

# Sheida Soleimani

## *Flyways*

### Harlan Levey Projects

65 Rue Isidoor Teirlinckstraat, 1080 Brussels, Belgium

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

April 18 - June 27, 2026



Sheida Soleimani, exhibition view of *Flyways*, 2026, Harlan Levey Projects, Brussels. Photo: Shivadas De Schrijver

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.

The wall mural included in this installation is a re-creation of a drawing by Sheida Soleimani's mother. It is part of her exhibition vocabulary in each iteration of the *Ghostwriter* series and is indicative of her approach to consensual ghostwriting.

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 (London, UK), the Art Vontobel Collection (Zurich, CH), the ING Collection (Amsterdam), KADIST (Paris), the Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago, US), Cranbrook Art Museum (Detroit, US), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York, US), the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, US), the National Museum of Women in the Arts (Washington D.C., US), and the CA2M Museum (Madrid, ES).



Learn More

Sheida Soleimani (b. 1990) lives and works in Providence, United States.

Sheida Soleimani is an artist, educator, and licensed wildlife rehabilitator whose work examines power, environmental crisis, queerness, migration, and care. The daughter of political refugees who escaped Iran in the early 1980s, Soleimani draws on archival materials, props, and sculptural elements to create visually lush, politically incisive tableaux. She works across various mediums, investigating themes such as oil politics and human rights abuses, confronting the systems of violence linking the SWANA region and the United States, unraveling their implications in American culture.

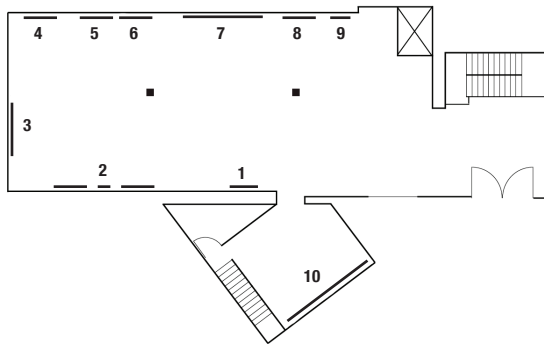
Though her images are dreamlike, they are grounded in lived experience: her parents frequently appear as subjects, in compositions made from elements of their (sometimes harrowing) tales. Increasingly, wildlife enters the frame – injured and orphaned birds, with their own quiet stories of migration and survival. Before the lens, these animals encapsulate Soleimani's multifaceted practice: care as art, storytelling as resistance.

Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions in institutions such as the International Center for Photography - ICP (New York, US), the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (US), Photoforum Pasquart (Biel, CH), Providence College Galleries (US), Castello San Basilio (Basilicata, IT), Southern Utah Museum of Art (Cedar City, US), CUE Art Foundation (New York, US), Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati, US), Atlanta Contemporary (US), and MoMA PS1 (New York, US), to name a few. Soleimani has participated in group exhibitions in institutions such as the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University (Waltham, US), the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts - PAFA (Philadelphia, US), the deCordova New England Biennial (Lincoln, US), the South London Gallery (UK), The Living Art Museum (Reykjavik, IS), and many others.

Her work has been recognized internationally in both exhibitions and publications such as Artforum, Frieze, The New York Times, Financial Times, Art in America, Interview Magazine, and many others. Alongside her artistic practice, Soleimani is also an Associate Professor of Studio Art at Brandeis University. In 2018, she founded Congress of the Birds, (originally) a home-based clinic in Providence, Rhode Island, where she provides care for wild birds.

In 2025, Soleimani won the MAST Photography Grant on Industry and Work for her new series, Flyways. In 2026, Soleimani was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to further her research in photography.

www.sheidasoleimani.com  
www.congressofthebirds.org



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|---|---|--------|---|
| 1 | <b>Deltang, 2024</b><br>Archival pigment print, 61 x 45.7 cm - 24 x 18 in<br>Edition of 5 plus 2 AP                           | 8      | <b>Field Hospital, 2024</b><br>Archival pigment print, 101.6 x 76.2 cm - 40 x 30 in<br>Edition of 3 plus 2 AP |
| 2 | <b>Interference, 2025</b><br>Archival pigment print, 101.6 x 195 cm - 40 x 76 3/4 in<br>Edition of 3 plus 2 AP                | 9      | <b>Truce, 2024</b><br>Archival pigment print, 61 x 45.7 cm - 24 x 18 in<br>Edition of 5 plus 2 AP             |
| 3 | <b>Marz, 2023</b><br>Archival pigment print, 152.4 x 111.8 cm - 60 x 44 in<br>Edition of 3 plus 2 AP                          | 10     | <b>Wave, 2026</b><br>HD video, color, sound<br>15 min 20 sec  |
| 4 | <b>What a Revolutionary Must Know, 2022</b><br>Archival pigment print, 101.6 x 76.2 cm - 40 x 30 in<br>Edition of 3 plus 2 AP | Office | <b>Laleh, 2023</b><br>Archival pigment print<br>35.6 x 27.9 cm - 14 x 11 in<br>Edition of 5 plus 2 AP         |
| 5 | <b>Safehouse, 2024</b><br>Archival pigment print, 101.6 x 76.2 cm - 40 x 30 in<br>Edition of 3 plus 2 AP                      |        |   |
| 6 | <b>Correspondents, 2024</b><br>Archival pigment print, 101.6 x 76.2 cm - 40 x 30 in<br>Edition of 3 plus 2 AP                 |        |   |
| 7 | <b>Behesht Zahra, 2023</b><br>Archival pigment print, 111.8 x 152.4 cm - 44 x 60 in<br>Edition of 3 plus 2 AP                 |        |   |