



'IN REAL LIFE' WITH ARTISTS SARA GREENBERGER RAFFERTY AND ARGHAVAN KHOSRAVI

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Artists Sara Greenberger Rafferty and Arghavan Khosravi exhibit works "in real life" at Rachel Uffner Gallery

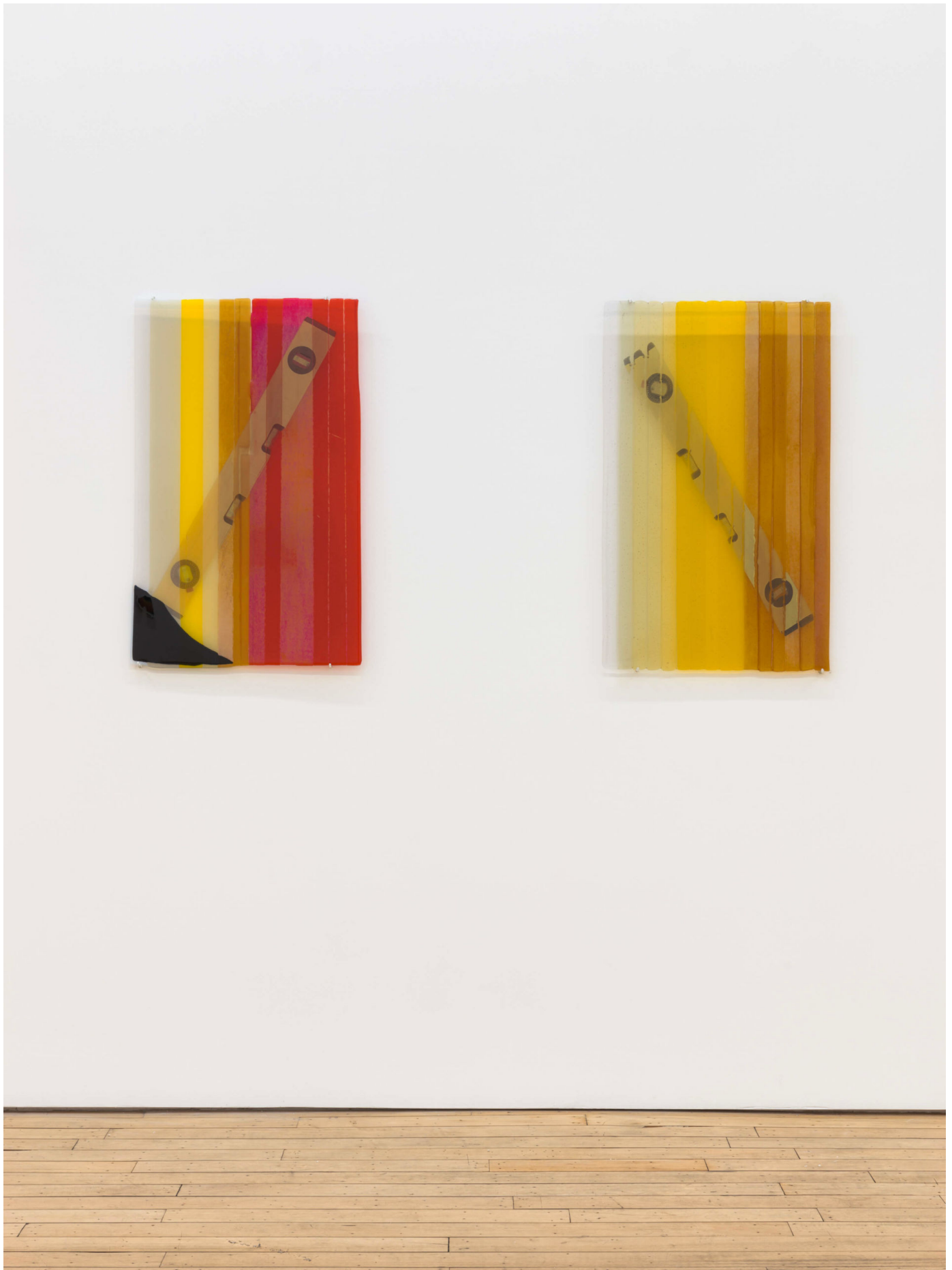


Installation view of "In Real Life." Photo: Rachel Uffner Gallery.

The exhibition "[In Real Life](#)" at [Rachel Uffner Gallery](#) took root online. Before this year's Frieze New York art fair was canceled and shifted to a digital platform, the Lower East Side gallery was gearing up to mount a solo presentation of new work from artist [Sara Greenberger Rafferty](#). But with production studios closed (limiting the amount of new work that Rafferty could complete), the gallery decided to present a [virtual booth](#) for Frieze that encapsulated new and old works from Rafferty cast alongside pieces from artist [Arghavan Khosravi](#), who the gallery began representing earlier this year. This summer, the works that populated the screens of the online art fair blossomed into the dual, in-person show "In Real Life."

The exhibition is available for viewers to see at the gallery's physical location on Suffolk Street through Aug. 21 — though those who can't make it can see

documentation of the installation on the gallery's website. The exhibition marks the first show presented in the space since the start of the pandemic.



