1. There's a slight ambiguity of narrative and meaning in your pieces that invites viewers to engage actively with your art, I think. What we see at first may not be what is interpreted in the end. Could you discuss the role of the viewers' interpretation in your work? How maybe it can be a lead into the concepts you're thinking about while creating it, but not giving it all away at first?

Iran is a country recognized worldwide for its rich culture, literature and history.

It’s also a country full of ideas and subjects for an artist to use as inspiration in their creations.
The subjects of my paintings are always drawn from Iranian society, culture, history and literature; but in Iran, an artist cannot express her thoughts directly in her art as that may cause problems down the line. That's why my paintings are always symbolic – to make the viewer think and pay more attention to the work, and put the pieces together like a puzzle to discover the mystery within the painting.

2. How does your work reflect or comment on the historical and political upheavals that have shaped the country of Iran throughout the last century? Can you discuss the specific moments in Iranian history that have shaped your artistic narrative?

As I mentioned above, each painting speaks to the position of women within the culture and history of my country. Throughout Iranian history, there have been influential women who were unparalleled in their impact; and now Iranian women are once again powerful and influential. This feature is also present in our literature, such as our national epic *The Shahnameh.* In my opinion, Iranian history and Iranian literature are interrelated, and are always repeating and reflecting each other.
The idea for my painting ‘Trial by Fire’ is drawn from the story of Siavash in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. Siavash, who is a heroic character, must pass through fire to prove his innocence. If the fire burns him, it means he was guilty and if it extinguishes, it means he was innocent. But as he passes through, the fire suddenly turns into a flower garden; and I relate this to the current situation in Iran, suggesting that Iranian women will pass through the burning fire of this moment and turn Iran into a garden of flowers.
In another painting, you can see the character of Reza Shah, who was the King of Iran from 1925 to 1944. In Iran, Reza Shah is a symbol of prosperity, as well as the recognition of women’s immense value. I use him in some of my works, alway symbolically, as a reminder of the provenance of the power that Iranian women currently hold.

3. Your play with scale is striking, making historical characters appear larger than life. How does this choice contribute to the symbolic significance these figures take on in your artwork? I'm curious to hear how the materials you choose play a role in this as well?

In Iranian art history, we have a movement called the *Ghahveh-khaneh* (lit. ‘coffee house’) school. In paintings created within this movement, characters are represented in various sizes depending on their importance, and often arranged in a perspective that reflects their social positioning. I created this collection under the influence of this school, and chose to represent the relative scale of the characters in accordance with their influence on the history of Iran and the world.

4. Your art often merges mythical and historical elements. How do these elements intersect with the political realities faced by people living in Iran today?

I believe I addressed this idea under question #2.

5. The world has watched women's rights in Iran undergo significant changes and challenges, which I feel has been a strong storyline in your exhibitions to date. How does your artwork reflect on this history and do you think your work contributes to a broader understanding of the female experience in the country?

Yes, definitely. The global community is perhaps less aware of the history, literature and culture of Iran and the position of women in Iran. They have seen images and news coverage that do not necessarily reflect reality. I am trying my best to present in my work the real faces of Iranian women and help create interest in and awareness of their complex history and experience.

6. How would you describe the role of art or your role as an artist in advocating for human rights, particularly in the context of women's rights in Iran? Is this a goal of yours?

Yes, absolutely. In my opinion, when a piece of art is free from falsehoods and presents reality wherever in the world it may be, it will definitely help with matters of human rights – now and in the future.
There are so many paintings in the history of art that have a social theme and have brought subsequent generations face-to-face with reality; and the more history is distorted, the more art functions to counteract and prevent the distortions and reveal the truth.