this year.