

# The New York Times

GREENWICH VILLAGE

## Behjat Sadr

Through Aug. 27. Institute of Arab & Islamic Art, 22 Christopher Street, [instituteaia.org](http://instituteaia.org).



Behjat Sadr, “Untitled,” circa 1990. The artist shows off her range with paintings, installations and collages. Institute of Arab and Islamic Art

[Behjat Sadr](#), who died in 2009, was a prominent painter in Iran before moving to Paris in the early 1980s. Her work demonstrates how artists absorbed a dizzying array of influences after World War II. For Sadr, this meant the earthy approach of European Informel painters like [Alberto Burri](#) and [Jean Dubuffet](#), but also the systemic geometries of Islamic architecture — and even the exaggerated, [Pop brushstrokes of Roy Lichtenstein](#). This show at the [Institute of Arab and Islamic Art](#) shows off her range with paintings, installations and haunting collages.

Sadr left Tehran studied in Rome in the mid-1950s and the canvases from that period, many painted on thick, toothy surfaces like Burri’s, are charged with carefully controlled formal energy. Later, she would scrape patterns into the “abstract” image, creating what looks like wood grain or that Lichtenstein brushstroke. The buoyant stripes in a kinetic work from the late 1960s, made with window blinds attached to the surface of a canvas, appear and disappear, depending on your perspective. The collages made in Paris feature photographs of arid Iranian landscapes, but also one of an unidentified man, seemingly silenced by a criss-cross pattern plastered over his mouth.

At root, many of the works here reverberate with politics. Sadr left Iran after the 1979 revolution and her work reverberates with radical poetry and powerful histories. It feels vitally important now, at a moment when women are leading a protest movement in that country, to see the visionary work of this groundbreaking woman artist. *MARTHA SCHWENDENER*