Installation view of "In Real Life." Photo: Rachel Uffner Gallery.

[Rafferty's](#) work wraps around the gallery's ground floor, where the demanding, kiln-formed glass piece "The Veldt" finds residency across an expanse of white wall. The largest created in the medium by the artist so far, the piece investigates notions of how we relate to technology. Off-center in the frame (formatted into a rectangle that recalls a large television composed of upright iPads or sheets of liquid paper), a woman stands, finger-raised, her back to the viewer. The effect makes the figure — taken from Adobe stock image search results of "woman touching screen" — seem as if she is a reflection frozen in a permanent gesture.

The artist's use of tech imagery carries over into other works — such as "Untitled," 2019, which looks like a shiny screen clutching a phone made out of film. The layering of the pieces are "formed and deformed by the kiln's metamorphic heat and the intrinsic properties of glass," the gallery explained in the artist's [online viewing room](#).



Sara Greenberger Rafferty, "Untitled," 2019. Photo: Rachel Uffner Gallery.

“One of my favorite parts of artwork and being an artist is the way in which the work’s legibility and context shifts as years pass,” Rafferty told ALL ARTS over email. “Artwork is a record of the moment that it was made in, and subsequently the work is shaped as history and culture unfold.”

In a moment moderated largely by screens, Rafferty's work reflects our daily lives with enhanced intimacy, as our devices become not only tools but portals to family, friends, entertainment, work, doctors, books and beyond.

“As I haven't completed much new work, I'm interested in the way the works I've made over the past five or so years have taken on new currency in the now,” she said. “And since growth and evolution is a constantly shifting target, I look forward to the ways in which my mind and community is expanding even as there is so much trauma, pain. While hyper-connected and screen-based communities proliferate, the solitude — in quarantine, behind a mask, feet, miles away — is profound.”



Arghavan Khosravi, "A Gentle Greeting," 2020. Photo: Rachel Uffner Gallery.

Joining Rafferty in a separate gallery on the ground floor, [Khosravi](#) weaves narratives of power and oppression into captivating paintings anchored by women. Born in Shahr-e-kord, Iran, and now based in the United States, the artist teases out cultural narratives through imagery, religious motifs and textiles.

“Khosravi’s practice is intrinsically linked to personal and paradoxical life experiences of growing up in Iran,” the gallery said in the exhibition text. “This bleeding of Eastern and Western imagery, past and present, religious and secular, reality and fantasy, is symbolic of the tensions the artist faces as an Iranian woman born under ideological autocracy.”

Cast in fine detail, the women populating Khosravi’s work stand out against the background in vividly captured tones. Winding through the paintings are red threads — a recurring element in the artist’s pieces. In some instances, the threads cling to the women, circled around thighs and wrists with quiet insistence. In others, the red lines orbit around bodies and objects, as if held in a magnetic field. Some of the paintings also feature a semi-invisible phantom force that pulls the figures in multiple directions or holds them down.



Arghavan Khosravi, "The Balance," 2019. Photo: Rachel Uffner Gallery.

On a practical level, Khosravi told ALL ARTS over email, the use of the red thread serves as a compositional tool that helps her “guide the viewer’s eyes

around the picture plane” and to bring “some dynamism to [her] compositions that otherwise are deliberately more static.” The use of the red thread also creates a continuous visual and conceptual draw across the paintings.

“In most of my paintings, the color red has a symbolic meaning with negative connotations of repression, suppression, and imposed power,” Khosravi said. “I am conveying the overall theme of living under the dominance of a religious-ideological autocratic system, which can be the totalitarian power of a state or the oppression and control of women imposed by tradition in patriarchal societies. In both cases, people are suppressed and forced to obey unjust rules; freedom of speech is restricted, and human rights issues in general are at stake. I wanted to find a symbolic or visual metaphor for these concepts and I came up with the red rope as a metaphor for limitation in these human rights and women’s rights issues.”

The placement of the red lines in a way that appears to not restrict the women too much suggests a more persistent form of oppression. The fastened postures of the figures hint toward this limited range of movement, with the red lines appearing almost like invisible force fields keeping the elements of the painting in place. This feeling amplifies when looking at multiple pieces from the artist and seeing how the red lines are ever-present and binding.



Arghavan Khosravi, "Let Me Help You," 2019. Photo: Rachel Uffner Gallery.

“The red lines symbolize those drawn by autocratic power, and they mustn’t be crossed,” Khosravi said. “In most cases the rope symbol at first glance may seem not too violent and even visually elegant. For example, the rope has entangled the figure but is not tightly binding her, or it has formed an oval shape that seems like a shackle around her body parts but is not even touching her (it’s gently floating around the figure’s neck, arms, or wrists or forms a halo and so forth).”

She continued: “The reason is that I believe violence against women sometimes has a hidden form and is not obviously visible (some might argue that the same is true in less patriarchal and more progressive societies).”

Viewers can check out the exhibition [“In Real Life”](#) at [Rachel Uffner Gallery](#) in-person through Aug. 21.

 Top Image: Sara Greenberger Rafferty, "The Veldt," 2019. Photo: Rachel Uffner Gallery.

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